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AN

EXPOSITION

ON

THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS;

WHEREIN

EACH CHAPTER IS SUMMED UP IN ITS CONTENTS; THE SACRED TEXT INSERTED
AT LARGE IN DISTINCT PARAGRAPHS; EACH PARAGRAPH REDUCED TO ITS PROPER HEADS;
THE SENSE GIVEN, AND LARGELY ILLUSTRATED;

WITH PRACTICAL REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS;

BY

MATTHEW HENRY,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

A NEW EDITION, IN THREE VOLUMES,

CONTAINING

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO EACH BOOK IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, TO THE FOUR GOSPELS AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
LARGE ADDITIONS TO THE EXPOSITION ON THE EPISTLES AND APOCALYPSE,
AND NUMEROUS WOOD ENGRAVINGS ILLUSTRATIVE OF BIBLICAL SCENES, CUSTOMS, AND OBJECTS;

TOGETHER WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PARTRIDGE AND OAKEY, PATERNOSTER ROW,
AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.

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THE publication of the Second Volume affords the opportunity of referring to the Supplementary Notes contained in it and the preceding volume, and to the Wood Engravings throughout the whole work. The Notes to *Genesis*, and the greater part of those to *Exodus*, were furnished by that experienced biblical commentator the Rev. Ingram Cobbin, of whose annotations to his forthcoming edition of the Scriptures, entitled *The Domestic Bible*, it will be seen that the Editor has also frequently availed himself. The authorities for the Notes to the immediately succeeding books are for the most part distinctly and fully indicated at the end of each Note; and in reference to those few to which no name is subjoined, the reader may infer, either that they are the Editor's or that the name of the author has been inadvertently omitted. In the latter case, the extract is from works elsewhere frequently alluded to—as the commentaries of T. Scott, A. Clarke, the Religious Tract Society, Dr. Kitto, &c. The aid derived from all these, and other works, he gratefully acknowledges, as well as the valuable addition to the exposition of the books of *Job* and *Isaiah*, from the writings of the distinguished American authors, Albert Barnes and Joseph Addison Alexander. The addition to the comment on the book of *Psalms* is comparatively short, because of the fulness and singular excellence of Matthew Henry's exposition; and though he has elsewhere referred to them, the Editor cannot conclude this notice without again expressing his obligation to the Rev. C. Bridges, Dr. Wardlaw, and Dr. Henderson, in allowing him the privilege of such copious extracts from their works on the books of *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*, and the Minor Prophets.

As to the Wood Engravings, the Editor can truly say that they have been selected with a view really to deserve the name of pictorial illustrations—the best authorities have been sought, and the execution has been entrusted to superior artists. It was intended to give an enumeration of them all, along with a statement of the works and institutions whence the designs were taken, but it was afterwards thought that the space so occupied might be, as it has been, more profitably employed. Suffice it, therefore, to mention that it contains about six hundred wood engravings, drawn from the Lycian Marbles, in the British Museum, the Assyrian Marbles so recently placed in the same institution, Sir J. Soane's and other Museums, and from the illustrated works of Calmet, Cassas, Chambeaud, Finden, Laborde, Roberts, Rosellini, Sir R. K. Porter, &c.; and it is hoped that they will be found, in their own department, to contribute somewhat to the illustration of the history, customs, and scenery of the Bible.

August, 1848. A. L. G.

BERKELEY BAPTIST
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AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

POETICAL BOOKS

OF

THE OLD TESTAMENT:

VIZ.

JOB, PSALMS, PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND SOLOMON'S SONG.

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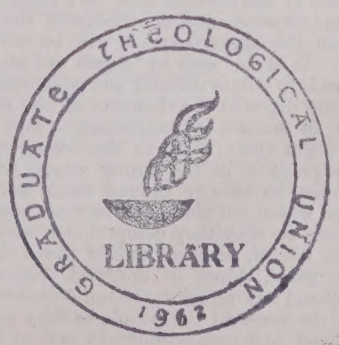


PREFACE.

THESE five books of Scripture which are contained in this Third Volume, and which I have here endeavoured, according to the measure of the gift given to me, to explain and improve, for the use of those who desire to read them, not only with understanding, but to their edification—though they have the same Divine origin, design, and authority, as those that went before, yet, upon some accounts, are of a very different nature from them, and from the rest of the sacred writings, such variety of methods has Infinite Wisdom seen fit to take in conveying the light of Divine revelation to the children of men, that this heavenly food might have (as the Jews say of the manna,) something in it agreeable to every palate, and suited to every constitution. If every eye be not thus opened, every mouth will be stopped, and such as perish in their ignorance will be left without excuse. "We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not lamented," *Mat.* xi. 17.

First. The books of Scripture have hitherto been, for the most part, very plain and easy, narratives of matter of fact, which he that runs may read and understand, and which are milk for babes, such as they can receive and digest, and both entertain and nourish themselves with. The waters of the sanctuary have hitherto been but to the ankles or to the knees, such as a lamb might wade in, to drink of and wash in; but here we are advanced to a higher form in God's school, and have books put into our hands wherein are many things "dark and hard to be understood," which we do not apprehend the meaning of so suddenly and so certainly as we could wish, the study of which requires a more close application of mind, a greater intenseness of thought, and the accomplishing of a diligent search, which yet the treasure hid in them, when it is found, will abundantly recompense. The waters of the sanctuary are here to the loins, and still as we go forward we shall find the waters still risen in the prophetical books, "waters to swim in," *Eze.* xlvii. 3—5; not fordable, nor otherwise to be passed over—depths in which an elephant will not find footing, "strong meat for strong men." The same method is observable in the New Testament, where we find the plain history of Christ and his Gospel placed first in the Evangelists, and the *Acts of the Apostles;* then the mystery of both in the Epistles, which are more difficult to be understood; and, lastly, the prophecies of things to come in the apocalyptic visions. This method, so exactly observed in both the Testaments, directs us in what order to proceed, both in studying the things of God ourselves and in teaching them to others; we must go in the order that the Scripture does; and where can we expect to find a better method of Divinity and a better method of preaching?

1. We must begin with those things that are most plain and easy, as, blessed be God, those things are which are most necessary to salvation and of the greatest use. We must lay our foundation firm, in a sound experimental knowledge of the principles of religion, and then the superstructure will be well reared, and will stand firmly. It is not safe to launch out into the deep at first, nor to venture into points difficult and controverted until we have first thoroughly digested the elements of the oracles of God and turned them *in succum et sanguinem,*—'into juice and blood.' Those that begin their Bible at the wrong end commonly use their knowledge of it in the wrong way. And, in training up others, we must be sure to ground them well at first in those truths of God which are plain, and in some measure level to their capacity, which we find they comprehend, and relish, and know how to make use of, and not amuse those that are weak with things above them, things of doubtful disputation, which they cannot apprehend any certainty of nor advantage by. Our Lord Jesus spoke the word to the people as they were able to hear it, *Mar.* iv. 33, and had many things to say to his disciples which he did not say, because as yet they could not bear them, *Jno.* xvi. 12, 13. And those whom St. Paul "could not speak to as unto spiritual"—though he blamed them for their backwardness, yet he accommodated himself to their weakness, and spoke to them "as unto babes in Christ," 1 *Cor.* iii. 1, 2.

2. Yet we must not rest in these things. We must not be always children that have need of milk, but nourished up with that, and gaining strength, we must go on to perfection, *Heb.* vi. 1; that having, by reason of use, our spiritual senses exercised, *Heb.* v. 14, we may come to full age, and put away childish things, and forgetting the things which are behind, that is, so well remembering them that we need not be still conning them, as those that are ever learning the same lesson, we may "reach forth to the things which are before," *Phil.* iii. 13. Though we must never think to learn above our Bible as long as we are here in this world, yet we must still be getting forward in it. "You have dwelt long enough in this mountain," now "turn you and take your journey" onward in the wilderness towards Canaan. Our motto must be *plus ultra,*—'onward.' And then shall we know, if thus by regular steps (*Hos.* vi. 3) we follow on to know the Lord, and what the mind of the Lord is.

Secondly. The books of Scripture have hitherto been mostly historical, but now the matter is of another nature; it is doctrinal and devotional, preaching and praying: and in this way of writing, as well as in the former, a great deal of excellent knowledge is conveyed, which serves very valuable purposes. It will be of good use to know not only what others did that went before us, and how they fared, but what their notions and sentiments were, what their thoughts and affections were; that we may, with the help of them, form our minds aright. *Plutarch's Morals* are reputed as useful a treasure in the commonwealth of learning as *Plutarch's Lives,* and the wise disquisitions and discourses of the philosophers as the records of the historians; nor is this Divine philosophy, (if I may so call it,) which we have in these books, less needful, nor less serviceable to the church, than the sacred history was. Blessed be God for both.

Thirdly. The Jews make these books to be given by a Divine inspiration somewhat different from that both of Moses and the prophets. They divided the books of the Old Testament into the law, the prophets, and the כתובים—'writings;' which Epiphanius emphatically translates, γραφεία—'things written;' and these books are more commonly called among the Greeks Ἁγιόγραφα,—'Holy Writings.' The Jews attribute them to that distinct kind of inspiration which they call רוח הקדש—'the Holy Spirit.' Moses they supposed to write by the Spirit in a way above all the other prophets, for with him God spoke mouth to mouth, even apparently, (*Num.* xii. 8,) knew him, that is, conversed with him face to face, *Deu.* xxxiv. 10. He was made partaker of Divine revelation (as Maimonides distinguishes, *De Fund. Legis,* c. 7,) *per vigiliam,*—'while awake,' whereas God manifested himself to all the other prophets in a dream or vision: see Mr. Smith's *Discourse of Prophecy,* ch. xi. And he adds that Moses understood the words of prophecy without any perturbation or astonishment of mind, whereas the other prophets commonly fainted and were troubled. But the writers of the Hagiographa they suppose to be inspired in a degree somewhat below that of the other prophets, and to receive Divine revelation, not as they did by dreams, and visions, and voices, but (as Maimonides describes it, *More Nevochim,* part 2, c. 45) they perceived some power to rise within them, and rest upon them, which urged and enabled them to write or speak far above their own natural ability, in psalms or hymns, or in history, or in rules of good living, still enjoying the ordinary vigour and use of their senses. Let David himself describe it: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue; the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me," 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 2, 3. This

gives such a magnificent account of the inspiration by which David wrote, that I see not why it should be made inferior to that of the other prophets, for David is expressly called a prophet, *Acts* ii. 29, 30. But, since our hand is in with the Jewish masters, let us see what books they account Hagiographa. These five that are now before us come, without dispute, into this rank of sacred writers, and the book of the *Lamentations* is not unfitly added to them. Indeed the Jews, when they would speak critically, reckon all those songs which we meet with in the Old Testament among the Hagiographa; for though they were penned by prophets, and under the direction of the Holy Ghost, yet, because they were not the proper result of a *visum propheticum*,—'prophetic vision,' they were not strictly prophecy. As to the historical books, they distinguish, (but I think it is a distinction without a difference;) some of them they assign to the prophets, calling them the *prophetæ priores*,—'the former prophets;' namely, *Joshua*, *Judges*, and the two books of the *Kings*; but others they rank among the Hagiographa, as the book of *Ruth*, (which yet is but an appendix to the book of *Judges*,) the two books of *Chronicles*, with *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, and the book of *Esther*, which last the rabbin have a great value for, and think it is to be had in equal esteem with the law of Moses itself, that it shall last as long as that lasts, and shall survive the writings of the prophets. And, lastly, they reckon the book of *Daniel* among the Hagiographa, *Hil. Megil.* c. 2, § 18; for which no reason can be given, since he was not inferior to any of the prophets in the gift of prophecy. And, therefore, the learned Mr. Smith thinks that their placing him among the Hagiographical writers was fortuitous and by mistake. Vid. *Hottinger. Thesaur. Philol.*, l. 2, c. 1, § 3. Mr. Smith, in his *Discourse*, before quoted, though he supposes this kind of Divine inspiration to be more '*pacate* and *serene* than that which was strictly called prophecy, not acting so much upon the imagination, but seating itself in the higher and purer faculties of the soul, yet shews that it manifested itself to be of a Divine nature, not only as it always elevated pious souls into strains of devotion, or moved them strangely to dictate matters of true piety and goodness, but as it came in abruptly upon the minds of those holy men, and transported them from the temper of mind they were in before, so that they perceived themselves captivated by the power of some higher light than that which their own understanding commonly poured out upon them; and this, says he, was a kind of vital form to that light of Divine and sanctified reason which they were perpetually possessed of, and that constant frame of holiness and goodness which dwelt in their hallowed minds.' We have reason to "glorify the God of Israel who gave such power unto men," and has here transmitted to us the blessed products of that power.

Fourthly. The style and composition of these books are different from those that go before and those that follow. Our Saviour divides the books of the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, (*Lu.* xxiv. 44,) and thereby teaches us to distinguish those books that are poetical, or metrical, from the Law and the Prophets; and such are all these that are now before us, except *Ecclesiastes*, which yet, having something restrained in its style, may well enough be reckoned among them. They are books in verse, according to the ancient rules of versifying, though not according to the Greek and Latin prosodies. Some of the ancients call these five books the second Pentateuch of the Old Testament, Damascen's *Orthod. Fid.* l. 4, c. 18; five sacred volumes which are as the satellites to the five books of the law of Moses. Gregory Nazianzen, vide *Suicer. Thesaur.* in στιχηρὰ, (*Carm.* 33, p. 98,) calls these *αἱ στιχήραι πέντε*,—'the five metrical books;' first *Job*, (so he reckons them up,) then David, then the three of Solomon—*Ecclesiastes*, the *Song*, and *Proverbs*. Amphilochius, bishop at Iconium, in his iambic poem to Seleucus, reckons them up particularly, and calls them *στιχηρὰς πέντε Βίβλους*,—'the five verse books.' Epiphanius, *Lib. de Ponder. et Mensur.*, p. 533, *πέντε στιχήρεις*,—'the five verse books.' And *Cyril. Hierosol. Collect.* 4, p. 30, (*mihi*,—'in my copy,') calls these five books *τὰ στιχηρὰ*,—'books in verse.' Polychronius, in his prologue to *Job*, saith that as those that are without call their tragedies and comedies *ποιητικα*,—'poetics;' so, in sacred writ, those books which are composed in Hebrew metre, (of which he reckons *Job* the first,) we call *στιχηρὰ βιβλιὰ*,—'books in verse,' written *κατὰ στίχον*,—'according to order.' What is written in metre, or rhythm, is so called from *μέτρος*,—'a measure,' and *ἄριθμος*,—'a number,' because regulated by certain measures, or numbers of syllables, which please the ear with their smoothness and cadency, and so insinuate the matter the more movingly and powerfully into the fancy. Sir William Temple, *Miscell.* part 2, in his essay upon poetry, thinks it is generally agreed to have been the first sort of writing that was used in the world; nay, that in several nations poetical compositions preceded the very invention or usage of letters. The Spaniards, he says, found in America many strains of poetry, and such as seemed to flow from a true poetic vein, before any letters were known in those regions. The same, says he, is probable of the Scythians and Grecians: the oracles of Apollo were delivered in verse—so were those of the Sybils. And Tacitus says that the ancient Germans had no annals or records but what were in verse. Homer and Hesiod wrote their poems (the very Alcoran of the pagan dæmonology,) many ages before the appearing of any of the Greek philosophers or historians; and long before them, (if we may give credit to the antiquities of Greece,) even before the days of David, Orpheus and Linus were celebrated poets and musicians in Greece; and, at the same time, Carmenta, the mother of Evander, who was the first that introduced letters among the natives of Greece, was so called *a carmine*,—'from a song,' because she delivered herself in verse. And in such veneration was this way of writing among the ancients, that their poets were called *vates*,—'prophets,' and their muses were deified. But, which is more certain and considerable, the most ancient composure that we meet with in Scripture was the song of Moses at the Red Sea, *Ex.* xv., which we find before the very first mention of writing, for that occurs not until *Ex.* xvii. 14, when God bade Moses write a memorial of the war with Amalek. The first, and indeed the true and general end of writing, is the help of memory; and poetry doth in some measure answer that end, and even in the want of writing, much more with writing, helps to preserve the remembrance of ancient things. The book of the wars of the Lord, *Num.* xxi. 14; and the book of Jasher, *Jos.* x. 13; 2 *Sam.* i. 18; seem to have been both written in poetic measures. Many sacred songs we meet with in the Old Testament, scattered both in the historical and prophetical books, penned on particular occasions; which, in the opinion of very competent judges, 'have in them as true and noble strains of poetry and picture as are met with in any other language whatsoever, in spite of all disadvantages from translations into such different tongues and common prose,' Sir W. Temple, p. 329; 'Nay, are nobler examples of the true, sublime style of poetry than any that can be found in the pagan writers. The images are so strong, the thoughts so great, the expressions so divine, and the figures so admirable, bold, and moving, that the wonderful manner of these writers is quite inimitable.' Sir R. Blackmore's *Preface to Job*. It is fit that what is employed in the service of the sanctuary should be the best in its kind.

The books here put together are poetical. *Job* is an heroic poem, the book of *Psalms* a collection of divine odes or lyrics, *Solomon's Song* a pastoral and an epithalamium; they are poetical, and yet sacred and serious, grave and full of majesty. They have a poetic force and flame, without poetic fury and fiction, and strangely command and move the affections, without corrupting the imagination, or putting a cheat upon it; and while they gratify the ear they edify the mind, and profit the more by pleasing. It is therefore much to be lamented that so powerful an art, which was at first consecrated to the honour of God, and hath been so often employed in his service, should be debauched as it has been, and is at this day, into the service of his enemies—that his corn, and wine, and oil, should be prepared for Baal.

Fifthly. As the manner of the composition of these books is excellent and very proper to engage the attention, move the affections, and fix them in the memory, so the matter is highly useful, and such as will be every way serviceable to us. They have in them the very sum and substance of religion, and what they contain is more fitted to our hand, and made ready for use, than any part of the Old Testament; upon which account, if we may be allowed to compare one star with another in the firmament of the Scripture, these will be reckoned stars of the first magnitude. All Scripture is profitable, and this part of it in a special manner for instruction in doctrine, in devotion, and in the right ordering of the conversation. The book of *Job* directs us what we are to believe concerning God; the book of *Psalms* how we are to worship him, pay our homage to him, and maintain our communion with him. And then the book of the *Proverbs* very particularly shews how we are to govern ourselves, *ἐν πάσῃ ἀναστροφῇ*,—'in every turn of human life.' Thus shall the man of God, by a due attention to these lights, be perfect, "thoroughly furnished for every good work." And these are placed according to their natural order, as well as according to the order of time; for very fitly are we first led into the knowledge of God, our judgments

rightly formed concerning him, and our mistakes rectified; and then instructed how to worship him, and to choose the things that please him. We have here much of natural religion, its principles, its precepts, much of God, his infinite perfections, his relations to man, and his government both of the world and of the church. Here is much of Christ, who is the spring, and soul, and centre of revealed religion, and whom both Job and David were eminent types of, and had clear and happy prospects of. We have here that which will be of use to enlighten our understandings, and to acquaint us more and more with the things of God, with the deep things of God—speculations to entertain the most contemplative, and discoveries to satisfy the most inquisitive, and increase the knowledge of those that are most knowing. Here is that also which with a Divine light will bring into the soul the heat and influence of a Divine fire, will kindle and inflame pious and devout affections, on which wings we may soar upwards, until we enter into the holiest. We may here be in the mount with God, to behold his beauty; and when we come down from that mount, if we retain (as we ought) the impressions of our devotion upon our spirits, and make conscience of doing that good which the Lord our God here requires of us, our faces shall shine before all with whom we converse, who shall take occasion from thence to "glorify our Father which is in heaven," *Mat.* v. 16. Thus great, thus noble, thus truly excellent is the subject, and thus capable of being improved; which gives me the more reason to be ashamed of the meanness of my performance, that the comment breathes so little of the life and spirit of the text. We often wonder at those that are not at all affected with the great things of God, and have no taste or relish of them, because they know little of them; but perhaps we have more reason to wonder at ourselves, that conversing so frequently, so intimately, with them we are not more affected with them, so as even to be wholly taken up with them, and in a continual transport of delight in the contemplation of them. We hope to be so shortly. In the meantime, though, like the three disciples that were the witnesses of Christ's transfiguration upon the mount, we are but dull and sleepy, yet we can say, Master, "it is good to be here;" here "let us make tabernacles," *Lu.* ix. 32, 33.

I have nothing here to boast of—nothing at all, but a great deal to be humbled for, that I have not come up to what I have aimed at, in respect of fulness and exactness. In the review of it I find many defects, and those who are critical, perhaps, will meet with some mistakes in it; but I have done it with what care I could, and desire to be thankful to God who by his grace has carried me on in his work thus far: let that grace have all the glory, *Phil.* ii. 13, which "works in us both to will and to do" whatever we will or do that is good, or serves any good purpose. What is from God will, I trust, be to him, will be graciously accepted by him, "according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not," and will be of some use to his church; and what is from myself (that is, all the defects and errors,) will, I trust, be favourably passed by and pardoned. That prayer of St. Austin is mine, *Domine Deus, quœcunque dixi in his libris de tuo, agnoscant et tui; et quæ de meo, et tu ignosce et tui,*—'Lord God, whatever I have maintained in these books correspondent with what is contained in thine, grant that thy people may approve as well as thyself; whatever is but the doctrine of my book forgive thou, and grant that thy people may forgive it also.' I must beg likewise to own, to the honour of our great Master, that I have found the work to be its own wages, and that the more we converse with the word of God the more it is to us as the honey and the honeycomb, *Ps.* xix. 10. In gathering some gleanings of this harvest for others we may feast ourselves; and, when we are enabled by the grace of God to do so, we are best qualified to feed others. I was much pleased with a passage I lately met with of Erasmus, that great scholar and celebrated wit, in an epistle dedicatory before his book *De Ratione Concionandi*, where, as one weary of the world and the hurry of it, he expresses an earnest desire to spend the rest of his days in secret communion with Jesus Christ, encouraged by his gracious invitation to those who "labour and are heavy laden to come unto him for rest," *Mat.* xi. 28; and this alone is that which he thinks will yield him true satisfaction. I think his words worth transcribing, and such as deserve to be inserted among the testimonies of great men to serious godliness. *Neque quisquam facile credat quam misere animus jamdudum affectet ab his laboribus in tranquillam otium secedere, quodque superest vitæ, (superest autem vix brevis palmus sive pugillus,) solum cum eo solo colloqui, qui clamavit olim, (nec hodie mutat vocem suam,) "Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, ego reficiam vos;" quandoquidem in tam turbulento, ne dicam furente, sœculo, in tot molestiis quas vel ipsa tempora publice invehunt, vel privatim adfert ætas ac valetudo, nihil reperio in quo mens mea libentius conquiescat quam in hoc arcano colloquio,*—'No one will easily believe how anxiously, for a long time past, I have wished to retire from these labours into a scene of tranquillity, and, during the remainder of life, (dwindled, it is true, to the shortest span,) to converse only with him who once cried, (nor does he now retract,) "Come unto me, all you that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you;" for in this turbulent, not to say furious, age, the many public sources of disquietude, connected with the infirmities of advancing age, leave no solace to my mind to be compared with this secret communion.' In the pleasing contemplation of the Divine beauty and benignity we hope to spend a blessed eternity, and therefore in this work it is good to spend as much as may be of our time.

One volume more, containing the prophetical books, will finish the Old Testament, if the Lord continue my life, and leisure, and ability of mind and body for this work. It is begun, and I find it will be larger than any of the other volumes, and longer in the doing; but, as God by his grace shall furnish me for it and assist me in it, (without which grace I am nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing,) it shall be carried on with all convenient speed; and *sat cito, si sat bene*,—'if with sufficient ability, it will be with sufficient speed.' I desire the prayers of my friends that God would "minister seed to the sower," and "bread to the eaters," *Isa.* lv. 10; that he would "multiply the seed sown," and "increase the fruits of our righteousness," 2 *Cor.* ix. 10; that so he who "sows and those who reap may rejoice together," *Jno.* iv. 36; and the great Lord of the harvest shall have the glory of all.

M. H.

Chester,
May 13, 1710.

THE OUADI MADIAN, OR GULF OF ÆLANA.

AN EXPOSITION

OF

THE BOOK OF JOB,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

This book of *Job* stands by itself, is not connected with any other, and is, therefore, to be considered alone. Many copies of the Hebrew Bible place it after the book of *Psalms*, and some after the *Proverbs*, which, perhaps, has given occasion to some learned men to imagine it to be written by Isaiah, or some of the later prophets; but, as the subject appears to have been much more ancient, so we have no reason to think but the composure of the book was, and that, therefore, it is most fitly placed first in this collection of Divine morals: also, being doctrinal, it is proper to precede and introduce the book of *Psalms*, which is devotional, and the book of *Proverbs*, which is practical; for how shall we worship or obey a God we know not? As to this book,

I. We are sure it is given by inspiration of God, though we are not certain who was the penman of it. The Jews, though no friends to Job, because he was a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, yet, as faithful conservators of the oracles of God committed to them, always retained this book in their sacred canon. The history is referred to by one apostle, *Jas.* v. 11, and one passage, *ch.* v. 13, quoted by another apostle, with the usual form of quoting Scripture, "It is written," 1 *Cor.* iii. 19. It is the opinion of many of the ancients that this history was written by Moses himself, in Midian, and delivered to his suffering brethren in Egypt, for their support and comfort under their burthens, and the encouragement of their hope that God would in due time deliver and enrich them, as he did this patient sufferer. Some conjecture that it was written originally in Arabic, and afterwards translated into Hebrew, for the use of the Jewish church, by Solomon, (saith M. Jurieu,) or some other inspired writer. It seems most probable to me that Elihu was the penman of it, at least of the discourses, because, *ch.* xxxii. 15, 16, he mingles the words of an historian with those of a disputant. But Moses perhaps wrote the first two chapters and the last, to give light to the discourses, for in them God is frequently called Jehovah, but not in all the discourses, except once, *ch.* xii. 9, and that name was but little known to the patriarchs before Moses, *Ex.* vi. 3. If Job wrote it himself, some of the Jewish writers themselves own him a prophet among the Gentiles; if Elihu, we find he had a spirit of prophecy, which filled him with matter, and constrained him, *ch.* xxxii. 18.

II. We are sure it is, for the substance of it, a true history, and not a romance, though the dialogues be poetical. No doubt there was such a man as Job; the prophet Ezekiel names him with Noah and Daniel, *Eze.* xiv. 14. The narrative we have here of his prosperity and piety, his strange afflictions and exemplary patience, the substance of his conferences with his friends, and God's discourse with him out of the whirlwind, with his return at length to a very prosperous condition, no doubt, is exactly true, though the inspired penman be allowed the usual liberty of putting the matter of which Job and his friends discoursed into his own words.

III. We are sure it is very ancient, though we cannot fix the precise time, either when Job lived or when the book was written. So many, so evident, are its hoary hairs, the marks of its antiquity, that we have reason to think it of equal date with the book of *Genesis* itself, and that holy Job was contemporary with Isaac and Jacob; though not co-heir with them of the promise of the earthly Canaan, yet a joint-expectant with them of the better country, that is, the heavenly. Probably he was of the posterity of Nahor, Abraham's brother, whose firstborn was Uz, *Gen.* xxii. 21, and in whose family religion was for some ages kept up, as appears *Gen.* xxxi. 53, where God is called, not only the God of Abraham, but the God of Nahor. He lived before the age of man was shortened to seventy or eighty, as it was in Moses' time; before sacrifices were confined to one altar; before the general apostacy of the nations from the knowledge and worship of the true God, and while yet there was no other idolatry known but only the worship of the sun and moon, and that punished by the judges, *ch.* xxxi. 26, 28. He lived while God was known by the name of God Almighty more than by the name of Jehovah, for he is called Shaddai, the Almighty, above thirty times in this book. He lived while Divine knowledge was conveyed, not by writing, but by tradition, for to that appeals are here made, *ch.* v. 1; viii. 8; xv. 18; xxi. 29; and we have, therefore, reason to think he lived before Moses, because here is no mention at all of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, or the giving of the law. There is indeed one passage which might be made to allude to the drowning of Pharaoh, *ch.* xxvi. 12, "He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through Rahab," which name Egypt is very frequently called by in Scripture, as *Ps.* lxxxvii. 4; lxxxix. 10; *Isa.* li. 9; but that may as well refer to the proud waves of the sea. We conclude, therefore, that we are here got back to the patriarchal age, and, besides its authority, we receive this book with veneration for its antiquity.

IV. We are sure it is of great use to the church, and to every good Christian, though there are many passages in it dark and hard to be understood. We cannot, perhaps, be confident of the true meaning of every Arabic word and phrase we meet with in it. It is a book that finds a great deal of work for the critics; but enough is plain to make the whole profitable, and it was all written for our learning. This noble poem presents to us, in very clear and lively characters, these five things among others: 1. A monument of primitive theology. The first and great principles of the light of nature, on which natural religion is founded, are here, in a warm, and long, and learned dispute, not only taken for granted on all sides, and not the least doubt made of them, but, by common consent, plainly laid down as eternal truths, illustrated and urged as affecting, commanding truths. Was ever the being of God, his glorious attributes and perfections, his unsearchable wisdom, his irresistible power, his inconceivable glory, his inflexible justice, and his incontestable sovereignty, discoursed of with more clearness, fulness, reverence, and Divine eloquence, than in this book? The creation of the world, and the government of it, are here admirably described, not as matters of nice speculation, but as laying most powerful obligations upon us to fear and serve, to submit to, and trust in, our Creator, Owner, Lord, and Ruler. Moral good and evil, virtue and vice, were never drawn more to the life,—the beauty of the one and the deformity of the other,—than in this book; nor the inviolable rule of God's judgment more plainly laid down, that happy are the righteous, it shall be well with them, and woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them. These are not questions of the schools to keep the learned world in action, nor engines of state to keep the unlearned world in awe; no, it appears by this book they are sacred truths of undoubted certainty, and which all the wise and sober part of mankind have in every age subscribed and submitted to. 2. It presents us with a specimen of Gentile piety. This great saint descended probably, not from Abraham, but Nahor; or if from Abraham, not from Isaac, but from one of the sons of the concubines, that were sent into the east country, *Gen.* xxv. 6; or, if from Isaac, yet not from Jacob, but Esau; so that he was out of the pale of the covenant of peculiarity,—no Israelite, no proselyte,—and yet none like him for religion, nor such a favourite of Heaven upon this earth. It was a truth, therefore, before St. Peter perceived it, that "in every nation, he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted of him," *Acts* x. 35. There were children of God scattered abroad, *Jno.* xi. 53, besides the incorporated children of the kingdom, *Mat.* viii. 11, 12. 3. It presents us with an exposition of the book of providence, and a clear and satisfactory solution of many of the difficult and obscure passages of it. The prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous, have always been reckoned two as hard chapters as any in that book; but they are here expounded, and reconciled with the Divine wisdom, purity, and goodness, by the end of these things. 4. It presents us with a great example of patience, and close adherence to God in the midst of the sorest calamities. Sir Richard Blackmore's most ingenious pen, in his excellent preface to his paraphrase on this book, makes Job a hero proper for an epic poem; for, saith he, 'he appears brave in distress and valiant in affliction, maintains his virtue, and, with that, his character, under the most exasperating provocations that the malice of hell could invent, and thereby gives a most noble example of passive fortitude, a character no way inferior to that of the active hero,' &c. 5. It presents us with an illustrious type of Christ, the particulars of which we shall endeavour to take notice of as we go along. In general, Job was a great sufferer, was emptied and humbled, but in order to his greater glory. So Christ abased himself that we might be exalted. The learned Bishop Patrick quotes St. Jerome more than once speaking of Job as a type of Christ, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, who was persecuted for a time by men and devils, and seemed forsaken of God too, but was raised up to be an intercessor even for his friends that had added affliction to his misery. When the apostle speaks of the patience of Job, he immediately takes notice of the end of the Lord, that is, of the Lord Jesus (as some understand it) typified by Job, *Jas.* v. 11.

In the book we have, I. The history of Job's sufferings, and his patience under them, *ch.* i., ii., not without a mixture of human frailty, *ch.* iii. II. A dispute between him and his friends upon them, in which, 1. The opponents were Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. 2. The respondent was Job. 3. The moderators were, 1st. Elihu, *ch.* xxxii.—xxxvii.; 2nd. God himself, *ch.* xxxviii.—xli. III. The issue of all in Job's honour and prosperity, *ch.* xlii. Upon the whole we learn, that many are the afflictions of the righteous, but when the Lord delivereth them out of all, the trial of their faith will be found to praise, and honour, and glory.

CHAPTER I.

The history of Job begins here with an account, I. Of his great piety in general, ver. 1; and in a particular instance, ver. 5. II. Of his great prosperity, ver. 2—4. III. Of the malice of Satan against him, and the permission he obtained to try his constancy, ver. 6—12. IV. Of the surprising troubles that befel him, the ruin of his estate, ver. 13—17; and the death of his children, ver. 18, 19. V. Of his exemplary patience and piety under these troubles, ver. 20—22. In all which he is set forth for an example of suffering affliction, from which no prosperity can secure us, but through which integrity and uprightness will preserve us.

THERE was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. 2 And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. 3 His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

Concerning Job we are here told,

First. That he was a man, therefore subject to like passions as we are; he was *Ish*, a worthy man, a man of note and eminency; a magistrate, a man in authority. The country he lived in was the land of Uz, in the eastern part of Arabia, which lay towards Chaldea, near Euphrates, probably not far from Ur of the Chaldees, whence Abram was called. When God called one good man out of that country, yet he left not himself without witness, but raised up another in it to be a preacher of righteousness. God has his remnant in all places, sealed ones out of every nation, as well as out of every tribe of Israel, *Rev.* vii. 9. It was the privilege of the land of Uz to have so good a man as Job in it; now it was Arabia the happy indeed; and it was the praise of Job that he was so eminently good in so bad a place. The worse others were round about him, the better he was. His name, Job, or Jjob, some say, signifies one hated, and counted as an enemy; others make it to signify one that grieves or groans. Thus the sorrow he carried in his name might be a check to his joy in his prosperity. Dr. Cave derives it from *jaab*, to love, or desire; intimating how welcome his birth was to his parents, and how much he was the desire of their eyes, and yet there was a time when he cursed the day of his birth. Who can tell what the day may prove which yet begins with a bright morning?

Secondly. That he was a very good man, eminently pious, and better than his neighbours. He "was perfect and upright." This is intended to shew us not only what reputation he had among men, that he was generally taken for an honest man, but what was really his character, for it is the judgment of God concerning him, and we are sure that is according to truth. 1. Job was a religious man, one that feared God; that is, worshipped him according to his will, and governed himself by the rules of the Divine law in every thing. 2. He was sincere in his religion. He was perfect, not sinless; he himself owns, *ch.* ix. 20, "If I say, I am perfect, I shall be proved perverse." But having a respect to all God's commandments, aiming at perfection, he was really as good as he seemed to be, and did not dissemble in his profession of piety; his heart was sound, and his eye single. Sincerity is gospel perfection; I know no religion without it. 3. He was upright in his dealings both with God and man; was faithful to his promises, steady in his counsels, true to every trust reposed in him, and made conscience of all he said and did: see *Isa.* xxxiii. 15. Though he was not of Israel, he was indeed an Israelite without guile. 4. The fear of God reigning in his heart was the principle that governed his whole conversation. That made him perfect and upright, inward and entire for God, universal and uniform in religion; that kept him close and constant to his duty. He feared God, had a reverence for his majesty, a regard to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. 5. He dreaded the thought of doing an ill thing. With the utmost abhorrence and detestation, and with a constant care and watchfulness, he eschewed evil, avoided all appearances of sin, and approaches to it, and this, "because of the fear of God," *Neh.* v. 15. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil," *Pr.* viii. 13; and then "by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil," *Pr.* xvi. 6.

Thirdly. That he was a man who prospered greatly in this world, and made a mighty figure in his country. He was prosperous and yet pious. Though it is hard and rare, it is not impossible, for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. With God even this is possible; and by his grace the temptations of worldly wealth are not insuperable. He was pious, and his piety was a friend to his prosperity; for godliness has the promise of the life that now is. He was prosperous, and his prosperity put a lustre upon his piety, and gave him that was so good so much greater opportunity of doing good. The acts of his piety were grateful returns to God for the instances of his prosperity; and in the abundance of the good things God gave him he served God the more cheerfully.

1. He had a numerous family. Eminent for religion, and yet not a hermit, not a recluse; but the father and master of a family. It is an instance of his prosperity, that his house was filled with children, which are a heritage of the Lord, and his reward, *Ps.* cxxvii. 3. He had seven sons and three daughters, ver. 2; some of each sex, and more of the more noble sex, in which the family is built up. Children must be looked upon as blessings, for so they are, especially to good people that will give them good instructions, and set them good examples, and put up good prayers for them. Job had many children, and yet he was neither oppressive nor uncharitable, but very liberal to the poor, *ch.* xxxi. 17, &c. Those that have great families to provide for ought to consider that which is prudently given in alms is set out to the best interest, and put into the best fund for their children's benefit.

2. He had a good estate for the support of his family. His substance was considerable, ver. 3. Riches are called substance, in conformity to the common form of speaking; otherwise, to the soul and another world, they are but shadows, things that are not, *Pr.* xxiii. 5. It is only in heavenly wisdom that we inherit substance, *Pr.* viii. 21. In those days, when the earth was not fully peopled, it was as now in some of the plantations, men might have land enough upon easy terms, if they had but wherewithal to stock it; and, therefore, Job's substance is described not by the acres of land he was lord of, but,

1st. By his cattle—sheep and camels, oxen and asses. The numbers of each are here set down, probably not the exact number, but thereabout, a very few under or over. The sheep are put first, because of most use in the family; as Solomon observes, *Pr.* xxvii. 23, 26, 27, lambs for thy clothing, and milk for the food of thy household. Job, it is likely, had silver and gold as well as Abraham, *Gen.* xiii. 2; but then men valued their own and their neighbours' estates by that which was for service and present use, more than by that which was for show and state, and fit only to be hoarded. As soon as God had made

man, and provided for his maintenance by the herbs and fruits, he made him rich and great, by giving him dominion over the creatures, *Gen.* i. 28; that, therefore, being still continued to man, notwithstanding his defection, *Gen.* ix. 2. is still to be reckoned one of the most considerable instances of men's wealth, honour, and power, *Ps.* viii. 6.

2nd. By his servants. He had a very great household, or husbandry; many that were employed for him, and maintained by him. And thus he both had honour and did good; yet thus he was involved in a great deal of care, and put to a great deal of charge. See the vanity of this world! "as goods are increased" they must be increased that tend them, and occupy them; and "they will be increased that eat them; and what good has the owner thereof save the beholding of them with his eyes?" *Eccl.* v. 11.

In a word, Job "was the greatest of all the men of the east," and they the richest in the world. Those were rich indeed who were replenished more than the east, *Isa.* ii. 6, margin. Job's wealth, with his wisdom, entitled him to that honour and power he had in his country, which he describes, *ch.* xxix., and made him sit chief. Job was upright and honest, and yet grew rich, nay, therefore grew rich; for honesty is the best policy, and piety and charity ordinarily the surest ways of thriving. He had a great household, and much business, and yet kept up the fear and worship of God, and he and his house served the Lord. The account of Job's piety and prosperity comes before the history of his great afflictions, to shew that neither will secure us from the common, no, nor from the uncommon, calamities of human life. Piety will not secure us, as Job's mistaken friends thought; for all things come alike to all. Prosperity will not, as a careless world thinks, *Isa.* xlvii. 8; "I sit as a queen, and therefore shall see no sorrow."

4 And his sons went and feasted *in their* houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them. 5 And it was so, when the days of *their* feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings *according* to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

We have here a farther account of Job's prosperity, and his piety.

First. His great comfort in his children is taken notice of as an instance of his prosperity; for our temporal comforts are borrowed, depend upon others, and are as those about us are. Job himself mentions it as one of the greatest joys of his prosperous estate, that his children were about him, *ch.* xxix. 5. And they kept a circular feast at some certain times, ver. 4; they "went and feasted in their houses." It was a comfort to this good man, 1. To see his children grown up and settled in the world; all his sons were in houses of their own, probably married; and to each of them he had given a competent portion to set up with. They that had been olive plants round his table were removed to tables of their own. 2. To see them thrive in their affairs, and able to feast one another, as well as to feed themselves. Good parents desire, promote, and rejoice in their children's wealth and prosperity as their own. 3. To see them in health, no sickness in their houses; for that would have spoiled their feasting, and turned it into mourning. 4. Especially to see them live in love and unity, and mutual good affection; no jars or quarrels among them, no strangeness, no shyness one of another, no strait-handedness; but, though every one knew his own, they lived with as much freedom as if they had had all in common. It is comfortable to the hearts of parents, and comely in the eyes of all, to see brethren thus knit together; "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is!" *Ps.* cxxxiii. 1. 5. It added to the comfort to see the brothers so kind to their sisters that they sent for them to feast with them; who were so modest that they would not have gone if they had not been sent for. Those brothers that slight their sisters, care not for their company, and have no concern for their comfort, are ill-bred and ill-natured, and very unlike Job's sons. It seems their feast was so sober and decent, that their sisters were good company for them at it. 6. They feasted in their own houses, not in public houses, where they would be more exposed to temptations, and which was not so creditable.

We do not find that Job himself feasted with them. Doubtless they invited him, and he would have been the most welcome guest at any of their tables; nor was it from any sourness or moroseness of temper, or for want of natural affection that he kept away, but he was old and dead to those things, like Barzillai, 2 *Sam.* xix. 35, and considered that the young people would be more free and pleasant if there were none but themselves. Yet he would not restrain his children from the diversion which he denied himself. Young people may be allowed a youthful liberty, provided they flee youthful lusts.

Secondly. His great care about his children is taken notice of, as an instance of his piety; for that we are really which we are relatively. Those that are good will be good to their children, and especially do what they can for the good of their souls. Observe, ver. 5, Job's pious concern for the spiritual welfare of his children.

1. He was jealous over them with a godly jealousy; and so we ought to be over ourselves, and those that are dearest to us, as far as is necessary to our care and endeavour for their good. Job had given his children good education; had comfort in them, and good hope concerning them, and yet he said, "It may be my sons have sinned" in the days of their feasting more than at other times, have been too merry, have taken too great a liberty in eating and drinking, "and have cursed God in their hearts;" that is, have entertained atheistical, profane thoughts in their minds, unworthy notions of God and his providence, and the exercises of religion. When they were full, they were ready to deny God, and to say, "Who is the Lord?" *Pr.* xxx. 9; to forget God, and to say, The power of our hand has gotten us this wealth, *Deu.* viii. 12, &c. Nothing alienates the mind more from God than the indulgence of the flesh.

2. As soon as the days of their feasting were over, he called them to the solemn exercises of religion; not while their feasting lasted,—let them take their time for that, there is a time for all things,—but when it was over, their good father minded them that they must know when to take up, and not think to fare sumptuously every day. Though they had their days of feasting the week round, they must not think to have them the year round; they had something else to do. Note, Those that are merry must find a time to be serious.

3. He sent to them to prepare for solemn ordinances,—sent and sanctified them; ordered them to examine their own consciences, and repent of what they had done amiss in their feasting; to lay aside their vanity, and compose themselves for religious exercises. Thus he kept his authority over them for their good, and they submitted to it, though they were got into houses of their own. Still he was the priest of the family; and at his altar they all attended, valuing their share in his prayers more than their share in his estate. Parents cannot give grace to their children, it is God that sanctifies; but they ought by seasonable admonitions and counsels to further their sanctification. In their baptism they were sanctified to God; let it be our desire and endeavour that they may be sanctified for him.

4. He offered sacrifice for them, both to atone for the sins he feared they had been guilty of in the days of their feasting, and to implore for them mercy to pardon, and grace to prevent the debauching of their minds, and corrupting of their manners by the liberty they had taken, and to preserve their piety and purity.

> For he with mournful eyes had often spied,
> Scatter'd on pleasure's smooth but treacherous tide,
> The spoils of virtue, overpower'd by sense,
> And floating wrecks of ruin'd innocence.—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

Job, like Abraham, had an altar for his family, on which, it is likely, he offered sacrifice daily; but on this extraordinary occasion he offered more sacrifices than usual, and with more solemnity, according to the number of them all,—one for each child. Parents should be particular in their addresses to God for the several branches of their family; "For this child I prayed," according to its particular temper, genius, and condition; to which the prayers, as well as the endeavours, must be accommodated.

When these sacrifices were to be offered, 1st. He rose early, as one in care that his children might not lie long under guilt, and as one whose heart was upon his work, and his desire toward it. 2nd. He required his children to attend the sacrifice, that they might join with him in the prayers he offered with the sacrifice; that the sight of the killing of the sacrifice might humble them much for their sins, for which they deserved to die, and the sight of the offering of it up might lead them to a Mediator. And this serious work would help to make them serious again after the days of their gaiety.

Lastly. This he did continually; not only whenever an occasion of this kind recurred,—for he that is washed needs to wash his feet, *Jno.* xiii. 10: the acts of repentance and faith must be often renewed, because we often repeat our transgressions,—but all days, every day, he offered up his sacrifices, was constant to his devotions, and did not omit them any day. The occasional exercises of religion will not excuse us from those that are stated. He that serves God uprightly will serve him continually.

6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. 7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? 10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. 12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath *is* in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Job was not only so rich and great, but withal so wise and good, and had such an interest both in heaven and earth, that one would think the mountain of his prosperity stood so strong that it could not be moved; but here we have a thick cloud gathering over his head, pregnant with a horrible tempest. We must never think ourselves secure from storms while we are in this lower region.

Before we are told how his troubles surprised and seized him here in this visible world, we are here told how they were concerted in the world of spirits. That the devil, having a great enmity to Job for his eminent piety, begged and obtained leave to torment him. It doth not at all derogate from the credibility of Job's story in general, to allow that this discourse between God and Satan in these verses is parabolical, like that of Micaiah, 1 *Kin.* xxii. 19, and an allegory designed to represent the malice of the devil against good men, and the Divine check and restraint that malice is under; only thus much farther is intimated, that the affairs of this earth are very much the subject of the counsels of the unseen world. That world is dark to us, but we lie very open to it. Now here we have,

First. Satan among the sons of God, ver. 6; an adversary, so Satan signifies, to God, to men, to all good. He thrust into an assembly of the sons of God that came to present themselves before the Lord. This means either, 1. A meeting of the saints on earth; professors of religion in the patriarchal age were called sons of God, *Gen.* vi. 2; they had then religious assemblies and stated times for them. The king came in to see his guests; the eye of God was on all present. But there was a serpent in Paradise, a Satan among the sons of God; when they come together, he is among them to distract and disturb them, stands at their right hand to resist them; "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan!" Or, 2. A meeting of the angels in heaven; they are the sons of God, *Job* xxxviii. 7. They came to give an account of their negociations on earth, and to receive new instructions. Satan was one of them originally, but "How

art thou fallen, O Lucifer!" He shall no more stand in that congregation, yet he is here represented as coming among them, either summoned to appear as a criminal, or connived at for the present, though an intruder.

Secondly. His examination, how he came thither; ver. 7, "The Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou?" He knew very well whence he came, and with what design he came thither, that, as the good angels came to do good, he came for a permission to do hurt; but he would, by calling him to an account, shew him that he was under check and control. "Whence comest thou?" He asks this, 1. As wondering what brought him thither. "Is Saul among the prophets!" Satan among the sons of God! Yes; for he transforms himself into an angel of light, 2 *Cor.* xi. 13, 14, and would seem one of them. Note, It is possible a man may be a child of the devil, and yet be found in the assemblies of the sons of God in this world; and there may pass undiscovered by men, and yet be challenged by the all-seeing God; "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" Or, 2. As inquiring what he had been doing before he came thither. The same question was perhaps put to the rest of them that presented themselves before the Lord, Whence came you? We are accountable to God for all our haunts, and all the ways we traverse.

Thirdly. The account he gives of himself, and the tour he had made. I come, saith he, "from going to and fro in the earth." 1. He could not pretend he had been doing any good, could give no such account of himself as the sons of God could that presented themselves before the Lord, who came from executing his orders, serving the interests of his kingdom, and ministering to the heirs of salvation. 2. He would not own he had been doing any hurt; that he had been drawing men from their allegiance to God, deceiving and destroying souls; no, "I have done no wickedness," *Pr.* xxx. 20; "Thy servant went no whither." In saying he had walked to and fro through the earth he intimates that he had kept himself within the bounds allotted him, and had not transgressed his tether; for the dragon is cast out into the earth, *Rev.* xii. 9, and not yet confined to his place of torment. While we are on this earth we are within his reach; and with so much subtilty, swiftness, and industry, doth he penetrate into all the corners of it, that we cannot be in any place secure from his temptations. 3. He yet seems to give some representation of his own character. 1st. Perhaps it is spoken proudly, and with an air of haughtiness, as if he were indeed the prince of this world, as if the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them were his, *Lu.* iv. 6, and he had now been walking in circuit through his own territories. 2nd. Perhaps it is spoken fretfully, and with discontent. He had been walking to and fro and could find no rest, but was as much a fugitive and a vagabond as Cain in the land of Nod. 3rd. Perhaps it is spoken carefully; I have been hard at work, going to and fro; or, as some read it, searching about in the earth; really in quest of an opportunity to do mischief. He walks about seeking whom he may devour. It concerns us therefore to be sober and vigilant.

Fourthly. The question God puts to him concerning Job; ver. 8, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" As when we meet with one that has been in a distant place, where we have a friend we dearly love, we are ready to ask, You have been in such a place, pray did you see my friend there? Observe,

1. How honourably God speaks of Job; He is my servant. Good men are God's servants; and he is pleased to reckon himself honoured in their services, and that they are to him for a name and a praise, *Jer.* xiii. 11; and a crown of glory, *Isa.* lxii. 3. Yonder is my servant Job, there is none like him, none I value like him of all the princes and potentates of the earth; one such saint as he is worth them all: none like him for uprightness and serious piety; many do well, but he excelleth them all; there is not to be found such great faith, no, not in Israel. Thus Christ long after boasted of the centurion, and the woman of Canaan, who were both of them, like Job, strangers to that commonwealth. The saints glory in God; Who is like thee among the gods? And he is pleased to glory in them; Who is like Israel among the people? So here, none like Job, none in earth, that state of imperfection. Those in heaven do indeed far outshine him; those who are least in that kingdom are greater than he. But on earth there is not his like; there is none like him in that land. So some good men are the glory of their country.

2. How closely he gives to Satan this good character of Job. "Hast thou set thy heart to my servant Job?" Designing hereby, 1st. To aggravate the apostacy and misery of that wicked spirit; How unlike him art thou? Note, The holiness and happiness of the saints is the shame and torment of the devil and the devil's children. 2nd. To answer the devil's seeming boasts of the interest he had in this earth; I have been walking to and fro in it, saith he, and it is all my own. All flesh have corrupted their way; they all sit still, and are at rest in their sins, *Zec.* i. 10, 11. Nay, hold, saith God; Job is my faithful servant. Satan may boast, but he shall not triumph. 3rd. To anticipate his accusations; as much as to say, Satan, I know thine errand, thou art come to inform against Job, but hast thou considered him? Doth not his unquestionable character give thee the lie? Note, God knows all the malice of the devil and his instruments against his servants; and we have an advocate ready to appear for us, even before we are accused.

Fifthly. The devil's base insinuation against Job, in answer to God's encomium of him. He cannot deny but that Job feared God, but suggests that he was mercenary in his religion, and therefore a hypocrite; ver. 9, "Doth Job fear God for nought?" Observe, 1. How impatient the devil was of hearing Job praised, though it was God himself that praised him. Those are like the devil who cannot endure any body should be praised but themselves, but grudge at the just share of reputation others have, as Saul, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 5, and the Pharisees, *Mat.* xxi. 5. 2. How far he was to seek for something to object against him; he could not accuse him of any thing that was ill, and therefore chargeth him with by-ends in doing good. Had the one half of that been true which his angry friends, in the heat of dispute, charged him with, *ch.* xv. 4; xxii. 5, Satan would no doubt have brought it against him now; but no such thing could be alleged, and therefore, 3. See how slily he censures him as a hypocrite, not asserting that he was so, but only asking, Is he not so? which is the common way of slanderers, to suggest that by way of query which yet they have no reason to think is true: whisperers, backbiters. Note, It is not strange if those that are approved and accepted of God be unjustly censured by the devil and his instruments; and if they are otherwise unexceptionable, it is easy to charge them with hypocrisy, as Satan charged Job, and they have no way to clear themselves, but patiently to wait for the judgment of God. As there is nothing we should dread more than being hypocrites, so there is nothing we need dread less than being called and counted so without cause. 4. How unjustly he accuseth him as mercenary, to prove him a hypocrite. It was a great truth that Job did not fear God for nought; he got well by it, for godliness is great gain: but it was a false lie that he would not have feared God if he had not got this by it, as the event proved. Job's friends charged him with hypocrisy because he was greatly afflicted; Satan, because he greatly prospered. It is no hard matter for those to calumniate that seek an occasion. It is not mercenary to look at the eternal recompence in our obedience; but to aim at temporal advantages in our religion, and to make it subservient to that, is spiritual idolatry, worshipping the creature more than the Creator, and is likely to end in a fatal apostacy. Men cannot long serve God and mammon.

Sixthly. The complaint Satan made of Job's prosperity, ver. 10. Observe,

1. What God had done for Job. He had protected him, made a hedge about him, for the defence of his person, his family, and all his possessions. Note, God's peculiar people are taken under his special protection, they, and all that belong to them; Divine grace makes a hedge about their spiritual life, and Divine providence about their natural life; so they are safe and easy. He had prospered him, not in idleness or injustice,—the devil could not accuse him of them; but in the way of honest diligence, "Thou hast blessed the work of his hands;" and without that blessing, be the hands never so strong, never so skilful, the work will not prosper; but with that his substance is wonderfully increased in the land. The blessing of the Lord makes rich; Satan himself owns it. 2. What notice the devil took of it, and how he improved it against him. The devil speaks of it with vexation; I see thou hast made a hedge about him, round about; as if he had walked it round, to see if he could spy ever a gap in it for him to enter in at, to do him a mischief; but he was disappointed, it was a complete hedge. The wicked one saw it and was grieved; and argued against Job that the only reason why he served God was because God prospered him. No thanks to him to be true to the government that prefers him, and to serve a master that pays him so well.

Seventhly. The proof Satan undertakes to give of the hypocrisy and mercenariness of Job's religion, if he might but have leave to strip him of his wealth. Let it be put to this issue, saith he, ver. 11, make him poor, frown upon him, turn thine hand against him, and then see where his religion will be; touch what he hath and it will appear what he is. If he curse thee not to thy face, let me never be believed, but posted for a liar and false accuser. Let me perish, or be damned, if he curse thee not. So some supply the imprecation, which the devil himself modestly concealed, but the profane swearers of our age impudently and daringly speak out. Observe, 1. How slightly he speaks of the affliction he desired that Job might be tried with. Do but touch all that he hath, do but begin with him, do but threaten to make him poor; a little cross will change his tune. 2. How spitefully he speaks of the impression it would make upon Job. He will not only let fall his devotion, but turn it into an open defiance; not only think hardly of thee, but even curse thee to thy face. The word translated curse is *barac*, the same that ordinarily and originally signifies to bless, but cursing God is so impious a thing that the holy language would not admit the name; but that, where the sense requires it, it must be so understood, is plain from 1 *Kin.* xxi. 10, 13, where the word is used concerning the crime charged on Naboth, that he did blaspheme God and the king.

Now, 1st. It is likely Satan did think that Job if impoverished would renounce his religion, and so disprove his profession, and if so, as a learned gentleman has observed in his *Mount of Spirits*, Satan had made out his own universal empire among the children of men. God declared Job the best man then living. Now, if Satan can prove him a hypocrite, it will follow that God had not one faithful servant among men, and that there was no such thing as true and sincere piety in the world; but religion was all a sham, and Satan was king *de facto* over all mankind. But it appeared that the Lord knows them that are his, and is not deceived in any. 2nd. However, if Job should retain his religion, Satan would have the satisfaction to see him sorely afflicted. He hates good men and delights in their griefs, as God has pleasure in their prosperity.

Eighthly. The permission God gave to Satan to afflict Job for the trial of his sincerity. Satan desired God to do it, "Put forth thy hand now;" God allowed him to do it, ver. 12, "All that he has is in thy hand," make the trial as sharp as thou canst; do thy worst at him. Now, 1. It is matter of wonder that God should give Satan such a permission as this, should deliver the soul of his turtle dove into the hand of the adversary, such a lamb to such a lion; but he did it for his own glory, the honour of Job, the explanation of providence, and the encouragement of his afflicted people in all ages; to make a case, which, being adjudged, might be a useful precedent. He suffered Job to be tried, as he suffered Peter to be sifted, but took care his faith should not fail, *Lu.* xxii. 32; and then the trial of it was found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 *Pet.* i. 7. But, 2. It is matter of comfort that God has the devil in a chain, a great chain, *Rev.* xx. 1. He could not afflict Job without leave from God first asked and obtained; and then no farther than he had leave: "only upon himself put not forth thine hand," meddle not with his body, but only with his estate. It is a limited power that the devil hath; he has no power to debauch men but what they give him themselves, nor power to afflict men but what is given him from above.

Lastly. Satan's departure from this meeting of the sons of God. Before they broke up Satan went forth (as Cain, *Gen.* iv. 16,) from the presence of the Lord; no longer detained before him (as Doeg was, 1 *Sam.* xxi. 7,) than until he had accomplished his malicious purpose. He went forth, 1. Glad that he had gained his point; proud of the permission he had to do mischief to a good man, and, 2. Resolved to lose no time, but speedily to put his project in execution. He went forth now, not to go to and fro, rambling through the earth, but with a direct course to fall upon poor Job, who is carefully going on in the way of his duty, and knows nothing of the matter. What passeth between good and bad spirits concerning us we are not aware.

13 And there was a day when his sons and his daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them: 15 And the Sabeans fell *upon them,* and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 16 While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 17 While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants

with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. 18 While he *was* yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters *were* eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: 19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

We have here a particular account of Job's troubles.

First. Satan brought them upon him on the very day that his children began their course of feasting at their eldest brother's house, ver. 13; where he having (we may suppose) the double portion, the entertainment was the most rich and plentiful. The whole family no doubt was in perfect repose, and all were easy, and under no apprehension of trouble, now when they revived this custom; and this time Satan chose, that the trouble coming now might be the more grievous; "The night of my pleasure has he turned into fear," *Isa.* xxi. 4.

Secondly. They all come upon him at once. While one messenger of evil tidings was speaking, another came; and before he had told his story, a third; and a fourth followed immediately. Thus Satan by the Divine permission ordered it, 1. That there might appear a more than ordinary displeasure of God against him in his troubles, and by that he might be exasperated against the Divine providence, as if it were resolved, right or wrong, to ruin him, and not give him time to speak for himself. 2. That he might not have leisure to consider and recollect himself, and reason himself into a gracious submission, but might be overwhelmed and overpowered by a complication of calamities. If he have not room to pause a little, he will be apt to speak in haste, and then, if ever, he will curse his God. Note, The children of God are often in heaviness, through manifold temptations: deep calls to deep, waves and billows, one upon the neck of another. Let one affliction therefore quicken and help us to prepare for another; for how deep soever we have drunk of the bitter cup, as long as we are in this world we cannot be sure that we have drunk our share, and that it will finally pass from us. 3. They took from him all that he had, and made a full end of his enjoyments. The detail of his losses answers to the foregoing inventory of his possessions.

1st. He had five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a competent number of servants to attend them, and all those he lost at once, ver. 14, 15. The account he has of this lets him know, *First.* That it was not through any carelessness of his servants, for then his resentment might have spent itself upon them. The oxen were ploughing, not playing; and the asses, not suffered to stray, and so taken up as waifs, but feeding beside them, under the servants' eye, each in their place; and they that passed by, we may suppose, blessed them, and said, God speed the plough. Note, All our prudence, care, and diligence cannot secure us from affliction, no, not from those afflictions which are commonly owing to imprudence and negligence. "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman," though never so wakeful, "wakes but in vain;" yet it is some comfort under a trouble if it found us in the way of our duty, and not in any by-path. *Secondly.* That it was through the wickedness of his neighbours the Sabeans, a sort of rapparees perhaps, that lived by spoil and plunder; they carried off the oxen and asses, and slew the servants that faithfully and bravely did their best to defend them; and one only escaped, not in kindness to him or his master, but that Job might have the certain intelligence of it by an eyewitness, before he heard it by a flying report, which would have brought it upon him gradually. We have no reason to suspect that either Job or his servants had given any provocation to these Sabeans to make this inroad; but Satan put it into their hearts to do it, to do it now, and so gained a double point, for he made both Job to suffer, and them to sin. Note, When Satan has God's permission to do mischief, he will not want mischievous men to be his instruments in doing it; for he is a spirit that works in the children of disobedience.

2nd. He had seven thousand sheep, and shepherds that kept them; and all those he lost at the same time by lightning, ver. 16. Job was perhaps in his own mind ready to reproach the Sabeans, and fly out against them for their injustice and cruelty, when the next news immediately directs him to look upward: "The fire of God is fallen from heaven." As thunder is his voice, so lightning is his fire. But this was such an extraordinary lightning, and levelled so directly against Job, that all his sheep and shepherds were not only killed, but consumed by it at once, and one shepherd only left alive to carry the news to poor Job. The devil, aiming to make him curse God and renounce his religion, managed this part of the trial very artfully, in order thereunto. *First.* His sheep, with which especially he used to honour God in sacrifice, were all taken from him, as if God were angry at his offerings, and would punish him in those very things which he had employed in his service. Having misrepresented Job to God as a false servant, in pursuance of his old design to set heaven and earth at variance, he here misrepresented God to Job as a hard master, who would not protect those flocks out of which he had had so many burnt offerings: this would tempt Job to say, It is vain to serve God. *Secondly.* The messenger called the lightning the fire of God, and innocently enough; but perhaps Satan thereby designed to strike into his mind this thought, that God was turned to be his enemy, and fought against him, which was much more grievous to him than all the insults of the Sabeans. He owns, *ch.* xxxi. 23, that destruction from God was a terror to him. How terrible then were the tidings of this destruction, which came immediately from the hand of God! Had the fire from heaven consumed the sheep upon the altar, he might have construed it a token of God's favour; but, consuming them in the pasture, he could not but look upon it as a token of God's displeasure. There had not been the like since Sodom was burned.

3rd. He had three thousand camels, and servants tending them; and he lost them all at the same time by the Chaldeans, who came in three bands, and drove them away, and slew the servants, ver. 17. If the fire of God which fell upon Job's honest servants, that were in the way of their duty, had fallen upon the Sabean and Chaldean robbers that were doing mischief, God's judgments therein would have been, like the great mountains, evident and conspicuous; but, when the way of the wicked prospers, and they carry off their booty, while just and good men are suddenly cut off, God's righteousness is like the great deeps, the bottom of which we cannot find, *Ps.* xxxvi. 6.

4th. His dearest and most valuable possessions were his ten children; and, to conclude the tragedy, news is brought him at the same time that they were killed, and buried in the ruins of the house in which they were feasting; and all the servants that waited on them, except one that came express with the tidings of it, ver. 18, 19. This was the greatest of all Job's losses, and which could not but go nearest him; and, therefore, the devil reserved it for the last, that, if the other provocations failed, this might make him curse God. Our children are pieces of ourselves; it is very hard to part with them, and touches a good man in as tender a part as any other. But to part with them all at once, and for them to be all cut off in a moment, who had been so many years his cares and hopes, went to the quick indeed. *First.* They all died together, and not one of them was left alive. David, though a wise and good man, was put very much off the hinges by the death of one son; how hard then did it bear upon poor Job, who lost them all, and in one moment was written childless? *Secondly.* They died suddenly. Had they been taken away by some lingering disease, he had had notice to expect their death, and prepare for the breach; but this came upon him without giving him any warning. *Thirdly.* They died when they were feasting and making merry. Had they died suddenly when they were praying, he might the better have borne it; he would have hoped that death had found them in a good frame, if their blood had been mingled with their sacrifices; but to have it mingled with their feast, where he himself used to be jealous of them that they had sinned, and cursed God in their hearts; to have that day come upon them at unawares, like a thief in the night, when perhaps their hearts were overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness; this could not but add much to his grief, considering what a tender concern he always had for his children's souls, and that they were now out of the reach of the sacrifices he used to offer, according to the number of them all. See how all things come alike to all. Job's children were constantly prayed for by their father; and lived in love one with another, and yet came to this untimely end. *Fourthly.* They died by a wind of the devil's raising, who is the prince of the power of the air, *Eph.* ii. 2; but which was looked upon to be an immediate hand of God, and a token of his wrath, so Bildad construed it; *ch.* viii. 4, "Thy children have sinned against him, and he has cast them away in their transgression." *Fifthly.* They were taken away when he had most need of them to comfort him under all his other losses. Such miserable comforters are all creatures; in God only we have a present help at all times.

20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, 21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. 22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

The devil had done all he desired leave to do against Job, to provoke him to curse God; had touched all he had, touched it with a witness; he whom the rising sun saw the richest of all the men in the East, before night was poor to a proverb. If his riches had been, as Satan insinuated, the only principle of his religion, now he had lost his riches he had certainly lost his religion; but the account we have in these verses of his pious deportment under his affliction sufficiently proved the devil a liar and Job an honest man.

First. He carried himself like a man under his afflictions; not stupid and senseless, like a stock or stone, not unnatural and unaffected at the death of his children and servants; no, ver. 20, he "arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head;" which were the usual expressions of great sorrow, to shew that he was sensible of the hand of the Lord that was gone out against him; yet he did not break out into any indecencies, nor discover an extravagant passion: he did not faint away, but arose as a champion to the combat; did not in a heat throw off his clothes, but, very gravely, in conformity to the custom of the country, rent his mantle, his cloak, or outer garment; did not passionately tear his hair, but deliberately shaved his head. By all which it appeared that he kept his temper, and bravely maintained the possession and repose of his own soul in the midst of all these provocations. It is observable when he began to shew his resentment; not till he heard of the death of his children, and then he arose, then he rent his mantle. A worldly unbelieving heart would have said, Now the meat is gone, it is well the mouths are gone too; now there is no portion, it is well there are no children. But Job knew better things, and would have been thankful if Providence had spared his children, though he had had little or nothing for them; for "Jehovah-jireh, the Lord will provide." Some expositors, remembering that it was usual with the Jews to rend their clothes when they heard blasphemy, conjecture that Job rent his clothes in a holy indignation at the blasphemous thoughts which Satan now cast into his mind, tempting him to curse God.

Secondly. He carried himself like a wise and good man under his afflictions; like a perfect and upright man, and one that feared God, and eschewed the evil of sin more than that of outward trouble.

1. He humbled himself under the hand of God, and accommodated himself to the providences he was under; as one that knew how to want, as well as how to abound. When God called to weeping and mourning, he wept and mourned, rent his mantle, and shaved his head; and, as one that abased himself even to the dust before God, he fell down upon the ground, in a penitent sense of sin, and a patient submission to the will of God, accepting the punishment of his iniquity. Hereby he shewed his sincerity, for hypocrites cry not when God binds them, *ch.* xxxvi. 13. Hereby he disposed himself to get good by the affliction, for how can we improve the grief we will not feel?

2. He composed himself with quieting considerations, that he might not be disturbed and put out of the possession of his own soul by these events. He reasons from the common state of human life, which he describes with application to himself; "Naked came I," as others do, "out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither," into the lap of our common mother, the earth; as the child when it is sick or weary lays its head in its mother's bosom. Dust we were in our original, and to dust we return in our exit, *Gen.* iii. 19; to the earth as we were, *Eccl.* xii. 7; naked shall we return thither, whence we were taken, namely, to the clay, *ch.* xxxiii. 6. St. Paul refers to this of Job, 1 *Tim.* vi. 7, "We brought nothing" of this world's goods "into the world," but have them from others; "and it is certain we can carry nothing out," but must leave them to others. We come into the world naked, not only unarmed, but unclothed; helpless, shiftless, not so well covered and fenced as other creatures. The sin we are born in makes us naked to our shame in the eyes of the holy God. We go out of the world naked; the body doth, though the sanctified soul goes clothed, 2 *Cor.* v. 3. Death strips us of all our enjoyments; clothing can neither warm nor adorn a dead body. This consideration silenced Job under all his losses. 1st. He is but where he was at first; he looks upon himself but as naked, not maimed, not wounded, he was himself still, his own man, when nothing else was his own; and, therefore, but reduced to his first condition. *Nemo tam pauper potest esse quam natus est,*—'No one can be so poor as he was when born.'—*Min. Felix.* If we are impoverished we are not

wronged, nor much hurt, for we are but as we were born. 2nd. He is but where he must have been at last, and is only unclothed, or unloaded rather, a little sooner than he expected. If we put off our clothes before we go to bed it is some inconvenience, but it may be the better borne when it is near bedtime.

3. He gave glory to God, and expressed himself upon this occasion with a great veneration for the Divine providence, and an awful submission to the disposals of it; and we may well rejoice to find Job in this good frame, because this was the very thing upon which the trial of his integrity was put, though he did not know it. The devil said he would under his affliction curse God, but he blessed him, and so proved himself an honest man.

1st. He acknowledgeth the hand of God, both in the mercies he had formerly enjoyed, and in the afflictions he was now exercised with; "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away." We must own the Divine providence, *First*. In all our comforts. God gave us our being, made us, and not we ourselves; gave us our wealth, it was not our own ingenuity or industry that enriched us, but God's blessing on our cares and endeavours; he gave us power to get wealth; not only made the creatures for us, but bestowed upon us our share. *Secondly*. In all our crosses. The same that gave hath taken away; and may he not do what he will with his own? See how he looks above instruments, and keeps his eye upon the first cause. He doth not say, The Lord gave, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans have taken away; God made me rich, and the devil has made me poor; but, He that gave has taken; and for that reason he is dumb and has nothing to say, because God did it; he that gave all may take which, and when, and how much he pleaseth. Seneca could argue thus, *Abstulit, sed et dedit*,—'he took away, but he also gave;' and Epictetus excellently, cap. xv.: When thou art deprived of any comfort, suppose a child taken away by death, or a part of thy estate lost, say not ἀπώλεσα αὐτό, but ἀπέδωκα; not 'I have lost it,' but 'I have restored it, and returned it to the right owner;' but thou wilt object, saith he, 'He is an ill man that has robbed me;' κακὸς ὁ ἀφελόμενος, to which he answers, 'What is it to thee (τί δέ σοι μέλει) by what hand he that gives remands what he gave?'

2nd. He adores God in both; when all was gone, he fell down and worshipped. Note, Afflictions must not divert us from, but quicken us to, the exercises of religion. Weeping must not hinder sowing, not hinder worshipping. He eyed not only the hand of God, but the name of God in his afflictions, and gave glory to that: "Blessed be the name of the Lord." He hath still the same great and good thoughts of God that ever he had, and is as forward as ever to speak them forth to his praise, and can find in his heart to bless God even when he takes away as well as when he gives. Thus must we sing both of mercy and judgment, *Ps.* ci. 1. *First*. He blesseth God for what was given, though now it was taken away. When our comforts are removed from us, we must thank God that ever we had them, and had them so much longer than we deserved. Nay, *Secondly*. He adores God, even in taking away, and gives him honour by a willing submission; nay, he gives him thanks for good designed him by his afflictions, and gracious supports under his afflictions, and the believing hopes he had of a happy issue at last.

Lastly. Here is the honourable testimony which the Holy Ghost gives to Job's constancy, and good carriage under his afflictions. He passed his trials with applause, ver. 22; in all this Job did not miss it, for he did not attribute folly to God; nor in the least reflect upon his wisdom in what he had done. Discontent and impatience do in effect charge God with folly. Against the workings of these, therefore, Job carefully watched; and so must we, acknowledging that, as God has done right but we have done wickedly, so God has done wisely but we have done foolishly, very foolishly. They who not only keep their temper under crosses and provocations, but keep up good thoughts of God, and sweet communion with him, whether their praise be of men or no, it will be of God, as Job's here was.

CHAPTER II.

We left Job honourably acquitted upon a fair trial between God and Satan concerning him. Satan had leave to touch, to touch and take all he had, and was confident he would then curse God to his face; but, on the contrary, he blessed him, and so he was proved an honest man, and Satan a false accuser. Now one would have thought this had been conclusive, and that Job should never have had his reputation called in question again; but Job is known to be armour of proof, and therefore is here set up for a mark, and brought upon his trial a second time. I. Satan moved for another trial, which should touch his bone and his flesh, ver. 1—5. II. God for holy ends permits it, ver. 6. III. Satan smites him with a very painful and loathsome disease, ver. 7, 8. IV. His wife tempts him to curse God, but he resists the temptation, ver. 9, 10. V. His friends come to condole with him, and to comfort him, ver. 11—13. And in this that good man is set forth for an example of suffering affliction and of patience.

AGAIN there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. 2 And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. 3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. 4 And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. 5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. 6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he *is* in thine hand; but save his life.

Satan, that sworn enemy to God and all good men, is here pushing forward his malicious prosecution of Job, whom he hated because God loved him; and did all he could to separate between him and his God, to sow discord and make mischief between them; urging God to afflict him, and then urging him to blaspheme God. One would have thought he had had enough of his former attempt upon Job, in which he was so shamefully baffled and disappointed; but malice is restless, the devil and his instruments are so. They that calumniate good people, and accuse them falsely, will have their saying, though the evidence to the contrary be never so plain and full; and they have been cast in the issue which they themselves have put it upon. Satan will have Job's cause called over again. The malicious, unreasonable importunity of that great persecutor of the saints is represented, *Rev.* xii. 10, by his accusing them before our God day and night, still repeating and urging that against them which has been many a time answered. So did Satan here accuse Job day after day. Here is,

First. The court set, and the prosecutor or accuser making his appearance, ver. 1, 2, as before, *ch.* i. 6, 7. The angels attended God's throne, and Satan among them. One would have expected him to come and confess his malice against Job; and his mistake concerning him, to cry *Peccavi*, for belying one whom God spoke well of, and to beg pardon; but, instead of that, he comes with a farther design against Job. He is asked the same question as before, "Whence comest thou?" and answers as before, "From going to and fro in the earth;" as if he had been doing no harm, though he had been abusing that good man.

Secondly. The judge himself of counsel for the accused, and pleading for him; ver. 3, "Hast thou considered my servant Job" better than thou didst; and art thou now at length convinced that he is a faithful servant of mine, a perfect and an upright man, for thou seest he still holds fast his integrity? This is now added to his character, as a farther achievement; instead of letting go his religion, and cursing God, he holds it faster than ever, as that which he has now more than ordinary occasion for; he is the same in adversity that he was in prosperity, and rather better, and more hearty and lively in blessing God than ever he was, and takes root the faster for being thus shaken. See 1. How Satan is condemned for his allegations against Job; "Thou movedst me against him," as an accuser, "to destroy him without cause." Or, Thou in vain movedst me to destroy him, but I will never do that. Good men when they are cast down are not destroyed, 2 *Cor.* iv. 9. How well is it for us, that neither men nor devils are to be our judges; for perhaps they would destroy us right or wrong; but our judgment proceedeth from the Lord, whose judgment never errs, or is biassed. 2. How Job is commended for his constancy, notwithstanding the attacks made upon him; "Still he holds fast his integrity," as his weapon, and thou canst not disarm him; as his treasure, and thou canst not rob him of that; nay, thine endeavours to do it make him hold it the faster. Instead of losing ground by the temptation, he gets ground. God speaks of it with wonder and pleasure, and something of triumph in the power of his own grace; "still he holds fast his integrity." Thus the trial of Job's faith was found to his praise and honour, 1 *Pet.* i. 7. Constancy crowns integrity.

Thirdly. The accusation farther prosecuted, ver. 4. What excuse can Satan make for the successlessness of his former attempt? What can he say to palliate it, when he had been so very confident he should gain his point? Why truly he has this to say, "Skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life." Something of truth there is in this, that self-love and self-preservation are very powerful commanding principles in the hearts of men. Men love themselves better than their nearest relations, even their children, that are pieces of themselves; will not only venture, but give their estates to save their lives. All account life sweet and precious; and, while they are themselves in health and at ease, they can keep trouble from their hearts, whatever they lose. And we ought to make a good use of this consideration, and while God continues to us our life and health, and the use of our limbs and senses, we should the more patiently bear the loss of other comforts: see *Mat.* vi. 25. But Satan grounds upon this an accusation of Job, slily representing him, 1. As unnatural to those about him, and one that laid not to heart the death of his children and servants, nor cared how many of them had their skins, as I may say, stripped over their ears, so long as he slept in a whole skin himself. As if he that was so tender of his children's souls could be careless of their bodies, and, like the ostrich, hardened against his young ones as though they were not his. 2. As wholly selfish, and minding nothing but his own ease and safety, as if his religion made him sour, and morose, and ill-natured. Thus are the ways and people of God often misrepresented by the devil and his agents.

Fourthly. A challenge given to make a farther trial of Job's integrity; ver. 5, "Put forth thine hand now," for I find my hand too short to reach him, and too weak to hurt him, "and touch his bone and his flesh," that is with him the only tender part; make him sick with smiting him, *Mic.* vi. 13; and then I dare say, "he will curse thee to thy face," and let go his integrity. Satan knew it, and we find it by experience, that nothing is more likely to ruffle the thoughts and put the mind into disorder than acute pain and distemper of body. There is no disputing against sense. St. Paul himself had much ado to bear a thorn in the flesh, nor could he have borne it without special grace from Christ, 2 *Cor.* xii. 7, 9.

Fifthly. A permission granted to Satan to make this trial, ver. 6. Satan would have God put forth his hand and do it; but he afflicts not willingly, nor takes any pleasure in grieving the children of men, much less his own children, *Lam.* iii. 33. And therefore, if it must be done, let Satan do it, who delights in such work, "He is in thine hand," do thy worst at him; but with a proviso and limitation, only save his life, or his soul; afflict him, but not to death. Satan hunted for the precious life, would have taken that, if he might, in hopes that dying agonies would have forced Job to curse his God; but God had mercy in store for Job after this trial, and therefore he must survive it, and however he is afflicted, must have his life given him for a prey. If God did not chain up the roaring lion, how soon would he devour us! As far as he permits the wrath of Satan and wicked men to proceed against his people, he will make it turn to his praise and theirs, and the remainder thereof he will restrain, *Ps.* lxxvi. 10. Save his soul, that is, his reason, so some; preserve to him the use of that, for otherwise it will be no fair trial. If, in his delirium, he should curse God, that will be no disproof of his integrity. It would not be the language of his heart, but of his distemper. Job, in being thus maligned by Satan was a type of Christ, the first prophecy of whom was, that Satan should bruise his heel, *Gen.* iii. 15; and so he was foiled, as in Job's case. Satan tempted him to let go his integrity, his adoption, *Mat.* iv. 4, "If thou be the Son of God." He entered into the heart of Judas that betrayed Christ, and, some think, with his terrors put Christ into his agony in the garden. He had permission to touch his bone and his flesh, without exception of his life, because by dying he was to do that which Job could not do, "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

7 So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. 8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal, and he sat down among the ashes. 9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. 10 But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

The devil, having got leave to tear and worry poor Job, presently fell to work with him, as a tormenter first, and then a tempter. His own children he tempts first, and draws them to sin, and afterwards torments, when thereby he has brought them to ruin; but this child of God he tormented with affliction, and then tempted to make an ill use of his affliction. That which he aimed at was to make Job curse God. Now here we are told what course he took, both to move him to it, and to move it to him; both to give him the provocation, else it would be to no purpose to urge him to it, and to give him the information, else he would not have thought of it. Thus artfully is the temptation managed with all the subtilty of the old serpent, who is here playing the same game against Job that he played against our first parents, *Gen.* iii., aiming to seduce him from his allegiance to his God, and to rob him of his integrity.

First. He provokes him to curse God, by smiting him with sore boils, and so making him a burthen to himself, ver. 7, 8. The former attack was extremely violent, but Job kept his ground, bravely made good the pass, and carried the day. Yet he is still but girding on the harness, there is worse behind; the clouds return after the rain. Satan, by the Divine permission, follows his blow, and now deep calls unto deep.

1. The disease was very grievous with which Job was seized. Satan smote him with boils, sore boils, all over him, from head to foot; with an evil inflammation, so some render it; an erysipelas, perhaps, in a high degree. One boil, when it is gathering, is torment enough, and gives a man abundance of pain and uneasiness. What a condition was Job then in, that had boils all over him, and no part free, and those of as raging a heat as the devil could make them, and as it were set on fire of hell. The small-pox is a very grievous and painful disease, and would be much more terrible than it is, but that we know the extremity of it ordinarily lasts but a few days. How grievous then was Job's disease, who was smitten all over him, not with pocks, or pouks, as we call them, but with sore boils, or grievous ulcers, which made him sick at heart, put him to exquisite torture, and being overspread with them he could lay himself no way for any ease. If at any time we be exercised with sore and grievous distempers, let us not think ourselves dealt with any otherwise than as God has sometimes dealt with the best of his saints and servants. We know not how much Satan may have a hand, by Divine permission, in the diseases with which the children of men, and especially the children of God, are afflicted; what infections that prince of the air may spread; what inflammations may come from that fiery serpent. We read of one whom Satan had bound many years, *Lu.* xiii. 16. Should God suffer that roaring lion to have his will against any of us, how miserable would he soon make us!

2. His management of himself in this distemper was very strange, ver. 8. 1st. Instead of healing salves "he took a potsherd," a piece of a broken pitcher, "to scrape himself withal." A very sad pass this poor man was come to. When a man is sick and sore, he may bear it the better if he be well tended and carefully looked after. Many rich people have, with a soft and tender hand, charitably ministered to the poor in such a condition as this; even Lazarus had some ease from the tongues of the dogs that came and licked his sores; but poor Job has no help afforded him. *First.* Nothing is done at his sores but what he doth himself, with his own hands. His children and servants are all dead, his wife unkind, *ch.* xix. 17. He has not wherewithal to fee a physician or a surgeon, and, which is most sad of all, none of those he had formerly been kind to had so much sense of honour and gratitude as to minister to him in his distress, and lend him a hand to dress or wipe his running sores, either because the disease was loathsome and noisome, or because they apprehended it infectious. Thus it was in the former days, as it will be in the last days: men were lovers of their own selves, unthankful, and without natural affection. *Secondly.* Nothing is done at his sores but only to scrape them; they are not bound up with soft rags, nor mollified with ointment, not washed or kept clean, no healing plaisters laid on them, no opiates, no anodynes ministered to the poor patient, to alleviate the pain, and compose him to rest, nor any cordials to support his spirits; all the operation is the scraping of his ulcers, which, when they were come to a head and began to die, made his body all over like a scurf, as is usual in the end of the small-pox. It would have been an endless thing to dress his boils one by one, he therefore resolves thus to do it by wholesale; a remedy which one would think as bad as the disease. *Thirdly.* He has nothing to do this with but a potsherd, no surgeon's instrument proper for the purpose, but that which would rather rake into his wounds, and add to his pain, than give him any ease. People that are sick and sore have need to be under the discipline and direction of others, for many times they are but ill managers of themselves. 2nd. Instead of reposing himself in a soft and warm bed, "he sat down among the ashes." Probably he had a bed left him, for, though his fields were stripped, we do not find that his house was burnt or plundered; but he chose to sit in the ashes, either because he was weary of his bed, or because he would put himself into the place and posture of a penitent, who, in token of his self-abhorrence, lay in dust and ashes, *ch.* xlii. 6; *Isa.* lviii. 5; *Jonah* iii. 6. Thus did he humble himself under the mighty hand of God, and bring his mind to the meanness and poverty of his condition. He complains, *ch.* vii. 5, that his flesh was clothed with worms and clods of dust, and therefore, Dust to dust, ashes to ashes. If God lay him among the ashes, there he will contentedly sit down. A low spirit becomes low circumstances, and will help to reconcile us to them. The Septuagint reads it, 'He sat down upon a dunghill without the city,' which is commonly said in mentioning this story; but the original saith no more but that he sat in the midst of the ashes, which he might do in his own house.

Secondly. He puts him in the head to curse God, by the persuasions of his own wife, ver. 9. The Jews, who covet much to be wise above what is written, say that Job's wife was Dinah, Jacob's daughter; so the Chaldee paraphrase. It is not likely she was; but, whoever it was, she was to him like Michal to David, a scoffer at his piety. She was spared to him, when the rest of his comforts were taken away, for this purpose, to be a troubler and tempter to him. If Satan leaves any thing that he has permission to take away, it is with a design of mischief. It is his policy to send his temptations by the hand of those that are dear to us, as he tempted Adam by Eve, and Christ by Peter. We must, therefore, carefully watch, that we be not drawn to say or do an ill thing by the influence, interest, or entreaty of any, no, not those for whose opinion and favour we have never so great a value. Observe how strong this temptation was.

1. She banters Job for his constancy in his religion: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity?" Art thou so very obstinate in thy religion that nothing will cure thee of it? So tame and sheepish as thus to truckle to a God that is so far from rewarding thy services with marks of his favour, that he seems to take a pleasure in making thee miserable, strips thee and whips thee without any provocation given? Is this a God to be still loved, and blessed, and served?

> 'Dost thou not see that thy devotion's vain?
> What have thy prayers procured but woe and pain?
> Hast thou not yet thine interest understood?
> Perversely righteous, and absurdly good?
> Those painful sores, and all thy losses shew
> How Heaven regards the foolish saint below:
> Incorrigibly pious! can't thy God
> Reform thy stupid virtue with his rod?'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

Thus Satan still endeavours to draw men from God, as he did our first parents, by suggesting hard thoughts of him, as one that envies the happiness, and delights in the misery of his creatures, than which nothing is more false. Another artifice he useth is, to drive men from their religion by loading them with scoffs and reproaches for their adherence to it. We have reason to expect it, but we are fools if we heed it; our Master himself has undergone it. We shall be abundantly recompensed for it, and with much more reason may we retort it upon the scoffers, Are ye such fools as still to retain your impiety, when you might bless God and live?

2. She urgeth him to renounce his religion, to blaspheme God, set him at defiance, and dare him to do his worst: "Curse God, and die;" live no longer in dependence upon God, wait not for relief from him, but be thine own deliverer by being thine own executioner; end thy troubles by ending thy life; better die once than be always dying thus; thou mayest now despair of having any help from thy God, even curse him and hang thyself. These are two of the blackest and most horrid of all Satan's temptations, and yet such as good men have sometimes been violently assaulted with. Nothing more contrary to natural conscience than blaspheming God, nor to natural sense than self-murder; therefore the suggestion of either of these may well be suspected to come immediately from Satan. Lord, lead us not into temptation, not into such, not into any temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Thirdly. He bravely resists and overcomes the temptation, ver. 10. He soon gave her an answer,—for Satan spared him the use of his tongue, in hopes he would curse God with it,—which shewed his constant resolution to cleave to God, to keep his good thoughts of him, and not to let go his integrity. See,

1. How he resented the temptation. He took it very heinously to have such a thing mentioned to him. What! curse God? I abhor the thought of it; "Get thee behind me, Satan." In other cases, Job reasoned with his wife with a great deal of mildness, even when she was unkind to him, *ch.* xix. 17, "I entreated her for the children's sake of my own body." But, when she persuaded him to curse God, he was much displeased; "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh." He doth not call her a fool, and an atheist, nor break out into any indecent expressions of his displeasure, as those who are sick and sore are apt to do, and think they may be excused; but he shews her the evil of what she said, that she spoke the language of the infidels and idolaters, who when they are "hardly beset, fret themselves and curse their king, and their God," *Isa.* viii. 21. We have reason to suppose, in such a pious household as Job had, his wife was one that had been well affected to religion; yet now, when all their estate and comforts were gone, she could not bear the loss with that temper of mind that Job had; but that she should go about to infect his mind with the distemper of hers was a great provocation to him, and he could not forbear thus shewing his resentment. Note, 1st. Those are angry and sin not that are angry only at sin, and take a temptation as the greatest affront; who cannot bear them that are evil, *Rev.* ii. 2. When Peter was a Satan to Christ, he told him plainly, "Thou art an offence to me." 2nd. If those that we think wise and good at any time speak that which is foolish and bad, we ought to reprove them faithfully for it, and shew them the evil of what they say, that we suffer not sin upon them. 3rd. Temptations to curse God ought to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence, and not so much as to be parleyed with. Whoever persuades us to that must be looked upon as our enemy, to whom, if we yield, it is at our peril. Job did not curse God, and then think to come off with Adam's excuse, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she persuaded me to do it," *Gen.* iii. 12, which had in it a tacit reflection on God, his ordinance and providence; no, if thou scornest, if thou cursest, thou alone shalt bear it.

2. How he reasoned against the temptation: "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?" Those whom we reprove we must endeavour to convince; and it is no hard matter to give a reason why we should still hold fast our integrity, even when we are stripped of every thing else. He considers that, though good and evil are contraries, yet they do not come from contrary causes, but both from the hand of God, *Isa.* xlv. 7; *Lam.* iii. 37, and therefore in both we must have our eye up unto him, with thankfulness for the good he sends, and without fretfulness at the evil. Observe the force of his argument.

1st. What he argues for; not only the bearing, but the receiving of evil. "Shall we not receive evil?" that is, *First.* Shall we not expect to receive it? If God give us so many good things, shall we be surprised, or think it strange, if he sometimes afflict us, when he has told us that prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other? 1 *Pet.* iv. 12. *Secondly.* Shall we not address ourselves to receive it aright? The word signifies to receive as a gift, and notes a pious affection and disposition of soul under our afflictions, neither despising them nor fainting under them, accounting them gifts, *Phil.* i. 29; accepting them as punishments of our iniquity, *Lev.* xxvi. 41; acquiescing in the will of God in them, Let him do with me as seemeth him good, and accommodating ourselves to them, as those that know how to want as well as how to abound, *Phil.* iv. 12. When the heart is humbled and weaned by humbling, weaning providences, then we receive correction, *Zep.* iii. 2, and take up our cross.

2nd. What he argues from. Shall we receive so much good as has come to us from the hand of God, during all those years of peace and prosperity that we have lived, and shall we not now receive evil, when God thinks fit to lay it on us? Note, The consideration of the mercies we receive from God, both past and present, should make us receive our afflictions with a suitable disposition of spirit. If we receive our share of the common good in the seven years of plenty, shall we not receive our share of the common evil in the years of famine? *Qui sentit commodum sentire debet et onus,*—'He who feels the privilege should prepare for the privation.' If we have so much that pleaseth

us, why should we not be content with that which pleaseth God? If we receive so many comforts, shall we not receive some afflictions, which will serve as foils to our comforts, to make them the more valuable?—we are taught the worth of mercies by being made to want them sometimes; and as allays to our comforts, to make them the less dangerous, to keep the balance even, and to prevent our being lifted up above measure, 2 *Cor.* xii. 7. If we receive so much good for the body, shall we not receive some good for the soul? that is, some affliction, by which we partake of God's holiness, *Heb.* xii. 10; something which, by saddening the countenance, makes the heart better. Let murmuring, therefore, as well as boasting, be for ever excluded.

Fourthly. Thus in a good measure Job still held fast his integrity, and Satan's design against him was defeated; "in all this did not Job sin with his lips." He not only said this well, but all he said at this time was under the government of religion and right reason. In the midst of all these grievances he did not speak a word amiss; and we have no reason to think but that he also preserved a good temper of mind, so that, though there might be some stirrings and risings of corruption in his heart, yet grace got the upper hand, and he took care that the root of bitterness might not spring up to trouble him, *Heb.* xii. 15. The abundance of his heart was for God, produced good things, and suppressed the evil that was there, which was out-voted by the better side. If he did think any evil, yet he laid his hand upon his mouth, (*Pr.* xxx. 32,) stifled the evil thought, and let it go no farther; by which it appeared, not only that he had true grace, but that it was strong and victorious; in short, that he had not forfeited the character of a perfect and upright man, for so he appears to be, who, in the midst of such temptations, offends not in word, *Jas.* iii. 2; *Ps.* xvii. 3.

11 Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him. 12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. 13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that *his* grief was very great.

We have here an account of the kind visit which Job's three friends made him in his affliction. The news of his extraordinary troubles spread into all parts, he being an eminent man both for greatness and goodness, and the circumstances of his troubles being very uncommon. Some that were his enemies triumphed in his calamities, *ch.* xvi. 10; xix. 18; xxx. 1, &c,—perhaps they made ballads of him; but his friends concerned themselves for him, and endeavoured to comfort him; "a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." Three of them are here named, ver. 11, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. We shall meet with a fourth after, who, it should seem, was present at the whole conference, namely, Elihu; whether he came as a friend of Job, or only as an auditor, doth not appear. These three are said to be his friends, his intimate acquaintance, as David and Solomon had each of them one in their court that was called the king's friend. These three were eminently wise and good men, as appears by their discourses; they were old men, very old, and had a great reputation for knowledge, and a mighty deference was paid to their judgment, *ch.* xxxii. 6. It is probable they were men of figure in their country,—princes, or heads of houses. Now observe,

First. That Job in his prosperity had contracted a friendship with them. If they were his equals, yet he had not that jealousy of them,—if his inferiors, yet he had not that disdain of them, which was any hindrance to an intimate converse and correspondence with them; and to have such friends adds more to his happiness in the day of his prosperity than all the head of cattle he was master of. Much of the comfort of this life lies in acquaintance and friendship with those that are prudent and virtuous; and he that has a few such friends ought to be choice of them. Job's three friends are supposed to be all of them of the posterity of Abraham, which for some descents, even in the families that were shut out from the covenant of peculiarity, retained some good fruits of that pious education which the father of the faithful gave to those under his charge. Eliphaz descended from Teman, the grandson of Esau, *Gen.* xxxvi. 11; Bildad, it is probable, from Shuah, Abraham's son by Keturah, *Gen.* xxv. 2; Zophar is thought by some to be the same with Zepho, a descendant from Esau, *Gen.* xxxvi. 11. The preserving of so much wisdom and piety among those that were strangers to the covenant of promise was a happy presage of God's grace to the Gentiles, when the partition wall should in the latter days be taken down. Esau was rejected, yet many that came from him inherited some of the best blessings.

Secondly. That they continued their friendship with Job in his adversity, when most of his friends had forsaken him, *ch.* xix. 14. Two ways they shewed their friendship:

1. By the kind visit they made him in his affliction, to mourn with him, and to comfort him, ver. 11. Probably they had been wont to visit him in his prosperity, not to hunt or hawk with him, not to dance or play at cards with him, but to entertain and edify themselves with his learned and pious converse; and now he was in adversity they come to share with him in his griefs, as formerly they had come to share with him in his comforts. These were wise men, whose heart was in the house of mourning, *Eccl.* vii. 4. Visiting the afflicted, sick or sore, fatherless or childless in their sorrow, is made a branch of pure religion and undefiled, *Jas.* i. 27; and, if done from a good principle, will be abundantly recompensed shortly, *Mat.* xxv. 36. By visiting the sons and daughters of affliction we may contribute to the improvement, 1st. Of our own graces; for many a good lesson is to be learned from the troubles of others; we may look upon them and receive instruction, and be made wise and serious. 2nd. Of their comforts. By putting a respect upon them we encourage them, and some good word may be spoken to them which may help to make them easy. Job's friends came, not to satisfy their curiosity with an account of his troubles, and the strangeness of the circumstances of them,—much less as David's false friends, to make invidious remarks upon him, *Ps.* xli. 6-8,—but to mourn with him,—to mingle their tears with his, and so to comfort him. It is much more pleasant to visit those in affliction, to whom comfort belongs, than those to whom we must first speak conviction.

Concerning these visitants observe, *First.* That they were not sent for, but came of their own accord, *ch.* vi. 22; whence Mr. Caryl observes, that 'it is good manners to be an unbidden guest at the house of mourning,' and in comforting our friends to prevent their invitations. *Secondly.* That they made an appointment to come. Note, Good people should make appointments among themselves for doing good, so exciting and obliging one another to it, and assisting and encouraging one another in it. For the carrying on of any pious design, let hand join in hand. *Thirdly.* That they came with a design (and we have reason to think it was a sincere design) to comfort him, and yet proved miserable comforters, through their unskilful management of his case. Many that aim well by mistake come short of their aim.

2. By their tender sympathy with him, and concern for him in his affliction. When they saw him at some distance he was so disfigured and deformed with his sores that they knew him not, ver. 12. His face was foul with weeping, *ch.* xvi. 16, like Jerusalem's Nazarites that had been ruddy as the rubies, but were now blacker than a coal, *Lam.* iv. 7, 8. What a change will a sore disease, or, without that, an oppressing care and grief, make in the countenance in a little time. Is this Naomi? *Ru.* i. 19; so, Is this Job? How art thou fallen! How is thy glory stained and sullied, and all thine honour laid in the dust! God fit us for such changes. Observing him thus miserably altered, they did not leave him in a fright, or loathing, but expressed so much the more tenderness towards him.

1st. Coming to mourn with him, they vented their undissembled grief in all the then usual expressions of that passion. They wept aloud. The sight of them, as is usual, revived Job's grief, and set him a weeping afresh, which fetched floods of tears from their eyes. They rent their clothes, and sprinkled dust upon their heads, as men that would strip themselves, and abase themselves, with their friend that was stripped and abased.

2nd. Coming to comfort him they sat down with him upon the ground; for so he received visits; and they, not in compliment to him, but in true compassion, put themselves into the same humble and uneasy place and posture. They had many a time, it is likely, sat with him on his couches and at his table, in his prosperity, and were therefore willing to share with him in his grief and poverty, because they had shared with him in his joy and plenty. It was not a modish, short visit that they made him, just to look upon him and be gone; but, as those that could have no enjoyment of themselves if they had returned to their place while their friend was in so much misery, they resolved to stay with him till they saw him mend or end, and therefore took lodgings near him, though he was not now able to entertain them as he had done, and they must therefore lie at their own charges. Every day, for seven days together, at the hours in which he admitted company, they came and sat with him as his companions in tribulation, and exceptions from that rule, *Nullus ad amissas ibit amicus opes*,—'Those that have lost their wealth are not to expect the visits of their friends.' They that are poor have few friends. They sat with him, but none spake a word to him, only they all attended to the particular narratives he gave of his troubles. They were silent, as men astonished and amazed. *Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*,—'Our lighter griefs have a voice; those which are more oppressive are mute.'

'So long a time they held their peace, to shew
A reverence due to such prodigious woe.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

They spake not a word to him, whatever they said one to another, by way of instruction, for the improvement of the present providence. They said nothing to that purpose that afterwards they spoke a great deal; nothing to grieve him, *ch.* iv. 2; because they saw his grief was very great already, and they were loath at first to add affliction to the afflicted. There is a time to keep silence, when either the wicked is before us, and by speaking we may harden them, *Ps.* xxxix. 1, or when by speaking we may offend the generation of God's children, *Ps.* lxxiii. 15. Their not entering upon the following solemn discourses till the seventh day, may perhaps intimate that it was the sabbath day, which doubtless was observed in the patriarchal age, and to that day they adjourned the intended conference, because probably then company resorted, as usual, to Job's house, to join with him in his devotions, who might be edified by the discourse. Or rather, by their silence so long they would intimate, that what they afterwards said was well considered and digested, and the result of many thoughts; "The heart of the wise studies to answer." We should think twice before we speak once, especially in such a case as this; think long, and we shall be the better able to speak short and to the purpose.

CHAPTER III.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job," saith the apostle, *Jas.* v. 11. So we have, and of his impatience too. We admired that a man should be so patient as he was, *ch.* i., ii.; but we admire that a good man should be so impatient as he is here in this chapter, where we find him cursing his day, and, in passion, I. Complaining that he was born, ver. 1—10. II. Complaining that he did not die as soon as he was born, ver. 11—19. III. Complaining that his life was now continued when he was in misery, ver. 20—26. In this it must be owned that Job sinned with his lips, and it is written, not for our imitation, but our admonition, that he who thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall.

AFTER this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.
2 And Job spake, and said,
3 Let the day perish wherein I was born, [conceived
And the night *in which* it was said, There is a man child
4 Let that day be darkness;
Let not God regard it from above,
Neither let the light shine upon it.
5 Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it;
Let a cloud dwell upon it;
Let the blackness of the day terrify it.
6 *As for* that night, let darkness seize upon it;
Let it not be joined unto the days of the year,
Let it not come into the number of the months.
7 Lo, let that night be solitary,
Let no joyful voice come therein.

8 Let them curse it that curse the day,
Who are ready to raise up their mourning.
9 Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark;
Let it look for light, but *have* none;
Neither let it see the dawning of the day:
10 Because it shut not up the doors of my *mother's* womb,
Nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.

Long was Job's heart hot within him; and while he was musing the fire burned, and the more for being stifled and suppressed; and at the length he spake with his tongue, but not such a good word as David spake after a long pause: "Lord, make me to know my end," *Ps.* xxxix. 3, 4. Seven days the prophet Ezekiel sat down astonied with the captives, and then (probably on the sabbath day) the word of the Lord came to him, *Eze.* iii. 15, 16. So long Job and his friends sat thinking, but said nothing; they were afraid of speaking what they thought, lest they should grieve him, and he durst not give vent to his thoughts, lest he should offend them. They came to comfort him, but, finding his afflictions so very extraordinary, they began to think comfort did not belong to him, suspecting him a hypocrite, and therefore said nothing. But losers think they may have leave to speak, and therefore Job gives vent first to his thoughts, and, unless they had been better, it had been well if he had kept them to himself. In short, he cursed his day, the day of his birth; wished he had never been born, could not think or speak of his own birth without regret and vexation. Whereas men usually observe the annual return of their birth-day with rejoicing, he looked upon it as the unhappiest day of the year, because the unhappiest of his life, being the inlet into all this woe. Now,

First. This was bad enough. The extremity of his trouble, and the discomposure of his spirits, may excuse it in part, but he can by no means be justified in it. Now he has forgotten the good he was born to; the lean kine have eaten up the fat ones; and he is filled with thoughts of the evil only, and wishes he had never been born. The prophet Jeremiah himself expressed his resentment of his calamities in language not much unlike this; not only, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me!" *Jer.* xv. 10, but "Cursed be the day wherein I was born," *Jer.* xx. 14, &c. We may suppose that Job in his prosperity had many a time blessed God for the day of his birth, and reckoned it a happy day, yet now he brands it with all possible marks of infamy. When we consider the iniquity in which we were conceived and born, we have reason enough to reflect with sorrow and shame upon the day of our birth, and to say that the day of our death, by which we are freed from sin, (*Rom.* vii. 7,) is far better, *Eccl.* vii. 1. But to curse the day of our birth, because then we entered upon the calamitous scene of life, is to quarrel with the God of nature, to despise the dignity of our being, and to indulge a passion which our own calm and sober thoughts will make us ashamed of. Certainly there is no condition of life a man can be in in this world, but he may in it (if it be not his own fault) so honour God and work out his own salvation, and make sure a happiness for himself in a better world, that he will have no reason at all to wish he had never been born, but a great deal of reason to say he had his being to good purpose. Yet it must be owned, if there were not another life after this, and Divine consolations to support us in the prospects of it, so many are the sorrows and troubles of this, that we might sometimes be tempted to say we were made in vain, *Ps.* lxxxix. 47, and to wish we had never been. There are those in hell that, with good reason, wish they had never been born, as Judas, *Mat.* xxvi. 24; but on this side hell there can be no reason for so vain and ungrateful a wish. It was Job's folly and weakness to curse his day; we must say of it, This was his infirmity; but good men have sometimes failed in the exercise of those graces they have been most eminent for, that we may understand that when they are said to be perfect it is meant they were upright, not that they were sinless. Lastly. Let us observe it, to the honour of the spiritual life above the natural, that, though many have cursed the day of their first birth, never any cursed the day of their new birth, nor wished they never had had grace and the Spirit of grace given them. Those are the most excellent gifts, above life and being itself, and which will never be a burthen.

Secondly. Yet it was not so bad as Satan promised himself. He cursed his day, but he did not curse his God; was weary of his life, and would gladly have parted with that, but not weary of his religion; he resolutely cleaves to that, and will never let it go. The dispute between God and Satan, concerning Job, was not whether Job had his infirmities, and whether he was subject to like passions as we are, that was granted, but whether he was a hypocrite, and secretly hated God, and if he were provoked would shew it; and upon trial it proved he was no such man. Nay, all this may consist with his being a pattern of patience; for, though he did thus speak unadvisedly with his lips, yet both before and after he expressed great submission and resignation to the holy will of God, and repented of his impatience. He condemned himself for it, and therefore God did not condemn him; nor must we, but watch the more carefully over ourselves, lest we sin after the similitude of this transgression.

The particular expressions which Job useth in cursing his day, are full of poetical fancy, flame, and rapture; and create as much difficulty to the critics as the thing itself doth to the divines. We need not be particular in our observations upon them. When he would express his passionate wish that he had never been, he falls foul upon the day, and,

1. He wisheth that earth might forget it; Let it perish, ver. 3; "Let it not be joined to the days of the year," ver. 6. Let it be not only not inserted in the calendar in red letters, as the day of the king's nativity used to be, (and Job was a king, *ch.* xxix. 25,) but let it be erased and blotted out, and buried in oblivion. Let not the world know that ever such a man as I was born into it, and lived in it, who am made such a spectacle of misery.

2. That Heaven might frown upon it; "Let not God regard it from above," ver. 4. Every thing is indeed as it is with God; that day is honourable on which he puts honour, and which he distinguishes and crowns with his favour and blessing, as he did the seventh day of the week; but let my birth-day never be so honoured, let it be *nigro carbone notandus*,—'marked as with a black coal,'—marked for an evil day, by him that determines the times before appointed. The Father and Fountain of light appointed the greater light to rule the day and lesser lights to rule the night, but let that want the benefit of both. 1st. "Let that day be darkness," ver. 4; and if the light of the day be darkness, how great is that darkness! how terrible, because then we look for light. Let the gloominess of the day represent Job's condition, whose sun went down at noon. 2nd. "As for that night" too, let it want the benefit of moon and stars, and "let darkness seize upon it," thick darkness, darkness that may be felt, which will not befriend the repose of the night by its silence, but rather disturb it with its terrors.

3. That all joy might forsake it. Let it be a melancholy night, solitary, and not a merry night of music or dancing; "let no joyful voice come therein," ver. 7; let it be a long night, and not "see the eyelids of the morning," ver. 9, which bring joy with them.

4. That all curses might follow it, ver. 8. Let none ever desire to see it, or bid it welcome when it comes; but, on the contrary, "Let them curse it that curse the day." Whatever day any are tempted to curse, let them at the same time bestow one curse upon my birth-day, particularly those that make it their trade to raise up mourning at funerals with their ditties of lamentation. Let them that curse the day of others' death in the same breath curse the day of my birth; or, those who are so fierce and daring as to be ready to raise up the leviathan, for that is the word here, who being about to strike the whale, or crocodile, curse it with the bitterest curse they can invent, hoping by those incantations to weaken it, and so to make themselves masters of it. Probably some such custom might there be used to which our divine poet alludes. Let it be as odious as 'the day wherein men bewail the greatest misfortune, or the time wherein they see the most dreadful apparition;' so Bishop Patrick: I suppose, taking the leviathan here to signify the devil, as others do who understand it of the curses used by conjurers and magicians in raising the devil, or, when they have raised a devil that they cannot lay.

But what is the ground of Job's quarrel with the day and night of his birth? It is "because it shut not up the doors of his mother's womb," ver. 10. See the folly and madness of a passionate discontent, and how absurdly and extravagantly it talks when the reins are laid in the neck of it. Is this Job, who was so much admired for his wisdom, that "unto him men gave ear, and kept silence at his counsel, and after his words they spake not again?" *ch.* xxix. 21, 22. Sure his wisdom failed him, 1st. When he took so much pains to express his desire that he had never been born, which, at the best, was a vain wish, for it is impossible to make that which has been not to have been. 2nd. When he was so liberal of his curses upon a day and a night that could not be hurt, or made ever the worse for his curses. 3rd. When he wished a thing so very barbarous to his own mother, as that she might not have brought him forth when her full time was come, which must inevitably have been her death, and a miserable death. 4th. When he despised the goodness of God to him in giving him a being, such a being, so noble and excellent a life, such a life, so far above that of any other creature in this lower world, and undervalued the gift as not worth the acceptance, only because *transit cum onere*,—'it was clogged with a proviso of trouble,' which now at length came upon him after many years' enjoyment of its pleasures. What a foolish thing it was to wish that his eyes had never seen the light, that so they might not have seen sorrow, which yet he might hope to see through, and beyond which he might see joy. Did Job believe and hope that he should in his flesh see God at the latter day, *ch.* xix. 26, and yet would he wish he never had had a being capable of such a bliss, only because for the present he had sorrow in the flesh? God, by his grace, arm us against this foolish and hurtful lust of impatience!

11 Why died I not from the womb? [belly?
Why did I *not* give up the ghost when I came out of the
12 Why did the knees prevent me?
Or why the breasts that I should suck?
13 For now should I have lain still and been quiet,
I should have slept: then had I been at rest,
14 With kings and counsellors of the earth,
Which built desolate places for themselves;

TOMBS IN EDOM.

15 Or with princes that had gold,
Who filled their houses with silver:
16 Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been;
As infants *which* never saw light
17 There the wicked cease *from* troubling;
And there the weary be at rest.
18 *There* the prisoners rest together;
They hear not the voice of the oppressor.
19 The small and great are there;
And the servant *is* free from his master.

Job, perhaps, reflecting upon himself for his folly in wishing he had never been born, follows it, and thinks to mend it with another, little better, that he had died as soon as he was born, which he enlargeth upon in these verses. When our Saviour would set forth a very calamitous state of things he seems to allow such a saying as this, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck," *Lu.* xxiii. 29: but blessing the barren womb is one thing, and cursing the fruitful womb is another. It is good to make the best of afflictions, but it is not good to make the worst of mercies. Our rule is, "Bless, and curse not." Life is often put for all good, and death for all evil; yet Job here very absurdly complains of life and its supports as a curse and a plague to him, and envies death and the grave as the greatest and most desirable bliss. Surely Satan was deceived in Job when he applied that maxim to him, "all that a man has will he give for his life;" for never any man valued life at a lower rate than he did.

First. He ungratefully quarrels with life, and is angry that his was not taken from him as soon as it was given him; ver. 11, 12, "Why died I not from the womb?" See here, 1. What a weak and helpless creature man is when he comes into the world, and how slender the thread of life is when it is first drawn. We are ready to die from the womb, and to breathe our last as soon as we breathe at all. We can do nothing for ourselves as other creatures can, but should drop into the grave if the knees did not prevent us; and the lamp of life when first lighted would go out of itself, if the breasts given us that we should suck did not supply it with fresh oil. 2. What a merciful and tender care Divine providence took of us at our entrance into the world. It was owing to this that we died not from the womb, and did not give up the ghost when we came out of the belly. Why were we not cut off as soon as we were born? Not because we did not deserve it; justly might such weeds have been plucked up as soon as they appeared, justly might such cockatrices have been crushed in the egg. Not because we did or could take any care of ourselves, and our own safety: no creature comes into the world so shiftless as man. It was not our might, or the power of our hand that preserved us these beings; but God's power and providence upheld our frail lives, and his pity and patience spared our forfeited lives. It was owing to this that the knees prevented us. Natural affection is put into parents' hearts by the hand of the God of nature; and hence it was that the blessings of the breast attended those of the womb. 3. What a great deal of vanity and vexation of spirit attends human life! If we had not a God to serve in this world, and better things to hope for in another world, considering the faculties we are endued with, and the troubles we are surrounded with, we should be strongly tempted to wish that we had died from the womb, which had prevented a great deal both of sin and misery.

'He that is born to day, and dies to morrow,
Loses some hours of joy, but months of sorrow.'

4. The evil of impatience, fretfulness, and discontent. When it thus prevails, it is unreasonable and absurd, it is impious and ungrateful, it is slighting and undervaluing God's favour. How much soever life is embittered, we must say it was of the Lord's mercies that we died not from the womb, that we were not consumed. It is contradicting the common sense and sentiments of mankind, and our own at another time. Let discontented people declaim never so much against life, they will be loath to part with it when it comes to the setting to. When the old man in the fable, being tired with his burthen, threw it down in discontent, and called for Death, and Death came to him and asked what he would have with him, he then answered, Nothing, but help me up with my burthen.

Secondly. He passionately applauds death and the grave, and seems hugely in love with them. To desire to die that we may be with Christ, that we may be free from sin, and that we may be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, is the effect and evidence of grace; but to desire to die only that we may be quiet in the grave, and delivered from the troubles of this life, savours of corruption. Job's considerations here may be of good use to reconcile us to death when it comes, and to make us easy under the arrests of it, but they ought not to be made use of as a pretence to quarrel with life while it is continued, or to make us uneasy under the burthens of it. It is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, be it living or dying, and so to live to the Lord, and die to the Lord, and to be his in both, *Rom.* xiv. 8. Job here frets himself with thinking that if he had but died as soon as he was born, and been carried from the womb to the tomb,

1. His condition would have been as good as that of the best. "I should have been," saith he, ver. 14, "with kings and counsellors of the earth," whose pomp, power, and policy cannot set them out of the reach of death, nor secure them from the grave, nor distinguish theirs from common dust in the grave. Even princes that had gold in abundance could not with it bribe death to overlook them when he came with commission; and, though they filled their houses with silver, yet they were forced to leave it all behind them, no more to return to it. Some, by the desolate places which the kings and counsellors are here said to build for themselves, understand the sepulchres or monuments they prepared for themselves in their lifetime; as Shebna, *Isa.* xxii. 16, hewed him out a sepulchre; and by the gold which the princes had, and the silver with which they filled their houses, they understand the treasures which, they say, it was usual to deposit in the graves of great men. Such arts have men used to preserve their dignity, if possible, on the other side death, and to keep themselves from lying even with those of inferior rank; but it will not do, death is and will be an irresistible leveller. *Mors sceptra ligonibus æquat*,—'Death mingles sceptres with spades.' Rich and poor meet together in the grave; and there a hidden untimely birth, ver. 16, a child that either never saw light, or but just opened its eyes, and peeped into the world, and, not liking it, closed them again, and hastened out of it, lies as soft and easy, lies as high and safe, as kings and counsellors, and princes that had gold; and, therefore, saith Job, would I had lain there in the dust, rather than live to lie here in the ashes.

2. His condition would have been much better than now it was; ver. 13, "Then should I have lain still and been quiet," which now I cannot do, I cannot be, but am still tossing and unquiet; then I should have slept, whereas now sleep departeth from mine eyes; then had I been at rest, whereas now I am restless. Now life and immortality are brought to a much clearer light by the Gospel than before they were placed in, good Christians can give a better account than this of the gain of death; Then should I have been present with the Lord, then should I have seen his glory face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly; but all that poor Job dreamed of was rest and quietness in the grave, out of the fear of evil tidings, and out of the feeling of sore boils. Then should I have been quiet; and, had he kept his temper, his even, easy temper still, which he was in in the two foregoing chapters, entirely resigned to the holy will of God, and acquiescing in it, he might have been quiet now; his soul at least might have dwelt at ease, even when his body lay in pain, *Ps.* xxv. 13. Observe how finely he describes the repose of the grave, which, provided the soul also be at rest in God, may much assist our triumphs over it.

1st. Those that now are troubled will there be out of the reach of trouble; ver. 17, "there the wicked cease from troubling." When persecutors die they can no longer persecute; their hatred and envy is now perished. Herod had vexed the church, but when he became a prey for worms he ceased from troubling. When the persecuted die, they are out of the danger of being any farther troubled. Had Job been at rest in his grave, he had had no disturbance from the Sabeans and Chaldeans; none of all his enemies had created him any trouble.

2nd. Those that are now toiled will there see the period of their toils; "there the weary are at rest." Heaven is more than a rest to the souls of saints, but the grave is a rest to their bodies; their pilgrimage is a weary pilgrimage; sin and the world they are weary of; their services, sufferings, and expectations they are wearied with, but in the grave they rest from all their labours, *Rev.* xiv. 13; *Isa.* lvii. 2. They are easy there, and make no complaints; there believers sleep in Jesus.

3rd, Those that were here enslaved are there at liberty. Death is the prisoner's discharge, the relief of the oppressed, and the servant's manumission, ver. 18. There the prisoners, though they walk not at large, yet they rest together, and are not put to work to grind in that prison house. They are no more insulted and trampled upon, menaced, and terrified by their cruel taskmasters; "they hear not the voice of the oppressor." They that were here doomed to perpetual servitude, that could call nothing their own, no, not their own bodies, are there no longer under command or control; there "the servant is free from his master," which is a good reason why those that have power should use it moderately, and those that are in subjection should bear it patiently,—yet a little while.

4th. Those that were at a vast distance from all other, there are upon a level; ver. 19, "the small and great are there;" there the same, there all one, all alike free among the dead. The tedious pomp and state which attends the great is at an end there, all the inconveniences of a poor and low condition are likewise over; death and the grave know no difference.

'Levell'd by death, the conqueror and the slave,
The wise and foolish, cowards and the brave,
Lie mix'd and undistinguish'd in the grave.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

20 Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery,
And life unto the bitter *in* soul;
21 Which long for death, but it *cometh* not;
And dig for it more than for hid treasures;
22 Which rejoice exceedingly,
And are glad, when they can find the grave?
23 *Why is light given* to a man whose way is hid,
And whom God hath hedged in?
24 For my sighing cometh before I eat,
And my roarings are poured out like the waters.
25 For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me,
And that which I was afraid of is come unto me.
26 I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I
Yet trouble came. [quiet;

Job, finding it to no purpose to wish either that he had not been born, or had died as soon as he was born, here complains that his life was now continued, and not cut off. When men are set on quarrelling, there is no end of it; the corrupt heart will carry on the humour. Having cursed the day of his birth, here he courts the day of his death. The beginning of this strife and impatience is as the letting forth of water.

First. He thinks it hard in general that miserable lives should be prolonged; ver. 20—22, "Wherefore is light in life given to them that are bitter in soul?" Bitterness of soul, through spiritual grievances, makes life itself bitter. 'Why doth he give light?' so it is in the original. He means God, yet doth not name him, though the devil had said, "He will curse thee to thy face;" but he tacitly reflects on the Divine providence as unjust and unkind in continuing life when the comforts of life are removed. Life is called light, because pleasant and serviceable for walking and working: it is candle light, the longer it burns the shorter it goes, and the nearer the socket. This light is said to be given us; for, if it were not daily renewed to us by a fresh gift, it would be lost. But Job reckons to those that are in misery, it is δῶρον ἄδωρον,—'a gift and no gift,' a gift that they had better be without, while the light only serves them to see their own misery by. Such is the vanity of human life that even it sometimes becomes a vexation of spirit; and so alterable is the property of death, that, though dreadful to nature, even it may become desirable to nature itself. He speaks of those here, 1. Who long for death when they have outlived their comforts and usefulness, are burthened with age and infirmities, with pain or sickness, poverty or disgrace, and yet it comes not; while at the same time it comes to many that dread it, and would put it far from them. The continuance and period of life must be according to God's will, not according to ours. It is not fit we should be consulted how long we would live, and when we would die; our times are in a better hand than our own. 2. Who dig for it as for hid treasures; that is, would give any thing for a fair dismission out of this world, which supposeth that then the thought of men's being their own executioners was not so much as entertained or suggested, else those that longed for it needed not take much pains for it; they might soon come at it, (as Seneca tells them,) if they pleased. 3. Who bid it welcome, and are glad when they can find the grave, and see themselves stepping into it. If the miseries of this life can prevail, contrary to nature, to make death itself desirable, shall not much more the hopes and prospects of a better life, to which death is our passage, make it so, and set us quite above the fear of it? It may be a sin to long for death, but I am sure it is no sin to long for heaven.

Secondly. He thinks himself in particular hardly dealt with, that he might not be eased of his pain and misery by death, when he could not get ease any other way. To be thus impatient of life for the sake of the troubles we meet with, is not only unnatural in itself, but ungrateful to the Giver of life, and argues a sinful indulgence of our own passion, and a sinful inconsideration of our future state. Let it be our great and constant care to get ready for another world, and then let us leave it to God to order the circumstances of our removal thither as he thinks fit; Lord, when and how thou pleasest; and this with such an indifferency, that, if he should refer it to us, we would refer it to him again. Grace teaches us in the midst of life's greatest comforts to be willing to die, and in the midst of its greatest crosses to be willing to live. Job, to excuse himself in this mighty desire he had to die, pleads the little comfort and satisfaction he had in life.

1. In his present afflicted state, troubles were continually felt, and were likely to be so. He thought he had cause enough to be weary of living; for, 1st. He had no comfort of his life; "My sighing comes before I eat," ver. 24. The sorrows of life prevented and anticipated the supports of life; nay, they took away his stomach, and spoiled his appetite to his necessary food. His griefs returned as duly as his meals, and affliction was his daily bread. Nay, so

great was the extremity of his pain and anguish, that he did not only sigh, but roar, and his roarings were poured out like the waters in a full and constant stream. Our Master was acquainted with grief, and we must expect to be so too. 2nd. He had no prospect of bettering his condition; his way was hid, and God had hedged him in, ver. 23. He saw no way open of deliverance, nor knew he what course to take; his way was hedged up with thorns that he could not find his path: see *ch.* xxiii. 8; *Lam.* iii. 7.

2. Even in his former prosperous state troubles were continually feared; so that then he was never easy, ver. 25, 26. He knew so much of the vanity of the world, and the troubles to which of course he was born, that he was not in safety, neither had he rest then. That which made his grief now the more grievous was, that he was not conscious to himself of any great degree either of negligence or security in the day of his prosperity, which might provoke God thus to chastise him. 1st. He had not been negligent and mindless of his affairs, but kept up such a fear of trouble as was necessary to the maintaining of his guard. He was afraid for his children when they were feasting, lest they should offend God, *ch.* i. 5; afraid for his servants, lest they should offend his neighbours; he took all the care he could of his own health, and managed himself and his affairs with all possible precaution; yet all would not do. 2nd. He had not been secure, nor indulged himself in ease and softness, had not trusted in his wealth, nor flattered himself with the hopes of the perpetuity of his mirth, yet trouble came, to convince and mind him of the vanity of the world, which yet he had not forgot when he lived at ease. Thus his way was hid, for he knew not wherefore God contended with him. Now this consideration, instead of aggravating his grief, might rather serve to alleviate it. Nothing will make trouble easy so much as the testimony of our consciences for us, that in some measure we did our duty in a day of prosperity; and an expectation of trouble will make it sit the lighter when it comes. The less it is a surprise, the less it is a terror.

CHAPTER IV.

Job having warmly given vent to his passion, and so broken the ice, his friends here come gravely to give vent to their judgment upon his case, which perhaps they had communicated to one another apart, compared notes upon it, and talked it over among themselves, and found they were all agreed in their verdict, that Job's afflictions certainly proved him to have been a hypocrite; but they did not attack Job with this high charge till, by the expressions of his discontent and impatience, in which they thought he reflected on God himself, he had confirmed them in the ill opinion they had before conceived of him and his character. Now they set upon him with great fear. The dispute begins, and it begins to be hot presently: the opponents are Job's three friends; Job himself is respondent; Elihu appears first as moderator, and at length God himself gives judgment upon the controversy, and the management of it. The question in dispute is, Whether Job was an honest man or no? the same question that was in dispute between God and Satan in the first two chapters. Satan had yielded it, and durst not pretend that his cursing of his day was a constructive cursing of his God; no, he cannot deny but that Job still holds fast his integrity. But Job's friends will needs have that if Job were an honest man he would not have been thus sorely and thus tediously afflicted; and therefore urge him to confess himself a hypocrite in the profession he made of religion. No, saith Job, that I will never do; I have offended God, but my heart, notwithstanding, has been upright with him; and still he holds fast the comfort of his integrity. Eliphaz, who it is likely was the senior, or of the best quality, begins with him in this chapter. In which, I. He bespeaks a patient hearing, ver. 2. II. He compliments Job with an acknowledgment of the eminency and usefulness of the profession he had made of religion, ver. 3, 4. III. He charges him with hypocrisy in his profession, grounding his charge upon his present troubles and his carriage under them, ver. 5, 6. IV. To make good the inference, he maintains that man's wickedness is that which always brings God's judgment, ver. 7—11. V. He corroborates his assertion by a vision which he had, in which he was minded of the incontestable purity and justice of God, and the meanness, and weakness, and sinfulness of man, ver. 12—21. By all this he aims to bring down Job's spirit, and to make him both penitent and patient under his afflictions.

THEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

2 *If* we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved?
But who can withhold himself from speaking?

3 Behold, thou hast instructed many,
And thou hast strengthened the weak hands.

4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling,
And thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.

5 But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest;
It toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.

6 *Is* not *this* thy fear, thy confidence,
Thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?

In these verses,

First. Eliphaz excuses the trouble he is now about to give to Job by his discourse; ver. 2, 'If we assay a word with thee, offer a word of reproof and counsel, wilt thou be grieved and take it ill? we have reason to fear thou wilt; but there is no remedy, who can refrain from words?' Observe, 1. With what modesty he speaks of himself and his own attempt. He will not undertake the management of the cause alone, but very humbly joins his friends with him; We will commune with thee. They that plead God's cause must be glad of help, lest it suffer through their weakness. He will not promise much, but begs leave to assay, or attempt, and try if he could propose any thing that might be pertinent, and suit Job's case. In difficult matters it becomes us to pretend no farther, but only to try what may be said or done. Many excellent discourses have gone under the modest title of essays. 2. With what tenderness he speaks of Job, and his present afflicted condition; 'If we tell thee our mind, wilt thou be grieved? Wilt thou take it ill? Wilt thou lay it to thine own heart, as thine affliction, or to our charge, as our fault? Shall we be reckoned unkind and cruel if we deal plainly and faithfully with thee? We desire we may not, we hope we shall not, and should be sorry if that should be ill resented which is well intended.' Note, We ought to be afraid of grieving any, especially those that are already in grief, lest we add affliction to the afflicted, as David's enemies, *Ps.* lxix. 26. We should shew ourselves backward to say that which we foresee will be grievous, though never so necessary. God himself, though he afflicts justly, yet he doth not afflict willingly, *Lam.* iii. 33. 3. With what assurance he speaks of the truth and pertinency of what he was about to say, "Who can withhold himself from speaking?" Surely it was a pious zeal for God's honour, and the spiritual welfare of Job, that laid him under this necessity of speaking. Who can forbear speaking in vindication of God's honour which we hear reproved, in love to thy soul which we see endangered? Note, It is foolish pity not to reprove our friends, even our friends in affliction, for what they say or do amiss, only for fear of offending them. Whether men take it well or ill, we must with wisdom and meekness do our duty, and discharge a good conscience.

Secondly. He exhibits a twofold charge against Job:

1. As to his particular carriage under this affliction, he chargeth him with weakness and faint-heartedness; and that article of his charge there was too much ground for, ver. 3—5. And here,

1st. He takes notice of Job's former serviceableness to the comfort of others. He owns that Job had instructed many, not only his own children and servants, but many others, his neighbours and friends, as many as fell within the sphere of his activity. He did not only encourage those who were teachers by office, and countenance them, and pay for the teaching of those that were poor, but he did himself instruct many. Though a great man, he did not think it below him; king Solomon was a preacher. Though a man of business he found time to do it, went among his neighbours, talked to them about their souls, and gave them good counsel. Oh that this example of Job were imitated by our great men! If he met with those that were ready to fall into sin, or sink under their troubles, his words upheld them. A wonderful dexterity he had in offering that which was proper to fortify persons against temptations, to support them under their burthens, and to comfort afflicted consciences. He had and used the tongue of the learned, knew how to speak a word in season to them that were weary, and employed himself much in that good work. With suitable counsels and comforts he strengthened the weak hands for work and service, and the spiritual warfare; and the feeble knees for the bearing up the man in his journey, and under his load. It is our duty not only to lift up our own hands that hang down, by quickening and encouraging ourselves in the way of duty, *Heb.* xii. 12, but we must also strengthen the weak hands of others, as there is occasion, and do what we can to confirm their feeble knees, by saying to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, *Isa.* xxxv. 3, 4. The expressions seem to be borrowed from hence. Note, They that have abundance of spiritual riches should abound in spiritual charity. A good word well and wisely spoken may do more good than perhaps we think of.

But why doth Eliphaz mention this here? *First.* Perhaps he praiseth him thus for the good he had done, that he might make the intended reproof the more passable with him. Just commendation is a good preface to a just reprehension, will help to remove prejudices, and will shew that the reproof comes not from ill-will. Paul praised the Corinthians before he chid them, 1 *Cor.* xi. 7. *Secondly.* He remembers how Job had comforted others, as a reason why he might justly expect to be himself comforted, and yet if conviction was necessary in order to comfort, they must be excused if they applied themselves to that first; the Comforter shall reprove, *Jno.* xvi. 8. *Thirdly.* He speaks this perhaps in a way of pity, lamenting it, that through the extremity of his affliction he could not apply those comforts to himself which he had formerly administered to others. It is easier to give good counsel than to take it, to preach meekness and patience than to practise them; *Facile omnes cum valemus rectum concilium ægrotis damus,*—'We all find it easy, when in health, to give good advice to the sick.'—*Terent. Fourthly.* Most think he mentions it as an aggravation of his present discontent, upbraiding him with his knowledge, and the good offices he had done for others; as if he had said, Thou that hast taught others, why dost thou not teach thyself? Is not this an evidence of thine hypocrisy, that thou hast prescribed that medicine to others which thou wilt not now take thyself, and so contradictest thyself, and actest against thy own known principles? Thou that teachest another not to faint, dost thou faint? *Rom.* ii. 12; physician, heal thyself. They who have rebuked others, must expect to hear of it if they themselves become obnoxious to rebuke.

2nd. He upbraids him with his present low-spiritedness, ver. 5. "Now it is come upon thee," now it is thy turn to be afflicted, and the bitter cup that goes round is put into thy hand, "now it toucheth thee, thou faintest, thou art troubled." *First.* He makes too light of Job's afflictions; "it toucheth thee." The very word that Satan himself had used, *ch.* i. 11; ii. 5. Had Eliphaz felt but the one half of Job's affliction he would have said, It smites me, it wounds me; but, speaking of Job's afflictions, he makes but a fleabite of it, It touches thee, and thou canst not bear to be touched; *noli me tangere,*—'Touch me not.' *Secondly.* He makes too much of Job's resentments, and aggravates them; "Thou faintest," or, thou art beside thyself, thou ravest, and knowest not what thou sayest. Men in deep distress must have grains of allowance, and a favourable construction put upon what they say. When we make the worst of every word, we do not as we would be done by.

2. As to his general character before this affliction, he chargeth him with wickedness and false-heartedness, and that article of his charge was utterly groundless and unjust. How unkindly doth he banter him, and upbraid him with the great profession of religion he had made, as if it were all now come to nothing, and proved a sham; ver. 6, "Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?" Doth it not all appear now to be a mere pretence? for, hadst thou been sincere in it, God would not thus have afflicted thee, nor wouldest thou have carried thyself thus under the affliction. This was the very thing Satan aimed at, to prove Job a hypocrite, and disprove the character God had given of him. When he could not himself do this to God, but he still saw and said, Job is perfect and upright, then he endeavoured by his friends to do it to Job himself, and to persuade him to confess himself a hypocrite. Could he have gained that point, he would have triumphed, *Habes confitentem reum,*—'Out of thy own mouth will I condemn thee.' But by the grace of God Job was enabled to hold his own, and would not bear false witness against himself. Note, Those that pass rash and uncharitable censures upon their brethren, and condemn them for hypocrites, do Satan's work, and serve his interest more than they are aware of. I know not how it comes to pass that this verse is differently read in several editions of our common English Bibles. The original, and all ancient versions, put "thy hope" before "the uprightness of thy ways." So doth the Geneva, and most of the editions of the last translation; but I find one of the first, in 1612, has it, "Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, the uprightness of thy ways and thy hope?" Both the Assembly's Annotations and Mr. Poole's have that reading. And an edition in 1660 reads it, "Is not thy fear thy confidence; and the uprightness of thy ways thy hope?" Doth it not appear now that all the religion, both of thy devotion and of thy conversation, was only in hope and confidence that thou shouldest grow rich by it? Was it not all mercenary? The very thing that Satan suggested. "Is not thy religion thy hope, and thy right ways thy confidence?" so Mr. Broughton. Or, Was it not? Didst thou not think that would have been thy protection? but thou art deceived. Or, Would it not have been so? If it had been sincere, would it not have kept thee from this despair? It is true, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength," thy grace, "is small," *Pr.* xxiv. 10; but it doth not there follow, thou hast no grace, no strength at all. A man's character is not to be taken from a single act.

7 Remember, I pray thee, who *ever* perished, being innocent?
Or where were the righteous cut off?

8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity,
And sow wickedness, reap the same.
9 By the blast of God they perish,
And by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.
10 The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion,
And the teeth of the young lions, are broken.
11 The old lion perisheth for lack of prey,
And the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.

Eliphaz here advanceth another argument to prove Job a hypocrite, and will have not only his impatience under his afflictions to be evidence against him, but even his afflictions themselves, being so very great and extraordinary, and there being no prospect at all of his deliverance out of them. To strengthen this argument he here lays down these two principles, which seem plausible enough:

First. That good men were never thus ruined. And for the proof of this he appeals to Job's own observation; ver. 7, "Remember, I pray thee;" recollect all that thou hast seen, heard, or read, and give me an instance of any one that was innocent and righteous, and yet perished as thou dost, and was cut off as thou art. If we understand it of a final and eternal destruction, his principle is true; none that are innocent and righteous perish for ever. It is only a man of sin that is a son of perdition, 2 *Thes.* ii. 3. But then it is ill applied to Job; he did not thus perish, nor was he cut off. A man is never undone till he is in hell. But, if we understand it of any temporal calamity, his principle is not true. "The righteous perish," *Isa.* lvii. 1; "there is one event both to the righteous and to the wicked," *Eccl.* ix. 2, both in life and death; the great and certain difference is after death. Even before Job's time, as early as it was, there were instances sufficient to contradict this principle. Did not righteous Abel perish being innocent; and was not he cut off in the beginning of his days? Was not righteous Lot burnt out of house and harbour, and forced to retire to a melancholy cave? Was not righteous Jacob, a Syrian, ready to perish? *Deu.* xxvi. 5. And other such instances no doubt there were, which are not on record.

Secondly. That wicked men were often thus ruined; and for the proof of this he voucheth his own observation; ver. 8, "Even as I have seen," many a time, "they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, by the blast of God they perish," ver. 9. We have daily instances of that; and therefore, since thou dost thus perish and art consumed, we have reason to think that, whatever profession of religion thou hast made, thou hast but ploughed iniquity and sown wickedness. Even as I have seen in others, so I do see in thee.

1. He speaks of sinners in general, politic busy sinners, that take pains in sin, for they plough iniquity; and expect gain by sin, for they sow wickedness. They that plough, plough in hope; but what is the issue? They reap the same; they shall of the flesh reap corruption and ruin, *Gal.* vi. 7, 8. The harvest will be a heap in the day of grief and desperate sorrow, *Isa.* xvii. 11. He shall reap the same, that is, the proper product of that seedness. That which the sinner sows, he sows not that body that shall be; but God will give it a body, a body of death, the end of those things, *Rom.* vi. 21. Some, by iniquity and wickedness, understand wrong and injury done to others; they who plough and sow that shall reap the same, that is, they shall be paid in their own coin. They that are troublesome shall be troubled, 2 *Thes.* i. 6; *Jos.* vii. 25. The spoilers spoiled, *Isa.* xxxiii. 1; and those that led captive shall go captive, *Rev.* xiii. 10. He farther describes their destruction, ver. 9, "By the blast of God they perish." The projects they take so much pains in are defeated, God cuts in sunder the cords of these ploughers, *Ps.* cxxix. 3, 4. They themselves are destroyed, which is the just punishment of their iniquity. They perish, that is, they are destroyed utterly; they are consumed, that is, they are destroyed gradually; and this by the blast and breath of God; that is, 1st. By his wrath. His anger is the ruin of sinners, who are therefore called vessels of wrath, and his breath is said to kindle Tophet, *Isa.* xxx. 33; "Who knows the power of his anger?" *Ps.* xc. 8. 2nd. By his word. He speaks and it is done, easily and effectually. The Spirit of God in the Word consumes sinners; with that he slays them, *Hos.* vi. 5. Saying and doing are not two things with God. The man of sin is said to be consumed with the breath of Christ's mouth, 2 *Thes.* ii. 8: compare *Isa.* xi. 4; *Rev.* xix. 21. Some think, in attributing the destruction of sinners to the blast of God, and the breath of his nostrils, he refers to the wind which blew the house down upon Job's children, as if they were therefore sinners above all men, because they suffered such things, *Lu.* xiii. 2.

2. He speaks particularly of tyrants and cruel oppressors, under the similitude of lions, ver. 10, 11. Observe, 1st. How he describes their cruelty and oppression. The Hebrew tongue has five several names for lions, and they are all here used, to set forth the terrible tearing power, fierceness, and cruelty of proud oppressors; they roar, and rend, and prey upon all about them, and bring up their young ones to do so too, *Eze.* xix. 3. The devil is a roaring lion, and they partake of his nature, and do his lusts. They are strong as lions, and subtle, *Ps.* x. 9; xvii. 12; and as far as they prevail lay all desolate about them. 2nd. How he describes their destruction; the destruction both of their power and of their persons. They shall be restrained from doing farther hurt, and reckoned with for the hurt they have done. An effectual course shall be taken, *First.* That they shall not terrify; the voice of their roaring shall be stopped. *Secondly.* That they shall not tear; God will disarm them, will take away their power to do hurt. The teeth of the young lions are broken, *Ps.* iii. 7. Thus shall the remainder of wrath be restrained. *Thirdly.* That they shall not enrich themselves with the spoil of their neighbours. Even the old lion is famished, and perisheth for lack of prey. They that have surfeited on spoil and rapine are perhaps reduced to such straits as to die for hunger at last. *Fourthly.* That they shall not, as they promised themselves, leave a succession. The stout lions' whelps are scattered abroad, to seek for food themselves, which the old ones used to bring in for them; *Nah.* ii. 12, "The lion did tear in pieces for his whelps," but now they must shift for themselves. Perhaps Eliphaz intended in this to reflect upon Job, as if he, being "the greatest of all the men of the east," had got his estate by spoil, and used his power in oppressing his neighbours; but now his power and estate were gone, and his family scattered. If so, it was pity a man whom God praised should be thus abused.

12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me,
And mine ear received a little thereof.
13 In thoughts from the visions of the night,
When deep sleep falleth on men,
14 Fear came upon me, and trembling,
Which made all my bones to shake.
15 Then a spirit passed before my face;
The hair of my flesh stood up:
16 It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof.
An image *was* before mine eyes,
There was silence, and I heard a voice, *saying*,
17 Shall mortal man be more just than God?
Shall a man be more pure than his maker?
18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants;
And his angels he charged with folly:
19 How much less *in* them that dwell in houses of clay,
Whose foundation *is* in the dust,
Which are crushed before the moth?
20 They are destroyed from morning to evening:
They perish for ever without any regarding *it*.
21 Doth not their excellency *which is* in them go away?
They die, even without wisdom.

Eliphaz, having undertaken to convince Job of the sin and folly of his discontent and impatience, here vouches a vision he had been favoured with, which he relates to Job for his conviction. What comes immediately from God all men will pay a particular deference to, and Job no doubt as much as any. Some think Eliphaz had this vision now lately, since he came to Job, putting words into his mouth wherewith to reason with him; and it had been well if he had kept to the purport of this vision, which would serve for a ground on which to reprove Job for his murmuring, but not to condemn him for a hypocrite. Others think he had it formerly; for God did in this way often communicate himself to the children of men in those first ages of the world, *ch.* xxxiii. 15. Probably God had sent Eliphaz this messenger and message some time or other when he was himself in an unquiet, discontented frame, to calm and pacify him. Note, As we should comfort others with that wherewith we have been comforted, (2 *Cor.* i. 4,) so we should endeavour to convince others with that which has been powerful to convince us. The people of God had not then any written Word to quote, and therefore God sometimes notified to them even common truths by the extraordinary ways of revelation. We that have Bibles have there (thanks be to God!) a more sure Word to depend upon than even visions and voices, 2 *Pet.* i. 19. Observe,

First. The manner how this message was sent to Eliphaz, and the circumstances of the conveyance of it to him. 1. It was brought him secretly, or by stealth. Some of the sweetest communion gracious souls have with God is in secret, where no eye sees but his that is all eye. God has ways of bringing conviction, counsel, and comfort to his people, unobserved by the world; by private whispers, as powerfully and effectually as by the public ministry. His secret is with them, *Ps.* xxv. 14. As the evil spirit often steals good words out of the heart, *Mat.* xiii. 19, so the good Spirit sometimes steals good words into the heart, or ever we are aware. 2. He received a little thereof, ver. 12; and it is but little of Divine knowledge that the best receive in this world. We know little in comparison with what is to be known, and with what we shall know when we come to heaven. "How little a portion is heard of God!" *ch.* xxvi. 14; "We know but in part," 1 *Cor.* xiii. 12. See his humility and modesty: he pretends not to have understood it fully, but something of it he perceived. 3. It was brought him in the visions of the night, ver. 13, when he was retired from the world, and the hurry of it, and all about him was composed and quiet. Note, The more we are withdrawn from the world, and the things of it, the fitter we are for communion with God. When we are communing with our own hearts, and are still, (*Ps.* iv. 4,) then is a proper time for the Holy Spirit to commune with us. When others were asleep Eliphaz was ready to receive this visit from Heaven, and probably, like David, was meditating upon God in the night watches. In the midst of those good thoughts this thing was brought to him. We should hear more from God if we thought more of him; yet some are surprised with convictions in the night, *ch.* xxxiii. 14, 15. 4. It was prefaced with terrors; fear came upon him and trembling, ver. 14. It should seem, before he either heard or saw any thing, he was seized with this trembling, which shook his bones, and perhaps the bed under him. A holy awe and reverence of God and his majesty being struck upon his spirit, he was thereby prepared for a Divine visit. Whom God intends to honour, he first humbles and lays low, and will have us all to serve him with holy fear, and to rejoice with trembling.

Secondly. The messenger by whom it was sent. A spirit, one of the good angels, who are employed not only as the ministers of God's providence, but sometimes as the ministers of his Word. Concerning this apparition which Eliphaz saw, we are here told, ver. 15, 16, 1. That it was real, and not a dream, not a fancy. An image was before his eyes, he plainly saw it: at first it passed and repassed before his face, moved up and down; but at length it stood still, to speak to him. If some have been so knavish as to impose false visions on others, and some so foolish as to be themselves imposed upon, it doth not therefore follow but that there have been apparitions of spirits, both good and bad. 2. That it was indistinct, and somewhat confused. He could not discern the form thereof, so as to frame any exact idea of it in his own mind, much less to give a description of it. His conscience was to be awakened and informed, not his curiosity gratified. We know little of spirits, we are not capable of knowing much of them, nor is it fit we should. All in good time; we must shortly remove to the world of spirits, and shall then be better acquainted with them. 3. That it put him into a mighty consternation, so that his hair stood on end. Ever since man sinned it has been terrible to him to receive an express from Heaven, as conscious to himself that he can expect no good tidings thence; apparitions therefore, even of good spirits, have always made deep impressions of fear, even upon good men. How well is it for us that God sends us his messages not by spirits, but by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid: see *Dan.* vii. 28; x. 8, 9.

Thirdly. The message itself. Before it was delivered there was silence, profound silence, ver. 16. When we are to speak, either from God or to him, it becomes us to address ourselves to it with a solemn pause, and so to set bounds about the mount on which God is to come down, and not be hasty to utter any thing. It was in a still small voice that the message was delivered, and this was it, ver. 17, "Shall mortal man be more just than God," the immortal God?

"Shall a man be" thought to be, or pretend to be, "more pure than his Maker?" Away with such a thought! 1. Some think Eliphaz aims hereby to prove that Job's great afflictions were a certain evidence of his being a wicked man. A mortal man would be thought unjust, and very impure, if he should thus correct and punish a servant or subject, unless he had been guilty of some very great crime; if, therefore, there were not some great crimes for which God thus punisheth thee, man would be more just than God, which is not to be imagined. 2. I rather think it is only a reproof of Job's murmuring and discontent. Shall a man pretend to be more just and pure than God? more truly to understand, and more strictly to observe, the rules and laws of equity than God? Shall *Enosh*,—'mortal, miserable man,' be so insolent, nay, shall *Geber*,—'the strongest, and most eminent man,' man at his best estate, pretend to compare with God, or stand in competition with him! Note, It is most impious and absurd to think either others or ourselves more just and pure than God. Those that quarrel and find fault with the directions of the Divine law, the dispensations of the Divine grace, or the disposals of the Divine providence, make themselves more just and pure than God; and they who thus reprove God, let them answer it. What? sinful man, (for he had not been mortal if he had not been sinful,) shortsighted man, shall he pretend to be more just, more pure than God, who, being his Maker, is his Lord and owner? Shall the clay contend with the potter? What justice and purity there is in man, God is the author of it, and therefore is himself more just and pure: see *Ps.* xciv. 9, 10.

Fourthly. The comment which Eliphaz makes upon this, for so it seems to be; yet some take all the following verses to be spoken in vision. It comes all to one.

1. He shews how little the angels themselves are in comparison with God, ver. 18. Angels are God's servants, waiting servants, working servants, they are his ministers, *Ps.* civ. 4. Bright and blessed beings they are; but God neither needs them, nor is benefited by them, and is himself infinitely above them; and therefore, 1st. He put no trust in them, did not repose a confidence in them, as we do in those we cannot live without; there is no service in which he employs them but, if he pleased, he could have it done as well without them. He never made them his confidants, or of his cabinet council, *Mat.* xxiv. 36. He doth not leave his business wholly to them; but his own eyes run to and fro through the earth, 2 *Chr.* xvi. 9: see this phrase, *ch.* xxxix. 11. Some give this sense of it: So mutable is even the angelical nature, that God would not trust them with their own integrity; if he had, they would all have done as some did, left their first estate; but he saw it necessary to give them a supernatural grace to confirm them. 2nd. He chargeth them with folly, vanity, weakness, infirmity, and imperfection, in comparison with God. If the world were left to the government of the angels, and they were trusted with the sole management of affairs, they would take false steps, and every thing would not be done for the best, as now it is. Angels are intelligences, but finite ones; though not chargeable with iniquity, yet with imprudence. This last clause is variously rendered by the critics; I think it would bear this reading, repeating the negation, which is very common: "He will put no trust in his saints, nor will he glory in his angels, (*in angelis suis non ponet gloriationem,*) or make his boast" of them, as if their praises or services added any thing to him. It is his glory that he is infinitely happy without them.

2. Thence he infers how much less man is, how much less to be trusted in, or gloried in. If there be such a distance between God and angels, what is there between God and man! See how man is represented here in his meanness.

1st. Look upon man in his life, and he is very mean, ver. 19. Take man in his best estate, and he is a very despicable creature in comparison with the holy angels, though honourable if compared with the brutes. It is true angels are spirits, and the souls of men are spirits; but, *First.* Angels are pure spirits; the souls of men dwell in houses of clay: such the bodies of men are. Angels are free; human souls are housed, and the body is a cloud, a clog to it, it is its cage, it is its prison. It is a house of clay, mean, and mouldering; an earthen vessel, soon broken, as it was first formed, according to the good pleasure of the potter. It is a cottage; not a house of cedar, or a house of ivory, but of clay, which would soon be in ruins if not kept in constant repair. *Secondly.* Angels are fixed; but the very foundation of that house of clay in which man dwells is in the dust. A house of clay, if built upon a rock, might stand long; but if founded in the dust the uncertainty of the foundation will hasten its fall, and it will sink with its own weight. As man was made out of the earth, so he is maintained and supported by that which comes out of the earth. Take away that, and his body returns to its earth. We stand but upon the dust; some have a higher heap of dust to stand upon than others; but still it is the earth that stays us up, and will shortly swallow us up. *Thirdly.* Angels are immortal; but man is soon crushed. The earthly house of his tabernacle dissolved, he dies and wastes away; is crushed like a moth between one's fingers, as easily, as quickly: one may almost as soon kill a man as kill a moth; a little thing will do it,—he is crushed before the face of the moth, so the word is. If some lingering distemper, which consumes like a moth, be commissioned to destroy him, he can no more resist it than he can resist an acute distemper that comes roaring upon him like a lion: see *Hos.* v. 12, 14. Is such a creature as this to be trusted in, or can any service be expected from him, by that God who puts no trust in angels themselves?

2nd. Look upon him in his death, and he appears yet more despicable and unfit to be trusted. Men are mortal, and dying, ver. 20, 21. *First.* In death they are destroyed, and perish for ever, as to this world. It is the final period of their lives, and all their employments and enjoyments here; their place will know them no more. *Secondly.* They are dying daily, and continually wasting; destroyed from morning to evening. Death is still working in us, like a mole, digging our grave at each remove; and we so continually lie exposed, that we are killed all the day long. *Thirdly.* Their life is short, and in a little time they are cut off; it lasts perhaps but from morning to evening. It is but a day, (so some understand it;) their birth and death are but the sunrise and sunset of the same day. *Fourthly.* In death all their excellency passeth away; beauty, strength, learning, not only cannot secure them from death, but dies with them; nor shall their pomp, their wealth, or power, descend after them. *Fifthly.* Their wisdom cannot save them from death; they die without wisdom, die for want of wisdom, by their own foolish management of themselves, digging their graves with their own teeth. *Sixthly.* It is so common a thing that nobody heeds it, or takes any notice of it; they perish without any regarding it, or laying it to heart. The deaths of others are much the subject of common talk, but little the subject of serious thought.

Some think the eternal damnation of sinners is here spoken of, as well as their temporal death. 'They are destroyed, or broken to pieces, by death from morning to evening, and if they repent not they perish for ever,' so some read it, ver. 20; they perish for ever because they regard not God and their duty, they consider not their latter end, *Lam.* i. 9. They have no excellency but that which death takes away; and they die, they die the second death, for want of wisdom to lay hold on eternal life. Shall such a mean, weak, foolish, sinful, dying creature as this pretend to be more just than God, and more pure than his Maker? No; instead of quarrelling with his afflictions, let him admire he is out of hell.

CHAPTER V.

Eliphaz in the foregoing chapter, for the making good of his charge against Job, had vouched a word from heaven, sent him in a vision. In this chapter he appeals to those that bear record on earth, to the saints, the faithful witnesses of God's truths in all ages, ver. 1. They will testify, I. That the sin of sinners is their ruin, ver. 2—5. II. That yet affliction is the common lot of mankind, ver. 6, 7. III. That when we are in affliction it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God, for he is able and ready to help us, ver. 8—16. IV. That the afflictions which are borne well will end well; and Job particularly, if he would come to a better temper, might assure himself that God had great mercy in store for him, ver. 17—27. So that he concludes his discourse in somewhat a better humour than he began it.

CALL now, if there be any that will answer thee;
And to which of the saints wilt thou turn?
2 For wrath killeth the foolish man,
And envy slayeth the silly one.
3 I have seen the foolish taking root:
But suddenly I cursed his habitation.
4 His children are far from safety,
And they are crushed in the gate,
Neither *is there* any to deliver *them.*
5 Whose harvest the hungry eateth up,
And taketh it even out of the thorns,
And the robber swalloweth up their substance.

A very warm dispute being began between Job and his friends, Eliphaz here makes a fair motion to put the matter to a reference; and in all debates perhaps the sooner that is done the better, if the contenders cannot end it between themselves. And so well assured is Eliphaz of the goodness of his own cause, that he moves Job himself to choose the arbitrators; ver. 1, "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee;" that is, 1. If there be any that suffer as thou sufferest. Canst thou produce an instance of any one that was really a saint that was reduced to such extremity as thou art now reduced to? God never dealt with any that love his name so as he deals with thee; and, therefore, sure thou art none of them. 2. If there be any that say as thou sayest; did ever any good man curse his day as thou dost? Or, will any of the saints justify thee in these heats, or passions, or say that these are the spots of God's children? Thou wilt find none of the saints that will be either thine advocates or mine antagonists; "to which of the saints wilt thou turn?" Turn to which thou wilt, and thou wilt find they are all of my mind; I have the *communis sensus fidelium,*—'the unanimous vote of all the saints on my side,' they will all subscribe to what I am going to say: see *ch.* xxxiv. 8.

Observe, 1st. Good people are called saints even in the Old Testament; and, therefore, I know not why we should in common speaking, (unless because we must, *loqui cum vulgo,*—'speak as our neighbours,') appropriate the title to those of the New Testament; and not say St. Abraham, and St. Moses, and St. Isaiah, as well as St. Matthew, and St. Mark; and St. David, the psalmist, as well as St. David, the British bishop. Aaron is expressly called the saint of the Lord. 2nd. All that are themselves saints will turn to those that are so; will choose them for their friends, and converse with them; will choose them for their judges, and consult with them: see *Ps.* cxix. 79. The saints shall judge the world, 1 *Cor.* vi. 1, 2. Walk in the way of good men, *Pr.* ii. 20: the old way, the footsteps of the flock. Every one chooseth some sort of people or other to whom he studies to recommend himself, and by whose sentiments he reckons honour and dishonour. Now all true saints endeavour to recommend themselves to those that are so, and to stand right in their opinion. 3rd. There are some truths so plain, and so universally known and believed, that one may venture to appeal to any of the saints concerning them. However there are some things about which they unhappily differ, there are many more, and more considerable, in which they are agreed; as the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the worth of the soul, the necessity of a holy life, and the like. Though they do not all live up as they should to their belief of these truths, yet they are all ready to bear their testimony to them.

Now there are two things which Eliphaz here maintains, and doubts not but all the saints concur with him:

First. That the sin of sinners directly tends to their own ruin; ver. 2, "Wrath kills the foolish man," his own wrath doth it, and, therefore, he is foolish for indulging it. It is a fire in his bones, in his blood, enough to put him into a fever; and envy is the rottenness of the bones, and so slays the silly one, that frets himself with it. So it is with thee, saith Eliphaz; while thou quarrellest with God, thou dost thyself the greatest mischief; thine anger at thine own troubles, and thine envy at our prosperity, doth but add to thy pain and misery. Turn to the saints, and thou wilt find they understand themselves better. Job had told his wife she spake as the foolish women; now Eliphaz tells him he acted as the foolish men, the silly ones; or, it may be meant thus: If men are ruined and undone, it is always their own folly that ruins and undoes them. They kill themselves by some lust or other; therefore, no doubt, (Job,) thou hast done some foolish thing by which thou hast brought thyself into this calamitous condition. Many understand it of God's wrath and jealousy. Job needed not be uneasy at the prosperity of the wicked; for the world's smiles can never shelter them from God's frowns: they are foolish and silly, if they think they will. God's anger and indignation will be the death, the eternal death, of those on whom it fastens. What is hell but that, without mixture or period?

Secondly. That their prosperity is short, and their destruction certain, ver. 3—5. He seems here to parallel Job's case with that which is commonly the case of wicked people.

1. Job had prospered for a time, seemed confirmed, and was secure in his prosperity; and it is common for foolish, wicked men to do so. "I have seen them taking root," planted, and, in their own and others' apprehension, fixed, and likely to continue: see *Jer.* xii. 2; *Ps.* xxxvii. 35, 36. We see worldly men taking root in the earth; on earthly things they fix the standing of their hopes, and from them they draw the sap of their comforts. The outward estate may be flourishing, but the soul cannot prosper that takes root in the earth.

2. Job's prosperity was now at an end, and so has the prosperity of other wicked people quickly been.

1st. Eliphaz foresaw their ruin with an eye of faith. They who looked only at present things blessed their habitation, and thought them happy, blessed it long, and wished themselves in their condition. But Eliphaz cursed it, suddenly cursed it, as soon as he saw them begin to take root, that is, he plainly

foresaw and foretold their ruin; not that he prayed for it, "I have not desired the woful day," but he prognosticated it. He went into the sanctuary, and there understood their end, and heard their doom read, *Ps.* lxxiii. 17, 18, that the prosperity of fools will destroy them, *Pr.* i. 32. They who believe the Word of God can see a curse in the house of the wicked, *Pr.* iii. 33, though it be never so finely and firmly built, and never so full of all good things; and can foresee that it will in time infallibly consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, *Zec.* v. 4.

2nd. He saw at length what he had foreseen. He was not disappointed in his expectation concerning him, the event answered it; his family was undone, and his estate ruined: in which particulars he plainly and very invidiously reflects on Job's calamities. *First.* His children were crushed, ver. 4. They thought themselves safe in their eldest brother's house, but were far from safety, for they were crushed in the gate; perhaps the door or gate of the house was highest built, and fell heaviest upon them, and there was none to deliver them from perishing in the ruins. This is commonly understood of the destruction of the families of wicked men, by the execution of justice upon them to oblige them to restore what they have ill gotten. They leave it to their children, but the descent shall not bar the entry of the rightful owners, who will crush their children, and cast them by due course of law, and there shall be none to help them; or, perhaps, by oppression, *Ps.* cix. 9, &c. *Secondly.* His estate was plundered, ver. 5. Job's was so; the hungry robbers, the Sabeans and Chaldeans ran away with it, and swallowed it, and this, saith he, I have often observed in others. What has been got by spoil and rapine has been lost the same way. The careful owner hedged it about with thorns, and then thought it safe, but the fence proved insignificant against the greediness of the spoilers,—if hunger will break through stone walls, much more through thorn hedges—and against the Divine curse, which will go through the thorns and briars, and burn them together, *Isa.* xxvii. 4.

6 Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust,
Neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;
7 Yet man is born unto trouble,
As the sparks fly upward.
8 I would seek unto God,
And unto God would I commit my cause:
9 Which doeth great things and unsearchable;
Marvellous things without number:
10 Who giveth rain upon the earth,
And sendeth waters upon the fields:
11 To set up on high those that be low;
That those which mourn may be exalted to safety.
12 He disappointeth the devices of the crafty,
So that their hands cannot perform *their* enterprise.
13 He taketh the wise in their own craftiness:
And the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.
14 They meet with darkness in the daytime,
And grope in the noonday as in the night.
15 But he saveth the poor from the sword,
From their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty.
16 So the poor hath hope,
And iniquity stoppeth her mouth.

Eliphaz, having touched Job in a very tender part, in mentioning both the loss of his estate and the death of his children, as the just punishment of his sin, that he might not drive him to despair, here begins to encourage him, and puts him in a way to make himself easy. Now he doth very much change his voice, (*Gal.* iv. 20,) and speaks Job fair, as if he would atone for the hard words he had given him.

First. He minds him, that no affliction comes by chance, nor is to be attributed to second causes. It doth not come forth of the dust, nor spring out of the ground, as the grass doth, ver. 6; it doth not come of course at certain seasons of the year, as natural productions do, by a chain of second causes. The proportion between prosperity and adversity is not so exactly observed by Providence as that between day and night, summer and winter, but according to the will and counsel of God, when and as he thinks fit; some read it, 'sin comes not forth of the dust, nor iniquity out of the ground.' If men be bad, they must not lay the blame upon the soil, the climate, or the stars, but on themselves: "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." We must not attribute our afflictions to fortune, for they are from God; nor our sins to fate, for they are from ourselves. So that, whatever trouble we are in, we must own that God sends it upon us, and we procure it to ourselves. The former is a reason why we should be very patient, the latter why we should be very penitent, when we are afflicted.

Secondly. He minds him that trouble and affliction is what we have all reason to expect in this world. "Man is born to trouble," ver. 7, not as man,—had he kept his innocency he had been born to pleasure; but as sinful man, as born of a woman, *ch* xiv. 1, who was in the transgression. Man is born in sin, and therefore born to trouble. Even those that are born to honour and estate, yet are born to trouble in the flesh. In our fallen state, it is become natural to us to sin, and the natural consequence of that is affliction, *Rom.* v. 12. There is nothing in this world we are born to, and can truly call our own, but sin and trouble; both are as the sparks that fly upward. Actual transgressions are the sparks that fly out of the furnace of original corruption; and, being called transgressors from the womb, no wonder that we deal very treacherously, *Isa.* xlviii. 8. And such is the frailty of our bodies, and the vanity of all our enjoyments, that our troubles also thence arise as naturally as the sparks fly upward; so many are they, so thick and so fast doth one follow another. Why then should we be surprised at our afflictions as strange, or quarrel with them as hard, when they are but what we are born to? 'Man is born to labour,' so it is in the margin, is sentenced to eat his bread in the sweat of his face, which should inure him to hardness, and make him bear his afflictions the better.

Thirdly. He directs him how to behave himself under his affliction; ver. 8, "I would seek unto God;" 'surely I would,' so it is in the original. Here is,

1. A tacit reproof to Job for not seeking to God, but quarrelling with him; Job, if I had been in thy case, I would not have been so peevish and passionate as thou art, I would have acquiesced in the will of God. It is easy to say what we would do if we were in such a one's case; but, when it comes to the trial, perhaps it will be found not so easy to do as we say. 2. Very good and seasonable advice to him, which Eliphaz transfers to himself in a figure; For my part, the best way I should think I could take, if I were in thy condition, would be to apply myself to God. Note, We should give our friends no other counsel but what we would take ourselves if we were in their case, that we may be easy under our afflictions, may get good by them, and may see a good issue of them. 1st. We must by prayer fetch in mercy and grace from God; seek to him as a Father and Friend, though he contend with us, as one who is alone able to support and succour us. His favour we must seek when we have lost all we have in the world; to him we must address ourselves as the fountain and Father of all good, all consolation. "Is any afflicted, let him pray." It is heart's ease, a salve for every sore. 2nd. We must by patience refer ourselves and our case to him; "To God would I commit my cause," having spread it before him, I would leave it with him; having laid it at his feet, I would lodge it in his hand. "Here I am, let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good." If our cause be indeed a good cause, we need not fear committing it to God, for he is both just and kind. They that would seek so as to speed must refer themselves to God.

Fourthly. He encourageth him thus to seek to God, and commit his cause to him. It will not be in vain to do so, for he is one in whom we shall find effectual help. Two things in God he recommends to his consideration:

1. God's almighty power and sovereign dominion. In general, he doth great things, ver. 9; great indeed, for he can do any thing, he doth do every thing; and all according to the counsel of his own will. Great indeed, for the operations of his power are, 1st. Unsearchable, and such as can never be fathomed, can never be found out, from the beginning to the end, *Eccl.* iii. 11. The works of nature are mysteries; the most curious searches come far short of full discoveries, and the wisest philosophers have owned themselves at a loss. The designs of Providence are much more deep and unaccountable, *Rom.* xi. 33. 2nd. Numerous, and such as can never be reckoned up. He doth great things without number; his power is never exhausted, nor will all his purposes ever be fulfilled till the end of time. 3rd. They are marvellous, and such as can never be sufficiently admired. Eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. Now, by the consideration of this, Eliphaz intends, *First.* To convince Job of his fault and folly in quarrelling with God. We must not pretend to pass a judgment upon his works, for they are unsearchable, and above our inquiries; nor must we strive with our Maker, for he will certainly be too hard for us, and is able to crush us in a moment. *Secondly.* To encourage Job to seek unto God, and to refer himself to him. What more encouraging than to see that he is one to whom power belongs? He can do great things and marvellous for our relief, when we are brought never so low.

2. He gives some instances of God's dominion and power. 1st. God doth great things in the kingdom of nature; he gives rain upon the earth, ver. 10; put here for all the gifts of common Providence, all the fruitful seasons by which he filleth our hearts with food and gladness, *Acts* xiv. 17. Observe, when he would shew what great things God doth, he speaks of his giving rain, which, because it is a common thing, we are apt to look upon as a little thing; but, if we duly consider both how it is produced and what is produced by it, we shall see it to be a great work, both of power and goodness. 2nd. He doth great things in the affairs of the children of men. Not only enricheth the poor, and comforts the needy by the rain he sends, ver. 10; but, in order to the advancing of those that be low, he disappoints the devices of the crafty, for ver. 11 is to be joined to ver. 12, and compared with *Lu.* i. 51—53, "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts," and so hath "exalted them of low degree," and "filled the hungry with good things." See,

First. How he frustrates the counsels of the proud and politic, ver. 12—14. There is a supreme power that manageth and overruleth men that think themselves free and absolute; and fulfils its own purposes, in despite of their projects. Observe, *1st.* The froward that walk contrary to God, and the interests of his kingdom, are often very crafty: for they are the seed of the old serpent, that was noted for his subtilty. They think themselves wise, but at their end will be fools. *2nd.* The froward enemies of God's kingdom have their devices, their enterprises, and their counsels against it, and against the loyal faithful subjects of it. They are restless and unwearied in their designs, close in their consultations, high in their hopes, deep in their politics, and fast linked in their confederacies, *Ps.* ii. 1, 2. *3rd.* God easily can, and (as far as is for his glory) certainly will, blast and defeat all the designs of his and his people's enemies. How were the plots of Ahithophel, Sanballat, and Haman baffled! the confederacies of Syria and Ephraim against Judah—of Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, against God's Israel—the kings of the earth and the princes against the Lord and against his Anointed, broken! The hands that have been stretched out against God and his church have not performed their enterprise, nor have the weapons formed against Zion prospered. *4th.* That which enemies have designed for the ruin of the church has often turned to their own ruin; ver. 13, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness, and snares them in the work of their own hands;" *Ps.* vii. 15; xvi. 9, 15, 16. This is quoted by the apostle, 1 *Cor.* iii. 19, to shew how the learned men of the heathen were befooled by their own vain philosophy. *5th.* When God infatuates men they are perplexed, and at a loss, even in those things that seem most plain and easy; ver. 14, "They meet with darkness even in the daytime;" nay, as it is in the margin, 'they run themselves into darkness' by the violence and precipitation of their own counsels: see *ch.* xii. 20, 24, 25.

Secondly. How he favours the cause of the poor and humble, and espouseth that. *1st.* He exalteth the humble, ver. 11. Those whom proud men contrive to crush, he raiseth from under their feet, and sets them in safety, *Ps.* xii. 5. The lowly in heart, and those that mourn, he advanceth, he comforteth, and makes them to dwell on high, in the munitions of rocks, *Isa.* xxxiii. 16. Zion's mourners are the sealed ones, marked for safety, *Eze.* ix. 4. *2nd.* He delivereth the oppressed, ver. 15. The designs of the crafty were to ruin the poor; tongue, and hand, and sword, and all are at work in order to this, but God takes them under his special protection, who being poor and unable to help themselves, being his poor, and devoted to his praise, have committed themselves to him. He saves them from the mouth that speaks hard things against them, and the hand that doth hard things against them; for he can, when he pleases, tie the tongue, and wither the hand.

And the effect of this is, ver. 16, 1. That weak and timorous saints are comforted; "So the poor hath hope," that began to despair. The experiences of some are encouragements to others to hope the best in the worst of times; for it is the glory of God to send help to the helpless, and hope to the hopeless. 2. That daring, threatening sinners are confounded; "Iniquity stoppeth her mouth," being surprised at the strangeness of the deliverance, ashamed of its enmity against those who appear to be the favourites of Heaven, mortified at the disappointment, and compelled to acknowledge the justice of God's proceedings, having nothing to object against them. Those that hectored

God's poor, that frighted them, menaced them, and falsely accused them, will have not a word to say against them when God appears for them; see *Ps.* lxxvi. 8, 9; *Isa.* xxvi. 11; *Mic.* vii. 16.

17 Behold, happy *is* the man whom God correcteth:
Therefore despise not thou the chastening of the
18 For he maketh sore, and bindeth up: [Almighty:
He woundeth, and his hands make whole.
19 He shall deliver thee in six troubles:
Yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.
20 In famine he shall redeem thee from death:
And in war from the power of the sword.
21 Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue:
Neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.
22 At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh:
Neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.
23 For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field:
And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.
24 And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle *shall be* in peace;
And thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.
25 Thou shalt know also that thy seed *shall be* great,
And thine offspring as the grass of the earth.
26 Thou shalt come to *thy* grave in a full age,
Like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.
27 Lo this, we have searched it, so it *is;*
Hear it, and know thou *it* for thy good.

Eliphaz, in this concluding paragraph of his discourse, gives Job (what he himself knew not how to take) a comfortable prospect of the issue of his afflictions, if he did but recover his temper, and accommodate himself to them. Observe,

First. The seasonable word of caution and exhortation that he gives him; ver. 17, "Despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." Call it a chastening which comes from the Father's love, and is designed for the child's good; call it the chastening of the Almighty, with whom it is madness to contend, to whom it is wisdom and duty to submit, and who will be a God all-sufficient (for so the word signifies) to all those that trust in him; do not despise it;—it is a copious word in the orignal. 1. Be not averse to it; let grace conquer the antipathy which nature has to suffering, and reconcile thyself to the will of God in it. We need the rod, and we deserve it, and therefore we ought not to think it either strange or hard if we feel the smart of it. Let not the heart rise against a bitter pill or potion, when it is prescribed us for our good. 2. Do not think ill of it; do not put it from you, as that which is either hurtful, or at least not useful,—which there is no occasion for, nor advantage by,—only because for the present it is not joyous, but grievous. We must never scorn to stoop to God, nor think it a thing below us to come under his discipline; but reckon, on the contrary, that God really magnifies a man when he thus visits and tries him, *ch.* vii. 17, 18. 3. Do not overlook and disregard it, as if it were only a chance, and the product of second causes; but take great notice of it as the voice of God, and a messenger from heaven. More is implied than is expressed. 'Reverence the chastening of the Lord;' have an humble awful regard to his correcting hand, and tremble when the lion roars, *Amos* iii. 8. Submit to the chastening, and study to answer the calls, to answer the end of it; and then you reverence it. When God, by an affliction, draws upon us for some of the effects he has intrusted us with, we must honour his bill, by accepting it, and subscribing it, resigning him his own when he calls for it.

Secondly. The comfortable words of encouragement which he gives him, thus to accommodate himself to his condition, and, as he himself had expressed it, to receive evil from the hand of God, and not despise it as a gift not worth the accepting. If his affliction was thus borne,

1. The nature and property of it would be altered. Though it looked like a man's misery, it would really be his bliss. "Happy is the man whom God correcteth," if he make but a due improvement of the correction. A good man is happy, though he be afflicted; for, whatever he has lost, he has not lost his enjoyment of God, nor his title to heaven; nay, he is happy, because he is afflicted. Correction is an evidence of his sonship, and a means of his sanctification; it mortifies his corruptions, weans his heart from the world, draws him nearer to God, brings him to his Bible, brings him to his knees, works him for, and so is working for him, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. "Happy, therefore, is the man whom God correcteth," *Jas.* i. 12.

2. The issue and consequent of it would be very good, ver. 18. 1st. Though he maketh sore the body with sore boils, the mind with sad thoughts, yet he bindeth up at the same time, as the skilful, tender surgeon binds up the wounds he had occasion to make with his incision knife. When God makes sore by the rebukes of his providence, he binds up by the consolations of his Spirit, which oftentimes abound most as afflictions do abound, and balance them to the unspeakable satisfaction of the patient sufferers. 2nd. Though he wounds, yet his hands make whole in due time; as he supports his people, and makes them easy under their afflictions, so in due time he delivers them, and makes a way for them to escape. All is well again; and he comforts them according to the time wherein he afflicted them. God's usual method is first to wound and then to heal, first to convince and then to comfort, first to humble and then to exalt; and, as Mr. Caryl observes, he never makes a wound too great, too deep for his own cure. *Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit,*—'The hand that inflicts the wound applies the cure.' God tears the wicked and goes away,—let them heal that will, if they can, *Hos.* v. 14; but the humble and penitent may say, "He has torn and he will heal us," *Hos.* vi. 1.

This is general; but in the following verses he applies himself directly to Job, and gives him many precious promises of great and kind things which God would do for him, if he did but humble himself under his hand. Though then they had no Bibles that we know of, yet Eliphaz had sufficient warrant to give Job these assurances from the general discoveries God had made of his good will to his people. And though in every thing which Job's friends said they were not directed by the Spirit of God, for they spake both of God and Job some things that were not right, yet the general doctrines they laid down, spake the pious sense of the patriarchal age; and as St. Paul quoted ver. 13 for canonical scripture, and the command, ver. 17, is no doubt binding to us, so these promises here may be and must be received and applied as Divine promises, and we may, through patience and comfort of this part of Scripture, have hope. Let us therefore give diligence to make sure our interest in these promises, and then view the particulars of them, and take the comfort of them.

1st. It is here promised that, as afflictions and troubles do recur, supports and deliverances shall be graciously repeated, be it never so often. In six troubles he shall be ready to deliver thee; yea, and in seven. This intimates that as long as we are here in this world we must expect a succession of troubles, that the clouds will return after the rain. After six troubles may come a seventh. After many, look for more; but out of them all will God deliver those that are his, 2 *Tim.* iii. 11; *Ps.* xxxiv. 19. Former deliverances are earnests of,—not, as among men, excuses from,—farther deliverances, *Pr.* xix. 19.

2nd. That, whatever troubles good men may be in, there shall no evil touch them. They shall do them no real harm; the malignity of them shall be taken out; they shall be unstung, they may hiss, they cannot hurt, *Ps.* xci. 10. The evil one toucheth not God's children, 1 *Jno.* v. 18. Being kept from sin, they are kept from the evil of every trouble.

3rd. That, when desolating judgments are abroad, they shall be take nunder special protection, ver. 20. Do many perish about them for want of the necessary supports of life, they shall be supplied; "In famine he shall redeem thee from death;" whatever becomes of others, thou shalt be "kept alive," *Ps.* xxxiii. 19. "Verily thou shalt be fed," nay, even "in the days of famine thou shalt be satisfied," *Ps.* xxxvii. 3, 19. In time of war, when thousands fall on thy right and left hand, he shall "redeem thee from the power of the sword." If God pleaseth, it shall not touch thee, or if it wound thee, if it kill thee, it shall not hurt thee; it can but kill the body, nor has it power to do that unless it be given from above.

4th. That, whatever is maliciously said against them, it shall not affect them to do them any hurt, ver. 21. Thou shalt not only be protected from the killing sword of war, but shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, which, like a scourge, is vexing and painful, though not mortal. The best men and the most inoffensive cannot, even with their innocency, secure themselves from calumny, reproach, and false accusation; from these a man cannot hide himself, but God can hide him, so that the most malicious slanders shall be so little heeded by him as not to disturb his peace, and so little heeded by others as not to blemish his reputation. And the remainder of his wrath God can and doth restrain; for it is owing to the hold he hath of the consciences of bad men that the scourge of the tongue is not the ruin of all the comforts of good men in this world.

5th. That they shall have a holy security, and serenity of mind arising from their hope and confidence in God, even in the worst of times. When dangers are most threatening, they shall be easy, believing themselves safe; and shall not be afraid of destruction, no, not when they see it coming, ver. 21; nor of the beasts of the field when they set upon them, or of men as cruel as beasts; nay, "at destruction and famine thou shalt laugh," ver. 22, not so as to despise any of God's chastenings, or make a jest of his judgments, but so as to triumph in God and his power and goodness, and therein to triumph over the world and all its grievances; to be not only easy, but cheerful and joyful in tribulation. Blessed Paul laughed at destruction, when he said, "O death! where is thy sting?" when, in the name of all the saints, he defied all the calamities of this present time to separate us from the love of God, concluding that "in all these things we are more than conquerors," *Rom.* viii. 35, &c.: see *Isa.* xxxvii. 22.

6th. That, being at peace with God, there shall be a covenant of friendship between them and the whole creation, ver. 23. When thou walkest thy grounds thou shalt not need to fear stumbling, for thou shalt be at league with the stones of the field not to dash thy foot against any of them; nor shalt thou be in danger from the beasts of the field, for they all shall be at peace with thee: compare *Hos.* ii. 18, "I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field." This implies that, while man is at enmity with his Maker, the inferior creatures are at war with him, but *tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia,*—'a reconciled God reconciles all things.' Our covenant with God is a covenant with all the creatures that they shall do us no hurt, but be ready to serve us and do us good.

7th. That their houses and families shall be comfortable to them, ver. 24. Peace and piety in the family will make it so. Thou shalt know and be assured that thy tabernacle is and shall be in peace; mayest be confident both of the present and future prosperity of it; 'that peace is thy tabernacle,' so the word is. They that dwell in God, and are at home in him, peace is the house in which they dwell. "Thou shalt visit," that is, inquire into the affairs of, "thy habitation," and take a review of them, "and shalt not sin." *First.* God will provide a settlement for his people, mean, perhaps, and moveable, a cottage, a tabernacle, but a fixed and quiet habitation. "Thou shalt not sin," or wander; that is, as some understand it, thou shalt not be a fugitive and a vagabond, Cain's curse, but shalt dwell in the land, and verily, not uncertainly, as vagrants, shalt thou be fed. *Secondly.* Their families shall be taken under the special protection of the Divine providence, and shall prosper as far as is for their good. *Thirdly.* They shall be assured of peace, and of the continuance and entail of it. Thou shalt know to thine unspeakable satisfaction, that peace is sure to thee and thine, having the word of God for it. Providence may change, but the promise cannot. *Fourthly.* They shall have wisdom to govern their families aright, to order their affairs with discretion, and to look well to the ways of their household, which is here called visiting their habitation. Masters of families must not be strangers at home, but have a watchful eye over what they have, and what their servants do. *Fifthly.* They shall have grace to manage the concerns of their families after a godly sort, and not to sin in the management of them. They shall call their servants to account without pride, passion, covetousness, worldliness, or the like; look into their affairs without discontent at what is, or distrust of what shall be. Family piety crowns family peace and prosperity. The greatest blessing, both in our employments and in our enjoyments, is to be kept from sin in them. When we are abroad, it is comfortable to hear that our tabernacle is in peace; and when we return home, to visit our habitation with satisfaction in our success, that we have not miscarried in our business, and with a good conscience that we have not offended God.

8th. That their posterity shall be numerous and prosperous. Job had lost all his children; but, saith Eliphaz, if thou return to God, he will again build up thy family, and thy seed shall be many, and as great as ever thou wast, and thine offspring increasing and flourishing as the grass of the earth, ver. 25, and thou shalt know it. God has blessings in store for the seed of the faithful, which they shall have if they do not stand in their own light, and forfeit them by their folly. It is a comfort to parents to see the prosperity, especially the

spiritual prosperity, of their children; if they are truly good, they are truly great, how small a figure soever they make in the world.

9th. That their death shall be seasonable, and they shall finish their course at length with joy and honour, ver. 26. It is a great mercy, *First.* To live to a full age, and not to have the number of our months cut off in the midst. If the providence of God do not give us long life, if the grace of God gives us to be satisfied with the time allotted us, we may be said to come to a full age. That man lives long enough that has done his work, and is fit for another world. *Secondly.* To be willing to die, to come cheerfully to the grave, and not to be forced thither, as he whose soul was required of him. *Thirdly.* To die seasonably, as the corn is cut and housed when it is full ripe; not till then, but then not suffered to stand a day longer, lest it shed. Our times are in God's hand; it is well they are so, for he will take care that those who are his die in the best time; however their death may seem to us untimely, it will be found not unseasonable.

In the last verse he recommends those promises to Job, *1st.* As faithful sayings, which he might be confident of the truth of; "Lo, this we have searched, and so it is." We have, indeed, received these things by tradition from our fathers, but we have not taken them upon trust; we have carefully searched them, have compared spiritual things with spiritual, have diligently studied them, and been confirmed in our belief of them from our own observation and experience; and we are all of a mind that so it is. Truth is a treasure that is well worth digging for, diving for; and then we shall know both how to value it ourselves, and how to communicate it to others, when we have taken pains in searching it. *2nd.* As well worthy of all acceptation, which he might improve to his great advantage; "Hear it, and know thou it for thy good." It is not enough to hear and know the truth, but we must improve it, and be made wiser and better by it, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the commanding power of it. 'Know it for thyself,' so the word is; with application to thyself and thy own case; not only this is true, but this is true concerning me. That which we thus hear and know for ourselves, we hear and know for our good; as the meat we digest we are nourished by. And that is indeed a good sermon that doth us good.

CHAPTER VI.

Eliphaz concluded his discourse with an air of assurance; very confident he was that what he had said was so plain, and so pertinent, that nothing could be objected in answer to it. But though he that is first in his own cause seemeth just, yet his neighbour comes and searcheth him. Job is not convinced by all he had said, but still justifies himself in his complaints, and condemns him for the weakness of his arguing. I. He shews that he had just cause to complain as he did of his troubles, and so it would appear to any impartial judge, ver. 2—7. II. He continues his passionate wish, that he might speedily be cut off by the stroke of death, and so be eased of all his miseries, ver. 8—13. III. He reproves his friends for their uncharitable censures of him, and the unkind treatment they gave him, ver. 14—30. It must be owned that Job in all this spoke a deal of reason, but with a mixture of passion and human infirmity; and in this contest, and indeed in most contests, there was fault on both sides.

BUT Job answered and said,

2 Oh that my grief were throughly weighed,
And my calamity laid in the balances together!
3 For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea:
Therefore my words are swallowed up
4 For the arrows of the Almighty *are* within me,
The poison whereof drinketh up my spirit:
The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.
5 Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass?
Or loweth the ox over his fodder?
6 Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?
Or is there *any* taste in the white of an egg?
7 The things *that* my soul refused to touch
Are as my sorrowful meat.

Eliphaz, in the beginning of his discourse, had been very sharp upon Job, and yet it doth not appear that Job gave him any interruption, but heard him patiently until he had said all he had to say. They that would make an impartial judgment of a discourse must hear it out, and take it entire. But when he had concluded, he makes his reply, in which he speaks very feelingly.

First. He represents his calamity in general as much heavier than either he had expressed it, or they had apprehended it, ver. 2, 3. He could not fully describe it, they would not fully apprehend it, or at least not own that they did. And therefore he would gladly appeal to a third person, that had but just weights and just balances with which to weigh his grief and calamity, and would do it with an impartial hand. He wisheth that they would set his grief in one scale, and all the expressions of it, his calamity in the other, and all the particulars of it; and, though he would not altogether justify himself in his grief, yet they would find as he saith, *ch.* xxiii. 2, that his stroke was heavier than his groaning; for, whatever his grief was, his calamity was heavier than the sand of the sea; it was complicated, it was aggravated, every grievance weighty, and altogether numerous as the sand; "Therefore," saith he, "my words are swallowed up;" that is, Therefore you must excuse both the brokenness and the bitterness of my expressions; therefore, do not think it strange if my speech be not so fine and polite as that of an eloquent orator, or so grave and regular as that of a morose philosopher. No, in these circumstances I can pretend neither to the one nor to the other, my words are, as I am, quite swallowed up.

Now, 1. He hereby complains of it as his unhappiness, that his friends undertook to administer spiritual physic to him before they thoroughly understood his case, and knew the worst of it. It is seldom that those who are at ease themselves rightly weigh the afflictions of the afflicted; every one feels most from his own burthen, few feel from other people's. 2. He excuseth the passionate expressions he had used when he cursed his day. Though he could not himself justify all he had said, yet he thought his friends should not thus violently condemn it, for really the case was extraordinary; and that might be connived at in such a man of sorrow as he now was, which in any common grief would by no means be allowed of. 3. He bespeaks the charitable and compassionate sympathy of his friends with him, and hopes, by representing the greatness of his calamity, to bring them to a better temper towards him. To those that are pained it is some ease to be pitied.

Secondly. He complains of the trouble and terror of mind he was in, as the sorest part of his calamity, ver. 4. Herein he was a type of Christ, who in his sufferings complained most of the sufferings of his soul; "Now is my soul troubled," *Jno.* xii. 27; "My soul is exceeding sorrowful," *Mat.* xxvi. 37, 38; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" *Mat.* xxvii. 46. Poor Job sadly complains here, 1. Of what he felt; "The arrows of the Almighty are within me." It was not so much the troubles themselves he was under that put him into this confusion, his poverty, disgrace, and bodily pain, but that which cut him to the heart, and put him into this mighty toss, was, to think that the God he loved and served had brought all this upon him, and laid him under these marks of his displeasure. Note, Trouble of mind is the sorest trouble; "a wounded spirit, who can bear?" Whatever burthen of affliction in body or estate God is pleased to lay upon us, we may well afford to submit to it as long as he continues to us the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences; but if in either of these we be disturbed, our case is sad indeed, and very piteous. The way to prevent God's fiery darts of trouble is with the shield of faith to quench Satan's fiery darts of temptation. Observe, He calls them "the arrows of the Almighty;" for it is an instance of the power of God above that of any man, that he can with his arrows reach the soul. He that made it can make his sword to approach to it. The poison or heat of these arrows is said to drink up his spirit, because it disturbed his reason, shook his resolution, exhausted his vigour, and threatened his life; and therefore his passionate expressions, though they could not be justified, yet might be excused. 2. Of what he feared. He saw himself charged by the terrors of God, as by an army set in battle array, and surrounded by them. God, by his terrors, fought against him. As he had no comfort when he retired inward into his own bosom, so he had none when he looked upward towards heaven. He that used to be encouraged with the consolations of God, not only wanted those, but was amazed with the terrors of God.

Thirdly. He reflects upon his friends for their severe censures of his complaints, and their unskilful management of his case. 1. Their reproofs were causeless. He complained, it is true, now he was in this affliction; but he never used to complain, as those do who are of a fretful, unquiet spirit, when he was in prosperity. He did not bray when he had grass, nor low over his fodder, ver. 5. But, now he was utterly deprived of all his comforts, he must be a stock or a stone, and not have the sense of an ox or a wild ass, if he did not give some vent to his grief. He was forced to eat unsavoury meats, and was so poor he had not a grain of salt wherewith to relish them, nor to give a little taste to the white of an egg, which was now the choicest dish he had at his table, ver. 6; and even that food which, when time was, he would have scorned to touch, now he was glad of, and it was his sorrowful meat, ver. 7. Note, It is wisdom not to use ourselves or our children to be nice and dainty about meat and drink, because we know not how we or they may be reduced, nor how that which we now disdain may be made acceptable by necessity. 2. Their comforts were sapless and insipid; so some understand, ver. 6, 7. He complains he had nothing now offered him for his relief that was proper for him, no cordial, nothing to revive and cheer his spirits; what they had afforded was in itself as tasteless as the white of an egg, and, when applied to him, as loathsome and burthensome as the most sorrowful meat. I am sorry he should say thus of what Eliphaz had excellently well said, *ch.* v. 8, &c.; but peevish spirits are too apt thus to abuse their comforters.

8 Oh that I might have my request;
And that God would grant *me* the thing that I long for!
9 Even that it would please God to destroy me;
That he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!
10 Then should I yet have comfort;
Yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare;
For I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.
11 What *is* my strength, that I should hope?
And what *is* mine end, that I should prolong my life?
12 *Is* my strength the strength of stones?
Or *is* my flesh of brass?
13 *Is* not my help in me?
And is wisdom driven quite from me?

Ungoverned passion often grows more violent when it meets with some rebuke and check. The troubled sea rages most when it dasheth to a rock. Job had been courting death, as that which would be the happy period of his miseries, *ch.* iii. For this Eliphaz had gravely reproved him; but he, instead of unsaying it, saith it here again with more vehemence than before, and it is as ill said as almost any thing we meet with in all his discourses; and is recorded for our admonition, not our imitation.

First. He is still most passionately desirous to die; as if it were not possible that he should ever see good days again in this world, or that, by the exercise of grace and devotion, he might make even these days of affliction good days. He could see no end of his trouble but death, and had not patience to wait the time appointed for that. He has a request to make; there is a thing he longs for, ver. 8, and what is that? One would think it should be, 'That it would please God to deliver me, and restore me to my prosperity again.' No, "That it would please God to destroy me," ver. 9. As once he let loose his hand to make me poor, and then to make me sick, let him loose it once more to put an end to my life. Let him give the fatal stroke, it shall be to me the *coup de grace*,—'the stroke of favour,' as in France they call the last blow which despatches them that are broken on the wheel. There was a time when destruction from the Almighty was a terror to Job, *ch.* xxxi. 23; yet now he courts the destruction of the flesh, but in hope that the spirit should be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Observe, Though Job was extremely desirous of death, and very angry at its delays, yet he did not offer to destroy himself, nor to take away his own life; only he begged that it would please God to destroy him. Seneca's morals, which recommend self-murder as the lawful redress of insupportable grievances, were not then known, nor will ever be entertained by any that have the least regard to the law of God and nature. How uneasy soever the soul's confinement in the body may be, it must by no means break prison, but wait for a fair discharge.

Secondly. He puts this desire into a prayer, that God would grant him this request; that it would please God to do this for him. It was his sin so passionately to desire the hastening of his own death, and offering up that desire to God made it no better; nay, what looked ill in his wish, looked worse in his prayer; for we ought not to ask any thing of God but what we can ask in

faith, and we cannot ask any thing in faith but what is agreeable to the will of God. Passionate prayers are the worst of passionate expressions; for we should lift up pure hands without wrath.

Thirdly. He promiseth himself effectual relief, and the redress of all his grievances by the stroke of death; ver. 10, "Then should I yet have comfort," which now I have not, nor ever expect till then. See, 1. The vanity of human life. So uncertain a good is it, that oftentimes it proves men's greatest burthen, and nothing so desirable as to get clear of it. Let grace make us willing to part with it whenever God calls; for it may so happen that even sense may make us desirous to part with it before he calls. 2. The hope which the righteous have in their death. If Job had not had a good conscience, he could not have spoken with this assurance of comfort on the other side death, which turns the tables between the rich man and Lazarus, "Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

Fourthly. He challengeth death to do its worst. If he could not die without the dreadful prefaces of bitter pains, and agonies, and strong convulsions,—if he must be racked before he be executed,—yet, in prospect of dying at last, he would make nothing of dying pains. "I would harden myself in sorrow," would open my breast to receive death's darts, and not shrink from them; "let him not spare;" I desire no mitigation of that pain which will put a happy period to all my pains. Rather than not die, let me die so as to feel myself die. These are passionate words, which might better have been spared. We should soften ourselves in sorrow, that we may receive the good impressions of it; and by the sadness of the countenance, our hearts being made tender, may be made better: but, if we harden ourselves, we provoke God to proceed in his controversy; for when he judgeth he will overcome. And it is great presumption to dare the Almighty, and to say, "Let him not spare; for are we stronger than he?" 1 *Cor.* x. 22. We are much indebted to sparing mercy: it is bad indeed with us when we are sick of that. Let us rather say with David, "O spare me a little."

Fifthly. He grounds his comfort upon the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had been faithful and firm to his profession of religion, and some way useful and serviceable to the glory of God in his generation; "I have not concealed the words of the Holy One." Observe, 1. Job had the words of the Holy One committed to him. The people of God were at that time blessed with Divine revelation. 2. It was his comfort that he had not concealed them, had not received the grace of God therein in vain. 1st. He had not kept them from himself, but had given them full scope to operate upon him, and in every thing to guide and govern him. He had not stifled his convictions, imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness, nor done any thing to hinder the digestion of this spiritual food, and the operation of this spiritual physic. Let us never conceal God's Word from ourselves, but always receive it in the light of it. 2nd. He had not kept them to himself, but had been ready on all occasions to communicate his knowledge for the good of others; was never ashamed or afraid to own the Word of God to be his rule, nor remiss in his endeavours to bring others into an acquaintance with it. Note, Those, and those only, may promise themselves comfort in death who are good and do good while they live.

Sixthly. He justifies himself, in this extreme desire of death, from the deplorable condition he was now in, ver. 11, 12. Eliphaz, in the close of his discourse, had put him in hopes that he should yet see a good issue of his troubles; but poor Job puts these cordials away from him, refuseth to be comforted, abandons himself to despair, and very ingeniously, yet perversely, argues against the encouragements that were given him. Disconsolate spirits will reason strangely against themselves. In answer to the pleasing prospects Eliphaz had flattered him with, he here intimates,

1. That he had no reason to expect any such thing; "What is my strength that I should hope?" You see how I am weakened and brought low, how unable I am to grapple with my distempers, and therefore what reason have I to hope that I should outlive them, and see better days? "Is my strength the strength of stones?" Are my muscles brass, and sinews steel? No, they are not; and therefore I cannot hold out always in this pain and misery, but must needs sink under the load. Had I strength to grapple with my distemper, I might hope to look through it; but, alas! I have not. The weakening of my strength in the way will certainly be the shortening of my days, *Ps.* cii. 23. Note, All things considered, we have no reason to count upon the long continuance of life in this world. What is our strength? It is depending strength; we have no more strength than God gives us, for in him we live and move. It is decaying strength; we are daily spending upon the quick stock of it, and by degrees it will be exhausted. It is disproportionable to the encounters we may meet with; what is our strength to be depended upon, when two or three days' sickness will make us weak as water? Instead of expecting a long life, we have reason to admire that we have lived hitherto, and to see ourselves hastening off apace.

2. That he had no reason to desire any such thing. "What is my end that I should desire to prolong my life?" What comfort can I promise myself in life comparable to the comfort I promise myself in death? Note, Those that, through grace, are ready for another world, cannot see much to invite their stay in this world, or to make them fond of it. That, if it be God's will, we may do him more service, and may get to be fitter and riper for heaven, is an end for which we may wish the prolonging of life, in subserviency to our chief end; but, otherwise, what can we propose to ourselves in desiring to tarry here? The burthens of life will be ever the longer the more grievous, *Eccl.* xii. 1; and the delights of life will be ever the longer the less pleasant, 2 *Sam.* xix. 34. We have already seen the best of this world; but we are not sure that we have seen the worst of it.

Seventhly. He obviates the suspicion of his being delirious; ver. 13, "Is not my help in me?" that is, Have I not the use of my reason, with which, I thank God, I can help myself, though you do not help me? Do you think wisdom is driven quite from me, and that I am gone distracted? No, I am not mad, most noble Eliphaz, but speak the words of truth and soberness. Note, Those who have grace in them, who have the evidence of it, and have it in exercise, have wisdom in them, which will be their help in the worst of times. *Sat lucis intus*,—'they have light within.'

14 To him that is afflicted pity *should be shewed* from his friend;
But he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.
15 My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook,
And as the stream of brooks they pass away;
16 Which are blackish by reason of the ice,
And wherein the snow is hid:
17 What time they wax warm, they vanish:
When it is hot, they are consumed out of their place.
18 The paths of their way are turned aside;
They go to nothing, and perish.
19 The troops of Tema looked,
The companies of Sheba waited for them.
20 They were confounded because they had hoped;
They came thither, and were ashamed.
21 For now ye are nothing;
Ye see *my* casting down, and are afraid.

Eliphaz had been very severe in his censures of Job; and his companions, though as yet they had said little, yet had intimated their concurrence with him. Their unkindness therein poor Job here complains of, as an aggravation of his calamity, and a farther excuse of his desire to die; for what satisfaction could he ever expect in this world, when those that should be his comforters thus proved his tormentors?

First. He shews what reason he had to expect kindness from them. His expectation was grounded upon the common principles of humanity; ver. 14, "To him that is afflicted," and that is wasting and melting under his affliction, "pity should be shewed from his friend," and he that doth not shew that pity "forsaketh the fear of the Almighty." Note, 1. Compassion is a debt owing to those that are in affliction. The least which those that are at ease can do for those that are pained and in anguish is to pity them; to manifest the sincerity of a tender concern for them, and sympathy with them; to take cognizance of their case, inquire into their grievances, hear their complaints, and mingle our tears with theirs; to comfort them, and do all we can to help and relieve them. This well becomes the members of the same body, who should feel for the grievances of their fellow members, not knowing how soon the same may be their own. 2. Inhumanity is impiety and irreligion. 'He that withholds compassion from his friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty,' so the Chaldee. "How dwells the love of God in this man?" 1 *Jno.* iii. 17. Surely those have no fear of the rod of God upon themselves who have no compassion for those that feel the smart of it: see *Jas.* i. 27. 3. Troubles are the trials of friendship. When a man is afflicted, he will see who are his friends indeed, and who are but pretenders, for a brother is born for adversity, *Pr.* xvii. 17; xviii. 24.

Secondly. He shews how wretchedly he was disappointed in his expectations from them; ver. 15, "My brethren," who should have helped me, "have dealt deceitfully as a brook." They came by appointment, with a great deal of ceremony, to mourn with him, and to comfort him, *ch.* ii. 11; and some mighty things were expected from such great men, such good men, such wise, learned, knowing men, and Job's particular friends. None questioned but that the drift of their discourses would be to comfort Job with the remembrance of his former piety, the assurance of God's favour to him, and the prospect of a glorious issue; but, instead of this, they most barbarously fall upon him with their reproaches and censures, condemn him as a hypocrite, insult over his calamities, and pour vinegar instead of oil into his wounds; and thus they dealt deceitfully with him. Note, 1. It is fraud and deceit, not only to violate our engagements to our friends, but to frustrate their just expectations from us; especially the expectations we have raised. 2. It is our wisdom to cease from man; we cannot expect too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. It is no new thing even for brethren to deal deceitfully, *Jer.* ix. 4, 5; *Mic.* vii. 5; let us therefore put our confidence in the Rock of ages, not in broken reeds,—in the Fountain of life, not in broken cisterns. God will outdo our hopes as much as men come short of them. This disappointment which he met with he here illustrates by the failing of the brooks in summer.

1st. The similitude is very elegant, ver. 15—20. *First.* Their pretensions are fitly compared to the great show which the brooks make when they are swelled with the waters of a land flood, by the melting of the ice and snow, which makes them blackish or muddy, ver. 16. *Secondly.* His expectations from them, which their coming so solemnly to comfort him had raised, he compares to the expectation which the weary, thirsty travellers have of finding water in the summer there where they have often seen it in great abundance in the winter: ver. 19, "The troops of Tema and Sheba," the caravans of the merchants of those countries, whose road lay through the deserts of Arabia, looked and waited for supply of water from those brooks. Hard by here, saith one; a little farther, saith another; when I last travelled this way there was water enough, we shall have that to refresh us. Where we have met with relief and comfort we are apt to expect it again, and yet it doth not follow. For, *Thirdly.* The disappointment of his expectation is here compared to the confusion which seizeth the poor travellers when they find heaps of sand where they expected floods of water. In the winter, when they were not thirsty, there was water enough. Every one will applaud and admire those that are full and in prosperity, but in the heat of summer, when they needed water, then it failed them, was consumed, ver. 17; it was turned aside, ver. 18. When those that are rich and high are sunk and impoverished, and stand in need of comfort, then those that before gathered about them stand aloof from them; that before commended them, are forward to run them down. Thus they that raise their expectations high from the creature will find it fail them then when it should help them; whereas they that make God their confidence have help in the time of need, *Heb.* iv. 16. They that make gold their hope sooner or later will be ashamed of it, and of their confidence in it, *Eze.* vii. 19; and the greater their confidence was the greater their shame will be; "They were confounded, because they had hoped," ver. 20. We prepare confusion for ourselves by our vain hopes; the reeds break under us, because we lean upon them. If we build a house upon the sand, we shall certainly be confounded; for it will fall in the storm; and we must thank ourselves for being such fools as to expect it would stand. We are not deceived, unless we deceive ourselves.

2nd. The application is very close; ver. 21, "For now ye are nothing." They seemed to be somewhat, but in conference they added nothing to him: compare *Gal.* ii. 6. He was never the wiser, never the better, for the visit they made him. Note, Whatever complacency we may take, or whatever confidence we may put, in creatures, how great soever they may seem, and how dear soever they may be to us, one time or other we shall say of them, "Now, ye are nothing." When Job was in prosperity, his friends were something to him, he took complacency in them and their society; But now ye are nothing, now I can find no comfort but in God. It were well for us if we had always such convictions of the vanity of the creature, and its insufficiency to make us happy, as we have sometimes had, or shall have, on a sick-bed, a death-bed, or in trouble of conscience. "Now ye are nothing;" you are not what you have been, what you should be, what you pretend to be, what I thought you would have been, for "you see my casting down, and are afraid." When you saw me in my elevation, you caressed me, but now you see me in my dejection you are shy of me,—are afraid of shewing yourselves kind, lest I should take the boldness from thence to beg something of you, or to borrow. Compare

ver. 22; are afraid lest, if you own me, you should be obliged to keep me. Perhaps they were afraid of catching his distemper, or of coming within smell of the noisomeness of it. It is not good, either out of pride or niceness, for love of our purses or of our bodies, to be shy of those in distress, and afraid of coming near them. Their case may soon be our own.

22 Did I say, Bring unto me?
Or, Give a reward for me of your substance?
23 Or, Deliver me from the enemy's hand?
Or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty?
24 Teach me, and I will hold my tongue:
And cause me to understand wherein I have erred.
25 How forcible are right words!
But what doth your arguing reprove?
26 Do ye imagine to reprove words, [wind?
And the speeches of one that is desperate, *which are* as
27 Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless,
And ye dig *a pit* for your friend.
28 Now therefore be content, look upon me;
For *it is* evident unto you if I lie.
29 Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity;
Yea, return again, my righteousness *is* in it.
30 Is there iniquity in my tongue?
Cannot my taste discern perverse things?

Poor Job goes on here to upbraid his friends with their unkindness, and the hard usage they gave him. He here appeals to themselves concerning several things which tended both to justify him and condemn them. If they would but think impartially, and speak as they thought, they could not but own,

First. That, though he was necessitous, yet he was not craving, nor burthensome to his friends. Those that are so, whose troubles serve them to beg by, are commonly less pitied than the silent poor. Job would be glad to see his friends, but he did not say, "Bring unto me," ver. 22, or, "Deliver me," ver. 23. He did not desire to put them to any expense, did not send abroad to urge his friends either, 1st. To make a collection for him, to set him up again in the world, though he could plead that his losses came upon him by the hand of God, and not by any fault or folly of his own; that he was utterly ruined and impoverished; that he had lived in good fashion, and when he had wherewithal was charitable, and ready to help those that were in distress; that his friends were rich, and able to help him; yet he did not say, "Give me of your substance." Note, A good man, when troubled himself, is afraid of being troublesome to his friends. Or, 2nd. To raise the country for him, to help him to recover his cattle out of the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, or to make reprisals upon them. Did I send for you to deliver me out of the hand of the mighty? No; I never expected you should either expose yourselves to any danger or put yourselves to any charge upon my account; I will rather sit down content under my affliction, and make the best of it, than spunge upon my friends. St. Paul worked with his hands that he might not be burthensome to any. Job's not asking their help did not excuse them from offering it when he needed it, and it was in the power of their hands to give it; but it much aggravated their unkindness, when he desired no more from them but a good look and a good word, and yet could not obtain that. From man oftentimes, even when we expect little, yet we have less, but from God, even when expect much, yet we have more, *Eph.* iii. 20.

Secondly. That, though he differed in opinion from them, yet he was not obstinate, but ready to yield to conviction, and to strike sail to truth as soon as ever it was made to appear to him that he was in an error, ver. 24, 25. If, instead of invidious reflections, and uncharitable insinuations, you will give me plain instructions and solid arguments, that shall carry their own evidence along with them, I am ready to acknowledge my error, and own myself in a fault; "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue;" for I have often found with pleasure and wonder how forcible right words are. But the method you take will never make proselytes; "what doth your arguing reprove?" Your hypothesis is false, your surmises groundless, your management weak, and your application peevish and uncharitable. Note, 1. Fair reasoning has a commanding power; and it is a wonder if men are not conquered by it; but railing and foul language is impotent and foolish, and it is no wonder if men are exasperated and hardened by it. 2. It is the undoubted character of every honest man, that he is truly desirous to have his mistakes rectified, and to be made to understand wherein he has erred; and that right words, when they appear to him to be so, though contrary to his former sentiments, are both forcible and acceptable.

Thirdly. That, though he had been indeed in a fault, yet they ought not to have given him such hard usage; ver. 26, 27, "Do you imagine," or contrive with a great deal of art, (for so the word signifies,) "to reprove words," some passionate expressions of mine, in this desperate condition, as if they were certain indications of reigning impiety and atheism? A little candour and charity would have served to excuse them, and to put a better construction upon them. Shall a man's spiritual state be judged of by some rash and hasty words, which a surprising trouble extorts from him? Is it fair, is it kind, is it just, to criticise in such a case? Would you yourselves be served thus? Two things aggravated their unkind treatment of him: 1. That they took advantage of his weakness, and the helpless condition he was in; "Ye overwhelm the fatherless," a proverbial expression, speaking that which is most barbarous and inhuman. The fatherless cannot secure themselves from insults, which emboldens men of base and sordid spirits to insult them, and trample upon them, and you do so by me. Job being a childless father, thought himself as much exposed to injury as a fatherless child, *Ps.* cxxvii. 5, and had reason to take it ill at those who therefore triumphed over him. Let those who overwhelm and overpower them that upon any account may be looked upon as fatherless, know that therein they not only put off the compassions of man, but fight against the compassions of God, who is, and will be, a father of the fatherless, and a helper of the helpless. 2. That they made pretence of kindness; "You dig a pit for your friend;" not only you are unkind to me, who am your friend, but under colour of friendship you ensnare me. When they came to see him, and sit with him, he thought he might speak his mind freely to them, and that the more bitter his complaints to them were, the more they would have endeavoured to comfort him. This made him take a greater liberty than otherwise he would have done. David, though he smothered his resentments when the wicked were before him, it is likely would have given vent to them if none had been by but friends, *Ps.* xxxix. 1. But this freedom of speech, which their professions of concern for him made him use, had exposed him to their censures, and so they might be said to dig a pit for him. Thus, when our hearts are hot within us, what is ill done we are apt to misrepresent as if done designedly.

Fourthly. That, though he had let fall some passionate expressions, yet for the main he was in the right, and that his afflictions, though very extraordinary, did not prove him to be a hypocrite, or wicked man. His righteousness he holds fast, and will not let it go. For the evincing of it he here appeals,

1. To what they saw in him; ver. 28, Be content, and look upon me, what do you see in me that speaks me either a mad man or an ill man? Nay, look in my face, and you may discern there the indications of a patient and submissive spirit, for all this. Let the show of my countenance witness for me that, though I have cursed my day, I do not curse my God. Or rather, Look upon my ulcers, and sore boils, and by them it will be evident to you that I do not lie; that is, that I do not complain without cause. Let your own eyes convince you that my condition is very sad, and I do not quarrel with God by making it worse than it is.

2. To what they heard from him; ver. 30, You hear what I have to say now, "is there iniquity in my tongue?" that iniquity that you charge me with? have I blasphemed God, or renounced him? Are not my present arguings right? Do not you perceive by what I say that I can discern perverse things? I can discover your fallacies and mistakes; and if I were myself in an error I could perceive it. Whatever you think of me, I know what I say.

3. To their own second and sober thoughts; ver. 29, "Return, I pray you," consider the thing over again, without prejudice and partiality, and let not the result be iniquity, let it not be an unrighteous sentence; and you will find my righteousness is in it, that is, I am in the right in this matter; and that, though I cannot keep my temper as I should, I keep my integrity, and have not said, or done, or suffered any thing which will prove me other than an honest man. A just cause desires nothing more but a just hearing, and, if need be, a rehearing.

CHAPTER VII.

Job in this chapter goes on expressing the bitter sense he had of his calamities; and, to justify himself in his desire of death, I. He complains to himself and his friends of his troubles, and the constant toss he was in, ver. 1—6. II. He turns to God and expostulates with him, ver. 7 to the end. In which, 1. He pleads the final period which death puts to our present state, ver. 7—10. 2. He passionately complains of the miserable condition he was now in, ver. 11—16. 3. He wonders God will thus contend with him, and begs for the pardon of his sins, and a speedy release out of his miseries, ver. 17—21. It is hard to methodize the speeches of one who owned himself almost desperate, *ch.* vi. 26.

IS there not an appointed time to man upon earth?
Are not his days also like the days of an hireling?
2 As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow,
And as an hireling looketh for *the reward of* his work:
3 So am I made to possess months of vanity,
And wearisome nights are appointed to me.
4 When I lie down, I say,
When shall I arise, and the night be gone?
And I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day.
5 My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust;
My skin is broken, and become loathsome.
6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
And are spent without hope.

Job is here excusing what he could not justify, even his inordinate desire of death. Why should he not wish for that period of life which would be the period of his miseries? To enforce this reason he argues,

First. From the general condition of man upon earth, ver. 1. He is of few days, and full of trouble. Every man must die quickly, and every man has some reason, more or less, to desire to die quickly, and therefore why should you impute it to me as so heinous a crime, that I wish to die quickly? Or thus: Pray mistake not my desire of death, as if I thought the time appointed of God could be anticipated. No, I know very well that is fixed; only in such language as that I take the liberty to express my present uneasiness. "Is there not an appointed time" ('a warfare,' so the word is,) "to man upon earth? and are not his days here like the days of an hireling?" Observe,

1. Man's present place. He is upon earth, which God has given to the children of men, *Ps.* cxv. 16. This speaks man's meanness and inferiority. How much below the inhabitants of yonder elevated and refined regions above is he situated! It also speaks God's mercy to him. He is yet upon the earth, not under it,—on earth, not in hell. Our time on earth is limited and short, according to the narrow bounds of this earth; but heaven cannot be measured, nor the days of heaven numbered.

2. His continuance in that place. "Is there not a time appointed" for his abode here? Yes, certainly there is; and it is easy to say by whom the appointment is made, even by him that made us and set us here. We are not to be on this earth always, nor long, but for a certain time, which is determined by him in whose hand our times are. We are not to think that we are governed by the blind fate of the Stoics, or by the blind fortune of the Epicureans, but by the wise, holy, and sovereign counsel of God.

3. His condition during that continuance. Man's life is a warfare, and as the days of a hireling. We are every one of us to look upon ourselves in this world, 1st. As soldiers, exposed to hardship, and in the midst of enemies; must serve and be under command; and, when our warfare is accomplished, we must be cashiered and disbanded,—dismissed either with shame or honour, according to what we have done in the body. 2nd. As day labourers, that have the work of the day to do in its day, and must make up their account at night.

Secondly. From his own condition at this time. He had as much reason he thought to wish for death as a poor servant or hireling that is tired with his work has to wish for the shadows of the evening, when he shall receive his penny, and go to rest, ver. 2: as welcome as the light of the morning is to the watchman, *Ps.* cxxx. 6, the darkness of the night is to the labourer. The God of nature has provided for the repose of labourers, and no wonder they desire

it; "The sleep of the labouring man is sweet," *Eccl.* v. 12. No pleasure more grateful, more relishing to the luxurious than rest to the laborious; nor can any rich man take so much satisfaction in the return of his rent-days as the hireling in his day's wages. The comparison is plain, the reddition is concise and somewhat obscure; but we must supply a word or two, and then it is easy,—exactness of language is not to be expected from one in Job's condition; "As a servant earnestly desires the shadow, so," and for the same reason, I earnestly desire death, for I am made to possess, &c. Hear his complaint.

1. His days were useless, and had been so a great while; he was wholly taken off from business, and utterly unfit for it. Every day was a burthen to him, because he was in no capacity of doing good, or of spending it to any purpose; *et vitæ partem non attigit ullam*,—'he could not fill up his time with any thing that would turn to account,' and this he calls possessing months of vanity, ver. 3. It very much increaseth the affliction of sickness and age to a good man, that he is thereby forced from his usefulness. He insists not so much upon it that they are days in which he has no pleasure, as that they are days in which he doth no good; on that account they are months of vanity. But when we are disabled to work for God, if we will but sit still quietly for him, it is all one; we shall be accepted.

2. His nights were restless, ver. 3, 4. The night relieves the toil and fatigue of the day, not only to the labourers, but to the sufferers. If a sick man can but get a little sleep in the night it helps nature, and it is hoped he shall do well, *Jno.* xi. 12. However, be the trouble what it will, sleep gives some intermission to the cares, and pains, and griefs that afflict us; it is the parenthesis of our sorrows: but poor Job could not gain this relief. 1st. His nights were wearisome, and, instead of taking any rest, he did but tire himself more with tossing to and fro until morning. Those that are in great uneasiness through pain of body, or anguish of mind, think by changing sides, changing places, changing postures, to get some ease; but, while the cause is the same within, it is all to no purpose. It is but a resemblance of a fretful, discontented spirit, that is ever shifting, but never easy. This made him dread the night as much as the servant desires it; and, when he lay down, to say, When will the night be gone? 2nd. These wearisome nights were appointed to him; God, who determines the times before appointed, had allotted him such nights as these. Whatever is at any time grievous to us it is good to see it appointed for us, that we may acquiesce in the event, not only as unavoidable, because appointed, but as therefore designed for some holy end. When we have comfortable nights we must see them also appointed to us, and be thankful for them; many better than we have wearisome nights.

3. His body was noisome, ver. 5. His sores bred worms, the scabs were like clods of dust, and his skin was broken: so evil was the disease which cleaved fast unto him. See what vile bodies we have, and what little reason we have to pamper them, or be proud of them; they have in themselves the principles of their own corruption. As fond as we are of them now, the time may come when we may loathe them, and long to get rid of them. Modern searches have discovered multitudes of worms in human bodies.

4. His life was hastening apace towards a period, ver. 6. He thought he had no reason to expect a long life, for he found himself declining fast; ver. 6, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle," that is, my time is now but short, and there are but few sands more in my glass, which will speedily run out. Natural motions are most swift near the centre; Job thought his days ran swiftly, because he thought he should soon be at his journey's end; he looked upon them as good as spent already, and he was therefore without hope of being restored to his former prosperity. It is applicable to man's life in general. Our days are like a weaver's shuttle, thrown from one side of the web to the other in the twinkling of an eye, and then back again, to and fro, until at length it is quite exhausted of the thread it carried, and then we cut off, like a weaver, our life, *Isa.* xxxviii. 12. Time hastens on apace, the motion of it cannot be stopped, and when it is past it cannot be recalled. While we are living, as we are sowing, (*Gal.* vi. 8,) so we are weaving; every day, like the shuttle, leaves a thread behind it; many weave the spider's web, which will fail them, *ch.* viii. 14. If we are weaving to ourselves holy garments, and robes of righteousness, we shall have the benefit of them when our work comes to be reviewed, and every man shall reap as he sowed, and wear as he wove.

7 O remember that my life *is* wind:
Mine eye shall no more see good.
8 The eye of him that hath seen me shall see me no *more:*
Thine eyes *are* upon me, and I *am* not.
9 *As* the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away:
So he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no [*more.*
10 He shall return no more to his house,
Neither shall his place know him any more.
11 Therefore I will not refrain my mouth;
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.
12 *Am* I a sea, or a whale,
That thou settest a watch over me?
13 When I say, My bed shall comfort me,
My couch shall ease my complaint;
14 Then thou scarest me with dreams,
And terrifiest me through visions:
15 So that my soul chooseth strangling,
And death rather than my life.
16 I loathe *it;* I would not live alway:
Let me alone; for my days are vanity.

Job, observing perhaps that his friends, though they would not interrupt him in his discourse, yet began to grow weary, and not to heed much what he said, here turns to God, and speaks to him. If men will not hear us, God will; if men cannot help us, he can; for his arm is not shortened, neither is his ear heavy. Yet we may not go to school to Job here to learn how to speak to God, for it must be confessed there is a great mixture of passion and corruption in what he here saith. But, if God be not extreme to mark what his people say amiss, let us also make the best of it. Job is here begging of God either to ease him or end him. He here represents himself to God,

First. As a dying man, surely and speedily dying. It is good for us, when we are sick, to think and speak of death, for sickness is sent on purpose to put us in mind of it; and, if we be duly mindful of it ourselves, we may in faith put God in mind of it, as Job doth here, ver. 7, "O remember that my life is wind." He recommends himself to God, as an object of his pity and compassion, with this consideration, that he was a very weak, frail creature, his abode in this world short and uncertain, his removal out of it sure and speedy, and his return to it again impossible, and never to be expected; that his life was wind, as the lives of all men are, noisy perhaps and bustling like the wind, but vain and empty, soon gone, and when gone, past recall. God had compassion on Israel, remembering that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away and cometh not again, *Ps.* lxxviii. 38, 39. Observe,

1. The pious reflections Job makes upon his own life and death. Such plain truths as these, concerning the shortness and vanity of life, the unavoidableness and irrecoverableness of death, then do us good when we think and speak of them with application to ourselves. Let us consider then,

1st. That we must shortly take our leave of all the things that are seen, that are temporal. The eye of the body must be closed, and shall no more see good, the good which the most of men set their hearts upon, for their cry is, Who will make us to see good? *Ps.* iv. 6. If we be such fools as to place our happiness in visible good things, what will become of us when they shall be for ever hid from our eyes, and we shall no more see good? Let us therefore live by that faith which is the substance and evidence of things not seen.

2nd. That we must then remove to an invisible world. "The eye of him that hath here seen me shall see me no more" there. It is ἀΐδης,—'an unseen state,' ver. 8. Death removes our lovers and friends into darkness, *Ps.* lxxxviii. 18, and will shortly remove us out of their sight; when we go hence we shall be seen no more, *Ps.* xxxix. 13, but go to converse with the things that are not seen, that are eternal.

3rd. That God can easily, and in a moment, put an end to our lives, and send us to another world; ver. 8, "Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not." Thou canst look me into eternity, frown me into the grave, when thou pleasest.

'Shouldst thou displeased give me a frowning look,
I sink, I die, as if with lightning struck.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

He takes away our breath, and we die; nay, he but looks on the earth and it trembleth, *Ps.* civ. 29, 32.

4th. That when we are once removed to another world we must never return to this. There is constant passing from this world to the other, but *vestigia nulla retrorsum*,—'there is no repassing.' Therefore, Lord, shew me kindness when I am here, for I shall return no more to receive kindness in this world. Or, Therefore, Lord, be so kind as to ease me by death; for that will be a perpetual ease. I shall return no more to the calamities of this life. When we are dead we are gone to return no more, *First.* From our house under ground; ver. 9, "He that goes down to the grave shall come up no more," until the general resurrection; shall come up no more to his place in this world. Dying is work that is to be done but once, and therefore it had need be well done; an error there is past retrieve. This is illustrated by the blotting out and scattering of a cloud: it is consumed and vanisheth away, is resolved into air, and never knits again. Other clouds arise, but the same cloud never returns; so a new generation of the children of men is raised up, but the former generation is quite consumed, and vanisheth away. When we see a cloud which looks great, as if it would eclipse the sun and drown the earth, of a sudden dispersed and disappearing, say, Just such a thing is the life of man; it is "a vapour that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away." *Secondly.* To return no more to our house above ground; ver. 10, "He shall return no more to his house," to the possession and enjoyment of it, to the business and delights of it. Others will take possession and keep it, until they also resign to another generation. The rich man in hell desired Lazarus might be sent to his house, knowing it was to no purpose to ask that he might have leave to go himself. Glorified saints shall return no more to the cares, and burthens, and sorrows of their house; nor damned sinners to the gaieties and pleasures of their house. Their place shall no more know them, no more own them, have no more acquaintance with them, nor be any more under their influence. It concerns us to secure a better place when we die, for this will no more own us.

2. The passionate inference he draws from it. From these premises he might have drawn a better conclusion than he doth; ver. 11, "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth, I will speak, I will complain." Holy David, when he had been meditating on the frailty of human life, made a contrary use of it, *Ps.* xxxix. 9, "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth;" but Job, finding himself near expiring, hastens as much to make his complaint as if he had been to make his last will and testament, or as if he could not die in peace till he had given vent to his passion. When we have but a few breaths to draw, we should spend them in the holy, gracious breathings of faith and prayer; not in the noisome, noxious breathings of sin and corruption. Better die praying and praising, than die complaining and quarrelling.

Secondly. As a distempered man, sorely and grievously distempered, both in body and mind. In this part of his representation he is very peevish, as if God dealt hardly with him, and laid upon him more than was meet: "Am I a sea, or a whale?" ver. 12. A raging sea, that must be kept within bounds, to check its proud waves; or an unruly whale, that must be restrained by force from devouring all the fishes of the sea? Am I so strong that there needs so much ado to hold me? so boisterous, that no less than all these mighty bonds of affliction will serve to tame me, and keep me within compass? We are very apt when we are in affliction to complain of God and his providence, as if he laid more restraint upon us than there is occasion for; whereas we are never in heaviness but when there is need, nor more than, upon some account or other, there is need.

1. He complains that he could not rest in his bed, ver. 13, 14. There we promise ourselves some repose when we are fatigued with labour, pain, or travail; "My bed shall comfort me, and my couch shall ease my complaint;" sleep will for a time give me some relief; it useth to do so; it is appointed for that end; many a time it hath eased us, and we have awaked refreshed, and with new vigour. When it is so we have great reason to be thankful; but it was not so with poor Job. His bed, instead of comforting him, terrified him, and his couch, instead of easing his complaint, added to it; for, if he dropped asleep, he was disturbed with his frightful dreams, and when those awaked him still he was haunted with dreadful apparitions. This was it that made the night so unwelcome and wearisome to him as it was; ver. 4, "When shall I arise?" Note, God can when he pleaseth meet us with terror there where we promise ourselves ease and repose. Nay, he can make us a terror to ourselves; and, as we have often contracted guilt by the rovings of an unsanctified fancy, he can likewise by the power of our own imagination create us a great deal of grief, and so make that our punishment which has often been our sin. Job's dreams, though they might partly arise from his distemper,—in fevers, or small-pox, when the body is all over sore, it is common for the sleep to be unquiet,—yet we have reason to think Satan had a hand in them, who delights to terrify those whom it is out of his reach to destroy; but Job looked up to God, who permitted Satan to do this, "Thou scarest me," and mistook Satan's mormos and bugbears for the terrors of

God setting themselves in array against him. We have reason to pray to God that our dreams may neither defile nor disquiet us, neither tempt us to sin, nor torment us with fear; that he who keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps, will keep us when we slumber and sleep, that the devil may not then do us a mischief, either as an insinuating serpent, or as a roaring lion; and to bless God if we lie down and our sleep is sweet, and we are not thus scared.

2. He covets to rest in his grave; that bed where there are no tossings to and fro, nor any frightful dreams, ver. 15, 16. 1st. He was sick of life, and hated the thoughts of it: "I loathe it," I have had enough of it, "I would not live alway." Not only not live alway in this condition, in pain and misery, but not live alway in the most easy and prosperous condition, to be continually in danger of being thus reduced: "My days are vanity" at the best, empty of solid comfort, exposed to real griefs, and I would not be for ever tied to such uncertainty. Note, A good man would not (if he might) live always in this world, no, not though it smile upon him; because it is a world of sin and temptation, and he hath a better world in prospect. 2nd. He was fond of death, and pleased himself with the thoughts of it. His soul (his judgment, he thought, but really it was his passion,) chose strangling and death rather; any death rather than such a life as this. Doubtless this was Job's infirmity; for, though a good man would not wish to live alway in this world, and would choose strangling and death rather than sin, as the martyrs did, yet he will be content to live as long as pleaseth God,—not choose them rather than life, because life is our opportunity of glorifying God, and getting ready for heaven.

17 What *is* man, that thou shouldest magnify him?
And that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?
18 And *that* thou shouldest visit him every morning,
And try him every moment?
19 How long wilt thou not depart from me,
Nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?
20 I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?
Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee,
So that I am a burden to myself?
21 And why dost thou not pardon my transgression,
And take away mine iniquity?
For now shall I sleep in the dust; [not *be.*
And thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I *shall*

Job here reasons with God,

First. Concerning his dealings with man in general; ver. 17, 18, "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him?" This may be looked upon either, 1. As a passionate reflection upon the proceedings of Divine justice; as if the great God did diminish and disparage himself in contending with man. Great men think it below them to take cognizance of those who are much their inferiors, so far as to reprove and correct their follies and indecencies; why then doth God magnify man, by visiting him and trying him, and making so much ado about him? Why will he thus pour all his forces upon one that is such an unequal match for him? why will he visit him with afflictions, which, like a quotidian ague, return as duly and constantly as the morning light, and try every moment what he can bear? We mistake God, and the nature of his providence, if we think it any lessening to him to take notice of the meanest of his creatures. Or, 2. As a pious admiration of the condescensions of Divine grace, like that, *Ps.* viii. 4; cxliv. 3. He owns God's favour to man in general, even then when he complains of his own particular troubles. What is man, miserable man, a poor, mean, weak creature, that thou, the great and glorious God, shouldst deal with him as thou dost? What is man, 1st. That thou shouldst put such honour upon him; shouldst magnify him by taking him into covenant and communion with thyself? 2nd. That thou shouldst concern thyself so much about him, shouldst set thine heart upon him as dear to thee, and one thou hast a kindness for? 3rd. That thou shouldst visit him with thy compassions every morning, as we daily visit a particular friend, or as the physician visits his patients every morning to help them? 4th. That thou shouldst try him, shouldst feel his pulse, and observe his motions every moment, as in care about him, and jealous over him? That such a worm of the earth as man is should be the darling and favourite of Heaven is what we have reason for ever to admire.

Secondly. Concerning his dealings with him in particular. Observe,

1. The complaint he makes of his afflictions; which he here aggravates, and (as we are all too apt to do) makes the worst of in three expressions: 1st. That he was the butt to God's arrows. "Thou hast set me as a mark against thee," ver. 20. My case is singular, and none is shot at so as I am. 2nd. That he was a burthen to himself, ready to sink under the load of his own life. How much delight soever we take in ourselves, God can, when he pleaseth, make us burthens to ourselves. What comfort can we take in ourselves, if God appear against us as an enemy, and we have not comfort in him? 3rd. That he had no intermission of his griefs, ver. 19. How long will it be ere thou cause thy rod to depart from me, or abate the rigour of the correction, at least, for so long as that I may swallow down my spittle? It should seem Job's distemper lay much in his throat, stopped him up, and almost choked him, so that he could not swallow his spittle. He complains, *ch.* xxx. 18, that it bound him about like the collar of his coat. Lord, saith he, wilt not thou give me some respite, some breathing time? *ch.* ix. 18.

2. The concern he is in about his sins. The best men have sin to complain of, and the better they are the more they will complain of it.

1st. He ingenuously owns himself guilty before God; "I have sinned." God had said of him, that he was a perfect and an upright man; yet, he saith of himself, "I have sinned." Those may be upright who yet are not sinless; and those who are sincerely penitent are accepted through a Mediator as evangelically perfect. Job maintained against his friends that he was not a hypocrite, not a wicked man; and yet owns to his God that he had sinned. If we have been kept from gross acts of sin, it doth not therefore follow that we are innocent. The best must acknowledge before God that they have sinned. His calling God the observer, or preserver of men, may be looked upon as designed for an aggravation of his sin. Though God has had his eye upon me, his eye upon me for good, yet I have sinned against him. When we are in affliction, it is seasonable to confess sin, as the procuring cause of our affliction. Penitent confessions would drown and silence passionate complaints.

2nd. He seriously inquires how he might make his peace with God. "What shall I do unto thee," having done so much against thee? Are we convinced that we have sinned, and are we brought to own it? we cannot but conclude that something must be done to prevent the fatal consequences of it. The matter must not rest as it is, but some course must be taken to undo what has been ill done; and if we are truly sensible of the danger we have run ourselves into, we will be willing to do any thing, to take a pardon upon any terms, and therefore will be inquisitive what we shall do, *Mic.* vi. 6, 7; what we shall do to God, not to satisfy the demands of his justice, (that is done only by the Mediator,) but to qualify ourselves for the tokens of his favour, according to the tenor of the Gospel covenant. And, in making this inquiry, it is good to eye God as the preserver, or Saviour, of men, not their destroyer. In our repentance we must keep up good thoughts of God, as one that delights not in the ruin of his creatures, but would rather they should turn and live. Thou art the Saviour of men; be my Saviour, for I cast myself upon thy mercy.

3rd. He earnestly begs for the forgiveness of his sins, ver. 21. The heat of his spirit, as on the one hand it made his complaints the more bitter, so, on the other hand, it made his prayers the more lively and importunate; as here, "Why dost not thou pardon my transgression?" Art thou not a God of infinite mercy, that art ready to forgive? Hast not thou wrought repentance in me? Why then dost thou not give me the pardon of my sin, and make me to hear the voice of that joy and gladness? Surely he means more than barely the removing of his outward trouble, and is herein earnest for the return of God's favour, which he complained of the want of, *ch.* vi. 4. Lord, pardon my sins, and give me the comfort of that pardon, and then I can easily bear my afflictions, *Mat.* ix. 2; *Isa.* xxxiii. 24. When the mercy of God pardons the transgression that is committed by us, the grace of God takes away the iniquity that reigns in us. Wherever God removes the guilt of sin, he breaks the power of sin.

4th. To enforce his prayer for pardon he pleads the prospect he had of dying quickly; "For now shall I sleep in the dust." Death will lay us in the dust, will lay us to sleep there; and perhaps presently, now in a little time. Job had been complaining of restless nights, and that sleep departed from his eyes, ver. 3, 4, 13, 14; but those who cannot sleep on a bed of down will shortly sleep in a bed of dust; and not be scared with dreams, nor tossed to and fro. "And thou shalt seek me in the morning" to shew me favour, "but I shall not be;" it will be too late then. If my sins be not pardoned while I live, I am lost and undone for ever. Note, The consideration of this, that we must shortly die, and perhaps may die suddenly, should make us all very solicitous to get our sins pardoned, and our iniquity taken away.

CHAPTER VIII.

Job's friends are like Job's messengers; those followed one another close with evil tidings, these with harsh censures: both unawares served Satan's design; those to drive him from his integrity, these to drive him from the comfort of it. Eliphaz did not reply to what Job had said in answer to him, but left it to Bildad, whom he knew to be of the same mind with himself in this affair. Those are not the wisest of the company, but the weakest rather, who covet to have all the talk. Let others speak in their turn, and let the first keep silence, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 30, 31. Eliphaz had undertaken to shew that, because Job was sorely afflicted, he was certainly a wicked man; Bildad is much of the same mind, and will conclude Job a wicked man unless God do speedily appear for his relief. In this chapter he endeavours to convince Job, I. That he had spoken too passionately, ver. 2. II. That he and his children had suffered justly, ver. 3, 4. III. That if he were a true penitent God would soon turn his captivity, ver. 5—7. IV. That it was a usual thing for Providence to extinguish the joys and hopes of wicked men as his were extinguished, and therefore they had reason to suspect him for a hypocrite, ver. 8—19. V. That they should be abundantly confirmed in their suspicion, unless God did speedily appear for his relief, ver. 20—22.

THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
2 How long wilt thou speak these *things?*
And *how long shall* the words of thy mouth *be like* a
3 Doth God pervert judgment? [strong wind?
Or doth the Almighty pervert justice?
4 If thy children have sinned against him,
And he have cast them away for their transgression;
5 If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes,
And make thy supplication to the Almighty;
6 If thou *wert* pure and upright;
Surely now he would awake for thee,
And make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.
7 Though thy beginning was small,
Yet thy latter end should greatly increase.

Here, First. Bildad reproves Job for what he had said, ver. 2; checks his passion, but perhaps (as is too common) with greater passion. We thought Job spoke a great deal of good sense, and much to the purpose, and that he had reason and right on his side; but Bildad, like an eager, angry disputant, turns it all off with this, "How long wilt thou speak these things?" taking it for granted that Eliphaz had said enough to silence him, and that, therefore, all he said was impertinent. Thus, as Caryl observes, 'Reproofs are often grounded upon mistakes.' Men's meaning is not taken aright, and then they are gravely rebuked, as if they were evil-doers. Bildad compares Job's discourse to a strong wind; Job had excused himself with this, that his speeches were but as wind, *ch.* vi. 26; and, therefore, they should not make such ado about them; Yea, but, saith Bildad, they are as a strong wind, blustering and threatening, boisterous and dangerous, and therefore we are concerned to fence against them.

Secondly. He justifies God in what he had done. This he had no occasion to do at this time; for Job did not condemn God, as he would have it thought he did. And this he might have done without reflecting upon Job's children, as he doth here. Could not he be an advocate for God, but he must be an accuser of the brethren?

1. He is right in general, that God doth not pervert judgment, nor ever go contrary to any settled rule of justice, ver. 2. Far be it from him that he should, and from us that we should suspect him. He never oppresseth the innocent, nor lays more load on the guilty than they deserve. He is God, the Judge, and "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" *Gen.* xviii. 25. If there should be unrighteousness with God, how should he judge the world? *Rom.* iii. 5, 6. He is Almighty, *Shaddai*,—'all-sufficient.' Men pervert justice sometimes for fear of the power of others,—but God is Almighty, and stands in awe of none; sometimes to obtain the favour of others,—but God is all-

sufficient, and cannot be benefited by the favour of any. It is man's weakness and impotency that he often is unjust; it is God's omnipotence that he cannot be so.

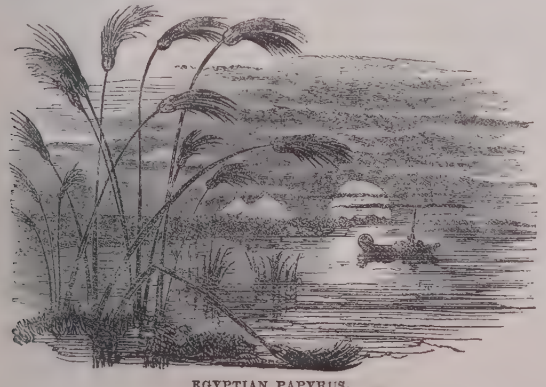
2. Yet he is not fair and candid in the application. He takes it for granted that Job's children (the death of whom was one of the greatest of his afflictions) had been guilty of some notorious wickedness; and that the unhappy circumstances of their death were sufficient evidence that they were sinners above all the children of the East, ver. 4. Job readily owned that God did not pervert judgment; and yet it did not therefore follow either that his children were castaways, or that they died for some great transgression. It is true that we and our children have sinned against God; and we ought to justify him in all he brings upon us and ours; but extraordinary afflictions are not always the punishment of extraordinary sins, but sometimes the trial of extraordinary graces; and in our judgment of another's case (unless the contrary appears) we ought to take the more favourable side, as our Saviour directs, *Lu.* xiii. 2, 4. Here Bildad missed it.

Thirdly. He put Job in hope that if he were indeed upright, as he said he was, he should yet see a good issue of his present troubles. "Although thy children have sinned against him, and are cast away in their transgression," they have died in their own sin; yet, if thou be pure and upright thyself, and, as an evidence of that, wilt now seek unto God, and submit to him, all shall be well yet, ver. 5—7. This may be taken two ways; either,

1. As designed to prove Job a hypocrite, and a wicked man; though not by the greatness, yet by the continuance of his afflictions. When thou wast impoverished, and thy children killed, if thou hadst been pure and upright, and approved thyself so in the trial, God would before now have returned in mercy to thee, and comforted thee according to the time of thine affliction; but, because he doth not so, we have reason to conclude thou art not so pure and upright as thou pretendest to be. If thou hadst carried thyself well under the former affliction, thou hadst not been struck with the latter. Herein Bildad was not in the right; for a good man may be afflicted for his trial, not only very sorely, but very long; and yet if for life, in comparison with eternity it is but for a moment. But since Bildad put it to this issue, God was pleased to join issue with him, and proved his servant Job an honest man by Bildad's own argument, for soon after he blessed his latter end more than his beginning. Or,

2. As designed to direct and encourage Job, that he might not thus run himself into despair, and give up all for gone; yet there might be hope if he would take the right course. I am apt to think Bildad here intended to condemn Job, yet would be thought to counsel and comfort him. 1st. He gives him good counsel, yet perhaps not expecting he would take it; the same that Eliphaz had given him, *ch.* v. 8, to seek unto God, and that betimes, that is, speedily and seriously; and not to be dilatory and trifling in his return and repentance. He adviseth him not to complain, but to petition, and to make his supplication to the Almighty with humility and faith. And to see that there was (what he feared had hitherto been wanting) sincerity in heart,—thou must be pure and upright; and honesty in his house, that must be the habitation of thy righteousness, and not filled with ill-gotten goods; else God will not hear thy prayers, *Ps.* lxvi. 18. It is only the prayer of the upright that is the acceptable and prevailing prayer, *Pr.* xv. 8. 2nd. He gives him good hopes that he should yet again see good days, yet secretly suspecting he was not qualified to see them. He assures him that, if he would be early in seeking God, God would awake for his relief, would remember him and return to him; though now he seemed to forget him, and forsake him. That if his habitation were righteous it should be prosperous; for honesty is the best policy, and inward piety a sure friend to outward prosperity. When we return to God in a way of duty, we have reason to hope that he will return to us in a way of mercy. Let not Job object that he had so little left to begin the world with again, that it was impossible he should ever prosper as he had done; no, though thy beginning should be never so small, a little meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruise, God's blessing shall multiply that to a great increase. This is God's way of enriching the souls of his people with graces and comforts, not *per saltum*—'as by a bound,' but *per gradum*—'step by step.' The beginning is small, but the progress is to perfection. Dawning light grows to noonday; a grain of mustard seed to a great tree. Let us not, therefore, despise the day of small things, but hope for the day of great things.

8 For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age,
And prepare thyself to the search of their fathers:
9 (For we *are but of* yesterday, and know nothing,
Because our days upon earth *are* a shadow:)
10 Shall not they teach thee, *and* tell thee,
And utter words out of their heart?
11 Can the rush grow up without mire?
Can the flag grow without water?



EGYPTIAN PAPYRUS.

12 Whilst it *is* yet in his greenness, *and* not cut down,
It withereth before any *other* herb.
13 So *are* the paths of all that forget God;
And the hypocrite's hope shall perish:
14 Whose hope shall be cut off,
And whose trust *shall be* a spider's web.
15 He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand:
He shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure.
16 He *is* green before the sun,
And his branch shooteth forth in his garden.
17 His roots are wrapped about the heap,
And seeth the place of stones.
18 If he destroy him from his place,
Then *it* shall deny him, *saying*, I have not seen thee.
19 Behold, this *is* the joy of his way,
And out of the earth shall others grow.

Bildad here discourseth very well of the sad catastrophe of hypocrites and evil-doers, and the fatal period of all their hopes and joys. He will not be so bold as to say with Eliphaz, that none that were righteous were ever cut off thus, *ch.* iv. 7; yet he takes it for universally granted, that God in the course of his providence doth ordinarily bring wicked men, who seemed pious, and were prosperous, to shame and ruin in this world; and, by making their prosperity short, he discovers their piety to be counterfeit. Whether this will certainly prove that all who are thus ruined must be concluded to have been hypocrites he will not say, but rather suspect, and thinks the application is easy.

First. He proves this truth, of the certain destruction of all the hopes and joys of hypocrites, by an appeal to antiquity, and the concurring sentiment and observation of all wise and good men. And an undoubted truth it is, if we take in the other world, that, if not in this life, yet in the life to come, hypocrites will be deprived of all their trusts and all their triumphs; whether Bildad so meant or no, we must so take it. Let us observe the method of his proof, ver. 8—10.

1. He insists not on his own judgment, and that of his companions; "We are but of yesterday, and know nothing," ver. 9. He perceived Job had no opinion of their abilities; he thought they knew little. Saith Bildad, We will own that we know nothing, are as ready to confess our ignorance as thou art to condemn it; for we are but of yesterday in comparison, and our days upon earth are short and transient, and hastening away as a shadow. And, therefore, 1st. We are not so near the fountain-head of Divine revelation (which then, for aught appears, was conveyed by tradition) as the former age was; and, therefore, we must inquire what they said, and recount what we have been told of their sentiments. Blessed be God, now we have the Word of God in writing, and are directed to search that, we need not inquire of the former age, nor prepare ourselves to the search of their fathers; for, though we ourselves are but of yesterday, the Word of God in the Scripture is as nigh us as them, *Rom.* x. 8. And it is the more sure word of prophecy to which we must take heed. If we study and keep God's precepts, we may by them understand more than the ancients, *Ps.* cxix. 99, 100. 2nd. We do not live so long as they of the former age did to make observations upon the methods of Divine providence; and, therefore, cannot be such competent judges as they in a cause of this nature. Note, The shortness of our lives is a great hindrance to the improvement of our knowledge, and so is the frailty and weakness of our bodies. *Vita brevis, ars longa*,—'life is short, the progress of art boundless.'

2. He refers himself to the testimony of the ancients, and to the knowledge which Job himself had of their sentiments. Do thou inquire of the former age, and let them tell thee not only their own judgment in this matter, but also of their fathers, ver. 8. They will teach thee, and inform thee, (ver. 10,) that all along in their time the judgments of God followed wicked men. This they will utter out of their hearts, that is, as that which they firmly believe themselves, which they are greatly affected with, and desirous to acquaint and affect others with. Note, 1st. For the right understanding of Divine providence, and the unfolding of the difficulties of it, it will be of use to compare the observations and experiences of former ages with the events of our own day; and, in order thereunto, to consult history, especially the sacred history, which is the most ancient, infallibly true, and written designedly for our learning. 2nd. They that would fetch knowledge from the former ages must search diligently, prepare for the search, and take pains in the search. 3rd. Those words are most likely to reach to the hearts of the learners that come from the hearts of the teachers. They shall teach thee best that utter words out of their heart, that speak by experience, and not by rote, of spiritual and Divine things. The learned Bishop Patrick suggests that, Bildad being a Shuhite, descended from Shuah, one of Abraham's sons by Keturah, *Gen.* xxv. 2, in this appeal he makes to history he has a particular respect to the rewards which then remained of God's blessings upon the posterity of faithful Abraham, who hitherto, and long after, continued in his religion; and of the extirpation of those Eastern people (neighbours to Job) in whose country they were settled, for their wickedness. Whence he infers, that it is God's usual way to prosper the just, and root out the wicked, though for awhile they may flourish.

Secondly. He illustrates this truth by some similitudes.

1. The hopes and joys of the hypocrite are here compared to a rush or flag, ver. 11—13. 1st. It grows up out of the mire and water. The hypocrite cannot gain his hope without some false, rotten ground or other out of which to raise it, and with which to support it and keep it alive, no more than the rush can grow without mire. He grounds it on his worldly prosperity, the plausible profession he makes of religion, the good opinion of his neighbours, and his own good conceit of himself, which are no solid foundation on which to build his confidence; it is all but mire and water, and the hope that grows out of it is but rush and flag. 2nd. It may look green and gay for a while. The rush outgrows the grass, but it is light, and hollow, and empty, and good for nothing; it is green for show, but of no use. 3rd. It withers presently, before any other herb, ver. 12; even while it is in its greenness it is dried away and gone in a little time. Note, The best state of hypocrites and evil-doers borders upon withering; even when it is green it is going. The grass is cut down and withered, *Ps.* xc. 6; but the rush is not cut down, and yet withers before it grows up, *Ps.* cxxix. 6: as it has no use, so it has no continuance. And, ver. 13, "So are the paths of all that forget God," they take the same way that the rush doth, for "the hypocrite's hope shall perish." Note, *First.* Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of men's hypocrisy, and of the vain hopes with which they flatter and deceive themselves in their hypocrisy. Men would not be hypocrites if they did not forget that the God with whom they have to do

searcheth the heart, and requires truth there, that he is a Spirit; and has his eye on our spirits. And hypocrites could have no hope if they did not forget that God is righteous, and will not be mocked with the torn and the lame. *Secondly*. The hope of hypocrites is a great cheat upon themselves; and, though it may flourish awhile, it will certainly perish at last, and they with it.

2. They are here compared to a spider's web, or a spider's house, as it is in the margin; a cobweb, ver. 14, 15. The hope of the hypocrite, 1st. Is woven out of his own bowels; it is the creature of his own fancy, and ariseth purely from a conceit of his own merit and sufficiency. There is a great deal of difference between the work of the bee and that of the spider. A diligent Christian, like the laborious bee, fetcheth in all his comfort from the heavenly dews of God's Word; but the hypocrite, like the subtle spider, weaves his out of a false hypothesis of his own concerning God, as if he were altogether such a one as himself. 2nd. He is very fond of it, as the spider of her web; pleaseth himself with it, wraps himself in it, calls it his house, leans upon it, and holds it fast. It is said of the spider, that "she takes hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces," *Pr.* xxx. 28. So doth a carnal worldling hug himself in the fulness and firmness of his outward prosperity; he prides himself in that house as his palace, and fortifies himself in it as his castle, and makes use of it as the spider of her web, to ensnare those he has a mind to prey upon. So doth a formal professor; he flatters himself in his own eyes, doubts not of his salvation, is secure of heaven, and cheats the world with his vain confidences. 3rd. It will easily and certainly be swept away, as the cobweb with the besom, when God shall come to purge his house. The prosperity of worldly people will fail them when they expect to find safety and happiness in it. They seek to hold fast their estates, but God is plucking them out of their hands; and whose shall those things be which they have provided, or what the better will they be for them? The confidences of hypocrites will fail them: "I tell you I know you not." The house built on the sand will fall in the storm when the builder most needed it, and promised himself the benefit of it. "When a wicked man dies, his expectation perisheth." The ground of his hopes will prove false; he will be disappointed of the thing he hoped for, and his foolish hope with which he buoyed himself up will be turned into endless despair; and thus his hope will be cut off, his web, that refuge of lies, swept away, and he crushed in it.

3. They are here compared to a flourishing and well rooted tree, which, though it do not wither of itself, yet will easily be cut down, and its place know it no more. The secure and prosperous sinner may think himself wronged when he is compared to a rush and a flag; he thinks he has a better bottom than so, and we will allow him his conceit, saith Bildad, and give him all the advantage he can desire, and yet bring him in suddenly cut off. He is here represented as Nebuchadnezzar was, in his own dream, (*Dan.* iv. 10,) by a great tree.

1st. See this tree fair and flourishing, ver. 16, "like a green bay tree," *Ps.* xxxvii. 35, "green before the sun," that keeps its greenness in defiance of the scorching sunbeams, and "his branch shooteth forth" under the protection of his garden wall, and with the benefit of his garden soil. See it fixed, and taking deep root, never likely to be overthrown by stormy winds, for his roots are interwoven with the stones, ver. 17; it grows in firm ground, not as the rush, in mire and water. Thus doth a wicked man, when he prospers in the world, think himself secure; his wealth is a high wall in his own conceit.

2nd. See this tree felled and forgotten, notwithstanding; "destroyed from his place," ver. 18, and so wholly extirpated that there shall remain no sign nor token where it grew; the very place shall say, "I have not seen thee," and the standers by shall say the same, "I sought him, but he could not be found," *Ps.* xxxvii. 36. He made a great show and a great noise for a time, but he is gone of a sudden, and neither root nor branch left him, *Mal.* iv. 1. "This is the joy" (that is, this is the end and conclusion) "of the wicked man's way," ver. 19; this is that which all his joy comes to: "the way of the ungodly shall perish," *Ps.* i. 6. His hope, he thought, would in the issue be turned into joy; but this is the issue, this is the joy, "the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow," *Isa.* xvii. 11. This is the best of it, and what then is the worst of it? But shall he not leave a family behind him to enjoy what he has? No, "out of the earth," not out of his roots, "shall others grow," that are nothing akin to him, and shall fill up his place, and rule over that for which he laboured. Others, namely, of the same spirit and disposition, shall grow up in his place, and be as secure as ever he was, not warned by his fall. The way of worldlings is their folly, and yet there is a race of them that approve their sayings, *Ps.* xlix. 13.

20 Behold, God will not cast away a perfect *man*,
Neither will he help the evil doers: [rejoicing.
21 Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with
22 They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame;
And the dwelling place of the wicked shall come to nought.

Bildad here, in the close of his discourse, sums up what he had to say in a few words, setting before Job life and death, the blessing and the curse; assuring him, that as he was so he should fare, and therefore they might conclude that as he fared so he was.

First. On the one hand, if he were a perfect upright man, God would not cast him away, ver. 20. Though now he seemed forsaken of God, he would yet return to him, and by degrees would turn his mourning into dancing, *Ps.* xxx. 11; and comforts should flow in upon him so plentifully, that his mouth should be filled with laughing, ver. 21; so affecting should the happy change be, *Ps.* cxxvi. 2. They that loved him would rejoice with him; but they that hated him, and had triumphed in his fall, would be ashamed of their insolence when they see him restored to his former prosperity. Now it is true that "God will not cast away an upright man;" he may be cast down for a time, but he shall not be cast away for ever. It is true that, if not in this world yet in another, the mouth of the righteous shall be filled with rejoicing. Though their sun should set under a cloud, yet it shall rise again clear, never more to be clouded; though they go mourning to the grave, that shall not hinder their entrance into the joy of their Lord. It is true that the enemies of the saints will be clothed with shame when they see them crowned with honour. But it doth not, therefore, follow that, if Job were not perfectly restored to his former prosperity, he forfeited the character of a perfect man.

Secondly. On the other hand, if he were a wicked man, and an evil-doer, God would not help him, but leave him to perish in his present distresses, ver. 20; and his dwelling-place should come to nought, ver. 22. And here also it is true, that God will not help the evil-doers, they throw themselves out of his protection, and forfeit his favour; 'he will not take the ungodly by the hand,' so it is in the margin, will not have fellowship and communion with them; for what communion between light and darkness? He will not lend them his hand to pull them out of the miseries, the eternal miseries, into which they have plunged themselves. They will then stretch out their hand to him for help; but it is too late, he will not take them by the hand: "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed." It is true that the dwelling-place of the wicked, sooner or later, will come to nought. Those only that make God their dwelling-place are safe for ever, *Ps.* xc. 1; xci. 1. They who make other things their refuge will be disappointed. Sin brings ruin on persons and families; yet to argue (as Bildad, I doubt, slily doth) that because Job's family was sunk, and he himself at present seemed helpless, therefore he certainly was an ungodly, wicked man, was neither just nor charitable, as long as there appeared no other evidence of his wickedness and ungodliness. Let us judge nothing before the time, but wait till the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest; and the present difficulties of Providence be solved to universal and everlasting satisfaction, when the mystery of God shall be finished.

CHAPTER IX.

In this and the following chapter we have Job's answer to Bildad's discourse, wherein he speaks honourably of God, humbly of himself, and feelingly of his troubles; but not one word by way of reflection upon his friends, or their unkindness to him, nor in direct reply to what Bildad had said. He wisely keeps to the merits of the cause, and makes no remarks upon the person that managed it, nor seeks occasion against him. In this chapter we have, I. The doctrine of God's justice laid down, ver. 2. II. The proof of it, from his wisdom, and power, and sovereign dominion, ver. 3—13. III. The application of it, in which, 1. He condemns himself, as not able to contend with God, neither in law nor battle, ver. 14—21; 2. He maintains his point, that we cannot judge of men's character by their outward condition, ver. 22—24; 3. He complains of the greatness of his troubles, the confusion he was in, and the loss he was at what to say or do, ver. 25—35.

THEN Job answered and said,
2 I know *it is* so of a truth:
But how should man be just with God?
3 If he will contend with him,
He cannot answer him one of a thousand.
4 *He is* wise in heart, and mighty in strength:
Who hath hardened *himself* against him, and hath prospered?
5 Which removeth the mountains, and they know not:
Which overturneth them in his anger.
6 Which shaketh the earth out of her place,
And the pillars thereof tremble.
7 Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not;
And sealeth up the stars.
8 Which alone spreadeth out the heavens,
And treadeth upon the waves of the sea.
9 Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades,
And the chambers of the south.
10 Which doeth great things past finding out;
Yea, and wonders without number.
11 Lo, he goeth by me, and I see *him* not:
He passeth on also, but I perceive him not.
12 Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him?
Who will say unto him, What doest thou?
13 *If* God will not withdraw his anger,
The proud helpers do stoop under him.

Bildad began with a rebuke to Job for talking so much, *ch.* viii. 2. Job makes no answer to that, though it had been easy enough to retort it upon himself; but what he next lays down as his principle, that God never perverts judgment, Job agrees with him in, "I know it is so of a truth," ver. 2. Note, Those we dispute with we should be ready to own how far we agree with, and not slight, much less resist a truth, though produced by an adversary, and urged against us; but receive it in the light and love of it, though it has been misapplied. "It is so of a truth," that wickedness brings men to ruin, and the godly are taken under God's special protection. These are truths which I subscribe to; but how can any man make his part good with God! "In his sight shall no flesh living be justified," *Ps.* cxliii. 2. "How should man be just with God?" Some understand this as a passionate complaint of God's strictness and severity, that he is a God there is no dealing with; and it cannot be denied that there are in this chapter some peevish expressions which seem to speak such language as that; but I take this rather as a pious confession of man's sinfulness, and his own in particular,—that, if God should deal with any of us according to the desert of our iniquities, we were certainly undone.

First. He lays this down for a truth, that man is an unequal match for his Maker, either in dispute or combat.

1. In dispute; ver. 3, "If he will contend with him," either at law or at an argument, "he cannot answer him one of a thousand." 1st. God can ask a thousand puzzling questions, which those that quarrel with him, and arraign his proceedings, cannot give an answer to. When God spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, he asked him a great many questions: Dost thou know this? and Canst thou do that? to none of which Job could give an answer, *ch.* xxxviii., xxxix. God can easily manifest the folly of the greatest pretenders to wisdom. 2nd. God can lay to our charge a thousand offences, can draw up against us a thousand articles of impeachment, and we cannot answer him so as to acquit ourselves from the imputation of any of them; but must by silence give consent that they are all true. We cannot set aside one as foreign, another as frivolous, and another as false; we cannot as to one deny the fact, and plead not guilty, and as to another deny the fault, confess and justify; no, we are not able to answer him, but must lay our hand upon our mouth, as Job did, *ch.* xl. 4, 5, and cry, Guilty, guilty.

2. In combat; ver. 4, "Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?" The answer is very easy; you cannot produce any instance, from the

beginning of the world to this day, of any daring sinner that has hardened himself against God, hath obstinately persisted in rebellion against him, but he found God too hard for him, and paid dear for his folly. They have not prospered, or had peace; they have had no comfort in it, nor success. What did ever any man get by trials of skill, or trials of titles, with his Maker? All the opposition given to God is but setting briars and thorns before a consuming fire, so foolish, so fruitless, so destructive is the attempt, *Isa.* xxvii. 4; *Eze.* xxvii. 14; 1 *Cor.* x. 22. Apostate angels hardened themselves against God, but did not prosper, 2 *Pet.* ii. 4. The dragon fights, but is cast out, *Rev.* xii. 8. Wicked men harden themselves against God, dispute his wisdom, disobey his laws, are impenitent for their sins, and incorrigible under their afflictions; they reject the offers of his grace, and resist the strivings of his Spirit; they make nothing of his threatenings, and make head against his interest in the world; but have they prospered? Can they prosper? No, they are but treasuring up against themselves wrath against the day of wrath. They that roll this stone, it will return upon them.

Secondly. He proves it by shewing what a God he is with whom we have to do. "He is wise in heart," and therefore we cannot answer him at law; he is "mighty in strength," and therefore we cannot fight it out with him. It is the greatest madness that can be, to think to contend with a God of infinite wisdom and power, who knows every thing, and can do every thing; who can be neither outwitted nor overpowered. The devil promised himself that Job, in the day of his affliction, would curse God, and speak ill of him; but, instead of that, he sets himself to honour God, and to speak highly of him. As ill pained as he is, and as much taken up with his own miseries, when he has occasion to mention the wisdom and power of God, he forgets his complaints, dwells with delight, and expatiates with a flood of eloquence, upon that noble, useful subject. Evidences of the wisdom and power of God he fetcheth,

1. From the kingdom of nature, in which the God of nature acts with an uncontrollable power, and doth what he pleaseth; for all the orders and all the powers of nature are derived from him, and depend upon him.

1st. When he pleaseth he alters the course of nature, and turns back its streams, ver. 5—7. By the common law of nature the mountains are settled, and are, therefore, called everlasting mountains; the earth is established, and cannot be removed, *Ps.* xciii. 1, and the pillars thereof are immoveably fixed; the sun riseth in its season, and the stars shed their influences on this lower world; but when God pleaseth he can not only drive out of the common track, but invert the order and change the law of nature. *First.* Nothing more firm than the mountains; when we speak of removing mountains, we mean that which is impossible; yet the Divine power can make them change their seat. "He removeth them and they know not," removes them whether they will or no; he can make them lower their heads, level them, and overturn them in his anger; can spread the mountains as easily as the husbandman spreads the molehills, be they never so high, and large, and rocky; men have much ado to pass them over, but God, when he pleaseth, can pass them off. He made Sinai shake, *Ps.* lxviii. 8; the hills skipped, *Ps.* cxiv. 4; the everlasting mountains were scattered, *Hab.* iii. 6. *Secondly.* Nothing more fixed than the earth on its axletree; yet God can, when he pleaseth, shake that out of its place, and heave it off its centre, and make even its pillars to tremble; what seemed to support it will itself need support, when God gives it a shock. See how much we are indebted to God's patience. God has power enough to shake the earth from under that guilty race of mankind which makes it groan under the burthen of sin, and so to shake the wicked out of it, *ch.* xxxviii. 13; yet he continues the earth, and man upon it, and makes it not still, as once, to swallow up the rebels. *Thirdly.* Nothing more constant than the rising sun; it never misseth its appointed time, yet God, when he pleaseth, can suspend it; he that at first commanded it to rise can countermand it. Once the sun was bidden to stand, and another time to retreat, to shew that it is still under the check of its great Creator. Thus great is God's power; and how great, then, is his goodness, which causeth his sun to shine even upon the evil and unthankful, though he could withhold it! He that made the stars also can, if he pleaseth, seal them up, and hide them from our eyes. By earthquakes and subterraneous fires, mountains have sometimes been removed, and the earth shaken. In very dark and cloudy days and nights it seems to us as if the sun were forbidden to rise, and the stars were sealed up, *Acts* xxvii. 20. It is sufficient to say that Job here speaks of what God can do; but, if we must understand it of what he has done in fact, all these verses may, perhaps, be applied to Noah's flood, when the earth, even its mountains, were shaken, and the sun and stars were darkened; and the world that now is, we believe to be reserved for that fire which will consume the mountains, and melt the earth with its fervent heat, and which will turn the sun into darkness.

2nd. As long as he pleaseth he preserves the settled course and order of nature, and this is a continued creation. He himself alone, by his own power, and without the assistance of any other, *First.* "Spreads out the heavens," ver. 8, not only did spread them out at first, but still spreads them out; that is, keeps them spread out, for otherwise they would of themselves roll together like a scroll of parchment. *Secondly.* He "treads upon the waves of the sea;" that is, he suppresseth them and keepeth them under, that they return not to deluge the earth, *Ps.* civ. 9, which is given as a reason why we should all fear God, and stand in awe of him, *Jer.* v. 22. He is mightier than the proud waves, *Ps.* xciii. 4; lxv. 7. *Thirdly.* He makes the constellations. Three are named for all the rest, ver. 9, "Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and" in general "the chambers of the south." The stars of which these are composed he made at first, and put into that order, and he still makes them, preserves them in being, and guides their motions; he makes them to be what they are to man, and inclines the hearts of men to observe them, which the beasts are not capable of doing. Not only those stars which we see and give names to, but those also in the other hemisphere, about the antarctic pole, which never come in our sight, called here "the chambers of the south," are under the Divine direction and dominion. How wise is he then, and how mighty!

2. Evidences are here fetched from the kingdom of providence, that special providence which is conversant about the affairs of the children of men. Consider what God doth in the government of the world, and you will say, "he is wise in heart, and mighty in strength."

1st. He doth many things and great; many and great to admiration, ver. 10. Job here saith the same that Eliphaz had said, *ch.* v. 9, and in the original in the very same words, not declining to speak after him, though now his antagonist. God is a great God, and doth great things, a wonder-working God; his works of wonder are so many that we cannot number them, and so mysterious that we cannot find them out. Oh, the depth of his counsels!

2nd. He acts invisibly and undiscerned; ver. 11, "He goes by me" in his operations, "and I see him not," I perceive him not; his way is in the sea, *Ps.* lxxvii. 19. The operations of second causes are commonly obvious to sense, but God doth all about us, and yet we see him not, *Acts* xvii. 23. Our finite understandings cannot fathom his counsels, apprehend his motions, or comprehend the measures he takes; we are, therefore, incompetent judges of God's proceedings, because we know not what he doth, or what he drives at. The *arcana imperii*,—'secrets of government,' are things above us, which, therefore, we must not pretend to expound or comment upon.

3rd. He acts with an incontestable sovereignty, ver. 12. He takes away our creature comforts and confidences when and as he pleaseth, takes away health, estate, relations, friends, takes away life itself, whatever goes it is he that takes it, by what hand soever it is removed, his hand must be acknowledged in it; the Lord taketh away, and "who can hinder him?" 'who can turn him away?' margin. 'Who shall make him restore?' so some. Who can dissuade him, or alter his counsels? Who can resist him, or oppose his operations? Who can control him, or call him to an account for it? What action can be brought against him? or, "Who will say unto him, What dost thou?" or, Why dost thou so? *Dan.* iv. 35. God is not obliged to give us a reason of what he doth. The meaning of his proceedings we know not now; it will be time enough to know hereafter, when it will appear that what seemed now to be done by prerogative was done in infinite wisdom, and for the best.

4th. He acts with an irresistible power, which no creature can resist; ver. 13, "If God will not withdraw his anger," which he can do when he pleaseth, for he is Lord of his anger, lets it out or calls it in as he will, "the proud helpers do stoop under him;" that is, he certainly breaks and crusheth those that proudly help one another against him. Proud men set themselves against God and his proceedings. In this opposition they join hand in hand. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together," to throw off his yoke, to run down his truths, and to persecute his people. "Men of Israel, help," *Acts* xxi. 28; *Ps.* lxxxiii. 8. If one enemy of God's kingdom fall under his judgment, the rest come proudly to help that, and think to deliver that out of his hand: but in vain; unless he pleaseth to withdraw his anger, which he often doth, for it is the day of his patience, "the proud helpers stoop under him," and fall with those whom they designed to help. "Who knows the power of God's anger?" They who think they have strength enough to help others, will not be able to help themselves against it.

14 How much less shall I answer him,
And choose out my words *to reason* with him?
15 Whom, though I were righteous, *yet* would I not answer,
But I would make supplication to my judge.
16 If I had called, and he had answered me; [voice.
Yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my
17 For he breaketh me with a tempest,
And multiplieth my wounds without cause.
18 He will not suffer me to take my breath,
But filleth me with bitterness.
19 If *I speak* of strength, lo, *he is* strong:
And if of judgment, who shall set me a time *to plead?*
20 If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me:
If I say, I *am* perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.
21 *Though* I *were* perfect, *yet* would I not know my soul:
I would despise my life.

What Job had said of man's utter inability to contend with God he here applies to himself, and in effect despairs of gaining his favour; which some think, ariseth from the hard thoughts he had of God, as one that, having set himself against him, right or wrong, would be too hard for him. I rather think it ariseth from the sense he had of the imperfection of his own righteousness, and the dark and cloudy apprehensions which at present he had of God's displeasure against him.

First. He dares not dispute with God; ver. 14, If "the proud helpers do stoop under him, how much less shall I," a poor, weak creature, so far from being a helper that I am very helpless, how "shall I answer him?" What can I say against that which God doth? If I go about to reason with him, he will certainly be too hard for me. If the potter make the clay into a vessel of dishonour, or break in pieces the vessel he has made, shall the clay or the broken vessel reason with him? So absurd is the man that replieth against God, or thinks to talk it out with him. No, let all flesh be silent before him.

Secondly. He dares not insist upon his own justification before God. Though he vindicated his own integrity to his friends, and would not yield that he was a hypocrite and a wicked man, as they suggested, yet he would never plead it as his righteousness before God. I will never venture upon the covenant of innocency, nor think to come off by virtue of that. Job knew so much of God, and knew so much of himself, that he durst not insist upon his own justification before God.

1. He knew so much of God that he durst not stand a trial with him, ver. 15—19. He knew how to make his part good with his friends, and thought himself able to deal with them; but, though his cause were better than it was, he knew it was to no purpose to debate it with God.

1st. God knew him better than he knew himself, and therefore, ver. 15, "Though I were righteous" in my own apprehension, and my own heart did not condemn me, yet God is greater than my heart, and knows those secret faults and errors of mine which I do not and cannot understand, and is able to charge me with them; and therefore "I will not answer." St. Paul speaks to the same purpose: "I know nothing by myself," am not conscious to myself of any reigning wickedness, and "yet I am not hereby justified," 1 *Cor.* iv. 4. I dare not put myself upon that issue, lest God charge that upon me which I did not discover in myself. Job will, therefore, waive that plea, and make supplication to his Judge; that is, would cast himself upon God's mercy, and not think to come off by his own merit.

2nd. He had no reason to think that there was any thing in his prayers to recommend them to the Divine acceptance, or to fetch in an answer of peace, no worth or worthiness at all to which to ascribe their success; but it must be attributed purely to the grace and compassion of God, who answers before we call, and not because we call, and gives gracious answers to our prayers, but not for our prayers; ver. 16, "If I had called, and he had answered," had given the thing I called to him for, "yet," so weak and defective are my best prayers, that "I would not believe he had" therein "hearkened to my voice." I could not say he had saved with his right hand, and answered me, *Ps.* lx. 5, but that he did it purely for his own name's sake. Bishop Patrick expounds it thus: If I had made supplication, and he had granted my desire, I would not think my prayer had done the business. "Not for your sakes, be it known to you."

3rd. His present miseries which God had brought him into, notwithstanding his integrity, gave him too sensible a conviction that in the ordering and disposing of men's outward condition in this world God acts by sovereignty,

and though he never doth wrong to any, yet he doth not ever give full right to all; that is, the best do not always fare best, nor the worst fare worst in this life, because he reserves the full and exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state. Job was not conscious to himself of any extraordinary guilt, and yet fell under extraordinary afflictions, ver. 17, 18. Every man must expect the wind to blow upon him and ruffle him; but Job was broken with a tempest. Every man, in the midst of these thorns and briars, must expect to be scratched; but Job was wounded, and his wounds multiplied. Every man must expect a cross daily, and to taste sometimes of the bitter cup; but poor Job's troubles came so thick upon him that he had no breathing time, and he was filled with bitterness; and he presumes to say all this was without cause, without any great provocation given. We have made the best of what Job said hitherto, though contrary to the judgment of many good interpreters; but here, no doubt, he spake unadvisedly with his lips. He reflected on God's goodness in saying he was not suffered to take his breath, while yet he had such good use of his reason and speech as to be able to talk thus; and on his justice in saying it was without cause. And yet it is true, that as, on the one hand, there are many who are chargeable with more sin than the common infirmities of the human nature, and yet feel no more sorrow than that of the common calamities of human life; so, on the other hand, there are many who feel more than the common calamities of human life, and yet are conscious to themselves of no more but the common infirmities of human nature.

4th. He was in no capacity at all to make his part good with God, ver. 19. *First.* Not by force of arms. I dare not enter the lists with the Almighty, for "if I speak of strength," and think to come off by that, "lo, he is strong," stronger than I, and will certainly overpower me. There is no disputing, said one once to Cæsar, with him that commands legions, much less with him that has legions of angels at command. "Can thine heart endure," thy courage and presence of mind, "or can thine hands be strong" to defend thyself, "in the days that I shall deal with thee?" *Eze.* xxii. 14. *Secondly.* Not by force of arguments. I dare not try the merits of the cause. "If I speak of judgment," and insist upon my right, "who will set me a time to plead?" There is no higher power to which I may appeal, no superior court to appoint a hearing of the cause; for he is supreme, and from him every man's judgment proceeds, which he must abide by.

2. He knew so much of himself that he durst not stand a trial; ver. 20, 21, "If I" go about to "justify myself" and to plead a righteousness of my own, my defence will be my offence, and "mine own mouth shall condemn me," even when it goes about to acquit me. A good man, that knows the deceitfulness of his own heart, and is jealous over it with a godly jealousy, and hath often discovered that amiss there which had long lain undiscovered, is suspicious of more evil in himself than he is really conscious of, and therefore will by no means think of justifying himself before God. "If we say we have no sin, we" not only "deceive ourselves," but we affront God; for we sin in saying so, and give the lie to the Scripture, which has concluded all under sin. "If I say, I am perfect," I am sinless, God has nothing to lay to my charge, my very saying so "shall prove me perverse," proud, ignorant, and presumptuous. Nay, "though I were perfect," though God should pronounce me just, "yet would I not know my soul," I would not be in care about the prolonging of my life, while it is loaded with all these miseries. Or, Though I were free from gross sins, though my conscience did not charge me with any enormous crime, yet would I not believe my own heart so far as to insist upon my innocency, nor think my life worth striving for with God. In short, it is folly to contend with God, and our wisdom, as well as duty, to submit to him, and throw ourselves at his feet.

22 This *is* one *thing*, therefore I said *it*,
He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked
23 If the scourge slay suddenly,
He will laugh at the trial of the innocent.
24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked:
He covereth the faces of the judges thereof;
If not, where, *and* who *is* he?

Here Job toucheth briefly upon the main point now in dispute between him and his friends. They maintained that those who are righteous and good always prosper in this world, and none but the wicked are in misery and distress. He asserted, on the contrary, that it is a common thing for the wicked to prosper, and the righteous to be greatly afflicted. This is the one thing, the chief thing, wherein he and his friends differed; and they had not proved their assertion, therefore he abides by his. I said it, and say it again, that all things come alike to all. Now it must be owned,

First. That there is very much truth in what Job here means; that temporal judgments, when they are sent abroad, fall both upon good and bad; and the destroying angel seldom distinguisheth, though once he did, between the houses of Israelites and the houses of Egyptians.

In the judgment of Sodom indeed, which is called "the vengeance of eternal fire," *Jude* 7, far be it from God to "slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked," *Gen.* xviii. 25; but, in judgments merely temporal, the righteous have their share, and sometimes the greatest share. "The sword devours one as well as another," Josiah as well as Ahab. Thus God destroys the perfect and the wicked, involves them both in the same common ruin; good and bad were sent together into Babylon, *Jer.* xxiv. 5, 9. If the scourge slay suddenly, and sweep down all before it, God will be well pleased to see how the same scourge which is the perdition of the wicked is the trial of the innocent, and of their faith, which will be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 *Pet.* i. 7; *Ps.* lxvi. 10.

'Against the just the Almighty's arrows fly,
For he delights the innocent to try;
To shew their constant and their Godlike mind,
Not by afflictions broken, but refined.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

Let this reconcile God's children to their troubles. They are but trials, designed for their honour and benefit; and if God be pleased with them, let not them be displeased. If "he laugh at the trial of the innocent," knowing how glorious the issue of it will be, at destruction and famine let them also laugh, *ch.* v. 22, and triumph over them, saying, "O death, where is thy sting?"

On the other hand, the wicked are so far from being made the marks of God's judgments, that "the earth is given into their hand," ver. 24. They enjoy large possessions and great power; have what they will, and do what they will. "Into the hand of the wicked" one; in the original it is singular; the devil, that wicked one, is called the god of this world, and boasts that into his hand it is delivered, *Lu.* iv. 6. Or, 'into the hand of a wicked man,' meaning, as Bishop Patrick and the Assembly's Annotations conjecture, some noted tyrant then living in those parts, whose great wickedness and great prosperity were well known both to Job and his friends. The wicked have the earth given them; but the righteous have heaven given them; and which is better, heaven without earth, or earth without heaven? God, in his providence, advanceth wicked men, while he covers the faces of those who are fit to be judges, who are wise and good, and qualified for government, and buries them alive in obscurity; perhaps suffers them to be run down and condemned, and to have their faces covered as criminals by those wicked ones into whose hand the earth is given. We daily see this done; if it be not God that doth it, where and who is he that doth? To whom can it be ascribed but to him that rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whom he will? *Dan.* iv. 32.

Secondly. Yet it must be owned that there is too much passion in what Job here saith. The manner of expression is peevish. When he meant that God afflicts, he ought not to have said he destroys both the perfect and the wicked. When he meant that God pleaseth himself with the trial of the innocent, he ought not to have said he laughs at it, for he doth not afflict willingly. When the spirit is heated, either with dispute or with discontent, we have need to set a watch before the door of our lips, that we may observe a good decorum in speaking of Divine things.

25 Now my days are swifter than a post:
They flee away, they see no good.

POST CAMEL.

26 They are passed away as the swift ships:
As the eagle *that* hasteth to the prey.
27 If I say, I will forget my complaint,
I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort *myself:*
28 I am afraid of all my sorrows,
I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent.
29 *If* I be wicked, why then labour I in vain?
30 If I wash myself with snow water,
And make my hands never so clean;
31 Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch,
And mine own clothes shall abhor me.
32 For *he is* not a man, as I *am, that* I should answer him,
And we should come together in judgment
33 Neither is there any daysman betwixt us,
That might lay his hand upon us both.
34 Let him take his rod away from me,
And let not his fear terrify me:
35 *Then* would I speak, and not fear him;
But *it is* not so with me.

Job here grows more and more querulous, and doth not conclude this chapter with such awful expressions of God's wisdom and justice as he began it. They that indulge a complaining humour know not to what indecencies, nay, to what impieties, it will hurry them. The beginning of that strife with God is as the letting forth of water; therefore leave it off before it be meddled with. When we are in trouble, we are allowed to complain to God, as the psalmist often, but must by no means complain of God, as Job here.

First. His complaint here of the passing away of the days of his prosperity is well enough, ver. 25, 26. My days, that is, all my good days, are gone, never to return,—gone of a sudden, gone ere I was aware. Never did any courier that went express, like Cushi and Ahimaaz, with good tidings, make such haste as all my comforts did from me; never did ship sail to its port,—never did eagle fly upon his prey,—with such incredible swiftness; nor doth there remain any footsteps of my prosperity, no more than there doth of an eagle in the air, or a ship in the sea, *Pr.* xxx. 19. See here, 1. How swift the motion of time is; it is always upon the wing, hastening to its period; it stays for no man. What little need have we of pastimes, and what great need to redeem time, when time runs out, runs on so fast towards eternity, which comes as time goes. 2. How vain the enjoyments of time are, which we may be quite deprived of while yet time continues. Our day may be longer than the sunshine of our prosperity; and when that is gone it is as if it had not been. The remembrance of having done our duty will be pleasing afterwards, so will not the remembrance of our having got a great deal of worldly wealth, when it is all lost and gone. They flee away past recall; they see no good, and leave none behind them.

Secondly. His complaint of his present uneasiness is excusable, ver. 27, 28. 1. It should seem he did his endeavour to quiet and compose himself, as his

friends advised him. That was the good he would do. He would fain forget his complaints, and praise God; would leave off his heaviness, and comfort himself, that he might be fit for converse, both with God and man. But, 2. He found he could not do it; "I am afraid of all my sorrows;" then when I strive most against my trouble, it prevails most over me, and proves too hard for me. It is easier in such a case to know what we should do than to do it; to know what temper we should be in than to get into that temper, and keep in it. It is easy to preach patience to those that are in trouble, and to tell them they must forget their complaints, and comfort themselves; but it is not so soon done as said. Fear and sorrow are tyrannizing things, not easily brought into the subjection they ought to be kept in to religion and right reason.

Thirdly. But his complaint of God, as implacable and inexorable, was by no means to be excused. It was the language of his corruption. He knew better things; and at another time would have been far from harbouring any such hard thoughts of God as now broke in upon his spirit, and broke out in these passionate complaints. Good men do not always speak like themselves; but God considers their frame, and the strength of their temptations, gives them leave afterwards to unsay it by repentance, and will not lay it to their charge. Job seems to speak here,

1. As if he despaired of obtaining from God any relief or redress of his grievances, though he should produce never so good proofs of his integrity. "I know thou wilt not hold me innocent;" my afflictions have continued so long upon me, and increased so fast, that I do not expect thou wilt ever clear up my innocency, by delivering me out of them, and restoring me to a prosperous condition. Right or wrong I must be treated as a wicked man; my friends will continue to think so of me, and God will continue upon me the afflictions which give them occasion to think so, and why then do I labour in vain to clear myself, and maintain my own integrity? ver. 29. It is to no purpose to speak in a cause that is already prejudged. With men it is often labour in vain for the most innocent to go about to clear themselves; they must be adjudged guilty, though the evidence be never so plain for them. But it is not so in our dealings with God, who is the patron of oppressed innocency, and to whom it was never in vain to commit a righteous cause.

Nay, he not only despairs of relief, but expects that his endeavour to clear himself would render him yet more obnoxious; ver. 30, 31, "If I wash myself with snow water," and make my integrity never so evident, it will be all to no purpose, judgment must go against me; "Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch," the pit of destruction, so some; or rather, the filthy kennel, or sewer, which will make me stink so in the nostrils of all about me, that "my own clothes shall abhor me," and I shall even loathe to touch myself. He saw his afflictions coming from God; those were the things that blackened him in the eye of his friends, and upon that score he complained of them, and of the continuance of them, not only as the ruin of his comfort, but as the ruin of his reputation. Yet these words are capable of a good construction. If we be never so industrious to justify ourselves before men, and to preserve our credit with them,—if we keep our hands never so clean from the pollutions of gross sin, which fall under the eye of the world,—yet God, who knows our hearts, can charge us with so much secret sin as will for ever take off all our pretensions to purity and innocency, and make us see ourselves odious in the sight of the holy God. Paul, while a Pharisee, made his hands very clean, but when the commandment came, and discovered to him his heart sins, made him know lust, that plunged him in the ditch.

2. As if he despaired to have so much as a fair hearing with God; and that were hard indeed.

1st. He complains that he was not upon even terms with God; ver. 32, "He is not a man as I am." I could venture to dispute with a man like myself; the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth, but he is infinitely above me, and therefore I dare not enter the lists with him; I shall certainly be cast if I contend with him. Note, *First*. God is not a man as we are. Of the greatest princes we may say, they are men as we are, but not of the great God. His thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours; and we must not measure him by ourselves. Man is foolish and weak, frail and fickle; but God is neither so nor so. We are depending, dying creatures; he the independent and immortal Creator. *Secondly*. The consideration of this should keep us very low, and very silent before God. Let us not make ourselves equal with God, but always eye him as infinitely above us.

2nd. That there was no arbitrator or umpire to adjust the differences between him and God, and to determine the controversy; ver. 33, "Neither is there any daysman." This complaint, that there was not, is in effect a wish that there were, and so the Seventy read it: 'O that there were a mediator between us!' Job would gladly refer the matter, but no creature was capable of being a referee; and, therefore, he must even refer it still to God himself, and resolve to acquiesce in his judgment. Our Lord Jesus is the blessed daysman, who has mediated between heaven and earth; has laid his hand upon us both; to him the Father has committed all judgment, and we must. But this matter was not then brought to so clear a light as it is now by the Gospel, which leaves no room for such a complaint as this.

3rd. That the terrors of God, which set themselves in array against him, put him into such confusion, that he knew not how to address himself to God with the confidence with which he was formerly wont to approach him, ver. 34, 35. Besides the distance which I am kept at by his infinite transcendency, his present dealings with me are very discouraging. "Let him take his rod away from me;" he means not so much his outward afflictions as the load which lay upon his spirit, from the apprehensions of God's wrath; that was his fear which terrified him. Let that be removed,—let me recover the sight of his mercy,—and not be amazed with the sight of nothing but his terrors; and then I would speak, and order my cause before him. But it is not so with me; the cloud doth not at all scatter; the wrath of God still fastens upon me, and preys on my spirits as much as ever; and what to do I know not.

From all this let us take occasion, *First*. To stand in awe of God, and to fear the power of his wrath. If good men have been put into such consternation by it, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? *Secondly*. To pity those that are wounded in spirit, and pray earnestly for them, because in that condition they know not how to pray for themselves. *Thirdly*. Carefully to keep up good thoughts of God always in our minds, for hard thoughts of him are the inlets of much mischief. *Fourthly*. To bless God that we are not in such a disconsolate condition as poor Job was here in, that we walk in the light of the Lord; let us rejoice therein, but rejoice with trembling.

CHAPTER X.

Job owns here that he was full of confusion, ver. 15, and as he was so was his discourse: he knew not what to say, and perhaps sometimes scarce knew what he said. In this chapter, I. He complains of the hardships he was under, ver. 1—7; and then comforts himself with this, that he was in the hand of the God that made him, and pleads that, ver. 8—13. II. He complains again of the severity of God's dealings with him, ver. 14—17; and then comforts himself with this, that death would put an end to his troubles, ver. 18—22.

MY soul is weary of my life;
I will leave my complaint upon myself;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.
2 I will say unto God, Do not condemn me;
Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.
3 *Is it* good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress,
That thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands,
And shine upon the counsel of the wicked?
4 Hast thou eyes of flesh?
Or seest thou as man seeth?
5 *Are* thy days as the days of man?
Are thy years as man's days,
6 That thou enquirest after mine iniquity,
And searchest after my sin?
7 Thou knowest that I am not wicked;
And *there is* none that can deliver out of thine hand.

Here is, First. A passionate resolution to persist in his complaint, ver. 1. Being daunted with the dread of God's majesty, so that he could not plead his cause with him, he resolves to give himself some ease by giving vent to his resentments. He begins with a hot word; "My soul is weary of my life," weary of this body, and impatient to get clear of it, fallen out with life, and displeased at it,—sick of it, and longing for death. Through the weakness of grace he went contrary to the dictates even of nature itself. We should act more like men, did we act more like saints. Faith and patience would keep us from being weary of our lives, (and cruel to them, as some read it,) even then when Providence has made them most wearisome to us; for that is to be weary of God's correction. Job, being weary of his life, and having ease no other way, resolves to complain,—resolves to speak. He will not give vent to his soul by violent hands, but he will give vent to the bitterness of his soul by violent words. Losers think they may have leave to speak; and unbridled passions, as well as unbridled appetites, are apt to think it an excuse for their excursions, that they cannot help it. But what have we wisdom and grace for, but to keep the mouth as with a bridle? Job's corruption speaks here, yet grace puts in a word. 1. He will complain, but he will leave his complaint upon himself. He would not impeach God, nor charge him with unrighteousness or unkindness; but, though he knew not particularly the ground of God's controversy with him, and the cause of action, yet in the general he would suppose it to be in himself, and willingly bear all the blame. 2. He will speak, but it shall be the bitterness of his soul that he will express, not his settled judgment. If I speak amiss, it is not I, but sin that dwells in me; not my soul, but its bitterness.

Secondly. An humble petition to God. He will speak, but the first word shall be a prayer; and, as I am willing to understand it, it is a good prayer, ver. 2. 1. That he might be delivered from the sting of his afflictions, which is sin; "Do not condemn me," do not separate me for ever from thee. Though I lie under the cross, let me not lie under the curse. Though I smart by the rod of a father, let me not be cut off by the sword of a judge. Thou dost correct me, I will bear that as well as I can, but, O do not condemn me! It is the comfort of those who are in Christ Jesus, that, though they are in affliction, there is no condemnation to them, *Rom.* viii. 1; nay, "they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world," 1 *Cor.* xi. 32. This, therefore, we should deprecate above any thing else when we are in affliction; However thou art pleased to deal with me, Lord, do not condemn me; my friends condemn me, but do not thou. 2. That he might be made acquainted with the true cause of his afflictions, and that is sin too; "Lord, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." When God afflicts us he contends with us; when he contends with us there is always a reason why and wherefore. He is never angry without cause, though we are; and it is desirable to know what the reason is, that we may repent of, mortify, and forsake the sin for which God hath a controversy with us. In inquiring it out, let conscience have leave to do its office, and to deal faithfully with us, as *Gen.* xlii. 21.

Thirdly. A peevish expostulation with God concerning his dealings with him. Now he speaks in the bitterness of his soul indeed, not without some ill-natured reflections upon the righteousness of his God.

1. He thinks it unbecoming the goodness of God, and the mercifulness of his nature, to deal so hardly with his creature, as to lay upon him more than he could bear; ver. 3, "Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress?" No, certainly it is not. What he approves not in men, *Lam.* iii. 34—36, he will not act himself. Lord, in dealing with me, thou seemest to oppress thy subject,—to despise thy workmanship, and to countenance thine enemies. Now, Lord, what is the meaning of this? Such is thy nature, that this cannot be a pleasure to thee; and such is thy name, that it cannot be an honour to thee; why, then, dealest thou thus with me? "what profit is there in my blood?" Far be it from Job to think that God did him wrong, but he is quite at a loss how to reconcile his providences with his justice, as good men have often been, and must wait till the day shall declare it. Let us, therefore, now harbour no hard thoughts of God, because we shall then see there was no hard cause for them.

2. He thinks it unbecoming the infinite knowledge of God to put his prisoner thus upon the rack, as it were by torture to extort a confession from him, ver. 4—6.

1st. He is sure God doth not discover things, nor judge of them, as men do. He has not eyes of flesh, ver. 4; for he is a Spirit. Eyes of flesh cannot see in the dark, but darkness hideth not from God. Eyes of flesh are but in one place at a time, and can see but a little way, but "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, and run to and fro through the whole earth." Many things are hid from eyes of flesh, the most curious and piercing; "there is a path which even the vulture's eye has not seen." But nothing is, or can be, hid from the eye of God, to which all things are naked and open. Eyes of flesh see the outward appearance only, and may be imposed upon by a *deceptio visus*,—'an illusion of the senses,' but God sees every thing truly; his sight cannot be deceived, for he trieth the heart, and is a witness to the thoughts and intents of that. Eyes of flesh discover things gradually, and when we gain the sight of one thing we lose the sight of another, but God sees every thing at one view. Eyes of flesh are soon tired, must be closed every night that they may be refreshed, and will shortly be darkened by age, and shut up by death; but the Keeper of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps, nor doth his sight ever decay. God sees

not as man sees, that is, he doth not judge as man judgeth,—at the best, *secundum allegata et probata*,—'according to what is alleged and proved,' as the thing appears, rather than as it is, and too often according to the bias of the affections, passions, prejudices and interest; but "we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth," and that truth he knows not by information, but by his own inspection. Men discover secret things by search, and examination of witnesses; comparing evidence and giving conjectures upon it, wheedling or forcing the parties concerned to confess. But God needs not any of these ways of discovery; he sees not as man sees.

2nd. He is sure that, as God is not short-sighted like man, so he is not short-lived; ver. 5, "Are thy days as the days of man," few and evil? Do they roll on in succession, or are they subject to change like the days of man? No, by no means. Men grow wiser by experience, and more knowing by daily observation; with them truth is the daughter of time, and therefore they must take time for their searches, and if one experiment fail must try another; but it is not so with God. To him nothing is past, nothing future, but every thing present. The days of time, by which the life of man is measured, are nothing to the years of eternity in which the life of God is wrapt up.

3rd. He therefore thinks it strange that God should thus prolong his torture, and continue him under the confinement of this affliction, and neither bring him to a trial, nor grant him a release; as if he must take time to inquire after his iniquity, and use means to search after his sin, ver. 6. Not as if Job thought God did thus torment him that he might find occasion against him; but his dealings with him had such an aspect, which was dishonourable to God, and would tempt men to think him a hard master. Now, Lord, if thou wilt not consult my comfort, consult thine own honour; do something for thy great name, and do not disgrace the throne of thy glory, *Jer.* xiv. 21.

3. He thinks it looked like an abuse of his omnipotence, to keep a poor prisoner in custody whom he knew to be innocent, only because there was none that could deliver him out of his hand; ver. 7, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked." He had already owned himself a sinner, and guilty before God; but he here stands to it that he was not wicked, not devoted to sin, not an enemy to God, not a dissembler in his religion, that he had not wickedly departed from his God; *Ps.* xviii. 21, "But there is none that can deliver out of thy hand;" and therefore, there is no remedy, I must be content to lie by it, waiting thy time, and throwing myself on thy mercy in submission to thy sovereign will. Here see, 1st. What ought to quiet us under our troubles; that it is to no purpose to contend with omnipotence. 2nd. What will abundantly comfort us if we are able to appeal to God as Job here, Lord, "thou knowest that I am not wicked." I cannot say that I am not wanting, or I am not weak; but, through grace, I can say I am not wicked. Thou knowest I am not, for thou knowest I love thee.

8 Thine hands have made me and fashioned me
Together round about; yet thou dost destroy me.
9 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay;
And wilt thou bring me into dust again?
10 Hast thou not poured me out as milk,
And curdled me like cheese?
11 Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh,
And hast fenced me with bones and sinews.
12 Thou hast granted me life and favour,
And thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.
13 And these *things* hast thou hid in thine heart:
I know that this *is* with thee.

In these verses we may observe,

First. How Job eyes God as his creator and preserver, and describes his dependence upon him as the author and upholder of his being. This is one of the first things we are all concerned to know and consider.

1. That God made us. He, and not our parents, who were only the instruments of his power and providence in our production; he made us and not we ourselves. His hands have made and fashioned these bodies of ours, and every part of them, ver. 8; and they are fearfully and wonderfully made. The soul also which animates the body is his gift. He takes notice of both here. 1st. The body is made as the clay, ver. 9; cast into shape, into this shape, as the clay is formed into a vessel according to the skill and will of the potter. We are earthen vessels, mean in our original, and soon broken into pieces, made as the clay; "let not," therefore, "the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" We must not be proud of our bodies, because the matter is from the earth, yet not dishonour our bodies, because the mould and shape is from the Divine wisdom. The formation of human bodies in the womb is described by an elegant similitude; ver. 10, "Thou hast poured me out like milk," which is coagulated into cheese; and by an induction of some particulars, ver. 11. Though we come into the world naked, yet the body is itself both clothed and armed. The skin and flesh are its clothing; the bones and sinews are its armour, not offensive, but defensive. The vital parts, the heart and lungs, are thus clothed, not to be seen—thus fenced, not to be hurt. The admirable structure of human bodies is an illustrious instance of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. What pity is it that these bodies should be instruments of unrighteousness which are capable of being temples of the Holy Ghost. 2nd. The soul is the life, the soul is the man; and this is the gift of God: Thou hast granted me life, breathed into me the breath of life, without which the body would be but a worthless carcass. God is the father of spirits, he made us living souls, and endued us with the powers of reason; gave us life and favour, and life is a favour, a great favour, more than meat, more than raiment; a distinguishing favour, a favour that puts us into a capacity of receiving other favours. Now Job was in a better mind than he was when he quarrelled with life as a burthen, and asked, "Why died I not from the womb?" Or, by life and favour may be meant life and all the comforts of life, referring to his former prosperity. Time was when he walked in the light of the Divine favour; and thought, as David, that through that favour his mountain stood strong.

2. That God maintains us. Having lighted the lamp of life, he doth not leave it to burn upon its own stock, but continually supplies it with fresh oil; "Thy visitation has preserved my spirit," kept me alive, protected me from the adversaries of life; the death we are in the midst of, and the dangers we are continually exposed to; and blessed me with all the necessary supports of life, and the daily supplies it needs and craves.

Secondly. How he pleads this with God, and what use he makes of it. He minds God of it; ver. 9, "Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hadst made me;" What then!

1. Thou hast made me, and therefore thou hast a perfect knowledge of me, *Ps.* cxxxix. 1—13; and needest not to examine me by scourging, nor to put me upon the rack for the discovering of what is within me.

2. Thou hast made me as the clay by an act of sovereignty, and wilt thou by a like act of sovereignty unmake me again? If so, I must submit.

3. Wilt thou destroy the work of thine own hands? It is a plea the saints have often used in prayer, "We are the clay, and thou our potter," *Isa.* lxiv. 8; "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me," *Ps.* cxix. 73. So here, "Thou madest me," and wilt thou destroy me? ver. 8, "Wilt thou bring me into dust again?" ver. 9. Wilt thou not pity me? wilt thou not spare and help me, and stand by the work of thine own hands? *Ps.* cxxxviii. 8. Thou madest me and knowest my strength, wilt thou then suffer me to be pressed above measure? Was I made to be made miserable? Was I preserved only to be reserved for these calamities? If we plead this with ourselves as an inducement to duty, God made me and maintains me, and therefore, I will serve him and submit to him, we may plead it with God as an argument for mercy, "Thou hast made me," new make me; "I am thine, save me." Job knew not how to reconcile God's former favours and his present frowns; but concludes, ver. 13, "These things hast thou hid in thine heart." Both are according to the counsel of thine own will, and therefore undoubtedly consistent, however they seem. When God thus strangely changeth his way, though we cannot account for it, we are bound to believe there are good reasons, for it is hid in his heart, which will be manifested shortly. It is not with us, or in our reach to assign the cause; but "I know that this is with thee." "Known unto God are all his works."

14 If I sin, then thou markest me,
And thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.
15 If I be wicked, woe unto me;
And *if* I be righteous, *yet* will I not lift up my head.
I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction;
16 For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion:
And again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me.
17 Thou renewest thy witnesses against me,
And increasest thine indignation upon me;
Changes and war *are* against me.
18 Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? [me!
Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen
19 I should have been as though I had not been;
I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.
20 *Are* not my days few? cease *then*,
And let me alone, that I may take comfort a little,
21 Before I go *whence* I shall not return,
Even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death;
22 A land of darkness, as darkness *itself;*
And of the shadow of death, without any order,
And *where* the light *is* as darkness.

Here is, First. Job's passionate complaints. On that harsh and unpleasant string he harps much, in which, though he cannot be justified, he may be excused. He complained not for nothing as the murmuring Israelites, but had cause to complain. If we think it looks ill in him, let it be a warning to us to keep our temper better.

1. He complains of the strictness of God's judgment, and the rigour of his proceedings against him, and is ready to call it *summum jus*,—'justice bordering on severity.' 1st. That he took all advantages against him, "If I sin, then thou markest me," ver. 14. If I do but take one false step, misplace a word, or cast a look awry, I shall be sure to hear of it; conscience, thy deputy, will be sure to upbraid me with it, and to tell me this gripe, this twitch of pain, is to punish me for that. If God should thus mark iniquities we are undone; we must say the contrary, though we sin, God doth not deal in extremity with us. 2nd. That he prosecuted those advantages to the utmost; "Thou will not acquit me from mine iniquity." While his troubles continued, he could not take the comfort of his pardon, nor hear that voice of joy and gladness, so hard is it to see love in God's heart, when we see frowns in his face, and a rod in his hand. 3rd. That, whatever was his character, his case at present was very uncomfortable, ver. 15. *First.* If he be wicked, he is certainly undone in the other world; "If I be wicked, woe unto me." Note, A sinful state is a woful state. This we should each of us believe, as Job here, with application to ourselves: "If I be wicked," though prosperous, and living in pleasure, yet "woe to me." Some especially have reason to dread double woes if they be wicked. I that have knowledge, that have made great profession of religion, that have been so often under strong convictions, and have made so many fair promises,—I that was born of so good parents, blessed with a good education, that have lived in good families, and long enjoyed the means of grace,—"if I be wicked, woe," and a thousand woes "to me." *Secondly.* If he be righteous, yet he dares not lift up his head; dares not answer as before, *ch.* ix. 15. He is so oppressed and overwhelmed with his troubles, that he cannot look up with any comfort or confidence. Without were fightings, within were fears; so that between both he was full of confusion. Not only confusion of face for the disgrace he was brought down to, and the censures of his friends, but confusion of spirit; his mind was in a constant hurry, and he was almost distracted, *Ps.* lxxxviii. 15.

2. He complains of the severity of the execution. God, he thought, did not only punish him for every failure, but punish him in a high degree, ver. 16, 17. His affliction was, 1st. Grievous, very grievous, marvellous, exceeding marvellous. God hunted him as a lion, as a fierce lion hunts and runs down his prey. God was not only strange to him, but shewed himself marvellous upon him by bringing him into uncommon troubles, and so making him a prodigy, a wonder unto many. All admired that God would inflict, and that Job could bear so much. That which made his afflictions most grievous was, that he felt God's indignation in them; that was it that made them taste so bitter and lie so heavy. They were God's witnesses against him, tokens of his displeasure; this made the sores of his body wounds in his spirit. 2nd. It was growing, still growing worse and

worse. This he insists much upon; when he hoped the tide would turn and begin to ebb, still it flowed higher and higher. His affliction increased, and God's indignation in the affliction; he found himself no better, no way better. These witnesses were renewed against him, that if one did not reach to convict him, another might. Changes and war were against him. If there were any change with him it was not for the better, still he was kept in a state of war. As long as we are here in this world, we must expect that the clouds will return after the rain, and perhaps the sorest and sharpest trials may be reserved for the last. God was at war with him, and it was a great change. He did not use to be so, which aggravated the trouble, and made it truly marvellous. God uses to shew himself kind to his people; if at any time he shews himself otherwise it is his strange work, his strange act, and he doth in it shew himself marvellous.

3. He complains of his life, and that ever he was born to all this trouble and misery, ver. 18, 19. If this was designed for my lot, "why was I brought out of the womb" and not smothered here, or stifled in the birth? This was the language of his passion, and it was a relapse into the same sin he fell into before. He had just now called life a favour, ver. 12; yet now he counts it a burthen, and quarrels with God for giving it, or rather laying it upon him. Mr. Caryl gives this a good turn in favour of Job. We may charitably suppose, saith he, that that which troubled Job was, that he was in a condition of life, which, as he conceived, hindered the main end of his life, which was the glorifying God. His harp was hung on the willow trees, and he was quite out of tune for praising God; nay, he feared lest his troubles should reflect dishonour upon God, and give occasion to his enemies to blaspheme; and therefore he wisheth, "O that I had given up the ghost!" A godly man reckons that he lives to no purpose if he do not live to the praise and glory of God; but if that had been his meaning, it was grounded on a mistake, for we may glorify the Lord in the fires. But this use we may make of it, not to be over fond of life, since the case hath been such sometimes even with wise and good men that they have complained of it. Why should we dread giving up the ghost, or covet to be seen of men, since the time may come when we may be ready to wish we had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen us. Why should we inordinately lament the death of our children in their infancy, that are as if they had not been, and are carried from the womb to the grave, when perhaps we ourselves may sometimes wish it had been our own lot?

Secondly. Job's humble requests. He prays,

1. That God would see his affliction, ver. 15; take cognizance of his case, and take it into his compassionate consideration. Thus David prays, *Ps.* xxv. 18: "Look upon mine affliction and my pain." Thus we should in our troubles refer ourselves to God, and may comfort ourselves with this, that he knows our souls in adversity.

2. That God would grant him some ease. If he could not prevail for the removal of his troubles, yet might he not have some intermission; Lord, let me not be always upon the rack, always in extremity, "O let me alone that I may take comfort a little!" ver. 20. Grant me some respite, some breathing time, some little enjoyment of myself. This he would reckon a great favour. Those that are not duly thankful for constant ease, should think how welcome one hour's ease would be if they were in constant pain. Two things he pleads:

1st. That life and its light were very short. "Are not my days few?" ver. 20. Yes, certainly they are, very few: Lord, let them not be all miserable, all in the extremity of misery. I have but a little time to live, let me have some comfort of life while it doth last. This plea fastens on the goodness of God's nature, the consideration of which is very comfortable to an afflicted spirit. And if we would use this as a plea with God for mercy, "Are not my days few?" Lord, pity me; we should use it as a plea with ourselves, to quicken us to duty. "Are not my days few?" then it concerns me to redeem time, to improve opportunities; what my hand finds to do, to do it with all my might, that I may be ready for the days of eternity, which shall be many.

2nd. That death and its darkness were very near, and would be very long, ver. 21, 22. Lord, give me some ease before I die, that is, lest I die of my pain. Thus David pleads, *Ps.* xiii. 3: "Lest I sleep the sleep of death," and then it will be too late to expect relief, for "wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?" *Ps.* lxxxviii. 10. Let me have a little comfort before I die, that I may calmly take leave of this world, and not in such confusion as I am now in. Thus earnest should we be for grace, and thus should we plead; Lord, renew me in the inward man; Lord, sanctify me before I die, for then it will never be done. See how he speaks here of the state of the dead.

First. It is a fixed state, whence we shall not return ever again to live such a life as we now live, *ch.* vii. 10. At death we must bid a final farewell to this world. The body must then be laid where it will lie long, and the soul determined to that state in which it must be for ever. That had need be well done which is to be done but once, and done for eternity.

Secondly. It is a very melancholy state; so it appears to us. Holy souls at death remove to a land of light, where there is no death; but their bodies they leave to a land of darkness and the shadow of death. He heaps up expressions here to the same purpose, to shew that he has as dreadful apprehensions of death and the grave as other men naturally have; so that it was only the extreme misery he was in that made him wish for it. Come, and let us look a little into the grave, and we shall find, 1*st.* That there is no order there. It is "without any order;" perpetual night, and no succession of day. All there lie on the same level, and there is no distinction between prince and peasant; but the servant is there free from his master, *ch.* iii. 19. No order is observed in bringing people to the grave; not the eldest first, not the richest, not the poorest, and yet every one in his own order, the order oppointed by the God of life. 2*nd.* That there is no light there. In the grave there is thick darkness; darkness that cannot be felt indeed, yet cannot but be feared by those that enjoy the light of life. In the grave there is no knowledge, no comfort, no joy, no praising God, no working out our salvation; and therefore no light. Job was so much ashamed others should see his sores, and so much afraid to see them himself, that the darkness of the grave, which would hide them, and huddle them up, would upon that account be welcome to him. Darkness comes upon us, and therefore let us walk and work while we have the light with us. The grave being a land of darkness, it is well we are carried thither with our eyes closed, and then it is all one. The grave is a land of darkness to man; our friends that are gone thither we reckon removed into darkness, *Ps.* lxxxviii. 18. But that it is not so to God will appear by this, that the dust of the bodies of the saints, though scattered, though mingled with other dust, will none of it be lost; for God's eye is upon every grain of it, and it shall be forthcoming in the great day.

CHAPTER XI.

Poor Job's wounds were yet bleeding, his sore still runs and ceaseth not, but none of his friends bring him any oil, any balm; Zophar, the third, pours into them as much vinegar as the two former had done. I. He exhibits a very high charge against Job, as proud and false in justifying himself, ver. 1—4. II. He appeals to God for his conviction, and begs that God would take him to task, ver. 5, and that Job might be made sensible, 1. Of God's unerring wisdom, and his inviolable justice, ver. 6; 2. Of his unsearchable perfections, ver. 7—9; 3. Of his incontestable sovereignty, and uncontrollable power, ver. 10; 4. Of the cognizance he takes of the children of men, ver. 11, 12. III. He assures him that, upon his repentance and reformation, ver. 13, 14, God would restore him to his former prosperity and safety, ver. 15—19; but if he were wicked it was in vain to expect it, ver. 20.

THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,
2 Should not the multitude of words be answered?
And should a man full of talk be justified?
3 Should thy lies make men hold their peace?
And when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?
4 For thou hast said, My doctrine *is* pure,
And I am clean in thine eyes.
5 But oh that God would speak,
And open his lips against thee;
6 And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom,
That *they are* double to that which is!
Know therefore that God exacteth of thee *less* than thine iniquity *deserveth.*

It is sad to see what intemperate passions even wise and good men are sometimes betrayed into by the heat of disputation, of which Zophar here is an instance. Eliphaz began with a very modest preface, *ch.* iv. 2. Bildad was a little more rough upon Job, *ch.* viii. 2. But Zophar falls upon him without mercy, and gives him very ill language; "Should a man full of talk be justified? and should thy lies make men hold their peace?" Is this the way to comfort Job? no, nor to convince him neither. Doth this become one that appears as an advocate for God and his justice? *Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ?*—'In heavenly hearts can such resentments dwell?' They that engage in controversy will find it very hard to keep their temper. All the wisdom, caution, and resolution they have will be little enough to prevent their breaking out into such indecencies as here we find Zophar guilty of.

First. He represents Job otherwise than what he was, ver. 2, 3; would have him thought idle and impertinent in his discourse, and one that loved to hear himself talk; gives him the lie, and calls him a mocker; and all this that it might be looked upon as a piece of justice to chastise him. Those that have a mind to fall out with their brethren, and to fall foul upon them, find it necessary to put the worst colours they can upon them and their performances; and, right or wrong, to make them odious. We have read and considered Job's discourses in the foregoing chapters, and have found them full of good sense, and much to the purpose; that his principles are right, his reasonings strong, and many of his expressions weighty and very considerable, and what there is in them of heat and passion, a little candour and charity will excuse and overlook; and yet Zophar here invidiously represents him,

1. As a man that never considered what he said, but uttered what came uppermost, only to make a noise with the multitude of words; hoping by that means to carry his cause, and run down his reprovers. "Should not the multitude of words be answered?" Truly, sometimes it is no great matter whether it be or no; silence, perhaps, is the best confutation of impertinence, and puts the greatest contempt upon it; "Answer not a fool according to his folly." But, if it be answered, let reason and grace have the answering of it, not pride and passion. "Should a man full of talk" (marg. 'a man of lips,' that is, all tongue, *vox et præterea nihil*,—'mere voice') be justified? Should he be justified in his loquacity, as in effect he is, if he be not reproved for it? No, for "in multitude of words there wanteth not sin." Should he be justified by it? Shall many words pass for valid pleas? Shall he carry the day with the flourishes of language? No, he shall not be accepted with God, or any wise men, for his much speaking, *Mat.* vi. 7.

2. As a man that made no conscience of what he said, a liar, and one that hoped by the impudence of lies to silence his adversaries; "Should thy lies make men hold their peace?" A mocker, one that bantered all mankind, and knew how to put false colours upon any thing, and was not ashamed to impose upon every one that talked with him; "When thou mockest shall no man make thee ashamed?" Is it not time to speak, to stem such a violent tide as this? Job was not mad, but spoke the words of truth and soberness, and yet is thus misrepresented. Eliphaz and Bildad had answered him, and said what they could to make him ashamed; it was, therefore, no instance of Zophar's generosity to set upon one so violently who was already thus baited. Three to one was great odds.

Secondly. He chargeth Job with saying that which he had not said; ver. 4, "Thou hast said, My doctrine is pure." And what if he had said so? It was true that Job was sound in the faith, and orthodox in his judgment, and spoke better of God than his friends did. If he had expressed himself unwarily, yet it did not therefore follow but that his doctrine was true; but he chargeth him with saying, "I am clean in thine eyes." Job had not said so. He had indeed said, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked," *ch.* x. 7; but he had said also, "I have sinned;" and never pretended to a spotless perfection. He had indeed maintained that he was not a hypocrite, as they charged him; but from thence to infer that he would not own himself a sinner, was an unfair insinuation. We ought to put the best construction on the words and actions of our brethren that they will bear, but contenders are tempted to put the worst.

Thirdly. He appeals to God, and wisheth him to appear against Job. So very confident is he that Job is in the wrong, that nothing will serve him but that God must presently appear to silence and condemn him. We are commonly ready with too much assurance to interest God in our quarrels; and to conclude that, if he would but speak, he would take our part, and speak for us, as Zophar here, "O that God would speak," for he would certainly open his lips against thee; whereas, when God did speak, he opened his lips for Job against his three friends. We ought, indeed, to leave all controversies to be determined by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth; but they are not always in the right that are most forward to appeal to that judgment, and prejudge it against their antagonists. Zophar despairs to convince Job himself, and therefore desires God would convince him of two things, which it is good for every one of us duly to consider, and under all our afflictions cheerfully to confess.

1. The unsearchable depth of God's counsels. Zophar cannot pretend to do it; but he desires that God himself would shew Job so much of the secrets of the Divine wisdom as might convince him that they are at least double to that which is, ver. 6. Note, 1st. There are secrets in the Divine wisdom: *arcana imperii*,—'state secrets.' God's way is in the sea; clouds and darkness are

round about him. He has reasons of state which we cannot fathom, and must not pry into. 2nd. What we know of God is nothing to what we cannot know; what is hid is more than double to what appears to us to be, *Eph.* iii. 9. 3rd. It will help very much to silence us under the afflicting hand of God to adore the depth of those Divine counsels which we cannot find the bottom of. 4th. God knows a great deal more evil by us than we do by ourselves, so some understand it. When God gave David a sight and sense of sin, he saith that he had in the hidden part made him to know wisdom, *Ps.* li. 6.

2. The unexceptionable justice of his proceedings. "Know, therefore," that, how sore soever the correction is, that thou art under, "God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserves;" or, as some read it, 'he remits thee part of thine iniquity,' and doth not deal with thee according to the full demerit of it. Note, 1st. When the debt of duty is not paid, it is justice to insist upon the debt of punishment. 2nd. Whatever punishment is inflicted upon us in this world, we must own that it is less than our iniquities deserve; and, therefore, instead of complaining of our troubles, we must be thankful that we are out of hell, *Lam.* iii. 39; *Ps.* ciii. 10.

7 Canst thou by searching find out God?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?
8 *It is* as high as heaven; what canst thou do?
Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?
9 The measure thereof *is* longer than the earth,
And broader than the sea.
10 If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together,
Then who can hinder him?
11 For he knoweth vain men:
He seeth wickedness also;
Will he not then consider *it?*
12 For vain man would be wise,
Though man be born *like* a wild ass's colt.

Zophar here speaks very good things concerning God, and his greatness and glory; concerning man, and his vanity and folly. These two compared together, and duly considered, will have a mighty influence upon our submission to the Divine providence in all the disposals of it.

First. See here what God is, and let him be adored.

1. He is an incomprehensible Being, infinite and immense, whose nature and perfections our finite understandings cannot possibly form any adequate conceptions of, and whose counsels and actings we cannot therefore, without the greatest presumption, pass a judgment upon. We that are so little acquainted with the Divine nature are incompetent judges of the Divine providence, and when we censure the dispensations of it we talk of things that we do not understand. We cannot find out God, how dare we then find fault with him? Zophar here shews,

1st. That God's nature infinitely exceeds the capacities of our understandings. "Canst thou find out God? find him out to perfection?" No, "What canst thou do? what canst thou know?" ver. 7, 8. Thou, a poor, weak, short-sighted creature, a worm of the earth, that art but of yesterday? Thou, though never so inquisitive after him, never so desirous and industrious to find him out, yet darest thou attempt the search, or canst thou hope to speed in it? We may by searching find God, *Acts* xvii. 27; but we cannot find him out in any thing he is pleased to conceal. We may apprehend him, but cannot comprehend him; may know that he is, but cannot know what he is. The eye can see the ocean, but not see over it. We may by an humble, diligent, and believing search find out something of God, but cannot find him out to perfection; may know, but cannot know fully, what God is, nor find out his work from the beginning to the end, *Eccl.* iii. 11. Note, God is unsearchable. The ages of his eternity cannot be numbered, nor the spaces of his immensity measured. The depths of his wisdom cannot be fathomed, nor the reaches of his power bounded. The brightness of his glory can never be described, nor the treasures of his goodness inventoried. This is a good reason why we should always speak of God with humility and caution, and never prescribe to him, or quarrel with him; why we should be thankful for what he has revealed of himself, and long to be there where we shall see him as he is, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 9, 10.

2nd. That it infinitely exceeds the limits of the whole creation. 'It is higher than heaven,' so some read it, "deeper than hell," the great abyss, "longer than the earth, and broader than the sea," many parts of which are to this day undiscovered, and more were then. It is quite out of our reach to comprehend God's nature; "such knowledge is too wonderful for us," *Ps.* cxxxix. 6. We cannot fathom God's designs, nor find out the reasons of his proceedings. His judgments are a great deep. St. Paul attributes such unmeasurable dimensions to the Divine love as Zophar here attributes to the Divine wisdom, and yet recommends it to our acquaintance; *Eph.* iii. 18, "that ye may know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ."

2. God is a sovereign Lord; ver. 10, "If he cut off" by death, (margin, 'if he make a change,' for death is a change; if he make a change in nations, in families, in the posture of our affairs,)—if he "shut up" in prison, or in the net of affliction, *Ps.* lxvi. 11,—'if he seize any creature as a hunter doth his prey, he will gather it,' so Bishop Patrick, 'and who shall force him to restore?' or, 'if he gather together,' as tares for the fire; or, 'if he gather to himself man's spirit and breath,' (*ch.* xxxiv. 14,)—'then who can hinder him?' Who can either arrest the sentence, or oppose the execution? Who can control his power, or arraign his wisdom and justice? If he that made all out of nothing think fit to reduce all to nothing, or to their first chaos again,—if he that separated between light and darkness, dry land and sea at first, please to gather them together again,—if he that made unmakes, who can turn him away? alter his mind, or stay his hand; impede or impeach his proceedings?

3. God is a strict and just observer of the children of men; ver. 11, "He knows vain men." We know little of him; but he knows us perfectly. "He sees wickedness also," not to approve it, *Hab.* i. 13, but to animadvert upon men. 1st. He observes vain men; such all are, "every man at his best estate is altogether vanity;" and he considers it in his dealings with them. He knows what the projects and hopes of vain men are, and can blast and defeat them; the workings of their foolish fancies, and sits in heaven and laughs at them. He takes knowledge of the vanity of men, that is, their little sins, so some; their vain thoughts, and vain words, and unsteadiness in that which is good. 2nd. He observes ill men; he sees gross wickedness also, though acted never so secretly, and never so artfully palliated and disguised. All the wickedness of the wicked is naked and open before the all-seeing eye of God; "will he not then consider it?" Yes, certainly he will, and will reckon for it, though for a time he seem to keep silence.

Secondly. See here what man is, and let him be humbled, ver. 12. God sees this concerning vain man, that he would be wise, would be thought so, though he is "born like a wild ass's colt," so sottish and foolish, unteachable and untameable. See what man is. 1. He is a vain creature; empty, so the word is. God made him full; but he emptied himself, impoverished himself, and now he is *raca*, a creature that has nothing in him. 2. He is a foolish creature; become like the beasts that perish, *Ps.* xlix. 20; lxxiii. 22; an idiot, born like an ass, the most stupid animal, an ass's colt, not yet brought to any service. If ever he come to be good for any thing, it is owing to the grace of Christ, who once in the day of his triumph served himself of an ass's colt. 3. He is a wilful, ungovernable creature. An ass's colt may be made good for something, but the wild ass's colt will never be reclaimed, nor regards the crying of the driver: see *ch.* xxxix. 5—7. Man thinks himself as much at liberty, and his own master, as the wild ass's colt doth, that is used to the wilderness, *Jer.* ii. 24; eager to gratify his own appetites and passions. 4. Yet he is a proud creature, and self-conceited; he would be wise, would be thought so, values himself upon the honour of wisdom, though he will not submit himself to the laws of wisdom. He would be wise, that is, he reacheth after forbidden wisdom; and, like his first parents, aiming to be wise above what is written, loseth the tree of life for the tree of knowledge. Now is such a creature as this fit to contend with God, or call him to an account? Did we but better know God and ourselves, we should better know how to carry ourselves to God.

13 If thou prepare thine heart,
And stretch out thine hands toward him;
14 If iniquity *be* in thine hand, put it far away,
And let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.
15 For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot;
Yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear:
16 Because thou shalt forget *thy* misery,
And remember *it* as waters *that* pass away:
17 And *thine* age shall be clearer than the noonday;
Thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning.
18 And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope;
Yea, thou shalt dig *about thee, and* thou shalt take thy rest in safety.
19 Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make *thee* afraid;
Yea, many shall make suit unto thee.
20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail,
And they shall not escape,
And their hope *shall be as* the giving up of the ghost

Zophar, as the other two, here encourageth Job to hope for better times, if he would but come to a better temper.

First. He gives him good counsel, ver. 13, 14; as Eliphaz did, *ch.* v. 8, and Bildad, *ch.* viii. 5. He would have him repent and return to God; and observe the steps of that return.

1. He must look within, and get his mind changed, and the tree made good. He must prepare his heart; there the work of conversion and reformation must begin. The heart, that wandered from God, must be reduced; that was defiled with sin, and put into disorder, must be cleansed, and put in order again; that was wavering and unfixed, must be settled and established, so the word here signifies. The heart is then prepared to seek God when it is determined and fully resolved to make a business of it, and to go through with it.

2. He must look up, and stretch out his hands towards God, that is, must stir up himself to take hold on God; must pray to him with earnestness, and importunity, striving in prayer, and with expectation to receive mercy and grace from him. To give the hand to the Lord signifies to yield ourselves to him, and to covenant with him, 2 *Chr.* xxx. 8; this Job must do, and for the doing of it must prepare his heart. Job had prayed; but Zophar would have him to pray in a better manner, not as an appellant, but as a petitioner and humble supplicant.

3. He must amend what was amiss in his own conversation, else his prayers would be ineffectual, ver. 14. "If iniquity be in thy hand," that is, if there be any sin which thou dost yet live in the practice of, "put it far away," forsake it with detestation, and a holy indignation; stedfastly resolving not to return to it, nor ever to have any thing more to do with it, *Eze.* xviii. 31; *Hos.* xiv. 9; *Isa.* xxx. 22. If any of the gains of iniquity, any goods gotten by fraud or oppression, be in thine hand, make restitution of it, as Zacchæus, *Lu.* xix. 8; and shake thy hands from holding it, *Isa.* xxxiii. 15. The guilt of sin is not removed if the gain of sin be not restored.

4. He must do his utmost to reform his family too. "Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles;" let not thy house harbour or shelter any wicked persons, any wicked practices, or any wealth gotten by wickedness. He suspected that Job's great household had been ill governed, and that where there were many there were many wicked, and that the ruin of his family was the punishment of the wickedness of it; and, therefore, if he expected God should return to him, he must reform what was amiss there; and, though wickedness might come into his tabernacles, he must not suffer it to dwell there, *Ps.* ci. 3, &c.

Secondly. He assures him of comfort if he took this counsel, ver. 15, &c. If he would repent and reform, he should, without doubt, be easy and happy, and all would be well. Perhaps Zophar might insinuate that, unless God did speedily make such a change as this in his condition, he and his friends would be confirmed in their opinion of him as a hypocrite and a dissembler with God. But, however, it speaks a great truth, that "the work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever," *Isa.* xxxii. 17. Those that sincerely turn to God may expect,

1. A holy confidence towards God; "Then shalt thou lift up thy face" towards heaven, "without spot;" thou mayest come boldly to the throne of grace, and not with that terror and amazement expressed *ch.* ix. 34. If our hearts condemn us not for hypocrisy and impenitency, then have we confidence in our approaches to God, and expectations from him, *ch.* iii. 21. If we are looked upon in the face of the Anointed, our faces, that were dejected, may be lifted up; that were polluted, being washed with the blood of Christ, may be lifted up without spot. We may draw near in full assurance of faith, when

we are sprinkled from an evil conscience, *Heb.* x. 22. Some understand this of the clearing up of his credit before men, *Ps.* xxxvii. 6. If we make our peace with God, we may with cheerfulness look our friends in the face.

2. A holy composedness in themselves; "Thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear," not "afraid of evil tidings, thy heart being fixed," *Ps.* cxii. 7. Job was now full of confusion, *ch.* x. 15, while he looked upon God as his enemy, and quarrelled with him; but Zophar assures him, if he would submit and humble himself, his mind would be stayed, and he would be freed from those frightful apprehensions he had of God, which put him into such a toss. The less we are frightened the more we are fixed, and, consequently, the more fit we are for our services and for our sufferings.

3. A comfortable reflection upon their past troubles; ver. 16, "Thou shalt forget thy misery," as the mother forgets her travailing pains for joy that the child is born; thou shalt be perfectly freed from the impressions it makes upon thee, and "thou shalt remember it as waters that pass away," or are poured out of a vessel, which leave no taste or tincture behind them, as other liquors do. The wounds of thy present affliction shall be perfectly healed, not only without a remaining scar, but without a remaining pain. Job had endeavoured to forget his complaint, *ch.* ix. 27, but found he could not; his soul had still in remembrance the wormwood and the gall. But here Zophar puts him in a way to forget it; let him by faith and prayer bring his griefs and cares to God, and leave them with him, and then he should forget them. Where sin sits heavy, affliction sits light. If we duly remember our sins, we shall in comparison with them forget our misery; much more if we obtain the comfort of a sealed pardon, and a sealed peace. He whose iniquity is forgiven shall not say, I am sick, but forget that, *Isa.* xxxiii. 24.

4. A comfortable prospect of their future peace. This Zophar here thinks to please Job with, in answer to the many despairing expressions he had used, as if it were to no purpose for him to hope ever to see good days again in this world. Yea, but thou mayest, saith Zophar, and good nights too. A blessed change he here puts him in hopes of.

1st. That, though now his light was eclipsed, it should shine out again, and brighter than ever, ver. 17. That even his setting sun should outshine his noonday sun, and his evening be fair and clear as the morning, in respect both of honour and pleasure; that his light should shine out of obscurity, *Isa.* lviii. 10, and the thick and dark cloud, from behind which his sun should break forth, would serve as a foil to its lustre. That it should shine even in old age, and those evil days should be good days to him. Note, They that truly turn to God then begin to shine forth; and their path is as the shining light, which increaseth; and the period of their day will be the perfection of it, and their evening to this world their morning to a better.

2nd. That, though now he was in a continual fear and terror, he should live in a holy rest and security, and find himself continually safe and easy; ver. 18, "Thou shalt be secure, because there is hope." Note, Those who have a good hope through grace, in God, and of heaven, are certainly safe, and have reason to be secure, how difficult soever the times are through which they pass in this world. He that walks uprightly may thus walk surely, because, though there is trouble and danger, yet there is hope that all will be well at last. Hope is an anchor of the soul, *Heb.* vi. 19, "Thou shalt dig about thee," that is, thou shalt be as safe as an army in its entrenchments. They that submit themselves to God's government shall be taken under his protection, and then they are safe both day and night. *First.* By day, when they employ themselves abroad; "Thou shalt dig in safety," thou and thy servants for thee, and not be again set upon by the rapparees, who fell upon his servants at plough, *ch.* i. 14. It is no part of the promised prosperity that he should live in idleness, but that he should have a calling, and follow it, and when he was about the business of it should be under the Divine protection. Thou shalt dig and be safe; not rob and be safe, revel and be safe. The way of duty is the way of safety. *Secondly.* By night, when they repose themselves at home; "Thou shalt take thy rest," —and "the sleep of the labouring man is sweet,"—"in safety," notwithstanding the dangers of the darkness. The pillar of cloud by day shall be a pillar of fire by night. "Thou shalt lie down," ver. 19; not forced to wander where there is no place to lay thy head on,—not forced to watch, and sit up in expectation of assaults,—but thou shalt go to bed at bed-time, and not only none shall hurt thee, but none shall make thee afraid, or so much as give thee an alarm. Note, It is a great mercy to have quiet nights and undisturbed sleep; those say so that are within hearing of the noise of war. And the way to be quiet is to seek unto God, and keep ourselves in his love. Nothing need make those afraid who return to God as their rest, and take him for their habitation.

3rd. That, though now he was slighted, yet he should be courted; "Many shall make suit to thee," and think it their interest to secure thy friendship. Suit is made to those that are eminently wise, or reputed to be so, that are very rich, or in power. Zophar knew Job so well that he foresaw, how low soever this present ebb was, if once the tide turned, it would flow as high as ever, and he would be again the darling of his country. They that rightly make suit to God, perhaps the day may come that others will make suit to them, as the foolish virgins to the wise, "Give us of your oil."

Lastly. Zophar concludes with a brief account of the doom of wicked people, ver. 20, "But the eyes of the wicked shall fail." It should seem he suspected that Job would not take his counsel; and here tells him what would then come of it; setting death as well as life before him. See what will come of those who persist in their wickedness, and will not be reformed.

1. They shall not reach the good they flatter themselves with the hopes of, in this world and in the other. Disappointments will be their doom, their shame, their endless torment. Their eyes shall fail with expecting that which will never come; when a wicked man dies, his expectation perisheth, *Pr.* xi. 7, 'their hope shall be as a puff of breath,' margin, vanished and gone,—past recall. Or, their hope will perish and expire as a man doth when he gives up the ghost; it will fail them when they have most need of it, and when they expected the accomplishment of it, it will die away, and leave them in utter confusion.

2. They shall not avoid the evil which sometimes they frighten themselves with the apprehensions of. They shall not escape the execution of the sentence passed upon them; can neither outbrave it nor outrun it. Those that will not fly to God will find it in vain to think of flying from him.

CHAPTER XII.

In this and the two following chapters we have Job's answer to Zophar's discourse, in which, as before, he first reasons with his friends, see *ch.* xiii. 19, and then turns to his God, and directs his expostulations to him from thence to the end of his discourse. In this chapter he addresseth himself to his friends, and, I. He condemns what they had said of him, and the judgment they had given of his character, ver. 1—5. II. He contradicts and confronts what they said of the destruction of wicked people in this world, shewing that they often prosper, ver. 6—11. III. He consents to what they had said of the wisdom, and power, and sovereignty of God, and the dominion of his providence over the children of men, and all their affairs; confirms this and enlargeth upon it, ver. 12—25.

AND Job answered and said,
2 No doubt but ye *are* the people,
And wisdom shall die with you.
3 But I have understanding as well as you;
I *am* not inferior to you:
Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?
4 I am *as* one mocked of his neighbour,
Who calleth upon God, and he answereth him:
The just upright *man is* laughed to scorn.
5 He that is ready to slip with *his* feet [ease.
Is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at

The reproofs Job here gives to his friends, whether they were just or no, were very sharp, and may serve for a rebuke to all that are proud and scornful, and an exposing of their folly.

First. He upbraids them with their conceitedness of themselves, and the mighty good opinion they seemed to have of their own wisdom in comparison with him; than which nothing is more weak and unbecoming, nor better deserves to be ridiculed, as it is here.

1. He represents them as claiming the monopoly of wisdom, ver. 2. He speaks ironically, "No doubt but ye are the people;" you think yourselves fit to dictate and give law to all mankind, and your own judgment the standard by which every man's opinion must be measured and tried, as if nobody could discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, but you only; and, therefore, every topsail must lower to you, and, right or wrong, we must all say as you say, and you three must be the people, the majority, to have the casting vote. Note, It is a very foolish, sinful thing for any to think themselves wiser than all mankind beside, or to speak and act confidently and imperiously, as if they thought so. Nay, he goes farther; You not only think there are none, but that there will be none as wise as you; and, therefore, wisdom must die with you, and all the world must be fools when you are gone, and in the dark when your sun is set. Note, It is folly for us to think that there will be any great irreparable loss of us when we are gone, or that we can be ill spared, since God has the residue of the Spirit, and can raise up others more fit than we are to do his work. When wise men and good men die, it is comfort to think that wisdom and goodness shall not die with them. Some think Job here reflects upon Zophar's comparing him, as he thought, and others, to the wild ass's colt, *ch.* xi. 12. Yes, saith he, we must be asses, you are the only men.

2. He doth himself the justice to put in his claim, as a sharer in the gifts of wisdom; ver. 3, "But I have understanding," a heart, "as well as you;" nay, 'I fall not lower than you,' as it is in the margin; I am as well able to judge of the methods and meanings of the Divine providence, and to construe the hard chapters of it, as you are. He saith not this to magnify himself; it was no great applause of himself to say, "I have understanding as well as you," no, nor to say, I understand this matter as well as you; for what reason had either he or they to be proud of understanding that which was obvious and level to the capacity of the meanest; "yea, who knows not such things as these?" What things you have said that are true, are plain truths, and common themes, which there are many that can talk as handsomely of as either you or I. But he saith it to humble them, and check the value they had for themselves as doctors of the chair. Note, 1st. It may justly keep us from being proud of our knowledge, to consider how many there are that know as much as we do, and perhaps much more, and to better purpose. 2nd. When we are tempted to be harsh in our censures of those we differ from and dispute with, we ought to consider that they also have understanding as well as we, a capacity of judging, and a right of judging for themselves; nay, perhaps they are not inferior to us, but superior: and it is possible they may be in the right and we in the wrong; and, therefore, we ought not to judge or despise them, *Rom.* xiv. 3, nor pretend to be masters, *Jas.* iii. 11, whilst all we are brethren, *Mat.* xxiii. 8. It is a very reasonable allowance to be made to all we converse with, all we contend with, that they are rational creatures as well as we.

Secondly. He complains of the great contempt with which they had treated him. Those that are haughty, and think too well of themselves, are commonly scornful, and ready to trample upon all about them. Job found it so, at least he thought he did; ver. 4, "I am as one mocked." I cannot say there was cause for this charge; we will not think Job's friends designed him any abuse, nor aimed at any thing but to convince him, and so in the right method to comfort him; yet he cries out, "I am as one mocked." Note, We are apt to call reproofs reproaches, and to think ourselves mocked when we are but advised and admonished; and this peevishness is our folly, and a great wrong to ourselves and to our friends. Yet we cannot but say there was colour for this charge. They came to comfort him, but they vexed him; gave him counsels and encouragements, but with no great opinion that either the one or the other would take place; and, therefore, he thought they mocked him, and it added much to his grief. Nothing more grievous to those that are fallen from the height of prosperity into the depth of adversity than to be trodden on, and insulted over when they are down, and it is what they are too apt to be jealous of. Observe,

1. What aggravated this grievance to him. Two things: 1st. That they were his neighbours, his friends, his companions, so the word signifies; and the scoff of such are often most spitefully given, and always most heinously taken; *Ps.* lv. 12, 13, "It was not an enemy that reproached me, then I would have" slighted it, and so "borne it; but it was thou, a man, mine equal." 2nd. That they were professors of religion, such as called upon God, and said that he answered them; for some understand that of the persons mocking. They are such as have a regard to heaven, and an interest in heaven; whose prayers I would therefore be glad of, and thankful for, and whose good opinion I cannot but covet: and therefore whose censures are the more grievous. Note, It is sad that any who call upon God should mock their brethren, *Jas.* iii. 9, 10, and it cannot but lie heavy on a good man to be thought ill of by those whom he thinks well of; yet this is no new thing.

2. What supported him under it. 1st. That he had a God to go to, with whom he could lodge his appeal; for some understand those words of the person mocked, that he "calleth upon God and he answereth him," and so it agrees with *ch.* xvi. 20, "My friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears to God." If our friends be deaf to our complaints, God is not; if they condemn us, God knows our integrity; if they make the worst of us, he will make the best of us; if they give us cross answers, he will give us kind ones. 2nd. That his case was not singular, but very common; "the just upright man is laughed to scorn." By many he is laughed at even for his justice and his uprightness,—his honesty towards men and his piety towards God; these are derided as

foolish things, which silly people needlessly hamper themselves with; as if religion were a jest, and therefore to be made a jest of. By most he is laughed at for any little infirmity or weakness, notwithstanding his justice and uprightness, without any consideration had of that which is so much his honour. Note, It was of old the lot of honest, good people to be despised and derided; we are not, therefore, to think it strange, 1 *Pet.* iv. 12, no, nor to think it hard, if it be our lot. So persecuted they not only the prophets, but even the saints of the patriarchal age, *Mat.* v. 12; and can we expect to fare better than they?

3. What he suspected to be the true cause of it; and that was in short this: they were themselves rich and easy, and therefore they despised him who was fallen into poverty. It is the way of the world, we see instances of it daily: they that prosper are praised; but they that are going down, down with them. "He that is ready to slip with his feet" and fall into trouble, though he has formerly shone as a lamp, is then looked upon as a lamp going out, like the snuff of a candle, which we throw to the ground and tread upon, and is accordingly "despised in the thought of him that is at ease," ver. 5. Even the just upright man,—that is in his generation as a burning and shining light,—if he enter into temptation, *Ps.* lxxiii. 2, or come under a cloud, is looked upon with contempt. See here, 1st. What is the common fault of those that live in prosperity. Being full and easy, and merry themselves, they look scornfully upon those that are in want, pain, and sorrow; they overlook them, take no notice of them, and study to forget them: see *Ps.* cxxiii. 4. The chief butler drinks wine in bowls, but makes nothing of the afflictions of Joseph. Wealth, without grace, often makes men thus haughty, thus careless of their poor neighbours. 2nd. What is the common fate of those that fall into adversity. Poverty serves to eclipse all their lustre; though they are lamps, yet, if taken out of golden candlesticks and put, like Gideon's, into earthen pitchers, nobody values them as formerly, but they that live at ease despise them.

6 The tabernacles of robbers prosper,
And they that provoke God are secure;
Into whose hand God bringeth *abundantly*.
7 But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee;
And the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee:
8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee:
And the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.
9 Who knoweth not in all these
That the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?
10 In whose hand *is* the soul of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind.
11 Doth not the ear try words?
And the mouth taste his meat?

Job's friends, all of them, went upon this principle, that wicked people cannot prosper long in this world, but some remarkable judgment or other will suddenly light on them. Zophar had concluded with it, that "the eyes of the wicked shall fail," *ch.* xi. 20. This principle Job here opposeth, and maintains that God, in disposing men's outward affairs, acts as a sovereign, reserving the exact distribution of rewards and punishments for the future state.

First. He asserts it as an undoubted truth, that wicked people may, and often do, prosper long in this world, ver. 6. Even great sinners may enjoy great prosperity. Observe, 1st. How he describes the sinners. They are robbers and such as provoke God; the worst kind of sinners, blasphemers, and persecutors. Perhaps he refers to the Sabeans and Chaldeans, who had robbed him, and had always lived by spoil and rapine, and yet they prospered; all the world saw they did, and there is no disputing against sense. One observation built upon matter of fact is worth twenty notions framed by an hypothesis. Or, more generally, all proud oppressors are robbers and pirates. It is supposed that what is injurious to men is provoking to God, the patron of right, and the protector of mankind. It is not strange if those that violate the bonds of justice break through the obligations of all religion, bid defiance even to God himself, and make nothing of provoking him. 2. How he describes their prosperity. It is very great; for, 1st. Even their tabernacles prosper, those that live with them, and those that come after them, and descend from them. It seems as if a blessing were entailed upon their families, and that is preserved sometimes to succeeding generations which was got by fraud. 2nd. They are secure, and not only feel no hurt, but fear none; nor are under any apprehensions of danger, either from threatening providences or an awakened conscience. But those that provoke God are never the more safe for their being secure. 3rd. "Into their hand God brings abundantly;" "they have more than heart could wish," *Ps.* lxxiii. 7. Not for necessity only, but for delight; not for themselves only, but for others; not for the present only, but for hereafter; and this from the hand of Providence too. God brings plentifully to them; we cannot therefore judge of men's piety by their plenty, nor of what they have in their heart by what they have in their hand.

Secondly. He appeals even to the inferior creatures for the proof of this, the beasts, and fowls, and trees, and even the earth itself; Consult these, and they shall tell thee, ver. 7, 8. Many a good lesson we may learn from them, but what are they here to teach us?

1. We may from them learn that "the tabernacles of robbers prosper;" so some. For, 1st. Even among the brute creatures the greater devour the lesser, and the stronger prey upon the weaker, and men are as the fishes of the sea, *Hab.* i. 14. If sin had not entered, we may suppose there had been no such disorder among the creatures, but the wolf and lamb had lain down together. 2nd. These creatures are serviceable to wicked men, and so they declare their prosperity. Ask the herds and the flocks to whom they belong, and they will tell you such a robber, such an oppressor, is their owner. The fishes and fowls will tell you they are served up to the tables and feed the luxury of proud sinners. The earth brings forth her fruits to them, *ch.* v. 24, and the whole creation groans under the burthen of their tyranny, *Rom.* viii. 20, 22. Note, All the creatures which wicked men abuse, by making them the food and fuel of their lusts, will witness against them another day, *Jas.* v. 3, 4.

2. We may from them learn the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, and that sovereign dominion of his; into which plain and self-evident truth all these difficult dispensations must be resolved. Zophar had made a mighty mystery of it, *ch.* xi. 7. So far from that, saith Job, that so much as we are concerned to know we may learn even from the inferior creatures; for, "who knows not from all these?" Any one may easily gather, from the book of the creatures, that "the hand of the Lord hath wrought this," ver. 9; that is, that there is a wise Providence which guides and governs all these things by rules which we neither are acquainted with nor are competent judges of. Note, From God's sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures we should learn to acquiesce in all his disposals of the affairs of the children of men, though contrary to our measures.

Thirdly. He resolves all into the absolute propriety which God has in all the creatures; ver. 10, "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing." All the creatures, and mankind particularly, derive their being from him, owe their being to him, depend upon him for the support of it, lie at his mercy, are under his direction and dominion, and entirely at his disposal, and at his summons must resign their lives. "All souls are his," and may he not do what he will with his own? The name Jehovah is used here, ver. 9, and it is the only time that we meet with it in all the discourses between Job and his friends; for God was in that age more known by the name of *Shaddai*, 'the Almighty.'

Those words, ver. 11, "Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste his meat?" may be taken either as the conclusion of the foregoing discourse, or the preface to what follows. The mind of man has as good a faculty of discerning between truth and error, when duly stated, as the palate has of discerning between what is sweet and what is bitter. He therefore demands from his friends a liberty to judge for himself of what they had said, and desires them to use the same liberty in judging of what he had said; nay, he seems to appeal to any man's impartial judgment in this controversy. Let the ear try the words on both sides, and it would be found he was in the right. Note, The ear must try words before it receives them so as to subscribe to them. As by the taste we judge what food is wholesome to the body and what not, so, by the spirit of discerning, we must judge what doctrine is sound, and savoury, and wholesome, and what not, 1 *Cor.* x. 15; xi. 13.

12 With the ancient *is* wisdom;
And in length of days understanding.
13 With him *is* wisdom and strength,
He hath counsel and understanding.
14 Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again:
He shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.
15 Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up:

DRY VALLEY OF IDUMEA.

Also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth
16 With him *is* strength and wisdom:
The deceived and the deceiver *are* his.
17 He leadeth counsellors away spoiled,
And maketh the judges fools.
18 He looseth the bond of kings,
And girdeth their loins with a girdle.
19 He leadeth princes away spoiled,
And overthroweth the mighty.
20 He removeth away the speech of the trusty,
And taketh away the understanding of the aged.
21 He poureth contempt upon princes,
And weakeneth the strength of the mighty.
22 He discovereth deep things out of darkness,
And bringeth out to light the shadow of death.
23 He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them:
He enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them *again*.
24 He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, [*is* no way.
And causeth them to wander in a wilderness *where there*
25 They grope in the dark without light,
And he maketh them to stagger like *a* drunken *man*.

This is a noble discourse of Job's concerning the wisdom, power, and sovereignty of God, in ordering and disposing of all the affairs of the children of men, according to the counsel of his own will, which none dares gainsay, or

can resist. Take both him and them out of the controversy in which they were so warmly engaged, and they all speak admirably well; but in that sometimes we scarce know what to make of them. It were well if wise and good men, that differ in their apprehensions about lesser things, would see it to be for their honour and comfort, and the edification of others, to dwell most upon those great things in which they are agreed. On this subject Job speaks like himself; here are no passionate complaints, no peevish reflections, but every thing masculine and great.

First. He asserts the unsearchable wisdom and irresistible power of God. It is allowed, that among men there is wisdom and understanding, ver. 12. But it is to be found only with some few, with the ancient, and those that are blessed with length of days, who get it by long experience and constant experience; and when they have got the wisdom they have lost the strength, and are unable to execute the results of their wisdom. But now with God there is both wisdom and strength,—wisdom to design the best, and strength to accomplish what is designed. He doth not get counsel and understanding as we do, by observation, but he hath it essentially and eternally in himself, ver. 13. What is the wisdom of ancient men compared with the wisdom of the Ancient of days! It is but little that we know, and less that we can do; but God can do every thing, and no thought can be withholden from him. Happy they that have this God for their God, for they have infinite wisdom and strength engaged for them. Foolish and fruitless are all the attempts of men against him; ver. 14, "He breaketh down, and it cannot be built again." Note, There is no contending with the Divine providence, nor breaking the measures of it. As he had said before, *ch.* ix. 12, "He takes away, and who can hinder him;" so he saith again. What God saith cannot be gainsaid, nor what he doth undone. There is no rebuilding what God will have to lie in ruins; witness the tower of Babel, which the undertakers could not go on with; and the desolations of Sodom and Gomorrah, which could never be repaired: see *Isa.* xxv. 2; *Eze.* xxvi. 14; *Rev.* xviii. 21. There is no releasing those whom God has condemned to a perpetual imprisonment; if he shut up a man by sickness, reduce him to straits, and embarrass him in his affairs, there can be no opening. He shuts up in the grave, and none can break open those sealed doors; shuts up in hell, in chains of darkness, and none can pass that great gulf fixed.

Secondly. He gives an instance for the proof of it in nature, ver. 15. God has the command of the waters, binds them as in a garment, *Pr.* xxx. 4; holds them in the hollow of his hand, *Isa.* xl. 12; and he can punish the children of men either by the defect, or by the excess of them. As men break the laws of virtue by extremes on each hand, both defects and excesses, while the virtue is in the mean, so God corrects them by extremes, and denies them the mercy which is in the mean. 1. Great droughts are sometimes great judgments. "He withholdeth the waters, and they dry up;" if the heaven be as brass, the earth is as iron; if the rain be denied, fountains dry up, and their streams are wanted; fields are parched, and their fruits are wanted, *Am.* iv. 7. 2. Great wet is sometimes a great judgment; raiseth the waters, and overturns the earth, the products of it, the buildings upon it. A sweeping rain is said to leave no food, *Pr.* xxviii. 3. See how many ways God has of contending with a sinful people, and taking from them abused, forfeited mercies, and how utterly unable we are to contend with him. If we might invert the order, this verse would fitly refer to Noah's flood, that ever-memorable instance of the Divine power. God then in wrath sent the waters out, and they overturned the earth; but in mercy he withheld them, shut the windows of heaven, and the fountains of the great deep, and then in a little time they dried up.

Thirdly. He gives many instances of it in God's powerful management of the children of men, crossing their purposes, and serving his own by them, and upon them; overruling all their counsels, overpowering all their attempts, and overcoming all their oppositions. What changes doth God make with men, what turns doth he give them, how easily, how surprisingly!

In general; ver. 16, 'With him is strength and reason,' so some translate it; strength and consistency with himself. It is an elegant word in the original; with him is the very quintessence and extract of wisdom. 'With him is power and all that is,' so some read it. He is what he is himself, and by him and in him all things subsist. Having this strength and wisdom, he knows how to make use not only of those that are wise and good, who willingly and designedly serve him, but even of those that are foolish and bad, that one would think could be made no way serviceable to the designs of his providence. "The deceived and the deceiver are his;" the simplest men that are deceived are not below his notice; the subtlest men that do deceive cannot with all their subtlety escape his cognizance. The world is full of deceit; the one half of mankind cheats the other, and God suffers it, and from both will at last bring glory to himself. The deceivers make tools of the deceived; but the great God makes tools of them both, wherewith he works, and none can let him. He has wisdom and might enough to manage all the fools and knaves in the world, and knows how to serve his own purposes by them, notwithstanding the weakness of the one and the wickedness of the other. When Jacob, by a fraud, got the blessing, the design of God's grace was served; when Ahab was drawn by a false prophecy into an expedition that was his ruin, the design of God's justice was served; and in both "the deceived and the deceiver" were at his dispose: see *Eze.* xiv. 8. God would not suffer the sin of the deceiver, nor the misery of the deceived, if he knew not how to set bounds to both, and bring glory to himself out of both. Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent thus reigns, and it is well he doth, for otherwise there is so little wisdom and so little honesty in the world, that it had all been in confusion and ruin long ago.

He next descends to the particular instances of the wisdom and power of God in the revolutions of states and kingdoms; for thence he fetcheth his proofs rather than from the like operations of Providence concerning private persons and families; because, the more high and public the station is in which men are placed, the more the changes that are concerning them are taken notice of, and consequently the more illustriously doth Providence shine forth in them. And it is easy to argue, If God can thus turn and toss the great ones of the earth like a ball in a large place, as the prophet speaks, *Isa.* xxii. 18, much more the little ones; and with him to whom states and kingdoms must truckle it is sure the greatest madness for us to contend. Some think Job here refers to the extirpation of those powerful nations, the Rephaim, the Zuzim, the Emim, and the Horites, which are mentioned *Gen.* xiv. 5, 6; *Deu.* ii. 10, 20; in which, perhaps, it was particularly taken notice of how strangely they were infatuated and enfeebled. But, if so, it is designed to shew that, whenever the like is done in the affairs of nations, it is God that doth it, and we must therein observe his sovereign dominion, even over those that think themselves most powerful, politic, and absolute. Compare this with that of Eliphaz, *ch.* v. 12, &c.

Let us gather up the particular changes here instanced in, which God makes upon persons, either for the destruction of nations, and the planting of others in their room, or for the turning out of a particular government and ministry, and the elevation of another in its room, which may be a blessing to the kingdom; witness the glorious revolution in our own land twenty years ago, in which we saw as happy an exposition as ever was given of this discourse of Job's.

1. Those that were wise are sometimes strangely infatuated, and in that the hand of God must be acknowledged; ver. 17, "He leadeth counsellors away spoiled," as trophies of his victory over them; spoiled of all the honour and wealth they have got by their policy; nay, spoiled of the wisdom itself for which they had been celebrated, and the success they promised themselves in their projects. His counsel stands, while all their devices are brought to nought, and their designs baffled; and so they are spoiled both of the satisfaction and of the reputation of their wisdom. "He maketh the judges fools;" by a work on their minds he deprives them of their qualifications for business, and so they become really fools; and by a disposal of their affairs he makes the issue and event of their projects to be quite contrary to what they themselves intended, and so he makes them look like fools. Ahithophel, one in whom this Scripture was remarkably fulfilled, his counsel became foolishness, and he, according to his name, the brother of a fool: see *Isa.* xix. 13, "The princes of Zoan are become fools, they have seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof." Let not the wise man, therefore, glory in his wisdom, nor the ablest counsellors and judges be proud of their station, but humbly depend upon God for the continuance of their abilities. Even the aged, who seem to hold their wisdom by prescription, and think they have got it by their own industry, and therefore have an indefeasible title to it, may yet be deprived of it, and often are, by the infirmities of age, which make them twice children; he "taketh away the understanding of the aged," ver. 20. The aged, that were most depended on for advice, fail those that depended on them. We read of an old and yet foolish king, *Eccl.* iv. 13.

2. Those that were high and in authority are strangely brought down, impoverished, and enslaved, and it is God that humbles them; ver. 18, "He looseth the bond of kings," and taketh from them the power wherewith they ruled their subjects,—perhaps enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour; strips them of all the ensigns of their honour and authority, and all the supports of their tyranny; unbuckles their belts, so that the sword drops from their side, and then no marvel if the crown quickly drops from their heads; on which presently follows the girding of their loins with a girdle, a badge of servitude, for servants went with their loins girt. Thus he leads great princes away spoiled of all their power and wealth, and that in which they pleased and prided themselves, ver. 19. Note, Kings are not exempt from God's jurisdiction. To us they are gods, but men to him, and subject to more than the common changes of human life.

3. Those that were strong are strangely weakened, and it is God that weakens them, ver. 21, and overthrows the mighty, ver. 19. Strong bodies are weakened by age and sickness, powerful armies moulder and come to nothing, and their strength will not secure them from a fatal overthrow. No force can stand before Omnipotence, no, not that of Goliath.

4. Those that were famed for eloquence, and intrusted with public business, are strangely silenced, and have nothing to say; ver. 20, "He removeth away the speech of the trusty," so that they cannot speak as they intended, and as they used to do, with freedom and clearness, but blunder and falter, and make nothing of it. Or they cannot speak what they intended, but the contrary, as Balaam, who blessed those whom he was called to curse. Let not the orator, therefore, be proud of his rhetoric, nor use it to any ill purposes, lest God take it away, who made man's mouth.

5. Those that were honoured and admired strangely fall into disgrace. He "poureth contempt upon princes," ver. 21; he leaves them to themselves to do mean things, or alters the opinions of men concerning them. If princes themselves dishonour God and despise him, if they do indignities to the people of God, and trample upon them, they shall be lightly esteemed, and God will pour contempt upon them: see *Ps.* cvii. 40. Commonly none more abject in themselves, nor more abused by others when they are down, than those that were haughty and insolent when they were in power.

6. That which was secret and lay hid is strangely brought to light and laid open; ver. 22, "He discovers deep things out of darkness." Plots closely laid are discovered and defeated; wickedness closely committed and artfully concealed is discovered, and the guilty brought to condign punishment: secret treasons, (*Eccl.* x. 20,) secret murders, secret whoredoms. The cabinet councils of princes are before God's eye, 2 *Kin.* vi. 11.

7. Kingdoms have their ebbings and flowings, their waxings and wanings, and both are from God, ver. 22. He sometimes increaseth their numbers, and enlargeth their bounds, so that they make a figure among the nations, and become formidable; but, after a while, by some undiscerned cause, perhaps they are destroyed and straitened, made few and poor, cut short, and many of them cut off; and so they are rendered despicable among their neighbours, and they that were the head become the tail of the nations: see *Ps.* cvii. 38, 39.

8. They that were bold and courageous, and made nothing of dangers, are strangely cowed and dispirited; and this also is the Lord's doing. "He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people," ver. 24, that were their leaders and commanders, and were most famed for their martial fire, and great achievements; when any thing was to be done they were heartless, and ready to flee at the shaking of a leaf, *Ps.* lxxvi. 5.

9. They that were driving on their projects with full speed are strangely bewildered and at a loss; they know not where they are, nor what they do, are unsteady in their counsels, and uncertain in their motions, off and on, this way and that way, wander like men in a desert, ver. 24, grope like men in the dark, and stagger like men in drink, ver. 25; *Isa.* lix. 10. Note, God can soon nonplus the deepest politicians, and bring the greatest wits to their wit's end, to shew that wherein they deal proudly he is above them.

Thus are the revolutions of kingdoms wonderfully brought about by an overruling Providence. Heaven and earth are shaken, but the Lord sits King for ever, and with him we look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

CHAPTER XIII.

Job here comes to make application of what he had said in the foregoing chapter, and now we have him not in so good a temper as he was in then; for, I. He is very bold with his friends, comparing himself with them, notwithstanding the mortifications he was under, ver. 1, 2; condemning them for their falsehood, their forwardness to judge, their partiality and deceitfulness, under colour of pleading God's cause, ver. 4—8; and threatening them with the judgments of God for their so doing, ver. 9—12; desiring them to be silent, ver. 5, 13, 17; and turning from them to God, ver. 3. II. He is very bold with his God. 1. In some expressions his faith is very bold, yet that is not more bold than welcome, ver. 15, 16, 18; but, 2. In other expressions his passion is rather too bold in expostulations with God concerning the deplorable condition he was in, ver. 14, 19, &c.; complaining of the confusion he was in, ver. 20—22; and the loss he was at to find out the sin that provoked God thus to afflict him, and, in short, of the rigour of God's proceedings against him, ver. 13—28.

LO, mine eye hath seen all *this*,
Mine ear hath heard and understood it.

2 What ye know, *the same* do I know also:
I *am* not inferior unto you.
3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty,
And I desire to reason with God.
4 But ye *are* forgers of lies,
Ye *are* all physicians of no value.
5 O that ye would altogether hold your peace!
And it should be your wisdom.
6 Hear now my reasoning,
And hearken to the pleadings of my lips.
7 Will ye speak wickedly for God?
And talk deceitfully for him?
8 Will ye accept his person?
Will ye contend for God?
9 Is it good that he should search you out?
Or as one man mocketh another, do ye *so* mock him?
10 He will surely reprove you,
If ye do secretly accept persons.
11 Shall not his excellency make you afraid?
And his dread fall upon you?
12 Your remembrances *are* like unto ashes,
Your bodies to bodies of clay.

Job here warmly expresseth his resentments of the unkindness of his friends to him.

First. He comes up with them as one that understood the matter in dispute as well as they, and did not need to be taught by them, ver. 1, 2. They compelled him, as the Corinthians did Paul, to commend himself, and his own knowledge; yet not in a way of self-applause, but of self-justification. All he had said before his eye had seen confirmed by many instances, and his ear had heard seconded by many authorities, and he well understood it, and what use to make of it. Happy they that do not only see and hear, but understand the greatness, and glory, and sovereignty of God. And this he thought would justify what he had said before, *ch.* xii. 3, which he repeats here, ver. 2, "What ye know, the same do I know also," so that I need not come to you to be taught; "I am not inferior unto you" in wisdom. Note, Those that enter into disputation enter into temptation to magnify themselves and vilify their brethren more than is fit, and therefore ought to watch and pray against the workings of pride.

Secondly. He turns from them to God; ver. 3, "Surely I would speak to the Almighty:" as though he would say, I can promise myself no satisfaction in talking with you; O, that I might have liberty to reason with God! He would not be so hard upon me as you are. The prince himself will perhaps give audience to a poor petitioner with more mildness, and patience, and condescension, than the servants will. Job would rather argue with God himself than with his friends. See here, 1. What confidence they have towards God whose hearts condemn them not of reigning hypocrisy: they can with humble boldness appear before him, and appeal to him. 2. What comfort they have in God whose neighbours unjustly condemn them. If they may not speak to them with any hopes of a fair hearing, yet they may speak to the Almighty; they have easy access to him, and shall find acceptance with him.

Thirdly. He condemns them for their unjust and uncharitable usage of him, ver. 4. 1. They falsely accused him, and that was unjust; "Ye are forgers of lies." They framed a wrong hypothesis concerning the Divine providence, and belied that, as if that did never remarkably afflict any but wicked men in this world; and from thence they drew a false judgment concerning Job, that he was certainly a hypocrite. For this gross mistake, both in doctrine and application, he thinks an indictment of forgery lies against them. To speak lies is bad enough, though but at second hand; but to forge them with contrivance and deliberation is much worse. Yet against this wrong neither innocency nor excellency will be a fence. 2. They basely deceived him, and that was unkind. They undertook his cure, and pretended to be his physicians, but they were "all physicians of no value;" idol physicians, that can do me no more good than an idol can. They were worthless physicians, who neither understood his case, nor knew how to prescribe to him; mere quacks, that pretended to mighty things, but in conference added nothing to him; he was never the wiser for all they said. Thus, to broken hearts and wounded consciences, all creatures without Christ are physicians of no value, on which one may spend all and be never the better, but rather grow worse, *Mar.* v. 26.

Fourthly. He begs they would be silent, and give him a patient hearing, ver. 5, 6. 1. He thinks it would be a credit to themselves if they would say no more, having said too much already. "Hold your peace, and it shall be your wisdom," for thereby you will conceal your ignorance and ill-nature, which now appear in all you say. They pleaded they could not forbear speaking, *ch.* iv. 2; xi. 2, 3; but he tells them they had more consulted their own reputation if they had enjoined themselves silence. Better say nothing than nothing to the purpose, or say that which tends to the dishonour of God, and the grief of our brethren. "Even a fool when he holdeth his peace is counted wise," because nothing appears to the contrary, *Pr.* xvii. 28. And as silence is an evidence of wisdom, so it is a means of it, as it gives time to think and hear. 2. He thinks it would be a piece of justice to him to hear what he had to say; "Hear now my reasoning." Perhaps, though they did not interrupt him in his discourse, yet they seemed careless, and did not much heed what he said; he therefore begs they would not only hear but hearken. Note, We should be very willing and glad to hear what those have to say for themselves whom, upon any account, we are in temptation to have hard thoughts of. Many a man, if he could but be fairly heard, would be fairly acquitted, even in the consciences of those that run him down.

Fifthly. He endeavours to convince them of the wrong they did to God's honour, while they pretended to plead for him, ver. 7, 8. They valued themselves upon it that they spoke for God, were advocates for him, and had undertaken to justify him and his proceedings against Job. And being (as they thought) of counsel for the Sovereign, they expected not only the ear of the court, and the last word, but judgment on their side. But Job tells them plainly, 1. That God and his cause did not need such advocates; "Will ye" think to "contend for God?" As if his justice were clouded, and wanted to be cleared up; or as if he were at a loss what to say, and wanted you to speak for him. Will you, that are so weak and passionate, put in for the honour of pleading God's cause? Good work ought not to be put into bad hands. "Will you accept his person?" Those that have not right on their side, if they carry their cause, it is by the partiality of the judge in favour of their persons; but God's cause is so just that it needs no such methods for the support of it. He is a God, and can plead for himself, *Jud.* vi. 31; and, if you were for ever silent, the heavens would declare his righteousness. 2. That God's cause suffered by such management. Under pretence of justifying God in afflicting Job, they magisterially condemn him as a hypocrite and an ill man. This, saith he, is speaking wickedly; for uncharitableness and censoriousness is wickedness, it is great wickedness; it is an offence to God to wrong our brethren. It is talking deceitfully; for you condemn one whom yet perhaps your own consciences at the same time cannot but acquit. Your principles are false, and your arguings fallacious, and will it excuse you to say it is for God? No, for a good intention will not justify, much less will it sanctify, an ill word or action. God's truth needs not our lie, nor God's cause either our sinful policies or our sinful passions. "The wrath of man works not the righteousness of God," nor may we do evil that good may come, *Rom.* iii. 7, 8. Pious frauds (as they call them) are impious cheats; and devout persecutions horrid profanations of the name of God, as theirs that hated their brethren, and cast them out, saying, "Let the Lord be glorified," *Isa.* lxvi. 5; *Jno.* xvi. 2.

Sixthly. He endeavours to possess them with a fear of God's judgment, and so to bring them to a better temper. Let them not think to impose upon God as they might upon a man like themselves, nor expect to gain his countenance in their ill practices, by pretending a zeal for him and his honour. As one man mocks another by flattering him, do you think so to mock him and deceive him? No, those that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove to have put a cheat upon themselves; "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." That they might not think thus to jest with God and affront him, he would have them to consider both God and themselves, and then they would find themselves unable to enter into judgment with him.

1. Let them consider what a God he is into whose service they had thus thrust themselves, and to whom they really did so much disservice, and inquire whether they could give him a good account of what they did. Consider,

1st. The strictness of his scrutiny, and inquiries concerning them; ver. 9, "Is it good that he should search you out?" Can you bear to have the principles looked into which you go upon in your censures, and to have the bottom of the matter found out? Note, It concerns us all seriously to consider whether it will be to our advantage or no that God searcheth the heart. It is good to an upright man, who means honestly, that God should search him; therefore he prays for it, "Search me, O God, and know my heart:" God's omniscience is a witness of his sincerity. But it is bad to him that looks one way and rows another that God should search him out, and lay him open to his confusion.

2nd. The severity of his rebukes and displeasure against them; ver. 10, "If ye do accept persons," though but secretly, and in heart, "he will surely reprove you." He will be so far from being pleased with your censures of me, though it be under colour of vindicating him, that he will resent it as a great provocation, as any prince or great man would, if an ill action were done under colour of his name, and advancing his interest. Note, What we do amiss we shall certainly be reproved for one way or other, one time or other, though it be done never so secretly.

3rd. The terror of his majesty, which, if they would duly stand in awe of, they would not do that which would make them obnoxious to his wrath; ver. 11, "Shall not his excellency make you afraid?" You that have great knowledge of God, and profess religion and a fear of him, how dare you talk at this rate, and give yourselves so great a liberty of speech? "Ought ye not to walk" and talk "in the fear of God?" *Neh.* v. 9. "Should not his dread fall upon you," and give check to your passions? Methinks Job speaks this as one that did himself know the terror of the Lord, and lived in a holy fear of him, whatever his friends suggested to the contrary. Note, *First*. There is in God a dreadful excellency. He is the most excellent being, has all excellences in himself, and in each infinitely excels any creature. His excellences in themselves are amiable and lovely: he is the most beautiful being; but, considering man's distance from God by nature, and his defection and degeneracy by sin, his excellences are dreadful. His power, holiness, justice, yea, and his goodness too, are dreadful excellences. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness. *Secondly*. A holy awe of this dreadful excellency should fall upon us and make us afraid. This would awaken impenitent sinners, and bring them to repentance, and would influence all to be careful to please him, and afraid of offending him.

2. Let them consider themselves, and what an unequal match they were for this great God; ver. 12, "Your remembrances," all that in you for which you hope to be remembered when you are gone, "is like unto ashes," worthless and weak, and easily trampled on and blown away. "Your bodies are like bodies of clay," mouldering and coming to nothing; your memories you think will survive your bodies, but, alas! they are like ashes, which will be shovelled up with your dust. Note, The consideration of our own meanness and mortality should make us afraid of offending God, and is a good reason why we should not despise and trample upon our brethren. Bishop Patrick gives another sense of this verse: 'Your remonstrances on God's behalf are no better than dust, and the arguments you accumulate but like so many heaps of dirt.'

13 Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak,
And let come on me what *will*.
14 Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth,
And put my life in mine hand?
15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:
But I will maintain mine own ways before him.
16 He also *shall be* my salvation:
For an hypocrite shall not come before him.
17 Hear diligently my speech,
And my declaration with your ears.
18 Behold now, I have ordered *my* cause;
I know that I shall be justified.
19 Who *is* he *that* will plead with me?
For now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.

20 Only do not two *things* unto me:
Then will I not hide myself from thee.
21 Withdraw thine hand far from me:
And let not thy dread make me afraid.
22 Then call thou, and I will answer:
Or let me speak, and answer thou me.

Job here takes fresh hold, fast hold of his integrity, as one that was resolved not to let it go, nor suffer it to be wrested from him. His firmness in this matter is commendable, and his warmness excusable.

First. He bespeaks his friends and all the company to let him alone, and not interrupt him in what he was about to say, ver. 13; but diligently to hearken to it, ver. 17. He would have his own protestation to be decisive, for none but God and himself knew his heart; Be you silent from me, therefore, and let me hear no more of you, but do you hearken diligently to what I say, and let my own oath for confirmation be an end of the strife.

Secondly. He resolves to adhere to the testimony his own conscience gave of his integrity; and, though his friends called it obstinacy, that should not shake his constancy; I will speak in my own defence, and "let come on me what will," ver. 13. Let my friends put what construction they please upon it, and think the worse of me for it, I hope God will not make my necessary defence to be my offence, as you do. He will justify me, ver. 18, and then nothing can come amiss to me. Note, Those that are upright, and have the assurance of their uprightness, may cheerfully welcome every event. Come what will, it is *bene præparatum pectus*,—'they are ready for it.' He resolves, ver. 15, he will maintain his own ways; he will never part with the satisfaction he had in having walked uprightly with God, but, though he could not justify every word he had spoken, yet in the general his ways were good, and he would maintain it; and why should he not, since that was his great support under his present exercises, as it was Hezekiah's, "Now, Lord, remember how I have walked before thee." Nay, he would not only not betray his own cause, or give it up, but he would openly avow his sincerity; for, "If I hold my tongue," and do not speak for myself, my silence now will for ever silence me, for "I shall" certainly "give up the ghost," ver. 19; if I cannot be cleared, yet let me be eased by what I say, as Elihu, *ch.* xxxii. 17.

Thirdly. He complains of the extremity of pain and misery he was in; ver. 14, "Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth?" That is, 1. Why do I suffer such agonies? I cannot but wonder that God should lay so much upon me when he knows I am not a wicked man. He was ready not only to rend his clothes, but even to tear his flesh, through the greatness of his affliction, and saw himself at the brink of death, and his life in his hand; yet his friends could not charge him with any enormous crime, nor could he himself discover any; no marvel then he was in such confusion. 2. Why do I stifle and smother the protestations of my innocency? When a man with great difficulty keeps in what he would say, he bites his lips. Now, saith he, why may not I take a liberty to speak, since I do but vex myself, add to my torment, and endanger my life by refraining? Note, It would vex the most patient man, when he has lost every thing else, to be denied the comfort, if he deserves it, of a good conscience and a good name.

Fourthly. He comforts himself in God, and still keeps hold of his confidence in him. Observe here,

1. What he depends upon God for—justification and salvation, the two great things we hope for through Christ. 1st. Justification; ver. 18, "I have ordered my cause," and upon the whole matter "I know that I shall be justified." This he knew because he knew that his Redeemer lived, *ch.* xix. 25. They whose hearts are upright with God in walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, may be sure that through Christ there shall be no condemnation to them; but, whoever lays any thing to their charge, they shall be justified, they may know that they shall. 2nd. Salvation; ver. 16, "He also shall be my salvation." He means it not of temporal salvation, he had little expectation of that; but concerning his eternal salvation he was very confident that God would not only be his Saviour to make him happy, but his salvation, in the vision and fruition of whom he should be happy. And the reason why he depended on God for salvation is, because a hypocrite shall not come before him. He knew himself not to be a hypocrite, and that none but hypocrites are rejected of God; and therefore concluded he should not be rejected. Sincerity is our evangelical perfection, nothing will ruin us but the want of that.

2. With what constancy he depends upon him; "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," ver. 15. This is a high expression of faith, and what we should all labour to come up to; to trust in God though he slay us. That is, we must be well pleased with God as a friend, even then when he seems to come forth against us as an enemy, *ch.* xxiii. 8—10. We must believe that all shall work for good to us, even then when all seems to make against us, *Jer.* xxiv. 5. We must proceed and persevere in the way of our duty, though it cost us all that is dear to us in this world, even life itself, *Heb.* xi. 35. We must depend upon the performance of the promise when all the ways leading to it are shut up, *Rom.* iv. 18. We must rejoice in God when we have nothing else to rejoice in, and cleave to him; yea, though we cannot for the present find comfort in him. In a dying hour we must derive from him living comforts, and this is to trust in him though he slay us.

Fifthly. He wishes to argue the case even with God himself, if he might but have leave to settle the preliminaries of the treaty, ver. 20—22. He had desired, ver. 3, to reason with God, and is still of the same mind; he will not hide himself, that is, he will not decline the trial, nor dread the issue of it; but under two provisos: 1. That his body might not be tortured with this exquisite pain; "Withdraw thine hand far from me," for while I am in this extremity I am fit for nothing; I can make a shift to talk with my friends, but I know not how to address myself to thee. When we are to converse with God we have need to be composed, and as free as possible from every thing that may make us uneasy. 2. That his mind might not be terrified with the tremendous majesty of God; "Let not thy dread make me afraid;" either let the manifestations of thy presence be familiar, or let me be enabled to bear them without disorder and disturbance. Moses himself trembled before God, so did Isaiah and Habakkuk, "O God, thou art terrible even in thy holy places." Lord, saith Job, let not me be put into such a consternation of spirit, together with this bodily affliction; for then I must certainly drop the cause, and shall make nothing of it. See what a folly it is for men to put off their repentance and conversion to a sick bed and a death bed! How can even a good man, much less a bad man, reason with God, so as to be justified before him, when he is upon the rack of pain, and under the terror of the arrests of death? At such a time it is very bad to have the great work to do, but very comfortable to have it done, as it was to Job, who, if he might but have a little breathing time, was ready either, 1st. To hear God speaking to him by his word, and return an answer; "Call thou, and I will answer;" or, 2nd. To speak to him by prayer, and expect an answer; "Let me speak, and answer thou me," ver. 22. Compare this with *ch.* ix. 34, 35, where he spoke to the same purpose. In short, the badness of his case was at present such a damp upon him as he could not get over; otherwise he was well assured of the goodness of his cause, and doubted not but to have the comfort of it at last, when the present cloud was over. With such holy boldness may the upright come to the throne of grace, not doubting but to find mercy there.

23 How many *are* mine iniquities and sins?
Make me to know my transgression and my sin.
24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And holdest me for thine enemy?
25 Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro?
And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?
26 For thou writest bitter things against me,
And makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth,
27 Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks,

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And lookest narrowly unto all my paths;
Thou settest a print upon the heels of my feet.
28 And he, as a rotten thing, consumeth,
As a garment that is moth eaten.

Here, First. Job inquires after his sins, and begs to have them discovered to him. He looks up to God and asks him what was the number of them; "How many are mine iniquities?" and what the particulars of them; "Make me to know my transgressions," ver. 23. His friends were ready enough to tell him how numerous and how heinous they were, *ch.* xxii. 5. But, Lord, saith he, let me know them from thee, for thy judgment is according to truth, theirs is not. This may be taken either, 1. As a passionate complaint of hard usage; that he was punished for his faults, and yet was not told what his faults were. Or, 2. As a prudent appeal to God from the censures of his friends. He desired all his sins might be brought to light, as knowing they would then appear nothing so many, nor so mighty, as his friends suspected him to be guilty of. Or, 3. As a pious request to the same sense with that which Elihu directed him to; *ch.* xxxiv. 32, "That which I see not teach thou me." Note, A true penitent is willing to know the worst by himself; and we should all desire to know what our transgressions are, that we may be particular in the confession of them, and on our guard against them for the future.

Secondly. He bitterly complains of God's withdrawings from him; ver. 24, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face?" This must be meant of something more than his outward afflictions; for the loss of estate, children, health, might well consist with God's love,—when that was all, he blessed the name of the Lord; but his soul was also sore vexed, and that is it which he here laments. 1. That the favours of the Almighty were suspended. God hid his face as one strange to him, displeased with him, shy and regardless of him. 2. That the terrors of the Almighty were inflicted and impressed upon him. God held him for his enemy, shot his arrows at him, *ch.* vi. 4, and set him as a mark, *ch.* vii. 20. Note, The holy God sometimes denies his favours, and discovers his terrors, to the best and dearest of his saints and servants in this world. This case occurs not only in the production, but sometimes in the progress, of the Divine life; evidences for heaven are eclipsed, sensible communications interrupted, dread of Divine wrath impressed, and the returns of comfort for the present despaired of, *Ps.* lxxvii. 7—9; lxxxviii. 7, 15, 16. These are grievous burthens to a gracious soul that values God's lovingkindness as better than life; *Pr.* xviii. 14, "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Job, by asking here, Why hidest thou thy face, teacheth us that, when at any time we are under the sense of God's withdrawings, we are concerned to inquire into the reason of them; what is the sin for which he corrects us? and what the good he designs us? Job's sufferings were typical of the sufferings of Christ, from whom not only men hid their faces, *Isa.* liii. 3, but God hid his. Witness the darkness which surrounded him on the cross when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If this were done to these green trees, what shall be done to the dry? They will for ever be forsaken.

Thirdly. He humbly pleads with God his own utter inability to stand before him; ver. 25, "Wilt thou break a leaf, pursue the dry stubble?" Lord, is it for thine honour to trample upon one that is down already? or to crush one that neither hath, nor pretends to, any power to resist thee? Note, We ought to have such an apprehension of the goodness and compassion of God as to believe that he will not break the bruised reed, *Mat.* xii. 20.

Fourthly. He sadly complains of God's severe dealings with him; he owns it was for his sins that God thus contended with him, but thinks it hard,

1. That his former sins long since committed should now be remembered against him, and he should be reckoned with for the old scores; ver. 26, "Thou writest bitter things against me." Afflictions are bitter things; writing of them notes deliberation and determination, written as a warrant for execution. It notes also the continuance of his affliction, for that which is written remains, and herein thou "makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth;" that is, thou punishest me for them, and thereby puttest me in mind of them, and obligest me to renew my repentance for them. Note, 1st. God sometimes writes very bitter things against the best and dearest of his saints and servants, both in outward afflictions and inward disquiet, trouble in body and trouble in mind, that he may humble them and prove them, and do them good in their latter end. 2nd. That the sins of youth are oftentimes the smart of age, both in respect of sorrow within, *Jer.* xxxi. 18, 19, and suffering without, *ch.* xx. 11. Time doth not wear out the guilt of sin. 3rd. That when God writes bitter things against us, his design therein is to make us possess our iniquities, to bring forgotten sins to mind, and so to bring us to remorse for them as to break us off from them. This is all the fruit to take away our sin.

2. That his present mistakes and miscarriages should be so strictly taken notice

of, and so severely animadverted upon; ver. 27, "Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks," not only to afflict me, and expose me to shame, nor only to keep me from outrunning the strokes of thy wrath, but that thou mayest critically remark all my motions, and "look narrowly to all my paths," to correct me for every false step; nay, for but a look awry, or a word misapplied. Nay, thou "settest a print upon the heels of my feet," scorest down every thing I do amiss, to reckon for it; or no sooner have I trod wrong, though never so little, but immediately I smart for it: the punishment treads upon the very heels of the sin. Guilt, both of the oldest and of the freshest date, is put together to make up the cause of my calamity. Now, 1st. It was not true that God did thus seek advantages against him. He is not thus extreme to mark what we do amiss; if he were, there were no abiding for us, *Ps.* cxxx. 3; but he is so far from this, that he deals not with us according to the desert, no, not of our manifest sins, which are not found by secret search, *Jer.* ii. 34. This, therefore, was the language of Job's melancholy; his sober thoughts never represented God thus as a hard master. 2nd. But we should keep such a strict and jealous eye as this upon ourselves, and our own steps, both for the discovery of sin past, and the prevention of it for the future. It is good for us all to ponder the path of our feet.

Fifthly. He finds himself wasting away apace under the heavy hand of God, ver. 28. He, that is, man, as a rotten thing, the principle of whose putrefaction is in itself, consumeth, even like a moth-eaten garment, which goes ever the longer the worse. Or, He, that is, God, like rottenness, and like a moth, consumeth me. Compare this with *Hos.* v. 12, "I will be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness;" and see *Ps.* xxxix. 11. Note, Man at the best wears fast; but under God's rebukes especially he is soon gone. While there is so little soundness in the soul, no marvel there is so little soundness in the flesh, *Ps.* xxxviii. 3.

CHAPTER XIV.

Job had turned from speaking to his friends, finding it to no purpose to reason with them, and here goes on to speak to God and himself. He had minded his friends of their frailty and mortality, *ch.* xiii. 12; here he minds himself of his own, and pleads it with God for some mitigation of his miseries. We have here an account, I. Of man's life, that it is short, ver. 1, 2; sorrowful, ver. 1; sinful, ver. 4; stinted, ver. 5, 14. II. Of man's death, that it puts a final period to our present life, to which we shall not again return, ver. 7—12; that it hides us from the calamities of life, ver. 13; destroys the hopes of life, ver. 18, 19; sends us away from the business of life, ver. 20; and keeps us in the dark concerning our relations in this life, how much soever we have formerly been in care about them, ver. 21, 22. III. The use Job makes of all this: 1. He pleads it with God, who he thought was too strict and severe with him, ver. 16, 17, begging that, in consideration of his frailty, he would not contend with him, ver. 3; but grant him some respite, ver. 6; 2. He engageth himself to prepare for death, ver. 14; and encourageth himself to hope that it would be comfortable to him, ver. 15. This chapter is proper for funeral solemnities; and serious meditations on it will help us both to get good by the death of others and to get ready for our own.

MAN *that is* born of a woman
Is of few days, and full of trouble.
2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down:
He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.
3 And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one,
And bringest me into judgment with thee?
4 Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean?
Not one.
5 Seeing his days *are* determined,
The number of his months *are* with thee,
Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;
6 Turn from him, that he may rest,
Till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.

We are here led to think,

First. Of the original of human life. God is, indeed, its great original, for he breathed into man the breath of life, and in him we live; but we date it from our birth, and thence we must date both its frailty and its pollution. 1. Its frailty. "Man that is born of a woman" is therefore "of few days," ver. 1. It may refer to the first woman, who was called Eve, because she was the mother of all living. Of her, who, being deceived by the tempter, was first in the transgression, we are all born, and consequently derive from her that sin and corruption which both shortens our days and saddens them. Or it may refer to every man's immediate mother. The woman is the weaker vessel, and we know that *partus sequitur ventrem*,—'the child takes after the mother. Let not the strong man, therefore, glory in his strength, or in the strength of his father, but remember that he is born of a woman, and that when God pleaseth the mighty men become as women, *Jer.* li. 30. 2. Its pollution; ver. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" If man be born of a woman that is a sinner, how can it be otherwise but that he should be a sinner? See *ch.* xxv. 4, "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" Clean children cannot come from unclean parents, no more than pure streams from an impure spring, or grapes from thorns. Our habitual corruption is derived with our nature from our parents, and is, therefore, bred in the bone. Our blood is not only attainted by a legal conviction, but tainted with an hereditary disease. Our Lord Jesus, being made sin for us, is said to be made of a woman, *Gal.* iv. 4.

Secondly. Of the nature of human life. It is a flower, it is a shadow, ver. 2. The flower is fading, and all its beauty soon withers and is gone. The shadow is fleeting, and its very being will soon be lost and drowned in the shadows of the night. Of neither do we make any account, in neither do we put any confidence.

Thirdly. Of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. Man is of few days. Life is computed not by months or years, but by days; for we cannot be sure of any day but that it may be our last. These days are few, fewer than we think of; few at the most in comparison with the days of the first patriarchs, much more in comparison with the days of eternity; but much fewer to most who come short of what we call the age of man. Man sometimes no sooner comes forth, but he is cut down; comes forth out of the womb, but he dies in the cradle; comes forth into the world, and enters into the business of it, but is hurried away as soon as he has laid his hand to the plough. If not cut down immediately, yet fleeing as a shadow, that never continues in one stay, in one shape, but the fashion of it passeth away; so doth this world, and our life in it, 1 *Cor.* vii. 31.

Fourthly. Of the calamitous state of human life. Man, as he is short lived, so he is sad lived. Though he had but a few days to spend here, yet if he might rejoice in those few it were well enough. A short life and a merry is the boast of some; but it is not so. During these few days he is full of trouble, not only troubled, but full of trouble, full of commotion, so the word is, either toiling or fretting, grieving or fearing. No day passeth without some vexation, some hurry, some disorder or other. He has his belly full of trouble. They that are fond of the world shall have enough of it. He is *satur tremore*,—'full of commotion.' The fewness of his days creates him a continual trouble and uneasiness in expectation of the period of them, and he always hangs in doubt of his life. Yet, since man's days are so full of trouble, it is well they are few, that the soul's imprisonment in the body, and banishment from the Lord, is not perpetual, is not long. When we come to heaven, our days will be many and perfectly free from trouble; and, in the mean time, faith, hope, and love, balance best the present grievances.

Fifthly. Of the sinfulness of human life, arising from the sinfulness of the human nature. So some understand that question; ver. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean," a clean performance from an unclean principle? Note, Actual transgressions are the natural product of habitual corruption; which is therefore called original sin, because it is the original of all our sins. This holy Job here laments, as all that are sanctified do, running up the streams to the fountain, *Ps.* li. 5; and some think he intends it as a plea with God for compassion: Lord, be not extreme to mark my sins of human frailty and infirmity, for thou knowest my weakness; "O remember that I am flesh." The Chaldee paraphrase has an observable reading of this verse, 'Who can make a man clean that is polluted with sin? cannot one? that is God; or who but God who is one, and will spare him?' God by his almighty grace can change the skin of the Ethiopian, the skin of Job, though clothed with worms.

Sixthly. Of the settled period of human life, ver. 5. We are here assured, 1. That our life will come to an end. Our days upon earth are not numberless, are not endless; no, they are numbered, and will soon be finished, *Dan.* v. 26. 2. That it is determined in the counsel and decree of God how long we shall live, and when we shall die. The number of our months is with God, at the disposal of his power, which cannot be controlled; and under the ken of his omniscience, which cannot be deceived. It is certain God's providence has the ordering of the period of our lives: our times are in his hand; the powers of nature depend upon him, and act under him. In him we live and move; diseases are his servants, he kills and makes alive; nothing comes to pass by chance, no, not the execution done by a bow drawn at a venture. It is, therefore, certain; God's prescience has determined it before, for known unto God are all his works. Whatever he doth he determined, yet with a regard partly to the settled course of nature,—the end and the means are determined together; and to the settled rules of moral government, punishing evil and rewarding good in this life. We are no more governed by the stoic's blind fate than by the epicurean's blind fortune. 3. That the bounds God has fixed we cannot pass; for his counsels are unalterable, his foresight being infallible.

These considerations Job here urgeth as reasons,

1st. Why God should not be so strict in taking cognizance of him, and of his slips and failings, ver. 3. Having such a corrupt nature within, and being liable to so much trouble, which is a constant temptation from without, dost thou open thine eyes and fasten them upon such a one, extremely to mark what I do amiss, *ch.* xiii. 27; and dost thou bring me, such a worthless worm as I am, into judgment with thee who art so quick-sighted to discover the least failing, so holy to hate it, so just to condemn it, and so mighty to punish it? The consideration of our own inability to contend with God, of our own sinfulness and weakness, should engage us to pray, "Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant."

2nd. Why he should not be so severe in his dealings with him. Lord, I have but a little time to live, and must certainly and shortly go hence, and the few days I have to spend here are at the best full of trouble. Oh, let me have a little respite, ver. 6. Turn from plaguing a poor creature thus, and let him rest awhile; allow him some breathing time, "until he shall accomplish as a hireling his day." It is appointed to me once to die; let that one day suffice me, and let me not thus be continually dying, dying a thousand deaths. Let it suffice that my life at best is "as the day of a hireling," a day of toil and labour, I am content to accomplish that, and will make the best of the common hardships of human life, the burthen and heat of the day; but let me not feel those uncommon tortures, let not my life be as the day of a malefactor, all execution day. Thus may we find some relief under great troubles, by recommending ourselves to the compassion of that God who knows our frame, and will consider it, and our being out of frame too.

7 For there is hope of a tree,
If it be cut down, that it will sprout again,
And that the tender branch thereof will not cease.
8 Though the root thereof wax old in the earth,
And the stock thereof die in the ground;
9 *Yet* through the scent of water it will bud,
And bring forth boughs like a plant.
10 But man dieth, and wasteth away:
Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where *is* he?
11 *As* the waters fail from the sea,
And the flood decayeth and drieth up:
12 So man lieth down, and riseth not:
Till the heavens *be* no more, they shall not awake,
Nor be raised out of their sleep.
13 O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave,
That thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past,
That thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember [me!
14 If a man die, shall he live *again?*
All the days of my appointed time will I wait,
Till my change come.

15 Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee:
Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

We have seen what Job has to say concerning life; let us now see what he has to say concerning death, which his thoughts were very much conversant with now he was sick and sore. It is not unseasonable when we are in health to think of dying; but it is an inexcusable incogitancy if, when we are already taken into the custody of death's messengers, we look upon it as a thing at a distance. Job had already shewed that death will come, and that its hour is already fixed. Now here he shews,

First. That death is a removal for good and all out of this world. This he had spoken of before, *ch.* vii. 7, 9, 10, and now he mentions it again; for, though it be a truth that needs not be proved, yet it needs to be much considered that it may be duly improved.

1. A man cut down by death will not revive again, as a tree cut down will. What hope there is of a tree he shews very elegantly, ver. 7—9; if the body of a tree be cut down, and only the stem or stump left in the ground, though it seem dead and dry, yet it will shoot out young boughs again, as if it were but newly planted. The moisture of the earth and the rain of heaven are, as it were, scented and perceived by the stump of a tree, and they have an influence upon it to revive it; but the dead body of a man would not perceive them, nor be in the least affected by them. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, when his being deprived of the use of his reason was signified by the cutting down of a tree, his return to it again was signified by the leaving of the stump in the earth with a band of iron and brass, to be wet with the dew of heaven, *Dan.* iv. 15. But man has no such prospect of a return to life. The vegetable life is a cheap and easy thing, the scent of water will recover it; the animal life in some insects and fowls is so, the heat of the sun retrieves it; but the rational soul, when once retired, is too great, too noble a thing to be recalled by any of the powers of nature. It is out of the reach of sun or rain, and cannot be restored but by the immediate operations of Omnipotence itself; for, ver. 10, "Man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost and where is he?" Two words are here used for man—*Geber*, 'a mighty man,' though mighty, dies; *Adam*, 'a man of the earth,' because earthy, "gives up the ghost." Note, Man is a dying creature: he is here described by what occurs, 1st. Before death, he wasteth away; he is continually wasting, dying daily, spending upon the quick stock of life. Sickness and old age are wasting things to the flesh, the strength, the beauty. 2nd. In death he "giveth up the ghost;" the soul leaves the body, and returns to God who gave it, the Father of spirits. 3rd. After death "where is he?" He is not where he was, his place knows him no more; but, 'is he nowhere?' so some read it. Yes; he is somewhere, and it is a very awful consideration to think where they are that have given up the ghost, and where we shall be when we give it up. It is gone to the world of spirits, gone into eternity, gone to return no more to this world.

2. A man laid down in the grave will not rise up again, ver. 11, 12. Every night we lie down to sleep, and in the morning we awake and rise again, but at death we must lie down in the grave, not to awake or rise again to such a world, such a state as we are now in, never to awake or arise until the heavens, the faithful measurers of time, shall be no more; and consequently time itself shall come to an end, and be swallowed up in eternity. So that the life of man may fitly be compared to the waters of a land flood, which spread far and make a great show; but they are shallow, and when they are cut off from the sea or river, the swelling and overflowing of which was the cause of them, they soon decay and dry up, and their place knows them no more. The waters of life are soon exhaled, and disappear; the body, like some of those waters, sinks and soaks into the earth, and is buried there; the soul, like others of them, is drawn upwards to mingle with the waters above the firmament. The learned Sir Richard Blackmore makes this also to be a dissimilitude. If the waters decay and be dried up in the summer, yet they will return again in the winter, but it is not so with the life of man. Take part of his paraphrase in his own words:—

'A flowing river, or a standing lake,
May their dry banks and naked shores forsake,
Their waters may exhale and upwards move,
Their channel leave to roll in clouds above;
But the returning winter will restore
What in the summer they had lost before:
But if, O man, thy vital streams desert
Their purple channels, and defraud the heart,
With fresh recruits they ne'er will be supplied,
Nor feel their leaping life's returning tide.'

Secondly. That yet there will be a return of man to life again in another world at the end of time, when the heavens are no more; then "they shall awake and be raised out of their sleep." The resurrection of the dead was, doubtless, an article of Job's creed, as appears, *ch.* xix. 26; and to that it should seem he has an eye here, where in the belief of that we have three things:

1. An humble petition for a hiding-place in the grave, ver. 13. It was not only in a passionate weariness of this life that he wished to die, but in a pious assurance of a better life, to which at length he should arise; "O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave." The grave is not only a resting-place, but a hiding-place to the people of God. God has the key of the grave to let in now, and to let out at the resurrection. He hides men in the grave, as we hide our treasures in a place of secrecy and safety; and he that hides will find, and nothing shall be lost. O that thou wouldst hide me not only from the storms and troubles of this life, but for the bliss and glory of a better life. Let me lie in the grave reserved for immortality; in secret from all the world, but not from thee, not from those eyes which saw my substance when first curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth, *Ps.* cxxxix. 15, 16. There let me lie, 1st. "Until thy wrath be past." As long as the bodies of the saints lie in the grave, so long there are some remains of that wrath which they were by nature children of; so long they are under some of the effects of sin. But when the body is raised, it is wholly passed; death, the last enemy, will then be totally destroyed. 2nd. Till the set time comes for my being remembered, as Noah was remembered in the ark, (*Gen.* viii. 1,) where God hid him, not only from the destruction of the old world, but for the reparation of a new world. The bodies of the saints shall not be forgotten in the grave; there is a time appointed, a time set for their being inquired after. We cannot be sure that we shall look through the darkness of our present troubles, and see good days after them in this world; but, if we can but get well to the grave, we may with an eye of faith look through the darkness of that, as Job here, and see better days on the other side it, in a better world.

2. A holy resolution patiently to attend the will of God both in his death and in his resurrection; ver. 14, "If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait until my change come." Job's friends proving miserable comforters, he set himself to be the more his own comforter. His case was now bad; but he pleaseth himself with the expectation of a change. I think it cannot be meant of his return to a prosperous condition in this world; his friends, indeed, flattered him with the hopes of that, but he himself all along despaired of it. Comforts founded upon uncertainties at best must needs be uncertain comforts; and, therefore, no doubt it is something more sure than that which he here bears up himself with the expectation of. The change he waits for must, therefore, be understood either, 1st. Of the change of the resurrection, when the vile body shall be changed, *Phil.* iii. 21; and a great and glorious change it will be; and then that question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" must be taken by way of admiration. Strange! shall these dry bones live? If so, all the time appointed for the continuance of the separation between soul and body, my separate soul shall wait until that change comes, when it shall be united again to the body, "and my flesh also shall rest in hope," *Ps.* xvi. 9. Or, 2nd. Of the change at death, "If a man die, shall he live again?" No, not such a life as he now lives; and, therefore, I will patiently wait until that change comes, which will put a period to my calamities, and not impatiently wish for the anticipation of it as I have done. Observe here, *First.* That it is a serious thing to die; it is a work by itself. It is a change. There is a visible change in the body, its appearance altered, its actions brought to an end; but a greater change with the soul, which quits the body, and removes to the world of spirits, finisheth its state of probation, and enters upon that of retribution. This change will come, and it will be a final change; not like the transmutations of the elements, which return to their former state. No, we must die, not thus to live again. It is but once to die; and that had need be well done that is to be done but once. An error here is fatal, conclusive, and not again to be rectified. *Secondly.* That therefore it is the duty of every one of us to wait for that change, and to continue waiting all the days of our appointed time. The time of life is an appointed time, that time is to be reckoned by days, and those days are to be spent in waiting for our change. That is, 1*st.* We must expect that it will come, and think much of it. 2*nd.* We must desire that it would come, as those that long to be with Christ. 3*rd.* We must be willing to tarry until it doth come, as those that believe God's time to be the best. 4*th.* We must give diligence to get ready against it comes, that it may be a blessed change to us.

3. A joyful expectation of bliss and satisfaction in this; ver. 15, then, "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee." Now he was under such a cloud that he could not, he durst not answer, *ch.* ix. 15, 35; xiii. 22; but he comforted himself with this, that there would come a time when God would call, and he should answer; then, that is, 1st. At the resurrection; Thou shalt call me out of the grave, by the voice of the archangel, and I will answer and come at the call. The body is the work of God's hands, and he will have a desire to that, having prepared a glory for it. Or, 2nd. At death; Thou shalt call my body to the grave, and my soul to thyself; and I will answer, Ready, Lord, ready, coming, coming; here I am. Gracious souls can cheerfully answer death's summons and appear to his writ. Their spirits are not forcibly required from them, as *Lu.* xii. 20, but willingly resigned by them; and the earthly tabernacle not violently pulled down, but voluntarily laid down, with this assurance, "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hand;" thou hast mercy in store for me, not only as made by thy providence, but new made by thy grace; otherwise, "he that made them will not save them." Note, Grace in the soul is the work of God's own hands; and, therefore, he will not forsake it in this world, *Ps.* cxxxviii. 8; but will have a desire to it, to perfect it in the other, and to crown it with endless glory.

16 For now thou numberest my steps:
Dost thou not watch over my sin?
17 My transgression *is* sealed up in a bag,
And thou sewest up mine iniquity.
18 And surely the mountain falling cometh to nought,
And the rock is removed out of his place.
19 The waters wear the stones: [of the earth;
Thou washest away the things which grow *out* of the dust
And thou destroyest the hope of man.
20 Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth:
Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away.
21 His sons come to honour, and he knoweth *it* not;
And they are brought low, but he perceiveth *it* not of
22 But his flesh upon him shall have pain, [them.
And his soul within him shall mourn.

Job here returns to his complaints; and, though he is not without hope of future bliss, he finds it very hard to get over his present grievances.

First. He complains of the particular hardships he apprehended himself under from the strictness of God's justice, ver. 16, 17. Therefore he longed to go hence to that world where God's wrath will be past, because now he was under the continual tokens of it, as a child under the severe discipline of the rod longs to be of age. When shall my change come? for now thou seemest to me to number my steps, and watch over my sin, and seal it up in a bag, as bills of indictment are kept safe to be produced against the prisoner: see *Deu.* xxxii. 34. Thou takest all advantages against me, old scores are called over, every infirmity is animadverted upon, and no sooner is a false step taken but I am beaten for it. Now, 1. Job doth right to the Divine justice in owning that he smarted for his sins and transgressions, that he had done enough to deserve all that was laid upon him; for there was sin in all his steps, and he was guilty of transgression enough to bring all this ruin upon him, if it were strictly inquired into. He is far from saying that he perisheth being innocent. But, 2. He doth wrong to the Divine goodness, in suggesting that God was extreme to mark what he did amiss, and made the worst of every thing. He spoke to this purpose, *ch.* xiii. 27. It was unadvisedly said, and therefore we will not dwell too much upon it. God doth indeed see all our sins, he sees sin in his own people, but he is not severe in reckoning with us; nor is the law ever stretched against us, but we are punished less than our iniquities deserve. The transgressions of the impenitent, God doth indeed seal and sew up against the day of wrath, but the sins of his people he blots out as a cloud.

Secondly. He complains of the wasting condition of mankind in general. We live in a dying world; who knows the power of God's anger, by which we are consumed and troubled, and in which all our days are passed away? see *Ps.* xc. 7—9, 11; and who can bear up against his rebukes? *Ps.* xxxix. 11.

1. We see the decays of the earth itself. 1st. Of the strongest parts of it, ver. 19. Nothing will last always, for we see even mountains moulder and come to nought, they wither and fall as a leaf; rocks wax old and pass away by the continual beating of the sea against them. "The waters wear the

stones" with constant dropping; *non vi, sed sæpe cadendo*,—'not by the violence, but the constancy with which they fall.' On this earth every thing is the worse for the wearing; *tempus edax rerum*,—'time devours all things.' It is not so with the heavenly bodies. 2nd. Of the natural products of it. The things which grow out of the earth, and seem to be firmly rooted in it, are sometimes, by an excess of rain, washed away, ver. 19. Some think he pleads this for relief, 'Lord, my patience will not hold out always, even rocks and mountains will fail at last; therefore, cease the controversy.'

2. No marvel if we then see the decays of man upon the earth, for he is of the earth earthy. Job begins to think his case is not singular, and therefore he ought to reconcile himself to the common lot. We perceive, by many instances, 1st. How vain it is to expect much from the enjoyments of life. "Thou destroyest the hope of man," that is, puttest an end to all the projects he had framed, and all the prospects of satisfaction he had flattered himself with. Death will be the destruction of all those hopes which are built upon worldly confidences, and confined to worldly comforts. Hope in Christ, and hope in heaven, death will consummate, and not destroy. 2nd. How vain it is to struggle against the assaults of death; ver. 20, "Thou prevailest for ever against him." Note, 1. Man is an unequal match for God. Whom God contends with he will certainly prevail against, prevail for ever against, so that they shall never be able to make head again. 2. The stroke of death is irresistible. It is to no purpose to dispute its summons; God prevails against man, and he passeth, passeth away, and lo, he is not. Look upon a dying man and see,

First. How his looks are altered; "Thou changest his countenance," two ways: *1st.* By the disease of his body. When a man has been a few days sick, what a change is there in his countenance! much more when he has been a few minutes dead. The countenance that was majestic and awful becomes mean and despicable, that was lovely and amiable becomes ghastly and frightful. "Bury my dead out of my sight." Where then is the admired beauty? Death changeth the countenance, and then sends us away out of this world; gives us our dismission hence, never to return. *2nd.* By the discomposure of his mind. Note, The approach of death will make the strongest and stoutest to change countenance; it will make the most merry, smiling countenance to look grave and serious, and the most bold, daring countenance to look pale and timorous.

Secondly. How little he is concerned in the affairs of his family, which, when time was, lay so near his heart. When he is in the hands of the harbingers of death, suppose struck with a palsy, or apoplexy, or delirious in a fever, or in conflict with death, tell him then never so good news concerning his children, or never so bad, it is all alike, he knows it not, he perceiveth it not, ver. 21. He is going to that world where he will be a perfect stranger to all those things which here filled and affected him. The consideration of this should moderate our cares concerning our children and families. God will know what comes of them when we are gone; to him, therefore, let us commit them, with him let us leave them, and not burthen ourselves with needless, fruitless cares, concerning them.

Thirdly. How dreadful the agonies of death are; ver. 22, 'While his flesh is upon him,' so it may be read, the body he is so loath to lay down, 'shall have pain;' and 'while his soul is within him,' the spirit he is so loath to resign, 'it shall mourn.' Note, Dying work is hard work; dying pangs are commonly sore pangs. It is folly, therefore, for men to defer their repentance to a death bed, and to have that to do which is the one thing needful when they are really unfit to do any thing. But it is true wisdom, by making our peace with God in Christ, and keeping a good conscience, to treasure up comforts which will support and relieve us against the pains and sorrows of a dying hour.

CHAPTER XV.

Perhaps Job was so clear, and so well satisfied in the goodness of his own cause, that he thought, if he had not convinced, yet he had at least silenced, all his three friends; but it seems he had not. At this chapter they begin a second attack upon him, each of them charging him afresh with as much vehemence as before. It is natural to us to be fond of our own sentiments, and therefore to be firm to them, and hardly to be brought to recede from them. Eliphaz here sticks close to the principles upon which he had condemned Job, and, I, He reproves him for justifying himself, and fathers on him many ill things which are unfairly inferred from thence, ver. 2—13. He persuades him to humble himself before God, and to take shame to himself, ver. 14—16. III. He reads him a long lecture concerning the woful estate of wicked people, that harden their hearts against God, and the judgments that are prepared for them, ver. 17—35. A good use may be made both of his reproofs, for they are plain, and of his doctrine, for it is sound, though both the one and the other are misapplied to Job.

THEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,
2 Should a wise man utter vain knowledge,
And fill his belly with the east wind?
3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk?
Or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?
4 Yea, thou castest off fear,
And restrainest prayer before God.
5 For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity,
And thou choosest the tongue of the crafty.
6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I:
Yea, thine own lips testify against thee.
7 *Art* thou the first man *that* was born?
Or wast thou made before the hills?
8 Hast thou heard the secret of God?
And dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?
9 What knowest thou, that we know not?
What understandest thou, which *is* not in us?
10 With us *are* both the grayheaded and very aged men,
Much elder than thy father.
11 *Are* the consolations of God small with thee?
Is there any secret thing with thee?
12 Why doth thine heart carry thee away?
And what do thy eyes wink at,
13 That thou turnest thy spirit against God,
And lettest *such* words go out of thy mouth?
14 What *is* man, that he should be clean? [righteous?
And *he which is* born of a woman, that he should be
15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints;
Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.
16 How much more abominable and filthy *is* man,
Which drinketh iniquity like water?

Eliphaz here falls very foul upon Job because he contradicted what he and his colleagues had said, and did not acquiesce in it, and applaud it as they expected. Proud people are apt thus to take it very heinously if they may not have leave to dictate and give law to all about them, and to run upon those as ignorant and obstinate, and all that is naught, that cannot in every thing say as they say. Several great crimes Eliphaz here chargeth Job with, only because he would not own himself a hypocrite.

First. He charges him with folly and absurdity, ver. 2, 3; that, whereas he had been reputed a wise man, he had now quite forfeited his reputation; any one would say that his wisdom was departed from him, he talked so extravagantly, and so little to the purpose. Bildad began thus, *ch.* viii. 2, and Zophar, *ch.* xi. 2, 3. It is common for angry disputants thus to represent one another's reasonings as impertinent and ridiculous, more than there is cause, forgetting the doom of him that calls his brother 'Raca,' and 'Thou fool.' It is true, 1. That there is in the world a great deal of vain knowledge, science falsely so called, that is useless, and therefore worthless. 2. That this is the knowledge that puffeth up, with which men fill their bellies, and swell in a fond conceit of their own accomplishments. 3. That whatever vain knowledge a man may have in his head, if he would be thought a wise man, he must not utter it, but let it die with himself as it deserves. 4. Unprofitable talk is evil talk. We must give an account in the great day, not only for wicked words, but for idle words. Speeches, therefore, which do no good, which do no service either to God or our neighbour, or no justice to ourselves, which are no way to the use of edifying, were better unspoken. Such words as are wind, light and empty, especially that are as the east wind, hurtful and pernicious, it will be ill-filling either ourselves or others with, for they will pass very ill in the account. 5. Vain knowledge, and unprofitable talk, ought to be reproved and checked, especially in a wise man, whom it worst becomes, and who doth most hurt by the ill example of it.

Secondly. He charges him with impiety and irreligion; ver. 4, "Thou castest off fear," that is, the fear of God, and that regard to him which thou shouldst have, "and thou restrainest prayer." See what religion is summed up in, fearing God and praying to him; the former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected; and those that live without prayer certainly live without God in the world. Those who restrain prayer, it is a sign they cast off fear. Surely those have no reverence of God's majesty, no dread of his wrath, and are in no care about their souls and eternity, who make no applications to God for his grace. Those that are prayerless are fearless and graceless. When the fear of God is cast off, all sin is let in, and a door open to all manner of profaneness. It is especially bad with those who have had some fear of God, but now they have cast it off; have been frequent in prayer, but now they restrain it. How are they fallen! How is their first love lost! It notes a kind of force put upon themselves. The fear of God should stick to them; but they throw it off. Prayer would be uttered, but they restrain it, and in both baffle their convictions. Those that either omit prayer or straiten and abridge themselves in it, quenching the spirit of adoption, and denying themselves the liberty they might take in the duty, restrain prayer. This is bad enough; but it is worse to restrain others from prayer, to prohibit and discourage prayer, as Darius, *Dan.* vi. 7.

Now Eliphaz charges this upon Job, either, 1. As that which was his own practice. He thought Job talked of God with such liberty as if he had been hail-fellow with him, charged him so high with hard usage of him, and challenged him so often to a fair trial, that he had quite thrown off all religious regard to him. This charge was utterly false, and yet wanted not some colour. We ought not only to take care that we keep up prayer and the fear of God, but that we never drop any unwary expressions which may give occasion to those who seek occasion to question our sincerity and constancy in religion. Or, 2. As that which others would infer from the doctrine he maintained. If this be true, thinks Eliphaz, which Job saith, that a man may be thus sorely afflicted, and yet be a good man, then farewell all religion, farewell prayer and the fear of God. If all things come alike to all, and the best men may have the worst treatment in this world, every one will be ready to say, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it to keep his ordinances?" *Mal.* iii. 14; "Verily I have cleansed my hands in vain," *Ps.* lxxiii. 13, 14. Who will be honest, if the tabernacles of robbers prosper? *ch.* xii. 6. If there be no forgiveness with God, *ch.* vii. 21, who will fear him? *Ps.* cxxx. 4. If he laugh at the trial of the innocent, *ch.* ix. 23, if he be so difficult of access, *ch.* ix. 32, who will pray to him? Note, It is a piece of injustice, which even wise and good men are too often guilty of in the heat of disputation, to charge upon their adversaries those consequences of their opinions which are not fairly drawn from them, and which really they abhor. This is not doing as we would be done by.

Upon this strained innuendo, Eliphaz grounds that high charge of impiety; ver. 5, "Thy mouth utters thine iniquity," 'teaches' it, so the word is. Thou teachest others to have the same hard thoughts of God and religion that thou thyself hast. It is bad to break even the least of the commandments; but worse to teach men so, *Mat.* v. 19. If we ever thought evil, let us lay our hand upon our mouth to suppress the evil thought, *Pr.* xxx. 32, and let us by no means utter it; that is putting an *imprimatur* to it, publishing it with allowance, to the dishonour of God, and the damage of others. Observe, when men have cast off fear and prayer their mouth utters iniquity. They that cease to do good soon learn to do ill. What can we expect but all manner of iniquity from those that arm not themselves with the grace of God against it? But, "Thou choosest the tongue of the crafty," that is, thou utterest thine iniquity with some show and pretence of piety, mixing some good words with the bad, as hucksters do with their wares, to help them off. The mouth of iniquity could not do so much mischief as it doth without the tongue of the crafty. The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety: see *Rom.* xvi. 18. The tongue of the crafty speaks with design and deliberation; and therefore they that use it may be said to choose it, as that which will serve their purpose better than the tongue of the upright. But it will be found at last that honesty is the best policy.

Eliphaz, in his first discourse, had proceeded against Job upon mere surmise,

ch. iv. 6, 7; but now he has got proof against him from his own discourses; ver. 6, "Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I." But then he should have considered that he and his fellows had provoked him to say that which now they took advantage of; and that was not fair. Those are most effectually condemned that are condemned by themselves, *Tit.* iii. 11; *Lu.* xix. 22. Many a man needs no more to sink him than for his own tongue to fall upon him.

Thirdly. He chargeth him with intolerable arrogancy and self-conceitedness. It was a just, and reasonable, and modest demand Job had made, *ch.* ix. 3, Allow that "I have understanding as well as you;" but see how they seek occasion against him. That is misconstrued, as if he pretended to be wiser than any man. Because he will not grant to them, they will have it thought that he claims to himself, the monopoly of wisdom, ver. 7—9; as if he thought he had the advantage of all mankind, 1. In length of acquaintance with the world, which furnisheth men with so much the more experience. "Art thou the first man that was born?" and consequently senior to us, and better able to give the sense of antiquity, and the judgment of the first and earliest, the wisest and purest ages? 'Art thou prior to Adam?' so it may be read. Did not he suffer for sin, and yet wilt not thou, who art so great a sufferer, own thyself a sinner? "Wast thou made before the hills," as wisdom herself was? *Pr.* viii. 23, &c. Must God's counsels, which are as the great mountains, *Ps.* xxxvi. 6, and immoveable as the everlasting hills, be subsequent to thy notions, and truckle to them? Dost thou know more of the world than any of us do? No, thou art but of yesterday, no more than we, *ch.* v. 9. Or, 2. In intimacy of acquaintance with God; ver. 8, "Hast thou heard the secret of God?" Dost thou pretend to be of the cabinet council of Heaven, that thou canst give better reasons than others can for God's proceedings? There are secret things of God which belong not to us, and which, therefore, we must not pretend to account for. Those are daringly presumptuous that do. He also represents him, 1st. As assuming to himself such knowledge as none else had; "Dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself," as if none were wise but thou? Job had said, *ch.* xiii. 2, "What ye know the same do I know also;" and now they return upon him, according to the usage of eager disputants, who think they have a privilege to commend themselves, "What knowest thou that we know not?" How natural are such replies as these in the heat of argument? but how simple do they look afterwards upon the review? 2nd. As opposing the stream of antiquity,—a venerable name, which all contending parties strive to shelter themselves under the umbrage of; "With us are the gray-headed, and very aged men," ver. 10. We have the fathers on our side, all the ancient doctors of the church are of our opinion. A thing soon said, but not so soon proved; and, when proved, truth is not so soon discovered and proved by it as most people imagine. David preferred right Scripture knowledge before that of antiquity, *Ps.* cxix. 100, "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts." Or perhaps one or more, if not all three, of these friends of Job, were elder than he, *ch.* xxxii. 6, and therefore they thought he was bound to acknowledge them to be in the right. And this also serves contenders to make a noise with to very little purpose. If they are elder than their adversaries, and can say they knew such a thing before they were born, it will serve them to bounce and hector with; whereas the eldest are not always the wisest, *ch.* xxxii. 9.

Fourthly. He chargeth him with a contempt of the counsels and comforts that were given him by his friends; ver. 11, "Are the consolations of God small with thee?" 1. Eliphaz takes it ill that Job did not value the comforts which he and his friends administered to him more than it seems he did; and did not welcome every word they said as gospel. It is true they had said some very good things, but in their application to Job they were miserable comforters. Note, We are apt to think that great and considerable which we ourselves say, when others, perhaps with good reason, think it small and trifling. Paul found that those who seemed to be somewhat, yet in conference added nothing to him, *Gal.* ii. 6. 2. He represents this as a slight put upon Divine consolations in general, as if they were of small account with him; whereas really they were not. If he had not highly valued them, he could not have borne up as he did under his sufferings. Note, 1st. The consolations of God are not in themselves small. Divine comforts are great things; that is, the comfort which is from God, especially the comfort which is in God. 2nd. The consolations of God not being small in themselves, it is very ill if they be small with us. It is a great affront to God, and an evidence of a degenerate, depraved mind, to disesteem and undervalue spiritual delights, and despise the pleasant land. What, saith Eliphaz, "is there any secret thing with thee?" hast thou some cordial to support thyself with that is a *proprium*, an *arcanum*, that nobody else can pretend to, or knows any thing of? or is there some secret sin harboured and indulged in thy bosom which hinders the operation of Divine comforts? None disesteem Divine comforts but those that secretly affect the world and the flesh.

Fifthly. He chargeth him with opposition to God himself, and to religion; ver. 12, 13, "Why doth thine heart carry thee away" into such indecent, irreligious expressions? Note, Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, *Jas.* i. 14. If we fly off from God and our duty, or fly out into any thing amiss, it is our own heart that carries us away; "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." And there is a violence, an impetus, in the by-turnings of the soul; the corrupt heart carries men away, as it were, by force, against their convictions. What is it that thine eyes wink at? Why so careless and mindless of what is said to thee, hearing it as if thou wert half asleep? Why so scornful, disdaining what we say, as if it were below thee to take notice of it? What have we said that deserves to be thus slighted? nay, "that thou turnest thy spirit against God?" It was bad that his heart was carried away from God, but much worse that it was turned against God. But they that forsake God will soon break out in open enmity to him. But how did this appear? Why, thou lettest such words go out of thy mouth reflecting on God, and his justice and goodness. It is the character of the wicked that they set their mouth against the heavens, *Ps.* lxxiii. 9; which is a certain indication that the spirit is turned against God. He thought Job's spirit was soured against God, and so turned from what it had been, and exasperated at his dealings with him. Eliphaz wanted candour and charity, else he would not have put such a harsh construction upon the speeches of one that had such a settled reputation for piety, and was now in temptation. This was in effect to give the cause on Satan's side, and to own that Job had done as he said he would, curse God to his face.

Sixthly. He chargeth him with justifying himself to that degree as even to deny his share in the common corruption and pollution of the human nature; ver. 14, "What is man, that he should be clean?" that is, that he should pretend to be so, or that any should expect to find him so. What is he that is born of a woman, a sinful woman, that he should be righteous? Note, 1. Righteousness is cleanness, it makes us acceptable to God, and easy to ourselves, *Ps.* xviii. 24. 2. Man in his fallen state cannot pretend to be clean and righteous before God, either to acquit himself to God's justice, or recommend himself to his favour. 3. He is therefore to be adjudged unclean and unrighteous, because born of a woman, from whom he derives a corrupt nature, which is both his guilt and his pollution. With these plain truths, Eliphaz thinks to convince Job, whereas he had just now said the same, *ch.* xiv. 4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" But doth it therefore follow that Job is a hypocrite, and a wicked man, which was all that he denied? By no means. Though man as born of a woman is not clean, yet as born again of the Spirit he is. Farther to evince this he here shews,

1st. That the brightest creatures are imperfect and impure before God; ver. 15, God placeth no confidence in saints and angels. He employs both; but trusts neither with his service without giving them fresh supplies of strength and wisdom for it, as knowing they are not sufficient of themselves, neither more nor better than his grace makes them. He takes no complacency in the heavens themselves; how pure soever they seem to us, in his eye they have many a speck, and many a flaw, "The heavens are not clean in his sight." If the stars, saith Mr. Caryl, have no light in the sight of the sun, what light has the sun in the sight of God? see *Isa.* xxiv. 23.

2nd. That man is much more so; ver. 16, "How much more abominable and filthy is man!" if saints are not to be trusted, much less sinners. If the heavens are not pure, which are as God made them, much less man that is degenerated. Nay, he is abominable and filthy in the sight of God; and, if ever he repent, he is so in his own sight, and therefore he abhors himself. Sin is an odious thing, it makes men hateful; the body of sin is so, and is therefore called a dead body, a loathsome thing. Is it not a filthy thing, and enough to turn one's stomach, to see a man swill swine meat, or some stinking, nasty stuff? Such is the filthiness of man, that he drinks iniquity (that abominable thing which the Lord hates) as greedily, and with as much pleasure, as a man drinks water when he is thirsty. It is his constant drink; it is natural to sinners to commit iniquity. It gratifies, but doth not satisfy, the appetites of the old man. It is like water to a man in a dropsy. The more men sin, the more they would sin.

17 I will shew thee, hear me;
And that *which* I have seen I will declare;
18 Which wise men have told from their fathers,
And have not hid *it:*
19 Unto whom alone the earth was given,
And no stranger passed among them.
20 The wicked man travaileth with pain all *his* days,
And the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.
21 A dreadful sound *is* in his ears:
In prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.
22 He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness,
And he is waited for of the sword.
23 He wandereth abroad for bread, *saying,* Where *is it?*
He knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand.
24 Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; [battle.
They shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the
25 For he stretcheth out his hand against God,
And strengtheneth himself against the Almighty.
26 He runneth upon him, *even* on *his* neck,
Upon the thick bosses of his bucklers:
27 Because he covereth his face with his fatness,
And maketh collops of fat on *his* flanks.
28 And he dwelleth in desolate cities,
And in houses which no man inhabiteth,
Which are ready to become heaps. [tinue,
29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance con-
Neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the
30 He shall not depart out of darkness; [earth.
The flame shall dry up his branches,
And by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.
31 Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity:
For vanity shall be his recompence.
32 It shall be accomplished before his time,
And his branch shall not be green.
33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine,
And shall cast off his flower as the olive.
34 For the congregation of hypocrites *shall be* desolate,
And fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.
35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity,
And their belly prepareth deceit.

Eliphaz, having reproved Job for his answers, here comes to maintain his own thesis, upon which he built his censure of Job. His opinion is, that those that are wicked are certainly miserable. From whence he would infer, that those that are miserable are certainly wicked, and therefore Job was so. Observe,

First. His solemn preface to this discourse, in which he bespeaks Job's attention; which he had little reason to expect, he having given so little heed to, and put so little value upon, what Job had said; ver. 17, "I will shew thee" that which is worth hearing, and not reason as thou dost with unprofitable talk. Thus apt are men, when they condemn others' reasonings, to commend their own. He promiseth to teach him, 1. From his own experience and observation; "That which I have" myself "seen," in divers instances, "I will declare." It is of good use to take notice of the providences of God concerning the children of men, from which many a good lesson may be learned.

What good observations we have made, and have found benefit by ourselves, we should be ready to communicate for the benefit of others. And we may then speak boldly when we declare what we have seen. 2. From the wisdom of the ancients; ver. 18, "which wise men have told from their fathers." Note, The wisdom and learning of the moderns is very much derived from that of the ancients. Good children will learn a great deal from their good parents. And what we have learned from our ancestors we must transmit to our posterity, and not hide from the generations to come: see *Ps.* lxxviii. 3—6. If the thread of the knowledge of many ages be cut off by the carelessness of one, and nothing be done to preserve it pure and entire, all that succeed fare the worse. The authorities Eliphaz voucheth were authorities indeed, men of rank and figure, ver. 19, "unto whom alone the earth was given;" and therefore you may suppose them favourites of Heaven, and best capable of making observations concerning the affairs of this earth. The dictates of wisdom come with advantage from those that are in places of dignity and power, as Solomon's; yet there is a wisdom "which none of the princes of this world knew," 1 *Cor.* ii. 7, 8.

Secondly. The discourse itself. He here aims to shew,

1. That those who are wise and good do ordinarily prosper in this world; this he only hints at, ver. 19. That those of whose mind he was were such as had the earth given to them, and to them only; they enjoyed it entirely and peaceably; and no stranger passed among them, either to share with them, or give disturbance to them. Job had said, "the earth is given into the hand of the wicked," *ch.* ix. 24. No, saith Eliphaz, it is given into the hands of the saints, and runs along with the faith committed unto them; and they are not robbed and plundered by strangers and enemies making inroads upon them, as thou art by the Sabeans and Chaldeans. But, because many of God's people have remarkably prospered in this world, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it doth not therefore follow that those who are crossed and impoverished, as Job, are not God's people.

2. That wicked people, and particularly oppressors, and tyrannizing rulers, are subject to continual terrors, live very uncomfortably, and perish very miserably. On this head he enlargeth, shewing that even they who impiously dare God's judgments yet cannot but dread them, and will feel them at last. He speaks in the singular number,—"the wicked man," some think meaning Nimrod, or perhaps Chedorlaomer, or some such mighty hunter before the Lord. I wish he doth not mean Job himself, whom he expressly chargeth both with the tyranny and with the timorousness here described, *ch.* xxii. 9, 10. Here he thinks the application easy, and that Job might in this description, as in a glass, see his own face. Now,

1st. Let us see how he describes the sinner who lives thus miserably. He doth not begin with that, but brings it in as a reason of his doom, ver. 25—28. It is no ordinary sinner, but one of the first rate, an oppressor, ver. 20; a blasphemer and a persecutor; one that neither fears God nor regards man.

First. He bids defiance to God, and to his authority and power, ver. 25. Tell him of the Divine law, and the obligations of it, he breaks those bonds asunder, and will not have, no, not him that made him to restrain him, or rule over him. Tell him of the Divine wrath, and the terrors of that, he bids the Almighty do his worst, he will have his will, he will have his way in spite of him; and will not be controlled by law or conscience, or the notices of a judgment to come. He stretcheth out his hand against God, in defiance of him, and of the power of his wrath. God is indeed out of his reach, but he stretcheth out his hand against him, to shew that if it were in his power he would ungod him. This speaks the audacious impiety of some sinners, who are really haters of God, *Rom.* i. 30; and whose carnal mind is not only an enemy to him, but enmity itself, *Rom.* viii. 7. But, alas! the sinner's malice is as impotent as it is impudent; what can he do? Why, "he strengtheneth himself" (he 'would be valiant,' so some read it) "against the Almighty;" he thinks with his exorbitant despotic power to change times and laws, *Dan.* vii. 25; and, in spite of Providence, to carry the day for rapine and wrong, clear of the check of conscience. Note, It is the prodigious madness of presumptuous sinners that they enter the lists with Omnipotence; "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker." That is generally taken for a farther description of the sinner's daring presumption; ver. 26, "He runs upon him," upon God himself, in a direct opposition to him, to his precepts and providences, "even upon his neck," as a desperate combatant, when he finds himself an unequal match for his adversary, flies in his face, though at the same time he falls on his sword's point, or 'the sharp spike of his buckler.' Every sinner runs from God; but the presumptuous sinner, who sins with a high hand, runs upon him, fights against him, and bids defiance to him; and it is easy to foretel what will be the issue.

Secondly. He wraps himself up in security and sensuality, ver. 27. "He covers his face with his fatness." This signifies both the pampering of his flesh with daily delicious fare and the hardening of his heart thereby against the judgments of God. Note, The gratifying of the appetites of the body, feeding and feasting that to the full, often turns to the damage of the soul and its interests. Why is God forgotten and slighted, but because the belly is made a god of, and the happiness placed in the delights of sense? They that fill themselves with wine and strong drink, abandon all that is serious, and flatter themselves with hopes that "to-morrow shall be as this day," *Isa.* lvi. 12; "Woe to them that are thus at ease in Zion," *Am.* vi. 1, 3, 4; *Lu.* xii. 19. The fat that covers his face makes him look bold and haughty, and that which covers his flanks makes him lie easy and soft, and feel little. But this will prove poor shelter against the darts of God's wrath.

Thirdly. He enriches himself with the spoils of all about him, ver. 28. He dwells in cities, which he himself hath made desolate, by expelling the inhabitants out of them, that he might be placed alone in them, *Isa.* v. 8. It is strange what pleasure proud and cruel men can take in ruins, when they are of their own making, in destroying cities, *Ps.* ix. 6, and triumphing in the destruction; since they cannot otherwise make them their own, but by making them ready to become heaps, and frightening the inhabitants out of them. Note, Those that aim to engross the world to themselves, and grasp at all, lose the comfort of all, and make themselves miserable in the midst of all. How doth this tyrant gain his point, and make himself master of cities that have all the marks of antiquity upon them? We are told, ver. 35, he doth it by malice and falsehood; the two chief ingredients of his wickedness who was a liar and a murderer from the beginning. They conceive mischief, and then they effect it by preparing deceit, pretending to protect those whom they design to subdue; and making leagues of peace, the more effectually to carry on the operations of war. From such wicked men God deliver all good men!

2nd. Let us see now what is the miserable condition of this wicked man, both in spiritual and temporal judgments.

First. His inward peace is continually disturbed. He seems to those about him to be easy, who therefore envy him, and wish themselves in his condition; but he that knows what is in men tells us that a wicked man has so little comfort and satisfaction in his own breast that he is rather to be pitied than envied.

1*st.* His own conscience accuseth him; and with the pangs and throes of that he "travaileth in pain all his days," ver. 20. He is continually uneasy at the thought of the cruelties he has been guilty of, and the blood in which he has imbrued his hands; his sins stare him in the face at every turn. *Diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos,*—'conscious guilt astonishes and confounds.'

2*nd.* He is vexed at the uncertainty of the continuance of his wealth and power; "the number of years is hidden to the oppressor." He knows, whatever he pretends, that it will not last always, and has reason to fear it will not last long, and this he frets at.

3*rd.* He is under "a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation," (*Heb.* x. 27,) which puts him into, and keeps him in, a continual terror and consternation, so that he dwells with Cain, in the land of Nod, or commotion, *Gen.* iv. 16; and is made like Pashur, "Magor-missabib, a terror round about," *Jer.* xx. 3, 4. "A dreadful sound is in his ears," ver. 21. He knows both heaven and earth are incensed against him, that God is angry with him, and all the world hates him, and he has done nothing to make his peace with either; and, therefore, thinks every one that meets him will slay him, *Gen.* iv. 14; or, like a man absconding for debt, that thinks every man a bailiff. Fear came in at first with sin, *Gen.* iii. 10, and still attends it. Even in prosperity he is apprehensive that the destroyer will come upon him, either some destroying angel sent of God to avenge his quarrel, or some of his injured subjects that will be their own avengers. Those who are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living usually go down slain to the pit, *Eze.* xxxii. 25; the expectation of which makes them a terror to themselves. This is farther set forth, ver. 22, that he is in his own apprehension waited for of the sword, for he knows that he who killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword, *Rev.* xiii. 10. A guilty conscience represents to the sinner a flaming sword turning every way, *Gen.* iii. 24, and himself inevitably running on it. Again, ver. 23, "He knows that the day of darkness" (or the night of darkness, rather) "is ready at his hand;" that it is appointed to him, and cannot be put by; that it is hastening on apace, and cannot be put off. This day of darkness is something beyond death; it is that day of the Lord which to all wicked people will be darkness and not light, and in which they will be doomed to utter endless darkness. Note, Some wicked people, though they seem secure, have already received the sentence of death, eternal death, within themselves, and plainly see hell gaping for them. No marvel that it follows, ver. 24, "Trouble and anguish" (that inward tribulation and anguish of soul spoken of, *Rom.* ii. 8, 9, which is the effect of God's indignation and wrath fastening upon the conscience,) "shall make him afraid" of worse to come. What is the hell before him if this be the hell within him? And though he would fain shake off his fears, drink them away, and jest them away, it will not do, they shall prevail against him, and overpower him as a king ready to the battle, with forces too strong to be resisted. He that would keep his peace, let him keep a good conscience.

4th. If at any time he be in trouble, he despairs of getting out; ver. 22, "He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness," but he gives himself up for gone and lost in an endless night. Good men expect light at evening time, light out of darkness; but what reason have they to expect that they shall return out of the darkness of trouble who would not return from the darkness of sin, but went on in it? *Ps.* lxxxii. 5. It is the misery of damned sinners, that they know they shall never return out of that utter darkness, nor pass the gulf fixed.

5th. He perplexeth himself with continual care, especially if Providence never so little frown upon him, ver. 23. Such a dread he has of poverty, and such a waste doth he discern upon his estate, that he is already, in his own imagination, wandering abroad for bread, going a begging for a meal's meat, and saying, Where is it? The rich man in his abundance cried out, What shall I do? *Lu.* xii. 17. Perhaps he pretends fear of wanting as an excuse of his covetous practices, and justly may he be brought to this extremity at last. We read of those who were full, but have hired out themselves for bread, 1 *Sam.* ii. 5, which this sinner will not do; he cannot dig, he is too fat, ver. 27, but to beg he may well be ashamed: see *Ps.* cix. 10. David never saw the righteous so far forsaken as to beg their bread, for, verily, they shall be fed by the charitable unasked, *Ps.* xxxvii. 3, 25. But the wicked want it, and cannot expect it should be readily given them. How shall they find mercy that never shewed mercy?

Secondly. His outward prosperity will soon come to an end, and all his confidence and all his comfort will come to an end with it. How can he prosper when God runs upon him? so some understand that, ver. 26. And whom God runs upon, he will certainly run down; for when he judgeth he will overcome. See how the judgments of God cross this worldly wicked man in all his cares, desires, and projects, and so complete his misery.

1*st.* He is in care to get, but "he shall not be rich," ver. 29. His own covetous mind keeps him from being truly rich. He is not rich that has not enough, and he has not enough that doth not think he has. It is contentment only that is great gain. Providence remarkably keeps some from being rich, defeating their enterprises, breaking their measures, and keeping them always behind hand. Many that get much by fraud and injustice, yet do not grow rich. It goes as it comes; it is got by one sin, and spent upon another.

2*nd.* He is in care to keep what he has got, but in vain; "his substance shall not continue;" it will dwindle and come to nothing; God blasts it, and what came up in a night perisheth in a night. "Wealth gotten by vanity will certainly be diminished." Some have themselves lived to see the ruin of those estates which have been raised by oppression; however, it goes with a curse to those that succeed. *De male quæsitis vix gaudet tertius hæres,*—'Ill-gotten property will scarcely be enjoyed by the third generation.' He purchaseth estates to him and his heirs for ever, but to what purpose? He shall not "prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth," neither the credit nor the comfort of his riches shall be prolonged; and when those are gone, where is the perfection of them? How indeed can we expect the perfection of any thing to be prolonged upon the earth, where every thing is transitory, and we soon see the end of all perfection?

3*rd.* He is in care to leave what he has got and kept to his children after him; but in this he is crossed. The branches of his family shall perish, in whom he hoped to have lived and flourished, and to have had the reputation of making them all great men. "They shall not be green," ver. 32; "the flame shall dry them up," ver. 30. He shall shake them off as blossoms that never knit, or as the unripe grape, ver. 33. They shall die in the beginning of their days, and never come to maturity. Many a man's family is ruined by his iniquity.

4*th.* He is in care to enjoy it a great while himself; but in that also he is crossed. (1.) He may perhaps be taken from it; ver. 30, "By the breath of God's mouth" (that is, by his wrath, which like a stream of brimstone kindles the fire that devours him, *Isa.* xxx. 33; or, by his word, he speaks and it is done presently,) "shall he go away," and leave his wealth to others. "This night shall thy soul be required of thee;" and so "the wicked is driven away in his wickedness," the worldling in his worldliness. (2.) It may perhaps be taken from him, and fly away like an eagle towards heaven. "It shall be accomplished" (or cut off) "before his time," ver. 32; that is, he shall survive his prosperity, and see himself stripped of it.

5*th.* He is in care, when he is in trouble, how to get out of it, not how to get good by it; but in this also he is crossed, ver. 30, "He shall not depart out of darkness." When he begins to fall, like Haman, down with him. It was said

of him, ver. 22, "He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness," he frightened himself with the perpetuity of his calamity; and God also shall choose his delusions, and bring his fears upon him, *Isa.* lxvi. 4, as he did upon Israel, *Num.* xiv. 28. God saith Amen to his distrust and despair.

6th. He is in care to secure his partners, and hopes to secure himself by his partnership with them, but that is in vain too; ver. 34, 35, The congregation of them, the whole confederacy, they and all their tabernacles, shall be desolate, and consumed with fire. Hypocrisy and bribery are here charged upon them; that is, deceitful dealing both with God and man: God affronted under colour of religion, man wronged under colour of justice. It is impossible these should end well. "Though hand join in hand" for the support of these perfidious practices, "yet shall not the wicked go unpunished."

Thirdly. The use and application of all this. Will the prosperity of presumptuous sinners end at last thus miserably? Then, (ver. 31,) "let not him that is deceived trust in vanity." Let others' harms be our warnings, and let not us rest on that broken reed which always failed those that leaned on it. *1st.* Those that trust to their sinful ways of getting wealth trust in vanity; and vanity will be their recompence, for they shall not get what they expected. Their arts will deceive them, and perhaps ruin them in this world. *2nd.* Those that trust to their wealth when they have gotten it, especially to the wealth they have gotten dishonestly, trust in vanity, for it will yield them no satisfaction; the guilt that cleaves to it will ruin the joy of it. They sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind, and will own at length, with the utmost confusion, that a deceived heart turned them aside, and they cheated themselves with a lie in their right hand.

CHAPTER XVI.

This chapter begins Job's reply to that discourse of Eliphaz which we had in the foregoing chapter; and it is but the second part of the same song of lamentation with which he had before bemoaned himself, and to the same melancholy tune. I. He upbraids his friends with their unkind usage of him, ver. 1—5. II. He represents his own case as very deplorable upon all accounts, ver. 6—16. III. He still holds fast his integrity, concerning which he appeals to God's righteous judgment from the unrighteous censures of his friends, ver. 17—22.

THEN Job answered and said,
2 I have heard many such things:
Miserable comforters *are* ye all.
3 Shall vain words have an end?
Or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?
4 I also could speak as ye *do:*
If your soul were in my soul's stead,
I could heap up words against you,
And shake mine head at you.
5 *But* I would strengthen you with my mouth,
And the moving of my lips should asswage *your grief.*

Both Job and his friends took the same way that disputants commonly take, which is to undervalue one another's sense, and wisdom, and management. The saw of contention, the longer it is drawn the hotter it grows, and the beginning of this sort of strife is as the letting forth of water; therefore leave it off before it be meddled with. Eliphaz had represented Job's discourses as idle and unprofitable, and nothing to the purpose; and Job here gives his the same character. Those who are free in passing such censures must expect to have them retorted. It is easy, it is endless; but, *cui bono?*—'what good doth it do?' It will stir up men's passions, but will never convince their judgments, nor set truth in a clear light. Job here reproves Eliphaz,

First. For needless repetitions; ver. 2, "I have heard many such things." You tell me nothing but what I knew before, nothing but what you yourselves have before said; you offer nothing new, it is the same thing over and over again; which Job thinks as great a trial of his patience as almost any of his troubles. The inculcating of the same things thus by an adversary is indeed provoking and nauseous; but by a teacher it is often necessary, and must not be grievous to the learner, to whom precept must be upon precept, and line upon line. Many things we have heard which it is good for us to hear again, that we may understand and remember them better, and be more affected with them and influenced by them.

Secondly. For unskilful applications. They came with a design to comfort him, but they went about it very awkwardly, and when they touched Job's case, quite mistook it; "Miserable comforters are ye all," that, instead of offering anything to alleviate the affliction, add affliction to it, and make it yet more grievous. The patient's case is sad indeed when his medicines are poisons, and his physicians his worst disease. What Job saith here of his friends is true of all creatures in comparison with God, and one time or other we shall be made to see it and own it, that "miserable comforters are they all." When we are under convictions of sin, terrors of conscience, and the arrests of death, it is only the blessed Spirit that can comfort effectually; all others without him do it miserably, and sing songs to a heavy heart to no purpose.

Thirdly. For endless impertinence. Job wisheth that vain words might have an end, ver. 3; and, if they be vain, it were well they were never begun, and the sooner they are ended the better. Those who are so wise as to speak to the purpose will be so wise as to know when they have said enough of a thing, and when it is time to break off.

Fourthly. For causeless obstinacy; "What emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?" It is a great piece of confidence, and unaccountable with Eliphaz, to charge men with those crimes which we cannot prove upon them, to pass a judgment on men's spiritual state upon the view of their outward condition, and to re-advance those objections which have been again and again answered.

Fifthly. For the violation of the sacred laws of friendship, doing by his brother as he would not have been done by, and as his brother would not have done by him. This is a cutting reproof, and very affecting, ver. 4, 5.

1. He desires his friends in imagination for a little while to change conditions with him, to put their souls into his soul's stead; to suppose themselves in misery like him, and him at ease like them. And it is no absurd or foreign supposition, but what might quickly become true in fact; so strange, so sudden, many times are the vicissitudes of human affairs, and such the turns of the wheel, that the spokes soon change places. Whatever our brethren's sorrows are, we ought by sympathy to make them our own, because we know not how soon they may be so.

2. He represents the unkindness of their carriage towards him by shewing what he could do to them if they were in his condition; "I could speak as ye do." It is an easy thing to trample upon those that are down, and to find fault with what those say that are in extremity of pain and affliction. "I could heap up words against you," as you do against me, and how would you like it? how would you bear it?

3. He shews them what they should do, by telling them what in that case he would do; ver. 5, "I would strengthen you," and say all I could to assuage your grief, but nothing to aggravate it. It is natural to sufferers to think what they would do if the tables were turned; but perhaps our hearts may deceive us, we know not what we would do. We find it easier to discern the reasonableness and importance of a command when we have occasion to claim the benefit of it than when we have occasion to do the duty of it. See what is the duty we owe to our brethren in affliction. 1st. We should say and do all we can to strengthen them, suggesting to them such considerations as are proper to encourage their confidence in God, and to support their sinking spirits. Faith and patience are the strength of the afflicted; what helps these graces confirms the feeble knees. 2nd. To assuage their grief, the causes of their grief if possible, or, however, their resentment of those causes. Good words cost nothing; but they may be of good service to those that are in sorrow, not only as it is some comfort to them to see their friends concerned for them, but they may so be minded of that which through the prevalency of grief was forgotten. Though hard words, we say, break no bones, yet kind words may help to make broken bones rejoice; and those have the tongue of the learned that know how to speak a word in season to the weary.

6 Though I speak, my grief is not asswaged:
And *though* I forbear, what am I eased?
7 But now he hath made me weary:
Thou hast made desolate all my company.
8 And thou hast filled me with wrinkles,
Which is a witness *against me:*
And my leanness rising up in me
Beareth witness to my face.
9 He teareth *me* in his wrath, who hateth me:
He gnasheth upon me with his teeth;
Mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.
10 They have gaped upon me with their mouth;
They have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully;
They have gathered themselves together against me.
11 God hath delivered me to the ungodly,
And turned me over into the hands of the wicked.
12 I was at ease, but he hath broken me asunder:
He hath also taken *me* by my neck, and shaken me to pieces,
And set me up for his mark.
13 His archers compass me round about,
He cleaveth my reins asunder, and doth not spare;
He poureth out my gall upon the ground.
14 He breaketh me with breach upon breach,
He runneth upon me like a giant.
15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin,
And defiled my horn in the dust.
16 My face is foul with weeping,
And on my eyelids *is* the shadow of death.

Job's complaint is here very bitter, as anywhere in all his discourses, and he is at a stand whether to smother it or to give it vent. Sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, is a relief to the afflicted, according as the temper or the circumstances are; but Job found help by neither, ver. 6. 1. Sometimes giving vent to grief gives ease; but "though I speak," saith Job, "my grief is not assuaged," my spirit is never the lighter for the pouring out of my complaint; nay, what I speak is so misconstrued as to be turned to the aggravation of my grief. 2. At other times, keeping silence makes the trouble the easier, and the sooner forgotten; but, saith Job, "though I forbear," I am never the nearer, "what am I eased?" If he complained, he was censured as passionate; if not, as sullen; if he maintained his integrity, that was his crime; if he made no answer to their accusations, his silence was taken for a confession of his guilt. Here is a doleful remonstrance of Job's grievances. Oh, what reason have we to bless God that we are not making such complaints! He complains,

First. That his family was scattered; ver. 7, "He made me weary;" weary of speaking, weary of forbearing, weary of my friends, weary of life itself; my journey through the world proves so very uncomfortable that I am quite tired with it. And this made it as tiresome as any thing, that all his company was made desolate, his children and servants killed, and the poor remains of his great household dispersed. The company of good people that used to meet at his house for religious worship was now scattered, and he spent his sabbaths in silence and solitude. He had company indeed, but such as he would rather have been without, for they seemed to triumph in his desolation. If lovers and friends are put far from us, we must see and own God's hand in it, making our company desolate.

Secondly. That his body was worn away with diseases and pains, so that he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones, ver. 8. His face was furrowed, not with age, but sickness; "Thou hast filled me with wrinkles." His flesh was wasted with the running of his sore boils, so that his leanness rose up in him; that is, his bones that were not seen stuck out, *ch.* xxxiii. 21. These are called witnesses against him, witnesses of God's displeasure against him, and such witnesses as his friends produced against him to prove him a wicked man. Or, they are witnesses for me, that my complaint is not causeless, or witnesses to me that I am a dying man, and must be gone shortly.

Thirdly. That his enemy was a terror to him, threatened him, frightened him, looked stern upon him, and gave all the indications of rage against him; ver. 9, "He tears me in his wrath." But who is this enemy? Either, 1. Eli-

phaz, who shewed himself very much exasperated against him, and perhaps had expressed himself with such marks of indignation as are here mentioned; however, what he said tore Job's good name, and thundered nothing but terror to him. His eyes were sharpened to spy out matter of reproach against Job, and very barbarously both he and the rest of them used him. Or, 2. Satan. He was his enemy that hated him, and, perhaps, by the Divine permission, terrified him with apparitions, as (some think) he terrified our Saviour, which put him into his agonies in the garden; and thus he aimed to make him curse God. It is not improbable that this is the enemy he means. Or, 3. God himself. If we understand it of him, the expressions are indeed as rash as any he used; God hates none of his creatures, but Job's melancholy did thus represent to him the terrors of the Almighty; and nothing can be more grievous to a good man than to apprehend God to be his enemy. If the wrath of a king be as messengers of death, what is the wrath of the King of kings!

Fourthly. That all about him were abusive to him, ver. 10. They came upon him with open mouth to devour him, as if they would swallow him alive, so terrible were their threats, and so scornful was their carriage to him. They did him all the indignities they could invent, and even smote him on the cheek; and herein many were confederate,—they gathered themselves together against him, even the abjects, *Ps.* xxxv. 15. Herein Job was a type of Christ, as many of the ancients make him. These very expressions are used in the predictions of his sufferings; *Ps.* xxii. 13, "They gaped upon me with their mouths;" and *Mic.* v. 1, "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek," which was literally fulfilled, *Mat.* xxvi. 67. How were they increased that troubled him!

Fifthly. That God, instead of delivering him out of their hands, as he hoped, delivered him into their hands; ver. 11, "He hath turned me over into the hands of the wicked." They could have had no power against him if it had not been given them from above; he therefore looks beyond them to God, who gave them their commission, as David did when Shimei cursed him. But he thinks it strange, and almost thinks it hard, that those should have power against him who were God's enemies as much as his. But God sometimes makes use of wicked men as his sword to one another, (*Ps.* xvii. 13,) and his rod to his own children, *Isa.* x. 5. Herein also Job was a type of Christ, who was delivered into wicked hands to be crucified and slain by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, *Acts* ii. 23.

Sixthly. That God not only delivered him into the hands of the wicked, but took him into his own hands too, into which it is a fearful thing to fall; ver. 12, "I was at ease" in the comfortable enjoyment of the gifts of God's bounty, not fretting and uneasy, as some are in the midst of their prosperity, who thereby provoke God to strip them; yet "he has broken me asunder," put me upon the rack of pain, and torn me limb from limb. God in afflicting him had seemed, 1. As if he were furious. Though fury is not in God, he thought it was, when he took him by the neck (as a strong man in a passion would take a child) and shook him to pieces, triumphing in the irresistible power he had to do what he would with him. 2. As if he were partial. He hath distinguished me from the rest of mankind by this hard usage of me; he "hath set me up for his mark," the butt at which he is pleased to let fly all his arrows. At me they are directed, and they come not by chance; against me they are levelled, as if I were the greatest sinner of all the men of the East, or were singled out to be made an example. When God set him up for a mark, his archers presently compassed him round. God has archers at command, who will be sure to hit the mark that he sets up. Whoever are our enemies, we must look upon them as God's archers, and see him directing the arrow. "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." 3. As if he were cruel, and his wrath as relentless as his power was resistless. As if he contrived to touch him in the tenderest part, cleaving his reins asunder with acute pains. Perhaps they were nephritic pains, those of the stone, which lie in the region of the kidneys. As if he had no mercy in reserve for him; he doth not spare, nor abate any thing of the extremity. And as if he aimed at nothing but his death, and his death in the midst of the most grievous tortures; "He pours out my gall upon the ground;" as, when men have taken a wild beast and killed it, they open it and pour out the gall with a loathing of it. He thought his blood was poured out as if it were not only not precious but nauseous. 4. As if he were unreasonable and insatiable in his executions; ver. 14, "He breaketh me with breach upon breach," follows me with one wound after another. So his troubles came at first, while one messenger of evil tidings was speaking another came; and so it was still, new boils were rising every day, so that he had no prospect of the end of his troubles. Thus he thought God ran upon him like a giant, whom he could not possibly stand before or confront, as the giants of old ran down all their poor neighbours, and were quite too hard for them. Note, Even good men, when they are in great and extraordinary troubles, have much ado not to entertain hard thoughts of God.

Seventhly. That he had divested himself of all his honour, and all his comfort, in compliance with the surprising providences that were concerning him. Some can lessen their own troubles by concealing them, holding their heads as high, and putting as good a face upon it as ever; but Job could not do so. He received the impressions of them, and, as one truly penitent and truly patient, he humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, ver. 15, 16. 1. He now laid aside all his ornaments and soft clothing, consulted not either his ease or finery in his dress, but sewed sackcloth upon his skin; that clothing he thought good enough for such a defiled, distempered body as he had. Silks upon sores, such sores, he thought would be disagreeable; sackcloth would be more becoming. Those are fond indeed of gay clothing that will not be weaned from it by sickness and old age, and, as Job was, ver. 8, by wrinkles and leanness. He not only put on sackcloth, but sewed it on, as one that resolved to continue his humiliation as long as the affliction continued. 2. He insisted not upon any points of honour, but humbled himself under humbling providences; he defiled his horn in the dust, and refused the respects that used to be paid to his dignity, power, and eminency. Note, When God brings down our condition, that should bring down our spirits. Better lay the horn in the dust, than lift it up in contradiction to the designs of Providence, and have it broken at last. Eliphaz had represented Job as high, and haughty, and unhumbled under his affliction. No, saith Job, I know better things; the dust is now the fittest place for me. 3. He banished mirth as utterly unseasonable, and set himself to sow in tears; ver. 16, "My face is foul with weeping" so constantly for my sins, for God's displeasure against me, and for my friends' unkindness; this has brought a shadow of death upon my eyelids. He had not only wept away all his beauty, but almost wept his eyes out. In this also he was a type of Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and much in tears, and pronounced those blessed that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

17 Not for *any* injustice in mine hands;
Also my prayer *is* pure.
18 O earth, cover not thou my blood,
And let my cry have no place.
19 Also now, behold, my witness *is* in heaven,
And my record *is* on high.
20 My friends scorn me:
But mine eye poureth out *tears* unto God.
21 O that one might plead for a man with God,
As a man *pleadeth* for his neighbour!
22 When a few years are come,
Then I shall go the way *whence* I shall not return.

Job's condition was very deplorable; but had he nothing to support him, nothing to comfort him? Yes, and he here tells us what it was.

First. He had the testimony of his conscience for him that he had walked uprightly, and had never allowed himself in any gross sin. None was ever more ready than he to acknowledge his sins of infirmity; but, upon search, he could not charge himself with any enormous crime for which he should be made more miserable than other men, ver. 17. He had kept a conscience void of offence, 1. Towards men. "Not for any injustice in my hands," any wealth that I have unjustly got or kept. Eliphaz had represented him as a tyrant and an oppressor. No, saith he, I never did any wrong to any man, but always despised the gain of oppression. 2. Towards God. "Also my prayer is pure," which it cannot be as long as there is injustice in our hands, *Isa.* i. 15. Eliphaz had charged him with hypocrisy in religion; but he instanceth in prayer, the great act of religion, and professeth that in that he was pure; though not from all infirmity, yet from reigning and allowed guile. It was not like the prayers of the Pharisees, who looked no farther than to be seen of men, and to serve a turn.

This assertion of his own integrity he backs with a solemn imprecation of shame and confusion to himself if it were not true, ver. 18. 1. If there were any injustice in his hands, he wishes it might not be concealed; "O earth, cover thou not my blood," that is, the innocent blood of others which I am suspected to have shed. Murder will out; and let it, saith Job, if I have ever been guilty of it, *Gen.* iv. 10, 11. The day is coming when the earth shall disclose her blood, *Isa.* xxvi. 21; and a good man is far from dreading that day. 2. If there were any impurity in his prayers, he wisheth they might not be accepted; "Let my cry have no place." He was willing to be judged by that rule, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me," *Ps.* lxvi. 18. There is another probable sense of these words, that he doth hereby, as it were, lay his death upon his friends, who broke his heart with their harsh censures, and chargeth the guilt of his blood upon them, begging of God to avenge it, and that the cry of his blood might have no place in which to lie hid, but might come up to heaven, and be heard by him that makes inquisition for blood.

Secondly. He could appeal to God's omniscience concerning his integrity, ver. 19. The witness in our own bosoms for us will stand us in little stead, if we have not a witness in heaven for us too; for God is greater than our hearts, and we are not to be our own judges: this, therefore, is Job's triumph, "My witness is in heaven." Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to a good man, when he lies under the censure of his brethren, that there is a God in heaven who knows his integrity, and will clear it up sooner or later: see *Job* v. 31, 37. This one Witness is instead of a thousand.

Thirdly. He had a God to go to, before whom he might unbosom himself, ver. 20, 21. See here, 1. How the case stood between him and his friends; he knew not how to be free with them, nor could he expect either a fair hearing with them, or fair dealing from them. My friends (so they call themselves) scorn me; they set themselves not only to oppose me, but to expose me; they are of counsel against me, and use all their art and eloquence (so the word signifies) to run me down. The scorns of friends are more cutting than those of enemies; but we must expect them, and provide accordingly. 2. How it stood between him and God. He doubted not but that, 1st. God did now take cognizance of his sorrows; "Mine eye pours out tears to God." He had said, ver. 16, that he wept much; here he tells us in what channel his tears ran, and which way they were directed. His sorrow was not that of the world; but he sorrowed after a godly sort, wept before the Lord, and offered to him the sacrifice of a broken heart. Note, Even tears, when sanctified to God, give ease to troubled spirits; and, if men slight our grief, this may comfort us, that God regards them. 2nd. That he would in due time clear up his innocency; ver. 21, "O that one might plead for a man with God!" If he could but now have the same freedom at God's bar that men commonly have at the bar of the civil magistrate, he doubted not but to carry his cause; for the judge himself was a witness to his integrity. The language of this wish is, that, *Isa.* l. 7, 8, "I know that I shall not be ashamed, for he is near that justifies me." Some give a gospel sense of this verse, and the original will very well bear it; 'And he will plead' (that is, there is one that will plead) 'for man with God, even the Son of man for his friend,' or neighbour. Those who pour out tears before God, though they cannot plead for themselves, by reason of their distance and defects, have a friend to plead for them, even the Son of man; and on this we must bottom all our hopes of acceptance with God.

Fourthly. He had a prospect of death, which would put a period to all his troubles. Such confidence had he towards God, that he could take pleasure in thinking of the approach of death, when he should be determined to his everlasting state, as one that doubted not but it would be well with him then. "When a few years are come," the years of number which are determined and appointed to me, "then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." Note, 1. To die is to go the way whence we shall not return; it is to go a journey, a long journey, a journey for good and all; to remove from this to another country, from the world of sense to the world of spirits; it is a journey to our long home; there will be no coming back to our state in this world, nor any change of our state in the other world. 2. We must all of us very certainly, and very shortly, go this journey; and it is comfortable to those who keep a good conscience to think of it, for it is the crown of their integrity.

CHAPTER XVII.

In this chapter, I. Job reflects upon the harsh censures which his friends had passed upon him, and, looking upon himself as a dying man, ver. 1, he appeals to God, and begs of him speedily to appear for him and right him, because they had wronged him, and he knew not how to right himself, ver. 2—7; but hopes, though it be a surprise, it will be no stumblingblock to good people to see him thus abused, ver. 8, 9. II. He reflects upon the vain hopes they had fed him with, that he should yet see good days; shewing that his days were just at an end, and with his body all his hopes would be buried in the dust, ver. 10—16. His friends becoming strange to him, which greatly grieved him, he makes death and the grave familiar to him, which yielded him some comfort.

MY breath is corrupt,
My days are extinct,
The graves *are ready* for me.
2 *Are there* not mockers with me?
And doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?
3 Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee;
Who *is* he *that* will strike hands with me?
4 For thou hast hid their heart from understanding;
Therefore shalt thou not exalt *them*.
5 He that speaketh flattery to *his* friends,
Even the eyes of his children shall fail.
6 He hath made me also a byword of the people;
And aforetime I was as a tabret.
7 Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow,
And all my members *are* as a shadow.
8 Upright *men* shall be astonied at this, [crite.
And the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypo-
9 The righteous also shall hold on his way, [stronger.
And he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and

Job's discourse here is somewhat broken and interrupted, and he passeth suddenly from one thing to another, as is usual with men in trouble. But we may reduce what is said here to three heads.

First. The deplorable condition which poor Job was now in, which he describes, to aggravate the great unkindness of his friends to him, and to justify his own complaints. Let us see what his case was.

1. He was a dying man, ver. 1. He had said, *ch.* xvi. 22, "When a few years are come," I shall go that long journey. But here he corrects himself: What! do I talk of years to come? alas, I am just setting out on that journey, am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, "my breath is" already "corrupt," or broken off, "my spirits are spent." I am a gone man. It is good for every one of us thus to look upon ourselves as dying, and especially to think of it when we are sick. We are dying, that is, 1st. Our life is going, for the breath of life is going. It is continually going forth, it is in our nostrils, *Isa.* iii. 26, the door at which it entered, *Gen.* ii. 7; there it is upon the threshold, ready to depart. Perhaps Job's distemper obstructed his breathing, and short breath will be no breath after a while. Let the Anointed of the Lord be the breath of our nostrils, and let us get spiritual life breathed into us, and that breath will never be corrupted. 2nd. Our time is ending. "My days are extinct," are put out, as a candle which from the first lighting is continually wasting and burning down, and will by degrees burn out of itself, but may by a thousand accidents be extinguished. Such is life. It concerns us, therefore, carefully to redeem the days of time, and to spend them in getting ready for the days of eternity, which will never be extinct. 3rd. We are expected in our long home. "The graves are ready for me." But would not one grave serve? Yes: but he speaks of the sepulchres of his fathers, to which he must be gathered. The graves where they are laid are ready for me also; graves in concert, the congregation of the dead. Wherever we go, there is but a step between us and the grave. Whatever is unready, that is ready. It is a bed soon made. If the graves be ready for us, it concerns us to be ready for the graves. 'The graves for me,' so it runs; noting not only his expectation of death, but his desire of it. I have done with the world, and have nothing now to wish for but a grave.

2. He was a despised man; ver. 6, "He" (that is, Eliphaz, so some, or rather God, whom he all along acknowledgeth to be the author of his calamities,) "has made me a byword of the people," the talk of the country, a laughing-stock to many, a gazing-stock to all; "and aforetime" (or, to men's faces, publicly) "I was as a tabret," that who would might play upon. They made ballads of him; his name became a proverb, it is so still, As poor as Job. He has now made me a byword, a reproach of men, whereas aforetime, in my prosperity, I was as a tabret, 'the darling of the country,'—*deliciæ humani generis*, whom they were all pleased with. It is common for those who were honoured in their wealth to be despised in their poverty.

3. He was a man of sorrows, ver. 7. He wept so much that he had almost lost his sight; "Mine eye is dim by reason of sorrow," *ch.* xvi. 16. The sorrow of the world thus works darkness and death. He vexed so much that he had fretted all the flesh off his back, and was become a perfect anatomy, a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones: "All my members are as a shadow." I am grown so poor and thin that I am not to be called a man, but the shadow of a man.

Secondly. The ill use which his friends made of his miseries. They trampled upon him, and insulted over him, and condemned him as a hypocrite, because he was thus grievously afflicted. Hard usage! Now observe,

1. How Job describes it, and what construction he puts upon their discourses with him. He looks upon himself as basely abused by them. 1st. They abused him with their foul censures, condemning him as an ill man, justly reduced thus, and exposed to contempt; ver. 2, They are mockers that deride my calamities, and insult over me because I am thus brought low. They are so with me, abusing me to my face, pretending friendship in their visit, but intending mischief. I cannot get clear of them, they are continually tearing me; and they will not be wrought upon, either by reason or pity, to let fall the prosecution. 2nd. They abused him too with their fair promises, for in them they did but banter him; he reckons them, ver. 5, among those that speak flattery to their friends. They all came to mourn with him; Eliphaz began with a commendation of him, *ch.* iv. 3. They had all promised him how happy he should be if he would take their advice; now all this he looked upon as flattery, and designed to vex him so much the more. All this he calls their provocation, ver. 2. They did what they could to provoke him, and then condemned him for his resentment of it; but he thinks himself excusable when his eye continued thus in their provocation: it never ceased, and he could never look off it. Note, The unkindness of those that trample upon their friends in affliction, that banter and abuse them then, is enough to try, if not to tire, the patience even of Job himself.

2. How he condemns it. 1st. It was a sign that "God had hid their heart from understanding," ver. 4, and that in this matter they were infatuated, and their wonted wisdom was departed from them. Wisdom is a gift of God, which he grants to some and withholds from others; grants at some times and withholds at other times. Those that are void of compassion are so far void of understanding. Where there is not the tenderness of a man, one may question whether there be the understanding of a man. 2nd. It would be a lasting reproach and diminution to them; "Therefore shalt thou not exalt them." Those are certainly kept back from honour whose hearts are hid from understanding. When God befools men, he will abase them. Sure they who discover so little acquaintance with the methods of Providence shall not have the honour of deciding this controversy! That is reserved for a man of better sense and better temper; such a one as Elihu afterwards appeared to be. 3rd. It would entail a curse upon their families. He that thus violates the sacred laws of friendship forfeits the benefit of it, not only for himself, but for his posterity. "Even the eyes of his children shall fail;" and, when they look for succour and comfort from their own and their father's friends, they shall look in vain as I have done, and be as much disappointed as I am in you. Note, Those that wrong their neighbours may prove to wrong their own children more than they are aware of.

3. How he appeals from them to God; ver. 3, "Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee;" that is, Let me be assured that God will take the hearing and determining of the cause into his own hands, and I desire no more. Let some or other engage for God to bring on this matter. Thus they whose hearts condemn them not have confidence towards God, and can with humble and believing boldness beg of him to search and try them. Some make Job here to glance upon the mediation of Christ; for he speaks of a surety with God, without whom he durst not appear before God, nor try his cause at his bar; for, though his friends' accusations of him were utterly false, yet he could not justify himself before God but in a mediator. Our English Annotations give this reading of the verse, 'Appoint, I pray thee, my surety with thee,' namely, Christ, who is with thee in heaven, and hath undertaken to be my surety; let him plead my cause and stand up for me, and "who is he then that will strike upon mine hand?" that is, who dares then contend with me? who shall lay any thing to my charge if Christ be an advocate for me? *Rom.* viii. 32, 33. Christ is the surety of the better testament, *Heb.* vii. 22, a surety of God's appointing; and, if he undertake for us, we need not fear what can be done against us.

Thirdly. The good use which the righteous should make of Job's afflictions, both from God, from his enemies, and from his friends, ver. 8, 9. Observe here,

1. How the saints are described. 1st. They are upright men, honest and sincere, and that act from a steady principle, with a single eye. This was Job's own character, *ch.* i. 1; and probably he speaks of such upright men especially as had been his intimates and associates. 2nd. They are the innocent; not perfectly so, but it is what they aim at, and press towards. Sincerity is evangelical innocency; and they that are upright are said to be innocent from the great transgression, *Ps.* xix. 13. 3rd. They are the righteous, who walk in the way of righteousness. 4th. They have clean hands, kept clean from the gross pollutions of sin, and when spotted with infirmities washed with innocency, *Ps.* xxvi. 6.

2. How they should be affected with the account of Job's troubles. Great inquiry no doubt would be made concerning him, and every one would speak of him and his case, and what use will good people make of it?

1st. It will amaze them; "Upright men shall be astonied at this." They will wonder to hear that so good a man as Job should be so grievously afflicted, both in body, name, and estate; that God should lay his hand so heavy upon him, and that his friends, who ought to have comforted him, should add to his grief; that such a remarkable saint should be such a remarkable sufferer, and so useful a man laid aside in the midst of his usefulness. What shall we say to these things? Upright men, though satisfied in general that God is wise and holy in all he doth, yet cannot but be astonished at such dispensations of Providence; paradoxes which will not be unfolded till the mystery of God shall be finished.

2nd. It will animate them. Instead of being deterred from, and discouraged in, the service of God by the hard usage which this faithful servant of God met with, they shall be so much the more emboldened to proceed and persevere in it. That which was St. Paul's care, 1 *Thes.* iii. 3, was Job's, that no good man should be moved either from his holiness or his comfort by these afflictions; that none should for the sake hereof think the worse of the ways or work of God. And that which was St. Paul's comfort was his too, that the brethren in the Lord would wax confident by his bonds, *Phil.* i. 14. They would hereby be animated,

First. To oppose sin, and to confront the corrupt and pernicious inferences which evil men would draw from Job's sufferings, as that God has forsaken the earth, that it is in vain to serve him, and the like. "The innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite;" will not bear to hear this, *Rev.* ii. 2, but will withstand him to his face; will stir up himself to search into the meaning of such providences, and study these hard chapters that he may read them readily; will stir up himself to maintain religion's just but injured cause against all its opposers. Note, The boldness of the attacks which profane people make upon religion should sharpen the courage and resolution of its friends and advocates. It is time to stir when proclamation is made in the gate of the camp, "Who is on the Lord's side?" When vice is daring, it is no time for virtue to be sneaking.

Secondly. To persevere in religion. "The righteous, instead of drawing back, or so much as starting back, at this frightful spectacle, or standing still to deliberate whether he should proceed or no, (allude to 2 *Sam.* ii. 23,) "shall" with so much the more constancy and resolution "hold on his way," and press forward. Though in me he foresees bonds and afflictions abide him, yet none of those things shall move him, *Acts* xx. 24. Those who keep their eye upon heaven as their end, will keep their feet in the paths of religion as their way, whatever difficulties and discouragements they meet with in it.

Thirdly. In order thereunto to grow in grace. He will not only hold on his way notwithstanding, but will grow "stronger and stronger;" and by the sight of other good men's trials, and the experience of his own, he will be made more vigorous and lively in his duty, more warm and affectionate, more resolute and undaunted; and the worse others are, the better he will be. That which dismays others heartens him. The blustering wind makes the traveller gather his cloak the closer about him, and gird it the faster. They that are truly wise and good will be continually growing wiser and better. Proficiency in religion is a good sign of sincerity in it.

10 But as for you all, do ye return, and come now:
For I cannot find *one* wise *man* among you.
11 My days are past,
My purposes are broken off,
Even the thoughts of my heart.
12 They change the night into day:
The light *is* short because of darkness.
13 If I wait, the grave *is* mine house:
I have made my bed in the darkness.

14 I have said to corruption, Thou *art* my father:
To the worm, *Thou art* my mother, and my sister.
15 And where *is* now my hope?
As for my hope, who shall see it?
16 They shall go down to the bars of the pit,
When *our* rest together *is* in the dust.

Job's friends had pretended to comfort him with the hopes of his return to a prosperous estate again; now here he shews,

First. That it was their folly to talk so; ver. 10, "Return, and come now," be convinced that you are in an error, and let me persuade you to be of my mind, for "I cannot find one wise man among you," that knows how to explain the difficulties of God's providence, or how to apply the consolations of his promises. Those do not go wisely about the work of comforting the afflicted who fetch their comforts from the possibility of their recovery and enlargement in this world, though that is not to be despaired of; but at the best it is uncertain, and if it should fail, as perhaps it may, the comfort built upon it will fail too. It is therefore our wisdom to comfort ourselves and others in distress with that which will not fail, the promise of God, his love and grace, and a well-grounded hope of eternal life.

Secondly. That it would be much more his folly to heed them; for,

1. All his measures were already broken, and he was full of confusion, ver. 11, 12. He owns he had in his prosperity often pleased himself, both with projects of what he should do, and prospects of what he should enjoy; but now he looked upon his days as past, and drawing towards a period, all those purposes were broken off, and those expectations dashed. He had had thoughts about enlarging his border, increasing his stock, and settling his children, and many pious thoughts, it is likely, of promoting religion in his country, redressing grievances, reforming the profane, relieving the poor, and raising funds perhaps for charitable uses; but all these thoughts of his heart were now at an end, and he should never have the satisfaction of seeing his designs effected. Note, The period of our days will be the period of all our contrivances and hopes for this world; but, if with full purpose of heart we cleave to the Lord, death will not break off that purpose. Job being thus put upon new counsels was under a constant uneasiness, ver. 12. The thoughts of his heart being broken, they changed the night into day and shortened the light. Some, in their vanity and riot, turn night into day, and day into night; but Job did so through trouble and anguish of spirit, which was a hindrance, 1st. To the repose of the night; keeping his eyes waking, so that the night was as wearisome to him as the day, and the tosses of the night tired him as much as the toils of the day. 2nd. To the entertainments of the day. The light of the morning is welcome, but by reason of his inward darkness the comfort of it is soon gone, and the day is to me as dismal as the black and dark night, *Deu.* xxviii. 67. See what reason we have to be thankful for that health and ease which enables us to welcome both the shadows of the evening and the light of the morning.

2. All his expectations from this world would very shortly be buried in the grave with him; so that it was a jest for him to think of such mighty things as they had flattered him with the hopes of, *ch.* iv. 19; viii. 21; xi. 17: Alas, you do but make a fool of me.

1st. He saw himself just dropping into the grave. A convenient house, an easy bed, and agreeable relations, are some of those things which we take satisfaction in in this world. Job expected not any of these above ground; all he felt, and all he had in view, was unpleasing and disagreeable; but under ground he expected them.

First. He counted upon no house but the grave; ver. 13, If I wait, if there be any place where I shall ever be easy again, it must be in the grave. I should deceive myself if I should count upon any outlet from my trouble but what death will give me. Nothing so sure as that. Note, In all our prosperity it is good to keep death in prospect. Whatever we expect, let us be sure to expect that; for that may prevent other things we expect, but nothing will prevent that. But see how he endeavours, not only to reconcile himself to the grave, but to recommend it to himself; It is my house. The grave is a house; to the wicked it is a prison house, *ch.* xxiv. 19, 20; to the godly it is Bethabara,—'a passage house' in their way home. It is my house; mine by descent, I am born to it, it is my father's house; mine by purchase, I have made myself obnoxious to it. We must, every one of us, shortly remove to this house, and it is our wisdom to provide accordingly; let us think of flitting, and send before to our long home.

Secondly. He counted upon no quiet bed but in the darkness; There, saith he, "I have made my bed." It is made, for it is ready, and I am just going to it. The grave is a bed; for we shall rest in it in the evening of our day on earth, and rise from it in the morning of our everlasting day, *Isa.* lvii. 2. Let this make good people willing to die, it is but going to bed. They are weary and sleepy, and it is time they were in their beds; why should they not go willingly when their Father calls? Nay, "I have made my bed," by preparation for it; have endeavoured to make it easy, by keeping conscience pure, by seeing Christ lying in this bed, and so turning it into a bed of spices, and by looking beyond it to the resurrection.

Thirdly. He counted upon no agreeable relations but what he had in the grave; ver. 14, "I have cried to corruption," that is, to the grave, where the body will corrupt, "Thou art my father," for our bodies were formed out of the earth; and "to the worms" there, "Ye are my mother and my sister," to whom I am allied, for man is a worm, and with whom I must be conversant, for the worms shall cover us, *ch.* xxi. 26. Job complained that his kindred were estranged from him, *ch.* xix. 13, 14; therefore here he claims acquaintance with other relations, that would stick to him when those disowned him. Note, 1*st.* We are all of us near akin to corruption and the worms. 2*nd.* It is, therefore, good to make ourselves familiar with them, by conversing much with them in our thoughts and meditations, which would very much help us above the inordinate love of life and fear of death.

2nd. He saw all his hopes from this world dropping into the grave with him; ver. 15, 16, Seeing I must shortly leave the world, "where is now my hope?" How can I expect to prosper, who do not expect to live? He is not hopeless, but his hope is not there where they would have it be. If in this life only he had hope, he were of all men most miserable. No; "as for my hope," that hope which I comfort and support myself with, "who shall see it?" It is something out of sight that I hope for, not things that are seen, that are temporal, but things not seen, that are eternal. What is his hope he will tell us, *ch.* xix. 25. *Non est mortale quod opto, immortale peto*,—'I seek not for that which perishes, but for that which abideth for ever.' But as for the hopes you would buoy me up with, they shall go down with me to the bars of the pit. You are dying men, and cannot make good your promises; I am a dying man, and cannot enjoy the good you promise: seeing, therefore, our rest will be together in the dust, let us all lay aside the thoughts of this world, and set our hearts upon another. We must shortly be in the dust, for dust we are, dust and ashes in the pit, under "the bars of the pit;" held fast there, never to loose the bands of death till the general resurrection. But we shall rest there, we shall rest together there. Job and his friends could not agree now, but they will both be quiet in the grave; the dust of that will shortly stop their mouths, and put an end to the controversy. Let the foresight of this cool the heat of all contenders, and moderate the disputers of this world.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In this chapter Bildad makes a second assault upon Job. In his first discourse, *ch.* viii., he had given him encouragement to hope that all should yet be well with him; but here, not a word of that: he is grown more peevish, and is so far from being convinced by Job's reasonings that he is but more exasperated. I. He sharply reproves Job as haughty, and passionate, and obstinate in his opinion, ver. 1—4. II. He enlargeth upon the doctrine he had before maintained, concerning the misery of wicked people, and the ruin that attends them, ver. 5—21. In which he seems all along to have an eye to Job's complaints of the miserable condition he was in, that he was in the dark, bewildered, ensnared, terrified, and hastening out of the world. Why this, saith Bildad, is the condition of a wicked man, and therefore thou art one.

THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
2 How long *will it be ere* ye make an end of words?
Mark, and afterwards we will speak.
3 Wherefore are we counted as beasts,
And reputed vile in your sight?
4 He teareth himself in his anger:
Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?
And shall the rock be removed out of his place?

Bildad here shoots his arrows, even bitter words, against poor Job, little thinking that, though he was a wise and good man, yet in this instance he was serving Satan's design in adding to his affliction.

First. He charges him with idle, endless talk, as Eliphaz had done, *ch.* xv. 2, 3; "How long will it be ere ye make an end of words?" ver. 2. Here he reflects not only upon Job himself, but either upon all the managers of the conference, thinking, perhaps, that Eliphaz and Zophar did not speak so close to the purpose as they might have done, or upon some that were present, who possibly took part with Job, and put in a word now and then in his favour, though it be not recorded. Bildad was weary of hearing others speak, and impatient till it came to his turn, which cannot be observed to any man's praise, for we ought to be swift to hear and slow to speak. It is common for contenders to monopolize the reputation of wisdom, and then to insist upon it as their privilege to be dictators. How unbecoming that is in others every one can see, but few that are guilty of it can see it in themselves. Time was when Job had the last word in all debates; *ch.* xxix. 22, "After my words they spake not again." Then he was in power and prosperity; but, now he was impoverished and brought low, he could scarce be allowed to speak at all, and every thing he said was as much vilified as formerly it had been magnified. "Wisdom," therefore, as the world goes, "is good with an inheritance," *Eccl.* vii. 11; for "the poor man's wisdom is despised," and because he is poor "his words are not heard," *Eccl.* ix. 16.

Secondly. With a regardlessness of what was said to him, intimated in that, "Mark, and afterwards we will speak." And it is to no purpose to speak, though what is said be never so much to the purpose, if those to whom it is spoken will not mark and observe it. Let the ear be opened to hear as the learned, and then the tongues of the learned will do good service, *Isa.* l. 4, and not otherwise. It is an encouragement to those that speak of the things of God to see the hearers attentive.

Thirdly. With a haughty contempt and disdain of his friends, and of that which they offered; ver. 3, "Wherefore are we counted as beasts?" This was invidious. Job had indeed called them mockers, had represented them both as unwise and as unkind, wanting both in the reason and tenderness of men; but he did not count them beasts, yet Bildad so represents it, 1. Because his high spirit resented what Job had said, as if it had been the greatest affront imaginable. Proud men are apt to think themselves slighted more than really they are. 2. Because his hot spirit was willing to find a pretence to be hard upon Job. Those that incline to be severe upon others will have it thought that they have first been so upon them.

Fourthly. With outrageous passion; "He teareth himself in his anger," ver. 4. Herein he seems to reflect upon what Job had said, *ch.* xiii. 14, "Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth?" It is thine own fault, saith Bildad; or upon what he said, *ch.* xvi. 9, where he seemed to charge it upon God, or, as some think, upon Eliphaz, "He teareth me in his wrath;" No, saith Bildad, thou alone shalt bear it. "He teareth himself in his anger." Note, Anger is a sin that is its own punishment. Fretful, passionate people tear and torment themselves. He teareth his soul, so the word is; every sin wounds the soul, tears that, wrongs that, *Pr.* viii. 36; unbridled passion particularly.

Fifthly. With a proud and arrogant expectation to give law even to Providence itself; "Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?" No, sure, there is no reason for that, that the course of nature should be changed, and the settled rules of government violated to gratify the humour of one man. Job, dost thou think the world cannot stand without thee? but that, if thou art ruined, all the world is ruined and forsaken with thee? Some make it a reproof of Job's justification of himself, falsely insinuating that either Job was a wicked man or we must deny a Providence, and suppose that God has forsaken the earth, and the Rock of ages is removed. It is rather a just reproof of his passionate complaints. When we quarrel with the events of Providence, we forget that whatever befalls us it is, 1. According to the eternal purpose and counsel of God. 2. According to the written Word. Thus it is written, that in the world we must have tribulation; that, since we sin daily, we must expect to smart for it. And, 3. According to the usual way and custom, the track of Providence, nothing but what is common to men; and to expect that God's counsels should change, his method alter, and his Word fail to please us, is as absurd and unreasonable as to think that "the earth should be forsaken for us, and the rock removed out of its place."

5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out,
And the spark of his fire shall not shine.
6 The light shall be dark in his tabernacle,
And his candle shall be put out with him.

7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened,
And his own counsel shall cast him down.
8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet,
And he walketh upon a snare.
9 The gin shall take *him* by the heel,
And the robber shall prevail against him.
10 The snare *is* laid for him in the ground,
And a trap for him in the way.

The rest of Bildad's discourse is entirely taken up in an elegant description of the miserable condition of a wicked man, in which there is a great deal of certain truth, and which will be of excellent use if duly considered; that a sinful condition is a sad condition, and that iniquity will be men's ruin if they do not repent of it. But, 1. It is not true that all wicked people are visibly and openly made thus miserable in this world; nor, 2. That all who are brought into great distress and trouble in this world are therefore to be deemed and adjudged wicked men, though no other proof appears against them; and therefore, though Bildad thought the application of it to Job was easy, yet it was not safe, nor just. In these verses we have,

First. The destruction of the wicked foreseen and foretold, under the similitude of darkness; ver. 5, 6, "Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out." Even his light, the best and brightest part of him, shall be put out; even that which he rejoiced in shall fail him. Or, the "Yea" may refer to Job's complaints of the great distress he was in, and the darkness he should shortly make his bed in. "Yea," saith Bildad, so it is; thou art clouded, and straitened, and made miserable, and no better could be expected, for "the light of the wicked shall be put out," and therefore thine shall. Observe here, 1. The wicked may have some light for a while, some pleasure, some joy, some hope within, as well as wealth, and honour, and power without. But his light is but a spark, ver. 5, a little thing, and soon extinguished. It is but a candle, ver. 6, wasting and burning down, and easily blown out. It is not the light of the Lord, that is sun-light, but the light of his own fire, and sparks of his own kindling, *Isa.* l. 11. That light will certainly be put out at length, quite put out, so that not the least spark of it shall remain with which to kindle another fire. Even while he is in his tabernacle, while he is in the body, which is the tabernacle of the soul, 2 *Cor.* v. 1, the light shall be dark, he shall have no true, solid comfort, no joy that is satisfying, no hope that is supporting; even the light that is in him is darkness, and how great is that darkness! But, when he is put out of this tabernacle by death, "his candle shall be put out with him." The period of his life will be the final period of all his days, and will turn all his hopes into endless despair. "When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish," *Pr.* xi. 7. "He shall lie down in sorrow."

Secondly. The preparatives for that destruction represented under the similitude of a beast or bird caught in a snare, or a malefactor arrested and taken into custody, in order to his punishment, ver. 7—10.

1. Satan is preparing for his destruction. He is "the robber that shall prevail against him," ver 9; for, as he was a murderer, so was he a robber from the beginning. He, as the tempter, lays snares for sinners in the way, wherever they go, and he shall prevail. If he make them sinful like himself, he will make them miserable like himself. He "hunts for the precious life."

2. He is himself preparing for his own destruction, by going on in sin, and so treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. God gives him up, as he deserves and desires, to his own counsels, and then his own counsels cast him down, ver. 7. His sinful projects and pursuits bring him to one mischief or other. He is "cast into a net by his own feet," ver. 8; runs upon his own destruction, is "snared in the work of his own hands," *Ps.* ix. 16; his "own tongue falls upon him," *Ps.* lxiv. 8. "In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare."

3. God is preparing for his destruction. The sinner, by his sin, is preparing the fuel, and then God, by his wrath, is preparing the fire. See here, 1st. How the sinner is infatuated to run himself into the snare; and whom God will destroy he befools. 2nd. How he is embarrassed. "The steps of his strength," his mighty designs and efforts, "shall be straitened," so that he shall not compass what he intended; and the more he strives to extricate himself the more will he be entangled. Evil men wax worse and worse. 3rd. How he is secured and kept from outrunning the judgments of God that are in pursuit of him; "The gin shall take him by the heel." He can no more escape the Divine wrath that is in pursuit of him than a man so held can flee from the pursuer. "God knows how to reserve the wicked for the day of judgment," 2 *Pet.* ii. 9.

11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side,
And shall drive him to his feet.
12 His strength shall be hungerbitten,
And destruction *shall be* ready at his side.
13 It shall devour the strength of his skin:
Even the firstborn of death shall devour his strength.
14 His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle,
And it shall bring him to the king of terrors.
15 It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because *it is* none of his:
Brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.
16 His roots shall be dried up beneath,
And above shall his branch be cut off.
17 His remembrance shall perish from the earth,
And he shall have no name in the street.
18 He shall be driven from light into darkness,
And chased out of the world.
19 He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people,
Nor any remaining in his dwellings.
20 They that come after *him* shall be astonied at his day,
As they that went before were affrighted.
21 Surely such *are* the dwellings of the wicked,
And this *is* the place *of him that* knoweth not God.

Bildad here describes the destruction itself which wicked people are reserved for in the other world, and which in some degree often seizeth them in this world. Come, and see what a miserable condition the sinner is in when his day comes to fall.

First. See him disheartened and weakened by continual terrors arising from the sense of his own guilt and the dread of God's wrath; ver. 11, 12, "Terrors shall make him afraid on every side." The terrors of his own conscience shall haunt him so that he shall never be easy; wherever he goes these shall dog him, which way soever he looks these shall stare him in the face. It will make him tremble to see himself fought against by the whole creation; to see Heaven frowning on him, hell gaping for him, and earth sick of him. He that carries his own accuser and his own tormentor always in his bosom cannot but be afraid on every side. This will drive him to his feet, like the malefactor, who, being conscious of his guilt, takes to his heels, and flies for the same, "flees when none pursues," *Pr.* xxviii. 1. But his feet will do him no service, they are fast in the snare, ver. 9. The sinner may as soon overpower the Divine omnipotence as overrun the Divine omniscience, *Am.* ix. 2, 3.

No marvel for the sinner to be dispirited and distracted with fear; for, 1. He sees his ruin approaching, "Destruction shall be ready at his side," to seize him whenever justice gives the word, so that he is brought into desolation in a moment, *Ps.* lxxiii. 19. 2. He feels himself utterly unable to grapple with it, either to escape it, or to bear up under it. That which he relied upon as his strength, his wealth, power, pomp, friends, and the hardiness of his own spirit, shall fail him in the time of need, and be hunger-bitten; that is, it shall do him no more service than a famished man pining away for hunger would do in work or war. The case being thus with him, no marvel that he is a terror to himself. Note, The way of sin is a way of fear, and leads to everlasting confusion, which the present terrors of an impure and unpacified conscience are earnests of, as they were to Cain and Judas.

Secondly. See him devoured and swallowed up by a miserable death; and miserable indeed a wicked man's death is, how secure and jovial soever his life was.

1. See him dying; arrested by "the firstborn of death," some disease, or some stroke that has in it a more than ordinary resemblance of death itself,—so great a death, as it is called, 2 *Cor.* i. 10; a messenger of death that has in it an uncommon strength and terror,—weakened by the harbingers of death, which "devour the strength of his skin;" that is, it shall bring rottenness into his bones, and consume them. "His confidence shall then be rooted out of his tabernacle," ver. 14; that is, all that he trusted to for his support shall be taken from him, and he shall have nothing to rely upon, no, not his own tabernacle. His own soul was his confidence; but that shall be rooted out of the tabernacle of the body, as a tree that cumbered the ground. "Thy soul shall be required of thee."

2. See him dead, and see his case then with an eye of faith. 1st. He is then "brought to the king of terrors." He was surrounded with terrors while he lived, ver. 11, and death was the king of all those terrors. They fought against the sinner in death's name, for it is by reason of death that sinners are all their lifetime subject to bondage, *Heb.* ii. 15; and at length they will be brought to that which they so long feared, as a captive to the conqueror. Death is terrible to nature,—our Saviour himself prayed, "Father, save me from this hour;" but to the wicked it is in a special manner the king of terrors, both as it is a period to that life in which they placed their happiness, and a passage to that life where they will find their endless misery. How happy, then, are the saints, and how much indebted to the Lord Jesus, by whom death is so far abolished, and the property of it altered, that this king of terrors is become a friend and servant! 2nd. He is then "driven from light into darkness," ver. 18. From the light of this world, and his prosperous condition in it, into darkness, the darkness of the grave, the darkness of hell; into utter darkness, never to see light, *Ps.* xlix. 19, not the least gleam, nor any hopes of it. 3rd. He is then "chased out of the world," hurried and dragged away by the messengers of death, sore against his will; chased as Adam out of Paradise, for the world is his Paradise. It intimates that he would fain stay here, he is loath to depart, but go he must. All the world is weary of him, and therefore chaseth him out, as glad to be rid of him. This is death to a wicked man.

Thirdly. See his family sunk and cut off, ver. 15. The wrath and curse of God light and lie not only upon his head and heart, but upon his house too, to consume it with the timber and stones thereof, *Zec.* v. 4. Death itself shall dwell in his tabernacle, and, having expelled him, shall take possession of his house, to the terror and destruction of all that he leaves behind; even the dwelling shall be ruined for the sake of its owner, "brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation," rained upon it as upon Sodom, to the destruction of which this seems to have reference. And some think he here upbraids Job with the burning of his sheep and servants with fire from heaven. The reason is here given why his tabernacle is thus marked for ruin, "because it is none of his;" that is, it was unjustly got, and kept from the rightful owner, and therefore, let him not expect either the comfort or the continuance of it.

His children shall perish, either with him or after him, ver. 16. So that, "his roots" being in his own person "dried up beneath, above his branch" (every child of his family) "shall be cut off." Thus the houses of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Ahab were cut off; none that descended from them were left alive. They who take root in the earth may expect it will thus be dried up; but, if we be rooted in Christ, even our leaf shall not wither, much less shall our branch be cut off. Those who consult the true honour of their family, and the welfare of its branches, will be afraid of withering it by sin. The extirpation of the sinner's family is mentioned again, ver. 19, "He shall neither have son nor nephew," child nor grandchild, to enjoy his estate and bear up his name, nor shall there be any remaining in his dwelling akin to him. Sin entails a curse upon posterity, and the iniquity of the fathers is often visited upon the children. Herein also, it is probable, Bildad reflects upon the death of Job's children and servants, as a farther proof of his being a wicked man, whereas all that are written childless are not thereby written graceless; there is a name better than that of sons and daughters.

Fourthly. See his memory buried with him, or made odious. He shall either be forgotten or spoken of with dishonour; ver. 17, "His remembrance shall perish from the earth," and if it perish from thence it perisheth wholly, for it was never written in heaven, as the names of the saints are, *Lu.* x. 20. All his honour shall be laid and lost in the dust, or stained with perpetual infamy, so that "he shall have no name in the street," departing without being desired. Thus the judgments of God follow him after death in this world, as an indication of the misery his soul is in after death, and an earnest of that everlasting shame and contempt to which he shall rise in the great day. "The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot," *Pr.* x. 7.

Fifthly. See a universal amazement at his fall, ver. 20. They that see it are affrighted, so sudden is the change, so dreadful the execution, so threatening to all about him. And "they that come after," and hear the report of it, are

astonished at it; their ears are made to tingle, and their hearts to tremble, and they cry out, Lord, "how terrible art thou in thy judgments!" A place or person utterly ruined is said to be made an astonishment, *Deu.* xxviii. 37; 2 *Chr.* vii. 21; *Jer.* xxv. 9, 18. Horrible sins bring strange punishments.

Lastly. See all this averred as the unanimous sense of the patriarchal age, grounded upon their knowledge of God, and their many observations of his providence; ver. 21, "Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked," and "this is the place," this the condition, "of him that knows not God!" See here what is the beginning and what is the end of the wickedness of this wicked world. 1. The beginning of it is ignorance of God, and it is a wilful ignorance, for there is that to be known of him which is sufficient to leave them for ever inexcusable. They know not God, and then they go all to nought; Pharaoh knows not the Lord, and therefore will not obey his voice. 2. The end of it, and that is utter destruction. Such, so miserable, are the dwellings of the wicked. Vengeance will be taken of those that know not God, 2 *Thess.* i. 8; for those whom he has not honour from he will get him honour upon. Let us, therefore, stand in awe, and not sin, for it will certainly be bitterness in the latter end.

CHAPTER XIX.

This chapter is Job's answer to Bildad's discourse in the foregoing chapter. Though his spirit was grieved and much heated, and Bildad was very peevish, yet he gave him leave to say all he designed to say, and did not break in upon him in the midst of his argument; but, when he had done, gave him a fair answer, in which, I. He complains of unkind usage. And very unkindly he takes it, 1. That his comforters added to his affliction, ver. 2—7; 2. That his God was the author of his affliction, ver. 8—12; 3. That his relations and friends were strange to him, and shy of him in his affliction, ver. 13—19; 4. That he had no compassion shewed him in his affliction, ver. 20—22. II. He comforts himself with the believing hopes of happiness in the other world, though he had so little comfort in this, making a very solemn confession of his faith, with a desire it might be recorded as an evidence of his sincerity, ver. 23—27. III. He concludes with a caution to his friends not to persist in their hard censures of him, ver. 28, 29. If the remonstrance Job here makes of his grievances may serve sometimes to justify our complaints, yet his cheerful views of the future state, at the same time, may shame us Christians, and may serve to silence our complaints, or, at least, to balance them.

THEN Job answered and said,

2 How long will ye vex my soul,
And break me in pieces with words?
3 These ten times have ye reproached me: [me.
Ye are not ashamed *that* ye make yourselves strange to
4 And be it indeed *that* I have erred,
Mine error remaineth with myself.
5 If indeed ye will magnify *yourselves* against me,
And plead against me my reproach:
6 Know now that God hath overthrown me,
And hath compassed me with his net.
7 Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard:
I cry aloud, but *there is* no judgment.

Job's friends had passed a very severe censure upon him as a wicked man, because he was so grievously afflicted; now here he tells them how ill he took it to be so censured. Bildad had twice began with a "How long," *ch.* xviii. 2; and therefore Job, being now to answer him particularly, begins with a "How long" too, ver. 2. What is not liked is commonly thought long; but Job had more reason to think them long who assaulted him than they had to think him long who only vindicated himself. Better cause may be shewn for defending ourselves, if we have right on our side, than for offending our brethren, though we have right on our side. Now observe here,

First. How he describes their unkindness to him, and what account he gives of it. 1. They vexed his soul, and that is more grievous than the vexation of the bones, *Ps.* vi. 2, 3. They were his friends; they came to comfort him, pretended to counsel him for the best; but with a great deal of gravity, and affectation of wisdom and piety, they set themselves to rob him of the only comfort he had now left him in a good God, a good conscience, and a good name; and this vexed him to the heart. 2. They broke him in pieces with words; and those were hard words sure, and very cruel ones, that would break a man to pieces. They grieved him, and so broke him; and, therefore, there will be a reckoning hereafter for all the hard speeches spoken against Christ and his people, *Jude* 15. 3. They reproached him, ver. 3; gave him an ill character, put him into an ill name, and laid to his charge things that he knew not. To an ingenuous mind reproach is a cutting thing. 4. They made themselves strange to him; were shy of him now he was in his troubles, took on them, they did not know him, *ch.* ii. 12, were not free with him as they used to be when he was in his prosperity. Those are governed by the spirit of the world, and not by any principles of true honour or love, who make themselves strange to their friends, or God's friends, when they are in trouble. A friend loves at all times. 5. They not only estranged themselves from him, but magnified themselves against him, ver. 5; not only looked shy of him, but looked big upon him, and insulted over him, magnifying themselves to depress him. It is a mean thing,—it is an ill thing,—thus to trample upon those that are down. 6. They pleaded against him his reproach; that is, they made use of his affliction as an argument against him, to prove him a wicked man. They should have pleaded for him his integrity, and helped him to take the comfort of that under his affliction, and so have pleaded that against his reproach, as St. Paul, 2 *Cor.* i. 12; but, instead of that, they pleaded his reproach against his integrity, which was not only unkind, but very unjust; for where shall we find an honest man, if reproach may be admitted for a plea against him?

Secondly. How he aggravates their unkindness. 1. They had thus abused him often; ver. 3, "These ten times ye have reproached me," that is, very often, as *Gen.* xxxi. 7; *Num.* xiv. 22. Five times they had spoken, and every speech was a double reproach. He spoke as if he had kept a particular account of their reproaches, and could tell just how many they were; and it is but a peevish and unfriendly thing to do so, and looks like a design of retaliation and revenge. We better befriend our own peace by forgetting injuries and unkindnesses, than by booking them and scoring them up. 2. They continued still to do it, and seemed resolved to persist in it. How long will ye do it? ver. 2, 5. I see you will magnify yourselves against me, notwithstanding all I have said in mine own justification. Many times those that speak too much yet never think they have said enough; and when the mouth is opened in passion the ear is shut to reason. 3. They were not ashamed of what they did, ver. 3. They had reason to be ashamed of their hard-heartedness, so ill becoming men,—and their uncharitableness, so ill becoming good men,—and their deceitfulness, so ill becoming friends. But were they ashamed? No; though they were told of it again and again, yet they could not blush.

Thirdly. How he answers their harsh censures, by shewing them that what they condemned was capable of excuse, which they ought to have considered.

1. The errors of his judgment were excusable; ver. 4, "Be it indeed that I have erred," that I am in the wrong through ignorance or mistake, which may well be supposed concerning men, concerning good men, *humanum est errare*,—'error cleaves to humanity,' and we must be willing to suppose it concerning ourselves. It is folly to think ourselves infallible. But be it so, saith Job, "mine error remaineth with myself," that is, I speak according to the best of my judgment, with all sincerity, and not from a spirit of contradiction. Or, if I be in an error, I keep it to myself, and do not impose it upon others as you do; I only prove myself and my own work by it; I meddle not with other people, either to teach them or to judge them. Men's errors are the more excusable if they keep them to themselves, and do not disturb others with them. "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself." Some give this sense of these words: 'If I be in an error, it is I that must smart for it, and therefore you need not concern yourselves. Nay, it is I that do smart, and smart severely for it, and therefore you need not add to my misery by your reproaches.'

2. The breakings out of his passion, though not justifiable, yet were excusable, considering the vastness of his grief, and the extremity of his misery. If you will go on to cavil at every complaining word I speak,—will make the worst of it, and improve it against me,—yet take the cause of the complaint along with you, and weigh that before you pass a judgment upon the complaint, and turn it to my reproach. "Know then that God has overcome me," ver. 6. Three things he would have them consider: 1st. That his trouble was very great. He was overthrown, and could not help himself; enclosed as in a net, and could not get out. 2nd. That God was the author of it, and that in it he fought against him. It was his hand that overthrew me; it is in his net that I am enclosed, and, therefore, you need not appear against me thus; I have enough to do to grapple with God's displeasure, let me not have yours also. Let God's controversy with me be ended for pity, before you begin yours. It is barbarous to persecute him whom God hath smitten, and talk to the grief of one whom he hath wounded, *Ps.* lxix. 26. 3rd. That he could not obtain any hope of the redress of his grievances, ver. 7. He complained of his pain, but got no ease; begged to know the cause of his affliction, but could not discover it; appealed to God's tribunal for the clearing of his innocency, but could not obtain a hearing, much less a judgment, upon his appeal. "I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard." God, for a time, may seem to turn away his ear from his people, to be angry at their prayers, and overlook their appeals to him, and they must be excused if in that case they complain bitterly. Woe unto us if God be against us.

8 He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass,
And he hath set darkness in my paths.
9 He hath stripped me of my glory,
And taken the crown *from* my head.
10 He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone:
And mine hope hath he removed like a tree.
11 He hath also kindled his wrath against me,
And he counteth me unto him as *one of* his enemies.
12 His troops come together,
And raise up their way against me,
And encamp round about my tabernacle.
13 He hath put my brethren far from me,
And mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.
14 My kinsfolk have failed,
And my familiar friends have forgotten me.
15 They that dwell in mine house,
And my maids, count me for a stranger:
I am an alien in their sight.
16 I called my servant, and he gave *me* no answer;
I intreated him with my mouth.
17 My breath is strange to my wife, [body.
Though I intreated for the children's *sake* of mine own
18 Yea, young children despised me;
I arose, and they spake against me.
19 All my inward friends abhorred me:
And they whom I loved are turned against me.
20 My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh,
And I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.
21 Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends;
For the hand of God hath touched me.
22 Why do ye persecute me as God,
And are not satisfied with my flesh?

Bildad had very disingenuously perverted Job's complaints, by making them the description of the miserable condition of a wicked man, and yet he repeats them here to move their pity, and to work upon their good nature, if they had any left in them.

First. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure which he was under, and which infused the wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery. How doleful are the accents of his complaint! ver. 11, "He hath kindled his wrath

against me," which flames and terrifies me, which burns and pains me. What is the fire of hell but the wrath of God? Seared consciences will feel it shortly, but do not fear it now. Enlightened consciences fear it now, but shall not feel it shortly. Job's present apprehension was, that God counted him as one of his enemies; and yet, at the same time, God loved him, and gloried in him as his faithful friend. It is a gross mistake, but a very common one, to think that whom God afflicts he treats as his enemies; whereas, on the contrary, "as many as he loves he rebukes and chastens." It is the discipline of his sons. Which way soever Job looked he thought he saw the tokens of God's displeasure against him.

1. Did he look back upon his former prosperity, he saw God's hand putting an end to that; ver. 9, "He has stripped me of my glory," my wealth, honour, power, and all the opportunity I had of doing good; my children were my glory, but I have lost them; and whatever was a crown to my head he has taken it from me, and has laid all mine honour in the dust. See the vanity of worldly glory; it is what we may be soon stripped of; and whatever strips us we must see and own God's hand in it, and comply with his design.

2. Did he look down upon his present troubles, he saw God giving them their commission, and their orders to attack him. They are his troops, that act by his direction, which encamp against me, ver. 12. It did not so much trouble him that his miseries came upon him in troops as that they were God's troops, in whom it seemed as if God fought against him, and intended his destruction. God's troops encamped round his tabernacle, as soldiers lay siege to a strong city, cutting off all provisions from being brought into it, and battering it continually. Thus was Job's tabernacle besieged. Time was when God's hosts encamped round him for his safety, "Hast thou not made a hedge about him?" Now, on the contrary, they surrounded him to his terror, and destroyed him on every side, ver. 10.

3. Did he look forward for deliverance, he saw the hand of God cutting off all hopes of that; ver. 8, "He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass." I have now no way left to help myself, either to extricate myself out of my troubles, or to ease myself under them. Would I make any motion, take any steps towards deliverance, I find my way hedged up, I cannot do what I would; nay, if I would please myself with the prospect of a deliverance hereafter, I cannot do it; it is not only out of my reach, but out of my sight; God hath set darkness in my paths, and there is none to tell me how long, *Ps.* lxxiv. 9. He concludes, ver. 10, I am gone, quite lost and undone for this world; "my hope hath he removed like a tree," cut down, or plucked up by the roots, which will never grow again. Hope, in this life, is a perishing thing; but the hope of good men, when it is cut off from this world, is but removed like a tree,—transplanted from this nursery to the garden of the Lord. We shall have no reason to complain if God thus remove our hopes from the sand to the rock,—from things temporal to things eternal.

Secondly. He complains of the unkindness of his relations, and of all his old acquaintance. In this also he owns the hand of God; ver. 13, "He hath put my brethren far from me;" that is, he has laid those afflictions upon me which frighten them from me, and make them stand aloof from my sores. As it was their sin, God was not the author of it,—it is Satan that alienates men's minds from their brethren in affliction; but, as it was Job's trouble, God ordered it for the completing of his trial. As we must eye the hand of God in all the injuries we receive from our enemies,—the Lord has bidden Shimei curse David,—so also in all the slights and unkindnesses we receive from our friends, which will help us to bear them the more patiently. Every creature is that to us (kind or unkind, comfortable or uncomfortable,) which God makes it to be. Yet this doth not excuse Job's relations and friends from the guilt of horrid ingratitude and injustice to him, which he had reason to complain of. Few could have borne it so well as he did. He takes notice of the unkindness,

1. Of his kindred and acquaintance, his neighbours, and such as he had formerly been familiar with, who were bound, by all the laws of friendship and civility, to concern themselves for him, to visit him, and inquire after him, and to be ready to do him all the good offices that lay in their power; yet these were estranged from him, ver. 13; they took no more care about him than if he had been a stranger whom they never knew. His kinsfolk, that called him cousin, and claimed relation to him when he was in prosperity, now failed him; they came short of their former professions of friendship to him, and his present expectations of kindness from them. Even his familiar friends, whom he was mindful of, had now forgotten him; had forgotten both his former friendliness to them, and his present miseries. They had heard of his troubles, and designed him a visit, but truly they forgot it, so little affected were they with it. Nay, his inward friends, the men of his secret, whom he was most intimate with, and laid in his bosom, not only forgot him, but abhorred him, kept as far off him as they could, because he was poor and could not entertain them as he used to do, and because he was sore and a loathsome spectacle. Those whom he loved, and who, therefore, were worse than publicans if they did not love him now he was in distress, not only turned from him, but were turned against him, and did all they could to make him odious, so to justify themselves in being so strange to him, ver. 19. So uncertain is the friendship of men; but, if God be our friend, he will not fail us in a time of need. But let none that pretend either to humanity or Christianity ever use their friends as Job's friends used him. Adversity is the proof of friendship.

2. Of his domestics and family relations. Sometimes, indeed, we find that, beyond our expectation, there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother; but ordinarily the master of a family expects to be attended on, and taken care of, by those of his family, even then when, through weakness of body or mind, he is become despicable to others. But poor Job was misused by his own family, and some of his worst foes were those of his own house. He mentions not his children, they were all dead, and we may suppose that the unkindness of his surviving relations made him lament the death of his children so much the more. If they had been alive, would he think, I should have had comfort in them. As for those that were now about him,

1st. His own servants slighted him. His maids did not attend him in his illness, but "counted him for a stranger and an alien," ver. 15. His other servants never heeded him; if he called to them they would not come at his call, but took on them they did not hear him. If he asked them a question, they would not vouchsafe to give him an answer, ver. 16. Job had been a good master to them, and did not despise their cause when they pleaded with him, *ch.* xxxi. 13, and yet they were rude to him now, and despised his cause when he pleaded with them. We must not think it strange if we receive ill at the hand of those from whom we have deserved well. Though he was now sickly, yet he was not cross with his servants, and imperious, as is too common; but he intreated his servant with his mouth, when he had authority to command, and yet he would not be civil to him, neither kind nor just. Note, Those that are sick and in sorrow are apt to take things ill, and be jealous of a slight, and to lay to heart the least unkindness done to them. When Job was in affliction, even his servants' neglect of him troubled him.

2nd. But one would think, when all forsook him, the wife of his bosom should have been tender of him. No; because he would not curse God and die, as she persuaded him, his breath was strange to her too; she did not care for coming near him, nor took any notice of what he said, ver. 17. Though he spoke to her, not with the authority, but with the tenderness of a husband,—did not command, but entreated her by that conjugal love which their children were the pledges of,—yet she regarded him not. Some read it, 'though I lamented,' or bemoaned myself for the children; that is, for the death of the children of my own body,—an affliction in which she was equally concerned with him. Now it appeared the devil spared her to him not only to be his tempter, but to be his tormenter. By what she said to him at first, "Curse God and die," it appeared she had little religion in her; and what can one expect that is kind and good from those that have not the fear of God before their eyes, and are not governed by conscience?

3rd. Even the little children that were born in his house, the children of his own servants, who were his servants by birth, despised him, and spake against him, ver. 18; though he arose in civility to speak friendly to them, or with authority to check them, they let him know, that they neither feared him nor loved him.

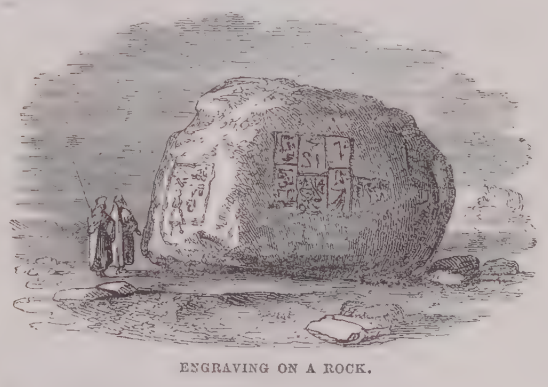
Thirdly. He complains of the decay of his body, all the beauty and strength of that was gone. When those about him slighted him, if he had been in health and at ease, he might have enjoyed himself. But he could take as little pleasure in himself as others took in him; ver. 20, "My bone cleaves" now "to my skin," as formerly it did to my flesh. This was it that filled him with wrinkles, *ch.* xvi. 8; he was a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Nay, his skin too was almost gone; little remained unbroken but the skin of his teeth, his gums, and perhaps his lips, all the rest was fetched off by his sore boils. See what little reason we have to indulge the body, which, after all our care, may be thus consumed by the diseases which it has in itself the seeds of.

Lastly. Upon all these accounts he recommends himself to the compassion of his friends, and justly blames their harshness with him. From this remonstrance of his deplorable case it was easy to infer,

1. That they ought to pity him, ver. 21. This he begs in the most moving, melting language that could be, enough, one would think, to break a heart of stone; "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends." If you will do nothing else for me, be sorry for me, and shew some concern for me; "have pity upon me, for the hand of God hath touched me." My case is sad indeed, for I am fallen into the hands of the living God; my spirit is touched with the sense of his wrath, a calamity of all other the most piteous. Note, It becomes friends to pity one another when they are in any trouble, and not shut up the bowels of compassion.

2. That, however, they ought not to persecute him. If they would not ease his affliction by their pity, yet they must not be so barbarous as to add to it by their censures and reproaches; ver. 22, "Why do ye persecute me as God?" Sure his rebukes are enough for one man to bear; you need not add your wormwood and gall to the cup of affliction he puts into my hand, it is bitter enough without that. God has a sovereign power over me, and may do what he pleaseth with me; but do you think that you may do so too? No, we must aim to be like the Most Holy, and the Most Merciful, but not like the Most High, and Most Mighty. God gives not account of any of his matters, but we must. If they did delight in his calamity, let them be satisfied with his flesh, which was wasted and gone; but let them not, as if that were too little, wound his spirit, and ruin his good name. Great tenderness is owing to those that are in affliction, especially to those that are troubled in mind.

23 Oh that my words were now written!
Oh that they were printed in a book!
24 That they were graven with an iron pen
And lead in the rock for ever!



ENGRAVING ON A ROCK.

25 For I know *that* my redeemer liveth,
And *that* he shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth:
26 And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*,
Yet in my flesh shall I see God:
27 Whom I shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another;
Though my reins be consumed within me.
28 But ye should say, Why persecute we him,
Seeing the root of the matter is found in me?
29 Be ye afraid of the sword:
For wrath *bringeth* the punishments of the sword,
That ye may know *there is* a judgment.

In all the conferences between Job and his friends we do not find any more weighty and considerable lines than these. Would one have expected it? Here is a great deal both of Christ and heaven in these verses; and he that said such things as these declared plainly that he sought the better country; that is, the heavenly, as the patriarchs of that age did, *Heb.* xi. 14. We have here Job's creed, or confession of faith. His belief in God the Father Almighty,

the maker of heaven and earth, and the principles of natural religion, he had often professed; but here we find him no stranger to revealed religion. Though the revelation of the promised Seed, and the promised inheritance, was then but discerned like the dawning of the day, yet Job was taught of God to believe in a living Redeemer, and to look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come, for of these, doubtless, he must be understood; these were the things he comforted himself with the expectation of, and not a deliverance from his trouble, or revival of his happiness in this world, as some would understand him. For, besides that the expressions he here useth of the Redeemer's standing at the latter day upon the earth, of his seeing God, and seeing him for himself, are wretchedly forced if they be understood of any temporal deliverance, it is very plain that he had no expectation at all of his return to a prosperous condition in this world. He had just now said, that his way was fenced up, ver. 8, and his hope removed like a tree, ver. 10. Nay, and after this he expressed his despair of any comfort in this life, *ch.* xxiii. 8, 9; xxx. 23; so that we must necessarily understand him of the redemption of his soul from the power of the grave, and his reception to glory, which is spoken of, *Ps.* xlix. 15. We have reason to think that Job was just now under an extraordinary impulse of the blessed Spirit, which raised him above himself, gave him light, and gave him utterance, even to his own surprise. And some observe, that after this we do not find in Job's discourses such passionate, peevish, unbecoming complaints of God and his providence as we have before met with. This hope quieted his spirit, stilled the storm; and, having here cast anchor within the veil, his mind kept steady from this time forward. Let us observe,

First. To what intent Job makes this confession of his faith here; never did any thing come in more pertinently, or to better purpose. 1. Job was now accused, and this was his appeal. His friends reproached him as a hypocrite, and contemned him as a wicked man; but he appeals to his creed, to his faith, to his hope, and to his own conscience, which not only acquitted him from reigning sin, but comforted him with the expectation of a blessed resurrection; "These are not the words of him that has a devil." He appeals to the coming of the Redeemer; from this wrangle at the bar to the judgment of the bench, even to him to whom all judgment is committed, who he knew would right him. The consideration of God's day coming will make it a very small thing with us to be judged of man's judgment, 1 *Cor.* iv. 3, 4. How easily may we bear the unjust calumnies and reproaches of men while we expect the glorious appearance of our Redeemer and his redeemed at the last day, and that there will then be a resurrection of names as well as bodies. 2. Job was now afflicted, and this was his cordial,—when he was pressed above measure, this kept him from fainting,—he believed that he should "see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;" not in this world, for that is the land of the dying.

Secondly. With what a solemn preface he introduceth it, ver. 23, 24. He breaks off his complaints abruptly to triumph in his comforts, which he doth, not only for his own satisfaction, but for the edification of others. Those now about him he feared would little regard what he said, and so it proved; he therefore wished it might be recorded for the generations to come. "O that my words were now written!" the words I am now about to say; as if he should say, 'I own I have spoken many unadvised words, which I could wish might be forgotten, for they will neither do me credit, nor do others good. But I am now going to speak deliberately, and that which I desire may be published to all the world, and preserved for the generations to come, *in perpetuam rei memoriam*,—'for an abiding memorial,' and therefore that it may be written plain, and printed, or drawn out in large and legible characters, so that he that runs may read it, and that it may not be left in loose papers, but put into a book; or, if that should perish, that it may be engraven like an inscription upon a monument, "with an iron pen in lead," or in the stone; let the engraver use all his art to make it durable, and a lasting appeal to posterity. That which Job here somewhat passionately wished for, God graciously granted him; his words are written, they are printed in God's book, so that wherever that book is read there shall this be told for a memorial concerning Job, He believed, therefore he spoke.

Thirdly. What his confession itself is; what are the words which he would have to be written. We here have them written, ver. 25—27; let us observe them.

1. He believes the glory of the Redeemer, and his own interest in him; ver. 25, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," he is in being, and is my life, "and that he shall stand" at last, or stand the last, or "at the latter day upon (or above) the earth." He shall be raised up, or, He shall be (at the latter day, that is, in the fulness of time,—the gospel day is called the last time, because that is the last dispensation) upon the earth: so it points at his incarnation. Or, He shall be lifted up from the earth: so it points at his crucifixion. Or, Raised up out of the earth: so it is applicable to his resurrection. Or, as we commonly understand it, At the end of time he shall appear over the earth, for "he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him," so close shall he come to this earth. He shall stand upon the dust, so the word is, upon all his enemies, which shall be put as dust under his feet, and he shall tread upon them, and triumph over them.

Observe here, 1st. That there is a Redeemer provided for fallen man, and Jesus Christ is that Redeemer. The word is *goel*, which is used for the next of kin, to whom, by the law of Moses, the right of redeeming a mortgaged estate did belong, *Lev.* xxv. 25. Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin, we are ourselves utterly unable to redeem it; Christ is near of kin to us, the next kinsman that is able to redeem: he has paid our debts, satisfied God's justice for sin, and so has taken off the mortgage, and made a new settlement of the inheritance. Our persons also want a Redeemer; we are sold for sin, and sold under sin: our Lord Jesus has wrought out a redemption for us, and proclaims a redemption to us, and so he is truly the Redeemer. 2nd. He is a living Redeemer. As we are made by a living God, so we are saved by a living Redeemer, who is both almighty and eternal, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost. "Of him it is witnessed that he liveth," *Heb.* vii. 8; *Rev.* i. 18. We are dying, but he liveth, and hath assured us that "because he lives, we shall live also," *Jno.* xiv. 19. 3rd. There are those that through grace have an interest in this Redeemer, and can upon good grounds call him theirs. When Job had lost all his wealth and all his friends, yet he was not separated from Christ, nor cut off from his relation to him; still he is "my Redeemer." That next kinsman stuck to him when all his other kindred forsook him, and he had the comfort of it. 4th. Our interest in the Redeemer is a thing that may be known; and where it is known may be triumphed in, as sufficient to balance all our griefs. "I know,"—observe with what an air of assurance he speaks it, as one confident of this very thing,—"I know that my Redeemer lives." His friends had often charged him with ignorance or vain knowledge; but he knows enough, and knows to good purpose, who knows Christ to be his Redeemer. 5th. There will be a latter day, a last day, a day when time shall be no more, *Rev.* x. 6. That is a day we are concerned to think of every day. 6th. Our Redeemer will at that day stand upon the earth, or over the earth, to summon the dead out of their graves, and determine to them an unchangeable state, for to him all judgment is committed. He shall stand the last on the dust to which this earth will be reduced by the conflagration.

2. He believes the happiness of the redeemed, and his own title to that happiness, that at Christ's second coming believers shall be raised up in glory, and so made perfectly blessed in the vision and fruition of God, and this he believes with application to himself.

1st. He counts upon the corrupting of his body in the grave, and speaks of it with a holy carelessness and unconcernedness; "Though after my skin" (which is already wasted and gone, none of it remaining but the skin of my teeth, ver. 20) "they destroy" (they that are appointed to destroy it, the grave, and the worms in it, of whom he had spoken, *ch.* xvii. 14) "this body." The word body is added. Though they destroy this, this skeleton, this shadow, *ch.* xvii. 7, this that I lay my hand upon,—or, pointing perhaps to his weak and withered limbs, this that you see, call it what you will,—I expect that shortly it will be a feast for the worms. Christ's body saw not corruption, but ours must. And Job mentions this that the glory of the resurrection he believed and hoped for might shine the more bright. Note, It is good for us often to think, not only of the approaching death of our bodies, but of their destruction and dissolution in the grave; yet let not that discourage our hope of their resurrection, for the same power that made man's body at first out of common dust can raise it out of its own dust. This body we now take such care about, and make such provision for, will in a little time be destroyed; even "my reins," saith Job, "shall be consumed within me," ver. 27; the innermost part of the body, which perhaps putrefies first.

2nd. He comforts himself with the hopes of happiness on the other side death and the grave. 'After I shall awake,' (so the margin reads it,) 'though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God.'

First. Soul and body shall come together again. That body which must be destroyed in the grave shall be raised again a glorious body, "yet in my flesh I shall see God." The separate soul has eyes wherewith to see God, eyes of the mind; but Job speaks of seeing him with eyes of flesh; In my flesh, with mine eyes. The same body that died shall rise again, a true body, but a glorified body, fit for the employments and entertainments of that world, and therefore a spiritual body, 1 *Cor.* xv. 44. Let us therefore glorify God with our bodies, because there is such a glory designed for them.

Secondly. Job and God shall come together again; "In my flesh shall I see God;" that is, the glorified Redeemer, who is God. 'I shall see God in my flesh,' so some read it: the Son of God clothed with a body which will be visible even to eyes of flesh. Though the body in the grave seem despicable and miserable, yet it shall be dignified and made happy in the vision of God. Job now complained that he could not get a sight of God, *ch.* xxiii. 8, 9, but hopes to see him shortly, never more to lose the sight of him; and that sight of him will be the more welcome after the present darkness and distance. Note, It is the blessedness of the blessed that they shall see God, shall see him as he is, see him face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly. See with what pleasure holy Job enlargeth upon this, ver. 27, "Whom I shall see for myself;" that is, see and enjoy, see to my own unspeakable comfort and satisfaction. I shall see him as mine, as mine with an appropriating sight; *Rev.* xxi. 3, "God himself shall be with them, and be their God;" they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is, that is seeing for themselves, 1 *Jno.* iii. 3. "Mine eyes shall behold him, and not another." 1*st.* He, and not another for him, shall be seen; not a type or figure of him, but he himself. Glorified saints are perfectly sure that they are not imposed upon; it is no *deceptio visus*,—'illusion of the senses.' 2*nd.* I, and not another for me, shall see him. Though my flesh and body be consumed, yet I shall not need a proxy, I shall see him with my own eyes. This is what Job hoped for, and what he earnestly desired, which some think is the meaning of the last clause, 'My reins are spent in my bosom;' that is, all my desires are summed up and concluded in this, this will crown and complete them all; let me have this, and I shall have nothing more to desire; it is enough, it is all. With this the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Fourthly. The application of this to his friends. His creed spoke comfort to himself, but warning and terror to them that set themselves against him.

1. It was a word of caution to them not to proceed and persist in their unkind usage of him, ver. 28. He had reproved them for what they had said, and now tells them what they should say for the reducing of themselves and one another to a better temper. "Why persecute we him thus?" Why do we grieve him and vex him by censuring and condemning him, "seeing the root of the matter," or the root of the Word, "is found in him?" Let this direct us, 1st. In our care concerning ourselves. We are all concerned to see to it, that the root of the matter be found in us. A living, quickening, commanding principle of grace in the heart is the root of the matter, as necessary to our religion as the root to the tree, to which it owes both its fixedness and its fruitfulness. Love to God and our brethren, faith in Christ, hatred of sin, this is the root of the matter; other things are but leaves in comparison with this: serious godliness is the one thing needful. 2nd. In our carriage towards our brethren. We are to believe that many have the root of the matter in them who are not in every thing of our mind, who have their follies, and weaknesses, and mistakes; and, to conclude, it is at our peril if we persecute any such. Woe be to him that offends one of those little ones, God will resent and revenge it. Job and his friends differed in some notions concerning the methods of providence, but they agreed in the root of the matter, the belief of another world, and therefore should not persecute one another for these differences.

2. It was a word of terror to them. Christ's second coming will be very dreadful to those that are found smiting their fellow-servants, *Mat.* xxiv. 49; and therefore, ver. 29, "Be ye afraid of the sword," the flaming sword of God's justice, which turns every way; fear lest you make yourselves obnoxious to it. Good men need to be frightened from sin by the terrors of the Almighty, particularly from the sin of rashly judging their brethren, *Mat.* vii. 1; *Jas.* iii. 1. Those that are peevish and passionate with their brethren, censorious of them, and malicious towards them, let them know, not only that their wrath, whatever it pretends, works not the righteousness of God, but, 1st. They may expect to smart for it in this world; it brings the punishments of the sword. Wrath leads to such crimes as expose men to the sword of the magistrate; however, God often takes vengeance for it, and those that shewed no mercy shall find no mercy. 2nd. If they repent not, that will be an earnest of worse. By these you may know there is a judgment, not only a present government, but a future judgment, in which hard speeches must be accounted for.

CHAPTER XX.

One would have thought that such an excellent confession of faith as Job made in the close of the foregoing chapter should have satisfied his friends, or, at least, have mollified them; but they do not seem to have taken any notice of it, and therefore Zophar here takes his turn, enters the lists with Job, and attacks him with as much vehemence as before. I. His preface is short, but hot, ver. 2, 3. II. His discourse is long, and all upon one subject; the very same that Bildad was large upon, *ch.* xviii.: the certain misery of wicked people, and the ruin that awaits them: 1. He asserts in general that the prosperity of the wicked is short, and their ruin sure, ver. 4—9; 2. He proves the misery of his condition by many instances: that he shall have a diseased body, a troubled conscience, a ruined estate, a beggared family, an infamous

name, and he himself shall perish under the weight of Divine wrath. All this is most curiously described here in lofty expressions, and lively similitudes; and it often proves true in this world, and always in another, without repentance, ver. 10—29. But the great mistake was, and, as Bishop Patrick expresseth it, all the flaw in his discourse,—which was common to him with the rest,—that he imagined God never varied from this method; and therefore Job was, without doubt, a very bad man, though it did not appear he was, any other way but by his infelicity.

THEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,
2 Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer,
And for *this* I make haste.
3 I have heard the check of my reproach,
And the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer.
4 Knowest thou *not* this of old,
Since man was placed upon earth,
5 That the triumphing of the wicked *is* short,
And the joy of the hypocrite *but* for a moment?
6 Though his excellency mount up to the heavens,
And his head reach unto the clouds;
7 *Yet* he shall perish for ever like his own dung:
They which have seen him shall say, Where *is* he?
8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found:
Yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.
9 The eye also *which* saw him shall *see him* no more;
Neither shall his place any more behold him.

Here, First. Zophar begins very passionately, and seems to be in a great heat at what Job had said. Being resolved to condemn Job for an ill man, he was much displeased that he talked so like a good man, and as it should seem, broke in upon him and began abruptly; ver. 2, "Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer." He takes no notice of what Job had said to move their pity, or to evidence his own integrity, but fastens upon the reproof he gave them in the close of his discourse, counts that a reproach; and, thinks himself therefore obliged to answer, because Job had bidden them be afraid of the sword, that he might not seem to be frightened by his menaces. The best counsel is too often ill taken from an antagonist, and therefore usually may be as well spared. Zophar seemed more in haste to speak than became a wise man, but he excuseth it with two things: 1. That Job had given him a strong provocation, ver. 3, "I have heard the check of my reproach," and cannot bear to hear it any longer. Job's friends, I doubt, had spirits too high to deal with a man in his low condition; and high spirits are impatient of contradiction, but think themselves affronted if all about them do not say as they say. They cannot hear a check, but they call it the check of their reproach; and then they are bound in honour to return it, if not to draw upon him that gave it. 2. That his own heart gave him a strong instigation. His thoughts caused him to answer, ver. 2, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; but he fathers it, ver. 3, upon "the spirit of his understanding." That, indeed, should cause us to answer; we should rightly apprehend a thing, and duly consider it before we speak to it; but whether it did so here or no is a question. Men often mistake the dictates of their passion for the dictates of their reason, and therefore think they do well to be angry.

Secondly. Zophar proceeds very plainly to shew the ruin and destruction of wicked people, insinuating that, because Job was destroyed and ruined, he was certainly a wicked man and a hypocrite. Observe,

1. How this doctrine is introduced, ver. 4, where he appeals, 1st. To Job's own knowledge and conviction, "Knowest thou not this?" Canst thou be ignorant of a truth so plain? or canst thou doubt of a truth which has been confirmed by the suffrage of all mankind? Those know little who do not know that the wages of sin is death. 2nd. To the experience of all ages. It was known of old since man was placed upon the earth, that is, ever since man was made, he has had this truth written in his heart, that the sin of sinners will be their ruin; and ever since there were instances of wickedness (which there were soon after man was placed on the earth) there were instances of the punishments of it: witness the exclusions of Adam and Cain. When sin entered into the world, death entered with it. All the world knows that evil pursues sinners, that vengeance suffers not to live, *Acts* xxviii. 4; and subscribes to that, *Isa.* iii. 11, "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him," sooner or later.

2. How it is laid down; "That the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment." Observe, 1st. He asserts the misery not only of those that are openly wicked and profane, but of hypocrites, who secretly practise wickedness under a show and profession of religion; because such a wicked man he looked upon Job to be: and it is true, that a form of godliness, if it be made use of for a cloak of maliciousness, doth but make ill worse. Dissembled piety is double iniquity, and the ruin that attends it will be accordingly. The hottest place in hell will be the portion of hypocrites, as our Saviour intimates, *Mat.* xxiv. 51. 2nd. He grants that wicked men may for a time prosper, may be secure and easy, and very merry. You may see them in triumph and joy, triumphing and rejoicing in their wealth and power, their grandeur and success; triumphing and rejoicing over their poor honest neighbours, whom they vex and oppress. They feel no evil, they fear none. Job's friends were loath to own at first that wicked people might prosper at all, *ch.* iv. 9, till Job proved it plainly, *ch.* ix. 24; xii. 6; and now Zophar yields it. But, 3. He lays it down for a certain truth that they will not prosper long. Their joy is but for a moment, and will quickly end in endless sorrow. Though he be never so great, and rich, and jovial, he will be humbled, and mortified, and made miserable.

3. How it is illustrated, ver. 6, &c.

1st. He supposeth his prosperity to be very high, as high as you can imagine, ver. 6. It is not his wisdom and virtue, but his worldly wealth and greatness, that he accounts his excellency, and values himself by. We will suppose that to mount up to the heavens; and, since his spirit always riseth with his condition, you may suppose that with it "his head reacheth to the clouds." He is every way advanced, the world has done the utmost it can for him, he looks down upon all about him with disdain, while they look up to him with admiration, envy, or fear. We will suppose him to bid fair for a universal monarchy; and, though he cannot but have made himself many enemies before he arrived to this pitch of prosperity, yet he thinks himself as much out of the reach of their darts as if he were in the clouds.

2nd. He is confident his ruin will accordingly be very great, and his fall the more dreadful for his having risen so high. "He shall perish for ever," ver. 7. His pride and security were the certain presages of his misery. This will certainly be true of all impenitent sinners in the other world, they shall be undone, for ever undone. But Zophar means his ruin in this world; and sometimes, indeed, notorious sinners are remarkably cut off by present judgments. They have reason enough to fear what Zophar here threatens even the triumphant sinner with. *First.* A shameful destruction. "He shall perish like his own dung," or dunghill, so loathsome is he to God and all good men, and so willing will the world be to part with him, *Ps.* cxix. 119; *Isa.* lxvi. 24. *Secondly.* A surprising destruction. He will be brought into desolation in a moment, *Ps.* lxxiii. 19; so that those about him, that saw him just now, will ask, Where is he? Could he that made so great a figure vanish and expire so suddenly? *Thirdly.* A swift destruction, ver. 8. He shall fly away upon the wings of his own terrors, and be chased away by the just imprecations of all about him, who would gladly be rid of him. *Fourthly.* An utter destruction. It will be total; he shall go away like a dream, or vision of the night, which was a mere phantasm, and whatever in it pleased the fancy it is quite gone, and nothing of it remains but what serves us to laugh at the folly of. It will be final, ver. 9; the eye that saw him, and was ready to adore him, shall see him no more, and the place he filled shall no more behold him, having given him an eternal farewell when he went to his own place, as Judas, *Acts* i. 25.

10 His children shall seek to please the poor,
And his hands shall restore their goods.
11 His bones are full *of the sin* of his youth,
Which shall lie down with him in the dust.
12 Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth,
Though he hide it under his tongue;
13 *Though* he spare it, and forsake it not;
But keep it still within his mouth:
14 *Yet* his meat in his bowels is turned,
It is the gall of asps within him.
15 He hath swallowed down riches,
And he shall vomit them up again:
God shall cast them out of his belly
16 He shall suck the poison of asps:
The viper's tongue shall slay him.

ASP AND VIPER.

17 He shall not see the rivers, the floods,
The brooks of honey and butter
18 That which he laboured for shall he restore,
And shall not swallow *it* down:
According to *his* substance *shall* the restitution *be*,
And he shall not rejoice *therein*.
19 Because he hath oppressed *and* hath forsaken the poor;
Because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not;
20 Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly,
He shall not save of that which he desired.
21 There shall none of his meat be left;
Therefore shall no man look for his goods.
22 In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits:
Every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.

The instances here given of the miserable condition of the wicked man in this world are expressed with a great fulness and fluency of language, and the same thing returned to again, and repeated in other words. Let us therefore reduce the particulars to their proper heads, and observe,

First. What his wickedness is for which he is punished.

1. The lusts of the flesh, here called the sins of his youth, ver. 11; for those are the sins which in that age people are most tempted to. The forbidden pleasures of sense are said to be sweet in his mouth, ver. 12; he indulgeth himself in all the gratifications of the carnal appetite, and takes an inordinate complacency in them, as yielding the most agreeable delights. That is the satisfaction which he hides under his tongue, and rolls there as the most dainty delicate thing that can be. He keeps it still within his mouth, ver. 13; let him have that and he desires no more, he will never part with that for the spiritual and Divine pleasures of religion, which he has no relish of, nor affection for. His keeping it still in his mouth notes both his obstinate persisting in his sin,—he spares it when he should kill and mortify it, and forsakes it not, but holds it fast, and goes on frowardly in it; and also his reacting of his sin by revolving

it, and remembering it with pleasure. As that adulterous woman, *Eze.* xxiii. 19, that multiplied her whoredoms by calling to remembrance the days of her youth, so doth this wicked man here. Or, his hiding it and keeping it under his tongue notes his industrious concealment of his beloved lust. Being a hypocrite, that he may save the credit of his profession, his haunts of sin are secret; but He that knows what is in the heart knows what is under the tongue too, and will discover it shortly.

2. The love of the world, and the wealth of it. That is it in which he placeth his happiness, and which, therefore, he sets his heart upon. See here, 1st. How greedy he is of it; ver. 15, "He hath swallowed down riches," as eagerly as ever a hungry man swallowed down meat, and is still crying, Give, give. It is that which he desired, ver. 20; it was in his eye the best gift, and that which he coveted earnestly. 2nd. What pains he takes for it; it is that which he laboured for, ver. 18; not by honest diligence in a lawful calling, but by an unwearied prosecution of all ways and methods, 'right or wrong,'—*per fas, per nefas*, to be rich. We must not labour to be rich, *Pr.* xxiii. 4, but to be charitable; that we may have to give, *Eze.* iv. 28, not to spend. 3rd. What great things he promiseth himself from it, intimated in "the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter," ver. 17; his being disappointed of them supposeth he had flattered himself with the hopes of them. He expected rivers of sensual delights.

3. Violence, and oppression, and injustice to his poor neighbours, ver. 19. This was the sin of the giants of the old world, and a sin that as much as any other brings God's judgments upon nations and families. It is charged upon this wicked man, 1st. That he hath forsaken the poor, taken no care of them, shewed no kindness to them, nor made any provision for them. At first, perhaps, for a pretence, he gave alms, like the Pharisees, to gain a reputation, but when he had served his turn with it he left it off, and forsook the poor, whom before he seemed to be concerned for. Those who do good, but not from a good principle, though they may abound in it, will not abide in it. 2nd. That he has oppressed them, crushed them, taken all advantages against them to do them a mischief. To enrich himself he has robbed the spital, and made the poor poorer. 3rd. That he hath violently taken away their houses, which he had no right to, as Ahab took Naboth's vineyard, not by secret fraud, by forgery, perjury, or some trick in law, but avowedly, and by open violence.

Secondly. What his punishment is for this wickedness.

1. He shall be disappointed in his expectations, and shall not find that satisfaction in his worldly wealth which he vainly promised himself; ver. 17, "He shall never see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter," with which he hoped to glut himself. The world is not that to those who love it, and court it, and admire it, which they fancy it will be. The enjoyment sinks far below the raised expectation.

2. He shall be diseased and distempered in his body. And what little comfort can a man have in wealth if he have not health; sickness and pain, especially if they be in extremity, embitter all his enjoyments. This wicked man has all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness; but what the nearer, when "his bones are full of the sins of his youth," ver. 11, that is, of the effects of those sins? By his drunkenness and gluttony his uncleanness and wantonness, when he was young, he contracted those diseases which are painful to him long after, and perhaps made his life very miserable, and, as Solomon speaks, "consume his flesh and his body," *Pr.* v. 11. Perhaps he was given to fight when he was young, and then made nothing of a cut or a bruise in a fray, but he feels it in his bones long after. But can he get no ease, no relief? No, he is like to carry his pains and diseases with him to the grave, or, rather, they are likely to carry him thither, and so the sins of his youth shall lie down with him in the dust. The very putrefying of his body in the grave is to him the effect of sin, *ch.* xxiv. 19; so that his iniquity is upon his bones there, *Eze.* xxxii. 27. The sin of sinners follows them to the other side death.

3. He shall be disquieted and troubled in his mind. "Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly," ver. 20. He has not that ease in his own mind that people think he has, but is in a continual toss. The ill-got wealth which he hath swallowed down makes him sick at his stomach, and, like undigested meat, is always upbraiding him. Let none expect to enjoy that comfortably which they have got unjustly. The unquietness of his mind ariseth, 1st. From his conscience looking back, and filling him with fear of the wrath of God against him for his wickedness. Even that wickedness which was sweet in the commission, and was rolled under the tongue as a delicate morsel, becomes bitter in the reflection, and, when it is reviewed, fills him with horror and vexation. In his bowels it is turned, ver. 14; like John's book, in his mouth as sweet as honey, but when he had eaten it his belly was bitter, *Rev.* x. 10. Such a thing is sin, it is turned into the gall of asps, than which nothing is more bitter; the poison of asps, ver. 16, than which nothing more fatal; and so it will be to him. What he sucked so sweetly, and with so much pleasure, will prove to him the poison of asps; so will all unlawful gains be. The fawning tongue will prove the viper's tongue. All the charming graces that are thought to be in sin, when conscience is awakened, will turn into so many raging furies. 2nd. From his cares, looking forwards; ver. 22, "In the fulness of his sufficiency," when he thinks himself most happy, and most sure of the continuance of his happiness, "he shall be in straits;" that is, he shall think himself so through the anxieties and perplexities of his own mind, as that rich man who, when his ground brought forth plentifully, cried out, "What shall I do?" *Lu.* xii. 17.

4. He shall be dispossessed of his estate. That shall sink and dwindle away to nothing, so that he shall not rejoice therein, ver. 18. He shall not only never rejoice truly, but not long enjoy it at all.

1st. What he has unjustly swallowed he shall be compelled to disgorge; ver. 15, "He hath swallowed down riches," and then thought himself sure of them, and that they were as much his own as the meat he has eaten; but he is deceived, "he shall vomit them up again." His own conscience, perhaps, may make him so uneasy in the keeping of what he has got, that for the quiet of his own mind he shall make restitution, and that not with the pleasure of a virtue, but the pain of a vomit, and with the utmost reluctancy. Or, if he do not himself refund what he has violently taken away, God shall by his providence force him to it, and bring it about one way or other, that ill-gotten goods shall return to the right owners. "God shall cast them out of his belly," while yet the love of the sin is not cast out of his heart. So loud shall the clamours of the poor be against him whom he has impoverished, that he shall be forced to send his children to them to speak them fair, and beg their pardon; ver. 10, "His children shall seek to please the poor," whilst his own hands shall restore them their goods with shame; ver. 18, "That which he laboured for" by all the arts of oppression, "shall he restore," and shall not so swallow it down as to digest it; it shall not stay with him, but, "according to his shame shall the restitution be." Having gotten a great deal unjustly he shall restore a great deal, so that, when everybody has their own, he will have but a little left for himself. To be made to restore what was unjustly gotten, by the sanctifying grace of God, as Zacchæus was, is a great mercy; he voluntarily and cheerfully restored fourfold, and yet had a great deal left to give to the poor, *Lu.* xix. 8. But to be forced to restore, as Judas was, merely by the horrors of a despairing conscience, has none of that benefit and comfort attending it, for he "threw down the pieces of silver, and went and hanged himself."

2nd. He shall be stripped of all he has, and become a beggar. He that spoiled others shall himself be spoiled, *Isa.* xxxiii. 1, for "every hand of the wicked shall be upon him." The innocent whom he has wronged sit down by their loss, saying, as David, "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but my hand shall not be upon him," 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 13. But though they have forgiven him, though they will make no reprisals, Divine justice will, and oftentimes makes the wicked to avenge the quarrel of the righteous, and squeezes and crushes one ill man by the hand of another upon him. Thus, when he is plucked of all sides, "he shall not save of that which he desired," ver. 20. Not only not save it all, but save nothing of it. "There shall none of his meat" (which he coveted so much, and fed upon with so much pleasure) "be left," ver. 21. All his neighbours and relations shall look upon him to be in such ill circumstances, that when he is dead no man shall look for his goods, none of his kindred shall expect to be a penny the better for him, nor be willing to take out letters of administration of what he leaves behind him. In all this Zophar reflects upon Job, who had lost all, and was reduced to the last extremity.

23 *When* he is about to fill his belly,
God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him,
And shall rain *it* upon him while he is eating.
24 He shall flee from the iron weapon,
And the bow of steel shall strike him through.
25 It is drawn, and cometh out of the body;
Yea, the glittering sword cometh out of his gall:
Terrors *are* upon him.
26 All darkness *shall be* hid in his secret places:
A fire not blown shall consume him;
It shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.
27 The heaven shall reveal his iniquity;
And the earth shall rise up against him.
28 The increase of his house shall depart,
And his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.
29 This *is* the portion of a wicked man from God,
And the heritage appointed unto him by God.

Zophar, having described the many embarrassments and vexations which commonly attend the wicked practices of oppressors and cruel men, here comes to shew their utter ruin at last.

First. Their ruin will take its rise from God's wrath and vengeance, ver. 23. The hand of the wicked was upon him, ver. 22; every hand of the wicked. His hand was against every one, and therefore every man's hand will be against him; and yet, in grappling with these, he might go near to make his part good; but his heart cannot endure, nor his hands be strong, when God shall deal with him, *Eze.* xxii. 14, when God shall "cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and rain it upon him." Every word here speaks terror. It is not only the justice of God that is engaged against him, but his wrath, the deep resentment of provocations given to himself; it is the "fury of his wrath," incensed to the highest degree. It is "cast upon him" with force and fierceness; it is "rained upon him" in abundance, it comes on his head like the fire and brimstone upon Sodom, to which the psalmist also refers, *Ps.* xi. 6, "On the wicked God shall rain fire and brimstone;" and there is no fence against it but only in Christ, who is the only covert from the storm and tempest, *Isa.* xxxii. 2. This wrath shall be cast upon him "when he is about to fill his belly," just going to glut himself upon what he has got, and promising himself abundant satisfaction in it. Then, when he is eating, shall this tempest surprise him, when he is secure and easy, and in apprehension of no danger; as the ruin of the old world and Sodom came when they were in the depth of their security, and the height of their sensuality, as Christ observes, *Lu.* xvii. 26, &c. Perhaps Zophar here reflects on the death of Job's children when they were eating and drinking.

Secondly. Their ruin will be inevitable, and there will be no possibility of escaping it; ver. 24, "He shall flee from the iron weapon." Flight argues guilt. He will not humble himself under the judgments of God, nor seek means to make his peace with him, all his care is to outrun the vengeance that pursues him; but in vain. If he escape the sword, yet "the bow of steel shall strike him through." God has weapons of all sorts, he has both whet his sword and bent his bow, *Ps.* vii. 12, 13; can deal with his enemies *cominus vel eminus*,—'at hand or afar off.' He has a sword for those that think to fight it out with him by their strength, and a bow for those that think to avoid him by their craft; see *Isa.* xxiv. 17, 18; *Jer.* xlviii. 43, 44. He that is marked for ruin, though he may escape one judgment, will find another ready for him.

Thirdly. It will be a total, terrible ruin. When the dart that has struck him through (for when God shoots he is sure to hit his mark, when he strikes he strikes home) comes to be drawn out of his body, when the glittering sword, (the lightning, so the word is,) the flaming sword, the sword that is bathed in heaven, (*Isa.* xxxiv. 5,) when this comes out of his gall, O what terrors are upon him! How strong are the convulsions, how violent the dying agonies! How terrible are the arrests of death to a wicked man!

Fourthly. Sometimes it is a ruin that comes upon him insensibly, ver. 26. 1. The darkness he is wrapped up in is a hidden darkness; it is all darkness, utter darkness, without the least mixture of light; and it is hid in his secret place, whither he is retreated, and where he hopes to shelter himself. He never retires into his own conscience, but he finds himself in the dark, and perfectly at a loss. 2. The fire he is consumed by is a fire not blown, kindled without noise, a consumption which every body sees the effect of, but nobody sees the cause of. It is plain the gourd is withered, but the worm at the root that withers it is out of sight. He is wasted by a soft, gentle fire, surely, but very slowly. When the fuel is very combustible, the fire needs no blowing, and that is his case; he is ripe for ruin. The proud, and they that do wickedly, shall be stubble, *Mal.* iv. 1. An unquenchable fire shall consume him, so some read it; and that is certainly true of hell fire.

Fifthly. It is a ruin not only to himself, but to his family. "It shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle;" for the curse shall reach him, and he shall be cut off perhaps by the same grievous disease. There is an entail of wrath upon the family, which will destroy both his heirs and his inheritance, ver. 28. 1. His posterity will be rooted out. The increase of his house shall depart; shall either be cut off by untimely deaths, or forced to run their country. Numerous and growing families, if wicked and vile, are soon reduced, dispersed, and extirpated by the judgments of God. 2. His estate will be sunk. His goods shall flow away from his family as fast as ever they flowed into it, when the

day of God's wrath comes, for which, all the while his estate was in the getting by fraud and oppression, he was treasuring up wrath.

Sixthly. It is a ruin which will manifestly appear to be just and righteous, and what he has brought upon himself by his own wickedness; for, ver. 27, "the heaven shall reveal his iniquity," that is, the God of heaven, who sees all the secret wickedness of the wicked, will, by some means or other, let all the world know what an ill man he has been, that they may own the justice of God in all that is brought upon him. "The earth" also "shall rise up against him," both to discover his wickedness, and to avenge it. "The earth shall disclose her blood," *Isa.* xxvi. 21. "The earth riseth up against him," (as the stomach rises against that which is loathsome to spit it out,) and will no longer keep him; "the heaven reveals his iniquity," and therefore will not receive him, whither, then, must he go but to hell? If the God of heaven and earth be his enemy, neither heaven nor earth will shew him any kindness, but all the hosts of both are, and will be, at war with him.

Lastly. Zophar concludes like an orator; ver. 29, "This is the portion of a wicked man from God;" it is allotted him, it is designed him as his portion. He will have it at last, as a child has his portion, and he will have it for a perpetuity, it is what he must abide by; 'this is the heritage of his decree from God;' it is the settled rule of his judgment, and fair warning is given of it. "O wicked man, thou shalt surely die," *Eze.* xxxiii. 8. Though impenitent sinners do not always fall under such temporal judgments as are here described, (therein Zophar was mistaken,) yet the wrath of God abides upon them, and they are made miserable by spiritual judgments which are much worse, their consciences being either on the one hand a terror to them, and then they are in continual amazement, or on the other hand seared and silenced, and then they are given up to a reprobate sense, and bound over to eternal ruin. Never was any doctrine better explained, nor worse applied, than this here by Zophar, who intended by all this to prove Job a hypocrite. Let us receive the good explication, and make a better application, for warning to ourselves to stand in awe, and not to sin.

CHAPTER XXI.

This is Job's reply to Zophar's discourse; in which he complains less of his own miseries than he had done in his former discourses, finding that his friends were not moved by his complaints to pity him in the least, and comes closer to the general question that was in dispute betwixt him and them,—whether outward prosperity, and the continuance of it, was a mark of the true church, and the true members of it; so that the ruin of a man's prosperity is sufficient to prove him a hypocrite, though no other evidence appear against him. This they asserted: but Job denied. I. His preface here is designed for the moving of their affections, that he might gain their attention, ver. 1—6. II. His discourse is designed for the convincing of their judgments and the rectifying of their mistakes. He owns that God does sometimes hang up a wicked man, as it were, in chains, *in terrorem* by some visible, remarkable judgment in this life, but denies that he always doth so; nay, he maintains that commonly he doth otherwise, suffering even the worst of sinners to live all their days in prosperity, and to go out of the world without any visible mark of his wrath upon them: 1. He describes the great prosperity of wicked people, ver. 7—13; 2. He shews their great impiety, in which they are hardened by their prosperity, ver. 14—16; 3. He foretells their ruin at length, but after a long reprieve, ver. 17—21; 4. He observes a very great variety in the ways of God's providence towards men, even towards bad men, ver. 22—26; 5. He overthrows the ground of their severe censures of him, by shewing that the destruction is reserved for the other world; but that they many times escape to the last in this world, ver. 27—34. And in this Job was clearly in the right.

BUT Job answered and said,
2 Hear diligently my speech,
And let this be your consolations.
3 Suffer me that I may speak;
And after that I have spoken, mock on.
4 As for me, *is* my complaint to man?
And if *it were so*, why should not my spirit be troubled?
5 Mark me, and be astonished,
And lay *your* hand upon *your* mouth.
6 Even when I remember I am afraid,
And trembling taketh hold on my flesh.

Job here recommends himself, both his case and his discourse, both what he suffered and what he said, to the compassionate consideration of his friends.

First. That which he begs of them is very fair, that they would suffer him to speak, ver. 3, and not break in upon him, as Zophar had done, in the midst of his discourse. Losers, of all men, may have leave to speak; and if those that are accused and censured may not speak for themselves, they are wronged without remedy, and have no way to come at their right. That they would hear diligently his speech, ver. 2, as those that were willing to understand him, and, if they were under a mistake, to have it rectified. And that they would mark him, ver. 5; for as good not hear as not heed and observe what we hear.

Secondly. That which he urgeth for this is very reasonable. 1. They came to comfort him; now, saith he, "Let this be your consolations," ver. 2. If you have no other comforts to administer to me, yet deny me not this, be so kind, so just, as to give me a patient hearing, and that shall pass for your consolations of me. Nay, they could not know how to comfort him if they would not give him leave to open his case, and tell his own story. Or, it will be a consolation to yourselves in the reflection, to have dealt tenderly with your afflicted friend, and not harshly. 2. He would hear them speak when it came to their turn. "After I have spoken," you may go on with what you have to say, and I will not hinder you, no, though you go on to mock me. Those that engage in controversy must count upon having hard words given them, and resolve to bear it patiently; for generally they that mock will mock on, whatever is said to them.

Thirdly. He hoped to convince them. If you will but give me a fair hearing, "mock on," if you can; but I believe I shall say that which will change your note, and make you pity me rather than mock me.

Fourthly. They were not his judges; ver. 4, "Is my complaint to man?" No, if it were, I see it would be to little purpose to complain. But my complaint is to God, and to him do I appeal. Let him be judge between you and me! Before him we stand upon even terms, and therefore I have the privilege of being heard as well as you. If my complaint were to man, my spirit would be troubled, for they would not regard me, nor rightly understand me; but my complaint is to God, who will suffer me to speak, though you will not. It would be sad if God should deal as unkindly with us as our friends sometimes do.

Fifthly. There was that in his case which was very surprising and astonishing, and therefore both needed and deserved their most serious consideration. It was not a common case, but very extraordinary. 1. He himself was amazed at it, at the troubles God had laid upon him, and the censures of his friends concerning him; ver. 6, "When I remember" that terrible day in which I was on a sudden stripped of all my comforts, that day in which I was stricken with sore boils, when I remember all the hard speeches with which you have grieved me, I confess "I am afraid, and trembling takes hold of my flesh," especially when I compare this with the prosperous condition of many wicked people, and the applauses of their neighbours, with which they pass through the world. Note, The providences of God in the government of the world are sometimes very astonishing, even to wise and good men, and bring them to their wits' end. 2. He would have them wonder at it; ver. 5, "Mark me, and be astonished." Instead of expounding my troubles, you should awfully adore the unsearchable mysteries of Providence in afflicting one thus whom you know no ill by; you should therefore "lay your hand upon your mouth," silently wait the issue, and judge nothing before the time. "God's way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters." When we cannot account for what he doth in suffering the wicked to prosper, and the godly to be afflicted, nor fathom the depth of those proceedings, it becomes us to sit down and admire them. "Upright men shall be astonied at this," *ch.* xvii. 8; be you so.

7 Wherefore do the wicked live,
Become old, yea, are mighty in power?
8 Their seed is established in their sight with them,
And their offspring before their eyes.
9 Their houses *are* safe from fear,
Neither *is* the rod of God upon them.
10 Their bull gendereth, and faileth not;
Their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf.
11 They send forth their little ones like a flock,
And their children dance.
12 They take the timbrel and harp,
And rejoice at the sound of the organ.
13 They spend their days in wealth,
And in a moment go down to the grave.
14 Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us;
For we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.
15 What *is* the Almighty, that we should serve him?
And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?
16 Lo, their good *is* not in their hand:
The counsel of the wicked is far from me.

All Job's three friends in their last discourses had been very large in describing the miserable condition of a wicked man in this world. It is true, saith Job, remarkable judgments are sometimes brought upon notorious sinners, but not always; for we have many instances of the great and long prosperity of those that are openly and avowedly wicked; though they are hardened in their wickedness by their prosperity, yet they are still suffered to prosper.

First. He here describes their prosperity, both to the height, and breadth, and length of it. If this be true, as you say, pray tell me "wherefore do the wicked live?" ver. 7. The matter of fact is taken for granted, for we see instances of it every day. 1. They live, and are not suddenly cut off by the strokes of Divine vengeance. They yet speak who have set their mouths against the heavens; they yet act who have stretched out their hands against God. Not only they live, that is, they are reprieved, but they live in prosperity, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 6. Nay, 2. They "become old," they have the honour, satisfaction, and advantage of living long, time enough to raise their families and estates. We read of a sinner a hundred years old, *Isa.* lxv. 20. But this is not all. 3. They "are mighty in power," are preferred to places of authority and trust, and not only make a great figure, but bear a great sway. *Vivit imo, et in senatum venit,*—'He not only lives, but appears in the senate.' Now, wherefore is it so? Note, It is worth while to inquire into the reasons of the outward prosperity of wicked people. It is not because God has forsaken the earth, because he doth not see, or doth not hate, or cannot punish their wickedness; but it is because the measure of their iniquities is not full. This is the day of God's patience, and some use or other he makes of them and their prosperity, to serve his own counsels, while it ripens them for ruin; but the chief reason is, because he will make it to appear there is another world, which is the world of retribution, and not this. The prosperity of the wicked is here described to be,

1st. Complete and consummate. *First.* They are multiplied, and their family is built up, and they have the satisfaction of seeing it; ver. 8, "Their seed is established in their sight." This is put first, as that which gives both a pleasant enjoyment and a pleasant prospect. *Secondly.* They are easy and quiet, ver. 9. Whereas Zophar had spoken of their continual frights and terrors, Job saith, "Their houses are safe," both from danger, and from the fear of it, ver. 9; and so far are they from the killing wounds of God's sword or arrows, that they do not feel the smart of so much as "the rod of God upon them." *Thirdly.* They are rich, and thrive in their estates; of this he gives only one instance; ver. 10, their cattle increase, and they meet with no disappointment in them, not so much as a cow casts her calf; and then their much must needs grow more. This is promised, *Ex.* xxiii. 26; *Deu.* vii. 14. *Fourthly.* They are merry, and live a jovial life; ver. 11, 12, "They send forth their little ones" abroad among their neighbours, "like a flock," in great numbers, to sport themselves. They have their balls and music-meetings, at which "their children dance;" and dancing is fittest for children, who know not how better to spend their time, and whose innocency guards them against the mischiefs that commonly attend it. And though the parents are not so very youthful and frolicsome as to dance themselves, yet they "take the timbrel and harp;" they pipe, and their children dance after their pipe, and they know no grief to put their instruments out of tune, or to "withhold their hearts from any joy." Some observe that this is an instance of their vanity, as well as of their prosperity. Here is none of that care taken of their children which Abraham took of his; to "teach them the way of the Lord," *Gen.* xviii. 19. Their children do not pray, or say their catechism; but dance, and sing, and "rejoice at the sound of the organ,"

Sensual pleasures are all the delights of carnal people, and as men are themselves so they breed their children.

2nd. Continuing and constant; ver. 13, "They spend their days," all their days, "in wealth," and never know what it is to want; in mirth, and never know what sadness means; and, at last, without any previous alarms to frighten them, without any anguish or agony, "in a moment" they "go down to the grave," and there are no bands in their death. And, if there were not another life after this, it were most desirable to die by the quickest, shortest strokes of death. Since we must "go down to the grave," if that were the farthest of our journey, we would wish to go down in a moment; to swallow the bitter pill, and not chew it.

Secondly. He shews how they abuse their prosperity, and are confirmed and hardened by it in their impiety, ver. 14, 15. Their gold and silver serves to steel and brazen them; to make them more insolent, and more impudent in their wickedness. Now he mentions this either, 1. To increase the difficulty. It is strange that any wicked people should prosper thus; but, especially that those should prosper who are arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as openly to bid defiance to God himself, and tell him to his face they care not for him; nay, and that their prosperity should be continued, though they bear up themselves upon that, in their opposition to God; with that weapon they fight against him, and yet are not disarmed. Or, 2. To lessen the difficulty. God suffers them to prosper; but let us not wonder at it, for "the prosperity of fools destroys them," by hardening them in sin, *Pr.* i. 32; *Ps.* lxxiii. 7—9. See how light these prospering sinners make of God and religion; as if, because they have so much of this world, they had no need to look after another.

1st. See how ill-affected they are to God and religion; they abandon them, and cast off the thoughts of them. *First.* They dread the presence of God; they say unto him, Depart from us, let us never be troubled with the apprehension of our being under God's eye, nor be restrained by the fear of him. Or, they bid him depart, as one they do not need, nor have any occasion to make use of. The world is the portion they have chosen and take up with, and think themselves happy in; and while they have that, they can live without God. Justly will God say to them, Depart, *Mat.* xxv. 41, who have bidden him depart; and justly doth he now take them at their word. *Secondly.* They dread the knowledge of God, and of his will, and of their duty to him; "We desire not the knowledge of thy ways." They that are resolved not to walk in God's ways desire not to know them, because their knowledge will be a continual reproach to their disobedience, *Jno.* iii. 19.

2nd. See how they argue against God and religion; ver. 15, "What is the Almighty?" Strange, that ever creatures should speak so insolently, that ever reasonable creatures should speak so absurdly and unreasonably. The two great bonds by which we are drawn and held to religion are those of duty and interest; now they here endeavour to break both these bonds asunder. *First.* They will not believe it is their duty to be religious; "What is the Almighty that we should serve him?" like Pharaoh, *Ex.* v. 2, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Observe how slightly they speak of God; "What is the Almighty?" as if he were a mere name, a mere cypher, or one they have nothing to do with, and that has nothing to do with them. How hardly they speak of religion! They call it a service, and mean a hard service. Is it not enough, they think, to keep up a fair correspondence with the Almighty, but they must serve him, which they look upon as a task and a drudgery. Observe also how highly they speak of themselves; "that we should serve him:" we who are rich and mighty in power, shall we be subject and accountable to him? No, we are lords, *Jer.* ii. 31. *Secondly.* They will not believe it is their interest to be religious; "What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" All the world are for what they can get; and, therefore, wisdom's merchandise is neglected, because they think there is nothing to be got by it; "It is vain to serve God," *Mal.* iii. 13, 14. Praying will not pay debts, nor portion children; nay, perhaps, serious godliness may balk a man's preferment, and expose him to losses; and, what then? Is nothing to be called gain but the wealth and honour of this world? If we obtain the favour of God, and spiritual and eternal blessings, we have no reason to complain of losing by our religion. But if we have not profit by prayer it is our own fault, *Isa.* lviii. 3, 4; it is because we ask amiss, *Jas.* iv. 2. Religion itself is not a vain thing; if it be so to us we may thank ourselves for resting in the outside of it, *Jas.* i. 26.

Thirdly. He shews their folly herein, and utterly disclaims all concurrence with them; ver. 19, "Lo, their good is not in their hand;" that is, they did not get it without God, and therefore they are very ungrateful to slight him thus. It was not their might, nor the power of their hand, that got them this wealth; and, therefore, they ought to remember God who gave it them. Nor can they keep it without God; and therefore they are very unwise to lose their interest in him, and bid him to depart from them. Some give this sense of it: their good is in their barns and their bags, hoarded up there, it is not in their hand to do good to others with it; and then what good doth it do them? And, therefore, saith Job, "The counsel of the wicked is far from me." Far be it from me that I should be of their mind; say as they say, do as they do, and take my measures from them. Their posterity approve their sayings, though their way be their folly, *Ps.* xlix. 13; but I know better things than to walk in their counsel.

17 How oft is the candle of the wicked put out!
And *how oft* cometh their destruction upon them!
God distributeth sorrows in his anger
18 They are as stubble before the wind,
And as chaff that the storm carrieth away
19 God layeth up his iniquity for his children:
He rewardeth him, and he shall know *it*.
20 His eyes shall see his destruction,
And he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.
21 For what pleasure *hath* he in his house after him,
When the number of his months is cut off in the midst?
22 Shall *any* teach God knowledge?
Seeing he judgeth those that are high.
23 One dieth in his full strength,
Being wholly at ease and quiet.
24 His breasts are full of milk,
And his bones are moistened with marrow.
25 And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul,
And never eateth with pleasure.
26 They shall lie down alike in the dust,
And the worms shall cover them

Job had largely described the prosperity of wicked people; now in these verses,

First. He opposeth this to what his friends had maintained concerning their certain ruin in this life; Tell me how often do you see the candle of the wicked put out? Do you not as often see it burn down to the socket, until it goes out of itself? ver. 17. How often do you see their destruction come upon them, or God distributing sorrows in his anger among them? Do you not as often see their mirth and prosperity continuing to the last? Perhaps there are as many instances of notorious sinners ending their days in pomp as ending them in misery. Which observation is sufficient to invalidate their arguments against Job; and to shew that no certain judgment can be made of men's character by their outward condition.

Secondly. He reconciles this to the holiness and justice of God. Though wicked people prosper thus all their days, yet we are not therefore to think that God will let their wickedness always go unpunished. No:

1. Even while they prosper thus they are "as stubble and chaff before the stormy wind," ver. 18. They are light and worthless, and of no account, either with God or with wise and good men. They are fitted to destruction, and continually lie exposed to it; and in the height of their pomp and power there is but a step between them and ruin.

2. Though they spend all their days in wealth, "God is laying up their iniquity for their children," ver. 19; and he will visit it upon their posterity when they are gone. The oppressor lays up his goods for his children, to make them gentlemen; but God lays up his iniquity for them, to make them beggars. He keeps an exact account of the father's sins; "seals them up among his treasures," *Deu.* xxxii. 34; and will justly punish the children, while the riches, to which the curse cleaves, are found as assets in their hands.

3. Though they prosper in this world, yet they shall be reckoned with in another world. God rewardeth him according to his deeds at last, ver. 19; though the sentence passed against his evil works be not executed speedily. Perhaps he may not now be made to fear the wrath to come, but he may flatter himself with hopes that he shall have peace, though he go on. But he shall be made to feel it in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; "he shall know it," ver. 19; "his eyes shall see his destruction," which he would not be persuaded to believe. They "will not see, but they shall see," *Isa.* xxvi. 11. The eyes that have been wilfully shut against the grace of God shall be opened to see his destruction; and "he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty," that shall be "the portion of his cup:" compare *Ps.* xi. 6, with *Rev.* xiv. 10. The misery of damned sinners is here set forth in a few words, but very terrible ones. They lie under the wrath of an almighty God, who in their destruction both shews his wrath, and makes his power known.

And, if this will be his condition in the other world, what good will his prosperity in this world do him? ver. 21, "What pleasure has he in his house after him?" Our Saviour has let us know how little pleasure the rich man in hell had in his house after him, when the remembrance of the good things he had received in his lifetime would not cool his tongue, but added much to his misery, as did also the sorrow he was in lest his five brethren whom he left in his house after him should follow him to that place of torment, *Lu.* xvi. 25—28. So little will the gain of the world profit him that has lost his soul.

Thirdly. He resolves this difference which Providence makes between one wicked man and another into the wisdom and sovereignty of God; ver. 22, "Shall any" pretend to "teach God knowledge?" Dare we arraign God's proceedings, or blame his conduct? Shall we take upon us to tell God how he should govern the world, what sinner he should spare, and what he should punish? He hath both authority and ability to judge those that are high. Angels in heaven, princes and magistrates on earth, are accountable to God; and must receive their doom from him; he manages them, and makes what use he pleaseth of them. Shall he then be accountable to us, or receive advice from us? He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore, no doubt, he shall do right, *Gen.* xviii. 25; *Rom.* iii. 6; and those proceedings of his providence which seem to contradict one another he can make not only mutually to agree, but jointly to serve his own purposes.

The little difference there is between one wicked man's dying impenitent in peace and pomp and another wicked man's dying so in pain and misery, when both will at last meet in hell, he illustrates by the little difference there is between one man's dying suddenly and another's dying slowly, when they will both meet shortly in the grave. So vast is the disproportion between time and eternity, that, if hell be the lot of every sinner at last, it breaks no squares if one goes singing thither and another sighing. See,

1. How various the circumstances of people's dying are. There is one way into the world, we say, but many out; yet, as some are born by quick and easy labour, others by that which is hard and lingering, so dying is to some much more terrible than to others. And, since the death of the body is the birth of the soul into another world, deathbed agonies may not unfitly be compared to childbed throes. Observe the difference. 1st. "One dies" suddenly, "in his full strength;" not weakened by age or sickness, (ver. 23,) being "wholly at ease and quiet," under no apprehension at all of the approach of death, nor in any fear of it. But, on the contrary, because "his breasts are full of milk," and his "bones moistened with marrow," (ver. 24,) that is, he is healthful and vigorous, and of a good constitution, like a milch cow that is fat and in good liking, he counts upon nothing but to live many years in mirth and pleasure. Thus fair doth he bid for life, and yet cut off in a moment by the stroke of death. Note, It is a common thing for persons to be taken away by death when they are in their full strength, in the highest degree of health, when they least expect death; and think themselves best armed against it, and are ready not only to set death at a distance, but to set it at defiance. Let us, therefore, never be secure; for we have known many well and dead in the same week, the same day, the same hour, nay, perhaps the same minute. Be we therefore always ready. 2nd. Another dies slowly, and with a great deal of previous pain and misery, ver. 25, "in the bitterness of his soul," such as poor Job was himself now in, and never eats with pleasure, has no appetite to his food, nor any relish of it, through sickness, or age, or sorrow of mind. What great reason have those to be thankful that are in health, and always eat with pleasure! and what little reason have they to complain who sometimes do not, when they hear of many that never do!

2. How undiscernible this difference is in the grave. As rich and poor, so healthful and unhealthful, meet there; ver. 26, "They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them," and feed sweetly on them. Thus, if one wicked man die in a palace, and another in a dungeon, they will meet in the congregation of the dead and damned; and the worm that dies not, and the fire that is not quenched, will be the same to them, which makes those differences inconsiderable, and not worth perplexing ourselves about.

27 Behold, I know your thoughts,
And the devices *which* ye wrongfully imagine against me.
28 For ye say, Where *is* the house of the prince?
And where *are* the dwelling places of the wicked?
29 Have ye not asked them that go by the way?
And do ye not know their tokens,
30 That the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction?
They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.
31 Who shall declare his way to his face?
And who shall repay him *what* he hath done?
32 Yet shall he be brought to the grave,
And shall remain in the tomb.
33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him,
And every man shall draw after him,
As *there are* innumerable before him.
34 How then comfort ye me in vain,
Seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?

In these verses,

First. Job opposeth the opinion of his friends, which he saw they still adhered to, that wicked people are sure to fall into such visible and remarkable ruin as Job was now fallen into, and none but they; upon which principle they condemned Job as a wicked man. "I know your thoughts," (saith Job, ver. 27,) I know you will not agree with me; for your judgments are tinctured and biassed by your piques and prejudices against me, "and the devices which you wrongfully imagine against" my comfort and honour. And how can such men be convinced? Job's friends were ready to say, in answer to his discourse concerning the prosperity of the wicked, "Where is the house of the prince?" ver. 28: Job's house, or the house of his eldest son, in which his children were feasting. Inquire what are the circumstances of Job's house and family, and then inquire, "Where are the dwelling-places of the wicked?" and compare them together, and you will soon see that Job's house is in the same predicament with the houses of tyrants and oppressors, and may therefore conclude that doubtless he was such a one.

Secondly. He lays down his own judgment to the contrary, and for proof of it appeals to the sentiments and observations of all mankind. So confident is he that he is in the right, that he is willing to refer the cause to the next man that comes by; ver. 29, "Have ye not asked them that go by the way;" any indifferent person, any that will answer you; and not only "to which of the saints," to whom Eliphaz appealed, (*ch.* v. 1,) but to which of the children of men, "will you turn?" Turn to which you will, and you will find them all of my mind; that the punishment of sinners is designed more for the other world than for this, according to the prophecy of Enoch, the seventh from Adam, *Jude* 14. "Do you not know the tokens" of this truth, which all that have made any observations upon the providences of God concerning mankind in this world can furnish you with? Now what is it that Job here asserts? Two things:

1. That impenitent sinners will certainly be punished in the other world, and ordinarily their punishment is put off until then.

2. That, therefore, we are not to think it strange if they prosper greatly in this world, and fall under no visible token of God's wrath. Therefore they are spared now, because they are to be punished then; therefore "the workers of iniquity flourish, that they may be destroyed for ever," *Ps.* xcii. 7. This sinner is here supposed,

1st. To live in a great deal of power, so as to be not only "the terror of the mighty in the land of the living," *Eze.* xxxii. 27, but the terror of the wise and good too, whom he keeps in such awe that none dares "declare his way to his face," ver. 31. None will take the liberty to reprove him, to tell him of the wickedness of his way, and what will be in the end thereof, so that he sins securely, and is not made to know either shame or fear. "The prosperity of fools destroys them," by setting them, in their own conceit, above reproofs, by which they might be brought to that repentance which alone will prevent their ruin. Those are marked for destruction that are let alone in sin, *Hos.* iv. 17. And if none dares "declare his way to his face," much less dare any "repay him what he has done," and make him refund there where he has done wrong. He is one of those great flies which break through the cobwebs of the law, that hold only the little ones. This emboldens sinners in their sinful ways, that they can browbeat justice, and make it afraid to meddle with them. But there is a day coming when those shall be told of their faults that now would not bear to hear of them; shall have their sins set in order before them, and their way declared to their face, to their everlasting confusion, that would not have it done here to their conviction; when those who would not repay the wrongs they had done shall have them repaid to them.

2nd. To die and be buried in a great deal of pomp and magnificence, ver. 32, 33. There is no remedy; he must die, that is the lot of all men; but every thing you can think of shall be done to take off the reproach of death. *First.* He shall have a splendid funeral. A poor thing for any man to be proud of the prospect of; yet with some it passeth for a mighty thing. Well, "he shall be brought unto the grave" in state, surrounded with all the honours of the herald's office, and all the respects his friends can then pay to his remains; "The rich man died and was buried," but no mention is made of the poor man's burial, *Lu.* xvi. 22. *Secondly.* He shall have a stately monument erected over him; "He shall remain in the tomb," with a *Hic jacet*,—'here lies,' over him, and a large encomium. Perhaps it is meant of the embalming of his body to preserve it, which was a piece of honour anciently done by the Egyptians to their great men. 'He shall watch in the tomb,' so the word is, shall abide solitary and quiet there, as a watchman in his tower. *Thirdly.* "The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him;" there shall be as much done as can be with rich odours to take off the noisomeness of the grave, as by lamps to set aside the darkness of it, which, perhaps, was referred to in the foregoing phrase of watching in the tomb. But it is all a jest. What is the light, or what the perfume, to a man that is dead? *Fourthly.* It shall be alleged for the lessening of the disgrace of death, that it is the common lot; he has only truckled to fate; "and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him." Note, Death is the way of all the earth. When we are to cross that darksome valley we must consider, 1st. That there are innumerable before us; it is a tracked road, which may help to take off the terror of it. To die is *ire ad plures*,—'to go with the crowd.' *2nd.* That every man shall draw after us. As there is a plain track before, so there is a long train behind; we are neither the first nor the last that pass through that dark entry. Every one must go in his own order, the order appointed of God.

Lastly. From all this Job infers the impertinency of their discourses, ver. 34. 1. Their foundation is rotten, and they went upon a wrong hypothesis. "In your answers there remaineth falsehood;" what you have said stands not only unproved but disproved, and lies under such an imputation of falsehood as you cannot clear it from. 2. Their building was therefore weak and tottering; You comfort me in vain. All you have said gives me no relief; you tell me I shall prosper again if I turn to God, but you go upon this presumption, that piety shall certainly be crowned with prosperity, which is false; and, therefore, how can your inference from it yield me any comfort? Note, Where there is not truth, there is little comfort to be expected.

CHAPTER XXII.

Eliphaz here leads on a third attack upon poor Job, in which Bildad followed him; but Zophar drew back and quitted the field. It was one of the unhappinesses of Job, as it is of many an honest man, to be misunderstood by his friends. He had spoken of the prosperity of wicked men in this world as a mystery of Providence; but they took it for a reflection upon Providence, as countenancing their wickedness, and fell foul upon him accordingly. In this chapter, I. Eliphaz checks him for his complaints of God, and of his dealings with him, as if he thought God had done him wrong, ver. 2—4. II. He charged him with many high crimes and misdemeanours, for which he supposeth God was now punishing him: oppression and injustice, ver. 5—11; Atheism and infidelity, ver. 12—14. III. He compares his case to that of the old world, ver. 15—20. IV. He gives him very good counsel, assuring him that, if he would take it, God would return in mercy to him, and he should return to his former prosperity, ver. 21—30.

THEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,
2 Can a man be profitable unto God,
As he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?
3 *Is it* any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous?
Or *is it* gain *to him*, that thou makest thy ways perfect?
4 Will he reprove thee for fear of thee?
Will he enter with thee into judgment?

Eliphaz here insinuates that, because Job complained so much of his afflictions, he thought God was unjust in afflicting him. But it was a strained innuendo, Job was far from thinking so. What Eliphaz saith here is therefore unjustly applied to Job, but in itself it is very true and good.

First. That when God doth us good, it is not because he is indebted to us; if he were, there might be some colour to say, when he afflicts us, he doth not deal fairly with us. But whoever pretends that he has by any meritorious action made God his debtor, let him prove his debt, and he shall be sure not to lose it; *Rom.* xi. 35, "Who has given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" But Eliphaz here shews that the righteousness and perfection of the best man in the world is no real benefit or advantage to God, and, therefore, cannot be thought to merit any thing from him.

1. Man's piety is no profit to God, no gain, ver. 1, 2. If we could by any thing merit from God, it would be by our piety, our being righteous, and making our way perfect. If that will not merit, to be sure nothing else will. If a man cannot make God his debtor by his godliness and honesty, and obedience to his laws, much less can he by his wit and learning, and worldly policy. Now Eliphaz here asks, 1st. Whether any man can possibly be profitable to God? No, by no means. "He that is wise may be profitable to himself." Note, Our wisdom and piety is that which we ourselves are, and are likely to be, great gainers by. "Wisdom is profitable to direct," *Eccl.* x. 10; "godliness is profitable to all things," 1 *Tim.* iv. 8; "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself," *Pr.* ix. 12. The gains of religion are infinitely greater than the losses of it, and so it will appear when they are balanced. But can a man be thus profitable to God? No, for such is the perfection of God, that he cannot receive any benefit or advantage by men; what can be added to that which is infinite? And such is the weakness and imperfection of man, that he cannot offer any benefit or advantage to God. Can the light of a candle be profitable to the sun, or the drop of the bucket to the ocean? He that is wise is profitable to himself, for his own direction and defence, his own credit and comfort; he can with his wisdom entertain himself, and enrich himself; but can he so be profitable to God? No; God needs not us or our services. We are undone, for ever undone, without him; but he is happy, for ever happy, without us. "Is it any gain to him," any real addition to his glory or wealth, "if we make our way perfect?" Suppose it were absolutely perfect, yet what is God the better? much less when it is so far short of being perfect.

2. It is no pleasure to him. God hath indeed expressed himself in his Word well pleased with the righteous; his countenance beholds them, and his delight is in them and their prayers. But all that adds nothing to the infinite satisfaction and complacency which the Eternal Mind hath in itself. God can enjoy himself without us, though we could have but little enjoyment of ourselves without our friends. This magnifies his condescension, in that, though our services be no real profit or pleasure to him, yet he invites, encourages, and accepts of them.

Secondly. That when God restrains or rebukes us, it is not because he is in danger by us, or jealous of us; ver. 4, "Will he reprove thee for fear of thee?" and take thee down from thy prosperity lest thou shouldst grow too great for him; as princes sometimes have thought it a piece of policy to curb the growing greatness of a subject, lest he should become formidable. Satan indeed suggested to our first parents, that God forbade them the tree of knowledge for fear of them, lest they should be as gods, and so become rivals with him; but it was a base insinuation. God rebukes the good, because he loves them; but he never rebukes the great because he fears them. He doth not enter into judgment with men, that is, pick a quarrel with them, and seek occasion against them, for fear they should eclipse his honour, or endanger his interest. Magistrates punish offenders for fear of them; Pharaoh oppressed Israel because he feared them; it was for fear that Herod slew the children of Bethlehem; that the Jews persecuted Christ and his apostles. But God doth not, as they did, pervert justice for fear of any: see *ch.* xxxv. 5—8.

5 *Is* not thy wickedness great?
And thine iniquities infinite?
6 For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought,
And stripped the naked of their clothing.

7 Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink,
And thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.
8 But *as for* the mighty man, he had the earth;
And the honourable man dwelt in it.
9 Thou hast sent widows away empty,
And the arms of the fatherless have been broken.
10 Therefore snares *are* round about thee,
And sudden fear troubleth thee;
11 Or darkness, *that* thou canst not see;
And abundance of waters cover thee.
12 *Is* not God in the height of heaven?
And behold the height of the stars, how high they are!
13 And thou sayest, How doth God know?
Can he judge through the dark cloud?
14 Thick clouds *are* a covering to him, that he seeth not;
And he walketh in the circuit of heaven.

Eliphaz and his companions had condemned Job in general, as a wicked man and a hypocrite; but none of them had descended to particulars, nor drawn up any articles of impeachment against him, till Eliphaz did it here, where he positively and expressly charges him with many high crimes and misdemeanours, which if he had really been guilty of they might well have justified themselves in their harsh censures of him. Come, saith Eliphaz, we have been too long beating about the bush, too tender of Job, and afraid of grieving him, which has but confirmed him in his self-justification; it is high time to deal plainly with him. We have condemned him by parables, but that doth not answer the end, he is not prevailed with to condemn himself; we must therefore plainly tell him, "Thou art the man," the tyrant, the oppressor, the atheist, we have been speaking of all this while. "Is not thy wickedness great?" Certainly it is, or thy troubles would not be so great. I appeal to thyself, and thy own conscience, "are not thine iniquities infinite," both in number and heinousness? Strictly taken, nothing is infinite but God. But he means this, his sins were more than could be counted, and more heinous than could be conceived. Sin being committed against an Infinite Majesty, has in it a kind of infinite malignity. But when Eliphaz charges Job thus high, and ventures to descend to particulars too, laying to his charge that which he knew not, we may take occasion from hence, 1. To be angry at those who do unjustly censure and condemn their brethren. For aught I know, Eliphaz, in accusing Job falsely as he doth here, was guilty of as great a sin, and as great a wrong to Job, as the Sabeans and Chaldeans that robbed him; for a man's good name is more precious and valuable than his wealth. It is against all the laws of justice, charity, and friendship, either to raise or receive calumnies, jealousies, and evil surmises concerning others; and it is the more base and disingenuous if we thus vex those that are in distress, and add to their affliction. Eliphaz could produce no instances of Job's guilt in any of the particulars that follow here, but seems resolved to calumniate boldly, and throw all the dirt he could on Job, not doubting but some would stick. 2. To pity those that are thus censured and condemned. Innocency itself will be no security against a false and foul tongue. Job, whom God himself praised as the best man in the world, is here represented by one of his friends, and he a wise and good man too, as one of the greatest villains in nature. Let us not think it strange if at any time we be thus blackened, but learn how to pass by evil report as well as good, and commit our cause, as Job did, to him that judgeth righteously. Let us see the particular articles of this charge:

First. He charges him with oppression and injustice; that when he was in prosperity, he not only did no good with his wealth and power, but did a great deal of hurt with it. This was utterly false, as appears by the account Job gives of himself, *ch.* xxix. 12, &c., and the character God gave of him, *ch.* i. And yet,

1. Eliphaz branches out this charge into divers particulars, with as much assurance as if he could call witnesses to prove upon oath every article of it. He tells him, 1st. That he had been cruel and unmerciful to the poor. As a magistrate he ought to have protected them, and seen them provided for; but Eliphaz suspects that he never did them any kindness, but all the mischief his power enabled him to do. That for an inconsiderable debt he demanded and carried away by violence a pawn of great value, even from his brother, whose honesty and sufficiency he could not but know; ver. 6, "Thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought;" or, as the Seventy read it, 'Thou hast taken thy brethren for pledges,' and that for nought; imprisoned them, enslaved them, because they had nothing to pay. That he had taken the very clothes of his insolvent tenants and debtors, all they had to their backs; so that he had stripped them naked, and left them so. The law of Moses forbade this, *Ex.* xxii. 26; *Deu.* xxiv. 13. That he had not been charitable to the poor; no, not to poor travellers, and poor widows; "Thou hast not given" so much as a cup of cold water, which would have cost thee nothing, "to the weary to drink," when he begged for it, ver. 7, and was ready to perish for want of it. Nay, thou hast "withholden bread from the hungry" in their extremity; hast not only not given it, but hast forbidden the giving of it, which is withholding good from those to whom it is really due, *Pr.* iii. 27. Poor widows, that while their husbands were living troubled nobody, but now were forced to seek relief, thou hast sent away empty from thy doors with a sad heart, ver. 9. Those that came to thee for justice thou didst send them away unheard, unhelped; nay, though they came to thee full, thou didst squeeze them, and send them away empty. And, worst of all, the arms of the fatherless have been broken; those that could help themselves but little, thou hast quite disabled to help themselves. This, which is the blackest part of the charge, is but insinuated; "The arms of the fatherless have been broken;" he doth not say, Thou hast broken them, but he would have it understood so. And if they be broken, and those that have power do not relieve them, they are chargeable with it. They have been broken by those under thee, and thou hast connived at it, which brings thee under the guilt. 2nd. That he had been partial to the rich and great; ver. 8, "As for the mighty man," if he were guilty of any crime, yet he should never be questioned for it; "he had the earth, he dwelt in it." If he brought an action never so unjustly, or if an action were never so justly brought against him, yet he was sure to carry his cause in thy courts. The poor were fed not at thy door, while the rich were feasted at thy table. Contrary to this is Christ's rule for hospitality, *Lu.* xiv. 12—14; and Solomon saith, "He that gives to the rich shall come to poverty."

2. He attributes all his present troubles to these supposed sins, ver. 10 11. Those that are guilty of such practices as these commonly bring themselves into just such a condition as thou art now in, and therefore we conclude thou hast been thus guilty. 1st. God's providence useth to cross and embarrass such, and snares are accordingly round about thee; so that, which way soever thou steppest or lookest, thou findest thyself in distress; and others are as hard upon thee as thou hast been upon the poor. 2nd. Their own consciences use to terrify and accuse them. No sin makes a louder cry there than unmercifulness. And accordingly "sudden fear troubleth thee;" and, though thou wilt not own it, it is guilt of this kind that creates thee all this terror. Zophar had insinuated this, *ch.* xx. 19, 20. 3rd. They are brought to their wits' end, so amazed and bewildered that they know not what to do. And that also is thy case; for thou art in "darkness that thou canst not see" wherefore God contends with thee, nor what is the best course for thee to take; "for abundance of waters cover thee," that is, thou art in a mist, in the midst of "dark waters in the thick clouds of the sky." Note, Those that have not shewed mercy may justly be denied the comfortable hopes that they shall find mercy; and then what can they expect but snares, and darkness, and continual fear.

Secondly. He chargeth him with atheism, infidelity, and gross impiety, and thought this was at the bottom of his injustice and oppressiveness; he that did not fear God did not regard man. He would have it thought that Job was an epicurean, who did indeed own the being of God, but denied his providence, and fancied that he confined himself to the entertainments of the upper world, and never concerned himself in the inhabitants and affairs of this.

1. Eliphaz observes a good truth, which, he thought, if Job would duly consider, he would not be so passionate in his complaints, nor so bold in justifying himself; ver. 12, "Is not God in the height of heaven?" Yes, no doubt he is; no heaven so high but God is there. And in the highest heavens, the heavens of the blessed, the residence of his glory, is in a special manner; there he is pleased to manifest himself in a way peculiar to the upper world, and thence he is pleased to manifest himself in a way suited to this lower world: there is his throne; there is his court: he is called the Heavens, *Dan.* iv. 26. Thus Eliphaz proves that a man cannot be profitable to God, ver. 2, and that he ought not to contend with God; it is his folly if he does. And that we ought always to address ourselves to God with very great reverence; for when we "behold the height of the stars, how high they are," we might at the same time also consider the transcendent majesty of God, who is above the stars, and how high he is.

2. He chargeth it upon Job that he made an ill use of this doctrine, which he might have made so good a use of, ver. 13. This is holding the truth in unrighteousness, fighting against religion with its own weapons, and turning its own artillery upon itself. Thou art willing to own that God is in the height of heaven, but from thence thou inferrest, "how doth God know?" Bad men expel the fear of God out of their hearts, by banishing the eye of God out of the world, *Eze.* viii. 12; and care not what they do, if they can but persuade themselves that God doth not know. Eliphaz suspects that Job had such notions as this of God, that because he is in the height of heaven, 1st. It is therefore impossible for him to see and hear what is done at so great a distance as this earth; especially since there is a dark cloud, ver. 13, many thick clouds, ver. 14, that come between him and us, and are a covering to him, so that he cannot see, much less can he judge of the affairs of this lower world; as if God had eyes of flesh, *ch.* x. 4; the interposing firmament is to him as transparent crystal, *Eze.* i. 22. Distance of place creates no difficulty to him who is immense, no more than distance of time to him who is eternal. Or, 2nd. That it is therefore below him, and a diminution to his glory, to take cognizance of this inferior part of the creation. He "walks in the circuit of heaven," and hath enough to do to enjoy himself and his own perfections and glory in that bright and quiet world; why should he trouble himself about us? This is gross absurdity, as well as gross impiety, which Eliphaz here fathers upon Job; for it supposeth that the administration of government is a burthen and disparagement to the Supreme Governor; and the acts of justice and mercy were a toil to a mind infinitely wise, holy, and good. If the sun, a creature, and inanimate, can with his light and influence reach this earth, and every part of it, *Ps.* xix. 6, even from that vast height of the visible heavens in which he is, and in the circuit of which he walks, and that through many a thick and dark cloud, shall we question it concerning the Creator?

15 Hast thou marked the old way
Which wicked men have trodden?
16 Which were cut down out of time,
Whose foundation was overflown with a flood:
17 Which said unto God, Depart from us:
And what can the Almighty do for them?
18 Yet he filled their houses with good *things:*
But the counsel of the wicked is far from me.
19 The righteous see *it,* and are glad:
And the innocent laugh them to scorn.
20 Whereas our substance is not cut down,
But the remnant of them the fire consumeth.

Eliphaz having endeavoured to convict Job, by setting his sins (as he thought) in order before him, here endeavours to awaken him to a sight and sense of his misery and danger by reason of sin; and this he doth by comparing his case with that of the sinners of the old world; as if he had said, Thy condition is bad now, but unless thou repent it will be worse, as theirs was. Theirs, who were overflown with a flood, as the old world, ver. 16; and theirs, the remnant of whom the fire consumed, ver. 20, namely, the Sodomites, who, in comparison of the old world, were but a remnant. And these two instances of the wrath of God against sin and sinners are more than once put together for warning to a careless world, as by our Saviour, *Lu.* xvii. 26, &c., and the apostle, 2 *Pet.* ii. 5, 6. Eliphaz would have Job to mark "the old way which wicked men have trodden," ver. 15, and see what came of it, what the end of their way was. Note, There is an old way which wicked men have trodden; religion had but newly entered when sin immediately followed it. But though it is an old way, a broad way, a tracked way, it is a dangerous way, and it leads to destruction; and it is good for us to mark it, that we may not dare to walk in it. Eliphaz here puts Job in mind of it, perhaps in opposition to what he had said of the prosperity of the wicked; as though he would say, Thou canst find out here and there a single instance, it may be, of a wicked man ending his days in peace; but what is that to those two great instances of the final perdition of ungodly men, the drowning of the whole world, and the burning of Sodom? destructions by wholesale, in which he thinks Job may, as in a glass, see his own face. Observe,

First. The ruin of those sinners; ver. 16, "They were cut down out of time;" that is, they were cut off in the midst of their days; when, as man's time then

went, many of them might in the course of nature have lived some hundreds of years longer, which made their immature extirpation the more grievous. They were cut down out of time to be hurried into eternity; and their foundation, the earth on which they built themselves, and all their hopes, was overflown with a flood, the flood which was brought in upon the world of the ungodly, 2 *Pet.* ii. 5. Note, Those who build upon the sand choose a foundation which will be overflown, when the rains descend, and the floods come, *Mat.* vii. 27; and then their building must needs fall, and they perish in the ruins of it, and repent their folly when it is too late.

Secondly. The sin of those sinners which brought that ruin; ver. 17, "They said unto God, Depart from us." Job had spoke of some who said so, and yet prospered, *ch.* xxi. 14; but these did not, saith Eliphaz, they found to their cost what it was to set God at defiance. Those that were resolved to lay the reins in the neck of their appetites and passions began with this; they said unto God, "Depart;" they abandoned all religion, hated the thoughts of it, and desired to live without God in the world; they shunned his Word, and silenced conscience, his deputy. "And what can the Almighty do for them?" Some make this to speak the justness of their punishment: they said to God, "Depart from us," and then what else could the Almighty do with them, but cut them off? Those that will not submit to God's golden sceptre, what is to be expected but that they should be broken to pieces with his iron rod? Others make it to speak the injustice of their sin: But what hath the Almighty done against them? what iniquity have they found in him? or wherein has he wearied them? *Mic.* vi. 3; *Jer.* ii. 5. Others make it to speak the reason of their sin: they say unto God, Depart, asking what the Almighty can do to them: What has he done to oblige us? what can he do in a way of wrath to make us miserable? or in a way of favour to make us happy? as they argue, *Zeph.* i. 12, "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." Eliphaz shews the absurdity of this in one word, and that is calling God the Almighty; for, if he be so, what cannot he do? But it is not strange if those cast off all religion who neither dread God's wrath nor desire his favour.

Thirdly. The aggravation of this sin; "Yet he had filled their houses with good things," ver. 18. Both those of the old world and those of Sodom had great plenty of all the delights of sense; for "they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold," &c., *Lu.* xvii. 27. So that they had no reason to ask what the Almighty could do for them; for they lived upon his bounty: no reason to bid him depart from them who had been so kind to them. Many have their houses full of goods, but their hearts empty of grace, and thereby are marked for ruin.

Fourthly. The protestation which Eliphaz makes against the principles and practices of those wicked people; "But the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Job had said so, *ch.* xxi. 16, and Eliphaz will not be behind with him. If they cannot agree in their own principles concerning God, yet they agree in renouncing the principles of those that live without God in the world. Note, Those that differ from each other in some matters of religion, and are engaged in disputes about them, yet ought unanimously and vigorously to appear against atheism and irreligion, and to take great care that their disputes do not hinder either their vigour or unanimity in that common cause of God, that righteous cause.

Fifthly. The pleasure and satisfaction which the righteous shall have in this. 1. In seeing the wicked destroyed, ver. 19. They shall see it, that is, observe it, and take notice of it, *Hos.* xiv. 9; and they shall be glad, not to see their fellow-creatures miserable, or any secular turn of their own served, or point gained, but to see God glorified, the word of God fulfilled, the power of oppressors broken, and thereby the oppressed relieved; to see sin shamed, atheists and infidels confounded, and fair warning given to all others to shun such wicked courses. Nay, they shall laugh them to scorn, that is, they justly might do it; they shall do it as God doth it, in a holy manner, *Ps.* ii. 4; *Pr.* i. 26. They shall take occasion from thence to expose the folly of sinners, and shew how ridiculous their principles are, though they call themselves wits. "Lo this is the man that made not God his strength;" and see what comes of it, *Ps.* lii. 7. Some understand this of righteous Noah and his family, who beheld the destruction of the old world, and rejoiced in it, as he had grieved for their impiety. And Lot, who saw the ruin of Sodom, had the same reason to rejoice, 1 *Pet.* ii. 8. 2. In seeing themselves distinguished; ver. 20, "Whereas our substance is not cut down," as theirs was, and as thine is; we continue to prosper, which is a sign we are the favourites of Heaven, and in the right. The same rule that served him to condemn Job by served him to magnify himself and his companions by: His substance is cut down, therefore he is a wicked man: ours is not, therefore we are righteous. But it is a deceitful rule to judge by; for none knows love or hatred by all that is before him. If others be consumed, if the very remnant of them be consumed, and we be not, instead of censuring them, and lifting up ourselves as Eliphaz doth here, we ought to be thankful to God, and take it for a warning to ourselves to prepare for the like calamities.

21 Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace:
Thereby good shall come unto thee.
22 Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth,
And lay up his words in thine heart.
23 If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up,
Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles.
24 Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust,
And the *gold* of Ophir as the stones of the brooks.
25 Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence,
And thou shalt have plenty of silver.
26 For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty,
And shalt lift up thy face unto God.
27 Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee,
And thou shalt pay thy vows.
28 Thou shalt also decree a thing,
And it shall be established unto thee:
And the light shall shine upon thy ways
29 When *men* are cast down,
Then thou shalt say, *There is* lifting up;
And he shall save the humble person.
30 He shall deliver the island of the innocent:
And it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.

Methinks I can almost forgive Eliphaz his hard censures of Job, which we had in the beginning of the chapter, though they were very unjust and unkind, for this good counsel and encouragement which he gives him in these verses, with which he closeth his discourse, and than which nothing could be better said, or more to the purpose. Though he thought him a bad man, yet he saw reason to have hopes concerning him; that for all this he would be both pious and prosperous. But it is strange that out of the same mouth, and almost in the same breath, both sweet waters and bitter should proceed. Good men, though they may perhaps be put into a heat, yet sometimes will talk themselves into a better temper, and, it may be, sooner than another could talk them into it. Eliphaz had laid before Job the miserable condition of a wicked man, that he might frighten him to repentance. Here, on the other hand, he shews him the happiness which those may be sure of that do repent, that he might allure and encourage him to it. Ministers must try both ways in dealing with people, must speak to them from mount Sinai by the terrors of the law, and from mount Zion by the comforts of the Gospel; must set before them both life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Now here observe,

First. The good counsel which Eliphaz gives to Job; and good counsel it is to us all, though as to Job it was built upon a false supposition that he was a wicked man, and now a stranger and enemy to God.

1. "Acquaint now thyself with God;" 'acquiesce in God,' so some. And our great duty it is at all times, especially when we are in affliction, to accommodate ourselves to, and quiet ourselves in, all the disposals of the Divine providence. 'Join thyself to him,' so some; fall in with his interests, and act no longer in opposition to him. Ours renders it very well, "Acquaint thyself with him." Be not such a stranger to him as thou hast made thyself by casting off the fear of him, and restraining prayer before him. It is the duty and interest of every one of us to acquaint ourselves with God. We must get the knowledge of him, fix our affections on him, join ourselves to him in a covenant of friendship, and then set up and keep up a constant correspondence with him, in the ways he has appointed. It is our honour that we are made capable of this acquaintance; our misery that by sin we have lost it; our privilege that through Christ we are invited to return to it; and it will be our unspeakable happiness to contract and cultivate this acquaintance.

2. "Be at peace." At peace with thyself, not fretful and uneasy, and in confusion; let not thy heart be troubled; but be quiet and calm, and well composed. Be at peace with thy God; be reconciled to him: do not carry on this unholy war. Thou complainest God is thine enemy: be thou friends with him. It is the great concern of every one of us to make our peace with God, and it is necessary in order to our comfortable acquaintance with him; for "can two walk together except they be agreed?" *Am.* iii. 3. This we must do quickly; now, before it be too late. Agree with thine adversary while thou art in the way. This we are earnestly urged to do. Some read it, 'Acquaint thyself, I pray thee, with him, and be at peace.' God himself beseeches us; ministers in Christ's stead pray us to be reconciled. Can we gainsay such entreaties?

3. "Receive the law from his mouth," ver. 22. Having made thy peace with God, submit to his government, and resolve to be ruled by him, that thou mayst keep thyself in his love. We receive our being and maintenance from God; from him we hope to receive our bliss, and from him we must receive law; "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" *Acts* ix. 6. Which way soever we receive the intimations of his will, we must have our eye to him; whether he speaks by Scripture, ministers, conscience, or providence, we must take the word as from his mouth, and bow our souls to it. Though in Job's time we do not know that there was any written word, yet there was a revelation of God's will to be received. Eliphaz looked upon Job as an ill man; and was pressing him to repent and reform. And herein consists the conversion of a sinner, his receiving the law from God's mouth, and no longer from the world and the flesh. Eliphaz being now in contest with Job, appeals to the Word of God for the ending of the controversy; Receive that, and be determined by it. "To the law and to the testimony."

4. "Lay up his word in thine heart." It is not enough to receive it, but we must retain it, *Pr.* iii. 18. We must lay it up as a thing of great value, that it may be safe; and we must lay it up in our hearts as a thing of great use, that it may be ready to us when there is occasion, and we may neither lose it wholly nor be at a loss for it in a time of need.

5. "Return to the Almighty," ver. 23. Do not only turn from sin, but turn to God and thy duty. Do not only turn towards the Almighty in some good inclinations and good beginnings, but return to him, (return home to him, quite to him, so as to reach to the Almighty, so Mr. Poole,) by a universal reformation, an effectual, thorough change of thy heart and life, and a firm resolution to cleave to him.

6. "Put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle." This was the advice Zophar gave him, *ch.* xi. 14, "Let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle." Put iniquity far off, the farther the better, not only from thy heart and hand, but from thy house. Thou must not only not be wicked thyself, but reprove and restrain sin in those that are under thy charge. Note, Family reformation is needful reformation; we and our house must serve the Lord.

Secondly. The good encouragement which Eliphaz gives Job, that he should be very happy if he would but take this good counsel. In general, "thereby good shall come unto thee," ver. 21. The good that is now departed from thee, all the good thy heart can desire, temporal, spiritual, eternal good shall come to thee. God shall come to thee, into covenant and communion with thee, and he brings all good with him, all good in him. Thou art now ruined and brought down; but if thou return to God thou shalt be built up again, and thy present ruins shall be repaired. Thy family shall be built up in children, thy estate in wealth, and thy soul in holiness and comfort. The promises which Eliphaz here encourageth Job with are reducible to three heads:

1. That his estate should prosper, and temporal blessings should be bestowed abundantly upon him; for godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. It is promised,

1st. That he shall be very rich; ver. 24, "Thou shalt lay up gold as dust," in such great abundance, "and shalt have plenty of silver," ver. 25, whereas now thou art poor and stripped of all. Job had been rich; Eliphaz suspected he got his riches by fraud and oppression, and therefore they were taken from him. But if he would return to God and duty, *First.* He should have more wealth than ever he had; not only thousands of sheep and oxen, the wealth of farmers, but thousands of gold and silver, the wealth of princes, *ch.* iii. 15. There is abundantly more riches, true riches, to be got by the service of God than by the service of the world. *Secondly.* He should have it more sure to him; Thou shalt lay it up, in good hands, and hold that which is got by thy piety by a surer tenure than that which thou gottest by thine iniquity. Thou shalt have 'silver of strength,' for so the word is, which, being honestly got, will wear well; silver like steel. *Thirdly.* He should, by the grace of God, be

kept from setting his heart so much upon it as Eliphaz thought he had done. And then wealth is a blessing indeed when we are not ensnared with the love of it. "Thou shalt lay up gold;" but how? not as thy treasure and portion, but "as dust, and as the stones of the brooks." So little shalt thou value it, or expect from it, thou shalt lay it at thy feet, (*Acts* iv. 35,) not in thy bosom.

2nd. That yet he shall be very safe. Whereas men's riches usually expose them to danger, and he had owned that in his prosperity he was not in safety, *ch.* iii. 26, now he might be secure, for "The Almighty shall be thy defender;" nay, he "shall be thy defence," ver. 25. He 'shall be thy gold,' so it is in the margin; and it is the same word that is used, ver. 24, for gold, but it signifies also a stronghold, because "money is a defence," *Eccl.* vii. 12. Worldlings make gold their god, saints make God their gold; and they that are enriched with his favour and grace may truly be said to have abundance of the best gold, and best laid up. We read it, he "shall be thy defence" against the incursions of neighbouring spoilers. Thy wealth shall not then lie exposed as it did to Sabeans and Chaldeans; which some think is the meaning of that, "Thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle;" taking it as a promise, The iniquity or wrong designed against thee shall be put off, and shall not reach thee. Note, Those must needs be safe, and they be secure, that have Omnipotence itself for their defence. *Ps.* xci. 1—3.

2. That his soul should prosper, and he should be enriched with spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings.

1st. That he should live a life of complacency in God; ver. 26, "For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty;" and thus the Almighty comes to be thy gold, by thy delighting in him, as worldly people delight in their money. He shall be thy wealth, thy defence, thy dignity; for he shall be thy delight. The way to have our heart's desire is to make God our heart's delight, *Ps.* xxxvii. 4. If God give us himself to be our joy, he will deny us nothing that is good for us. Now God is a terror to thee; he is so by thine own confession, *ch.* vi. 4; xvi. 9; xix. 11. But if thou wilt return to him, then, and not till then, he will be thy delight; and it shall be as much a pleasure to thee to think of him as ever it was a pain. No delight is comparable to the delight which gracious souls have in the Almighty. And those that acquaint themselves with him, and submit themselves entirely to him, shall find his favour to be not only their strength, but their song.

2nd. That he should have an humble, holy confidence towards God, such as they are said to have whose hearts condemn them not, 1 *Jno.* iii. 21. Then shalt thou "lift up thy face to God" with boldness, and not be afraid, as thou now art, to draw near to him. Thy countenance is now fallen, and thou lookest dejected; but when thou hast made thy peace with God, thou shalt blush no more, tremble no more, as now thou dost, and hang thy head no more, but shalt cheerfully, and with a gracious assurance, shew thyself to him, pray before him, and expect blessings from him.

3rd. That he should maintain a constant communion with God. The correspondence, once settled, shall be kept up to thine unspeakable satisfaction. Letters shall be both statedly and occasionally interchanged between thee and heaven, ver. 27. *First.* Thou shalt, by prayer, send letters to God: "Thou shalt make thy prayer" (the word is, 'thou shalt multiply' thy prayers) unto him, and he will not think thy letters troublesome, though many and long. The oftener we come to a throne of grace, the more welcome. Under all thy burthens, in all thy wants, cares, and fears, thou shalt send to heaven for guidance and strength, wisdom, comfort, and good success. *Secondly.* He shall, by his providence and grace, answer those letters, and give thee what thou askest of him, either in kind or kindness: "He shall hear thee," and make it to appear he doth so, by what he doth for thee, and in thee. *Thirdly.* Then thou shalt, by thy praises, reply to the gracious answers which he sent thee: "Thou shalt pay thy vows," and that shall be acceptable to him, and fetch in farther mercy. Note, When God performs that which in our distress we prayed for, we must make conscience of performing that which we then promised, else we do not deal honestly. If we promised nothing else, we promised to be thankful; and that is enough, for it includes all, *Ps.* cxvi. 14.

4th. That he should have inward satisfaction in the management of all his outward affairs; ver. 28, "Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee;" that is, thou shalt frame all thy projects and purposes with so much wisdom and grace, and resignation to the will of God, that the issue of them shall be to thy heart's content, just as thou wouldst have it to be. Thou shalt commit thy works unto the Lord, by faith and prayer, and then thy thoughts shall be established; thou shalt be easy and pleased, whatsoever comes, *Pr.* xvi. 3. This the grace of God shall work in thee; nay, sometimes the providence of God shall give thee the very thing thou didst desire and pray for, and give it thee in thy own way, and manner, and time: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." When at any time an affair succeeds just according to the scheme we laid, and our measures are in nothing broken, nor are we put upon new counsels, then we must own the performance of this promise, "Thou shalt decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee." Whereas now thou complainest of darkness round about thee, then "the light shall shine on thy ways;" that is, God shall guide and direct thee, and then it will follow of course that he shall prosper and succeed thee in all thine undertakings. God's wisdom shall be thy conduct, and his favour thy comfort; and thy ways shall be so under both those lights, as that thou shalt have a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable prospect of what is future, *Ps.* xc. 17.

5th. That even in times of common calamity and danger he should have abundance of joy and hope; ver. 29, "When men are cast down" round about thee, cast down in their affairs, cast down in their spirits, sinking, desponding, and ready to despair, "then shalt thou say, There is lifting up." Thou shalt find that in thyself which will not only bear thee up under thy troubles, and keep thee from fainting, but lift thee up above thy troubles, and enable thee to rejoice evermore. When men's hearts fail them for fear, then shall Christ's disciples lift up their heads for joy, *Lu.* xxi. 26, 28. Thus are they made to ride upon the high places of the earth, *Isa.* lviii. 14, and that which will lift them up is the belief of this, that God will save the humble person. They that humble themselves shall be exalted, not only in honour, but in comfort.

3. That he should be a blessing to his country, and an instrument of good to many; ver. 30, "God shall," in answer to thy prayers, "deliver the island of the innocent," and have a regard therein to "the pureness of thy hands," which is necessary to the acceptableness of our prayers, 1 *Tim.* ii. 8. But, because we may suppose the innocent not to need deliverance,—it was guilty Sodom that wanted the benefit of Abraham's intercession,—I incline to the marginal reading, 'The innocent shall deliver the island,' by their advice, *Eccl.* ix. 14, 15, and by their prayers and their interest in heaven, *Acts* xxvii. 24. Or, 'He shall deliver those that are not innocent, and they are delivered by the pureness of thy hands;' so it may be read, and most probably. Note, A good man is a public good. Sinners fare the better for saints, whether they are aware of it or no. If Eliphaz intended hereby, as some think he did, to insinuate that Job's prayers were not prevailing, nor his hands pure, for then he would have relieved others, much more himself, he was afterwards made to see his error, when it appeared that Job had a better interest in Heaven than he had; for he and his three friends, who in this matter were not innocent, were delivered by the pureness of Job's hands, *ch.* xlii. 8.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The chapter begins Job's reply to Eliphaz; and in this reply he takes no notice of his friends, either because he saw it was to no purpose, or because he liked the good counsel Eliphaz gave him in the close of his discourse so well, that he would make no answer to the peevish reflections he began with. But he appeals to God; begs to have his cause heard, and doubts not but to make it good; having the testimony of his own conscience concerning his integrity. Here seems to be a struggle between flesh and spirit, fear and faith, throughout this chapter. I. He complains of his calamitous condition, and especially of God's withdrawings from him, so that he could not get his appeal heard, ver. 2—5; nor discern the meaning of God's dealings with him, ver. 8, 9; nor gain any hope of relief, ver. 13, 14; and this made deep impressions of trouble and terror upon him, ver. 15—17. But, II. In the midst of these complaints he comforts himself with the assurance of God's clemency, ver. 6, 7; and his own integrity, which God himself was a witness to, ver. 10—12. Thus was the light of his day, like that spoken of *Zec.* xiv. 6, 7, neither perfectly clear nor perfectly dark, but at evening time it was light.

THEN Job answered and said,
2 Even to day *is* my complaint bitter:
My stroke is heavier than my groaning.
3 Oh that I knew where I might find him!
That I might come *even* to his seat!
4 I would order *my* cause before him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.
5 I would know the words *which* he would answer me,
And understand what he would say unto me.
6 Will he plead against me with *his* great power?
No; but he would put *strength* in me.
7 There the righteous might dispute with him;
So should I be delivered for ever from my judge.

Job is satisfied that he has wrong done him by his friends, and therefore, as ill as he is, he will not give up the cause, nor let them have the last word. Here,

First. He justifies his own resentments and remonstrances of his trouble; ver. 2, "Even to day," I own, "my complaint is bitter;" for the affliction, the cause of the complaint is so; there is wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery, my soul has them still in remembrance, and is embittered by them, *Lam.* iii. 19, 20. 'Even to day is my complaint counted rebellion,' so some read it. His friends construed the innocent expressions of his grief, as reflections upon God and his providence, and called them rebellion. But, saith he, I do not complain more than there is cause, "for my stroke is heavier than my groaning." Even to day, after all you have said to convince and comfort me, still the pain of my body, and the wounds of my spirit are such, that I have reason enough for my complaints, if they were more bitter than they are. We wrong God, if our groaning be heavier than our stroke; like froward children, who, when they cry for nothing, have justly something given them to cry for; but we do not wrong ourselves, though our stroke be heavier than our groaning, for little said is soon amended.

Secondly. He appeals from the censures of his friends to the just judgment of God; and this he thought was an evidence for him that he was not a hypocrite, for then he durst not have made such an appeal as this. St. Paul comforts himself in this, that he that judged him was the Lord, and therefore he valued not man's judgment, 1 *Cor.* iv. 3, 4, but he is willing to wait till the appointed day of decision comes; whereas Job is impatient, and passionately wishes to have the judgment day anticipated, and to have his cause tried quickly, as it were, by a special commission of Oyer and Terminer. The apostle found it necessary to press it much upon suffering Christians patiently to expect the Judge's coming, *Jas.* v. 7—9.

1. He is so sure of the equity of God's tribunal, that he longs to appear before it; ver. 3, "O that I knew where I might find him!" This may properly speak the pious breathings of a soul convinced it has by sin lost God, and is undone for ever if it recover not its interest in his favour. O that I knew how I might recover his favour! how I might come into covenant and communion with him! *Mic.* vi. 6, 7. It is the cry of a poor deserted soul, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? O that I knew where I might find him!" O that he who has laid open the way to him would direct me into it, and lead me in it! But Job here seems to speak it too boldly, that his friends wronged him, and he knew not which way to apply himself to God to have justice done him, else he would come, even to his seat, to demand it. A patient waiting for death and judgment is our wisdom and duty, and, if we duly consider things, that cannot be without a holy fear and trembling; but a passionate wishing for death or judgment, without any such fear and trembling, is our sin and folly, and ill becomes us. Do we know what death and judgment are, and are we so very ready for them, that we need not time to get readier? "Woe to them that," thus in a heat, "desire the day of the Lord," *Am.* v. 18.

2. He is so sure of the goodness of his own cause, that he longs to be opening it at God's bar; ver. 4, "I would order my cause before him," and set it in a true light; I would produce the evidences of my sincerity in a proper method, and "would fill my mouth with arguments" to prove it. We may apply this to the duty of prayer, in which we have boldness to enter into the holiest, and to come even to the footstool of the throne of grace; and we have not only liberty of access, but liberty of speech. We have leave, 1st. To be particular in our requests, to order our cause before God, to speak the whole matter, to lay before him all our grievances, in what method we think most proper. We durst not be so free with earthly princes, as an humble, holy soul may be with God. 2nd. To be importunate in our requests. We are allowed not only to pray, but to plead; not only to ask, but to argue; nay, to fill our mouths with arguments. Not to move God,—he is perfectly apprised of the merits of the cause without our shewing,—but to move ourselves, to excite our fervency, and encourage our faith in prayer.

3. He is so sure of a sentence in favour of him, that he even longed to hear it; ver. 5, "I would know the words which he would answer me;" that is, I would gladly hear what God will say to this matter in dispute between you and me, and will entirely acquiesce in his judgment. This becomes us in all controversies. Let the Word of God determine them; let us know what he answers, and understand what he saith. Job knew well enough what his friends would answer him; they would condemn him, and run him down; but, saith he, I would fain know what God would answer me; for I am sure his judgment is according to truth, which theirs is not. I cannot understand them

they talk so little to the purpose; but what he saith I should understand, and therefore be fully satisfied in.

Thirdly. He comforts himself with hopes that God would deal favourably with him in this matter, ver. 6, 7. Note, It is of great use to us, in every thing wherein we have to do with God, to keep up good thoughts of him. He believes,

1. That God would not overpower him; that he would not deal with him either by absolute sovereignty or in strict justice; not with a high hand, nor with a strong hand. "Will he plead against me with his great power?" No. Job's friends pleaded against him with all the power they had, but will God do so? No; his power is all just and holy, whatever men's is. Against those that are obstinate in their unbelief and impenitency, God will plead with his great power, their destruction will come from the glory of his power; but with his own people, that love him and trust in him, he will deal in tender compassion.

2. That, on the contrary, he would empower him to plead his own cause before God; "He would put strength in me," to support me and bear me up, in maintaining mine integrity. Note, The same power that is engaged against proud sinners is engaged for humble saints, who prevail with God by strength derived from him, as Jacob did, *Hos.* xii. 3: see *Ps.* lxviii. 35.

3. That the issue would certainly be comfortable; ver. 7, "There," in the court of heaven, when the final sentence is to be given, "the righteous might dispute with him," and come off in his righteousness. Now even the upright are often chastened of the Lord, and they cannot dispute against it. Integrity itself is no fence either against calamity or calumny. But in that day they shall not be condemned with the world, though God may afflict by prerogative. "Then you shall discern between the righteous and the wicked," *Mal.* iii. 18. So vast will be the difference between them in their everlasting state, whereas now we can scarce distinguish them, so little is the difference between them as to their outward condition, "for all things come alike to all." Then, when the final doom is given, "I shall be delivered for ever from my judge;" that is, I shall be saved from the unjust censures of my friends, and from that Divine sentence which is now so much a terror to me. Those that are delivered up to God as their owner and ruler, shall be for ever delivered from him as their judge and avenger; and there is no flying from his justice but by flying to his mercy.

8 Behold, I go forward, but he *is* not *there;*
And backward, but I cannot perceive him:
9 On the left hand, where he doth work,
But I cannot behold *him:*
He hideth himself on the right hand,
That I cannot see *him:*
10 But he knoweth the way that I take:
When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.
11 My foot hath held his steps,
His way have I kept, and not declined.
12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips;
I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary *food.*

Here, First. Job complains that he cannot understand the meaning of God's providences concerning him, but was quite at a loss about them; ver. 8, 9, "I go forward, but he is not there," &c. Eliphaz had bid him acquaint himself with God; So I would with all my heart, saith Job, if I knew how to get acquainted with him. He had himself a great desire to appear before God, and get a hearing of his case; but the judge was not to be found. Look which way he would he could see no sign of God's appearing for him, to clear up his innocency. Job no doubt believed that God is every where present; but three things he seems to complain of here: 1. That he could not fix his thoughts, nor form any clear judgment of things in his own mind. His mind was so hurried and discomposed with his troubles, that he was like a man in a fright or at his wits' end, that runs this way and that way, but, being in confusion, brings nothing to a head. By reason of the disorder and tumult his spirit was in, he could not fasten upon that which he knew to be in God, and which, if he could but mix faith with it, and dwell upon it in his thoughts, would be a support to him. It is the common complaint of those who are sick or melancholy, that when they would think of that which is good they can make nothing of it. 2. That he could not find out the cause of his troubles, nor the sin which provoked God to contend with him. He took a view of his whole conversation, turned to every side of it, and could not perceive wherein he had sinned more than others, for which he should thus be punished more than others; nor could he discern what other end God should aim at in afflicting him thus. 3. That he could not foresee what would be in the end hereof, whether God would deliver him at all; nor, if he did, when, or which way. He saw not his signs, nor was there any to tell him how long: as the church complains, *Ps.* lxxiv. 9. He was quite at a loss what to think God would do with him; and, whatever conjecture he advanced, still something or other appeared against it.

Secondly. He satisfies himself with this, that God himself was a witness to his integrity; and, therefore, did not doubt but the issue would be good. After Job had almost lost himself in the labyrinth of the Divine counsels, how contentedly doth he sit down at length with this thought, Though I know not the way that he takes,—for "his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters," his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and it would be presumption in us to pretend to judge of them,—yet "he knows the way that I take," ver. 10. That is, 1. He is acquainted with it. His friends judged of that which they did not know, and therefore charged him with that which he was never guilty of; but God, who knew every step he had taken, would not do so. *Ps.* cxxxix. 3. Note, It is a great comfort to those who mean honestly, that God understands their meaning, though men do not, cannot, or will not. 2. He approves of it. He knows that, however I may sometimes have taken a false step, yet I have still taken a good way; have chosen the way of truth; and therefore he knows it: that is, he accepts it, and is well pleased with it, as he is said to know the way of the righteous, *Ps.* i. 6. This comforted the prophet; *Jer.* xii. 3, "Thou hast tried my heart towards thee." From this Job infers, "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." They that keep the way of the Lord may comfort themselves, when they are in affliction, with these three things: 1st. That they are but tried. It is not intended for their hurt, but for their honour and benefit; it is the trial of their faith, 1 *Pet.* i. 7. 2nd. That when they are sufficiently tried they shall come forth out of the furnace, and not be left to consume in it, as dross, or reprobate silver. The trial will have an end; "God will not contend for ever." 3rd. That they shall come forth as gold, pure in itself, and precious to the refiner. They shall come forth as gold approved and improved; found to be good, and made to be better. Afflictions are to us as we are; those that go gold into the furnace will come out no worse.

Now that which encouraged Job to hope that his present troubles would thus end well was, the testimony of his conscience for him that he had lived a good life, in the fear of God.

1. That God's way was the way he walked in; ver. 11, "My foot hath held his steps," that is, held to them, held close to them; the steps he takes. I have endeavoured to conform myself to his example. Good people are followers of God. Or, I have accommodated myself to his providence, and endeavoured to answer all the intentions of that,—to follow providence step by step. Or, his steps are the steps he hath appointed me to take: the way of religion and serious godliness, that way I have kept, and have not declined from it; not only not turned back from it, by a total apostacy, but not turned aside out of it by any wilful transgression. His holding God's steps, and keeping his way, intimates that the tempter had used all his arts by fraud and force to draw him aside; but with care and resolution he had by the grace of God hitherto persevered; and those that will do so must hold and keep,—hold with resolution, and keep with watchfulness.

2. That God's Word was the rule he walked by, ver. 12. He governed himself by the commandment of God's lips; and would not go back from that, but go forward according to it. Whatever difficulties we may meet with in the way of God's commandments, though they lead us through a wilderness, yet we must never think of going back, but must press on towards the mark. Job kept close to the law of God in his conversation, for both his judgment and his affection led him to it; "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food;" that is, he looked upon it as his necessary food; could as well have lived without his daily bread as without the Word of God. 'I have laid it up,' so the word is, as those that lay up provision for a siege, or as Joseph laid up corn before the famine. Eliphaz had bid him lay up God's words in his heart, *ch.* xxii. 22. So I do, saith he, and always did, that I might not sin against him; and that, like the good householder, I might bring forth for the good of others. Note, The Word of God is to our souls as our necessary food is to our bodies, it sustains the spiritual life, and strengthens us for the actions of life; it is that which we cannot subsist without, and which nothing else can make up the want of. And we ought therefore so to esteem it, to take pains for it, hunger after it, feed upon it with delight, and nourish our souls with it; and this will be our rejoicing in the day of evil, as it was Job's here.

13 But he *is* in one *mind,* and who can turn him?
And *what* his soul desireth, even *that* he doeth.
14 For he performeth *the thing that is* appointed for me:
And many such *things are* with him.
15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence:
When I consider, I am afraid of him.
16 For God maketh my heart soft,
And the Almighty troubleth me:
17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness,
Neither hath he covered the darkness from my face.

Some make Job to complain here, that God dealt unjustly and unfairly with him, in proceeding to punish him, without the least relenting or relaxation, though he had such incontestable evidences to produce of his innocency. I am loath to think holy Job would charge the holy God with iniquity; but his complaint is indeed bitter, and peevish enough, and he reasons himself into a sort of patience perforce, which he cannot do without reflecting upon God as dealing hardly with him; but he must bear it, because he cannot help it. The worst he saith is, that God deals unaccountably with him.

First. He lays down good truths, and which were capable of a good improvement, ver. 13, 14.

1. That God's counsels are immutable; "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" 'He is one,' so some read it; or 'in one.' He has no counsellors by whose interest he might be prevailed with to alter his purpose. He is one with himself, and never alters his mind, never alters his measures. Prayer has prevailed to change God's way and his providence, but never was his will or purpose changed; for known unto God are all his works.

2. That his power is irresistible; "What his soul desireth," or designs, "even that he doth;" and nothing can stand in his way, or put him upon new counsels. Men desire many things, which either they may not do, or cannot do, or dare not do, but God has an incontestable sovereignty; his will is so perfectly pure and right that it is highly fit that he should be arbitrary. And he has an uncontrollable power: "None can stay his hand. Whatever the Lord pleased, that he did," *Ps.* cxxv. 6; and always will, for it is always best.

3. That all he doth is according to the counsel of his will; ver. 14, "He performeth the thing that is appointed for me." Whatever happens to us, it is God that performs it, *Ps.* lvii. 2; and an admirable performance the whole will appear to be when the mystery of God shall be finished. He performs all that, and that only, that was appointed, and in the appointed time and method. This may silence us; for what is appointed cannot be altered. But to consider that when God was appointing us to eternal life and glory, as our end, he was appointing to this condition, this affliction, whatever it is, in our way; this may do more than silence us, it may satisfy us, that it is all for the best; and though what he doth we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter.

4. That all he doth is according to the custom of his providence; "Many such things are with him;" that is, he doth many things in the course of his providence which we can give no account of, but must resolve into his absolute sovereignty. Whatever trouble we are in others have been in the like; our case is not singular, "the same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren," 1 *Pet.* v. 9. Are we sick, or sore, impoverished and stripped, children removed by death, or friends unkind, this is what God has appointed for us, and many such things are with him. "Shall the earth be forsaken for us?"

Secondly. He makes but a bad use of these good truths. Had he duly considered them he might have said, Therefore am I easy and pleased, and well reconciled to the way of my God concerning me; therefore will I rejoice, in hope that my troubles will issue well at last. No, "Therefore am I troubled at his presence," ver. 15. Those are indeed of troubled spirits who are troubled at the presence of God; as the psalmist, who "remembered God, and was troubled," *Ps.* lxxvii. 3. See what confusion poor Job was now in, for he contradicted himself. Just now he was troubled for God's absence, ver. 8, 9, now he is troubled at his presence; "When I consider, I am afraid of him." What he now felt made him fear worse. There is indeed that which, if we consider,

we shall see cause to be afraid of God, his infinite justice and purity, compared with our own sinfulness and vileness; but if withal we consider his grace in a Redeemer, and our compliance with that grace, the fears will vanish, and we shall see cause to hope in him.

See what impressions were made upon him by the wounds of his spirit. 1. He was very fearful, ver. 14. The Almighty troubled him, and so made his heart soft; that is, utterly unable to bear any thing, and afraid of every thing that stirred. There is a gracious softness, like that of Josiah, whose heart was tender, and trembled at the word of God. This is meant of a grievous softness, which apprehends every thing that is present to be pressing, and every thing future to be threatening. 2. He was very fretful, peevish indeed, for he quarrels with God, ver. 17. 1st. Because he did not die before his troubles, that he might never have seen them; "Because I was not cut off before the darkness." And yet, if in the height of his prosperity he had received a summons to the grave, he would have thought it hard. This may help to reconcile us to death, whenever it comes, that we do not know what evil we may be taken away from. But, when trouble is come, it is folly to wish we had not lived to see it; and it is better to make the best of it. 2nd. Because he was left to live so long in his troubles, and the darkness was not covered from his face, by his being hid in the grave. We should bear the darkness better than thus if we would but remember that to the upright there sometimes ariseth a marvellous light in the darkness. However, there is reserved for them a more marvellous light after it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Job, having by his complaints in the foregoing chapter given vent to his passion, and thereby gained some ease, breaks them off abruptly; and now applies himself to a farther discussion of the doctrinal controversy between him and his friends, concerning the prosperity of wicked people. That many live at ease who yet are ungodly and profane, and despise all the exercises of devotion, he had shewed, *ch.* xxi. Now here he goes farther, and shews that many who are mischievous to mankind, and live in open defiance to all the laws of justice and common honesty, yet thrive and succeed in their unrighteous practices; and we do not see them reckoned with in this world. What he had said before, *ch.* xii. 6, "The tabernacles of robbers prosper," he here enlargeth upon; he lays down his general proposition, ver. 1, that the punishment of wicked people is not so visible and apparent as his friends supposed, and then proves it by an induction of particulars. I. Those that openly do wrong to their poor neighbours are not reckoned with, nor the injured righted, ver. 2—12; though they are very barbarous, ver. 21, 22. II. Those that secretly practise mischief often go undiscovered and unpunished, ver. 13—17. III. That God punisheth such by secret judgments, and reserves them for future judgments, ver. 18—20, and ver. 23—25; so that, upon the whole matter, we cannot say that all that are in trouble are wicked, for it is certain all that are in prosperity are not righteous.

WHY, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty,
Do they that know him not see his days?
2 *Some* remove the landmarks;
They violently take away flocks, and feed *thereof.*
3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless,
They take the widow's ox for a pledge.
4 They turn the needy out of the way:
The poor of the earth hide themselves together.
5 Behold, *as* wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work;
Rising betimes for a prey: [children.
The wilderness *yieldeth* food for them *and* for *their*
6 They reap *every one* his corn in the field:
And they gather the vintage of the wicked.
7 They cause the naked to lodge without clothing,
That *they have* no covering in the cold.
8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains,
And embrace the rock for want of a shelter.
9 They pluck the fatherless from the breast,
And take a pledge of the poor.
10 They cause *him* to go naked without clothing,
And they take away the sheaf *from* the hungry;
11 *Which* make oil within their walls,
And tread *their* winepresses, and suffer thirst.
12 Men groan from out of the city,
And the soul of the wounded crieth out:
Yet God layeth not folly *to them.*

Job's friends had been very positive in it, that they should soon see the fall of wicked people, how much soever they might prosper for a while. By no means, saith Job; though times are not hidden from the Almighty, yet they that know him do not presently see his day, ver. 1. 1. He takes it for granted that times are not hidden from the Almighty; past times are not hid from his judgment, *Eccl.* iii. 15; present times are not hid from his providence, *Mat.* x. 29; future times are not hid from his prescience, *Acts* xv.18. God governs the world, and therefore we may be sure he takes cognizance of it. Bad times are not hid from him, though the bad men that make the times bad say one to another that he has forsaken the earth, *Ps.* xciv. 6, 7. Every man's times are in his hand, and under his eye, and therefore it is in his power to make the times of wicked men in this world miserable. He foresees the time of every man's death, and therefore, if wicked men die before they are punished for their wickedness, we cannot say they escaped him by surprise; he foresaw it, nay, he ordered it. Before Job will inquire into the reasons of the prosperity of wicked men, he asserts God's omniscience, as one prophet in a like case asserts his righteousness, *Jer.* xii. 1; another his holiness, *Hab.* i. 13; another his goodness to his own people, *Ps.* lxxiii. 1. General truths must be held fast, though we may find it difficult to reconcile them to particular events. 2. He yet asserts that they that know him, that is, wise and good people that are acquainted with him, and with whom his secret is, do not see his days, not the day of his judging for them. This was the thing he complained of in his own case, *ch.* xxiii. 8, that he could not see God appearing on his behalf to plead his cause; nor the day of his judging against open and notorious sinners: that is called his day, *Ps.* xxxvii. 13. We believe that day will come, but we do not see it, because it is future, and its presages secret. 3. Though this is a mystery of providence, yet there is a reason for it, and we shall shortly know when and wherefore the judgment is deferred; and even the wisest, and those that know God best, do not yet see it. God will exercise their faith and patience, and excite their prayers for the coming of his kingdom, for which they are to cry day and night to him, *Lu.* xviii. 7. For the proof of this, that wicked people prosper, he instanceth in two sorts of unrighteous ones, whom all the world saw thriving in their iniquity.

First. Tyrants, and those that do wrong under pretence of law and authority. It is a melancholy sight which has often been seen under the sun, "wickedness in the place of judgment," *Eccl.* iii. 16; the unregarded tears of the oppressed, while "on the side of the oppressors there was power," *Eccl.* iv. 1; the violent perverting of justice and judgment, *Eccl.* v. 8.

1. They disseize their neighbours of their real estates, which came to them by descent from their ancestors. They "remove the landmarks," under pretence that they were misplaced, ver. 2, and so they encroached upon their neighbour's rights; and think they effectually secure that to their posterity which they have got wrongfully, by making that to be an evidence for them which should have been an evidence for the rightful owner. This was forbidden by the law of Moses, *Deu.* xix. 14; under a curse, *Deu.* xxvii. 17. Forging or destroying deeds is now a crime equivalent to this here.

2. They dispossess them of their personal estates under colour of justice; "they violently take away flocks," pretending they are forfeited, "and feed thereof;" as the rich man took the poor man's ewe-lamb, 2 *Sam.* xii. 4. If a poor fatherless child hath but an ass of his own to get a little money with, they find some colour or other to take it away, because the owner is not able to contest with them. It is all one if a widow has but an ox, for what little husbandry she hath, under pretence of distraining for some small debt, or arrears of rent, this ox shall be taken for a pledge, though perhaps it is the widow's all. God has taken it among the titles of his honour to be "a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows;" and therefore those will not be reckoned his friends that do not to their utmost protect and help them; but those he will certainly reckon with as his enemies that vex and oppress them.

3. They take all occasions to offer personal abuses to them, ver. 4. They will mislead them if they can when they meet them on the highway, so that the poor and needy are forced to hide themselves from them; having no other way to secure themselves from them. They love in their hearts to banter people, and to make fools of them, and do them a mischief if they can; especially to triumph over a poor body, whom they turn out of the way of getting relief, threaten to punish them as vagabonds, and so force them to abscond, and laugh at them when they have done. Some understand those barbarous actions, ver. 9, 10, to be done by those oppressors that pretend law for what they do. "They pluck the fatherless from the breast;" that is, having made poor infants fatherless, they make them motherless too; having taken away the father's life, they break the mother's heart, and so starve the children, and leave them to perish. Pharaoh and Herod plucked the children from the breast to the sword; and we read of children brought forth to the murderers, *Hos.* ix. 13: and those are inhuman murderers indeed that can with so much pleasure suck innocent blood. "They take a pledge of the poor," and so they rob the spital; nay, they take the poor themselves for a pledge, as some read it: and probably it was under this pretence that "they plucked the fatherless from the breast," distraining them for slaves, as *Neh.* v. 5. Cruelty to the poor is great wickedness, and cries aloud for vengeance. Those who shew no mercy to them that lie at their mercy shall themselves have judgment without mercy. Another instance of their barbarous usage of those they have advantage against is, that they take from them even their necessary food and raiment. They squeeze them so with their extortion that they make them "go naked without clothing," ver. 10, and so catch their death. And if a poor hungry family has gleaned a sheaf of corn, to make a little cake of, that they may eat it and die; even that they take away from them, being well pleased to see them perish for want, while they themselves are fed to the full.

4. They are very oppressive to the labourers they employ in their service. They not only give him no wages, though the labourer is worthy of his hire, and this is a crying sin, *Jas.* v. 4; but they will not so much as give them meat and drink. 'Those that carry their sheaves are hungry,' so some read it, ver. 10, and it agrees with ver. 11, that those who make oil within their walls, and with a great deal of toil labour at the winepresses, yet suffer thirst; which was worse than muzzling the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Those masters forget that they have a Master in heaven who will not allow the necessary supports of life to their servants and labourers, not caring whether they can live by their labour.

5. It is not only among the poor country people, but in the cities also, that we see the tears of the oppressed; ver. 12, "Men groan from out of the city," where the rich merchants and traders are as cruel with their poor debtors as the landlords in the country are with their poor tenants. In cities such cruel actions as these are more observed than in obscure corners of the country, and the wronged have easier access to justice to right themselves, and yet the oppressors there fear neither the restraints of the law nor the just censures of their neighbours; but the oppressed groan and cry out like wounded men, and can no more ease and help themselves, for the oppressors are inexorable, and deaf to their groans.

Secondly. He speaks of robbers and rapparees, and those that do wrong by downright force, as the bands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans which had lately plundered him. He doth not instance particularly in them, lest he should seem partial to his own cause, and to judge of men (as we are apt to do) by what they are to us; but among the Arabians, the children of the East, (Job's country,) there were those that lived by spoil and rapine, making incursions upon their neighbours, and robbing travellers. See how they are described here, and what mischief they do, ver. 5—8. 1. Their character is that they are "as wild asses in the desert," untamed, untractable, unreasonable; Ishmael's character, *Gen.* xvi. 13; fierce and furious, and under no restraint of law or government, *Jer.* ii. 23, 24. They choose the deserts for their dwelling, that they may be lawless and unsociable, and that they may have opportunity of doing the more mischief. The desert is indeed the fittest place for such wild people, *ch.* xxxix. 6. But no desert can set men out of the reach of God's eye and hand. 2. Their trade is to steal, and to make a prey of all about them. They have chosen it as their trade; it is their work, because there is more to be got by it, and it is got easier, than by an honest calling. They follow it as their trade, they follow it close; they go forth to it as their work, as "man goes forth to his labour," *Ps.* civ. 23. They are diligent and take pains at it, they rise betimes for a prey; if a traveller be out early, they will be out as soon to rob him. They live by it as a man lives by his trade; "the wilderness," not the grounds there, but the

roads there, "yieldeth food for them and for their children." They maintain themselves and their families by robbing on the highway; and bless themselves in it without any remorse of compassion or conscience, and with as much security as if it were honestly got, as Ephraim, *Hos.* xii. 7, 8. 3. See the mischief they do to the country. They not only rob travellers, but they make incursions upon the neighbours, and "reap every one his corn in the field," ver. 6; that is, they enter upon other people's ground, cut their corn, and carry it away as freely as if it were their own. Even 'the wicked gather the vintage, and it is their wickedness;' or, as we read it, "they gather the vintage of the wicked," and so one wicked man is made a scourge to another. What the wicked got by extortion, which is their way of stealing, these robbers get from them in their way of stealing. Thus oftentimes are the spoilers spoiled, *Isa.* xxxiii. 1. 4. The misery of those that fall into their hands; ver. 7, 8, "They cause the naked," whom they have stripped, not leaving them the clothes to their backs, "to lodge," in the cold nights, "without clothing," so that "they are wet with the showers of the mountains," and, for want of a better shelter, embrace the rock, and are glad of a cave or den in it to preserve them from the injuries of the weather. Eliphaz had charged Job with such inhumanity as this, concluding that Providence would not thus have stripped him if he had not first stripped the naked of their clothing, *ch.* xxii. 6; Job here tells him there were those that were really guilty of those crimes with which he was unjustly charged, and yet prospered and had success in their villanies; the curse they laid themselves under working invisibly. And Job thinks it more just to argue as he did, from an open, notorious course of wickedness, to infer a secret and future punishment, than to argue as Eliphaz did, who, from nothing else but a present trouble, inferred a past course of secret wickedness.

The impunity of these oppressors and spoilers is expressed in one word; ver. 12, "Yet God layeth not folly to them;" that is, he doth not immediately prosecute them with his judgments for these crimes, nor make them examples, and so evince their folly to all the world. "He that gets riches, and not by right, at his end shall be a fool," *Jer.* xvii. 11: but while he prospers he passes for a wise man, and God lays not folly to him till he saith, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," *Lu.* xii. 20.

13 They are of those that rebel against the light;
They know not the ways thereof,
Nor abide in the paths thereof.
14 The murderer rising with the light
Killeth the poor and needy,
And in the night is as a thief.
15 The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight,
Saying, No eye shall see me:
And disguiseth *his* face.
16 In the dark they dig through houses,
Which they had marked for themselves in the daytime:
They know not the light.
17 For the morning *is* to them even as the shadow of death:
If *one* know *them, they are in* the terrors of the shadow of death.

These verses describe another sort of sinners, who therefore go unpunished, because they go undiscovered. "They rebel against the light," ver. 13. Some understand it figuratively; they sin against the light of nature, the light of God's law, and that of their own consciences. They profess to know God, but they rebel against the knowledge they have of him, and will not be guided and governed, commanded and controlled, by it. Others understand it literally: they have the daylight, and choose the night as the most advantageous season for their wickedness. Sinful works are therefore called works of darkness, because he that doth evil hates the light, *Jno.* iii. 20; knows not the ways thereof, that is, keeps out of the way of it; or, if he happen to be seen, he abides not where he thinks he is known. So that he here describes the worst of sinners: 1. That sin wilfully, and against the convictions of their own consciences, whereby they add rebellion to their sin. 2. That sin deliberately, and with a great deal of plot and contrivance, using a thousand arts to conceal their villanies, fondly imagining that if they can but hide them from the eye of men they are safe; but forgetting that there is no darkness or shadow of death in which the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from God's eye, *ch.* xxxiv. 22. He instances in three sorts of sinners that shun the light:

First. Murderers, ver. 14. They rise with the light, as soon as ever the day breaks, to kill the poor travellers that are up early, and abroad about their business, going to market with a little money or goods; and, though it is so little that they are really to be called poor and needy, that with much ado get a sorry livelihood by their marketings, yet to get it the murderer will both take his neighbour's life, and venture his own; will rather play at such small game than sit out. Nay, he kills for killing sake, thirsting more for blood than booty. See what care and pains wicked men take to compass their wicked designs, and let it shame us out of our negligence and slothfulness in doing good.

Ut jugulent homines, surgunt de nocte latrones,
Tuque ut te serves non expergisceris?—
'Rogues nightly rise to murder men for pelf,
Will you not rouse you to preserve yourself?'

Secondly. Adulterers. The eyes that are full of adultery, 2 *Pet.* ii. 14, the unclean and wanton eyes, wait for the twilight, ver. 15. The eye of the adultress did so, *Pr.* vii. 9. Adultery hides its head for shame. The sinners themselves, even the most impudent, do what they can to hide it. *Si non caste, tamen caute,*—'if not chastely, yet cautiously;' and after all the wretched endeavours of the factors for hell to take away the reproach of it, it is and ever will be "a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret," *Eph.* v. 12. It hides its head also for fear, knowing that jealousy is the rage of a husband, who will not spare in the day of vengeance, *Pr.* vi. 34, 35. See what pains those take that make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts of it! Pains to compass, and then to conceal, that provision, which after all will be death and hell at last. Less pains would serve to mortify and crucify the flesh, which would be life and heaven at last. Let the sinner change his heart, and then he needs not disguise his face, but may lift it up without spot.

Thirdly. Housebreakers, ver. 16. These mark houses in the daytime, mark the avenues of a house, and on which side they can most easily force their entrance, and then in the night dig through them, either to kill or steal, or commit adultery. The night favours the assault, and makes the defence the more difficult; for "the goodman of the house knows not what hour the thief will come," and therefore is asleep, *Lu.* xii. 39, and he and his lie exposed. For this reason our law makes burglary, which is the breaking and entering of a dwelling house in the night time, with a felonious intent, to be felony without benefit of clergy. And,

Lastly. Job observes (and perhaps observes it as part of the present, though secret punishment of such sinners as these) that they are in a continual terror for fear of being discovered; ver. 17, "the morning is to them even as the shadow of death." The light of the day, which is welcome to honest people, is a terror to ill people: they curse the sun, not as the Moors, because it scorcheth them, but because it discovers them. "If one know them," their consciences fly in their faces, and they are ready to become their own accusers; for "they are in the terrors of the shadow of death." Shame came in with sin, and everlasting shame is at the end of it. See the misery of sinners, they are exposed to continual frights, and yet their folly, that they are afraid of coming under the eye of men, but have no dread of God's eye, which is always upon them; and that they are not afraid of doing that which yet they are so terribly afraid of being known to do.

18 He *is* swift as the waters;
Their portion is cursed in the earth:
He beholdeth not the way of the vineyards.
19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters:
So doth the grave *those which* have sinned.
20 The womb shall forget him;
The worm shall feed sweetly on him;
He shall be no more remembered;
And wickedness shall be broken as a tree.
21 He evil entreateth the barren *that* beareth not:
And doeth not good to the widow.
22 He draweth also the mighty with his power:
He riseth up, and no *man* is sure of life. [resteth;
23 *Though* it be given him *to be* in safety, whereon he
Yet his eyes *are* upon their ways. [brought low;
24 They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and
They are taken out of the way as all *other*,
And cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.
25 And if *it be* not *so* now, who will make me a liar,
And make my speech nothing worth?

Job here in the conclusion of his discourse,

First. Gives some farther instances of the wickedness of these cruel bloody men. 1. Some are pirates and robbers at sea. To this many learned interpreters apply those difficult expressions, ver. 18, "He is swift upon the waters." Privateers choose those ships that are the best sailers. In these swift ships they cruise from one channel to another to pick up prizes; and this brings them in so much wealth that "their portion is cursed in the earth," and they "behold not the way of the vineyards;" that is, as Bishop Patrick explains it, they despise the employment of those who till the ground and plant vineyards, as poor and unprofitable. But others make this a farther description of the carriage of those sinners that are afraid of the light; if they be discovered, they get away as fast as they can, and choose to look not in the vineyards for fear of being discovered, but in some cursed portion, a lonely desolate place, which nobody looks after. 2. Some are abusive to those that are in trouble, and add affliction to the afflicted. Barrenness was looked upon as a great reproach; and those that fall under that affliction they upbraid them with it, as Peninnah did Hannah, on purpose to vex them and make them to fret, which is a barbarous thing. This is evil intreating the barren that beareth not, ver. 21; or those that are childless, and so want the arrows others have in their quiver, which enable them to deal with their enemy in the gate, *Ps.* cxxvii. 5. He takes that advantage against, and is oppressive to, them. As the fatherless, so the childless are in some degree helpless; and for the same reason it is a cruel thing to hurt the widow, to whom he ought to do good. And not doing good when it is in our power, is doing hurt. 3. There are those who, by inuring themselves to cruelty, come at last to be so exceedingly boisterous that they are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, ver. 22. He draws the mighty into a snare with his power, even the greatest are not able to stand before him, when he is in his mad fits. He riseth up in his passion, and lays about him with so much fury that no man is sure of his life; nor can he at the same time be sure of his own, for his hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him, *Gen.* xvi. 12. One would wonder how any man can take pleasure in making all about him afraid of him, yet there are those that do.

Secondly. He shews that these daring sinners prosper, and are at ease for awhile; nay, and many times end their days in peace, as Ishmael, who, though he was a man of such a character as is here given, yet both lived and died in the presence of all his brethren, as we are told, *Gen.* xvi. 12; xxv. 18. Of these sinners here it is said, 1. That it is given them to be in safety, ver. 23; they seem to be under the special protection of the Divine providence; and one would wonder how they escape with life through so many dangers as they run themselves into. 2. That they rest upon this; that is, they rely upon this as sufficient to warrant all their violences. "Because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily," they think there is no great evil in them, and that God is not displeased with them, nor will ever call them to an account. Their prosperity is their security. 3. That they are exalted for awhile; they seem to be the favourites of Heaven, and value themselves as making the best figure on earth. They are set up in honour, set up, as they think, out of the reach of danger, and lifted up in the pride of their own spirits. 4. That at length they are carried out of the world very silently and gently, and without any remarkable disgrace or terror. 'They go down to the grave as easily as snow water sinks into the dry ground when it is melted by the sun.' So Bishop Patrick explains ver. 19. And to the same purpose he paraphraseth ver. 20, "The womb shall forget him," &c. 'God sets no such mark of his displeasure upon him, but that his mother may soon forget him. The hand of justice doth not hang him on a gibbet for the birds to feed on; but he is carried to his grave like other men, to be the sweet food of worms. There he lies quietly, and neither he nor his wickedness are any more remembered than a

tree which is broken to shivers.' And, ver. 24, "They are taken out of the way as all other;" that is, 'they are shut up in their graves like all other men; nay, they die as easily (without those tedious pains which some endure) as an ear of corn is cropped with your hand.' Compare this with Solomon's observation, *Eccl.* viii. 10, "I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten."

Thirdly. He foresees their fall, however, and that their death, though they die in ease and honour, will be their ruin; "God's eyes are upon their ways," ver. 23. Though he keep silence and seem to connive at them, yet he takes notice, and keeps account of all their wickedness, and will make it to appear shortly, that their most secret sins, which they thought no eye should see, (ver. 15,) were under his eye, and will be called over again. Here is no mention of the punishment of these sinners in the other world; but it is intimated in the particular notice taken of the consequence of his death. 1. The consumption of the body in the grave, though common to all, yet to him is in the nature of a punishment for his sin. The grave shall consume those that have sinned; that land of darkness will be the lot of those that love darkness rather than light. The bodies they pampered shall be a feast for worms, which shall feed as sweetly on them as ever they fed on the pleasures and gains of their sins. 2. Though they thought to make themselves a great name by their wealth and power, and mighty achievements, yet "their memorial is perished with them," *Ps.* ix. 6. He that made himself so much talked of, when he is dead shall be no more remembered with honour, his name shall rot, *Pr.* x. 7. They that durst not give him his due character while he lived shall not spare him when he is dead; so that the womb that bare him, his own mother, shall forget him; that is, shall avoid making mention of him, and shall think that the greatest kindness she can do him, since no good can be said of him. That honour which is got by sin will soon turn into shame. 3. The "wickedness" they thought to establish in their families "shall be broken as a tree;" all their wicked projects shall be blasted, and all their wicked hopes dashed and buried with them. 4. Their pride shall be brought down, and laid in the dust, ver. 24; and in mercy to the world they shall be taken out of the way, and all their power and prosperity shall be cut off; you may seek him, and he shall not be found. Job owns that wicked people will be miserable at last; miserable on the other side death, but utterly denies what his friends asserted, that ordinarily they are miserable in this life.

Lastly. He concludes with a bold challenge to all that were present to disprove what he had said if they could; ver. 25, "If it be not so now," as I have opened, and if it do not from thence follow that I am unjustly condemned and censured, let them that can, undertake to prove that my discourse is either, 1. False in itself, and then they prove me a liar; or, 2. Foreign, and nothing to the purpose, and then they prove my speech frivolous and nothing worth. That indeed which is false is nothing worth; where there is not truth how can there be goodness? But they that speak the words of truth and soberness need not fear having what they say brought to the test; but can cheerfully submit it to a fair examination, as Job doth here.

CHAPTER XXV.

Bildad here makes a very short reply to Job's last discourse, as one that began to be sick of the cause. He drops the main question concerning the prosperity of wicked men, as being unable to answer the proofs Job had produced in the foregoing chapter; but, because he thought Job had made too bold with the Divine majesty, in his appeals to the Divine tribunals, *ch.* xxiii., he, in a few words, shews the infinite distance there is between God and man, teaching us, I. To think highly and honourably of God, ver. 2, 3, 5. II. To think meanly of ourselves, ver. 4, 6; which, however misapplied to Job, are two good lessons for us all to learn.

THEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,
2 Dominion and fear *are* with him,
He maketh peace in his high places.
3 Is there any number of his armies?
And upon whom doth not his light arise?
4 How then can man be justified with God?
Or how can he be clean *that is* born of a woman?
5 Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not;
Yea, the stars are not pure in his sight.
6 How much less man, *that is* a worm?
And the son of man, *which is* a worm?

Bildad is to be commended here for two things: 1. For speaking no more to the matter about which Job and he differed. Perhaps he began to think Job was in the right; and then it was justice to say no more to it, as one that contended for truth not for victory, and therefore for the finding of truth would be content to lose the victory. Or, if he still thought himself in the right, yet he knew when he had said enough, and would not wrangle endlessly for the last word. And it may be one reason why he and the rest of them let fall this debate was, because they perceived that Job and they did not differ so much in opinion as they thought. They owned that wicked people might prosper awhile, and Job owned they would be destroyed at last, and how little then was the difference! If disputants would understand one another better, perhaps they would find themselves nearer one another than they imagined. 2. For speaking so well to the matter about which Job and he were agreed. If we would all get our hearts filled with awful thoughts of God, and humble thoughts of ourselves, we should not be so apt as we are to fall out about matters of doubtful disputation, which are trifling or intricate. Two ways Bildad takes here to exalt God and abase man:

First. He shews how bright, and blessed, and glorious, God is; and from thence infers how guilty and impure man is before him, ver. 2—4. Let us see then,

1. What great things are here said of God; designed to possess Job with a reverence of him, and to check his reflections upon him, and upon his dealings with him.

1st. God is the Sovereign Lord of all, and with him is terrible majesty. "Dominion and fear are with him," ver. 2. He that gave being has an incontestable authority to give laws, and can enforce the laws he gives. He that made all has a right to dispose of all according to his own will, with an absolute sovereignty. Whatever he will do, he doth, and may do, and none can say unto him, What dost thou? or why dost thou so? *Dan.* iv. 34. His having dominion (or being *Dominus*,—'Lord') speaks him both owner and ruler of all the creatures. They are all his, and they are all under his direction, and at his disposal. From hence it follows that he is to be feared, that is, reverenced and obeyed, and that he is feared by all that know him,—the seraphim cover their faces before him; and that first or last all will be made to fear him: men's dominion is often despicable, often despised, but God is always terrible.

2nd. The glorious inhabitants of the upper world are all perfectly observant of him, and entirely acquiesce in his will; "He maketh peace in his high places." He enjoys himself in a perfect tranquillity. The holy angels never quarrel with him, nor with one another, but entirely acquiesce in his will; and unanimously execute it without murmuring or disputing. Thus the will of God is done in heaven; and thus we pray it may be done by us and others on earth. The sun, moon, and stars, keep their courses, and never clash with one another. Nay, even in this lower region, which is often disturbed with storms and tempests, yet, when God pleaseth, he commandeth peace by making the storm a calm, *Ps.* cvii. 29; lxv. 7. Observe, the high places are his high places; for "the heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's" in a peculiar manner. Peace is God's work; where it is made it is he that makes it, *Isa.* lvii. 19. In heaven there is perfect peace; for there is perfect holiness, and there is God, who is love.

3rd. He is a God of irresistible power. "Is there any number of his armies?" ver. 3. The greatness and power of princes is judged of by their armies. God is not only himself almighty, but he has numberless numbers of armies at his beck and disposal; standing armies, that are never disbanded; regular troops, and well disciplined, that are never to seek, never at a loss, never mutiny; veteran troops, that have been long in the service; victorious troops, that never failed of success, nor were ever foiled. All the creatures are his hosts, angels especially; he is Lord of all, Lord of hosts. He hath numberless armies, and yet maketh peace; he could make war upon us, but is willing to be at peace with us; and even the heavenly hosts were sent to proclaim peace on earth, and good-will towards men, *Lu.* ii. 14.

4th. His providence extends itself to all. "Upon whom doth not his light arise?" The light of the sun is communicated to all parts of the world, and, take the year round, to all equally: see *Ps.* xix. 6. That is a faint resemblance of the universal cognizance and care God takes of the whole creation, *Mat.* v. 45. All are under the light of his knowledge, and are naked and open before him. All partake of the light of his goodness; it seems especially to be meant of that. He is good to all; the earth is full of his goodness. He is *Deus optimus*,—'God the best of beings,' as well as *maximus*,—'the greatest;' has power to destroy, but his pleasure is to shew mercy. All the creatures live upon his bounty.

2. What ill things are here said of man, and very truly and justly; ver. 4, "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean?" Man is not only mean, but vile; not only earthy, but filthy: he cannot be justified, he cannot be clean, 1st. In comparison with God. Man's righteousness and holiness at the best is nothing to God's, *Ps.* lxxxix. 6. 2nd. In debate with God. He that will quarrel with the word and providence of God must unavoidably go by the worst. God will be justified, and then man must be condemned, *Ps.* li. 4; *Rom.* iii. 4. There is no error in God's judgment, and therefore there lies no exception against it, nor appeal from it. 3rd. In the sight of God. If God be so great and glorious, how can man, who is guilty and impure, appear before him? Note, *First.* Man by reason of his actual transgressions is obnoxious to God's justice, and cannot in himself be justified before him. He can neither plead not guilty, nor plead any merit of his own, to balance or extenuate his guilt; "the Scripture has concluded all under sin." *Secondly.* Man by reason of his original corruption, as he is born of a woman, is odious to God's holiness, and cannot be clean in his sight. God sees his impurity, and it is certain by it he is rendered utterly unfit for communion and fellowship with God here, and for the vision and fruition of him in glory hereafter. We have need therefore to be born again of water and of the Holy Ghost, and to be bathed again and again in the blood of Christ, that fountain opened.

Secondly. He shews how dark and defective even the heavenly bodies are in the sight of God, and in comparison with him; and from thence infers how little, and mean, and worthless, man is.

1. The lights of heaven, though beauteous creatures, are before God but as clods of earth; ver. 5, "Behold, even to the moon," walking in brightness; and the stars, those glorious lamps of heaven, which the heathen were so charmed with the lustre of that they worshipped them; yet, in God's sight, in comparison with him, they shine not. They are not pure; they have no glory by reason of the glory which excelleth; as a candle, though it burn, yet doth not shine when it is set in the clear light of the sun. Even the glory of God shining in his providences eclipseth the glory of the brightest creatures; *Isa.* xxiv. 23, "The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion." The heavenly bodies are often clouded; we plainly see spots in the moon, and with the help of glasses may sometimes discern spots on the sun too. But God sees spots in them that we do not see. And how durst Job then so confidently appeal to God, who would discover that amiss in him which he was not aware of in himself?

2. The children of men, though noble creatures, are before God but as worms of the earth; ver. 6, "How much less" doth "man" shine in honour, how much less is he pure in righteousness, "that is a worm, and the son of man," whoever he be, "that is a worm!" A vermin, so some; not only mean and despicable, but noxious and detestable. A mite, so others; the smallest animal, which cannot be discerned with the naked eye, but through a magnifying glass. Such a thing is man. 1st. So mean and little and inconsiderable in comparison with God, and with the holy angels. So worthless and despicable, having his original in corruption, and hastening to corruption. What little reason has man then to be proud, and what great reason to be humble? 2nd. So weak and impotent, and so easily crushed; and, therefore, a very unequal match for Almighty God. Shall man be such a fool to contend with his Maker, who can tread him to pieces easier than he can a worm? 3rd. So dirty and filthy. Man is not pure; for he is a worm, hatched in putrefaction, and therefore odious to God. Let us, therefore, wonder at God's condescension in taking such worms as we are into covenant and communion with himself; especially at the condescension of the Son of God in emptying himself so far as to say, "I am a worm, and no man," *Ps.* xxii. 6.

CHAPTER XXVI.

This is Job's short reply to Bildad's short discourse; in which he is so far from contradicting him, that he confirms what he had said; and outdoes him in magnifying God, and setting forth his power, to shew what reason he had still to say as he did, *ch.* xiii. 2, "What ye know, the same do I know also." I. He shews that Bildad's discourse was foreign to the matter he was discoursing of; though very true and good, yet not to the purpose, ver. 2—4. II. That it was needless to the person he was discoursing with; for he knew it, and believed it, and could speak of it as well as he, and better, and could add to the proofs which he had produced of God's power and greatness, which he doth in the rest of his discourse, ver. 5—13; concluding that, when they had both said what they could, all came short of the merit of the subject, and it was still far from being exhausted, ver. 14.

BUT Job answered and said,
2 How hast thou helped *him that is* without power?
How savest thou the arm *that hath* no strength?
3 How hast thou counselled *him that hath* no wisdom?
And *how* hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?
4 To whom hast thou uttered words?
And whose spirit came from thee?

One would not have thought that Job, now he was in so much pain and misery, should banter his friend as he doth here, and make himself merry with the impertinency of his discourse. Bildad thought he had made a fine speech, that the matter was so weighty, and the language so fine, that he had gained the reputation both of an oracle and of an orator; but Job peevishly enough shews that his performance was not so valuable as he thought it, and ridicules him for it. He shews,

First. That there was no great matter to be found in it; ver. 3, "How hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?" This is spoken ironically, upbraiding Bildad with the good conceit he himself had of what he had said. 1. He thought he had spoken very clearly, had declared the thing as it is. He was very fond, as we are all apt to be, of his own notions, and thought they only were right and true, and intelligible, and all other notions of the thing were false, mistaken and confused. Whereas, when we speak of the glory of God, we cannot declare the thing as it is; for we see it through a glass darkly, or but by reflection, and shall not see him as he is till we come to heaven. Here "we cannot order our speech concerning him," *ch.* xxxvii. 19. 2. He thought he had spoken very fully, though in few words, that he had plentifully declared it; and, alas! it was but poorly and scantily that he declared it, in comparison with the vast compass and copiousness of the subject.

Secondly. That there was no great use to be made of it; *cui bono?*—'What good hast thou done' by all that thou hast said? ver. 2, "How hast thou," with all this mighty flourish, "helped him that is without power?" ver. 3, "How hast thou," with thy grave dictates, "counselled him that hath no wisdom?" Job would convince him, 1. That he had done God no service by it, nor made him in the least beholden to him. It is indeed our duty, and will be our honour, to speak on God's behalf; but we must not think that he needs our service, or is indebted to us for it, nor will he accept it if it come from a spirit of contention and contradiction, and not from a sincere regard to God's glory. 2. That he had done his cause no service by it. He thought his friends were mightily beholden to him, for helping them at a dead lift to make their part good against Job, when they were quite at a loss, and had no strength, no wisdom. Even weak disputants, when warm, are apt to think truth more beholden to them than really it is. 3. That he had done him no service by it. He pretended to convince, instruct, and comfort Job; but, alas! what he had said was so little to the purpose, that it would not avail to rectify any mistakes, nor to assist him either in bearing his afflictions or in getting good by them; ver. 4, "To whom hast thou uttered words?" Was it to me that thou didst direct thy discourse? and dost thou take me for such a child as to need these instructions? Or, dost thou think them proper for one in my condition? Every thing that is true and good is not suitable and seasonable. To one that was humbled, and broken, and grieved in spirit, as Job was, he ought to preach of the grace and mercy of God, rather than of his greatness and majesty; to lay before him the consolations rather than the terrors of the Almighty. Christ knows how to speak what is proper for the weary, *Isa.* l. 4; and his ministers should learn rightly to divide the word of truth, and not make those sad whom God would not have made sad, as Bildad did. And therefore, Job asks him, "Whose spirit came from thee?" that is, What troubled soul would ever be revived and relieved, and brought to itself, by such discourses as these? Thus are we often disappointed in our expectations from our friends that should comfort us; but the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, never mistakes in his operation, nor misseth of his end.

5 Dead *things* are formed from under the waters,
And the inhabitants thereof.
6 Hell *is* naked before him,
And destruction hath no covering.
7 He stretcheth out the north over the empty place,
And hangeth the earth upon nothing.
8 He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds;
And the cloud is not rent under them.
9 He holdeth back the face of his throne,
And spreadeth his cloud upon it.
10 He hath compassed the waters with bounds,
Until the day and night come to an end.
11 The pillars of heaven tremble
And are astonished at his reproof.
12 He divideth the sea with his power,
And by his understanding he smiteth through the proud.
13 By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens;
His hand hath formed the crooked serpent.
14 Lo, these *are* parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him?
But the thunder of his power who can understand?

The truth received a great deal of light from the dispute between Job and his friends concerning those points about which they differed; but now they are upon a head in which they were all agreed, the infinite glory and power of God. How doth truth triumph, and how bright doth it shine, when there appears no other strife between the contenders but which shall speak most highly and honourably of God, and be most large in shewing forth his praise! It were well if all disputes about matters of religion might end thus, in glorifying God as Lord of all, and our Lord, with one mind, and one mouth, *Rom.* xv. 6; for to that we have all attained, in that we are all agreed.

First. Many illustrious instances are here given of the wisdom and power of God in the creation and preservation of the world.

1. If we look about us, to the earth and waters here below, we shall see mighty instances of omnipotence, which we may gather up out of these verses:

1st. "He hangs the earth upon nothing," ver. 7. The vast terraqueous globe neither rests upon any pillars, nor hangs upon any axletree; and yet, by the almighty power of God, is firmly fixed in its place, poised with its own weight. The art of man could not hang a feather upon nothing, yet the Divine wisdom hangs the whole earth so. It is *ponderibus librata suis*,—'poised by its own weight,' so saith the poet; it is upheld by the word of God's power, so saith the apostle. What is hung upon nothing may serve us to set our feet on, and bear the weight of our bodies; but it will never serve us to set our hearts on, nor bear the weight of our souls.

2nd. He "sets bounds to the waters of the sea," and compasseth them in, ver. 10, that they may not return to cover the earth; and these bounds shall continue unmoved, unshaken, unworn, "till the day and night come to an end," when time shall be no more. Herein appears the dominion which Providence hath over the raging waters of the sea; and so it is an instance of his power, *Jer.* v. 22, and the care which Providence takes of the poor sinful inhabitants of the earth, who, though obnoxious to his justice, and lying at his mercy, are thus preserved from being overwhelmed, as they were once by the waters of a flood; and will continue to be so, because they are reserved unto fire.

3rd. He "forms dead things under the waters;" *rephaim*,—'giants are formed under the waters,' that is, vast creatures of prodigious bulk, as whales, giant-like creatures, among the innumerable inhabitants of the water; so Bishop Patrick.

4th. By mighty storms and tempests he shakes the mountains, which are here called "the pillars of heaven," ver. 11; and even divideth the sea, and smiteth through its proud waves, ver. 12. At the presence of the Lord the sea flies, and the mountains skip, *Ps.* cxiv. 3, 4: see *Hab.* iii. 6, &c. A storm furrows the waters, and doth as it were divide them; and then a calm smites through the waves, and lays them flat again: see *Ps.* lxxxix. 10. Those who think Job lived at or after the time of Moses apply this to the dividing of the Red sea before the children of Israel, and the drowning of the Egyptians in it. "By his understanding he smiteth through Rahab," so the word is, and Rahab is often put for Egypt, as *Ps.* lxxxvii. 4; *Isa.* li. 9.

2. If we consider hell beneath, though it is out of our sight, yet we may conceive the instances of God's power there. By hell and destruction, ver. 6, we may understand not only the grave and those that are buried in it,—that they are under the eye of God, though laid out of our sight, which may strengthen our belief of the resurrection of the dead, (God knows where to find, and whence to fetch, all the scattered atoms of the consumed body,)—but we may take it as meant also of the place of the damned, where the separate souls of the wicked are in misery and torment. That is hell and destruction, which are said to be before the Lord, *Pr.* xv. 11, and here to be naked before him; to which it is probable there is an allusion, *Rev.* xiv. 10, where sinners are said to be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, who attended the Shechinah, and in the presence of the Lamb. And this may give light to ver. 5, which some ancient versions read thus, (and, I think, more agreeable to the signification of the word *rephaim*,) 'Behold the giants groan under the waters, and those that dwell with them;' and then follows, "hell is naked before him," typified by the drowning of the giants of the old world; so the learned Mr. Joseph Mede understands it, and with it illustrates *Pr.* xxi. 16, where hell is called "the congregation of the dead;" and it is the same word which is here used, and which he would there have rendered 'the congregation of the giants,' in allusion to the drowning of the sinners of the old world: and is there any thing in which the majesty of God appears more dreadful than in the eternal ruin of the ungodly, and the groans of the inhabitants of the land of darkness? Those that will not with angels fear and worship, shall for ever with devils fear and tremble, and God will therein be glorified.

3. If we look up to heaven above, we shall see instances of God's sovereignty and power.

1st. "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place," ver. 7. So he did at first. Then "he stretched out the heavens like a curtain," *Ps.* civ. 2; and still continues to keep them stretched out, and will do so till the general conflagration, when they shall be "rolled together as a scroll," *Rev.* vi. 14. He instanceth in the north, because his country, as ours, lay in the northern hemisphere; and the air is the empty place over which it is stretched out: see *Ps.* lxxxix. 12. What an empty place is this world in comparison with the other!

2nd. He keeps the waters that are said to be above the firmament from pouring down upon the earth, as once they did; ver. 8, "He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds," as if they were tied close in a bag, till there is occasion to use them; and, notwithstanding the mighty weight of water so raised and laid up, yet "the cloud is not rent under them," for then they would burst, and pour out as a spout; but they do as it were distil through the cloud, and so come drop by drop, in mercy to the earth, in small rain or great rain, as he pleaseth.

3rd. He conceals the glory of the upper world, the dazzling lustre of which we poor mortals could not bear; ver. 9, "He holds back the face of his throne," that light in which he dwells, "and spreads a cloud upon it," through which he judgeth, *ch.* xxii. 13. God will have us to live by faith, not by sense, for that is agreeable to a state of probation. It were not a fair trial if the face of God's throne were as visible now as it will be in the great day.

'Lest his high throne, above expression bright,
With deadly glory should oppress our sight;
To break the dazzling force, he draws a screen
Of sable shades, and spreads his clouds between.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

4th. The bright ornaments of heaven are the work of his hands; ver. 13, "By his Spirit," the Eternal Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters, "the breath of his mouth," *Ps.* xxxiii. 6, "he hath garnished the heavens," not only made them, but beautified them; has curiously bespangled them with stars by night, and painted them with the light of the sun by day. God having made man to look upward, (*os homini sublime dedit*,—'to man he gave an erect countenance,') has therefore garnished the heavens to invite him to look upwards; that, by pleasing his eye with the dazzling light of the sun, and the sparkling light of the stars, their number, order, and various magnitudes, which as so many golden studs beautify the canopy which is drawn over our heads, he may be led to admire the great Creator, the father and fountain of lights, and to consider, if the pavement be so richly inlayed, what is the palace! If the visible heavens be so glorious, what are those that are out of sight! From the beauteous garniture of the antichamber we may infer the precious furniture of the presence chamber. If stars be so bright, what are angels! What is meant here by the crooked serpent which his hands have formed, is not certain. Some make it part of the garnishing of the heavens; the milky-way, say some; some particular constellation so called, say others. It is the same word that is used for leviathan, *Isa.* xxvii. 1; and probably may be meant of the whale or crocodile, in which appears much of the power of the Creator; and why may not Job conclude with that inference, when God himself doth so? *ch.* xli.

Secondly. He concludes at last with an awful *et cætera*; ver. 14, "Lo, these are parts of his ways," the outgoings of his wisdom and power; the ways in which he walks, and by which he makes himself known to the children of men. Here, 1. He acknowledgeth with adoration the discoveries that were made of God. These things which he himself had said, and which Bildad had said, are his ways, and this is heard of him; this is something of God. But, 2. He admires the depth of that which is undiscovered. This that we have said is but part of his ways, a small part. What we know of God is nothing in comparison with what is in God, and what God is. After all the discoveries which God has made to us, and all the inquiries we have made after God, still we are much in the dark concerning him, and must conclude, "Lo, these are but parts of his ways." Something we hear of him by his works, and by his Word; but, alas, "how little a portion is heard of him!" heard by us, heard from us. We know but in part, we prophesy but in part. When we have said all we can concerning God, we must even do as St. Paul doth, *Rom.* xi. 33; despairing to find the bottom, sit down at the brink, and adore the depth: "O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" It is but a little portion that we hear and know of God in our present state. He is infinite and incomprehensible; our understandings and capacities are weak and shallow, and the full discoveries of the Divine glory are reserved for the future state. Even "the thunder of his power," that is, his powerful thunder, one of the lowest of his ways, here in our own region, we cannot understand: see *ch.* xxxvii. 4, 5. Much less can we understand the utmost force and extent of his power, the terrible efforts and operations of it, and particularly "the power of his anger," *Ps.* xc. 11. God is great, and we know him not.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Job had sometimes complained of his friends, that they were so eager in disputing that they would scarce let him put in a word; "Suffer me that I may speak:" and "O that you would hold your peace;" but now it seems they were out of breath, and left him room to say what he would. Either they were themselves convinced that Job was in the right, or they despaired of convincing him that he was in the wrong, and therefore they threw down the cudgels, and gave up the cause. Job was too hard for them, and forced them to quit the field; for great is the truth, and will prevail. What Job had said, *ch.* xxvi., was a sufficient answer to Bildad's discourse; and now Job paused awhile, to see whether Zophar would take his turn again, but, declining it, Job himself went on, and without any interruption or vexation given him, said all he desired to say in this matter. I. He begins with a solemn protestation of his integrity, and of his resolution to hold it fast, ver. 2—6. II. He expresseth the dread he had of that hypocrisy which they charged him with, ver. 7—10. III. He shews the miserable end of wicked people, notwithstanding their long prosperity, and the curse that attends them, and is entailed upon their families, ver. 11—23.

MOREOVER Job continued his parable, and said,
2 *As* God liveth, *who* hath taken away my judgment;
And the Almighty, *who* hath vexed my soul;
3 All the while my breath *is* in me,
And the spirit of God *is* in my nostrils;
4 My lips shall not speak wickedness,
Nor my tongue utter deceit
5 God forbid that I should justify you:
Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.
6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go:
My heart shall not reproach *me* so long as I live.

Job's discourse here is called a parable, (mashal,) the title of Solomon's proverbs, because it was grave and weighty, and very instructive; and "he spake as one having authority." It comes from a word that signifies to rule, or have dominion; and some think it intimates that Job now triumphed over his opponents, and spake as one that had baffled them. We say of an excellent preacher that he doth *dominari in concionibus*,—'he commands his hearers.' Job did so here. A long strife there had been between Job and his friends; they seemed disposed to have the matter compromised; and therefore, since "an oath for confirmation is an end of strife," *Heb.* vi. 16, Job here backs all he had said in maintenance of his own integrity with a solemn oath, to silence contradiction, and take the blame entirely upon himself, if he did prevaricate. Observe,

First. The form of his oath; ver. 2, "As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment." Here, 1. He speaks highly of God, in calling him the living God, which means everliving, the eternal God, that has life in himself; and in appealing to him as the sole and sovereign Judge. We can swear by no greater, and it is an affront to him to swear by any other. 2. Yet he speaks hardly of him, and unbecomingly, in saying that he had taken away his judgment, that is, denied to do him justice in this controversy, and to appear in defence of him, and by continuing his troubles, on which his friends grounded their censures of him, had taken from him the opportunity he hoped ere now to have had of clearing himself. Elihu reproved him for this word, *ch.* xxxiv. 3; for God is righteous in all his ways, and takes away no man's judgment. But see how apt we are to despair of favour, if it be not shewed us presently; so short-sighted are we, and so soon weary of waiting God's time. He also chargeth it upon God that he had vexed his soul; had not only not appeared for him, but had appeared against him, and by laying such grievous afflictions upon him had quite embittered his life to him, and all the comforts of it. We, by our impatience, vex our own souls, and then complain of God that he has vexed them. Yet see Job's confidence in the goodness both of his cause and of his God; that, though God seemed to be angry with him, and to act against him for the present, yet he could cheerfully commit his cause to him.

Secondly. The matter of his oath, ver. 3, 4. 1. That he would not speak wickedness, nor utter deceit; that, in general, he would never allow himself in the way of lying; that as in this debate he had all along spoke as he thought, so he would never wrong his conscience by speaking otherwise; he would never maintain any doctrine, nor assert any matter of fact, but what he believed to be true; nor would he deny the truth, how much soever it might make against him. And whereas his friends charged him with being a hypocrite, he was ready to answer upon oath to all their interrogatories, if called to it. On the one hand, he would not for all the world deny the charge, if he knew himself guilty; but would declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and take to himself the shame of his hypocrisy. On the other hand, since he was conscious to himself of his integrity, and that he was not such a man as his friends represented him, he would never betray his integrity, nor charge himself with that which he was innocent of; he would not be brought, no, not by the rack of their unjust censures, falsely to accuse himself. If we must not bear false witness against our neighbour, then not against ourselves. 2. That he would stick to this resolution as long as he lived; ver. 3, "All the while my breath is in me." Our resolutions against sin should be thus constant, resolutions for life. In things doubtful and indifferent it is not safe to be thus peremptory; we know not what reason we may see to change our mind, God may reveal even that unto us which now we are not aware of; but in so plain a thing as this we cannot be too positive that we will never speak wickedness. Something of a reason for his resolution is here implied, that our breath will not be always in us; we must shortly breathe our last, and therefore while our breath is in us we must never breathe wickedness and deceit, nor allow ourselves to say or do any thing which will make against us when our breath shall depart. The breath in us is called the Spirit of God, because he breathed it into us; and that is another reason why we must not speak wickedness. It is God that gives us life and breath, and therefore while we have breath we must praise him.

Thirdly. The explication of his oath; ver. 5, 6, "God forbid that I should justify you" in your uncharitable censures of me, by owning myself a hypocrite. No, "till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go." 1. He would always be an honest man, would hold fast his integrity, and not curse God, as Satan by his wife urged him to do, *ch.* ii. 9. Job here thinks of dying, and of getting ready for death; and therefore resolves never to part with his religion, though he had lost all he had in the world. Note, The best preparative for death is perseverance to death in our integrity. Till I die; that is, though I die by this affliction, I will not thereby be put out of conceit with my God and my religion. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." 2. He would always stand to it that he was an honest man; he would not remove, he would not part with, the conscience, and comfort, and credit of his integrity; he was resolved to defend it to the last. God knows, and my own heart knows, that I always meant well, and did not allow myself in the omission of any known duty, or the commission of any known sin; this is my rejoicing, and no man shall rob me of it; I will never lie against my right. It has often been the lot of upright men to be censured and condemned as hypocrites; but it well becomes them to bear up boldly against such censures, and not to be discouraged by them, or think the worse of themselves for them; as the apostle, *Heb.* xiii. 18, "We have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly."

Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi.
'Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.'

Job complained much of the reproaches of his friends; but, saith he, "My heart shall not reproach me;" that is, I will never give my heart cause to reproach me, but will keep a conscience void of offence; and while I do so I will not give my heart leave to reproach me. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifies. To resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us when we give them cause to do so, is to affront God, whose deputy conscience is, and to wrong ourselves; for it is a good thing, when a man hath sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 10. But to resolve that our hearts shall not reproach us, while we still hold fast our integrity, is to baffle the designs of the evil spirit, who tempts good Christians to question their adoption, "If thou be the Son of God," and to concur with the operations of the good Spirit, who witnesseth to their adoption.

7 Let mine enemy be as the wicked,
And he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous.
8 For what *is* the hope of the hypocrite,
Though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?
9 Will God hear his cry
When trouble cometh upon him?
10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty?
Will he always call upon God?

Job, having solemnly protested the satisfaction he had in his integrity, for the farther clearing of himself, here expresseth the dread he had of being found a hypocrite.

First. He tells us how he startled at the thought of it; for he looked upon the condition of a hypocrite and a wicked man to be certainly the most miserable condition that any man could be in, ver. 7; "Let mine enemy be as the wicked;" a proverbial expression, like that *Dan.* iv. 19, "The dream be to them that hate thee." Job was so far from indulging himself in any wicked way, and flattering himself in it, that, if he might have leave to wish the greatest evil he could think of to the worst enemy he had in the world, he would wish him the portion of a wicked man; knowing that worse he could not wish him. Not that we may lawfully wish any man to be wicked, or that any man who is not wicked should be treated as wicked, but we should all choose to be in the condition of a beggar, an outlaw, a galley-slave, any thing rather than in the condition of the wicked, though in never so much outward pomp and prosperity.

Secondly. He gives us the reasons of it.

1. Because the hypocrite's hope will not be crowned; ver. 8, "For what is the hope of the hypocrite?" Bildad had condemned it, *ch.* viii. 13, 14, and Zophar, *ch.* xi. 20, and Job here concurs with them, and reads the death of the hypocrite's hope with as much assurance as they had done; and this fitly comes in as a reason why he would not remove his integrity, but still hold it fast. Note, The consideration of the miserable condition of wicked people, and especially hypocrites, should engage us to be upright, for we are undone, for ever undone, if we be not; and also to get the comfortable evidence of our uprightness; for how can we be easy if the great concern lie at uncertainties? Job's friends would persuade him that all his hope was but the hope of the hypocrite, *ch.* iv. 6. Nay, saith he, I would not for all the world be so foolish as to build upon such a rotten foundation; "for what is the hope of the hypocrite?" See here, 1st. The hypocrite deceived. He hath gained, and he hath hope; this is his bright side. It is allowed that he has gained by his hypocrisy, has gained the praise and applause of men, and the wealth of this world. Jehu gained a kingdom by his hypocrisy, and the Pharisees many a widow's house. Upon this gain he builds his hopes, such as it is; he hopes he is in good circumstances for another world, because he finds he is so for this, and he blesseth himself in his own way. 2nd. The hypocrite undeceived. He will at last see himself wretchedly cheated; for, *First.* God shall take away his soul sore against his will; *Lu.* xii. 20, "Thy soul shall be required of thee." God, as the judge, takes it away, to be tried and determined to its everlasting state; he shall then fall into the hands of the living God, to be dealt with immediately. *Secondly.* What will his hope be then? It will be vanity and a lie; it will stand him in no stead. The wealth of this world, which he hoped in, he must leave behind him, *Ps.* xlix. 17. The happiness of the other world, which he hoped for, he will certainly miss of; he

hoped to go to heaven, but he will be shamefully disappointed; he will plead his external profession, privileges, and performances, but all his pleas will be overruled as frivolous; "Depart from me, I know you not." So that, upon the whole matter, it is certain a formal hypocrite, with all his gains and all his hopes, will be certainly miserable in a dying hour.

2. Because the hypocrite's prayer will not be heard; ver. 9, "Will God hear his cry when trouble comes upon him?" No, he will not; it cannot be expected he should. If true repentance come upon him, God will hear his cry, and accept him, *Isa.* i. 18; but if he continue impenitent and unchanged let him not think to find favour with God. Observe, 1st. Trouble will come upon him; certainly it will. Troubles in the world often surprise those that are most secure of an uninterrupted prosperity. However, death will come, and trouble with it, when he must leave the world and all his delights in it. The judgment of the great day will come; fearfulness will surprise the hypocrites, *Isa.* xxxiii. 14. 2nd. Then he will cry to God; will pray, and pray earnestly. Those that in prosperity slighted God, either prayed not at all, or were cold and careless in prayer, when trouble comes will make their application to him, and cry as men in earnest. But, 3rd. Will God hear him then, in the troubles of this life? God hath told us that he will not hear the prayers of those that regard iniquity in their hearts, *Ps.* lxvi. 18, and set up their idols there, *Eze.* xiv. 4; nor of those that turn away their ear from hearing the law, *Pr.* xxviii. 9; "Get you to the gods whom you have served," *Jud.* x. 14. In the judgment to come, it is certain God will not hear the cry of those that lived and died in their hypocrisy. Their doleful lamentations will all be unpitied, "I will laugh at your calamity;" their importunate petitions will all be thrown out, and their pleas rejected. Inflexible justice cannot be biassed, nor the irreversible sentence revoked: see *Mat.* vii. 22, 23; *Lu.* xiii. 26; and the case of the foolish virigins, *Mat.* xxv. 11.

3. Because the hypocrite's religion is neither comfortable nor constant; ver. 10, "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" No, not at any time; for his delight is in the profits of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, more than in God; especially not in time of trouble. "Will he always call upon God?" No; in prosperity he will not call upon God, but slight him; in adversity he will not call upon God, but curse him. He is weary of his religion when he gets nothing by it, or is in danger of losing. Note, 1st. Those are hypocrites who, though they profess religion, neither take pleasure in it, nor persevere in it; that reckon their religion a task and a drudgery, a weariness, and snuff at it; that make use of it only to serve a turn, and lay it aside when the turn is served; that will call upon God while it is in fashion, or while the pang of devotion lasts, but give it off when they fall into other company, or when the hot fit is over. 2nd. The reason why hypocrites do not persevere in religion is, because they have no pleasure in it. They that do not delight themselves in the Almighty will not always call upon him. The more comfort we find in our religion the more close we shall cleave to it. Those that have no delight in God are easily inveigled by the pleasures of sense, and so drawn away from their religion; and they are easily run down by the crosses of this life, and so driven away from their religion, and will not "always call upon God."

11 I will teach you by the hand of God:
That which *is* with the Almighty will I not conceal.
12 Behold, all ye yourselves have seen *it;*
Why then are ye thus altogether vain?
13 This *is* the portion of a wicked man with God,
And the heritage of oppressors,
Which they shall receive of the Almighty.
14 If his children be multiplied, *it is* for the sword:
And his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.
15 Those that remain of him shall be buried in death:
And his widows shall not weep.
16 Though he heap up silver as the dust,
And prepare raiment as the clay;
17 He may prepare *it,* but the just shall put *it* on,
And the innocent shall divide the silver.
18 He buildeth his house as a moth,
And as a booth *that* the keeper maketh.

WATCH BOOTH.

19 The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered:
He openeth his eyes, and he *is* not.
20 Terrors take hold on him as waters,
A tempest stealeth him away in the night.
21 The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth:
And as a storm hurleth him out of his place.
22 For *God* shall cast upon him, and not spare:
He would fain flee out of his hand.
23 *Men* shall clap their hands at him,
And shall hiss him out of his place.

Job's friends had seen a great deal of the misery and destruction that attends wicked people, especially oppressors; and Job, while the heat of disputation lasted, had said as much, and with as much assurance, of their prosperity; but, now the heat of the battle was pretty well over, he was willing to own how far he agreed with them, and where the difference between his opinion and theirs lay. 1. He agreed with them that wicked people are miserable people; that God will certainly reckon with cruel oppressors, and one time or other, one way or other, his justice will make reprisals upon them for all the affronts they have put upon God, and all the wrongs they have done to their neighbours. This truth is abundantly confirmed by the entire concurrence even of these angry disputants in it. But, 2. In this they differed: they held that these deserved judgments are presently and visibly brought upon wicked oppressors; that "they travail with pain all their days;" that in prosperity "the destroyer comes upon them;" that they "shall not be rich," nor their "branch green;" and that "their destruction shall be accomplished before their time:" so Eliphaz, *ch.* xv. 20, 21, 29, 32. That the "steps of their strength shall be straitened;" that "terrors shall make them afraid on every side:" so Bildad, *ch.* xviii. 7, 11. That he himself "shall vomit up his riches," and that "in the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits:" so Zophar, *ch.* xx. 15, 22. Now Job held that many times judgments do not fall upon them quickly, but are deferred for some time. That vengeance strikes slowly he had already shewed, *ch.* xxi.; xxiv.; now he comes to shew that it strikes surely and severely, and that reprieves are no pardons.

First. Job here undertakes to set this matter in a true light; ver. 11, 12, "I will teach you." And we must not disdain to learn even of those that are sick and poor, yea, and peevish too, if they deliver what is true and good. Observe, 1. What he would teach them. "That which is with the Almighty;" that is, the counsels and purposes of God concerning wicked people, which are hid with him, and which you cannot hastily judge of; and the usual methods of his providence concerning them; This, saith Job, "will I not conceal." What God has not concealed from us we must not conceal from those we are concerned to teach; "things revealed belong to us and our children." 2. How he would teach them. "By the hand of God;" that is, by his strength and assistance. Those that undertake to teach others must look to the hand of God to direct them, to open their ear, (*Isa.* l. 4,) and to open their lips. Those whom God teacheth with a strong hand are best able to teach others, *Isa.* viii. 11. 3. What reason they had to learn those things which he was about to teach them, ver. 12. That it was confirmed by their own observation; "You yourselves have seen it;" but what we have heard, and seen, and known we have need to be taught, that we may be perfect in our lesson. And that it would set them to rights in their judgment concerning him; "Why then are ye thus altogether vain," to condemn me for a wicked man, because I am afflicted? Truth, rightly understood and applied, would cure us of that vanity of mind which ariseth from our mistakes. That particularly which he offers now to lay before them is, "the portion of a wicked man with God," particularly of oppressors, ver. 13: compare *ch.* xx. 29. Their portion in the world may be wealth and preferment, but their portion with God is ruin and misery. They are above the control of any earthly power, it may be; but the Almighty can deal with them.

Secondly. He doth it by shewing that wicked people may in some instances prosper; but ruin follows them in those very instances, and that is their portion, that is their heritage, that is it which they must abide by.

1. They may prosper in their children, but ruin attends them. "His children," perhaps, "are multiplied," ver. 14, or magnified, so some; they are very numerous, and are raised to honour and great estates. Worldly people are said to be "full of children," *Ps.* xvii. 14; and, as it is in the margin there, 'their children are full;' in them the parents hope to live, and in their preferment to be honoured. But the more children they leave, and the greater prosperity they leave them in, the more and the fairer marks do they leave for the arrows of God's judgments to be levelled at; his three sore judgments, sword, famine, and pestilence, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 13. 1st. Some of them shall die by the sword, the sword of war, perhaps. They brought them up to live by their sword, as Esau, *Gen.* xxvii. 40; and those that do so commonly die by the sword, first or last: or by the sword of justice, for their crimes; or the sword of the murderer, for their estates. 2nd. Others of them shall die by famine; ver. 14, "His offspring shall not be satisfied with bread." He thought he had secured to them large estates, but it may happen, that they may be reduced to poverty, so as not to have the necessary supports of life, at least not to live comfortably. They shall be so needy that they shall not have a competency of necessary food, and so greedy, or so discontented, that what they have they shall not be satisfied with, because not so much, or not so dainty, as what they have been used to. "Ye eat, but ye have not enough," *Hag.* i. 6. 3rd. "Those that remain shall be buried in death," that is, shall die of the plague, which is called death, *Rev.* vi. 8; and be buried privately, and in haste, as soon as they are dead, without any solemnity; "buried with the burial of an ass." And even their widows shall not weep; they shall not have wherewithal to put them in mourning. Or it notes that these wicked men, as they lived undesired, so they die unlamented; and even their widows will think themselves happy that they are got rid of them.

2. They may prosper in their estates, but ruin attends them too, ver. 16—18. 1st. We will suppose them to be rich in money and plate, in clothing and furniture. "They heap up silver" in abundance, "as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay." They have heaps of clothes about them, as plentiful as heaps of clay; or it intimates, that they have such abundance of clothes that they are even a burthen to them: they "lade themselves with thick clay," *Hab.* ii. 6. See what is the care and business of worldly people, to heap up worldly wealth. Much would have more, till the silver is cankered, and the garments moth-eaten, *Jas.* v. 2, 3. But what comes of it? He shall never be the better for it himself; death will strip him, death will rob him, if he be not robbed and stripped sooner, *Lu.* xii. 20. Nay, God will so order it, that the just shall wear his raiment, and the innocent shall divide his silver. *First.* They shall have it, and divide it among themselves. Some way or other Providence shall so order it, that good men shall come honestly by that wealth which the wicked man came dishonestly by; "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just," *Pr.* xiii. 22. God disposeth of men's estates as he pleaseth, and often

makes their wills against their wills. The just, whom he hated and persecuted, shall have rule over all his labours, and, in due time, recover with interest what was violently taken from him. The Egyptians' jewels were the Israelites' pay. Solomon observes (*Eccl.* ii. 26) that God makes the sinners drudges to the righteous; for to "the sinner he gives travail to gather and heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God." *Secondly.* They shall do good with it. The innocent shall not hoard the silver, as he did that gathered it, but shall divide it to the poor; shall "give a portion to seven, and also to eight," which is laying up the best securities. Money is like muck, good for nothing if it be not spread. When God enricheth good men, they must remember they are but stewards, and must give an account. What bad men bring a curse upon their families with the ill getting of, good men bring a blessing upon their families with the well using of. "He that by unjust gain increaseth his substance shall gather it for him that will pity the poor," *Pr.* xxviii. 8. 2nd. We will suppose them to have built them strong and stately houses; but they are like the house which the moth makes for herself in an old garment, out of which she will soon be shaken, ver. 18. He is very secure in it, as a moth, and has no apprehension of danger, but it will prove of as short continuance as a booth which the keeper makes, which will quickly be taken down and gone, and his place shall know him no more.

3. Destruction attends their persons, though they lived long in health and at ease; ver. 19, "The rich man shall lie down" to sleep, to repose himself in the abundance of his wealth,—"Soul, take thine ease;" shall lie down in it as his strong city, and seem to others to be very happy, and very easy; "but he shall not be gathered," that is, he shall not have his mind composed and settled, and gathered in to enjoy his wealth. He doth not sleep so contentedly as people think he doth; he lies down, but "his abundance will not suffer him to sleep," at least not so sweetly as the labouring man, *Eccl.* v. 12. He lies down, but he is full of tossings to and fro, till the dawning of the day, and then "he opens his eyes, and he is not;" he sees himself and all he has hastening away, as it were, in the twinkling of an eye. His cares increase his fears, and both together make him uneasy. So that, when we attend him to his bed, we do not find him happy there; but in the close we are called to attend his exit, and see how miserable he is in death, and after death.

1st. He is miserable in death; it is to him the king of terrors, ver. 20, 21. When some mortal disease seizeth him, what a fright is he in! "Terrors take hold on him, as waters," as if he were surrounded by the flowing tides. He trembles to think of leaving this world, and much more of removing to another. This mingles sorrow and wrath with his sickness, as Solomon observes, *Eccl.* v. 17. These terrors put him either, *First.* Into a silent and sullen despair, and then the tempest of God's wrath, the tempest of death, may be said to steal him away in the night, when no one is aware, or takes any notice of it. Or, *Secondly.* Into an open and clamorous despair, and then he is said to be carried away, and hurled out of his place, as with a storm, and with an east wind, violent and noisy, and very dreadful. Death to a godly man is like a fair gale of wind to transport him to the heavenly country; but to a wicked man it is like an east wind, a storm, a tempest, that hurries him away in confusion and amazement to destruction.

2nd. He is miserable after death. *First.* His soul falls under the just indignation of God, and the terror of that puts him into such amazement at the approach of death; ver. 22, "For God shall cast upon him, and not spare." While he lived he had the benefit of sparing mercy, but now the day of God's patience is over, and he will not spare, but pour out upon him the full vials of his wrath. What God casts down upon a man there is no flying from, nor bearing up under. We read of his casting down great stones from heaven upon the Canaanites, *Jos.* x. 11, which made terrible execution among them; but what was that to his casting down his anger in its full weight upon the sinner's conscience, like the talent of lead? *Zec.* v. 7, 8. The damned sinner, seeing the wrath of God break in upon him, "would fain flee out of his hand," but he cannot, the gates of hell are locked and barred, and the great gulf fixed; and it will be in vain to call for the shelter of rocks and mountains. Those that will not be persuaded now to fly to the arms of Divine grace, which are stretched out to receive them, will not be able to flee from the arms of Divine wrath, which will shortly be stretched out to destroy them. *Secondly.* His memory falls under the just indignation of all mankind; ver. 23, "Men shall clap their hands at him," that is, they shall rejoice in the judgments of God, by which he is cut off, and be well pleased in his fall. "When the wicked perish, there is shouting," *Pr.* xi. 10. When God hurleth him, men shall hiss him, out of his place, and leave on his name perpetual marks of infamy. In the same place where he has been caressed and cried up he shall be laughed at, *Ps.* lii. 7, and his ashes shall be trampled on.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The strain of this chapter is very unlike the rest of this book. Job forgets his sores, and all his sorrows, and talks like a philosopher, or a virtuoso. Here is a great deal both of natural philosophy and moral in this discourse; but the question is, How it comes in here? Doubtless it was not merely for an amusement, or diversion from the controversy, (and if it had been only so perhaps it had not been much amiss,—when disputes grow hot, better lose the question than lose our temper,) but this is pertinent, and to the business in hand. Job and his friends had been discoursing about the dispensations of Providence towards the wicked and the righteous. Job had shewed that some wicked men live and die in prosperity, while others are presently and openly arrested by the judgments of God. But if any ask the reason why some are punished in this world, and not others, they must be told, it is a question that cannot be resolved. The knowledge of the reasons of state in God's government of the world is kept from us, and we must neither pretend to it nor reach after it. Zophar had wished that God would shew Job the secrets of wisdom, *ch.* xi. 6. No, saith Job, secret things belong not to us, but things revealed, *Deu.* xxix. 29. And here he shews, I. Concerning worldly wealth, how industriously that is sought for, and pursued by the children of men, what pains they take, what contrivances they have, and what hazards they run to get it, ver. 1—11. II. Concerning wisdom, ver. 12; in general, the price of it is very great, it is of inestimable value, ver 15—19; the place of it is very secret, ver. 14, 20, 22; in particular, there is a wisdom which is hid in God, ver. 23—27; and there is a wisdom which is revealed to the children of men, ver. 28. Our inquiries into the former must be checked, into the latter must be quickened, for that is it which is our concern.

SURELY there is a vein for the silver,
And a place for gold *where* they fine *it*.
2 Iron is taken out of the earth,
And brass *is* molten *out of* the stone.
3 He setteth an end to darkness,
And searcheth out all perfection:
The stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.
4 The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant;
Even the waters forgotten of the foot:
They are dried up, they are gone away from men
5 *As for* the earth, out of it cometh bread:
And under it is turned up as it were fire.
6 The stones of it *are* the place of sapphires:
And it hath dust of gold.
7 *There is* a path which no fowl knoweth,
And which the vulture's eye hath not seen:
8 The lion's whelps have not trodden it,
Nor the fierce lion passed by it.
9 He putteth forth his hand upon the rock;
He overturneth the mountains by the roots.
10 He cutteth out rivers among the rocks;
And his eye seeth every precious thing.
11 He bindeth the floods from overflowing;
And *the thing that is* hid bringeth he forth to light

WORKERS IN METAL.—ver. 2.

Here Job shews, 1. What a great way the wit of man may go, in diving into the depths of nature, and seizing the riches of it; what a great deal of knowledge, and a great deal of wealth, men may by their ingenious and industrious searches make themselves masters of. But doth it therefore follow that men may by their wit comprehend the reasons why some wicked people prosper, and others are punished? why some good people prosper, and others are afflicted? No, by no means. The caverns of the earth may be discovered, but not the counsels of Heaven. 2. What a great deal of care and pains worldly men take to get riches. He had observed, concerning the wicked man, *ch.* xxvii. 16, that he "heaped up silver as the dust," now here he shews whence that silver came, and how it was come by, which he is so fond of, to shew what little reason wicked rich men have to be proud of their wealth and pomp. Observe here,

First. The wealth of this world is hid in the earth; thence the silver and the gold which afterwards they refine is fetched, ver. 1. There it lay, mixed with a great deal of dirt and dross, like a worthless thing, of no more account than common earth; and abundance of it will so lie neglected till the earth and all the works therein shall be burned up. Holy Mr. Herbert, in his poem called *Avarice*, takes notice of this, to shame men out of the love of money.

'Money, thou bane of bliss, thou source of woe,
Whence com'st thou that thou art so fresh and fine?
I know thy parentage is base and low;
Man found thee poor and dirty in a mine.

Surely thou didst so little contribute
To this great kingdom which thou now hast got,
That he was fain, when thou wast destitute,
To dig thee out of thy dark cave and grot.

Man calleth thee his wealth, who made thee rich,
And while he digs out thee, falls in the ditch.'

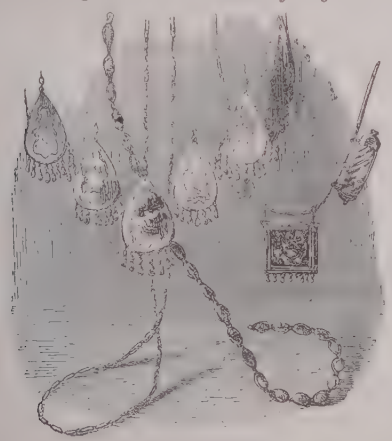
Iron and brass, though less valuable, but more serviceable metals, are "taken out of the earth," ver. 2, and are there found in great abundance, which abates their price indeed, but is a great kindness to man, who could much better be without gold than without iron. Nay, "out of the earth comes bread," that is bread-corn, the necessary support of life, ver. 5. Thence man's maintenance is fetched to mind him of his own original; he is of the earth, and is hastening to the earth. "Under it is turned up as it were fire;" precious stones that sparkle as fire; brimstone, that is apt to take fire; coal, that is proper to feed fire. As we have our food, so we have our fuel, out of the earth. There the sapphires and other gems are, and thence gold dust is digged up, ver. 6. The wisdom of the Creator has placed these things, 1. Out of our sight, to teach us not to set our eyes upon them, *Pr.* xxiii. 5. 2. Under our feet, to teach us not to lay them in our bosoms, not to set our hearts upon them, but to trample upon them with a holy contempt. See how full the earth is of God's riches, *Ps.* civ. 24, and infer from thence not only how great a God he is whose the earth is and the fulness thereof, *Ps.* xxiv. 1, but how full heaven must needs be of God's riches, which is the city of the great King, in comparison with which this earth is a poor country.

Secondly. The wealth that is hid in the earth cannot be come at but with a great deal of difficulty. It is hard to be found out; there is but here and there a vein for the silver, ver. 1. The precious stones, though bright themselves, yet, because buried in obscurity, and out of sight, are called stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. Men may search long before they light on them; when found out, it is hard to be fetched out; men's wits must be set on work to contrive ways and means to get this hid treasure into their hands, they must with their lamps set an end to darkness; and if one expedient miscarry, one method fail, they must try another, until they have searched out all perfection, and turned every stone to effect it, ver. 3. They must grapple with subterraneous waters, ver. 4, 10, 11; and force their way through rocks which are as it were the roots of the mountains, ver. 9. Now God has made the getting of gold and silver and precious stones so difficult, 1. For the exciting and engaging of industry. *Dis laboribus omnia vendunt*,—'Labour is the price which the gods affix to all things.' If valuable things were too easily come by, men would never

learn to take pains. But the difficulty of gaining the riches of this earth may suggest to us what violence the kingdom of heaven suffers. 2. For the checking and restraining of pomp and luxury. What is for necessity is had with a little labour from the surface of the earth, but what is for ornament must be digged with a great deal of pains out of the bowels of it. To be fed is cheap, but to be fine is chargeable.

Thirdly. Though the subterraneous wealth is thus hard to come by, yet men will have it. He that loveth silver is not satisfied with silver, and yet is not satisfied without it; but they that have much must needs have more. See here, 1. What inventions men have to get this wealth; they search out all perfection, ver. 3. They have arts and engines to dry up the waters and carry them off when they break in upon them in their mines, and threaten to drown the work, ver. 4. They have pumps and pipes and canals to clear their way; and, obstacles being removed, they tread "the path which no fowl knoweth," ver. 7, 8. Unseen by the vulture's eye, which is piercing and quick-sighted, and untrodden by the lion's whelps, that traverse all the paths of the wilderness. 2. What pains men take, and what vast charge they are at, to get this wealth; they work their way through the rocks, and undermine the mountains, ver. 10. 3. What hazards they run. They that dig in the mines have their lives in their hands; for they are fain to bind "the floods from overflowing," ver. 11; and are continually in danger of being suffocated by damps, or crushed or buried alive by the fall of the earth upon them. See how foolish man adds to his own burthen: he is sentenced to eat bread in the sweat of his face; but, as if that were not enough, he will get gold and silver in the peril of his life, though the more is gotten the less valuable it is: for in Solomon's time silver was as stones. But, 4. Observe what it is that carries men through all this toil and peril; "their eye sees every precious thing," ver. 10. Silver and gold are precious things with them; and they have them in their eye in all these pursuits. They fancy they see them glittering before their faces, and, in the prospect of laying hold on them, they make nothing of all these difficulties; for, lastly, they make something of it at last: "that which is hid bringeth he forth to light," ver. 11. What was hid under ground is laid upon the bank; the metal that was hid in the ore is refined from its dross, and brought forth pure out of the furnace, and then he thinks his pains well bestowed. Go to the miners then, thou sluggard in religion, consider their ways and be wise. Let their courage, diligence, and constancy in seeking the wealth that perisheth, shame us out of slothfulness and faint-heartedness in labouring for the true riches; "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold?" much easier, much safer; yet gold is sought for, but grace neglected. Will the hopes of precious things out of the earth, (so they call them, though really they are paltry and perishing,) be such a spur to industry, and shall not the certain prospect of truly precious things in heaven be much more so?

12 But where shall wisdom be found?
And where *is* the place of understanding?
13 Man knoweth not the price thereof;
Neither is it found in the land of the living.
14 The depth saith, It *is* not in me:
And the sea saith, *It is* not with me
15 It cannot be gotten for gold,
Neither shall silver be weighed *for* the price thereof
16 It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir,
With the precious onyx, or the sapphire.
17 The gold and the crystal cannot equal it:
And the exchange of it *shall not be for* jewels of fine gold.



GOLDEN ORNAMENTS.

18 No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls:
For the price of wisdom *is* above rubies.
19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it,
Neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

Job, having spoken of the wealth of the world, which men put such a value upon, and take so much pains for, here comes to speak of another more valuable jewel, and that is wisdom and understanding, the knowing and enjoying of God and ourselves. They that found out all those ways and means to enrich themselves thought themselves very wise. But Job will not own that to be wisdom; he supposeth them to gain their point, and to bring to light what they sought for, ver. 11, and yet asks, Where is wisdom? for it is not here; "this their way is their folly." We must, therefore, seek it somewhere else, and it will be found nowhere but in the principles and practices of religion. There is more true knowledge, satisfaction, and happiness in sound divinity, which shews us the way to the joys of heaven, than in natural philosophy or mathematics, which help us to find a way into the bowels of the earth. Two things cannot be found out concerning this wisdom:

First. The price of it; for that is inestimable, its worth infinitely more than all the riches in this world. "Man knows not the price thereof," ver. 13; that is, 1. Few put a due value upon it. Men know not the worth of it; its innate excellency, their need of it, and of what unspeakable advantage it will be to them; and, therefore, though they have many a price in their hand to get this wisdom, yet they have no heart to it, *Pr.* xvii. 16. The cock in the fable knew not the value of the precious stone he found in the dunghill, and therefore would rather have lighted on a barleycorn. Men know not the worth of grace, and therefore will take no pains to get it. 2. None can possibly give a valuable consideration for it, with all this wealth the world can furnish them with. This Job is large upon, ver. 15, &c., where he makes an inventory of the *bona notabilia*,—'the most valuable treasures' of this world. Gold is five times mentioned; silver comes in also; and then divers precious stones, the onyx and sapphire, pearls and rubies, and the topaz of Ethiopia; these are the things that are highest prized in the world's markets. But if a man would give, not only these, heaps of these, but "all the substance of his house," all he is worth in the world, for wisdom, "it would utterly be contemned." These may give a man some advantage in seeking wisdom, as they did to Solomon, but there is no purchasing wisdom with these. It is a gift of the Holy Ghost, which cannot be bought with money, *Acts* viii. 20; as it doth not run in the blood, and so come to us by descent, so it cannot be got for money, nor doth it come to us by purchase. Spiritual gifts are conferred without money, and without price, because no money can be a price for them. Wisdom is likewise a more valuable gift to him that has it, makes him richer and happier, than gold or precious stones. It is "better to get wisdom than gold." Gold is another's, wisdom our own; gold is for the body and time, wisdom is for the soul and eternity. Let that which is most precious in God's account be so in ours: see *Pr.* iii. 14, &c.

Secondly. The place of it; for that is undiscoverable. "Where shall wisdom be found?" ver. 12. He asks this,

1. As one that truly desired to find it. This is a question we should all put; while the most of men are asking where shall money be found, we should ask where may wisdom be found, that we may seek it and find it. Not vain philosophy, or carnal policy, but true religion; for that is the only true wisdom, that is it which best improves our faculties, and best secures our spiritual and eternal welfare. This is that which we should cry after, and dig for, *Pr.* ii. 3, 4.

2. As one that utterly despaired of finding it anywhere but in God, and any way but by Divine revelation. "It is not found in the land of the living," ver. 13. We cannot attain to a right understanding of God and his will, of ourselves, and our duty and interest, by reading any books or men but God's book and the men of God. Such is the degeneracy of the human nature, that there is no true wisdom to be found with any but those that are born again, and through grace partake of a Divine nature. As for others, even the most ingenious and industrious, they can tell us no tidings of this lost wisdom. 1st. Ask the miners, and by them "the depth will say, It is not in me," ver. 14. Those that dig into the bowels of the earth, to rifle the treasures there, cannot in these dark recesses find this rare jewel, nor with all their art make themselves masters of it. 2nd. Ask the mariners, and by them the sea will say, "It is not in me." It can never be got either by trading on the waters or diving into them; can never be sucked from the abundance of the seas or the treasures hid in the sand. Where there is a vein for the silver there is no vein for wisdom, none for grace. Men can easier break through the difficulties they meet with in getting worldly wealth than through those they meet with in getting heavenly wisdom; and they will take more pains to learn how to live in this world than how to live for ever in a better world. So blind and foolish is man become, that it is in vain to ask him, "Where is the place of wisdom?" and which is the road that leads to it?

20 Whence then cometh wisdom?
And where *is* the place of understanding?
21 Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living,
And kept close from the fowls of the air.
22 Destruction and death say,
We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.
23 God understandeth the way thereof,
And he knoweth the place thereof.
24 For he looketh to the ends of the earth,
And seeth under the whole heaven;
25 To make the weight for the winds;
And he weigheth the waters by measure.
26 When he made a decree for the rain,
And a way for the lightning of the thunder:
27 Then did he see it, and declare it;
He prepared it, yea, and searched it out.
28 And unto man he said, Behold,
The fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom;
And to depart from evil *is* understanding.

The same question he had asked, ver. 12, he asks again here; for it is too worthy, too weighty, to be let fall until we speed in the inquiry. Concerning this we must seek until we find, until we get some satisfactory account of it. And by a diligent prosecution of this inquiry he brings it at length to this issue, that there is a twofold wisdom; one hid in God, which is secret, and belongs not to us; the other made known by him, and revealed to man, which belongs to us and to our children.

First. The knowledge of God's secret will. The will of his providence is out of our reach, and what God has reserved to himself; it belongs to the Lord our God. To know the particulars of what God will do hereafter, and the reasons of what he is doing now, is the knowledge he first speaks of.

1. This knowledge is hid from us. It is high, we cannot attain unto it; ver. 21, 22, "It is hid from the eyes of all living," even of philosophers, politicians, and saints; it is "kept close from the fowls of the air," though they fly high, and in the open firmament of heaven; though they seem somewhat nearer that upper world where the source of this wisdom is; though their eyes behold afar off, *ch.* xxxix. 29, yet they cannot penetrate into the counsels of God. No; man is wiser than the fowls of heaven; and yet comes short of this wisdom.

Even those who in their speculations soar highest, and think themselves, like the fowls of the air, above the heads of other people, yet cannot pretend to this knowledge. Job and his friends had been arguing about the methods and reasons of the dispensations of Providence in the government of the world. Why, what fools are we, saith Job, to fight in the dark thus; to dispute about that which we do not understand! The line and plummet of human reason can never fathom the abyss of the Divine counsels. Who can undertake to give a *rationale* of Providence; or account for the maxims, measures, and methods of God's government, those *arcana imperii*,—'the cabinet counsels' of Divine wisdom? Let us then be content not to know the future events of Providence, until time discover them, *Acts* i. 7; and not to know the secret reasons of Providence until eternity discovers them. God is now a God that hideth himself, *Isa.* xlv. 15; "clouds and darkness are round about him." Though this wisdom be hid from all living, yet "Destruction and death say they have heard the fame of it." Though they cannot give an account of it themselves, for there is "no wisdom, nor device, nor knowledge at all in the grave," much less this, yet there is a world on the other side death and the grave, on which those dark regions border, and to which we must pass through them, and there we shall see clearly what we are now in the dark about. Have a little patience, saith Death to the inquisitive soul, I will fetch thee shortly to a place where even this wisdom will be found. When "the mystery of God shall be finished," it will be laid open, and we shall know as we are known; when the veil of flesh is rent, and the interposing clouds are scattered, we shall know what God doth, though we know not now, *Jno.* xiii. 7.

5. This knowledge is hid in God, as the apostle speaks, *Eph.* iii. 9. "Known unto God are all his works," though they are not known to us, *Acts* xv. 18. There are good reasons for what he doth, though we cannot assign them; ver. 23, "God understands the way thereof." Men sometimes do they know not what; but God never doth. Men do what they did not design to do; new occurrences put them upon new counsels, and oblige them to take new measures; but God doth all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself, and which he never alters. Men sometimes do that which they cannot give a good reason for; but in every will of God there is a counsel. He knows both what he doth and why he doth it; the whole series of events, and the order and place of every occurrence. This knowledge he has in perfection, but keeps to himself. Two reasons are here given why God must needs understand his own way, and he only:

1st. Because all events are now directed by an all-seeing and almighty Providence, ver. 24, 25. He that governs the world, is, *First.* Omniscient: "for he looks to the ends of the earth," both in place and time; distant ages, distant regions, are under his view. We do not understand our own way, much less can we understand God's way, because we are short-sighted; how little do we know of what is doing in the world, much less of what will be done! But "the eyes of the Lord are in every place;" nay, they "run to and fro through the earth." Nothing is or can be hid from him; and, therefore, the reasons why some wicked people prosper remarkably, and others are remarkably punished in this world, which are secret to us, are known to him. One day's events and one man's affairs have such a reference to, and such a dependence upon, another's, that he only to whom all events and all affairs are naked and open, and who sees the whole at one entire and certain view, is a competent judge of every part. *Secondly.* He is omnipotent: he can do every thing, and is very exact in all he doth. For proof of this, he instanceth in the winds and waters; ver. 25, What is lighter than the wind? yet God hath ways of poising it; he knows how "to make the weight for the winds," which he "brings out of his treasuries," *Ps.* cxxxv. 7; keeping a very particular account of what he draws out, as men do of what they pay out of their treasuries, not at random, as men bring out of their trash. Nothing sensible is to us more unaccountable than the wind; we "hear the sound of it, yet cannot tell whence it comes, or whither it goes." But God gives it out by weight, wisely ordering both from what point it shall blow and with what strength. The waters of the sea, and the rain waters, he both weighs and measures; allotting the proportion of every tide, and every shower. A great and constant communication there is between clouds and seas, the waters above the firmament, and those under it; vapours go up, rains come down; air is condensed into water, water rarified into air. But the great God keeps an exact account of all the stock with which this trade is carried on for the public benefit, and sees that none of it be lost. Now if in these things Providence be so exact, much more in dispensing frowns and favours, rewards and punishments, to the children of men, according to the rules of equity.

2nd. Because all events were from eternity designed and determined by an infallible prescience, and immutable decree, ver. 26, 27. When he settled the course of nature, he foreordained all the operations of his government. *First.* He settled the course of nature: for this he instanceth in "a decree for the rain, and a way for the thunder and lightning;" the general manner and method, and the particular uses and tendencies, of these strange performances. Both their causes and their effects were appointed by the Divine purpose; hence he is said to "prepare lightnings for the rain," *Ps.* cxxxv. 7; *Jer.* x. 13. *Secondly.* When he did that, he laid all the measures of his providence, and drew an exact scheme of the whole work from first to last. Then from eternity did he see in himself, and declare to himself, the plan of his proceedings; then he prepared it, fixed it, and established it, set every thing in readiness for all his works; so that when any thing was to be done nothing was to seek, nor could any thing unforeseen occur to put it either out of its method or out of its time, for all was ordered as exactly as if he had studied it, and searched it out: so that, whatever he doth, "nothing can be put to it, or taken from it," and, therefore, "it shall be for ever," *Eccl.* iii. 14. Some make Job to speak of wisdom here as a person, and translate it, 'Then he saw her, and shewed her,' &c.; and then it is parallel with that of Solomon, concerning the essential wisdom of the Father, the eternal Word, *Pr.* viii. 22, &c., Before the earth was, then was I by him, *Jno.* i. 1, 2.

Secondly. The knowledge of God's revealed will, the will of his precept; and this is within our reach, it is level to our capacity, and will do us good; ver. 28, "Unto man he said, Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom." Let it not be said that, when God concealed his counsels from man, and forbade him that tree of knowledge, it was because he grudged him any thing that would contribute to his real bliss and satisfaction; no, he let him know as much as he was concerned to know in order to his duty and happiness. He shall be intrusted with as much of his sovereign mind as was needful and fit for a subject, but he must not think himself fit to be a privy counsellor. 'He said to Adam,' so some, to the first man, in the day in which he was created he told him plainly, it was not for him to amuse himself with over curious searches into the mysteries of creation, nor to pretend to solve all the phenomena of nature; he would find it neither possible nor profitable to do so. No less wisdom, saith Archbishop Tillotson, than that which made the world can thoroughly understand the philosophy of it. But let him look upon this as his wisdom, to fear the Lord and to depart from evil; let him learn that, and he is learned enough, let this knowledge serve his turn. When God forbade man the tree of knowledge, he allowed him the tree of life; and this is that tree, *Pr.* iii. 18. We cannot attain true wisdom but by Divine revelation; "the Lord giveth wisdom," *Pr.* ii. 6. Now the matter of that is not the secrets of nature or providence, but the rules of our own practice; "unto man he said," not, Go up to heaven to fetch happiness thence; or, Go down to the deep to draw it up thence. No; "the word is nigh thee," *Deu.* xxx. 11. "He hath shewed thee, O man," not what is great, but "what is good;" not what the Lord thy God designs to do with thee, but what he "requires of thee," *Mic.* vi. 8. "Unto you, O men, I call," *Pr.* viii. 4. Lord, what is man, that he should be thus minded, thus visited! "Behold," mark, take notice of this; he that hath ears let him hear what the God of heaven saith to the children of men, "The fear of the Lord, that is the wisdom." Here is, 1. The description of true religion, pure religion, and undefiled; it is to "fear the Lord, and depart from evil," which agrees with God's character of Job, *ch.* i. 1. "The fear of the Lord" is the spring and summary of all religion. There is a slavish fear of God, springing from hard thoughts of him, which is contrary to religion, *Mat.* xxv. 24. There is a selfish fear of God, springing from dreadful thoughts of him, which may be a good step towards religion, *Acts* ix. 5. But there is a filial fear of God, springing from great and high thoughts of him, which is the life and soul of all religion. And wherever this reigns in the heart, it will appear by a constant care to depart from evil, *Pr.* xvi. 6. This is essential to religion; we must first "cease to do evil," or we shall never "learn to do well." *Virtus est vitium fugere*,—'Even in our flight from vice some virtue lies.' 2. The commendation of religion. It is wisdom and understanding; to be truly religious is to be truly wise. As the wisdom of God appears in the institution of it, so the wisdom of man appears in the practice and observance of it: it is understanding, for it is the best knowledge of truth; it is wisdom, for it is the best conduct of our affairs. Nothing more surely guides our way, and gains our end, than being religious.

CHAPTER XXIX.

After that excellent discourse concerning wisdom in the foregoing chapter, Job sat down and paused a while, not because he had talked himself out of breath, but because he would not without the leave of the company engross the talk to himself, but would give room for his friends, if they pleased, to make their remarks on what he had said; but they had nothing to say, and therefore, after he had recollected himself a little, he went on with his discourse, concerning his own affairs, in this and the two following chapters. In which, I. He describes the height of the prosperity from which he was fallen. And, II. The depth of the adversity into which he was fallen; and this he doth to move the pity of his friends, and to justify, or at least excuse, his own complaints. But then, III. To obviate his friends' censures of him, he makes a very ample and particular protestation of his own integrity notwithstanding. In this chapter he looks back to the days of his prosperity; and shews, 1. What comfort and satisfaction he had in his house and family, ver. 1—6. 2. What a great deal of honour and power he had in his country, and what respect was paid him by all sorts of people, ver. 7—10. 3. What abundance of good he did in his place as a magistrate, ver. 11—17. 4. What a just prospect he had of the continuance of his comfort at home, ver. 18—20; and of his interest abroad, ver. 21—25. All this he enlargeth upon, to aggravate his present calamities; like Naomi, I went out full, but am brought home again empty.

MOREOVER Job continued his parable, and said,
2 Oh that I were as *in* months past,
As *in* the days *when* God preserved me;
3 When his candle shined upon my head,
And when by his light I walked *through* darkness;
4 As I was in the days of my youth,
When the secret of God *was* upon my tabernacle;
5 When the Almighty *was* yet with me,
When my children *were* about me;
6 When I washed my steps with butter,
And the rock poured me out rivers of oil;

Losers may have leave to speak, and there is nothing they speak of more feelingly than of the comforts they are stripped of. Their former prosperity is one of the most pleasing subjects of their thoughts and talk; it was so to Job here, who begins with a wish, ver. 2, "O that I were as in months past!" So he brings in this account of his prosperity. His wish is, 1. O that I were in as good a state as I was then; that I had as much wealth, honour, and pleasure as I had then. This he wisheth, not so much from a concern he had for his ease, as for his reputation and the glory of his God; which he thought was eclipsed by his present sufferings. Oh! that I might be restored to my prosperity, and then the censures and reproaches of my friends would be effectually silenced, even upon their own principles, and for ever rolled away. If this be our end in desiring life, health, and prosperity, that God may be glorified, and the credit of our holy profession rescued, preserved, and advanced, the desire is not only natural but spiritual. 2. O that I were in as good a frame of spirit as I was then. That which Job complained most of now, was a load upon his spirits, through God's withdrawing from him; and therefore he wishes he now had his spirit as much enlarged and encouraged in the service of God as he had had then; and that he had as much freedom and fellowship with him, as he then thought himself happy in. This was in the days of his youth, ver. 4, when he was in the prime of his time for the enjoyment of those things, and could relish them with the highest gust. Note, Those that prosper in the days of their youth know not what black and cloudy days they are yet reserved for. Two things made the months past pleasant to Job:

First. That he had comfort in his God. This was the chief thing he rejoiced in in his prosperity, as the spring of it and the sweetness of it, that he had the favour of God, and the tokens of that favour. He did not attribute his prosperity to a happy turn of fortune, or to his own might, or the power of his own hand; but makes the same acknowledgment that David doth, *Ps.* xxx. 7, "Thou, by thy favour, hast made my mountain stand strong." A gracious soul delights in God's smiles, not in the smiles of this world. Four things were then very pleasant to holy Job:

1. The confidence he had in the Divine protection. They were "the days when God preserved me," ver. 2. Even then he saw himself exposed, and did not make his wealth his strong city, nor trusted in the abundance of his riches; but the name of the Lord was his strong tower, and in that only he thought himself safe; and to that he ascribed it that he was then safe, and his comforts were preserved to him. The devil saw a hedge about him of God's making, *ch.* i. 10; and Job saw it himself, and owned it was God's visitation that preserved his spirit, *ch.* x. 12. Those only whom God protects are safe, and may be secure; and, therefore, those who have never so much of this world must not think themselves safe unless God preserve them.

2. The complacency he had in the Divine favour; ver. 3, God's candle

shined upon his head; that is, God lifted up the light of his countenance upon him, gave him the assurances and sweet relishes of his love. The best of the communications of the Divine favour to the saints in this world is but the candlelight, compared with what is reserved for them in the future state. But such abundant satisfaction did Job take in the Divine favour, that by the light of that he walked through darkness; that guided him in his doubts, comforted him in his griefs, bore him up under his burthens, and helped him through all his difficulties. Those that have the brightest sunshine of outward prosperity, must yet expect some moments of darkness; they are sometimes crossed, sometimes at a loss, sometimes melancholy, but they that are interested in the favour of God, and know how to value it, can by the light of that, walk cheerfully and comfortably through all the darkness of this vale of tears. That puts gladness into the heart, enough to balance all the grievances of this present time.

3. The communion he had with the Divine Word; ver. 4, "The secret of God was upon my tabernacle;" that is, when God conversed freely with him, as one bosom friend with another; he knew God's mind, and was not in the dark about it, as of late he had been. "The secret of the Lord is" said to be "with them that fear him;" for he shews them that in his covenant which others see not, *Ps.* xxv. 14. God communicates his favour and grace to his people, and receives the returns of their devotion, in a way secret to the world. Some read it, 'when the society of God was in my tabernacle;' which rabbi Solomon understands of an assembly of God's people that used to meet at Job's house for religious worship in which he presided; this he took a great deal of pleasure in, and the scattering of it was a trouble to him. Or it may be understood of the angels of God pitching their tents about his habitation.

4. The assurance he had of the Divine presence; ver. 5, "The Almighty was yet with me." Now he thought God was departed from him, but in those days he was with him, and that was all in all to him. God's presence with a man in his house, though it be but a cottage, makes it both a castle and a palace.

Secondly. That he had comfort in his family; every thing was agreeable there. He had both mouths for his meat and meat for his mouths; the want of either is a great affliction. 1. He had a numerous offspring to enjoy his estate; "My children were about me." He had many children, enough to compass him round, and they were observant of him, and obsequious to him; they were about him to know what he would have, and wherein they might serve him. It is a comfort to tender parents to see their children about them; Job speaks very feelingly of this comfort, now he was deprived of it. He thought it an instance of God's being with him, that his children were about him; and yet we reckon wrong, if, when we have lost our children, we cannot comfort ourselves with this, that we have not lost our God. 2. He had a plentiful estate for the support of this numerous family, ver. 6. His dairy abounded to that degree, that he might if he pleased wash his steps with butter; and his oliveyards were so fruitful, beyond expectation, that it seemed as if the rock poured him out rivers of oil. He reckons his wealth, not by his silver and gold, which were for hoarding, but by his butter and oil, which were for use. For what is an estate good for, unless we take the good of it ourselves, and do good with it to others?

7 When I went out to the gate through the city,
When I prepared my seat in the street!
8 The young men saw me, and hid themselves:
And the aged arose, *and* stood up.
9 The princes refrained talking,
And laid *their* hand on their mouth.
10 The nobles held their peace,
And their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.
11 When the ear heard *me*, then it blessed me;
And when the eye saw *me*, it gave witness to me:
12 Because I delivered the poor that cried,
And the fatherless, and *him that had* none to help him.
13 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me:
And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me:
My judgment *was* as a robe and a diadem.
15 I was eyes to the blind,
And feet *was* I to the lame.
16 I *was* a father to the poor:
And the cause *which* I knew not I searched out.
17 And I brake the jaws of the wicked,
And plucked the spoil out of his teeth.

We have here Job in a post of honour and power; though he had comfort enough in his own house, yet he did not confine himself to that: we are not born for ourselves, but for the public. When any business was to be done in the gate, the place of judgment, Job went out to it through the city, ver. 7; not in an affectation of pomp, but in affection to justice. Observe, judgment was administered in the gate, in the street, in the places of concourse, to which every man might have a free access; that who would might be a witness to all that was said and done, and that, when judgment was given against the guilty, others might hear and fear. Job being a prince, a judge, a magistrate, a man in authority among the children of the East, we are here told,

First. What a great deal of respect was paid him by all sorts of people, not only for the dignity of his place, but for his personal merit, his eminent prudence, integrity, and good management. 1. The people honoured him, and stood in awe of him, ver. 8. The gravity and majesty of his looks and mien, and his known strictness in animadverting upon every thing that was evil and indecent, commanded all about him into a due decorum. "The young men," that could not keep their countenances, or it may be were conscious to themselves of something amiss, "hid themselves," and got out of his way; "and the aged," though they kept their ground, yet would not keep their seats, they "arose, and stood up," to do obeisance to him. They who expected honour from others gave honour to him. Virtue and piety challenge respect from all, and ordinarily have it; but they that not only are good, but do good, are worthy of double honour. Modesty becomes those that are young and in subjection, as much as majesty becomes those that are aged and in power. Honour and fear are due to magistrates, and must be rendered to them, *Rom.* xiii. 7; but if a great and good man was thus reverenced, how is the great and good God to be feared! 2. The princes and nobles paid a mighty deference to him, ver. 9, 10. Some think these were inferior magistrates under him; and the respect they paid him was due to his place, as their sovereign and supreme. It should rather seem they were his equals in place, and joined in commission with him, and the peculiar honour they gave him was gained by his extraordinary abilities and services. It was agreed that he excelled them all in quickness of apprehension, soundness of judgment, closeness of application, clearness and copiousness of expression; and, therefore, he was among his fellows an oracle of law, and counsel, and justice, and what he said all attended to, and acquiesced in. When he came into court, especially when he stood up to speak to any business, "the princes refrained talking; the nobles held their peace," that they might the more diligently hearken to what he said, and might be sure to take his meaning. They that had been forward to speak their own thoughts, loved to hear themselves talk, and cared not much what any body else said, yet, when it came to Job's turn to speak, were as desirous to know his thoughts as ever they had been to vent their own. They that suspected their own judgment were satisfied in his, and admired with what dexterity he split the hair, and untied the knots, which puzzled them, and which they knew not what to make of. When the princes and nobles wrangled among themselves, all agreed to refer the matters in dispute to Job, and to abide by his judgment. Happy the men that are blest with such eminent gifts as these; they have great opportunities of honouring God, and doing good, but have great need to watch against pride. Happy the people that are blest with such eminent men; it is a token for good to them.

Secondly. What a great deal of good he did in his place. He was very serviceable to his country with the power he had; and here we shall see what it was which Job valued himself by in the day of his prosperity. It is natural to men to have some value for themselves, and we may judge something of our own character by observing what that is upon which we value ourselves. Job valued himself, not by the honour of his family, the great estate he had, his large income, his full table, the many servants he had at his command, the ensigns of his dignity, his equipage and retinue, the splendid entertainments he gave, and the court that was made to him, but by his usefulness. Goodness is God's glory, and it will be ours; be merciful as God is, and we are perfect as he is.

1. He valued himself by the interest he had in the esteem, affections, and prayers of sober people; not by the studied panegyrics of the wits and poets, but the natural praises of all about him. All that heard what he said, and saw what he did, how he laid out himself for the public good, with all the authority and tender affection of a father to his country, blessed him, and gave witness to him, ver. 11. Many a good word they said of him, and many a good prayer they put up for him. He did not think it an honour to make every body fear him, (*Oderint dum metuant*,—'Let them hate, provided they also fear,') nor to be arbitrary, and to have his own will and way, not caring what people said of him; but, like Mordecai, to be "accepted of the multitude of his brethren," *Est.* x. 3. He did not so much value the applauses of those at a distance as the attestations of those that were the witnesses of his conduct, that constantly attended him, saw him, and heard him, and could speak of their own knowledge; especially theirs who had themselves been the better for him, and could speak by their own experience; such was "the blessing of him that was ready to perish," ver. 13, and who, by Job's means, was rescued from perishing. Let great men, and men of estates, thus do good, and they shall have praise of the same; and let those who have good done to them look upon it as a just debt they owe to their protectors and benefactors, to bless them and give witness to them; to use their interest on earth for their honour, and in heaven for their comfort; to praise them, and pray for them. Those are ungrateful indeed who grudge these small returns.

2. He valued himself by the care he took of those that were least able to help themselves, the poor and the needy, the widows and fatherless, the blind and lame, who could not be supposed either to merit his favour or ever to be in a capacity to recompense it. 1st. If the poor were injured or oppressed, they might cry to Job, and, if he found the allegations of their petitions true, they had not only his ear and his bowels, but his hand too; he "delivered the poor that cried," ver. 12, and would not suffer them to be trampled upon and run down. Nay, ver. 16, he was "a father to the poor;" not only a judge to protect them, and to see that they were not wronged, but a father to provide for them, and to see that they did not want; to counsel and direct them, and to appear and act for them upon all occasions. It is no disparagement to the son of a prince to be a father to the poor. 2nd. The fatherless, that had none to help them, found Job ready to them; and, if they were in straits, to deliver them. He helped them to make the best of what little they had; helped them to pay what they owed, and to get in what was owing to them; helped them out into the world, helped them into business; helped them to it, and helped them in it: thus should the fatherless be helped. 3rd. Those that were ready to perish he saved from perishing; relieving them that were hungry and ready to perish for want; taking care of them that were sick, that were outcasts, that were falsely accused, or in danger of being turned out of their estates unjustly, or upon any other account were ready to perish. And the extremity of the peril, as it quickened Job to appear the more vigorously for them, so it made his seasonable kindness the more affecting, and the more obliging, and brought their blessings the more abundantly upon him. 4th. The widows that were sighing for grief, and trembling for fear, he made to sing for joy; so carefully did he protect them, and provide for them, and so heartily did he espouse their interest. It is a pleasure to a good man, and should be so to a great man, to give those occasion to rejoice who are most acquainted with grief. 5th. Those that were upon any account at a loss Job gave suitable and seasonable relief to; ver. 15, "I was eyes to the blind," counselling and advising those for the best that knew not what to do; "and feet to the lame," assisting those with money and friends that knew what they should do, but knew not how to compass it. Those we best help whom we help out in that very thing wherein they are defective and most need help. We may come to be blind or lame ourselves, and therefore should pity and succour those that are so, *Isa.* xxxv. 3, 4; *Heb.* xii. 13.

3. He valued himself by the conscience he made of justice and equity in all his proceedings. His friends had unjustly censured him as an oppressor. So far from that, saith he, that I always made it my business to maintain and support right. 1st. He devoted himself to the administration of justice; ver. 14, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;" that is, he had an habitual disposition to execute justice, and put on a fixed resolution to do it. It was the girdle of his loins, *Isa.* xi. 5. It kept him tight and steady in all his motions; he always appeared in it, as in his clothing, and never without it. They that put on righteousness it will clothe them, it will keep them warm, and be comfortable to themselves; it will keep them safe, and fence them against the injuries of the season; it will adorn them, and recommend them to the favour both of God and man. 2nd. He took pleasure in it, and, as I may say, a holy pride. He looked upon it as his greatest glory to do justice to all, and

injury to none; "My judgment was as a robe and a diadem." Perhaps he did not himself wear a robe and a diadem, he was very indifferent to those ensigns of honour,—they were most fond of them that had least intrinsic worth to recommend them,—but the settled principles of justice, by which he was governed, and did govern, were to him instead of all those ornaments. If a magistrate do the duty of his place, that is an honour to him far beyond his gold or purple, and should be accordingly his delight; and truly if he do not make conscience of his duty, and in some measure answer the end of his elevation, his robe and diadem, his crown and cap, his sword and mace, are but a reproach, like the purple robe and crown of thorns with which the Jews studied to ridicule our Saviour. For, as clothes on a dead man will never make him warm, so robes on an ill man will never make him honourable. 3rd. He took pains in the business of his place; ver. 16, "The cause which I knew not, I searched out." He diligently inquired into the matters of fact, patiently and impartially heard both sides, set every thing in its true light, and cleared it from false colours; he laid all circumstances together, that he might find out the truth, and the merits of every cause, and then, and not till then, gave judgment upon it. He never answered a matter before he heard it, nor did he judge a man to be righteous, however he seemed, for his being first in his own cause, *Pr.* xviii. 17.

4. He valued himself by the check he gave to the violence of proud and evil men; ver. 17, "I brake the jaws of the wicked." He doth not say he broke their necks, he did not take away their lives, but he broke their jaws; he took away their power of doing mischief, he humbled them, mortified them, and curbed their insolence, and so "plucked the spoil out of their teeth;" delivered the persons and estates of honest men from being made a prey of by them. When they had got the spoil between their teeth, and were greedily swallowing it down, he bravely rescued it, as David did the lamb out of the mouth of the lion; not fearing, though they roared and raged like a lion disappointed of his prey. Good magistrates must thus be a terror and restraint to evil doers, and a protection to the innocent; and, in order to this, they have need to arm themselves with zeal and resolution, and an undaunted courage. A judge upon the bench has as much need to be bold and brave as a commander in the field.

18 Then I said, I shall die in my nest,
And I shall multiply *my* days as the sand.
19 My root *was* spread out by the waters,
And the dew lay all night upon my branch.
20 My glory *was* fresh in me,
And my bow was renewed in my hand.
21 Unto me *men* gave ear, and waited,
And kept silence at my counsel.
22 After my words they spake not again;
And my speech dropped upon them.
23 And they waited for me as for the rain;
And they opened their mouth wide *as* for the latter rain.
24 *If* I laughed on them, they believed *it* not;
And the light of my countenance they cast not down.
25 I chose out their way, and sat chief,
And dwelt as a king in the army,
As one *that* comforteth the mourners.

That which crowned Job's prosperity was the pleasing prospect he had of the continuance of it. Though he knew, in the general, he was liable to trouble, and therefore was not secure, *ch.* iii. 26, "I was not in safety, neither had I rest," yet he had no particular occasion for fear," but as much reason as ever any man had to count upon the lengthening out of his tranquillity.

First. See here what his thoughts were in his prosperity; ver. 18, "Then I said, I shall die in my nest." Having made himself a warm and easy nest, he hoped nothing would disturb him in it, nor move him out of it till death removed him. He knew he had never stolen any coal from the altar which might fire his nest; he saw no storm arising to shake down his nest, and therefore concluded, that to-morrow shall be as this day; as David, *Ps.* xxx. 6, "My mountain stands strong, and shall not be moved." Observe, 1. In the midst of his prosperity he thought of dying, and the thought was not uneasy to him. He knew, though his nest was high, it did not set him out of the reach of the darts of death. 2. Yet he flattered himself with vain hopes, 1st. That he should live long, should multiply his days as the sand. He means as the sand on the seashore; whereas we should rather reckon our days by the sand in the hour-glass, which will be run out in a little time. See how apt even good people are to think of death as a thing at a distance, and to put far from them that evil day, which will really be to them a good day. 2nd. That he should die in the same prosperous state in which he had lived. If such an expectation as this arise from a lively faith in the providence and promise of God, it is well; but if from a conceit of our own wisdom, and the stability of these earthly things, it is ill grounded, and turns into sin. We hope Job's confidence was like David's, *Ps.* xxvii. 1, "Whom shall I fear?" not like the rich fool's, *Lu.* xii. 19, "Soul, take thine ease."

Secondly. See what was the ground of these thoughts.

1. If he looked at home, he found he had a good bottom. His stock was all his own, and none of all his neighbours had any demand upon him. He found no bodily distemper growing upon him, his estate did not lie under any incumbrance, nor was he sensible of any worm at the root of it. He was getting forward in his affairs, and not going behindhand; he lost no reputation, but gained rather; he knew no rival that threatened either to eclipse his honour, or abridge his power. See how he describes this, ver. 19, 20. He was like a tree, whose root is not only spread out, which fixeth it and keeps it firm, so that it is in no danger of being overturned, but spread out by the waters, which feed it, and make it fruitful and flourishing, so that it is in no danger of withering. And, as he thought himself blessed with the fatness of the earth, so also with the kind influences of heaven too; for the dew lay all night upon his branch. Providence favoured him, and made all his enjoyments comfortable, and all his enterprises successful. Let none think to support their prosperity with what they draw from this earth, without that blessing which is derived from above. God's favour being continued to Job, in the virtue of that his glory was still fresh in him. Those about him had still something new to say in his praise, and needed not to repeat the old stories. And it is only by constant goodness that men's glory is thus preserved fresh, and kept from withering and growing stale. His bow also was renewed in his hand; that is, his power to protect himself, and annoy those that assailed him, still increased; so that he thought he had as little reason as any man to fear the insults of the Sabeans and Chaldeans.

2. If he looked abroad, he found he had a good interest, and well confirmed. As he had no reason to dread the power of his enemies, so neither had he any reason to distrust the fidelity of his friends. To the last moment of his prosperity they continued their respects to him, and their dependence on him. What had he to fear who so gave counsel as in effect to give law to all his neighbours? Nothing sure could be done against him, when really nothing was done without him.

1st. He was the oracle of his country. He was consulted as an oracle, and his dictates were acquiesced in as oracles, ver. 21. When others could not be heard, all men gave ear to him, and kept silence at his counsel, knowing that, as nothing could be said against it, so nothing needed to be added to it; and, therefore, after his words they spake not again, ver. 22. Why should men meddle with a subject that has already been exhausted?

2nd. He was the darling of his country. All about him were well pleased with every thing he said and did, as David's people were with him, 2 *Sam.* iii. 36. He had the hearts and affections of all his neighbours, all his servants, tenants, subjects; never was man so much admired, nor so well beloved. *First.* They were thought happy to whom he spoke, and they thought themselves so. Never were the dews of heaven so acceptable to the parched ground as his wise discourses were to them that attended on them, especially to whom they were particularly accommodated and directed. His "speech dropped upon them," and they "waited for it as for the rain," ver. 22, 23; wondering at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, catching at them, laying hold on them, and treasuring them up as apophthegms. His servants that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom would not have envied Solomon's. Those are wise, or are likely to be so, that know how to value wise discourse, that wish for it, and wait for it, and drink it in as the earth doth the rain that comes often upon it, *Heb.* vi. 7. And those who have such an interest as Job had in the esteem of others, whose *ipse dixit* goes so far, as they have a great opportunity of doing good, so they must take great care lest they do hurt; for an ill word out of their mouths is very infectious. Much more happy were they thought on whom he smiled, and they thought themselves so; ver. 24, "If I laughed on them," designing thereby to shew myself pleased in them, or pleasant with them, it was such a favour, that "they believed it not" for joy, or because it was so rare a thing to see this grave man smile. "Many seek the ruler's favour." Job was a ruler whose favour was courted, and valued at a high rate. He to whom a great prince gave a kiss was envied by another to whom he only gave a golden cup. Familiarity often breeds contempt; but, if Job at any time saw fit, for his own diversion, to make himself free with those about him, yet it did not in the least diminish the veneration they had for him; "the light of his countenance they cast not down." So wisely did he dispense his favours as not to make them cheap, and so wisely did they receive them as not to make themselves unworthy of them another time.

3rd. He was the sovereign of his country; ver. 25, he "chose out their way," sat at the helm, and steered for them; all referring themselves to his conduct, and submitting themselves to his command. To this, perhaps, in many countries, monarchy owed its rise. Such a man as Job, that so far excelled all his neighbours in wisdom and integrity, could not but sit chief, and the fool will, of course, be servant to the wise in heart; and if the wisdom did but for a while run in the blood, the honour and power would certainly attend it, and so by degrees become hereditary. Two things recommended Job to the sovereignty: *First.* That he had the authority of a commander, or general; he "dwelt as a king in the army," giving orders which were not to be disputed. Every one that has the spirit of wisdom has not the spirit of government; but Job had both, and, when there was occasion, could take on as the king in the army doth, and say, Go, Come, and Do this, *Mat.* viii. 9. *Secondly.* That yet he had the tenderness of a comforter. He was as ready to succour those in distress as if it had been his office to comfort the mourners. Eliphaz himself owned he had been very good at that; *ch.* iv. 3, "Thou hast strengthened the weak hands;" and this he now reflected upon with pleasure when he was himself a mourner. But we find it easier to comfort others with the comforts wherewith we ourselves have been formerly comforted, than to comfort ourselves with those comforts wherewith we have formerly comforted others.

I know not but we may look upon Job as a type and figure of Christ in his power and prosperity. Our Lord Jesus is such a king as Job was; the poor man's king, who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity, and upon whom the blessing of a world ready to perish comes: see *Ps.* lxxii. 2, &c. To him, therefore, let us give ear, and let him sit chief in our hearts.

CHAPTER XXX.

It is a melancholy "but now" which this chapter begins with. Adversity is here described as much to the life as prosperity was there, and the height of that did but increase the depth of this. God sets the one over against the other, and so did Job, that his afflictions might appear the more grievous, and consequently his case the more piteous. I. He had lived in great honour, but now he had fallen into disgrace, and was much vilified, even by the meanest, as ever he had been magnified by the greatest; this he insists much on, ver. 1—14. II. He had had much inward comfort and delight, but now he was a terror and burthen to himself, ver. 15, 16, and overwhelmed with sorrow, ver. 26—31. III. He had long enjoyed a good state of health, but now he was sick and in pain, ver. 17—19, 29, 30. IV. Time was when the secret of God was with him, but now his communication with Heaven was cut off, ver. 20—22. V. He had promised himself a long life, but now he saw death at the door, ver. 23. One thing he mentions, which aggravated his affliction, that it surprised him when he looked for peace. But two things gave him some relief: 1. That his troubles would not follow him to the grave, ver. 24. 2. That his conscience witnessed for him, that in his prosperity he had sympathised with those that were in misery, ver. 25.

BUT now *they that are* younger than I have me in derision,
Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.
2 Yea, whereto *might* the strength of their hands *profit* me,
In whom old age was perished?
3 For want and famine *they were* solitary; [waste.
Fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and
4 Who cut up mallows by the bushes,
And juniper roots *for* their meat.

5 They were driven forth from among *men*,
(They cried after them as *after* a thief;)
6 To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys,
In caves of the earth, and *in* the rocks.
7 Among the bushes they brayed;
Under the nettles they were gathered together.
8 *They were* children of fools,
Yea, children of base men:
They were viler than the earth.
9 And now am I their song,
Yea, I am their byword.
10 They abhor me, they flee far from me,
And spare not to spit in my face.
11 Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me,
They have also let loose the bridle before me.
12 Upon *my* right *hand* rise the youth;
They push away my feet, [tion.
And they raise up against me the ways of their destruc-
13 They mar my path,
They set forward my calamity,
They have no helper.
14 They came *upon me* as a wide breaking in *of waters:*
In the desolation they rolled themselves *upon me.*

POOR BEDOUIN ARAB.

Here Job makes a very large and sad complaint of the great disgrace he was fallen into, from the height of honour and reputation, which was exceeding grievous and cutting to such an ingenuous spirit as Job's was. Two things he insists upon, as very aggravating:

First. The meanness of the persons that affronted him. As it added much to his honour in the day of his prosperity that princes and nobles shewed him respect, and paid a deference to him, so it added no less to his disgrace in his adversity that he was kicked by the footmen, and trampled upon by those that were not only every way his inferiors, but were the meanest and most contemptible of all mankind. None can be represented more base than they are here represented who insulted Job, upon all accounts.

1. They were young, younger than he, ver. 1; the youth, ver. 12; who ought to have behaved themselves respectfully towards him for his age and gravity. Even the children in their play played upon him, as the children of Bethel upon the prophet; "Go up thou baldhead." Children soon learn to be scornful, when they see their parents so.

2. They were of a mean extraction. Their fathers were so very despicable that such a man as Job would have disdained to take them into the lowest service about his house, as that of tending the sheep, and attending the shepherds with the dogs of his flock, ver. 1. They were so shabby that they were not fit to be seen among his servants, so silly that they were not fit to be employed, and so false that they were not fit to be trusted in the meanest post. Job here speaks what he might have done, not what he did. He was not of such a spirit as to set any of the children of men with the dogs of his flock, he knew the dignities of the human nature better than so.

3. They and their families were the unprofitable burthens of the earth, and good for nothing. Job himself, with all his prudence and patience, could make nothing of them, ver. 2. The young were not fit for labour, they were so lazy, and went about their work so awkwardly; "Whereto might the strength of their hands profit me?" The old were not to be advised with in the smallest matters, for in them was old age indeed, but their old age was perished, they were twice children.

4. They were extreme poor, ver. 3; they were ready to famish, for they would not dig, and to beg they were ashamed. Had they been brought to necessity by the providence of God, their neighbours would have sought them out as proper objects of charity, and would have relieved them; but, being brought into straits by their own slothfulness and wastefulness, nobody was forward to relieve them, but they were forced to flee into the deserts, both for shelter and sustenance, and were put to sorry shifts indeed, when they "cut up mallows by the bushes," and were glad to eat them, for want of food that was fit for them, ver. 4. See what hunger will bring men to; one half of the world doth not know how the other half lives, yet those that have abundance ought to think sometimes of those whose fare is very coarse, and who are brought to a short allowance of that too; but we must own the righteousness of God, and not think it strange if slothfulness clothes men with rags, and the idle soul be made to suffer hunger. This beggarly world is full of the devil's poor.

5. They were very scandalous wicked people, not only the burthens, but the plagues of the places where they lived, arrant scoundrels, and the scum of the country, "They were driven forth from among men," ver. 5. They were such lying, thieving, lurking, mischievous people, that the best service the magistrates could do was to rid the country of them, while the very mob "cried after them as after a thief:" Away with such fellows from the earth, it is not fit they should live. They were lazy, and would not work, and therefore they were exclaimed against as thieves; and justly, for they that do not earn their own bread by honest labour do in effect steal the bread out of other people's mouths. An idle fellow is a public nuisance; but it is better drive such into a workhouse than, as here, into a wilderness, which will punish them indeed, but never reform them. They were forced to dwell in caves of the earth, and they brayed like asses among the bushes, ver. 6, 7. See what is the lot of those that have the cry of the country, the cry of their own conscience, against them, they cannot but be in a continual terror and confusion. 'They groan among the trees,' so Broughton, 'and smart among the nettles;' they are stung and scratched there, where they hoped to be sheltered and protected. See what miseries wicked people bring themselves to in this world; yet this is nothing to what is in reserve for them in the other world.

6. They were all that is base, ver. 8. They had nothing at all in them to recommend them to any man's esteem. They were a vile kind; yea, a kind without fame; people that nobody could give a good word to, nor had a good wish for; they were banished from the earth, as being viler than the earth. One would not think it possible that ever the human nature should sink so low, and degenerate so far as it did in these people. When we thank God we are men, we have reason to thank him that we are not such men. But such as these were abusive to Job, 1st. In revenge; because, when he was in prosperity and power, like a good magistrate, he put the laws in execution which were in force against vagabonds and rogues, and sturdy beggars, which these base people now remembered against him. 2nd. In triumph over him; because they thought he was now become like one of them: alluding to *Isa.* xiv. 10, 11. The abjects, men of mean spirits, insult over the miserable, *Ps.* xxxv. 15.

Secondly. The greatness of the affronts that were given him. It cannot be imagined how abusive they were.

1. They made ballads of him, with which they made themselves and their companions merry; ver. 9, "I am their song, and their byword." Those have a very base spirit that turn the calamities of their honest neighbours into a jest, and can sport themselves with their griefs.

2. They shunned him as a loathsome spectacle, abhorred him, fled far from him, ver. 10, as an ugly monster, or as one infected. They that were themselves driven out from among men, would have him driven out; for,

3. They expressed the greatest scorn and indignation against him that could be. They spat in his face, or were ready to do so; they tripped up his heels, pushed away his feet, ver. 12; kicked him, either in wrath, because they hated him, or in sport, to make themselves merry with him, as they did with their companions at foot-ball. The best of saints have sometimes received the worst of injuries and indignities from a spiteful, scornful, wicked world, and must not think it strange. Our Master himself was thus abused.

4. They were very malicious against him, and not only made a jest of him, but made a prey of him; not only affronted him, but set themselves to do him all the real mischief they could devise. "They raise up against me the ways of their destruction;" or, as some read it, 'They cast upon me the causes of their woe,' that is, they lay the blame of their being driven out upon me; and it is common for criminals to hate the judges and laws by which they are punished. But under this pretence, 1st. They accused him falsely, and misrepresented his former conversation, which is here called marring his path. They reflected upon him as a tyrant and an oppressor, because he had done justice upon them; and perhaps Job's friends grounded their uncharitable censures of him, *ch.* xx. 6, &c., upon the unjust and unreasonable clamours of these sorry people; and it was an instance of their great weakness and inconsideration, for who can be innocent if the accusations of such fellows may be heeded? They not only triumphed in his calamity, but set it forward, and did all they could to add to his miseries, and make them more grievous to him. It is a great sin to forward the calamity of any, especially of good people. In this they have no helper, nobody to set them on, or to countenance them in it; nobody to bear them out, or to protect them; but they do it of their own accord. They are fools in other things, but wise enough to do mischief, and need no help in inventing that; some read it thus, 'They hold my heaviness a profit, though they be never the better.' Wicked people, though they get nothing by the calamities of others, yet rejoice in them.

5. They that did him all this mischief were numerous, unanimous, and violent; ver. 14, "They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters," when the dam is broken; or, they come as soldiers into a broad breach which they have made in the wall of a besieged city, pouring in upon me with the utmost fury; and in this they took a pride and a pleasure; "in the desolation they rolled themselves," as a man rolls himself in a soft and easy bed, and they rolled themselves upon him with all the weight of their malice.

Thirdly, All this contempt put upon him was caused by the troubles he was in; ver. 11, "Because he hath loosed my cord;" hath taken away the honour and power with which I was girded, *ch.* xii. 18, hath scattered what I had got together, and unwisted all my affairs; "because he hath afflicted me, therefore they have let loose the bridle before me," that is, have given themselves a liberty to say and do what they please against me. They that by Providence are stripped of their honour may expect to be loaded with contempt by inconsiderate ill-natured people. 'Because he has loosed his cord,' (the original has that reading also,) that is, because he hath taken off his bridle of restraint from off their malice, 'they cast away the bridle from me,' that is, they make no account of my authority, nor stand in any awe of me. It is owing to the hold God has of the consciences, even of bad men, and the restraints he lays upon them, that we are not continually thus insulted and abused; and if at any time we meet with such ill treatment, we must acknowledge the hand of God in taking off those restraints; as David did when Shimei cursed him, "So let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him."

Now in all this, 1. We may see the uncertainty of worldly honour, and particularly of popular applause; how suddenly a man may fall from the height of dignity into the depth of disgrace. What little cause therefore have men to be ambitious or proud of that which may be so easily lost, and what little confidence is to be put in it! They that to-day cry, Hosanna, may to-morrow cry, Crucify; but there is an honour which comes from God, which if we secure, we shall find it not thus changeable and loseable. 2. We may see that it has often been the lot of very wise and good men to be trampled upon and abused. And, 3. That those who look only at the things that are seen despise those whom the world frowns upon, though they are never so much the favourites of Heaven. Nothing is more grievous in poverty than that it renders men contemptible;

Turba Remi, sequitur fortunam, ut semper odit damnatos,—'The Roman populace, faithful to the turns of fortune, still persecute the fallen.' 4. We may see in Job a type of Christ, who was thus made a reproach of men, and despised of the people, *Ps.* xxii. 6; *Isa.* liii. 3; and who hid not his face from shame and spitting, but bore it better than Job did.

15 Terrors are turned upon me:
They pursue my soul as the wind:
And my welfare passeth away as a cloud.
16 And now my soul is poured out upon me;
The days of affliction have taken hold upon me.
17 My bones are pierced in me in the night season:
And my sinews take no rest.
18 By the great force *of my disease* is my garment changed:
It bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.
19 He hath cast me into the mire,
And I am become like dust and ashes.
20 I cry unto thee, and thou dost not hear me:
I stand up, and thou regardest me *not*.
21 Thou art become cruel to me:
With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself against me.
22 Thou liftest me up to the wind; [substance.
Thou causest me to ride *upon it,* and dissolvest my
23 For I know *that* thou wilt bring me *to* death,
And *to* the house appointed for all living.
24 Howbeit he will not stretch out *his* hand to the grave,
Though they cry in his destruction.
25 Did not I weep for him that was in trouble?
Was *not* my soul grieved for the poor?
26 When I looked for good, then evil came *unto me:*
And when I waited for light, there came darkness.
27 My bowels boiled, and rested not:
The days of affliction prevented me.
28 I went mourning without the sun:
I stood up, *and* I cried in the congregation.
29 I am a brother to dragons,
And a companion to owls.
30 My skin is black upon me,
And my bones are burned with heat.
31 My harp also is *turned* to mourning,
And my organ into the voice of them that weep.

In this second part of Job's complaint, which is very bitter, and has a great many sorrowful accents upon it, we may observe a great deal that he complains of, and some little that he comforts himself with.

First. Here is a great deal that he complains of.

1. In general, it was a day of great affliction and sorrow. 1st. Affliction seized him, and surprised him. It seized him; ver. 16, "The days of affliction have taken hold upon me;" have 'caught me,' so some. They have arrested me, as the bailiff arrests the debtor, claps him on the back, and lays him by the heels. When trouble comes with commission, it will take fast hold, and not lose its hold. It surprised him; ver. 27, "The days of affliction prevented me;" that is, they came upon me without giving me any previous warning; I did not expect them, nor make any provision for such an evil day. Observe, he reckons his affliction by days, which will soon be numbered and finished, and are nothing to the ages of eternity, 2 *Cor.* iv. 17. 2nd. He was in great sorrow by reason of it. His bowels boiled with grief, and rested not, ver. 27. The sense of his calamities was continually preying upon his spirits without any intermission. He went mourning from day to day, always sighing, always weeping, and such a cloud was constantly upon his mind, that he went in effect without the sun, ver. 28. He had nothing that he could take any comfort in; he abandoned himself to a perpetual sorrow, as one that, like Jacob, resolved to go to the grave mourning. He walked out of the sun, (so some,) in dark shady places, as melancholy people use to do. If he went into the congregation, to join with them in solemn worship, instead of standing up calmly to desire their prayers, he stood up and cried aloud, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, like one half distracted. If he appeared in public to receive visits, when the fit came upon him, he could not contain himself, nor maintain any thing of a decorum, but stood up and shrieked aloud. Thus he was a brother to dragons and owls, ver. 29; both in choosing solitude and retirement, as they do, *Isa.* xxxiv. 13, and in making a fearful hideous noise, as they do; his inconsiderate complaints were fitly compared to their inarticulate ones.

2. The terror and trouble that seized his soul was the sorest part of his calamity, ver. 15, 16. 1st. If he looked forward, he saw every thing frightful before him; if he endeavoured to shake off his terrors, they turned furiously upon him; if he endeavoured to outrun them, they pursued his soul, as swiftly and violently as the wind. He complained at first of the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him, *ch.* vi. 4; and still, which way soever he looked, they turned upon him; which way soever he fled, they pursued him. "My soul;" (Hebrew 'my principal one,' 'my princess;') for the soul is the principal part of the man; it is our glory; it is every way more excellent than the body, and, therefore, that which pursues the soul, and threatens that, should be most dreaded. 2nd. If he looked back, he saw all the good he had formerly enjoyed removed from him, and nothing left him but the bitter remembrance of it; My welfare and prosperity passeth away as suddenly, swiftly, and irrecoverably as a cloud. 3rd. If he looked within, he found his spirit quite sunk, and unable to bear his infirmity; not only wounded, but poured out upon him, ver. 16. He was not only weak as water, but in his own apprehension lost as water spilt upon the ground. Compare *Ps.* xxii. 14, "My heart is melted like wax."

3. His bodily diseases were very grievous; for, 1st. He was full of pain, piercing pain; pain that went to the bone, to all his bones, ver. 17. It was a sword in his bones, which pierced him in the night season, when he should have been refreshed with sleep; his nerves were affected with strong convulsions, his sinews took no rest. By reason of his pain he could take no rest, but sleep departed from his eyes. His bones were burnt with heat, ver. 30. He was in a constant fever, which dried up the radical moisture, and even consumed the marrow in his bones. See how frail our bodies are, which carry in themselves the seeds of our own disease and death. 2nd. He was full of sores. Some that are pained in their bones, yet sleep in a whole skin, but Satan's commission against Job extending both to his bone and to his flesh, he spared neither. His skin was black upon him, ver. 30. The blood settled; the sores suppurated, and by degrees scabbed over, which made his skin look black. Even his garment had its colour changed with the continual running of his boils; and the soft clothing he used to wear was now grown so stiff that all his garments were like his collar, ver. 18. It would be noisome to describe what a condition poor Job was in for want of clean linen, and good attendance; and what filthy rags all his clothes were. Some think that among other diseases Job was ill of a quinsey, or swelling in his throat, and that was it which bound him about like a stiff collar. Thus was he "cast into the mire," ver. 19; 'compared to mire,' so some; his body looked more like a heap of dirt than any thing else. Let none be proud of their clothing, nor proud of their cleanness; they know not but some disease or other may change their garments, and even throw them into the mire, and make them noisome both to themselves and others; "instead of sweet smell there shall be stink," *Isa.* iii. 24. We are but dust and ashes at the best, and our bodies vile bodies; but we are apt to forget it, till God by some sore disease make us sensibly to feel and own what we are; I am become already like that dust and ashes into which I must shortly be resolved. Wherever I go, I carry my grave about with me.

4. That which afflicted him most of all was, that God seemed to be his enemy, and to fight against him. It was he that cast him into the mire, ver. 19, and seemed to trample on him when he had him there. This cut him to the heart more than any thing else. 1st. That God did not appear for him. He addressed to him, but gained no grant; appealed to him, but gained no sentence; he was very importunate in his applications, but in vain; ver. 20, "I cry unto thee," as one in earnest; "I stand up" and cry, as one waiting for an answer, but "thou hearest not," "thou regardest not," for any thing I can perceive. If our most fervent prayers bring not in speedy and sensible returns, we must not think it strange. Though the seed of Jacob did never seek in vain, yet they have often thought they did, and that God has not only been deaf, but angry at the prayers of his people, *Ps.* lxxx. 4. 2nd. That God did appear against him. It is one of the worst words that ever Job spoke, that which he here chargeth upon God; ver. 21, "Thou art become cruel to me." Far be it from the God of mercy and grace, that he should be cruel to any, his compassions fail not; but especially that he should be so to his own children. Job was unjust and ungrateful when he said so of him; but harbouring hard thoughts of God was the sin which did at this time most easily beset him. Here, *First.* He thought God fought against him, and stirred up his whole strength to ruin him; "With thy strong hand thou opposest thyself," or art an adversary "against me." He had better thoughts of God, *ch.* xxiii. 6, when he concluded he would not plead against him with his great power. God has an absolute sovereignty, and an irresistible strength; but he never useth either the one or the other for the crushing or oppressing of any. *Secondly.* He thought he insulted over him; ver. 22, "Thou liftest me up to the wind," as a feather, or the chaff which the wind plays with; so unequal a match did Job think himself for Omnipotence, and so unable was he to help himself when he was made to ride—not in triumph, but in terror—upon the wings of the wind; and the judgments of God did even dissolve his substance, as a cloud is dissolved and dispersed by the wind. Man's substance, take him in his best estate, is nothing before the power of God; it is soon dissolved.

5. He expected no other now but that God, by these troubles, would shortly make an end of him; If I be made to ride upon the wind, I can count upon no other but to break my neck shortly; and he speaks as if God had no other design upon him, but that, in all his dealings with him, "I know that thou wilt bring me," with so much the more terror, "to death," though I might have been brought thither without all this ado, for it is "the house appointed for all living," ver. 23. The grave is a house, a narrow, dark, cold, ill-furnished house; but it will be our residence, where we shall rest and be safe; it is our long home, our own home, for it is our mother's lap, and in it we are gathered to our fathers. It is a house appointed for us by Him that has appointed us the bounds of all our habitations. It is appointed for all living. It is the common receptacle, where rich and poor meet; it is appointed for the general rendezvous; we must all be brought thither shortly. It is God that brings us, for the keys of death and the grave are in his hand, and we may all know that, sooner or later, he will bring us thither. It would be well for us if we would duly consider it. "The living know that they shall die;" let us, each of us, know it with application.

6. There were two things that aggravated his trouble, and made it the less tolerable: 1st. That it was a very great disappointment to his expectation; ver. 26, "When I looked for good," for more good, or at least the continuance of what I had, "then evil came." Such uncertain things are all our worldly enjoyments, and such a folly is it to feed ourselves with great expectations from them. They that wait for light from the sparks of their creature comforts will be wretchedly disappointed, and will make their bed in the darkness. 2nd. That it was a very great change in his condition; ver. 31, "My harp is" not only laid by, and hung upon the willow trees, but it is "turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep." Job, in his prosperity, had taken the timbrel and harp, and "rejoiced at the sound of the organ," *ch.* xxi. 12. Notwithstanding his gravity and grace, he had found time to be cheerful, but now his tune was altered. Let those, therefore, that rejoice be as though they rejoiced not; for they know not how soon their laughter will be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness.

Thus we see how much Job complains of; but,

Secondly. Here is something, in the midst of all, with which he comforts himself; and it is but little. 1. He foresees, with comfort, that death will be the period of all his calamities, ver. 24. Though God now, with a strong hand, opposed himself against him, yet, saith he, "He will not stretch out his hand to the grave." The hand of God's wrath would bring him to death, but would not follow him beyond death; his soul would be safe and happy in the world of spirits, his body safe and easy in the dust. Though men cry in his destruction, (though, when they are a dying, there is a great deal of agony and outcry, many a sigh, and groan, and complaint,) yet in the grave they feel nothing, they fear nothing, but all is quiet there. Though in hell, which is called destruction, they cry, yet not in the grave; and I, being delivered from the second death, the first will to me be an effectual relief. Therefore, he wished he might be hid in the grave, *ch.* xiv. 13. 2. He reflects, with comfort, upon the concern

he always had for the calamities of others, when he was himself at ease; ver. 25, "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble?" Some think he herein complains of God, thinking it very hard that he who had shewed mercy to others should not himself find mercy. I would rather take it as a quieting consideration to himself; his conscience witnessed for him, that he had always sympathized with persons in misery, and done what he could to help them, and therefore had reason to expect that, at length, both God and his friends would pity him. They who mourn with them that mourn will bear their own sorrows the better, when it comes to their turn to drink of the bitter cup. 'Did not my soul burn for the poor?' so some read it, comparing it with that of St. Paul, 2 *Cor.* xi. 29, "Who is offended, and I burn not?" As they who have been unmerciful and hard-hearted to others, may expect to hear of it from their own consciences, when they are themselves in trouble, so they who have considered the poor, and succoured them, the remembrance of that will make their bed easy in their sickness, *Ps.* xli. 1, 3.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Job had often protested his integrity in general, here he doth it in particular instances; not in a way of commendation, for he doth not here proclaim his good deeds, but in his own just and necessary vindication, to clear himself from those crimes with which his friends had falsely charged him, which is a debt every man owes to his own reputation. Job's friends had been particular in their articles of impeachment against him, and therefore he is so in his protestation, which seems especially to refer to what Eliphaz had accused him of, *ch.* xxii. 6, &c. They had produced no witnesses against him, neither could they prove the things whereof they now accused him, and therefore he may well be admitted to purge himself upon oath, which he doth very solemnly, and with many awful imprecations of God's wrath if he were guilty of those crimes. This protestation confirms God's character of him, that there was none like him in the earth. Perhaps some of his accusers durst not have joined with him; for he not only acquits himself from those gross sins which lie open to the eyes of the world, but from many secret sins, which, though he had been guilty of them, nobody could have charged him with, because he will prove himself no hypocrite. Nor doth he only maintain the cleanness of his practices, but shews also that in them he went upon good principles; that the reason of his eschewing evil was because he feared God, and his piety was at the bottom of his justice and charity; and this crowns the proof of his sincerity. The sins from which he here acquits himself are, 1. Wantonness and uncleanness of heart, ver. 1—4; 2. Fraud and injustice in commerce, ver. 4—8; 3. Adultery, ver. 9—12; 4. Haughtiness and severity towards his servants, ver. 13—15; 5. Unmercifulness to the poor, the widows, and the fatherless, ver. 16—23; 6. Confidence in his worldly wealth, ver. 24, 25; 7. Idolatry, ver. 26—28; 8. Revenge, ver. 29—31; 9. Neglect of poor strangers, ver. 32; 10. Hypocrisy in concealing his own sins, and cowardice in conniving at the sins of others, ver. 33, 34; 11. From oppression, and the violent invasion of other people's rights, ver. 38—40; and towards the close he appeals to God's judgment concerning his integrity, ver. 35—37. Now in all this we may see, I. The sense of the patriarchal age, concerning good and evil, and what was so long ago condemned as sinful, that is, both hateful and hurtful. II. A noble pattern of piety and virtue proposed to us for our imitation, which, if our consciences can witness for us that we conform to it, will be our rejoicing, as it was Job's, in the day of evil.

I MADE a covenant with mine eyes;
Why then should I think upon a maid?
2 For what portion of God *is there* from above?
And *what* inheritance of the Almighty from on high?
3 *Is* not destruction to the wicked?
And a strange *punishment* to the workers of iniquity?
4 Doth not he see my ways,
And count all my steps?
5 If I have walked with vanity,
Or if my foot hath hasted to deceit;
6 Let me be weighed in an even balance,
That God may know mine integrity.
7 If my step hath turned out of the way,
And mine heart walked after mine eyes,
And if any blot hath cleaved to mine hands;
8 *Then* let me sow, and let another eat;
Yea, let my offspring be rooted out.

The lusts of the flesh and the love of the world are the two fatal rocks on which multitudes split; against these Job protests he was always careful to stand upon his guard.

First. Against the lusts of the flesh. He not only kept himself clear from adultery, defiling his neighbours' wives, ver. 9, but from all lewdness with any women whatsoever. He kept no concubine, no mistress, but was inviolably faithful to the marriage-bed, though his wife was none of the wisest, best, or kindest. "From the beginning it was so," that a man should have but one wife, and cleave to her only; and Job kept close to that institution, and abhorred the thought of transgressing it; for, though his greatness might tempt him to it, his goodness kept him from it. Job was now in pain and sickness of body, and, under that affliction it is in a particular manner comfortable if our consciences can witness for us that we have been careful to preserve our bodies in chastity, and to possess those vessels in sanctification and honour, pure from the lusts of uncleanness. Now observe here,

1. What the resolutions were which, in this matter he kept to; ver. 1, "I made a covenant with mine eyes," that is, I watched against the occasions of the sin, "why then should I think upon a maid?" that is, by that means, through the grace of God, I kept myself from the very first step towards it. So far was he from wanton dalliances, or any act of lasciviousness, that, 1st. He would not so much as admit a wanton look. He made a covenant with his eyes; made this bargain with them, that he would allow them the pleasure of beholding the light of the sun, and the glory of God shining in the visible creation, provided they would never fasten upon any object that might occasion any impure imaginations, much less any impure desires in his mind; and under this penalty, that if they did, they must smart for it in penitential tears. Note, Those that would keep their hearts pure, must guard their eyes, which are both the outlets and inlets of uncleanness; hence we read of wanton eyes, *Isa.* iii. 16, and "eyes full of adultery," 2 *Pet.* ii. 14. The first sin began in the eye, *Gen.* iii. 6. What we must not meddle with we must not lust after; and what we must not lust after we must not look at, not the forbidden wealth, *Pr.* xxiii. 5; not the forbidden wine, *Pr.* xxiii. 31; not the forbidden woman, *Mat.* v. 28. 2nd. He would not so much as allow a wanton thought; "Why then should I think upon a maid," with any unchaste fancy, or desire toward her? Shame and sense of honour might restrain him from soliciting the chastity of a beautiful virgin; but only grace and the fear of God would restrain him from so much as thinking of it. Those are not chaste that are not so in spirit as well as body, 1 *Cor.* vii. 34. See how agreeable Christ's exposition of the seventh commandment is with the ancient sense of it, and how much better Job understood it than the Pharisees, though they sat in Moses' chair.

2. What the reasons were which in this matter he was governed by. It was not for fear of reproach among men, though that is to be considered, *Pr.* vi. 33; but for fear of the wrath and curse of God. He knew very well,

1st. That uncleanness is a sin that forfeits all good, and shuts us out from the hope of it; ver. 2, "What portion of God is there from above?" What blessing can such impure sinners expect from the pure and holy God, or what token of his favour? "what inheritance of the Almighty" can they look for "from on high?" There is no portion, no inheritance, no true happiness, for a soul but what is in God, in the Almighty, and what comes from above, from on high. But those that wallow in uncleanness render themselves utterly unfit for communion with God, either in grace here or in glory hereafter, and become allied to unclean spirits, which are for ever separated from him; and then what portion, what inheritance, can they have with God? No unclean thing shall enter into the new Jerusalem, that holy city.

2nd. It is a sin that incurs Divine vengeance, ver. 3. It will certainly be the sinner's ruin, if it be not repented of in time. "Is not destruction," a swift and sure destruction, to those wicked people, "and a strange punishment to the workers of" this "iniquity?" Fools make a mock at this sin, make a jest of it; it is with them a *peccadillo*, a trick of youth, but they deceive themselves with vain words, for "because of these things," how light soever they make of them, "the wrath of God," the insupportable wrath of the eternal God, "comes upon the children of disobedience," *Eph.* v. 6. There are some sinners whom God sometimes goes out of the common road of providence to meet with; such are these. The destruction of Sodom is a strange punishment. 'Is there not alienation,' so some read it, 'to the workers of iniquity?' This is the sinfulness of the sin, that it alienates the mind from God, *Eph.* iv. 18, 19; and this is the punishment of the sinners, that they shall be eternally set at a distance from him, *Rev.* xxii. 15.

3rd. It cannot be hidden from the all-seeing God. A wanton thought cannot be so close, nor a wanton look so quick, as to escape his cognizance, much less any act of uncleanness so secretly done as to be out of his sight. If Job was at any time tempted to this sin, he restrained himself from it, and all approaches to it, with this pertinent thought, ver. 4, "Doth not he see my ways?" as Joseph did, *Gen.* xxxix. 9, "How can I do it, and sin against God?" Two things Job had an eye to: *First.* God's omniscience. It is a great truth, that God's eyes are "upon all the ways of men," *Pr.* v. 20, 21; but Job here mentions it with application to himself and his own actions, "Doth not he see my ways?" "O God, thou hast searched me and known me." God sees what rule we walk by, what company we walk with, what end we walk towards, and therefore what ways we walk in. *Secondly.* His observance. He doth not only see, but takes notice; he "counts all my steps," all my false steps in the way of duty, all my bysteps into the way of sin. He not only sees our ways in general, but takes cognizance of our particular steps in these ways; every action, every motion. He keeps count of all, because he will call us to account; will bring every work into judgment. God takes a more exact notice of us than we do of ourselves, for who ever counted his own steps? Yet God doth; let us therefore walk circumspectly.

Secondly. He stood upon his guard against the love of the world, and carefully avoided all sinful, indirect means of getting wealth. He dreaded all forbidden profit, as much as all forbidden pleasure. Let us see,

1. What his protestation is. In general, that he had been honest and just in all his dealings; and never to his knowledge did any body any wrong. 1st. He never walked with vanity, that is, he never durst tell a lie to get a good bargain. It was never his way to banter or equivocate, or make many words in his dealings. Some men's constant walk is a constant cheat. They either make what they have more than it is, that they may be trusted, or, less than it is, that nothing may be expected from them: but Job was none of those, his wealth was not gotten by vanity, though now diminished, *Pr.* xiii. 11. 2nd. He never hasted to deceit. Those that deceive must be quick and sharp; but Job's quickness and sharpness were never turned that way. He never made haste to be rich by deceit; but always acted cautiously, lest through inconsideration he should do an unjust thing. Note, What we have in the world may be either used with comfort or lost with comfort, if it was honestly got. 3rd. His steps never turned out of the way, the way of justice and fair dealing, from that he never deviated, ver. 7. He not only took care not to walk in a constant course and way of deceit, but he did not so much as take one step out of the way of honesty. In every particular action and affair we must closely tie ourselves up to the rules of righteousness. 4th. His heart did not walk after his eyes; that is, he did not covet what he saw that was another's, nor wish it his own. Covetousness is called the lust of the eye, 1 *Jno.* ii. 16. Achan saw, and then took the accursed thing. That heart must needs wander that walks after the eyes; for then it looks no farther than the things that are seen, whereas it ought to be in heaven, whither the eyes cannot reach. It should follow the dictates of religion and right reason; if it follow the eye it will be misled to that for which God will bring men into judgment, *Eccl.* xi. 9. 5th. That no blot had cleaved to his hands; that is, he was not chargeable with getting any thing dishonestly, or keeping that which was another's, whenever it appeared to be so. Injustice is a blot, a blot to the estate, a blot to the owner; it spoils the beauty of both, and therefore is to be dreaded. Those that deal much in the world may perhaps have a blot come upon their hands, but they must wash it off again by repentance and restitution, and not let it cleave to their hands: see *Isa.* xxxiii. 15.

2. How he ratifies his protestation. So confident is he of his own honesty that, 1st. He is willing to have his goods searched; ver. 6, "Let me be weighed in an even balance," that is, Let what I have got be inquired into, and it will be found to weigh well; a sign it was not gotten by vanity, for then *tekel* had been written on it, weighed in the balance and found too light. An honest man is so far from dreading a trial, that he desires it rather; being well assured that God doth know his integrity, and will approve it, and the trial of it would be to his praise and honour. 2nd. He is willing to forfeit the whole cargo, if there were found among them any prohibited, contraband goods, any thing but what he came honestly by; ver. 8, "Let me sow, and let another eat," which was already agreed to be the doom of oppressors, *ch.* v. 5; xviii. 9; and let my offspring, all the trees that I have planted, be rooted out. This intimates that he believed the sin did deserve this punishment, that ordinarily it is thus punished, but that, though now his estate was ruined, and then, if ever, his conscience would have brought it to his mind, yet he knew himself innocent; that he would venture all the poor remains of his estate upon the issue of the trial.

9 If mine heart have been deceived by a woman,
Or *if* I have laid wait at my neighbour's door;
10 *Then* let my wife grind unto another,
And let others bow down upon her.
11 For this *is* an heinous crime;
Yea, it *is* an iniquity *to be punished by* the judges.
12 For it *is* a fire *that* consumeth to destruction,
And would root out all mine increase.
13 If I did despise the cause of my manservant
Or of my maidservant, when they contended with me;
14 What then shall I do when God riseth up?
And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?
15 Did not he that made me in the womb make him?
And did not one fashion us in the womb?

Two more instances we have here of Job's integrity.

First. That he had a very great abhorrence of the sin of adultery. As he did not wrong his own marriage-bed by keeping a concubine,—he did not so much as think upon a maid, ver. 1,—so he was careful not to offer any injury to his neighbour's marriage-bed. Let us see here,

1. How clear he was from this sin, ver. 9. 1st. He did not so much as covet his neighbour's wife, for even his heart was not deceived by a woman. The beauty of another man's wife did not kindle in him any unchaste desires, nor was he ever moved by the allurements of an adulterous woman, such as is described, *Pr.* vii. 6, &c. See the original of all the defilements of the life, they come from a deceived heart. Every sin is deceitful, and none more so than the sin of uncleanness. 2nd. He never compassed or imagined any unchaste design. He never laid wait at his neighbour's door to get an opportunity to debauch his wife in his absence, when the good man was not at home, *Pr.* vii. 19: see *ch.* xxiv. 15.

2. What a dread he had of this sin, and what frightful apprehensions he had concerning the malignity of it. That it is a heinous crime, ver. 11; one of the greatest, vilest sins that a man can be guilty of, highly provoking to God, and destructive to the prosperity of the soul. And, concerning the mischievousness of it, and the punishment it deserved, he owns that if he were guilty of that heinous crime, 1st. His family might justly be made infamous in the highest degree; ver. 10, "Let my wife grind to another." Let her be a slave, so some; a harlot, so others. God often punisheth the sins of one with the sin of another, the adultery of the husband with the adultery of the wife, as in David's case, 2 *Sam.* xii. 11, which doth not in the least excuse the treachery of the adulterous wife; but how unrighteous soever she is, God is righteous: see *Hos.* iv. 12, "Your spouses shall commit adultery." Note, Those who are not just and faithful to their relations must not think it strange if their relations be unjust and unfaithful to them. 2nd. He himself might justly be made a public example: for "it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges;" yea, though they who be guilty of it are themselves judges, as Job was. Note, Adultery is a crime which the civil magistrate ought to take cognizance of, and punish. So it was adjudged even in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses made it capital; it is an evil work to which the sword of justice ought to be a terror. 3rd. It might justly become the ruin of his estate; nay, he knew it would be so, ver. 12, "It is a fire;" lust is a fire in the soul. They that indulge in it are said to burn. It consumes all that is good there; the convictions, the comforts, and lays the conscience waste. It kindles the fire of God's wrath, which, if not extinguished by the blood of Christ, will burn to the lowest hell. It consumes the body, *Pr.* v. 11; consumes the substance, it "roots out all the increase." Burning lusts bring burning judgments. Perhaps it alludes to the burning of Sodom, which was intended for an "example to those who should afterwards in like manner live ungodly."

Secondly. That he had a very great tenderness for his servants, and ruled them with a gentle hand. He had a great household, and he managed it well. By this he evidenced his sincerity, that he had grace to govern his passion as well as his appetite; and he that in these two things hath the rule of his own spirit is better than the mighty, *Pr.* xvi. 32. Here observe,

1. What were Job's condescensions to his servants, ver. 13. He did not despise the cause of his manservant, no, nor of his maidservant, when they contended with him; that is, if they contradicted him in any thing he was willing to hear their reasons. If they had offended him, or were accused to him, he would patiently hear what they had to say for themselves in their own vindication or excuse. Nay, if they complained of any hardship he put upon them, he did not browbeat them, and bid them hold their tongues, but gave them leave to tell their story, and redress their grievances as far as it appeared they had right on their side. He was tender of them, not only when they served him and pleased him, but even when they contended with him. Herein he was a great example to masters to give unto their servants that which is just and equal; nay, to do the same things to them that they expect from them, *Col.* iv. 1; *Eph.* vi. 9; and not to rule them with rigour, and carry it with a high hand. Many of Job's servants were slain in his service, *ch.* i. 15—17; the rest were unkind and undutiful to him, and despised his cause, though he never despised theirs, *ch.* xix. 15, 16; but he had this comfort, that in his prosperity he had carried it well towards them. Note, When relations are either removed from us or embittered to us, the testimony of our consciences that we have done our duty to them will be a great support and comfort to us.

2. What were the considerations that moved him to treat his servants thus kindly. He had herein an eye to God, both as his Judge and as their Maker. 1st. As his Judge; he considered, If I should be imperious and severe with my servants, "what shall I do when God riseth up?" He considered that he had a Master in heaven, to whom he was accountable, who will rise up, and will visit, and we are concerned to consider what we shall do in the day of his visitation, *Isa.* x. 3. And, in consideration of this, that we are undone if God should then be strait and severe with us, we ought to be very mild and gentle towards all with whom we have to do. Consider what would become of us, if God should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, should take all advantages against us, and insist upon all his just demands from us; if he should visit every offence, and take every forfeiture, if he should always chide, and keep his anger for ever. And let not us be thus rigorous with our inferiors. Consider what will become of us if we be cruel and unmerciful to our brethren. The cries of the injured will be heard, the sin of the injurious will be punished, they that shewed no mercy shall find none, and what shall we do then? 2nd. As his and his servants' Creator, ver. 15; when he was tempted to be harsh with his servants, to deny them right, and turn a deaf ear to their reasonings, this thought came very seasonably into his mind, "Did not he that made me in the womb make him?" I am a creature as well as he, and my being is derived and depending as well as his. He partakes of the same nature that I do, and is the work of the same hand; "Have we not all one Father?" Note, Whatever difference there is among men in their outward condition, in their capacity of mind, or strength of body, or place in the world, he that made the one made the other also; which is a good reason why we should not mock at men's natural infirmities, nor trample upon those that are any way our inferiors; but in every thing do as we would be done by. It is a rule of justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*,—'let equals be equally estimated and treated;' and, therefore, since there is so great a parity among men, they being all made of the same mould, by the same power, for the same end; notwithstanding the disparity of our outward condition, we are bound so far to set ourselves upon the level with those we deal with, as to do to them in all respects as we would they should do to us.

16 If I have withheld the poor from *their* desire,
Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail;
17 Or have eaten my morsel myself alone,
And the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;
18 (For from my youth he was brought up with me, as *with* a father,
And I have guided her from my mother's womb;)
19 If I have seen any perish for want of clothing,
Or any poor without covering;
20 If his loins have not blessed me,
And *if* he were *not* warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
21 If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless,
When I saw my help in the gate:
22 *Then* let mine arm fall from my shoulder blade,
And mine arm be broken from the bone.
23 For destruction *from* God *was* a terror to me,
And by reason of his highness I could not endure.

Eliphaz had particularly charged Job with unmercifulness to the poor, *ch.* xxii. 6, &c.; Thou hast "withholden bread from the hungry, stripped the naked of their clothing, and sent widows away empty." Now one would think he could not have been so very positive and express in his charge, but there had been some truth in it, some ground for it; and yet it appears, by Job's protestation, it was utterly false and groundless; he was never guilty of any such thing. See here,

First. The testimony which Job's conscience gave in concerning his constant carriage towards the poor. He is most large upon this head, because in this matter he was most particularly accused. He solemnly protests,

1. That he had never been wanting to do good to them, as there was occasion, to the utmost of his ability. He was always compassionate to the poor, and careful of them; especially the widows and fatherless, that were destitute of help. 1st. He was always ready to grant their desires, and answer their expectations, ver. 16. If a poor body begged a kindness of him, he was ready to gratify him; if he could but perceive by the widow's mournful, craving look that she expected an alms from him, though she had not confidence enough to ask it, he had compassion enough to give it; and never "caused the eyes of the widow to fail." 2nd. He put a respect upon the poor, and did them honour; for he took the fatherless children to eat with him, at his own table. They should fare as he fared, and be familiar with him, and he would shew himself pleased with their company, as if they had been his own, ver. 17. As it is one of the greatest grievances of poverty that it exposeth to contempt, so it is none of the least supports to the poor to be respected. 3rd. He was very tender of them, and had a fatherly concern for them, ver. 18. He was a father to the fatherless; took care of orphans, brought them up with him under his own eye, and gave them not only maintenance, but education. He was a guide to the widow, who had lost the guide of her youth; he advised her in her affairs, took cognizance of them, and undertook the management of them. Those that need not our alms may yet have occasion for our counsel, and it may be a real kindness to them. This Job saith he did from his youth, from his mother's womb; that is, he had something of tenderness and compassion woven into his nature. He began betimes to do good, ever since he could remember; he had always some poor widow or fatherless child under his care. His parents taught him betimes to pity and relieve the poor, and brought up orphans with him. 4th. He provided food convenient for them; they ate of the same morsels that he did, ver. 17; did not only eat after him of the crumbs that fell from his table, but eat with him of the best dish upon his table. They that have abundance must not eat their morsels alone, as if they had none but themselves to take care of; nor indulge their appetite with a dainty bit by themselves, but take others to share with them, as David took Mephibosheth. 5th. He took particular care to clothe them that were without covering, which would be more expensive to him than feeding them, ver. 19. Poor people may perish for want of clothing as well as for want of food; for want of clothing to lie in by night, or to go abroad in by day. If Job knew of any that were in this distress, he was forward to relieve them; and, instead of giving rich and gaudy liveries to his servants, while the poor were turned off with rags that were ready to be thrown to the dunghill, he had good warm strong clothes made on purpose for them, of the fleece of his sheep, ver. 20. So that their loins, whenever they girt those garments about them, blessed him; they commended his charity, blessed God for him, and prayed God to bless him. Job's sheep were burned with fire from heaven, but this was his comfort, that when he had them he came honestly by them, and used them charitably; fed the poor with their flesh, and clothed them with their wool.

2. That he had never been accessary to the wronging of any that were poor. It might be said, perhaps he was kind here and there to a poor orphan that was a favourite, but to others he was oppressive. No, he was tender of all, and injurious to none. He never so much as lifted up his hand against the fatherless, ver. 21; never threatened or frightened them, or offered to strike them; never used his power to crush them that stood in his way, or squeeze what he could out of them, though he saw his help in the gate, that is, though he had interest enough, both in the people and in the judges, both to enable him to do it, and to bear him out when he had done it. Those that have it in their power to do an ill thing, and go through with it, and a prospect of getting by it, and yet do justly, and love mercy, and are firm to both, may afterwards reflect upon it with a great deal of comfort, as Job doth here.

Secondly. The imprecation wherewith he confirms this protestation; ver. 22, If I have been oppressive to the poor, "let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone;" that is, let the flesh rot off from the bone, and one bone be disjointed and broken off from another. Had he not been perfectly clear in this matter, he durst not thus have challenged the Divine vengeance. And he intimates that it is a righteous thing with God to break the arm that is lifted up against the fatherless, as he withered Jeroboam's arm, that was stretched out against a prophet.

Thirdly. The principles by which Job was restrained from all uncharitableness and unmercifulness. He durst not abuse the poor; for, though with his help in the gate, he could overpower them, yet he could not make his part good against that God who is the patron of oppressed poverty, and will not let oppressors go unpunished; ver. 23, "Destruction from God was a terror to me," whenever I was tempted to this sin, and "by reason of his highness I could not endure" the thought of making him my enemy. He stood in awe, 1. Of the majesty of God; as a God above him. He thought of his highness, the infinite distance between him and God, which possessed him with such a reverence of him, as made him very circumspect in his whole conversation. They who oppress the poor, and pervert judgment and justice, forget that he who is higher than the highest regardeth, and there is a higher than they, who is able to deal with them, *Eccl.* v. 8; but Job considered this. 2. Of the wrath of God; as a God that would certainly be against him, if he should wrong the poor. Destruction from God, because it would be a certain and an utter ruin to him, if he were guilty of this sin, was a constant terror to him to restrain him from it. Note, Good men, even the best, have need to restrain themselves from sin with the fear of destruction from God, and all little enough. This should especially restrain us from all acts of injustice and oppression, that God himself is the avenger thereof. Even then when salvation from God is a comfort to us, yet destruction from God should be a terror to us. Adam, in innocency, was awed with a threatening.

24 If I have made gold my hope,
Or have said to the fine gold, *Thou art* my confidence;
25 If I rejoiced because my wealth *was* great,
And because mine hand had gotten much;
26 If I beheld the sun when it shined,
Or the moon walking *in* brightness;
27 And my heart hath been secretly enticed,
Or my mouth hath kissed my hand:
28 This also *were* an iniquity *to be punished by* the judge:
For I should have denied the God *that is* above.
29 If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me,
Or lifted up myself when evil found him:
30 Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin
By wishing a curse to his soul.
31 If the men of my tabernacle said not,
Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied.
32 The stranger did not lodge in the street:
But I opened my doors to the traveller.

Four articles more of Job's protestation we have in these verses; which, as all the rest, not only assure us what he was and did, but teach us what we should be and do.

First. He protests that he never set his heart upon the wealth of this world, nor took the things of it for his portion and happiness. He had gold, he had fine gold; his wealth was great, and he had gotten much. Now our wealth is either advantageous or pernicious to us, according as we stand affected to it. If we make it our rest and our ruler, it will be our ruin; if we make it our servant, and an instrument of righteousness, it will be a blessing to us. Job here tells how he stood affected to his worldly wealth. 1. He put no great confidence in it: he did not make gold his hope, ver. 24. They are very unwise that do, and enemies to themselves, who depend upon it as sufficient to make them happy, who think themselves safe and honourable, and sure of comfort in having abundance of this world's goods. Some make it their hope and confidence for another world, as if it were a certain token of God's favour; and those who have so much sense as not to think so yet promise themselves that it will be a portion for them in this life; whereas the things themselves are uncertain, and our satisfaction in them much more so. It is hard to have riches, and not to trust in riches; and that is it which makes it so difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God, *Mat.* xix. 23; *Mar.* x. 24. 2. He took no great complacency in it; ver. 25, "If I rejoiced because my wealth was great," and boasted that "my hand had gotten much." He took no pride in his wealth, as if it added any thing to his real excellency, nor did he think that his might and the power of his hand got it him, *Deu.* viii. 17. He took no pleasure in it in comparison with the spiritual things which were the delight of his soul; his joy did not terminate in the gift, but passed through it to the Giver. When he was in the midst of his abundance, he never said, "Soul, take thine ease" in these things, "eat, drink, and be merry," nor blessed himself in his riches. He did not inordinately rejoice in his wealth; and that helped him to bear the loss of it so patiently as he did. The way to weep as though we wept not is to rejoice as though we rejoiced not. The less pleasure the enjoyment is, the less pain the disappointment will be.

Secondly. He protests that he never gave that worship and glory to the creature which is due to God only; he was never guilty of idolatry, ver. 26—28. We do not find that Job's friends charged him with this; but there were those, it seems, at that time, who were so sottish as to worship the sun and moon, else Job would not have mentioned it. Idolatry is one of the old ways which wicked men have trodden; and the most ancient idolatry was the worshipping the sun and moon, to which the temptation was most strong; as appears, *Deu.* iv. 19, where Moses speaks of the danger which the people were in of being driven to worship them. But, as yet, it was practised secretly, and durst not appear in open view, as afterwards the most abominable idolatries did. Observe,

1. How far Job kept from this sin. He not only never bowed the knee to Baal, (which some think was designed to represent the sun,) never fell down and worshipped the sun; but he kept his eye, his heart, and his lips clean from this sin. 1st. He never so much as beheld the sun or the moon in their pomp and lustre with any other admiration of them than what led him to give all the glory of their brightness and usefulness to their Creator. Against spiritual as well as corporal adultery he made a covenant with his eyes; and this was his covenant, that, whenever he looked at the lights of heaven, he should by faith look through them, and beyond them, to the Father of lights. 2nd. He kept his heart with all diligence, that that should not be secretly enticed to think that there is a Divine glory in their brightness, or a Divine power in their influence, and that therefore Divine honours are to be paid to them. Here is the source of idolatry; it begins in the heart; every man is tempted to that, as to other sins, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. 3rd. He did not so much as put a compliment upon these pretended deities, did not perform the least and lowest act of adoration of them; "his mouth did not kiss his hand," which it is likely was a ceremony then commonly used, even by some that yet would not be thought idolaters. It is an old-fashioned piece of civil respect among ourselves, in making a bow, to kiss the hand; and it seems was anciently used in giving Divine honours to the sun and moon. They could not reach to kiss them, as "the men that sacrificed kissed the calves," *Hos.* xiii. 2; 1 *Kin.* xix. 18; but to shew their good-will they kissed their hand, reverencing those as their masters which God has made servants to this lower world, to hold the candle for us. Job never did it.

2. How ill Job thought of this sin, ver. 28. 1st. He looked upon it as an affront to the civil magistrate; it "were an iniquity to be punished by the judge," as a public nuisance, and hurtful to kings and provinces. Idolatry debauches men's minds, corrupts their manners, takes off the true sense of religion, which is the great bond of societies, and provokes God to give men up to a reprobate sense, and to send judgments upon a nation; and therefore the conservators of the public peace are concerned to restrain it by punishing it. 2nd. He looked upon it as a much greater affront to the God of heaven, and no less than high treason against his crown and dignity; for "I should have denied the God that is above," denied his being as God, and his sovereignty as God above. Idolatry is atheism in effect; hence, the Gentiles are said to be without God (atheists) in the world. Note, We should be afraid of every thing that doth but implicitly deny the God above, his providence or any of his perfections.

Thirdly. He protests that he was so far from doing or designing mischief to any, that he neither desired nor delighted in the hurt of the worst enemy he had. The forgiving of those that do us evil, it seems, was Old Testament duty. Look how the Pharisees came to lose it, who taught, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy," *Mat.* v. 43. Observe here,

1. Job was far from revenge. He did not only not return the injuries that were done him, not only not destroy those that hated him, but, 1st. He did not so much as rejoice when any mischief befell them, ver. 29. Many that would not wilfully hurt those who stand in their light, or have done them a diskindness, yet are secretly pleased, and laugh in their sleeve, as we say, when hurt is done them; but Job was not of that spirit. Though Job was a very good man, yet it seems there were those that hated him; but evil found them. He saw their destruction, and was far from rejoicing in it; for that would justly have brought the destruction upon him, as is intimated, *Pr.* xxiv. 17, 18. 2nd. He did not so much as wish in his own mind that evil might befall them, ver. 30; he never wished a curse to his soul; and curses to the soul are the worst of curses; never desired his death,—he knew if he did, it would turn into sin to him. He was careful not to offend with his tongue, *Ps.* xxxix. 1; would not suffer his mouth to sin, and therefore durst not imprecate any evil, no, not to his worst enemy. If others bear malice to us, that will not justify us in bearing malice to them.

2. He was violently urged to revenge, and yet he kept himself thus clear from it; ver. 31, "the men of his tabernacle," his domestics, his servants, and those about him, were so enraged at Job's enemy that hated him, that they could have eaten him, if Job would but have set them on, or given them leave; "Oh that we had of his flesh." Our master is satisfied to forgive him, but we cannot be so satisfied. See how well beloved Job was by his family; how heartily they espoused his cause, and what enemies they were to his enemies; but see what a strict hand Job kept upon his passions, that he would not revenge himself, though he had those about him that blew the coals of his resentment. Note, A good man commonly doth not lay the affronts that are done him so much to heart himself as his friends do for him. 2. Great men have commonly those about them that stir them up to revenge; David had so, 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 4; xxvi. 8; 2 *Sam.* xvi. 9. But if they keep their temper, notwithstanding the spiteful insinuations of those about them, afterwards it shall be no grief of heart to them, but shall turn very much to their praise.

Fourthly. He protests that he had never been unkind or inhospitable to strangers; ver. 32, "The stranger lodged not in the street;" as angels might lately have done in the streets of Sodom, if Lot alone had not entertained them. Perhaps by that instance Job was taught (as we are, *Heb.* xiii. 2,) not to be forgetful to entertain strangers. He that is at home, must consider those that are from home; and put his soul into their soul's stead, and then do as he would be done by. Hospitality is a Christian duty, 1 *Pet.* iv. 9; Job in his prosperity was noted for good housekeeping, 'he opened his door to the road,' so it may be read; he kept the street-door open that he might see who passed by, and invite them in, as Abraham, *Gen.* xviii. 1.

33 If I covered my transgressions as Adam,
By hiding mine iniquity in my bosom:
34 Did I fear a great multitude,
Or did the contempt of families terrify me,
That I kept silence, *and* went not out of the door?
35 Oh that one would hear me!
Behold, my desire *is*, *that* the Almighty would answer me,
And *that* mine adversary had written a book.
36 Surely I would take it upon my shoulder,
And bind it *as* a crown to me.
37 I would declare unto him the number of my steps;
As a prince would I go near unto him.
38 If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise
thereof complain;
39 If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money,
Or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life:
40 Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of
The words of Job are ended. [barley.

We have here Job's protestation against three more sins, together with his general appeal to God's bar, and his petition for a hearing there; which it is likely was intended to conclude his discourse, (and therefore we will consider it last,) but that another particular sin occurred from which he thought it requisite to acquit himself. He clears himself from the charge,

First. Of dissimulation and hypocrisy, which was the general crime his friends accused him of; that, under the cloak of a profession of religion, he had kept up secret haunts of sin, and that really he was as bad as other people, but had the art of concealing it. Zophar insinuated this, *ch.* xx. 12, that he hid his iniquity under his tongue; No, saith Job, that I never did, ver. 33, "I never covered my transgression as Adam;" never palliated a sin with frivolous excuses, nor made fig leaves the shelter of my shame, nor ever hid my iniquity in my bosom, as a fondling, a darling that I could by no means part with; or as stolen goods, which he dreaded the discovery of. It is natural to us to cover our sins; we have it by kind from our first parents. We are loath to confess our faults, willing to extenuate them, and make the best of ourselves; to devolve the blame upon others, as Adam on his wife, not without a tacit reflection upon God himself. But he that thus covers his sins shall not prosper, *Pr.* xxviii. 13. Job in this protestation intimates two things, which were certain evidences of his integrity: 1. That he was not guilty of any great transgression or iniquity, inconsistent with sincerity, which he had now industriously concealed. In this protestation he had dealt fairly, and, while he denies some sins, was not conscious to himself that he allowed himself in any. 2. That what transgression and iniquity he had been guilty of, (as who is there that lives, and sins not?) he had always been ready to own it; and, as soon as ever he perceived he had said or done amiss, he was ready to unsay it, and undo it as far as he could by repentance; confessing it both to God and man, and forsaking it. And this is doing honestly.

Secondly. From the charge of cowardice and base fear. His courage in that which is good he produceth as an evidence of his sincerity in it; ver. 34, "Did I fear a great multitude, that I kept silence?" No; all that knew Job knew him to be a man of undaunted resolution in a good cause; that boldly appeared, spoke, and acted in defence of religion and justice, and did not fear the face of man, nor was ever threatened or browbeaten out of his duty, but set his face as a flint. Observe, 1. What great conscience Job had made of his duty as a magistrate, or a man of reputation in the place where he lived. He did not, he durst not, keep silence when he had a call to speak in an honest cause, nor keep within doors when he had a call to go abroad to do good. The case may be such as that it may be our sin to be silent and retired; as when we are called to reprove sin, and bear our testimony against it, to vindicate the truths and ways of God, to do right to those who are injured or oppressed, or any way to serve the public, or do honour to our religion. 2. What little account Job made of the discouragements he met with in the way of his duty. He valued not the clamours of the mob, feared not a great multitude, nor did he value the menaces of the mighty; the contempt of families never terrified him. He was not deterred by the number or quality, the scorns or insults, of the injurious from doing justice to the injured,—no, he scorned to be swayed and biassed by any such considerations,—nor ever suffered a righteous cause to be run down by a high hand. He feared the great God, not the great multitude, and his curse, not the contempt of families.

Thirdly. From the charge of oppression and violence, and doing wrong to his poor neighbours. And here observe,

1. What his protestation is. That the estate he had he both got and used honestly; so that his land could not cry out against him, nor the furrows thereof complain, ver. 38; as they do against those who get the possession of them by fraud and extortion, *Hab.* ii. 9—11. The whole creation is said to groan under the sin of man; but that which is unjustly gained and held cries out against a man, and accuseth him, condemns him, and demands justice against him for the injury. Rather than his oppression shall go unpunished, the very ground and the furrows of it shall witness against him, and be his prosecutors. Two things he could safely say concerning his estate: 1st. That he 'never ate the fruits of it without money," ver. 39; what he purchased he paid for, as Abraham, for the land he bought, *Gen.* xxiii. 16; and David, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 24. The labourers that he employed had their wages duly paid them; and, if he made use of the fruits of those lands that he let out, he paid his tenants for them, or allowed it in their rent. 2nd. That he never "caused the owners thereof to lose their life;" never got an estate, as Ahab got Naboth's vineyard, killing the heir, and seizing the inheritance; never starved those that held lands of him, nor killed them with hard bargains and hard usage. No tenant, no workman, no servant he had, could complain of him.

2. How he confirms his protestation. He doth it, as often before, with a suitable imprecation; ver. 40, If I have got my estate unjustly, "let thistles grow instead of wheat;" the worst of weeds instead of the best of grains. When men get estates unjustly they are justly deprived of the comfort of them, and disappointed in their expectations from them. They sow their land, but they sow not that body that shall be. God will give it a body; it was sown wheat, but shall come up thistles. What men do not come honestly by will never do them any good.

Job, towards the close of his protestation, appeals to the judgment-seat of God concerning the truth of it; ver. 34—36, "Oh that he would hear me, even that the Almighty would answer me!" This was what he often desired, and often complained that he could not obtain; and, now he had drawn up his own defence so particularly, he leaves it upon record, in expectation of a hearing, files it as it were, until his cause be called.

1st. A trial is moved for, and the motion earnestly pressed; 'Oh that one, any one, would hear me; my cause is so good, and my evidence so clear, that I am willing to refer it to any indifferent person whatsoever; but my desire is that the Almighty himself would determine it.' An upright heart doth not dread a scrutiny. He that means honestly wishes he had a window in his breast, that all men might see the intents of his heart. But an upright heart doth particularly desire to be determined in every thing by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth. It was holy David's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart;" and it was blessed Paul's comfort, "He that judgeth me is the Lord."

2nd. The prosecutor is called; the plaintiff summoned, and ordered to bring in his information, to say what he has to say against the prisoner, for he stands upon his deliverance. "Oh that mine adversary had written a book!" that my friends, who charge me with hypocrisy, would draw up their charge in writing, that it might be reduced to a certainty, and that we might the better join issue upon it. Job would be very glad to see the libel, to have a copy of his indictment; he would not hide it under his arm, but take it upon his shoulder, to be seen and read of all men; nay, he would bind it as a crown to him, would be pleased with it, and look upon it as his ornament. For, *First.* If it discovered to him any sin he had been guilty of which he did not yet see, he should be glad to know it, that he might repent of it, and get it pardoned. A good man is willing to know the worst by himself, and will be thankful to those that will faithfully tell him of his faults. *Secondly.* If it charge him with what was false, he doubted not but to disprove the allegations: that his innocency would be cleared up as the light, and he should come off with so much the more honour. But, *Thirdly.* He did believe that, when his adversaries came to consider the matter so closely as they must do if they put the charge in writing, the accusations would be trivial and minute, and every one that saw them would say, If this was all they had to say against him, it was a shame they had given him so much trouble.

3rd. The defendant is ready to make his appearance, and to give his accusers all the fair play they can desire. He will declare unto them the number of his steps, ver. 37. He will let them into the history of his own life, will shew them all the stages and scenes of it; he will give them a narrative of his conversation, what would make against him as well as what would make for him, and let them make what use they pleased of it. And so confident he is of his integrity that, as a prince to be crowned, rather than as a prisoner to be tried, he would go near to him, both to his accuser to hear his charge, and to his judge to hear his doom. Thus the testimony of his conscience was his rejoicing.

Hic murus aheneus esto, nil conscire sibi—
'Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.'

Those that have kept their hands without spot from the world, as Job did, may lift up their faces without spot unto God, and may comfort themselves with the prospect of his judgment when they lie under the unjust censures of men. "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."

And thus "the words of Job are ended;" that is, he has now said all he would say in answer to his friends. He afterwards said something in a way of self-reproach and condemnation, *ch.* xl. 4, 5; xlii. 2, &c.; but here ends what he had to say in a way of self-defence and vindication. If this suffice not, he will say no more; he knows when he hath said enough, and will submit himself to the judgment of the bench. Some think the manner of expression intimates that he concluded with an air of assurance and triumph. He now keeps the field, and doubts not but to win the field; "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies."

CHAPTER XXXII.

The stage is clear, for Job and his three friends are set down, and neither he nor they have any thing more to say; it is therefore very seasonable for a moderator to interpose, and Elihu is the man. In this chapter we have, I. Some account of him, his parentage, his presence at this dispute, and his sentiments concerning it, ver. 1—5. II. The apology he made for his bold undertaking, to speak to a question which had been so largely and learnedly argued by his seniors. He pleads, 1. That, though he had not the experience of an old man, yet he had the understanding of a man, ver. 6—10; 2. That he had patiently heard all they had to say, ver. 11—13; 3. That he had something new to offer, ver. 14—17; 4. That his mind was full of this matter, and it would be a refreshment to him to give it vent, ver. 18—20; 5. That he was resolved to speak impartially, ver. 21, 22. And he did speak so well to this matter that Job made no reply to him, and God gave him no rebuke, when he checked both Job himself and his other three friends.

SO these three men ceased to answer Job, because he *was* righteous in his own eyes. 2 Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God. 3 Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and *yet* had condemned Job. 4 Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they *were* elder than he. 5 When Elihu saw that *there was* no answer in the mouth of *these* three men, then his wrath was kindled.

Usually young men are the disputants, and old men the moderators. But here, when old men were the disputants, as a rebuke to them for their unbecoming heat, a young man is raised up to be the moderator. Divers of Job's friends were present, that came to visit him, and to receive instruction. Now here we have,

First. The reason why his three friends were now silent. They ceased to answer him, and let him have his saying, "because he was righteous in his own eyes;" that was the reason they gave why they said no more, because it was to no purpose to argue with a man that was so opinionative, ver. 1. Those that are self-conceited are indeed hard to be wrought upon; "there is more hope of a fool" (a fool of God's making) "than of them," (who are fools of their own making,) *Pr.* xxvi. 11. But they did not judge fairly concerning Job. He was really righteous before God, and not righteous only in his own eyes; so that it was only to save their own credit that they made this the reason of their silence, as peevish disputants commonly do when they find themselves run aground, and are not willing to own themselves unable to make their part good.

Secondly. The reasons why Elihu, the fourth, now spoke. His name, Elihu, signifies 'my God is he.' They had all tried in vain to convince Job, but 'my God is he' that can and will do it, and did it at last. None but he can open the understanding. He is said to be a Buzite, from Buz, Nahor's second son, *Gen.* xxii. 21; and of the kindred of Ram, that is, Aram, so some, *Gen.* xxii. 21, from whence the Syrians or Aramites descended, and were denominated 'of the kindred of Abram;' so the Chaldee paraphrase, supposing him to be first called Ram, 'high;' then Abram, 'a high father;' and lastly, Abraham, 'the high father of a multitude.' Elihu was not so well known as the rest, and therefore is more particularly described thus.

1. Elihu spoke because he was angry, and thought he had good cause to be so. When he had made his remarks upon the dispute, he did not go away and calumniate the disputants, striking them secretly with a malicious, censorious tongue, but what he had to say he would say it before it their faces, that they might vindicate themselves if they could.

1st. He was angry at Job because he thought he did not speak so reverently of God as he ought to have done, and that was too true; ver. 2, "he justified himself more than God;" that is, he took more care and pains to clear himself from the imputation of unrighteousness in being thus afflicted than to clear God from the imputation of unrighteousness in afflicting him, as if he were more concerned for his own honour than for God's; whereas he should in the first place have justified God, and cleared his glory, and then he might well

enough have left his own reputation to shift for itself. Note, A gracious heart is jealous for the honour of God, and cannot but be angry when it is neglected or postponed, or any injury done it. Nor is it any breach of the law of meekness to be angry at our friends when they are offensive to God. "Get thee behind me, Satan," saith Christ to Simon. Elihu owned Job to be a good man, and yet would not say as he said, when he thought he said amiss. It is too great a compliment to our friends not to tell them of their faults.

2nd. He was angry at his friends, because he thought they had not carried it so charitably towards Job as they ought to have done; ver. 3, "They had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job." They had adjudged him to be a hypocrite, and a wicked man, and would not recede from that sentence concerning him, and yet they could not prove him so, nor disprove the evidences he produced of his integrity. They could not make good the premises, and yet held fast the conclusion. They had no reply to make to his arguments, and yet they would not yield, but, right or wrong, would run him down, and this is not fair. There is seldom any quarrel begun, and more seldom carried on to that length that this was, but there is a fault on both sides. Elihu, as became a moderator, took part with neither, but was equally displeased with the mistakes and mismanagements of both. Those that in good earnest seek for truth, must thus be impartial in their judgments concerning the contenders, and not reject what is true and good on either side for the sake of what is amiss, nor approve or defend what is amiss for the sake of what is true and good; but must learn to separate between the precious and the vile.

2. Elihu spoke because he thought it was time to speak, and that now at length it was come to his turn, ver. 4, 5. 1st. He had waited on Job's speeches, had patiently heard him out, till the words of Job were ended. 2nd. He had waited on his friends' silence. So that, as he would not interrupt him, so he would not prevent them; not because they were wiser than he, but because they were older than he, and therefore it was expected by the company that they should speak first, and Elihu was very modest, and would by no means offer to abridge them of their privilege. Some certain rules of precedency must be observed for the keeping of order. Though inward real honour will attend true wisdom and worth; but, because every man will think himself or his friend the wisest and worthiest, that can be no certain rule for the outward ceremonial honour, which, therefore, must attend the seniority either of age or office; and this respect the seniors may the better require because they paid it when they were juniors, and the juniors may the better pay because they shall have it when they come to be seniors.

6 And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said,

I *am* young, and ye *are* very old;
Wherefore I was afraid,
And durst not shew you mine opinion.
7 I said, Days should speak,
And multitude of years should teach wisdom.
8 But *there is* a spirit in man: [standing.
And the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them under-
9 Great men are not *always* wise:
Neither do the aged understand judgment.
10 Therefore I said, Hearken to me;
I also will shew mine opinion.
11 Behold, I waited for your words;
I gave ear to your reasons,
Whilst ye searched out what to say.
12 Yea, I attended unto you,
And, behold, *there was* none of you that convinced Job,
Or that answered his words:
13 Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom:
God thrusteth him down, not man.
14 Now he hath not directed *his* words against me:
Neither will I answer him with your speeches.

Elihu here appears to be,

First. A man of great modesty and humility. Though a young man, and of pregnant parts, yet not pert and confident and assuming. His face shone, and, like Moses, he did not know it, which made it shine so much the brighter. Let it be observed by all, especially by young people, as worthy their imitation, 1. What a diffidence he had of himself, and of his own judgment; ver. 6, "I am young, and therefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion," for fear I should either prove mistaken, or do that which was unbecoming me. He was so observant of all that passed, and applied his mind so close to what he heard, that he had formed in himself a judgment of it; he neither neglected it as foreign, nor declined it as intricate; but, how clear soever the matter was to himself, he was afraid to deliver himself upon it, because he differed in his sentiments from those that were older than he. Note, It becomes us to be suspicious of our own judgment in matters of doubtful disputation; to be swift to hear the sentiments of others, and slow to speak our own, especially when we go contrary to the judgment of those whom, upon the score of their learning and piety, we justly have a veneration for. 2. What a deference he paid to his seniors, and what great expectations he had from them; ver. 7, "I said, Days should speak." Note, Age and experience give a man great advantage in judging of things, both as they furnish a man with so much the more matter for his thoughts to work upon, and as they ripen and improve the faculties he is to work with; which is a good reason why old people should take pains both to learn themselves and to teach others, else the advantages of their age are a reproach to them; and why young people should attend on their instructions. It is good lodging with an old disciple, *Acts* xxi. 16; *Tit.* ii. 4.

Elihu's modesty appeared in the patient attention he gave to what his seniors said, ver. 11, 12. He waited for their words as one that expected much from them, agreeable to the opinion he had of these grave men. He gave ear to their reasons, that he might take their meaning, and fully understand what was the drift of their discourse, and what the force of their arguments. Yea, he attended to them with diligence and care. And this, 1. Though they were slow, and took up a deal of time in searching out what to say. Though they were often to seek for matter and words, paused and hesitated, and were unready at their work, yet he overlooked that, and gave ear to their reasons, which, if really convincing, he would not think the less so for the disadvantages of the delivery of them. 2. Though they trifled and made nothing of it, though they none of them answered Job's words, nor said what was proper to convince him, yet he attended to them in hopes they would bring it to some head at last. Many a time we must be willing to hear what we do not like, else we cannot prove all things. His patient attendance on their discourses he pleads, 1st. As that which entitled him to a liberty of speech in his turn, and empowered him to require their attention. *Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim,*—'This liberty we mutually allow and ask.' They that have heard may speak, and they that have learned may teach. 2nd. As that which enabled him to pass a judgment upon what they had said. He had observed what they drove at, and therefore knew what to say to it. Let us be thoroughly apprized of the sentiments of our brethren before we censure them; for "he that answers a matter before he hears it," or when he has heard it but by the halves, "it is folly and shame to him," and speaks him both impertinent and imperious.

Secondly. He appears to have been a man of great sense and courage, and one that knew as well when and how to speak, as when and how to keep silence. Though he had so much respect to his friends as not to interrupt them with his speaking, yet he had so much regard to truth and justice (his better friends) as not to betray them by his silence. He boldly pleads,

1. That man is a rational creature, and therefore every man hath for himself a judgment of discretion, and ought to be allowed a liberty of speech in his turn. He means the same that Job did, *ch.* xii. 3, "But I have understanding as well as you," when he saith, ver. 8, "But there is a spirit in man;" only he expresseth it a little more modestly, that one man has understanding as well as another, and no man can pretend to have the monopoly of reason, or to engross all the trade of it. Had he meant, 'I have revelation as well as you,' (as some understand it,) he must have proved it; but if he mean only, 'I have reason as well as you,' they cannot deny it, for it is every man's honour, and it is no presumption to claim it, nor could they gainsay his inference from it, ver. 10, "Therefore hearken to me." Learn here, 1st. That the soul is a spirit, neither material itself, nor doth it depend upon matter, but is capable of conversing with things spiritual, which are not the objects of sense. 2nd. It is an understanding spirit. It is able to discover and receive truth, to discourse and reason upon it, and to direct and rule accordingly. 3rd. This understanding spirit is in every man. It is the light that lighteth every man, *Jno.* i. 9. 4th. It is "the inspiration of the Almighty" that gives us this understanding spirit; for he is the Father of spirits, and Fountain of understanding: see *Gen.* ii. 7; *Eccl.* xii. 7; *Zec.* xii. 1.

2. That those who are advanced above others in grandeur and gravity do not always proportionably go beyond them in knowledge and wisdom; ver. 9, "Great men are not always wise." It is pity but they were; for then they would never do hurt with their greatness, and would do so much the more good with their wisdom. Men should be preferred for their wisdom; and those that are in honour and power have most need of wisdom, and have the greatest opportunity of improving in it, and yet it doth not follow that great men are always wise, and therefore it is folly to subscribe to the dictates of any with an implicit faith. The aged do not always understand judgment, even they may be mistaken, and therefore must not expect to bring every thought into obedience to them; nay, therefore they must not take it as an affront to be contradicted, but rather take it as a kindness to be instructed by their juniors; "Therefore I said, Hearken to me," ver. 10. We must be willing to hear reason from those that are every way inferior to us, and to yield to it. He that has a good eye can see farther upon level ground than he that is purblind can from the top of the highest mountain. "Better is a poor and wise child than an old and foolish king," *Eccl.* iv. 13.

3. That it was requisite something should be said for the setting of this controversy in a true light, which by all that had hitherto been said was but rendered more intricate and perplexed, ver. 13. I must speak, "lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom;" lest you should think your argument against Job conclusive and irrefragable, and that Job cannot be convinced and humbled by any other argument but this of yours, that "God casteth him down, and not man;" that it appears by his extraordinary afflictions that God is his enemy, and therefore he is certainly a wicked man. I must shew you that this is a false hypothesis, and that Job may be convinced without maintaining it. Or, lest you should think you have found out the wisest way, to reason no more with him, but leave it to God to thrust him down. It is time to speak when we hear errors advanced and disputed for, especially under pretence of supporting the cause of God with them. It is time to speak when God's judgments are vouched for the patronizing of men's pride and passion, and their unjust, uncharitable censures of their brethren; then we must speak on God's behalf.

4. That he had something new to offer, and would endeavour to manage the dispute in a better manner than it had hitherto been managed, ver. 14. He thinks he may expect a favourable hearing; for, 1st. He will not reply to Job's protestations of his integrity, but allows the truth of them, and therefore doth not interpose as his enemy. "He hath not directed his words against me;" I have nothing to say against the main of his discourse, nor do I differ from his principles. I have only a gentle reproof to give him for his passionate expressions. 2nd. He will not repeat their arguments, nor go upon their principles; "Neither will I answer him with your speeches." Not with the same matter; should I only say what has been said, I might justly be silenced as impertinent. Nor in the same manner; I will not be guilty of that peevishness towards him myself which I dislike in you. The controversy that has already been fully handled a wise man will let alone, unless he can amend and improve what has been done. Why should he *actum agere,*—'do that which has been done already?'

15 They were amazed, they answered no more:
They left off speaking.
16 When I had waited, (for they spake not,
But stood still, *and* answered no more;)
17 *I said,* I will answer also my part,
I also will shew mine opinion.
18 For I am full of matter,
The spirit within me constraineth me.
19 Behold, my belly *is* as wine *which* hath no vent;
It is ready to burst like new bottles
20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed:
I will open my lips and answer.

21 Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person,
Neither let me give flattering titles unto man.
22 For I know not to give flattering titles;
In so doing my maker would soon take me away.

Three things here apologize for Elihu's interposing as he doth in this controversy, which had already been canvassed by such acute and learned disputants:

First. That the stage was clear, and he did not break in upon any of the managers on either side; ver. 15, "they were amazed;" ver. 16, "they stood still, and answered no more." They not only left off speaking themselves, but they stood still, to hear if any of the company would speak their minds; so that (as we say) he had room and fair play given him. They seemed not fully satisfied themselves with what they had said, else they would have adjourned the court, and not have stood still, expecting what might farther be offered. And therefore "I said" (ver. 17) "I will answer also my part." I cannot pretend to give a definitive sentence; no, the judgment is the Lord's, and by him it must be determined who is in the right, and who in the wrong; but, since you have each of you shewed your opinion, I also will shew mine, and let it take its fate with the rest. When what is offered, even by the meanest, is offered thus modestly, it is pity but it should be fairly heard and considered. I see no inconvenience in supposing that Elihu here discovers himself to be the penman of this book; and that he here writes as an historian, relating the matter of fact, that after he had bespoke their attention in the foregoing verses, they were amazed, they left off whispering among themselves, did not gainsay the liberty of speech he desired, but stood still to hear what he would say, being much surprised at the admirable mixture of boldness and modesty that appeared in his preface.

Secondly. That he was uneasy, and even in pain to be delivered of his thoughts upon this matter. They must give him leave to speak, for he cannot forbear; while he is musing, the fire burns, *Ps.* xxxix. 3. Shut up in his bones, as the prophet speaks, *Jer.* xx. 9. Never did nurse, when her breasts were gorged, so long to have them drawn, as Elihu did to deliver his mind concerning Job's case, ver. 18—20. If any of the disputants would have hit that which he thought was the right joint, he would contentedly have been silent. But when he thought they all missed it, he was eager to be trying his hand at it. He pleads, 1. That he had a great deal to say; "I am full of matter," having made my remarks upon all that has hitherto been said, and taken rise from it for my own thoughts. When aged men are drawn dry, and have spent their stock in discoursing of the Divine providence, God can raise up others, even young men, and fill them with matter for the edifying of his church; for it is a subject that can never be exhausted, though they that speak to it may. 2. That he was under a necessity of saying it; "The Spirit within me" not only instructs me what to say, but puts me on to say it; so that if I have not vent (such a mighty ferment are my thoughts in) I shall burst like bottles of new wine when it is working, ver. 19. See what a great grief it is to a good minister to be silenced and thrust into a corner. He is full of matter, full of Christ, full of heaven, and would speak of these things for the good of others, but he may not. 3. That it would be an ease and satisfaction to himself to deliver his mind; ver. 20, "I will speak that I may be refreshed;" not only that I may be eased of the pain of stifling it, but that I may have the pleasure of endeavouring, according to my place and capacity, to do good. It is a great refreshment to a good man to have liberty to speak for the glory of God and the edification of others.

Thirdly. That he was resolved to speak with all possible freedom and sincerity what he thought was true, not what he thought would please; ver. 21, 22, "Let me not accept any man's person," as partial judges do, that aim to enrich themselves, not to do justice; I am resolved to flatter no man. He would not speak otherwise than he thought, either, 1. In compassion to Job, because he was poor and in affliction; would not make his case better than he really took it to be, for fear of increasing his grief, but, let him bear it as he can, he shall be told the truth. Those that are in affliction must not be flattered, but dealt faithfully with. When trouble is upon any, it is foolish pity to suffer sin upon them too, (*Lev.* xix. 17,) for that is the worst addition that can be to their trouble. "Thou shalt not countenance," no more than discountenance, "a poor man in his cause," *Ex.* xxiii. 3, nor regard a sad look any more than a big look, so as for the sake of it to pervert justice, for that is knowing faces. Or, 2. In compliment to Job's friends, because they were in prosperity and reputation. Let them not expect he should say as they said, any farther than he was convinced they said right, nor applaud their dictates for the sake of their dignities; no, though Elihu is a young man, and upon his preferment, he will not dissemble truth to court the favour of great men. It is a good resolution he has taken up, "I know not to give flattering titles to men." I never used myself to that language; and it is a good reason he gives for that resolution; "in so doing my Maker would soon take me away." It is good to keep ourselves in awe with a holy fear of God's judgments. He that made us will take us away in his wrath, if we do not carry ourselves as we should. He hates all dissimulation and flattery, and will soon put lying lips to silence, and cut off flattering lips, *Ps.* xii. 3. The more closely we eye the majesty of God as our Maker, and the more we dread his wrath and justice, the less danger shall we be in of a sinful fearing or flattering of men.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Pompous prefaces oftentimes, like the teeming mountain, introduce but poor performances; but Elihu's discourse here, doth not disappoint the expectations which his preface had raised: it is substantial and lively, and very much to the purpose. He had in the foregoing chapter, said what he had to say to Job's three friends; and now he comes up close to Job himself, and directs his speech to him. I. He bespeaks Job's favourable acceptance of what he should say, and desires he would take him for that person whom he had so often wished for, that would plead with him, and receive his plea on God's behalf, ver. 1—7. II. He doth in God's name, bring an action against him, for words, which in the heat of disputation he had spoken: reflecting upon God as dealing hardly with him, ver. 8—11. III. He endeavours to convince him of his fault and folly herein, by shewing him, 1. God's sovereign dominion over man, ver. 12, 13. 2. The care God takes of man, and the various ways and means he useth to do his soul good: which we have reason to think he designs, when he lays bodily afflictions upon him, ver. 14. 1st. Job had sometimes complained of unquiet dreams, *ch.* vii. 14; Why, saith Elihu, God sometimes speaks conviction and instruction to men by such dreams, ver. 15—18. 2nd. Job had especially complained of his sicknesses and pains; and as to these he shews largely, that they were far from being tokens of God's wrath, as Job took them; or evidences of Job's hypocrisy, as his friends took them; that they were really wise and gracious methods, which Divine grace took for the increase of his acquaintance with God, to work patience, experience, and hope, ver. 19—30; and, lastly, he concludes with a request to Job, either to answer him, or give him leave to go on, ver. 31—33.

WHEREFORE, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches,
And hearken to all my words.
2 Behold, now I have opened my mouth,
My tongue hath spoken in my mouth.
3 My words *shall be of* the uprightness of my heart:
And my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.
4 The Spirit of God hath made me,
And the breath of the Almighty hath given me life
5 If thou canst answer me,
Set *thy words* in order before me, stand up.
6 Behold, I *am* according to thy wish in God's stead:
I also am formed out of the clay.
7 Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid,
Neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.

Several arguments Elihu here useth to persuade Job not only to give him a patient hearing, but to believe that he designed him a good office; and to take it kindly, and be willing to receive the instructions he was now about to give him. Let Job consider,

First. That Elihu doth not join with his three friends against him. He hath in the foregoing chapter declared his dislike of their proceedings, disclaimed their hypothesis, and quite set aside the method they took of healing Job. "Wherefore, Job, I pray thee, hear my speech," ver. 1. They were all in the same song, all spoke in the same strain; but I am trying a new way, "therefore hearken to all my words," and not to some of them only; for we cannot judge of a discourse unless we take it entire, and hearken to it all.

Secondly. That he intended to make a solemn business of it, not to put in a word by the by, or give a short repartee to shew his wit, but after long silence he opened his mouth, ver. 2, with deliberation and design. Upon mature consideration, he had already begun to speak, and was prepared to go on, if Job would encourage him by his attention.

Thirdly. That he was resolved to speak as he thought, and not otherwise; ver. 3, "My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart," the genuine product of my convictions and sentiments. There was reason to suspect that Job's three friends did not think in their consciences that Job was so ill a man as they had in their discourses represented him to be, merely for the support of their hypothesis; and that was not fair. It is a base thing to condemn those with our tongues, to serve a turn, whom at the same time, we cannot but in our consciences think well of. Elihu is an honest man, and scorns to do so.

Fourthly. That what he said should be easy, and not dark and hard to be understood. "My lips shall utter knowledge clearly." Job shall readily take his meaning, and find what he drives at. Those that speak of the things of God should carefully avoid all obscurity and perplexedness both of notion and expression, and speak as plainly and clearly as they can, for by that it will appear that they do themselves understand what they speak of, that they mean honestly, and design the edification of those they speak to.

Fifthly. That he would in his discourse make the best use he could of the reason and understanding God had given him, that life, that rational soul, which he received from the Spirit of God, and the breath of the Almighty, ver. 4. He owns himself unfit to enter the lists with his seniors, yet he desires they will not despise his youth, for he is God's workmanship as well as they, made by the same hand, endued with the same noble powers and faculties, and designed for the same great end; and therefore why may not the God that made him make use of him as an instrument of good to Job? With this consideration also we should quicken ourselves (and perhaps Elihu made that use of it) to do good in our places, according to our capacity: God has made us, and given us life, and therefore we should study to use our life to some good purpose, to spend it in glorifying God, and serving our generation according to his will, that we may answer the end of our creation, and it may not be said we were made in vain.

Sixthly. That he would be very willing to hear what Job could object against what he had to say; ver. 5, "If thou canst answer me," if thou hast so much strength and spirit left thee, and art not quite spent with the distemper and the dispute, "set thy words in order," and they shall have their due consideration. Those that can speak reason will hear reason.

Seventhly. That he had often wished for one that would appear for God, with whom he might freely expostulate, and to whom as arbitrator he might refer the matter, and such a one Elihu would be; ver. 6, "I am according to thy wish in God's stead." How pathetically had Job wished, *ch.* xvi. 21, "O that one might plead for a man with God!" and *ch.* xxiii. 3, "O that I knew where I might find him!" only he would make in his bargain, that his dread should not make him afraid, *ch.* xiii. 21. Now, saith Elihu, look upon me this once as in God's stead; I will undertake to plead his cause with thee, and to shew thee wherein thou hast affronted him, and what he has against thee; and what appeals or complaints thou hast to make to God, make them to me.

Eighthly. That he was not an unequal match for him. "I also am formed out of the clay." I also as well as the first man, *Gen.* ii. 7, I also as well as thou. Job had urged this with God as a reason why he should not bear hard upon him; *ch.* x. 9, "Remember that thou hast made me as the clay;" Why, saith Elihu, I am formed out of the clay as well as thou; 'formed of the same clay,' so some read it. It is good for us all to consider that we are formed out of the clay; and well for us it is that those who are to us in God's stead are so; that he speaks to us by men like ourselves, according to Israel's wish upon a full trial, *Deu.* v. 24. God has wisely deposited the treasure in earthen vessels like ourselves, 2 *Cor.* iv. 7.

Lastly, That he would have no reason to be frighted at the assault he made upon him; ver. 7, "My terror shall not make thee afraid." 1. As thy friends have done with their arguings, I will not fall so foul upon thee as they have done, nor draw up such a heavy charge against thee. Nor, 2. As God would do if he should appear to reason with thee. I stand upon the same level with thee, and am made of the same mould, and therefore cannot impress that terror upon thee which thou mayest justly dread from the appearance of the Divine majesty. If we would rightly convince men, it must be by reason, not by terror; by fair arguing, not by a heavy hand.

8 Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing,
And I have heard the voice of *thy* words, *saying*,
9 I am clean without transgression, I *am* innocent;

Neither *is there* iniquity in me.
10 Behold, he findeth occasions against me,
He counteth me for his enemy,
11 He putteth my feet in the stocks,
He marketh all my paths.
12 Behold, *in* this thou art not just:
I will answer thee, that God is greater than man.
13 Why dost thou strive against him?
For he giveth not account of any of his matters.

In these verses,

First. Elihu particularly chargeth Job with some indecent expressions that had dropped from him, reflecting upon the justice and goodness of God in his dealings with him. He doth not ground the charge upon report, but was himself an earwitness of what he here reproves him for; ver. 8, "Thou hast spoken it in my hearing," and in the hearing of all this company. He had it not at second hand; if so, he would have hoped it had not been so bad as it was represented. He did not hear it from Job in private conversation, then he would not have been so ill-bred as to repeat it thus publicly; but Job had said it openly, and therefore it was fit he should be openly reproved for it. "Them that sin before all, rebuke before all." When we hear any thing said that tends to God's dishonour, we ought publicly to bear our testimony against it. What is said amiss in our hearing, we are concerned to reprove, for ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, to confront the accuser.

1. Job had represented himself as innocent; ver. 9, Thou hast said, "I am clean without transgression;" Job had not said this *totidem verbis*,—'in so many words;' nay, he had owned himself to have sinned, and to be impure before God; but he had indeed said, "Thou knowest that I am not wicked. My righteousness I hold fast," and the like, on which Elihu might ground this charge. It was true, that Job was "a perfect and an upright man," and not such a one as his friends had represented him; but he ought not to have insisted so much upon it, as if God had therefore done him wrong in afflicting him. Yet, it should seem, Elihu did not deal fairly in charging Job with saying that he was clean and innocent from all transgression, when he only pleaded that he was "upright and innocent from the great transgression;" but those that speak passionately and unwarily must thank themselves if they be misunderstood. They should have taken more care.

2. He had represented God as severe in marking what he did amiss, and taking all advantages against him, ver. 10, 11, as if he lay at catch to pick quarrels with him; "He findeth occasions against me," which supposeth seeking them. To this purpose Job had spoken, *ch.* xiv. 16, 17, "Dost thou not watch over my sin?" "He counteth me for his enemy;" so he had expressly said, *ch.* xiii. 24; xix. 11. "He putteth my feet in the stocks," that, as I cannot contend with him, so I may not be able to flee from him; this he had said, *ch.* xiii. 27, "And lookest narrowly unto all my paths," in the same place.

Secondly. He endeavours to convince him that he had spoken amiss in speaking thus, and that he ought to humble himself before God for it, and by repentance to unsay it; ver. 12, "Behold, in this thou art not just." 'Here thou art not in the right;' so some read it. See the difference between the charge which Elihu exhibited against Job and that which was preferred against him by his other friends. They would not own that he was just at all, but Elihu only saith, In this, in saying this, thou art not just. 1. Thou dost not deal justly with God. To be just is to render to all their due; now we do not render God his due, nor are we just to him, if we do not acknowledge his equity and kindness in all the dispensations of his providence towards us; that he is righteous in all his ways, and that, however it be, yet he is good. 2. Thou dost not speak the language of a righteous man. I do not deny but thou art such a one, but in this thou dost not make it to appear. Many that are just, yet in some particular instances do not speak and act like themselves; and as, on the one hand, we must not fail to tell even a good man wherein he mistakes and doth amiss, nor flatter him in his errors and passions, for in that we are not kind, so, on the other hand, we must not draw men's characters, nor pass a judgment on them by one instance, or some few misplaced words, for in that we are not just. In many things we all offend, and therefore must be candid in our censures.

Two things Elihu proposeth to Job's consideration, to convince him that he had said amiss:

1st. That God is infinitely above us; and therefore it is madness to contend with him, for if he plead against us with his great power we cannot stand before him. "I will answer thee," saith Elihu, in one word, which carries its own evidence along with it, "that God is greater than man;" no doubt he is infinitely greater. Between God and man there is no proportion. Job had himself said a great deal, and admirably well, concerning the greatness of God, his irresistible power and incontestable sovereignty, his terrible majesty and unsearchable immensity. Now, said Elihu, do but consider what thou thyself hast said concerning the greatness of God, and apply it to thyself. If he is greater than man, he is greater than me, and thou wilt see reason enough to repent of these ill-natured, ill-favoured reflections upon him, and to blush at thy folly, and tremble to think of thine own presumption. Note, There is enough in this one plain unquestionable truth, "that God is greater than man," if duly improved, for ever to put to silence and put to shame all our complaints of his providence, and our exceptions against his dealings with us. He is not only more wise and powerful than we are, and therefore it is to no purpose to contend with him, who will be too hard for us, but more holy, just, and good; for these are the transcendent glories and excellences of the Divine nature; in these "God is greater than man," and therefore, it is absurd and unreasonable to find fault with him, for he is certainly in the right.

2nd. That God is not accountable to us; ver. 13, "Why dost thou strive against him?" Those that complain of God strive against him, implead him, impeach him, bring an action against him; and why do they do so? for what cause? to what purpose? Note, It is an unreasonable thing for us, weak, foolish, sinful creatures, to strive with a God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness. Woe to the clay that strives with the potter. "For he gives not account of any of his matters." He is under no obligation to shew us a reason for what he doth, neither to tell us what he designs to do,—in what method, at what time, by what instruments; nor to tell us why he deals thus with us. He is not bound either to justify his own proceedings, or to satisfy our demands and inquiries; his judgments will certainly justify themselves; if we do not satisfy ourselves in them it is our own fault. It is therefore daring impiety for us to arraign God at our bar, or challenge him to shew cause for what he doth, to say unto him, "What dost thou?" or, "why dost thou so?" 'He giveth not account of all his matters;' so some read it. He reveals as much as it is fit for us to know, as follows here, ver. 14. But still there are secret things, which belong not to us, which it is not for us to pry into,

14 For God speaketh once, yea twice,
Yet man perceiveth it not.
15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, [the bed;
When deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon
16 Then he openeth the ears of men,
And sealeth their instruction,
17 That he may withdraw man *from his* purpose,
And hide pride from man.
18 He keepeth back his soul from the pit,
And his life from perishing by the sword.

Job had complained that God kept him wholly in the dark concerning the meaning of his dealings with him; and therefore concluded he dealt with him as his enemy. No, saith Elihu, he speaks to you, but you do not perceive him, so that the fault is yours, not his; and is designing your real good, even in those dispensations which you put this harsh construction upon. Observe in general, ver. 14,

First. What a friend God is to our welfare. "He speaketh to us once, yea, twice." It is a token of his favour, that, notwithstanding the distance and quarrel between us and him, yet he is pleased to speak to us. It is an evidence he designs our good, that he is pleased to speak to us of our own concerns, to shew us what is our duty and what our interest, what he requires of us and what we may expect from him; to tell us of our faults, and warn us of our danger; to shew us the way, and to lead us in it. This he doth once, yea, twice, that is, again and again. When one warning is neglected, he gives another, "not willing that any should perish;" "Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line;" and so it is, that sinners may be left inexcusable.

Secondly. What enemies we are to our own welfare. "Man perceives it not," that is, he doth not heed it or regard it; he doth not discern or understand it; is not aware that it is the voice of God, nor doth he receive the things revealed, for they are foolishness to him; he stops his ear, stands in his own light, rejects the counsel of God against himself, and so is never the wiser, no, not for the dictates of wisdom itself. God speaks to us by conscience, by providences, and by ministers, of all which Elihu here discourseth at large, to shew Job that God was both telling him his mind and doing him a kindness, even now he seemed to keep him in the dark, and so treat him as a stranger, and to keep him in distress, and so treat him as an enemy. There was not then, that we know of, any Divine revelation in writing; and therefore that is not here mentioned among the ways by which God speaketh to men, though now it is the principal way. In these verses he shews how God teacheth and admonisheth the children of men by their own consciences. Observe,

1. The proper season and opportunity for these admonitions; ver. 15, "In a dream, in slumberings upon the bed." When men are retired from the world, and the business and conversation of it, then is a good time for them to retire into their own hearts, and commune with them, when they are upon their beds, solitary and still, *Ps.* iv. 4; and that time God takes for dealing personally with men. 1st. When he sent angels, extraordinary messengers on his errands, he commonly chose that time for the delivery of them, when by deep sleep falling on men the bodily senses were all locked up, and the mind more free to receive the immediate communications of Divine light. Thus he made his mind known to the prophets by visions and dreams, *Num.* xii. 6; thus he warned Abimelech, *Gen.* xx. 3; Laban, *Gen.* xxxi. 24; Joseph, *Mat.* i. 21; thus he made known to Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, things that should come to pass hereafter. 2nd. When he stirred up conscience, that ordinary deputy of his in the soul, to do its office, he took that opportunity, either when deep sleep fell on men, (for, though dreams mostly come from fancy, some may come from conscience,) or in slumberings, when men are between sleep and awake, reflecting at night upon the business of the foregoing day, or projecting in the morning the business of the ensuing day, then is a proper time for their hearts to reproach them for what they have done ill, and to admonish them what they should do: see *Isa.* xxx. 21.

2. The power and force with which those admonitions come, ver. 16. When God designs men's good, by the convictions and dictates of their own consciences, 1st. He gives them the letting in, and makes them to be heeded. "Then he opens the ears of men," which were before shut against the voice of this charmer, *Ps.* lviii. 5. He opens the heart, as he opened Lydia's, and so opens the ears. He takes away that which stopped the ear, so that the conviction finds, or forces its way; nay, he works in the soul a submission to the regimen of conscience, and a compliance with its rules, for that follows upon God's opening the ear; *Isa.* l. 5, "God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious." 2nd. He gives them the setting on, and makes them to abide: "he sealeth their instruction;" that is, the instruction that is designed for them, and is suited to them. This he makes their souls to receive the deep and lasting impression of, as the wax of the seal. When the heart is delivered into Divine instructions as into a mould, then the work is done.

Thirdly. The end and design of these admonitions that are sent.

1. To keep men from sin, and particularly the sin of pride; ver. 17, "That he may withdraw man from his purpose," that is, from his evil purposes; may change the temper of his mind, and the course of his life, his disposition and inclination, or prevent some particular sin he is in danger of falling into. May withdraw man from his work; may make him leave off man's work, which is working for the world and the flesh, and may set him to work the work of God. Many a man has been stopped in the full career of a sinful pursuit, by the seasonable checks of his own conscience, saying, "Do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates." Particularly, God doth by this means hide pride from man, that is, hide those things from him which are the matter of his pride, and take his mind off from dwelling upon them, by setting before him what reason he has to be humbled, that he may take away pride from man, so some read it; that he may pluck up that root of bitterness, which is the cause of so much sin. All those whom God has mercy in store for he will humble and hide pride from. Pride makes people eager and resolute in the prosecution of their purposes, they will have their way; therefore God withdraws them from their purposes, by mortifying their pride.

2. To keep men from ruin, ver. 18. While sinners are pursuing their evil purposes, and indulging their pride, their souls are hastening apace to the pit, to the sword, to destruction both in this world and that to come. But when God, by the admonitions of conscience, withdraws them from sin, he thereby keeps back their souls from the pit, from the bottomless pit, and saves them from perishing by the sword of Divine vengeance; so iniquity shall not be their ruin. That which turns men from sin, saves them from hell, saves a soul from death, *Jas.* v. 20. See what a mercy it is to be under the restraints of an awakened conscience; faithful are the wounds, and kind are the bonds of that friend, for the soul is kept from perishing eternally.

19 He is chastened also with pain upon his bed,
And the multitude of his bones with strong *pain*:
20 So that his life abhorreth bread,
And his soul dainty meat.
21 His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen;
And his bones *that* were not seen stick out.
22 Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave,
And his life to the destroyers.
23 If there be a messenger with him,
An interpreter, one among a thousand,
To shew unto man his uprightness:
24 Then he is gracious unto him, and saith,
Deliver him from going down to the pit:
I have found a ransom.
25 His flesh shall be fresher than a child's:
He shall return to the days of his youth: [him:
26 He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto
And he shall see his face with joy:
For he will render unto man his righteousness.
27 He looketh upon men, and *if any* say,
I have sinned, and perverted *that which was* right,
And it profited me not;
28 He will deliver his soul from going into the pit,
And his life shall see the light.

God hath spoken once to sinners by their own consciences, to keep them from the paths of the destroyer, but they perceive it not; they are not aware that the checks their own hearts give them in a sinful way are from God, but they are imputed to melancholy, or the preciseness of their education; and therefore God speaketh twice; speaks a second time, and tries another way to convince and reclaim sinners, and that is by providences, afflictive and merciful, in which he speaketh twice, and by the seasonable instructions of good ministers setting in with them. Job complained much of his diseases, and judged by them that God was angry with him; his friends did so too: but Elihu shews they were all mistaken, for God often afflicts the body in love, and with gracious designs of good to the soul, as appears in the issue, which here it is brought to; and of great use this part of Elihu's discourse will be to us, for the due improvement of sickness, in and by which God speaketh to men. Here is,

First. The patient described in his extremity. See what work sickness makes, ver. 19, when God sends it with commission: Do this, and it doth it.

1. The sick man is full of pain all over him; ver. 14, "He is chastened with pain upon his bed," such pain as confines him to his bed; or, so extreme the pain is, that he can get no ease, no, not on his bed, where he would repose himself. Pain and sickness will turn a bed of down into a bed of thorns, on which he that used to sleep now "tosseth to and fro, until the dawning of the day." The case as here put is very bad; pain is more hardly borne than sickness, and with that the patient here is chastened; not a dull, heavy pain, but strong and acute; and, many times, the stronger the patient, the stronger the pain; for the more sanguine the complexion is the more violent, commonly, the disease is. It is not the smarting of the flesh that is complained of, but the aching of the bones. It is an inward rooted pain; and not only the bones of one limb, but the multitude of the bones, are thus chastened. See what frail, what vile bodies we have, which, though receiving no external hurt, may be thus pained from causes within themselves. See what work sin makes, what mischief it doth. Pain is the fruit of sin; yet, by the grace of God, the pain of the body is often made a means of good to the soul.

2. He has quite lost his stomach; the common effect of sickness; ver. 20, "His life abhorreth bread," the most necessary food, "and dainty meat," which he most delighted in, and formerly relished with a great deal of pleasure. This is a good reason why we should not be desirous of dainties, because they are deceitful meat, *Pr.* xxiii. 3. We may be soon made as sick of them as we are now fond of them; and those who live in luxury when they are well, if ever they come, by reason of sickness, to loathe dainty meat, may with grief and shame read their sin in their punishment. Let us not inordinately love the taste of meat, for the time may come when we may even loathe the sight of meat. *Ps.* cvii. 18.

3. He is become a perfect skeleton; nothing but skin and bones, ver. 21. By sickness, perhaps a few days' sickness, his flesh, which was fat, and fair, and plump, "is consumed away that it cannot be seen;" it is strangely wasted and gone, and his bones, that were buried in flesh, now stick out; you may count his ribs, may tell all his bones. The soul that is well nourished with the bread of life, sickness will not make lean; but it soon makes a change in the body.

'He who before had such a beauteous air,
And pamper'd with his ease, seem'd plump and fair,
Doth all his friends (amazing change!) surprise,
With pale lean cheeks, and ghastly hollow eyes;
His bones, a horrid sight, start through his skin,
Which lay before in flesh and fat unseen.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

4. He is given up for gone, and his life despaired of; ver. 22, "His soul draws near to the grave;" that is, he has all the symptoms of death upon him, and in the apprehension of all about him, as well as in his own, he is a dying man. The pangs of death, here called the destroyers, are just ready to seize him; they compass him about, *Ps.* cxvi. 3. Perhaps it intimates the very dreadful apprehensions which those have of death as a destroying thing, when it stares them in the face, who when it was at a distance made light of it. All agree, when it comes to the setting to, whatever they thought of it before, that it is a serious thing to die.

Secondly. The provision made for his instruction, in order to a sanctified use of his affliction, that when God in that way speaketh to man he may be heard and understood, and not speak in vain, ver. 23. He is happy, "if there be a messenger with him" to attend him in his sickness, to convince, counsel, and comfort him; an interpreter to expound the providence, and give him to understand the meaning of it; a man of wisdom that knows the voice of the rod, and its interpretation; for many a time when God speaks by afflictions, we are so unversed in the language, that we have need of an interpreter; and it is well if we have such a one. The advice and help of a good minister is as needful and seasonable, and should be as acceptable in sickness, as of a good physician; especially if he be well skilled in the art of explaining and improving providences; which, if he be, he is "one of a thousand," and to be valued accordingly; and his business at such a time is "to shew unto man his uprightness;" that is, God's uprightness, that in faithfulness he afflicts him, and doth him no wrong; which it is necessary we be convinced of, in order to our making a due improvement of the affliction. Or, rather, man's uprightness, or rectitude. 1. The uprightness that *is*. If it appear that the sick person is truly pious, the interpreter will not do as Job's friends had done,—make it his business to prove him a hypocrite because he is afflicted; but, on the contrary, will shew him his uprightness, notwithstanding his afflictions, that he may take the comfort of it, and be easy whatever the event is. 2. The uprightness, the reformation that *should be*, in order to life and peace. When men are made to see the way of uprightness to be the only way, and a sure way to salvation, and to choose it, and walk in it accordingly, the work is done.

Thirdly. God's gracious acceptance of him upon his repentance, ver. 24. When he sees that the sick person is indeed convinced that sincere repentance, and that uprightness which is Gospel perfection, is his interest as well as duty, then he that waits to be gracious, and shews mercy upon the first indication of true repentance, is gracious unto him, and takes him into his favour and thoughts for good. Wherever God finds a gracious heart, he will be found a gracious God; and, 1. He will give a gracious order for his discharge. He saith, Deliver him; that is, Let him be delivered from going down to the pit, from that death which is the wages of sin. When afflictions have done their work, they shall be removed. When we return to God in a way of duty, he will return to us in a way of mercy. Those shall be delivered from going down to the pit who receive God's messengers, and rightly understand his interpreters, so as to subscribe to his uprightness. 2. He will give a gracious reason for this order, "I have found a ransom," or propitiation; Jesus Christ is that ransom, so Elihu calls him, as Job had called him his Redeemer, for he is both the purchaser and the price, the priest and the sacrifice; so high was the value put upon souls, that nothing less would redeem them, and so great the injury done by sin, that nothing less would atone for it than the blood of the Son of God, who gave his life a ransom for many. This is a ransom of God's finding, a contrivance of infinite wisdom; we could never have found it ourselves, and the angels themselves could never have found it. It is "the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom;" and such an invention as is and will be the everlasting wonder of those principalities and powers that desire to look into it. Observe how God glories in the invention here, εὕρηκα, εὕρηκα,—'I have found, I have found' the ransom; I, even I, am he that hath done it.

Fourthly. The recovery of the sick man hereupon. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease. When the patient becomes a penitent, see what a blessed change follows.

1. His body recovers its health, ver. 25. This is not always the consequent of a sick man's repentance and return to God, but sometimes it is; and recovery from sickness is then a mercy indeed, when it arises from the remission of sin, then it is in love to the soul that the body is delivered from the pit of corruption, when God casts our sins behind his back, *Isa.* xxxviii. 17. That is the method of a blessed recovery; "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee," and then, "rise, take up thy bed and walk," *Mat.* ix. 2, 6. So here, interest him in the ransom, and then "his flesh shall be fresher than a child's," and there shall be no remains of his distemper, but "he shall return to the days of his youth," to the beauty and strength which he had then. When the distemper that oppressed nature is removed, how strangely doth nature help itself, in which the power and goodness of the God of nature must be thankfully acknowledged. By such merciful providences as these, which afflictions give occasion for, God speaketh once, yea twice, to the children of men, letting them know (if they would but perceive it) their dependence upon him, and his tender compassion of them.

2. His soul recovers its peace, ver. 26. 1st. The patient being a penitent, is a supplicant, and has learned to pray. He knows God will be sought unto for his favours, and therefore "he shall pray unto God," pray for pardon, pray for health. "Is any afflicted? any sick? let him pray." When he finds himself recovering, he shall not then think that prayer is no longer necessary, for we need the grace of God as much for the sanctifying of a mercy as for the sanctifying of an affliction. 2nd. His prayers are accepted. "God will be favourable to him," and be well pleased with him; his anger shall be turned away from him, and the light of God's countenance shall shine upon his soul; and then it follows, 3rd. That he has the comfort of communion with God. He shall now see the face of God, which before was hid from him, and he shall see it with joy, for what sight can be more reviving? (see *Gen.* xxiii. 10, "As though I had seen the face of God.") All true penitents rejoice more in the returns of God's favour, than in any instance whatsoever of prosperity or pleasure, *Ps.* iv. 6, 7. 4th. He has a blessed tranquillity of mind, arising from the sense of his justification before God, who will render unto this man his righteousness. He shall receive the atonement; that is, the comfort of it, *Rom.* v. 11. Righteousness shall be imputed to him, and peace thereupon spoken, the joy and gladness of which he shall then be made to hear, though he could not hear it in the day of his affliction. God will now deal with him as a righteous man, with whom it shall be well. He shall "receive the blessing from the Lord, even righteousness," *Ps.* xxiv. 5. God shall give him grace to go and sin no more. Perhaps this may speak the reformation of his life after his recovery. As he shall pray unto God, whom before he had slighted, so he shall render to men his righteousness, whom before he had wronged, shall make restitution, and for the future do justly.

Fifthly. The general rule which God will go by, in dealing with the children of men, inferred from this instance, ver. 27, 28. As sick people upon their submission are recovered, so all others that truly repent of their sins, shall find mercy with God. See here, 1. What sin is, and what reason we have not to sin. Would we know the nature of sin, and the malignity of it? It is "the perverting of that which is right;" it is a most unjust, unreasonable thing; it is the rebellion of the creature against the Creator, the usurped dominion of the flesh over the spirit, and a contradiction to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil; it is perverting the right ways of the Lord, *Acts* xiii. 10, and therefore the ways of sin are called crooked ways, *Ps.* cxxv. 5. Would we know what is to be got by sin? It profiteth us not. The works of darkness are unfruitful works. When profit and loss come to be balanced, all the gains of sin, put them all together, will come far short of countervailing the damage. All true penitents are ready to own this; and it is a mortifying consideration, *Rom.* vi. 21, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" 2. See what repentance is, and what reason we have to repent. Would we approve ourselves true penitents? we must then, with a broken and contrite heart, confess our sins to God, 1 *Jno.* i. 9. Confess the fact of sin, "I have sinned;" and not deny the charge, or stand upon our own justifi-

cation; confess the fault of sin, the iniquity, the dishonesty of it, "I have perverted that which was right;" the folly of sin, So foolish have I been and ignorant, for "it profiteth me not;" and, therefore, what have I to do any more with it? And is there not good reason why we should make such a penitent confession as this? for, 1st. God expects it; "He looks upon men" when they have sinned, to see what they will do next, whether they will go on in it, or whether they will bethink themselves and return. He hearkens and hears whether any say, What have I done? *Jer.* viii. 6. He looks upon sinners with an eye of compassion, desiring to hear this from them, for he has no pleasure in their ruin. He looks upon them, and as soon as he perceives these workings of repentance in them he encourageth them, and is ready to accept them, *Ps.* xxxii. 4, 5, as the father went forth to meet the returning prodigal. 2nd. It will turn to our unspeakable advantage. The promise is general; if any humble themselves thus, whoever they are, *First.* They shall not come into condemnation, but be saved from the wrath to come. "He shall deliver his soul from going into the pit," the pit of hell; iniquity shall not be his ruin. *Secondly.* They shall be happy in everlasting life and joy. "His life shall see the light;" that is, all good, in the vision and fruition of God. To obtain this bliss, "if the prophet had bid us do some great thing, would we not have done it? how much more when he only saith unto us, Wash and be clean?" confess and be pardoned, repent and be saved.

29 Lo, all these *things*
Worketh God oftentimes with man,
30 To bring back his soul from the pit,
To be enlightened with the light of the living.
31 Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me:
Hold thy peace, and I will speak.
32 If thou hast any thing to say, answer me:
Speak, for I desire to justify thee.
33 If not, hearken unto me:
Hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

We have here the conclusion of this first part of Elihu's discourse, in which, First. He briefly sums up what he had said, shewing that God's great and gracious design, in all the dispensations of his providence towards the children of men, is to save them from being for ever miserable, and bring them to be for ever happy; ver. 29, 30, all these things God is working with the children of men; dealing with them by conscience, by providences, by ministers, by mercies, by afflictions; makes them sick and makes them well again. All these are his operations; he hath set the one over against the other, *Eccl.* vii. 14; but his hand is in all: it is he that performeth all things for us. All providences are to be looked upon as God's workings with man, his strivings with him. He useth variety of methods to do men good; if one affliction do not do the work, he will try another; if neither do, he will try a mercy; will send a messenger to interpret both. He works such things as these oftentimes, twice, thrice; so it is in the original, referring to ver. 14, "He speaketh once, yea, twice;" if that prevail not, he worketh twice, yea, thrice; changes his method, "we have piped, we have mourned," returns again to the same method, repeats the same applications. And why doth he take all this pains with man? It is "to bring back his soul from the pit," ver. 30. If God did not take more care of us than we do of ourselves, we were miserable; we would destroy ourselves, but he would have us saved, and deviseth means by his grace to undo that by which we were undoing ourselves. The former method, by dream and vision, was to keep back the soul from the pit, ver. 18, that is, to prevent sin, that we might not fall into it. This, by sickness and the word, is to bring back the soul, to recover those that have fallen into sin, that they may not lie still and perish in it. And all that by repentance are brought back from the pit, it is that they may "be enlightened with the light of the living," that they may have present comfort and everlasting happiness. Whom God saves from sin and hell, which are darkness, he will bring to heaven, the inheritance of the saints in light; and this he aims at, this he drives at, in all his institutions, and all his dispensations. "Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest thus visit him!" This should engage us to comply with God's designs, to work with him for our own good, and not to counterwork him. And this will render those that perish for ever inexcusable, that so much was done to save them, and they would not be healed.

Secondly. He bespeaks Job's acceptance of what he had offered, and begs of him to mark it well, ver. 31. What is intended for our good challengeth our regard. And if Job will observe what is said, 1. He is welcome to make what objections he can against it; ver. 32, "If thou hast any thing to say" for thyself, in thine own vindication, "answer me;" though I am fresh, and thou art spent, I will not run thee down with words. "Speak, for I desire to justify thee," and am not as thy other friends, that desired to condemn thee. Elihu contends for truth, not, as they did, for victory. Note, Those we reprove, we should desire to justify, and be glad to see them clear themselves from the imputations they lie under, and therefore give them all possible advantage and encouragement to do it. 2. If he has nothing to say against what is said, Elihu lets him know that he has something more to say, which he desires him patiently to attend to; ver. 33, "Hold thy peace, and I will teach thee wisdom." Those that would both shew wisdom and learn wisdom must hearken and keep silence; be swift to hear and slow to speak. Job was wise and good; but those that are so may yet be wiser and better, and must therefore set themselves to improve by the means of wisdom and grace.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Elihu, it is likely, paused a while, to see if Job had anything to say against his discourse in the foregoing chapter; but he sitting silent, and it is likely intimating his desire that he would go on, he here proceeds; and, I. He bespeaks not only the audience, but the assistance of the company, ver. 2—4. II. He chargeth Job with some more indecent expressions, that had dropped from him, ver. 5—9. III. He undertakes to convince him that he had spoken amiss, by shewing very fully, 1. God's incontestable justice, ver. 10—12, 17, 19, 23. 2. His sovereign dominion, ver. 13—15. 3. His almighty power, ver. 20—24. 4. His omniscience, ver. 21, 22, 25. 5. His severity against sinners, ver. 26—28. 6. His overruling providence, ver. 29, 30. IV. He teacheth him what he should say, ver. 31, 32; and then, lastly, he leaves the matter to Job's own conscience, and concludes with a sharp reproof of him for his peevishness and discontent, ver. 33—37. And all this Job not only bore patiently, but took kindly, because he saw Elihu meant well: and whereas his other friends had accused him of that from which his own conscience acquitted him, Elihu charged him with that only for which, it is probable, his own heart, now upon the reflection, began to smite him.

FURTHERMORE Elihu answered and said,
2 Hear my words, O ye wise *men;*
And give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.
3 For the ear trieth words,
As the mouth tasteth meat.
4 Let us choose to us judgment:
Let us know among ourselves what *is* good.
5 For Job hath said, I am righteous:
And God hath taken away my judgment.
6 Should I lie against my right?
My wound *is* incurable without transgression.
7 What man *is* like Job,
Who drinketh up scorning like water?
8 Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity,
And walketh with wicked men.
9 For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing
That he should delight himself with God.

Here, First. Elihu humbly addresseth himself to the auditors, and endeavours, like an orator, to gain their good will and their favourable attention. 1. He calls them wise men, and men that had knowledge, ver. 2. It is comfortable dealing with such as understand sense. I speak as to wise men who can judge what I say, 1 *Cor.* x. 15. Elihu differed in opinion from them, and yet he calls them wise and knowing men. Peevish disputants think all fools that are not of their mind; but it is justice we owe to those who are wise, to acknowledge it, though our sentiments do not agree with theirs. 2. He appeals to their judgment, and therefore submits to their trial, ver. 3. The ear of the judicious tries words, whether what is said be true or false, right or wrong; and he that speaks must stand the test of the intelligent. As we must prove all things we hear, so we must be willing what we speak should be proved. 3. He takes them in partners with him in the examination and discussion of this matter, ver. 4. He doth not pretend to be sole dictator, nor undertake to say what is just and good, and what is not; but he is willing to join with them in searching it out, and desires a consultation. Let us agree to lay aside all animosities and feuds, all prejudices and affectation of contradiction, and all stiffness in adhering to the opinion we have once espoused, and let us choose to ourselves judgment; let us fix right principles on which to proceed, and then take right methods for finding out truth; and let us know among ourselves, by comparing notes and communicating our reasons, what is good and what is otherwise. Note, We are then likely to discern what is right, when we agree to assist one another in searching it out.

Secondly. He warmly accuseth Job for some passionate words which he had spoken, that reflected on the Divine government, appealing to the house, whether he ought not to be called to the bar, and checked for them.

1. He recites the words which Job had spoken, as near as he can remember, 1st. He had insisted upon his own innocency; "Job hath said, I am righteous," ver. 5; and when urged to confess his guilt, has stiffly maintained his plea of not guilty. "Should I lie against my right?" ver. 6. Job had spoken to this purpose, *ch.* xxvii. 6, "My righteousness I hold fast." 2nd. He had charged God with injustice in his dealings with him, that he had wronged him in afflicting him, and had not righted him: "God has taken away my judgment;" so Job had said, *ch.* xxvii. 2. 3rd. He had despaired of relief, and concluded that God could not or would not help him; "My wound is incurable," and likely to be mortal, and yet "without transgression; not for any injustice in my hand," *ch.* xvi. 16, 17. 4th. He had in effect said, that there is nothing to be got in the service of God, and that no man will be the better at last for his religion; ver. 9, "He hath said" that which gives occasion to suspect that he thinks, "it profiteth a man nothing that he shall delight himself with God." It is granted that there is a present pleasure in religion; for what is it but to delight ourselves with God? in communion with him, in concurrence with him, in walking with him as Enoch did? This is a true notion of religion, and speaks its ways to be pleasantness. And yet the advantage of it is denied, as if it were vain to serve God, *Mal.* iii. 14. This Elihu gathers as Job's opinion, by an innuendo from what he said, *ch.* ix. 22, "He destroys the perfect and the wicked," which has a truth in it, for all things come alike to all; but it was ill expressed, and gave too much occasion for this imputation, and therefore Job sat down silent under it, and attempted not his own vindication; whence Mr. Caryl well observes, that good men sometimes speak worse than they mean. And that a good man will rather bear more blame than he deserves than stand to excuse himself when he hath deserved any blame,

2. He chargeth Job very high upon it. In general, "what man is like Job?" ver. 7. Did you ever know such a man as Job, or ever hear a man talk at such an extravagant rate? He represents him, 1st. As sitting in the seat of the scornful. He "drinketh up scorning like water;" that is, he takes a great deal of liberty to reproach both God and his friends, takes a pleasure in it, and is very liberal in his reflections. Or, he is very greedy in receiving and hearkening to the scorns and contempts which others cast upon their brethren; is well pleased with them, and cries them up. Or, as some explain it, by these foolish expressions of his he makes himself the object of scorn, lays himself very open to reproach, and gives occasion to others to laugh at him; while his religion suffers by it, and the reputation of that is wounded through his side. We have need to pray that God will never leave us to ourselves, to say or do any thing which may make us a reproach to the foolish, *Ps.* xxxix. 8. 2nd. As walking in the course of the ungodly, and standing in the way of sinners. He "goes in company with the workers of iniquity," ver. 8; not that in his conversation he did associate with them, but in his opinion he did favour and countenance them, and strengthen their hands. If (as it follows, ver. 9, for the proof of this) "it profits a man nothing to delight himself in God," why should he not lay the reins in the neck of his lusts, and herd himself with the workers of iniquity? He that saith, he hath cleansed his hands in vain, doth not only offend against the generation of God's children, *Ps.* lxxiii. 13, 14, but gratifies his enemies, and saith as they say.

10 Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding:
Far be it from God, *that he should do* wickedness;
And *from* the Almighty, *that he should commit* iniquity.

11 For the work of a man shall he render unto him,
And cause every man to find according to *his* ways.
12 Yea, surely God will not do wickedly,
Neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.
13 Who hath given him a charge over the earth?
Or who hath disposed the whole world?
14 If he set his heart upon man,
If he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath;
15 All flesh shall perish together,
And man shall turn again unto dust.

The scope of Elihu's discourse is to reconcile Job to his afflictions, and to pacify his spirit under them. In order to this he had shewed, in the foregoing chapter, that God meant him no hurt in afflicting him, but intended it for his spiritual benefit. In this chapter he shews that he did him no wrong in afflicting him, nor punished him more than he deserved. If the former could not prevail to satisfy him, yet this ought to silence him. In these verses he directs his discourse to all the company; "Hearken to me ye men of understanding," ver. 10, and shew yourselves to be intelligent by assenting to this which I say. And this is that which he saith, that the righteous God never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures; but his ways are equal, ours are unequal. The truth here maintained is the justice and equity of all God's proceedings. Now observe in these verses,

First. How plainly this truth is laid down, both negatively and positively. 1. He doth wrong to none. God cannot do wickedness, nor the Almighty commit iniquity, ver. 10. It is inconsistent with the perfection of his nature, and so it is also with the purity of his will; ver. 12, "God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment." He neither can nor will do an ill thing, nor deal hardly with any man. He will never inflict the evil of punishment but where he finds the evil of sin, nor in any undue proportion; for that would be to commit iniquity, and do wickedly. If appeals be made to him, or he be to give a definitive sentence, he will have an eye to the merits of the cause, and not respect the person; for that were to pervert judgment. He will never either do any man wrong or deny any man right; but "the heavens will shortly declare his righteousness." Because he is God, and therefore is infinitely perfect and holy, he can neither do ill himself nor countenance it in others, no more than he can either die, or lie, or deny himself. Though he be almighty, yet he never useth his power, as mighty men often do, for the support of injustice. He is Shaddai, God all-sufficient, and therefore he cannot be tempted with evil, *Jas.* i. 13, to do an unrighteous thing. 2. He ministers justice to all; ver. 11, "The work of a man shall he render unto him." Good works shall be rewarded, and evil works either punished or satisfied for; so that, sooner or later, in this world or in that to come, he "will cause every man to find according to his ways." This is the standing rule of distributive justice, to give to every man according to his work, "Say to the righteous it shall be well with them; woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." If services persevered in now go unrewarded, and sins persisted in now go unpunished, yet there is a day coming when God will fully render to every man according to his works, with interest for the delay.

Secondly. How warmly it is asserted. 1. With an assurance of the truth of it; "yea, surely," ver. 12. It is a truth which none can deny, or call in question; it is what we may take for granted, and are all agreed in, that "God will not do wickedly." 2. With an abhorrence of the very thought of the contrary; ver. 10, "Far be it from God that he should do wickedness," and from us that we should imagine such a thing, that we should entertain the least suspicion of it, or say any thing that looks like charging him with it.

Thirdly. How evidently it is proved, by two arguments:

1. His independent, absolute sovereignty and dominion; ver. 13, "Who hath given him a charge over the earth," and deputed him to manage the affairs of men upon the earth? Or, who but he hath disposed the whole world of mankind? He hath the sole administration of the kingdoms of men, and has it of himself, nor is he intrusted with it by or for any other. 1st. It is certain the government is his, and he doth according to his will in all the hosts both of heaven and earth; and therefore he is not to be charged with injustice; for, "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" *Gen.* xviii. 25. How shall God either rule or judge the world, if there be or could be any unrighteousness with him? *Rom.* iii. 5, 6. He that is entitled to such an unlimited power must certainly have in himself an unspotted purity. This is also a good reason why we should acquiesce in all God's dealings with us. Shall not he that disposeth of the whole world dispose of us and our concerns? 2nd. It is as certain that he doth not derive his power from any, nor is it a dispensation that is committed to him, but his power is original and, like his being, of himself; and therefore if he were not perfectly just all the world and the affairs of it would soon be in the utmost confusion. The highest powers on earth have a God above them to whom they are accountable, because it is not far from them to do iniquity. But, therefore, God has none above him, because it is not possible he should do any thing (such is the perfection of his nature) that should need to be controlled. And if he be an absolute Sovereign, we are bound to submit to him; for there is no higher power to which we may appeal, so that the virtue is a necessity.

2. His irresistible power, ver. 14. "If he set his heart upon man," to contend with him, much more if, as some read it, he set his heart against man to ruin him, if he should deal with man either by *summa potestas*,—'mere sovereignty,' or by *summum jus*,—'strict justice,' there were no standing before him; man's spirit and breath would soon be gone, and all flesh would perish together, ver. 15. Many men's honesty is owing purely to their impotency; they do not do wrong, because they cannot support it when it is done, or it is not in their power to do it. But God is able to crush any man, easily and suddenly, and yet doth not by arbitrary power crush any man; which, therefore, must be attributed to the infinite perfection of his nature, and that is immutable. See here, 1st. What God can do with us; he can soon bring us to dust. There needs not any positive act of his omnipotence to do it; if he do but withdraw that concurrence of his providence by which we live, if he gather unto himself that spirit and breath which was from his hand at first, and is still in his hand, we expire immediately, like an animal in an air pump when the air is exhausted. 2nd. What he may do with us without doing us any wrong. He may recall the being he gave, of which we are but tenants at will, and which also we have forfeited; and therefore as long as that is continued, of his mere favour, we have no reason to cry out of wrong, whatever other comforts are removed.

16 If now *thou hast* understanding, hear this:
Hearken to the voice of my words.
17 Shall even he that hateth right govern?
And wilt thou condemn him that is most just?
18 *Is it fit* to say to a king, *Thou art* wicked?
And to princes, *Ye are* ungodly? [princes,
19 *How much less to him* that accepteth not the persons of
Nor regardeth the rich more than the poor?
For they all *are* the work of his hands.
20 In a moment shall they die, [away:
And the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass
And the mighty shall be taken away without hand.
21 For his eyes *are* upon the ways of man,
And he seeth all his goings.
22 *There is* no darkness, nor shadow of death,
Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.
23 For he will not lay upon man more *than right;*
That he should enter into judgment with God.
24 He shall break in pieces mighty men without number,
And set others in their stead.
25 Therefore he knoweth their works, [destroyed.
And he overturneth *them* in the night, so that they are
26 He striketh them as wicked men
In the open sight of others;
27 Because they turned back from him,
And would not consider any of his ways:
28 So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him,
And he heareth the cry of the afflicted.
29 When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?
And when he hideth *his* face, who then can behold him?
Whether *it be done* against a nation, or against a man
30 That the hypocrite reign not, [only:
Lest the people be ensnared.

Elihu here applies himself more directly to Job. He had spoken to the rest, ver. 10, as men of understanding. Now, speaking to Job, he puts an if upon his understanding: "If thou hast understanding, hear this," and observe it, ver. 16.

First. Hear this, that God is not to be quarrelled with for any thing that he doth. It is daring presumption to arraign and condemn God's proceedings, as Job had done by his discontents. It was, 1. As absurd as it would be to advance one to power that is a professed enemy to justice; "Shall even he that hateth right govern?" ver. 17. The righteous Lord so loveth righteousness, that, in comparison with him, even Job himself, though a perfect and upright man, might be said to hate right, and shall he govern? Shall he pretend to direct God, or correct what he doth? Shall such unrighteous creatures as we are give law to the righteous God? Or, must he take his measures from us? When we consider the corruption of our nature, and the contrariety there is in us to the eternal rule of equity, we cannot but see it an impudent, impious thing for us to prescribe to God. 2. It was as absurd as it would be to call a most righteous, innocent person to the bar, and to give judgment against him, though it appeared never so plain upon the trial that he was most just. Wilt thou condemn him that is righteous in all his ways, and cannot but be so? 3. It is more absurd and unbecoming than it would be to say to a sovereign prince, "Thou art wicked;" and to judges upon the bench, "Ye are ungodly," ver. 18. This would be looked upon as an insufferable affront to majesty, and to magistracy. No king, no prince, would bear it. In favour of government we presume it is a right sentence that is past, unless the contrary be very evident; but whatever we think, it is not fit to tell a king to his face that he is wicked: Nathan reproved David by a parable. Or, whatever a high priest or a prophet might do, it is not for an ordinary subject to make so bold with the powers that are. How absurd is it then to say so to God! To impute iniquity to him who, having no respect of persons, is in no temptation to do an unjust thing; ver. 19, "He regardeth not the rich more than the poor," and therefore it is fit he should rule, and it is not fit we should find fault with him. Note, Rich and poor stand upon the same level before God. A great man shall fare never the better, nor find any favour, for his wealth and greatness; nor shall a poor man fare ever the worse for his poverty, nor an honest cause be starved. Job, now he was poor, should have as much favour with God, and be as much regarded by him as when he was rich; for they all are the work of his hands. Their persons are so; the poor are made by the same hand, and of the same mould with the rich. Their conditions are so; the poor were made poor by the Divine providence, as well as the rich made rich; and therefore the poor shall fare never the worse for that which is their lot, not their fault.

Secondly. Hear this, That God is to be acknowledged and submitted to in all that he doth. Divers considerations Elihu here suggests to Job, to beget in him great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him to knock under, and proceed no farther in his quarrel with him.

1. God is almighty, and able to deal with the strongest of men, when he enters into judgment with them, ver. 20; even the people, the body of a nation, though never so numerous, shall be troubled, unhinged, and put into disorder, when God pleaseth. Even the mighty man, the prince, though never so honourable, never so formidable among men, yet, if God speak the word, shall be taken away, out of his throne, nay, out of the land of the living; they shall die, they shall pass away. What cannot he do that has all the powers of death at his command? Observe the suddenness of this destruction: "In a moment shall they die." It is not a work of time with God to bring down his proud enemies, but when he pleaseth it is soon done. Nor is he bound to give them warning, no, not an hour's warning: "This night thy soul shall be required." Observe the season of it; they shall be troubled at midnight, when they are secure and

careless, and unable to help themselves, as the Egyptians when their firstborn were slain. And this is the immediate work of God, they are taken away without hand, insensibly, by secret judgments. God can himself humble the greatest tyrant, without the assistance or agency of any man. Whatever hand he sometimes useth in the accomplishing of his purposes, he needs none, but can do it without hand. Nor is it one single mighty man only that he can thus overpower, but even hosts of them; ver. 24, "He shall break in pieces mighty men without number;" for no combined power can stand it out against Omnipotence. Yet when God destroys tyranny, he doth not design anarchy; if those are brought down that ruled ill, it doth not therefore follow that people must have no rulers; for when he breaks mighty men, yet he sets others in their stead, that will rule better; or, if they do not, he overturns them also in the night, or in a night, so that they are destroyed, ver. 25; witness Belshazzar. Or, if he designs them space to repent, he doth not presently destroy them, but "he strikes them as wicked men," ver. 26; some humbling, mortifying judgments are brought upon them. These wicked rulers are stricken as other wicked men; as surely, as sorely stricken in their bodies, estates, or families, and this for warning to their neighbours. The stroke is given *in terrorem*,—'as an alarm to others,' and therefore is given "in the open sight of others," that they also may see and fear, and tremble before the justice of God. If kings stand not before him, how shall we stand?

2. God is omniscient, and can discover that which is most secret. As the strongest cannot oppose his arm, so the most subtle cannot escape his eye; and therefore if some are punished either more or less than we think they should be, instead of quarrelling with God, it becomes us to ascribe it to some secret cause known to God only. For, 1st. Every thing is open before him, ver. 22. "His eyes are upon the ways of man." Not only they are within reach of his eye, so that he can see them, but his eye is upon them, so that he actually observes and inspects them. He sees us all, and sees all our goings; go whither we will, we are under his eye; all our actions, good and evil, are regarded and recorded, and reserved to be brought into judgment when the books shall be opened. 2nd. Nothing is or can be concealed from him; ver. 22, "There is no darkness nor shadow of death," so close, so thick, so solitary, so remote from light or sight, as that in it the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from the discovering eye and avenging hand of the righteous God. Observe here, *First*. The workers of iniquity would hide themselves, if they could, from the eye of the world for shame, (and that perhaps they may do,) and from the eye of God for fear, as Adam among the trees of the garden. The day is coming when mighty men, and chief captains, will call to the rocks and mountains to hide them. *Secondly*. They would gladly be hid even by the shadow of death, be hid in the grave, and lie for ever there, rather than appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. *Thirdly*. It is in vain to think of flying from God's justice, or absconding when his wrath is in pursuit of us. The workers of iniquity may find ways and means to hide themselves from men, but not from God. "He knows their works," ver. 25, both what they do, and what they design.

3. God is righteous, and in all his proceedings goes according to the rules of equity. Even then when he is overturning mighty men, and breaking them in pieces, yet "he will not lay upon man more than right," ver. 23. As he will not punish the innocent, so he will not exact of those that are guilty more than their iniquities deserve; and of the proportion between the sin and the punishment Infinite Wisdom shall be the judge. He will not give any man cause to complain that he deals hardly with him, nor shall any man enter into judgment with God, or bring an action against him. If he do, God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth. Therefore Job was very much to be blamed for his complaints of God, and is here well advised to let fall his action, for he would certainly be cast, or nonsuited. 'It is not for man ever to purpose to enter into judgment with the Omnipotent;' so some read the whole verse. Job had often wished to plead his cause before God. To what purpose? saith Elihu; the judgment already given concerning thee will certainly be affirmed; no errors can be found in it, nor any exceptions taken to it, but after all it must rest as it is. All is well that God doth, and will be found so.

To prove that God when he destroys the mighty men, and strikes them as wicked men, yet doth not lay upon them more than right, he shews what their wickedness was, ver. 27, 28; and let any compare that with their punishment, and then judge whether they did not deserve it. In short, these unjust judges whom God will justly judge, neither feared God, nor regarded man, *Lu.* xviii. 2. 1st. They were rebels to God. They turned back from him, cast off the fear of him, and abandoned the very thoughts of him; for they would not consider any of his ways, took no heed either to his precepts or to his providences, but lived without God in the world. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, they turn back from God; and it is because they do not consider,—not because they cannot, but they will not. From inconsideration comes impiety, and from thence all immorality. 2nd. They were tyrants to all mankind, ver. 28. They will not call upon God for themselves; but they "cause the cry of the poor to come to him," and that cry is against them. They are injurious and oppressive to the poor, wrong them, crush them, impoverish them yet more, and add affliction to the afflicted, who cry unto God, make their complaint to him, and he hears them, and pleads their cause. Their case is bad that have the prayers and tears of the poor against them, for the cry of the oppressed will sooner or later draw down vengeance on the heads of the oppressors, and no one can say that this is more than right, *Ex.* xxii. 23.

4. God hath an uncontrollable dominion in all the affairs of the children of men, and so guides and governs whatever concerns both communities and particular persons, that, as what he designs cannot be defeated, so what he doth cannot be changed, ver. 29. Observe, 1st. The frowns of all the world cannot trouble those whom God quiets with his smiles. "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" Which is a challenge to all the powers of hell and earth to disquiet those to whom God speaks peace, and for whom he creates it. If God give outward peace to a nation, he can secure what he gives, and disable the enemies of it to give it any disturbance. If God give inward peace to a man only, that quietness and everlasting assurance which is the effect of righteousness, neither the accusations of Satan nor the afflictions of this present time, no, nor the arrests of death itself, can give trouble. What can make them uneasy whose souls dwell at ease in God? see *Phil.* iv. 7. 2nd. The smiles of all the world cannot quiet those whom God troubles with his frowns. For if he in displeasure hide his face, and withhold the comfort of his favour, who then can behold him! that is, who can behold a displeased God so as to bear up under his wrath, or turn it away? Who can make him shew his face when he resolves to hide it, or see through the clouds and darkness which are round about him? Or, who can behold a disquieted sinner so as to give him effectual relief? Who can stand a friend to him to whom God is an enemy? None can relieve the distresses of the outward condition without God. "If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I?" 2 *Kin.* vi. 27. Nor can any relieve the distresses of the mind against God and his terrors. If he impress the sense of his wrath upon a guilty conscience, all the comforts the creature can administer are ineffectual; "as vinegar upon nitre, so are songs to a heavy heart." The irresistibleness of God's operations must be acknowledged in his dealings both with communities and with particular persons. What he doth cannot be controlled, whether it be done against a nation in its public capacity, or against a man only in his private affairs. The same Providence that governs mighty kingdoms, presides in the concerns of the meanest individual; and neither the strength of a whole nation can resist his power, nor the smallness of a single person evade his cognizance; but what he doth shall be done effectually and victoriously.

5. God is wise, and careful of the public welfare, and therefore provides "that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared," ver. 30. See here, 1st. The pride of hypocrites. They aim to reign; the praise of men and power in the world is their reward; it is what they aim at. 2nd. The policy of tyrants. When they aim to set up themselves, they sometimes make use of religion as a cloak and cover for their ambition, and by their hypocrisy come to reign. 3rd. The danger the people are in when hypocrites reign. They are likely to be ensnared in sin or trouble, or both. Power in the hands of dissemblers is often destructive to the rights and liberties of a people, which they are more easily wheedled out of than forced out of. And a great deal of mischief has been done likewise to the power of godliness under the pretence of a form of godliness. 4th. The care which Divine providence takes of the people to prevent this danger, that the hypocrite reign not; either that he do not reign at all or that he do not reign long. If God has mercy in store for a people, he will either prevent the rise, or hasten the ruin of hypocritical rulers.

31 Surely it is meet to be said unto God,
I have borne *chastisement*, I will not offend *any more:*
32 *That which* I see not teach thou me:
If I have done iniquity, I will do no more. [it,
33 *Should it be* according to thy mind? he will recompense
Whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I:
Therefore speak what thou knowest.
34 Let men of understanding tell me,
And let a wise man hearken unto me.
35 Job hath spoken without knowledge,
And his words *were* without wisdom.
36 My desire *is that* Job may be tried unto the end
Because of *his* answers for wicked men.
37 For he addeth rebellion unto his sin,
He clappeth *his hands* among us,
And multiplieth his words against God.

In these verses,

First. Elihu instructs Job what he should say under his affliction, ver. 31, 32. Having reproved him for his peevish passionate words, here he puts better words into his mouth. When we reprove for what is amiss, we must direct to what is good. Those are reproofs of instruction, *Pr.* vi. 23. He doth not impose it upon Job to use these words, but recommends it to him, as that which was meet to be said. And in general he would have him repent of his ill carriage and indecent expressions under his affliction. Job's other friends would have had him own himself an ill man, and by overdoing they undid. Elihu will oblige him only to own that he had in the management of this controversy spoken unadvisedly with his lips. Let us remember this in giving reproofs, and not make the matter worse than it is; for the stretching of the crime may defeat the prosecution. Elihu drives the right nail, and speeds accordingly. He directs Job,

1. To humble himself before God for his sins, and to accept the punishment of them. "I have borne chastisement." What I suffer comes justly upon me, and therefore I will bear it, and not only justify God in it, but acknowledge his goodness. Many are chastised that do not bear chastisement, do not bear it well, and so in effect do not bear it at all. Penitents, if sincere, will take all well that God doth, and will bear chastisement as a medicinal operation intended for good.

2. To pray to God to discover his sins to him; ver. 32, "That which I see not teach thou me." Lord, upon the review, I find much amiss in me, and much done amiss by me, but I have reason to fear there is much more that I am not aware of; greater abominations which through ignorance, mistake, and partiality to myself, I do not yet see. Lord, give me to see it, awaken my conscience to do its office faithfully. A good man is willing to know the worst by himself, and particularly under affliction, desires to be told wherefore God contends with him, and what God designs in correcting him.

3. To promise reformation; ver. 31, "I will not offend any more;" and, ver. 32, "If I have done iniquity," (or seeing I have,) "I will do no more;" whatever thou shalt discover to me to have been amiss, by thy grace I will amend it for the future. This implies a confession that we have offended, true remorse and godly sorrow for the offence, and an humble compliance with God's design in afflicting us, which is to part between us and our sins. The penitent here completes his repentance; for it is not enough to be sorry for our sins, but we must go and sin no more, and, as here, bind ourselves with the bond of a fixed resolution never more to return to folly. This is meet to be said in a stedfast purpose, and meet to be said to God in a solemn promise and vow.

Secondly. He reasons with him concerning his discontent and uneasiness under his affliction, ver. 33. We are ready to think every thing that concerns us should be just as we would have it; but Elihu here shews, 1. That it is absurd and unreasonable to expect it; "Should it be according to thy mind?" No, what reason for that? Elihu here speaks with a great deference to the Divine will and wisdom, and a satisfaction therein: It is highly fit every thing should be according to God's mind; and with a just disdain of the pretensions of those that are proud, and would be their own carvers, "Should it be according to thy mind?" Must we always have the good we have a mind to enjoy? We should then wrongfully encroach upon others, and foolishly ensnare ourselves. Must we never be afflicted, because we have no mind to it? Is it fit that sinners should feel no smart, that scholars should be under no discipline? or, if we must be afflicted, is it fit we should choose what rod we will be beaten with? No, it is fit every thing should be according to God's mind, and not ours, for he is the Creator, and we are creatures; he is infinitely wise and knowing, we are foolish and short-sighted; he is in one mind, we are in many. 2. That it is vain, and to no purpose to expect it. "He will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose." God will take his own way, fulfil his own counsel, and recompense according to the sentence of his own

justice, whether thou art pleased or displeased, he will neither ask thy leave nor ask thy advice, but what he pleaseth that he will do; it is therefore thy wisdom to be easy, and make a virtue of necessity. Make the best of that which is, because it is out of thy power to make it otherwise. If thou pretend to choose and refuse, that is, to prescribe to God, and except against what he doth, so will not I,—I will acquiesce in all he doth; and, therefore, speak what thou knowest, say what thou wilt do, whether thou wilt oppose or submit. The matter lies plain before thee; be at a point; thou art in God's hand, not in mine.

Thirdly. He appeals to all intelligent, indifferent persons whether there was not a great deal of sin and folly in that which Job said. 1. He would have the matter thoroughly examined and brought to an issue; ver. 36, "My desire is that Job may be tried unto the end." If any will undertake to justify what he has said, let them do it; if not, let us all agree to bear our testimony against it. Many understand it of his trial by afflictions; Let his troubles be continued till he be thoroughly humbled, and his proud spirit brought down, till he be made to see his error, and to retract what he hath so presumptuously said against God and his providence. Let the trial be continued till the end be obtained. 2. He appeals both to God and man, and desires the judgment of both upon it. 1st. Some read verse 36 as an appeal to God: 'O my Father, let Job be tried.' So the margin of our Bibles, for the same word signifies 'my desire' and 'my father;' and some suppose, he lifted up his eyes when he said this, meaning, 'O Father which art in heaven, let Job be tried till he be subdued.' When we are praying for the benefit of afflictions either to ourselves or others, we must eye God as a father, because they are fatherly corrections and a part of our filial education, *Heb.* xii. 7. 2nd. He appeals to the bystanders; ver. 34, "Let men of understanding tell me," whether they can put any more favourable construction upon Job's words than I have put, and whether he has not spoken very ill, and ought not to cry peccavi. In what Job had said, he thought it appeared, *First.* That he did not rightly understand himself, but had talked foolishly, ver. 35. He cannot say that Job is without knowledge and wisdom, but in this matter he "hath spoken without knowledge," and whatever his heart is, his words were without prudence. What he said to his wife may be retorted upon himself, (he speaks as one of the foolish men speak, and for the same reason,) Shall we not receive evil as well as good at God's hand? *ch.* ii. 10. Sometimes we need and deserve those reproofs ourselves which we have given to others. Those that reproach God's wisdom really reproach their own. *Secondly.* That he had not a due regard to God, but had talked wickedly. If what he has said be tried to the end, that is, if one would put it to the utmost stretch, and make the worst of it, it would be found, 1*st.* That he had taken part with God's enemies. His answers were for wicked men, that is, what he had said tended to strengthen the hands and harden the hearts of wicked people in their wickedness, in having carried the matter of their prosperity much farther than he needed. Let wicked men, like Baal, plead for themselves if they will; but far be it from us that we should answer for them, or say any thing in favour of them. 2*nd.* That he had insulted God's friends, and hectored over them. "He clappeth his hands among us," and, if he be not thoroughly tried and humbled, will grow yet more insolent and imperious, as if he had gotten the day, and silenced us all. To speak ill is bad enough, but to clap our hands and triumph in it when we have done, as if error and passion had won the victory, is much worse. 3*rd.* That he spoke against God himself, and by standing to what he had said, "added rebellion to his sin." To speak though but one word against God, by whom we speak and for whom we ought to speak, is a great sin; what is it then to multiply words against him, as if we would out-talk him? what is it to repeat them instead of unsaying them? Those that have sinned, and when they are called to repent, thus go on frowardly, add rebellion to their sin, and make it exceeding sinful; *errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo,*—'I may fall into error, but I will not plunge into heresy.'

CHAPTER XXXV.

Job being still silent, Elihu follows his blow, and here, a third time, undertakes to shew him that he had spoken amiss, and ought to recant. Three ill sayings he here chargeth him with, and returns answer to them distinctly: I. He had represented religion as an indifferent, unprofitable thing, which God enjoins for his own sake, not for ours, the contrary to which Elihu makes out, ver. 1—8. II. He had complained of God as deaf to the cries of the oppressed, against which imputation Elihu here justifies God, ver. 9—13. III. He had despaired of the return of God's favour to him, because it was so long deferred: but Elihu shews him the true cause of the delay, ver. 14—16.

ELIHU spake moreover, and said,
2 Thinkest thou this to be right, *that* thou saidst,
My righteousness *is* more than God's?
3 For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee?
And, What profit shall I have, *if I be cleansed* from my [sin?
4 I will answer thee,
And thy companions with thee.
5 Look unto the heavens, and see;
And behold the clouds *which* are higher than thou.
6 If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him?
Or *if* thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?
7 If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?
Or what receiveth he of thine hand?
8 Thy wickedness *may hurt* a man as thou *art*,
And thy righteousness *may profit* the son of man.

We have here,

First. The bad words which Elihu chargeth upon Job, ver. 2, 3. To evince the badness of them he appeals to himself and his own sober thoughts in the reflection; "Thinkest thou this to be right?" This intimates, 1. Elihu's confidence that the reproof he now gave was just, for he could refer the judgment of it even to Job himself. They that have truth and equity on their side sooner or later will have every man's conscience on their side. 2. His good opinion of Job, that he thought better than he spoke, and that, though he had spoken amiss, yet when he perceived his mistake, he would not stand to it. What we have said in our haste that was not right, it becomes us to own that our second thoughts convince us it was wrong. Two things Elihu here reproves Job for:

1st. For justifying himself more than God, which was the thing that first provoked him, *ch.* xxxii. 2. Thou hast in effect said, "My righteousness is more than God's," that is, I have done more for God than ever he did for me; so that when the accounts are balanced he will be brought in debtor to me. As if Job thought his services had been paid less than they deserved, and his sins punished more than they deserved, which is a most unjust and wicked thought for any man to harbour, and especially to utter. When Job insisted so much upon his own integrity, and the severity of God's dealings with him, he did in effect say, "My righteousness is more than God's;" whereas, though we be never so good, and our afflictions never so great, we are chargeable with unrighteousness, and God is not.

2nd. For disowning the benefits and advantages of religion, because he suffers these things. "What profit shall I have, if I be cleansed from my sin?" ver. 3. This is gathered from *ch.* ix. 30, 31, "Though I make my hands never so clean," what the nearer am I? "Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch;" and *ch.* x. 15, "If I be wicked, woe to me;" but if I be righteous, it is all one. The psalmist, when he compared his own afflictions with the prosperity of the wicked, was tempted to say, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain," *Ps.* lxxiii. 13; and, if Job said so, he did in effect say, "My righteousness is more than God's," ver. 2; for if he got nothing by his religion, God was more beholden to him than he was to God; but, though there might be some colour for it, yet it was not fair to charge these words upon Job when he himself had made them the wicked words of prospering sinners; *ch.* xxi. 15, "What profit shall we have if we pray to him?" and had immediately disclaimed them; ver. 16, "The counsel of the wicked is far from me." It is not a fair way of disputing to charge men with those consequences of their opinions which they expressly renounce.

Secondly. The good answer which Elihu gives to this; ver. 4, "I will" undertake to "answer thee, and thy companions with thee;" that is, all those that approve thy sayings, and are ready to justify thee in them, and all others that say as thou sayest; I have that to offer which will silence them all. To do this he has recourse to his old maxim; *ch.* xxxiii. 12, "That God is greater than man." That is a truth which, if duly improved, will serve many good purposes; and this particularly, to prove that God is debtor to no man. The greatest of men may be a debtor to the meanest, but such is the infinite disproportion between God and man, that the great God cannot possibly receive any benefit by man; and therefore cannot be supposed to lie under any obligation to man, for, if he be obliged by his purpose and promise, it is only to himself. That is a challenge which no man can take up; *Rom.* xi. 35, "Who hath first given to God," let him prove it, "and it shall be recompensed to him again." Why should we demand it as a just debt to gain by our religion, as Job seemed to do, when the God we serve doth not gain by it?

1. Elihu needs not prove that God is above man. It is agreed by all, but he endeavours to affect Job and us with it by an ocular demonstration of the height of the heavens and the clouds, ver. 5. They are far above us, and God is far above them, how much then is he set out of the reach either of our sins or of our services! "Look unto the heavens, and behold the clouds." God made man 'to look upwards,'—*cælumque tueri jussit.* Idolaters looked up to heaven, and worshipped the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; but we must look up to heaven, and worship the Lord of those hosts. They are higher than we, but God is infinitely above them. His glory is above the heavens, *Ps.* viii. 1; and the knowledge of him higher than heaven, *ch.* xi. 8.

2. But from thence he infers that God is not affected, either one way or other, by any thing that we do.

1st. He owns that men may be bettered or damaged by what we do; ver. 8, "Thy wickedness" perhaps "may hurt a man as thou art," may occasion him trouble in his outward concerns; a wicked man may wound, or rob, or slander his neighbour, or may draw him into sin, and so prejudice his soul. Thy righteousness, thy justice, thy charity, thy wisdom, thy piety, may perhaps profit the son of man; our goodness extends to the saints that are in the earth, *Ps.* xvi. 3. To men like ourselves we are in a capacity either of doing injury, or of shewing kindness; and in both these the sovereign Lord and Judge of all will interest himself, will reward those that do good, and punish those that do hurt to their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects. But,

2nd. He utterly denies that God can really be either prejudiced or advantaged by what any, even the greatest of all the men of the East, do or can do.

First. The sins of the worst sinners are no damage to him; ver. 6, "If thou sinnest;" wilfully, and of malice prepense, and designedly against him, with a high hand; nay, "if thy transgressions be multiplied," and the acts of sin be never so often repeated, yet "what dost thou against him?" This is a challenge to the carnal mind, and defies the most daring sinner to do his worst. It speaks much of the greatness and glory of God, that it is not in the power of his worst enemies to do him any real prejudice. Sin is said to be against God, because so the sinner intends it, and so he takes it, and it is an injury to his honour, yet it cannot do any thing against him. The malice of sinners is impotent malice; it cannot destroy his being or perfections, cannot dethrone him from his power and dominion, cannot diminish his wealth and possessions, cannot disturb his peace and repose, cannot defeat his counsels and designs, nor can it derogate from his essential glory. Job therefore did ill to say, "What profit is it that I am cleansed from my sin?" God was no gainer by his reformation, and then who should gain if he himself did not?

Secondly. The services of the best saints are no profit to him; ver. 7, "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him?" He needs not our service; or, if he did want to have the work done, he has better hands than ours at command. Our religion brings no accession at all to his felicity. He is so far from being beholden to us, that we are beholden to him for making us righteous and accepting our righteousness; and therefore, we can demand nothing from him, nor have any reason to complain if we have not what we expect, but be thankful that we have better than we deserve.

9 By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make *the oppressed* to cry:
They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty.
10 But none saith, Where *is* God my maker,
Who giveth songs in the night;
11 Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth,
And maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?
12 There they cry, but none giveth answer,
Because of the pride of evil men.
13 Surely God will not hear vanity,
Neither will the Almighty regard it.

Elihu here returns answer to another word that Job had said, which he

thought reflected much upon the justice and goodness of God, and therefore ought not to pass without a remark. Observe,

First. What it was that Job complained of. It was this; that God did not regard the cries of the oppressed against their oppressors; ver. 9, "By reason of the multitude of oppressions," the many hardships which proud tyrants put upon poor people, and the barbarous usage they give them, they make the oppressed to cry, but to no purpose, God doth not appear to right them. "They cry out," they cry on still "by reason of the arm of the mighty," which lies heavy upon them. This seems to refer to those words of Job, *ch.* xxiv. 12, "Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out" against the oppressors, "yet God layeth not folly to them," doth not reckon with them for it. This is a thing that Job knows not what to make of, nor how to reconcile to the justice of God and his government.

Is there a righteous God, and can it be,
He should so slowly hear, so slowly see?

Secondly. How Elihu solves the difficulty. If the cries of the oppressed be not heard, the fault is not in God; he is ready to hear and help them, but the fault is in themselves. "They ask and have not," but it is "because they ask amiss," *Jas.* iv. 3. "They cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty;" but it is a complaining cry, a wailing cry, not a penitent praying cry; the cry of nature and passion, not of grace: see *Hos.* vii. 14, "They have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled upon their beds;" and how can we expect then that they should be answered and relieved?

1. They do not inquire after God, nor seek to acquaint themselves with him under their affliction; ver. 10, "But none saith, Where is God my maker?" Afflictions are sent to direct and quicken us to inquire early after God, *Ps.* lxxviii. 34. But many that groan under great oppressions never mind God, nor take notice of his hand in their troubles; if they did, they would bear their troubles more patiently, and be more bettered by them. Of the many that are afflicted and oppressed few get the good they might get by their affliction. It should drive them to God, but how seldom doth it so. It is a piteous thing to see so little religion among the poor and miserable part of mankind. Every one complains of his troubles; "but none saith, Where is God my Maker?" that is, none repent of their sins, none return to him that smiteth them, none seek the face and favour of God, and that comfort in him which would balance their outward afflictions. They are wholly taken up with the calamitousness of their condition, as if that would excuse them in living without God in the world which should engage them to cleave the more closely to him. Observe, 1st. God is our Maker, the Author of our being, and under that notion it concerns us to regard and remember him, *Eccl.* xii. 1. 'God my Makers,' in the plural number; which some think is, if not an indication, yet an intimation of the trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead. "Let us make man." 2nd. It is our duty, therefore, to inquire after him. Where is he, that we may pay our homage to him, may own our dependence upon him, and obligations to him? Where is he, that we may apply ourselves to him for maintenance and protection, may receive law from him, and may seek our happiness in his favour, from whose power we received our being? 3rd. It is to be lamented that he is so little inquired after by the children of men. All are asking where is mirth, and where is wealth, and where is a good bargain, but none ask, "Where is God my maker?"

2. They do not take notice of the mercies they enjoy in and under their afflictions, nor are thankful for them, and therefore cannot expect that God should deliver them out of their afflictions. 1st. He provides for our inward comfort and joy under our outward troubles; and we ought to make use of that, and wait his time for the removal of our troubles. He "giveth songs in the night;" that is, when our condition is never so dark, and sad, and melancholy, there is that in God, in his providence and promise, which is sufficient not only to support us, but to fill us with joy and consolation, and enable us in every thing to give thanks, and even to rejoice in tribulation. When we only pore upon the afflictions we are under, and neglect the consolations of God which are treasured up for us, it is just with God to reject our prayers. 2nd. He preserves to us the use of our reason and understanding; ver. 11, "Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth," that is, who has endued us with more noble powers and faculties than they are endued with, and hath made us capable of more excellent enjoyments and employments, here and for ever. Now this comes in here, *First.* As that which furnisheth us with matter for thanksgiving, even under the heaviest burthen of affliction. Whatever we are deprived of, we have our immortal souls, those jewels, more worth than all the world, continued to us, and even those that kill the body cannot hurt them. And if our affliction prevail not to disturb the exercise of their faculties, but we enjoy the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences, we have a great deal of reason to be thankful, how pressing soever our calamities otherwise are. *Secondly.* As a reason why we should under our afflictions inquire after God our Maker, and seek unto him. This is the greatest excellency of reason, that it makes us capable of religion; and it is in that especially that we are taught more than the beasts and the fowls. They have wonderful instincts and sagacities in seeking out their food, their physic, their shelter; but none of them are capable of inquiring, "Where is God my maker?" Something like logic, and philosophy, and politics, have been observed among the brute creatures, but never any thing of divinity or religion. These are peculiar to man. If therefore "the oppressed" only "cry by reason of the arm of the mighty," and do not look up to God, they do no more than the brutes, who complain when they are hurt, and forget that instruction and wisdom by which they are advanced so far above them. God relieves the brute creatures because they cry to him according to the best of their capacity, *Ps.* civ. 21; *ch.* xxxviii. 41. But what reason have men to expect relief, who are capable of inquiring after God as their Maker, and yet cry to him no otherwise than as brutes do?

3. They are proud and unhumbled under their afflictions, which were sent to mortify them, and to hide pride from them; ver. 12, "There they cry," there they lie exclaiming against their oppressors, and filling the ears of all about them with their complaints, not sparing to reflect upon God himself and his providence; "but none giveth answer." God doth not work deliverance for them, and perhaps men do not much regard them, and why so? It is "because of the pride of evil men." They are evil men; they regard iniquity in their hearts, and therefore God will not hear their prayers, *Ps.* lxvi. 18; *Isa.* i. 11. God heareth not such sinners. They have, it may be, brought themselves into trouble by their own wickedness; they are the devil's poor, and then who can pity them? Yet this is not all, they are proud still; therefore they do not seek unto God, *Ps.* x. 4. Or, if they do cry unto him, therefore he doth not give answer, for he hears only the desire of the humble, *Ps.* x. 17; and delivers those by his providence whom he hath first by his grace prepared and made fit for deliverance, and that we are not, if under humbling afflictions our hearts remain unhumbled, and pride unmortified. The case is plain then, if we cry to God for the removal of the oppression and affliction we are under, and it is not removed, the reason is, not because the Lord's hand is shortened, or his ear heavy, but because the affliction has not done its work; we are not sufficiently humbled, and therefore must thank ourselves that it is continued.

4. They are not sincere and upright and inward with God in their supplications to him, and therefore he doth not hear and answer them; ver. 13, "God will not hear vanity," that is, the hypocritical prayer, which is a vain prayer, coming out of feigned lips. It is a vanity to think that God should hear it, who searcheth the heart, and requires truth in the inward part.

14 Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him,
Yet judgment *is* before him;
Therefore trust thou in him. [anger;
15 But now, because *it is* not *so*, he hath visited in his
Yet he knoweth *it* not in great extremity:
16 Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain;
He multiplieth words without knowledge.

Here is, First. Another ill word for which Elihu reproves Job; ver. 14, "Thou sayest thou shalt not see him," that is, 1. Thou complainest that thou dost not understand the meaning of his severe dealings with thee, nor discern the drift and design of them, *ch.* xxiii. 8, 9. And, 2. Thou despairest of seeing his gracious returns to thee, of seeing better days again, and art ready to give up all for gone, as Hezekiah, *Isa.* xxxviii. 11, "I shall not see the Lord." As when we are in prosperity we are ready to think our mountain shall never be brought low, so when we are in adversity we are ready to think our valley will never be filled; but in both to conclude, that to-morrow must be as this day, which is as absurd as to think that the weather, when it is either fair or foul, will be always so, that the flowing tide will always flow, or the ebbing tide will always ebb.

Secondly. The answer which Elihu gives to this despairing word that Job had said, which is this:

1. That when he looked up to God he had no just reason to speak thus despairingly: for "judgment is before him," that is, he knows what he has to do, and will do all in infinite wisdom and justice. He has the entire plan and model of providence before him, and knows what he will do, which we do not, and therefore understand not what he doth. There is a day of judgment before him, when all the seeming disorders of providence will be set to rights, and the dark chapters of it will be expounded. Then thou shalt see the full meaning of these dark events, and the final period of these dismal events; then thou shalt see his face with joy; "therefore trust in him," depend upon him, wait for him, and believe that the issue will be good at last. When we consider that God is infinitely wise, and righteous, and faithful, and that he is a God of judgment, *Isa.* xxx. 18, we shall see no reason to despair of relief from him, but all the reason in the world to hope in him, that it will come in due time, in the best time.

2. That if he had not yet seen an end of his troubles, the reason was because he did not thus trust in God, and wait for him; ver. 15, "Because it is not so," because thou dost not thus trust in him, therefore the affliction which came at first from love has now displeasure mixed with it. Now God hath visited thee in his anger, taking it very ill that thou canst not find in thy heart to trust him, but harbourest such hard misgiving thoughts of him. If there be any mixtures of Divine wrath in our afflictions, we may thank ourselves, it is because we do not carry ourselves aright under them; we quarrel with God, are fretful and impatient, and distrustful of the Divine providence. This was Job's case: "The foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord," *Pr.* xix. 3; yet Elihu thinks that Job, being in great extremity, did not know and consider that as he should, that it is his own fault that he is not yet delivered.

He concludes therefore that "Job opens his mouth in vain," ver. 16; namely, in complaining of his grievances, and crying for redress, or in justifying himself, and clearing up his own innocency. It is all in vain, because he doth not trust in God, and wait for him, and had not a due regard to him in his afflictions. He had said a great deal, had multiplied words, but all without knowledge; all to no purpose, because he did not encourage himself in God, and humble himself before him. It is in vain for us either to appeal to God or to acquit ourselves, if we do not study to answer the end for which affliction is sent; and in vain to pray for relief, if we do not trust in God, for let not that man that distrusts God think that he shall receive any thing from him, *Jas.* i. 7. Or this may refer to all that Job had said. Having shewed the absurdity of some passages in his discourse, he concludes there were many other passages that were in like manner the fruits of his ignorance and mistake. He did not, as his other friends, condemn him for a hypocrite, but chargeth him only with Moses' sin, speaking unadvisedly with his lips, when his spirit was provoked. And when at any time we do so—and who is there that offends not in word?—it is a mercy to be told of it, and we must take it patiently and kindly, as Job did, not repeating but recanting what we have said amiss.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Elihu having largely reproved Job for some of his unadvised speeches, which Job had nothing to say in the vindication of, here comes more generally to set him to rights, in his notions of God's dealings with him. His other friends had stood to it that because he was a wicked man therefore his afflictions were so great and so long; Elihu saith, No, the affliction was sent for his trial, and therefore it was lengthened out because Job was not as yet thoroughly humbled under it, nor had duly accommodated himself to it; and many reasons he urgeth, taken from the wisdom and righteousness of God, his care of his people, and especially his greatness and almighty power, with which, in this and the following chapter, he persuades him to submit to the hand of God. Here we have, I. His preface, ver. 2—4. II. The account he gives of the methods of God's providence towards the children of men, according as they carry themselves, ver. 5—15. III. The fair warning and good counsel he gives to Job thereupon, ver. 16—21. IV. His demonstration of God's sovereignty and omnipotence, which he gives instance of in the operations of common providence, and which is a reason why we should all submit to him, in his dealings with us, ver. 22—33; this he prosecutes, and enlarges upon in the following chapter.

ELIHU also proceeded, and said,
2 Suffer me a little, and I will shew thee
That *I have* yet to speak on God's behalf.
3 I will fetch my knowledge from afar,
And will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
4 For truly my words *shall* not *be* false:
He that is perfect in knowledge *is* with thee.

Once more Elihu begs the patience of the auditory, and Job's particularly, for he has not said all he has to say, but will have done presently. 'Stand

about me a little;' so some read it, ver. 2. Let me have your attendance, your attention, a while longer, and I will speak but this once, as plainly and as much to the purpose as I can. To gain this he pleads,

First. That he had a good cause, a noble subject, and a very fruitful one. "I have yet to speak on God's behalf." He spoke as an advocate for God, and therefore might justly expect the ear of the court. Some indeed pretend to speak on God's behalf that really speak for themselves; but those who sincerely appear in the cause of God, and speak in behalf of his honour, his truths, his ways, his people, they shall be sure neither to want instructions,—it shall be given them in that same hour what they shall speak,—nor to lose their cause, nor to lose their fee. Nor need they fear the exhausting of their subject. They that have spoken never so much, may yet find more to be spoken on God's behalf.

Secondly. That he had something to offer that was uncommon, and out of the road of vulgar observation. "I will fetch my knowledge from afar," ver. 3; that is, we will have recourse to our first principles, and the highest notions we can make use of to serve any purpose. It is worth while to go far for this knowledge of God, to dig for it, to travel for it; it will recompense our pains, and though far-fetched is not dear-bought.

Thirdly. That his design was undeniably honest; for all he aimed at was to ascribe righteousness to his Maker; to maintain and clear this truth, that God is righteous in all his ways. In speaking of God, and speaking for him, it is good to remember that he is our Maker, to call him so, and therefore to be ready to do him, and the interests of his kingdom, the best service we can. If he be our Maker, we have our all from him, must use our all for him, and be very jealous for his honour.

Fourthly. That his management should be very just and fair; ver. 4, "My words shall not be false," neither disagreeable to the thing itself, nor to my own thoughts and apprehensions. It is truth I am contending for, and that for truth's sake, with all possible sincerity and plainness. He will make use of plain and solid arguments, and not the subtleties and niceties of the schools. He that is perfect or upright in knowledge is now reasoning with thee, and therefore let him not only have a fair hearing, but let what he saith be taken in good part as meant well. The perfection of our knowledge in this world is to be honest and sincere in searching out truth, in applying it to ourselves, and in making use of what we know for the good of others.

5 Behold, God *is* mighty, and despiseth not *any:*
He is mighty in strength *and* wisdom.
6 He preserveth not the life of the wicked:
But giveth right to the poor.
7 He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous:
But with kings *are they* on the throne; [exalted.
Yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are
8 And if *they be* bound in fetters,
And be holden in cords of affliction;
9 Then he sheweth them their work,
And their transgressions that they have exceeded.
10 He openeth also their ear to discipline,
And commandeth that they return from iniquity.
11 If they obey and serve *him,*
They shall spend their days in prosperity,
And their years in pleasures.
12 But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword,
And they shall die without knowledge.
13 But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath:
They cry not when he bindeth them.
14 They die in youth,
And their life *is* among the unclean.

Elihu being to speak on God's behalf, and particularly to ascribe righteousness to his Maker, here shews that the disposals of Divine providence are all of them not only according to the eternal counsels of his will, but according to the eternal rules of equity. God acts as a righteous governor, for,

First. He doth not think it below him to take notice of the meanest of his subjects, nor doth poverty or obscurity set any at a distance from his favour. If men are mighty, they are apt to look with a haughty disdain upon those that are not of distinction, and make no figure; but "God is mighty," infinitely so, and yet he "despiseth not any," ver. 5. He humbleth himself to take cognizance of the affairs of the meanest, to do them justice, and to shew them kindness. Job thought himself and his cause slighted, because God did not presently appear for him. No, saith Elihu, "God despiseth not any;" which is a good reason why we should honour all men. "He is mighty in strength and wisdom," and yet doth not look with contempt upon those that have but a little strength and wisdom, if they but mean honestly. Nay, therefore he despiseth not any, because his wisdom and strength are incontestably infinite, and therefore the condescensions of his grace can be no diminution to him. They that are wise and good will not look upon any with scorn and disdain.

Secondly. He gives no countenance to the greatest, if they be bad; ver. 6, "He preserveth not the life of the wicked." Though their life may be prolonged, yet not under any special care of the Divine providence, but only the common protection of it. Job had said that "the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in power," *ch.* xxi. 7. No, saith Elihu, he seldom suffers wicked men to become old. He preserveth not their life so long as they expected, nor with that comfort and satisfaction which is indeed our life; and their preservation is but a reservation for the day of wrath, *Rom.* ii. 5.

Thirdly. He is always ready to right those that are any way injured, and to plead their causes; ver. 6, he "giveth right to the poor," avengeth their quarrel upon their persecutors, and forceth them to make restitution of what they have robbed them of. If men will not right the injured poor, God will.

Fourthly. He takes a particular care for the protection of his good subjects, ver. 7. He not only looks on them, but he never looks off them; "He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous." Though they may seem sometimes neglected and forgotten, and that befalls them which looks like an oversight of Providence, yet the tender, careful eye of their heavenly Father never withdraws from them. If our eye be ever towards God in duty, his eye will be ever upon us in mercy, and when we are at the lowest will not overlook us.

1. Sometimes he prefers good people to places of trust and honour; ver. 7, "With kings are they on the throne," and every sheaf is made to bow to theirs. When righteous persons are advanced to places of honour and power, it is in mercy to them, for God's grace in them will both arm them against the temptations that attend preferment, and enable them to improve the opportunity it gives them of doing good. It is also in mercy to those over whom they are set; "When the righteous bear rule, the city rejoiceth." If the righteous be advanced, they are established. They that in honour keep a good conscience stand upon sure ground, and high places are not such slippery ground to them as they are to others. But, because it is not often that we see good men made great men in this world, this may be supposed to refer to the honour to which the righteous shall rise when their Redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; for then only they shall be exalted for ever and established for ever, then shall they all shine forth as the sun, and be made kings and priests to our God.

2. If at any time he bring them into affliction, it is for the good of their souls, ver. 8—10. Some good people are preferred to honour and power; but others are in trouble. Now observe, 1st. The distress supposed; ver. 8, "If they be bound in fetters," laid in prison as Joseph was, "or holden in the cords of" any other "affliction," suppose them confined by pain and sickness, hampered by poverty, bound in their counsels, and notwithstanding all their struggles held long in this distress. This was Job's case; he was caught and kept fast in the cords of anguish, as some read it. But observe, 2nd. The design God has in bringing his people into such distresses as these. It is for the benefit of their souls, the consideration of which should reconcile us to affliction, and make us think well of it. Three things God intends when he afflicts us: *First.* To discover past sins to us, and to bring them to our remembrance, ver. 9. Then he shews them that amiss in them which before they did not see. He discovers to them the fact of sin, "he shews them their work;" sin is our own work. If there be any good in us it is God's work; and we are concerned to see what work we have made by sin. He discovers the fault of sin, shews them their transgressions of the law of God, and withal, the sinfulness of sin; that they have exceeded, and have been beyond measure sinful. True penitents lay load upon themselves, do not extenuate, but aggravate their sins, and own that they have exceeded in them. Affliction sometimes answers the sin; however, it awakens the conscience, and puts men upon considering. *Secondly.* To dispose our hearts to receive present instructions. Then he opens their ear to discipline, ver. 10. Whom God chastens he teaches, *Ps.* xciv. 12; and the affliction makes people willing to learn, softens the wax, that it may receive the impression of the seal; yet it doth not do it of itself, but the grace of God working with and by it. It is he that opens the ear, that opens the heart, who has the key of David. *Thirdly.* To deter and draw us off from iniquity for the future. This is the errand on which the affliction is sent; it is a command to return from iniquity, to have no more to do with sin, turn from it with an aversion to it, and a resolution never to return to it any more, *Hos.* xiv. 8.

3. If the affliction do its work, and accomplish that for which it is sent, he will comfort them again according to the time that he has afflicted them; ver. 11, "If they obey and serve him," if they comply with his design, and serve his purpose in these dispensations; if, when the affliction is removed, they continue in the same good mind that they were in when they were under the smart of it, and perform the vows they made then; if they live in obedience to God's commands, particularly those which relate to his service and worship, and in all instances make conscience of their duty to him, then they shall spend their days in prosperity again, and their years in true pleasures. Religion and piety is the only sure way to prosperity and pleasure. This is a certain truth, and yet few will believe it. If we faithfully serve God, 1st. We have the promise of outward prosperity, "the promise of the life that now is," and the comforts of it as far as is for God's glory and our good; and who would desire them any farther? 2nd. We have the possession of inward pleasures, the comfort of communion with God, and a good conscience, and that great peace which they have that love God's law. If we rejoice not in the Lord always, and in hope of eternal life, it is our own fault. And what better pleasures can we spend our years in?

4. If the affliction do not do its work, let them expect the furnace to be heated seven times hotter until they are consumed; ver. 12, "If they obey not," if they are not bettered by their afflictions, are not reclaimed and reformed, "they shall perish by the sword" of God's wrath. Those whom his rod is not the cure of, his sword will be the death of; and the consuming fire will prevail if the refining fire do not; for "when God judgeth he will overcome." If Ahaz in his distress trespass yet more against the Lord, this is that king Ahaz that is marked for ruin, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 22; *Jer.* vi. 29, 30. God would have instructed them by their afflictions; but they received not instruction, would not take the hints that were given them, and therefore "they shall die without knowledge," ere they are aware, without any farther previous notices given them; or they shall die because they were without knowledge, notwithstanding the means of knowledge which they were blessed with. They that die without knowledge die without grace, and are undone for ever.

Lastly. He brings ruin upon hypocrites, the secret enemies of his kingdom, such as he described ver. 12; who, though they were numbered among the righteous whom he had spoken of before, yet did not obey him; but being children of disobedience and darkness, become children of wrath and perdition, these are the hypocrites in heart who heap up wrath, ver. 13. See the nature of hypocrisy; it lies in the heart, that is for the world and the flesh, when the outside seems to be for God and religion. Many that are saints in show, and saints in word, are hypocrites in heart. That spring is corrupt, and there is an evil treasure there. See the mischievousness of it; hypocrites heap up wrath. They are doing that every day which is provoking to God, and will be reckoned with for it altogether in the great day; "They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath," *Rom.* ii. 5; their sins are "laid up in store with God among his treasures," *Deu.* xxxii. 34; compare *Jas.* v. 3. As what goes up a vapour comes down a shower, so what goes up sin, if not repented of, will come down wrath. They think they are heaping up wealth, heaping up merits; but when the treasures are opened, it will prove they were heaping up wrath.

Observe, 1, What they do to heap up wrath. What is it that is so provoking? It is this, "They cry not when he binds them;" that is, when they are in affliction, bound with the cords of trouble, their hearts are hardened, they are stubborn and unhumbled, and will not cry to God, nor make their application to him. They are stupid and senseless, as stocks and stones, despising the chastening of the Lord. 2. What are the effects of that wrath? ver. 14, "They die in youth, and their life is among the unclean." This is the portion of hypocrites, whom Christ denounced many woes against. If they continue impenitent, 1st. They shall die a sudden death; die in youth, when death is most a surprise, and so death (that is, the consequences of it) always is to hypocrites. As they that die in youth die when they hoped to live, so hypocrites at death go to hell when they hoped to go to heaven. "When a wicked man dies, his expectation shall perish." 2nd. They shall die the second death. "Their life," after death, (for so it comes in here,) "is among the unclean;"

among the fornicators, so some; among the worst and vilest of sinners, notwithstanding their specious and plausible profession. It is 'among the Sodomites,' so the margin; those filthy wretches, who, "going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," *Jude* 7. The souls of the wicked live after death; but they live among the unclean, the unclean spirits, the devil and his angels, for ever separated from the New Jerusalem, into which no unclean thing shall enter.

15 He delivereth the poor in his affliction,
And openeth their ears in oppression.
16 Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait
Into a broad place, where *there is* no straitness;
And that which should be set on thy table *should be* full of fatness.
17 But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked:
Judgment and justice take hold *on thee.*
18 Because *there is* wrath, *beware* lest he take thee away with *his* stroke:
Then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.
19 Will he esteem thy riches?
No, not gold, nor all the forces of strength.
20 Desire not the night,
When people are cut off in their place.
21 Take heed, regard not iniquity:
For this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.
22 Behold, God exalteth by his power:
Who teacheth like him?
23 Who hath enjoined him his way?
Or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?

Elihu here comes more closely to Job; and,

First. He tells him what God would have done for him ere this, if he had been duly humbled under his affliction. We all know how ready God is to deliver "the poor in his affliction," ver. 15. He always was so; the poor in spirit, those that are of a broken and contrite heart, he looks upon with tenderness, and when they are in affliction is ready to help them. He opens their ears, and makes them to hear joy and gladness, even in their oppressions; while he doth not yet deliver them he speaks to them good words and comfortable words, for the encouragement of their faith and patience, the silencing of their fears, and the balancing of their griefs. And even so (ver. 16) would he have done to thee; if thou hadst submitted to his providence, and carried thyself well, he would have delivered and comforted thee, and we should have had none of these complaints. If thou hadst accommodated thyself to the will of God, thy liberty and plenty would have been restored to thee with advantage. 1. Thou hadst been enlarged, and not confined thus by thy sickness and disgrace; "He would have removed thee into a broad place, where is no straitness," and thou shouldest no longer have been cramped thus, and have had all thy measures broken. 2. Thou hadst been enriched, and not in this poor condition; thou shouldest have had thy table richly spread, not only with food convenient, but with the finest of the wheat (see *Deu.* xxxii. 14) and the fattest of the flesh. Note, It ought to silence us under our afflictions to consider that if we were better it would be every way better with us. If we had answered the ends of an affliction, the affliction would be removed; and deliverance would come if we were ready for it. God would have done well for us if we had carried ourselves well, *Ps.* lxxxi. 13, 14; *Isa.* xlviii. 18.

Secondly. He chargeth him with standing in his own light, and makes him the cause of the continuance of his own trouble: ver. 17, "But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked;" that is, whatever thou art really, in this thing thou hast carried thyself like a wicked man, hast spoken and done like them; thou hast gratified them and served their cause; and therefore "judgment and justice take hold on thee" as a wicked man, because thou goest in company with them, actest as if thou wert in their interest, aiding and abetting. Thou hast maintained the cause of the wicked, and such as a man's cause is such will the judgment of God be upon him. So Bishop Patrick. It is dangerous being on the wrong side. Accessaries to treason will be dealt with as principals.

Thirdly. He cautions him not to persist in his frowardness. Several good cautions he gives him to this purpose:

1. Let him not make light of Divine vengeance, nor be secure, as if he were in no danger of it; ver. 18, "Because there is wrath;" that is, because God is a righteous governor, who resents all the affronts given to his government; because he has revealed his wrath from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and because thou hast reason to fear that thou art under God's displeasure, therefore "beware lest he take thee away" suddenly "with his stroke," and be so wise as to make thy peace with him quickly, and get his anger turned away from thee. A warning to this purpose Job had given his friends, *ch.* xix. 29, "Be ye afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishment of the sword." Thus contenders are apt, with too much boldness, to bind one another over to the judgment of God, and threaten one another with his wrath. But he that keeps a good conscience needs not fear the impotent menaces of proud men. But this was a friendly caution to Job, and necessary. Even good men have need to be kept to their duty by the fear of God's wrath. Thou art a wise and good man; but beware lest he take thee away, for the wisest and best have enough in them to deserve his stroke.

2. Let him not promise himself that if God's wrath should kindle against him he could find out ways to escape the strokes of it. 1st. There is no escaping by money; no purchasing a pardon with silver or gold, and such corruptible things. Even a great ransom cannot deliver thee when God enters into judgment with thee. His justice cannot be bribed, nor any of the ministers of his justice. "Will he esteem thy riches," and take from them a commutation of the punishment? "No, not gold," ver. 19. If thou hadst as much wealth as ever thou hadst, that would not ease thee, would not secure thee from the strokes of God's wrath in the day of revelation in which riches profit not, *Pr.* xi. 4; see *Ps.* xlix. 7, 8. 2nd. No escaping by rescue. If "all the forces of strength" were at thy command, if thou couldst muster never so many servants and vassals to appear for thee, to force thee out of the hands of Divine vengeance, it were all in vain, God would not regard it; there is "none that can deliver out of his hand." 3rd. No escaping by absconding; ver. 20, "Desire not the night," which often favours the retreat of a conquered army, and covers it. Think not that thou canst so escape the righteous judgment of God, for the darkness hideth not from him, *Ps.* cxxxix. 11, 12: see *ch.* xxxiv. 22. Think not that because in the night people retire to their place, go up to their beds, and so it is easy then to escape their discovery, that God also ascends to his place, and cannot see thee. No, he neither slumbers nor sleeps; his eyes are open upon the children of men, not only in all places, but at all times; no rocks nor mountains can shelter us from his eye. Some understand it of the night of death. That is the night by which men are cut off from their place, and Job had earnestly breathed for that night, as the hireling desires the evening, *ch.* vii. 2. But do not do so, saith Elihu, for thou knowest not what the night of death is. Those that passionately wish for death, in hopes to make that their shelter from God's wrath, may perhaps be mistaken. There are those whom wrath pursues into that night.

3. Let him not continue his unjust quarrel with God and his providence, which hitherto he had persisted in, when he should have submitted to the affliction: ver. 21, "Take heed," look well to thine own spirit, and "regard not iniquity," 'return not' to it; so some; for it is at thy peril if thou do. Let us never dare to think a favourable thought of sin, never indulge it, nor allow ourselves in it. Elihu thinks Job had need of this caution, he having chosen iniquity rather than affliction; that is, having chosen rather to gratify his own pride and humour in contending with God, than to mortify it, by a submission to him, and accepting the punishment. We may take it more generally, and observe, that they who choose iniquity rather than affliction make a very foolish choice; that ease their cares by sinful pleasures, increase their wealth by sinful pursuits, escape their troubles by sinful projects, and evade sufferings for righteousness' sake by sinful compliances against their consciences, these make a choice they will repent of; for there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest affliction. It is an evil, an only evil.

4. Let him not dare to prescribe to God, nor give him his measures; ver. 22, 23, "Behold, God exalteth by his power;" that is, he doth, may, and can set up and pull down whom he pleaseth, and therefore it is not for thee and me to contend with him. The more we magnify God the more do we humble and abase ourselves. Now consider,

1st. That God is an absolute sovereign. He exalteth himself by his own power, and not by strength derived from any other. He exalteth whom he pleases, exalts those that are afflicted and cast down by the strength and power which he gives his people; and therefore, "who has enjoined him his way?" who presides above him in his way? is there any superior from whom he has his commission, and to whom he is accountable? No, he himself is supreme and independent. Who puts him in mind of his way? so some. Doth the Eternal Mind need a remembrancer? No, his own way, as well as ours, is ever before him. He has not received orders or instructions from any, *Isa.* xl. 13, 14; nor is he accountable to any. He enjoins to all the creatures their way; let not us then enjoin him his, but leave it to him to govern the world who is fit to do it.

2nd. That he is an incomparable teacher. "Who teacheth like him?" It is absurd for us to teach him who is himself the fountain of light, truth, knowledge, and instruction. "He that teacheth man knowledge," and so as no one else can, "shall not he know?" *Ps.* xciv. 9, 10. Shall we light a candle to the sun? Observe, when Elihu would give glory to God as a ruler, he praiseth him as a teacher, for rulers must teach. God doth so. He binds with the cords of a man. In this, as in other things, he is a nonsuch. None so fit to direct his own actions as he himself is. He knows what he has to do, and how to do it for the best, and needs no information or advice. Solomon himself had a privy council to advise him, but the King of kings has none. Nor is any so fit to direct our actions as he is. None teacheth with such authority and convincing evidence, with such condescension and compassion, nor with such power and efficacy as God doth. He teacheth by the Bible, and that is the best book; teacheth by his Son, and he is the best master.

3rd. That he is unexceptionably just in all his proceedings. "Who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?" Not, who *dares* say it,—many do iniquity, but if any tell them of it, it is at their peril,—but who *can* say it, who had any cause to say it? who can say it and prove it? It is a maxim undoubtedly true, without limitation, that 'the King of kings can do no wrong.'

24 Remember that thou magnify his work,
Which men behold.
25 Every man may see it;
Man may behold *it* afar off.
26 Behold, God *is* great, and we know *him* not,
Neither can the number of his years be searched out.
27 For he maketh small the drops of water:
They pour down rain according to the vapour thereof:
28 Which the clouds do drop
And distil upon man abundantly.
29 Also can *any* understand the spreadings of the clouds,
Or the noise of his tabernacle?
30 Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it,
And covereth the bottom of the sea.
31 For by them judgeth he the people;
He giveth meat in abundance.
32 With clouds he covereth the light;
And commandeth it *not to shine* by *the cloud* that cometh betwixt.
33 The noise thereof sheweth concerning it,
The cattle also concerning the vapour.

Elihu is here endeavouring to possess Job with great and high thoughts of God, and so to persuade him into a cheerful submission to his providence.

First. He represents the work of God in general as illustrious and conspicuous, ver. 24. His whole work is so. God doeth nothing mean. This is a good reason why we should acquiesce in all the operations of his providence concerning us

in particular. His visible works, those of nature, and which concern the world in general, are such as we admire and commend, and observe the Creator's wisdom, power, and goodness; shall we then find fault with his dispensations concerning us, and the counsels of his will concerning our affairs? We are here called to consider the work of God, *Eccl.* vii. 13. 1. It is plain before our eyes; nothing more obvious. It is what men behold; every man that has but half an eye may see it, may behold it afar off. Look which way we will, we see the products of God's wisdom and power; we see that done, and that in the doing, concerning which we cannot but say, This is the work of God, the finger of God; it is the Lord's doing. Every man may see afar off the heaven and all its lights, the earth and all its fruits, to be the work of Omnipotence; and much more when we behold them nigh at hand. Look at the minutest works of nature through a microscope, do they appear curious? The eternal power and godhead of the Creator is clearly seen and understood by the things that are made, *Rom.* i. 20. Every man, even those that have not the benefit of Divine revelation, may see this, for there is no speech or language where the voice of these natural constant preachers is not heard, *Ps.* xix. 3. 2. It ought to be marvellous in our eyes. The beauty and excellency of the work of God, and the agreement of all the parts of it, are what we must remember to magnify and highly to extol. Not only justify it as right and good, and what cannot be blamed, but magnify it as wise and glorious, and such as no creature could contrive or produce. Man may see his works, and is capable of discerning his hand in them, which the beasts are not; and therefore ought to praise them, and give him the glory of them.

Secondly. He represents God, the author of them, as infinite and unsearchable, ver. 26. The streams of being, power, and perfection, should lead us to the fountain. God is great, infinitely so; great in power, for he is omnipotent and independent; great in wealth, for he is self-sufficient and all-sufficient; great in himself, great in all his works; great, and therefore greatly to be praised. Great, and therefore we know him not; we know that he is, but not what he is. We know what he is not, but not what he is. We know in part, but not in perfection. This comes in here as a reason why we must not arraign his proceedings, nor find fault with what he doth, because it is speaking evil of the things that we understand not; and answering a matter before we hear it. We know not the duration of his existence, for it is infinite. The number of his years cannot possibly be searched out, for he is eternal; there is no number of them. He is a being without beginning, succession, or period, that ever was, and ever will be, and ever the same, the great *I AM*. This is a good reason why we should not prescribe to him or quarrel with him, because as he is, such are his operations, quite out of our reach.

Thirdly. He gives some instances of God's wisdom, and power, and sovereign dominion in the works of nature, and the dispensations of common providence; and begins in this chapter with the clouds and the rain that descends from them. We need not be critical in examining either the phrase or the philosophy of this noble discourse. The general scope of it is to shew, 1. That God is infinitely great, and the Lord of all; the first cause and supreme director of all the creatures, and has all power in heaven and earth; and whom therefore we ought with all humility and reverence to adore, to speak well of, and to give honour to. 2. That it is presumption for us to prescribe to him the rules and methods of his special providence towards the children of men, or to expect from him an account of them, when the operations even of common providences about the meteors are so various, and so mysterious and unaccountable. Elihu, to affect Job with God's sublimity and sovereignty, had directed him, *ch.* xxxv. 5, to look unto the clouds; now, in these verses, he shews us what we may observe in the clouds, we see what will lead us to consider the glorious perfections of their Creator. Consider the clouds,

1. As springs to this lower world; the source and treasure of its moisture, and the great bank through which it circulates, and that is as necessary, and the stagnating of it would be as hurtful to this lower world, as of the blood to the body of man. It is worth while to observe in this common occurrence, 1st. That the clouds above distil upon the earth below. If the heavens become brass, the earth becomes iron; therefore, thus the promise of plenty runs, "I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth." This intimates to us that every good gift is from above, from Him who is both father of lights, and father of the rain, and instructs us to direct our prayers to him, and to look up. 2nd. That they are here said to distil upon man, ver. 28; for though indeed he "causes it to rain in the wilderness where no man is," *ch.* xxxviii. 26, *Ps.* civ. 11, yet special respect is had to man herein, to whom the inferior creatures are all made serviceable, and from whom the actual return of the tributes of praise is required; and, among men he "causeth his rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust," *Mat.* v. 45. 3rd. They are said to distil the water in small drops, not in spouts, as when the windows of heaven were opened, *Gen.* vii. 11. God waters the earth with that with which he once drowned it, only dispensed in another manner, to let us know how much we lie at his mercy, and how kind he is in giving rain by drops, that the benefit of it may be the farther and the more equally diffused, as by an artificial waterpot. 4th. Though sometimes the rain comes in very small drops, yet at other times it pours down in great rain, and this difference between one shower and another must be resolved into Divine providence, which orders it so. 5th. Though it comes down in drops, yet it distils upon man abundantly, ver. 28; and therefore, is called the river of God which is full of water, *Ps.* lxv. 9. 6th. The clouds pour down according to the vapour that they draw up, ver. 27. Thus just the heavens are to the earth, but the earth is not so in the returns it makes. 7th. The produce of the clouds is sometimes a great terror, and at other times a great favour to the earth, ver. 13. When he pleaseth he doth by them judge the people he is angry with. Storms, and tempests, and excessive rains destroying the fruits of the earth, and causing inundations, come from the clouds; but, on the other hand, ordinarily from them he give'h meat in abundance, they drop fatness upon the pastures that are clothed with flocks, and the vallies that are covered with corn, *Ps.* lxv. 11—13. Lastly, Notice is sometimes given of the approach of rain, ver. 39, "the noise thereof," among other things, "sheweth concerning it." Hence we read, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 41, of the "sound of abundance of rain," or as it is in the margin, 'a sound of a noise of rain,' before it came, and a welcome harbinger it was then; and, as the noise, so the face, of the sky sheweth concerning it, *Lu.* xii. 56. The cattle also, by a strange instinct, are apprehensive of a change in the weather nigh at hand, and seek for shelter; shaming man, who will not foresee the evil and hide himself.

2. As shadows to the upper world; ver. 24, "Can any understand the spreadings of the clouds?" They are spread over the earth as a curtain or canopy; how they come to be so, how stretched out, and how poised as they are, we cannot understand, though we daily see they are so. Shall we then pretend to understand the reasons and methods of God's judicial proceedings with the children of men, whose characters and cases are so various, when we cannot account for the spreadings of the clouds which cover the light? ver. 32. It is a cloud coming betwixt, *ch.* xxvi. 9; and this we are sensible of, that by the interposition of the clouds between us and the sun we are, 1st. Sometimes favoured; for they serve as an umbrella to shelter us from the violent heat of the sun, which otherwise would beat upon us. A cloud of dew in the heat of harvest is spoken of as a very great refreshment, *Isa.* xviii. 4. 2nd. Sometimes we are by them frowned upon; for they darken the earth at noonday, and eclipse the light of the sun. Sin is compared to a cloud, *Ps.* xliv. 22, because it comes between us and the light of God's countenance, and obstructs the shining of it; but though the cloud darken the sun for a time, and pour down rain, yet, *post nubila Phœbus*,—'the sun shines forth after the rain;' after he has wearied the cloud "he spreads his light upon it," ver. 30. There is a clear shining after rain, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 4; the sunbeams are darted forth, and reach to cover even the bottom of the sea, thence to exhale a fresh supply of vapours, and so raise recruits for the clouds. In all this we must remember to magnify the work of God.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Elihu here goes on to extol the wonderful power of God, in the meteors, and all the changes of the weather. If in those changes we submit to the will of God, take the weather as it is, and make the best of it, why should not we do so in other changes of our condition? Here he observes the hand of God, I. In the thunder and lightning, ver. 1—5. II. In the frost and snow, the rains and winds, ver. 6—13. III. He applies it to Job, and challengeth him to solve the phenomena of these works of nature, that confessing his ignorance of them, he might own himself an incompetent judge in the proceedings of Divine providence, ver. 14—22. And then, V. Concludes with his principle which he undertook to make out, That God is great, and greatly to be feared, ver. 23, 24.

1 AT this also my heart trembleth,
And is moved out of his place.
2 Hear attentively the noise of his voice,
And the sound *that* goeth out of his mouth.
3 He directeth it under the whole heaven,
And his lightning unto the ends of the earth.
4 After it a voice roareth:
He thundereth with the voice of his excellency;
And he will not stay them when his voice is heard.
5 God thundereth marvellously with his voice;
Great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend

Thunder and lightning, which usually go together, are sensible indications of the glory and majesty, the power and terror, of Almighty God, one to the ear and the other to the eye. In these God leaves not himself without witness of his greatness, as in the rain from heaven and fruitful seasons he leaves not himself without witness of his goodness, (*Acts* xiv. 17,) even to the most stupid and unthinking. Though there be natural causes and useful effects of them, which the philosophers undertake to account for, yet they seem chiefly designed by the Creator to startle and awaken the slumbering dozing world of mankind to the consideration of a God above them. The eye and the ear are the two learning senses; and, therefore, though it is possible it might have been, yet they say it was never known in fact that any one was born both blind and deaf. By the word of God Divine instructions are conveyed to the mind through the ear, by his works through the eye; but because those ordinary sights and sounds do not duly affect men, God is pleased sometimes to astonish men by the eye with his lightnings, and by the ear with his thunder. It is very probable that at this time, when Elihu was speaking, it thundered and lightened, for he speaks of it as present; and, God being about to speak, *ch.* xxxviii. 1, these were, as afterwards on mount Sinai, the proper prefaces to command attention and awe. Observe here,

First. How Elihu was himself affected, and desired to affect Job, with the appearance of God's glory in the thunder and lightning, ver. 1, 2. For my part, saith Elihu, my heart trembleth at it; though I have often heard it, often seen it, yet it is still terrible to me, and makes every joint of me tremble, and my heart beat so as if it would move out of its place. Thunder and lightning have been dreadful to the wicked; the emperor Caligula would run into a corner, or under a bed, for fear of them. Those who are very much astonished, we say are thunderstruck, and even good people think them very awful; and that which makes them the more terrible is the hurt often done by lightning. Many have been killed by it; Sodom and Gomorrah were laid in ruins by it. It is a sensible indication what God could do to this sinful world, and what he will do at last by the fire to which it is reserved. Our hearts, like Elihu's, should tremble at it for fear of God's judgments, *Ps.* cxix. 120. He also calls upon Job to attend to it; ver. 2, "Hear attentively the noise of his voice." Perhaps as yet it thundered at a distance, and could not be heard without listening. Or rather, though the thunder itself will be heard, and whatever we are doing we cannot help attending to it, yet, to apprehend and understand the instructions God thereby gives us, we have need to hear with a great attention and application of mind. Thunder is called the voice of the Lord, *Ps.* xxix. 3, &c., because by it God speaks to the children of men to fear before him; and it should put us in mind of that mighty word by which the world was at first made, which is called thunder; *Ps.* civ. 7, "At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away," namely, the waters, when God said, "Let them be gathered in one place." They that are themselves affected with God's greatness should labour to affect others.

Secondly. How he describes them. 1. Their original, not their second causes, but the first. God directs the thunder, and the lightning is his, ver. 3. Their production and motion is not from chance, but from the counsel of God, and under the direction and dominion of his providence, though to us they seem accidental and ungovernable. 2. Their extent. The claps of thunder roll under the whole heaven, and are heard far and near, so are the lightnings darted to the ends of the earth; they come out of the one part under heaven, and shine to the other, *Lu.* xvii. 24. Though the same lightning and thunder do not reach to all places, yet they reach to very distant places in a moment; and there is no place but some time or other has these alarms from heaven. 3. Their order. The lightning is first directed, and after it a voice roars, ver. 4. The flash of fire, and the noise it makes in a watery cloud, are really at the same time; but, because the motion of light is much quicker than that of sounds, we see the lightning some time before we hear the thunder, as we see the firing of a great gun at a distance before we hear the report of it. The thunder is here called the voice of God's excellency, because by it he proclaims his transcendent power and greatness. "He sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice," *Ps.* lxviii. 33. 4. Their violence. "He will not stay them," that is, he doth not need to check them, or hold them back, lest they should grow unruly, and out of his power to restrain them, but lets them take their course; saith to them, "Go, and they go, come and they come, do this and they do it." He will not stay the rains and showers that usually follow upon the thunder, which he had spoken of, *ch.* xxxvi. 27, 29, so some; but will pour them out upon the earth, when his voice is heard. Thunder showers are

sweeping rains, and for them he makes the lightnings, *Ps.* xxv. 7. 5. The inference he draws from all this, ver. 5. Doth God thunder thus marvellously with his voice? We must then conclude that his other works are great, and such as we cannot comprehend. From this one instance we may argue to all, that in the dispensations of his providence there is that which is too great, too strong for us to oppose or strive against, and too high, too deep for us to arraign or quarrel with.

6 For he saith to the snow, Be thou *on* the earth;
Likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his [strength.
7 He sealeth up the hand of every man;
That all men may know his work.
8 Then the beasts go into dens,
And remain in their places.
9 Out of the south cometh the whirlwind:
And cold out of the north.
10 By the breath of God frost is given:
And the breadth of the waters is straitened.
11 Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud:
He scattereth his bright cloud:
12 And it is turned round about by his counsels:
That they may do whatsoever he commandeth them
Upon the face of the world in the earth.
13 He causeth it to come, whether for correction,
Or for his land, or for mercy.

The changes and extremities of the weather, wet or dry, hot or cold, is the subject of a great deal of our common talk and observation. But how seldom do we think and speak of these things, as Elihu doth here, with an awful regard to God the director of them, who shews his power and serves the purposes of his providence by them? We must take notice of the glory of God, not only in the thunder and lightning, but in the more common revolutions of the weather, which are not so terrible, and which make less noise. As,

First. In the snow and rain, ver. 6. Thunder and lightning happen usually in the summer, but here he takes notice of the winter weather. Then "he saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth." He commissions it, he commands it, he appoints it where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. He speaks, and it is done; as in the creation of the world, "Let there be light," so in the works of common providence, Snow, "be thou on the earth." Saying and doing are not two things with God, though they are with us. When he speaks the word, the small rain distils, and the great rain pours down as he pleaseth. 'The winter rain,' so the Seventy; for in these countries, when the winter was past, the rain was over and gone, *Cant.* ii. 11. The distinction in the Hebrew between the small rain and the great rain is this, that the former is called a shower of rain, the latter of rains, many showers in one. But all are the showers of his strength. The power of God is to be observed as much in the small rain that soaks into the earth, as in the great rain that batters on the housetop, and washeth away all before it. Note, The providence of God is to be acknowledged both by husbandmen in the fields, and travellers upon the road, in every shower of rain, whether it doth them a kindness or an unkindness. It is sin and folly to contend with God's providence in the weather. If he send the snow or rain, can we hinder them? or shall we be angry at them? It is as absurd to quarrel with any other disposal of Providence concerning ourselves or ours.

The effect of the extremity of the winter weather is, that it obligeth both men and beasts to retire, making it uncomfortable and unsafe for them to go abroad. 1. Men retire to their houses from their labours in the field, and keep within doors; ver. 7, "He seals up the hand of every man." In frost and snow husbandmen cannot follow their business, nor some tradesmen, nor travellers, when the weather is extreme. The plough is laid by, the shipping laid up, nothing to be done, nothing to be got, that men, being taken off from their own work, may know his work, and contemplate that, and give him the glory of that; and, by the consideration of that work of his in the weather which seals up their hands, be led to celebrate his other great and marvellous works. Note, When we are upon any account disabled to follow our worldly business, and taken off from it, we should spend our time rather in the exercises of piety and devotion, in acquainting ourselves with the works of God, and praising him in them, than in foolish idle sports and recreations. When our hands are sealed up, our hearts should thus be opened; and the less we have at any time to do in the world, the more we should do for God and our souls. When we are confined to our houses, we should thereby be driven to our Bibles and our knees. 2. The beasts also retire to their dens, and remain in their close places, ver. 8. It is meant of the wild beasts, which being wild must seek a shelter for themselves, to which by instinct they are directed, while the tame beasts, that are serviceable to man, are housed and protected by his care, as *Ex.* ix. 20. The ass has no den but his master's crib, and thither he goes, not only to be safe and warm, but to be fed. Nature directs all creatures to shelter themselves from a storm, and shall man only be unprovided of an ark?

Secondly. In the winds, which blow from different quarters, and produce different effects, ver. 9, 'Out of the hidden place' (so it may be read) 'comes the whirlwind,' it turns round, and so it is hard to say from which point it comes, but it comes from the secret chamber, as the word signifies, which I am not so willing to understand of the south, because he saith here, ver. 17, that the wind out of the south is so far from being a whirlwind, that it is a warming quieting wind. But at this time perhaps Elihu saw a whirlwind cloud coming out of the south, and making towards them, out of which the Lord spoke soon after, *ch.* xxxviii. 1. Or, if turbulent winds, which bring showers, come out of the south, cold and drying blasts come out of the north to scatter the vapours, and clear the air of them.

Thirdly. In the frost, ver. 10. See the cause of it; it is given by the breath of God; that is, by the word of his power, and command of his will; or, as some understand it, by the wind, which is the breath of God, as the thunder is his voice; it is caused by the cold freezing wind out of the north. See the effect of it; "The breadth of the waters is straitened;" that is, the waters that had spread themselves, and flowed with a great deal of liberty, are congealed, benumbed, arrested, bound up in crystal fetters. This is such an instance of the power of God, as, if it were not common, would be next to a miracle.

Fourthly. In the clouds, the womb where all these watery meteors are conceived, of which he had spoken, *ch.* xxxvi. 28. Three sorts of clouds he here speaks of.

1. Close black thick clouds, pregnant with showers, and these with watering he wearies, ver. 11; that is, they spend themselves, and are exhausted by the rain into which they melt and are dissolved, pouring out water till they are weary and can pour out no more. See what pains, as I may say, the creatures, even those above us, take to serve man. The clouds water the earth till they are weary; they spend and are spent for our benefit; which shames and condemns us for the little good we do in our places, though it would be to our own advantage; for he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

2. Bright thin clouds, clouds without water, these he scattereth; they are dispersed of themselves and not dissolved into rain, but what goes with them we know not. The bright cloud in the evening when the sky is red is scattered, and proves an earnest of a fair day, *Mat.* xvi. 2.

3. Flying clouds, which do not dissolve as the thick cloud into a close rain, but are carried upon the wings of the wind from place to place, dropping showers as they go; and these are said to be "turned round about by his counsels," ver. 12. The common people say, the rain goes by planets, which is as bad divinity as it is philosophy; for it is guided and governed by the counsel of God, which extends itself even to those things that seem most casual and minute, "that they may do whatsoever he commandeth them," for the stormy winds and the clouds that are driven by them fulfil his word. And by this means he "causeth it to rain upon one city, and not upon another," *Am.* iv. 7, 8. Thus his will is done "upon the face of the world in the earth;" that is, among the children of men, to whom God has an eye in all these things, of whom it is said that he "made them to dwell on the face of all the earth," *Acts* xvii. 26. The inferior creatures, being not capable of doing moral actions, are not capable of receiving rewards or punishments. But among the children of men God causeth the rain to come either for the correction of his land or for mercy to it, ver. 13. 1st. Rain sometimes turns into a judgment; it is a scourge to a sinful land. As once it was for the destruction of the whole world, so it is now often for the correction or discipline of some parts of it, by hindering seedness and harvest, raising the waters, and damaging the fruits. Some have said that our nation has received much more prejudice by the excess of rain than by the want of it. 2nd. At other times it is a blessing. It is for the land, that that may be made fruitful; and besides that which is just necessary, he gives for mercy to fatten it and make it more fruitful. See what a necessary dependence we have upon God, when the very same thing, according to the proportion in which it is given, may be either a great mercy or a great judgment; and, without God, we cannot have either a shower or a fair gleam.

14 Hearken unto this, O Job:
Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.
15 Dost thou know when God disposed them,
And caused the light of his cloud to shine?
16 Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds,
The wondrous works of him which is perfect in know- [ledge?
17 How thy garments *are* warm,
When he quieteth the earth by the south *wind?*
18 Hast thou with him spread out the sky,
Which is strong, *and* as a molten looking glass?
19 Teach us what we shall say unto him;
For we cannot order *our speech* by reason of darkness.
20 Shall it be told him that I speak?
If a man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.

Elihu here applies himself closely to Job, desiring him to apply what he had hitherto said to himself. He begs he would hearken to this discourse, ver. 14, that he would pause awhile; "Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God." What we hear is not likely to profit us unless we consider it; and we are not likely to consider things fully unless we stand still, and compose ourselves to the consideration of them. The works of God being wondrous, both deserve and need our consideration; and the due consideration of them will help to reconcile us to all his providences. Elihu, for the humbling of Job, shews him,

First. That he had no insight at all into natural causes; could neither see the springs of them, nor foresee the effects of them, ver. 15—17. Dost thou know this, and know that, which are the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? We are here taught, 1. The perfection of God's knowledge. It is one of the most glorious perfections of God, that he is perfect in knowledge. It is omniscience. His knowledge is intuitive, he sees, and doth not know by report; it is intimate and entire. He knows things truly, and not by their colours; thoroughly, and not by piecemeal. To his knowledge there is nothing distant, but all near; nothing future, but all present; nothing hid, but all open. And we ought to acknowledge this in all his wondrous works, and it is sufficient to satisfy us in those wondrous works which we know not the meaning of, that they are the works of one that knows what he doth. 2. The imperfection of our knowledge. The greatest philosophers are much in the dark concerning the powers and works of nature. We are a paradox to ourselves, and every thing about us is a mystery. The gravitation of bodies, and the cohesion of the parts of matter, are most certain, and yet unaccountable. It is good for us to be made sensible of our own ignorance. Some have confessed it, and those that would not have betrayed it. But we must all infer from it what incompetent judges we are of the Divine politics, who understand so little even of the Divine mechanics. 1st. We know not what orders God has given concerning the clouds, nor what orders he will give, ver. 15. That all is done by determination and with design we are sure; but what is determined, and what designed, and when the plan was laid, we know not. God often causeth the light of his cloud to shine; in the rainbow, so some; in the lightning, so others; but did we foresee, or could we foretell when he would do it? If we foresee the change of weather a few hours before, when second causes have begun to work, by the weather-glass, or vulgar observation, yet how little doth that shew us of the purposes of God by these changes? 2nd. We know not how the clouds are poised in the air, the balancing of them, which is one of the wondrous works of God. They are so balanced, so spread, as that they never rob us of the benefit of the sun, even the cloudy day is day; so balanced as that they do not fall at once, or burst into cataracts or waterspouts. The rainbow is an intimation of God's favour in balancing the clouds so as to keep them from drowning the world. Nay, so are they balanced as that they impartially distribute their showers on the earth, so that one time or other every place has its share. 3rd. We know not how the comfortable change comes when the winter is past, ver. 17. *First.* How the weather becomes warm after it has been cold. We know how our garment came to be warm upon us; that is, how we came to be warm in our clothes, by reason of the warmth of the air we

breathe in. Without God's blessing we should clothe us and not be warm, *Hag.* i. 6; but, when he so orders it, the clothes are warm upon us which in the extremity of cold weather would not serve to keep us warm. *Secondly.* How it becomes calm after it has been stormy. "He quieteth the earth with the south wind," when spring comes. As he has a blustering, freezing north wind, so he has a thawing, composing south wind. The Spirit is compared to both, because he both convinceth and comforteth, *Cant.* iv. 16.

Secondly. That he had no share at all in the first making of the world; ver. 18, "Hast thou with him spread out the sky?" Thou canst not pretend to have stretched it out without him, no, nor to have stretched it out in conjunction with him, for he was far from needing any help, either in contriving or working. The creation of the vast expanse of the visible heavens, (*Gen.* i. 6—8,) which we see in being to this day, is a glorious instance of the Divine power, considering, 1. That, though it is fluid, yet it is firm. "It is strong," and has its name from its stability. It still is what it was, and suffers no decay, nor shall the ordinances of heaven be altered till the lease expires with time. 2. That, though it is large, it is bright, and most curiously fine. It is "a molten looking-glass," smooth and polished, and without the least flaw or crack; and in which, as in a looking-glass, we may behold the glory of God, and the wisdom of his handywork, *Ps.* xix. 1. When we look up to heaven above we should remember it is a mirror, or looking-glass, not to shew us our own faces, but to be a faint representation of the purity, dignity, and brightness of the upper world, and its glorious inhabitants.

Thirdly. That neither he nor they were able to speak of God in any proportion to the merit of the subject, ver. 19, 20. 1. He challengeth Job to be their director, if he durst undertake it. He speaks it ironically: "Teach us," if thou canst, "what we shall say unto him." Thou hast a mind to reason with God, and wouldst have us to contend with him on thy behalf, teach us then what we shall say. Canst thou see farther into this abyss than we can? If thou canst, favour us with the discoveries, furnish us with instructions. 2. He owns his own insufficiency both in speaking to God and in speaking of him; "We cannot order our speech by reason of darkness." Note, The best of men are much in the dark concerning the glorious perfections of the Divine nature, and the administrations of the Divine government. They that through grace know much of God, yet it is little, it is nothing, in comparison with what is to be known, and what will be known, when that which is perfect is come, and the veil shall be rent. When we would speak of God, we speak confusedly, and with great uncertainty, and are presently at a loss, and run aground, not for want of matter, but for want of words. And as we must always begin with fear and trembling, lest we speak amiss, (*De Deo etiam vera dicere periculosum est*,—'Even while affirming what is true concerning God we incur risk,') so we must conclude with shame and blushing, that we have spoken no better. Elihu himself had for his part spoken very well on God's behalf, and yet is so far from expecting a fee, or thinking God was beholden to him for it, or that he was fit to be standing counsel for him, that, 1st. He is even ashamed of what he has said; not of the cause, but of his own management of it; "Shall it be told him that I speak?" Shall it be reported to him as a meritorious piece of service worthy his notice? By no means; let it never be spoken of: for he fears the subject has suffered by his undertaking it, as a fine face is wronged by an ill painter; and his performance is so far from meriting thanks, that it needs pardon. When we have done all we can for God, we must acknowledge that we are unprofitable servants, and have nothing at all to boast of. 2nd. He is afraid of saying any more. "If a man speak," if he undertake to plead for God, much more if he offers to plead against him, "surely he shall be swallowed up." If he speak presumptuously, God's wrath shall soon consume him; but if never so well, he will soon lose himself in the mystery, and be overpowered by the Divine lustre. Astonishment will strike him blind and dumb.

21 And now *men* see not the bright light which *is* in the clouds:
But the wind passeth, and cleanseth them.
22 Fair weather cometh out of the north:
With God *is* terrible majesty.
23 *Touching* the Almighty, we cannot find him out:
He is excellent in power, and in judgment,
And in plenty of justice: he will not afflict.
24 Men do therefore fear him:
He respecteth not any *that are* wise of heart.

Elihu here concludes his discourse with some short but great sayings concerning the glory of God, as that which he was himself possessed, and desired to possess others with a holy awe of. He speaks concisely and in haste, because it should seem he perceived that God was about to take the work into his own hands.

First. He observes that God, who hath said he will dwell in the thick darkness, and make that his pavilion, (2 *Chr.* vi. 1; *Ps.* xviii. 11,) is in that awful chariot advancing towards them, as if he were preparing his throne for judgment, surrounded with clouds and darkness, *Ps.* xcvii. 2. He saw the cloud with a whirlwind in the bosom of it, coming out of the south, ver. 9; but now it hung so thick, so black over their heads, that they could none of them see the bright light which just before was in the clouds. The light of the sun was now eclipsed; this minded him of the darkness by reason of which he could not speak, ver. 19, and made him afraid to go on, ver. 20. Thus the disciples feared when they entered into a cloud, *Lu.* ix. 34. Yet he looks to the north, and sees it clear that way, which gives him hopes that the clouds are not gathering for a deluge; they are covered, but not surrounded with them, and he expects that the wind will pass (so it may be read) and cleanse them,—such a wind as passed over the earth to clear it from the waters of Noah's flood, (*Gen.* viii. 1,) in token of the return of God's favour; and then fair weather will come out of the north, ver. 22, and all will be well. God will not always frown, nor contend for ever.

Secondly. He hastens to conclude, now God is about to speak; and therefore delivers much in a few words, as the sum of all that he had been discoursing of, which, if duly considered, would not only clench the nail he had been driving, but make way for what God would say. 1. That "with God is terrible majesty." He is a God of glory, and such transcendent perfection as cannot but strike an awe upon all his attendants, and a terror upon all his adversaries. 'With God is terrible praise,' so some; for he is "fearful in praises," *Ex.* xv. 11. 2. That when we speak "touching the Almighty," we must own that "we cannot find him out." Our finite understandings cannot comprehend his infinite perfections. Can we put the sea into an egg-shell? We cannot trace the steps he takes in his providence. "His way is in the sea." 3. That "he is excellent in power." It is the excellency of his power that he can do whatever he pleaseth in heaven and earth. The universal extent and irresistible force of his power are the excellency of it; no creature has an arm like him, so long, so strong. 4. That he is no less excellent in wisdom and righteousness, "in judgment and plenty of justice;" else there would be little excellency in his power. He that can do every thing we may be sure will do every thing for the best, for he is infinitely wise; and will not in any thing do wrong, for he is infinitely just. When he executes judgments upon sinners, yet there is plenty of justice in it, and he inflicts not more than they deserve. 5. That "he will not afflict," that is, he will not afflict willingly. It is no pleasure to him to grieve the children of men, much less his own children. He never afflicts but when there is cause, and when there is need; and he doth not overburthen us with affliction, but considers our frame. Some read it thus: 'The Almighty whom we cannot find out is great in power, but he will not afflict in judgment, and plenty of justice,' nor is extreme to mark what we do amiss. 6. He values not the censures of those that are wise in their own conceit. He respecteth them not, ver. 24. He will not alter his counsels to oblige them, nor can those that prescribe to him prevail with him to do as they would have him do. He regards the prayer of the humble, but not the policies of the crafty. No, the foolishness of God is wiser than men, 1 *Cor.* i. 25.

Lastly. From all this it is easy to infer that, since God is great, he is greatly to be feared; nay, because he is gracious and will not afflict, "men do therefore fear him," for there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared, *Ps.* cxxx. 4. It is the duty and interest of all men to fear God: 'men shall fear him,' so some. Sooner or later they shall fear him. They that will not fear the Lord and his goodness shall for ever tremble under the pourings out of the vials of his wrath.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

In most disputes the strife is, who shall have the last word; Job's friends had in this controversy tamely yielded it to Job, and then he to Elihu. But after all the wranglings of the council at bar the judge upon the bench must have the last word, so God had here, and so he will have in every controversy; for every man's judgment proceedeth from him, and by his definitive sentence every man must stand or fall, and every cause be won or lost. Job had often appealed to God, and had talked boldly how he would order his cause before him, and as a prince he would go near unto him; but when God took the throne Job had nothing to say in his own defence, but was silent before him. It is not so easy a matter as some think it to contest with the Almighty. Job's friends had sometimes appealed to God too; O that God would speak! *ch.* xi. 5. And now, at length, God doth speak, when Job by Elihu's clear and closing arguings was mollified a little and mortified, and so prepared to hear what God had to say. It is the office of ministers to prepare the way of the Lord. That which the great God designs in this discourse is to humble Job, and bring him to repent of and to recant his passionate, indecent expressions concerning God's providential dealings with him: and this he doth by calling upon Job to compare God's eternity with his own time; God's omniscience with his own ignorance, and God's omnipotence with his own impotency. I. He begins with an awakening challenge and demand in general, ver. 2, 3. II. He proceeds in divers particular instances and proofs of Job's utter inability to contend with God, because of his ignorance and weakness; for, 1. He knew nothing of the founding of the earth, ver. 4—7; 2. Nothing of the limiting of the sea, ver. 8—11; 3. Nothing of the morning light, ver. 12—15; 4. Nothing of the dark recesses of the sea and earth, ver. 16—21; 5. Nothing of the springs in the clouds, ver. 22—27, nor the secret counsel by which they are directed; 6. He could do nothing towards the production of the rain, or frost, or lightning, ver. 28—30, 34, 35, 37, 38; nothing towards the directing of the stars and their influences, ver. 31, 33; nothing towards the making of his own soul, ver. 36; and lastly, He could not provide for the lions and ravens, ver. 39—41. If in these ordinary works of nature Job was puzzled, how durst he pretend to dive into the counsels of God's government, and to judge of them? In this, as Bishop Patrick observes, God takes up the argument began by Elihu, (who came nearest to the truth,) and prosecutes it in inimitable words, excelling his, and all other men's, in the loftiness of the style, as much as thunder doth a whisper.

THEN the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
2 Who *is* this that darkeneth counsel
By words without knowledge?
3 Gird up now thy loins like a man;
For I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

Let us observe here,

First. Who speaks: "The Lord," Jehovah, not a created angel, but the eternal Word himself, the second person in the blessed Trinity; for it is he by whom the worlds were made, and that was no other but the Son of God. The same speaks here that afterwards spoke from mount Sinai. Here he begins with the creation of the world, there with the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, and from both is inferred the necessity of our subjection to him. Elihu had said that God speaks to men and they do not perceive it, *ch.* xxxiii. 14. But this they could not but perceive, and yet "we have a more sure word of prophecy," 2 *Pet.* i. 19.

Secondly. When he spoke: "Then;" when they had all had their saying, and yet had not gained their point, then it was time for God to interpose, whose judgment is according to truth. When we know not who is in the right, and perhaps are doubtful whether we ourselves are, this may satisfy us, that God will determine shortly in the valley of decision, *Joel* iii. 14. Job had silenced his three friends, and yet could not convince them of his integrity in the main; Elihu had silenced Job, and yet could not bring him to acknowledge his mismanagement of this dispute, but now God comes and doth both; convinceth Job first of his unadvised speaking, and makes him cry peccavi, and, having humbled him, puts honour upon him, by convincing his three friends that they had done him wrong. These two things God will sooner or later do for his people, he will shew them their faults, that they may be themselves ashamed of them, and he will shew others their righteousness, and bring it forth as the light, that they may be ashamed of their unjust censures of them.

Thirdly. How he spoke: "Out of the whirlwind," the rolling and involving cloud, which Elihu took notice of *ch.* xxxvii. 1, 2, 9. A whirlwind prefaced Ezekiel's vision, *Eze.* i. 4; and Elijah's, 1 *Kin.* xix. 11. God is said to have his way in the whirlwind, *Nah.* i. 3; and, to shew that even the stormy wind fulfils his word, here it was made the vehicle of it. This shews what a mighty voice God's is, that it was not lost, but perfectly audible, even in the noise of a whirlwind. Thus God designed to startle Job, and to command his attention. Sometimes God answers his own people in terrible corrections, as out of the whirlwind, but always in righteousness.

Fourthly. To whom he spoke: He answered Job, directed his speech to him, to convince him of what was amiss, before he cleared him from the unjust aspersions cast upon him. It is God only that can effectually convince of sin, and those shall so be humbled whom he designs to exalt. Those that desire to hear from God, as Job did, shall certainly hear from him at length.

Fifthly. What he said: We may conjecture that Elihu, or some other of the auditory, wrote down verbatim what was delivered out of the whirlwind; for we find, *Rev.* x. 4, that when the thunders uttered their voices John was prepared to write; or, if it were not written then, yet, the penman of the book

being inspired by the Holy Ghost, we are sure that we have here a very true and exact report of what was said. The Spirit, saith Christ, shall bring to your remembrance, as he did here, what I have said to you. The preface is very searching.

1. God charges him with ignorance and presumption in what he had said; ver. 2, "Who is this" that talks at this rate? Is it Job? What! a man? that weak, foolish, despicable creature, shall he pretend to prescribe to me what I must do, or to quarrel with me for what I have done? Is it Job? What, my servant Job? a perfect and an upright man? Can he so far forget himself, and act unlike himself? Who, where is he, "that darkens counsel thus by words without knowledge?" Let him shew his face if he dare, and stand to what he hath said. Note, Darkening the counsels of God's wisdom with our folly is a great affront and provocation to God. Concerning God's counsels we must own that we are without knowledge. They are a deep which we cannot fathom; we are quite out of our element, out of our aim, when we pretend to account for them; and we are too apt to talk of them as if we understood them, with a great deal of niceness and boldness. But, alas, we do but darken them instead of explaining them. We confound and perplex ourselves and one another, when we dispute of the order of God's decrees, and the designs, and reasons, and methods of his operations of providence and grace. An humble faith and sincere obedience shall see farther and better into the secret of the Lord than all the philosophy of their schools, and the searches of science so called. This first word which God spoke is the most observable, because Job in his repentance fastens upon it as that which did his business, and humbled him, *ch.* xlii. 3. This he repeated and echoed to, as the arrow that stuck fast in him: I am the fool that have darkened counsel. There was some colour to have turned it upon Elihu, as if God meant him, for he spoke last, and was speaking when the whirlwind began; but Job applied it to himself, as becomes us to do when faithful reproofs are given, and not, as most do, to billet them upon other people.

2. He challenges him to give such proofs of his knowledge as would serve to justify his inquiries into the Divine counsels; ver. 3, "Gird up now thy loins like a stout man;" prepare thyself for the encounter; "I will demand of thee," will put some questions to thee, and answer me if thou canst, before I answer thine. Those that go about to call God to an account must expect to be catechised and called to an account themselves, that they may be made sensible of their ignorance and arrogance. God here puts Job in mind of what he had said, *ch.* xiii. 22, "Call thou, and I will answer." Now make thy words good.

4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the
Declare, if thou hast understanding. [earth?
5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
Or who hath stretched the line upon it?
6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened?
Or who laid the corner stone thereof;
7 When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
8 Or *who* shut up the sea with doors, [womb?
When it brake forth, *as if* it had issued out of the
9 When I made the cloud the garment thereof,
And thick darkness a swaddlingband for it,
10 And brake up for it my decreed *place*,
And set bars and doors,
11 And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further:
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed?

For the humbling of Job, God here shews him his ignorance, even concerning the earth and the sea. Though so near, though so bulky, yet he could give no account of their origination, much less of heaven above, or hell beneath, which are at such a distance, or of the several parts of matter which are so minute; and then, least of all, of the Divine counsels.

First. Concerning the founding of the earth. If he have such a mighty insight as he pretends to have into the counsels of God, let him give some account of the earth he goes upon, which is given to the children of men.

1. Let him tell where he was when this lower world was made, and whether he were advising or assisting in that wonderful work; ver. 4, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Thy pretensions are high, canst thou pretend to this? Wast thou present when the world was made? See here, 1st. The greatness and glory of God; "I laid the foundations of the earth." This proves him to be the only living and true God, and a God of power, *Isa.* xl. 21; *Jer.* x. 11, 12; and encourageth us to trust in him at all times, *Isa.* li. 13, 16. 2nd. The meanness and contemptibleness of man; "Where wast thou then?" Thou that hast made such a figure among the children of the east, and settest up for an oracle, and a judge of the Divine counsels, where wast thou when the foundations of the earth were laid? So far were we from having any hand in the creation of the world, which might entitle us to a dominion in it, or so much as being witnesses of it, by which we might have gained an insight into it, that we were not then in being. The first man was not, much less were we. It is the honour of Christ that he was present when this was done, *Pr.* viii. 22, &c.; *Jno.* i. 1, 2; but we are of yesterday, and know nothing. Let us not, therefore, find fault with the works of God, nor prescribe to him. He did not consult us in making the world, and yet it is well made. Why should we expect then that he should take his measures from us in governing it?

2. Let him describe how this world was made, and give a particular account of the manner and method in which this strong and stately edifice was formed and erected. Declare, if thou hast so much understanding as thou fanciest thyself to have, what were the advances of that work. Those that pretend to have understanding above others ought to give proof of it. Shew me thy faith by thy works, thy knowledge by thy words. Let Job declare if he can,

1st. How the world came to be so finely framed, with so much exactness, and such an admirable symmetry and proportion of all the parts of it, ver. 5. Stand forth and tell who laid the measures thereof, and stretched out the line upon it. Wast thou the architect that formed the model, and then drew the dimensions by rule according to it? The vast bulk of the earth is moulded as regularly as if it had been done by line and measure. But who can describe how it was cast into this figure? who determine its circumference and diameter, and all the lines that are drawn on the terrestrial globe? It is to this day a dispute whether the earth stands still or turns round; how then can we determine by what measures it was first formed?

2nd. How it came to be so firmly fixed. Though it is hung upon nothing, yet it is established that it cannot be moved; but who can tell upon what the foundations of it are fastened, that it may not sink with its own weight; or who laid the corner stone thereof, that the parts of it may not fall asunder, ver. 6. "What God doth it shall be for ever," *Eccl.* iii. 14; and therefore, as we cannot find fault with God's work, so we need not be in fear concerning it. It will last and answer the end, the works of his providence, as well as the work of creation,—the measures of neither can ever be broken; and the work of redemption is no less firm, of which Christ himself is both the foundation and the corner stone. The church stands as fast as the earth.

3rd. Let him repeat if he can the songs of praise which were sung at that solemnity; ver. 7, "When the morning stars sang together," the blessed angels, (the firstborn of the Father of light,) who in the morning of time shone so bright, as the morning stars, going immediately before the light which, God commanded to shine out of darkness upon the seeds of this lower world, the earth, which was without form and void. They were the sons of God, which shouted for joy when they saw the foundations of the earth laid; because, though it was not made for them, but for the children of men, and though it would increase their work and service, yet they knew the Eternal Wisdom and Word, whom they were to worship, (*Heb.* i. 6,) would rejoice in the habitable parts of the earth, and much of his delight would be in the sons of men, *Pr.* viii. 31. The angels are called the sons of God, because they bear much of his image, are with him in his house above, and serve him as a son doth his father. Now observe here, *First.* The glory of God as the Creator of the world is to be celebrated with joy and triumph by all his reasonable creatures; for they are qualified and appointed to be the collectors of his praises, from the inferior creatures, who can only praise him objectively. *Secondly.* The work of angels is to praise God; and the more we abound in holy, humble, thankful, joyful praise, the more we do the will of God as they do it; and when we are so barren and defective in praising God, it is a comfort to think that they are doing it in a better manner. *Thirdly.* They were unanimous in singing God's praises. They sung together with one accord, and there was no jar in their harmony. The sweetest concerts are in praising God. *Fourthly.* They all did it, even those that afterwards fell, and left their first estate. Even those who have praised God may, by the deceitful power of sin, be brought to blaspheme him, and yet God will be eternally praised.

Secondly. Concerning the limiting of the sea to the place appointed for it, ver. 8, &c. This refers to the third day's work, when God said, *Gen.* i. 9, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so."

1. Out of the great deep, or chaos, in which earth and water were intermixed, in obedience to the Divine command, the waters brake forth like a child out of the teeming womb, ver. 8. Then the waters that had covered the deep, and stood above the mountains, retired with precipitation; at God's rebuke they fled, *Ps.* civ. 6, 7.

2. This new-born babe is clothed and swaddled, ver. 9. The cloud is made the garment thereof, with which it is covered, and thick darkness; that is, shores vastly remote and distant from one another, and quite in the dark one to another, are a swaddling band for it. See with what ease the great God manageth the raging sea; notwithstanding the violence of its tides, and strength of its billows, he manageth it as the nurse doth the child in swaddling clothes. It is not said he made rocks and mountains its swaddling bands, but clouds and darkness; something that we are not aware of, and would think least likely for such a purpose.

3. There is a cradle too provided for this babe; "I brake up for it my decreed place," ver. 10. Valleys were sunk for it in the earth, capacious enough to receive it, and there it is laid to sleep; and if it be sometimes tossed with winds, that, as Bishop Patrick observes, is but the rocking of a cradle, which makes it sleep the faster. As for the sea, so for every one of us, there is a decreed place; for he that determined the times before appointed determined also the bounds of our habitation.

4. This babe being made unruly and dangerous by the sin of man, which was the original of all unquietness and danger in this lower world, there is also a prison provided for it; bars and doors are set, ver. 10. And it is said to it, by way of check to its insolence, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther." The sea is God's, for he made it, he restrains it; he saith to it, "Here shall thy proud waves be stayed," ver. 11. This may be considered as an act of God's power over the sea. Though so vast a body, and its motion sometimes extremely violent, yet God has it under check; its waves rise no higher, its tides roll no farther, than God permits, and it is mentioned as a reason why we should stand in awe of God, *Jer.* v. 22, and yet why we should encourage ourselves in him; for he that stops the noise of the sea, even the noise of her waves, can when he pleaseth still the tumult of the people, *Ps.* lxv. 7. It is also to be looked upon as an act of God's mercy to the world of mankind, and an instance of his patience towards that provoking race. Though he could easily cover the earth again with the waters of the sea, (and methinks every flowing tide twice a day threatens us, and shews what the sea could do, and would do, if God would give it leave,) yet he restrains them, being not willing that any should perish, and having reserved the world that now is unto fire, 2 *Pet.* iii. 7.

12 Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days;
And caused the dayspring to know his place;
13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth,
That the wicked might be shaken out of it?
14 It is turned as clay *to* the seal;
And they stand as a garment.
15 And from the wicked their light is withholden,
And the high arm shall be broken.
16 Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea?
Or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?
17 Have the gates of death been opened unto thee?
Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?
18 Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth?
Declare if thou knowest it all.
19 Where *is* the way *where* light dwelleth?
And *as for* darkness, where *is* the place thereof,
20 That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof,

And that thou shouldest know the paths *to* the house
21 Knowest thou *it*, because thou wast then born? [thereof?
Or *because* the number of thy days *is* great?
22 Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow?
Or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail,
23 Which I have reserved against the time of trouble,
Against the day of battle and war?
24 By what way is the light parted,
Which scattereth the east wind upon the earth?

The Lord proceeds here to ask Job a great many very puzzling questions, to convince him of his ignorance, and so to shame him for his folly, in prescribing to God. If we will but pose ourselves with such interrogatories as these, we shall soon be brought to own that what we know is nothing in comparison with that which we know not. Job is here challenged to give an account of six things:

First. Of the springs of the morning, the dayspring from on high, ver. 12—15. As there is no visible being of which we may be more firmly assured that it is so, there is none which we are more puzzled in describing, nor more doubtful in determining what it is, than the light. We welcome the morning, and are glad of the dayspring; but, 1. It is not commanded since our days, but what it is it was long before we were born, so that it was neither made by us, nor designed primarily for us; but we take it as we find it, and as the many generations had it that went before us. The dayspring knew its place before we knew ours, for we are but of yesterday. 2. It was not we, it was not any man, that commanded the morning light at first, nor appointed the place of its springing up, and shining forth, nor the time of it. The constant and regular succession of day and night was no contrivance of ours; it is the glory of God that it shews, and his handywork, not ours, *Ps.* xix. 1, 2. 3. It is quite out of our power to alter this course; "Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days?" hast thou at any time raised the morning light sooner than its appointed time, to serve thy purpose, when thou hast waited for the morning? or ordered the dayspring for thy convenience to any other place but its own? No, never; why then wilt thou pretend to direct the Divine counsels, or expect to have the methods of Providence altered in favour of thee? We may as soon break the covenant of the day and of the night, as any part of God's covenant with his people, and particularly that, "I will chasten them with the rod of men." 4. It is God that has appointed the dayspring to visit the earth, and diffuseth the morning light through the air, which receives it as readily as the clay doth the seal, ver. 14, immediately admitting the impressions of it, so as of a sudden to be all over enlightened by it, as the seal stamps its image on the wax; and they stand as a garment, or as if they were clothed with a garment. The earth puts on a new face every morning, and dresseth itself as we do; puts on light as a garment, and is then to be seen. 5. This is made a terror to evil-doers. Nothing more comfortable to mankind than the light of the morning; it is pleasant to the eyes, it is serviceable to life and the business of it, and the favour of it is universally extended, for it "takes hold of the ends of the earth;" and how welcome it is to the earth is what we should dwell upon in our hymns to the light. But God here observes how unwelcome it is to those that do evil, and therefore hate the light. God makes the light a minister of his justice as well as of his mercy; it is designed to shake the wicked out of the earth, and for that purpose it takes hold of the ends of it, as we take hold of the ends of a garment to shake the dust and moths out of it. Job had observed what a terror the morning light is to criminals, because it discovers them, *ch.* xxiv. 13, &c.; and God here seconds the observation, and asks him whether the world was indebted to him for that kindness? No; the great Judge of the world sends forth the beams of the morning light as his messengers to detect criminals, that they may not only be defeated in their purposes, and put to shame, but that they may be brought to condign punishment, ver. 15; that their light may be withholden from them; that is, that they may lose their comfort, their confidence, their liberties, their lives, and that their high arm, which they have lifted up against God and man, may be broken, and they deprived of their power to do mischief. Whether what is here said of the morning light was designed to represent, as in a figure, the light of the Gospel of Christ, and to give a type of it, I will not say; but I am sure it may serve to put us in mind of the encomiums given to the Gospel, just at the rising of its morning star, by Zecharias in his *Benedictus*, *Lu.* i. 78: By "the tender mercy of our God the Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness," whose hearts are turned to it as clay to the seal, 2 *Cor.* iv. 6. And by the Virgin Mary in her *Magnificat*, *Lu.* i. 51; shewing that God in his Gospel hath shewed strength with his arm, scattered the proud, and put down the mighty; by that light he designed to shake the wicked, to shake wickedness itself out of the earth, and break its high arm.

Secondly. Of the springs of the sea; ver. 16, "Hast thou entered into them, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?" knowest thou what lies in the bottom of the sea, the treasures there hid in the sands? or canst thou give an account of the rise and original of the waters of the sea? Vapours are continually exhaled out of the sea; dost thou know how the recruits are raised by which it is continually supplied? Rivers are constantly poured into the sea; dost thou know how they are continually discharged, so as not to overflow the earth? Art thou acquainted with the secret subterraneous passages by which the waters circulate? God's way in the government of the world is said to be in the sea, and in the great waters, *Ps.* lxxvii. 19; intimating that it is hid from us, and not to be pried into by us.

Thirdly. Of the gates of death; Have those been opened to thee? ver. 17. Death is a grand secret. 1. We know not beforehand when and how and by what means we or others shall be brought to death; by what road we must go the way whence we shall not return; what disease, or what disaster, will be the door to let us into "the house appointed for all living;" "man knows not his time." 2. We cannot describe what death is, how the knot is untied between body and soul, nor how "the spirit of a man goes upward," *Eccl.* iii. 21, to 'be we know not what, and live we know not how,' as Mr. Norris expresseth it: 'With what dreadful curiosity,' saith he, 'doth the soul launch out into the vast ocean of eternity, and resign to an untried abyss!' Let us make it sure that the gates of heaven shall be opened to us on the other side death, and then we need not fear the opening of the gates of death, though it is a way we are to go but once. 3. We have no correspondence at all with separate souls, nor any acquaintance with their state. It is an unknown, undiscovered region to which they are removed; we can neither hear from them nor send to them. While we are here in a world of sense, we speak of the world of spirits as blind men do of colours, and when we remove thither shall be amazed to find how much we were mistaken.

Fourthly. Of the breadth of the earth; ver. 18, Hast thou perceived that? The knowledge of this might seem most level to him, and within his reach; yet he is challenged to declare this if he can. We have our residence on the earth, God has given it to the children of men; but whoever surveyed it, or could give an account of the number of its acres? It is but a point to the universe; yet, as small as it is, we cannot be exact in declaring the dimensions of it. Job had never sailed round the world, nor any before him; so little did men know the breadth of the earth, that it was but a few ages ago that the vast continent of America was discovered, which had time out of mind laid hid. The Divine perfection is "longer than the earth, and broader than the sea;" it is, therefore, presumption for us, who perceive not the breadth of the earth, to dive into the depth of God's counsels.

Fifthly. Of the place and way of light and darkness. Of the dayspring he had spoken before, ver. 12; and he returns to speak of it again, ver. 19, "Where is the way where light dwells?" and again, ver. 24, "By what way is the light parted?" He challengeth him to describe,

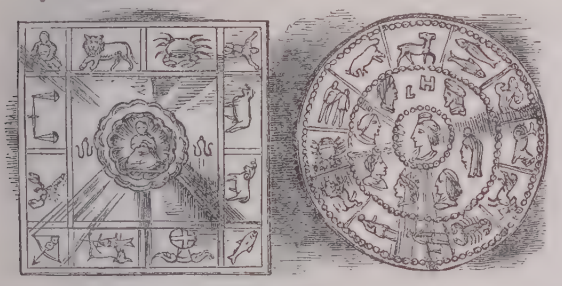
1. How the light and darkness were at first made. When God in the beginning first spread "darkness upon the face of the deep," and afterwards "commanded the light to shine out of darkness," by that mighty word, "Let there be light," was Job a witness to the order, to the operation? Can he tell where the fountains of light and darkness are, and where those mighty princes keep their courts distinct, while in one world they rule alternately? Though we long never so much either for the shining forth of the morning or the shadows of the evening, we know not whither to send or go to fetch them, nor can tell "the paths to the house thereof," ver. 20. We were not then born, nor is the number of our days so great that we can describe the birth of that firstborn of the visible creation, ver. 21. Shall we then undertake to discourse of God's counsels, which were from eternity, or to find out the paths to the house thereof, to solicit for the alteration of them? God glories in it that he forms the light, and creates the darkness; and if we must take those as we find them, take those as they come, and quarrel with neither, but make the best of both, then we must, in like manner, accommodate ourselves to the peace and the evil which God likewise created, *Isa.* xlv. 7.

2. How they still keep their turns interchangeably. It is God that "makes the outgoings of the morning and of the evening to rejoice," *Ps.* lxv. 8; for it is his order, and no order of ours, that is executed by the outgoings of the morning light, and the darkness of the night. We cannot so much as tell from whence they come, or whither they go; ver. 24, "By what way is the light parted" in the morning, when in an instant it shoots itself into all the parts of the air, above the horizon, as if the morning light flew upon the wings of an east wind, so swiftly, so strongly is it carried, scattering the darkness of the night as the east wind doth the clouds. Hence we read of the wings of the morning, *Ps.* cxxxix. 9; on which the light is conveyed to the uttermost parts of the sea, and scattered like an east wind upon the earth. It is a mighty change that passeth over us every morning by the return of the light, and every evening by the return of the darkness; but we expect them, and so they are no surprise or uneasiness to us. If we would in like manner count upon changes in our outward condition, we should neither in the brightest noon count upon perpetual day nor in the darkest midnight despair of the return of the morning. "God hath set the one over against the other," like the day and night, and so must we, *Eccl.* vii. 14.

Sixthly. Of the treasures of the snow and hail; ver. 22, 23, Hast thou entered into those, and taken a view of them? In the clouds the snow and hail are generated, and thence they come in such abundance, that one would think there were treasures of them laid up in store there, whereas indeed they are produced, *ex tempore*,—'suddenly,' as I may say, and *pro re nata*,—'for the occasion.' And sometimes they come so opportunely to serve the purposes of providence in God's fighting for his people, and against his and their enemies, that one would think they were laid up as magazines, or stores of arms, ammunition, and provisions, against "the time of trouble, the day of battle and war;" when God will either contend with the world in general, as in the deluge, when the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters fetched out of these treasures to drown a wicked world that waged war with heaven, or with some particular person, or parties, as when God out of these treasures fetched great hailstones wherewith to fight against the Canaanites, *Jos.* x. 11. See what folly it is to strive against God who is thus prepared for battle and war, and how much it is our interest to make our peace with him, and to keep ourselves in his love. God can fight as effectually with snow and hail, if he pleases, as with thunder and lightning, or the sword of an angel.

25 Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of
Or a way for the lightning of thunder; [waters,
26 To cause it to rain on the earth, *where* no man *is*;
On the wilderness, wherein *there is* no man;
27 To satisfy the desolate and waste *ground*;
And to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?
28 Hath the rain a father?
Or who hath begotten the drops of dew?
29 Out of whose womb came the ice?
And the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?
30 The waters are hid as *with* a stone,
And the face of the deep is frozen.
31 Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades,
Or loose the bands of Orion?
32 Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?
Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?
33 Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?
Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?
34 Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds,
That abundance of waters may cover thee?
35 Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go,
And say unto thee, Here we *are*?
36 Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?
Or who hath given understanding to the heart?

37 Who can number the clouds in wisdom?
Or who can stay the bottles of heaven,
38 When the dust groweth into hardness,
And the clods cleave fast together?
39 Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion?
Or fill the appetite of the young lions,
40 When they couch in *their* dens,
And abide in the covert to lie in wait?
41 Who provideth for the raven his food?
When his young ones cry unto God,
They wander for lack of meat.



ANCIENT ZODIACS.

Hitherto God had put such questions to Job as were proper to convince him of his ignorance and shortsightedness. Now he comes in the same manner to shew his impotency and weakness. As it is but little that he knows, and therefore he ought not to arraign the Divine counsels, so it is but little he can do, and therefore he ought not to oppose the proceedings of Providence. Let him consider what great things God doth, and try whether he can do the like, or whether he thinks himself an equal match for him.

First. God has thunder, and lightning, and rain, and frost at command; but Job has not, and therefore let him not dare to compare with God, or to contest with him. Nothing is more uncertain than what weather it shall be, nor more out of our reach to appoint, but it shall be what weather pleaseth God, not what pleaseth us; unless, as becomes us, whatever pleaseth God pleaseth us. Concerning this, observe here,

1. How great God is, 1st. He has a sovereign dominion over the waters, has appointed them their course, even then when they seem to overflow, and to be from under his check; ver. 25, he has divided a watercourse; directs the rain where to fall, even when the shower is most violent, with as much certainty as if it were conveyed by canals or conduit-pipes. Thus the hearts of kings are said to be in God's hand; and, as the rains, those rivers of God, he turneth them whithersoever he will. Every drop goes as it is directed. God has "sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more return to cover the earth;" and we see he is able to make good what he has promised, for he has the rain in a watercourse. 2nd. He hath dominion over the lightning and the thunder, which go not at random, but in the way that he directs them; and they are mentioned here, because he "prepares the lightnings for the rain," *Ps.* cxxxv. 7. Let not those that fear God be afraid of the lightning or the thunder; for they are not blind bullets, but go the way that God himself directs them, who means no hurt to them. 3rd. In directing the course of the rain, he doth not neglect the wilderness nor the desert land; ver. 26, 27, "where no man is." *First.* No man to be employed in taking care of the products. God's providence reaches farther than man's industry. If he had not more kindness for many of the inferior creatures than man has it would go ill with them. God can make the earth fruitful without any art or pains of ours, as, *Gen.* ii. 5, 6, when "there was not a man to till the ground, yet there went up a mist, and watered it;" but we cannot make it fruitful without God, it is he that gives the increase. *Secondly.* Where there is no man to be provided for, or to take the benefit of the fruits that are produced. Though God doth with a very peculiar favour visit and regard man, yet he doth not overlook the inferior creatures, but causeth "the bud of the tender herb to spring forth for food for all flesh, as well as for the service of man." Even the wild asses shall have their thirst quenched, *Ps.* civ. 11. God has enough for all, and wonderfully provides even for those creatures that man neither hath service from nor makes provision for. 4th. He is in a sense the father of the rain, ver. 28. It has no other father. He produceth it by his power, he governs and directs it, and makes what use he pleaseth of it. Even the small drops of the dew he distils upon the earth as the God of nature, and as the God of grace rains righteousness upon us; and is himself as the dew unto Israel: see *Hos.* xiv. 5, 6; *Mic.* v. 7. 5th. The ice and the frost, by which the waters are congealed and the earth incrustated, are produced by his providence, ver. 29, 30. These are very common things, which lessens the strangeness of them; but considering what a mighty change is made by them in a very little time,—how the waters are hid as with a stone, as with a gravestone laid upon them, so thick, so strong, is the ice that covers them, and the face even of the deep is sometimes frozen, we may well ask, "Out of whose womb came the ice?" What created power could produce such a wonderful work? No power but that of the Creator himself. Frost and snow come from him, and therefore should lead our thoughts and meditations to him, who doth such great things past finding out; and we shall the easier bear the inconveniences of winter weather if we learn to make this good use of it.

2. Observe, how weak man is. Can he do such things as these? Could Job? No; ver. 35, 36. 1st. He cannot command one shower of rain for the relief of himself or his friends. "Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds," those bottles of heaven, "that abundance of waters may cover thee," to water thy fields when they are dry and parched? If we lift up our voice to God to pray for rain, we may have it, *Zec.* x. 1; but, if we lift up our voice to the clouds to demand it, they will soon tell us they are not at our beck, and we shall go without it, *Jer.* xiv. 22. The heavens will not hear the earth unless God hear them, *Hos.* ii. 21. See what poor, indigent, depending creatures we are; we cannot do without rain, nor can we have it when we will. 2nd. He cannot commission one flash of lightning, if he had a mind to make use of it for the terror of his enemies; ver. 35, "Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go" on thine errand, and do the execution thou wishest for? will they come at thy call, "and say unto thee, Here we are?" No, the ministers of God's wrath will not be ministers of ours. Why should they, since "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God?" see *Lu.* ix. 55.

Secondly. God has the stars of heaven under his command and cognizance, and that we have not. Our meditations are now to rise higher, far above the clouds, to the glorious lights above. He instanceth not in the planets, which move in lower orbs, but in the fixed stars which are much higher. It is supposed that they have an influence upon this earth, notwithstanding their vast distance, not upon the minds of men, or the events of providence,—men's fate is not determined by their stars,—but upon the ordinary course of nature: they are set for signs and seasons, for days and years, *Gen.* i. 14; and if the stars have such a dominion over this earth, as it is called here, ver. 33, though they have their place in the heavens, and are but mere matter, much more has He who is their Maker and ours, and who is an eternal mind. Now see how weak we are.

1. We cannot alter the influences of the stars, ver. 31, not theirs that are instrumental to produce the pleasures of the spring; "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?" the seven stars, that constellation which lies in so small a compass, (none in less,) and yet sheds very benign influences upon the earth. Nor can we alter theirs that introduce the rigour of the winter. "Canst thou loose the bands of Orion?" that magnificent constellation, that makes so great a figure, (none greater,) dispenseth rough and unpleasing influences which we cannot control or repel. Both summer and winter will have their course; God can change them when he pleaseth, can make the summer cold, and so "bind the sweet influences of Pleiades," and the winter warm, and so "loose the bands of Orion," but we cannot.

2. It is not in our power to order the motions of the stars, nor are we intrusted with the conduct of them. God, who calleth the stars by their names, *Ps.* cxlvii. 4, calls them forth in their respective seasons, appoints them the time of their rising and setting; but this is none of our province, we cannot bring forth Mazzaroth, the stars in the southern signs, nor guide Arcturus, those in the northern, ver. 32. God can bring forth the stars to battle as he did when in their courses they fought against Sisera, and guide them in the attacks they are ordered to make; but man cannot do so.

3. We are not only unconcerned in the government of the stars, the government they are under, and the government they are intrusted with, (for they both rule and are ruled,) but utterly unacquainted with it; we know not the ordinances of heaven, ver. 33. So far are we from being able to change them, that we can give no account of them; they are a secret to us. Shall we then pretend to know God's counsels, and the reasons of them? If it were left to us to "set the dominion of the stars upon the earth," we should soon be at a loss. Shall we then teach God how to govern the world?

Thirdly. God is the author and giver, the father and fountain, of all wisdom and understanding, ver. 36. The souls of men are nobler and more excellent beings than the stars of heaven themselves, and shine brighter. The powers and faculties of reason with which man is endued, and the wonderful performances of thought, bring him into some alliance to the blessed angels; and whence comes this light but from the Father of lights? Who, but he, hath put wisdom into the inward parts of man, and given understanding to the heart? 1. The rational soul itself, and its capacities, come from him as the God of nature; for he "formeth the spirit of man within him." We did not make our own souls, nor can we describe how they act, or how they are united to our bodies. He only that made them knows them, and knows how to manage them; "he fashioneth men's hearts alike" in some things, and yet unlike in others. 2. True wisdom, its furniture and improvement, come from him as the God of grace, and the founder of every good and perfect gift. Shall we pretend to be wiser than God, who have all our wisdom from him? Nay, shall we pretend to be wise above our sphere, and beyond the limits which he that gave us our understanding sets to it? He designed we should with it serve God and do our duty; but never intended we should with it set up for directors of the stars or the lightning.

Fourthly. God has the clouds under his cognizance and government; but so have not we, ver. 37. Can any man, with all his wisdom, undertake to number the clouds? Or, as it may be read, to declare and describe the nature of them? Though they are near us, in our own atmosphere, yet we know little more of them than of the stars which are at so great a distance. And when the clouds have poured down rain in abundance, so that the dust grows into solid mire, and the clods cleave fast together, ver. 38, "Who can stay the bottles of heaven?" Who can stop them, that it may not always rain? The power and goodness of God is herein to be acknowledged that he gives the earth rain enough, but doth not surfeit it; softens it, but doth not drown it; makes it fit for the plough, but not unfit for the seed. As we cannot command a shower of rain, so we cannot command a fair day without God; so necessary, so constant, is our dependence on him.

Fifthly. God provides food for the inferior creatures; and it is by his providence, not by any care or pains of ours, that they are fed. The following chapter is wholly taken up with the instances of God's power and goodness about animals; and therefore some transfer the three last verses of this chapter to it, which speak of the provision made,

1. For the lions, ver. 39, 40. Thou dost not pretend that the clouds and stars have any dependence upon thee, for they are above thee, but on the earth thou thinkest thyself paramount; let us try that then. "Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion?" Thou valuest thyself upon thy possessions of cattle which thou wast once owner of, the oxen, and asses, and camels, that were fed at thy crib; but wilt thou undertake the maintenance of the lions, and the young lions, when they couch in their dens, waiting for a prey? No, thou needest not do it, they can shift for themselves without thee. Thou canst not do it, for thou hast not wherewithal to satisfy them. Thou darest not do it,—shouldest thou come to feed them, they would seize upon thee; but I do it. See the all-sufficiency of the Divine providence; it has wherewithal to "satisfy the desire of every living thing," even the most ravenous. See the bounty of the Divine providence, that wherever it has given life will give livelihood, even to those creatures that are not only not serviceable but dangerous to man. And see its sovereignty, that it suffers some creatures to be killed for the support of other creatures; the harmless sheep are torn to pieces to fill the appetite of the young lions, who yet sometimes are made to lack and suffer hunger, to punish them for their cruelty, while those that fear God want no good thing.

2. For the young ravens, ver. 41. As ravenous beasts, so ravenous birds, are fed by the Divine providence. "Who" but God "provides for the raven his food?" Man doth not; he takes care only of these creatures that are or may be useful to him; but God has a regard to all the works of his hands, even the meanest and least valuable. The ravens, young ones, are in a special manner necessitous, and God supplies them, *Ps.* cxlvii. 9. God's feeding the fowls, especially these fowls, *Mat.* vi. 26, is an encouragement to us to trust him for our daily bread. See here, 1. What distress the young ravens are often in; "they wander for lack of meat." The old ones, they say, neglect them, and do not provide for them as other birds do for their young; and, indeed, those that are ravenous to others are commonly barbarous to their own, and unnatural. 2. What they are supposed to do in that distress. They cry, for they are noisy, clamorous creatures, and this is interpreted "crying to God." It being the

cry of nature, it is looked upon as directed to the God of nature. The putting of so favourable a construction as this upon the cries of the young ravens may encourage us in our prayers, though we can but cry, Abba, Father. 3. What God doth for them. Some way or other he provides for them, so that they grow up and come to maturity. And he that takes this care of the young ravens certainly will not be wanting to his people or theirs. This, being but one instance of many of the Divine compassion, may give us occasion to think how much good our God doth every day beyond what we are aware of.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

God proceeds here to shew Job what little reason he had to charge him with unkindness, who was so compassionate to the inferior creatures, and took such a tender care of them: or to boast of himself and his own good deeds before God, which were nothing to the Divine mercies. He shews him also what great reason he had to be humble, who knew so little of the nature of the creatures about him, and had so little influence upon them, and to submit to that God on whom they all depend. He discourseth particularly, I. Concerning the wild goats and the hinds, ver. 1—4. II. Concerning the wild ass, ver. 5—8. III. Concerning the unicorn, ver. 9—12. IV. Concerning the peacock, ver. 12. V. Concerning the ostrich, ver. 13—18. VI. Concerning the horse, ver. 19—25. VII. Concerning the hawk and the eagle, ver. 26—30.

1 KNOWEST thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?
Or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?
2 Canst thou number the months *that* they fulfil?
Or knowest thou the time when they bring forth?
3 They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones,
They cast out their sorrows. [corn;
4 Their young ones are in good liking, they grow up with
They go forth, and return not unto them.
5 Who hath sent out the wild ass free?
Or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass?

SYRIAN ASS.

6 Whose house I have made the wilderness,
And the barren land his dwellings.
7 He scorneth the multitude of the city,
Neither regardeth he the crying of the driver.
8 The range of the mountains *is* his pasture,
And he searcheth after every green thing.
9 Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee,
Or abide by thy crib?
10 Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow?
Or will he harrow the vallies after thee?
11 Wilt thou trust him, because his strength *is* great?
Or wilt thou leave thy labour to him?
12 Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed,
And gather *it into* thy barn?

God here shews Job what a little acquaintance he had with the untamed creatures that run wild in the deserts, and lived at large, but were the care of the Divine providence; as,

First. The wild goats and the hinds. That which is taken notice of concerning them is the bringing forth and bringing up of their young ones. For, as every individual is fed, so every species of animals is preserved, by the care of the Divine providence, and, for aught we know, none extinct to this day. Observe here,

1. Concerning the production of their young. 1st. Man is wholly ignorant of the time when they bring forth, ver. 1, 2. Shall we pretend to tell what is in the womb of Providence, or what a day will bring forth, who know not the time of the pregnancy of a hind, or a wild goat? 2nd. Though they bring forth their young with a great deal of difficulty and sorrow, and have no assistance from man, yet, by the good providence of God they get through it; their young ones are safely produced, and their sorrows cast out and forgotten, ver. 3. Some think it is intimated, *Ps.* xxix. 9, that God by thunder helps the hinds in calving. Let it be observed, for the comfort of women in labour, that God helps even the hinds to bring forth their young; and shall he not much more succour them, and save them in child-bearing, who are his children in covenant with him?

2. Concerning the growth of their young; ver. 4, "they are in good liking," though they are brought forth in sorrow. After their dams have suckled them a while, they shift for themselves in the corn-fields, and are no more burthensome to them, which is an example to children, when they are grown up, not to be always hanging upon their parents, and craving from them, but to put forth themselves to get their own livelihood, and to requite their parents.

Secondly. The wild ass. A creature we frequently read of in Scripture; some say untameable. Man is said to be born as the wild ass's colt, so hard to be governed. Three things Providence has allotted to the wild ass: 1. An unbounded liberty; ver. 5, "Who" but God "hath sent out the wild ass free?" He hath given a disposition to it, and therefore a dispensation for it. The tame ass is bound to labour, the wild ass has no bonds on him. Note, Freedom from service, and liberty to range at pleasure, is but the privilege of a wild ass. It is pity any of the children of men should covet it, or value themselves by it. It is better labour and be good for something, than ramble and be good for nothing. But if among men Providence sets some at liberty, and suffers them to live at ease while others are doomed to servitude, we must not marvel at the matter, it is so among the brute creatures. 2. An unenclosed lodging; ver. 6, "Whose house I have made the wilderness," where he has room enough to traverse his ways, and snuff up the wind at his pleasure, as the wild ass is said to do, *Jer.* ii. 24, as if he were to live upon air, for it is the barren land that is his dwelling. Observe, The tame ass that labours, and is serviceable to man, has his master's crib to go to both for shelter and food, and lives in a fruitful land; but the wild ass that will have his liberty must have it in a barren land. He that will not labour let him not eat. He that will, shall eat the labour of his hands, and have also to give to him that needeth. Jacob the shepherd has good red pottage to spare, when Esau a sportsman was ready to perish for hunger. A farther description of the liberty and livelihood of the wild ass we have, ver. 7, 8. *First.* He has no owner, nor will he be in subjection. "He scorneth the multitude of the city." If they attempt to take him, and in order to that surround him with a multitude, he will soon get clear of them, and the crying of the driver is nothing to him. He laughs at those that live in the tumult and bustle of cities, (so Bishop Patrick,) thinking himself happier in the wilderness; and opinion is the rate of things. *Secondly.* Having no owner, he has no feeder, nor is any provision made for him, but he must shift for himself. "The range of the mountains is his pasture," and a bare pasture it is; there he searcheth after here and there a green thing as he can find it, and pick it up; whereas the labouring asses have green things in plenty, without their searching for them. From the untameableness of this and other creatures, we may infer how unfit we are to give law to Providence, who cannot give law even to a wild ass's colt.

Thirdly. The unicorn. *Rhem,* a 'strong' creature; *Num.* xxiii. 22, a stately proud creature, *Ps.* xcii. 10; he is able to serve, but not willing, and God here challenges Job to force him to it. Job expected every thing should be just as he would have it. Since thou dost pretend, saith God, to bring every thing to thy bow, begin with the unicorn, and try thy skill upon him. Now thine oxen and asses are all gone, try whether he will be willing to serve thee in their stead, ver. 9, and whether he will take up with the provision thou usedst to make for them; "Will he abide by thy crib?" No. 1. Thou canst not tame him; not bind him with his band, nor set him to draw the harrow, ver. 10. There are creatures that are willing to serve man, and seem to take a pleasure in it, and to have a love for their masters; but there are such as will never be brought to it. And it is the effect of sin. Man is revolted from his subjection to his Maker, and is therefore justly punished with the revolt of the inferior creatures from their subjection to him; and yet, as an instance of God's good will to man, there are some that are still serviceable to him. Though the wild bull (which some think is meant here by the unicorn) will not serve man, nor submit to his band in the furrows, yet there are tame bullocks that will, and other animals that are not *feræ naturæ*,—'of a wild nature,' in whom man may have a property, for whom he provides, and to whose service he is entitled. "Lord, what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him?" 2. Thou darest not trust him. Though his strength is great, yet thou wilt not leave thy labour to him as thou dost with thine asses or oxen, whom a little child may lead or drive, leaving to them all the pains. Thou wilt never depend upon the wild bull as likely to come to thy harvest work, much less to go through it, to "bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn," ver. 11, 12. And, because he will not serve about the corn, he wants the many good bits which the tame ox hath, whose mouth was not to be muzzled in treading out the corn; but therefore he will not draw the plough, because He that made him never designed him for it. A disposition to labour is as much the gift of God as an ability for it. And it is a great mercy if, where God gives strength for service, he gives a heart; and it is what we should pray for, and reason ourselves into, which the brutes cannot do; for, as among beasts, so among men, those may justly be reckoned wild and abandoned to the deserts that have no mind either to take pains or to do good.

13 *Gavest thou* the goodly wings unto the peacocks?
Or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?

OSTRICH.

14 Which leaveth her eggs in the earth,
And warmeth them in dust,
15 And forgetteth that the foot may crush them,
Or that the wild beast may break them.
16 She is hardened against her young ones, as though *they* *were* not her's:
Her labour is in vain without fear;
17 Because God hath deprived her of wisdom,
Neither hath he imparted to her understanding.
18 What time she lifteth up herself on high,
She scorneth the horse and his rider.

The ostrich is a wonderful animal, a very large bird, but never flies. Some have called it a winged camel. God here gives an account of it, and observes,

First. Something that it has in common with the peacocks, and that is, beautiful feathers, ver. 13. 'Gavest thou proud wings unto the peacocks?' so some read it. Fine feathers make proud birds. The peacock is an emblem of pride; when he struts and shews his fine feathers, Solomon in all his glory is not arrayed like him. The ostrich too has goodly feathers, and yet a foolish bird; for wisdom doth not always go along with beauty and gaiety. Other birds do not envy the peacock or the ostrich their gaudy colours, nor complain for want of them; why then should we repine if we see others wear better clothes than we can afford to wear? God gives his gifts variously, and those gifts are not always the most valuable that make the finest show. Who would not rather have the voice of the nightingale than the tail of the peacock? the eye of the eagle, and her soaring wing, and the natural affection of the stork, than the beautiful wings and feathers of the ostrich, that can never rise above the earth, and is without natural affection?

Secondly. Something that is peculiar to itself.

1. Carelessness of her young. And it is well this is peculiar to herself, for it is a very ill character. Observe, 1st. How she exposeth her eggs. She doth not retire to some private place, and make a nest there, as the sparrows and swallows do, *Ps.* lxxxiv. 3, and there lay eggs and her young. Most birds, as well as other animals, are strangely guided by natural instinct in providing for the preservation of their young; but the ostrich is a monster in nature, for she drops her eggs any where upon the ground, and takes no care to hatch them. If the sand and the sun will hatch them, well and good; they may for her, for she will not warm them, ver. 14. Nay, she takes no care to preserve them; the foot of the traveller may crush them, and the wild beast break them, ver. 15. But how then are any young ones brought forth, and whence is it that the species is not perished? We must suppose either that God by a special providence with the heat of the sun and sand (so some think) hatcheth the neglected eggs of the ostrich, as he feeds the neglected young ones of the raven, or that, though the ostrich often leaves her eggs thus, yet not always. 2nd. The reason why she doth thus expose her eggs. It is, *First.* For want of natural affection; ver. 16, "She is hardened against her young ones." To be hardened against any is an ill thing even in a brute creature, much more in a rational creature, that boasts of humanity; especially to be hardened against young ones, that cannot help themselves, and therefore merit compassion; that give no provocation, and therefore merit no hard usage. But it is worst of all for her to be hardened against her own young ones, as though they were not hers, whereas really they are parts of herself. Her labour in laying her eggs is in vain, and all lost, because she has not that fear and tender concern for them that she should have. Those are most likely to lose their labour that are least in fear of losing it. *Secondly.* For want of wisdom; ver. 17, "God has deprived her of wisdom." This intimates that the art which other animals have to nourish and preserve their young is God's gift, and, where it is not, God denies it, that by the folly of the ostrich, as well as by the wisdom of the ant, we may learn to be wise; for, 1st. As careless as the ostrich is of her eggs, many people are of their own souls; they make no provision for them, no proper nest in which they may be safe, leave them exposed to Satan and his temptations, and it is a certain evidence that they are deprived of wisdom. 2nd. So careless are many parents of their children; some of their bodies, not providing for their own house, their own bowels, and therefore worse than infidels, and as bad as the ostrich; but many more are thus careless of their children's souls, take no care of their education, send them abroad into the world untaught, unarmed, forgetting what corruption there is in the world through lust, which will certainly crush them. Thus their labour in rearing them comes to be in vain; it were better for their country they had never been born. 3rd. So careless are too many ministers of their people, with whom they should reside; but they leave them in the earth, and forget how busy Satan is to sow tares while men sleep. They overlook those whom they should oversee, and are really hardened against them.

2. Care of herself. She leaves her eggs in danger; but, if she herself be in danger, no creature shall ply the oar better to get out of the way of it than the ostrich, ver. 18. Then she lifts up her wings on high, (the strength of which then stands her in better stead than their beauty,) and with the help of them runs so fast that a horseman on full speed cannot overtake her; "She scorneth the horse and his rider." Many times those that are least under the law of natural affection contend most for the law of self-preservation. Let not the rider be proud of the swiftness of his horse, when so sottish and lubberly an animal as the ostrich shall have the heels of him.

19 Hast thou given the horse strength?
Hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?
20 Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?
The glory of his nostrils *is* terrible.
21 He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in *his* strength:
He goeth on to meet the armed men.
22 He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted;
Neither turneth he back from the sword.
23 The quiver rattleth against him,
The glittering spear and the shield.
24 He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage:
Neither believeth he that *it is* the sound of the trumpet.
25 He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha;
And he smelleth the battle afar off,
The thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

God, having displayed his own power in those creatures that are strong and despise man, here shews it in one scarce inferior to any of them in strength, and yet very tame and serviceable to man, and that is the horse; especially "the horse that is prepared against the day of battle," and is serviceable to man at a time when he has more than ordinary occasion for his service. It seems there was in Job's country a noble, generous breed of horses. Job, it is probable, kept a good stable of them, though they are not mentioned among his possessions; cattle, for use in husbandry, being there valued more than those for state and war, which alone horses were then reserved for, and they were not then put to such mean services as with us they are commonly put to. Concerning the great horse, that stately beast, it is here observed,

First. That he has a great deal of strength and spirit; ver. 19, "Hast thou given the horse strength?" He uses his strength for man, but has it not from him; God gave it him, who is the fountain of all the powers of nature, and yet he himself "delighteth not in the strength of the horse," *Ps.* cxlviii. 10; but has told us that "a horse is a vain thing for safety," *Ps.* xxxiii. 17. For running, drawing, and carrying, no creature that is ordinarily in the service of man hath so much strength as the horse hath, nor is of so stout and bold a spirit, not to be "made afraid as a grasshopper," but daring and forward to face danger. It is a mercy to man to have such a servant, which, though very strong, submits to the management of a child, and rebels not against his owner. But let not the strength of a horse be trusted to, *Hos.* xiv. 3; *Ps.* xx. 7; *Isa.* xxxi. 1, 3.

Secondly. That his neck and nostrils look great. His neck is clothed with a great thundering mane, which makes him formidable, and is an ornament to him. The glory of his nostrils when he snorts, flings up his head, and throws foam about, is terrible. Perhaps there might be at that time and in that country a more stately breed of horses than any we have now.

Thirdly. That he is very fierce and furious in battle, and chargeth with an undaunted courage, though he pusheth on in imminent danger of his life. 1. See how frolicsome he is, ver. 21. He paweth in the valley, scarce knowing what ground he stands upon. He is proud of his strength, and much more reason to be so that useth his strength in the service of man, and under his direction, than the wild ass, that useth it in contempt of man, and in a revolt from him, ver. 8. 2. See how forward he is to engage; "he goes on to meet the armed men," animated not by the goodness of the cause, or the prospect of honour, but only by "the sound of the trumpet, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting" of the soldiers, which are as bellows to the fire of his innate courage, and make him spring forwards with the utmost eagerness, as if he cried, "Ha, ha," ver. 25. How wonderfully are the brute creatures fitted for, and inclined to, the services for which they were designed. 3. See how fearless he is, how he despiseth death, and the most threatening dangers; ver. 22, "he mocks at fear," and makes a jest of it; slash at him with a sword, rattle the quiver, brandish the spear to drive him back, he will not retreat, but press forward, and even inspires courage into his rider. 4. See how furious he is. He curvets, and pranceth, and runs on with so much violence and heat against the enemy, that one would think he even swallowed the ground with fierceness and rage, ver. 24. High mettle is the praise of a horse rather than of a man, whom fierceness and rage ill become. This description of the war horse will help to explain that character which is given of presumptuous sinners, *Jer.* viii. 6, "Every one turneth to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle." When a man's heart is fully set in him to do evil, and he is carried on in a wicked way by the violence of inordinate appetites and passions, there is no making him afraid of the wrath of God, and the fatal consequences of sin. Let his own conscience set before him the curse of the law, the death that is the wages of sin, and all the terrors of the Almighty in battle array, and he mocks at this fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the flaming sword of the cherubim. Let ministers lift up their voice like a trumpet, to proclaim the wrath of God against him, he believeth not that it is the sound of the trumpet, nor that God and his heralds are in earnest with him; but what will be in the end hereof it is easy to foresee.

26 Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom,
And stretch her wings toward the south?
27 Doth the eagle mount up at thy command,
And make her nest on high?
28 She dwelleth and abideth on the rock,
Upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place.
29 From thence she seeketh the prey,
And her eyes behold afar off.
30 Her young ones also suck up blood:
And where the slain *are*, there *is* she.

The birds of the air are proofs of the wonderful power and providence of God, as well as the beasts of the earth. God here instanceth in two stately ones.

First. The hawk, a noble bird, of great strength and sagacity, and yet a bird of prey, ver. 26. This bird is here taken notice of for her flight, which is swift and strong, and especially for the course she steers towards the south, whither she follows the sun in winter, out of the colder countries in the north, especially when she is to cast her plumes and renew them. This is her wisdom, and it was God that gave her this wisdom, not man. Perhaps the extraordinary wisdom of the hawk's flight after her prey was not used then for men's diversion and recreation, as it has been since. It is pity the reclaimed hawk, that is taught to fly at man's command, and to make him sport, should at any time be abused to the dishonour of God, since it is from God that she receives that wisdom which makes her flight entertaining and serviceable.

Secondly. The eagle, a royal bird, and yet a bird of prey too; the permission of which, nay, the giving of power to which, may help to reconcile us to the prosperity of oppressors among men. The eagle is here taken notice of, 1. For the height of her flight. No bird soars so high, has so strong a wing, nor can so well bear the light of the sun. Now, doth she mount at thy command? ver. 27. Is it by any strength she has from thee, or dost thou direct her flight? No, it is by the natural power and instinct God has given her; she will soar out of thy sight, much more out of thy call. 2. For the strength of her nest. Her house is her castle and stronghold; she makes it on high and on the rock, the crag of the rock, ver. 28, which sets her and her young out of the

reach of danger. Secure sinners think themselves as safe in their sins as the eagle in her nest on high, in the clefts of the rock; *Jer.* xliv. 16, "But I will bring thee down from thence," saith the Lord. The higher ill men sit above the resentments of the earth, the nearer they ought to think themselves to the vengeance of Heaven. 3. For her quicksightedness; ver. 29, "her eyes behold afar off," not upwards, but downwards, in quest of her prey. In this she is an emblem of a hypocrite, who, while in the profession of religion he seems to rise towards heaven, at the same time his eye and heart are upon the prey on earth, some temporal advantage, some widow's house or other that he hopes to devour under pretence of devotion. 4. For the way she has of maintaining herself and her young. She preys upon living animals, which she seizeth and tears to pieces, and then carries to her young ones, who are taught to suck up blood. They do it by instinct, and know no better; but for men, that have reason and conscience, to thirst after blood, is what could scarce be believed, if there had not been in every age wretched instances of it. She also preys upon the dead bodies of men; "where the slain are, there is she." These birds of prey (in another sense than the horse, ver. 25,) smell the battle afar off; therefore when a great slaughter is to be made among the enemies of the church, the fowls are invited to "the supper of the great God, to eat the flesh of kings and captains," *Rev.* xix. 17, 19. Our Saviour refers to this instinct of the eagle, *Mat.* xxiv. 28, "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Every creature will make towards that which is its proper food; for He that provides them their food has implanted in them that inclination. These and many such instances of natural power and sagacity in the inferior creatures, which we cannot account for, oblige us to confess our own weakness and ignorance, and to give glory to God as the fountain of all being, power, wisdom, and perfection.

CHAPTER XL.

Many humbling puzzling questions God had put to Job in the foregoing chapter; now in this chapter, I. He demands an answer to them, ver. 1, 2. II. Job submits in an humble silence, ver. 3—5. III. God proceeds to reason with him, for his conviction, of the infinite distance and disproportion between him and God, and that he was by no means an equal match for him. He challengeth him, (ver. 6, 7,) to vie with him, if he durst, for justice, ver. 8; power, ver. 9; majesty, ver. 10; and dominion over the proud, ver. 11—14; and gives an instance of his power in one particular animal, here called Behemoth, ver. 15—24.

MOREOVER the LORD answered Job, and said,
2 Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct *him?*
He that reproveth God, let him answer it.
3 Then Job answered the LORD, and said,
4 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee?
I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.
5 Once have I spoken; but I will not answer:
Yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.

Here is, First. An humbling challenge which God gave to Job. After he had heaped up many hard questions upon him, by his manifest ignorance in the works of nature to shew him what an incompetent judge he was of the methods and designs of Providence, he clenches the nail with one demand more, which stands by itself here as the application of the whole. It should seem God paused awhile, as Elihu had done, to give Job time to say what he had to say, or to think of what God had said; but Job was in such confusion, that he remained silent, and therefore God here put him upon replying, ver. 1, 2. This is not said to be spoken out of the whirlwind, as before, and therefore some think God said it in a still small voice, which wrought more upon Job than the whirlwind did, as upon Elijah, 1 *Kin.* xix. 12, 13; "My doctrine shall drop as the rain," and then it doth wonders. Though Job had not spoken any thing, yet God is said to answer him; for he knows men's thoughts, and can return a suitable answer to their silence. Here,

1. God puts a convincing question to him: "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him?" Shall he pretend to dictate to God's wisdom, or prescribe to his will? Shall God receive instruction from every peevish complainer, and change the measures he has taken to please him? It is a question with disdain: "Shall any teach God knowledge?" *ch.* xxi. 22. It is intimated that those who quarrel with God do in effect go about to teach him how to mend his work. For if we contend with men like ourselves, as not having done well, we ought to instruct them how to do better; but is it a thing to be suffered that any man should teach his Maker? He that contends with God is justly looked upon as his enemy, and shall he pretend so far to have prevailed in the contest, as to prescribe to him? We are ignorant and short-sighted, but before him all things are naked and open. We are foolish, but his wisdom is infinite; we are depending creatures, but he is the sovereign Creator, and shall we pretend to instruct him? Some read it, 'Is it any wisdom to contend with the Almighty?' The answer is easy, No, it is the greatest folly in the world. Is it wisdom to contend with him whom it will certainly be our ruin to oppose, and unspeakably our interest to submit to?

2. He demands a speedy reply to it: "He that reproacheth God, let him answer" this question to his own conscience, and answer it thus, "Far be it from me to contend with the Almighty," or to instruct him. Let him answer all those questions which I have put if he can. Let him answer for his presumption and insolence, answer it at God's bar to his confusion. Those have high thoughts of themselves, and mean thoughts of God, who reprove any thing he saith or doth.

Secondly. Job's humble submission thereupon. Now Job came to himself, and began to melt into godly sorrow. When his friends reasoned with him, he did not yield, but the voice of the Lord is powerful. When the Spirit of truth is come he shall convince. They had condemned him for a wicked man; Elihu himself had been very sharp upon him, *ch.* xxxiv. 7, 8, 37; but God had not given him such hard words. We may sometimes have reason to expect better treatment from God, and a more candid construction of what we do, than we meet with from our friends. And this the good man is here overcome by, and yields himself a conquered captive to the grace of God.

1. He owns himself an offender, and has nothing to say in his own justification; ver. 4, "Behold, I am vile;" not only mean and contemptible, but vile and abominable in my own eyes. He is now sensible that he hath sinned, and therefore calls himself vile. Sin debaseth us, and penitents abase themselves, reproach themselves, are ashamed, yea, even confounded. I have acted undutifully to my father, ungratefully to my benefactor, unwisely for myself, and therefore I am vile. Job now vilifies himself as much as ever he had justified and magnified himself. Repentance changes men's opinion of themselves. Job had been too bold in demanding a conference with God, and thought he could make his part good with him; but now he is convinced of his error, and owns himself utterly unable to stand before God, or to produce any thing worth his notice; the veriest dunghill worm that ever crawled upon God's ground. While his friends talked with him he answered them, for he thought himself as good as they; but when God talked with him, he had nothing to say: for in comparison with him he sees himself nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing, vanity and vileness itself, and therefore, "What shall I answer thee?" God demanded an answer, ver. 2. Here he gives the reason of his silence. It was not because he was sullen, but because he was convinced he had been in the wrong. Those that are truly sensible of their own sinfulness and vileness dare not justify themselves before God, but are ashamed that ever they entertained such a thought, and in token of that shame lay their hand upon their mouth.

2. He promiseth not to offend any more as he had done; for Elihu had told him this was meet to be said unto God. When we have spoken amiss, we must repent it, and not repeat it, nor stand to it. He enjoins himself silence; ver. 4, "I will lay my hand upon my mouth," will keep that as with a bridle, to suppress all passionate thoughts which may arise in my mind, and keep them from breaking out in intemperate speeches. It is bad to think amiss, but it is much worse to speak amiss, for that is an allowance of the evil thought, and gives it an *imprimatur*,—'a sanction;' it is publishing the seditious libel; and therefore "If thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth," and let it go no farther, *Pr.* xxx. 32; and that will be an evidence for thee, that that which thou thoughtest thou allowest not. Job had suffered his evil thoughts to vent themselves; "Once have I spoken" amiss, "yea, twice;" that is, divers times, in one discourse and in another; but I have done, I will not answer, I will not stand to what I have said, nor say it again, "I will proceed no farther." Observe here what true repentance is. 1st. It is to rectify our errors, and the false principles we went upon in doing as we did. What we have long, and often, and vigorously maintained once, yea, twice, as soon as we are convinced that it is a mistake, we must retract it, not adhere to it any longer, but take shame to ourselves for holding it so long. 2nd. It is to return from every by-path, and to proceed not one step farther in it. 'I will not add,' so the word is. I will never indulge my passion so much again, nor give myself such a liberty of speech; will never say as I have said, nor do as I have done. Until it come to this, we come short of repentance. Farther observe, that those who dispute with God, will be silenced at last. Job had been very bold and forward in demanding a conference with God, and talked very big, how plain he would make his case, and how sure he was that he "should be justified, as a prince he would go near unto him," *ch.* xxxi. 37; he would come even to his seat, *ch.* xxiii. 3; but he has soon enough of it, he lets fall his plea, and will not answer. Lord, the wisdom and right is all on thy side, and I have done foolishly and wickedly in questioning it.

6 Then answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind,
7 Gird up thy loins now like a man: [and said,
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
8 Wilt thou also disannul my judgment?
Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?
9 Hast thou an arm like God?
Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?
10 Deck thyself now *with* majesty and excellency;
And array thyself with glory and beauty.
11 Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath:
And behold every one *that is* proud, and abase him.
12 Look on every one *that is* proud, *and* bring him low;
And tread down the wicked in their place.
13 Hide them in the dust together;
And bind their faces in secret.
14 Then will I also confess unto thee
That thine own right hand can save thee.

Job was greatly humbled for what God had already said, but not sufficiently; brought low, but not low enough; and therefore God here proceeds to reason with him in the same manner, and to the same purpose, as before, ver. 6. Observe, 1. Those who duly receive what they have heard from God, and profit by it, shall hear more from him. 2. Those that are truly convinced of sin, and penitent for it, yet have need to be more thoroughly convinced, and to be made more deeply penitent. Those that are under convictions, that have their sins set in order before their eyes, and their hearts broken for them, must learn from this instance not to catch at comfort too soon; it will be everlasting when it comes, and therefore it is necessary we be prepared for it by deep humiliation, that the wound be searched to the bottom, and not skinned over, and that we do not make more haste out of our convictions than good speed. When our hearts begin to melt and relent within us, let those considerations be dwelt upon and pursued which will help to make a thorough effectual thaw of it. God begins with a challenge, ver. 7, as before, *ch.* xxxviii. 3, "Gird up thy loins now like a man." If thou hast the courage and confidence thou hast pretended to, shew it now; but thou wilt soon be made to see and own thyself no match for me. This is that which every proud heart must be brought to at last, either by its repentance or by its ruin; and thus low must every mountain and hill be sooner or later brought. We must acknowledge,

First. That we cannot vie with God for justice. That the Lord is righteous and holy in his dealings with us, but we are unrighteous and unholy in our carriage towards him. We have a great deal to blame ourselves for, but nothing to blame him for; ver. 8, "Wilt thou disannul my judgment?" Wilt thou take exceptions to what I say and do, and bring a writ of error to reverse the judgment I have given, as erroneous and unjust? Many of Job's complaints had too much of a tendency this way; "I cry out of wrong," saith he, "but I am not heard;" but such language as this is by no means to be suffered. God's judgment cannot, must not, be disannulled, for we are sure it is according to truth, and therefore it is a great piece of impudence and iniquity in us to call it in question. What! saith God, "wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?" Must my honour suffer for the support of thy reputation? Must I be charged as dealing unjustly with thee, because thou canst not otherwise clear thyself from the censures thou liest under? Our duty is to condemn ourselves that God may be righteous; David is therefore ready

to own the evil he has done in God's sight, that God may be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth, *Ps.* li. 4; see *Neh.* ix. 33; *Dan.* ix. 7. But those are very proud, and very ignorant both of God and themselves, who to clear themselves will condemn God; and the day is coming when, if the mistake be not rectified in time by repentance, the eternal judgment will be both the confutation of the plea and the confusion of the prisoner, for the heavens shall declare God's righteousness, and all the world shall become guilty before him.

Secondly. That we cannot vie with God for power; and therefore, as it is great impiety, so it is great imprudence to contest with him, and we go as much against our interest as we do against reason and right; ver. 9, "Hast thou an arm like God?" equal to his in length and strength; or, "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him," as he did, *ch.* xxxvii. 1, 2, or doth now out of the whirlwind? To convince Job that he was not so able as he thought himself to contest with God, he shews him, 1. That he could never fight it out with him, nor carry his cause by force of arms. Sometimes among men controversies have been decided by battle, and the victorious champion is adjudged to have the right on his side; but, if it be put upon that issue between God and man, man would certainly go by the worse, for all the force he could raise against the Almighty would be but like briars and thorns before a consuming fire, *Isa.* xxvii. 4. Hast thou, a poor, weak worm of the earth, an arm comparable to His who upholdeth all things? The power of creatures, even of angels themselves, is derived from God, limited by him, and dependent on him; but the power of God is original, independent, and unlimited. He can do every thing without us; we can do nothing without him; and, therefore, we have not an arm like God. 2. That he could never talk it out with him, nor carry his cause by noise and big words, which sometimes, among men, go a great way towards the gaining of a point; "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" No; his voice will soon drown thine, and one of his thunders will overpower and overrule thy whispers. Man cannot speak so convincingly, so powerfully, nor with such a commanding, conquering force as God can, who speaks and it is done. His creating voice is called his thunder, *Ps.* civ. 7; so is that voice of his with which he terrifies and discomfits his enemies, 1 *Sam.* ii. 10, "Out of heaven shall he thunder upon them." The wrath of a king may sometimes be like the roaring of a lion, but can never pretend to imitate God's thunder.

Thirdly. That we cannot vie with God for beauty and majesty; ver. 10, If thou wilt enter into a comparison with him, and appear more amiable, put on thy best clothes, "deck thyself now with majesty and excellency." Appear in all the martial pomp, in all the royal pomp thou hast, make thy best of every thing that will set thee off, "array thyself with glory and beauty," such as may awe thy enemies and charm thy friends. But what is it all to the Divine majesty and beauty? No more than the light of a glowworm to that of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. God decks himself with such majesty and glory as is the terror of devils and all the powers of darkness, and makes them tremble; he arrays himself with such glory and beauty as is the wonder of angels and all the saints in light, and makes them rejoice. David could dwell all his days in God's house to behold the beauty of the Lord. But in comparison with this, what is all that majesty and excellency with which princes think to make themselves feared, and all that glory and beauty with which lovers think to make themselves beloved? If Job think in contending with God to carry the day by looking great and making a figure, he is quite mistaken. "The sun shall be ashamed and the moon confounded when God shines forth."

Fourthly. That we cannot vie with God for dominion over the proud, ver. 11—14. Here the cause is put upon this short issue: if Job can humble and abase proud tyrants and oppressors as easily and effectually as God can, it shall be acknowledged that he has some colour to compare with God. Observe here,

1. The justice Job is here challenged to do; and that is to bring the proud low, with a look. If Job will pretend to be a rival with God, especially if he pretend to be a judge of his actions, he must be able to do this.

1st. It is here supposed that God can do it, and will do it himself, else he would not have put it thus upon Job. By this God proves himself to be God, that he resisted the proud, sat Judge upon them, and is able to bring them to ruin. Observe here, *First.* That proud people are wicked people, and pride is at the bottom of a great deal of the wickedness that is in this world, both towards God and man. *Secondly.* Proud people will certainly be abased and brought low, for pride goes before destruction. If they bend not, they will break; if they humble not themselves by true repentance, God will humble them to their everlasting confusion. The wicked will be trodden down in their place; that is, wherever they are found. Though they pretend to have a place of their own, and to have taken root in it, yet there they shall be trodden down, and all the wealth and power and interest which their place entitles them to, will not be their security. *Thirdly.* The wrath of God scattered among the proud will humble them and break them, and bring them down. If he casts abroad the rage of his wrath, as he will do at the great day, and sometimes doth in this life, the stoutest heart cannot hold out against him. Who knows the power of his anger? *Fourthly.* God can and doth easily abase proud tyrants. He can look upon them, and bring them low, can put them to shame and fear and utter ruin with one angry look, as he can with a gracious look revive the hearts of the contrite ones. *Fifthly.* He can and will at last do it effectually, ver. 13; not only bring them to the dust, from which they might hope to arise, but hide them in the dust, like the proud Egyptian whom Moses slew and hid in the sand, *Ex.* ii. 12; that is, they shall not only be brought to death, but brought to the grave, that pit out of which there is no return. They were proud of the figure they made, but they shall be buried in oblivion, and be no more remembered than those that are hid in the dust—out of sight and out of mind. They were linked in leagues and confederacies to do mischief, and are now bound in bundles, they are hid together; not their rest, but their shame together is in the dust, *ch.* xvii. 16. Nay, they are treated as malefactors, who, when condemned, had their faces covered as Haman's was; he binds their faces in secret, or as dead men. Lazarus, in the grave, had his face bound about. So complete will the victory be that God will gain at last over proud sinners that set themselves in opposition to him. Now by this he proves himself to be God. Doth he thus hate proud men? then he is holy. Will he thus punish them? then he is the just Judge of the world. Can he thus humble them? then he is the Lord Almighty. When he had abased proud Pharaoh, and hid him in the sand of the Red sea, Jethro from thence inferred that doubtless the Lord is greater than all gods, for wherein the proud enemies of his Israel dealt proudly he was above them, he was too hard for them, *Ex.* xviii. 11: see *Rev.* xix. 1, 2.

2nd. It is here proposed to Job to do it. He had been passionately quarrelling with God and his providence, casting abroad the rage of his wrath towards heaven; as if he thought thereby to bring God himself to his mind. Come, saith God, try thy hand first upon proud men, and thou wilt soon see how little they value the rage of thy wrath; and shall I then regard it or be moved by it? Job had complained of the prosperity and power of tyrants and oppressors, and was ready to charge God with maladministration for suffering it: but he ought not to find fault except he could mend. If God, and he only, has power enough to humble and bring down proud men, no doubt he has wisdom enough to know when and how to do it, and it is not for us to prescribe to him, or to teach him how to govern the world. Unless we had an arm like God, we must not think to take his work out of his hands.

2. The justice which is here promised shall be done him, if he can perform such mighty works as these; ver. 14, "Then will I also confess unto thee that thy right hand" is sufficient to "save thee," though, after all, it would be too weak to contend with me. It is the innate pride and ambition of man that he would be his own saviour, would have his own hands sufficient for him, and be independent; but it is presumption to pretend to it; our own hands cannot save us by recommending us to God's grace, much less by rescuing us from his justice. Unless we could by our own power humble our enemies, we cannot pretend by our own power to save ourselves; but if we could, God himself would confess it. He never did, nor ever will, defraud any man of his just praise, nor deny him the honour he has merited. But, since we cannot do this, we must confess unto him that our own hands cannot save us, and therefore into his hand we must commit ourselves.

15 Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee;
He eateth grass as an ox.

HIPPOPOTAMUS.

16 Lo now, his strength *is* in his loins,
And his force *is* in the navel of his belly.
17 He moveth his tail like a cedar:
The sinews of his stones are wrapped together.
18 His bones *are as* strong pieces of brass;
His bones *are* like bars of iron.
19 He *is* the chief of the ways of God: [*unto him.*
He that made him can make his sword to approach
20 Surely the mountains bring him forth food,
Where all the beasts of the field play.
21 He lieth under the shady trees,
In the covert of the reed, and fens.
22 The shady trees cover him *with* their shadow;
The willows of the brook compass him about.
23 Behold, he drinketh up a river, *and* hasteth not:
He trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.
24 He taketh it with his eyes:
His nose pierceth through snares.

God, for the farther proving of his own power, and disproving of Job's pretensions, concludes his discourse with the description of two huge, vast, mighty animals, far exceeding man in bulk and strength; one he calls Behemoth, the other Leviathan. In these verses we have the former described. "Behold now behemoth," and consider whether thou art able to contend with him who made that beast and gave him all that power that he hath, and whether it is not thy wisdom rather to submit to him, and make thy peace with him. Behemoth signifies beasts in general, but must here be meant of some one particular species. Some understand it of the bull; others of an amphibious animal, well known, they say, in Egypt, called the river horse, hippopotamus, living among the fish in the river Nilus, but coming out to feed upon the earth. But I confess I see no reason to depart from the ancient and most generally received opinion, that it is the elephant that is here described, which is a very strong, stately creature, of a very large stature above any other, and of wonderful sagacity, and of so great a reputation in the animal kingdom, that among so many fourfooted beasts as we have had the natural history of, *ch.* xxxviii. and xxxix., we can scarce suppose this should be omitted. Observe,

First. The description here given of the behemoth.

1. His body is very strong and well built. "His strength is in his loins," ver. 16. His bones, compared with those of other creatures, are like bars of iron, ver. 18. His backbone so strong, that, though his tail be not large, yet he moves it like a cedar, with a commanding force, ver. 17. Some understand it of the trunk of the elephant, for the word signifies any extreme part, and in

that there is indeed a wonderful strength. So strong is the elephant in his back and loins, and the sinews of his thighs, that he will carry a large wooden tower, and a great number of fighting men in it. No animal whatsoever comes near the elephant for strength of body, which is the main thing insisted on in this description.

2. He feeds on the products of the earth, and doth not prey upon other animals; he "eateth grass as an ox," ver. 15; "the mountains bring him forth food," ver. 20; and the beasts of the field do not tremble before him, nor flee from him, as from a lion; but they play about him, knowing they are in no danger from him. This may give us occasion, 1st. To acknowledge the goodness of God in ordering it so that a creature of such bulk, that required so much food, should not feed upon flesh, for then multitudes must die to keep him alive, but should be content with the grass of the field, to prevent such destruction of lives as otherwise must have been made. 2nd. To commend living upon herbs and fruits without flesh, according to the original appointment of man's food, *Gen.* i. 29. Even the strength of an elephant, as of a horse and an ox, may be supported without flesh, and why not those of a man? Though, therefore, we use the liberty God has allowed us, yet, be not among riotous eaters of flesh, *Pr.* xxiii. 20. To commend a quiet and peaceable life. Who would not rather, like the elephant, have his neighbours easy and pleasant about him, than, like the lion, have them all afraid of him?

3. He lodgeth "under the shady trees," ver. 21, which "cover him with their shadow," ver. 22, where he has a free and open air to breathe in; while the lions, that live by prey, when they would repose themselves, are obliged to retire into a close and dark den, to live therein, and to abide in the covert of that, *ch.* xxxviii. 40. They that are a terror to others cannot but be sometimes a terror to themselves too; but they will be easy that will let others be easy about them; and the reed and fens, and the willows of the brook, though a very weak and slender fortification, yet are sufficient for the defence and security of those who therefore dread no harm, because they design none.

4. That he is a very great and greedy drinker; not of wine and strong drink,—to be greedy of that is peculiar to man, who, by his drunkenness, makes a beast of himself,—but of fair water. 1st. His belly is big, and must be filled, and therefore he must have supply accordingly, ver. 23. He drinks so much that one would think he could drink up a river, if you would give him time and not hasten him. Or, when he drinks, he hasteth not, as those do that drink in fear; he is confident of his own strength and safety, and therefore makes no haste when he drinks, no more haste than good speed. 2nd. His eye is bigger than his belly; for when he is very thirsty, having been long kept without water, he "trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth," and even "takes it with his eyes," ver. 24. As a covetous man causeth his eyes to fly upon the wealth of this world, which he is greedy of, so this great beast is said to snatch, or draw up, even a river, with his eyes. 3rd. His nose has in it strength enough for both; for when he goes greedily to drink with it he pierceth through snares, or nets, which perhaps are laid in the water to catch fish. He makes nothing of the difficulties that lie in his way, so great is his strength, and so eager his appetite.

Secondly. The use that is to be made of this description. We have taken a view of this mountain of a beast, this overgrown animal, which is here set before us, not merely as a show, as sometimes it is in our country, to satisfy our curiosity, and to amuse us, but as an argument with us to humble ourselves before the great God; for,

1. He made this vast animal, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made; it is the work of his hands, the contrivance of his wisdom, the product of his power; it is "behemoth which I made," ver. 15. Whatever strength this or any other creature hath, it is derived from God, who therefore must be acknowledged to have all power originally and infinitely in himself, and such an arm as it is not for us to contest with. This beast is here called the chief in its kind of the ways of God, ver. 19; an eminent instance of the Creator's power and wisdom. They that will peruse the accounts given by historians of the elephant will find that his capacities approach nearer to those of reason than the capacities of any other brute creature whatsoever; and therefore he is fitly called "the chief of the ways of God," in the inferior part of the creation, no creature below man being preferable to him.

2. He made him with man, as he made other four-footed beasts, on the same day with man, *Gen.* i. 25, 26, whereas the fish and fowl were made the day before, and to live and move on the same earth, in the same element; and therefore man and beast are said to be jointly preserved by the Divine providence, as fellow commoners, *Ps.* xxxvi. 6. It is "behemoth which I made with thee;" I made that beast as well as thee, and he doth not quarrel with me; why then dost thou? Why shouldst thou demand peculiar favours because I made thee, *ch.* x. 9, when I made the behemoth likewise with thee? I made thee as well as that beast, and therefore can as easily manage thee at pleasure as that beast; and will do it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose. I made him with thee that thou mayest look upon him and receive instruction. We need not go far for proofs and instances of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion; they are with us, they are near us, they are under our eye wherever we are.

3. "He that made him can make his sword to approach to him," ver. 19; that is, the same hand that made him, notwithstanding his great bulk and strength, can unmake him again at pleasure, and kill an elephant as easily as a worm or a fly, without any difficulty, and without impeachment either of waste or wrong. God that gave to all the creatures their being, may take away the being he gave; for may he not do what he will with his own? And he can do it; he that has power to create with a word, no doubt has power to destroy with a word, and can as easily speak the creature into nothing as at first he spoke it out of nothing. The behemoth perhaps is here intended (as well as the leviathan afterwards) to represent those proud tyrants and oppressors, whom God had just now challenged Job to abase and bring down. They think themselves as well fortified against the judgments of God as the elephant with his bones of brass and iron; but he that made the soul of man knows all the avenues to it, and can make the sword of justice—his wrath—to approach to it, and touch it in the most tender and sensible part. He that framed the engine, and put the parts of it together, knows how to take it in pieces. Woe to him, therefore, that strives with his Maker; for he that made has therefore power to make him miserable, and will not make him happy unless he will be ruled by him.

CHAPTER XLI.

The description here given of the leviathan, a very large, strong, formidable fish, or water animal, is designed yet farther to convince Job of his own impotency, and of God's omnipotence, that he might be humbled for his folly in making so bold with him as he had done. I. To convince Job of his own weakness, he is here challenged to subdue and tame this leviathan if he could, and make himself master of him, ver. 1—9; which because he cannot do, he must own himself utterly unable to stand before the great God, ver. 10. II. To convince Job of God's power and terrible majesty, divers particular instances are here given of the strength and terror of the leviathan, which is no more than what God has given him, nor more than he has under his check, ver. 11, 12. The face of the leviathan is here described to be terrible, ver. 13, 14: his scales close, ver. 15—17; his breath and neesings sparkling, ver. 18—21; his flesh firm, ver. 22—24; his strength and spirit when he is attacked insuperable, ver. 25—30; his motions turbulent and disturbing to the waters, ver. 31, 32. So that upon the whole matter he is a very terrible creature, and man is no match for him, ver. 33, 34.

CANST thou draw out leviathan with an hook?
Or his tongue with a cord *which* thou lettest down?
2 Canst thou put an hook into his nose?
Or bore his jaw through with a thorn?
3 Will he make many supplications unto thee?
Will he speak soft *words* unto thee?
4 Will he make a covenant with thee?
Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?
5 Wilt thou play with him as *with* a bird?
Or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?
6 Shall the companions make a banquet of him?
Shall they part him among the merchants?
7 Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons?
Or his head with fish spears?
8 Lay thine hand upon him,
Remember the battle, do no more.
9 Behold, the hope of him is in vain:
Shall not *one* be cast down even at the sight of him?
10 None *is so* fierce that dare stir him up:
Who then is able to stand before me?

Whether this leviathan be a whale or crocodile is a great dispute among the learned, which I will not undertake to determine; some of the particulars agree more easily to the one, others to the other; both are very strong and fierce, and the power of the Creator appears in them. The ingenious Sir Richard Blackmore, though he admits the more received opinion concerning the behemoth, that that must be meant of the elephant, yet agrees with the learned Bochart's notion of the leviathan, that it is the crocodile, which was so well known in the river of Egypt. I confess that which inclines me rather to understand it of the whale, is not only because it is much larger, and a nobler animal, but because in the history of the creation there is such an express notice taken of it as is not of any other species of animals whatsoever, *Gen.* i. 21, "God created great whales;" by which it appears not only that whales were well known in those parts in Moses' time, who lived a little after Job; but that the creation of whales was generally looked upon as a most illustrious proof of the eternal power and godhead of the Creator; and we may conjecture that this was the reason (for otherwise it seems unaccountable) why Moses there so particularly mentions the creation of the whales, because God has so lately, in this discourse with Job, more largely insisted upon the bulk and strength of that creature than of any other, as the proof his power; and the leviathan is here spoken of as an inhabitant of the sea, ver. 31, which the crocodile is not; and *Ps.* civ. 25, 26, "there," in "the great and wide sea is that leviathan." Here in these verses,

First. He shews how unable Job was to master the leviathan. 1. That he could not catch him as a little fish with angling, ver. 1, 2. He had no bait wherewith to deceive him, no hook wherewith to catch him, no fish-line wherewith to draw him out of the water, nor a thorn to run through his gills on which to carry him home. 2. That he could not make him his prisoner, nor force him to cry quarter, or surrender himself at discretion, ver. 3, 4. He knows his own strength too well to make many supplications to thee, and to make a covenant with thee to be thy servant, on condition thou wilt save his life. 3. That he could not entice him into a cage, and keep him there, as a bird for the children to play with, ver. 5. There are creatures so little, so weak, as to be easily restrained thus, and triumphed over; but the leviathan is none of those; he is made to be the terror, not the sport and diversion, of mankind. 4. That he could not have him served up to his table as a fish dinner; he and his companions could not make a banquet of him; his flesh is too strong to be fit for food; nor, if he were good fish, is he so easily catched. 5. That they could not enrich themselves with the spoil of him. "Shall they part him among the merchants," the bones to one, the oil to another? so they will do if they can catch him: but it is probable the art of fishing for whales was not brought to perfection then as it has been since. 6. That they could not be the death of him; could not "fill his head with fish-spears," ver. 7. He kept out of the reach of their instruments of slaughter; or, if they touched him, they could not touch him to the quick. 7. That it was to no purpose to attempt it; the hope of taking him is in vain, ver. 9. If men go about to seize him, so formidable is he that the very sight of him will give them enough, and make a stout man ready to faint away; "Shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?" and will not that deter the pursuers from their attempt? Job is bid, at his peril, to lay his hand upon him; ver. 8, Touch him if thou dare; remember the battle, how unable thou art to encounter such a force, and what is therefore likely to be the issue of the battle, and do no more, but desist from the attempt. It is good to remember the battle before we engage in a war, and put off the harness in time, if we foresee it will be to no purpose to gird it on. Job is hereby admonished not to proceed in his controversy with God, but to make his peace with him, remembering what the battle will certainly end in if we come to an engagement: see *Isa.* xxvii. 4, 5.

Secondly. From thence he infers how unable he was to contend with the Almighty. "None is so fierce," none so fool-hardy, that dare stir up the leviathan, ver. 10, as knowing he will certainly be too hard for them; and "who then is able to stand before God," either to impeach and arraign his proceedings, or to outface the power of his wrath? If the inferior creatures that are put under the feet of man, and over whom he has dominion, keep us in awe thus, how terrible must the majesty of our great Lord be, who has a sovereign dominion over us, and against whom man has been so long in rebellion? "Who can stand before him when once he is angry?"

11 Who hath prevented me, that I should repay *him?*
Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine.
12 I will not conceal his parts, nor his power,
Nor his comely proportion

13 Who can discover the face of his garment?
Or who can come *to him* with his double bridle?
14 Who can open the doors of his face?
His teeth *are* terrible round about.
15 *His* scales *are his* pride,
Shut up together *as with* a close seal.
16 One is so near to another,
That no air can come between them.
17 They are joined one to another,
They stick together, that they cannot be sundered.
18 By his neesings a light doth shine,
And his eyes *are* like the eyelids of the morning.

CROCODILE.

19 Out of his mouth go burning lamps,
And sparks of fire leap out.
20 Out of his nostrils goeth smoke,
As *out* of a seething pot or caldron.
21 His breath kindleth coals,
And a flame goeth out of his mouth.
22 In his neck remaineth strength,
And sorrow is turned into joy before him.
23 The flakes of his flesh are joined together:
They are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved.
24 His heart is as firm as a stone;
Yea, as hard as a piece of the nether *millstone*.
25 When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid:
By reason of breakings they purify themselves.
26 The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold:
The spear, the dart, nor the habergeon.
27 He esteemeth iron as straw,
And brass as rotten wood.
28 The arrow cannot make him flee:
Sling stones are turned with him into stubble.
29 Darts are counted as stubble:
He laugheth at the shaking of a spear.
30 Sharp stones *are* under him:
He spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire.
31 He maketh the deep to boil like a pot:
He maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.
32 He maketh a path to shine after him;
One would think the deep *to be* hoary.
33 Upon earth there is not his like,
Who is made without fear.
34 He beholdeth all high *things:*
He *is* a king over all the children of pride.

God having in the foregoing verses shewed Job how unable he was to deal with the leviathan, here sets forth his own power in that massy mighty creature. Here is,

First. God's sovereign dominion and independency laid down, ver. 11. 1. That he is indebted to none of his creatures. If any pretend he is indebted to them, let them make their demand and prove their debt, and they shall receive it in full, and not by composition. "Who has prevented me?" that is, who has laid any obligations upon me by any service they have done me? Who can pretend to be beforehand with me? If any were, I would not long be behindhand with them; I would soon repay them. The apostle quotes this for the silencing of all flesh in God's presence, *Rom.* xi. 35, "who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" As God doth not inflict upon us the evils we have deserved, so he doth bestow upon us the favours we have not deserved. 2. That he is the rightful Lord and owner of all the creatures. "Whatsoever is under the whole heavens," animate or inanimate, "is mine," (and particularly this leviathan,) at my command and dispose, what I have an incontestable property in, and dominion over. All is his; we are his, all we have and do, and therefore we cannot make God our debtor; but of thine own, Lord, have we given thee. All is his; and therefore if he were indebted to any, he has wherewithal to repay them; the debt is in good hands. All is his; and therefore he needs not our services, nor can he be benefited by them. "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof," *Ps.* l. 12.

Secondly. The proof and illustration of it from the wonderful structure of the leviathan, ver. 12. The parts of his body, the power he exerts, especially when he is set upon, and the comely proportion of the whole of him, is what God will not conceal, and therefore what we must observe and acknowledge the power of God in. Though he be a creature of monstrous bulk, yet there is in him a comely proportion. In our eye, beauty lies in little, (*inest sua gratia parvis*,—'little things have a gracefulness all their own,') because we ourselves are little; but in God's eye even the leviathan is comely; and if he pronounce even the whale, even the crocodile so, it is not for us to say of any of the works of his hands they are ugly or ill-favoured, it is enough to say so, as we have cause, of our own works. God here goes about to give us an anatomy, as it were, of the leviathan, for his works appear most beautiful and excellent, and his wisdom and power appear most in them when they are taken in pieces and viewed in their several parts and proportions.

1. The leviathan, even *prima facie*,—'at first sight,' appears formidable and inaccessible, ver. 13, 14. Who dares come so near him while he is alive as to discover or take a distinct view of the face of his garment, the skin with which he is clothed as with a garment? so near him as to bridle him like a horse, and so lead him away? so near him as to be within reach of his jaws, which are like a double bridle? Who will venture to look into his mouth, as we do into a horse's mouth? He that opens the doors of his face will see his teeth terrible round about, strong and sharp, and fitted to devour; it would make a man tremble to think of having a leg or an arm between them.

2. His scales are his beauty and strength, and therefore his pride, ver. 15—17. The crocodile is indeed remarkable for his scales; if we understand it of the whale, we must understand by these, 'shields,' (for so the word is,) the several coats of his skin; or there might be whales in that country with scales. That which is remarkable concerning the scales is, that they stick so close together, by which he is not only kept warm,—for no air can pierce him,—but kept safe; for no sword can pierce him through those scales. Fishes that live in the water are fortified accordingly by the wisdom of Providence, which gives clothes as it gives cold.

3. He scatters terror with his very breath and looks. If he sneeze, or spout up water, it is like a light shining, either with the froth, or the light of the sun shining through it, ver. 18. The eyes of the whale are reported in the night time to shine like a flame, or, as here, "like the eyelids of the morning;" the same they say of the crocodile. The breath of this creature is so hot and fiery, from the great natural heat within, that burning lamps and sparks of fire, smoke, and a flame, are said to go out of his mouth, even such as one would think sufficient to set coals on fire, ver. 19—21. Probably these hyperbolical expressions are used concerning the leviathan, to intimate the power and terror of the wrath of God, for that is it which all this is designed to convince us of. "Fire out of his mouth devours," *Ps.* xviii. 7, 8; "the breath of the Almighty, like a stream of brimstone, kindles Tophet," and will for ever keep it burning, *Isa.* xxx. 33. The wicked one shall be consumed with the breath of his mouth, 2 *Thes.* ii. 8.

4. He is of invincible strength, and most terrible fierceness, so that he frightens all that come in his way, but is not himself frightened by any. Take a view of his neck, and there remains strength, ver. 22. His head and his body are well set together. Sorrow rejoiceth, or rides in triumph before him; for he makes terrible work wherever he comes. Or those storms which are the sorrow of others are his joy; what is tossing to others is dancing to him. His flesh is well knit, ver. 23. The flakes of it are joined so close together, and are so firm, that it is hard to pierce it; he is as if he were all bone; his flesh is of brass, which Job had complained his was not, *ch.* vi. 12. His heart is as firm as a stone, ver. 24. He has spirit equal to his bodily strength; and though he is bulky, he is sprightly and not unwieldy. As his flesh and skin cannot be pierced, so his courage cannot be daunted; but, on the contrary, he daunts all he meets, and puts them into a consternation; ver. 25, "When he raiseth up himself," like a moving mountain in the great waters, even "the mighty are afraid," lest he overturn their ships, or do them some other mischief. "By reason of the breakings" he makes in the water, which threaten death, "they purify themselves," confess their sins, betake themselves to their prayers, and get ready for death. We read, *ch.* iii. 8, of those who, when they raise up a leviathan, are in such a fright that they curse the day. It was a fear which it seems used to drive some to their curses, and others to their prayers; for as now, so then, there were seafaring men of different characters, and on whom the terrors of the sea have contrary effects; but all agree there is a great fright among them when the leviathan raiseth up himself.

5. All the instruments of slaughter that are used against him do him no hurt, and therefore are no terror to him, ver. 26—29. The sword and the spear, which wound nigh at hand, are nothing to him; the darts, arrows, and sling-stones, which wound at a distance, do him no damage; nature has so well armed him, *cap-a-pie*,—'at all points,' against them all. The defensive weapons which men use when they engage leviathan, as the habergeon, or breastplate, often stead men no more than their offensive weapons; iron and brass are to him as straw and rotten wood, and he laughs at them. It is the picture of a hard-hearted sinner, that despiseth the terrors of the Almighty, and laughs at all the threatenings of his word. The leviathan so little dreads the weapons that are used against him, that, to shew how hardy he is, he chooseth to lie on the sharp stones, the sharp pointed things, ver. 30, and lies as easy there as if he lay on the soft mire. Those that would endure hardness must inure themselves to it.

6. His very motion in the water troubles it, and puts it into a ferment, ver. 31, 32. When he rolls and tosseth, and makes a bustle in the water, or is in pursuit of his prey, "he makes the deep to boil like a pot;" he raiseth

a great froth and foam upon the water, such as is upon a boiling pot, especially a pot of boiling ointment. And he makes a path to shine after him, which even a ship in the midst of the sea doth not, *Pr.* xxx. 19. One may trace the leviathan under water by the bubbles on the surface, and yet who can take that advantage against him in pursuing him? Men track hares in the snow, and kill them, but he that tracks the leviathan dares not come near him.

Lastly, Having given this particular account of "his parts, and his power, and his comely proportion," he concludes with four things in general, concerning this animal, ver. 33, 34:—1. That he is a nonsuch among the inferior creatures; "upon earth there is not his like." No creature in this world is comparable to him for strength and terror. Or the earth is here distinguished from the sea; 'his dominion is not upon the earth,' so some, but in the waters. None of all the savage creatures upon earth come near him for bulk and strength; and it is well for man that he is confined to the waters, and there has a watch set upon him (*ch.* vii. 12) by the Divine providence; for if such a terrible creature were allowed to roam and ravage upon this earth, it would be an unsafe and uncomfortable habitation for the children of men, for whom it is intended. 2. That he is more bold and daring than any other creature whatsoever. "He is made without fear." The creatures are as they are made; the leviathan has courage in his constitution, nothing can frighten him; other creatures, quite contrary, seem as much designed for flying as this for fighting; among men some in their natural temper are bold, others are timorous. 3. That he is himself very proud; though lodged in the deep, yet "he beholdeth all high things." The rolling waves, the impending rocks, the hovering clouds, and the ships under sail with top and top-gallant, this mighty animal beholds with contempt, for he doth not think they either lessen him or threaten him. Those that are great are apt to be scornful. 4. That "he is a king over all the children of pride," that is, he is the proudest of all proud ones. He has more to be proud of (so Mr. Caryl expounds it) than the proudest people in the world have; and so it is a mortification to the haughtiness and lofty looks of men. Whatever bodily accomplishments men are proud of and puffed up with, the leviathan excels them, and is a king over them. Some read it as to understand it of God: 'He that beholdeth all high things, even he is King over all the children of pride.' He can tame the behemoth, *ch.* xl. 19, and so he can the leviathan, as big as they are, and as stout-hearted as they are. This discourse concerning those two animals was brought in to prove that it is God who can "look upon proud men and abase them, bring them low, and tread them down, and hide them in the dust," *ch.* xl. 11—13; and so it concludes with a *quod erat demonstrandum*,—'that which was to be demonstrated.' There is one that "beholds all high things," and wherein men deal proudly, is above them; "he is king over all the children of pride," whether brutal or rational, and can make them all either bend or break before him: *Isa.* ii. 11, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and thus the Lord alone shall be exalted."

CHAPTER XLII.

Solomon saith, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof," *Eccl.* vii. 8; it was so here in the story of Job: at evening time it was light. Three things we have met with in this book that, I confess, have troubled me very much; but we find all the three grievances redressed, thoroughly redressed, in this chapter, every thing set to rights and well again: I. It has been a great trouble to us to see such a holy man as Job was so fretful and peevish and uneasy to himself, and especially to hear him quarrel with God, and speak indecently to him: but, though he thus fell, he is not utterly cast down, for here he recovers his temper, comes to himself and to his right mind again by repentance, is sorry for what he hath said amiss, unsaith it, and humbles himself before God, ver. 1—6. II. It has been likewise a great trouble to us to see Job and his friends so much at variance, not only differing in their opinions, but giving one another a great many hard words, and passing severe censures upon one another, though they were all very wise and good men; but here we have this grievance redressed likewise, the differences between them happily adjusted, the quarrel taken up, all the peevish reflections they had cast upon one another forgiven and forgotten, and all joining in sacrifices and prayers, mutually accepted of God, ver. 7—9. III. It has troubled us to see a man of such eminent piety and usefulness as Job was so grievously afflicted, so pained, so sick, so poor, so reproached, so slighted, and made the very centre of all the calamities of human life; but here we have this grievance redressed too; Job healed of all his ailments, more honoured and beloved than ever, enriched with an estate double to what he had before, surrounded with all the comforts of life, and as great an instance of prosperity as ever he had been of affliction and patience, ver. 10—17. And all this is written for our learning, that we, under these and the like discouragements that we meet with, through patience and comfort of this scripture may have hope.

THEN Job answered the LORD, and said,
2 I know that thou canst do every *thing*,
And *that* no thought can be withholden from thee.
3 Who *is* he that hideth counsel without knowledge?
Therefore have I uttered that I understood not;
Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.
4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak:
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:
But now mine eye seeth thee.
6 Wherefore I abhor *myself*,
And repent in dust and ashes.

The words of Job, justifying himself, were ended *ch.* xxxi. 40; after that he said no more to that purpose. The words of Job, judging and condemning himself, began *ch.* xl. 4, 5; here he goes on with words to the same purpose. Though his patience had not its perfect work, his repentance for his impatience had. He is here thoroughly humbled for his folly and unadvised speaking, and it was forgiven him. Good men will see and own their faults at last, though it may be some difficulty to bring them to it. "Then" when God had said all that to him concerning his own greatness and power appearing in the creatures, "then Job answered the Lord," ver. 1, not by way of contradiction,—he had promised not so to answer again, *ch.* xl. 5,—but by way of submission; and thus we must all answer the calls of God.

First. He subscribes to the truth of God's unlimited power, knowledge, and dominion, to prove which was the scope of God's discourses out of the whirlwind, ver. 2. Corrupt passions and practices arise either from some corrupt principles, or from the inconsideration and disbelief of the principles of truth, and therefore true repentance begins in "the acknowledgment of the truth," 2 *Tim.* ii. 25. Job here owns his judgment convinced of the greatness, and glory, and perfection of God, from which would follow the conviction of his conscience concerning his own folly in speaking irreverently to him. 1. He owns that God can do every thing. He that made behemoth and leviathan, and manages both as he pleases, what can be too hard for him to do? He knew this before, and had himself discoursed very well upon the subject, but now he knew it with application; God had spoken it once, and then he heard it twice, that power belongs to God, and therefore it is the greatest madness and presumption imaginable to contend with him. "Thou canst do every thing," and therefore canst raise me out of this low condition, which I have so often foolishly despaired of as impossible; I now believe thou art able to do this. 2. That no thought can be withholden from him; that is, 1st. There is no thought of ours that he can be hindered from the knowledge of. Not a fretful, discontented, unbelieving thought is in our minds at any time but God is a witness to it. It is in vain to contest with him, for we cannot hide our counsels and projects from him; and if he discover them he can defeat them. 2nd. There is no thought of his that he can be hindered from the execution of; whatever the Lord pleased that did he. Job had said this passionately, complaining of it, *ch.* xxiii. 13, "What his soul desireth, even that he doth." Now he saith it with pleasure and satisfaction, that God's counsels shall stand. If God's thoughts concerning us be thoughts of good, to give us an expected end, he cannot be withheld from accomplishing his gracious purposes, whatever difficulties may seem to lie in the way.

Secondly. He owns himself to be guilty of that which God had charged him with in the beginning of his discourse, ver. 3. Lord, the very first word thou saidst was, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" and there needed no more; that word convinced me. I own I am the man that has been so foolish. That word reached my conscience, and set my sin in order before me; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused; 'I have hid counsel without knowledge.' I have ignorantly overlooked the counsels and designs of God in afflicting me, and therefore have quarrelled with God, and insisted too much upon my own justification: "Therefore I uttered that I understood not;" that is, I have passed a judgment upon the dispensations of Providence, though I was utterly a stranger to the reasons of them. Here, 1. He owns himself ignorant of the Divine counsels; and so we are all. God's judgments are a great deep, which we cannot fathom, much less find out the springs of. We see what God doth, but we neither know why he doth it, what he is driving at, nor what he will bring it to; these are things too wonderful for us, out of our sight to discover, out of our reach to alter, and out of our jurisdiction to judge of. They are things which we know not; it is quite above our capacity to pass a verdict upon them; the reason why we quarrel with Providence is because we do not understand it. And we must be content to be in the dark about it, till the mystery of God shall be finished. 2. He owns himself imprudent and presumptuous in undertaking to discourse of that which he did not understand, and to arraign that which he could not judge of. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him." We wrong ourselves, as well as the cause which we undertake to determine, while we are no competent judges of it.

Thirdly. He will not answer, but he will make supplication to his Judge, as he had said *ch.* ix. 15, "Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak," ver. 4; not speak either as plantiff or defendant, (*ch.* xiii. 22,) but as an humble petitioner; not as one that will undertake to teach and prescribe, but as one that desires to learn, and is willing to be prescribed to. Lord, put no more puzzling questions to me, for I am not able to answer thee one of a thousand of those which thou hast put; but give me leave to ask instruction from thee, and do not deny it me, do not upbraid me with my folly and self-sufficiency, *Jas.* i. 5. Now he is brought to the prayer Elihu taught him, "That which I see not teach thou me."

Fourthly. He puts himself into the posture of a penitent, and therein goes upon a right principle. In true repentance there must be not only conviction of sin, but contrition, and godly sorrow for it, sorrow according to God, 2 *Cor.* vii. 9. Such was Job's sorrow for his sins.

1. Job had an eye to God in his repentance, thought highly of him, and went upon that as the principle of it; ver. 5, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear" many a time, from my teachers, when I was young; from my friends now of late. I have known something of thy greatness, and power, and sovereign dominion, and yet was not brought by what I heard to submit myself to thee as I ought. The notions I had of these things served me only to talk of, and had not a due influence upon my mind; "but" now thou hast by immediate revelation discovered thyself to me in thy glorious majesty, "now mine eye sees thee," now I feel the power of those truths which before I had only the notion of, and therefore now I repent, and unsay what I have foolishly said. Note, 1st. It is a great mercy to have a good education, and to know the things of God by the instructions of his word and ministers. Faith comes by hearing, and then it is most likely to come when we hear attentively, and with the hearing of the ear. 2nd. When the understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of grace, our knowledge of Divine things as far exceeds what we had before as that by ocular demonstration exceeds that by report and common fame. By the teachings of men God reveals his Son to us, but by the teachings of his Spirit he reveals his Son in us, *Gal.* i. 16, and so changes us into the same image, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. 3rd. God is pleased sometimes to manifest himself most fully to his people by the rebukes of his word and providence. Now I have been afflicted; now I have been told of my faults; "now mine eye sees thee;" "the rod and reproof give wisdom; blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest."

2. Job had an eye to himself in his repentance, thought hardly of himself, and thereby expressed his sorrow for his sins; ver. 6, "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Observe, 1st. It concerns us to be deeply humbled for the sins we are convinced of, and not to rest in a sight, superficial displeasure against ourselves for them. Even good people, that have no gross enormities to repent of, yet must be greatly afflicted in soul for the workings and breaking out of pride, passion, peevishness and discontent, and all their hasty unadvised speeches; for these we must be pricked to the heart, and be in bitterness. Till the enemy be effectually humbled, the peace will be insecure. 2nd. Outward expressions of godly sorrow well become penitents; Job repented in dust and ashes. These, without an inward change, do but mock God; but where they come from sincere contrition of soul, the sinner by them gives glory to God, takes shame to himself, and may be instrumental to bring others to repentance. Job's afflictions had brought him to the ashes, *ch.* ii. 8; he sat down among the ashes; but now his sins brought him thither. True penitents mourn for their sins as heartily as ever they did for any outward afflictions; and are in bitterness, as for an only son, or a firstborn, for they are brought to see more evil in their sins than in their troubles. 3rd. Self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance; *Eze.* vi. 9, "They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed." We must not only be angry at ourselves for the wrong and damage we have by sin done to our own souls, but must abhor ourselves, as having by sin made ourselves odious to the pure and holy God, who cannot endure to look upon iniquity. If sin be truly an abomination to us, sin in ourselves will especially be so; the nearer

it is to us, the more loathsome it will be. 4th. The more we see of the glory and majesty of God, the more we see of the vileness and odiousness of sin, and of ourselves because of sin, and the more we shall abase and abhor ourselves for it. Now mine eye sees what a God he is whom I have offended, the brightness of that majesty that by wilful sin I have spit in the face of, the tenderness of that mercy which I have spurned at the bowels of; now I see what a just and holy God he is whose wrath I have incurred, "wherefore I abhor myself;" "Woe is me, for I am undone," *Isa.* vi. 5. God had challenged Job to look upon proud men and abase them. Not I, saith Job, I will never pretend to it; I have enough to do to get my own proud heart humbled, to abase that, and bring that low. Let us leave it to God to govern the world, and make it our care, in the strength of his grace, to govern ourselves and our own hearts well.

7 And it was *so*, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me *the thing that is* right, as my servant Job *hath*. 8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you *after your* folly, in that ye have not spoken of me *the thing which is* right, like my servant Job. 9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job.

Job in his discourses had complained very much of the censures of his friends, and their hard usage of him, and had appealed to God as judge between him and them, and thought it long that judgment was not given upon the appeal. While God was catechising Job out of the whirlwind, one would have thought that he only was in the wrong, and the cause would certainly go against him; but here, to our great surprise, we find it quite otherwise, and the definitive sentence given in Job's favour: wherefore judge nothing before the time. Those who are truly righteous before God may have their righteousness clouded and eclipsed by great and uncommon afflictions, by the severe censures of men, by their own frailties and foolish passions, by the sharp reproofs of the Word and conscience, and the deep humiliation of their own spirits, under the sense of God's terrors; and yet in due time these clouds shall all blow over, and God will "bring forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noonday," *Ps.* xxxvii. 6. So he cleared Job's righteousness here, because he, like an honest man, held it fast, and would not let it go. We have here,

First. Judgment given against Job's three friends upon the controversy between them and Job. Elihu is not censured here, for he distinguished himself from the rest in the management of the dispute, and acted not as a party, but as a moderator; and moderation will have its praise with God, whether it have with men or no. In the judgment here given, Job is magnified, and his three friends mortified. While we were examining the discourses on both sides we could not discern, and therefore durst not determine, who was in the right; something of truth we thought they both had on their side, but could not cleave the hair between them, nor would we, for all the world, have been to give the decisive sentence upon the case, lest we should have determined wrong; but it is well the judgment is the Lord's, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth, to it we will refer ourselves, and by it we will abide. Now in the judgment here given,

1. Job is greatly magnified, and comes off with honour. He was but one against three, a beggar now against three princes, and yet, having God on his side, he needed not fear coming off well, though thousands set themselves against him. Observe here,

1st. When God appeared for him: "After the Lord had spoken these words unto Job," ver. 7; after he had convinced and humbled him, and brought him to repentance for what he had said amiss, then he owned him in what he had said well, comforted him, and put honour upon him. Not till then,—for we are not ready for God's approbation till we judge and condemn ourselves,—but then he thus pleaded his cause, for he that has torn will heal us, he that has smitten will bind us up: the Comforter shall convince, *Jno.* xvi. 8. See in what method we are to expect Divine acceptance, we must first be humbled under Divine rebukes. After God, by speaking these words, had caused grief, he returned and had compassion, according to the multitude of his mercies, for he will not contend for ever, but will debate in measure, and stay his rough wind in the day of his east wind. Now Job had humbled himself, God exalted him. True penitents shall find favour with God, and what they have said and done amiss shall no more be mentioned against them. Then God is well pleased with us when we are brought to abhor ourselves.

2nd. How he appeared for him. It is taken for granted that all his offences are forgiven, for, if he be dignified, as we find he is here, no doubt he is justified. Job had sometimes spoken with great assurance that God would clear him at last, and he was not made ashamed of the hope.

First. God calls him again and again his servant Job; four times in two verses, and he seems to take a pleasure in calling him so, as before his troubles, *ch.* i. 8, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" Though he be poor and despised he is my servant for all that, and as dear to me as when he was in his prosperity. Though he has his faults, and has appeared to be a man subject to like passions as others, though he has contended with me, has gone about to disannul my judgment, and has darkened counsel by words without knowledge, yet he sees his error, and retracts it, and therefore he is my servant Job still. If we still hold fast the integrity and fidelity of servants to God as Job did, though we may for a time be deprived of the credit and comfort of the relation, we shall be restored to it at last, as he was. The devil had undertaken to prove Job a hypocrite, his three friends had condemned him as a wicked man, but God will confess those whom he accepts, and will not suffer them to be run down by the malice of hell or earth. If God saith, Well done, good and faithful servant, the matter is not great who saith otherwise.

Secondly. He owns that he had spoken of him the thing that was right beyond what his antagonists had done; he had given a much better account of the Divine providence, and nearer to truth, than they had done. They had wronged God by making prosperity a mark of the true church, and affliction a certain indication of God's wrath. But Job had done him right, by maintaining that God's love and hatred is to be judged of by what is in men, not by what is before them, *Eccl.* ix. 1. Observe, 1st. Those do the most justice to God and his providence who have an eye to the rewards and punishments of another world more than to those of this, and with the prospect of those solve the difficulties of the present administration. Job had referred things to the future judgment and the future state more than his friends had done, and therefore he spoke of God that which was right better than his friends had done. 2nd. Though Job had spoken some things amiss, even concerning God, whom he made too bold with, yet he is commended for what he spoke that was right. We must not only not reject that which is true and good, but must not deny it its true praise, though there appear in it a mixture of human frailty and infirmity. 3rd. Job was in the right, and his friends in the wrong, and yet he was in pain, and they at ease, which is a plain evidence that we cannot judge of men and their sentiments by looking in their faces or purses; He only can do it infallibly who sees men's hearts.

Thirdly. He will pass his word for Job, that, notwithstanding all the wrong his friends had done him, he is so good a man, and of such an humble, tender, forgiving spirit, that he will very readily pray for them, and use his interest in Heaven on their behalf. "My servant Job will pray for you," I know he will; I have pardoned him, and he has the comfort of it, and therefore he will pardon you.

Fourthly. He appoints him to be the priest of this congregation, and promiseth to accept him, and his mediation for his friends. Take your sacrifices to my servant Job, "for him will I accept." Those whom God washes from their sins, he makes to himself kings and priests. True penitents shall not only find favour as petitioners for themselves, but be accepted as intercessors for others also. It was a great honour God hereby put upon Job, in appointing him to offer sacrifice for his friends, as formerly he used to do for his own children, *ch.* i. 5; and a happy presage it was of his restoration to his prosperity again, and indeed a good step towards it, that he was thus restored to the priesthood. Thus he became a type of Christ, through whom alone we and our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God, see 1 *Pet.* ii. 5. "Go to my servant Job," to my servant Jesus, (from whom for a time he hid his face,) put your services into his hand, make use of him as your advocate, "for him will I accept;" but out of him you must expect to be dealt with according to your folly. And as Job prayed and offered sacrifice for those that had grieved and wounded his spirit, so Christ prayed and died for his persecutors, and ever lives making intercession for the transgressors.

2. Job's friends are greatly mortified, and came off with a slur. They were good men, and did belong to God, and therefore he would not let them lie still in their mistake no more than Job; but, having humbled him by a discourse out of the whirlwind, takes another course to humble them. Job, who was dearest to him, was first chidden, but the rest in their turn. When they heard Job talked to it is probable they flattered themselves with a conceit that they were in the right, and Job in all the fault; but God soon took them to task, and made them know the contrary. In most disputes and controversies there is something amiss on both sides, either in the merits of the cause or in the management, or both, and it is fit both sides should be told of it, and made to see their errors. God addresseth this to Eliphaz, not only as the senior, but as the ringleader in the attack made upon Job. Now,

1. God tells them plainly they had "not spoken of him the thing that was right, like Job;" that is, they had censured and condemned Job upon a false hypothesis, had represented God fighting against Job as an enemy, when really he was only trying him as a friend; and this was not right. Those do not say well of God who represent his fatherly chastisements of his own children as judicial punishments, and who cut them off from his favour upon the account of them. Note, It is a dangerous thing to judge uncharitably of the spiritual and eternal state of others, for in so doing we may perhaps condemn those whom God has accepted, which is a great provocation to him; it is offending his little ones, and he takes himself to be wronged in all the wrongs that are done to them.

2. He assures them he was angry with them: "My wrath is kindled against thee, and thy two friends." God is very angry with those who despise and reproach their brethren, who insult over them, and judge hardly of them, either for their calamities or for their infirmities. Though they were wise and good men, yet when they spoke amiss God was angry with them, and let them know it.

3. He requires from them a sacrifice to make atonement for what they had said amiss. They must bring each of them seven bullocks, and each of them seven rams, to be offered up to God for a burnt offering; for it should seem that, before the law of Moses, all sacrifices, even those of atonement, were wholly burnt, and therefore were so called. They thought they had spoken wonderful well, and that God was beholden to them for pleading his cause, and owed them a good fee for it, but they are told that, quite contrary, he is displeased with them, requires from them a sacrifice, and threatens that otherwise he will deal with them after their folly. Many times God is angry at that in us which we are ourselves proud of, and sees much amiss in that which we think was well done.

4. He orders them to go to Job, and beg of him to offer their sacrifices and pray for them, or otherwise they should not be accepted. By this God designed, 1st. To humble them, and lay them low. They thought that they only were the favourites of Heaven, and that Job had no interest there, but God gives them to understand, that he had a better interest there than they had, and stood fairer for God's acceptance than they did. The day may come when those who despise and censure God's people will court their favour, and be made to know that God has loved them, *Rev.* iii. 9. The foolish virgins will beg oil of the wise. 2nd. To oblige them to make their peace with Job, as the condition of their making their peace with God. "If thy brother has aught against thee," (as Job had a great deal against them,) "first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Satisfaction must first be made for wrong done, according as the nature of the thing requires, before we can hope to obtain from God the forgiveness of sin. See how thoroughly God espoused the cause of his servant Job, and engaged in it; God will not be reconciled to those that have offended Job till they have first begged his pardon, and he is reconciled to them. Job and his friends had differed in their opinion about many things, and been too keen in their reflections one upon another, but now they were to be made friends, and in order to that they are not to argue the matter over again, and try to give it a new turn, that might be done endlessly; but they must agree in a sacrifice and a prayer, and that must reconcile them. In affection and devotion they must unite, when they could not concur in the same sentiments. Those who differ in judgment about lesser things yet are one in Christ the great sacrifice, and meet at the same throne of grace, and therefore ought to love and bear with one another. Once more, observe, that when God was angry with Job's friends he did himself put them in a way to make their peace

with him. Our quarrels with God always begin on our part, but the reconciliation begins on his.

Secondly. The acquiescence of Job's friends in this judgment given, ver. 9. They were good men, and as soon as they understood what the mind of the Lord was they did as he commanded them, and that speedily, and without gainsaying, though it was against the grain to flesh and blood to court him thus whom they had condemned. Note, Those who would be reconciled to God must carefully use the prescribed means and methods of reconciliation. Peace with God is to be had only in his own way, and upon his own terms; and they will never seem hard to those who know how to value the privilege, but they will be glad of it upon any terms, though never so humbling. Job's friends had all joined in accusing Job, and now they join in begging his pardon. Those that have sinned together should repent together. They that appeal to God, as both Job and his friends had often done, must resolve to stand by his award, whether pleasing or unpleasing to their own mind. And they that conscientiously observe God's commands need not doubt but to gain his favour; "the Lord also accepted Job," and his friends, in answer to his prayer. It is not said he accepted them, though that is implied, but he accepted Job for them; so he has made us accepted in the Beloved, *Eph.* i. 6; *Mat.* iii. 17. Job did not insult over his friends upon the testimony God had given concerning him, and the submission they were obliged to make to him, but God being graciously reconciled to him, he was easily reconciled to them, and then God accepted him. This is that we should aim at in all our prayers and services, to be accepted of the Lord; this must be the top of our ambition, not to have praise of men, but to please God.

10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. 12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. 13 He had also seven sons and three daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. 15 And in all the land were no women found *so* fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. 16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, *even* four generations. 17 So Job died, *being* old and full of days.

JOB'S WEALTH.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job," saith the apostle, *Jas.* v. 11, "and have seen the end of the Lord," that is, what end the Lord at length put to his troubles. In the beginning of this book we had Job's patience under his troubles, for an example; here, in the close, for our encouragement to follow that example, we have the happy issue of his troubles, and the prosperous condition to which he was restored after them, which confirms us in counting them happy which endure. And the extraordinary prosperity which Job was crowned with after his afflictions perhaps was intended to be to us Christians a type and figure of the glory and happiness of heaven, which the afflictions of this present time are working for us; and in which they will issue at last, and which will be more than double to all the delights and satisfactions we now enjoy, as Job's after prosperity was to his former, though then he was the greatest of all the men of the East. He that rightly endureth temptation when he is tried shall receive a crown of life, *Jas.* i. 12; as Job, when he was tried, received all the wealth, and honour, and comfort, which here we have an account of.

First. God returned in ways of mercy to him; and his thoughts concerning him were "thoughts of good and not of evil, to give the expected" (nay, the unexpected) "end," *Jer.* xxix. 11. His troubles began in Satan's malice, which God restrained; his restoration began in God's mercy, which Satan could not oppose. Job's sorest complaint, and indeed the sorrowful accent of all his complaints, on which he laid the greatest emphasis, was that God appeared against him. But now God plainly appeared for him, and "watched over him to build and to plant, like as he had" (at least, in his apprehension,) "watched over him to pluck up and to throw down," *Jer.* xxxi. 28. This put a new face upon his affairs immediately, and every thing now looked as pleasing and promising as before it had looked gloomy and frightful.

1. God turned his captivity, that is, he redressed his grievances, and took away all the causes of his complaints. He loosed him from the bond with which Satan had now for a great while bound him, and delivered him out of those cruel hands into which he had delivered him. We may suppose that presently all his bodily pains and distempers were healed, so suddenly and so thoroughly, that the cure was next to miraculous; "His flesh became fresher than a child's, and he returned to the days of his youth;" and that (which was more) he sensibly felt a very great alteration in his mind; it was calm and easy, and the toss was all over, his disquieting thoughts were all vanished, his fears silenced, and the consolations of God were now as much the delight of his soul as his terrors had been its burthen. The tide thus turned, and his troubles began to ebb as fast as they had flowed; just then when he was praying for his friends, praying over his sacrifice which he offered for them. Mercy did not return when he was disputing with his friends, no, not though he had right on his side, but when he was praying for them; for God is better served and pleased with our warm devotions than with our warm disputations. When Job completed his repentance by this instance of his forgiving men their trespasses, then God completed his remission by turning his captivity. Note, We are really doing our business when we are praying for our friends, if we pray in a right manner; for in those prayers there is not only faith, but love. Christ has taught us to pray with and for others, in teaching us to say, "Our Father;" and in seeking mercy for others, we may find mercy ourselves. Our Lord Jesus has his exaltation and dominion there where he ever lives making intercession. Some by the turning of Job's captivity understand the restitution which the Sabeans and Chaldeans made of the cattle which they had taken from him, God wonderfully inclining them to do it; and with these he began the world again. Probably it was so; those spoilers had swallowed down his riches, but they were forced to vomit them up again, *ch.* xx. 15. But I rather understand this more generally of the turn now given.

2. God doubled his possessions; "also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." It is likely he did at first, by some way or other, intimate to him that it was his gracious purpose, by degrees, in due time to bring him to such a height of prosperity, that he should have twice as much as ever he had, for the encouraging of his hope, and the quickening of his industry, and that it might appear that this wonderful increase was a special token of God's favour. And it may be considered as intended, 1st. To balance his losses. He suffered for the glory of God, and therefore God made it up to him with advantage, and allowed him more than interest upon interest; God will take care that none shall lose by him. 2nd. To recompense his patience and his confidence in God, which (notwithstanding the workings of corruption) he did not cast away, but still held fast; and that is it which has a great recompence of reward, *Heb.* x. 35. Job's friends had often put their severe censure of Job upon this issue, "If thou wert pure and upright, surely now he would awake for thee," *ch.* viii. 6; but he doth not awake for thee, therefore thou art not upright. Well, saith God, though your argument be not conclusive, I will even by that demonstrate the integrity of my servant Job; his latter end shall greatly increase, and by that it shall appear, since you will have it so, that it was not for any injustice in his hands that he suffered the loss of all things. Now it appeared Job had reason to bless God for taking away, (as he did *ch.* i. 21,) since it made so good a return.

Secondly, His old acquaintance, neighbours, and relations, were very kind to him, ver. 11. They had been estranged from him, and it was not the least of the grievances of his afflicted state; he bitterly complained of their unkindness, *ch.* xix. 13, &c.; but now they visited him with all possible expressions of affection and respect. 1. They put an honour upon him, in coming to dine with him, as formerly; but, we may suppose, privately bringing their entertainment along with them, so that he had the reputation of feasting them without the expense. 2. They sympathized with him, and shewed a tender concern for him, such as becomes brethren. They bemoaned him, when they talked over all the calamities of his afflicted state, and comforted him, when they took notice of God's gracious returns to him. They wept for his griefs, and rejoiced in his joys; and proved not such miserable comforters as his three friends, that at first were so forward and officious to attend him. These were not such great men, nor such learned and eloquent men as those, but they proved much more skilful and kind in comforting Job. God sometimes chooseth the foolish and weak things of the world, as for conviction, so for comfort. 3. They made a collection among them for the repair of his losses, and the setting of him up again; they did not think it enough to say, "Be warmed, be filled," but gave him such things as would be of use to him, *Jas.* ii. 16. "Every one gave him a piece of money," some more, it is likely, and some less, according to their ability, "and every one an earring of gold," (an ornament much used by the children of the East,) which would be as good as money to him. This was a superfluity which they could well spare, and the rule is, that our abundance must be a supply to our brethren's necessity.

But why did Job's relations now at length shew this kindness to him? 1st. God put it in their hearts to do so; and every creature is that to us that he makes it to be. Job had acknowledged God in their estrangement from him, for which he now rewarded him, in turning them to him again. 2nd. Perhaps some of them withdrew from him because they thought him a hypocrite, but now his integrity was made manifest, they returned to him and to communion with him again. When God was friends with him, they were all willing to be friends with him, *Ps.* cxix. 74, 79; others of them, it may be, withdrew because he was poor, and sore, and a rueful spectacle, but now he began to get up his back again, they were willing to renew their acquaintance with him. Swallow-friends, that are gone in winter, will return in the spring, though their friendship is of little value. 3rd. Perhaps the rebuke which God had given to Eliphaz, and the other two, for their unkindness to Job, awakened the rest of his friends to return to their duty. Reproofs to others we should thus take as admonitions and instructions to us. 4th. "Job prayed for his friends," and then they flocked about him, overcome by his kindness, and every one desiring an interest in his prayers. The more we pray for our friends and relations, the more comfort we may expect in them.

Thirdly. His estate strangely increased, by the blessing of God upon the little that his friends gave him. He thankfully received their courtesy, and did not think it below him to have his estate repaired by contributions; he did not, on the one hand, urge his friends to raise money for him, he acquits himself from that *ch.* vi. 22, "Did I say, Bring unto me, or give me a reward of your substance?" and yet what they brought he thankfully accepted, and did not upbraid them with their former unkindnesses, nor ask them why they did not do this sooner. He was neither so covetous and grasping as to ask their charity, nor so proud and ill-natured as to refuse it when they offered it; and he being in so good a temper, God gave him that which was far better than their money and earrings, and that was his blessing, ver. 12. The Lord comforted him now according to the days wherein he had afflicted him, and "blessed his latter end more than his beginning." Observe, 1. "The blessing of the Lord makes rich." It is he that gives us power to get wealth, and gives success in honest endeavours. Those, therefore, that would thrive must have an eye to God's blessing; and never go out of it, no, not into the warm sun; and those that have thriven must not sacrifice to their own net, but own their obligations to God for his blessing. 2. That blessing can make very rich, and sometimes makes good people so. Those that are become rich by getting think they can easily make themselves very rich by saving; but, as those that have little must depend upon God to make it much, so those that have much must depend upon God to make it more, and to double it; else ye have sown much, and bring in little, *Hag.* i. 6. 3. The last days of a good man sometimes prove his best days, his last works his best works, his last comforts his best comforts; for his path, like that of the morning light, shines more and more to the perfect day. Of a wicked man it is said, his last state is worse than his first, *Lu.* xi. 26; but of the upright man, that his end is peace, and somctimes the nearer it is the clearer are the views of it. In respect of outward prosperity, God is pleased sometimes to make the latter end of a good man's life more comfortable than the former part of it has been, and strangely to outdo the expectations of his afflicted people, who thought they should never have lived to see better days, that we may not despair even in the depths of adversity; we know not what good times we may yet be reserved for in our latter end. *Non si male, nunc et olim, sic erit*,—'it may be well, though now it is ill.' Job in his affliction had wished to be as in months past, as rich as he had been before, and quite despaired of that; but God is often better to us than our own fears, nay, than our own wishes, for Job's possessions were doubled to him. The number of his cattle, his sheep and camels, his oxen and she-asses, is just double here to what it was *ch.* i. 3. This is a remarkable instance of the extent of the Divine providence to things that seem minute, as this of the exact number of a man's cattle; as also of the harmony of providence, and the reference of one event to another: for "known unto God are all his works, from the beginning to the end." Job's other possessions, no doubt, were increased in proportion to his cattle, his lands, money, servants, &c. So that if before he was the greatest of all the men of the East, what was he now?

Fourthly. His family was built up again, and he had great comfort in his children, ver. 13—15. The last of his afflictions that are recorded, *ch.* i., and the most grievous, was the death of all his children at once. His friends upbraided him with it, *ch.* viii. 4. But God repaired even that breach, in process of time, either by the same wife, or, she being dead, by another. 1. The number of his children was the same as before, "seven sons, and three daughters." Some give this reason why they were not doubled as his cattle were, because his children that were dead were not lost, but gone before, to a better world; and, therefore, if he have but the same number of them, they may be reckoned doubled, for he hath two fleeces of children, as I may say, Mahanaim,—'two hosts,' one in heaven, the other on earth, and in both he is rich. 2. The names of his daughters are here registered, ver. 14; because in the significations of them they seemed designed to perpetuate the remembrance of God's great goodness to him in the surprising change of his condition. He called the first Jemima, 'the day,' (whence perhaps Diana had her name,) because of the shining forth of his prosperity after a dark night of affliction. The next, Kezia, a spice of a very fragrant smell, because, saith Bishop Patrick, God had healed his stinking ulcers. The third, Keren-happuch, that is, 'plenty restored,' or 'a horn of paint;' because, saith he, God had wiped away the tears which fouled his face, *ch.* xvi. 16. Concerning these daughters we are here told, ver. 15, 1st. That God made them great beauties, "no women so fair as the daughters of Job." In the Old Testament we often find women praised for their beauty, as Sarah, Rebecca, and many others, but we never find any women in the New Testament whose beauty is in the least taken notice of, no, not the virgin Mary herself, because the beauty of holiness is that which is brought to a much clearer light by the Gospel. 2nd. That their father (God enabling him to do it) made them great fortunes; pardon the vulgar expression. He "gave them inheritance among their brethren," and did not turn them off with small portions, as most did. It is probable they had some extraordinary personal merit, which Job had an eye to in this extraordinary favour he shewed them. Perhaps they excelled their brethren in wisdom and piety; and therefore, that they might continue in his family, to be a stay and blessing to it, he made them coheirs with their brethren.

Fifthly. His life was long. What age he was of when his troubles came, we are nowhere told, but here we are told that he lived one hundred and forty years; whence some conjecture that he was seventy when he was in his troubles, and so his age was doubled, as his other possessions. 1. He lived to have much of the comfort of this, for he saw his posterity to the fourth generation, ver. 16; though his children were not doubled to him, yet in his children's children, (and those are the crown of old men,) they were more than doubled. As God appointed to Adam another seed, instead of that which was slain, *Gen.* iv. 15, so he did to Job with advantage. God has ways to repair the losses and balance the griefs of those who are written childless, as Job was when he had buried all his children. 2. He lived until he had enough of it; for he died "full of days," satisfied with living in this world, and willing to leave it; not peevishly so, as in the days of his affliction, but piously so, and thus, as Eliphaz had encouraged him to hope, he "came to his grave like a shock of corn in his season."

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF JOB.

CHAP. I.—1. *There was a man.* This has all the appearance of being a true history. Many have regarded the whole book as a fiction, and have supposed that no such person as Job ever lived. But the book opens with the appearance of reality; and the express declaration that there was such a man, the mention of his name, and of the place where he lived, shew that the writer meant to affirm that there was in fact such a man. The monuments and memorials of Job still preserved or referred to in the East may be adduced as some slight evidence of the fact that such a man as Job lived, and as an indication of the region in which he resided, which appears to have been not in Idumæa, but in some part of Arabia Deserta, lying between Palestine and the Euphrates. 6. *Now there was a day.* This is evidently designed to introduce the subsequent events relating to Job. It is language taken from the proceedings of a monarch who had sent forth messengers or ambassadors on important errands through the different provinces of his empire, who now returned to give an account of what they had observed, and of the general state of the kingdom. Such a return would, of course, be made on a fixed day, when, in the language of the law, their report would be 'returnable,' and when they would be required to give in an account of the state of the kingdom. If it be said that it is inconsistent with the supposition that this book was inspired, to suppose such a poetic fiction, it is replied, 1. That it is no more so than the parables of the Saviour, who often supposes cases, and states them as real occurrences, in order to illustrate some important truth. Yet no one was ever led into error by this. 2. It is in accordance with the language in the Scripture everywhere to describe God as a monarch seated on his throne, surrounded by his ministers, and sending them forth to accomplish important purposes in different parts of his vast empire. It is not absolutely necessary, therefore, to regard this as designed to represent an actual occurrence. It is one of the admissible ornaments of poetry,—as admissible as any other poetic ornament. To represent God as a king is not improper; and if so, it is not improper to represent him with the usual accompaniments of royalty,—surrounded by ministers, and employing angels and messengers for important purposes in his kingdom. This supposition being admitted, all that follows is merely in keeping, and is designed to preserve the verisimilitude of the conception. This idea, however, by no means militates against the supposition that angels are in fact really employed by God in important purposes in the government of his kingdom, nor that Satan has a real existence, and is permitted by God to employ an important agency in the accomplishment of his purposes towards his people.

CHAP. II.—11. *Eliphaz the Temanite.* The Temanites were celebrated for wisdom. "Is wisdom no more in Teman?" *Jer.* xlix. 7. The country was distinguished also for producing men of strength: "and thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed," *Obad.* 9. That this country was a part of Idumæa is apparent, not only from the fact that Teman was a descendant of Esau, who settled there, but from several places in the Scriptures: thus *Eze.* xxv. 13; *Amos* i. 12. *Bildad the Shuhite.* It would seem that Bildad did not reside very far from Eliphaz, for they made an agreement to go and visit Job. *And Zophar the Naamathite.* An inhabitant of Naamah, whose situation is unknown. Naamah was probably in or near the Ghor or valley which extends from the Dead sea to the gulf of Akaba. 13. *And none spake a word unto him.* That is, on the subject of his grief. They came to condole with him, but they had now nothing to say. They saw that his affliction was much greater than they had anticipated. *For they saw that his grief was very great.* This is given as a reason why they were silent. But how this produced silence, or why his great grief was a cause of their silence, is not intimated. Perhaps one or all of the following considerations may have led to it. 1. They were amazed at the extent of his sufferings. 2. The effect of great calamity is often to prevent utterance. 3. They might not have known what to say. 4. They seem to have been very early thrown into doubt in regard to the real character of Job. 5. In this state of things to administer rebuke would seem to be cruel. To be silent at such times is all that can be done; or to commend the sufferer in humble prayer to God, an expedient which seems not to have been resorted to either by Job or his friends. It is remarkable that Job is not represented as calling upon God for support, and it is as remarkable that his friends during these seven days of silent grief did not commend the case of their much afflicted friend to the Father of mercies. Had Job prayed, he might have been kept from much of the improper feeling to which he gave vent in the following chapter; had they prayed, they might have obtained much more just views of the government of God than they had hitherto possessed.

CHAP. III.—14. *Which built desolate places for themselves.* Kings constructed for their own burial-places magnificent tombs or mausoleums, which

were lonely and desolate places, where they might lie in still and solemn grandeur. With such persons, lying in their places of lonely grandeur, Job felt it would be an honour to be associated. Compared with his present condition, it was one of dignity; and he earnestly wished that it might have been his lot thus early to have been consigned to the fellowship of the dead. It may be some confirmation of this view to remark, that the land of Edom, near which Job is supposed to have lived, contains at this day some of the most wonderful sepulchral monuments of the world. The engraving, (see also heading to *Isaiah*,) taken from Laborde, will give an illustration of those tombs. It is true that those sepulchres are of a much later date than the time of Job, nor could the art of sculpture in his time have been such as these specimens exhibit; but it is interesting to find such illustrations of the general idea in the very region where Job lived.

CHAP. IV.—8. *Even as I have seen.* It is true that wicked men are thus cut off and perish; but it is not true that all the wicked are thus punished in this life, nor that any of the righteous are not visited with similar calamities. His reasoning was of a kind that is common in the world—that of drawing universal conclusions from premises that are too narrow to sustain them, or from too few carefully observed facts. 20. *Without any regarding it.* O how painfully soon to human pride will our names be forgotten! The circle of friends will cease to weep, and then cease to remember us. The last memorial that we lived will be gone. The house that we built, the bed on which we slept, the counting-room that we occupied, the monuments that we raised, the books that we made, the stone that we directed to be placed over our graves, will all be gone; and the last memento that we ever lived, will have faded away! How vain is man! How vain is pride! How foolish is ambition! How important the announcement that there is another world, where we may live on for ever!

CHAP. V.—9. *Without number.* Marg. 'Till there be no number.' The sense is, that it is impossible to estimate the number of those things in the universe over which he presides which are adapted to excite admiration. If the view of the universe entertained in the time of Eliphaz was fitted to overwhelm the mind by its vastness, and by the number of the objects which were created, this astonishment is much greater now that the telescope has disclosed the wonders of the heavens above to man, and the microscope the not less amazing wonders of the world beneath him.

CHAP. VI.—4. *For the arrows of the Almighty are within me.* That is, it is not a light affliction that I endure. I am wounded in a manner which could not be caused by man; called to endure a severity of suffering which shews that it proceeds from the Almighty. The figure is not uncommon in the poetry of the East and of the ancients. Far more beautiful, however, than the expressions of any of the ancient classics,—more tender, more delicate, more full of pathos,—is the description which the Christian poet Cowper gives of the arrow that pierces the side of the sinner. It is the account of his own conversion:—

> 'I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
> Long since. With many an arrow deep infix'd
> My panting side was charged, when I withdrew,
> To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
> There I was found by one, who had himself
> Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
> And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.'—*Task*, b. iii.

Of such wounding he did not complain. The arrow was extracted by the tender hand of him who alone had power to do it. Had Job known of him; had he been fully acquainted with the plan of mercy through him, and the comfort which a wounded sinner may find there, we should not have heard the bitter complaints which he uttered in his trials. Let us not judge him with the severity which we may use of one who is afflicted and complains under the full light of the Gospel.

CHAP. VII.—16. *I would not live alway.* As Job used this expression, there was doubtless somewhat of impatience and of an improper spirit. Still it contains a very important sentiment, and one that may be expressed in the highest state of just religious feeling. A man who is prepared for heaven should not, and will not, desire to live here always. It is better to depart and to be with Christ, better to leave a world of imperfection and sin, and to go to a world of purity and love. The sentiments suggested by this verse have been beautifully versified in a hymn by Muhlenberg:—

> 'I would not live alway; I ask not to stay
> Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way;
> The few fleeting mornings that dawn on us here
> Are enough for life's sorrows—enough for its cheer.
>
> I would not live alway; no, welcome the tomb;
> Since Jesus hath lain there, I dread not its gloom;
> There sweet be my rest, till he bid me arise,
> To hail him in triumph descending the skies.
>
> Who, who would live alway, away from his God,
> Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
> Where rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
> And the noontide of glory eternally reigns?
>
> Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
> Their Saviour and brethren transported to greet;
> While anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,
> And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul.

21. *And why dost thou not pardon my transgression?* Perhaps the following may be some of the reasons why Job had not the evidence of forgiveness which he now desired, and why the convicted sinner has not. The main reason is, that they are not in a state of mind to make it proper to forgive them. 1. There is a feeling that they have a claim on God for pardon, or that it would be wrong for God not to pardon them. 2. There is no proper submission to God, to his views, his terms, his plan. 3. There is a murmuring spirit, and that is a reason why the sinner is not forgiven. That was manifestly the case with Job; and when that exists how can God forgive? God often suffers the awakened sinner, therefore, to remain under conviction for sin, until he is willing to acquiesce in all his claims, and to submit without a murmur; and then, and not till then, he extends forgiveness to the guilty and troubled spirit.

CHAP. VIII.—17. *His roots are wrapped about the heap.* The reference is to the fact that a tree or plant which springs up on a rock, or in the midst of rocks, will send its roots afar for nutriment, or will wrap them around the projecting points of rocks in order to obtain support. What more beautiful illustration of a hypocrite can there be? His roots do not strike into the earth. His piety is not planted in a rich soil. It is on the hard rock of the unconverted human heart. Yet it sends out its roots afar; seems to flourish for a time; draws nutriment from remote objects; clings to a crag or a projecting rock, or to anything for support, until a tempest sweeps it down to rise no more! No doubt the idea of Bildad was, that Job was just such a man. *Seeth the place of stones.* Sept., 'and lives in the midst of flints,' not an unapt rendering, and a very striking description of a hypocrite.

CHAP. IX.—9. *Which maketh Arcturus.* This constellation is so conspicuous, that it has been an object of interest in all ages, and has been one of the groups of stars most attentively observed by navigators, as a guide in sailing. The reason was, probably, that as it constantly revolved around the North Pole, it could always be seen in clear weather, and thus the direction in which they were sailing could always be told. It has had a great variety of names. The name Ursa Major, or the Great Bear, is that which is commonly given to it. *Orion.* The situation of Orion is on the equator, midway between the poles of the heavens. It comes to the meridian about the 23rd of January. If, then, Job, with his limited views of astronomy, saw in this constellation an impressive proof of the greatness of the Almighty, how much more sublime should be our views of God! We see this constellation, not merely as a beautiful object in the sky—a collection of bright and beautiful gems—but we see it as so vast as to surpass our comprehension, and behold in it a single nebula, or speck—not quite visible to the naked eye—that mocks all our powers of conception! It may be added, that by the aid of a telescope about two thousand stars have been seen in this constellation. *And Pleiades.* The seven stars. The name is given to the cluster of stars in the neck of the constellation Taurus, of which seven are the principal. Six or seven may be usually seen if the eye is directed towards it; but if the eye be turned carelessly aside while the attention is fixed on the group, many more may be seen. For, 'it is a very remarkable fact, says Sir John Herschell, 'that the centre of the visual organ is by far less sensible to feeble impressions of light than the exterior portion of the retina.' 25. *Now my days are swifter than a post.* Than a courier, runner, or racer. It is applied to the mounted couriers of the Persians who carried the royal edicts to the distant provinces, *Est.* iii. 13, 15; xviii. 14; and to the body-guard and royal messengers of Saul and of David, 1 *Sam.* xxii. 17; 2 *Kin.* x. 25. The common rate of travelling in the East is exceedingly slow. The caravans move little more than two miles an hour. Couriers are, however, employed, who go either on dromedaries, or horses, or on foot, and who travel with great rapidity. Lady Montague says, that 'after the defeat at Peterwaradin, they [the couriers on dromedaries] far outran the fleetest horses, and brought the first news of the battle at Belgrade.'

CHAP. XI.—16. *And remember it as waters that pass away.* When we look back upon our sorrows, it is like thinking of the stream that was so much swollen, and was so impetuous. Its waters rolled on, and they come not back again; and there is a kind of pleasure in thinking of that time of danger, of that flood that was then so fearful, and that has now swept on to come back no more. So there is a kind of peaceful joy in thinking of the days of sorrow that are now fled for ever; in the assurance that those sad times will never, never recur again.

CHAP. XIII.—15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* The sentiment here expressed is one of the noblest that could fall from the lips of man. It indicates unwavering confidence in God, even in death. It is the determination of a mind to adhere to him, though he should strip away comfort after comfort, and though there should be no respite to his sorrows until he should sink down in death. This is the highest expression of piety, and this it is the privilege of the friends of God to experience. Reader, can you in sincerity lift the eye toward God, and say to him, 'Though thou dost slay me, though comfort after comfort is taken away, though the waves of trouble roll over me, and though I go down into the valley of the shadow of death, yet I will trust in thee; thine I will be even then, and when all is dark I will believe that God is right, and just, and true, and good, and will never doubt that he is worthy of my eternal affection and praise?' Such is religion. Where else is it found but in the views of God and of his government which the Bible reveals? The infidel may have apathy in his sufferings, the blasphemer may be stupid, the moralist or the formalist may be unconcerned; but that is not to have confidence in God—that results from religion alone.

CHAP. XV.—26. *Upon the thick bosses.* The word boss with us means a knob, a protuberant ornament of silver, brass, or ivory, on a harness or a bridle; then a protuberant part, a prominence, or a round or swelling body of any kind. The idea here is not that which our translation would seem to convey. It is not that he rushes upon or against the hard and thick shield of the Almighty, and that, therefore, he must meet resistance and be overcome; it is that he rushes upon God with his own shield. He puts himself in the attitude of a warrior. He turns the boss of his own shield against God, and becomes his antagonist. He is his enemy. The omission of the word *with* in the passage, or the preposition, which is in the Hebrew, has led to this erroneous translation. The passage is often quoted in a popular manner to denote that the sinner rushes upon God, and must meet resistance from his shield, or be overcome. It should be quoted only to denote that the sinner places himself in an attitude of opposition to God, and is his enemy.

CHAP. XVI.—15. *And defiled my horn in the dust.* The word horn is used in the Scriptures to denote strength and power. The figure is taken from horned animals, whose strength resides in their horns; and hence, as the horn is the means of defence, the word comes to denote that on which one relies; his strength, honour, dignity. A horn made of silver was also worn as an ornament, or as an emblem, on the forehead of females or warriors. It was probably used at first by warriors as a symbol of power, authority, or strength; and the idea was undoubtedly derived from the fact that the strength of animals was seen to lie in the horn. Then it came to be a mere ornament, and as such is used still in the vicinity of mount Lebanon. Oriental customs do not undergo those changes which are so common in the Western world, and it is possible that this custom prevailed in the time of Job. The idea here is, that whatever once constituted the reliance or the glory of Job, was now completely prostrate. It was as if it were buried in the earth.

CHAP. XVIII.—*And his candle.* Marg., 'lamp.' The reference is to a lamp that was suspended from the ceiling. 'The houses of Egypt, in modern times, are never without lights; they burn lamps all the night long, and in every occupied apartment. So requisite to the comfort of a family is this custom reckoned, and so imperious is the power which it exercises, that the poorest people would rather retrench part of their food than neglect it.'—*Paxton.* It is not improbable that this custom prevailed in former times in Arabia, as it does now in Egypt; and this consideration will give increased beauty and force to this passage.

CHAP. XIX.—23. *Oh that they were printed.* It is clear that this expression may convey wholly an erroneous idea. The art of printing was then unknown; and the passage has no allusion to that art. The original word means, properly, to cut in, to hew; then to cut,—for example, a sepulchre in a rock, *Isa.* xxii. 16; then to cut, or engrave letters on a tablet of lead or stone, *Isa.* xxx. 8; *Eze.* iv. 1, and generally it implies the notion of engraving, or inscribing on a plate with an engraving tool. Anciently books were made of materials which allowed of this mode of making a record. Stone would probably be the first material; and then

plates of metal, leaves, bark, skins, &c. The notion of engraving, however, is the proper idea here. *In a book.* As books in the form in which they are now were then unknown; as there is no evidence that at that time anything like volumes or rolls were possessed; as the records were probably preserved on tablets of stone or lead; and as the entire description here pertains to something that was engraved; and as this sense is conveyed by the Arabic verb from which the word book is derived, the word tablet, or some kindred word, will better express the sense of the original than book. 24. *Pen—graven—in the rock.* It was common, at an early period, to make inscriptions on the smooth surface of a rock. Perhaps the first that were made were on stones, which were placed as waymarks, or monuments over the dead, as we now make such inscriptions on gravestones. Then it became common to record any memorable transaction, as a battle, on stones or rocks; and perhaps, also, sententious and apophthegmatical remarks were recorded in this manner, to admonish travellers, or to transmit them to posterity. Numerous inscriptions of this kind are found by travellers in the East, on tombs, and on rocks in the desert. 25. *For I know*—that is, 'I am fully persuaded'—*that my redeemer liveth.* Wemyss considers that Job only meant, 'I know that my *avenger* liveth,' &c., and that he predicted the appearance of God as his avenger, as related in *ch.* xxxviii., &c. A host of distinguished critics support this opinion, and so does Barnes, in his recent translation of Job. Wemyss, among other reasons for so rendering it, says, 'the Septuagint (or Greek translation) gives no countenance to our translation · it commences the passage thus:—

"For I know that he is eternal
Who is about to deliver me on earth," &c.'

He also says, 'There is no other passage in the whole book of *Job* importing that he knew anything of the Messiah, or believed in a resurrection.' He adds, 'It is a good and safe rule to apply no Old Testament passage to Jesus Christ that is not so applied to him in the New.' He considers *ch.* xvi. 19, as expressing the same meaning as this text. He says, 'Had Job possessed a hope in the resurrection from the dead, and in a Saviour to come, he would never have cursed the day of his birth.' 'Such an avowal of faith as is supposed would have included his name in *Heb.* xi.' And finally, 'Job would then have had a place among the prophets.' Now the word rendered, by the advocates of these opinions, 'avenger,' signifies also 'redeemer;' and the interpretation of the passage may be, 'he shall stand up as the great and impartial Judge, to award to all according to their deeds; to vindicate the character of the just, and to punish the wicked.' With regard to the rendering of the Septuagint, it certainly signifies that a 'deliverer' shall come, and that that deliverer is 'eternal,' a grand characteristic of the Redeemer. In opposition to Wemyss, it may be observed, that there is, at least, another passage from which it may be inferred that Job did believe in a resurrection: see *ch.* xiv. 12. The expression "till the heavens be no more," may imply, as Davidson remarks, 'that then shall man rise again from death,' which Scripture calls a sleep, 1 *Thes.* iv. 13; and with regard to a Redeemer and Saviour, the knowledge of God which Job possessed must have been derived from the same source whence is derived the promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The rule is conceded, that passages in the Old Testament should not be applied to Christ without the sanction of the New; nevertheless the doctrine contained in this verse, rendered as by our translators, is a New Testament doctrine, and the editor of these pages thinks there may be a strongly-implied allusion to Job's faith in the declaration of our Lord at Bethany, "I am the resurrection and the life," &c. Some think the spirit of the passage may be found in 2 *Tim.* i. 12. As to Job cursing the day of his birth, the hasty expression of a vexed, tried, and tempted man is not to be viewed as his creed; he might express his angry feelings against this life, without shutting out hope from the next. That Job was not inserted in the catalogue in *Heb.* xi., is not to be taken as an argument, since that inserted the name of some persons only of distinguished faith; nor, finally, was it likely that Job should, for such a glance at future deliverance, be reckoned as a prophet, any more than Jacob, when he bowed his dying head, and said, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." As there is among modern critics an effort to alter this text, the editor has here given a far longer note than usual, to dispute the point, which he ventures to do with great deference. He has on his side Poole, Henry, Bishop Hall, Bishop Sherlock, Dr. Gill, Scott the translator, Bishop Pearson, Hales, Ostervald, Goode, Clarke, Dr. Boothroyd, Dr. Pye Smith, Scott the commentator, and T. Williams; and even Dr. Priestley says, 'Christians in general, from the earliest times, maintain that Job [in this passage] declares his faith in a happy resurrection at the last day; and this, I have no doubt, is the right construction. . . . . His wishing so often for death, as the end of all his troubles, shows that he had no expectation of any temporal deliverance.' Old prejudices should certainly yield to the discoveries of clearer light and knowledge; but arguments should be stronger than those at present advanced, to induce us to relinquish the construction of a passage which has comforted many a believer in trouble, and lighted up his countenance with the beams of immortality, when the spirit was about to depart to its eternal abode. Barnes considers that the common rendering is inconsistent with the whole scope and connexion of the book, which is 'a great inquiry about the doctrines of Divine providence, and the Divine dealings with men;' but it is not a singular thing to find pious men and eminent prophets suddenly, as if by momentary inspiration, darting out of, and soaring far above, the subject on which they are treating, to take a glimpse of the Messiah, or the blessings connected with him. Barnes considers that our rendering is inconsistent with numerous passages in which Job expresses a contrary belief; or at least that, had he believed in the resurrection, he would frequently have adverted to it. This objection has been noticed, and is easily answered, as Job, in the gloominess of his spirit, noticed only the destination of the mortal body, worn out with disease and grief; but it might as fairly be inferred from this, that he had no belief in the existence of his soul. No doubt, as Barnes observes, the clear doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was reserved for the Christian dispensation, as were many other great truths; but they were all seen as by momentary glimpses, of which there seem to be sufficient evidences. Abel, before the days of Job, had by faith offered up a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain: the one acknowledged the Creator, but the other doubtless looked to the Redeemer. Job, too, offered up his sacrifices, not merely as acknowledgments for favours received, but for the removal of guilt; and as there never was but one way in which guilt could be removed, Job's sacrifices could only have been offered by faith in that way. Hence he must have had some view of a Redeemer, or his sacrifices, on the score of attaining pardon and acceptance, would have been in vain. It may, therefore, be inferred that our Redeemer was the Redeemer to whose glorious deliverance Job cast the momentary glance of faith, which must have been as the drop of cordial to cheer his drooping spirit.—*Domestic Bible, by the Rev. Ingram Cobbin, A.M.*

CHAP. XXI.—*Wherefore do the wicked live?* This question is one of great importance at all times, and one which it is natural to ask, but which it is not even yet always easy to answer. Some points are clear, and may be easily suggested. They are such as these: They live, 1. To shew the forbearance and long-suffering of God. 2. To furnish a full illustration of the character of the human heart. 3. To afford them ample space for repentance, so that there shall not be the semblance of a ground of complaint when they are called before God, and are condemned. 4. Because God intends to make some of them the monuments of his mercy, and more fully to display the riches of his grace in their conversion, as he did in the case of Paul, Augustine, John Bunyan, and John Newton. 5. They may be preserved to be the instruments of his executing some important purpose by them, as was the case with Pharaoh, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar. Or, 6. He keeps them, that the great interests of society may be carried on; that the affairs of the commercial and the political world may be forwarded by their skill and talent. For some, or all of these purposes, it may be, the wicked are kept in the land of the living, and are favoured with great external prosperity, while many a Christian is oppressed, afflicted, and crushed to the dust. Of the fact there can be no doubt; of the reasons for the fact, there will be a fuller development in the future world than there can be now. 11. *And their children dance.* They frolick or play. There is no evidence here that Job meant to say that they taught their children to dance; that they caused them to be trained in anything that now corresponds to dancing schools; and that he meant to say that such a training was improper, and tended to exclude God from the heart. Of the impropriety of so training children there ought to be but one opinion among the friends of religion; but there is no evidence that Job referred to any such training here, and this passage should not be adduced to prove that dancing is wrong. It refers to the playfulness and the cheerful sports of children, and God has made them so that they will find pleasure in such sports, and so that they are benefited by them. There is not a more lovely picture of happiness and of the benevolence of God anywhere on earth than in such groups of children, and in their sportiveness and playfulness there is no more that is wrong than there is the gambols of the lambs of the flock. 14. *Therefore.* In the Hebrew it is simply, *And* they say. The word 'therefore' should not have been inserted. Job is not affirming that their mode of life is a reason why they reject the claims of God, but that it is a simple fact that they do live, even in this prosperity, in the neglect of God. This is the gist of what he is saying, that being thus wicked they were in fact prospered, and not punished as his friends had maintained. 33. *And every man shall draw after him.* This appears to be the idea here, that the man who should thus die would draw great numbers to the place where he was buried, and that before him, or in his presence, there was an innumerable multitude, so greatly would he be honoured. What multitudes would go to look on the grave of Alexander the Great! How many have gone to look on the place where Cæsar fell! How many have gone, and will go, to look on the place where Napoleon is buried!

CHAP. XXIII.—8. *I go forward.* The terms here used refer to the points of the compass, and should have been so rendered. The Oriental geographers considered themselves as facing the east, instead of the north, as we do. Of course the west was behind them, the south on the right hand, and on the left the north. The phrase, therefore, "Behold, I go forward," means, "I go to the east. I look toward the rising of the sun." *And backward.* To the west—for this was behind the individual when he stood looking to the east. 9. *On the left hand.* That is, in the north—at the left hand when the face was turned to the east. *On the right hand.* On the south.

CHAP. XXIV.—16. *In the dark they dig through houses.* In Bengal, says Mr. Ward, it is common for thieves to dig through the walls of houses made of mud, or under the house floors, which are made merely of earth, and enter thus into the dwellings while the inmates are asleep.

CHAP. XXVI.—13. *Crooked serpent.* The practice of forming pictures of the heavens, with a somewhat fanciful resemblance to animals, was one of the most early devices of astronomy, and was evidently known in the time of Job. The figure of the serpent, or "the dragon," is still one of the constellations of the heavens, and there can be little doubt that it is the same that is referred to in this ancient book. On the celestial globes it is drawn between Ursa Major and Cepheus.

CHAP. XXVII.—10. *Will he always call upon God?* That is, he will not always call upon God. This is literally true. The hypocrite prays, 1. When he makes a profession of religion. 2. On some extraordinary occasion—as when a friend is sick, or when he feels that he himself is about to die; but he does not always maintain habits of prayer. He suffers his business to break in upon his times for prayer; neglects secret devotion on the slightest pretence, and soon abandons it altogether. One of the best tests of character is the feeling with which we pray, and the habit which we have of calling on God. The man who loves secret prayer has one of the most certain evidences that he is a pious man.

CHAP. XXVIII.—1. *A vein for silver, and a place for gold where they fine it.* 'When we had satisfied ourselves with the view of the inscriptions on the rocks in the valley of Mukatted, Mr. Smith, Dhanjibbai, and I proceeded to take a peep through our telescopes at the high range of red granite mountains, lying to the east. We were so much struck by their absolutely naked flanks, and with what appeared to be numerous dark metallic veins, or basaltic dykes, running up to their summits, like a series of bars or ribs, that we resolved to visit them. On a hill in front of them, which we had to surmount before we could get to their base, we were surprised to see immense quantities of debris and slag, with fragments of stone, mortar, and furnaces, which we doubted not had been used in the remotest antiquity, for the founding and smelting of ore. When we actually reached the mountains, we found that they had been peeled and excavated to a great extent where the veins and dykes had occurred. Numerous grooves and channels seemed to be cut in the extraction of the ore from the very top to the bottom of the mountains, even where they were most perpendicular, and the mountains are completely spoiled and stripped of their treasures. How they were wrought, whether by the aid of scaffolding reaching from the bottom, or by supports let down from above by ropes or chains, it is impossible to say. They formed to us a most striking and valuable illustration of the ancient processes of mining, and the enterprise in which they originated, as referred to in that sublime and interesting chapter of Job—the twenty-eighth.'—*Dr. Wilson's Lands of the Bible,* vol. i. pp. 187, 188.

CHAP. XXIX.—19. *My root was spread out by the waters.* The meaning is that it was spread abroad, or extended far, so that the moisture of the earth had free access to it; or it was like a tree planted near a stream, whose root ran down to the water. This is an image designed to denote great prosperity. In the East such an image would be more striking than with us. Here, green, large, and beautiful trees are so common as to excite little or no attention. In such a country as Arabia, however, where general desolation exists, such a tree would be a most beautiful object, and a most striking image of prosperity. *And the dew lay all night upon my branch.* In the absence of rain, which seldom falls in deserts, the scanty vegetation is dependent on the dews that fall at night. Those dews are often very abundant.

CHAP. XXXI.—12. *For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction.* It is like a consuming fire, which sweeps away every thing before it. It is destructive to the body, the morals, the soul. Accordingly, it may be remarked that there is

no one vice which pours such desolation through the soul as licentiousness: see *Rush on the Diseases of the Mind*, and *Paley's Moral Philosophy*. It corrupts and taints all the fountains of morals, and utterly annihilates all purity of the heart. *And would root out all mine increase*. By its desolating effects on my heart and life. The meaning is that it would utterly ruin him: compare *Luke* xv. 13, 30. How many a wretched sensualist can bear testimony to the truth of this statement! How many a young man has been wholly ruined in reference to his worldly interests, as well as in reference to his soul, by this vice! compare *Pr.* vii. No young man could do a better service to himself than to commit the whole of that chapter to memory, and so engrave it on his soul that it never could be forgotten.

CHAP. XXXII.—19. *Like new bottles*. The reference of Elihu is undoubtedly to skins that were used as bottles; and new skins are here mentioned as ready to burst, not because they were more likely to burst than old ones, for that was by no means the case, but because new and unfermented wine would naturally be placed in them, thus endangering them. Bottles in the East, it is well known, are usually made of the skins of goats: see Supplementary Notes on *Mat.* ix. 17.

CHAP. XXXIII.—17. *That he may withdraw man from his purpose*. Marg., *work*. The sense is plain. God designs to warn him of the consequences of executing a plan of iniquity. The case of Colonel Gardiner cannot be forgotten, though in that instance it was rather "a vision of the night" than a dream. He was meditating an act of wickedness, and was alone in his room awaiting the appointed hour. In the silence of the night, and in the solitude of his room, he seemed to see the Saviour on the cross. This view, however it may be accounted for, restrained him from the contemplated act of wickedness, and he became an eminently pious man: see *Doddridge's Life of Colonel Gardiner*. The mind, with all its faculties, is under the control of God, and no one can demonstrate that he does not make its actings, even in the wanderings of a dream, the designed means of checking the sinner, and of saving the soul.

CHAP. XXXV.—12. *Because of the pride of evil men*. That is, of their own pride. The pride of men so rebellious, and so disposed to complain of God, is the reason why they do not appeal to him to sustain them and give them relief. This is still as true as it was in the time of Elihu. However inapplicable, therefore, this solution of the difficulty may have been to the case of Job, it is not inapplicable to the case of multitudes of sufferers. Many of the afflicted have no peace or consolation in their trials, no "songs in the night," because they are too proud to pray!

CHAP. XXXVI.—6. *But giveth right to the poor*. Marg., or *afflicted*. The Hebrew word often refers to the afflicted, to the humble, or the lowly; and the reference here is to the lower classes of society. The idea is that God deals justly with them, and does not overlook them because they are so poor and feeble that they cannot contribute any thing to him. In this sentiment Elihu was undoubtedly right, though, like the three friends of Job, he seems to have adopted the principle that the dealings of God here are according to the characters of men. He had some views in advance of theirs. He saw that affliction is designed for discipline, *ch.* xxxiii.; that God is willing to shew mercy to the sufferer on repentance; that he is not dependent on men, and that his dealings cannot be graduated by any reference to what he would receive or suffer from men; but still he clung to the idea that the dealings of God here are a proof of the character of the afflicted. What was mysterious about it he resolves into sovereignty, and shewed that man ought to be submissive to God, and to believe that he was qualified to govern. He lacked the views which Christianity has furnished, that the inequalities that appear in the Divine dealings here, will be made clear in the retributions of another world.

CHAP. XXXVII.—16. *Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?* That is, Dost thou know how the clouds are poised and suspended in the air? The difficulty to be explained was, that the clouds, so full of water, did not fall to the earth, but remained suspended in the atmosphere. They were poised and moved about by some unseen hand. Elihu asks what kept them there; what prevented their falling to the earth; what preserved the equilibrium, so that they did not all roll together? We know more of the facts and laws respecting the clouds than was understood then; but our knowledge in this, as in all other things, is fitted only to exalt our conceptions of the Deity, and to change blind wonder into intelligent adoration. 22. *Fair weather*. Marg., *gold*. It seems probable that Elihu means to say that a bright, dazzling light was seen in the northern sky, like burnished gold, which was a fit symbol of the approaching Deity. This idea is hinted at in the Septuagint, but it has not seemed to occur to expositors. The image is that of the heavens darkened with the tempest, the lightnings playing, the thunder rolling, and then the wind seeming to brush away the clouds in the north, and disclosing in the opening a bright dazzling appearance, like burnished gold, that bespoke the approach of God.

CHAP. XXXVIII.—22. *Treasures of the snow—of the hail*. All the facts about the formation of hail were unknown in the time of Job, and hence God appeals to them as evidence of his superior wisdom and greatness, and in proof of the duty of man to submit to him. These phenomena, which were constantly occurring, man could not explain; and how much less qualified, therefore, was he to sit in judgment on the secret counsels of the Almighty! The same observation may be made now; for, though science has done something to explain the laws by which snow and hail are formed, yet those discoveries have tended to enlarge our conceptions of the wisdom of God, and have shown us, to an extent which was not then suspected, how much is still unknown. We see a few of the laws by which God does these things, but who is prepared to explain these laws themselves, or to tell why and how the particles of vapour arrange themselves into such beautiful crystallized forms?

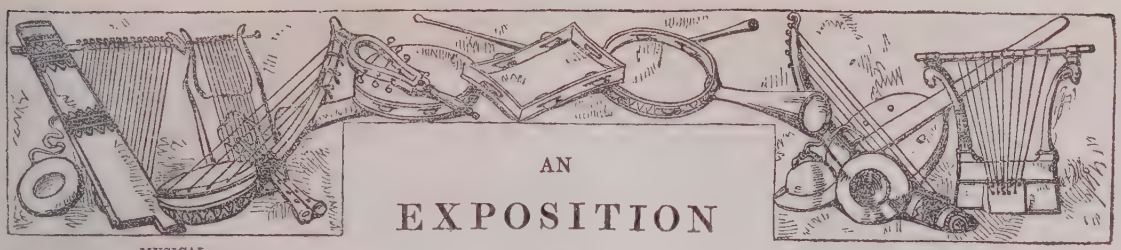
CHAP. XXXIX.—9. *Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee?* In Hebrew, *rem*, or *reem*. Of the wild buffalo of Abyssinia, Dr. Roth, who lately visited that country as the naturalist under Major Harris, says, 'The wild buffalo, *bubolus pegasus*, fierce, and as yet untamed, inhabits the forests and jungles of Bulgu and Mentspai, all along the river Hawash. Its chase is considered one of the most dangerous pursuits of the hunter; several human lives being frequently expended in the conquest of one beast.'—*App. to Harris's Highlands of Ethiopia*. Dr. Wilson adds, 'Such an animal as this seems to correspond with the *reem* of Job.' 18. *She scorneth the horse and his rider*. 'Notwithstanding the stupidity of this animal, its Creator hath amply provided for its safety by endowing it with extraordinary swiftness, and a surprising apparatus for escaping from its enemy. "They, when they raise themselves up for flight, laugh at the horse and his rider." They afford him an opportunity only of admiring at a distance the extraordinary agility, and the stateliness likewise of their motions, the richness of their plumage, and the great propriety there was in ascribing to them an expanded, quivering wing. Nothing, certainly, can be more entertaining than such a sight; the wings, by their rapid but unwearied vibrations, equally serving them for sails and for oars; while their feet, no less assisting in conveying them out of sight, are no less insensible of fatigue.'—*Dr. Shaw's Travels*, 8vo vol. ii. p. 343, as quoted by Noyes.

CHAP. XL.—15. *Behold now behemoth*. The characteristics given agree better with the hippopotamus than with any other known animal, and at present, critics, with few exceptions, agree in the opinion that this is the animal which is referred to. The hippopotamus is found principally on the banks of the Nile, though it is found also in the other large rivers of Africa, as the Niger, and the rivers which lie between that and the Cape of Good Hope. It is not found in any of the rivers which run north into the Mediterranean except the Nile, and there only at present in that portion which traverses Upper Egypt; and it is found also in the lakes and fens of Ethiopia. The appearance of the animal, when on land, is represented as very uncouth, the body being very large, flat, and round, the head enormously large in proportion, the feet as disproportionably short, and the armament of teeth in its mouth truly formidable. The length of a male has been known to be seventeen feet, the height seven, and the circumference fifteen; the head three feet and a half, and the mouth about two feet in width. Objection is, however, made to the hippopotamus, because he keeps to the water, and never feeds on the mountains, as the creature here described (see ver. 20); and to the elephant, because his belly is not invulnerable, as this creature (see ver. 16). Hence some suppose an animal is meant now become extinct, possibly the mastodon, whose amazing structure is among the discoveries of geology.—*Domestic Bible*.

CHAP. XLI.—1. *Leviathan*. As the learned have contended about the behemoth, so also have they about leviathan. The two leading opinions respecting this creature are, 1. That it means the whale; and, 2. That it means the crocodile. Against the opinion that it means the whale it is objected, that the whale tribes do not inhabit the Mediterranean, much less the rivers which empty themselves into it, with which it is supposed Job could have been acquainted. And moreover, the animal here described differs from the whale in many particulars, the whale having neither proper snout nor nostrils, nor proper teeth. The eyes too of the whale are most disproportionately small. Neither is it fierce, or unconquerably courageous. In favour of the leviathan being the crocodile, it is remarked, 1. That this creature is a natural inhabitant of the Asiatic and African rivers; 2. that he is wild, fierce, and ungovernable—of vast extent—terrible in aspect—has a huge mouth—numerous and formidable teeth—is covered with strong scales—fierce in the eye—frightful in the mouth—astonishingly strong, and incapable of being captured in an ordinary way. The crocodile will grow to the length of thirty feet; it has thirty teeth in each jaw; its coat of mail repels a musket ball. It has power sufficient to drag a tiger into the water and drown it, when it goes to drink. The description of the fury and power of this creature needs no particular explanation in the subsequent verses. In verses 10 and 11 the argument is carried from the creature to the Creator; and ver. 12 again commences a more particular description of the animal than had been before given.—*Domestic Bible*.

CHAP. XLII.—16. *After this lived Job an hundred and forty years*. The age to which he lived is mentioned as remarkable, and was evidently somewhat extraordinary. It is not proper, therefore, to assume that this was the ordinary length of human life at that time, though it would be equally improper to suppose that there was anything like miracle in the case. The fair interpretation is that he reached the period of old age which was then deemed most honourable; that he was permitted to arrive at what was then regarded as the outer limit of human life; and if this be so, it is not difficult to determine about the time when he lived. The length of human life after the flood suffered a somewhat regular decline, until, in the time of Moses, it was fixed at about threescore years and ten, *Ps.* xc. 10. The following instances will shew the regularity of the decline, and enable us, with some degree of probability, to determine the period of the world in which Job lived. Noah lived 950 years; Shem, his son, 600; Arphaxad, his son, 438 years; Salah, 433 years; Eber, 464; Peleg, 239; Reu, 239; Serug, 230; Nahor, 248; Terah, 205; Abraham, 175; Isaac, 180; Jacob, 147; Joseph, 110; Moses, 120; Joshua, 110. Supposing then the age of Job to have been somewhat unusual and extraordinary, it would fall in with the period somewhere in the time between Terah and Jacob; and if so, he was probably contemporary with the most distinguished of the patriarchs.

In view of all these things, and especially of the statements in the chapter which closes the book, we may make the following remarks: 1. The upright will be ultimately honoured by God and man. 2. We should adhere to our integrity when passing through trials. 3. The expressions of Divine favour and love are not to be expected in the midst of angry controversy and heated debate. 4. From the chapter before us (xlii. 11,) we are presented with an interesting fact, such as often occurs. It is this: friends return to us, and become exceedingly kind after calamity has passed by. 5. We should overcome the unkindness of our friends by praying for them. 6. The last days of a good man are not unfrequently his best and happiest days. The early part of his life may be harassed with cares; the middle may be filled up with trials; but returning prosperity may smile upon his old age, and his sun go down without a cloud. 7. The book through whose exposition we have now passed is a most invaluable argument. The reasonings of philosophy now are no more satisfactory than were those of Eliphaz, Zophar, and Bildad; and it may be doubted whether, since this book was written, the slightest advance has been made in removing the perplexities on the subject of the Divine administration, so beautifully stated in the book of Job. 8. The reasonings in this book show the desirableness and the value of revelation. A great and good man falls. His comforts all depart. He sinks to the lowest degree of wretchedness. To explain this, and all kindred subjects, his own mind is taxed to the utmost, and four men of distinguished sagacity and extent of observation are introduced—the representatives of the wisdom of the world—to explain the fact. They adduce all that they had learned by tradition, and all that their own observation had suggested, and all the considerations which reason would suggest to them; but all in vain. They make no advances in the explanation, and the subject at the close is left as dark as when they began. Such an effect, and such a train of discussion, is admirably fitted to prepare the mind to welcome the teachings of revelation, and to be grateful for that volume of revealed truth which casts such abundant light on the questions that so perplexed these ancient sages. Lastly, the theologian should study this book as an invaluable introduction to the volume of inspired truth; the humble Christian, to obtain elevated views of God; the philosopher, to see how little the human mind can accomplish on the most important of all subjects without the aid of revelation; the child of sorrow, to learn the lessons of patient submission; the man of science, to know what was understood in the far distant periods of the past; the man of taste, as an incomparable specimen of poetic beauty and sublimity. It will teach invaluable lessons to each advancing generation; and to the end of time true piety and taste will find consolation and pleasure in the study of the book of Job.



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE BOOK OF PSALMS,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

We have now before us one of the choicest and most excellent parts of all the Old Testament; nay, so much is there in it of Christ and his Gospel, as well as of God and his law, that it has been called the abstract or summary of both Testaments. The history of Israel, which we were long upon, led us to camps and council-boards, and there entertained and instructed us in the knowledge of God; the book of *Job* brought us into the schools, and treated us with profitable disputations concerning God and his providence; but this book brings us into the sanctuary, draws us off from converse with men, with the politicians, philosophers, or disputers of this world, and directs us into communion with God, by solacing and reposing our souls in him, lifting up and letting out our hearts towards him. Thus may we be in the mount with God; and we understand not ourselves if we say not, "It is good to be here." Let us consider,

I. The title of this book. It is called, 1. *The Psalms;* under that title it is referred to *Lu.* xxiv. 44. The Hebrew calls it *Tehillim*, which properly signifies 'psalms of praise,' because many of them are such; but *Psalms* is a more general word, meaning all metrical compositions fitted to be sung, which may as well be historical, doctrinal, or supplicatory, as laudatory. Though singing be properly the voice of joy, yet the intention of songs is of a much greater latitude—to assist the memory, and both to express and to excite all the other affections as well as this of joy. The priests had a mournful muse as well as joyful ones. And the Divine institution of singing psalms is thus largely intended; for we are directed not only to praise God, but to teach and admonish ourselves and one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, *Col.* iii. 16. 2. It is called *the Book of Psalms;* so it is quoted by St. Peter, *Acts* i. 20. It is a collection of psalms, of all the psalms that were divinely inspired; which, though composed at several times, and upon several occasions, are here put together without any reference to, or dependence upon, one another. Thus they were preserved from being scattered and lost, and laid in so much greater readiness for the service of the church. See what a good Master we serve, and what pleasantness there is in wisdom's ways, when we are not only commanded to sing at our work, and have cause enough given us to do so, but have words also put into our mouths, and songs prepared to our hands.

II. The author of this book. It is, no doubt, derived originally from the blessed Spirit. They are spiritual songs, words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. The penman of most of them was David the son of Jesse, who is therefore called the sweet Psalmist of Israel, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 1. Some that have not his name in their titles, yet are expressly ascribed to him elsewhere, as the *second Psalm, Acts* iv. 25, and *Psalms* xcvi. and cv., 1 *Chr.* xvi. One psalm is expressly said to be the prayer of Moses, *Ps.* xc., and that some of the psalms were penned by Asaph is intimated 2 *Chr.* xxix. 30, where they are said to praise the Lord in the words of David and Asaph, who is there called a seer or prophet. Some of the psalms seem to have been penned long after, as *Ps.* cxxxvii., at the time of the captivity in Babylon; but for certain the far greater part of them were penned by David himself, whose genius lay towards poetry and music; and who was raised up, qualified, and spirited for the establishing of the ordinance of singing psalms in the church of God, as Moses and Aaron were in their day for the settling of the ordinances of sacrifice: theirs is superseded, but this remains, and will to the end of time, when it shall be swallowed up in the songs of eternity. Herein David was a type of Christ, who descended from him; not from Moses, because he came to take away sacrifice, (the family of Moses was soon lost and extinct,) but to establish and perpetuate joy and praise; for of the family of David, in Christ, there shall be no end.

III. The scope of it. It is manifestly intended, 1. To assist the exercises of natural religion, and to kindle in the souls of men those devout affections which we owe to God as our Creator, Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor. The book of *Job* helps to prove our first principles of the Divine perfections and providence; but this helps to improve them in prayers and praises, and professions of desire toward him, dependence on him, and an entire devotedness and resignation to him. Other parts of Scripture shew that God is infinitely above man, and his Sovereign Lord; but this shews us that, notwithstanding that, he may be conversed with by us sinful worms of the earth, and there are ways in which, if it be not our own faults, we may keep up communion with him in all the various conditions of human life. 2. To advance the excellences of revealed religion, and, in the most pleasing, powerful manner, to recommend it to the world. There is indeed little or nothing in all the book of *Psalms* of the ceremonial law; though sacrifice and offering were yet to continue many ages, yet they are here represented as things which God did not desire, *Ps.* xl. 6; li. 16; as things comparatively little, and which in time were to vanish away. But the word and law of God, those parts of it which are moral and of perpetual obligation, are here all along magnified and made honourable: nowhere more. And Christ, the crown and centre of revealed religion, the foundation, corner, and topstone of that blessed building, is here clearly spoken of in type and prophecy; both his sufferings and the glory that should follow, and the kingdom he should set up in the world, which God's covenant with David concerning his kingdom was to have its accomplishment in. What a high value doth this book put upon the Word of God, his statutes and judgments, his covenant, and the great and precious promises of it; and how doth it recommend them to us as our guide and stay, and our heritage for ever!

IV. The use of it. All Scripture, being given by inspiration of God, is profitable to convey Divine light into our understanding; but this book is of singular use with that to convey Divine life and power, and a holy heat, into our affections. There is no one book of Scripture that is more helpful to the devotions of the saints than this, and it has been so in all ages of the church ever since it was written, and the several parts of it delivered to the chief musician, for the service of the church. 1. It is of use to be sung. Farther than David's psalms we may go, but we need not go, for hymns and spiritual songs. What the rules of the Hebrew metre were, even the learned are not certain. But these psalms ought to be rendered according to the metre of every language, at least, so as that they may be sung for the edification of the church; and, methinks, it is a great comfort to us, when we are singing David's psalms, that we are offering the very same praises to God that were offered him in the days of David, and other the godly kings of Judah. So rich, so well made, are these Divine poems, that they can never be exhausted, can never be worn threadbare. 2. It is of use to be read and opened by the ministers of Christ, as containing great and excellent truths, and rules concerning good and evil. Our Lord Jesus expounded the psalms to his disciples, the gospel psalms, and opened their understandings (for he had the key of David) to understand them, *Lu.* xxiv. 44. 3. It is of use to be read and meditated upon by all good people. It is a full fountain out of which we may all be drawing water with joy. 1st. The Psalmist's experiences are of great use for our direction, caution, and encouragement; in telling us, as he often doth, what passed between God and his soul, he lets us know what we may expect from God, and what he will expect and require, and graciously accept, from us. David was a man after God's own heart, and, therefore, those who find themselves in some measure according to his heart, have reason to hope that they are renewed by the grace of God, after the image of God, and may have much comfort in the testimony of their consciences for them, that they can heartily say Amen to David's prayers and praises. 2nd. Even the Psalmist's expressions, too, are of great use; and by them the Spirit helps our praying infirmities, because we know not what to pray for as we ought. In all our approaches to God, as well as in our first returns to God, we are directed to take with us words, *Hos.* xiv. 2; these words, words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. If we make David's psalms familiar to us, as we ought to do, whatever errand we have at the throne of grace, by way of confession, petition, or thanksgiving, we may from thence be assisted in the delivery of it; whatever devout affection is working in us, holy desire or hope, sorrow or joy, we may there find apt words wherewith to clothe them: sound speech which cannot be condemned. It will be good to collect the most proper and lively expressions of devotion which we find here, and to methodize them, and reduce them to the several heads of prayer, that they may be the more ready to us; or we may take sometimes one choice psalm, and sometimes another, and pray it over, that is, enlarge upon each verse in our own thoughts, and offer up our meditations to God, as they arise from the expressions we find there. The learned Dr. Hammond, in his preface to his *Paraphrase on the Psalms*, sect. 29, saith, 'That going over a few psalms with these interpunctions of mental devotion, suggested, animated, and maintained by the native life and vigour which is in the *Psalms*, is much to be

preferred before the saying over of the whole Psalter; since nothing is more fit to be averted in religious offices than their degenerating into heartless, dispirited recitations.' If, as St. Austin adviseth, we form our spirit by the affection of the psalm, we may then be sure of acceptance with God in using the language of it. Nor is it only our devotion and the affections of our mind that the book of *Psalms* assists, teaching us how to offer praise so as to glorify God; but it is also a directory to the actions of our lives, and teacheth us how to order our conversation aright, so as that, in the end, we may see the salvation of God, *Ps.* l. 6. The psalms were thus serviceable to the Old Testament church, but to us Christians they may be of more use than they could be to them who lived before the coming of Christ; for, as Moses' sacrifices, so David's songs, are expounded and made more intelligible by the Gospel of Christ, which lets us within the veil; so that if, to David's prayers and praises, we add St. Paul's prayers in his Epistles, and the new songs in the *Revelation*, we shall be thoroughly furnished for this good work, for the Scripture perfected makes the man of God perfect.

As to the division of this book we need not be solicitous; there is no connexion (or very seldom) between one psalm and another, nor any reason discernible for the placing of them in the order wherein we here find them; but it seems to be ancient, for that which is now the 2nd *Psalm* was so in the apostles' time, *Acts* xiii. 33. The vulgar Latin joins the 9th and 10th together; all Popish authors quote by that; so that from thenceforward, throughout the book, their number is one short of ours: our 11th is their 10th, our 119th their 118th. But then they divide the 147th into two, and so make up the number of 150. Some have endeavoured to reduce the *Psalms* to proper heads, according to the matter of them; but there is many times such a variety of matter in one and the same psalm, that it cannot be done with any certainty; but the seven penitential psalms have been in a particular manner singled out by the devotions of many. They are reckoned to be the 6th, 32nd, 38th, 51st, 102nd, 130th, and 143rd. The *Psalms* have anciently been divided into five books, each concluding with "Amen, amen," or "Hallelujah;" the first ending with *Ps.* xli., the second with *Ps.* lxxii., the third with *Ps.* lxxxix., the fourth with *Ps.* cvi., the fifth with *Ps.* cl. Others divide them into three fifties, others into sixty parts, two for every day of the month,—one for the morning, the other for the evening. Let good Christians divide them for themselves, so as may best increase their acquaintance with them, that they may have them at hand upon all occasions, and may sing them in the spirit and with the understanding.

PSALM I.

This is a psalm of instruction concerning good and evil, setting before us life and death, the blessing and the curse, that we may take the right way which leads to happiness, and avoid that which will certainly end in our misery and ruin. The different character and condition of godly people and wicked people, those that serve God, and those that serve him not, is here plainly stated in a few words; so that every man, if he will be faithful to himself, may here see his own face, and then read his own doom. That division of the children of men into saints and sinners, righteous and unrighteous, the children of God, and the children of the wicked one, as it is ancient, ever since the struggle began between sin and grace, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, so it is lasting, and will survive all other divisions and subdivisions of men into high and low, rich and poor, bond and free; for by this men's everlasting state will be determined, and the distinction will last as long as heaven and hell. This psalm shews us, I. The holiness and happiness of a godly man, ver. 1—3. II. The sinfulness and misery of a wicked man, ver. 4, 5. III. The ground and reason of both, ver. 6. Whosoever collected the psalms of David, (probably it was Ezra,) with good reason put this psalm first, as a preface to the rest, because it is absolutely necessary to the acceptance of our devotions that we be righteous before God; for it is only the prayer of the upright that is his delight, and therefore that we be right in our notions of blessedness, and in our choice of the way that leads to it. Those are not fit to put up good prayers that do not walk in good ways.

BLESSED *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, [ners,
Nor standeth in the way of sin-
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. [of the LORD;
2 But his delight *is* in the law
And in his law doth he meditate day and night.
3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
That bringeth forth his fruit in [his season;
His leaf also shall not wither;
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The psalmist begins with the character and condition of a godly man, that those may first take the comfort of that to whom it belongs. Here is,

First. A description given of the godly man's spirit and way, by which we are to try ourselves. The Lord knows them that are his by name, but we must know them by their character, for that is agreeable to a state of probation, that we may study to answer the character; which is indeed both the command of the law, that we are bound in duty to obey, and the condition of the promise, that we are bound in interest to fulfil. The character of a good man is here given by the rules he chooseth to walk by, and to take his measures from. It is of great consequence to us what we take at our setting out, and at every turn, for the guide of our conversation, whether the course of this world or the word of God. An error in the choice of our standard and leader is original and fatal, but if we be right here we are in a fair way to do well.

1. A godly man, that he may avoid the evil, utterly renounces the conduct of evil-doers, and will not be led by them; ver. 1, he "walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," &c. This part of his character is put first, because those that will keep the commandments of their God must say to evil-doers, "Depart from us," *Ps.* cxix. 115. And departing from evil is that in which wisdom begins. 1st. He sees evil-doers round about him. The world is full of them, they walk on every side. They are here described by three characters,—ungodly, sinners, and scornful. See by what steps men arrive to the height of impiety; *nemo repente sit turpissimus*,—'none reach the height of vice at once.' They are ungodly first, casting off the fear of God, and living in the neglect of their duty to him. But they rest not there; when the services of religion are laid aside, they come to be sinners, that is, they break out into open rebellion against God, and engage in the service of sin and Satan. Omissions make way for commissions; and by these the heart is so hardened that at length they come to be scorners; they openly defy all that is sacred, scoff at religion, and make a jest of sin. Thus is the way of iniquity down-hill; the bad grow worse, sinners themselves become tempters to others, and advocates for Baal. The word which we translate ungodly, signifies such as are unsettled, aim at no certain end, and walk by no certain rule, but are at the command of every lust, and at the beck of every temptation; the word for sinners, such as are determined for the practice of sin, and set it up as their trade; and then the scornful are those that set up their mouths against the heavens. These the good man sees with a sad heart; they are a constant vexation to his righteous soul. But, 2nd. He shuns them wherever he sees them. He doth not do as they do; and that he may not he doth not converse familiarly with them. *First.* He doth not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. He is not present at their counsels, nor doth he advise with them; though they are never so witty, and subtle, and learned, if they are ungodly they shall not be the men of his counsel; he doth not consent to them, nor say as they say, *Lu.* xxiii. 51; doth not take his measures from their principles, nor act according to the advice which they use to give and take. The ungodly are forward to give their advice against religion; and it is managed so artfully, that we have reason to bless ourselves from it, and to think ourselves happy if we escape being tainted and ensnared by it. *Secondly.* He stands not in the way of sinners; that is, he avoids doing as they do. Their way shall not be his way; he will not come into it, much less will he continue in it, as the sinner doth, who "sets himself in a way that is not good," *Ps.* xxxvi. 4. He avoids, as much as may be, being where they are; that he may not imitate them he will not associate with them, nor choose them for his companions. He doth not stand in their way to be picked up by them, *Pr.* vii. 8, but keeps as far from them as from a place or person infected with the plague, for fear of the contagion, *Pr.* iv. 14, 15. He that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way. *Thirdly.* He sits not in the seat of the scornful. He doth not repose himself with those that sit down secure in their wickedness, and please themselves with the searedness of their own consciences. He doth not associate with those that sit in close cabal to find out ways and means for the support and advancement of the devil's kingdom; or that sit in open judgment magisterially to condemn the generation of the righteous. The seat of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful, *Ps.* lxix. 12; happy is the man that never sits in it, *Hos.* vii. 5.

2. A godly man, that he may do that which is good, and cleave to it, submits to the conduct of the word of God, and makes that familiar to him, ver. 2. This is that which keeps him out of the way of the ungodly, and fortifies him against their temptations, "By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the path of the destroyer," *Ps.* xvii. 4. We need not court the fellowship of sinners either for pleasure or improvement, while we have fellowship with the word of God, and with God himself, in and by his word; "When thou wakest, it shall talk with thee," *Pr.* vi. 22. We may judge of our spiritual state by this, What is the law of God to us? what account do we make of it? what place has it in us? See here, 1st. The entire affection which a good man has for the law of God. His delight is in it. He delights in it, though it be a law, a yoke, because it is the law of God, which is holy, just, and good, which he freely consents to, and so delights in it after the inner man, *Rom.* vii. 16, 22. All that are well pleased there is a God, cannot but be well pleased there is a Bible, a revelation of God, of his will, and of the only way to happiness in him. 2nd. The intimate acquaintance which a good man keeps up with the word of God. In that law doth he meditate day and night; and by this it appears his delight is in it; for what we love we love to think of, *Ps.* cxix. 97. To meditate in God's word is to discourse with ourselves concerning the great things contained in it, with a close application of mind, a fixedness of thought, till we be suitably affected with those things, and experience the savour and power of them in our hearts. This we must do day and night, that is, we must have a constant habitual regard to the word of God as the rule of our actions, and the spring of our comforts, and we must have it in our thoughts accordingly upon every occasion that occurs, whether night or day. No time amiss for the meditating on the word of God, nor any time unseasonable for those visits. We must not only set ourselves to meditate on God's word morning and evening, at the entrance of the day and the night, but these thoughts should be interwoven with the business and converse of every day, and with the repose and slumbers of every night; "When I am awake, I am still with thee."

Secondly. An assurance given of the godly man's happiness, with which we should encourage ourselves to answer the character of such.

1. In general, he is blessed, ver. 1. God blesseth him, and that blessing will make him happy. 'Blessednesses are to him,' blessings of all kinds, of the upper and nether springs, enough to make him completely happy; none of the ingredients of happiness shall be wanting to him. When he undertakes to describe a blessed man, he describes a good man; for, after all, those only are happy, truly happy, that are holy, truly holy; and we are more concerned to know the way to blessedness than to know wherein the blessedness will consist. Nay, goodness and holiness is not only the way to happiness, (*Rev.* xxii. 14,) but happiness itself. Supposing there were not another life after this, yet that man is a happy man that keeps in the way of his duty.

2. His blessedness is here illustrated by a similitude; ver. 3, "He shall be like a tree," fruitful and flourishing. This is the effect, 1st. Of his pious practice; he meditated in the law of God, turns that *in sucum et sanguinem*,—'into juice and blood,' and that makes him like a tree. The more we converse with the word of God the better furnished we are for every good word and work. Or, 2nd. Of the promised blessing. He is blessed of the Lord, and therefore "he shall be like a tree." The Divine blessing produceth real effects. It is the happiness of a godly man, *First.* That he is planted by the grace of God. These trees were by nature wild olives, and will continue so till they are grafted anew, and so planted by a power from above. Never any good tree grew of itself; it is

the planting of the Lord; and therefore he must in it be glorified, *Isa.* lxi. 3; "The trees of the Lord are full of sap." *Secondly.* That he is placed by the means of grace, here called the rivers of water, those rivers which make glad the city of our God, *Ps.* xlvi. 4; from these a good man receives supplies of strength and vigour, but in secret undiscerned ways. *Thirdly.* That his practices shall be fruit abounding to a good account, *Phil.* iv. 17. To those whom God first blessed he said, Be fruitful, *Gen.* i. 22, and still the comfort and honour of fruitfulness is a recompence for the labour of it. It is expected from those who enjoy the mercies of grace, that, both in the temper of their minds and in the tenor of their lives, they comply with the intentions of that grace, and then they bring forth fruit. And be it observed, to the praise of the Great Dresser of the vineyard, they bring forth their fruit (that which is required of them) in due season, when it is most beautiful and most useful; improving every opportunity of doing good, and doing it in its proper time. *Fourthly.* That his profession shall be preserved from blemish and decay; "his leaf also shall not wither." Those who bring forth only the leaves of profession, without any good fruit, even their leaf will wither, and they shall be as much ashamed of their profession as ever they were proud of it; but if the word of God rule in the heart, that will keep the profession green, both to our comfort and to our credit. The laurels he has won shall never wither. *Fifthly.* That prosperity shall attend him wherever he goes,—soul prosperity. Whatever he doth, in conformity to the law, it shall prosper and succeed to his mind, or above his hope.

In singing these verses, being duly affected with the malignant and dangerous nature of sin, the transcendent excellences of the Divine law, and the power and efficacy of God's grace, from which our fruit is found, we must teach and admonish ourselves and one another to watch against sin, and all approaches towards it,—to converse much with the word of God, and abound in the fruits of righteousness. And in praying over them we must seek to God for his grace, both to fortify us against every evil word and work, and to furnish us for every good word and work.

4 The ungodly *are* not so:
But *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away.
5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Here is, First. The description of the ungodly given, ver. 4. 1. In general; they are the reverse of the righteous, both in character and condition. They "are not so." The Seventy emphatically repeat this, 'Not so the ungodly, they are not so;' they are led by the counsel of the wicked, in the way of sinners, to the seat of the scornful. They have no delight in the law of God, nor ever think of it; they bring forth no fruit, but grapes of Sodom; they cumber the ground. 2. In particular; whereas the righteous are like valuable, useful, fruitful trees, they "are like the chaff which the wind driveth away;" the very lightest of the chaff, the dust which the owner of the flour desires to have driven away, as not capable of being put to any use. Would you value them? Would you weigh them? They are like chaff, of no worth at all in God's account, how highly soever they may value themselves. Would you know the temper of their minds? They are light and vain; they have no substance in them, no solidity; they are easily driven to and fro by every wind and temptation, and have no stedfastness. Would you know their end? The wrath of God will drive them away in their wickedness, as the wind doth the chaff, which is never gathered or looked after more. The chaff may be for a while among the wheat, but He is coming whose fan is in his hand, and who will thoroughly purge his floor. They that by their own sin and folly make themselves as chaff will be found so before the whirlwind and fire of Divine wrath, (*Ps.* xxxv. 5,) so unable to stand before it or to escape it, *Isa.* xvii. 13.

Secondly. The doom of the ungodly read, ver. 5. 1. They will be cast, upon their trial, as traitors convict. They "shall not stand in the judgment," that is, they shall be found guilty, shall hang down the head with shame and confusion, and all their pleas and excuses will be overruled as frivolous. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's present character and work, though never so artfully concealed and disguised, shall be truly and perfectly discovered, and appear in its own colours; so every man's future state will be by an irreversible sentence determined for eternity. The ungodly must appear in that judgment, to receive according to the things done in the body. They may hope to come off, nay, to come off with honour, but their hope will deceive them; they "shall not stand in the judgment;" so plain will the evidence be against them, and so just and impartial will the judgment be upon it. 2. They will be for ever shut out from the society of the blessed. They shall not stand "in the congregation of the righteous," that is, in the judgment, so some, in that court wherein the saints, as assessors with Christ, shall judge the world,—those holy myriads with which he shall come to execute judgment upon all, *Jude* 14; 1 *Cor.* vi. 2. Or, in heaven there will shortly be a general assembly of the church of the firstborn, a congregation of the righteous, of all the saints, and none but saints, and saints made perfect; such a congregation of them as never was in this world, 2 *Thes.* ii. 1. The wicked shall not have a place in that congregation. Into the New Jerusalem none unclean, or unsanctified, shall enter; they shall see the righteous enter into the kingdom, and themselves to their everlasting vexation thrust out, *Lu.* xiii. 27. The wicked and profane in this world ridiculed the righteous, and their congregation despised them, and cared not for their company; justly, therefore, will they be for ever separated from them. Hypocrites in this world, under the disguise of a plausible profession, may thrust themselves into the congregation of the righteous, and remain undisturbed and undiscovered there, but Christ cannot be imposed upon, though his ministers may; the day is coming when he will separate between the sheep and the goats, the tares and the wheat: see *Mar.* xiii. 41, 49. That great day, so the Chaldee here calls it, will be a day of discovery, a day of distinction, and a day of final division; then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, which here it is sometimes hard to do, *Mal.* iii. 18.

Thirdly. The reason rendered of this different state of the godly and wicked, ver. 6. 1. God must have all the glory of the prosperity and happiness of the righteous. They are blessed because the Lord knows their way; he chose them into it, inclined them to choose it, leads and guides them in it, and orders all their steps. 2. Sinners must bear all the blame of their own destruction. Therefore the ungodly perish because the very way in which they have chosen and resolved to walk leads directly to destruction; it naturally tends towards ruin, and therefore must necessarily end in it. Or we may take it thus: "The Lord knows," that is, he approves of, and is well pleased with, "the way of the righteous," and therefore under the influence of his gracious smiles it shall prosper and end well. But he is angry at the way of the wicked; all they do is offensive to him, and therefore it shall perish, and they in it. It is certain every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord, and it is well or ill with us, and is likely to be so to all eternity, according as we are or are not accepted of God. Let this support the drooping spirits of the righteous, that the Lord knows their way, knows their hearts, *Jer.* xii. 3; knows their secret devotions, *Mat.* vi. 6; knows their character, how much soever it is blackened and blemished by the reproaches of men; and will shortly make them and their way manifest before the world, to their immortal joy and honour. Let this cast a damp upon the security and jollity of sinners, that their way, though pleasant now, will perish at last.

In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us possess ourselves with a holy dread of the wicked man's portion, and deprecate it, with a firm and lively expectation of the judgment to come, and stir up ourselves to prepare for it; and with a holy care to approve ourselves to God in every thing, entreating his favour with our whole hearts.

PSALM II.

As the foregoing psalm was moral, and shewed us our duty, so this is evangelical, and shews us our Saviour. Under the type of David's kingdom, which was of Divine appointment, met with much opposition, but prevailed at last, the kingdom of the Messiah, the son of David, is prophesied of, which is the primary intention and scope of the psalm; and I think there is less in it of the type, and more of the antitype, than in any of the gospel psalms, for there is nothing in it but what is applicable to Christ, but some things that are not at all applicable to David; ver. 6, 7, "Thou art my Son;" ver. 8, "I will give thee the uttermost parts of the earth;" and, ver. 12, "Kiss the Son." It is interpreted of Christ, *Acts* iv. 25; xiii. 33; *Heb.* i. 5. The Holy Ghost here foretells, I. The opposition that should be given to the kingdom of the Messiah, ver. 1—3. II. The baffling and chastising of that opposition, ver. 4, 5. III. The setting up of the kingdom of Christ notwithstanding that opposition, ver. 6. IV. The confirmation and establishment of it, ver. 7. V. A promise of the enlargement and success of it, ver. 8, 9. VI. A call and exhortation to kings and princes to yield themselves the willing subjects of this kingdom, ver. 10—12. Or thus: we have here, I. Threatenings denounced against the adversaries of Christ's kingdom, ver. 1—6. II. Promises made to Christ himself, the head of this kingdom, ver. 7—9. III. Counsel given to all to espouse the interests of this kingdom, ver. 10—12. This psalm, as the former, is very fitly prefixed to this book of devotions, because, as it is necessary to our acceptance with God that we should be subject to the precepts of his law, so it is likewise that we should be subject to the grace of his Gospel, and come to him in the name of a Mediator.

WHY do the heathen rage,
And the people imagine a vain thing?
2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*,
3 Let us break their bands asunder,
And cast away their cords from us.
4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:
The LORD shall have them in derision.
5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,
And vex them in his sore displeasure.
6 Yet have I set my king
Upon my holy hill of Zion.

We have here a very great struggle about the kingdom of Christ; hell and heaven contesting it; and the seat of the war is this earth, where Satan has long had a usurped kingdom, and exercised dominion to that degree, that he has been called the prince of the power of the very air we breathe in, and the god of the world we live in. He knows very well that as the Messiah's kingdom riseth and gets ground his falls and loseth ground; and, therefore, though it will be set up certainly, it shall not be set up tamely. Observe here,

First. The mighty opposition that would be given to the Messiah and his kingdom, to his holy religion, and all the interests of it, ver. 1—3. One would have expected that so great a blessing to this world should have been universally welcomed and embraced, and that every sheaf should immediately have bowed to that of the Messiah, and all the crowns and sceptres on earth should have been laid at his feet; but it proves quite contrary. Never were the notions of any sect of philosophers, though never so absurd, nor the powers of any prince or state though never so tyrannical, opposed with so much violence as the doctrine and government of Christ. A sign it was from heaven, for the opposition was plainly from hell originally.

1. We are here told who would appear as adversaries to Christ, and the devil's instruments in this opposition to his kingdom. Princes and people, court and country, have sometimes separate interests, but here they are united against Christ; not the mighty only, but the mob, the heathen, the people,—numbers of them, communities of them, though usually fond of liberty, yet averse to that liberty Christ came to procure and proclaim. Not the mob only, but the mighty, among whom one might have expected more sense and consideration, appear violent against Christ; though his kingdom is not of this world, nor in any danger of weakening their interests, but very likely, if they please, to strengthen them, yet the kings of the earth and rulers are up in arms presently. See the effects of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, and how general and malignant the corruption of mankind is: see how formidable the enemies of the church are; they are numerous, they are potent. The unbelieving Jews are here called heathen, so wretchedly were they degenerated from the faith and holiness of their ancestors; they stirred up the heathen, the Gentiles, to prosecute the Christians. As the Philistines and their lords, Saul and his courtiers, the disaffected party and their ringleaders, opposed David's coming to the crown, so Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews, did their utmost against Christ, and his interest in men, *Acts* iv. 27.

2. Who it is that they quarrel with, and muster up all their forces against. It is "against the Lord, and against his anointed," that is, against all religion in general, and the Christian religion in particular; and it is certain, all that are enemies to Christ, whatever they pretend, are enemies to God himself; they "have hated both me and my Father," *Jno.* xv. 24. The Great Author of our holy religion is here called the Lord's Anointed, or Messiah, or Christ, in allusion to the anointing of David to be king. He is both authorized and qualified to be the church's head and king, is duly invested in the office, and every way fitted for it, and yet there are those that are against him; nay, therefore they are against him, because they are impatient of God's authority, envious at his advancement, and have a rooted enmity to the Spirit of holiness.

3. The opposition they give is here described. 1st. It is a most spiteful and malicious opposition. They rage and fret, gnash their teeth for vexation, at the setting up of Christ's kingdom; it creates in them the greatest uneasiness that can be, and fills them with indignation, so that they have no enjoyment of themselves: see *Lu.* xiii. 14; *Jno.* xi. 47; *Acts* v. 17, 33; xix. 28. Idolaters raged at the discovery of their folly, the chief priests and Pharisees at the eclipsing of their glory, and the shaking of their usurped dominion. They that did evil raged at the light. 2nd. It is a deliberate, politic opposition. They imagine, or meditate, that is, they contrive means to suppress the rising interests of Christ's kingdom, and are very confident of the success of their contrivances; they promise themselves that they shall run down religion, and carry the day. 3rd. It is a resolute, obstinate opposition. They set themselves, set their faces as a flint, and their hearts as an adamant, in defiance of reason and conscience, and all the terrors of the Lord; they are proud and daring, like the Babel-builders, and will persist in their resolution, come what will. 4th. It is a combined, confederate opposition. They "take counsel together," to assist and animate one another in this opposition; they are 'unanimous' in their resolutions, and carry them *nemine contradicente*, that they will push on the unholy war against the Messiah with the utmost vigour. And thereupon councils are called, cabals are formed, and all their wits are at work to find out ways and means for the preventing of the establishment of Christ's kingdom, *Ps.* lxxxiii. 5.

4. We are here told what it is they are exasperated at, and what they aim at in this opposition; ver. 3, "Let us break their bands asunder." They will not be under any government,—they are children of Belial, that cannot endure the yoke,—however, not under the government of the Lord and his Anointed; they will be content to entertain the notions of the kingdom of God and the Messiah, which will serve them to dispute of, and to support their own dominion with. If the Lord and his Anointed will make them rich and great in the world, they will bid them welcome; but if they will restrain their corrupt appetites and passions, regulate and reform their hearts and lives, and bring them under the government of a pure and heavenly religion, truly, then, they will not have this man to reign over them, *Lu.* xix. 14. Christ has bands and cords for us; they that will be saved by him must be ruled by him: but they are cords of a man, agreeable to right reason, and bands of love, conducive to our true interest. And yet against those the quarrel is. Why do men oppose religion, but because they are impatient of the restraints and obligations of it? They would break asunder the bands of conscience they are under; and the cords of God's commandments, by which they are called to tie themselves out from all sin, and to tie themselves up to all duty, they will not receive, but cast them away as far from them as they can.

5. They are here reasoned with concerning it; ver. 1, Why do they do this? 1st. They can shew no good cause for opposing so just, and holy, and gracious a government, which will not interfere with the secular powers, nor introduce any dangerous principles hurtful to kings or provinces; but, on the contrary, if universally received, would bring a heaven upon earth. 2nd. They can hope for no good success in opposing so powerful a kingdom, with which they are utterly unable to contend. It is a vain thing; when they have done their worst Christ will have a church in the world, and that church shall be glorious and triumphant. It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The moon walks in brightness, though the dogs bark at it.

Secondly. The mighty conquest gained over all this threatening opposition. If heaven and earth be the combatants, it is easy to foretell which will be the conqueror. They that make this mighty struggle are the people of the earth, and the kings of the earth, who, being of the earth, are earthy; but he whom they contest with is one that sits in the heavens, ver. 4. He is in the heaven, a place of such a vast prospect that he can oversee them all, and all their projects; and such a vast power that he can overcome them all, and all their attempts. He sits there as one easy and at rest, out of the reach of all their impotent menaces and attempts. There he sits as judge in all the affairs of the children of men, perfectly secure of the full accomplishment of all his own purposes and designs, in spite of all opposition, *Ps.* xxix. 10. The perfect repose of the Eternal Mind may be our comfort under all the disquietments of our mind. We are tossed on earth, and in the sea, but he sits in the heavens, where he has prepared his throne for judgment. And therefore,

1. The attempts of Christ's enemies are easily ridiculed. God laughs at them for a company of fools; he hath them and all their attempts in derision, and therefore the virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised them, *Isa.* xxxvii. 22. Sinners' follies are the just sport of God's infinite wisdom and power; and those attempts of the kingdom of Satan which in our eyes are formidable in his are despicable. Sometimes God is said to awake, and arise, and stir up himself for the vanquishing of his enemies, here he is said to sit still and do it; for the utmost operations of God's omnipotence create no difficulty at all, nor the least disturbance to his eternal rest.

2. They are justly punished, ver. 5. Though God despiseth them as impotent, yet he doth not therefore wink at them, but is justly displeased with them, as impudent and impious, and will make the most daring sinners to know that he is so, and to tremble before him. 1st. Their sin is a provocation to him. He is wrath, he is sorely displeased. We cannot expect that God should be reconciled to us, or well pleased in us, but in and through the Anointed; and therefore, if we affront and reject him, we sin against the remedy, and forfeit the benefit of his interposal between us and God. 2nd. His anger will be a vexation to them. If he but speak to them in his wrath, even the breath of his mouth will be their confusion,—slaughter and consumption, *Isa.* xi. 6; 2 *Thes.* ii. 8. He speaks, and it is done; he speaks in wrath, and sinners are undone. As a word made us, so a word can unmake us again; "Who knows the power of his anger?" The enemies rage, but cannot vex God. God sits still, and yet vexeth them; puts them into a consternation, so the word is, and brings them to their wit's end. His setting up this kingdom of his Son in spite of them, is the greatest vexation to them that can be. They were vexatious to Christ's good subjects; but the day is coming when vexation shall be recompensed to them.

3. They are certainly defeated, and all their counsels turned headlong; ver. 6, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." David was advanced to the throne, and became master of the stronghold of Zion notwithstanding the disturbance given him by the malcontents in his kingdom, and particularly the affronts he received from the garrison of Zion, who taunted him with their blind and their lame,—their maimed soldiers, 2 *Sam.* v. 6. And the Lord Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father, has all power both in heaven and in earth, and is head over all things to the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of his enemies to hinder his advancement. 1st. Jesus Christ is a king, and is invested by him who is the fountain of power with the dignity and authority of a sovereign prince in the kingdom both of providence and grace. 2nd. God is pleased to call him his King, because he is appointed by him, and intrusted for him, with the sole administration of government and judgment. He is his King, for he is dear to the Father, and one in whom he is well pleased. 3rd. Christ took not this honour to himself, but was called to it; and he that called him owns him: I have set him. His commandment, his commission, he received from the Father. 4th. Being called to this honour, he was confirmed in it. High places, we say, are slippery places, but Christ being raised is fixed: I have set him, I have settled him. 5th. He is set upon Zion, the hill of God's holiness, a type of the gospel church, for on that the temple was built, for the sake of which the whole mount was called holy. Christ's throne is set up in his church, that is, in the hearts of all believers, and in the societies of them. The evangelical law of Christ is said to go forth from Zion, *Isa.* ii. 3; *Mic.* iv. 2; and therefore that is spoken of as the head-quarters of this general, the royal seat of this prince, in whom the children of men shall be joyful.

We are to sing these verses with a holy exultation, triumphing over all the enemies of Christ's kingdom, not doubting but they will all of them be quickly made his footstool, and triumphing in Jesus Christ as the great trustee of power. And we are to pray in firm belief of the assurance here given, 'Father in heaven, thy kingdom come; let thy Son's kingdom come.'

7 I will declare the decree:
The LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son;
This day have I begotten thee.
8 Ask of me,
And I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession
9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

We have heard what the kings of the earth have to say against Christ's kingdom, and have heard it gainsaid by him that sits in heaven. Let us now hear what the Messiah himself has to say for his kingdom, to make good his claims, and it is what all the powers on earth cannot gainsay. 1. The kingdom of the Messiah is founded upon a decree, an eternal decree of God the Father. It was not a sudden resolve, it was not the trial of an experiment, but the result of the counsels of the Divine wisdom, and the determinations of the Divine will before all worlds, neither of which can be altered. The precept or statute, so some read it; the covenant or compact, so others; the federal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning man's redemption, represented by the covenant of royalty made with David, and his seed, *Ps.* lxxxix. 3. This our Lord Jesus often referred himself to, as that which all along in his undertaking he governed himself by, "This is the will of him that sent me," *Jno.* vi. 40; "This commandment have I received of my Father," *Jno.* x. 18; xiv. 31. 2. There is a declaration of that decree, as far as is necessary for the satisfaction of all those who are called and commanded to yield themselves subjects to this king, and to leave them inexcusable who will not have him to reign over them. The decree was secret; it was what the Father said to the Son, when he possessed him in the beginning of his way before his works of old; but it is declared by a faithful witness, who had lain in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and came into the world as the prophet of the church to declare him, *Jno.* i. 18. The fountain of all being is, without doubt, the fountain of all power; and it is by, from, and under him, that the Messiah claims: he has his right to rule from what Jehovah said to him, by whose word all things were made, and are governed. Christ here makes out a twofold title to his kingdom:

First. A title by inheritance; ver. 7, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." This scripture the apostle quotes, *Heb.* i. 5, to prove not only that Christ has a more excellent name than the angels, but that he obtained it by inheritance, ver. 4. He is the Son of God, not by adoption, but his begotten Son, the only begotten of the Father, *Jno.* i. 14. And the Father owns him, and will have this declared to the world as the reason why he is constituted King upon the holy hill of Zion; he is therefore unquestionably entitled to, and perfectly qualified for, that great trust. He is the Son of God, and therefore of the same nature with the Father; has in him all the fulness of the Godhead, infinite wisdom, power, and holiness. The supreme government of the church is too high an honour, and too hard an undertaking, for any mere creature; none can be fit for it but he who is one with the Father, and was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, thoroughly apprised of all his counsels, *Pr.* viii. 30. He is the Son of God, and therefore dear to him; his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased, and upon this account we are to receive him as a King; for, because "the Father loveth the Son, he hath given all things into his hand," *Jno.* iii. 35; v. 20. Being a Son, he is heir of all things; and, the Father having made the worlds by him, it is easy to infer from thence, that by him also he governs them; for he is the Eternal Wisdom, and the Eternal Word. If God hath said unto him, "Thou art my Son," it becomes each of us to say to him, Thou art my Lord, my Sovereign. Farther to satisfy us that his kingdom is well grounded upon his sonship, we are here told what his sonship is grounded on; "This day have I begotten thee," which refers both to his eternal generation itself, for it is quoted, *Heb.* i. 5, to prove that he is "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," ver. 3, and to the evidence and demonstration which was given of it by his resurrection from the dead, for to that also it is expressly applied by the apostle, *Acts* xiii. 33, "He hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." It was by the resurrection from the dead, that sign of the prophet Jonas, which was to be the most convincing of all, that he was "declared to be the Son of God with power," *Rom.* i. 4. Christ is said to be the first begotten, and firstborn from the dead, *Rev.* i. 5, *Col.* i. 18; and immediately after his resurrection it was that he entered upon the administration of his mediatorial kingdom. It was then that he said, "All power is given unto me," and to that especially he had an eye when he taught his disciples to pray, "Thy kingdom come."

Secondly. A title by agreement, ver. 8, 9. The agreement is in short this, the Son must undertake the office of an intercessor, and upon that condition he shall have the honour and power of a universal monarch: see *Isa.* liii. 12, "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, because he made intercession for the transgressors." "He shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both," *Zec.* vi. 13.

1. The Son must ask. This supposeth his putting himself voluntarily into a state of inferiority to the Father by taking upon him the human nature; for, as God, he was equal in power and glory with the Father, and had nothing to ask. It supposeth the making of a satisfaction, in the virtue of which the intercession must be made, and the paying of a price on which this large demand was to be grounded: see *Jno.* xvii. 4, 5. The Son, in asking the heathen for his inheritance, aims not only at his own honour, but at their happiness in him; so that he intercedes for them, ever lives to do so, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

2. The Father will grant, more than to the half of the kingdom, even to the kingdom itself. It is here promised him, 1st. That his government shall be universal. He shall have the heathen for his inheritance; not the Jews only, to whose nation the church had been long confined, but the Gentiles also, those

in the uttermost parts of the earth (as this nation of ours) shall be his possession, and he shall have multitudes of willing, loyal subjects among them. Baptized Christians are the possession of the Lord Jesus, they are to him for a name and a praise; God the Father gives them to him, when by his Spirit and grace he works upon them to submit their necks to the yoke of the Lord Jesus. This is in part fulfilled; a great part of the Gentile world received the Gospel when it was first preached, and Christ's throne was set up there where Satan's seat had long been; but it is to be yet farther accomplished, when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ," *Rev.* xi. 15; "Who shall live when God doth this?" 2nd. That it shall be victorious; "thou shalt break them," that is, those of them that oppose thy kingdom, "with a rod of iron," ver. 9. This was in part fulfilled when the nation of the Jews, Those that persisted in unbelief and enmity to Christ's Gospel, were destroyed by the Roman power, which was represented *Dan.* ii. 40, by feet of iron, as here by a rod of iron. It had a farther accomplishment in the destruction of the pagan powers, when the Christian religion came to be established; but it will not be completely fulfilled till all opposing rule, principality and power shall be finally put down, 1 *Cor.* xv. 24: see *Ps.* cx. 5, 6. Observe, How powerful Christ is, and how weak the enemies of his kingdom are before him; he hath a rod of iron wherewith to crush them that will not submit to his golden sceptre; they are but like a potter's vessel before him, suddenly, easily, and irreparably dashed in pieces by him; see *Rev.* ii. 27. Thou shalt do it, that is, thou shalt have leave to do it; nations shall be ruined, rather than the gospel church shall not be built and established: "I have loved thee, therefore will I give men for thee," *Isa.* xliii. 4. Thou shalt have power to do it, and none shall be able to stand before thee, and thou shalt do it effectually. They that will not bow shall break.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must give glory to Christ as the eternal Son of God, and our rightful Lord; and must take comfort from this promise, and plead it with God, that the kingdom of Christ shall be enlarged and established, and shall triumph over all opposition.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry,
And ye perish *from* the way,
When his wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

We have here the practical application of this gospel doctrine concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, by way of exhortation to the kings and judges of the earth. They hear that it is in vain to oppose Christ's government; let them therefore be so wise for themselves as to submit to it. He that has power to destroy them shews that he has no pleasure in their destruction; for he puts them into a way to make themselves happy, ver. 10. Those that would be wise must be instructed; and those are truly wise that receive instruction from the Word of God. Kings and judges stand upon a level with common persons before God; and it is as necessary for them to be religious as for any others. They that give law and judgment to others must receive it from Christ, and it will be their wisdom. What is said to them is said to all, and is required of every one of us, only it is directed to kings and judges, because of the influence which their example will have upon their inferiors, and because they were men of rank and power that opposed the setting up of Christ's kingdom, ver. 2. We are exhorted,

First. To reverence God, and to stand in awe of him, ver. 11. This is the great duty of natural religion. God is great and infinitely above us, just and holy, and provoked against us, and therefore we ought to fear him and tremble before him; yet he is our Lord and Master, and we are bound to serve him; our Friend and Benefactor, and we have reason to rejoice in him. And these are very well consistent with each other, for, 1. We must serve God in all ordinances of worship, and all instances of a godly conversation, but with a holy fear, a jealousy over ourselves, and a reverence of him. Even kings themselves, whom others serve and fear, must serve and fear God; there is the same infinite distance between them and God that there is between the meanest of their subjects and him. 2. We must rejoice in God; and, in subordination to him, we may rejoice in other things, but still with a holy trembling, as those that know what a glorious and jealous God he is, whose eye is always upon us. Our salvation must be wrought out with fear and trembling, *Phil.* ii. 12. We ought to rejoice in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, but rejoice with trembling; with a holy awe of him, a holy fear for ourselves lest we come short, and a tender concern for the many precious souls to whom his Gospel and kingdom are a savour of death unto death. Whatever we rejoice in in this world, it must always be with trembling, lest we grow vain in our joy, and be puffed up with the things we rejoice in; and because of the uncertainty of them, and the damp which by a thousand accidents may soon be cast upon our joy. To rejoice with trembling is to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, 1 *Cor.* vii. 29.

Secondly. To welcome Jesus Christ, and to submit to him, ver. 12. This is the great duty of the Christian religion; it is that which is required of all, even kings and judges, and it is our wisdom and interest to do it. Observe here,

1. The command given to this purpose; "Kiss the Son." Christ is called the Son, because so he was declared ver. 7, "Thou art my Son." He is the Son of God by eternal generation, and upon that account he is to be adored by us; he is the Son of man, that is, the Mediator, *Jno.* v. 27, and upon that account to be received and submitted to. He is called the Son to include both, as God is often called emphatically the Father, because he is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father; and we must have an eye to him under both considerations. Our duty to Christ is here expressed figuratively, "Kiss the Son." Not with a betraying kiss, as Judas kissed him, and as all hypocrites who pretend to honour him, but really affront him, but with a believing kiss. 1st. With a kiss of agreement and reconciliation; Kiss and be friends, as Jacob and Esau; let the quarrel between us and God be taken up, let the acts of hostility cease, and let us be at peace with God in Christ, who is our peace. 2nd. With a kiss of adoration and religious worship; they that worshipped idols kissed them, 1 *Kin.* xix. 18; *Hos.* xiii. 2. Let us study how to do honour to the Lord Jesus, and to give unto him the glory due unto his name; "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him," *Ps.* xlv. 11; with him that "sits on the throne, we must worship the Lamb," *Rev.* v. 9—13. 3rd. With a kiss of affection and sincere love; "Kiss the Son," that is, enter into a covenant of friendship with him, and let him be very dear and precious to you, love him above all, love him in sincerity, love him much, as she did to whom much was forgiven, and in token of it kissed his feet, *Lu.* vii. 38. 4th. With a kiss of allegiance and loyalty, as Samuel kissed Saul, 1 *Sam.* x. 1; Swear fealty and homage to him, submit to his government, take his yoke upon you, and give up yourselves to be governed by his laws, disposed of by his providence, and entirely devoted to his interest.

2. The reasons to enforce this command; and they are taken from our own interest, which God in his Gospel shews a concern for. Consider,

1st. The certain ruin we run upon if we refuse and reject Christ; "Kiss the Son," for it is at your peril if you do not. *First.* It will be a great provocation to him; Do it "lest he be angry." The Father is angry already, the Son is the Mediator that undertakes to make peace; if we slight him, the Father's wrath abides upon us, *Jno.* iii. 36; and not only so, but there is an addition of the Son's wrath too, to whom nothing is more displeasing than to have the offers of his grace slighted, and the designs of it frustrated. The Son can be angry, though a Lamb, he is the lion of the tribe of Judah; and the wrath of this King, this King of kings, will be as the roaring of a lion, and will drive even mighty men, and chief captains, to seek in vain for shelter in rocks and mountains, *Rev.* vi. 16. If the Son be angry, who shall intercede for us? There remains no more sacrifice, no other name by which we can be saved. Unbelief is a sin against the remedy. *Secondly.* It will be utter destruction to yourselves; "lest ye perish from the way," or 'in the way,' so some. In the way of your sins, and from the way of your vain hopes; lest your way perish, as *Ps.* cxvi.; lest you prove to have missed the way to happiness. Christ is the way; take heed lest ye be cut off from him as your way to God. It intimates that they were, or at least thought themselves, in the way, but by neglecting Christ they perished from it, which aggravates their ruin, that they go to hell from the way to heaven, are not far from the kingdom of God, and yet never come thither.

2nd. The happiness we are sure of if we yield ourselves to Christ. "When his wrath is kindled," though "but a little," the least spark of that fire is enough to make the proudest sinner miserable, if it fasten upon his conscience; for it will burn to the lowest hell. One would think it should therefore follow, "when his wrath is kindled," woe be to those that despise him. But the psalmist startles at the thought, blesseth himself from that dreadful doom, and blesseth those that do escape it. They that trust in him, and so kiss him, are truly happy; but they will especially appear to be so when the wrath of Christ is kindled against others. Blessed will they be in the day of wrath that by trusting in Christ have made him their refuge and patron; when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they shall lift up their heads with joy; and then those who now despise Christ and his followers will be forced to say it to their own greater confusion, Now we see that blessed are all they, and they only, that trust in him.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should have our hearts filled with a holy awe of God, but borne up with a cheerful confidence on Christ, in whose mediation we may comfort and encourage ourselves and one another: "We are the circumcision that rejoice in Christ Jesus."

PSALM III.

As the foregoing psalm, in the type of David in preferment, shewed us the royal dignity of the Redeemer, so this, by the example of David in distress, shews us the peace and holy security of the redeemed; how safe they really are, and think themselves to be, under the Divine protection. David being now driven out from his palace, from the royal city, from the holy city, by his rebellious son Absalom, I. Complains to God of his enemies, ver. 1, 2. II. Confides in God, and encourageth himself in him as his God notwithstanding, ver. 3. III. Recollects the satisfaction he had in the gracious answers God gave to his prayers, and his experience of his goodness to him, ver. 4, 5. IV. Triumphs over his fears, ver. 6; and over his enemies, whom he prays against, ver. 7. V. Gives God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort of that Divine blessing and salvation which are sure to all the people of God, ver. 8. Those speak best of the truths of God that speak experimentally; so David here speaks of the power and goodness of God, and of the safety and tranquillity of the godly.

A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me!
Many *are* they that rise up against me.
2 Many *there be* which say of my soul,
There is no help for him in God. Selah.
3 But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me;
My glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

The title of this psalm, and many others, is as a key hung ready at the door to open it, and let us into the entertainments of it. When we know upon what occasion a psalm was penned, we know the better how to expound it. This was composed, or at least the substance of it was meditated and digested in David's thoughts, and offered up to God, then when he fled from Absalom his son, who formed a conspiracy against him to take away not his crown only but his life; we have the story, 2 *Sam.* xv., &c. 1. David was now in great grief. When in his flight he went up the mount of Olives he wept greatly, with his head covered, and marching barefoot; yet then he composed this comfortable psalm. He wept and prayed, wept and sung, wept and believed; this was sowing in tears. "Is any afflicted? let him pray;" nay, let him sing psalms, let him sing this psalm. Is any afflicted with undutiful disobedient children? So was David, and yet that did not hinder his joy in God, nor put him out of tune for holy songs. 2. He was now in great danger. The plot against him was laid deep, and the party that sought his ruin was very formidable, and his own son at the head of them, so that his affairs seemed to be at the last extremity; yet then he kept hold of his interest in God, and improved that. Perils and frights should drive us to God, not drive us from him. 3. He had now a great deal of provocation given him by those from whom he had reason to expect better things; from his son, whom he had been indulgent of, from his subjects, whom he had been so great a blessing to, which he could not but resent, and was enough to break in upon any man's temper; and yet he was so far from any indecent expressions of passion and indignation, that he had calmness enough for those acts of devotion which require the greatest fixedness and freedom of thought. It was a sign his mind was very sedate, that the Spirit came upon him, who chooseth to move upon the still waters. Let no unkindness, no, not of a child, or a friend, ever be laid so much to heart as to disfit us for communion with God. 4. He was now suffering for his sin in the matter of Uriah; this was the evil which for that sin God threatened to raise up against him out of his own house, 2 *Sam.* xii. 11, which no doubt he observed, and took occasion from thence to renew his repentance for it; and yet he did not therefore cast away his confidence in the Divine power and goodness, nor despair of succour. Even our sorrow for sin must not hinder either our joy in God or our hope in God. 5. He seemed cowardly in fleeing from Absalom, and quitting his royal city, before he had had one push for it; and yet by this psalm it appears he was full of true courage arising from his faith in God. True Christian fortitude consists more in a gracious security and serenity of mind, in patient bearing, and patient waiting, than in daring enterprises with sword in hand. In these three verses he applies himself to God. Whither else should we go but to him, when

any thing grieves us or frightens us? David was now at a distance from his own closet, and from the courts of God's house, where he used to pray, and yet he could find a way open heavenward. Wherever we are we may have access to God, and may draw nigh to him whithersoever we are driven. David in his flight attends his God,

First. With a remonstrance of his distress, ver. 1, 2. He looks round, and doth as it were take a view of his enemies' camp, or receive informations of their designs against him, which he brings to God, not to his council-board. Two things he complains of concerning his enemies:

1. That they were very many. "Lord, how are they increased!" beyond what they were at first, and beyond whatever he thought they would have been. Absalom's faction, like a snowball, strangely gathered in its motion. He speaks of it as one amazed, and well he might, that a people he had so many ways obliged should almost generally revolt from him, and rebel against him, and choose for their head such a silly, giddy, young fellow as Absalom was. How slippery and deceitful are the many! and how little fidelity and constancy is to be found among men! David had had the hearts of his subjects as much as ever any king had, and yet now of a sudden he had lost them. As people must not trust too much to princes, *Ps.* cxlvi. 3, so princes must not build too much upon their interest in the people. Christ, the son of David, had many enemies; when a great multitude came to seize him, when the crowd cried, Crucify him, crucify him, how were they then increased that troubled him! Even good people must not think it strange if the stream be against them, and the powers that threaten them grow more and more formidable.

2. That they were very malicious. They rose up against him, they aimed to trouble him; but that was not all, "they said of his soul, There is no help for him in God." That is, *First.* They put a spiteful invidious construction upon his troubles, as Job's friends did upon his, concluding that, because his servants and subjects forsook him thus, and did not help him, God had deserted him, and abandoned his cause; and he was therefore to be looked on, or rather to be looked off, as a hypocrite, and a wicked man. *Secondly.* They blasphemously reflected upon God as unable to relieve him; his danger is so great that God himself cannot help him. It is strange, that so great unbelief should be found in any, especially in many, in Israel, as to think any party of men too strong for Omnipotence to deal with. *Thirdly.* They endeavoured to shake his confidence in God, and drive him to despair of relief from him. 'They have said it to my soul,' so it may be read: compare *Ps.* xi. 1; xlii. 10. This grieved him worst of all, that they have so ill an opinion of him as to think it possible to take him off from that bottom. Even the temptation was a buffeting to him, a thorn in his flesh; nay, a sword in his bones. Note, A child of God startles at the very thought of despairing of help in God; you cannot vex him with any thing so much as if you offer to persuade him, "there is no help for him in God." David comes to God, and tells him what his enemies said of him, as Hezekiah spread Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter before the Lord; they say, There is no help for me in thee; but Lord, if it be so, I am undone. They say to my soul, 'There is no salvation' (for so the word is) 'for him in God;' but Lord, do thou "say unto my soul, I am thy salvation," *Ps.* xxxv. 3; and that shall satisfy me, and in due time silence them. To this complaint he adds "Selah," which occurs about seventy times in the book of *Psalms*. Some refer it to the music with which in David's time the psalms were sung; others to the sense, and that it is a note commanding a solemn pause: Selah, Mark that, or stop there, and consider a little. As here, they say, There is no help for me in God, Selah; take time for such a thought as this. "Get thee behind me, Satan; the Lord rebuke thee!" away with such a vile suggestion!

Secondly. With a profession of his dependence upon God, ver. 3. An active believer, the more he is beaten off from God, either by the rebukes of providence or the reproaches of enemies, the faster hold he will take of him, and the closer will he cleave to him; so David here, when his enemies said, "There is no help for him in God," cries out with so much the more assurance, "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me;" let them say what they will, I am sure thou wilt never desert me, and I am resolved, I will never distrust thee. See what God is to his people, what he will be, what they have found him, what David found in him. 1. Safety; "Thou art a shield for me," a shield about me, so some, to secure me on all sides since my enemies surrounded me. Not only my shield, *Gen.* xv. 1, which notes an interest in the Divine protection; but a shield for me, which notes the present benefit and advantage of that protection. 2. Honour, "Thou art my glory." Those whom God owns for his are not only safe and easy, but really look great, and have true honour put upon them, far above that which the great ones of the earth are proud of. David was now in disgrace, the crown was fallen from his head; but he will not think the worse of himself, while he has God for his glory; *Isa.* lx. 19, "Thou art my glory," that is, thy glory I reckon mine, so some; that is it I aim at, and am ambitious of, whatever my lot is, and whatever becomes of my honour, that I may be to my God for a name and a praise. 3. Joy and deliverance; "Thou art the lifter up of my head," that is, thou wilt lift up my head out of my troubles, and restore me to my dignity again in due time; however, thou wilt lift up my head under my troubles, so that I shall not droop nor be discouraged, nor shall my spirits fail. If in the worst of times God's people can lift up their heads with joy, knowing that all shall work for good to them, they will own it is God that is the lifter up of their head, that gives them both cause to rejoice and hearts to rejoice.

In singing this, and praying it over, we should possess ourselves with an apprehension of the danger we are in from the multitude and malice of our spiritual enemies, that seek the ruin of our souls by driving us from our God; and concern ourselves in the distresses and dangers of the church of God, which is every where spoken against, every where fought against; but in reference to both we should encourage ourselves in our God, who doth own and protect, and will in due time crown, his own interest, both in the world and in the hearts of his people.

4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice,
And he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah
5 I laid me down and slept;
I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.
6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,
That have set *themselves* against me round about.
7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: [bone;
For thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek
Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.
8 Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD:
Thy blessing *is* upon thy people. Selah.

David having stirred up himself, by the irritations of his enemies, to take hold on God, as his God, and so gained comfort enough in looking upward, when if he looked round about him nothing appeared but what was discouraging, here looks back with pleasing reflections upon the benefit he had found by trusting in God, and looks forward with pleasing expectations of a very bright and happy issue which would shortly be put to the dark dispensation he was now under.

First. See with what comfort he looks back upon the communion he had had with God, and the communications of his favour to him, either in some former troubles he had been in, and through God's goodness got through, or in this hitherto. David had been in his time exercised with many difficulties, often oppressed and brought very low; but still he had found God all-sufficient. He now remembered with pleasure,

1. That his troubles had always brought him to his knees, and in all his difficulties and dangers he had been enabled to acknowledge God, and to lift up his heart to him, and his voice too; and this will be a comfortable reflection: "I cried unto God with my voice." That care and grief doth us good and no hurt, which sets us praying, and engageth us, not only to speak to God, but to cry to him as those that are in earnest; and though God understands the language of the heart, when the voice is not heard, 1 *Sam.* i. 13, and values not the hypocritical prayers of those who cause their voice to be heard on high, *Isa.* lviii. 4,—*vox et preterea nihil*,—'voice, and that is all,"—yet, when the earnestness of the voice comes from the fervency of the heart, notice shall be taken of it in the account, that we cried unto God with our voice.

2. That he had always found God ready to answer his prayers; Still "he heard me out of his holy hill," from heaven, the high and holy place, from the ark on mount Zion, whence he used to give answers to those that sought to him. David had ordered Zadok to carry back the ark into the city, when he was upon his flight from Absalom, 2 *Sam.* xv. 25; knowing that God was not tied, no, not to the ark of his presence, and that, notwithstanding the distance of place, he could by faith receive answers of peace from the holy hill. No such thing can fix a gulf between the communications of God's grace towards us and the operations of his grace in us, between his favour and our faith. The ark of the covenant was in mount Zion, and all the answers to our prayers come from the promises of that covenant. Christ was set king upon the holy hill of Zion, *Ps.* ii. 6; and it is through him, whom the Father hears always, that our prayers are heard.

3. That he had always been very safe and very easy under the Divine protection; ver. 5, "I laid me down and slept," composed and quiet, and awaked refreshed, "for the Lord sustained me." 1st. This is applicable to the common mercies of every night, which we ought to give thanks for alone and with our families every morning. Many have not where to lay their head, but wander in deserts, or, if they have, dare not lie down for fear of the enemy; but we have laid us down in peace. Many lay them down and cannot sleep, but are full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day, through pain of body, or anguish of mind, or the continual alarms of fear in the night; but we lie down and sleep in safety, though incapable of doing any thing then for our own preservation. Many lie down and sleep, and never wake again,—they sleep the sleep of death, as the firstborn of the Egyptians,—but we lie down, and sleep, and awake again to the light and comfort of another day; and whence is it, but because the Lord hath sustained us with sleep as with food? we have been safe under his protection, and easy in the arms of his good providence. 2nd. It seems here to be meant of the wonderful quietness and calmness of David's spirit in the midst of his dangers. Having by prayer committed himself and his cause to God, and being sure of his protection, his heart was fixed, and he was easy. The undutifulness of his son, the disloyalty of his subjects, the treachery of many of his friends, the hazard of his person, the fatigues of his march, and uncertainty of the event, never lost him an hour's sleep, nor gave any disturbance to his repose, for the Lord, by his grace and the consolations of his Spirit, powerfully sustained him, and made him easy. It is a great mercy, when we are in trouble, to have our minds stayed upon God, so as never either to eat or sleep with trembling and astonishment. 3rd. Some of the ancients apply it to the resurrection of Christ. In his sufferings he offered up strong cries, and was heard; and therefore, though he laid him down and slept the sleep of death, yet he awaked the third day, for the Lord sustained him that he should not see corruption.

4. That God had many a time broken the power, and restrained the malice of his enemies; had smitten them upon the cheek bone, ver. 7; had silenced them and spoiled their speaking, blemished them and put them to shame, smitten them on the cheek reproachfully; had disabled them to do the mischief they intended, for he had broken their teeth. Saul and the Philistines, that were sometimes ready to swallow him up, could not effect what they designed. The teeth that are gnashed or sharpened against God's people shall be broken; and, when at any time the power of the church's enemies seems threatening, it is good to remember how often God has broken it, and we are sure that his arm is not shortened. He can stop their mouths, and tie their hands.

Secondly. See with what confidence he looks forward upon the dangers he had yet in prospect. Having put himself under God's protection, and often found the benefit of it,

1. His fears were all stilled and silenced, ver. 6. With what a holy bravery doth he bid defiance to the impotent menaces and attempts of his enemies: "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that" either in a foreign invasion or an intestine rebellion "set themselves" as it were encamped "against me round about." No man less safe; his enemies are numerous, ten thousands. They are spiteful and resolute, they have set themselves against me; nay, they have prevailed far, and seemed to have gained their point, for they are against me round about on every side, thousands against one; and yet no man more secure. I will not be afraid for all this; they cannot hurt me, and therefore they shall not frighten me; whatever prudent methods I take for my own perservation, I will not disquiet myself, distrust my God, nor doubt of a good issue at last. When David, in his flight from Absalom, bade Zadok carry back the ark, he spoke doubtfully of the issue of his present troubles, and concluded like an humble penitent, "Here I am, let him do to me what seemeth him good," 2 *Sam.* xv. 26; but now, like a strong believer, he speaks confidently, and has no fear concerning the event. Note, A cheerful resignation to God is the way to obtain a cheerful satisfaction and confidence in God.

2. His prayers were quickened and encouraged, ver. 7. He believed God was his Saviour, and yet prays; nay, he therefore prays: "Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God," Promises of salvation do not supersede, but engage, our petitions for it. He will for this be enquired of.

3. His faith became triumphant. He began the psalm with complaints of the strength and malice of his enemies, but concludes it with exultation in the power and grace of his God, and now sees more with him than against him, ver. 8. Two great truths he here builds his confidence upon, and fetcheth comfort from: 1st. That "salvation belongeth unto the Lord," that is, he has power to save, be the danger never so great; it is his prerogative to save, when all other helps and succours fail. It is his pleasure, it is his property, it is his promise to those that are his, whose salvation is not of themselves, but of the Lord; therefore all that have the Lord for their God, according to the tenor of the new covenant, are sure of salvation, for he that is their God

is the God of salvation. 2nd. That his blessing is upon his people. He not only has power to save them, but he assurres them of his kind and gracious intentions towards them. He has in his word pronounced a blessing upon his people, and we are bound to believe that that blessing doth accordingly rest upon them, though there be not the visible effects of it. Hence we may conclude, that God's people, though they may lie under the reproaches and censures of men, yet are surely blessed of him, who blesseth indeed, and therefore can command a blessing.

In singing this, and praying it over, we must own the satisfaction we have had in depending upon God, and committing ourselves to him; and encourage ourselves and one another to continue still hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

PSALM IV.

David was a preacher, a royal preacher, as well as Solomon. Many of his psalms are doctrinal and practical as well as devotional; the greatest part of this psalm is so, in which wisdom cries to men, to the sons of men, (as *Pr.* viii. 4, 5,) to receive instruction. The title doth not tell us, as that of the former did, that it was penned on any particular occasion, nor are we to think that all the psalms were occasional, though some were; but that many of them were designed in general for the instruction of the people of God that attended in the courts of his house, the assisting of their devotions, and the directing of their conversations; such a one I take this psalm to be. Let us not make the prophecy of Scripture to be of more private interpretation than needs must, 2 *Pet.* i. 20. Here, I. David begins with a short prayer, ver. 1, and that prayer preacheth. II. He directs his speech to the children of men, and, 1. In God's name reproves them for the dishonour they do to God, and the damage they do to their own souls, ver. 2; 2. He sets before them the happiness of godly people, for their encouragement to be religious; 3. He calls upon them to consider their ways, ver. 4. III. He exhorts them to serve God and trust in him, ver. 5. IV. He gives an account of his own experiences of the grace of God working in him: 1. Enabling him to choose God's favour for his felicity, ver. 6; 2. Filling his heart with joy therein, ver. 7; 3. Quieting his spirit in the assurance of the Divine protection he was under night and day, ver. 8.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth. A Psalm of David.

HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness:
Thou hast enlarged me *when I was* in distress;
Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. [shame?
2 O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn* my glory into
How long will ye love vanity, *and* seek after leasing?
Selah. [for himself:
3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly
The LORD will hear when I call unto him.
4 Stand in awe, and sin not:
Commune with your own heart
Upon your bed, and be still. Selah.
5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
And put your trust in the LORD.

The title of the psalm acquaints us that David, having penned it by Divine inspiration, for the use of the church, delivered it to the chief musician, or master of the song, who (according to the Divine appointment of psalmody made in his time, which he was chiefly instrumental in the establishment of) presided in that service. We have a particular account of the constitution, the modelling the several classes of singers, each with a chief, and the share each bore in the work, 1 *Chr.* xxv. Some "prophesied according to the order of the king," ver. 2; others "prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord," ver. 3; of others it is said, "they were to lift up the horn," ver. 5; but of them all that they were "for song in the house of the Lord," ver. 6, and were "instructed in the songs of the Lord," ver. 7. To one of the chiefs was this psalm committed to be sung on Neginoth, that is, on stringed instruments, *Hab.* iii. 19, which were played on with the hand; with music of that kind the choristers were to sing this psalm: and it should seem that then they only sung, not the people. But the New Testament appoints all Christians to sing, *Eph.* v. 19; *Col.* iii. 16; from whom it is expected that they do it decently, not artfully, and therefore there is not now so much occasion for musical instruments as there was then: the melody is to be made in the heart. In these verses,

First. David addresseth himself to God, ver. 1. Whether the sons of men, to whom he is about to speak, will hear, or whether they will forbear, he hopes and prays that God will give him a gracious audience, and an answer of peace: "Hear me when I call," and accept my adorations; grant my petitions, and judge upon my appeals; "have mercy upon me, and hear me." All the notice God is pleased to take of our prayers, and all the returns he is pleased to make to them, must be ascribed not to our merit, but purely to his mercy. Hear me for thy mercy sake, is our best plea. Two things David here pleads farther: 1. Thou art the God of my righteousness; not only a righteous God thyself, but the author of my righteous dispositions, who hast by thy grace wrought that good that is in me, hast made me a righetous man; therefore hear me, and so own thine own work in me: thou art also the patron of my righteous cause, the protector of my wronged innocency, to whom I commit my way, and whom I trust to bring forth my righteousness as the light. When men condemn us unjustly this is our comfort, it is God that justifies. He is the God of a believer's righteousness. 2. "Thou hast" formerly "enlarged me when I was in distress," enlarged my heart in holy joy and comfort under my distresses, enlarged my condition by bringing me out of my distresses; therefore now, Lord, have mercy upon me, and hear me. The experience we have had of God's goodness to us in enlarging us when we have been in distress is not only a great encouragement to our faith and hope for the future, but a good plea with God in prayer: Thou hast; wilt thou not? for thou art God, and changest not; thy work is perfect.

Secondly. He addresseth himself to the children of men, for the conviction and conversion of those that are yet strangers to God, and that will not have the Messiah, the son of David, to reign over them.

1. He endeavours to convince them of the folly of their impiety; ver. 2, "O ye sons of men," (of great men, so some, men of high degree, understanding it of the partizans of Saul, or Absalom,) how long will ye oppose me and my government, and continue disaffected to it, under the influence of the false and groundless suggestions of those that wish evil to me? Or it may be taken more generally. God by the psalmist here reasons with sinners to bring them to repentance. You that go on in the neglect of God and his worship, and in contempt of the kingdom of Christ and his government, consider what you do. 1st. You debase yourselves, for you are sons of men, (the word signifies man as a noble creature;) consider the dignity of your nature, and the excellency of those powers of reason with which you are endued, and do not act thus irrationally, and unbecoming yourselves. Let the sons of men consider, and shew themselves men. 2nd. You dishonour your Maker, and turn his glory into shame. They may well be taken as God's own words, charging sinners with the wrong they do him in his honour. Or, if David's words, it may be understood of God, whom he called his glory, *Ps.* iii. 3. Idolaters are charged with changing the glory of God into shame, *Rom.* i. 23. All wilful sinners do so, by disobeying the commands of his law, despising the offers of his grace, and giving that affection and service to the creature which is due to God only. Those that profane God's holy name, that ridicule his word and ordinances, and, while they profess to know him, in works deny him, do what in them lies to turn his glory into shame. 3rd. You put a cheat upon yourselves; "you love vanity, and seek after leasing," or lying, or that which is a lie. You are yourselves vain and lying, and you love to be so. Or, you set your hearts upon that which will prove at last but vanity and a lie. They that love the world, and seek the things that are beneath, love vanity, and seek lies; that please themselves with the delights of sense, and portion themselves with the wealth of this world, for these will deceive them, and so ruin them. How long will ye do this? Will you never be wise for yourselves, never consider your duty and interest? "When shall it once be?" *Jer.* xiii. 27. The God of heaven thinks the time long that sinners persist in dishonouring him, and in deceiving and ruining themselves.

2. He shews them the peculiar favour which God has for good people, the special protection they are under, and the singular privileges to which they are entitled, ver. 3. This comes in here, 1st. As a reason why they should not oppose or persecute him that is godly, or think to run him down. It is at their peril if they offend one of these little ones, whom God has set apart for himself, *Mat.* xviii. 6. God reckons that those who touch them touch the apple of his eye, and he will make their persecutors to know it sooner or later. They have an interest in heaven; God will hear them, and therefore let none dare to do them any injury, for God will hear their cry and plead their cause, *Ex.* xxii. 23. It is generally supposed that David speaks of his own designation to the throne; he is the godly man whom God hath set apart for that honour, and who doth not usurp it, or assume it to himself; and therefore the opposition you give to him, and to his advancement, is very criminal, for therein you fight against God, and it will be vain and ineffectual. God has in like manner set apart the Lord Jesus for himself, that merciful one; and those that attempt to hinder his advancement will certainly be baffled, for the Father heareth him always. Or, 2nd. As a reason why they should themselves be good, and walk no longer in the counsel of the ungodly; You have hitherto sought vanity, be truly religious, and you will be truly happy here and for ever. For, *First.* God will secure to himself his interest in you. "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly," every particular godly man, "for himself," in his eternal choice, in his effectual calling, in the special disposals of his providence and operations of his grace; they are purified unto him a peculiar people. Godly men are God's separated, sealed ones; he knows them that are his, hath set his image and superscription upon them; distinguisheth them with uncommon favours, "and they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." Know this; let godly people know it, and let them never alienate themselves from him to whom they are thus appropriated; let wicked people know it, and take heed how they hurt those whom God protects. *Secondly.* God will secure to you an interest in himself. This David speaks with application, "The Lord will hear when I call unto him." We should think ourselves happy if we had the ear of an earthly prince; and is it not worth while upon any terms, especially such easy ones, to gain the ear of the King of kings? Let us know this, and forsake lying vanities for our own mercies.

3. He warns them against sin, and exhorts them both to frighten themselves and to reason themselves from it; ver. 4, "Stand in awe, and sin not:" ('be angry and sin not,' so the Seventy, and some think the apostle takes that exhortation from him, *Eph.* iv. 26;) "commune with your own hearts." Be converted; and, in order thereunto, consider and fear. Note, 1st. We must not sin, not miss our way and so miss our aim. 2nd. One good remedy against sin is to stand in awe. 'Be moved,' so some, in opposition to carelessness and carnal security; always keep up a holy reverence of the glory and majesty of God, and a holy dread of his wrath and curse, and dare not to provoke him. 3rd. One good means of preventing sin, and preserving a holy awe, is to be frequent and serious in communing with our own hearts. Talk with your hearts; you have a great deal to say to them, they may be spoken with at any time, let it not be unsaid. A thinking man is in a fair way to be a wise and a good man. "Commune with your hearts;" that is, examine them by serious self-reflection, that you may acquaint yourselves with them, and amend what is amiss in them; employ them by solemn pious meditations; let your thoughts fasten upon that which is good, and keep close to it. Consider your ways; and observe the directions here given us, in order to the doing of this work well, and to good purpose. *First.* Choose a solitary time: do it when you lie awake upon your beds. Before you turn you to go to sleep at night, (as some of the heathen moralists have directed,) examine your consciences what you have done that day, particularly what you have done amiss, that you may repent of it. When you awake in the night meditate upon God, and the things that belong to your peace. David did himself practise what he here counsels others to; *Ps.* lxiii. 6, "I remember thee on my bed." Upon a sick bed particularly we should consider our ways, and commune with our own hearts about them. *Secondly.* Compose yourselves into a serious frame; "be still." When you have asked conscience a question, be silent, and wait for an answer; even in unquiet times keep your spirits calm and quiet.

4. He counsels them to make conscience of their duty; ver. 5, "Offer to God the sacrifice of righteousness." We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. They that were disaffected to David and his government would soon come to a better temper, and return to their allegiance, if they would but worship God aright. And those that know the concerns that lie between them and God will be glad of the Mediator the Son of David. It is required here from every one of us, 1st. That we serve him, offer sacrifices to him; your own selves first, and your best sacrifices. But they must be sacrifices of righteousness, that is, good works; all the fruits of the reigning love of God and our neighbour, and all the instances of a religious conversation, which are better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Let all your devotions come from an upright heart; let all your alms be sacrifices of righteousness. The sacrifices of the unrighteous God will not accept, they are an abomination, *Isa.* i. 11, &c. 2nd. That we confide in him. First make conscience of offering the sacrifices of righteousness, and then you are welcome to "put your trust in the Lord." Serve God without any diffidence of him, or any fear of losing by him. Honour him by trusting in him only, and not in your wealth, or in an arm of flesh; in his providence, and lean not to your own understanding; in his grace, and go not about to establish your own righteousness or sufficiency.

In singing these verses we must preach to ourselves the doctrine of the provoking nature of sin, the lying vanity of the world, and the unspeakable happiness of God's people, and press upon ourselves the duties of fearing God,

conversing with our own hearts, and offering spiritual sacrifices; and, in praying over them, beg of God grace thus to think and thus to do.

6 *There be* many that say, Who will shew us *any* good?
LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.
7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, [increased.
More than in the time *that* their corn and their wine
8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep:
For thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

We have here,

First. The foolish wish of worldly people; "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?" 'Who will make us to see good?' What good they meant is intimated ver. 7; it was the increase of their corn and wine. All they desired was plenty of the wealth of this world, that they might enjoy abundance of the delights of sense. Thus far they are right, that they are desirous of good, and solicitous about it; but there are these things amiss in this wish: 1. They inquire in general who will make them happy, but do not apply themselves to God, who alone can; and so expose themselves to be ill advised, and shew they would rather be beholden to any than to God; for they would willingly live without him. 2. They inquire for good that may be seen, seeming good, sensible good, and were not for the good things that were out of sight, and are the objects of faith only. The source of idolatry was a desire of gods that they might see, therefore they worshipped the sun; but as we must be taught to worship an unseen God, so to seek an unseen good, 2 *Cor.* iv. 18. We look with an eye of faith farther than we can see with an eye of sense. 3. They inquire for any good, not for the chief good; if it be outward good, present good, partial good, good meat, good drink, a good trade, a good estate; and what are all these worth without a good God, and a good heart? Any good will serve the turn of the most of men, but a gracious soul will not be put off so. This way, this wish, of carnal worldlings is their folly, and yet many there be that join in it; and so will their doom be; "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things;" the penny thou didst agree for.

Secondly. The wise choice which godly people make. David and the pious few that adhered to him dissented from that wish, and joined in this prayer, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." 1. He disagrees from the vote of the many; God had set him apart for himself by distinguishing favours, and therefore he sets himself apart by a distinguishing character. They are for any good, for worldly good, but so am not I; I will not say as they say. Any good will not serve my turn; the wealth of the world will never make a portion for my soul, and therefore I cannot take up with it. 3. He and his friends agree in their choice of God's favour as their felicity; that is it which in their account is better than life, and all the comforts of life.

1st. That is it which they most earnestly desire and seek after. This is the breathing of their souls, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;" most are for other things, but we are for this. Good people, as they are distinguished by their practices, so they are by their prayers, not the length and language of them, but the faith and fervency of them. They whom God hath set apart have a prayer by themselves, which, though others may speak the words of, they only offer up in sincerity; and this is a prayer which they all say amen to, Lord, let us have thy favour, and let us know that we have it, and we desire no more; that is enough to make us happy. Lord, be at peace with us, accept of us, manifest thyself to us; let us be satisfied of thy lovingkindness, and we will be satisfied with it. Observe, though David speaks, ver. 7, 8, of himself only, here in the prayer he speaks for others also, "upon us," as Christ taught us to pray, "Our Father." All the saints come to the throne of grace on the same errand; and in this they are one, they all desire God's favour as their chief good. We should beg it for others, as well as for ourselves; for in God's favour there is enough for us all, and we shall have never the less for others sharing.

2nd. That is it in which above any thing they rejoice, ver. 7. Thou hast hereby many a time put gladness into my heart, not only supported and refreshed me, but filled me with joy unspeakable; and, therefore, that is it which I will still pursue, which I will seek after all the days of my life. When God puts grace in the heart, he puts gladness in the heart; nor is any joy comparable to that which gracious souls have in the communications of the Divine favour, no, not the joy of harvest, of a plentiful harvest, when the corn and wine increaseth. This is gladness in the heart, inward, solid, substantial joy. The mirth of worldly people is but a flash, a shadow; even in laughter their heart is sorrowful, *Pr.* xiv. 13. 'Thou hast given gladness in my heart,' so the word is. True joy is God's gift, not as the world giveth, *Jno.* xiv. 27. The saints have no reason to envy carnal worldlings their mirth and joy, but should pity them rather; for they may know better, and will not.

3rd. That is it which they entirely confide in, and in that confidence are always easy, ver. 8. He had laid him down and slept, *Ps.* iii. 5; and so he will still, "I will lay me down," having the assurance of thy favour, "in peace;" and with as much pleasure as they "whose corn and wine increaseth," and who lie down as Boaz did in his threshing-floor, at the end of the heap of corn, to sleep there, when his heart was merry, *Ru.* iii. 7. "For thou only makest me to dwell in safety." Though I am alone, yet I am not alone, for God is with me; though I have no guards to attend me, the Lord alone is sufficient to protect me; he can do it himself when all other defences fail. If he have the light of God's countenance, *First.* He can enjoy himself. His soul returns to God, and reposeth itself in him as its rest, and so he lays him down and sleeps in peace. He has what he would have, and is sure that nothing can come amiss to him. *Secondly.* He fears no disturbance from his enemies, sleeps quiet, and is very secure, because God himself has undertaken to keep him safe. When he comes to sleep the sleep of death, and to lie down in the grave, to make his bed in the darkness, he will then, with good old Simeon, depart in peace, *Lu.* ii. 29; being assured that God will receive his soul to be safe with himself, and that his body also shall be made to dwell in safety in the grave. *Thirdly.* He commits all his affairs to God, and contentedly leaves the issue of them with him. It is said of the husbandman that, having cast his seed into the ground, he sleeps and riseth night and day, and the seed springs and grows up he knoweth not how, *Mar.* iv. 26, 27. So a good man, having by faith and prayer cast his care upon God, he sleeps and resteth night and day, and is very easy, leaving it to his God to perform all things for him: welcome his holy will.

In singing these verses, and praying over them, let us, with a holy contempt of the wealth and pleasure of this world as insufficient to make us happy, earnestly seek the favour of God, and pleasingly solace ourselves in that favour, and with a holy indifferency about the issue of all our worldly concerns; let us commit ourselves and all our affairs to the conduct and custody of the Divine providence, and be satisfied that all shall be made to work for good to us, if we keep ourselves in the love of God.

PSALM V.

This psalm is a prayer, a solemn address to God, at a time when the psalmist was brought into distress by the malice of his enemies. Many such times passed over David; nay, there was scarce any time of his life to which this psalm may not be accommodated; for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was continually beset with enemies; and his powerful and prevalent appeals to God when he was so beset, pointed at Christ's dependence on his Father, and triumphs over the powers of darkness in the midst of his sufferings. In this psalm, I. David settles a correspondence between his soul and God, promising to pray, and promising himself that God would certainly hear him, ver. 1—3. II. He gives to God the glory, and takes to himself the comfort of God's holiness, ver. 4—6. III. He declares his resolution to keep close to the public worship of God, ver. 7. IV. He prayed, 1. For himself, that God would guide him, ver. 8; 2. Against his enemies, that God would destroy them, ver. 9, 10; 3. For all the people of God, that God would give them joy, and keep them safe, ver. 11, 12. And this is all of great use to direct us in prayer.

To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth. A Psalm of David.

GIVE ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.
2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God:
For unto thee will I pray.
3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD;
In the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.
4 For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness:
Neither shall evil dwell with thee.
5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight:
Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.
6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing:
The LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

The title of this psalm has nothing in it peculiar, but that it is said to be upon Nehiloth, a word nowhere else used. It is conjectured (and it is but a conjecture) that it signifies wind-instruments, with which this psalm was sung, as Neginoth was supposed to signify the stringed instruments. In these verses David had an eye to God,

First. As a prayer-hearing God; and so he has always been, ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, and yet is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. Observe how David here styles him, "O Lord," ver. 1, 3; Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient being, whom we are bound to adore; and "my King and my God," ver. 2, whom I have avouched for my God, and to whom I have sworn allegiance, and under whose protection I have put myself as my King. We believe that the God we pray to is a King and a God, King of kings, and God of gods; but that is not enough. The most commanding, encouraging principle of prayer, and the most powerful prevailing plea in prayer, is to look upon him as our King and our God, whom we lie under peculiar obligations to, and whom we have peculiar expectations from. Now observe,

1. What David here prays for, which may encourage our faith and hopes in all our addresses to God. If we pray fervently and in faith, we have reason to hope. 1st. That God will take cognizance of our case, the remonstrance we make of it, and the requests we make upon it; for so he prays here, "Give ear to my words, O Lord." Though God is in heaven, he has an ear open to his people's prayers; and it is not heavy, that he cannot hear. Men perhaps will not or cannot hear us, our enemies so haughty that they will not, our friends at such a distance that they cannot; but God, though high, though in heaven, can and will. 2nd. That he will take it into his wise and compassionate consideration, and will not slight it, or turn it off with a cursory answer; for so he prays, "Consider my meditation." David's prayers were not his words only, but his meditations. As meditation is the best preparative for prayer, so prayer is the best issue of meditation. Meditation and prayer should go together, *Ps.* xix. 14. And when we thus consider our prayers, then and then only we may expect that God will consider them, and take that to his heart which comes from ours. 3rd. That he will in due time return a gracious answer of peace; for so he prays ver. 2, "Hearken to the voice of my cry." His prayer was a cry, it was the voice of his cry, which notes fervency of affection, and importunity of expression; and such effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man avail much, and do wonders.

2. What David here promiseth, as the condition on his part to be performed, fulfilled and kept, that he might obtain this gracious acceptance; and this may guide and govern us in our addresses to God, that we may present them aright; for we ask and have not, if we ask amiss. Four things David here promiseth, and so must we:

1st. That he will pray, that he will make conscience of it, and make a business of it; "Unto thee will I pray." Others live without prayer, but I will pray. Kings on their own thrones (so David was) must be beggars at God's throne. Others pray to strange gods and expect relief from them; but to thee, to thee only will I pray. The assurances God has given us of his readiness to hear prayer should confirm our resolution to live and die praying.

2nd. That he will pray in the morning. His praying voice shall be heard then, and then shall his prayer be directed, that shall be the date of his letters to heaven; not that only, "morning and evening, and at noon will I pray," nay, seven times a day will I praise thee, but that certainly. Morning prayer is our duty; we are the fittest for prayer when we are in the most fresh, and lively, and composed frame, got clear of the slumbers of the night, revived by them, and not yet filled with the business of the day. We have then most need of prayer, considering the dangers and temptations of the day, to which we are exposed, and against which we are concerned, by faith and prayer, to fetch in fresh supplies of grace.

3rd. That he will have his eye single, and his heart intent in the duty; "I will direct my prayer," as a marksman directs his arrow to the white; with such a fixedness and steadiness of mind should we address ourselves to God. Or, as we direct a letter to a friend at such a place, so must we direct our prayers to God as our Father in heaven; and let us always direct them to be left with the Lord Jesus, the great Mediator, and then they will be sure not to miscarry. All our prayers must be directed to God, that is, his honour and glory must be aimed at as our highest end in all our prayers; let our first petition be, Hallowed, glorified be thy name, and then we may be sure of the same gracious answer to it that was given to Christ himself, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again."

4th. That he will patiently wait for an answer of peace. "I will look up;" will look after my prayers, and "hear what God the Lord will speak,"

Ps. lxxxv. 8; *Hab.* ii. 1; that if he grant what I asked I may be thankful; if he deny, I may be patient; if he defer, I may continue to pray and wait, and may not faint. We must look up or look out, as he that has shot an arrow looks to see how near it has come to the mark. We lose much of the comfort of our prayers for want of observing the returns of them. Thus praying, thus waiting, as the lame man looked stedfastly on Peter and John, *Acts* iii. 4, we may expect that God will give ear to our words, and consider them, and to him we may refer ourselves, as David here; who doth not pray, Lord, do this or the other for me, but hearken to me, consider my case, and do in it as seemeth good unto thee.

Secondly. As a sin-hating God, ver. 4—6. David takes notice of this, 1. As a warning to himself, and all other praying people, to remember that, as the God with whom we have to do is gracious and merciful, so he is pure and holy. Though he is ready to hear prayer, yet if we regard iniquity in our heart he will not hear our prayers, *Ps.* lxvi. 18. 2. As an encouragement to his prayers against his enemies; they were wicked men, and therefore enemies to God, and such as he had no pleasure in. See here,

1st. The holiness of God's nature. When he saith, "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness," he means, thou art a God that hatest it, as directly contrary to thine infinite purity, and rectitude, and holy will. Though the workers of iniquity prosper, let none from thence infer, that God hath pleasure in wickedness; no, not in that by which men pretend to honour him, or those do that hate their brethren and cast them out, and say, "Let the Lord be glorified." God has no pleasure in wickedness, though palliated with a cloak of religion. Let those, therefore, who delight in sin, know that God hath no delight in them; nor let any say when he is tempted, "I am tempted of God," for God is not the author of sin, neither shall evil dwell with him; that is, it shall not always be countenanced and suffered to prosper. Dr. Hammond thinks this refers to that law of Moses, which would not permit strangers that persisted in their idolatry to dwell in the land of Israel.

2nd. The justice of his government. The foolish shall not stand in his sight; that is, shall not be smiled upon by him, nor admitted to attend upon him, nor shall they be acquitted in the judgment of the great day. The workers of iniquity are very foolish: sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest fools of any others; not fools of God's making,—those are to be pitied, he hateth nothing that he has made,—but fools of their own making, and those he hates. Wicked people hate God, justly therefore are they hated of him, and it will be their endless misery and ruin; Those whom thou hatest thou shalt destroy; particularly two sorts of sinners, who are here marked for destruction. *First.* Those that are fools; that speak leasing, or lying, and that are deceitful. There is a particular emphasis laid on these sinners, *Rev.* xxi. 8, all liars; and xxii. 15, "whosoever loves and makes a lie." Nothing more contrary than this, and therefore nothing more hateful to the God of truth. *Secondly.* Those that are cruel; Thou wilt abhor the bloody man; for inhumanity is no less contrary, no less hateful to the God of mercy, whom mercy pleaseth. Liars and murderers are in a particular manner said to resemble the devil, and to be his children; and, therefore, it may well be expected that God should abhor them. These were the characters of David's enemies, and such as these are still the enemies of Christ and his church, men perfectly lost to all virtue and honour; and the worse they are the surer we may be of their ruin in due time.

In singing these verses and praying over them, we must engage and stir up ourselves to the duty of prayer, and encourage ourselves in it, because we shall not seek the Lord in vain; and must express our detestation of sin, and our awful expectation of that day of Christ's appearing, which will be the day of the perdition of ungodly men.

7 But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude of thy mercy:
And in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.
8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies;
Make thy way straight before my face.
9 For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth;
Their inward part *is* very wickedness;
Their throat is an open sepulchre;
They flatter with their tongue.
10 Destroy thou them, O God;
Let them fall by their own counsels;
Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions;
For they have rebelled against thee.
11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice:
Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them:
Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.
12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous;
With favour wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield.

In these verses David gives three characters, of himself, of his enemies and of all the people of God, and subjoins a prayer to each of them.

First. He gives an account of himself, and prays for himself, ver. 7, 8.

1. He is stedfastly resolved to keep close to God, and to his worship. Sinners go away from God, and so make themselves odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice; but as for me, that shall not keep me from thee. God's holiness and justice are so far from being a terror to the upright in heart, to drive them from God, that they are rather by them invited to cleave to him. David resolves, 1st. To worship God; that is, to pay his homage to him, and give unto God the glory due unto his name. 2nd. To worship him publicly; "I will come into thy house," the courts of thy house, to worship there with other thy faithful worshippers. David was much in secret worship, prayed often alone by himself, ver. 2, 3; and yet was very constant and devout in his attendance on the sanctuary. The duties of the closet are designed to prepare us for, not excuse us from, public ordinances. 3rd. To worship him reverently, and with a due sense of the infinite distance there is between God and man; "In thy fear will I worship," with a holy awe of God upon my spirit, *Heb.* xii. 28. God is greatly to be feared by all his worshippers. 4th. To take his encouragement in worship from God himself only. *First.* From his infinite mercy. It is in the multitude of that (the inexhaustible treasures of mercy that are in God, and the innumerable proofs and instances of it which we receive from him,) that David confides, and not in any merit or righteousness of his own, in his approaches to God. The mercy of God should ever be both the foundation of our hopes and the fountain of our joy in every thing wherein we have to do with him. *Secondly.* From the instituted medium of worship; which was then the temple, here called the temple of his holiness, as a type of Christ, the great and only Mediator, who sanctifies the service, as the temple sanctified the gold; and to whom we must have an eye in all our devotions, as they then had to the temple.

2. He earnestly prays, that God by his grace would guide and preserve him always in the way of his duty; ver. 8, "Lead me in thy righteousness, because of mine enemies," Heb., 'Because of those which observe me,' which watch for my halting, and seek occasion against me. See here, 1st. The good use which David made of the malice of his enemies against him. The more curious they were in spying faults in him, that they might have whereof to accuse him, the more cautious he was to avoid sin, and all appearances of it, and the more solicitous to be always found in the good way of God and duty. Thus by wisdom and grace good may come out of evil. 2nd. The right course which David took for the baffling of those who sought occasion against him. He committed himself to a Divine conduct, begged of God both by his providence and by his grace to direct him in the right way, and keep him from turning aside out of it, at any time, in any instance whatsoever, that the most critical and captious of his enemies, like Daniel's, might find no occasion against him. The way of our duty is here called God's way and his righteousness, because he prescribes to us by his just and holy laws, which, if we sincerely set before us as our rule, we may in faith beg of God to direct us in all particular cases. How this prayer of David's was answered to him, see 1 *Sam.* xviii. 14, 15.

Secondly. He gives an account of his enemies, and prays against them, ver. 9, 10. 1. If his account of them be true, as no doubt it is, they have a very bad character; and if they had not been ill men indeed they could not have been enemies to a man after God's own heart. He had spoken, ver. 6, of God's hating the bloody and deceitful men; Now, Lord, saith he, that is the character of my enemies. They are deceitful; there is no trusting them; for "there is no faithfulness in their mouth." They thought it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it might but blemish David, and make him odious; "Lord, lead me," saith he, ver. 8, for such as these are the men I have to do with, against whose slanders innocency itself is no security. Do they speak fair? Do they talk of peace and friendship? They flatter with their tongues; it is designed to cover their malice, and to gain their point the more secure. Whatever they pretend of religion or friendship, two sacred things, they are true to neither; their inward part is wickedness itself,—it is very wickedness. They are likewise bloody, for their throat is an open sepulchre; cruel as the grave, gaping to devour and to swallow up; insatiable as the grave, which never saith, "It is enough," *Pr.* xxx. 15, 16. This is quoted *Rom.* iii. 13, to shew the general corruption of mankind; for they are all naturally prone to malice, *Tit.* iii. 3. The grave is opened for them all, and yet they are as open graves to one another. 2. If his prayer against them be heard, as no doubt it is, they are in a bad condition. As men are and do, so they must expect to fare. He prays to God to destroy them, (according to what he had said, ver. 6, "Thou shalt destroy" men of this character, so let them fall; and sinners will soon throw themselves into ruin, if they be let alone;) to cast them out of his protection and favour, out of the heritage of the Lord, out of the land of the living. And woe to those whom God casts out. They have by their sins deserved destruction; there is enough to justify God in their utter rejection; "Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions," by which they have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are become ripe for ruin. Persecuting God's servants fills the measure as soon as any thing, 1 *Thes.* ii. 15, 16. Nay, they may be easily made to fall by their own counsels; that which they do to secure themselves and do mischief to others, by the overruling providence of God, may be made a means of their destruction, *Ps.* vii. 15; ix. 17. He pleads, "They have rebelled against thee." Had they been only mine enemies, I could safely have forgiven them, but they are rebels against God, his crown and dignity; they oppose his government, and will not repent to give him glory, and therefore I plainly foresee their ruin. His prayer for their destruction comes not from a spirit of revenge, but from a spirit of prophecy; by which he foretold, that all that rebel against God will certainly be destroyed by their own counsels. If "it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble" his people, as we are told it is, 2 *Thes.* i. 6, we pray it may be done whenever we pray, "Father, thy will be done."

Thirdly. He gives an account of the people of God, and prays for them, concluding with an assurance of their bliss, which he doubted not of his own interest in. Observe,

1. The description he gives of God's people. They are "the righteous," ver. 12; for they put their trust in God, are well assured of his power and all-sufficiency, venture their all upon his promise, and are confident of his protection in the way of their duty; and they love his name, are well-pleased with all that by which God has made himself known, and take delight in their acquaintance with him. This is true and pure religion, to live a life of complacency in God, and dependence on him.

2. His prayer for them; "Let them rejoice;" let them have cause to rejoice, and hearts to rejoice. Fill them with joy, with great joy, and unspeakable, "let them shout for joy." With constant joy, and perpetual; "let them ever shout for joy, with holy joy; and that which terminates in God, let them "be joyful in thee," in thy favour, in thy salvation, not in any creature. Let them rejoice, "because thou coverest them," or overshadowest them, dwellest among them. Perhaps it is an allusion to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was to Israel a visible token of God's special presence with them, and the special protection they were under. Let us learn of David to pray not for ourselves only, but for others; for all good people, for all that trust in God and love his name, though not in every thing of our mind, or in our interest. Let all that are entitled to God's promises have a share in our prayers. "Grace be with all that love Christ in sincerity." This is to concur with God.

3. His comfort concerning them, ver. 12. Therefore he takes them into his prayers, because they are God's peculiar people; therefore he doubts not but his prayers shall be heard, and they shall always rejoice; for, 1st. They are happy in the assurance of God's blessing; "Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous;" wilt command a blessing upon them. Thou hast in thy word pronounced them blessed, and therefore wilt make them truly so; 'Those whom thou blessest, they are blessed indeed.' 2nd. They are safe under the protection of thy favour; 'with that thou wilt crown him,' so some read it; it is his honour; it will be to him a diadem of beauty, and make him truly great. With that thou wilt compass him, wilt surround him on every side, as with a shield. A shield in war guards only one side, but the favour of God is to the saints a defence on every side, like the hedge about Job, round about, so that while they keep themselves under the Divine protection they are entirely safe, and ought to be entirely satisfied.

In singing these verses, and praying them over, we must by faith put ourselves under God's conduct and care, and then please ourselves with his mercy and grace, and with the prospect of God's triumphs at last over all his enemies, and his people's triumphs in him and in his salvation.

PSALM VI.

David was a weeping prophet as well as Jeremiah, and this psalm is one of his lamentations; either it was penned at a time, or at least calculated for a time, of great trouble, both outward and inward. Is any afflicted? is any sick? Let him sing this psalm. The method of the psalm is very observable, and what we shall often meet with. He begins with doleful complaints, but ends with joyful praises; like Hannah, who went to prayer with a sorrowful spirit, but when she had prayed went her way, and her countenance was no more sad. Three things the psalmist is here complaining of: I. Sickness of body. II. Trouble of mind, arising from the sense of sin, the meritorious cause of pain and sickness. III. The insults of his enemies upon occasion of both. Now here, 1. He pours out his complaint before God, deprecates his wrath, and begs earnestly for the return of his favour, ver. 1—7; 2. He assures himself of an answer of peace shortly, to his full satisfaction, ver. 8—10. This psalm is like the book of Job.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak:
O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.
3 My soul is also sore vexed:
But thou, O LORD, how long?
4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul:
Oh save me for thy mercies' sake.
5 For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee:
In the grave who shall give thee thanks?
6 I am weary with my groaning;
All the night make I my bed to swim;
I water my couch with my tears.

MODERN EASTERN COUCH AND BED.

7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief;
It waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

These verses speak the language of a heart truly humbled under humbling providences, of a broken and contrite spirit under great afflictions, sent on purpose to awaken conscience, and mortify corruption. Those heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them; but those are getting ready for mercy who, under God's rebukes, sow in tears, as David doth here. Let us observe here,

First. The representation he makes to God of his grievances. He pours out his complaint before him. Whither else should a child go with his complaints but to his father? 1. He complains of bodily pain and sickness; ver. 2, "My bones are vexed;" his bones and his flesh, like Job's were touched. Though David was a king, yet sick and pained; his imperial crown would not keep his head from aching. Great men are men, and subject to the common calamities of human life. Though David was a stout man, a man of war from his youth, yet that will not secure him from distempers, which will soon make even the strong men to bow themselves. Though David was a good man, yet neither will his goodness keep him in health; "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Let this help to reconcile us to pain and sickness, that it has been the lot of some of the best saints, and that we are directed and encouraged by their example to shew before God our trouble in that case, who is for the body, and takes cognizance of its ailments. 2. He complains of inward trouble; "My soul is also sore vexed," and that is much more grievous than the vexation of the bones; "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity," if that be in good plight, but if that be wounded the grievance is intolerable. David's sickness brought his sin to his remembrance, and he looked upon it as a token of God's displeasure against him; and that was the vexation of his soul that made him cry, I am weak, heal me. It is a sad thing for a man at the same time to have his bones vexed and his soul vexed too. But this has been sometimes the lot of God's own people; nay, and this completed his complicated trouble, it was continued upon him a great while, which is there intimated in that expostulation, ver. 3, "Thou, O Lord, how long?" To the living God we must at such a time apply ourselves, who is the only physician, both of body and mind, and not to the Assyrians, not to the god of Ekron.

Secondly. The impression which his troubles made upon him. They lay very heavy. He groaned till he was weary, wept till he made his bed to swim, and watered his couch, ver. 6. Wept till he had almost wept his eyes out; ver. 7, "Mine eye is consumed because of grief." David had more courage and consideration than to mourn thus for any outward affliction. But when sin sat heavy upon his conscience, and he was made to possess his iniquities,—when his soul was wounded with the sense of God's wrath, and his withdrawings from him,—then he takes on thus, and mourns in secret, and even his soul refuseth to be comforted. This not only kept his eyes waking, but kept his eyes weeping. Note, 1. It has often been the lot of the best men to be men of sorrows; our Lord Jesus himself was so. Our way lies through a vale of tears, and we must accommodate ourselves to the temper of the climate. 2. It well becomes the greatest spirits to be tender, and to relent under the tokens of God's displeasure. David, that could face Goliath himself, and many another threatening enemy, with an undaunted bravery, yet melts into tears at the remembrance of sin, and under the apprehensions of Divine wrath; and it is no diminution at all to his character. 3. True penitents weep in their retirements. The Pharisees disguised their faces, that they might appear unto men to mourn, but David mourns in the night upon his bed, where he lay communing with his own heart, and no eye was a witness to his grief but His that is all eye. Peter went out, covered his face, and wept. 4. Sorrow for sin ought to be great sorrow; so David's was; he wept so bitterly, so abundantly, that he watered his couch. 5. The triumphs of wicked men in the sorrows of the saints add very much to their grief. David's eye waxed old because of his enemies, who rejoiced in his afflictions, and put ill constructions upon his tears. In this great sorrow David was a type of Christ, who often wept, and who cried out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful;" *Heb.* v. 7.

Thirdly. The petitions which he offers up to God in this sorrowful and distressed state. 1. That which he dreads as the greatest evil is the anger of God. This was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; it was the infusion of this that made it indeed a bitter cup; and therefore he prays, ver. 1, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger," though I have deserved it, "neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." He doth not pray, Lord, rebuke me not, Lord, chasten me not; for as many as God loves he rebukes and chastens, "as a father the son in whom he delighteth." He can bear the rebuke and chastening well enough, if God at the same time lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and by his Spirit make him to hear the joy and gladness of his lovingkindness; the affliction of his body will be tolerable, if he have but comfort in soul. No matter, though sickness make his bones ache, if God's wrath do not make his heart ache; therefore his prayer is, "Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath;" let me not lie under the impressions of that, for that will sink me. Herein David was a type of Christ, whose sorest complaint in his sufferings was of the trouble of his soul, and of the suspension of his Father's smiles. He never so much as whispered a complaint of the rage of his enemies,—Why do they crucify me? or the unkindness of his friends,—Why do they desert me? but he cried with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Let us thus deprecate the wrath of God more than any outward trouble whatsoever, and always take heed of treasuring up wrath against a day of affliction. 2. That which he desires as the greatest good, and which would be to him the restoration of all good, is the favour and grace of God. He prays, 1st. That God would pity him, and look upon him with compassion. He thinks himself very miserable, and misery is the proper object of mercy; and therefore he prays, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord;" in wrath remember mercy, and deal not with me in strict justice. 2nd. That God would pardon his sins; for that is the proper act of mercy, and is often chiefly intended in that petition, Have mercy upon me. 3rd. That God would put forth his power for his relief; "Lord, heal me," ver. 2; "Save me," ver. 4; speak the word, and I shall be whole, and all will be well. 4th. That he would be at peace with him; Return, O Lord, receive me into thy favour again, and be reconciled to me. Thou hast seemed to depart from me, and neglect me; nay, to set thyself at a distance, as one angry; but now, Lord, return, and shew thyself nigh to me. 5th. That he would especially preserve the inward man, and the interests of that, whatever becomes of the body; "O Lord, deliver my soul" from sinning, from sinking, from perishing for ever. It is an unspeakable privilege that we have a God to go to in our afflictions; and it is our duty to go to him, and thus to wrestle with him, and we shall not seek in vain.

Fourthly. The pleas with which he enforceth his petitions: not to move God, he knows our cause, and the true merits of it, better than we can state it; but to move himself. 1. He pleads his own misery, and that his misery had continued long. "I am weak," I am troubled, sore troubled; O Lord, how long shall I be so? 2. He pleads God's mercy, and from thence we take some of our best encourgements in prayer. "Save me, for thy mercy's sake." 3. He pleads God's glory, ver. 5, "For in death there is no remembrance of thee." Lord, if thou deliver me and comfort me, I will not only give thee thanks for my deliverance, and stir up others to join with me in these thanksgivings, but I will spend the new life thou shalt intrust me with in thy service, to thy glory, and all the remainder of my days preserve a grateful remembrance of thy favours to me, and be quickened thereby in all instances of service to thee; but if I die I shall be cut short of that opportunity of honouring thee, and doing good to others; for "in the grave, who will give thee thanks?" Not but that separate souls live and act, and the souls of the faithful joyfully remember God, and give thanks to him; but, 1st. In the second death (which perhaps David, being now troubled in soul under the wrath of God, had some dreadful apprehensions of) there is no pleasing remembrance of God; devils and damned spirits blaspheme him, and do not praise him. Lord, let me not lie always under this wrath, for that is *Sheol*, it is hell itself, and lays me under an everlasting disability to praise thee. They that sincerely seek God's glory, and desire and delight to praise him, may pray in faith, Lord, send me not to that dreadful place, where there is no devout remembrance of thee, nor any thanks given to thee. 2nd. Even the death of the body puts an end to our opportunity and capacity of glorifying God in this world, and serving the interests of his kingdom among men, by opposing the powers of darkness, and bringing many on this earth to know God, and devote themselves to him. Some have maintained, that the joys of saints in heaven are more desirable, infinitely more so, than the comforts of saints on earth; yet the services of saints on earth, especially such eminent ones as David was, are more laudable, and redound more to the glory of the Divine grace, than the services of saints in heaven, who are not employed in maintaining the war against sin and Satan, nor in edifying the body of Christ. Courtiers in the royal presence are most happy, but soldiers in the field are more useful; and therefore we may with good reason pray, that if it be the will of God, and he has any farther work for us or our friends to do in this world, he will yet spare us or them to serve him. To depart and be with Christ is most happy for the saints themselves; but for them to abide in the flesh is more profitable for the church. And this David had an eye to when he pleaded this, "In the grave, who shall give thee thanks?" *Ps.* xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 10; cxv. 17; *Isa.* xxxviii. 18. And this Christ had an eye to when he said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world."

We should sing these verses with a deep sense of the terrors of God's wrath, which we should therefore dread and deprecate above anything; and with thankfulness, if this be not our condition; and compassion to those who are thus afflicted. If we be thus troubled, let it comfort us, that our case is not without precedent; nor, if we humble ourselves, and pray as David did, shall it be long without redress.

8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;
For the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
9 The LORD hath heard my supplication;
The LORD will receive my prayer.
10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed:
Let them return *and* be ashamed suddenly.

What a sudden change is here for the better! He that was groaning, and weeping, and giving up all for gone, ver. 6, 7, here looks and speaks very pleasant. Having made his requests known to God, and lodged his case with him, he is very confident the issue will be good, and his sorrow turned into joy.

First. He distinguisheth himself from the wicked and ungodly, and fortifies himself against their insults; ver. 8, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." When he was in the depth of his distress, 1. He was afraid that God's wrath against him would give him his portion with the workers of iniquity; but now that cloud of melancholy was blown over, he is assured that his soul shall not be gathered with sinners, for they are not his people. He began to suspect himself to be one of them, because of the heavy pressures of God's wrath upon him; but now all his fears are silenced, he bids them depart, knowing that his lot is among the chosen. 2. The workers of iniquity had teazed him, and taunted him, and asked him, Where was his God? triumphing in his despondency and despair, but now he had wherewith to answer them that reproached him, for God was about to return in mercy to him, had now comforted his spirit, and would shortly complete his deliverance. 3. Perhaps they had tempted him to do as they did, to quit his religion, and betake himself for ease to the pleasures of sin. But now, "Depart from me;" I will never lend ear to your counsel; you would have had me to curse God and die, but I will bless him, and live. This good use we should make of God's mercies to us, we should thereby have our resolutions strengthened never to have anything more to do with sin and sinners. David was a king, and he takes this occasion to renew his purpose of using his power for the suppression of sin, and the reformation of manners, *Ps.* lxxv. 4; ci. 3. When God has done great things for us, that should put us upon studying what we shall do for him. Our Lord Jesus seems to borrow these words from the mouth of his father David, when, having all judgment committed to him, he shall say, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity," *Lu.* xiii. 27; and so teaches us to say so now, *Ps.* cxix. 115.

Secondly. He assures himself that God was, and would be, propitious to him, notwithstanding the present intimations of wrath which he was under. 1. He is confident of a gracious answer to this prayer which he is now making. While he is yet speaking, he is aware that God hears, as *Isa.* lxv. 24; *Dan.* ix. 20, and therefore speaks of it as a thing done, and repeats it with an air of triumph, "the Lord hath heard;" and again, "the Lord hath heard." By the workings of God's grace upon his heart, he knew his prayer was graciously accepted, and therefore did not doubt but it would in due time be effectually answered. His tears had a voice, a loud voice in the ears of the God of mercy; and "the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." Silent tears are not speechless ones. His prayers were cries to God; and "the Lord hath heard the voice of my supplications," has put his fiat to my petitions, and so it will appear shortly. 2. From thence he infers the like favourable audience of all his other prayers; he "has heard the voice of my supplication," and therefore he will receive my prayer; for he gives, and doth not upbraid with former grants.

Thirdly. He either prays for the conversion or predicts the destruction of his enemies and persecutors, ver. 10. 1. It may very well be taken as a prayer for their conversion. "Let them all be ashamed" of the opposition they have given me, and the censures they have passed upon me; let them be (as all true penitents are) vexed at themselves for their own folly; let them return to a better temper and disposition of mind, and let them be ashamed of what they have done against me, and take shame to themselves. 2. If they be not converted, it is a prediction of their confusion and ruin. They shall be ashamed, and sore vexed, so it may be read, and that justly; they rejoiced that David was vexed, ver. 2, 3, and therefore, as usually, it returns upon themselves; they also shall be sore vexed. They that will not give glory to God shall have their faces filled with everlasting shame.

In singing this, and praying over it, we must give glory to God, as a God ready to hear prayer, must own his goodness to us in hearing our prayers, and must encourage ourselves to wait upon him, and to trust in him in the greatest straits and difficulties.

PSALM VII.

It appears by the title that this psalm was penned upon a particular occasion, which was the malicious imputations that David was unjustly laid under by some of his enemies. Being thus wronged, I. He applies himself to God for favour, ver. 1, 2. II. He appeals to God concerning his innocency as to those things whereof he was accused, ver. 3—5. III. He prays to God to plead his cause, and judge for him against his persecutors, ver. 6—9. IV. He expresseth his confidence in God that he would do so, and would return the mischief upon the head of those that designed it against him, ver. 10—16. V. He promiseth to give God the glory of his deliverance, ver. 17. In this David was a type of Christ, who was himself, and still is in his members, thus injured, but will certainly be righted at last.

Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust:
Save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver
2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, [me:
Rending *it* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.
3 O LORD my God, if I have done this;
If there be iniquity in my hands; [me;
4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with
(Yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine
enemy:)
5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take *it;*
Yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth,
And lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.
6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger,
Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies:
And awake for me *to* the judgment *that* thou hast commanded. [about:
7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee
For their sakes therefore return thou on high.
8 The LORD shall judge the people:
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
And according to mine integrity *that is* in me.
9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end;
But establish the just:
For the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

Shiggaion is a song or psalm; the word is used so only here and *Hab.* iii. 1. A wandering song, so some; the matter and composure of the several parts being different, but artificially put together. A charming song, so others; very delightful. David not only penned it, but sang it himself in a devout religious manner unto the Lord, concerning the words or affairs of Cush the Benjamite; that is, of Saul himself, whose barbarous usage of David bespoke him rather a Cushite, or Ethiopian, than a trueborn Israelite. Or more likely it was some kinsman of Saul named Cush, who was an inveterate enemy to David, misrepresented him to Saul as a traitor, and (which needed not) exasperated Saul against him; one of those children of men, children of Belial indeed, whom David complains of, 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 19, that made mischief between him and Saul. David, thus basely abused, has recourse to the Lord. The injuries men do us should drive us to God, for to him we may commit our cause. Nay, he sings to the Lord; his spirit was not ruffled by it, nor cast down, but so composed and cheerful, that he was still in tune for sacred songs, and it did not occasion one jarring string of his harp. Thus let the injuries we receive from men, instead of provoking our passions, kindle and excite our devotions. In these verses,

First. He puts himself under God's protection, and flies to him for succour and shelter; ver. 1, "Lord, save me, and deliver me" from the power and malice of "all them that persecute me," that they may not have their will against me. He pleads, 1. His relation to God. Thou art my God, and therefore whither else should I go but to thee? Thou art my God, and therefore my shield, *Gen.* xv. 1; my God, and therefore I am one of thy servants who may expect to be protected. 2. His confidence in God. Lord, save me, for I depend upon thee; "in thee do I put my trust," and not in any arm of flesh. Men of honour will not fail those that repose a trust in them, especially if they themselves have encouraged them to do so; which is our case. 3. The rage and malice of his enemies, and the imminent danger he was in of being swallowed up by them. Lord, save me or I am gone; he will tear my soul like a lion tearing his prey, with so much pride, and pleasure, and power; so easily, so cruelly. St. Paul compares Nero to a lion, 2 *Tim.* iv. 17, as David here compares Saul. 4. The failure of all other helpers. Lord, be thou pleased to deliver me; for otherwise there is none to deliver, ver. 2. It is the glory of God to help the helpless.

Secondly. He makes a solemn protestation of his innocency, as to those things whereof he was accused, and by a dreadful imprecation appeals to God, the searcher of hearts, concerning it, ver. 3—5. Observe, in general, 1. When we are falsely accused by men, it is a great comfort if our own consciences acquit us.

———*Hic murus aheneus esto*
Nil conscire sibi.———
'Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.'

Not only, that they cannot prove their calumnies, *Acts* xxiv. 13, but that our hearts can disprove them to our own satisfaction. 2. God is the patron of wronged innocency. David had no court on earth to appeal to; his prince, that should have righted him, was his sworn enemy; but he had the court of heaven to fly to, and a righteous judge there, whom he could call his God. And here see,

1st. What the indictment is which he pleads not guilty to. He was charged with a traitorous design against Saul's crown and life, that he compassed and imagined to depose and murder him, and in order to that levied war against him. This he utterly denies. He never did this; there was no iniquity of this kind in his hand, ver. 3; he abhorred the thought of it. He never rewarded evil to Saul when he was at peace with him, nor to any other, ver. 4; nay, as some think it should be rendered, he never rendered evil for evil, never did them mischief that had injured him.

2nd. What evidence he produceth of his innocency. It is hard to prove a negative, and yet this was a negative which David could produce very good proof of; "I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy." By this it appeared beyond contradiction, that David had no design against Saul's life, that once and again Providence so ordered it that Saul lay at his mercy, and there were those about him that would soon have dispatched him, but David generously and conscientiously prevented it, when he cut off his skirt, 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 4; and afterwards, when he took away his spear, 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 12, to be witnesses for him what he could have done. Saul himself owned both these to be undeniable proofs of David's integrity and good affection to him. If we render good for evil, and deny ourselves the gratifications of our passion, it may turn to us for a testimony more than we think of another day.

3. What doom he would submit to if he were guilty; ver. 5, "Let the enemy persecute my soul" to the death, and my good name when I am gone; let him "lay my honour in the dust." This intimates, 1st. That if he had been indeed injurious to others, he had reason to expect that they would repay him in the same coin. He that hath his hand against every man, must count upon it that every man's hand will be against him. 2nd. That in that case he could not with any confidence go to God, and beg of him to deliver him or plead his cause. It is a presumptuous, dangerous thing for any that are guilty, and suffer justly, to appeal to God, as if they were innocent aud suffered wrongfully; such must humble themselves, and accept the punishment of their iniquity, and not expect that the righteous God will patronise their unrighteousness. 3rd. That he was abundantly satisfied in himself concerning his innocency. It is natural to us to wish well to ourselves, and therefore a curse to ourselves if we swear falsely has been thought as awful a form of swearing as any other. With such an oath or imprecation David here ratifies the protestation of his innocency, which yet will not justify us in doing the like for every light and trivial cause; for the occasion here was important.

Thirdly. Having this testimony of his conscience concerning his innocency, he humbly prays to God to appear for him against his persecutors, and breaks every petition with a proper plea, as one that knew how to order his cause before God.

1. He prays that God would manifest his wrath against his enemies, and

pleads their wrath against him. Lord, they are unjustly angry at me, be thou justly angry with them, and let them know that thou art so; ver. 6, "in thine anger, lift up thyself" to the seat of judgment, and make thy power and justice conspicuous, "because of the rage," the furies, the outrages (the word is plural) "of mine enemies." Those need not fear men's wrath against them who have God's wrath for them. "Who knows the power of his anger?"

2. He prays that God would plead his cause; "Awake for me to judgment," that is, let my cause have a hearing, "to the judgment which thou hast commanded;" that speaks, 1st. The Divine power. As he blesseth effectually, and is therefore said to command the blessing, so he judgeth effectually, and is therefore said to command the judgment, which is such as none can countermand, for it certainly carries execution along with it. 2nd. The Divine purpose and promise. It is the judgment which thou hast determined to pass upon all the enemies of thy people. "Thou hast commanded" the princes and judges of the earth to right the injured, and vindicate the oppressed; Lord, awaken thyself to that judgment. He that loves righteousness, and requires it in others, will no doubt execute it himself; though he seem to connive at wrong as one asleep, he will awake in due time, *Ps.* lxxviii. 65; and will make it to appear that the delays were no neglects. He prays, ver. 7, "Return thou on high;" maintain thine own authority, resume thy royal throne which they have despised the sovereignty of, and the judgment-seat which they have despised the sentence of. "Return on high," that is, visibly, and in the sight of all, that it may be universally acknowledged, that Heaven itself owns and pleads David's cause. Some make this to point at the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, who, when he returned to heaven, (returned on high in his exalted state,) had all judgment committed to him. Or it may refer to his second coming, when he shall return on high to this world to execute judgment upon all. This return his injured people wait for, and pray for; and to it they appeal from the unjust censures of men. He prays again, ver. 8, Judge me, judge for me, give sentence on my side.

To enforce this suit, *First.* He pleads that his cause was now brought into the proper court, "The Lord shall judge the people," ver. 8. It is his place, it is his promise, "God is the Judge," therefore, Lord, judge me. He is the Judge of all the earth, and therefore no doubt he shall do right; and all will be obliged to acquiesce in his judgment. *Secondly.* He insists upon his integrity as to all the matters in variance between him and Saul; and desires no other but to be judged in this matter "according to his righteousness," and the sincerity of his heart in all the steps he had taken towards his preferment. *Thirdly.* He foretells that it would be much for the glory of God, and the edification and comfort of his people, if God would appear for him. "So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about;" therefore do it for their sakes, that they may attend thee with their praises and services in the courts of thine house. 1*st.* They will do it of their own accord. God's appearing on David's behalf, and fulfilling his promise to him, would be such an instance of his righteousness, goodness, and faithfulness, as would greatly enlarge the hearts of all his faithful worshippers, and fill their mouths with praise. David was the darling of his country, especially of all the good people in it; and therefore when they saw him in a fair way to the throne they would greatly rejoice, and give thanks to God. Crowds of them would attend his footstool with their praises for such a blessing to their land. 2*nd.* If David come into power, as God had promised him, he would take care to bring people to church by his influence upon them, and the ark should not be neglected as it had been in the days of Saul, 1 *Chr.* xiii. 3.

3. He prays in general for the conversion of sinners, and the establishment of saints; ver. 9, "O let the wickedness," not only of my wicked enemies, but "of" all "the wicked come to an end; but establish the just." Here are two things which we every one of us must desire, and may hope for: 1st. The period of sin, that it may be brought to an end in ourselves and others. When corruption is mortified, when every wicked way and thought is forsaken, and the stream which ran violently towards the world and the flesh is driven back and runs towards God and heaven, then the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end;—when there is a general reformation of manners, when atheists and profane are convinced and converted; when a stop is put to the spreading of the infection of sin, so that evil men proceed no farther, their folly being made manifest;—when the wicked designs of the church's enemies are baffled and their power broken, and the man of sin is destroyed, then "the wickedness of the wicked comes to an end." And this is that which all that love God, and for his sake hate evil, desire and pray for. 2nd. The perpetuity of righteousness; "But establish the just." As we pray that bad may be made good, so we pray that the good may be made better; that they may not be seduced by the wiles of the wicked, nor shocked by their malice; that they may be confirmed in their choice of the ways of God, and in their resolution to persevere therein; may be firm to the interests of God and religion, and zealous in their endeavours to bring "the wickedness of the wicked to an end." His plea to enforce this petition is, for "the righteous God trieth the hearts and the reins;" and therefore the secret wickedness of the wicked he knows, and knows how to bring to an end; and the secret sincerity of the just he is witness to, and has secret ways of establishing.

As far as we have the testimony of an unbiassed conscience for us, that in any instance we are wronged and injuriously reflected on, we may, in singing these verses, lodge our appeal with the righteous God, and be assured that he will own our righteous cause, and will one day, in the last day at farthest, bring forth our integrity as the light.

10 My defence *is* of God,
Which saveth the upright in heart.
11 God judgeth the righteous,
And God is angry *with the wicked* every day.
12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword;
He hath bent his bow, and made it ready.
13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death;
He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.
14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity,
And hath conceived mischief,
And brought forth falsehood.
15 He made a pit, and digged it,
And is fallen into the ditch *which* he made.
16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, [pate.
And his violent dealing shall come down upon his own
17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness:
And will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

David having lodged his appeal with God by prayer, and a solemn profession of his integrity in the former part of the psalm, in this latter part doth as it were take out judgment upon the appeal, by faith in the Word of God, and the assurance it gives of the happiness and safety of the righteous, and the certain destruction of wicked people, that continue impenitent.

First. David is confident he shall find God his powerful protector and saviour, and the patron of his oppressed innocency; ver. 10, "My defence is of God." Not only God is my defender, and I shall find him so, but I look for defence and safety in no other; my hope for shelter in a time of danger is placed in God alone: if I have defence, it must be of God. 'My shield is upon God,' so some read it; there is that in God which hath an assurance of protection to all that are his; his name is a strong tower, *Pr.* xviii. 10. Two things David builds this confidence upon: 1. The particular favour God has for all that are sincere; "He saveth the upright in heart," saves them with an everlasting salvation, and therefore will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom; saves them out of their present troubles as far as is good for them; their integrity and uprightness will preserve them. The upright in heart are safe, and ought to think themselves so, under the Divine protection. 2. The general respect he has for justice and equity; "God judgeth the righteous;" that is, he owns every righteous cause, and will maintain it in every righteous man, and will protect him. God is a righteous Judge, so some read it; who not only doth righteousness himself, but will take care that righteousness be done by the children of men, and will avenge and punish all unrighteousness.

Secondly. He is no less confident of the destruction of all his wicked persecutors, even as many of them as would not repent to give glory to God. He reads their doom here, for their good if possible, that they might cease their enmity; or, however, for his own comfort, that he might not be afraid of them, nor aggrieved at their prosperity and success for a time. He goes into the sanctuary of God, and there understands, 1. That they are children of wrath; they are not to be envied, for "God is angry" with them "is angry with the wicked every day." They are every day doing that which is provoking to him, and he resents it, and treasures it up against the day of wrath; as his mercies are new every morning towards his people, so his anger is new every morning against the wicked, upon the fresh occasions given for it by their renewed transgressions. God is angry with the wicked even in the merriest and most prosperous of their days, even in the days of their devotion. For if they be suffered to prosper, it is in wrath; if they pray, their very prayers are an abomination. The wrath of God abides upon them, *Jno.* iii. 36; and continual additions are made to it. 2. That they are children of death, as all the children of wrath are; sons of perdition marked out for ruin. See their destruction.

1. God will destroy them. The destruction they are reserved for is, "destruction from the Almighty," which ought to be a terror to every one of us, for it comes from the wrath of God, ver. 13, 14. It is here intimated, 1st. That the destruction may be prevented by the conversion of the sinner, for it is threatened on that condition, "if he turn not" from his evil way, if he do not let fall his enmity against the people of God, then let him expect it will be his ruin; but, if he turn, it is implied that his sin shall be pardoned, and all shall be well. Thus even the threatenings of wrath are introduced with a gracious implication of mercy, enough to justify God for ever in the destruction of them that perish; they might have turned and lived, but they chose rather to go on and die, and their blood is therefore upon their own heads. 2nd. That if it be not thus prevented by the conversion of the sinner, it will be prepared for him by the justice of God. In general, ver. 13, "He hath prepared for him the instruments of death," of all that death which is the wages of sin; if God will slay, he will not want instruments of death, for any creature, even the least and weakest, may be made so when he pleaseth. *First.* Here is variety of instruments, all which breathe threatenings and slaughter; here is a sword which wounds and kills at hand, a bow and arrows which wound and kill at a distance those who think to get out of the reach of God's vindictive justice. If the sinner flees from the iron weapon, yet the bow of steel shall strike him through, *Job* xx. 24. *Secondly.* These instruments of death are all said to be made ready, God has them not to seek, but always at hand; "Judgments are prepared for scorners; Tophet is prepared of old." *Thirdly.* While God is preparing his instruments of death, he gives the sinners timely warning of their danger, and space to repent and prevent it. He is slow to punish, and "longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish." *Fourthly.* The longer the destruction is delayed, to give time for repentance, the sorer will it be, and the heavier will it light and lie for ever, if that time be not so improved; while God is waiting the sword is in the whetting and the bow in the drawing. *Fifthly.* The destruction of impenitent sinners, though it come slowly, yet it comes surely; for it is ordained, they are of old ordained to it. *Sixthly.* Of all sinners, persecutors are set up as the fairest marks of Divine wrath; against them more than any other God has ordained his arrows. They set God at defiance, but cannot set themselves out of the reach of his judgments.

2. They will destroy themselves, ver. 14—16. The sinner is here described taking a great deal of pains to ruin himself, more pains to damn his soul than if directed aright would save it. 1st. It is described by the pains of a labouring woman that brings forth a false conception, ver. 14. The sinner's head with its politics conceives mischief, contrives it with a great deal of art, lays his plot deep, and keeps it close; the sinner's heart with its passions travails with iniquity, and is in pain to be delivered of the malicious projects it is hatching against the people of God. But what doth it come to when it comes to the birth? It is a falsehood, it is a cheat upon himself, it is a lie in his right hand; he cannot compass what he intended, nor, if he gain his point, will he gain the satisfaction he promised himself; he brings forth wind, *Isa.* xxvi. 18; stubble, *Isa.* xxxiii. 11; death, *Jas.* i. 15; that is, falsehood. 2nd. By the pains of a labouring man that works hard to dig a pit, and then falls into it, and perishes in it. *First.* This is true in a sense of all sinners, they prepare destruction for themselves by preparing themselves for destruction; loading themselves with guilt, and submitting themselves to their corruptions. *Secondly.* It is often remarkably true of those who contrive mischief against the people of God, or against their neighbours. By the righteous hand of God it is made to return upon their own heads; what they designed for the shame and destruction of others proves to be their own confusion.

——————*Nec lex est justior ulla,*
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua.——

—'There is not a juster law than that the author of a murderous contrivance shall perish by it.' Some apply it to Saul, who fell upon his sword.

In singing this, we must do as David here doth; ver. 17, "praise the Lord according to his righteousness;" that is, give him the glory of that gracious protection under which he takes his afflicted people, and the just vengeance with which he will pursue them that afflict them. Thus we must sing to the praise of the Lord most high, who when his enemies deal proudly, shews that he is above them.

PSALM VIII.

This psalm is a solemn meditation on, and admiration of, the glory and greatness of God, which we are all concerned to think highly and honourably of. It begins and ends with the same acknowledgment of the transcendent excellency of God's name. It is proposed to be proved, ver. 1, "How excellent is thy name in all the earth." And then it is repeated, as proved (with a *quod erat demonstrandum*,—'that which was to be proved,') in the last verse. For the proof of God's glory, he gives instances of his goodness to man; for God's goodness is his glory. God is to be glorified, I. For making known himself and his great name to us, ver. 1. II. For making use of the weakest of the children of men, by them to serve his own purposes, ver. 2. III. For making even the heavenly bodies useful to man, ver. 3, 4. IV. For making him to have dominion over the creatures in this lower world, and thereby placing him but a little lower than the angels, ver. 5—8. This psalm is, in the New Testament, applied to Christ and the work of our redemption which he wrought out; the honour given by the children of men to him, (compare ver. 2 with *Mat.* xxi. 16,) and the honour put upon the children of men by him, both in his humiliation, when he was made a little lower than the angels, and in his exaltation, when he was crowned with glory and honour: compare ver. 5, 6, with *Heb.* ii. 6—8; 1 *Cor.* xv. 27. When we are observing the glory of God in the kingdom of nature and providence, we should be led by that, and through that, to the contemplation of his glory in the kingdom of grace.

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David.

O LORD our Lord,
How excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!
Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.
2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings
Hast thou ordained strength
Because of thine enemies,
That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

The psalmist here sets himself to give unto God the glory due unto his name. Dr. Hammond grounds a conjecture upon the title of this psalm concerning the occasion of penning it. It is said to be upon Gittith, which is generally taken for the tune, or musical instrument with which this psalm was to be sung; but he renders it, 'upon the Gittite,' that is, Goliath the Gittite, whom he vanquished and slew, 1 *Sam.* xvii., and then by him, who was in comparison but a babe and suckling, was that enemy stilled. The conjecture would be probable enough, but that we find two other psalms with the same title, *Ps.* lxxxi. and lxxxiv. Two things David here admires:

First. How plainly God displays his glory himself, ver. 1. He addresses himself to God with all humility and reverence as the Lord, and his people's Lord, "O Lord, our Lord." If we believe that God is the Lord, we must avouch and acknowledge him to be ours; he is ours, for he made us, protects us, and takes special care of us. He must be ours, for we are bound to obey him and submit to him; we must own the relation, not only when we come to pray to God, as a plea with him to shew us mercy, but when we come to praise him, as an argument with ourselves to give him glory. And we shall never think we can do that with affection enough, if we consider,

1. How bright God's glory shines even in this lower world; "How excellent is thy name in all the earth!" The works of creation and providence evince and proclaim to all the world that there is an Infinite Being, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection, the Sovereign Ruler, powerful Protector, and bountiful Benefactor of all the creatures. How great, how illustrious, how magnificent is this name in all the earth: the light of it shines in men's faces everywhere, *Rom.* i. 20; if they shut their eyes against it, that is their fault. There is no speech or language but the voice of God's name either is heard in it or may be. But this looks farther, to the Gospel of Christ, by which the name of God as it is notified by Divine revelation, which before was great in Israel only, came to be so in all the earth, the utmost ends of which have thus been made to see God's great salvation, *Mar.* xvi. 16.

2. How much brighter it shines in the upper world; Thou "hast set thy glory above the heavens." 1st. God is infinitely more glorious and excellent than the noblest creatures, and those that shine brightest. 2nd. Whereas we on this earth only hear God's excellent name, and praise that, the angels and blessed spirits above see his glory and praise that, and yet he is exalted far above even their blessing and praise. 3rd. In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of God, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, God set his glory above the heavens, far above all principalities and powers.

Secondly. How powerfully he discovers it by the weakest of his creatures; ver. 2, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength," or perfected praise, the praise of thy strength, *Mat.* xxi. 16. This speaks the glory of God,

1. In the kingdom of nature. The care God takes of little children when they first come into the world, the most helpless of all animals, the special protection they are under, and the provision nature has made for them, ought to be acknowledged by every one of us to the glory of God, as a great instance of his power and goodness, and the more sensibly, because we have all had the benefit of it, for to this we owe it that we died not from the womb, that the knees then prevented us, and the breasts that we should suck; this is such an instance of thy goodness as may for ever put to silence the enemies of thy glory, who say, "There is no God." 2. In the kingdom of providence. In the government of this lower world, he makes much use of the children of men, some that know him, and others that do not, *Isa.* xlv. 4, and these such as have been babes and sucklings; nay, sometimes he is pleased to serve his own purposes by the ministry of such as are still, in wisdom and strength, little better than babes and sucklings. 3. In the kingdom of grace, the kingdom of the Messiah. It is here foretold, that by the apostles, who were looked upon but as babes, unlearned and ignorant men, *Acts* iv. 13, mean and despicable, and by the foolishness of their preaching, the devil's kingdom should be thrown down, as Jericho's walls were by the sound of ram's horns. The Gospel is called the arm of the Lord, and the rod of his strength. This was ordained to work wonders, not out of the mouth of philosophers or orators, politicians or statesmen, but of a company of poor fishermen, who lay under the greatest external disadvantages that could be; and a specimen was given of this in the children's crying, Hosanna to the Son of David, when the chief priests and the Pharisees owned him not, but despised and rejected him; to that therefore our Saviour applies this, *Mat.* xxi. 16, and by it stilled the enemy. Sometimes the grace of God appears wonderfully in young children, and he "teacheth them knowledge, and maketh them to understand doctrine, who are but newly weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts," *Isa.* xxviii. 9. Sometimes the power of God brings to pass great things in his church by very weak and unlikely instruments, and confounds the noble, wise, and mighty, by the base, and weak, and foolish things of the world, that no flesh might glory in his presence, but the excellency of the power may the more evidently appear to be of God, and not of man, 1 *Cor.* i. 27, 28. This he doth because of his enemies, because they are insolent and haughty, that he may still them, may put them to silence, and put them to shame, and so be justly avenged on the avengers: see *Acts* iv. 14; vi. 10. The devil is the great enemy and avenger; and by the preaching of the Gospel he was in a great measure stilled, his oracles were silenced, the advocates of his cause were confounded, and unclean spirits themselves not suffered to speak.

In singing this let us give God the glory of his great name, and the great things he has done by the power of his Gospel, in the chariot of which the exalted Redeemer rides forth, conquering and to conquer, and ought to be attended not only with our praises, but with our best wishes; praise is perfected, that is, God is in the highest degree glorified, when strength is ordained out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?
5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
And hast crowned him with glory and honour.
6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of
Thou hast put all *things* under his feet: [thy hands;
7 All sheep and oxen,
Yea, and the beasts of the field;
8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
And whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
9 O LORD our Lord,
How excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!

David here goes on to magnify the honour of God, by recounting the honours he has put upon man; especially the man Christ Jesus. The condescensions of the Divine grace call for our praises as much as the elevations of the Divine glory; how God has condescended in favour to man, the psalmist here observes with wonder and thankfulness, and recommends it to our thoughts. See here,

First. What it is that leads him to admire the condescending favour of God to man. It is his consideration of the lustre and influence of the heavenly bodies, which are within the view of sense; ver. 3, "I consider thy heavens," and there particularly "the moon and the stars." But why doth he not take notice of the sun, which much excelleth them all? Probably because it was in a night walk by moonlight that he entertained and instructed himself with this meditation, when the sun was not within view, but only the moon and the stars; which, though they are not altogether so serviceable to man as the sun is, yet are no less demonstrations of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator. Observe, 1. It is our duty to consider the heavens. We see them, we cannot but see them; by this, among other things, man is distinguished from the beast, that while they are so framed as to look downwards to the earth, man is made erect, to look upward towards heaven. *Os homini sublime dedit cœlumque tueri jussit*,—'To man he gave an erect countenance, and bade him look towards heaven,' that thus he may be directed to set his affections on things above; for what we see has not its due influence upon us unless we consider it. 2. We must always consider the heavens as God's heavens, not only as all the world is his, even the earth, and the fulness thereof, but in a more peculiar manner, "the heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's," *Ps.* cxv. 16; they are the place of the residence of his glory, and we are taught to call him, Our Father in heaven. 3. They are therefore his, because they are the work of his fingers; he made them, he made them easily. The stretching out of the heavens needed not any outstretched arm, it was done with a word, it was but the work of his fingers. He made them with very great curiosity and fineness, like a nice piece of work, which the artist makes with his fingers. 4. Even the lesser lights, the moon and stars, shew the glory and power of the Father of lights, and furnish us with matter for praise. 5. The heavenly bodies are not only the creatures of the Divine power, but subjects to the Divine government. God not only made them, but ordained them; and the ordinances of heaven can never be altered. But how doth this come in here to magnify God's favour to man? 1st. When we consider how the glory of God shines in the upper world, we may well wonder he should take cognizance of such a mean creature as man: that he who is resident in and president over that bright and blessed part of the creation, should humble himself to behold the things done upon this earth: see *Ps.* cxiii. 5, 6. 2nd. When we consider of what great use the heavens are to men on earth, and how the lights of heaven are divided unto all nations, *Deu.* iv. 19, *Gen.* i. 15, we may well say, "Lord, what is man," that thou shouldst settle the ordinances of heaven with an eye to him, and to his benefit, and that his comfort and convenience should be so much consulted in the making of the lights of heaven, and directing their motions!

Secondly. How he expresseth this admiration; ver. 4, "Lord, what is man," *Enosh*, sinful, weak, miserable man, a creature so forgetful of thee, and his duty to thee, "that thou art" thus "mindful of him," that thou takest cognizance of him, and of his actions and affairs, that in the making of the world thou hadst a respect to him? What is "the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Dost not only feed him and clothe him, protect him and provide for him, in common with other creatures, but visitest him, as one friend visits another, art pleased to converse with him, and concern thyself for him? What is man, so mean a creature, that he should be thus honoured; so sinful a creature, that he should be thus countenanced and favoured? Now this refers,

1. To mankind in general. Though "man is a worm, and the son of man is a worm," *Job* xxv. 6, yet God puts a respect upon him, and shews him abundance of kindness. Man is above all the creatures in this lower world the favourite and darling of Providence. For,

1st. He is of a very honourable rank of beings. We may be sure he takes place of all the inhabitants of this lower world, for he is made but "a little lower than the angels," ver. 5; lower indeed, because by his body he is allied to the earth, and to the beasts that perish; and yet by his soul, which is spiritual and immortal, he is so near akin to the holy angels, that he may be truly said to be but a little lower than they, and is in order next to them. He is but for a little while lower than the angels, while his great soul is cooped up in a house of clay; but the children of the resurrection shall be ἰσάγγελοι,—'angels' peers,' *Lu.* xx. 36, and no longer lower than they.

2nd. He is endued with noble faculties and capacities; "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour." He that gave him his being has distinguished him, and qualified him for a dominion over the inferior creatures; for having "made

him wiser than the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of heaven," *Job* xxxv. 11, he has made him fit to rule them, and it is fit they should be ruled by him. Man's reason is his crown of glory; let him not profane that crown by disturbing the use of it, nor forfeit that crown by acting contrary to its dictates.

3rd. He is invested with a sovereign dominion over the inferior creatures, under God, and is constituted their lord. He that made them, and knows them, and whose own they are, has "made man to have dominion over them," ver. 6. His charter, by which he holds this royalty, bears equal date with his creation, *Gen.* i. 28, and was renewed after the flood, *Gen.* ix. 2. God has put all things under man's feet, that he might serve himself not only of the labour, but of the products and lives, of the inferior creatures; they are all delivered into his hand, nay, they are all put under his feet. He instanceth in some of the inferior animals, ver. 7, 8; not only sheep and oxen, which man takes care of and provides for, but the beasts of the field, as well as those of the flood; yea, and those creatures which are most at a distance from man, as the fowl of the air, yea, and the fish of the sea, which live in another element, and pass unseen through the paths of the seas. Man has arts to take these; though many of them are much stronger, and many of them much swifter than he, yet one way or other he is too hard for them; *Jas.* iii. 7, "Every kind of beasts and birds and things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed;" he has likewise liberty to use them as he has occasion; "Rise, Peter, kill and eat," *Acts* x. 13. Every dish of fish and fowl that comes to our table is an instance of this dominion man has over the works of God's hands, and it is a reason for our subjection to God our chief Lord, and to his dominion over us.

2. But this refers in a particular manner to Jesus Christ; of him we are taught to expound it *Heb.* ii. 6—8, where the apostle, to prove the sovereign dominion of Christ, both in heaven and in earth, shews that he is that man, that Son of man, here spoken of, whom God has crowned with glory and honour, and made to have dominion over the works of his hands. And it is certain that the greatest favour that ever was shewed to the human race, and the greatest honour that ever was put upon the human nature, was by the incarnation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus, far beyond the favours and honours done us by creation and providence; though those also are great and far more than we deserve. We have reason humbly to value ourselves by it, and thankfully to admire the grace of God in it.

1st. That Jesus Christ assumed the nature of man, and in that nature humbled himself. He became the Son of man, a partaker of flesh and blood; being so, God visited him; which some apply to his sufferings for us, for it is said, *Heb.* ii. 9, by "the suffering of death," a visitation in wrath, "he was crowned with glory and honour." God visited him, that is, having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, he reckoned with him for it, visited him with a rod, and with stripes, that we by them might be healed. He was for a little while (so the apostle interprets it) made lower than the angels, when he took upon him the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation.

2nd. That in that nature he is exalted to be Lord of all; God the Father exalted him because he had humbled himself; crowned him with glory and honour, the glory which he had with him before the worlds were; set him at his own right hand; constituted him not only the head of the church, but head over all things to the church; and gave all things into his hand, intrusted him with the administration of the kingdom of providence in conjunction with, and subserviency to, the kingdom of grace. All the creatures are put under his feet, and even in the days of his flesh he gave some specimens of his power over them, as when he commanded the winds and the seas, and appointed a fish to pay his tribute.

With good reason therefore doth the psalmist conclude as he began, "Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" which has been honoured with the presence of the Redeemer, and is still enlightened by his Gospel, and governed by his wisdom and power. And in singing this, and praying over it, though we must not forget to acknowledge with suitable affections God's common favours to mankind, particularly in the serviceableness of the inferior creatures to us, yet we must especially set ourselves to give glory to our Lord Jesus, by confessing that he is Lord, and submitting to him as our Lord, and waiting till we see all things put under him, and all his enemies made his footstool.

PSALM IX.

In this psalm, I. David praiseth God for pleading his cause, and giving him victory over his enemies, and the enemies of his country, ver. 1—6, and calls upon others to join with him in his songs of praise, ver. 11, 12. II. He prays to God that he might still have farther occasion to praise him, for his own deliverances, and the confusion of his enemies, ver. 13, 14, 19, 20. III. He triumphs in the assurance he had of God's judging the world, ver. 7, 8; protecting his oppressed people, ver. 9, 10, 18; and bringing his and their implacable enemies to ruin, ver. 15—17. And this is very applicable to the kingdom of the Messiah, the enemies of which have been in part destroyed already, and shall be yet more and more, till they all be made his footstool, which we are to assure ourselves of, that God may have the glory, and we may take the comfort.

To the chief Musician upon Muth-labben, A Psalm of David.

1 I WILL praise *thee*, O LORD, with my whole heart;
I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.
2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee:
I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.
3 When mine enemies are turned back,
They shall fall and perish at thy presence.
4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause;
Thou satest in the throne judging right.
5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen,
Thou hast destroyed the wicked,
Thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.
6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end:
And thou hast destroyed cities;
Their memorial is perished with them.
7 But the LORD shall endure for ever:
He hath prepared his throne for judgment.
8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness,
He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.
9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,
A refuge in times of trouble.
10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:
For thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

The title of this psalm gives a very uncertain sound concerning the occasion of penning it. It is upon Muthlabben, which some make to refer to the death of Goliath, others to Nabal, others of Absalom, but I incline to think it signifies only some tune or musical instrument to which this psalm was intended to be sung; and that the enemies he is here triumphing in the defeat of are the Philistines, and other the neighbour nations that opposed his settlement in the throne, whom he contested with, and subdued in the beginning of his reign, 2 *Sam.* v. and viii. In these verses,

First. David excites and engages himself to praise God for his mercies, and the great things he had of late done for him and his government, ver. 1, 2. Note, 1. God expects suitable returns of praise from those for whom he has done marvellous works. 2. If we would praise God acceptably, we must praise him in sincerity with our hearts, and not only with our lips, and be lively and fervent in the duty, with our whole heart. 3. When we give thanks for some one particular mercy, we should take occasion from thence to remember former mercies, and so to "shew forth all his marvellous works." 4. Holy joy is the life of thankful praise, as thankful praise is the language of holy joy; "I will be glad and rejoice in thee." 5. Whatever occurs to make us glad, our joy must pass through it, and terminate in God only; "I will be glad and rejoice in thee," not in the gift so much as in the Giver. 6. Joy and praise are properly expressed by singing of psalms. 7. When God has shewed himself to be above the proud enemies of the church, we must take occasion from thence to give glory to him as the Most High. 8. The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed: see *Rev.* xii. 10; xix. 5; xv. 3, 4.

Secondly. He acknowledges the almighty power of God, as that which the strongest and stoutest of his enemies were no way able to contest with or stand before, ver. 3. But, 1. They are forced to turn back, their policy and their courage fail them, so that they cannot, they dare not, push forward in their enterprises, but retire with precipitation. 2. When once they turn back, they fall and perish, even their retreat will be their ruin, and they will save themselves no more by flying than by fighting. If Haman begin to fall before Mordecai he is a gone man, and shall prevail no more: see *Est.* vi. 13. 3. The presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power, is sufficient for the destruction of his and his people's enemies. That is easily done which a man doth with his very presence; with that God confounds his enemies, such a presence has he. This was fulfilled when our Lord Jesus with one word, "I am he," made his enemies to fall back at his presence, *Jno.* xviii. 6, and at the same time could have made them perish. 4. When the enemies of God's church are put to confusion, we must ascribe it to the power, not of instruments, but of his presence, and give him all the glory.

Thirdly. He gives to God the glory of his righteousness in his appearing on his behalf; ver. 4, "Thou hast maintained my right and my cause;" that is, my righteous cause, when that came on, "thou satest in the throne judging right." Observe, 1. God sits in the throne of judgment. To him it belongs to decide controversies, determine appeals, to right the injured, and to punish the injurious; for he hath said, "Vengeance is mine." 2. We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and with him there is no unrighteousness. Far be it from God that he should pervert justice. If there seem to us to be some irregularity in the present decisions of Providence, yet those instead of shaking our belief of God's justice, may seem to strengthen our belief of the judgment to come, which will set all to rights. 3. Whoever disown and desert a just and injured cause, we may be sure that the righteous God will maintain it, and plead it with jealousy, and will never suffer it to be run down.

Fourthly. He records with joy the triumphs of the God of heaven over all the powers of hell, and attends those triumphs with his praises, ver. 5. By three steps the power and justice of God had proceeded against the heathen and wicked people that were enemies to the king God had lately set up upon his holy hill of Zion. 1. He had checked them; "Thou hast rebuked the heathen;" that is, hast given them real proofs of thy displeasure against them. This he did before he destroyed them, that they might have taken warning by the rebukes of Providence, and so have prevented their own destruction. 2. He had cut them off; "Thou hast destroyed the wicked." The wicked are marked for destruction, and some are made monuments of God's vindictive justice and destructive power in this world. 3. He had buried them in oblivion and perpetual infamy: had "put out their name for ever," that they should never be remembered with any respect.

Fifthly. He insults over the enemy whom God thus appears against; ver. 6, "Thou hast destroyed cities." Either, thou, O enemy, hast destroyed our cities, at least in intention and imagination; or, thou, O God, hast destroyed their cities by the desolation brought upon their country. It may be taken either way, for the psalmist will have the enemy to know, 1. That their destruction is just; and God was but reckoning with them for all the mischief which they had done and designed against his people. The malicious and vexatious neighbours of Israel, as the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Syrians, had made incursions upon them when there was no king in Israel to fight their battles, had destroyed their cities, and done what they could to make their memorial perish with them; but now the wheel was turned upon them, their destructions of Israel were come to a perpetual end, they shall now cease to spoil, and must themselves be spoiled, *Isa.* xxxiii. 1. 2. That it is total and final; such a destruction as should make a perpetual end of them, so that the very memorial of their cities should perish with them. So devouring a thing is time. And much more such desolations do the righteous judgments of God make upon sinners, that great and populous cities have been reduced to such ruins, that their very memorial is perished, and those that have sought them could not find where they stood. But we look for a city that has stronger foundations than so.

Sixthly. He comforts himself and others in God, and pleaseth himself with the thoughts of him.

1. With the thoughts of his eternity. On this earth we see nothing durable, even strong cities are buried in rubbish, and forgotten, "but the Lord shall endure for ever," ver. 7. There is no change of his being; his felicity, power, and perfection, are out of the reach of all the combined forces of hell and earth; they may put an end to our liberties, our privileges, our lives, but our God is still the same, and sits even upon the floods, unshaken, undisturbed, *Ps.* xxix. 10; xciii. 2.

2. With the thoughts of his sovereignty both in government and judgment. He hath prepared his throne, has fixed it by his infinite wisdom, has fixed it by his immutable counsel. It is the great support and comfort of good people when the power of the church's enemies is threatening, and the posture of its affairs melancholy and perplexed, that God doth now rule the world, and will shortly judge the world.

3. With the thoughts of his justice and righteousness in all the administrations of his government. He doth all every day, he will do all at the last day, according to the eternal, unalterable rules of equity; ver. 8, "He shall judge the world," all persons, and all controversies; "shall minister judgment to the people," shall determine their lot both in this and in the future state, "in righteousness and in uprightness," so that there shall not be the least colour of exception against it.

4. With the thoughts of that peculiar favour which God bears to his own people, and the special protection which he takes them under. The Lord that endures for ever is their everlasting strength and protection. He that judgeth the world will be sure to judge for them, when at any time they are injured or distressed, ver. 9. He "will be a refuge for the oppressed;" a high place, a strong place, "for the oppressed in times of trouble." It is the lot of God's people to be oppressed in this world, and to have troublous times appointed to them. Perhaps God may not presently appear for them as their deliverer and avenger, but in the midst of their distresses they may by faith fly to him as their refuge, and may depend upon his power and promise for their safety, so that no real hurt shall be done them.

5. With the thoughts of that sweet satisfaction and repose of mind which they have that make God their refuge; ver. 10, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee," as I have done, for the grace of God is the same in all the saints, and then they will find, as I have found, that "thou dost not forsake them that seek thee," for the favour of God is the same towards all the saints. Note, 1st. The better God is known, the more he is trusted. Those who know him to be a God of infinite wisdom will trust him farther than they can see him, *Job* xxxv. 14; to be a God of almighty power, will trust him when creature confidences fail, and they have nothing else to trust to, 2 *Chr.* xx. 12; and to be a God of infinite grace and goodness, will trust him though he slay them, *Job* xiii. 15. Those that know him to be a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness will rejoice in his word of promise and rest upon that, though the performance be deferred, and intermediate providences seem to contradict it. Those that know him to be the Father of spirits, and an everlasting Father, will trust him with their souls as their main care; and trust in him at all times, even to the end. 2nd. The more God is trusted, the more he is sought unto. If we trust God, we will seek him by faithful and fervent prayer, and by a constant care to approve ourselves to him in the whole course of our conversation. 3rd. God never did nor ever will disown or desert any that duly seek to him and trust in him. Though he afflict them he doth not leave them, he doth not leave them comfortless; though he seem to forsake them for a while, yet he will gather them with everlasting mercies.

11 Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion:
Declare among the people his doings. [them:
12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth
He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.
13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD;
Consider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me,
Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:
14 That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the
I will rejoice in thy salvation. [daughter of Zion:
15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made:
In the net which they hid is their own foot taken.
16 The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: [Higgaion. Selah.
The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.
17 The wicked shall be turned into hell,
And all the nations that forget God.
18 For the needy shall not alway be forgotten:
The expectation of the poor shall *not* perish for ever.
19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail:
Let the heathen be judged in thy sight.
20 Put them in fear, O LORD: [Selah.
That the nations may know themselves *to be but* men.

In these verses,

First, David, having praised God himself, calls upon and invites others to praise him likewise, ver. 11. Those who believe God is greatly to be praised not only desire to do that work better themselves, but desire that others also may join with them in it, and would gladly be instrumental to bring them to it. "Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion." As the special residence of his glory is in heaven, so the special residence of his grace is in his church, of which Zion was a type. There he meets his people with his promises and graces, and there he expects they should meet him with their praises and services. In all our praises we should have an eye to God as dwelling in Zion, in a special manner present in the assemblies of his people, as their protector and patron. He resolved himself to shew forth God's marvellous works, ver. 2, and here he called upon others to "declare among the people his doings;" he commands his own subjects to do it, for the honour of God, of their country, and of their holy religion; he courts his neighbours to do it; to sing praises, not as hitherto to their false gods, but to Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion, to the God of Israel, and to own among the heathen that the Lord has done great things for his people Israel, *Ps.* cxxvi. 3, 4. Let them particularly take notice of the justice of God in avenging the blood of his people Israel on the Philistines, and other their wicked neighbours, who had in making war upon them used them barbarously and given them no quarter, ver. 12. When God comes to make inquisition for blood, by his judgments on earth, before he comes to do it by the judgment of the great day, he remembereth them, remembers every drop of the innocent blood which they have shed, and will return it sevenfold upon the head of the bloodthirsty. He will give them blood to drink, for they are worthy. This assurance he might well build upon that word, *Deu.* xxxii. 43, "He will avenge the blood of his servants." Note, There is a day coming when God will make inquisition for blood, when he will discover what has been shed secretly, and revenge what has been shed unjustly: see *Isa.* xxvi. 21; *Jer.* li. 35. In that day it will appear how precious the blood of God's people is to him, *Ps.* lxxii. 14, when it must all be accounted for. It will then appear that he has not forgotten the cry of the humble, nor the cry of their blood, nor the cry of their prayers, but both are sealed up among his treasures.

Secondly, David, having praised God for former mercies and deliverances, earnestly prays that God would still appear for him; for he sees not yet all things put under him. He prays, 1. That God would be compassionate to him; ver. 13, "Have mercy upon me," who having misery only, and not merit to speak for me, must depend upon mere mercy for relief. 2. That he would be concerned for him. He is not particular in his requests, lest he should seem to prescribe to God, but refers himself to the wisdom and will of God in this modest request, "Lord, consider my trouble," and do for me as thou thinkest fit. He pleads, 1st. The malice of his enemies, the trouble which he suffered of them that hated him; and hatred is a cruel passion. 2nd. The experience he had had of Divine succours, and the expectation he now had of the continuance of them, as the necessity of his case required. O thou that liftest me up, that canst do it, that hast done it, that wilt do it, whose prerogative it is to lift up thy people from the gates of death. We are never brought so low, so near to death, but God can raise us up. If he has saved us from spiritual and eternal death, we may from thence take encouragement to hope that in all our distresses he will be a very present help to us. 3rd. His sincere purpose to praise God when his victories shall be completed, ver. 14. Lord, save me, not that I may have the comfort and credit of it, but that thou mayest have the glory, "That I may shew forth all thy praise;" and that publicly, "in the gates of the daughter of Zion." There God was said to dwell, ver. 11, and there David would attend him, with joy in God's salvation, typical of the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Son of David.

Thirdly, David by faith foresees and foretells the certain ruin of all wicked people both in this world and in that to come.

1. In this world, ver. 15, 16. God executeth judgment upon them when the measure of their iniquities is full, and doth it so as, 1st. To put shame upon them, and make their fall inglorious, for they sink into the pit which they themselves digged, *Ps.* vii. 15; they are taken in the net which they themselves laid for the ensnaring of God's people, and they are snared in the work of their own hands. In all the struggles David had with the Philistines they were the aggressors, 2 *Sam.* v. 22. And other nations were subdued by those wars in which they embroiled themselves. And many times the overruling providence of God so orders it, that their persecutors and oppressors are brought to ruin by those very projects which they intended to be destructive to the people of God. Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves; the contentious bring mischief upon themselves; and thus men's sins may be read in their punishment, and it becomes visible to all, that the destruction of sinners is not only meritoriously but efficiently of themselves, which will fill them with the utmost confusion. 2nd. So as to get honour to himself. "The Lord is known;" that is, he makes himself known "by these judgments which he executeth." It is known there is a God who judgeth in the earth; that he is a righteous God, and one that hates sin, and will punish it. In these the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and therefore the psalmist adds here a note extraordinary, commanding special regard, *Higgaion;* it is a thing to be carefully observed and meditated upon. What we see of present judgments, and what we believe of the judgment to come, ought to be the subject of our frequent and serious meditations.

2. In the other world, ver. 17. "The wicked shall be turned into hell," as captives into the prison-house, even "all the nations that forget God." Note, 1. That forgetfulness of God is the cause of all the wickedness of the wicked. 2. There are nations of those that forget God, multitudes that live without God in the world, many great and mighty nations who never regard him, nor desire the knowledge of his ways. 3. Hell will at last be the portion of such, a state of everlasting misery and torment; *Sheol*, a pit of destruction, in which they and all their comforts will be for ever lost and buried. Though there be nations of them, yet they shall be turned into hell, like sheep into the slaughter-house, *Ps.* xlix. 14; and their being so numerous will neither be any security or ease to them, nor any loss to God, or the least impeachment of his goodness.

Fourthly, David encourageth the people of God to wait for his salvation, though it should be long deferred, ver. 18. The needy may think themselves, and others may think them, forgotten for a while, and their expectation of help from God may seem to have perished, and to have been for ever frustrated; but he that believeth doth not make haste, the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak. We may build upon it as undoubtedly true, that God's people, God's elect, shall not always be forgotten, nor shall they be disappointed of their hopes from the promise. God will not only remember them at last, but will make it appear that he never did forget them. It is impossible he should, though a woman may forget her sucking child.

Fifthly, He concludes with prayer that God would humble the pride, break the power, and blast the projects of all the wicked enemies of his church; "Arise, O Lord," ver. 19, stir up thyself, exert thy power, take thy seat, and deal with all these proud and daring enemies of thy name, and cause, and people. 1. Lord, restrain them, and set bounds to their malice. "Let not man prevail;" consult thine own honour, and let not weak and mortal men prevail against the kingdom and interest of the almighty and immortal God. "Shall mortal man be too hard for God, too strong for his Maker?" 2. Lord, reckon with them, "Let the heathen be judged in thy sight;" that is, let them be plainly called to an account for all the dishonour done to thee, and the mischief done to thy people. Impenitent sinners will be punished in God's sight, and when their day of grace is over the bowels even of infinite mercy will not relent towards them, *Rev.* xiv. 10. 3. Lord, frighten them; ver. 20, "Put them in fear, O Lord." Or, strike a terror upon them, make them afraid with thy judgments. God knows how to make the strongest and stoutest of men to tremble, and to flee when none pursues; and thereby he makes them know that they are but men, and own it; they are but weak men, unable to stand before the holy God; sinful men, the guilt of whose consciences makes them subject to frights. Note, It is a very desirable thing, much for the glory of God, and the peace and welfare of the universe, that men should know and consider themselves to be but men; depending creatures; mutable, mortal, and accountable.

In singing this, we must give to God the glory of his justice in pleading his people's cause against his and their enemies, and encourage ourselves to wait for the year of the redeemed, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, even the final destruction of all antichristian powers and factions, to which many of the ancients apply this psalm.

PSALM X.

The Septuagint translation joins this psalm with the 9th, and makes them but one; but the Hebrew makes it a distinct psalm, and the scope and style is different. In this psalm, 1. David complains of the wickedness of the wicked, and describes the mighty pitch of impiety to which they were arrived, to the great dishonour of God, and the prejudice of his church and people, and the delay of God's appearing against them, ver. 1—11. II. He prays to God to appear against them for the relief of his people, and comforts himself with hopes that he would do so in due time, ver. 12—18.

PSALM X.

WHY standest thou afar off, O LORD?
Why hidest thou *thyself* in times of trouble?
2 The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor:
Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.
3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire,
And blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.
4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will
God *is* not in all his thoughts. [not seek *after God:*
5 His ways are always grievous;
Thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight:
As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.
6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved:
For *I shall* never *be* in adversity.
7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud:
Under his tongue *is* mischief and vanity.
8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages:
In the secret places doth he murder the innocent:
His eyes are privily set against the poor.
9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den:
He lieth in wait to catch the poor:
He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.
10 He croucheth, *and* humbleth himself,
That the poor may fall by his strong ones.
11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten:
He hideth his face; he will never see *it*.

David in these verses discovers,

First. A very great affection to God and his favour; for in the time of trouble that which he complains of most feelingly is, God's withdrawing his gracious presence; ver. 1, "Why standest thou afar off," as one unconcerned in the indignities done to thy name, and the injuries done to thy people? Note, God's withdrawings are very grievous to his people at any time, but especially "in times of trouble." Outward deliverance is afar off, and is hidden from us, and then we think God is afar off, and we therefore want inward comfort; but that is our own fault, it is because we judge by outward appearance; we stand afar off from God by our unbelief, and then we complain that God stands afar off from us.

Secondly. A very great indignation against sin, the sins that made the times perilous, 2 *Tim.* iii. 1. He beholds the transgressors, and is grieved, is amazed, and brings to his heavenly Father their evil report; not in a way of vainglory, boasting before God that he was not as these publicans, *Lu.* xviii. 11, much less venting any personal resentments, piques, or passions of his own; but as one that laid to heart that which is offensive to God and all good men, and earnestly desired a reformation of manners. Passionate and satirical invectives against bad men do more hurt than good; if we will speak of their badness, let it be to God in prayer, for he alone can make them better. This long remonstrance of the wickedness of the wicked is here summed up in the first words of it; ver. 2, "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor," where two things are laid to their charge, pride and persecution; the former the cause of the latter. Proud men will have all about them to be of their mind, of their religion, to say as they say, to submit to their dominion, and acquiesce in their dictates; and those that either eclipse them or will not yield to them, they malign, and are inveterate in their hatred of them. Tyranny both in state and church owes its original to pride. The psalmist, having begun this description, presently inserts a short prayer, a prayer in a parenthesis, which is an advantage, and no prejudice to the sense; "Let them be taken," as proud people often are "in the devices that they have imagined," ver. 2. Let their counsel be turned headlong, and let them fall headlong by them. These two heads of the charge are here enlarged upon.

1. They are proud, very proud, and extremely conceited of themselves; justly, therefore, did he wonder that God did not speedily appear against them, for he hates pride, and resists the proud.

1st. The sinner proudly glories in his power and success. He boasteth of his heart's desire, brags that he can do what he pleaseth, as if God himself could not control him; and that he hath all he wished for, and has carried his point. Ephraim said, "I am become rich, I have found me out substance," *Hos.* xii. 8. Now, Lord, is it for thy glory to suffer a sinful man thus to pretend to the sovereignty and felicity of a god?

2nd. He proudly contradicts the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth; for he "blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhors." See how God and men differ in their sentiments of persons. God abhors covetous worldlings, who make money their god, and idolize it; he looks upon them as his enemies, and will have no communion with them; "the friendship of the world is enmity to God." But proud persecutors bless them, and approve their saying, *Ps.* xlix. 13; they applaud them as wise whom God pronounceth foolish, *Lu.* xii. 20; they justify them as innocent whom God condemns as deeply guilty before him; and they admire them as happy in having their portion in this life whom God declares upon that account truly miserable; "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things."

3rd. He proudly casts off the thoughts of God, and all dependence upon him, and devotion to him; ver. 4, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance," that pride of his heart which appears in his very countenance, *Pr.* vi. 17, "will not seek after God," nor entertain the thoughts of him; "God is not in all his thoughts," that is, not in any of them. "All his thoughts are that there is no God." See here, *First.* The nature of impiety and irreligion. It is, not seeking after God, and not having him in our thoughts. No inquiry after him, *Job* xxxv. 10; *Jer.* ii. 6; no desire towards him, no communion with him, and a secret wish to have no dependence upon him, and not to be beholden to him. Wicked people will not seek after God, that is, not call upon him; they live without prayer, and that is living without God. They have many thoughts, many projects and devices, but no eye to God in any of them, no submission to his will, nor aim at his glory. *Secondly.* The cause of this impiety and irreligion, and that is pride. Men will not seek after God, because they think they have no need of him, their own hands are sufficient for them; they think it a thing below them to be religious, because religious people are few, and mean, and despised, and the restraints of religion will be a disparagement to them.

4th. He proudly makes light of God's commandments and judgments; ver. 5, "His ways are always grievous;" that is, he is very daring and resolute in his sinful courses; he will have his way, though never so tiresome to himself and vexatious to others; he travails with pain in his wicked courses, and yet his pride makes him wilful and obstinate in them. God's judgments, that is, what he commands, and what he threatens for the breach of his commands, are far above, out of his sight; he is not sensible of his duty by the law of God, nor of his danger by the wrath and curse of God. Tell him of God's authority over him, he turns it off with this, he never saw God, and therefore doth not know that there is a God; he is in the height of heaven, and *quæ supra nos nihil ad nos*,—'we have nothing to do with things above us.' Tell him of God's judgments which will be executed upon those that go on still in their trespasses, and he will not be convinced that there is any reality in them; they are far above, out of his sight, and therefore he thinks they are mere bugbears.

5th. He proudly despiseth all his enemies, and looks upon them with the utmost disdain. He puffs at them, whom God is preparing to be a scourge and ruin to him, as if he could baffle them all, and was able to make his part good with them. But as it is impolitic to despise an enemy, so it is impious to despise any instrument of God's wrath.

6th. He proudly sets trouble at defiance, and is confident of the continuance of his own prosperity: ver. 6, "He hath said in his heart," and pleased himself with the thought, "I shall not be moved," my goods are laid up for many years, and "I shall never be in adversity." Like Babylon, that said, "I shall be a lady for ever," *Isa.* xlvii. 7; *Rev.* xviii. 7. Those are nearest ruin who thus set it farthest from them.

2. They are persecutors, cruel persecutors. For the gratifying of their pride, covetousness, and in opposition to God and religion, they are very oppressive to all within their reach. Observe concerning these persecutors,

1st. That they are very bitter and malicious; ver. 7, "His mouth is full of cursing." Those he cannot do a real mischief to, yet he will spit his venom at, and breathe out the slaughter which he cannot execute. Thus have God's faithful worshippers been anathematized, and cursed with bell, book, and candle. Where there is a heart full of malice, there is commonly a mouth full of curses.

2nd. That they are very false and treacherous. There is mischief designed, but it is hid under the tongue not to be discerned, for the mouth is full of deceit and vanity; he has learned of the devil to deceive, and so to destroy; with this his hatred is covered, *Pr.* xxvi. 26. He cares not what lies he tells, nor what oaths he breaks, nor what arts of dissimulation he useth to compass his ends.

3rd. That they are very cunning and crafty in carrying on their designs. They have ways and means to concert what they intend, that they may the more effectually accomplish it. Like Esau, that cunning hunter, he sits in the lurking places, in the secret places, and his eyes are privily set to do mischief, ver. 8, not because he is ashamed of what he doth, (if he blushed, there were some hopes he would repent,) nor because he is afraid of the wrath of God, for he imagines God will never call him to an account, ver. 11, but because he is afraid lest the discovery of his designs should be the breaking of them. Perhaps it refers particularly to robbers and highwaymen, who lie in wait for honest travellers, to make a prey of them and what they have.

4th. That they are very cruel and barbarous. Their malice is against the innocent, that never provoked them; against the poor, that cannot resist them, and that it will be no glory to them to triumph over. Those are perfectly lost to all honesty and honour, against whose mischievous designs neither innocence nor poverty will be any man's security. Those that have power ought to protect the innocent, and provide for the poor; yet he will be the destroyer of those whose guardian he ought to be. And what do they aim at? It is to catch the poor, and draw them into their net, that is, get them into their power, not to strip them only, but to murder them; they hunt for the precious life. They are God's poor people that they are persecuting, against whom they bear a mortal hatred, for his sake whose they are, and whose image they bear, and therefore they lie in wait to murder them; "He lies in wait as a lion" that thirsts after blood, and feeds with pleasure upon the prey. The devil, whose agent he is, is compared to a roaring lion that seeks not what, but whom, he may devour.

5th. That they are base and hypocritical, ver. 10. He "croucheth and humbleth himself," as beasts of prey do, that they may get their prey within their reach. This intimates that the sordid spirits of persecutors and oppressors will stoop to any thing, though never so mean, for the compassing of their wicked designs. Witness the scandalous practices of Saul when he hunted David. It intimates likewise, that they cover their malicious designs with the pretence of meekness and humility, and a show of kindness to those they design the greatest mischief to; they seem to humble themselves, to take cognizance of the poor, and concern themselves in their concernments, when it is in order to make them fall, to make a prey of them.

6th. That they are very impious and atheistical, ver. 11. They could not thus break through all the laws of justice and goodness towards man, if they had not first shaken off all sense of religion, and risen up in rebellion against the light of its most sacred and self-evident principles. "He hath said in his heart, God has forgotten." When his own conscience rebuked him for his wickedness, and threatened him with the consequences of it, and asked how he would answer it to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, he turned it off with this, "God has forsaken the earth," *Eze.* viii. 12; ix. 9. This is a blasphemous reproach, *First.* Upon God's omniscience and providence, as if he could not or did not see what men do in this lower world. *Secondly.* Upon his holiness and the rectitude of his nature, as if, though he did see, yet he did not dislike, but was willing to connive at the most unnatural and inhuman villanies. *Thirdly.* Upon his justice and the equity of his government, as if, though he did see and dislike the wickedness of the wicked, yet he would never reckon with them, nor punish them for it, either because he could not, or durst not, or was not inclined to it. Let those that suffer by proud oppressors hope that God will in due time appear for them; for those that are abusive to them are abusive to God Almighty too.

In singing this, and praying over it, we should have our hearts much affected with a holy indignation at the wickedness of the oppressors, a tender compassion of the miseries of the oppressed, and a pious zeal for the glory and honour of God, with a firm belief that he will in due time right the injured, and reckon with the injurious.

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand:
Forget not the humble.
13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?

He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require *it.*
14 Thou hast seen *it;* [thy hand:
For thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite *it* with
The poor committeth himself unto thee;
Thou art the helper of the fatherless.
15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil *man:*
Seek out his wickedness *till* thou find none.
16 The LORD *is* King for ever and ever:
The heathen are perished out of his land.
17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble:
Thou wilt prepare their heart,
Thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:
18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,
That the man of the earth may no more oppress.

David here, upon the foregoing remonstrance of the inhumanity and impiety of the oppressors, grounds an address to God; wherein observe,

First. What he prays for. 1. That God would himself appear; ver. 12, "Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up thine hand." Manifest thy presence and providence in the affairs of this lower world; "Arise, O Lord," to the confusion of those who say thou hidest thy face. Manifest thy power, exert it for maintaining of thine own cause, lift up thine hand to give a fatal blow to these oppressors; let thine everlasting arm be made bare. 2. That he would appear for his people. "Forget not the humble, the afflicted," that are poor, that are made poorer, and are poor in spirit. Their oppressors in their presumption say, Thou hast forgotten them; and they in their despair are ready to say the same. Lord, make it to appear that they are both mistaken. 3. That he would appear against their persecutors, ver. 15. 1st. That he would disable them to do any farther mischief; "Break thou the arm of the wicked;" that is, take away his power, "that the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared," *Job* xxxiv. 30. We read of oppressors whose "dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged," *Dan.* vii. 12, that they might have time to repent. 2nd. That he would deal with them for the mischief they had done. "Seek out his wickedness;" let it all be brought to light, which he thought should for ever lie undiscovered; let it all be brought to account, which he thought should for ever go unpunished; bring it out "till thou find none," that is, till none of his evil deeds remain unreckoned for, none of his evil designs remain undefeated, and none of his partisans undestroyed.

Secondly. What he pleads, for the encouraging of his own faith, in these petitions.

1. He pleads the great affronts which these proud oppressors put upon God himself. Lord, it is thine own cause we beg thou wouldest appear in; the enemies have made it so, and therefore it is not for thy glory to let them go unpunished; ver. 13, "Wherefore do the wicked contemn God?" He doth so; for he saith, "Thou wilt not require it;" that is, thou wilt never call them to an account for what they do; than which they could not put a greater indignity upon the righteous God. The psalmist here speaks with admiration, 1st. At the wickedness of the wicked. Why do they speak so impiously, why so absurdly? It is a great trouble to good men to think what contempt is cast upon the holy God by the sin of sinners, upon his precepts, his promises, his threatenings, his favours, his judgments; all are despised and made light of. "Wherefore do the wicked thus contemn God?" It is because they do not know him. 2nd. At the patience and forbearance of God towards them. Why are they suffered thus to contemn God? Why doth he not presently vindicate himself and take vengeance on them? It is because the day of reckoning is yet to come, when the measure of their iniquity is full.

2. He pleads the notice God took of the impiety and iniquity of these oppressors, ver. 14. Do the persecutors encourage themselves with a groundless fancy that thou will never see it? Let the persecuted encourage themselves with a well-grounded faith, not only that thou hast seen it, but that thou dost behold it; even all the mischief that is done by the hands, and all the spite and malice that lurks in the hearts of these oppressors. It is all known to thee, and observed by thee; nay, not only thou hast seen it, and dost behold it, but thou wilt requite it, wilt recompense it into their bosoms, by thy just and avenging hand.

3. He pleads the dependence which the oppressed had upon him. "The poor committeth himself unto thee;" each of them doth so, poor I for one. They rely on thee as their Patron and Protector, they refer themselves to thee as their Judge, in whose determination they acquiesce, and at whose disposal they are willing to be. 'They leave themselves with thee,' so some read it; not prescribing, but subscribing to thy wisdom and will. They thus give thee honour as much as their oppressors dishonour thee. They are thy willing subjects, and put themselves under thy protection, therefore protect them.

4. He pleads the relation in which God is pleased to stand to us. 1st. As a great God. "He is king for ever and ever," ver. 16; and it is the office of a king to administer justice for the restraint and terror of evil-doers, and the protection and praise of them that do well. To whom should the injured subject appeal but to the sovereign; "Help, my Lord, O king;" "Avenge me of mine adversary." Lord, let all that pay homage and tribute to thee as their king have the benefit of thy government, and find thee their refuge. Thou art an everlasting king, which no earthly prince is, and therefore canst and wilt by an eternal judgment dispense rewards and punishments in an everlasting state, when time shall be no more; and to that judgment the poor refer themselves. 2nd. As a good God. "He is the helper of the fatherless," ver. 14; that is, of those who have no one else to help them, and have many to injure them. He has appointed kings to defend the poor and fatherless, *Ps.* lxxxii. 3; and therefore much more will he do it himself; for he has taken it among the titles of his honour, to be a Father to the fatherless, *Ps.* lxviii. 5; a Helper of the helpless.

5. He pleads the experience which God's church and people had had of God's readiness to appear for them. 1st. He had dispersed and extirpated their enemies; ver. 16, "The heathen are perished out of his land;" that is, the remainders of the Canaanites, the seven devoted nations, which have long been as thorns in the eyes and goads in the sides of Israel, are now at length utterly rooted out; and that is an encouragement to us to hope that God will in like manner break the arm of the oppressive Israelites, that were in some respects worse than heathens. 2nd. He had heard and answered their prayers; ver. 17, "Lord, thou hast" many a time "heard the desire of the humble," and never saidst to a distressed supplicant, Seek in vain. Why may not we hope for the continuance and repetition of the wonders, the favours, which our fathers told us of?

6. He pleads their expectations from God pursuant to their experiences of him. "Thou hast heard," therefore "thou wilt cause thine ear to hear," as *Ps.* vi. 9. Thou art the same, and thy power, and promise, and relation to thy people the same; and the work and workings of grace are the same in them, and therefore why may we not hope that He who has been will still be, will ever be, a God hearing prayer? But observe, 1st. In what method God hears prayer. He first prepares the heart of his people, and then gives them an answer of peace; nor may we expect his gracious answer but in this way; so that God's working upon us is the best earnest of his working for us. He prepares the heart for prayer by kindling holy desires, and strengthening our most holy faith, fixing the thoughts, and raising the affections, and then he graciously accepts the prayer; he prepares the heart for the mercy itself that is wanting and prayed for, makes us fit to receive it and use it well, and then gives it in to us. "The preparation of the heart is from the Lord," and we must seek unto him for it, *Pr.* xvi. 1, and take that as a leading favour. 2nd. What he will do in answer to prayer, ver. 18. *First.* He will plead the cause of the persecuted; will judge the fatherless and oppressed, will judge for them, clear up their innocency, restore their comforts, and recompense them for all the loss and damage they have sustained. *Secondly.* He will put an end to the fury of the persecutors. Hitherto they shall come, but no farther; here shall the proud waves of their malice be stayed; an effectual course shall be taken "that the man of the earth may no more oppress." See how light the psalmist now makes of the power of that proud persecutor whom he had been describing in this psalm, and how slightly he speaks of him, now he had been considering God's sovereignty. 1*st.* He is but a man of the earth, 'a man out of the earth,' so the word is; sprung out of the earth, and therefore mean and weak, and hastening to the earth again. Why then should we be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, when he is but man that shall die, a son of man that shall be as grass? *Isa.* li. 12. He that protects us is the Lord of heaven; he that persecutes us is but a man of the earth. 2*nd.* God has him in a chain, and can easily restrain the remainder of his wrath, so that he cannot do what he would. When God speaks the word, Satan shall by his instruments no more deceive, *Rev.* xx. 3; no more oppress.

In singing these verses, we must commit religion's just, but injured cause, to God, as those that are heartily concerned for its honour and interests, believing that he will in due time plead it with jealousy.

PSALM XI.

In this psalm we have David's struggles with, and triumphs over, a strong temptation to distrust God, and betake himself to indirect means for his own safety in a time of danger. It is supposed to have been penned when he began to feel the resentments of Saul's envy, and had had the javelin thrown at him once and again. He was then advised to run his country. 'No,' saith he, 'I trust in God, and therefore will keep my ground.' Observe, I. How he represents the temptation, and perhaps parleys with it, ver. 1—3. II. How he answers it, and puts it to silence, with the consideration of God's dominion and providence, ver. 4; his favour to the righteous, and the wrath which the wicked are reserved for, ver. 5—7. In time of public fears, when the insults of the church's enemies are daring and threatening, it will be profitable to meditate on this psalm.

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David.

IN the LORD put I my trust:
How say ye to my soul, Flee *as* a bird to your mountain?
2 For, lo, the wicked bend *their* bow,
They make ready their arrow upon the string,
That they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.
3 If the foundations be destroyed,
What can the righteous do?

Here is, First. David's fixed resolution to make God his confidence. "In the Lord put I my trust," ver. 1. Those that truly fear God and serve him, are welcome to put their trust in him, and shall not be made ashamed of their doing so. And it is the character of the saints that, having taken God for their God, they make him their hope. Even when they have other things to stay themselves upon, yet they do not, they dare not, stay upon them, but on God only. Gold is not their hope, nor horses and chariots their confidence, but God only. And, therefore, when second causes frown, yet their hopes do not fail them, because the First Cause is still the same, is ever so. The psalmist, before he gives an account of the temptation he was in to distrust God, records his resolution to trust in him, as that which he was resolved to live and die by.

Secondly. His resentment of a temptation to the contrary. "How say ye to my soul," which hath thus returned to God as its rest, and reposeth in him, "Flee as a bird to your mountain," to be safe there out of the reach of the fowler? This may be taken either,

1. As the serious advice of his timorous friends; so many understand it, and with great probability. Some that were hearty well-wishers to David, when they saw how much Saul was exasperated against him, and how maliciously he sought his life, pressed him by all means to flee for the same to some place of shelter, and not to depend too much upon the anointing he had received; which they thought was more likely to lose him his head than to save it him. That which grieved him in this motion was, not that to flee now would savour of cowardice, and ill become a soldier, but that it would savour of unbelief, and would ill become a saint, who had so often said, "In the Lord put I my trust." Taking it thus, the two following verses are the reason with which these faint-hearted friends of David backed this advice. They would have him flee, 1st. Because he could not be safe where he was, ver. 2. Look, say they, how the wicked bend their bow; Saul and his instruments aim at thy life, and the uprightness of thine heart will not be thy security. See what an enmity there is in the wicked against the upright, in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, what pains they take, what preparations they make to do them a mischief. They privily shoot at them, or in darkness, that they may not see the evil designed, to avoid it, nor others to prevent it; no, nor God himself to punish it. 2nd. Because he could be no longer useful where he was; for, say they, "If the foundations be destroyed," as they were by Saul's maladministration, if the civil state and government be unhinged, and all out of course, *Ps.* lxxv. 3, lxxxii. 5, what canst thou do with thy righteousness to redress the grievances? Alas, it is to no purpose to attempt the saving of a kingdom so wretchedly shattered; whatever the righteous can do signifies nothing. *Abi in cellum, et dic miserere mei Domine,*—'Away to thy cell, and there cry, Pity me, O Lord.' Many are thus hindered from doing the service they might do to the public in difficult times by a despair of success.

2. It may be taken as a taunt wherewith his enemies bantered him, upbraiding him with the professions he used to make of confidence in God, and scornfully bidding him try what stead that would stand him in now. You say, God

is your mountain; flee to him now, and see what the better you will be. Thus they endeavoured to shame the counsel of the poor, saying, There is no help for them in God, *Ps.* xiv. 6; iii. 2. The confidence and comfort which the saints have in God, when all the hopes and joys in the creature fail them, is a riddle to a carnal world, and is ridiculed accordingly.

Taking it thus, the two following verses are David's answer to this sarcasm; in which, 1. He complains of the malice of those who did thus abuse him; ver. 2, "They bend their bow, and make ready their arrows;" and we are told, *Ps.* lxiv. 3, what they are, "even bitter words," such words as these, by which they endeavour to discourage their hope in God, which David felt as a sword in his bones. 2. He resists the temptation with a gracious abhorrence, ver. 3. He looks upon this suggestion as striking at the foundations which every Israelite builds upon. If you destroy the foundations, if you take good people off from their hope in God, if you can persuade them that their religion is a cheat and a jest, and can banter them out of that, you ruin them, and break their hearts indeed, and make them of all men the most miserable. The principles of religion are the foundations on which the faith and hope of the righteous are built. These we are concerned, in interest as well as duty, to hold fast against all temptations to infidelity; for, if these be destroyed, if we let these go, "What can the righteous do?" Good people would be undone if they had not a God to go to, a God to trust to, and a future bliss to hope for.

4 The LORD *is* in his holy temple,
The LORD's throne *is* in heaven:
His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.
5 The LORD trieth the righteous: [hateth.
But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul
6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares,
Fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest:
This shall be the portion of their cup.
7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness;
His countenance doth behold the upright.

The shaking of a tree, they say, makes it take the deeper and faster root. The attempt of David's enemies to discourage his confidence in God engageth him to cleave so much the closer to his first principles, and to review them; which he here doth abundantly to his own satisfaction, and the silencing of all temptations to infidelity. That which was shocking to his faith, and has been so to the faith of many, was the prosperity of wicked people in their wicked ways; and the straits and distresses which the best men are sometimes reduced to; from hence such an evil thought as this was apt to arise, Surely it is vain to serve God; and we may call the proud happy. But, to stifle and shame all such thoughts, we are here called to consider,

First. That there is a God, a God in heaven. "The Lord is in his holy temple" above, where, though he is out of our sight, yet we are not out of his. Let not the enemies of the saints insult over them, as if they were at a loss, and at their wit's end. No; they have a God, and they know where to find him, and how to direct their prayer unto him as their Father in heaven. Or, he is in his holy temple; that is, in his church. He is a God in covenant and communion with his people, through a Mediator, of whom the temple was a type. We need not say, Who shall go up to heaven to fetch us from thence a God to trust to? No, the word is nigh us, and God in the word. His Spirit is in his saints, those living temples, and "the Lord is that Spirit."

Secondly. That this God governs the world. The Lord has not only his residence but his throne in heaven, and he has set the dominion thereof in the earth, *Job* xxxviii. 33; for, having "prepared his throne in the heavens, his kingdom ruleth over all," *Ps.* ciii. 19. Hence the heavens are said to rule, *Dan.* iv. 26. Let us by faith see God on his throne; on his throne of glory, infinitely transcending the splendour and majesty of earthly princes; on his throne of government, giving law, giving motion, and giving aim to all the creatures; on his throne of judgment, rendering to every man according to his works; and on his throne of grace, to which his people may come boldly for mercy and grace; and we shall see no reason to be discouraged by the pride and power of oppressors, or any of the afflictions that attend the righteous.

Thirdly. That this God perfectly knows every man's true character. "His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." He not only sees them, but he sees through them; not only knows all they say and do, but knows what they think, what they design, and how they really stand affected, whatever they pretend. We may know what men seem to be, but he knows what they are; as the refiner knows what the value of the gold is when he has tried it. God is said to try with his eyes and his eyelids, because he knows men, not as earthly princes know men, by report and representation, but by his own strict inspection, which cannot err or be imposed upon. This may comfort us when we are deceived in men, even in men that we think we have tried, that God's judgment of men we are sure is according to truth.

Fourthly. That if he afflict good people it is for their trial, and therefore it is for their good, ver. 5. The Lord tries all the children of men, that he may do them justice; but he tries the righteous, that he may do them good in their latter end, *Deu.* viii. 16. Let not that, therefore, shake our foundations, or discourage our hope and trust in God.

Fifthly. That however persecutors and oppressors may prosper and prevail a while, they now lie under, and will for ever perish under, the wrath of God.

1. He is a holy God, and therefore hates them, and cannot endure to look upon them; "the wicked, and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth," for nothing is more contrary to the rectitude and goodness of his nature. Their prosperity is so far from being an evidence of God's love, that their abuse of it doth certainly make them the objects of his hatred. He that hates nothing that he has made yet hates those who have thus ill made themselves. Dr. Hammond offers another reading of this verse: 'The Lord trieth the righteous and the wicked;' that is, distinguisheth infallibly between them, which is more than we can do; and 'he that loveth violence hateth his own soul;' that is, persecutors bring certain ruin upon themselves, *Pr.* viii. 36, as follows here.

2. He is a righteous Judge, and therefore he will punish them, ver. 6. Their punishment will be, 1st. Inevitable. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares." Here is a double metaphor, to speak the unavoidableness of the punishment of wicked men. It shall be rained upon them from heaven, *Job* xx. 23; against which there is no fence, and from which there is no escape: see *Jos.* x. 11; 1 *Sam.* ii. 10. It shall surprise them as a sudden shower sometimes surpriseth the traveller in a summer's day. It shall be as snares upon them, to hold them fast, and keep them prisoners, till the day of reckoning comes. 2nd. Very terrible. It is "fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest," which plainly alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and very fitly, for that destruction was intended for a figure of "the vengeance of eternal fire," *Jude* 7. The fire of God's wrath, fastening upon the brimstone of their own guilt, will burn certainly and furiously, will burn to the lowest hell, and to the utmost line of eternity. What a horrible tempest are the wicked hurried away in at death! What a lake of fire and brimstone must they make their bed in for ever, in the congregation of the dead and damned! That is it that is here meant; that is it that shall be "the portion of their cup, the heritage appointed them by the Almighty," and allotted to them, *Job* xx. 29. This is the cup of trembling which shall be put into their hands, which they must drink the dregs of, *Ps.* lxxv. 8. Every man has the portion of his cup assigned him. They that choose the Lord for the portion of their cup shall have what they choose, and be for ever happy in their choice, *Ps.* xvi. 5. But they who reject his grace shall be made to drink the cup of his fury, *Jer.* xxv. 15; *Isa.* li. 17; *Hab.* ii. 16.

Sixthly. That though honest, good people may be run down and trampled upon, yet God doth and will own them, and favour them, and smile upon them; and that is the reason why God will severely reckon with persecutors and oppressors, because those whom they oppress and persecute are dear to him, so that whosoever toucheth them, "toucheth the apple of his eye," ver. 7. 1. He loves them, and the work of his own grace in them. He is himself a righteous God, and therefore loves righteousness wherever he finds it, and pleads the cause of the righteous that are injured and oppressed; he delights to execute judgment for them, *Ps.* ciii. 6. We must herein be followers of God, must love righteousness, as he doth, that we may keep ourselves always in his love. 2. He looks graciously upon them. "His countenance doth behold the upright;" that is, he is not only at peace with them, but well pleased in them, and he comforts them, and puts gladness into their hearts by letting them know that he is so. He, like a tender father, looks upon them with pleasure; and they, like dutiful children, are pleased and abundantly satisfied with his smiles. They walk in the light of the Lord.

In singing this psalm we must encourage and engage ourselves to trust in God at all times, must depend upon him to protect our innocency, and make us happy; must dread his frowns as worse than death, and desire his favour as better than life.

PSALM XII.

It is supposed that David penned this psalm in Saul's reign, when there was a general decay of honesty and piety both in court and country, which he here complains of to God, and very feelingly, for he himself suffered by the treachery of his false friends, and the insolence of his sworn enemies. I. He begs help of God, because there was none among men whom he durst trust, ver. 1, 2. II. He foretells the destruction of his proud and threatening enemies, ver. 3, 4. III. He assures himself and others, that, how ill soever things went now, ver. 8, God would preserve and secure to himself his own people, ver. 5, 7, and would certainly make good his promises to them, ver. 6. Whether the psalm was penned in Saul's reign or no, it is certainly calculated for a bad reign; and perhaps David in spirit foresaw that some of his successors would bring things to as ill a pass as is here described, and treasured up this psalm for the use of the church then. *O tempora! O mores!*—'Oh the times! Oh the manners!'

To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.

HELP, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth;
For the faithful fail from among the children of men.
2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour;
With flattering lips *and* with a double heart do they
3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, [speak.
And the tongue that speaketh proud things:
4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail;
Our lips *are* our own: who *is* lord over us?
5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the
Now will I arise, saith the LORD; [needy,
I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him.
6 The words of the LORD *are* pure words:
As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.
7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,
Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.
8 The wicked walk on every side,
When the vilest men are exalted.

This psalm furnisheth us with good thoughts for bad times, in which, though the prudent will keep silent, *Amos* v. 13, because a man may be made an offender for a word, yet a man may comfort himself with such suitable meditations and prayers as are here got ready to our hand in such a day.

First. Let us see here what it is that makes the times bad, and when it may be said to be so. Ask the children of this world, What it is in their account that makes the times bad? and they will tell you, Scarcity of money, and decay of trade, and the desolations of war make the times bad; but the Scripture lays the badness of the times upon causes of another nature, 2 *Tim.* iii. 1, "Perilous times shall come," for iniquity shall abound, and that is the thing David here complains of.

1. When there is a general decay of piety and honesty among men, the times are then truly bad; ver. 1, when "the godly man ceaseth, and the faithful fail." Observe, How these two characters are here put together, the godly and the faithful. As there is no true policy, so there is no true piety, without honesty. Godly men are faithful men, fast men, so they have sometimes been called; their word is as confirming as their oath, as obliging as their bond; they make conscience of being true both to God and man. They are here said to cease and fail either by death or desertion, or both. Those that were godly and faithful are taken away, and those that are left are sadly degenerated, and are not what they were, so that there are few or no good people that are Israelites indeed to be met with. Perhaps he means that there were no godly, faithful men among Saul's courtiers; if he mean there were few or none in Israel, we hope he was under the same mistake that Elijah was, who thought he only was left alone, when God had seven thousand who kept their integrity, *Rom.* xi. 3; or, he means there were few in comparison, there was a general decay of religion and virtue, and the times are bad, very bad, when it is so; not a man to be found that executes judgment, *Jer.* v. 1.

2. When dissimulation and flattery have corrupted and debauched all conversation, then the times are very bad, ver. 2; when men are generally so profligate that they make no conscience of a lie, are so spiteful as to design against

their neighbours the worst of mischiefs, and yet so base as to cover the design with the most specious and plausible pretences, and professions of friendship. Thus "they speak vanity," that is, falsehood and a lie, "every one to his neighbour;" with flattering lips and a double heart they will kiss and kill, (as Joab did Abner and Amasa, in David's own time,) smile in your face and cut your throat. This is the devil's image complete, a complication of malice and falsehood. The times are bad indeed when there is no such thing as sincerity to be met with; when an honest man knows not who to believe, nor who to trust, nor dares put confidence in a friend, in a guide, *Mic.* vii. 5, 6; *Jer.* ix. 4, 5. Woe to those who help to make the times thus perilous!

3. When the enemies of God, and religion, and religious people, are impudent and daring, and threaten to run down all that is just and sacred, then the times are very bad; when proud sinners are arrived to such a pitch of impiety as to say, "With our tongues will we prevail" against the cause of virtue, "our lips are our own," and we may say what we will; "Who is lord over us?" either to restrain us, or to call us to an account, ver. 4. This speaks, 1st. A proud conceit of themselves, and confidence in themselves, as if the point were indeed gained by eating forbidden fruit, and they were as gods, independent and self-sufficient, infallible in their knowledge of good and evil, and therefore fit to be oracles; irresistible in their power, and therefore fit to be lawgivers, that could prevail with their tongues, and, like God himself, speak, and it is done. 2nd. An insolent contempt of God's dominion; as if he had no propriety in them,—their lips are their own; an unjust pretension, for who made man's mouth? In whose hand is his breath, and whose is the air he breathes in? And, as if he had no authority either to command them or judge them, "Who is lord over us?" like Pharaoh, *Ex.* v. 2. And this is as absurd and unreasonable as the former; for He in whom we live, and move, and have our being, must needs be, by an indisputable title, Lord over us.

4. When the poor and needy are oppressed, and abused, and puffed at, then the times are very bad. This is implied, ver. 5, where God himself takes notice of the oppression of the poor, and the sighing of the needy; they are oppressed because they are poor, have all manner of wrong done them purely because they are not in a capacity to right themselves. Being thus oppressed, they dare not speak for themselves, lest their defence should be made their offence; but they sigh, secretly bemoaning their calamities, and pouring out their souls in sighs before God. If their oppressors be spoken to on their behalf, they puff at them, make light of their own sin, and the misery of the poor, and lay neither to heart: see *Ps.* x. 5.

5. When wickedness abounds, and goes barefaced under the protection and countenance of those in authority, then the times are very bad, ver. 7. When the vilest men are exalted to places of trust and power, that, instead of putting the laws in execution against vice and injustice, and punishing the wicked according to their merits, patronize and protect them, give them countenance, and support their reputation by their own example, then the wicked walk on every side, they swarm in all places, and go up and down seeking to deceive, and debauch, and destroy others; they are neither afraid nor ashamed to discover themselves; they declare their sin as Sodom, and there is none to check or control them. Bad men are base men, the vilest of men, and they are so, though they are never so highly exalted in this world. Antiochus the illustrious the Scripture calls a vile person, *Dan.* xi. 21. But it is bad with a kingdom when such are preferred; then no marvel if wickedness grow impudent and insolent. "When the wicked bear rule, the people mourn."

Secondly. Let us now see what good thoughts we are here furnished with for such bad times; and what times we may yet be reserved for we cannot tell. When times are thus bad, it is comfortable to think,

1. That we have a God to go to, from whom we may ask and expect the redress of all our grievances. This he begins with, ver. 1, "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth." All other helps and helpers fail; even the godly and faithful, who should lend a helping hand to support the dying cause of religion, they are gone, and therefore whither shall we seek but to thee? Note, When godly, faithful people cease and fail, it is time to cry, Help, Lord! The abounding of iniquity threatens a deluge. Help, Lord, help the virtuous; few seek to hold fast their integrity, and to stand in the gap; help to save thine own interest in the world from sinking. "It is time for thee, Lord, to work."

2. That God will certainly reckon with false and proud men, and will punish and restrain their insolence. They are above the control of men, and set them at defiance. Men cannot discover the falsehood of flatterers, nor humble the haughtiness of those that speak proud things; but the righteous God will cut off all flattering lips that give the traitor's kiss, and speak words softer than oil, when war is in the heart; he will pluck out that tongue that speaks proud things against God and religion, ver. 3. Some translate it as a prayer, 'May God cut off those false and spiteful lips:' "Let lying lips be put to silence."

3. That God will, in due time, work deliverance for his oppressed people, and shelter them from the malicious designs of their persecutors; ver. 5, "Now will I arise, saith the Lord." This promise of God, which David here delivers by the Spirit of prophecy, is an answer to that petition which he put up to God by the Spirit of prayer. Help, Lord, saith he. I will, saith God; here I am with seasonable help, and effectual help. 1st. It is seasonable, now, in the fittest time. *First.* When the oppressors are in the height of their pride and insolence, when they say, "Who is lord over us?" then is God's time to let them know to their cost, that he is above them. *Secondly.* When the oppressed are in the depth of their distress and despondency; when they are sighing like Israel in Egypt, by reason of the cruel bondage, then is God's time to appear for them; as for Israel, when they were most dejected, and Pharaoh was most elevated. "Now will I arise." Note, There is a time fixed for the rescue of oppressed innocency; that time will come, and we may be sure it is of all other the fittest time, *Ps.* cii. 13. 2nd. It is effectual. "I will set him in safety;" or, in salvation; not only protect him, but restore him to his former prosperity, will bring him out into a wealthy place, *Ps.* lxvi. 12. So that upon the whole matter he shall lose nothing by his sufferings.

4. That, though men are false, God is faithful; though they are not to be trusted, God is. They speak vanity and flattery; but "the words of the Lord are pure words," ver. 6; not only all true, but all pure, "like silver tried in a furnace of earth," or crucible. It notes, 1st. The sincerity of God's word. Every thing is really as it is there represented, and not otherwise; it doth not jest with us, nor impose upon us, nor has it any other design upon us but our own good. 2nd. The preciousness of God's word. It is of great intrinsic value, like silver refined to the highest degree; it has nothing in it to depreciate it. 3rd. The many proofs that have been given of its power and truth. It has been often tried; all the saints in all ages have trusted it, and so tried it, and it never deceived them or frustrated their expectation; but they have all set to their seal that God's word is true, with an *experta crede*,—'trust one that has made trial;' they have found it so. Probably this refers especially to these promises of succouring and relieving the poor and distressed. Their friends put them in hopes they will do something for them, and yet prove a broken reed. But the words of God are what we may rely upon; and, the less confidence is to be put in men's words, let us, with the more assurance, trust in God's word.

5. That God will secure his chosen remnant to himself, how bad soever the times are; ver. 7, "Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." This intimates that as long as the world stands there will be a generation of proud and wicked men in it, more or less, who will be in danger by their wretched arts of ruining religion, by "wearing out the saints of the Most High," *Dan.* vii. 25. But let God alone to maintain his own interest, and to preserve his own people. He will keep them from this generation; that is, 1st. From being debauched by them, and drawn away from God, from mingling with them, and learning their works. In times of general apostacy the Lord knows them that are his, and they shall be enabled to keep their integrity. 2nd. From being destroyed and rooted out by them. The church is built upon a rock, and so well fortified that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In the worst of times God has his remnant, and in every age will reserve to himself a holy seed, and preserve that to his heavenly kingdom.

In singing this psalm and praying over it, we must bewail the general corruption of manners; thank God that things are not worse than they are, but pray and hope that they will be better in God's due time.

PSALM XIII.

This psalm is the deserted soul's case and cure. Whether it was penned upon any particular occasion doth not appear, but in general, I. David sadly complains that God had long withdrawn from him, and delayed to relieve him, ver. 1, 2. II. He earnestly prays God to consider his case, and comfort him, ver. 3, 4. III. He assures himself of an answer of peace, and therefore concludes the psalm with joy and triumph, because he concludes his deliverance as good as wrought, ver. 5, 6.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

HOW long wilt thou forget me, O LORD?
For ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?
2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,
Having sorrow in my heart daily?
How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?
3 Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God:
Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;
4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;
And those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.
5 But I have trusted in thy mercy;
My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.
6 I will sing unto the LORD,
Because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

David, in affliction, is here pouring out his soul before God. His address is short, but the method is very observable, and of use for direction and encouragement.

First. His troubles extort complaints, ver. 1, 2; and the afflicted have liberty to pour out their complaint before the Lord, *Ps.* cii. title. It is some ease to a troubled spirit to give vent to its griefs, especially to give vent to them at the throne of grace, where we are sure to find one who is afflicted in the afflictions of his people, and is troubled with the feeling of their infirmities; thither we have boldness of access by faith, and there we have 'freedom of speech,' παρρησία. Observe here,

1. What it is that David complains of. Three things:

1st. God's unkindness; so he construed it, and it was his infirmity. He thought God had forgotten him, had forgotten his promises to him, his covenant with him, his former lovingkindness which he had shewed him, and which he took to be an earnest of farther mercy; had forgotten that there was such a man in the world who needed and expected relief and succour from him. Thus "Zion said, My God has forgotten me," *Isa.* xlix. 14; "Israel said, My way is hid from the Lord," *Isa.* xl. 27. Not that any good man can doubt the omniscience, and goodness, and faithfulness of God; but it is a peevish expression of prevailing fear, which yet, when it ariseth from a high esteem and earnest desire of God's favour, though it be indecent and culpable, shall be passed by and pardoned, for the second thought will retract it, and repent of it. God hid his face from him; that is, he wanted that inward comfort in God which he used to have, and herein was a type of Christ upon the cross crying out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God sometimes hides his face from his own children, and leaves them in the dark concerning their interest in him. And this they lay to heart more than any outward trouble whatsoever.

2nd. His own uneasiness. *First.* He was racked with care, that filled his head. "I take counsel in my soul;" that is, I am at a loss, and am *inops consilii*,—'have no friend to advise with,' that I can put any confidence in, and therefore am myself continually projecting what to do to help myself; but none of my projects are likely to take effect. So that I am at my wit's end, and in a continual toss. Anxious cares are heavy burthens with which, many times, good people load themselves more than they need. *Secondly.* He was overwhelmed with sorrow that filled his heart; "I have sorrow in my heart daily." He had a constant disposition to sorrow, and it preyed upon his spirits; not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, but by day too, when lighter griefs are diverted and dissipated by conversation and business; nay, every day brought with it fresh occasions of grief. The clouds returned after the rain. The bread of sorrows is sometimes the saint's daily bread. Our Master himself was a man of sorrows.

3rd. His enemies' insolence, which added to his grief. Saul, his great enemy, and others under him, were exalted over him, triumphed in his distress, pleased themselves with his grief, and promised themselves a complete victory over him. This he complained of as reflecting dishonour upon God, and his power and promise.

2. How he expostulates with God hereupon. How long shall it be thus? And shall it be thus for ever? Long afflictions try our patience, and often tire it; and it is a common temptation when trouble lasts long to think it will last always; and despondency then turns into despair, and those that have long been without joy begin at last to be without hope. Lord, tell me how long thou wilt hide thy face, and assure me that it shall not be for ever, but that thou wilt return at length in mercy to me, and then I shall the easier bear my present troubles.

Secondly. His complaints stir up his prayers, ver. 3, 4. We should never allow ourselves to make any complaints but what are fit to be offered up to God, and what drive us to our knees. Observe here,

1. What his petitions are. Consider my case, hear my complaints, and

lighten mine eyes; that is, 1st. Strengthen my faith; for faith is the eye of the soul, with which it sees above, and sees through the things of sense. Lord, enable me to look beyond my present troubles, and to foresee a happy issue of them. 2nd. Guide my way; enable me to look about me, that I may avoid the snares which are laid for me. 3rd. Refresh my soul with the joy of thy salvation. That which revives the drooping spirits is said to enlighten the eyes, 1 *Sam.* xiv. 27; *Ezra* ix. 8. Lord, scatter the cloud of melancholy which darkens my eyes, and let my countenance be made pleasant.

2. What his pleas are. He mentions his relation to God, and interest in him, "O Lord, my God," and insists upon the greatness of the peril, which called for speedy relief and succour. If his eyes were not lightened quickly, 1st. He concludes that he must perish. I shall sleep the sleep of death, I cannot live under the weight of all this care and grief. Nothing more killing to a soul than the want of God's favour; nothing more reviving than the return of it. 2nd. That then his enemies would triumph; Lest mine enemy say, So would I have it; lest Saul, lest Satan, be gratified in my fall. It would gratify the pride of his enemy; he will say, I have prevailed, I have gotten the day, and been too hard for him and his God. It would gratify the malice of his enemies; they will rejoice when I am moved. And will it be for God's honour to suffer them thus to trample upon all that is sacred both in heaven and earth?

Thirdly. His prayers are soon turned into praises, ver. 5, 6. But "my heart shall rejoice, and I will sing to the Lord." What a surprising change is here in a few lines; in the beginning of the psalm we have him drooping and trembling, and ready to sink into melancholy and despair; but in the close of it, rejoicing in God, and elevated and enlarged in his praises. See the power of faith, the power of prayer, and how good it is to draw near to God. If we bring our cares and griefs to the throne of grace, and leave them there, we may go away, like Hannah, and our countenance be no more sad, 1 *Sam.* i. 18. And here observe the method of his comfort.

1. God's mercy is the support of his faith. My case is bad enough, and I am ready to think it deplorable, till I consider the infinite goodness of God; and finding I have that to trust to I am well enough, though I have no merit of my own. In former distresses I have trusted in the mercy of God, and I never found that it failed me; his mercy has in due time relieved me, and my confidence in it has in the meantime supported me. Even in the depth of this distress, when God hid his face from me, when without were fightings and within were fears, yet I trusted in the mercy of God, and that was as an anchor in a storm, by the help of which, though I was tossed, I was not overset. And still I do trust in thy mercy; so some read it. I refer myself to that, with an assurance that will do well for me at last. This he pleads with God, knowing what pleasure he takes in those that hope in his mercy, *Ps.* cxlvii. 11.

2. His faith in God's mercy filled his heart with joy in his salvation; for joy and peace come by believing, *Rom.* xv. 13; "Believing ye rejoice," 1 *Pet.* i. 8. Having put his trust in the mercy of God, he is fully assured of salvation, and that his heart, which was now daily grieving, should rejoice in that salvation. Though weeping endure long, joy will return.

3. His joy in God's salvation would fill his mouth with songs of praise; ver. 6, "I will sing unto the Lord;" sing in remembrance of what he has done formerly. Though I should never recover the peace I have had, I will die blessing God that ever I had it. He has dealt bountifully with me formerly, and he shall have the glory of that, however he is pleased to deal with me now. I will sing in hope of what he will do for me at last; being confident that all will end well, will end everlastingly well. But he speaks of it as a thing past, "He has dealt bountifully with me," because by faith he had received the earnest of the salvation, and he was as confident of it as if it had been done already.

In singing this psalm, and praying over it, if we have not the same complaints to make that David had, we must thank God that we have not, dread and deprecate his withdrawing, pity and sympathize with those that are troubled in mind, and encourage ourselves in our most holy faith and joy.

PSALM XIV.

It doth not appear upon what occasion this psalm was penned, nor whether upon any particular occasion. Some say David penned it when Saul persecuted him; others, when Absalom rebelled against him; but they are mere conjectures, which have not certainty enough to warrant us to expound the psalm by them. The apostle in quoting part of this psalm, *Rom.* iii. 10, &c., to prove that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, ver. 9, and all the world is guilty before God, ver. 19, leads us to understand it in general as a description of the pravity of the human nature, and the sinfulness of the sin we are conceived and born in, and the deplorable corruption of a great part of mankind, even of the world that lies in wickedness, 1 *Jno.* v. 19. But as in those psalms which are designed to discover our remedy in Christ, there is commonly an allusion to David himself, yea, and some passages that are to be understood primarily of him, as in *Ps.* ii., xvi., xxii., and others; so in this psalm, which is designed to discover our wound by sin, there is an allusion to David's enemies and persecutors, and other the oppressors of good men at that time, to whom some passages have an immediate reference. In all the psalms from the 3rd to this, (except the 8th,) David had been complaining of those that hated and persecuted him, insulted him and abused him; now here he runs up all those bitter streams to the fountain, the general corruption of nature, and sees they were not his enemies only, but all the children of men that were thus corrupted. Here is, I. A charge exhibited against a wicked world, ver. 1. II. The proof of the charge, ver. 2, 3. III. A serious expostulation with sinners, especially with persecutors, upon it, ver. 4—6. IV. A believing prayer for the salvation of Israel, and a joyful expectation of it, ver. 7.

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David.

1 THE fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God.
They are corrupt, they have done abominable works,
There is none that doeth good.
2 The LORD looked down from heaven
Upon the children of men,
To see if there were any that did understand,
And seek God.
3 They are all gone aside,
They are *all* together become filthy:
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

If we apply our hearts as Solomon did, *Eccl.* vii. 26, "to search out the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness," these verses will assist us in the search, and will shew us sin exceeding sinful. Sin is the disease of mankind, and it appears here to be malignant and epidemical.

First. See how malignant it is, ver. 1, in two things:

1. The contempt it puts upon the honour of God; for there is something of practical atheism at the bottom of all sin; "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." We are sometimes tempted to think, Sure there never was so much atheism and profaneness as there is in our days, but we see the former days were no better; even in David's time there were such as had arrived to such a height of impiety as to deny the very being of a God, and the first and self evident principles of religion. Observe, 1st. The sinner here described. He is one that saith in his heart "There is no God;" he is an atheist. There is no *Elohim*, no judge or governor of the world, no Providence presiding over the affairs of men. They cannot doubt of the being of God, but will question his dominion. He saith this in his heart; it is not his judgment, but his imagination. He cannot think there is none, but he wisheth there were none, and pleaseth himself with the fancy that it is possible there may be none; he cannot be sure there is one, and therefore he is willing to think there is none. He dares not speak it out lest he be confuted, and so undeceived; but he whispers it secretly in his heart, for the silencing of the clamours of his conscience, and the emboldening of himself in his evil ways. 2nd. The character of this sinner. He is a fool, he is simple and unwise; and this is an evidence of it: he is wicked and profane; and this is the cause of it. Note, Atheistical thoughts are very foolish, wicked thoughts, and they are at the bottom of a great deal of the wickedness that is in this world. The Word of God is a discerner of these thoughts, and puts a just brand on him that harbours them, "Nabal is his name, and folly is with him;" for he thinks against the clearest light, against his own knowledge and convictions, and the common sentiments of all the wise and sober part of mankind. And there is no man will say, "There is no God," till he is so hardened in sin, that it is become his interest there should be none to call him to an account.

2. The disgrace and debasement it puts upon the nature of man. Sinners are corrupt, quite degenerated from what man was in his innocent estate. "They are become filthy," ver. 3, putrid and stinking. All their faculties are so disordered, that they are become odious to their Maker, and utterly incapable to answer the ends of their creation. Corrupt indeed; for, 1st. They do no good, but are the unprofitable burthens of the earth; they do God no service, bring him no honour, nor do themselves any real kindness. 2nd. They do a great deal of hurt; "they have done abominable works," for such all sinful works are. Sin is an abomination to God; it is that abominable thing which he hates, *Jer.* xliv. 4, and sooner or later it will be so to the sinner. It will be found to be hateful, *Ps.* xxxvi. 2; an abomination of desolation, that is, making desolate, *Mat.* xxiv. 15. This follows upon their saying, "There is no God;" for they that "profess they know God, but in works deny him, are abominable, and to every good work reprobate," *Tit.* i. 16.

Secondly. See how epidemical this disease is; it has infected the whole race of mankind. To prove this, God himself is here brought in for a witness, and he is an eyewitness, ver. 2, 3. Observe, 1. His inquiry. "The Lord looked down from heaven," a place of prospect which commands this lower world; from thence with an all-seeing eye, he took a view of all the children of men; and the question was, Whether there were any among them that did understand themselves aright, their duty and interests, and did seek God, and set him before them. He that made this search was not only One that could find out a good man if he was to be found, though never so obscure; but One that would be glad to find out one, and would be sure to take notice of him, as of Noah in the old world. 2. The result of this inquiry, ver. 3. Upon search, upon his search, it appeared, "They are all gone aside;" the apostacy is universal, "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Till the free and mighty grace of God has wrought a change, whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is done by them, it is not of themselves, it is God's work in them. When God had made the world, he looked upon his own work, and all was very good, *Gen.* i. 31; but, some time after, he looked upon man's work, and behold, all was very bad, *Gen.* vi. 5; every operation of the thought of man's heart was evil, only evil, and that continually. They are gone aside from the right way of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and are turned into the paths of the destroyer.

In singing this, let us lament the corruption of our own nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God; and, since that which is born of the flesh is flesh, let us not marvel that we are told we must be born again.

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread,
And call not upon the LORD.
5 There were they in great fear:
For God *is* in the generation of the righteous.
6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor,
Because the LORD *is* his refuge.
7 Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion!
When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

In these verses the psalmist endeavours,

First. To convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way they are in, how secure soever they are in that way. Three things he shews them, which, it may be, they are not very willing to see,—their wickedness, their folly, and their danger; while they are apt to believe themselves very wise, and good, and safe. See here,

1. Their wickedness. This is described in four instances: 1st. They are themselves workers of iniquity; they design it, they practise it, and take as much pleasure in it as ever any man did in his business. 2nd. They eat up God's people with as much greediness as they eat bread; such an innate and inveterate enmity they have to them, and so heartily do they desire their ruin, because they really hate God, whose people they are. It is meat and drink to persecutors to be doing mischief: it is as agreeable to them as their necessary food. They eat up God's people easily, daily, securely, without either check of conscience when they do it, or remorse of conscience when they have done it; as Joseph's brethren cast him into a pit, and then sat down to eat bread, *Gen.* xxxvii. 24, 25: see *Mic.* iii. 2, 3. 3rd. They call not upon the Lord. Note, Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself, but live in contempt of him; and the reason why people run into all manner of wickedness, even the worst, is, because they do not call upon God for his grace. What good can be expected from those that live without prayer? 4th. They shame the counsel of the poor, and upbraid them with making God their refuge, as David's enemies upbraided him, *Ps.* xi. 1. Note, Those are very wicked indeed, and have a great deal to answer for, who not only shake off religion, and live without it themselves, but say and do what they can to

put others out of conceit with it that are well inclined; with the duties of it, as if they were mean, melancholy, and unprofitable; and with the privileges of it, as if they were insufficient to make a man safe and happy. Those that banter religion, and religious people, will find, to their cost, it is ill jesting with edged tools, and dangerous persecuting those that make God their refuge. "Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." He shews them,

2. Their folly. They have no knowledge: so it is a sign; for if they had any knowledge of God, if they did rightly understand themselves, and would but consider things as men, they would not be so abusive and barbarous as they are to the people of God.

3. Their danger; ver. 5, "There were they in great fear." There, where they ate up God's people, their own consciences condemned what they did, and filled them with secret terrors. They sweetly sucked the blood of the saints; but in their bowels it is turned, and become the gall of asps. Many instances there have been of proud and cruel persecutors, who have been made, like Pashur, Magor-missabibs, terrors to themselves and all about them. They that will not fear God perhaps may be made to fear at the shaking of a leaf.

Secondly. He endeavours to comfort the people of God, 1. With what they have. They have God's presence; ver. 5, he "is in the generation of the righteous:" they have his protection; ver. 6, "The Lord is their refuge." This is as much their security as it is the terror of their enemies, who may jeer them for their confidence in God, but cannot jeer them out of it. In the judgment-day it will add to the terror and confusion of sinners to see God own the generation of the righteous, which they have hated and bantered. 2. With what they hope for; and that is the salvation of Israel, ver. 7. When David was driven out by Absalom and his rebellious accomplices, he comforted himself with an assurance that God would in due time turn again his captivity, to the joy of all his good subjects. But surely this pleasing prospect looks farther. He had, in the beginning of the psalm, lamented the general corruption of mankind; and, in the melancholy view of that, wishes for the salvation which, in the fulness of time, was to come out of Zion; salvation from sin, that great salvation which should be wrought out by the Redeemer, who was expected to come to Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, *Rom.* xi. 26. The world is bad; Oh that the Messiah would come and mend them! There is a universal corruption; Oh for the times of reformation! Those will be as joyful times as these are melancholy ones. Then shall God turn again the captivity of his people; for the Redeemer shall ascend up on high, and lead captivity captive, and Jacob shall in that rejoice. The triumphs of Zion's king will be the joys of Zion's children. The second coming of Christ, finally to extinguish the dominion of sin and Satan, will be the completing of this salvation, which is the hope, and will be the joy, of every Israelite indeed. And with the assurance of that we should, in singing this, comfort ourselves and one another, with reference to the present sins of sinners, and sufferings of saints.

PSALM XV.

The scope of this short but excellent psalm is to shew us the way to heaven, and to convince us that, if we would be happy, we must be holy and honest. Christ, who is himself the way, and in whom we must walk as our way, has also shewed us the same way that is here prescribed, *Mat.* xix. 17, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." In this psalm, I. By the question, ver. 1, we are directed and excited to inquire the way. II. By the answer to that question in the rest of the psalm, we are directed to walk in that way, ver. 2—5. III. By the assurance given in the close of the psalm, of the safety and happiness of those who answer these characters, we are encouraged to walk in that way, ver. 5.

A Psalm of David.

LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
And speaketh the truth in his heart.
3 *He that* backbiteth not with his tongue,
Nor doeth evil to his neighbour,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned;
But he honoureth them that fear the LORD.
He that sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.
5 *He that* putteth not out his money to usury,
Nor taketh reward against the innocent.
He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

Here is, First. A very serious and weighty question, concerning the characters of a citizen of Zion; ver. 1, "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" that is, Let me know who shall go to heaven. Not who by name,—so the Lord only knows them that are his; but who by description, What kind of people are they whom thou wilt own, and crown with distinguishing and everlasting favours? This supposeth that it is a great privilege to be a citizen of Zion, an unspeakable honour and advantage; that all are not thus privileged, but a remnant only; and that men are not entitled to this privilege by their birth and blood; all shall not abide in God's tabernacle that have Abraham to their father, but according as men's hearts and lives are accordingly will their lot be. It concerns us all to put this question to ourselves, Lord, what shall I be, and do, that I may abide in thy tabernacle? *Lu.* xviii. 18; *Acts* xvi. 30. Observe,

1. Who this inquiry is addressed to; to God himself. Note, Those that would find the way to heaven must look up to God, must take direction from his word, and beg direction from his Spirit. It is fit he himself should give laws to his servants, and appoint the conditions of his favours, and tell who are his, and who not.

2. How it is expressed in Old Testament language. 1st. By the tabernacle we may understand the church militant, typified by Moses' tabernacle, fitted to a wilderness state, mean and moveable. There God manifests himself, and there he meets his people, as of old, in the tabernacle of the testimony, the tabernacle of meeting. Who shall dwell in this tabernacle? that is, Who shall be accounted a true, living member of God's church, admitted among the spiritual priests to lodge in the courts of this tabernacle? We are concerned to inquire this, because many pretend to a place in this tabernacle who really have no part nor lot in the matter. 2nd. By the holy hill we may understand the church triumphant, alluding to mount Zion, on which the temple was to be built by Solomon. It is the happiness of glorified saints that they dwell in that holy hill, they are at home there, they shall be for ever there. It concerns us to know who shall dwell there, that we make it sure to ourselves that we shall have a place among them, and may then take the comfort of it, and rejoice in prospect of that holy hill.

Secondly. A very plain and particular answer to this question. Those that desire to know their duty, with a resolution to do it, will find the Scripture a very faithful director, and conscience a faithful monitor. Let us see then the particular characters of a citizen of Zion.

1. He is one that is sincere and entire in his religion. "He walketh uprightly," according to the condition of the covenant, *Gen.* xvii. 1, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," (it is the same word that is here used,) and then thou shalt find me a God all-sufficient. He is really what he professeth to be, is sound at heart, and can approve himself to God in his integrity in all he doth; his conversation is uniform, and he is of a piece with himself, and endeavours to stand complete in all the will of God. His eye perhaps is weak, but it is single; he has his spots indeed, but he doth not paint; "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," *Jno.* i. 47; 2 *Cor.* i. 12. I know no religion but sincerity.

2. He is one that is conscientiously honest and just in all his dealings, faithful and fair to all with whom he has to do. He "worketh righteousness:" that is, he walks in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, and takes care to give all their due; is just both to God and man; and in speaking to both he speaketh that which is the truth in his heart; his prayers, professions, and promises to God, come not out of feigned lips, nor dares he tell a lie, or so much as equivocate in his converse or commerce with men. He walks by the rules of righteousness and truth, and scorns and abhors the gains of injustice and fraud; and reckons that cannot be a good bargain, nor a saving one, which is made with a lie; and that he who wrongs his neighbour, though never so plausibly, will prove in the end to have done the greatest injury to himself.

3. He is one that contrives to do all the good he can to his neighbours; but is very careful to do hurt to no man, and is in a particular manner tender of his neighbour's reputation, ver. 3. He doth no evil at all to his neighbour willingly or designedly, nothing to offend and grieve his spirit, nothing to prejudice the health or ease of his body, nothing to injure him in his estate or secular interests, in his family or relations; but walks by that golden rule of equity,—to do as he would be done by. He is especially careful not to injure his neighbour in his good name, because many who would not otherwise wrong their neighbours make nothing of that; and he that in this matter bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain. He knows the worth of a good name, and therefore he backbiteth not, defames no man, speaks evil of no man, makes not others' faults the subject of his common talk, much less of his sport and ridicule, nor speaks of them with pleasure, nor at all but for edification; he makes the best of every body, and the worst of nobody. He doth not take up a reproach; that is, he neither raiseth it, nor receiveth it; he gives no credit nor countenance to a calumny, but frowns upon a backbiting tongue, and so silenceth it, *Pr.* xxv. 23. If an ill-natured character of his neighbour be given him, or an ill-natured story be told him, he will disprove it if he can: if not, it shall die with him, and go no farther. His charity will cover a multitude of sins.

4. He is one that values men by their virtue and piety, and not by the figure they make in the world, ver. 5. 1st. He thinks the better of no man's wickedness for his pomp and grandeur; "In his eyes a vile person is contemned." Wicked people are vile people, worthless, and good for nothing; so the word signifies, as dross, as chaff, as salt that has lost its savour; they are vile in their choices, *Jer.* ii. 13, in their practices, *Isa.* xxxii. 6. And for this wise and good men contemn them,—not denying them civil honour and respect as men, as men in authority and power perhaps, 1 *Pet.* ii. 17; *Rom.* xiii. 7,—but in their judgment of them, agreeing with the word of God. They are so far from envying them that they pity him; despise their gains, *Isa.* xxxiii. 15, as turning to no account; their dainties, *Ps.* cxli. 4; their pleasures, *Heb.* xi. 24, 25, as sapless and insipid. They despise their society, *Ps.* cxix. 115; 2 *Kin.* iii. 14, despise their taunts and threats, and are not moved by them, nor disturbed at them; they despise the feeble efforts of their impotent malice, *Ps.* ii. 1, 4, and will shortly triumph in their fall, *Ps.* iii. 6, 7. God despiseth them, and they are of his mind. 2nd. He thinks the worse of no man's piety for his poverty and meanness; "but he honours them that fear the Lord." He reckons that serious piety, wherever it is found, puts an honour upon a man, and makes his face to shine more than wealth or wit, or a great name among men doth or can. He honours such; that is, he esteems them very highly in love, desires their friendship and conversation, and an interest in their prayers; is glad of an opportunity to shew them respect, or do them a good office; pleads their cause, and speaks of them with veneration, rejoiceth when they prosper, grieves when they are removed, and their memory when they are gone is precious with him. By this we may judge of ourselves in some measure: What rules do we go by in judging of others?

5. He is one that always prefers a good conscience before any secular interest or advantage whatsoever; for if he has promised upon oath to do any thing, though afterwards it appear much to his damage and prejudice in his worldly estate, yet he sticks to it, and changeth not, ver. 4. See how weaksighted and shortsighted even wise and good men may be, they may swear to their own hurt, which they were not aware of when they took the oath; but see how strong the obligation of an oath is, that a man must rather suffer loss to himself and his family, than wrong his neighbour by breaking his oath. An oath is a sacred thing, which we must not think to play fast and loose with.

6. He is one that will not increase his estate by any unjust practices, ver. 5. 1st. Not by extortion. "He putteth not out his money to usury," that he may live at ease upon the labours of others, while he is in capacity of improving it by his own industry. Not that it is any breach of the law of justice or charity for the lender to share in the profit which the borrower makes of his money any more than for the owner of the land to demand rent from the occupant, money being by art and labour as improvable as land; but a citizen of Zion will freely lend to the poor, according to his ability, and not be rigorous and severe in recovering his right from those that are reduced by Providence. 2nd. Not by bribery. He will not "take a reward against the innocent;" that is, if he be any way employed in the administration of public justice, he will not for any gain, or hope of it to himself, do any thing to the prejudice of a righteous cause.

Thirdly. The psalm concludes with a ratification of this character of the citizen of Zion. He is like Zion-hill itself, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever, *Ps.* cxxv. 1. Every true, living member of the church, like the church itself, is built upon a rock, which the gates of hell cannot prevail against. "He that doth these things shall never be moved;" shall not be moved for ever, so the word is. The grace of God shall always be sufficient for him to preserve him safe and blameless to the heavenly kingdom; temptations shall not overcome him, trouble shall not overwhelm him, nothing shall rob him of his present peace or his future bliss.

In singing this psalm we must teach and admonish ourselves and one another, to answer the characters here given of the citizen of Zion, that we may never be moved from God's tabernacle on earth, and may arrive at last at that holy hill, where we shall be for ever out of the reach of temptation and danger.

PSALM XVI.

This psalm has something of David in it, but much more of Christ. It begins with such expressions of devotion as may be applied to Christ, but concludes with such confidence of a resurrection (and so timely a one as to prevent corruption) as must be applied to Christ, to him only, and cannot be understood of David, as both St. Peter and St. Paul have observed, *Acts* ii. 24; xiii. 36; for David died and was buried, and saw corruption. I. David speaks of himself as a member of Christ, and so he speaks the language of all good Christians, professing his confidence in God, ver. 1; his consent to him, ver. 2; his affection to the people of God, ver. 3; his adherence to the true worship of God, ver. 4; and his entire complacency and satisfaction in God, and the interest he had in him, ver. 5—7. II. He speaks of himself as a type of Christ, and so he speaks the language of Christ himself, to whom all the rest of the psalm is expressly and at large applied, *Acts* ii. 25, &c., "David speaketh concerning him," (not concerning himself,) "I foresaw the Lord always before my face," &c.; and this he spake, being a prophet, ver. 30, 31; spake, 1. Of the special presence of God with the Redeemer in his services and sufferings, ver. 8; 2. of the prospect which the Redeemer had of his own resurrection, and the glory that should follow, which carried him cheerfully through his undertaking, ver. 9—11.

Michtam of David.

PRESERVE me, O God:
For in thee do I put my trust. [my Lord:
2 *O my soul*, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou *art*
My goodness *extendeth* not to thee;
3 *But* to the saints that *are* in the earth,
And *to* the excellent, in whom *is* all my delight.
4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* hasten *after* ano-
Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, [ther *god:*
Nor take up their names into my lips. [cup:
5 The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my
Thou maintainest my lot.
6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places;*
Yea, I have a goodly heritage.
7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel:
My reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

This psalm is entitled Michtam, which some translate a golden psalm, a very precious one, more to be valued by us than gold, yea than much fine gold; because it speaks so plainly of Christ and his resurrection, who is the true treasure hid in the field of the Old Testament.

First. David here flies to God's protection with a cheerful, believing confidence in it; ver. 1, "Preserve me, O God," from the deaths, and especially from the sins, to which I am continually exposed; "for in thee," and thee only, "do I put my trust." Those that by faith commit themselves to the Divine care, and submit themselves to the Divine conduct, have reason to hope for the benefit of both. This is applicable to Christ, who prayed, "Father, save me from this hour," and "trusted in God that he would deliver him."

Secondly. He recogniseth his solemn dedication of himself to God as his God; ver. 2, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord," and therefore thou mayest venture to trust him. Note, 1. It is the duty and interest of every one of us to acknowledge the Lord for our Lord, to subject ourselves to him, and then to stay ourselves upon him. *Adonai* signifies 'my stayer,' the strength of my heart. 2. This must be done with our souls. "O my soul, thou hast said" it. Covenanting with God must be heart-work, all that is within us must be employed therein, and engaged thereby. 3. Those who have avouched the Lord for their Lord should be often putting themselves in mind of what they have done. Hast thou said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord? say it again then, stand to it, abide by it, and never unsay it. Hast thou said it? take the comfort of it, and live up to it. "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him," and let thine eye be ever towards him.

Thirdly. He devotes himself to the honour of God, in the service of the saints; ver. 2, 3, "My goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints." Observe, 1. Those that have taken the Lord for their Lord, must, like him, be good, and do good; we do not expect happiness without goodness. 2. Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, we must humbly acknowledge that it extendeth not to God; so that we cannot pretend to merit any thing by it. God has no need of our services, he is not benefited by them, nor can they add any thing to his infinite perfection and blessedness. The wisest, and best, and most useful men in the world, cannot be profitable to God, *Job* xxii. 2; xxxv. 7. God is infinitely above us, and happy without us, and whatever good we do it is all from him; so that we are indebted to him, not he to us. David owns it 1 *Chr.* xxix. 4, "Of thine own have we given thee." 3. If God be ours, we must for his sake extend our goodness to those that are his, to the saints in the earth; for what is done to them he is pleased to take as done to himself, having constituted them his receivers. Note, 1st. There are saints in the earth, and saints on earth we must all be, or we shall never be saints in heaven. Those that are renewed by the grace of God, and devoted to the glory of God, are saints on earth. 2nd. The saints in the earth are excellent ones, great, mighty, magnificent ones, and yet some of them so poor in the world, that they needed to have David's goodness extended to them. God makes them excellent by the grace he gives them. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour." And then he accounts them excellent; they are precious in his sight, and honourable; they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure. Their God is their glory, and a diadem of beauty to them. 3rd. All that have taken the Lord for their God delight in his saints as excellent ones, because they bear his image, and because he loves them. David, though a king, was a companion for all that feared God, *Ps.* cxix. 63, even the meanest, which was a sign that his delight was in them. 4th. It is not enough for us to delight in the saints; but, as there is occasion, our goodness must extend to them; we must be ready to shew them the kindness they need, distribute to their necessities, and abound in the labour of love to them. This is applicable to Christ. The salvation he wrought out for us was no gain to God, for our ruin would have been no loss to him; but the goodness and benefit of it extends to us men, in whom he delighted, *Pr.* viii. 31. "For their sakes," saith he, "I sanctify myself," *Jno.* xvii. 19. Christ delights even in the saints on earth, notwithstanding their weaknesses and manifold infirmities, which is a good reason why we should.

Fourthly. He disclaims the worship of all false gods, and all communion with their worshippers, ver. 4; where, 1. He reads the doom of idolaters, who "hasten after another god," being mad upon their idols, and pursuing them as eagerly as if they were afraid they would overgo them. "Their sorrows shall be multiplied," both by the judgments they bring upon themselves from the true God whom they forsake and by the disappointment they will meet with in the false gods they embrace. They that multiply gods multiply griefs to themselves; for whosoever thinks one god too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough. 2. He declares his resolution to have no fellowship with them, nor with their unfruitful works of darkness. "Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer," not only because the gods they are offered to are a lie, but because the offerings themselves are barbarous. At God's altar, because the blood made atonement, the drinking of it was most strictly prohibited, and the drink offerings were of wine; but the devil prescribed his worshippers to drink the blood of the sacrifices, to teach them cruelty. I will have nothing to do, saith David, with those bloody deities, nor so much as "take their names into my lips" with any delight in them, or respect to them. Thus must we hate idols and idolatry with a perfect hatred. Some make this also applicable to Christ and his undertaking, shewing the nature of the sacrifice he offered,—it was not "the blood of bulls and goats, which was offered according to the law," that was never named, nor did he ever make any mention of it, but his own blood—shewing also the multiplied sorrows of the unbelieving Jews, who hastened after another king, Cæsar, and are still hastening after another Messiah, whom they in vain look for.

Fifthly. He repeats the solemn choice he had made of God for his portion and happiness, ver. 5; takes to himself the comfort of the choice, ver. 6; and gives God the glory of it, ver. 7. This is very much the language of a devout and pious soul in its gracious exercises,

1. Choosing the Lord for its portion and happiness. The most of men take the world for their chief good, and place their felicity in the enjoyments of it; but this I say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup;" the portion I make choice of, and will gladly take up with, how poor soever my condition is in this world. Let me have the love and favour of God, and be accepted of him; let me have the comfort of communion with God, and satisfaction in the communications of his graces and comforts. Let me have an interest in his promises, and a title by promise to everlasting life and happiness in the future state, and I have enough, I need no more, I desire no more to complete my felicity. Would we do well and wisely for ourselves, we must take God in Christ to be, 1st. The portion of our inheritance in the other world. Heaven is an inheritance, God himself is the inheritance of the saints there, whose everlasting bliss it is to enjoy him. We must take that for our inheritance, our home, our rest, our lasting, everlasting good, and look upon this world to be no more ours than the country is through which our road lies when we are in a journey. 2nd. The portion of our cup in this world with which I am nourished and refreshed, and kept from fainting. Those have not God for theirs who do not reckon his comforts the most reviving cordials, acquaint themselves with them, and make use of them as sufficient to balance all the grievances of this present time, and to sweeten the most bitter cup of affliction.

2. Confiding in him for the securing of this portion. "Thou maintainest my lot." Thou that hast by promise made over thyself to me to be mine wilt graciously make good what thou hast promised, and never leave me to myself to forfeit this happiness, nor leave it in the power of mine enemies to rob me of it. Nothing shall pluck me out of thy hands, nor separate me from thy love, and the sure mercies of David. The saints and their bliss are kept by the power of God.

3. Rejoicing in this portion, and taking a complacency in it; ver. 6, "The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places." Those have reason to say so that have God for their portion; they have a worthy portion, a goodly heritage. What can they have better? What can they desire more? "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," and look no farther. Note, Gracious souls, though they still covet more of God, never covet more than God; but, being satisfied of his lovingkindness, are abundantly satisfied with it, and envy not any their carnal mirth, and sensual pleasures and delights, but account themselves truly happy in what they have, and doubt not but to be completely happy in what they hope for. Those whose lot is cast, as David's was, in a land of light, a valley of vision, where God is known and worshipped, have upon that account reason to say the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places; much more they that have not only the means, but the end, not only Immanuel's land, but Immanuel's love.

4. Giving thanks to God for it, and for grace to make this wise and happy choice; ver. 7, "I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel," this counsel to take him for my portion and happiness. So ignorant and foolish are we, that if we be left to ourselves our hearts will follow our eyes, and we shall choose our own delusions, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities; and therefore, if we have indeed taken God for our portion, and preferred spiritual and eternal blessings before those that are sensible and temporal, we must thankfully acknowledge the power and goodness of Divine grace, directing and enabling us to make that choice. If we have the pleasure of it, let God have the praises of it.

5. Making a good use of it. God having given him counsel by his Word and Spirit, his own reins, that is, his own thoughts, also instructed him in the night season, when he was silent and solitary, and retired from the world. Then his own conscience (which is called the reins, *Jer.* xvii. 10) not only reflected with comfort upon the choice he had made, but instructed or admonished him concerning his duty, which he was obliged to by this choice; catechised him, and engaged and quickened him to live as one that had God for his portion, by faith to live upon him, and live to him. Those who have God for their portion, who will be faithful to them, must give their own consciences leave to deal thus faithfully and plainly with them.

All this may be applied to Christ, who made the Lord his portion, and was pleased with that portion, made his Father's glory his highest end, and made it his meat and drink to seek that and to do his will, and delighted to prosecute his undertaking, pursuant to his Father's counsel, depending upon him to maintain his lot, and to carry him through his undertaking. We may also apply it to ourselves in singing it, renewing our choice of God as ours, with a holy complacency and satisfaction.

8 I have set the LORD always before me:
Because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth:
My flesh also shall rest in hope.
10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;
Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life;

In thy presence *is* fulness of joy;
At thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

All these verses are quoted by St. Peter, in his first sermon after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, *Acts* ii. 25—28, and he tells us expressly, that David in them speaketh concerning Christ, and particularly of his resurrection. Something we may allow here of the workings of David's own pious and devout affections towards God, depending upon his grace to perfect every thing that concerned him, and looking for the blessed hope and a happy state on the other side death, in the enjoyment of God. But in these holy elevations towards God and heaven he was carried, by the spirit of prophecy, quite beyond the consideration of himself and his own case, to foretell the glory of the Messiah, in such expressions as were peculiar to that, and could not be understood of himself. The New Testament furnisheth us with a key to let us into the mystery of these lines.

First. These verses for certain must be applied to Christ. Of him speaketh the prophet this, as did many of the Old Testament prophets, who "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," 1 *Pet.* i. 11, and that is the subject of this prophecy here. It is foretold (as he himself shewed concerning this, no doubt, among other prophecies in this psalm, *Lu.* xxiv. 44, 46,) that Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead, 1 *Cor.* xv. 3, 4.

1. That he should suffer and die. This is implied here, when he saith, ver. 8, "I shall not be moved." He supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock given him, as he had in his agony, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, and he prayed that the cup might pass from him. When he saith, "my flesh shall rest," it is implied that he must put off the body, and therefore must go through the pains of death. It is likewise plainly intimated, that his soul must go into a state of separation from the body, and that his body so deserted would be in imminent danger of seeing corruption; that he should not only die, but be buried, and abide for some time under the power of death.

2. That he should be wonderfully borne up by the Divine power in suffering and dying. 1st. That he should not be moved nor driven off from his undertaking, nor sink under the weight of it; that he should not fail nor be discouraged, *Isa.* xlii. 4, but should proceed and persevere in it, till he could say, "It is finished." Though the service was hard, and the encounter hot, and he trod the winepress alone, yet he was not moved, did not give up the cause, but set his face as a flint, *Isa.* l. 7—9. "Here am I, let these go their way." Nay, 2nd. That his heart should rejoice, and his glory be glad; that he should go on with his undertaking, not only resolutely, but cheerfully, and with an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction. Witness that saying, *Jno.* xvii. 11, "Now I am no more in the world, but I come to thee;" and that, *Jno.* xviii. 11, "The cup that my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" and many the like. By his glory is meant his tongue, as appears *Acts* ii. 26; for our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in glorifying God.

Now there were three things which bore him up, and carried him on thus cheerfully. *First.* The respect he had to his Father's will and glory in what he did: "I have set the Lord always before me." He still had an eye to his Father's commandment, *Jno.* x. 18; xiv. 31; the will of him that sent him. He aimed at his Father's honour, and the restoring of the interests of his kingdom among men, and this kept him from being moved by the difficulties he met with; for he always did those things that pleased his Father. *Secondly.* The assurance he had of his Father's presence with him in his sufferings: "He is at my right hand;" a present help to me, nigh at hand in the time of need; *Isa.* l. 8, "He is near that justifieth me;" he is at my right hand, to direct and strengthen it, and hold it up, *Ps.* lxxxix. 21. When he was in his agony an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, *Lu.* xxii. 43. To this the victories and triumphs of the cross were all owing; it was the Lord at his right hand that struck through kings, *Ps.* cx. 5; *Isa.* xlii. 1, 2. *Thirdly.* The prospect he had of a glorious issue of his sufferings. It was for the joy set before him, that he endured the cross, *Heb.* xii. 2. He rested in hope, and that made his rest glorious, *Isa.* xi. 10. He knew he should be justified in the Spirit by his resurrection, and straightway glorified: see *Jno.* xiii. 31, 32.

3. That he should be brought through his sufferings, and brought from under the power of death by a glorious resurrection. 1st. That his soul should not be left in hell; that is, his human spirit should not be long left, as other men's spirits are, in a state of separation from the body, but should in a little time return and be re-united to it, never to part again. 2nd. That being God's Holy One in a peculiar manner, sanctified to the work of redemption, and perfectly free from sin, he should not see corruption, or feel it. This implies, that he should not only be raised from the grave, but raised so soon that his dead body should not so much as begin to corrupt, which in the course of nature it would have done, if it had not been raised the third day. We that have so much corruption in our souls must expect that our bodies also will corrupt, *Job* xxiv. 19. But that Holy One of God, who knew no sin, saw no corruption. Under the law it was strictly ordered that those parts of the sacrifices which were not burnt upon the altar yet should by no means be kept till the third day, lest they should putrefy, *Lev.* vii. 15, 18, which perhaps pointed at Christ's rising the third day, that he might not see corruption, as neither was a bone of him broken.

4. That he should be abundantly recompensed for his sufferings, with the joy set before him, ver. 11. He was well assured, 1st. That he should not miss of his glory. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life," and lead me to that life through this darksome valley. In confidence of this, when he gave up the ghost, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and a little before, "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self." 2nd. That he should be received into the presence of God, to sit at his right hand. His being admitted into God's presence would be the acceptance of his service; and his being set at his right hand the recompence of it. 3rd. Thus, as a reward for the sorrows he underwent for our redemption, he should have a "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore;" not only the glory he had with God, as God before all worlds, but the joy and pleasure of a Mediator, in seeing his seed, and the success and prosperity of his undertaking, *Isa.* liii. 10, 11.

Secondly. Christ being the head of the body, the church, these verses may for the most part be applied to all good Christians, who are guided and animated by the Spirit of Christ; and in singing of them, when we have first given glory to Christ, in whom they have to our everlasting comfort had their accomplishment, we may then encourage and edify ourselves and one another with them, and may from hence learn,

1. That it is our wisdom and duty to set the Lord always before us, and to see him continually at our right hand, wherever we are; to eye him as our chief good and highest end, our owner, ruler, and judge, our gracious benefactor, our sure guide, and strict observer; and while we do thus we shall not be moved either from our duty or from our comfort. Blessed Paul set the Lord before him, when, though bonds and afflictions did abide him, he could bravely say, "None of these things move me," *Acts* xx. 24.

2. That if our eyes be ever towards God, our hearts and tongues may ever rejoice in him. It is our own fault if they do not; if the heart rejoice in God, out of the abundance of that let the mouth speak, to his glory and the edification of others.

3. That dying Christians, as well as a dying Christ, may cheerfully put off the body in a believing expectation of a joyful resurrection. "My flesh also shall rest in hope." Our bodies have little rest in this world, but in the grave they shall rest as in their beds, *Isa.* lvii. 2. We have little to hope for from this life, but we shall rest in hope of a better life; that is, we may put off the body in that hope. Death destroys the hope of man, *Job* xiv. 14, but not the hope of a good Christian, *Pr.* xiv. 32. He has hope in his death, living hopes in dying moments; hopes that the body shall not be left for ever in the grave; but, though it see corruption for a time, it shall at the end of time be raised to immortality. Christ's resurrection is an earnest of ours if we be his.

4. That those who live piously with God in their eye may die comfortably with heaven in their eye. In this world sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy; all our joys here are empty and defective, but in heaven there is a fulness of joy. Our pleasures here are transient and momentary, and such is the nature of them that it is not fit they should last long; but those at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore; for they are the pleasures of immortal souls in the immediate vision and fruition of an eternal God.

PSALM XVII.

David, being in great distress and danger by the malice of his enemies, doth in this psalm, by prayer, address himself to God, his tried refuge, and seeks shelter in him. I. He appeals to God concerning his integrity, ver. 1—4. II. He prays to God still to be upheld in his integrity, and preserved from the malice of his enemies, ver. 5—8, 13. III. He gives a character of his enemies, using that as a plea with God for his preservation, ver. 9—12, 14. IV. He comforts himself with the hopes of his future happiness, ver. 15. And some make him in this a type of Christ, who was perfectly innocent, and yet was hated and persecuted; but, like David, committed himself and his cause to him that judgeth righteously.

A Prayer of David.

HEAR the right, O LORD,
Attend unto my cry, [lips.
Give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned
2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence;
Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.
3 Thou hast proved mine heart;
Thou hast visited *me* in the night;
Thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing;
I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.
4 Concerning the works of men,
By the word of thy lips I have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer.
5 Hold up my goings in thy paths,
That my footsteps slip not.
6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God:
Incline thine ear unto me, *and hear* my speech.
7 Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness,
O thou that savest by thy right hand
Them which put their trust *in thee*
From those that rise up *against them.*

This psalm is a prayer. As there is a time to weep, and a time to rejoice, so there is a time for praise, and a time for prayer. David was now persecuted, probably by Saul, who hunted him like a partridge on the mountains; without were fightings, within were fears, and both drove him to his prayers. He addresseth himself to God in these verses, both by way of appeal, "Hear the right, O Lord," that is, let my righteous cause have a hearing before thy tribunal, and give judgment upon it; and by way of petition, "Give ear unto my prayer," ver. 1; and again, ver. 6, "Incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech." Not that God needs to be thus pressed with our importunity, but he gives us leave thus to express our earnest desires of his gracious answers to our prayers. These things he pleads with God for audience, 1. That he was sincere, and did not dissemble with God in his prayer; it "goeth not out of feigned lips." He meant as he spoke, and the impressions on his mind agreed with the expressions of his mouth. Feigned prayers are fruitless, but if our hearts lead our prayers God will meet them with his favour. 2. That he had been used to pray at other times, and it was not his distress and danger that now first brought him to his duty. "I have called upon thee" formerly, ver. 6, therefore, Lord, hear me now. It will be a great comfort to us if trouble, when it comes, finds the wheels of prayer a going, for then may we come with the more boldness to the throne of grace. Tradesmen are willing to oblige those that have been long their customers. 3. That he was encouraged by his faith to expect God would take notice of his prayers. I know "thou wilt hear me," and therefore, "O God, incline thine ear unto me." Our believing dependence upon God is a good plea to enforce our desires towards him. Let us now see,

First. What his appeal is. And there observe,

1. What the court is to the cognizance and determination of which he doth appeal. It is the court of heaven. Lord, do thou "hear the right," for Saul is so passionate, so prejudiced, he will not hear it. Lord, "let my sentence come forth from thy presence," ver. 2. Men sentence me to be run down, and cut off as an evil-doer. Lord, I appeal from them to thee. This he did in a public remonstrance before Saul's face, 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 12, "The Lord judge between me and thee;" and he repeats it here in his private devotions. Note, 1st. The equity and extent of God's government and judgment is a very great support to injured innocency. If we are blackened and abused and misrepresented by unrighteous men, it is our comfort that we have a righteous God to go to, who will take our part, who is the patron of the oppressed, whose judgment is according to truth, by the discoveries of which every person and every cause will appear in a true light, stript of all false colours, and by the decisions of which all unrighteous dooms will be reversed, and to every man will be rendered according to his work. 2nd. Sincerity dreads no scrutiny, no, not that of God himself, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace. "Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal." God's omniscience is as much the joy of the upright as it is the terror of hypocrites, and is particularly

comfortable to those who are falsely accused, and in any wise have wrong done them.

2. What the evidence is by which he hopes to make good his appeal. It is the trial God had made of him; ver. 3, "Thou hast proved mine heart." God's sentence is therefore right, because he always proceeds upon his own knowledge, which is more certain and infallible than that which men attain to by the closest views and the strictest searches. He knew God had tried him, 1st. By his own conscience, which is God's deputy in the soul. "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord;" with this God had searched him, and visited him in the night, when he communed with his own heart upon his bed. He had submitted to the search, and had seriously reviewed the actions of his life, to discover what was amiss; but could find nothing of that which his enemies charged him with. 2nd. By providence. God had tried him by the fair opportunity he had once and again to kill Saul; and tried him by the malice of Saul, the treachery of his friends, and the many provocations that were given him, so that if he had been the man he was represented to be, it would have appeared; but upon all these trials there was nothing found against him, no proof at all of the things whereof they accused him.

God tried his heart, and could witness to the integrity of that; but, for the farther proof of his integrity, he himself takes notice of two things, concerning which his conscience bore him record: *First.* That he had a fixed resolution against all tongue sins: "I am purposed," and fully determined, in the strength of God's grace, "that my mouth shall not transgress." He doth not say, I hope it shall not, or, I wish it may not; but, I am fully purposed that it shall not; with this bridle he kept his mouth, *Ps.* xxxix. 2. Note, Constant resolution and watchfulness against tongue sins will be a good evidence of our integrity. "If any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man," *Jas.* iii. 2. He doth not say, My mouth never shall transgress, for "in many things we all offend;" but, I am purposed that it shall not, and He that searcheth the heart knows whether the purpose be sincere. *Secondly.* That he had been as careful to refrain from sinful actions as from sinful words; ver. 4, "Concerning the" common "works of men," the actions and affairs of human life, "I have," by the direction of thy word, "kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Some understand it particularly, that he had not been himself a destroyer of Saul, when it lay in his power, nor had he permitted others to be so, but said to Abishai, "Destroy him not," 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 9. But it may be taken more generally, he kept himself from all evil works, and endeavoured, according to the duty of his place, to keep others from them too. Note, 1*st.* The ways of sin are paths of the destroyer, that is, of the devil, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, that is, a destroyer, and who ruins souls by decoying them into the paths of sin. 2*nd.* It concerns us all to keep out of the paths of the destroyer, for if we walk in those ways that lead to destruction, we must thank ourselves if destruction and misery be our portion at last. 3*rd.* It is by the word of God, as our guide and rule, that we must keep out of the paths of the destroyer, by observing the directions and admonitions of that, *Ps.* cxix. 9. 4*th.* If we carefully avoid all the paths of sin, it will be very comfortable in the reflection when we are in trouble. If we keep ourselves, that the wicked one touch us not with his temptations, 1 *Jno.* v. 18, we may hope he shall not be able to touch us with his terrors.

Secondly. What his petition is. It is in short this: that he might experience the good work of God in him, as an evidence of, and qualification for, the good will of God towards him. This is grace and peace from God the Father.

1. He prays for the work of God's grace in him; ver. 5, "Hold up my goings in thy paths." Lord, I have by thy grace "kept me from the paths of the destroyer," by the same grace let me be kept in thy paths; let me not only be restrained from doing that which is evil, but quickened to abound always in that which is good. Let my goings be held in thy paths, that I may not turn back from them, nor turn aside out of them; let them be held up in thy paths, that I may not stumble and fall into sin, that I may not trifle and neglect my duty. Lord, as thou hast kept me hitherto, so keep me still. Those that are through grace going in God's paths, have need to pray, and do pray, that their goings may be held up in those paths; for we stand no longer than he is pleased to hold us, we go no farther than he is pleased to lead us, bear up, and carry us. David had been kept in the way of his duty hitherto, and yet he doth not think that would be his security for the future, and therefore prays, 'Lord, still hold me up.' Those that would proceed and persevere in the way of God, must by faith and prayer fetch in daily fresh supplies of grace and strength from him. David was sensible that his way was slippery, that he himself was weak, and not so well fixed and furnished as he should be; that there were those who watched for his halting, and would improve the least slip against him, and therefore he prays, 'Lord, hold me up, that my foot slip not, that I may never say or do any thing that looks either dishonest or distrustful of thee and thy providence and promise.'

2. He prays for the tokens of God's favour to him, ver. 7. Observe here, 1st. How he eyes God as the protector and saviour of his people, so he calls him, and from that he takes his encouragement in prayer. "O thou that savest by thy right hand" (by thine own power, and needest not the agency of any other,) "them which put their trust in thee, from those that rise up against them." It is the character of God's people, that they trust in him; he is pleased to make them his confidants, for his secret is with the righteous; and they make him their confidence, for to him they commit themselves. Those that trust in God have many enemies, many that rise up against them, and seek their ruin; but they have one friend that is able to deal with them all, and if he be for them no matter who is against them. He reckons it his honour to be their Saviour. His almighty power is engaged for them, and they have all found him ready to save them. The margin reads it, 'O thou that savest them which trust in thee from those that rise up against thy right hand.' Those that are enemies to the saints are rebels against God and his right hand, and therefore no doubt he will in due time appear against them. 2nd. What he expects and desires from God: "Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness." The word signifies, *First.* Distinguishing favours. Set apart thy lovingkindnesses for me; put me not off with common mercies, but be gracious to me, "as thou usest to do to those who love thy name." *Secondly.* Wonderful favours. O make thy lovingkindness admirable; that is, Lord, testify thy favour to me in such a way as that I and others may wonder at it. God's lovingkindness is marvellous for the freeness and the fulness of it; in some instances it appears in a special manner marvellous, *Ps.* cxviii. 23, it will certainly appear so in the salvation of the saints, when Christ shall come "to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye,
Hide me under the shadow of thy wings,
9 From the wicked that oppress me,
From my deadly enemies, *who* compass me about.
10 They are inclosed in their own fat:
With their mouth they speak proudly.
11 They have now compassed us in our steps:
They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;
12 Like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey,
And as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.
13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down:
Deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is* thy sword:
14 From men *which are* thy hand, O LORD, [life,
From men of the world, *which have* their portion in *this*
And whose belly thou fillest with thy hid *treasure:*
They are full of children, and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.
15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness:
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

We may observe in these verses,

First. What David prays for. Being compassed about with enemies that sought his life, he prays to God to preserve him safe through all their attempts against him, to the crown to which he was anointed. And this prayer was both a prediction of the preservation of Christ through all the hardships and difficulties of his humiliation, to the glories and joys of his exalted state, and a pattern to Christians to commit the keeping of their souls to God, trusting him to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom. He prays,

1. That he himself might be protected, ver. 8. Keep me safe; hide me close, where I may not to be found, where I may not be come at. "Deliver my soul," not only my mortal life from death, but my immortal spirit from sin Those who put themselves under God's protection may in faith implore the benefit of it. He prays that God would keep him, 1st. With as much care as a man keeps the apple of his eye, which nature has wonderfully fenced, and teaches us to guard. If we keep God's law as the apple of our eye, *Pr.* vii. 2, we may expect that God will so keep us; for it is said concerning his people, that whoso toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye, *Zec.* ii. 8. 2nd. With as much tenderness as the hen gathers her young ones under her wings. Christ useth the similitude, *Mat.* xxiii. 37; "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings," where I may be both safe and warm. Or, perhaps, it rather alludes to the wings of the cherubims shadowing the mercy-seat. Let me be taken under the protection of that glorious grace which is peculiar to God's Israel. What David here prays for was performed to the Son of David our Lord Jesus, of whom it is said, *Isa.* xlix. 2, that God hid him in the shadow of his hand, hid him as a polished shaft in his quiver. David prays, Lord, keep me from the wicked, from men of the world; that is, *First.* From being and doing like them, from walking in their counsel, and standing in their way, and eating of their dainties. *Secondly.* From being destroyed and run down by them. Let them not have their will against me, let them not triumph over me.

2. That all the designs of his enemies to bring him either into sin or into trouble might be defeated; ver. 13, "Arise, O Lord," appear for me, "disappoint him," and cast him down in his own eyes by the disappointment. While Saul persecuted David, how often did he miss his prey, then when he thought he had him sure enough; and how were Christ's enemies disappointed by his resurrection, who thought they had gained their point when they had put him to death.

Secondly. What he pleads for the encouraging of his own faith in these petitions, and his hope of speeding. He pleads,

1. The malice and wickedness of his enemies. They are such as are not fit to be countenanced, such as, if I be not delivered from them by the special care of God himself, will be my ruin. Lord, see what wicked men they are that oppress me, and waste me, and run me down. 1st. They are very spiteful and malicious. They are my deadly enemies, that thirst after my blood, my heart's blood; 'enemies against the soul,' so the word is. David's enemies did what they could to drive him to sin, and drive him away from God; they bade him go serve other gods, 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 19; and therefore he had reason to pray against them. Note, Those are our worst enemies, and we ought so to account them, that are enemies to our souls. 2nd. They are very secure and sensual, insolent and haughty, ver. 10. "They are enclosed in their own fat," wrap themselves, hug themselves, in their own honour, and power, and plenty, and then make light of God, and set his judgments at defiance, *Job* xv. 26; *Ps.* lxxiii. 7. They wallow in pleasure, and promise themselves that to-morrow shall be as this day; and therefore, "with their mouth they speak proudly," glorying in themselves, blaspheming God, trampling upon his people, and insulting them: see *Rev.* xiii. 5, 6. Lord, are not such men as these fit to be mortified and humbled, and made to know themselves? Will it not be for thy glory to look upon these proud men, and abase them? 3rd. They are restless and unwearied in their attempts against me, they compass me about, ver. 9. "They have now" in a manner gained their point, they have surrounded us, "they have compassed us in our steps," they track us wherever we go, follow us as close as the hound doth the hare, and take all advantages against us, being both too many for us, and too quick for us; and yet they take on them to look another way, "they set their eyes bowing down to the earth," as if they were meditating, retired into themselves, and thinking of something else; or, as some think, they are watchful and intent upon it to do us a mischief; downlooked, and never slip an opportunity of compassing their design. 4th. The ringleader of them (that was Saul) is in a special manner bloody and barbarous, politic and projecting, ver. 12, like a lion that lives by prey, and is therefore greedy of it. It is as much the meat and drink of a wicked man to do mischief, as it is of a good man to do good. He is like "a young lion lurking in secret places," disguising his cruel designs. This is fitly applied to Saul, who sought David on the rocks of the wild goats, 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 2; and in the wilderness of Ziph, 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 2, where lions used to lurk for their prey.

2. The power God hath over them to control and restrain them. He pleads, 1st. Lord, they are thy sword, and will any father suffer his sword to be drawn against his own children? As this is a reason why we should patiently bear the injuries of men, that they are but the instruments of the trouble, it comes originally from God, to whose will we are bound to submit, so it is an encouragement to us to hope both that their wrath shall praise him, and that the remainder thereof he will restrain, that they are God's sword, which he can manage as he pleaseth, which cannot move without him, and which he will sheath when he has done his work with it. 2nd. They are thy hand, by which thou dost chastise thy people, and make them feel thy displeasure. He therefore expects deliverance from God's hand, because from God's hand the trouble came; *una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit,*—'the same hand wounds and heals.' There is no flying from God's hand, but by flying to it.

It is very comfortable, when we are in fear of the power of man, to see it dependent upon, andin subjection to, the power of God: see *Isa.* x. 6, 7, 15.

3. Their outward prosperity, ver. 14. Lord, appear against them; for, 1st. They are entirely devoted to the world, and care not for thee and thy favour. They are men of the world, acted by the spirit of the world, walking according to the course of this world, in love with the wealth and pleasure of this world, eager in the pursuits of it, and making them their business, and at ease in the enjoyments of it, and making them their bliss. They "have their portion in this life;" that is, they look upon the good things of this world as the best things, and sufficient to make them happy, and they choose them accordingly, place their felicity in them, aim at them as their chief good, rest satisfied with them, their souls take their ease in them, and they look no farther, nor are in any care to provide for another life. These things are their consolation, *Lu.* vi. 24; their good things, *Lu.* xvi. 25; their reward, *Mat.* vi. 5; the penny they agreed for, *Mat.* xx. 13. Now, Lord, shall men of this character be supported and countenanced against those that honour thee, by preferring thy favour before all the wealth in this world, and taking thee for their portion? *Ps.* xvi. 5. 2nd. They have abundance of the world. *First.* They have enlarged appetites, and a great deal wherewith to satisfy them; their "belly thou fillest with thy hid treasures." The things of this world are called treasures, because they are so accounted; otherwise to a soul, and in comparison with eternal blessings, they are but trash. They are hid in the several parts of the creation, and hid in the sovereign disposals of Providence. They are God's hid treasures, for the earth is his and the fulness thereof, though the men of the world think it is their own, and forget God's property in it. They that fare deliciously every day, have their bellies filled with these hid treasures, and they will but fill the belly, 1 *Cor.* vi. 13; they will not fill the soul, they are not bread for that, nor can they satisfy, *Isa.* lv. 2. They are husks, and ashes, and wind; yet the most of men, having no care for their souls, but all for their bellies, take up with them. *Secondly.* They have numerous families, and a great deal to leave to them. "They are full of children," and yet their pasture is not overstocked, they have enough for them all, "and leave the rest of their substance to their babes," that is, to their grand-children; and this is their heaven, it is their bliss, it is their all. Lord, saith David, Deliver me from them; that is, let not me have my portion with them; deliver me from their designs against me, for, they having so much wealth and power, I am not able to deal with them unless the Lord be on my side.

4. He pleads his own dependence upon God as his portion and happiness. They have their portion in this life, but as for me, ver. 15, I am none of them, I have but little of the world; *nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo*,—'I neither have, nor need, nor care for it.' It is the vision and fruition of God that I place my happiness in, that is it I hope for, and comfort myself with the hopes of, and thereby distinguish myself from those that "have their portion in this life." Beholding God's face with satisfaction may be considered, 1st. As our duty and comfort in this world. We must in righteousness (clothed with Christ's righteousness, having a good heart, and a good life,) by faith behold God's face, and set him always before us; entertain ourselves from day to day with the contemplation of the beauty of the Lord; and when we awake every morning we must be satisfied with his likeness set before us in his word, and with his likeness stamped upon us by his renewing grace. Our experience of God's favour to us, and our conformity to him, should yield us more satisfaction than they have whose belly is filled with the delights of sense. 2nd. As our recompence and happiness in the other world. With the prospect of that he concluded the foregoing psalm, and so this: that happiness is prepared and designed only for the righteous that are justified and sanctified. They shall be put in possession of it when they awake; when the soul awakes, at death, out of its slumber in the body, and when the body awakes, at the resurrection, out of its slumber in the grave. That blessedness will consist in three things: *First.* The immediate vision of God and his glory, "I shall behold thy face," not as in this world through a glass darkly. The knowledge of God will there be perfected, and the enlarged intellects filled with it. *Secondly.* The participations of his likeness; our holiness will there be perfect. This results from the former; 1 *Jno.* iii. 2, "when he shall appear we shall" therefore "be like him, for we shall see him as he is." *Thirdly.* A complete and full satisfaction resulting from this. "I shall be satisfied," abundantly satisfied with it. There is no satisfaction for a soul but in God, and in his face and likeness, his good-will towards us, and his good work in us; and even that satisfaction will not be perfect till we come to heaven.

PSALM XVIII.

This psalm we met with before in the history of David's life, 2 *Sam.* xxii. That was the first edition of it; here we have it revived, altered a little, and fitted for the service of the church. It is David's thanksgiving for the many deliverances God had wrought for him, which he desired always to preserve fresh in his own memory, and to diffuse and entail the knowledge of them. It is an admirable composure. The poetry is very fine, the images bold, the expressions lofty, and every word proper and significant. But the piety far exceeds the poetry; holy faith, and love, and joy, and praise, and hope, are here lively, active, and upon the wing. I. He triumphs in God, ver. 1—3. II. He magnifies the deliverances God had wrought for him, ver. 4—19. III. He takes the comfort of his integrity which God hed thereby cleared up, ver. 20—28. IV. He gives to God the glory of all his achievements, ver. 29—42. V. He encourageth himself with the expectation of what God would farther do for him and his, ver. 43—50.

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day *that* the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

I WILL love thee, O LORD, my strength.
2 The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; [tower.
My buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high
3 I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised:
So shall I be saved from mine enemies.
4 The sorrows of death compassed me,
And the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about:
The snares of death prevented me. [my God:
6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto
He heard my voice out of his temple,
And my cry came before him, *even* into his ears.
7 Then the earth shook and trembled;
The foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken,
Because he was wroth.
8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
And fire out of his mouth devoured:
Coals were kindled by it.
9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down:
And darkness *was* under his feet.
10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly:
Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
11 He made darkness his secret place;
His pavilion round about him
Were dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.
12 At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds
Hail *stones* and coals of fire. [passed,
13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
And the Highest gave his voice;
Hail *stones* and coals of fire.
14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
And he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.
15 Then the channels of waters were seen,
And the foundations of the world were discovered
At thy rebuke, O LORD,
At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils
16 He sent from above, he took me,
He drew me out of many waters.
17 He delivered me from my strong enemy,
And from them which hated me:
For they were too strong for me.
18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity:
But the LORD was my stay.
19 He brought me forth also into a large place;
He delivered me, because he delighted in me

The title gives us the occasion of penning this psalm. We had it before, 2 *Sam.* xxii. 1, only here we are told that the psalm was delivered "to the chief musician," or precentor in the temple songs. Note, The private composures of good men, designed by them for their own use, may be serviceable to the public, that others may not only borrow light from their candle, but heat from their fire. Examples sometimes teach better than rules; and David is here called "the servant of the Lord," as Moses was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but because with his sceptre, with his sword, and with his pen, he greatly promoted the interests of God's kingdom in Israel. It was more his honour that he was a servant of the Lord than that he was king of a great kingdom; and so he himself accounted it, *Ps.* cxvi. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant." In these verses,

First. He triumphs in God, and his relation to him. The first words of the psalm, "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength," are here prefixed as the scope and contents of the whole. Love to God is the first and great commandment of the law, because it is the principle of all our acceptable praise and obedience; and this use we should make of all the mercies God bestows upon us, our hearts should thereby be enlarged in love to him. This he requires, and will accept; and we are very ungrateful if we grudge him so poor a return. An interest in the person loved is the lover's delight; this string therefore he touches, and on this he harps with a great deal of pleasure; ver. 2, The Lord, Jehovah, is my God; and then, he is my rock, my fortress, all that which I need and can desire in my present distress; for there is that in God which is suited to all the exigences and occasions of his people that trust in him. He is my rock, and strength, and fortress; that is, 1. I have found him so in the greatest dangers and difficulties. 2. I have chosen him to be so, disclaiming all others, and depending upon him alone to protect me. Those that truly love God may thus triumph in him as theirs; and may with confidence call upon him, ver. 3. This farther use we should make of our deliverances, we must not only love God the better, but love prayer the better. Call upon him as long as we live, especially in time of trouble, with an assurance that so we shall be saved; for thus it is written, that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," *Acts* ii. 21.

Secondly. He sets himself to greaten the deliverances God had wrought for him, that he might be the more affected in his returns of praise. It is good for us to observe all the circumstances of a mercy, which magnify the power of God and his goodness to us in it.

1. The more imminent and threatening the danger was out of which we were delivered the greater is the mercy of the deliverance. David now remembered how the forces of his enemies poured in upon him, which he calls the floods of Belial, shoals of the children of Belial, likely to overpower him with numbers. They surrounded him, compassed him about; they surprised him, and by that means were very near seizing him; their snares prevented him; and when without were fightings within were fears and sorrows, ver. 4, 5. His spirit was overwhelmed, and he looked upon himself as a gone man: see *Ps.* cxvi. 2.

2. The more earnest we have been with God for deliverance, and the more direct answer it is to our prayers, the more we are obliged to be thankful. David's deliverances were so, ver. 6. David was found a praying man, and God was found a prayer-hearing God. If we pray as he did, we shall speed as he did. Though distress drive us to prayer, God will not therefore be deaf to us; nay, being a God of pity, he will be the more ready to succour us.

3. The more wonderful God's appearances are in any deliverance the

greater it is. Such were the deliverances wrought for David, in which God's manifestation of his presence and glorious attributes is most magnificently described, ver. 7, &c. Little appeared of man, but much of God, in these deliverances. 1st. He appeared a God of almighty power; for he made the earth shake and tremble, and moved even the foundations of the hills, ver. 7, as of old at mount Sinai. When the men of the earth were struck with fear, then the earth might be said to tremble; when the great men of the earth were put into confusion, then the hills moved. 2nd. He shewed his anger and displeasure against the enemies and persecutors of his people. He was wroth, ver. 7. His wrath smoked, it burned, it was fire, it was devouring fire, ver. 8; and coals were kindled by it. Those that by their own sins make themselves as coals (that is, fuel) to this fire, will be consumed by it. He that "ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors, sendeth them forth" when he pleaseth, and they are sure to hit the mark, and do execution; for those arrows are lightnings, ver. 14. 3rd. He shewed his readiness to plead his people's cause, and work deliverance for them; for "he rode upon a cherub, and did fly," for the maintaining of right, and the relieving his distressed servants, ver. 10. No opposition, no obstruction, can be given to him "who rideth upon the wings of the wind, who rides on the heavens for the help of his people, and in his excellency on the skies." 4th. He shewed his condescension, in taking cognizance of David's case; "He bowed the heavens and came down," ver. 9; did not send an angel, but came himself, as one afflicted in the afflictions of his people. 5th. He wrapped himself in darkness, and yet commanded light to shine out of darkness for his people, *Isa.* xlv. 15. He is a God that hideth himself; for "he made darkness his pavilion," ver. 11. His glory is invisible, his counsels are unsearchable, and his proceedings unaccountable; and so, as to us, "clouds and darkness are round about him." We know not the way that he takes, even when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy; but when his designs are secret they are kind; for, though he hide himself, he is the God of Israel, the Saviour; and, at his brightness the thick clouds pass, ver. 12, comfort returns, the face of affairs is changed, and that which was gloomy and threatening becomes serene and pleasant.

4. The greater the difficulties are that lie in the way of deliverance the more glorious the deliverance is. For the rescuing of David, the waters were to be divided till the very channels were seen. The earth was to be cloven till the very foundations of it were discovered, ver. 15. There were waters deep and many, waters out of which he was to be drawn, ver. 16, as Moses, who from thence had his name, because he was drawn out of the water literally, so David figuratively. His enemies were strong, and they hated him; had he been left to himself, they had been too strong for him, ver. 17; and they were too quick for him, for they prevented him in the day of his calamity, ver. 18. But in the midst of his troubles the Lord was his stay, so that he did not sink. Note, God will not only deliver his people out of their troubles in due time, but he will sustain them, and bear them up under their troubles in the meantime.

5. That which especially magnified the deliverance was, that his comfort was the fruit of it, and God's favour was the root and fountain of it. 1st. It was an introduction to his preferment; ver. 19, "He brought me forth also" out of my straits "into a large place," where I had not only room to turn me, but room to thrive. 2nd. It was a token of God's favour to him, and that made it doubly sweet. "He delivered me because he delighted in me," not for my merit, but for his own grace and good-will: compare this with 2 *Sam.* xv. 26, "If he thus say, I have no delight in thee, here I am." We owe our salvation, that great deliverance, to the delight God had in the Son of David, in whom he has declared himself to be well pleased.

In singing this, we must triumph in God, and trust in him. And we may apply it to Christ, the Son of David. The sorrows of death surrounded him; in his distress he prayed, *Heb.* v. 7; God made the earth to shake and tremble, and the rocks to rend, and brought him out in his resurrection into a large place, because he delighted in him and his undertaking.

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness;
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.
21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD,
And have not wickedly departed from my God.
22 For all his judgments *were* before me,
And I did not put away his statutes from me.
23 I was also upright before him,
And I kept myself from mine iniquity.
24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me
According to my righteousness,
According to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.
25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful;
With an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;
26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure;
And with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.
27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people;
But wilt bring down high looks.
28 For thou wilt light my candle:
The LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

Here, First. David reflects with comfort upon his own integrity, and rejoiceth in the testimony of his conscience, that he had had his conversation in godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom, 2 *Cor.* i. 12. His deliverances were an evidence of this, and this was the great comfort of his deliverances. His enemies had misrepresented him, and perhaps when his troubles continued long, he began to suspect himself; but, when God visibly took his part, he had both the credit and the comfort of his righteousness. 1. His deliverances cleared his innocency before men, and acquitted him from those crimes which he was falsely accused of. This he calls rewarding him according to his righteousness, ver. 20, 24; that is, determining the controversy between him and his enemies, according to the justice of his cause, and the cleanness of his hands from that sedition, treason, and rebellion with which he was charged. He had often appealed to God concerning his innocency; and now God had given judgment upon the appeal, as he always will, according to equity. 2. They confirmed the testimony of his own conscience for him, which he here reviews with a great deal of pleasure, ver. 21—23. His own heart knows and is ready to attest it, 1st. That he had kept firm to his duty, and had not departed, not wickedly, not wilfully, departed from his God. They that forsake the ways of the Lord do in effect depart from their God, and it is a wicked thing to do so. But though we are conscious to ourselves of many a stumble, and many a false step taken, yet, if we recover ourselves by repentance, and go on in the way of our duty, it shall not be construed a departure, for it is not a wicked departure from our God. 2nd. That he had kept his eye upon the rule of God's commands; ver. 22, "All his judgments were before me," and I had a respect to them all, despised none as little, disliked none as hard, but made it my care and business to conform to them all. His statutes I did not put away from me, out of my sight, out of my mind, but kept my eye always upon them, and did not as those who, because they would quit the ways of the Lord, desire not the knowledge of those ways. 3rd. That he had kept himself from his iniquity, and thereby had approved himself upright before God. Constant care to abstain from that sin, whatever it be, which doth most easily beset us, and to mortify the habit of it, will be a good evidence for us that we are upright before God. As David's deliverances cleared his integrity, so did the exaltation of Christ clear his, and for ever roll away the reproach that was cast upon him; and therefore he is said to be "justified in the Spirit," 1 *Tim.* iii. 16.

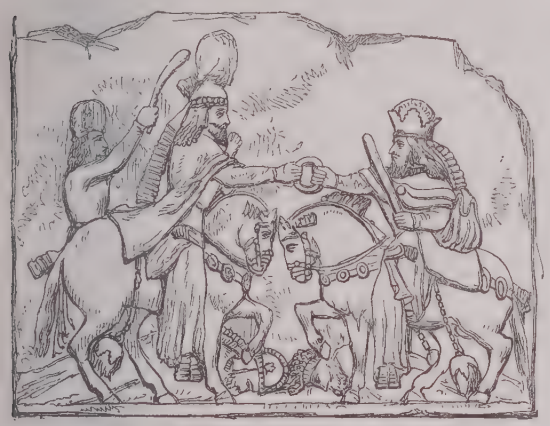
Secondly. He takes occasion from thence to lay down the rules of God's government and judgment, that we may know not only what God expects from us, but what we may expect from him, ver. 25, 26. 1. Those that shew mercy to others (even they need mercy, and cannot depend upon the merit, no, not of their works of mercy, and they) shall find mercy with God, *Mat.* v. 7. 2. Those that are faithful to their covenants with God, and the relations wherein they stand to him, shall find him all that to them which he has promised to be. Wherever God finds an upright man he will be found an upright God. 3. Those that serve God with a pure conscience, shall find that the words of the Lord are pure words, that is, very sure to be depended on, and very sweet to be delighted in. 4. Those that resist God, and walk contrary to him, he will resist them, and walk contrary to them, *Lev.* xxvi. 21, 24.

Thirdly. From thence he speaks comfort to the humble; "Thou wilt save the afflicted people," that are wronged and bear it patiently. Terror to the proud; "Thou wilt bring down high looks," that aim high and expect great things for themselves, and look with scorn and disdain upon the poor and pious. And encouragement to himself; "Thou wilt light my candle," that is, thou wilt revive and comfort my sorrowful spirit, and not leave me melancholy; thou wilt recover me out of my troubles, and restore me to peace and prosperity; thou wilt make my honour bright, which is now eclipsed; thou wilt guide my way, and make it plain before me, that I may avoid the snares laid for me; thou wilt light my candle to work by, and give me an opportunity of serving thee and the interests of thy kingdom among men.

Let those that walk in darkness, and labour under many discouragements, in singing these verses, encourage themselves that God himself will be a light to them.

29 For by thee I have run through a troop;
And by my God have I leaped over a wall.
30 *As for* God, his way *is* perfect:
The word of the LORD is tried:
He *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.
31 For who *is* God save the LORD?
Or who *is* a rock save our God?
32 *It is* God that girdeth me with strength,
And maketh my way perfect.
33 He maketh my feet like hinds' *feet*,
And setteth me upon my high places.
34 He teacheth my hands to war,
So that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.
35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation:
And thy right hand hath holden me up,
And thy gentleness hath made me great.
36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me,
That my feet did not slip.
37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them:
Neither did I turn again till they were consumed.
38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise:
They are fallen under my feet.
39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle:
Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.
40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies;
That I might destroy them that hate me.
41 They cried, but *there was* none to save *them*:
Even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.
42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind:
I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.
43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people;
And thou hast made me the head of the heathen:
A people *whom* I have not known shall serve me.
44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me:
The strangers shall submit themselves unto me.
45 The strangers shall fade away,
And be afraid out of their close places.

46 The LORD liveth; and blessed *be* my rock;
And let the God of my salvation be exalted
47 *It is* God that avengeth me,
And subdueth the people unto me.
48 He delivereth me from mine enemies: [me:
Yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against
Thou hast delivered me from the violent man.
49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among
And sing praises unto thy name. [the heathen,
50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king;
And sheweth mercy to his anointed,
To David, and to his seed for evermore



FROM SCULPTURES AT PERSEPOLIS.—ver. 40.

In these verses,

First. David looks back with thankfulness upon the great things which God had done for him. He had not only wrought deliverance for him, but had given him victory and success, and made him triumph over those who thought to have triumphed over him. When we set ourselves to praise God for one mercy, we must be led by that to observe the many more with which we have been compassed about and followed all our days. Many things had contributed to David's advancement, and he owns the hand of God in them all, to teach us to do likewise, in reviewing the several steps by which we have risen to our prosperity. 1. God had given him all his skill and understanding in military affairs, which he was not bred up to, nor designed for, his genius leading him more to music and poetry, and a contemplative life. "He teacheth my hands to war," ver. 34. 2. God had given him bodily strength to go through the business and fatigue of war; God girded him with strength, ver. 32, 39, to that degree, that he could break even a bow of steel, ver. 34. What service God designs men for he will be sure to fit them for. 3. God had likewise given him great swiftness, not to flee from the enemies, but to fly upon them; ver. 33, "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet;" ver. 36, "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me," but (whereas those that take large steps are apt to tread awry) "my feet did not slip." He was so swift that he pursued his enemies and overtook them, ver. 37. 4. God had made him very bold and daring in his enterprises, and given him spirit proportionable to his strength. If a troop stood in his way, he made nothing of running through them; if a wall, he made nothing of leaping over it, ver. 29; if ramparts and bulwarks, he soon mounted them, and, by Divine assistance, set his feet upon the high places of the enemy, ver. 33. 5. God had protected him, and kept him safe in the midst of the greatest perils. Many a time he put his life in his hand, and yet it was wonderfully preserved. "Thou hast given me the shield of thy salvation," ver. 35, and that has compassed me on every side. By that I have been "delivered from the strivings of the people," that aimed at my destruction, ver. 43, particularly from the violent man, ver. 48, namely, Saul, who more than once threw a javelin at him. 6. God had prospered and succeeded him in his designs. He it was that made his way perfect, ver. 32; and it was his right hand that held him up, ver. 35. 7. God had given him victory over his enemies, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and all that fought against Israel. Those especially he means, yet not excluding the house of Saul, which opposed his coming to the crown; and the partisans of Absalom and Sheba, that would have deposed him. He enlargeth much upon the goodness of God to him in defeating his enemies, attributing his victories not to his own sword or bow, or the valour of his mighty men, but to the favour of God. I pursued them, ver. 37, I wounded them, ver. 38, "for thou hast girded me with strength," ver. 39, else I could not have done it. All the praise is ascribed to God; Thou hast subdued them under me, ver. 39. Thou hast given me their necks, ver. 40, not only to trample upon them, as *Jos.* x. 24, but to cut them off. Even those that hated David whom God loved, and were enemies to the Israel of God, yet in their distress "cried unto the Lord," but in vain, "he answered them not." How could they expect he should, when it was he they fought against? And when he disowned them, (as he will all those that act against his people,) no other succours could stand them in stead, "there was none to save them," ver. 41. Those whom God has abandoned are easily vanquished: "Then did I beat them small as the dust," ver. 43; but those whose cause is just he avengeth, ver. 47; and those whom he favours will certainly be lifted up above those that rise up against them, ver. 42. 8. God had raised him to the throne, and not only delivered him and kept him alive, but dignified him, and made him great, ver. 35. 'Thy gentleness hath increased me;' thy discipline and instruction, so some. The good lessons David learned in his affliction prepared him for the dignity and power that were intended him; and the lessening of him helped very much to greaten him. God made him not only a great conqueror, but a great ruler; "Thou hast made me the head of the heathen," ver. 43. All the neighbour nations were tributaries to him: see 2 *Sam.* viii. 6, 11. In all this David was a type of Christ, whom the Father brought safely through his conflicts with the powers of darkness, and made victorious over them, and gave "to be head over all things to his church, which is his body."

Secondly. David looks up with humble and reverent adorations of the Divine glory and perfection. When God had by his providence magnified him, he endeavours with his praises to magnify God, to bless him, and exalt him, ver. 46. He gives honour to him, 1. As a living God: "The Lord liveth," ver. 46. We had our lives at first from, and we owe the continuance of them to, that God who has life in himself, and therefore is fitly called, the living God. The gods of the heathen were dead gods; the best friends we have among men are dying friends; but God lives, lives for ever, and will not fail those that trust in him, but, because he lives, they shall live also, for he is their life. 2. As a finishing God: "As for God," he is not only perfect himself, but "his way is perfect," ver. 30. He is known by his name Jehovah, *Ex.* vi. 3, a God performing and perfecting what he begins, in providence as well as creation, *Gen.* ii. 1. If it was God that made David's way perfect, ver. 32, much more is his own so. There is no flaw in God's works, nor any fault to be found with what he doth, *Eccl.* iii. 14. And what he undertakes he will go through with, whatever difficulties lie in the way. What God begins to build, he is able to finish. 3. As a faithful God: "The word of the Lord is tried." I have tried it, saith David, and it has not failed me. All the saints in all ages have tried it, and it never failed any that trusted in it. It is tried as silver is tried, refined from all such mixture and alloy as lessen the value of men's words. David, in God's providences concerning him, takes notice of the performance of his promises to him, which, as it puts sweetness into the providence, so it puts honour upon the promise. 4. As the protector and defender of his people. David had found him so to him: He is "the God of my salvation," ver. 46, by whose power and grace I am and hope to be saved. But not of mine only, "He is a buckler to all those that trust in him," ver. 30. He shelters and protects them all; is both able and ready to do so. 5. As a nonsuch in all this, ver. 31. There is a God, and "Who is God, save Jehovah?" That God is a rock for the support and shelter of his faithful worshippers, and "Who is a rock, save our God?" Thus he not only gives glory to God, but encourages his own faith in him. Note, 1st. Whoever pretend to be deities, it is certain there is no God save the Lord, all others are counterfeits, *Isa.* xliv. 8; *Jer.* x. 10. 2nd. Whoever pretend to be our felicities, there is no Rock save our God; none that we can depend upon to make us happy.

Thirdly. David looks forward with a believing hope that God would still do him good. He promiseth himself, 1. That his enemies should be completely subdued, and those of them that yet remain should be made his footstool. That his government should be extensive, so that even a people whom he had not known should serve him, ver. 43. That his conquests, and consequently his acquests, should be easy; "As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me," ver. 44; and that his enemies should be convinced that it was to no purpose to oppose him. Even those that are retired to their fastnesses shall not trust to them, but "be afraid out of their close places," having seen so much of David's wisdom, courage, and success. Thus the Son of David, though he sees not yet all things put under him, yet knows he shall reign till all opposing rule, principality, and power shall be quite put down. 2. That his seed should be for ever continued in the Messiah, who he foresaw should come from his loins, ver. 50. He "sheweth mercy to his Anointed," his Messiah, to David himself, the Anointed of the God of Jacob in the type, "and to his seed for evermore." "He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but to his seed, as of one, that is Christ," *Gal.* iii. 16. It is he only that shall "reign for ever, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end." Christ is called David, *Hos.* iii. 5. God has called him his king, *Ps.* ii. 6. "Great deliverance doth God give," and will give "to him, and to" his church and people, here called "his seed, for evermore."

And in singing these verses we must give God the glory of the victories of Christ and his church hitherto, and all the deliverances and advancements of the gospel kingdom; and encourage ourselves and one another with an assurance that the church militant will shortly be triumphant, will be eternally so.

PSALM XIX.

There are two excellent books which the great God hath published for the instruction and edification of the children of men, and this psalm treats of them both, and recommends them both to our diligent study. I. The book of the creatures, in which we may easily read the power and godhead of the Creator, ver. 1—6. II. The book of the Scriptures, which makes known to us the will of God concerning our duty. He shews the excellency and usefulness of that book, ver. 7—11; and then teacheth us how to improve it, ver. 12—14.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

THE heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament sheweth his handywork.
2 Day unto day uttereth speech,
And night unto night sheweth knowledge.
3 *There is* no speech nor language,
Where their voice is not heard.
4 Their line is gone out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.
In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
5 Which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.
6 His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven,
And his circuit unto the ends of it:
And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

From the things that are seen every day by all the world the Psalmist, in these verses, leads us to the consideration of the invisible things of God, whose being appears incontestably evident, and whose glory shines transcendently bright in the visible heavens, the structure and beauty of them, and the order and influence of the heavenly bodies. This instance of the Divine power serves not only to shew the folly of atheists, who see there is a heaven, and yet say there is no God; who see the effect, and yet say there is no cause; but to shew the folly of idolaters also, and the vanity of their imaginations who, though "the heavens declare the glory of God," yet gave that glory to the lights of heaven, which those very lights directed them to give to God only, the Father of lights. Now observe here,

PSALM XIX.

First. What that is which the creatures notify to us. They are many ways useful and serviceable to us, but in nothing so much as in this, that they declare the glory of God, by shewing his handywork, ver. 1. They plainly speak themselves to be God's handyworks; for they could not exist from eternity. All succession and motion must have had a beginning; they could not make themselves, that is a contradiction; they could not be produced by a casual hit of atoms, that is an absurdity, fit rather to be bantered than reasoned with; therefore they must have a creator, who can be no other than an eternal mind, infinitely wise, powerful, and good. Thus it appears they are God's works, the work of his fingers, *Ps.* viii. 2, and therefore they declare his glory. From the excellency of the work we may easily infer the infinite perfection of its great Author. From the brightness of the heavens we may collect that the Creator is light; their vastness of extent speaks his immensity; their height, his transcendency and sovereignty; their influence upon this earth, his dominion, and providence, and universal beneficence: and all declare his almighty power, by which they were at first made, and continue to this day, according to the ordinances that were then settled.

Secondly. What are some of those things which do notify this?

1. The heavens and the firmament. The vast expanse of air and ether, and the spheres of the planets, and fixed stars. Man has this advantage above the beasts in the structure of his body, that, whereas they are made to look downward, as their spirits must go, he is made erect to look upwards, because upwards his spirit must shortly go, and his thoughts should now rise.

2. The constant and regular succession of day and night, ver. 2. Day unto day, and night unto night, speak the glory of that God who first divided between the light and the darkness, and has from the beginning to this day preserved that established order without variation, according to God's covenant with Noah, *Gen.* viii. 22, that "while the earth remains, day and night shall not cease," to which covenant of providence the covenant of grace is compared for its stability, *Jer.* xxxiii. 20; xxxi. 35. The counterchanging of day and night in so exact a method is a great instance of the power of God, and calls us to observe that, as in the kingdom of nature, so in that of providence, he forms the light and creates the darkness, *Isa.* xlv. 7, and sets the one over against the other. It is likewise an instance of his goodness to man, for he makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice, *Ps.* lxv. 8. Not only glorifies himself, but gratifies us by this constant revolution; for, as the light of the morning befriends the business of the day, so the shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night. Every day and every night speaks the goodness of God, and, when it has finished its testimony, leaves it to the next day, to the next night, to say the same.

3. The light and influence of the sun doth in a special manner declare the glory of God; for, of all the heavenly bodies, that is the most conspicuous in itself, and most useful to this lower world, which would be all dungeon and all desert without it. It is not an improbable conjecture, that David penned this psalm when he had the rising sun in view, and from the brightness of it took occasion to declare the glory of God. Concerning the sun, observe here, 1st. The place appointed him. In the heavens God hath set a tabernacle for the sun. The heavenly bodies are called hosts of heaven, and therefore are fitly said to dwell in tents, as soldiers in their encampments. The sun is said to have a tabernacle set him, not only because he is in continual motion, and never has a fixed residence; but because the mansion he has will, at the end of time, be taken down like a tent, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the sun shall be turned into darkness. 2nd. The course assigned him. That glorious creature was not made to be idle, but his going forth (at least as it appears to our eye) is from one point of the heavens, and his circuit from thence to the opposite point, and thence, to complete his diurnal revolution, to the same point again; and this with such steadiness and constancy, that we can certainly foretell what hour and what minute the sun will rise at such a place any day to come. 3rd. The brightness wherein he appears. He "is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber," richly dressed up and adorned, as fine as hands can make him, looking pleasantly himself, and making all about him pleasant; for "the friend of the bridegroom rejoiceth greatly to hear the bridegroom's voice," *Jno.* iii. 29. 4th. The cheerfulness wherewith he makes his tour. Though it seems a vast round he has to walk, and he has not a moment's rest, yet, in obedience to the law of his creation, and for the service of man, he not only doth it, but doth it with a great deal of pleasure, and "rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." With such satisfaction did Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, finish the work that was given him to do. 5th. His universal influence on this earth: "There is nothing hid from the heat thereof," no, not metals in the bowels of the earth, which the sun has an influence upon.

Thirdly. To whom this declaration is made of the glory of God. It is made to all parts of the world; ver. 3, 4, "there is no speech nor language," (that is, no nation, for the nations were divided after their tongues, *Gen.* x. 32,) "where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone through all the earth," (the equinoctial line, suppose,) "and" with it "their words to the end of the world," proclaiming the eternal power of the God of nature, ver. 4. The apostle useth this as a reason why the Jews should not be angry with him and others for preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles, because God had already made himself known to the Gentile world by the works of creation, and left not himself without witness among them, *Rom.* x. 18; so that they were without excuse if they were idolaters, *Rom.* i. 20, 21. And those were without blame that by preaching the Gospel to them endeavoured to turn them from their idolatry. If God used these means to prevent their apostacy, and they proved ineffectual, the apostles did well to use other means to recover them from it. 'They have no speech or language,' (so some read it,) 'and yet their voice is heard.' All people may hear these natural, immortal preachers speak to them in their own tongue the wonderful works of God.

And in singing these verses we must give God the glory of all the comfort and benefit we have by the lights of heaven, still looking above and beyond them to the Sun of Righteousness.

7 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul:
The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.
8 The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart:
The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.
9 The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring for ever:
The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much [fine gold:
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned:
And in keeping of them *there is* great reward.
12 Who can understand *his* errors?
Cleanse thou me from secret *faults.*
13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins;*
Let them not have dominion over me:
Then shall I be upright,
And I shall be innocent from the great transgression.
14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my [heart,
Be acceptable in thy sight,
O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

God's glory, that is, his goodness to man, appears much in the works of creation, but much more in and by Divine revelation. The holy Scripture, as it is a rule both of our duty to God and of our expectation from him, is of much greater use and benefit to us than day or night, than the air we breathe in, or the light of the sun. The discoveries made of God by his works might have served if man had retained his integrity; but to recover him out of his fallen state another course must be taken, that must be done by the Word of God. And here,

First. The Psalmist gives an account of the excellent properties and uses of the Word of God, in six sentences, ver. 7—9, in each of which the name Jehovah is repeated, and no vain repetition, for the law has its authority and all its excellency from the lawmaker. Here are six several titles of the Word of God, to take in the whole of Divine revelation, precepts and promises, and especially the Gospel. Here are several good properties of it which prove its Divine original, which recommend it to our affection, and which extol it above all other laws whatsoever. And here are several good effects of the law upon the minds of men, which shew what it is designed for, what use we are to make of it, and how wonderful the efficacy of Divine grace is, going along with it, and working by it.

1. "The law of the Lord is perfect." It is perfectly free from all corruption, perfectly filled with all good, and perfectly fitted for the end for which it is designed. It will make the man of God perfect, 2 *Tim.* iii. 17. Nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it. It is of use to convert the soul, to bring us back to ourselves, to our God, to our duty; for it shews us our sinfulness and misery in our departures from God, and the indispensable necessity of our return to him.

2. "The testimony of the Lord" (which witnesseth for him to us) "is sure," incontestably and inviolably sure, what we may give credit to, may rely upon, and may be confident it will not deceive us. It is a sure discovery of Divine truth, a sure direction in the way of duty. It is a sure fountain of living comforts, and a sure foundation of lasting hopes. It is of use to make us wise, wise to salvation, 2 *Tim.* iii. 15. It will give us an insight into things Divine, and a foresight of things to come. It will employ us in the best work, and secure to us our true interests. It will make even the simple wise, for their souls and eternity, who yet are no conjurers (as we say) for this world. Those that are humbly simple, that is, sensible of their own folly, and willing to be taught, those shall be made wise by the Word of God, *Ps.* xxv. 9.

3. "The statutes of the Lord," (enacted by his authority, and binding to all, wherever they come,) they "are right," exactly agreeing with the eternal rules and principles of good and evil; that is, with the right reason of man, and the right counsels of God. All God's precepts concerning all things are right, *Ps.* cxix. 128, just as they should be, and they will set us to rights if we receive them, and submit to them; and, because they are right, they rejoice the heart. The law, as we see it in the hands of Christ, gives cause for joy; and when it is written in our hearts it lays a foundation for lasting joy, by restoring us to our right mind.

4. "The commandment of the Lord is pure." It is clear without darkness, it is clean without dross and defilement; it is itself purified from all alloy, and is purifying to those that receive and embrace it; it is the ordinary means which the Spirit useth in "enlightening the eyes;" it brings us to a sight and sense of our sin and misery, and directs us in the way of duty.

5. "The fear of the Lord," that is, true religion and godliness prescribed in the Word, reigning in the heart, and practised in the life, "is clean," clean itself, and it will make us clean, *Jno.* xv. 3; it will cleanse our way, *Ps.* cxix. 9; and it "endureth for ever," that is, it is of perpetual obligation, and can never be repealed. The ceremonial law is long since done away, but the law concerning the fear of God is ever the same. Time will not alter the nature of moral good and evil.

6. "The judgments of the Lord," all his precepts, which are framed in infinite wisdom, they "are true." They are grounded upon the most sacred and unquestionable truths; they are righteous, all consonant to natural equity; and they are so altogether, there is no unrighteousness in any of them, but they are all of a piece.

Secondly. He expresseth the great value he had for the Word of God, and the great advantage he had and hoped to have by it, ver. 10, 11.

1. See how highly he prized the commandments of God. It is the character of all good people that they prefer their religion and the Word of God, 1st. Far before all the wealth of the world. It is more desirable than gold, than fine gold, than much fine gold. Gold is of the earth, earthly; but grace is the image of the heavenly. Gold is only for the body, and the concerns of time; but grace is for the soul, and the concerns of eternity. 2nd. Far before all the pleasures and delights of sense. The Word of God, received by faith, is sweet to the soul, "sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb." The pleasures of sense are the delight of brutes, and therefore debase the great soul of man; the pleasures of religion are the delight of angels, and exalt the soul. The pleasures of sense are deceitful, will soon surfeit, and yet never satisfy; but those of religion are substantial and satisfying, and there is no danger of exceeding in them.

2. See what use he made of the precepts of God's Word; "By them is thy servant warned." The Word of God is a word of warning to the children of men; it warns us of the duty we are to do, the dangers we are to avoid, and the deluge we are to prepare for, *Eze.* iii. 17; xxxiii. 7; it warns the wicked not to go on in his wicked way, and warns the righteous not to turn from his good way. And all that are indeed God's servants take this warning.

3. See what advantages he promised himself by his obedience to God's precepts; "In keeping of them there is great reward." Those that make conscience of their duty will not only be no losers by it, but unspeakable gainers. There is a reward not only after keeping, but in keeping, God's commandments; a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Religion is health and honour,

it is peace and pleasure; it will make our comforts sweet, and our crosses easy; life truly valuable, and death itself truly desirable.

Thirdly. He draws some good inferences from this pious meditation upon the excellency of the Word of God. Such thoughts as these should excite in us devout affections, and then they are to good purpose.

1. He takes occasion from hence to make a penitent reflection upon his sins; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Is the commandment thus holy, just, and good? then "who can understand his errors?" I cannot, whoever can. From the rectitude of the Divine law he learns to call his sins his errors; if the commandment be true and righteous, every transgression of the commandment is an error, as grounded upon a mistake; every wicked practice takes rise from some corrupt principle, it is a deviation from the rule we are to work by, the way we are to walk in. From the extent, and strictness, and spiritual nature of the Divine law, he learns that his sins are so many that he cannot understand the number of them; and so exceeding sinful that he cannot understand the heinousness and malignity of them. We are guilty of many sins, which, through our carelessness and partiality to ourselves, we are not aware of; many we have been guilty of which we have forgotten; so that, when we have been never so particular in the confession of sin, we must conclude with an *et cætera*,—'and such like:' for God knows a great deal more evil by us than we do by ourselves. In many things we all offend, and who can tell how often he offends? It is well we are under grace, and not under the law, else we were undone.

2. He takes occasion from hence to pray against sin. All the discoveries of sin made us by the law should drive us to the throne of grace, there to pray, as David doth here,

1st. For mercy to pardon. Finding himself unable to instance in all the particulars of his transgressions, he cries out, "Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults:" not secret to God, so none are; nor only such as are secret to the world, but such as were hid from his own observation of himself. The best of men have reason to suspect themselves guilty of many secret faults, and to pray to God to cleanse them from that guilt, and not to lay it to their charge; for even our sins of infirmity and inadvertency, and our secret sins, would be our ruin, if God should deal with us according to the desert of them. Even secret faults are defiling, and render us unfit for communion with God; but when they are pardoned we are cleansed from them, 1 *Jno.* i. 7.

2nd. For grace to help in time of need. Having prayed that his sins of infirmity might be pardoned, he prays that presumptuous sins might be prevented, ver. 13. All that truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, are in care not to relapse into sin, nor to return again to folly, as appears by their prayers, which concur with David's here; where observe, *First*. His petition; "Keep me from" ever being guilty of a wilful, "presumptuous sin." We ought to pray that we may be kept from sins of infirmity, but especially from presumptuous sins, which most offend God, and wound conscience; which wither our comforts and shock our hopes. However, let none such have dominion over me, let me not be at the command of any such sin, nor be captive by it. *Secondly*. His plea; "So shall I be upright," that is, I shall appear upright; I shall preserve the evidence and comfort of my uprightness; "and I shall be innocent from the great transgression," so he calls a presumptuous sin, because no sacrifice was accepted for it, *Num.* xv. 28—30. Note, 1*st*. Presumptuous sins are very heinous and dangerous. Those that sin against the habitual convictions and actual admonitions of their own consciences, in contempt and defiance of the law and its sanctions, that sin with a high hand, they sin presumptuously, and it is a great transgression. 2*nd*. Even good men ought to be jealous of themselves, and afraid of sinning presumptuously, yea, though through the grace of God they have hitherto been kept from them. Let none be high-minded, but fear. 3*rd*. Being so much exposed, we have great need to pray to God, when we are pushing forward towards a presumptuous sin, to keep us back from it, either by his providence preventing the temptation, or by his grace giving us victory over it.

3. He takes occasion humbly to beg the Divine acceptance of those his pious thoughts and affections, ver. 14. Observe the connexion of this with what goes before: he prays to God to keep him from sin, and then begs he would accept his performances; for, if we favour our sins, we cannot expect God should favour us or our services, *Ps.* lxvi. 18. Observe, 1st. What his services were; the words of his mouth, and the meditations of his heart, that is, his holy affections offered up to God. The pious meditations of the heart must not be smothered, but expressed in the words of our mouth, for God's glory and the edification of others; and the words of our mouth in prayer and praise must not be formal, but arising from the meditation of the heart, *Ps.* xlv. 1. 2nd. What was his care concerning these services, that they might be acceptable with God, else what do they avail us? Gracious souls have all they aim at if they be accepted of God, for that is their bliss. 3rd. What encouragement he had to hope for this; because God was his strength and his redeemer. If we seek assistance from God, as our strength, in our religious duties, we may hope to find acceptance with God of our duties; for by his strength we have power with him.

In singing this we should get our hearts much affected with the excellency of the Word of God and delivered into it, and much affected with the evil of sin, the danger we are in of it, and the danger we are in by it, and fetch in help from Heaven against it.

PSALM XX.

It is the will of God that prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving should be made, in a special manner, for kings and all in authority. This psalm is a prayer, and the next a thanksgiving, for the king. David was a martial prince, much in war. Either this psalm was penned upon occasion of some particular expedition of his, or in general, as a form to be used in the daily service of the church for him. In this psalm we may observe, I. What it is they beg of God for the king, ver. 1—4. II. With what assurance they beg it. The people triumph, ver. 5; the prince, ver. 6; both together, ver. 7, 8; and so he concludes with a prayer to God for audience, ver. 9. In this David may well be looked upon as a type of Christ, to whose kingdom, and its interests among men, the church was in every age a hearty well-wisher.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

THE LORD hear thee in the day of trouble;
The name of the God of Jacob defend thee;
2 Send thee help from the sanctuary,
And strengthen thee out of Zion.
3 Remember all thy offerings,
And accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.
4 Grant thee according to thine own heart,
And fulfil all thy counsel.
5 We will rejoice in thy salvation,
And in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners:
The LORD fulfil all thy petitions

This prayer for David is entitled, a Psalm of David; nor was it any absurdity at all for him, who was divinely inspired, to draw up a directory, or form of prayer, to be used in the congregation for himself and those in authority under him; nay, it is very proper for those who desire the prayers of their friends to tell them particularly what they would have to be asked of God for them. Note, Even great and good men, and those that know never so well how to pray for themselves, yet must not despise, but earnestly desire, the prayers of others for them, even those that are their inferiors in all respects. Paul often begged of his friends to pray for him. Magistrates, and those in power, ought to esteem and encourage praying people, to reckon them their strength, *Zec.* xii. 5, 10, and to do what they can for them, that they may have an interest in their prayers, and may do nothing to forfeit it. Now observe here,

First. What it is that they are taught to ask of God for the king.

1. That God would answer his prayers. "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble," ver. 1, and "the Lord fulfil all thy petitions," ver. 5. Note, 1st. Even the greatest of men may be much in trouble. It was often a day of trouble with David himself, of disappointment and distress, of treading down, and of perplexity. Neither the crown on his head nor the grace in his heart would exempt him from trouble. 2nd. Even the greatest of men must be much in prayer. David, though a man of business, a man of war, yet was constant to his devotions. Though he had prophets and priests, and many good people among his subjects, to pray for him, yet he did not think that excused him from praying for himself. Let none expect benefit by the prayers of the church, or of their ministers or friends for them, who are capable of praying for themselves, and yet neglect it. The prayers of others for us must be desired, not to supersede, but to second our own for ourselves. Happy the people that have praying princes, to whose prayers they may thus say, Amen.

2. That God would protect his person, and preserve his life in the perils of war. "The name of the God of Jacob defend thee," and set thee out of the reach of the enemies. 1st. Let God by his providence keep thee safe, even the God who preserved Jacob in the days of his trouble. David had mighty men for his guards, but he commits himself, and his people commit him, to the care of the Almighty God. 2nd. Let God by his grace keep thee easy from the fear of evil; *Pr.* xviii. 10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower," into which the righteous run by faith, and are safe; let David be enabled to shelter himself in that strong tower, as he has done many a time.

3. That God would enable him to go on in his undertakings for the public good; that in the day of battle he would "send him help out of the sanctuary, and strength out of Zion;" not from common providence, but from the ark of the covenant, and the peculiar favour God bears to his chosen people Israel; that he would help him in performance of the promises, and in answer to the prayers made in the sanctuary. Mercies out of the sanctuary are the sweetest mercies, such as are the token of God's peculiar love; the blessing of God even our own God. "Strength out of Zion" is spiritual strength, strength in the soul, in the inward man, and that is it we should most desire both for ourselves and others, in services and sufferings.

4. That God would testify his gracious acceptance of the sacrifices he offered with his prayers, according to the law of that time, before he went out on this dangerous expedition. "The Lord remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifices," ver. 3, or, 'turn them to ashes;' that is, the Lord give thee the victory and success which thou didst by prayer with sacrifices ask of him, and thereby give as full proof of his acceptance of the sacrifice, as ever he did by kindling it with fire from heaven. By this we may now know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by his Spirit he kindles in our souls a holy fire of pious and Divine affection, and with that makes our hearts burn within us.

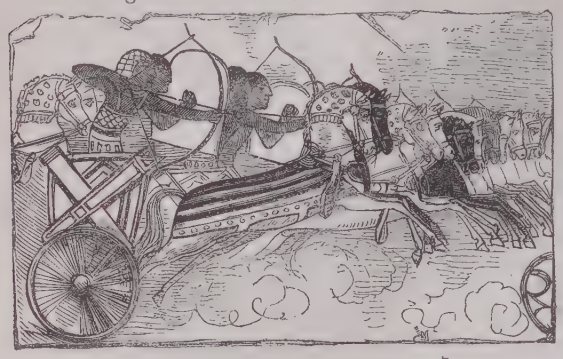
5. That God would crown all his enterprises and noble designs for the public welfare with the desired success; ver. 4, "The Lord grant thee according to thine own heart." This they might in faith pray for, because they knew David was "a man after God's own heart," and would design nothing but what was pleasing to him. Those who make it their business to glorify God, may expect that God will, one way or other, gratify them; and they who walk in his counsel may promise themselves that he will fulfil theirs. "Thou shalt devise a thing and it shall be established unto thee."

Secondly. What confidence they had of an answer of peace to these petitions for themselves and their good king; ver. 5, "We will rejoice in thy salvation." We that are subjects will rejoice in the preservation and prosperity of our prince; or rather, 'In thy salvation, O God,' in thy power and promise to save, 'will we rejoice;' that is it we depend upon now, and which in the issue we shall have occasion greatly to rejoice in. Those that have their eye still upon the salvation of the Lord shall have their hearts filled with the joy of that salvation. "In the name of our God will we set up our banners." 1. We will wage war in his name, we will see that our cause be good, and make his glory our end in every expedition; we will ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; we will follow his conduct, implore his aid, and depend upon it, and refer the issue to him. David went against Goliath, in the name of the Lord of hosts, 1 *Sam.* xvii. 45. 2. We will celebrate our victories in his name. When we lift up our banners in triumph, and set up our trophies, it shall be in the name of our God; he shall have all the glory of our success, and no instrument shall have any part of the honour that is due to him.

In singing this we ought to offer up to God our hearty good wishes for the good government we are under, and to the prosperity of it. But we may look farther; these prayers for David are prophecies concerning Christ the Son of David; and in him they were abundantly answered: he undertook the work of our redemption, and made war upon the powers of darkness; in the day of trouble, when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, the Lord heard him, heard him in that he feared, *Heb.* v. 7; sent him help out of the sanctuary, sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him, took cognizance of his offering, when he made his soul an offering for sin, and accepted his burnt sacrifice, turned it to ashes; the fire that should have fastened upon the sinner, fastening upon the sacrifice, with which God was well pleased. And he granted him according to his own heart, made him to see of the travail of his soul to his satisfaction, prospered his good pleasure in his hand, fulfilled all his petitions for himself and us, for him the Father heareth always, and his intercession is ever prevailing.

6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed;
He will hear him from his holy heaven
With the saving strength of his right hand.

7 Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses:
But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.
8 They are brought down and fallen:
But we are risen, and stand upright.
9 Save, LORD:
Let the king hear us when we call.



EGYPTIAN CHARIOTS AND HORSES.—ver. 7.

Here is, First. Holy David himself triumphing in the interest he had in the prayers of good people; ver. 6, "Now know I" (I that pen the psalm know it,) "that the Lord saveth his anointed," because he hath stirred up the hearts of the seed of Jacob to pray for him. Note, It bodes well to any prince and people, and may justly be taken as a happy presage, when God pours upon them a spirit of prayer. If he see us seeking him, he will be found of us; if he cause us to hope in his word, he will establish his word to us. Now so many that have an interest in heaven are praying for him, he doubts not but that God will hear him, and grant him an answer of peace; which will, 1. Take its rise from above. He will hear him from his holy heaven, of which the sanctuary was a type, *Heb.* ix. 23; from the throne he hath prepared in heaven, of which the mercy-seat was a type. 2. It shall take its effect here below. He will hear him with the saving strength of his right hand; that is, he will give a real answer to his prayer, and the prayers of his friends for him, not by letter, or by word of mouth, but, which is much better, by his right hand, by "the saving strength of his right hand." He will make it to appear he hears him by what he doth for him.

Secondly. His people triumphing in God, and their relation to him, and his revelation of himself to them, by which they distinguish themselves from those that live without God in the world. 1. See the difference between worldly people and godly people in their confidences, ver. 7. The children of this world trust in second causes, and think all is well if those do but smile upon them. They "trust in chariots and in horses;" and the more of them they can bring into the field the more sure they are of success in their wars. Probably David has here an eye to the Syrians, whose forces consisted much of chariots and horsemen, as we find in the history of David's victories over them, 2 *Sam.* viii. 4; x. 18. But, say the Israelites, we neither have chariots and horses to trust to, nor do we want them, nor if we had them would we build our hopes of success upon that; but we will remember, and rely upon, the name of the Lord our God, upon the relation we stand in to him as the Lord our God, and the knowledge we have of him by his name, that is, all that whereby he makes himself known; this we will remember, and upon every remembrance of it will be encouraged. Note, Those who make God and his name their praise may make God and his name their trust. 2. See the difference in the issue of their confidences, and by that we are to judge of the wisdom of the choice. Things are as they prove: see who will be ashamed of their confidence and who not; ver. 8, They that trust in their chariots and horses are brought down and fallen; and their chariots and horses were so far from saving them that they helped to sink them, and made them the easier and the richer prey to the conqueror, 2 *Sam.* viii. 4. But we that trust in the name of the Lord our God, not only stand upright and keep our ground, but are risen and have got ground against the enemy, and have triumphed over them. Note, A believing, obedient trust in God and his name, is the surest way both to preferment and to establishment, to rise and to stand upright; and this will stand us in stead when creature confidences fail those that depend upon them.

Thirdly. They conclude their prayer for the king with an Hosanna; Save now we beseech thee, O Lord! ver. 9. As we read this verse it may be taken as a prayer that God would not only bless the king, "Save, Lord," give him success, but that he would make him a blessing to them, "Let the king hear us, when we call" to him for justice and mercy. Those that would have good of their magistrates must thus pray for them; for they, as all other creatures, are that to us, and no more, that God makes them to be. Or it may refer to the Messiah, that King, that King of kings; Let him hear us when we call; let him come to us, according to the promise, in the time appointed; let him, as the great Master of requests, receive all our petitions, and present them to his Father. But many interpreters give another reading of this verse, by altering the pause; "Lord, save the king, and hear us when we call;" and so it is a summary of the whole psalm, and is taken into our English Liturgy, 'O Lord, save the king, and mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.'

In singing these verses, we should encourage ourselves to trust in God, and stir up ourselves to pray earnestly, as we are in duty bound, for those in authority over us, that under them we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty.

PSALM XXI.

As the foregoing psalm was a prayer for the king, that God would protect and prosper him, so this is a thanksgiving for the success God had blessed him with. Those whom we have prayed for we ought to give thanks for, and particularly for kings in whose prosperity we share. They are here taught, I. To congratulate his victories, and the honour he had achieved, ver. 1—6. II. To confide in the power of God for the completing of the ruin of the enemies of his kingdom, ver. 7—13. And in this there is an eye to the Messiah, the prince and the glory of his kingdom; for to him divers passages in this psalm are more applicable than to David himself.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

THE king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD;
And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!
2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire,
And hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.
3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness:
Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

EASTERN CROWNS.

4 He asked life of thee, *and* thou gavest *it* him,
Even length of days for ever and ever
5 His glory *is* great in thy salvation:
Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.
6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: [nance.
Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy counte-

David here speaks for himself in the first place, professing that his joy was in God's strength, and in his salvation, and not in the strength or success of his armies. He also directs his subjects herein to rejoice with him, and to give God all the glory of the victories he had obtained; and all with an eye to Christ, of whose triumphs over the powers of darkness David's victories were but shadows.

First. They here congratulate the king's joys, and concur with him in them, ver. 1. The king doth rejoice; he useth to rejoice in thy strength, and so do we: what pleaseth the king pleaseth us, 2 *Sam.* iii. 36. Happy the people the character of whose king it is that he makes God's strength his confidence, and God's salvation his joy; that is pleased with all the advancements of God's kingdom, and trusts God to bear him out in all he doth for the service of it. Our Lord Jesus in his great undertaking relied upon help from Heaven, and pleased himself with the prospect of that great salvation which he was thereby to work out.

Secondly. They give God all the praise of those things which were the matter of their king's rejoicing.

1. That God had heard his prayers; ver. 2, "Thou hast given him his heart's desire," (and there is no prayer accepted but what is the heart's desire,) the very thing they begged of God for him, *Ps.* xx. 4. Note, God's gracious returns of prayer do in a special manner require our humble returns of praise. When God gives to Christ the heathen for his inheritance, gives him to see his seed, and accepts his intercession for all believers, he gives him his heart's desire.

2. That God had surprised him with favours, and much outdone his expectations; ver. 3, "Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness." All our blessings are blessings of goodness; and are owing not at all to any merit of ours, but purely and only to God's goodness. But the psalmist here reckons it in a special manner obliging, that these blessings were given in a preventing way. This fixed his eye, enlarged his soul, and endeared his God, as one expresseth it. When God's blessings come sooner, and prove richer, than we imagine,—when they are given before we prayed for them, before we were ready for them, nay, when we feared the contrary,—then it may be truly said, that he prevented us with them. Nothing indeed prevented Christ; but to mankind never was any favour more preventing than our redemption by Christ, and all the blessed fruits of his mediation.

3. That God had advanced him to the highest honour, and the most extensive power; "Thou hast set a crown of pure gold upon his head," and kept it there when his enemies attempted to throw it off. Note, Crowns are at God's dispose; no head wears them but God sets them there; whether in judgment to his land, or for mercy, the event will shew. On the head of Christ God never set a crown of gold, but of thorns first and then of glory.

4. That God had assured him of the perpetuity of his kingdom, and therein had done more for him than he was able either to ask or think, ver. 4. When he went forth upon a perilous expedition he asked his life of thee, which he then put into his hand, and thou not only gavest him that, but withal gavest him length of days for ever and ever; didst not only prolong his life far beyond his expectation, but didst assure him of a blessed immortality in a future state, and of the continuance of his kingdom in the Messiah, that should come of his loins. See how God's grants often exceed our petitions and hopes, and infer from thence how rich he is in mercy to those that call upon him. See also, and rejoice, in the length of the days of Christ's kingdom. He was dead indeed, that we might live through him; but he is alive, and lives for evermore; and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; and because he thus lives we shall thus live also.

5. That God had advanced him to the highest honour and dignity; ver. 5, "His glory is great," far transcending that of all the neighbouring princes, "in the salvation" thou hast wrought for him and wrought by him. The glory which every good man is ambitious of, is to see the salvation of the Lord; "Honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him," as a burthen which he must bear, as a charge which he must account for. Jesus Christ "received from God the Father honour and glory," 2 *Pet.* i. 17; the glory which he had with him before the worlds were, *Jno.* xvii. 5. And on him is laid the charge of an universal government, and to him all power in heaven and earth is committed.

6. That God had given him the satisfaction of being the author of all bliss to mankind, ver. 6. 'Thou hast set him to be blessings for ever,' so the margin reads it; thou hast made him to be a universal, everlasting blessing to the world, in whom the families of the earth are and shall be blessed; and so "thou hast made him exceeding glad," with the countenance thou hast given to his undertaking, and to him in the prosecution of it. See how the Spirit

of prophecy gradually riseth here to that which is peculiar to Christ, for none but he is blessed for ever, much less a blessing for ever; to that eminency that the expression speaks. And of him it is said, that "God made him full of joy with his countenance."

And, in singing this, we should rejoice in his joy, and triumph in his exaltation.

7 For the king trusteth in the LORD, [be moved.
And through the mercy of the most High he shall not
8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies:
Thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee
9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger:
The LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath,
And the fire shall devour them.
10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth,
And their seed from among the children of men.
11 For they intended evil against thee:
They imagined a mischievous device,
Which they are not able *to perform.*
12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back,
When thou shalt make ready *thine arrows* upon thy strings against the face of them.
13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength:
So will we sing and praise thy power.

The psalmist, having taught his people to look back with joy and praise on what God had done for him and them, here teacheth them to look forward with faith, and hope, and prayer upon what God would farther do for them. "The king rejoiceth in God," ver. 1, and therefore we will be thankful; "The king trusteth in God," ver. 7, therefore will we be encouraged. The joy and confidence of Christ our King is the ground of all our joy and confidence.

First. They are confident of the stability of David's kingdom; "Through the mercy of the Most High," and not through his own merit or strength, "he shall not be moved." His prosperous state shall not be disturbed; his faith and hope in God, which is the stay of his spirit, shall not be shaken. "The mercy of the Most High," the Divine goodness, power, and dominion, is enough to secure our happiness, and therefore our trust in that mercy should be enough to silence all our fears. God being at Christ's right hand in his suffering, *Ps.* xvi. 8, and he being at God's right hand in his glory, we may be sure he shall not, he cannot, be moved, but continueth ever.

Secondly. They are confident of the destruction of all the impenitent, implacable enemies of David's kingdom. The success with which God had blessed David's arms hitherto was an earnest of the rest which God would give him from all his enemies round about, and a type of the total overthrow of all Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them. Observe, 1. The description of his enemies. They are such as hate him, ver. 8. They hated David because God had set him apart for himself; hated Christ because they hated the light; but both were hated without any just cause, and in both God was hated, *Jno.* xv. 23, 25. 2. The designs of his enemies; ver. 11, "They intended evil against thee, and imagined a mischievous device." They pretended to fight against David only, but their enmity was against God himself. They that aimed to unking David, aimed in effect to ungod Jehovah. What is devised and designed against religion, and against the instruments God raiseth up to support and advance it, is very evil and mischievous; and God takes it as devised and designed against himself, and will so reckon for it. 3. The disappointment of them. They devise what they are not able to perform, ver. 11. Their malice is impotent, and they imagine a vain thing, *Ps.* ii. 1. 4. The discovery of them; ver. 8, "Thy hand shall find them out," though never so artfully disguised by the pretences and professions of friendship; though mingled with the faithful subjects of this kingdom, and hardly to be distinguished from them; though flying from justice, and absconding in their close places, yet thy hand shall find them out wherever they are. There is no escaping God's avenging eye, no going out of the reach of his hand; rocks and mountains will be no better shelter at last than fig leaves were at first. 5. The destruction of them. It will be an utter destruction, *Lu.* xix. 27; they shall be swallowed up and devoured, ver. 9. Hell, the portion of all Christ's enemies, is the complete misery both of body and soul. Their fruit and their seed shall be destroyed, ver. 10. The enemies of God's kingdom in every age shall fall under the same doom; and the whole generation of them will at last be rooted out, and all opposing rule, principality and power, shall be put down. The arrows of God's wrath shall confound them, and put them to flight, being levelled at the face of them, ver. 12; that will be the lot of daring enemies that face God. The fire of God's wrath will consume them, ver. 9; they shall not only be cast into a furnace of fire, (*Mat.* xiii. 42,) but he shall make them themselves as a fiery oven or furnace; they shall be their own tormentors,—the reflections and terrors of their own consciences will be their hell. Those that might have had Christ to rule and save them, but rejected him, and fought against him, even the remembrance of that will be enough to make them, to eternity, a fiery oven to themselves. It is the worm that dies not.

Thirdly. In this confidence they beg of God that he would still appear for his anointed, ver. 13; that he would act for him in his own strength, by the immediate operations of his power as Lord of hosts, and Father of spirits; making little use of means and instruments. And, 1. Hereby he would exalt himself, and glorify his own name. We have but little strength, and are not so active for thee as we should be, which is our shame. Lord, take the work into thine own hands; do it without us, and it will be thy glory. 2. Hereupon they would exalt him; "So will we sing and praise thy power" the more triumphantly. The less God has of our service when a deliverance is in the working, the more he must have of our praises when it is wrought without us.

PSALM XXII.

The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testifies in this psalm, as clearly and fully as anywhere else in all the Old Testament, "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," 1 *Pet.* i. 11; of him, no doubt, David here speaks, and not of himself, or of any other man. Much of it is expressly applied to Christ in the New Testament, all of it may be applied to him, and some of it must be understood of him only. The providences of God concerning David were so very extraordinary, that we may suppose there were some wise and good men who then could not but look upon him as a figure of him that was to come. But the composure of his psalms especially, in which he found himself wonderfully carried out by the spirit of prophecy, far beyond his own thought and intention, was, we may suppose, an abundant satisfaction to himself, that he was not only a father of the Messiah, but a figure of him. In this psalm he speaks, I. Of the humiliation of Christ, ver. 1—21; where David, as a type of Christ, complains of the very calamitous condition he was in upon many accounts: 1. He complains, and mixeth comforts with his complaints. Complains, ver. 1, 2; but comforts himself, ver. 3—5. Complains again, ver. 6—8; but comforts himself again, ver. 9, 10. 2. He complains, and mixeth prayers with his complaints. Complains of the power and rage of his enemies, ver. 12, 13, 16, 18; of his own bodily weakness and decay, ver. 14, 15, 17; but prays that God would not be far from him, ver. 11, 19; that he would save and deliver him, ver. 19—21. II. Of the exaltation of Christ, that his undertaking should be for the glory of God, ver. 22—25; for the salvation and joy of his people, ver. 26—29; and for the perpetuating of his own kingdom, ver. 30, 31. In singing this psalm, we must keep our thoughts fixed upon Christ, and be so affected with his sufferings as to experience the fellowship of them, and so affected with his grace as to experience the power and influence of it.

To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.

MY God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me, *and from* the words of my roaring?
2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;
And in the night season, and am not silent.
3 But thou *art* holy,
O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
4 Our fathers trusted in thee:
They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered:
They trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
6 But I *am* a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised of the people.
7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying,*
8 He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him:
Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
9 But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb:
Thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's
10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: [breasts.
Thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.

Some think they find Christ in the title of this psalm "upon *Aijeleth Shahar,*"—'the hind of the morning.' Christ is as the swift hind upon the mountains of spices, *Cant.* viii. 14; as the loving hind, and the pleasant roe, to all believers, *Pr.* v. 19; giveth goodly words, like Naphtali, who is compared to a hind let loose, *Gen.* xlix. 21. He is the hind of the morning, marked out by the counsels of God from eternity, to be run down by those dogs that compassed him, ver. 16. But others think it notes only the tune to which the psalm was set. In these verses we have,

First. A sad complaint of God's withdrawings, ver. 1, 2. This may be applied to David, or any other child of God, in the want of the tokens of his favour, and pressed with the burthen of his displeasure, roaring under it, as one overwhelmed with grief and terror, and crying earnestly for relief, and in this case apprehending himself forsaken of God, unhelped, unheard, yet calling him again and again, My God, and continuing to cry day and night to him, and earnestly desiring his gracious returns. Note, 1. Spiritual desertions are the saints' sorest afflictions. When their evidences are clouded, Divine consolations suspended, their communion with God interrupted, and the terrors of God set themselves in array against them, how sad are their spirits, and how sapless all their comforts! 2. Even their complaint of these burthens is a good sign of spiritual life, and spiritual senses exercised. To cry out, My God, why am I sick? why am I poor? would give cause to suspect discontent and worldliness. But, "why hast thou forsaken me?" is the language of a heart binding up its happiness in God's favour. 3. When we are lamenting God's withdrawings, yet still we must call him our God, and continue to call upon him as ours. When we want the faith of assurance, we must live by a faith of adherence; however it be, yet God is good, and he is mine; and though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; though he do not answer me presently, I will continue praying and waiting; though he be silent, I will not be silent.

But it must be applied to Christ; for in the first words of this complaint he poured out his soul before God when he was upon the cross, *Mat.* xxvi. 46. Probably, he proceeded to the following words, and, some think, repeated the whole psalm, if not aloud, because they cavilled at the first words, yet to himself. Note, 1st. Christ in his sufferings cried earnestly to his Father for his favour and presence with him. He cried in the daytime upon the cross, and "in the night season," when he was in his agony in the garden, he offered up "strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him," and with some fear too, *Heb.* v. 7. 2nd. Yet God forsook him, was far from helping him, and did not hear him, and this was it which he complains of more than all his sufferings. God delivered him into the hands of his enemies; it was by his determinate counsel that he was crucified and slain, and he did not give in sensible comforts; but Christ having made himself sin for us, in conformity thereunto, the Father laid him under the present impressions of his wrath and displeasure against sin. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief," *Isa.* liii. 10. But even then he kept fast hold of his relation to his Father as his God, by whom he was now employed, whom he was now serving, and with whom he should shortly be glorified.

Secondly. Encouragement taken in reference hereunto, ver. 3—5. Though God did not hear him, did not help him, yet, 1. He will think well of God. "But thou art holy;" not unjust, or untrue, or unkind in any of thy dispensations; though thou dost not presently come in to the relief of thine afflicted people, yet thou lovest them, art true to thy covenant with them, and dost not countenance the iniquity of their persecutors, *Hab.* i. 13; and, as thou art

infinitely pure and upright thyself, so thou delightest in the services of thine upright people. "Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel;" that is, thou art pleased to manifest thy glory, and grace, and special presence with thy people, in the sanctuary where they attend thee with their praises; there thou art always ready to receive their homage, and of the tabernacle of meeting hast said, "This is my rest for ever." This speaks God's wonderful condescension to his faithful worshippers, that, though he is attended with the praises of angels, yet he is pleased to inhabit the praises of Israel. And it may comfort us in all our complaints that, though God seem for a while to turn a deaf ear to them, yet he is so pleased with his people's praises that he will in due time give them cause to change their note. "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him." Our Lord Jesus in his sufferings had an eye to the holiness of God, to preserve and advance the honour of that, and of his grace in inhabiting the praises of Israel, notwithstanding the iniquities of their holy things. 2. He will take comfort from the experiences which the saints in former ages had of the benefit of faith and prayer; ver. 4, 5, "Our fathers trusted in thee; cried unto thee, and thou didst deliver them;" therefore thou wilt in due time deliver me, for never any that hoped in thee were made ashamed of their hope; never any that sought thee sought thee in vain. And thou art still the same in thyself, and the same to thy people that ever thou wast. They were our fathers, and thy people are beloved for the fathers' sakes, *Rom.* xi. 28. The entail of the covenant is designed for the support of the seed of the faithful; he that was our fathers' God must be ours, and therefore will be ours. Our Lord Jesus in his sufferings supported himself with this, that all the fathers who were types of him in his sufferings, Noah, Joseph, David, Jonah, and others, were in due time delivered, and were types of his exaltation too; therefore he knows he also shall not be confounded, *Isa.* l. 7.

Thirdly. The complaint renewed of another grievance, and that is the contempt and reproach of men. This complaint is nothing so bitter as that before, God's withdrawings; but, as that touches a gracious soul, so this a generous soul, in a very tender part, ver. 6—8. Our fathers were honoured; the patriarchs in their day, first or last, appeared great in the eye of the world, Abraham, Moses, David; but Christ is a worm, and no man. It was great condescension that he became man, a step downwards that is and will be the wonder of angels; yet as if it were too much, too great to be a man, he becomes a worm, and no man. He was *Adam*, 'a mean man,' and *Enosh*, 'a man of sorrow;' but *lo Ish*, 'not a considerable man;' for he took upon him the form of a servant, and his visage was marred more than any man's, *Isa.* lii. 14. Man at the best is a worm, but he became a worm and no man; and if he had not made himself a worm he could not have been trampled upon as he was. The word signifies such a worm as was used in dyeing scarlet or purple, whence some make it an allusion to his bloody sufferings. See what abuses were put upon him: 1. He was reproached as an ill man, as a blasphemer, a sabbath breaker, a winebibber, a false prophet, an enemy to Cæsar, a confederate with the prince of the devils. 2. He was despised of the people as a mean contemptible man, not worth taking notice of; his country in an ill name, his relations poor mechanics, his followers none of the rulers or the Pharisees, but the mob. 3. He was ridiculed as a foolish man, and one that not only deceived others, but himself too. They that saw him hanging on the cross laughed him to scorn. So far were they from pitying him, or concerning themselves for him, that they added to his afflictions with all the gestures and expressions of insolence, upbraiding him with his fall; they make mouths at him, make merry over him, and make a jest of his sufferings; they shoot out the lip, they shake their head, saying, This was he that said he trusted God would deliver him; now let him deliver him. David was sometimes taunted for his confidence in God; but in the sufferings of Christ this was literally and exactly fulfilled, those very gestures were used by those that reviled him, *Mat.* xxvii. 39, they wagged their heads; nay, and so far did their malice make them forget themselves, that they used the very words, ver. 43, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him." Our Lord Jesus, having undertaken to satisfy for the dishonour we had done to God by our sins, did it by submitting to the highest instance of ignominy and disgrace that could be.

Fourthly. Encouragement taken as to this also; ver. 9, 10, Men despise me, "but thou art he that took me out of the womb." David, and other good men, have often, for direction to us, encouraged themselves with this, that God was not only the God of their fathers, as before, ver. 1, but the God of their infancy, who began betimes to take care of them, as soon as they had a being, and therefore they hope will never cast them off. He that did so well for us in that helpless, useless state, will not leave us when he has reared us, and nursed us up into some capacity of serving him. See the early instances of God's providential care for us, 1. In the birth. He took us also out of the womb, else we had died there, or been stifled in the birth. Every man's particular time begins with this pregnant proof of God's providence, as time in general began with the creation, that pregnant proof of his being. 2. At the breast. "Then didst thou make me hope;" that is, thou didst that for me in providing sustenance for me, and protecting me from the dangers to which I was exposed, which encourages me to hope in thee all my days. The blessings of the breasts, as they crown the blessings of the womb, so they are earnests of the blessings of our whole lives; sure he that fed us then, will never starve us, *Job* iii. 12. 3. In our early dedication to him. "I was cast upon thee from the womb," which perhaps refers to his circumcision on the eighth day; he was then by his parents committed and given up to God as his God in covenant,—for circumcision was a seal of the covenant,—and this encouraged him to trust in God. Those have reason to think themselves safe who were so soon, so solemnly, gathered under the wings of the Divine majesty. 4. In the experience we have had of God's goodness to us all along ever since, drawn out in a constant, uninterrupted series of preservations and supplies. "Thou art my God," providing for me, and watching over me for good, "from my mother's belly;" that is, from my coming into the world, unto this day. And if, as soon as we became capable of exercising reason, we put our confidence in God, and committed ourselves and our way to him, we need not doubt but he will always remember the kindness of our youth, and the love of our espousals, *Jer.* ii. 2. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, over whose incarnation and birth the Divine providence watched with a peculiar care, when he was born in a stable, laid in a manger, and immediately exposed to the malice of Herod, and forced to flee into Egypt; "when he was a child, God loved him and called him thence," *Hos.* xi. 1, and the remembrance of this comforted him in his sufferings. Men reproached him, and discouraged his confidence in God; but God had honoured him, and encouraged his confidence in him.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near;
For *there is* none to help.
12 Many bulls have compassed me:
Strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.
13 They gaped upon me *with* their mouths,
As a ravening and a roaring lion.
14 I am poured out like water,
And all my bones are out of joint:
My heart is like wax;
It is melted in the midst of my bowels.
15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
16 For dogs have compassed me:
The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:
They pierced my hands and my feet.

DOGS OF PALESTINE.

17 I may tell all my bones:
They look *and* stare upon me.
18 They part my garments among them,
And cast lots upon my vesture.
19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD:
O my strength, haste thee to help me.
20 Deliver my soul from the sword;
My darling from the power of the dog.
21 Save me from the lion's mouth:
For thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns

PERSIAN BULL, FROM PERSEPOLIS.—ver. 12.

In these verses we have Christ suffering, and Christ praying, by which we are directed to look for crosses and to look up to God under them.

First. Here is Christ suffering. David indeed was often in trouble, and beset with enemies; but many of the particulars here instanced in are such as were never true of David, and therefore must be appropriated to Christ in the depth of his humiliation.

1. He is here deserted by his friends. "Trouble" and distress "is near, and there is none to help," none to uphold, ver. 11. He trod the winepress alone; for all his disciples forsook him and fled. It is God's honour to help when all other helps and succours fail.

2. He is here insulted and surrounded by his enemies, such as were of a higher rank, who, for their strength and fury, are compared to bulls, strong bulls of Bashan, ver. 12, fat and fed to the full, haughty and sour; such were the chief priests and elders that persecuted Christ; and others of a lower rank, who are compared to dogs, ver. 16, filthy and greedy, and unwearied in running him down. There is an assembly of the wicked plotting against him, ver. 16, for the

chief priests sat in council to consult of ways and means to take Christ. These enemies were numerous and unanimous; many, and those of different and clashing interests among themselves, as Herod and Pilate, yet have agreed to compass me. They have carried their plot far, and seem to have gained their point, for they have beset me round, ver. 12; they have inclosed me, ver. 16. They are formidable and threatening; ver. 13, "they gaped upon me with their mouths," to show me that they would swallow me up; and this with as much strength and fierceness as a roaring ravening lion leaps upon his prey.

3. He is here crucified. The very manner of his death is described, though never in use among the Jews; "They pierced my hands and my feet," ver. 16, which were nailed to the accursed tree, and the whole body left so to hang, the effect of which must needs be the most exquisite pain and torture. There is no one passage in all the Old Testament which the Jews have so industriously corrupted as this, because it is such an eminent prediction of the death of Christ, and was so exactly fulfilled.

4. He is here dying, ver. 14, 15; dying in pain and anguish, because he was to satisfy for sin, which brought in pain, and for which we must otherwise have lain in everlasting anguish. Here is, 1st. The dissolution of the whole frame of his body; "I am poured out like water," weak as water, and yielding to the power of death, emptying himself of all the supports of his human nature. 2nd. The dislocation of his bones. Care was taken that not one of them should be broken, *Jno.* xix. 36, but they were all out of joint, by the violent stretching of his body upon the cross, as upon a rack. Or, it may note the fear that seized him in his agony in the garden, when he began to be sore amazed, the effect of which perhaps was, (as sometimes it has been, of great fear, *Dan.* v. 6,) that "the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." His bones were put out of joint that he might put the whole creation into joint again, which sin had put out of joint, and might make our broken bones to rejoice. 3rd. The colliquation of his spirits; "My heart is like wax," melted to receive the impressions of God's wrath against the sins he undertook to satisfy for; melting away like the vitals of a dying man; which, as it satisfied for the hardness of our hearts, so the consideration of it should help to soften them. When Job speaks of his inward trouble, he saith, "The Almighty makes my heart soft," *Job* xxiii. 16; and see *Ps.* lxviii. 2. 4th. The failing of his natural force; "My strength is dried up," so that he became parched and brittle "like a potsherd," the radical moisture being wasted by the fire of Divine wrath preying upon his spirits. Who then can stand before God's anger? or who knows the power of it? "If this were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" 5th. The clamminess of his mouth, a usual symptom of approaching death; "My tongue cleaveth to my jaws." This was fulfilled both in his thirst upon the cross, *Jno.* xix. 28, and in his silence under his sufferings; for, as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth, nor objected against anything done to him. 6th. His giving up the ghost; "Thou hast brought me to the dust of death;" that is, I am just ready to drop into the grave; for nothing less would satisfy Divine justice. The life of the sinner was forfeited, and therefore the life of the sacrifice must be the ransom for it. The sentence of death passed upon Adam was thus expressed, "Unto dust thou shalt return;" and therefore Christ, having an eye to that sentence in his obedience to death, here useth a like expression, "Thou hast brought me to the dust of death."

5. He was stripped. The shame of nakedness was the immediate consequence of sin; and therefore our Lord Jesus was stripped of his clothes when he was crucified, that he might clothe us with the robe of his righteousness, and that the shame of our nakedness might not appear. Now here we are told, 1st. How his body looked when it was thus stripped; "I may tell all my bones," ver. 17. His blessed body was lean and emaciated with labour, grief and fasting, during the whole course of his ministry, which made him look as if he was near fifty years old when he was yet but thirty-three, as we find, *Jno.* viii. 57. His wrinkles now witnessed for him that he was far from being what he was called, "a gluttonous man, and a winebibber." Or, his bones might be numbered, because his body was distended upon the cross, which made it easy to count his ribs: "They look and stare upon me," that is, my bones do, being distorted, and having no flesh to cover them, as Job saith, *Job* xvi. 8, "My leanness rising up in me, beareth witness to my face." Or, the standers-by, the passers-by, are amazed to see my bones start out thus, and, instead of pitying me, are pleased even with such a rueful spectacle. 2nd. What they did with his clothes, which they took from him; ver. 18, "They part my garments among them," to every soldier a part, "and upon my vesture," the seamless coat, "do they cast lots." This very circumstance was exactly fulfilled, *Jno.* xix. 23, 24; and though it was no great instance of Christ's suffering, yet it is a great instance of the fulfilling of the Scripture in him. Thus it was written, and therefore thus it behoved Christ to suffer. Let this therefore confirm our faith in him as the true Messiah, and inflame our love to him, as the best of friends, who loved us, and suffered all this for us.

Secondly. Here is Christ praying, and with that supporting himself under the burthen of his sufferings. Christ in his agony prayed, prayed earnestly, prayed that the cup might pass from him. When the prince of this world with his terrors set upon him, gaped upon him as a roaring lion, he fell upon the ground and prayed; and of that David's praying here was a type. He calls God his strength, ver. 19. When we cannot rejoice in God as our song, yet let us stay ourselves upon him as our strength; and take the comfort of spiritual supports when we cannot come at spiritual delights. He prays, 1. That God would be with him, and not set himself at a distance from him; "Be not thou far from me," ver. 11; and again, ver. 19, Whoever stands aloof from my sore, Lord, do not thou. The nearness of trouble should quicken us to draw near to God, and then we may hope that he will draw near to us. 2. That he would help him, and make haste to help him; help him to bear up under his troubles, that he might not fail nor be discouraged, that he might neither shrink from his undertaking nor sink under it; and the Father heard him in that he feared, *Heb.* v. 7, and enabled him to go through with his work. 3. That he would deliver him, and save him, ver. 20, 21. 1st. Observe what the jewel is which he is in care for; The safety of my soul, my darling; let that be redeemed from the power of the grave, *Ps.* xliv. 15; Father, into thy hands I commit that, to be conveyed safe to paradise. The psalmist here calls his soul his darling, his only one, so the word is: My soul is my only one. I have but one soul to take care of, and therefore the greater is my shame if I neglect it, and the greater will the loss be if I let it perish. Being my only one it ought to be my darling, for the eternal welfare of which I ought to be deeply concerned. I do not use my soul as my darling unless I take care to preserve it from every thing that would hurt it, and to provide all necessaries for it, and be entirely tender of its welfare. 2nd. Observe what the danger is from which he prays to be delivered; from the sword, the flaming sword of Divine wrath, which turns every way. This he dreaded more than any thing, *Gen.* iii. 24. God's anger was the wormwood and the gall in the bitter cup that was put into his hands: O deliver my soul from that; Lord, though I lose my life, let me not lose thy love. Save me from the power of the dog, and from the lion's mouth. This seems to be meant of Satan, that old enemy, that bruised the heel of the seed of the woman, the prince of this world, with whom he was to engage in close combat, and whom he saw coming, *Jno.* xiv. 30. Lord, save me from being overpowered by his terrors. He pleads, "Thou hast" formerly "heard me from the horns of the unicorn," that is, saved me from him in answer to my prayer. Which may refer to the victory Christ had obtained over Satan, and his temptations, *Mat.* iv., when the devil left him for a season, *Lu.* iv. 13, but now returned in another manner to attack him with his terrors. Lord, thou gavest me the victory then, give it me now, that I may spoil principalities and powers, and cast out the prince of this world. Has God delivered us from the horns of the unicorn, that we be not tossed? Let that encourage us to hope that we shall be delivered from the lion's mouth, that we be not torn. He that has delivered doth and will. This prayer of Christ no doubt was answered, for the Father heard him always; and, though he did not deliver him from death, yet he suffered him not to see corruption, but the third day raised him out of the dust of death, which was a greater instance of God's favour to him than if he had helped him down from the cross: for that would have baulked his undertaking, whereas his resurrection crowned it.

In singing this we should meditate on the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, till we experience in our own souls the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren:
In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him;
All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him;
And fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Neither hath he hid his face from him;
But when he cried unto him, he heard.
25 My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation:
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.
26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied:
They shall praise the LORD that seek him:
Your heart shall live for ever.
27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD:
And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.
28 For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S:
And he *is* the governor among the nations.
29 All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship:
All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him:
And none can keep alive his own soul.
30 A seed shall serve him;
It shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation.
31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness
Unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

The same that began the psalm complaining, who was no other than Christ in his humiliation, ends it here triumphing, and it can be no other than Christ in his exaltation. And, as the first words of the complaint were used by Christ himself upon the cross, so the first words of the triumph are expressly applied to him, *Heb.* ii. 12, and are made his own words: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." The certain prospect which Christ had of the joy set before him not only gave him a satisfactory answer to his prayers, but turned his complaints into praises. He saw of the travail of his soul and was well satisfied; witness that triumphant word wherewith he breathed his last, "It is finished." Five things are here spoken of, the view of which was the satisfaction and triumph of Christ in his sufferings.

First. That he should have a church in the world, and those that were given him from eternity should, in the fulness of time, be gathered in to him. This is implied here, that he should see his seed, *Isa.* liii. 10. It pleased him to think, 1. That by the declaring of God's name, that is, by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel in its plainness and purity, many should be effectually called to him and to God by him. And for this end ministers should be employed to publish this doctrine to the world, who should be so much his messengers and his voice, that their doing it should be accounted his doing it; their word is his, and by them he declares God's name. 2. That those who are thus called in should be brought into a very near and dear relation to him, as his brethren; for he is not only not ashamed, but greatly well pleased to call them so; not the believing Jews only, his countrymen, but those of the Gentiles also, who became fellow heirs, and of the same body, *Heb.* ii. 11. Christ is our elder brother, who takes care of us, and makes provision for us, and expects that our desire should be towards him, and that we be willing he should rule over us. 3. That these brethren of his should be incorporated into a congregation, a great congregation. Such is the universal church, the whole family that is named from him, into which all the children of God that were scattered abroad are collected, and in which they are united, *Jno.* xi. 52; *Eph.* i. 10. And that they should also be incorporated into lesser societies, members of that great body, many religious assemblies for Divine worship, on which the face of Christianity should appear, and in which the interests of it should be supported and advanced. 4. That these should be accounted the seed of Jacob and Israel, ver. 23; that on them, though Gentiles, the blessing of Abraham might come, *Gal.* iii. 14; and to them might pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenant, and the service of God, as much as ever it did to Israel according to the flesh, *Rom.* ix. 4; *Heb.* viii. 10. The Gospel church is called the Israel of God, *Gal.* vi. 6.

Secondly. That God should be greatly honoured and glorified in him by that church. His Father's glory was that which he had in his eye throughout his whole undertaking, *Jno.* xvii. 4, particularly in his sufferings; which he entered upon with this solemn request, "Father, glorify thy name," *Jno.* xii. 27, 28. He foresees with pleasure,

1. That God would be glorified by the church that should be gathered to him; and for that end they should be called and gathered in, that they might be unto

God for a name and a praise. Christ by his ministers will declare God's name to his brethren, as God's mouth to them; and then by them, as the mouth of the congregation to God, will God's name be praised. All that fear the Lord will praise him, ver. 23, even every Israelite indeed: see *Ps.* cxviii. 2—4; cxxxv. 19, 20. The business of Christians, particularly in their solemn religious assemblies, is to praise and glorify God, with a holy awe and reverence of his majesty; and therefore they that are here called upon to praise God are called upon to fear him.

2. That God would be glorified in the Redeemer, and in his undertaking. Therefore Christ is said to praise God in the church, not only because he is the Master of the assemblies in which God is praised, and the Mediator of all the praises that are offered up to God, but because he is the matter of the church's praise: see *Eph.* iii. 21. All our praises must centre in the work of redemption, and a great deal of reason we have to be thankful, 1st. That Jesus Christ was owned by his Father in his undertaking, notwithstanding the apprehension he was sometimes under that his Father had forsaken him; ver. 24, "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted" one, that is, of the suffering Redeemer; but has graciously accepted it as a full satisfaction for sin, and a valuable consideration on which to ground the grant of eternal life to all believers. Though it was offered to us poor sinners, he did not despise or abhor it for our sakes, nor did he turn his face from him that offered it, as Saul was angry with his own son, because he interceded for David, whom he looked upon as his enemy. But when he cried unto him, when his blood cried for peace and pardon for us, he heard him. This, as it is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Those who have thought their prayers slighted and unheard, yet, if they continue to pray and wait, will find they have not sought in vain. 2nd. That he himself will go on with his undertaking and complete it. Christ saith, "I will pay my vows," ver. 25. Having engaged to bring many sons to glory, he will perform his engagement to the utmost, and will lose none.

Thirdly. That all humble gracious souls should have a full satisfaction and happiness in him, ver. 26. It comforted the Lord Jesus in his sufferings, that in and through him all true believers should have everlasting consolation. 1. The poor in spirit shall be rich in blessings, spiritual blessings; the hungry shall be filled with good things. Christ's sacrifice being accepted, the saints shall feast upon the sacrifice, as under the law upon the peace offerings, and so partake of the altar. "The meek shall eat and be satisfied," eat of the bread of life, feed with an appetite upon the doctrine of Christ's mediation; which is meat and drink to the soul that knows its own nature and case. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness in Christ shall have all they can desire to satisfy them, and make them easy, and shall not labour as they have done for that which satisfieth not 2. They that are much in praying shall be much in thanksgiving. "They shall praise the Lord that seek him," because through Christ they are sure of finding him; in the hopes of which they have reason to praise him, even while they are seeking him. And the more earnest they are in seeking him, the more will their hearts be enlarged in his praises when they have found him. 3. The souls that are devoted to him shall be for ever happy with him; "Your heart shall live for ever." Yours that are meek, that are satisfied in Christ, that continue to seek God, whatever becomes of your bodies, your hearts shall live for ever; the graces and comforts you have shall be perfected in everlasting life. Christ has said, "Because I live, you shall live also," *Jno.* xiv. 19; and therefore that life shall be as sure, and as long as his.

Fourthly. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, should extend itself to all corners of the earth, and should take in all sorts of people.

1. That it should reach far, ver. 27, 28. That whereas the Jews had long been the only professing people of God, now "all the ends of the world should" come into the church, and, the partition wall being taken down, the Gentiles should be taken in. It is here prophesied, 1st. That they should be converted; They shall "remember and turn to the Lord." Note, Serious reflection is the first step, and a good step it is towards true conversion. We must consider and turn. The prodigal came first to himself, and then to his father. 2nd. That then they should be admitted into communion with God, and with the assemblies that serve him; "They shall worship before thee," for "in every place incense shall be offered to God," *Mal.* i. 11; *Isa.* lxvi. 23. Those that turn to God will make conscience of worshipping before him. And good reason there is why all the kindreds of the nations should do homage to God, for, ver. 28, "The kingdom is the Lord's;" his, and his only, is the universal monarchy. *First.* The kingdom of nature is the Lord Jehovah's, and his providence rules among the nations, and upon that account we are bound to worship him; so that the design of the Christian religion is to revive natural religion, and the principles and laws of it. Christ died to bring us to God, the God that made us, from whom we had revolted, and reduce us to our native allegiance. *Secondly.* The kingdom of grace is the Lord Christ's, and he, as Mediator, is appointed governor among the nations; head over all things to his church. Let every tongue therefore confess that he is Lord.

2. That it should include many of different ranks, ver. 29; high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, meet in Christ. 1st. Christ shall have the homage of many of the great ones. "They that be fat upon earth," that live in pomp and power, they "shall eat and worship;" even they that fare deliciously, when they have eaten and are full, shall bless the Lord their God for their plenty and prosperity. 2nd. The poor also shall receive his Gospel. Those that go down to the dust, that sit in the dust, *Ps.* cxiii. 7, that can scarce keep life and soul together, they shall bow before the Lord Jesus, who reckons it his honour to be the poor man's King, *Ps.* lxxii. 12; and whose protection doth in a special manner draw their allegiance. Or this may be understood in general of dying men, whether poor or rich. See then what is our condition: we are going down to the dust, to which we are sentenced, and where shortly we must make our bed; nor can we keep alive our own souls, we cannot secure our own natural life long; nor can we be the authors of our own spiritual and eternal life. It is, therefore, our great interest, as well as duty, to bow before the Lord Jesus, to give up ourselves to him to be his subjects, and worshippers; for this is the only way, and it is a sure way, to secure our happiness, when we go down to the dust. Seeing we cannot keep alive our own souls, it is our wisdom by an obedient faith to commit our souls to Jesus Christ, who is able to save them, and keep them alive for ever.

Fifthly. That the church of Christ, and with it the kingdom of God among men, shall continue to the end through all the ages of time. Mankind is kept up in a succession of generations; so that there is always a generation passing away, and a generation coming up. Now, as Christ shall have honour from that which is passing away, and leaving the world, ver. 29, they that go down to the dust shall bow before him; and it is good to die bowing before Christ. Blessed are the dead who thus die in the Lord; so he shall have honour from that which is rising up and setting out in the world, ver. 30. Observe,

1. Their application to Christ; "A seed shall serve him," that is, shall keep up the solemn worship of him, and profess and practise obedience to him as their Master and Lord. Note, God will have a church in the world to the end of time; and, in order to that, there shall be a succession of professing Christians, and Gospel ministers, from generation to generation. "A seed shall serve him," that is, there shall be a remnant more or less to whom shall pertain the service of God, and to whom God will give grace to serve him. Perhaps not the seed of the same persons, for grace doth not run in a blood; he doth not say their seed, but a seed. Perhaps but few, yet enough to preserve the entail.

2. Christ's acknowledgment of them; "They shall be accounted to him for a generation," that is, he will be the same to them that he was to those who went before them. His kindness to his friends shall not die with them, but shall be drawn out to their heirs and successors; and instead of the fathers shall be the children, whom all shall acknowledge to be "a seed that the Lord hath blessed," *Isa.* lxi. 9; lxv. 23. The generation of the righteous God will graciously own as his treasure, his children.

3. Their agency for him; ver. 31, "They shall come," shall rise up in their day, not only to keep up the virtue of the generation that is past, and to do the work of their own generation; but to serve the honour of Christ, and the welfare of souls in the generations to come. They shall transmit to them the Gospel of Christ (that sacred depositum) pure and entire, even "to a people that shall be born" hereafter; to them they shall declare two things: 1st. That there is an everlasting righteousness, which Jesus Christ hath brought in. This righteousness of his, and not any of our own, they shall declare to be the foundation of all our hopes, and the fountain of all our joys: see *Rom.* i. 16, 17. 2nd. That the work of our redemption by Christ is the Lord's own doing, *Ps.* cxviii. 23; and no contrivance of ours. This we must declare to our children, "that God has done this." It is his wisdom in a mystery, it is his arm revealed.

In singing this, we must triumph in the name of Christ, as above every name; must give him honour ourselves; rejoice in the honours others do him, and in the assurance we have that there shall be a people praising him on earth when we are praising him in heaven.

PSALM XXIII.

Many of David's psalms are full of complaints, but this is full of comforts, and the expressions of delight in God's great goodness and dependence upon him. It is a psalm which has been sung by good Christians, and will be while the world stands, with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. I. The psalmist here claims relation to God as his shepherd, ver. 1. II. He recounts his experience of the kind things God had done for him, as his shepherd, ver. 2, 3, 5. III. From hence he infers, that he should want no good, ver. 1; that he needed to fear no evil, ver. 4; that he would never leave or forsake him in a way of mercy, and therefore he resolves never to leave or forsake God in the way of duty, ver. 6; and in this certainly he has an eye, not only to the blessings of God's providence, which made his outward condition prosperous, but to the communications of God's grace, received by a lively faith, and returned in a warm devotion, which fills his soul with joy unspeakable; and, as in the foregoing psalm he represented Christ dying for his sheep, so here he represents Christians receiving the benefit of all the care and tenderness of that great and good Shepherd.

A Psalm of David.

THE LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.
2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
3 He restoreth my soul: [name's sake.
He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; [death,
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine
Thou anointest my head with oil; [enemies:
My cup runneth over.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days
of my life:
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

From three very comfortable premises, David in this psalm draws three very comfortable conclusions, and teaches us to do so too. We are saved by hope, and therefore that hope will not make us ashamed, because it is well grounded. It is the duty of Christians to encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and we are here directed to take that encouragement, both from the relation wherein he stands to us, and from the experience we have had of his goodness according to that relation.

First. From God's being his Shepherd he infers that he shall not want any thing that is good for him, ver. 1. See here,

1. The great care that God takes of believers. He is their Shepherd, and they may call him so. Time was when David was himself a shepherd, he was taken from following the ewes great with young, *Ps.* lxxviii. 70; and so he knew by experience the cares and tender affections of a good shepherd towards his flock; he remembered what need they had of a shepherd, and what a kindness it was to them to have one that was skilful and faithful: he once ventured his life to rescue a lamb. By this, therefore, he illustrates God's care of his people; and to this our Saviour seems to refer, when he saith, "I am the Shepherd of the sheep; the good Shepherd," *Jno.* x. 11. He that is the Shepherd of Israel, that is, of the whole church in general, *Ps.* lxxx. 1, is the Shepherd of every particular believer; the meanest is not below his cognizance, *Isa.* xl. 11. He takes them into his fold, and then takes care of them; protects them, and provides for them with more care and constancy than a shepherd can, that makes it his business to keep the flock. If God be as a Shepherd to us, we must be as sheep, inoffensive, meek and quiet, silent before the shearers, nay, and before the butcher too, useful and sociable; we must know the Shepherd's voice, and follow him.

2. The great confidence which believers have in God. If "the Lord is my Shepherd," my feeder, I may conclude, "I shall not want" any thing that is really necessary and good for me. If David penned this psalm before his coming to the crown, though destined to it, he had as much reason to fear wanting as any man. Once he sent his men a begging for him to Nabal, and another time went himself a begging to Ahimelech; and yet, when he considers that God is his Shepherd, he can boldly say, "I shall not want." Let not those fear starving that are at God's finding, and have him for their feeder. More is

implied than is expressed; not only "I shall not want," but I shall be supplied with whatever I need; and if I have not every thing I desire, I may conclude it is either not fit for me, or not good for me, or I shall have it in due time.

Secondly. From his performing the office of a good Shepherd to him, he infers that he needs not fear any evil in the greatest dangers and difficulties he could be in, ver. 2—4. He experienceth the benefit of God's presence with him, and care of him now, and therefore expects the benefit of them when he most needs it. See here,

1. The comforts of a living saint. God is his Shepherd, and he is to him a God all-sufficient to all intents and purposes; David found him so, and so have we. See the happiness of the saints as the sheep of God's pasture.

1st. They are well placed, well laid; "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." We have the supports and comforts of this life from God's good hand; our daily bread from him as our Father. The greatest abundance is but a dry pasture to a wicked man, who relisheth that only in it which pleaseth the senses; but to a godly man, who tasteth the goodness of God in all his enjoyments, and by faith relisheth that, though he has but little of the world, it is to him a green pasture, *Ps.* xxxvii. 16; *Pr.* xv. 16, 17. God's ordinances are the green pastures, in which food is provided for all believers; the word of life is the nourishment of the new man. It is milk for babes, pasture for the sheep; never barren, never eaten bare, never parched, but always a green pasture for faith to feed in. God makes his saints to lie down, that is, he gives them quiet and contentment in their own minds, whatever their lot is; their souls dwell at ease in him, and that makes every pasture green. Are we blessed with the green pastures of the ordinances, let us not think it enough to pass through them, but let us lie down in them, abide in them; This is my rest for ever. It is by a constancy of the means of grace that the soul is fed.

2nd. They are well guided, well led. The Shepherd of Israel guideth Joseph like a flock; and every believer is under the same conduct: "He leadeth me beside the still waters." Those that feed on God's goodness, must follow his direction; he leads them by his providence, by his Word, by his Spirit, disposeth their affairs for the best according to his counsel; disposeth their affections and actions according to his command; directs their eye, their way, and their heart into his love. The still waters by which he leads them yield them not only a pleasant prospect, but many a cooling draught, many a reviving cordial, when they are thirsty and weary. God provides for his people, not only food and rest, but refreshment also and pleasure. The consolations of God, the joys of the Holy Ghost, are these still waters by which the saints are led; streams which flow from the fountain of living waters, and make glad the city of our God. God leads his people, not to the standing waters which corrupt and gather filth, not to the troubled sea, nor to the rapid, rolling floods, but to the silent, purling waters; for the still but running waters agree best with those spirits that flow out towards God, and yet do it silently. This Divine conduct they are under is stripped of its metaphor; ver. 3, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness," that is, in the way of my duty, in that he instructs me by his word, and directs me by conscience and providence. These are the paths in which all the saints desire to be led and kept, and never to turn aside out of them; and those only are led by the still waters of comfort that walk in the paths of righteousness. The way of duty is the truly pleasant way; it is the work of righteousness that is peace. In these paths we cannot walk, unless God both lead us into them and lead us in them.

3rd. They are well helped when any thing ails them; "He restoreth my soul," that is, *First.* He reduceth me when I wander. No creature will lose itself sooner than a sheep, so apt it is to go astray, and then so unapt to find the way back. The best saints are sensible of their proneness to "go astray like lost sheep;" *Ps.* cxix. 176. They miss their way, and turn aside into bypaths; but when God shews them their error, gives them repentance, and brings them back to their duty again, he restoreth the soul; and if he did not do so they would wander endlessly, and be undone. When after one sin David's heart smote him, and after another Nathan was sent to tell him, "Thou art the man," God restored his soul. Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. *Secondly.* He recovereth me when I am sick, and revives me when I am faint; and so restores the soul which was ready to depart. He is the Lord our God that healeth us, *Ex.* xv. 26; many a time we had fainted unless we had believed; and it was the good Shepherd that kept us from fainting.

2. See here the courage of a dying saint, ver. 4. Having had such experience of God's goodness to me all my days, in six troubles and in seven, I will never distrust him, no, not in the last extremity. The rather, because all he has done for me hitherto was not for any merit or desert of mine, but purely for his name's sake; in pursuance of his word, in performance of his promise, and for the glory of his own attributes, and relations to his people. That name, therefore, shall still be my strong tower, and shall assure me that he that has led me and fed me all my life long will not leave me at last. Here is,

1st. Imminent danger supposed; "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death;" that is, though I am in peril of death, though in the midst of dangers, deep as a valley, dark as a shadow, and dreadful as death itself,—or, rather, though I am under the arrests of death, have received the sentence of death within myself, and have all the reason in the world to look upon myself as a dying man,—yet I am easy. Those that are sick, those that are old, have reason to look upon themselves as "in the valley of the shadow of death." Here is one word indeed which sounds terrible,—it is death; which we must all count upon,—there is no discharge in that war. But even in the supposition of the distress, there are four words which lessen the terror. It is death indeed that is before us; but, *First.* It is but the shadow of death, there is no substantial evil in it; the shadow of a serpent will not sting, nor the shadow of a sword kill. *Secondly.* It is the valley of the shadow, deep indeed, and dark, and dirty, but the valleys are fruitful; and so is death itself fruitful of comforts to God's people. *Thirdly.* It is but a walk in this valley, a gentle, pleasant walk. The wicked are chased out of the world, and their souls are required; but the saints take a walk to another world as cheerfully as they take their leave of this. *Fourthly.* It is a walk through it; they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safe to the mountain of spices on the other side it.

2nd. This danger made light of and triumphed over upon good grounds. Death is a king of terrors, but not to the sheep of Christ; they tremble at it no more than sheep do that "are appointed for the slaughter." Even in "the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," none of these things move me. Note, A child of God may meet the messengers of death, and receive its summons with a holy security and serenity of mind. The sucking child may play upon the hole of this asp; and the weaned child, that through grace is weaned from this world, may put his hand upon this cockatrice's den, bidding a holy defiance to death, as Paul, "O death, where is thy sting?" And there is ground enough for this confidence, *First.* Because there is no evil in it to a child of God. Death cannot separate us from the love of God, and therefore it can do us no real harm; it kills the body, but cannot touch the soul. And what need it be dreadful, when there is nothing in it hurtful? *Secondly.* Because the saints have God's gracious presence with them in their dying moments. He is then at their right hand, and therefore what need they be moved? The good Shepherd will not only conduct, but convey his sheep through this valley, where they are in danger of being set upon by the beasts of prey, the evening wolves; he will not only convey them, but comfort them then when they most need comfort. His presence shall comfort them, "Thou art with me;" his Word and Spirit shall comfort them; his rod and staff, alluding to the shepherd's crook, or the rod under which the sheep passed when they were counted, *Lev.* xxvii. 32; or the staff with which the shepherds drove away the dogs that would scatter or worry the sheep. It is a comfort to the saints when they come to die that God takes cognizance of them, he knows them that are his; that he will rebuke the enemy; that he will guide them with his rod, and sustain them with his staff. The Gospel is called the rod of Christ's strength, *Ps.* cx. 2; and there is enough in that to comfort the saints when they come to die, and underneath them are the everlasting arms.

Thirdly. From the good gifts of God's bounty to him now he infers the constancy and perpetuity of his mercy, ver. 5, 6. Where we may observe,

1. How highly he magnifies God's gracious vouchsafements to him; ver. 5, "Thou hast prepared a table before me;" thou hast provided for me all things pertaining both to life and godliness; all things requisite both for body and soul, for time and eternity. Such a bountiful benefactor is God to all his people; and it becomes them abundantly to utter his great goodness, as David here, who acknowledgeth, 1st. That he had food convenient, a table spread, a cup filled, meat for his hunger, drink for his thirst. 2nd. That he had it carefully and readily provided for him. His table was not spread with any thing that came next to hand, but prepared, and prepared before him. 3rd. That he was not stinted, was not straitened, but had abundance; "My cup runs over;" enough for myself and my friends too. 4th. That he had not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight. "Thou anointest my head with oil." Samuel anointed him king, which was a certain pledge of farther favour; but this is rather an instance of the plenty with which God had blessed him; or an allusion to the extraordinary entertainment of special friends, whose heads they anointed with oil, *Lu.* vii. 46. Nay, some think, he still looks upon himself as a sheep, but such a one as the poor man's ewe lamb, 2 *Sam.* xii. 3, that did "eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom." Not only thus nobly, but thus tenderly, are the children of God looked after. Plentiful provision is made for their bodies, for their souls, for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. If Providence do not bestow upon us thus plentifully for our natural life, it is our own fault if it be not made up to us in spiritual blessings.

2. How confidently he counts upon the continuance of God's favours, ver. 6. He had said, ver. 1, "I shall not want," but now he speaks more positively, more comprehensively: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." His hope riseth, and his faith is strengthened by being acted. Observe, 1st. What he promiseth himself. "Goodness and mercy;" that is, all the streams of it flowing from the fountain; pardoning mercy, protecting mercy, sustaining, supplying mercy. 2nd. The manner of the conveyance of it. It "shall follow me," as the water out of the rock followed the camp of Israel through the wilderness; it shall follow them into all places and all conditions, shall be always ready to them. 3rd. The continuance of it. It shall follow me all my life long, even to the last; for whom God loves he loves to the end. 4th. The constancy of it. "All the days of my life," as duly as the day comes; it shall be new every morning, *Lam.* iii. 22, 23; like the manna that was given to the Israelites daily. 5th. The certainty of it. "Surely" it shall. It is as sure as the promise of the God of truth can make it; and we know whom we have believed. 6th. Here is a prospect of the perfection of bliss in the future state, so some take the latter clause. Goodness and mercy having followed me all the days of my life on this earth, when that is ended, I shall remove to a better world, to "dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," in our Father's house above, where there are many mansions. 'With what I have, I am pleased much; with what I hope for, more.' All this, and heaven too! Then we serve a good Master.

3. How resolutely he determines to cleave to God and to his duty. We read the last clause as David's covenant with God; "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," that is, as long as I live, and I will praise him while I have any being. We must dwell in his house as servants that desire to have their ears bored to his door-post, to serve him for ever. If God's goodness to us be like the morning light, which shines more and more to the perfect day, let not ours to him be like the morning cloud and the early dew that passeth away. Those that would be satisfied with the fatness of God's house must keep close to the duties of it.

PSALM XXIV.

This psalm is concerning the kingdom of Jesus Christ. I. His providential kingdom, by which he rules the world, 1, 2. II. The kingdom of grace, by which he rules in his church. 1. Concerning the subjects of that kingdom; their character, ver. 3, 4, 6; their charter, ver. 5. 2. Concerning the king of that kingdom, and a summons to all to give him admission, ver. 7—10. It is supposed that the psalm was penned upon occasion of David's bringing up the ark to the place prepared for it; and that the intention of it was to lead the people above the pomp of external ceremonies to a holy life and faith in Christ, of whom the ark was a type.

A Psalm of David.

THE earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.
2 For he hath founded it upon the seas,
And established it upon the floods.

Here is, First. God's absolute propriety in this part of the creation, where our lot is cast, ver. 1. We are not to think that "the heavens, even the heavens" only, "are the Lord's," and the numerous and bright inhabitants of the upper world; and that this earth, being so small and inconsiderable a part of the creation, and at such a distance from the royal palace above, is neglected, and that he claims no interest in it. No, even the earth is his, and this lower world; and though he has prepared the throne of his glory in the heavens, yet his kingdom ruleth over all; and even the worms of this earth are not below his cognizance, nor from under his dominion.

1. When God gave the earth to the children of men, he still reserved to himself the property, and only let it out to them as tenants or usufructuaries. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" the mines that are lodged in the bowels of it, even the richest; the fruits it produceth; all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills; our lands and houses, and all the improvements that are made of this earth by the skill and industry of man; they are all his. These indeed, in the kingdom of grace, are justly looked upon as emptiness, for they are vanity of vanities, nothing to a soul; but in the kingdom of providence they are fulness. "The earth is full of God's riches, so is the great and wide sea also." All the parts and regions of the earth are the Lord's, all under his eye, all in his hand, so that wherever a child of God goes he may comfort himself with this, that he doth not go off his Father's ground.

That which falls to our share of the earth and its products is but lent to us; it is the Lord's; what is our own against all the world is not so against his claims. That which is most remote from us, as that which passeth through the paths of the sea, or is hid in the bottom of it, is the Lord's; and he knows where to find it.

2. The habitable part of this earth is his in a special manner; *Pr.* viii. 31, "The world, and they that dwell therein." We ourselves are not our own,—our bodies, our souls, are not; "All souls are mine," saith God; for he is the former of our bodies, and the father of our spirits. Our tongues are not our own; they are to be at his service. Even those of the children of men are his that know him not, nor own their relation to him. Now this comes in here to shew that, though God is graciously pleased to accept the devotions and services of his peculiar chosen people, ver. 3—5, it is not because he needs them, or can be benefited by them, for the earth is his, and all in it, *Ex.* xix. 5; *Ps.* l. 12. It is likewise to be applied to the dominion Christ hath as Mediator over the utmost parts of the earth, which are given him for his possession. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand,—power over all flesh." The apostle quotes this scripture twice together, in his discourse about things offered to idols, 1 *Cor.* x. 26, 28. If it be sold in the shambles, eat it, and ask no questions, "for the earth is the Lord's;" it is God's good creature, and you have a right to it; but if one tell you, it was offered to an idol, forbear, "for the earth is the Lord's," and there is enough beside. This is a good reason why we should be content with our allotment in this world, and not envy others theirs; "the earth is the Lord's," and may he not do what he will with his own, and give to some more of it, to others less, as it pleaseth him?

Secondly. The ground of this propriety. The earth is his by an indisputable title; "for he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods," ver. 2. It is his; for, 1. He made it, formed it, founded it, and fitted it for the use of man. The matter his; for he made it out of nothing. The form his; for he made it according to the eternal counsels and ideas of his own mind. He made it himself; he made it for himself; so that he is sole, entire, and absolute owner; and none can let us a title to any part of it but by, from, and under him: see *Ps.* lxxxix. 11, 12. 2. He made it so as no one else could. It is the creature of Omnipotence; for it is founded upon the seas, upon the floods; a weak and unstable foundation, one would think, to build the earth upon; and yet, if Almighty Power pleaseth, it shall serve to bear the weight of this earth. The waters which at first covered the earth, and rendered it unfit to be a habitation for man, were ordered under it, that the dry land might appear, and so they are as a foundation to it: see *Ps.* civ. 8, 9. 3. He continues it; he hath established it, fixed it, so that, though one generation passeth and another cometh, the earth abideth, *Eccl.* i. 4; and his providence is a continued creation, *Ps.* cxix. 90. The founding of the earth upon the floods should mind us how slippery and uncertain all earthly things are. Their foundation is not only sand, but water; it is therefore our folly to build upon them.

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?
Or who shall stand in his holy place?
4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.
5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.
6 This *is* the generation of them that seek him,
That seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

From this world, and the fulness thereof, the psalmist's meditations rise of a sudden to the great things of another world, the foundation of which is not on the seas, nor on the floods. The things of this world God hath given to the children of men, and we are much indebted to his providence for them; but they will not make a portion for us. And, therefore,

First. Here is an inquiry after better things, ver. 3. This earth is God's footstool; but, if we had never so much of it, we must be here but a while, must shortly go hence, and "Who then shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" Who shall go to heaven hereafter, and, as an earnest of that, shall have communion with God in holy ordinances now? A soul that knows and considers its own nature, original, and immortality, when it has viewed the earth and the fulness thereof, will sit down unsatisfied. There is not found among all the creatures a help meet for man, and therefore it will think of ascending towards God, towards heaven; will ask, What shall I do to rise to that high place, that hill where the Lord dwells, and manifests himself, that I may be acquainted with him; and to abide in that happy, holy place where he meets his people, and makes them holy and happy? What shall I do that I may be of those whom God owns for his peculiar people, and who are his in another manner than the earth is his and its fulness? This question is much the same with that *Ps.* xv. 1. The hill of Zion, on which the temple was built, typified the church both visible and invisible. When the people attended the ark to its holy place, David puts them in mind that these were but patterns of heavenly things, and therefore by them they should be led to consider the heavenly things themselves.

Secondly. An answer to this inquiry. In which we have,

1. The property of God's peculiar people, who shall have communion with him in grace and glory.

1st. They are such as keep themselves from all the gross acts of sin. They have clean hands; not spotted with the pollutions of the world and the flesh. None that were ceremonially unclean might enter into the mountain of the temple, which signified that cleanness of conversation which is required in all those that have fellowship with God. The hands lifted up in prayer must be pure hands; no blot of unjust gain cleaving to them, nor any thing else that defiles the man, and is offensive to the holy God.

2nd. They are such as make conscience of being really, that is, of being inwardly, as good as they seem to be outwardly. They have pure hearts. And we make nothing of our religion if we do not make heart-work of it. It is not that our hands be clean before men, but we must also wash our hearts from wickedness, and not allow ourselves in any secret heart-impurities, which are open before the eye of God. Yet in vain do those pretend to have pure and good hearts whose hands are defiled with the acts of sin. That is a pure heart which is sincere and without guile in covenanting with God; which is carefully guarded, that the wicked one, the unclean spirit, touch it not; which is purified by faith, and conformed to the image and will of God: see *Mat.* v. 8.

3rd. They are such as do not set their affections upon the things of this world; that do not lift up their souls unto vanity; whose hearts are not carried out inordinately towards the wealth of the world, the praise of men, or the delights of sense; who do not choose these things for their portion, nor reach forth after them, because they believe them to be vanity, uncertain, and unsatisfying.

4th. They are such as deal honestly both with God and man. In their covenant with God, and their contracts with men, they have not sworn deceitfully, not broken their promises, violated their engagements, or taken any false oath. Those that have no regard to the obligations of truth, or the honour of God's name, are unfit for a place in God's holy hill.

5th. They are a praying people; ver. 6, "This is the generation of them that seek him." In every age there is a remnant of such as these, men of this character, that are "accounted to the Lord for a generation," *Ps.* xxii. 30; and they are such as "seek God, that seek thy face, O Jacob!" *First.* They join themselves to God to seek him; not only in earnest prayer, but in serious endeavour to obtain his favour, and keep themselves in his love; that having made it the top of their happiness, make it the top of their ambition, to be accepted of him, and therefore take care and take pains to approve themselves to him. It is to the hill of the Lord that we must ascend; and, the way being uphill, we have need to put forth ourselves to the utmost as those that seek diligently. *Secondly.* They join themselves to the people of God, to seek God with them. Being brought into communion with God, they come into the communion of saints; conforming to the patterns of the saints that are gone before, so some understand this. They seek God's face as Jacob, so some, who was therefore sirnamed Israel, because he wrestled with God and prevailed,—sought him and found him. And associating with the saints of their own day, they shall court the favour of God's church, *Rev.* iii. 9; shall be glad of an acquaintance with God's people, *Zec.* viii. 23; shall incorporate themselves with them; and, when they "subscribe with their hand to the Lord," shall "call themselves by the name of Jacob," *Isa.* xliv. 5. As soon as ever Paul was converted, he joined himself to the disciples, *Acts* ix. 26. They shall seek God's face in Jacob, (so some,) that is, in the assemblies of his people; 'Thy face, O God of Jacob,' so our margin supplies it, and makes it easy. As all believers are the spiritual seed of Abraham, so all that strive in prayer are the spiritual seed of Jacob; to whom God never said, Seek ye me in vain.

2. The privileges of God's peculiar people, ver. 5. They shall be made truly and for ever happy. 1st. They shall be blessed. They "shall receive the blessing from the Lord," all the fruits and gifts of God's favour according to his promise; and those whom God blesseth they are blessed indeed; for it is his prerogative to command the blessing. 2nd. They shall be justified and sanctified. These are the spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which they shall receive, even righteousness, the very thing they hunger and thirst after, *Mat.* v. 6. Righteousness is blessedness, and it is from God only that we must expect it; for we have no righteousness of our own. They shall receive the reward of their righteousness, so some; "the crown of righteousness, which the righteous Judge shall give," 2 *Tim.* iv. 8. 3rd. They shall be saved; for God himself will be the God of their salvation. Note, Where God gives righteousness, he certainly designs salvation. Those that are made meet for heaven shall be brought safe to heaven, and then they will find what they have been seeking to their endless satisfaction.

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in
8 Who *is* this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.
9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Even lift *them* up, ye everlasting doors;
And the King of glory shall come in.
10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory. Selah.

What is spoken once is spoken a second time in these verses; such repetitions are usual in songs, and have a great deal of beauty in them. Here is, 1. Entrance once and again demanded for the King of glory. The doors and gates are to be thrown open, thrown wide open, to give him admission; for, behold, he stands at the door and knocks, ready to come in. 2. Inquiry once and again made concerning this mighty Prince, in whose name entrance is demanded; "Who is this King of glory?" as when any knock at our door it is common to ask, Who is there? 3. Satisfaction once and again given concerning the royal person that makes the demand. It is "the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts," ver. 8, 10. Now,

First. This splendid entry here described, it is probable, refers to the solemn bringing in of the ark into the tent David pitched for it, or the temple Solomon built for it; for when David prepared materials for the building of it it was proper enough for him to prepare a psalm for the dedication of it. The porters are called upon to open the doors, and they are called everlasting doors, because much more durable than the door of the tabernacle, which was but a curtain. They are taught to ask, "Who is this King of glory?" and they that bare the ark thus to answer, and very fitly, because the ark was the symbol or token of God's presence, *Jos.* iii. 11. Or it may be taken as a poetical figure, designed to represent the thing the more affectingly. God in his word and ordinances is thus to be welcomed by us, 1. With great readiness. The doors and gates must be thrown open to him. Let the word of the Lord come into the innermost and uppermost place in our souls; and if we had six hundred necks we should bow them all to the authority of it. 2. With all reverence; remembering how great a God he is with whom we have to do, in all our approaches to him.

Secondly. Doubtless it points at Christ, of whom the ark with the mercy-seat was a type.

1. We may apply it to the ascension of Christ into heaven, and the welcome given to him there. When he had finished his work on earth, he ascended in the clouds of heaven, *Dan.* vii. 13, 14. The gates of heaven must then be opened to him; those doors that may be truly called everlasting, which had been shut against us to keep the way of the tree of life, *Gen.* iii. 24. Our Redeemer found them shut; but, having by his blood made atonement for sin, and gained a title to enter into the holy place, *Heb.* ix. 12, as one having authority he demanded entrance, not for himself only, but for us; for as the forerunner he is for us entered, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The keys, not only of hell and death, but of heaven and life, must be put into his hand. His approach being very magnificent, the angels are brought in asking, "Who is this King of glory?" for angels keep the gates of the new Jerusalem, *Rev.* xxi. 12. When the first begotten was brought into the upper world, the angels were to worship him, *Heb.* i. 6; and, accordingly, they here ask with wonder, Who he is? this that cometh with dyed garments from Bozrah,

Isa. lxiii. 1—3; for he appears in that world as a Lamb that had been slain. It is answered, That he is strong and mighty; mighty in battle to save his people, and subdue his and their enemies.

2. We may apply it to Christ's entrance into the souls of men by his Word and Spirit, that they may be his temples. Christ's presence in them is like that of the ark in the temple, it sanctifies them; Behold, he stands at the door, and knocks, *Rev.* iii. 20. It is required that the gates and doors of the heart be opened to him; not only as admission is given to a guest, but as possession is delivered to the rightful owner, after the title has been contested. This is the Gospel call and demand, that we let Jesus Christ, the King of glory, come into our souls, and welcome him with hosannas, "Blessed is he that cometh." That we may do this aright, we are concerned to ask, "Who this King of glory is?" to acquaint ourselves with him, whom we are to believe in, and to love above all. And the answer is ready: he is Jehovah, and will be Jehovah our righteousness, an all-sufficient Saviour to us, if we give him entrance and entertainment. He is strong and mighty, and the Lord of hosts; and therefore it is at our peril if we deny him entrance, for he is able to avenge the affront; he can force his way, and can break those in pieces with his iron rod that will not submit to his golden sceptre.

In singing this, let our hearts cheerfully answer to this call, as it is in the first words of the next psalm, "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul."

PSALM XXV.

This psalm is full of devout affection to God; the outgoings of holy desires towards his favour and grace, and the lively actings of faith in his promises. We may learn out of it, I. What it is to pray, ver. 1, 15. II. What we must pray for: the pardon of sin, ver. 6, 7, 18; direction in the way of duty, ver. 4, 5; the favour of God, ver. 16; deliverance out of our troubles, ver. 17, 18; preservation from our enemies, ver. 20, 21; and the salvation of the church of God, ver. 22. III. What we may plead in prayer: our confidence in God, ver. 2, 3, 5, 20, 21; our distress, and the malice of our enemies, ver. 17, 19; our sincerity, ver. 21. IV. What precious promises we have to encourage us in prayer: of guidance and instruction, ver. 8, 9, 12; the benefit of the covenant, ver. 10; and the pleasure of communion with God, ver. 13, 14. It is easy to apply the several passages of this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it; for we have often troubles, and always sins, to complain of at the throne of grace.

A Psalm of David.

UNTO thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, I trust in thee:
Let me not be ashamed,
Let not mine enemies triumph over me.
3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed:
Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.
4 Shew me thy ways, O LORD;
Teach me thy paths.
5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me:
For thou *art* the God of my salvation;
On thee do I wait all the day.
6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy loving-
For they *have been* ever of old. [kindnesses;
7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgres-
According to thy mercy remember thou me [sions:
For thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Here is, First. David's professions of desire towards God, and dependence on him. He often begins his psalms with such professions; not to move God, but to move himself, and to engage himself to answer those professions.

1. He professeth his desire towards God; "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul," ver. 1. In the foregoing psalm, ver. 4, it was made the character of a good man, that he has not lifted up his soul to vanity; and a call was given to the everlasting gates to lift up their heads for the King of glory to come in, ver. 1. To which character, to which call, David here answers, Lord, I lift up my soul; not to vanity, but to thee. Note, In worshipping God, we must lift up our souls to him. Prayer is the ascent of the soul to God; God must be eyed, and the soul employed; *sursum corda*,—'up with your hearts,' was anciently used as a call to devotion. With a holy contempt of the world, and the things of it, by a fixed thought, and active faith, we must set God before us, and let out our desires towards him as the fountain of our happiness.

2. He professeth his dependence upon God; and begs for the benefit and comfort of that dependence, ver. 2, "O my God, I trust in thee." His conscience witnessed for him, that he had no confidence in himself, or in any creature; and that he had no diffidence of God, or of his power or promise. He pleaseth himself with this profession of faith in God; having put his trust in God, he is easy, is well satisfied, and quiet from the fear of evil. And he pleads it with God, whose honour it is to help those that honour him, by trusting in him. What men put a confidence in is either their joy or their shame, according as it proves. Now David here, under the direction of faith, prays earnestly, 1st. That shame might not be his lot. Let me not be ashamed of my confidence in thee; let me not be shaken from it by any prevailing fears, and let me not be in the issue disappointed of what I depend upon thee for; but, Lord, keep what I have committed unto thee. Note, If we make our confidence in God our stay, it shall not be our shame; and if we triumph in him, our enemies shall not triumph over us, as they would if we should now sink under our fears, or should in the issue come short of our hopes. 2nd. That it might not be the lot of any other that trusted in God. All the saints have obtained a like precious faith; and, therefore, doubtless, it will be alike successful in the issue. And thus the communion of saints is kept up, even by their praying one for another. True saints will make supplication for all saints. It is certain, none that by a believing attendance wait on God, and by a believing hope wait for him, shall be made ashamed of it. 3rd. That it might be the lot of the transgressors; "Let them be ashamed that transgress without cause," or vainly, as the word is. *First.* Upon no provocation. They revolt from God and their duty, from David and his government, so some, without any occasion given them; not being able to pretend any iniquity they have found in God, or that in any thing he hath wearied them. The weaker the temptation is by which men are drawn to sin, the stronger the corruption is by which they are driven to it. Those are the worst transgressors that sin for sinning sake. *Secondly.* To no purpose. They know their attempts against God are fruitless; they imagine a vain thing, and therefore they will soon be ashamed of them.

3. He begs direction from God in the way of his duty, ver. 4, 5. Once again he here prays to God to teach him. He was a knowing man himself, but the most intelligent, the most observant, both need and desire to be taught of God; from him we must be ever learning. Observe, 1st. What he desired to learn; "Teach me," not fine words or fine notions, but "teach me thy ways, thy paths, thy truth." The ways in which thou walkest towards me, which are all mercy and truth, ver. 10; and the ways in which thou wouldst have me to walk towards thee. Those are best learned who understand their duty, and know the good things they should do, *Eccl.* ii. 3. Thy paths and thy truth are the same; Divine laws are all founded upon Divine truths. The way of God's precepts is the way of truth, *Ps.* cxix. 30; Christ is both the way and the truth, and therefore we must learn Christ. 2nd. What he desires of God in order to this. *First.* That he would enlighten his understanding concerning his duty; Shew me thy way, and so teach me. In doubtful cases we should pray earnestly that God would make it plain to us what he would have us to do. *Secondly.* That he would incline his will to it, and strengthen him in it; Lead me, and so teach me. Not only as we lead one that is dimsighted, to keep him from missing his way, but as we lead one that is sick, and feeble, and faint, to help him forward in the way, and to keep him from fainting and falling. We go no farther in the way to heaven than God is pleased to lead us, and to hold us up. 3rd. What he pleads, *First.* His great expectation from God; "Thou art the God of my salvation." Note, Those that choose the salvation of God as their end, and make him the God of their salvation, may come boldly to him for direction in the way that leads to that end; if God save us, he will teach us, and lead us. He that gives salvation will give instruction. *Secondly.* His constant attendance on God; "On thee do I wait all the day." Whence should a servant expect direction what to do but from his own master, on whom he waits all the day? If we sincerely desire to know our duty, with a resolution to do it, we need not question but that God will direct us in it.

4. He appeals to God's infinite mercy, and casts himself upon that, not pretending to any merit of his own; ver. 6, "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies," and for the sake of those mercies lead me and teach me, "for they have been ever of old;" that is, 1st. Thou always wast a merciful God; it is thy name, it is thy nature and property to shew mercy. 2nd. Thy counsels and designs of mercy were from everlasting; the vessels of mercy were before all worlds ordained to glory. 3rd. The instances of thy mercy to the church in general, and to me in particular, were early and ancient, and constant hitherto; they began of old, and never ceased. Thou hast taught me from my youth up, teach me now.

5. He is in a special manner earnest for the pardon of his sins; ver. 7, Oh "remember not the sins of my youth." Lord, remember thy mercies, ver. 6; which speak for me, and not my sins which speak against me. Here is, 1st. An implicit confession of sin; he instanceth particularly in the sins of his youth. Note, Our youthful faults and follies should be matter of our repentance and humiliation long after; because time doth not wear out the guilt of sin. Old people should mourn for the sinful mirth, and be in pain for the sinful pleasures of their youth. He aggravates his sins, calling them his transgressions; and the more holy, just, and good the law is, which sin is the transgression of, the more exceeding sinful it ought to appear to us. 2nd. An express petition for mercy. *First.* That he might be acquitted from guilt; "Remember not the sins of my youth," that is, remember them not against me; lay them not to my charge, enter not into judgment with me for them. When God pardons sin, he is said to remember it no more, which notes a plenary remission; he forgives, and forgets. *Secondly.* That he might be accepted in God's sight; "Remember thou me;" think on me for good, and come in seasonably for my succour. We need desire no more to make us happy than for God to remember us with favour; his plea is, "according to thy mercy, and for thy goodness' sake." Note, It is God's goodness and not ours, his mercy and not our own merit, that must be our plea for the pardon of sin, and all the good we stand in need of. This plea we must always rely upon, as those that are sensible of our poverty and unworthiness, and as those that are satisfied of the riches of God's mercy and grace.

8 Good and upright *is* the LORD:
Therefore will he teach sinners in the way.
9 The meek will he guide in judgment:
And the meek will he teach his way.
10 All the paths of the LORD *are* mercy and truth
Unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
11 For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity;
For it *is* great.
12 What man *is* he that feareth the LORD?
Him shall he teach in the way *that* he shall choose.
13 His soul shall dwell at ease;
And his seed shall inherit the earth.
14 The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him;
And he will shew them his covenant.

God's promises are here mixed with David's prayers. Many petitions there were in the former part of the psalm, and many in the latter; and here, in the middle of the psalm, he meditates upon the promises, and by a lively faith sucks and is satisfied from these breasts of consolation; for the promises of God are not only the best foundation of prayer, telling us what to pray for, and encouraging our faith and hope in prayer, but they are a present answer to prayer. Let the prayer be made according to the promise, and then the promise may be read as a return to the prayer; and we are to believe the prayer is heard, because the promise will be performed. But in the midst of the promises we find one petition which seems to come in somewhat abruptly, and should have followed upon ver. 7; it is that, ver. 11, "Pardon my iniquity." But prayers for the pardon of sin are never impertinent; we mingle sin with all our actions, and therefore should mingle such prayers with all our devotions. He enforces this petition with a double plea. The former is very natural; "For thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity," because thou hast proclaimed thy name gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity; for thy glory's sake, for thy promise's sake, for thine own sake, *Isa.* xliii. 25. But the latter is very surprising; "Pardon mine

iniquity, for it is great;" and the greater it is, the more will Divine mercy be magnified in the forgiveness of it. It is the glory of a great God to forgive great sins, to forgive iniquity, transgression and sin, *Ex.* xxxiv. 7. It is great; and therefore I am undone, for ever undone, if infinite mercy do not interpose for the pardon of it. It is great, that is, I see it so. The more we see of the heinousness of our sins, the better qualified we are to find mercy with God. When we confess sin, we must aggravate it. Let us now take a view of the great and precious promises which we have in these verses, and observe,

First. To whom these promises do belong, and who may expect the benefit of them. We are all sinners; and can we hope for any advantage by them? Yes; ver. 8, He will teach sinners, though they be sinners; for Christ came into the world to save sinners, and in order to that to teach sinners, to call sinners to repentance. These promises are sure to those who, though they have been sinners, have gone astray, yet now keep God's word. To such, 1. As "keep his covenant and his testimonies," ver. 10; that is, that take his precepts for their rule, and his promises for their portion; that, having taken God to be to them a God, live upon that, and, having given up themselves to be to him a people, live up to that. Though through the infirmity of the flesh they sometimes break the command, yet by a sincere repentance, when at any time they do amiss, and a constant adherence by faith to God as their God, they keep the covenant, and do not break that. 2. To such as fear him, ver. 12; and again, ver. 14; that stand in awe of his majesty, and worship him with reverence, submit to his authority, and obey him with cheerfulness, dread his wrath, and are afraid of offending him.

Secondly. Upon what these promises are grounded, and what encouragement we have to build upon them. Here are two things which ratify and confirm all the promises:

1. The perfections of God's nature. We value the promise by the character of him that makes it. We may therefore depend upon God's promises, for "good and upright is the Lord," and therefore he will be as good as his word; so kind, that he cannot deceive us, so true, that he cannot break his promise; "Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it." He was good in making the promise, and therefore will be upright in performing it.

2. The agreeableness of all he saith and doth with the perfections of his nature; ver. 10, "All the paths of the Lord," that is, all his promises and all his providences, "are mercy and truth;" that is, they are like himself, good and upright. All God's dealings with his people are according to the mercy of his purposes, and the truth of his promises. All he doth comes from love, covenant love; and they may see in it his mercy displayed, and his word fulfilled. What a mighty satisfaction may this be to good people, that, whatever afflictions they are exercised with, "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth;" and so it will appear when they come to their journey's end.

Thirdly. What these promises are.

1. That God will instruct and direct them in the way of their duty. This is most insisted upon, because it is an answer to David's prayers, ver. 4, 5, "Shew me thy ways, and lead me." We should fix our thoughts, and act our faith, most on those promises which suit our present case. 1st. "He will teach sinners in the way," because they are sinners, and therefore need teaching. When they see themselves sinners, and desire teaching, then he will teach them the way of reconciliation to God, the way to a well-grounded peace of conscience, and the way to eternal life. He doth by his Gospel make known this way to all; and by his Spirit open the understanding, and guide penitent sinners that inquire after it. The devil leads men blindfold to hell; but God enlightens men's eyes, sets things before them in a true light, and so leads them to heaven. 2nd. "The meek will he guide, the meek will he teach," that is, those that are humble and low in their own eyes, that are distrustful of themselves, desirous to be taught, and honestly resolved to follow the Divine conduct; "Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears." These he will guide in judgment, that is, by the rule of the written word. He will guide them in that which is practical, which relates to sin and duty, so as that they may keep conscience void of offence; and he will do it judiciously, so some, that is, he will suit his conduct to their case. He will teach sinners with wisdom, tenderness, and compassion, and as they are able to bear. He will teach them his way. All good people make God's way their way, and desire to be taught that; and those that do so shall be taught and led in that way. 3rd. "Him that feareth the Lord he will teach in the way that he shall choose," either in the way that God shall choose, or that the good man shall choose. It comes all to one, for he that fears the Lord chooseth the things that please him. If we choose the right way, he that directed our choice will direct our steps, and will lead us in it. If we choose wisely, God will give us grace to walk wisely.

2. That God will make them easy; ver. 13, "His soul shall dwell at ease;" 'shall lodge in goodness,' marg. Those that devote themselves to the fear of God, and give up themselves to be taught of God, it is their own fault if they be not easy. The soul that is sanctified by the grace of God, and much more that is comforted by the peace of God, dwells at ease. Even when the body is sick and lies in pain, yet the soul may dwell at ease in God, may return to him and repose in him as its rest. Many things occur to make us uneasy; but there is enough in the covenant of grace to balance them all, and to make us easy.

3. That he will give to them and theirs as much of this world as is good for them. "His seed shall inherit the earth." Next to our care concerning our souls is our care concerning our seed, and God has a blessing in store for the generation of the upright. They that fear God shall inherit the earth, shall have a competency in it, and the comfort of it; and their children shall fare the better for their prayers, when they are gone.

4. That God will admit them into the secret of communion with himself; ver. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." They understand his word; for "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," *Jno.* vii. 17. They that receive the truth in the love of it, and experience the power of it, best understand the mystery of it. They know the meaning of his providence, and what God is doing with them better than others. "Shall I hide from Abraham the things that I do?" *Gen.* xviii. 17. He calls them not servants, but friends, as he called Abraham. They know by experience the blessings of the covenant, and the pleasure of that fellowship which gracious souls have "with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." This honour have all his saints.

15 Mine eyes *are* ever toward the LORD;
For he shall pluck my feet out of the net.
16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me;
For I *am* desolate and afflicted.
17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged:
O bring thou me out of my distresses
18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain;
And forgive all my sins.
19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many;
And they hate me with cruel hatred.
20 O keep my soul, and deliver me:
Let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee
21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me;
For I wait on thee.
22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

David, encouraged by the promises he had been meditating upon, here renews his addresses to God, and concludes the psalm as he began, with the professions of dependence upon God, and desire towards him.

First. He lays open before God the calamitous condition he was in. His feet were in the net, held fast, and entangled, so that he could not extricate himself out of his difficulties, ver. 15; he was desolate and afflicted, ver. 16; and it is common for those that are afflicted to be desolate. Their friends desert them then, and they are themselves disposed to sit alone, and keep silence, *Lam.* iii. 26. David calls himself desolate and solitary, because he depended not upon his servants and soldiers, but relied as entirely upon God as if he had no prospect at all of help and succour from any creature. Being in distress, in many distresses, the troubles of his heart were enlarged, ver. 17, that is, he grew more and more melancholy, and troubled in mind. Sense of sin afflicted him more than any thing else: that was it that broke and wounded his spirit, and made his outward trouble lie heavy upon him. He was in affliction and pain, ver. 18. His enemies that persecuted him were many and malicious (they hated him) and very barbarous; it was with a cruel hatred that they hated him, ver. 19. Such were Christ's enemies, and the persecutors of his church.

Secondly. He expresseth the dependence he had upon God in these distresses; ver. 15, "Mine eyes are ever towards the Lord." Idolaters were for gods that they could see with their bodily eyes; and they had their eyes ever towards their idols, *Isa.* xvii. 7, 8; but it is an eye of faith that we must have towards God who is a spirit, *Zec.* ix. 1. Our meditation of him must be sweet, and we must always set him before us. In all our ways we must acknowledge him, and do all to his glory. Thus we must live a life of communion with God, not only in ordinances, but in providences, not only in the acts of devotion, but in the whole course of our conversation. David had the comfort of this in his affliction; for, because his eyes were ever toward the Lord, he doubted not but he would pluck his feet out of the net, that he would deliver him from the corruptions of his own heart, so some; from the designs of his enemies against him, so others. Those that have their eye ever towards God shall not have their feet long in the net. He repeats his profession of dependence upon God, ver. 20, "Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee;" and of expectation from him, "I wait on thee," ver. 21; and, "it is good" thus "to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord."

Thirdly. He prays earnestly to God for relief and succour.

1. For himself. See how he begs, 1st. For the remission of sin; ver. 18, "Forgive all my sins." Those were his heaviest burthens, and which brought upon him all his other burthens. He had begged, ver. 7, for the pardon of the sins of his youth, and, ver. 11, for the pardon of some one particular iniquity that was remarkably great, which some think was his sin in the matter of Uriah; but here he prays, Lord, forgive all, take away all iniquity. It is observable that, as to his affliction, he asks for no more than God's regard to it, "Look upon my affliction and my pain," and do with it as thou pleasest; but, as to his sin, he asks for no less than a pardon, "Forgive all my sins." When at any time we are in trouble, we should be more concerned about our sins to get them pardoned, than about our afflictions to get them removed. Yet he prays, 2nd. For the redress of his grievances. His mind was troubled for God's withdrawings from him, and under the sense he had of his displeasure against him for his sin; and therefore he prays, ver. 16, "Turn thee unto me;" and if God turn to us no matter who turns from us. His condition was troubled, and in reference to that he prays, "O bring thou me out of my distresses." I see no way of deliverance open; but thou canst either find one or make one. His enemies were spiteful; and in reference to that he prays, O keep my soul from falling into their hands, or else deliver me out of their hands.

Four things he mentions by way of plea to enforce these petitions; and refers himself and them to God's consideration: 1. He pleads God's mercy; "Have mercy upon me." Men of the greatest merits were undone, if they had not to do with a God of infinite mercies. 2. He pleads his own misery, the distress he was in, his affliction and pain, especially the troubles of his heart; all which made him the proper object of Divine mercy. 3. He pleads the iniquity of his enemies: Lord, consider them, how cruel they are, and deliver me out of their hands. 4. He pleads his own integrity, ver. 21. Though he had owned himself guilty before God, and had confessed his sins against him, yet, as to his enemies, he had the testimony of his conscience that he had done them no wrong, which was his comfort when they hated him with cruel hatred; and he prays that this might preserve him. This intimates that he did not expect to be safe any longer than he continued in his integrity and uprightness; and that while he did continue in it, he did not doubt of being safe. Sincerity will be our best security in the worst of times. Integrity and uprightness will be a man's preservation more than the wealth and honour of the world can be. This will preserve us to the heavenly kingdom. We should therefore pray to God to preserve us in our integrity, and then be assured that that will preserve us.

2. For the church of God; ver. 22, "Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." David was now in trouble himself, but he thinks it not strange, since trouble is the lot of all God's Israel, and why should any one member fare better than the whole body? David's troubles were enlarged, and very earnest he was with God to deliver him, yet he forgets not the distresses of God's church; for when we have never so much business of our own at the throne of grace we must still remember to pray for the public. Good men have little comfort in their own safety, while the church is in distress and danger. This prayer is a prophecy that God would at length give David rest, and therewith give Israel rest from all their enemies round about. It is a prophecy of the sending of the Messiah in due time to redeem Israel from his iniquities, *Ps.* cxxx. 8; and so to redeem them from their troubles; and of the happiness of the future state. In heaven, and in heaven only, will God's Israel be perfectly redeemed from all troubles.

PSALM XXVI.

Holy David is in this psalm putting himself upon a solemn trial, not by God and his country, but by God and his own conscience, to both which he appeals touching his integrity, ver. 1, 2. And for the proof of it he allegeth, I. His constant regard to God and his grace, ver. 3. II. His rooted antipathy to sin and sinners, ver. 4, 5. III. His

sincere affection to the ordinances of God, and his care about them, ver. 6—8. Having thus proved his integrity, 1. He deprecates the doom of the wicked, ver. 9, 10. 2. He casts himself upon the mercy and grace of God, with a resolution to hold fast his integrity, and his hope in God, ver. 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish ourselves and one another, what we must be and do that we may have the favour of God, and comfort in our own consciences, and comfort ourselves with it as David doth, if we can say that in any measure we have through grace answered these characters. The learned Amyraldus, in his argument of this psalm, suggests that David is here by the spirit of prophecy carried out to speak of himself as a type of Christ, of whom what he here saith of his spotless innocency was fully and eminently true, and of him only, and to him we may apply it in singing this psalm. "We are complete in him."

A Psalm of David.

JUDGE me, O LORD;
For I have walked in mine integrity: [slide.
I have trusted also in the LORD; *therefore* I shall not
2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me;
Try my reins and my heart.
3 For thy lovingkindness *is* before mine eyes:
And I have walked in thy truth.
4 I have not sat with vain persons,
Neither will I go in with dissemblers.
5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers;
And will not sit with the wicked.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul and his party, who, to give some colour to their unjust rage, represented him as a very ill man, and falsely accused him of many high crimes and misdemeanours; dressed him up in the skins of wild beasts, that they might bait him. Innocency itself is no fence to the name, though it is to the bosom, against the darts of calumny. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was made a reproach of men, and foretold to his followers that they also must have all manner of evil said against them falsely. Now see what David doth in this case.

First. He appeals to God's righteous sentence; ver. 1, "Judge me, O God;" that is, be thou judge between me and my accusers, between the persecutor and the poor prisoner, bring me off with honour and put them to shame that belie me. Saul, who was himself supreme judge in Israel, was his adversary; so that in a controversy with him he could appeal to no other but God himself. As to his offences against God, he prays, "Lord, enter not into judgment with me," *Ps.* cxliii. 2; "Remember not my transgressions," *Ps.* xxv. 7. There he appeals to God's mercy; but as to his offences against Saul, he appeals to God's justice, and begs of him to judge for him, as *Ps.* xliii. 1. Or thus: he cannot justify himself against the charge of sin, he owns his iniquity is great, and he is undone if God in his infinite mercy do not forgive him; but he can justify himself against the charge of hypocrisy, and has reason to hope that, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, he is one of those that may expect to find favour with God. Thus holy Job often owns he has sinned, and yet he holds fast his integrity. Note, It is a comfort to those who are falsely accused that there is a righteous God, who, sooner or later, will clear up their innocency; and a comfort to all that are sincere in religion that God himself is a witness to his sincerity.

Secondly. He submits to his unerring search; ver. 2, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me," as gold is proved whether it be standard. God knows every man's true character, for he knows the thoughts and intents of the heart, and sees through every disguise. David prays, Lord, examine me, which speaks him greatly well-pleased that God did know him; and truly desirous that he would discover him to himself, and discover him to all the world. So sincere was he in his devotion to his God, and his loyalty to his prince, (in both which he was suspected to be a pretender,) that he wished he had a window in his bosom, that who would might look into his heart.

Thirdly. He solemnly protests his sincerity; ver. 1, "I have walked in mine integrity," that is, my conversation has agreed with my profession, and one part of it has been of a piece with another. It is in vain to boast of our integrity, unless we can make it out that by the grace of God we have walked in our integrity, and that our conversation in the world has been in simplicity and godly sincerity. He produceth here several proofs of his integrity, which encouraged him to trust in the Lord, as his righteous judge, who would patronize and plead his righteous cause, with an assurance that he should come off with reputation, "therefore I shall not slide;" that they should not prevail who consulted to cast him down from his excellency, to shake his faith, blemish his name, and prevent his coming to the crown, *Ps.* lxii. 4. They that are sincere in religion may trust in God that they shall not slide, that is, that they shall not apostatise from their religion.

1. He had a constant regard to God and to his grace, ver. 3. 1st. He aimed at God's favour as his end, and chief good. *First.* "Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes." This will be a good evidence of our sincerity, if what we do in religion, we do from a principle of love to God, and good thoughts of him as the best of beings, and the best of friends and benefactors; and from a grateful sense of God's goodness to us in particular, which we have had experience of all our days. If we set God's lovingkindness before us as our pattern, to which we endeavour to conform ourselves, being followers of him that is good in his goodness, 1 *Pet.* iii. 13; if we set it before us as our great engagement and encouragement to our duty, and are afraid of doing any thing to forfeit God's favour, and in care by all means to keep ourselves in his love; this will not only be a good evidence of our integrity, but will have a great influence upon our perseverance in it. *Secondly.* He governed himself by the word of God as his rule. "I have walked in thy truth;" that is, according to thy law, for thy law is truth. Note, Those only may expect the benefit of God's lovingkindness that live up to his truths, and his laws that are grounded upon them. Some understand it of his conforming himself to God's example in truth and faithfulness, as well as in goodness and lovingkindness. Those certainly walk well that are followers of God as dear children.

2. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, nor with the workers of those works, ver. 4, 5. By this it appeared he was truly loyal to his prince, that he never associated with those that were disaffected to his government, with any of those sons of Belial that despised him, 1 *Sam.* x. 27. He was in none of their cabals, nor joined with them in any of their intrigues; he cursed not the king, no, not in his heart. And this also was an evidence of his faithfulness to his God, that he never associated with those that he had any reason to think were disaffected to religion, or were open enemies or false friends to its interests. Note, Great care to avoid bad company is both a good evidence of our integrity, and a good means to preserve us in it. Now observe here,

1st. That this part of his protestation looks both backward upon the care he had hitherto taken in this matter, and forward upon the care he would still take; I have not sat with them, and I will not go in with them. Note, Our good practices hitherto are then evidences of our integrity when they are accompanied with resolutions, in God's strength, to persevere in them to the end, and not to draw back; and our good resolutions for the future we may then take the comfort of when they are the continuation of our good practices hitherto. 2nd. That David shunned the company not only of wicked persons, but of vain persons, that were wholly addicted to mirth and gaiety, and had nothing solid or serious in them. The company of such may perhaps be the more pernicious of the two to a good man, because he will not be so ready to stand upon his guard against the contagion of vanity as against that of downright wickedness. 3rd. That the company of dissemblers is as dangerous company as any other, and as much to be shunned in prudence as well as piety. Evil-doers pretend friendship to those whom they would decoy into their snares; but they dissemble: when they speak fair, believe them not. 4th. Though sometimes he could not avoid being in the company of bad people, yet he would not go in with them; that is, he would not choose such for his companions, nor seek an opportunity of acquaintance and converse with them. He might fall in with them, but he would not by appointment and assignation go in with them; or, if he happened to be with them, he would not sit with them; that is, he would not continue with them; he would be in their company no longer than his business made it necessary; he would not concur with them, not say as they said, nor do as they did, as they that sit in the seat of the scornful, *Ps.* i. 1. He would not sit in counsel with them upon ways and means to do mischief; not sit in judgment with them to condemn the generation of the righteous. 5th. We must not only in our practice avoid bad company, but in our principles and affections we must have an aversion to it. David here saith, Not only I have shunned it, but I have hated it, *Ps.* cxxxix. 21. 6th. The congregation of evil-doers, the club, the confederacy of them, is in a special manner hateful to good people. 'I have hated the church of the malignant,'—*ecclesiam malignantium*, so the Vulgar Latin reads it. As good men in consort make one another better, and are enabled to do so much the more good, so bad men in combination make one another worse and do so much the more mischief. In all this David was both a type of Christ,—who, though he received sinners, and ate with them, to instruct them, and do them good, yet otherwise was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," particularly from the Pharisees, those dissemblers,—and an example to Christians, when they join themselves to Christ, to save themselves from this untoward generation, *Acts* ii. 40.

6 I will wash mine hands in innocency:
So will I compass thine altar, O LORD:
7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving,
And tell of all thy wondrous works.
8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house,
And the place where thine honour dwelleth.
9 Gather not my soul with sinners,
Nor my life with bloody men:
10 In whose hands *is* mischief,
And their right hand is full of bribes.
11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity:
Redeem me, and be merciful unto me.
12 My foot standeth in an even place:
In the congregations will I bless the LORD.

In these verses,

First. David produceth a farther evidence of his integrity, which was the sincere affection he had to the ordinances of God, and the constant care he took about them, and the pleasure he took in them. Hypocrites and dissemblers may indeed be found attending on God's ordinances,—the proud Pharisee went up to the temple to pray with the penitent publican,—but it is a good sign of sincerity if we attend upon them as David here tells us he did, ver. 6—8.

1. He was very careful and conscientious in his preparation for holy ordinances: "I will wash mine hands in innocency." He not only refrained from the society of sinners, but kept himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and this with an eye to the place he had among those that compassed God's altar. I will wash, and so will I compass the altar, knowing that otherwise I shall not be welcome. This is like that, 1 *Cor.* xi. 28, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat," so prepared. This notes, 1st. Habitual preparation. "I will wash my hands in innocency;" that is, I will carefully watch against all sin, and keep my conscience pure from those dead works which defile it, and forbid my drawing nigh to God: see *Ps.* xxiv. 3, 4. 2nd. Actual preparation. It alludes to the ceremony of the priests washing when they went in to minister, *Ex.* xxx. 20, 21. Though David was no priest, yet, as every worshipper ought, he would look to the substance of that which the priests were enjoined the shadow of. In our preparations for solemn ordinances, we must not only be able to clear ourselves from the charge of reigning infidelity and hypocrisy, and to protest our innocency of that, (which was signified by washing the hands, *Deu.* xxi. 6,) but we must take pains to cleanse ourselves from the spots of remaining iniquity, by renewing our repentance, and making a fresh application of the blood of Christ to our consciences, for the purifying and pacifying of them. He that is washed, that is in a justified state, has need thus to wash his feet, *Jno.* xiii. 10, to wash his hands, to wash them in innocency. He that is penitent, is *pene innocens*,—'almost innocent,' and he that is pardoned is so far innocent that his sins shall not be mentioned against him.

2. He was very diligent and serious in his attendance upon them: "I will compass thine altar," alluding to the custom of the priests, who, while the sacrifice was in offering, walked round the altar; and probably the offerers likewise did so at some distance, noting a diligent regard to what was done, and a dutiful attendance on the service. I will compass it; that is, I will be among the crowds that do compass it, among the thickest of them. David, a man of honour, a man of business, a man of war, yet thought it not below him to attend with the multitude on God's altars, and could find time for that attendance. Note, 1st. All God's people will be sure to wait on God's altar, in obedience to his commands, and in pursuance of his favour. Christ is our altar, not as the altar in the Jewish church, which was fed by them, but an altar that we eat of, and live upon, *Heb.* xiii. 10. 2nd. It is a pleasant sight to see God's altar compassed, and to see ourselves among them that compass it.

3. In all his attendance on God's ordinances he aimed at the glory of God, and was much in the thankful praise and adoration of him. He had an eye to the

place of worship as the place where God's honour dwelt, ver. 8, and therefore made it his business there to honour God, and to give him the glory due to his name, to "publish with the voice of thanksgiving all God's wondrous works." God's gracious works, which call for our thanksgiving, are all wondrous works, which call for our admiration. We ought to publish them, and tell of them for his glory, and the excitement of others to praise him; and we ought to do it "with the voice of thanksgiving," as those that are sensible of our obligations, by all ways possible to acknowledge with gratitude the favours we have received from God.

4. He did this with delight, and from a principle of true affection to God and his institutions. Touching this, he appeals to God, "Lord," thou knowest how dearly "I have loved the habitation of thy house," ver. 8; that is, the tabernacle where thou art pleased to manifest thy residence among thy people, and receive their homage; "the place where thine honour dwells." David was sometimes forced by persecution into the countries of idolaters, and was hindered from attending God's altars, which perhaps his persecutors that laid him under that restraint did themselves upbraid him with as his crime: see 1 *Sam.* xx. 27. But, Lord, saith he, though I cannot come to the habitation of thine house, I love it; my heart is there, and it is my greatest trouble that I am not there. Note, All that truly love God truly love the ordinances of God, and therefore love them, because in them he manifests his honour, and they have an opportunity of honouring him. Our Lord Jesus loved his Father's honour, and made it his business to glorify him. He loved the habitation of his house, that is, his church among men; loved it, and gave himself for it, that he might build and consecrate it. And those who love communion with God, and delight in approaching to him, as the thing itself is a constant pleasure, so it is to them a comfortable evidence of their integrity, and a comfortable earnest of their endless felicity.

Secondly. David, having given proofs of his integrity, doth, with an humble confidence towards God, (such as they have whose hearts condemn them not,) earnestly pray that he might not fall under the doom of the wicked; ver. 9, 10, "Gather not my soul with sinners." Here, 1. David describes these sinners, whom he looked upon to be in a miserable condition, so miserable that he could not wish the worst enemy he had in the world to be in a worse. They are bloody men, that thirst after blood, and lie under a great deal of the guilt of blood. They do mischief, and mischief is always in their hands. Though they get by their wickedness, for their right hand is full of bribes, which they have taken to pervert justice, yet that will make their case never the better; for "what is a man profited if he gain the world and lose his soul?" 2. He dreads having his lot with them. He never loved them, nor associated with them in this world, and therefore could in faith pray that he might not have his lot with them in the other world. Our souls must shortly be gathered to return to God that gave them and will call for them again: see *Job* xxxiv. 14. It concerns us to consider whether our souls will then be gathered with saints or with sinners; whether bound in the bundle of life with the Lord for ever, as the souls of the faithful are, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 29, or bound in the bundle of tares for the fire, *Mat.* xiii. 30. Death gathers us to our people; those that are our people while we live, whom we choose to associate with, and with whom we cast in our lot, to those death will gather us, and with them we must take our lot to eternity. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous, David dreaded dying the death of the wicked; so that both sides are of that mind, which, if we be of, and will live up to it, we are happy for ever. Those that will not be companions with sinners in their mirth, nor eat of their dainties, may in faith pray not to be companions with them in their misery, nor to drink of their cup, their cup of trembling.

Thirdly. David, with a holy, humble confidence, commits himself to the grace of God, ver. 11, 12. 1. He promiseth that, by the grace of God, he would persevere in his duty; "As for me," whatever others do, "I will walk in mine integrity." Note, When the testimony of our consciences for us, that we have walked in our integrity, is comfortable to us, that should confirm our resolutions to continue therein. 2. He prays for the Divine grace both to enable him to do so and to give him the comfort of it. Redeem me out of the hands of my enemies and be merciful to me, living and dying. Be we never so confident of our integrity, yet still we must rely upon God's mercy, and the great redemption Christ has wrought out, and pray for the benefit of them. 3. He pleaseth himself with his steadiness. "My foot stands in an even place," where I shall not stumble, and whence I shall not fall. This he speaks as one that found his resolutions fixed for God and godliness, not to be shaken by the temptations of the world; and his comforts firm in God and his grace, not to be disturbed by the crosses and troubles of the world. 4. He promiseth himself that he should yet have occasion to praise the Lord; that he should be furnished with matter for praise; that he should have a heart for praises; and that, though he was now perhaps banished from public ordinances, yet he should again have an opportunity of blessing God in the congregation of his people. Those that hate the congregation of evil-doers shall be joined to the congregation of the righteous, and join with them in praising God, and it is pleasant doing that in good company; the more the better: it is the liker to heaven.

PSALM XXVII.

Some think David penned this psalm before his coming to the throne, when he was in the midst of his troubles, and perhaps upon occasion of the death of his parents; but the Jews think he penned it when he was old, upon occasion of that wonderful deliverance he had from the sword of the giant, when Abishai succoured him, 2 *Sam.* xxi. 16, 17; and his people thereupon resolved he should never venture his life again in battle, lest he "should quench the light of Israel." Perhaps it was not penned upon any particular occasion, but it is very expressive of the pious and devout affections with which gracious souls are carried out towards God at all times, especially in times of trouble. Here is, I. The courage and holy bravery of his faith, ver. 1—3. II. The complacency he took in communion with God, and the benefit he experienced by it, ver. 4—6. III. His desire towards God, and his favour and grace, ver. 7—9, 11, 12. IV. His expectations from God, and the encouragement he gives to others to hope in him, ver. 10, 13, 14; and let our hearts be thus affected in singing this psalm.

A Psalm of David.

THE LORD *is* my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD *is* the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?
2 When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came
upon me to eat up my flesh,
They stumbled and fell.
3 Though an host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear:
Though war should rise against me,
In this *will* I *be* confident.
4 One *thing* have I desired of the LORD,
That will I seek after; [of my life,
That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days
To behold the beauty of the LORD,
And to enquire in his temple [pavilion:
5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his
In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
He shall set me up upon a rock.
6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me:
Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy;
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

We may observe here,

First. With what a lively faith David triumphs in God, glories in his holy name, and in the interest he had in him. 1. "The Lord is my light." David's subjects called him "the light of Israel," 2 *Sam.* xxi. 17, and he was indeed a burning and a shining light; but he owns that he shone as the moon doth with a borrowed light: what light God darted upon him, reflected upon them; "The Lord is my light." God is a true light to his people to shew them the way when they are in doubt; to comfort and rejoice their hearts when they are in sorrow. It is in his light that they now walk on in their way, and in his light they hope to see light for ever. 2. He is "my salvation," in whom I am safe, and by whom I shall be saved. 3. He is "the strength of my life;" not only the protector of my exposed life, who keeps me from being slain, but the strength of my frail, weak life, who keeps me from fainting, sinking, and dying away. God, that is a believer's life, is the strength of his life, not only by whom, but in whom, he lives and moves. In God therefore let us strengthen ourselves.

Secondly. With what an undaunted courage he triumphs over his enemies. No fortitude like that of faith. If God be for him, who can be against him? "Whom shall I fear? Of whom shall I be afraid?" If Omnipotence be his guard, he has no cause to fear; if he knows it to be so, he has no disposition to fear. If God be his light, he fears no shades; if God be his salvation, he fears no colours. He triumphs over his enemies that were already routed; ver. 2, his enemies came upon him to eat up his flesh, aiming at no less, and assured of that; but they fell: not, he smote them, and they fell, but they stumbled and fell; they were so confounded and weakened that they could not go on with their enterprise. Thus they that came to take Christ, with a word's speaking were made to stagger and fall to the ground, *Jno.* xviii. 6. The ruin of some of the enemies of God's people is an earnest of the complete conquest of them all; and therefore, these being fallen, he is fearless of the rest. Though they be numerous, a host of them; though they be daring, and their attempts threatning; though they encamp against me, an army against one man; though they wage war upon me, yet my heart shall not fear. Hosts cannot hurt us if the Lord of hosts protect us; nay, in this assurance that God is for me, "I will be confident." Two things he will be confident of: 1. That he shall be safe. If God is my salvation, "in the time of trouble he shall hide me;" that is, he shall set me out of danger, and above the fear of it. God will not only find out a shelter for his people in distress, as he did, *Jer.* xxxvi. 26, but he will himself be their hiding-place, *Ps.* xxxii. 7. His providence shall, it may be, keep them safe; however, his grace shall make them easy. His name is the strong tower into which by faith they run, *Pr.* xviii. 10; "he shall hide me," not in the strongholds of En-gedi, 1 *Sam.* xxiii. 29, but "in the secret of his tabernacle." The gracious presence of God with him, his power, his promise, his readiness to hear prayer, the witness of his Spirit in the hearts of his people, these are the secrets of his tabernacle; and in these the saints find cause for that holy security and serenity of mind in which they dwell at ease. This sets them upon a rock which will not sink under them, but on which they find firm footing for their hopes; nay, it sets them up upon a rock on high, where the raging, threatening billows of a stormy sea cannot touch them. It is a rock that is higher than we, *Ps.* lxi. 2. 2. That he shall be victorious; ver. 6, "Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies," not only so as that they cannot reach it with their darts, but so as that I shall be exalted to bear rule over them. David here by faith in the promise of God triumphs before the victory, and is as sure not only of the laurel, but of the crown, as if it were already upon his head.

Thirdly. With what a gracious earnestness he prays for a constant communion with God in holy ordinances, ver. 4. It greatly encouraged his confidence in God, that he was conscious to himself of an entire affection to God and to his ordinances, and that he was in his element when in the way of his duty, and in the way of increasing his acquaintance with him. If our hearts can witness for us that we delight in God above any creature, that may encourage us to depend upon him; for it is a sign we are of those whom he protects as his own. Or it may be taken thus: he desired to dwell in the house of the Lord, that there he might be safe from the enemies that surrounded him. Finding himself surrounded by threatening hosts, he doth not say, "One thing have I desired" in order to my safety, that I may have my army augmented to such a number, or that I may be master of such a city, or such a castle; but "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord," and then I am well. Observe,

1. What it is he desires: To "dwell in the house of the Lord." In the courts of God's house the priests had their lodgings, and David wished he had been one of them. As disdainfully as some look upon God's ministers, one of the greatest and best of kings that ever was would gladly have taken his lot, have taken his lodging, among them. Or rather, he desires that he might duly and constantly attend on the public service of God, with other faithful Israelites, according as the duty of every day required. And therefore he longed to see an end of the wars in which he was now engaged; not that he might live at ease in his own palace, but that he might have leisure and liberty for that constant attendance in God's courts. Thus Hezekiah, a genuine son of David, wished for the recovery of his health; not that he might go up to the thrones of judgment, but that he might go up to the house of the Lord, *Isa.* xxxviii. 22. Note, All God's children desire to dwell in God's house; where should they dwell else? not to sojourn there as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry but for a night, or to dwell there for a time only, as the servant that abideth not in the house for ever, but to dwell there all the days of their life; for there the Son abideth ever. Do we hope that praising

God will be the blessedness of our eternity? surely then we ought to make it the business of our time.

2. How earnestly he covets this: This is the "one thing I have desired of the Lord," and which "I will seek after." If he were to ask but one thing of God, this should be it; for this he had at heart more than any thing. He desired it as a good thing; he desired it of the Lord as his gift, and a token of his favour. And, having fixed his desire upon this as the one thing needful, he sought after it, that is he continued to pray for it, and contrived his affairs so as that he might have this liberty and opportunity. Note, They that truly desire communion with God will set themselves with all diligence to seek after it, *Pr.* xviii. 1.

3. What he had in his eye in it: He would dwell in God's house; not for the plenty of good entertainment that was there in the feasts upon the sacrifices,—not for the music and good singing that was there,—but "to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." He desired to attend in God's courts, 1st. That he might have the pleasure of meditating upon God. He knew something of the beauty of the Lord; the infinite and transcendent amiableness of the Divine Being and perfections: his holiness is his beauty, *Ps.* cx. 3; his goodness is his beauty, *Zec.* ix. 17; the harmony of all his attributes is the beauty of his nature. With an eye of faith and holy love we with pleasure behold this beauty, and observe more and more in it that is amiable, that is admirable. When, with fixedness of thought and a holy flame of devout affections, we contemplate God's glorious excellences, and entertain ourselves with the tokens of his peculiar favour to us, this is that view of the beauty of the Lord which David here covets; and it is to be had in his ordinances, for there he manifests himself. 2nd. That he might have the satisfaction of being instructed in his duty; for concerning this he would inquire in God's temple, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" For the sake of these two things he desired that one thing, "to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life;" for blessed are they that do so, they will be still praising him, *Ps.* lxxxiv. 4, both in speaking to him and in hearing from him. Mary's sitting at Christ's feet to hear his word, Christ calls the one thing needful and the good part.

4. What advantage he promised himself by it, could he but have a place in God's house: 1st. There he should be quiet and easy; there troubles would not find him, for he should be hid in secret; there troubles would not reach him, for he should be set on high, ver. 5. Joash, one of David's seed, was hid in the house of the Lord six years, and there not only preserved from the sword, but reserved to the crown, 2 *Kin.* xi. 3. The temple was thought a safe place for Nehemiah to abscond in, *Neh.* vi. 10; but the safety of believers is not in the walls of the temple, but in the God of the temple, and their comfort in communion with him. 2nd. There he should be pleasant and merry; there he would offer sacrifices of joy, ver. 6; for God's work is its own wages. There he would sing, yea, he would sing praises to the Lord. Note, Whatever is the matter of our joy ought to be the matter of our praise; and when we attend upon God in holy ordinances we ought to be much in joy and praise. It is for the glory of our God that we should sing in his ways; and whenever God lifts us up above our enemies, we ought to exalt him in our praises. "Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph," 2 *Cor.* ii. 14.

7 Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice:
Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
8 *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face;
My heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
9 Hide not thy face *far* from me;
Put not thy servant away in anger:
Thou hast been my help; leave me not,
Neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.
10 When my father and my mother forsake me,
Then the LORD will take me up.
11 Teach me thy way, O LORD,
And lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.
12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies:
For false witnesses are risen up against me,
And such as breathe out cruelty.
13 *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD
14 In the land of the living. Wait on the LORD:
Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart:
Wait, I say, on the LORD.

David in these verses expresses,

First. His desire towards God in many petitions. If he cannot now go up to the house of the Lord, yet, wherever he is, he can find a way to the throne of grace by prayer.

1. He humbly bespeaks, because he firmly believes he shall have, a gracious audience; "Hear, O Lord, when I cry," not only with my heart, but as one in earnest, "with my voice" too; and an answer of peace, which he expects, not from his own merit, but God's goodness. "Have mercy upon me, and answer me," ver. 7. If we pray and believe, God will graciously hear and answer.

2. He takes hold of the kind invitation God had given him to this duty, ver. 8. It is presumption for us to come into the presence of the King of kings uncalled, nor can we draw near with any assurance unless he hold forth to us the golden sceptre. David therefore, going to pray, doth in his thoughts fasten upon the call God had given him to the throne of his grace, and doth as it were reverently touch the top of the golden sceptre, which was thereby held out to him. 'My heart said unto thee,' so it begins in the original, or, 'of thee, seek ye my face.' He first revolved that, and preached that over again, to himself, (and that is the best preaching, it is hearing twice what God speaks once,) Thou saidst, (so it may be supplied,) seek ye my face; and then he returns what he had so meditated upon in this pious resolution, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." Observe here, 1st. The true nature of religious worship. It is seeking the face of God; this it is in God's precept, "Seek ye my face." He would have us seek him for himself, and make his favour our chief good. And this it is in the saint's purpose and desire, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek," and nothing else will I take up with. The opening of his hand will satisfy the desire of other living things, *Ps.* cxlv. 16, but it is only the shining of his face that will satisfy the desire of a living soul, *Ps.* iv. 6, 7. 2nd. The kind invitation of a gracious God to this duty; "Thou saidst, seek ye my face." It is not only a permission, but a precept; and his commanding us to seek implies a promise of finding; for he is too kind to say, Seek ye me in vain. God calls us to seek his face in our conversion to him, and in our converse with him. He calls us by the whispers of his Spirit, to and with our spirits, to seek his face; calls us by his Word,—by the stated returns of opportunities for his worship, and by special providences, merciful and afflictive. When we are foolishly making our court to lying vanities, God is in love to us calling us in him to seek our own mercies. 3rd The ready compliance of a gracious soul with this invitation. The call is presently returned; "My heart answered, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The call was general, "Seek ye my face;" but, like David, we must apply it to ourselves, I will seek it. The word doth us no good when we transfer it to others, and do not ourselves accept the exhortation. The call was, "Seek ye my face;" the answer is express, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek;" like that, *Jer.* iii. 22, "Behold we come unto thee." A gracious heart readily echoes to the call of a gracious God, being made willing in the day of his power.

3. He is very particular in his requests.

1st. For the favour of God, that he might not be shut out from that; ver. 9, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek," in obedience to thy command, therefore "hide not thy face from me," that is, let me never want the reviving sense of thy favour. Love me, and let me know that thou lovest me; "Put not thy servant away in anger." He owns he had deserved God's displeasure, but begs that, however God might correct him, he would not cast him away from his presence; for what is hell but that?

2nd. For the continuance of his presence with him; "Thou hast been my help," formerly, and "Thou art the God of my salvation," and therefore, whither shall I go but to thee? O "leave me not, neither forsake me;" withdraw not the operations of thy power from me, for then I am helpless; withdraw not the tokens of thy good-will to me, for then I am comfortless.

3rd. For the benefit of a Divine conduct; ver. 11, "Teach me thy way, O Lord," that is, give me to understand the meaning of thy providences towards me, and make them plain to me; and give me to know my duty in every doubtful case, that I may not mistake it, but may walk rightly, and that I may not do it with hesitation, but may walk surely. It is not policy but plainness, that is, downright honesty, that will direct us into, and keep us in, the way of our duty. He begs to be guided in a plain path, because of his enemies; or, as the margin reads it, his observers. His enemies watched for his halting, that they might find occasion against him. Saul eyed David, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 9; this quickened him to pray, "Lord, lead me in a plain path," that they may have nothing ill, or nothing that looks ill, to lay to my charge.

4th. For the benefit of a Divine protection; ver. 12, "Deliver me not over to the will of mine enemies." Lord, let them not gain their point, for it aims at my life, and no less; and in such a way as that I have no fence against them but thy power over their consciences; "for false witnesses are risen up against me," that aim farther than to take away my reputation or estate, for they breathe out cruelty; it is the blood, the precious blood, they thirst after. Herein David was a type of Christ; for false witnesses rose up against him, and such as breathed out cruelty; but, though he was delivered into their wicked hands, he was not delivered over to their will, for they could not prevent his exaltation.

Secondly. He expresseth his dependence upon God,

1. That he would help and succour him, when all other helps and succours failed him; ver. 10, "When my father and my mother forsake me," that is, the nearest and dearest friends I have in the world, from whom I may expect most relief, and with most reason, when they either die or are at a distance from me, or are disabled to help me in the time of need, or are unkind to me, or unmindful of me, and will not help me; when I am as helpless as ever poor orphan was, that was left fatherless and motherless, then I know "the Lord will take me up," as a poor wandering sheep is taken up and saved from perishing. His time to help those that trust in him is when all other helpers fail,—when it is most for his honour and their comfort; with him the fatherless find mercy. This promise has often been fulfilled in the letter of it. Forsaken orphans have been taken under the special care of the Divine providence, which has raised up relief and friends for them, that way that one would not have expected it. God is a surer and better friend than our earthly parents are or can be.

2. That in due time he should see the displays of his goodness, ver. 13. He believed he should "see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living," and if he had not done so he should have fainted under his afflictions. Even the best saints are subject to faint when their troubles become grievous and tedious. Their spirits are overwhelmed, and their flesh and heart fail; but then faith is a sovereign cordial. It keeps them from desponding under their burthen, and despairing of relief, keeps them hoping, and praying, and waiting, and keeps up in them good thoughts of God, and the comfortable enjoyment of themselves. But what was it the belief of which kept David from fainting? "That he should see the goodness of the Lord," which now seemed at a distance. They that walk by faith in the goodness of the Lord, shall in due time walk in the sight of that goodness. This he hopes to see "in the land of the living," that is, 1st. In this world, that he should outlive his troubles, and not perish under them. It is his comfort, not so much that he shall see the land of the living, as that he shall see the goodness of God in it; for that is the comfort of all creature comforts to a gracious soul. 2nd. In the land of Canaan, and in Jerusalem, where the lively oracles were, in comparison with the heathen, that were dead in sin, the land of Israel might fitly be called the land of the living,—there God was known, and there David hoped to see his goodness: see 2 *Sam.* xv. 25, 26. Or, 3rd. In heaven. It is that land alone that may truly be called the land of the living, where there is no more death; this earth is the land of the dying. Nothing like the believing hope of eternal life, the foresights of that glory, and foretastes of those pleasures, to keep us from fainting under all the calamities of this present time.

3. That in the meantime he should be strengthened to bear up under his burthens, ver. 14. Whether he saith it to himself or to his friends, it comes all to one, this is that which encourageth him. "He shall strengthen thy heart," shall sustain the spirit, and then the spirit shall sustain the infirmity. In that strength, 1st. Keep close to God, and to your duty; "Wait on the Lord," by faith and prayer, and an humble resignation to his will, "wait, I say, on the Lord;" whatever you do, grow not remiss in your attendance upon God. 2nd. Keep up your spirits in the midst of the greatest dangers and difficulties; "Be of good courage." Let your hearts be fixed, trusting in God, and your minds stayed upon him, and then let none of these things move you. They that wait upon the Lord have reason to be of good courage.

PSALM XXVIII.

The former part of this psalm is the prayer of a saint militant, and now in distress, 1—3; to which is added the doom of God's implacable enemies, ver. 4, 5. The latter part of the psalm is the thanksgiving of a saint triumphant, and delivered out of his distresses, ver. 6—8; to which is added a prophetical prayer for all God's faithful, loyal

subjects, ver. 9; so that it is hard to say which of these two conditions David was in when he penned it. Some think he was now in trouble seeking God, but at the same time preparing to praise him for his deliverance, and by faith giving him thanks for it, before it was wrought. Others think he was now in triumph, but remembered and recorded, for his own and others' benefit, the prayers he made when he was in affliction, that the mercy might relish the better, when it appeared to be an answer to them.

A Psalm of David.

UNTO thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me:
Lest, *if* thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.
2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee,
When I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.
3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers
Which speak peace to their neighbours, [of iniquity,
But mischief *is* in their hearts.
4 Give them according to their deeds,
And according to the wickedness of their endeavours:
Give them after the work of their hands;
Render to them their desert.
5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD,
Nor the operation of his hands,
He shall destroy them, and not build them up.

In these verses David is very earnest in prayer.

First. He prays that God would graciously hear and answer him now that, in his distress, he called upon him, ver. 1, 2. Observe his faith in prayer; "O Lord my rock;" noting his belief of God's power, He is a rock; and his dependence upon that power, He is my rock, on whom I build my hope. Observe his fervency in prayer, "To thee will I cry," as one in earnest, being ready to sink unless thou come in with seasonable succour. And observe how solicitous he is to obtain an answer, "Be not silent to me," as one angry at my prayers, *Ps.* lxxx. 4; Lord, speak to me, answer me with good words, and comfortable words, *Zec.* i. 13. Though the thing I pray for be not given in, yet let God speak to me joy and gladness, and make me to hear it. Lord, speak for me, in answer to my prayers; plead my cause, command deliverances for me, and thus hear and answer the voice of my supplications. Two things he pleads: 1. The sad despair he should be in if God slighted him. "If thou be silent to me," and I have not the tokens of thy favour, "I am like them that go down into the pit," that is, I am a dead man, lost and undone; if God be not my friend, appear not to me, and appear not for me, my hope and my help is perished. Nothing can be so cutting, so killing, to a gracious soul, as the want of God's favour, and the sense of his displeasure. 'I shall be like them that go down to hell,' so some understand it; for what is the misery of the damned but this, that God is for ever silent to them, and deaf to their cry? Those are in some measure qualified for God's favour, and may expect it, who are thus possessed with a dread of his wrath, and to whom his frowns are worse than death. 2. The good hopes he had that God would favour him, "I lift up my hands towards thy holy oracle;" which notes, not only an earnest desire, but an earnest expectation, from thence to receive an answer of peace. The most holy place, within the veil, is here, as elsewhere, called the oracle; there the ark and the mercy-seat were, there God was said to dwell between the cherubims, and thence he spake to his people, *Num.* vii. 89. That was a type of Christ; and it is to him that we must lift up our eyes and hands, for through him all good comes from God to us. It was also a figure of heaven, *Heb.* ix. 24. And from God, as our Father in heaven, we are taught to expect an answer to our prayers. The Scriptures are called the oracles of God, and to them we must have an eye in our prayers and expectations. There is the word on which God hath caused and encouraged us to hope.

Secondly. He deprecates the doom of wicked people, as before, *Ps.* xxvi. 9, "Gather not my soul with sinners." Lord, I attend thy holy oracle, "draw me not away from that with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity," ver. 3; that is, 1. Save me from being entangled in the snares they have laid for me. They flatter and cajole me, and speak peace to me, but they have a design upon me, for mischief is in their heart; they aim to disturb me, nay, to destroy me; Lord, suffer me not to be drawn away and ruined by their cursed plots; for they have, can have, no power, no success against me, except it be given them from above. 2. Save me from being infected with their sins, and from doing as they do; let me not be drawn away by their fallacious arguments, or their allurements, from thy holy oracle, where I desire to dwell all the days of my life, to practise any wicked works: see *Ps.* cxli. 4. Lord, never leave me to myself to use such arts of deceit and treachery for my safety as they use for my ruin. Let no event of providence be an invincible temptation to me, to draw me either to the imitation or into the interest of wicked people. Good men dread the way of sinners; the best are sensible of the danger they are in of being drawn aside into it; and therefore we should all pray earnestly to God for his grace to keep us in our integrity. 3. Save me from being involved in their doom; let not me be led forth with the workers of iniquity, for I am none of them that speak peace while war is in their hearts. Note, Those that are careful not to partake with sinners in their sins have reason to hope that they shall not partake with them in their plagues, *Rev.* xviii. 4.

Thirdly. He imprecates the just judgments of God upon the workers of iniquity; ver. 4, "Give them according to their deeds." This is not the language of passion or revenge; nor is it inconsistent with the duty of praying for our enemies. But, 1. Thus he would shew how far he was from complying with the workers of iniquity, and with what good reason he had begged not to be drawn away with them, because he was convinced that they could not be made more miserable than to be dealt with according to their deeds. 2. Thus he would express his zeal for the honour of God's justice in governing the world: Lord, they think all well they do, and justify themselves in their wicked practices; Lord, "give them after the work of their hands," and so undeceive those about them, who think there is no harm in what they do because it goes unpunished, *Ps.* xciv. 1, 2. 3. This prayer is a prophecy that God will, sooner or later, render to all impenitent sinners according to their deserts. If what has been done amiss be not undone by repentance, there will certainly come a reckoning day, when God will render to every man who persists in his evil deeds according to them. It is a prophecy particularly of the destruction of destroyers. They speak peace to their neighbour, but mischief is in their hearts; Lord, give them according to their deeds, let the spoilers be spoiled, and let them be treacherously dealt with, who have thus dealt treacherously: see *Isa.* xxxiii. 1; *Rev.* xviii. 4; xiii. 10. Observe, He foretells that God will reward them, not only according to their deeds, but "according to the wickedness of their endeavours;" for sinners shall be reckoned with, not only for the mischief they have done, but for the mischief they would have done, which they designed, and did what they could to effect. And if God go by this rule in dealing with the wicked, sure he will do so in dealing with the righteous, and will reward them, not only for the good they have done, but for the good they have endeavoured to do, though they could not compass it.

Fourthly. He foretells their destruction for their contempt of God, and his hand; ver. 5, "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, and the operations of his hands," by which he manifests himself, and speaks to the children of men, he shall destroy them in this world and in the other, and not build them up. Note, A stupid regardlessness of the works of God is the cause of the sin of sinners, and so becomes the cause of their ruin. Why do men question the being or attributes of God, but because they do not duly regard his handyworks which declare his glory, and in which the invisible things of him are clearly seen? Why do men forget God, and live without him, nay, affront God, and live in rebellion against him, but because they consider not the instances of that wrath of his, which is "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?" Why do the enemies of God's people hate and persecute them, and devise mischief against them, but because they regard not the works God has wrought for his church, by which he has made it appear how dear it is to him? see *Isa.* v. 12.

In singing this we must arm ourselves against all temptations to join with the workers of iniquity; and animate ourselves against all the troubles we may be threatened with by the workers of iniquity.

6 Blessed *be* the LORD,
Because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.
7 The LORD *is* my strength and my shield;
My heart trusted in him, and I am helped:
Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth;
And with my song will I praise him.
8 The LORD *is* their strength,
And he *is* the saving strength of his anointed.
9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance:
Feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

In these verses,

First. David gives God thanks for the audience of his prayers, as affectionately as a few verses before he had begged it; ver. 6, "Blessed be the Lord." How soon are the saints' sorrows turned into songs; and their prayers into praises! It was in faith that David prayed, ver. 2, "Hear the voice of my supplications;" and by the same faith he gives thanks, ver, 6, that God had heard the voice of his supplications. Note, 1. They that pray in faith may rejoice in hope. He hath heard me, that is, graciously accepted me, and I am as sure of a real answer as if I had it already. 2. What we win by prayer we must wear with praise. Hath God heard our supplications? let us then bless his name.

Secondly. He encourageth himself to hope in God for the perfecting of every thing that concerned him. Having given to God the glory of his grace, ver. 6, he is humbly bold to take the comfort of it, ver. 7. This is the method of attaining peace, let it begin with praise that it is attainable. Let us first bless God, and then bless ourselves. Observe, 1. His dependence upon God. "The Lord is my strength" to support me, and carry me on through all my services and sufferings. He is "my shield" to protect me from all the malicious designs of my enemies against me. I have chosen him to be so, I have always found him so, and I expect he will still be so. 2. His experience of the benefit of that dependence. "My heart trusted in him," and in his power and promise, and it has not been in vain to do so, for I am helped, I have been helped many a time; not only God has given in to me in his due time the help I trusted to him for, but my very trusting in him has helped me in the meantime, and kept me from fainting, *Ps.* xxvii. 13. The very actings of faith are present aids to a drooping spirit, and help it many a time at a dead lift. 3. His improvement of this experience. He had the pleasure of it, "therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth." The joy of a believer is seated in the heart, while in the laughter of the fool the heart is sorrowful. It is great joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory. The heart that truly believes shall in due time greatly rejoice; it is joy and peace in believing that we are to expect. God shall have the praise of it; when "my heart greatly rejoiceth, with my song will I praise him." Thus must we express our gratitude; it is the least we can do, and others will hereby be invited and encouraged to trust in him too.

Thirdly. He pleaseth himself with the interest which all good people through Christ have in God; ver. 8, "The Lord is their strength;" not mine only, but the strength of every believer. Note, The saints rejoice in their friends' comforts as well as their own; for, as we have not the less benefit by the light of the sun, so neither by the light of God's countenance, for others sharing therein; for we are sure there is enough for all, and enough for each. This is our communion with all saints, that God is their strength and ours; Christ, their Lord and ours, 1 *Cor.* i. 2. He is their strength, the strength of all Israel, because "he is the saving strength of his Anointed;" that is, 1. Of David in the type. God, in strengthening him that was their king and fought their battles, strengthened the whole kingdom. He calls himself God's anointed, because it was the unction he had received that exposed him to the envy of his enemies, and therefore entitled him to the Divine protection. 2. Of Christ, his Anointed, his Messiah, in the antitype. God was his saving strength, qualified him for his undertaking, and carried him through it: see *Ps.* lxxxix. 21; *Isa.* xlix. 5; l. 7, 9; and so he becomes their strength, the strength of all the saints. He strengthened him that is the church's head, and from him diffuseth strength to all the members; has commanded his strength, and so strengthens what he has wrought for us, *Ps.* lxviii. 28: see *Ps.* lxxx. 17, 18.

Fourthly. He concludes with a short but comprehensive prayer for the church of God, ver. 9. He prays for Israel, not as his people, Save my people, and bless mine inheritance, though they were so, but thine. God's interest in them lay nearer his heart than his own; We are thy people, is a good plea, *Isa.* lxiv. 9; lxiii. 19, "I am thine, save me." God's people are his inheritance, dear to him, and precious in his eyes; what little glory he has from this world he has it from them: "The Lord's portion is his people." That which he begs of God for them is, 1. That he would save them from their enemies, and the dangers they were exposed to. 2. That he would bless them with all good flowing from his

favour, in performance of his promise, and amounting to a happiness for them. 3. That he would feed them: bless them with plenty, and especially the plenty of his ordinances, which are food to the soul: 'rule them,' so the margin; direct their counsels and actions aright, and overrule their affairs for good. Feed them and rule them; that is, set pastors, set rulers over them, that shall do their office with wisdom and understanding. 4. That he would lift them up for ever; lift them up out of their troubles and distresses; and do this not only for those of that age, but for his people in every age to come, even to the end. Lift them up into thy glorious kingdom, lift them up as high as heaven. There, and there only, will the saints be lifted up for ever, never more to sink or be depressed. Observe, Those, and those only, whom God feeds and rules, that are willing to be taught, and guided, and governed by him, shall be saved, and blessed, and lifted up for ever.

PSALM XXIX.

It is the probable conjecture of some very good interpreters that David penned this psalm upon occasion, and just at the time, of a great storm of thunder, lightning, and rain; as the 8th psalm was his meditation in a moonshine night, and the 19th in a sunshine morning. It is good to take occasion from the sensible operations of God's power in the kingdom of nature to give glory to him. So composed was David, and so cheerful, even in a dreadful tempest, when others trembled, that then he penned this psalm; for, "though the earth be removed, yet will we not fear." I. He calls upon the great ones of the world to give glory to God, ver. 1, 2. II. To convince them of the greatness of that God whom they were to adore, he takes notice of his power and terror in the thunder and lightning, and thunder-showers, ver. 3—9; his sovereign dominion over the world, ver. 10; and his special favour to his church, ver. 11. Great and high thoughts of God should fill us in singing this psalm.

A Psalm of David.

GIVE unto the LORD, O ye mighty,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name;
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness
3 The voice of the LORD *is* upon the waters:
The God of glory thundereth:
The LORD *is* upon many waters.
4 The voice of the LORD *is* powerful;
The voice of the LORD *is* full of majesty.
5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars;
Yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.
6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf;
Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

LEBANON, FROM THE SEA.

7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.
8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness;
The LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve,
And discovereth the forests:
And in his temple doth every one speak of *his* glory.
10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood;
Yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.
11 The LORD will give strength unto his people;
The LORD will bless his people with peace.

In this psalm we have,

First. A demand of the homage of the great men of the earth to be paid to the great God. Every clap of thunder David interpreted as a call to himself and other princes to give glory to the great God. Observe, 1. Who they are that are called to this duty: "O ye mighty," ver. 1. Ye sons of the mighty; that have power, and on whom that power is devolved by succession and inheritance, that have royal blood running in your veins. It is much for the honour of the great God that the great men of this world should pay their homage to him; and they are bound to do it, not only because as high as they are He is infinitely above them, and therefore they must vail to him, but because they have their power from him, and are to use it for him, and this tribute of acknowledgment they owe to him for it. 2. How often this call is repeated: "Give unto the Lord," and again, and a third time, "Give unto the Lord." This intimates that the mighty men are backward to this duty, and are hardly persuaded to it; but that it is of great consequence to the interests of God's kingdom among men that princes should heartily espouse them. Jerusalem flourishes when the kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into it, *Rev.* xxi. 24. 3. What they are called to: To give unto the Lord; not as if he needed any thing, or could be benefited by any gifts of ours, or as if we had any thing to give him that is not his own already, "Who hath first given to him?" but the recognition of his glory, and of his dominion over us, he is pleased to interpret as a gift to him. "Give unto the Lord," your own selves in the first place, and then your services. "Give unto the Lord glory and strength;" that is, acknowledge his glory and strength, and give praise to him as a God of infinite majesty and irresistible power; and what glory and strength he has by his providence intrusted you with, offer it to him, to be used for his honour in his service. Give him your crowns, let them be laid at his feet; give him your sceptres, your swords, your keys, put all into his hand, that you in the use of them may be to him for a name and a praise. Princes value themselves by their glory and strength; these they must ascribe to God, owning him to be infinitely more glorious and powerful than they.

This demand of homage from the mighty may be looked upon as directed either to the grandees of David's own kingdom, the peers of the realm, the princes of the tribes,—and it is to excite them to a more diligent and constant attendance at God's altars, in which he had observed them very remiss,—or to the neighbouring kings whom he by his sword had made tributaries to Israel, and now would persuade to become tributaries to the God of Israel. Crowned heads must bow before the King of kings. What is here said to the mighty is said to all, Worship God; it is the sum and substance of the everlasting Gospel, *Rev.* xiv. 6, 7. Now we have here, 1. The nature of religious worship; it is giving "to the Lord the glory due to his name," ver. 2. God's name is that whereby he has made himself known. There is a glory due to his name. It is impossible we should give him all the glory due to his name; when we have said and done our best for the honour of God's name, still we come infinitely short of the merit of the subject. But when we answer that revelation which he has made of himself, with suitable affections and adorations, then we give him some of that glory which is due to his name. If we would, in hearing, and praying, and other acts of devotion, receive grace from God, we must make it our business to give glory to God. 2. The rule of the performance of religious exercises; "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Which speaks, 1st. The object of our worship. The glorious majesty of God is called "the beauty of holiness," 2 *Chr.* xx. 21. In the worship of God we must have an eye to his beauty, and adore him not only as infinitely awful, and therefore to be feared above all, but as infinitely amiable, and therefore to be loved and delighted in above all; especially we must have an eye to the beauty of his holiness; this the angels fasten upon in their praises, *Rev.* iv. 8. Or, 2nd. The place of worship. The sanctuary then was the beauty of holiness, *Ps.* xlviii. 1, 2; *Jer.* xvii. 12. The beauty of the sanctuary was the exact agreeableness of the worship there performed with the Divine appointment; the pattern in the mount. Now, under the Gospel, solemn assemblies of Christians (which purity is the beauty of) are the places where God is to be worshipped. Or, 3. The manner of worship. We must be holy in all our religious performances; that is, devoted to God, and to his will and glory. There is a beauty in holiness, and it is that that puts an acceptable beauty upon all the acts of worship.

Secondly. Good reason given for this demand. We shall see ourselves bound to give glory to God if we consider, 1. His sufficiency in himself, intimated in his name Jehovah, "I am that I am," which is repeated here no less than eighteen times in this short psalm, twice in every verse but three, and once in two of those three; I think there is not the like in all the book of *Psalms*. Let the mighty ones of the earth know him by this name, and give him the glory due to it. 2. His sovereignty over all things. Let those that rule over men know there is a God that rules over them, that rules over all. The psalmist here sets forth God's dominion,

1. In the kingdom of nature. In the wonderful effects of natural causes, and the operations of the powers of nature, we ought to take notice of God's glory and strength, which we are called upon to ascribe to him. In the thunder, and lightning, and rain, we may see,

1st. His glory. It is the God of glory that thundereth, ver. 3. It is God that thunders; it is the noise of his voice, *Job* xxxvii. 2, and it speaks him a God of glory; so awful is the sound of the thunder, and so bright the flash of its companion the lightning. To the hearing and to the sight nothing more affecting than these, as if by those two learning senses God would give such proofs of his glory to the minds of men as should leave the most stupid inexcusable. And some observe, that there were then some particular reasons why thunder should be called the voice of the Lord, not only because it comes from above, is not under the direction or foresight of any man, speaks loud, and reaches far; but because God often spake in thunder, particularly at mount Sinai, and by thunder discomfited the enemies of Israel. To speak it the voice of the God of glory, it is here said to be upon the waters, upon many waters, ver. 3; it reacheth over the vast ocean, the waters under the firmament; it rattles among the thick clouds, the waters that are above the firmament. Every one that hears the thunder, his ears being made to tingle with it, will own that "the voice of the Lord is full of majesty," ver. 4, enough to make the highest humble, for none "can thunder with a voice like him;" and the proudest tremble, for, if his voice be so terrible, what is his arm? Every time we hear it thunder, let our hearts be thereby filled with great, and high, and honourable thoughts of God, in the holy adoring and admirings of whom the power of godliness doth so much consist. "O Lord our God, thou art very great."

2nd. His power; ver. 4, "The voice of the Lord is powerful," as appears by the effects of it; for it works wonders. They that write natural histories relate the prodigious effects of thunder and lightning, even out of the ordinary course of natural causes, which must be resolved into the omnipotence of the God of nature. *First.* Trees have been rent and split by thunderbolts; ver. 5. 6, "The voice of the Lord" in the thunder often "broke the cedars," even those of Lebanon, the strongest, the stateliest. Some understand it of the violent winds, which shook the cedars, and sometimes tore off their aspiring tops. Earthquakes also shook the ground itself on which the trees grew, and made Lebanon and Sirion to dance; the wilderness of Kadesh also was in like manner shaken, ver. 8, the trees by winds, the ground by earthquakes, and both by thunders, of which I incline rather to understand it. The learned Dr. Hammond understands it of the consternation and conquest of the neighbour kingdoms that warred with Israel and opposed David; as the Syrians, whose country lay near the forest of Lebanon, the Amorites, that bordered on mount Hebron, and the Moabites and Ammonites, that lay about the wilderness of Kadesh. *Secondly.* Fires have been kindled by lightnings, and houses and churches thereby consumed; hence we read of hot thunderbolts, *Ps.* lxxviii. 48. Accordingly, the voice of the Lord in the thunder is here said to divide the flames, ver. 7; that is, to scatter them upon the earth, as God sees fit to direct them, and do execution by them. *Thirdly.* The terror of thunder "makes the hinds to calve," sooner, and some think easier, than otherwise they would. The

hind is a timorous creature, and much affected with the noise of thunder; and no marvel, when sometimes proud and stout men have been made to tremble at it. The emperor Caligula would hide himself under his bed when it thundered. Horace the poet owns that he was reclaimed from atheism by the terror of thunder and lightning, which he describes somewhat like this here, *Lib.* i. *Ode* 34. The thunder is said here to discover the forests; that is, it so terrifies the wild beasts of the forest that they quit the dens and thickets in which they hid themselves, and so are discovered. Or, it throws down the trees, and so discovers the ground that was shaded by them. Whenever it thunders, let us think of this psalm; and whenever we sing this psalm let us think of the dreadful thunderclaps we have sometimes heard, and thus bring God's word and his works together, that by both we may be directed and quickened to give unto him the glory due unto his name; and let us bless him that there is another voice of his besides this dreadful one, by which God now speaks to us, even the still small voice of his Gospel, the terror of which shall not make us afraid.

2. In the kingdom of providence. God is to be praised as the governor of the world of mankind. He "sits upon the flood, he sits king for ever," ver. 10. He not only sits at rest in the enjoyment of himself, but he sits as king in the throne which he has prepared in the heavens, *Ps.* ciii. 17, where he takes cognizance of, and gives orders about, all the affairs of the children of men, and doth all according to his will, according to the counsel of his will. Observe, 1st. The power of his kingdom: He sits upon the flood. As he has founded the earth, so he hath founded his own throne, upon the floods, *Ps.* xxiv. 2. The ebbings and flowings of this lower world, and the tosses and revolutions of the affairs in it, give not the least shake to the repose, or to the counsels, of the Eternal Mind. The opposition of his enemies is compared to the floods, *Ps.* xciii. 3, 4; but the Lord sits upon it; that is, he crusheth it, conquers it, and completes his own purposes in despite of all the devices that are in men's hearts. The word here translated "the flood," is never used but concerning Noah's flood; and therefore some think that is it that is here spoken of. God did sit upon that flood, as a judge executing the sentence of his justice upon the world of the ungodly that was swept away by it. And he still sits upon the flood, restrains the waters of Noah, that they turn not again to cover the earth, according to his promise never to destroy the earth any more by a flood, *Gen.* ix. 11; *Isa.* liv. 9. 2nd. The perpetuity of his kingdom: He sits king for ever; no period can or shall be put to his government. The administration of his kingdom is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and pursuant to his designs for eternity.

3. In the kingdom of grace. Here his glory shines brightest, 1st. In the adorations he receives from the subjects of that kingdom, ver. 9. "In his temple," where his people attend his discoveries of himself and his mind, and attend him with their praises, there doth "every one speak of his glory." In the world every man sees it, or at least, may behold it afar off, *Job* xxxvi. 25; but it is only in the temple, in the church, that it is spoken of to his honour. "All his works do praise him;" that is, they minister matter for praise, but his saints only do bless him and speak of his glory in his works, *Ps.* cxlv. 10. 2nd. In the favours he bestows upon the subjects of that kingdom, ver. 11. *First.* He will enable them for his service. "He will give strength to his people," to fortify them against every evil work, and to furnish them for every good work; out of weakness they shall be made strong; nay, he will perfect strength in weakness. *Secondly.* He will encourage them in his service. "He will bless his people with peace." Peace is a blessing of inestimable value, which God designs for all his people. "The work of righteousness is peace: great peace have they that love thy law;" but much more the crown of righteousness. The end of the righteous is peace, it is endless peace. When the thunder of God's wrath shall make sinners tremble, the saints shall lift up their heads with joy.

PSALM XXX.

This is a psalm of thanksgiving for the great deliverances which God had wrought for David, penned upon occasion of the dedicating of his house of cedar, and sung in that pious solemnity, though there is not any thing in it that has particular reference to that occasion. Some collect from divers passages in the psalm itself, that it was penned upon his recovery from a dangerous fit of sickness, which might happen to be about the time of the dedication of his house. I. He here praiseth God for the deliverances he had wrought for him, ver. 1—3. II. He calls upon others to praise him too, and encourageth them to trust in him, ver. 4, 5. III. He blames himself for his former security, ver. 6, 7. IV. He recollects the prayers and complaints he had made in his distress, ver. 8—10; and with them stirs up himself to be very thankful to God for the present comfortable change, ver. 11, 12. In singing this psalm, we ought to remember with thankfulness any like deliverances wrought for us; for which we must stir up ourselves to praise him, and by which we must be engaged to depend upon him.

A Psalm *and* Song *at* the dedication of the house of David.

I WILL extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up,
And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.
2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee,
And thou hast healed me.
3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave:
Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to
4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, [the pit.
And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.
5 For his anger *endureth but* a moment;
In his favour *is* life:
Weeping may endure for a night,
But joy *cometh* in the morning.

It was the laudable practice of the pious Jews, and though not expressly appointed yet allowed and accepted, when they had built a new house, to dedicate it to God, *Deu.* xx. 5. David did so, when his house was built, and he took possession of it, 2 *Sam.* v. 11; for royal palaces do as much need God's protection, and are as much bound to be at his service, as ordinary houses. Note, The houses we dwell in should, at our first entrance upon them, be dedicated to God as little sanctuaries. We must solemnly commit ourselves and our families, and all our family affairs, to God's conduct and care; must pray for his presence and blessing, must devote ourselves and all ours to his glory, and must resolve both that we will put away iniquity far from our tabernacles and that we and our houses will serve the Lord, both in the duties of family worship, and in all instances of Gospel obedience. Some conjecture that this psalm was sung at the rededication of David's house, after he had been driven out of it by Absalom, who had defiled it with his incest, and that it is a thanksgiving for the crushing of that dangerous rebellion. In these verses,

First. David doth himself give God thanks for the great deliverances he had wrought for him; ver. 1. "I will extol thee, O Lord;" that is, I will exalt thy name, will praise thee as one high and lifted up; I will do what I can to advance the interests of thy kingdom among men. "I will extol thee, for thou hast lifted me up," not only up out of the pit in which I was sinking, but up to the throne of Israel. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust. In consideration of the great things God has done to exalt us, both by his providence and by his grace, we are bound in gratitude to do all we can to extol his name, though the most we can do is but little. Three things magnify David's deliverance: 1. That it was the defeat of his enemies. They were not suffered to triumph over him, as they would have done (though it is a barbarous thing) if he had died of this sickness, or perished in this distress: see *Ps.* xli. 11. 2. That it was an answer to his prayers; ver. 2, "I cried unto thee." All the expressions of the sense we have of our troubles should be directed to God, and every cry be a cry to him; and giving way in this manner to our grief will ease a burthened spirit. "I cried to thee," and thou hast not only heard me, but healed me, healed the distempered body, healed the disturbed and disquieted mind, healed the disordered, distracted affairs of the kingdom. It is what God glories in; "I am the Lord that healeth thee," *Ex.* xv. 26, and we must give him the glory of it. 3. That it was the saving of his life; for he was brought to the last extremity, dropping into the grave, and ready to go down into the pit, and yet rescued and kept alive, ver. 3. The more imminent our dangers have been, the more eminent our deliverances have been, the more comfortable to ourselves, and the more illustrious proofs of the power and goodness of God. A life from the dead ought to be spent in extolling the God of our life.

Secondly. He calls upon others to join with him in praise, not only for the particular favours God had bestowed upon him, but for the general tokens of his goodwill to all his saints; ver. 4, "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his." All that are truly saints he owns for his; there is a remnant of such in this world, and from them it is expected that they sing unto him; for they are created and sanctified, made, and made saints, that they be to him for a name and a praise. His saints in heaven sing to him; why should not those on earth be doing the same work, as well as they can, in concert with them?

1. They believe him to be a God of unspotted purity; and therefore let them sing to him. Let them "give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness;" that is, let them praise his holy name, for holiness is his memorial throughout all generations. God is a holy God; his holiness is his glory; that is the attribute which the holy angels in their praises fasten most upon, *Isa.* vi. 3; *Rev.* iv. 8. We ought to be much in the mention and remembrance of God's holiness; and holy souls can give thanks at the mention of God's holiness. It is matter of joy to the saints that God is a holy God; for then they hope he will make them holy, more holy. No one of all God's perfections carries in it more terror to the wicked, nor more comfort to the godly, than his holiness. It is a good sign we are in some measure partakers of his holiness, if we can heartily rejoice and give thanks at the remembrance of it.

2. They have experienced him to be a God gracious and merciful; and therefore let them sing to him. 1st. We have found his frowns very short. Though we have deserved they should have been everlasting, and that he should have been angry with us till he had consumed us, and should never have been reconciled, yet "his anger endureth but for a moment," ver. 5. When we offend him he is angry; but, as he is slow to anger, and not soon provoked, so, when he is angry, upon our repentance and humiliation, his anger is soon turned away, and he is willing to be at peace with us. If he hide his face from his own children, and suspend the wonted tokens of his favour, it is but in a little wrath, and for a small moment; but he will gather them with everlasting kindness, *Isa.* liv. 7, 8. If weeping endure for a night, and it be a wearisome night; yet, as sure as the light of the morning returns after the darkness of the night, so sure will joy and comfort return in a short time, in due time, to the people of God; for the covenant of grace is as firm as the covenant of the day. This word has often been fulfilled to us in the letter, weeping has endured for a night; but the grief has been soon over, and the grievance gone. Observe, As long as God's anger continues, so long the saints' weeping continues; but if that be but for a moment, the affliction is but for a moment; and when the light of God's countenance is restored the affliction is easily made nothing of. 2nd. We have found his smiles very sweet. "In his favour is life," that is, all good. The return of his favour to an afflicted soul is as life from the dead; nothing can be more reviving. Our happiness is bound up in God's favour; if we have that we have enough, whatever else we want. It is the life of the soul, it is spiritual life, the earnest of life eternal.

6 And in my prosperity I said,
I shall never be moved. [stand strong:
7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to
Thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled.
8 I cried to thee, O LORD;
And unto the LORD I made supplication. [pit?
9 What profit *is there* in my blood, when I go down to the

SACKCLOTH AND ASHES.—ver. 11.

Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?
10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me:
LORD, be thou my helper.
11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing:
Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; [not be silent.
12 To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and
O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

We have in these verses an account of three several states that David was in successively, and of the workings of his heart toward God in each of those states, what he said and did, and how his heart stood affected; in the first of which we may see what we are too apt to be, and in the other two what we should be.

First. He had long enjoyed prosperity, and then he grew secure, and over confident of the continuance of it; ver. 6, 7, "In my prosperity," when I was in health of body, and God had given me rest from all mine enemies, "I said, I shall never be moved;" that is, I never thought either of having my body distempered or my government disturbed, nor had any apprehensions of danger upon any account. Such complete victories had he obtained over those that opposed him, and such a confirmed interest had he in the hearts of his people, such a firmness of mind, and such a strong constitution of body, that he thought his prosperity fixed like a mountain; yet this he ascribes not to his own wisdom or fortitude, but to the Divine goodness; "Thou, through thy favour, hast made my mountain to stand strong," ver. 7. He doth not look upon it as his heaven, (as worldly people do, who make their prosperity their felicity,) only his mountain; it is earth still, only raised a little higher than the common level. This he thought, by the favour of God, would be perpetuated to him; imagining perhaps that, having had so many troubles in the beginning of his days, he had had his whole share, and should have none in his latter end. Or, that God, who had given him such tokens of his favour, would never frown upon him. Note, 1. We are very apt to dream, when things are well with us, that they will always be so, and never otherwise; "To-morrow shall be as this day;" as if we should think when the weather is once fair, that it will be ever fair; whereas nothing is more certain than that it will change. 2. When we see ourselves deceived in our expectation, it becomes us to reflect with shame upon our security as our folly, as David doth here, that we may be wiser another time, and may rejoice in our prosperity as though we rejoiced not, because the fashion of it passeth away.

Secondly. On a sudden he fell into trouble, and then he prayed to God, and pleaded earnestly for relief and succour. 1. His mountain was shaken, and he with it; it proved when he grew secure he was least safe; "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled," in mind, body, or estate. In every change of his condition he still kept his eye upon God; and, as he ascribed his prosperity to God's favour, so in his adversity he observed the hiding of God's face to be the cause of it. If God hide his face, a good man is certainly troubled, though no other calamity befal him. When the sun sets, night certainly follows; and the moon and all the stars cannot make day. 2. When his mountain was shaken, he lifted up his eyes above the hills. Prayer is a salve for every sore: he made use of it accordingly. "Is any afflicted?" Is any troubled? "Let him pray." Though God hid his face from him, yet he prayed. If God in wisdom and justice turn from us, yet it will be in us the greatest folly and injustice imaginable if we turn from him. No, let us learn to pray in the dark; ver. 8, "I cried to thee, O Lord." It seems God's withdrawings made his prayers the more vehement. We are here told, (for it seems he kept account of it,) *First*. What he pleaded, ver. 9. That God would be no gainer by his death; "What profit is there in my blood?" implying, that he would willingly die if he could thereby do any real service to God or his country, *Phil*. ii. 17; but he saw not what good could be done by his dying in the bed of sickness, as might be if he had died in the bed of honour. Lord, saith he, wilt thou sell one of thine own people for nought, and not increase thy wealth by the price? *Ps*. xliv. 12. Nay, that in his honour God would seem to be a loser by his death. "Shall the dust praise thee?" The sanctified spirit which returns to God shall praise him, shall be still praising him; but the dust which returns to the earth shall not praise him, nor declare his truth. The services of God's house cannot be performed by the dust; it cannot praise him. There is none of that device or working in the grave, for it is the land of silence. The promises of God's covenant cannot be performed to the dust. Lord, saith David, if I die now, what will become of the promise made to me, who shall declare the truth of that? The best pleas in prayer are those that are taken from God's honour, and then we ask aright for life, when we have that in view, that we may live and praise him. *Secondly*. What he prayed for, ver. 10. He prayed for mercy to pardon, "Have mercy upon me;" and for grace to help in time of need, "Lord, be thou my helper." And on these two errands we also may come boldly to the throne of grace, *Heb*. iv. 16.

Thirdly. In due time God delivered him out of his troubles, and restored him to his former prosperity. His prayers were answered, and his mourning was turned into dancing, ver. 11. God's anger now endured but for a moment, and David's weeping but for a night. The sackcloth, with which in an humble compliance with the Divine providence he had clad himself, was loosed, his griefs were balanced, his fears were silenced, his comforts returned, and he was girded with gladness; joy was made his ornament; was made his strength, and seemed to cleave to him as "the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man." As David's plunge into trouble from the height of prosperity, and then when he least expected it, teacheth us to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, because we know not how near trouble may be, so his sudden return to a prosperous condition, teacheth us to weep as though we wept not, because we know not how soon the storm may become a calm, and the formidable blast may become a favourable gale.

But what temper of mind was he in upon this happy change of the face of his affairs? What doth he say now? He tell us, ver. 12, 1. His complaints were turned into praises. He looked upon it that therefore God girded him with gladness, to the end that he might be the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2 *Sam*. xxiii. 1. That his glory might sing praise to God; that is, his tongue; for our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. Or, his soul; for that is our glory above the beasts: that must be employed in blessing the Lord, and with that we must make melody to him in singing psalms. They that are kept from being silent in the pit must not be silent in the land of the living, but fervent, and constant, and public, in praising God. 2. These praises were likely to be everlasting. "I will give thanks unto thee for ever." This speaks a gracious resolution, that he would persevere to the end in praising God, and a gracious hope that he should never want fresh matter for praise, and that he should shortly be there where this would be the everlasting work. Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, they will be still praising him. Thus must we learn to accommodate ourselves to the various providences of God that are concerning us; to want and to abound, to sing of mercy and judgment, and to sing unto God for both.

PSALM XXXI.

It is probable that David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul; and some passages in it agree particularly to the fair escape he had at Keilah, 1 *Sam*. xxiii. 13; and then in the wilderness at Maon, when Saul marched on one side of the hill and he on the other; and soon after in the cave in the wilderness of En-gedi; but that it was penned upon any of those occasions we are not told. It is a mixture of prayers, and praises, and professions of confidence in God; all which do well together, and are helpful to one another. I. David professeth his cheerful confidence in God, and in that confidence prays for deliverance out of his present troubles, ver. 1—8. II. He complains of the very deplorable condition he was in, and in the sense of his calamities still prays that God would graciously appear for him against his persecutors, ver. 9—18. III. He concludes the psalm with praise and triumph, giving glory to God, and encouraging himself and others to trust in him, ver. 19—24.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

IN thee, O LORD, do I put my trust;
Let me never be ashamed:
Deliver me in thy righteousness
2 Bow down thine ear to me;
Deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock,
For an house of defence to save me.
3 For thou *art* my rock and my fortress;
Therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me:
For thou *art* my strength.
5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit:
Thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.
6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities:
But I trust in the LORD.
7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy:
For thou hast considered my trouble;
Thou hast known my soul in adversities;
8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy:
Thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Faith and prayer must go together. He that believes let him pray; "I believe, therefore have I spoken." And he that prays let him believe; for the prayer of faith is the prevailing prayer. We have both here.

First. David in distress is very earnest with God in prayer for succour and relief. This easeth a burthened spirit, fetcheth in promised mercies, and wonderfully supports and comforts the soul in the expectation of them. He prays, 1. That God would deliver him, ver. 1; that his life might be preserved from the malice of his enemies, and that an end might be put to their prosecutions of him; that God, not only in mercy but in righteousness, would deliver him, as a righteous judge betwixt him and his unrighteous persecutors; that he would bow down his ear to his petitions, to his appeals, and deliver him, ver. 2, (it is condescension in God to take cognizance of the case of the greatest and best of men,—he humbleth himself to do it;) and that he would deliver him speedily, lest, if the deliverance were long deferred, his faith should fail. 2. That if he did not presently deliver him out of his troubles, yet he would protect and shelter him in his troubles: "Be thou my strong rock," immoveable, impregnable, as a fastness framed by nature, and my house of defence, a fortress framed by art, and all "to save me." Thus may we pray that God's providence would secure to us our lives and comforts, and that by his grace we may be enabled to think ourselves safe in him, *Pr*. xviii. 10. 3. That his case, having much in it of difficulty, both in respect of duty and in respect of prudence, he might be under a Divine conduct: "Lord, lead me, and guide me," ver. 3. So order my steps, so order my spirit, that I may never do any thing unlawful and unjustifiable, against my conscience; or unwise and indiscreet, against my interest. They that resolve to follow God's direction may in faith pray for it. 4. That his enemies being very crafty as well as very spiteful, God would frustrate and baffle their designs against him; ver. 4, "Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me," and keep me from the sin, the trouble, the death, they aim to entrap me in.

Secondly. In this prayer he gives glory to God by a repeated profession of his confidence in him and dependence on him. This encouraged his prayers, and qualified him for the mercies he prayed for; ver. 1, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust," and not in myself, or any sufficiency of my own, or in any creature; "let me never be ashamed," that is, let me not be disappointed of any of that good which thou hast promised me, and which therefore I have promised myself in thee.

1. He had chosen God for his protector, and God had, by his promise, undertaken to be so; ver. 3, "Thou art my rock and my fortress," by thy covenant with me, and my believing consent to that covenant; therefore, be my strong rock, ver. 2. They that have in sincerity avouched the Lord for theirs may expect the benefit of his being so, for God's relations to us carry with them both name and thing. "Thou art my strength," ver. 4. If God be our strength, we may hope that he will both put his strength in us and put forth his strength for us.

2. He gave up his soul in a special manner to him; ver. 5, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit." 1st. If David here looks upon himself as a dying man, by these words he resigns his departing soul to God who gave it, and to whom at death the spirit returns. Men can but kill the body; but I trust in God to "redeem my soul from the power of the grave," *Ps*. xlix. 15. He is willing to die if God will have it so; but let my soul fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great. With these words our Lord Jesus yielded up the ghost upon the cross, and made his soul an offering, a freewill offering for sin, voluntarily laying down his life a ransom. By Stephen's example we are taught, in our dying moments, to eye Christ at God's right hand, and to commit our spirits to him, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." But, 2nd. David is here to be looked upon as a man in distress and trouble. And, *First*. His great care

is about his soul, his spirit, his better part. Note, Our outward afflictions should increase our concern for our souls. Many think while they are perplexed about their worldly affairs, and Providence multiplies their cares about them, they may be excused if they neglect their souls; whereas, the greater hazard our lives and secular interests lie at, the more we are concerned to look to our souls, that, though the outward man perish, the inward man may suffer no damage, 2 *Cor.* iv. 16; and that we may keep possession of our souls when we can keep possession of nothing else, *Lu.* xxi. 19. *Secondly.* He thinks the best he can do for his soul is to commit it into the hand of God, and lodge that great trust with him. He had prayed, ver. 4, to be plucked out of the net of outward trouble; but as not insisting upon that, God's will be done, he presently lets fall that petition, and commits the spirit, the inward man, into God's hand: Lord, however it goes with me as to my body, let it go well with my soul. Note, It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us solemnly to commit our spirits into the hands of God, to be sanctified by his grace, devoted to his honour, employed in his service, and fitted for his kingdom. That which encourageth us to commit our spirits into the hand of God is, that he hath not only created, but redeemed them; the particular redemptions of the Old Testament church, and the Old Testament saints, were typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, *Gen.* xlviii. 16. The redemption of the soul is so precious that it must have ceased for ever if Christ had not undertaken it; but by redeeming our souls he has not only acquired an additional right and title to them, which obligeth us to commit them to him as his own, but hath shewed the extraordinary kindness and concern he hath for them, which encourageth us to commit them to him to be preserved to his heavenly kingdom, 2 *Tim.* i. 12. "Thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth:" redeemed it according to a promise which thou wilt be true to.

3. He disclaimed all confederacy with those that made an arm of flesh their confidence; ver. 6, "I have hated them that regard lying vanities." Idolaters, (so some,) who expect aid from false gods, which are vanity and a lie; astrologers, and those that give heed to them, (so others.) David abhorred the use of enchantments and divinations; consulted not, nor ever took notice of the flight of birds, or entrails of beasts. Good omens or bad omens, they are lying vanities; and he not only did not regard them himself, but hated the wickedness of those that did. He trusted in God only, and not in any creature; his interest in the court or country, his retreats or strongholds, even Goliath's sword itself, these were lying vanities, which he could not depend upon, but trusted in the Lord only: see *Ps.* xl. 4; *Jer.* xvii. 5.

4. He comforted himself with his hope in God, and made himself not only easy, but cheerful with it, ver. 7. Having relied on God's mercy, he will be glad and rejoice in it. And those know not how to value their hope in God who cannot find joy enough in that hope to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs.

5. He encouraged himself in this hope with the experiences he had had of late and formerly of God's goodness to him, which he mentions to the glory of God. He that has delivered, doth and will. 1st. God had taken notice of his afflictions, and all the circumstances of them. "Thou hast considered my trouble," with wisdom to suit relief to it; with condescension and compassion, regarding the low estate of thy servant. 2nd. He had observed the temper of his spirit, and the workings of his heart under his afflictions; "Thou hast known my soul in adversities," with a tender concern and care for it. God's eye is upon our souls when we are in trouble, to see whether they be humbled for sin, submissive to the will of God, and bettered by the affliction. If the soul, when cast down under affliction has been lifted up to him in true devotion, he knows it. 3rd. He had rescued him out of the hands of Saul, when he had him safe enough in Keilah; 1 *Sam.* xxxiii. 7, "Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy," but set me at liberty, in a large room, where I may shift for my own safety, ver. 8. Christ's using these words, ver. 5, upon the cross, may warrant us to apply all this to Christ, who trusted in his Father, and was supported and delivered by him, and, because he humbled himself, highly exalted; which it is proper to think of when we sing these verses, as also therein to acknowledge the experience we have had of God's gracious presence with us in our troubles, and to encourage ourselves to trust in him for the future.

9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble:
Mine eye is consumed with grief,
Yea, my soul and my belly.
10 For my life is spent with grief,
And my years with sighing:
My strength faileth because of mine iniquity,
And my bones are consumed.
11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies,
But especially among my neighbours,
And a fear to mine acquaintance:
They that did see me without fled from me.
12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind:
I am like a broken vessel.
13 For I have heard the slander of many:
Fear *was* on every side:
While they took counsel together against me,
They devised to take away my life.
14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD:
I said, Thou *art* my God.
15 My times *are* in thy hand:
Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies,
And from them that persecute me.
16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant:
Save me for thy mercies' sake.
17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon [thee:
Let the wicked be ashamed,
And let them be silent in the grave.
18 Let the lying lips be put to silence;
Which speak grievous things proudly
And contemptuously against the righteous.

In the foregoing verses David had appealed to God's righteousness, and pleaded his relation to him and dependence on him; here he appeals to his mercy, and pleads the greatness of his misery, which made his case the proper object of that mercy. Observe,

First. The complaint he makes of his trouble and distress; ver. 9, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble," and need thy mercy. The remembrance he makes of his condition is not much unlike some even of Job's complaints.

1. His troubles had fixed a very deep impression upon his mind, and made him a man of sorrows. So great was his grief, that his very soul was consumed with it, and his life spent with it, and he was continually sighing, ver. 9, 10. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was intimately acquainted with grief, and often in tears. We may guess by David's complexion, which was ruddy and sanguine, by his genius for music, and by his daring enterprises in his early days, that his natural temper was both cheerful and stout, that he was apt enough to be merry, and not at all to lay trouble to his heart; and yet here we see what he is brought to: he has almost wept out his eyes, and sighed away his breath. Let those that are airy and gay take heed of running into extremes, and never set sorrow at defiance; God can find out ways to make them melancholy if they will not otherwise learn to be serious.

2. His body was affected with the sorrows of his mind; ver. 10, "My strength fails, my bones are consumed," and all "because of mine iniquity." As to Saul, and the quarrel he had with him, he could confidently insist upon his righteousness; but, as it was an affliction God laid upon him, he owns he had deserved it, and freely confesseth his iniquity to have been the procuring cause of all his trouble; and the sense of sin touched him to the quick, and wasted him more than all his calamities.

3. His friends were unkind, and became shy of him. He was a fear to his acquaintance; when they saw him they fled from him, ver. 11. They durst not harbour him, not give him any assistance, not shew him any countenance, not so much as be seen in his company, for fear of being brought into trouble by it, now Saul had proclaimed him traitor, and outlawed him. They saw how dear Ahimelech the priest had paid for aiding and abetting him, though ignorantly; and therefore, though they could not but own he had a great deal of wrong done him, yet they had not the courage to appear for him. He was forgotten by them as a dead man out of mind, ver. 12, and looked upon with contempt as a broken vessel. They that shewed him all possible respects when he was in honour at court, now he was fallen into disgrace, though unjustly, were strange to him. Such swallow friends the world is full of, that are gone in winter. Let those that fall on the losing side not think it strange if they be thus deserted, but make sure a Friend in heaven that will not fail them, and make use of him.

4. His enemies were unjust in their censures of him. They would not have persecuted him as they did, if they had not first represented him as an ill man; he was a reproach among all his enemies, but especially among his neighbours, ver. 11. Those that had been the witnesses of his integrity, and could not but be convinced in their consciences that he was an honest man, yet were the most forward to represent him quite otherwise, that they might curry favour with Saul. Thus he heard the slander of many: every one had a stone to throw at him, because fear was on every side; that is, they durst not do otherwise, for he that would not join with his neighbours to abuse David was looked upon as disaffected to Saul. Thus the best of men have been put under the worst characters by those that resolved to give them the worst treatment.

5. His life was aimed at, and he went in continual peril of it. That fear was on every side, and he knew that, whatever counsel his enemies took against him, the design was not to take away his liberty, but to take away his life, ver. 13; a life so valuable, so useful, to the good services of which all Israel owed so much, and which was never forfeited. Thus in all the plots of the Pharisees and Herodians against Christ, still the design was to take away his life, such is the enmity and cruelty of the serpent's seed.

Secondly. His confidence in God in the midst of these troubles. Every thing looked black and dismal round about him, and threatened to drive him to despair; "But I trusted in thee, O Lord," ver. 14, and that kept me from sinking. His enemies robbed him of his reputation among men, but they could not rob him of his comfort in God, because they could not drive him from his confidence in God. Two things he comforted himself with in his straits, and he went to God and pleaded them with him: 1. "Thou art my God;" that is, I have chosen thee for mine, and thou hast promised to be mine. And if he be ours, and we can by faith call him so, it is enough, when we can call nothing else ours. "Thou art my God," and therefore to whom shall I go for relief but to thee? They need not be straitened in their prayers who can plead this; for if God undertake to be our God he will do that for us which will answer the compass and vast extent of that engagement. 2. "My times are in thy hand." Join this with the former, and it makes the comfort complete. If God have our times in his hand, he can help us; and if he be our God, he will help us, and then what can discourage us? It is a great support to those who have God for their God, that their times are in his hand, and he will be sure to order and dispose of them for the best, to all those who commit their spirits also into his hand, to suit them to their times, as David here, ver. 5. The time of life is in God's hands, to lengthen or shorten, embitter or sweeten, as he pleaseth, according to the counsel of his will. Our times, that is, all events that are concerning us, and the timing of them, these are at God's dispose. They are not in our own hands; for the way of man is not in himself, not in our friends' hands, nor in our enemies' hands, but in God's, every man's judgment proceedeth from him. David doth not in his prayers prescribe to God, but subscribe to him, "Lord, my times are in thy hand," and I am well pleased that they are so, they could not be in a better hand. "Thy will be done."

Thirdly. His petitions to God. In this faith and confidence,

1. He prays that God would deliver him out of the hand of his enemies, ver. 15, and save him, ver. 16, and this for his mercies' sake, and not for any merit of his own. Our opportunities are in God's hand, (so some read it,) and therefore he knows how to choose the best and fittest time for our deliverance, and we must be willing to wait that time. When David had Saul at his mercy in the cave, those about him said, This is the time in which God will deliver thee, 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 4. No, saith David, the time is not come for my deliverance, till it can be wrought without sin, and I will wait for that time; or it is God's time, and that is the best time.

2. That God would give him the comfort of his favour in the meantime; ver. 16, "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." Let me have the comfortable tokens and evidences of thy favour to me, and that shall put gladness in my heart in the midst of all my griefs.

3. That his prayers to God might be answered, and his hopes in God accomplished; ver. 17, "Let me not be ashamed" of my hopes and prayers, "for I

have called upon thee," who never saidst to thy people, Seek in vain, and hope in vain.

4. That shame and silence might be the portion of wicked people, and particularly of his enemies. They were confident of their success against David, and that they should run him down and ruin him. Lord, saith he, "let them be made ashamed" of that confidence by the disappointment of their expectations; as those that opposed the building of the wall about Jerusalem, when it was finished, were much cast down in their own eyes, *Neh.* vi. 16. "Let them be silent in the grave." Note, Death will silence the rage and clamour of cruel persecutors whom reason would not silence. In the grave "the wicked cease from troubling." Particularly he prays for, that is, he prophesies, the silencing of those that reproach and calumniate the people of God; ver. 18, "Let lying lips be put to silence, that speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous." This is a very good prayer, 1st. Which we have often occasion to put up to God; for they that set their mouth against the heavens, commonly fall foul on the heirs of heaven. Religion, and the strict and serious professors of it, are every where spoken against, *First.* With a great deal of malice. They speak grievous things, on purpose to vex them, and hoping with what they say to do them a real mischief. They speak hard things, (so the word is,) which bear hard upon them, and by which they hope to fasten indelible characters of infamy upon them. *Secondly.* With a great deal of falsehood. They are lying lips, taught by the father of lies, and serving his interest. *Thirdly.* With a great deal of scorn and disdain. They speak "proudly and contemptuously," as if the righteous, whom God has honoured, were the most despicable people in the world, and not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock. One would think they thought it no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it may but serve to expose a good man either to hatred or contempt. "Hear, O our God, for we are despised." 2nd. We may pray it in faith; for these lying lips shall be put to silence. God has many ways of doing it. Sometimes he convinceth the consciences of those that reproach his people, and turns their hearts; sometimes by his providence he visibly confutes their calumnies, and brings forth the righteousness of his people as the light. However, there is a day coming when God will convince ungodly sinners of the falsehood of all the hard speeches they have spoken against his people, and will execute judgment upon them, *Jude* 14, 15. Then shall this prayer be fully answered, and to that day we should have an eye in the singing of it; engaging ourselves likewise by well-doing, if possible, to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 *Pet.* ii. 15.

19 *Oh* how great *is* thy goodness,
Which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee;
Which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee
before the sons of men!
20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence
From the pride of man:
Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion
From the strife of tongues.
21 Blessed *be* the LORD:
For he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness
In a strong city.
22 For I said in my haste,
I am cut off from before thine eyes:
Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications
When I cried unto thee.
23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints:
For the LORD preserveth the faithful,
And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.
24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart,
All ye that hope in the LORD.

We have three things in these verses:

First. The believing acknowledgment which David makes of God's goodness to his people in general, ver. 19, 20.

1. God is good to all, but he is in a special manner good to Israel. His goodness to them is wonderful, and will be to eternity matter of admiration. "O how great is thy goodness!" How profound are the counsels of it; how rich are the treasures of it; how free and extensive are the communications of it! Those very persons whom men load with slanders God loads with benefits and honours. Those who are interested in this goodness are described to be such as fear God, and trust in him, that stand in awe of his greatness, and rely on his grace. This goodness is said to be laid up for them, and wrought for them. 1st. There is goodness laid up for them in the other world, an inheritance reserved in heaven, 1 *Pet.* i. 4; and there is a goodness wrought for them in this world, goodness wrought in them. There is enough in God's goodness both for the portion and inheritance of all his children, when they come to their full age, and for their maintenance and education during their minority. There is enough in bank, and enough in hand. 2nd. This goodness is laid up in his promise for all that fear God, to whom assurance is given that they shall want no good thing. But it is wrought in the actual performance of the promise for those that trust in him, that is, that by faith take hold of the promise, put it in suit, and draw out to themselves the benefit and comfort of it. If what is laid up for us in the treasures of the everlasting covenant be not wrought for us, it is our own fault, because we do not believe. But those that trust in God, as they have the comfort of his goodness in their own bosoms, so they have the credit of it, (and the credit of an estate goes far with some;) it is wrought for them before the sons of men. God's goodness to them puts an honour upon them, and rolls away their reproach; "for all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed," *Isa.* lxi. 9.

2. God preserveth man and beast; but he is in a special manner the protector of his own people, ver. 20. "Thou shalt hide them." As his goodness is hid and reserved for them, so they are hid and preserved for it. The saints are God's hidden ones. See here, 1st. The danger they are in, which ariseth from the pride of man, and from the strife of tongues. Proud men insult over them, and would trample on them, and tread them down; contentious men pick quarrels with them; and when tongues are at strife good people oftentimes go by the worst. The pride of man endangers their liberty. The strife of tongues in perverse disputings endangers truth. But, 2nd. See the defence they are under; "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence;" in a pavilion. God's providence shall keep them safe from the malice of their enemies. He has many ways of sheltering them. When Baruch and Jeremiah were sought for, the Lord hid them, *Jer.* xxxvi. 26. God's grace shall keep them safe from the evil of the judgments that are abroad; to them they have no sting: they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, for there is no anger at them. His comforts shall keep them easy and cheerful; and his sanctuary, where they have communion with him, shelters them from the fiery darts of terror and temptation; and the mansions in his house above shall be shortly, shall be eternally, their hiding-place from all danger and fear.

Secondly. The thankful returns which David makes for God's goodness to him in particular, ver. 21, 22. Having admired God's goodness to all the saints, he here owns how good he had found him.

1. "Without were fightings;" but God had wonderfully preserved his life. "He hath shewed me his marvellous lovingkindness;" that is, he hath given me an instance of his care of me, and favour to me, beyond what I could have expected. God's lovingkindness to his people, all things considered, is wonderful; but some instances of it, even in this world, are in a special manner marvellous in their eyes; as this here, when God preserved David from the sword of Saul in caves and woods, as safe as if he had been in a strong city. In Keilah, that strong city, God shewed him great mercy, both in making him an instrument to rescue the inhabitants out of the hands of the Philistines, and then in rescuing him from the same men who would have ungratefully delivered him up into the hand of Saul, 1 *Sam.* xxiii. 5, 12. This was marvellous lovingkindness indeed, upon which he writes with wonder and thankfulness, "Blessed be the Lord." Special preservations call for particular thanksgivings.

2. "Within were fears;" but God was better to him than his fears, ver. 22. He here keeps an account, 1st. Of his own folly in distrusting God, which he acknowledgeth to his shame, that though he had express promises to build upon, and great experience of God's care concerning him in many straits, yet he had entertained this hard and jealous thought of God, and could not forbear telling it him to his face, "I am cut off from before thine eyes;" that is, thou hast quite forsaken me, and I must not expect to be looked upon or regarded by thee any more. "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul," and so be cut off before thine eyes, be ruined while thou lookest on, 1 *Sam.* xxvii. 1. This he said 'in his flight,' (so some read it,) which notes the distress of his affairs. Saul was just at his back, and ready to seize him, which made the temptation strong. "In his haste," (so we read it,) which notes the disturbance and discomposure of his mind, which made the temptation surprising, so that it found him off his guard. Note, It is a common thing to speak amiss when we speak in haste, and without consideration; but what we speak amiss in haste we must repent of at leisure, particularly that which we have spoken distrustfully of God. 2nd. Of God's wonderful goodness to him notwithstanding. Though his faith failed, God's promise did not: "Thou heardest the voice of my supplication" for all this. He mentions his own unbelief as a foil to God's fidelity, serving to make his lovingkindness the more marvellous, the more illustrious. When we have thus distrusted God, he might justly have taken us at our word, and brought our fears upon us, as he did on Israel, *Num.* xiv. 28; *Isa.* lxvi. 4. But he has pitied and pardoned us, and our unbelief has not made his promise and grace of none effect; for he knows our frame.

Thirdly. The exhortation and encouragement which he hereupon gives to all the saints, ver. 23, 24.

1. He would have them set their love on God; ver. 23, "O love the Lord, all ye his saints." Those that have their own hearts full of love to God cannot but desire that others also may be in love with him; for in his favour there is no need to fear a rival. It is the character of the saints that they do love God; and yet they must be still called upon to love hm, to love him more, and love him better, and give proofs of their love. We must love him not only for his goodness, because he "preserveth the faithful," but for his justice, because he "plentifully rewardeth the proud doer" (who would ruin those whom he preserves) according to their pride. Some take it in a good sense; 'He plentifully rewardeth the magnificent' (or excellent) 'doer,' that is daringly good, whose heart, like Jehoshaphat's, is "lifted up in the ways of the Lord." He rewardeth him that doth well, but plentifully rewardeth him that doth excellently well.

2. He would have them set their hope in God; ver. 24, "Be of good courage," have a good heart on it, whatever difficulties or dangers you may meet with; the God you trust in shall by that trust strengthen your heart. They that hope in God have reason to be of good courage, and let their hearts be strong, for, as nothing truly evil can befall them, so nothing truly good for them shall be wanting to them.

In singing this, we should animate ourselves and one another to proceed and persevere in our Christian course, whatever threatens us, and whoever frowns upon us.

PSALM XXXII.

This psalm, though it speak not of Christ, as many of the psalms hitherto we have met with have done, yet it has a great deal of gospel in it. The apostle tells us, that David in this psalm "describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," *Rom.* iv. 6. We have here a summary, I. Of gospel grace in the pardon of sin, ver. 1, 2; in Divine protection, ver. 7; and Divine conduct, ver. 8. II. Of gospel duty; to confess sin, ver. 3—5; to pray, ver. 6; to govern ourselves well, ver. 9, 10; and to rejoice in God, ver. 11. And the way to obtain these privileges is to make conscience of these duties, which we ought to think of,—of the former for our comfort, of the latter for our quickening,—when we sing this psalm. Grotius thinks it was designed to be sung on the day of atonement.

A Psalm of David, Maschil.

BLESSED *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven,
Whose sin *is* covered. [iniquity,
2 Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not
And in whose spirit *there is* no guile.
3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
Through my roaring all the day long.
4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:
My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.
5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee,
And mine iniquity have I not hid.
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;

And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.
6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee
In a time when thou mayest be found:
Surely in the floods of great waters
They shall not come nigh unto him.

This psalm is entitled Maschil, which some take to be only the name of the tune to which it was set and was to be sung. But others think it is significant. Our margin reads it, 'A psalm of David giving instruction.' And there is nothing in which we have more need of instruction than in the nature of true blessedness, wherein it consists, and the way that leads to it—what we must do that we may be happy. There are divers things in which these verses instruct us. In general, we are here taught that our happiness consists in the favour and grace of God, and not in the wealth of this world; in spiritual blessings, and not the good things of this world. When David saith, *Ps.* i. 1, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly;" and, *Ps.* cxix. 1, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way," the meaning is, this is the character of the blessed man, and he that has not this character cannot expect to be happy; but when it is here said, "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven," the meaning is, this is the ground of his blessedness, this is that fundamental privilege from which all the other ingredients of his blessedness flow. In particular, we are here instructed,

First. Concerning the nature of the pardon of sin. This is that we all need, and are undone without, and we are therefore concerned to be very solicitous and inquisitive about it. 1. It is the forgiving of transgression. Sin is the transgression of the law: upon our repentance the transgression is forgiven; that is, the obligation to punishment, which we lay under by virtue of the sentence of the law, is vacated and cancelled; it is lifted off, (so some read it,) that by the pardon of it we may be eased of a burthen, a heavy burthen, like a load on the back that makes us stoop, or a load on the stomach that makes us sick, or a load on the spirits that makes us sink. The remission of sins gives rest and relief to those that were weary and heavy laden, *Mat.* xi. 28. 2. It is the covering of sin, as nakedness is covered, that it may not appear to our shame, *Rev.* iii. 18. One of the first symptoms of guilt in our first parents was blushing at their own nakedness. Sin makes us loathsome in the sight of God, and utterly unfit for communion with him, and when conscience is awakened it makes us loathsome to ourselves too; but when it is pardoned, it is covered with the robe of Christ's righteousness, like the coats of skins wherewith God clothed Adam and Eve, (an emblem of the remission of sins,) so that God is no longer displeased with us, but perfectly reconciled. They are not covered from us; no, "my sin is ever before me;" nor covered from God's omniscience, but from his vindictive justice. When he pardons sin he remembers it no more, he casts it behind his back; it shall be sought for, and not found. And the sinner, being thus reconciled to God, begins to be reconciled to himself. 3. It is the not imputing of iniquity, not laying it to the sinner's charge, not proceeding against him for it, according to the strictness of the law, not dealing with him as he deserves. The righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, and we made the righteousness of God in him, our iniquity is not imputed, God having laid upon him the iniquity of us all, and made him sin for us. Observe, It is God's act not to impute iniquity; for he is the Judge. "It is God that justifieth."

Secondly. Concerning the character of those whose sins are pardoned: "in whose spirit there is no guile." He doth not say there is no guilt, (for who is there that lives and sins not?) but no guile; that doth not dissemble with God in his professions of repentance and faith, and in his prayers for peace or pardon; but in all these is sincere, and means as he saith; that doth not repent with a purpose to sin again, and then sin with a purpose to repent again, as a learned interpreter glosseth upon it. Those that design honestly, that are really what they profess to be, those are the Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

Thirdly. Concerning the happiness of a justified state: "Blessednesses are to the man whose iniquity is forgiven," all manner of blessings, sufficient to make him completely blessed. That is taken away which incurred the curse, and obstructed the blessing, and then God will pour out blessings till there be no room to receive them. The forgiveness of sin is that article of the covenant which is the reason and ground of all the rest: "for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," *Heb.* viii. 12.

Fourthly. Concerning the uncomfortable condition of an unhumbled sinner, that sees his guilt, but is not yet brought to make a penitent confession of it. This David describes very pathetically from his own sad experience; ver. 3, 4, "While I kept silence, my bones waxed old." Those may be said to keep silence that stifle their convictions, that when they cannot but see the evil of sin, and their danger by reason of it, ease themselves by not thinking of it and diverting their minds to something else, as Cain to the building of a city; that cry not when God binds them; that will not unburthen their consciences by a penitent confession, nor seek for peace, as they ought, by faithful and fervent prayer; and that choose rather to pine away in their iniquities, than to take the method which God has appointed of finding rest for their souls. Let such expect that their smothered convictions will be a fire in their bones, and the wounds of sin not opened will fester and grow intolerably painful. If conscience be seared, the case is so much the more dangerous; but if it be startled and awake, it will be heard; the hand of Divine wrath will be felt lying heavy upon the soul, and the anguish of the spirit will affect the body. To that degree David experienced it, so that when he was young his bones waxed old, and even his silence made him roar all the day long, as if he had been under some grievous pain and distemper of body; when really the cause of all his uneasiness was the struggle he felt in his own bosom between his convictions and his corruptions. Note, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper." Some inward trouble is required in repentance, but there is much worse in impenitency.

Fifthly. Concerning the true and only way to peace of conscience. We are here taught to confess our sins, that they may be forgiven; to declare, that we may be justified. This course David took: "I acknowledged my sin unto thee," and no longer hide mine iniquity, ver. 5. Note, Those that would have the comfort of the pardon of their sins, must take shame to themselves by a penitent confession of them. We must confess the fact of sin, and be particular in it,—thus and thus have I done; confess the fault of sin, aggravate it, and lay load upon ourselves for it,—I have done very wickedly; confess the justice of the punishment we have been under for it,—"The Lord is just in all that is brought upon us;" and that we deserve much worse,—"I am no more worthy to be called thy son." We must confess sin with shame and holy blushing, with fear and holy trembling.

Sixthly. Concerning God's readiness to pardon sin to those who truly repent of it. "I said, I will confess;" that is, I sincerely resolved upon it, hesitated no longer, but came to a point, that I would make a free and ingenuous confession of my sins, and immediately "thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," and gavest me the comfort of the pardon in mine own conscience; presently I found rest to my soul. Note, God is more ready to pardon sin, upon our repentance, than we are to repent in order to the obtaining of pardon. It was with much ado that David was here brought to confess his sins: he was put to the rack before he was brought to it, ver. 3, 4; he held out long, and would not surrender till it came to the last extremity; but when he did offer to surrender, see how quickly, how easily, he obtained good terms! I did but say, I will confess, and thou forgavest. Thus the father of the prodigal saw his returning son "when he was yet afar off," and ran to meet him with the kiss that sealed his pardon. What an encouragement is this to poor penitents, and what an assurance doth it give us, that "if we confess our sins," we shall find God not only "faithful and just," but gracious and kind, "to forgive us our sins!"

Seventhly. Concerning the good use that we are to make of the experience David had had of God's readiness to forgive his sins; ver. 6, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee." Note, 1. All godly people are praying people. As soon as ever Paul was converted, "behold he prays," *Acts* ix. 11. You may as soon find a living man without breath, as a living Christian without prayer. 2. The instructions given us concerning the happiness of those whose sins are pardoned, and the easiness of obtaining the pardon, should engage and encourage us to pray, and particularly to pray, "God be merciful to us sinners." For this shall every one that is well inclined be earnest with God in prayer, and come boldly to the throne of grace, with hopes to obtain mercy, *Heb.* iv. 16. 3. Those that would speed in prayer, must seek the Lord in a time when he will be found. When he doth by his providence call them to seek him, and by his Spirit stir them up to seek him, they must go speedily to seek the Lord, *Zec.* viii. 21, and lose no time, lest death cut them off, and then it will be too late to seek him, *Isa.* lv. 6. "Behold, now is the accepted time," 2 *Cor.* vi. 2. 4. Those that are sincere and abundant in prayer will find the benefit of it when they are in trouble. "Surely in the floods of great waters," which are very threatening, "they shall not come nigh them" to terrify them, or create them any uneasiness, much less shall they overwhelm them. Those that have God "nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for," as all upright, penitent, praying people have, are so guarded, so advanced, that no waters, no, not great waters, no, not floods of them, can come nigh them to hurt them. As the temptations of the wicked one touch them not, 1 *Jno.* v. 18, so neither do the troubles of this evil world; these fiery darts of both kinds drop short of them.

7 Thou *art* my hiding place;
Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; [Selah.
Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.
8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou
I will guide thee with mine eye. [shalt go:
9 Be ye not as the horse,
Or as the mule, *which* have no understanding:
Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,
Lest they come near unto thee.
10 Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked:
But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.
11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous:
And shout for joy, all *ye that are* upright in heart.

David is here improving the experience he had had of the comfort of pardoning mercy.

First. He speaks to God, and professeth his confidence in him and expectation from him, ver. 7; having tasted the sweetness of Divine grace to a penitent sinner, he cannot doubt of the continuance of that grace to a praying saint; and that in that grace he should find both safety and joy. 1. Safety. "Thou art my hiding place;" when by faith I have recourse to thee, I see all the reason in the world to be easy, and to think myself out of the reach of any real evil. "Thou shalt preserve me from trouble," from the sting of it, and from the strokes of it, as far as is good for me. Thou shalt preserve me from such trouble as I was in while I kept silence, ver. 3. When God has pardoned our sins, if he leave us to ourselves, we shall soon run as far in debt again as ever, and plunge ourselves again into the same gulf; and, therefore, when we have received the comfort of our remission, we must fly to the grace of God to be preserved from returning to folly again, and having our hearts again hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. God keeps his people from trouble by keeping them from sin. 2. Joy. "Thou shalt" not only deliver me, but "compass me about with songs of deliverance;" which way soever I look I shall see occasion to rejoice and to praise God, and my friends also shall compass me about in the great congregation, to join with me in songs of praise: they shall join their songs of deliverance with me. As every one that is godly shall pray with me, so they shall give thanks with me.

Secondly. He turns his speech to the children of men; being himself converted, he doth what he can to strengthen his brethren, *Lu.* xxii. 32; ver. 8, "I will instruct thee," whoever thou art that desirest instruction, "and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go." Thus, in another of his penitential psalms, he resolves that, when God had restored to him the joy of his salvation, he would teach transgressors his ways, and do what he could to convert sinners to God, as well as to comfort those that were converted, *Ps.* li. 12, 13; when Solomon became a penitent, he presently became a preacher, *Eccl.* i. 1. Those are best able to teach others the grace of God who have themselves had the experience of it; and those who are themselves taught of God ought to tell others what he has done for their souls, *Ps.* lxvi. 16, and so teach them. "I will guide thee with mine eye." Some apply it to God's conduct and direction. He teacheth us by his word, and guides us with his eye; that is, by the secret intimations of his will in the hints and turns of providence, which he enables his people to understand and take direction from; as a master makes a servant know his mind by a wink of his eye. When Christ turned and looked upon Peter, he guided him with his eye. But it is rather to be taken as David's promise to those who sat under his instruction, his own children and family especially. 'I will counsel thee, mine eye shall be upon thee,' so the margin reads it. I will give thee the best counsel I can, and then observe whether thou takest it or no. Those that are taught in the word should be under the constant inspection of those that teach them. Spiritual guides must be overseers.

In this application of the foregoing doctrine concerning the blessedness of those whose sins are pardoned, here is a word to sinners, and a word to saints; and this is rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to each their portion.

1. Here is a word of caution to sinners, and a good reason given for it. 1st.

The caution is, not to be unruly and ungovernable: ver. 9, "Be ye not as the horse, or the mule, which have no understanding." When the psalmist would reproach himself for the sins he repented of, he compared himself to a beast before God, "So foolish have I been, and ignorant," *Ps.* lxxiii. 23; and therefore warns others not to be so. It is our honour and happiness that we have understanding, that we are capable of being governed by reason, and of reasoning with ourselves. Let us, therefore, use the faculties we have, and act rationally. The horse and mule must be managed with bit and bridle, lest they come near to us to do us a mischief; or, as some read it, that they may come near to us, to do us service, that they may obey us, *Jas.* iii. 3. Let us not be like them; that is, let us not be hurried by appetite and passion at any time, to go contrary to the dictates of right reason, and to our true interest. If sinners would be governed and determined by these, they would soon become saints, and would not go a step farther in their sinful courses. Where there is renewing grace, there is no need of the bit and bridle of restraining grace. 2nd. The reason for this caution is, because the way of sin, which we would persuade you to forsake, will certainly end in sorrow; ver. 10, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked," which will not only spoil their vain and carnal mirth, and put an end to it, but will make them pay dear for it. Sin will have sorrow, if not repented of, everlasting sorrow. It was part of the sentence, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrows." Be wise for yourselves, therefore, and turn from your wickedness, that you may prevent those sorrows, those many sorrows.

2. Here is a word of comfort to saints, and a good reason given for that too. 1st. They are assured that if they will but trust in the Lord, and keep close to him, mercy shall compass them about on every side, ver. 10, so that they shall not depart from God, for that mercy shall keep them in, nor shall any real evil break in upon them, for that mercy shall keep it out. 2nd. They are, therefore, commanded to be glad in the Lord, and to rejoice in him, to that degree, as even to shout for joy, ver. 11. Let them be so transported with this holy joy as not to be able to contain themselves, and let them affect others with it, that they also may see that a life of communion with God is the most pleasant and comfortable life we can live in this world. This is that present bliss which the upright in heart, and they only, are entitled to and qualified for.

PSALM XXXIII.

This is a psalm of praise; it is probable David was the penman of it, but we are not told so, because God would have us look above the penmen of sacred writ, to that blessed Spirit that moved and guided them. The psalmist in this psalm, I. Calls upon the righteous to praise God, ver. 1—3. II. Furnisheth us with matter for praise. We must praise God, 1. For his justice, goodness, and truth, appearing in his word, and in all his works, ver. 4, 5. 2. For his power appearing in the work of creation, ver. 6—9. 3. For the sovereignty of his providence in the government of the world, ver. 10, 11; and again, ver. 13—17. 4. For the peculiar favour which he bears to his own chosen people, which encourageth them to trust in him, ver. 13; and again, ver. 18—22. We need not be far to seek for proper thoughts in singing this psalm, which so naturally speaks the pious affections of a devout soul towards God.

REJOICE in the LORD, O ye righteous:
For praise is comely for the upright.
2 Praise the LORD with harp:
Sing unto him with the psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings.
3 Sing unto him a new song;
Play skilfully with a loud noise.
4 For the word of the LORD *is* right;
And all his works *are done* in truth.
5 He loveth righteousness and judgment:
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.
6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made;
And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.
7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap:
He layeth up the depth in storehouses.
8 Let all the earth fear the LORD:
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
9 For he spake, and it was *done;*
He commanded, and it stood fast.
10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought:
He maketh the devices of the people of none effect.
11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever,
The thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Four things the psalmist expresseth in these verses:

First. The great desire he had that God might be praised. He did not think he did it so well himself, but that he wished others also might be employed in this work; the more the better in this concert, it is the liker to heaven. 1. Holy joy is the heart and soul of praise, and that is here pressed upon all good people; ver. 1, "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous," so the foregoing psalm concluded, and so this begins; for all our religious exercises should both begin and end with a holy complacency and triumph in God as the best of beings and best of friends. 2. Thankful praise is the breath and language of holy joy; and that also is here required of us, ver. 2, "Praise the Lord." Speak well of him, and give him the glory due to his name. 3. Religious songs are the proper expressions of thankful praise. Those are here required; ver. 3, "Sing unto him a new song," the best you have, not that which by frequent use is worn threadbare; but that which, being new, is most likely to move the affections. A new song for new mercies, and upon every new occasion, for those compassions which are new every morning. Music was then used by the appointment of David, with the temple songs, that they might be the better sung; and this also is here called for, ver. 2, "Sing unto him with the psaltery." Here is, 1st. A good rule for this duty; Do it "skilfully, and with a loud noise;" let it have the best both of head and heart; let it be done intelligently, and with a clear head; affectionately, and with a warm heart. 2nd. A good reason for this duty; "for praise is comely for the upright." It is greatly well-pleasing to God. The garments of praise add much to the comeliness which God puts upon his people; and it is an excellent ornament to our profession. It becomes the upright, whom God has put so much honour upon, to give honour to him. The upright praise God in a comely manner, for they praise him with their hearts; that is praising him with their glory. Whereas the praises of hypocrites are awkward and uncomely, like a parable in the mouth of fools, *Pr.* xxvi. 7.

Secondly. The high thoughts he had of God and of his infinite perfections, ver. 4, 5. God makes himself known to us, 1. In his Word; here put for all Divine revelation, all that which God at sundry times and in divers manners spake to the children of men; and that is all right; there is nothing amiss in it. His commands exactly agree with the rules of equity, and the eternal reasons of good and evil. His promises are all wise and good, and inviolably sure, and there is no iniquity in his threatenings, but even those are designed for our good, by deterring us from evil. God's word is right, and therefore all our deviations from it are wrong, and we are then in the right when we agree with it. 2. In his works; and those are all done in truth, all according to his counsels, which are called the scriptures of truth, *Dan.* x. 21. The copy in all God's works agrees exactly with the great original, the plan laid in the Eternal Mind, and varies not in the least jot. God has made it to appear in his works, 1st. That he is a God of inflexible justice. He loveth righteousness and judgment. There is nothing but righteousness in the sentence he passeth, and judgment in the execution of it. He never did or can do wrong to any of his creatures, but is always ready to right those that are wronged, and doth it with delight. He takes pleasure in those that are righteous. He is himself "the righteous Lord," and therefore "loveth righteousness." 2nd. That he is a God of inexhaustible bounty. "The earth is full of his goodness," that is, of the proofs and instances of it. The benign influences which the earth receives from above, and the fruits it is thereby enabled to produce, the provision that is made both for man and beast, and the common blessings with which all the nations of the earth are blessed, plainly speak that "the earth is full of his goodness;" the darkest, the coldest, the hottest, and the most dry and desert part of it not excepted. What pity is it that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness, should be so empty of his praises; and that, of the multitudes that live upon his bounty, there are so few that live to his glory!

Thirdly. The conviction he was under of the almighty power of God, evidenced in the creation of the world. We believe in God, and therefore we praise him as 'the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth;' so we are here taught to praise him.

Observe, 1. How God made the world, and brought all things into being. 1st. How easily. All things were made by the word of the Lord, and by the breath of his mouth; Christ is the Word, the Spirit is the breath, so that God the Father made the world, as he rules it and redeems it, by his Son and Spirit. "He spake and he commanded," ver. 9, and that was enough, there needed no more. With men, saying and doing are two things; but it is not so with God: by the word and Spirit of God as the world was made, so was man, that little world. God said, "Let us make man; and he breathed into him the breath of life." By the word and Spirit the church is built, that new world, and grace wrought in the soul, that new man, that new creation. What cannot that power do which with a word made a world! 2nd. How effectually it was done, "and it stood fast." What God doth, he doth to purpose; he doth it, and it stands fast, ver. 9. Whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever, *Eccl.* iii. 14. It is by virtue of that command to stand fast that they continue to this day according to God's ordinance, *Ps.* cxix. 91.

2. What he made. He made all things; but notice is here taken, 1st. Of the heavens, and the host of them, ver. 6. The visible heavens, and the sun, moon, and stars, their hosts; the highest heavens, and the angels their hosts. 2nd. Of the waters, and the treasures of them, ver. 7. The earth was at first covered with the water, and being heavier must of course subside and sink under it; but to shew from the very first that the God of nature is not tied to the ordinary method of nature, and the usual operations of his powers, with a word's speaking he "gathered the waters together on a heap," that the dry land might appear, yet left them not to continue on a heap, but "laid up the depth in storehouses;" not only in the flats where the seas make their beds, and in which they are locked up by the sand on the shore as in storehouses, but in secret subterraneous caverns, where they are hid from the eyes of all living, but were reserved as in a storehouse for that day when those fountains of the great deep were to be broken up; and they are still laid up there in store, for what use the great Master of the house knows best.

3. What use is to be made of this; ver. 8, "Let all the earth fear the Lord, and stand in awe of him;" that is, let all the children of men worship him, and give glory to him, *Ps.* xcv. 5, 6. The everlasting Gospel gives this as the reason why we must worship God, because he made the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, *Rev.* xiv. 6, 7. Let us all fear him; that is, dread his wrath and displeasure, and be afraid of having him our enemy, and standing it out against him. Let us not dare to offend him who, having this power, no doubt has all power in his hand. It is dangerous being at war with him who has the hosts of heaven for his armies, and the depths of the sea for his magazines; and therefore it is wisdom to desire conditions of peace: see *Jer.* v. 22.

Fourthly. The satisfaction he had in God's sovereignty and dominion, ver. 10, 11. He overrules all the counsels of men, and makes them, contrary to their intention, serviceable to his counsels. Come and see, with an eye of faith, God in the throne, 1. Frustrating the devices of his enemies. "He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought," so that what they imagine against him and his kingdom proves a vain thing, *Ps.* ii. 1; the counsel of Ahithophel is turned into foolishness, Haman's plot baffled. Though the design be laid never so deep, and the hopes raised upon it never so high, yet, if God saith, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass, it is all to no purpose. 2. Fulfilling his own decrees. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever." It is immutable in itself, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? The execution of it may be opposed, but cannot in the least be obstructed by any created power. Through all the revolutions of time God never changeth his measures, but in every event, even that which to us is most surprising, the eternal counsel of God is fulfilled; nor can any thing prevent its being accomplished in its time. With what pleasure to ourselves may we, in singing this, give praise to God! How easy may this thought make us at all times, that God governs the world, that he did it in infinite wisdom before we were born, and will do it when we are silent in the dust!

12 Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD;
And the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.
13 The LORD looketh from heaven;
He beholdeth all the sons of men.
14 From the place of his habitation
He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

15 He fashioneth their hearts alike;
He considereth all their works.
16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host:
A mighty man is not delivered by much strength.
17 An horse *is* a vain thing for safety:
Neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength.
18 Behold, the eye of the LORD *is* upon them that fear him,
Upon them that hope in his mercy;
19 To deliver their soul from death,
And to keep them alive in famine.
20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD:
He *is* our help and our shield.
21 For our heart shall rejoice in him,
Because we have trusted in his holy name.
22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us,
According as we hope in thee.

We are here taught to give God the glory,

First. Of his common providence towards all the children of men. Though he has endued man with understanding and freedom of will, yet he reserves to himself the government of him, and even of those very faculties by which he is qualified to govern himself.

1. The children of men are all under his eye, even their hearts are so; and all the motions and operations of their souls, which none know but they themselves, he knows better than they themselves, ver. 13, 14. Though the residence of God's glory is in the highest heavens, yet from thence he not only has a prospect of all the earth, but a particular inspection of all the inhabitants of the earth. He not only beholdeth them, but he looks upon them, he looks narrowly upon them; so the word here used is sometimes rendered; so narrowly that not the least thought can escape his observation. Atheists think that, because he dwells above in heaven, he cannot, or will not, take notice of what is done here in this lower world; but from thence, as high as it is, he sees us all, and all persons and things are naked and open before him.

2. Their hearts as well as their times are all in his hand. "He fashioneth their hearts." He made them at first, formed the spirit of each man within him, then when he brought him into being. Hence he is called the Father of spirits. And this is a good argument to prove that he perfectly knows them. The artist that made the clock can account for the motions of every wheel. David useth this argument, with application to himself, *Ps.* cxxxix. 1, 14. He still moulds the hearts of men, turns them as the rivers of water which way soever he pleaseth, to serve his own purposes; darkens or enlightens men's understandings, stiffens or bows their wills, according as he is pleased to make use of them. He that fashions men's hearts fashions them alike. It is in hearts as in faces; though there is a great difference, and such a variety as that no two faces are exactly of the same features, nor any two hearts exactly of the same temper, yet there is such a similitude, as that in some things all faces and all hearts agree, "as in water face answers to face," *Pr.* xxvii. 19. 'He fashions them together;' (so some read it;) as the wheels of a watch, though of different shapes, sizes, and motions, yet are all put together to serve one and the same purpose, so the hearts of men and their dispositions, however varying from each other, and seeming to contradict one another, yet are all overruled to serve the Divine purpose, which is one.

3. They, and all they do, are obnoxious to his judgment; for he "considereth all their works;" not only knows them, but weighs them, that he may "render to every man according to his works," in the day, in the world, of retribution, in the judgment, and to eternity.

4. All the powers of the creature have a dependence upon him, and are of no account, of no avail at all, without him, ver. 16, 17. It is much for the honour of God, that not only no force can prevail in opposition to him, but that no force can act but in dependence on him, and by a power derived from him. 1st. The strength of a king is nothing without God. No king is sacred by his royal prerogatives, or the authority with which he is invested; for the powers of that kind that be are ordained of God, and are what he makes them, and no more. David was a king, and a man of war, from his youth, and yet acknowledged God only to be his protector and saviour. 2nd. The strength of an army is nothing without God. "The multitude of an host" cannot secure those under whose command they act, unless God make them a security to them. A great army cannot be sure of victory, for when God pleaseth one shall chase a thousand. 3rd. The strength of a giant is nothing without God. "A mighty man," such as Goliath was, "is not delivered by his much strength," when his day comes to fall; neither the firmness nor activity of his body, neither the stoutness nor resolution of his mind, will stand him any stead, any farther than God is pleased to give him success. Let not the strong man, then, glory in his strength, but let us all strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God; go forth and go on in his strength. 4th. The strength of a horse is nothing without God; ver. 17, "A horse is a vain thing for safety." In war horses were then so highly accounted of, and so much depended on, that God forbade the kings of Israel to multiply horses, *Deu.* xvii. 16, lest they should be tempted to trust to them, and their confidence should thereby be taken off from God. David houghed the horses of the Syrians, 2 *Sam.* viii. 4; here he houghs all the horses in the world, by pronouncing a horse a vain thing for safety in the day of battle. If the war-horse be unruly and ill-managed, he may hurry his rider into danger, instead of carrying him out of danger. If he be killed under him, he may be his death, instead of saving his life. It is, therefore, our interest to make sure God's favour towards us, and then we may be sure of his power engaged for us, and need not fear whatever is against us.

Secondly. We are to give God the glory of his special grace. In the midst of his acknowledgments of God's providence, he pronounceth those blessed that have Jehovah for their God, who governs the world, and has wherewithal to help them in every time of need, while they were miserable who had this and the other Baal for their God, which was so far from being able to hear and help them, that it was itself senseless and helpless; ver. 12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord," even Israel, who had the knowledge of the true God, and were taken into covenant with him, and all others who own God for theirs, and are owned by him; for they also, whatever nation they are of, are of the spiritual seed of Abraham. 1. It is their wisdom that they take the Lord for their God, that they direct their homage and adoration there where it is due, and where the payment of it will not be in vain. 2. It is their happiness that they are the people whom God hath chosen for his own inheritance, whom he is pleased with, and honoured in, and whom he protects and takes care of; whom he cultivates and improves, as a man doth his inheritance, *Deu.* xxxii. 9. Now let us observe here, to the honour of Divine grace,

1st. The regard which God has to his people, ver. 18, 19. God beholds all the sons of men with an eye of observation, but his eye of favour and complacency is upon them that fear him; he looks upon them with delight, as the father on his children, as the bridegroom on his spouse, *Isa.* lxii. 5. While those that depend on arms and armies, on chariots and horses, perish in the disappointment of their expectations, God's people under his protection are safe, for "he shall deliver their soul from death," when there seems to be but a step between them and it. If he do not deliver the body from temporal death, yet he will deliver the soul from spiritual and eternal death; their souls, whatever happens, shall live and praise him, either in this world or in a better. From his bounty they shall be supplied with all necessaries: "he shall keep them alive in famine;" when others die for want, they shall live, which makes it a distinguishing mercy; when visible means fail, God will find out some way or other to supply them. He doth not say he will give them abundance, they have no reason either to desire it or to expect it, but he will keep them alive, they shall not starve; and when destroying judgments are abroad it ought to be reckoned a great favour, for it is a very sensible one, and very obliging, to have our lives given us for a prey. They that have the Lord for their God shall find him their help and their shield, ver. 20. In their difficulties he will assist them, they shall be helped over them, helped through them; in their dangers he will secure them, so that they shall not receive any real damage.

2nd. The regard which God's people have to him, and which we all ought to have in consideration of this. *First.* We must wait for God. We must attend the motions of his providence, and accommodate ourselves to them, and patiently expect the issue of them. Our souls must wait for him, ver. 20. We must not only in word and tongue profess a believing regard to God, but it must be inward and sincere, a secret and silent attendance on him. *Secondly.* We must rely on God, "hope in his mercy," in the goodness of his nature, though we have not an express promise to depend upon. They that fear God and his wrath, must hope in God and his mercy; for there is no flying from God, but by flying to him. These pious dispositions will not only consist together, but befriend each other; a holy fear of God, and yet at the same time a hope in his mercy. This is trusting in his holy name, ver. 21, in all that whereby he has made known himself to us for our encouragement to serve him. *Thirdly.* We must rejoice in God, ver. 21. And those do not truly rest on God, or do not know the unspeakable advantage they have by so doing, who do not rejoice in him at all times; because they that hope in God hope for an eternal fulness of joy in his presence. *Fourthly.* We must seek to him for that mercy which we hope in, ver. 22. Our expectations from God are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage our applications to him; he will be sought unto for that which he has promised, and therefore the psalm concludes with a short but comprehensive prayer, "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us;" let us always have the comfort and benefit of it, not according as we merit from thee, but "according as we hope in thee," that is, according to the promise which thou hast in thy Word given to us, and according to the faith which thou hast by thy Spirit and grace wrought in us. If in singing these verses we put forth a dependence upon God, and let out our desires towards him, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

PSALM XXXIV.

This psalm was penned upon a particular occasion, as appears by the title; and yet there is little in it peculiar to that occasion, but that which is general, both by way of thanksgiving to God and instruction to us. I. He praiseth God for the experience which he and others had had of his goodness, ver. 1—6. II. He encourageth all good people to trust in God, and to seek to him, ver. 7—10. III. He gives good counsel to us all as unto children, to take heed of sin, and to make conscience of our duty both to God and man, ver. 11—14. IV. To enforce this good counsel he shews God's favour to the righteous, and his displeasure against the wicked; in which he sets before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse, ver. 15—22. So that, in singing this psalm, we are both to give glory to God, and to teach and admonish ourselves and one another.

A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.

I WILL bless the LORD at all times:
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD:
The humble shall hear *thereof*, and be glad.
3 O magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt his name together.
4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
5 They looked unto him, and were lightened:
And their faces were not ashamed.
6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them
And delivereth them. [that fear him,
8 O taste and see that the LORD *is* good:
Blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.
9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints:
For *there is* no want to them that fear him.
10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: [*thing.*
But they that seek the LORD shall not want any good

The title of this psalm tells us both who penned it and upon what occasion it was penned. David being forced to run his country, which was made too hot for him by the rage of Saul, sought for shelter as near it as he could in the land of the Philistines; there it was soon discovered who he was, and he was brought before the king, who in the story is called Achish, his proper name, here Abimelech, his title. And for fear he should be treated as a spy, or one

that came thither upon design, he feigned himself to be a mad man, (such there have been in every age, that even by idiots men might be taught to give God thanks for the use of their reason,) that Achish might dismiss him as a contemptible man, rather than take cognizance of him as a dangerous man. And it had the effect he desired; by this stratagem he escaped the hand that otherwise would have handled him roughly. Now, 1. We cannot justify David in this dissimulation; it ill became an honest man to feign himself to be what he was not, and a man of honour to feign himself to be a fool and a madman. If in sport we mimic those who have not so good an understanding as we think we have, we forget that God might have made their case ours. 2. Yet we cannot but admire at the composedness of his spirit, and how far he was from any change of that when he changed his behaviour. Even when he was in that fright, or rather in that danger only, his heart was so fixed, trusting in God, that even then he penned this excellent psalm, which hath as much in it of the marks of a calm, sedate spirit as any psalm in all the book; and there is something very nice too in the composure, for every verse begins with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order. Happy they who can thus keep their temper, and keep their graces in exercise, even when they are tempted to change their behaviour. In this former part of the psalm,

First. David engageth and exciteth himself to praise God. Though it was his fault that he changed his behaviour, yet it was God's mercy that he escaped; and the mercy was so much the greater in that God did not deal with him according to the desert of his dissimulation; and we must in every thing give thanks. He resolves, 1. That he will praise God constantly; "I will bless the Lord at all times," upon all occasions. He resolves to keep up stated times for this duty; to lay hold on all opportunities for it, and to renew his praises upon every fresh occurrence that furnisheth him with matter. If we hope to spend our eternity in praising God, it is fit we should spend as much as may be of our time in this work. 2. That he will praise him openly; "His praise shall continually be in my mouth." Thus he would shew how forward he was to own his obligations to the mercy of God, and how desirous to make others also sensible of theirs. 3. That he will praise him heartily; "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," in my relation to him, my interest in him, and expectations from him. This is not vainglory to glory in the Lord.

Secondly. He calls upon others to join with him herein. He expects they will; ver. 2, "The humble shall hear thereof," both of my deliverance and of my thankfulness, "and be glad," that a good man has so much favour shewed him, and a good God so much honour done him. Those have much comfort in God's mercies, both to others and to themselves, that are humble, and have the least confidence in their own merit and sufficiency. It pleased David to think that God's favours to him would rejoice the heart of every Israelite. Three things he would have us all to concur with him in:

1. In great and high thoughts of God, which we should express in magnifying him, and exalting his name, ver. 3. We cannot make God greater or higher than he is, but if we adore him as infinitely great, and higher than the highest, he is pleased to reckon this magnifying and exalting him. This we must do together. God's praises sound best in concert, for so we praise him as the angels do in heaven. They that share in God's favour, as all the saints do, should concur in his praises; and we should be as desirous of the assistance of our friends in returning thanks for mercies as in praying for them. We have reason to join in thanksgiving to God,

1st. For his readiness to hear prayer, which all the saints have had the comfort of; for he never said to any of them, Seek ye me in vain. *First.* David for his part will give it under his hand that he has found him a prayer-hearing God; ver. 4, "I sought the Lord" in my distress, intreated his favour, begged his help, "and he heard me;" answered my request presently, "and delivered me from all my fears," both from the death I feared and from the disquietment and disturbance I was put into by my fear of it. The former he doth by his providence working for us; the latter by his grace working in us to silence our fears, and still the tumult of the spirits. And this is the greater mercy of the two, because the thing we fear is our trouble only, but our unbelieving, distrustful fear of it is our sin; nay, and many times it is more our torment too than the thing itself would be, which perhaps would only touch the bone and the flesh, while the fear would prey upon the spirits, and put us out of the possession of our own soul. David's prayers helped to silence his fears; having sought the Lord, and left his case with him, he could with a great deal of ease expect the event. But David was a great and eminent man; we may not expect to be favoured as he was; have any others ever experienced the like benefit by prayer? Yes; *Secondly.* Many besides him have looked unto God by faith and prayer, and have been lightened by it, ver. 5. It has wonderfully revived and comforted them, witness Hannah, who, when she had prayed, "went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." When we look to the world we are darkened, are perplexed and at a loss; but when we look unto God, from him we have the light both of direction and joy, and our way is made both plain and pleasant. These here spoken of, that looked unto God, had their expectations raised, and the event did not frustrate them; their faces were not ashamed of their confidence. But perhaps these also were persons of great eminency, like David himself, and upon that account were highly favoured; or their numbers made them considerable. Nay, *Thirdly,* "This poor man cried;" a single person, mean and inconsiderable, whom no man looked upon with any respect, or looked after with any concern, yet he was as welcome to the throne of grace as David or any of his worthies. "The Lord heard him," took cognizance of his case and of his prayers, "and saved him out of all his troubles," ver. 6. God will regard the prayer of the destitute, *Ps.* cii. 17: see *Isa.* lvii. 15.

2nd. For the ministration of the good angels about us; ver. 7, "The angel of the Lord," that is, a guard of angels, so some, but so unanimous in their service as if they were but one, or a guardian angel, "encampeth round about them that fear God," as the life-guard about the prince, "and delivereth them." God makes use of the attendance of the good spirits for the protection of his people from the malice and power of evil spirits; and more good offices the holy angels do us every day than we are aware of. Though in dignity and capacity of nature they are very much superior to us, though they retain their primitive rectitude, which we have lost, though they have constant employment in the upper world to praise God, and are entitled to a constant rest and bliss there, yet in obedience to their Maker, and in love to those that bear his image, they condescend to minister to the saints, and stand up for them against the powers of darkness. They not only visit them, but encamp round about them, acting for their good as really, though not as sensibly, as for Jacob's, *Gen.* xxxii. 1; and Elisha's, 2 *Kin.* vi. 17. All the glory be to the God of the angels.

2. He would have us to join with him in kind and good thoughts of God; ver. 8, "O taste and see that the Lord is good." The goodness of God includes both the beauty and amiableness of his being, and the bounty and beneficence of his providence and grace; and, accordingly, 1st. We must taste that he is a bountiful benefactor, relish the goodness of God in all his gifts to us, and reckon that the savour and sweetness of them; let God's goodness be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel. 2nd. We must see that he is a beautiful being, and delight in the contemplation of his infinite perfections. By taste and sight we both make discoveries and take complacency. Taste and see God's goodness, that is, take notice of it, and take the comfort of it, 1 *Pet.* ii. 3. He is good, for he makes all those truly blessed that trust in him; let us, therefore, be so convinced of his goodness as thereby to be encouraged in the worst of times to trust in him.

3. He would have us join with him in a resolution to seek God and serve him, and continue in his fear; ver. 9, "O fear the Lord, ye his saints:" when we taste and see that he is good, we must not forget that "he is great, and greatly to be feared;" nay, even his goodness is the proper object of a filial reverence and awe; "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness," *Hos.* iii. 5. "Fear the Lord;" that is, worship him, and make conscience of your duty to him in every thing; not fear him and shun him, but fear him and seek him, ver. 10; as a people seek unto their God; apply yourselves to him, and portion yourselves in him. To encourage us to fear God and seek him, it is here promised that those that do so, even in this wanting world, shall want no good thing; Heb., 'They shall not want all good things,' that is, they shall so have all good things as that they shall have no reason to complain of the want of any. As to the things of the other world, they shall have grace sufficient for the support of the spiritual life, 2 *Cor.* xii. 9; *Ps.* lxxxiv. 11; and, as to this life, they shall have what is necessary to the support of it from the hand of God. As a Father, he will feed them with food convenient. What farther comforts they desire they shall have, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good; and what they want in one thing, shall be made up in another. What God denies them, he will give them grace to be content without, and then they do not want it, *Deu.* iii. 26; Paul had all and abounded, because he was content, *Phil.* iv. 11—18. Those that live by faith in God's all-sufficiency want nothing, for in him they have enough; however it goes with the young lions, they shall lack and suffer hunger. They that live upon common providence, as the lions do, shall want that satisfaction which they have that live by faith in the promise. They that trust to themselves, and think their own hands sufficient for them, shall want; for bread is not always to the wise, but verily they shall be fed that trust in God, and desire to be at his finding. They that are ravenous and prey upon all about them shall want; but "the meek shall inherit the earth." They shall not want that with quietness work and mind their own business. Plainhearted Jacob has pottage enough, when Esau the cunning hunter is ready to perish for hunger.

11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me:
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 What man *is he that* desireth life,
And loveth *many* days, that he may see good?
13 Keep thy tongue from evil,
And thy lips from speaking guile.
14 Depart from evil, and do good;
Seek peace, and pursue it.
15 The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous,
And his ears *are open* unto their cry.
16 The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil,
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
17 *The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth,
And delivereth them out of all their troubles.
18 The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;
And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.
19 Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous:
But the LORD delivereth him out of them all.
20 He keepeth all his bones:
Not one of them is broken.
21 Evil shall slay the wicked:
And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.
22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants:
And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

David, in this latter part of the psalm, undertakes to teach children; though a man of war, and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him. Though now he had his head so full of cares, and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people from his own experience. It doth not appear that he had now any children of his own, at least none that were grown up to a capacity of being taught, but by Divine inspiration he instructs the children of his people. Those that were in years would not be taught by him, though he had offered them his service, *Ps.* xxxii. 8; but he has hopes that the tender branches will be more easily bent, and that children and young people will be more tractable, and therefore he calls together a congregation of them; ver. 10, "Come, ye children," that are now in your learning age, and are now to lay up a stock of knowledge which you must live upon all your days; ye children that are foolish and ignorant, and need to be taught. Perhaps he intends especially those children whose parents neglected to instruct and catechise them; and it is as great a piece of charity to put those children to school, whose parents are not in a capacity to teach them, as to feed those children whose parents have not bread for them. Observe, 1. What he expects from them; "Hearken unto me," leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me. 2. What he undertakes to teach them; "the fear of the Lord," inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier, but he doth not say to the children, I will teach you to play on the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state policy, but, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord;" which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all burntofferings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves and to teach our children.

First. He supposeth that we all aim to be happy; ver. 12, "What man is he that desireth life," that is, as it follows, not only to see many days, but to see good, comfortable days. *Non est vivere, sed valere vita,*—'it is not being, but well-being, that constitutes life.' It is asked, Who wisheth to live a long and pleasant life? and it is easily answered, Who doth not? Surely this must look farther than time, and this present world; for man's life on earth at best consists but of few days, and those full of trouble. What man is he that would

be eternally happy? that would see many days, as many as the days of heaven; that would see good in that world where all bliss is in perfection, without the least alloy; who would see that good before him now by faith and hope, and enjoy it shortly? Who would? alas, very few have that in their thoughts. Most ask, "Who will shew us any good?" but few ask, "What shall we do to inherit eternal life?" This question implies there are some such.

Secondly. He prescribes the true and only way to happiness, both in this world and that to come, ver. 13, 14. Would we pass comfortably through the world, and out of the world, our constant care must be to keep a good conscience. And in order to that, 1. We must learn to bridle our tongues, and be careful what we say; that we never speak amiss to God's dishonour, or our neighbour's prejudice: "Keep thy tongue from evil" speaking, lying, and slandering. So great a way doth this go in religion, that "if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man;" and so little a way doth religion go without this, that he that "bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain." 2. We must be upright and sincere in every thing we say, and not double-tongued; our words must be the indications of our minds, our lips must be kept from speaking guile, either to God or man. 3. We must leave all our sins, and resolve we will have no more to do with them. "Depart from evil," from evil works, and evil workers; from the sins others commit, and which we have formerly allowed ourselves in. 4. It is not enough not to do hurt in the world, but we must study to be useful, and live to some purpose. We must not only "depart from evil," but we must "do good;" good for ourselves, especially for our own souls, employing them well, furnishing them with a good treasure, and fitting them for another world; and as we have ability and opportunity we must do good to others also. 5. Because nothing is more contrary to that love which never fails, which is the summary both of law and gospel, both of grace and glory, than strife and contention, which brings confusion and every evil work, we must "seek peace and pursue it." Have a peaceable disposition; study "the things that make for peace;" do nothing to break the peace, and to make mischief. If peace seem to flee from us, we must pursue it; "follow peace with all men;" stick at no pains, no expense, to preserve and recover peace; be willing to deny ourselves a great deal both in honour and interest for peace sake. These excellent directions in the way to life and good, are transcribed into the New Testament, and made part of our gospel duty, 1 *Pet* iii. 10, 11; and, perhaps, David in warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin in changing his behaviour. They that truly repent of what they have done amiss will warn others to take heed of doing likewise.

Thirdly. He enforceth these directions by setting before us the happiness of the godly in the love and favour of God, and the miserable state of the wicked under his displeasure. Here is life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse, plainly stated before us, that we may choose life, and live: see *Isa.* iii. 10, 11.

1. "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them;" however they may bless themselves in their own way.

1st. God is against them, and then they cannot but be miserable. Sad is the case of that man who by sin has made his Maker his enemy, his destroyer. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil," ver. 16. Sometimes God is said to turn his face from them, *Jer.* xviii. 17, because they have forsaken him; here he is said to set his face against them, because they have fought against him. And for certain, God is able to outface the most proud and daring sinners, and can frown them into hell.

2nd. Ruin is before them. This will follow of course, if God be against them, for he is able both to kill and to cast into hell. *First.* The land of the living shall be no place for them or theirs. When God sets his face against them, he shall not only cut them off, but "cut off the remembrance of them;" shall when they are alive bury them in obscurity, when they are dead shall bury them in oblivion. He shall root out their posterity, by whom they should be remembered; he shall pour disgrace upon their achievements, which they gloried in, and for which they thought they should have been remembered. It is certain there is no lasting honour but that which comes from God. *Secondly.* There shall be a sting in their death; "Evil shall slay the wicked," ver. 21. Their death shall be miserable; and so it will certainly be, though they die in a bed of down, or in the bed of honour. Death to them has a curse in it, and is the king of terrors; to them it is an evil, an only evil. It is very well observed by Dr. Hammond, that the evil here which slays the wicked, is the same word in the singular number that is used, ver. 19, for the afflictions of the righteous, to intimate that godly people have many troubles, and yet they do them no hurt; but are made to work for good to them, for God will deliver them out of them all; whereas wicked people have fewer troubles, fewer evils befall them, perhaps but one, and yet that one may prove their utter ruin. One trouble with a curse in it kills and slays, and doth execution; but many, with a blessing in them, are harmless, nay, gainful. *Thirdly.* Desolation will be their everlasting portion. They that are wicked themselves oftentimes hate the righteous, name and thing, have an implacable enmity to them and their righteousness; but they shall be desolate, shall be condemned as guilty, and laid waste for ever, shall be for ever forsaken and abandoned of God and all good angels and men, and those that are so are desolate indeed.

2. Yet, "Say to the righteous, it shall be well with them;" all good people are under God's special favour and protection. We are here assured of that, under a great variety of instances and expressions.

1st. God takes special notice of good people, and takes notice who have their eyes ever to him, and who make conscience of their duty to him. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous," ver. 15; to direct and guide them, to protect and keep them. Parents that are very fond of a child, will not let it be out of their sight; none of God's children are ever from under his eye, but on them he looks with a singular complacency, as well as with a watchful and tender concern.

2nd. They are sure of an answer of peace to their prayers. All God's people are a praying people, and they cry in prayer, which notes great importunity; but is it to any purpose? Yes; *First.* God takes notice of what we say; ver. 17, they "cry, and the Lord heareth them," and hears them so as to make it appear he has a regard to them. "His ears are open to their prayers;" to receive them all, and to receive them readily, and with delight. Though he has been a God hearing prayer ever since men began to call upon the name of the Lord, yet his ear is not heavy. There is no rhetoric, nothing charming, in a cry, yet God's ears are open to it, as the tender mother's to the cry of her sucking child, which another would take no notice of. "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth," ver. 17. This intimates that it is the constant practice of good people, when they are in distress, to cry unto God; and it is their constant comfort that God hears them. *Secondly.* He not only takes notice of what we say, but is ready to us for our relief, ver. 18; he "is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth them." Note, 1*st*. It is the character of the righteous, whose prayers God will hear, that they are of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, that is, humbled for sin, and emptied of self; they are low in their own eyes, and have no confidence in their own merit and sufficiency, but in God only. 2*nd*. Those who are so have God nigh unto them to comfort and support them; that the spirit may not be broken more than is meet, lest it should fail before him: see *Isa.* lvii. 15. Though God is high, and dwells on high, yet he is near to those who, being of a contrite spirit, know how to value his favour, and will save them from sinking under their burthens; he is near them to good purpose.

3. They are taken under the special protection of the Divine government; ver. 20, "He keepeth all his bones,"—not only his soul but his body; not only his body in general, but every bone in it,—"not one of them is broken." He that has a broken heart shall not have a broken bone; for David himself had found that when he had a contrite heart the broken bones were made to rejoice, *Ps.* li. 8, 17. One would not expect to meet with anything of Christ here, and yet this scripture is said to be fulfilled in him, *Jno.* xix. 36, when the soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves that were crucified with him, but did not break his, they being under the protection of this promise as well as the type, even the paschal lamb, "a bone of him shall not be broken;" the promises being made good to Christ, through him are sure to all the seed. It doth not follow but that a good man may have a broken bone, but many a time, by the watchful providence of God concerning him, it is wonderfully prevented, and the preservation of his bones is the effect of this promise; and if he have a broken bone, sooner or later it shall be made whole; at farthest at the resurrection, when that which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power.

4. They are, and shall be, delivered out of their troubles. 1st. It is supposed that they have their share of crosses in this world, perhaps a greater share than others. In the world they must have tribulation, that they may be conformed both to the will of God and to the example of Christ; ver. 19, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous;" witness David and his afflictions, *Ps.* cxxxii. 1. There are those that hate them, ver. 21, and they are continually aiming to do them a mischief. Their God loves them, and therefore corrects them; so that, between the mercy of Heaven and the malice of hell, the afflictions of the righteous must needs be many. 2nd. God has engaged for their deliverance and salvation: "He delivereth them out of all their troubles," ver. 17; and again, ver. 19; he saveth them, ver. 18, so that though they may fall into trouble it shall not be their ruin. This promise of their deliverance is explained, ver. 22; whatever troubles befall them, *First.* They shall not hurt their better part; "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants," from the power of the grave, *Ps.* xlix. 15, and from the sting of every affliction. He keeps them from sinning in their troubles, which is the only thing that would do them a mischief, and keeps them from despair, and from being put out of the possession of their own souls. *Secondly.* They shall not hinder their everlasting bliss; "none of them that trust in him shall be desolate," that is, they shall not be comfortless, for they shall not be cut off from their communion with God. No man is desolate but he whom God has forsaken, nor is any man undone till he is in hell. Those that are God's faithful servants,—that make it their care to please him, and their business to honour him, and in doing so trust him to protect and reward them,—and with good thoughts of him refer themselves to him, have reason to be easy, whatever befalls them, for they are safe, and shall be happy.

In singing these verses let us be confirmed in the choice we have made of the ways of God; let us be quickened in his service, and greatly encouraged by the assurances he has given of the particular care he takes of all those that faithfully adhere to him.

PSALM XXXV.

David in this psalm appeals to the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, against his enemies that hated and persecuted him; it is supposed that Saul and his party are the persons he means, for with them he had the greatest struggles. I. He complains to God of the injuries they did him; they strove with him, fought against him, ver. 1; persecuted him, ver. 3; sought his ruin, ver. 4, 7; accused him falsely, ver. 11; abused him basely, ver. 15, 16; and all his friends, ver. 20; and triumphed over him, ver. 21, 25, 26. II. He pleads his own innocency, that he never gave them any provocation, ver. 7, 19; but, on the contrary, had studied to oblige them, ver. 12—14. III. He prays to God to protect and deliver him, and appear for him, ver. 1, 2; to comfort him, ver. 3; to be nigh to him, and rescue him, ver. 17, 22; to plead his cause, ver. 23, 24; to defeat all the designs of his enemies against him, ver. 3, 4; and to disappoint their expectations of his fall, ver. 19, 25, 26; and, lastly, to countenance all his friends, and encourage them, ver. 27. IV. He prophesies the destruction of his persecutors, ver. 4—6, 8. V. He promiseth himself that he shall yet see better days, ver. 9, 10; and promiseth God that he will then attend him with his praises, ver. 18, 28. In singing this psalm, and praying over it, we must take heed of applying it to any little peevish quarrels and enmities of our own; and of expressing by it any uncharitable, revengeful resentments of injuries done to us; for Christ has taught us to forgive our enemies, and not to pray against them, but to pray for them, as he did; but, 1. We may comfort ourselves with the testimony of our consciences concerning our innocency, with reference to those that are any way injurious to us, and with hopes that God will in his own way and time right us, and in the mean time support us. 2. We ought to apply it to the public enemies of Christ and his kingdom, typified by David and his kingdom, to resent the indignities done to Christ's honour; to pray to God to plead the just and injured cause of Christianity and serious godliness, and to believe that God will in due time glorify his own name in the ruin of all the irreconcilable enemies of his church, that will not repent to give him glory.

A Psalm of David.

PLEAD *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me:
Fight against them that fight against me.
2 Take hold of shield and buckler,
And stand up for mine help.
3 Draw out also the spear,
And stop *the way* against them that persecute me:
Say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.
4 Let them be confounded and put to shame
That seek after my soul:
Let them be turned back and brought to confusion
That devise my hurt.
5 Let them be as chaff before the wind:
And let the angel of the LORD chase *them*.
6 Let their way be dark and slippery:
And let the angel of the LORD persecute them.
7 For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit,
Which without cause they have digged for my soul.

8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares;
And let his net that he hath hid catch himself:
Into that very destruction let him fall.
9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD:
It shall rejoice in his salvation.
10 All my bones shall say,
LORD, who *is* like unto thee, [for him,
Which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong
Yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

In these verses we have,

First. David's representation of his case to God, setting forth the restless rage and malice of his persecutors. He was God's servant, expressly appointed by him to be what he was, followed his conduct, and aimed at his glory in the way of duty, had "lived," as St. Paul speaks, "in all good conscience before God unto this day;" and yet there were those that strove with him, that did their utmost to oppose his advancement, and made all the interest they could against him; they fought against him, ver. 1; not only undermined him closely and secretly, but openly avowed their opposition to him, and set themselves to do him all the mischief they could. They persecuted him with an unwearied enmity, sought after his soul, ver. 4, that is, his life, no less would satisfy their bloody minds; they aimed to disquiet his spirit, and put that into disorder. Nor was it a sudden passion against him that they harboured, but an inveterate malice; they devised his hurt, laid their heads together, and set their wits on work, not only to do him a mischief, but to find out ways and means to ruin him. They treated him, who was the greatest blessing of his country, as if he had been the curse and plague of it; hunted him as a dangerous beast of prey; they digged a pit for him, and laid a net in it, that they might have him at their mercy, ver. 7. They took a great deal of pains in persecuting him, for they digged a pit, *Ps.* vii. 15, and very close and crafty they were in carrying on their designs; the old serpent taught them subtlety; they hid their net from David and his friends, but in vain, for they could not hide it from God. And, lastly, He found himself an unequal match for them. His enemy, especially Saul, was too strong for him, ver. 10; for he had the army at his command, and assumed to himself the sole power of making laws, and giving judgment, attainted and condemned whom he pleased, carried not a sceptre, but a javelin in his hand, to cast at any man that stood in his way; such was the manner of the king, and all about him must do as he bade them, right or wrong. The king's word is a law, and every thing must be carried with a high hand; he has fields, and vineyards, and preferments, at his dispose, 1 *Sam.* xxii. 7; but David is poor and needy, has nothing to make friends with, and therefore has none to take his part, but men (as we say) of broken fortunes, 1 *Sam.* xxii. 2, and therefore no marvel that Saul spoiled him of what little he had got, and the interest he had made. If the kings of the earth set themselves against the Lord and his anointed, who can contend with them? Note, It is no new thing for the most righteous men, and the most righteous cause, to meet with many mighty and malicious enemies; Christ himself is striven with, and fought against, and war made upon the holy seed; and we are not to marvel at the matter, it is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman.

Secondly. His appeal to God concerning his integrity, and the justice of his cause. If a fellow subject had wronged him, he might have appealed to his prince, as St. Paul did to Cæsar; but, when his prince wronged him, he appealed to his God, who is Prince and Judge of the kings of the earth. "Plead my cause, O Lord," ver. 1. Note, A righteous cause may with the greatest satisfaction imaginable be laid before a righteous God, and referred to him to give judgment upon it; for he perfectly knows the merits of it, holds the balance exactly even; and with him there is no respect of persons. God knew that they were without cause his enemies, and that they had without cause digged pits for him, ver. 7. Note, It will be a comfort to us, when men do us wrong, if our consciences can witness for us that we have never done them any. It was so to St. Paul, *Acts* xxv. 10, "To the Jews have I done no wrong." We are apt to justify our uneasiness at the injuries men do us, that we never gave them any cause to use us so; whereas this should, more than any thing, make us easy, for then we may the more securely expect that God will plead our cause.

Thirdly. His prospect of the destruction of his enemies, which he prays for, —not in malice or revenge. We find how patiently he bore Shimei's curses: "So let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him;" and we cannot suppose that he that was so meek in his conversation should give vent to any intemperate heat or passion in his devotion; but by the spirit of prophecy he foretells the just judgments of God that would come upon them for their great wickedness, their malice, cruelty, and perfidiousness, and especially their enmity to the counsels of God, the interests of religion, and that reformation which they knew David, if ever he had power in his hand, would be an instrument of. They seemed to be hardened in their sins, and to be of the number of those who have sinned unto death, and are not to be prayed for, *Jer.* vii. 16; xi. 14; xiv. 11; 1 *Jno.* v. 16. As for Saul himself, it is probable David knew that God had rejected him, and had forbidden Samuel to mourn for him, 1 *Sam.* xvi. 1. And these predictions look farther, and read the doom of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, as appears by comparing, *Rom.* xi. 9, 10.

He here prays, 1. Against his many enemies; ver. 4—6, "Let them be confounded," &c. Or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, 'They shall be confounded, they shall be turned back.' This may be taken as a prayer for their repentance, for all penitents are put to shame for their sins, and turned back from them; or, if they were not brought to repentance, that they might be defeated and disappointed in their designs against him, and so put to shame. But though they should in some degree prevail, yet he foresees that it would be to their own ruin at last; they shall be as chaff before the wind, so unable will wicked men be to stand before the judgments of God, and so certainly will they be driven away by them, *Ps.* i. 4. Their way shall be dark and slippery, 'darkness and slipperiness,' (so the margin reads it;) the way of sinners is so, for they walk in darkness, and in continual danger of falling into sin, into hell; it will prove so at last, for "their foot shall slide in due time," *Deu.* xxxii. 35. But this is not the worst of it; even chaff before the wind may perhaps be stopped and find a place of rest, and though the way be dark and slippery it is possible a man may keep footing; but it is here foretold that the angel of the Lord shall chase them, ver. 5, so that they shall find no rest; shall persecute them, ver. 6, so that they cannot possibly escape the pit of destruction. As God's angels encamp about them that fear him, so they encamp against them that fight against him. They are the ministers of his justice as well as of his mercy. Those that make God their enemy make all the holy angels their enemies. 2. He prays against his one mighty enemy; ver. 8, "Let destruction come upon him." It is probable he means Saul, who laid snares for him, and aimed at his destruction. David vowed his hand should not be upon him, he would not be judge in his own cause; but at the same time foretold that the Lord would smite him, 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 10; and here, that the net he had hid should catch himself, and into that very destruction he should fall, which was remarkably fulfilled in the ruin of Saul, for he had laid a plot to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 25; that was the net which he hid for him, under pretence of doing him honour; and in that very net was he himself taken, for he fell by the hand of the Philistines, when his day came to fall.

Fifthly. His prospect of his own deliverance, which, having committed his cause to God, he did not doubt of, ver. 9, 10. 1. He hoped that he should have the comfort of it; "My soul shall be joyful," not in mine own ease and safety, but "in the Lord," and in his favour; in his promise and in his salvation, according to the promise. Joy in God, and in his salvation, is the only true, solid, satisfying joy. They whose souls are sorrowful in the Lord, that sow in tears, and sorrow after a godly sort, need not question but that in due time their souls shall be joyful in the Lord, for gladness is sown for them, and they shall at last enter into the joy of their Lord. 2. He promised that then God should have the glory of it; ver. 10, "All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee?" 1st. He will praise God with the whole man, with all that is within him, and with all the strength and vigour of his soul, intimated by his bones, which are within the body, and are the strength of it. 2nd. He will praise him as one of peerless and unparalleled perfection; we cannot express how great and good God is, and therefore must praise him, by acknowledging him a nonsuch; "Lord, who is like unto thee?" No such patron of oppressed innocency, no such punisher of triumphant tyranny. The formation of our bones so wonderfully, so curiously, *Eccl.* xi. 5, *Ps.* cxxxix. 16, the serviceableness of our bones, and the preservation of them, and especially the life which at the resurrection shall be breathed upon the dry bones, and make them flourish as an herb, oblige every bone in our bodies, if it could speak, to say, "Lord, who is like unto thee?" and willingly to undergo any services or sufferings for him.

11 False witnesses did rise up;
They laid to my charge *things* that I knew not.
12 They rewarded me evil for good
To the spoiling of my soul.
13 But as for me,
When they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth
I humbled my soul with fasting;
And my prayer returned into mine own bosom.
14 I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend *or* brother:
I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his* mother. [selves together:
15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered them-
Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew *it* not;
They did tear *me,* and ceased not:
16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts,
They gnashed upon me with their teeth.

Two very ill things David here lays to the charge of his enemies, to make good his appeal to God against them—perjury and ingratitude.

First. Perjury, ver. 11. When Saul would have David attainted of treason, in order to his being outlawed, perhaps he did it with the formalities of a legal prosecution, produced witnesses which swore some treasonable words or overt acts against him, and he being not present to clear himself,—or if he had, it had been all one,—Saul adjudged him a traitor; this he complains of here as the highest piece of injustice imaginable. "False witnesses did rise up," who would swear anything; "they laid to my charge things that I knew not," nor ever thought of. See how much the honours, estates, liberties, and lives, even of the best men, lie at the mercy of the worst, against whose false oaths innocency itself is no fence; and what reason we have to acknowledge with thankfulness the hold God has of the consciences even of bad men, to which it is owing that there is not more mischief done that way than is. This instance of the wrong done to David was typical, and had its accomplishment in the Son of David, against whom false witnesses did arise, *Mat.* xxvi. 60; and if we be at any time charged with what we are innocent of, let us not think it strange, as though some new thing happened to us; so persecuted they the prophets, even the great Prophet.

Secondly. Ingratitude. Call a man ungrateful and you can call him no worse. This was the character of David's enemies, ver. 12, "They rewarded me evil for good." A great deal of good service he had done to his king,—witness his harp, witness Goliath's sword, witness the foreskins of the Philistines,—and yet his king vowed his death, and his country is made too hot for him. This is to the spoiling of his soul; that is, this base unkind usage robs him of his comfort, and cuts him to the heart more than anything else. Now, he had not only deserved well of the public, but of those particular persons that were now most bitter against him. Probably it was then well known who he meant; it may be Saul himself for one, whom he was sent for to attend upon when he was melancholy and ill, and to whom he was serviceable to drive away the evil spirit, not with his harp, but with his prayers; to others of the courtiers it is likely he had

shewed this respect while he lived at court, who now were of all others most abusive to him. Herein he was a type of Christ, to whom this wicked world was very ungrateful; *Jno.* x. 32, "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father, for which of those do you stone me?" David here shews,

1. How tenderly, and with what a cordial affection he had carried it towards them in their afflictions; ver. 13, 14, "they were sick." Note, Even the palaces and courts of princes are not exempt from the jurisdiction of death, and the visitation of sickness. Now when these people were sick, 1st. David mourned for them, and sympathised with them in their grief. They were nothing akin to him, he was under no obligations to them, would lose nothing by their death, but perhaps be a gainer by it, and yet he behaved himself as though they had been his nearest relations, purely from a principle of compassion and humanity. David was a man of war, and of a bold, stout spirit, and yet was thus susceptible of the impressions of sympathy, forgot the bravery of the hero, and seemed wholly made up of love and pity. It was a rare composition of hardiness and tenderness, courage and compassion, in the same breast. Observe, He took on as for a brother or mother, which intimates that it is our duty, and well becomes us, to lay to heart the sickness, and sorrow, and death of our near relations. Those that do not are justly stigmatized as without natural affection. 2nd. He prayed for them. He discovered not only the tender affection of a man, but the pious affection of a saint. He was concerned for their precious souls; and, since he could not otherwise be helpful to them, he helped them with his prayers to God for mercy and grace; and the prayers of one who had so great an interest in heaven were of more value than perhaps they knew and considered. With his prayers he joined humiliation and self-affliction, both in his diet—he fasted, at least from pleasant bread, and in his dress—he clothed himself with sackcloth, thus expressing his grief, not only for their affliction, but for their sin; for this was the guise and practice of a penitent. We ought to mourn for the sins of those that do not mourn for them themselves. His fasting also put an edge upon his praying, and was an expression of the ardency of it; he was so intent in his devotions that he had no appetite to meat, nor would allow himself time for eating. "My prayer returned into mine own bosom;" that is, I had the comfort of having done my duty, and of having approved myself a loving neighbour, though I could not thereby win upon them, nor make them my friends. We shall not lose by the good offices we have done to any, how ungrateful soever they are, for our rejoicing will be this, the testimony of our conscience.

2. How basely and insolently, and with what a brutish enmity, and worse than brutish, they had carried it towards him; ver. 15, 16, "In mine adversity they rejoiced." When he fell under the frowns of Saul, was banished the court, and persecuted as a criminal, they were pleased, were glad at his calamities, and got together in their drunken clubs to make themselves and one another merry with the disgrace of this great favourite. Well might he call them abjects, for nothing could be more vile and sordid than to triumph in the fall of a man of such unstained honour and consummate virtue. But this was not all, 1st. They tore him, rent his good name without mercy, said all the ill they could of him, and fastened upon him all the reproach their cursed wit and malice could reach to. 2nd. They gnashed upon him with their teeth; that is, they never spoke of him but with the greatest indignation imaginable, as those that would have eaten him up, if they could. David was the fool in the play, and his disappointment all the table-talk of the hypocritical mockers at feasts; it was the song of the drunkards; the comedians, who may fitly be called hypocritical mockers, (for what doth a hypocrite signify but a stage-player?) and whose comedies it is likely were acted at feasts and balls, chose David for their subject, bantered and abused him, while the auditory, in token of their agreement with the plot, hummed, and gnashed upon him with their teeth. Such has often been the hard fate of the best of men. The apostles were made a spectacle to the world. David was looked upon with ill-will for no other reason but because he was caressed by the people. It is a vexation of spirit which attends even a right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour, *Eccl.* iv. 4; and "who can stand before envy?" *Pr.* xxvii. 4.

17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on?
Rescue my soul from their destructions,
My darling from the lions.
18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation:
I will praise thee among much people.
19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: [out a cause.
Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me with-
20 For they speak not peace:
But they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land.
21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me,
And said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen *it*.
22 *This* thou hast seen, O LORD:
Keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.
23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment,
Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.
24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteous-
And let them not rejoice over me. [ness;
25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it:
Let them not say, We have swallowed him up.
26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together
That rejoice at mine hurt:
Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour
That magnify *themselves* against me.
27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad,
That favour my righteous cause:
Yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified,
Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness
And of thy praise all the day long.

In these verses, as before,

First. David describes the great injustice, malice, and insolence of his persecutors, pleading this with God as a reason why he should protect him from them, and appear against them. 1. They were very unrighteous. They were his enemies wrongfully, for he never gave them any provocation; they hated him without a cause; nay, for that for which they ought rather to have loved and honoured him. This is quoted with application to Christ, and is said to be fulfilled in him, *Jno.* xv. 25, "They hated me without cause." 2. They were very rude. They could not find it in their hearts to shew him common civility; "they speak not peace;" if they meet him, they had not the good manners to give him the time of day, like Joseph's brethren, that could not speak peaceably to him, *Gen.* xxxvii. 4. 3. They were very proud and scornful; ver. 21, "They opened their mouth wide against me;" that is, they shouted and huzzaed when they saw his fall; they bawled after him when he was forced to quit the court, "Aha, aha," this is the day we longed to see. 4. They were very barbarous and base; for they trampled upon him when he was down, rejoiced at his hurt, and magnified themselves against him, ver. 26. *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam, ut semper, et odit damnatos,*—'The Roman crowd, varying their opinions with every turn of fortune, are sure to execrate the fallen.' Thus, when the Son of David was run upon by the rulers, the people cried, "Crucify him, crucify him." 5. They set themselves against all the sober good people that adhered to David; ver. 20, "They devise deceitful matters" to trepan and ruin "them that are quiet in the land." Note, 1st. It is the character of the godly in the land, that they are the quiet in the land; that they live in all dutiful subjection to government and governors, in the Lord, and endeavour as much as in them lies to live peaceably with all men, however they have been misrepresented as enemies to Cæsar, and hurtful to kings and provinces. "I am for peace," *Ps.* cxx. 7. 2nd. Though the people of God are and study to be a quiet people, yet it has been the common practice of their enemies to devise deceitful matters against them. All the hellish arts of malice and falsehood are made use of to render them odious or despicable, their words and actions misconstrued, even that which they abhor fathered upon them, laws made to ensnare them, *Dan.* vi. 4, and all to ruin them and root them out. They that hated David thought scorn, like Haman, to lay hands on him alone, but contrived to involve all the religious people of the land in the same ruin with him.

Secondly. He appeals to God against them, the God to whom vengeance belongs. Appeals to his knowledge; ver. 22, "This thou hast seen." They had falsely accused him, but God, that knows all things, knew that he did not falsely accuse them, nor make them worse than really they were. They had carried on their plots against him with a great deal of secrecy; ver. 15, I knew it not till long after, when they themselves gloried in it; but thine eye was upon them in their close cabals, and thou art a witness of all they have said and done against me and thy people. He appeals to God's justice. "Awake to my judgment, even to my cause," and let it have a hearing at thy bar, ver. 23. "Judge me, O Lord my God;" that is, pass sentence upon this appeal, "according to the righteousness" of thy nature and government: see this explained by Solomon, 1 *Kin.* viii. 31, 32; When thou art appealed to, "hear in heaven, and judge, by condemning the wicked, and justifying the righteous."

Thirdly. He prays earnestly to God to appear graciously for him and his friends against his and their enemies, that by his providence the struggle might issue to the honour and comfort of David, and to the conviction and confusion of his prosecutors.

1. He prays that God would act for him, and not stand by as a spectator; ver. 17, "Lord, how long wilt thou look on?" how long wilt thou connive at the wickedness of the wicked? Rescue my soul from the destructions they are plotting against it; rescue my darling, my only one, from the lions. My soul is my only one, and therefore the greater is the shame if I neglect it, and the greater the loss if I lose it; it is my only one, and therefore ought to be my darling, ought to be carefully protected and provided for. It is my soul that is in danger, Lord, rescue it; it doth in a peculiar manner belong to the Father of spirits, therefore claim thine own; it is thine, save it. "Lord, keep not silence!" as if thou didst consent to what is done against me, "Lord, be not far from me!" ver. 22, as if I were a stranger that thou art not concerned for; let not me be beheld afar off, as the proud are.

2. He prays that his enemies might not have cause to rejoice; ver. 19, "Let them not rejoice over me," and again, ver. 24; not so much because it would be a mortification to him to be trampled upon by the abjects, but because it would turn to the dishonour of God, and the reproach of his confidence in God; it would harden the hearts of his enemies in their wickedness, and confirm them in their enmity to him, and would be a great discouragement to all the pious Jews that were friends to his righteous cause. He prays that he might never be in such imminent danger as that they should "say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it," ver. 25, much more that he might not be reduced to such extremity as that they should say, "We have swallowed him up," for then they will reflect upon God himself. But, on the contrary, that they might be "ashamed and brought to confusion together," ver. 26, as before, ver. 4; he desires his innocency might be so cleared, as that they might be ashamed of the calumnies with which they had loaded him, that his interest might be so confirmed as that they might be ashamed of their designs against him and their expectations of his ruin, that they might either be brought to that shame which would be a step towards their reformation, or that that might be their portion which would be their everlasting misery.

3. He prays that his friends might have cause to rejoice and give glory to God, ver. 27. Notwithstanding the arts that were used to blacken David and make him odious, and to frighten people from owning him, there were some that favoured his righteous cause, that knew he was wronged, and bore a good affection to him; and he prays for them, 1st. That they might rejoice with him in his joys. It is a great pleasure to all that are good to see an honest man and an honest cause prevail and prosper; and those that heartily espouse the interests of God's people, and are willing to take their lot with them, even when they are run down and trampled upon, shall in due time shout for joy and be glad, for the righteous cause will at length be a victorious cause. 2nd. That they might join with him in his praises. "Let them say continually, The Lord be magnified," by us and others, "who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant." Note, *First.* The great God hath pleasure in the prosperity of good people, not only of his family, the church, in general, but of every particular servant in his family; he hath pleasure in the prosperity both of their temporal and of their spiritual affairs, and delights not in their griefs; for he doth not afflict willingly, and we ought therefore to have pleasure in their prosperity, and not to envy it. *Secondly.* When God in his providence shews his good-will to the prosperity of his servants, and the pleasure he takes in it, we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness to his praise, and to say, "The Lord be magnified."

Lastly. The mercy he hoped to win by prayer he promiseth to wear with praise; "I will give thee thanks," as the author of my deliverance, ver. 18, and "my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness," the justice of thy judgments, and

the equity of all thy dispensations; and this, 1. Publicly, as one that took a pleasure in owning his obligations to his God. So far was he from being ashamed of them, he will do it in the great congregation, and among much people, that God might be honoured, and many edified. 2. Constantly. He will speak God's praise every day, (so it may be read,) and all the day long; for it is a subject that will never be exhausted, no, not by the endless praises of saints and angels.

PSALM XXXVI.

It is uncertain when, and upon what occasion, David penned this psalm; probably when he was struck at either by Saul or by Absalom, for in it he complains of the malice of his enemies against him, but triumphs in the goodness of God to him. We are here led to consider, and it will do us good to consider seriously, I. The sinfulness of sin, and how mischievous it is, ver. 1—4. II. The goodness of God, and how gracious he is: 1. To all his creatures in general, ver. 5, 6; 2. To his own people in a special manner, ver. 7—9; with which the psalmist is encouraged to pray for all the saints, ver. 10; for himself in particular, and his own preservation, ver. 11; and to triumph in the certain fall of his enemies, ver. 12. If in singing this psalm our hearts be duly affected with the hatred of sin, and satisfaction in God's lovingkindness, we sing it with grace and understanding.

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David the servant of the LORD.

THE transgression of the wicked saith within my heart,
That there is no fear of God before his eyes.
2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes,
Until his iniquity be found to be hateful.
3 The words of his mouth *are* iniquity and deceit:
He hath left off to be wise, *and* to do good.
4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed;
He setteth himself in a way *that is* not good;
He abhorreth not evil.

David in the title of this psalm is styled the servant of the Lord; why in this, and not in any other, except in Psalm xviii., title, no reason can be given; but so he was, not only as every good man is God's servant, but as a king, as a prophet, as one employed in serving the interests of God's kingdom among men, more immediately, and more eminently than any other in his day. He glories in it, *Ps.* cxvi. 16. It is no disparagement, but an honour to the greatest of men, to be the servants of the great God; it is the highest preferment a man is capable of in this world. David in these verses describes the wickedness of the wicked; whether he means his persecutors in particular, or all notorious gross sinners in general, is not certain. But we have here sin in its causes, and sin in its colours; in its root, and in its branches.

First. Here is the root of bitterness from which all the wickedness of the wicked comes. It takes rise,

1. From their contempt of God, and the want of a due regard to him; ver. 1, "The transgression of the wicked" (as it is described afterwards, ver. 3, 4,) "saith within my heart," that is, makes me to conclude within myself, that "there is no fear of God before his eyes," for if there were he would not talk and act so extravagantly as he doth; he would not, he durst not, break the laws of God, and violate his covenants with him, if he had any awe of his majesty, or dread of his wrath. Fitly therefore is it brought into the form of indictments by our law, that the criminal, not having the fear of God before his eyes, did so and so. The wicked did not openly renounce the fear of God, but their transgression whispered it secretly into the minds of all those that knew any thing of the nature of piety and impiety. David concluded concerning those who lived at large, that they lived without God in the world.

2. From their conceit of themselves, and a cheat they wilfully put upon their own souls; ver. 2, "He flattereth himself in his own eyes," that is, while he goes on in sin he thinks he doth wisely and well for himself, and either doth not see, or will not own, the evil and danger of his wicked practices. He "calls evil good, and good evil;" his licentiousness he pretends to be but his just liberty; his fraud passeth for his prudence and policy, and his persecuting the people of God he suggests to himself is a piece of necessary justice. If his own conscience threaten him for what he doth, he saith, "God will not require it, I shall have peace though I go on." Note, Sinners are self-destroyers by being self-flatterers. Satan could not deceive them if they did not deceive themselves. But will the cheat last always? No; the day is coming when the sinner will be undeceived, when his iniquity shall be found to be hateful. Iniquity is a hateful thing; it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which his pure and jealous eye cannot endure to look upon. It is hurtful to the sinner himself, and therefore ought to be hateful; but it is not so, he rolls it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, because of the secular profit and sensual pleasure which perhaps attends it; yet "the meat in his bowels will be turned, it will be the gall of asps," *Job* xx. 13, 14. When their consciences are convinced, and sin appears in its true colours, and makes them a terror to themselves; when the cup of trembling is put into their hands, and they are made to drink the dregs of it, then their iniquity will be found hateful, and their self-flattery their unspeakable folly, and an aggravation of their condemnation.

Secondly. Here are the cursed branches which spring from this root of bitterness. The sinner defies God, and even deifies himself, and then what can be expected but that he should go all to nought? These two were the first inlets of sin. Men do not fear God, and therefore they flatter themselves, and then,

1. They make no conscience of what they say; true or false, right or wrong; ver. 3, "The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit;" contrived to do wrong, and yet to cover it with specious and plausible pretences. It is no marvel if those that deceive themselves contrive how to deceive all mankind; for who will they be true to that are false to their own souls?

2. What little good there has been in them is gone. The sparks of virtue extinguished, their convictions baffled, their good beginnings come to nothing; "they have left off to be wise and to do good." They seemed to have been under the direction of wisdom, and the government of religion, but they have broken these bonds in sunder; they have shaken off their religion, and therewith their wisdom. Note, They that leave off to do good leave off to be wise.

3. Having left off to do good, they contrive to do hurt, and to be vexatious to those about them that are good, and do good; ver. 4, "He deviseth mischief upon his bed." Note, 1st. Omissions make way for commissions. When men leave off doing good, leave off praying, leave off their attendance on God's ordinances, and their duty to him, the devil easily makes them his agents, his instruments to draw those that will be drawn into sin, and those that will not, to draw them into trouble. Those that leave off to do good begin to do evil; the devil being an apostate from his innocency, soon became a tempter to Eve, and a persecutor of righteous Abel. 2nd. It is bad to do mischief, but it is worse to devise it; to do it deliberately and with resolution, to set the wits a work to contrive to do it most effectually, to do it with plot and management; with the subtlety as well as the malice of the old serpent. To devise it upon the bed, where we should be meditating upon God and his word, *Mic.* ii. 1, this argues the sinner's heart fully set in him to do evil.

4. Having entered into the way of sin, that way that is not good, that neither has good in it, nor good at the end of it, they persist, and resolve to persevere in that way. He sets himself to execute the mischief he has devised, and nothing shall be withholden from him which he has purposed to do, though it be never so contrary both to his duty and to his true interest. If sinners did not steel their hearts, and brazen their faces with obstinacy and impudence, they could not go on in their evil ways, in such a direct opposition to all that is just and good.

5. Doing evil themselves, they have no dislike at all of it in others. "He abhorreth not evil," but on the contrary takes pleasure in it, and is glad to see others as bad as himself. Or this may speak his impenitency in sin. They that have done evil, if God give them repentance, abhor the evil they have done, and themselves because of it; it is bitter in the reflection, however sweet it was in the commission: but these hardened sinners have such seared, stupified consciences, that they never reflect upon their sins afterwards with any regret or remorse, but stand to what they have done, as if they could justify it before God himself.

Some think David in all this particularly means Saul, who had cast off the fear of God, and left off all goodness; who pretended kindness to him, when he gave him his daughter to wife, but at the same time was devising mischief against him. But we are under no necessity of limiting ourselves so in the exposition of it; there are too many among us to whom the description agrees, which is to be greatly lamented.

5 Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens;
And thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds.
6 Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains;
Thy judgments *are* a great deep:
O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.
7 How excellent *is* thy lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.
8 They shall be abundantly satisfied
With the fatness of thy house;
And thou shalt make them drink
Of the river of thy pleasures.
9 For with thee *is* the fountain of life:
In thy light shall we see light.
10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee;
And thy righteousness to the upright in heart.
11 Let not the foot of pride come against me,
And let not the hand of the wicked remove me.
12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen:
They are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

David, having looked round with grief upon the wickedness of the wicked, here looks up with comfort upon the goodness of God; a subject as delightful as the former was distasteful, and very proper to be set in the balance against it. Observe,

First. His meditations upon the grace of God. He sees the world polluted, himself endangered, and God dishonoured by the transgressions of the wicked; but of a sudden he turns his eye, and heart, and speech to God; However it be, yet thou art good. He here acknowledgeth,

1. The transcendent perfections of the Divine nature. Among men we have often reason to complain there is no truth nor mercy, *Hos.* iv. 1, no judgment nor justice, *Isa.* v. 7; but all these may be found in God without the least alloy. Whatever is missing or amiss in the world, we are sure there is nothing missing, nothing amiss, in him that governs it.

1st. He is a God of inexhaustible goodness; "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens." If men shut up the bowels of their compassion, yet with God, at the throne of his grace, we shall find mercy. When men are devising mischief against us, God's thoughts concerning us, if we cleave closely to him, are thoughts of good. On earth we meet with little content, but a great deal of disquiet and disappointment; but in the heavens, where the mercy of God reigns in perfection, and to eternity, there is all satisfaction. There, therefore, if we would be easy, let us have our conversation, and there let us long to be. How bad soever the world is, let us never think the worse of God, or of his government; but from the abundance of wickedness that is among men let us take occasion, instead of reflecting upon God's purity, as if he countenanced sin, to admire his patience, that he bears so much with those that so impudently provoke him; nay, and causeth his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon them. If God's mercy were not in the heavens, that is, infinitely above the mercies of any creature, he would long ere this have drowned the world again: see *Isa.* lv. 8, 9; *Hos.* xi. 9.

2nd. He is a God of inviolable truth; "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." Though God suffers wicked people to do a great deal of mischief, yet he is, and will be, faithful to his threatenings against sin, and there will come a day when he will reckon with them; he is faithful also to his covenant with his people, which cannot be broken, not one jot or tittle of the promises of it defeated, by all the malice of earth and hell. This is matter of great comfort to all good people, that, though men are false, God is faithful; men speak vanity, but the words of the Lord are pure words. God's faithfulness reacheth so high that it doth not change with the weather, as men's doth, for it reacheth to the skies, so it should be read (as some think), above the clouds, and all the changes of the lower region.

3rd. He is a God of incontestable justice and equity; "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains," so immovable and inflexible itself, and so conspicuous and evident to all the world; for no truth is more certain or more plain than this, that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and that he never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures. Even when clouds and darkness are round about him, yet judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne, *Ps.* xcvii. 2.

4th. He is a God of unsearchable wisdom and design; "Thy judgments are a great deep," not to be fathomed with the line and plummet of any finite understanding. As his power is sovereign, which he owes not any account of to us, so his method is singular and mysterious, which cannot be accounted for by us. "His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters." We know he doth all wisely and well, but what he doth we know not now; it is time enough to know hereafter.

2. The extensive care and beneficence of the Divine providence; "Thou preservest man and beast," not only protectest them from mischief, but suppliest them with that which is needful for the support of life. The beasts, though not capable of knowing and praising God, yet are graciously provided for; their eyes wait on him, and he giveth them their meat in due season. Let us not wonder that God gives food to bad men, for he feeds the brute creatures; and let us not fear but that he will provide well for good men. He that feeds the young lions will not starve his own children.

3. The peculiar favour of God to the saints. Observe,

1st. Their character, ver. 7. They are such as are allured by the excellency of God's lovingkindness, to put their trust under the shadow of his wings. *First.* God's lovingkindness is precious to them; they relish it, they taste a transcendent sweetness in it, they admire God's beauty and benignity above any thing in this world; nothing so amiable, so desirable. Those know not God that do not admire his lovingkindness, and those know not themselves that do not earnestly covet it. *Secondly.* They therefore repose an entire confidence in him; they have recourse to him, put themselves under his protection, and then think themselves safe, and find themselves easy, as the chickens under the wings of the hen, *Mat.* xxiii. 37. It was the character of proselytes that they came "to trust under the wings of the God of Israel," *Ru.* ii. 12. And what more proper to gather proselytes than the excellency of his lovingkindness? What more powerful to engage our complacency to him and on him? Those that are thus drawn by love will cleave to him.

2nd. Their privilege. Happy, thrice happy, the people whose God is the Lord, for in him they have, or may have, or shall have, a complete happiness.

First. Their desires shall be answered; ver. 8, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house;" their wants supplied, their cravings gratified, and their capacities filled. In God All-sufficient they shall have enough; all that which an enlightened, enlarged soul can desire or receive. The gains of the world, and the delights of sense, will surfeit, but never satisfy, *Isa.* lv. 2; but the communications of Divine favour and grace will satisfy, but never surfeit. A gracious soul, though still desiring more of God, never desires more than God. The gifts of providence so far satisfy them that they are content with such things as they have; "I have all, and abound," *Phil.* iv. 18. The benefit of holy ordinances is the fatness of God's house, sweet to a sanctified soul, and strengthening to the spiritual and Divine life; with this they are abundantly satisfied; they desire nothing more in this world than to live a life of communion with God; and to have the comfort of the promises. But the full, the abundant satisfaction, is reserved for the future state, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Every vessel will be full there.

Secondly. Their joys shall be constant; "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures." There are pleasures that are truly Divine; they are thy pleasures; not only which come from thee as the giver of them, but which terminate in thee as the matter and centre of them, which being purely spiritual are of the same nature with those of the glorious inhabitants of the upper world, and bear some analogy even to the delights of the Eternal Mind. There is a river of these pleasures, always full, always fresh, always flowing. There is enough for all, enough for each: see *Ps.* xlvi. 4. The pleasures of sense are stinking puddle water; those of faith are pure and pleasant, clear as crystal, *Rev.* xxii. 1. God has not only provided this river of pleasures for his people, but he makes them to drink of it; works in them a gracious appetite to these pleasures, and by his Spirit fills their souls with joy and peace in believing. In heaven they shall be for ever drinking of those pleasures that are at God's right hand, satiated with a fulness of joy, *Ps.* xvi. 11.

Thirdly. Life and light shall be their everlasting bliss and portion, ver. 9, having God himself for their felicity. 1*st.* In him they have a fountain of life, from which those rivers of pleasure flow, ver. 8. The God of nature is the fountain of natural life, in him we live and move and have our being; the God of grace is the fountain of spiritual life. All the strength and comfort of a sanctified soul, all its gracious principles, powers, and performances, are from God; all its sensations of Divine things, and all its motions towards them, he is the spring and author of them all; he "quickeneth whom he will," and whosoever will may come and take from him of the waters of life freely. He is the fountain of eternal life. The happiness of glorified saints consists in the vision and fruition of him, and in the immediate communications of his love without interruption or fear of cessation. 2*nd.* In him they have light in perfection, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, all included in this light. "In thy light we shall see light," that is, 1. In the knowledge of thee in grace, and the vision of thee in glory, we shall have that which will abundantly suit and satisfy our understandings. That Divine light which shines in the Scripture, and especially in the face of Christ, the light of the world, has all truth in it. When we come to see God face to face within the veil, we shall see light in perfection, we shall know enough then, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 12; 1 *Jno.* iii. 2. 2. In communion with thee now. By the communications of thy grace to us, and the return of our devout affections to thee, and in the fruition of thee shortly in heaven, we shall have a complete felicity and satisfaction. In thy favour we have all the good we can desire. This is a dark world, we see little comfort in it, but in the heavenly light there is true light, and no false light, light that is lasting and never wastes. In this world we see God, and enjoy him by creatures and means, but in heaven God himself shall be with us, *Rev.* xxi. 3; and we shall see and enjoy him immediately.

Secondly. We have here David's prayers, intercessions, and holy triumphs, grounded upon these meditations.

1. He intercedes for all saints, begging that they may always experience the benefit and comfort of God's favour and grace, ver. 10. 1st. The persons he prays for are those that know God, that are acquainted with him, acknowledge him, and avouch him for theirs; and the upright in heart, that are sincere in their profession of religion, and faithful both to God and man. Those that are not upright with God do not know him as they should. 2nd. The blessing he begs for them is God's lovingkindness, (that is, the tokens of his favour towards them,) and his righteousness, (that is, the workings of his grace in them,) or his lovingkindness and righteousness is his goodness according to promise; it is mercy and truth. 3rd. The manner in which he desires this blessing may be conveyed is, O continue it, draw it out, as the mother draws out her breasts to the child, and then the child draws out the milk from the breasts. Let it be drawn out to a length equal to the line of eternity itself. The happiness of the saints in heaven will be in perfection, and yet in continual progression, as some think; for the fountain there will be always full, and the streams always flowing. In these is continuance, *Isa.* lxiv. 5.

2. He prays for himself, that he might be preserved in his integrity and comfort; ver. 11, "Let not the foot of pride come against me," to trip up my heels, or trample upon me; and "let not the hand of the wicked," which is stretched out against me, prevail to "remove me," either from my purity and integrity by any temptation, or from my peace and comfort by any trouble. Let not those that fight against God triumph over those who desire to cleave to him. They that have experienced the pleasure of communion with God cannot but desire that nothing may ever remove them from him.

3. He rejoiceth in hope of the downfal of all his enemies in due time, ver. 12. There where they thought to have gained the point against me, they are themselves fallen, taken in that snare which they laid for me. There, in the other world, so some, there where the saints stand in the judgment, and have a place in God's house, the workers of iniquity are cast in the judgment, are cast down into hell, into the bottomless pit, out of which for certain they shall never be able to rise from under the insupportable weight of God's wrath and curse. It is true we are not to rejoice when any particular enemy of ours falls; but the final overthrow of all the workers of iniquity will be the everlasting triumph of glorified saints.

PSALM XXXVII.

This psalm is a sermon, and an excellent, useful sermon it is, calculated not, as most of the psalms, for our devotion, but for our conversation. There is nothing in it of prayer or praise, but it is all instruction; it is Maschil, a teaching psalm; it is an exposition of some of the hardest chapters in the book of Providence, the advancement of the wicked, and the disgrace of the righteous, a solution of the difficulties that arise thereupon, and an exhortation to carry ourselves as becomes us under such dark dispensations. The work of the prophets (and David was one) was to explain the law. Now the law of Moses had promised temporal blessings to the obedient, and denounced temporal miseries against the disobedient, which principally referred to the body of the people, the nation as a nation; for, when they came to be applied to particular persons, many instances occurred of sinners in prosperity, and saints in adversity: to reconcile those instances with the word that God had spoken, is the scope of the prophet in this psalm, in which, I. He forbids us to fret at the prosperity of the wicked in their wicked ways, ver. 1, 7, 8. II. He gives very good reasons why we should not fret at it: 1. Because of the scandalous character of the wicked, ver. 12, 14, 21, 32, notwithstanding their prosperity, and the honourable character of the righteous, ver. 21, 26, 30, 31; 2. Because of the destruction and ruin which the wicked are nigh to, ver. 2, 9, 10, 20, 35, 36, 38, and the salvation and protection which the righteous are sure of from all the malicious designs of the wicked, ver. 13, 15, 17, 28, 33, 39, 40; 3. Because of the particular mercy God has in store for all good people, and the favour he shews them, ver. 11, 16, 18, 19, 22—25, 28, 29, 37. III. He prescribes very good remedies against this sin of envying the prosperity of the wicked, and great encouragement to use those remedies, ver. 3—6, 27, 34. In singing this psalm, we must teach and admonish one another rightly to understand the providences of God, and to accommodate ourselves to them; at all times carefully to do our duty, and then patiently to leave the event with God, and to believe that, how black soever things may look for the present, it shall be well with them that fear God, that fear before him.

A Psalm of David.

FRET not thyself because of evildoers,
Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.
2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,
And wither as the green herb.
3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; [fed.
So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be
4 Delight thyself also in the LORD;
And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.
5 Commit thy way unto the LORD;
Trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass.
6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light,
And thy judgment as the noonday.

The instructions here given are very plain, much need not be said for the exposition of them; but there is a deal to be done for the reducing of them to practice, and there they will look best.

First. We are here cautioned against discontent at the prosperity and success of evil-doers; ver. 1, 2, "Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious." We may suppose that David speaks this to himself first, and preaches it to his own heart, in his communing with that upon his bed, for the suppressing of those corrupt passions which he found working there, and then leaves it in writing, for instruction to others that might be in the like temptation. That is preached best, and with most probability of success to others, which is first preached to ourselves. Now, 1. When we look abroad, we see the world full of evil-doers, and workers of iniquity, that flourish and prosper, that have what they will, and do what they will, that live in ease and pomp themselves, and have power in their hands to do mischief to those about them. So it was in David's time, and therefore, if it is so still, let us not marvel at the matter, as though it were some new or strange thing. 2. When we look within, we find ourselves in temptation to fret at this, and to be envious against these scandals and burthens, these blemishes and common nuisances of this earth. We are apt to fret at God, as if he were unkind to the world, and unkind to his church, in permitting such men to live and prosper, and prevail as they do. We are apt to fret ourselves with vexation at their success in their evil projects; we are apt to envy them the liberty they take in getting wealth, and perhaps by unlawful means, and in the indulgence of their lusts, and to wish that we could shake off the restraints of conscience, and do so too. We are tempted to think them the only happy people, and to incline to imitate them, and to join ourselves with them, that we may share in their gains, and eat of their dainties; and this is that which we are warned against: "Fret not thyself, neither be thou envious." Fretfulness and envy are sins that are their own punishments, they are the uneasiness of the spirit, and the rottenness of the bones; it is therefore in kindness to ourselves that we are warned against it. Yet that is not all; for, 3. When we look forward with an eye of faith, we shall see no reason to envy wicked people their prosperity, for their ruin is at the door, and they are ripening apace for it, ver. 2. They flourish but as the grass, and as the green herb, which no body envies or frets at. The flourishing of a godly man is like that of a fruitful tree, *Ps.* i. 3; but that of the wicked man like grass and herbs, which are very short-lived. 1st. They will soon wither of themselves. Outward prosperity is a fading thing, and so is the life itself, to which it is confined. 2nd. They will sooner be cut down by the judgments of God. Their triumphing is short, but their weeping and wailing will be everlasting.

Secondly. We are here counselled to live a life of confidence and complacency in God, and that will keep us from fretting at the prosperity of evil-doers. If we do well for our own souls, we shall see little reason to envy those that do

so ill for theirs. Here are three excellent precepts which we are to be ruled by, and to enforce them three precious promises which we may rely upon.

1. We must make God our hope in the way of duty, and then we shall have a comfortable subsistence in this world, ver. 3. 1st. It is required that we "trust in the Lord, and do good;" that we confide in God, and conform to him. The life of religion lies much in a believing reliance on God, his favour, his providence, his promise, his grace, and a diligent care to serve him and our generation according to his will. We must not think to trust in God, and then live as we list; no, it is not trusting God, but tempting him, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him; nor must we think to do good, and then to trust to ourselves and our own righteousness and strength; no, we must both trust in the Lord, and do good. And then, 2nd. It is promised that we shall be well provided for in this world; "So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." He doth not say, so shalt thou get preferment, dwell in a palace and be feasted—what needs that? a man's life consists not in the abundance of these things—but thou shalt have a place to live in, and that "in the land," in Canaan, the valley of vision; and thou shalt have food convenient for thee. This is more than we deserve; it is as much as a good man will indent for, *Gen.* xxviii. 20; and it is enough for one that is going to heaven. Thou shalt have a settlement, a quiet settlement, and a maintenance, a comfortable maintenance: "Verily thou shalt be fed." Some read it, 'Thou shalt be fed by faith,' as the just are said to live by faith; and it is good living, good feeding upon the promises. "Verily thou shalt be fed," as Elijah in the famine, with what is needful for thee. God himself is a shepherd, a feeder to all those that trust in him, *Ps.* xxiii. 1.

2. We must make God our heart's delight, and then we shall have our heart's desire, ver. 4. We must not only depend upon God, but solace ourselves in him. We must be well pleased that there is a God, that he is such a one as he has revealed himself to be, and that he is our God in covenant. We must delight ourselves in his beauty, bounty, and benignity; our souls must return to him, and repose in him as their rest, and their portion for ever. Being satisfied of his lovingkindness, we must be satisfied with it, and make that our exceeding joy, *Ps.* xliii. 4. We were commanded, ver. 3, to do good; and then follows this command, to delight in God, which is as much a privilege as a duty. If we make conscience of obedience to God, we may then take the comfort of a complacency in him; and even this pleasant duty of delighting in God has a promise annexed to it, which is very full and precious, enough to recompense the hardest services; "He shall give thee the desires of thy heart." He has not promised to gratify all the appetites of the body, and the humours of the fancy, but to grant all the desires of the heart, all the cravings of the renewed sanctified soul. What is the desire of the heart of a good man? It is this, to know, and love, and live to God, to please him, and to be pleased in him.

3. We must make God our guide, and submit in every thing to his conduct and dispose; and then all our affairs, even those that seem most intricate and perplexed, shall be made to issue well, and to our satisfaction, ver. 5, 6.

1st. The duty is very easy, and if we do it aright it will make us easy. "Commit thy way unto the Lord;" 'roll thy way upon the Lord,' so the margin reads it, *Pr.* xvi. 3; *Ps.* lv. 22, "Cast thy burthen upon the Lord," that is, the burthen of thy care, 1 *Pet.* v. 7. We must roll it off ourselves, so as not to afflict and perplex ourselves with thoughts about future events, *Mat.* vi. 25; not to cumber and trouble ourselves either with contrivance of the means or with expectation of the end; but refer it to God, leave it to him by his wise and good providence to order and dispose of all our concerns as he pleaseth. 'Reveal thy way unto the Lord,' (so the Seventy;) that is, by prayer spread thy case and all thy cares about it before the Lord, as "Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh," *Jud.* xi. 11; and then trust in him to bring it to a good issue, with a full satisfaction that all is well that God doth. We must do our duty, that must be our care, and then leave the event with God; "Sit still, and see how the matter will fall," *Ru.* iii. 18. We must follow providence, and not force it; subscribe to Infinite Wisdom, and not prescribe.

2nd. The promise is very sweet. *First.* In general, he shall bring that to pass, whatever it is, which thou hast committed to him, if not to thy contrivance, yet to thy content. He will find means to extricate thee out of thy straits, to prevent thy fears, and bring about thy purposes to thy satisfaction. *Secondly.* In particular, he will take care of thy reputation, and bring thee out of thy difficulties, not only with comfort, but with credit and honour. "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday," ver. 6, that is, he shall make it to appear that thou art an honest man, and that is honour enough. 1*st.* It is implied that the righteousness and judgment of good people may for a time be clouded and eclipsed, either by remarkable rebukes of Providence, (Job's great afflictions darkened his righteousness,) or by the malicious censures and reproaches of men, who put them under ill characters, which they no way deserve, and lay to their charge things which they know not. 2*nd.* It is promised that God will in due time roll away the reproach they are under, clear up their innocency, and bring forth their righteousness to their honour; perhaps in this world, at farthest in the great day, *Mat.* xiii. 43. Note, If we take care to keep a good conscience, we may leave it to God to take care of our good name.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him:
Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way,
Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.
8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath:
Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.
9 For evildoers shall be cut off: [the earth.
But those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit
10 For yet a little while, and the wicked *shall* not *be:*
Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it *shall*
11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; [not *be.*
And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.
12 The wicked plotteth against the just,
And gnasheth upon him with his teeth.
13 The LORD shall laugh at him:
For he seeth that his day is coming. [their bow,
14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent
To cast down the poor and needy,
And to slay such as be of upright conversation.
15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart,
And their bows shall be broken.
16 A little that a righteous man hath
Is better than the riches of many wicked.
17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken:
But the LORD upholdeth the righteous.
18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright:
And their inheritance shall be for ever.
19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time:
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.
20 But the wicked shall perish, [lambs:
And the enemies of the LORD *shall be* as the fat of
They shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

In these verses we have,

First. The foregoing precepts inculcated; for we are so apt to disquiet ourselves with needless, fruitless discontents and distrusts, that it is necessary there should be precept upon precept, and line upon line, to suppress them, and arm us against them.

1. Let us compose ourselves by believing in God: "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him," ver. 7; that is, be well reconciled to all he doth, and acquiesce in it, for that is best that is, because it is what God has appointed; and be well satisfied that he will still make all to work for good to us, though we know not how or which way. 'Be silent to the Lord,' so the word is; not with a sullen, but a submissive silence. A patient bearing what is laid upon us, and a patient expectation of what is farther appointed for us, is as much our interest as it is our duty; for it will make us always easy, and there is a great deal of reason for it; for it is making a virtue of necessity.

2. Let us not discompose ourselves at what we see in this world: "Fret not thyself because of him who prospers in his" wicked "way;" that, though he is an ill man, yet thrives, and grows rich and great in the world. No, nor because of him who doth mischief with his power and wealth, and "brings wicked devices to pass," against those that are virtuous and good; who seems to have gained his point, and to have run them down. If thy heart begins to rise at it, stroke down thy folly, and cease from anger, ver. 8; check the first stirrings of discontent and envy, and do not harbour any hard thoughts of God and his providence upon this account; be not angry at any thing that God doth, but forsake that wrath; it is the worst kind of wrath that can be. "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil;" that is, do not envy them their prosperity, lest thou be tempted to fall in with them, and to take the same evil course that they take to enrich and advance themselves, or some desperate course to avoid them and their power. Note, A fretful, discontented spirit lies open to many temptations, and those that indulge it are in danger of doing evil.

Secondly. The foregoing reasons taken from the approaching ruin of the wicked, notwithstanding their prosperity, and the real happiness of the righteous, notwithstanding their troubles, are here much enlarged upon, and the same things repeated in a pleasing variety of expression. We were cautioned, ver. 7, not to envy the wicked, either their worldly prosperity, or the success of their plots against the righteous; and the reasons here given respect these two temptations severally.

1. Good people have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of wicked people, nor to grieve or be uneasy at it.

1st. Because the prosperity of the wicked will soon be at an end; ver. 9, "Evildoers shall be cut off," by some sudden stroke of Divine justice, in the midst of their prosperity. What they have got by sin will not only flow away from them, *Job* xx. 28, but they shall be carried away with it. See the end of these men, *Ps.* lxxiii. 17; how dear their ill-got gain will cost them, and you will be far from envying them, or from being willing to espouse their lot for better, for worse. Their ruin is sure, and it is very near; ver. 10, "Yet a little while and the wicked shall not be" what they now are; "they are brought into desolation in a moment," *Ps.* lxxiii. 19. Have a little patience, for "the Judge stands before the door," *Jas.* v. 8, 9. Moderate your passion, "for the Lord is at hand," *Phil.* iv. 5. And when it comes it will be an utter ruin, he and his shall be extirpated; the day that comes shall leave him neither root nor branch, *Mal.* iv. 1. "Thou shalt diligently consider his place," where but the other day he made a mighty figure, "but it shall not be;" you will not find it, he shall leave nothing valuable, nothing honourable behind him. To the same purpose, ver. 20, "The wicked shall perish;" their death is their perdition, because it is the period of all their joy, and a passage to endless misery. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;" but undone, for ever undone, are the dead that die in their sins. The wicked are the enemies of the Lord; so they make themselves who will not have him to reign over them, and as such he will reckon with them; "they shall consume as the fat of lambs, they shall consume into smoke." Their prosperity, which gratifies their sensuality, is like the fat of lambs; not solid or substantial, but loose and washy; and when their ruin comes they shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God, and be consumed as the fat of the sacrifices was upon the altar, whence it ascended in smoke. The day of God's vengeance on the wicked is represented as a "sacrifice of the fat of the kidneys of rams," *Isa.* xxxiv. 6; for he will be honoured by the ruin of his enemies, as he was by the sacrifices. Damned sinners are sacrifices, *Mar.* ix. 49. This is a good reason why we should not envy them their prosperity; while they are fed to the full, they are but in the fattening for the day of sacrifice, "like a lamb in a large place," *Hos.* iv. 16; and the more they prosper the more will God be glorified in their ruin.

2nd. Because the condition of the righteous even in this life is every way better and more desirable than that of the wicked, ver. 16. In general, "a little that a righteous man has" of the honour, wealth, and pleasure of this world, "is better than the riches of many wicked." Observe, (1.) The wealth of the world is so dispensed by the Divine providence, that it is often the lot of good people to have but a little of it, and of wicked people to have abundance of it; for thus God would shew us that the things of this world are not the best things, for if they were those would have most that are best and dearest to God. (2.) That a godly man's little is really better than a wicked man's much: see *Pr.* xv. 16, 17; xvi. 8; xxviii. 6. A godly man's estate, though never so little, is better than a wicked man's estate, though never so much, for it comes from a better hand; from a hand of special love, and not merely from a hand of common providence; it is enjoyed by a better title, God gives it to them by promise, *Gal.* iii. 18; it is theirs by virtue of their relation to Christ, who is the heir of all things; and it is put to a better use: it is sanctified to them by the blessing of God; "unto the pure all things are pure," *Tit.* i. 15. A little, wherewith God is served and honoured, is better than a

great deal prepared for Baal, or for a base lust. The promises here made to the righteous secure them such a happiness as that they need not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. Let them know to their comfort,

First. That they shall inherit the earth; that is, as much of it as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; they have the promises of the life that now is, 1 *Tim.* iv. 8. If all the earth were necessary to make them happy, they should have it. All is theirs, even the world, and things present, as well as things to come, 1 *Cor.* iii. 21, 22. They have it by inheritance, a safe and honourable title, not by permission only, and connivance. When evil-doers are cut off, the righteous sometimes inherit what they gathered; "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just," *Job* xxvii. 17. This promise is here made, 1*st.* To those that live a life of faith; ver. 9, "Those that wait upon the Lord" as dependants on him, expectants from him, and supplicants to him, "they shall inherit the earth," as a token of his present favour to them, and an earnest of better things intended for them in the other world. God is a good master, that provides plentifully and well, not only for his working servants, but for his waiting servants. 2*nd.* To those that live a quiet and peaceable life; ver. 11, "The meek shall inherit the earth." They are in least danger of being injured and disturbed in the possession of what they have; and they have most satisfaction in themselves, and consequently the sweetest relish of their creature comforts. Our Saviour has made this a Gospel promise, and a confirmation of the blessing he pronounced on the meek, *Mat.* v. 5.

Secondly. That they shall "delight themselves in the abundance of peace," ver. 11. Perhaps they have not abundance of wealth to delight in, but they have that which is better,—abundance of peace, inward peace and tranquillity of mind. Peace with God, and then peace in God; that great peace which they have that love God's law, whom nothing shall offend, *Ps.* cxix. 165; that abundance of peace which is in the kingdom of Christ, *Ps.* lxxii. 7; that peace which the world cannot give, *Jno.* xiv. 27; and which the wicked cannot have, *Isa.* lvii. 21. This they shall delight themselves in, and in it they shall have a continual feast, while they that have abundance of wealth do but cumber and perplex themselves with it, and have little delight in it.

Thirdly. That God knows their days, ver. 18. He takes particular notice of them, of all they do, and of all that happens to them. He keeps account of the days of their service, and not one day's work shall go unrewarded; and of the days of their suffering, that for those also they may receive a recompence. He knows their fair days, and hath pleasure in their prosperity; he knows their cloudy and dark days, the days of their affliction, and "as the day is so shall the strength be."

Fourthly. That "their inheritance shall be for ever." Their time on earth is reckoned by days, which will be soon numbered; God takes cognizance of them, and gives them the blessings of every day in its day, but it was never intended that their inheritance should be confined within the limits of those days; no, that must be the portion of an immortal soul, and therefore must last as long as that lasts, and will run parallel with the longest line of eternity itself: "their inheritance shall be for ever;" not their inheritance in the earth, but that incorruptible, indefeasible one, which is laid up for them in heaven. They that are sure of an everlasting inheritance in the other world have no reason to envy the wicked their transitory possessions and pleasures in this world.

Fifthly. That in the worst of times it shall go well with them; ver. 19, "They shall not be ashamed" of their hope and confidence in God, nor of the profession they have made of religion; for the comfort of that will stand them in stead, and be a real support to them in evil times. When others droop, they shall lift up their heads with joy and confidence: even "in the days of famine," when others are dying for hunger round about them, "they shall be satisfied," as Elijah was. Some way or other, God will provide food convenient for them, or give them hearts to be satisfied and content without it; so that, if they should be "hardly bestead and hungry," they shall not (as the wicked do) "fret themselves, and curse their king, and their God," *Isa.* viii. 21; but rejoice in God as the God of their salvation, even when the fig-tree doth not blossom, *Hab.* iii. 17, 18.

2. Good people have no reason to fret at the success of the designs of the wicked against the just in some measure and degree. Suppose they do bring some of their wicked devices to pass, which makes us fear they will gain their point, and bring them all to pass; yet let us cease from anger, and not fret ourselves, so as to think of giving up the cause. For,

1st. Their plots will be their shame, ver. 12, 13. It is true "the wicked plotteth against the just;" there is a rooted enmity in the seed of the wicked one against the righteous seed. Their aim is, if they can, to destroy their righteousness, if that fail, then to destroy them. To this end, they have acted with a great deal both of cursed policy and contrivance, they plot, they practise against the just; and of cursed zeal and fury, "they gnash upon them with their teeth:" so desirous are they, if they could get it into their power, to eat them up; and so full of rage and indignation are they, because it is not in their power. But by all this they do but make themselves ridiculous; "The Lord shall laugh at them," *Ps.* ii. 4, 5. They are proud and insolent; but God shall pour contempt upon them. He is not only displeased with them, but he despiseth them and all their attempts as vain and ineffectual, and their malice as impotent, and in a chain, for "he sees that his day is coming;" that is, *First.* The day of God's reckoning, the day of the revelation of his righteousness, which now seems clouded and eclipsed. Men have their day now, "This is your hour," *Lu.* xxii. 53; but God will have his day shortly; a day of recompences, a day which will set all to rights, and render that ridiculous which now passeth for glorious. "It is a small thing to be judged of men's judgment," 1 *Cor.* iv. 3. God's day will give a decisive judgment. *Secondly.* The day of their ruin, the wicked man's day, the day set for his fall; that day is coming,—which notes delay, it is not yet come, but certainly it will come. The believing prospect of that day will enable the virgin the daughter of Zion to despise the rage of her enemies, and laugh them to scorn, *Isa.* xxxvii. 22.

2nd. Their attempts will be their destruction, ver. 14, 15. See here, *First.* How barbarous they are in their designs against good people. They prepare instruments of death, the sword and the bow, no less will serve; they hunt for the precious life; that which they design is to cast down and slay, it is the blood of the saints they thirst after. They carry on the design very far, and it is near to be put in execution, they have drawn the sword and bent the bow; and all these military preparations are made against the helpless, the poor and needy, which speaks them very cowardly; and against the guiltless, such as be of upright conversation, that never gave them any provocation, nor offered injury to them or any other person, which speaks them very wicked. Uprightness itself will be no fence against their malice. But, *Secondly.* How justly their malice recoils upon themselves; "Their sword shall turn into their own heart," which implies the preservation of the righteous from their malice, and the filling up of the measure of their own iniquity by it. Sometimes that very thing proves to be their own destruction which they projected against their harmless neighbours. However, God's sword, which their provocations have drawn against themselves, will give them their death's wound.

3rd. Those that are not suddenly cut off, yet shall be so disabled to do any farther mischief that the interests of the church shall be effectually secured. "Their bows shall be broken," ver. 15; the instruments of their cruelty shall fail them, and they shall lose those whom they had made tools of to serve their bloody purposes with; nay, "their arms shall be broken," so that they shall not be able to go on with their enterprises. "But the Lord upholdeth the righteous;" so that they neither sink under the weight of their afflictions nor are run down by the violence of their enemies. He upholdeth them both in their integrity and in their prosperity; and they that are so upheld by the Rock of ages have no reason to envy the wicked the support of their broken reeds.

21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again:
But the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.
22 For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth;
And *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.
23 The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD:
And he delighteth in his way.
24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down:
For the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.
25 I have been young, and *now* am old;
Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken,
Nor his seed begging bread.
26 *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth;
And his seed *is* blessed.
27 Depart from evil, and do good;
And dwell for evermore.
28 For the LORD loveth judgment,
And forsaketh not his saints;
They are preserved for ever:
But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.
29 The righteous shall inherit the land,
And dwell therein for ever.
30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom,
And his tongue talketh of judgment.
31 The law of his God *is* in his heart;
None of his steps shall slide.
32 The wicked watcheth the righteous,
And seeketh to slay him.
33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand,
Nor condemn him when he is judged.

These verses are much to the same purpose with the foregoing verses of this psalm; for it is a subject worthy to be dwelt upon. Observe here,

First. What is required of us as the way to our happiness; which we may learn both from the characters here laid down and the directions here given. If we would be blessed of God,

1. We must make conscience of giving every body their own; for "the wicked borroweth, and payeth not again," ver. 21. It is the first thing which the Lord our God requires of us, that we do justly, and render to all their due. It is not only a shameful, paltry thing, but a sinful, wicked thing, not to repay what we have borrowed. Some make this an instance not so much of the wickedness of the wicked as of the misery and poverty to which they are reduced by the just judgment of God; that they shall be necessitated to borrow for their supply, and then be in no capacity to repay again, and so lie at the mercy of their creditors. And, whatever some men seem to think of it, as it is a great sin for those that are able to deny the payment of their just debts, so it is a great misery not to be able to pay them.

2. We must be ready to all acts of charity and beneficence. For, as it is an instance of God's goodness to the righteous, that he puts it into the power of his hand to be kind and to do good, (and so some understand it, God's blessing increaseth his little to that degree that he has abundance to spare for the relief of others,) so it is an instance of the goodness of the righteous man, that he has a heart proportionable to his estate; he "sheweth mercy, and giveth," ver. 21. "He is ever merciful," or every day, or all the day, merciful, "and lendeth;" and sometimes there is as true charity in lending as in giving; and giving and lending are then acceptable to God, when they come from a merciful disposition in the heart, which, if it be sincere, will be constant, and will keep us from being weary of well-doing. He that is truly merciful will be ever merciful.

3. We must leave our sins, and engage in the practice of serious godliness; ver. 27, "Depart from evil and do good;" cease to do evil, and abhor it; learn to do well, and cleave to it. This is true religion.

4. We must abound in good discourse, and with our tongues must glorify God and edify others. That is part of the character of a righteous man, ver. 30, that his mouth speaketh wisdom; not only he speaks wisely, but he speaks wisdom, like Solomon himself, for the instruction of those about him; his tongue talketh not of things idle and impertinent, but of judgment, that is, of the word and providence of God, and the rules of wisdom for the right ordering of the conversation. Out of the abundance of a good heart will the mouth speak that which is good, and to the use of edifying.

5. We must have our wills brought into an entire subjection to the will and word of God; ver. 31, "The law of God," of his God, "is in his heart;" and in vain do we pretend that God is our God, if we do not receive his law into our hearts, and resign ourselves to the government of it. It is but a jest and a mockery to speak wisdom, and to talk of judgment, ver. 30, unless we have the law in our hearts, and we think as we speak. The law of God must be a commanding, ruling principle in the heart; it must be a light there, a spring there, and then the conversation will be regular and uniform; none of his steps will slide; it will effectually prevent backsliding into sin, and the uneasiness that follows from it.

Secondly. What is assured to us as instances of our happiness and comfort, upon these conditions.

1. That we shall have the blessing of God, and that blessing shall be the spring, and sweetness, and security of all our temporal comforts and enjoyments; ver. 22, "Such as be blessed of God," as all the righteous are, with

a Father's blessing, by virtue of that "shall inherit the earth," or the land, for so the same word is translated, ver. 29; the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands. Our creature comforts are then comforts indeed to us, when we see them flowing from the blessing of God, from his favour, his promise, and his covenant with us; and if we are sure of the blessing of God we are sure not to want any thing that is good for us in this world. The earth shall yield us her increase, if God, as our own God, give us his blessing, *Ps.* lxvii. 6. And as those whom God blesseth are thus blessed indeed, for they shall inherit the land, so those whom he curseth are cursed indeed, and they shall be cut off and rooted out. And their extirpation by the Divine curse will set off the establishment of the righteous by the Divine blessing, and be a foil to it.

2. That God will direct and dispose of our actions and affairs, so as may be most for his glory; ver. 23. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." By his grace and Holy Spirit he directs the thoughts, affections, and designs of good men; he has all hearts in his hand, but theirs by their own consent; by his providence he overrules the events that are concerning them, so as to make their way plain before them, both what they should do and what they may expect. Observe, God orders the steps of a good man; not only his way in general, by his written word, but his particular steps by the whispers of conscience, saying, "This is the way, walk in it." He doth not always shew him his way at a distance, but leads him step by step, as children are led, and so keeps him in a continual dependence upon his conduct. And this, 1st. Because he delighteth in his way, and is well pleased with the paths of righteousness wherein he walks. "The Lord knows the way of the righteous," *Ps.* i. 6; knows it with favour, and therefore directs it. 2nd. That he may delight in his way. Because God orders his way according to his own will, therefore he delights in it; for, as he loves his own image upon us, so he is well pleased with what we do under his conduct.

3. That God will keep us from being ruined by our falls, either into sin or into trouble; ver. 24, "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down." 1st. It is possible a good man may be overtaken in a fault, but the grace of God shall recover him to repentance, so that "he shall not be utterly cast down." Though he may for a time lose the joys of God's salvation, yet they shall be restored to him; for God shall uphold him with his hand, uphold him with his free Spirit. The root shall be kept alive, though the leaf wither; and there will come a spring after the winter. 2nd. It is possible a good man may be in distress, his affairs embarrassed, his spirits sunk, but "he shall not be utterly cast down;" God will be the strength of his heart, when his flesh and heart fail, and will uphold him with his comforts, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

4. That we shall not want the necessary supports of this life; ver. 25, "I have been young, and now am old;" and of all the changes I have seen in men's outward condition, and the observations I have made upon them, "I never saw the righteous forsaken" of God and man, as I have sometimes seen wicked people abandoned both by heaven and earth; nor do I ever remember to have seen the seed of the righteous reduced to that extremity as to beg their bread. David had himself begged his bread of Ahimelech the priest, but it was when Saul hunted him; and our Saviour has taught us to except the case of persecution for righteousness' sake out of all the temporal promises, *Mar.* x. 30, because that has such peculiar honours and comforts attending it, as make it rather a gift (as the apostle reckons it, *Phil.* i. 29,) than a loss or grievance. But there are very few instances of good men, or their families, that are reduced to such extreme poverty as many wicked people bring themselves to by their wickedness. He had not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread forsaken, so some expound it. If they do want, God will raise them up friends to supply them, without a scandalous exposing of themselves to the reproach of common beggars; or if they go from door to door for meat, it shall not be with despair, as the wicked man "that wanders abroad for bread, saying, Where is it?" *Job* xv. 23. Nor shall he be denied, as the prodigal, that "would fain have filled his belly, but no man gave unto him," *Lu.* xv. 16. Nor shall he grudge if he be not satisfied, as David's enemies, when they wandered up and down for meat, *Ps.* lix. 15. Some make this promise relate especially to those that are charitable and liberal to the poor, and to intimate that David never observed any that brought themselves to poverty by their charity, but it is withholding more than is meet that tendeth to poverty, *Pr.* xi. 24.

5. That God will not desert us, but graciously protect us in our difficulties and straits; ver. 28, "The Lord loveth judgment," that is, he delights in doing justice himself, and he delights in those that do justice, and therefore "he forsaketh not his saints" in affliction, when others make themselves strange to them, and become shy of them; but he takes care that they be preserved for ever, that is, that the saints in every age be taken under his protection, that the succession be preserved to the end of time, and that particular saints be preserved from all the temptations, and through all the trials, of this present time, to that happiness which shall be for ever. He will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, that is a preservation for ever, 2 *Tim.* iv. 18; *Ps.* xii. 7.

6. That we shall have a comfortable settlement in this world, and in a better when we leave this. That we shall dwell for evermore, ver. 27, and not be cut off, as the seed of the wicked, ver. 28. That we shall inherit the land which the Lord our God gives us, and dwell therein for ever, ver. 29. They shall not be tossed that make God their rest, and are at home in him. But on this earth there is no dwelling for ever, no continuing city; it is in heaven only, that city which hath foundations, that the righteous shall dwell for ever; that will be their everlasting habitation.

7. That we shall not become a prey to our adversaries that seek our ruin, ver. 32, 33. There is an adversary that takes all opportunities to do us a mischief; a wicked one that watcheth the righteous, as a roaring lion watcheth his prey, and seeketh to slay him. There are wicked men that do so, that are very subtle; they watch the righteous, that they may have an opportunity to do them a mischief effectually, and may have a pretence wherewith to justify themselves in the doing of it, and very spiteful, for they seek to slay him; but it may very well be applied to the wicked one, the devil, that old serpent, who has his wiles to entrap the righteous,—his devices, which we should not be ignorant of; that great red dragon that seeks to slay them; that roaring lion that goes about continually, restless and raging, and seeking whom he may devour. But it is here promised that he shall not prevail, neither Satan nor his instruments. 1st. He shall not prevail as a field adversary. "The Lord will not leave him in his hand;" he will not permit Satan to do what he would, nor will he withdraw his strength and grace from his people, but will enable them to resist and overcome him, and their faith shall not fail, *Lu.* xxii. 31, 32. A good man may fall into the hands of a messenger of Satan, and be sorely buffeted, but God will not leave him in his hands, 1 *Cor.* x. 13. 2nd. He shall not prevail as a law adversary. "God will not condemn him when he is judged," though urged to do it by the accuser of the brethren, that "accuseth them before our God day and night." His false accusations will be thrown out, as those exhibited against Joshua, *Zec.* iii. 1, 2, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan." "It is God that justifieth;" and then, "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"

34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way,
And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land:
When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.
35 I have seen the wicked in great power,
And spreading himself like a green bay tree.
36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he *was* not:
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.
37 Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright:
For the end of *that* man *is* peace.
38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together:
The end of the wicked shall be cut off.
39 But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD:
He is their strength in the time of trouble.
40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them:
He shall deliver them from the wicked,
And save them, because they trust in them.

The psalmist's conclusion of this sermon (for that is the nature of this poem) is of the same purport with the whole, and inculcates the same things.

First. The duty here pressed upon us is still the same; ver. 34, "Wait on the Lord, and keep his way;" that is, duty is ours, and we must mind it, and make conscience of it; keep God's way, and never turn out of it, nor loiter in it; keep close, keep going. But events are God's, and we must refer ourselves to him for the disposal of them; we must wait on the Lord, attend the motions of his providence, carefully observe them, and conscientiously accommodate ourselves to them. If we make conscience of keeping God's way, we may with cheerfulness wait on him, and commit to him our way; and we shall find him a good master, both to his working servants and to his waiting servants.

Secondly. The reasons to enforce this duty are much the same too; taken from the certain destruction of the wicked and the certain salvation of the righteous. This good man being tempted to envy the prosperity of the wicked, that he might fortify himself against the temptation, goes into the sanctuary of God, and leads us thither, *Ps.* lxxiii. 17; there he understands their end, and thence gives us to understand it, and by comparing that with the end of the righteous baffles the temptation, and puts it to silence. Observe,

1. The misery of the wicked at last, however they may prosper awhile. "The end of the wicked shall be cut off," ver. 38; and that cannot be well that will undoubtedly end so ill. The wicked in their end will be cut off from all good, and all hopes of it; a final period will be put to all their joys, and they will be for ever separated from the fountain of life to all evil. 1st. Some instances of the remarkable ruin of wicked people David had himself observed in this world: that the pomp and prosperity of sinners would not secure them from the judgments of God, when their day was come to fall; ver. 35, 36, "I have seen a wicked man," (the word is singular,) suppose Saul, or Ahithophel, (for David was an old man when he penned this psalm,) "in great power," 'formidable,' so some render it, "the terror of the mighty in the land of the living," carrying all before him with a high hand, and seeming to be firmly fixed, and finely flourishing; "spreading himself like a green bay tree," which produceth all leaves and no fruit; like a native, home-born Israelite, (so Dr. Hammond,) likely to take root. But what became of him? Eliphaz long before had learned when he saw the foolish taking root to curse his habitation, *Job* v. 3; and David saw cause for it, for this bay-tree is withered away as soon as the fig-tree Christ cursed; "He passed away as a dream," as a shadow; such was he and all the pomp and power he was so proud of. He was gone in an instant; "He was not; I sought him" with wonder, "but he could not be found." He had acted his part, and then quitted the stage; and there was no miss of him. 2nd. The total and final ruin of sinners, of all sinners, will shortly be made as much a spectacle to the saints as they are now sometimes made a spectacle to the world; ver. 34, "When the wicked are cut off," and cut off they certainly will be, "thou shalt see it," with awful adorations of the Divine justice. "The transgressors shall be destroyed together," ver. 28. In this world God singles out here one sinner, and there another, out of many, to be made an example, *in terrorem*, but in the day of judgment there will be a general destruction of all the transgressors, and not one shall escape. Thay that have sinned together shall be damned together; "Bind them in bundles to burn them."

2. The blessedness of the righteous at last. Let us see what will be the end of God's poor despised people.

1st. Preferment. There have been times, the iniquity of which has been such that men's piety has baulked their preferment in this world, and put them quite out of the way of raising estates; but those that keep God's way may be assured that in due time he will exalt them to inherit the land, ver. 34; he will advance them to a place in the heavenly mansions, to dignity, and honour, and true wealth in the new Jerusalem; to inherit that good land, that land of promise, of which Canaan was a type. He will exalt them above all contempt and danger.

2nd. Peace; ver. 37, Let all people "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright;" take notice of him to admire him, and imitate him; keep your eye upon him to observe what comes of him, and you will find that "the end of that man is peace." Sometimes the latter end of his days proves more comfortable to him than the beginning was; the storms blow over, and he is comforted again after the time that he was afflicted. However, if all his days continue dark and cloudy, perhaps his dying day may prove comfortable to him, and his sun may set bright; or, if it should set under a cloud, yet his future state will be peace, everlasting peace. They that walk in their uprightness while they live shall enter into peace when they die, *Isa.* lvii. 2. A peaceful death has concluded the troublesome life of many a good man; and all is well that thus ends everlastingly well. Balaam himself wished that his death and his last end might be like that of the righteous, *Num.* xxiii. 10.

3rd. Salvation; ver. 39, 40, "The salvation of the righteous," (which may be applied to the great salvation of which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, 1 *Pet.* i. 10,) that "is of the Lord." It will be the Lord's doing. The eternal salvation, that salvation of God which those shall see that order their conversation aright, *Ps.* l. 23, that is of the Lord too. And he that intends Christ and heaven for them, will be a God all-sufficient to them. "He is their strength in time of trouble," to support them under it, and carry them through it. "He shall help them, and deliver them;" help them to do their duties, to bear their burthens, and to maintain their spiritual conflicts; help them to bear their troubles well, and get good by them, and in due time shall deliver them out of their troubles. "He shall deliver them from the wicked" that would run them down, and swallow them up; shall secure them there where "the wicked

cease from troubling." "He shall save them;" not only keep them safe, but make them happy, "because they trust in him;" not because they have merited it from him, but because they have committed themselves to him, and reposed a confidence in him, and have thereby honoured him.

PSALM XXXVIII.

This is one of the penitential psalms. It is full of grief and complaint from the beginning to the end. David's sins and his afflictions are the cause of his grief, and the matter of his complaint. It should seem he was now sick and in pain, which minded him of his sins, and helped to humble him for them; he was at the same time deserted by his friends, and persecuted by his enemies, so that this psalm is calculated for the depth of distress, and a complication of calamities. He complains, I. Of God's displeasure, and of his own sin, which provoked God against him, ver. 1—5. II. Of his bodily sickness, ver. 6—10. III. Of the unkindness of his friends, ver. 11. IV. Of the injuries which his enemies did him, pleading his good carriage towards them, yet confessing his sins against God, ver. 12—20. Lastly. He concludes the psalm with earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence and help, ver. 21, 22. In singing this psalm we ought to be much affected with the malignity of sin; and if we have not such troubles as here are described, we know not how soon we may have, and therefore must sing of them by way of preparation; and we know that others have them, and therefore we must sing of them by way of sympathy.

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath:
Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
2 For thine arrows stick fast in me,
And thy hand presseth me sore.
3 *There is* no soundness in my flesh [bones
Because of thine anger; neither *is there any* rest in my
Because of my sin.
4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head:
As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
5 My wounds stink *and* are corrupt
Because of my foolishness.
6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease:*
And *there is* no soundness in my flesh.
8 I am feeble and sore broken:
I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.
9 Lord, all my desire *is* before thee;
And my groaning is not hid from thee.
10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me:
As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.
11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore;
And my kinsmen stand afar off.

The title of this psalm is very observable. It is a psalm "to bring to remembrance." The 70th psalm, which was likewise penned in a day of affliction, is so entitled. It is designed, 1. To bring to his own remembrance. We will suppose it penned when he was sick, and in pain, and then it teacheth us that times of sickness are times to bring to remembrance; to bring the sin to remembrance for which God contendeth with us; to awaken our consciences to deal faithfully and plainly with us, and set our sins in order before us for our humiliation. "In a day of adversity consider." Or we may suppose it penned after his recovery, but designed as a record of the convictions he was under, and the workings of his heart when he was in affliction, that upon every review of this psalm he might call to mind the good impressions then made upon him, and make a fresh improvement of them. To the same purpose was "the writing of Hezekiah when he had been sick." 2. To put others in mind of the same things which he was himself mindful of, and to teach them what to think, and what to say, when they are sick and in affliction; let them think as he did, and speak as he did.

First. He deprecates the wrath of God, and his displeasure, in his affliction; ver. 1, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath." With this same petition he began another prayer, for the visitation of the sick, *Ps.* vi. 1. This was most upon his heart, and should be most upon ours, when we are in affliction, that, however God rebukes and chastens us, it may not be in wrath and displeasure; for that will be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery. Those that would escape the wrath of God must pray against that, more than any outward affliction; and be content to bear any outward affliction, while it comes from and consists with the law of God.

Secondly. He bitterly laments the impressions of God's displeasure upon his soul; ver. 2, "Thine arrows stick fast in me." Let Job's complaint, *ch.* vi. 4, expound David's here. By the arrows of the Almighty, he means the terrors of God, which did set themselves in array against him. He was under a very melancholy, frightful apprehension of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and thought he could look for nothing but judgment and fiery indignation to devour him. God's arrows, as they are sure to hit the mark, so they are sure to stick where they hit, to stick fast, till he is pleased to draw them out, and to bind up with his comforts the wound he has made with his terrors. This will be the everlasting misery of the damned; the arrows of God's wrath will stick fast in them, and the wound will be incurable. "Thy hand," thy heavy hand, "presseth me sore," and I am ready to sink under it; it not only lies hard upon me, but it lies long; and who knows the power of God's anger, the weight of his hand! Sometimes God shot his arrows and stretched forth his hand for David, *Ps.* xviii. 14; but now against him; so uncertain is the continuance of Divine comforts, where yet the continuance of Divine grace is assured. He complains of God's wrath, as that which inflicted the bodily distemper he was under; ver. 3, "There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger." The bitterness of it, infused in his mind, affected his body; but that was not the worst; it caused the disquietness of his heart, by reason of which he forgot the courage of a soldier, the dignity of a prince, and all the cheerfulness of the sweet psalmist of Israel, and roared terribly, ver. 8. Nothing will disquiet the heart of a good man so much as the sense of God's anger; which shews what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands. The way to keep the heart quiet is to keep ourselves in the love of God, and to do nothing to offend him.

Thirdly. He acknowledgeth his sin to be the procuring, provoking cause of all his troubles, and groans more under the load of guilt than any other load, ver. 3. He complains his flesh had no soundness, his bones had no rest, so great a toss was he in. It is "because of thine anger," that kindles the fire which burns so fierce; but in the next words he justifies God herein, and takes all the blame upon himself: It is "because of my sin." I have deserved it, and so have brought it upon myself: "mine own iniquities do correct me." If our trouble be the fruit of God's anger, we may thank ourselves, it is our sin that is the cause of it. Are we restless? It is sin that makes us so. If there were not sin in our souls there would be no pain in our bones, no illness in our bodies. It is sin, therefore, that this good man complains most of.

1. As a burthen, a heavy burthen; ver. 4, "Mine iniquities are gone over my head," as proud waters over a man that is sinking and drowning, or as a heavy burthen upon my head, pressing me down, more than I am able to bear or to bear up under. Note, Sin is a burthen. The power of sin dwelling in us is a weight, *Heb.* xii. 1; all are clogged with it, it keeps men from soaring upwards and pressing forward; all the saints are complaining of it as a body of death they are loaded with, *Rom.* vii. 24. The guilt of sin committed by us is a burthen, a heavy burthen; it is a burthen to God, he is pressed under it, *Am.* ii. 13; a burthen to the whole creation, which groans under it, *Rom.* viii. 21, 22. It will, first or last, be a burthen to the sinner himself, either a burthen of repentance, when he is pricked to the heart for it, labours and is heavy laden under it, or a burthen of ruin, when it sinks him to the lowest hell, and will for ever detain him there; it will be a talent of lead upon him, *Zec.* v. 8. Sinners are said to bear their iniquity. Threatenings are burthens.

2. As wounds, dangerous wounds; ver. 5, "My wounds stink and are corrupt;" as wounds in the body rankle and fester, and grow foul for want of being dressed and looked after; and it is through my own foolishness. Sins are wounds, *Gen.* iv. 23, painful, mortal wounds. Our wounds, by sin, are oftentimes in a bad condition, no care taken of them, no application made to them, and it is owing to the sinner's foolishness, in not confessing sin, *Ps.* xxxii. 3, 4. A slight sore neglected may prove of fatal consequence, and so may a slight sin, slighted and left unrepented of.

Fourthly. He bemoans himself because of his afflictions, and gives ease to his grief by giving vent to it, and pouring out his complaint before the Lord.

1. He was troubled in mind, his conscience was pained, and he had no rest in his own spirit; and a wounded spirit who can bear? He was troubled, or distorted, bowed down greatly, and went mourning all the day long, ver. 6. He was always pensive and melancholy, which made him a burthen and terror to himself. His spirit was feeble and sore broken, and his heart disquieted, ver. 8. Herein David, in his sufferings, was a type of Christ, who, being in his agony, cried out, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." This is a sorer affliction than any other in this world; whatever God is pleased to lay upon us, we have no reason to complain, as long as he preserves to us the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences.

2. He was sick and weak in body; his loins filled with a loathsome disease, some swelling, or ulcer, or inflammation; some think a plague-sore, such as Hezekiah's boil; and there was no soundness in his flesh, but, like Job, he was all over distempered. See, 1st. What vile bodies these are which we carry about with us, and what grievous diseases they are liable to, and what an offence and grievance they may soon be made by some diseases to the souls that animate them, as they always are a cloud and clog. 2nd. That the bodies both of the greatest and of the best of men have in them the same seeds of diseases that the bodies of others have, and are liable to the same disasters. David himself, though so great a prince, and so great a saint, was not exempt from the most grievous diseases; there was no soundness even in his flesh; probably this was after his sin in the matter of Uriah, and thus did he smart in his flesh for his fleshly lusts. When at any time we are distempered in our bodies, we ought to remember how God has been dishonoured in and by our bodies. He was feeble and sore broken, ver. 8. His heart panted, and was in a continual palpitation, ver. 10. His strength and limbs failed him; as for the light of his eyes, that was gone from him, either with much weeping, or by a defluxion of rheum upon them, or through the lowness of his spirits, and the frequent returns of a deliquium. Note, Sickness will tame the strongest body, and the stoutest spirit. David was famed for his courage and great exploits; and yet, when God contended with him by bodily sickness, and the impressions of his wrath upon his mind, his hair is cut, his heart fails him, and he is become weak as water. Therefore, let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor any man set grief at defiance, however it may be thought at a distance.

3. His friends were unkind to him; ver. 11, "My lovers" (such as had been merry with him in the day of his mirth) now "stand aloof from my sore." They would not sympathize with him in his griefs, nor so much as come within hearing of his complaints; but, like the priest and Levite, *Lu.* x. 31, "passed by on the other side." Even his kinsmen, that were bound to him by blood and alliance, stood afar off. See what little reason we have to trust in man, or to wonder if we be disappointed in our expectations of kindness from men. Adversity tries friendship, and separates between the precious and the vile. It is our wisdom to make sure a Friend in heaven, who will not stand aloof from our sore, and from whose love no tribulation or distress shall be able to separate us. David in his troubles was a type of Christ in his agony, Christ on his cross, feeble and sore broken, and then deserted by his friends and kinsmen, who beheld afar off.

Lastly. In the midst of his complaints he comforts himself with the cognizance God graciously took both of his griefs and of his prayers; ver. 9, "Lord, all my desire is before thee;" thou knowest what I want, and what I would have, "my groaning is not hid from thee." Thou knowest the burthens I groan under, and the blessings I groan after. The groanings which cannot be uttered are not hid from Him that searcheth the heart, and knows what is the mind of the spirit, *Rom.* viii. 26, 27. In singing this, and praying it over, whatever burthen lies upon our spirits, we should by faith cast it upon God, and all our care concerning it, and then be easy.

12 They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me:*
And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things,
And imagine deceits all the day long.
13 But I, as a deaf *man,* heard not;
And *I was* as a dumb man *that* openeth not his mouth.
14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not,
And in whose mouth *are* no reproofs.

15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope:
Thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.
16 For I said, *Hear me,*
Lest *otherwise* they should rejoice over me: [me.
When my foot slippeth, they magnify *themselves* against
17 For I *am* ready to halt,
And my sorrow *is* continually before me.
18 For I will declare mine iniquity;
I will be sorry for my sin.
19 But mine enemies *are* lively, *and* they are strong:
And they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.
20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries;
Because I follow *the thing that* good *is.*
21 Forsake me not, O LORD:
O my God, be not far from me.
22 Make haste to help me,
O Lord my salvation.

In these verses,

First. David complains of the power and malice of his enemies, who, it should seem, not only took occasion from the weakness of his body, and the trouble of his mind, to insult over him, but took advantage from thence to do him a mischief. He hath a great deal to say against them, which he humbly offers as a reason why God should appear for him, as *Ps.* xxv. 19, "Consider mine enemies."

1. They are very spiteful and cruel; "They seek my hurt;" nay, "they seek after my life," ver. 12. That life which was so precious in the sight of the Lord, and all good men, was aimed at, as if it had been forfeited, or a public nuisance. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman; it would wound the head, though it can but reach the heel. It is the blood of the saints that is thirsted after.

2. They are very subtle and politic. They lay snares, they imagine deceits, and herein they are restless and unwearied; they do it all the day long; they speak mischievous things one to another; that is, every one has something or other to propose, that may be a mischief to me. Mischief covered and carried on by deceit may well be called a snare.

3. They are very insolent and abusive. "When my foot slippeth;" that is, when I fall into any trouble, or when I make any mistake, misplace a word, or take a false step, "they magnify themselves against me;" they are pleased with it, and promise themselves that it will ruin my interest, and that if I slip I shall certainly fall and be undone.

4. They are not only unjust, but very ungrateful; "They hate me wrongfully," ver. 19. I never did them any ill turn, nor so much as bore them any ill-will, nor ever gave them any provocation; nay, "they render evil for good," ver. 20. Many a kindness I have done them, for which I might have expected a return of kindness; but "for my love they are my adversaries," *Ps.* cix. 4; such a rooted enmity there is in the hearts of wicked men to goodness for its own sake, that they hate it, even then when they themselves have the benefit of it; they hate prayer, even in those that pray for them; and hate peace, even in those that would be at peace with them: but very ill-natured those are whom no courtesy will oblige, but they are rather exasperated by it.

5. They are very impious and devilish; they are my adversaries purely because "I follow the thing that good is." They hated him not only for his kindness to them, but for his devotion and obedience to God; they hated him because they hated God, and all that bear his image. If we suffer ill for doing well, we must not think it strange; from the beginning it was so. Cain slew Abel because his works were righteous. Nor must we think it hard, because it will not be always so; for so much the greater will our reward be.

6. They are many and mighty; they are lively, they are strong, they are multiplied; ver. 19, "Lord, how they are increased that trouble me," *Ps.* iii. 1. Holy David was weak and faint, his heart panted, and his strength failed; he was melancholy and of a sorrowful spirit, and persecuted by his friends; but at the same time his wicked enemies were strong and lively, and their number increased. Let us not, therefore, pretend to judge of men's characters by their outward condition; none knows love or hatred by all that is before them. It should seem that David in this, as in other complaints he makes of his enemies, has an eye to Christ, whose persecutors were such as are here described,—perfectly lost to all honour and virtue. None hate Christianity but such as have first divested themselves of the first principles of humanity, and broken through its most sacred bonds.

Secondly. He reflects with comfort upon his own peaceable and pious behaviour, under all the injuries and indignities that were done him. It is then only that our enemies do us a real mischief, when they provoke us to sin, (*Neh.* vi. 13,) when they prevail to put us out of the possession of our own souls, and drive us from God and our duty. If by Divine grace we are enabled to prevent this mischief, we quench their fiery darts, and save ourselves harmless; if still we hold fast our integrity and our peace, who can hurt us? This David did here.

1. He kept his temper, and was not ruffled or discomposed by any of the slights that were put upon him, or the mischievous things that were said or done against him; ver. 13, 14, "I, as a deaf man, heard not;" I took no notice of the affronts put upon me, did not resent them, nor was put into disorder by them; much less did I meditate revenge, or study to return the injury. Note, The less notice we take of the unkindness and injuries that are done us, the more we consult the quiet of our own minds. Being deaf, he was dumb, as a man in whose mouth there are no reproofs; he was as silent as if he had nothing to say for himself, for fear of putting himself into a heat, and incensing his enemies yet more against him; he would not only not recriminate upon them, but not so much as vindicate himself, lest his necessary defence should be construed his offence. Though they sought after his life, and his silence might be taken for a confession of his guilt, yet he was as "a dumb man, that openeth not his mouth." Note, When our enemies are most clamorous, ordinarily it is our prudence to be silent, or to say little, lest we make ill worse. David could not hope by his mildness to win upon his enemies, or by his soft answers to turn away their wrath; for they were men of such base spirits that they rendered him evil for good, and yet he carried it thus meekly towards them, that he might prevent his own sin, and might have the comfort of it in the reflection. Herein David was a type of Christ, who was "as a sheep dumb before the shearer," and "when he was reviled, reviled not again;" and both are examples to us not to render railing for railing.

2. He kept close to his God by faith and prayer, and so both supported himself under these injuries, and silenced his own resentments of them. 1st. He trusted in God; ver. 15, "I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth, for in thee, O Lord, do I hope." I depend upon thee to plead my cause, and clear my innocency, and some way or other to put them to silence and shame. His lovers and friends, that should have owned him, and stood by him, and appeared as witnesses for him, withdrew from him, ver. 10. But God is a friend that will never fail us, if we hope in him; "I was as a man that heareth not, for thou wilt hear." What need I hear and God hear too? as 1 *Pet.* v. 7, "He careth for you," and what need you care and God care too? 'Thou wilt answer,' so some, and therefore I will say nothing. Note, It is a good reason why we should bear reproach and calumny with silence and patience, because God is a witness to all the wrong that is done us, and in due time will be a witness for us, and against those that do us wrong; therefore let us be silent, because if we be then we may expect that God will appear for us, for that is an evidence we trust in him; but if we undertake to manage for ourselves, we take God's work out of his hands, and forfeit the benefit of his appearing for us. Our Lord Jesus, therefore, "when he suffered, threatened not," because he "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously," 1 *Pet.* ii. 23, and we shall lose nothing at last by doing so. 'Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.' 2nd. He called upon God; ver. 16, "For I said, Hear me," that is supplied; "I said so," as ver. 15, "in thee do I hope, for thou wilt hear, lest they should rejoice over me;" I comforted myself with that, when I was apprehensive that they would run me down. It is a great support to us, when men are false and unkind, that we have a God to go to, whom we may be free with, and who will be faithful to us.

Thirdly. He here bewails his own follies and infirmities.

1st. He was very sensible of the present workings of corruption in him, and that he was now ready to repine at the providence of God, and to be put into a passion by the injuries men did him; "I am ready to halt," ver. 17. This will best be explained by a reflection like this which the psalmist made upon himself in a like case, *Ps.* lxxiii. 2, "My feet were almost gone, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked," so here, "I was ready to halt," ready to say, "I have cleansed my hands in vain." His sorrow was continual; "All the day long have I been plagued," *Ps.* lxxiii. 13, 14, and it was continually before him; he could not forbear poring upon it, and that made him almost ready to halt between religion and irreligion. The fear of this drove him to his God; "In thee do I hope," not only that thou wilt plead my cause, but that thou wilt prevent my falling into sin. Good men, by setting their sorrow continually before them, have been ready to halt, who by setting God always before them, have kept their standing.

2nd. He remembered against himself his former transgressions, acknowledging that by them he had brought these troubles upon himself, and forfeited the Divine protection. Though before men he could justify himself, before God he will judge and condemn himself; ver. 18, "I will declare mine iniquity," and not cover it; "I will be sorry for my sin," and not make a light matter of it; and this helped to make him silent under the rebukes of Providence and the reproaches of men. Note, If we be truly penitent for sin, that will make us patient under affliction, and particularly under unjust censures. Two things are required in repentance: 1st. Confession of sin; "I will declare mine iniquity;" I will not only in general own myself a sinner, but I will make a particular acknowledgment of what I have done amiss. We must declare our sins before God freely and fully, and with their aggravating circumstances, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves. 2nd. Contrition for sin. I will be sorry for it. Sin will have sorrow; every true penitent grieves for the dishonour he has done to God, and the wrong he has done to himself; 'I will be in care,' or 'fear about my sin,' so some, in fear, lest it ruin me, and in care to get it pardoned.

Fourthly. He concludes with very earnest prayers to God for his gracious presence with him, and seasonable powerful succour in his distress; ver. 21, 22, "Forsake me not, O Lord," though my friends forsake me, and though I deserve to be forsaken by thee; "be not far from me," as my unbelieving heart is ready to fear thou art. Nothing goes nearer to the heart of a good man in affliction than to be under the apprehension of God's deserting him in wrath; nor doth any thing therefore come more feelingly from his heart than this prayer, "Lord, be not thou far from me; make haste for my help," for I am ready to perish, and in danger of being lost, if relief do not come quickly. God gives us leave not only to call upon him when we are in trouble, but to hasten him. He pleads, Thou art my God, whom I serve, and on whom I depend to bear me out; and my salvation, who alone art able to save me, who hast engaged thyself by promise to save me, and from whom alone I expect salvation. Is any afflicted? let him thus pray, let him thus plead, let him thus hope, in singing this psalm.

PSALM XXXIX.

David seems to have been in a great toss when he penned this psalm, and, upon some account or other, very uneasy; for it is with some difficulty that he conquers his passion, and composeth his spirit himself to take that good counsel which he had given to others, *Ps.* xxxvii., to rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, without fretting; for it is easier to give the good advice than to give the good example of quietness under affliction. What was the particular trouble which gave occasion for the conflict David was now in, doth not appear. Perhaps it was the death of some dear friend or relation that was the trial of his patience, and that suggested to him these meditations of mortality; and at the same time it should seem he himself was weak and ill, and under some prevailing distemper. His enemies likewise were seeking advantages against him, and watched for his halting that they might have something to reproach him for. Thus aggrieved, I. He relates the struggle that was in his breast between grace and corruption, between passion and patience, ver. 1—3. II. He meditates upon the doctrine of man's frailty and mortality, and prays to God to instruct him in it, ver. 4—6. III. He applies himself to God for the pardon of his sins, the removal of his afflictions, and the lengthening out of his life till he was ready for death, ver. 7—13. This is a funeral psalm, and very proper for the occasion. In singing of it, we should get our hearts duly affected with the brevity, uncertainty, and calamitous state of human life; and those on whose comforts God has by death made breaches, will find this psalm of great use to them, in order to their obtaining what we ought to aim much at under such an affliction, which is to get it sanctified to us for our spiritual benefit, and to get our hearts reconciled to the holy will of God in it.

To the chief Musician, *even* to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

I SAID, I will take heed to my ways,
That I sin not with my tongue:
I will keep my mouth with a bridle,
While the wicked is before me.
2 I was dumb with silence,

I held my peace, *even* from good;
And my sorrow was stirred.
3 My heart was hot within me,
While I was musing the fire burned:
Then spake I with my tongue,
4 LORD, make me to know mine end,
And the measure of my days, what it *is*;
That I may know how frail I *am*.
5 Behold, thou hast made my days *as* an handbreadth;
And mine age *is* as nothing before thee: [Selah.
Verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity.
6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew:
Surely they are disquieted in vain: [them.
He heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather

David here recollects, and leaves upon record, the workings of his heart under his afflictions, and it is good for us to do so, that what was thought amiss may be amended, and what was well thought of may be improved the next time.

First. He remembered the covenants he had made with God to walk circumspectly, and to be very cautious both of what he did and what he said. When at any time we are tempted to sin, and are in danger of falling into it, we must call to mind the solemn vows we have made against sin, against that particular sin we are upon the brink of. God can and will mind us of them; *Jer.* ii. 20, "Thou saidst, I will not transgress," and therefore we ought to mind ourselves of them. So David did here.

1. He remembers that he had resolved in general to be very cautious and circumspect in his walking; ver. 1, "I said, I will take heed to my ways;" and it was well said, and what he would never unsay, and therefore must never gainsay. Note, 1st. It is the great concern of every one of us to take heed to our ways, that is, to walk circumspectly, while others walk at all adventures. 2nd. We ought stedfastly to resolve that we will take heed to our ways, and frequently to renew that resolution. Fast bind, fast find. 3rd. Having resolved to take heed to our ways, we must upon all occasions mind ourselves of that resolution, for it is a covenant never to be forgotten, but which we must be always mindful of.

2. He remembers that he had in particular covenanted against tongue sins. That he would not-sin with his tongue, that he would not speak amiss, either to offend God, or "offend the generation of the righteous," *Ps.* lxxiii. 15. It is not so easy as we could wish not to sin in thought; but if an evil thought should arise in his mind he would lay his hand upon his mouth, and suppress it, that it should go no farther; and this is so great an attainment, that "if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man," and so needful a one, that he who "seems to be religious, but bridles not his tongue, his religion is vain." David had resolved, 1st. That he would at all times watch against tongue sins. "I will keep a bridle," or muzzle, "upon my mouth." A bridle upon it, as upon an unruly horse, to guide and direct it, to check and curb it, to keep it in the right way, and on a good pace: see *Jas.* iii. 3. Watchfulness in the habit is the bridle upon the head; watchfulness in the act and exercise is the hand upon the bridle, a muzzle upon it, as upon an unruly dog that is fierce and doth mischief. By particular stedfast resolution, corruption is restrained from breaking out at the lips, and so is muzzled. 2nd. That he would double his guard against them, when there was most danger of scandal, "when the wicked is before me." When he was in company with the wicked, he would take heed of saying any thing that might harden them, or give occasion to them to blaspheme. If good men light into bad company, they must take heed what they say. Or, "when the wicked is before me," that is, in my thoughts, when he was contemplating the pride and power, the prosperity and flourishing estate of evil-doers, he was tempted to speak amiss, and therefore then he would take special care what he said. Note, The stronger the temptation to a sin is, the stronger the resolution must be against it.

Secondly. Pursuant to these covenants he made a shift, with much ado, to bridle his tongue; ver. 2, "I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good." His silence was commendable, and the greater the provocation was, the more praiseworthy was his silence. Watchfulness and resolution in the strength of God's grace will do more towards the bridling of the tongue than we can imagine, though it be an unruly evil. But what shall we say of his keeping silence even from good? Was it his wisdom that he refrained good discourse when the wicked were before him, because he would not cast pearls before swine? I rather think it was his weakness; because he might not say any thing he would say nothing, but ran into an extreme, which was a reproach to the law, for that prescribes a mean between extremes. The same law which forbids all corrupt communications requires that which is good, and to the use of edifying, *Eph.* iv. 29.

Thirdly. The less he spoke the more he thought, and the more warmly. Binding the distempered part did but draw the humour to it. "My sorrow was stirred, my heart was hot within me," ver. 3. He could bridle his tongue, but he could not keep his passion under, though he suppressed the smoke that was as a fire in his bones; and while he was musing upon his afflictions, and upon the prosperity of the wicked, the fire burned. Note, Those that are of a fretful, discontented spirit, ought not to pore much, for while they suffer their thoughts to dwell upon the causes of their calamity the fire of their discontent is fed with fuel, and burns the more furiously. Impatience is a sin that has its ill cause within ourselves, and that is musing, and its ill effect upon ourselves, and that is no less than burning. If, therefore, we would prevent the mischief of ungoverned passions, we must redress the grievance of ungoverned thoughts.

Fourthly. When he did speak at last, it was to the purpose. At the last I spake with my tongue. And some make what he said to be the breach of his good purpose, and that in what he said he sinned with his tongue; and so they make what follows to be a passionate wish that he might die, like Elijah, 1 *Kin.* xix. 4, and Job, *ch.* vi. 8; but I rather take it to be, not the breach of his good purpose, but the reformation of his mistake in carrying it too far; he had kept silence from good, but now he would so keep silence no longer. He had nothing to say to the wicked that were before him, for to them he knew not how to place his words, but, after long musing, the first word he said was a prayer, and a devout meditation upon a subject which it will be good for us all to think much of.

1. He prays to God to make him sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death; ver. 4, "Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days." He doth not mean, Lord, let me know how long I shall live, and when I shall die; we could not in faith pray such a prayer, for God has nowhere promised to let us know, but has in wisdom locked up that knowledge among the secret things which belong not to us, nor would it be good for us to know it; but, "Lord, make me to know my end," is, Lord, give me wisdom and grace to consider it, *Deu.* xxxii. 29, and to improve what I know concerning it. "The living know that they shall die," *Eccl.* ix. 5, but few care for thinking of it; we have therefore need to pray, that God by his grace would conquer that aversion which is in our corrupt hearts to the thoughts of death. Lord, make me to consider, 1st. What death is. It is my end, the end of my life, and all the employments and enjoyments of life; it is the end of all men, *Eccl.* vii. 2. It is a final period to our state of probation and preparation, and an awful entrance upon a state of recompence and retribution. To a wicked man, it is the end of all his joys; to a godly man, it is the end of all his griefs. Lord, give me to know my end; that is, to be better acquainted with death, and to make it more familiar to me, *Job* xvii. 14; and to be more affected with the greatness of the change, Lord, give me to consider what a serious thing it is to die. 2nd. How near it is. Lord, give me to consider the measure of my days, that they are measured in the counsel of God, the end is a fixed end, so the word signifies, ("My days are determined," *Job* xiv. 5,) and that the measure is but short; My days will soon be numbered and finished. When we look upon death as a thing at a distance, we are tempted to adjourn the necessary preparations for it; but when we consider how short life is we shall see ourselves concerned to do what our hand finds to do, not only with all our might, but with all possible expedition. 3rd. That it is continually working in us. Lord, give me to consider how frail I am, how scanty the stock of life is, and how faint the spirits, which are as the oil to keep that lamp burning. We find, by daily experience, that the earthly house of this tabernacle is mouldering and going to decay; Lord, make us to consider this, that we may secure mansions in the house not made with hands.

2. He meditates upon the brevity and vanity of life, pleading it with God for relief under the burthens of life, as Job often, and pleading it with himself for his quickening to the business of life.

1st. Man's life on earth is short, and of no continuance, and that is a reason why we should sit loose to it, and prepare for the end of it; ver. 5, "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth," the breadth of four fingers, a certain dimension, a small one, and the measure whereof we have always about us, always before our eyes. We need no rod, no pole, no measuring line, wherewith to take the dimension of our days, nor any skill in arithmetic wherewith to compute the number of them; no, we have the standard of them at our fingers'-end, and there is no multiplication of it; it is but one handbreadth in all. Our time is short, and God has made it so; for the number of our months is with him. It is short, and he knows it to be so; it is as nothing before thee. He remembers how short our time is, *Ps.* lxxxix. 47. It is nothing in comparison with thee, so some. All time is nothing to God's eternity, much less our share of time.

2nd. Man's life on earth is vain, and of no value, and therefore it is folly to be fond of it, and wisdom to make sure of a better life. Adam is Abel, man is vanity, in his present state; is not what he seems to be, has not what he promised himself. He and all his comforts lie at a continual uncertainty, and if there were not another life after this, all things considered, he were made in vain. He is vanity, that is, he is mortal, he is mutable. Observe how emphatically this truth is expressed here. *First.* Every man is vanity, without exception; high and low, rich and poor, all meet in this. *Secondly.* He is so at his best estate, when he is young, and strong, and healthful, in wealth and honour, and the height of prosperity; when he is most easy, and merry, and secure, and thinks his mountain stands strong. *Thirdly.* He is altogether vanity, as vain as you can imagine. All man is all vanity, so it may be read; every thing about him is uncertain, nothing is substantial and durable but what relates to the new man. *Fourthly.* Verily he is so. This is a truth of undoubted certainty, but which we are very unwilling to believe, and need to have solemnly attested to us, as indeed it is by frequent instances. *Fifthly.* Selah is annexed, as a note commanding observation. Stop here, and pause a while, that you may take time to consider and apply this truth, that every man is vanity. We ourselves are so.

Now for the proof of the vanity of man, as mortal, he here instances in three things, and shews the vanity of each of them, ver. 6. 1*st.* The vanity of our joys and honours; "Surely every man walketh" (even when he walks in state, when he walks in pleasure) in a shadow, in an image, "in a vain show." When he makes a figure, his fashion passeth away, and his great pomp is but great fancy, *Acts* xxv. 23. It is but a show, and therefore a vain show, like the rainbow, the gaudy colours of which must needs vanish, and disappear quickly, when the substratum is but a cloud, a vapour; such is life, *Jas.* iv. 14, and therefore such are all the gaieties of it. 2*nd.* The vanity of our griefs and fears; "Surely they are disquieted in vain." Our disquietments are often groundless; we vex ourselves without any just cause, and the occasions of our trouble are many times the creatures of our own fancy and imagination: and they are always fruitless; we disquiet ourselves in vain, for we cannot, with all our disquietment, alter the nature of things, nor the counsel of God. Things will be as they are, when we have disquieted ourselves never so much about them. 3*rd.* The vanity of our cares and toils. He takes a great deal of pains to heap up riches, and they are but like heaps of muck in the furrows of the field, good for nothing unless they be spread. But when he has filled his treasures with his trash he knows not who shall gather them, nor to whom they shall descend when he is gone; for he shall not take them away with him. He asks not, For whom do I labour? and that is his folly, *Eccl.* iv. 8. But if he did ask he could not tell whether he should be a wise man or a fool, a friend or a foe, *Eccl.* ii. 19. "This is vanity."

7 And now, Lord, what wait I for?
My hope *is* in thee.
8 Deliver me from all my transgressions:
Make me not the reproach of the foolish.
9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth;
Because thou didst *it*.
10 Remove thy stroke away from me:
I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.
11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity,
Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth:
Surely every man *is* vanity. Selah.
12 Hear my prayer, O LORD,
And give ear unto my cry;

Hold not thy peace at my tears:
For I *am* a stranger with thee,
And a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.
13 O spare me, that I may recover strength,
Before I go hence, and be no more.

The psalmist having meditated on the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the vanity and vexation of spirit that attends all the comforts of life, here, in these verses, turns his eyes and heart heavenward. When there is no solid satisfaction to be had in the creature, it is to be found in God, and in communion with him; and to him we should be driven by our disappointments in the world. David here speaks,

First. His dependence on God, ver. 7. Seeing all is vanity, and man himself is so, 1. He despairs of a happiness in the things of the world, and disclaims all expectations from it. "Now, Lord, what wait I for?" Even nothing from the things of sense and time; I have nothing to wish for, nothing to hope for from this earth. Note, The consideration of the vanity and frailty of human life should deaden our desires to the things of this world, and lower our expectations from it. If the world be such a thing as this, God deliver me from having or seeking my portion in it. We cannot count upon constant health and prosperity, nor upon comfort in every relation, for it is all as uncertain as our continuance here. Now, though I have sometimes foolishly promised myself this and the other from the world, now I am of another mind. 2. He takes hold of happiness and satisfaction in God; "My hope is in thee." Note, When creature confidences fail it is our comfort that we have a God to go to, a God to trust to, and we should thereby be quickened to take so much the faster hold of him by faith.

Secondly. His submission to God, and his cheerful acquiescence in his holy will, ver. 9. If our hope be in God for a happiness in the other world, we may well afford to reconcile ourselves to all the dispensations of his providence concerning us in this world. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth," in a way of complaint and murmuring. He now again recovered that serenity and sedateness of mind which was disturbed, ver. 2. Whatever comforts he is deprived of, whatever crosses he is burthened with, he will be easy; "because thou didst it." It did not come to pass by chance; but according to thine appointment. We may here see, 1. A good God doing all, and ordering all events concerning us. Of every event we may say, This is the finger of God, it is the Lord's doing, whoever were the instruments. 2. A good man for that reason saying nothing against it. He is dumb, he has nothing to object, no question to ask, no dispute to raise upon it; all that God doth is well done.

Thirdly. His desire towards God, and the prayers he puts up to him; "Is any afflicted? let him pray," as David here,

1. For the pardoning of his sin and the preventing of his shame, ver. 8. Before he prays, ver. 10, "Remove thy stroke from me," he prays, ver. 8, "Deliver me from all mine offences," from the guilt I have contracted, the punishment I have deserved, and the power of corruption I have been captivated by. When God forgives our sins, he delivers us from them, he delivers us from them all. He pleads, "Make me not a reproach to the foolish." Wicked people are foolish people; and they then shew their folly most when they think to shew their wit by scoffing at God's people. When David prays that God would pardon his sins, and not make him a reproach, it is to be taken as a prayer for peace of conscience; Lord, leave me not to the power of melancholy, which the foolish will laugh at me for. And as a prayer for grace, that God would never leave him to himself so far as to do any thing that might make him a reproach to bad men. Note, This is a good reason why we should both watch and pray against sin, because the credit of our profession is nearly concerned in the preservation of our integrity.

2. For the removal of his affliction, that he might speedily be eased of his present burthens; ver. 10, "Remove thy stroke away from me." Note, When we are under the correcting hand of God, our eye must be to God himself, and not to any other for relief; he only that inflicts the stroke can remove it. And we may then in faith, and with satisfaction, pray that our afflictions may be removed, when our sins are pardoned, *Isa.* xxxviii. 17, and when as here the affliction is sanctified, and has done its work, and we are humbled under the hand of God.

1st. He pleads the great extremity he was reduced to by his affliction, which made him the proper object of God's compassion: "I am consumed by the blow of thy hand." His sickness prevailed to that degree that his spirits failed, his strength was wasted, and his body emaciated. The blow or conflict of thine hand has brought me even to the gates of death. Note, The strongest, and boldest, and best of men cannot bear up under, much less make head against, the power of God's wrath. It was not his case only, but any man will find himself an unequal match for the Almighty, ver. 11. When God doth at any time contend with us, when with rebukes he corrects us, *First*. We cannot impeach the equity of his controversy, but must acknowledge that he is righteous in it; for whenever he correcteth man it is for iniquity. Our ways and our doings procure the trouble to ourselves, and we are beaten with a rod of our own making. It is "the yoke of our transgressions" though it be bound with his hand, *Lam.* i. 14. *Secondly*. We cannot oppose the effects of his controversy, but he will be too hard for us. As we have nothing to move in arrest of his judgment, so we have no way of escaping the execution. God's rebukes "make man's beauty to consume away like a moth;" we see it often, we feel it sometimes, how much the body is weakened and decayed by sickness in a little time. The countenance is changed; where is the ruddy cheek and lip, the sprightly eye, the lively look, the smiling face? It is the reverse of all this. What a poor thing is beauty, and what fools are they that are proud of it, or in love with it, when it will certainly and may quickly be consumed thus? Some make the moth to represent man, who is as easily crushed as a moth with the touch of a finger, *Job* iv. 19. Others make it to represent the Divine rebukes, which silently and insensibly waste and consume us, as the moth doth the garment. All which abundantly proves what he had said before, that surely every man is vanity, weak and helpless; so he will be found when God comes to contend with him.

2nd. He pleads the good impressions made upon him by his affliction. He hoped the end was accomplished for which it was sent, and that therefore it would be removed in mercy; and unless an affliction hath done its work, though it may be removed, it is not removed in mercy. *First*. It had set him a weeping, and he hoped God would take notice of that. When "the Lord God called to mourning," he answered the call, and accommodated himself to the dispensation, and therefore could in faith pray, "Lord, hold not thy peace at my tears," ver. 12. He that doth not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, much less his own children, will not hold his peace at their tears, but will either speak deliverance for them, (and if he speak it is done,) or in the meantime speak comfort to them, and make them to hear joy and gladness. *Secondly*. It had set him a praying; and afflictions are sent to stir up prayer. If they have that effect, and when we are afflicted we pray more, and pray better than before, we may hope that God will hear our prayer, and give ear to our cry; for the prayer which by his providence he gives occasion for, and which by his Spirit of grace he indites, shall not return void. *Thirdly*. It had helped to wean him from the world, and to take his affections off from it. Now he began more than ever to look upon himself as a stranger and sojourner here, like all his fathers, not at home in this world, but travelling through it to another, to a better, and would never reckon himself at home till he came to heaven. He pleads it with God; Lord, take cognizance of me, and of my wants and burthens, for I am a stranger here, and therefore meet with strange usage; I am slighted and oppressed as a stranger, and whence should I expect relief but from thee, from that other country to which I belong?'

Lastly. He prays for a reprieve yet a little longer; ver. 13, "O spare me," ease me, raise me up from this illness, "that I may recover strength" both in body and mind, that I may get into a more calm and composed frame of spirit, and may be better prepared for another world, before I go hence by death and shall be no more in this world. Some make this to be a passionate wish that God would send him help quickly or it would be too late, like that *Job* x. 20, 21. But I rather take it as a pious prayer that God would continue him here till by his grace he had made him fit to go hence, and that he might finish the work of life before his life was finished. "Let my soul live and it shall praise thee."

PSALM XL.

It should seem David penned this psalm upon occasion of his deliverance, by the power and goodness of God, from some great and pressing trouble, by which he was in danger of being overwhelmed; probably it was some trouble of mind, arising from a sense of sin, and of God's displeasure against him for it. Whatever it was, the same Spirit that indited his praises for that deliverance was in him at the same time a spirit of prophecy, testifying of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; or ever he was aware he was led to speak of Christ's undertaking, and the discharge of his undertaking, in words that must be applied to Christ only; and therefore how far the praises that here go before that illustrious prophecy, and the prayers that follow, may safely and profitably be applied to him, it will be worth while to consider in this psalm. I. David records God's favour to him in delivering him out of his deep distress, with thankfulness to his praise, ver. 1—5. II. Thence he takes occasion to speak of the work of our redemption by Christ, ver. 6—10. III. That gives him encouragement to pray to God for mercy and grace, both for himself and for his friends, ver. 11—17. If in singing this psalm we mix faith with the prophecy of Christ, and join in sincerity with the praises and prayers here offered up, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

I WAITED patiently for the LORD;
And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my goings.
3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth,
Even praise unto our God:
Many shall see *it*, and fear,
And shall trust in the LORD.
4 Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust,
And respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. [thou hast done,
5 Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which*
And thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward:
They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
If I would declare and speak *of them*, they are more than can be numbered.

In these verses we have,

First. The great distress and trouble that the psalmist was in. This is supposed, ver. 2, that he was plunged into a horrible pit, and into miry clay; out of which he could not work himself, and in which he found himself sinking yet farther. He saith nothing here either of the sickness of his body or the insults of his enemies, and therefore we have reason to think it was some inward disquiet and perplexity of spirit that was now his greatest grievance. Despondency of spirit under the sense of God's withdrawings, and prevailing doubts and fears about the eternal state, are indeed a horrible pit and miry clay, and have been so to many a dear child of God.

Secondly. His humble attendance upon God, and his believing expectations from him in those depths: "I waited patiently for the Lord," ver. 1; 'waiting I waited.' He expected relief from no other but from God; the same hand that tears must heal, that smites must bind up, *Hos.* vi. 1, or it will never be done. From God he expected relief, and he was big with the expectation, not doubting but it would come in due time. There is power enough in God to help the weakest, and grace enough in God to help the unworthiest of all his people that trust in him. But he waited patiently; which intimates that the relief did not come quickly, yet he doubted not but it would come, and resolved to continue believing, and hoping, and praying, till it did come. Those whose expectation is from God may wait with assurance, but must wait with patience. Now this is very applicable to Christ. His agony both in the garden and on the cross was the same continued, and it was a horrible pit and miry clay. Then was his soul troubled and exceeding sorrowful; but then he prayed, "Father, glorify thy name," "Father, save me;" then he kept hold of his relation to his Father, "My God, my God," and thus waited patiently for him.

Thirdly. His comfortable experience of God's goodness to him in his distress, which he records for the honour of God, and his own and others' encouragement.

1. God answered his prayers: "He inclined unto me and heard my cry." Those that wait patiently for God, though they may wait long, do not wait in vain. Our Lord Jesus "was heard in that he feared," *Heb.* v. 7. Nay, he was sure the Father heard him always.

2. He silenced his fears, and stilled the tumult of his spirits, and gave him a settled peace of conscience, ver. 2. He brought me out of that horrible pit of despondency and despair, scattered the clouds, and shone bright upon my soul with the assurances of his favour, and not only so, but set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. Those that have been under the prevalency of a

religious melancholy, and by the grace of God have been relieved, may apply this very feelingly to themselves. They are brought up out of a horrible pit, and, 1st. The mercy is completed by the setting of their feet upon a rock, where they find firm footing, are as much elevated with the hopes of heaven as they were before cast down with the fears of hell. Christ is the rock on which a poor soul may stand fast, and on whose mediation alone, between us and God, we can build any solid hopes or satisfaction. 2nd. It is continued in the establishment of their goings. Where God has given a stedfast hope, he expects there should be a steady, regular conversation, and if that be the blessed fruit of it we have reason to acknowledge with abundance of thankfulness the riches and power of his grace.

3. He filled him with joy, as well as peace, in believing. "He hath put a new song in my mouth," that is, he has given me cause to rejoice, and a heart to rejoice. He was brought as it were into a new world, and that filled his mouth with a new song, even praise to our God; for to his praise and glory must all our songs be sung. Fresh mercies, especially such as we never yet received, call for new songs. This is applicable to our Lord Jesus, in his reception to paradise, his resurrection from the grave, and his exaltation to the joy and glory set before him; he was brought out of the horrible pit, set upon a rock, and had a new song put in his mouth.

Fourthly. The good improvement that should be made of this instance of God's goodness to David.

1. David's experience would be an encouragement to many to hope in God, and for that end he leaveth it here upon record. "Many shall see and fear, and trust in the Lord." They shall fear the Lord and his justice, which brought David, and the Son of David, into that horrible pit, and shall say, "If this be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?" They shall fear the Lord and his goodness, in filling the mouth of David, and the Son of David, with new songs of joy and praise. There is a holy, reverent fear of God which is not only consistent with, but the foundation of, our hope in him. They shall not fear him and shun him, but fear him and trust in him, in their greatest straits, not doubting but to find him as able and ready to help them as David did in his distress. God's dealings with our Lord Jesus are our great encouragement to trust in God. When it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief for our sins, he demanded our debt from him; and when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, he made it to appear that he had accepted the payment he made, and was satisfied with it; and what greater encouragement can we have to fear and worship God, and to trust in him? see *Rom.* iv. 25; v. 1, 2. The psalmist invites others to make God their hope, as he did, by pronouncing those happy that do so; ver. 4, "Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust," and him only, that has great and good thoughts of him, and is entirely devoted to him, and respecteth not the proud; doth not do as they do that trust in themselves, nor depend upon those who proudly encourage others to trust in them, for both the one and the other turn aside to lies, as indeed all those do that turn aside from God. This is applicable particularly to our faith in Christ. Blessed are they that trust in him, and in his righteousness alone, and respect not the proud Pharisees that set up their own righteousness in competition with that; that will not be governed by their dictates, nor turn aside to lies with the unbelieving Jews, who submit not to the righteousness of God, *Rom.* x. 3. Blessed are they that escape this temptation.

2. The joyful sense he had of this mercy led him to observe with thankfulness the many other favours he had received from God, ver. 5. When God puts new songs into our mouth, we must not forget our former songs, but repeat them; "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works, which thou hast done," both for me and others. This is but one of many. Many are the benefits with which we are daily loaded, both by the providence and by the grace of God. 1st. They are his works. Not only the gifts of his bounty, but the operations of his power; he works for us, he works in us, and thus he favours us with matter not only for thanks, but for praise. 2nd. They are his wonderful works. The contrivance of them admirable; his condescension to us in bestowing them upon us admirable; eternity itself will be short enough to be spent in the admiration of them. 3rd. His wonderful works are all the product of his thoughts to usward. He doth all according to the counsel of his own will, *Eph.* i. 11; the purposes of his grace, which he purposed in himself, *Eph.* iii. 11. They are the projects of infinite wisdom, the designs of everlasting love, 1 *Cor.* ii. 7; *Jer.* xxxi. 3; thoughts of good, and not of evil, *Jer.* xxix. 11. His gifts and callings will therefore be without repentance, because they are not sudden resolves, but the result of his thoughts, his many thoughts, to usward. 4th. They are innumerable. They cannot be methodized or reckoned up in order. There is an order in all God's works, but they are so many that present themselves to our view at once, that we know not where to begin nor which to name next; the order of them, and their natural references and dependences, and how the links of the golden chain are joined is a mystery to us, and what we shall not be able to account for till the veil be rent, and the mystery of God finished. Nor can they be counted, not the very heads of them. When we have said the most we can of the wonders of Divine love to us, we must conclude with an *et cætera*,—'and such like,' and adore the depth, despairing to find the bottom.

6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire;
Mine ears hast thou opened:
Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.
7 Then said I, Lo, I come:
In the volume of the book *it is* written of me,
8 I delight to do thy will, O my God:
Yea, thy law *is* within my heart.
9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation:
Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.
10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart;
I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:
I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth
from the great congregation.

The psalmist being struck with amazement at the wonderful works that God had done for his people, is strangely carried out here to foretell that work of wonder which excelleth all the rest, and is the foundation and fountain of all, that of our redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. God's thoughts, which were to usward concerning that work, were the most curious, the most copious, the most gracious, and therefore above any other to be most admired. This paragraph is quoted by the apostle, *Heb.* x. 5, &c., and applied to Christ, and his undertaking for us. As in the institutions, so in the devotions of the Old Testament, there is more of Christ than perhaps the Old Testament saints were aware of; and when the apostle would shew us the Redeemer's voluntary undertaking of his work, he doth not fetch his account out of the book of God's secret counsels, which belong not to us, but from the things revealed. Observe,

First. The utter insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to atone for sin in order to our peace with God, and our happiness in him. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire," that is, thou wouldst not have the Redeemer to offer them; something he must have to offer, but not these, *Heb.* viii. 3, therefore he must not be of the house of Aaron, *Heb.* vii. 14. Or, in the days of the Messiah burnt-offering and sin-offering will no longer be required, but all those ceremonial institutions will be abolished. But that is not all; even while the law concerning them was in full force, it might be said, God did not desire them, nor accept them for their own sake. They could not take away the guilt of sin by satisfying God's justice; the life of a sheep, which is so much inferior in value to that of a man, (*Mat.* xii. 12,) could not pretend to be an equivalent, much less an expedient to preserve the honour of God's government and laws, and repair the injury done to that honour by the sin of man. They could not take away the terror of sin by pacifying the conscience, nor the power of sin, by sanctifying the nature; it was impossible, *Heb.* ix. 9; x. 1—4. What there was in them that was valuable resulted from their reference to Jesus Christ, of whom they were types; shadows indeed, but shadows of good things to come, and trials of the faith and obedience of God's people; of their obedience to the law, and their faith in the Gospel. But the substance must come, which is Christ, who must bring that glory to God, and that grace to man, which it was impossible these sacrifices should ever do.

Secondly. The designation of our Lord Jesus to the work and office of Mediator. "Mine ears hast thou opened," that is, God the Father disposed him to the undertaking, *Isa.* l. 5, 6, and then obliged him to go through with it. 'Mine ear hast thou digged.' It is supposed to allude to the law and custom of binding servants to serve for ever, by boring their ear to the door-post: see *Ex.* xxi. 6. Our Lord Jesus was so in love with his undertaking, that he would not go out free from it, and therefore engaged to persevere for ever in it. And for this reason he is able to save us to the uttermost, because he has engaged to serve his Father to the uttermost, who upholds him in it, *Isa.* xlii. 1.

Thirdly. His own voluntary consent to this undertaking. "Then said I, Lo, I come;" then, when sacrifice and offering would not do, rather than the work should be undone, "I said, Lo, I come," to enter the lists with the powers of darkness, and to advance the interests of God's glory and kingdom. This speaks three things: 1. That he freely offered himself to this service, which he was under no engagement at all to, prior to his own voluntary susception. It was no sooner proposed to him, but with the greatest cheerfulness he consented to it, and was wonderfully well pleased with the undertaking; had he not been perfectly voluntary in it he could not have been a surety, he could not have been a sacrifice; for it is by this will—this *animus offerentis*,—'mind of the offerer,—that we are sanctified, *Heb.* x. 10. 2. That he firmly obliged himself to it. "I come," that is, I promise to come in the fulness of time. And therefore the apostle saith, it was when he came into the world that he had an actual regard to this promise, by which he had engaged his heart to approach unto God. He thus entered into bonds not only to shew the greatness of his love, but because he was to have the honour of his undertaking before he had fully performed it; though the price was not paid, it was secured to be paid, so that he was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 3. That he frankly owned himself engaged. He said, "Lo, I come;" said it all along to the Old Testament saints, who therefore knew him by the title of ὁ ἐρχόμενος,—"he that should come." This word was the foundation on which they built their faith and hope, and which they looked and longed for the accomplishment of.

Fourthly. The reason why he came in pursuance of his undertaking. Because in the volume of the book it was written of him. 1. In the close rolls of the Divine decree and counsel, there it was written, that his ear was opened; and he said, "Lo, I come." There the covenant of redemption was recorded, the counsel of peace between the Father and the Son; and to that he had an eye in all he did, the commandment he received of his Father. 2. In the letters patent of the Old Testament, Moses and all the prophets testified of him; in all the volumes of that book something or other was written of him, which he had an eye to, that all might be accomplished, *Jno.* xix. 28.

Fifthly. The pleasure he took in his undertaking. Having freely offered himself to it, he did not fail, nor was discouraged, but proceeded with all possible satisfaction to himself; ver. 8, 9, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." It was to Christ his meat and drink to go on with the work appointed to him, *Jno.* iv. 34, and the reason here given is, "Thy law is within my heart." It is written there; it rules there; it is an active, commanding principle there; it is meant of the law concerning the work and office of the Mediator, what he was to do and suffer. This law was dear to him, and had an influence upon him in his whole undertaking. Note, When the law of God is written in our hearts, our duty will be our delight.

Sixthly. The publication of the Gospel to the children of men, even in the great congregation, ver. 9, 10. The same that as a priest wrought out redemption for us, as a prophet by his own preaching first, then by his apostles, and still by his Word and Spirit, makes it known to us. The great salvation began to be spoken by the Lord, *Heb.* ii. 3. It is the Gospel of Christ that is preached to all nations. Observe, 1. What it is that is preached. It is righteousness, ver. 9; God's righteousness, ver. 10; the everlasting righteousness which Christ has brought in, *Dan.* ix. 24; compare *Rom.* i. 16, 17. It is God's faithfulness to his promise, and the salvation which had long been looked for; it is God's lovingkindness and his truth,—his mercy according to his word. Note, In the work of our redemption we ought to take notice how bright all the Divine attributes shine, and give to God the praise of each of them. 2. To whom it is preached. To the great congregation, ver. 9; and again, ver. 10. When Christ was here on earth he preached to multitudes, thousands at a time. The Gospel was preached both to Jews and Gentiles, to great congregations of both. Solemn religious assemblies are a Divine institution, and in them the glory of God in the face of Christ ought to be both praised to the glory of God and preached for the edification of men. 3. How it is preached. Freely and openly; "I have not refrained my lips;" I have not hid it; I have not concealed it. This intimates, that whoever undertook to preach the Gospel of Christ would be in great temptation to hide it, and conceal it, because it must be preached with great contention, and in the face of great opposition. But Christ himself and those whom he calls to that work, set their faces as a flint, *Isa.* l. 7, and were wonderfully carried on in it. And it is well for us that they were so, for by this means our eyes come to see this joyful light, and our ears to hear this joyful sound, which otherwise we might for ever have perished in ignorance of.

11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD:
Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about:
Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me,
So that I am not able to look up;
They are more than the hairs of mine head:
Therefore my heart faileth me.
13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me:
O LORD, make haste to help me.
14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together
That seek after my soul to destroy it;
Let them be driven backward and put to shame
That wish me evil.
15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame
That say unto me, Aha, aha.
16 Let all those that seek thee
Rejoice and be glad in thee:
Let such as love thy salvation
Say continually, The LORD be magnified.
17 But I *am* poor and needy;
Yet the LORD thinketh upon me:
Thou *art* my help and my deliverer;
Make no tarrying, O my God.

The psalmist having meditated upon the work of redemption, and spoken of it in the person of the Messiah, now comes to make improvement of the doctrine of his mediation between us and God, and therefore speaks in his own person. Christ having done his Father's will, and finished his work, and given orders for the preaching of the Gospel to every creature, we are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace for mercy and grace.

First. This may encourage us to pray for the mercy of God, and to put ourselves under the protection of that mercy, ver. 11: Lord, thou hast not spared thy Son, nor withheld him, withhold not thou thy tender mercies then, which thou hast laid up for us in him; for wilt thou not with him also freely give us all things? *Rom.* viii. 32. "Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me." The best saints are in continual danger, and see themselves undone, if they be not continually preserved by the grace of God; and the everlasting lovingkindness and truth of God is that which we have to depend upon for our preservation to the heavenly kingdom, *Ps.* lxi. 7.

Secondly. This may encourage us in reference to the guilt of sin, that Jesus Christ has done that towards our discharge from it which sacrifice and offering could not do. See here, 1. The frightful sight he had of sin, ver. 12. This was it that made the discovery he was now favoured with of a Redeemer very welcome to him. He saw his iniquities to be evils, the worst of evils; he saw that they compassed him about; in all the reviews of his life, and his reflections upon each step of it, still he discovered something amiss. The threatening consequences of his sin surrounded him; look which way he would he saw some mischief or other waiting for him, which he was conscious to himself his sins had deserved. He saw them taking hold of him, arresting him, as the bailiff doth the poor debtor; he saw them to be innumerable, and more than the hairs of his head. Convinced, awakened consciences are apprehensive of danger, from the numberless number of the sins of infirmity, which seem small as hairs, but being numerous are very dangerous; "Who can understand his errors?" God numbers our hairs, *Mat.* x. 30, which yet we cannot number, so he keeps an account of our sins, which we keep no account of. The sight of sin so oppressed him, that he could not hold up his head, "I am not able to look up;" much less could he keep up his heart, "therefore my heart fails me." Note, The sight of our sins in their own colours would drive us to distraction if we had not at the same time some sight of a Saviour. 2. The careful recourse he had to God under the sense of sin, ver. 13. Seeing himself brought by his sins to the very brink of ruin, eternal ruin, with what a holy passion does he cry out, "Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me," ver. 13. O save me from the wrath to come, and the present terrors I am in through the apprehensions of that wrath. I am undone, I die, I perish, without speedy relief. In a case of this nature, where the bliss of an immortal soul is concerned, delays are dangerous; therefore, "O Lord, make haste to help me."

Thirdly. This may encourage us to hope for victory over our spiritual enemies, that seek after our souls to destroy them, ver. 14; the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour:—if Christ has triumphed over them, we through him shall be more than conquerors. In the belief of this we may pray with humble boldness, "Let them be ashamed and confounded together, and driven backward," ver. 14; "Let them be desolate," ver. 15. Both the conversion of a sinner and the glorification of a saint are great disappointments to Satan; who doth his utmost with all his power and subtlety to hinder both. Now, our Lord Jesus having undertaken to bring about the salvation of all his chosen, we may in faith pray that both these ways that great adversary may be confounded. When a child of God is brought into that horrible pit and the miry clay, Satan cries, Aha, aha, thinking he has gained his point; but he shall rage when he sees the brand plucked out of the fire, and shall be desolate for a reward of his shame. "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan;" "The accuser of the brethren is cast out."

Fourthly. This may encourage all that seek God, and love his salvation, to rejoice in him and to praise him, ver. 16. See here, 1. The character of good people, conformable to the laws of natural religion; they seek God, desire his favour, and in all their exigences apply themselves to him, as a people should seek unto their God. And conformable to the laws of revealed religon; they love his salvation, that great salvation of which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, which the Redeemer undertook to work out, when he said, "Lo, I come." All that shall be saved love the salvation, not only as a salvation from hell, but a salvation from sin. 2. The happiness secured to good people, by this prophetical prayer. They that seek God shall rejoice and be glad in him; and with good reason, for he will not only be found of them, but will be their bountiful rewarder. They that love his salvation shall be filled with the joy of his salvation; and shall say continually, "The Lord be magnified," and thus they shall have a heaven upon earth. Blessed are they that are thus still praising God.

Lastly. This may encourage the saints in distress and affliction to trust in God, and comfort themselves in him, ver. 17: David himself was one of these; "I am poor and needy." A king, perhaps, now on the throne; and yet being troubled in spirit, he calls himself poor and needy, lost and undone without a Saviour. In want and distress, "yet the Lord thinketh upon me," in and through the Mediator, by whom we are made accepted. Men forget the poor and needy, and seldom think of them; but God's thoughts towards them, which he had spoken of, ver. 5, are their support and comfort. They may assure themselves that God is their help under their troubles, and will be in due time their deliverer out of their troubles, and will make no long tarrying; for the vision is for an appointed time, and therefore, though it tarry, we may wait for it, for it shall come; it will come, it will not tarry.

PSALM XLI.

God's kindness and truth have often been the support and comfort of the saints, when they have had most experience of men's unkindness and treachery; David here found them so upon a sick-bed, when he found his enemies very barbarous, but his God very gracious. I. He here comforts himself in his communion with God under his sickness, by faith receiving and laying hold of God's promises to him, ver. 1—3; and lifting up his heart in prayer to God, ver. 4. II. He here represents the malice of his enemies against him, their malicious censures of him, their spiteful reflections upon him, and their insolent carriage towards him, ver. 5—9. III. He leaves his case with God, not doubting but that he would own and favour him, ver. 10, 11; and so the psalm concludes with a doxology, ver. 13. Is any afflicted with sickness? let him sing the beginning of the psalm; is any persecuted by enemies? let him sing the latter end of it; and we may, any of us, in singing of it, meditate upon both the calamities and comforts of good people in this world.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

BLESSED *is* he that considereth the poor:
The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.
2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive;
And he shall be blessed upon the earth:
And thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.
3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languish-
Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. [ing:
4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me:
Heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

In these verses we have,

First. God's promises of succour and comfort to those that consider the poor; and we may suppose that David makes mention of these with application, either, 1. To his friends, who were kind to him, and very considerate of his case, now he was in affliction; blessed is he that considers poor David. Here and there he met with one that sympathized with him, and was concerned for him, and kept up their good opinion of him, and respect for him, notwithstanding his afflictions; while his enemies were so insolent and abusive to him. On these he pronounceth this blessing, not doubting but that God would recompense to them all the kindness they had done him, particularly when they also came to be in affliction. The provocations which his enemies gave him did but endear his friends so much the more to him. Or, 2. To himself. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had considered the poor; that when he was in honour and power at court he had taken cognizance of the wants and miseries of the poor, and had provided for their relief, and therefore was sure God would according to his promise strengthen and comfort him in his sickness. Here is a comment upon that promise; "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Observe,

1st. What the mercy is which is required of us. It is to consider the poor or afflicted, whether in mind, body, or estate. These we are to consider with prudence and tenderness; we must take notice of their affliction, and inquire into their state, must sympathize with them, and judge charitably concerning them. We must wisely consider the poor; that is, we must ourselves be instructed by the poverty and affliction of others, it must be Maschil to us, that is the word here used.

2nd. What the mercy is that is promised to us, if we thus shew mercy. He that considers the poor (if he cannot relieve them, yet he considers them, and has a compassionate concern for them, and in relieving them doth it considerately, and with discretion,) God will be sure to consider him. He shall not only be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, but he shall be blessed upon the earth. This branch of godliness, as much as any other, has the promise of the life that now is, and is ordinarily recompensed with temporal blessings; liberality to the poor is the surest and safest way of thriving. Such may be sure of seasonable and effectual relief from God.

First. In all troubles. He will deliver them in the day of evil; so that when the times are at the worst it shall go well with them, and they shall not fall into the calamities in which others are involved; if any be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, they shall. They who thus distinguish themselves from those that have hard hearts God will distinguish from those that have hard usage. Are they in danger? he will preserve and keep them alive; and to those who have a thousand times forfeited their lives, as the best have, it must be acknowledged a great favour if they have their lives given them for a prey. He doth not say they shall be preferred, but they shall be preserved and kept alive, when the arrows of death fly thick round about them. Do their enemies threaten them? God will not deliver them into the will of their enemies; and the most potent enemy we have can have no power against us, but what is given him from above. The good-will of a God that loves us is sufficient to secure us from the ill-will of all that hate us, men or devils; and that good-will we may promise ourselves an interest in if we have considered the poor, and helped to relieve and rescue them.

Secondly. Particularly in sickness; ver. 3, "The Lord will strengthen him," both in body and mind, "upon the bed of languishing," on which he had long lain sick, "and he will make all his bed." A very condescending expression, alluding to the care of those that nurse and tend sick people, especially of mothers for their children when they are sick, which is to make their beds easy for them; and that bed must needs be well made which God himself has the making of. He will make all his bed from head to foot, so that no part shall be uneasy; 'he will turn his bed,' (so the word is,) to shake it up, and make it very easy, or, he will turn it into a bed of health. Note, God has promised his people that he will strengthen them, and make them easy under their bodily pains and sicknesses. He has not promised that they shall never be sick, nor that they shall not lie long languishing, nor that their sickness shall not be unto death, but he has promised to enable them to bear their affliction with patience,

and cheerfully to wait the issue. The soul shall by his grace be made to dwell at ease, when the body lies in pain.

Secondly. David's prayer directed and encouraged by these promises; ver. 4, "I said, Heal my soul." It is good for us to keep some account of our prayers, that we may not unsay in our practices any thing that we said in our prayers. Here is, 1. His humble petition; "Lord, be merciful to me." He appeals to mercy, as one that knew he could not stand the test of strict justice. The best saints, even those that have been merciful to the poor, have not made God their debtor, but must throw themselves on his mercy. When we are under the rod we must thus recommend ourselves to the tender mercy of our God; "Lord, heal my soul." Sin is the sickness of the soul; pardoning mercy heals it, renewing grace heals it; and this spiritual healing we should be more earnest for than for bodily health. 2. His penitent confession; "I have sinned against thee," and therefore my soul needs healing. I am a sinner, a miserable sinner, therefore "God be merciful to me," *Lu.* xviii. 13. It doth not appear that this hath reference to any particular gross act of sin, but in general to his many sins of infirmity, which his sickness set in order before him, and the dread of the consequences of which made him pray, "Heal my soul."

5 Mine enemies speak evil of me,
When shall he die, and his name perish?
6 And if he come to see *me*, he speaketh vanity:
His heart gathereth iniquity to itself;
When he goeth abroad, he telleth *it*.
7 All that hate me whisper together against me:
Against me do they devise my hurt.
8 An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him:
And *now* that he lieth he shall rise up no more.
9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread,
Hath lifted up *his* heel against me.
10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me,
And raise me up, that I may requite them.
11 By this I know that thou favourest me,
Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.
12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity,
And settest me before thy face for ever.
13 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

David often complains of the insolent carriage of his enemies towards him when he was sick; which as it was very barbarous in them, so it could not but be very grievous to him. They were not indeed arrived to that modern pitch of wickedness, of poisoning his meat or drink, or giving him something to make him sick, but when he was sick they insulted over him; ver. 5, "Mine enemies speak evil of me," designing thereby to grieve his spirit, to ruin his reputation, and so to sink his interest. Observe,

First. The conduct of David's enemies.

1. They longed for his death; "When shall he die, and his name perish" with him. He had but an uncomfortable life, and yet they grudged him that; but it was a useful life. He was upon all accounts the greatest ornament and blessing of his country, and yet it seems there were some who were sick of him, as the Jews were of Paul, crying out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth." We ought not to desire the death of any; but to desire the death of useful men for their usefulness has much in it of the venom of the old serpent. They envied him his name, and the honour he had won; and doubted not but if he were dead that would be laid in the dust with him; yet see how they were mistaken. When he had served his generation he did die, *Acts* xiii. 36, but did his name perish? No; it lives and flourishes to this day in the sacred writings, and will to the end of time; for the memory of the just is and shall be blessed.

2. They picked up every thing they could to reproach him with; ver. 6, "If he come to see me," as it has always been reckoned a piece of neighbourly kindness to visit the sick, "he speaketh vanity;" that is, he pretends friendship, and that his errand is to mourn with me, and to comfort me; tells me he is very sorry to see me so much indisposed, and wisheth me my health, but it is all flattery and falsehood. We complain, and justly, of the want of sincerity in our days, and that there is scarce any true friendship to be found among men; but it seems by this the former days were no better than these. David's friends were all compliment, and had nothing of that affection for him in their hearts which they made profession of; but that was not the worst of it, it was upon a mischievous design that they came to see him, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he said or did; and might represent it as they pleased to others, with their own comments upon it, so as to render him odious or ridiculous. "His heart gathereth iniquity to itself," puts ill constructions upon every thing; and then when he goes among his companions he tells it them that they may tell it others; "Report, say they, and we will report it," *Jer.* xx. 10. If he made any complaints of his illness, they would reproach him for his pusillanimity; if little complaints, for his stupidity. If he prayed, or gave them good counsel, they would banter it, and call it canting. If he kept silence from good when the wicked were before him, they would say he had forgot his religion now he was sick. There is no fence against those whose malice thus gathers iniquity.

3. They promised themselves that he would never recover from this sickness, nor ever wipe off the odium with which they had loaded him. They whispered together against him, ver. 7; speaking that secretly in one another's ears which they could not for shame speak out, and which if they did, they knew it would be confuted. Whisperers and backbiters are put together among the worst of sinners, *Rom.* i. 29, 30. They whispered that their plot against him might not be discovered, and so defeated; there is seldom whispering, we say, but there is lying, or some mischief on foot. Those whisperers devised evil to David; concluding he would die quickly, they contrived how to break all the measures he had concerted for the public good; to prevent the prosecution of them, and to undo all that he had hitherto been doing. This he calls devising hurt against him; and they doubted not but to gain their point, for "an evil disease," 'a thing of Belial,' say they, "cleaveth fast unto him." The reproach with which they had loaded his name they hoped would cleave so fast to it, that it would perish with him, and then they should gain their point; they went by a modern maxim, *fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit*,—'fling an abundance of calumny, some will be sure to stick.' Or, this disease he is now under will certainly make an end of him; for it is the punishment of some great enormous crime, which he will not be brought to repent of, and proves him, however he has appeared, a son of Belial. Or, it is inflicted by Satan, who is called Belial, the wicked one, 2 *Cor.* vi. 15. It is (according to a loose way of speaking some have) a devilish disease; and, therefore, it will cleave fast to him, and "now that he lieth," now his distemper prevails so far as to oblige him to keep his bed, "he shall rise up no more;" we shall be rid of him, and divide the spoil of his preferments. We are not to think it strange if, when good men are sick, there be those that hope for their death, as well as those that fear it, which makes the world not worthy of them, *Rev.* xi. 10.

4. There was one particularly, in whom he had reposed a great deal of confidence, that took part with his enemies, and was as abusive to him as any of them; ver. 9, "my own familiar friend." Probably he means Ahithophel, who had been his bosom friend, and prime minister of state, in whom he trusted, as one inviolably firm to him, and whose advice he relied much upon in dealing with his enemies, who did eat of his bread; that is, with whom he had been very intimate, and whom he had taken to sit at the table with him; nay, whom he had maintained and given a livelihood to, and so obliged both in gratitude and interest to stick to him. They that had their maintenance from the king's palace did not think it meet for them to see the king's dishonour, *Ezr.* iv. 14, much less to do him dishonour; yet this base and treacherous confidant of David's forgot all the eaten bread, and lifted up his heel against him that had lifted up his head; not only deserted him, but insulted him, kicked at him, endeavoured to supplant him. Those are wicked indeed whom no courtesy done them, nor confidence reposed in them, will oblige; and let us not think it strange if we receive abuses from such. David did, and the Son of David, for of Judas the traitor David here in the Spirit spake; our Saviour himself so expounds this, and therefore gave Judas the sop, that the Scripture might be fulfilled; "He that eateth bread with me, has lift up his heel against me," *Jno.* xiii. 18, 26. Nay, have not we ourselves carried it thus perfidiously and disingenuously towards God? We eat of his bread daily, and yet lift up the heel against him, as Jeshurun that waxed fat and kicked, *Deu.* xxxii. 15.

Secondly. Now how did David bear this insolent, ill-natured carriage of his enemies towards him?

1. He prayed to God that they might be disappointed. He said nothing to them, but turned himself to God; "O Lord, be thou merciful to me," for they are unmerciful, ver. 10. He had prayed, in reference to the guilt of his sins, ver. 4, "Lord, be merciful to me;" and now again, in reference to the insults of his enemies, "Lord, be merciful to me," for that is a prayer will fit every case. God's mercy has in it a redress for every grievance. They endeavour to run me down, but, Lord, do thou raise me up from this bed of languishing, from which they think I shall never rise. "Raise me up, that I may requite them;" that is, that I may render them good for evil; so some, for that was David's practice, *Ps.* vii. 4; xxxv. 13. A good man will even wish for an opportunity of making it to appear that he bears no malice to those that have been injurious to him; but, on the contrary, is ready to do them any good office. Or, that as a king I may put them under the marks of my just displeasure, banish them the court, and forbid them my table for the future; which would be a necessary piece of justice for warning to others. Perhaps in this prayer is couched a prophecy of the exaltation of Christ, whom God raised up that he might be a just avenger of all the wrongs done to him and to his people, particularly by the Jews, whose utter destruction followed not long after.

2. He assured himself that they would be disappointed; ver. 11, "By this I know that thou favourest me" and my interest, "because mine enemy doth not triumph over me." They hoped for his death; but he found himself, through mercy, recovering, and this would add to the comfort of his recovery, 1st. That it would be a baulk to his adversaries. They would be crest-fallen, and wretchedly ashamed, and there would be no occasion to upbraid them with their disappointment, they would fret at it themselves. Note, Though we may not take a pleasure in the fall of our enemies, we may take a pleasure in the frustrating of their designs against us. 2nd. That that would be a token of God's favour to him, and a certain evidence that he did favour him, and would continue to do so. Note, When we can discern the favour of God to us in any mercy personal or public, that doubles it and sweetens it.

3. He dependeth upon God who had thus delivered him from many an evil work, to preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as blessed Paul, 2 *Tim.* iv. 18; "And as for me," forasmuch as thou favourest me, as a fruit of that favour, and to qualify me for the continuance of it, "thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and" in order to that "settest me before thy face," hast thine eye always upon me for good; or, because thou dost, by thy grace, uphold me in my integrity, I know that thou wilt in thy glory set me for ever before thy face. Note, 1st. When at any time we suffer in our reputation, our chief concern should be about our integrity, and then we may cheerfully leave it to God to secure our reputation. David knows, if he can but persevere in his integrity, he needs not fear his enemies' triumphs over him. 2nd. The best man in the world holds his integrity no longer than God upholds him in it, for by his grace we are what we are; if we be left to ourselves we shall not only fall, but fall away. 3rd. It is a great comfort to us that, however we are weak, God is able to uphold us in our integrity, and will do it if we commit the keeping of it to him. 4th. If the grace of God did not take a constant care of us, we should not be upheld in our integrity. His eye is always upon us, else we should soon start aside from him. 5th. Those whom God now upholds in their integrity he will set before his face for ever, and make them happy in the vision and fruition of himself. "He that endures to the end shall be saved."

4. The psalm concludes with a solemn doxology, or adoration of God, as "the Lord God of Israel," ver. 13. It is not certain whether this verse pertains to this particular psalm; if so, it teaches us this, that a believing hope of our preservation through grace to glory is enough to fill our hearts with joy, and our mouths with everlasting praise, even in our greatest straits; or, whether it were added as the conclusion of the first book of Psalms, which is reckoned to end here; the like being subjoined to *Ps.* lxxii.; lxxxix.; cvi.; and then it teacheth us to make God the Omega who is the Alpha, to make him the end who is the beginning of every good work. We are here taught, 1st. To give glory to God as the Lord God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people; that has done great and kind things for them, and has more and better in reserve. 2nd. To give him glory as an eternal God, that hath both his being and his blessedness "from everlasting and to everlasting." 3rd. To do this with great affection and fervour of spirit, intimated in the double seal set to it; "Amen, and Amen;" be it so now, be it so to all eternity. We say Amen to it, and let all others say Amen too.

PSALM XLII.

If the book of Psalms be, as some have styled it, a mirror or looking-glass of pious and devout affections, this psalm in particular deserves as much as any one psalm to be so entitled, and is as proper as any other to kindle and excite such in us. Gracious desires

are here strong and fervent; gracious hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, are here struggling, but the pleasing passion comes off a conqueror; or we may take it for a conflict between sense and faith, sense objecting and faith answering. I. Faith begins with holy desires towards God and communion with him, ver. 1, 2. II. Sense complains of the darkness and cloudiness of the present condition, aggravated by the remembrance of the former enjoyments, ver. 3, 4. III. Faith silenceth the complaint with the assurance of a good issue at last, ver. 5. IV. Sense renews its complaints of the present dark and melancholy state, ver. 6, 7. V. Faith holds up the heart notwithstanding, with hope that the day will dawn, ver. 8. VI. Sense repeats its lamentations, ver. 9, 10, and sighs out the same remonstrance it had before made of its grievances. VII. Faith gets the last word, ver. 11, for the silencing of the complaints of sense; and though it be almost the same with that, ver. 5, yet now it prevails and carries the day. The title doth not tell us who was the penman of the psalm, but most probably it was David; and we may conjecture it was penned by him at a time when, either by Saul's persecution, or Absalom's rebellion, he was driven from the sanctuary, and cut off from the privilege of waiting upon God in public ordinances. The strain of it is much the same with *Ps.* lxiii., and therefore we may presume it was penned by the same hand, and upon the same or a like occasion. In singing it, if we be either in outward affliction or inward distress, we may accommodate to ourselves the melancholy expressions we find here; if not, we must in singing them sympathize with those whose case they speak too plainly, and thank God it is not our own case; but those passages in it which express and excite holy desires towards God, and dependence on him, we must earnestly endeavour to bring our minds up to.

To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

AS the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.

HARTS.

2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God?
3 My tears have been my meat day and night,
While they continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?
4 When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul in me: [to the house of God,
For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them
With the voice of joy and praise,
With a multitude that kept holyday.
5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And *why* art thou disquieted in me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him
For the help of his countenance.

Holy love to God, as the chief good and our felicity, is the power of godliness, the very life and soul of religion, without which all external professions and performances are but a shell and carcase; now here we have some of the expressions of that love. Here is,

First. Holy love thirsting. Love upon the wing, soaring upwards in holy desires towards the Lord, and towards the remembrance of his name; ver. 1, 2, "My soul panteth, thirsteth for God," for nothing more than God, but still for more and more of him. Now observe,

1. When it was that David thus expressed his vehement desire towards God. It was, 1st. When he was debarred from his outward opportunities of waiting on God. When he was banished to the land of Jordan, a great way off from the courts of God's house. Note, Sometimes God teacheth us effectually to know the worth of mercies by the want of them, and whets our appetites to the means of grace by cutting us short in those means; we are apt to loathe that manna when we have plenty of it, which will be very precious to us if ever we come to know the scarcity of it. 2nd. When he was deprived in a great measure of the inward comfort he used to have in God. He now went mourning, but he went on panting. Note, If God by his grace has wrought in us sincere and earnest desires towards him, we may take comfort from these, when we want those ravishing delights we have sometimes had in God, because lamenting after God is as sure an evidence that we love him as rejoicing in God. Before the psalmist records his doubts, and fears, and griefs which had sorely shaken him, he premiseth this, that he looked upon the living God as his chief good, and had set his heart upon him accordingly, and was resolved to live and die by him; and casting anchor thus at first, he rides out the storm.

2. What is the object of his desire, and what it is he thus thirsts after. 1st. He pants after God, he thirsts for God; not the ordinances themselves, but the God of the ordinances. A gracious soul can take little satisfaction in God's courts if it do not meet with God himself there; "O that I knew where I might find him!" that I might have more of the tokens of his favour, the graces and comforts of his Spirit, and the earnests of his glory. 2nd. He has herein an eye to God as the living God, that has life in himself, and is the fountain of life and all happiness to those that are his. The living God, not only in opposition to dead idols, the works of men's hands, but to all the dying comforts of this world, which perish in the using. Living souls can never take up their rest any where short of a living God. 3rd. He longs to come and appear before God, to make himself known to him, as being conscious to himself of his own sincerity; to attend on him, as a servant appears before his master, to pay his respects to him, and receive his commands; to give an account to him, as one from whom our judgment proceeds. To appear before God is as much the desire of the upright as it is the dread of the hypocrite. The psalmist knew he could not come into God's courts but he must come to his charges, for so was the law, that none should appear before God empty; yet he longs to come, and will not grudge the charges.

3. What is the degree of this desire. It is very importunate; it is his soul that pants, his soul that thirsts; which speaks not only the sincerity, but the strength of his desire. His longing for the water of the well of Bethlehem was nothing to this. He compares it to the panting of a hart, or deer, which is naturally hot and dry, especially of a hunted buck, after the water brooks. Thus earnestly doth a gracious soul desire communion with God, thus impatient is it in the want of that communion, so impossible it should take up with any thing short of that communion, and so insatiable in taking the pleasures of that communion when the opportunity of it returns, still thirsting after the full enjoyment of him in the heavenly kingdom.

Secondly. Holy love mourning for God's present withdrawings, and the want of the benefit of solemn ordinances; ver. 3, "My tears have been my meat day and night," during this forced absence from God's house. His circumstances were sorrowful, and he accommodated himself to them, received the impressions, and returned the expressions of sorrow; even the royal prophet was a weeping prophet when he wanted the comforts of God's house. His tears were mingled with his meat; nay, they were his meat day and night; he fed, he feasted upon his own tears, when there was such just cause for them; and it was a satisfaction to him that he found his heart so much affected with a grievance of this nature. Observe, He did not think it enough to shed a tear or two at parting from the sanctuary, to weep a farewell prayer when he took his leave; but as long as he continued under a forced absence from that place of his delight he never looked up, but wept day and night. Note, Those that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances constantly miss them, and therefore should constantly mourn for the want of them, till they are restored to them again. Two things aggravated his grief:

1. The reproaches with which his enemies teazed him; "They continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" 1st. Because he was absent from the ark, the token of God's presence. Judging of the God of Israel by the gods of the heathen, they concluded he had lost his God. Note, Those are mistaken who think that when they have robbed us of our Bibles, and our ministers, and our solemn assemblies, they have robbed us of our God; for, though God has tied us to them when they are to be had, he has not tied himself to them. We know where our God is, and where to find him, when we know not where his ark is, nor where to find that. Wherever we are there is a way open heavenward. 2nd. Because God did not presently appear for his deliverance, they concluded that he had abandoned him; but herein also they were deceived. It doth not follow that the saints have lost their God, because they have lost all their other friends. However, by this base reflection on God and his people, they added affliction to the afflicted, and that was what they aimed at. Nothing is more grievous to a gracious soul than that which is intended to shock its hope and confidence in God.

2. The remembrance of his former liberties and enjoyments; ver. 4, "Son, remember thy good things," is a great aggravation of evil things; so much do our powers of reflection and prospect add to the grievance of this present time. David remembered the days of old, and then his soul was poured out in him; he melted away, and the thought almost broke his heart. He poured out his soul within him in sorrow, and then poured out his soul before God in prayer. But what was it that occasioned this colliquation of spirit? It was not the remembrance of the pleasures at court, or the entertainments of his own house, from which he was now banished, that afflicted him; but the remembrance of the free access he had formerly had to God's house, and the pleasure he had in attending the sacred solemnities there. 1st. He went to the house of God, though in his time it was but a tent; nay, if this psalm was penned, as many think it was, at the time of his being persecuted by Saul, the ark was then in a private house, 2 *Sam.* vi. 3; but the meanness, obscurity, and inconveniency of the place did not lessen his esteem of that sacred symbol of the Divine presence. David was a courtier, a prince, a man of honour, a man of business, and yet very diligent in attending God's house, and joining in public ordinances; even in the days of Saul, when he and his great men inquired not at it, 1 *Chr.* xiii. 3. Whatever others did, David and his house would serve the Lord. 2nd. He went with the multitude, and thought it no disparagement to his dignity to be at the head of a crowd in attending upon God. Nay, this added to the pleasure of it, that he was accompanied with a multitude, and therefore it is twice mentioned, as that which he greatly lamented the want of now. The more the better, in the service of God; it is the liker to heaven, and a sensible help to our comfort in the communion of saints. 3rd. He went with the voice of joy and praise, not only with joy and praise in his heart, but with the outward expressions of it, proclaiming his joy, and speaking forth the high praises of his God. Note, When we wait upon God in public ordinances we have reason to do it both with cheerfulness and thankfulness, to take to ourselves the comfort, and give to God the glory of our liberty of access to him. 4th. He went to keep holy days; not to keep them in vain mirth and recreation, but in religious exercises. Solemn days are spent most comfortably in solemn assemblies.

Thirdly. Holy love hoping; ver. 5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" His sorrow was upon a very good account, and yet it must not exceed its due limits, nor prevail to depress his spirits; he therefore communes with his own heart for his relief. Come, my soul, I have something to say to thee in thy heaviness. Let us consider, 1. The cause of it. Thou art cast down, as one stooping and sinking under a burthen, *Pr.* xii. 25. Thou art disquieted, in confusion and disorder, now, why art thou so? This may be taken either as an inquiring question; Let the cause of this uneasiness be duly weighed, and see whether it be a just cause. Our disquietments would many times vanish before a strict scrutiny into the grounds and reasons of them. Why am I cast down? Is there a cause, a real cause? Have not others more cause that do not make so much ado? Have not we at the same time cause to be encouraged? Or, it may be taken as an expostulating question. Those that commune much with their own hearts will often have occasion to chide them, as David here. Why do I thus dishonour God by my melancholy dejections? Why do I discourage others, and do so much injury to myself? Can I give a good account of this tumult? 2. The cure of it. "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." A believing confidence in God is a sovereign antidote against prevailing despondency and disquiet of spirit. And therefore when we chide ourselves

for our dejections, we must charge ourselves to hope in God. When the soul embraces itself, it sinks; if it catch hold on the power and promise of God, it keeps the head above water. Hope in God, 1st. That he shall have glory from us: "I shall yet praise him." I shall experience such a change in my estate, that I shall not want matter for praise; and such a change in my spirit, that I shall not want a heart for praise. It is the greatest honour and happiness of a man, and the greatest desire and hope of every good man, to be unto God for a name and a praise. What is the crown of heaven's bliss but this, that there we shall be for ever praising God? And what is our support under our present woes but this, that we shall yet praise God, that they shall not prevent or abate our endless hallelujahs? 2nd. That we shall have comfort in him. We "shall praise him for the help of his countenance;" for his favour, and the support we have by it, and the satisfaction we have in it. Those that know how to value and improve the light of God's countenance will find in that a suitable, seasonable, and sufficient help in the worst of times, and that which will furnish them with constant matter for praise. David's believing expectation of this kept him from sinking, nay, it kept him from drooping. His harp was a palliative cure of Saul's melancholy; but his hope was an effectual cure of his own.

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me:
Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan,
and of the Hermonites,
From the hill Mizar.
7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts;
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
8 *Yet* the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime,
And in the night his song *shall be* with me,
And my prayer unto the God of my life. [me?
9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?
10 *As* with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;
While they say daily unto me, Where *is* thy God?
11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Complaints and comforts here, as before, take their turn, like night and day in the course of nature.

First. He complains of the dejections of his spirit, but comforts himself with the thoughts of God, ver. 6. 1. In his troubles his soul was dejected, and he goes to God and tells him so: "O my God, my soul is cast down within me." It is a great support to us, when upon any account we are distressed, that we have liberty of access to God, and liberty of speech before him, and may open to him the causes of our dejection. David had communed with his own heart about its own bitterness, and had not as yet found relief; and therefore he turns to God, and opens before him the trouble. Note, When we cannot get relief for our burthened spirits by pleading with ourselves, we should try what we can do by praying to God, and leaving our case with him. We cannot still these winds and waves, but we know who can. 2. In his devotions his soul was elevated; and, finding the disease very painful, he had recourse to that as a sovereign remedy. My soul is plunged; therefore, to prevent its sinking, "I will remember thee," meditate upon thee, and call upon thee, and try what that will do to keep up my spirit. Note, The way to forget the sense of our miseries is to remember the God of our mercies. It was an uncommon case when the psalmist remembered God and was troubled, *Ps.* lxxvii. 3. Ordinarily he remembered God and was comforted, and therefore had recourse to that expedient now. He was now driven to the utmost borders of the land of Canaan, to shelter himself there from the rage of his persecutors, sometimes to the country about Jordan, and when discovered there, then to the land of the Hermonites, or to a hill called Mizar, or the little hill. But, 1st. Wherever he went he took his religion along with him; in all these places he remembered God, and lifted up his heart to him, and kept his secret communion with him. This is the comfort of the banished, the wanderers, the travellers, of those that are strangers in a strange land, *undique ad cœlos tantundem est viæ*,—' wherever they are, there is a way open heavenwards.' 2nd. Wherever he was, he retained his affection for the courts of God's house. From the land of Jordan, or from the top of the hills, he used to look a long look, a longing look, towards the place of the sanctuary, and wish himself there. Distance and time could not make him forget that which his heart was so much upon, and which lay so near it.

Secondly. He complains of the tokens of God's displeasure against him, but comforts himself with the hopes of the return of his favour in due time.

1. He saw his troubles coming from God's wrath, and that discouraged him; ver. 7, "Deep calls unto deep," one affliction comes upon the neck of another, as if it were called to hasten after it; and thy waterspouts give the signal, and sound the alarm of war. It may be meant of the terrors and tosses of his mind under the apprehensions of God's anger. One frightful thought summoned another, and made way for it, as is usual in melancholy people. He was overpowered and overwhelmed with a deluge of grief, like that of the old world when the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Or it is an allusion to a ship at sea, in a great storm, tossed by the roaring waves which go over it, *Ps.* cvii. 25. Whatever waves and billows of affliction go over us at any time, we must call them God's waves, and his billows, that we may humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and may encourage ourselves to hope that, though we be threatened, we shall not be ruined; for the waves and billows are under a Divine check, "The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of these many waters." Let not good men think it strange if they be exercised with many and various trials, and if they come thick upon them God knows what he doth, and so shall they shortly. Jonah in the whale's belly made use of these words of David, *Jonah* ii. 3, (they are exactly the same in the original,) and of him they are literally true, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;" for the book of Psalms is contrived so as to reach every one's case.

2. He expected his deliverance to come from God's favour; ver. 8, "Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness." *Non si male nunc et olim sic erit*,—'Things are bad, but they shall not always be so.' After the storm there will come a calm, and the prospect of this supported him when deep called unto deep. Observe, 1st. What he promised himself from God. "The Lord will command his lovingkindness." He eyes the favour of God as the fountain of all the good he looked for, that is life, that is better than life; and with that God will gather those from whom he has in a little wrath hid his face, *Isa.* liv. 7, 8. God's conferring of his favour is called his commanding it, which intimates both the freeness of it,—we cannot pretend to merit it, but it is bestowed in a way of sovereignty; he gives like a king,—and the efficacy of it, he speaks his lovingkindness, and makes us to hear it; "speaks, and it is done." He "commands deliverance," *Ps.* xliv. 4; "commands the blessing," *Ps.* cxxxiii. 3, as one having authority. By commanding his lovingkindness, he commands down the waves and the billows, and they shall obey him. This he will do in the daytime; for God's lovingkindness will make day in the soul at any time. Though weeping has endured for a night, a long night, yet joy will come in the morning. 2nd. What he promised for himself to God. If God command his lovingkindness for him, he will meet it, and bid it welcome with his best affections and devotions. *First.* He will rejoice in God; "In the night his song shall be with me." The mercies we receive in the day, we ought to return thanks for at night; when others are sleeping, we should be praising God: see *Ps.* cxix. 62, "At midnight will I rise to give thanks." In silence and solitude, when we are retired from the hurries of the world, we must be pleasing ourselves with the thoughts of God's goodness. Or in the night of affliction, before the day dawns in which God commands his lovingkindness, I will sing songs of praise in the prospect of it. Even in tribulation the saints can rejoice in hope of the glory of God; sing in hope, and praise in hope, *Rom.* v. 2, 3. It is God's prerogative to give songs in the night, *Job* xxxv. 10. *Secondly.* He will seek to God in a constant dependence upon him, "My prayer shall be to the God of my life." Our believing expectation of mercy must not supersede but quicken our prayers for it. God is the God of our life, in whom we live and move, the author and giver of all our comforts, and, therefore, to whom should we apply ourselves by prayer but to him? And from him what good may not we expect? It would put life into our prayers, in them to eye God as the God of our life; for then it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we stand up to make request.

Thirdly. He complains of the insolence of his enemies, and yet comforts himself in God as his friend, ver. 9—11.

1. His complaint is, that his enemies oppressed and reproached him, and this made a great impression upon him. 1st. They oppressed him to that degree that he went mourning from day to day, from place to place, ver. 9. He did not break out into indecent passions, though abused as never man was; but he silently wept out his grief, and went mourning. And for this we cannot blame him; it must needs grieve a man that truly loves his country, and seeks the good of it, to see himself run upon, and hardly used, as if he were an enemy to it. Yet David ought not from hence to conclude that God had forgotten him and cast him off, nor thus to expostulate with him, as if he did him as much wrong in suffering him to be trampled upon, as they did that trampled upon him. "Why go I mourning?" and "why hast thou forgotten me?" We may complain to God, but we are not allowed thus to complain of him. 2nd. They reproached him so cuttingly, that it was a sword in his bones, ver. 10. He had mentioned before what the reproach was that touched him thus to the quick, and here he repeats it: "They say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" A reproach which was therefore very grievous to him, both because it reflected dishonour upon God, and was intended to discourage his hope in God, which he had enough to do to keep up in any measure, and which was but too apt to fail of itself.

2. His comfort is, that God is his rock, ver. 9. A rock to build upon, a rock to take shelter in. The Rock of ages, in whom is everlasting strength, would be his rock, his strength in the inner man, both for doing and suffering. And to him he had access with confidence; to God his rock he might say what he had to say, and be sure of a gracious audience. He therefore repeats what he had said, ver. 5, and concludes with it; ver. 11, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" His griefs and fears were clamorous and troublesome, they were not silenced, though they were again and again answered; but here at length his faith came off a conqueror, and forced the enemies to quit the field. And he gains this victory, 1st. By repeating what he had before said; chiding himself, as before, for his dejections and disquietments, and encouraging himself to trust in the name of the Lord, and to stay himself upon his God. Note, It may be of great use to us to think our good thoughts over again; and, if we do not gain our point with them at first, perhaps we may the second time; however, where the heart goes along with the words, it is no vain repetition. We have need to press the same thing over and over again upon our own hearts, and all little enough. 2nd. By adding one word to it. There he hoped to praise God for the salvation that was in his countenance; here, I will praise him, saith he, as the salvation of my countenance, from the present cloud that is upon it. If God smile upon me, that will make me look pleasant, look up, look forward, look round with pleasure. He adds, And my God, related to me, in covenant with me. All that he is, all that he has, is mine, according to the true intent and meaning of the promise. This thought enabled him to triumph over all his griefs and fears. God's being with the saints in heaven, and being their God, is that which will wipe away all tears from their eyes, *Rev.* xxi. 3, 4.

PSALM XLIII.

This psalm, it is likely, was penned upon the same occasion with the former, and having no title may be looked upon as an appendix to it. The malady presently returning, he had immediate recourse to the same remedy, because he had entered it in his book with a *probatum est*,—' it has been proved,' upon it. The 2nd verse of this psalm is almost the very same with the 9th verse of the foregoing psalm, as the 5th of this is exactly the same with the 11th of that. Christ himself, who had the Spirit without measure, when there was occasion, prayed a second and third time, saying the same words, *Mat.* xxvi. 44. In this psalm, I. He appeals to God concerning the injuries that were done him by his enemies, ver. 1, 2. II. He prays to God to restore to him the free enjoyment of public ordinances again, and promiseth a good improvement of them, ver. 3, 4. III. He endeavours to still the tumult of his own spirit with a lively hope and confidence in God, ver. 5, which if we labour after in singing this psalm, we sing with grace in our hearts.

JUDGE me, O God, and plead my cause
Against an ungodly nation:
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.
2 For thou *art* the God of my strength:
Why dost thou cast me off? [enemy?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the

3 O send out thy light and thy truth:
Let them lead me; [nacles.
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy taber-
4 Then will I go unto the altar of God,
Unto God my exceeding joy:
Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee,
O God my God.
5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

David here makes his application to God, by faith and prayer, as his judge, his strength, his guide, his joy, his hope, with suitable affections and expressions.

First As his judge, his righteous judge, who he knew would judge him, and who (being conscious of his own integrity) he knew would judge for him; ver. 1, "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause." There were those that impeached him, against them he is defendant, and from their courts, where he stood unjustly convicted and condemned, he appeals to the court of heaven, the supreme judicature; praying to have their judgment given against him reversed, and his innocency cleared. There were those that had injured him; against them he is plaintiff, and exhibits his complaint to him who is the avenger of wrong, praying for justice for himself, and upon them. Observe, 1. Who his enemies were with whom he had this struggle. Here was an ill body of men, whom he calls an ungodly or unmerciful nation; and those that are unmerciful make it appear that they are ungodly, for those that have any fear or love of their Master will have compassion on their fellow servants. And here was one ill man the head of them, a deceitful and unjust man; most probably Saul, who not only shewed no kindness to David, but dealt most perfidiously and dishonestly with him. If Absalom was the man he meant, his character was no better. As long as there are such bad men out of hell, nations of them, it is not strange that good men who are yet out of heaven meet with hard and base treatment. Some think that David, by the spirit of prophecy, calculated this psalm for the use of the Jews in their captivity in Babylon, and that the Chaldeans are the ungodly nation here meant; and to them it was very applicable, but only as other like scriptures, none of which are of private interpretation. God might design it for their use, whether David did or no. 2. What is his prayer with reference to them. "Judge me." As to the quarrel God had with him for sin, he prays, "Enter not into judgment with me," for then I shall be condemned; but as to the quarrel his enemies had with him, he prays, Lord, "judge me," for I know that I shall be justified; "Plead my cause against them," that is, take my part, and in thy providence appear on my behalf. He that has an honest cause may expect that God will plead it. Plead my cause so as to deliver me from them, that they may not have their will against me. We must reckon our cause sufficiently pleaded, if we be delivered, though our enemies be not destroyed.

Secondly. As his strength, his all-sufficient strength; so he eyes God; ver. 2, "Thou art the God of my strength, my God," my strength, from whom all my strength is derived, in whom I strengthen myself, who hast many a time strengthened me, and without whom I am weak as water, and utterly unable either to do or suffer any thing for thee. David now went mourning, destitute of spiritual joys, yet he found God the God of his strength; however, if we cannot comfort ourselves in God, we may stay ourselves upon him, and may have spiritual supports when we want spiritual suavities. David here pleads this with God. Thou art the God on whom I depend as my strength, why then dost thou cast me off? This was a mistake; for God never cast off any that trusted in him, whatever melancholy apprehensions they may have of their own state. Thou art the God of my strength, why then is mine enemy too strong for me; and why go I mourning because of his oppressive power? It is hard to reconcile the mighty force of the church's enemies with the almighty power of the church's God; but the day will reconcile them, when all his enemies shall become his footstool.

Thirdly. As his guide, his faithful guide; ver. 3, "Lead me, bring me to thy holy hill." He prays, 1. That God by his providence would bring him back from his banishment, and open a way for him again to the free enjoyment of the privileges of God's sanctuary. His heart is upon the holy hill and the tabernacles, not upon his family comforts, or his court preferments or diversions; he could bear the want of these, but he is impatient to see God's tabernacles again. Nothing so amiable in his eyes as those; thither he would fain be brought back. In order to this, he prays, "Send out thy light and thy truth," that is, let me have this as a fruit of thy favour which is light; and the performance of thy promise which is truth; and we need desire no more to make us happy than the good that flows from God's favour, and is included in his promise. That mercy, that truth is enough, is all; and when we see these in God's providences we see ourselves under a very safe conduct. Note, Those whom God leads, he leads to his holy hill and to his tabernacles; those therefore who pretend to be led by the Spirit, and yet turn their backs upon instituted ordinances, certainly deceive themselves. 2. That God by his grace would bring him into communion with himself, and prepare him for the vision and fruition of himself in the other world. Some of the Jewish writers by the light and truth here understand Messiah the prince, and Elias his forerunner. These are come in answer to the prayers of the Old Testament; but we are still to pray for God's light and truth, that is, the Spirit of light and truth, who supplies the want of Christ's bodily presence, to lead us into the mystery of godliness, and to guide us in the way to heaven. When God sends his light and truth into our hearts, those will guide us to the upper world in all our devotions, as well as in all our aims and expectations; and if we conscientiously follow that light and truth they will certainly bring us to the holy hill above.

Fourthly. As his joy, his exceeding joy. If God guide him to his tabernacles, if he restore him to his former liberties, he knows very well what he has to do, "Then will I go unto the altar of God," ver. 4; he will get as near as he can unto God his exceeding joy. Note, 1. Those that come to the tabernacles should come to the altar; that come to ordinances, should qualify themselves to come, and then come to special ordinances, to those that are most affecting and most binding. The nearer we come, the closer we cleave, to God, the better. 2. Those that come to the altar of God, must see to it that therein they come unto God, and draw near to him with the heart, with a true heart. We come in vain to holy ordinances, if we do not in them come to the holy God. 3. Those that come unto God, must come to him as their exceeding joy, not only as their future bliss, but as their present joy; and that not a common, but an exceeding joy, far exceeding all the joys of sense and time. The phrase in the original is very emphatical, 'Unto God the gladness of my joy,' or of my triumph. Whatever we rejoice or triumph in, God must be the joy of it, all our joy in it must terminate in him, and must pass through the gift to the giver. 4. When we come to God as our exceeding joy, our comforts in him must be the matter of our praises of him as God, and our God; "Upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God." David was an artist at the harp, 1 *Sam.* xvi. 16, 18; and with that in which he excelled he would praise God, for God is to be praised with the best we have; it is fit he should be so who is the best.

Fifthly. As his hope, his never-failing hope, ver. 5. Here, as before, David quarrels with himself for his dejections and despondencies, and owns he did ill to yield to them, and that he had no reason to do so: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" and then quiets himself in the believing expectation he had of giving glory to God, "Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him;" and of enjoying glory with God, He is "the health of my countenance, and my God." This is what we cannot too much insist upon, for it is what we must live and die by.

PSALM XLIV.

We are not told either who was the penman of this psalm or when and upon what occasion it was penned. Upon a melancholy occasion we are sure, not so much to the penman himself, then we could have found occasions enough for it in the history of David and his afflictions, but to the church of God in general; and therefore, if we suppose it penned by David, yet we must attribute it purely to the spirit of prophecy, and must conclude that that Spirit, whatever he had, had in view the captivity in Babylon, or the sufferings of the Jewish church under Antiochus, or rather the afflicted state of the Christian church in its early days, to which ver. 22 is applied by the apostle, *Rom.* viii. 36, and indeed in all its days on earth, for it is its determined lot that it must enter into the kingdom of heaven through many tribulations. And if we have any gospel psalms pointing at the privileges and comforts of Christians, why should we not have one pointing at their trials and exercises? It is a psalm calculated for a day of fasting and humiliation upon occasion of some public calamity, either pressing or threatening. In it the church is taught, I. To own with thankfulness to the glory of God the great things God had done for their fathers, ver. 1—8. II. To exhibit a memorial of their present calamitous estate, ver. 9—16. III. To file a protestation of their integrity and adherence to God notwithstanding, ver. 17—22. IV. To lodge a petition at the throne of grace for succour and relief, ver. 22—26. In singing this psalm we ought to give God the praise of what he has formerly done for his people, to represent our own grievances, or sympathize with those parts of the church that are in distress, to engage ourselves, whatever happens, to cleave to God and duty, and then cheerfully to wait the event.

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.

WE have heard with our ears, O God,
Our fathers have told us,
What work thou didst in their days,
In the times of old.
2 *How* thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand,
And plantedst them;
How thou didst afflict the people,
And cast them out. [sword,
3 For they got not the land in possession by their own
Neither did their own arm save them: [countenance,
But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy
Because thou hadst a favour unto them.
4 Thou art my King, O God:
Command deliverances for Jacob.
5 Through thee will we push down our enemies:
Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up
6 For I will not trust in my bow, [against us.
Neither shall my sword save me.
7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies,
And hast put them to shame that hated us.
8 In God we boast all the day long.
And praise thy name for ever. Selah.

Some observe that most of the psalms that are entitled, Maschil, psalms of instruction, are sorrowful psalms; for afflictions give instruction, and sorrow of spirit opens the ear to them; "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest and teachest." In these verses, the church, though now trampled upon, calls to remembrance the days of her triumph, of her triumph in God, and over her enemies. This is very largely mentioned here, 1. As an aggravation of the present distress. The yoke of servitude cannot but lie very heavy on the necks of those that used to wear the crown of victory; and the tokens of God's displeasure must needs be most grievous to those that have been long accustomed to the tokens of his favour. 2. As an encouragement to hope that God would yet turn again their captivity, and return in mercy to them; and accordingly he mixes prayers and comfortable expectations with his record of former mercies. Observe,

First. Their commemoration of the great things God had formerly done for them. In general, ver. 1, "Our fathers have told us what work thou didst in their days." Observe, 1. The many operations of Providence are here spoken of as one work. They have told us "the work which thou didst," for there is a wonderful harmony and uniformity in all that God doth, and the many wheels make but one wheel, *Eze.* x. 13; many works make but one work. 2. It is a debt which every age owes to posterity, to keep an account of God's works of wonder, and transmit the knowledge of them to the next generation. Those that went before us told us what God did in their days, we are bound to tell those that come after us what he has done in our days, and let them do the like justice to those that shall succeed them; thus shall "one generation praise his works to another," *Ps.* cxlv. 4; "The fathers to the children shall make known his truth," *Isa.* xxxviii. 19. 3. We must not only make mention of the work God has done in our own days, but must also acquaint ourselves and our children with what he did in the times of old, long before our own days; and of this we

have in the Scripture a sure word of history, as sure as the word of prophecy. 4. Children must diligently attend to what their parents tell them of the wonderful works of God, and keep it in remembrance, as that which will be of great use to them. 5. Former experiences of God's power and goodness are strong supports to faith, and powerful pleas in prayer under present calamities. See how Gideon insists upon it, *Jud.* vi. 13, "Where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of!" In particular their fathers had told them,

1st. How wonderfully God planted Israel in Canaan at first, ver. 2, 3. He drove out the natives to make room for Israel, afflicted them, and cast them out, gave them as dust to Israel's sword, and as driven stubble to their bow. The many complete victories which Israel obtained over the Canaanites, under the command of Joshua, were not to be attributed to themselves, nor could they challenge the glory of them. *First.* They were not owing to their own merit, but to God's favour and free grace; it was through "the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour to them;" "Not for thy righteousness or the uprightness of thy heart doth God drive them out from before thee," *Deu.* ix. 5, 6; but because God would "perform the oath which he sware unto their fathers," *Deu.* vii. 8. The less praise this allows us, the more comfort it administers to us, that we may see all our successes and enlargements coming to us from the favour of God, and the light of his countenance. *Secondly.* They were not owing to their own might, but to God's power engaged for them, without which all their own efforts and endeavours had been fruitless. It was not by their own sword that they got the land in possession, though they had great numbers of mighty men; nor did their own arm save them from being driven back by the Canaanites, and put to shame; but it was God's right hand and his arm. He fought for Israel, else they had fought in vain; it was through him that they did valiantly and victoriously. It was God that planted Israel in that good land, as the careful husbandman plants a tree, from which he promiseth himself fruit: see *Ps.* lxxx. 8. This is applicable to the planting of the Christian church in the world by the preaching of the Gospel. Paganism was wonderfully driven out, as the Canaanites, not all at once, but by little and little; not by any human policy or power, for God chose to do it by the weak and foolish things of the world, but by the wisdom and power of God. Christ by his Spirit went forth conquering and to conquer; and the remembrance of that is a great support and comfort to those that groan under the yoke of anti-christian tyranny; for to the state of the church under the power of the New Testament Babylon, some think (and particularly the learned Amyraldus) the complaints in the latter part of this psalm may very fitly be accommodated. He that by his power and goodness planted a church for himself in the world will certainly support it by the same power and goodness, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

2nd. How frequently he had given them success against their enemies that attempted to disturb them in the possession of that good land; ver. 7, "Thou hast" many a time "saved us from our enemies;" and hast put to flight, and so put to shame, them that hated us. Witness the successes of the judges against the nations that oppressed Israel. Many a time have the persecutors of the Christian church, and those that hate it, been put to shame by the power of truth, *Acts* vi. 10.

Secondly. The good use they make of this record, and had formerly made of it, in consideration of the great things God had done for their fathers of old.

1. They had taken God for their sovereign Lord, had sworn allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection; ver. 4, "Thou art my king, O God." He speaks in the name of the church, as *Ps.* lxxiv. 12, "Thou art my king of old." God has as a king made laws for his church, provided for the peace and good order of it, judged for it, pleaded its cause, fought its battles, and protected it. It is his kingdom in the world, and ought to be subject to him, and to pay him tribute; or, the psalmist speaks for himself here; Lord, "Thou art my king," whither shall I go but to thee with my petitions? The favour I ask is not for myself, but for thy church. Note, It is every one's duty to improve their personal interest at the throne of grace for the public welware and prosperity of the people of God, as Moses, "If I have found grace in thy sight," guide thy people, *Ex.* xxxiii. 13.

2. They had always applied themselves to him by prayer for deliverance, when at any time they were in distress; "Command deliverances for Jacob." Observe, 1st. The enlargedness of their desire. They pray for deliverances, not one, but many, as many as they had need of, how many soever they were; a series of deliverances, a deliverance from every danger. 2nd. The strength of their faith in the power of God; they do not say, work deliverances, but command them, which notes his doing it easily and instantly; Speak, and it is done: such was the faith of the centurion, *Mat.* viii. 8, "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed;" and his doing it effectually; command it, as one having authority, whose command will be obeyed; "Where the word of a king is, there is power," much more the word of the King of kings.

3. They had trusted and triumphed in him. As they owned that it was not their own sword and bow that had saved them, ver. 3, so neither did they trust to their own sword or bow to save them for the future; ver. 6, "I will not trust in my bow," not in any of my military preparations, as if those would stand me in stead without God; no, "through thee will we push down our enemies," ver. 5; that is, we will attempt it in thy strength, relying only upon that, and not upon the number or valour of our forces; and having thee on our side we will not doubt of success in the attempt. "Through my name," that is, by virtue of thy wisdom directing us, thy power strengthening us and working for us, and thy promise securing success to us, we shall, we "will, tread them under that rise up against us."

4. They had made him their joy and praise; ver. 8, "In God we have boasted," in him we do and will boast every day, and "all the day long." When their enemies boasted of their strength and successes, as Sennacherib and Rabshakeh hectored Hezekiah, they owned they had nothing to boast of in answer thereunto but their relation to God, and their interest in him; and if he were for them they could set all the world at defiance. "Let him that glories glory in the Lord;" and let that for ever exclude all other boasting. Let those that trust in God make their boast in him; for they know whom they have trusted. Let them boast in him all the day long; for it is a subject that can never be exhausted. But let them withal praise his name for ever; if they have the comfort of his name, let them give unto him the glory due to it.

9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame;
And goest not forth with our armies.
10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy:
And they which hate us spoil for themselves.
11 Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat;
And hast scattered us among the heathen.
12 Thou sellest thy people for nought,
And dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.
13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.
14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen,
A shaking of the head among the people.
15 My confusion *is* continually before me,
And the shame of my face hath covered me,
16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth;
By reason of the enemy and avenger.

The people of God here complain to him of the low and afflicted condition that they were in, under the prevailing power of their enemies and oppressors; which was the more grievous to them because they were now trampled upon who had always been used in their struggles with their neighbours to win the day, and get the upper hand, and because those were now their oppressors whom they had many a time triumphed over and made tributaries; and, especially, because they had boasted in their God, with great assurance that he would still protect and prosper them, which made the distress they were in, and the disgrace they were under, the more shameful. Let us see what the complaint is.

First. That they wanted the usual tokens of God's favour to them, and presence with them; ver. 9, "Thou hast cast off," that is, thou seemest to have cast us off, and our cause, and to have cast off thy wonted care of us, and concern for us, and so hast put us to shame, for we boasted of the constancy and perpetuity of thy favour. Our armies go forth as usual, but they are put to flight; we gain no ground, but lose what we have gained, for thou goest not forth with them; for if thou didst, which way soever they turned they would prosper,—but it is quite contrary. Note, God's people, when they are cast down, are tempted to think themselves cast off, and forsaken of God; but it is a mistake. "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid," *Rom.* xi. 1.

Secondly. That they were put to the worst before their enemies in the field of battle; ver. 10, "Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy," as Joshua complained when they met with a repulse at Ai, *Jos.* vii. 8. We are dispirited and have lost the ancient valour of Israelites; we flee, we fall before those that used to flee and fall before us, and then they that hate us have the plunder of our camp and of our country; they spoil for themselves, and reckon all their own that they can lay their hands on. Attempts to shake off the Babylonish yoke have been ineffectual, and we have rather lost ground by them.

Thirdly. That they were doomed to the sword and to captivity; ver. 11, "Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat." They make no more conscience of killing an Israelite than of killing a sheep; nay, like the butcher, they make a trade of it, they take a pleasure in it as a hungry man in his meat; and we are led with as much ease, and as little resistance, as a lamb to the slaughter. Many are slain, and the rest scattered among the heathen, continually insulted by their malice, or in danger of being infected by their iniquities. They looked upon themselves as bought and sold, and charged it upon God, "Thou sellest thy people;" when they should have charged it upon their own sins, "for your iniquities have you sold yourselves," *Isa.* l. 1. However, thus far was right, that they looked above the instruments of their trouble, and kept their eye upon God, as well knowing that their worst enemies had no power against them, but what was given them from above; they own it was God that delivered them into the hands of the ungodly, as that which is sold is delivered to the buyer. 'Thou sellest them for nought, and dost not increase in their price,' so it may be read; dost not sell them by auction to those that will bid most for them, but in haste, to those that will bid first for them; any one shall have them that will. Or, as we read it, "Thou dost not increase thy wealth by their price;" intimating that they could have suffered this contentedly, if they had been sure that it would have redounded to the glory of God, and that his interests might have been some way served by their sufferings. But it was quite contrary; Israel's disgrace turned to God's dishonour, so that he was so far from being a gainer in his glory by the sale of them, that it should seem he was greatly a loser by it: see *Isa.* lii. 5; *Eze.* xxxvi. 20.

Fourthly. That they were loaded with contempt, and all possible ignominy put upon them. In this also they acknowledge God: "Thou makest us a reproach;" that is, thou bringest those calamities upon us which occasion the reproach, and thou permittest their virulent tongues to smite us. They complain, 1. That they were ridiculed and bantered, and were looked upon as the most contemptible people under the sun; their troubles were turned to their reproach, and upon the account of them they were derided. 2. That their neighbours and those about them, from whom they could not withdraw, were most abusive to them, ver. 13. 3. That the heathen and the people that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenants of promise, made them a byword, and shook the head at them as triumphing in their fall, ver. 14. 4. That the reproach was constant and incessant; ver. 15, "My confusion is continually before me." The church in general, the psalmist in particular, was continually teased and vexed with the insults of the enemy: to those that are going down every one cries, Down with them. 5. That it was very grievous, and in a manner overwhelmed him; "The shame of my face has covered me." He blushed for sin, or rather for the dishonour done to God; and then it was a holy blushing. 6. That it reflected upon God himself. The reproach which the enemy and the avenger cast upon them was downright blasphemy against God, ver. 16, and 2 *Kin.* xix. 3; therefore, no doubt but God would appear for them. As there is no trouble more grievous to a generous and ingenuous mind than reproach and calumny, so there is none more grievous to a holy, gracious soul than blasphemy and dishonour done to God.

17 All this is come upon us;
Yet have we not forgotten thee,
Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.
18 Our heart is not turned back,
Neither have our steps declined from thy way;
19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons,
And covered us with the shadow of death.
20 If we have forgotten the name of our God,
Or stretched out our hands to a strange god;
21 Shall not God search this out?
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long;
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord?
Arise, cast *us* not off for ever.
24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust:
Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
26 Arise for our help,
And redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

The people of God, being greatly afflicted and oppressed, here apply themselves to him; whither else should they go?

First. By way of appeal concerning their integrity; which he only is an infallible judge of, and which he will certainly be the reward of. Two things they call God to witness to:

1. That, though they suffered these hard things, yet they kept close to God and to their duty; ver. 17, "All this is come upon us," and it is as bad, perhaps, as bad can be, "yet have we not forgotten thee;" not cast off the thoughts of thee, nor deserted the worship of thee, for though we cannot deny but that we have dealt foolishly, yet we have not "dealt foolishly in thy covenant," so as to cast thee off, and take to other gods. Though idolaters were our conquerors, we did not therefore entertain any more favourable thoughts of their idols and idolatries; though thou hast seemed to forsake us, and withdraw from us, yet we have not therefore forsaken thee. The trouble they had been long in was very great; we have been "sore broken in the place of dragons," that is, among men as fierce, and furious, and cruel as dragons. We have been covered with the shadow of death, that is, we have been under deep melancholy, and apprehensive of nothing but death. We have been wrapped up in obscurity, and buried alive; and thou hast thus broken us, thou hast thus covered us, ver. 19. Yet we have not harboured any hard thoughts of thee, nor meditated a retreat from thy service. Though thou hast slain us, we have continued to trust in thee; "our heart is not turned back;" we have not secretly withdrawn our affections from thee, "neither have our steps," either in our religious worship, or in our conversation, "declined from thy way," ver. 18; the way which thou hast appointed us to walk in. When the heart turns back, the steps will soon decline; for it is the evil heart of unbelief that inclines us to depart from God. Note, We may the better bear our troubles, how pressing soever, if in them we still hold fast our integrity. While our troubles do not drive us from our duty to God, we should not suffer them to drive us from our comfort in God; for he will not leave us, if we do not leave him.

For the proof of their integrity they take God's omniscience to witness; which is as much the comfort of the upright in heart as it is the terror of hypocrites; ver. 20, 21. "If we have forgotten the name of our God," under pretence that he had forgotten us, or in our distress had stretched out our hands to a strange god, as more likely to help us, "shall not God search this out?" shall he not know it more fully and distinctly than we know that which we have with the greatest care and diligence searched out? Shall he not judge it, and call us to an account for it? Forgetting God was a heart-sin; and stretching out the hand to a strange god was often a secret sin, *Eze.* viii. 14. But heart-sins and secret sins are known to God, and must be reckoned for; for he knows the secrets of the heart, and therefore is an infallible judge of the words and actions.

2. That therefore they suffered these hard things because they kept close to God and to their duty; ver. 22, it is "for thy sake that we are killed all the day long," because we stand related to thee; are called by thy name, call upon thy name, and will not worship other gods. In this the spirit of prophecy had reference to those who suffered even unto death for the testimony of Christ, to whom it is applied, *Rom.* viii. 36. So many were killed and put to such lingering deaths, that they were in the killing all the day long; so universally was this practised, that when a man became a Christian, he reckoned himself as a "sheep appointed for the slaughter."

Secondly. By way of petition, with references to their present distress, that God would in his own due time work deliverance for them. Their request is very importunate; "Awake, arise," ver. 23; "Arise for our help, redeem us," ver. 26; come speedily and powerfully to our relief; *Ps.* lxxx. 2, "Stir up thy strength, and come and save us." They complained, ver. 12, that God had sold them; here they pray, ver. 26, that God would redeem them, for there is no appealing from God but by appealing to him. If he sell us, it is not any one else that can redeem us; the same hand that tears must heal, that smites must bind up, *Hos.* vi. 1. They complained, ver. 9, "Thou hast cast us off;" but here they pray, ver. 23, "Cast us not off for ever;" let us not be finally forsaken of God. The expostulations are very moving; "Why sleepest thou?" ver. 23. He that keeps Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when he doth not presently appear for the deliverance of his people, they are tempted to think he sleeps. The expression is figurative, as *Ps.* lxxviii. 65, "Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep;" but it was applicable to Christ in the letter, *Mat.* viii. 24; he was asleep when the disciples were in a storm, and they awoke him, saying, "Lord, save us, we perish!" "Wherefore hidest thou thy face," that we may not see thee and the light of thy countenance? Or, that thou mayest not see us and our distresses. Thou "forgettest our affliction and our oppression," for it still continues, and we see no way open for our deliverance. And, lastly, The pleas are very proper; not their own merit and righteousness, though they had the testimony of their consciences concerning their integrity, but they plead the poor sinner's pleas. 1. Their own misery, which made them the proper object of the Divine compassion; ver. 25, "Our soul is bowed down to the dust," under prevailing grief and fear. We are become as creeping things, the most despicable animals; "Our belly cleaveth unto the earth," we cannot lift up ourselves, neither revive our own drooping spirits, nor recover ourselves out of our low and sad condition, and we lie exposed to be trodden on by every insulting foe. 2. God's mercy; "O redeem us for thy mercies' sake." We depend upon the goodness of thy nature, which is the glory of thy name, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6; and upon those sure mercies of David which are conveyed by the covenant to all his spiritual seed.

PSALM XLV.

This psalm is an illustrious prophecy of Messiah the Prince. It is all over gospel, and points at him only, as a Bridegroom espousing the church to himself, and as a King ruling in it and ruling for it; and it is probable our Saviour has reference to this psalm when he compares the kingdom of heaven, more than once, to a nuptial solemnity, the solemnity of a royal nuptial, *Mat.* xxii. 2; xxv. 1. We have no reason to think it has any reference to Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter. If I thought it had reference to any other than the mystical marriage between Christ and his church, I would rather apply it to some of David's marriages, because he was a man of war, such a one as the bridegroom here is described to be, which Solomon was not. But I take it to be purely and only meant of Jesus Christ; of him speaketh the prophet this, of him and of no other man; and to him ver. 6, 7, is applied in the New Testament, *Heb.* i. 8, nor can it be understood of any other. The preface speaks the excellency of the song, ver. 1. The psalm speaks, I. Of the royal Bridegroom, who is Christ: 1. The transcendent excellency of his person, ver. 2; 2. The glory of his victories, ver. 3—5; 3. The righteousness of his government, ver. 6, 7; 4. The splendour of his court, ver. 8, 9. II. Of the royal bride, which is the church: 1. Her consent gained, ver. 10, 11; 2. The nuptials solemnized, ver. 12—15; 3. The issue of this marriage, ver. 16, 17. In singing this psalm our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of Christ, with an entire submission to, and satisfaction in, his government, and earnest desire of the enlarging and perpetuating of his church in the world.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves.

MY heart is inditing a good matter:
I speak of the things which I have made touching the king:
My tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.
2 Thou art fairer than the children of men:
Grace is poured into thy lips:
Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.
3 Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* mighty,
With thy glory and thy majesty.
4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously
Because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness;
And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
5 Thine arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the king's enemies;
Whereby the people fall under thee.

Some make Shoshannim, in the title, to signify an instrument of six strings; others take it in its primitive signification for lilies or roses, which probably were strewed with other flowers at nuptial solemnities; and then it is easily applicable to Christ, who calls himself the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys, *Cant.* ii. 1. It is a song of loves, concerning the holy love that is between Christ and his church. It is a song of the well-beloved, the virgins, the companions of the bride, ver. 14, prepared to be sung by them. The virgin company that attend the Lamb on mount Zion are said to sing a new song, *Rev.* xiv. 3, 4.

The preface, ver. 1, speaks, 1. The dignity of the subject. It is a good matter, and it is pity such a moving art as poetry should ever be employed about a bad matter. It is touching the King, king Jesus, and his kingdom and government. Note, Those that speak of Christ speak of a good matter, no subject so noble, so copious, so fruitful, so profitable, and so well becoming us. It is a shame that this good matter is not more the matter of our discourse. 2. The excellency of the management. This song was a confession with the mouth of faith in the heart concerning Christ and his church. 1st. The matter was well digested, as it well deserved. "My heart is inditing it." Which perhaps is meant of that Spirit of prophecy that dictated the psalm to David; that Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets, 1 *Pet.* i. 11. But it is applicable to his devout meditations and affections in his heart, out of the abundance of which his mouth spake. Things concerning Christ ought to be thought of by us with all possible seriousness, with fixedness of thought, and a fire of holy love: especially when we are to speak of those things. We then speak best of Christ and Divine things, when we speak from the heart that which has warmed and affected us; and we should never be rash in speaking of the things of Christ, but weigh well beforehand what we have to say, lest we speak amiss: see *Eccl.* v. 2. 2nd. It was well expressed. "I will speak of the things which I have made." He would express himself, *First.* With all possible clearness, as one that did himself understand, and was affected with the things he spoke of. Not, I will speak the things I have heard from others, that is speaking by rote; but the things which I have myself studied. Note, What God has wrought in our souls, as well as what he has wrought for them, we must declare to others, *Ps.* lxvi. 16. *Secondly.* With all possible cheerfulness, freedom, and fluency. "My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer," guided by my heart in every word, as the pen is by the hand. We call the prophets the penmen of Scripture, whereas really they were but the pen. The tongue of the most subtle disputant, and the most eloquent orator, is but the pen with which God writes what he pleaseth. Why should we quarrel with the pen, if bitter things be written against us? or idolize the pen, if it write in our favours? David not only spoke what he thought of Christ, but wrote it, that it might spread the farther, and last the longer. His tongue was as the pen of a ready writer, that lets nothing slip. When the heart is inditing a good matter, it is pity but the tongue should be as the pen of a ready writer to leave it upon record. In these verses the Lord Jesus is presented,

First. As most beautiful and amiable in himself. It is a marriage song, and therefore the transcendent excellences of Christ are represented by the beauty of the royal bridegroom; ver. 2, "Thou art fairer than the children of men," than any of them. He proposed, ver. 1, to speak of the king, but immediately directs his speech to him. They that have an admiration and affection for Christ, love to go to him and tell him so. Thus we must profess our faith that we see his beauty, and our love that we are pleased with it. "Thou art fair, thou art fairer, than the children of men." Note, Jesus Christ is in himself, and in the eyes of all believers, more amiable and lovely than the children of men. The beauties of the Lord Jesus, as God, as Mediator, far surpass those of the human nature in general, and those which the most amiable and excellent of the children of men are endowed with. There is more in Christ to engage our love than there is or can be in any creature. Our beloved is more than another beloved. The beauties of this lower world and its charms are in danger of drawing away our hearts from Christ, and therefore we are concerned to understand how much he excelleth them all, and how much more worthy he is of our love.

Secondly. As the great favourite of Heaven. He is fairer than the children of men, for God has done more for him than for any of the children of men; and all his kindness to the children of men is for his sake, and passeth through his hands, through his mouth. 1. He hath grace, and he has it for us; "Grace is poured into thy lips." By his word, his promise his Gospel, the good will of God is made known to us, and the good work of God is begun and carried on in us. He received all grace from God, all the endowments that were requisite

to qualify him for his work and office as Mediator, that from his fulness we might receive, *Jno.* i. 16. It was not only poured into his heart, for his own strength and encouragement, but poured into his lips, that by the words of his mouth in general, and the kisses of his mouth to particular believers, he might communicate both holiness and comfort. From this grace poured into his lips proceeded those gracious words which all admired, *Lu.* iv. 22. The Gospel of grace is poured into his lips, for "it began to be spoken by the Lord," and from him we receive it; he hath the words of eternal life. 'The spirit of prophecy is put into thy lips;' so the Chaldee. 2. He hath the blessing, and he has it for us. Therefore, because thou art the great trustee of Divine grace for the use and benefit of the children of men, "therefore God has blessed thee for ever;" that is, has made thee an everlasting blessing, so as that in thee all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. Where God gives his grace, he will give his blessing. We are blessed with spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, *Eph.* i. 3.

Thirdly. As victorious over all his enemies. The royal bridegroom is a man of war, and his nuptials do not excuse him from the field of battle, (as was allowed by the law, *Deu.* xxiv. 5,) nay, they bring him to the field of battle, for he is to rescue his spouse by dint of sword out of her captivity; to conquer her, and to conquer for her, and then to marry her. Now we have here,

1. His preparations for war; ver. 3, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty." The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. By the promises of that word, and the grace contained in those promises, souls are made willing to submit to Jesus Christ, and become his loyal subjects; and by the threatenings of that word, and the judgments executed according to them, those that stand it out against Christ will in due time be brought down and ruined. By the Gospel of Christ many Jews and Gentiles were converted, and at length the Jewish nation was destroyed, according to the predictions of it, for their implacable enmity to it; and paganism was quite abolished. The sword here girt on Christ's thigh is the same which is said to proceed out of his mouth, *Rev.* xix. 15. When the Gospel was sent forth to be preached to all nations, then our Redeemer girt his sword upon his thigh.

2. His expedition to this holy war. He goes forth with his glory and his majesty, as a great king takes the field, with abundance of pomp and magnificence—his sword, his glory and majesty. In his Gospel he appears transcendently great and excellent, bright and blessed, in the honour and majesty which the Father has laid upon him. Christ, both in his person and in his Gospel, had nothing of external glory or majesty, nothing to charm men; for "he had no form nor comeliness:" nothing to awe men, for "he took upon him the form of a servant;" but it was all spiritual glory, spiritual majesty. There is so much grace, and therefore glory, in that word, "He that believes shall be saved;" so much terror, and therefore majesty, in that word, "He that believes not shall be damned;" that we may well say, in the chariot of that Gospel, which these words are the sum of, the Redeemer rides forth in glory and majesty. "In thy majesty ride prosperously," ver. 4. 'Prosper thou; ride thou.' This speaks the promise of his Father, that he should prosper, according to the good pleasure of the Lord, that he should divide the spoil with the strong, in recompence of his sufferings. Those cannot but prosper to whom God saith, Prosper, *Isa.* liii. 10—12. And it speaks the good wishes of his friends, praying that he may prosper in the conversion of souls to him, and the destruction of all the powers of darkness that rebel against him. "Thy kingdom come." Go on and prosper.

3. The glorious cause in which he is engaged: "because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness," which were in a manner sunk and lost among men, and which Christ came to retrieve and rescue. 1st. The Gospel itself is "truth, meekness, and righteousness;" it commands by the power of truth and righteousness, for Christianity has these incontestably on its side, and yet it is to be promoted by meekness and gentleness, 1 *Cor.* iv. 12, 13; 2 *Tim.* ii. 25. 2nd. Christ appears in it, in his "truth, meekness, and righteousness," and these are his glory and majesty, and because of these he shall prosper. Men are brought to believe on him because he is truth, to learn of him because he is meek, *Mat.* xi. 29, (the gentleness of Christ is a thing of mighty force, 2 *Cor.* x. 1,) and to submit to him because he is righteous and rules with equity. 3rd. The Gospel, as far as it prevails with men, sets up in their hearts "truth, meekness, and righteousness;" rectifies their mistakes by the light of truth, controls their passions by the power of meekness, and governs their hearts and lives by the laws of righteousness. Christ came, by setting up his kingdom among men, to restore these glories to a degenerate world, and to maintain the cause of these just and rightful rulers under him that, by error, malice, and iniquity, had been deposed.

4. The success of his expedition. "Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things;" that is, thou shalt experience a wonderful Divine power going along with thy Gospel, to make it victorious; and the effects of it will be terrible things. 1st. In order to the conversion and reduction of souls to him, there are terrible things to be done; the heart must be pricked, conscience must be startled, and the terrors of the Lord must make way for his consolations. This is done by the right hand of Christ. The Comforter shall continue, *Jno.* xvi. 8. 2nd. In the conquest of the gates of hell, and its supporters, in the destruction of Judaism and Paganism, terrible things will be done, which will make men's hearts fail them for fear, *Lu.* xxi. 26, and great men and chief captains call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, *Rev.* vi. 15. The next verse describes these terrible things; ver. 5, "Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies." *First.* Those that were by nature enemies are thus wounded, in order to their being reduced and reconciled. Convictions are like the arrows of the bow, which are sharp in the heart on which they fasten, and bring people to fall under Christ, in subjection to his laws and government. They that thus fall on this stone, shall be broken, *Mat.* xxi. 44. *Secondly.* Those that persist in their enmity are thus wounded, in order to their being ruined. The arrows of God's terrors are sharp in their hearts, whereby they shall fall under him, so as to be made his footstool, *Ps.* cx. 1. Those that would not have him to reign over them shall be brought forth and slain before him, *Lu.* xix, 27; that would not submit to his golden sceptre, shall be broken to pieces by his iron rod.

6 Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever:
The sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre.
7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness:
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
8 All thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia,
Out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.
9 Kings' daughters *were* among thy honourable women:
Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

We have here the royal Bridegroom filling his throne with judgment, and keeping his court with splendour.

First. He here fills his throne with judgment. It is God the Father that saith to the Son here, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" as appears, *Heb.* i. 8, 9, where this is quoted to prove that he is God, and has a "more excellent name than the angels." The Mediator is God, else he had neither been able to do the Mediator's work, nor fit to wear the Mediator's crown. Concerning his government observe,

1. The eternity of it. It is "for ever and ever." It shall continue on earth throughout all the ages of time, in despite of all the opposition of the gates of hell; and in the blessed fruits and consequences of it it shall last as long as the days of heaven, and run parallel with the line of eternity itself. And, perhaps, even then the glory of the Redeemer, and the blessedness of the redeemed, shall be in a continual, infinite progression; for it is promised, that not only of his government, but "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end," *Isa.* iv. 7, even then when "the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father," 1 *Cor.* xv. 24, the throne of the Redeemer will continue.

2. The equity of it. "The sceptre of thy kingdom," that is, the administration of thy government is right, exactly according to the eternal counsel and will of God, which is the eternal rule and reason of good and evil; and whatever Christ doth he doth none of his subjects any wrong, but rights those that do suffer wrong, "He loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness," ver. 7. He himself loves to do righteousness, and hates to do wickedness; and he loves those that do righteousness, and hates those that do wickedness. By the holiness of his life, the merit of his death, and the great design of his Gospel, he has made it to appear that he loves righteousness, for by his example, his satisfaction, and his precepts, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness; and that he hates wickedness, for never did God's hatred of sin appear so as it did in the sufferings of Christ.

3. The establishment and elevation of it. "Therefore God, even thy God," (Christ, as mediator, called God his God, *Jno.* xx. 17, as commissioned by him, and the head of those that are taken into covenant with him,) he "has anointed thee with the oil of gladness;" therefore, that is, 1st. In order to this righteous government of thine, God has given thee his Spirit, that Divine unction, to qualify thee for thine undertaking; *Isa.* lxi. 1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me." What God called him to he fitted him for, *Isa.* xi. 2. The Spirit is called the oil of gladness, because of the delight wherewith Christ was filled in carrying on his undertaking. He was anointed with the Spirit above all his fellows, that is, above all those that were anointed, whether priests or kings. 2nd. In recompence of what thou hast done and suffered for the advancement of righteousness, and the destruction of sin, God has anointed thee with the oil of gladness; that is, has brought thee to all the honours and all the joys of thine exalted state; "Because he humbled himself, God has highly exalted him," *Phil.* ii. 8, 9. His anointing him notes the power and glory to which he is exalted; he is invested in all the dignities and authorities of the Messiah; and his anointing him with the oil of gladness, notes the joy that was set before him, (so his exaltation is expressed, *Heb.* xii. 2,) both in the light of his Father's countenance, *Acts* ii. 28, and in the success of his undertaking, which he shall see and be satisfied, *Isa.* liii. 11. This he is anointed with above all his fellows, that is, above all believers, who are his brethren, and who partake of the anointing; but they by measure, he without measure. But the apostle brings it to prove his preeminence above the angels, *Heb.* i. 4, 9. The salvation of sinners is the joy of angels, *Lu.* xv. 10, but much more of the Son.

Secondly. He keeps his court with splendour and magnificence.

1. His robes of state, wherein he appears, are taken notice of, not for their pomp, which might strike an awe upon the spectator, but their pleasantness and the gratefulness of the odours with which they were perfumed; ver. 8, "They smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia," compounding the oil of gladness with which he and his garments were anointed. These were some of the ingredients of the holy anointing oil which God appointed, the like to which was not to be made up for any common use, *Ex.* xxx. 23, 24, which was typical of the unction of the Spirit, which Christ the great high priest of our profession received, and to which, therefore, there seems here to be a reference. It is the savour of these good ointments, his graces and comforts, that draws souls to him, *Cant.* i. 3, 4, and makes him precious to believers, 1 *Pet.* ii. 7.

2. His royal palaces are said to be ivory ones, such as were then reckoned most magnificent. We read of an ivory house that Ahab made, 1 *Kin.* xxi. 39. The mansions of light above are the ivory palaces whence all the joys both of Christ and believers come, and where they will be for ever in perfection; for by them he is made glad, and all that are his with him; for they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.

3. The beauties of his court shine very bright. In public appearances at court, when the pomp of it is shewed, nothing is supposed to contribute so much to it as the splendour of the ladies, which is alluded to here, ver. 9.

1st. Particular believers are here compared to the ladies at court, richly dressed, in honour of the sovereign. "Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women," whose looks, and mien, and ornaments, we may suppose, by the height of their extraction, to excel all others. All true believers are born from above; they are the children of the King of kings, these attend the throne of the Lord Jesus daily with their prayers and praises, which is really their honour, and he is pleased to reckon it his. The numbering of kings' daughters among his honourable woman, or maids of honour, intimates that the kings whose daughters they were should be tributaries to him, and dependants on him, and would therefore think it a preferment to their daughters to attend him.

2nd. The church in general, constituted of these particular believers, is here compared to the queen herself, the queen consort, which by an everlasting covenant he hath betrothed to himself. She stands at his right hand, near to him, and receiving honour from him, in the richest array, in gold of Ophir, in robes woven with gold thread, or with a gold chain, and other ornaments of gold. This is the bride, the Lamb's wife, whose graces, that are her ornaments, are compared to fine linen, clean and white, *Rev.* xix. 8, for their purity; here to gold of Ophir, for their costliness; for as we owe our redemption, so we owe our adorning, not to corruptible things, but to the precious blood of the Son of God.

10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;
Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;
11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty:
For he *is* thy Lord; and worship thou him.
12 And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift;
Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour
13 The king's daughter *is* all glorious within:
Her clothing *is* of wrought gold.

14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-
The virgins her companions that follow her [work:
Shall be brought unto thee.
15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought:
They shall enter into the king's palace.
16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,
Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.
17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:
Therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

This latter part of the psalm is addressed to the royal bride, standing on the right hand of the royal Bridegroom. God, that said to the Son, "Thy throne is for ever and ever," saith this to the church, who upon the account of her espousals to the Son, he here calls his daughter.

First. He tells her of the duties expected from her, which ought to be considered by all those that come into relation to the Lord Jesus: "Hearken therefore, and consider" this, "and incline thine ear;" that is, submit to those conditions of thine espousals, and bring thy will to comply with them. This is the method of profiting by the Word of God; "He that hath ears let him hear," let him hearken diligently; he that hearkens, let him consider and weigh it duly; he that considers, let him incline, and yield to the force of what is laid before him. And what is it that is here required?

1. She must renounce all others; "Forget thine own people and thy father's house," according to the law of marriage; retain not the affection thou hast had for them, nor covet to return to them again; banish all such remembrance (not only of thy people that were dear to thee, but of thy father's house that was dearer,) as may incline thee to look back, as Lot's wife to Sodom. When Abraham, in obedience to God's call, had quitted his native soil, he was not so much as "mindful of the country from whence he came out." This shews, 1st. How necessary it was for those who were converted from Judaism or paganism to the faith of Christ, wholly to cast out the old leaven, and not to bring into their Christian profession either the Jewish ceremonies or the heathen idolatries, for these would make such a mongrel religion in Christianity as the Samaritans had. 2nd. How necessary it is for us all when we give up our names to Jesus Christ to hate father and mother, and all that is dear to us in this world, in comparison; that is, to love them less than Christ and his honour, and our interest in him, *Lu.* xiv. 26. And here is very good encouragement given to the royal bride thus entirely to break off from her former alliances; "So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty," which intimates that the mixing of her old rites and customs, whether Jewish or Gentile, with her religion, would blemish her beauty, and would be in danger of losing her interest in the affections of the royal Bridegroom; but if she entirely conformed to his will he would delight in her. The beauty of holiness, both on the church and on particular believers, is in the sight of Christ of great price, and very amiable. Where that is he saith, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it." Among the golden candlesticks he walks with pleasure, *Rev.* ii. 1.

2. She must reverence him; must love, honour, and obey him; "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." The church is to be subject to Christ, as the wife to the husband, *Eph.* v. 24; to call him Lord as Sarah called Abraham, and to obey him, 1 *Pet.* iii. 6; and so not only to submit to his government, but to give him Divine honours. We must worship him as God, and our Lord; for this is the will of God, that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" nay, in so doing, it is reckoned that they honour the Father. If we confess that Christ is Lord, and pay our homage to him accordingly, it is to the glory of God the Father, *Phil.* ii. 11.

Secondly. He tells her of the honours designed for her.

1. Great court should be made to her, and rich presents brought her; ver. 12, "The daughter of Tyre," a rich and splendid city, "the daughter of the king of Tyre, shall be there with a gift;" every royal family round about shall send a branch as a representative of the whole, to seek thy favour, and to make an interest in thee; "even the rich among the people," whose wealth might be thought to discharge them from dependence at court, yet they "shall entreat thy favour," for his sake to whom thou art espoused, that by thee they may make him their friend. The Jews, the pretending Jews, who are rich to a proverb,—as rich as a Jew,—shall come and worship before the church's feet in the Philadelphian period, and shall know that Christ has loved her, *Rev.* iii. 9. When the Gentiles, being converted to the faith of Christ, join themselves to the church, they then come with a gift, 2 *Cor.* viii. 5; *Rom.* xv. 16; when with themselves they devote all they have to the honour of Christ and the service of his kingdom, they then come with a gift.

2. She shall be very splendid and highly esteemed in the eyes of all; 1st. For her personal qualifications, the endowments of her mind, which every one shall admire; ver. 13, "The king's daughter is all glorious within." Note, The glory of the church is spiritual glory, and that is indeed all glory; it is the glory of the soul, and that is the man; it is glory in God's sight, and it is an earnest of eternal glory. The glory of the saints falls not within the ken of a carnal eye. As their life, so their glory, is hid with Christ in God, neither can the natural man know it, for it is spiritually discerned; but those who do so discern it highly value it. Let us see here what is that true glory which we should be ambitious of, not that which makes a fair show in the flesh, but which is in "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible," 1 *Pet.* iii. 4; "Whose praise is not of men, but of God," *Rom.* ii. 29. 2nd. For her rich apparel. Though all her glory is within, that for which she is truly valuable, yet her clothing also is of wrought gold. The conversation of Christians, in which they appear in the world, must be enriched with good works; not gay and gaudy ones, like paint and flourish, but substantially good, like gold; and it must be accurate and exact, like wrought gold, which is worked with a great deal of care and caution.

3. Her nuptials shall be celebrated with a great deal of honour and joy; ver. 14, 15, "She shall be brought to the king," as the Lord God brought the woman to the man, *Gen.* ii. 22, which was a type of this mystical marriage between Christ and his church. None are brought to Christ but whom the Father brings, and he has undertaken to do it; so brought to the king, ver. 14, as to enter into the king's palace, ver. 15, which intimates a two-fold bringing of the spouse to Christ: 1st. In the conversion of souls to Christ; then they are espoused to him, privately contracted, as chaste virgins, 2 *Cor.* xi. 2; *Rom.* vii. 4. 2nd. In the completing of the mystical body, and the glorification of all the saints at the end of time. Then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be made completely ready, when all that belong to the election of grace shall be called in, and called home, and all gathered together to Christ, 2 *Thes.* ii. 1. Then is the marriage of the Lamb come, *Rev.* xix. 7; xxi. 2, and the virgins go forth to meet the bridegroom, *Mat.* xxv. 1; then they shall enter into the king's palaces, into the heavenly mansions, to be ever with the Lord. In both these espousals, observe to the honour of the royal bride, *First.* Her wedding clothes, raiment of needlework, the righteousness of Christ, the graces of the Spirit, both curiously wrought by Divine wisdom. *Secondly.* Her bridemaids, "the virgins her companions," the wise virgins that have oil in their vessels as well as in their lamps, those that being joined to the church cleave to it, and follow it, these shall go in to the marriage. *Thirdly.* The mirth with which the nuptials will be celebrated; "with gladness and rejoicing shall she be brought." When the prodigal is brought home to his father, "it is meet that we should make merry and be glad," *Lu.* xv. 32; and when the marriage of the Lamb is come, "let us be glad and rejoice," *Rev.* xix. 7; for the "day of his espousals is the day of the gladness of his heart," *Cant.* iii. 11.

4. The progeny of this marriage shall be illustrious; ver. 16, "Instead of the fathers, shall be thy children." Instead of the Old Testament church, the economy of which was waxen old, and ready to vanish away, *Heb.* viii. 13, as the fathers that are going off, there shall be a New Testament church, a Gentile church, that shall be grafted into the same olive, and partake of its root and fatness, *Rom.* xi. 17; "more" and more eminent "shall be the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife," *Isa.* liv. 1. This promise to Christ is of the same import with that *Isa.* liii. 10, "He shall see his seed," and these shall be made "princes in all the earth," that is, there shall be some of all nations brought into subjection to Christ, and so made princes, "made to our God kings and priests," *Rev.* i. 6. Or it may intimate that there should be a much greater number of Christian kings than ever there was of Jewish kings; those in Canaan only,—these in all the earth; nursing fathers, and nursing mothers to the church, which shall suck the breasts of kings. They are princes of Christ's making; for by him kings reign, and princes decree justice.

5. The praise of this marriage shall be perpetual, in the praises of the royal Bridegroom; ver. 18, "I will make thy name to be remembered." His Father has given him a name above every name, and here promiseth to make it perpetual, by keeping up a succession of ministers and Christians in every age that should bear up his name, which shall thus endure for ever, *Ps.* lxxii. 17, by being remembered in all the generations of time, for the entail of Christianity shall not be cut off. Therefore, because they shall remember thee in all generations, they shall praise thee for ever and ever. They that help to support the honour of Christ on earth shall in heaven see his glory, and share in it, and be for ever praising him. In the believing hope of our everlasting happiness in the other world, let us always keep up the remembrance of Christ, as our only way thither in our generation; and, in assurance of the perpetuating of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world, let us transmit the remembrance of him to succeeding generations, that his "name may endure for ever, and be as the days of heaven."

PSALM XLVI.

This psalm encourageth us to hope and trust in God, and his power and providence, and gracious presence with his church in the worst of times, and directs us to give him the glory of what he has done for us, and what he will do. Probably it was penned upon occasion of David's victories over the neighbour nations, 2 *Sam.* viii., and the rest which God gave him from all his enemies round about. We are here taught, I. To take comfort in God when things look very black and threatening, ver. 1—5. II. To mention to his praise the great things he has wrought for the church against its enemies, ver. 6—9. III. To assure ourselves that God, who hath glorified his own name, will glorify it yet again, and to comfort ourselves with that, ver. 10, 11. We may, in singing it, apply it either to our spiritual enemies, and the encouragement we have to hope that through Christ we shall be more than conquerors over them, or to the public enemies of Christ's kingdom in the world, and their threatening insults, endeavouring to preserve a holy security and serenity of mind when they seem most formidable. It is said of Luther, that when he heard any discouraging news, he would say, 'Come, let us sing the forty-sixth psalm.'

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.

GOD *is* our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
2 Therefore will not we fear,
Though the earth be removed,

EFFECTS OF AN EARTHQUAKE IN CALABRIA.

And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

3 *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. [Selah.

4 *There is* a river,
The streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
The holy *place* of the tabernacles of the most High.

5 God *is* in the midst of her;
She shall not be moved:
God shall help her, *and that* right early.

The psalmist here teacheth us by his own example,

First. To triumph in God, and his relation to us, and presence with us, especially when we have had some fresh experiences of his appearing on our behalf; ver. 1, "God is our refuge and strength;" we have found him so, he has engaged to be so, and he ever will be so. Are we pursued? God is our refuge, to whom we may flee, and in whom we may be safe, and think ourselves so,—secure upon good grounds, *Pr.* xviii. 10. Are we oppressed by troubles? Have we work to do, and enemies to grapple with? God is our strength to bear us up under burthens—to fit us for all our services and sufferings; who will by his grace put strength into us, and on whom we may stay ourselves. Are we in distress? He is a help, to do all that for us which we need, "a present help," 'a help found,' so the word is, that is, one whom we have found to be so; a help on which we may write, *probatum est*,—'it is tried,' as Christ is called a "tried stone," *Isa.* xxviii. 16. Or, a help at hand, that is never to seek, but is always ready to be found of us; or, a help sufficient, a help accommodated to every case and exigence. Whatever it is, he is "a very present help;" we cannot desire a better help, nor shall ever find the like in any creature.

Secondly. To triumph over the greatest dangers. "God is our strength and our help," a God all-sufficient to us, "therefore will not we fear." Those that with a holy reverence fear God need not with any amazement to be afraid of the power of hell or earth; "If God be for us, who can be against us" to do us any harm? It is our duty, it is our privilege, to be thus fearless; it is an evidence of a clear conscience, of an honest heart, and of a lively faith in God and his providence and promise; "We will not fear, though the earth be removed," though all our creature-confidences fail us, and sink us; nay, though that which should support us threaten to swallow us up, as the earth did Korah, for whose sons this psalm was penned, and some think by them, yet while we keep close to God, and have him for us, we will not fear, for we have no cause to fear.

——*Et si fractus illabatur orbis*
Impavidum ferient ruinæ.
Let Jove's dread arms with thunder rend the spheres,
Beneath the crush of worlds undaunted he appears.—*Hor.*

Observe here,

1. How threatening the danger is. We will suppose the earth to be removed and thrown into the sea, even the mountains, the strongest and firmest parts of the earth, to lie buried in the unfathomed ocean,—we will suppose the sea to roar and rage, and make a dreadful noise, and its foaming billows to insult the shore with so much violence as even to shake the mountains, ver. 3: though kingdoms and states be in confusion, embroiled in wars, tossed with tumults, and their governments in continual revolution; though their powers combine against the church and people of God, aim at no less than their ruin, and go very near to gain their point, "yet will not we fear,' knowing that all these troubles will end well for the church: see *Ps.* xciii. 4. If the earth be removed, those have reason to fear that have laid up their treasures on earth, and set their hearts upon it, but not those who have laid up for themselves treasures in heaven, and who then expect to be most happy, when "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up." Let those be troubled at the troubling of the waters who build their confidence on such a floating foundation, but not those who are led to "the rock that is higher than they," and find firm footing upon that rock.

2. How well-grounded the defiance of this danger is, considering how well-guarded the church is, and that interest which we are concerned for. It is not any private particular concern of our own that we are in pain about; no, it is "the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High;" it is the ark of God for which our hearts tremble. But when we consider what God has provided for the comfort and safety of his church we shall see reason to have our hearts fixed, and set above the fear of evil tidings. Here is,

1st. Joy to the church, even in the most melancholy and sorrowful times; ver. 4, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make it glad," even then when the waters of the sea roar and threaten it. It alludes to the waters of Siloam, which went softly by Jerusalem, *Isa.* viii. 6, 7, and though of no great depth or breadth, yet the waters of it were made serviceable to the defence of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time, *Isa.* xxii. 10, 11. But this here must be understood spiritually: the covenant of grace is the river, the promises of which are the streams; the Spirit of grace is the river, *Jno.* vii. 38, 39, the comforts of which are "the streams that make glad the city of our God." God's word and ordinances are rivers and streams with which God makes his saints glad in cloudy and dark days. God himself is to his church a place of "broad rivers and streams," *Isa.* xxviii. 21. The streams that make glad the city of God are not rapid, but gentle, like those of Siloam. Note, The spiritual comforts which are conveyed to the saints by soft and silent whispers, and which come not with observation, are sufficient to balance the most loud and noisy threatenings of an angry and malicious world.

2nd. Establishment to the church. Though heaven and earth are shaken, yet "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved," ver. 5. God has assured his church of his special presence with it, and concern for it; his honour is embarked in it, he hath set up his tabernacle in it, and has undertaken the protection of it, and therefore she shall not be moved; that is, *First.* Not destroyed, not removed, as the earth may be, ver. 2. The church shall survive the world, and be in bliss when that is in ruins. It is built upon a rock, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." *Secondly.* Not disturbed, not much moved with fears of the issue. If God be for us, if God be with us, we need not be moved at the most violent attempts made against us.

3rd. Deliverance to the church. Though its dangers be very great, "God shall help her," and then who can hurt her? help her under her troubles, that she shall not sink; nay, that the more she is afflicted, the more she shall multiply. "God shall help her" out of her troubles, "and that right early;" when the morning appeareth, that is, very speedily, for he is a present help, ver. 1; and very seasonably; then when things are brought to the last extremity, and when the relief will be most welcome. This may be applied by particular believers themselves; if God be in our hearts, in the midst of us by his word dwelling richly in us, we shall be established, we shall be helped; let us therefore trust and not be afraid; all is well and will end well.

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.

7 The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariot in the fire.

10 Be still, and know that I *am* God:
I will be exalted among the heathen,
I will be exalted in the earth.

11 The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

These verses give glory to God both as King of nations and as King of saints.

First. As King of nations, ruling the world by his power and providence, and overruling all the affairs of the children of men to his own glory. He doth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may say, "What dost thou?"

1. He checks the rage, and breaks the power, of the nations that oppose him and his interest in the world; ver. 6, "The heathen raged" at David's coming to the throne, and at the setting up of the kingdom of the Son of David: compare *Ps.* ii. 1, 2. "The kingdoms were moved" with indignation, and rose in a tumultuous, furious manner, to oppose it; but God "uttered his voice, spake to them in his wrath," and they were moved in another sense, they were struck into confusion and consternation, put into disorder, and all their measures broke, the earth itself melted under them, so that they found no firm footing, their earthly hearts failed them for fear, and dissolved like snow before the sun. Such a colliquation of the spirits of the enemies is described, *Jud.* v. 4, 5; and see *Lu.* xxi. 25, 26.

2. When he pleaseth to draw his sword and give it commission he can make great havoc among the nations, and lay all waste; ver. 8, "Come, behold the works of the Lord;" they are to be observed, *Ps.* lxvi. 5, and to be sought out, *Ps.* cxi. 2. All the operations of Providence must be considered as the works of the Lord, and his attributes and purposes must be taken notice of in them. Particularly take notice of the "desolations he hath made in the earth," among the enemies of his church, who thought to have laid the land of Israel desolate. The destruction they designed to bring upon the church has been turned upon themselves. War is a tragedy which commonly destroys the stage it is acted on; David carried the war into the enemy's country; and O what desolations did it make there! cities were burnt, countries laid waste, armies of men cut off and laid heaps upon heaps. Come and see the effects of desolating judgments, and stand in awe of God; say, "How terrible art thou in thy works!" *Ps.* lxvi. 3. Let all that oppose him see this with terror, and expect the same cup of trembling to be put into their hands; let all that fear him, and trust in him, see it with pleasure, and not be afraid of the most formidable powers armed against the church. Let them gird themselves, but they shall be broken to pieces.

3. When he pleaseth to sheathe his sword, he puts an end to the wars of the nations, and crowns them with peace, ver. 9. War and peace depend on his word and will as much as storms and calms at sea do, *Ps* cvii. 25, 29. "He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth;" sometimes in pity to the nations, that they may have a breathing time, when by long wars with each other they have run themselves out of breath. Both sides perhaps are weary of the war, and willing to let it fall; expedients are found out for accommodation; martial princes are removed, and peacemakers set in their room; and then the bow is broken by consent, the spear cut asunder, and turned into a pruning-hook, and the sword beaten into a ploughshare; and the chariots of war burned, there being no more occasion for them. Or rather it may be meant of what he doth at other times in favour of his own people. He maketh those wars to cease that were waged against them, and designed for their ruin. He breaks the enemy's bow that was drawn against them; "No weapon formed against Zion shall prosper," *Isa.* liv. 16. The total destruction of Gog and Magog is prophetically described by the burning of their weapons of war, *Eze.* xxxix. 9, 10; which intimates likewise the church's perfect security and assurance of lasting peace, which made it needless to lay up those weapons of war for their own service. The bringing of a long war to a good issue is a work of the Lord which we ought to behold with wonder and thankfulness.

Secondly. As King of saints; and as such we must own that "great and marvellous are his works," *Rev.* xv. 3. He doth and will do great things,

1. For his own glory; ver. 10, "Be still, and know that I am God." 1st. Let his enemies be still, and threaten no more, but know it to their terror that he is God, one infinitely above them, and that will certainly be too hard for them. Let them rage no more, for it is all in vain, he that sits in heaven laughs at them; and in spite of all their impotent malice against his name and honour he "will be exalted among the heathen," and not only among his own people; he "will be exalted in the earth," and not only in the church. Men will set up themselves, will have their own way, and do their own will, but let them know that God will be exalted, he will have his way; will do his own will, will glorify his own name, and "wherein they deal proudly he will be above them," and make them know that he is so. 2nd. Let his own people be still, let them be calm and sedate, and tremble no more, but know to their comfort that the Lord is God; he is God alone, and "he will be exalted above the heathen." Let him alone to maintain his honour, to fulfil his own counsels, and to support his own interest in the world. Though we be depressed, yet let us not be dejected, for we are sure God will be exalted, and that may satisfy us; he will work for his great name, and then no matter what becomes of our little names. When we pray, "Father, glorify thy name," we ought to act faith upon the answer given to that prayer when Christ himself prayed it, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it yet again." Amen, Lord, so be it.

2. For his people's safety and protection. He triumphs in the former: "I will be exalted;" they triumph in this, ver. 7, and again, ver. 11. It is the burthen of the song, "The Lord of hosts is with us," he is on our side, he takes our part, is present with us, and president over us, and "the God of Jacob is our refuge," to whom we may flee, and in whom we may confide and be sure of safety. Let all believers triumph in this. 1st. They have the presence of a God of power, of all power: "The Lord of hosts is with us." God is the Lord of hosts, for he

has all the creatures which are called the hosts of heaven and earth at his beck and command, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them, as the instruments either of his justice or of his mercy. This sovereign Lord is with us, sides with us, acts with us, and has promised he will never leave us. Hosts may be against us, but we need not fear them if the Lord of hosts be with us. 2nd. They are under the protection of a God in covenant; who not only is able to help them, but is engaged in honour and faithfulness to help them. He is the God of Jacob, not only Jacob the person, but Jacob the people; nay, and of all praying people, the spiritual seed of wrestling Jacob; and he is our refuge, by whom we are sheltered, and in whom we are satisfied, who by his providence secures our welfare, when without are fightings; and who by his grace quiets our minds, and establisheth them, when within are fears. The Lord of hosts, the God of Jacob, has been, is, and will be, with us; has been, is, and will be, our refuge; the original includes all; and well may "Selah" be added to it. Mark this, and take the comfort of it, and say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

PSALM XLVII.

The scope of this psalm is to stir us up to praise God, to stir up all people to do it. And I. We are directed in what manner to do it: publicly, cheerfully, and intelligently, ver. 1, 6, 7. II. We are furnished with matter for praise: 1. God's majesty, ver. 2; 2. His sovereign and universal dominion, ver. 2, 7—9; 3. The great things he had done and would do for his people, ver. 3—5. Many suppose that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the bringing up of the ark to mount Zion, which ver. 5 seems to refer to, "God is gone up with a shout;" but it looks farther to the ascension of Christ into the heavenly Zion, after he had finished his undertaking on earth, and to the setting up of his kingdom in the world, to which the heathen should become willing subjects. In singing this psalm we are to give honour to the exalted Redeemer, to rejoice in his exaltation, and to celebrate his praises, confessing that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

O CLAP your hands, all ye people;
Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
2 For the LORD most high *is* terrible;
He is a great King over all the earth.
3 He shall subdue the people under us,
And the nations under our feet.
4 He shall choose our inheritance for us,
The excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

The psalmist, having his own heart filled with great and good thoughts of God, endeavours to engage all about him in the blessed work of praise; as one convinced that God is worthy of all blessing and praise, and as one grieved at his own and others' backwardness to, and barrenness in, this work. Observe in these verses,

First. Who are called upon to praise God; "All ye people," all ye people of Israel. Those were his own subjects, and under his charge, and therefore he will engage them to praise God, for on them he has an influence. Whatever others do, he and his house, he and his people, shall praise the Lord. Or, All ye people and nations of the earth; and so it may be taken as a prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church: see *Rom.* xv. 11.

Secondly. What they are called upon to do: "O clap your hands," in token of your own joy and satisfaction in what God has done for you; of your approbation, nay, your admiration, of what God has done in general; and of your indignation against all the enemies of God's glory, *Job* xxvii. 23. Clap your hands, as men transported with pleasure, that cannot contain themselves; "shout unto God," not to make him hear,—his ear is not heavy,—but to make all about you hear, and take notice how much you are affected and filled with the works of God. Shout with the voice of triumph in him, and in his power and goodness, that others may join with you in the triumph. Note, Such expressions of pious and devout affections, as to some may seem indecent and imprudent, yet ought not to be hastily censured and condemned, much less ridiculed, because if they come from an upright heart God will accept the strength of the affection, and excuse the weakness of the expressions of it.

Thirdly. What is suggested to us as matter for our praises,

1. That the God with whom we have to do is a God of awful majesty; ver. 2, "The Lord most high is terrible." He is infinitely above the noblest creatures, higher than the highest; there are those perfections in him that are to be reverenced by all, and particularly that power, holiness, and justice, that are to be dreaded by all those that contend with him.

2. That he is a God of sovereign and universal dominion; he is a King that reigns alone, and with an absolute power, a King over all the earth; all the creatures, being made by him, are subject to him; and therefore he is a great King, the King of kings.

3. That he takes a particular care of his people and their concerns, has done so, and ever will;

1st. In giving them victory and success, ver. 3. Subduing the people and nations under them, both those that stood in their way, *Ps.* xliv. 2, and those that made attempts upon them. This God had done for them; witness the planting of them in Canaan, and their continuance there unto this day. This they doubted not but he would still do for them by his servant David, who prospered which way soever he turned his victorious arms; but this looks forward to the kingdom of the Messiah, which was to be set over all the earth, and not confined to the Jewish nation. Jesus Christ shall subdue the Gentiles. He shall bring them in as sheep into the fold, so the word signifies, not for slaughter, but for preservation. He shall subdue their affections, and make them a willing people in the day of his power; shall bring their thoughts into obedience to him, and reduce them which had gone astray under the conduct of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, 1 *Pet.* ii. 25.

2nd. In giving them rest and settlement; ver. 4, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." He had chosen the land of Canaan to be an inheritance for Israel; it was the land which the Lord their God spied out for them: see *Deu.* xxxii. 8. This justified their possession of that land, and gave them a good title; and this sweetened their enjoyment of it, and made it comfortable. They had reason to think it a happy lot, and to be satisfied in it, when it was that which Infinite Wisdom chose for them. And the setting up of God's sanctuary in it, made it the excellency, the honour of Jacob, *Am.* vi. 8; and he chose so good an inheritance for Jacob because he loved him, *Deu.* vii. 8. Apply this spiritually, and it speaks, *First.* The happiness of the saints, that God himself hath chosen their inheritance for them, and it is a goodly heritage. He has chosen it who knows the soul, and what will serve to make it happy, and he has chosen so well that he himself has undertaken to be the inheritance of his people, *Ps.* xvi. 5, and he has laid up for them in the other world an inheritance incorruptible, 1 *Pet.* i. 4. This will be indeed "the excellency of Jacob," whom because he loved, he prepared for them such a happiness as eye has not seen. *Secondly.* The faith and submission of the saints to God. This is the language of every gracious soul, God shall choose my inheritance for me, let him appoint me my lot, and I will acquiesce in the appointment. He knows what is good for me better than I do for myself, and therefore I will have no will of my own but what is resolved into his.

5 God is gone up with a shout,
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
6 Sing praises to God, sing praises:
Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
7 For God *is* the King of all the earth:
Sing ye praises with understanding.
8 God reigneth over the heathen:
God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.
9 The princes of the people are gathered together,
Even the people of the God of Abraham:
For the shields of the earth *belong* unto God:
He is greatly exalted.

We are here most earnestly pressed to praise God, and to sing his praises. So backward are we to this duty, that we have need to be urged to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line; so we are here, ver. 6, "Sing praises to God," and again, "sing praises. Sing praises to our King," and again, "sing praises." This intimates that it is a very necessary and excellent duty, that it is a duty we ought to be frequent and abundant in; we may sing praises again and again in the same words, and it is no vain repetition if it be done with new affections. Should not a people praise their God? *Dan.* v. 4. Should not subjects praise their king? God is our God, our King, and therefore we must praise him; we must sing his praises, as those that are pleased with them, and that are not ashamed of them. But here is a needful rule subjoined, ver. 7, "Sing ye praises with understanding," with *maschil*. 1. Intelligently; as those that do yourselves understand why and for what reasons you praise God, and what is the meaning of the service. This is the Gospel rule, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 15, to "sing with the Spirit, and with the understanding also." It is only with the heart that we make melody to the Lord, *Eph.* v. 19. It is not an acceptable service if it be not a reasonable service. 2. Instructively; as those that desire to make others understand God's glorious perfections, and to teach them to praise him. Three things are mentioned in these verses as just matter for our praises, and each of them will admit of a double sense:

First. We must praise God going up; ver. 5, "God is gone up with a shout;" which may refer, 1. To the carrying up of the ark to the hill of Zion, which was done with great solemnity, David himself dancing before it; the priests, it is likely, blowing the trumpets, and the people following with their loud huzzas. The ark being the instituted token of God's special presence with them, when that was brought up by warrant from him, he might be said to go up; and the emerging of God's ordinances out of obscurity, in order to the more public and solemn administration of them, is a great favour to any people, which they have reason to rejoice in, and give thanks for. 2. To the ascension of our Lord Jesus into heaven when he had finished his work on earth, *Acts* i. 9. Then "God went up with a shout," the shout of a king, of a conqueror, as one that, having spoiled principalities and powers, then led captivity captive, *Ps.* lxviii. 18. He went up as Mediator, typified by the ark and the mercy-seat over it, and was brought as the ark was into the most holy place, that is, into heaven itself: see *Heb.* ix. 24. We read not of a shout, or the sound of a trumpet, at the ascension of Christ; but they were the inhabitants of the upper world, those sons of God that then shouted for joy, *Job* xxxviii. 7. He shall come again in the same manner as he went, *Acts* i. 11; and we are sure he shall come again with a shout, and the sound of a trumpet.

Secondly. We must praise God reigning, ver. 7, 8. God is not only our king, and therefore we owe our homage to him, but he is king of all the earth, ver. 7, over all the kings of the earth, and therefore in every place the incense of praise is to be offered up to him. Now this may be understood, 1. Of the kingdom of providence. God, as Creator and the God of nature, reigns over the heathen, disposeth of them and all their affairs as he pleaseth, though they know him not, nor have any regard to him. He sits upon the throne of his holiness, which he hath prepared in the heavens, and there he ruleth over all, even over the heathen, serving his own purposes by them and upon them. See here the extent of God's government. All are born within his allegiance; even the heathen that serve other gods, yet are ruled by the true God, our God, whether they will or no. See the equity of his government. It is a throne of holiness on which he sits, whence he gives warrants, orders, and judgment, in which we are sure there is no iniquity. 2. Of the kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus Christ, who is God, and whose throne is for ever and ever, reigns over the heathen; not only is he intrusted with the administration of the providential kingdom, but he shall set up the kingdom of his grace in the Gentile world, and rule in the hearts of multitudes that were bred up in heathenism, *Eph.* ii. 12, 13. This the apostle speaks of as a great mystery, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, *Eph.* iii. 6. Christ sits upon the throne of his holiness, his throne in the heavens, where all the administrations of his government are intended to shew forth God's holiness, and to advance holiness among the children of men.

Thirdly. We must praise God as attended and honoured by the princes of the people, ver. 9. This may be understood, 1. Of the congress or convention of the states of Israel, the heads and rulers of the several tribes, to the solemn feasts, or to despatch the public business of the nation. It was the honour of Israel that they were the people of the God of Abraham, as they were Abraham's seed, and taken into his covenant; and thanks be to God this blessing of Abraham is come upon the isles of the Gentiles, *Gal.* iii. 14. It was their happiness that they had a settled government, princes of their people, who were the shields of their land. Magistracy is the shield of a nation, and it is a great mercy to any people to have this shield; especially when their princes, their shields, belong unto the Lord, are devoted to his honour, and their power is employed in his service; for then he is greatly exalted. It is likewise the honour of God that in another sense the shields of the earth do belong to him; magistracy is his institution, and he serves his own purposes by it in the government of the world, turning the hearts of kings as the rivers of water which way soever he pleaseth. It was well with Israel when the princes of their people were gathered together to consult for the public welfare. The unanimous agreement of the great ones of a nation, in the things that belong to its peace, is a very happy omen, which promiseth abundance of blessings.

2. It may be applied to the calling of the Gentiles into the church of Christ, and taken as a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah the kings of the earth and their people should join themselves to the church, and bring their glory and power into the new Jerusalem. That they should all become the people of the God of Abraham, to whom it was promised that he should be the father of many nations. The 'volunteers of the people;' so it may be read. It is the same word that is used, *Ps.* cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing;" for those that are gathered to Christ are not forced, but made freely willing to be his. When the shields of the earth, the ensigns of royal dignity, 1 *Kin.* xiv. 27, 28, are surrendered to the Lord Jesus, as the keys of a city are presented to the conqueror or sovereign, when princes use their power for the advancement of the interests of religion, then Christ is greatly exalted.

PSALM XLVIII.

This psalm, as the two former, is a triumphant song. Some think it was penned on occasion of Jehoshaphat's victory, 2 *Chr.* xx.; others, of the rout given to Sennacharib, when his army laid siege to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time; but, for aught I know, it might be penned by David upon occasion of some eminent victory obtained in his time; yet not so calculated for that but that it might serve any other the like occasion in after times, and be applicable also to the glories of the gospel church, of which Jerusalem was a type, especially when it shall come to be a church triumphant, the heavenly Jerusalem, *Heb.* xii. 22; the Jerusalem which is above, *Gal.* iv. 26. Jerusalem is here praised, I. For its relation to God, ver. 1, 2. II. For God's care of it, ver. 3. III. For the terror it strikes upon its enemies, ver. 4—7. IV. For the pleasure it gives to its friends, who delight to think, 1. Of what God hath done, doth, and will do for it, ver. 8; 2. Of the gracious discoveries he makes of himself in and for that holy city, ver. 9, 10; 3. Of the effectual provision which is made for its safety, ver. 11—13; 4. Of the assurance we have of the perpetuity of God's covenant with the children of Zion, ver. 14. In singing this psalm, we must be affected with the privilege we have as members of the gospel church, and must express and excite our sincere good will to all its interests.

A Song *and* Psalm for the sons of Korah.

GREAT *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness.
2 Beautiful for situation,
The joy of the whole earth, *is* mount Zion,
On the sides of the north, the city of the great King.
3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.
4 For, lo, the kings were assembled,
They passed by together.
5 They saw *it, and* so they marvelled;
They were troubled, *and* hasted away.
6 Fear took hold upon them there,
And pain, as of a woman in travail.
7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish
With an east wind.

The psalmist is designing to praise Jerusalem, and to set forth the grandeur of that city; but he begins with the praises of God and his greatness, ver. 1, and ends with the praises of God and his goodness, ver. 14; for, whatever is the subject of our praises, God must be both the Alpha and Omega of them; and particularly, whatever is said to the honour of the church must redound to the honour of the church's God. What is here said to the honour of Jerusalem is,

First. That the King of heaven owns it. It is the city of our God, ver. 1, which he chose out of all the cities of Israel to put his name there; and of Zion he said kinder things than ever he said of any place upon earth; "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it," *Ps.* cxxxii. 13, 14. It is the city of the great King, ver. 2, the King of all the earth, who is pleased to declare himself in a special manner present there. This our Saviour quotes to prove that to swear by Jerusalem is profanely to swear by God himself, *Mat.* v. 35, for it is the city of the great King, who has chosen it for the special residence of his grace, as heaven is of his glory.

1. It is enlightened with the knowledge of God. "In Judah God is known," and his name is great, but especially in Jerusalem, the head-quarters of the priests, whose lips were to keep this knowledge. In Jerusalem God is great, ver. 1, who, in other places, was made little of, was made nothing of. Happy the kingdom, the city, the family, the heart, in which God is great, in which he is uppermost, in which he is all. There God is known, ver. 3; and where he is known he will be great: none contemn God but those that are ignorant of him.

2. It is devoted to the honour of God. It is, therefore, called the "mountain of his holinesss," for, Holiness to the Lord, is written upon it, and all the furniture of it, *Zec.* xiv. 20, 21. This is the privilege of the church of Christ, that it is a holy nation, a peculiar people; Jerusalem, the type of it, is called the holy city, as bad as it was, *Mat.* xxvii. 53, till that was set up, but never after.

3. It is the place appointed for the solemn service and worship of God. There he is greatly praised, and greatly to be praised, ver. 1. Note, The clearer discoveries are made to us of God and his greatness, the more it is expected we should abound in his praises. They that from all parts of the country brought their offerings to Jerusalem, had reason to be thankful that God would not only permit them thus to attend him, but promise to accept them, and meet them with a blessing, and reckon himself praised and honoured by their services. Herein Jerusalem typified the Gospel church; for what little tribute of praise God has from this earth ariseth from that church upon earth, which is therefore his tabernacle among men.

4. It is taken under his special protection, ver. 3. He is known for a refuge; that is, he has approved himself such a one, and as such a one he is there applied to by his worshippers. They that know him will trust in him, and seek to him, *Ps.* ix. 10. God was known not only in the streets, but even in the palaces of Jerusalem, for a refuge; the great men had recourse to God, and acquaintance with him. And then religion was likely to flourish in the city, when it reigned in the palaces.

5. Upon all these accounts, Jerusalem, and especially mount Zion, on which the temple was built, were universally beloved and admired; "Beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth," ver. 2. The situation must needs be every way agreeable, when Infinite Wisdom chose it for the place of the sanctuary; and that which made it beautiful was that it was the mountain of holiness, for there is a beauty in holiness. This earth is, by sin, covered with deformity, and therefore justly might that spot of ground which was thus beautified with holiness, be called, "the joy of the whole earth;" that is, what the whole earth had reason to rejoice in, that God would thus, in very deed, dwell with man upon the earth. Mount Zion was on the north side of Jerusalem, and so was a shelter to the city from the cold and bleak winds that blew from that quarter; or, if fair weather was expected out of the north, they were thus directed to look Zionward for it.

JERUSALEM, FROM THE NORTH.

Secondly. That the kings of the earth were afraid of it. That "God was known in their palaces for a refuge," they had had a late instance, and a very remarkable one. Whatever it was,

1. They had had but too much occasion to fear their enemies. For "the kings were assembled," ver. 4. The neighbouring princes were confederate against Jerusalem, their heads and horns, their policies and powers, were combined for its ruin; they were assembled with all their forces, they passed, advanced, and marched on together, not doubting but presently to make themselves masters of that city which should have been the joy, but was the envy, of the whole earth.

2. God made their enemies to fear them. The very sight of Jerusalem struck them into a consternation, and gave check to their fury; as the sight of the tents of Jacob frightened Balaam from his purpose to curse Israel, *Num.* xxiv. 2. "They saw it and marvelled, and hasted away," ver. 5. Not *veni, vidi, vici,*—'I came, I saw, I conquered;' but, on the contrary, *veni, vidi, victus sum,*—'I came, I saw, I was defeated.' Not that there was any thing to be seen in Jerusalem that was so very formidable, but the sight of it brought to mind what they had heard concerning the special presence of God in that city, and the Divine protection it was under; and God impressed such terrors upon their minds thereby as made them retire with precipitation. Though they were kings, though they were many in confederacy, yet they knew themselves an unequal match for Omnipotence, and therefore fear came upon them, and pain, ver. 6. Note, God can dispirit the stoutest of his church's enemies, and soon put them in pain that live at ease. The fright they were in upon the sight of Jerusalem is here compared to the throes of a woman in travail, which are sharp and grievous, which sometimes come suddenly, 1 *Thes.* v. 3, which cannot be avoided, and which are effects of sin and the curse. The defeat hereby given to their designs upon Jerusalem is compared to the dreadful work made with a fleet of ships by a violent storm, when some are split, others shattered, all dispersed; ver. 7, "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind;" effects at sea lie thus exposed. The terrors of God are compared to an east wind, *Job* xxvii. 20, 21. These shall put them into confusion, and break all their measures. "Who knows the power of God's anger?"

8 As we have heard, so have we seen
In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God:
God will establish it for ever. Selah.
9 We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God,
In the midst of thy temple.
10 According to thy name, O God,
So *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth:
Thy right hand is full of righteousness.
11 Let mount Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad,
Because of thy judgments.
12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her:

Tell the towers thereof.
13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces;
That ye may tell *it* to the generation following.
14 For this God *is* our God for ever and ever:
He will be our guide *even* unto death.

We have here the good use and improvement which the people of God are taught to make of his late glorious and gracious appearances for them against their enemies, that they might work for their good.

First. Let our faith in the work of God be hereby confirmed. If we compare what God has done with what he has spoken, we shall find that, as we have heard so have we seen, ver. 8; and what we have seen obliges us to believe what we have heard. 1. As we have heard done in former providences, in the days of old, so have we seen done in our own days. Note, God's latter appearances for his people, against his and their enemies, are consonant to his former appearances, and should put us in mind of them. 2. As we have heard in the promise and prediction, so have we seen in the performance and accomplishment. We have heard that God is the Lord of hosts, and that Jerusalem is the city of our God, is dear to him, is his particular care, and now we have seen it; we have seen the power of our God, we have seen his goodness, we have seen his care and concern for us, that he is a wall of fire round about Jerusalem, and the glory in the midst of her. Note, In the great things that God has done and is doing for his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of the Scriptures; and this would help us the better to understand both the providence itself and the Scripture that is fulfilled in it.

Secondly. Let our hope of the stability and perpetuity of the church be hereby encouraged. From what we have seen, compared with what we have heard in the city of our God, we may conclude that God will establish it for ever. This was not fulfilled in Jerusalem, that was long since destroyed, and all its glory laid in the dust, but has its accomplishment in the Gospel church; we are sure that that shall be established for ever, it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it, *Mat.* xvi. 18; God himself has undertaken the establishment of it; it is the Lord that has founded Zion, *Isa.* xiv. 32. And what we have seen, compared with what we have heard, may encourage us to hope in that promise of God upon which the church is built.

Thirdly. Let our minds be hereby filled with good thoughts of God. From what we have heard, and seen, and hope for, we may take occasion to think much of God's lovingkindness whenever we meet in the midst of his temple, ver. 9. All the streams of mercy that flow down to us must be run up to the fountain of God's lovingkindness. It is not owing to any merit of ours, but purely to his mercy, and the peculiar favour he bears to his people. This, therefore, we must think of with delight, think frequently and fixedly of. What subject can we dwell upon more noble, more pleasant, more profitable! We must have God's lovingkindness always before our eyes, *Ps.* xxvi. 3, especially when we attend upon him in his temple. And when we enjoy the benefit of public ordinances undisturbed, we meet in his temple, and there is none to make us afraid, we should take occasion from thence to think of his lovingkindness.

Fourthly. Let us give to God the glory of the great things which he has done for us, and mention them to his honour; ver. 10, "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise," not only in Jerusalem, but "to the ends of the earth." By the late signal deliverance of Jerusalem, God had made himself a name, that is, he had gloriously discovered his wisdom, power, and goodness, and made all the nations about sensible of it; and so was his praise, that is, some in all parts would be found giving glory to him accordingly. As far as his name goes, his praise will go, at least it should go, and at length it shall go, when all the ends of the world shall praise him, *Ps.* xxii. 27; *Rev.* xi. 15. Some by this name understand especially that glorious name of his, the Lord of hosts; according to that name, so is his praise, for all the creatures, even to the ends of the earth are under his command. But his people must in a special manner acknowledge his justice in all he doth for them; Righteousness fills thy right hand; that is, all the operations of thy power are consonant to the eternal rules of equity.

Fifthly. Let all the members of the church in particular take to themselves the comfort of what God doth for his church in general; ver. 11, "Let mount Zion rejoice," the priests and Levites that attend the sanctuary, and then let all the daughters of Judah, the country towns, and the inhabitants of them, be glad; let the women in their songs and dances, as usual on occasion of public joys, celebrate with thankfulness this great salvation which God has wrought for us. Note, When we have given God the praise, we may then take the pleasure of the extraordinary deliverances of the church; and be glad because of God's judgments, that is, the operations of his providence, all which we may see wrought in wisdom, (therefore called judgments,) and working for the good of his church.

Sixthly. Let us diligently observe the instances and evidences of the church's beauty, strength, and safety, and faithfully transmit our observations to those that shall come after us; ver. 12, 13, "Walk about Zion." Some think this refers to the ceremony of the triumph. Let those who are employed in that solemnity walk round the walls, as they did, *Neh.* xii. 31, singing and praising God; and in doing this, let "them tell the towers, and mark well the bulwarks," 1. That they might magnify the late wonderful deliverance God had wrought for them. Let them observe with wonder, that the towers and bulwarks are all in their full strength, and none of them damaged; the palaces in their beauty, and none of them blemished; there is not the last damage done to the city by the kings that were assembled against it; ver. 5, "Tell this to the generation following," as a wonderful instance of God's care of his holy city, that the enemies should not only not ruin or destroy it, but not so much as hurt or deface it. 2. That they might fortify themselves against the fear of the like threatening danger another time. And so, 1st. We may understand it literally of Jerusalem, and the stronghold of Zion. Let the daughters of Judah see the towers and bulwarks of Zion, with as much pleasure as the kings their enemies saw them with terror, ver. 5. Jerusalem was generally looked upon as an impregnable place, as appears, *Lam.* iv. 2, "All the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that an enemy should have entered the gates of Jerusalem." Nor could they have entered, if the inhabitants had not sinned away their defence. Set your heart to her bulwarks. That intimates, that the principal bulwarks of Zion were not the objects of sense, which they might set their eye upon, but the objects of faith, which they must set their hearts upon. It was well enough fortified indeed both by nature and art; but its bulwarks that were mostly to be relied upon were the special presence of God in it, the beauty of holiness he had put upon it, and the promises he had made concerning it. Consider Jerusalem's strength, and tell it to the generations to come, that they may do nothing to weaken it, and that, if at any time it be in distress, they may not basely surrender it to the enemy as not tenable. Calvin observes here, that when they are directed to transmit to posterity a particular account of the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces of Jerusalem, it is intimated that in process of time they would all be destroyed, and remain no longer to be seen; for otherwise what need was there to preserve the description and history of them? When the disciples were admiring the buildings of the temple, their Master told them, that in a little time one stone of it should not be left upon another, *Mat.* xxiv. 1, 2. Therefore, 2nd. This must certainly be applied to the gospel church, that mount Zion, *Heb.* xii. 22. Consider the towers, and bulwarks, and palaces of that, that you may be invited and encouraged to join yourselves to it, and embark in it. See it founded on Christ, the rock fortified by the Divine power, guarded by him that neither slumbers nor sleeps. See what precious ordinances are its palaces, what precious promises are its bulwarks; "Tell this to the generation following," that they may with purpose of heart espouse its interests, and cleave to it.

Seventhly. Let us triumph in God, and in the assurances we have of his everlasting lovingkindness, ver. 14. Tell this to the generation following, transmit this truth as a sacred depositum to your posterity, that "this God," who has now done such great things for us, "is our God for ever and ever;" he is constant and unchangeable in his love to us, and care for us. 1. If God be our God, he is ours for ever, not only through all the ages of time, but to eternity; for it is the everlasting blessedness of glorified saints, that "God himself will be with them, and will be their God," *Rev.* xxi. 3. 2. If he be our God, he will be our guide, our faithful constant guide, to shew us our way, and to lead us in it; he will be so, even unto death, which will be the period of our way, and will bring us to our rest. He will lead and keep us even to the last. He will be our guide above death; so some. He will so guide us as to set us above the reach of death, so that it shall not be able to do us any real hurt. He will be our guide beyond death; so others. He will conduct us safe to a happiness on the other side death, to a life in which there shall be no more death. If we take the Lord for our God, he will conduct and convey us safe to death, through death, and beyond death; down to death, and up again to glory.

PSALM XLIX.

This psalm is a sermon, and so is the next. In most of the psalms we have the penman praying or praising; in these we have him preaching; and it is our duty in singing psalms to teach and admonish ourselves and one another. The scope and design of this discourse is to convince the men of this world of their folly in setting their hearts upon the things of this world, and so to persuade them to seek the things of a better world; as also to comfort the people of God in reference to their own troubles, and the grief that ariseth from the prosperity of the wicked. I. In the preface he proposeth to awaken worldly people out of their security, ver. 1—3; and to comfort himself and other godly people in a day of distress, ver. 4, 5. II. In the rest of the psalm, 1. He endeavours to convince sinners of their folly in doting upon the wealth of this world, by shewing them, 1st. That they cannot, with all their wealth, save their friends from death, ver. 6—9; 2nd. They cannot save themselves from death, ver. 10; 3rd. They cannot secure to themselves a happiness in this world, ver. 11, 12; much less, 4th. Can they secure to themselves a happiness in the other world, ver. 14. 2. He endeavours to comfort himself and other good people, 1st. Against the fear of death, ver. 15; 2nd. Against the fear of the prospering power of wicked people, ver. 16—20. In singing this psalm, let us receive these instructions, and be wise.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

HEAR this, all *ye* people;
Give ear, all *ye* inhabitants of the world:
2 Both low and high,
Rich and poor, together.
3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; [ing.
And the meditation of my heart *shall be* of understand-
4 I will incline mine ear to a parable:
I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

EGYPTIAN MINSTREL.

5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,
When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

This is the psalmist's preface to his discourse concerning the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy; and we seldom meet with an introduction more solemn than this is, for there is no truth of more undoubted certainty, nor of greater weight and importance, and the consideration of which will be of more advantage to us.

First. He demands the attention of others to that which he was about to say; ver. 1, 2, "Hear this, all ye people;" hear it, and heed it, hear it, and consider it; what is spoken once, hear twice, hear and give ear, *Ps.* lxii. 9, 11. Not only, hear all ye Israelites, and give ear all the inhabitants of Canaan; but, "hear, all ye people, and give ear all the inhabitants of the world," for this doctrine is not peculiar to those that are blessed with Divine revelation, but even the light of nature witnesseth to it. All men may know, and therefore, let all men consider, that their riches will not profit them in the day of death. Both low and high, both rich and poor, must come together to hear the Word of God; let both therefore hear this with application. Let those that are high and rich

in the world hear of the vanity of their worldly possessions, and not be proud of them, nor secure in the enjoyment of them, but lay them out in doing good, that with them they may make to themselves friends; let those that are poor and low, hear this, and be content with their little, and not envy those that have abundance. Poor people are as much in danger by an inordinate desire towards the wealth of the world as rich people by an inordinate delight in it.

He gives a good reason why his discourse should be regarded; ver. 3, "My mouth shall speak of wisdom." What he had to say, 1. It was true and good. It is wisdom and understanding; it will make those wise and intelligent that receive it and submit to it. It is not doubtful, but certain; not trival, but weighty; not a matter of nice speculation, but of admirable use to guide us in the right way to our great end. 2. It was what he had himself well digested. What his mouth spoke was the meditation of his heart, as *Ps.* xix. 14; xlv. 1; it was what God put into his mind, what he had himself seriously considered, and was fully apprised of the meaning of, and convinced of the truth of. That which ministers speak from their own hearts is most likely to reach the hearts of their hearers.

Secondly. He engageth his own attention; ver. 4, "I will incline mine ear to a parable." It is called a parable, not because it is figurative and obscure, but because it is a wise discourse, and very instructive. It is the same word that is used concerning Solomon's proverbs. The psalmist will himself incline his ear to it. This intimates, 1. That he was taught it by the Spirit of God, and did not speak of himself. Those that undertake to teach others must first learn themselves. 2. That he thought himself nearly concerned in it, and was resolved not to venture his own soul upon that bottom which he dissuaded others from venturing theirs upon. 3. That he would not expect others should attend to that which he himself did not attend to as a matter of the greatest importance. Where God gives the tongue of the learned, he first wakens the ear to hear as the learned, *Isa.* l. 4.

Thirdly. He promiseth to make the matter as plain and as affecting as he could; "I will open my dark saying upon the harp." What he learned for himself he would not conceal or confine to himself, but would communicate it for the benefit of others. 1. Some understood it not, it was a riddle to them. Tell them of the vanity of the things that are seen, and of the reality and weight of invisible things, and they say, "Ah, Lord God, doth he not speak parables?" For the sake of such he would open this dark saying, and make it so plain that he that runs might read it. 2. Others understood it well enough, but they were not moved by it, it never affected them, and for their sake he would open it upon the harp, and try that expedient to work upon them, to win upon them. 'A verse may find him who a sermon flies.'—*Herbert.*

Fourthly. He begins with the application of it to himself; and that is the right method in which to treat of Divine things: we must first preach to ourselves, before we undertake to admonish or instruct others. Before he comes to set down the folly of carnal security, ver. 6, he here lays down, from his own experience, the benefit and comfort of a holy gracious security, which they enjoy who trust in God and not in their worldly wealth; "Wherefore should I fear?" he means, wherefore should I fear their fear, *Isa.* viii. 12, the fears of worldly people. 1. Wherefore should I be afraid of them? "Wherefore should I fear in the days" of trouble and persecution, "when the iniquity of my heels," or of my supplanters that endeavour to trip up my heels, shall compass me about, and they shall surround me with their mischievous attempts? Why should I be afraid of those, all whose power lies in their wealth, and that will not enable them to redeem their friends; and therefore I will not fear it, it cannot enable them to ruin me. The great men of the world will not appear at all formidable when we consider what little stead their wealth will stand themselves in. We need not fear their casting us down from our excellency, who cannot support themselves in their own excellency. 2. Wherefore should I be afraid like them? The days of old age and death are the days of evil, *Eccl.* xii. 1. In the day of judgment, the iniquity of our heels, or of our steps, our past sins, will compass us about, will be set in order before us. "Every work will be brought into judgment, with every secret thing;" and "every one of us must give account of himself." In these days worldly wicked people will be afraid; nothing more dreadful to them that have set their hearts upon the world than to think of leaving it. Death to them is the king of terrors, because after death the judgment, when their sins will surround them as so many furies; but wherefore should a good man fear death, who has God with him? *Ps.* xxiii. 4. When his iniquities compass him about, he sees them all pardoned, his conscience is purified and pacified; and then even in the judgment-day, when the hearts of others fail them for fear, they can lift up their heads with joy, *Lu.* xxi. 26, 28. Note, The children of God, though never so poor, are in this truly happy, above the most prosperous of the children of this world, that they are well guarded against the terrors of death, and the judgment to come.

6 They that trust in their wealth,
And boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;
7 None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother,
Nor give to God a ransom for him:
8 (For the redemption of their soul *is* precious,
And it ceaseth for ever:)
9 That he should still live for ever,
And not see corruption.
10 For he seeth *that* wise men die,
Likewise the fool and the brutish person perish,
And leave their wealth to others. [for ever,
11 Their inward thought *is, that* their houses *shall continue*
And their dwelling places to all generations;
They call *their* lands after their own names.
12 Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not:
He is like the beasts *that* perish.
13 This their way *is* their folly:
Yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.
14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave;
Death shall feed on them; [morning;
And the upright shall have dominion over them in the
And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their
dwelling.

In these verses we have,

First. A description of the spirit and way of worldly people, whose portion is in this life, *Ps.* xvii. 14. It is taken for granted that they have wealth, and a multitude of riches, ver. 6; houses and lands of inheritance, which they call their own, ver. 11. Many times God gives abundance of the good things of this world to bad men, that live in contempt of him and rebellion against him; by which it appears, that they are not the best things in themselves, for then God would give most of them to his best friends, and that they are not the best things for us, for then they would not have so much of them who, being marked for ruin, are to be ripened for it by their prosperity, *Pr.* i. 32. It is possible a man may have abundance of the wealth of the world, and be made better by it,—may thereby have his heart enlarged in love and thankfulness and obedience, and may do that good with it which will be fruit abounding to his account; and therefore it is not men's having riches that denominates them worldly, but their setting their hearts upon them as the best things; and so these worldly people are here described.

1. They repose a confidence in their riches. "They trust in their wealth," ver. 6; they depend upon it as their portion and happiness, and expect that it will secure them from all evil, and supply them with all good, and they need nothing else, no, not God himself. Their gold is their hope, *Job* xxxi. 24; and so it becomes their god. Thus our Saviour explains the difficulty of the salvation of rich people, *Mar.* x. 24; "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" see 1 *Tim.* vi. 17.

2. They take a pride in their riches. They "boast themselves in the multitude" of them, as if they were sure tokens of God's favour, and certain proofs of their own ingenuity and industry: "My might, and the power of my hand has gotten me this wealth;" as if they made them truly great and happy, and more really excellent than their neighbours. They boast that they have all they would have, *Ps.* x. 3, and can set all the world at defiance; "I sit as a queen, and shall be a lady for ever;" therefore "they call their lands after their own names," hoping thereby to perpetuate their memory. And if their lands do retain the names by which they called them, it is but a poor honour; but many times they change their names when they change their owners.

3. They flatter themselves with an expectation of the perpetuity of their worldly possessions; ver. 14, "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever," and with this thought they please themselves. Are not all thoughts inward? Yes; but it intimates, 1st. That this thought is deeply rooted in their minds; is rolled and revolved there, and carefully lodged in the innermost recesses of their hearts. A godly man has thoughts of the world; but they are his outward thoughts, his inward thought is reserved for God and heavenly things. But a worldly man has only some floating foreign thoughts of the things of God, while his fixed thought, his inward thought, is about the world; that lies nearest his heart, and is upon the throne there. 2nd. There it is industriously concealed; they cannot for shame say that they expect their houses to continue for ever, but inwardly they think so. If they cannot persuade themselves that "they shall continue for ever," yet they are so foolish as to think their houses shall, and their dwelling-places. And suppose they should, what good will that do them when they shall be no longer theirs? But they will not, for the world passeth away, and the fashion of it. All things are devoured by the teeth of time.

Secondly. A demonstration of their folly herein. In general, ver. 13, "This their way is their folly." Note, The way of worldliness is a very foolish way. They that lay up their treasure on earth, and set their affections on things below, act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest. God himself pronounced him a fool who thought his goods were laid up for many years, and that they would be a portion for his soul, *Lu.* xii. 19, 20; and yet "their posterity approve their sayings," agree with them in the same sentiments, say as they say, and do as they do, and tread in the steps of their worldliness. Note, The love of the world is a disease that runs in the blood; men have it by kind, till the grace of God cures it. To prove the folly of carnal worldlings, he shews,

1. That with all their wealth they cannot save the life of the dearest friend they have in the world, nor purchase a reprieve for him when he is under the arrest of death; ver. 7—9, "There is none of them can by any means redeem his brother,"—his brother worldling, who would give him counter-security out of his own estate, if he would but be bail for him; and gladly he would, in hopes that he might do the same kindness for him another time. But their words will not be taken one for another, nor will one man's estate be the ransom of another man's life. God doth not value it, it is of no account with him; and the true value of things is as they stand in his books. His justice will not accept it by way of commutation or equivalent. The Lord of our brother's life is the Lord of our estate, and may take both if he pleaseth, without either difficulty to himself or wrong to us; and therefore one cannot be ransom for another. We cannot bribe death, that our brother should still live, much less that he should live for ever in this world; nor bribe the grave, that he should not see corruption: for we must needs die, and return to the dust; and there is no discharge from that war. What folly is it to trust to that, and boast of that, which will not enable us so much as for one hour to respite the execution of the sentence of death upon a parent, a child, or a friend, that is to us as our own soul! It is certainly true, that "the redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever;" that is, life when it is going cannot be stayed, and when it is gone it cannot be recalled by any human art, or worldly price. But this looks farther to the eternal redemption which was to be wrought out by the Messiah, whom the Old Testament saints had an eye to as the Redeemer. Immortality and an everlasting life is a jewel of too great a value to be purchased by the wealth of this world; "We are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold," 1 *Pet.* i. 18, 19. The learned Dr. Hammond applies the 8th and 9th verses expressly to Christ; 'The redemption of the soul shall be precious,' shall be high prized, it shall cost very dear; but being once wrought "it shall cease for ever;" that is, it shall never need to be repeated, *Heb.* ix. 25, 26; x. 13. 'And he,' that is, the Redeemer, 'shall yet live for ever, and shall not see corruption.' He shall rise again before he sees corruption, and then shall live for evermore, *Rev.* i. 18. Christ did that for us which all the riches of the world could not do, and therefore good reason he should be dearer to us than any worldly things. Christ did that for us which a brother, a friend, could not do for us; no, not one of the best estate or interest, and therefore those that love father or brother more than him are not worthy of him. This likewise shews the folly of worldly people, who sell their souls for that which would never buy them.

2. That with all their wealth they cannot secure themselves from the stroke of death. The worldling sees, and it vexes him to see it, that "wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish," ver. 10. Therefore he cannot but expect that it will at length come to his own turn; he cannot find any encouragement to hope that he himself shall continue for ever, and therefore foolishly comforts himself with this, that though he shall not his house shall. Some rich people are wise, they are politicians; but they cannot outwit death, nor evade his stroke with all their art and management. Others are fools, and brutish, (*fortuna favet fatuis,*—'fools are fortune's favourites;') these, though they do no good, yet perhaps do no great hurt in the world.

But that shall not excuse them; they shall perish, and be taken away by death, as well as the wise that did mischief with their craft. Or, by the wise and the foolish, we may understand the godly and the wicked. The godly die, and their death is their deliverance; the wicked perish, their death is their destruction; but, however, they leave their wealth to others. 1st. They cannot continue with it, nor will it serve to procure them a reprieve. That is a frivolous plea, though once it served a turn; *Jer.* xli. 8, "Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field." 2nd. They cannot carry it away with them, but leave it behind them. 3rd. They cannot foresee who will enjoy it when they have left it. They must leave it to others, but to whom they know not, perhaps to a fool, *Eccl.* ii. 19; perhaps to an enemy. And as men's wealth will stand them in no stead in a dying hour, so neither will their honour; ver. 12, "Man being in honour abideth not." We will suppose a man advanced to the highest pinnacle of preferment, as great and happy as the world can make him; man in splendour, "man at his best estate," surrounded and supported with all the advantages he can desire, yet then he abideth not, his honour doth not continue, that is a fleeting shadow; he himself doth not. He tarries not all night: this world is an inn, in which his stay is so short that he can scarce be said to get a night's lodging in it; so little rest is there in these things, he has but a baiting-time. "He is like the beasts that perish;" that is, he must as certainly die as the beasts, and his death will be as final a period to his state in this world as theirs is; his dead body likewise will putrefy as theirs doth; and, as Dr. Hammond observes, oftentimes the greatest honours and wealth, unjustly gotten by the parent, descend not to any one of his posterity, (as the beasts when they die leave nothing behind them to their young ones but the wide world to feed in,) but fall into other hands immediately, for which he never designed to gather them.

3. That their condition on the other side death will be very miserable. The world they dote upon will not only not save them from death, but will sink them so much the lower into hell; ver. 14, "Like sheep they are laid in the grave." Their prosperity did but feed them like sheep for the slaughter, *Hos.* iv. 16; and then death comes and shuts them up in the grave like fat sheep in a fold, "to be brought forth to the day of wrath," *Job* xxi. 30. Multitudes of them, like flocks of sheep dead of some disease, are thrown into the grave, and there death shall feed on them; the second death, the worm that dies not, *Job* xxiv. 20. Their own guilty consciences, like so many vultures, shall be continually preying upon them with, Son, remember, *Lu.* xvi. 25. Death insults and triumphs over them, as it is represented in the fall of the king of Babylon; at which "hell from beneath is moved," *Isa.* xiv. 9, &c. While a saint can ask proud death, "Where is thy sting?" death will ask the proud sinner, Where is thy wealth, thy pomp? and the more he was fattened with prosperity, the more sweetly will death feed on him. And in the morning of the resurrection, when all that sleep in the dust shall awake, *Dan.* xii. 2, "the upright shall have dominion over them;" shall not only be advanced to the highest dignity and honour, when they are filled with everlasting shame and contempt,—elevated to the highest heavens, when they are sunk to the lowest hell,—but they shall be assessors with Christ in passing judgment upon them, and shall applaud the justice of God in their ruin. When the rich man in hell begged that Lazarus might bring him a drop of water to cool his tongue, he owned that that upright man had dominion over him; as the foolish virgins also owned the dominion of the wise, and that they lay much at their mercy when they begged, "Give us of your oil." Let this comfort us in reference to the oppressions which the upright are now often groaning under, and the dominion which the wicked have over them. The day is coming when the tables will be turned, *Est.* ix. 1; and "the upright will have the dominion." Let us now judge of things as they will appear at that day. But what will become of all the beauty of the wicked? Alas! that shall all be "consumed in the grave from their dwelling." All that upon which they valued themselves, and for which others caressed and admired them, it was all adventitious and borrowed; it was paint and varnish, and they will rise in their own native deformity. The beauty of holiness is that which the grave, that consumes all other beauty, cannot touch, or do any damage to. 'Their beauty shall consume; the grave,' or hell, 'being a habitation to every one of them;' and what beauty can be there where there is nothing but the blackness of darkness for ever?

15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave:
For he shall receive me. Selah.
16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;
17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away:
His glory shall not descend after him.
18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul:
And *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.
19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
They shall never see light.
20 Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not,
Is like the beasts *that* perish.

Good reason is here given to good people,

First. Why they should not be afraid of death. There is no cause for that fear, if they have such a comfortable prospect as David here has of a happy state on the other side death, ver. 15. He had shewed, ver. 14, how miserable the dead are that die in their sins, here he shews how blessed the dead are that die in the Lord. The distinction of men's outward condition, how great a difference soever it makes in life, makes none at death; rich and poor meet in the grave. But the distinction of men's spiritual state, though in this life it makes a small difference, where all things come alike to all, yet at and after death it makes a very great one; "Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." The righteous has hope in his death, so has David here hope in God concerning his soul. Note, The believing hopes of the soul's redemption from the grave, and reception to glory, are the great support and joy of the children of God in a dying hour. They hope,

1. That God will redeem their souls from the power of the grave; which includes, 1st. The preserving of the soul from going to the grave with the body. The grave has a power over the body, by virtue of the sentence, *Gen.* iii. 19; and it is cruel enough in executing that power, *Cant.* viii. 6; but it has no such power over the soul. It has power to silence, and imprison, and consume the body: but the soul then moves, and acts, and converseth more freely than ever, *Rev.* vi. 9, 10; it is immaterial and immortal. When death breaks the dark lantern, yet it doth not extinguish the candle that was pent up in it. 2nd. The reuniting of the soul and body at the resurrection. The soul is often put for the life; that indeed falls under the power of the grave for a time, but it shall at length be redeemed from it, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life." The God of life, that was its Creator at first, can and will be its Redeemer at last. 3rd. The salvation of the soul from eternal ruin. God shall redeem my soul from the *sheol* of hell, the wrath to come, that pit of destruction into which the wicked shall be cast, ver. 14. It is great comfort to dying saints, that they shall not be hurt of the second death, *Rev.* ii. 11; and therefore the first death has no sting, and the grave no victory.

2. That he will receive them to himself. He redeems their souls, that he may receive them; *Ps.* xxxi. 5, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it." He will receive them into his favour, will admit them into his kingdom, into the mansions that are prepared for them, *Jno.* xiv. 2, 3; those everlasting habitations, *Lu.* xvi. 9.

Secondly. Why they should not be afraid of the prosperity and power of wicked people in this world, which, as it is their pride and joy, so it has often been the envy, and grief, and terror of the righteous; which yet, all things considered, there is no reason for.

1. He supposeth the temptation very strong to envy the prosperity of sinners; and to be afraid that they will carry all before them with a high hand, and with their wealth and interest to run down religion and religious people; to be afraid that they will be found the truly happy people. For he supposeth, 1st. That they are made rich, and so are enabled to give law to all about them, and have every thing at command. *Pecuniæ obediunt omnes et omnia*,—'Every person and every thing obeys the commanding influence of money.' 2nd. That the glory of their house, from very small beginnings, is increased greatly; which naturally makes men haughty, insolent, and imperious, ver. 16. Thus they seem to be the favourites of Heaven, and therefore formidable. 3rd. That they are very easy and secure in themselves, and in their own minds; ver. 18, "In his lifetime he blessed his soul," that is, he thought himself a very happy man; and such a one as he would be, and a very good man, and such a one as he should be, because he prospered in the world. He blessed his soul, as that rich fool who said to his soul, Soul, take thine ease, and be not disturbed either with cares and fears about the world, or with the rebukes and admonitions of conscience; all is well, and will be well for ever. Note, *First.* It is of great consequence to us what that is in which we bless our souls, upon the score of which we think well of ourselves. Believers bless themselves in the God of truth, *Isa.* lxv. 16; and think themselves happy if he be theirs. Carnal people bless themselves in the wealth of the world, and think themselves happy if they have abundance of that. *Secondly.* There are many whose precious souls lie under God's curse, and yet they do themselves bless them. They applaud that in themselves which God condemns; and speak peace to themselves when God denounceth war against them. Yet this is not all. 4th. They are in good reputation among their neighbours: "Men will praise thee," and cry thee up, as having done well for thyself in raising such an estate and family. This is the sentiment of all the children of this world, that those do best for themselves that do most for their bodies, by heaping up riches, though nothing is done at the same time for the soul, nothing for eternity; and, accordingly, they "bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhors," *Ps.* x. 3. And if men were to be our judges it were our wisdom thus to recommend ourselves to their good opinion; but what will it avail us to be approved of men, if God condemn us? Dr. Hammond understands this of the good man here spoken to, for it is the second person, not of the wicked man spoken of; 'He in his lifetime blessed his soul, but thou shalt be praised for doing well unto thyself.' The worlding magnified himself, but thou, that dost not, like him, speak well of thyself, but do well for thyself in securing thy eternal welfare, thou shalt be praised, if not of men, yet of God, which will be thine everlasting honour.

2. He suggests that which is sufficient to take off the strength of the temptation, by directing us to look forward to the end of prospering sinners, *Ps.* lxxiii. 17. Think what they will be in the other world, and you will see no cause to envy them what they are and have in this world.

1st. In the other world they will be never the better for all the wealth and prosperity they are now so fond of. It is a miserable portion, which will not last so long as they must; ver. 17, "when he dies," it is taken for granted that he goes into another world himself, but "he shall carry nothing away with him" of that which he has been so long heaping up. The greatest and wealthiest cannot therefore be the happiest, because they are never the better for their living in this world; as they came naked into it, they shall go naked out of it. But those have something to shew in the other world for their living in this world, who can say through grace, that though they came corrupt and sinful, and spiritually naked into it, they go renewed and sanctified, and well clothed with the righteousness of Christ, out. They that are rich in the graces and comforts of the Spirit have something which when they die they shall carry away with them; something which death cannot strip them of, nay, which death will be the improvement of. But for worldly possessions, "as we brought nothing into the world," but what we have had from others, "so it is certain we shall carry nothing out," but leave it to others, 1 *Tim.* vi. 7. They shall descend; but "their glory," that which they called and counted their glory, and gloried in, "shall not descend after them," to lessen the disgrace of death and the grave; to bring them off in the judgment, or abate the torments of hell. Grace is glory that will ascend with us, but no earthly glory will descend after us.

2nd. In the other world they will be infinitely the worse for all their abuses of the wealth and prosperity they enjoyed in this world; ver. 19, "The soul shall go to the generation of his fathers," his worldly, wicked fathers, whose sayings he approved, and whose steps he trod in, his fathers that would not hearken to the word of God, *Zec.* i. 5. He shall go to be there where they are that shall never see light, shall never have the least glimpse of comfort and joy, being condemned to utter darkness. Be not afraid then of the pomp and power of wicked people; for "man that is in honour," if he be not wise and good, his end will be miserable; "if he understand not," he is to be pitied rather than envied. A fool, a wicked man in honour, is really as despicable an animal as any under the sun; he "is like the beasts that perish," ver. 20; and it is better be a beast than be a man that makes himself like a beast. Men in honour that understand, that know and do their duty, and make conscience of it, are as gods, and children of the Most High. But men in honour that understand not, that are proud, and sensual, and oppressive, are as beasts, and they shall perish like the beasts. ingloriously as to this world, though not like the beasts indemnified as to another world. Let prospering sinners, therefore, be afraid for themselves; but let not even suffering saints be afraid of them.

PSALM L.

This psalm, as the former, is a psalm of instruction, not of prayer or praise. It is a psalm of reproof and admonition, in singing of which we are to teach and admonish one another. In the foregoing psalm, after a general demand of attention, God by his prophet deals, ver. 3, with the children of this world, to convince them of their sin and folly in setting their hearts upon the wealth of this world. In this psalm, after a like preface, he deals with those that were in profession the church's children, to convince them of their sin and folly in placing their religion in ritual services, while they

neglected practical godliness; and this is as sure a way to ruin as the other. This psalm is intended, I. As a reproof to the carnal Jews, both those that rested in the external performances of their religion, and were remiss in the more excellent duties of prayer and praise, and those that expounded the law to others, but lived wicked lives themselves. II. As a prediction of the abolishing of the ceremonial law, and of the introducing of a spiritual way of worship in and by the kingdom of the Messiah, *Jno.* iv. 23, 24. III. As a representation of the day of judgment, in which God will call men to an account concerning their observance of those things which they have thus been taught. Men shall be judged according to what is written in the books; and therefore Christ is fitly represented speaking as a judge then when he speaks as a law-giver. Here is, 1. The glorious appearance of the Prince that gives law and judgment, ver. 1—6; 2. Instruction given to his worshippers to turn their sacrifices into prayers, ver. 7—15; 3. A rebuke to those that pretend to worship God, but live in disobedience to his commands, ver. 16—20; their doom read, ver. 21, 22; and warning given to all to look to their conversation as well as to their devotions, ver. 23. And these instructions and admonitions we must take to ourselves, and give to one another, in singing this psalm.

A Psalm of Asaph.

THE mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken,
And called the earth
From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.
2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God hath shined.
3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence:
A fire shall devour before him,
And it shall be very tempestuous round about him.
4 He shall call to the heavens from above,
And to the earth, that he may judge his people.
5 Gather my saints together unto me;
Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.
6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness:
For God *is* judge himself. Selah.

It is probable Asaph was not only the chief musician that was to put a tune to this psalm, but was himself the penman of it; for we read that in Hezekiah's time "they praised God with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer," 2 *Chr.* xxix. 30. Here is,

First. The court called in the name of the King of kings; ver. 1, "The mighty God, even the Lord, hath spoken;" *El, Elohim, Jehovah*, the God of infinite power, justice, and mercy, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. God is the judge, the Son of God came for judgment into the world, and the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of judgment. All the earth is called to attend, not only because the controversy God had with his people Israel for their hypocrisy and ingratitude may safely be referred to any man of reason, (nay, let the house of Israel itself judge between God and his vineyard, *Isa.* v. 3,) but because all the children of men are concerned to know the right way of worshipping God, in spirit and in truth, and when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up, all should be instructed in the evangelical worship, and invited to join in it: see *Mal.* i. 11; *Acts* x. 34; and because, in the day of final judgment, all nations shall be gathered together to receive their doom, and every man shall give account of himself unto God.

Secondly. The judgment set, and the Judge taking his seat. As when God gave the law to Israel in the wilderness, it is said, "He came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir, and shined forth from mount Paran, and came with ten thousands of his saints, and then from his right hand went a fiery law," *Deu.* xxxiii. 2; so, with allusion to that, when God comes to reprove them for their hypocrisy, and to send forth his Gospel to supersede the legal institutions, it is said here, 1. That he shall shine out of Zion, as then from the top of Sinai, ver. 2. Because in Zion his oracle was now fixed, thence his judgments upon that provoking people were denounced, and thence the orders issued for the execution of them, *Joel* ii. 1, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion," (sometimes there are more than ordinary appearances of God's presence and power working with and by his word and ordinances, for the convincing of men's consciences, and the reforming and refining of his church, and then God, who always dwells in Zion, may be said to shine out of Zion,) and because the Gospel, which set up spiritual worship, was to go forth from mount Zion, *Isa.* ii. 4; *Mic.* iv. 1; and the preachers of it were to begin at Jerusalem, *Lu.* xxiv. 47; and Christians are said to come unto mount Zion to receive their instructions, *Heb.* xii. 22, 23. Zion is here called the perfection of beauty, because it was the holy hill, and holiness is indeed the perfection of beauty. 2. That he shall come and not keep silence, shall no longer seem to wink at the sins of men as he had done, ver. 21, but shall shew his displeasure at them, and shall also cause that mystery to be published to the world by his holy apostles, which had long lain hid, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, *Eph.* iii. 5, 6, and that the partition wall of the ceremonial law should be taken down; this shall now no longer be concealed. In the great day "our God shall come, and shall not keep silence," but shall make those to hear his judgment that would not hearken to his law. 3. That his appearance should be very majestic and terrible; "a fire shall devour before him." The fire of his judgments shall make way for the rebukes of his word, in order to the awakening of the hypocritical nation of the Jews, that the sinners in Zion, being afraid of that devouring fire, (*Isa.* xxxiii. 14,) they might be startled out of their sins. When his gospel kingdom was to be set up, Christ came to send fire on the earth, *Lu.* xii. 44. And the Spirit was given in cloven tongues as of fire, introduced by a rushing mighty wind, which was very tempestuous, *Acts* ii. 2, 3. And in the last judgment, Christ shall come in flaming fire, 2 *Thes.* i. 8: see *Dan.* vii. 9; *Heb.* x. 27. 4. That as on mount Sinai he came with ten thousands of his saints, so he shall now call to the heavens from above, to take notice of this solemn process, ver. 4, as Moses often called heaven and earth to witness against Israel, *Deu.* iv. 26; xxxi. 28; xxxii. 1; and God by his prophets, *Isa.* i. 2; *Mic.* vi. 2. And the equity of the judgment of the great day will be attested and applauded by heaven and earth, by saints and angels, even all the holy myriads.

Thirdly. The parties summoned; ver. 5, "Gather my saints together unto me." This may be understood either, 1. Of saints indeed. Let them be gathered to God through Christ; let the few pious Israelites be set by themselves, for to them the following denunciations of wrath do not belong. Rebukes to hypocrites ought not to be terrors to the upright. When God will reject the services of those that only offered sacrifice, resting in the outside of the performance, he will graciously accept those that in sacrificing make a covenant with him, and so attend to, and answer the end of, the institution of sacrifices. The design of the preaching of the Gospel, and the setting up of Christ's kingdom, was to gather together in one the children of God, *Jno.* xi. 52; and at the second coming of Jesus Christ all his saints shall be gathered together unto him, 2 *Thes.* ii. 1, to be assessors with him in the judgment: for the saints shall judge the world, 1 *Cor.* vi. 2. Now it is here given as a character of the saints, that they have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Note, 1st. Those only shall be gathered to God as his saints who have in sincerity covenanted with him, who have taken him to be their God, and given up themselves to him to be his people, and thus have joined themselves unto the Lord. 2nd. It is only by sacrifice, by Christ the great sacrifice, (from whom all the legal sacrifices derived what value they had,) that we poor sinners can covenant with God so as to be accepted of him. There must be an atonement made for the breach of the first covenant before we can be admitted again into covenant. Or, 2. It may be understood of saints in profession, such as the people of Israel were, who are called a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation, *Ex.* xix. 6. They were, as a body politic, taken into covenant with God, the covenant of peculiarity; and it was done with great solemnity by sacrifice, *Ex.* xxiv. 8. Let them come and hear what God hath to say to them; let them receive the reproofs God sends them now by his prophets, and the Gospel he will in due time send them by his Son, which shall supersede the ceremonial law. And if these be slighted let them expect to hear from God another way, and to be judged by that word which they will not be ruled by.

Fourthly. The issue of this solemn trial foretold; ver. 6, "The heavens shall declare his righteousness;" those heavens that were called to be witnesses to the trial, ver. 4. The "people in heaven shall say, Hallelujah; true and righteous are his judgments," *Rev.* xix. 1, 2. The righteousness of God in all the rebukes of his word and providence, in the establishment of his Gospel, (which brings in an everlasting righteousness, and in which the righteousness of God is revealed,) and especially in the judgment of the great day, is what the heavens will declare; that is, 1. It will be universally known, and proclaimed to all the world. As the heavens declare the glory, the wisdom, and power of God the Creator, *Ps.* xix. 1, so they shall no less openly declare the glory, the justice, and righteousness of God the Judge. And so loud do they proclaim both, that "there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard," as it follows there, ver. 3. 2. It will be incontestably owned and proved. Who can deny what the heavens declare? Even sinners' own consciences will subscribe to it, and hell as well as heaven will be forced to acknowledge the righteousness of God. The reason given is, for "God is judge himself," and therefore, 1st. He will be just; for it is impossible he should do any wrong to any of his creatures; he never did, nor ever will. When men are employed to judge for him, it is possible they may do unjustly; but when He is judge himself there can be no injustice done. "Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance?" The apostle for this reason startles at the thought of it: "God forbid! for then how shall God judge the world?" *Rom.* iii. 5, 6. These decisions will be perfectly just, for against them there will lie no exception, and from them there will lie no appeal. He will be justified. God is judge, and therefore he will not only execute justice, but he will oblige all to own it; for he will be clear when he judgeth, *Ps.* li. 4.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak;
O Israel, and I will testify against thee:
I *am* God, *even* thy God.
8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices
Or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me.
9 I will take no bullock out of thy house,
Nor he goats out of thy folds.
10 For every beast of the forest *is* mine,
And the cattle upon a thousand hills.
11 I know all the fowls of the mountains:
And the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.
12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee:
For the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.
13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls,
Or drink the blood of goats?
14 Offer unto God thanksgiving;
And pay thy vows unto the most High:
15 And call upon me in the day of trouble:
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

God is here dealing with those that placed all their religion in the observances of the ceremonial law, and thought those sufficient.

First. He lays down the original contract between him and Israel, in which they had avouched him to be their God, and he them to be his people, and so both parties were agreed; ver. 7, "Hear, O my people, and I will speak." Note, It is justly expected that whatever others do, when he speaks, his people should give ear; who will if they do not? and then we may comfortably expect that God will speak to us when we are ready to hear what he saith. Even when he testifies against us in the rebukes and threatenings of his word and providences, we must be forward to hear what he saith, to hear even "the rod and him that has appointed it."

Secondly. He puts a slight upon the legal sacrifices, ver. 8, &c. Now,

1. This may be considered as looking back to the use of these under the law. God had a controversy with the Jews; but what was the ground of the controversy? Not their neglect of the ceremonial institutions; no, they had not been wanting in the observance of them, their burnt offerings had been continually before God, they took a pride in them, and hoped by their offerings to procure a dispensation for their lusts, as the adulterous woman, *Pr.* vii. 14. Their constant sacrifices they thought would both expiate and excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. Nay, if they had in some degree neglected these institutions, yet that should not have been the cause of God's quarrel with them, for it was but a small offence in comparison with the immoralities of their conversation. They thought God was mightily beholden to them for the many sacrifices they had brought to his altar, and that they had made him very much their debtor by them, as if he could not have maintained his numerous family of priests without their contributions. But God here shews them the contrary: 1st. That he did not need their sacrifices. What occasion had he for their bullocks and goats, that has the command of all the

beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills? ver. 9, 10; has an incontestable propriety in them, and dominion over them; has them all always under his eye, and within his reach, and can make what use he pleaseth of them? They all wait on him, and are all at his dispose, *Ps.* civ. 27—29. Can we add any thing to his store, whose all the wild fowl and wild beasts are, the world itself, and the fulness thereof? ver. 11, 12. God's infinite self-sufficiency proves our utter insufficiency to add any thing to him. 2nd. That he could not be benefited by their sacrifices. Their goodness of this kind could not possibly extend unto him; neither if they were in this matter righteous was he the better; ver. 13, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls?" It is as absurd to think that their sacrifices could of themselves, and by virtue of any innate excellency in them, add any pleasure or praise to God, as it would be to imagine that an infinite Spirit could be supported by meat and drink as our bodies are. It is said, indeed, of the dæmons whom the Gentiles worshipped, that they did "eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drink the wine of their drink offerings," *Deu.* xxxii. 38; they regaled themselves in the homage they robbed the true God of. But will the great Jehovah be thus entertained? No; "to obey is better than sacrifice," and to love God and our neighbour better than all burnt offerings; so much better, that God, by his prophets, often told them that their sacrifices were not only not acceptable, but abominable to him while they lived in sin. Instead of pleasing him he looked upon them as a mockery, and therefore an affront and provocation to him: see *Pr.* xv. 8; *Isa.* i. 11, &c.; lxvi. 3; *Jer.* vi. 20; *Am.* v. 21. They are, therefore, here warned not to rest in these performances; but to carry themselves in all other instances towards God as their God.

2. This may be considered as looking forward to the abolishing of these by the Gospel of Christ: thus Dr. Hammond understands it. When God shall set up the kingdom of the Messiah he shall abolish the old way of worship by sacrifice and offerings; he will no more have those to be continually before him, ver. 8; he will no more require of his worshippers to bring him their bullocks and their goats to be burnt upon his altar, ver. 9. For, indeed, he never appointed this as that which he had any need of, or took any pleasure in; for, besides that all we have is his already, he has far more beasts in the forest, and upon the mountains, which we know nothing of, nor have any property in, than we have in our folds; but he instituted it to prefigure the great sacrifice which his own Son should in the fulness of time offer upon the cross, to make atonement for sin, and all the other spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment with which God through Christ will be well pleased.

Thirdly. He directs to the best sacrifices of prayer and praise, as those which under the law were preferred before all burnt offerings and sacrifices, and on which then the greatest stress was laid, and which now under the Gospel come in the room of those carnal ordinances which were imposed until the times of reformation. He sheweth us here, ver. 14, 15, what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us, and will accept, when sacrifices are slighted and superseded. 1. We must make a penitent acknowledgment of our sins; offer to God confession, so some read it, and understand it of the confession of sin, in order to our giving glory to God, and taking shame to ourselves, that we may never return to it. A broken and contrite heart is the sacrifice which God will not despise, *Ps.* li. 17. If the sin were not abandoned, the sin offering was not accepted. 2. We must give God thanks for his mercies to us; "offer to God thanksgiving" every day, often every day, "Seven times a day will I praise thee," and upon special occasions; and "this shall please the Lord," if it come from an humble, thankful heart, full of love to him, and joy in him, "better than an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs," *Ps.* lxix. 30, 31. 3. We must make conscience of performing our covenants with him. "Pay thy vows to the Most High," forsake thy sins, and do thy duty better, pursuant to the solemn promises thou hast made him to that purpose. When we give God thanks for any mercy we have received, we must be sure to pay the vows we made to him when we were in the pursuit of the mercy, else our thanksgivings will not be accepted. Dr. Hammond applies this to the great gospel ordinance of the eucharist, in which we are to give thanks to God for his great love in sending his Son to save us, and to pay our vows of love and duty to him, and to give alms. Instead of all the Old Testament types of a Christ to come, we have that blessed memorial of a Christ already come. 4. In the day of distress, we must apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer; ver. 15, "Call upon me in the day of trouble," and not upon any other God. Our troubles, though we see them coming from God's hand, must drive us to him, and not drive us from him. We must thus acknowledge him in all our ways, depend upon his wisdom, power, and goodness, and refer ourselves entirely to him, and so give him glory. This is a cheaper, easier, readier way of seeking his favour than by a peace offering, and yet more acceptable. 5. When he, in answer to our prayers, delivers us, as he has promised to do in such way and time as he shall think fit, we must glorify him, not only by a grateful mention of his favour, but by living to his praise. Thus must we keep up our communion with God, meeting him with our prayers when he afflicts us, and with our praises when he delivers us.

16 But unto the wicked God saith,
What hast thou to do to declare my statutes,
Or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?
17 Seeing thou hatest instruction,
And castest my words behind thee. [him,
18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with
And hast been partaker with adulterers.
19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil,
And thy tongue frameth deceit.
20 Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother;
Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.
21 These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence;
Thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as
thyself: [eyes.
But I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine
22 Now consider this, ye that forget God,
Lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.
23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me:
And to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright*
Will I shew the salvation of God.

God, by the psalmist, having instructed his people in the right way of worshipping him, and keeping up their communion with him, here directs his speech to the wicked, to hypocrites, whether they were such as professed the Jewish or the Christian religion. Hypocrisy is wickedness, for which God will judge. Observe here,

First. The charge drawn up against them.

1. They are charged with invading and usurping the honours and privileges of religion; ver. 16, "What hast thou to do," O wicked man, "to declare my statutes?" This is a challenge to those that are really profane, but seemingly godly, to shew what title they have to the cloak of religion, and by what authority they wear it, when they use it only to cover and conceal the abominable impieties of their hearts and lives; let them make out their claim to it if they can. Some think it points prophetically at the scribes and Pharisees, that were the teachers and leaders of the Jewish church, at the time when the kingdom of the Messiah, and that evangelical way of worship spoken of in the foregoing verses, were to be set up. They violently opposed that great revolution, and used all the power and interest which they had, by sitting in Moses' seat, to hinder it. But the account which our blessed Saviour gives of them, *Mat.* xxiii., and St. Paul, *Rom.* ii. 21, 22, makes this expostulation here agree very well to them. They took on them to declare God's statutes, but they hated Christ's instruction, and therefore what had they to do to expound the law who reject the Gospel? But it is applicable to all those that are practisers of iniquity, and yet professors of piety, especially if withal they be preachers of it. Note, It is very absurd in itself, and a great affront to the God of heaven, for those that are wicked and ungodly to declare his statutes, and to take his covenant in their mouths. It is very possible, and too common, for those that declare God's statutes to others to live in disobedience to them themselves; and for those that take God's covenant in their mouths yet in their hearts to continue their covenant with sin and death. But they are guilty of an usurpation; they take to themselves an honour which they have no title to; and there is a day coming when they will be thrust out as intruders. "Friend, how camest thou in hither?"

2. They are charged with transgressing and violating the laws and precepts of religion. 1st. They are charged with a daring contempt of the Word of God; ver. 17, "Thou hatest instruction." They loved to give instruction, and to tell others what they should do; for this fed their pride, and made them look great, and by this craft they got their living. But they hated to receive instruction from God himself; for that would be a check upon them, and a mortification to them: Thou hatest discipline, the reproofs of the Word, and the rebukes of Providence. Those that hate to be reformed, no wonder they hate the means of reformation; "Thou castest my words behind thee." They seemed to set God's words before them, when they sat in Moses' seat, and undertook to teach others out of the law, *Rom.* ii. 19; but in their conversations they cast God's word behind them, and did not care for seeing that rule which they were resolved not to be ruled by. This is despising the commandment of the Lord. 2nd. A close confederacy with the worst of sinners; ver. 18, "When thou sawest a thief," instead of reproving him, and witnessing against him, as those should do that declare God's statutes, "thou consentedst with him," didst approve of his practices, and desire to come in partner with him, and to share in the profits of his cursed trade. And "thou hast been partakers with adulterers;" hast done as they do, and encouraged them to go on in their wicked courses; hast done these things, and hast had pleasure in them that do them, *Rom.* i. 32. 3rd. A constant persisting in the worst of tongue sins; ver. 19, "Thou givest thy mouth to evil;" not only allowest thyself in, but addictest thyself wholly to, all manner of evil speaking. *First.* Lying; "Thy tongue frameth deceit," which notes contrivance and deliberation in lying. It knits or links deceit, so some. One lie begets another, and one fraud requires another to cover it. *Secondly.* Slandering; ver. 20, "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother;" dost basely abuse and misrepresent him; magisterially judge and censure him, and pass sentence upon him, as if thou wert his master, to whom he must stand or fall; whereas he is thy brother, as good as thou art, and upon the level with thee, for he is "thy own mother's son." He is thy near relation, whom thou oughtest to love, to vindicate, and stand up for, if others abused him; yet thou dost thyself abuse him, whose faults thou oughtest to cover, and make the best of. If really he had done amiss, yet thou dost most falsely and unjustly charge him with that which he is innocent of; thou sittest and dost this, as a judge upon the bench with authority; thou sittest in the seat of the scornful, to deride and backbite those whom thou oughtest to respect and be kind to. Those that do ill themselves commonly delight in speaking ill of others.

Secondly. The proof of this charge; ver. 21, "These things thou hast done." The fact is too plain to be denied, the fault too bad to be excused; "These things" God knows, and thy own heart knows, "thou hast done." The sins of sinners will be proved upon them beyond contradiction, in the judgment of the great day. "I will reprove thee," or convince thee, so that thou shalt have not one word to say for thyself. The day is coming when impenitent sinners will have their mouths for ever stopped, and be struck speechless. What confusion will they be filled with when God shall set their sins in order before their eyes. They would not see their sins to their humiliation, but cast them behind their backs,—covered them, and endeavoured to forget them; nor would they suffer their own consciences to put them in mind of them; but the day is coming when God will make them see their sins to the everlasting shame and terror. He will set them in order:—original sin; actual sins; sins against the law; sins against the Gospel; against the first table, against the second table; sins of childhood and youth, of riper age and old age. He will set them in order, as the witnesses are set in order, and called in order against the criminal, and asked what they have to say against him.

Thirdly. The judge's patience, and the sinner's abuse of that patience. "I kept silence," did not give thee any disturbance in thy sinful way, but let thee alone to take thy course. Sentence against thine evil works was respited, and not executed speedily. Note, The patience of God is very great towards provoking sinners. He sees their sins, and hates them. It would be neither difficulty nor damage to him to punish them, and yet he waits to be gracious, and gives them space to repent, that he may render them inexcusable if they repent not. His patience is the more wonderful because the sinner makes such an ill use of it; "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself," as weak and forgetful as thyself, as false to my word as thyself; nay, as much a friend to sin as thyself. Sinners take God's silence for consent, and his patience for connivance, and therefore the longer they are reprieved the more are their hearts hardened; but if they turn not they shall be made to see their error when it is too late, and that the God they provoke is just, and holy, and terrible, and not such a one as themselves.

Fourthly. The fair warning given of the dreadful doom of hypocrites; ver. 22, "Now consider this, ye that forget God." Consider that God knows and keeps account of all your sins, that he will call you to an account for them; that patience abused will turn into the greater wrath; that though you forget God, and your duty to him, he will not forget you and your rebellions against him. Consider this in time, before it be too late; for if these things be not considered, and the consideration of them improved, he will "tear you in pieces, and there will be none to deliver." It is the doom of hypocrites to be cut in sunder,

Mat. xxiv. 21. Note, 1. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked. They that know God, and yet do not obey him, do certainly forget him. 2. Those that forget God forget themselves; and it will be never right with them till they consider, and so recover themselves. Consideration is the first step towards conversion. 3. Those that will not consider the warnings of God's word will certainly be torn in pieces by the executions of his wrath. 4. When God comes to tear sinners in pieces, there is no delivering them out of his hand. They cannot deliver themselves, nor can any friend they have in the world deliver them.

Fifthly. Full instructions given to us all how to prevent this fearful doom. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, (we have it ver. 23,) which directs us what to do that we may attain our chief end.

1. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and we are here told that whoso offers praise glorifies him; whether he be Jew or Gentile, those spiritual sacrifices shall be accepted of him. We must praise God, and we must sacrifice praise; direct it to God, as every sacrifice was; put it into the hands of the priest, our Lord Jesus, who is also the altar; see that it be made by fire, sacred fire; that it be kindled with the flame of holy and devout affection; we must be fervent in spirit, praising the Lord. And this he is pleased in infinite condescension to interpret as the glorifying him. Hereby we give him the glory due to his name, and do what we can to advance the interests of his kingdom among men.

2. Man's chief end, in conjunction with this, is to enjoy God. And we are here told that those who order their conversation aright shall see his salvation. 1st. It is not enough for us to offer praise, but we must withal order our conversation aright. Thanksgiving is good, but thanksliving is better. 2nd. Those that would have their conversation right must take care and pains to order it; to dispose it according to rule; to understand their way, and to direct it. 3rd. Those that take care of their conversation make sure their salvation. Them God will make to see his salvation; for it is a salvation ready to be revealed. He will make them to see it, and enjoy it; to see it, and to see themselves happy for ever in it. Note, The right ordering of the conversation is the only way, and it is a sure way, to obtain the great salvation.

PSALM LI.

Though David penned this psalm upon a very particular occasion, yet it is of as general use as any of David's psalms. It is the most eminent of the penitential psalms, and most expressive of the cares and desires of a repenting sinner. It is a pity indeed that in our devout addresses to God we should have anything else to do but to praise God, for that is the work of heaven; but we make other work for ourselves by our own sins and follies. We must come to the throne of grace, in the posture of penitents, to confess our sins, and sue for the grace of God, and if therein we would take with us words, we can nowhere find any more apposite than in this psalm, which is the record of David's repentance for his sin in the matter of Uriah, which was the greatest blemish upon his character; all the rest of his faults were nothing to this. It is said of him, 1 *Kin.* xv. 5, that "he turned not aside from the commandment of the Lord all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." In this psalm, I. He confesseth his sin, ver. 3—6. II. He prays earnestly for the pardon of his sin, ver. 1, 2, 7, 8. III. For peace of conscience, ver. 8, 12. IV. For grace, to go and sin no more, ver. 10, 11, 14. V. For liberty of access to God, ver. 15. VI. He promiseth to do what he could for the good of the souls of others, ver. 13; and for the glory of God, ver. 16. 17, 19; and, lastly, concludes with a prayer for Zion and Jerusalem, ver. 18. Those whose consciences charge them with any gross sin should, with a believing regard to Jesus Christ, the Mediator, again and again pray over this psalm; nay, though we have not been guilty of adultery and murder, or any the like enormous crime, yet in singing it, and praying over it, we may very sensibly apply it all to ourselves, which if we do with suitable affections, we shall, through Christ, find mercy to pardon, and grace for seasonable help.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

HAVE mercy upon me, O God,
According to thy lovingkindness:
According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies
Blot out my transgressions.
2 Wash me throughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.
3 For I acknowledge my transgressions:
And my sin *is* ever before me.
4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in thy sight:
That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,
And be clear when thou judgest.
5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;
And in sin did my mother conceive me.
6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:
And in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

The title has reference to a very sad story, that of David's fall. But though he fell he was not utterly cast down, for God graciously upheld him, and raised him up. 1. This sin, which in this psalm he laments, was the folly and wickedness he committed with his neghbour's wife; a sin not to be spoken of, or thought of, without detestation. His debauching Bathsheba was the inlet to all the other sins that followed; it was as the letting forth of water. This sin of David's is recorded for warning to all, that he that thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall. 2. The repentance in this psalm he expresseth he was brought to by the ministry of Nathan, who was sent of God to convince him of his sin, after he had continued about nine months (for aught appears) without any particular expressions of remorse and sorrow for it. But though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, and to lie a great while in it, yet he will by some means or other recover them to repentance, bring them to himself, and to their right mind again. Herein ordinarily he useth the ministry of the word, which yet he is not tied to. But those that have been overtaken in any fault ought to reckon a faithful reproof the greatest kindness that can be done them, and a wise reprover their best friend. "Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be excellent oil." 3. David being convinced of his sin, poured out his soul to God in prayer for mercy and grace. Whither should backsliding children return, but to the Lord their God, from whom they have backslidden, and who alone can heal their backslidings? 4. What were the workings of his heart towards God upon this occasion by Divine inspiration he drew up into a psalm, that it might be often repeated, and long after reviewed; and this he committed to the chief musician, to be sung in the public service of the church, 1st. As a profession of his own repentance, which he would have to be generally taken notice of, his sin having been notorious, that the plaister might be as wide as the wound. Those that truly repent of their sins will not be ashamed to own their repentance; but, having lost the honour of innocents, will rather covet the honour of penitents. 2nd. As a pattern to others, both to bring them to repentance by his example, and to instruct them in their repentance what to do, and what to say. Being converted himself, he thus strengthens his brethren, *Lu.* xxii. 32, and for this cause he obtained mercy, 1 *Tim.* i. 16. In these words we have,

First. David's humble petition, ver. 1, 2. His prayer is much the same with that which our Saviour puts into the mouth of his penitent publican in the parable, "God be merciful to me a sinner," *Lu.* xviii. 13. David was upon many accounts a man of great merit; he had not only done much, but suffered much in the cause of God; and yet, when he is convinced of sin, he doth not offer to balance his evil deeds with his good deeds, nor can he think that his services will atone for his offences; but he flies to God's infinite mercy, and depends upon that only for pardon and peace. "Have mercy upon me, O God." He owns himself obnoxious to God's justice, and therefore casts himself upon his mercy; and it is certain the best man in the world is undone if God be not merciful to him. Observe,

1. What his plea is for this mercy. "Have mercy upon me, O God," not according to the dignity of my birth, as descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah, not according to my public services as Israel's champion, or my public honours as Israel's king. His plea is not, "Lord, remember David in all his afflictions, how he vowed to build a place for the ark," *Ps.* cxxxii. 1, 2, a true penitent will make no mention of any such thing; but, Have mercy upon me for mercy sake. I have nothing to plead with thee but, 1st. The freeness of thy mercy, "according to thy lovingkindness," thy clemency, the goodness of thy nature, which inclines thee to pity the miserable. 2nd. The fulness of thy mercy. There is in thee not only lovingkindness and tender mercies, but abundance of it, a multitude of tender mercies for the forgiveness of many sinners, of many sins; to multiply pardons as we multiply transgressions.

2. What is the particular mercy he begs. The pardon of sin; "Blot out my transgressions," as a debt is blotted or crossed out of the book, when either the debtor has paid it or the creditor has remitted it; wipe out my transgressions, that they may not appear to demand judgment against me, nor stare me in the face to my confusion and terror. The blood of Christ, sprinkled upon the conscience to purify and pacify that, blots out the transgression, and being reconciled to God reconciles us to ourselves; ver. 2, "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity;" wash my soul from the guilt and stain of my sin by thy mercy and grace, for it is only from a ceremonial pollution that the water of separation will avail to cleanse me. Multiply to wash me; the stain is deep, for I have lain long soaking in the guilt, so that it will not easily be got out. O wash me much, wash me throughly; "Cleanse me from my sin." Sin defiles us, renders us odious in the sight of the holy God, and uneasy to ourselves; it disnits us for communion with God in grace or glory. When God pardons sin, he cleanseth us from it, so that we become acceptable to him, easy to ourselves, and have liberty of access to him. Nathan had assured David, upon his first profession of repentance, that his sin was pardoned, "The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die," 2 *Sam.* xii. 13; yet he prays, "Wash me, cleanse me, blot out my transgressions;" for God will be sought unto, even for that which he has promised; and those whose sins are pardoned must pray that the pardon may be more and more cleared up to them. God hath forgiven him, but he could not forgive himself, and therefore he is thus importunate for pardon, as one that thought himself unworthy of it, and knew how to value it.

Secondly. David's penitential confessions, ver. 3—5. 1. He was very free to own his guilt before God; "I acknowledge my transgressions." This he had formerly found the only way of easing his conscience, *Ps.* xxxii. 4, 5. Nathan said, "Thou art the man." And so I am, saith David, "I have sinned." 2. He had such a deep sense of it, that he was continually thinking of it with sorrow and shame. His contrition for his sin was not a slight, sudden passion, but an abiding grief: "My sin is ever before me," to humble me and mortify me, and make me continually blush and tremble. It is ever against me, so some; I see it before me as an enemy, accusing and threatening me. David was upon all occasions put in mind of his sin, and was willing to be so for his farther abasement. He never walked on the roof of his house without a penitent reflection on his unhappy walk there, when from thence he saw Bathsheba; never lay down to sleep without a sorrowful thought of the bed of his uncleanness; never sat down to meat, never sent his servant on an errand, or took his pen in hand, but it put him in mind of his making Uriah drunk, the treacherous message he sent him, and the fatal warrant he wrote and signed for his execution. Note, The acts of repentance, even for the same sin, must be often repeated. It will be of good use for us to have our sins ever before us, that by the remembrance of our past sins we may be kept humble, may be armed against temptation, quickened to duty, and made patient under the cross.

1st. He confesseth his actual transgressions; ver. 4, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned." David was a very great man, and yet, having done amiss, submits to the discipline of a penitent, and thinks not his royal dignity will excuse him from it. Rich and poor must here meet together; there is one law of repentance for both; the greatest must be judged shortly, and therefore must judge themselves now. David was a very good man, and yet, having sinned, he willingly accommodates himself to the place and posture of a penitent. The best men, if they sin, should give the best example of repentance.

First. His confession is particular; "I have done this evil," this that I am now reproved for, this that my own conscience now upbraids me with. Note, It is good to be particular in the confession of sin, that we may be the more express in praying for pardon, and so may have the more comfort in it. We ought to reflect upon the particular heads of our sins of infirmity, and the particular circumstances of our gross sins.

Secondly. He aggravates the sin which he confesseth, and laid load upon himself for it; "Against thee, and in thy sight." Hence our Saviour seems to borrow the confession which in the parable he puts into the mouth of the returning prodigal; "I have sinned against heaven and before thee," *Lu.* xv. 18. Two things David laments in his sin: 1*st.* That it was committed against God. To him the affront is given, and he is the party wronged. It is his truth that by wilful sin we deny; his conduct that we despise; his command that we disobey; his promise that we distrust; his name that we dishonour; and it is with him that we deal deceitfully and disingenuously. From this topic Joseph fetched the great argument against sin, *Gen.* xxxix. 9, and David here the great aggravation of it; "Against thee only." Some make this to speak the prerogative of his crown, that as a king he was not accountable to any but God; but it is more agreeable to his present temper to suppose that it speaks the deep contrition of his soul for his sin, and that it was upon right grounds. He here

sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah; against his own soul and body, and family; against his kingdom, and against the church of God, and all this helped to humble him; but none of these were sinned against so as God was; and therefore this he lays the most sorrowful accent upon, "Against thee only have I sinned." *2nd.* That it was committed in God's sight. This not only proves it upon me, but renders it exceeding sinful. This should greatly humble us for all our sins, that they have been committed under the eye of God, which argues either a disbelief of his omniscience or a contempt of his justice.

Thirdly. He justifies God in the sentence past upon him, for that "the sword should never depart from his house," 2 *Sam.* xii. 10, 11. He is very forward to own his sin, and aggravate it, not only that he might obtain the pardon of it himself, but that by his confession he might give honour to God. *1st.* That God might be justified in the threatenings he had spoken by Nathan. Lord, I have nothing to say against the justice of them; I deserve what is threatened, and a thousand times worse. Thus Eli acquiesced in the like threatenings, 1 *Sam.* iii. 18, "It is the Lord." And Hezekiah, 2 *Kin.* xx. 19, "Good is the word of the Lord, which thou hast spoken." *2nd.* That God may be clear when he judgeth, that is, when he executes those threatenings. David published his confession of sin, that, when hereafter he should come into the temple, none might say, God had done him any wrong, for he owns the Lord is righteous. Thus will all true penitents justify God by condemning themselves: "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us."

2nd. He confesseth his original corruption; ver. 5, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity." He doth not call upon God to behold it, but upon himself. Come, my soul, look unto the rock out of which I was hewn, and thou wilt find "I was shapen in iniquity." 'Had I duly considered this before, I find I should not have made so bold with the temptation, nor have ventured among the sparks with such tinder in my heart, and so the sin might have been prevented. But let me consider it now, not to excuse or extenuate the sin,—Lord, I did so, but indeed I could not help it, my inclination led me to it;' (for as that plea is false, with due care and watchfulness, and improvement of the grace of God, he might have helped it, so it is what a true penitent never offers to put in;) 'but let me consider it rather as an aggravation of the sin; Lord, I have not only been guilty of adultery and murder, but I have an adulterous, murderous nature; therefore I abhor myself.' David elsewhere speaks of the admirable structure of his body, *Ps.* cxxxix. 14, 15, it was curiously wrought, and yet here he saith it was shapen in iniquity; sin was twisted in with it, not as it came out of God's hands, but as it comes through our parents' loins. He elsewhere speaks of the piety of his mother, that she was God's handmaid, and he pleads his relation to her, *Ps.* cxvi. 16; lxxxvi. 16, and yet here he saith she conceived him in sin; for, though she was by grace a child of God, she was by nature a daughter of Eve, and not excepted from the common character. Note, It is to be sadly lamented by every one of us, that we brought into the world with us a corrupt nature, wretchedly degenerated from its primitive purity and rectitude; we have from our birth the snares of sin in our bodies, the seeds of sin in our souls, and a stain of sin upon both. This is what we call original sin, because it is as ancient as our original, and because it is the original of all our actual transgressions. This is that foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child, that proneness to evil, and backwardness to good, which is the burthen of the regenerate, and the ruin of the unregenerate. It is a bent to backslide from God.

Thirdly. David's acknowledgment of the grace of God, ver. 6, both his good will towards us, "Thou desirest truth in the inward parts," thou wouldst have us all honest and sincere, and true to our profession, and his good work in us, "In the hidden part thou" hast made, or "shalt make me to know wisdom." Note, 1. Truth and wisdom will go very far towards making a man a good man. A clear head and a sound heart (sincerity and prudence) bespeak the man of God perfect. 2. What God requires of us he himself works in us, and he works it in the regular way, enlightening the mind, and so gaining the will. But how doth this come in here? 1st. God is hereby justified and cleared. Lord, thou wast not the author of my sin; there is no blame to be laid upon thee; but I alone must bear it; for thou hast many a time admonished me to be sincere, and hast made me to know that which if I had duly considered would have prevented my falling into this sin; had I improved the grace thou hast given me, I had kept my integrity. 2nd. The sin is hereby aggravated. "Lord, thou desirest truth," but where was it when I dissembled with Uriah? "Thou hast made me to know wisdom;" but I have not lived up to what I have known. 3rd. He is hereby encouraged in his repentance to hope that God would graciously accept of him. For, *First.* God had made him sincere in his resolutions never to return to folly again. "Thou desirest truth in the inward part;" this is that which God has an eye to in a returning sinner, that "in his spirit there be no guile," *Ps.* xxxii. 2. And David was conscious to himself of the uprightness of his heart towards God in his repentance, and therefore doubted not but God would accept him. *Secondly.* He hoped that God would enable him to make good his resolutions, that in the hidden part, in the new man, which is called the hidden man of the heart, 1 *Pet.* iii. 4, he would make him to know wisdom, so as to discern and avoid the designs of the tempter another time. Some read it as a prayer: Lord, in this instance I have done foolishly, for the future make me to know wisdom. Where there is truth, God will give wisdom. Those that sincerely endeavour to do their duty shall be taught their duty.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
8 Make me to hear joy and gladness;
That the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
9 Hide thy face from my sins,
And blot out all mine iniquities.
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me.
11 Cast me not away from thy presence;
And take not thy holy spirit from me.
12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;
And uphold me *with thy* free spirit.
13 *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways;
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.

See here, First. What David prays for. Many excellent petitions he here puts up, to which, if we but add, "for Christ's sake," they are as evangelical as any other.

1. He prays that God would cleanse him from his sins, and the defilement he had contracted by them; ver. 7, "Purge me with hyssop;" that is, pardon my sins, and let me know that they are pardoned, that I may be restored to those privileges which by sin I had forfeited and lost. The expression here alludes to a ceremonial distinction, that of cleansing the leper, or those that were unclean by the touch of a body, by sprinkling water, or blood, or both, upon them with a bunch of hyssop, by which they were at length discharged from the restraints they were laid under by their pollution. Lord, let me be as well assured of my restoration to thy favour, and to the privilege of communion with thee, as they were thereby assured of their readmission to their former privileges. But it is founded upon gospel grace; "Purge me with hyssop," that is, with the blood of Christ applied to my soul by a lively faith, as water of purification was sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop. It is the blood of Christ, which is therefore called the blood of sprinkling, *Heb.* xii. 24, that purgeth the conscience from dead works, from that guilt of sin, and dread of God, which shuts us out of communion with him, as the touch of a dead body under the law shut a man out from the courts of God's house. If this blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, cleanse us from our sin, then we shall be clean indeed, *Heb.* x. 2. If we be washed in this fountain opened, we shall be whiter than snow; not only acquitted, but accepted; so those are that are justified, *Isa.* i. 18, "Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

2. He prays that, his sins being pardoned, he might have the comfort of that pardon. He asks not to be comforted till first he is cleansed: but if sin, the bitter root of sorrow, be taken away, he can pray in faith, "Make me to hear joy and gladness," ver. 8, that is, let me have a well-grounded peace of thy creating, thy speaking, so "that the bones which thou hast broken" by convictions and threatenings "may rejoice," may not only be set again, and eased from the pain, but may be sensibly comforted, and, as the prophet speaks, may flourish as an herb. Note, 1st. The pain of a heart truly broken for sin may well be compared to that of a broken bone; and it is the same Spirit who as a Spirit of bondage smites and wounds, and as a Spirit of adoption heals and binds up. 2nd. The comfort and joy that ariseth from a sealed pardon to a penitent sinner is as refreshing as perfect ease from the most exquisite pain. 3rd. It is God's work not only to speak this joy and gladness, but to make us hear it, and take the comfort of it. He earnestly desires that God would lift up the light of his countenance upon him, and so put gladness into his heart, that he would not only be reconciled to him, but, which is a farther act of grace, let him know that he was so.

3. He prays for a complete and effectual pardon. This is that which he is most earnest for, as the foundation of his comfort; ver. 9, "Hide thy face from my sins," that is, be not provoked by them to deal with me as I deserve; they are ever before me, let them be cast behind thy back; "blot out all mine iniquities" out of the book of thine account; blot them out as a cloud is blotted out and dispelled by the beams of the sun, *Isa.* xliv. 22.

4. He prays for sanctifying grace; and this every true penitent is as earnest for as for pardon and peace, ver. 10. He doth not pray, Lord, preserve me my reputation; as Saul, "I have sinned, yet honour me before this people." No, his great concern is to get his corrupt nature changed. The sin he had been guilty of was, 1st. An evidence of its impurity, and therefore he prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." He now saw more than ever what an unclean heart he had, and sadly laments it, but sees it is not in his power to amend it, and therefore begs of God (whose prerogative it is to create) that he would create in him a clean heart. He only that made the heart can new make it; and to his power nothing is impossible. He created the world by the word of his power as the God of nature; and it is by the word of his power as the God of grace that we are clean, *Jno.* xv. 3; that we are sanctified, *Jno.* xvii. 17. 2nd. It was the cause of its disorder, and undid much of the good work that had been wrought in him, and therefore he prays, "Lord, renew a right spirit within me;" repair the decays of spiritual strength which this sin has been the cause of, and set me to rights again. Renew a constant spirit within me; so some. He had in this matter discovered much inconstancy and disagreeableness with himself, and therefore prays, Lord, fix me for the time to come, that I may never in like manner depart from thee.

5. He prays for the continuance of God's good will towards him, and the progress of his good work in him, ver. 11. 1st. That he might never be shut out from God's favour; "Cast me not away from thy presence," as one whom thou abhorrest, and canst not endure to look upon. He prays that he might not be thrown out of God's protection, but that wherever he went he might have the Divine presence with him, might be under the conduct of his wisdom, and in the custody of his power, and that he might not be forbidden communion with God: Let me not be banished thy courts, but always have liberty of access to thee, by prayer. He doth not deprecate the temporal judgments which God by Nathan had threatened to bring upon him; God's will be done: but, "Lord, rebuke me not in thy wrath." If the sword come into my house never to depart from it, yet let me have a God to go to in my distresses, and I am well enough. 2nd. That he might never be deprived of God's grace; "Take not thy holy Spirit from me." He knew he had by his sin grieved the Spirit, and provoked him to withdraw; and that, because he also is flesh, God might justly have said that his Spirit should no more strive with him, or work upon him, *Gen.* vi. 3. This he dreads more than any thing. We are undone if God take his holy Spirit from us. Saul was a sad instance of this; how exceeding sinful, how exceeding miserable was he, when "the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him!" David knew it, and therefore begs thus earnestly, Lord, whatever thou take from me, my children, my crown, my life, yet "take not thy holy Spirit from me," (see 2 *Sam.* vii. 15,) but continue thy holy Spirit with me, to perfect the work of my repentance, to prevent my relapse into sin, and to enable me to discharge my duty both as a prince and as a psalmist.

6. He prays for the restoration of Divine comforts, and the perpetual communications of Divine grace, ver. 12. David finds two ill effects of his sin: 1st. It had made him sad, and therefore he prays, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." A child of God knows no true nor solid joy but the joy of God's salvation, joy in God his Saviour, and in the hope of eternal life. By wilful sin we forfeit this joy, and deprive ourselves of it; our evidences cannot but be clouded, and our hopes shaken. When we give ourselves so much cause to doubt of our interest in the salvation, how can we expect the joy of it? But when we truly repent, we may pray and hope that God will restore to us those joys. They that sow in penitential tears shall reap in the joys of God's salvation, when the times of refreshing shall come. 2nd. It had made him weak, and therefore he prays, "Uphold me with thy free Spirit:" I am ready to fall, either into sin or into despair; Lord, sustain me. My own spirit (though the spirit of a man will go far towards the sustaining his infirmity) is not sufficient, but if I be left to myself I shall certainly sink; therefore uphold me with thy Spirit, let him counterwork the evil spirit that would cast me down from mine excellency. Thy Spirit is a free Spirit, a free agent himself, working freely; and that makes those free whom he works upon, for where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. 'Thy ingenuous, princely Spirit.' He was conscious to himself of his acting very disingenuously in the matter of Uriah, and unlike a prince; that his behaviour was base and paltry. Lord, saith he, let thy Spirit inspire my soul

with noble and generous principles, that I may always act as becomes me. A free spirit will be a firm and fixed spirit, and will uphold us. The more cheerful we are in our duty, the more constant we shall be to it.

Secondly. See what David here promiseth, ver. 13. Observe, 1. What good work he promiseth God to do; "I will teach transgressors thy ways." David had been himself a transgressor, and therefore could speak experimentally to transgressors, and resolves, having himself found mercy with God in the way of repentance, to teach others God's ways, that is, our way to God by repentance; he would teach others that had sinned to take the same course that he had taken, to humble themselves, to confess their sins, and seek God's face; and God's way towards us in pardoning mercy, how ready he is to receive those that return to him. He taught the former by his own example for the direction of sinners in repenting; he taught the latter by his own experience, for their encouragement. By this psalm he is, and will be, to the world's end, teaching transgressors, telling them what God had done for his soul. Note, Penitents should be preachers; Solomon was so, and blessed Paul. 2. What good effect he promiseth himself from his doing this; "Sinners shall be converted unto thee," and shall neither persist in their wanderings from thee nor despair of finding mercy in their returns to thee. The great thing to be aimed at in teaching transgressors, is their conversion to God, that is a happy point gained, and happy they that are instrumental to contribute towards it, *Jas.* v. 20.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness,
O God, thou God of my salvation:
And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.
15 O Lord, open thou my lips;
And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it:*
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.
17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit:] [despise.
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not
18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:
Build thou the walls of Jerusalem. [ness,
19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteous-
With burnt offering and whole burnt offering:
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

First. David prays against the guilt of sin, and prays for the grace of God, and enforceth both petitions with a plea taken from the glory of God, which he promiseth with thankfulness to shew forth.

1. He prays against the guilt of sin, that he might be delivered from that, and promiseth that then he would praise God, ver. 14. The particular sin he prays against is blood-guiltiness, the sin he had now been guilty of, having slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon. Hitherto, perhaps, he had stopped the mouth of conscience with that frivolous excuse that he did not kill him himself; but now he was convinced that he was the murderer, and hearing the blood cry to God for vengeance he cries to God for mercy; "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness," that is, Let me not lie under the guilt of that kind I have contracted, but let it be pardoned to me, and let me never be left to myself to contract the like guilt again. Note, It concerns us all to pray earnestly against the guilt of blood. In this prayer he eyes God as the God of salvation. Note, Those to whom God is the God of salvation he will deliver from guilt, for the salvation he is the God of is salvation from sin. We may therefore plead this with him, Lord, thou art the God of my salvation, therefore deliver me from the dominion of sin. He promiseth that, if God would deliver him, his tongue should sing aloud of his righteousness; that is, God should have the glory both of pardoning mercy and of preventing grace. God's righteousness is often put for his grace, especially in the great business of justification and sanctification. This he would comfort himself in, and therefore sing of it; and this he would endeavour both to acquaint and to affect others with; he would sing aloud of it. This all those should do that have had the benefit of it, and owe their all to it.

2. He prays for the grace of God, and promiseth to improve that grace to his glory; ver. 15, "O Lord, open thou my lips," not only that I may teach and instruct sinners, which the best preacher cannot do to any purpose, unless God give him the opening of the mouth, and the tongue of the learned, but "that my mouth may shew forth thy praise;" not only that I may have abundant matter for praise, but a heart enlarged in praise. Guilt had closed his lips, had gone near to stop the mouth of prayer; he could not for shame, he could not for fear, come into the presence of that God whom he knew he had offended, much less speak to him; his heart condemned him, and therefore he had little confidence towards God. It cast a damp particularly upon his praises; when he had lost the joys of his salvation, his harp was hung upon the willow trees; therefore he prays, Lord, open my lips, put my heart in tune for praise again. To them that are tongue-tied by reason of guilt, the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins saith effectually, *Ephphatha,*—'Be opened;' and when the lips are opened, what should they speak but the praises of God? as Zacharias did, *Lu.* i. 64.

Secondly. David offers the sacrifice of a penitent, contrite heart, as that which he knew God would be pleased with.

1. He knew very well that the sacrificing of beasts was in itself of no account with God; ver. 16, "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it" with all my heart to obtain pardon and peace, but "thou delightest not in burnt offering." Here see how fond David would have been to give thousands of rams to make atonement for sin. Those that are thoroughly convinced of their misery and danger by reason of sin would spare no cost to obtain the remission of it, *Mic.* vi. 6, 7. But see how little God valued this! As trials of obedience, and types of Christ, he did indeed require sacrifices to be offered; but he had no delight in them for any intrinsic worth or value they had. "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not:" as they cannot make satisfaction for sin, so God cannot take any satisfaction in them, any otherwise than as the offering of them is expressive of love and duty to him.

2. He knew also how acceptable true repentance is to God; ver. 17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." See here, 1st. What the good work is that is wrought in every true penitent: "A broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." It is a work wrought upon the heart; that is it that God looks at and requires in all religious exercises, particularly in the exercises of repentance. It is a sharp work wrought there, no less than the breaking of the heart; not in despair, as we say when a man is undone, his heart is broken; but in necessary humiliation, and sorrow for sin. It is a heart breaking with itself, and breaking from its sin; it is a heart pliable to the word of God, and patient under the rod of God; a heart subdued and brought into obedience; it is a heart that is tender, like Josiah's, and trembles at God's word. Oh that there were such a heart in us! 2nd. How graciously God is pleased to accept of this. It is the sacrifices of God, not one, but many, it is instead of all burnt offering and sacrifice. The breaking of Christ's body for sin is the only sacrifice of atonement, for no sacrifice but that could take away sin: but the breaking of our hearts for sin is a sacrifice of acknowledgment, a sacrifice of God, for to him it is offered up; he requires it, he prepares it, (he provides this lamb for a burnt offering,) and he will accept of it. That which pleased God was not the feeding of a beast, and making much of it, but killing it; so it is not the pampering of our flesh, but the mortifying of it, that God will accept. The sacrifice was bound, was bled, was burnt; so the penitent heart is bound by convictions, bleeds in contrition, and then burns in holy zeal against sin and for God. The sacrifice was offered upon the altar, that sanctified the gift; so the broken heart is acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ. There is no true repentance without faith in him; and this is the sacrifice which he will not despise. Men despise that which is broken, but God will not. He despised the sacrifice of torn and broken beasts, but he will not despise that of a torn and broken heart. He will not overlook it, he will not refuse or reject it; though it make God no satisfaction for the wrong done him by sin, yet he doth not despise it. The proud Pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican, and he thought very meanly of himself; but God did not despise him. More is implied than is expressed; the great God overlooks heaven and earth to look with favour upon a broken and contrite heart, *Isa.* lxvi. 1, 2; lvii. 15.

Thirdly. David intercedes for Zion and Jerusalem, with an eye to the honour of God. See what a concern he had,

1. For the good of the church of God; ver. 16, "Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion;" that is, 1st. To all the particular worshippers in Zion, to all that love and fear thy name. Keep them from falling into such wounding wasting sins as these of mine; defend and succour all that fear thy name. Those that have been in spiritual troubles themselves know how to pity and pray for those that are in like manner afflicted. Or, 2nd. To the public interests of Israel. David was sensible of the wrong he had done to Judah and Jerusalem by his sin; how it had weakened the hands and saddened the hearts of good people, and opened the mouths of their adversaries. He was likewise afraid lest, he being a public person, his sin should bring judgments upon the city and kingdom, and therefore he prays to God to secure and advance those public interests which he had damaged and endangered. He prays that God would prevent those national judgments which his sin had deserved, that he would continue those blessings, and carry on that good work which it had threatened to retard and put a stop to. He prays not only God would do good to Zion, as he did to other places by his providence, but that he would do it in his good pleasure, with the peculiar favour he bore to that place which he had chosen to put his name there; that the walls of Jerusalem, which perhaps were now in the building, might be built up, and that good work finished. Note, *First.* When we have most business of our own, and of greatest importance at the throne of grace, yet then we must not forget to pray for the church of God; nay, our Master has taught us in our daily prayers to begin with that, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come." *Secondly.* The consideration of the prejudice we have done to the public interests by our sins should engage us to do them all the service we can, particularly by our prayers.

2. For the honour of the churches of God, ver. 19. If God would shew himself reconciled to him and his people, as he had prayed, then they should go on with the public services of his house; 1st. Cheerfully to themselves. The sense of God's goodness to them would enlarge their hearts in all the instances and expressions of thankfulness and obedience. They will then come to his tabernacle with burnt offerings, with whole burnt offerings, which were intended purely for the glory of God, and they shall offer not lambs and rams only, but bullocks, the costliest sacrifices, upon his altar. 2nd. Acceptably to God. Thou shalt be pleased with them; that is, we shall have reason to hope so, when we perceive the sin taken away which threatened to hinder thine acceptance. Note, It is a great comfort to a good man to think of the communion that is between God and his people in their public assemblies; how he is honoured by their humble attendance on him, and they are happy in his gracious acceptance of them.

PSALM LII.

David no doubt was in very great grief when he said to Abiathar, 1 *Sam.* xxii. 22, "I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house," which were put to death upon Doeg's malicious information. To give some vent to that grief, and to gain some relief to his mind under it, he penned this psalm, wherein, as a prophet, and therefore with as good an authority as if he had been now a prince upon the throne, I. He arraigns Doeg for what he had done, ver. 1. II. He accuseth him, convicts him, and aggravates his crimes, ver. 2—4. III. He passeth sentence upon him, ver. 5. IV. He foretells the triumphs of the righteous in the execution of the sentence, ver. 6, 7. V. He comforts himself in the mercy of God, and the assurance he had that he should yet praise him, ver. 8, 9. In singing this psalm we should conceive a detestation of the sin of lying, foresee the ruin of those that persist in it, and please ourselves with the assurance of the preservation of God's church and people, in spite of all the malicious designs of the children of Satan, that father of lies.

To the chief Musician, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

WHY boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man?
The goodness of God *endureth* continually
2 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs;
Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
3 Thou lovest evil more than good;
And lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.
4 Thou lovest all devouring words,
O *thou* deceitful tongue.
5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, [ing place,
He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwell-
And root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

The title is a brief account of the story which the psalm refers to. David now at length saw it necessary to quit the court and shift for his own safety, for fear of Saul, who had once and again attempted to murder him. Being unprovided of arms and victuals, he, by a wile, got Ahimelech the priest to furnish him with

both. Doeg, an Edomite, happened to be there, and he went and informed Saul against Ahimelech, representing him as confederate with a traitor; upon which accusation Saul grounded a very bloody warrant to kill all the priests; and Doeg, who was the prosecutor, was the executioner, 1 *Sam.* xxii. 9, &c. In these verses,

First. David argues the case fairly with this proud and mighty man, ver. 1. Doeg, it is probable, was mighty in respect of bodily strength; but if he were he gained no reputation to it by his easy victory over the unarmed priests of the Lord. It is no honour for those that wear a sword to hector those that wear an ephod. However, he was by his office a mighty man, for he was set over the servants of Saul, chamberlain of the household. This was he that boasted himself not only in the power he had to do mischief, but in the mischief he did. Note, It is bad to do ill, but it is worse to brag of it and glory in it when we have done; not only not to be ashamed of a wicked action, but to justify it; not only to justify it, but to magnify it, and value ourselves upon it. They that glory in their sin glory in their shame, and then it becomes yet more shameful. Mighty men are often mischievous men, and boast of their hearts' desire, *Ps.* x. 3. It is uncertain how the following words come in: "The goodness of God endures continually." Some make it the wicked man's answer to this question. The patience and forbearance of God, that great instance of his goodness, is abused by sinners, to the hardening of their hearts in their wicked ways; because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, nay, God is continually doing them good, therefore they boast in mischief, as if their prosperity in their wickedness were an evidence that there is no harm in it; but it is rather to be taken as an argument against him, to shew, 1. The sinfulness of his sin. God is continually doing good, and those that therein are like him have reason to glory in their being so; but thou art continually doing mischief, and therein art utterly unlike him, and contrary to him, and yet gloriest in being so. 2. The folly of it. Thou thinkest with the mischief which thou boastest of the artful contriving of, and successful carrying on of, to run down and ruin the people of God; but thou wilt find thyself mistaken; "the goodness of God endures continually" for their preservation, and then they need not fear what man can do unto them. The enemies in vain boast in their mischief while we have God's mercy to boast in.

Secondly. He draws up a high charge against him in the court of heaven, as he had drawn up a high charge against Ahimelech in Saul's court, ver. 2—4. He accuseth him of the wickedness of his tongue, that unruly evil full of deadly poison, and the wickedness of his heart which that was an evidence of. Four things he charges him with: 1. Malice. His tongue doth mischief, not only pricking like a needle, but cutting like a sharp razor. Scornful bantering words would not content him; he loved devouring words, words that would ruin the priests of the Lord, whom he hated. 2. Falsehood. It was a deceitful tongue that he did this mischief with, ver. 4: he loved lying, ver. 3; and this sharp razor did work deceitfully, ver. 2; that is, before he had this occasion given him to discover his malice against the priests, he had carried it very plausibly towards them. Though he were an Edomite, he attended the altars, and brought his offerings, and paid his respects to the priests as decently as any Israelite, though therein he put a force upon himself, for "he was detained before the Lord;" but herein he gained an opportunity of doing them so much the greater mischief. Or it may refer to the information itself which he gave in against Ahimelech; for the matter of fact was in substance true, yet it was misrepresented, and false colours put upon it, and therefore he might well be said to love lying, and to have a deceitful tongue. He told the truth, but not all the truth, as a witness ought to do. Had he told that David made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon Saul's errand, the kindness he shewed him would have appeared to be not only not traitorous against Saul, but respectful to him. It will not save us from the guilt of lying to be able to say there was some truth in what we said, if we pervert it, and make it to appear otherwise than it was. 3. Subtlety in sin. "Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs;" that is, it speaks the mischief which thy heart deviseth. The more there is of craft and contrivance in any wickedness, the more there is of the devil in it. 4. Affection to sin. "Thou lovest evil more than good;" that is, thou lovest evil, and hast no love at all to that which is good; thou takest delight in lying, and makest no conscience of doing right. Thou wouldest rather please Saul by telling a lie than please God by speaking truth. Those are of Doeg's spirit who, instead of being pleased (as we all ought to be) with an opportunity of doing a man kindness in his body, estate, or good name, are glad when they have a fair occasion to do a man a mischief, and readily close with an opportunity of that kind; that is loving evil more than good. It is bad to speak devouring words, but it is worse to love them, either in others or in ourselves.

Thirdly. He reads his doom, and denounceth the judgments of God against him for his wickedness, ver. 5. Thou hast destroyed the priests of the Lord, and cut them off, and therefore "God shall likewise destroy thee for ever." Sons of perdition actively shall be sons of perdition passively, as Judas and the man of sin. Destroyers shall be destroyed; those especially that hate, and persecute, and destroy the priests of the Lord, his ministers and people, who are made to our God priests, a royal priesthood, shall be taken away with a swift and everlasting destruction. Doeg is here condemned, 1. To be driven out of the church; "He shall pluck thee out of the tabernacle;" not thy dwelling-place, but God's, so it is most probably understood. Thou shalt be cut off from the favour of God, and his presence, and all communion with him, and shalt have no benefit, either by oracle or offering. Justly was he deprived of all the privileges of God's house, that had been so mischievous to his servants; he had come sometimes to God's tabernacle, and attended in his courts, but he was detained there, he was sick of the service, and sought an opportunity to defame his family. It was very fit therefore he should be taken away, and plucked out from thence: we would forbid one our house that should serve us so. Note, We forfeit the benefit of ordinances if we make an ill use of them. 2. To be driven out of the world; "He shall root thee out of the land of the living," in which thou thoughtest thyself so deeply rooted. When good men die, they are transplanted from the land of the living on earth, the nursery of the plants of righteousness, to that in heaven, the garden of the Lord, where they shall take root for ever; but when wicked men die, they are rooted out of the land of the living to perish for ever, as fuel to the fire of Divine wrath. This will be the portion of those that contend with God.

6 The righteous also shall see, and fear,
And shall laugh at him:
7 Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength;
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness.
8 But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God:
I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
9 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it:*
And I will wait on thy name;
For *it is* good before thy saints.

OLIVE TREES.—ver. 8.

David was at this time in great distress; the mischief Doeg had done him was but the beginning of his sorrows; and yet here we have him triumphing, and that is more than rejoicing, in tribulation. Blessed Paul, in the midst of his troubles, is in the midst of his triumphs, 2 *Cor.* ii. 14. David here triumphs,

First. In the fall of Doeg; yet, lest this should look like personal revenge, he doth not speak of it as his own act, but the language of other righteous persons. They shall observe God's judgments on Doeg, and speak of them,

1. To the glory of God. They shall see and fear, ver. 6; that is, they shall reverence the justice of God, and stand in awe of him as a God of almighty power, before whom the proudest sinner cannot stand, and before whom therefore we ought every one of us to humble ourselves. Note, God's judgments on the wicked should strike an awe upon the righteous, and make them afraid of offending God, and incurring his displeasure, *Ps.* cxix. 120; *Rev.* xv. 3, 4.

2. To the shame of Doeg. They shall laugh at him, not with a ludicrous, but a rational, serious laughter, as he that sits in heaven shall laugh at him, *Ps.* ii. 4. He shall appear ridiculous and worthy to be laughed at. We are told how they shall triumph in God's just judgments on him; ver. 7, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength." The fall and ruin of a wealthy, mighty man cannot be but generally taken notice of, and every one is apt to make his remarks upon it. Now this is the remark which the righteous should make upon Doeg's fall, that no better could come of it, since he took the wrong method of establishing himself in his wealth and power. If a new erected fabric tumbles down, presently every one inquires where was the fault in the building of it. Now that which ruined Doeg's prosperity was, 1st. That he did not build it upon a rock; "he made not God his strength;" that is, he did not think that the continuance of his prosperity depended upon the favour of God, and therefore took no care to make sure that favour, nor to keep himself in God's love, made no conscience of his duty to him, nor sought him in the least. Those wretchedly deceive themselves that think to support themselves in their power and wealth without God and religion. 2nd. That he did build it upon the sand. He thought his wealth would support itself; he "trusted in the abundance of his riches," which he imagined were laid up for many years; nay, he thought his wickedness would help to support it. He was resolved to stick at nothing for the securing and advancing of his honour and power; right or wrong, he would get what he could, and keep what he had, and be the ruin of any one that stood in his way; and this he thought would strengthen him. They may have anything that will make conscience of nothing. But now see what it comes to, see what untempered mortar he built his house with; now it is fallen, and himself buried in the ruins of it.

Secondly. In his own stability, ver. 8, 9. This mighty man is plucked up by the roots, "but I am like a green olive tree," planted and rooted, fixed and flourishing; he is turned out of God's dwelling-place, but I am established in it, not detained as Doeg by any thing but the abundant satisfaction I meet with there. Note, Those that by faith and love dwell in the house of God shall be like green olive-trees there. The wicked are said to flourish like a green bay-tree, *Ps.* xxxvii. 35, which bears no useful fruit, though it have abundance of large leaves; but the righteous flourish like a green olive-tree, which is fat as well as flourishing, *Ps.* xcii. 14; and with its fatness honours God and man, *Jud.* ix. 9, deriving its root and fatness from the good olive, *Rom.* xi. 17. Now what must we do that we may be as green olive-trees?

1. We must live a life of faith and holy confidence in God and his grace. I see what comes of men's trusting in the abundance of their riches, and therefore "I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever;" not in the world, but in God; not in my own merit, but in God's mercy, which dispenseth its gifts freely, even to the unworthy, and has in it an all-sufficiency to be our portion and happiness. This mercy is for ever; it is constant and unchangeable, and its gifts will continue to all eternity; we must therefore for ever trust in it, and never come off from that bottom.

2. We must live a life of thankfulness and holy joy in God; ver. 9, "I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it," hast avenged the blood of thy priests upon their bloody enemy, and given him blood to drink, and hast performed thy promise to me, which he was as sure would be done in due time as if it were done already. It contributes very much to the beauty of our profession, and to our fruitfulness in every grace, to be much in praising God, and it is certain we never want matter for praise.

3. We must live a life of expectation, and humble dependence upon God. "I will wait on thy name;" that is, I will attend upon thee in all those ways wherein thou hast made thyself known, hoping for the discoveries of thy favour to me, and willing to tarry till the time appointed for them; "for it is good before thy saints;" or, in the opinion and judgment of thy saints, with whom David heartily concurs. It is the *communis sensus fidelium*,—'all the saints are of this mind.' 1st. That God's name is good in itself. That God's manifestations of himself to his people are gracious and very kind; there is no other name given but his, that would be our refuge and strong tower. 2nd. That it is very good

for us to wait on that name; that there is nothing better to calm and quiet our spirits, when they are ruffled and disturbed, and to keep us in the way of our duty, when we are tempted to use any indirect courses for our own relief, than to "hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord," *Lam.* iii. 26. All the saints have experienced the benefit of it, who never attended him in vain, never followed his conduct but it ended well, nor were ever made ashamed of their believing expectations from him. What is good before all the saints, let us therefore abide and abound in, and in this particularly; "Turn thou to thy God, keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually," *Hos.* xii. 6.

PSALM LIII.

God speaketh once, yea twice, and it were well if man would even then perceive it. God in this psalm speaketh twice, for this is the same, almost verbatim, with the 14th Psalm. The scope of it is to convince us of our sins, to set us a blushing, and to set us a trembling because of them; and this is what we are so hardly brought to, that there is need of line upon line to this purpose. The word, as a convincing word, is compared to a hammer, the strokes whereof must be frequently repeated. God, by the psalmist here, I. Shews us how bad we are, ver. 1. II. Proves it upon us by his own certain knowledge, ver. 2, 3. III. He speaks terror to persecutors, the worst of sinners, ver. 4, 5. IV. He speaks encouragement to God's persecuted people, ver. 6. Some little variation there is between *Ps.* xiv. and this, but none considerable, only between ver. 5, 6, there, and ver. 5, where some expressions there used are here left out, concerning the shame which the wicked put upon God's people, and instead of that is here foretold the shame which God would put upon the wicked; which alteration, with some others, he made by Divine direction, when he delivered it the second time to the chief musician. In singing it, we ought to lament the corruption of the human nature, and the wretched degeneracy of the world we live in, yet rejoicing in hope of the great salvation.

To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David.

THE fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God.
Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity:
There is none that doeth good.
2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there were *any* that did understand,
That did seek God.
3 Every one of them is gone back:
They are altogether become filthy;
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread:
They have not called upon God.
5 There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was:
For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth
against thee: [them.
Thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised
6 Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion!
When God bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

This psalm was opened before, and therefore we shall here only observe, in short, some things concerning sin, in order to the increasing of our sorrow for it and hatred of it.

I. The fact of sin. Is that proved? Can the charge be made out? Yes; God is a witness to it, an unexceptionable witness. From the place of his holiness he looks on the children of men, and sees how little good there is among them, ver. 2. All the sinfulness of their hearts and lives is naked and open before him.

II. The fault of sin. Is there any harm in it? Yes; it is iniquity, ver. 1, 4; it is an unrighteous thing; it is that which there is no good in, ver. 1, 3; it is an evil thing, it is the worst of evils; it is that which makes this world such an evil world as it is; it is going back from God, ver. 3.

III. The fountain of sin. How comes it that men are so bad? Surely it is because there is no fear of God before their eyes. They say in their hearts, There is no God at all to call us to an account, none that we need to stand in awe of. Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they profess to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they deny him.

IV. The folly of sin. He is a fool (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) that harbours such corrupt thoughts: atheists, whether in opinion or practice, are the greatest fools in the world. They that do not seek God, they do not understand; they are like brute beasts that have no understanding; for man is distinguished from the brutes, not so much by the powers of reason as by a capacity for religion. The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, they have no knowledge. Those may truly be said to know nothing that do not know God, ver. 4.

V. The filthiness of sin. Sinners are corrupt, ver. 1; their nature is vitiated and spoiled; and the more noble the nature is the more vile it is when it is depraved; as that of the angels. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*,—'The best things when corrupted become the worst.' Their iniquity is abominable, it is odious to the Holy God, and it renders them so; whereas otherwise he hates nothing that he has made. It makes men filthy, altogether filthy; wilful sinners (pardon the expression) even stink above ground in the nostrils of the God of heaven and the holy angels. What neatness soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain wickedness is the greatest nastiness in the world.

VI. The fruit of sin. See to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last. When men's hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, see their cruelty to their brethren, that are bone of their bone; because they will not run with them to the same excess of riot, they eat them up as they eat bread; as if they were not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. And see their contempt of God at the same time; they have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.

VII. The fear and shame that attend sin; ver. 5, "There were they in great fear," who had made God their enemy; their own guilty consciences frightened them, and filled them with horror, though otherwise there was no apparent cause of fear: "the wicked flees when none pursues." See the ground of this fear; it is because God hath formerly scattered the bones of those that encamped against his people; not only broken their power, and dispersed their forces, but slain them, and reduced their bodies to dry bones, like those scattered at the grave's mouth, *Ps.* cxli. 7. Such will be the fate of those that lay siege to the camp of the saints, and the beloved city, *Rev.* xx. 9; and the apprehensions of this cannot but put those into frights that eat up God's people. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to put them to shame, and expose them, because God hath despised them; to laugh at them, because He that sits in heaven laughs at them. We need not look upon those enemies with fear whom God looks upon with contempt. If he despiseth them, we may.

Lastly. The faith of the saints, and their hope and power touching the cure of this great evil, ver. 6. There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. Oh that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited, for this redemption. 1. God would in due time save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which would bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that had long been in a mournful, melancholy state. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church. 2. He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting matter of joy to them. From this work the Redeemer had "his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins," *Mat.* i. 21.

PSALM LIV.

The key of this psalm hangs at the door, for the title tells us upon what occasion it was penned, when the inhabitants of Ziph, men of Judah, types of Judas the traitor, betrayed David to Saul, by informing him where he was, and putting him in a way how to seize him. This they did twice, 1 *Sam.* xxiii. 19; xxvi. 1, and it is upon record to their everlasting infamy. The psalm is sweet; the former part of it, perhaps, was meditated when he was in his distress, and when the danger was over was put into writing, and the two last verses added, which speak his thankfulness for the deliverance; which yet might be written in faith, even then when he was in the midst of his fright. Here, I. He complains to God of the malice of his enemies, and prays for help against them, ver. 1—3. II. He comforts himself with an assurance of the Divine favour and protection, and that in due time his enemies should be confounded, and he delivered, ver. 4—7. What time we are in distress, we may comfortably sing this psalm.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

SAVE me, O God, by thy name,
And judge me by thy strength.
2 Hear my prayer, O God;
Give hear to the words of my mouth.
3 For strangers are risen up against me,
And oppressors seek after my soul:
They have not set God before them. Selah.

We may observe here,

First. The great distress that David was now in, which the title gives an account of. The Ziphims came of their own accord and informed Saul where David was, with a promise to deliver him into his hand. One would have thought, when David was retired into the country, he should not have been pursued; into a desert country, he should not have been discovered; and into his own country, he should not have been betrayed; and yet it seems he was. Never let a good man expect to be safe and easy till he comes to heaven. How treacherous, how officious were these Ziphims! It is well God is faithful, for men are not to be trusted, *Mic.* vii. 5.

Secondly. His prayer to God for succour and deliverance, ver. 12. He appeals to God's strength, by which he was able to help him; and to his name, by which he was engaged to help him; and begs he would save him from his enemies, and judge him, that is, plead his cause, and judge for him. David has no other plea to depend upon but God's name, no other power to depend upon but God's strength, and those he makes his refuge and confidence. This would be the effectual answer of his prayers, ver. 2, which, even in his flight, when he had not opportunity for solemn address to God, he was ever and anon lifting up to heaven: "Hear my prayer," which comes from my heart, "and give ear to the words of my mouth."

Thirdly. His plea, which is taken from the character of his enemies, ver. 3. 1. They are strangers. Such were the Ziphites, unworthy the name of Israelites; they have used me more basely and barbarously than the Philistines themselves would have done. The worst treatment may be expected from those who, having broken through the bonds of relation and alliance, make themselves strangers. 2. They are oppressors. Such was Saul, who, as a king, should have used his power for the protection of his good subjects, but abused it for their destruction. Nothing so grievous as oppression in the seat of judgment, *Eccl.* iii. 16. Paul's greatest perils were by his own countrymen, and by false brethren, 2 *Cor.* xi. 26, and so were David's. 3. They were very formidable and threatening. They not only hated him and wished him ill, but they rose up against him in a body, joining their power to do him a mischief. 4. They were very spiteful and malicious. They "seek after my soul;" they hunt for the precious life, no less will satisfy them. We may in faith pray that God would not by his providence give success, lest it should look like giving countenance, to such cruel, bloody men. 5. They were very profane and atheistical; and for this reason he thought God was concerned in honour to appear against them: "They have not set God before them," that is, they have quite cast off the thoughts of God, they do not consider that his eye is upon them, that in fighting against his people they fight against him, nor have they any dread of the certain fatal consequences of such an unequal engagement. Note, From those who do not set God before them no good is to be expected; nay, what wickedness will not such men be guilty of? What bonds of nature, or friendship, or gratitude, or covenant, will hold those that have broken through the fear of God? "Selah;" mark this. Let us all be sure to set God before us at all times, for if we do not, we are in danger of going all to naught.

4 Behold, God *is* mine helper:
The Lord *is* with them that uphold my soul.
5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies:
Cut them off in thy truth.

6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee:
I will praise thy name, O LORD; for *it is* good.
7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble:
And mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

We have here the lively actings of David's faith in his prayer, by which he was assured that the issue would be comfortable, though the attempt upon him was formidable.

First. He was sure that he had God on his side; that God took his part, ver. 4. He speaks it with an air of triumph and exultation, "Behold, God is mine helper." If we be for him, he is for us; and if he be for us, we shall have such help in him as that we need not fear any power engaged against us. Though men and devils aim to be our destroyers, they shall not prevail while God is our helper. "The Lord is with them that uphold my soul;" compare *Ps.* cxviii. 7, "The Lord taketh my part with them that help me." There are some that uphold me, and God is one of them; he is the principal one; none of them could help me, if he did not help them. Every creature is that to us, and no more, that God makes it to be. He means, The Lord is he that doth uphold my soul, and keep me from tiring in my work, and sinking under my burthens. He that by his providence uphold all things by his grace upholds the souls of his people. God, that will in due time save his people, doth in the meantime sustain them and bear them up, so that the spirit he has made shall not fail before him.

Secondly. God taking part with him he doubted not but his enemies should both flee and fall before him; ver. 5, "He shall reward evil unto mine enemies that observe me," seeking an opportunity to do me a mischief. The evil they designed against me the righteous God will return upon their own heads. David would not render evil to them; but he knew God would: "I, as a deaf man, heard not, for thou wilt hear." The enemies we forgive, if they repent not, God will judge; and for this reason we must not avenge ourselves, because God hath said, "Vengeance is mine." But he prays, "Cut them off in thy truth." This is not a prayer of malice, but a prayer of truth, for it has an eye to the word of God, and only desires the performance of that. There is truth in God's threatenings as well as in his promises, and sinners that repent not will find it so to their cost.

Thirdly. He promiseth to give thanks to God for all the experiences he had had of his goodness to him; ver. 6, "I will sacrifice unto thee." Though sacrifices were expensive, yet, when God required that his worshippers should in that way praise him, David would not only offer them, but offer them freely, and without grudging. All our spiritual sacrifices must in this sense be free-will offerings, for God loves a cheerful giver. Yet he will not only bring his sacrifice, which was but the shadow, the ceremony, he will mind the substance, "I will praise thy name." A thankful heart, and the calves of our lips giving thanks to his name, are the sacrifices God will accept. "I will praise thy name, for it is good." Thy name is not only great, but good, and therefore to be praised. To praise thy name is not only what we are bound to, but it is good, it is pleasant, it is profitable; it is good for us, *Ps.* xcii. 1, therefore "I will praise thy name."

Fourthly. He speaks of his deliverance as a thing done, ver. 7. I will praise thy name, and say, "He hath delivered me;" this shall be my song then. That which he rejoiceth in is a complete deliverance, "He hath delivered me from all trouble;" and a deliverance to his heart's content, "Mine eye hath seen its desire upon mine enemies;" not seen them cut off and ruined, but forced to retreat; tidings being brought to Saul that the Philistines were upon him, 1 *Sam.* xxiii. 27, 28. That was all David desired, to be himself safe; when he saw Saul draw off his forces he saw his desire. "He hath delivered me from all trouble." Either, 1. With this thought David comforted himself when he was in distress, "He hath delivered me from all trouble" hitherto, and many a time I have gained my point, and seen my desire on mine enemies, therefore he will deliver me out of this trouble. We should thus in our greatest straits encourage ourselves with our past experiences. Or, 2. With this thought he magnified his present deliverance when the fright is over, that it was an earnest of farther deliverance. He speaks of the completing of his deliverance as a thing done, though he had as yet many troubles before him; because, having God's promise for it, he was as sure of it as if it was done already. He that hath begun to deliver me from this trouble shall deliver me from all troubles, and shall at length give me to "see my desire upon mine enemies." This may, perhaps, point at Christ, of whom David was a type; God would deliver him out of all the troubles of his state of humiliation, and he was perfectly sure of it. And all things are said to be put under his feet; for, though "we see not yet all things put under him," yet we are sure "he shall reign till all his enemies be made his footstool," and he shall see his desire upon them. However, it is an encouragement to all believers to make that use of their particular deliverances which St. Paul doth, like David here, 2 *Tim.* iv. 17, 18, "He that delivered me from the mouth of the lion, shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me to his heavenly kingdom."

PSALM LV.

It is the conjecture of many expositors that David penned this psalm upon occasion of Absalom's rebellion, and that the particular enemy he here speaks of, that dealt treacherously with him, was Ahithophel; and some will therefore make David's troubles here typical of Christ's sufferings, and Ahithophel's treachery a figure of Judas', because they both hanged themselves. But there is nothing in it that is particularly applied to Christ in the New Testament. David was in great distress when he penned this psalm. I. He prays that God would manifest his favour to him, and pleads his own sorrow and fear, ver. 1—8. II. He prays that God would manifest his displeasure against his enemies, and pleads their great wickedness and treachery, ver. 9—15; and again, ver. 20, 21. III. He assures himself that God would in due time appear for him against his enemies, comforts himself with the hopes of it, and encourageth others to trust in God, ver. 16—19; and again, ver. 22, 23. In singing this psalm we may, if there be occasion, apply it to our own troubles; if not, we may sympathize with those to whose case it comes nearer, foreseeing that there will be at last indignation and wrath to the persecutors, salvation and joy to the persecuted.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David.

GIVE ear to my prayer, O God;
And hide not thyself from my supplication.
2 Attend unto me, and hear me:
I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;
3 Because of the voice of the enemy,
Because of the oppression of the wicked:
For they cast iniquity upon me,
And in wrath they hate me.
4 My heart is sore pained within me:
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me,
And horror hath overwhelmed me.
6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove!
For then would I fly away, and be at rest.
7 Lo, *then* would I wander far off,
And remain in the wilderness. Selah.
8 I would hasten my escape
From the windy storm *and* tempest.

In these verses we have,

First. David praying. Prayer is a salve for every sore, and a relief to the spirit under every burthen. "Give ear to my prayer, O God," ver. 1, 2. He doth not set down the petitions he offered up to God in his distress, but begs that God would hear the prayers which at every turn his heart lifted up to God, and grant an answer of peace to them; "Attend to me, hear me." Saul would not hear his petitions, his other enemies regarded not his pleas, but, Lord, be thou pleased to hearken to me. "Hide not thy face from my supplication;" either as one unconcerned, and not regarding it, nor seeming to take any notice of it; or, as one displeased, angry at me, and therefore at my prayer. If we, in our prayers, sincerely lay open ourselves, our case, our hearts to God, we have reason to hope that he will not hide himself, his favours, his comforts from us.

Secondly. David weeping; for in this he was a type of Christ, that he was a man of sorrows, and often in tears; ver. 2, "I mourn in my complaint," or, in my meditation, my melancholy musings, "and make a noise;" I cannot forbear such sighs and groans, and other expressions of grief, as discover it to those about me. Great griefs are sometimes noisy and clamorous, and by that means are in some measure lessened, while those increase that are stifled, and have no vent given them. But what was the matter? ver. 3, it is "because of the voice of the enemy," the menaces and insults of Absalom's party, that hectored and talked big, and stirred up the people to cry out against David, and shout him out of his palace and capital city, as afterwards the chief priests stirred up the mob to cry out against the Son of David, "Away with him, Crucify him." Yet it was not the voice of the enemy only that fetched tears from David's eyes, but their oppression, and the hardship he was thereby reduced to. "They cast iniquity upon me." They could not justly charge David with any maladministration in his government, could not prove any act of oppression or injustice upon him, but they loaded him with calumnies. Though they found no iniquity in him relating to his trust as a king, yet they cast all manner of iniquity upon him, and represented him to the people as a tyrant, fit to be expelled. Innocency itself is no security against violent and lying tongues. They hated him themselves, nay, in wrath they hated him; there was in their enmity both the heat and violence of anger, or sudden passion, and the implacableness of hatred and rooted malice; and therefore they studied to make him odious, that others also might hate him. This made him mourn, and the more, because he could remember the time when he was the darling of the people, and answered his name, David,—'a beloved one.'

Thirdly. David trembling, and in great consternation. We may well suppose him to be so, upon the breaking out of Absalom's conspiracy, and the general defection of the people, even those that he had little reason to suspect.

1. See what fear seized him. David was a man of great boldness, and in some very eminent instances had signalized his courage, and yet, when the danger was surprising and imminent, his heart failed him. Let not the stout man, therefore, glory in his courage any more than the strong man in his strength. Now David's heart is sore pained within him; the terrors of death are fallen upon him, ver. 4. Now fearfulness of mind, and trembling of body, are come upon him, and horror has covered and overwhelmed him, ver. 5; when without are fightings, no marvel that within are fears; and if it was upon the occasion of Absalom's rebellion, we may suppose that the remembrance of his sin in the matter of Uriah, which God was now reckoning with him for, added as much more to the fright. Sometimes David's faith made him in a manner fearless, and he could boldly say, when surrounded with enemies, "I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." But at other times his fears prevail and tyrannize; for the best men are not always alike strong in faith.

2. See how desirous he was in this fright to retire into a desert, any whither to be far enough from hearing the voice of the enemy, and seeing their oppressions. He said, ver. 6, said it to God in prayer, said it to himself in meditation, said it to his friends in complaint, "O that I had wings like a dove!" As much as he had been sometimes in love with Jerusalem, now it was become a rebellious city he longed to get clear of it, and, like the prophet, wisheth he had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that he might leave his people and go from them, for they are an assembly of treacherous men, *Jer.* ix. 2. This agrees very well with David's resolution upon the breaking out of that plot, "Arise, let us flee, and make speed to depart," 2 *Sam.* xv. 14. Observe,

1st. How he would make his escape; he was so surrounded with enemies that he saw not how he could escape but upon the wing, and therefore wisheth, "O that I had wings," not like a hawk, that flies strongly, but "like a dove," that flies swiftly; he wishes not for wings to fly upon the prey, but to fly from the birds of prey; for such his enemies were. The wings of a dove were most agreeable to him who was of a dovelike spirit, and therefore the wings of an eagle would not become him. The dove flies low, and takes shelter as soon as she can; and thus would David fly.

2nd. What he would make his escape from; "from the windy storm and tempest," the tumult and ferment that the city was now in, and the danger to which he was exposed. Herein he was like a dove that cannot endure noise.

3rd. What he aimed at in making this escape; not victory, but rest. "I would fly away and be at rest," ver. 6. I would fly any whither, if it were to a barren, frightful wilderness, never so far off, so I might be quiet, ver. 7. Note, Peace and quietness in silence and solitude is what the wisest and best of men have most earnestly coveted, and the more when they have been vexed and wearied with the noisiness and clamour of those about them. Gracious souls wish to retire from the hurry and bustle of this world, where they may sweetly enjoy God and themselves; and if there be any true peace on this side heaven, it is they that enjoy it in those retirements. This makes death desirable to a child of God, that it is a final escape from all the storms and tempests of this world to perfect and everlasting rest.

9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues:
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.

10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof:
Mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.
11 Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof:
Deceit and guile depart not from her streets
12 For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me;
Then I could have borne *it:* [*self* against me;
Neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *him*-
Then I would have hid myself from him:
13 But *it was* thou, a man mine equal,
My guide, and mine acquaintance.
14 We took sweet counsel together,
And walked unto the house of God in company
15 Let death seize upon them,
And let them go down quick into hell:
For wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them.

David here complains of his enemies, whose wicked plots had brought him, though not to his faith's end, yet to his wit's end, and prays against them by the spirit of prophecy. Observe here,

First. The character he gives of the enemies he feared. They were of the worst sort of men, and his description of them agrees very well with Absalom and his accomplices.

1. He complains of the city, Jerusalem, which strangely fell in with Absalom, and fell off from David, so that he had none there but his own guards and servants that he could repose any confidence in; "How is that faithful city become a harlot!" David did not take the representation of it from others, but with his own eyes, and with a sad heart, did himself see nothing but violence and strife in the city, ver. 9; for when they grew disaffected and disloyal to David they grew mischievous one to another. If he walked the rounds upon the walls of the city, he saw that violence and strife went about it day and night, and mounted its guards, ver. 10. All the arts and methods which the rebels used for the fortifying of the city were made up of violence and strife, and there were no remains of honesty or love among them. If he looked into the heart of the city, mischief and injury, mutual wrong and vexation, were in the midst of it; wickedness, all manner of wickedness, is in the midst thereof. *Jusque datum sceleri*,—'wickedness was legalized;' "deceit and guile," and all manner of treacherous dealing, "departed not from her streets," ver. 11. It may be meant of the base and barbarous usage they gave to David's friends and such as they knew were firm and faithful to him; they did them all the mischief they could by fraud or force. Is this the character of Jerusalem, the royal city, and which is more, the holy city? and in David's time too, so soon after the thrones of judgment and the testimony of Israel were both placed there? Is "this the city that men call the perfection of beauty?" *Lam.* ii. 15. Is Jerusalem, the head-quarters of God's priests, so ill taught? Can Jerusalem be ungrateful to David himself, its own illustrious founder, and be made too hot for him? Let us not think strange at the corruptions and disorders of this church on earth, but long to see the new Jerusalem, where there is no violence or strife, no mischief or guile, and into which no unclean thing shall enter, nor any thing that disquiets.

2. He complains of one of the ringleaders of the conspiracy, that had been very industrious to foment jealousies, to misrepresent him and his government, and to incense the city against him; it was one that reproached him, as if he either abused his power, or neglected the use of it, for that was Absalom's malicious suggestion; "There is no man deputed of the king to hear thee," 2 *Sam* xv. 3. That, and other the like accusations, were industriously spread among the people. And who was most active in it? Not a sworn enemy, not Shimei, or any of the nonjurors; "then I could have borne it," for I should not have expected better from them, (and we find how patiently he did bear Shimei's curses,) not one that professed to hate me, then I would have stood upon my guard against him, would have hid myself and my counsels from him, so that it would not have been in his power to betray me; "but it was thou, a man mine equal," ver. 13. The Chaldee paraphrase names Ahithophel as the person here meant, and nothing in that plot seems to have discouraged David so much as to hear that Ahithophel was among the conspirators with Absalom, 2 *Sam.* xv. 31, for he was the king's counsellor, 1 *Chr.* xxvii. 33. "It was thou, a man mine equal," one whom I esteemed as myself, a friend as mine own soul, whom I had laid in my bosom, and made hail-fellow with myself; to whom I had communicated all my secrets, and who knew my mind as well as I myself did; my guide with whom I advised, and by whom I was directed in all my affairs, whom I made president of the council, and prime minister of state; my intimate acquaintance, and familiar friend; this is the man that now abuseth me. I have been kind to him; but I find him thus basely ungrateful; I have put a trust in him, but I find him thus basely treacherous; nay, and he could not have done me the one half of the mischief he doth, if I had not shewed him so much respect. All this must needs be very grievous to an ingenuous mind, and yet this was not all. This traitor had seemed a saint, else he had never been David's bosom friend; ver. 14, "We took counsel together," spent many an hour together with a great deal of pleasure in religious discourse; or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, 'we joined ourselves together to the assembly;' I gave him the right hand of fellowship in holy ordinances, and then "we walked to the house of God in company," to attend the public service. Note, 1st. There always has been, and always will be, a mixture of good and bad, sound and unsound, in the visible church, between whom, perhaps, for a long time, we can discern no difference, but the Searcher of hearts doth. David, who went to the house of God in his sincerity, had Ahithophel in company with him, who went in his hypocrisy. The pharisee and the publican went together to the temple to pray; but, sooner or later, they that are perfect, and they that are not, will be made manifest. 2nd. Carnal policy may carry men on very far and very long in a profession of religion, while it is in fashion and will serve a turn. In the court of pious David, none more devout than Ahithophel, and yet his heart not right in the sight of God. 3rd. We must not wonder if we be sadly deceived in some that have made great pretensions to those two sacred things,—religion and friendship. David himself, though a very wise man, was thus imposed upon, which may make our like disappointments the more tolerable.

Secondly. His prayers against them, which we are both to stand in awe of and to comfort ourselves in, as prophecies, but not to copy into our prayers against any particular enemies of our own. He prays,

1. That God would disperse them as he did the Babel builders; ver. 9, "Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues;" that is, blast their counsels, by making them to disagree among themselves, and clash with one another. Send an evil spirit among them, that they may not understand one another; but be envious and jealous one of another. This prayer was answered in the turning of Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, by setting up the counsel of Hushai against it. God often destroys the church's enemies by dividing them; nor is there a surer way to the destruction of any people than their division. A kingdom, an interest, divided against itself, cannot long stand.

2. That God would destroy them, as he did Dathan and Abiram, and their associates, who were confederate against Moses, whose throat being an open sepulchre, the earth therefore opened, and swallowed them up. This was then a new thing which God executed, *Num.* xvi. 30. But David prays that it might now be repeated, or something equivalent; ver. 15, "Let death seize upon them" by Divine warrant, "and let them go down quick into hell;" let them be dead, and buried, and damned in a moment; for wickedness is wherever they are, it is in the midst of them. The souls of impenitent sinners go down quick, or alive, into hell; for they have a perfect sense of their miseries, and shall, therefore, live still, that they may be still miserable. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the final, the everlasting ruin of all those who, whether secretly or openly, oppose and rebel against the Lord's Messiah.

16 As for me, I will call upon God;
And the LORD shall save me.
17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray,
And cry aloud:
And he shall hear my voice. [*was* against me:
18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the batle *that*
For there were many with me.
19 God shall hear, and afflict them,
Even he that abideth of old. Selah.
Because they have no changes,
Therefore they fear not God. [with him:
20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace
He hath broken his covenant.
21 *The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter,
But war *was* in his heart:
His words were softer than oil,
Yet *were* they drawn swords.
22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD,
And he shall sustain thee:
He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of
destruction: [days;
Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their
But I will trust in thee.

In these verses,

First. David perseveres in his resolution to call upon God; being well assured that he should not seek him in vain; ver. 16, "As for me," let them take what course they please to secure themselves; let violence and strife be their guards, prayer shall be mine; this I have found comfort in, and therefore this I will abide by. "I will call upon God," and commit myself to him, "and the Lord shall save me;" "for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord," in a right manner, "shall be saved," *Rom.* x. 13. He resolves to be both fervent and frequent in this duty. 1. He will pray fervently. "I will pray, and cry aloud;" I will meditate, so the former word signifies; I will speak with my own heart, and the prayer shall come from thence. Then we pray aright when we pray with all that is within us; think first, and then pray over our thoughts: for the true nature of prayer is lifting up the heart to God. And having meditated, he will cry, he will cry aloud; the fervour of his spirit in prayer shall be expressed, and yet more excited by the intenseness and earnestness of his voice. 2. He will pray frequently, every day, and three times a day; "Evening, and morning, and at noon." It is probable this had been his constant practice, and he resolves to continue it now he is in his distress. And then we may come the more boldly to the throne of grace in trouble, when we do not then first begin to scrape acquaintance with God, as I may say, but it is what we have constantly practised, and the trouble finds the wheels of prayer agoing. They that think three meals a day little enough for the body ought much more to think three solemn prayers a day little enough for the soul, and to count it a pleasure, not a task. As it is fit in the morning we should begin the day with God, and in the evening close it with him, so it is fit in the midst of the day we should retire awhile to converse with him. It was Daniel's practice to pray three times a day, *Dan.* vi. 10; and noon was one of Peter's hours of prayer, *Acts* x. 9. Let not us be weary of praying often, for God is not weary of hearing; "he shall hear my voice," and not blame me for coming too often, but the oftener the better, the more welcome.

Secondly. He assures himself that God would in due time give an answer of peace to his prayers.

1. That he himself should be delivered, and his fears prevented; those fears with which he was much disordered, ver. 4, 5, by the exercise of faith were now silenced, and he begins to rejoice in hope; ver. 18, "God has delivered my soul in peace," that is, he will deliver it, and David is as sure of the deliverance as if it were already wrought. His enemies were at war with him, and the battle was against him, but God delivered him in peace, that is, brought him off with as much comfort as if he had never been in danger. If he did not deliver him in victory yet he delivered him in peace, inward peace, he delivered his soul in peace; by patience and holy joy in God he kept possession of that. Those are safe and easy whose hearts and minds are kept by that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," *Phil.* iv. 7. David, in his fright, thought all were against him, but now he sees there were many with him,—more than he imagined; his interest proved better than he expected, and this he gives God the glory of; for it is he that raiseth us up friends when we need them, and makes them faithful to us. There were many with him; for though his subjects deserted him, and went over to Absalom, yet God was with him, and the good angels. With an eye of faith, he now sees himself sur-

rounded, as Elisha was, with chariots of fire, and horses of fire, and therefore triumphs thus, "There are many with me," more with me than against me, 2 *Kin.* vi. 16, 17.

2. That his enemies should be reckoned with, and brought down. They had frighted him with their menaces, ver. 3, but here he saith enough to frighten them, and make them tremble with more reason, and no remedy, for they could not ease themselves of their fears as David could, by faith in God.

1st. David here gives their character, as the reason why he expected God would bring them down. *First.* They were impious and profane, and stand in no awe of God, of his authority or wrath; ver. 19, "Because they have no changes," no afflictions, no interruption to the constant course of their prosperity, no crosses to empty them from vessel to vessel, "therefore they fear not God;" they live in a constant neglect and contempt of God and religion, which is the cause of all their other wickedness, and by which they are certainly marked for destruction. *Secondly.* They are treacherous and false, and will not be held by the most sacred and solemn engagements; ver. 20, "He hath put forth his hand against such as be at peace with him,"—that never provoked him, nor gave him any cause to quarrel with them; nay, to whom he had given all possible encouragement to expect kindness from him. He has put forth his hand against those whom he had given his hand to, "and has broken his covenant," both with God and man,—has perfidiously violated his engagements to both, than which nothing makes men riper for ruin. *Thirdly.* They are base and hypocritical; pretending friendship while they design mischief; ver. 21, "The words of his mouth" (probably he means Ahithophel particularly,) "were smoother than butter, and softer than oil;" so courteous was he, and obliging,—so free in his professions of respect and kindness, and the proffers of his service,—and yet at the same time, "war was in his heart;" and all this courtesy was but a stratagem of war, and those very words had such a mischievous design in them that they were as drawn swords designed to stab. They smile in a man's face, and cut his throat at the same time, as Joab, that kissed and killed. Satan is such an enemy that flatters men into their ruin; "when he speaks fair, believe him not."

2nd. David here foretells their ruin. *First.* "God shall afflict them," and bring them into straits and frights, and recompense tribulation to them that have troubled his people, and this in answer to the prayers of his people; "God shall hear and afflict them,"—hear the cries of the oppressed, and speak terror to their oppressors; "even he that abideth of old," who is God from everlasting and world without end, and who sits Judge from the beginning of time, and hath always presided in the affairs of the children of men. Mortal men, though never so high and strong, will easily be crushed by an eternal God, and are a very unequal match for him. This the saints have comforted themselves with in reference to the threatening power of the church's enemies, *Hab.* i. 12, "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord?" *Secondly.* "God shall bring them down," not only to the dust, but "to the pit of destruction," ver. 23; to the bottomless pit, which is called destruction, *Job* xxvi. 6. He afflicted them, ver. 19, to see if that would humble and reform them; but they not being wrought upon by that, he shall at last bring them to ruin. Those that are not reclaimed by the rod of affliction will certainly be brought down into the pit of destruction. They are bloody and deceitful men; that is, the worst of men, and therefore shall not live out half their days, that is, not half so long as men ordinarily live, and as they might have lived in a course of nature, and as they themselves expected to live. They shall live as long as the Lord of life, the righteous judge, has appointed, with whom the number of our months is, but he has determined to cut them off by an untimely death in the midst of their days. They were bloody men, and cut others off, and therefore God will justly cut them off. They were deceitful men, and defrauded others of the one half perhaps of what was their due, and now God will cut them short, though not of that which was their due, yet of that which they counted upon.

Thirdly. He encourageth himself and all good people to commit themselves to God, with confidence in him. He himself resolves to do so; ver. 23, "I will trust in thee," in thy providence, and power, and mercy, and not in my own prudence, strength, or merit. When bloody and deceitful men are cut off in the midst of their days, I shall still live by faith in thee. And this he will have others to do; ver. 22, "Cast thy burthen upon the Lord," whoever thou art that art burthened, and whatever the burthen is. 'Cast thy gift upon the Lord,' so some read it; whatever blessings God has bestowed upon thee to enjoy, commit them all to his custody, and particularly commit the keeping of thy soul to him. Or, whatever it is that thou desirest God should give thee, leave it to him to give it thee in his own way and time. 'Cast thy care upon the Lord,' so the Seventy, to which the apostle refers, 1 *Pet.* v. 7. Care is a burthen; it maketh the heart stoop, *Pr.* xii. 25; we must cast it upon God by faith and prayer, commit our way and works to him; "Let him do as seemeth him good," and we will be satisfied. To cast our burthen upon God is to stay ourselves on his providence and promise, and to be very easy in the assurance that all shall work for good. If we do so, it is promised, 1. That he will sustain us, both support and supply us; will himself carry us in the arms of his power, as the nurse carries the sucking child; will strengthen our spirits so by his Spirit as that they shall sustain the infirmity. He has not promised presently to free us from that trouble which gives rise to our cares and fears, but he will provide that we be not tempted above what we are able, and that we shall be able according as we are tempted. 2. That he "will never suffer the righteous to be moved," to be so shaken by any troubles as to quit either their duty to God or their comfort in him. However, 'He will not suffer them to be moved for ever,' as some read it; though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down.

PSALM LVI.

It seems by this, and many other psalms, that even in times of the greatest trouble and distress David never hung his harp upon the willow trees, never unstrung it, or laid it by: but when his dangers and fears were greatest yet still he was in tune for singing God's praises. He was in imminent peril when he penned this psalm, at least when he meditated it; yet even then his meditation of God was sweet. I. He complains of the malice of his enemies, and begs mercy for himself, and justice against them, ver. 1, 2, 5—7. II. He confides in God, being assured that he took his part, comforting himself with this, that therefore he was safe, and should be victorious, and that while he lived he should praise God. ver. 3, 4, 8—13. How pleasantly may a good Christian, in singing this psalm, rejoice in God, and praise him for what he will do, as well as for what he hath done.

To the chief Musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

BE merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up;
He fighting daily oppresseth me.
2 Mine enemies would daily swallow *me* up: [High.
For *they be* many that fight against me, O thou most
3 What time I am afraid,
I will trust in thee.
4 In God I will praise his word,
In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.
5 Every day they wrest my words:
All their thoughts *are* against me for evil.
6 They gather themselves together,
They hide themselves, they mark my steps,
When they wait for my soul.
7 Shall they escape by iniquity?
In *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.

David in this psalm, by his faith, throws himself into the hands of God, then when he had by his fear and folly thrown himself into the hands of the Philistines. It was when they took him in Gath, whither he fled for fear of Saul, forgetting the quarrel they had with him for killing Goliath; but they soon put him in mind of it, 1 *Sam.* xxi. 10, 11. Upon that occasion he changed his behaviour, but with so little ruffle to his temper that then he penned both this psalm and the 34th. This is called Michtam, 'a golden psalm.' So some other psalms are entitled, but this has something peculiar in the title; it is "upon Jonath-elem-rechokim," which signifies, 'the silent dove afar off;' some apply that to David himself, who wished for the wings of a dove on which to fly away. He was innocent and inoffensive, mild and patient as a dove; was at this time driven from his nest, from the sanctuary, *Ps.* lxxxiv. 3; was forced to wander afar off, to seek for shelter in distant countries. There he was like the doves of the valleys, mourning and melancholy; but silent, neither murmuring against God nor railing at the instruments of his trouble; herein a type of Christ, who was as a sheep dumb before the shearers, and a pattern to Christians, who, wherever they are, and whatever injuries are done them, ought to be as silent doves. In this former part of the psalm,

First. He complains to God of the malice and wickedness of his enemies, to shew what reason he had to fear them, and what cause, what need, there was that God should appear against them; ver. 1, "Be merciful to me, O God." That petition includes all the good we come to the throne of grace for. If we obtain mercy there, we obtain all we can desire; and need no more to make us happy. It implies likewise our best plea, not our merit, but God's mercy; his free, rich mercy. He prays he might find mercy with God; for with men he could find no mercy. When he fled from the cruel hands of Saul he fell into the cruel hands of the Philistines. Lord, saith he, be thou merciful to me now, or I am undone. The mercy of God is what we may flee to, and trust to, and in faith pray for, when we are surrounded on all sides with difficulties and dangers. He complains,

1. That his enemies were very numerous; ver. 2, "They be many that fight against me," and think to overpower me with numbers. Take notice of this, "O thou Most High," and make it to appear that wherein they deal proudly thou art above them. It is a point of honour to come in to the help of one against many; and if God be on our side, how many soever they are that fight against us, we may upon good grounds boast that there are more with us; for (as that great general said,) 'How many do we reckon him for?'

2. That they were very barbarous. They would swallow him up, ver. 1; and again, ver. 2, they sought to devour him; no less would serve; they came upon him with the utmost fury, like beasts of prey, to eat up his flesh, *Ps.* xxvii. 2. Man would swallow him up, those of his own kind, from whom he might have expected humanity. The ravenous beasts prey not upon those of their own species, yet a bad man would devour a good man if he could. They are men weak and frail; make them to know that they are so, *Ps.* ix. 20.

3. That they were very unanimous; ver. 6, "They gather themselves together." Though they were many, and of different interests among themselves, yet they united and combined against David, as Herod and Pilate against the Son of David.

4. That they were very powerful; quite too hard for him if God did not help him. "They fight against me," ver. 2; they oppress me, ver. 1; I am almost overcome and borne down by them, and reduced to the last extremity.

5. That they were very subtle and crafty; ver. 6, "They hide themselves;" industriously cover their designs, that they may the more effectually prosecute and pursue them. They hide themselves as a lion in his den, that they may mark my steps; that is, they observe every thing I say and do with a critical eye, that they may have something to accuse me of. Thus Christ's enemies watched him, *Lu.* xx. 20. Or, they have an eye upon all my motions, that they may gain an opportunity to do me a mischief, and may lay their snares for me.

6. That they were very spiteful and malicious. They put invidious constructions upon every thing he said, though never so honestly meant, and prudently expressed; ver. 5, "They wrest my words," put them upon the rack to extort that out of them which was never in them, and so they made him an offender for a word, *Isa.* xxix. 21; misrepresenting it to Saul, and aggravating it, to incense him yet more against him. They made it their whole business to ruin David, all their thoughts were against him for evil, which put evil interpretations upon all his words.

7. That they were very restless and unwearied. They continually waited for his soul; it was the life, the precious life, they hunted for; it was his death they longed for, ver. 6. They fought daily against him, ver. 1, and would daily swallow him up, ver. 2, and every day they wrested his words, ver. 5. Their malice would not admit the least cessation of arms, or the acts of hostility, but they were continually pushing at him. Such as this is the enmity of Satan and his agents against the kingdom of Christ, and the interests of his holy religion, which, if we cordially espouse, we must not think it strange to meet with such treatment as this, as though some strange thing happened to us. Our betters have been thus used; "so persecuted they the prophets."

Secondly. He encourageth himself in God, and in his promises, power, and providence, ver. 3, 4. In the midst of his complaints, and before he has said what he has to say of his enemies, he triumphs in the Divine protection. 1. He resolves to make God his confidence, then when dangers were most threatening, and all other confidences failed; "what time I am afraid," in the day of my fear, when I am most terrified from without, and most timorous within, then "I will trust in thee," and thereby my fears shall be silenced. Note, There are some times which are in a special manner times of fear with God's people; and in these times it is their duty and interest to trust in God, as their God, and to know whom they have trusted. This will fix the heart, and keep it in peace. 2. He resolves to make God's promises the matter of his praises, and so we have reason to make them; ver. 4, "In God I will praise," not only his work which he has done, but "his word" which he has spoken; I will give him thanks for a promise, though not yet performed. "In God;" that is,

in his strength, and by his assistance, I will both glory in his word and give him the glory of it. "His word;" that is, his providences, (so some,) every event that he orders and appoints concerning me. When I speak well of God, with him I will speak well of every thing that he doth. 3. Thus supported, he will bid defiance to all adverse powers; when "in God I have put my trust," I am safe, I am easy, and "I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." It is but flesh, and cannot do much; nay, it can do nothing but by Divine permission. As we must not trust to an arm of flesh when it is engaged for us, so we must not be afraid of an arm of flesh when it is stretched out against us.

Thirdly. He foresees and foretells the fall of those that fought against him, and of all others that think to establish themselves in and by any wicked practices; ver. 7, "Shall they escape by iniquity?" They hope to escape God's judgments as they escape men's, by violence and fraud, and the arts of injustice and treachery; but shall they escape? No, certainly, they shall not: the sin of sinners will never be their security; nor will either their impudence or their hypocrisy bring them off at God's bar; God will in his anger cast down, and cast out such people, *Rom.* ii. 3. None are raised so high, or settled so firm, but that the justice of God can bring them down, both from their dignities and from their confidences; "Who knows the power of God's anger," how high it can reach, and how home it can strike?

8 Thou tellest my wanderings:
Put thou my tears into thy bottle:

LACHRYMATORIES.

Are they not in thy book?
9 When I cry *unto thee*, then shall mine enemies turn
This I know; for God *is* for me. [back:
10 In God will I praise *his* word:
In the LORD will I praise *his* word.
11 In God have I put my trust:
I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.
12 Thy vows *are* upon me, O God:
I will render praises unto thee.
13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death:
Wilt not *thou deliver* my feet from falling,
That I may walk before God in the light of the living?

Several things David here comforts himself with in the day of his distress and fear.

First. That God took particular notice of all his grievances and all his griefs, ver. 8. 1. Of all the inconveniences of his state; "Thou tellest my wanderings," 'my flittings,' so the old translation. David was now but a young man, (under thirty,) and yet he had had many removes from his father's house to the court, thence to the camp, and now driven out to sojourn where he could find a place, but not allowed to rest any where; "hunted like a partridge upon the mountains." Continual terrors and toils attended him; but this comforted him, that God kept a particular account of all his motions, and numbered all the weary steps he took by night or by day. Note, God takes cognizance of all the afflictions of his people, and those whom men have cast out from their converse he has not cast out from his care and love. 2. Of all the impressions those made upon his spirit. When he was wandering, he was often weeping; and therefore prays, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle," to be preserved and looked upon; nay, I know they are in thy book, the book of thy remembrance; God has a bottle and a book for his people's tears, both those for their sins and those for their afflictions. This intimates, 1st. That he observes them with compassion and tender concern; he is afflicted in their afflictions, and knows their souls in adversity. As the blood of his saints and their deaths are precious in the sight of the Lord, so are their tears, not one of them shall fall to the ground. "I have seen thy tears," 2 *Kin.* xx. 5; "I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," *Jer.* xxxi. 18. 2nd. That he will remember them, and review them, as we do the accounts we have booked. Paul was mindful of Timothy's tears, 2 *Tim.* i. 4; and God will not forget the sorrows of his people. The tears of God's persecuted people are bottled up, and sealed among God's treasures; and when these books come to be opened, they will be found vials of wrath which will be poured out upon their persecutors, whom God will surely reckon with for all the tears they have forced from his people's eyes; and they will be breasts of consolations to God's mourners, whose sackcloth will be turned into garments of praise. God will comfort his people according to the time wherein he has afflicted them, and give to them to reap in joy who sowed in tears. What was sown a tear will come up a pearl.

Secondly. That his prayers would be powerful for the defeat and discomfiture of the enemies, as well as for his own support and encouragement; ver. 9, "When I cry unto thee, then shall my enemies turn back;" I need no other weapons but prayers and tears; "this I know, for God is for me," to plead my cause, to protect and deliver me, and if God be for me, who can be against me so as to prevail? The saints have God for them, they may know it; and to him they must cry when they are surrounded with enemies, which if they do in faith they shall find a Divine power exerted and engaged for them; their enemies shall be made to turn back; their spiritual enemies, against whom we fight best upon our knees, *Eph.* vi. 19.

Thirdly. That his faith in God would set him above the fear of man, ver. 10, 11. Here he repeats with a strong pathos what he had said, ver. 4, "In God will I praise his word," that is, I will firmly depend upon the promise for the sake of him that made it, who is true and faithful, and has wisdom, power, and goodness enough to make it good. When we give credit to a man's bill we honour him that drew it. So when we do and suffer for God in a dependence upon his promise, not staggering at it, we give glory to God, we praise his word, and so give praise to him. Having thus put his trust in God, he looks with a holy contempt upon the threatening power of man. "In God have I put my trust," and in him only, and therefore, "I will not be afraid what man can do unto me," though I know very well what he would do if he could, ver. 1, 2. This triumphant word, so expressive of a holy magnanimity, the apostle puts into the mouth of every true believer, whom he makes a Christian hero, *Heb.* xiii. 6. We may each of us boldly say, "The Lord is my helper," and then "I will not fear what man shall do unto me;" for he has no power but what he has given him from above.

Fourthly. That he was in bonds to God; ver. 12, "Thy vows are upon me, O God." Not upon me as a burthen which I am loaded with, but as a badge which I glory in, as that by which I am known to be thy menial servant; not upon me as fetters that hamper me, (such are superstitious vows,) but upon me as a bridle that restrains me from what would be hurtful to me, and directs me in the way of my duty. "Thy vows," that is, the vows I have made to thee, to which thou art not only a witness but a party, and which thou hast commanded and encouraged me to make. It is probable, he means especially those vows which he had made to God in the day of his trouble and distress, which he would retain the remembrance of, and acknowledge the obligations of when his fright was over. Note, It ought to be the matter of our consideration and joy, that the vows of God are upon us; our baptismal vows renewed at the Lord's table, our occasional vows under convictions, under corrections. By these we are bound to live to God.

Fifthly. That he should still have more and more occasion to praise him; "I will render praises unto thee." This is part of the performances of his vows; for vows of thankfulness properly accompany prayers for mercy; and when the mercy is received must be made good. When we study what we shall render, this is the least we can resolve upon, to render praises to God. Poor returns for rich receiving. Two things he will praise God for:

1. For what he had done for him; ver. 13; "Thou hast delivered my soul," my life, "from death," which was just ready to seize me. If God have delivered us from sin, either from the commission of it by preventing grace, or from the punishment of it by pardoning mercy, we have reason to own that he has thereby delivered our souls from death, which is the wages of sin. If we who were by nature dead in sin are quickened together with Christ, and are made spiritually alive, we have reason to own that God has delivered our souls from death.

2. For what he would do for him; "Thou hast delivered my soul from death," and so hast given me a new life, and thereby hast given me an earnest of farther mercy, that thou wilt "deliver my feet from falling." Thou hast done the greater, and therefore thou wilt do the lesser; thou hast began a good work, and therefore thou wilt carry it on, and perfect it. This may be taken either as the matter of his prayer, pleading his experience, or as the matter of his praise, raising his expectations; and those that know how to praise in faith will give God thanks for mercies in promise and prospect as well as in possession. See here, 1st. What David hopes for, that God would deliver his feet from falling either into sin, which would wound his conscience, or into the appearance of sin, from which his enemies would take occasion to wound his good name. Those that think they stand must take heed lest they fall, because the best stand no longer than God is pleased to uphold them. We are weak, our way is slippery, many stumblingblocks are in it, our spiritual enemies are industrious to thrust us down; and therefore we are concerned by faith and prayer to commit ourselves to his care who keepeth the feet of his saints. 2nd. What he builds this hope upon; "Thou hast delivered my soul from death," and therein hast magnified thy power and goodness, and put me into a capacity of receiving farther mercy from thee; and now wilt thou not secure and crown thy own work? God never brought his people out of Egypt to slay them in the wilderness. He that in conversion delivers the soul from so great a death as sin is will not fail to preserve it to his heavenly kingdom. 3rd. What he designs in these hopes; "That I may walk before God in the light of the living," that is, *First.* That I may get to heaven, the only land of light and life; for in this world darkness and death reign. *Secondly.* That I may do my duty while this life lasts. Note, This we should aim at in all our desires and expectations of deliverance both from sin and trouble, that we may do God so much the better service; that, "being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we may serve him without fear."

PSALM LVII.

This psalm is very like that which goes next before it; it was penned upon a like occasion, when David was both in danger of trouble and in temptation to sin. It begins as that did, "Be merciful to me;" the method also is the same. I. He begins with prayer and complaint, yet not without some assurance of speeding in his request, ver. 1—6 II. He concludes with joy and praise, ver. 7—11; so that from hence we may take direction and encouragement both in our supplications and in our thanksgivings, and may offer both to God in singing this psalm.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

BE merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me:
For my soul trusteth in thee:
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities be overpast.
2 I will cry unto God most high;
Unto God that performeth *all things* for me.
3 He shall send from heaven, and save me [Selah.
From the reproach of him that would swallow me up.
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.
4 My soul *is* among lions:
And I lie *even among* them that are set on fire,
Even the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.
5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;

PSALM LVII.

Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

6 They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down:
They have digged a pit before me,
Into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves.* Selah.

The title of this psalm has one word new in it, Al-taschith,—'destroy not.' Some make it to be only some known tune to which this psalm was set; others apply it to the occasion and matter of the psalm. Destroy not, that is, David would not let Saul be destroyed, when now in the cave there was a fair opportunity of doing it, and his servants would fain have done it; No, saith David, "destroy him not," 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 4, 6; or rather, God would not let David be destroyed by Saul; he suffered him to persecute David, but still under this limitation, Destroy him not; as he permitted Satan to afflict Job, only save his life. David must not be destroyed, for a blessing is in him, *Isa.* lxv. 8; even Christ, the best of blessings. When David was in the cave in imminent peril, he here tells us what were the workings of his heart towards God; and happy they that have such good thoughts as these in their minds when they are in danger.

First. He supports himself with faith and hope in God, and prayer to him, ver. 1, 2. Seeing himself surrounded with enemies, he looks up to God with that suitable prayer, "Be merciful to me, O Lord;" which he again repeats, and it is no vain repetition, "Be merciful unto me." It was the publican's prayer, *Lu.* xviii. 13. It is pity any should use it slightly and profanely, should cry, 'God be merciful to us,' or 'Lord, have mercy upon us,' when they mean only to express their wonder, or surprise, or vexation; but God and his mercy are not in all their thoughts. It is with much devout affection that David here prays, "Be merciful unto me, O Lord;" look with compassion upon me, and in thy love and pity redeem me. To recommend himself to God's mercy, he here professeth,

1. That all his dependence is upon God. "My soul trusteth in thee," ver. 1. He did not only profess trust in God, but his soul did indeed rely on God only, with a sincere devotion, and self-dedication, and an entire complacency and satisfaction. He goes to God, and at the footstool of the throne of his grace humbly professeth his confidence in him, "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge," as the chickens take shelter under the wings of the hen, when the birds of prey are ready to strike at them, "until these calamities be overpast." 1st. He was confident his troubles would end well in due time; these calamities will be overpast; the storm will blow over. *Non si male nunc et olim sic erit,*—'Though now distressed, I shall not always be so.' Our Lord Jesus comforted himself with this in his sufferings; *Lu.* xxii. 37, "The things concerning me have an end." 2nd. He was very easy under the Divine protection in the meantime. *First.* He comforted himself in the goodness of God's nature, by which he is inclined to succour and protect his people, as the hen is by instinct to shelter her young ones. God comes upon the wing to the help of his people, which notes a speedy deliverance, *Ps.* xviii. 10; and he takes them under his wing, which notes warmth and refreshment, even when the calamities are upon them: see *Mat.* xxiii. 37. *Secondly.* In the promise of his word, and the covenant of his grace; for it may refer to the outstretched wings of the cherubims, between which God is said to dwell, *Ps.* lxxx. 1; and from whence he gave his oracles. To God as the God of grace will I fly, and his promise shall be my refuge, and a sure passport it will be through all these dangers. God by his promise offers himself to us to be trusted, we by our faith must accept of him, and put our trust in him.

2. That all his desire is towards God; ver. 2, "I will cry unto God most high" for succour and relief; to him that is most high will I lift up my soul, and pray earnestly, even "unto God that performeth all things for me." Note, 1st. In every thing that befalls us we ought to see and own the hand of God. Whatever is done is of his performing, in it his counsel is accomplished, and the Scripture is fulfilled. 2nd. Whatever God performs concerning his people, it will appear in the issue to have been performed for them, and for their benefit. Though God be high, most high, yet he condescends so low as to take care that all things be made to work for good to them. 3rd. This is a good reason why we should in our straits and difficulties cry unto him; not only pray, but pray earnestly.

3. That all his expectation is from God; ver. 3, "He shall send from heaven and save me." They that make God their only refuge, and fly to him by faith and prayer, may be sure of salvation in his way and time. Observe here, 1st. Whence he expects the salvation. "From heaven." Look which way he will on this earth, and refuge fails, no help appears, but he looks for it "from heaven." They that lift up their hearts to things above, may from thence expect all good. 2nd. What the salvation is that he expects. He trusts God will save him from the reproach of those that would swallow up, that aimed to ruin him, and in the meantime did all they could to vex him. Some read it, 'He shall send from heaven and save me, for he hath put to shame him that would swallow me up;' he hath disappointed their designs against me hitherto, and therefore he will perfect my deliverance. 3rd. What he will ascribe his salvation to; "God shall send forth his mercy and truth." God is good in himself, and faithful to every word that he hath spoken, and so he makes it appear when he works deliverance for his people. We need no more to make us happy, but to have the benefit of the mercy and truth of God, *Ps.* xxv. 10.

Secondly. He represents the power and malice of his enemies; ver. 4, "My soul is among lions." So fierce and furious was Saul, and those about him against David, he might have been as safe in a den of lions as among such men, that were continually roaring against him, and ready to make a prey of him. They are set on fire, and breathe nothing but flame; they set on fire the course of nature, inflaming one another against David, and they were themselves set on fire of hell, *Jas.* iii. 6. They were sons of men, from whom one might have expected something of the reason and compassion of a man; but they were beasts of prey in the shape of men, their teeth which they gnashed upon him, and with which they hoped to tear him to pieces, and to eat him up, were spears and arrows fitted for mischiefs and murders; and their tongues, with which they cursed him and wounded his reputation, was as a sharp sword to cut and kill: see *Ps.* xlvii. 10. A spiteful tongue is a dangerous weapon wherewith Satan's instruments fight against God's people. He describes their malicious projects against him, ver. 6, and shews the issue of them; "They have prepared a net for my steps" in which to take me, that I might not again escape out of their hands; "They have digged a pit before me," that I might, ere I was aware, run headlong into it. See the policies of the church's enemies, see the pains they take to do mischief; but let us see what comes of it. 1. It is indeed some disturbance to David; "My soul is bowed down." It made him droop and hang the head to think that there should be those that bore him so much ill-will. But, 2. It was destruction to themselves; they digged a pit for David, "into the midst whereof they are fallen." The mischief they designed against David returned upon themselves, and they were themselves embarrassed in their counsels. Then when Saul was pursuing David, the Philistines were invading him; nay, in the cave, when Saul thought David should fall into his hands, he fell into the hands of David, and lay at his mercy.

Thirdly. He prays to God to glorify himself and his own great name; ver. 5, Whatever comes of me and my interest, "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens," be thou praised by the holy angels, those glorious inhabitants of the upper world; "and let thy glory be above," or over "all the earth;" let all the inhabitants of this earth be brought to know and praise thee. Thus God's glory should lie nearer our hearts, and we should be more concerned for that than for any particular interests of our own. When David was in the greatest distress and disgrace, he did not pray, Lord, exalt me, but, Lord, exalt thine own name. Thus the Son of David, when his soul was troubled, and he prayed, "Father, save me from this hour," presently withdrew that petition, and presented this in the room of it, "For this cause came I to this hour, Father, glorify thy name," *Jno.* xii. 27, 28. Or it may be taken as a plea to enforce his petition for deliverance: Lord, send from heaven to save me, and thereby thou wilt glorify thyself as the God both of heaven and earth. Our best encouragement in prayer is taken from the glory of God, and to that, therefore, more than our own comfort, we should have an eye in all our petitions for particular mercies; for this is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which regulates and directs all the rest, "Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed:
I will sing and give praise.
8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp:
I *myself* will awake early.
9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people:
I will sing unto thee among the nations.
10 For thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens,
And thy truth unto the clouds.
11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens:
Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

How strangely is the tune altered here! David's prayers and complaints, by the lively actings of faith, are here all of a sudden turned into praises and thanksgivings; his sackcloth is loosed, and he is girded with gladness, and his hallelujahs are as fervent as his hosannas. This should make us in love with prayer, that sooner or later it will be swallowed up in praise. Observe,

First. How he prepares himself for the duty of praise; ver. 7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." My heart is erect, or lifted up, (so some,) which was bowed down, ver. 6. "My heart is fixed," 1. With reference to God's providences, it is prepared for every event, being stayed upon God, *Ps.* cxii. 7; *Isa.* xxvi. 3. "My heart is fixed," and then "none of these things move me," *Acts* xx. 24. If by the grace of God we be brought into this even composed frame of spirit, we have great reason to be thankful. 2. With reference to the worship of God; "My heart is fixed," to sing and give praise. It is implied that the heart is the main thing required in all acts of devotion; nothing is done to purpose in religion farther than it is done with the heart. The heart must be fixed; fixed for the duty, fitted and put in frame for it; fixed in the duty by a close application; "attending on the Lord without distraction."

Secondly. How he excites himself to the duty of praise; ver. 8, "Awake up my glory," that is, my tongue. Our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. Or, my soul, that must be first awakened. Dull and sleepy devotions will never be acceptable to God; we must stir up ourselves and all that is within us to praise God; with a holy fire must that sacrifice be kindled, and ascend in a holy flame. David's tongue will lead, and his psaltery and harp will follow, in these hymns of praise. "I myself will awake," not only I will not be dead, and drowsy, and careless in this work, but I will be in the most lively frame that may be, as one newly awakened out of a refreshing sleep. He will awake early to this work, early in the morning, to begin the day with God; early in the beginnings of a mercy. When God is coming towards us with his favours, we must go forth to meet him with our praises.

Thirdly. How he pleaseth himself, and (as I may say) even prides himself in the work of praise. So far is he from being ashamed to own his obligations to God, and dependence upon him, that he resolves to praise him among the people, and to sing unto him among the nations, ver. 9. This intimates, 1. That his own heart was much affected and enlarged in praising God. He would even make the earth ring with his sacred songs, that all might take notice how much he thought himself indebted to the goodness of God. 2. That he desired to bring others in to join with him in praising God. He will publish God's praises among the people, that the knowledge, and fear, and love of God might be propagated, and the ends of the earth might see his salvation. When David was driven out into heathen lands, he would not only not worship their gods, but he would openly avow his veneration for the God of Israel, would take his religion along with him wherever he went, would endeavour to bring others in love with it, and leave the sweet savour of it behind him. David in his psalms, which fill the universal church, and will to the end of time, may be said to be still praising God among the people, and singing to him among the nations, for all good people make use of his words in praising God. Thus St. John in his writings is said to "prophesy again before many peoples and nations," *Rev.* x. 11.

Fourthly. How he furnisheth himself with matter for praise, ver. 10. That which was the matter of his hope and comfort, ver. 3, "God shall send forth his mercy and his truth," is here the matter of his thanksgiving: "Thy mercy is great unto the heavens," that is, it is great beyond conception and expression; "and thy truth unto the clouds," that is, it is great beyond discovery, for what eye can reach that which is wrapped up in the clouds? God's mercy and truth reach to the heavens, for they will bring all such to heaven as lay up their treasure in them, and build their hopes upon them. God's mercy and truth are praised even to the heavens, that is, by all the bright and blessed inhabitants of the upper world, who are continually raising God's praises to the highest, while David on earth is endeavouring to spread his praises to the farthest, ver. 9.

Fifthly. How he leaves it at last to God to glorify his own name; ver. 11, "Be thou exalted, O God." The same words which he had used, ver. 5, to sum up his prayers in, he here useth again (and no vain repetition) to sum up his praises in; Lord, I desire to exalt thy name, and that all the creatures may exalt it; but what can the best of us do towards it? Lord, take the work into thine own hands; do it thyself, "be thou exalted, O God." In the praises of the church triumphant thou art exalted to the heaven, and in the praises of the church militant thy glory is throughout all the earth; but thou art above all the blessing and praise of both, *Neh.* ix. 5, and therefore, Lord, exalt thyself "above the heavens, and above all the earth:" "Father, glorify thine own name; thou hast glorified it, glorify it yet again."

PSALM LVIII.

It is the probable conjecture of some, Amyraldus particularly, that before Saul began to prosecute David by force of arms, and raised the militia to seize him, he formed a process against him by course of law; upon which he was condemned unheard, and attainted as a traitor by the great council, or supreme court of judicature, and then proclaimed an outlaw; *qui caput gerit lupinum*,—'an outlawed wolf,' whom any man might kill, and no man might protect. And upon occasion of passing this bill of attainder, which the elders did to curry favour with Saul, David penned this psalm, wherein, I. He describes their sin, and aggravates that, ver. 1—5. II. He imprecates and foretells their ruin, and the judgments which the righteous God would bring upon them for their injustice, ver. 6—9; which would redound, 1. To the comfort of the saints, ver. 10; 2. To the glory of God, ver. 11. Sin appears here both exceedingly sinful and exceedingly dangerous, and God a just avenger of wrong; with which we should be affected in singing this psalm.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David.

DO ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?
Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?
2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness;
Ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.
3 The wicked are estranged from the womb:
They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.
4 Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent:
They are like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear;
5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers,
Charming never so wisely.

SERPENT CHARMERS.

We have reason to think that this psalm refers to the malice of Saul and his janizaries against David, because it bears the same inscription (Al-taschith, and Michtam of David,) with that which goes before and that which follows, both which appear by the title to have been penned with reference to that persecution through which God preserved him that he was not destroyed, Al-taschith, 'destroy not;' and therefore the psalms he then penned were precious to him, Michtam, David's jewels, as Dr. Hammond translates it. In these verses David, not as a king, for he was not yet come to the throne, but as a prophet, in God's name arraigns and convicts his judges, with more authority and justice than they shewed in prosecuting him. Two things he chargeth them with:

First. The corruption of their government. They were a congregation, a bench of justices, nay, perhaps a congress or convention of the states, from whom one might have expected fair dealing, for they were men learned in the laws, had been brought up in the study of these statutes and judgments, which were so righteous, that those of other nations were not to be compared with them. One cannot think a congregation of such could be bribed and biassed with pensions, and yet it seems they were, because the son of Kish could do that for them which the son of Jesse could not, 1 *Sam.* xxii. 7. He had vineyards, and fields, and preferments to give them, and therefore to please him they would do any thing, right or wrong. Of all the melancholy views which Solomon took of this earth and its grievances, nothing vexed him so much as to see that in the place of judgment wickedness was there, *Eccl.* iii. 16. So it was in Saul's time.

1. The judges would not do right, would not protect or vindicate oppressed innocency; ver. 1, "Do ye indeed speak righteousness, or judge uprightly?" No, you are far from it, your own consciences cannot but tell you that you do not discharge the trust reposed in you as magistrates, by which you are obliged to be "a terror to evildoers, and a praise to them that do well." Is this the justice you pretend to administer? Is this the patronage, this the countenance which an honest man, and an honest cause, may expect from you; remember you are sons of men, mortal and dying, and that stand upon the same level before God with the meanest of those you trample upon, and must yourselves be called to an account and judged. You are sons of men, and therefore we may appeal to yourselves, and to that law of nature which is written in every man's heart, "Do ye indeed speak righteousness?" And will not your second thoughts correct what you have done? Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon what we say with this serious question, Do we indeed speak righteousness? That we may unsay what we have spoken amiss, and may proceed no farther in it.

2. They did a great deal of wrong; they used their power for the support of injury and oppression; ver. 2, "In heart you work wickedness." All the wickedness of the life is wrought in the heart. It intimates that they wrought with a great deal of plot and management, not by surprise, but with premeditation and design, and with a strong inclination to it, and resolution in it. The more there is of the heart in any act of wickedness the worse it is, *Eccl.* viii. 11. And what was their wickedness? It follows: "You weigh the violence of your hands in the earth," or in the land, the peace of which you are appointed to be the conservators of. They did all the violence and injury they could, either to enrich or revenge themselves, and they weighed it; that is, 1st. They did it with a great deal of craft and caution; You frame it by rule and line, so the word signifies, that it may effectually answer your mischievous intentions; such masters are you of the art of oppression. 2nd. They did it under colour of justice. They held the balances (the emblem of justice) in their hands as if they designed to do right, and right is expected from them, but the result is violence and oppression, which is done the more effectually for being done under the umbrage of law and right.

Secondly. The corruption of their nature. This was the root of bitterness from which that gall and wormwood sprung; ver. 3, "The wicked," who in heart work wickedness, "are estranged from the womb," estranged from God, and all good, alienated from the Divine life, and its principles, powers, and pleasures, *Eph.* iv. 18. A sinful state is a state of estrangement from that acquaintance with God and service of him which we were made for. Let none wonder that these wicked men dare do such things, for wickedness is bred in the bone with them; they brought it into the world with them, they have in their natures a strong inclination to it, they learned it from their wicked parents, and have been trained up in it by a bad education; they are called, and not miscalled, transgressors from the womb, one can therefore expect no other but that they will deal very treacherously: see *Isa.* xlviii. 8. They go astray from God and their duty as soon as they be born, that is, as soon as possibly they can; the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts presently appears with the first operations of reason; as the wheat springs up, the tares spring up with it. Three instances are here given of the corruption of nature:

1. Falsehood. They soon learn to speak lies, and bend their tongues like their bow for that purpose, *Jer.* ix. 3. How soon will little children tell a lie to excuse a fault, or in their own commendation! no sooner can they speak but they speak to God's dishonour. Tongue sins are some of the first of our actual transgressions.

2. Malice. Their poison, that is, their ill-will, and the spite they bore to goodness and all good men, particularly to David, was like the poison of a serpent, innate, venomous, and very mischievous, and that which they can never be cured of. We pity a dog that is poisoned by accident, but hate a serpent that is poisonous by nature. Such was the cursed enmity in this serpent's brood against the Lord and his anointed.

3. Untractableness. They are malicious, and nothing will work upon them, no reason, no kindness, to mollify them, and bring them to a better temper. "They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear," ver. 4, 5. The psalmist having compared these wicked men, whom he here complains of, to serpents, for their poisonous malice, takes occasion from thence upon another account to compare them to the deaf adder, or viper, concerning which there was then this vulgar tradition, that whereas by music, or some other art, they had a way of charming serpents, so as either to destroy them or at least disable them to do mischief, this deaf adder would lay one ear to the ground, and stop the other with her tail, so that she could not hear the voice of the enchantment, and so defeated the intention of it, and secured herself. The using of this comparison doth neither verify the story, nor, if it were true, justify the use of this enchantment; for it is only an allusion to the report of such a thing, to illustrate the obstinacy of sinners in a sinful way. God's design in his word and providence is to cure serpents of their malignity. To this end, how wise, how powerful, how well-chosen are the charms! How forcible the right words! But all in vain with the most of men; and what is the reason? It is because they will not hearken. None so deaf as those that will not hear. We have piped unto men, and they have not danced; how should they, when they have stopped their ears?

6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth:
Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.
7 Let them melt away as waters *which* run continually:
When he bendeth *his bow to shoot* his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.
8 As a snail *which* melteth, let *every one of them* pass away:
Like the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not [see the sun.
9 Before your pots can feel the thorns,
He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in *his* wrath.
10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance:
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.
11 So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a reward for the righteous:
Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

In these verses we have,

First. David's prayers against his enemies, and all the like enemies of God's church and people; for as such he looks upon them, and is acted by a public spirit in praying against them, and not by any private revenge.

1. He prays that they might be disabled to do any farther mischief; ver. 6, "Break their teeth, O God." Not so much that they might not feed themselves, as that they might not be able to make a prey of others, *Ps.* iii. 7. He doth not say, Break their necks; no, let them live to repent, "Slay them not, lest my people forget;" but break their teeth for they are lions, they are young lions that live by rapine.

2. That they might be disappointed in the plots they had already laid, and might not gain their point. "When he bendeth his bow," and takes aim "to shoot his arrows" at the upright in heart, "let them be as cut in pieces," ver. 7. Let them fall at his feet, and never come near the mark.

3. That they and their interest might waste and come to nothing; that they might "melt away as waters that run continually," that is, as the waters of a land-flood, which, though they seem formidable for a while, soon soak into the ground, or return to their channels. Or, in general, "as waters spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again," but gradually dries away and disappears. Such shall the floods of ungodly men be which make us afraid sometimes, *Ps.* xviii. 4; so shall the proud waters be reduced which threaten to go over our soul, *Ps.* cxxiv. 4, 5. Let us by faith then see what they shall be, and then we shall not fear what they are He prays, ver. 8, that they might melt as a snail; which wastes by her own motion, in every stretch it makes, leaving some of its moisture behind, which by degrees must needs consume it, though it make a path to shine after it. He that like a snail in her house is *plenus sui*,—'full of himself;' that pleaseth himself, and trusts to himself, doth but consume himself, and will quickly bring himself to nothing. And he prays,

that they might be "like the untimely birth of a woman;" which dies as soon as it begins to live, and never sees the sun. Job in his passion wished himself had been such a one, *Job* iii. 16; but he knew not what he said. We may in faith pray against the designs of the church's enemies, as the prophet doth, *Hos.* ix. 14, "Give them, O Lord, what wilt thou give them? Give them a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts." Which explains this here.

Secondly. His predictions of their ruin; ver. 9, "Before your pots can feel the" heat of a fire of "thorns" made under them, which they will presently do,—for it is a quick fire, and violent while it lasts,—so speedily, with such a hasty and vehement flame, God shall hurry them away; as terribly and as irresistibly as with a whirlwind, as it were alive, as it were in fury. The proverbial expressions are somewhat difficult, but the sense is plain. 1. That the judgments of God oftentimes surprise wicked people in the midst of their jollity, and hurry them away of a sudden. When they are beginning to walk in the light of their own fire, and the sparks of their own kindling, they are made to lie down in sorrow, *Isa.* l. 11; and their laughter proves like the crackling of thorns under a pot, the comfort of which is soon gone, ere they can say, "Alas, I am warm," *Eccl.* vii. 6. 2. That there is no standing before the destruction that comes from the Almighty; for "Who knows the power of God's anger?" When God will take sinners away, dead or alive, they cannot contest with him. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." Now there are two things which the psalmist promiseth himself would be the good effects of sinners' destruction:

1st. That saints would be encouraged and comforted by it; ver. 10, "The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance." The pomp and power, the prosperity and success of the wicked is a discouragement to the righteous; it saddens their hearts, and weakens their hands, and is sometimes a strong temptation to them to question their foundations, *Ps.* lxxiii. 2, 13. But when they see the judgments of God hurrying them away, and just vengeance taken on them for all the mischief they have done to the people of God, they rejoice in the satisfaction thereby given to their doubts, and the confirmation thereby given to their faith in the providence of God, and his justice and righteousness in governing of the world. They shall rejoice in the victory thus gained over that temptation, by seeing their end, *Ps.* lxxiii. 17. "He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked;" that is, there shall be abundance of blood shed, *Ps.* lxviii. 23; and it shall be as great a refreshment to the saints to see God glorified in the ruin of sinners as it is to a weary traveller to have his feet washed. It shall likewise contribute to their sanctification; the sight of the vengeance shall make them tremble before God, *Ps.* cxix. 120, and shall convince them of the evil of sin, and the obligations they lie under to that God who pleads their cause, and will suffer no man to do them wrong, and go unpunished for it. The joy of the saints in the destruction of the wicked, is then a holy joy, and justifiable, when it helps to make them holy, and to purify them from sin.

2nd. That sinners would be convinced and converted by it, ver. 11. The vengeance God sometimes takes on the wicked in this world will bring men to say, "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous." Any man may draw this inference from such providences; and many a man shall, who before denied even these plain truths, or doubted of them. Some shall have this confession extorted from them; others shall have their minds so changed, that they shall willingly own it, and thank God who has given them to see it, and see it with satisfaction:—that God is; and, *First.* That he is the bountiful Rewarder of his saints and servants. 'Verily,' ('however it be,' so it may be read,) 'there is a fruit to the righteous;' whatever damage a man may sustain, whatever hazard he may run, and whatever hardship he may undergo for his religion, he shall not only be no loser, but an unspeakable gainer by it in the issue. Even in this world "there is a reward for the righteous;" they shall be recompensed in the earth. They shall be taken notice of; honoured and protected, that seemed slighted, despised, and abandoned. *Secondly.* That he is the righteous Governor of the world; and will surely reckon with the enemies of his kingdom. Verily, however it be, though wicked people prosper, and bid defiance to Divine justice, yet it shall be made to appear to their confusion, that the world is not governed by chance, but by a Being of infinite wisdom and justice; "there is a God that judgeth in the earth," though he has prepared his throne in the heavens. He presides in all the affairs of the children of men, and directs and disposeth them according to the counsel of his will to his own glory; and he will punish the wicked, not only in the world to come, but in the earth, where they have laid up their treasure, and promised themselves a happiness,—"In the earth" that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executeth; and they may be taken as earnests of a judgment to come. "He is a God," so we read, not a weak man, not an angel, not a mere name, not (as the atheists suggest) a creature of men's fear and fancy; not a deified hero, not the sun and moon, as idolaters imagined, but a God, a self-existent, perfect Being; he it is that judgeth the earth. His favour, therefore, let us seek; from whom every man's judgment proceeds, and to him let all judgment be referred.

PSALM LIX.

This psalm is of the same nature and scope with six or seven foregoing psalms. They are all David's complaints of the malice of his enemies, and of their cursed and cruel designs against him; his prayers and prophecies against them; and his comfort and confidence in God as his God. The first is the language of nature, and may be allowed; the second of a prophetical spirit, looking forward to Christ, and the enemies of his kingdom, and therefore not to be drawn into a precedent; the third, of grace and a most holy faith, which ought to be imitated by every one of us. In this psalm, I. He prays to God to defend and deliver him from his enemies, representing them as very ill men, barbarous, malicious, and atheistical, ver. 1—7. II. He foresees and foretells the destruction of his enemies, which he would give to God the glory of. ver. 8—17. As far as it appears that any of the particular enemies of God's people fall under these characters, we may in singing this psalm read their doom, and foresee their ruin.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.

DELIVER me from mine enemies, O my God:
Defend me from them that rise up against me.
2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity,
And save me from bloody men.
3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul:
The mighty are gathered against me;
Not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD.
4 They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault:
Awake to help me, and behold.
5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to visit all the heathen:
Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.
6 They return at evening:
They make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.
7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth:
Swords *are* in their lips:
For who, *say they*, doth hear?

BANDITTI.—ver. 3.

The title of this psalm acquaints us particularly with the occasion on which it was penned; it was when Saul sent a party of his guards to beset David's house in the night, that they might seize him and kill him; we have the story, 1 *Sam.* xix. 11. It was when his hostilities against David were newly begun; and he had but just before narrowly escaped Saul's javelin. These first eruptions of Saul's malice could not but put David into disorder, and be both grievous and terrifying; and yet he kept up his communion with God, and such a composure of mind as that he was never out of frame for prayer and praises. Happy they whose intercourse with Heaven is not intercepted or broken in upon by their cares, or griefs, or fears, or any of the hurries (whether outward or inward) of an afflicted state. In these verses,

First. David prays to be delivered out of the hands of his enemies, and that their cruel designs against him might be defeated; ver. 12, "Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God." Thou art God, and canst deliver me; my God, under whose protection I have put myself; and thou hast promised me to be a God all-sufficient, and therefore in honour and faithfulness thou wilt deliver me. Set me on high out of the reach of the power and malice of them that rise up against me, and above the fear of it. Let me be safe, and see myself so, safe and easy, safe and satisfied. O deliver me, and save me. He cries out as one ready to perish; and that had his eye to God only for salvation and deliverance. He prays, ver. 4, "Awake to help me;" take cognizance of my case, behold that with an eye of pity, and exert thy power for my relief. Thus the disciples in the storm awoke Christ, saying, "Master, save us, we perish;" and thus earnestly should we pray daily, to be defended and delivered from our spiritual enemies; the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of our own hearts which war against our spiritual life.

Secondly. He pleads for deliverance. Our God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him; "to order our cause before him, and to fill our mouth with arguments;" not to move him, but to move ourselves. David doth so here.

1. He pleads the ill character of his enemies. They are workers of iniquity, and therefore not only his enemies, but God's enemies. They are bloody men, and therefore not only his enemies, but enemies to all mankind; Lord, let not the workers of iniquity prevail against one that is a worker of righteousness; nor bloody men against a merciful man.

2. He pleads their malice against him, and the imminent danger he was in from them, ver. 3. Their spite is great; They aim at my soul, my life, my better part; they are subtle and very politic, they lie in wait, taking an opportunity to do me a mischief. They are all mighty, men of honour and estates, and interest in court and country; they are in a confederacy, they are united by league, and actually gathered together against me; combined both in consultation and action. They are very ingenious in their contrivances, and very industrious in the prosecution of them; ver. 4, "They run and prepare themselves," with the utmost speed and fury to do me a mischief. He takes particular notice of the brutish carriage of the messengers that Saul sent to take him; ver. 6, "They return at evening" from the posts assigned them in the day, to apply themselves to their works of darkness, (their night work which may well be their day shame,) and then "they make a noise" like a hound in pursuit of the hare. Thus did David's enemies when they came to take him, raise an outcry against him as a rebel, and a traitor, and a man not fit to live; with this clamour "they went round about the city," to put David into an ill name, if possible, to set the mob against him, at least to prevent their being incensed against them; which otherwise they had reason to fear they would be, so much was David their darling. Thus the persecutors of our Lord Jesus, who are compared to

dogs, *Ps.* xxii. 16, ran him down with noise, for else they could not have taken him, at least "not on the feast day, lest there should be an uproar among the people." They belch out with their mouth the malice that boils in their hearts; ver. 7, "Swords are in their lips," that is, reproaches that wound my heart with grief, *Ps.* xlii. 10; and slanders that wound my reputation, and stab that. They were continually suggesting that which drew and whet Saul's sword against him, and the fault is laid upon the false accusers. The sword, perhaps, had not been in Saul's hand, if it had not been first in their lips.

3. He pleads his own innocency, not as to God, (he was never backward to own himself guilty before him,) but as to his persecutors; what they charged him with was utterly false, nor had he ever said or done any thing to deserve such treatment from them; ver. 3, "Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Lord;" thou knowest, who knowest all things. And again, ver. 4, "without my fault." Note, 1st. The innocency of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless like doves yet for Christ's sake are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly. 2nd. Though our innocency will not secure us from troubles, yet it will greatly support and comfort us under our troubles. The testimony of our conscience for us, that we have behaved ourselves well towards those that behave themselves ill towards us, will be very much our rejoicing in the day of evil. 3rd. If we are conscious to ourselves of our innocency, we may with humble confidence appeal to God, and beg of him to plead our injured cause, which he will do in due time.

4. He pleads that his enemies were profane and atheistical, and bolstered themselves up in their enmity to David with the contempt of God; "For who, say they, doth hear?" ver. 7. Not God himself, *Ps.* x. 11; xciv. 7. Note, It is not strange if those regard not what they say who have made themselves believe that God regards not what they say.

Thirdly. He refers himself and his cause to the just judgment of God, ver. 5. The Lord, the Judge, be judge between him and his persecutors. In this appeal to God he has an eye to him as the Lord of hosts, that has power to execute judgment, having all creatures, even hosts of angels, at his command; and as the God of Israel, to whom he was in a peculiar manner king and judge, and would appear on the behalf of those that are upright, that are Israelites indeed. When Saul's hosts persecuted him, he had recourse to God as the Lord of all hosts; when those maligned him who in spirit were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, he had recourse to God as the God of Israel. He desires, that is, he is very sure, that God will awake to visit all the nations; will make an early and exact inquiry into the controversies and quarrels that are among the children of men. There will be a day of visitation, *Isa.* x. 3; and to that day David refers himself with this solemn appeal, "Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors, Selah;" mark that. 1. If David were conscious to himself that he was a wicked transgressor, he would not expect to find mercy. But as to his enemies he could say, he was no transgressor at all; ver. 3, 4, "Not for my transgression," and therefore thou wilt appear for me. As to God, he could say he was no wicked transgressor; for though he had transgressed, he was a penitent transgressor, and did not obstinately persist in what he had done amiss. 2. He knew his enemies were wicked transgressors; wilful, and malicious, and hardened in their transgressions, both against God and man; and therefore he sues for justice against them. "Judgment without mercy." Let not those expect to find mercy who never shewed mercy, for such are wicked transgressors.

8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them;
Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.
9 *Because of* his strength will I wait upon thee:
For God *is* my defence.
10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me:
God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies.
11 Slay them not, lest my people forget:
Scatter them by thy power;
And bring them down, O Lord our shield.
12 *For* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips
Let them even be taken in their pride:
And for cursing and lying *which* they speak. [not *be:*
13 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them,* that they *may*
And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob
Unto the ends of the earth. Selah.
14 And at evening let them return;
And let them make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.
15 Let them wander up and down for meat,
And grudge if they be not satisfied.
16 But I will sing of thy power;
Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning:
For thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of
17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: [my trouble.
For God *is* my defence, *and* the God of my mercy.

David here encourageth himself in reference to the threatening power of his enemies with a pious resolution to wait upon God, and a believing expectation that he should yet praise him.

First. He resolves to wait upon God; ver. 9, "Because of his strength," either the strength of his enemies, the fear of which drove him to God, or because of God's strength, the hope of which drew him to God, "will I wait upon thee," with a believing dependence upon thee, and confidence in thee. It is our wisdom and duty in times of danger and difficulty to wait upon God; for he is our defence, our high place, in whom we shall be safe. He hopes,

1. That God will be to him a God of mercy; ver. 10, "The God of my mercy shall prevent me" with the blessings of his goodness, and the gifts of his mercy; prevent my fears, prevent my prayers, and be better to me than my own expectations. It is very comfortable to us in prayer to eye God, not only as the God of mercy, but as the God of our mercy, the author of all good in us, and the giver of all good to us. Whatever mercy there is in God, it is laid up for us, and is ready to be laid out upon us. Justly doth the psalmist call God's mercy his mercy; for all the blessings of the new covenant are called the sure mercies of David, *Isa.* lv. 3; and they are sure to all the seed.

2. That he will be to his persecutors a God of vengeance. His expectation of this he expresseth partly by way of prediction, and partly by way of petition, which comes all to one; for his prayer that it might be so amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so. And so here are several things which he foretells concerning his enemies, or observers, that sought occasions against him, and opportunity to do him a mischief: in all which he should see his desire, not a passionate or revengeful desire, but a believing desire upon them, ver. 10.

1st. He foresees that God would expose them to scorn, as they had indeed made themselves ridiculous, ver. 8. They think God doth not hear them, doth not heed them, "but thou, O Lord, shalt laugh at them" for their folly, to think that he that planted the ear shall not hear; and thou shalt have, not them only, but all other such heathenish people that live without God in the world, in derision. Note, Atheists and persecutors are worthy to be laughed at, and had in derision: see *Ps.* ii. 4; *Pr.* i. 26; *Isa.* xxxvii. 22.

2nd. That God would make them standing monuments of his justice; ver. 11, "Slay them not," let them not be killed outright, "lest my people forget." If the execution be soon done, the impressions of it will not be deep, and therefore will not be durable, but will quickly wear off. Swift destructions startle men for the present, but they are soon forgotten; for which reason he prays that this might be gradual: "Scatter them by thy power," and let them carry about with them in their wanderings such tokens of God's displeasure as may spread the notice of their punishment to all parts of the country. Thus Cain himself, though a murderer, was not slain, lest the vengeance should be forgotten, but was sentenced to be a fugitive and a vagabond. Note, When we think God's judgments come slowly upon sinners, we must conclude that God has wise and holy ends in the gradual proceedings of his wrath. So scatter them, as that they may never again unite to do mischief, "bring them down, O Lord, our shield." If God have undertaken the protection of his people, as their shield, he will doubtless humble and abase all those that fight against them.

3rd. That they might be dealt with according to their deserts; ver. 12, "For the sin of their mouth, even for the words of their lips;" for every word they speak has sin in it. Let them for this be taken in their pride, even for their cursing others and themselves, (a sin Saul was subject to, 1 *Sam.* xiv. 28, 44,) and lying. Note, *First.* There is a great deal of malignity in tongue sins, more than is commonly thought of. *Secondly.* Cursing, and lying, and speaking proudly, are some of the worst of the sins of the tongue; and that man is truly miserable whom God deals with according to the desert of these, "making his own tongue to fall on him."

4th. That God would glorify himself as Israel's God and king in their destruction; ver. 13, "Consume them in wrath, consume them;" that is, follow them with one judgment after another till they be utterly ruined; let them be sensibly but gradually wasted, that they themselves, while they are in the consuming, may know, and that the standers-by may likewise draw this inference from it, "That God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth." Saul and his party think to rule and carry all before them, but they shall be made to know that there is a higher than they, that there is one who doth and will overrule them. The design of God's judgments is to convince men that the Lord reigns; that he fulfils his own counsels, gives law to all the creatures, and disposeth all things to his own glory; so that the greatest of men are under his check, and he makes what use he pleases of them. He rules in Jacob, for there he keeps his court, there he is known, and his name is great; but he rules to the end of the earth, for all nations are within the territories of his kingdom. 'He rules to the ends of the earth, even over those that know him not, but he rules for Jacob,' so it may be read; he has an eye to the good of his church in the government of the world; the administrations of that government, even to the ends of the earth, are "for Jacob his servant's sake, and Israel's his elect," *Isa.* xlv. 4.

5th. That he would make their sin their punishment, ver. 14; compare ver. 6. Their sin was hunting for David, to make a prey of him; their punishment should be, that they should be reduced to such extreme poverty, that they should hunt about for meat to satisfy their hunger, and should miss of it as they missed of David. Thus they should be not cut off at once, but scattered, ver. 11, and gradually consumed, ver. 13. They that die by famine die by inches, and feel themselves die, *Lam.* iv. 9. He foretells that they should be forced to beg their bread from door to door. *First.* That they should do it with the greatest regret and reluctancy imaginable. "To beg they are ashamed," (which makes it the greater punishment to them,) and therefore they do it at evening, when it begins to be dark, that they may not be seen; at the time when other beasts of prey creep forth, *Ps.* civ. 20. *Secondly.* That yet they should be very clamorous and loud in their complaints, which would proceed from a great indignation at their condition, which they cannot in the least degree reconcile themselves to. "They shall make a noise like a dog." When they were in quest of David they made a noise like an angry dog snarling and barking; now, when they are in quest of meat, they shall make a noise like a hungry dog howling and wailing. Those that repent of their sins, when they are in trouble, mourn like doves; those whose hearts are hardened, when they are in trouble, make a noise like dogs, "like a wild bull in a net, full of the fury of the Lord:" see *Hos.* vii. 14, "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled on their beds for corn and wine." *Thirdly.* That they should meet with little relief, but the hearts of people should be very much hardened towards them, so that they should "go round about the city, and wander up and down for meat," ver. 15, and should get nothing but by dint of importunity, according to our marginal reading, 'if they be not satisfied they will tarry all night;' so that what people do give them is not with good will, but only to be rid of them, lest by their continual coming they weary them. *Fourthly.* That they should be insatiable, which is the greatest misery of all in a poor condition. "They are greedy dogs which can never have enough," *Isa.* lvi. 11, "and they grudge if they be not satisfied." A contented man, if he has not what he would have, yet doth not grudge, doth not quarrel with Providence, nor fret within himself; but those whose god is their belly, if that be not filled, and its appetites gratified, fall out both with God and themselves. It is not poverty, but discontent, that makes a man unhappy.

Secondly. He expects to praise God, that God's providence would find him matter for praise, and that God's grace would work in him a heart for praise, ver. 16, 17. Observe,

1. What he would praise God for. 1st. He would praise his power, and his mercy; both should be the subject matter of his song. Power without mercy is to be dreaded; mercy without power is not what a man can expect much benefit from; but God's power by which he is able to help us, and his mercy by which he is inclined to help us, will justly be the everlasting praise of all the saints. 2nd. He would praise him because he had many a time and all along found him his defence and his refuge in the day of trouble. God brings his people into trouble, that they may experience his power and mercy in protecting and sheltering them, and may have occasion to praise him. 3rd. He would praise him because he had still a dependence upon him, and a confidence in him,

as his strength to support him and carry him on in his duty, his defence to keep him safe from evil, and the God of his mercy to make him happy and easy. He that is all this to us is certainly worthy of our best affections, praises, and services.

2. How he would praise God. 1st. He would sing. As that is a natural expression of joy, so it is an instituted ordinance for the exerting and exciting of holy joy and thankfulness. 2nd. He would sing aloud, as one much affected with the glory of God, that was not ashamed to own it, and that desired to affect others with it. He will sing of God's power, but he will sing aloud of his mercy; the consideration of that raises his affections more than any thing else. 3rd. He would sing aloud in the morning, when his spirits were most fresh and lively. God's compassions are new every morning, and therefore it is fit to begin the day with his praises. 4th. He would sing unto God, ver. 17, to his honour and glory, and with him in his eye. As we must direct our prayers to God, so to him we must direct our praises and must look up, making melody to the Lord.

PSALM LX.

After many psalms which David penned in a day of distress, this comes, which was calculated for a day of triumph; it was penned after he was settled on the throne, upon occasion of an illustrious victory which God blessed his forces with over the Syrians and Edomites. It was when David was in the zenith of his prosperity, and the affairs of his kingdom seem to have been in a better posture than ever they were either before or after: see 2 *Sam.* viii. 3, 13; 1 *Chr.* xviii. 3, 12. David in prosperity was as devout as David in adversity. In this psalm, I. He reflects upon the ill state of the public interests for many years, in which God had been contending with them, ver. 1—3. II. He takes notice of the happy turn lately given to their affairs, ver. 4. III. He prays for the deliverance of God's Israel from their enemies, ver. 5. IV. He triumphs in hope of their victories over their enemies, and begs of God to carry them on and complete them, ver. 6—12. In singing this psalm we may have an eye both to the acts of the church and to the state of our own souls, both which have their struggles.

To the chief Musician upon Shushan-eduth, Michtam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.

O GOD, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us,
Thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.
2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it:
Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.
3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard things:
Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.
4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee,
That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.
5 That thy beloved may be delivered;
Save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.

The title gives us an account, 1. Of the general design of the psalm. It is Michtam, David's jewel, and it is to teach. The Levites must teach it the people, and by it teach them both to trust in God, and to triumph in him; we must in it teach ourselves and one another. In a day of public rejoicing, we have need to be taught to direct our joy to God, and to terminate it in him, to give none of that praise to the instruments of our deliverance which is due to him only, and to encourage our hopes with our joys. 2. Of the particular occasion of it. It was at a time, 1st. When he was in war with the Syrians, and still had a conflict with them, both those of Mesopotamia and those of Zobah. 2nd. When he had gained a great victory over the Edomites by his forces under the command of Joab, who had left twelve thousand of the enemy dead upon the spot. David has an eye to both these concerns in this psalm: he is in care about his strife with the Assyrians, and in reference to that he prays. He is rejoicing in his success against the Edomites, and with reference to that he triumphs, with a holy confidence in God, that he would complete the victory. We have our cares at the same time that we have our joys, and they may serve for a balance to each other, that neither may exceed. They may likewise furnish us with matter both for prayer and praise, for both must be laid before God with suitable affections and devotions. If one point be gained, yet in another we are still striving. The Edomites are vanquished, but the Syrians are not; therefore "let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as if he had put it off." In these verses, which begin the psalm, we have,

First. A melancholy memorial of the many disgraces and disappointments which God had for some years past put the people under. During the reign of Saul, especially in the latter end of it, and during David's struggle with the house of Saul, while he reigned over Judah only, the affairs of the kingdom were much perplexed, and the neighbour nations were vexatious to them. 1. He complains of hard things which they had seen, that is, which they had suffered, ver. 3, while the Philistines and other ill neighbours took all advantages against them. God sometimes shews even his own people hard things in this world, that they may not take up their rest in it, but may dwell at ease in him only. 2. He owns God's displeasure to be the cause of all the hardships they had undergone. "Thou hast been displeased" by us, displeased against us, ver. 1, and in thy displeasure hast cast us off, and scattered us; hast put us out of thy protection, else our enemies could not have prevailed thus against us. They had never picked us up and made a prey of us, if thou hadst not broke the staff of bands (*Zec.* xi. 14) by which we were united, and so scattered us. Whatever our trouble is, and whoever are the instruments of it, we must own the hand of God, his righteous hand, in it. 3. He laments the ill effects and consequences of the miscarriages of the late years. The whole nation was in a convulsion; "Thou hast made the earth to tremble," or the land. The generality of the people had dreadful apprehensions of the issue of these things; the good people themselves were in a consternation. "Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment." We were like men intoxicated and at our wit's end, not knowing how to reconcile these dispensations with God's promises and his relation to his people. We are at a gaze, can do nothing, nor know we what to do.

Now this is mentioned here 'to teach,' that is, for the instruction of the people. When God is turning his hand in our favours, it is good to remember our former calamities. 1st. That we may retain the good impressions they made upon us, and may have them revived. Our souls must still have the affliction and the misery in remembrance, that they may be humbled within us, *Lam.* iii. 19, 20. 2nd. That God's goodness to us in relieving us and raising us up may be the more magnified; for it is as life from the dead, so strange, so refreshing. Our calamities serve as foils to our joys. 3rd. That we may not be secure, but may always rejoice with trembling, as those that know not how soon we may be returned into the furnace again which we were lately taken out of, as the silver is when it is not thoroughly refined.

Secondly. A thankful notice of the encouragement God had given them to hope that, though things had been long bad, they would now begin to mend; ver. 4, "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee," (for, as bad as the times are, there is a remnant among us that desire to fear thy name, for whom thou hast a tender concern,) "that it may be displayed" by thee, "because of the truth" of thy promise, which thou wilt perform, and to be displayed by them in defence of truth and equity, *Ps.* xlv. 4. This banner was David's government, the establishment and enlargement of it over all Israel. The pious Israelites, who feared God, and had a regard to the Divine designation of David to the throne, took his elevation as a token for good, and like the lifting up of a banner to them. 1. It united them, as soldiers are gathered together to their colours. They that were scattered, ver. 1, divided among themselves, and so weakened and exposed, when he was fixed upon the throne, coalesced in him. 2. It animated them, and put life and courage into them, as the soldiers are heartened by the sight of their banner. 3. It struck a terror upon their enemies, to whom they could now hang out a flag of defiance. Christ, the Son of David, is given for an ensign of the people, *Isa.* xi. 10; for a banner to those that fear God. In him, as the centre of their unity, they are gathered together in one; to him they seek, in him they glory and take courage; his love is the banner over them, and in his name and strength they wage war with the powers of darkness, and under him the church becomes terrible as an army with banners.

Thirdly. An humble petition for seasonable mercy.

1. That God would be reconciled to them, though he had been displeased with them. In his displeasure their calamities began, and therefore in his favour their prosperity must begin; "O turn thyself to us again," ver. 1; smile upon us, and take part with us; be at peace with us, and in that peace we shall have peace. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia,*—'A God at peace with us spreads peace over all the scene.'

2. That they might be reconciled to one another, though they had been broken and wretchedly divided among themselves. "Heal the breaches of our land," ver. 2; not only the breaches made upon us by our enemies, but the breaches made among ourselves by our unhappy divisions. Those are breaches which the folly and corruption of man makes, and which nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can make up and repair, by pouring out a spirit of love and peace, by which only a shaken, shattered kingdom is set to rights, and saved from ruin.

3. That thus they might be preserved out of the hands of their enemies; ver. 3, "That thy beloved may be delivered," and not made a prey of, "save with thy right hand," with thine own power, and by such instruments as thou art pleased to make the men of thy right hand, "and hear me." They that fear God are his beloved; they are dear to him as the apple of his eye; they are often in distress, but they shall be delivered; God's own right hand shall save them, for they that have his heart have his hand. "Save them, and hear me." Note, God's praying people may take the general deliverances of the church as answers to their prayers in particular. If we improve what interest we have at the throne of grace for blessings for the public, and those blessings be bestowed, besides the share we have with others in the benefit of them, we may each of us say with a peculiar satisfaction, God has therein heard me, and answered me.

6 God hath spoken in his holiness;
I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem,
And mete out the valley of Succoth.
7 Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine;
Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head;
Judah *is* my lawgiver;
8 Moab *is* my washpot;
Over Edom will I cast out my shoe:
Philistia, triumph thou because of me.
9 Who will bring me *into* the strong city?
Who will lead me into Edom?

EDOM

10 *Wilt* not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off?
And *thou*, O God, *which* didst not go out with our [armies?
11 Give us help from trouble:
For vain *is* the help of man.
12 Through God we shall do valiantly:
For he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

SHECHEM.—ver. 6.

David is here rejoicing in hope, and praying in hope. Such are the triumphs of the saints, not so much upon the account of what they have in possession, as of what they have in prospect; ver. 6, "God hath spoken in his holiness;" that is, he hath given me his word of promise, has "sworn by his holiness, and he will not lie unto David," *Ps.* lxxxix. 35; therefore "I will rejoice," and please myself with hopes of the performance of the promise, which was intended for more than a pleasing promise. Note, God's word of promise, being a firm foundation of hope, is a full fountain of joy to all believers.

First. Two things David here rejoiceth in the prospect of:

1. The perfecting of this revolution in his own kingdom. God, having spoken in his holiness, that David shall be king, he doubts not but the kingdom is all his own, as sure as if it were already in his hand. "I will divide Shechem," a pleasant city in mount Ephraim, "and mete out the valley of Succoth" as my own; ver. 7, "Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine," and both entirely reduced. Ephraim would furnish him with soldiers for his life-guards and his standing forces; Judah would furnish him with able judges for his courts of justice; and thus Ephraim would be the strength of his head, and Judah his lawgiver. Thus may an active believer triumph in the promises, and take the comfort of all the good contained in them; for they are all Yea and Amen in Christ. "God hath spoken in his holiness," and then pardon is mine, peace mine, grace mine, Christ mine, heaven mine, God himself mine; "All is yours, for you are Christ's," 1 *Cor.* iii. 22, 23.

2. The conquering of the neighbour nations that had been vexatious to Israel, were still dangerous, and opposed the throne of David; ver. 8, Moab shall be enslaved, and put to the meanest drudgery. The Moabites became David's servants, 2 *Sam.* viii. 2 Edom shall be made a dunghill to throw old shoes upon; at least, David shall take possession of it as his own, which was signified by drawing off his shoe over it, *Ru.* iv. 7; and as for the Philistines, let them, if they dare, triumph over him as they had done, he will soon force them to change their note. Rather let those that know their own interest triumph because of him; for it would be the greatest kindness imaginable to them to be brought into subjection to David, and communion with Israel.

But the war is not yet brought to an end; there is a strong city (Rabbah perhaps) of the children of Ammon, which yet holds out; Edom is not yet subdued. Now, 1st. David is here inquiring for help to carry on the war. "Who will bring me into the strong city?" What allies, what auxiliaries can I depend upon to make me master of the enemies' country and their strongholds? They that have begun a good work cannot but desire to make a thorough work of it, and to bring it to perfection. 2nd. He is expecting it from God only. "Wilt not thou, O God?" for thou hast spoken in thine holiness; and wilt not thou be as good as thy word? He takes notice of the frowns of Providence they had been under; "Thou hadst," in appearance, "cast us off; thou didst not go forth with our armies." When they were defeated and met with disappointments, they owned it was because they wanted, that is, because they had forfeited, the gracious presence of God with them; yet they do not therefore fly off from him, but rather take so much the faster hold of him: and the less he had done for them of late the more they hoped he would do. At the same time that they own God's justice in what was past they hope in his mercy for what was to come. Though thou hadst cast us off, yet thou wilt not contend for ever, thou wilt not always chide; though thou hadst cast us off, yet thou hast begun to shew mercy, and wilt thou not perfect what thou hast begun? The Son of David in his sufferings seemed to be cast off by his Father, when he cried out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" and yet even then he obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness and their strong city, a victory which will undoubtedly be completed at last; for he is gone forth conquering and to conquer. The Israel of God, his spiritual Israel, through him likewise are more than conquerors. Though sometimes they may be tempted to think that God has cast them off, and may be foiled in particular conflicts, yet God will bring them into the strong city at last. *Vincimur in prælio, sed non in bello,*—'We are foiled in a battle, but not in the whole war.' A lively faith in the promise will assure us, not only that the God of peace shall tread Satan under our feet shortly, but that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

Secondly. He prays in hope. His prayer is, "Give us help from trouble," ver. 11. Even in the day of their triumph they see themselves in trouble, because still in war, which is troublesome even to the prevailing side. None therefore can delight in war, but those that love to fish in troubled waters. The help from trouble they pray for is preservation from those they were at war with. Though now they were conquerors, yet (so uncertain are the issues of war) unless God gave them help in the next engagement, they might go by the worst; therefore, Lord, send us help from the sanctuary. Help from trouble is rest from war, which they prayed for, as those that contended for equity, not for victory. *Sic quærimus pacem,*—'Thus we seek for peace.'

The hope with which they support themselves in this prayer has two things in it: 1. A diffidence of themselves, and all their creature confidences. "Vain is the help of man;" and then only we are qualified to receive help from God when we are brought to own the insufficiency of all creatures to do that for us which we expect him to do. 2. A confidence in God, and in his power and promise; ver. 12, "Through God we shall do valiantly," and so we shall do victoriously; for he it is, and he only, that shall tread down our enemies, and shall have the praise of it. Note, 1st. Our confidence in God must be so far from superseding, that it must encourage and quicken our endeavours in the way of our duty. Though it is God that performeth all things for us, yet there is something to be done by us. 2nd. Hope in God is the best principle of true courage. Those that do their duty under his conduct may afford to do it valiantly; for what need they fear who have God on their side? 3rd. It is only through God, and by the influence of his grace, that we do valiantly. It is he that puts strength into us, and inspires us, who of ourselves are weak and timorous, with courage and resolution. 4th. Though we do never so valiantly, the success must be attributed entirely to him; for "he it is that shall tread down our enemies," and not we ourselves. All our victories, as well as our valour, are from him, and therefore at his feet all our crowns must be cast.

PSALM LXI.

David in this psalm, as in many others, begins with a sad heart, but concludes with an air of pleasantness; begins with prayers and tears, but ends with songs of praise. Thus the soul by being lifted up to God returns to the enjoyment of itself. It should seem David was driven out and banished when he penned this psalm, whether by Saul or Absalom is uncertain; some think by Absalom, because he calls himself the king, ver. 6, but that refers to the King Messiah. David in this psalm resolves to persevere in his duty, encouraged thereto both by his experience and by his expectations. I. He will call upon God, because God had protected him, ver. 1—3. II. He will call upon God, because God had provided well for him, ver. 4, 5. III. He will praise God, because he had an assurance of the continuance of God's favour to him, ver. 6—8. So that in singing this psalm we may find that which is very expressive both of our faith and of our hope, of our prayers and of our praises. And some passages in this psalm are very peculiar.

To the chief Musician upon Neginah, *A Psalm* of David.

HEAR my cry, O God;
Attend unto my prayer.
2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed:
Lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I.
3 For thou hast been a shelter for me,
And a strong tower from the enemy.
4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever:
I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

In these verses we may observe,

First. David's close adherence and application to God by prayer in the day of his distress and trouble. Whatever comes, "I will cry unto thee," ver. 2; not cry to other gods, but to thee only; not fall out with thee because thou afflictest me, but still look unto thee, and wait upon thee; not speak to thee in a cold and careless manner, but cry to thee with the greatest importunity and fervency of spirit, as one that will not let thee go except thou bless me. This he will do, 1. Notwithstanding his distance from the sanctuary, the house of prayer, where he used to attend, as in the court of requests: "From the end of the earth," or of the land, from the most remote and obscure corner of the country, "will I cry unto thee." Note, Wherever we are we may have liberty of access to God, and may find a way open to the throne of grace. *Undique ad cœlos tantundem est viæ,*—'Heaven is equally accessible from all places.' Nay, because I am here in the end of the earth, in sorrow and solitude, therefore I will cry unto thee. Note, That which separates us from our other comforts should drive us so much the nearer to God, the fountain of all comfort 2 Notwithstanding the dejection and despondency of his spirit. Though my heart is overwhelmed, it is not so sunk, so burthened, but that it may be lifted up to God in prayer. If it is not capable of being thus raised, it is certainly too much cast down Nay, because my heart is ready to be overwhelmed, therefore I will cry unto thee, for by that means it will be supported and relieved. Note, Weeping must quicken praying, and not deaden it. "Is any afflicted? let him pray," *Jas.* v. 13; *Ps.* cii., title.

Secondly. The particular petition he put up to God when his heart was overwhelmed, and he was ready to sink. "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I;" that is, 1. To the rock which is too high for me to get up to, unless thou help me to it; Lord, give me such an assurance and satisfaction of my own safety as I can never attain to but by thy special grace working such a faith in me. 2. To the rock, on the top of which I shall be set farther out of the reach of my troubles, and nearer the serene and quiet region, than I can be by any power or wisdom of my own. God's power and promise is a rock that is higher than we; this rock is Christ. They are safe that are in him We cannot get upon this rock unless God by his power lead us. "I will put thee in the clift of the rock," *Ex.* xxxiii. 22. We should therefore, by faith and prayer, put ourselves under a Divine conduct, that we may be taken under a Divine direction.

Thirdly. His desire and expectation of an answer of peace. He begs in faith, ver. 1, "Hear my cry, O God, attend unto my prayer;" that is, let me have the present comfort of knowing that I am heard, *Ps.* xx. 6, and in due time let me have that which I pray for.

Fourthly. The ground of this expectation, and the plea he useth to enforce his petition; ver. 3, "Thou hast been a shelter for me," I have found in thee a rock higher than I, therefore I trust thou wilt still lead me to that rock. Note, Past experiences of the benefit of trusting in God, as they should engage us still to keep close to him, so they should encourage us to hope that it will not be in vain. "Thou hast been my strong tower from the enemy," and thou art as strong as ever, and thy name as much a refuge to the righteous as ever it was, *Pr.* xviii. 10.

Fifthly. His resolution to continue in the way of duty to God, and dependence on him, ver. 4. 1. The service of God shall be his constant work and business. All those must make it so who expect to find God their shelter and strong tower; none but his menial servants have the benefit of his protection: "I will abide in my tabernacle for ever." David was now banished from the tabernacle, which was his greatest grievance, but he is assured that God by his providence would bring him back to his tabernacle, because he had by his grace wrought in him such a kindness for the tabernacle, as that he was resolved to make it his perpetual residence, *Ps.* xxvii. 4. He speaks of abiding in it for ever, because

that tabernacle was a type and figure of heaven, *Heb.* ix. 8, 9, 24, and those that dwell in God's tabernacle, as it is a house of duty, during their short *ever* on earth, shall dwell in that tabernacle which is the house of glory during an endless *ever*. 2. The grace of God, and the covenant of grace, shall be his constant comfort: "I will make my refuge in the covert of his wings," as the chickens seek both warmth and safety under the wings of the hen. Those that have found God a shelter to them ought still to have recourse to him in all their straits. This advantage they have that abide in God's tabernacle, that in the time of trouble he shall there hide them.

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: [name.
Thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy
6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life:
And his years as many generations.
7 He shall abide before God for ever:
O prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him.
8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever,
That I may daily perform my vows.

In these verses we may observe,

First. With what pleasure David looks back upon what God had done for him formerly; ver. 5, "Thou, O God, hast heard my vows;" that is, 1. The vows themselves which I made, and with which I bound my soul. Thou hast taken notice of them; thou hast accepted them because made in sincerity, and been well pleased with them; thou hast been mindful of them, and put me in mind of them. God put Jacob in mind of his vows, *Gen.* xxxi. 13; xxxv. 1. Note, God is a witness to all our vows, all our good purposes, and all our solemn promises of new obedience. He keeps an account of them, which should be a good reason with us, as it was with David here, why we should perform our vows, ver. 8; for he that hears the vows we made will make us hear from them if they be not made good. 2. The prayers that went along with those vows; those thou hast graciously heard and answered, which encouraged him now to pray, "O God, hear my cry." He that never did say to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain, will not now begin to say so. Thou hast heard my vows, and given a real answer to them; for "thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name." Note, 1st. There is a peculiar people in the world that fear God's name,—that with a holy awe and reverence accept of, and accommodate themselves to, all the discoveries he is pleased to make of himself to the children of men. 2nd. There is a heritage peculiar to that peculiar people,—present comforts, earnests of their future bliss. God himself is their inheritance, their portion for ever. The Levites, that had God for their inheritance, must take up with him, and not expect a lot like their brethren. So those that fear God have enough in him, and therefore must not complain if they have but little of the world. 3rd. We need desire no better heritage than that of those which fear God. If God deal with us as he uses to deal with those that love his name, we need not desire to be any better dealt with.

Secondly. With what assurance he looks forward to the continuance of his life; ver. 6, "Thou wilt prolong the king's life." This may be understood either, 1. Of himself. If it were penned before he came to the crown, yet, being anointed by Samuel, and knowing what God had spoken in his holiness, he could in faith call himself the king, though now persecuted as an outlaw. Or, perhaps it was penned when Absalom sought to unking him, and forced him into exile. There were those that aimed to shorten his life, but he trusted to God to prolong his life, which he did to the age of man set by Moses, namely, seventy years, which, spent in serving his generation according to the will of God, (*Acts* xiii. 36,) might be reckoned as many generations, because many generations would be the better for him. His resolution was to abide in God's tabernacle for ever, ver. 4, in a way of duty; and now his hope is, that he shall abide before God for ever in a way of comfort. Those abide to good purpose in this world that abide before God, that is, that serve him, and walk in his fear; and they that do so shall abide before him for ever. He speaks of himself in the third person, because the psalm was delivered to the chief musician, for the use of the church, and he would have the people in singing of it to be encouraged with an assurance that, notwithstanding the malice of his enemies, their king, as they wished, should live for ever. Or, 2. Of the Messiah, the king of whom he was a type. It was a comfort to David to think, whatever became of him, the years of the Lord's anointed should be as many generations, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. The Mediator shall abide before God for ever, for he always appears in the presence of God for us, and ever lives making intercession; and because he lives we shall live also.

Thirdly. With what importunity he begs of God to take him and keep him always under his protection; "O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him." God's promises, and our faith in them, are not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer. David is sure that God will prolong his life, and therefore prays that he would preserve it; not that he would prepare him a strong life-guard, or a well fortified castle, but that he would prepare mercy and truth for his preservation; that is, that God's goodness would provide for his safety according to the promise. We need not desire to be better secured than under the protection of God's mercy and truth. This may be applied to the Messiah; let him be sent in the fulness of time in "performance of the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham," *Mic.* vii. 20; *Lu.* i. 72, 73.

Fourthly. With what cheerfulness he vows the grateful returns of duty to God; ver. 8, "So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever." Note, God's preserving us calls upon us to praise him; and therefore we should desire to live that we may praise him; "Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee." We must make praising God the work of our time, even to the last. As long as our lives are prolonged, we must continue praising God; and then it shall be made the work of our eternity, and we shall be praising him for ever. "That I may daily perform my vows." His praising God was itself the performance of his vows, and it disposed his heart to the performance of his vows in other instances. Note, 1. The vows we have made we must conscientiously perform. 2. Praising God and paying our vows to him must be our constant daily work. Every day we must be doing something towards it, because it is all but little in comparison with what is due; because we daily receive fresh mercies, and because if we think much to do it daily we cannot expect to be doing it eternally.

PSALM LXII.

This psalm has nothing in it directly either of prayer or praise; nor doth it appear upon what occasion it was penned, nor whether upon any particular occasion, whether mournful or joyful. But in it, I. David with a great deal of pleasure professeth his own confidence in God, and dependence upon him, and encourageth himself to continue waiting on him, ver. 1—7. II. With a great deal of earnestness he excites and encourageth others to trust in God likewise, and not in any creature, ver. 8—12. And in singing it we should stir up ourselves to wait on God.

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

TRULY my soul waiteth upon God:
From him *cometh* my salvation.
2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation;
He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.
3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man?
Ye shall be slain all of you:
As a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as* a tottering fence.
4 They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency:
They delight in lies:
They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.
5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; [Selah.
For my expectation *is* from him.
6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation:
He is my defence; I shall not be moved.
7 In God *is* my salvation and my glory:
The rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.

In these verses we have,

First. David's profession of dependence upon God, and upon him only, for all good; ver. 1, "Truly my soul waiteth upon God." 'Nevertheless,' so some, or 'however it be;' whatever difficulties or dangers I may meet with, though God frown upon me, and I meet with discouragements in my attendance on him, yet still "my soul waiteth upon God;" or, is silent to God, as the word is; saith nothing against what he doth, but quietly expects what he will do. We are in the way both of duty and comfort when our souls wait upon God, that is, when we cheerfully refer ourselves and the disposal of all our affairs to his will and wisdom; when we acquiesce in, and accommodate ourselves to, all the dispensations of his providence; and patiently expect a doubtful event with an entire satisfaction in his righteousness and goodness, however it be. "Is not my soul subject to God?" so the Seventy; so it is, certainly so it ought to be; our wills must be melted into his will. My soul hath respect to God; for "from him cometh my salvation." He doubts not but his salvation will come, though now he was threatened and in danger; and he expects it to come from God, and from him only; for in vain is it hoped for from hills and mountains, *Jer.* iii. 23; *Ps.* cxxi. 1, 2. From him I know it will come, and therefore on him will I patiently wait till it doth come; for his time is the best time. We may apply it to our eternal salvation, which is called the salvation of God, *Ps.* l. 23. From him that comes; he prepared it for us; he prepares us for it, and preserves us to it; and therefore let our souls wait on him, to be conducted through this world to that eternal salvation in such a way as he thinks fit.

Secondly. The ground and reason of this dependence; ver. 2, "He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence." 1. He hath been so many a time, in him I have found shelter, and strength, and succour; he hath by his grace supported me, and borne me up under my troubles, and by his providence defended me from the insults of my enemies, and delivered me out of the troubles into which I was plunged; and therefore "I trust he will deliver me," 2 *Cor.* i. 10. 2. He only can be my rock and my salvation. Creatures are insufficient; they are nothing without him, and therefore I will look above them to him. 3. He hath by covenant undertaken to be so. Even he that is the Rock of ages is my rock, that is the God of salvation is my salvation, that is the Most High is my high place; and therefore I have all the reason in the world to confide in him.

Thirdly. The improvement he makes of his confidence in God.

1. Trusting in God, his heart is fixed. If God is my strength and mighty deliverer, "I shall not be greatly moved;" that is, I shall not be undone and ruined; I may be shocked, but I shall not be sunk; or, I shall not be much disturbed and disquieted in my own breast. I may be put into some fright, but I shall not be afraid with any amazement, nor so as to be put out of the possession of my own soul. I may be perplexed, but not in despair, 2 *Cor.* iv. 8. This hope in God will be an anchor of the soul sure and stedfast.

2. His enemies are slighted, and all their attempts against him looked upon with contempt, ver. 3, 4. If God be for us, we need not fear what man can do against us, though never so mighty and malicious. He here, 1st. Gives a character of his enemies. They imagine mischief, design it with a great deal of the serpent's venom, and contrive it with a great deal of the serpent's subtlety; and this against a man, one of their own kind,—against one single man that is not an equal match for them, for they are many. They continued their malicious prosecution though Providence had often defeated their mischievous designs. How long will ye do it? Will ye never be convinced of your error? Will your malice never have spent itself? They are unanimous in their consultations to cast an excellent man down from his excellency,—to draw an honest man from his integrity, to entangle him in sin,—which is the only thing that can effectually cast us down from our excellency; to thrust a man whom God has exalted down from his dignity, and so to fight against God. Envy was at the bottom of their malice. They were grieved at David's advancement, and therefore plotted, by diminishing his character and blackening that, which was casting him down from his excellency, to baulk his preferment. In order to this they belie him, and love to hear such ill characters given of him, and such ill reports raised and spread concerning him, as they themselves know to be false; "they delight in lies." And as they make no conscience of lying concerning him, to do him a mischief, so they make no conscience of lying to him, to conceal the mischief they design, and accomplish it the more effectually; "They bless with their mouth," they compliment David to his face, "but they curse inwardly;" that is, in their hearts they wish him all mischief, and privately they are plotting against him, and in their cabals carrying on some ill design or other by which they hope to ruin him. It is dangerous putting our trust in men who are thus false; but God is faithful. 2nd. He reads their doom; pronounceth a sentence of death upon them, not as a king, but as a prophet; "Ye shall be slain, all of you," by the righteous judgments of God. Saul and his servants were slain by the Philistines on mount Gilboa, according to this prediction. Whoever seeks the ruin of God's chosen are but preparing ruin for themselves. God's church is built upon a rock which will stand, but they that fight against it, and its patrons, and protectors, shall be "as a bowing

wall, and a tottering fence," which, having a rotten foundation, sinks with its own weight, falls of a sudden, and buries those in the ruins of it that put themselves under the shadow and shelter of it. David, having put his confidence in God, thus foresees the overthrow of his enemies, and in effect sets them at defiance, and bids them do their worst.

3. He is himself encouraged to continue waiting upon God; ver. 5—7, "My soul, wait thou only upon God." Note, The good we do we should stir up ourselves to continue doing, and to do yet more and more, as those that have through grace experienced the comfort and benefit of it. We have found it good to wait upon God, and therefore should charge our souls, and even charm them into such a constant dependence upon him, as may make us always easy. He had said, ver. 1, "From him cometh my salvation;" he saith, ver. 5, "My expectation is from him." His salvation was the principal matter of his expectation; let him have that from God and he expects no more. His salvation being from God, all his other expectations are from him. If God will save my soul, as to every thing else let him do what he pleaseth with me, and I will acquiesce in his disposals, knowing they shall all turn to my salvation, *Phil.* i. 19. He repeats, ver. 6, what he had said concerning God, ver. 2, as one that was not only assured of it, but greatly well pleased with it, and dwelt much upon it in his thoughts. "He only is my rock and my salvation, he is my defence;" I know he is; but there he adds, "I shall not be greatly moved;" here, "I shall not be moved" at all. Note, The more faith is acted the more active it is; *crescit eundo*,—'it grows by being exercised.' The more we meditate upon God's attributes and promises, and our own experience, the more ground we get of our fears, which, like Haman, when they begin to fall, shall fall before us, and we shall be kept in perfect peace, *Isa.* xxvi. 3. And as David's faith in God advanceth to an unshaken staidness, so his joy in God improves itself into a holy triumph; ver. 7, "In God is my salvation and my glory." Where our salvation is, there our glory is; for what is our salvation but the glory to be revealed,—the eternal weight of glory? and there our glorifying must be. In God let us boast all the day long. "The rock of my strength," that is, my strong rock, on which I build my hopes, and stay myself, "and my refuge" to which I flee for shelter when I am pursued, "is in God," and in him only. I have no other to flee to, no other to trust to; the more I think of it the better satisfied I am in the choice I have made. Thus doth he delight himself in the Lord, and then ride upon the high places of the earth, *Isa.* lviii. 14.

8 Trust in him at all times; ye people,
Pour out your heart before him:
God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.
9 Surely men of low degree *are* vanity,
And men of high degree *are* a lie:
To be laid in the balance,
They *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.
10 Trust not in oppression,
And become not vain in robbery:
If riches increase, set not your heart *upon them*
11 God hath spoken once;
Twice have I heard this;
That power *belongeth* unto God.
12 Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy:
For thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Here we have David's exhortation to others to trust in God, and wait upon him as he had done. Those that have found the comfort of the ways of God themselves will invite others into those ways. There is enough in God for all the saints to draw from, and we shall have never the less for others sharing with us.

First. He counsels all to wait upon God as he did, ver. 8. Observe, 1. To whom he gives this good counsel; "Ye people," that is, all people, all shall be welcome to trust in God, for he is "the confidence of all the ends of the earth," *Ps.* lxv. 5; 'ye people of the house of Israel,' so the Chaldee. They are especially engaged and invited to trust in God, for he is the God of Israel; and "should not a people seek unto their God?" 2. What the good counsel is which he gives. 1st. To confide in God; "Trust in him;" deal with him, and be willing to deal upon trust; depend upon him to perform all things for you,—upon his wisdom and goodness, his power and promise, his providence and grace. Do this "at all times," that is, we must have an habitual confidence in God always; must live a life of dependence upon him; must so trust in him at all times as not at any time to put that confidence in ourselves or in any creature which is to be put in him only. And we must have an actual confidence in God upon all occasions; trust in him upon every emergency to guide us when we are in doubt; to protect us when we are in danger; to supply us when we are in want; to strengthen us for every good word and work. 2nd. To converse with God; "Pour out your heart before him." The expression seems to allude to the pouring out of the drink-offerings before the Lord. When we make a penitent confession of sin, our hearts are therein poured out before God, 1 *Sam.* vii. 31; but here it is meant of prayer, which, if it be as it should be, is the pouring out of the heart before God. We must lay our grievances before him, offer up our desires to him with all humble freedom, and then entirely refer ourselves to his disposal, patiently submitting our wills to his. This is pouring out our hearts. 3rd. What encouragement he gives us to take this good counsel. "God is a refuge for us;" not only my refuge, ver. 7, but a refuge for us all, even as many as will flee to him, and take shelter in him.

Secondly. He cautions us to take heed of misplacing our confidence, in which, as much as in any thing, "the heart is deceitful," *Jer.* xvii. 5—9. They that trust in God truly, ver. 1, will trust in him only, ver. 5.

1. Let us not trust in the men of this world, for they are broken reeds; ver. 9, "Surely men of low degree are vanity," utterly unable to help us, "and men of high degree are a lie," that will deceive us if we trust to them. Men of low degree, one would think, might be relied on for their multitude and number, their bodily strength and service; and men of high degree for their wisdom, power, and influence: but they are neither to be depended upon; nay, of the two, men of high degree are under the worse character,—for they are a lie, which notes not only vanity but iniquity. We are not so apt to depend upon men of low degree as upon the king and captain of the host, who, by the figure they make, tempt us to trust in them, and so when they fail us prove a lie; but lay them in the balance, the balance of the Scripture,—or rather make trial of them,—see how they will prove, whether they will answer your expectations from them or no; and you will write Tekel upon them, they are alike lighter than vanity. There is no depending upon their wisdom to advise us, their power to act for us; upon their goodwill to us, no, nor upon their promises, in comparison with God, nor otherwise than in subordination to him.

2. Let us not trust in the wealth of this world, let not that be made our strong city; ver. 10, "Trust not in oppression," that is, not in riches got by fraud and violence, because where there is a great deal it is commonly got by indirect scraping or saving,—our Saviour calls it the mammon of unrighteousness, *Lu.* xvi. 9; or, not in the arts of getting riches. Think not that, either because you have got abundance or are in the way of getting, that therefore you are safe enough; for this is becoming vain in robbery, that is, cheating yourselves while you think to cheat others. He that "trusted in the abundance of his riches, strengthened himself in his wickedness," *Ps.* lii. 7; but at his end he will be a fool, *Jer.* xvii. 11. Let none be so stupid as to think of supporting themselves in their sin, much less of supporting themselves in this sin; nay, because it is hard to have riches and not to trust in them, if they increase, though by lawful and honest means, we must take heed lest we let out our affections inordinately towards them. Set not your heart upon them; that is, be not eager for them, do not take a complacency in them as the rest of your souls, nor put a confidence in them as your portion; be not over solicitous about them; do not value yourselves and others by them; make not the wealth of the world your chief good and highest end; in short, do not make an idol of it. This we are most in danger of doing when they increase; when the grounds of the rich man brought forth plentifully, then he said to his soul, Take thine ease in these things, *Lu.* xii. 19. It is a smiling world that is most likely to draw the heart away from God, on whom only it should be set.

Thirdly. He gives a very good reason why we should make God our confidence, because he is a God of infinite power, mercy, and righteousness, ver. 11, 12. This he himself was well assured of, and would have us be assured of it: "God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this;" that is, 1. God hath spoken it, and I have heard it, once, yea twice. He hath spoken it, and I have heard it by the light of reason, which easily infers it from the nature of the infinitely-perfect Being, and from his works both of creation and providence. He has spoken it and I have heard once, yea twice; that is, many a time, by the events that have been concerning me in particular, and by the light of revelation; by dreams and visions, *Job* iv. 15; by the glorious manifestation of himself upon mount Sinai, to which some think it doth especially refer, and by the written Word. God has often told us what a great and good God he is, and we ought as often to take notice of what he told us. Or, 2. Though God spoke it but once, I heard it twice; heard it diligently, not only with my outward ears, but with my soul and mind. To some God speaks twice, and they will not hear once; but to others he speaks but once, and they hear twice. Compare *Job* xxxiii. 14. Now what is it which is thus spoken and thus heard?

1st. That the God with whom we have to do is infinite in power. "Power belongs to God;" he is almighty, and can do every thing; with him nothing is impossible; all the powers of all the creatures are derived from him, and depend upon him, and are used by him as he pleaseth. His is the power, and to him we must ascribe it. This is a good reason why we should "trust in him at all times," and live in a constant dependence upon him; for he is able to do all that for us which we trust in him for.

2nd. That he is a God of infinite goodness. Here he turns his speech to God himself, as being desirous to give him the glory of his goodness, which is his glory: "Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy." God is not only the greatest, but the best of beings. Mercy is with him, *Ps.* cxxx. 4, 7. He is merciful in a way peculiar to himself; he is the Father of mercies, 2 *Cor.* i. 3. This is a farther reason why we should trust in him, and answers the objections of our sinfulness and unworthiness,—though we deserve nothing but his wrath, yet we may hope for all good from his mercy, which is over all his works.

3rd. That he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; "For thou renderest to every man according to his work." Though he doth not always do this visibly in this world, yet he will do it in the day of recompence. No service done him shall go unrewarded, nor any affront given him unpunished, unless it be repented of. By this it appears that power and mercy belong to him. If he were not a God of power, there are sinners that would be too big to be punished; and if he were not a God of mercy, there are services that would be too worthless to be rewarded. This seems especially to speak the justice of God in judging upon appeals made to him by wronged innocency. He will be sure to judge according to truth, in righting the injured, and revenging them on those that have been injurious to them, 1 *Kin.* viii. 32. Let those therefore that are wronged commit their cause to him, and trust to him to plead it.

PSALM LXIII.

This psalm has in it as much of warmth and lively devotion as any of David's psalms in so little a compass. As the sweetest of Paul's epistles were those that bore date out of a prison, so some of the sweetest of David's psalms were those that were penned, as this was, in a wilderness. That which grieved him most in his banishment was, the want of public ordinances; these he here longs to be restored to the enjoyment of; and the present want did but whet his appetite. Yet it is not the ordinances, but the God of the ordinances, that his heart is upon. And here we have, I. His desire towards God, ver. 1, 2. II. His esteem of God, ver. 3, 4. III. His satisfaction in God, ver. 5; IV. His secret communion with God, ver. 6. V. His joyful dependence upon God, ver. 7, 8. VI. His holy triumph in God, over his enemies, and in the assurance of his own safety, ver. 9—11. A devout and pious soul has little need of direction how to sing this psalm, so naturally doth it speak its own genuine language; and an unsanctified soul, that is unacquainted and unaffected with Divine things, is scarce capable of singing it with understanding.

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

O GOD, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee:
My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee
In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
2 To see thy power and thy glory,
So *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

The title tells us when the psalm was penned, when David was in the wilderness of Judah; that is, in the forest of Hareth, 1 *Sam.* xxii. 5; or in the wilderness of Ziph, 1 *Sam.* xxiii. 15. 1. Even in Canaan, though a fruitful land, and the people numerous, yet there were wildernesses, places less fruitful and less inhabited than other places. It will be so in the world, in the church, but not in heaven. There it is all city, all paradise, and no desert ground. The wilderness there shall blossom as the rose. 2. The best and dearest of God's saints and servants may sometimes have their lot cast in a wilderness, which speaks them lonely and solitary, desolate and afflicted, wanting, wandering, and unsettled, and quite at a loss what to do with themselves. 3. All the straits and difficulties of a wilderness must not put us out of tune for sacred songs; but even then it is our duty and interest to keep up a cheerful communion with

God. There are psalms proper for a wilderness, and we have reason to thank God it is the wilderness of Judah we are in, not the wilderness of Sin. David in these verses stirs up himself to take hold on God,

First. By a lively, active faith. "O God, thou art my God." Note, In all our addresses to God we must eye him as God, and our God, and this will be our comfort in a wilderness state. We must acknowledge that God is, that we speak to one that really exists, and is present with us when we say, O God, which is a serious word,—pity it should ever be used as a byword; and we must own his authority over us, and propriety in us, and our relation to him. "Thou art my God;" mine by creation and therefore my rightful owner and ruler; mine by covenant and my own consent. We must speak it with the greatest pleasure to ourselves and thankfulness to God, as those that are resolved to abide by it. "O God, thou art my God."

Secondly. By pious and devout affections, pursuant to the choice he had made of God, and the covenant he had made with him.

1. He resolves to seek God, and his favour and grace. "Thou art my God," and therefore "I will seek thee;" for "should not a people seek unto their God?" *Isa.* viii. 20. We must seek him, that is, we must covet his favour as our chief good, and consult his glory as our highest end. We must seek acquaintance with him by his word, and seek mercy from him by prayer. We must seek him. 1st. Early; that is, with the utmost care, as those that are afraid of missing him; we must begin our days with him, begin every day with him. "Early will I seek thee." 2nd. Earnestly; "My soul thirsteth for thee, and my flesh longeth for thee:" that is, my whole man is affected with this pursuit here "in a dry and thirsty land." Observe, *First*. His complaint in the want of God's favourable presence. He was "in a dry and thirsty land," so he reckoned it: not so much because it was a wilderness as because it was at a distance from the ark, from the word and sacraments. This world is 'a weary land,' so the word is: it is so to the worldly, that have their portion in it, it will yield them no true satisfaction; it is so to the godly, that have their passage through it, it is a valley of Baca, they can promise themselves little from it. *Secondly*. His importunity for that presence of God. "My soul thirsteth, longeth for thee." His want quickened his desires, which were very intense: he thirsted as the hunted hart for the waterbrooks; he would take up with nothing short of it. And they were very impatient; he longed, he languished till he should be restored to the liberty of God's ordinances. Note, Gracious souls look down upon the world with a holy disdain, and look up to God with a holy desire.

2. He longs to enjoy God. What is it he doth so passionately wish for? What is his petition, and what is his request? It is this; ver. 2, "To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." That is, 1st. To see it here in this wilderness, as I have seen it in the tabernacle; to see it in secret, as I have seen it in the solemn assembly. Note, When we want the benefit of public ordinances, we should desire and endeavour to keep up the same communion with God in our retirements that we have had in the great congregation. A closet may be turned into a little sanctuary. Ezekiel had the visions of the Almighty in Babylon, and John in the isle of Patmos. When we are alone we may have the Father with us, and that is enough. 2nd. To see it again in the sanctuary as I have formerly seen it there. He longs to be brought out of this wilderness, not that he might see his friends again, and be restored to the pleasures and gaieties of the court, but that he might have access to the sanctuary, not to see the priests there, and the ceremony of the worship, but "to see thy power and glory," that is, thy glorious power, or thy powerful glory, which is put for all God's attributes and perfections; that I may increase in my acquaintance with them, and have the agreeable impressions of them made upon my heart. So to behold the glory of the Lord, as to be changed into the same image; 2 *Cor.* iii. 18, "That I may see thy power and glory." He doth not say, as I have seen them, but, as I have seen thee. We cannot see the essence of God, but we see him in seeing by faith his attributes and perfections. These sights David here pleaseth himself with the remembrance of. Those were precious minutes which he spent in communion with God; he loved to think them over again. These he lamented the loss of, and longed to be restored to. Note, That which has been the delight, and is the desire, of gracious souls in their attendance on solemn ordinances is, to see God and his power and glory in them.

3 Because thy lovingkindness *is* better than life,
My lips shall praise thee.
4 Thus will I bless thee while I live:
I will lift up my hands in thy name.
5 My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness;
And my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips:
6 When I remember thee upon my bed,
And meditate on thee in the *night* watches.

How soon are David's complaints and prayers turned into praises and thanksgivings! After two verses that speak his desire in seeking God, here are some that speak his joy and satisfaction in having found him. Faithful prayers may presently be turned into joyful praises, if it be not our own fault. "Let the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord," *Ps.* cv. 3, and let them praise him for working those desires in them, and giving them assurance that he will satisfy them. David was now in a wilderness, and yet had his heart much enlarged in blessing God. Even in affliction we need not want matter for praise, if we have but a heart to it. Observe,

First. What David will praise God for; ver. 3, "Because thy lovingkindness is better than life," than lives. Life, and all the comforts of life; life in its best estate; long life and prosperity. God's lovingkindness is in itself, and in the account of all the saints, better than life. It is our spiritual life, and that is better than temporal life, *Ps.* xxx. 5. It is better a thousand times to die in God's favour than to live under his wrath. David in the wilderness finds by comfortable experience that God's lovingkindness is better than life; and "therefore," saith he, "my lips shall praise thee." Note, Those that have their hearts refreshed with the tokens of God's favour ought to have them enlarged in his praises. A great deal of reason we have to bless God we have better provisions and better possessions than the wealth of this world can afford us; and that in the service of God, and in communion with him, we have better employments and better enjoyments than we can have in the business and converse of this world.

Secondly. How he will praise God, and how long, ver. 4. He resolves to live a life of thankfulness to God, and dependence on him. Observe, 1. His manner of blessing God: "Thus will I bless thee." "Thus," as I have now begun; the present devout affections shall not pass away like the morning cloud, but shine more and more, like the morning sun. Or "thus," that is, I will bless thee with the same earnestness and fervency with which I have prayed to thee. 2. His continuance and perseverance therein: "I will bless thee while I live." Note, Praising God must be the work of our whole lives. We must always retain a grateful sense of his former favours, and repeat our thanksgivings for them; we must every day give thanks to him for the benefits with which we are daily loaded. We must in every thing give thanks; and not be put out of frame for this duty by any of the afflictions of this present time. Whatever days we live to see, how dark and cloudy soever, though the days come of which we say we have no pleasure in them; yet still every day must be a thanksgiving day, even to our dying day. In this work we must spend our time, because in this work we hope to spend a blessed eternity. 3. His constant regard to God upon all occasions, which should accompany his praises of him. "I will lift up my hands in thy name." We must have an eye to God's name, that is, to all that by which he has made himself known, in all our prayers and praises, which we are taught to begin with "hallowed be thy name," and to conclude with "thine is the glory." This we must have an eye to in our work and warfare; we must lift up our hands to our duty, and against our spiritual enemies in God's name, that is, in the strength of his Spirit and grace, *Ps.* lxxi. 16; *Zec.* x. 12. We must make all our vows in God's name, to him we must engage ourselves, and in a dependence upon his grace. And when we lift up the hands that hang down, in comfort and joy, it must be in God's name; from him our comforts must be fetched, and to him they must be devoted. In thee do we boast all the day.

Thirdly. With what pleasure and delight he would praise God, ver. 5. 1. With inward complacency. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." Not only as with bread, which is nourishing, but as with marrow, which is pleasant and delicious, *Isa.* xxv. 6. David hopes he shall return again to the enjoyment of God's ordinances, and then he shall thus be satisfied, and the more for his having been for a time under restraint. Or, if not, yet in God's lovingkindness, and in conversing with him in solitude, he shall be thus satisfied. Note, There is that in a gracious God, and in communion with him, which gives abundant satisfaction to a gracious soul, *Ps.* xxxvi. 8; lxv. 4. And there is that in a gracious soul which takes abundant satisfaction in God, and communion with him. The saints have a contentment with God, they desire no more than his favour to make them happy; and they have a transcendent complacency in God, in comparison with which all the delights of sense are sapless and without relish; as puddle water in comparison with the wine of this consolation. 2. With outward expressions of this satisfaction. He will praise God with joyful lips. He will praise him, 1st. Openly. His mouth and lips shall praise God. When with the heart man believeth, and is thankful, with the mouth confession must be made of both, to the glory of God. Not that the performances of the mouth are accepted without the heart, *Mat.* xv. 8; but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth must speak, *Ps.* xlv. 1, both for the exciting of our own devout affections and for the edification of others. 2nd. Cheerfully. We must praise God with joyful lips; we must address ourselves to that and other duties of religion with great cheerfulness, and speak forth the praises of God from a principle of holy joy. Praising lips must be joyful lips.

Fourthly. How he would entertain himself with thoughts of God when he was most retired, ver. 6. I will praise thee "when I remember thee upon my bed." We must praise God upon every remembrance of him. Now David was shut out from public ordinances, he abounded the more in secret communion with God, and so did something towards making up his loss. Observe here,

1. How David employed himself in thinking of God. God was in all his thoughts, which is the reverse of the wicked man's character, *Ps.* x. 4. The thoughts of God were ready to him: "I remember thee;" that is, when I go to think, I find thee at my right hand present to my mind. This subject should first offer itself as that which we cannot forget or overlook. And they were fixed in him: "I meditate on thee." Thoughts of God must not be transient thoughts, passing through the mind, but abiding thoughts, dwelling in the mind.

2. When David employed himself thus. Upon his bed, and in the night-watches. David was now wandering and unsettled, but wherever he came he brought his religion along with him. 'Upon my beds,' so some. Being hunted by Saul, he seldom lay two nights together in the same bed; but wherever he lay, if, as Jacob, upon the cold ground, and with a stone for his pillow, yet good thoughts of God lay down with him. David was so full of business all day, shifting for his own safety, that he had scarce leisure to apply himself solemnly to religious exercises, and therefore, rather than want time for them, he denied himself his necessary sleep. He was now in continual peril of his life, so that we may suppose care and fear many a time held his eyes waking, and gave him wearisome nights; but then he entertained and comforted himself with thoughts of God. Sometimes we find David in tears upon his bed, *Ps.* vi. 6, but thus he wiped away his tears. When sleep departeth from our eyes through pain or sickness of body, or any disturbance in the mind, our souls by remembering God may be at ease and repose themselves. Perhaps an hour's pious meditation will do us more good than an hour's sleep would have done: see *Ps.* iv. 4; xvi. 7; xvii. 3; cxix. 62. There were night watches kept in the tabernacle for praising God, *Ps.* cxxxiv. 1, which it is probable David when he had liberty joined with the Levites in; but, now he could not keep place with them, he kept time with them, and wished himself among them.

7 Because thou hast been my help,
Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.
8 My soul followeth hard after thee:
Thy right hand upholdeth me.
9 But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*,
Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
10 They shall fall by the sword:
They shall be a portion for foxes.
11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
Every one that sweareth by him shall glory:
But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

David having expressed his desires towards God, and his praises of him, here speaks his confidence in him, and his joyful expectations from him: ver. 7, "In the shadow of thy wings I will rejoice," alluding either to the wings of the cherubims stretched out over the ark of the covenant, between which God is said to dwell,—I will rejoice in thine oracles, and in covenant and communion with thee; or to the wings of a fowl, under which the helpless young ones have shelter, as the eagles' young ones, *Ex.* xix. 4, *Deu.* xxxii. 11, which speaks the Divine power; and the young ones of the common hen, *Mat.* xxiii. 37, which speaks more of Divine tenderness. It is a phrase often used in the psalms, *Ps.* xvii. 8; xxxvi. 7; lvii. 1; lxi. 4; xci. 4; and nowhere else in this sense, except *Ru.* ii. 12, where Ruth, when she became a proselyte, is said to trust under the wings of the God of Israel. It is our duty to rejoice in the shadow

of God's wings, which notes our recourse to him by faith and prayer, as naturally as the chickens when they are cold or frightened run by instinct under the wings of the hen. It intimates also our reliance upon him as able and ready to help us, and our refreshment and satisfaction in his care and protection. Having committed ourselves to God, we must be easy and pleased, and quiet from the fear of evil. Now let us see farther,

First. What were the supports and encouragements of David's confidence in God. Two things were as props to that hope, which the word of God was the only foundation of:

1. His former experiences of God's power in relieving him. "Because thou hast been my help," when other helps and helpers failed me, therefore I will still rejoice in thy salvation, will trust in thee for the future, and will do it with delight and holy joy. Thou hast been not only my helper, but my help; for we could never have helped ourselves, nor could any creature have been helpful to us, but by him. Here we may set up our Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto the Lord has helped us," and must therefore resolve that we will never desert him, never distrust him, nor ever droop in our walking with him.

2. The present sense he had of God's grace carrying him on in these pursuits; ver. 8, "My soul follows hard after thee," which speaks a very earnest desire, and a serious, vigorous endeavour to keep up communion with God. If we cannot always have God in our embraces, yet we must always have him in our eye, reaching forth towards him as our prize, *Phil.* iii. 14. To press hard after God, is to follow him close, as those that are afraid of losing the sight of him, and to follow him fast, as those that long to be with him. This David did, and he owns to the glory of God, "Thy right hand upholds me." God upholds him, 1st. Under his afflictions, that he might not sink under him. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." 2nd. In his devotions. God upheld him in his holy desires and pursuits, that he might not grow weary in well doing. Those that follow hard after God would soon fail and give off if God's right hand did not uphold them. It is he that strengthens us in the pursuit of him, quickens our good affections, and comforts us while we have not yet attained what we are in the pursuit of. It is by the power of God, that is his right hand, that we are kept from falling. Now this was a great encouragement to the psalmist to hope that he would in due time give him that which he so earnestly desired, because he had by his grace wrought in him those desires, and kept them up.

Secondly. What it was that David triumphed in the hopes of.

1. That his enemies should be ruined, ver. 9, 10. There were those that sought his soul to destroy it. Not only his life, which they struck at, both to prevent his coming to the crown, and because they envied and hated him for his wisdom, piety, and usefulness, but his soul; they sought to destroy that by banishing him from God's ordinances, which are the nourishment and support of the soul, and so doing what they could to starve it; and by sending him to serve other gods, and so doing what they could to poison it, 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 19. But he foresees and foretells, 1st. That they shall go into the lower parts of the earth—to the grave—to hell. Their enmity to David would be their death, and their damnation; their ruin, their eternal ruin. 2nd. That they shall fall by the sword—by the sword of God's wrath and his justice—by the sword of man, *Job* xix. 18, 29. They shall die a violent death, *Rev.* xiii. 10. This was fulfilled in Saul; he fell by the sword, his own sword. David foretold this, yet he would not execute it when it was in the power of his hand, once and again; for precepts, not prophecies, are our rule. 3rd. That "they shall be a portion for foxes." Either their dead bodies shall be a prey to ravenous beasts, (Saul lay a good while unburied,) or their houses and estates shall be a habitation for wild beasts, *Isa.* xxxiv. 14. Such as this will be the doom of Christ's enemies, that oppose his kingdom and interest in the world. "Bring them forth and slay them before me," *Lu.* xix. 27.

2. That he himself should gain his point at last, ver. 11. That he should be advanced to the throne to which he had been anointed. "The king shall rejoice in God." 1st. He calls himself the king, because he knew himself to be so in the Divine purpose and designation. Thus Paul, while yet in the conflict, writes himself more than a conqueror, *Rom.* viii. 37. Believers are made kings, though they are not to have the dominion till the morning of the resurrection. 2nd. He doubts not but that though he was now sowing in tears, yet he should reap in joy. "The king shall rejoice." 3rd. He resolves to make God the alpha and omega of all his joys; he shall rejoice in God. Now this is applicable to the glories and joys of the exalted Redeemer. Messiah the prince shall rejoice in God: he is already entered into the joy set before him, and his glory will be completed at his second coming.

Two things would be the good effect of his advancement. *First.* It would be the consolation of his friends. Every one that swears to him, that is, to David, that comes into his interest, and takes an oath of allegiance to him, shall glory in his success; or, that swears by him, that is, by the blessed name of God, and not by any idol, *Deu.* vi. 13. And then it means all good people, that make a sincere and open profession of God's name. They shall glory in God; they shall glory in David's advancement. "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me." They that heartily espouse the cause of Christ, shall glory in its victory at last. "If we suffer with him we shall reign with him." *Secondly.* It would be the confutation of his enemies. "The mouth of them that speak lies," of Saul, and Doeg, and others that misrepresented David, and insulted over him as if his cause was desperate, "shall be" quite "stopped;" they shall not have one word more to say against him, but will be for ever silenced and shamed. Apply this to Christ's enemies, those that speak lies to him, as all hypocrites do, that tell him they love him, but their hearts are not with him; their mouth shall be stopped with that word, "I know you not whence you are," they shall be for ever speechless, *Mat.* xxii. 12. Those that speak lies against him, who "pervert the right ways of the Lord," and speak ill of his holy religion, their mouths will be stopped too, in that day when the Lord shall come to reckon for all the hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. Christ's second coming will be the everlasting triumph of all his faithful friends and followers, who may therefore now triumph in the believing hopes of it.

PSALM LXIV.

The whole psalm has reference to David's enemies, persecutors, and slanderers; many such there were, and a great deal of trouble they gave him, almost all his days, so that we need not guess at any particular occasion of penning this psalm. I. He prays to God to preserve him from their malicious designs against him, ver. 1, 2. II. He gives a very ill character of them, as men marked for ruin by their own wickedness, ver. 3—6. III. By the Spirit of prophecy he foretells their destruction, which would redound to the glory of God, and the encouragement of his people, ver. 7—10. In singing this psalm we must observe the effect of the old enmity that is in the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent; and assure ourselves that the serpent's head will be broken at last to the honour and joy of the holy seed.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

HEAR my voice, O God, in my prayer:
Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
2 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked;
From the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:
3 Who whet their tongue like a sword,
And bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows, *even* bitter words:
4 That they may shoot in secret at the perfect:
Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
5 They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter:
They commune of laying snares privily;
They say, Who shall see them?
6 They search out iniquities;
They accomplish a diligent search:
Both the inward *thought* of every one *of them*, and the heart, *is* deep.

David in these verses puts in before God a representation of his own danger, and of his enemies' character, to enforce his petition that God would protect him and punish them.

First. He earnestly begs of God to preserve him; ver. 1, 2, "Hear my voice, O God, in prayer;" that is, grant me the thing I pray for; and this is it, "Lord, preserve my life from fear of the enemy," that is, from the enemy that I am in fear of. He makes request for his life, which is in a particular manner dear to him, because he knows it is designed to be very serviceable to God and his generation. When his life is struck at, it cannot be thought he should altogether hold his peace: allude to *Est.* vii. 3, 4. And if he plead his fear of the enemy, it is no disparagement to his courage; his father Jacob, that prince with God, did so before him, *Gen.* xxxii. 11, "Deliver me from the hand of Esau, for I fear him." "Preserve my life from fear," that is, not only from the thing itself which I fear, but from the disquieting fear of it. And this is in effect the preservation of the life; for fear has torment, particularly the fear of death, by reason of which some are all their lifetime subject to bondage. He prays, "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked," that is, from the mischief which they secretly consult among themselves to do against me; and "from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity," who join forces as they join counsels to do me a mischief. Observe, the secret counsel ends in an insurrection. Treasonable practices begin in treasonable confederacies and conspiracies. Hide me from them, that they may not find me, that they may not reach me. Let me be safe under thy protection.

Secondly. He complains of the great malice and wickedness of his enemies. Lord, hide me from them, for they are the worst of men, not fit to be connived at; they are dangerous men, that will stick at nothing; so that I am undone, if thou do not take my part.

1. They are very spiteful in their calumnies and reproaches, ver. 3, 4. They are described as military men, with their sword and bow; archers, that take aim exactly, secretly, and suddenly shoot at the harmless bird, that apprehends not herself in any danger. But, 1st. Their tongues are their swords, flaming swords, two-edged swords, drawn swords, drawn in anger, with which they cut, and wound, and kill the good name of their neighbour. The tongue is a little member, but like the sword, it boasts great things, *Jas.* iii. 5. It is a dangerous weapon. 2nd. Bitter words are their arrows. Scurrilous reflections, opprobrious nicknames, false representations, slanders and calumnies, the fiery darts of the wicked one, set on fire of hell. For these their malice bends their bows, to send out these arrows with so much the more force. 3rd. The upright man is their mark. Against him their spleen is, and they cannot speak peaceably either of him or to him. The better any man is, the more he is envied by those that are themselves bad, and the more ill is said of him. 4th. They manage it with a great deal of art and subtlety. They shoot in secret, that those they shoot at may not discover them and avoid the danger, for "in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." And suddenly do they shoot, without giving a man lawful warning, or any opportunity to defend himself. "Cursed be he that" thus "smiteth his neighbour secretly," in his reputation, *Deu.* xxvii. 24. There is no guard against a pass made by a false tongue. 5th. Herein they fear not; that is, they are confident of their success, and doubt not but by these methods they shall gain the point which their malice aims at. Or, rather, they fear not the wrath of God, which will be the portion of a false tongue. They are impudent and daring in the mischief they do to good people, as if they must never be called to an acount for it.

2. They are very close, and very resolute in their malicious projects, ver. 5. 1st. They strengthen and corroborate themselves and one another in this evil matter, and by joining together in it they make one another the more bitter and the more bold; *Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit*,—'Lay on an abundance of reproach, for it will be sure to stick.' It is bad to do an ill thing, but worse to encourage ourselves and one another in it; that is doing the devil's work for him. It is a sign the heart is hardened to the highest degree, when it is thus fully set to do evil, and fears no colours. It is the office of conscience to discourage men in an evil matter, but when that is baffled the case is desperate. 2nd. They consult with themselves and one another how to do the most mischief, and most effectually; "They commune of laying snares privily." All their communion is in sin; and all their communication is how to sin securely. They hold councils of war for finding out the most effectual expedient to do mischief; every snare they lay was talked of before, and was laid with all the contrivance of their wicked wits combined. 3rd. They please themselves with an atheistical conceit that God himself takes no notice of their wicked practices; "They say, Who shall see them?" A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked.

3. They are very industrious in putting their projects in execution; ver. 6, "They search out iniquity," that is, they take a great deal of pains to find out some iniquity or other to lay to my charge; they dig deep, and look far back, and put things to the utmost stretch, that they may have something to accuse me of. Or, they are industrious to find out new arts of doing mischief to me; in this "they accomplish a diligent search;" they go through with it, and spare neither cost nor labour, "evil men dig up mischief." Half the pains that many take to damn their souls would serve to save them. They are masters of all the arts of mischief and destruction; for "the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart is deep," deep as hell, desperately wicked, who can know it? By the unaccountable wickedness of their wit, and of their will, they shew themselves to be both in subtlety and malignity the genuine offspring of the old serpent.

7 But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow;
Suddenly shall they be wounded. [selves:
8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon them-
All that see them shall flee away.
9 And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God;
For they shall wisely consider of his doing.
10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust
And all the upright in heart shall glory. [in him;

We may observe here,

First. The judgments of God which should certainly come upon these malicious persecutors of David. Though they encouraged themselves in their wickedness, here is that which, if they would believe and consider it, was enough to discourage them. And it is observable how the punishment answers the sin. 1. They shot at David secretly and suddenly to wound him; but "God shall shoot at them;" for he "ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors," *Ps.* vii. 13; "against the face of them," *Ps.* xxi. 12. And God's arrows will hit surer, and fly swifter, and pierce deeper than theirs do or can. They have many arrows, but they are only bitter words, and words are but wind; the curse causeless shall not come. But God has one arrow that will be their death; his curse which is never causeless, and therefore shall come. With it they shall be suddenly wounded, that is, their wound by it will be a surprise upon them, because they were secure, and not apprehensive of any danger. 2. Their tongues fell upon him, but God shall "make their own tongues to fall upon themselves;" they do it by the desert of their sin, God doth it by the justice of his wrath, ver. 8. When God deals with men according to the desert of their tongue-sins, and brings those mischiefs upon them which they have passionately and maliciously imprecated upon others, then he makes their own tongues to fall upon them; and it is weight enough to sink a man to the lowest hell, like a talent of lead. Many have cut their own throats, and many more have damned their own souls with their tongues, and it will be an aggravation of their condemnation; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," art "snared in the words of thy mouth." "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." They that love cursing it shall come unto them. Sometimes men's secret wickedness is brought to light by their own confession; and then their own tongue falls upon themselves.

Secondly. The influence which these judgments should have upon others; for it is done "in the open sight of all," *Job* xxxiv. 26.

1. Their neighbours shall shun them, and shift for their own safety; they shall flee away, for fear of partaking in their plagues, and being involved in their ruin. So dreadful will it be, and such a noise will it make in the country, they shall flee away as the men of Israel did from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, *Num.* xvi. 27. Some think this was fulfilled in the death of Saul; when not only his army was dispersed, but the inhabitants of the neighbouring country were so terrified with the fall, not only of their king, but of his three sons, that they quitted their cities and fled, 1 *Sam.* xxxi. 7.

2. Spectators shall reverence the providence of God therein, ver. 9. 1st. They shall understand and observe God's hand in all; and unless we do so we are not likely to profit by the dispensations of Providence, *Hos.* xiv. 9, "They shall wisely consider his doing." There is need of consideration and serious thought rightly to take the matter of fact, and need of wisdom to put a true interpretation upon it. God's doing is well worth our considering, *Eccl.* vii. 13; but it must be considered wisely, that we put not a corrupt gloss upon a pure text. 2nd. They shall be affected with a holy awe of God upon the consideration of it. All men (all that have any thing of the reason of a man in them) shall fear, and tremble because of God's judgments, *Ps.* cxix. 120. They shall fear to do the like, fear being found persecutors of God's people; smite the scorner, and the simple shall beware. 3rd. They shall declare the work of God; they shall speak to one another, and to all about them of the justice of God in punishing persecutors. What we wisely consider ourselves, we should wisely declare to others, for their edification and the glory of God; "This is the finger of God."

3. Good people shall in a special manner take notice of it, and it shall affect them with a holy pleasure, ver. 10. 1st. It shall increase their joy. "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord," not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow-creatures, but glad that God is glorified; and his word fulfilled, and the cause of injured innocency pleaded effectually. 2nd. It shall encourage their faith. They shall commit themselves to him in the way of duty, and be willing to venture for him with an entire confidence in him. 3rd. Their joy and faith shall both express themselves in a holy boasting. "All the upright in heart," that keep a good conscience, and approve themselves to God, "shall glory," not in themselves, but in the favour of God; in his righteousness and goodness, their relation to him, and interest in him. "Let him that glories glory in the Lord."

PSALM LXV.

In this psalm we are directed to give to God the glory of his power and goodness, which appears, I. In the kingdom of grace, ver. 1; hearing prayer, ver. 2; pardoning sin, ver. 3; satisfying the souls of the people, ver. 4; protecting and supporting them, ver. 5. II. In the kingdom of providence: fixing the mountains, ver. 6; calming the sea, ver. 7; preserving the regular succession of day and night, ver. 8; and making the earth fruitful, ver. 9—13. These are blessings we are all indebted to God for, and therefore may easily accommodate this psalm to ourselves in singing of it.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm *and* Song of David.

PRAISE waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion:
And unto thee shall the vow be performed.
2 O thou that hearest prayer,
Unto thee shall all flesh come.
3 Iniquities prevail against me:
As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.
4 Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest,
And causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts:
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
Even of thy holy temple.
5 *By* terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us,
O God of our salvation;
Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth,
And of them that are afar off *upon* the sea:

The psalmist here has no particular concern of his own at the throne of grace; but begins with an address to God, as the master of an assembly, and the mouth of a congregation; and observe,

First. How he gives glory to God, ver. 1. 1. By humble thankfulness. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion;" waits in expectation of the mercy desired, waits till it arrives, that it may be received with thankfulness at its first approach. When God is coming towards us with his favours, we must go forth to meet him with our praises, and wait till the day dawn. Praise waits with an entire satisfaction in thy holy will, and dependence on thy mercy; when we stand ready in every thing to give thanks, then praise waits for God. Praise waits thine acceptance; the Levites by night stood in the house of the Lord, ready to sing their songs of praise at the hour appointed, (*Ps.* cxxxiv. 1, 2,) and thus their praise waited for him. 'Praise is silent unto thee,' so the word is, as wanting words to express the great goodness of God, and being struck with a silent admiration at it. As there are holy groanings which cannot be uttered, so there are holy adorings which cannot be uttered; and yet shall be accepted by Him that searcheth the heart, and knoweth what is the mind of the spirit. Our praise is silent, that the praises of the blessed angels, who excel in strength, may be heard. Let it not be told him that I speak; for if a man offer to speak forth all God's praise, "surely he shall be swallowed up," *Job* xxxvii. 20. 'Before thee, praise is reputed as silence,' so the Chaldee; so far exalted is God above all our blessing and praise. Praise is due to God from all the world, but it waits for him in Zion only, in his church, among his people. All his works praise him, that is, they minister matter for praise, but his saints only bless him by actual adorations. The redeemed church sing their new song upon mount Zion, *Rev.* xiv. 1, 3; in Zion was God's dwelling-place, *Ps.* lxxvi. 2. Happy they who dwell with him there, for they will be still praising him. 2. By sincere faithfulness. "Unto thee shall the vow be performed;" that is, the sacrifice shall be offered up, which was vowed. We shall not be accepted in our thanksgivings to God for the mercies we have received, unless we make conscience of paying the vows which we made when we were in pursuit of the mercy; for better it is not to vow than to vow and not to pay.

Secondly. What he gives him glory for.

1. For hearing prayer; ver. 2, "Praise waits for thee;" and why is it so ready? 1st. Because thou art ready to grant our petitions. "O thou that hearest prayer;" thou canst answer every prayer, for thou art able to do for us more than we are able to ask or think, *Eph.* iii. 20; and thou wilt answer every prayer of faith either in kind or kindness. It is much for the glory of God's goodness, and the encouragement of ours, that he is a God hearing prayer, and has taken it among the titles of his honour to be so; and we are much wanting to ourselves if we do not take all occasions to give him his title. 2. Because for that reason we are ready to run to him when we are in our straits. Therefore, because thou art a God hearing prayer, "unto thee shall all flesh come." Justly doth every man's praise wait for thee, because every man's prayer waits on thee, when he is in want or distress, whatever he doth at other times. Now only the seed of Israel come to thee, and the proselytes to their religion; but when thy "house shall be called a house of prayer to all people," then unto thee shall all flesh come, and be welcome, *Rom.* x. 12, 13. To him let us come, and come boldly, because he is a God that hears prayer.

2. For pardoning sin. In this who is a God like unto him? *Mic.* vii. 18; by this he proclaims his name, *Ex.* xxxiv. 7; and, therefore, upon this account, praise waits for him, ver. 3. Our sins reach to the heavens; "iniquities prevail against us," and appear so numerous, so heinous, that when they are set in order before us we are full of confusion, and ready to fall into despair. They prevail so against us, that we cannot pretend to balance them with any righteousness of our own; so that when we appear before God our own consciences accuse us, and we have no replication to make; and yet, "as for our transgressions, thou shalt" of thine own free mercy, and for the sake of a righteousness of thine own providing, "thou shalt purge them away," so that we shall not come into condemnation for them. Note, The greater our danger is by reason of sin, the more cause we have to admire the power and riches of God's pardoning mercy, which can invalidate the threatening force of our manifold transgressions and our mighty sins.

3. For the kind entertainment he gives to those that attend upon him; and the comfort they have in communion with him. Iniquity must first be purged away, ver. 3, and then we are welcome to compass God's altars, ver. 4. They that come into communion with God shall certainly find true happiness and full satisfaction in that communion.

1st. They are blessed. Not only blessed is the nation, *Ps.* xxxiii. 12; but "blessed is the man," the particular person, how mean soever, "whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts." He is a happy man, for he hath the surest token of the Divine favour, and the surest pledge and earnest of everlasting bliss. Observe here, *First.* What it is to come into communion with God, in order to this blessedness. 1*st.* It is to approach to him by laying hold on his covenant, setting our best affections upon him, and letting out our desires towards him; it is to converse with him as one we love and value. 2*nd.* It is to dwell in his courts, as the priests and Levites did that were at home in God's house; it is to be constant in the exercises of religion, and apply ourselves closely to them as we do to that which is the business of our dwelling-place. *Secondly.* How we come into communion with God. Not recommended by any merit of our own, or brought in by any management of our own, but by God's free choice; "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest," and so distinguishest from others who are left to themselves; and it is by his effectual special grace pursuant to that choice. Whom he chooseth, he causeth to approach; not only invites them, but inclines and enables them to draw nigh to him. He draws them, *Jno.* vi. 44.

2nd. They shall be satisfied. Here the psalmist changeth the person; not, he shall be satisfied, the man whom thou choosest, but we shall; which teacheth us to apply the promises to ourselves, and by an active faith to put our own names into them. "We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." Note, *First.* God's holy temple is his house; there he dwells where his ordinances are administered. *Secondly.* God keeps a good house; there is abundance of goodness in his house, righteousness and grace, and all the comforts of the everlasting covenant. There is enough for all, enough for each; it is ready, always ready, and all on free cost; "without money, and without price." *Thirdly.* In those things there is that which is satisfying to a soul, and with which all gracious souls will be satisfied. Let them have the pleasure of communion with God and that sufficeth them: they have enough, they desire no more.

4. For the glorious operations of his power on their behalf; ver. 5, "By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation." This may be understood of the rebukes which God in his providence sometimes gives to his own people. He often answers them by terrrible things, for the awakening and quickening of them, but always in righteousness. He neither doth them any wrong nor means them any hurt, for even then he is the God of their salvation: see *Isa.* xlv. 15. But it is rather to be understood of his judgments upon their enemies. God answers his people's prayers by the destructions made for their sakes among the heathen, and the recompence he renders to their proud oppressors, as a righteous God, the God to whom vengeance belongs, and as the God that protects and saves his people. By wonderful things, so some read it; things which are very surprising, and which we looked not for, *Isa.* lxiv. 3. Or, by things which strike an awe upon us, thou wilt answer us. The holy freedom that we are admitted to in God's courts, and the nearness of our approach to him, must not at all abate our reverence and godly fear of him; for he is terrible in his holy places.

5. For the care he takes of all his people, howsoever distressed, and whithersoever dispersed. "He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth;" that is, of all the saints all the world over, and not theirs only that were of the seed of Israel, for he is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews; the confidence of them that are afar off from his holy temple, and the courts of that, that dwell in the islands of the Gentiles, or that are in distress upon the sea. They trust in thee, and cry to thee when they are at their wits' end, *Ps.* cvii. 27, 28. By faith and prayer we may keep up our communion with God, and fetch in comfort from him wherever we are, not only in the solemn assemblies of his people, but afar off upon the sea.

6 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains;
Being girded with power:
7 Which stilleth the noise of the seas,
The noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.
8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at
thy tokens: [to rejoice.
Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening
9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it:
Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, *which* is
Thou preparest them corn, [full of water:
When thou hast so provided for it.
10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly:
Thou settlest the furrows thereof:
Thou makest it soft with showers:
Thou blessest the springing thereof.
11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness;
And thy paths drop fatness.
12 They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness:
And the little hills rejoice on every side.
13 The pastures are clothed with flocks;
The valleys also are covered over with corn;
They shout for joy, they also sing.

That we may be the more affected with the wonderful condescensions of the God of grace, it is of use to observe his power and sovereignty as the God of nature; the riches and bounty of his providential kingdom.

First. He establisheth the earth, and it abideth, *Ps.* cxix. 90; ver. 6, by his own strength he setteth fast the mountains; did set them fast at first, and still keeps them firm, though they are sometimes shaken by earthquakes.

——— *Feriuntque summos*
Fulmina montes.
'The lightning blasts the loftiest hills.'

Hence they are called everlasting mountains, *Hab.* iii. 6. Yet God's covenant with his people is said to stand more firm than they, *Isa.* liv. 10.

Secondly. He stills the sea, and it is quiet, ver. 7. The sea in a storm makes a great noise, which adds to its threatening terror; but when God pleaseth he commands silence among the waves and billows, and lays them to sleep; turns the storm into a calm presently, *Ps.* cvii. 29. And by this change in the sea, as well as by the former instance of the unchangeableness of the earth, it appears that He whose the sea and the dry land are is girded with power. And by this our Lord Jesus gave a proof of his Divine power, that he commanded the winds and waves, and they obeyed him. To this instance of the quieting of the sea, he adds, as a thing much of the same nature, that he "stills the tumult of the people," the common people. Nothing more unruly and disagreeable than the insurrections of the mob, the insults of the rabble; yet even these God can pacify in secret ways, and which they themselves are not aware of. Or, it may be meant of the outrage of the people that were enemies to Israel, *Ps.* ii. 1. God has many ways to still them, and will for ever silence their tumults.

Thirdly. He renews the morning and evening, and their revolution is constant, ver. 8. This regular succession of day and night may be considered, 1. As an instance of God's great power; and so it strikes an awe upon all. "They that dwell in the uttermost parts" of the earth "are afraid at thy signs," or tokens; they are by them convinced that there is a supreme *Numen*, a sovereign monarch, before whom they ought to fear and tremble; for in these things the invisible things of God are clearly seen, and therefore they are said to be set for signs, *Gen.* i. 14. Many of them that dwelt in the remote and dark corners of the earth were so afraid at these tokens that they were driven to worship them. *Deu.* iv. 19; not considering that they were God's tokens, undeniable proofs of his power and godhead, and therefore they should have been led by them to worship him. 2. As an instance of God's great goodness; and so it brings comfort to all. "Thou makest the outgoings of the morning," before the sun riseth, "and of the evening," before the sun sets, "to rejoice." As it is God that scatters the light of the morning, and draws the curtains of the evening, so he doth both in favour to man, and makes both to rejoice; that is, gives occasion to us to rejoice in both; so that how contrary soever light and darkness are to each other, and how inviolable soever the partition between them, *Gen.* i. 4, both are equally welcome to the world in their season. It is hard to say which is more welcome to us, the light of the morning which befriends the business of the day, or the shadows of the evening which befriend the repose of the night. Doth the watchman wait for the morning? so doth the hireling earnestly desire the shadow. Some understand it of the morning and evening sacrifice, which good people greatly rejoiced in, and in which God was constantly honoured. Thou makest them to sing, so the word is; for every morning and every evening songs of praise were sung by the Levites; it was that which the duty of every day required. And we are to look upon our daily worship, alone and with our families, to be both the most needful of our daily business and the most delightful of our daily comforts; and if therein we keep up our communion with God, the outgoings both of the morning and of the evening are thereby made truly to rejoice.

Fourthly. He watereth the earth, and maketh it fruitful. On this instance of God's power and goodness he enlarges very much; the psalm being probably penned upon occasion either of a more than ordinary plentiful harvest or of a seasonable rain after long drought. How much the fruitfulness of this lower part of the creation depends upon the influence of the upper is easy to observe; if the heavens be as brass, the earth is as iron; which is a sensible intimation to a stupid world, that every good and perfect gift is from above, *omnia desuper*,—'all from above;' that we must lift up our eyes above the hills, lift them up to the heavens, where the original springs of all blessings are, out of sight; and thither must our praises return. As the firstfruits of the earth were in the heave-offerings lifted up towards heaven by way of acknowledgment that thence they were derived. All God's blessings, even spiritual ones, are expressed by his raining righteousness upon us. Now observe how the common blessing of rain from heaven and fruitful seasons is here described.

1. How much there is in it of the power and goodness of God; which is here set forth by a great variety of lively expressions. 1st. God that made the earth hereby visits it, sends to it, gives proof of his care of it, ver. 9. It is a visit in mercy, which the inhabitants of the earth ought to return in praises. 2nd. God that made it dry land hereby waters it, in order to its fruitfulness. Though the products of the earth flourished before God had caused it to rain, yet even then there was a mist which answered the intention, and "watered the whole face of the ground," *Gen.* ii. 5, 6. Our hearts are dry and barren, unless God himself be as the dew to us, and water us; and the plants of his own planting he will water, and make them to increase. 3rd. Rain is the river of God, which is full of water; the clouds are the springs of this river, which do not flow at random, but in the channel which God cuts out for it. The showers of rain, as the rivers of water, he turneth which way soever he pleaseth. 4th. This river of God enricheth the earth, which without it would quickly be a poor thing. The riches of the earth which are produced out of its surface are every jot as valuable, and abundantly more useful and serviceable to man, than those which are hid in its bowels. We might live well enough without silver and gold, but not without corn and grass.

2. How much benefit and advantage comes by it to the earth, and to man upon it.

1st. To the earth itself. The rain in season gives it a new face; nothing more reviving, more refreshing, than the rain upon the new-mown grass, *Ps.* lxxii. 6. Even the ridges of the earth, off which the rain seems to slide, are watered abundantly, for they drink in the rain which comes often upon them; the furrows of it which are turned up by the plough, in order to the seedness, are settled by the rain, and made fit to receive the seed, ver. 10; they are settled by being made soft. That which makes the soil of the heart tender settles it; for the heart is established with that grace. Thus the springing of the year is blessed: and if the spring, that first quarter of the year, be blessed, that is an earnest of a blessing upon the whole year, which God is therefore said to crown with his goodness, ver. 11; to compass it on every side, as the head is compassed with a crown; and to complete the comforts of it, as the end of a thing is said to crown it. And his paths are said to drop fatness; for whatever fatness there is in the earth which impregnates its products, it comes from the outgoings of the Divine goodness. Wherever God goes, he leaves the tokens of his mercy behind him, *Joel* ii. 13, and makes his path thus to shine after him. These communications of God's goodness to this lower world are very extensive, and diffusive; ver. 12, "They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness," and not only upon the pastures of the inhabited land. The deserts, which man takes no care of, and receives no profit from, yet are under the care of the Divine providence, and the profits of them redound to the glory of God, as the great benefactor of the whole creation, though not immediately to the benefit of man; and we ought to be thankful not only for that which serves us, but for that which serves any part of the creation, because thereby it turns to the honour of the Creator. The wilderness, which makes not such returns as the cultivated grounds doth, yet receives as much of the rain of heaven as the most fruitful soil; for God doth good to the evil and unthankful. So extensive are the gifts of God's bounty, that in them the hills, "the little hills rejoice on every side," even the north side, that lies most from the sun. Hills are not above the need of God's providence; little hills are not below the cognizance of it. But as when he pleaseth he can make them tremble, *Ps.* cxiv. 6, so when he pleaseth he can make them rejoice.

2nd. To man upon the earth. God, by providing rain for the earth, prepareth corn for man, ver. 9. "As for the earth, out of it cometh bread," *Job* xxviii. 5, for out of it cometh corn; but every grain of corn that comes out of it God himself prepared; and therefore he provides rain for the earth, that thereby he may prepare corn for man, under whose feet he has put the rest of the creatures, and for whose use he has fitted them. When we consider that the yearly produce of the corn is not only an operation of the same power that raiseth the dead, but an instance of that power not much unlike it, as appears by that of our Saviour, *Jno.* xii. 24, and that the constant benefit we have by it is an instance of that goodness which endureth for ever, we shall have reason to think, it is no less than a God that prepares corn for us. Corn and cattle are the two staple commodities with which the husbandman that deals immediately in the fruits of the earth is enriched; and both are owing to the Divine goodness in watering the earth, ver. 13. To this it is owing that "the pastures are clothed with flocks," ver. 13. So well stocked are the pastures that they seem to be covered over with the cattle that are laid in them; and yet the pasture not overcharged; so well fed are the cattle, that they are the ornament and the glory of the pastures in which they are fed. The valleys are so fruitful, that they seem to be covered over with corn, in the time of harvest. The lowest parts of the earth are commonly the most fruitful, and one acre of the humble valleys is worth five of the lofty mountains. But both corn-ground and pasture-ground, answering the end of their creation, are said to shout for joy, and sing; because they are serviceable to the honour of God, and the comfort of man, and because they furnish us with matter for joy and praise. As there is no earthly joy above the joy of harvest, so there was none of the feasts of the Lord among the Jews solemnized with greater expressions of thankfulness than the feast of ingathering at the end of the year, *Ex.* xxiii. 16. Let all these common gifts of the Divine bounty which we yearly and daily partake of increase our love to God as the best of beings, and engage us to glorify him with our bodies, which he thus provides so well for.

PSALM LXVI.

This is a thanksgiving psalm; and it is of such a general use and application, that we need not suppose it penned upon any particular occasion. All people are here called upon to praise God, I. For the general instances of his sovereign dominion and power in the whole creation, ver. 1—7. II. For the special tokens of his favour to the church, his peculiar people, ver. 8—12. And then, III. The psalmist praiseth God for his own experiences of his goodness to him in particular, especially in answering his prayers, ver. 13—20. If we have learned in every thing to give thanks for ancient and modern mercies, public and personal mercies, we shall know how to sing this psalm with grace and understanding.

To the chief Musician, a Song *or* Psalm

MAKE a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:
2 Sing forth the honour of his name:
Make his praise glorious.
3 Say unto God, How terrible *art thou in* thy works!
Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies
submit themselves unto thee.
4 All the earth shall worship thee, [Selah.
And shall sing unto thee; they shall sing *to* thy name.
5 Come and see the works of God:
He is terrible *in his* doing toward the children of men
6 He turned the sea into dry *land:*
They went through the flood on foot:
There did we rejoice in him.
7 He ruleth by his power for ever;
His eyes behold the nations:
Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

First. In these verses the psalmist calls upon all people to praise God. "All lands," 'all the earth,' ver. 1, all the inhabitants of the world that are capable of praising God. 1. This speaks the glory of God, that he is worthy to be praised by all, for he is good to all, and furnisheth every nation with matter for praise. 2. The duty of man; that all are obliged to praise God. It is part of the law of creation, and therefore is required of every creature. 3. A prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. The time should come when all lands should praise God, and this incense should in every place be offered to him. 4. A hearty good-will which the psalmist had to this good work of praising God. He will abound in it himself, and wishes that God might have his tribute paid him by all the nations of the earth, and not by the land of Israel only. He excites all lands, 1st. To make a joyful noise to God. Holy joy is that devout affection which should animate all our praises; and though it is not making a noise in religion that God will accept of, (hypocrites are said to cause their voice to be heard on high, *Isa.* lviii. 4,) yet, in praising God, *First.* We must be hearty and zealous, and what we do must do with all our might, with all that is within us. *Secondly.* We must be open and public, as those that are not ashamed of our Master; and both these are implied in making a noise, a joyful noise. 2nd. To sing with pleasure, and to sing forth, for the edification of others, the honour of his name; that is, of all that whereby he has made himself known, ver. 2. That which is the honour of God's name ought to be the matter of our praise. 3rd. To make his praise glorious as far as we can. In praising God we must do it so as to glorify him, and that must be the scope and drift of all our praises. Reckon it your greatest glory to praise God; so some. It is the highest honour the creature is capable of, to be to the Creator for a name and a praise.

Secondly. He had called upon all lands to praise God, ver. 1, 4; he foretells that they shall do so, "All the earth shall worship thee;" some in all parts of the earth, even the remotest regions, for the everlasting Gospel shall be preached to every nation and kindred; and this is the purport of it, "Worship him that made heaven and earth," *Rev.* xiv. 6, 7. And being thus sent forth, it shall not return void, but shall bring all the earth, more or less, to worship God and sing unto him. In gospel times God should be worshipped by singing of psalms. They shall sing to God; that is, sing to his name; for it is only to his declarative glory,—that by which he has made himself known,—not to his essential glory, that we can contribute any thing by our praises.

Thirdly. That we may be furnished with matter for praise, we are here called upon to come and see the works of God; for his own works praise him, whether we do or not; and the reason why we do not praise him more and better is, because we do not duly and attentively observe them. Let us, therefore, see God's works, and observe the instances of his wisdom, power, and faithfulness in them, ver. 5; and then speak of them, and speak of them to him; ver. 3, "Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! terrible in thy doings!"

1. God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as, when duly considered, may justly fill us with amazement. God is terrible; that is, admirable in his works through the greatness of his power; which is such, and shines so bright, so strong in all he doth, that it may be truly said, there are not any works like unto his works. Hence he is said to be fearful in praises, *Ex.* xv. 11. In all his doings towards the children of men he is terrible, and to be eyed with a holy awe. Much of religion lies in a reverence for the Divine providence.

2. They are formidable to his enemies, and have many a time forced and frightened them into a feigned submission; ver. 3, "Through the greatness of thy power," before which none can stand, "shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." They shall lie unto thee, so the word is; that is, they shall be compelled sore against their wills to make their peace with thee upon any terms. Subjection extorted by fear is seldom sincere, and therefore force is no proper means of propagating religion; nor can there be much joy of such proselytes to the church as will in the end be found liars unto it. *Deu.* xxxiii. 29.

3. They are comfortable and beneficial to his people, ver. 6. When Israel came out of Egypt, "he turned the sea into dry land" before them, which encouraged them to follow God's conduct through the wilderness; and when they were to enter Canaan, for their encouragement in their wars, Jordan was divided before them, and they "went through that flood on foot;" and such foot, so signally owned by Heaven, might well pass for cavalry rather than infantry in the wars of the Lord. There did the enemies tremble before them, *Ex.* xv. 14, 15; *Jos.* v. 1; but "there did we rejoice him;" both trust his power (for relying on God is often expressed by rejoicing in him) and sing his praise, *Ps.* cvi. 12. There did we rejoice, that is, our ancestors did, and we in their loins. The joys of our fathers were our joys, and we ought to look upon ourselves as sharers in them.

4. They are commanding to all. God by his works keeps up his dominion in the world; ver. 7, "He rules by his power for ever, his eyes behold the nations." 1st. God has a commanding eye. From the height of heaven his eye commands all the inhabitants of the world, and he has a clear and full view of them all. His eyes run to and fro through the earth; the most remote and obscure nations are under his inspection. 2nd. He has a commanding arm. His power rules, rules for ever, and is never weakened, never obstructed; "Strong is his hand, and high is his right hand." From hence he infers, "Let not the rebellious exalt themselves;" let not those that have revolting and rebellious hearts dare to rise up in any overt acts of rebellion against God, as Adonijah exalted himself, saying, "I will be king." Let not those that are in rebellion against God exalt themselves, as if there were any probability that they should gain their point; no, let them be still, for God hath said, I will be exalted, and man cannot gainsay it.

8 O bless our God, ye people,
And make the voice of his praise to be heard:
9 Which holdeth our soul in life,
And suffereth not our feet to be moved.
10 For thou, O God, hast proved us:
Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
11 Thou broughtest us into the net;
Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.
12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads;
We went through fire and through water:
But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy *place.*

In these verses the psalmist calls upon God's people in a special manner to praise him; let all lands do it, but Israel's land particularly. "Bless our God;" bless him as ours, a God in covenant with us, and that takes care of us as his own. Let them "make the voice of his praise to be heard," ver. 8; for from whom should it be heard, but from those who are his peculiar favourites and select attendants? Two things we have reason to bless God for:

First. Common protection, ver. 9. He "holdeth our soul in life," that it may not drop away of itself; for, being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers. We must own that it is the good providence of God that keeps life and soul together, and his visitation that preserves our spirit; he puts our soul in life, so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a continued creation. When we are ready to faint and perish, he restoreth our soul, and so puts it as it were into a new life, giving new comforts; *Non est vivere, sed valere vita,* —'It is not existence, but happiness, that deserves the name of life.' But we are apt to stumble and fall, and are exposed to many destructive accidents, killing disasters as well as killing diseases, and therefore as to these also we are guarded by the Divine power; he "suffereth not our feet to be moved," preventing many unforeseen evils, which we ourselves were not aware of our danger from. To him we owe it that we have not long ere this fallen into endless ruin. "He will keep the feet of his saints."

Secondly. Special deliverance from great distress. Observe,

1. How grievous the distress and danger was, ver. 11, 12. What particular trouble of the church this refers to doth not appear; it might be the trouble of some private persons or families only; but, whatever it was, they were surprised with it, as a bird with a snare, enclosed and entangled in it as a fish in a net. They were pressed down with it, and kept under as with a load upon their loins, ver. 11; but they own the hand of God in it. We are never in the net, but God brings us into it; never under affliction, but God lays it upon us. Is any thing more dangerous than fire and water? we went through both, that is, afflictions of different kinds. The end of one trouble was the beginning of another; when we had got clear of one sort of dangers, we found ourselves involved in dangers of another sort. Such may be the troubles of the best of God's saints; but he has promised, "When thou passest through the waters, through the fire, I will be with thee," *Isa.* xliii. 2. Yet proud and cruel men may be as dangerous as fire and water, and more so; "Beware of men," *Mat.* x. 17. When men rose up against us, that was fire and water, and all that is threatening, *Ps.* cxxiv. 2—4; and that was the case here. "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads," that is, to trample upon us, and insult over us; to hector and abuse us; nay, and to make perfect slaves of us. They have said to our souls, "Bow down that we may go over," *Isa.* li. 23. While it is the pleasure of good princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, it is the pride of tyrants to ride over their heads; yet the afflicted church in this also owns the hand of God, Thou hast caused them thus to abuse us; for the most furious oppressor has no power but what is given him from above.

2. How gracious God's design was in bringing them into this distress and danger. See what the meaning of it is; ver. 10, "Thou, O God, hast proved us and tried us." Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions when we look upon them under this notion, for then we may see God's grace and love at the bottom of them, and our own honour and benefit in the end of them. By afflictions we are proved as silver in the fire. 1st. That our graces by being tried may be made more evident, and so we may be approved, as silver when it is touched and marked sterling; and this will be to our praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 *Pet.* i. 7; and perhaps in this world. Job's integrity and constancy were manifested by his afflictions. 2nd. That our graces by being exercised may be made more strong and active, and so we may be improved, as silver when it is refined by the fire, and made more clear from its dross; and this will be to our unspeakable advantage, for thus we are made partakers of God's holiness, *Heb.* xii. 10. Public troubles are for the purifying of the church, *Dan.* xi. 35; *Rev.* ii. 10; *Deu.* viii. 2.

3. How glorious the issue was at last. The troubles of the church will certainly end well; these do so. For, 1st. The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water, but they get through them; "We went through fire and water," and did not perish in the flames or floods. Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God there is a way through them. 2nd. The inlet to a better state is much more happy. "Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place," into a well-watered place, for the word is, 'like the gardens of the Lord,' and therefore fruitful. God brings his people into trouble, that their comforts afterwards may be the sweeter, and that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place.

13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings:
I will pay thee my vows,

14 Which my lips have uttered,
And my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams;
I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.
16 Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God,
And I will declare what he hath done for my soul.
17 I cried unto him with my mouth,
And he was extolled with my tongue.
18 If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear *me:*
19 *But* verily God hath heard *me;*
He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.
20 Blessed *be* God, which hath not turned away my prayer,
Nor his mercy from me.

The psalmist having before stirred up all people, and all God's people in particular, to bless the Lord, here stirs up himself, and engageth himself to do it.

First. In his devotions to his God, ver. 13—15. He had called upon others to sing God's praises, and to make a joyful noise with them; but for himself his resolutions go farther, and he will praise God,

1. By costly sacrifices, which under the law were offered to the honour of God. All people had not wherewithal to offer these sacrifices, or wanted zeal to be at such an expense in praising God; but David, for his part, being able, is as willing in this chargeable way to pay his homage to God; ver. 13, "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings." His sacrifices should be public in the place which God had chosen; I will go into thy house with them. Christ is our temple, to whom we must bring our spiritual gifts, and by whom they are sanctified. They should be the best of the kind; burnt sacrifices, which were wholly consumed upon the altar to the honour of God, and of which the offerer had no share; and burnt sacrifices of fatlings, not the lame or the lean, but the best fed, and such as would be most acceptable at his own table. God that is the best must be served with the best we have. The feast God makes for us is a feast of fat things full of marrow, *Isa.* xxv. 6; and such sacrifices should we bring to him. He will offer bullocks with goats, so liberal would he be in his return of praise, and not strait-handed. He would not offer that which cost him nothing, but that which cost him a great deal; and this with the incense of rams, that is, with the fat of rams, which being burnt upon the altar, the smoke of it would ascend like the smoke of incense. Or, rams with incense. The incense typifies Christ's intercession, without which the fattest of our sacrifices will not be accepted.

2. By a conscientious performance of his vows. We do not acceptably praise God for our deliverances out of trouble, unless we make conscience of paying the vows we made when we were in trouble. This was the psalmist's resolution; ver. 13, 14, "I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered when I was in trouble." Note, 1st. It is very common and very commendable when we are under the pressure of any affliction, or in the pursuit of any mercy, to make vows, and solemnly to speak them before the Lord, to bind ourselves out from sin, and bind ourselves more closely to our duty; not as if this were an equivalent, or valuable consideration, for the favour of God, but a qualification of us to receive the tokens of that favour. 2nd. The vows which we made when we were in trouble must not be forgotten when the trouble is over, but be carefully performed, for "better it is not to vow than to vow and not pay."

Secondly. In his declarations to his friends, ver. 16. He calls together a congregation of good people to hear his thankful narrative of God's favours to him; "Come and hear, all ye that fear God," for, 1. You will join with me in my praises, and help me in giving thanks; and we should be as desirous of the assistance of those that fear God in returning thanks for the mercies we have received as in praying for those we want. 2. You will be edified and encouraged by that which I have to say; "The humble shall hear of it and be glad," *Ps.* xxxiv. 2. "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me," *Ps.* cxix. 74; and therefore let me have their company, "and I will declare" to them, not to vain carnal people that will banter it and make a jest of it, (pearls are not to be cast before swine,) but to them that fear God, and will make a good use of it. "I will declare what God hath done for my soul;" not in pride and vainglory, that he might be thought more a favourite of Heaven than other people, but for the honour of God, to which we owe this as a just debt, and for the edification of others. Note, God's people should communicate their experiences to each other; we should take all occasions to tell one another of the great and kind things which God has done for us, especially which he has done for our souls, the spiritual blessings with which he hath blessed us in heavenly things. These we should be most affected with ourselves, and therefore with these we should be desirous to affect others. Now what was it that God had done for his soul?

1st. He had wrought in him a love to the duty of prayer, and had by his grace enlarged his heart in that duty; ver. 17, "I cried unto him with my mouth;" but if God, among other things done for our souls, had not given us the spirit of adoption, teaching and enabling us to cry, Abba, father, we should never have done it. That God has given us leave to pray, a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and, to crown all, a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention with thankfulness to his praise; and the more if when we cried to him with our mouth he was extolled with our tongue, that is, if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to him then when we were seeking for mercy and grace from him; and to praise him for mercy in prospect, though it be not yet in possession. By crying to him we do indeed extol him. He is pleased to reckon himself honoured by the humble believing prayers of the upright, and this is a great thing which he has done for our souls, that he has been pleased so far to twist interests with us, as that in seeking our own welfare we seek his glory. 'His exaltation was under my tongue,' so it may be read; that is, I was considering in my mind how I might exalt and magnify his name. When prayers are in our mouths, praises must be in our hearts.

2nd. He had wrought in him a dread of sin, as an enemy to prayer; ver. 18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart," I know very well "the Lord will not hear me." The Jewish writers, some of them that have the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy, put a very corrupt gloss upon these words; "If I regard iniquity in my heart," that is, say they, if I allow myself only in heart-sins, and iniquity doth not break out in my words and actions, "God will not hear me," that is, he will not be offended with me, will take no notice of it, so as to lay it to my charge; as if heart-sins were no sins in God's account. The falsehood of this our Saviour has shewn in his spiritual exposition of the law, *Mat.* v. But the sense of this place is plain; "If I regard iniquity in my heart," that is, if I have favourable thoughts of it; if I love it, indulge it, and allow myself in it; if I treat it as a friend, and bid it welcome; make provision for it, and am loath to part with it; if I roll it under my tongue as a sweet morsel, though it be but a heart sin, that is thus countenanced and made much of; if I delight in it after the inward man;—"God will not hear" my prayer, will not accept it, or be pleased with it, nor can I expect an answer of peace to it. Note, Iniquity regarded in the heart will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord." They that continue in love and league with sin have no interest either in the promise or in the Mediator; and therefore cannot expect to speed in prayer.

3rd. He had graciously granted him an answer of peace to his prayers; ver. 19, "But verily God hath heard me." Though, being conscious to myself of much amiss in me, I began to fear that my prayers would have been rejected, yet to my comfort I found that God was pleased to regard them. This God did for his soul: by answering his prayer, he gave him a token of his favour, and an evidence that he had wrought a good work in him; and therefore he concludes, ver. 20, "Blessed be God." The two foregoing verses are the major and minor propositions of a syllogism. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayers," that is the proposition; "but verily God hath heard me," that is the assumption, from which he might have rationally inferred, Therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart. But, instead of taking the comfort to himself, he gives the praise to God, "Blessed be God;" whatever are the premises, God's glory must always be the conclusion. "God has heard me," and therefore, "Blessed be God." Note, What we win by prayer we must wear with praise. Mercies in answer to prayer do in a special manner oblige us to be thankful. "He hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy;" lest it should be thought that the deliverance was granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God's mercy. That he adds by way of correction: It was not my prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it; therefore God doth not turn away our prayer, because he doth not turn away his own mercy, for that is the foundation of our hopes, and the fountain of our comforts, and therefore ought to be the matter of our praises.

PSALM LXVII.

This psalm relates to the church, and is calculated for the public. Here is, I. A prayer for the prosperity of the church of Israel, ver. 1. II. A prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, and the bringing of them into the church, ver. 2—5. III. A prospect of happy and glorious times when God shall do this, ver. 6, 7. Thus was the psalmist carried out by the spirit of prophecy to foretell the glorious estate of the Christian church, in which Jews and Gentiles should unite into one flock, the beginning of which blessed work ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, and the completing of it of our prayer and hope in singing this psalm.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm *or* Song.

GOD be merciful unto us, and bless us;
And cause his face to shine upon us. Selah.
2 That thy way may be known upon earth,
Thy saving health among all nations.
3 Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:
For thou shalt judge the people righteously,
And govern the nations upon earth. Selah.
5 Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
6 *Then* shall the earth yield her increase;
And God, *even* our own God, shall bless us.
7 God shall bless us;
And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

The composure of this psalm is such as speaks the penman's affections very warm and lively; by which spirit of devotion he was elevated to receive the spirit of prophecy concerning the enlargement of God's kingdom.

First. He begins with a prayer for the welfare and prosperity of the church then in being, in the happiness of which he should share, and think himself happy, ver. 1. Our Saviour, in teaching us to say, Our Father, has intimated that we ought to pray with and for others; so the psalmist here prays not, God be merciful to me and bless me, but to us, and bless us, for we must make supplication for all saints, and be willing and glad to take our lot with them. We are here taught, 1. That all our happiness comes from God's mercy, and takes rise in that; and therefore the first thing prayed for is, "God be merciful to us," to us sinners, and pardon our sins, *Lu.* xviii. 13; to us miserable sinners, and help us out of our miseries. 2. That it is conveyed by God's blessing, and secured in that. God bless us, that is, give us an interest in his promises, and confer upon us all the good contained in them. God's speaking well to us amounts to his doing well for us. God bless us, is a comprehensive prayer; it is pity such excellent words should ever be used slightly and carelessly, and as a byword. 3. That it is completed in the light of his countenance; "God cause his face to shine upon us," that is, God by his grace qualify us for his favour, and then give us the tokens of his favour. We need desire no more to make us happy than to have God's face shine upon us, to have God love us, and let us know that he loves us. 'To shine with us,' so the margin reads it; with us doing our endeavour, and let it crown that endeavour with success. If we by faith walk with God, we may hope that his face will shine with us.

Secondly. He passeth from this to a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles; ver. 2, "That thy way may be known upon earth." Lord, I pray not only that thou wilt be merciful to us, and bless us, but that thou wilt be merciful to all mankind, "that thy way may be known upon earth." Thus public spirited must we be in our prayers, "Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come." We shall have never the less of God's mercy, and blessing, and favour, for others coming in to share with us. Or it may be taken thus: 'God be merciful to us Jews, and bless us, that thereby thy way may be known upon earth;' that by the peculiar distinguishing tokens of thy favour to us others may be allured to come and join themselves to us, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you," *Zec.* viii. 23. These verses, which point at the conversion of the Gentiles, may be taken, 1. As a prayer; and so it speaks the desire of the Old Testament saints. So far were they from wishing to monopolize the privileges of the church, that they desired nothing

more than the throwing down of the enclosure, and the laying open of the advantages. See then how the spirit of the Jews in the days of Christ and his apostles differed from the spirit of their fathers. The Israelites indeed that were of old desired that God's name might be known among the Gentiles; those counterfeit Jews were enraged at the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles; nothing in Christianity exasperated them so much as that did. 2. As a prophecy; that it shall be as he here prays. Many Scripture prophecies and promises are wrapped up in prayers, to intimate that the answer of the church's prayer is as sure as the performance of God's promises. Three things are here prayed for with reference to the Gentiles:

1st. That Divine revelation might be sent among them, ver. 2. Two things he desires might be known upon earth, even among all nations, and not to the nation of the Jews only: *First.* God's way; that is, the rule of duty. Let them all know as well as we do what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of them; let them be blessed and honoured with the same righteous statutes and judgments which are so much the praise of our nation, and the envy of all its neighbours, *Deu.* iv. 8. *Secondly.* His saving health, or his salvation. The former is wrapped up in his law, this in his Gospel. If God makes known his way to us, and we walk in it, he will shew us his saving health, *Ps.* l. 23. They that have themselves experimentally known the pleasantness of God's ways, and the comforts of his salvation, cannot but desire and pray that they may be known to others, even among all nations. All upon earth are bound to walk in God's way, all need his salvation, and there is in it enough for all; and therefore we should pray that both the one and the other may be made known to all.

2nd. That Divine worship may be set up among them, as it will be where Divine revelation is received and embraced; ver. 3, "Let the people praise thee, O God," let them have matter for praise, let them have hearts for praise; yea, "let" not only some, but "all the people praise thee," all nations in their national capacity, some of all nations. It is again repeated, ver. 5, as that which the psalmist's heart was very much upon. They that delight in praising God themselves cannot but desire that others also may be brought to praise him; that he may have the honour of it, and they may have the benefit of it. It is a prayer, *First.* That the Gospel might be preached to them, and then they would have cause enough to praise God, as for the day-spring after a long and dark night. *Ortus est sol,*—'The sun has risen,' *Acts* viii. 8. *Secondly.* That they might be converted and brought into the church, and then they would have a disposition to praise God; the living and true God, and not the dumb and dunghill deities they had worshipped, *Dan.* v. 4. Then their hard thoughts of God would be silenced, and they should see him in the gospel-glass to be love itself, and the proper object of praise. *Thirdly.* That they might be incorporated into solemn assemblies, and might praise God in a body; that they might all, altogether, praise him with one mind, and one mouth. Thus a face of religion appears upon a land, when God is publicly owned, and the ordinances of religious worship duly celebrated in religious assemblies.

3rd. That the Divine government may be acknowledged and cheerfully submitted to; ver. 4, "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy." Holy joy, joy in God, and in his name, is the heart and soul of thankful praise. That all the people may praise thee; Let the nations be glad. They that rejoice in the Lord always will in every thing give thanks. The joy he wisheth to the nations is holy joy, for it is joy in God's dominion; joy that God has taken to himself his great power and has reigned, which the unconverted nations are angry at, *Rev.* xi. 17, 18. Let them be glad, *First.* That the kingdom is the Lord's, *Ps.* xxii. 28. That he, as an absolute sovereign, shall govern the nations upon earth. That by the kingdom of his providence he shall overrule the affairs of kingdoms according to the counsel of his will, though they neither know him nor own him; and that in due time he shall disciple all nations by the preaching of his Gospel, *Mat.* xxviii. 18, and set up the kingdom of his grace among them upon the ruin of the devil's kingdom. That he shall make them a willing people in the day of his power, and even the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ. *Secondly.* That "every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord." Let them be glad that "thou shalt judge the people righteously," that is, that thou shalt give a law and gospel which shall be a righteous rule of judgment, and pass an unerring sentence according to that rule upon all the children of men, against which there will lie no exception. Let us all be glad that we are not to be one another's judges, but that he that judgeth us is the Lord, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth.

Thirdly. He concludes with a joyful prospect of all good, when God shall do this, when the nations shall be converted, and brought to praise God.

1. The lower world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the fruits of that; ver. 6, "Then shall the earth yield her increase." Not but that God gave rain from heaven and fruitful seasons to the nations when they sat in darkness, *Acts* xiv. 17; but when they were converted the earth yielded its increase to God; the meat and the drink then became a meat offering and a drink offering to the Lord our God, *Joel* ii. 13, and then it was fruitful to some good purpose. Then it yielded its increase more than before to the comfort of men, who through Christ acquired a covenant title to the fruits of it, and had a sanctified use of it. Note, The success of the Gospel brings outward mercies along with it sometimes; righteousness exalts a nation: see *Isa.* iv. 2; lxii. 9.

2. The upper world shall smile upon them, and they shall have the favours of that, which is much better. "God, even our own God, shall bless us," ver. 6; and again, ver. 7, "God shall bless us." Note, 1st. There are a people in the world that can upon good ground call God their God. 2nd. Believers have reason to glory in their relation to God, and the interest they have in him. It is here spoken with an air of triumph, "God, even our own God." 3rd. Those who through grace call God their own may with an humble confidence expect a blessing from him. If he be our God, he shall bless us with special blessings. 4th. The blessing of God, as ours in covenant, is that which sweetens all our creature comforts to us, and makes them comforts indeed; then we receive the increase of the earth as a mercy indeed, when with it God, even our own God, gives us his blessing.

3. All the world shall hereby be brought to do like them. "The ends of the earth shall fear him," that is, worship him, which is to be done with a godly fear. The blessings God bestows upon us call upon us not only to love him, but to fear him, to keep up high thoughts of him, and to be afraid of offending him. When the Gospel begins to spread it shall get ground more and more till it reach to the ends of the earth. The leaven hid in the meal shall diffuse itself till the whole be leavened; and the many blessings which they will own themselves to have received that are brought into the church invite others to join themselves to them. It is good to cast in our lot with those that are the blessed of the Lord.

PSALM LXVIII.

This is a most excellent psalm, but in many places the genuine sense is not easy to come at; for in this, as in some other Scriptures, there are things dark and hard to be understood. It doth not appear when or upon what occasion David penned this psalm; but probably it was when, God having given him rest from all his enemies round about, he brought the ark (which was both the token of God's presence and a type of Christ's mediation) from the house of Obed-edom, to the tent he had pitched for it in Zion; for the first words are the prayer which Moses used at the removing of the ark, *Num.* x. 35. From this he is led by the spirit of prophecy to speak glorious things concerning the Messiah, his ascension into heaven, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world. I. He begins with prayer, both against God's enemies, ver. 1, 2; and for his people, ver. 3. II. He proceeds to praise, which takes up the rest of the psalm, calling upon all to praise God, ver. 4, 26, 32, and suggesting many things as matter of praise: 1. The greatness and goodness of God, ver. 4—6; 2. The wonderful works God had wrought for his people formerly, bringing them through the wilderness, ver. 7, 8, settling them in Canaan, ver. 9, 10, giving them victory over their enemies, ver. 11, 12, and delivering them out of the hands of their oppressors, ver. 13, 14; 3. The special presence of God in his church, ver. 5—17; 4. The ascension of Christ, ver. 18, and the salvation of his people by him, ver. 19, 20; 5. The victories which Christ would obtain over his enemies, and the favours he would bestow upon his church, ver. 21—28; 6. The enlargement of the church by the accession of the Gentiles to it, ver. 29—31; and so he concludes the psalm with an awful acknowledgment of the glory and grace of God, ver. 32—35. With all these great things we should endeavour to be duly affected in singing this psalm.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm *or* Song of David.

LET God arise, let his enemies be scattered:
Let them also that hate him flee before him.
2 As smoke is driven away, *so* drive *them* away:
As wax melteth before the fire,
So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
3 But let the righteous be glad;
Let them rejoice before God:
Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.
4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name:
Extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH,
And rejoice before him.
5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,
Is God in his holy habitation.
6 God setteth the solitary in families:
He bringeth out those which are bound with chains:
But the rebellious dwell in a dry *land.*

In these verses, First. David prays to God to appear in his glory,

1. For the confusion of his enemies, ver. 1, 2. Let God arise as a judge, to pass sentence upon them; as a general, to take the field and do execution upon them; and let them be scattered, and flee before him, as unable to keep their ground, much less to make head against him. "Let God arise," as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, and the children of darkness shall be scattered, as the shadows of the evening flee before the rising sun. Let them be driven away as smoke by the wind, which ascends as if it would eclipse the sun, but is presently dispelled, and there appears no remainder of it; "Let them melt as wax before the fire," which is presently dissolved. Thus doth David comment upon Moses' prayer, and not only repeat it with application to himself and his own times, but enlarge upon it, to direct us how to make use of Scripture prayers. Nay, it looks farther, to the Redeemer's victories over the enemies of his kingdom, for he was the angel of the covenant that guided Israel through the wilderness. Note, 1st. There are, and have been, and ever will be, such as are enemies to God, and hate him; that join in with the old serpent against the kingdom of God among men, and against the seed of the woman. 2nd. They are the wicked, and none but they that are enemies to God; the children of the wicked one. 3rd. Though we are to pray for our enemies as such, yet we are to pray against God's enemies as such, against their enmity to him, and all their attempts upon his kingdom. 4th. If God but arise, all his impenitent, implacable enemies, that will not repent, to give him glory, will certainly and speedily be scattered, and driven away, and made to perish at his presence; for none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. The day of judgment will be the day of the complete and final perdition of ungodly men, 2 *Pet.* iii. 7, who shall melt like wax before that flaming fire in which the Lord shall then appear, 2 *Thes.* i. 8.

2. For the comfort and joy of his own people; ver. 3, "Let the righteous be glad," that are now in sorrow; "let them rejoice before God," in his favourable presence. God is the joy of his people, let them rejoice whenever they come before God, yea, let them exceedingly rejoice, let them rejoice with gladness. Note, Those who rejoice in God have reason to rejoice with exceeding joy; and this joy we ought to wish to all the saints, for it belongs to them. "Light is sown for the righteous."

Secondly. He praiseth God for his glorious appearances, and calls upon us to praise him, to sing to his name, and extol him.

1. As a great God, infinitely great; ver. 4, he "rides upon the heavens by his name Jah." He is the spring of all the motions of the heavenly bodies, directs and manageth them, as he that rides in the chariot sets it agoing; has a supreme command of the influences of heaven. He rides upon the heavens for the help of his people, *Deu.* xxxiii. 26, so swiftly, so strongly, and so much above the reach of opposition. These he rules by his name Jah, or Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient being, the fountain of all beings, power, motion, and perfection: this is his name for ever. When we thus extol God we must rejoice before him; holy joy in God will very well consist with that reverence and godly fear wherewith we ought to worship him.

2. As a gracious God, a God of mercy and tender compassion. He is great, but he despiseth not any, no not the meanest; nay, being a God of great power, he useth his power for the relief of those that are distressed, ver. 5, 6. The fatherless, the widows, the solitary, find him a God all-sufficient to them. Observe how much God's goodness is his glory. He "that rides on the heavens by his name Jah" one would think should immediately have been adored as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and the sovereign director of all the affairs of states and nations; he is so, but this he rather glories in, that he is "a Father of the fatherless." "Though God be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly." Happy they that have an interest in such a God as this; he that "rides upon the heavens" is a Father worth having: thrice "happy is the people whose God is the Lord." 1st. When families are beheaded, God takes care of them, and is himself their head, and the widows and fatherless children shall find that in him which they have lost in the relation that is removed, and infinitely more and better. He is a Father of the fatherless, to pity them, and bless them, and

teach them, to provide for them, and portion them. He will preserve them alive, *Jer.* xlix. 11; and with him they shall find mercy, *Hos.* xiv. 3. They have liberty to call him Father, and to plead their relation to him as their guardian, *Ps.* cxlvi. 9; x. 14, 18. He is a judge, or patron, of the widows, to give them counsel, and to do them right; to own them and plead their cause, *Pr.* xxii. 23. He has an ear open to all their complaints, and a hand open to all their wants. He is so in his holy habitation; which may be understood either of the habitation of his glory in heaven,—there he has prepared his throne of judgment, which the fatherless and widow have free recourse to, and are taken under the protection of, *Ps.* ix. 4, 7,—or of the habitation of his grace on earth, and so it is a direction to the widows and fatherless how to apply themselves to God; let them go to his holy habitation, to his word and ordinances, there they may find comfort in him. 2nd. When families are to be built up he is the founder of them; "God setteth the solitary in families," brings them into comfortable relations that were lonely, gives them a convenient settlement that were unsettled, *Ps.* cxiii. 9. He makes those dwell at home that were forced to seek for relief abroad, (so Dr. Hammond,) putting them that were destitute into a way of getting their livelihood, which is a very good way for man's charity, as it is of God's bounty.

3. As a righteous God, 1st. In relieving the oppressed. He "bringeth out those that are bound with chains," and sets them at liberty who were unjustly imprisoned, and brought into servitude. No chains can detain those whom God will make free. 2nd. In reckoning with the oppressors. "The rebellious dwell in a dry land," and have no comfort in that which they have got by fraud and injury. The best land will be a dry land to those that by their rebellion have forfeited the blessing of God, which is the juice and fatness of all our enjoyments. Israel was brought out of Egypt into a wilderness, but were there better provided for than the Egyptians themselves, whose land, if Nilus failed them, as it sometimes did, was a dry land.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,
When thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:
8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence
of God: [God of Israel.
Even Sinai itself *was moved* at the presence of God, the
9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain,
Whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it
was weary.
10 Thy congregation hath dwelt therein:
Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.
11 The Lord gave the word:
Great *was* the company of those that published *it.*
12 Kings of armies did flee apace:
And she that tarried at home divided the spoil.
13 Though ye have lien among the pots,

EGYPTIAN DRESSER AND POTS.

Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And her feathers with yellow gold.
14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it,
It was *white* as snow in Salmon.

The psalmist here, having occasion to give God thanks for the great things he had done for him and his people of late, takes occasion from thence to praise him for what he had done for their fathers in the days of old. Fresh mercies should put us in mind of former mercies, and revive our grateful sense of them. Let it never be forgotten,

First. That God himself was the guide of Israel through the wilderness. When he had brought them out of their chains, he did not leave them in the dry land, but himself went before them in a march through the wilderness, ver. 7. It was not a journey, but a march, for they went as soldiers, as an army with banners. The Egyptians promised themselves that the wilderness had shut them in, but they were deceived; God's Israel, having him for their leader, marched through the wilderness, and were not lost in it. Note, If God bring his people into a wilderness, he will be sure to go before them in it, and bring them out of it, *Cant.* viii. 5.

Secondly. That he manifested his glorious presence with them at mount Sinai, ver. 8. Never did any people see the glory of God, nor hear his voice, as Israel did, *Deu.* iv. 32, 33. Never had any people such an excellent law given them; so expounded, so enforced. Then the earth shook, and the neighbouring countries, it is likely, felt the shock; terrible thunders there were, accompanied, no doubt, with thunder showers, in which the heavens seemed to drop; while the Divine doctrine dropped as the rain, *Deu.* xxxii. 2. Sinai itself, that vast mountain, that long ridge of mountains, was moved at the presence of God: see *Jud.* v. 4, 5; *Deu.* xxxiii. 2; *Hab.* iii. 3. This terrible appearance of the Divine majesty, as it would possess them with a fear and dread of him, so it would encourage their faith in him, and dependence upon him. Whatever mountains of difficulty lay in the way of their happy settlement, He that could move Sinai itself could remove them, could get over them.

Thirdly. That he provided very comfortably for them, both in the wilderness and in Canaan; ver. 9, 10, "Thou didst send a plentiful rain, and hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor." This may refer, 1. To the victualling of their camp with manna in the wilderness, which was rained upon them, as were also the quails, *Ps.* lxxviii. 24, 27; and it might be fitly called a rain of liberality, or munificence, for it was a memorable instance of the Divine bounty. This confirmed the camp of Israel, (here called God's inheritance, because he had chosen them to be a peculiar treasure to himself,) when it was weary, and ready to perish; this confirmed their faith, and was a standing proof of God's power and goodness. Even in the wilderness God found a comfortable dwelling for Israel, which was his congregation. Or, 2. To the seasonable supplies granted them in Canaan, that land flowing with milk and honey, which is said to drink water of the rain of heaven, *Deu.* xi. 11. When sometimes that fruitful land was ready to be turned into barrenness for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein, God in judgment remembered mercy, and sent them a plentiful rain, which refreshed it again, so that the congregation of Israel dwelt therein, and there was provision enough even to satisfy their poor with bread. This looks farther to the spiritual provision made for God's Israel; the Spirit of grace, and the Gospel of grace are the plentiful rain with which God confirms his inheritance, and from which their fruit is found, *Isa.* xlv. 8. Christ himself is this rain; *Ps.* lxxii. 6, "He shall come as showers that water the earth."

Fourthly. That he often gave them victory over their enemies. Armies and kings of armies appeared against them, from their first coming into Canaan, and all along in the times of the judges, till David's days, but, first or last, they gained their point against them, ver. 11, 12, 14. Observe here, 1. That God was their commander in chief. "The Lord gave the word," as general of their armies; he raised up judges for them, gave them their commissions and instructions, and assured them of success. God spoke in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine. 2. That they had prophets as God's messengers to make known his mind to them. God gave them his word, ('the word of the Lord came' unto them,) and then "great was the company of the preachers," prophets and prophetesses, for the word is feminine. When God has messages to send, he will not want messengers. Or perhaps it may allude to the women's joining in the triumph when the victory was obtained, as was usual, *Ex.* xv. 20, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 7, in which they took notice of the word of God, triumphing in that as much as in his works. 3. That their enemies were defeated and put to confusion. "Kings of armies did flee, did flee" with the greatest terror and precipitation imaginable; did not fight and flee, but flee and flee, retired without striking a stroke; they fled apace, fled and never rallied again. 4. That they were enriched with the plunder of the field: "She that tarried at home divided the spoil." Not only the men, the soldiers that abode by the stuff, who were by a statute of distribution to share the prey, 1 *Sam.* xxx. 24, but even the women that tarried at home had a share, which intimates the abundance of spoil that should be taken. 5. That these great things which God did for them were sanctified to them, and contributed to their reformation; ver. 14, "When the Almighty scattered kings for her," for the church, "she was white as snow in Salmon," purified and refined by the mercies of God. When the host went forth against the enemy, they kept themselves from every wicked thing, and so the host returned victorious, and Israel by the victory was confirmed in their purity and piety. This account of Israel's victories is applicable to the victories obtained by the exalted Redeemer for those that are his, over death and hell. By the resurrection of Christ our spiritual enemies were made to flee, their power was broken, and they were for ever disabled to hurt any of God's people. This victory was first notified by the women (the she-publishers) to the disciples, *Mat.* xxviii. 7, and by them it was preached to all the world, whilst believers that tarry at home, that did not themselves contribute any thing towards it, enjoy the benefit of it, and divide the spoil.

Fifthly. That from a low and despised condition they had been advanced to splendour and prosperity. When they were bond-slaves in Egypt, and afterwards when they were oppressed, sometimes by one potent neighbour, and sometimes by another, they did as it were lie among the pots, or rubbish, as despised broken vessels, or as vessels in which there was no pleasure; they were black and dirty, and discoloured. But God at length delivered them from the pots, *Ps.* lxxxi. 6, and in David's time they were in a fair way to be one of the most prosperous kingdoms in the world; amiable in the eyes of all about them, "like the wings of a dove covered with silver," ver. 13. 'And so,' saith Dr. Hammond, 'under Christ's kingdom, the heathenish idolaters that were brought to the basest and most despicable condition of any creatures, worshipping wood and stone, and given up to the vilest lusts, should from that detestable condition be advanced to the service of Christ, and the practice of all Christian virtues, the greatest inward beauties in the world.' It may be applied also to the deliverance of the church out of a suffering state, and the comforts of particular believers after their despondencies.

15 The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan;
An high hill *as* the hill of Bashan.
16 Why leap ye, ye high hills?
This is the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in;
Yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever. [of angels:
17 The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands
The Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place.*
18 Thou hast ascended on high,
Thou hast led captivity captive:
Thou hast received gifts for men;
Yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might
dwell *among them.*
19 Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits,*
Even the God of our salvation. Selah.
20 *He that is* our God *is* the God of salvation;
And unto GOD the Lord *belong* the issues from death

21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies,
And the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

SINAI.—ver. 17.

David, having given God praise for what he had done for Israel in general, as the God of Israel, ver. 8, here comes to give him praise as Zion's God in a special manner; compare *Ps.* ix. 11, "Sing praises to the Lord which dwelleth in Zion," for which reason Zion is called the hill of God.

First. He compares it with the hill of Bashan, and other high and fruitful hills, and prefers it before them, ver. 15, 16. It is true Zion was but little and low in comparison with them, and was not covered over with flocks and herds as they were; yet upon this account it has the preeminence above them all, that it is the hill of God, the hill which he desireth to dwell in, and where he chooseth to manifest the tokens of his peculiar presence, *Ps.* cxxxii. 13, 14. Note, It is much more honourable to be holy to God than to be high and great in the world. "Why leap ye, ye high hills?" why do ye insult over poor Zion, and boast of your own height? This is the hill which God has chosen, and therefore, though you exceed it in bulk, and be first-rates, because on this the royal flag is hoisted, you must all strike sail to it. Zion was especially honourable because it was a type of the gospel church, which is therefore called mount Zion, *Heb.* xii. 22; and this is intimated here when he said, "the Lord will dwell in it for ever," which must have its accomplishment in the gospel Zion. There is no kingdom in the world comparable to the kingdom of the Redeemer, no city to that which is incorporated by the gospel charter, for there God dwells, and will dwell for ever.

Secondly. He compares it with mount Sinai, of which he had spoken, ver. 8, and shews that it has the Shechinah, or Divine presence, in it, as really, though not as sensibly, as Sinai itself had, ver. 17. Angels are the chariots of God, his chariots of war, which he makes use of against his enemies; his chariots of conveyance, which he sends for his friends, as he did for Elijah, and Lazarus is said to be carried by the angels; and chariots of state, in the midst of which he shews his glory and power. They are vastly numerous; twenty thousands, even thousands multiplied. There is an innumerable company of angels in the heavenly Jerusalem, *Heb.* xii. 22. The enemies David fought with had chariots, 2 *Sam.* viii. 4; but what were they for number or strength to the chariots of God? which while David had on his side he needed not fear those that trusted in chariots and horses, *Ps.* xx. 7. God appeared on mount Sinai attended with myriads of angels, by whose disposition the law was given, *Acts* vii. 53; "He comes with ten thousands of saints," *Deu.* xxxiii. 2. And still in Zion God manifests his glory, and is really present with a numerous retinue of his heavenly hosts, signified by the cherubims between which God is said to dwell. So that, as some read the last words of the verse, 'Sinai is in the sanctuary;' that is, the sanctuary was to Israel instead of mount Sinai, whence they received Divine oracles. Our Lord Jesus has these chariots at command. When the First-begotten was brought into the world, it was with this charge, "Let all the angels of God worship him," *Heb.* i. 6; they attended him upon all occasions, and he is now among them, "angels, principalities, and powers being made subject to him," 1 *Pet.* iii. 22. And it is intimated in the New Testament, that the angels are present in the solemn religious assemblies of Christians; 1 *Cor.* xi. 10, "Let the woman have a veil on her head, because of the angels;" and see *Eph.* iii. 10.

Thirdly. The glory of mount Zion was the King which God set on that holy hill, *Ps.* ii. 6; who came to the daughter of Zion, *Mat.* xxi. 5. Of his ascension the psalmist here speaks, and to it it is expressly applied, *Eph.* iv. 8, "Thou hast ascended on high," ver. 18; compare *Ps.* xlvii. 5, 6. Christ's ascending on high is here spoken of as a thing past, so sure was it, and spoken of to his honour, so great was it; it may include his whole exalted state, but points especially at his ascension into heaven, to the right hand of the Father, which was as much our advantage as his advancement. For, 1. He then triumphed over the gates of hell. He led captivity captive; that is, he led his captives in triumph, as great conquerors used to do, making a show of them openly, *Col.* ii. 15. He led those captives who had led us captives, and, if he had not interposed, would have held us captives for ever. Nay, he led captivity itself captive, having quite broken the power of sin and Satan; as he was the death of death, so he was the captivity of captivity, *Hos.* xii. 14. This speaks the complete victory which Jesus Christ obtained over our spiritual enemies, such as that through him we also are more than conquerors, that is, triumphers, *Rom.* viii. 37. 2. He then opened the gates of heaven to all believers; "Thou hast received gifts for men." "He gave gifts to men," so the apostle reads it, *Eph.* iv. 8; for he received that he might give; on his head the anointing of the Spirit was poured, that from him it might descend to the skirts of his garments. And he gave what he had received; having received power to give eternal life, he doth bestow it upon as many as were given him, *Jno.* xvii. 2. "Thou hast received gifts for men," not for angels; fallen angels were not to be made saints, nor standing angels made gospel ministers, *Heb.* ii. 5; not for Jews only, but for all men. Whoever will, may reap the benefit of these gifts. The apostle tells us what these gifts were, *Eph.* iv. 11: prophets, apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, the institution of a gospel ministry, and the qualification of men for it, both which are to be valued as the gifts of heaven, and the fruits of Christ's ascension. 'Thou hast received gifts in man,' so the margin; that is, in the human nature which Christ was pleased to clothe himself with, "that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." In him, as Mediator, all fulness dwells, that from his fulness we might receive. To magnify the kindness and love of Christ to us in receiving these gifts for us, the psalmist observes, 1st. The forfeiture we had made of them. He received them for the rebellious also; that is, for those that had been rebellious: so all the children of men had been in their fallen state. Perhaps it is especially meant of the Gentiles, that had been enemies in their minds by wicked works, *Col.* i. 21; for them these gifts are received, to them they are given, that they might lay down their arms, their enmity might be slain, and they might return to their allegiance. This magnifies the grace of Christ exceedingly, that through him rebels are, upon their submission, not only pardoned, but preferred. They have commissions given them under Christ, which some say in our law amounts to the reversion of an attainder. Christ came to a rebellious world, not to condemn it, but that through him it might be saved. 2nd. The favour designed us in them. "He received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them;" that he might set up a church in a rebellious world, in which he would dwell by his word and ordinances as of old in the sanctuary, that he might set up his throne, and Christ might dwell in the hearts of particular persons that had been rebellious. The gracious intention of Christ's undertaking was to rear up the tabernacle of God among men, that he might dwell with them, and they might themselves be living temples to his praise, *Eze.* xxxvii. 27.

Fourthly. The glory of Zion's King is, that he is a Saviour and benefactor to all his willing people, and a consuming fire to all those that persist in rebellion against him, ver. 19—21. We have here good and evil, life and death, the blessing and the curse set before us, like that *Mar.* xvi. 16, "He that believes shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned."

1. They that take God for their God, and so give up themselves to him to be his people, shall be loaded with his benefits; and to them he will be the God of salvation. He that is our God, if in sincerity we avouch him to be so, and seek to him as our God, 1st. He will continually do us good, and furnish us with occasion for praise. Having mentioned the gifts Christ received for us, ver. 18, fitly doth he subjoin in the next words, "Blessed be the Lord," for it is owing to the mediation of Christ that we live, and live comfortably, and are "daily loaded with benefits." So many, so weighty, are the gifts of God's bounty to us, that he may be truly said to load us with them; he pours out blessings till there be no room to receive them, *Mal.* iii. 10. So constant are they, and so unwearied is he in doing us good, that he daily loads us with them, according as the necessity of every day requires. 2nd. He will at length be unto us the God of salvation, of everlasting salvation, the salvation of God, which he will shew to them that order their conversation aright, *Ps.* l. 23, the salvation of the soul. He that daily loads us with benefits will not put us off with present things for a portion, but he will be the God of our salvation; and what he gives us now he gives as the God of salvation, pursuant to the great design of our salvation. He is our God, and therefore he will be the God of eternal salvation to us; for that only will answer the vast extent of his covenant-relation to us as our God. But hath he power to complete this salvation? Yes, certainly; "for unto God the Lord belong the issues from death," that is, the keys of hell and death are put into the hand of the Lord Jesus, *Rev.* i. 18. He having made an escape from death himself in his resurrection, he has both authority and power to rescue those that are his from the dominion of death, by altering the property of it to them when they die, and giving them a complete victory over it when they shall rise again; for "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." And to those that shall thus for ever escape death, and shall find such an outlet from it as not to be hurt of the second death, to them surely deliverances from temporal death are mercies indeed, and come from God as the God of their salvation: see 2 *Cor.* i. 10.

2. They that persist in their enmity to him, it will certainly be their ruin; ver. 21, "God shall wound the head of his enemies;" of Satan, the old serpent, of whom it was by the first promise foretold, that the seed of the woman should break his head, *Gen.* iii. 16; of all the powers of the nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, that oppose him and his kingdom among men, (*Ps.* cx. 6, "He shall wound the heads over many countries;") of all those, whoever they are, that will not have him to reign over them, for those he accounts his enemies, and they shall be brought forth and slain before him, *Lu.* xix. 27. He will "wound the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses." Note, Those who go on still in their trespasses, and hate to be reformed, God looks upon as his enemies, and will treat them accordingly. In calling the head the hairy scalp, perhaps there is an allusion to Absalom, whose bushy hair was his halter; or, it notes either the most fierce and barbarous of his enemies, that let their hair grow to make themselves look the more frightful, or the most fine and delicate of his enemies, that are nice about their hair. Neither the one nor the other can secure themselves from the fatal wounds which Divine justice will give to the heads of those that go on in their sins.

22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan,
I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea:
23 That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine*
And the tongue of thy dogs in the same. [enemies,
24 They have seen thy goings, O God;
Even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.
25 The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after;
Among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.
26 Bless ye God in the congregations,
Even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.
27 There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler,
The princes of Judah *and* their council,
The princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali.
28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength:
Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.
29 Because of thy temple at Jerusalem

Shall kings bring presents unto thee.
30 Rebuke the company of spearmen,
The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people,
Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver:
Scatter thou the people *that* delight in war.
31 Princes shall come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

In these verses we have three things:

First. The gracious promise which God makes of the redemption of his people, and their victory over his and their enemies; ver. 22, 23, "The Lord said," in his own gracious purpose and promise, I will do great things for my people, as the God of their salvation, ver. 20. God will not fail the expectations of those who by faith take him for their God. It is promised, 1. That he will set them in safety from their danger, as he had done formerly; "I will again bring them from the depths of the sea," as he did Israel, when he brought them out of the slavery of Egypt into the ease and liberty of the wilderness. And "I will again bring them from Bashan," as he did Israel, when he brought them from their wants and wanderings in the wilderness into the fulness and settlement of the land of Canaan; for the land of Bashan was on the other side Jordan, where they had wars with Sihon and Og, and from whence their next remove was into Canaan. Note, The former appearances of God's power and goodness for his people should encourage their faith and hope in him for the future, that what he has done he will do again. He will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, *Isa.* xi. 11; and we may perhaps see repeated all the wonders which our fathers told us of. But this is not all. 2. That he will make them victorious over their enemies; ver. 23, "That thy feet may be dipped," as thou passest along, "in the blood of thine enemies," shed like water in great abundance, "and the tongue of thy dogs" may lap "in the same." Dogs licked the blood of Ahab; and in the destruction of the antichristian generation we read of blood up to the horse-bridles, *Rev.* xiv. 20. The victories with which God blessed David's forces over the enemies of Israel are here prophesied of, but as types of Christ's victories over death and the grave, for himself and for all believers in his resurrection (and theirs by virtue of his) out of the earth; and of the destruction of the enemies of Christ and his church, who shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

Secondly. The welcome entertainment which God's own people shall give to these glorious discoveries of his grace, both in his word and in his works. Has he spoken in his holiness? Has he said, he will bring again from Bashan? What then is required of us in return to this?

1. That we observe his motions; ver. 24, "They have seen," thy people have seen, "thy goings, O God." While others regard not the work of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, "they have seen the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary." See here, 1st. How an active faith appropriates God. He is God and King; but that is not all, he is my God and my King; and those who thus take him for theirs may see him in all his outgoings, acting as their God, as their King, for their good, and in answer to their prayers. 2nd. Where God's most remarkable outgoings are, even in the sanctuary, in and by his word and ordinances; and among his people in the gospel church especially, in and by which is made known the manifold wisdom of God. These outgoings of his in the sanctuary far outshine the outgoings of the morning and the evening, and more loudly proclaim his eternal power and godhead. 3rd. What is our duty in reference to these outgoings, which is to observe them. "This is the finger of God;" surely "God is with us of a truth."

2. That we give him glory in the most devout and solemn manner. When we see his goings in his sanctuary. 1st. Let those that are immediately employed in the service of the temple praise him, ver. 25; the Levites, that were some of them singers, and others of them players on instruments, that have the nearest views of his outgoings in his sanctuary, and from whom it is expected that they should lead in his praises. And, it being a day of extraordinary triumph, "among them were damsels playing with timbrels" to complete the concert. 'Thus,' saith Dr. Hammond, 'when Christ is gone up to heaven, the apostles shall celebrate and publish it to all the world; and even the women that were witnesses of it shall affectionately join with them in divulging it.' And, 2nd. Let all the people of Israel, in their solemn religious assembly, give glory to God. "Bless ye God," not only in temples, but in the synagogues, or schools of the prophets; or, wherever there is a congregation of those that come forth from the fountain of Israel, that are of the seed of Jacob, let them concur in blessing God. Public mercies, which we jointly share in, call for public thanksgivings, which all should join in. 'Thus,' saith Dr. Hammond, 'all Christians shall be obliged solemnly to magnify the name of the Messiah, and to that end frequently to assemble together in congregations.' And, 3rd. Let those among them that upon any account are most eminent, and make a figure, go before the rest in praising God; ver. 27, "There was little Benjamin," (that was the royal tribe in Saul's time,) "with their rulers, the princes of Judah" (that was the royal tribe in David's time,) "and their council,"—their captains or leaders. In the beginning of David's reign there had been long war between Judah and Benjamin, but now they both join in praises for success against the common enemy. But why are the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali particularly mentioned? Perhaps because those tribes, lying towards the north, lay most exposed to the incursions of the Syrians, and other their neighbours that molested them, and therefore should be in a particular manner thankful for these victories over them. Dr. Hammond gives another reason,—that these were the two learned tribes; "Naphtali giveth goodly words," *Gen.* xliv. 21, and Zebulun had those that handle the pen of the writer, *Jud.* v. 14. These shall join in praising God; their princes especially. It is much for the honour of God when those that are above others in dignity, power, and reputation, go before them in the worship of God; and are forward to use their influence and interest for the advancing of any service that is to be done to him. Dr. Hammond notes from hence, that the kingdom of the Messiah should at length be submitted to by all the potentates and learned men in the world.

3. That we seek unto him, and depend upon him, for the perfecting of what he has begun, ver. 28. In the former part of the verses the psalmist speaks to Israel; "Thy God hath commanded thy strength," that is, whatever is done for thee, or whatever strength thou hast to help thyself, it comes from God, his power and grace, and the word which he has commanded. Thou hast no reason to fear while thou hast strength of God's commanding, and no reason to boast while thou hast no strength but what is of his commanding. In the latter part he speaks to God, encouraged by his experiences; "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us." Lord, confirm what thou hast commanded, and perform what thou hast promised, and bring to a happy end that good work which thou hast so gloriously begun. What God has wrought he will strengthen; where he has given true grace he will give more grace. Some make this whole verse to be a believer's address to the Messiah, whom David calls God, as he had done, *Ps.* xlv. 6, 8, "Thy God," that is, God the Father, has commanded thy strength, that is, has made thee strong for himself, as the man of his right hand, *Ps.* lxxx. 17; has treasured up strength in thee for us; therefore we pray, that thou, O God the Son, wilt strengthen what thou hast wrought for us, that is, wilt accomplish thine undertaking for us, by finishing thy good work in us.

Thirdly. The powerful invitation and inducement which would hereby be given to those that are without to come in and join themselves to the church, ver. 29—31. This was in part fulfilled by the accession of many proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon; but it was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentile nations to the faith of Christ, and the making them fellow-heirs, and of the same body with the seed of Israel, *Eph.* iii. 6.

1. Some shall submit for fear; ver. 30, "the company of spearmen," that stand it out against Christ and his Gospel, that are not willing to be ruled by him, that persecute the preachers and professors of his name, that are furious and outrageous as a multitude of bulls, fat and wanton as the calves of the people, (which is a description of those Jews and Gentiles that opposed the Gospel of Christ, and did what they could to prevent the setting up of his kingdom in the world,) Lord, rebuke them, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices, till conquered by the convictions of their consciences, and the many checks of providence, they be every one of them brought at length to submit themselves with pieces of silver, as being glad to make their peace with the church upon any terms. Even Judas submitted himself with pieces of silver, when he returned them with this confession, "I have betrayed innocent blood:" and see *Rev.* iii. 9. Many by being rebuked have been happily saved from being ruined. But as for those that will not submit, notwithstanding these rebukes, he prays for their dispersion, which amounts to a prophecy of it; "Scatter thou the people that delight in war," who take such a pleasure in opposing Christ, that they will never be reconciled to him. This may refer to the unbelieving Jews, who delighted in making war upon the holy seed, and would not submit themselves, and were therefore scattered over the face of the earth. David had himself been a man of war, but could appeal to God that he never delighted in war and bloodshed for its own sake; as for those that did, and therefore would not submit to the fairest terms of peace, he doth not doubt but God would scatter them. Those are lost to all the sacred principles of humanity, as well as Christianity, that can delight in war, and take pleasure in contention; but let them expect that sooner or later they shall have enough of it, *Isa.* xxxiii. 1; *Rev.* xiii. 10.

2. Others shall submit willingly; ver. 29, 31, "Because of thy temple at Jerusalem," (this David speaks of in faith, for the temple of Jerusalem was not built in his time, only the materials and model were prepared,) "kings shall bring presents unto thee," that is, rich presents shall be brought, such as are fit for kings to bring; and even kings themselves, that stand much upon the punctilios of honour and prerogative, yet shall court the favour of Christ at a great expence. There is that in God's temple, that beauty and benefit in the service of God, and in communion with him, and in the Gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, that is enough to invite kings themselves to bring presents to God, to present themselves to him as living sacrifices, and with themselves the best performances. He instanceth in Egypt and Ethiopia, two countries out of which subjects and supplicants were least to be expected; ver. 31, princes shall come out of Egypt, as ambassadors to seek God's favour, and submit to him; and they shall be accepted, for the Lord of hosts shall thereupon bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people," *Isa.* xix. 25. And even Ethiopia, that had stretched out her hands against God's Israel, 2 *Chr.* xiv. 9, should now stretch out her hands unto God, in prayer, in presents, and to take hold on him; and that soon: "Agree with thine adversary quickly." Out of all nations some shall be gathered in to Christ, and be owned by him.

32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth;
O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:
33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, *which were* of old;
Lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice
34 Ascribe ye strength unto God:
His excellency *is* over Israel,
And his strength *is* in the clouds.
35 O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places:
The God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power
Blessed *be* God. [unto *his* people.

The psalmist having prayed for, and prophesied of, the conversion of the Gentiles, here invites them to come in and join with the devout Israelites in praising God, intimating that their accession to the church would be the matter of their joy and praise, ver. 32. Let the kingdoms of the earth sing praises to the Lord; they all ought to do it, and when they become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ they will do it. God is here proposed to them as the proper object of praise upon several accounts.

First. Because of his supreme and sovereign dominion. "He rides upon the heavens of heavens which were of old," ver. 33: compare ver. 4. He has from the beginning, nay, from before all time, prepared his throne. He sits on the circuit of heaven; guides all the motions of the heavenly bodies, and from the highest heavens, which are the residence of his glory, he dispenseth the influences of his power and goodness to this lower world.

Secondly. Because of his awful and terrible majesty. "He sends out his voice, and that a mighty voice;" which may refer either generally to the thunder, which is called the voice of the Lord, and is said to be powerful and full of majesty, *Ps.* xxix. 3, 4, or in particular to that thunder in which God spake to Israel at mount Sinai.

Thirdly. Because of his mighty power. "Ascribe ye strength unto God," ver. 34. Acknowledge him to be a God of such irresistible power, that it is folly to contend with him, and wisdom to submit to him; acknowledge that he has power sufficient both to protect his faithful subjects and to destroy his stubborn adversaries, and give him the glory of all the instances of his omnipotence. "Thine is the kingdom and power," and therefore "thine is the glory." We must acknowledge his power, 1. In the kingdom of grace. "His excellency is over Israel;" he shews his sovereign care in protecting and governing his church. That is the excellency of his power which is employed for the good of his people. 2. In the kingdom of providence. "His strength is in the clouds," whence comes the thunder of his power, the small rain, and the great rain of

his strength. Though God has his strength in the clouds, yet he condescends to gather his Israel under the shadow of his wings, *Deu.* xxxiii. 26.

Fourthly. Because of the glory of his sanctuary, and the wonders wrought there; ver. 35, "O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places." God is to be admired and adored with reverence and godly fear by all those that attend him in his holy places, that receive his oracles, that observe his operations according to them, and that pay their homage to him. He displays that out of his holy places which speaks aloud that he will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him. Out of heaven, his holy place above, he doth and will shew himself a terrible God. Nor is any attribute of God more dreadful to sinners than his holiness.

Fifthly. Because of the grace bestowed upon his people. "The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people," which the gods of the nations, that were vanity and a lie, could not give to their worshippers; how should they help them when they could not help themselves? All Israel's strength against their enemies came from their God; they owned they had no might of their own, 2 *Chr.* xx. 12; and all our sufficiency for our spiritual work and warfare is from the grace of God. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and not otherwise; and therefore he must have the glory of all we do, *Ps.* cxv. 1, and our humble thanks for enabling us to do it, and accepting the work of his own hands in us. If it be the God of Israel that gives strength and power unto his people, they ought to say, "Blessed be God." If all be from him, let all be to him.

PSALM LXIX.

David penned this psalm when he was in affliction; and in it, I. He complains of the great distress and trouble he was in, and earnestly begs of God to relieve and succour him, ver. 1—21. II. He imprecates the judgments of God upon his persecutors, ver. 22—29. III. He concludes with the voice of joy and praise, in an assurance that God would help and succour him, and would do well for the church, ver. 30—36. Now in this David was a type of Christ, and divers passages in this psalm are applied to Christ in the New Testament, and are said to have their accomplishment in him, ver. 4, 9, 21, and ver. 22, refers to the enemies of Christ; so that, like the 22nd psalm, it begins with the humiliation, and ends with the exaltation of Christ; one branch of which was the destruction of the Jewish nation for persecuting him, which the imprecations here are predictions of. And in singing this psalm, we must have an eye to the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that followed; not forgetting the sufferings of Christians too, and the glory that shall follow them, for it may lead us to think of the ruin reserved for the persecutors, and the rest reserved for the persecuted.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, *A Psalm* of David.

SAVE me, O God;
For the waters are come in unto *my* soul.
2 I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing:
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
3 I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried:
Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
4 They that hate me without a cause
Are more than the hairs of mine head:
They that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty:
Then I restored *that* which I took not away.
5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness;
And my sins are not hid from thee.
6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts,
Be ashamed for my sake:
Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.
7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;
Shame hath covered my face.
8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren,
And an alien unto my mother's children.
9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;
And the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.
10 When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting,
That was to my reproach.
11 I made sackcloth also my garment;
And I became a proverb to them.
12 They that sit in the gate speak against me;
And I *was* the song of the drunkards.

In these verses David complains of his troubles, intermixing with those complaints some requests for relief.

First. His complaints are very sad; and he pours them out before the Lord as one that hoped thus to ease himself of a burthen that lay very heavy upon him.

1. He complains of the deep impressions that his troubles made upon his spirit, ver. 1, 2. The waters of affliction, those bitter waters, are come unto my soul; not only threaten my life, but disquiet my mind. They fill my head with perplexing cares, and my heart with oppressive grief, so that I cannot enjoy God and myself as I used to do. We shall do pretty well if we can but keep troubles from our hearts; but when they put us out of the possession of our own souls, our case is bad. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;" but what shall we do when the spirit is wounded? That was David's case here; his thoughts sought for something to confide in, and with which to support his hope; but he found nothing. He sunk in deep mire, where there was no standing, no firm footing; the considerations that used to support and encourage him now failed him, or were out of the way, and he was ready to give up himself for gone. He sought for something to comfort himself with, but found himself in deep waters that did overflow him, overwhelm him. He was like a sinking, drowning man, in such confusion and consternation. This points at Christ's sufferings in his soul, and the inward agony he was in when he said, "Now is my soul troubled;" and, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful;" for it was his soul that he made an offering for sin. And it instructs us, when we are in affliction, to commit the keeping of our souls to God, that they may be neither soured with discontent nor sunk into despair.

2. He complains of the long continuance of his troubles; ver. 3, "I am weary of my crying." Though he could not keep his head above water, yet he cried to his God; and the more death was in his view the more life was in his prayers: yet he had not presently an answer of peace given in, no, nor so much of that support and comfort in praying which God's people used to have; so that he was almost weary of crying, grew hoarse, and his throat so dried that he could cry no more. Nor had he his wonted satisfaction in believing, hoping, and expecting relief; "Mine eyes fail, while I wait for my God." He had almost looked his eyes out in expectation of deliverance; and yet his pleading this with God is an indication that he is resolved not to give off from believing and praying. His throat is dried, but his heart is not; his eyes fail, but his faith doth not. Thus our Lord Jesus on the cross cried out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" and yet at the same time kept hold of his relation to him, "My God, my God."

3. He complains of the malice and multitude of his enemies, their injustice and cruelty, and the hardships they put upon him, ver. 4. They hated him, they would destroy him; for hatred aims at the destruction of the person hated. But what was his iniquity? what was his sin? what provocation had he given them, that they were so spiteful towards him? None at all; "They hate me without cause;" I never did them an ill turn, that they should bear me such an ill-will. Our Saviour applies this to himself, *Jno.* xv. 25, "They hated me without a cause." We are apt to use this in justification of our passion against those that hate us, that we never gave them cause to hate us. But it is rather an argument why we should bear it patiently, because then we suffer as Christ did, and may then expect that God will right us. "They are mine enemies wrongfully;" for I have been no enemy to them. In a world where unrighteousness reigns so much, we must not wonder if we meet with those that are our enemies wrongfully. Let us take care that we never do wrong, and then we may the better bear it if we receive wrong. These enemies were not to be despised, but were very formidable, both for their number, "They are more than the hairs of mine head," (Christ's enemies were numerous; they that came to seize him were a great multitude: how were they increased that troubled him?) and for their strength, They are mighty, in authority and power. We are weak, but our enemies are strong; for "we wrestle against principalities and powers." "Then I restored that which I took not away." Applying this to David, 1st. It was what his enemies compelled him to. They made him suffer for that offence which he had never been guilty of. 2nd. It was what he consented to, that if possible he might pacify them, and make them to be at peace with him. He might have insisted upon the laws of justice and honour, the former not requiring, and the latter commonly thought to forbid, the restoring of that which we took not away; for that is to wrong ourselves both in our wealth and in our reputation. Yet the case may be such sometimes as that it may become our duty. Blessed Paul, though free from all men, yet, for the honour of Christ and the edification of the church, made himself a servant to all. But, applying it to Christ, it is an observable description of the satisfaction which he made to God for our sin by his blood; "Then he restored that which he took not away;" that is, he underwent the punishment that was due to us, paid our debt, suffered for our offences. God's glory, in some instances of it, was taken away by the sin of men; man's honour, and peace, and happiness, were taken away. It was not He that took them away; and yet, by the merit of his death, he restored them.

4. He complains of the unkindness of his friends and relations; and this is a grievance which, with an ingenuous mind, cuts as deep as any other; ver. 8, "I am become a stranger to my brethren," they make themselves strange to me, and use me as a stranger; are shy of conversing with me, and ashamed to own me. This was fulfilled in Christ, whose brethren did not believe on him, *Jno.* vii. 5; who came to his own, and his own received him not, *Jno.* i. 11, and who was forsaken by his disciples, whom he had been free with as his brethren.

5. He complains of the contempt that was put upon him, and the reproach with which he was continually loaded. And in this, especially, his complaint points at Christ, who for our sakes submitted to the greatest disgrace, and made himself of no reputation; we having, by sin, injured God in his honour, Christ made him satisfaction, not only by divesting himself of the honours due to an incarnate Deity, but by submitting to the greatest dishonours that could be done to any man. Two things David here takes notice of as aggravations of the indignities done him: 1st. The ground and matter of the reproach, ver. 10, 11. They ridiculed him for that by which he both humbled himself and honoured God. When men lift up themselves in pride and vainglory, they are justly laughed at for it. But David chastened his soul, and clothed himself with sackcloth; and from his abasing himself they took occasion to trample upon him. When men dishonour God, it is just that it turn to their dishonour; but when David, purely in devotion to God, and to testify his respect to him, wept and chastened his soul with fasting, and made sackcloth his garment, as humble penitents used to do, instead of commending his devotion, and recommending it as a great example of piety, they did all they could both to discourage him in it and to prevent others from following his good example, for that was to his reproach. They laughed at him as a fool for mortifying himself thus, and even for this he became a proverb to them; they made him the common subject of their banter. We must not think it strange if we be ill-spoken of for that which is well done, and in which we have reason to hope that we are accepted of God. Our Lord Jesus was stoned for his good works, *Jno.* x. 32; and when he cried, "Eli, Eli, my God, my God!" was bantered as if he called for Elias. 2nd. The persons that reproached him, ver. 12. *First.* Even the gravest, and the most honourable, from whom better was expected; "They that sit in the gate speak against me," and their reproaches pass for the dictates of senators, and the decrees of judges, and are credited accordingly. *Secondly.* The meanest, and the most despicable; the abjects, *Ps.* xxxv. 15; the scum of the country, the children of fools, yea, the children of base men, *Job* xxx. 8. Such drunkards as they make themselves vile; and he was the song of the drunkards, they made themselves and their companions merry with him. See the ill consequence of the sin of drunkenness,—it makes men despisers of those that are good, 2 *Tim.* iii. 3. When the king was made sick with bottles of wine, he stretched out his hand with scorners, *Hos.* vii. 5. The bench of the drunkards is the seat of the scornful. See what is commonly the lot of the best of men; they that are the praise of the wise are the song of fools. But it is easy to those that rightly judge of things to despise being thus despised.

Secondly. His confessions of sin are very serious; ver. 5, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness," both what is, and what is not; "my sins" that I am guilty of "are not hid from thee," and therefore thou knowest how innocent

I am of those crimes which they charge upon me. Note, Even then when as to men's unjust accusations we plead 'Not guilty,' yet before God we must acknowledge ourselves to have deserved all that is brought upon us, and much worse. This is the genuine confession of a penitent, who knows that he cannot prosper in covering his sin, and that therefore it is his wisdom to acknowledge it, because it is naked and open before God. 1. He knows the corruption of our nature. Thou knowest the foolishness that is bound up in my heart. All our sins take rise from our foolishness. 2. He knows the transgressions of our lives. They are not hid from him, no, not our heart sins, no, not those that are committed most secretly. They are all done in his sight, and are never cast behind his back till they are repented of and pardoned. This is apt to be applied to Christ, for he knew no sin, yet he was made sin for us; and God knew it, nor was it hid from him, when "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief."

Thirdly. His supplications are very earnest. For himself; ver. 1, "Save me, O God," save me from sinking, from despairing. Thus Christ was heard in that he feared, for he was saved from letting fall his undertaking, *Heb.* v. 7. For his friends; ver. 6, "Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of hosts, and that seek thee, O God of Israel," (under these two characters we ought to seek God, and in seeking him to wait on him as the God of hosts who has all power to help, and as the God of Israel in covenant with his people, whom therefore he is engaged in honour and truth to help,) let not them be ashamed and confounded for my sake. This intimates his fear that, if God did not appear for him, it would be a discouragement to all other good people, and would give their enemies occasion to triumph over them; and his earnest desire that, whatever became of him, all that seek God, and wait upon him, might be kept in heart, and kept in countenance, and might neither be discouraged in themselves nor exposed to contempt from others. If Jesus Christ had not been owned and accepted of his Father in his sufferings, all that seek God and wait for him had been ashamed and confounded; but they have confidence towards God, and in his name come boldly to the throne of grace.

Fourthly. His plea is very powerful, ver. 7, 9. Reproach was one of the greatest of his burthens. Lord, roll away the reproach, and plead my cause; for, 1. It is for thee that I am reproached, for serving thee and trusting in thee; "For thy sake I have borne reproach." Those that are evil spoken of for well-doing may with an humble confidence leave it to God to bring forth their righteousness as the light. 2. It is with thee that I am reproached; "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" that is, has made me forget myself, and do that which they wickedly turn to my reproach. They that hate thee and thy house for that reason hate me, because they know how zealously affected I am to it. that is it that has made them ready to eat me up, and has eaten up all the love and respect I had among them. They that blasphemed God, and spoke ill of his word and ways, did therefore reproach David for believing in his word and walking in his ways. Or it may be construed as an instance of David's zeal for God's house, that he resented all the indignities done to God's name, as if they had been done to his name. He laid to heart all the dishonour done to God, and the contempt cast upon religion. These he laid nearer to his heart than any outward troubles of his own; and therefore he had reason to hope God would interest himself in the reproaches cast upon him, because he had always interested himself in the reproaches cast upon God. Both the parts of this verse are applied to Christ; 1st. It was an instance of his love to his Father, that the zeal of his house did even eat him up, when he whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, which minded his disciples of this text, *Jno.* ii. 17. 2nd. It was an instance of his self-denial, and that he pleased not himself that the reproaches of them that reproached God fell upon him, *Rom.* xv. 3; and therein he set us an example.

13 But as for me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, *in* an acceptable time:
O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.
14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink:
Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of [the deep waters.
15 Let not the waterflood overflow me,
Neither let the deep swallow me up,
And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.
16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness *is* good:
Turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender [mercies.
17 And hide not thy face from thy servant;
For I am in trouble: hear me speedily.
18 Draw nigh unto my soul, *and* redeem it:
Deliver me because of mine enemies. [dishonour:
19 Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my
Mine adversaries *are* all before thee.
20 Reproach hath broken my heart;
And I am full of heaviness:
And I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none;
And for comforters, but I found none.
21 They gave me also gall for my meat;
And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

David had been speaking before of the spiteful reproaches which his enemies cast upon him; "But as for me, my prayer is unto thee." They spoke ill of him for his fasting and praying, and for that he was made the song of the drunkards; but, notwithstanding that, he resolves to continue praying. Note, Though we may be jeered for well-doing, we must never be jeered out of it. Those can bear but little for God, and their confessing of his name before men, that cannot bear a scoff and a hard word rather than quit their duty. David's enemies were very abusive to him; but this was his comfort, that he had a God to go to, with whom he would lodge his cause. They think to carry their cause by insolence and calumny, but I use other methods; whatever they do, "as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Lord," and it is "in an acceptable time." Not the less acceptable for being a time of affliction,—God will not drive us from him, though it is need that drives us to him; nay, it is the more acceptable, because the misery and distress of God's people makes them so much the more the objects of his pity. It is seasonable for him to help them when all other helps fail; and they are undone, and see themselves so, if he do not help them. We find this expression used concerning Christ, *Isa.* xlix. 8, "In an acceptable time have I heard thee." Now observe,

First. What his requests are. 1. That he might have a gracious audience given to his complaints, the cry of his affliction, and the desire of his heart. "Hear me," ver. 13; and again, "Hear me, O Lord," ver. 16; "hear me speedily," ver. 17; not only hear what I say, but grant what I ask. Christ knew that the Father heard him always, *Jno.* xi. 42. 2. That he might be rescued out of his troubles, might be saved from sinking under the load of grief; "Deliver me out of the mire:" let me not stick in it, so some; but help me out, and set my feet on a rock, *Ps.* xl. 2;—might be saved from his enemies, that they might not swallow him up, nor have their will against him; "Let me be delivered from them that hate me," as a lamb from the paw of the lion, ver. 14. Though I am come into deep waters, ver. 2, where I am ready to conclude that the floods will overflow me, yet let my fears be prevented, and silenced; "let not the waterflood," though it flow upon me, "overflow me," ver. 15. Let me not fall into the gulf of despair, let not that deep swallow me up, let not that pit shut her mouth upon me, for then I am undone. He gave himself up for lost in the beginning of the psalm, yet now he has his head above water, and is not so weary of crying as he thought himself. 3. That God would turn to him, ver. 16; that he would smile upon him, and not hide his face from him, ver 17. The tokens of God's favour to us, and the light of his countenance shining upon us, is enough to keep our spirits from sinking in the deepest mire of outward troubles, nor need we desire any more to make us safe and easy; ver. 18, "Draw nigh to my soul," to manifest thyself to it, and that shall redeem it.

Secondly. What his pleas are to enforce these petitions.

1. He pleads God's mercy and truth; ver. 13, "In the multitude of thy mercy hear me." There is mercy in God, a multitude of mercies, all kinds of mercy, inexhaustible mercy, mercy enough for all, enough for each; and hence we must take our encouragement in praying. And the truth of his salvation; that is, the truth of all those promises of salvation which he has made to those that trust in him, is a farther encouragement. He repeats his argument taken from the mercy of God; ver. 16, "Hear me, for thy lovingkindness is good;" it is so in itself, it is rich, and plentiful, and abundant; it is so in the account of all the saints; it is very precious to them, it is their life, their joy, their all. O let me have the benefit of it! "Turn to me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies," ver. 16. See how highly he speaks of the goodness of God; in him there are mercies, tender mercies, and a multitude of them. If we think well of God, and continue to do so under the greatest hardships, we need not fear but God will do well for us; for he taketh pleasure in those that hope in his mercy, *Ps.* cxlvii. 11.

2. He pleads his own distress and affliction. "Hide not thy face from me, for I am in trouble," ver. 17, and therefore need thy favour; therefore it will come seasonably, and therefore I shall know how to value it. He pleads particularly the reproach he was under, and the indignities that were done him; ver. 19, "Thou hast known my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour." See what a stress is laid upon this; for, in the sufferings of Christ for us, perhaps nothing contributed more to the satisfaction he made for sin, which had been so injurious to God in his honour, than the reproach, and shame, and dishonour he underwent, which God took notice of, and accepted of as more than an equivalent for the everlasting shame and contempt which our sins had deserved, who therefore must by repentance take shame to ourselves, and bear the reproach of our youth. And if at any time we be called out to suffer reproach, and shame, and dishonour for his sake, this may be our comfort that he knows it; and, as he is beforehand with us, so he will not be behindhand with us. The psalmist speaks the language of an ingenuous nature, when he saith, ver. 20, "Reproach hath broken my heart; I am full of heaviness;" for it bears hard upon one that knows the worth of a good name to be put under an ill character: but when we consider what an honour it is to be dishonoured for God, and a favour if we be counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, (as they deemed it, *Acts* v. 41,) we shall see there is no reason at all why it should sit so heavy, or be any heart-breaking to us.

3. He pleads the insolence and cruelty of his enemies; ver. 18, "Deliver me because of mine enemies," because they were such as he had before described them, ver. 4. "Mine adversaries are all before thee," ver. 19; that is, thou knowest what sort of men they are, what danger I am in from them, what enemies they are to thee, and how much thou art reflected upon in what they do and design against me. One instance of their barbarity is given; ver. 21, "They gave me gall for my meat," (the word signifies a bitter herb, and is often joined with wormwood,) "and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." This was literally fulfilled in Christ, and did so directly point to him, that he would not say, "It is finished," till this was fulfilled; and on purpose that his enemies might have occasion to fulfil it he said, "I thirst," *Jno.* xix. 28, 29. And some think the hyssop which they put to his mouth with the vinegar was the bitter herb which they gave him with the vinegar for his meat. See how particularly the sufferings of Christ were foretold, which proves the Scripture to be the word of God; and how exactly the predictions were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which proves him to be the true Messiah. This is he that should come, and we are to look for no other.

4. He pleads the unkindness of his friends, and his disappointment in them; ver. 20, "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none." They all failed him like the brooks in summer. This was fulfilled in Christ, for in his sufferings "all his disciples forsook him and fled." We cannot expect too little from men,—miserable comforters are they all,—nor can we expect too much from God, for he is "the Father of mercy, and the God of all comfort and consolation."

22 Let their table become a snare before them:
And *that which should have been* for *their* welfare, *let it become* a trap.
23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not;
And make their loins continually to shake.
24 Pour out thine indignation upon them,
And let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.
25 Let their habitation be desolate;
And let none dwell in their tents.
26 For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten;
And they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast [wounded
27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity:
And let them not come into thy righteousness;

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,
And not be written with the righteous.
29 But I *am* poor and sorrowful:
Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

These imprecations are not David's prayers against his enemies, but prophecies of the destruction of Christ's persecutors, especially the Jewish nation, which our Lord himself foretold with tears, and which was accomplished about forty years after the death of Christ. The first two verses of this paragraph are expressly applied to the judgments of God upon the unbelieving Jews by the apostle, *Rom.* xi. 9, 10, and therefore the whole must look that way. The rejection of the Jews for rejecting Christ, as it was a signal instance of God's justice, and an earnest of the vengeance which God will at last take on all that are obstinate in their infidelity, so it was, and continues to be, a convincing proof of the truth of the Christian religion. One great objection against it first was, that it set aside the ceremonial law; but its doing so was effectually justified, and that objection removed, when God set it aside with a witness, by the utter destruction of the temple, and the sinking of those with the Mosaic economy that obstinately adhered to it in opposition to the Gospel of Christ. Let us observe here,

First. What the judgments are which should come upon the crucifiers of Christ. Not upon all of them, for there were those who had a hand in his death, and yet repented and found mercy, *Acts* ii. 23; iii. 14, 15; but upon those of them, and their successors, who justified it by an obstinate infidelity, and rejection of his Gospel, and by an inveterate enmity to his disciples and followers: see 1 *Thes.* ii. 15, 16. It is here foretold,

1. That their sacrifices and offerings should be mischief and prejudice to them; ver. 22, "Let their table become a snare." The altar of the Lord, which is called his table and theirs, because in feasting upon the sacrifices they were partakers of the altar. This should have been for their welfare or peace, for they were peace offerings, but it became a snare and a trap to them; for by their affection and adherence to the altar they were held fast in their infidelity, and hardened in their prejudices against Christ, that altar which they had no right to eat of, who continued to serve the tabernacle, *Heb.* xiii. 10. Or, it may be understood of their common creature comforts, even their necessary food. They had given Christ gall and vinegar, and therefore justly shall their meat and drink be made gall and vinegar to them. When the supports of life, and delights of sense, through the corruption of our nature become an occasion of sin to us, and are made the food and fuel of our sensuality, then our table is a snare, which is a good reason why we should never feed ourselves without fear, *Jude* 12.

2. That they should never have the comfort either of that knowledge or of that peace which believers are blessed with in the Gospel of Christ, ver. 23. That they should be given up, 1st. To a judicial blindness. "Let their eyes be darkened that they see not" the glory of God in the face of Christ. Their sin was that they would not see, but shut their eyes against the light, loving darkness rather; their punishment was, that they should not see, but be given up to their own hearts' lusts which were hardening, and the God of this world should be permitted to blind their minds, 2 *Cor.* iv. 4. This was foretold concerning them, *Isa.* vi. 10, and Christ ratified it, *Mat.* xiii. 14, 15; *Jno.* xii. 40. 2nd. To a judicial terror. There is a gracious terror which opens the way to comfort, such as that of Paul, *Acts* ix. 6; he trembled and was astonished. But this is a terror that shall never end in peace, "make their loins continually to shake" through horror of conscience, as Belshazzar, when the joints of his loins were loosed. Let them be driven to despair, and filled with constant confusion. This was fulfilled in the desperate counsels of the Jews when the Romans came upon them.

3. That they should fall and lie under God's anger and fiery indignation; ver. 24, "Pour out thine indignation upon them." Note, Those who reject God's great salvation proffered to them may justly fear his indignation to be poured out upon them; for they that submit not to the Son of his love will certainly be made the generation of his wrath. It is the doom passed on those who believe not in Christ, that the wrath of God abideth on them, *Jno.* iii. 36; it takes hold of them, and will never let them go. Salvation itself will not save those that are not willing to be ruled by it. "Behold the goodness and severity of God!"

4. That their place and nation should be utterly taken away, the very thing they were afraid of, and to prevent which, as they pretended, they persecuted Christ, *Jno.* xi. 48; ver. 25, "Let their habitation be desolate," which was fulfilled when their country was laid waste by the Romans, and "Zion for their sakes was ploughed as a field," *Mic.* iii. 12. The temple was the house which they were in a particular manner proud of, but this was left unto them desolate, *Mat.* xxiii. 38. Yet that is not all: it ought to be some satisfaction to us, if we be cut off from the enjoyment of our possessions, that others will have the benefit of them when we are dislodged; but it is here added, "Let none dwell in their tents," which was remarkably fulfilled in Judah and Jerusalem; for, after the destruction of the Jews, it was long ere the country was inhabited to any purpose. But this is applied particularly to Judas by St. Peter, *Acts* i. 20; for he being *felo de se*,—'a suicide,' we may suppose his estate was confiscated, so that his habitation was desolate, and no man of his own kindred dwelt therein.

5. That their way to ruin should be down hill, and nothing should stop them, nor interpose to prevent it, ver. 27. Lord, leave them to themselves to add iniquity to iniquity; and those that are bad, if they be given up to their own heart's lusts, will certainly be worse. They will add sin to sin; nay, they will add rebellion to their sin, *Job* xxxiv. 37. It is said of the Jews that they filled up their sin always, 1 *Thes.* ii. 16; 'add the punishment of iniquity to their iniquity,' so some read it, for the same word signifies both sin and punishment, so close is their connection. If men will sin, God will reckon for it; but those that have multiplied to sin may yet find mercy, for God multiplies to pardon, through the righteousness of the Mediator; and therefore, that they might be precluded from all hopes of mercy, he adds, "Let them not come into thy righteousness," to receive the benefit of the righteousness of God, which is by faith in a Mediator, *Phil.* iii. 9. Not that God shuts out any from that righteousness, for the Gospel excludes none that do not by their unbelief exclude themselves; but let them be left to take their own course, and they will never come into this government; for, being ignorant of the demands of God's righteousness, and going about to establish the merit of their own, they "have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," *Rom.* x. 3; and those that are so proud and self-willed that they will not come into God's righteousness, so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it, they shall not come into his righteousness. Let not them expect any benefit by it that are not willing and glad to be beholden to it.

6. That they should be cut off from all hopes of happiness; ver. 28, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living," that is, let them not be suffered to live any longer, who the longer they live the more mischief they do. Multitudes of the unbelieving Jews fell by sword and famine, and none of those who had embraced the Christian faith perished among them. The nation as a nation was blotted out, and became not a people. Many understand it of their rejection from God's covenant, and all the privileges of it; that is, the book of the living. Let the commonwealth of Israel itself, Israel according to the flesh, now become alienated from that covenant of promise, which hitherto it has had the monopoly of. Let it appear that they were never written in the Lamb's book of life; but "reprobate silver, let men call them, because the Lord has rejected them." Let them "not be written with the righteous;" that is, let them not have a place in the congregation of the saints, when they shall all be gathered in the general assembly of those whose names are written in heaven, *Ps.* i. 5.

Secondly. What the sin is for which these dreadful judgments should be brought upon them; ver. 26, "They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and talk to the grief of thy wounded." 1. Christ was he whom God had smitten, for it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and he was esteemed stricken, smitten of God and afflicted; and therefore men hid their faces from him, *Isa.* liii. 4, 5. They persecuted him with a rage reaching up to heaven; they cried, "Crucify him, crucify him." Compare that of St. Peter with this, *Acts* ii. 23; though he was delivered by the counsel and foreknowledge of God, it was with wicked hands that they crucified and slew him. They talked to the grief of the Lord Jesus when he was upon the cross, saying, "He trusted in God, let him deliver him," than which nothing could be said more grieving. 2. The suffering saints were God's wounded, wounded in his cause, and for his sake, and them they persecuted, and talked to their grief; and for these things wrath came upon them to the uttermost, 1 *Thes.* ii. 16; and see *Mat.* xxiii. 34, &c. This may be understood more generally, and it teacheth us, that nothing is more provoking to God than to insult over those whom he hath smitten, and to add affliction to the afflicted; upon which it justly follows here, "Add iniquity to iniquity:" see *Zec.* i. 15. Those that are of a wounded spirit, under trouble and fear about their spiritual state, ought to be very tenderly dealt with, and care must be taken not to talk to their grief, and not to make the heart of the righteous sad.

Thirdly. What the psalmist thinks of himself in the midst of all; ver. 29, "But I am poor and sorrowful;" that is the worst of my case: under outward afflictions, yet written among the righteous, and not under God's indignation as they are. It is better to be poor and sorrowful with the blessing of God, than rich and jovial, and under his curse; for they who come into God's righteousness shall soon see an end of their poverty and sorrow, and his salvation shall set them up on high, which is the thing that David here prays for, *Isa.* lxi. 10. This may be applied to Christ. He was in his humiliation poor and sorrowful, a man of sorrows, and that had not where to lay his head; but God highly exalted him: the salvation wrought for him, the salvation wrought by him, set him up on high, far above all principalities and powers.

30 I will praise the name of God with a song,
And will magnify him with thanksgiving.
31 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox
Or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.
32 The humble shall see *this, and* be glad:
And your heart shall live that seek God.
33 For the LORD heareth the poor,
And despiseth not his prisoners.
34 Let the heaven and earth praise him,
The seas, and every thing that moveth therein.
35 For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah:
That they may dwell there, and have it in possession.
36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it:
And they that love his name shall dwell therein.

The psalmist here, both as a type of Christ, and as an example to Christians, concludes a psalm with holy joy and praise, which he began with complaints and remonstrances of his griefs.

First. He resolves to praise God himself, not doubting but that therein he should be accepted of him; ver. 30, 31, "I will praise the name of God," not only with my heart, but "with my song, and magnify him with thanksgiving," for he is pleased to reckon himself magnified by the thankful praises of his people. It is intimated that all Christians ought to glorify God with their praises, "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs;" and, "this shall please the Lord," through Christ, the Mediator of our praises as well as of our prayers, "better than" the most valuable of the legal sacrifices; ver. 31, "an ox or bullock." This is a plain intimation that in the days of the Messiah an end should be put not only to the sacrifices of atonement, but to those of praise and acknowledgment, which were instituted by the ceremonial law; and instead of them spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are accepted; the calves of our lips, not the calves of the stall, *Heb.* xiii. 15. It is a great comfort to us that humble thankful praises are more pleasing to God than the most costly pompous sacrifices are or ever were.

Secondly. He encourageth other good people to rejoice in God, and continue seeking him; ver. 32, 33, "The humble shall see this and be glad." They shall observe to their comfort, 1. The experiences of the saints. They shall see how ready God is to hear the poor, when they cry to him, and to give them that which they call upon him for; how far he is from despising his prisoners, though men despise them, but he favours them with his gracious visits, and will find a time to enlarge them. "The humble shall see this and be glad," not only because when "one member is honoured all the members rejoice with it," but because it is an encouragement to them in their straits and difficulties to trust in God. It shall revive the hearts of those who seek God to see more seals and subscriptions to this truth, that Jacob's God never said to Jacob's seed, Seek ye me in vain. 2. The exaltation of the Saviour, for of him the psalmist had been speaking, and of himself as a type of him. When his sorrows are over, and he enters into the joy that was set before him,—when he is heard, and discharged from his imprisonment in the grave,—the humble shall look upon it and be glad, and they that seek God through Christ shall live and be comforted; concluding that, if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him.

Thirdly. He calls upon all the creatures to praise God. The heaven and earth, and sea, and the inhabitants of each, ver. 34. Heaven and earth, and the hosts of both, were made by him; and therefore "let the heaven and earth praise him." Angels in heaven and saints on earth; they may each of them in their respective habitations furnish themselves with matter enough for constant praise. Let the fishes of the sea, though mute to a proverb, praise the Lord, for "the sea is his, and he made it." The praises of the world must be offered for God's favours to his church, ver. 35, 36. For God will save

Zion, the holy mountain, where his service was kept up. He will save all that are sanctified, and set apart to him all that employ themselves in his worship, and all those over whom Christ reigns, for he was King upon the holy hill of Zion. He has mercy in store for the cities of Judah, of which tribe Christ was. God will do great things for the gospel church, in which let all that wish well to it rejoice. For, 1. It shall be peopled and inhabited. There shall be added to it such as shall be saved. The cities of Judah shall be built, particular churches shall be formed, and incorporated according to the Gospel model, that there may be a remnant to dwell there, and to have it in possession; to enjoy the privileges conferred upon it, and to pay the tributes and services required from it. They that love his name, that have a kindness for religion in general, shall embrace the Christian religion, and take their place in the Christian church; they shall dwell therein as citizens, and of the household of God. 2. It shall be perpetuated and inherited. Christianity was not to be *res unius ætatis*,—'a transitory thing;' no, "The seed of his servants shall inherit it." God will secure and raise up for himself a seed to serve him; and they shall inherit the privileges of their fathers; for the promise is to you and your children, as it was of old, "I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee." The land of promise shall never be lost for want of heirs, for God can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, and will do it rather than the entail shall be cut off. David shall never want a man to stand before him. The Redeemer shall see his seed, and prolong his days in them, till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the mystical body completed; and since the holy seed is the substance of the world, and if that were all gathered in it would be at an end quickly, it is just that for this assurance of the preservation of it heaven and earth should praise him.

PSALM LXX.

This psalm is adapted to a state of affliction. It is copied almost word for word from another psalm, and some think, for that reason, is entitled a psalm to bring to remembrance; for it may be of use sometimes to pray over the prayers we have formerly made to God upon the like occasions, which may be done with new affections. David here prays that God would send, I. Help to himself, ver. 1—5. II. Shame to his enemies, ver. 2, 3. III. Joy to his friends, ver. 4. These five verses were the five last verses of *Ps.* xl. He seems to have intended this short prayer to be both for himself and us, a salve for every sore, and therefore to be always in mind, and in singing we may apply it to our particular troubles, whatever they are.

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David, to bring to remembrance.

MAKE haste, O God, to deliver me;
Make haste to help me, O LORD.
2 Let them be ashamed and confounded
That seek after my soul:
Let them be turned backward, and put to confusion,
That desire my hurt.
3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame
That say, Aha, aha.
4 Let all those that seek thee
Rejoice and be glad in thee:
And let such as love thy salvation
Say continually, Let God be magnified.
5 But I *am* poor and needy:
Make haste unto me, O God:
Thou *art* my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, make no tarrying.

The title tells us that this psalm was designed "to bring to remembrance;" to put God in remembrance of his mercy and promise; for so we are said to do when we pray to him, and plead with him, *Isa.* xliii. 26, "Put me in remembrance." Not that the Eternal Mind needs a remembrancer, but this honour he is pleased to put upon the prayer of faith. It was rather to put himself and others in remembrance of former afflictions, that we may never be secure, but always in expectation of troubles; and of former devotions, that when the clouds return after the rain we may have recourse to the same means which we have formerly found effectual for fetching in comfort and relief. We may in prayer use the same words we have often used before. Our Saviour in his agony prayed thrice, saying the same words; so David here useth the same words he had used before, yet not without some alterations, to shew that he did not design to tie himself or others to them as a form. God looks at the heart, not at the words.

First. David here prays that God would make haste to relieve and succour him; ver. 1, 5, "I am poor and needy," in want and distress, and much at a loss within myself. Poverty and necessity is a very good plea in prayer to a God of infinite mercy, who despiseth not the sighing of a contrite heart, and hath pronounced a blessing upon the poor in spirit; who "filleth the hungry with good things." He prays, 1. That God would appear for him to deliver him out of his troubles in due time. 2. That in the meantime he would come in to him to help him under his troubles, that he might not sink and faint. 3. That he would do this quickly; "Make haste," ver. 1; and again, ver. 5, "Make haste, make no tarrying." Sometimes God seems to delay helping his own people, that he may excite such earnest desires as these. "He that believeth doth not make haste," so as to anticipate or outrun the Divine counsels, so as to force a way of escape, or take any unlawful methods of relief; but he may make haste by going forth to meet God in humble prayer, that he would hasten the desired succour. "Make haste unto me," for the longing desire of my soul is towards thee; I shall perish if I be not speedily helped; I have no other to expect relief from: "Thou art my help and my deliverer." Thou hast engaged to be so to all that seek thee, I depend upon thee to be so to me; I have often found thee so, and thou art sufficient, all-sufficient to be so. Therefore make haste to me.

Secondly. He prays that God would fill the faces of his enemies with shame, ver. 2, 3. Observe, 1. How he describes them. They sought after his soul, his life, to destroy that; his mind, to disturb that, to draw him from God to sin and to despair. They desired his hurt, his ruin. When any calamity befell him, or threatened him, they said, "Aha, aha;" so would we have it, we shall gain our point now, and see him ruined. Thus spiteful, thus insolent were they. 2. What his prayer is against them: "Let them be ashamed," that is, let them be brought to repentance; so filled with shame as that they may seek thy name, *Ps.* lxxxiii. 16. Let them see their fault and folly, in fighting against those whom thou dost protect, and be ashamed of their envy, *Isa.* xxvi. 11. However, let their designs against me be frustrated, and their measures broken; let them be turned back from their malicious pursuits, and then they will be ashamed and confounded, and, like the enemies of the Jews, much cast down in their own eyes, *Neh.* vi. 16.

Thirdly. He prays that God would fill the hearts of his friends with joy, ver. 4; that all those that seek God, and love his salvation,—that desire it, delight in it, and depend upon it,—may have continual matter for joy and praise, and hearts for both; and then he doubts not but himself to put in for a share of the blessing he prays for; and so may we, if we answer the character. 1. Let us make the service of God our great business, and the favour of God our great delight and pleasure, for that is seeking him, and loving his salvation. Let the pursuit of a happiness in God be our great care, and the enjoyment of it our great satisfaction. A heart to love the salvation of the Lord, and to prefer it before any secular advantages whatsoever, so as cheerfully to quit all rather than hazard our salvation, is a good evidence of our interest in it, and title to it. 2. Let us, then, be assured that, if it be not our own fault, the joy of the Lord shall fill our minds, and the high praises of the Lord shall fill our mouths. Those that seek God, if they seek him early and seek him diligently, shall rejoice and be glad in him; for their seeking him is an evidence of his good-will to them, and an earnest of their finding him, *Ps.* cv. 3. There is pleasure and joy even in seeking God, for it is one of the fundamental principles of religion that God is the rewarder of all those that diligently seek him. Those that love God's salvation shall say with pleasure, with constant pleasure, (for praising God, if we make it our continual work, it will be our continual feast,) "Let God be magnified," as he will be to eternity in the salvation of his people. All that wish well to the comfort of the saints, and to the glory of God, cannot but say a hearty Amen to this prayer, that those who "love God's salvation may say continually, Let God be magnified."

PSALM LXXI.

David penned this psalm in his old age, as appears by several passages in it, which makes many think that it was penned at the time of Absalom's rebellion, for that was the great trouble of his latter days. It might be occasioned by Sheba's insurrection, or some trouble that happened to him in that part of his life, of which it was foretold, that the sword should not depart from his house. But he is not over particular in representing his case, because he intended it for the general use of God's people in their affliction, especially those they meet with in their declining years; for this psalm, above any other, is fitted for the use of the old disciples of Jesus Christ. I. He begins the psalm with believing prayers, with prayers that God would deliver him and save him, ver. 2, 4; and not cast him off, ver. 9; or be far from him, ver. 12; and that his enemies might be put to shame, ver. 13. He pleads his confidence in God, ver. 1, 3, 5, 7; the experience he had had of help from God, ver. 6; and the malice of his enemies against him, ver. 10, 11. II. He concludes the psalm with believing praises, ver. 14, &c.; never was his hope more established, ver. 16, 18, 20, 21; never were his joys and thanksgivings more enlarged, ver. 15, 19, 22—24. He is in an extacy of joyful praise, and in the singing of it we should have our faith in God encouraged, and our hearts raised in blessing his holy name.

IN thee, O LORD, do I put my trust:
Let me never be put to confusion.
2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape:
Incline thine ear unto me, and save me.
3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort:
Thou hast given commandment to save me;
For thou *art* my rock and my fortress.
4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked,
Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.
5 For thou *art* my hope, O Lord GOD:
Thou art my trust from my youth.
6 By thee have I been holden up from the womb:
Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels:
My praise *shall be* continually of thee.
7 I am as a wonder unto many;
But thou *art* my strong refuge.
8 Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise
And with thy honour all the day.
9 Cast me not off in the time of old age;
Forsake me not when my strength faileth.
10 For mine enemies speak against me;
And they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,
11 Saying, God hath forsaken him:
Persecute and take him; for *there is* none to deliver *him*.
12 O God, be not far from me:
O my God, make haste for my help.
13 Let them be confounded *and* consumed
That are adversaries to my soul;
Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonour
That seek my hurt.

Two things in general David here prays for—that he might not be confounded, and that his enemies and persecutors might be confounded.

First. He prays that he might never be made ashamed of his dependence upon God, nor disappointed in his believing expectations from him. And with this petition every true believer may come boldly to the throne of grace; for God will never dash the hope that is of his own raising. Now observe here,

PSALM LXXI.

1. How David professeth his confidence in God; and with what pleasure and grateful variety of expression he repeats his profession of that confidence, still presenting the profession of it to God, and pleading it with him. We praise God, and so please him by telling him, if it be indeed true, what an entire confidence we have in him; ver. 1, "In thee, O Lord," and in thee only, "do I put my trust." Whatever others do, I choose the God of Jacob for my help. They that are entirely satisfied in God's all-sufficiency, and the truth of his promise, and in dependence upon that as sufficient to make them amends,—are freely willing to do and suffer, to lose and venture for him,—may truly say, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust." Those that will deal with God, must deal upon trust; if we are shy of dealing with him, it is a sign we do not trust him. "Thou art my rock and my fortress," ver. 3; and again, "Thou art my refuge, my strong refuge," ver. 7; that is, I fly to thee, and am sure to be safe in thee, and under thy protection. If thou secure me, none can hurt me; "Thou art my hope and my trust," ver. 5; that is, thou hast proposed thyself to me in thy Word as the proper object of my hope and trust; I have hoped in thee, and never found it in vain to do so.

2. How his confidence in God is supported and encouraged by his experiences; ver. 5, 6, "Thou hast been my trust from my youth;" that is, ever since I was capable of discerning between my right hand and my left I stayed myself upon thee; and saw a great deal of reason to do so, for "by thee have I been holden up from the womb." Ever since he had the use of his reason he had been a dependent upon God's goodness, because ever since he had a being he had been a monument of it. Note, The consideration of the gracious care which the Divine providence took of us in our birth and infancy should engage us to an early piety, and constant devotedness to his honour. He that was our help from our birth ought to be our hope from our youth. If we received so much mercy from God before we were capable of doing him any service, we should lose no time when we are capable. This comes in here as a support to the psalmist in his present distress; not only that God had given him his life and being, bringing him out of his mother's bowels into the world, and providing that he should not die from the womb, nor give up the ghost when he came out of the belly, but that he had betimes made him one of his family; "Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels" into the arms of thy grace, under the shadow of thy wings, into the bond of thy covenant; thou tookest me into thy church, as a son of thine handmaid, and born in thine house, *Ps.* cxvi. 16. And, therefore, 1st. I have reason to hope that thou wilt protect me; thou that hast held me up hitherto wilt not let me fall now. Thou that madest me wilt not forsake the work of thine own hands; that helpedst me when I could not help myself wilt not abandon me now I am upon the matter as helpless as I was then. 2nd. Therefore I have reason to resolve, that I will devote myself unto thee; "My praise shall therefore be continually of thee," that is, I will make it my business every day to praise thee, and will take all occasions to do it.

3. What his requests to God are in this confidence.

1st. That he might never be put to confusion, ver. 1; that is, that he might not be disappointed of the mercy he expected, and so made ashamed of his expectation. Thus we may all pray in faith, that our confidence in God may not be our confusion. Hope of the glory of God is hope that maketh not ashamed.

2nd. That he might be delivered out of the hand of his enemies; ver. 2, "Deliver me in thy righteousness," that is, as thou art the righteous judge of the world, pleading the cause of the injured, and punishing the injurious; cause me some way or other to escape. God uses with the temptation to make a way to escape, 1 *Cor.* x. 13; "Incline thine ear unto my prayers," and in answer to them save me out of my troubles, ver. 4. "Deliver me, O my God, out of the hands" of those that are ready to pull me in pieces. Three things he pleads for deliverance: *First.* The encouragement God had given him to expect it. "Thou hast given commandment to save me," ver. 3; that is, thou hast promised to do it, and such efficacy is there in God's promises, that they are often spoken of as commands; like that, "Let there be light, and there was light." He speaks, and it is done. *Secondly.* The character of his enemies. They are wicked, unrighteous, cruel men, and it will be for the honour of God to appear against them, ver. 4; for he is a holy, just, and good God. *Thirdly.* The many eyes that were upon him; ver. 7, "I am as a wonder unto many." Every one waits to see what will be the issue of such extraordinary troubles as I am fallen into, and such extraordinary confidence as I profess to have in God. Or, I am looked upon as a monster, am one whom everybody shuns; and therefore am undone if the Lord be not my refuge. Men abandon me, but God will not.

3rd. That he might always find rest and safety in God; ver. 3, "Be thou my strong habitation." Be thou to me a rock of repose, "whereto I may continually resort." They are at home in God that live a life of communion with him, and confidence in him; that continually resort unto him by faith and prayer, having their eyes ever towards him, may promise themselves a strong habitation in him, such as will never fall of itself, nor can ever be broken through by any invading power. And they shall be welcome to resort to him continually upon all occasions, and not be upbraided as coming too often.

4th. That he might have continual matter for thanksgiving to God, and might be continually employed in that pleasant work; ver. 8, "Let my mouth be filled with thy praise," as now it is with complaints, and then I shall not be ashamed of my hope, but my enemies will be ashamed of their insolence. They that love God love to be praising him, and desire to be doing it all the day; not only in their morning and evening devotions, not only seven times a day, *Ps.* cxix. 164, but all the day; to intermix with all they say something or other that may redound to the honour and praise of God. They resolve to do it while they live; they hope to be doing it eternally in a better world.

5th. That he might not be neglected now in his declining years; ver. 9, "Cast me not off now in the time of my old age, forsake me not when my strength fails." Observe here, *First.* The natural sense he had of the infirmities of age; "my strength fails." Where there was strength of body, and vigour of mind, strong sight, strong voice, strong limbs, alas! in old age they fail; the life is continued, but the strength is gone, or that which is is labour and sorrow, *Ps.* xc. 10. *Secondly.* The gracious desire he had of the continuance of God's presence with him under these infirmities. Lord, cast me not off, do not then forsake me. This intimates that he should look upon himself as undone if God should abandon him. To be cast off and forsaken of God is a thing to be dreaded at any time, especially in the time of old age, and when our strength fails us; for it is God that is the strength of our heart. But it intimates that he had reason to hope God would not desert him. The faithful servants of God may be comfortably assured that he will not cast them off in old age, nor forsake them when their strength fails them. He is a master that doth not use to cast off old servants. In this confidence David here prays again, ver. 12, "O God, be not far from me;" let me not be under the apprehension of thy withdrawings, for then I am miserable; "O my God," a God in covenant with me, "make haste for my help," lest I perish before help come.

Secondly. He prays that his enemies might be made ashamed of their designs against him. Observe, 1. What it was which they unjustly said against him, ver. 10, 11. Their plot was deep and desperate, it was against his life; "They lay wait for my soul," ver. 10; and are adversaries to that, ver. 13. Their powers and policies were combined; "They take counsel together." And very insolent they were in their carriage; "They say, God has forsaken him; persecute and take him." Here their premises are utterly false; that because a good man was in great trouble, and had continued long in it, and was not so soon delivered as perhaps he expected, that therefore God had forsaken him, and would have no more to do with him. All are not forsaken of God who think so themselves, or whom others think to be so. And as their premises were false, so their inference was barbarous. If God has forsaken him, then persecute and take him; and doubt not but to make a prey of him. This is talking to the grief of one whom God hath smitten, *Ps.* lxix. 26. But thus they endeavour to discourage David, as Sennacherib endeavoured to intimidate Hezekiah, by suggesting that God was his enemy, and fought against him; "Am I now come up without the Lord against this city to destroy it?" *Isa.* xxxvi. 10. It is true, if God has forsaken a man, there is none to deliver him; but therefore to insult over him ill becomes those who are conscious to themselves that they deserve to be for ever forsaken of God. But "rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, though I fall I shall rise." He that seems to forsake for a small moment will gather with everlasting kindness. 2. What it was which he justly prayed for, from a spirit of prophecy, not a spirit of passion; ver. 13, "Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul." If they will not be confounded by repentance and so saved, let them be confounded with everlasting dishonour, and so ruined. They that turn the glory of God and his people into shame, God will turn their glory into shame.

14 But I will hope continually,
And will yet praise thee more and more.
15 My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness
And thy salvation all the day;
For I know not the numbers *thereof.*
16 I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: [only.
I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine
17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth:
And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.
18 Now also when I am old and greyheaded,
O God, forsake me not;
Until I have shewed thy strength unto *this* generation,
And thy power to every one *that* is to come.
19 Thy righteousness also, O God, *is* very high, [thee!
Who hast done great things: O God, who *is* like unto
20 *Thou*, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles,
Shalt quicken me again,
And shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.
21 Thou shalt increase my greatness,
And comfort me on every side.
22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery,
Even thy truth, O my God:
Unto thee will I sing with the harp,
O thou Holy One of Israel.
23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee;
And my soul, which thou hast redeemed. [long:
24 My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day
For they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame,
that seek my hurt.

David is here in a holy transport of joy and praise, arising from his faith and hope in God. We have both together, ver. 14, where there is a sudden and remarkable change of his voice; his fears are all silenced, his hopes raised, and his prayers turned into thanksgivings. Let mine enemies say what they will to drive me to despair, "I will hope continually;" hope in all conditions, in the most cloudy and dark day; I will live upon hope, and will hope to the end. Since we hope in one that will never fail us, let not our hope in him fail us; and then we shall "praise him yet more and more." The more they reproach me the more closely will I cleave to thee; I will praise thee more and better than ever I have done yet. The longer we live the more expert we should grow in praising God, and the more we should abound in it. 'I will add over and above all thy praise;' that is, all the praise I have hitherto offered, for it is all too little. When we have said all we can to the glory of God's grace, there is still more to be said; it is a subject that can never be exhausted, and therefore we should never grow weary of it. Now observe in these verses,

First. How his heart is established in faith and hope, and it is a good thing that the heart be so established. Observe,

1. What he hopes in, ver. 16. 1st. In the power of God; "I will go in the strength of the Lord God;" not sit down in despair, but stir up myself to, and exert myself in, my work and warfare; will go forth and go on, not in any strength of my own, but in God's strength; disclaiming my own sufficiency, and depending on him only as all-sufficient, in the strength of his providence, and in the strength of his grace. We must always go about God's work in his strength, having our eyes up unto him to work in us both to will and to do. 2nd. In the promise of God; "I will make mention of thy righteousness," that is, thy faithfulness to every word which thou hast spoken, the equity of thy disposals, and thy kindness to thy people that trust in thee. This I will make mention of as my plea in prayer for thy mercy. We may very fitly apply it to the righteousness of Christ, which is called the righteousness of God by faith, and which is witnessed by the law and the prophets; we must depend upon God's strength for assistance, and upon Christ's righteousness for acceptance. "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," *Isa.* xlv. 24.

2. What he hopes for.

1st. He hopes that God will not leave him in his old age, but will be the same

to him to the end that he had been all along, ver. 17, 18. Observe here, *First.* What God had done for him when he was young. "Thou hast taught me from my youth." The good education and good instructions which his parents gave him when he was young, he owns himself obliged to give God thanks for as a great favour. It is a blessed thing to be taught of God from our youth, from our childhood to know the holy Scriptures; and it is what we have reason to bless God for. *Secondly.* What he had done for God when he was middle-aged. He had declared all God's wondrous works. Those that have got good when they are young must be doing good when they are grown up; and must continue to communicate what they have received. We must own all the works of God's goodness to us are wondrous works; admiring he should do so much for us that are so undeserving; and we must make it our business to declare them to the glory of God, and the good of others. *Thirdly.* What he desired of God now he was old. "Now I am old and greyheaded," dying to this world, and hastening to another, "O God, forsake me not." This is what he earnestly desires, and confidently hopes for. Those that have been taught of God from their youth, and have made it the business of their lives to honour him, may be sure he will not leave them when they are old and greyheaded, will not leave them helpless and comfortless; but will make the evil days of old age their best days, and such as they shall have occasion to say they have pleasure in. *Fourthly.* What he designed to do for God in his old age. "I will shew thy strength," by my own experience of it, not only "to this generation," but I will leave my observations upon record for the benefit of posterity, and so shew it "to every one that is to come." As long as we live we should be endeavouring to glorify God, and edify one another; and those that have had the largest and longest experience of the goodness of God to them should improve their experiences for the good of their friends. It is a debt which the old disciples of Christ owe to the succeeding generations, to leave behind them a solemn testimony to the power, and pleasure, and advantage of religion, and the truth of God's promises.

2nd. He hopes that God would revive him, raise him up out of his present low and disconsolate condition; ver. 20, "Thou which hast made me to see and feel great and sore troubles," above most men, "shalt quicken me again." Note, *First.* The best of God's saints and servants are sometimes exercised with great and sore troubles in this world. *Secondly.* God's hand is to be eyed in all the troubles of the saints; and that will help to extenuate them, and make them seem light. He doth not say, Thou hast burthened me with those troubles, but shewed them me, as the tender father shews the child the rod to keep him in awe. *Thirdly.* Though God's people be brought never so low, he can revive them, and raise them up. Are they dead? he can quicken them again: see 2 *Cor.* i. 9. Are they buried, as dead men out of mind? he can bring them up again from the depths of the earth; can cheer the most drooping spirit, and raise the most sinking interest. *Fourthly.* If we have a due regard to the hand of God in our troubles, we may promise ourselves in due time a deliverance out of them. Our present troubles, though great and sore, shall be no hindrance to our joyful resurrection from the depths of the earth; witness our great Master, to whom this may have some reference: his Father shewed him great and sore troubles, but quickened him and brought him up from the grave.

3rd. He hopes that God would not only deliver him out of his troubles, but would advance his honour and joy more than ever; ver. 21, Thou shalt not only restore me to my greatness again, but shalt increase it, and give me a better interest after this shock than before. Thou shalt not only comfort me, but "comfort me on every side," so that I shall see nothing black or threatening on any side. Note, Sometimes God makes his people's troubles contribute to the increase of their greatness; and their sun shines the brighter for having been under a cloud. If he makes them contribute to the increase of their goodness, that will prove in the end their greatness, their glory; and if he comfort them on every side, according to the time and degree wherein he has afflicted them on every side, they will have no reason to complain. When our Lord Jesus was quickened again, and brought back from the depths of the earth, his greatness was increased, and he entered on the joy set before him.

4th. He hopes that all his enemies would be put to confusion, ver. 24. He speaks of it with the greatest assurance as a thing done, and triumphs in it accordingly; "They are confounded, they are brought to shame, that seek my hurt." His honour would be their disgrace, and his comfort their vexation.

Secondly. Let us now see how his heart is enlarged in joy and praises; how he rejoiceth in hope, and sings in hope, for we are saved by hope.

1. He will speak of God's righteousness and his salvation as great things; things which he was well acquainted with, and much affected with, which he desired God might have the glory of, and others might have the comfortable knowledge of; ver. 15, "My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness, and thy salvation." And again, ver. 24, "My tongue shall talk of thy righteousness," and this "all the day." God's righteousness, which David seems here to be in a particular manner affected with, includes a great deal: the rectitude of his nature, the equity of his providential disposals, the righteous laws which he hath given us to be ruled by, the righteous promises he has given us to depend upon, and the everlasting righteousness which his Son hath brought in for our justification. God's righteousness and his salvation are here joined together, let no man think to put them asunder, nor expect salvation without righteousness, *Ps.* l. 23. If these two are made the objects of our desire, let them be made the subjects of our discourse all the day; for they are subjects that can never be drawn dry.

2. He will speak of them with wonder and admiration; as one astonished at the dimensions of Divine love and grace, the height and depth, the length and breadth of it. "I know not the numbers thereof," ver. 15. Though I cannot give a particular account of thy favours to me, they are so many, so great, if "I would count them they are more in number than the sand," *Ps.* xl. 5, yet knowing them to be numberless I will be still speaking of them; for in them I shall find new matter, ver. 19. The righteousness that is in God is very high, that which is done by him for his people is very great; put both together, and we shall say, "O God, who is like unto thee?" This is praising God, acknowledging his perfections and peformances to be, 1st. Above our conception. They are very high and great; so high that we cannot apprehend them; so great that we cannot comprehend them. 2nd. Without any parallel. No being like him, no works like his; "O God, who is like unto thee?" None in heaven, none on earth; no angel, no king. God is a nonsuch; we do not rightly praise him, if we do not own him to be so.

3. He will speak of them with all the expressions of joy and exultation, ver. 22, 23. Observe, 1st. How he would eye God in praising him. *First.* As a faithful God; "I will praise thee, even thy truth." God is made known by his Word; if we praise that, and the truth of that, we praise him. By faith we set to our seal that God is true; and so we praise his truth. *Secondly.* As a God in covenant with him; O my God, whom I have consented to, and avouched for mine. As in our prayers, so in our praises, we must look up to God as our God, and give him the glory of our interest in him, and relation to him. *Thirdly.* As the Holy One of Israel; Israel's God in a peculiar manner, glorious in his holiness among that people, and faithful to his covenant with them. It is God's honour that he is a Holy One; it is his people's honour that he is the Holy One of Israel. 2nd. Observe how he will express his joy and exultation. *First.* With his hand; in sacred music, with the psaltery, with the harp. At these David was an artist, and the best of his skill shall be employed in setting forth God's praises to such advantage as might affect others. *Secondly.* With his lips in sacred songs. "Unto thee will I sing," to thine honour, and with a desire to be accepted of thee; "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee," knowing they cannot be better employed. *Thirdly.* In both, with his heart; "My soul shall rejoice, which thou hast redeemed." Note, 1*st.* Holy joy is the very heart and life of thankful praise. 2*nd.* We do not make melody to the Lord in singing his praises, if we do not do it with our hearts. "My lips shall rejoice," but that is nothing. Lip-labour, though never so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in serving God. The soul must be at work, and with all that is within us we must bless his holy name; else all about us is worth little. 3*rd.* Redeemed souls ought to be joyful, thankful souls. The work of redemption ought above all God's works to be celebrated by us in our praises. The Lamb that was slain, and has redeemed us to God, must therefore be counted worthy of all blessing and praise.

PSALM LXXII.

The foregoing psalm was penned by David when he was old, and it should seem so was this too, for Solomon was now standing fair for the crown; that was his prayer for himself, this for his son and successor; and with these two, "the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," as we find in the close of this psalm. If we have but God's presence with us while we live, and good hopes concerning those that shall come after us, that they shall be praising God on earth when we are praising him in heaven, it is enough. This is entitled, "a psalm for Solomon." It is probable David dictated it, or rather it was by the blessed Spirit dictated to him, when, a little before he died, by Divine direction he settled the succession, and gave orders to proclaim Solomon king, 1 *Kin.* i. 30. But, though Solomon's name is here made use of, Christ's kingdom is here prophesied of under the type and figure of Solomon's. David knew what the Divine oracle was, "that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne," *Acts* ii. 30; and to him he here bare witness, and with the prospect of the glories of his kingdom he comforted himself in his dying moments, when he foresaw that his house would not be so with God, not so great, not so good, as he wished. David, in spirit, I. Begins with a short prayer for his successor, ver. 1. II. He passeth immediately into a long prediction of the glories of his reign, ver. 2—17. And, III. He concludes with praise to the God of Israel, ver. 18—20. In singing this psalm we must have an eye to Christ, praising him as a king, and pleasing ourselves with our happiness as his subjects.

A Psalm for Solomon.

GIVE the king thy judgments, O God,
And thy righteousness unto the king's son.

This verse is a prayer for the king, even the king's son.

First. We may apply it to Solomon; "Give him thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness," make him a man, a king; make him a good man, a good king. 1. It is the prayer of a father for his child; a dying blessing, such as the patriarchs bequeathed to their children. The best thing we can ask of God for our children is that God will give them wisdom and grace to know and do their duty. That is better than gold. Solomon learned to pray for himself, as his father had prayed for him, not that God would give him riches and honour, but a wise and understanding heart. It was a comfort to David that his own son was to be his successor; but more so that he was likely to be both judicious and righteous. David had given him a good education, *Pr.* iv. 3; had taught him good judgment and righteousness, yet that would not do unless God gave him his judgments. Parents cannot give grace to their children, but may by prayer bring them to the God of grace, and shall not seek him in vain; for their prayer shall either be answered or it shall return with comfort into their own bosom. 2. It is the prayer of a king for his successor. David had executed judgment and justice during his reign, and now he prays that his son might do so too. Such a concern as this we should have for posterity, desiring and endeavouring that those who come after us may do God more and better service in their day than we have done in ours. Those have little love either to God or man, and are of a very narrow selfish spirit, who care not what becomes of the world and the church when they are gone. 3. It is the prayer of subjects for their king. It should seem David penned this psalm for the use of the people, that they in singing might pray for Solomon. Those who would live quiet and peaceable lives must pray for kings and all in authority, that God would give them his judgments and righteousness.

Secondly. We may apply it to Christ; not that he who intercedes for us needs us to intercede for him, but, 1. It is a prayer of the Old Testament church for sending the Messiah, as the church's King, King on the holy hill of Zion, of whom the King of kings had said, "Thou art my son," *Ps.* ii. 6, 7. Hasten his coming to whom all judgment is committed; and we must thus hasten the second coming of Christ, when he shall judge the world in righteousness. 2. It is an expression of the satisfaction which all true believers take in the authority which the Lord Jesus has received from the Father. Let him have all power both in heaven and earth, and be the Lord our righteousness; let him be the great trustee of Divine grace for all that are his: give it him, that he may give it us.

2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness,
And thy poor with judgment.
3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people,
And the little hills, by righteousness.
4 He shall judge the poor of the people,
He shall save the children of the needy,
And shall break in pieces the oppressor.
5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure,
Throughout all generations.
6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:
As showers *that* water the earth.
7 In his days shall the righteous flourish;
And abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.
8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the river unto the ends of the earth.

9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him;
And his enemies shall lick the dust.
10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring pre- [sents:
The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him:
All nations shall serve him.
12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth;
The poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.
13 He shall spare the poor and needy,
And shall save the souls of the needy.
14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence:
And precious shall their blood be in his sight.
15 And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba:
Prayer also shall be made for him continually;
And daily shall he be praised.
16 There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains;
The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:
And *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.
17 His name shall endure for ever:
His name shall be continued as long as the sun:
And *men* shall be blessed in him:
All nations shall call him blessed.

This is a prophecy of the prosperity and perpetuity of the kingdom of Christ under the shadow of the reign of Solomon. It comes in, 1. As a plea to enforce the prayer; Lord, give him thy judgments and thy righteousness, and then he shall judge thy people with righteousness, and so shall answer the end of his elevation, ver. 2. Give him thy grace, and then thy people committed to his charge will have the benefit of it. Because God loved Israel, he made him king over them to do judgment and justice, 2 *Chr.* ix. 8. We may in faith wrestle with God for that grace which we have reason to think will be of common advantage to his church. 2. As an answer of peace to the prayer. As by the prayer of faith we return answers to God's promises of mercy, so by the promises of mercy God returns answers to our prayers of faith. That this prophecy must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah is plain, because there are many passages in it which cannot be applied to the reign of Solomon. There was indeed a great deal of righteousness and peace at first in the administration of his government; but before the end of his reign there was both trouble and unrighteousness. The kingdom here spoken of is to last as long as the sun, but Solomon's was soon extinct. Therefore even the Jewish expositors understand it of the kingdom of the Messiah. Let us observe the many great and precious promises here made, which were to have their full accomplishment only in the kingdom of Christ; and yet some of them were in part fulfilled in Solomon's reign.

First. That it should be a righteous government; ver. 2, "He shall judge thy people with righteousness:" compare *Isa.* xi. 4. All the laws of Christ's kingdom are consonant to the eternal rules of equity; the chancery it erects to relieve against the rigours of the broken law is indeed a court of equity, and against the sentence of his last judgment there will lie no exception. The peace of his kingdom shall be supported by righteousness, ver. 3; for then only is the peace like a river, when the righteousness is as the waves of the sea. The world will be judged in righteousness, *Acts* xvii. 31.

Secondly. That it should be a peaceable government. "The mountains shall bring peace, and the little hills," ver. 3; that is, (saith Dr. Hammond,) both the superior and the inferior courts of judicature in Solomon's kingdom. There shall be abundance of peace, ver. 7. Solomon's name signifies peaceable, and such was his reign; for in it Israel enjoyed the victories of the foregoing reign, and preserved the tranquillity and repose of that reign. But peace is in a special manner the glory of Christ's kingdom, for as far as it prevails it reconciles men to God, to themselves, and to one another, and slays all enmities; "for he is our peace."

Thirdly. That the poor and needy should be in a particular manner taken under the protection of this government; "He shall judge thy poor," ver. 2. Those are God's poor that are impoverished by keeping a good conscience, and those shall be provided for with a distinguishing care, shall be judged for with judgment, with a particular cognizance taken of their case, and a particular vengeance taken for their wrongs. The poor of the people, and the children of the needy, he will be sure so to judge as to save, ver. 4. This is insisted upon again, ver. 12, 13, intimating that Christ will be sure to carry his cause on behalf of his injured poor. He will deliver the needy that lie at the mercy of their oppressors, the poor also; both because they have no helper and it is for his honour to help them, and because they cry unto him and he has promised in answer to their prayers to help them; they by prayer commit themselves unto him, *Ps.* x. 14. He will spare the needy that throw themselves on his mercy, and will not be rigorous and severe with them; he will save their souls, and that is all they desire. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Christ is the poor man's king.

Fourthly. That proud oppressors shall be reckoned with. He shall break them in pieces, ver. 4, shall take away their power to hurt, and punish them for all the mischief they have done. This is the office of a good king, *Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos*,—'To spare the vanquished, and debase the proud.' The devil is the great oppressor whom Christ will break in pieces, and of whose kingdom he will be the destruction; with the breath of his mouth shall he slay that wicked one, *Isa.* xi. 4, and shall deliver the souls of his people from deceit and violence, ver. 14. He shall save them from the power of Satan, both as an old serpent, working by deceit to ensnare them, and as a roaring lion, working by violence to terrify and devour them. Thus precious shall their blood be unto him, that not a drop of it shall be shed by the deceit or violence of Satan or his instruments, but it shall be reckoned for. Christ is a King who, though he calls his subjects sometimes to resist unto blood for him, yet is not prodigal of their blood, nor will ever have it parted with, but upon a valuable consideration, to his glory and theirs, and the filling up of the measure of their iniquity.

Fifthly. That religion shall flourish under Christ's government; ver. 5, "They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure." Solomon indeed built the temple, and the fear and worship of God was well kept up for some time under his government, but it did not last long. This therefore must point at Christ's kingdom, all the subjects of which are brought to and kept in the fear of God; for the Christian religion has a direct tendency to, and a powerful influence upon, the support and advancement of natural religion. Faith in Christ will set up, and keep up, the fear of God; and therefore this is the everlasting Gospel that is preached, "Fear God, and give honour to him," *Rev.* xiv. 7. And as Christ's government promotes devotion towards God, so it promotes both justice and charity among men, ver. 7, "In his days shall the righteous flourish;" righteousness shall be practised, and those that practise righteousness shall be preferred. Righteousness shall abound and be in reputation; shall command and be in power. The law of Christ written in the heart disposeth men to be honest and just, and to render to all their due; it likewise disposeth men to live in love, and so it produceth abundance of peace, and beats swords into ploughshares. Both holiness and love shall be perpetual in Christ's kingdom, and shall never go to decay, for the subjects of it shall "fear God as long as the sun and moon endure;" that is, Christianity, in the profession of it having got footing in the world, shall keep its ground till the end of time, and having in the power of it got footing in the heart, it will continue there till by death the sun and the moon and the stars, that is, the bodily senses, are darkened. Through all the changes of the world, and all the changes of life, Christ's kingdom will support itself; and, if the fear of God continues as long as the sun and moon, abundance of peace will. The peace of the church, the peace of the soul, shall run parallel with its purity and piety, and last as long as these last.

Sixthly. That Christ's government shall be very comfortable to all his faithful loving subjects; ver. 6, "He shall," by the graces and comforts of his Spirit, "come down like rain upon the mown grass;" not on that which is cut down, but that which is left growing, that it may spring again though it was beheaded. The Gospel of Christ distils as the rain, which softens the ground that was hard, moistens that which was dry, and so makes it green and fruitful, *Isa.* lv. 10. Let our hearts drink in the rain, *Heb.* vi. 7.

Seventhly. That Christ's kingdom shall be extended very far, and greatly enlarged. Considering,

1. The extent of his territories; ver. 8, "He shall have dominion from sea to sea," from the south sea to the north, or from the Red sea to the Mediterranean; and from the river Euphrates, or Nile, to the ends of the earth. Solomon's dominion was very large, 1 *Kin.* iv. 21, according to the promise, *Gen.* xv. 18. But no sea, no river, is named, that it might by these proverbial expressions speak the universal monarchy of the Lord Jesus. His Gospel has been, or shall be, preached to all nations, *Mat.* xxiv. 14; and the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdoms, *Rev.* xi. 15, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. His territories shall be extended to those countries, 1st. That were strangers to him. "They that dwell in the wilderness," out of all high roads, that seldom hear news, yet shall hear the glad tidings of the Redeemer, and redemption by him, shall bow before him, that is, shall believe in him, accept of him, worship him, and take his yoke upon them. Before the Lord Jesus we must all either bow or break; if we break we are ruined, if we bow we are certainly made for ever. 2nd. That were enemies to him, and had fought against him. They shall lick the dust; that is, they shall be brought down and laid in the dust, shall bite the ground for vexation, and be so hunger-bitten that they shall be glad of dust, the serpent's meat, *Gen.* iii. 15; for of his seed they are. And over whom shall not he rule, when his enemies themselves are thus humbled and brought low?

2. The dignity of his tributaries. He shall not only reign over them that dwell in the wilderness, the peasants and cottagers, but over them that dwell in the palaces; ver. 10, the kings of Tarshish, and of the isles that lie most remote from Israel, and are the isles of the Gentiles, *Gen.* ix. 5. These shall bring presents to him as their sovereign Lord, by and under whom they hold their crowns, and all their crown lands. They shall court his favour, and make an interest in him, that they may hear his wisdom. This was literally fulfilled in Solomon; for "all the kings of the earth sought the wisdom of Solomon, and brought every man his present," 2 *Chr.* ix. 23, 24; and in Christ too, when the wise men of the East, who probably were men of the first rank in their own country, came to worship him, and brought him presents, *Mat.* ii. 11. They shall present themselves to him; that is the best present we can bring to Christ, and without that no other present is acceptable, *Rom.* xii. 1. They shall offer gifts, that is, spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise; offer them to Christ as their God, on Christ as their altar, which sanctifies every gift. Their conversion to God is called the offering up, or sacrificing of the Gentiles, *Rom.* xv. 16; and so is their devotion to God, *Heb.* xiii. 15, 16. Yea, "all kings shall" sooner or later "fall down before him," either to do their duty to him, or to receive their doom from him, ver. 11. They shall fall before him either as his willing subjects or as his conquered captives; as supplicants for his mercy or expectants of his judgment. And when the kings submit the people come in of course, "All nations shall serve him;" all shall be invited into his service; some of all nations shall come into it, and in every nation incense shall be offered to him, and a pure offering, *Mal.* i. 11; *Rev.* vii. 9.

Eighthly. That he shall be honoured and beloved by all his subjects; ver. 15, "He shall live;" his subjects shall desire his life, "O King, live for ever," and with good reason; for he hath said, "Because I live, you shall live also," and "of him it is witnessed, that he liveth, ever liveth making intercession," *Heb.* vii. 8, 25. "He shall live," and live prosperously: and, 1. Presents shall be made to him. Though he shall be able to live without them, for he needs neither the gifts nor the services of any, yet "to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba;" gold, the best of metals, gold of Sheba, which probably was the finest gold; for he that is best must be served with the best. They that have abundance of the wealth of this world, that have gold at command, must give it to Christ, that is, must serve him with it, do good with it; "Honour the Lord with thy substance." 2. "Prayer shall be made for him," and that "continually." The people prayed for Solomon, and that helped to make him and his reign so great a blessing to them. It is the duty of subjects to make "prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for kings, and all in authority;" not in compliment to them, as it is too often done, but in concern for the public welfare. But how is this applied to Christ? He needs not our prayers, nor can have any benefit by them. But the Old Testament saints prayed for his coming, prayed continually for it; for they called him, "He that should come." And now he is come we must pray for the success of his Gospel, and the advancement of his kingdom, which he calls praying for him, "Hosanna to the Son of David," prosperity to his reign; and we pray for his second coming. It may be read, 'Prayer shall be made through him,' or for his sake; that is, whatsoever we ask of the Father shall be in his name, and in dependence upon his intercession. 3. Praises shall be made of him, and high encomiums given of his wisdom, justice, and goodness; "daily shall he be praised." By praying daily in his name we give him honour. Subjects ought to speak well of the govern-

ment that is a blessing to them; and much more ought all Christians to praise Jesus Christ, daily to praise him; for they owe their all to him, and to him they lie under the highest obligations.

Ninthly. That under his government there shall be a wonderful increase both of meat and mouths, both of the fruits of the earth in the country and of the people inhabiting the cities, ver. 16. 1. The country shall grow rich; sow but "a handful of corn on the top of the mountains," whence one would expect but little, and yet "the fruit of it shall shake like Lebanon," it shall come up like a wood, so thick, and tall, and strong, like the cedars of Lebanon. Even upon the tops of the mountains the earth shall bring forth by handfuls; that is an expression of great plenty, *Gen.* xli. 47, as the grass upon the housetop is said to be that wherewith the mower filleth not his hand. This is applicable to the wonderful products of the seed of the Gospel in the days of the Messiah: a handful of that seed, sown in the mountainous and barren soil of the Gentile world, produced a wonderful harvest, gathered in to Christ, fruit that shook like Lebanon; the fields were white to the harvest, *Jno.* iv. 35; *Mat.* ix. 37. The grain of mustardseed grew up to a great tree. 2. The towns shall grow populous; "they of the city shall flourish like grass," for number, for verdure. The Gospel church, the city of God among men, shall have all the marks of prosperity, many shall be added to it, and those that are, shall be happy in it.

Tenthly. That his government shall be perpetual, both to his honour and to the happiness of his subjects. The Lord Jesus shall reign for ever, and of him only this must be understood, and not at all of Solomon. It is Christ only that "shall be feared throughout all generations," ver. 5; "and as long as the sun and moon endure," ver. 7. 1. The honour of the prince is immortal, and shall never be sullied; ver. 17, "His name shall endure for ever," in despite of the malicious attempts and endeavours of the powers of darkness to eclipse the lustre of it, and to cut off the line of it; it shall be preserved, it shall be perpetuated, and in a manner propagated. As the names of earthly princes are continued in their posterity, so Christ's in himself, *filiabitur nomen ejus*,—'his name shall descend to posterity.' All nations while the world stands shall call him blessed; shall bless God for him, and continually speak well of him, and think themselves happy in him. To the end of time, and to eternity, his name shall be celebrated, shall be made use of; every tongue shall confess it, and every knee shall bow before it. 2. The happiness of the people is universal too, it is complete and everlasting; "men shall be blessed," truly and for ever blessed, "in him." This plainly refers to the promise made unto the fathers that in the Messiah all the nations of the earth should be blessed, *Gen.* xii. 3.

18 Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only doeth wondrous things.
19 And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever:
And let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory; Amen,
and Amen.
20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

Such an illustrious prophecy as is in the foregoing verses of the Messiah and his kingdom may fitly be concluded, as it is here, with hearty prayers and praises.

First. The psalmist is here enlarged in thanksgivings for the prophecy and promise, ver. 18, 19. So sure is every word of God, and with so much satisfaction may we rely upon it, that we have reason enough to give thanks for what he hath said, though it be not yet done. We must own that for all the great things he has done for the world, for the church, for the children of men, for his own children, in the kingdom of providence, in the kingdom of grace, for all the power and trust lodged in the hands of the Redeemer, God is worthy to be praised; we must stir up ourselves and all that is within us to praise him after the best manner, and desire that all others may do it. "Blessed be the Lord," that is, "blessed be his glorious name;" for it is only in his name that we can contribute any thing to his glory and blessedness, and yet that is also "exalted above all blessing and praise." Let it be blessed for ever; it shall be blessed for ever, it deserves to be blessed for ever, and we hope to be for ever blessing it. We are here taught to bless the name of Christ, and to bless God in Christ for all that which he has done for us by him. We must bless him, 1. As the Lord God, as a self-existent, self-sufficient being, and our sovereign Lord. 2. As the God of Israel, in covenant with that people, and worshipped by them, and who doth this in performance of the truth unto Jacob and the mercy to Abraham. 3. As the God "who only doth wondrous things," in creation and providence, and especially this work of redemption, which excelleth them all. Men's works are little, common, trifling things, and which without him they could not do. But God doth all by his own power, and they are wondrous things which he doth, and such as will be the eternal admiration of saints and angels.

Secondly. He is earnest in prayer for the accomplishment of this prophecy and promise; "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory;" as it will be when "the kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents to him." It is sad to think how empty the earth is of the glory of God, how little service and honour he has from a world to which he is such a bountiful benefactor. And therefore all that wish well to the honour of God, and the welfare of mankind, cannot but desire that the earth may be filled with the discoveries of his glory, suitably returned in thankful acknowledgments of his glory. Let every heart, and every mouth, and every assembly, be filled with the high praises of God. We shall see how earnest David is in this prayer, and how much his heart is in it, if we observe, 1. How he shuts up the prayer with a double seal; "Amen, and Amen," again and again I say, I say it, and let all others say the same, so be it. Amen to my prayer; Amen to the prayers of all the saints to this purpose; "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come." 2. How he even shuts up his life with this prayer, ver. 20. This was the last psalm that ever he penned, though not placed last in this collection; he penned it when he lay on his death-bed, and with this he breathes his last: Let God be glorified; let the kingdom of the Messiah be set up, and kept up in the world, and I have enough, I desire no, more. With this let the prayers of David the son of Jesse be ended; even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

PSALM LXXIII.

This psalm, and the ten that next follow it, carry the name of Asaph in the titles of them. If he was the penman of them, as many think, we rightly call them psalms of Asaph; if he was only the chief musician, to whom they were delivered, our marginal reading is right, which calls them psalms for Asaph. It is probable he penned them, for we read of the words of David and of Asaph the seer, which were used in Hezekiah's time, 2 *Chr.* xxix. 30. Though the spirit of prophecy by sacred songs descended chiefly on David, who is therefore styled the sweet psalmist of Israel, yet God put some of that spirit upon those about him. This is a psalm of great use; it gives us an account of the conflict which the psalmist had with a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of wicked people. He begins his account with a sacred principle, which he held fast, and by the help of which he kept his ground and carried his point, ver. 1; and then tells us, I. How he got into the temptation, ver. 2—14. II. How he got out of the temptation, and gained a victory over it, ver. 15—20. III. How he got by the temptation, and was the better for it, ver. 21—28. And if in singing this psalm we fortify ourselves against the like temptation, we do not use it in vain. The experiences of others should be our instructions.

A Psalm of Asaph.

TRULY God *is* good to Israel,
Even to such as are of a clean heart.
2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone;
My steps had well nigh slipped.
3 For I was envious at the foolish,
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
4 For *there are* no bands in their death:
But their strength *is* firm.
5 They *are* not in trouble *as other* men;
Neither are they plagued like *other* men.
6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain;
Violence covereth them *as* a garment.
7 Their eyes stand out with fatness:
They have more than heart could wish.
8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression:
They speak loftily
9 They set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue walketh through the earth.
10 Therefore his people return hither:
And waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.
11 And they say, How doth God know?
And is there knowledge in the most High?
12 Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world;
They increase *in* riches.
13 Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain,
And washed my hands in innocency.
14 For all the day long have I been plagued,
And chastened every morning.

The psalm begins somewhat abruptly; 'Yet God is good to Israel,' so the margin reads it. He had been thinking of the prosperity of the wicked; and while he was thus musing the fire burned, and at last he spake by way of check to himself for what he had been thinking of, 'However it be, yet God is good.' Though wicked people receive many of the gifts of his providential bounty, yet we must own that he is in a peculiar manner good to Israel; they have favours from him which others have not. The psalmist designs an account of a temptation he was strongly assaulted with to envy the prosperity of the wicked; a common temptation, which has tried the graces of many of the saints. Now in this account,

First. He lays down, in the first place, that great principle which he is resolved to abide by, and not to quit while he was parleying with this temptation, ver. 1. Job, when he was entering into such a temptation, fixed for his principle, the omniscience of God; "Times are not hidden from the Almighty," *Job* xxiv. 1. Jeremiah's principle is the justice of God; "Righteous art thou, O God, when I plead with thee," *Jer.* xii. 1. Habakkuk's principle is the holiness of God; "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," *Hab.* i. 13. The psalmist's here is the goodness of God. These are truths that cannot be shaken, and which we must resolve to live and die by. Though we may not be able to reconcile all the disposals of Providence with them, we must believe they are reconcilable. Note, Good thoughts of God will fortify us against many of Satan's temptations. "Truly God is good." He had had many thoughts in his mind concerning the providences of God, but this word at last settled him: For all this, God is good, "good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." Note, 1. Those are the Israel of God that are of a clean heart, purified by the blood of Christ, cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and entirely devoted to the glory of God. An upright heart is a clean heart; cleanliness is truth in the inward part. 2. God, who is good to all, is, in a special manner, good to his church and people, as he was to Israel of old. God was good to Israel in redeeming them out of Egypt, taking them into covenant with himself, giving them his laws and ordinances, and in the various providences that were concerning them; and he is in like manner good to all them that are of a clean heart; and, whatever happens, we must not think otherwise.

Secondly. He comes now to relate the shock that was given to his faith in God's distinguishing goodness to Israel, by a strong temptation to envy the prosperity of the wicked, and therefore to think that the Israel of God are no happier than other people, and that God is no kinder to them than to others. He speaks of it as a very fair escape that he had not been quite foiled and overthrown by this temptation; ver. 2, "But as for me," though I was so well satisfied in the goodness of God to Israel, yet "my feet were almost gone," the tempter had almost tripped up my heels, "my steps had well nigh slipped;" I had like to have quitted my religion, and given up all my expectations of benefit by it, "for I was envious at the foolish." Note, 1. The faith even of strong believers may sometimes be sorely shaken, and ready to fail them. There are storms that will try the firmest anchors. 2. Those that shall never be quite undone are sometimes very near it, and in their own apprehension as good as gone. Many a precious soul that shall live for ever had once a very narrow turn for its life; almost and well nigh ruined, but a step between it and a fatal apostacy, and yet snatched as a brand out of the burning, which will for ever magnify the riches of Divine grace in the nations of them that are saved. Now let us take notice of the process of the psalmist's temptation; what he was tempted with, and tempted to.

PSALM LXXIII.

1. He observed that foolish, wicked people have oftentimes a very great share of outward prosperity. He saw, with grief, the prosperity of the wicked, ver. 3. Wicked people are really foolish people, and act against reason and their true interest, and yet every stander-by sees their prosperity.

1st. They seem to have the least share of the troubles and calamities of this life; ver. 5, "They are not in trouble as other men," even of wise and good men, "neither are they plagued with other men," but seem as if, by some special privilege, they were exempted from the common lot of sorrows. If they meet with some little trouble, it is nothing to what others endure, that are less sinners, and yet greater sufferers.

2nd. They seem to have the greatest share of the comforts of this life. They live at ease, and bathe themselves in pleasures, so that "their eyes stand out with fatness," ver. 7. See what the excess of pleasure is; the moderate use of it enlightens the eyes, but they that indulge themselves inordinately in the delights of sense have their eyes ready to start out of their heads. Epicures are really their own tormentors, by putting a force upon nature, while they pretend to gratify it. And well may they feed themselves to the full who "have more than heart could wish," more than they themselves ever thought of, or expected to be masters of. They have at least more than an humble, quiet, contented heart could wish, yet not so much as they themselves wish for. There are many who have a great deal of this life in their hands, but nothing of the other life in their hearts. They are ungodly, live without the fear and worship of God, and yet they prosper and come on in the world, and not only are rich, but increase in riches, ver. 12. They are looked upon as thriving men, and while others have much ado to keep what they have they are still adding more, more honour, power and pleasure, by increasing in riches. They are the prosperous of the age; so some read it.

3rd. Which is most strange of all, and therefore is first mentioned, their end seems to be peace. This was ever thought to be the peculiar privilege of the godly, *Ps.* xxxvii. 37; and yet, to outward appearance, it is oftentimes the lot of the ungodly; ver. 4, "There are no bands in their death." They are not taken off by a violent death; they are foolish, and yet die not as fools die; for "their hands are not bound, nor their feet put into fetters," 2 *Sam.* iii. 33, 34 They are not taken off by an untimely death, like the fruit forced from the tree before it is ripe, but are left to hang on till, through old age, they gently drop of themselves. They do not die of sore and painful diseases, there are no pangs, no agonies in their death; but "their strength is firm" to the last, so that they scarce feel themselves die. They are of those who "die in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet;" not of those that "die in the bitterness of their souls, and never eat with pleasure," *Job* xxi. 23, 25. Nay, they are not bound by the terrors of conscience in their dying moments, they are not frightened either with the remembrance of their sins or the prospect of their misery, but die securely. We cannot judge of men's state on the other side death, either by the manner of their death or the frame of their spirits in dying. Men may die like lambs, and yet have their place with the goats.

2. He observed that they made a very ill use of their outward prosperity, and were hardened by it in their wickedness, which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to grudge at it. If it had done them any good, if it had made them less provoking to God, or less oppressive to man, it would never have vexed him; but it had a quite contrary effect upon them.

1st. It made them very proud and haughty, because they live at ease; "Pride compasseth them as a chain," ver. 6. They shew themselves to all that see them to be puffed up with their prosperity, as men shew their ornaments. "The pride of Israel testifies to his face," *Hos.* v. 5; *Isa.* iii. 9. 'Pride ties on their chain,' or necklace, so Dr. Hammond reads it. It is no harm to wear a chain or necklace; but when pride ties it on, when it is worn to gratify a vain mind, it ceaseth to be an ornament. It is not so much what the dress or apparel is, (though we have rules for that, 1 *Tim.* ii. 9,) as what principle ties it on, and with what spirit it is worn. And as the pride of sinners appears in their dress, so it doth in their talk; "they speak loftily," ver. 8. They affect great swelling words of vanity, 2 *Pet.* ii. 18, bragging of themselves, and disdaining all about them. Out of the abundance of the pride that is in their heart they speak big.

2nd. It made them oppressive to their poor neighbours; ver. 6, "Violence covereth them as a garment." What they have got by fraud and oppression they keep and increase by the same wicked methods, and care not what injury they do to others, nor what violence they use, so they may but enrich and aggrandize themselves. "They are corrupt," like the giants, the sinners of the old world, when "the earth was filled with violence through them," *Gen.* vi. 11, 13. They care not what mischief they do, either for mischief sake or for their own advantage sake; "they speak wickedly concerning oppression;" they oppress, and justify themselves in it. They that speak well of sin speak wickedly of it. "They are corrupt;" that is, dissolved in pleasures, and every thing that is luxurious, so some; and then they deride and speak maliciously; they care not whom they wound with the poisoned darts of calumny; 'from on high they speak oppression.'

3rd. It made them very insolent in their carriage, both towards God and man; ver. 9, "They set their mouth against the heavens;" putting contempt upon God himself and his honour, bidding defiance to him and his power and justice; they cannot reach the heavens with their hands to shake God's throne, else they would; but they shew their ill-will by setting their mouth against the heavens. "Their tongue also walks through the earth," and they take a liberty to abuse all that come in their way. No man's greatness or goodness can secure him from the scourge of the virulent tongue; they take a pride and pleasure in bantering all mankind; they are pests of the country, for they neither fear God nor regard man.

4th. In all this they were very atheistical and profane. They could not have been thus wicked if they had not learned to say, ver. 11, "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?" So far were they from desiring the knowledge of God, who gave them all the good things they had, and would have taught them to use them well, that they were not willing to believe God had any knowledge of them, that he took any notice of their wickedness, or would ever call them to an account. As if, because he is most high, he could not, or would not, see them, *Job* xxii. 11. Whereas, because he is most high, therefore he can and will take cognizance of all the children of men, and of all they do, or say, or think. What an affront is it to the God of infinite knowledge, from whom all knowledge is, to ask, Is there knowledge in him? Well may he say, ver. 12, "Behold these are the ungodly."

3. He observed that while wicked men thus prospered in their impiety, and were made more impious by their prosperity, good people were in great affliction, and he himself in particular; which very much strengthened the temptation he was in to quarrel with Providence.

1st. He looked abroad, and saw many of God's people greatly at a loss, ver. 10. Because the wicked are so very daring, "therefore his people return hither;" that is, they are at the same pause, the same plunge that I am at; they know not what to say to it no more than I do, and the rather, because "waters of a full cup are wrung out to them;" they are not only made to drink, and to drink deep, of the bitter cup of affliction, but to drink all. Care is taken that they lose not a drop of that unpleasant potion; the waters are wrung out unto them, that they may have the dregs of the cup. They pour out abundance of tears when they hear wicked people blaspheme God, and speak profanely, as David did, *Ps.* cxix. 136. These are the waters wrung out to them.

2nd. He looked at home, and felt himself under the continual frowns of providence, while the wicked were sunning themselves in its smiles, ver. 14. For my part, saith he, "all the day long have I been plagued" with one affliction or other, "and chastened every morning," as duly as the morning comes. His afflictions were great, he was chastened and plagued; the returns of them were constant, every morning with the morning; and they continued without intermission, "all the day long." This he thought was very hard, that, when those who blasphemed God were in prosperity, he that worshipped God was under such great affliction. He spoke feelingly when he spoke of his own troubles; no disputing against sense, except by faith.

4. From all this arose a very strong temptation to cast off his religion. 1st. Some that observed the prosperity of the wicked, especially comparing it with the afflictions of the righteous, were tempted to deny a providence, and to think that God had forsaken the earth. In this sense some take ver. 11, There are those even among God's professing people that say, "How doth God know?" Sure all things are left to blind fortune, and not disposed of by an all-seeing God. Some of the heathen, upon such a remark as this, have asked, *Quis putet esse deos?*—'Who will believe that there are gods?' 2nd. Though the psalmist's feet were not thus far gone, as to question God's omniscience, yet he was tempted to question the benefit of religion, and to say, ver. 13, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and" have to no purpose, "washed my hands in innocency." See here what it is to be religious; it is to cleanse our hearts in the first place, by repentance and regeneration, and then to wash our hands in innocency, by an universal reformation of our lives. It is not in vain to do this, not in vain to serve God and keep his ordinances; but good men have been sometimes tempted to say, It is in vain; and that religion is a thing that there is nothing to be got by, because they see wicked people in prosperity. But, however the thing may appear now, when the pure in heart, those blessed ones, shall see God, *Mat.* v. 8, they will not say that they cleansed their hearts in vain.

15 If I say, I will speak thus;
Behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy
16 When I thought to know this, [children
It *was* too painful for me;
17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
Then understood I their end.
18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places;
Thou castedst them down into destruction.
19 How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment!
They are utterly consumed with terrors.
20 As a dream when *one* awaketh; [image.
So, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their

We have seen what a strong temptation the psalmist was in to envy prospering profaneness; now here we are told how he kept footing, and got the victory.

First. He kept up a respect for God's people, and with that he restrained himself from speaking what he had thought amiss, ver. 15. He got the victory by degrees; and this was the first point he gained. He was ready to say, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain," and thought he had reason to say it; but he kept his mouth with this consideration, "If I say I will speak thus, behold I should" myself revolt and apostatize from, and so give the greatest offence imaginable, "to the generation of thy children." Observe here, 1. Though he thought amiss, he took care not to utter that evil thought which he had conceived. Note, It is bad to think ill, but it is worse to speak it, for that is giving the evil thought an *imprimatur*; it is allowing it, giving consent to it, and publishing it for the infection of others. But it is a good sign we repent of the evil imagination of the heart, if we suppress it, and the error remaineth with ourselves. If, therefore, thou hast been so foolish as to think evil, be so wise as to lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and let it go no farther, *Pr.* xxx. 32. "If I say I will speak thus." Observe, though his corrupt heart made this inference from the prosperity of the wicked, yet he did not mention it to those about him till he had debated within himself whether it were fit to be mentioned or no. Note, We must think twice before we speak once; both because some things may be thought which yet may not be spoken, and because the second thoughts may correct the mistakes of the first. 2. The reason why he would not speak it was, for fear of giving offence to those whom God owned for his children. Note, 1st. There is a people in the world that are the generation of God's children, a set of men that fear and love God as their Father. 2nd. We must be very careful not to say or do any thing which may justly offend any of these little ones, *Mat.* xviii. 6, especially that may offend the generation of them, may sadden their hearts, or weaken their hands, or shake their interest. 3rd. There is nothing that can give more general offence to the generation of God's children than to say that we have cleansed our heart in vain, or that it is vain to serve God; for there is nothing more contrary to their universal sentiment and experience, nor any thing that grieves them more than to hear God thus reflected on. 4th. Those that wish themselves in the condition of the wicked do in effect quit the tents of God's children.

Secondly. He foresaw the ruin of wicked people; and by this he baffled the temptation, as by the former he gave some check to it. Because he durst not speak what he had thought, for fear of giving offence, he began to consider whether he had any good reason for that thought, ver. 16. I endeavoured to understand the meaning of this unaccountable dispensation of Providence; but "it was too painful for me," I could not conquer it by the strength of my own reasoning. It is a problem not to be solved by the mere light of nature; for if there were not another life after this we could not fully reconcile the prosperity of the wicked with the justice of God; but, ver. 17, he "went into the sanctuary of God," he applied himself to his devotions, meditated upon the attributes of God, and "the things revealed which belong to us and to our children;" he consulted the Scriptures, and the priests' lips who attend the sanctuary; he prayed to God to make this matter plain to him, and to help him over this difficulty; and at length he understood the wretched end of wicked people, which he plainly foresaw to be such, that even in the height of their prosperity they were rather to be pitied than envied, for they were but ripening for ruin. Note, 1st. There are many great things, and needful to be known, which will not be known otherwise than by going into the sanctuary of God, by the word and prayer. That therefore must be the resort of a tempted soul. 2nd. We must judge of persons and things as they appear by the light of Divine revelation, and then we shall judge righteous judgment; particularly we must judge by the end. All is well that ends well, everlast-

ingly well; but nothing well that ends ill, everlastingly ill. The righteous man's afflictions end in peace, and therefore he is happy; the wicked man's enjoyments end in destruction, and therefore he is miserable.

1. The prosperity of the wicked is short and uncertain. The high places in which Providence sets them are slippery places, ver. 18, where they cannot long keep footing; but when they offer to climb higher that very attempt will be the occasion of their sliding and falling. Their prosperity has no firm ground, it is not built upon God's favour or his promise; and they have not the satisfaction of feeling any firm ground it has.

2. Their destruction is sure and sudden, and very great. This cannot be meant of any temporal destruction, for they were supposed to spend all their days in wealth, and their death itself had no bands in it, "in a moment they go down to the grave;" so that even that could scarce be called their destruction. It must therefore be meant of eternal destruction on the other side death; hell and destruction. They flourish for a time, but are undone for ever. 1st. Their ruin is sure and inevitable. He speaks of it as a thing done; they are cast down, for their destruction is as certain as if it were already accomplished. He speaks of it as God's doing, and therefore it cannot be resisted: "Thou castest them down." It is destruction from the Almighty, *Joel* i. 15; from the glory of his power, 2 *Thes.* i. 9. Who can support those whom God will cast down, whom God will lay load upon? 2nd. It is swift and sudden. Their damnation slumbereth not; for "how are they brought into desolation as in a moment?" ver. 19. It is easily effected, and will be a mighty surprise to themselves and all about them. 3rd. It is severe and very dreadful. It is a total, final ruin; "they are utterly consumed with terrors." It is the misery of the damned, that the terrors of the Almighty, whom they have made their enemy, fasten upon their guilty consciences, which can neither shelter themselves from them nor strengthen themselves under them; and therefore, not their being, but their bliss, must needs be utterly consumed by them. Not the least degree of comfort or hope remains to them; the higher they were lifted up in their prosperity, the sorer will their fall be when they are cast down into destructions, (for the word is plural,) and suddenly brought into desolation.

3. Their prosperity is therefore not to be envied at all, but despised rather; *quod erat demonstrandum*,—'which was the point to be established;' ver. 20, "As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest," or 'when they awake' (so some read it) "thou shalt despise their image," their shadow, and make it to vanish. 'In the day of the great judgment,' (so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it,) when they are awaked out of their graves, thou shalt in wrath despise their image; for "they shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt." See here, 1st. What their prosperity now is. It is but an image, a vain show, a fashion of the world that passeth away; it is not real, but imaginary, and it is only a corrupt imagination that makes it a happiness; it is not substance, but a mere shadow, not what it seems to be, nor will it prove what we promise ourselves from it; it is a dream, which may please us a little while we are asleep, yet even then disturbs our repose; but, how pleasing soever it is, it is all but a cheat, all false, when we awake we find it so. A hungry man dreams that he eats, but he wakes and his soul is empty, *Isa.* xxix. 8. A man is never the more rich or honourable for dreaming he is so. Who, therefore, will envy a man the pleasure of a dream? 2nd. What will be the issue of it. God will awake to judgment, to plead his own and his people's injured cause. They shall be made to awake out of the sleep of their carnal security, and then God shall despise their image; that is, he shall make it to appear to all the world how despicable it is; so that the righteous shall laugh at them, *Ps.* lii. 6, 7. How did God despise that rich man's image, when he said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," *Lu.* xii. 19, 20. We ought to be of God's mind, for his judgment is according to truth; and not to admire and envy that which he despiseth, and will despise; for sooner or later he will bring all the world to be of his mind.

21 Thus my heart was grieved,
And I was pricked in my reins.
22 So foolish *was* I, and ignorant:
I was *as* a beast before thee.
23 Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee:
Thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.
24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,
And afterward receive me *to* glory.
25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?*
And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee.
26 My flesh and my heart faileth: [for ever.
But God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion
27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish:
Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from
28 But *it is* good for me to draw near to God: [thee.
I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
That I may declare all thy works.

Behold Samson's riddle again unriddled, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness;" for we have here an account of the good improvement which the psalmist made of that sore temptation with which he had been assaulted, and by which he was almost overcome. He that stumbles and doth not fall, by recovering himself takes so much the longer steps forwards. It was so with the psalmist here; divers good lessons he learned from his temptation, his struggles with it, and his victories over it. Nor would God suffer his people to be tempted, if his grace was not sufficient for them, not only to save them harmless, but to make them gainers by it; even this shall work for good.

First. He learned to think very humbly of himself, and to abase and accuse himself before God, ver. 21, 22. He reflects with shame upon the disorder and danger he was in, and the vexation he gave himself by entertaining the temptation, and parleying with it; "My heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins," as one afflicted with the acute pain of the stone in the region of the kidneys. If ill thoughts at any time enter into the mind of a good man, he doth not roll them under his tongue as a sweet morsel, but they are grievous and painful to him. Temptation was to Paul as a thorn in the flesh, 2 *Cor.* xii. 7. This particular temptation, the working of envy and discontent, is as painful as any other; where it constantly rests, it is the rottenness of the bones, *Pr.* xiv. 30; where it doth but occasionally come, it is the pricking of the reins. Fretfulness is a corruption that is its own correction.

Now, in the reflection upon it, 1. He owns it was his folly thus to vex himself: "So foolish was I" to be my own tormentor. Let peevish people thus reproach themselves for, and shame themselves out of, their discontents. What a fool am I thus to make myself uneasy without a cause. 2. He owns it was his ignorance to vex himself at this. So ignorant of that which I might have known, and which, if I had known it aright, would have been sufficient to have silenced the fret. "I was as a beast," behemoth, 'a great beast,' "before thee." Beasts mind present things only, and never look before at what is to come; and so did I. If I had not been a great fool, I should never have suffered such a senseless temptation to have prevailed over me so far. What! to envy wicked men upon account of their prosperity! to be ready to wish myself one of them, and to think of changing conditions with them! "so foolish was I." Note, If good men do at any time, through the surprise and strength of temptation, think, or speak, or act amiss, when they see their error they will reflect upon it with sorrow, and shame, and self-abhorrence; will call themselves fools for it; "Surely I am more brutish than any man," *Pr.* xxx. 2; *Job* xlii. 5, 6. Thus David, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 10.

Secondly. He took occasion from hence to own his dependence and obligations to the grace of God; ver. 23, "Nevertheless," as foolish as I am, "I am continually with thee," and in thy favour, "thou hast holden me by my right hand." This may refer either, 1. To the care God had taken of him, and the kindness he had shewed him all along from his beginning hitherto. He had said in the hour of temptation, ver. 14, "All the day long have I been plagued;" but here he corrects himself for that passionate complaint. Though God has chastened me, he has not cast me off; notwithstanding all the crosses of my life, "I have been continually with thee;" I have had thy presence with me, and thou hast been nigh unto me in all that which I have called upon thee for; and therefore, "though perplexed, yet not in despair." Though God has sometimes written bitter things against me, yet he has still "holden me by my right hand," both to keep me that I should not desert him, or fly off from him, and to prevent my sinking and fainting under my burthens, or losing my way in the wildernesses through which I have walked. If we have been kept in the way with God, kept close to our duty, and upheld in our integrity, we must own ourselves indebted to the free grace of God for our preservation; "Having obtained help of God, I continue hitherto." And if he has thus maintained the spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, we ought not to complain, whatever calamities of this present time we have met with. Or, 2. To the late experience he had had of the power of Divine grace in carrying him through this strong temptation, and bringing him off a conqueror. I was foolish and ignorant, and yet thou hast had compassion on me and taught me, *Heb.* v. 2, and kept me under thy protection; for the unworthiness of man is no bar to the free grace of God. We must ascribe our safety in temptation, and our victory over it, not to our own wisdom, for we are foolish and ignorant, but to the gracious presence of God with us, and the prevalency of Christ's intercession for us, that our faith may not fail. "My feet were almost gone," and they had quite gone past recovery but that thou hast holden me by my right hand, and so kept me from falling.

Thirdly. He encouraged himself to hope that the same God who had delivered him from this evil work would preserve him to his heavenly kingdom, as St. Paul doth, 2 *Tim.* iv. 18. I am now upheld by thee, therefore "thou shalt guide me with thy counsel," leading me as thou hast done hitherto by many a difficult step; and being now continually with thee, thou shalt "afterwards receive me to glory," ver. 24. This completes the happiness of the saints, so that they have no reason to envy the worldly prosperity of sinners. Note, 1. All those who commit themselves to God's conduct he will guide with his counsel, with the counsel both of his Word and of his Spirit, the best counsellors. The psalmist had like to have paid dear for following his own counsels in this temptation, and therefore resolves for the future to take God's advice, which shall never be wanting to those that duly seek it with a resolution to follow it. 2. All those that are guided and led by the counsel of God in this world shall be received to his glory in another world. If we make God's glory in us the end we aim at, he will make our glory with him the end we shall for ever be happy in. Upon this consideration let us never envy sinners, but rather bless ourselves in our own blessedness. If God direct us in the way of our duty, and prevent our turning aside out of it, he will afterwards, when our state of trial and preparation is over, receive us to his kingdom and glory, the believing hopes and prospects of which will reconcile us to all the dark providences that now puzzle and perplex us, and ease us of the pain we have been put into by some threatening temptations.

Fourthly. He was hereby quickened to cleave the closer to God, and very much confirmed and comforted in the choice he had made of him, ver. 25, 26. His thoughts here dwell with delight upon his own happiness in God, as much greater than the happiness of the ungodly that prospered in the world. He saw little reason to envy them what they had in the creature, when he found how much more and better, surer and sweeter, comforts he had in the Creator, and what cause he had to please himself with that. He had complained of his afflictions, ver. 14, but this makes them very light and easy. 'All is well, if God be mine.' We have here the breathings of a sanctified soul towards God, and its repose in him, as that to a godly man really which the prosperity of a worldly man is to him in conceit and imagination. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" There is scarce a verse in all the psalms more expressive than this of the pious and devout affections of a soul to God; here it soars up towards him, follows hard after him, and yet at the same time has an entire satisfaction and complacency in him.

1. It is here supposed that God alone is the felicity and chief good of man. He, and none but he, that made the soul can make it happy. There is none in heaven, none in earth, that can pretend to do it but he.

2. Here are expressed the workings and breathings of a soul towards God accordingly. If God be our felicity,

1st. Then we must have him, ("Whom have I but thee?") we must choose him, and make sure to ourselves an interest in him. What will it avail us that he is the felicity of souls, if he be not the felicity of our souls, and if we do not by a lively faith make him ours, by joining ourselves to him in an everlasting covenant?

2nd. Then our desire must be towards him, and our delight in him. The word signifies both we must delight in what we have of God and desire what we yet farther hope for. Our desires must not only be offered up to God, but they must all terminate in him, desiring nothing more than God, but still more and more of him. This includes all our prayers, Lord give us thyself, as that includes all the promises, "I will be to them a God." "The desire of our souls is to thy name."

3rd. We must prefer him in our choice and desire before any other. *First.* "There is none in heaven but thee," none to seek to, or trust in, none to court or covet acquaintance with, but thee. God is in himself more glorious than any celestial being, *Ps.* lxxxix. 6, and must be in our eyes infinitely more desirable. Excellent beings there are in heaven, but God only can make us happy. His favour is infinitely more to us than the refreshments of the dews of heaven, or

the benign influence of the stars of heaven; more than the friendship of the saints in heaven, or the good offices of the angels there. *Secondly.* "I desire none on earth beside thee." Not only none in heaven, a place at a distance, which we have but little acquaintance with, but none on earth neither, where we have many friends, and where much of our present interest and concern lies. Earth carries away the desires of the most of men, and yet none on earth, no persons, no things, no possessions, no delights that I desire besides thee, or with thee, in comparison or competition with thee. We must desire nothing besides God but what we desire for him, (*nil præter te, nisi propter te,*—nothing besides thee except for thy sake,) nothing but what we desire from him, and can be content without, so that it be made up in him. We must desire nothing besides God as needful to be a partner with him in making us happy.

4th. Then we must repose ourselves in God with an entire satisfaction, ver. 26. Observe here, *First.* Great distress and trouble supposed; "My flesh and my heart fails." Note, Others have experienced, and we must expect, the failing both of flesh and heart. The body will fail by sickness, age, and death; and that which touches the bone and the flesh touches us in a tender part, that part of ourselves which we have been but too fond of. When the flesh fails, the heart is ready to fail too; the conduct, and courage, and comfort fails. *Secondly.* Sovereign relief provided in this distress; But "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Note, Gracious souls in their greatest distresses rest upon God as their spiritual strength, and their eternal portion. *1st.* "He is the strength of my heart." The rock of my heart, a firm foundation which will bear my weight, and not sink under it. "God the strength of my heart." I have found him so, I do so still, and hope ever to find him so. In the distress supposed, he had put the case of a double failure, both flesh and heart fail, but in the relief he fastens on a single support; he leaves out the flesh and the consideration of that, it is enough that God is the strength of his heart. He speaks as one careless of the body,—let that fail, there is no remedy; but concerned about the soul,—to be strengthened in the inner man. *2nd.* He is "my portion for ever." He will not only support me while I am here, but make me happy when I go hence. The saints choose God for their portion, they have him for their portion, and it is their happiness that he will be their portion, a portion that will last as long as the immortal soul lasts.

Fifthly. He was fully convinced of the miserable estate of all wicked people. This he learned in the sanctuary upon this occasion, and he would never forget it; ver. 27, "Lo, they that are far from thee," in a state of distance and estrangement, that desire the Almighty to depart from them, they shall certainly perish; so shall their doom be; they choose to be far from God, and they shall be far from him for ever. "Thou shalt" justly "destroy all them that go a whoring from thee," that is, all apostates that in profession have been betrothed to God, but forsake him, their duty to him, and their communion with him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger. The doom is severe, no less than perishing and being destroyed. It is universal, they shall all be destroyed, without exception; it is certain, "thou hast destroyed;" it is as sure to be done as if done already; and the destruction of some is an earnest of the perdition of all ungodly men. God himself undertakes to do it, into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall; "Thou," though infinite in goodness, yet wilt reckon for thine injured honour and abused patience, and "wilt destroy them that go a whoring from thee."

Sixthly. He was mightily encouraged to cleave to God, and to confide in him; ver. 28, if "they that are far from God shall perish," then 1. Let this oblige us to communion with God. If it fare so ill with those that live at a distance from him, then it is good, very good, the chief good,—that good for a man in this life which he should most carefully pursue and secure,—it is best for me to draw near to God, and to have God draw near to me. The original may take in both; 'But for my part,' (so I would read it,) 'the approach of God is good for me.' Our drawing near to God takes rise from his drawing near to us; and it is the happy meeting that makes the bliss. Here is a great truth laid down, that it is good to draw near to God; but the life of it lies in the application: "it is good for me." Those are wise who know what is good for themselves. Why, saith he, (and every good man agrees with him in it,) "it is good for me to draw near to God;" it is my duty, it is my interest. 2. Let us therefore live in a continual dependence upon him; "I have put my trust in the Lord God," and will never go a whoring from him after any creature confidences. If wicked men, notwithstanding all their prosperity, shall perish and be destroyed, then let us trust in the Lord God; in him, not in them: see *Ps.* cxlvi. 3—5; in him, and not in our worldly prosperity. Let us trust in God, and neither fret at them nor be afraid of them; let us trust in him for a better portion than theirs is. 3. While we do so, let us not doubt but that we shall have occasion to praise his name. Let us trust in the Lord, that we may declare all his works. Note, Those that with an upright heart put their trust in God shall never want matter for thanksgiving to him.

PSALM LXXIV.

This psalm doth so particularly describe the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Nebuchadnezzar, and the army of the Chaldeans, and can so hardly be applied to any other event we meet with in the Jewish history, that interpreters incline to think either it was penned by David, or Asaph in David's time, with a prophetical reference to that sad event, which yet is not so probable; or that it was penned by another Asaph that lived at the time of the captivity, or by Jeremiah, (for it is of a piece with his *Lamentations,*) or some other prophet, and after the return out of captivity was delivered to the sons of Asaph, who were called by his name, for the public service of the church: and that was the most eminent family of the singers in Ezra's time: see *Ezr.* ii. 41; iii. 10; *Neh.* xi. 17, 22; xii. 35, 46. The deplorable case of the people of God at that time is here spread before the Lord, and left with him. The prophet, in the name of the church, I. Puts in complaining pleas of the miseries they suffered, for the quickening of their desire in prayer, ver. 1—11. II. He puts in comfortable pleas for the encouraging of their faith in prayer, ver. 12—17. III. He concludes with divers petitions to God for deliverances, ver. 18—23. In singing it we must be affected with the former desolations of the church, for we are members of the same body, and may apply it to any present distresses or desolations of any part of the Christian church.

Maschil of Asaph.

O GOD, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever?
Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? [of old;
2 Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased
The rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed;
This mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.
3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations;
Even all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.
4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations;
They set up their ensigns *for* signs.
5 *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up
Axes upon the thick trees.

FELLING TREES IN LEBANON.

6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once
With axes and hammers.
7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary,
They have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.
8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together:
They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.
9 We see not our signs:
There is no more any prophet:
Neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.
10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?
Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?
11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?
Pluck *it* out of thy bosom.

This psalm is entitled, Maschil, a psalm to give instruction; for it was penned in a day of affliction, which is intended for instruction; and this instruction in general it gives us, that when we are upon any account in distress it is our wisdom and duty to apply ourselves to God by faithful and fervent prayer, and we shall not find it in vain to do so. Three things they here complain of:

First. The displeasure of God against them, as that which was the cause and bitterness of all their calamities. They look above the instruments of their trouble, who they knew could have no power against them, unless it were given them from above, and keep their eye upon God, by whose determined counsel they were delivered up into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Observe, The liberty they take to expostulate with God, ver. 1: and, we hope, not too great a liberty; for Christ himself upon the cross, cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" so the church here, "O God, why hast thou forsaken us for ever?" Here they speak according to their present dark and melancholy apprehensions; for otherwise, "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid," *Rom.* xi. 1. The people of God must not think that, because they are cast down, they are therefore cast off; that because men cast them off therefore God doth; and that because he seems to cast them off for a time, therefore they are really cast off for ever: yet this expostulation intimates that they dreaded God's casting them off more than any thing,—that they desired to be owned of him, whatever they suffered from men; and were desirous to know wherefore he thus contended with them; "Why doth thine anger smoke?" that is, why doth it rise up to such a degree that all about us take notice of it, and ask, "What meaneth the heat of this great anger?" *Deu.* xxix. 24. Compare ver. 20, where the anger of the Lord and his jealousy are said to smoke against sinners. Observe what they plead with God, now they lay under the tokens and apprehensions of his wrath.

1. They plead their relation to him; "We are the sheep of thy pasture," the sheep wherewith thou hast been pleased to stock thy pasture; thy peculiar people whom thou art pleased to set apart for thyself, and design for thine own glory. That the wolves worry the sheep is not strange, but was ever any shepherd thus displeased at his own sheep? "Remember, we are thy congregation," ver. 2; incorporated by thee, and for thee, and devoted to thy praise; we are "the rod," or tribe "of thine inheritance," whom thou hast been pleased to claim a special property in, above other people, *Deu.* xxxii. 9, and from whom thou hast received the rents and issues of praise and worship more than from the neighbour nations. Nay, a man's inheritance may lie at a great distance, but we are pleading for mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt, which has been the place of thy peculiar delight and residence, thy demesne and mansion.

2. They plead the great things God had done for them, and the vast expence he had been at upon them. It is thy congregation, which thou hast not only made with a word's speaking, but purchased of old, by many miracles of mercy, when they were first formed into a people. It is "thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed." When they were sold into servitude, God gave Egypt to ruin

for their ransom, gave men for them, and people for their life, *Isa.* xliii. 3, 4. Now, Lord, wilt thou now abandon a people that cost thee so dear, and has been so dear to thee? And if the redemption of Israel out of Egypt was an encouragement to hope that he would not cast them off, much more reason have we to hope that God will not cast off any whom Christ has redeemed with his own blood; but the people of his purchase shall be for ever the people of his praise.

3. They plead the calamitous state that they were in; ver. 3, "Lift up thy feet," that is, come with speed to repair the desolations that are made in thy sanctuary, which otherwise will be perpetual and irreparable. It has been sometimes said that the Divine vengeance strikes with iron hands, yet it comes with leaden feet; and then those who wait for the day of the Lord cry, "Lord, lift up thy feet," exalt thy steps; that is, magnify thyself in the outgoing of thy providence. When the desolations of the sanctuary have continued long, we are tempted to think they will be perpetual. But it is a temptation; for God will avenge his own elect, will avenge them speedily, though he bear long with their oppressors and persecutors.

Secondly. They complain of the outrage and cruelty of their enemies. Not so much, no, not at all, of what they had done to the prejudice of their secular interests,—here are no complaints of the burning of their cities, and ravaging of their country,—but only what they had done against the sanctuary, and the synagogue. The concerns of religion should lie nearer our hearts, and affect us more, than any worldly concern whatsoever. The desolation of God's house should grieve us more than the desolation of our own houses; for the matter is not great what comes of us and our families in this world, provided God's name may be sanctified, his kingdom may come, and his will be done.

1. He complains of the desolations of the sanctuary, as Daniel, *ch.* ix. 17. The temple at Jerusalem was the dwelling-place of God's name, and therefore the sanctuary or holy place, ver. 7. In this the enemies did wickedly, ver. 3; for they destroyed it in downright contempt of God, and affront to him. 1st. They roared in the midst of God's congregations. There, where God's faithful people attended on him with an humble, reverent silence, or softly speaking, they roared in a riotous, revelling manner; being very jovial that they had made themselves masters of that sanctuary which they had sometimes heard formidable things of. 2nd. "They set up their ensigns for signs." The banners of their army they set up in the temple (Israel's strongest castle, as long as they kept close to God,) as trophies of their victory. There, where the signs of God's presence used to be, now the enemy had set up their ensigns. This daring defiance of God and his power touched his people in a tender part. 3rd. They took a pride in destroying the carved work of the temple. As much as formerly men thought it an honour to lend a hand to the building of the temple, and he was thought famous that helped to fell timber for that work, so much now they valued themselves upon their agency in destroying it, ver. 5, 6. Thus, as when time was those were celebrated for wise men that did service to religion, so now they are cried up for wits that help to run it down. Some read it thus, 'They shew themselves, as one that lifts up axes on high in a thicket of trees;' for so do they break down the carved work of the temple. They make no more scruple of breaking down the rich wainscot of the temple than wood-cutters do of hewing trees in the forest; such indignation have they at the sanctuary, that the most curious carving that ever was seen is beaten down by the common soldiers, without any regard had to it either as a dedicated thing or as a piece of exquisite art. 4th. They set fire to it, and so violated or destroyed it to the ground, ver. 7. The Chaldeans burnt the house of God, that stately, costly fabric, 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 19; and the Romans left not there one stone upon another, *Mat.* xxiv. 2; razing it, razing it even to the foundations, till Zion, the holy mountain, was by Titus Vespasian ploughed as a field.

2. He complains of the desolations of the synagogues, or schools of the prophets, which before the captivity were in use, though much more after. There God's Word was read and expounded, and his name praised and called upon, without altars or sacrifices. These also they had a spite to; ver. 8, "Let us destroy them together," not only the temple, but all the places of religious worship, and the worshippers with them; "Let us destroy them together," let them be consumed in the same flame. Pursuant to this impious resolve, "they burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land," and laid them all waste. So great was their rage against religion, that the religious houses, because religious, were all levelled with the ground, that God's worshippers might not glorify God, and edify one another, by meeting in solemn assemblies.

Thirdly. The great aggravation of all these calamities was, that they had no prospect at all of relief, nor could they foresee an end of them, ver. 9. We see our enemy's sign set up in the sanctuary, but "we see not our signs," none of the tokens of God's presence, no hopeful indications of approaching deliverance; there is no more any prophet to tell us how long the trouble will last, and when things concerning us shall have an end, that the hopes of an issue at last may support us under our troubles. In the captivity in Babylon they had prophets, and had been told how long the captivity should continue, but the day was cloudy and dark, *Eze.* xxxiv. 12, and they had not as yet the comfort of these gracious discoveries. God spoke once, yea twice, good words, and comfortable words, but they perceived them not. Observe, They do not complain, We see not our armies; there are no men of war to command our forces, nor any to go forth with our hosts; but, no prophets,—none to tell us how long.

This puts them upon expostulating with God, as delaying, 1. To assert his honour; ver. 10, "How long shall the adversary reproach and blaspheme thy name?" In the desolations of the sanctuary, our chief concern should be for the glory of God, that that may not be injured by the blasphemies of those who persecute his people for his sake, because they are his; and therefore our inquiry should be, not how long shall we be troubled, but how long shall God be blasphemed? 2. To exert his power; ver. 11, "Why withdrawest thou thy hand," and dost not stretch it out to deliver thy people, and destroy thine enemies? "Pluck it out of thy bosom," and be not "as a man astonied, as a mighty man that cannot save," or will not, *Jer.* xiv. 9. When the power of enemies is most threatening, it is comfortable to fly to the power of God.

12 For God *is* my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength:
Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.
14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces,
And gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.
15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood:
Thou driedst up mighty rivers.
16 The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine:
Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.
17 Thou hast set all the borders of the earth:
Thou hast made summer and winter.

The lamenting church fastens upon something here which she calls to mind, and therefore hath she hope, as *Lam.* iii. 21, and with which she encourageth herself, and silenceth her own complaints. Two things quiet the minds of those that are here sorrowing for the solemn assembly:

First. That God is the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people; ver. 12, "God is my king of old." This comes in both as a plea in prayer to God, *Ps.* xliv. 4, "Thou art my King, O God," and as a prop to their own faith and hope, to encourage themselves to expect deliverance, considering the days of old, *Ps.* lxxvii. 5. The church speaks as a complex body, the same in every age, and therefore calls God, my King, my King of old, or from antiquity; that is, he has of old put himself into that relation to them, and has appeared and acted for them in that relation. As Israel's King he has wrought salvation in the midst of the nations of the earth; for what he has done in the government of the world has tended towards the salvation of his church. Several things are here mentioned which God had done for his people as their King of old, which encouraged them to commit themselves to him, and depend upon him.

1. He had divided the sea before them when they came out of Egypt, not by the strength of Moses or his rod, but by his own strength; and he that could do that could do any thing.

2. He had destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Pharaoh was the leviathan, the Egyptians were the dragons, fierce and cruel. Observe, 1st. The victory obtained over these enemies. God broke their heads, baffled their politics, when Israel, the more they were afflicted by them, the more they multiplied; crushed their powers, though complicated; ruined their country by ten plagues; and at last drowned them all in the Red sea; "This is Pharaoh and all his multitude," *Eze.* xxi. 18. It was the Lord's doing, none but he could do it, and he did it with a strong hand and outstretched arm. This was typical of Christ's victory over Satan and his kingdom, pursuant to the first promise, that the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head. 2nd. The improvement of this victory for the encouragement of the church. "Thou gavest him to be meat to the people of Israel" now going to inhabit the wilderness. The spoil of the Egyptians enriched them; they stripped their slain, and so got the Egyptians' arms and weapons, as before they had got their jewels. Or rather, this providence was meat to their faith and hope, to support and encourage them in reference to the other difficulties they were likely to meet with in the wilderness. It was part of the spiritual meat which they were all made to eat of. Note, The breaking of the heads of the church's enemies is the joy and strength of the hearts of the church's friends. Thus the companions make a banquet even of leviathan, *Job* xli. 6.

3. God had both ways altered the course of nature, both in fetching streams out of the rock and turning streams into rock, ver. 15. 1st. He had dissolved the rock into waters, 'Thou didst bring out the fountain and the flood,' so some read it, and every one knows whence it was brought: out of the rock, out of the flinty rock. Let this never be forgotten, but let it especially be remembered, that that rock was Christ, and the waters out of it spiritual drink. 2nd. He had congealed the waters into rock. "Thou driedst up mighty" rapid "rivers," Jordan particularly, at the time when it overflowed all its banks. He that did these things could now deliver his oppressed people, and break the yoke of the oppressors, as he had done formerly; nay, he would do it, for his justice and goodness, his wisdom and truth, are still the same, as well as his power.

Secondly. That the God of Israel is the God of nature, ver. 16, 17. It is he that orders the regular successions and revolutions, 1. Of day and night. He is the Lord of all time; the evening and the morning are of his ordaining; it is he that opens the eyelids of the morning light, and draws the curtains of the evening shadow. 'He hath prepared the moon and the sun,' so some read it; the two great lights, to rule by day and by night alternately. The preparing of them notes their constant readiness and exact observance of their time, which they never miss a moment. 2. Of summer and winter. Thou hast appointed all the bounds of the earth, and the different climates of its several regions, for "thou hast made summer and winter," both frigid and torrid zone; or, rather, the constant revolutions of the year, and its several seasons. Herein we are to acknowledge God, from whom all the laws and powers of nature are derived; but how doth this come in here? 1st. He that had power at first to settle, and still to preserve, this course of nature by the diurnal and annual motions of the heavenly bodies, has certainly all power both to save and to destroy, and with him nothing is impossible, nor any difficulties or oppositions insuperable. 2nd. He that is faithful to his covenant with the day and with the night, and preserves the ordinances of heaven inviolable, will certainly make good his promise to his people, and never cast off those whom he has chosen, *Jer.* xxxi. 35, 36; xxxiii. 20, 21. His covenant with Abraham and his seed is as firm as that with Noah and his sons, *Gen.* viii. 21. 3rd. Day and night, summer and winter, being counterchanged in the course of nature throughout all the borders of the earth, we can expect no other, but that trouble and peace, prosperity and adversity, should be in like manner counterchanged in all the borders of the church. We have as much reason to expect afflictions as to expect night and winter. But we have then no more reason to despair of the return of comfort than we have to despair of day and summer.

18 Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD,
And *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.
19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude *of the wicked:*
Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.
20 Have respect unto the covenant: [of cruelty.
For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations
21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed:
Let the poor and needy praise thy name.
22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause:
Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.
23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies:
The tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, most earnestly begs that God would appear for them against their enemies, and put an end to their present troubles; and to encourage his own faith he interests God in this matter; ver. 22, "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause." This we may be sure he will do, for he is jealous for his own honour; whatever is his own cause he will plead it with a strong hand, will appear against those that oppose it, and with and for those that cordially espouse it. He will arise and plead it. Though for a time he seems to neglect it, he will stir up himself, will manifest himself, will do his own work in his own time. Note, The cause of religion is God's own cause, and he will certainly plead it. Now, to make it out that the cause is God's, he pleads,

First. That the persecutors are God's sworn enemies. Lord, they have not only abused us, but they have been and are abusive to thee; what is done against us for thy sake doth by consequence reflect upon thee. But that is not all; they have directly and immediately reproached thee, and blasphemed thy name, ver. 18. This was that which they roared in the sanctuary; they triumphed as if they had now got the mastery of the God of Israel, of whom they had heard such great things. As nothing grieves the saints more than to hear God's name blasphemed, so nothing encourageth them more to hope that God will appear against their enemies than when they are arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as to reproach God himself; this fills the measure of their sins apace, and hastens their ruin. The psalmist insists much upon this: We dare not answer their reproaches; Lord, do thou answer them. "Remember that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name," ver. 18, and that still "the foolish man reproacheth thee daily." Observe the character of those that reproach God; they are foolish. As atheism is folly, *Ps.* xiv. 1, so is profaneness and blasphemy no less so. Perhaps they are cried up for the wits of the age that ridicule religion and sacred things; but really they are the greatest fools, and will shortly be made to appear so before all the world. And yet see their malice—They reproach God daily, as constantly as his faithful worshippers pray to him, and praise him—Their impudence; they do not hide their blasphemous thoughts in their own bosoms, but proclaim them with a loud voice; "Forget not the voice of thine enemies," ver. 23; and this with a daring defiance of Divine justice—They rise up against thee; and by their blasphemies even wage war with heaven, and take up arms against the Almighty. 'Their noise and tumult ascendeth continually,' (so some,) as the cry of Sodom came up before God calling for vengeance, *Gen.* xviii. 21. It "increaseth continually," (so we read it,) they grow worse and worse, and are hardened in their impieties by their successes. Now, Lord, remember this, do not forget it; God needs not to be put in remembrance by us of what he has to do, but thus we must shew our concern for his honour, and believe that he will vindicate us.

Secondly. That the persecuted are his covenant people.

1. See what distress they are in. They are fallen into the hands of "the multitude of the wicked," ver. 19. How are they increased that trouble them? There is no standing before an enraged multitude, especially as these, armed with power; and as they are numerous so are they barbarous, "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." The land of the Chaldeans, where there was none of the light of the knowledge of the true God, though otherwise it was famed for learning and arts, was indeed a dark place; the inhabitants of it were alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them, and therefore they were cruel. Where there was no true divinity, there was scarce to be found common humanity; they were especially cruel to the people of God: certainly they have no knowledge who eat them up, *Ps.* xiv. 4. They are oppressed, ver. 21, because they are poor, and unable to right themselves; they are oppressed, and so impoverished and made poor.

2. See what reason they had to hope that God would appear for their relief, and not suffer them to be always thus trampled upon. Observe how the psalmist pleads with God for them. 1st. It is thy turtle-dove that is ready to be swallowed up by the multitude of the wicked, ver. 19. The church is a dove for harmlessness and mildness, innocency and inoffensiveness, purity and fruitfulness; a dove for mournfulness in a day of distress; a turtle-dove for fidelity, and the constancy of love. Turtle-doves and pigeons were the only fowl that were offered in sacrifice to God: shall thy turtle-dove, that is true to thee, and devoted to thine honour, be delivered, its life and soul and all, into the hand of the multitude of the wicked, to whom it will soon become an easy and acceptable prey? Lord, it will be thine honour to help the weak, especially to help thine own. 2nd. It is the congregation of thy poor; and they are not the less thine for their being poor, for God hath chosen the poor of the world, *Jas.* ii. 5. But they have the more reason to expect thou wilt appear for them because they are many: it is the congregation of thy poor; let them not be abandoned and forgotten for ever. 3rd. They are in covenant with thee; and wilt thou not have respect unto the covenant? ver. 20. Wilt thou not perform the promises thou hast in thy covenant made to them? wilt thou not own them whom thou hast brought into the bond of thy covenant? When God delivers his people, it is in remembrance of his covenant, *Lev.* xxvi. 42. Lord, though we are unworthy to be respected, yet have respect to the covenant. 4th. They trust in thee, and boast of their relation to thee, and expectations from thee; O let not them return ashamed of their hope, ver. 21, as they will be if they be disappointed. 5th. If thou deliver them, they will praise thy name, and give thee the glory of their deliverance. Appear, Lord, for those that will praise thy name, against those that blaspheme it.

PSALM LXXV.

Though this psalm is attributed to Asaph in the title, yet it doth so exactly agree with David's circumstances at his coming to the crown after the death of Saul, that most interpreters apply it to that juncture, and suppose that either Asaph penned it in the person of David, as his poet-laureate, (probably the substance of the psalm was some speech which David made to a convention of the states at his accession to the government, and Asaph turned it into verse, and published it in a poem, for the better spreading of it among the people,) or that David penned it, and delivered it to Asaph as precentor of the temple. In this psalm, I. David returns God thanks for bringing him to the throne, ver. 1, 9. II. He promiseth to lay out himself for the public good, in the use of the power God had given him, ver. 2, 3, 10. III. He checks the insolence of those that opposed his coming to the throne, ver. 4, 5. IV. He fetcheth a reason for all this from God's sovereign dominion in the affairs of the children of men, ver. 6—8. In singing this psalm, we must give to God the glory of all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, believing that they are all according to his counsel, and that he will make them all to work for the good of his church.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, A Psalm *or* Song of Asaph.

UNTO thee, O God, do we give thanks,
Unto thee do we give thanks:
For *that* thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.
2 When I shall receive the congregation
I will judge uprightly.
3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved:
I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.
4 I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly:
And to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:
5 Lift not up your horn on high:
Speak *not with* a stiff neck.

In these verses,

First. The psalmist gives to God the praise of his advancement to honour and power, and other the great things he had done for him and for his people Israel; ver. 1, "Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks," for all the favours thou hast bestowed upon us; and again, "Unto thee do we give thanks," for our thanksgivings must be often repeated. Did we not often pray for a mercy when we were in pursuit of it, and shall we think it will suffice once or twice to give thanks when we have obtained it? Not only I do give thanks, but we do; I and all my friends. If we share with others in their mercies, we must join with them in their praises unto thee, O God, the author of our mercies; and we will not give that glory to the instruments which is due to thee only. "For that thy name is near,"—that is, that the complete accomplishment of thy promise made to David is not far off,—"thy wondrous works" which thou hast already done for him do "declare." Note, 1. There are many works which God doth for his people that may truly be called wondrous works, out of the common course of providence, and quite beyond our expectation. 2. These wondrous works declare the nearness of his name. They shew that he himself is at hand, nigh to us in what we call upon him for; and that he is about to do some great things for his people, in pursuance of his purpose and promise. 3. When God's wondrous works declare the nearness of his name, it is our duty to give him thanks; again and again to give him thanks.

Secondly. He lays himself under an obligation to use his power well, pursuant to the great trust reposed in him; ver. 2, "When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly." Here he takes it for granted that God would in due time perfect that which concerned him; that though the congregation was very slow in gathering to him, and great opposition was made to it, yet at length he should receive it; for what God hath spoken in his holiness he will perform by his wisdom and power. Being thus in expectation of the mercy, he promiseth to make conscience of his duty; When I am a judge, I will judge, and judge uprightly; not as those that went before me, who either neglected judgment, or, which was worse, perverted it; either did no good with their power or did hurt. Note, 1. Those that are advanced to posts of honour must remember they are posts of service, and must set themselves with diligence and application of mind to do the work to which they are called. He doth not say, When I shall receive the congregation, I will take my ease, and take state upon me, and leave the public business to others; but, I will mind it myself. 2. Public trusts are to be managed with great integrity. They that judge must judge uprightly, according to the rules of justice, without respect of persons.

Thirdly. He promiseth himself that his government would be a public blessing to Israel, ver. 3. The present state of the kingdom was very bad; "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved," and no marvel, when the former reign was so dissolute; all went to wreck and ruin. There was a general corruption of manners for want of putting the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. They were divided one from another for want of centring, as they ought to do, in the government God had appointed. They were all to pieces, two against three, and three against two, crumbled into factions and parties, which was likely to issue in their ruin; but "I bear up the pillars of it." Even in Saul's time David did what he could towards the public welfare, but he hoped when he had himself received the congregation he should do much more, and should not only prevent the public ruin, but recover the public strength and beauty. Now, 1. See the mischief of parties. They melt and dissolve a land, and the inhabitants of it. 2. See how much one head many times holds up. The fabric had sunk if David had not held up the pillars of it. This may well be applied to Christ and his government. The world and all the inhabitants of it were dissolved by sin; man's apostacy threatened the destruction of the whole creation; but Christ bore up the pillars of it: he saved the whole world from utter ruin, by saving his people from their sins, and into his hand the administration of the kingdom of providence is committed, for "he upholdeth all things by the word of his power," *Heb.* i. 3.

Fourthly. He checks those that opposed his government, that were against his accession to it, and obstructed the administration of it; striving to keep up that vice and profaneness which he made it his business to suppress; ver. 4, 5, "I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly." He had said so to them in Saul's time. When he had not power to restrain them, yet he had wisdom and grace to reprove them, and to give them good counsel; though they bore themselves high upon the favour of that unhappy prince, he cautioned them not to be too presumptuous. Or, rather, he doth now say so to them. As soon as he came to the crown, he issued out a proclamation against vice and profaneness, and here we have the contents of it. 1. To the simple sneaking sinners, the fools in Israel, that corrupted themselves, to them he said, "Deal not foolishly;" do not act so directly contrary both to your reason and to your interest as you do while you walk contrary to the laws God has given Israel, and the promises he has made to David. Christ, the son of David, gives us this counsel, issues out this edict, Deal not foolishly. He who is made of God to us wisdom bids us be wise for ourselves, and not make fools of ourselves. 2. To the proud daring sinners, the wicked, that set God himself at defiance, he saith, "Lift not up the horn;" brag not of your power and prerogatives, persist not in your contumacy and contempt of the government set over you; "Lift not up your horn on high," as though you could have what you will, and do what you will; "speak not with a stiff neck," in which is an iron sinew, that will never bend to the will of God in the government; for they that will not bend shall break; they whose necks are stiffened are so to their own destruction. This is Christ's word of command in his Gospel, that every mountain will be brought low before him, *Isa.* xl. 4. Let not the anti-christian power, with its heads and horns, lift up itself against him, for it shall certainly be broken to pieces; what is said with a stiff neck must be unsaid again with a broken heart, or we are undone. Pharaoh said with a stiff neck, "Who is the Lord?" but God made him know to his cost.

6 For promotion *cometh* neither from the east,
Nor from the west, nor from the south.
7 But God *is* the judge:

He putteth down one, and setteth up another.
8 For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup,
And the wine is red; it is full of mixture;
And he poureth out of the same:
But the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and* drink *them*.
9 But I will declare for ever;
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.
10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off;
But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

In these verses we have two great doctrines laid down, and two good inferences drawn from them, for the confirmation of what he had before said:

First. Here are two things laid down concerning God's government of the world, which we ought to mix faith with, both pertinent to the occasion.

1. That from God alone kings receive their power, ver. 6, 7; and therefore to God alone David would give the praise of his advancement; therefore, having his power from God, he would use it for him; and therefore they were fools that lifted up the horn against him. We see strange revolutions in states and kingdoms, and are surprised at the sudden disgrace of some, and elevation of others; we are all full of such changes when they happen; but here we are directed to look at the author of them, and are here taught where the original of power is, and whence promotion comes. Whence comes preferment to kingdoms, to the sovereignty of them? and whence come preferments in kingdoms to places of power and trust in them? The former depends not upon the will of the people, nor the latter on the will of the prince, but both on the will of God, who has all hearts in his hands; to him therefore those must look that are in pursuit of preferment, and then they begin right. We are here told,

1st. Negatively, which way we are not to look for the fountain of power. "Promotion comes neither from the east nor from the west, nor from the desert," that is, neither from the desert on the north of Jerusalem, nor from that on the south; so that the fair gale of preferment is not to be expected to blow from any point of the compass, but only from above, directly from thence. Men cannot gain promotion either by the wisdom or wealth of the children of the East, or by the numerous forces of the isles of the Gentiles that lay westward, or those of Egypt or Arabia that lay south. No concurring smiles of second causes will raise men to preferment without the First Cause. The learned Bishop Lloyd (*Serm. in loc.*) gives this gloss upon it. All men took the original of power to be from heaven, but from whom there they knew not. The Eastern nations, who were generally given to astrology, took it to come from their stars, especially the sun, their god; No, saith David, it comes neither from the east nor from the west, neither from the rising or setting of such a planet, or such a constellation, nor from the south, not from the exaltation of the sun, or any star in the mid heaven. He mentions not the north, because none supposed it to come from thence, or because the same word that signifies the north signifies the secret place, and from the secret of God's counsel it doth come; or from the oracle in Zion, which lay on the north side of Jerusalem. Note, No wind so good as to blow promotion, but as he directs who hath the winds in his fists.

2nd. Positively; "God is the judge," the governor or umpire. When parties contend for the prize, "he puts down one, and sets up another," as he sees fit, so as to serve his own purposes, and bring to pass his own counsels. Herein he acts by prerogative, and is not accountable to us for any of these matters; nor is it any damage, danger, or disgrace that He, who is infinitely wise, holy, and good, has an arbitrary and despotic power to set up and put down whom and when and how he pleaseth. This is a good reason why magistrates should rule for God, as those that must give account to him, because it is by him that kings reign.

2. That from God alone all must receive their doom; ver. 8, "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup," which he puts into the hands of the children of men; a cup of providence, mixed up (as he thinks fit) of many ingredients; a cup of affliction. The sufferings of Christ are called a cup, *Mat.* xx. 22; *Jno.* xviii. 11; the judgments of God upon sinners are "the cup of the Lord's right hand," *Hab.* ii. 16. "The wine is red," noting the wrath of God which is infused into the judgments executed on sinners, and is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. It is red as fire, red as blood, for it burns, it kills. "It is full of mixture" prepared in wisdom, so as to answer the end. There are mixtures of mercy and grace in the cup of affliction, when it is put into the hands of God's own people; mixtures of the curse when it is put into the hands of the wicked; it is wine mingled with gall. These vials, 1st. Are poured out upon all: see *Rev.* xv. 7, xvi. 1, where we read of the angels pouring out the vials of God's wrath upon the earth. Some drops of this wrath may light on good people; when God's judgments are abroad, they have their share in common calamities. But, 2nd. The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked. The calamity itself is but the vehicle into which the wrath and curse is infused, the top of which has little of the infusion; but the sediment is pure wrath, and that shall fall to the share of sinners. They have the dregs of the cup now in the terrors of conscience; and hereafter in the torments of hell. They shall wring them out, that not a drop of the wrath may be left behind, and they shall drink them, for the curse shall "enter into their bowels like water, and like oil into their bones." The cup of the Lord's indignation will be to them a cup of trembling, everlasting trembling, *Rev.* xiv. 10. The wicked man's cup while he prospers in the world is full of mixture, but the worst is at the bottom. The wicked are reserved unto the day of judgment.

Secondly. Here are two good practical inferences drawn from these great truths, and they are the same purposes of duty that he began the psalm with. 1. This being so, he will praise God and give him glory for the power to which he had advanced him; ver. 9, "I will declare for ever" that which "thy wondrous works declare," ver. 1. He will praise God for his elevation, not only at first while the mercy was fresh, but for ever, so long as he lives; the exaltation of the Son of David will be the subject of the saints' everlasting praises. He will give glory to God, not only as his God, but as the God of Jacob, knowing it was for Jacob his servant's sake, and because he loved his people Israel, that he made him king over them. 2. He will use the power with which he is intrusted for the great ends for which it was put into his hands, ver. 10; as before, ver. 2, 4. According to the duty of the higher powers, 1st. He resolves to be a terror to evil-doers, to humble their pride, and break their power. Though not all the heads, yet "all the horns of the wicked will I cut off," with which they push their poor neighbours; I will disable them to do mischief. Thus God promises to raise up carpenters which should "fray the horns of the Gentiles that had scattered Judah and Israel," *Zec.* i. 18—21. 2nd. He resolves to be a protection and praise to them that do well; "The horns of the righteous shall be exalted, that is, they shall be preferred, and put into places of power; and they that are good, and have hearts to do good, shall not want ability and opportunity for it. This agrees with David's resolutions, *Ps.* ci. 3, &c.; and herein David was a type of Christ, who with the breath of his mouth shall slay the wicked, but shall exalt with honour the horn of the righteous, *Ps.* cxii. 9.

PSALM LXXVI.

This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some great victory obtained by the church over some threatening enemy or other, and designed to grace the triumph. The Septuagint call it, a song upon the Assyrians, from whence many good interpreters conjecture that it was penned when Sennacherib's army, then besieging Jerusalem, was entirely cut off by a destroying angel in Hezekiah's time; and several passages in the psalm are very applicable to that work of wonder. But there was a religious triumph upon occasion of another victory in Jehoshaphat's time, which might as well be the subject of this psalm, 2 *Chr.* xx. 28; and it might be called a song of Asaph, because always sung by the sons of Asaph. Or it might be penned by Asaph that lived in David's time, upon occasion of the many triumphs with which God delighted to honour that reign. Upon occasion of this glorious victory, whatever it was, I. The psalmist congratulates the happiness of the church in having God so nigh, ver. 1—3. II. He celebrates the glory of God's power, which this was an illustrious instance of, ver. 4—6. III. He infers from hence what reason all have to fear before him, ver. 7—9. And, IV. What reason his people have to trust in him, and to pay their vows to him, ver. 10—12. It is a psalm proper for a thanksgiving day upon the account of public successes, and not improper at other times, because it is never out of season to glorify God for the great things he has done for his church formerly, especially for the victories of the Redeemer over the powers of darkness, which all those Old Testament victories were types of, at least those that are celebrated in the *Psalms*.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm *or* Song of Asaph.

IN Judah *is* God known:
His name *is* great in Israel.
2 In Salem also is his tabernacle,
And his dwelling place in Zion.
3 There brake he the arrows of the bow,
The shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.
4 Thou *art* more glorious *and* excellent
Than the mountains of prey.
5 The stouthearted are spoiled,
They have slept their sleep:
And none of the men of might have found their hands.
6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

The church is here triumphant, even in the midst of its militant state. The psalmist, in the church's name, triumphs here in God, the centre of all our triumphs.

First. In the revelation God had made of himself to them, ver. 2. It is the honour and privilege of Judah and Israel, that among them God is known, and where he is known his name will be great. God is known as he is pleased to make himself known; and they are happy to whom he discovers himself: happy people, that have their land filled with the knowledge of God; happy persons, that have their hearts filled with that knowledge! In Judah God was known so as he was not known in other nations, which made the favour the more obliging, that it was distinguishing, *Ps.* cxlvii. 19, 20.

Secondly. In the tokens of God's special presence with them in his ordinances, ver. 2. In the whole land of Judah and Israel God was known, and his name was great; but in Salem, in Zion, was his tabernacle and his dwelling-place. There he kept court, there received the homage of his people by their sacrifices, and entertained them by the feasts upon the sacrifices, thither they came to address themselves to him, and thence by his oracles he issued out his orders. There he recorded his name, and of that place he said, "Here will I dwell, for I have desired it." It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by his ordinances; but his dwelling-place is a tabernacle, a moveable dwelling: yet a little while is that light with us.

Thirdly. In the victories they had obtained over their enemies; ver. 3, "There brake he the arrows of the bow." Observe how threatening the danger was; though Judah and Israel, Salem and Zion, were thus privileged, yet war is raised against them, and the weapons of war are furbished. Here is bow and arrows, shield and sword, and all for battle; but all broken and rendered useless. And it was done there, 1. In Judah and Israel; in favour of that people near to God. While the weapons of war were used against other nations, they answered their end, but when turned against that holy nation they were broken presently. The Chaldee paraphraseth it thus: 'When the house of Israel did his will, he placed his majesty among them, and there he broke the arrows of the bow;' while they kept close to his service, they were great and safe, and every thing went well with them. Or, 2. In the tabernacle and dwelling-place in Zion; there he brake the arrows of the bow. It was done in the field of battle, and yet it is said to be done in the sanctuary, because done in answer to the prayers which there God's people made to him, and in performance of the promises which he there made to them; of both which see that instance, 2 *Chr.* xx. 5, 14. Public successes are owing as much to what is done in the church as to what is done in the camp. Now this victory redounded very much,

1. To the immortal honour of Israel's God; ver. 4, "Thou art," and hast manifested thyself to be, "more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey." 1st. Than the great and mighty ones of the earth in general, who are high, and think themselves firmly fixed like mountains, but are really mountains of prey, oppressive to all about them. It is their glory to destroy; it is thine to deliver. 2nd. Than our invaders in particular. When they besieged the cities of Judah, they cast up mounts against them, and raised batteries; but thou art more able to protect us, than they are to annoy us. Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly, it will appear that God is above them.

2. To the perpetual disgrace of the enemies of Israel, ver. 5, 6. They were stout-hearted, men of great courage and resolution, flushed with their former victories, enraged against Israel, confident of success; they were men of might, robust, and fit for service; they had chariots and horses, which were then greatly valued and trusted to in war, *Ps.* xx. 7. But all this force was of no force when it was levelled against Jerusalem. 1st. The stout-hearted have despoiled and disarmed themselves, (so some read it,) and when God pleaseth he can make his enemies to weaken and destroy themselves. "They have slept," not the sleep of the righteous, who sleep in Jesus, but "their sleep," the sleep of sinners, that shall wake to everlasting shame and contempt. 2nd. The men of might are as far to seek for their hands as the stout-hearted are for their

spirit. As the bold men are cowed, so the strong men are lamed, and cannot so much as find their hands to save their own heads, much less to hurt their enemies. 3rd. The chariots and horses may be truly said to be cast into a dead sleep, when their drivers and their riders were so. God did but speak the word, as the God of Jacob that commands deliverances for Jacob, and at his rebuke "the chariot and horse" were both "cast into a dead sleep;" when the men were laid dead upon the spot by the destroying angel, the chariot and horse were not at all formidable. See the power and efficacy of God's rebukes. With what pleasure may we Christians apply all this to the advantages we enjoy by the Redeemer! It is through him that God is known; it is in him that God's name is great; to him it is owing that God has a tabernacle and a dwelling-place in his church. He it was that vanquished the strong man armed, "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly."

7 Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be feared: [angry?
And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art
8 Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven;
The earth feared, and was still,
9 When God arose to judgment,
To save all the meek of the earth. Selah.
10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee:
The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.
11 Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God:
Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him
that ought to be feared.
12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes:
He is terrible to the kings of the earth.

This glorious victory with which God had graced and blessed his church is here made to speak three things:

First. Terror to God's enemies; ver. 7—9, "Thou, even thou, art to be feared." Thy majesty is to be reverenced, thy sovereignty to be submitted to, and thy justice to be dreaded by those that have offended thee. Let all the world learn by this event to stand in awe of the great God. 1. Let all be afraid of his wrath against the daring impiety of sinners; 'Who may stand in thy sight from the minute that thou art angry?' If God be a consuming fire, how can chaff and stubble stand before him, though "his anger be kindled but a little?" *Ps.* ii. 12. 2. Let all be afraid of his jealousy for oppressed innocency, and the injured cause of his own people; "Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven," then "when thou didst arise to save all the meek of the earth," ver. 8, 9. And then "the earth feared and was still;" waiting what would be the issue of those glorious appearances of thine. Note, 1st. God's people are the meek of the earth, *Zep.* ii. 3; the quiet in the land, *Ps.* xxxv. 20; that can bear any wrong, but do none. 2nd. Though the meek of the earth are by their meekness exposed to injury, yet God will sooner or later appear for their salvation, and plead their cause. 3rd. When God comes "to save all the meek of the earth;" he will "cause judgment to be heard from heaven," that is, he will make the world know that he is angry at the oppressors of his people, and takes what is done against them as done against himself. The righteous God long seems to keep silence, yet sooner or later he will "make judgment to be heard." 4th. When God is speaking judgment from heaven, it is time for the earth to compose itself into an awful and reverent silence; 'The earth feared and was still," as silence is made by proclamation when the court sits. "Be still, and know that I am God," *Ps.* xlvi. 10; "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is raised" up to judgment, *Zec.* ii. 13. Those that suppose this psalm to have been penned upon the occasion of the routing of Sennacherib's army, take it for granted that the descent of the destroying angel who did the execution was accompanied with thunder, by which God caused judgment to be heard from heaven, and that the earth feared; that is, there was an earthquake, but it was soon over. But this is altogether uncertain.

Secondly. Comfort to God's people, ver. 10. We live in a very angry provoking world, we feel much many times, and are apt to fear more from the wrath of man, which seems boundless. But this is a great comfort to us, 1. That as far as God permits the wrath of man to break forth at any time, he will make it turn to his praise, will bring honour to himself and serve his own purposes by it. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee," not only by the checks given to it, when it shall be forced to confess its own impotency, but even by the looses given to it for a time. The hardships which God's people suffer by the wrath of their enemies, are made to redound to the glory of God and his grace; and the more the heathen rage and plot against the Lord and his Anointed, the more will God be praised for setting his king upon his holy hill of Zion in spite of them, *Ps.* ii. 1, 6. When the heavenly hosts make this the matter of their thanksgiving-songs, that God has taken to him his great power, and has reigned, though the nations were angry, *Rev.* xi. 17, 18, then the wrath of man adds lustre to the praises of God. 2. That what will not turn to his praise shall not be suffered to break out; "the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." Men must never permit sin, because they cannot check it when they will, but God can. He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as he doth to the raging sea, "Hitherto it shall come, and no farther; here shall its proud waves be stayed." God restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's rage, for he put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his jaws, *Isa.* xxxvii. 29; and, though he permitted him to talk big, he restrained him from doing what he designed.

Thirdly. Duty to all, ver. 11, 12. Let all submit themselves to this great God, and become his loyal subjects. Observe,

1. The duty required of us all; "all that are about him," that have any dependence upon him, or any occasion to approach to him; and who is there that has not? We are, therefore, every one of us commanded to do our homage to the Kings of kings; "Vow and pay," that is, take an oath of allegiance to him, and make conscience of keeping it. Vow to be his, and pay what you vow; bind your souls with a bond to him, (for that is the nature of a vow,) and then live up to the obligations you have laid upon yourselves; for "better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay." And having taken him for our King, let us bring presents to him, as subjects to their sovereign, 1 *Sam.* x. 17. "Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land," *Isa.* xvi. 1. Not that God needs any present we can bring, or can be benefited by it; but thus we must give him honour, and own that we have our all from him. Our prayers and praises, and especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord our God.

2. The reasons to enforce this duty; "Render to all their due; fear to whom fear is due." And is it not due to God? Yes; 1st. He "ought to be feared." He is the fear, so the word is; his name is glorious and fearful, and he is the proper object of our fear: with him is terrible majesty. The God of Abraham is called "the fear of Isaac," *Gen.* xxxi. 42; and we are commanded to make him our fear, *Isa.* viii. 13. When we bring presents to him, we must have an eye to him as greatly to be feared; for he is terrible in his holy places. 2nd. He will be feared, even by those who think it their own sole prerogative to be feared; ver. 12, "He shall cut off the spirit of princes." He shall slip it off as easily as we slip off a flower from the stalk, or a bunch of grapes from the vine, so the word signifies. He can dispirit those that are most daring, and make them heartless; for "He is," or will be, "terrible to the kings of the earth." And sooner or later, if they be not so wise as to submit themselves to him, he will force them to call in vain to rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his wrath, *Rev.* vi. 16. Since there is no contending with God, it is as much our wisdom as it is our duty to submit to him.

PSALM LXXVII.

This psalm, according to the method of many other psalms, begins with sorrowful complaints, but ends with comfortable encouragements. The complaints seem to be of personal grievances, but the encouragements relate to the public concerns of the church, so that it is not certain whether it was penned upon a personal or a public account. If they were private troubles that he was groaning under, it teacheth us, that what God has wrought for his church in general may be improved for the comfort of particular believers. If it was some public calamity that he is here lamenting, his speaking of it so feelingly, as if it had been some particular trouble of his own, shews how much we should lay to heart the interests of the church of God, and make them our own. One of the rabbins saith, this psalm is spoken in the dialect of the captives, and therefore some think it was penned in the captivity in Babylon. I. The psalmist complains here of the deep impressions which his troubles made upon his spirits, and the temptation he was in to despair of relief, ver. 1—10. II. He encourageth himself to hope that it would be well at last, by the remembrance of God's former appearances for the help of his people, of which he gives several instances, ver. 11—20. In singing this psalm, we must take shame to ourselves for all our sinful distrusts of God, and of his providence and promise, and give to him the glory of his power and goodness by a thankful commemoration of what he has done for us formerly, and a cheerful dependence upon him for the future.

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of Asaph.

I CRIED unto God with my voice,
Even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.
2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord:
My sore ran in the night, and ceased not:
My soul refused to be comforted.
3 I remembered God, and was troubled:
I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.
4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking:
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
5 I have considered the days of old,
The years of ancient times.
6 I call to remembrance my song in the night:
I commune with mine own heart:
And my spirit made diligent search.
7 Will the Lord cast off for ever?
And will he be favourable no more?
8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever?
Doth *his* promise fail for evermore?
9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious?
Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.
10 And I said, This *is* my infirmity:
But I will remember the years of the right hand of the
most High.

We have here the lively portraiture of a good man under prevailing melancholy, falling into, and sinking in, that horrible pit, and that miry clay, but struggling to get out. Drooping saints that are of a sorrowful spirit, may here as in a glass see their own faces. The conflict which the psalmist had with his griefs and fears seems to have been over when he penned this record of it; for he saith, ver. 1, "I cried unto God, and he gave ear unto me;" which while the struggle lasted he had not the comfortable sense of, as he had afterwards; but he inserts it in the beginning of his narrative, as an intimation that his trouble did not end in despair, for God heard him, and at length he knew that he heard him. Observe,

First. His melancholy prayers. Being afflicted he prayed, *Jas.* v. 13; and being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, ver. 1. 'My voice was unto God and I cried, even with my voice unto God;' he was full of complaints, loud complaints; but he directed them to God, and turned them all into prayers, vocal prayers, very earnest and importunate. Thus he gave vent to his grief, and gained some ease, and thus he took the right way in order to relief; ver. 2, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord." Note, Days of trouble must be days of prayer; days of inward trouble especially, when God seems to have withdrawn from us we must seek him; and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversion of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but pray it away. 'My hand was stretched out in the night, and ceased not,' so Dr. Hammond reads the following words, as speaking the incessant importunity of his prayers: compare *Ps.* cxliii. 5, 6.

Secondly. His melancholy grief. Grief may then be called melancholy indeed, 1. When it admits of no intermission. Such was his: "My sore," or wound, "ran in the night," and bled inwardly, "and it ceased not;" no, not in the time appointed for rest and sleep. 2. When it admits of no consolation. And that also was his case; "My soul refused to be comforted." He had no mind to hearken to those that would be his comforters; "As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart," *Pr.* xxv. 20; nor had he any

mind to think of those things that would be his comforts; he put them far from him as one that indulged himself in sorrow. Those that are in sorrow upon any account do not only prejudice themselves, but affront God, if they refuse to be comforted.

Thirdly. His melancholy musings. He pored so much upon the trouble, whatever it was, personal or public, that, 1. The methods that should have relieved him did but increase his grief, ver. 3. 1st. One would have thought that the remembrance of God should have comforted him, but it did not; "I remembered God, and was troubled," as poor Job, *ch.* xxiii. 15, "I am troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him." When he remembered God, his thoughts fastened only upon his justice, and wrath, and dreadful majesty; and thus God himself became a terror to him. 2nd. One would have thought that pouring out his soul before God should have given him ease, but it did not; he complained, and yet his spirit was overwhelmed, and sunk under the load. 2. The means of his present relief were denied him, ver. 4. He could not sleep; which, if it be quiet and refreshing, is a parenthesis to our griefs and cares. "Thou holdest mine eyes waking" with thy terrors, which make me "full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day." He could not speak by reason of the disorder of his thoughts, and the tumult of his spirits, and the mighty confusion his mind was in. He kept silence even from good, while his heart was hot within him, he was ready to burst like a new bottle, *Job* xxxiii. 19; and yet so troubled, that he could not speak and refresh himself. And grief never preys so much upon the spirits as when it is thus smothered and pent up.

Fourthly. His melancholy reflections; ver. 5, 6, "I have considered the days of old," and compared them with the present days, and our former prosperity doth but aggravate our present calamities; for we see not "the wonders that our fathers told us of." Melancholy people are apt to pore altogether upon the days of old, and the years of ancient times, and to magnify them for the justifying of their own uneasiness and discontent at the present posture of affairs. But "say not thou that the former days were better than these;" because it is more than thou knowest whether they were or no, *Eccl.* vii. 10. Neither let the remembrance of the comforts we have lost make us unthankful for those that are left, or impatient under our crosses. Particularly, he called to remembrance his song in the night; the comforts with which he had supported himself in his former sorrows, and entertained himself in his former solitude. These songs he remembered, and tried if he could not sing them over again; but he was out of tune for them, and the remembrance of them did but pour out his soul in him, *Ps.* xlii. 4: see *Job* xxxv. 10.

Fifthly. His melancholy fears and apprehensions. "I communed with mine own heart," ver. 6. Come, my soul, what will be the issue of these things? What can I think of them, and what can I expect they will come to at last? "I made diligent search" into the causes of my trouble, inquiring wherefore God contended with me, and what would be the consequences of it? And thus I began to reason; "Will the Lord cast off for ever," as he doth for the present? He is not now favourable; "and will he be favourable no more?" His mercy is now gone, and is it clean gone for ever? His promise now fails, and doth it fail for evermore? God is not now gracious, but hath he forgotten to be gracious? His tender mercies have been withheld, perhaps in wisdom, but are they shut up? shut up in anger? ver. 7—9. This is the language of a disconsolate, deserted soul, now walking in darkness, and having no light; a case not uncommon, even with those "that fear the Lord, and obey the voice of his servant," *Isa.* l. 10. He may here be looked upon, 1. As groaning under a sore trouble. God hid his face from him, and withdrew the usual tokens of his favour. Note, Spiritual trouble is of all other most grievous to a gracious soul; nothing wounds and pierceth it like the apprehensions of God's being angry, the suspending of his favour, and the superseding of his promise; this wounds the spirit, and who can bear that? 2. As grappling with a strong temptation. Note, God's own people, in a cloudy and dark day, may be tempted to make desperate conclusions about their own spiritual state, and the condition of God's church and kingdom in the world, and as to both to give up all for gone. We may be tempted to think that God has abandoned us, and cast us off, that the covenant of grace fails us, and that the tender mercy of our God shall be for ever withheld from us. But we must not give way to such suggestions as these. If fear and melancholy ask such peevish questions, let faith answer them from the Scripture, "Will the Lord cast off for ever?" "God forbid," *Rom.* xi. 1. No; "The Lord will not cast off his people," *Ps.* xciv. 14. "Will he be favourable no more?" Yes, he will; for "though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion," *Lam.* iii. 32. "Is his mercy clean gone for ever?" No; "his mercy endureth for ever;" as it is "from everlasting, it is to everlasting," *Ps.* ciii. 7. "Doth his promise fail for evermore?" No; "it is impossible for God to lie," *Heb.* vi. 18. "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?" No; he cannot deny himself, and his own name which he hath proclaimed gracious and merciful, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6. "Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" No; they "are new every morning," *Lam.* iii. 22; and, therefore, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" *Hos.* xi. 8, 9.

Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions, when on a sudden he first checked himself with that word, Selah,—stop there, go no farther, let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises; and he then chid himself; ver. 10, "I said, This is mine infirmity." He is soon aware that it is not well said, and therefore, Why art thou cast down, O my soul? I said, This is mine affliction, (so some understand it,) this is the calamity that falls to my lot, and I must make the best of it. Every one has his affliction, his trouble in the flesh; and this is mine, the cross I must take up. Or rather, This is my sin,—it is mine iniquity, the plague of my own heart. These doubts and fears proceed from the want and weakness of faith, and the corruption of a distempered mind. Note, 1. We all know that ill by ourselves, of which we must say, This is our infirmity; a sin that most easily besets us. 2. Despondency of spirit, and distrust of God under affliction, are too often the infirmities of good people; and as such are to be reflected upon by us with sorrow and shame, as by the psalmist here: "This is my infirmity." And when at any time it is working in us, we must thus suppress the rising of it, and not suffer the evil spirit to speak. We must argue down the insurrections of unbelief, as the psalmist here: "But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." He had been considering the years of ancient times, ver. 5, the blessings formerly enjoyed, the remembrance of which did only add to his grief; but now he considered them as the years of the right hand of the Most High; that those blessings of ancient times came from the Ancient of Days, from the power and sovereign disposal of his right hand, who is over all, God blessed for ever; and this satisfied him: for may not the Most High with his right hand make what changes he pleaseth?

11 I will remember the works of the LORD:
Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.
12 I will meditate also of all thy work,
And talk of thy doings.
13 Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary:
Who *is so* great a God as *our* God?
14 Thou *art* the God that doest wonders:
Thou hast declared thy strength among the people.
15 Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.
16 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee;
They were afraid:
The depths also were troubled.
17 The clouds poured out water:
The skies sent out a sound:
Thine arrows also went abroad.
18 The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven:
The lightnings lightened the world:
The earth trembled and shook.
19 Thy way *is* in the sea,
And thy path in the great waters,
And thy footsteps are not known.
20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

The psalmist here recovers himself out of the great distress and plague he was in, and silenceth his own fears of God's casting off his people by the remembrance of the great things he had done for them formerly, which, though he had in vain tried to quiet himself with, ver. 5, 6, yet he tried again, and upon this second trial found it not in vain. It is good to persevere in the proper means for the strengthening of faith, though they do not prove effectual at first. "I will remember," surely I will, what God has done for his people of old, till I can from thence infer a happy issue of the present dark dispensations, ver. 11, 12. Note, 1. The works of the Lord for his people have been wondrous works. 2. They are recorded for us, that they may be remembered by us. 3. That we may have benefit by the remembrance of them, we must meditate upon them, and dwell upon them in our thoughts, and must talk of them, that we may inform ourselves and others farther concerning them. 4. The due remembrance of the works of God will be a powerful antidote against distrust of his promise and goodness; for he is God, and changeth not. If he begin, he will finish his work, and bring forth the top-stone. Two things in general satisfied him very much:

First. That God's "way is in the sanctuary," ver. 13. It is in holiness, so some. When we cannot solve the particular difficulties that may arise in our constructions of the Divine providence, this we are sure of in general, that "God is holy in all his works," that they are all worthy of himself, and consonant to the eternal purity and rectitude of his nature. He has holy ends in all he doth, and will be sanctified in every dispensation of his providence. His way is according to his promise which he has spoken in his holiness, and made known in the sanctuary. What he hath done is according to what he hath said, and may be construed by it; and from what he hath said we may easily gather that he will not cast off his people for ever. God's way is for the sanctuary, and for the benefit of it; all he doth is intended for the good of his church.

Secondly. That God's "way is in the sea." Though God is holy, just, and good in all he doth, yet we cannot give an account of the reasons of his proceedings, nor make any certain judgment of his designs; "His path is in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known," ver. 19. God's ways are like the deep waters, which cannot be fathomed, *Ps.* xxxvi. 6; like the way of a ship in the sea, which cannot be tracked, *Pr.* xxx. 18, 19. God's proceedings are always to be acquiesced in, but cannot always be accounted for. He instanceth in some particulars, for which he goes as far back as the infancy of the Jewish church, and from which he gathers, 1st. That there is no God to be compared with the God of Israel; ver. 13, "Who is so great a God as our God?" Let us first give to God the glory of the great things he has done for his people, and acknowledge him therein great above all comparison; and then we may take to ourselves the comfort of what he has done, and encourage ourselves with it. 2nd. That he is a God of almighty power; ver. 14, "Thou art the God that" alone "dost wonders," above the power of any creature; thou hast visibly, and beyond any contradiction, "declared thy strength among the people." What God has done for his church has been a standing declaration of his almighty power, for therein he has made bare his everlasting arm.

1. God brought Israel out of Egypt, ver. 15. This was the beginning of mercy to them, and was yearly to be commemorated among them in the passover. "Thou hast with thine arm," stretched out in so many miracles, "redeemed thy people" out of the hand of the Egyptians. Though they were delivered by power, yet they are said to be redeemed, as if it had been done by price, because it was typical of the great redemption which was to be wrought out in the fulness of time both by price and power. Those that were redeemed are here called not only the sons of Jacob, to whom the promise was made, but of Joseph also, who had a most firm and lively belief of the performance of it; for "when he was dying he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and gave commandment concerning his bones."

2. He divided the Red sea before them; ver. 16, "The waters" gave way, and a lane was made through that crowd instantly, as if they had seen God himself at the head of the armies of Israel, and had retired for fear of him. Not only the surface of the waters, but "the depths were troubled," and opened to the right and to the left, in obedience to his word of command.

3. He destroyed the Egyptians; ver. 17, "The clouds poured out water" upon them, while the pillar of fire, like an umbrella over the camp of Israel, sheltered it from the shower, in which, as in the deluge, the waters that were above the firmament, concurred with those that were beneath the firmament, to destroy the rebels. Then "the skies sent out a sound; thine arrows also went abroad," which is explained ver. 18, "The voice of thy thunder was heard in the heaven," that is, the sound which the skies sent forth. "The lightnings lightened the world;" those are the arrows that went abroad, by which the host of the Egyptians was discomfited, with so much terror, that the earth of the adjacent coasts shook and trembled. Thus "God's way was in the sea," for the destruction of his enemies, as well as for the salvation of his people; and yet, when the waters returned to their place, "his footsteps were not known," ver. 19. There was no mark set upon the place, as there was afterwards in

Jordan, *Jos.* iv. 9. We do not read in the story of Israel's passing through the Red sea that there were thunders and lightnings, and an earthquake; yet there might be, and Josephus saith there were, such displays of the Divine terror upon that occasion. But it may refer to the thunders, lightnings, and earthquake that were at mount Sinai when the law was given.

4. He took his people Israel under his own conduct and protection; ver. 20, "Thou leddest thy people like a flock." They being weak and helpless, and apt to wander like a flock of sheep, and lying exposed to the beasts of prey, God went before them with all the care and tenderness of a shepherd, that they might not miscarry. The pillar of cloud and fire led them, yet that is not here taken notice of, but the agency of Moses and Aaron, by whose hand God led them. They could not do it without God, but God did it with and by them. Moses was their governor, Aaron their high priest; they were guides, overseers, and rulers to Israel, and by them God led them. The right and happy administration of the two great ordinances of magistracy and ministry are, though not so great a miracle, yet as great a mercy to any people as the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness.

The psalm concludes abruptly, and doth not apply those ancient instances of God's power to the present distresses of the church, as one might have expected. But as soon as the good man began to meditate on these things he found he had gained his point. His very entrance upon this matter gave him light and joy, *Ps.* cxix. 130; his fears suddenly and strangely vanished, so that he needed to go no farther. He went his way and did eat, and his countenance was no more sad.

PSALM LXXVIII.

This psalm is historical. It is a narrative of the great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel; the great sins wherewith they had provoked him, and the many tokens of his displeasure they had been under for their sins. The psalmist began in the foregoing psalm to relate God's wonders of old for his own encouragement in a difficult time; there he broke off abruptly, but here resumes the subject, for the edification of the church, and enlargeth much upon it; shewing not only how good God had been to them, which was an earnest of farther finishing mercy, but how basely they had carried themselves to God, which justified him in correcting them as he did at this time, and forbade all complaints. Here is, I. The preface to this church history, commanding the attention of the present age to it, and recommending it to the study of the generations to come, ver. 1—8. II. The history itself from Moses to David. It is put into a psalm or song, that it might be the better remembered and transmitted to posterity, and that the singing of it might affect them with the things here related more than they would be with a bare narrative of them. The general scope of this psalm we have, ver. 9—11, where notice is taken of the present rebukes they were under, ver. 9; the sin which brought them under those rebukes, ver. 10; and the mercies of God to them formerly, which aggravated that sin, ver. 11. As to the particulars, we are here told, 1. What wonderful works God had wrought for them in bringing them out of Egypt, ver. 12—16; providing for them in the wilderness, ver. 23—29; plaguing and ruining their enemies, ver. 43—53; and at length putting them in possession of the land of promise, ver. 54, 55; 2. How ungrateful they were to God for his favours to them, and how many and great provocations they were guilty of; how they murmured against God and distrusted him, ver. 17—20; and did but counterfeit repentance and submission when he punished them, ver. 34—37; thus grieving and tempting him, ver. 40—42; how they affronted God with their idolatries after they came to Canaan, ver. 56—58; 3. How God had justly punished them for their sins, ver. 21, 22, in the wilderness, making their sin their punishment, ver. 29—33; and now of late when the ark was taken by the Philistines, ver. 59—64; 4. How graciously God had spared them, and returned in mercy to them, notwithstanding their provocations; he had forgiven them formerly, ver. 38—39; and now of late had removed the judgments they had brought upon themselves, and brought them under a happy establishment both in church and state, ver. 65—72. As the general scope of this psalm may be of use to us in the singing of it, to put us upon recollecting what God has done for us and for his church formerly, and what we have done against him, so the particulars also may be of use to us for warning against those sins of unbelief and ingratitude which Israel of old was notoriously guilty of, and the record of which was preserved for our learning; "These things happened unto them for ensamples," 1 *Cor.* x. 11; *Heb.* iv. 11.

Maschil of Asaph.

GIVE ear, O my people, *to* my law:
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
2 I will open my mouth in a parable:
I will utter dark sayings of old:
3 Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
4 We will not hide *them* from their children, [LORD,
Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the
And his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath
5 For he established a testimony in Jacob, [done.
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which he commanded our fathers,
That they should make them known to their children:
6 That the generation to come might know *them,*
Even the children *which* should be born;
Who should arise and declare *them* to their children:
7 That they might set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep his commandments:
8 And might not be as their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation;
A generation *that* set not their heart aright,
And whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

These verses, which contain the preface to this history, shew that the psalm answers the title. It is indeed Maschil,—'a psalm to give instruction.' If we receive not the instruction it gives, it is our own fault.

Here, First. The psalmist demands attention to what he wrote; ver. 1, "Give ear, O my people, to my law." Some make these the psalmist's words. David, as a king, or Asaph in his name, as his secretary of state, or scribe to the sweet singer of Israel, here calls upon the people, as his people, committed to his charge, to give ear to his law. He calls his instructions his law or edict; such was their commanding force in themselves. Every good truth, received in the light and love of it, will have the power of a law upon the conscience. Yet that was not all; David was a king, and he would interpose his royal power for the edification of his people. If God by his grace make great men good men, they will be capable of doing more good than others, because their word will be a law to all about them, who must therefore give ear and hearken; for to what purpose is Divine revelation brought to our ears if we will not incline our ears to it; both humble ourselves and engage ourselves to hear it, and heed it? Or, the psalmist being a prophet, speaks as God's mouth, and so calls them his people, and demands subjection to what was said as to a law. "Let him that has an ear" thus "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," *Rev.* ii. 7.

Secondly. Several reasons are given why we should diligently attend to that which is here related.

1. The things here discoursed of are weighty, and deserve consideration; strange, and need it; ver. 2, "I will open my mouth in a parable,"—in that which is sublime and uncommon, but very excellent, and well worthy your attention; "I will utter dark sayings," which challenge your most serious regards as much as the enigmas with which the eastern princes and learned men used to pose one another. These are called dark sayings, not because they are hard to be understood, but because they are greatly to be admired, and carefully to be looked into. This is said to be fulfilled in the parables which our Saviour put forth, *Mat.* xiii. 35, which were, as this, representations of the state of the kingdom of God among men.

2. They are the monuments of antiquity; "Dark sayings of old, which our fathers have told us," ver. 3. They are things of undoubted certainty; we have heard them and known them, and there is no room left to question the truth of them. The Gospel of *Luke* is called a "declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us," *Lu.* i. 1; so were the things here related. The honour we owe to our parents and ancestors obligeth us to attend to that which our fathers have told us; and, as far as it appears to be true and good, to receive it with so much the more reverence and regard.

3. They are to be transmitted to posterity, and it lies as a charge upon us carefully to hand them down, ver. 4. Because our fathers told them us, "we will not hide them from their children." Our children are called theirs, for they were in care for their seed's seed, and looked upon them as theirs; and in teaching our children the knowledge of God we repay to our parents some of that debt we owe to them for teaching us. Nay, if we have no children of our own, we must declare the things of God to their children, the children of others. Our care must be for posterity in general, and not only for our own posterity; and for the generation to come hereafter, the children that shall be born, as well as for the generation that is next rising up, and the children that are born. That which we are to transmit to our children is not only the knowledge of languages, arts, and sciences, their liberty and property, but especially the praises of the Lord, and his strength appearing in "the wonderful works that he has done." Our great care must be to lodge our religion, that great depositum, pure and entire in the hands of those that succeed us. There are two things, the full and clear knowledge of which we must preserve the entail of to our heirs:

1st. The law of God; for this was given with a particular charge to teach it diligently to their children; ver. 5, "He established a testimony," or covenant, and enacted a law in Jacob and Israel, gave them precepts and promises, which he commanded them to make known to their children, *Deu.* vi. 7, 20. The church of God, as the historian saith of the Roman commonwealth, was not to be *res unius ætatis,*—'a business of one age,' but was to be kept up from one generation to another; and therefore, as God provided for a succession of ministers in the tribe of Levi and the house of Aaron, so he appointed that parents should train up their children in the knowledge of his law; and when they were grown up, they must "arise, and declare them to their children," ver. 6. That, as one generation of God's servants and worshippers passeth away, another generation may come, and the church, as the earth, may abide for ever; and thus God's name among men may be as the days of heaven.

2nd. The providences of God concerning them, both in mercy and in judgment. The former seems to be mentioned for the sake of this; since God gave order that his laws should be made known to posterity, it is requisite that with them his works also should be made known, and the fulfilling of the promises made to the obedient, and the threatenings denounced against the disobedient. Let these be told to our children, and our children's children,

First. That they may take encouragement to conform themselves to the will of God, ver. 7. That, not forgetting the works of God wrought in former days, they might set their hope in God, and keep his commandments, might make his command their rule, and his covenant their stay; and those only may with confidence hope for God's salvation that make conscience of doing his commandments. The works of God, duly considered, will very much strengthen our resolution both to set our hope in him and to keep his commandments; for he is able to bear us out in both.

Secondly. That they may take warning not to conform themselves to the example of their fathers; ver. 8, "That they might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation." See here, 1*st.* What was the character of their fathers. Though they were the seed of Abraham, taken into covenant with God, and, for aught we know, the only professing people he had then in the world, yet they were stubborn and rebellious, and walked contrary to God, in direct opposition to his will. They did, indeed, profess relation to him, but they did not set their hearts right, they were not cordial in their engagements to God, nor inward with him in their worship of him; and therefore their spirit was not stedfast with him, but upon every occasion they flew off from him. Note, Hypocrisy is the high road to apostacy; those that do not set their hearts right will not be stedfast with God, but play fast and loose. 2*nd.* What was a charge to the children. "That they be not as their fathers." Note, Those that are descended from wicked and ungodly ancestors, if they will but consider the word and works of God, will see reason enough not to tread in their steps. It will be no excuse for a vain conversation, that it was received by tradition from our fathers, 1 *Pet.* i. 18. For what we know of them that was ill must be an admonition to us, that we dread that which was so pernicious to them, as we would shun those courses which they took that were ruinous to their health or estates.

9 The children of Ephraim, *being* armed, *and* carrying
Turned back in the day of battle. [bows,
10 They kept not the covenant of God,
And refused to walk in his law;
11 And forgat his works,
And his wonders that he had shewed them.

12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers,
In the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.
13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through;
And he made the waters to stand as an heap.
14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.
15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.
16 He brought streams also out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.
17 And they sinned yet more against him
By provoking the most High in the wilderness.
18 And they tempted God in their heart
By asking meat for their lust.
19 Yea, they spake against God;
They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?
20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed;
Can he give bread also?
Can he provide flesh for his people?
21 Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth:
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel;
22 Because they believed not in God,
And trusted not in his salvation:
23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above,
And opened the doors of heaven,
24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat,
And had given them of the corn of heaven.
25 Man did eat angels' food:
He sent them meat to the full.
26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven:
And by his power he brought in the south wind
27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust,
And feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:
28 And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp,
Round about their habitations.
29 So they did eat, and were well filled:
For he gave them their own desire;
30 They were not estranged from their lust.
But while their meat *was* yet in their mouths,
31 The wrath of God came upon them,
And slew the fattest of them,
And smote down the chosen *men* of Israel.
32 For all this they sinned still,
And believed not for his wondrous works.
33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity,
And their years in trouble.
34 When he slew them, then they sought him:
And they returned and enquired early after God.
35 And they remembered that God *was* their rock,
And the high God their redeemer.
36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth,
And they lied unto him with their tongues.
37 For their heart was not right with him,
Neither were they stedfast in his covenant.
38 But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity,
And destroyed *them* not:
Yea, many a time turned he his anger away,
And did not stir up all his wrath.
39 For he remembered that they *were but* flesh;
A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

In these verses,

First. The psalmist observes the late rebukes of Providence that the people of Israel had been under, which they had brought upon themselves by their dealing treacherously with God: ver. 9—11, "The children of Ephraim," in which tribe Shiloh was, though they were well armed, and shot with bows, yet "turned back in the day of battle." This seems to refer to that shameful defeat which the Philistines gave them in Eli's time, when they took the ark prisoner, 1 *Sam.* iv. 10, 11; which the psalmist here begins to speak of, and after a long digression returns to it again, ver. 61. And well might that event be thus fresh in mind in David's time, above forty years after; for the ark, which in that memorable battle was seized by the Philistines, though it was quickly brought out of captivity, was never brought out of obscurity till David fetched it from Kirjath-jearim to his own city. Observe,

1. The shameful cowardice of the children of Ephraim, that warlike tribe, so famed for valiant men, Joshua's tribe. The children of that tribe, though as well armed as ever, yet turned back when they came to face the enemy. Note, Weapons of war stand men in little stead without a martial spirit; and that is gone if God be gone. Sin dispirits men, and takes away the heart. 2. The causes of their cowardice, which were no less shameful; and these were, 1st. A shameful violation of God's law, and their covenant with him, ver. 10. They were basely treacherous and perfidious, for "they kept not the covenant of God," and basely stubborn and rebellious, (as they were described, ver. 8,) for they peremptorily refused to walk in his law, and in effect told him to his face they would not be ruled by him. 2nd. A shameful ingratitude to God for the favours he had bestowed upon them. They forgot his works and his wonders, his works of wonder which they ought to have admired, ver. 11. Note, Our forgetfulness of God's works is at the bottom of our disobedience to his laws.

Secondly. He takes occasion from hence to consult precedents, and to compare this with their fathers' case; who were in like manner unmindful of God's mercies to them, and ungrateful to their founder and great benefactor, and were therefore often brought under his displeasure. The narrative in these verses is very observable, for it relates a kind of struggle between God's goodness and man's badness, and mercy at length rejoiceth against judgment.

1. God did great things for his people Israel when he first incorporated them, and formed them into a people. "Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers," and not only in their sight, but in their cause, and for their benefit; so strange, so kind, that one would think they should never be forgotten. What he did for them in the land of Egypt is only mentioned here, ver. 12; but afterwards resumed, ver. 43. And here he goes on to shew, 1st. How he made a lane for them through the Red sea, and caused them, that is, gave them courage, to pass through, though the waters stood over their heads as a heap, ver. 13; see *Isa.* lxiii. 12, 13, where God is said to lead them by the hand, as it were, "through the deep, that they should not stumble." 2nd. How he provided a guide for them through the untrodden paths of the wilderness, ver. 14. He led them step by step, "in the daytime by a cloud," which also sheltered them from the heat, and "all the night with a light of fire," which perhaps warmed the air; however, made the darkness of the night the less frightful, and perhaps kept off wild beasts, *Zec.* ii. 5. 3rd. How he furnished their camp with fresh water in a dry and thirsty land where no water was; not by opening the bottles of heaven, that had been a common way, but by broaching a rock; ver. 15, 16, "He clave the rocks in the wilderness," which yielded water, though they were not capable of receiving it either from the clouds above or the springs beneath. Out of the dry and hard rock he gave them drink, not distilled as out of an alembic, drop by drop, but in streams, running down like rivers, and as out of the great depths. God gives abundantly, and is rich in mercy; he gives seasonably, and sometimes makes us to feel the want of mercies, that we may the better know the worth of them. This water which God gave Israel out of the rock was the more valuable, because it was spiritual drink, "and that rock was Christ."

2. When God began thus to bless them, they began to affront him; ver. 17, "They sinned yet more against him," more than they had done in Egypt, though there they were bad enough, *Eze.* xx. 8. They bore the miseries of their servitude better than the difficulties of their deliverance; and never murmured at their taskmasters so as they did at Moses and Aaron, as if they were "delivered to do all these abominations," *Jer.* vii. 10. As sin sometimes takes occasion by the commandment, so at other times it takes occasion by the deliverance, to become more exceeding sinful. "They provoked the most High;" though he is most High, and they knew themselves an unequal match for him, yet they provoked him, and even bade defiance to his justice. And this in the wilderness, where he had them at his mercy, and therefore they were bound in interest to please him; and where he shewed them so much mercy, and therefore they were bound in gratitude to please him; yet there they said and did that which they knew would provoke him; "They tempted God in their heart," ver. 18. Their sin began in their heart, and thence it took its malignity; "They do always err in their heart," *Heb.* iii. 10. Thus they tempted God, tried his patience to the utmost whether he would bear with them or no; and, in effect, bade him do his worst. Two ways they provoked him:

1st. By desiring, or rather demanding, that which he had not thought fit to give them; "They asked meat for their lust." God had given them meat for their hunger in the manna,—wholesome, pleasant food, and in abundance. He had given them meat for their faith, out of the heads of leviathan, which he brake in pieces, *Ps.* lxxiv. 14. But all this would not serve; they must have meat for their lust, dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh.

2nd. By distrusting his power to give them what they desired. This was tempting God indeed. They challenged him to give them flesh; and if he did not, they would say it was because he could not; not because he did not see it fit for them; ver. 19, "They spake against God." They that set bounds to God's power speak against him. It was as injurious a reflection as could be cast upon God to say, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" They had manna, but they did not think they had a table furnished unless they had boiled and roast, a first, a second, and a third course, as they had in Egypt, where they had both flesh and fish, and sauce too, *Ex.* xvi. 3; *Num.* xi. 5; dishes of meat, and salvers of fruit. What an unreasonable, insatiable thing is luxury! Such a mighty thing did these epicures think a table well furnished to be, that they thought it was more than God himself could give them in that wilderness; whereas the beasts of the forests, and all the fowls of the mountains, are his, *Ps.* l. 10, 11. Their disbelief of God's power was so much the worse, in that they did at the same time own that he had done as much as that came to; ver. 20, "Behold, he smote the rock that waters gushed out," which they and their cattle drunk of. And whether is easier to furnish a table in the wilderness, which a rich man can do, or to fetch water out of a rock, which the greatest potentate on the earth cannot do? Never did unbelief, though always unreasonable, ask so absurd a question; Can he that melted down a rock into streams of water give bread also? Or, Can he that has given bread provide flesh also? Is any thing too hard for Omnipotence? When once the ordinary powers of nature are exceeded, God has made bare his arm, and we must conclude nothing is impossible with him. Be it never so great a thing that we ask, it becomes us to own, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst."

3. God justly resented the provocation, and was much displeased with them; ver. 21, "The Lord heard this, and was wroth." Note, God is a witness to all

our murmurings and distrusts; he hears them and is much displeased with them. "A fire was kindled" for this "against Jacob, the fire of the Lord burnt among them," *Num.* xi. 1. Or, it may be understood of the fire of God's anger which came up against Israel. To unbelievers our God is himself a consuming fire. And those that will not believe the power of God's mercy shall feel the power of his indignation, and be made to confess that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Now here we are told,

1st. Why God thus resented the provocation, ver. 4. Because by this it appeared that they believed not in God, they did not give credit to the revelation he had made of himself to them, for they durst not commit themselves to him, nor venture themselves with him; they trusted not in the salvation he had begun to work for them; for then they would not thus have questioned its progress. Those cannot be said to trust in God's salvation as their felicity at last who cannot find in their hearts to trust in his providence for food convenient in the way to it. And that which aggravated their unbelief was, the experience they had had of the power and goodness of God, ver. 23—25. He had given them undeniable proofs of his power, not only on earth beneath, but in heaven above; for "he commanded the clouds from above," as one that had created them and commanded them into being; he made what use he pleased of them. Ordinarily by their showers they contribute to the earth's producing corn; but now, when God so commanded them, they showered down corn themselves, which is therefore called here, the corn of heaven; for heaven can do the work without the earth, but not the earth without heaven. God, who has the key of the clouds, opened the doors of heaven; that is more than opening the windows, which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, *Mal.* iii. 10. To all that by faith and prayer ask, seek, and knock, these doors shall at any time be opened, for the God of heaven is rich in mercy to all that call upon him; he not only keeps a good house, but keeps open house. Justly might God take it ill they should distrust him, when he had been so very kind to them, that he "had rained down manna upon them to eat," substantial food daily, duly, enough for all, enough for each; "Man did eat angels' food," such as angels, if they had occasion for food, would eat and be thankful for; or rather, such as was given by the ministry of angels, and (as the Chaldee reads it) 'descended from the dwelling of angels.' 'Every one,' even the least child in Israel, 'did eat the bread of the mighty,' (so the margin reads it;) the weakest stomach could digest it, and yet it was so nourishing, that it was strong meat for strong men. And though the provision was so good, yet they were not stinted, nor ever reduced to short allowance; for He "sent them meat to the full;" if they gathered little it was their own fault, and yet even then they had no lack, *Ex.* xvi. 18. The daily provision God makes for us, and has made ever since we came into the world, though it has not so much of miracle as this, has no less of mercy, and is therefore a great aggravation of our distrust of God.

2nd. How he expressed his resentment of the provocation, not in denying them what they so inordinately lusted after, but in granting it to them. *First.* Did they question his power? he soon gave them a sensible conviction that he could "furnish a table in the wilderness." Though the winds seem to blow where they list, yet when he pleased he could make them his caterer to fetch in provisions, ver. 26. He caused an east wind to blow, and a south wind, either a south-east wind or an east wind first, to bring in the quails from that quarter, and then a south wind to bring in more from that quarter; so that he rained flesh upon them, and that of the most delicate sort; not butcher's meat, but wild fowl, and abundance of it, as dust, as the sand of the sea, ver. 27. So that the meanest Israelite might have his belly full of it, and it cost them nothing, no, not the pains of fetching it from the mountains, for "he let it fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitation," ver. 28. We have the story *Num.* xi. 31, 32. See how good God is, even to the evil and unthankful, and wonder that his goodness doth not overcome their badness. See what little reason we have to judge of God's love by such gifts of his bounty as these. Dainty bits are no tokens of his peculiar favour. Christ gave dry bread to the disciples he loved, but a sop dipped in the sauce to Judas that betrayed him. *Secondly.* Did they defy his justice, and boast that they had gained their point? he made them pay dear for their quails; for, though he "gave them their own desire, they were not estranged from their lust," ver. 29, 30; that is, their appetite was insatiable, they were well filled, and yet they were not satisfied; for they knew not what they would have. Such is the nature of lust, it is content with nothing; and the more it is humoured the more humoursome it grows. They that indulge their lust will never be estranged from it. Or, it intimates that God's liberality did not make them ashamed of their ungrateful lustings, as it would have done if they had had any sense of honour. But what came of it? While "the meat was yet in their mouth," rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, "the wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them," ver. 31, those that were most luxurious, and most daring: see *Num.* xi. 33, 34. They were fed as sheep for the slaughter. The butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites that did eat moderately of the quails, and were never the worse; for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust. Let epicures and sensualists here read their doom. They who make a god of their belly, their end is destruction, *Phil.* iii. 19. "The prosperity of fools shall destroy them," and their ruin will be the greater.

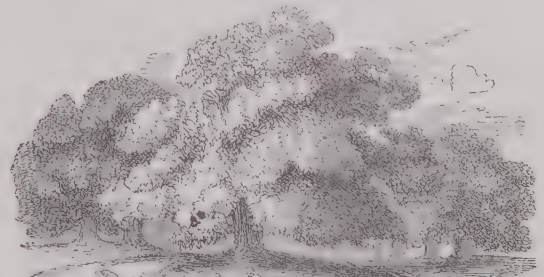
4. The judgments of God upon them did not reform them, nor attain the end, no more than his mercies; ver. 32, "For all this they sinned still," they murmured and quarrelled with God and Moses as much as ever. Though God "was wrath and smote them, yet they went on frowardly in the way of their heart," *Isa.* lvii. 17; "they believed not for his wondrous works." Though his works of justice were as wondrous and as great proofs of his power as his works of mercy, yet they were not wrought upon by them to fear God, nor convinced how much it was their interest to make him their friend. Those hearts are hard indeed that will neither be melted by the mercies of God nor broken by his judgments.

5. They persisting in their sins, God proceeded in his judgments, but they were judgments of another nature, which wrought not suddenly, but slowly. He punished them, not now with such acute diseases as that was which "slew the fattest of them," but a lingering, chronical distemper; ver. 33, "Therefore their days did he consume in vanity" in the wilderness, "and their years in trouble." By an irreversible doom they were condemned to wear out thirty-eight tedious years in the wilderness, which, indeed, were consumed in vanity; for in all those years there was not a step taken nearer Canaan, but they were turned back again, and wandered to and fro as in a labyrinth, nor one stroke struck towards the conquest of it; and not only in vanity, but in trouble, for their carcasses were condemned to fall in the wilderness, and there they all perished but Caleb and Joshua. Note, Those that sin still must expect to be in trouble still. And the reason why we spend our days in so much vanity and trouble, why we live with so little comfort, and to so little purpose, is, because we do not live by faith.

6. Under these rebukes they professed repentance, but they were not cordial and sincere in it. 1st. Their profession was plausible enough; ver. 34, 35, "When he slew them," or condemned them to be slain, "then they sought him," they confessed their fault, and begged his pardon. When some were slain, others in a fright cried to God for mercy, and promised they would reform and be very good; then "they returned to God, and inquired early after him." So one would take them to be such as desired to find him. And they pretended to do this because, however they had forgotten it formerly, now "they remembered that God was their rock," and therefore, now they needed him, they would fly to him, and take shelter in him; and that "the high God was their Redeemer," that brought them out of Egypt, and to whom therefore they might come with boldness. Afflictions are sent to put us in mind of God as our Rock and our Redeemer; for in prosperity we are apt to forget him. 2nd. They were not sincere in this profession; ver. 36, 37, "They did but flatter him with their mouth," as if they thought by fair speeches to prevail with him to revoke the sentence, and remove the judgment, with a secret intention to break their word when the danger was over; they did not "return to God with their whole heart, but feignedly," *Jer.* iii. 10. All their professions, prayers, and promises, were extorted by the rack. It was plain they did not mean as they said, for they did not stick to it; they thawed in the sun, but froze in the shade; they did but "lie to God with their tongues, for their heart was not with him," was not right with him, as appeared by the issue, for "they were not stedfast in his covenant." They were not sincere in their reformation, for they were not constant; and by thinking thus to impose upon a heart-searching God they really put as great an affront upon him as by any of their reflections.

7. God hereupon in pity to them put a stop to the judgments which were threatened and in part executed; ver. 38, 39, "But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity." One would think this counterfeit repentance should have filled up the measure of their iniquity. What could be more provoking than to lie thus to the holy God? than thus to keep back part of the price, the chief part, *Acts* v. 3. And "yet he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity" thus far, that he did not destroy them, and cut them off from being a people, as justly he might have done; but spared their lives till they had reared another generation which should enter into the promised land. "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it," *Isa.* lxv. 8. "Many a time he turned his anger away," for he is Lord of his anger, "and did not stir up all his wrath," to deal with them as they deserved. And why did he not? Not because their ruin would have been any loss to him, but, 1st. Because he was full of compassion; and when he was going to destroy them his repentings were kindled together, and he said, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel?" *Hos.* xi. 8. 2nd. Because, though they did not rightly remember that he was their Rock, he "remembered that they were but flesh." He considered the corruption of their nature, which inclined them to evil, and was pleased to make that an excuse for his sparing them, though it was really no excuse for their sin: see *Gen.* vi. 3. He considered the weakness and frailty of their nature, and what an easy thing it would be to crush them; they are "as a wind that passeth away and cometh not again." They may soon be taken off, but when they are gone, they are gone irrecoverably, and then what will become of the covenant with Abraham? They are flesh, they are wind, from whence it were easy to argue, they may justly, they may presently, be cut off, and there would be no loss of them. But God argues on the contrary, therefore he will not destroy them; for the true reason is, he is full of compassion.

40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness,
And grieve him in the desert!
41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God,
And limited the Holy One of Israel.
42 They remembered not his hand,
Nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.
43 How he had wrought his signs in Egypt,
And his wonders in the field of Zoan:
44 And had turned their rivers into blood;
And their floods, that they could not drink. [them;
45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured
And frogs, which destroyed them.
46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpiller,
And their labour unto the locust.
47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycomore trees with frost.



SYCAMORE TREES.

48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail,
And their flocks to hot thunderbolts.
49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger,
Wrath, and indignation, and trouble,
By sending evil angels *among them.*
50 He made a way to his anger;

He spared not their soul from death,
But gave their life over to the pestilence;
51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt;
The chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:
52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep,
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not:
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary,
Even to this mountain, *which* his right hand had pur-
55 He cast out the heathen also before them, [chased.
And divided them an inheritance by line,
And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.
56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God,
And kept not his testimonies:
57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers:
They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.
58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places,
And moved him to jealousy with their graven images.
59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth,
And greatly abhorred Israel:
60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh,
The tent *which* he placed among men;
61 And delivered his strength into captivity,
And his glory into the enemy's hand.
62 He gave his people over also unto the sword;
And was wroth with his inheritance.
63 The fire consumed their young men;
And their maidens were not given to marriage
64 Their priests fell by the sword;
And their widows made no lamentation.
65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep,
And like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.
66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts:
He put them to a perpetual reproach.
67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph,
And chose not the tribe of Ephraim:
68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
The mount Zion which he loved.
69 And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*,
Like the earth which he hath established for ever.
70 He chose David also his servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds:
71 From following the ewes great with young
He brought him to feed Jacob his people,
And Israel his inheritance.
72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart;
And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands

CARAVAN IN THE DESERT.

The matter and scope of this paragraph is the same with the former, shewing what great mercies God had bestowed upon Israel, how provoking they had been, what judgments he had brought upon them for their sins, and yet how in judgment he remembered mercy at last. Let not those that receive mercy from God be thereby emboldened to sin; for the mercies they receive will aggravate their sin, and hasten the punishment of it. Yet let not those that are under Divine rebukes for sin be discouraged from repentance; for their punishments are means of repentance, and shall not prevent the mercy God has yet in store for them. Observe,

First. The sins of Israel in the wilderness again reflected on, because written for our admonition; ver. 40, 41, "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness." Not once, or twice, but many a time; and the repetition of the provocation was a great aggravation of it, as well as the place, ver. 17. God kept an account how oft they provoked him, though they did not; *Num.* xiv. 22, "They have tempted me these ten times." By provoking him they did not so much anger him as grieve him; for he looked upon them as his children, "Israel is my son, my firstborn," and the undutiful, disrespectful carriage of children doth more grieve than anger the tender parents; they lay it to heart, and take it unkindly, *Isa.* i. 2. They grieved him, because they put him under a necessity of afflicting them; which he did not willingly. After they had humbled themselves before him, they "turned back and tempted God," as before, "and limited the Holy One of Israel," prescribing to him what proofs he should give of his power and presence with them, and what methods he should take in leading them, and providing for them. They limited him to their way, and their time, as if he did not observe that they quarrelled with him. It is presumption for us to "limit the Holy One of Israel;" for, being the Holy One, he will do what is most for his own glory; and being the Holy One of Israel, he will do what is most for their good; and we both impeach his wisdom and betray our own pride and folly if we go about to prescribe to him. That which occasioned their limiting God for the future was their forgetting his former favours; ver. 42, "They remembered not his hand," how strong it is, and how it had been stretched out for them, nor "the day when he delivered them from the enemy;" Pharaoh, that great enemy that sought their ruin. There are some days made remarkable by signal deliverances, which ought never to be forgotten; for the remembrance of them would encourage us in our greatest straits.

Secondly. The mercies of God to Israel, which they were unmindful of when they tempted God, and limited him, and this catalogue of the works of wonder which God wrought for them begins higher, and is carried down farther, than that before, ver. 12, &c.

1. This begins with their deliverance out of Egypt, and the plagues with which God compelled the Egyptians to let them go. These were the signs God wrought in Egypt: ver. 43, "the wonders he wrought in the field of Zoan," that is, in the country of Zoan, as we say, *in agro N.*, meaning in such a country.

1st. Divers of the plagues of Egypt are here instanced in, which speak aloud the power of God, his favours to Israel, as well as terror to his and their enemies. As, *First.* The turning the waters into blood. They had made themselves drunk with the blood of God's people, even the infants, and now God gave them blood to drink, for they were worthy, ver. 44. *Secondly.* The flies and frogs which infested them, mixtures of insects in swarms, in shoals, which devoured them, which destroyed them, ver. 45. For God can make the weakest and most despicable animals instruments of his wrath when he pleaseth; what they want in strength may be made up in number. *Thirdly.* The plague of locusts, which devoured their increase, and that which they had laboured for, ver. 46. They are called God's great army, *Joel* ii. 25. *Fourthly.* The hail, which destroyed their trees, especially their vines, the weakest of trees, ver. 47, and their cattle, especially their flocks of sheep, the weakest of their cattle, which were killed with hot thunderbolts, ver. 48; and the frost or congealed rain (as the word signifies) was so violent, that it destroyed even the sycamore trees. *Fifthly.* The death of the firstborn was the last and sorest of the plagues of Egypt, and that which perfected the deliverance of Israel. It was first in intention, *Ex.* iv. 23, but last in execution; for, if gentler methods would have done the work, this had been prevented. But it is here largely described, ver. 49—51. *1st.* The anger of God was the cause of it. Wrath was now come upon the Egyptians to the uttermost. Pharaoh's heart having been often hardened, after lesser judgments had softened it, God now stirred up all his wrath; for he cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, anger in the highest degree; wrath and indignation the cause, and trouble (tribulation and anguish, *Rom.* ii. 8, 9) the effect. This from on high he cast upon them, and did not spare, and they could not flee out of his hands, *Job* xxvii. 22. "He made a way," or, as the word is, 'He weighed a path' "to his anger;" he did not cast it upon them uncertainly, but by weight. His anger was weighed with the greatest exactness in the balances of justice; for in his greatest displeasure he never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures. The path of his anger is always weighed. *2nd.* The angels of God were the instruments employed in this execution. He sent evil spirits among them; not evil in their own nature, but in respect of the errand upon which they were sent. They were destroying angels, or angels of punishment, which passed through all the land of Egypt, with orders according to the weighed paths of God's anger, not to kill all, but the firstborn only. Good angels become evil angels to sinners. They that make the holy God their enemy, let them never expect the holy angels to be their friends. *3rd.* The execution itself was very severe. "He spared not their soul from death," but suffered death to ride in triumph among them, and "gave their life over to the pestilence," which cut the thread of life off immediately; for "he smote all the firstborn in Egypt," ver. 51, "the chief of their strength," the hopes of their respective families. Children are the parents' strength, and the firstborn the chief of their strength. Thus, because Israel was precious in God's sight, he gave men for them, and people for their life, *Isa.* xliii. 4.

2nd. By these plagues on the Egyptians, "God made" a way for "his own people to go forth like sheep;" distinguishing between them and the Egyptians, "as the shepherd divideth between the sheep and the goats," having set his own mark on these sheep, by the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their doorposts. "He made them go forth like sheep," not knowing whither they went, "and guided them in the wilderness," like as a shepherd guides his flock, with all possible care and tenderness; ver. 52, "He led them on safely," though in dangerous paths, so that "they feared not," that is, they did not need to fear. They were indeed frightened at the Red sea, *Ex.* xiv. 10, but that was said to them, and done for them, which effectually silenced their fears: "but the sea overwhelmed their enemies" that ventured to pursue them into it, ver. 53. It was a lane to them, but a grave to their persecutors.

2. It is carried down as far as their settlement in Canaan; ver. 54, "He brought them to the border of his sanctuary," that is, to that land, in the midst of which he set up his sanctuary, which was as it were the centre and metropolis, the crown and glory of it. That is a happy land which is the border of God's sanctuary; it was the happiness of that land, that there God was

known, and there was his sanctuary and dwelling-place, *Ps.* lxxvi. 1, 2. The whole land in general, and Zion in particular, was "the mountain which his right hand had purchased," which by his own power he had set apart for himself: see *Ps.* xliv. 3. He "made them to ride on the high places of the earth," *Isa.* lviii. 14; *Deu.* xxxii. 13. They found the Canaanites in the full and quiet possession of that land, but God "cast out the heathen before them," not only took away their title to it, as the Lord of the whole earth, but himself executed the judgment given against them, and as Lord of hosts turned them out of it, and made his people "Israel tread upon their high places;" dividing each tribe an inheritance by line, and making them to dwell in the houses of those whom they had destroyed. God could have turned the uninhabited, uncultivated wilderness (which perhaps was almost as much compass of ground as Canaan) into fruitful soil, and have planted them there; but the land he designed them was to be a type of heaven, and therefore must be the glory of all lands; it must likewise be fought for, for "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence."

Thirdly. The sins of Israel after they were settled in Canaan, ver. 56—58. The children were like their fathers, and brought their old corruptions into their new habitations; though God had done so much for them, yet "they tempted and provoked the most high God still." He gave them his testimonies, but they did not keep them; they began very promisingly, but they turned back; gave God good words, but dealt unfaithfully; and were like a deceitful bow, which seemed likely to send the arrow to the mark, but when it is drawn, breaks, and drops the arrow at the archer's foot, or, perhaps makes it recoil in his face. There was no hold of them, nor any confidence to be put in their promises or professions. They seemed sometimes devoted to God, but they presently turned aside, and "provoked him to anger with their high places, and their graven images." Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset them, and which, though they often professed their repentance for, they as often relapsed into. It was spiritual adultery either to worship idols, or to worship God by images, as if he had been an idol; and therefore by it they are said to move him to jealousy, *Deu.* xxxii. 16, 21.

Fourthly. The judgments God brought upon them for these sins. Their place in Canaan would no more secure them in a sinful way than their descent from Israel; "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you," *Am.* iii. 2. Idolatry is winked at among the Gentiles, but not in Israel.

1. God was displeased with them; ver. 59, "When God heard this," when he heard the cry of their iniquity which came up before him, "he was wroth," he took it very heinously, as well he might, "and he greatly abhorred Israel," whom he had greatly loved and delighted in. They that had been the people of his choice became the generation of his wrath. Presumptuous sins, idolatries especially, render even Israelites odious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice.

2. He deserted his tabernacle among them, and removed the defence which was upon that glory, ver. 60. God never leaves us till we leave him, never withdraws till we have driven him from us. His name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God, and therefore no marvel if a people whom he had betrothed to himself be loathed and rejected, and he refuse to cohabit with them any longer, when they have embraced the bosom of a stranger. The tabernacle at Shiloh was the tent God had placed among men, in which God would in very deed dwell with men upon earth; but when his people treacherously forsook it, he justly forsook it, and then all its glory departed. Israel has small joy of the tabernacle without the presence of God in it.

3. He gave up all into the hands of the enemy. Those whom God forsakes become an easy prey to the destroyer. The Philistines are sworn enemies to the Israel of God, and no less so to the God of Israel, and yet God will make use of them to be a scourge to his people. 1st. God permits them to take the ark prisoner, and carry it off as a trophy of their victory, to shew that he had not only forsaken the tabernacle, but even the ark itself, which shall now be no longer a token of his presence; ver. 61, "He delivered his strength into captivity," as if it had been weakened and overcome, and his glory fell under the disgrace of being abandoned into the enemies' hands. We have the story 1 *Sam.* iv. 11. When the ark is become as a stranger among Israelites, no marvel if it soon be made a prisoner among Philistines. 2nd. He suffers the armies of Israel to be routed by the Philistines; ver. 62, 63, "He gave his people over unto the sword," to the sword of his own justice, and of the enemies' rage, for "he was wroth with his inheritance;" and that wrath of his was "the fire which consumed their young men," in the prime of their time, by the sword or sickness, and made such a devastation of them, that "their maidens were not praised," that is, "were not given in marriage," which is honourable in all; because there were no young men for them to be given to; and because the distresses and calamities of Israel were so many and great, that the joys of marriage solemnities were judged unseasonable; and it was said, "Blessed is the womb that beareth not." General destructions produce a scarcity of men; *Isa.* xiii. 12, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold," so that "seven women shall take hold of one man," *Isa.* iv. 1: compare *ch.* iii. 25. Yet this was not the worst: 3rd. Even their priests that attended the ark fell by the sword, Hophni and Phinehas. Justly they fell, for they "made themselves vile," and were "sinners before the Lord exceedingly;" and their priesthood was so far from being their protection, that it aggravated their sin, and hastened their fall; and justly did they fall by the sword, because they exposed themselves in the field of battle without call or warrant; and we throw ourselves out of God's protection when we go out of our place and out of the way of our duty. When the priests fell "their widows made no lamentation," ver. 64. All the ceremonies of mourning were lost and buried in substantial grief. The widow of Phinehas, instead of lamenting her husband's death, died herself, when she had called her son Ichabod, 1 *Sam.* iv. 19.

Fifthly. God's return in mercy to them, and his gracious appearances for them after this. We read not of their repentance and return to God, but God was grieved for the miseries of Israel, *Jud.* x. 16, and concerned for his own honour, "fearing the wrath of the enemy, lest they should behave themselves strangely," *Deu.* xxxii. 27; and therefore, "then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine," ver. 65, not only like one that is raised out of sleep, and recovers himself from the slumber, which by drinking he was overcome with, who then regardeth that which before he seemed wholly to neglect, and to be mindless of; but like one that is refreshed with sleep, and whose heart is made glad by the sober and moderate use of wine, and is therefore the more lively and vigorous, and fit for business. When God had delivered the ark of his strength into captivity, as one jealous of his honour, he soon put forth the arm of his strength to rescue it; stirred up his strength to do great things for his people.

1. He plagued the Philistines that held the ark in captivity, ver. 66. He smote them with emerods in the hinder parts, wounded them behind, as if they were fleeing from him, even then when they thought themselves more than conquerors. He put them to reproach, and they themselves helped to make it a perpetual reproach by the golden images of their emerods, which they returned with the ark for a trespass offering, 1 *Sam.* vi. 5, to remain *in perpetuam rei memoriam*,—'as a perpetual memorial.' Note, Sooner or later God will glorify himself by putting disgrace upon his enemies, then when they are most elevated with their successes.

2. He provided a new settlement for his ark, after it had been some months in captivity, and some years in obscurity. He did indeed refuse the tabernacle of Joseph, he never sent it back to Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, ver. 67. The ruins of that place were standing monuments of Divine justice, "Go see what I did to Shiloh," *Jer.* vii. 12. But he did not wholly take away the glory from Israel; the moving of the ark is not the removing of it; Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not. God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Zion, as, long after, the fall of the Jews was the riches of the Gentiles, *Rom.* xi. 12. When God chose not the tribe of Ephraim, of which tribe Joshua was, he chose the tribe of Judah, ver. 68, because of that tribe Jesus was to be, who is greater than Joshua. Kirjath-jearim, the place to which the ark was brought after its rescue out of the hands of the Philistines, was in the tribe of Judah. There it took possession of that tribe; but thence it was removed to Zion, "that mount Zion which he loved," ver. 61, which was "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth;" there it was that he "built his sanctuary like high palaces, and like the earth." David indeed erected only a tent for the ark; but a temple was then designed and prepared for, and finished by his son. And that was, 1st. A very stately place. It was built like the palaces of princes, and the great men of the earth; nay, it excelled them all in splendour and magnificence. Solomon built it, and yet here it is said God built it, for his father had taught him, perhaps with reference to this undertaking, that "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it," *Ps.* cxxvii. 1, which is a psalm for Solomon. 2nd. A very stable place, like the earth. Though not to continue as long as the earth, yet while it was to continue it was as firm as the earth, which God upholds by the word of his power, and it was not finally destroyed till the gospel temple was erected, which is to continue as long as the sun and moon endure, *Ps.* lxxxix. 36, 37, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

3. He set a good government over them; a monarchy, and a monarch after his own heart. "He chose David his servant" out of all the thousands of Israel, and put the sceptre into his hand, out of whose loins Christ was to come, and who was to be a type of him, ver. 70. Concerning David observe here,

1st. The meanness of his beginning. His extraction indeed was great, for he descended from the prince of the tribe of Judah; but his education was poor. He was bred not a scholar, not a soldier, but a shepherd; he was taken from the sheepfolds, as Moses was; for God delights to put honour upon the humble and diligent, to raise the poor out of the dust, and to set them among princes; and sometimes finds those most fit for public action that have spent the beginning of their time in solitude and contemplation. The Son of David was upbraided with the obscurity of his original, "Is not this the carpenter?" David was taken—he doth not say from leading the rams, but—from following the ewes, especially those great with young, which intimated that of all the good properties of a shepherd, he was most remarkable for his tenderness and compassion to those of his flock that most needed it. This temper of mind fitted him for government; and made him a type of Christ, who when he feeds his flock like a shepherd, doth with a particular care "gently lead those that are with young," *Isa.* xl. 11.

2nd. The greatness of his advancement. God preferred him "to feed Jacob his people," ver. 71. It was a great honour God put upon him in advancing him to be a king, especially to be king over Jacob and Israel, God's peculiar people, near and dear to him; but withal it was a great trust reposed in him when he was charged with the conduct of those that were God's own inheritance. God advanced him to the throne that he might feed them, not that he might feed himself; that he might do good, not that he might make his family great. It is the charge given to all the under shepherds, both magistrates and ministers, that they feed the flock of God.

3rd. The happiness of his management. David having so great a trust put into his hands, obtained mercy of the Lord to be found both skilful and faithful in the discharge of it; ver. 72, "So he fed them;" he ruled them, and taught them, guided and protected them, *First.* Very honestly; he did it "according to the integrity of his heart," aiming at nothing else but the glory of God, and the good of the people committed to his charge. The principles of his religion were the maxims of his government, which he administered, not with carnal policy, but with godly sincerity, by the grace of God. In every thing he did he meant well, and had no by-end in view. *Secondly.* Very discreetly. He did it "by the skilfulness of his hands;" he was not only very sincere in what he designed, but very prudent in what he did, and chose out the most proper means in pursuit of his end; for his God did instruct him to discretion. Happy the people that are under such a government; and with good reason doth the psalmist make this the finishing crowning instance of God's favour to Israel, for David was a type of Christ, the great and good Shepherd, who was humbled first, and then exalted, and of whom it was foretold, that he should be filled with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and should judge and reprove with equity, *Isa.* xi. 3, 4. On the integrity of his heart, and the skilfulness of his hands, all his subjects may entirely rely, and of the increase of his government and people there shall be no end.

PSALM LXXIX.

This psalm, if penned with any particular event in view, is, with most probability, made to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the woful havoc made of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar. It is set to the same tune, as I may say, with the *Lamentations* of Jeremiah, and that weeping prophet borrows two verses out of it, (ver. 6, 7,) and makes use of them in his prayer, *Jer.* ii. 25. Some think it was penned long before by the spirit of prophecy, prepared for the use of the church in that cloudy and dark day; others, that it was penned then by the spirit of prayer, either by a prophet named Asaph, or some other prophet for the sons of Asaph. Whatever the particular occasion was, we have here, I. A representation of the very deplorable condition that the people of God were in at this time, ver. 1—5. II. A petition to God for succour and relief, that their enemies might be reckoned with, ver. 6, 7, 10, 12; that their sins might be pardoned, ver. 8, 9; and that they might be delivered, ver. 11. III. A plea taken from the readiness of his people to praise him, ver. 13. In times of the church's peace and prosperity, this psalm may, in the singing of it, give us occasion to bless God that we are not thus trampled on and insulted; but it is especially seasonable in a day of treading down and perplexity, for the exciting of our desires towards God, and the encouragement of our faith in him as the church's patron.

A Psalm of Asaph.

O GOD, the heathen are come into thine inheritance;
Thy holy temple have they defiled;
They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.
2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given

To be meat unto the fowls of the heaven,
The flesh of thy saints
Unto the beasts of the earth. [salem;
3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jeru-
And *there was* none to bury *them*.
4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.
5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever?
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

We have here a sad complaint exhibited in the court of heaven. The world is full of complaints, and so is the church too, for it not only suffers with it, but from it, as a lily among thorns. God is complained to; whither should children go with their grievances but to their father, to such a father as is able and willing to help? The heathen are complained of, who being themselves aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were sworn enemies to it. Though they knew not God, nor owned him, yet God having them in a chain, the church very fitly appeals to him against them, for he is King of nations, to overrule them, to judge among the heathen, and King of saints, to favour and protect them.

First. They complain here of the anger of their enemies, and the outrageous fury of the oppressor, exerted,

1. Against places, ver. 1. They did all the mischief they could, 1st. To the holy land; they invaded that, and made inroads into it; "The heathen are come into thine inheritance," to plunder that, and lay it waste. Canaan was dearer to the pious Israelites, as it was God's inheritance, than as it was their own; as it was the land in which God was known, and his name was great, than as it was the land in which they were bred and born, and which they and their ancestors had been long in possession of. Note, Injuries done to religion should grieve us more than even those done to common right, nay, to our own right. We should better bear to see our own inheritance wasted, than God's inheritance. This psalmist had mentioned it in the foregoing psalm as an instance of God's great favour to Israel, that he had cast out the heathen before them, *Ps.* lxxviii. 55. But see what a change sin made; now the heathen are suffered to pour in upon them. 2nd. To the holy city; "they have laid Jerusalem on heaps," heaps of rubbish, such heaps as are raised over graves, (so some). The inhabitants were buried in the ruins of their own houses, and their dwelling-places became their sepulchres, their long homes. 3rd. To the holy house; that sanctuary which God had built like high palaces, and which was thought to be established as the earth, was now laid level with the ground. "Thy holy temple have they defiled," by entering into it and laying it waste. God's own people had defiled it by their sins, and therefore God suffered their enemies to defile it by their insolence.

2. Against persons, against the bodies of God's people, and farther their malice could not reach. 1st. They were prodigal of their blood, and killed them without mercy; their eye did not spare, nor did they give any quarter; ver. 3, "Their blood have they shed like water," wherever they met with them, round about Jerusalem, in all the avenues to the city; whoever went out or came in was waited for of the sword. Abundance of human blood was shed, so that the channels of water ran with blood: and they did it with no more reluctancy or regret than if they had spilled so much water; little thinking that every drop of it will be reckoned for in the day when "God shall make inquisition for blood." 2nd. They were abusive to their dead bodies; when they had killed them they would let none bury them. Nay, those that were buried, even the "dead bodies of God's servants, the flesh of his saints," whose names and memories they had a particular spite at, they digged up again, and "gave them to be meat to the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth;" or at least they left those so exposed whom they slew; they hung them in chains, which was in a particular manner grievous to the Jews to see, because God had given them an express law against this, as a barbarous thing, *Deu.* xxi. 23. This inhuman usage of Christ's witnesses is foretold *Rev.* xi. 9, and thus even the dead bodies were witnesses against their persecutors. This is mentioned (saith Austin, *De Civ. Dei*, lib. i. cap. 12,) not as an instance of the misery of the persecuted,—for the bodies of the saints shall rise in glory, however they became meat to the birds and the fowls,—but of the malice of their persecutors.

3. Against their names; ver. 4, "We" that survive "are become a reproach to our neighbours," they all study to abuse us, and load us with contempt, and represent us as ridiculous, or odious, or both, upbraiding us with our sins and with our sufferings, or giving the lie to our relation to God, and expectations from him; so that we are become "a scorn and derision to them that are round about us." If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it; and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the Gospel Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were counted as the offscouring of all things.

Secondly. They wonder more at God's anger, ver. 5. This they discern in the anger of their neighbours, and this they complain most of, "How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry?" Shall it be "for ever?" This intimates that they desired no more but that God would be reconciled to them, that his anger might be turned away, and then the remainder of men's wrath would be restrained. Note, Those who desire God's favour as better than life, cannot but dread and deprecate his wrath as worse than death.

6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not
known thee,
And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy
7 For they have devoured Jacob, [name.
And laid waste his dwelling place.
8 O remember not against us former iniquities:
Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us:
For we are brought very low.
9 Help us, O God of our salvation,
For the glory of thy name:
And deliver us, and purge away our sins,
For thy name's sake.
10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God?
Let him be known among the heathen in our sight
By the revenging of the blood of thy servants *which is*
11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; [shed.
According to the greatness of thy power
Preserve thou those that are appointed to die;
12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their
bosom
Their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O
13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture [Lord.
Will give thee thanks for ever:
We will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

The petitions here put up to God, are very suitable to the present distresses of the church, and they have pleas to enforce them interwoven with them, taken mostly from God's honour.

First. They pray that God would so turn away his anger from them, as to turn it upon those that persecuted and abused them; ver. 6, "Pour out thy wrath," the full vials of it, "upon the heathen;" let them wring out the dregs of it and drink them. This prayer is in effect a prophecy, in which "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Observe here, 1. The character of those he prays against; they are such as have not known God, nor called upon his name. And the reason why men do not call upon God is because they do not know him, how able and willing he is to help them. They that persist in ignorance of God, and neglect of prayer, are the ungodly, who live without God in the world. There are kingdoms that know not God, and obey not the Gospel, but neither their multitude, nor their force united, will secure them from his just judgments. 2. Their crime; "They have devoured Jacob," ver. 7. And that is crime enough in the account of Him who reckons those that touch his people, touch the apple of his eye. They have not only disturbed, but devoured Jacob; not only encroached upon his dwelling-place, the land of Canaan, but have laid it waste by plundering and depopulating it. 3. Their condemnation. "Pour out thy wrath" upon them; do not only restrain them from doing farther mischief, but reckon with them for the mischief they have done.

Secondly. They pray for the pardon of sin, which they own to be the procuring cause of all their calamities. How unrighteous soever men were, God was righteous in permitting them to do what they did. They pray,

1. That God would not remember against them their former iniquities, ver. 8. Either their own former iniquities, that now they were old they might not be made to possess the iniquities of their youth. Or, the former iniquities of their people, the sins of their ancestors. In the captivity of Babylon former iniquities were brought to account; but God promiseth not again to do so, *Jer.* xxxi. 29, 30; and so they pray, Remember not against us our first sins; which some make to look as far back as the golden calf, because that God said, "In the day when I visit, I will visit for this sin" of theirs "upon them," *Ex.* xxxii. 34. If the children by repentance and reformation cut off the entail of the parents' sin, they may in faith pray that God will not remember them against them. When God pardons sin he blots it out, and remembers it no more.

2. That he would purge away their sins they had been lately guilty of, by the guilt of which their minds and consciences had been defiled. "Deliver us, and purge away our sins," ver. 9. Then deliverances from trouble are granted in love, and are mercies indeed, when they are grounded upon the pardon of sin, and flow from that; we should therefore be more earnest with God in prayer for the removal of our sins, than for the removal of our afflictions; and the pardon of them is the foundation and sweetness of our deliverances.

Thirdly. They pray that God would work deliverance and salvation for them, and bring their troubles to a good end, and that speedily; "Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us," ver. 8. They had no hopes but from God's mercies, his tender mercies; their case was so deplorable that they looked upon themselves as the proper objects of Divine compassion; and so near to desperate, that unless Divine mercy did speedily interpose to prevent their ruin, they were undone. This whets their importunity, "Lord, help us, Lord, deliver us;" help us under our troubles, that we may bear them well; help us out of our troubles, that the spirit may not fail. Deliver us from sin, from sinking. Three things they plead: 1. The great distress they were reduced to; "We are brought very low;" and being low, shall be lost, if thou help us not. The lower we are brought, the more need we have of help from heaven, and the more will Divine power be magnified in raising us up. 2. Their dependence upon him; "Thou art the God of our salvation," who alone canst help, "Salvation belongeth to the Lord," and whom we expect help from; for "in the Lord alone is the salvation of his people." They who make God the God of their salvation shall find him so. 3. The interest of his own honour in their case. They plead no merit of theirs, they pretend to none; but, "Help us for the glory of thy name;" pardon us "for thy name's sake." The best encouragements in prayer are those that are taken from God only, and those things whereby he has made himself known. Two things are insinuated in this plea: 1st. That God's name and honour would be greatly injured if he did not deliver them; for those that derided them blasphemed God, as if he were weak and could not help them, or withdrawn, and would not; therefore they plead, ver. 10, "Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God?" He has forsaken them, and forgotten them; and this they get by worshipping a God whom they cannot see. (*Nil præter nubes et cœli numen adorant,*—'They adore no other divinity than the clouds and the sky.'—*Juv.*) That which was their praise, that they served a God that is every where, was now turned to their reproach and his too, that they served a God that is nowhere. Lord, say they, make it to appear that thou art, by making it to appear that thou art with us, and for us; that when we are asked, "Where is your God?" we may be able to say, He is nigh unto us in all that which we call upon him for; and you see he is so by what he doth for us. 2nd. That God's name and honour would be greatly advanced if he did deliver them; his mercy would be glorified in delivering them that were so miserable and helpless. By making bare his everlasting arm on their behalf, he would make unto himself an everlasting name; and their deliverance would be a type and figure of the great salvation which, in the fulness of time, Messiah the Prince would work out, to the glory of God's name.

Fourthly. They pray that God would avenge them on their adversaries, 1. For their cruelty and barbarity, ver. 10. Let the avenging of our blood (according to the ancient law, *Gen.* vi. 6,) be known among the heathen, let them be made sensible that what judgments are brought upon them are punishments of the wrong they have done to us, and let this be in our sight; and by

this means let God be known among the heathen, as the God to whom vengeance belongs, *Ps.* xciv. 1, and the God that espouseth his people's cause. Those that have intoxicated themselves with the blood of the saints shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. 2. For their insolence and scorn, ver. 12, "render to them their reproach." The indignities which by word and deed they have done to the people of God himself, and his name, let them be repaid to them with interest. The reproach wherewith men have reproached us only, we must leave it to God whether he will render it to them or no, and must pray that he would forgive them; but the reproach wherewith they have blasphemed God himself, we may in faith pray that God would render it sevenfold into their bosoms, so as to strike at their hearts, to humble them, and bring them to repentance. This prayer is a prophecy of the same import with that of Enoch, that God will convince sinners of all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, *Jude* 15, and will return them into their own bosoms by everlasting terrors at the remembrance of them.

Fifthly. They pray that God would find out a way for the rescue of his poor prisoners, especially the condemned prisoners, ver. 11. The case of their brethren that were fallen into the hands of the enemy was very sad; they were kept close prisoners, and because they durst not be heard to bemoan themselves, they vented their griefs in deep and silent sighs. All their breathing was sighing, and so was their praying. They were appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, and had received the sentence of death within themselves. This deplorable case the psalmist recommends, 1. To the Divine pity; "Let their sighs come up before thee," and be thou pleased to take cognizance of their moans. 2. To the Divine power; "According to the greatness of thy arm," which no creature can contest with; "Preserve thou those that are appointed to die" from the death to which they are appointed. Man's extremity is God's opportunity to appear for his people: see 2 *Cor.* i. 8—10.

Sixthly. They promise the returns of praise for the answers of prayer; ver. 13, "So we will give thee thanks for ever." Observe, 1. How they please themselves with their relation to God; though we are oppressed and brought low, yet we are the sheep of thy pasture; not disowned and cast off by thee for all this; "We are thine, save us." 2. How they promise themselves an opportunity of praising God for their deliverance; which they therefore desired, and would bid welcome, because it would furnish them with matter for thanksgiving, and put their hearts in tune for that excellent work, the work of heaven. 3. How they oblige themselves not only to give God thanks at present, but to shew forth his praise unto all generations, that is, to do all they could, both to perpetuate the remembrance of God's favours to them, and to engage their posterity to keep up the work of praise. 4. How they plead this with God; Lord, appear for us against our enemies, for if they get the better, they will blaspheme thee, ver. 12; but if we be delivered we will praise thee. Lord, we are that people of thine, which thou hast formed for thyself, to shew forth thy praise; if we be cut off, whence shall that rent, that tribute, be raised? Note, Those lives that are entirely devoted to God's praise, are assuredly taken under his protection.

PSALM LXXX.

This psalm is much to the same purpose with the next foregoing. Some think it was penned upon occasion of the desolation and captivity of the ten tribes, as the foregoing psalm of the two. But many were the distresses of the Israel of God, many, perhaps, which are not recorded in the sacred history, some whereof might give occasion for the drawing up of this psalm, which is proper to be sung in the day of Jacob's trouble; and if, in singing it, we express a true love to the church, and a hearty concern for its interest, with a firm confidence in God's power to help it out of its greatest distresses, we make melody with our hearts to the Lord. The psalmist here, I. Begs for the tokens of God's presence with them, and favour to them, ver. 1—3. II. He complains of the present rebukes they were under, ver. 4—7. III. He illustrates the present desolations of the church by the comparison of a vine and a vineyard; which had flourished, but was now destroyed, ver. 8—16. IV. He concludes with prayer to God for the preparing of mercy for them, and the preparing of them for mercy, ver. 17—19. This, as many psalms before and after, relate to the public interests of God's Israel, which ought to lie nearer our hearts than any secular interest of our own.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth, A Psalm of Asaph.

GIVE ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock;
Thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth.
2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength,
And come *and* save us.
3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine;
And we shall be saved.
4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?
5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears;
And givest them tears to drink in great measure.
6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours:
And our enemies laugh among themselves.
7 Turn us again, O God of hosts,
And cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

The psalmist here in the name of the church applies himself to God by prayer with reference to the present afflicted state of Israel.

First. He entreats God's favour for them, ver. 1, 2, that is all in all to the sanctuary when it is desolate, and is to be sought in the first place. Observe, 1. How he eyes God in his address; as the Shepherd of Israel, whom he had called the sheep of his pasture, *Ps.* lxxix. 13, under whose conduct and care Israel was, as the sheep under the care and conduct of the shepherd. Christ is the great and good shepherd, to whom we may in faith commit the custody of his sheep that were given to him. He leads Joseph like a flock to the best pastures, and out of the way of danger; if Joseph follow him not as obsequiously as the sheep do the shepherd, it is his own fault. He dwells between the cherubims, where he is ready to receive petitions, and to give directions. The mercy-seat was between the cherubims, and it is very comfortable in prayer to look up to God as sitting on a throne of grace, and that it is so to us is owing to the great propitiation, for the mercy-seat was the propitiatory. 2. What he expects and desires from God. That he would give ear to the cry of their miseries, and of their prayers; that he would shine forth both in his own glory, and in favour and in kindness to his people; that he would shew himself, and smile on them; that he would stir up his strength, that he would excite it, and exert it: it had seemed to slumber, Lord, awaken it; his cause met with great opposition, and the enemies threatened to overpower it, Lord, put forth thy strength so much the more, and come for salvation to us; be to thy people a powerful help, and a present help. Lord, do this before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh; that is, in the sight of all the tribes of Israel, let them see it to their satisfaction. Perhaps these three tribes are named because they were the tribes which formed that squadron of the camp of Israel that in their march through the wilderness followed next after the tabernacle; so that before them the ark of God's strength rose to scatter their enemies.

Secondly. He complains of God's displeasure against them; God was angry, and he dreads that more than any thing, ver. 4. 1. It was great anger: he apprehended that God was angry against the prayer of his people; not only that he was angry notwithstanding their prayers, by which they hoped to turn away his wrath from them, but he was angry with their prayers; though they were his own people that prayed. That God should be angry at the sins of his people, and at the prayers of his enemies, is not strange; but that he should be angry at the prayers of his people, is strange indeed. He not only delayed to answer them, that he often doth in love, but he was displeased at them. If he be really angry at the prayers of his people, we may be sure it is because they ask amiss, *Jas.* iv. 3. They pray, but they do not wrestle in prayer, their ends are not right, or there is some secret sin harboured and indulged in them; they do not lift up pure hands, or with wrath and doubting. But perhaps it is only in their own apprehension; he seems angry with their prayers when really he is not; for thus he will try their patience and perseverance in prayer; as Christ tried the woman of Canaan when he said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." 2. It was anger that had continued a great while. "How long wilt thou be angry?" We have still continued praying, and yet are still under thy frowns.

Now the tokens of God's displeasure, which they had been long under, were both their sorrow and shame. 1st. Their sorrow, ver. 5, "Thou feedest them with the bread of tears." They eat their meat from day to day in tears; this is the vinegar in which they dipped their morsel, *Ps.* xlii. 3. They had tears given them to drink, not now and then a taste of that bitter cup, but in great measure. Note, There are many that spend their time in sorrow, who yet shall spend their eternity in joy. 2nd. It was their shame, ver. 7. God by frowning upon them made them a strife unto their neighbours, each strove which should expose them most; and such a cheap and easy prey were they made to them, that all the strife was who should have the stripping and plundering of them. Their enemies laughed among themselves to see the frights they were in, the straits they were reduced to, and the disappointments they met with. When God is displeased with his people, we must expect to see them in tears, and their enemies in triumph.

Thirdly. He prays earnestly for converting grace in order to their acceptance with God, and their salvation: "Turn us again, O God," ver. 3; "Turn us again, O God of hosts," ver. 7, and then "cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." It is the burthen of the song, for we have it again, ver. 19. They are conscious to themselves that they have gone astray from God and their duty, and have turned aside into sinful ways, and that was it that provoked God to hide his face from them, and to give them up into the hand of their enemies; and therefore they desire to begin their work at the right end; Lord, turn us to thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then, no doubt, thou wouldst return to us in a way of mercy and deliverance. Observe, 1. No salvation but from God's favour; "cause thy face to shine," let us have thy love, and the light of thy countenance, and then we shall be saved. 2. No obtaining favour with God unless we be converted to him. We must turn again to God from the world and the flesh, and then he will cause his face to shine upon us. 3. No conversion to God but by his own grace; we must frame our doings to turn to him, *Hos.* v. 4, and then pray earnestly for his grace, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned;" pleading that gracious promise, *Pr.* i. 23, "Turn you at my reproof, behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you." The prayer here is for a national conversion. In this method we must pray for national mercies, that what is amiss may be amended, and then our grievances would be soon redressed. National holiness would secure national happiness.

8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt:
Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.
9 Thou preparedst *room* before it,
And didst cause it to take deep root,
And it filled the land.
10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it,
And the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.
11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea,
And her branches unto the river.
12 Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges,
So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?
13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it,
And the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

WILD BOARS.

14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts:
Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;

15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted,
And the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.
16 *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down:
They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.
17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,
Upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thy-
18 So will not we go back from thee: [self.
Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.
19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts,
Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

The psalmist is here presenting his suit for the Israel of God, and pressing it home at the throne of grace, pleading with God for mercy and grace for them. The church is here represented as a vine, ver. 8, 14, and a vineyard, ver. 15. The root of this vine is Christ, *Rom.* xi. 28. The branches are believers, *Jno.* xv. 5. The church is like a vine, weak, and needing support; unsightly, and having an unpromising outside, but spreading and fruitful, and its fruit most excellent. The church is a choice and noble vine; we have reason to acknowledge the goodness of God, that he has planted such a vine in the wilderness of this world, and preserved it to this day. Now observe here,

First. How the vine of the Old Testament church was planted at first. It was brought out of Egypt with a high hand, the heathen were cast out of Canaan to make room for it; seven nations to make room for that one. 'Thou didst sweep before it,' so some read ver. 9, to make clear work; the nations were swept away as dirt with the besom of destruction. God, having made room for it and planted it, he caused it to take deep root by a happy establishment of their government both in church and state; which was so firm that, though their neighbours about them oft attempted it, they could not prevail to pluck it up.

Secondly. How it spread and flourished. 1. The land of Canaan itself was fully peopled. At first they were not so numerous as to replenish it, *Ex.* xxiii. 29. But in Solomon's time Judah and Israel were many as the sand of the sea; the land was filled with them, and yet such a fruitful land that it was not overstocked, ver. 10. The hills of Canaan were covered with their shadow, and the branches, though they extend themselves far like those of the vine, yet were not weak like them, but as strong as those of the goodly cedars; Israel not only had abundance of men, but those mighty men of valour. 2. They extended their conquests and dominion to the neighbouring countries; ver. 11, "She sent out her boughs to the sea," the great sea westward, "and her branches to the river," to the river of Egypt southward, the river of Damascus northward, or rather, the river Euphrates eastward, *Gen.* xv. 18. Nebuchadnezzar's greatness is represented by a flourishing tree, *Dan.* iv. 20, 21. But it is observable here concerning this vine, that it is praised for its shadow, its boughs and its branches, but not a word of its fruit, for Israel was an empty vine, *Hos.* x. 1. God came looking for grapes, but behold wild grapes, *Isa.* v. 2. And if a vine do not bring forth fruit, no tree so useless, so worthless, *Eze.* xv. 2, 6.

Thirdly. How it was wasted and ruined. Lord, thou hast done great things for this vine, and why shall it all be undone again? If it were a plant not of God's planting it were not strange to see it rooted up; but shall God desert and abandon that which he himself gave being to? ver. 12, "Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?" There was a good reason for this change in God's way towards them; this noble vine was become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, *Jer.* ii. 21, to the reproach of its great owner; and then no marvel if he took away its hedge, *Isa.* v. 5. Yet God's former favours to this vine are urged as pleas in prayer to God, and improved as encouragements to faith, that for all this God would not wholly cast them off. Observe, 1. The malice and enmity of the Gentile nations against Israel. As soon as ever God broke down their hedges and left them exposed, troops of enemies presently broke in upon them, that waited for an opportunity to destroy them. They that passed by the way had a pluck at them; the boar out of the wood, and the wild beast of the field were ready to ravage it, ver. 13. But, 2. See also the restraint which these cruel enemies were under, for till God had broken down their hedges they could not pluck a leaf of this vine. The devil could not hurt Job so long as God continued the hedge round about him, *Job* i. 10. See how much it is the interest of any people to keep themselves in the favour of God, and then they need not fear any wild beast of the field, *Job* v. 23. But if we provoke God to withdraw, "our defence is departed from us," and we are undone. The deplorable state of Israel is described ver. 16, "It is burned with fire, it is cut down;" the people are treated like thorns and briars, that are nigh unto cursing, and whose end is to be burned, and no longer like vines, that are protected and cherished. "They perish," not through the rage of the wild beast and the boar, but "at the rebuke of thy countenance;" that was it which they dreaded, and to which they attributed all their calamities. It is well or ill with us according as we are under God's smiles or frowns.

Fourthly. What their requests were to God hereupon.

1. That God would help the vine, ver. 14, 15; that he would graciously take cognizance of its case, and do for it as he thought fit. "Return, we beseech thee, O Lord of hosts," for thou hast seemed to go away from us. "Look down from heaven," to which thou hast retired; from heaven, that place of prospect, whence thou seest all the wrongs that are done us; that place of power, whence thou canst send effectual relief; from heaven, where thou hast prepared thy throne of judgment, to which we appeal; and where thou hast prepared a better country for those that are Israelites indeed: thence give a gracious look, thence make a gracious visit to this vine. Take our woful condition into thy compassionate consideration, and for the particular fruits of thy pity we refer ourselves to thee. Only "behold the vineyard," or rather the root, "which thy right hand hath planted," and which therefore we hope thy right hand will protect; that "branch which thou madest strong for thyself," to shew forth thy praise, *Isa.* xliii. 21, that with the fruit of it thou mightest be honoured. Lord, it is formed by thyself, and for thyself, and therefore it may with an humble confidence be committed to thyself, and to thine own care. "As for God, his work is perfect." What we read "the branch," in the Hebrew is 'the son' (*Ben*), whom in thy counsel thou hast made strong for thyself. That branch was to come out of the stock of Israel, "My servant, the branch," *Zec.* iii. 8. And therefore, till he was come, Israel in general, and the house of David in particular, must be preserved, and upheld, and kept in being. "He is the true vine," *Jno.* xv. 1; *Isa.* xi. 1; "Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it," *Isa.* lxv. 8.

2. That he would help the vinedresser; ver. 17, 18, "Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand;" that king, whoever it was, of the house of David, that was now to go in and out before them; let thy hand be upon him, not only to protect and cover him, but to own him, and strengthen him, and give him success. We have this phrase, *Ezr.* vii. 28, "And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me." Their king is called the man of God's right hand, as he was the representative of their state, which was dear to God, as his Benjamin, the son of his right hand; and as he was president in their affairs, and an instrument in God's right hand of much good to them, defending them from themselves and from their enemies, and directing them in the right way; and under shepherd under him who was the great Shepherd of Israel. Princes that have power must remember that they are sons of men, of Adam, so the word is; that if they are strong, it is God that hath made them strong, and he has made them so for himself, for they are his ministers to serve the interests of his kingdom among men; which if they do in sincerity, his hand shall be upon them, and we should pray in faith that it may be so; adding this promise, that if God will adhere to our governors we will adhere to him: "So will not we go back from thee;" we will never desert a cause which we see that God espouseth, and is the patron of. Let God be our leader, and we will follow him. Adding also this prayer, "Quicken us," put life into us, revive our dying interests, revive our drooping spirits, "and then we will call upon thy name." We will continue to do so upon all occasions, having found it not in vain to do so. We cannot call upon God's name in a right manner, unless he quicken us; but it is he puts life into our souls, that puts liveliness into our prayers.

But many interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, apply this to the Messiah, the son of David, the protector and saviour of the church, and the keeper of the vineyard. 1st. He is the man of God's right hand; to whom he hath sworn by his right hand, so the Chaldee; whom he has exalted to his right hand, and who is indeed his right hand, the arm of the Lord, for all power is given to him. 2nd. He is that Son of Man whom he has made strong for himself, for the glorifying of his name, and the advancing of the interests of his kingdom among men. 3rd. God's hand is upon him throughout his whole undertaking, to bear him out, and carry him on, to protect and animate him, that "the good pleasure of the Lord might prosper in his hand." 4th. The stability and constancy of believers is entirely owing to that grace and strength which is laid up for us in Jesus Christ, *Ps.* lxviii. 28. In him is our strength found, by which we are enabled to persevere to the end. Let thy hand be upon him, on him let our help be laid, who is mighty, let him be made able to save to the uttermost, and that will be our security, "So will not we go back from thee."

Lastly. The psalm concludes with the same petition that had been put up twice before, and yet it is no vain repetition; ver. 19, "Turn us again." The title given to God rises, ver. 3, "O God!" ver. 7, "O God of hosts!" ver. 19, "O Lord, Jehovah, God of hosts!" When we come to God for his grace, his good will towards us, and his good work in us, we should pray earnestly, continue instant in prayer, and pray more earnestly.

PSALM LXXXI.

This psalm was penned, as is supposed, not upon occasion of any particular providence, but for the solemnity of a particular ordinance, either that of the new moon in general, or that of the feast of trumpets, on the new moon of the seventh month, *Lev.* xxiii. 24; *Num.* xxix. 1. When David, by the Spirit, introduced the singing of psalms into the temple service, this psalm was intended for that day, to excite and assist the proper devotions of it. All the psalms are profitable; but if one psalm be more suitable than another to the day, and the observances of it, we should choose that. The two great intentions of our religious assemblies, and which we ought to have in our eye in our attendance on them, are answered in this psalm, which are, to give glory to God, and to receive instruction from God, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. Accordingly, by this psalm we are assisted on our solemn feast days, I. In praising God, for what he is to his people, ver. 1—3; and has done for them, ver. 4—7. II. In teaching and admonishing one another concerning the obligations we lie under to God, ver. 8—10; the danger of revolting from him, ver. 11, 12; and the happiness we should have if we would but keep close to him, ver. 13—16. This, though speaking primarily of Israel of old, is written for our learning, and is therefore to be sung with application.

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A *Psalm* of Asaph.

SING aloud unto God our strength:
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.
2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the psaltery.
3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day
4 For this *was* a statute for Israel,
And a law of the God of Jacob.
5 This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony,
When he went out through the land of Egypt:
Where I heard a language *that* I understood not.
6 I removed his shoulder from the burden:

His hands were delivered from the pots.
7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee;
I answered thee in the secret place of thunder:
I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

When the people of God were gathered together in the solemn day, the day of the feast of the Lord, they must be told that they had business to do, for we do not go to church to sleep, or to be idle. No; there is that which the duty of every day requires; work of the day, which is to be done in its day. And here,

First. The worshippers of God are excited to their work; and are taught, by singing this psalm, to stir up both themselves and one another to it, ver. 1—3. Our errand is to "give unto God the glory due unto his name;" and in all our religious assemblies we must mind this as our business. 1. In doing this, we must eye God as our strength, and as the God of Jacob, ver. 1. He is the strength of Israel, as a people; for he is a God in covenant with them, that will powerfully protect, support, and deliver them; that fights their battles, and makes them to do valiantly, and victoriously. He is the strength of every Israelite; by his grace we are enabled to go through all our services, sufferings, and conflicts. And to him, as our strength, we must both pray and sing praise to him, as the God of all the wrestling seed of Jacob, with whom we have a spiritual communion. 2. We must do this by all the expressions of holy joy and triumph. It was then to be done by musical instruments, the timbrel, harp, and psaltery, and by blowing the trumpet; some think, in remembrance of the sound of the trumpet on mount Sinai, which waxed louder and louder. It was then, and is now to be done, by singing psalms, singing aloud, and making a joyful noise. The pleasantness of the harp, and the awfulness of the trumpet, intimates to us that God is to be worshipped with cheerfulness and holy joy, with reverence and godly fear. Singing aloud, and making a noise, intimates that we must be warm and affectionate in praising God; that we must with a hearty good-will shew forth his praise, as those that are not ashamed to own our dependence on him, and obligations to him; and that we should join many together in this work, the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. 3. This must be done in the time appointed. No time amiss for praising God; "Seven times a day will I praise thee;" nay, "at midnight will I rise and give thanks to thee." But some are times appointed, not for God to meet us, he is always ready, but for us to meet one another, that we may join together in praising God. The solemn feast-day must be a day of praise, when we are receiving the gifts of God's bounty, and rejoicing in them then it is proper to sing his praises.

Secondly. They are here directed in their work.

1. They must look up to the Divine institution, which it is the observation of. In all religious worship we must have an eye to the command; ver. 4, "This was a statute for Israel," for the keeping up of a face of religion among them; it was "a law of the God of Jacob," which all the seed of Jacob are bound by, and must be subject to. Note, Praising God is not only a good thing, which we may do well to do, but it is our indispensable duty, which we are obliged to do. It is at our peril if we neglect it; and in all religious exercises we must have an eye to the institution as our warrant and rule. This I do, because God has commanded me; and therefore, I hope he will accept me. Then it is done in faith.

2. They must look back upon those operations of Divine providence, which it is the memorial of. This solemn service was ordained for a testimony, ver. 5; a standing traditional evidence, for the attesting of the matters of fact. It was a testimony to Israel, that they might know and remember what God had done for their fathers, and would be a testimony against them, if they should be ignorant of them and forget them.

1st. The psalmist, in the people's name, puts himself in mind of the general work of God on Israel's behalf, which was kept in remembrance by this and other solemnities, ver. 5. When God went out against the land of Egypt, to lay it waste, that he might force Pharaoh to let Israel go, then he ordained solemn feast days to be observed by a statute for ever in their generations, as a memorial of it, particularly the passover, which perhaps is meant by the solemn feast day, ver. 3. That was appointed just then when God went out through the land of Egypt to destroy the firstborn, and passed over the houses of the Israelites, *Ex.* xii. 23, 24. And by it that work of wonder was to be kept in perpetual remembrance, that all ages might in it behold the goodness and severity of God. The psalmist, speaking for his people, takes notice of this aggravating circumstance of their slavery in Egypt, that there they heard a language that they understood not; there they were strangers in a strange land. The Egyptians and the Hebrews understood not one another's language; for Joseph spake to his brethren by an interpreter, *Gen.* xlii. 23; and the Egyptians are said to be to the house of Jacob a people of a strange language, *Ps.* cxiv. 1. To make a deliverance appear the more gracious, the more glorious, it is good to observe every thing that makes the trouble we are delivered from appear the more grievous

2nd. The psalmist, in God's name, puts the people in mind of some of the particulars of their deliverance. Here he changeth the person; ver. 6, God speaks by him, saying, "I removed his shoulder from the burthen." Let him remember this on the feast day, *First.* That God had brought them out of the house of bondage; had removed their shoulder from the burthen of oppression, under which they are ready to sink; had delivered their hands from the pots, or panniers, or baskets in which they carried clay or bricks. Liberty out of slavery is a very sensible mercy, and which ought to be had in everlasting remembrance. But this was not all. *Secondly.* God had delivered them at the Red sea. Then they called in trouble, and he rescued them, and disappointed the designs of their enemies against them, *Ex.* xiv. 10. Then he answered them with a real answer out of the secret place of thunder, that is, out of the pillar of fire, through which God looked upon the host of the Egyptians, and troubled it, *Ex.* xiv. 25. Or, it may be meant of the giving of the law at mount Sinai, which was the secret place; for it was death to gaze, *Ex.* xix. 21, and it was in thunder that God then spake. Even the terrors of Sinai were favours to Israel, *Deu.* iv. 33. *Thirdly.* God had borne their manners in the wilderness; "I proved thee at the waters of Meribah, that is, thou didst there shew thy temper, what an unbelieving murmuring people thou wast, and yet I continued my favour to thee; Selah, mark that. Compare God's goodness and man's badness, and they will serve as foils to each other. Now if they on their solemn feast days were thus to call to mind their redemption out of Egypt, much more ought we on the Christian sabbath to call to mind a more glorious redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, from worse than Egyptian bondage, and the many gracious answers he hath given to us, notwithstanding our manifold provocations.

8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee:
O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;
9 There shall no strange god be in thee;
Neither shalt thou worship any strange god.
10 I *am* the LORD thy God,
Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt:
Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
11 But my people would not hearken to my voice;
And Israel would none of me.
12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust:
And they walked in their own counsels.
13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me,
And Israel had walked in my ways!
14 I should soon have subdued their enemies,
And turned my hand against their adversaries.
15 The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him:
But their time should have endured for ever.
16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat:
And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

God, by the psalmist, here speaks to Israel, and in them to us, on whom the ends of the world are come.

First. He demands their diligent and serious attention to what he was about to say; ver. 8, "Hear, O my people;" and who should hear me if my own people will not? I have heard and answered thee, now wilt thou hear me? Hear what is said with the greatest solemnity, and the most unquestionable certainty; for it is what "I will testify unto thee." Do not only give me the hearing, but hearken unto me, that is, be advised by me, be ruled by me. Nothing could be more reasonably or more justly expected, and yet God puts an 'if' upon it; "If thou wilt hearken unto me." It is thine interest to do so, and yet it is questionable whether thou wilt or no; for thy neck is an iron sinew.

Secondly. He puts them in mind of their obligation to him, as the Lord their God and Redeemer; ver. 10, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," which is the preface to the Ten Commandments, and a powerful reason for the keeping of them, shewing that we are bound to it in duty, interest, and gratitude, all which bonds we break asunder if we be disobedient.

Thirdly. He gives them an abstract, both of the precepts and of the promises which he gave them as the Lord, and their God, upon their coming out of Egypt. 1. The great command was, that they should have no other gods before him; ver. 9, "There shall no strange god be in thee," none beside thine own God. Other gods might well be called strange gods, for it was very strange that ever any people, who had the true and living God for their God, should hanker after any other. God is jealous in this matter, for he will not suffer his glory to be given to another; and therefore in this matter they must be circumspect, *Ex.* xxiii. 13. 2. The great promise was, that God himself, as a God all-sufficient, would be nigh unto them in all that which they called upon him for, *Deu.* iv. 7. That if they would adhere to him as their powerful protector and ruler, they should always find him their bountiful benefactor; "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," as the young ravens that cry, open their mouths wide, and the old ones fill them. See here, 1st. What is our duty. To raise our expectations from God, and enlarge our desires towards him. We cannot look for too little from the creature, nor too much from the Creator. We are not straitened in him, and therefore why should we be straitened in our own bosoms? 2nd. What is God's promise. I will fill thy mouth with good things, *Ps.* ciii. 5. There is enough in God to fill our treasures, *Pr.* viii. 21; to replenish every hungry soul, *Jer.* xxxi. 25; to supply all our wants, to answer all our desires, and to make us completely happy. The pleasures of sense will surfeit, and never satisfy, *Isa.* lv. 2; Divine pleasures will satisfy, and never surfeit. And we may have enough from God if we pray for it in faith; "Ask, and it shall be given you;" "he gives liberally, and upbraideth not." God assured his people Israel, that it should be their own fault if he did not do as great and kind things for them as he had done for their fathers. Nothing should have been thought too good, too much, to give them, if they would but have kept close to God. He "would moreover have given them such and such things," 2 *Sam.* xii. 8.

Fourthly. He chargeth them with a high contempt of his authority as their lawgiver, and his grace and favour as their benefactor, ver. 11. He had done much for them, and designed to do more; but all in vain, "My people would not hearken to my voice," but turned a deaf ear to all I said. Two things he complains of: 1. Their disobedience to his commands. They did hear his voice, so as never any people did; but they would not hearken to it,—they would not be ruled by it,—neither by the law, nor by the reason of it. 2. Their dislike of his covenant-relation to them; "They would none of me;" 'they acquiesced not in my word,' so the Chaldee. God was willing to be to them a God, but they were not willing to be to him a people; they did not like his terms; "I would have gathered them, but they would not." They had none of him; and why had they not? It was not because they might not; they were fairly invited into covenant with God. It was not because they could not; for "the word was nigh them, even in their mouth, and in their heart;" but it was purely because they would not. God calls them his people, for they were bought by him, bound to him, his by a thousand ties, and yet even they have not hearkened, have not obeyed: Israel, the seed of Jacob my friend, set me at nought, and would have none of me. Note, All the wickedness of the wicked world is owing to the wilfulness of the wicked will. The reason why people are not religious is because they will not be so.

Fifthly. He justifies himself with this in the spiritual judgments he had brought upon them; ver. 12, "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts," which would be more dangerous enemies, and more mischievous oppressors to them than any of the neighbouring nations ever were. God withdrew his Spirit from them, took off the bridle of restraining grace, left them to themselves, and justly; they will do as they will, and therefore let them do as they will; "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." It is a righteous thing with God to give those up to their own hearts' lusts that indulge them, and give up themselves to be led by them; for why should his Spirit always strive? His grace is his own, and he is debtor to no man; and yet, as he never gave his grace to any that could say they deserved it, so he never took it away from any

but such as had first forfeited it. "They would none of me, so I gave them up;" let them take their course, and see what follows; "they walked in their own counsels," in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eye,—both in their worships and in their conversations. I left them to do as they would, and then they did all that was ill; they walked in their own counsels, and not according to the counsels of God, and his advice. God therefore was not the author of their sin; he left them to the lusts of their own hearts, and the counsels of their own heads; if they do not well, the blame must lie upon their own hearts, and the blood upon their own heads.

Sixthly. He testifies his good-will to them, in wishing they had done well for themselves. He saw how sad their case was, and how sure their ruin, when they were delivered up to their own lusts. That is worse than being given up to Satan, that may be in order to reformation, 1 *Tim.* i. 20, and to salvation, 1 *Cor.* v. 5. But to be delivered up to our own hearts' lusts, is to be sealed under condemnation. "He that is filthy let him be filthy still." What fatal precipices will not these hurry a man to! Now here God looks upon them with pity, and shews that it was with reluctancy that he thus abandoned them to their folly and fate; "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" *Hos.* xi. 8, 9; so here; "O that my people had hearkened!" see *Isa.* xlviii. 18. Thus Christ lamented the obstinacy of Jerusalem, "If thou hadst known," *Lu.* xix. 41. The expressions here are very affecting, ver. 13—16; designed to shew, 1. How unwilling God is that any should perish, and desirous that all should come to repentance. He delights not in the ruin of sinful persons or nations. 2. What enemies sinners are to themselves, and what an aggravation it will be of their misery that they might have been happy upon such easy terms.

Observe here, 1st. The great mercy God had in store for his people, and which he would have wrought for them if they had been obedient. *First.* He would have given them victory over their enemies, and would soon have completed the reduction of them. They should not only have kept their ground, but have gained their point against the remaining Canaanites, and their encroaching, vexatious neighbours; ver. 14, "I should soon have subdued their enemies;" and it is God only that is to be depended on for the subduing our enemies. Nor would he have put them to the expense and fatigue of a tedious war; he would soon have done it; for he would have "turned his hand against their adversaries," and then they had not been able to stand before them. It intimates how easily he would have done it, and without any difficulty; with the turn of a hand, nay, "with the breath of his mouth shall he slay the wicked," *Isa.* xi. 4. If he but turn his hand, "the haters of the Lord will submit themselves to him," ver. 15. And though they are not brought to love him, yet they shall be made to fear him, and to confess that he is too hard for them, and it is in vain to contend with him. God is honoured, and so is his Israel, by the submission of those that have been in rebellion against them, though it be but a forced and feigned submission. *Secondly.* He would have confirmed and perpetuated their posterity, and established it upon sure and lasting foundations. In despite of all the attempts of their enemies against them, "their time should have endured for ever," and they should never have been disturbed in the possession of the good land God had given them, much less evicted, and turned out of possession. *Thirdly.* He would have given them great plenty of all good things; ver. 16, "He should have fed them with the finest of the wheat," with the best grain, and the best of the kind. Wheat was the staple commodity of Canaan, and they exported a deal of it, *Eze.* xxvii. 17. He would not only have provided for them the best sort of bread, but "with honey out of the rock would he have satisfied them." Besides the precious products of the fruitful soil, that there might not be a barren spot in all their land, even the clefts of the rock should serve for beehives, and in them they should find honey in abundance: see *Deu.* xxxii. 13, 14. In short, God designed to make them every way easy and happy.

2nd. The duty God required from them as the condition of all this mercy. He expected no more but that they should hearken to him, as a scholar to his teacher, to receive his instructions; as a servant to his master, to receive his commands. And that they should walk in his ways, those ways of the Lord which are right and pleasant, that they should observe the institutions of his ordinances, and attend the intimations of his providence. And there was nothing unreasonable in this.

3rd. Observe how the reason of the withholding of the mercy is laid in their neglect of the duty. If they had hearkened to me, "I would soon have subdued their enemies." Note, National sin and disobedience is the great and only thing that retards and obstructs national salvation and deliverance. "When I would have healed Israel," and set every thing to rights among them, then "the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered," and so a stop was put to the cure, *Hos.* vii. 1. We are apt to say, if such a method had been taken, such an instrument employed, we should soon have subdued our enemies; but we mistake. If we had hearkened to God, and kept to our duty, the thing had been done; but it is sin that makes our troubles long, and salvation slow. And this is that which God himself complains of, and wisheth it had been otherwise. Note, Therefore God would have us do our duty to him, that we may be qualified to receive favour from him. He therefore delights in our serving him, not because he is the better for it, but because we shall be.

PSALM LXXXII.

This psalm is calculated for the meridian of princes' courts, and courts of justice, not in Israel only, but in other nations; yet it was probably penned primarily for the use of the magistrates of Israel, the great Sanhedrim, and others their elders that were in places of power, and perhaps by David's direction. This psalm is designed to make kings wise, and to instruct the judges of the earth, as *Ps.* ii. 10; to tell them their duty, as 2 *Sam.* xxii. 3; and tell them of their faults, as *Ps.* lviii. 1. We have here, I. The dignity of magistracy, and its dependence upon God, ver. 1. II. The duty of magistrates, ver. 3, 4. III. The degeneracy of bad magistrates, and the mischief they do, ver. 2, 5. IV. Their doom read, ver. 6, 7. V. The desire and prayer of all good people that the kingdom of God may be set up more and more, ver. 8. Though magistrates may most closely apply this psalm to themselves, yet we may any of us sing it with understanding, when we give glory to God in singing of it, as presiding in all public affairs, providing for the protection of injured innocency, and ready to punish the most powerful injustice, and when we comfort ourselves with the belief of his present government, and with the hopes of his future judgment.

A Psalm of Asaph.

GOD standeth in the congregation of the mighty;
He judgeth among the gods.
2 How long will ye judge unjustly,
And accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.
3 Defend the poor and fatherless:
Do justice to the afflicted and needy
4 Deliver the poor and needy:
Rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked.
5 They know not, neither will they understand;
They walk on in darkness:
All the foundations of the earth are out of course.

We have here,

First. God's supreme presidency and power in all councils and courts asserted and laid down, as a great truth necessary to be believed both by princes and subjects; ver. 1, "God stands" as chief director "in the congregation of the mighty," the mighty One, *in cœtu fortis*,—'in the councils of the prince,' the supreme magistrate, and "he judgeth among the gods," the inferior magistrates; both the legislative and the executive power of princes is under his eye and his hand. Observe here, 1. The power and honour of magistrates. They are the mighty; they are so in authority for the public good. It is a great power that they are intrusted with, and they ought to be so in wisdom and courage; they are in the Hebrew dialect called gods. The same word is used for these subordinate governors that is used for the sovereign ruler of the world; they are Elohim. Angels are so called, both because they are great in power and might, and because God is pleased to make use of their service in the government of this lower world. And magistrates, in an inferior capacity, are likewise the ministers of his providence in general, for the keeping up of order and peace in human societies, and particularly of his justice and goodness, in punishing evil-doers, and protecting them that do well. Good magistrates, that answer the ends of magistracy, are as God; some of his honour is put upon them; they are his vicegerents, and great blessings to any people. "A divine sentence is in the lips of the king," *Pr.* xvi. 10; but, "as roaring lions and ranging bears, so are wicked rulers over the poor people," *Pr.* xxviii. 15. 2. A good form and constitution of government intimated, and that is a mixed monarchy, like ours. Here is the mighty One, the sovereign, and here is his congregation, his privy council, his parliament, his bench of judges, who are called the gods. 3. God's incontestable sovereignty maintained in and over all the congregations of the mighty. God stands, he judgeth among them; that is, they have their power from him, and are accountable to him; by him kings reign. He is present at all their debates, and inspects all they say and do; and what is said and done amiss will be called over again, and they reckoned with for their maladministrations. God has their hearts in his hands, and their tongues too, and he directs them which way soever he will, *Pr.* xxi. 1. So that he has a negative voice in all their resolves, and his counsels shall stand, whatsoever devices rise in men's hearts. He makes what use he pleaseth of them, and serves his own purposes and designs by them, though little doth their heart think so, *Isa.* x. 7. Let magistrates consider this, and be awed by it; God is with them in the judgment, 2 *Chr.* i. 6; *Deu.* xix. 17. Let subjects consider this, and be comforted with it; for good princes and good judges, that mean well, are under a Divine direction; and bad ones, that mean never so ill, are under a Divine restraint.

Secondly. A charge given to all magistrates to do good with their power, as they will answer it to Him by whom they are intrusted with it, ver. 3, 4. 1. They are to be the protectors of those that lie exposed to injury, and the patrons of those that want advice and assistance. Defend the poor that have no money wherewith to make friends, or fee council; and the fatherless, that while they are young and unable to help themselves, have lost those that would have been the guides of their youth. Magistrates, as they must be fathers to their country in general, so particularly to those in it that are fatherless. Are they called gods? Herein they must be followers of him, they must be fathers of the fatherless. Job was so, *Job* xxix. 13. 2. They are to administer justice impartially, and "do right to the afflicted and needy," who, being weak and helpless, have often wrongs done them, and will be in danger of losing all, if magistrates do not *ex officio* interpose for their relief. If a poor man has an honest cause, his poverty must be no prejudice to his cause, how great and powerful soever those are that contend with him. 3. They are to rescue those that are already fallen into the hands of oppressors, and deliver them; ver. 4, "rid them out of the hand of the wicked." "Avenge them of their adversary," *Lu.* xviii. 3. These are clients that there is nothing to be got by, no pay for serving them, no interest by obliging them, yet these are they whom judges and magistrates must concern themselves for, whose comfort they must consult, and whose cause they must espouse.

Thirdly. A charge drawn up against bad magistrates, that neglect their duty, and abuse their power, forgetting that God standeth among them, ver. 2, 5. Observe,

1. What the sin is they are here charged with. They judge unjustly, contrary to the rules of equity, and the dictates of their consciences; giving judgment against those that have right on their side, out of malice and ill-will; or for those that have an unrighteous cause, out of favour and partial affection. To do unjustly is bad, but to judge unjustly is much worse, because it is doing wrong under colour of right; against such acts of injustice there is least fence for the injured, and by them encouragement is given to the injurious. It was as great an evil as any Solomon saw under the sun, when he observed "the place of judgment that iniquity was there," *Eccl.* iii. 16; *Isa.* v. 7. They not only accepted the persons of the rich, because they were rich, though that is bad enough; but, which is much worse, they "accepted the persons of the wicked," because they were wicked; they not only countenanced them in their wickedness, but loved them the better for it, and fell in with their interests. Woe unto thee, O land, when thy judges are such as these.

2. What were the cause of this sin. They were told plainly enough that it was their office and duty to protect and deliver the poor; it was many a time given them in charge, yet they judge unjustly, for they know not, neither will they understand. They do not care to hear their duty, they will not take pains to study it; they have no desire to take things right, but are governed by interest, not by reason or justice; "A gift in secret blinds their eyes." They know not, because they will not understand; none so blind as those that will not see. They have baffled their own consciences, and so they walk on in darkness, not knowing or caring what they do, or whither they go. They that walk on in darkness are walking on to everlasting darkness.

3. What were the consequences of this sin. "All the foundations of the earth," or of the land, "are out of course." When justice is perverted, what good can be expected? "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved," as the psalmist speaks in a like case, *Ps.* lxxv. 3. The miscarriages of public persons are public mischiefs.

6 I have said, Ye *are* gods;
And all of you *are* children of the most High
7 But ye shall die like men,
And fall like one of the princes.

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth:
For thou shalt inherit all nations.

We have here,

First. Earthly gods abased and brought down, ver. 6 7. The dignity of their character is acknowledged; ver. 6, "I have said, Ye are gods." They have been honoured with the name and title of gods; God himself called them so in the statute against treasonable words, *Ex.* xxii. 28, "Thou shalt not revile the gods." And if they have this style from the fountain of honour, who can dispute it? But what is man, that he should be thus magnified? "He called them gods, because unto them the word of God came," so our Saviour expounds it, *Jno.* x. 35; that is, they had a commission from God, and were delegated and appointed by him to be the shields of the earth, the conservators of the public peace, and revengers to execute wrath upon those that disturb it, *Rom.* xiii. 4. All of them are in this sense children of the Most High; God has put some of his honour upon them, and employs them in his providential government of the world, as David made his sons chief rulers. Or, because "I said ye are gods," you have carried the honour farther than was intended, and have imagined yourselves to be "the children of the Most High," as the king of Babylon, *Isa.* xiv. 14, "I will be like the Most High;" and the king of Tyre, *Eze.* xxviii. 2, "Thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God." It is a hard thing for men to have so much honour put upon them by the hand of God, and so much honour paid them, as ought to be by the children of men, and not to be proud of it, and puffed up with it, and so think of themselves above what is meet. But here follows a mortifying consideration, "Ye shall die like men." This may be taken either,

1. As the punishment of bad magistrates, such as judged unjustly, and by their misrules put the foundations of the earth out of course. God will reckon with them, and will cut them off in the midst of their pomp and prosperity; they shall die like other wicked men, and fall like one of the heathen princes, and their being Israelites shall not secure them, no more than their being judges; or like one of the angels that sinned; or like one of the giants of the old world. Compare this with that which Elihu observed concerning the mighty oppressors in his time; *Job* xxxiv. 26, "He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others." Let those that abuse their power know that God will take both it and their lives from them; for wherein they deal proudly, he will shew himself above them. Or,

2. As the period of the glory of all magistrates in this world. Let them not be puffed up with their honour, or neglect their work; but let the consideration of their mortality be both mortifying to their pride and quickening to their duty. Ye are called gods, but ye have no patent for immortality; "ye shall die like men," like common men, and 'like one of them ye, O princes, shall fall.' Note, Kings and princes, old judges of the earth, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men, and all their honour shall be laid in the dust. *Mors sceptra ligonibus æquat*,—'Death mingles sceptres with spades.'

Secondly. The God of heaven exalted, and raised high, ver. 8. The psalmist finds it to little purpose to reason with these proud oppressors; they turned a deaf ear to all he said, and walked on in darkness, and therefore he looks up to God, appeals to him, and begs of him to take unto himself his great power. "Arise, O God, judge the earth." And when he prays that he would do it, he believes that he will do it: "Thou shalt inherit all nations." This has respect, 1. To the kingdom of providence. God governs the world, sets up and puts down whom he pleaseth; he inherits all nations, has an absolute dominion over them, to dispose of them as a man doth of his inheritance. This we are to believe, and to comfort ourselves with, that the earth is not given so much into the hands of the wicked, the wicked rulers, as we are tempted to think it is, *Job* ix. 24; but God has reserved the power to himself, and overrules them. In this faith we must pray, "Arise, O God, judge the earth," appear against those that judge unjustly, and set shepherds over thy people after thine own heart. There is a righteous God to whom we may have recourse, and on whom we may depend, for the effectual relief of all that find themselves aggrieved by unjust judges. 2. It has respect to the kingdom of the Messiah. It is a prayer for the hastening of that, that Christ would come, who is to judge the earth; and that promise is pleaded, that God shall give him the heathen for his inheritance. Thou, O Christ, shalt inherit all nations, and be the governor over them, *Ps.* ii. 8; xxii. 28. Let the second coming of Christ set to rights all these disorders. There are two words with which we may comfort ourselves and one another, in reference to the mismanagements of power among men; one is, *Rev.* xix. 6, "Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth;" the other is, *Rev.* xxii. 20, "Surely I come quickly."

PSALM LXXXIII.

This psalm is the last of those that go under the name of Asaph. It is penned, as most of those, upon a public account, with reference to the insults of the church's enemies, that sought its ruin. Some think it was penned upon occasion of the threatening descent which was made upon the land of Judah in Jehoshaphat's time by the Moabites and Ammonites, those children of Lot here spoken of, ver. 8, who were at the head of the alliance, and to whom all the other states here mentioned were auxiliaries. We have the story 2 *Chr.* xx. 1, where it is said, the children of Moab and Ammon, and others besides them, invaded the land. Others think it was penned with reference to all the confederacies of the neighbour nations against Israel from first to last. The psalmist here makes an appeal and application, I. To God's knowledge, by a remonstrance of their designs and endeavours to destroy Israel, ver. 1—8. II. To God's justice and jealousy both for his church and for his own honour, by an earnest prayer for the defeat of their attempt, that the church might be preserved, the enemies humbled, and God glorified, ver. 9—18. This, in the singing of it, we may apply to the enemies of the gospel church, all antichristian powers and factions, representing to God their confederacies against Christ and his kingdom, and rejoicing in hopes that all their projects will be baffled, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

A Song *or* Psalm of Asaph.

KEEP not thou silence, O God:
Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.
2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult:
And they that hate thee have lifted up the head.
3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people,
And consulted against thy hidden ones. [a nation;
4 They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being*
That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.
5 For they have consulted together with one consent:
They are confederate against thee:
6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites;
Of Moab, and the Hagarenes;
7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek;
The Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;
8 Assur also is joined with them:
They have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

The Israel of God was now in danger, and fear, and great distress; and yet their prayer is called, a song or psalm, for singing psalms is not unseasonable, no, not when the harps are hung upon the willow trees.

First. The psalmist here begs of God to appear on the behalf of his injured, threatened people; ver. 1, "Keep not thou silence, O God," but give judgment for us against those that do us an apparent wrong. Thus Jehoshaphat prayed upon occasion of that invasion, 2 *Chr.* xx. 11, "Behold how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession." Sometimes God seems to connive at the unjust treatment which is given to his people; he keeps silence, as one that either did not observe it or did not concern himself in it; he holds his peace, as if he would observe an exact neutrality, and let them fight it out; he is still, and gives not the enemies of his people any disturbance or opposition, but seems to sit by "as a man astonied, or as a mighty man that cannot save." Then He gives us leave to call upon him, as here, "Keep not thou silence, O God." Lord, speak to us by thy prophets for our encouragement against our fears, as he did in reference to that invasion, 2 *Chr.* xx. 14. Lord, speak for us by thy providence, and speak against our enemies; speak deliverance to us, and disappointment to them. God's speaking is his acting; for with him saying and doing are the same thing.

Secondly. He here gives an account of the grand alliance of the neighbour nations against Israel, which he begs of God to break, and blast the projects of. Now observe here,

1. Against whom this confederacy is formed. It is against the Israel of God, and so in effect against the God of Israel. Thus the psalmist takes care to interest God in their cause, not doubting but that, if it appeared that they were for God, God would make it appear he was for them, and then they might set all their enemies at defiance; for who then could be against them? Lord, saith he, they are thine enemies, and they hate thee. All wicked people are God's enemies; "the carnal mind is enmity against God," but especially wicked persecutors; they hated the religious worshippers of God, because they hated God's holy religion, and the worship of him. This was that which made God's people so zealous against them,—that they fought against God; "They are confederates against thee," ver. 5. Were our interest only concerned, we could the better bear it; but when God himself is struck at, it is time to cry, Help, Lord; "Keep not thou silence, O God." He proves that they are confederate against God, for they are so against the people of God, who are near and dear to him,—his son, his firstborn, his portion, and the lot of his inheritance He may truly be said to fight against me that endeavours to destroy my children, to root out my family, and ruin my estate. Lord, saith the psalmist, they are thy enemies, for they consult against thy hidden ones. Note, God's people are his hidden ones. Hid, 1. In respect of secrecy. Their life is hid with Christ in God; the world knows them not; if they knew them, they would not hate them as they do. 2nd. In respect of safety. God takes them under his special protection, hides them in the hollow of his hand; and yet, in defiance of God, and his power and promise to secure his people, they will consult to ruin them, and cast them down from their excellency, *Ps.* lxii. 4, and to make a prey of those whom "the Lord hath set apart for himself," *Ps.* iv. 3. They resolve to destroy those whom God resolves to preserve.

2. How this confederacy is managed. The devil is at the bottom of it, and therefore it is carried on, 1st. With a great deal of heat and violence. "Thine enemies make a tumult," ver. 2; "The heathen rage," *Ps.* ii. 1; "The nations are angry," *Rev.* xi. 18. They are noisy in their clamours against the people, whom they hope to run down with their loud calumnies. This comes in as a reason why God should not keep silence. The enemies talk big, and talk much; Lord, let them not talk all, but do thou speak to them in thy wrath, *Ps.* ii. 5. 2nd. With a great deal of pride and insolence. They have lift up the head; in confidence of their success they are so elevated, as if they could overtop the Most High, and overpower the Almighty. 3rd. With a great deal of art and policy. They have taken crafty counsel, ver. 3. The subtlety of the old serpent appears in their management, and they contrive by all possible means, though never so base, never so bad, to gain their point. They are profound to make slaughter, *Hos.* v. 2; as if they could outwit Infinite Wisdom. 4th. With a great deal of unanimity. Whatever separate, clashing interests they have among themselves, against the people of God they consult with one consent, ver. 5; nor is Satan's kingdom divided against itself. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*,—'Even an enemy may instruct.' Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends, that they may join in crucifying Christ, sure Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ.

3. What is it that is aimed at in this confederacy. They consult not like the Gibeonites to make a league with Israel, that they might strengthen themselves by such a desirable alliance, which had been their wisdom. They consult not only to clip the wings of Israel, to recover their new conquests, and check the progress of their victorious arms; not only to keep the balance even between them and Israel, and to prevent their power from growing exorbitant. This will not serve; it is no less than the utter ruin and extirpation of Israel that is designed; ver. 4, "Come, let us cut them off from being a nation," as they cut off the seven nations of Canaan; let us leave them neither root nor branch, but lay their country so perfectly waste, "that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance," no, not in history; for with them they would destroy their Bibles, and burn all their records. Such is the enmity of the serpent's seed against the seed of the woman. It is the secret wish of many wicked men, that the church of God might not have a being in the world, that there might be no such thing as religion among mankind. Having banished the sense of it out of their own hearts, they would gladly see the whole earth as well rid of it; all its laws and ordinances abolished, all its restraints and obligations shaken off, and all that preach, profess, or practise it, cut off; this they would bring it to if it were in their power; but "He that sits in heaven shall laugh at them."

4. Who they are that are drawn into this confederacy. The nations that entered into this alliance are here mentioned, ver. 6—8. The Edomites and Ishmaelites, both descendants from Abraham, lead the van; for apostates from the church have been its most bitter and spiteful enemies; witness Julian. These were allied to Israel in blood, and yet in alliance against Israel. There

are no bonds of nature so strong but the spirit of persecution has broke through them; "The brother shall betray the brother to death." Moab and Ammon were the children of righteous Lot; but as an incestuous, so a degenerate race. The Philistines were long a thorn in Israel's side, and very vexatious: but how the inhabitants of Tyre, who in David's time were Israel's firm allies, come in among their enemies, I know not. But that Assur, that is, the Assyrian, also is joined with them, is not strange, or that, as the word is, they were an arm to the children of Lot. See how numerous the enemies of God's church have always been; "Lord, how are they increased that trouble it!" God's heritage was as a speckled bird, all the birds round about were against her, *Jer.* xii. 9; which highly magnifies the power of God in preserving to himself a church in the world in despite of the combined force of earth and hell,

9 Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites;
As *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:
10 *Which* perished at En-dor:
They became *as* dung for the earth.
11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb:
Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:
12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves
The houses of God in possession.
13 O my God, make them like a wheel;
As the stubble before the wind.
14 As the fire burneth a wood,
And as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;
15 So persecute them with thy tempest,
And make them afraid with thy storm.
16 Fill their faces with shame;
That they may seek thy name, O LORD.
17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever;
Yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:
18 That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone *is* JEHOVAH.
Art the most high over all the earth.

The psalmist here, in the name of the church, prays for the destruction of those confederate forces, and in God's name foretells it; for this prayer that it might be so amounts to a prophecy that it shall be so; and this prophecy reacheth to all the enemies of the gospel church. Whoever they be that oppose the kingdom of Christ, here they may read their doom. The prayer is, in short, that these enemies that were confederate against Israel might be defeated in all their attempts, and that they might prove their own ruin, and so God's Israel might be preserved and perpetuated. Now this is here illustrated,

First. By some precedents. Let that be their punishment which has been the fate of others who have formerly set themselves against God's Israel. The defeat and discomfiture of former combinations may be pleaded in prayer to God, and improved for the encouragement of our own faith and hope; because God is the same still that ever he was, the same to his people, and the same against his and their enemies; with him is no variableness.

1. He prays that their armies might be destroyed as the armies of former enemies had been; ver. 9, 10, "Do to them as to the Midianites;" let them be routed by their own fears; for so the Midianites were, more than by Gideon's three hundred men. Do to them as to the army under the command of Sisera, who was general under Jabin king of Canaan, which God discomfited, *Jud.* iv. 15, at the brook Kishon, near to which was Endor. They became as dung on the earth, their dead bodies were thrown like dung laid in heaps, or spread to fatten the ground; they were trodden to dirt by Barak's small but victorious army; and this was fitly made a precedent here, because Deborah made it so to aftertimes when it was fresh; *Jud.* v. 31, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord;" that is, so they shall perish.

2. He prays that their leaders may be destroyed as they had been formerly. The common people would not have been so mischievous if their princes had not set them on; and therefore they are particularly prayed against, ver. 11, 12. Observe, 1st. What their malice was against the Israel of God. They said, "Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession," ver. 12. The pleasant places of God, so the word is; by which we may understand the land of Canaan, which was a pleasant land, and was Immanuel's land; or, the temple, which was indeed God's pleasant place, *Isa.* lxiv. 11; or, as Dr. Hammond suggests, the pleasant pastures, which these Arabians, who traded in cattle, did in a particular manner court. The princes and nobles aimed to enrich themselves by this war; and their armies must be made as dung for the earth to serve their covetousness and ambition. 2nd. What their lot should be. They shall be made like Oreb and Zeeb, two princes of the Midianites, who, when their forces were routed, were taken in their flight by the Ephraimites and slain, *Jud.* vii. 25; and like Zebah and Zalmunna, whom Gideon himself slew, *Jud.* viii. 21. Let these enemies of ours be made as easy a prey to us as they were to the conquerors then. We may not prescribe to God; but we may pray to God that he will deal with the enemies of his church in our days as he did with those in the days of our fathers.

Secondly. He illustrates it by some similitudes, and prays,

1. That God would make them like a wheel, ver. 13; that they might be in continual motion, unquiet, unsettled, and giddy in all their counsels and resolves; that they might roll down easily and speedily to their own ruin. Or, as some think, that they might be broken by the judgments of God, as the corn is broken, or beaten out by the wheel which was then used in threshing. Thus, when a wise king scattereth the wicked, he is said to bring the wheel over them, *Pr.* xx. 26. They that trust in God have their hearts fixed; they that fight against him are unfixed, like a wheel.

2. That they might be chased as stubble, or chaff before the fierce wind. The wheel, though it continually turn round, yet is fixed on its own axis. But let them have no more fixation than the light stubble has which the wind hurries away, and nobody desires to save it, but is willing it should go, *Ps.* i. 4. Thus shall "the wicked be driven away in his wickedness, and chased out of the world."

3. That they might be consumed as wood by the fire, or as briars and thorns, as fern or furze upon the mountains by the flames, ver. 14. When the stubble is driven by the wind, yet it will rest at last under some hedge, in some ditch or other. But he prays that they might not only be driven away as stubble, but burnt up as stubble. And this will be the end of wicked men, *Heb.* vi. 8; and particularly of all the enemies of God's church. The reddition of these comparisons we have ver. 15, "So persecute them with thy tempest," persecute them to their utter ruin, "and make them afraid with thy storm." See how sinners are made miserable; the storm of God's wrath raiseth terrors in their own hearts, and so they are made completely miserable. God can deal with the proudest and most daring sinner that has bid defiance to his justice, and can "make him afraid as a grasshopper." It is the torment of devils that they tremble.

Thirdly. He illustrates it by the good consequences of their confusion, ver. 16—18. He prays here that God, having filled their hearts with terror, would thereby fill their faces with shame, that they might be ashamed of their enmity to the people of God, *Isa.* xxvi. 11; ashamed of their folly in acting both against Omnipotence itself and their own true interest. They did what they could to put God's people to shame; but the shame will, at long run, return upon themselves. Now,

1. The beginning of this shame might be a means of their conversion. Let them be broken and baffled in their attempts, "that they may seek thy name, O Lord." Let them be put to a stand, that they may have both leisure and reason to pause a little, and consider who it is that they are fighting against, and what an unequal match they are for him, and may therefore humble and submit themselves, and desire conditions of peace. Let them be made to fear thy name, and perhaps that will bring them to seek thy name. Note, That which we should earnestly desire and beg of God for our enemies and persecutors is, that God would bring them to repentance, and we should desire their abasement in order to this; no other confusion to them, but what may be a step towards their conversion.

2. If it did not prove a means of their conversion, the perfecting of it would redound greatly to the honour of God. If they will not be ashamed and repent, let them be put to shame, and perish. If they will not be troubled and turned, which would soon put an end to all their trouble, a happy end, "let them be troubled for ever;" and never have peace. And this will be for God's glory; ver. 18, "That" other "men may know" and own, if they themselves will not, "that thou whose name alone is Jehovah," (that incommunicable, though not ineffable name,) "art the most high over all the earth." God's triumphs over his and his church's enemies will be incontestable proofs, 1st. That he is, according to his name Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient being, that has all power and perfection in himself. 2nd. That he is the most high God, Sovereign Lord of all, above all gods, above all kings; above all that exalt themselves, and pretend to be high, 3rd. That he is so not only over the land of Israel, but over all the earth; even those nations of the earth that do not know him, or own him, for his kingdom ruleth over all. These are great and unquestionable truths, but men will hardly be persuaded to know and believe them; therefore the psalmist prays that the destruction of some might be the conviction of others. The final ruin of all God's enemies in the great day will be the effectual proof of this before angels and men; when the everlasting shame and contempt to which sinners shall rise, *Dan.* xii. 2, shall redound to the everlasting honour and praise of that God to whom vengeance belongs.

PSALM LXXXIV.

Though David's name be not in the title of this psalm, yet we have reason to think he was the penman of it, because it breathes so much of his excellent spirit, and is so like to the 63rd psalm, which was penned by him. It is supposed that David penned this psalm when he was forced by Absalom's rebellion to quit his city, which he lamented his absence from, not so much because it was the royal city, as because it was the holy city; witness this psalm, which contains the pious breathings of a gracious soul after God, and communion with him. Though it be not entitled, yet it may fitly be looked upon as, a psalm or song for the sabbath day, the day of our solemn assemblies. The psalmist here, with great devotion, expresseth his affection, I. To the ordinances of God: his value for them, ver. 1; desire towards them, ver. 2, 3; his conviction of the happiness of those that did enjoy them, ver. 4, 7; and his placing his own happiness so very much in the enjoyment of them, ver. 10. II. To the God of the ordinances: his desire towards him, ver. 8, 9; his faith in him, ver. 11; and his conviction of the happiness of those that put their confidence in him, ver. 12. In singing this psalm, we should have the same devout affections working towards God that David had, and then the singing of it will be very pleasant.

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

HOW amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!
2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth
For the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh [crieth out
For the living God.
3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay [her young,
Even thine altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King, and my God.
4 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house:
They will be still praising thee. Selah.
5 Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee;
In whose heart *are* the ways *of them*.
6 *Who* passing through the valley of Baca make it a well;
The rain also filleth the pools.
7 They go from strength to strength,
Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

The psalmist here, being by force restrained from waiting upon God in public ordinances, by the want of them is brought under a more sensible conviction than ever of the worth of them. Observe,

First. The wonderful beauty he saw in holy institutions; ver. 1, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" Some think he here calls God the Lord of hosts, that is, in a special manner of the angels, the heavenly hosts, because of the presence of the angels in God's sanctuary. They attended the Shechinah, and were, as some think, signified by the cherubim; God is the Lord of these hosts, and his the tabernacle is. It is spoken of as more than

one, "thy tabernacles" because there were divers courts in which the people attended; and because the tabernacle itself consisted of a holy place, and a most holy. How amiable are these! How lovely is the sanctuary in the eyes of all that are truly sanctified! Gracious souls see a wonderful, inexpressible beauty in holiness, and in holy work. A tabernacle was a mean habitation, but the disadvantage of external circumstances makes holy ordinances not at all the less amiable; for the beauty of holiness is spiritual, and their glory is within.

Secondly. The longing desire he had to return to the enjoyment of public ordinances, or rather of God in them, ver. 2. It was an entire desire; body, soul, and spirit concurred in it. He was not conscious to himself of any rising thought to the contrary; it was an intense desire; it was like the desire of the ambitious, or covetous, or epicure. He longed, he fainted, he cried out, importunate to be restored to his place in God's courts; and almost impatient of delay. Yet it was not so much the courts of the Lord that he coveted, but he cried out in prayer for the living God himself. O that I might know him, and be taken again into communion with him, 1 *Jno.* i. 3. Ordinances are empty things, if we meet not with God in the ordinances.

Thirdly. His grudging the happiness of the little birds that made their nests in the buildings that were adjoining to God's altars, ver. 3. This is an elegant and surprising expression of his affection to God's altars. "The sparrow has found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself." These little birds, by the instinct and direction of nature, provide habitations for themselves in houses, as other birds do in the woods, both for their own repose and in which to lay their young. Some such David supposeth there were in the buildings about the courts of God's house; and wisheth himself with them. He would rather live in a bird's nest nigh God's altars than in a palace at a distance from them. He sometimes wished for the wings of a dove, on which to fly into the wilderness, *Ps.* lv. 6. Here for the wings of a sparrow that he might fly undiscovered into God's courts; and though to watch as a sparrow alone upon the housetop is the description of a very melancholy state and spirit, *Ps* cii. 7, yet David would be glad to take it for his lot, provided he might be near God's altars. It is better to be serving God in solitude, than serving sin with a multitude. The word for a sparrow signifies any little bird; and, if I may offer a conjecture, perhaps, when in David's time, music was introduced so much into the sacred service, both vocal and instrumental, to complete the harmony they had singing-birds in cages hung about the courts of the tabernacle; (for we find the singing of birds taken notice of to the glory of God, *Ps.* civ. 12.) And David envies the happiness of these, and would gladly change places with them. Observe, David envies the happiness not of those birds that flew over the altars, and had only a transient view of God's courts, but of those that had nests for themselves there. David will not think it enough to sojourn in God's house as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night, but let this be his rest, his home, here he will dwell. And he takes notice that these birds not only have nests for themselves there, but there they lay their young. For those that have a place in God's courts themselves cannot but desire that their children also may have in God's house and within his walls a place and a name, that they may feed their kids beside the shepherd's tents. Some give another sense of this verse. Lord, by thy providence thou hast furnished the birds with nests and resting-places, agreeable to their nature, and to them they have free recourse. But thine altar, which is my nest, my resting-place, which I am as desirous of as ever the wandering bird was of her nest, I cannot have access to. Lord, wilt thou provide better for thy birds than for thy babes? "As a bird that wanders from her nest," so am I, now I wander from the place of God's altars, for that is my place, *Pr.* xxvii. 8. I shall never be easy till I return to my place again. Note, They whose souls are at home, at rest in God, cannot but desire a settlement near his ordinances. There were two altars, one for sacrifice, the other for incense; and David, in his desire of a place in God's courts, has an eye to both; as we also must in all our attendance on God have an eye both to the satisfaction and to the intercession of Christ. And lastly, observe how he eyes God in this address; Thou art the "Lord of hosts, my King, and my God." Where should a poor, distressed subject seek for protection but with his King? "And should not a people seek unto their God?" my King, my God, is Lord of hosts, by him and his altars let me live and die.

Fourthly. His acknowledgment of the happiness both of the ministers and of the people that had liberty of attendance on God's altars; "Blessed are they," O when shall I return to the enjoyment of that blessedness?

1. Blessed are the ministers. The priests and Levites that have their residence about the tabernacle, and are in their courses employed in the service of it; ver. 4, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;" that are at home there, and whose business lies there. He is so far from pitying them as confined to a constant attendance, and obliged to perpetual seriousness, that he would sooner envy them than the greatest princes in the world. There are those that bless the covetous, but he blesseth the religious; "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house," not because they have good wages, a part of every sacrifice for themselves, which would enable them to keep a good table, but because they have good work, "they will be still praising thee." And if there be a heaven upon earth, it is in praising God; in continual praising him. Apply this to his house above; Blessed are they that dwell there; angels and glorified saints, "for they rest not day or night from praising God." Let us, therefore, spend as much of our time as may be in that blessed work in which we hope to spend a joyful eternity.

2. Blessed are the people. The inhabitants of the country, who, though they do not constantly dwell in God's house as the priests do, yet have liberty of access to it, at the times appointed for their solemn feasts; the three great feasts, at which all the males were obliged to give their attendance, *Deu.* xvi. 16. David was so far from reckoning this an imposition, and a hardship put upon them, that he envies the happiness of those that might thus attend, ver. 5—7. Those whom he pronounceth blessed are here described.

1st. They are such as act in religion from a rooted principle of dependence upon God, and devotedness to him. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee;" that is, that makes thee his strength, and strongly stays himself upon thee; that makes thy name his strong tower into which he runs for safety, *Pr.* xviii. 10; "Happy is the man whose hope is in the Lord his God," *Ps.* xl. 4; cxlvi. 5. Those are truly happy who go forth and go on in the exercises of religion, not in their own strength, for then the work is sure to miscarry, but in the strength of the grace of Jesus Christ, from whom all our sufficiency is. David wished to return to God's tabernacles again, that there he might strengthen himself in the Lord his God for service and suffering.

2nd. They are such as have a dear love for holy ordinances; "in whose heart are the ways of them," that is, that, having placed their happiness in God as their end, rejoice in all the ways that lead to him; all those means by which their graces are strengthened, and their communion with him kept up. They not only walk in these ways, but they have them in their hearts, they lay them near their hearts; there is no care or concern, no pleasure or delight, lies nearer than this. Note, Those that have the new Jerusalem in their eye must have the ways that lead to it in their heart; must mind them, their eyes must look straight forward in them; must ponder the paths of them, must keep close to them, and be afraid of turning aside to the right hand or to the left. If we make God's promise our strength, we must make God's Word our rule, and walk by it.

3rd. They are such as will break through difficulties and discouragements in waiting upon God in holy ordinances, ver. 6. When they come up out of the country to worship at the feasts, their way lies through many a dry and sandy valley, so some; in which they are ready to perish for thirst. But, to guard against that inconvenience, they dig little pits to receive and keep the rain water, which is ready to them and others for their refreshment. When they make the pools, the rain of heaven fills them. If we be ready to receive the grace of God, that grace shall not be wanting to us, but shall be sufficient for us at all times. Their way lay through many a weeping valley, so Baca signifies; that is, as others understand it, many a watery valley; which in wet weather, when the rain filled the pools, either through the rising of the waters or the dirtiness of the way, were unpassable. But by draining and drenching them, they made a road through them, for the benefit of those that went up to Jerusalem. Care should be taken to keep those roads in repair that lead to church as well as those that lead to market. But all this is intended to shew, *First.* That they had a good will to the journey. When they were to attend the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, they would not be kept back by bad weather, or bad ways; nor make those an excuse for staying at home. Difficulties in the way of duty are designed to try our resolution, and "he that observes the wind shall not sow." *Secondly.* That they made the best of the way to Zion; contrived and took pains to mend it where it was bad, and what inconveniences could not be removed they bore them as well as they could. Our way to heaven lies through a valley of Baca, but even that may be made a well, if we make a due improvement of the comforts God has provided for the pilgrims to the heavenly city.

4th. They are such as are still pressing forward till they come to their journey's end at length, and do not take up short of it; ver. 7, "They go from strength to strength," that is, their company increaseth by the accession of more out of every town they pass through, till they become very numerous. Those that were near stayed till those that were farther off called on them, saying, "Come, and let us go to the house of the Lord," *Ps.* cxxii. 1, 2; that they might go together in a body, in token of their mutual love. Or, the particular persons, instead of being fatigued with the tediousness of their journey, and the difficulties they met with, the nearer they came to Jerusalem the more lively and cheerful they were, and so went stronger and stronger, *Job* xvii. 8. Thus it is promised that "they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," *Isa.* xl. 31. Even where they are weak there they were strong; they go from virtue to virtue, so some; it is the same word that is used for the virtuous woman. They that press forward in their Christian course shall find God adding grace to their graces, *Jno.* i. 16. They shall be changed from glory to glory, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18; from one degree of glorious grace to another; till at length "every one of them appears before God in Zion," to give glory to him, and receive blessings from him. Note, They that grow in grace shall at last be perfect in glory. The Chaldee reads it, 'They go from the house of the sanctuary to the house of doctrine; and the pains which they have taken about the law shall appear before God, whose majesty dwells in Zion.' We must go from one duty to another, from prayer to the word, from practising what we have learned to learn more; which if we do, the benefit of it will appear to God's glory, and our own everlasting comfort.

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer:
Give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.
9 Behold, O God our shield,
And look upon the face of thine anointed.
10 For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand.
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
11 For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield:
The LORD will give grace and glory:
No good *thing* will he withhold
From them that walk uprightly.
12 O LORD of hosts,
Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

Here, First. The psalmist prays for audience and acceptance with God, not mentioning particularly what he desired God would do for him; he needed to say no more, when he had professed such an affectionate esteem for the ordinances of God, which now he was restrained and banished from. All his desire was in that profession plainly before God, and his longing, his groaning, was not hid from him. Therefore he prays, ver. 8, 9, only that God would hear his prayer, and give ear; that he would behold his condition, behold his good affection, and look upon his face, which way it was set, and how his countenance discovered the longing desire he had towards God's courts. He calls himself, as many think, God's anointed, for so David was; anointed by him, and anointed for him. In this petition, 1. He has an eye to God, under several of his glorious titles. As the Lord God of hosts, that has all the creatures at his command; and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth. As the God of Jacob, a God in covenant with his own people, a God that never said to the praying seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. And as God our shield, that takes his people under his special protection, pursuant to his covenant with Abraham their father; *Gen.* xv. 1, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield." When David could not be hid in the secret of God's tabernacle, *Ps.* xxvii. 5, being at a distance from it, yet he hoped to find God his shield ready to him wherever he was. 2. He has an eye to the Mediator, for of him I rather understand those words, 'Look upon the face of thy Messiah,' thine anointed one; for of his anointing David spoke, *Ps.* xlv. 7. In all our addresses to God we must desire that he would look upon the face of Christ, accept us for his sake, and be well pleased with us in him. We must look with an eye of faith, and then God will with an eye of favour look upon the face of the Anointed, who does shew his face when we without him dare not shew ours.

Secondly. He pleads his love to God's ordinances, and his dependence upon God himself.

1. God's courts were his choice, ver. 10. A very dear love he had for holy ordinances; he valued them above any thing else, and he expresseth his value for them, 1st. By preferring the time of God's worship before all other time. "A day" spent "in thy courts," in attending on the services of religion, wholly abstracted from all secular affairs, "is better than a thousand;" not than a thousand in thy courts, but anywhere else in this world, though in the midst of all the delights of the children of men. "Better than a thousand;" he doth not say days,

you may supply it with years, with ages, if you will, and yet David will set his hand to it. "A day in thy courts," a sabbath day, a holy day, a feast day, though but one day, would be very welcome to me. Nay, as some of the rabbins paraphrase it, though I were to die for it the next day, yet that would be more sweet than years spent in the business and pleasure of this world. One of these days shall, with its pleasure chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, to shame, as not worthy to be compared. 2nd. By preferring the place of worship before any other place. "I had rather be a doorkeeper," rather be in the meanest place and office "in the house of my God, than dwell" in state, as master, "in the tents of wickedness." Observe, He calls even the tabernacle a house, for the presence of God in it made even those curtains more stately than a palace, and more strong than a castle. It is the house of my God. The covenant interest he had in God, as his God, was the sweet string on which he loved dearly to be harping. They, and they only, that can upon good ground call God theirs, delight in the courts of his house. I would rather be a porter in God's house than a prince in those tents where wickedness reigns; rather lie at the threshold, so the word is; that was the beggars' place, *Acts* iii. 2; No matter, saith David, let that be my place rather than none. The Pharisees loved synagogues well enough, provided they might have the uppermost seats there, *Mat.* xxiii. 6, that they might make a figure. Holy David is not solicitous about that; if he may be but admitted to the threshold, he will say, "Master, it is good to be here." Some read it, 'I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty in the tents of wickedness,' alluding to the law concerning servants, who, if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door-post, *Ex.* xxi. 5, 6. David loved his Master, and loved his work so well, that he desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account comparable to that in communion with God.

2. God himself was his hope, and joy, and all; therefore he loved the house of his God, because his expectation was from his God, and there he used to communicate himself, ver. 11. See, 1st. What God is and will be to his people. "The Lord God is a sun and shield." We are here in darkness, but if God be our God he will be to us a sun to enlighten and enliven us, to guide and direct us. We are here in danger, but he will be to us a shield, to secure us from the fiery darts that fly thick about us; with his favour he will compass us as with a shield. Let us therefore always walk in the light of the Lord, and never throw ourselves out of his protection, and we shall find him a sun to supply us with all good, and a shield to shelter us from all evil. 2nd. What he doth and will bestow upon them. "The Lord will give grace and glory." Grace signifies both the good will of God towards us and the good work of God in us; glory signifies both the honour which he puts upon us in giving us the adoption of sons and that which he has prepared for us in the inheritance of sons. God will give them grace in this world as a preparation for glory, and glory in the other world as the perfection of grace; both are God's gift, his free gift. And, as on the one hand, wherever God gives grace he will give glory, for grace is glory begun, and is an earnest of it, so, on the other hand, he will give glory hereafter to none to whom he doth not give grace now, or that receive his grace in vain. And if God will give grace and glory, which are the two great things that concur to make us happy in both worlds, we may be sure that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." It is the character of all good people, that they walk uprightly, that they worship God in spirit and in truth, and have their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, and such may be sure that God will withhold no good thing from them that is requisite to their comfortable passage through this world. Make sure grace and glory, and other things shall be added. This is a comprehensive promise, and is such an assurance of the present comfort of the saints, that whatever they desire, and think they need, they may be sure that either Infinite Wisdom sees it is not good for them, or Infinite Goodness will give it them in due time. Let it be our care to walk uprightly, and then let us trust God to give us everything that is good for us.

Lastly. He pronounceth them blessed that put their confidence in God, as he did, ver. 12. They are blessed that have the liberty of ordinances, and the privileges of God's house; but, though we should be debarred from them, yet we are not therefore debarred from blessedness if we trust in God. If we cannot go to the house of the Lord, we may go by faith to the Lord of the house, and in him we shall be happy, and may be easy.

PSALM LXXXV.

Interpreters are generally of opinion that this psalm was penned after the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when they still remained under some tokens of God's displeasure, which they here pray for the removal of; and nothing appears to the contrary, but that it might be penned then as well as *Ps.* cxxxvii. They are the public interests that lie near the psalmist's heart here, and the psalm is penned for the great congregation. The church was here in a deluge; above were clouds, below were waves, every thing was dark and dismal. The church is like Noah in the ark, between life and death, between hope and fear. Being so, I. Here is the dove sent forth in prayer. The petitions are, against sin and wrath, ver. 4; and for mercy and grace, ver. 7. The pleas are taken from former favours, ver. 1—3; and present distresses, ver. 5, 6. II. Here is the dove returning with an olive-branch of peace and good tidings. The psalmist expects her return, ver. 8; and then recounts the favours to God's Israel, which by the spirit of prophecy he gave assurance of to others, and by the spirit of faith he took the assurance of to himself, ver. 9—13. In singing this psalm we may be assisted in our prayers to God both for his church in general and for the land of our nativity in particular. The former part will be of use to direct our desires, the latter to encourage our faith and hope in those prayers.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land:
Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.
2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people,
Thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.
3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: [anger.
Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine
4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,
And cause thine anger toward us to cease.
5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?
Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
6 Wilt thou not revive us again:
That thy people may rejoice in thee?
7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD,
And grant us thy salvation.

The church, in affliction and distress, is here by direction from God making her application to God. So ready is God to hear and answer the prayers of his people, that by his Spirit in the word, in the heart, he indites their petitions, and puts words into their mouths. The people of God, in a very low and weak condition, are here taught how to address themselves to God.

First. They are to acknowledge with thankfulness the great things God had done for them, ver. 1—3. Thou hast done so and so for us and our fathers. Note, The sense of present afflictions should not drown the remembrance of former mercies, but even then when we are brought very low we must call to remembrance past experiences of God's goodness, which we must take notice of with thankfulness to his praise. They speak of it here with pleasure, 1. That God had shewed himself propitious to their land, and had smiled upon it as his own; "Thou hast been favourable to thy land," as thine, with distinguishing favours. Note, The favour of God is the spring-head of all good, and the fountain of happiness to nations as well as to particular persons. It was by the favour of God that Israel got and kept possession of Canaan, *Ps.* xliv. 3; and if he had not continued very favourable to them they had been ruined many a time. 2. That he had rescued them out of the hands of their enemies, and restored them to their liberty. "Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob," and settled those in their own land again that had been driven out, and were strangers in a strange land, prisoners in the land of their oppressors. The captivity of Jacob, though it may continue long, will be brought back in due time. 3. That he had not dealt with them according to the desert of their provocations; ver. 2, "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people," and not punished them as in justice thou mightest. "Thou hast covered all their sin." When God forgives sin, he covers it; and when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all. The bringing back of their captivity was then an instance of God's favour to them, when it was accompanied with the pardon of their iniquity. 4. That he had not continued his anger against them so far and so long as they had reason to fear; ver. 3, having covered all their sin, "thou hast taken away all thy wrath;" for when sin is set aside God's anger ceaseth. God is pacified if we are purified. See what the pardon of sin is: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people;" that is, "thou hast turned thine anger from waxing hot," so as to consume us in the flame of it. In compassion to us thou hast not stirred up all thy wrath; but when an intercessor hath stood before thee in the gap thou hast turned away thine anger.

Secondly. They are taught to pray to God for grace and mercy in reference to their present distress. This is inferred from the former: thou hast done well for our fathers, do well for us, for we are the children of the same covenant. 1. They pray for converting grace. "Turn us, O God of our salvation;" in order to the turning of our captivity, turn us from iniquity; turn us to thyself, and to our duty; turn us, and we shall be turned. All those whom God will save sooner or later he will turn. If no conversion, no salvation. 2. They pray for the removal of the tokens of God's displeasure which they were under. "Cause thine anger towards us to cease," as thou didst many a time cause it to cease in the days of our fathers, when thou didst take away thy wrath from them. Observe the method: first turn us to thee, and then cause thine anger to turn from us. When we are reconciled to God, then, and not till then, we may expect the comfort of his being reconciled to us. 3. They pray for the manifestation of God's good-will to them: ver. 7, "Shew us thy mercy, O Lord;" that is, shew thyself merciful to us; not only have mercy on us, but let us have the comfortable evidences of that mercy; let us know that thou hast mercy on us, and mercy in store for us. 4. They pray that God would, graciously to them, and gloriously to himself, appear on their behalf: "Grant us thy salvation;" grant it by thy promise, and then, no doubt, thou wilt work it by thy providence. Note, The vessels of God's mercy are the heirs of his salvation. He shews mercy to those to whom he grants salvation, for salvation is of mere mercy.

Thirdly. They are taught humbly to expostulate with God concerning their present troubles, ver. 5, 6. Where observe, 1. What they dread and deprecate. "Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?" We are undone if thou art, but we hope thou wilt not. "Wilt thou draw out thine anger unto all generations?" No; thou art gracious, slow to anger, and swift to shew mercy, and wilt not contend for ever. Thou wast not angry with our fathers for ever, but didst soon turn thyself from the fierceness of thy wrath; why, then, wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Are not thy mercies and compassions as plentiful and powerful as ever they were? Impenitent sinners God will be angry with for ever; for what is hell but the wrath of God drawn out unto endless generations? But shall a hell upon earth be the lot of thy people? 2. What they desire and hope for. "Wilt thou not revive us again?" ver. 6. Revive us with comforts spoken to us, revive us with deliverances wrought for us. Thou hast been favourable to thy land formerly, and that revived it; wilt thou not again be favourable, and so revive it again? God had granted to the children of the captivity some reviving in their bondage, *Ezr.* ix. 8. Their return out of Babylon was as life from the dead, *Eze.* xxxvii, 11, 12. Now, Lord, (say they,) wilt thou not revive us again, and put thy hand again the second time to gather us in? *Isa.* xi. 11; *Ps.* cxxvi. 1, 4; "Revive thy work in the midst of the years," *Hab.* iii. 2. "Revive us again," Ist. "That thy people may rejoice," and so we shall have the comfort of it, *Ps.* xiv. 7. Give them life that they may have joy. 2nd. That they "may rejoice in thee," and so thou wilt have the glory of it. If God be the fountain of all our mercies, he must be the centre of all our joys.

8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak:
For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:
But let them not turn again to folly.
9 Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him;
That glory may dwell in our land.
10 Mercy and truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*
11 Truth shall spring out of the earth;
And righteousness shall look down from heaven.
12 Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is* good;
And our land shall yield her increase.
13 Righteousness shall go before him;
And shall set *us* in the way of his steps.

We have here an answer to the prayers and expostulations in the foregoing verses.

First. In general it is an answer of peace. This the psalmist is soon aware of; ver. 8, for he stands upon his watch tower to hear what God will say unto him, as the prophet, *Hab.* ii. 1, 2, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." This intimates, 1. The stilling of his passion, his grief, his fear, and the tumult of his spirit which these occasioned. Compose thyself, O my soul, in an humble silence to attend upon God, and wait his motions. I have spoken enough, or too much; now I will hear what God will speak, and welcome his holy will; "What saith my Lord unto his servant?" If we would have God to hear what we say to him by prayer, we must be ready to hear what he saith to us by his Word. 2. The raising of his expectation. Now he has been at prayer he looks for something very great and very kind from the God that hears prayer. When we have prayed, we should look after our prayers, and stay for an answer. Now observe here, 1st. What it is that he promiseth himself from God in answer to his prayers: "He will speak peace to his people, and to his saints." There is a people in the world that are God's people, set apart for him, subject to him, and that shall be saved by him. All his people are his saints, sanctified by his grace, and devoted to his glory; these may sometimes want peace, when without are fightings and within are fears; but sooner or later God will speak peace to them. If he do not command outward peace, yet he will suggest inward peace; speaking that to their hearts by his Spirit which he has spoken to their ears by his Word and ministers, and making them to hear joy and gladness. 2nd. What use he makes of this expectation. *First.* He takes the comfort of it; and so must we: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," hear the assurances he gives of peace in answer to prayer. When God speaks peace we must not be deaf to it, but with all humility and thankfulness receive it. *Secondly.* He cautions the saints to do the duty which this calls for; "But let them not turn again to folly;" for it is on these terms, and no other, that peace is to be expected. To those, and those only, peace is spoken who turn from sin; but if they return to it again it is at their peril. All sin is folly, but especially backsliding; it is egregious folly to turn to sin after we have seemed to turn from it, to turn to it after God hath spoken peace; God is for peace, but when he speaks, such are for war.

Secondly. Here are the particulars of this answer of peace. He doubts not but all will be well in a little time, and therefore gives us the pleasing prospect of the flourishing estate of the church in the last five verses of the psalm, which describe the peace and prosperity that God at length blessed the children of the captivity with, when after a great deal of toil and toss at length they gained a settlement in their own land. But it may be taken, 1. As a promise also to all that fear God and work righteousness, that they shall be easy, they shall be happy. 2. As a prophecy of the kingdom of Messiah, and the blessings with which that kingdom should be enriched. Here is,

1st. Help at hand; ver. 9, "Surely his salvation is nigh," nigh to us, nigher than we think it is, it will soon be effected, how great soever our difficulties and distresses are, when God's time is come, and that time is not far off; when the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses comes. It is nigh to "all that fear him;" when trouble is nigh, salvation is nigh; for "God is a very present help in time of trouble" to all that are his; whereas "salvation is far from the wicked," *Ps.* cxix. 155. This may fitly be applied to Christ, the author of eternal salvation. It was the comfort of the Old Testament saints that, though they lived not to see that redemption in Jerusalem which they waited for, yet they were sure it was nigh, and would be welcome to all that fear God.

2nd. Honour secured. "That glory may dwell in our land," that is, that we may have the worship of God settled and established among us; for that is the glory of a land. When that goes, "Ichabod, the glory is departed;" when that stays, glory dwells. This may refer to the Messiah, who was to be the glory of his people Israel, and who came and dwelt among them, *Jno.* i. 4; for which reason their land is called Immanuel's land, *Isa.* viii. 8.

3rd. Graces meeting and happily embracing; ver. 10, 11, "Mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, kiss each other." This may be understood, *First.* Of the reformation of the people, and of the government, in the administration of which all those graces should be conspicuous and commanding. The rulers and ruled shall all be merciful and true, righteous and peaceable; when there is no truth nor mercy all goes to ruin, *Hos.* iv. 1; *Isa.* lix. 14, 15. But when these meet in the management of all affairs, when these give aim, when these give law, when there is such plenty of truth that it sprouts up like the grass of the earth, and of righteousness, that it is showered down like rain from heaven, then things go well. When in every congress mercy and truth meet, in every embrace righteousness and peace kiss, and common honesty is indeed common, then glory dwells in a land, as the sin of reigning dishonesty is a reproach to any people. *Secondly.* Of the return of God's favour, and the continuance of it thereupon. When a people return to God, and adhere to him in a way of duty, he will return to them and abide with them in a way of mercy. So some understand this: Man's truth and God's mercy, man's righteousness and God's peace, meet together. If God finds us true to him, to one another, to ourselves, we shall find him merciful; if we make conscience of righteousness, we shall have the comfort of peace. If truth spring out of the earth, that is, (as Dr. Hammond expounds it) out of the hearts of men, the proper soil for it to grow in, righteousness, that is, God's mercy, shall look down from heaven, as the sun doth upon the world, when it sheds its influences on the productions of the earth and cherisheth them. *Thirdly.* Of the harmony of the Divine attributes in the Messiah's undertaking. In him, who is both our salvation and our glory, "mercy and truth are met together." God's mercy and truth, and his "righteousness and peace have kissed each other;" that is, the great affair of our salvation is so well contrived, so well concerted, that God may have mercy upon poor sinners, and be at peace with them without any wrong to his truth and righteousness. He is true to the threatening, and just in his government, and yet pardons sinners, and takes them into covenant with himself. Christ as Mediator brings heaven and earth together again, which sin had set at variance. Through him "truth springs out of the earth," that truth which God desires in the inward part, and then "righteousness looks down from heaven," for "God is just, and the justifier of them which believe in Jesus." Or, it may note that in the kingdom of the Messiah these graces shall flourish and prevail, and have a universal command.

4th. Great plenty of every thing desirable; ver. 12, "The Lord shall give that which is good," that is every thing that he sees to be good for us. All good comes from God's goodness; and when mercy, truth, and righteousness have a sovereign influence on men's hearts and lives, all good may be expected. If we thus seek the righteousness of God's kingdom, other things shall be added, *Mat.* vii. 33. When the glory of the Gospel dwells in our land, then it shall yield its increase; for soul prosperity will either bring outward prosperity along with it, or sweeten the want of it: see *Ps.* lxvii. 6.

5th. A sure conduct in the good way, ver. 13. The righteousness of his promise which he hath made to us, assuring us of happiness, the righteousness of sanctification, that good work which he has wrought in us; these shall go before him, to prepare his way, both to raise our expectations of his favour and to qualify us for it; and this shall go before us also, and be our guide to "set us in the way of his steps," that is, to encourage our hopes, and guide our practice, that we may go forth to meet him when he is coming towards us in ways of mercy. Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shall bring us to God, and put us into the way that leads to him; John Baptist, a preacher of righteousness, shall go before Christ, to prepare his way. Righteousness is a sure guide both in meeting God and in following him.

PSALM LXXXVI.

This psalm is entitled a prayer of David. Probably it was not penned upon any particular occasion, but was a prayer he often used himself, and recommended to others for their use, especially in a day of affliction. Many think that David penned this prayer as a type of Christ, who, in the days of his flesh, offered up strong cries, *Heb.* v. 7. David, in this prayer, according to the nature of that duty, I. Gives glory to God, ver. 8—10, 12, 13. II. Seeks for grace and favour from God; that God would hear his prayers, ver. 1, 6, 7; preserve and save him, and be merciful to him, ver. 2, 3, 16; that he would give him joy, and grace, and strength, and put honour upon him, ver. 4, 11, 17; he pleads God's goodness, ver. 5, 15; and the malice of his enemies, ver. 14. In singing this, we must, as David did, lift up our souls to God with application.

A Prayer of David.

BOW down thine ear, O LORD, hear me:
For I *am* poor and needy.
2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy:
O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.
3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord:
For I cry unto thee daily.
4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant:
For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
5 For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive;
And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.
6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer;
And attend to the voice of my supplications.
7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee:
For thou wilt answer me.

This psalm was published under the title of a prayer of David; not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a psalm will admit the expressions of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetical flights or figures, in comparison of some other psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer. Now here we may observe,

First. The petitions he puts up to God. It is true, prayer accidentally may preach, but it is most fit that (as it is in this prayer) every passage should be directed to God, for such is the nature of prayer, as it is here described; ver. 4, "Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul," as he had said, *Ps.* xxv. 1. In all the parts of prayer the soul must ascend upon the wings of faith and holy desire, and be lifted up to God, to meet the communications of his graces, and in an expectation raised very high of great things from him.

1. He begs that God would give a gracious audience to his prayers; ver. 1, "Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me." When God hears our prayers it is fitly said that he bows down his ear to them; for it is admirable condescension in God that he is pleased to take notice of such mean creatures as we are, and such defective prayers as ours are. He repeats this again, ver. 6, "Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer," a favourable ear, though it be whispered, though it be stammered, "attend to the voice of my supplications." Not that God needs to have his affection stirred up by any thing that we can say; but thus we must express our desire of his favour. The Son of David spake it with assurance and pleasure, *Jno.* xi. 41, 42, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me alway."

2. He begs that God would take him under his special protection, and so be the author of his salvation; ver. 2, "Preserve my soul, save thy servant." It was David's soul that was God's servant, for those only serve God acceptably that serve him with their spirits. David's concern is about his soul. If we understand it of his natural life, it teaches us that the best self-preservation is to commit ourselves to God's keeping, and by faith and prayer to make our Creator our Preserver. But it may be understood of his spiritual life; the life of the soul as distinct from the body; Preserve my soul from that one evil and dangerous thing to souls, and that is sin. Preserve my soul, and so save me. All those whom God will save he doth preserve, and will preserve them to his heavenly kingdom.

3. He begs that God would look upon him with an eye of pity and compassion; ver. 3, "Be merciful to me, O Lord." It is mercy in God to pardon our sins, and to help us out of our distresses; both these are included in this prayer, God be merciful to me. Men shew no mercy, we ourselves deserve no mercy; but, Lord, for mercy's sake, be merciful unto me.

4. He begs that God would fill him with inward comfort; ver. 4, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant." It is God only that can put gladness into the heart, and make the soul to rejoice; and then and not till then the joy is full. And those that are God's servants, as it is their duty to serve him with gladness, so it is their privilege to be filled with joy and peace in believing; and they may in faith pray not only that God will preserve their souls, but that he will rejoice their souls, and the joy of the Lord will be their strength. Observe, When he prays, Rejoice my soul, he adds, "For unto thee do I lift up my soul." Then we may expect comfort from God when we take care to keep up our communion with God. Prayer is the nurse of spiritual joy.

Secondly. The pleas with which he enforceth these petitions.

1. He pleads his relation to God and interest in him. Thou art my God, to whom I have devoted myself, and on whom I depend, and I am thy servant, (ver. 2,) in subjection to thee, and therefore looking for protection from thee.

2. He pleads distress; "Hear me, for I am poor and needy," therefore I want thy help, therefore none else will hear me. God is the poor man's King, whose glory it is to save the souls of the needy. They that are poor in spirit, that see themselves empty and necessitous, are most welcome to the God of all grace.

3. He pleads God's good will towards all that seek him, ver. 5. "To thee do I lift up my soul" in desire and expectation; "for thou, Lord, art good," and whither should beggars go, but to the door of the good housekeeper? The goodness of God's nature is a great encouragement to us in all our addresses to

him. His goodness appears in two things, giving, and forgiving. 1st. He is a sin-pardoning God; not only he can forgive, but he is "ready to forgive;" more ready to forgive than we are to repent; "I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest," *Ps.* xxxii. 5. 2nd. He is a prayer-hearing God. He is plenteous in mercy, very full, and very free, both rich and liberal unto all them that call upon him. He has wherewithal to supply all their needs, and is open-handed in granting that supply.

4. He pleads God's good work in himself, by which he had qualified him for the tokens of his favour. Three things were wrought in him by Divine grace, which he looked upon as earnests of all good:

1st. A conformity to God; ver. 2, "I am holy," therefore "preserve my soul;" for those whom the Spirit sanctifies he will preserve. He doth not say this in pride and vainglory, but with humble thankfulness to God; 'I am one whom thou favourest,' so the margin reads it, whom thou hast set apart for thyself. If God has begun a good work of grace in us, we must own that the time was a time of love; "Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour." And whom God hath taken into his favour he will take under his protection; "All his saints are in thy hand," *Deu.* xxxiii. 3. Observe, "I am needy," ver. 1, yet "I am holy," ver. 2. Holy and yet needy; poor in the world, but rich in faith. And those who preserve their purity in their greatest poverty, may assure themselves that God will preserve their comforts, will preserve their souls.

2nd. A confidence in God; "Save thy servant that trusteth in thee." They that are holy yet must not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace. They that trust in God may expect salvation from him.

3rd. A disposition to communion with God. He hopes God will answer his prayers, because he had inclined him to pray. *First.* To be constant in prayer; "I cry unto thee daily," and "all the day," ver. 3. It is thus our duty to pray always, without ceasing, and to continue instant in prayer; and then we may hope to have our prayers heard which we make in time of trouble, if we have made conscience of the duty at other times, at all times. It is comfortable if an affliction finds the wheels of prayer agoing, and that they are not then to be set agoing. *Secondly.* To be inward with God in prayer; to lift up his soul to him, ver. 4. Then we may hope that God will meet us with his mercies when we in our prayers send forth our souls as it were to meet him. *Thirdly.* To be in a special manner earnest with God in prayer when he was in affliction; ver. 7, "In the day of my trouble," whatever others do, "I will call upon thee," and commit my case to thee, for thou wilt hear and answer me, and I shall not seek in vain, as those did who cried, "O Baal, hear us; but there was no voice, nor any that regarded," 1 *Kin.* xviii. 29.

8 Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord;
Neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.
9 All nations whom thou hast made
Shall come and worship before thee, O Lord;
And shall glorify thy name.
10 For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things:
Thou *art* God alone
11 Teach me thy way, O LORD;
I will walk in thy truth:
Unite my heart to fear thy name
12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart:
And I will glorify thy name for evermore
13 For great *is* thy mercy toward me:
And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.
14 O God, the proud are risen against me,
And the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my [soul;
And have not set thee before them.
15 But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious,
Long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.
16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me;
Give thy strength unto thy servant,
And save the son of thine handmaid.
17 Shew me a token for good;
That they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed:
Because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

David is here going on in his prayer:

First. He gives glory to God; for we ought in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to him, with the most humble and reverent adorations.

1. As a Being of unparalleled perfection, such an one as there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him; ver. 8, "Among the gods," the false gods, whom the heathens worshipped, the angels, the kings of the earth, among them all, "there is none like unto thee, O Lord;" none so wise, so mighty, so good; "neither are there any works like unto thy works," which is an undeniable proof that there is none like him. His own works praise him, and the best way we have of praising him is by acknowledging that there is none like him.

2. As the fountain of all being, and the centre of all praise; ver. 9, "Thou hast made all nations," made them all of one blood; they all derive their being from thee, and have a constant dependence on thee, and therefore "they shall come and worship before thee, and glorify thy name." This was in part fulfilled in the multitude of proselytes to the Jewish religion in the days of David and Solomon, but was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when some out of every kingdom and nation should be effectually brought in to praise God, *Rev.* vii. 9. It was by Christ that God made all nations, for without him was not any thing made that was made, and therefore through Christ, and by the power of his Gospel and grace, all nations shall be brought to worship before God, *Isa.* lxvi. 23.

3. As a Being infinitely great, ver. 10. Therefore all nations shall worship before thee, because as King of nations thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute, and incontestable, thy majesty terrible and insupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and for the proof of this, "thou doest wondrous things," which all nations admire, and from whence they might easily infer that "thou art God alone," not only none like thee, but none beside thee. Let us always entertain great thoughts of this great God, and be filled with holy admirings of this God that doeth wonders; and let him alone have our hearts who is God alone.

4. As a Being infinitely good. Man is bad, very wicked and vile, ver. 14; no mercy is to be expected from him; "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious," ver. 15. This is that attribute by which he proclaims his name, and by which we are therefore to proclaim it, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6, 7. It is his goodness that is over all his works, and therefore should fill all our praises; and this is our comfort, in reference to the wickedness of the world we live in, that, however it be, God is good. Men are barbarous, but God is gracious; men are false, but God is faithful. God is not only compassionate, but full of compassion, and in him mercy rejoiceth against judgment. He is long suffering towards us, though we forfeit his favour, and provoke him to anger; and he is plenteous in mercy and truth, as faithful in performing as he was free in promising.

5. As a kind friend and bountiful benefactor to him. We ought to praise God as good in himself, but we do it most feelingly when we observe how good he has been to us. This therefore the psalmist harps upon with most pleasure, ver. 12, 13. He had said, ver. 9, "All nations shall praise thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name." It is some satisfaction to a good man to think that others shall praise and glorify God, but it is his greatest care and pleasure to do it himself. Whatever others do, saith David, "I will praise thee, O Lord my God," not only as the Lord, but as my God; and I will do it with all mine heart,—that is, I will be ready to do it, and cordial in it; I will do it with cheerfulness and liveliness, with a sincere regard to thy honour; for "I will glorify thy name," not for a time, but "for evermore." I will do it as long as I live, and hope to be doing it to eternity. And with good reason does he resolve to be thus particular in praising God, because God had shewed him particular favours. "For great is thy mercy toward me." The fountain of mercy is inexhaustibly full; the streams of mercy are inestimably rich. When we speak of God's mercy to us, it becomes us to magnify it; "Great is thy mercy toward me." Of the greatness of God's mercy, he gives this instance, "Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell;" from death, from so great a death, as St. Paul, 2 *Cor.* i. 10. From eternal death; so even some of the Jewish writers understood it. David knew he deserved to have been cast off for ever into the lowest hell, for his sin in the matter of Uriah; but Nathan assured him, the Lord had taken away his sin, and by that word he was delivered from the lowest hell; and herein God's mercy was great toward him. Even the best saints owe it not to their own merit, but to the mercy of God, that they are saved from the lowest hell; and the consideration of that should greatly enlarge their hearts in praising the mercy of God, which they are obliged to glorify for evermore. So glorious, so gracious a rescue from everlasting misery justly requires the return of everlasting praise.

Secondly. He prays earnestly for mercy and grace from God. He complains of the restless and implacable malice of his enemies against him, ver. 14; Lord, be thou for me, for there are many against me; then takes notice of their character: they are proud men, that looked with disdain upon poor David. Many are made persecutors by their pride. They are violent men, that will carry all before them by force, right or wrong; they are terrible, formidable men, so some, that do what they can to frighten all about them. Their number: there are assemblies of them, they were men in authority, and met in councils and courts; or men for conversation, and met in clubs; but being assembled they were the more capable of doing mischief. Their enmity to David: they rise up against me in open rebellion; they not only plot, but they put their plots in execution as far as they can; and the design is not only to depose David, but to destroy him. They seek after my life, to slay me; after my soul, to damn me, if it lay in their power. And, lastly, here is their distance and estrangement from God, which was at the bottom of their enmity to David, they have not set thee before them; and what good can be expected from those that have no fear of God before their eyes? Lord, appear against them, for they are thine enemies as well as mine. His petitions are,

1. For the operations of God's grace in him, ver. 11. He prays that God would give him, 1st. An understanding heart, that he would inform and instruct him concerning his duty; "Teach me thy way, O Lord," the way that thou hast appointed me to walk in, and when I am in doubt concerning it make it plain to me what I should do; let me hear the voice, saying, "This is the way," *Isa.* xxx. 21. David was a very knowing man in the things of God, and yet was sensible he needed farther instruction, and many a time could not trust his own judgment. "Teach me thy way, I will walk in thy truth." One would think it should be, 'Teach me thy truth, and I will walk in thy way,' but it comes all to one. It is the way of truth that God teacheth, and that we must choose, and walk in, *Ps.* cxix. 30. Christ is the way and the truth, and we must both learn Christ, and walk in him. We cannot walk in God's way and truth unless he teach us; and if we expect he should teach us we must resolve to be governed by his teachings, *Isa.* ii. 3. 2nd. An upright heart; "Unite my heart to fear thy name;" that is, make me sincere in religion. A hypocrite has a double heart, let mine be single, and entire for God; not divided by him and the world, not straggling from him. Our hearts are apt to wander and hang loose; their powers and faculties scatter after a thousand foreign things, we have therefore need of God's grace to unite them, that we may serve God with all that is within us, and all little enough to be employed in his service. Let my heart be fixed for God, and firm and faithful to him, and fervent in serving him: that is a united heart.

2. For the tokens of God's favour to him, ver. 16, 17. Three things he here prays for; 1st. That God would speak peace and comfort to him. "O turn unto me," as to one thou lovest, and hast a kind and tender concern for. My enemies turn against me, my friends turn from me, Lord, do thou turn to me, "and have mercy upon me." It will be a comfort to me to know that thou pitiest me. 2nd. That God would work deliverance for him, and set him in safety. Give me thy strength,—that is, put strength into me, that I may help myself, and put forth thy strength for me, that I may be saved out of the hands of those that seek my ruin. He pleads relation: "I am thy servant," I am so by birth, as "the son of thine handmaid," born in thy house; and therefore thou art my rightful owner and proprietor, from whom I may expect protection. "I am thine, save me." The children of godly parents, who were betimes dedicated to the Lord, may plead it with him; if they come under the discipline of his family, they are entitled to the privileges of it. 3rd. That God would put reputation on him. "Shew me a token for good,"—that is, make it to appear to others as well as to myself, that thou art doing me good, and designing farther good for me. Let me have some unquestionable illustrious instances of thy favour to me, "that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed" of their enmity to me, as they will have reason to be when they perceive "thou, Lord, hast holpen me, and comforted me," and that therefore they have been striving

against God, opposing one whom he owns, and that they have been striving in vain to ruin and vex one whom God himself has undertaken to help and comfort. The joy of the saints shall be the shame of their persecutors.

PSALM LXXXVII.

The foregoing psalm was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark and hard to be understood. It is an encomium of Zion, as a type and figure of the gospel church, to which what is here spoken is very applicable. Zion, for the temple's sake, is here preferred, I. Before the rest of the land of Canaan, as being crowned with special tokens of God's favour, ver. 1—3. II. Before any other place or country whatsoever, as being replenished with more eminent men, and with a greater plenty of Divine blessings, ver. 4—7. Some think it was penned to express the joy of God's people when Zion was in a flourishing state; others think it was penned to encourage their faith and hope when Zion was in ruins, and was to be rebuilt after the captivity. Though no man cared for her, *Jer.* xxx. 17, "This is Zion whom no man seeketh after," yet God had done great things for her, and spoken glorious things of her, which should all have their perfection and accomplishment in the gospel church; to that therefore we must have an eye in singing this psalm.

A Psalm *or* Song for the sons of Korah.

HIS foundation *is* in the holy mountains.
2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.
3 Glorious things are spoken of thee,
O city of God. Selah.

Some make the first words of the psalm to be part of the title. It is a psalm or song, whose subject is the holy mountains,—that is, the temple built in Zion upon mount Moriah. That is the foundation of the argument, or beginning of the psalm. Or we may suppose the psalmist had now the tabernacle or temple in view, and was in his thoughts contemplating the glories of it, and at length he breaks out into this expression, which has reference, though not to what he had written before, yet to what he had thought of. Every one knew what he meant when he said thus abruptly, "Its foundations is in the holy mountains." Three things are here observed in the praise of the temple:

First. That it was founded on the holy mountains, ver. 1. The church has a foundation, so that it cannot sink or totter. Christ himself is the foundation of it, which God hath laid. The Jerusalem above is a city that has foundations. The foundation is upon the mountains, it is built high. "The mountain of the Lord's house is established upon the top of the mountains," *Isa.* ii. 2. It is built firm, the mountains are rocky, and on a rock the church is built. The world is founded upon the seas, *Ps.* xxiv. 2, which are continually ebbing and flowing, and are a very weak foundation; Babel was built in a plain, where the ground was rotten; but the church is built upon the everlasting mountains, and the perpetual hills; for sooner shall the mountains depart, and the hills be removed, than the covenant of God's peace shall be disannulled, and on that the church is built, *Isa.* liv. 10. The foundation is upon "the holy mountains." Holiness is the strength and stability of the church, that is it which will support it, and keep it from sinking; not so much that it is built upon mountains, as that it is built upon holy mountains; upon the promise of God, for the confirming of which he hath sworn by his holiness; upon the sanctification of the Spirit, which will secure the happiness of all the saints.

Secondly. That God had expressed a particular affection for it; ver. 2, "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion," of the temple, of the houses of doctrine, so the Chaldee, "more than all the dwellings of Jacob," whether in Jerusalem, or any where else in the country. God had said concerning Zion, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell;" there he met his people, and conversed with them, received their homage, and shewed them the tokens of his favour, and therefore we may conclude how well he loves those gates. Note, 1. God has a love for the dwellings of Jacob, has a gracious regard to religious families, and accepts their family worship. 2. Yet he loves the gates of Zion better, not only better than any, but better than all the dwellings of Jacob. God was worshipped in the dwellings of Jacob, and family worship is family duty, which must by no means be neglected; yet when they come in competition, public worship (*cæteris paribus*,—'other things being equal,') is to be preferred before private.

Thirdly. That there was much said concerning it in the word of God; ver. 3, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." We are to judge of things and persons by the figure they make and the estimate put upon them in and by the Scripture. Many base and ill things were spoken of the city of God by the enemies of it, to render it mean and odious, but by him whose judgment we are sure is according to truth, glorious things are spoken of it. God said of the temple, "Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually; I have sanctified this house that my name may be there for ever," 2 *Chr.* vii. 16; "Beautiful for situation is mount Zion," *Ps.* xlviii. 2. These are glorious things. Yet more glorious things are spoken of the gospel church; it is the spouse of Christ, the purchase of his blood; it is "a peculiar people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood," and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Let us not be ashamed of the church of Christ in its meanest condition, nor of any that belong to it, nor disown our relation to it, though it be turned never so much to our reproach, since such glorious things are spoken of it, and not one iota or tittle of what is said shall fall to the ground.

4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me:
Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia;
This *man* was born there.
5 And of Zion it shall be said,
This and that man was born in her:
And the highest himself shall establish her.
6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people,
That this *man* was born there. Selah. [*there:*
7 As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be*
All my springs *are* in thee.

Zion is here compared with other places, and preferred before them. The church of Christ is more glorious and excellent than the nations of the earth.

First. It is owned that other places have their glories; ver. 4, "I will make mention of Rahab," that is, Egypt, "and Babylon, to them that know me," and are about me, and with whom I discourse about public affairs. "Behold Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia," or rather Arabia, we will observe that "this man was born there;" here and there one famous man, eminent for knowledge and virtue, may be produced, that was a native of these countries; here and there one that becomes a proselyte, and a worshipper of the true God. But some give another sense of it; that it is a prophecy or promise of bringing the Gentiles into the church, and uniting of them in one body with the Jews. God saith, 'I will reckon Egypt and Babylon with them that know me,' that is, I will reckon them my people, as much as Israel, when they shall receive the Gospel of Christ, and own them as born in Zion, that is, born again there, and admitted to the privileges of Zion as freely as a trueborn Israelite. They that were strangers and foreigners became fellow-citizens with the saints, *Eph.* ii. 17. A Gentile convert shall stand upon a level with a native Jew. Compare *Isa.* xix. 23, 25, "The Lord shall say, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."

Secondly. It is proved that the glory of Zion outshines them all upon many accounts; for,

1. Zion shall produce many great and good men, that shall be famous in their generation; ver. 5. "Of Zion it shall be said" by all her neighbours, that "this and that man was born in her;" many men of renown for wisdom and piety, and especially for acquaintance with the words of God and the visions of the Almighty. Many prophets and kings that should be greater favourites of Heaven, and greater blessings to the earth than ever were bred in Egypt or Babylon. The worthies of the church far exceed those of heathen nations, and their names will shine brighter than in perpetual records. 'A man, a man was born in her;' by which some understand Christ, that man, that Son of man, who is fairer than the children of men; he was born at Bethlehem, near Zion, and was the glory of his people Israel. The greatest honour that ever was put upon the Jewish nation was, that of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, *Rom.* ix. 5. Or this also may be applied to the conversion of the Gentiles; of Zion it shall be said, that the law which went forth out of Zion, the Gospel of Christ, shall be an instrument to beget many souls to God, and the Jerusalem that is from above shall be acknowledged the mother of them all.

2. Zion's interest shall be strengthened and settled by an almighty power. "The highest himself shall" undertake to "establish her," who can do it effectually; the accession of proselytes out of divers nations shall be so far from occasioning discord and division, that it shall contribute greatly to Zion's strength; for God himself, having founded her upon an everlasting foundation, whatever convulsions and revolutions there are of states and kingdoms, and however heaven and earth may be shaken, these are things which cannot be shaken, but must remain.

3. Zion's sons shall be registered with honour; ver. 6, "The Lord shall count when he writes up the people," and takes a catalogue of his subjects, "that this man was born there," and so is a subject by birth, by the first birth, being born in his house, by the second birth, being born again of his Spirit. When God comes to reckon with the children of men, that he may render to every man according to his works, he shall observe who was born in Zion, and consequently enjoyed the privileges of God's sanctuary, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, *Rom.* ix. 4; iii. 1, 2; for to them much was given, and therefore of them much will be required, and the account will be accordingly; five talents must be improved by those that were intrusted with five. "I know thy works and where thou dwellest," and where thou wast born. "Selah." Let those that dwell in Zion mark this, and live up to their profession.

4. Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph. "As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there" to praise God, ver. 7. It was much the honour of Zion, and is the honour of the gospel church, that there God is served and worshipped with rejoicing; his work is done, and done cheerfully, see *Ps.* lxviii. 25. "All my springs are in thee," O Zion: so God saith he hath deposited treasures of grace in his holy ordinances; there are the springs from which those streams take rise, "which make glad the city of our God," *Ps.* xlvi. 4. So the Psalmist saith, reckoning the springs from which his dry soul must be watered to lie in the sanctuary, in the word and ordinances, and in the communion of saints. The springs of the joy of a carnal worldling lie in wealth and pleasure, but the springs of the joy of a gracious soul lie in the word of God and prayer. Christ is the true temple; all our springs are in him, and from him all our streams flow; "it pleased the Father," and all believers are well pleased with it too, "that in him should all fulness dwell."

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This psalm is a lamentation, one of the most melancholy of all the psalms; and it doth not conclude as usually the melancholy psalms do, with any the least intimation of comfort or joy, but from first to last, it is mourning and woe. It is not upon a public account that the psalmist here complains; here is no mention of the afflictions of the church, but only upon a personal account, especially trouble of mind, and the grief impressed upon his spirits, both by his outward afflictions, and by the remembrance of his sins, and the fear of God's wrath. It is reckoned among the penitential psalms, and it is well when our fears are thus turned into the right channel; and we take occasion from our worldly grievances to sorrow after a godly sort. In this psalm we have, I. The great pressure of spirit that the psalmist was under, ver. 3—6. II. The wrath of God, which was the cause of that pressure, ver. 7, 15—17. III. The wickedness of his friends, ver. 8, 18. IV. The application he made to God by prayer, ver. 1, 2, 9, 13. V. His humble expostulations and pleadings with God, ver. 10, 12, 14. Those who are in trouble of mind may sing this psalm feelingly; those that are not ought to sing it thankfully, blessing God that it is not their case.

A Song *or* Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

O LORD God of my salvation,
I have cried day *and* night before thee:
2 Let my prayer come before thee:
Incline thine ear unto my cry;
3 For my soul is full of troubles:
And my life draweth nigh unto the grave
4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit:
I am as a man *that hath* no strength:
5 Free among the dead,
Like the slain that lie in the grave,

Whom thou rememberest no more:
And they are cut off from thy hand.
6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,
In darkness, in the deeps.
7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,
And thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves. Selah.
8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me;
Thou hast made me an abomination unto them:
I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.
9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction:
LORD, I have called daily upon thee,
I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

It should seem by the titles of this and the following psalm, that Heman was the penman of the one, and Ethan of the other. There were two, of these names, that were sons of Zerah the son of Judah, 1 *Chr.* ii. 4, 6. There were two others famed for wisdom, 1 *Kin.* iv. 31, where, to magnify Solomon's wisdom, he is said to be wiser than Heman and Ethan. Whether the Heman and Ethan that were Levites and precentors in the songs of Zion were the same, we are not sure, nor which of these, nor whether any of these were the penmen of these psalms. There was a Heman that was one of the chief singers, who is called the king's seer, or prophet, in the words of God, 1 *Chr.* xxv. 5; it is probable this too was a seer, and yet could see no comfort for himself—an instructor and comforter of others, and yet himself putting comfort away from him. The very first words of the psalm are the only words of comfort and support in all the psalm. There is nothing about him but clouds and darkness; but before he begins his complaint he calls God the God of his salvation, which intimates both that he looked for salvation, as bad as things were, and that he looked up to God for the salvation, and depended upon him to be the author of it. Now here we have the psalmist,

First. A man of prayer; one that gave himself to prayer at all times, but especially now he was in affliction; for "is any afflicted? let him pray." It is his comfort that he had prayed; it is his complaint, that notwithstanding his prayer, he was still in affliction. He was, 1. Very earnest in prayer, "I have cried unto thee," ver. 1; and "have stretched out my hands unto thee," ver. 9, as one that would take hold on thee, and even catch at the mercy, with a holy fear of coming short and missing of it. 2. He was very frequent and constant in prayer. "I have called upon thee daily," ver. 9; nay, day and night, ver. 1: for thus "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" God's own elect cry day and night to him; not only morning and evening, beginning every day and every night with prayer, but spending the day and night in prayer. This is indeed praying always, and then we shall speed in prayer when we continue instant in prayer. 3. He directed his prayer to God, and from him expected and desired an answer; ver. 2, "Let my prayer come before thee," to be accepted of thee, not before men, to be seen of them, as the Pharisees' prayers. He doth not desire that men should hear them, but "Lord, incline thou thine ear unto my cry," for to that I refer myself; give what answer to it thou pleasest.

Secondly. He was a man of sorrows, and therefore some make him in this psalm a type of Christ, whose complaints on the cross, and sometimes before, were much to the same tune with this psalm. He cries out, ver. 3, "My soul is full of troubles;" so Christ said, "Now is my soul troubled;" and in his agony, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful;" like the psalmist's here, "even unto death," for he saith, "My life draweth nigh unto the grave." Heman was a very wise man, and a good man, a man of God, and a singer, too, and one may therefore suppose him to be a man of a cheerful spirit, and yet now a man of a sorrowful spirit, troubled in mind, and upon the brink of despair. Inward trouble is the sorest trouble, and that which sometimes the best of God's saints and servants have been severely exercised with. The spirit of man, of the greatest of men, will not always sustain the infirmity, but will droop and sink under it; who, then, can bear a wounded spirit?

Thirdly. He looked upon himself as a dying man, whose heart was ready to break with sorrow; ver. 5, "Free among the dead," one of that ghastly corporation; "Like the slain that lie in the grave," whose rotting and perishing nobody takes notice of, or is concerned for; nay, "Whom thou rememberest no more," to protect or provide for the dead bodies, but they become an easy prey to corruption and the worms; "they are cut off from thy hand," which used to be employed in supporting them, and reaching out to them; but now there is no more occasion for it, they are cut off from it, and cut off by it; for "God will not stretch out his hand to the grave," *Job* xxx. 24. "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit," as low as possible, my condition low, my spirits low, "in darkness, in the deeps," ver. 6; sinking, and seeing no way open of escape, brought to the last extremity, and ready to give up all for gone. Thus greatly may good men be afflicted, and such dismal apprehensions may they have concerning their afflictions, and such dark conclusions may they sometimes be ready to make concerning the issue of them, through the power of melancholy and the weakness of faith.

Fourthly. He complained most of God's displeasure against him, which infused the wormwood and the gall into the affliction and the misery; ver. 7, "Thy wrath lies hard upon me." Could he have discerned the favour and love of God in his affliction, it had lain light upon him; but it lay hard, very hard upon him, so that he was ready to sink and faint under it. The impressions of this wrath upon his spirits, were God's waves, with which he afflicted him, which rolled upon him, one on the neck of another, so that he scarce recovered from one dark thought but he was oppressed with another; these waves beat against him with noise and fury; not some, but all God's waves were made use of in afflicting him, and bearing him down. Even the children of God's love may sometimes apprehend themselves children of wrath, and no outward trouble can lie so hard upon them as that apprehension.

Fifthly. It added to his affliction that his friends deserted him, and made themselves strange to him. When we are in trouble, it is some comfort to have those about us that love us, and sympathize with us, but this good man had none such, which gives him occasion not to accuse them, or charge them with treachery, ingratitude, and inhumanity, but to complain to God, with an eye to his hand in this part of the affliction; ver. 8, "Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me." Providence had removed them, or rendered them incapable of being serviceable to him, or alienated their affections from him, for every creature is that to us and no more than God makes it to be. If our old acquaintance be shy of us, and those we expect kindness from prove unkind, we must bear that with the same patient submission to the Divine will that we do other afflictions, *Job* xix. 13. Nay, his friends were not only strange to him, but even hated him, because he was poor and in distress; "thou hast made me an abomination to them;" they are not only shy of me, but sick of me, and I am looked upon by them not only with contempt, but with abhorrence. Let none think it strange concerning such a trial as this, when Heman, that was so famed for wisdom, yet when the world frowned upon him was neglected, as a vessel in which is no pleasure.

Lastly. He looked upon his case as helpless and deplorable; "I am shut up, and I cannot come forth," a close prisoner under the arrests of Divine wrath, and no way open of escape. He therefore lies down and sinks under his troubles, because he sees not any probability of getting out of them. For thus he bemoaneth himself, ver. 9, "Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction;" and sometimes giving vent to grief by weeping gives some ease to a troubled spirit. Yet weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears; "Mine eye mourns, but I cry unto thee daily;" let prayer and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together; "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears."

10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?
Shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah.
11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?
Or thy faithfulness in destruction?
12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?
And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD;
And in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.
14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul?
Why hidest thou thy face from me?
15 I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up:
While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.
16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me;
Thy terrors have cut me off.
17 They came round about me daily like water;
They compassed me about together.
18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me,
And mine acquaintance into darkness.

In these verses,

First. The psalmist expostulates with God concerning the present deplorable condition he was in, ver. 10—12, Wilt thou do a miraculous work to the dead, and raise them to life again? Shall those that are dead and buried rise up to praise thee? No, they leave it to their children to rise up in their rooms to praise God; none expects that they should do it; and wherefore should they rise? Wherefore should they live, but to praise God? The life we are born to at first, and the life we hope to rise to at last, must thus be spent. But "shall thy lovingkindness" to thy people "be declared in the grave," either by those or to those that lie buried there? and thy faithfulness to thy promise, shall that be told in destruction? Shall thy wonders be wrought in the dark or known there, and thy righteousness in the grave, which is the land of forgetfulness, where men remember nothing, nor are themselves remembered? Departed souls may indeed know God's wonders, and declare his faithfulness, justice, and lovingkindness, but deceased bodies cannot; they can neither receive God's favours in comfort, nor return them in praise. Now we will not suppose these expostulations to be the language of despair, as if he thought God could not help him, or would not, much less do they speak any disbelief of the resurrection of the dead at the last day; but he thus pleads with God for speedy relief. Lord, thou art good, thou art faithful, thou art righteous; these attributes of thine will be made known in my deliverance, but if it be not hastened, it will come too late, for I shall be dead and past relief; dead, and not capable of receiving any comfort very shortly. Job often pleaded this, *Job* vii. 8; x. 21.

Secondly. He resolves to continue instant in prayer, and the more so because the deliverance was deferred; ver. 13, "Unto thee have I cried" many a time, and found comfort in it, and therefore I will continue to do so; "In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee." Note, Though our prayers be not answered presently, yet we must not therefore give over praying, because "the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie." And God, therefore, delays the answer, that he may try our patience and perseverance in prayer. He resolves to seek God early in the morning, when his spirits were lively, and before the business of the day began to crowd in; in the morning, after he had been tossed with cares and sorrowful thoughts in the silence and solitude of the night. But how doth he say, "My prayer shall prevent thee?" Not as if he could wake sooner to pray than God to hear and answer, for he neither slumbers nor sleeps: but it intimates that he would be up earlier than ordinary to pray: would prevent his usual hour of prayer. The greater our afflictions are, the more solicitous and serious we should be in prayer. My prayer shall present itself before thee, and be betimes with thee, and shall not stay for the encouragement of the beginning of mercy, but reach out towards it with faith and expectation, even before the day dawns. God often prevents our prayers and expectations with his mercies; let us prevent his mercies with our prayers and expectations.

Thirdly. He sets down what he will say to God in prayer.

1. He will humbly reason with God concerning the abject afflicted condition he was now in; ver. 14, "Lord, why castest thou off my soul?" What is it that provokes thee to treat me as one abandoned? "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." He speaks it with wonder that God should cast off an old servant; should cast off one that was resolved not to cast him off; no wonder men cast me off, but, Lord, why dost thou, whose gifts and callings are without repentance? "Why hidest thou thy face," as one angry at me, that either hast no favour for me, or wilt not let me know it? Nothing grieves a child of God so much as God's hiding his face from him, nor is there any thing he so much dreads as God's casting off his soul. If the sun be clouded, that darkens the earth, but if the sun should abandon the earth, and quite cast it off, what a dungeon would it be!

2. He will humbly repeat the same complaints he had before made, until that God have mercy on him. Two things he represents to God as his grievances:

1st. That God was a terror to him; "I suffer thy terrors," ver. 15. He had continual frightful apprehensions of the wrath of God against him for his sins, and the consequences of that wrath. It terrified him to think of God, and of falling into his hands, and appearing before him to receive his doom from him. He sweat and trembled at the apprehension of God's displeasure against him, and the terror of his majesty. Note, Even those that are designed for God's

favours may yet for a time suffer his terrors. The spirit of adoption is first a spirit of bondage to fear. Poor Job complained of the terrors of God setting themselves in array against him, *Job* vi. 4. The psalmist here explains himself, and tells us what he means by God's terrors, even his fierce wrath. Let us see what dreadful impressions those terrors made upon him, and how deep they wounded him. *First.* They had almost taken away his life: "I am so afflicted with them, that I am ready to die," and, as the word is, to give up the ghost; "Thy terrors have cut me off," ver. 16. What is hell, that eternal excision, by which damned sinners are for ever cut off from God and all happiness, but God's terrors fastening and preying upon their guilty consciences? *Secondly.* They had almost taken away the use of his reason; "When I suffer thy terrors I am distracted;" that sad effect the terrors of the Lord have had upon many, and some good men, who have thereby been put quite out of the possession of their own souls; a most piteous case, and which ought to be looked upon with great compassion. *Thirdly.* This had continued long; "From my youth up I suffer thy terrors;" he had been from his childhood afflicted with melancholy, and trained up in sorrow, under the discipline of that school. If we begin our days with trouble, and the days of our mourning have been prolonged a great while, let us not think it strange, but let tribulation work patience. It is observable that Heman, who became eminently wise and good, was afflicted and ready to die from his youth up, and suffered God's terrors. Thus many have found it was good for them to bear the yoke in their youth; that sorrow has been much better for them than laughter would have been; and that being much afflicted, and often ready to die when they were young, they have, by the grace of God, got such an habitual seriousness and weanedness from the world as had been of great use to them all their days. And sometimes those whom God designs for eminent services are prepared for them by exercises of this kind. *Fourthly.* His affliction was now in extremity, and worse than ever. God's terrors now came round about him, so that from all sides he was assaulted with varieties of troubles, and he had no comfortable gale from any point of the compass. They broke in upon him together, like an inundation of water, and this daily and all the day; so that he had no rest, no respite, not the least breathing time, no lucid intervals, nor any gleam of hope. Such was the calamitous state of a very wise and good man; he was so surrounded with terrors that he could find no place of shelter, nor lie any where under the wind.

2nd. That no friend he had in the world was a comfort to him; ver. 18, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me;" some are dead, others at a distance, and perhaps many unkind. Next to the comforts of religion are those of friendship and society; therefore to be friendless is (as to this life) almost to be comfortless; and to those who have had friends, but have lost them, the calamity is the more grievous. With this the psalmist here closeth his complaint, as if this were it that completed his woe, and gave the finishing stroke to this melancholy piece. If our friends are put far from us by scattering providences, nay, if by death our acquaintance are removed into darkness, we have reason to look upon it as a sore affliction, but must acknowledge and submit to the hand of God in it.

PSALM LXXXIX.

Many psalms that begin with complaint and prayer end with joy and praise, but this begins with joy and praise, and ends with sad complaints and petitions; for the psalmist first recounts God's former favours, and then with the consideration of them aggravates the present grievances. It is uncertain when it was penned, only in general that it was at a time when the house of David was wofully eclipsed; some think it was at the time of the captivity of Babylon, when king Zedekiah was insulted over and abused by Nebuchadnezzar; and then they make the title to signify no more but that the psalm was set to the tune of a song of Ethan, the son of Zerah, called Maschil; others suppose it to be penned by Ethan, who is mentioned in the story of Solomon, who, outliving that glorious prince, thus lamented the great disgrace done to the house of David in the next reign by the revolt of the ten tribes. I. The psalmist in the joyful, pleasant part of the psalm gives glory to God, and takes comfort to himself and his friends; and this he doth more briefly, mentioning God's mercy and truth, ver. 1, and his covenant, ver. 2—4; but more largely in the following verses, wherein, 1. He adores the glory and perfection of God, ver. 5—14. 2. He pleaseth himself in the happiness of those that are admitted into communion with him, ver. 15—18. 3. He builds all his hope upon God's covenant with David, as a type of Christ, ver. 19—37. II. In the melancholy part of the psalm he laments the present calamitous state of the prince and royal family, ver. 38—45; expostulates with God upon it, ver. 46—49; and then concludes with prayer for redress, ver. 50, 51. In singing this psalm we must have high thoughts of God, a lively faith in his covenant with the Redeemer, and a sympathy with the afflicted parts of the church.

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

I WILL sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever:
With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.
2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever:
Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.
3 I have made a covenant with my chosen,
I have sworn unto David my servant,
4 Thy seed will I establish for ever,
And build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

The psalmist has a very sad complaint to make, of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the psalm with songs of praise; for we must in every thing, in every state, give thanks; thus we must glorify the Lord in the fire. We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining; but we do more—we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgiving; and in these verses we find that which will be matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or public account.

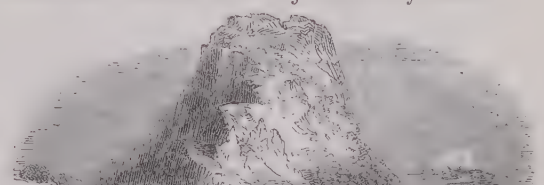
First. However it be, the everlasting God is good and true, ver. 1. Though we may find it hard to reconcile present dark providences with the goodness and truth of God, yet we must abide by this principle, that God's mercies are inexhaustible, and his truth inviolable; and these must be the matter of our joy and praise. "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever;" sing a praising song to God's honour, a pleasant song for my own solace; and Maschil, an instructing song for the edification of others. We may be for ever singing of God's mercies, and yet the subject will not be drawn dry. We must sing of God's mercies as long as we live, train up others to sing of them when we are gone, and hope to be singing of them in heaven world without end; and this is singing of the mercies of the Lord for ever. "With my mouth," and my pen, (for by that also we speak,) "will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations;" assuring posterity from my own observation and experience, that God is true to every word that he hath spoken, that they may learn to put their trust in God, *Ps.* lxxviii. 6.

Secondly. However it be, the everlasting covenant is firm and sure, ver. 2—4. Here we have,

1. The psalmist's faith and hope. Things now look black, and threaten the utter extirpation of the house of David; but "I have said," and I have warrant from the word of God to say it, that "Mercy shall be built up for ever." As the goodness of God's nature is to be the matter of our song, ver. 1, so much more the mercy that is built up for us in the covenant. It is still increasing like a house in the building up, and shall still continue our rest for ever, like a house built up. It shall be built up for ever; for the everlasting habitations we hope for in the new Jerusalem are of this building. If mercy shall be built for ever, then the tabernacle of David which is fallen down shall be raised out of its ruins, and built up as in the days of old, *Am.* ix. 11. Therefore, mercy shall be built up for ever, because "thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens." Though our expectations are in some particular instances disappointed, yet God's promises are not disannulled. They are established in the very heavens, that is, in his eternal counsels; they are above the changes of this lower region, and out of the reach of the opposition of hell and earth. And the stability of the material heavens is an emblem of the truth of God's word; the heavens may be clouded by vapours arising out of the earth, but they cannot be touched,—they cannot be changed.

2. An abstract of the covenant upon which this faith and hope is built. I have said it, saith the psalmist, for God hath sworn it, that the heirs of promise might be entirely satisfied of the immutability of his counsel. He brings in God speaking, ver. 3, owning to the comfort of his people, "I have made a covenant," and therefore will make it good. The covenant is made with David; the covenant of royalty is made with him, as the father of his family, and with his seed through him, and for his sake; representing the covenant of grace made with Christ as head of the church, and with all believers as his spiritual seed. David is here called God's chosen, and his servant: and, as God is not changeable to recede from his own choice, so he is not unrighteous to cast off one that served him. Two things encourage the psalmist to build his faith on this covenant: 1st. The ratification of it. It was confirmed with an oath. "The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent." 2nd. The perpetuity of it. The blessings of the covenant were not only secured to David himself, but were entailed on his family. It was promised that his family should continue; "Thy seed will I establish for ever," so that "David shall not want a son to reign," *Jer.* xxiii. 20, 21. And that it should continue a royal family; "I will build up thy throne to all generations," to all the generations of time. This has its accomplishment only in Christ, of the seed of David, who lives for ever, to whom God has given the throne of his father David, and of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end. Of this covenant the psalmist will return to speak more largely, ver. 19, &c.

5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD:
Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.
6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD?
Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?
7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints,
And to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him.
8 O LORD God of hosts, who *is* a strong LORD like unto thee?
Or to thy faithfulness round about thee?
9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea:
When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.
10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain;
Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.
11 The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine:
As for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.
12 The north and the south thou hast created them:
Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.



MOUNT TABOR.

13 Thou hast a mighty arm:
Strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand.
14 Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne:
Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

These verses are full of the praises of God. Observe,

First. Where and by whom God is to be praised.

1. God is praised by the angels above; "The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord," ver. 5; that is, The glorious inhabitants of the upper world continually celebrate thy praises. "Bless the Lord, ye his angels," *Ps.* ciii. 20. The works of God are wonders even to them that are best acquainted, and most intimately conversant with them. God's works the more they are known the more they are admired and praised. This should make us love heaven, and long to be there, that there we shall have nothing else to do but to praise God and his wonders.

2. God is praised by the assemblies of his saints on earth. Praise waits for him in Zion, and though they fall so far short of the praises of angels, yet God is pleased to take notice of them, and accept them, and reckons himself honoured by them. Thy faithfulness and the truth of thy promise, that rock on which the church is built, this shall be praised in the congregation of the saints, who owe their all to that faithfulness, and whose constant comfort it is that there is a promise, and that "He is faithful that has promised." It is expected from God's saints on earth, that they praise him. Who should if they do not? Let every saint praise him, but especially the congregation of saints; when they come together, let them join in praising God; the more the better, it is liker heaven. Of the honour done to God by the assembly of the saints, he speaks again, ver. 7, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints." Saints should assemble for religious worship, that they may publicly own their relation to God, and may stir up one another to give honour to him, and in keeping up communion with God, may likewise maintain the communion of saints. In religious assemblies God has promised the presence of his grace, but we must also in them have an eye to his glorious presence, that the familiarity we are admitted to may not breed the least contempt; for he is terrible in his holy places, and therefore greatly to be feared. A holy awe of God must fall upon us, and fill us, in all our approaches to God, even in secret, to which something may very well be added by the solemnity of public assemblies. God must be had in reverence of all that are about him, that attend him continually as his servants, or approach him upon any particular errand: see *Lev.* x. 3. Those only serve God acceptably who serve him with reverence and godly fear, *Heb.* xii. 28.

Secondly. What it is to praise God. It is to acknowledge him to be a being of unparalleled perfection, such an one as there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, ver. 6. If there be any beings that can pretend to vie with God, sure they must be found among the angels; but they are all infinitely short of him; "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord?" so as to challenge any share of that adoration and reverence which is due to him only, or to set up in rivalship with him for the homage of the children of men? They are sons of the mighty, but which of them can be likened unto the Lord? Nobles are prince's peers; some parity there is between them; but none between God and the angels; they are not his peers; "To whom will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One," *Isa.* xl. 25. This is insisted on again, ver. 8, "Who is a strong Lord like unto thee?" No angel, no earthly potentate whatsoever, is comparable to God, or has an arm like him, or can thunder with a voice like him. "Thy faithfulness is round about thee," that is, thine angels that are round about thee, attending thee with their praises, and ready to go on thine errands, are all faithful. Or rather, in every thing thou dost, on all sides, thou approvest thyself faithful to thy word, above whatever prince or potentate was. Among men it is often found, that those who are most able to break their word are least careful to keep it; but God is both strong and faithful; he can do every thing, and yet will never do an unjust thing.

Thirdly. What we ought in our praises to give God the glory of. Several things are here mentioned.

1. The command God has of the most ungovernable creatures; ver. 9, "Thou rulest the raging of the sea," than which nothing is more frightful or threatening, nor more out of the power of man to give check to; yet it can swell no higher, no farther, beat no harder, continue no longer, nor do any more hurt than God suffers it; "When the waves thereof arise," thou canst presently hush them asleep,—still them, and make them quiet, and turn the storm into a calm. This coming in here as an act of Omnipotence, what manner of man then was the Lord Jesus, whom the winds and seas obeyed?

2. The victories God has obtained over the enemies of his church. His ruling the raging of the sea, and quelling its billows, was an emblem of this; ver. 10, "Thou hast broken Rahab," many a proud enemy, so it signifies, Egypt in particular, which is sometimes called Rahab, broken it "in pieces, as one that is slain," and utterly unable to make head again. The head being broken, thou hast scattered the remainder with the arm of thy strength. God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies; we think he should slay them presently but sometimes he scatters them, that he may send them abroad to be mounments of his justice, *Ps.* li. 11. The remembrance of the breaking of Egypt in pieces, is a comfort to the church in reference to the present power of Babylon; for God is still the same.

3. The incontestable property he has in all the creatures of the upper and lower world, ver. 11, 12. Men are honoured for their large possessions, but "the heavens are thine, O Lord, the earth also is thine," therefore, we praise thee; therefore we trust in thee; therefore we will not fear what man can do against us. "The world and the fulness thereof," all the riches contained in it, all the inhabitants of it, both the tenements and the tenants, they are all thine; for thou hast founded them; and the foundcr may justly claim to be the owner. He instanceth, 1st. In the remotest parts of the world, the north and south, the countries that lie under the two poles, which are uninhabited, and little known, yet thou hast created them, and therefore knowest them, takest care of them, and hast tributes of praise from them. The north is said to be hung over the empty place, yet what fulness there is there God is the owner of it. 2nd. In the highest parts of the world. He instanceth in the two highest hills in Canaan, "Tabor and Hermon," one lying to the west, the other to the east; these "shall rejoice in thy name;" for they are under the care of thy providence, and they produce offerings for thine altar; the little hills are said to rejoice in their own fruitfulness, *Ps.* lxv. 12. Tabor is commonly supposed to be that high mountain in Galilee on the top of which Christ was transfigured; and then indeed, it might be said to rejoice in that voice which was there heard, "This is my beloved Son."

4. That power and justice, that mercy and truth, with which he governs the world, and rules in the affairs of the children of men, ver. 13, 14. 1st. God is able to do every thing; for he is the Lord God Almighty. His arm, his hand, is mighty and strong, both to save his people, and to destroy his and their enemies; none can either resist his force, or bear the weight of his mighty hand. High is his right hand to reach the highest, even those that set their nest among the stars, *Am.* ix. 2, 3; *Obad.* 4; his right hand is exalted in what he hath done, for in thousands of instances he hath signalized his power, *Ps.* cxviii. 16. 2nd. He never did nor ever will do any thing that is either unjust or unwise; for "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." None of all his dictates or decrees ever varied from the rules of equity and wisdom, nor could ever any charge God with unrighteousness or folly. Justice and judgment are the preparing of his throne, so some; the establishment of it, so others. The preparations for his government in his counsels from eternity, and the establishment of it in its consequences to eternity, are all justice and judgment. 3rd. He always doth that which is kind to his people, and consonant to the word which he hath spoken. Mercy and truth shall go before thy face to prepare thy way, as harbingers to make room for thee; mercy in promising, truth in performing; truth in being as good as thy word, mercy in being better. How praiseworthy are these in great men, much more in the great God, in whom they are in perfection!

15 Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound:
They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.
16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:
And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.
17 For thou *art* the glory of their strength:
And in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.
18 For the LORD *is* our defence;
And the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.

The psalmist having largely shewed the blessedness of the God of Israel, here shews the blessedness of the Israel of God. As "there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun," so, "Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people?" especially as a type of the gospel Israel, consisting of all true believers, whose happiness is here described.

First. Glorious discoveries are made to them, and glad tidings of good brought to them. They hear, they "know the joyful sound," ver. 15. This alludes either, 1. To the shout of a victorious army, the shout of a king, *Num.* xxiii. 21. Israel has the tokens of God's presence with them in their wars. The sound of the going in the top of the mulberry trees was indeed a joyful sound, 2 *Sam.* v. 24, and they often returned, making the earth ring with their songs of triumph; these were joyful sounds. Or, 2. To the sound that was made over the sacrifices, and on the solemn feast-day, *Ps.* lxxxi. 1—3. This was the happiness of Israel, that they had among them the free and open profession of God's holy religion, and abundance of joy in their sacrifices. Or, 3. To the sound of the jubilee trumpet. A joyful sound it was to servants and debtors, to whom it proclaimed release. The Gospel is indeed a joyful sound; a sound of victory, of liberty, of communion with God, and the sound of abundance of rain. Blessed is the people that hear it, and know it, and bid it welcome.

Secondly. Special tokens of God's favour are granted them. "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance;" they shall govern themselves by thy conduct, be guided by thine eye. And they shall delight themselves in thy consolations; they shall have the favour of God, they shall know that they have it, and it shall be continual matter of joy and rejoicing to them. They shall go through all the exercises of a holy life under the powerful influences of God's lovingkindness, which shall make their duty pleasant to them, and make them sincere in it, aiming at this as their end, to be accepted of the Lord. We then walk in the light of the Lord, when we fetch all our comforts from God's favour, and are very careful to keep ourselves in his love.

Thirdly. They never want matter for joy. Blessed are God's people, for in his name, in all that whereby he has made himself known, if it be not their own fault, "they shall rejoice all the day." They that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and make God their exceeding joy, have enough to balance their grievances, and silence their griefs; and therefore their joy is full, 1 *Jno.* i. 4, and constant. It is their duty to rejoice evermore.

Fourthly. Their relation to God is their honour and dignity. They are happy, for they are high. "Surely in the Lord," the Lord Christ, "they have righteousness and strength," and so are recommended by him to the Divine acceptance; and therefore "in him shall all the seed of Israel glory," *Isa.* xlv. 24, 25. And so it is here, ver. 16, 17: 1. "In thy righteousness shall they be exalted," and not in any righteousness of their own. We are exalted out of danger, and into honour, purely by the righteousness of Christ, which is a clothing both for dignity and for defence. 2. "Thou art the glory of their strength;" that is, thou art their strength, and it is their glory that thou art so, and what they glory in. "Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph." 3. "In thy favour," which through Christ we hope for, "our horn shall be exalted." The horn notes beauty, plenty, and power, these they have who are made accepted in the Beloved. What greater preferment are men capable of in this world, than to be God's favourites?

Fifthly. Their relation to God is their protection and safety; ver. 18, 'For our shield is of the Lord,' (so the margin) 'and our king is from the Holy One of Israel.' If God be our ruler, he will be our defender, and who is he then that can harm us? It was the happiness of Israel, that God himself had the erecting of their bulwarks, and the nominating of their king; so some take it. Or rather, that he was himself a wall of fire round about them, and as a holy one, the author and centre of their holy religion. He was their king, and so their glory in the midst of them. Christ is the holy one of Israel, that holy thing; and in nothing was that peculiar people more blessed than in this, that he was born king of the Jews. Now this account of the blessedness of God's Israel comes in here as that to which it was hard to reconcile their present calamitous state.

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one,
And saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty;
I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.
20 I have found David my servant;
With my holy oil have I anointed him:
21 With whom my hand shall be established:
Mine arm also shall strengthen him.
22 The enemy shall not exact upon him;
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
23 And I will beat down his foes before his face,
And plague them that hate him.
24 But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him:
And in my name shall his horn be exalted.
25 I will set his hand also in the sea,

And his right hand in the rivers.
26 He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.
27 Also I will make him *my* firstborn,
Higher than the kings of the earth
28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,
And my covenant shall stand fast with him.
29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever,
And his throne as the days of heaven.
30 If his children forsake my law,
And walk not in my judgments;
31 If they break my statutes,
And keep not my commandments;
32 Then will I visit their transgression with the rod,
And their iniquity with stripes.
33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take [from him,
Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
34 My covenant will I not break,
Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
35 Once have I sworn by my holiness
That I will not lie unto David.
36 His seed shall endure for ever,
And his throne as the sun before me.
37 It shall be established for ever as the moon,
And *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

ANOINTING.—ver. 20.

The covenant God made with David and his seed was mentioned before, ver. 3, 4; but in these verses it is enlarged upon, and pleaded with God for favour to the royal family, now almost sunk and ruined; yet certainly it looks at Christ, and has its accomplishment in him much more than in David; nay, some passages here are scarce applicable at all to David, but must be understood of Christ only, who is therefore called David our king, *Hos.* iii. 5. And very great and precious promises they are which are here made to the Redeemer, which are strong foundations for the faith and hope of the redeemed to build upon. The comforts of our redemption flow from the covenant of redemption, all our springs are in that; *Isa.* lv. 3, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David," *Acts* xiii. 34. Now here we have an account of those sure mercies. Observe,

First. What assurance we have of the truth of the promise, which may encourage us to build upon it. We are here told, 1. How it was spoken; ver. 19, "Thou spakest in vision to thy holy one." God's promise to David, which is especially referred to here, was spoken in vision to Nathan the prophet, 2 *Sam.* vii. 12—17. Then when the holy one of Israel was their king, ver. 18, then he appointed David to be his viceroy. But to all the prophets, those holy ones, he spake in vision concerning Christ, and to him himself especially, who had lain in his bosom from eternity, and was made perfectly acquainted with the whole design of redemption, *Mat.* xi. 27. 2. How it was sworn to and ratified; ver. 35, "Once have I sworn by my holiness," that darling attribute. In swearing by his holiness, he sware by himself; for as soon will he cease to be, as be otherwise than holy. His swearing once is enough, he needs not swear again as David did, 1 *Sam.* xx. 17, for his word and oath are two immutable things. As Christ was made a priest, so he was made a king by an oath, *Heb.* vii. 21; for his kingdom and priesthood are both unchangeable.

Secondly. The choice made of the person to whom the promise is given, ver. 19, 20. David was a king of God's own choosing, so is Christ; and therefore both are called God's kings, *Ps.* ii. 6. David was mighty, a man of courage, and fit for business; he was chosen out of the people; not out of the princes, but the shepherds; God found him out, exalted him, and laid help upon him, and ordered Samuel to anoint him. But this is especially to be applied to Christ. 1. He is one that is mighty, every way qualified for the great work he was to undertake, able to save to the uttermost. Mighty in strength, for he is the Son of God; mighty in love, for he is able experimentally to compassionate those that are tempted. He is the mighty God, *Isa.* ix. 6. 2. He is chosen out of the people, one of us, bone of our bone, that takes part with us of flesh and blood. Being ordained for men, he is taken from among men, that his terror might not make us afraid. 3. God has found him. He is a Saviour of God's own providing, for the salvation from first to last is purely the Lord's doing. He has found the ransom, *Job* xxxiii. 24; for we could never have found a person fit to undertake this great work, *Rev.* v. 3, 4. 4. God has laid help upon him. Not only helped him, but treasured up help in him for us; laid it as a charge upon him to help fallen man up again, to help the chosen remnant to heaven; "In me is thy help," *Hos.* xiii. 9. 5. He has exalted him by constituting him the prophet, priest, and king of his church; clothing him with power, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand. Whom God chooseth and useth he will exalt. 6. He has anointed him, has qualified him for his office, and so confirmed him in it, by giving him the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, infinitely above his fellows. He is called Messiah, or Christ, the Anointed. 7. In all this he designed him to be his own servant, for the accomplishing of his eternal purpose, and the advancement of the interests of his kingdom among men.

Thirdly. The promises made to this chosen one, to David in the type, and the Son of David in the antitype; in which not only gracious, but glorious things are spoken of him.

1. With reference to himself, as king and God's servant. And what makes for him makes for all his loving subjects. It is here promised,

1st. That God would stand by him and strengthen him in his undertaking; ver. 21, "With him my hand" not only shall be, but "shall be established" by promise, shall be so established, as that he shall by it be established and confirmed in all his offices, so as that none of them shall be undermined and overthrown, though by the man of sin they should all be usurped and fought against. Christ had a great deal of hard work to do, and hard usage to go through, but he that gave him commission gave him forces sufficient for the execution of his commission. "Mine arm also shall strengthen him" to break through and bear up under all his difficulties. No good work can miscarry in the hand of those whom God himself undertakes to strengthen.

2nd. That he should be victorious over his enemies. That he should not encroach upon them; ver. 22, "The son of wickedness shall not exact upon him," nor afflict him. He that at first broke the peace would set himself against him that undertook to make peace, and do what he could to blast his design; but he could only reach to bruise his heel, farther he could not exact upon him or afflict him. Christ became a surety for our debt, and thereby Satan and death thought to have gained advantage against him; but he satisfied the demands of God's justice, and then they could not exact upon him; "the prince of this world cometh, but he has nothing in me," *Jno.* xiv. 30. Nay, they not only shall not prevail against him, but they shall fall before him; ver. 23, "I will beat down his foes before his face;" the prince of this world shall be cast out, principalities and powers spoiled, and he shall be the death of deaths itself, and the destruction of the grave, *Hos.* xiii. 14. Some apply this to the ruin which God brought upon the Jewish nation that persecuted Christ, and put him to death. Nay, and all Christ's enemies that hate him, and will not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him, *Lu.* xix. 27.

3rd. That he should be the great trustee of the covenant between God and men. That God would be gracious and true to him, and in him be gracious and true to us; ver. 24, "My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him." It was with David; God continued merciful to him, and so approved himself faithful. It was with Christ; God made good all his promises to him. But that is not all, God's mercy to us, and his faithfulness to us, are with Christ; he is not only pleased with him, but with us in him; and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen. So that if any poor sinners hope for benefit by the faithfulness and mercy of God, let them know it is with Christ, it is lodged in his hand, and to him they must apply themselves for it; ver. 28, "My mercy will I keep for him," to be disposed of by him "for evermore." In the channel of Christ's mediation all the streams of Divine goodness will for ever run; and therefore it is the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ which we look for unto eternal life, *Jude* 21; *Jno.* xvii. 2. And as the mercy of God flows to us through him, so the promise of God is through him firm to us: "My covenant shall stand fast with him," both the covenant of redemption made with him, and the covenant of grace made with us in him. The new covenant is therefore always new, and firmly established, because it is lodged in the hands of a mediator, *Heb.* viii. 6. The covenant stands fast, because it stands upon this basis. And this redounds to the everlasting honour of the Lord Jesus, that to him the great cause between God and man is entirely referred, and the Father has committed all judgment to him that all men might honour him, *Jno.* v. 22, 23; therefore it is here said, "In my name shall his horn be exalted." This shall be his glory, that God's name is in him, *Ex.* xxiii. 21, and that he acts in God's name. "As the Father gave me commandment, so I do."

4th. That his kingdom should be greatly enlarged; ver. 25, "I will set his hand in the sea," that is, he shall have the dominion of the seas, and the isles of the seas; "and his right hand in the rivers," the inland countries that are watered with rivers. David's kingdom extended itself to the Great sea, and the Red sea, to the river of Egypt, and the river Euphrates. But it is in the kingdom of the Messiah that this has its full accomplishment; and shall have more and more when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ," *Rev.* xi. 15; and "the isles shall wait for his law."

5th. That he should own God as his Father; and God would own him as his son, his firstborn, ver. 26, 27. This is a comment upon these words in Nathan's message concerning Solomon, for he also was a type of Christ as well as David; 2 *Sam.* vii. 14, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son;" and the relation shall be owned on both sides. *First.* "He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father." It is likely Solomon did so, but we are sure Christ did so, in the days of his flesh, when he offered up strong cries to God, and called him, "Holy Father;" "Righteous Father," and taught us to address ourselves to him as "Our Father in heaven." Christ in his agony cried unto God, "Thou art my Father," *Mat.* xxvi. 39, 42, "O my Father;" and upon the cross, "Father, forgive them," "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." He looked upon him likewise as his God; and therefore he perfectly obeyed him, and submitted to his will in his whole undertaking; he is "my God and your God," *Jno.* xx. 17. And as the rock of his salvation, who would bear him up, and bear him out in his undertaking, and make him more than a conqueror, even a complete Saviour; and, therefore, with an undaunted resolution he endured the cross, despising the shame, for he knew he should be both justified and glorified. *Secondly.* "I will make him my firstborn." I see not how this can be applied to David; it is Christ's prerogative to be firstborn of every creature, and as such the heir of all things, *Col.* i. 15; *Heb.* i. 2, 6. When all power was given to Christ, both in heaven and in earth, and all things were delivered unto him by the Father, then God made him his Firstborn; and far higher, more great and honourable, than the kings of the earth, for he is the King of kings, "angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him," 1 *Pet.* iii. 22.

2. With reference to his seed. God's covenants always took in the seed of the covenanters, this doth so; ver. 29, 36, "His seed shall endure for ever," and with it his throne; now this will be differently understood according as we apply it to Christ or David.

1st. If we apply it to David, by his seed we are to understand his successors, Solomon and the following kings of Judah that descended from the loins of David. It is supposed that they might degenerate, and not walk in the spirit and steps of their father David; in such a case they must expect to come under Divine rebukes, such as the house of David was at this time under, ver. 38. But let this encourage them, that though they were corrected, they should not be abandoned or disinherited. This refers to that part of Nathan's message, 2 *Sam.* vii. 14, 15, "If he commit iniquity I will chasten him, but my mercy shall not depart from him." Thus far David's seed and throne did endure for ever; that notwithstanding the wickedness of many of his posterity, who were the scandals of his house, yet his family continued, and continued in the imperial dignity a very long time. That as long as Judah continued a kingdom, David's posterity were kings of it; and the royalty of that kingdom was never in any other family, as that of the ten tribes was in Jeroboam's first, then in Baasha's, &c. And that the family of David continued a family of distinction, till that Son of David came whose throne should endure for ever: see *Lu.* i. 27, 32; ii. 4, 11. If David's posterity in after times should forsake God and their duty, and revolt to the ways of sin, God would bring desolating judgments upon them, and ruin the family; and yet he would not take away his lovingkindness from David, nor break his covenant with him, for in the Messiah who should come out of his loins all these promises should have their accomplishment to the full. Thus, when the Jews were rejected, yet the apostle makes it out that God's covenant with Abraham was not broken, because it was fulfilled in his spiritual seed, the heirs of the righteousness of faith, *Rom.* xi. 7.

2nd. If we apply it to Christ, by his seed we are to understand his subjects; all believers, his spiritual seed, the children which God hath given him, *Heb.* ii. 13. This is that seed which shall be made to endure for ever, and his throne in the midst of them, in the church, in the heart, as the days of heaven. To the end Christ shall have a people in the world to serve and honour him, "he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days." And this holy seed shall endure for ever in a glorified state, when time and days shall be no more. And thus Christ's throne and kingdom shall be perpetuated; the kingdom of his grace shall continue through all the ages of time, and the kingdom of his glory to the endless ages of eternity.

First. The continuance of Christ's kingdom is here made doubtful by the sins and afflictions of his subjects, their iniquities and calamities threaten the ruin of it. This case is here put that we may not be offended when it comes to be a case in fact, but that we may reconcile it with the stability of the covenant, and be assured of that notwithstanding. 1*st.* It is here supposed that there will be much amiss in the subjects of Christ's kingdom. It is possible his children may forsake God's law, ver. 30, by omissions, and break his statutes, ver. 31, by commissions. There are spots that are the spots of God's children, *Deu.* xxxii. 5. Many corruptions there are in the bowels of the church, as well as in the hearts of those that are the members of it, and these corruptions break out. 2*nd.* They are here told that they must smart for it, ver. 32. "I will visit their transgression with the rod," their transgression sooner than that of others; "you only have I known, and therefore I will punish you," *Am.* iii. 2. Their being related to Christ shall not excuse them from being called to an account. But observe what affliction is to God's people. (1.) It is but a rod, not an axe, not a sword; it is for correction, not for destruction. This notes gentleness in the affliction; it is the rod of men, such a rod as men use in correcting their children; and it notes a design of good in and by the affliction, such a rod as yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness. (2.) It is a rod in the hand of God. I will visit them; he that is wise and knows what he doth, gracious and will do what is best. (3.) It is a rod which they shall never feel the smart of but when there is great need. If they break my law, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, but not else. Then it is requisite that God's honour be vindicated, and that they be humbled and reduced.

Secondly. The continuance of Christ's kingdom is made certain, by the inviolable promise and oath of God, notwithstanding all this; ver. 33, "Nevertheless, my kindness will I not" totally and finally "take from him." Notwithstanding their provocations, yet my covenant shall not be broken. Note, Afflictions are not only consistent with covenant love, but to the people of God they flow from it. Though David's seed be chastened, it doth not follow that they are disinherited; they may be cast down, but they are not cast off. God's favour is continued to his people. 1*st.* For Christ's sake; in him the mercy is laid up for us, and God saith, I will not take it from him, ver. 33. I will not lie unto David, ver. 35; we are unworthy, but he is worthy. 2*nd.* For the covenant sake; "My faithfulness shall not fail, my covenant will I not break." It was supposed that they had broken God's statutes, profaned and polluted them, so the word signifies; but, saith God, I will not break, I will not profane and pollute my covenant,—it is the same word. That which is said and sworn is, that God will have a church in the world as long as sun and moon endure, ver. 36, 37. The sun and moon are faithful witnesses in heaven of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, and shall continue while time lasts, which they are the measures of; but the seed of Christ shall be established for ever, as lights of the world while the world stands, to shine in it, and, when it is at an end, they shall be established lights, shining in the firmament of the Father.

38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred,
Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.
39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant:
Thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.
40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges;
Thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.
41 All that pass by the way spoil him:
He is a reproach to his neighbours.
42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries;
Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.
43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword,
And hast not made him to stand in the battle.
44 Thou hast made his glory to cease,
And cast his throne down to the ground.
45 The days of his youth hast thou shortened:
Thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.
46 How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever?
Shall thy wrath burn like fire?
47 Remember how short my time is:
Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?
48 What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death?
Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.
49 Lord, where *are* thy former lovingkindnesses,
Which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?
50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants;
How I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people;
51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD;
Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.
52 Blessed *be* the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen

In these verses we have,

First. A very melancholy complaint of the present deplorable state of David's family, which the psalmist thinks hard to be reconciled to the covenant God made with David. Thou saidst thou wouldst not take away thy lovingkindness, "but thou hast cast off." Sometimes it is no easy thing to reconcile God's providences with his promises; and yet we are sure they are reconcilable, for God's works fulfil his word and never contradict it.

1. David's house seemed to have lost its interest in God, which was the greatest strength and beauty of it. God had been pleased with his anointed, but now he was wroth with him, ver. 38; had entered into covenant with the family, but now for aught he could perceive he had made void the covenant, not broken some of the articles of it, but cancelled it, ver. 39. We misconstrue the rebukes of providence if we think they make void the covenant. When the great Anointed One, Christ himself, was upon the cross, God seemed to have cast him off, and was wroth with him; and yet did not make void his covenant with him, for that was established for ever.

2. The honour of the house of David was lost and laid in the dust; "thou hast profaned his crown," which was always looked upon as sacred, "by casting it to the ground," to be trampled on; ver. 39, "Thou hast made his glory to cease," so uncertain is all earthly glory, and so soon doth it wither, and "thou hast cast his throne down to the ground," not only dethroned the king, but put a period to the kingdom, ver. 44. If it were penned in Rehoboam's time it was true, as to the greatest part of the kingdom, five parts of six; if in Zedekiah's time, it was more remarkably true of the poor remainder. Note, Thrones and crowns are tottering things, and are often laid in the dust; but there is a crown of glory, reserved for Christ's spiritual seed, which fadeth not away.

3. It was exposed and made a prey to all the neighbours, who insulted over that ancient and honourable family; ver. 40, "Thou hast broken down all his hedges," all those things that were a defence to them, and particularly that hedge of protection, which they thought God's covenant and promise had made about them, and thou "hast made even his strongholds a ruin," so that they were rather a reproach to them than any shelter. And then, ver. 41, "All that pass by the way spoil him," and make an easy prey of him: see *Ps.* lxxx. 12, 13. The enemies talk insolently; "he is a reproach to his neighbours," who triumph in his fall from so great a degree of honour. Nay, every one helps forward the calamity; ver. 42, "Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries," not only given them power, but inclined them to turn their power this way. If the enemies of the church lift up their hand against it, we must see God setting up their hand, for they could have no power unless it were given them from above. But when God doth permit them to do mischief to his church it pleaseth them; "thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice," and this for thy glory, that those who hate thee should have the pleasure to see the tears and troubles of those that love thee.

4. It was disabled to help itself; ver. 43, "Thou hast turned the edge of his sword," rebated it, and made it blunt, that it cannot do execution as it has done; and, which is worse, thou hast turned the edge of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and "hast not made him to stand" as he used to do "in the battle." The spirit of men is what the Father and former of spirits makes them; nor can we stand with any strength or resolution, farther than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them; but it is sad with the church when those cannot stand that should stand up for it.

5. It was upon the brink of an inglorious exit; ver. 45, "The days of his youth hast thou shortened," that is, it is ready to be cut off like a young man in the flower of his age. This should intimate that it was penned in Rehobam's time, when the house of David was but in the days of its youth, and yet waxed old, and began to decay already. And thus it was covered with shame, and it was turned very much to its reproach, that a family which in the first and second reign looked so great, and made such a figure, should in the third dwindle and look so little as the house of David did in Rehoboam's time. But it may be applied to the captivity in Babylon, which in comparison with what was expected, were but the days of the youth of that kingdom. However, the kings then had remarkably the days of their youth shortened, for it was in the days of their youth, when they were about thirty years old, that Jehoiachin and Zedekiah were carried captives to Babylon.

From all this complaint let us learn, 1st. What work sin makes with families, noble royal families, with families in which religion has been uppermost; when posterity degenerates, it falls into disgrace, and iniquity stains their glory. 2nd. How apt we are to place the promised honour and happiness of the church in something external, and to think the promise fails, and the covenant made void, if we be disappointed of that; a mistake which we now are inexcusable if we fall into, since our Master hath so expressly told us that his kingdom is not of this world.

Secondly. A very pathetical expostulation with God upon this. Four things they plead with God for mercy:

1. The long continuance of the trouble; ver. 46, "How long, O Lord? wilt thou hide thyself for ever?" That which grieved them most was, that God hid himself as one displeased, did not appear to them by his prophets to comfort them, did not appear for them by his providences to deliver them, and that he had kept them long in the dark; it seemed an eternal night when God was withdrawn; thou hidest thyself for ever. Nay, God not only hid himself from them, but seemed to set himself against them; "shall thy wrath burn like fire," that is, how long shall it burn? shall it never be put out? What is hell, but the wrath of God burning for ever? And is that the lot of thine anointed?

2. The shortness of life, and the certainty of death; Lord, let thine anger cease, and return in mercy to us; remembering how short my time is, and how sure the period of my time. Lord, since my life is so transitory, and will ere long be at an end, let it not be always so miserable as that I should rather choose no being at all, than such a being. Job pleads thus, *ch.* x. 20, 21; and, probably the psalmist here urgeth it in the name of the house of David, and the present prince of that house, the days of whose youth were shortened, ver. 45.

1st. He pleads the shortness and vanity of life; ver. 47, "Remember how short my time is;" 'how transitory I am,' say some; therefore unable to bear the power of thy wrath, and therefore a proper object of thy pity. "Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?" Or, 'unto what vanity hast thou created all the sons of Adam?' Now this may be understood either, *First.* As speaking a great truth. If the ancient lovingkindnesses spoken of ver. 49, be forgotten, (those relating to another life,) man is indeed made in vain. Considering man as mortal, if there were not a future state on the other side of death, we might be ready to think man was made in vain, and was in vain endued with the noble powers and faculties of reason, and filled with such vast designs and desires; but God would not make man in vain; therefore, Lord, remember those lovingkindnesses. Or, *Secondly.* As speaking a strong temptation that the psalmist was in. It is certain God has not made all men, nor any man in vain, *Isa.* xlv. 18. For, 1*st.* If we think that God hath made men in vain, because so many have short lives, and long afflictions in this world; it is true that God has made them so, but it is not true that therefore they are made in vain. For those whose days are few and full of trouble, yet may glorify God, and do some good; may keep their communion with God, and get to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. 2*nd.* If we think that God has made men in vain because the most of men neither serve him, nor enjoy him, it is true that as to themselves they were made in vain; better for them they had not been born than not to be born again. But it was not long of God that they were made in vain, it was long of themselves, nor are they made in vain as to him; for he has "made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil," and those whom he is not glorified by he will be glorified upon.

2nd. He pleads the universality and unavoidableness of death; ver. 48, "What man," (what strong man, so the word is,) "is he that liveth, and shall not see death?" The king himself, of the house of David, is not exempted from the sentence, from the stroke. Lord, since he is under a fatal necessity of dying, let not his whole life be made thus miserable. "Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" No, he shall not when his time is come. Let him not, therefore, be delivered into the hand of the grave by the miseries of a dying life, till his time is come. We must learn here, that death is the end of all men; our eyes must shortly be closed to see death; there is no discharge from that war, nor will any bail be taken to save us from the prison of the grave. It concerns us, therefore, to make sure a happiness on the other side of death and the grave, that "when we fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations."

3. The next plea is taken from the kindness God had for, and the covenant he made with, his servant David; ver. 49, "Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses," which thou shewedst, nay, "which thou swarest to David in thy truth." Wilt thou fail of doing what thou hast promised? Wilt thou undo what thou hast done? Art not thou still the same? Why then may not we have the benefit of the former sure mercies of David? God's unchangeableness and faithfulness assure us that God will not cast off those whom he hath chosen and covenanted with.

4. The last plea is taken from the insolence of the enemies, and the indignity done to God's anointed: ver. 50, 51, "Remember, Lord, the reproach," and let it be rolled away from us, and returned upon our enemies. 1st. They were God's servants that were reproached, and the abuses done to them reflected upon their Master, especially since it was for serving him that they were reproached. 2nd. The reproach cast upon God's servants was a very grievous burthen to all that were concerned for the honour of God. "I bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people," and am even overwhelmed with it; it is what I lay much to heart, and can scarce keep up my spirits under the weight of. 3rd. They are thine enemies who do thus reproach us, and wilt thou not appear against them as such? 4th. "They have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed." They reflected upon all tne steps which the king had taken in the course of his administration, tracked him in all his motions, that they might make invidious remarks upon every thing he had said and done. Or, if we may apply it to Christ, the Lord's Messiah, they reproached the Jews with his footsteps, the slowness of his coming. 'They have reproached the delays of the Messiah,' so Dr. Hammond. They called him, "He that should come;" but because he was not yet come, because he did not now come to deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, when they had none to deliver them, they told them, He would never come, they must give over looking for him. The scoffers of the latter days do in like manner reproach the footsteps of the Messiah when they ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" 2 *Pet.* iii. 3, 4. The reproaching of the footsteps of the Anointed, some refer to the serpent's bruising of the heel of the seed of the woman, or to the sufferings of Christ's followers, that tread in his footsteps, and are reproached for his name's sake.

Lastly. The psalm concludes with praise, even after this sad complaint; ver. 52, "Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen and Amen." Thus he confronts the reproaches of his enemies. The more others blaspheme God, the more we should bless him. Thus he corrects his own complaints, chiding himself for quarrelling with God's providences, and questioning his promises. Let both these sinful passions be silenced with the praises of God. However it be, yet God is good, and we will never think hardly of him; God is true, and we will never distrust him. Though the glory of David's house be stained and sullied, this shall be our comfort,—that God is blessed for ever, and his glory cannot be eclipsed. If we would have the comfort of the stability of God's promise, we must give him the praise of it; in blessing God we encourage ourselves. Here is a double Amen, according to the double signification. Amen,—'so it is,' God is blessed for ever; Amen,—'be it so,' let God be blessed for ever. He began the psalm with thanksgiving, before he made his complaint, ver. 1; and now he concludes it with a doxology. They that give God thanks for what he has done, may give him thanks also for what he will do. God will follow those with his mercies that in a right manner follow him with their praises.

PSALM XC.

The foregoing psalm was supposed to be penned as late as the captivity in Babylon; this, it is plain, was penned as early as the deliverance out of Egypt, and yet they are put close together in this collection of Divine songs. This psalm was penned by Moses, as appears by the title, the most ancient penman of Sacred Writ; we have upon record a praising song of his, *Ex.* xv., which is alluded to, *Rev.* xv. 3; and an instructing song of his, *Deu.* xxxii. But this is of a different nature from both, for it is called a prayer. It is supposed that this psalm was penned upon occasion of the sentence passed upon Israel in the wilderness for their unbelief, murmuring, and rebellion, that their carcases should fall in the wilderness, that they should be wasted away by a series of miseries for thirty-eight years together, and none of them that were then of age should enter Canaan. This was calculated for their wanderings in the wilderness, as that other song of Moses, *Deu.* xxxi. 19, 21, was for their settlement in Canaan. We have the story to which this psalm seems to refer, *Num.* xiv. Probably Moses penned this prayer to be daily used, either by the people in their tents, or at least by the priests in the tabernacle service during that tedious fatigue of theirs in the wilderness. In it, I. Moses comforts himself and his people with the eternity of God, and their interest in him however, ver. 1, 2. II. He humbles himself and his people with the consideration of the frailty of man, ver. 3—6. III. He submits himself and his people to the righteous sentence of God passed upon them, ver. 7—11. IV. He commits himself and his people to God by prayer for Divine mercy and grace, and the return of God's favour, ver. 12—17. Though it seems to have been penned upon this particular occasion, yet it is very applicable to the frailty of human life in general; and in singing of it we may easily apply it to the years of our passage through the wilderness of this world, and it furnisheth us with meditations and prayers very suitable to the solemnity of a funeral.

A Prayer of Moses the man of God.

LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God.
3 Thou turnest man to destruction;
And sayest, Return, ye children of men.
4 For a thousand years in thy sight
Are but as yesterday when it is past,
And *as* a watch in the night.
5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood;
They are *as* a sleep:
In the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up.
6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up;
In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

This psalm is entitled "a prayer of Moses." Where, and in what volume, it was preserved from Moses' time till the collection of psalms begun to be made is uncertain; but, being Divinely inspired, it was under a special protection. Perhaps it was written in the book of Jasher, or the book of the wars of the Lord. Moses taught the people of Israel to pray, and put words into their mouths which they might make use of in turning to the Lord. Moses is here called the man of God, because he was a prophet, the father of the prophets, and an eminent type of the great Prophet. In these verses we are taught,

First. To give God the praise of his care concerning his people at all times; and concerning us in our days; ver. 1, "Lord, thou hast been to us a habitation, or dwelling-place," a refuge or help, "in all generations." Now they were fallen under God's displeasure, and he threatened to abandon them, they plead his former kindness to their ancestors. Canaan was a land of pilgrimage to their fathers the patriarchs, who dwelt there in tabernacles; but then God was their habitation, and wherever they went they were at home, at rest in him. Egypt had been a land of bondage to them for many years; but even then God was their refuge, and in him that poor oppressed people lived, and were kept in being. Note, True believers are at home in God, and that is their comfort in reference to all the toils and tosses they meet with in this world. In Him we may repose and shelter ourselves as in our dwelling-place.

Secondly. To give God the glory of his eternity; ver. 2, "Before the mountains were brought forth, before he made the highest part of the dust of the world," as it is expressed, *Pr.* viii. 26, "before the earth fell in travail," or as we may read it, "before thou hadst formed the earth and the world;" that is, before the beginning of time thou hadst a being, even "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." An eternal God, whose existence hath neither its commencement nor its period with time, nor is measured by the successions and revolutions of it, but who art the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, without beginning of days, or end of life, or change of time. Note, Against all the grievances that arise from our own mortality, and the mortality of our friends, we may take comfort from God's immortality; we are dying creatures, and all our comforts in the world are dying comforts. But God is an ever-living God; and they shall find him so that have him for theirs.

Thirdly. To own God's absolute sovereign dominion over man, and his irresistible incontestable power to dispose of him as he pleaseth; ver. 3, "Thou turnest man to destruction," with a word's speaking, when thou pleasest, to the destruction of the body, of the earthly house, "and thou sayest, Return, ye children of men." 1. When God is, by sickness or other afflictions, turning men to destruction, he doth thereby call men to return unto him, that is, to repent of their sins, and live a new life. This God speaketh once, yea twice, "Return unto me, from whom ye have revolted," *Jer.* iv. 1. 2. When God is threatening to turn men to destruction, to bring them to death, and they have received a sentence of death within themselves, sometimes he wonderfully recovers them, and saith, or as the old translation reads it, 'Again thou sayest, Return,' to life and health again. For God kills, and makes alive again, brings down to the grave, and brings up. 3. When God turns men to destruction, it is according to the general sentence passed upon all, which is this, "Return, ye children of men," one as well as another; Return to your first principles, let the body return to the earth as it was, ("Dust to dust," *Gen.* iii. 19,) and let "the soul return to God who gave it," *Eccl.* xii. 7. 4. Though God turns all men to destruction, yet he will again say, "Return, ye children of men," namely, at the general resurrection, when "though a man dies, yet he shall live again; and then shalt thou call, and I will answer," *Job* xiv. 14, 15; thou shalt bid me return, and I shall return. The body, the soul, shall both return, and unite again.

Fourthly. To acknowledge the infinite disproportion there is between God and men, ver. 4. The patriarchs, some of them, lived near a thousand years; Moses knew it very well, and had recorded it. But what is their long life to God's eternal life? "A thousand years" to us is a great deal, it is what we cannot expect to come near to, or if we could, it is what we could not retain the remembrance of. But it is "in thy sight as yesterday," as one day, as that which is freshest in mind; nay, it is but "as a watch of the night," which was but three hours. 1. A thousand years are nothing to God's eternity, they are less than a day, than an hour, to a thousand years. Betwixt a minute and a million of years there is some proportion; but betwixt time and eternity there is none. The long lives of the patriarchs were nothing to God, not so much as the life of a child, that is born and dies the same day, is to theirs. 2. All the events of a thousand years, whether past or to come, are as present to the Eternal

Mind as what was done yesterday, or the last hour, is to us, and more so. God will say at the great day, to those whom he has turned to destruction, Return, arise, ye dead. But it might be objected against the doctrine of the resurrection, that it is a long time since it was expected, and it is not yet come. Let that be no difficulty, for a thousand years in God's sight are but as one day. *Nullum tempus occurri regi*,—'To the king all periods are alike.' To this purpose these words are quoted 2 *Pet.* iii. 8.

Fifthly. To see the frailty of men, and his vanity, even at his best estate, ver. 5, 6. Look upon all the children of men, and we shall see, 1. That their life is a dying life. "Thou carriest them away as with a flood;" that is, they are continually gliding down the stream of time into the ocean of eternity. The flood is continually flowing, and they are carried away with it. As soon as we are born we begin to die, and every day of our life carries us so much nearer death. Or, we are carried away violently and irresistibly as with a flood of waters, as with an inundation which sweeps away all before it. Or, as the old world was carried away with Noah's flood. Though God promised not so to drown the world again, yet death is a constant deluge. 2. That it is a dreaming life. Men are carried away as with a flood, and yet "they are as a sleep;" they consider not their own frailty, nor are aware how near they approach to an awful eternity. Like men asleep, they imagine great things to themselves, till death wakes them, and puts an end to the pleasing dream. Time passeth unobserved by us, as it doth with men asleep; and when it is over it is as nothing. 3. That it is a short and transient life, like that of the grass which grows up and flourisheth; in the morning looks green and pleasant, but in the evening the mowers cut it down, and it withers presently; changes its colour, and loses all its beauty. Death will change us shortly, perhaps suddenly; and it is a great change that death will make with us in a little time. Man, in his prime, doth but flourish as the grass, which is weak, and low, and tender, and exposed; and which, when the winter of old age comes, will wither of itself. But it may be mown down by disease or disaster, as the grass is in the midst of summer. "All flesh is as grass."

7 For we are consumed by thine anger,
And by thy wrath are we troubled.
8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,
Our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.
9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath:
We spend our years as a tale *that is told.*
10 The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten;
And if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years,
Yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.
11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger?
Even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath.

Moses had, in the foregoing verses, lamented the frailty of human life in general; the children of men are as a sleep, and as the grass. But here he teacheth the people of Israel to confess before God that righteous sentence of death which they were under in a special manner, and which by their sins they had brought upon themselves. Their share in the common lot of mortality was not enough, but they are, and must live and die, under peculiar tokens of God's displeasure. Here they speak of themselves: We Israelites are consumed and troubled, and our days are passed away.

First. They are here taught to acknowledge the wrath of God to be the cause of all their miseries. We are consumed, we are troubled, and it is by thine anger, by thy wrath, ver. 7; "our days are passed away in thy wrath," ver. 9. The afflictions of the saints often come purely from God's love, as Job's; but the rebukes of sinners and of good men for their sins, must be seen coming from the anger of God, who takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sins of Israel. We are too apt to look upon death as no more but a debt owing to nature; whereas it is not so; if the nature of man had continued in its primitive purity and rectitude, there had been no such debt owing to it: it is a debt to the justice of God, a debt to the law. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Are we consumed by decays of nature, the infirmities of age, or any chronical disease? We must ascribe it to God's anger. Are we troubled by any sudden, surprising stroke? That also is the fruit of God's wrath, which is thus revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Secondly. They are taught to confess their sins, which had provoked the wrath of God against them; ver. 8, "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee," even "our secret sins." It was not without cause that God was angry with them; he had said, "Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt;" but they had provoked him, and will own that in passing this severe sentence upon them he justly punished them. 1. For their open contempts of him, and the daring affronts they had given him. "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee." God had herein an eye to their unbelief and murmuring, their distrusting his power, and their despising the pleasant land. These he set before him, when he passed that sentence on them. These kindled the fire of God's wrath against them, and kept good things from them. 2. For their more close departures from him; "Thou hast set our secret sins," those that go no farther than the heart, and which are at the bottom of all the overt acts, thou hast set these "in the light of thy countenance;" that is, thou hast discovered these, and brought these also to the account, and made us to see them, who before overlooked them. Secret sins are known to God, and shall be reckoned for. Those that in heart return into Egypt, that set up idols in their heart, shall be dealt with as revolters or idolaters. See the folly of those that go about to cover their sins, for they cannot cover them.

Thirdly. They are taught to look upon themselves as dying and passing away, and not to think either of a long life, or of a pleasant one; for the decree gone forth against them was irreversible; ver. 9, "All our days are" like to be "passed away in thy wrath," that is, under the tokens of thy displeasure; and though we are not quite deprived of the residue of our years, yet we are likely to "spend them as a tale that is told." The thirty-eight years which after this they wore away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth after they came out of Egypt. Their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of "a tale that is told;" for it was only to pass away time like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness, all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the raising. When they came out of Egypt "there was not one feeble person among their tribes," *Ps.* cv. 37; but now they were all feeble. Their joyful prospect of a prosperous glorious life in Canaan, was turned into the melancholy prospect of a tedious inglorious death in the wilderness, so that their whole life was now as impertinent a thing as ever any winter tale was. This is applicable to the state of every one of us in the wilderness of this world; "we spend our years," we bring them to an end each year, and all at last, "as a tale that is told." As the breath of our mouth in winter, (so some) which soon disappears. As a thought, (so some) than which nothing more quick; as a word which is soon spoken, and then vanisheth into air. Or, "as a tale that is told." The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year when it is passed is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one; most mixed, but all short and transient; that which was long in the doing, may be told in a short time. Our years, when they are gone, can no more be recalled than the word that we have spoken can. The loss and waste of our time, which is our fault and folly, may be thus complained of. We should spend our years like the despatch of business, with care and industry; but, alas! we do spend them like the telling of a tale,—idly, and to little purpose,—mindlessly, and without regard. Every year passed "as a tale that is told;" but what was the number of them? As they were vain, so they were few; ver. 10, seventy or eighty at most, which may be understood either,

1. Of the lives of the Israelites in the wilderness. All those that were numbered when they came out of Egypt, above twenty years old, were to die within thirty-eight years; they numbered those only that were able to go forth to war, most of whom we may suppose were between twenty and forty, who therefore must all die before eighty years old, and many before sixty, and perhaps much sooner, which was far short of the years of the lives of their fathers; and those that lived to seventy or eighty, yet being under a sentence of consumption and a melancholy despair of ever seeing through this wilderness-state, their strength, their life, was nothing but labour and sorrow, which otherwise would have been made a new life by the joys of Canaan. See what work sin made. Or,

2. Of the lives of men in general, ever since the days of Moses. Before Moses, it was ordinary for men to live about one hundred years, or near one hundred and fifty; but since, seventy or eighty is the common stint, which few exceed and multitudes never come near. We reckon those to have lived to the age of man, and to have had as large a share of life as they had reason to expect, who live to be seventy years old; and how short a time is that compared with eternity! Moses was the first that committed Divine revelation to writing, which before had been transmitted by tradition. Now also both the world and the church were pretty well peopled; and therefore there were not now the same reasons for men's living long that there had been. If by reason of a strong constitution some reach to eighty years, yet their strength then is what they have little joy of, it doth but serve to prolong their misery, and make their death the more tedious, for even "their strength then is labour and sorrow," much more their weakness; for the years are come which they have no pleasure in. Or, it may be taken thus: 'Our years are seventy, and the years of some, by reason of strength are eighty, but the breadth of our years,' (for so the latter word signifies rather than strength,) the whole extent of them from infancy to old age, 'is but labour and sorrow.' In the sweat of our face we must eat bread, our whole life is toilsome and troublesome; and perhaps in the midst of the years we count upon "it is soon cut off, and we fly away," and do not live out half our days.

Fourthly. They are taught by all this to stand in awe of the wrath of God; ver. 11, "Who knows the power of thine anger?" 1. None can perfectly comprehend it. The psalmist speaks as one afraid of God's anger, and amazed at the greatness of the power of it; who knows how far the power of God's anger can reach, and how deep it can wound? The angels that sinned, know experimentally the power of God's anger; damned sinners in hell know it; but which of us can fully comprehend or describe it? 2. Few do seriously consider it as they ought. Who knows it so as to improve the knowledge of it? Those that make a mock at sin, and make light of Christ, surely do not know the power of God's anger. For "according to thy fear, so is thy wrath," that is, God's wrath is equal to the apprehensions which the most thoughtful serious people have of it. Let men have never so great a dread upon them of the wrath of God, it is not greater than there is cause for, and than the nature of the thing deserves. God has not in his word represented his wrath more terrible than really it is; nay, what is felt in the other world, is infinitely worse than what is feared in this world. "Who among us can dwell with that devouring fire?"

12 So teach *us* to number our days,
That we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.
13 Return, O LORD, how long?
And let it repent thee concerning thy servants.
14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy;
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
15 Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us,
And the years *wherein* we have seen evil.
16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants,
And thy glory unto their children.
17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us:
And establish thou the work of our hands upon us;
Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

These are the petitions of this prayer, grounded upon the foregoing meditations and acknowledgments. Is any afflicted? let him learn thus to pray. Four things they are here directed to pray for:

First. For a sanctified use of the sad dispensation they were now under. Being condemned to have our days shortened, "Lord, teach us to number our days," ver. 12; that is, Lord, give us grace duly to consider how few they are, and how little a while we have to live in this world. Note, 1. It is an excellent art rightly to number our days; so as not to be out in our calculation, as he was who counted upon many years to come, when that night his soul was required of him. We must live under a constant apprehension of the shortness and uncertainty of life, and the near approach of death and eternity. We must so number our days as to compare our work with them, and mind it accordingly with a double diligence, as those that have no time to trifle. 2. Those that would learn this Divine arithmetic must pray for Divine instruction, must go to God, and beg of him to teach them by his Spirit, to put them upon considering and to give them a good understanding. 3. We then number our days to good purpose, when thereby our hearts are inclined and engaged to true wis-

dom, that is, to the practice of serious godliness. To be religious is to be wise; this is a thing to which it is necessary that we apply our hearts, and the matter requires and deserves a close application, to which frequent thoughts of the uncertainty of our continuance here, and the certainty of our removal hence, will very much contribute.

Secondly. For the turning away of God's anger from them. That though the decree was gone forth, and was passed revocation, there was no remedy but they must die in the wilderness, yet "Return, O Lord," be thou reconciled to us, "and let it repent thee concerning thy servants," ver. 13; send us tidings of peace to comfort us again after these heavy tidings. How long must we look upon ourselves as under thy wrath; and when shall we have some token given us of our restoration to thy favour? We are thy servants, thy people, *Isa.* lxiv. 9. When wilt thou change thy way towards us? In answer to this prayer, and upon their profession of repentance, (*Num.* xiv. 39, 40,) God in the next chapter proceeded with the laws concerning sacrifices, *Num.* xv. 1, &c., which was a token that it repented him concerning his servants, for if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have shewed them such things as these.

Thirdly. For comfort and joy in the returns of God's favour to them, ver. 14, 15. They pray for the mercy of God, for they pretend not to plead any merit of their own; "Have mercy upon us, O God," is a prayer we are all concerned to say Amen to. Let us pray for early mercy, the seasonable communications of Divine mercy. That God's tender mercies may speedily prevent us, early in the morning of our days, when we are young and flourishing, ver. 6. Let us pray for that true satisfaction and happiness, which is to be had only in the favour and mercy of God, *Ps.* iv. 6, 7. A gracious soul, if it may but be satisfied of God's lovingkindness, will be satisfied with it, abundantly satisfied; will take up with that, and will take up with nothing short of it. Two things are pleaded to enforce this petition for God's mercy: 1. That it would be a full fountain of future joys; "O satisfy us with thy mercy," not only that we may be easy and at rest within ourselves, which we can never be while we lie under thy wrath; but, "that we may rejoice and be glad," not only for a time upon the first indications of thy favour, but "all our days," though we are to spend them in the wilderness. Those that make God their chief joy, as their joy may be full, 1 *Jno.* i. 4—so it may be constant, even in this vale of tears. It is their own fault if they are not glad all their days, for his mercy will furnish them with joy in tribulation, and nothing can separate them from it. 2. That it would be a sufficient balance to their former griefs; "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us." Let the days of our joy in thy favour be as many as the days of our pain for thy displeasure have been, and as pleasant as those have been gloomy. Lord, thou usest to set the one over against the other, *Eccl.* vii. 14; do so in our case. Let it suffice that we have drunk so long of the cup of trembling, now put into our hands the cup of salvation. God's people reckon the returns of God's lovingkindness a sufficient recompence for all their troubles.

Fourthly. For the progress of the work of God among them notwithstanding, ver. 16, 17. 1. That he would manifest himself in carrying it on. "Let thy work appear upon thy servants," let it appear that thou hast wrought upon us, to bring us home to thyself, and to fit us for thyself. God's servants cannot work for him unless he work upon them, and work in them both to will and to do; and then we may hope the operations of God's providence will be apparent for us, when the operations of his grace are apparent upon us. "Let thy work appear," and in it thy glory will appear to us, and those that shall come after us. In praying for God's grace, God's glory must be our end; and we must therein have an eye to our children as well as to ourselves, that they also may experience God's glory appearing upon them, so as to change them into the same image, from glory to glory. Perhaps in this prayer they distinguish between themselves and their children, for so God distinguished in his late message to them; *Num.* xiv. 31, "Your carcases shall fall in this wilderness, but your little ones will I bring into Canaan." Lord, say they, let thy work appear upon us to reform us and bring us to a better temper, and then let thy glory appear to our children, in performing the promise to them which we have forfeited the benefit of. 2. That he would countenance and strengthen them in carrying it on, in doing their part towards it. 1st. That he would smile upon them in it. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us," that is, let it appear that God favours us. Let us have God's ordinances kept up among us, and the tokens of God's presence with his ordinance; so some. We may apply this petition both to our sanctification, and to our consolation. Holiness is the beauty of the Lord our God, let that be upon us in all we say and do; let the grace of God in us make our faces to shine, and the light of our good works, (that is the comeliness God puts upon us, and those are comely indeed who are so beautified;) and then let Divine consolations put gladness into our hearts, and a lustre upon our countenances, and that also will be the beauty of the Lord upon us as our God. 2nd. That he would succeed them in it, "establish thou the work of our hands upon us." God's working upon us, (ver. 16,) doth not discharge us from using our utmost endeavours in serving him, and working out our salvation. But when we have done all, we must wait upon God for the success, and beg of him to prosper our handy works, to give us to compass that we aim at for his glory. We are so unworthy of Divine assistance, and yet so utterly insufficient to bring any thing to pass without it, that we have need to be earnest for it, and to repeat the request; "Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it," and in order to that establish us in it.

PSALM XCI.

Some of the ancients were of opinion that Moses was the penman, not only of the foregoing Psalm, which is expressly said to be his, but also of the eight that next follow it; but that cannot be, for *Ps.* xcv. is expressly said to be penned by David, and long after Moses, *Heb.* iv. 7. And it is probable this Psalm also was penned by David: it is a writ of protection for all true believers, not in the name of king David, or under his broad-seal; he needed it himself, especially if the psalm was penned, as some conjecture it was, at the time of the pestilence which was sent for his numbering the people; but in the name of the King of kings, and under the broad-seal of Heaven. Observe, I. The psalmist's own resolution to take God for his keeper, ver. 2, from which he gives both direction and encouragement to others, ver. 9. II. The promises which are here made in God's name to all those that do so in sincerity: 1. They shall be taken under the peculiar care of Heaven, ver. 1, 4. 2. They shall be delivered from the malice of the powers of darkness, ver. 3, 5, 6, and that by a distinguishing preservation, ver. 7, 8. 3. They shall be the charge of the holy angels, ver. 10, 11. 4. They shall triumph over their enemies, ver. 13. 5. They shall be the special favourites of God himself, ver. 14—16. In singing this, we must shelter ourselves under, and then solace ourselves in, the Divine protection. Many think that to Christ, as Mediator, these promises do primarily belong, *Isa.* xlix. 2, not because to him the devil applied one of these promises, *Mat.* iv. 6, but because to him they are very applicable, and, coming through him, they are more sweet and sure to all believers.

HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say of the LORD,
He is my refuge and my fortress:
My God; in him will I trust.
3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
And from the noisome pestilence.
4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings
shalt thou trust:
His truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.
5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;
Nor for the arrow *that* flieth by day;
6 *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness;
Nor for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.
7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy [right hand;
But it shall not come nigh thee.
8 Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold
And see the reward of the wicked.

In these verses we have,

First. A great truth laid down in general, that all those who live a life of communion with God are constantly safe under his protection, and may, therefore, preserve a holy serenity and security of mind at all times; ver. 1, "He that dwells," that sits down "in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty;" that is, he that by faith chooseth God for his guardian, shall find all that in him which he needs or can desire. Note, 1. It is the character of a true believer that "he dwells in the secret place of the Most High," that is, he is at home in God, returns to God, and reposeth in him as his rest; he acquaints himself with inside religion, and makes heart-work of the service of God; worships him within the veil, and loves to be alone with God, to converse with him in solitude. 2. It is the privilege and comfort of those that do so, that they "abide under the shadow of the Almighty," that is, he shelters them and comes between them and every thing that would annoy them, whether storm or sunshine. They shall not only have an admittance, but a residence under God's protection; he will be their rest and refuge for ever.

Secondly. The psalmist's comfortable application of this to himself; ver. 2, "I will say of the Lord," whatever others say of him, "He is my refuge;" I choose him so, and confide in him. Others make idols their refuge, but I will say of Jehovah, the true and living God, he is my refuge; any other is a refuge of lies. And he is a refuge that will not fail me, for he is my fortress and stronghold. Idolaters called their idols Mahuzzim, their most stronghold, *Dan.* xi. 19, but therein they deceived themselves; those only secure themselves that make the Lord their God, their fortress. And, having no reason to question his sufficiency, fitly doth it follow, "In him will I trust." If Jehovah be our God, our refuge, and our fortress, what can we desire which we may not be sure to find in him? He is neither fickle, nor false, nor weak, nor mortal; he is God, and not man, and therefore there is no danger of being disappointed in him. We know whom we have trusted.

Thirdly. The great encouragement he gives to others to do likewise; not only from his own experience of the comfort of it (for in that it was possible there might be a fallacy,) but from the truth of God's promise, in which there neither is nor can be any deceit, ver. 3, &c., "Surely he shall deliver thee." Those who have themselves found the comfort of making God their refuge, cannot but desire that others may do so too. Now here it is promised,

1. That believers shall be kept from those mischiefs which they are in imminent danger of, and which would be fatal to them; ver. 3, "From the snare of the fowler," which is laid unseen, and catches the unwary prey on a sudden; "and from the noisome pestilence," which seizeth men unawares, and against which there is no guard. This promise protects, 1st. The natural life, and is often fulfilled in our preservation from those dangers which are very threatening and very near, and yet we ourselves are not apprehensive of them, no more than the bird is of "the snare of the fowler." We owe it, more than we are sensible, to the care of the Divine providence that we have been kept from infectious diseases, and out of the hands of the wicked and unreasonable. 2nd. The spiritual life, which is protected by Divine grace from the temptations of Satan, which are as the snares of the fowler, and from the contagion of sin, which is the noisome pestilence. He that has given grace to be the glory of the soul will create a defence upon all that glory.

2. That God himself will be their protector; they must needs be safe that have him for their keeper, and in a good bottom for whom he undertakes; ver. 4, "He shall cover thee," shall keep thee secret, *Ps.* xxxi. 20, and so keep thee safe, *Ps.* xxvii. 5. God protects believers, 1st. With the greatest tenderness and affection, which is intimated in that, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, under his wings," which alludes to the hen gathering her chickens under her wings, *Mat.* xxiii. 37. By natural instinct she not only protects them, but calls them under that protection, when she sees them in danger; not only keeps them safe, but cherisheth them and keeps them warm. To this the great God is pleased to compare his care of his people, which are helpless as the chickens, and easily made a prey of, but are invited to trust under the wings of the Divine promise and providence, which is the periphrasis of a proselyte to the true religion, that he is come to trust under the wings of the God of Israel, *Ru.* ii. 12. 2nd. With the greatest power and efficacy; wings and feathers, though spread with the greatest tenderness, yet are weak and easily broken through, and therefore it is added, "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler," a strong defence. God is as willing to guard his people as the hen is to guard the chickens, and as able as a man of war in armour.

3. That he will not only keep them from evil, but from the fear of evil, ver. 5, 6. Here is, 1st. Great danger supposed; the mention of it is enough to frighten us; night and day we lie exposed, and those that are disposed to be timorous will not think themselves safe either night or day. When we are retired into our chambers, our beds, and made all as safe as we can about us, yet there is terror by night, from thieves and robbers, winds and storms, besides those things that are the creatures of fancy and imagination, which are often most frightful of all; we read of fear in the night, *Cant.* iii. 8. There is also a pestilence that walketh in darkness, as that was which slew the firstborn of the Egyptians, and the army of the Assyrians; no locks or bars can shut out diseases, while we carry about with us in our own bodies the seeds of them. But sure, in the daytime, when we can look about us, we are not so much in danger. Yes, there is an arrow that flieth by day too, and yet flies unseen; there is a destruction that wasteth at high noon, when we are awake, and have all our

friends about us; even then we cannot secure ourselves, nor can they secure us. It was in the daytime that that pestilence wasted which was sent to chastise David for numbering the people, on occasion of which some think this psalm was penned. But 2nd. Here is great security promised to believers in the midst of this danger; "Thou shalt not be afraid," that is, God, by his grace will keep thee from disquieting distrustful fear, that fear which hath torment, in the midst of the greatest dangers. Wisdom shall keep thee from being causelessly afraid, and faith shall keep thee from being inordinately afraid. Thou shalt not be afraid of the arrow, as knowing that though it may hit thee, it cannot hurt thee: if it take away the natural life, yet it shall be so far from doing any prejudice to the spiritual life, that it shall be its perfection. A believer needs not fear, and therefore should not fear, any arrow, because the point is off, the poison is out, "O death, where is thy sting?" and because it is under Divine direction, and will hit where God appoints, and not otherwise. Every bullet has its commission. Whatever is done, our heavenly Father's will is done, and we have no reason to be afraid of that.

4. That they shall be preserved in common calamities in a distinguishing way, ver. 6. When death rides in triumph, and diseases rage, so that thousands and ten thousands fall, fall by sickness, or fall by the sword in battle, fall at thy side, at thy right hand, and the sight of their fall is enough to frighten thee; and if they fall by the pestilence, their falling so near thee may be likely to infect thee; yet "it shall not come nigh thee," the death shall not, the fear of death shall not. Those that preserve their purity in times of general corruption, may trust God with their safety in times of general desolation. When multitudes die round about us, though thereby we must be awakened to prepare for our own death, yet we must not be afraid with any amazement, nor make ourselves subject to bondage, as many do all their lifetime through fear of death, *Heb.* ii. 15. The sprinkling of blood secured the firstborn of Israel, when thousands fell. Nay, it is promised to God's people that they shall have the satisfaction of seeing, not only God's promises fulfilled to them, but his threatenings fulfilled upon those that hate them; ver. 8, "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the just reward of the wicked," which perhaps refers to the destruction of the firstborn of Egypt by the pestilence, which was both the punishment of the oppressors and the enlargement of the oppressed; this Israel saw when they saw themselves unhurt, untouched. As it will aggravate the damnation of sinners, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the reward of the righteous, *Lu.* xiii. 28, so it will magnify the salvation of the saints, that with their eyes they shall behold and see the destruction of the wicked, *Isa.* lxvi. 24; *Ps.* lviii. 10.

9 Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge,
Even the most High, thy habitation;
10 There shall no evil befall thee,
Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.
11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee,
To keep thee in all thy ways.
12 They shall bear thee up in *their* hands,
Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.
13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder:
The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under [feet.
14 Because he hath set his love upon me,
Therefore will I deliver him:
I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.
15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:
I *will be* with him in trouble;
I will deliver him, and honour him.
16 With long life will I satisfy him,
And shew him my salvation.

Here are more promises to the same purpose with those in the foregoing verses, and they are exceeding great and precious, and sure to all the seed.

First. The psalmist assures believers of Divine protection from his own experience, and that which he saith is the word of God, and what we may rely upon.

Observe, 1. The character of those that shall have the benefit and comfort of these promises, it is much the same with that, ver. 1. They are such as make the Most High their habitation, ver. 9, that are continually with God, and rest in him; that make his name both their temple and their strong tower; that dwell in love, and so dwell in God. It is our duty to be at home in God; to make our choice of him, and then to live our life in him as our habitation; to converse with him and delight in him, and depend upon him; and then it shall be our privilege to be at home in God; that is, we shall be welcome to him, as a man to his own habitation, without any let, hindrance, or molestation from the arrests of the law or the clamours of conscience; and then we shall be safe in him, shall be kept in perfect peace, *Isa.* xxvi. 3. To encourage us to make the Lord our habitation, and to hope for safety and satisfaction in him, the psalmist intimates the comfort he had had in doing so; he whom thou makest thy habitation is my refuge, and I have found him firm and faithful, and in him there is room enough and shelter enough both for thee and me. "In my Father's house there are many mansions," one needs not crowd another, much less crowd out another.

2. The promises that are sure to all those who have thus made the Most High their habitation.

1st. That, whatever happens to them, nothing shall hurt them; ver. 10, "There shall no evil befall thee." Though trouble and affliction befall thee, yet there shall be no real evil in it, for it shall come from the love of God, and shall be sanctified; it shall not come for thy hurt, but for thy good; and though for the present it be not joyous, but grievous, yet in the end it shall yield so well, that thou thyself shalt own no evil befell thee. It is not an evil, an only evil, but there is a mixture of good in it, and a product of good by it. Nay, not thy person only, but thy dwelling shall be taken under the Divine protection; there shall no plague come nigh that; nothing to do thee or thine any damage. *Nihil accidere bono viro mali potest*—'No evil can befall a good man.'—*Senec. de Provid.*

2nd. That the angels of light shall be serviceable to them, ver. 11, 12. This is a precious promise, and speaks a great deal both of honour and comfort to the saints; and it is never the worse for its being quoted and abused by the devil in tempting Christ, *Mat.* iv. 6. Observe, *First.* The charge given to the angels concerning the saints. He who is the Lord of the angels, who gave them their being, and gives laws to them, whose they are, and whom they were made to serve, "He shall give his angels a charge over thee;" not only over the church in general, but over every particular believer. The angels keep the charge of the Lord their God, and this is the charge they receive from him. It notes the great care God takes of the saints, in that the angels themselves shall be charged with them and employed for them. The charge is, "To keep thee in all thy ways;" here is a limitation of the promise, they shall "keep thee in thy ways," that is, as long as thou keepest in the way of thy duty. They that go out of that way put themselves out of God's protection. This word the devil left out when he quoted it to enforce a temptation, knowing how much it made against him. But observe the extent of the promise; it is "to keep thee in all thy ways." Even where there is no apparent danger, yet we need it, and where there is the most imminent danger we shall have it. Wherever the saints go, the angels are charged with them, as the servants are with the children. *Secondly.* The care which the angels take of the saints pursuant to this charge; "They shall bear thee up in their hands," which notes both their great ability and their great affection; they are able to bear up the saints out of the reach of danger, and they do it with all the tenderness and affection wherewith the nurse carries the little child about in her arms. It speaks us helpless, and them helpful. They are descending in their ministrations, they "keep the feet of the saints," lest they dash them against a stone, lest they stumble and fall into sin and into trouble.

3rd. That the powers of darkness shall be triumphed over by them; ver. 13, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder." The devil is called a roaring lion, the old serpent, the red dragon; so that to this promise the apostle seems to refer in that, *Rom.* xvi. 20, "The God of peace shall tread Satan under your feet." Christ has broken the serpent's head, spoiled our spiritual enemies, *Col.* ii. 15, and through him we are more than conquerors; for Christ calls us, as Joshua called the captains of Israel, to come and set their feet on the necks of these vanquished enemies. Some think this promise had its full accomplishment in Christ, and the miraculous power which he had over the whole creation, healing the sick, casting out devils, and particularly putting it into his disciples' commission, that they should take up serpents, *Mar.* xvi. 18. It may be applied to that care of the Divine providence by which we are preserved from ravenous, noxious creatures; "The wild beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee," *Job* v. 23; nay, and have ways and means of taming them, *Jas.* iii. 7.

Secondly. He brings in God himself speaking words of comfort to the saints, and declaring the mercy he hath in store for them, ver. 14—16. Some make this to be spoken to the angels, as the reason of the charge given them concerning the saints; that is to say, Take care of them, for they are dear to me, and I have a tender concern for them. And now, as before, we must observe,

1. To whom these promises do belong; they are described by three characters: 1st. They are such as know God's name; his nature we cannot fully know, but by his name he has made himself known, and with that we must acquaint ourselves. 2nd. They are such as have set their love upon him, and they who rightly know him will love him, will place their love upon him, as the only adequate object of it, will let out their love towards him with pleasure and enlargement, and will fix their love upon him with a resolution never to remove it to any rival. 3rd. They are such as call upon him, that by prayer keep up a constant correspondence with him, and in every difficult case refer themselves to him.

2. What the promises are which God makes to the saints.

1st. That he will in due time deliver them out of trouble; "I will deliver him," ver. 14; and again, ver. 15, noting a double deliverance, living and dying; a deliverance in trouble and a deliverance out of trouble. If God proportions the degree and continuance of our troubles to our strength; if he keeps us from offending him in our troubles, and makes our death our discharge at length from all our troubles, then this promise is fulfilled: see *Ps.* xxxiv. 19; 2 *Tim.* iii. 11; iv. 18.

2nd. That he will in the meantime "be with them in trouble," ver. 15. If he doth not presently put a period to their afflictions, yet they shall have his gracious presence with them in their troubles; he will take notice of their sorrows, and know their souls in adversity; will visit them graciously by his word and Spirit, and converse with them, will take their part, will support and comfort them, and sanctify their afflictions to them, which will be the surest token of his presence with them in their troubles.

3rd. That herein he will answer their prayers; "He shall call upon me," that is, I will pour upon him the spirit of prayer, "and then I will answer," answer by promises, *Ps.* lxxxv. 8; answer by providences bringing in seasonable relief; and answer by graces "strengthening them with strength in their souls," *Ps.* cxxxviii. 3; thus he answered Paul with grace sufficient, 2 *Cor.* xii. 9.

4th. That he will exalt and dignify them; "I will set him on high," out of the reach of trouble, above the stormy region, on a rock above the waves, *Isa.* xxxiii. 16. They shall be enabled, by the grace of God, to look down upon the things of this world with a holy contempt and indifference, and to look up to the things of the other world with a holy ambition and concern, and then they are set on high. "I will honour him," and those are truly honourable whom God puts honour upon, by taking them into covenant and communion with himself, and designing them for his kingdom and glory, *Jno.* xii. 26.

5th. That they shall have a sufficiency of life in this world; ver. 16, "With length of days will I satisfy him." That is, *First.* They shall live long enough; they shall be continued in this world till they have done the work they were sent into this world for, and are ready for heaven, and that is long enough. Who would wish to live a day longer than God has some work to do, either by him or upon him? *Secondly.* They shall think it long enough, for God by his grace shall wean them from the world, and make them willing to leave it. A man may die young, and yet die full of days; *satur dierum*—'satisfied with living.' A wicked worldly man is not satisfied, no, not with long life; he still cries, Give, give. But he that has his treasure and heart in another world has soon enough of this; he would not live always.

6th. That they shall have an eternal life in the other world. This crowns the blessedness; "I will shew him my salvation;" shew him the Messiah, so some. Good old Simeon was then satisfied with long life when he could say, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Nor was there any greater joy to the Old Testament saints than to see Christ's day, though at a distance. Or, rather, the better country, that is, the heavenly, which the patriarchs desired and sought. He will shew him that, that is, bring him to that blessed state, the felicity of which consists so much in seeing that face to face which here we see through a glass darkly, and in the meantime give him a prospect of it. All these promises some think point primarily at Christ, and had their accomplishment in his resurrection and exaltation.

PSALM XCII.

It is a groundless opinion of some of the Jewish writers, who are usually free of their conjectures, that this Psalm was penned and sung by Adam in innocency, on the first sabbath. It is inconsistent with the Psalm itself, which speaks of the workers of

PSALM XCII.

iniquity, when as yet sin had not entered. It is probable it was penned by David, and being calculated for the sabbath day, I. Praise, the business of the sabbath, is here recommended, ver. 1—3. II. God's works, which gave occasion for the sabbath, are here celebrated as great and unsearchable in general, ver. 4—6. In particular, with reference to the works both of providence and redemption, the Psalmist sings unto God both of mercy and judgment. the ruin of sinners and the joy of saints, three times counterchanged. 1. The wicked shall perish, ver. 7, but God is eternal, ver. 8. 2. God's enemies shall be cut off, but David shall be exalted, ver. 9, 10. 3. David's enemies shall be confounded, ver. 11, but all the righteous shall be fruitful and flourishing, ver. 12—15. In singing this psalm we must take pleasure in giving to God the glory due to his name, and triumph in his works.

A Psalm *or* Song for the sabbath day.

IT is a good *thing* to give thanks unto the LORD,
And to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:
2 To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning,
And thy faithfulness every night,
3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery;
Upon the harp with a solemn sound.
4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work:
I will triumph in the works of thy hands.
5 O LORD, how great are thy works!
And thy thoughts are very deep.
6 A brutish man knoweth not;
Neither doth a fool understand this.

This psalm was appointed, or at least accustomed, to be sung in the house of the sanctuary on the sabbath day, that day of rest, which was an instituted memorial of the work of creation, of God's rest from that work, and the continuance of it in his providence; for "the Father worketh hitherto." Note, 1. The sabbath day must be a day not only of holy rest, but of holy work, and the rest is in order to the work. 2. The proper work of the sabbath is praising God; every sabbath day must be a thanksgiving day, and the other services of the day must be in order to this, and therefore must by no means thrust this into a corner. One of the Jewish writers refers it to the kingdom of the Messiah, and calls it 'A psalm or song for the age to come, which shall be all sabbath.' Believers through Christ enjoy that sabbatism which remains for the people of God, *Heb.* iv. 9, the beginning of the everlasting sabbath. In these verses,

First. We are called upon and encouraged to praise God; ver. 1—3, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord." Praising God is good work; it is good in itself, and good for us. It is our duty,—the rent, the tribute, we are to pay to our great Lord; we are unjust if we withhold it. It is our privilege that we are admitted to praise God, and have hope to be accepted in it. It is good; for it is pleasant and profitable, work that is its own wages. It is the work of angels,—the work of heaven. It is good to give thanks for the mercies we have received, for that is the way of fetching in farther mercy. It is fit to sing to his name who is Most High, exalted above all blessing and praise. Now observe here,

1. How we must praise God. We must do it by shewing forth his lovingkindness and his faithfulness. Being convinced of his glorious attributes and perfections, we must shew them forth, as those that are greatly affected with them ourselves, and desire to affect others with them likewise. We must shew forth not only his greatness and majesty, his holiness and justice, which magnify him, and strike an awe upon us; but his lovingkindness and his faithfulness, for his goodness is his glory, *Ex.* xxxiii. 18, 19, and by these he proclaims his name. His mercy and truth are the great supports of our faith and hope, and the great encouragements of our love and obedience; these therefore we must shew forth as our pleas in prayer, and the matter of our joy. This was then done not only by singing, but by music joined with it; "upon an instrument of ten strings," ver. 3; but then it was to be "with a solemn sound," not with that which was gay and apt to dissipate the spirits, but that which was grave and apt to fix them.

2. When we must praise God. "In the morning, and every night;" not only on sabbath days, but every day; it is that which the duty of every day requires. We must praise God, not only in public assemblies, but in secret, and in our families; shewing forth to ourselves and those about us his lovingkindness and faithfulness. We must begin and end every day with praising God; must give him thanks every morning, when we are fresh, and before the business of the day comes in upon us, and every night, when we are again composed and retired and are recollecting ourselves. Give him thanks every morning for the mercies of the night, and every night for the mercies of the day. Going out and coming in we must bless God.

Secondly. We have an example set before us in the psalmist himself, both to move us to and to direct us in this work; ver. 4, "Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work." Note, 1. Those can best recommend to others the duty of praise that have themselves experienced the pleasantness of it. God's works are to be praised, for they have many a time rejoiced my heart, and therefore, whatever others think of them, I must think well and speak well of them. 2. If God has given us the joy of his works, there is all the reason in the world we should give him the honour of them. Has he made our hearts glad? Let us then make his praises glorious. Has God made us glad through the works of his providence for us, and of his grace in us, and both through the great work of redemption?—

1. Let us then thence fetch encouragement for our faith and hope. So the psalmist doth; "I will triumph in the works of thy hands." From a joyful remembrance of what God has done for us we may raise a joyful prospect of what he will do, and triumph in the assurance of it,—triumph over all opposition, 2 *Thes.* ii. 14.

2. Let us thence fetch matter for holy adorings and admirings of God; ver. 5, "O Lord, how great are thy works!"—great beyond conception, beyond expression! The products of great power and wisdom, of great consequence and importance; men's works are nothing to them. We cannot comprehend the greatness of God's works, and therefore must reverently and awfully wonder at them, and even stand amazed at the magnificence of them. Men's works are little and trifling, for their thoughts are shallow; but, Lord, thy works are great, and such as cannot be measured; for "thy thoughts are very deep," and such as cannot be fathomed. God's counsels as much exceed the contrivances of our wisdom as his works do the efforts of our power; "His thoughts are above our thoughts, as his ways are above our ways," *Isa.* lv. 9; O the depth of God's designs! *Rom.* xi. 33. The greatness of God's works should lead us to consider the depth of his thoughts, that counsel of his own will according to which he doth all things,—what a compass his thoughts fetch, and to what a length they reach!

Thirdly. We are admonished not to neglect the works of God, by the character of those that do, ver. 6. They are fools,—they are brutish,—who do not know, who do not understand, how great God's works are; who will not acquaint themselves with them, or give him the glory of them; "they regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands," *Ps.* xxviii. 5. Particularly they understand not the meaning of their own prosperity, which is spoken of ver. 7. They take it as a pledge of their happiness, whereas it is a preparative for their ruin. If there are so many who know not the designs of Providence, nor care to know them, those that through grace are acquainted with them, and love to be so, have the more reason to be thankful.

7 When the wicked spring as the grass,
And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish;
It is that they shall be destroyed for ever:
8 But thou, LORD, *art most* high for evermore.
9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD,
For, lo, thine enemies shall perish;
All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.
10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of* an unicorn:
I shall be anointed with fresh oil.
11 Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies,
And mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me.
12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree:
He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

DATE AND DOUM-PALM TREES.

13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD
Shall flourish in the courts of our God.
14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age;
They shall be fat and flourishing;
15 To shew that the LORD *is* upright:
He is my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in him.

The psalmist had said, ver. 4, that from the works of God he would take occasion to triumph; and here he doth so.

First. He triumphs over God's enemies, ver. 7, 9, 11; triumphs in the foresight of their destruction; not as it would be the misery of his fellow-creatures, but as it would redound to the honour of God's justice and holiness. He is confident of the ruin of sinners,

1. Though they are flourishing, ver. 7. "When the wicked spring as the grass" in spring, so numerous, so thick-sown, so green, and growing so fast; "and all the workers of iniquity do flourish" in pomp, and power, and all the instances of outward prosperity, are easy and many, and succeed in their enterprises, one would think all this was in order to their being happy, that it was a certain evidence of God's favour, and an earnest of something as good or better in reserve; but it is quite otherwise; "It is that they shall be destroyed for ever." The very prosperity of fools shall slay them, *Pr.* i. 32. The sheep that are designed for the slaughter are put into the fattest pasture.

2. Though they are daring, ver. 9. They are thine enemies, and impudently avow themselves to be so. They are contrary to God, and they fight against God; they are in rebellion against his crown and dignity, and therefore it is easy to foresee that they shall perish; for "whoever hardened his heart against God and prospered?" Note, All the impenitent workers of iniquity shall be deemed and taken as God's enemies; and as such they shall perish and be scattered. Christ reckons those his enemies that will not have him to reign over them; and they shall be brought forth and slain before him. The workers of iniquity are now associated, and closely linked together, in a combination against God and religion; but they shall be scattered, and disabled to help one another against the just judgment of God. 'In the world to come they shall be separated from the congregation of the righteous,' so the Chaldee, *Ps.* i. 5.

3. Though they had a particular malice against the psalmist, and upon that account he might be tempted to fear them, yet he triumphs over them: ver. 11, "Mine eyes shall see my desire on mine enemies that rise up against me," that is, I shall see them not only disabled to do me any farther mischief, but reckoned with for the mischief they have done me, and brought either to repentance or ruin; and this was his desire concerning them. In the Hebrew it is no more but thus, 'Mine eye shall look on mine enemies, and mine ear shall hear of the wicked.' He doth not say what he shall see, or what he shall hear, but he shall see and hear that in which God will be glorified, and in which he will therefore be satisfied. This perhaps has reference to Christ, to his victory over Satan, death, and hell, the destruction of those that persecuted and crucified him, and opposed his Gospel, and to the final ruin of the impenitent at the last day. They that rise up against Christ will fall before him and be made his footstool.

Secondly. He triumphs in God, and his glory and grace.

1. In the glory of God; ver. 8, "But thou, O Lord, art most high for evermore." The workers of iniquity that fight against us, may be high for a time, and think to carry all before them with a high hand, but thou art high, most high for evermore. Their height will be humbled and brought down, but thine is everlasting. Let us not therefore fear the pride and power of evil men, nor be discouraged by their impotent menaces, for the moth shall eat them up as a garment, but God's righteousness shall be for ever, *Isa.* lvi. 7, 8.

2. In the grace of God, his favour and the fruits of it.

1st. To himself, ver. 20. Thou, O Lord, that art thyself most high, shalt exalt my horn. The great God is the fountain of honour, and he being high for evermore, himself will exalt his people for ever; for he "is the praise of all his saints," *Ps.* cxliii. 14. The wicked are forbidden to lift up the horn, *Ps.* lxxv. 4, 5, but those that serve God and the interests of his kingdom with their honour and power, and commit it to him to keep it, to raise it, to use it, and to dispose of it as he pleaseth, may hope that he will exalt their horn as the horn of a unicorn, to the greatest height, either in this world or the other; "My horn shalt thou exalt" when thine enemies perish; for then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, when the wicked shall be doomed to shame and everlasting contempt. He adds, "I shall be anointed with fresh oil," which speaks a fresh confirmation in his office, to which he had been anointed, or abundance of plenty, so that he should have fresh oil as often as he pleased, or renewed comforts to revive him when his spirits drooped. Grace is the anointing of the Spirit, which, when it is given to help in the time of need, and is received, as there is occasion, from the fulness that is in Jesus Christ, we are then anointed with fresh oil. Some read it, 'when I grow old, thou shalt anoint me with fresh oil;' 'My old age shalt thou exalt with rich mercy,' so the Seventy. Compare ver. 14, "They shall bring forth fruit in old age." The comforts of God's Spirit, and the joys of his salvation, shall be a refreshing oil to the hoary heads that are found in the way of righteousness.

2nd. To all the saints. They are here represented as trees of righteousness, *Isa.* lxi. 3; *Ps.* i. 3. Observe,

First. The good place they are fixed in. They are "planted in the house of the Lord," ver. 13. The trees of righteousness do not grow of themselves; they are planted, not in common soil, but in Paradise, in the house of the Lord. Trees do not use to be planted in a house, but God's trees are said to be planted in his house, because it is from his grace, by his Word and Spirit, that they receive all the sap and virtue that keeps them alive, and makes them fruitful. They fix themselves to holy ordinances, take root in them, abide by them, put themselves under the Divine protection, and bring forth all their fruits to God's honour and glory.

Secondly. The good plight they shall be kept in. It is here promised, 1*st.* That they shall grow, ver. 11. Where God gives true grace he will give more grace. God's trees shall grow higher, like the cedars, the tall cedars, in Lebanon; they shall grow nearer heaven, and with a holy ambition shall aspire towards the upper world. They shall grow stronger, like the cedars, and fitter for use. "He that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." 2*nd.* That they shall flourish, both in the credit of their profession, and in the comfort and joy of their own souls. They shall be cheerful themselves, and respected by all about them; "They shall flourish like the palm-tree," which has a stately body, *Cant.* vii. 7, large boughs, *Lev.* xxiii. 40; *Jud.* iv. 5. Dates, the fruit of it, are very pleasant, but it is especially alluded to here, as being evergreen. The wicked flourish as the grass, ver. 7, which is soon withered; the righteous as the palm-tree, which is long-lived, and which the winter doth not change. It has been said of the palm-tree, that 'the more it is pressed down, the more it grows,'—*sub pondere crescit*, so the righteous flourish under their burthens; "the more they are afflicted, the more they multiply." Being "planted in the house of the Lord," there their root is; "they flourish in the courts of our God," there their branches spread. Their "life is hid with Christ in God;" but their light also shines before men. It is very desirable that those that have a place should have a name in God's house, and within his walls, *Isa.* lvi. 5. Let good Christians aim to excel, that they may be eminent, and may flourish, and so may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, as flourishing trees adorn the courts of a house. And let those that flourish in God's courts give him the glory of it; it is by virtue of this promise, "They shall be fat and flourishing." Their flourishing without is from a fatness within, from the root and fatness of the good olive, *Rom.* xi. 17. Without a living principle of grace in the heart the profession will not be long flourishing, but where that is "the leaf also shall not wither," *Ps.* i. 3. "The trees of the Lord are full of sap," *Ps.* civ. 16: see *Hos.* xiv. 5, 6. 3*rd.* That they shall be fruitful. Were there nothing but leaves upon them, they would not be trees of any value; but "they shall bring forth fruit." The products of sanctification, all the instances of a lively devotion and a useful conversation, good works, by which God is glorified, and others edified, these are the fruits of righteousness, in which it is the privilege as well as the duty of the righteous to abound; and it is the matter of a promise as well as the matter of a command. It is promised they shall bring forth fruit in old age: other trees when they are old leave off bearing, but in God's trees the strength of grace doth not fail with the strength of nature. The last days of the saints are sometimes their best days, and their last work their best work. This indeed shews that they are upright; perseverance is the surest evidence of sincerity. But it is here said "to shew that the Lord is upright," ver. 15, that he is true to his promises, and faithful to every word that he hath spoken, and that he is constant to the work which he has begun. As it is by the promises that believers first partake of a Divine nature, so it is by the promises that that Divine nature is preserved and kept up, and therefore the power it exerts is an evidence that the Lord is upright, and so he will shew himself with an upright man, *Ps.* xviii. 25. This the psalmist triumphs in; "He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." I have chosen him for my rock on which to build, in the clefts of which to take shelter, on the top of which to set my feet; I have found him a rock, strong and stedfast, and his word as firm as a rock; I have found (and let every one speak as they find) that there is no unrighteousness in him. He is as able, and will be as kind, as his Word makes him to be. All that ever trusted in God found him faithful and all-sufficient; and none were ever made ashamed of their hope in him.

PSALM XCIII.

This short psalm sets forth the honour of the kingdom of God among men, to his glory, the terror of his enemies, and the comfort of all his loving subjects. And it relates both to the kingdom of his providence, by which he upholds and governs the world, and especially to the kingdom of his grace, by which he secures the church, sanctifies and preserves it. The administration of both these kingdoms is put into the hands of the Messiah, and to him doubtless the prophet here bears witness, and to his kingdom, speaking of it as present, because sure; and because, as the Eternal Word, even before his incarnation, he was Lord of all. Concerning God's kingdom glorious things are here spoken: I. Have other kings their royal robes? so has he, ver. 1. II. Have they their throne? so has he, ver. 2. III. Have they their enemies whom they subdue and triumph over? so has he, ver. 3, 4. IV. Is it their honour to be faithful and holy? so is it his, ver. 5. In singing this psalm we forget ourselves if we forget Christ, to whom the Father hath given all power both in heaven and in earth.

THE LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty;
The LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself:
The world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.
2 Thy throne *is* established of old:
Thou *art* from everlasting.
3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice;
The floods lift up their waves.
4 The LORD on high
Is mightier than the noise of many waters,
Yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.
5 Thy testimonies are very sure:
Holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

Next to the being of God, there is nothing that we are more concerned to believe and consider than God's dominion; that Jehovah is God, and that this God reigns, ver. 1; not only that he is King of right, and is the owner and proprietor of all persons and things, but that he is King in fact, and doth direct and dispose of all the creatures and all their actions, according to the counsel of his own will. This is celebrated here, and in many other psalms; "The Lord reigns." It is the song of the gospel church, of the glorified church; *Rev.* xix. 6, "Hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." And here we are told how he reigns.

First. The Lord reigns gloriously; "He is clothed with majesty." The majesty of earthly princes, compared with God's terrible majesty, is but like the glimmerings of a glowworm, compared with the brightness of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Are the enemies of God's kingdom great and formidable? yet let us not fear them, for God's majesty will eclipse theirs.

Secondly. He reigns powerfully. "He is" not only "clothed with majesty," as a prince in his court, but he "is clothed with strength," as a general in the camp. He has wherewithal to support his greatness, and to make it truly formidable. See him not only clad in robes, but clad in armour; both strength and honour are his clothing. He can do every thing, and with him nothing is impossible. 1. With this power "he hath girded himself." It is not derived from any other, nor doth the executing of it depend upon any other, but he has it of himself, and with it doth whatsoever he pleaseth. Let us not fear the power of man, which is borrowed and bounded, but fear him who has power to kill and cast into hell. 2. To this power it is owing that the world stands to this day; "The world also is established." It was so at first, by the creating power of God, when "he founded it upon the seas." It is so still, by that providence which upholds all things, and is a continued creation. It is so established, that though "he hath hanged the earth upon nothing," *Job* xxvi. 7, yet "it cannot be moved;" "All things continue to this day according to his ordinance." Note, The preserving of the powers of nature, and the course of nature, is what the God of nature must have the glory of; and we that have the benefit thereof daily are very careless and ungrateful, if we give him not the glory of it. Though God clothes himself with majesty, yet he condescends to take care of this lower world, and to settle the affairs of that. And if he established the world, much more will he establish his church, that it cannot be moved.

Thirdly. He reigns eternally; ver. 2, "Thy throne is established of old." 1. God's right to rule the world is founded in his making it. He that gave being to it, no doubt, may give law it, and so his title to the government is incontestable. "Thy throne is established;" it is a title without a flaw in it; and it is ancient,—it is established of old, from the beginning of time, before any other rule, principality, or power was erected, as it will continue when all other rule, principality, and power shall be put down, 1 *Cor.* xv. 24. The whole administration of his government was settled in his eternal counsels before all worlds; for he doth all according to the purpose which he purposed in himself. The chariots of providence came down from between the mountains of brass, from those decrees which are fixed as the everlasting mountains, *Zec.* vi. 1. "Thou art from everlasting," and therefore "thy throne is established of old;" because God himself was from everlasting, his throne, and all the determinations of it, were so too; for in an eternal mind there could not but be eternal thoughts.

Fourthly. He reigns triumphantly, ver. 3, 4. We have here, 1 A threatening storm supposed; "The floods have lifted up, O Lord," (to God himself the remonstrance is made,) "the floods have lifted up their voice," which speaks terror; nay, they have lifted up their waves, which speaks real danger. It alludes to a tempestuous sea, such as the wicked are compared to, *Isa.* lvii. 20. The heathen rage, *Ps.* ii. 1, and think to ruin the church,—to overwhelm it like a deluge, to sink it like a ship at sea. The church is said to be tossed with tempests, *Isa.* liv. 11, and the floods of ungodly men make the saints afraid, *Ps.* xviii. 4. We may apply it to the tumults that are sometimes in our own bosoms, through prevailing passions and frights, which put the soul into disorder, and are ready to overthrow its graces and comforts. But if the Lord reigns there, even the winds and seas shall obey him. 2. An immovable anchor cast in this storm; ver. 4, "The Lord himself is mightier." Let this keep our minds fixed, 1st. That God is on high, above them, which notes his safety, they cannot reach him, *Ps.* xxix. 10, and his sovereignty; they are ruled by him,—they are overruled, and wherein they rebel overcome, *Ex.* xviii. 11. 2nd. That he is mightier, doth more wondrous things than the noise of many waters. They cannot disturb his rest or rule; they cannot defeat his designs and purposes. Observe, The power of the church's enemies is but as the noise of many waters; there is more of sound than substance in it; Pharaoh king of Egypt

is but a noise, *Jer.* xlvi. 17. The church's friends are commonly worse frightened than hurt. God is mightier than this noise; he is mighty to preserve his people's interests from being ruined by these many waters, and his people's spirits from being terrified by the noise of them. He can, when he pleaseth, command peace to the church, *Ps.* lxv. 7,—peace in the soul, *Isa.* xxvi. 3. Note, The unlimited sovereignty and irresistible power of the great Jehovah is very encouraging to the people of God, in reference to all the noises and hurries they meet with in this world, *Ps.* xlvi. 1, 2.

Fifthly, He reigns in truth and holiness, ver. 5. 1. All his promises are inviolably faithful; "Thy testimonies are very sure." As God is able to protect his church, so he is true to his promises he has made of its safety and victory. His word is past, and all the saints may rely upon it. Whatever was foretold concerning the kingdom of the Messiah, would certainly have its accomplishment in due time. Those testimonies, upon which the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints was built, were very sure, and would not fail them. 2. All his people ought to be conscientiously pure; "Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, for ever." God's church is his house; it is a holy house cleansed from sin, consecrated by God, and employed in his service. The holiness of it is its beauty; nothing better becomes the saints than conformity to God's image, and an entire devotedness to his honour; and it is its strength and safety. It is the holiness of God's house that secures it against the many waters, and their noise. Where there is purity there shall be peace. Fashions change, and that that is becoming at one time is not at another; but holiness always becomes God's house and family, and those that belong to it. It is perpetually decent; and nothing so ill becomes the worshippers of the holy God as unholiness.

PSALM XCIV.

This psalm was penned when the church of God was under hatches, oppressed and persecuted; and is an appeal to God, as the judge of heaven and earth, and an address to him, to appear for his people against his and their enemies. Two things this psalm speaks, I. Conviction and terror to the persecutors, ver. 1—11, shewing them their danger and folly, and arguing with them. II. Comfort and peace to the persecuted, ver. 12—23, assuring them, both from God's promise and from the psalmist's own experience, that their troubles would end well, and God would in due time appear to their joy and the confusion of those that set themselves against them. In singing this psalm we must look abroad upon the pride of oppressors with a holy indignation, and the tears of the oppressed with a holy compassion; but at the same time look upwards to the righteous Judge with an entire satisfaction, and look forward, to the end of all those things, with a pleasing hope.

O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth;
O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.
2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth:
Render a reward to the proud.
3 LORD, how long shall the wicked,
How long shall the wicked triumph?
4 *How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things?
And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?
5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD,
And afflict thine heritage.
6 They slay the widow and the stranger,
And murder the fatherless.
7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see,
Neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*.
8 Understand, ye brutish among the people:
And *ye* fools, when will ye be wise?
9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?
He that formed the eye, shall he not see?
10 He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?
He that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?*
11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man,
That they *are* vanity.

In these verses we have,

First. A solemn appeal to God against the cruel oppressors of his people, ver. 1, 2. And this speaks terror enough to them, that they have the prayers of God's people against them, who cry day and night to him to avenge them of their adversaries; and shall he not avenge them speedily? *Lu.* xviii. 3, 7. Observe here,

1. The titles they give to God for the encouraging of their faith in this appeal; "O God, to whom vengeance belongeth," and "thou judge of the earth." We may with boldness appeal to him; for, 1st. He is judge, supreme judge,—judge alone,—from whom every man's judgment proceeds. He that gives law, gives sentence upon every man according to his works, by the rule of that law. He hath prepared his throne for judgment. He hath indeed appointed magistrates to be avengers under him, *Rom.* xiii. 4; but he is the avenger in chief, to whom even magistrates themselves are accountable. His throne is the last refuge (the *dernier ressort*, as the law speaks,) of oppressed innocency. He is universal judge, not of this city or country only, but judge of the earth, of the whole earth. None are exempt from his jurisdiction; nor can it be alleged against an appeal to him in any court, that it is *coram non judice*,—'before a person not judicially qualified.' 2nd. He is just. As he has authority to revenge wrong, so it is his nature, and property, and honour. And this also is implied in the title here given to him, and repeated with such an emphasis; "O God, to whom vengeance belongs," who will not suffer might always to prevail against right. This is a good reason why we must not avenge ourselves, because God hath said, "Vengeance is mine;" and it is daring presumption to usurp his prerogative, and step into his throne, *Rom.* xii. 19. Let this frighten those who do wrong, whether with a close hand, so as not to be discovered, or with a high hand, so as not to be controlled, There is a God to whom vengeance belongs, who will certainly call them to an account. And let it encourage those who suffer wrong to bear it with silence; committing themselves to him that judgeth righteously.

2. What it is they ask of God. 1st. That he would glorify himself, and get honour to his own name. Wicked persecutors thought God was withdrawn, and had forsaken the earth. Lord, say they, shew thyself; make them know that thou art, and that thou art ready to "shew thyself strong, on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright with thee." The enemies thought God was conquered, because his people were. Lord, say they, "Lift up thyself, be thou exalted in thy own strength;" lift up thyself to be seen, to be feared, and suffer not thy name to be trampled upon and run down. 2nd. That he would mortify the oppressors; "render a reward to the proud," that is, reckon with them for all their insolence, and the injuries they have done to thy people. These prayers are prophecies, which speak terror to all the sons of violence. The righteous God will deal with them according to their merits.

Secondly. An humble complaint to God of the pride and cruelty of the oppressors, and an expostulation with him concerning it, ver. 3—6. Where observe,

1. The character of the enemies they complain against. They are wicked, they are workers of iniquity; they are bad, very bad themselves, and therefore they hate and persecute those whose goodness shames and condemns them. Those are wicked indeed, and workers of the worst iniquity, lost to all honour and virtue, that are cruel to the innocent, and hate the righteous.

2. Their haughty, barbarous carriage which they complain of. 1st. They are insolent, and take a pleasure in magnifying themselves. They talk high, and talk big; they triumph; they speak loud things; they boast themselves, as if their tongues were their own, and their hands too, and they were accountable to none for what they say or do, and as if the day were their own, and they doubted not but to carry the cause against God and religion. They that speak highly of themselves, that triumph and boast, are apt to speak hardly of others; but there will come a day of reckoning for all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against God, his truths, and ways, and people, *Jude* 15. 2nd. They are impious, and take a pleasure in running down God's people, because they are his; ver. 5, "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord;" break their assemblies, their estates, their families, their persons in pieces, and do all they can to afflict thine heritage, to grieve them, to crush them, to run them down, to root them out. God's people are his heritage. There are those that for his sake hate them and seek their ruin; and this is a very good plea with God in our intercessions for the church: Lord, it is thine, thou hast a property in it. It is thine heritage, thou hast a pleasure in it, and out of it the rent of thy glory in this world issues; and wilt thou suffer these wicked men to trample upon it thus? 3rd. They are inhuman, and take a pleasure in wronging those that are least able to help themselves, ver. 6. They not only oppress and impoverish, but "they slay the widow and the stranger;" not only neglect the fatherless, and make a prey of them, but murder them, because they are weak and exposed, and sometimes lie at their mercy. Those whom they should protect from injury, they are most injurious to; perhaps because God has taken them into his particular care. Who would think it possible that any of the children of men should be thus barbarous?

3. A modest pleading with God concerning the continuance of the persecution. Lord, how long shall they do thus? and again, how long? When shall this wickedness of the wicked come to an end?

Thirdly. A charge of atheism exhibited against the persecutors, and an expostulation with them upon that charge.

1. Their atheistical thoughts are here discovered; ver. 7, "Yet they say, The Lord shall not see." Though the cry of their wickedness is very great and loud, though they rebel against the light of nature, and the dictates of their own consciences, yet they have the confidence to say, "The Lord shall not see." He will not only wink at small faults, but shut his eyes at great ones too; or they think they have managed it so artfully, under colour of justice and religion, perhaps, that it will not be adjudged murder. The God of Jacob, though his people pretend to have such an interest in him, doth not regard it, either as against justice, or as against his own people. He will never call them to an account for it. Thus denying God's government of the world, bantering his covenant with his people, and setting the judgment to come at defiance.

2. They are here convicted of folly and absurdity. He that saith either that Jehovah, the living God, shall not see, or that the God of Jacob shall not regard the injuries done to his people, Nabal is his name, and folly is with him. And yet here he is fairly reasoned with, for his conviction and conversion, to prevent his confusion; ver. 8, "Understand, ye brutish among the people," and let reason guide you. Note, The atheistical, though they set up for wits, and philosophers, and politicians, yet are really the brutish among the people; and if they would but understand, they would believe. God by the prophet speaks as if he thought the time long till men would be men, and shew themselves so by understanding and considering. "Ye fools, when will ye be wise?" so wise as to know that God sees and regards all you say and do, and to speak and act accordingly, as those that must give account. Note, None are so bad but means are to be used for the reclaiming and reforming of them; none so brutish, so foolish, but it should be tried whether they may not yet be made wise. While there is life there is hope. To evidence the folly of those that question God's omniscience and justice, the psalmist argues,

1st. From the works of creation, ver. 9. The formation of human bodies, which, as it proves that there is a God, so it proves that God has infinitely and transcendently in himself all those perfections that are in any creature. "He that planted the ear," (and it is planted in the head, as a tree in the ground,) "shall he not hear?" No doubt he shall, more and better than we can. "He that formed the eye," (and how curiously it is formed above any part of the body anatomists know and let us know by their dissections,) "shall he not see?" Could he give, would he give, that perfection to a creature which he has not in himself? Note, *First.* The powers of nature are all derived from the God of nature: see *Ex.* iv. 11. *Secondly.* By the knowledge of ourselves we may be led a great way towards the knowledge of God; if by the knowledge of our own bodies, and the organs of sense, so as to conclude that if we can see and hear, much more can God, then certainly by the knowledge of our own souls, and their noble faculties. The gods of the heathen had eyes and saw not, ears and heard not; our God has no eyes or ears, as we have, and yet we must conclude he both sees and hears; because we have our sight and hearing from him, and are accountable to him how we use it.

2nd. He argues from the works of providence; ver. 10, "He that chastiseth the heathen" for their polytheism and idolatry, "shall not he" much more "correct" his own people for their atheism and profaneness? He that chastiseth the children of men for oppressing and wronging one another, shall not he correct those that profess to be his own children, and call themselves so, and yet persecute those that are really so? Shall not we be under his correction, under whose government the whole world is? Doth he regard as king of nations, and shall he not much more regard as the God of Jacob? Dr. Hammond gives another very probable sense of this. 'He that instructeth the nations,' that is, gives them his law, 'shall not he correct,' that is, shall not he judge them according to that law, and call them to an account for their violations of it? In vain was the law given, if there will not be a judgment upon it. And it is true that the same word signifies to chastise and instruct; because

chastisement is intended for instruction, and instruction should go along with chastisement.

3rd. He argues from the works of grace. "He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" He not only as the God of nature has given the light of reason, but as the God of grace has given the light of revelation, hath shewed man what is true wisdom and understanding; and he that doth this, shall he not know? *Job* xxviii. 23, 28. The flowing of the stream is a certain sign of the fulness of the fountain. If all knowledge is from God, no doubt all knowledge is in God. From this general doctrine of God's omniscience, he not only confutes the atheists, who said, "the Lord shall not see," ver. 7, he will not take cognizance of what we do; but awakens us all to consider that God will take cognizance even of what we think; ver. 11, "The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." *First.* He knows those thoughts in particular concerning God's conniving at the wickedness of the wicked, and knows them to be vain; and laughs at the folly of those who by such fond conceits buoy themselves up in sin. *Secondly.* He knows all the thoughts of the children of men, and knows them to be for the most part vain; that the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts are evil, only evil, and that continually. Even in good thoughts there is a fickleness and inconstancy which may well be called vanity. It concerns us to keep a strict guard upon our thoughts, because God takes particular notice of them. Thoughts are words to God, and vain thoughts are provocations.

12 Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD,
And teachest him out of thy law;
13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity,
Until the pit be digged for the wicked.
14 For the LORD will not cast off his people,
Neither will he forsake his inheritance.
15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness:
And all the upright in heart shall follow it.
16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?
Or who will stand up for me against the workers of [iniquity?
17 Unless the LORD *had been* my help,
My soul had almost dwelt in silence.
18 When I said, My foot slippeth;
Thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.
19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me
Thy comforts delight my soul.
20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee,
Which frameth mischief by a law? [righteous,
21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the
And condemn the innocent blood.
22 But the LORD is my defence;
And my God *is* the rock of my refuge.
23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity,
And shall cut them off in their own wickedness;
Yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

The psalmist, having denounced tribulation to them that trouble God's people, here assures them that are troubled of rest: see 2 *Thes.* i. 6, 7. He speaks comfort to suffering saints from God's promises and his own experience.

First. From God's promises, which are such as not only save them from being miserable, but secure a happiness to them; ver. 12, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest." Here he looks above the instruments of trouble, and eyes the hand of God, which gives it another name, and puts quite another colour upon it. The enemies break in pieces God's people, ver. 5; they aim at no less; but the truth of the matter is, that God by them chastens his people, as the father the son in whom he delighteth, and the persecutors are only the rod he makes use of. "Howbeit they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so," *Isa.* x. 5—7. Now it is here promised,

1. That God's people shall get good by their sufferings. When he chastens them he will teach them, and blessed is the man who is thus taken under a Divine discipline; for none teacheth like God. Note, 1st. The afflictions of the saints are fatherly chastenings, designed for our instruction, reformation, and improvement. 2nd. When the teachings of the Word and Spirit go along with the rebukes of Providence, they then both speak men blessed, and help to make them so; for then they are marks of adoption and means of sanctification. When we are chastened, we must pray to be taught, and look into the law as the best expositor of providence. It is not the chastening itself that doth good, but the teaching that goes along with it, and is the exposition of it.

2. That they shall see through their sufferings; ver. 13, "That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity." Note, 1st. There is a rest remaining for the people of God after the days of their adversity, which, though they may be many and long, shall be numbered and finished in due time, and shall not last always. He that sends the trouble will send the rest, that he may comfort them according to the time that he hath afflicted them. 2nd. God therefore teacheth his people by their troubles that he may prepare them for deliverance, and so give them rest from their troubles; that being reformed, they might be relieved, and the affliction having done its work, it may be removed.

3. That they shall see the ruin of those that are the instruments of their sufferings, which is the matter of a promise, not as gratifying any passion of theirs, but as redounding to the glory of God; "until the pit is digged," or rather, while the pit is in digging "for the wicked," God is ordering peace for them at the same time that he is ordaining his arrows against the persecutors.

4. That though they may be cast down, yet certainly they shall not be cast off, ver. 14. Let God's suffering people assure themselves of this, that whatever their friends do, God will not cast them off, nor throw them out of his covenant or out of his care; neither will he forsake them, because they are his inheritance, which he will not quit his title to, nor suffer himself to be disseized of. St. Paul comforted himself with this, *Rom.* xi. 1.

5. That as bad as things are, they shall mend; and though they are now out of course, yet they shall return to their due and ancient channel; ver. 15, "Judgment shall return unto righteousness," that is, the seeming disorders of providence (for real ones there never were) shall be rectified. God's judgment, that is, his government, looks sometimes as if it were at a distance from righteousness, while the wicked prosper, and the best men meet with the worst usage; but it shall return to righteousness again, either in this world, or, at the farthest, in the judgment of the great day, which will set all to rights. And then 'all the upright in heart shall be after it,' that is, they shall follow it with their praises, and with an entire satisfaction; they shall return to a prosperous and flourishing condition, and shine forth out of obscurity. They shall accommodate themselves to the dispensations of Divine providence, and with suitable affections attend all its motions. "They shall walk after the Lord," *Hos.* xi. 10. Dr. Hammond thinks this was most eminently fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem first, and afterwards of heathen Rome, the crucifiers of Christ and persecutors of Christians, and the rest which the churches had thereby; "Then judgment returned even to righteousness," that is, to mercy and goodness, and favour to God's people, who then were as much countenanced as before they had been trampled on.

Secondly. From his own experiences and observations.

1. He and his friends had been oppressed by cruel and imperious men, that had power in their hands, and abused it, by abusing all good people with it. They were themselves evil-doers, and workers of iniquity, ver. 16; they abandoned themselves to all manner of impiety and immorality, and then their throne was a throne of iniquity, ver. 20. Their dignity served to put a reputation upon sin, and their authority was employed to support it, and to bring about their wicked designs. It is pity that ever a throne, which should be a terror to evil-doers and a protection and praise to them that do well, should be the seat and shelter of iniquity. That is a throne of iniquity which by the policy of its counsel frameth mischief, and by its sovereignty enacts it, and turns it into a law. Iniquity is daring enough, even when human laws are against it, which often prove too weak to give an effectual check to it; but how insolent, how mischievous, is it when it is backed by a law! Iniquity is not the better, but much the worse, for being enacted by law; nor will it excuse those that practise it, to say they did but do as they were bidden. These workers of iniquity, having framed mischief by a law, take care to see the law executed; for "they gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous," who dare not keep the statutes of Omri, nor the law of the house of Ahab; and they condemned the innocent blood for violating their decrees. See an instance in Daniel's enemies; they framed mischief by a law when they obtained an impious edict against prayer, *Dan.* vi. 7, which when Daniel would not obey, they assembled together against him, ver. 11, and condemned his innocent blood to the lions. The best of benefactors to mankind have often been thus treated, under colour of law and justice, as the worst of malefactors.

2. This oppression they were under bore very hard upon them, and oppressed their spirits too. Let not suffering saints despair, though when they are persecuted they find themselves perplexed and cast down. It was so with the psalmist here: His "soul had almost dwelt in silence," ver. 17; that is, he was at his wit's end, and knew not what to say or do; he was, in his own apprehension, at his life's end, ready to drop into the grave, that land of silence. St. Paul in a like case received a sentence of death within himself, 2 *Cor.* i. 8, 9. He said, "My foot slippeth," ver. 18, that is, I am going irretrievably, there is no remedy, I must fall, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;" or, my hope fails me, I do not find such firm footing for my faith as I have sometimes found: see *Ps.* lxxiii. 2. He had a multitude of perplexed, entangled thoughts within him concerning the case he was in, and the construction to be made of it, and concerning the course he should take, and what was likely to be the issue of it.

3. In this distress they sought for help and succour, and some relief. 1st. They looked about for it, and were disappointed; ver. 16, "Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers?" Have I any friend that in love to me will appear for me? Hath justice any friend that in a pious indignation at unrighteousness will plead my injured cause? He looked, but there was none to save, there was none to uphold. Note, When on the side of the oppressors there is power, it is no marvel if the oppressed have no comforter, none that dare own them, or speak a good word for them, *Eccl.* iv. 1; when St. Paul was brought before Nero's throne of iniquity, no man stood by him, 2 *Tim.* iv. 16. 2nd. They looked up for it, ver. 20. They humbly expostulate with God; "Lord, shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?" Wilt thou countenance and support these tyrants in their wickedness? We know thou wilt not. A throne has fellowship with God when it is a throne of justice, and answers the end of the erecting of it; for by him kings reign, and when they reign for him, their judgments are his, and he owns them as his ministers, and whoever resist them, or rise up against them, shall receive to themselves damnation; but when it becomes a throne of iniquity, it has no longer fellowship with God. Far be it from the just and holy God that he should be the patron of unrighteousness, even in princes and those that sit in thrones; yea, though they be the thrones of the house of David.

4. They found succour and relief in God, and in him only. When other friends failed, in him they had a faithful and powerful friend; and it is recommended to all God's suffering saints to trust in him.

1st. God helps at a dead lift, ver. 17. When I had almost dwelt in silence, then the Lord was my help, kept me alive, kept me in heart; and unless I had made him my help, by putting my trust in him, and expecting relief from him, I could never have kept possession of my own soul; but living by faith in him has kept my head above water, has given me breath, and something to say.

2nd. God's goodness is the great support of sinking spirits; ver. 18, "When I said, My foot slippeth" into sin, into ruin, into despair, then "thy mercy, O Lord, held me up," and kept me from falling, and defeated the design of those who consulted to cast me down from mine excellency, *Ps.* lxii. 4. We are beholden not only to God's power, but to his pity, for spiritual supports. Thy mercy, the gifts of thy mercy, and my hope in thy mercy, held me up. God's right hand sustains his people, when they look on their right hand and on their left, and there is none to uphold. And we are then prepared for his gracious supports, when we are sensible of our own weakness and inability to stand by our own strength, and come to God to acknowledge it, and to tell him how our foot slippeth.

3rd. Divine consolations are the effectual relief of troubled spirits; ver. 19, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me," that are noisy like a multitude, crowding and jostling one another like a multitude, and very unruly and ungovernable; in the multitude of my sorrowful, solicitous, timorous thoughts, "thy comforts delight my soul;" and they are never more delightful than when they come in so seasonably to silence my unquiet thoughts, and keep my mind easy. The world's comforts give but little delight to the soul when it is hurried with melancholy thoughts; they are songs to a heavy heart. But God's comforts will reach the soul, and not the fancy only, and will bring with them that peace and pleasure which the smiles of the world cannot give, and which the frowns of the world cannot take away.

4th. God is and will be, as a righteous judge, the patron and protector of right, and the punisher and avenger of wrong. This the psalmist had both the assurance of, and the experience of.

First. He will right the injured, ver. 22. When none else will, or can, or dare shelter me, "the Lord is my defence," to preserve me from the evil of my troubles, from sinking under them, and being ruined by them; and he is "the rock of my refuge," in the clefts of which I may take shelter, and on the top of which I may set my feet, to be out of the reach of danger. God is his people's refuge, to whom they may flee, in whom they are safe, and may be secure. He is the rock of their refuge, so strong, so firm: impregnable, immovable as a rock. Natural fastnesses sometimes exceed artificial fortifications.

Secondly. He will reckon with the injurious; ver. 23, "He shall render to them their own iniquity;" that is, he shall deal with them according to their deserts; and that very mischief which they did and designed against God's people shall be brought upon themselves; and it follows, he "shall cut them off in their own wickedness." A man cannot be more miserable than his own wickedness will make him, if God visit it upon him; it will cut him in the remembrance of it; it will cut him off in the recompence of it. This the psalm concludes with the triumphant assurance of. "Yea, the Lord our God," who takes our part, and owns us for his, "shall cut them off" from any fellowship with him, and so shall make them completely miserable, and their pomp and power shall stand them in no stead.

PSALM XCV.

For the expounding of this psalm we may borrow a great deal of light from the apostle's discourse, *Heb.* iii. and iv., where it appears, both to have been penned by David, and to have been calculated for the days of the Messiah; for it is there said expressly, *Heb.* iv. 7, that the day here spoken of, ver. 7, is to be understood of the gospel day, in which God speaks to us by his Son, in a voice which we are concerned to hear, and proposeth to us a rest, beside that of Canaan. In singing of psalms it is intended, I. That we should make melody unto the Lord, and that we are here excited to do, and assisted in doing; being called upon to praise God, ver. 1, 2, as a great God, ver. 3—5, and as our gracious benefactor, ver. 6, 7. II. That we should teach and admonish ourselves and one another; and we are here taught and warned to hear God's voice, ver. 7, and not to harden our hearts, as the Israelites in the wilderness did, ver. 8, 9, lest we fall under God's wrath, and fall short of his rest, as they did, ver. 10, 11. This psalm must be sung with a holy reverence of God's majesty, and a dread of his justice, with a desire to please him, and a fear to offend him.

O COME, let us sing unto the LORD:
Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
And make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.
3 For the LORD *is* a great God,
And a great King above all gods.
4 In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth:
The strength of the hills *is* his also.
5 The sea *is* his, and he made it:
And his hands formed the dry *land*.
6 O come, let us worship and bow down:
Let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
7 For he *is* our God; [his hand.
And we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of

The psalmist here, as often elsewhere, stirs up himself and others to praise God; for it is a duty which ought to be performed with the most lively affections, and which we have great need to be excited to, being very often backward to it, and cold in it. Observe,

First. How God is to be praised. 1. With holy joy and delight in him. The praising song must be a joyful noise, ver. 1; and again, ver. 2. Spiritual joy is the heart and soul of thankful praise. It is the will of God (such is the condescension of his grace) that when we give glory to him, as a being infinitely perfect and blessed, we should, at the same time, rejoice in him as our Father and King, and a God in covenant with us. 2. With humble reverence and a holy awe of him; ver. 6, "let us worship, and bow down," and kneel before him, as becomes those who know what an infinite distance there is between us and God, how much we are in danger of his wrath, and in need of his mercy. Though bodily exercise alone profits little, yet certainly it is our duty to glorify God with our bodies, by the outward expressions of reverence, seriousness, and humility, in the duties of religious worship. 3. We must praise God with our voice; we must speak forth, sing forth, his praises out of the abundance of a heart filled with love, and joy, and thankfulness; "Sing to the Lord, make a noise, a joyful noise to him with psalms;" as those that are ourselves much affected with his greatness and goodness, are forward to own ourselves so, are desirous to be more and more affected therewith, and would willingly be instrumental to kindle and inflame the same pious and devout affection in others also. 4. We must praise God in concert, in the solemn assemblies; "Come, let us sing;" let us join in singing to the Lord; not others without me, nor I alone, but others with me. "Let us come" together "before his presence," in the courts of his house, where his people use to attend him, and to expect his manifestations of himself. Whenever we come into God's presence, we must come "with thanksgiving," that we are admitted to such a favour; and whenever we have thanks to give we must come before God's presence, set ourselves before him, and present ourselves to him in the ordinances which he hath appointed.

Secondly. Why God is to be praised, and what must be the matter of our praise: we do not want matter, it were well if we did not want a heart. We must praise God,

1. Because he is a great God and sovereign Lord of all; ver. 3, he is great, and therefore greatly to be praised. He is infinite and immense, and hath all perfection in himself. 1st. He has great power; "he is a great King above all gods," above all deputed deities, all magistrates, to whom he said, Ye are gods; (he manageth them all, and serves his own purposes by them, and to him they are all accountable;) above all counterfeit deities, all pretenders, all usurpers; he can do that which none of them can do; he can and will famish and vanquish them all. 2nd. He has great possessions. This lower world is here particularly instanced in; we reckon those great men that have large territories, which they call their own against all the world, which yet are a very inconsiderable part of the universe. How great then is that God, whose the whole earth is, and the fulness thereof; not only under whose feet it is, as he has an incontestable dominion over all the creatures, and a propriety in them, but in whose hand it is, as he has the actual directing and disposing of all, ver. 4; even "the deep places of the earth," which are out of our sight, subterraneous springs and mines, are in his hand; and "the height of the hills," which are out of our reach, whatever grows or feeds upon them, "is his also." This may be taken figuratively: the meanest of the children of men, that are as the low places of the earth, are not beneath his cognizance; and the greatest, that are as the strength of the hills, are not above his control. Whatever strength is in any creature it is derived from God, and employed for him, ver. 5. "The sea is his," and all that is in it; the waves fulfil his word; it is his, for "he made it," gathered its waters and fixed its shores. The dry land, though given to the children of men, is his too, for he still reserved the property to himself; it is his, for his hands formed it, when his word made the dry land appear. His being the Creator of all makes him without dispute the owner of all. This being a gospel psalm, we may very well suppose that it is the Lord Jesus whom we are here taught to praise. He is a great God; the mighty God is one of his titles, and God over all, blessed for evermore. As Mediator, he is a great King above all gods; by him kings reign; and angels, principalities, and powers are subject to him; by him, as the Eternal Word, all things were made, *Jno.* i. 3; and it was fit he should be the restorer and reconciler of all who was the creator of all, *Col.* i. 16, 20. To him all power is given both in heaven and in earth, and into his hand all things are delivered. It is he that sets one foot on the sea and the other on the earth, as sovereign Lord of both, *Rev.* x. 2; and therefore to him we must sing our songs of praise, and before him we must worship and bow down.

2. Because he is our God; not only has a dominion over us, as he has over all the creatures, but stands in special relation to us, ver. 7. He is our God; and therefore it is expected we should praise him. Who will if we do not? What else did he make us for, but that we should be to him for a name and a praise?

1st. He is our Creator, and the author of our being; we must "kneel before the Lord our Maker," ver. 6. Idolaters kneel before gods which they themselves made; we kneel before a God that made us and all the world, and who is therefore our rightful proprietor; for His we are, and not our own.

2nd. He is our Saviour, and the author of our blessedness. He is here called "the Rock of our salvation," ver. 1; not only the founder, but the very foundation of that work of wonder, on whom it is built. That Rock is Christ; to him therefore we must sing our songs of praises, "to Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb."

3rd. We are therefore his, under all possible obligations; "we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand." All the children of men are so; they are fed and led by his providence, which cares for them, and conducts them, as the Shepherd the sheep. We must therefore praise him, not only because he made us, but because he preserves and maintains us, and our breath and ways are in his hand. All the church's children are in a special manner so; Israel is "the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand," and therefore he demands their homage in a special manner. The gospel church is his flock, Christ is the great and good Shepherd of it; we as Christians are led by his hand into the green pastures, by him we are protected and well provided for; to his honour and service we are entirely devoted as a peculiar people, and therefore to him must be glory in the churches, whether it be in the world or no, throughout all ages, *Eph.* iii. 21.

To day if ye will hear his voice,
8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation,
And as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:
9 When your fathers tempted me,
Proved me, and saw my work.
10 Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation,
And said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart,
And they have not known my ways:
11 Unto whom I sware in my wrath
That they should not enter into my rest.

The latter part of this psalm, which begins in the middle of a verse, is an exhortation to those that sing gospel psalms to live gospel lives, and to hear the voice of God's word, or otherwise how can they expect that he should hear the voice of their prayers and praises? Observe,

First. The duty required of all those that are the people of Christ's pasture, and the sheep of his hand. He expects that they hear his voice, for he hath said, "My sheep hear my voice," *Jno.* x. 27. "We are his people," say they; are you so? then hear his voice. If you call him Master, or Lord, then do the things which he saith, and be his willing, obedient people. Hear the voice of his doctrine, his law, and in both of his Spirit; hear and heed; hear and yield. Hear his voice, and not the voice of a stranger. "If ye will hear his voice;" some take it as a wish, 'O, that ye would hear his voice!' that ye would be so wise, and do so well for yourselves; as, "if thou hadst known," *Lu.* xix. 41, that is, O, that thou hadst known! Christ's voice must be heard to-day; this the apostle lays much stress upon, applying it to the gospel day. While he is speaking to you see that you attend to him, for this day of your opportunities will not last always, improve it therefore while it is called to-day, *Heb.* iii. 13, 15. Hearing the voice of Christ is the same with believing. To-day, if by faith you accept the gospel offer, well and good, but to-morrow it may be too late. In a matter of such vast importance nothing more dangerous than delay.

Secondly. The sin they are warned against, as inconsistent with the believing, obedient ear required, and that is hardness of heart. "If ye will hear his voice," and profit by what you hear, then do not harden your hearts; for the seed sown on the rock never brought any fruit to perfection. The Jews therefore believed not the Gospel of Christ, because their hearts were hardened; they were not convinced of the evil of sin, and of their danger by reason of sin, and therefore they regarded not the offer of salvation. They would not bend to the yoke of Christ, nor yield to his demands. And if the sinner's heart be hardened, it is his own act and deed, he hardened it himself, and he alone shall bear the blame for ever.

Thirdly. The example they are warned by; which is that of the Israelites in the wilderness. Take heed of sinning as they did, lest you be shut out of the everlasting rest, as they were out of Canaan: "Be not as your fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation," *Ps.* lxxviii. 8. Thus here, "Harden not your heart, as" you did, that is your ancestors, "in the provocation," or in Meribah, the place where they quarrelled with God and Moses, *Ex.* xvii. 2—7, "and in the day of temptation in the wilderness," ver. 8. So often did they provoke God by their distrusts and murmurings, that the whole time of their continuance in the wilderness might be called a day of temptation, or Massah, the other name given to that place, *Ex.* xvii. 7, because they tempted the Lord,

saying, "Is the Lord among us, or is he not?" This was in the wilderness, where they could not help themselves, but lay at God's mercy; and where God wonderfully helped them, and gave them such sensible proofs of his power and tokens of his favour as never any people had before or since. Note, 1. Days of temptation are days of provocation. Nothing is more offensive to God than disbelief of his promise, and despair of the performance of it because of some difficulties that seem to lie in the way. 2. The more experience we have had of the power and goodness of God, the greater is our sin if we distrust him. What, to tempt him in the wilderness, where we live upon him! This is as ungrateful as it is absurd and unreasonable. 3. Hardness of heart is at the bottom of all our distrusts of God, and quarrels with him. That is a hard heart which receives not the impressions of Divine discoveries, and conforms not to the intentions of the Divine will, which will not melt, which will not bend. 4. The sins of others ought to be warnings to us not to tread in their steps. The murmurings of Israel were written for our admonition, 1 *Cor.* x. 11. Now here observe,

1st. The charge drawn up in God's name against the unbelieving Israelites, ver. 9, 10. God here, many ages after, complains of their ill carriage towards him, with the expressions of a high resentment. *First.* Their sin was unbelief. They tempted God, and proved him; that is, they questioned whether they might take his word, and insisted upon farther security, before they would go forward to Canaan, by sending spies; and when those discouraged them, they protested against the sufficiency of the Divine power and promise, and would make a captain, and return into Egypt, *Num.* xiv. 3, 4. This is called rebellion, *Deu.* i. 26, 32. *Secondly.* The aggravation of this sin was, that they saw God's work; they saw what he had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt; nay, what he was now doing for them every day, this day, in the bread he rained from heaven for them, and the water out of the rock that followed them, than which they could not have more unquestionable evidences of God's presence with them. With them even seeing was not believing, because they hardened their hearts, though they had seen what Pharaoh got by hardening his heart. *Thirdly.* The causes of their sin. See what God imputed it to: "It is a people that do err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways." Men's unbelief and distrust of God, their murmurings and quarrels with him, are the effect of their ignorance and mistake. 1*st.* Of their ignorance; "they have not known my ways." They saw his work, ver. 9, and he made known his acts to them, *Ps.* ciii. 7, and yet they did not know his ways, the ways of his providence, in which he walked towards them, or the ways of his commandments, in which he would have them to walk towards him. They did not know, that is, they did not rightly understand, and therefore did not approve of these. Note, The reason why people slight and forsake the ways of God is because they do not know them. 2*nd.* Of their mistake; "they do err in their heart;" they wander out of the way, in heart they turn back. Note, Sins are errors, practical errors, errors in heart; such there are, and as fatal as errors in the head. When the corrupt affections pervert the judgment, and so lead the soul out of the ways of duty and obedience, there is an error of the heart. *Fourthly.* God's resentment of their sin. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation." Note, The sins of God's professing people do not only anger him, but grieve him, especially their distrust of him; and God keeps an account how often (*Num.* xiv. 22) and how long they grieve him. See the patience of God towards provoking sinners. He was grieved with them forty years, and yet those years ended in a triumphant entrance into Canaan, made by the next generation. If our sins have grieved God, surely they should grieve us, and nothing in sin should grieve us so much as that.

2nd. The sentence passed upon them for their sin; ver. 11, "Unto whom I sware in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest," then say I am changeable and untrue; see the sentence at large, *Num.* xiv, 21, &c. Observe, *First.* Whence this sentence came—from the wrath of God. He swore solemnly in his wrath, his just and holy wrath; but let not men therefore swear profanely in their wrath, their sinful brutish wrath. God is not subject to such passions as we are; but he is said to be angry, very angry at sin and sinners, to shew the malignity of sin, and the justice of God's government. That is certainly an evil thing which deserves such a recompence of revenge as may be expected from a provoked deity. *Secondly.* What it was; "that they should not enter into his rest," the rest which he had prepared and designed for them; a settlement for them and theirs. That none of them, who were enrolled when they came out of Egypt, should be found written in the roll of the living at their entering into Canaan, but Caleb and Joshua. *Thirdly.* How it was ratified; I swore it. It was not only a purpose, but a decree. The oath shewed the immutability of his counsel, "The Lord sware, and will not repent;" and it cut off the thought of any reserve of mercy; God's threatenings are as sure as his promises.

Now this case of Israel may be applied to those of their posterity that lived in David's time, when this psalm was penned. Let them hear God's voice, and not harden their hearts as their fathers did, lest, if they were stiffnecked like them, God should be provoked to forbid them the privileges of his temple at Jerusalem, of which he had said, "This is my rest." But it must be applied to us Christians, because so the apostle applies it. There is a spiritual and eternal rest set before us, and promised to us, of which Canaan was a type. We are all (in profession at least) bound for this rest, yet many that seem to be so come short, and shall never enter into it. And what is it that puts a bar in their door? It is sin, it is unbelief; that sin against the remedy, against our appeal. They that, like Israel, distrust God, and his power and goodness, and prefer the garlick and onions of Egypt before the milk and honey of Canaan, will justly be shut out from his rest; so shall their doom be, themselves have decided it. "Let us therefore fear," *Heb.* iv. 1.

PSALM XCVI.

This psalm is part of that psalm which was delivered into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, 1 *Chr.* xvi. 7, by which it appears both that David was the penman of it, and that it has reference to the bringing up of the ark to the city of David; whether that long psalm was made first, and this afterwards taken out of it, or this made first, and afterwards borrowed to make up that, is not certain: but this is certain, that though it was sung at the translation of the ark, it looks farther to the kingdom of Christ, and is designed to celebrate the glories of that kingdom; especially the accession of the Gentiles to it. Here is, I. A call given to all people to praise God, to worship him, and give glory to him, as a great and glorious God, ver. 1—9. II. Notice given to all people of God's universal government and judgment, which ought to be the matter of universal joy, ver. 10—13. In singing this psalm we ought to have our hearts filled with great and high thoughts of the glory of God, and the grace of the Gospel, and with an entire satisfaction in Christ's sovereign dominion, and in the expectation of the judgment to come.

O SING unto the LORD a new song:
Sing unto the LORD, all the earth.
2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name;
Shew forth his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the heathen,
His wonders among all people.
4 For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised:
He *is* to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the nations *are* idols:
But the LORD made the heavens.
6 Honour and majesty *are* before him:
Strength and beauty *are* in his sanctuary.
7 Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people,
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.
8 Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name:
Bring an offering, and come into his courts.
9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness:
Fear before him, all the earth.

These verses will be best expounded by pious and devout affections, working in our souls towards God, with a high veneration for his majesty and transcendent excellency. The call here given us to praise God is very lively, the expressions raised and repeated, to all which the echo of a thankful heart should make agreeable returns. We are here required to honour God,

First. With songs, ver. 1, 2. Three times we are here called to "sing unto the Lord." Sing to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, when the morning stars sung together, is now, in the church militant, and ever shall be in the church triumphant. We have reason to do it often, and we have need to be often minded of it, and stirred up to it. "Sing unto the Lord," that is, "Bless his name," speak well of him, that you may bring others to think well of him. 1. Sing a new song; that is, an excellent song, the product of new affections, clothed with new expressions. We speak of nothing more despicable than an old song, but the newness of a song recommends it; for there we expect something surprising. A new song is a song for new favours, for those compassions which are new every morning. A new song is a New Testament song, a song of praise for the new covenant, and the precious privileges of that covenant. A new song is a song that shall be ever new, and shall never wax old, or vanish away; it is an everlasting song, that shall never be antiquated or out of date. 2. Let all the earth sing this song; not the Jews only, to whom hitherto the service of God had been appropriated, who could not sing the Lord's song in (would not sing it to) a strange land; but let all the earth, all that are redeemed from the earth, learn and sing this new song, *Rev.* xiv. 3. This is a prophecy of the calling of the Gentiles: all the earth shall have this new song put into their mouths, shall have both cause and call to sing it. 3. Let the subject matter of this song be his salvation; the great salvation which was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus; that must be shewed forth as the cause of this joy and praise. 4. Let these songs be sung constantly, and not only in the times appointed for the solemn feasts, but from day to day. It is a subject that can never be exhausted. Let day unto day utter this speech, that under the influence of gospel devotions, we may daily exemplify a gospel conversation.

Secondly. With sermons; ver. 3, "Declare his glory among the heathen, even his wonders among all people." 1. Salvation by Christ is here spoken of as a work of wonder, and that in which the glory of God shines very bright. In shewing forth that salvation, we declare God's glory as it shines in the face of Christ. 2. This salvation was in the Old Testament times, as heaven's happiness is now, a glory to be revealed; but in the fulness of time it was declared, and a full discovery made of that, even to babes, which prophets and kings desired and wished to see, and might not. 3. What was then discovered was declared only among the Jews, but it is now declared among the heathen, among all people. The nations which long sat in darkness now see this great light. The apostles' commission to preach the Gospel to every creature is copied from this: "Declare his glory among the heathen."

Thirdly. With religious services, ver. 7—9. Hitherto though in every nation they that feared God, and wrought righteousness, were accepted of him, yet instituted ordinances were the peculiarities of the Jewish religion; but in gospel times the kindreds of the people shall be invited and admitted into the service of God, and be as welcome as ever the Jews were. The court of the Gentiles shall no longer be an outward court, but shall be laid in common with the court of Israel. All the earth is here summoned to fear before the Lord, that is, to worship him according to his appointment. "In every place incense shall be offered to his name," *Mal.* i. 11; *Zec.* xiv. 17; *Isa.* lxvi. 23. This indeed spoke mortification to the Jews, but withal it gave a prospect of that which would redound very much to the glory of God, and to the happiness of mankind.

Now observe how the acts of devotion to God are here described. 1. We must give unto the Lord; not as if God needed any thing, or could receive any thing from us or any creature, which was not his own before, much less be benefited by it; but we must in our best affections, adorations, and services return to him what we have received from him, and do it freely, as what we give; for God loves a cheerful giver. It is debt, it is rent, it is tribute, it is what must be paid, and if not will be recovered; and yet if it come from holy love, God is pleased to accept it as gift. 2. We must acknowledge God to be the sovereign Lord, and pay homage to him accordingly; ver. 7, "Give unto the Lord glory and strength," glory and empire, or dominion, so some. As a king he is clothed with robes of glory, and girt with the girdle of power, and we must subscribe to both. "Thine is the kingdom," and therefore "thine is the power and the glory." Give the glory to God; do not take it to yourselves, nor give it to any creature. 3. We must "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;" that is, to the discovery he has been pleased to make of himself to the children of men. In all the acts of religious worship this is that which we must aim at, to honour God, to pay him some of that reverence which we owe him as the best of beings, and the fountain of our being. 4. We must bring an offering into his courts. We must bring ourselves in the first place, the offering up of the Gentiles, *Rom.* xv. 16. We must offer up the sacrifices of praise continually, *Heb.* xiii. 15; must often appear before God in public worship, and never appear before him empty. 5. We must worship him in the beauty of holiness: in the solemn assembly, where Divine institutions are religiously observed, the beauty of which is their holiness, that is, their conformity to the rule. Worship him with holy hearts, sanctified by the grace of God, devoted to the glory of God, and purified from the pollutions of sin. 6. We must fear before him. All the acts of worship must be performed from a principle of the fear of God, and with a holy awe and reverence.

In the midst of these calls to praise God and give glory to him, glorious things are here said of him, both as motives to praise, and matter of praise. "The Lord is great, and" therefore "greatly to be praised," ver. 4, and to be feared; great and honourable to his attendants; great and terrible to his adversaries. Even the new song proclaims God great as well as good; for his goodness is his glory. And when the everlasting Gospel is preached, this is it, "Fear God, and give glory to him," *Rev.* xiv. 6, 7.

1st. He is great in his sovereignty over all that pretend to be deities. None dare vie with him: "He is to be feared above all gods," all princes, who were often deified after their deaths, and even while they lived were adored as petty gods; or rather, all idols, the gods of the nations, ver. 5. All the earth being called to sing the new song, they must be convinced that the Lord Jehovah, to whose honour they must sing it, is the one only living and true God; infinitely above all rivals and pretenders. He is great, and they are little: he is all, and they are nothing. So the word used for idols signifies; for "we know that an idol is nothing in the world," 1 *Cor.* viii. 4. 2nd. He is great in his right, even to the noblest part of the creation; for it is his own work, and derives its being from him. "The Lord made the heavens," and all their hosts, they are the work of his fingers, *Ps.* viii. 3; so nicely, so curiously are they made. The gods of the nations were all made gods, the creatures of men's fancies; but our God is the creator of the sun, moon and stars, those lights of heaven, which they imagined to be gods, and worshipped as such. 3rd. He is great in the manifestation of his glory both in the upper and lower world, among his angels in heaven, and his saints on earth; ver. 6, "Splendour and majesty are before him" in his immediate presence above, where the angels cover their faces, as unable to bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary," both that above, and this below. In God there is every thing that is awful, and yet every thing that is amiable. If we attend him in his sanctuary, we shall behold his beauty, for God is love; and experience his strength, for he is our rock. Let us therefore go forth in his strength, enamoured with his beauty.

10 Say among the heathen *that* the LORD reigneth:
The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved:
He shall judge the people righteously.
11 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.
12 Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* therein:
Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice
13 Before the LORD: for he cometh,
For he cometh to judge the earth:
He shall judge the world with righteousness,
And the people with his truth.

We have here instructions given to those who were to preach the Gospel to the nations, what to preach; or to those who had themselves received the Gospel, what account to give of it to their neighbours, what to say among the heathen. And it is an illustrious prophecy of the setting up of the kingdom of Christ upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom, which began presently after his ascension, and will continue in the doing till the mystery of God be finished.

First. Let it be told that the Lord reigneth, the Lord Christ reigneth, that King whom God determined to set upon his holy hill of Zion. See how this was first said among the heathen by Peter, *Acts* x. 42. Some of the ancients added a gloss to this, which by degrees crept into the text, 'The Lord reigneth from the tree.' So Justin Martyr, Austin, and others, quote it, meaning the cross, when he had this title written over him, "The King of the Jews." It was because he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that God exalted him, and gave him a name above every name, a throne above every throne. Some of the heathen came betimes to inquire after him that was born king of the Jews, *Mat.* ii. 2. Now let them know that he is come, and his kingdom is set up.

Secondly. Let it be told that Christ's government will be the world's happy settlement. "The world also shall be established, that it shall not be moved." The natural world shall be established. The standing of the world and its stability is owing to the mediation of Christ. Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens it; but Christ as Redeemer upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved till all that belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty, provoking world. The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established, so some, that it cannot be moved; for it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. It is a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Thirdly. Let them be told that Christ's government will be incontestably just and righteous. "He shall judge the people righteously," ver. 10; "Judge the world with righteousness, and with his truth," ver. 13. Judging is here put for ruling; and though this may be extended to the general judgment of the world at the last day, which will be in righteousness, *Acts* xvii. 31, yet it refers more immediately to Christ's first coming, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world by the Gospel. He saith himself, "For judgment am I come into this world," *Jno.* ix. 39; xii. 31; and that all judgment was committed to him, *Jno.* v. 22, 27. His ruling and judging with righteousness and truth signifies, 1. That all the laws and ordinances of his kingdom shall be consonant to the rules and principles of eternal truth and equity, that is, to the rectitude and purity of the Divine nature and will. 2. That all his administrations of government shall be just and faithful, and according to what he hath said. 3. That he shall rule in the hearts and consciences of men by the commanding power of truth, and the spirit of righteousness and sanctification. When Pilate asked our Saviour, "Art thou a king?" He answered, "For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth," *Jno.* xviii. 37; for he rules by truth, commands men's wills by informing their judgments aright.

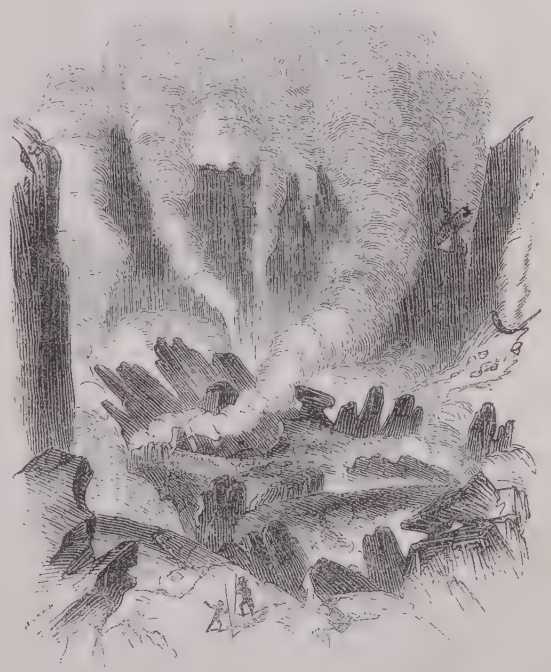
Fourthly. Let them be told that his coming draws nigh; that this king, this judge, standeth before the door; "for he cometh, for he cometh." Enoch, the seventh from Adam, said so: "Behold, the Lord cometh," *Jude* 14. Betwixt this and his first coming the revolutions of many ages intervened, and yet he came at the set time; and so sure will his second coming be; though it is now long since it was said, "Behold he comes in the clouds," *Rev.* i. 7, and yet he is not come. See 2 *Pet.* iii. 4, &c.

Fifthly. Let them be called upon to rejoice in this honour that is put upon the Messiah, and this great trust that is to be lodged in his hand; ver. 11, 12, "Let heaven and earth rejoice, the sea, the field, and all the trees of the wood." The dialect here is poetical; the meaning is, 1. That the days of the Messiah will be joyful days, and as far as his grace and government are submitted to they will bring joy along with them. We have reason to give that place, that soul joy into which Christ is admitted. See an instance of both, *Acts* viii., when Samaria received the Gospel, "there was great joy in that city," ver. 8. And when the eunuch was baptized, "He went on his way rejoicing," ver. 39. 2. That it is the duty of every one of us to bid Christ and his kingdom welcome; for though it comes conquering and to conquer, yet it comes peaceably. "Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh;" and again, "Hosanna, blessed be the kingdom of our father David," *Mar.* xi. 9, 10; not only, "Let the daughter of Zion rejoice, that her king comes," *Zec.* ix. 9, but let all rejoice. 3. That the whole creation will have reason to rejoice in the setting up of Christ's kingdom, even the sea, and the field. For as by the sin of the first Adam the whole creation was made subject to vanity, so by the grace of the second Adam it shall, some way or other, first or last, be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," *Rom.* viii. 20, 21. 4. That there will in the first place "be joy in heaven, joy in the presence of the angels of God;" for when the First-begotten was brought into the world they sung their anthems to his praise, *Lu.* ii. 14. 5. That God will graciously accept the holy joys and praises of all the hearty wellwishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity never so mean. The sea can but roar, and how the trees of the wood can shew that they rejoice, I know not; but "he that searcheth the heart knows what is the mind of the spirit," and understands the language, the broken language, of the weakest.

PSALM XCVII.

This psalm dwells upon the same subject, and is set to the same tune, with the foregoing psalm. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of both; they are both penned, and are both to be sung, to his honour, and we make nothing of them if we do not in them make melody with our hearts to the Lord Jesus. He it is that reigns to the joy of all mankind, ver. 1. And his government speaks, I. Terror to his enemies; for he is a prince of inflexible justice and irresistible power, ver. 2—7. II. Comfort to his friends and loyal subjects, arising from his sovereign dominion, the care he takes of his people, and the provision he makes for them, ver. 8—12. In singing this psalm we must be affected with the glory of the exalted Redeemer; must dread the lot of his enemies, and think ourselves happy if we are of those that kiss the Son.

THE LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice;
Let the multitude of isles be glad *thereof.*
2 Clouds and darkness *are* round about him: [throne.
Righteousness and judgment *are* the habitation of his
3 A fire goeth before him,
And burneth up his enemies round about.
4 His lightnings enlightened the world:
The earth saw, and trembled.
5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD,
At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.



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6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
And all the people see his glory.
7 Confounded be all they that serve graven images,
That boast themselves of idols:
Worship him, all *ye* gods.

PSALM XCVII.

What was to be said among the heathen in the foregoing psalm, ver. 10, is here said again, ver. 1; and is made the subject of this psalm, and of *Ps.* xcix., "The Lord reigns." That is the great truth here laid down. The Lord Jehovah reigns; he that made the world governs it; he that gave being, gives motion and power, gives law and commission, gives success and event. Every man's judgment proceeds from the Lord, from his counsel and providence, and in all affairs both public and private he performeth the thing which he himself has appointed. The Lord Jesus reigns; the providential kingdom is twisted in with the mediatorial, and the administration of both is in the hand of Christ; who therefore is both the head of the church, and head over all things to the church. The kingdom of Christ is so constituted as that,

First. It may be matter of joy to all; and it will be so if it be not their own fault. "Let the earth rejoice," for hereby it is established, *Ps.* xcvi. 10; it is honoured and enriched, and in part rescued from the vanity which by sin it is made subject to. Not only let the people of Israel rejoice in him as King of the Jews, and the daughter of Zion as her King, but let all the earth rejoice in his elevation; for the kingdoms of the world shall more or less, sooner or later, become his kingdom. "Let the multitude of isles," the many or great isles, "be glad thereof." This speaks the language of our country, which is a great isle, and has many belonging to it; however, it speaks comfort in general to the Gentiles, whose countries are called the isles of the Gentiles, *Gen.* x. 5. There is enough in Christ for the multitude of the isles to rejoice in; for though many have been made happy in him, yet still there is room. All have reason to rejoice in Christ's government.

1. In the equity of it. There is an incontestable instance in all the acts of his government, both legislative and judicial; sometimes indeed "clouds and darkness are round about him," his dispensations are altogether unaccountable; "His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters." We are not aware what he designs, what he drives at, nor is it fit that we should be let into the secrets of his government. There is a depth in his counsels which we must not pretend to fathom; but still, "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." A golden thread of justice runs through the whole web of his administration. In this he resides, for it is his habitation; in this he rules, for it is the habitation of his throne. His commandments are and will be all righteous. 'Righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne,' so Dr. Hammond; for therefore his throne is for ever and ever, because his sceptre is a right sceptre, *Ps.* xlv. 6. "The throne is established in righteousness." Even "the heavens declare his righteousness," ver. 6, that is, it is as conspicuous and as illustrious as the heavens themselves. The angels of heaven will declare it, who are employed as messengers in the administration of his government; and therefore know more of it than any of his creatures. His righteousness is incontestable, for who can contradict or dispute what the heavens declare? *Ps.* l. 6.

2. In the extent of it in the upper and lower world. 1st. All the men on earth are under his government. Either he is served by them, or he serveth himself by them; "All the people see his glory," or may see it. The glory of God in the face of Christ was made to shine in distant countries: among many people, more or less among all people. The Gospel was preached, for aught we know, in all languages, *Acts* ii. 5, 11; miracles were wrought in all nations, and so all the people saw his glory. "Have they not heard?" *Rom* x. 18. 2nd. All the angels in heaven are so; perhaps we should not have found this truth in those words, ver. 7, "Worship him, all ye gods;" if we had not been directed to it by the inspired apostle, who from the Septuagint version of those words, makes the Messiah to be introduced into the upper world at the ascension, with this charge, *Heb.* i. 6, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" which helps us with a key to this whole psalm, and shews us that it must be applied to the exalted Redeemer, who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, which intimates that all power is given him both in heaven and earth, "angels, authorities, and powers being made subject unto him," 1 *Pet.* iii. 22. This speaks the honour of Christ, that he hath such worshippers, and the honour of all good Christians, that they have such fellow-worshippers.

Secondly. Christ's government, though it may be matter of joy to all, yet will be matter of terror to some; and it is long of themselves that it is so, ver. 3—5, 7. Observe,

1. When the kingdom of Christ was to be set up in the world after his ascension, it would meet with many enemies, and much opposition would be given to it. He that reigns to the joy of the whole earth, yet as he has his subjects, so he hath his enemies, ver. 3; that not only will not have him to reign over them, but would not have him to reign at all. That not only will not enter into the kingdom of heaven themselves, but do all they can to hinder those that are entering, *Mat.* xxiii. 13. This was fulfilled in the enmity of the unbelieving Jews to the Gospel of Christ, and the violent persecution which in all places they stirred up against the preachers and professors of it. These enemies are here called hills, ver. 5; for their height, and strength, and immovable obstinacy. They were the princes of this world that crucified the Lord of glory, 1 *Cor.* ii. 8; *Ps.* ii. 1.

2. The opposition which the Jews gave to the setting up of Christ's kingdom turned to their own ruin. Their persecuting the apostles, and forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles, filled up their sin, and brought wrath upon them to the uttermost, 1 *Thes.* ii. 15, 16. That wrath is here compared, 1st. To consuming fire; which goes before him and burns up his enemies, that have made themselves like chaff and stubble, and have set the briars and thorns before him in battle, *Isa.* xxvii. 4. This fire of Divine wrath will not only burn the rubbish upon the hills, but will even melt the hills themselves like wax, ver. 5. When our God appears as a consuming fire, even rocks will be wax before him. The most resolute and daring opposition will be baffled "at the presence of the Lord." His very presence is enough to shame and sink it, for he is "the Lord of the whole earth," by whom all the children of men are manageable, and to whom they are accountable. Men hate and persecute God's people, because they think him absent; that the Lord has forsaken the earth, but when he manifests his presence they melt. 2nd. To amazing lightnings, ver. 4, which strike a terror upon many. The judgments of God brought upon the enemies of Christ's kingdom were such as all the world took notice of with terror; "The earth saw and trembled," and the ears of all that heard were made to tingle. This was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, about forty years after Christ's resurrection; which like fire wholly destroyed that people, and like lightnings astonished all their neighbours, *Deu.* xxix. 24. But the heavens declared God's righteousness in it, and all the people to this day see his glory in those lasting monuments of his justice, the scattered Jews.

3. Idolaters also would be put to confusion by the setting up of Christ's kingdom; ver. 7, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images," that is, the Gentile world, who "did service to them that by nature are no gods," *Gal.* iv. 8; who boast themselves of idols as their protectors and benefactors. Did they that served idols boast of them, and shall the servants of the living God distrust him, or be ashamed of him? "Let them be ashamed that serve graven images." 1st. This is a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, that those who have been so long serving dumb idols may be convinced of their error, ashamed of their folly, and may by the power of Christ's Gospel be brought to serve the only living and true God; and may be as much ashamed of their idols as ever they were proud of them: see *Isa.* ii. 20, 21. 2nd. This is a prophecy of the ruin of those that would not be reformed, and reclaimed from their idolatry; they shall be confounded by the destruction of paganism in the Roman empire, which was fulfilled about three hundred years after Christ; so much to the terror of idolaters, that some think it was the revolution under Constantine that made even the mighty men say to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us," *Rev.* vi. 15, 16. This prayer and prophecy is still in force against anti-christian idolaters, who may here read their doom, "Confounded be all they that worship graven images:" see *Jer.* xlviii. 13.

8 Zion heard, and was glad;
And the daughters of Judah rejoiced
Because of thy judgments, O LORD.
9 For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth:
Thou art exalted far above all gods.
10 Ye that love the LORD, hate evil:
He preserveth the souls of his saints;
He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.
11 Light is sown for the righteous,
And gladness for the upright in heart.
12 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous;
And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

The kingdom of the Messiah, like the pillar of cloud and fire, as it hath a dark side towards the Egyptians, so it has a bright side towards the Israel of God. It is set up in spite of opposition; and then "the earth saw and trembled," ver. 4; but "Zion heard, and was glad," very glad to hear of the conversion of some, and the confusion of others; that is, the conquest of all that stood it out against Christ. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, for behold thy king comes unto thee," *Zec.* ix. 9. And not Zion only, where the temple was, but even the daughters of Judah rejoiced; the common people, the inhabitants of the villages, they shall triumph in Christ's victories. The command, ver. 1, is, "Let the earth rejoice;" but it is only the sons of Zion, and the daughters of Judah, that do rejoice. All should bid the kingdom of the Messiah welcome, but few do. Now here observe,

First. The reasons that are given for Zion's joy in the government of the Redeemer. The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad,

1. Because God is glorified, and whatever redounds to his honour is very much his people's pleasure. They rejoice "because of thy judgments, O Lord;" which may take in both the judgments of his mouth, and the judgments of his hand, the word of his Gospel, and his works wrought for the propagating of it, miracles and marvellous providences; for in these we must own, "thou, Lord, art high above all the earth," ver. 9. Thou hast manifested thy sovereignty in the kingdom of nature, and thy command of all its powers, and thy dominion over all nations, over all hearts; "Thou art exalted far above all gods," all deputed gods, that is, princes; all counterfeit gods, that is, idols. The exaltation of Christ, and the advancement of God's glory among men thereby, is the rejoicing of all the saints.

2. Because care is taken for their safety. Those that pay allegiance to Christ as a King shall be sure of his protection. Princes are the shields of the earth; Christ is so to his subjects; they may put their trust under his shadow, and rejoice in it; for, ver. 10, "He preserveth the souls of his saints." He preserves their lives as long as he has any work for them to do, and wonderfully delivers them many a time out of the hand of the wicked, their persecutors, that thirst after their blood; for "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." But something more is meant than their lives, for they that will be his disciples, must be willing to lay down their lives, and not indent for the securing of them. It is the immortal soul that Christ preserves, the inward man; which may be renewed more and more when the outward man decays. He will preserve the souls of his saints from sin, from apostacy, and despair under their greatest trials; he will deliver them out of the hands of the wicked one, that seeks to devour them. He will preserve them safe to his heavenly kingdom, 2 *Tim.* iv. 18. They have therefore reason to be glad, being thus safe.

3. Because provision is made for their comfort. Those that rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in his exaltation, have fountains of joy treasured up for them, which will be opened sooner or later; ver. 11, "Light is sown for the righteous," that is, "gladness for the upright in heart." The subjects of Christ's kingdom are told to expect tribulation in the world; they must suffer by its malice, and must not share in its mirth; yet let them know to their comfort, that light is sown for them, it is designed and prepared for them. What is sown will come up again in due time; though, like a winter seedness, it may lie long under the clods, and seem to be lost and buried, yet it will return in a rich and plentiful increase. God's goodness shall be sure of a harvest in the appointed weeks. "They that sow in tears, shall" without fail "reap in joy," *Ps.* cxxvi. 5, 6. Christ told his disciples at parting, *Jno.* xvi. 20, "You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Gladness is sure to the upright in heart, to those only that are sincere in religion. "The joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment." There is no serenity without a lasting sincerity.

Secondly. The rules that are here given for Zion's joy.

1. Let it be a pure and holy joy. Ye that love the Lord Jesus, that love his appearing and kingdom, that love his word and his exaltation, see that ye hate evil, the evil of sin, every thing that is offensive to him, and will throw you out of his favour. Note, A true love to God will shew itself in a real hatred of all sin, as that abominable thing which he hates. The joy of the saints should likewise confirm their antipathy to sin, and Divine comforts should put their mouths out of taste to sensual pleasures.

2. Let the joy terminate in God; ver. 12, "Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous." Let all the streams of comfort which flow to us in the channel of Christ's kingdom, lead us to the fountain, and oblige us to rejoice in the Lord. All the lines of joy must meet in him as their centre: see *Phil.* iii. 1; iv. 4.

3. Let it express itself in praise and thanksgiving. "Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and particularly, the holiness of God. They that hate sin themselves, are glad that God doth so, in hopes that therefore he will not suffer it to have dominion over them. Note, 1st. We ought to be much in the remembrance of God's holiness, the infinite purity, rectitude and perfection of the Divine nature. We must be ever mindful of his holy covenant, which he hath confirmed with an oath by his holiness. 2nd. He ought to give thanks upon the remembrance of his holiness; not only give him the glory of

it as it is an honour to him, but give him thanks for it as it is a favour to us; and an unspeakable favour it will be if through grace we are partakers of his holiness. It is God's holiness which, above all his attributes, the angels celebrate, *Isa.* vi. 3, "Holy, holy, holy." Sinners tremble, but saints rejoice, at the remembrance of God's holiness, *Ps.* xxx. 5.

PSALM XCVIII.

This psalm is to the same purpose with the two foregoing psalms; it is a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, the setting it up in the world, and the bringing in of the Gentiles to it. The Chaldee entitles it a prophetical psalm. It sets forth, I. The glory of the Redeemer, ver. 1—3. II. The joy of the redeemed, ver. 4—9. If we in a right manner give to Christ this glory, and upon right grounds take to ourselves this joy in singing this psalm, we sing it with understanding. And if they then who saw Christ's day at a distance, and in the promise only, must rejoice and triumph thus, much more reason have we to do so, that see these things accomplished, and share in the better things provided for us, *Heb.* xi. 40.

A Psalm.

O SING unto the LORD a new song;
For he hath done marvellous things:
His right hand, and his holy arm,
Hath gotten him the victory.
2 The LORD hath made known his salvation:
His righteousness hath he openly shewed
In the sight of the heathen.
3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth
Toward the house of Israel: [God.
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our

We are here called upon again to "sing unto the Lord a new song," as before, *Ps.* xcvi. 1. Sing a most excellent song, the best song you have. Let the song of Christ's love be like Solomon's on that subject,—a song of songs. A song of praise for redeeming love is a new song, such a song as had not been sung before; for this is a mystery which was hid from ages and generations. Converts sing a new song, very different from what they had sung; they change their wonder, and change their joy, and therefore change their note. If the grace of God put a new heart into our breasts, it will therewith put a new song into our mouths. In the new Jerusalem there will be new songs sung, that will be new to eternity, and never wax old Let this new song be sung to the praise of God, in consideration of these four things:

First. The wonders he hath wrought. "He hath done marvellous things," ver. 1. Note, The work of our salvation by Christ is a work of wonder. If we take a view of all the steps of it from the contrivance of it, and the counsels of God concerning it before all time, to the consummation of it, and its everlasting consequences when time shall be no more, we shall say, God has in it done marvellous things; it is all his doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. The more it is known, the more it will be admired.

Secondly. The conquests he has won. "His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory." Our Redeemer hath surmounted all the difficulties that lay in the way of our redemption, has broken through them all, and was not discouraged by the services or sufferings appointed him. He hath subdued all the enemies that opposed it, hath gotten the victory over Satan, disarmed him, and cast him out of his strongholds, hath spoiled principalities and powers, *Col.* ii. 15; has taken the prey from the mighty, *Isa.* xliv. 24, and given death his death's wound; he hath gotten a clear and complete victory, not only for himself, but for us also; for we through him are more than conquerors. He got this victory by his own power; there was none to help, none to uphold, none that durst venture into the service, but his right hand and his holy arm, which is therefore always stretched out with good success, because it is never stretched out but in a good cause. 'This has gotten him the victory, hath brought him relief or deliverance,' so Dr. Hammond. God's power and faithfulness, called here his right hand and his holy arm, brought relief to the Lord Jesus in raising him from the dead, and exalting him personally to the right hand of God; so he applies it.

Thirdly. The discoveries he has made to the world of the work of redemption. What he has wrought for us he hath revealed to us, and both by his Son. The gospel revelation is that on which the gospel kingdom is founded; "The word which God sent," *Acts* x. 36. The opening of the sealed book is that which is to be celebrated with songs of praise, *Rev.* v. 8, because by it was brought to light the mystery which had long been hid in God. Observe, 1. The subject of this discovery. His salvation and his righteousness, ver. 3. Righteousness and salvation are often put together, as *Isa.* lxi. 10; xlvi. 13; li. 5, 6, 8. Salvation speaks the redemption itself, and righteousness the way in which it was wrought,—by the righteousness of Christ. Or, the salvation includes all our gospel privileges, and the righteousness all our gospel duties; both are made known, for God hath joined them together, and we must not separate them. Or, righteousness is here put for the way of our justification by Christ, which is revealed in the Gospel to be by faith, *Rom.* i. 17. 2. The plainness of this discovery. He hath openly shewed it, not in types and figures, as under the law, but it is written as with a sunbeam, that he that runs may read it. Ministers are appointed to preach it with all plainness of speech. 3. The extent of this discovery. It is made in the sight of the heathen, and not of the Jews only. "All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God," for to the Gentiles was the word of salvation sent.

Fourthly. The accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of the Old Testament in this; ver. 3, "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth towards the house of Israel." God had mercy in store for the seed of Abraham, and had given them many and great assurances of kindness he designed them in the latter days; and it was in pursuance of all those that he raised up his Son Jesus, to be not only a "light to lighten the Gentiles," but "the glory of his people Israel;" for he sent him in the first place to bless them. God is said, in sending Christ, to "perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember the holy covenant," *Lu.* i. 72. It was in consideration of that, and not of their merit.

4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth:
Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.
5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp;
With the harp, and the voice of a psalm.
6 With trumpets and sound of cornet
Make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.
7 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.
8 Let the floods clap *their* hands:
Let the hills be joyful together
9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth:
With righteousness shall he judge the world,
And the people with equity.

The setting up of the kingdom of Christ is here represented as a matter of joy and praise.

First. Let all the children of men rejoice in it; for they all have, or may have, benefit by it. Again and again we are here called upon by all ways and means possible, to express our joy in it, and give God praise for it. "Make a joyful noise," as before, *Ps.* xlv. 1, 2. "Make a loud noise," as those that are affected with those glad tidings, and are desirous to affect others with them; "Rejoice and sing praise;" sing Hosanna, *Mat.* xxi. 9; sing Hallelujahs, *Rev.* xix. 6. Let him be welcomed to the throne as new kings used to be, with acclamations of joy and loud shouts till the earth ring again, as when Solomon was proclaimed, 1 *Kin.* i. 40; and let the shouts of the crowd be accompanied with "the singers and players on instruments," *Ps.* lxxxvii. 7; lxviii. 25, as is usual in such solemnities. 1. Let sacred songs attend the new king. "Sing praise, sing with the voice of a psalm." Express your joy, thus proclaim it, thus excite it yet more, and thus propagate it among others. 2. Let these be assisted with sacred music, not only with the soft and gentle melody of the harp, but, since it is a victorious king whose glory is to be celebrated, who goes forth conquering and to conquer, let him be proclaimed with the martial sound of the trumpet and cornet, ver. 6. Let all this joy be directed to God, and expressed in a solemn, religious manner; "make a joyful noise to the Lord," ver. 4. "Sing to the Lord," ver. 5; do it "before the Lord, the King," ver. 6. Carnal mirth is an enemy to this holy joy. When David danced before the ark he pleaded, "it was before the Lord;" and the piety and devotion of the intention not only vindicated what he did, but commended it. We must rejoice before the Lord whenever we draw near to him, *Deu.* xii. 12; before the Lord Jesus, and before him not only as the Saviour, but as the King, the King of kings, the church's King, and our King.

Secondly. Let the inferior creatures rejoice in it, ver. 7—9. This is to the same purpose with what we had before, *Ps.* xcvi. 11—13, "Let the sea roar," and let that be called,—not as it used to be, a dreadful noise, but—a joyful noise; for the coming of Christ, and the salvation wrought out by him, hath quite altered the property of the troubles and terrors of this world, so that when the floods lift up their voice, lift up their waves, we must not construe that to be the sea roaring against us, but rather rejoicing with us. Let the floods express their joy as men do when they clap their hands; and let the hills, that trembled for fear before God when he came down to give the law at mount Sinai, dance for joy before him when his Gospel is preached, and that word of the Lord goes forth from Zion in a still small voice. "Let the hills be joyful together before the Lord." This intimates that the kingdom of Christ would be a blessing to the whole creation, but that, as the inferior creatures declare the glory of the Creator, (*Ps.* xix. 1,) so they declare the glory of the Redeemer, for by him all things not only subsist in their being, but consist in their order. It intimates likewise, that the children of men would be wanting in paying their due respects to the Redeemer, and therefore he must look for his honour from the sea and the floods, which would shame the stupidity and ingratitude of mankind. And, perhaps, respect is here had to the new heavens and the new earth, which we yet, according to his promise, look for, 2 *Pet.* iii. 13; and this second mention of his coming, after the like, *Ps.* xcvi., may principally refer to his second coming, when all these things shall be so dissolved as to be refined. Then shall he come to judge the world with righteousness; and in the prospect of that day all that are sanctified do rejoice, and even the sea, and the floods, and the hills would rejoice if they could. One would think that Virgil had these psalms in his eye, as well as the oracles of the Cumean sybil, in his fourth eclogue, where he either ignorantly or basely applies to Asinius Pollio the ancient prophecies which at that time were expected to be fulfilled; for he lived in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, a little before our Saviour's birth. He owns they looked for the birth of a child from heaven, that should be a great blessing to the world, and restore the golden age;

Jam nova progenies cœlo demittitur alto,
'A new race descends from the lofty sky,'

that should take away sin;

Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.
'Thy influence shall efface every stain of corruption,
And free the world from alarm.'

Many other things he saith of this long-looked-for child, which Ludovicus Vives, in his notes on that eclogue, thinks applicable to Christ; and he concludes, as the psalmist here, with a prospect of the rejoicing of the whole creation herein;

Aspice, venturo lætentur ut omnia sæclo.
'See how this promised age makes all rejoice.'

And if all rejoice, why should not we?

PSALM XCIX.

Still we are celebrating the glories of the kingdom of God among men, and are called upon to praise him, as in the foregoing psalms; but those psalms looked forward to the times of the Gospel, and prophesied of the graces and comforts of those times. This psalm seems to dwell more upon the Old Testament dispensation, and the manifestation of God's glory and grace in that. Let not men in expectation of the Messiah's kingdom and the evangelical worship neglect that divine regimen they were then under, and the ordinances that were then given them, but in them see God reigning, and worship before him according to the law of Moses. Prophecies of good things to come must not lessen our esteem of good things present. To Israel indeed pertained the promises which they must believe; but to them pertained also the giving of the law and the service of God, which they must also dutifully and conscientiously attend to, *Rom.* ix. 4. And this they are called to do in this psalm; where yet there is much of Christ, for the government of the church was in the hands of the eternal Word, before he was incarnate; and, besides, the ceremonial services were types and figures of evangelical worship.

The people of Israel are here required to praise and exalt God, and to worship before him in consideration of these two things: I. The happy constitution of the government they were under, both in sacred and civil things, ver. 1—5. II. Some instances of the happy administration of it, ver. 6—9. In singing this psalm we must set ourselves to exalt the name of God, as it is made known to us in the Gospel, which we have much more reason to do than they had that lived under the law.

THE LORD reigneth; let the people tremble:
He sitteth *between* the cherubims; let the earth be moved.
2 The LORD *is* great in Zion;
And he *is* high above all the people.
3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name;
For it *is* holy.
4 The king's strength also loveth judgment;
Thou dost establish equity,
Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.
5 Exalt ye the LORD our God,
And worship at his footstool;
For he *is* holy.

The foundation of all religion is laid in this truth,—that the Lord reigneth. God governs the world by his providence, governs the church by his grace, and both by his Son. We are to believe not only that the Lord liveth, but that the Lord reigneth. This is the triumph of the Christian church, and here it was the triumph of the Jewish church, that Jehovah was their king; and hence it is inferred, "Let the people tremble;" that is, 1. Even let the subjects of this kingdom tremble, for the Old Testament dispensation had much of terror in it. At mount Sinai Israel, and even Moses himself, did exceedingly fear and quake; and then God was terrible in his holy places; even when he appeared in his people's behalf he did terrible things. But we are not now come to that mount that burned with fire, *Heb.* xii. 18. Now "the Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice." Then he ruled more by the power of holy fear, now of holy love. 2. Much more let the enemies of this kingdom tremble, for he will either bring them into obedience to his golden sceptre, or crush them with his iron rod. The Lord reigns, though the people be stirred with indignation at it; though they fret their hearts out, their rage is all in vain; he will set his king upon his holy hill of Zion in despite of them, *Ps.* ii. 1, 6. First or last he will make them tremble, *Rev.* vi. 15, &c. "The Lord reigns, let the earth be moved." Those that submit to him shall be established, and not moved, *Ps.* xcvi. 10; but they that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ is what cannot be moved. The things which cannot be shaken shall remain, *Heb.* xii. 27. In these is continuance, *Isa.* lxiv. 5. God's kingdom, set up in Israel, is here made the subject of the psalmist's praise.

First. God presided in the affairs of religion; "He sitteth between the cherubims," ver. 1, as on his throne, to give law by the oracles thence delivered, as on the mercy-seat, to receive petitions. This was the honour of Israel, that they had among them the Shechinah, or special presence of God, attended by the holy angels. The temple was the royal palace, and the holy of holies was the presence-chamber. "The Lord is great in Zion," ver. 2; there he is known and praised, *Ps.* lxxvi. 1, 2; there he is served as great, more than any where else. He is high there above all people; as that which is high is exposed to view and looked up to, so in Zion the perfections of the Divine nature appear more conspicuous and more illustrious than any where else. Therefore "let them" that dwell in Zion, and worship there, "praise thy great and terrible name," and give thee the glory due unto it, "for it is holy." The holiness of God's name makes it truly great to his friends, and terrible to his enemies, ver. 3. This is that which they above adore: "Holy, holy, holy."

Secondly. He was all in all in their civil government, ver. 4. As in Jerusalem was the testimony of Israel, whither the tribes went up, so there were set thrones of judgment, *Ps.* cxxii. 4, 5. Their government was a theocracy. He raised up David to rule over them, (and some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of his quiet and happy settlement in the throne,) and he is the king whose strength loveth judgment. He is strong; all his strength he has from God, and his strength is not abused for the support of any wrong, as the power of great princes often is, but it loveth judgment; he doth justice with his power, and doth it with delight. And herein he was a type of Christ, to whom God would give the throne of his father David, to do judgment and justice. He has power to crush, but his strength loves judgment; that is, he doth not rule with rigour, but with moderation, with wisdom, and tenderness. The people of Israel had a good king; but they are here taught to look up to God as he by whom their king reigns. "Thou dost establish equity;" that is, God gave them those excellent laws by which they were governed, and "thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob;" that is, he not only by his immediate providences often executed and enforced his own laws, but took care for the administration of justice among them by civil magistrates, who reigned by him, and by him did decree justice. Their judges judged for God, and their judgment was his, 2 *Chr.* xix. 6.

Putting these two things together, we see what was the happiness of Israel above any other people, as Moses had described it, *Deu.* iv. 7, 8, that they had God so nigh unto them, sitting between the cherubims, and that they had statutes and judgments so righteous by which equity was established, and God himself ruled in Jacob, from which he infers this command to that happy people; ver. 5, "Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool;" give him the glory of the good government you are under, as it is now established both in church and state. Note, 1. The greater the public mercies are which we have to share in, the more we are obliged to bear a part in the public homage paid to God. The setting up of the kingdom of Christ especially ought to be the matter of our praise. 2. When we draw nigh to God to worship him, our hearts must be filled with high thoughts of him, and he must be exalted in our souls. 3. The more we abase ourselves, and the more prostrate we are before God, the more we exalt him. We must worship at his footstool; that is, at his ark, which was as the footstool to the mercy-seat between the cherubims; or, we must cast ourselves down upon the pavement of his courts. And good reason we have to be thus reverent, for he is holy; and his holiness should strike an awe upon us, as it doth on the angels themselves, *Isa.* vi. 2, 3.

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests,
And Samuel among them that call upon his name;
They called upon the LORD, and he answered them.
7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar:
They kept his testimonies,
And the ordinance *that* he gave them.
8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God;
Thou wast a God that forgavest them,
Though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.
9 Exalt the LORD our God,
And worship at his holy hill;
For the LORD our God *is* holy.

The happiness of Israel in God's government is here farther made out by some particular instances of his administration, especially with reference to those that were in their day the prime leaders and most active useful governors of that people—Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, in the former of whom the theocracy, or Divine government began, for they were employed to form Israel into a people, and in the last of whom that form of government in a great measure ended; for, when the people rejected Samuel, and urged him to resign, they are said to reject God himself, that he should not be so immediately their king as he had been, 1 *Sam.* viii. 7, for now they would have a king like all the nations. Moses as well as Aaron is said to be among his priests, for he executed the priest's office till Aaron was settled in it, and he consecrated Aaron and his sons; therefore the Jews call him the priest of the priests. Now concerning these three chief rulers observe,

First. The intimate communion they had with God, and the wonderful favour to which he admitted them. None of all the nations of the earth could produce three such men as these, that had such an intercourse with heaven, and whom God knew by name, *Ex.* xxxiii. 17. Here is,

1. Their gracious observance of God. No kingdom had men that honoured God so as these three men of the kingdom of Israel did. They honoured him, 1st. By their prayers. Samuel, though not among his priests, yet was among them that called on his name; and for this they were all famous, they called upon the Lord; they relied not on their own wisdom or virtue, but in every emergency had recourse to God; towards him was their desire, and on him their dependence. 2nd. By their obedience. "They kept his testimonies, and the ordinances that he gave them;" that is, they made conscience of their duty, and in every thing made God's word and law their rule, as knowing that unless they did so, they could not expect their prayers should be answered, *Pr.* xxviii. 9. Moses did all according to the pattern shewn him; it is often repeated, "according to all that God commanded Moses, so did he." Aaron and Samuel did likewise. These were the greatest men, and most honourable, that were most eminent for keeping God's testimonies, and conforming to the rule of his word.

2. God's gracious acceptance of them. "He answered them," and granted them the things which they called upon him for; they all wonderfully prevailed with God in prayer; miracles were wrought at their special instance and request; nay, he not only condescended to do that for them which they desired, as a prince for a petitioner, but he communed with them as one friend familiarly converseth with another; ver. 7, "He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar." He often spake to Samuel; from his childhood the word of the Lord came to him; and probably sometimes he spake to him by a bright cloud overshadowing him; however, to Moses and Aaron he often spake out of the famous cloudy pillar, *Ex.* xvi. 10; *Num.* xii. 5. Israel is now minded of this, for the confirming of their faith, that though they had not every day such sensible tokens of God's presence as the cloudy pillar was, yet to them that were their first founders, and to him that was their great reformer, God was pleased thus to manifest himself.

Secondly. The good offices they did to Israel. They interceded for the people, and for them also they obtained many an answer of peace. "Moses stood in the gap, and Aaron between the living and the dead;" and when Israel was in distress, Samuel cried unto the Lord for them, 1 *Sam.* vii. 9. This is here referred to, ver. 8, "Thou answeredst them, O Lord our God," and at their prayer "thou wast a God that forgavest" the people they prayed for; and though "thou tookest vengeance of their inventions," yet thou didst not cut them off from being a people, as their sin deserved. 'Thou wast a God that wast propitious for them, (so Dr. Hammond,) for their sakes, and sparedst the people at their request, then when thou wast about to take vengeance of their inventions;' that is, when thy wrath was so highly provoked against them that it was just ready to break in upon them, to their utter overthrow. These were some of the many remarkable instances of God's dominion in Israel more than in any other nation, for which the people are again called upon to praise God; ver. 9, "Exalt the Lord our God," on account of what he hath done for us formerly as well as of late, "and worship at his holy hill of Zion," on which he hath now set his temple, and will shortly set his king, *Ps.* ii. 6, the former a type of the latter. There, as the centre of unity, let all God's Israel meet with their adorations, "for the Lord our God is holy," and appears so, not only in his holy law, but in his holy Gospel.

PSALM C.

It is with good reason that many sing this psalm very frequently in their religious assemblies, for it is very proper both to express and to excite pious and devout affections towards God in our approach to him in holy ordinances; and if our hearts go along with the words, we shall make melody in it to the Lord. The Jews say it was penned to be sung with their thank-offerings; perhaps it was; but we say that as there is nothing in it peculiar to their economy, so its beginning with a call to all lands to praise God, plainly extends it to the gospel-church. Here, I. We are called upon to praise God, and rejoice in him, ver. 1, 2, 4. II. We are furnished with matter for praise; we must praise him, considering his being and relation to us, ver. 3, and his mercy and truth, ver. 5. These are plain and common things, and therefore the more fit to be the matter of devotion.

A Psalm of praise.

MAKE a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.
2 Serve the LORD with gladness:
Come before his presence with singing.
3 Know ye that the LORD he *is* God:
It is he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves;
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise:
Be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.
5 For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting;
And his truth *endureth* to all generations.

Here, First. The exhortations to praise are very importunate. The psalm doth indeed answer the title, "a psalm of praise." It begins with that call which of late we have several times met with, ver. 1, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands," or all the earth, all the inhabitants of the earth. When all nations shall be discipled, and the Gospel preached to every creature, then this summons will be fully answered to. But if we take the foregoing psalm to be (as we have opened it) a call to the Jewish church to rejoice in the administration of God's kingdom which they were under, (as the four before it were calculated for the days of the Messiah,) this psalm perhaps was intended for proselytes, that came over out of all lands to the Jews' religion. However, we have here,

1. A strong invitation to worship God; not that God needs us, or any thing we have, or can do, but it is his will that we should serve the Lord, should devote ourselves to his service, and employ ourselves in it, and that we should not only serve him in all instances of obedience to his law, but that we should come before his presence in the ordinances which he has appointed, and in which he hath promised to manifest himself, ver. 2; that we should enter into his gates, and into his courts, ver. 3; that we should attend upon him among his servants, and keep there where he keeps court. In all acts of religious worship, whether in secret or in our families, we come into God's presence, and serve him; but it is in public worship especially that we enter into his gates, and into his courts. The people were not permitted to enter into the holy place, there the priests only went in to minister; but let the people be thankful for their place in the courts of God's house, to which they were admitted, and gave their attendance there.

2. Great encouragement given us in worshipping God, to do it cheerfully; ver. 2, "Serve the Lord with gladness." This intimates a prediction that, in gospel times, there should be special occasion for joy. And it prescribes this as a rule of worship, Let God be served with gladness. By holy joy we do really serve God; it is an honour to him to rejoice in him, and we ought to serve him with holy joy. Gospel worshippers should be joyful worshippers. If we serve God in uprightness, let us serve him with gladness; we must be willing and forward to it; glad when we are called to go up to the house of the Lord, *Ps.* cxxii. 1; looking upon it as the comfort of our lives to have communion with God; and we must be pleasant and cheerful in it, must say, "it is good to be here," approaching to God in every duty, as to God our exceeding joy, *Ps.* xliii. 4. We must "come before his presence with singing," not only songs of joy, but songs of praise; ver. 4, "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving." We must not only comfort ourselves, but glorify God with our joy, and let him have the praise of that which we have the pleasure of. "Be thankful to him, and bless his name;" that is, 1st. We must take it as a favour to be admitted into his service, and give him thanks that we have liberty of access to him, that we have ordinances instituted, and opportunity continued, of waiting upon God in those ordinances. 2nd. We must intermix praise and thanksgiving with all our services. This golden thread must run through every duty, *Heb.* xiii. 15, for it is the work of angels. "In every thing give thanks," in every ordinance, as well as in every providence.

Secondly. The matter of praise, and motives to it, are very important; ver. 3, 5, "Know ye" what God is in himself, and what he is to you. Note, Knowledge is the mother of devotion and of all obedience. Blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. Know it; that is, consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him. Let us know then these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship:

1. "That the Lord he is God," the only living and true God; that he is a being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being. He is God, and not a man as we are. He is an eternal Spirit, incomprehensible and independent; the first cause and last end. The heathen worshipped the creatures of their own fancy; "the workmen made it, therefore it is not God." We worship him that made us and all the world. He is God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie, and such as he hath triumphed over.

2. That he is our Creator. "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." I find that I am, but cannot say, I am that I am, and therefore must ask whence am I? Who made me? "Where is God my Maker?" And it is the Lord Jehovah; he gave us being, gave us this being; is both the Former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits. We did not, we could not, make ourselves. It is God's prerogative to be his own cause; our being is derived and depending.

3. That therefore he is our rightful owner. The Masorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, 'He made us, and his we are,' or to him we belong. Put both the readings together, and we learn, that because God made us, and not we ourselves, therefore we are not our own but his. He hath an incontestable right to and property in us and all things. His we are, to be acted by his power, disposed of by his will, and devoted to his honour and glory.

4. That he is our sovereign ruler. "We are his people," or subjects, and he is our prince, our rector, or governor, that gives law to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do. "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver;" we are not at liberty to do what we will, but must always make conscience of doing as we are bidden.

5. That he is our bountiful benefactor. We are not only his sheep, whom he is entitled to, but "the sheep of his pasture," whom he takes care of. 'The flock of his feeding,' so it may be read; therefore the sheep of his hand, at his disposal, because the sheep of his pasture, *Ps.* xcv. 7. He that made us maintains us, and gives us all good things richly to enjoy.

6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and goodness; ver. 5, "The Lord is good," and therefore doth good; "his mercy is everlasting;" it is a fountain that can never be drawn dry. The saints that are now the sanctified vessels of mercy, will be to eternity the glorified monuments of mercy.

7. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness. "His truth endureth to all generations," and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked; the promise is sure to all the seed from age to age.

PSALM CI.

David was for certain the penman of this psalm, and it has in it the genuine spirit of the man after God's own heart; it is a solemn vow he made to God when he took upon him the charge of a family, and of the kingdom. Whether it was penned when he entered upon the government immediately after the death of Saul, as some think, or when he began to reign over all Israel, and brought up the ark to the city of David, as others think, is not material; it is an excellent plan or model for the good government of a court, or the keeping up of virtue and piety, and by that means good order in it. But it is applicable to private families; it is the householder's psalm. It instructs all that are in any sphere of power, whether larger or narrower, to use their power so as to make it a terror to evil-doers, but a praise to them that do well. Here is, I. The general scope of David's vow, ver. 1, 2. II. The particulars of it, that he would detest and discountenance all manner of wickedness, ver. 3, 5, 7, 8. And that he would favour and encourage such as were virtuous, ver. 6. Some think this may fitly be accommodated to Christ the son of David, who governs his church, the city of the Lord, by these rules, and who loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness. In singing this psalm families, both governors and governed, should teach and admonish, and engage themselves and one another to walk by the rule of it, that peace may be upon them, and God's presence with them.

A Psalm of David.

I WILL sing of mercy and judgment:
Unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.
2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.
O when wilt thou come unto me?
I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.
3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes:
I hate the work of them that turn aside;
It shall not cleave to me.
4 A froward heart shall depart from me:
I will not know a wicked *person*.
5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off:
Him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.
6 Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me:
He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.
7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house:
He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.
8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land;
That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

David here cuts out to himself and others a pattern both of a good magistrate and a good master of a family, and if these were careful to discharge the duty of their place it would contribute very much to a universal reformation. Observe,

First. The chosen subject of the psalm; ver. 1, "I will sing of mercy and judgment;" that is, 1. Of God's mercy and judgment; and then it looks back upon the dispensations of providence that had been concerning him since he was first anointed to be king, during which time he had met with many a rebuke, and much hardship on the one hand, and yet on the other hand had many wonderful deliverances wrought for him and favours bestowed upon him. Of these he will sing unto God. Note, 1st. God's providences concerning his people are commonly mixed both of mercy and judgments; God hath set the one over against the other, and appointed them April-days, showers and sunshine. It was so with David and his family; when there was mercy in the return of the ark, there was judgment in the death of Uzza. 2nd. When God in his providence exerciseth us with a mixture of mercy and judgment, it is our duty to sing, and sing unto him, both of the one and of the other; we must be suitably affected with both, and make suitable acknowledgments to God of both. The Chaldee paraphrase of this is observable, 'If thou bestowest mercy upon me, or if thou bring any judgment upon me, before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymns for all:' whatever our outward condition is, whether joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God, and sing praises to him; neither the laughter of a prosperous condition nor the tears of an afflicted condition, must put us out of tune for sacred songs. Or, 2. It may be understood of David's mercy and judgment; he would in this psalm promise to be merciful and just, or wise, for judgment is often put for discretion. To do justly and love mercy is the sum of our duty; these he would covenant to make conscience of in that place and relation to which God had called him, and this in consideration of the various providences of God that had been concerning him. Family mercies and family afflictions are both of them calls to family religion. David puts his vow into a song or psalm, that he might the better keep it in his own mind, and frequently repeat it, and that it might the better be communicated to others, and preserved in his family for a pattern to his sons and successors.

Secondly. The general resolution David took up to carry himself carefully and conscientiously in his court, ver. 2. We have here, 1. A good purpose concerning his conversation, concerning his conversation in general, how he would behave himself in every thing; he would live by rule, and not at large, nor walk at all adventures; he would, though a king, by a solemn covenant, bind himself to his good behaviour. And concerning his conversation in his family particularly, not only how he would walk when he appeared in public, when he sat on the throne; but how he would walk within his house, where he was more out of the eye of the world, but where he still saw himself under the eye of God. It is not enough to put on our religion when we go abroad, and appear before men, but we must govern ourselves by it in our families. Those that are in public stations are not thereby excused from care in governing their families; nay, rather they are most concerned to set a good example of ruling their own houses well, 1 *Tim.* iii. 4. When David had his hands full of public affairs, yet he returned to bless his house, 2 *Sam.* vi. 20. He resolves, 1st. To act conscientiously and with integrity, to walk in a perfect way, that is, in the way of God's commandments; that is a perfect way, for "the law of the Lord is perfect." This he will walk in with a perfect heart, with all sincerity, not dissembling either with God or men. When we make the Word of God our rule, and are ruled by it, the glory of God our end, and aim at it, then we walk in a perfect way with a perfect heart. 2nd. To act considerately and with discretion, "I will behave myself wisely;" 'I will understand,' or 'instruct myself in a perfect way;' (so some;) I will walk circumspectly. Note, We must all resolve to walk by the rules of Christian prudence in the ways of Christian piety. We must never turn aside out of the perfect way under pretence of

behaving ourselves wisely; but while we keep to the good way we must be wise as serpents. 2. Here is a good prayer: "O when wilt thou come unto me!" Note, It is a desirable thing when a man hath a house of his own to have God come to him, and dwell with him in it; and those may expect God's presence that walk with a perfect heart in a perfect way. If we compare the account which the historian gives of David, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 14, we shall find how exactly it answers his purpose and prayer, and that neither was in vain. David, as he purposed, behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and as he prayed the Lord was with him.

Thirdly. His particular resolution to practise no evil himself; ver. 3, "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes;" that is, I will not design or aim at any thing but what is for the glory of God and the public welfare. He will never have it in his eye to enrich himself by impoverishing his subjects, or enlarge his own prerogative by encroaching on their property. In all our worldly business we must see that that be right and good which we set our eyes upon, and not any forbidden fruit, and that we never seek that which we cannot have without sin. It is the character of a good man that he shuts his eyes from seeing of evil, *Isa.* xxxiii. 15. Nay, I hate the work of them that turn aside from the paths of equity, *Job* xxxi. 7; not only I avoid it, but abhor it, it shall not cleave to me; if any blot of injustice should come on my hands, it shall be washed off quickly.

Fourthly. His farther resolution not to keep bad servants, nor to employ those about him that were vicious. He will not countenance them, nor shew them any favour, lest thereby he should harden them in their wickedness, and encourage others to do like them. He will not converse with them himself, nor admit them into the company of his other servants, lest they should spread the infection of sin in his family. He will not confide in them, nor put them in power under him, for they would certainly hinder every thing that is good, who did themselves hate to be reformed. When he comes to instance in particulars, he doth not mention drunkards, adulterers, murderers, or blasphemers; such gross sinners as these he was in no danger of admitting into his house: nor did he need to covenant particularly against having fellowship with them; but he instanceth in those sinners who were less scandalous, but no less dangerous, and in reference to whom he needed to stand upon his guard with caution, and to behave himself wisely.

1. He will have nothing to do with spiteful malicious people, they are ill-natured, and will bear a grudge a great while, and care not what mischief they do to those they have a pique against; ver. 4, "A froward heart," one that delights to be cross and perverse, "shall depart from me," as not fit for society, the bond of which is love. "I will not know," that is, I will have no acquaintance or conversation, if I can help it, with such a wicked person, for a little of the leaven of malice and wickedness will leaven the whole lump.

2. Nor with slanderers and those who take a pleasure in wounding their neighbours' reputation secretly; ver. 5, "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour," either raises or spreads false stories to the prejudice of his good name, "him will I cut off" from my family and court. Many endeavour to raise themselves into the favour of princes by unjust representations of persons and things which they think will please their prince: "If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked," *Pr.* xxix. 12. But David will not only not hearken to them, but will baulk the preferment of those that hope thus to curry favour with him. He will punish not only those that falsely accuse another in open court, but that privily slander another. I wish David remembered this vow in the case of Mephibosheth and Ziba.

3. Nor with haughty, conceited, ambitious people; none do more mischief in a family, in a court, in a church, for "only by pride comes contention:" therefore him "that hath an high look and a proud heart will I not suffer." I will have no patience with them that are still grasping at all preferments, for it is certain they do not aim at doing good, but only at aggrandizing themselves and their families. God resists the proud, and so will David.

4. Nor with false deceitful people, that make no conscience of a lie or a fraud; ver. 7, "He that worketh deceit," though he may insinuate himself into my family, yet as soon as he is discovered, he "shall not dwell within my house." Some great men know how to serve their own purposes by such as are skilful to deceive, and they are fit tools for them to work by, but David will make use of no such as agents for him; "he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight," but shall be expelled the house with indignation. Herein David was a man after God's own heart, for a proud look and a lying tongue are things which God hates. And he was also a type of Christ, who will in the great day banish from his presence all that love and make a lie, *Rev.* xxii. 15.

Fifthly. His resolution to put those in trust under him that were honest and good; ver. 6, "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land." In choosing his servants and ministers of state he kept to the land of Israel, and would not employ foreigners; none shall be preferred but true-born Israelites, and those such as were Israelites indeed, "the faithful in the land," for even in that land there were those that were unfaithful. These faithful ones his eyes shall be upon, to discover them and find them out, for they were modest, did not crowd into the city, to court preferment, but lived retired in the land, in the country, out of the way of it. Those are commonly most fit for places of honour and trust that are least fond of them, and therefore wise princes will spy out such in their recesses and privacies, and take them to dwell with them, and act under them. "He that walks in a perfect way," that makes conscience of what he saith and doth, "he shall serve me." The kingdom must be searched for honest men to make courtiers of, and if any man were better than another, he must be preferred. This was a good resolution of David's, but either he did not keep to it, or else his judgment was imposed upon, when he made Ahithophel his right hand. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sakes and their children's, to take such servants into their families as they have reason to hope fear God. The Son of David has his eyes upon the faithful in the land; his secret is with them, and they shall dwell with him. Saul chose servants for their goodliness, 1 *Sam.* viii. 16, but David for their goodness.

Lastly. His resolution to extend his zeal to the reformation of the city and country as well as of the court; ver. 8, "I will early destroy all the wicked of the land," that is, all that are discovered and convicted, the law shall have its course against them. He would do his utmost to destroy all the wicked, so as that there might be none left that were notoriously wicked; he would do it early, that is, he would lose no time, and spare no pains, he would be forward and zealous in promoting the reformation of manners and suppression of vice, and those must rise betimes that will do any thing to purpose in that work. That which he aimed at was not only the securing of his own government and the peace of the country, but the honour of God in the purity of his church, "That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord;" not Jerusalem only, but the whole land was the city of the Lord; so is the gospel church. It is the interest of the city of the Lord to be purged from evil-doers, who both blemish it and weaken it, and it is therefore the duty of all to do what they can in their places towards so good a work, and to be zealously affected in it. The day is coming when the Son of David shall cut off all wicked doers from the new Jerusalem, for there shall not enter into it any that do iniquity.

PSALM CII.

Some think David penned this psalm at the time of Absalom's rebellion; others, that Daniel, Nehemiah, or some other prophet penned it for the use of the church when it was in captivity in Babylon, because it seems to speak of the ruins of Zion, and of a time set for the rebuilding of it, which Daniel understood by books, *Dan.* ix. 2. Or perhaps the psalmist was himself in great affliction, which he complains of in the beginning of the psalm, but (as in *Ps.* lxxvii. and elsewhere) he comforts himself under it with the consideration of God's eternity, and the church's prosperity and perpetuity, however it was now distressed and threatened. But it is clear by the application of ver. 25, 26, to Christ, *Heb.* i. 11, 12, that the psalm has reference to the days of the Messiah, and speaks either of his affliction, or the afflictions of his church for his sake. In the psalm we have, I. A sorrowful complaint which the psalmist makes either for himself, or in the name of the church, of great afflictions which were very pressing, ver. 1—11. II. Seasonable comfort fetched in against these grievances, 1. From the eternity of God, ver. 12, 23, 27. 2. From a believing prospect of the deliverance which God would in due time work for his afflicted church, ver. 13—22, and the continuance of it in the world, ver. 28. In singing this psalm, if we have not occasion to make the same complaints, yet we may take occasion to sympathize with those that have, and then the comfortable part of the psalm will be more comfortable to us in the singing of it.

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.

HEAR my prayer, O LORD,
And let my cry come unto thee. [trouble;
2 Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in
Incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call
Answer me speedily.
3 For my days are consumed like smoke,
And my bones are burned as an hearth.
4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass;
So that I forget to eat my bread.
5 By reason of the voice of my groaning
My bones cleave to my skin.
6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness:
I am like an owl of the desert.

OWLS.

7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.
8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day;
And they that are mad against me are sworn against me.
9 For I have eaten ashes like bread,
And mingled my drink with weeping,
10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath:
For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.
11 My days *are* like a shadow that declineth;
And I am withered like grass.

The title of this psalm is very observable: it is "a prayer of the afflicted;" it was composed by one that was himself afflicted, afflicted with the church and for it; and on those that are of a public spirit afflictions of that kind lie heavier than any other. It is calculated for an afflicted state, and is intended for the use of others that may be in the like distress; "for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written" designedly "for our use." The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but here, as often elsewhere, the Holy Ghost has drawn up our petition for us, has put words into our mouths; *Hos.* xiv. 2, "Take with you words." Here is a prayer put into the hands of the afflicted; let them set, not their hands, but their hearts to it, and present it to God. Note, 1. It is many times the lot of the best saints in this world to be sorely afflicted. 2. Even good men may be almost overwhelmed with their afflictions, and may be ready to faint under them. 3. When our state is afflicted, and our spirits overwhelmed, it is our duty and interest to pray, and by prayer to pour out our complaints before the Lord; which intimates the leave God gives us to be free with him, and the liberty of speech we have before him, as well as liberty of access to him; it intimates also what an ease it is to an afflicted spirit to unburthen itself by an humble representation of its grievances and griefs. Such a representation we have here; in which,

First. The psalmist humbly begs of God to take notice of his affliction, and of his prayer in his affliction, ver. 1, 2. When we pray in our affliction, 1. It should

be our care that God would graciously hear us; for if our prayers be not pleasing to God, they will be to no purpose to ourselves. Let this therefore be in our eye, that our prayer may come unto God, even to his ears, *Ps.* xviii. 6; and in order to that let us lift up the prayer, and our souls with it. 2. It may be our hope that God will graciously hear us, because he has appointed us to seek him, and has promised we shall not seek him in vain. If we put up a prayer in faith, we may in faith say, "Hear my prayer, O Lord." Hear me, that is, 1st. Manifest thyself to me; "hide not thy face from me" in displeasure "when I am in trouble:" if thou dost not presently free me, yet let me know that thou favourest me; if I see not the operations of thy hand for me, yet let me see the smiles of thy face upon me. God's hiding his face is trouble enough to a good man, even in his prosperity; *Ps.* xxx. 7, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled;" but if when we are in trouble God hides his face, the case is sad indeed. 2nd. Manifest thyself to me; not only hear me, but answer me; grant me the deliverance I am in want of, and in pursuit of; "answer me speedily, even in the day when I call." When troubles press hard upon us, God gives us leave to be in prayer thus pressing upon him, yet with humility and patience.

Secondly. He makes a lamentable complaint of the low condition to which he was reduced by his afflictions.

1. His body was macerated and emaciated, and he was become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. As prosperity and joy are represented by making fat the bones, and the bones flourishing like an herb: so great trouble and grief are here represented by the contrary; "My bones are burnt as an hearth," ver. 3; "they cleave to my skin," ver. 5; nay, "my heart is smitten, and withered like grass," ver. 4; it toucheth the vitals, and there is a sensible decay there. "I am withered like grass," ver. 11, scorched with the burning heat of my troubles. If we be thus brought low by bodily distempers, let us not think it strange; the body is like grass, weak, and of the earth, no wonder it withers then.

2. He was very melancholy, and of a sorrowful spirit: he was so taken up with the thoughts of his troubles, that he forgot to eat bread, ver. 4; he had no appetite to his necessary food, nor could he relish it. When God hides his face from a soul, the delights of sense will be sapless things. He was always sighing and groaning, as one pressed above measure, ver. 5, and this wasted him and exhausted his spirits. He affected solitude, as melancholy people do. His friends deserted him and were shy of him, and he cared as little for their company; ver. 6, 7, "I am like a pelican in the wilderness," or a bittern, (so some,) that makes a doleful noise; "I am like an owl," that affects to lodge in deserted, ruined buildings. "I watch, and am as a sparrow on the house top;" I live in a garret, and there spend my hours in poring on my troubles, and bemoaning myself. Those who do thus when they are in sorrow, humour themselves indeed, but they prejudice themselves, and know not what they do, nor what advantage they hereby give to the tempter. In affliction we should sit alone, to consider our ways, *Lam.* iii. 28; but not sit alone to indulge an inordinate grief.

3. He was evil spoken of by his enemies, and all manner of evil said against him. When his friends went off from him, his foes set themselves against him; ver. 8, "Mine enemies reproach me all the day;" designing thereby both to create vexation to himself,—for an ingenuous mind regrets reproach,—and to bring an odium upon him before men. When they could not otherwise reach him they shot these arrows at him, even bitter words, and in this they were unwearied, they did it all the day, it was a continual dropping. His enemies were very outrageous: "They are mad against me," and very obstinate and implacable; they are sworn against me, as the Jews that bound themselves with an oath to kill Paul; or, They have sworn against me as accusers, to take away my life.

4. He fasted and wept under the tokens of God's displeasure; ver. 9, 10, "I have eaten ashes like bread," that is, instead of eating my bread, I have lain down in dust and ashes, and "I have mingled my drink with weeping;" when I should have refreshed myself with drinking, I have only eased myself with weeping. And what is the matter? He tells us, ver. 10, "Because of thy wrath." It was not so much the trouble itself that troubled him, as the wrath of God, which he was under the apprehensions of as the cause of the trouble. This, this was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. "Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down;" as that which we cast to the ground with a design to dash it to pieces; we lift it up first that we may throw it down with the more violence. Or, Thou hast formerly lifted me up in honour, and joy, and uncommon prosperity; but the remembrance of that aggravates the present grief, and makes it the more grievous. We must eye the hand of God, both in lifting us up, and casting us down, and say, Blessed be the name of the Lord, who both gives and takes away.

5. He looked upon himself as a dying man; "My days are consumed like smoke," ver. 3, which vanisheth away presently. Or, They are consumed in smoke, of which nothing remains. They are like a shadow that declineth, ver. 11; like the evening-shadow, or a forerunner of night approaching. Now all this, though it seems to speak the psalmist's personal calamities, and therefore is properly a prayer for a particular person afflicted, yet is supposed to be a description of the afflictions of the church of God, with which the psalmist sympathizeth, making public grievances his own. The mystical body of Christ is sometimes, like the psalmist's body here, withered and parched, nay, like dead and dry bones. The church sometimes is forced into the wilderness, seems lost, and gives up herself for gone, under the tokens of God's displeasure.

12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever;
And thy remembrance unto all generations.
13 Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion:
For the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.
14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones,
And favour the dust thereof.
15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD,
And all the kings of the earth thy glory.
16 When the LORD shall build up Zion,
He shall appear in his glory.
17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
And not despise their prayer.
18 This shall be written for the generation to come:
And the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.
19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary;
From heaven did the LORD behold the earth;
20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner;
To loose those that are appointed to death;
21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion,
And his praise in Jerusalem;
22 When the people are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

Many exceeding great and precious comforts are here thought of, and mustered up to balance the foregoing complaints, for "unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness," so that though they are cast down they are not in despair. It is bad with the psalmist himself, bad with the people of God, but he hath many considerations to revive himself with.

First. We are dying creatures, and our interests and comforts dying, but God is an everliving, everlasting God; ver. 12, "My days are like a shadow;" there is no remedy, night is coming upon me; but "thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever." Our life is transient, but thine is permanent; our friends die, but our God dies not; what threatened us cannot touch him; our names will be written in the dust, and buried in oblivion, but "thy remembrance shall be unto all generations," to the end of time, nay, to eternity, thou shalt be known and honoured. A good man loves God better than himself, and therefore can balance his own sorrow and death with the pleasing thought of the unchangeable blessedness of the Eternal Mind. God endures for ever, his church's faithful patron and protector; and his honour and perpetual remembrance being very much bound up in her interests, we may be confident that they shall not be neglected.

Secondly. Poor Zion is now in distress, but there will come a time for her relief and succour; ver. 13, "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion." The hope of deliverance is built upon the goodness of God, "Thou wilt have mercy upon Zion," for she is become an object of thy pity; and upon the power of God, "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy," shalt stir up thyself to do it, shalt do it in contempt of all the opposition made by the church's enemies; "the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this." And that which is very encouraging is, that there is a time set for the deliverance of the church, which not only will come some time, but will come at the time appointed, the time which Infinite Wisdom hath appointed, and therefore it is the best time; and which Eternal Truth has fixed it to, and therefore it is a certain time, and shall not be forgotten or farther adjourned. At the end of seventy years the time to favour Zion, by delivering her from the daughter of Babylon, was to come, and at length it did come. Zion was now in ruins, that is, the temple that was built in the city of David: the favouring of Zion is the building of it up again, as it is explained ver. 16. This is expected from the favour of God; that will set all to rights, and nothing but that, and therefore Daniel prays, *Dan.* ix. 17, "Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate." And the building up of Zion is as great a favour to any people as they can desire. No blessing more desirable to a ruined state than the restoring and re-establishing of their church privileges. Now this is here wished for and longed for,

1. Because it would be a great rejoicing to Zion's friends; ver. 14, "Thy servants take pleasure" even "in the stones" of the temple, though they were thrown down and scattered, "and favour the dust," the very rubbish and ruins of it. Observe here, That when the temple was ruined, yet the stones of it were to be had for a new building, and there were those who encouraged themselves with that, for they had a favour even for the dust of it. Those that truly love the church of God, love it when it is in affliction as well as when it is in prosperity; and it is a good ground to hope that God will favour the ruins of Zion, when he puts it into the heart of his people to favour them, and to shew that they do so by their prayers and by their endeavours; as it is also a good plea with God for mercy for Zion, that there are those who are so affectionately concerned for her, and are "waiting for the salvation of the Lord."

2. Because it would have a good influence upon Zion's neighbours, ver. 5. It will be a happy means perhaps of their conversion, however of their conviction; for "so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord," shall have high thoughts of him and of his people, and even the kings of the earth shall be affected with his glory. They shall have better thoughts of the church of God than they have had, when God by his providence thus puts an honour upon it. They shall be afraid of doing any thing against it when they see God taking its part; nay, they shall say, "We will go with you, for we have seen that God is with you," *Zec.* viii. 23: thus it is said, *Est.* viii. 17, that "many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them."

3. Because it would redound to the honour of Zion's God; ver. 16, "When the Lord shall build up Zion." They take it for granted it will be done, for God himself hath undertaken it, and "he shall then appear in his glory;" and for that reason all that have made his glory their highest end, desire it and pray for it. Note, The edifying of the church will be the glorifying of God, and therefore we may be assured it will be done in the set time. They that pray in faith, "Father, glorify thy name," may receive the same answer to that prayer which was given to Christ himself by a voice from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again," though now for a time it may be eclipsed.

Thirdly. The prayers of God's people now seem to be slighted, and no notice taken of them, but they will be reviewed, and greatly encouraged; ver. 17, "He will regard the prayer of the destitute." It was said, ver. 16, that God will appear in his glory, such a glory as kings themselves shall stand in awe of, ver. 15. When great men appear in their glory, they are apt to look with disdain upon the poor that apply themselves to them, but the great God will not do so. Observe, 1. The meanness of the petitioners, they are the destitute; it is an elegant word that is here used, which signifies the heath in the wilderness, a low shrub or bush, like the hyssop of the wall. They are supposed to be in a low and broken state, enriched with spiritual blessings but destitute of temporal good things: the poor, the weak, the desolate, the stripped; thus variously is the word rendered; or it may signify that low and broken spirit which God looks for in all that draw nigh to him, and which he will graciously look upon. This will bring them to their knees. Destitute people should be praying people, 1 *Tim.* v. 5. 2. The favour of God to them, notwithstanding their meanness. He will regard their prayer, and will look at, will peruse their petition, 2 *Chr.* vi. 40, and he will not despise their prayer. More is implied than is expressed. He will value it, and be well pleased with it, and will return an answer of peace to it, which is the greatest honour that can be put upon it. But it is thus expressed because others despise their praying; they themselves fear God will despise it; and he was thought to despise it while their affliction was prolonged, and their prayers lay unanswered. When we consider our own meanness and vileness, our darkness and deadness, and manifold defects in our prayers, we have cause to suspect that our prayers will be received with dis-

dain in heaven; but we are here assured of the contrary, for we have an Advocate with the Father, and are under grace, not under the law. This instance of God's favour to his praying people, though they are destitute, will be a lasting encouragement to prayer; ver. 18, "This shall be written for the generation to come," that none may despair, though they be destitute, nor think their prayers forgotten because they have not an answer to them presently. Others' experiences should be our encouragements to seek unto God, and trust in him. And if we have the comfort of others' experiences it is fit we should give God the glory of them: "The people which shall be created shall praise the Lord," for what he hath done both for them and for their predecessors; many that are now unborn, by reading the history of the church, shall be wrought upon to turn proselytes. The people that shall be created anew by Divine grace, that are a kind of firstfruits of his creatures, shall praise the Lord for his answers to their prayers when they were more destitute.

Fourthly. The prisoners under condemnation unjustly seem as sheep appointed for the slaughter, but care shall be taken for their discharge; ver. 19, 20, "God hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary, from heaven," where he hath prepared his throne, that high place, that holy place; thence "did the Lord behold the earth," for it is a place of prospect, and nothing on this earth is or can be hid from his all-seeing eye. He looks down not to take a view of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, but to do acts of grace, "to hear the groaning of the prisoners," which we would desire to be out of the hearing of; and not only to hear them, but to help them, "to loose those that are appointed to death," then when there is but a step between them and it. Some understand it of the release of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon; God heard their groaning there as he did when they were in Egypt, *Ex.* iii. 7, 9, and came down to deliver them. God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace, but even of their groans, which are the language of nature. See the Divine pity, in hearing the prisoners' groans, and the Divine power, in loosing the prisoners' bonds; even when they are appointed to death, and are pinioned and double shackled: we have an instance in Peter, *Acts* xii. 6.

Such instances as these of the Divine condescension and compassion will help, 1. "To declare the name of the Lord in Zion," and to make it appear that he answers his name which he himself proclaimed, "The Lord God, gracious and merciful;" and this declaration of his name in Zion shall be the matter of his praise in Jerusalem, ver. 21. If God by his providences declare his name, we must by our acknowledgments of them declare his praise, which ought to be the echo of his name. God will discharge his people that were prisoners and captives in Babylon, "that they may declare his name in Zion," the place he has chosen to put his name there, and his praise in Jerusalem, at their return thither. In the land of their captivity they could not sing the songs of Zion, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 3, 4, and therefore God brought them again to Jerusalem that they might sing them there. For this end God gives liberty from bondage; "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name," *Ps.* cxlii. 7; and life from the dead, "Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee," *Ps.* cxix. 175. 2. They will help to draw in others to the worship of God; ver. 22, "when the people of God are gathered together at Jerusalem," (as they were after their return out of Babylon,) many out of the kingdoms joined with them "to serve the Lord." This was fulfilled, *Ezr.* vi. 21, where we find that not only the children of Israel that were come out of captivity, but many that had "separated themselves to them from among the heathen," did "keep the fast of unleavened bread with joy." But it may look farther, at the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ in the latter days. Christ has proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, that they may declare the name of the Lord in the Gospel church, in which Jews and Gentiles shall unite.

23 He weakened my strength in the way;
He shortened my days. [days:
24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my
Thy years *are* throughout all generations.
25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:
And the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.
26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure:
Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;
As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be
27 But thou *art* the same, [changed:
And thy years shall have no end.
28 The children of thy servants shall continue,
And their seed shall be established before thee.

We may here observe,

First. The imminent danger that the Jewish church was in of being quite extirpated and cut off by the captivity in Babylon; ver. 23, "He weakened my strength in the way." They were for many ages in the way to the performance of the great promise made to their fathers concerning the Messiah, longing as much for it as ever a traveller did to be at his journey's end. The legal institutions led them in the way; but when the ten tribes were lost in Assyria, and the two almost lost in Babylon, the strength of that nation was weakened, and in all appearance its days shortened, for they said "our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts," *Eze.* xxxvii. 11; and then what comes of the promise that Shiloh should arise out of Judah, the star out of Jacob, and the Messiah out of the family of David? If these fail, the promise fails. This the psalmist speaks of as in his own person, and it is very applicable to two of the common afflictions of this time: 1. To be sickly; bodily distempers soon weaken our strength in the way, make the keepers of the house to tremble, and the strong men to bow themselves. 2. To be short-lived; where the former is felt, this is feared. When in the midst of our days, according to a course of nature, our strength is weakened, what can we expect, but that "the number of our months should be cut off in the midst," and what should we do but provide accordingly? We must own God's hand in it, for in his hand our strength and our times are; and must reconcile it to his love, for it has often been the lot of those that have used their strength well, yet to have it weakened; and of those who could very ill be spared, yet to have their days shortened.

Secondly. A prayer for the continuance of it; ver. 24, "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days." Let not this poor church be cut off in the midst of the days assigned it by the promise; let it not be cut off till the Messiah is come; "Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it," *Isa.* lxv. 8. It is a criminal, but for the sake of that blessing which is in her, she pleads for a reprieve. This is "a prayer for the afflicted," and which with submission to the will of God we may in faith put up, that God would not "take us away in the midst of our days;" but that if it be his will, he would spare us to do him farther service, and to be made riper for heaven.

Thirdly. A plea to enforce this prayer taken from the eternity of the Messiah promised, ver. 25—27. The apostle quotes these verses, *Heb.* i. 10—12; and tells us, "He saith this to the Son," and in that exposition we must acquiesce. It is very comfortable, in reference to all the changes that pass over the church, and all the dangers it is in, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever." "Thy years are throughout all generations," and cannot be shortened. As it is likewise comfortable in reference to the decay and death of our own bodies, and the removal of our friends from us, that God is an ever-living God, and therefore, if he be ours, in him we may have everlasting consolation. In this plea observe how, to illustrate the eternity of the Creator, he compares it with the mutability of the creature, for it is God's sole prerogative to be unchangeable.

1. God made the world, and therefore had a being before it from eternity; the Son of God, the eternal Word, made the world. It is expressly said, "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made;" and, "therefore the same was in the beginning" from eternity "with God, and was God," *Jno.* i. 1—3; *Col.* i. 16; *Eph.* iii. 9; *Heb.* i. 2. Earth and heaven, and the hosts of both, include the universe and its fulness, and these derive their being from God by his Son; ver. 25, "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth," that is founded on the seas, and on the floods, and yet it abideth; much more shall the church which is built upon a rock. "The heavens are the work of thy hands," and by thee are all their motions and influences directed; God is therefore the fountain, not only of all being, but of all power and dominion. See how fit the great Redeemer is to be intrusted with all power both in heaven and in earth, since he himself, as Creator of both, perfectly knows both, and is entitled to both.

2. God will unmake the world again, and therefore shall have a being to eternity; ver. 26, 27, "They shall perish," for "thou shalt change them," by the same almighty power that made them; and therefore, no doubt, "thou shalt endure; thou art the same." God and the world, Christ and the creature, are rivals for the innermost and uppermost place in the soul of man, the immortal soul; now what is here said, one would think, were enough to decide the controversy presently, and to determine us for God and Christ. For, 1st. A portion in the creature is fading and dying; "They shall perish," they will not last so long as we shall last; the day is coming when "the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up;" and then what will become of those that have laid up their treasure in it? Heaven and earth "shall wax old as a garment," not by a gradual decay; but when the set time comes, they shall be laid aside like an old garment that we have no more occasion for. "As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed;" not annihilated, but altered it may be, so as that they shall not be at all the same, but "new heavens and a new earth." See God's sovereign dominion over heaven and earth; he can change them as he pleaseth, and when he pleaseth, and the constant changes they are subject to in the revolutions of day and night, summer and winter, are earnests of their last and final change, when the heavens and time (which they measure) shall be no more. 2nd. A portion in God is perpetual and everlasting; for "thou art the same," subject to no change, "and thy years have no end," ver. 27. Christ will be the same in the performance that he was in the promise; the same to his church in captivity that he was to his church at liberty. Let not the church fear the weakening of her strength or the shortening of her days, while Christ himself is both her strength and her life, and he is the same; and hath said, "Because I live ye shall live also." Christ came in the fulness of time, and set up his kingdom, in spite of the power of the Old Testament Babylon, and he will keep it up in spite of the power of the New Testament Babylon.

Fourthly. A comfortable assurance of an answer to this prayer; ver. 28, "The children of thy servants shall continue." Since Christ is the same, the church shall continue from one generation to another. From the eternity of the Head we may infer the perpetuity of the body, though often weak and distempered, and even at death's door. They that hope to wear out the saints of the Most High will be mistaken. Christ's servants shall have children; those children shall have a seed, that is, a succession of professing people. The church as well as the world is under the influence of that blessing, "Be fruitful and multiply." These children shall continue, not in their own persons, by reason of death, but in their seed, which shall be established before God, that is, in his service, and by his grace. The entail of religion shall not be cut off while the world stands; but as one generation of good people passeth away, another shall come, and thus the throne of Christ shall endure.

PSALM CIII.

This psalm calls more for devotion than exposition; it is a most excellent psalm of praise, and of general use. The psalmist, I. Stirs up himself and his own soul to praise God, ver. 1, 2, for his favour to him in particular, ver. 3—5, to the church in general, and to all good men, to whom he is and will be just, and kind, and constant, ver. 6—18, and for his government of the world, ver. 19. II. He desires the assistance of the holy angels and all the works of God in praising him, ver. 20—22. In singing this psalm we must in a special manner get our hearts affected with the goodness of God, and enlarged in love and thankfulness.

A Psalm of David.

BLESS the LORD, O my soul:
And all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; [cies;
Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mer-
5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things;*
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

David is here communing with his own heart; and he is no fool that thus talks to himself, and excites his own soul to that which is good. Observe,

First. How he stirs up himself to the duty of praise, ver. 1, 2. 1. It is the Lord that is to be blessed and spoken well of, for he is the fountain of all good, whatever are the channel or cisterns. It is to his name, his holy name, that we are to consecrate our praise, giving thanks at the remembrance of his holi-

ness. 2. It is the soul that is to be employed in blessing God, and all that is within us. We make nothing of our religious performances if we do not make heart-work of them; if that which is within us, nay, if all that is within us be not engaged in them. The work requires the inward man, the whole man, and all little enough. 3. In order to our return of praises to God, there must be a grateful remembrance of the mercies we have received from him. "Forget not all his benefits." If we do not give thanks for them, we do forget them, and that is unjust as well as unkind; since in all God's favours there is so much that is memorable. O my soul! to thy shame be it spoken, thou hast forgotten many of his benefits; but sure thou wilt not forget them all, for thou shouldest not have forgotten any.

Secondly. How he furnisheth himself with abundant matter for praise, and that which is very affecting; Come, my soul, consider what God has done for thee.

1. He hath pardoned thy sins, ver. 3. He hath forgiven and doth forgive all thine iniquities. This is mentioned first, because by the pardon of sin that is taken away which kept good things from us, and we are restored to the favour of God, which bestows good things on us. Think what the provocation was, it was iniquity, and yet pardoned; how many the provocations were, and yet all pardoned; he hath forgiven all our trespasses. It is a continued act; he is still forgiving, as we are still sinning and repenting.

2. He hath cured thy sickness. The corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul, it is its disorder, and threatens its death. This is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; though complicated, it is all healed. Our crimes were capital, but God saves our lives by pardoning them; our diseases were mortal, but God saves our lives by healing them. These two go together, for "as for God his work is perfect," and not done by the halves; if God take away the guilt of sin by pardoning mercy, he will break the power of it by renewing grace. Where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is made sanctification, 1 *Cor.* i. 30.

3. He hath rescued thee from danger. A man may be in peril of life, not only by his crimes or his diseases, but by the power of his enemies; and therefore, here also we experience the Divine goodness: "who redeemed thy life from destruction," ver. 4, from the destroyer; from hell, (so the Chaldee;) from the second death. The redemption of the soul is precious, we cannot compass it, and therefore are the more indebted to Divine grace that has wrought it out, to him who hath obtained eternal redemption for us: see *Job* xxxiii. 24, 28.

4. He hath not only saved thee from death and ruin, but has made thee truly and completely happy, with honour, pleasure, and long life. 1st. He hath given thee true honour, and great honour, no less than a crown; "He crowneth thee with his lovingkindness and tender mercies;" and what greater dignity is a poor soul capable of, than to be advanced into the love and favour of God? "This honour have all his saints." What is the crown of glory but God's favour? 2nd. He hath given thee true pleasure; he "satisfieth thy mouth with good things," ver. 5; and it is only the favour and grace of God that can give satisfaction to a soul, can suit its capacities, supply it needs, and answer its desires. Nothing but Divine wisdom can undertake to fill its treasures, *Pr.* viii. 21; other things will surfeit but not satiate, *Eccl.* vi. 7; *Isa.* lv. 2. 3rd. He hath given thee a prospect and pledge of long life; "Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." The eagle is long-lived, and, as naturalists say, when she is near a hundred years old, casts all her feathers, (as indeed she changes them in a great measure every year at moulting-time,) and fresh ones come, so that she becomes young again. When God by the graces and comforts of his Spirit recovers his people from their decays, and fills them with new life and joy, which is to them an earnest of eternal life and joy, then they may be said to return to the days of their youth, *Job* xxxiii. 25.

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment
For all that are oppressed.
7 He made known his ways unto Moses,
His acts unto the children of Israel.
8 The LORD *is* merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
9 He will not always chide:
Neither will he keep *his anger* for ever.
10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
11 For as the heaven is high above the earth,
So great is his mercy toward them that fear him.
12 As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
13 Like as a father pitieth *his* children,
So the LORD pitieth them that fear him.
14 For he knoweth our frame;
He remembereth that we *are* dust.
15 *As for* man, his days *are* as grass:
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone;
And the place thereof shall know it no more.
17 But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,
And his righteousness unto children's children;
18 To such as keep his covenant, [them.
And to those that remember his commandments to do

Hitherto the psalmist had only looked back upon his own experiences, and thence fetched matter for praise; here he looks abroad and takes notice of his favour to others also, for in them we should rejoice, and give thanks for them; all the saints being fed at a common table, and sharing in the same blessings.

First. Truly God is good to all; ver. 6, "He executeth righteousness and judgment," not only for his own people, but "for all that are oppressed;" for even in common providence he is the patron of wronged innocency, and one way or other will plead the cause of those that are injured against their oppressors. It is his honour to humble the proud, and help the helpless.

Secondly. He is in a special manner good to Israel, to every Israelite indeed, that is of a clean and upright heart.

1. He hath revealed himself and his grace to us; ver. 7, "He made known his ways unto Moses," and by him "his acts to the children of Israel;" not only by his rod to those who then lived, but by his pen to succeeding ages. Note, Divine revelation is one of the first and greatest of Divine favours with which the church is blessed; for God reduceth us to himself by revealing himself to us; and gives us all good by giving us knowledge. He hath made known his acts and his ways, that is, his nature, and the methods of his dealing with the children of men, that they may know both what to conceive of him, and what to expect from him; so Dr. Hammond. Or, by his ways we may understand his precepts, the way which he requires us to walk in; and by his acts, or designs, as the word signifies, his promises and purposes what to do with us. Thus fairly doth God deal with us.

2. He hath never been rigorous and severe with us, but always tender, full of compassion, and ready to forgive. 1st. It is in his nature to be so; ver. 8, "The Lord is merciful and gracious." This was his way which he made known unto Moses at mount Horeb, when he thus proclaimed his name, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6, 7, in answer to Moses' request, *Ex.* xxxiii. 13, "I beseech thee shew me thy way, that I may know thee." It is my way, saith God, to pardon sin. *First.* He is not soon angry; ver. 8, he is "slow to anger," not extreme to mark what we do amiss, nor ready to take advantage against us. He bears long with those that are very provoking, defers punishing that he may give space to repent, and doth not speedily execute the sentence of his law. And he could not be thus slow to anger if he were not plenteous in mercy, the very Father of mercies. *Secondly.* He is not long angry; for, ver. 9, "He will not always chide," though we always offend, and deserve chiding. Though he signify his displeasure against us for our sins by the rebukes of providence, and the reproaches of our own consciences, and thus cause grief; yet he will have compassion, and will not always keep us in pain and terror, no, not for our sins, but, after the spirit of bondage, will give the spirit of adoption. How unlike are those to God who always chide, who take every occasion to chide, and never know when to take up! What would become of us, if God should deal so with us? "He will not keep his anger for ever" against his own people, but will gather them with everlasting mercies, *Isa.* liv. 8; lvii. 16. 2nd. We have found him so. We, for our parts, must own, that "He hath not dealt with us after our sins," ver. 10. The Scripture saith a great deal of the mercy of God, and we may all set to our seal that it is true; that we have experienced it. If he had not been a God of patience we had been in hell long ago; but He hath not "rewarded us after our iniquities;" so they will say who know what sin deserves. He has not inflicted the judgments which we have merited, nor deprived us of the comforts which we have forfeited; which should make us think the worse and not the better of sin; for God's patience should lead us to repentance, *Rom.* ii. 4.

3. He hath pardoned our sins; not only mine iniquity, ver. 3, but our transgressions, ver. 12. Though it is of our own benefit by the pardoning mercy of God that we are to take the comfort, yet of the benefit others have by it we must give him the glory. Observe, 1st. The transcendent riches of God's mercy; ver. 11, "As the heaven is high above the earth," so high that the earth is but a point to the vast expanse; so God's mercy is above the merits of those that fear him most; so much above and beyond them that there is no proportion at all between them. The greatest performances of man's duty cannot demand the least tokens of God's favour as a debt, and therefore all the seed of Jacob will join with him in owning themselves less than the least of all God's mercies, *Gen.* xxxii. 10. Observe, God's mercy is thus "great towards them that fear him," not towards them that trifle with him. We must fear the Lord and his goodness. 2nd. The fulness of his pardons, an evidence of the riches of his mercy; ver. 12, "As far as the east is from the west," (which two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, because all known and inhabited, and therefore geographers that way reckon their longitudes,) "so far hath he removed our transgressions from us," so that they shall never be laid to our charge, nor rise up in judgment against us. The sins of believers shall be remembered no more, shall not be mentioned unto them; they shall be sought for and not found. If we thoroughly forsake them, God will thoroughly forgive them.

4. He hath pitied our sorrows, ver. 13, 14. Observe, 1st. Whom he pities; "Them that fear him;" that is, all good people who in this world may become objects of pity upon account of the grievances which they are not only born, but born again to. Or it may be understood of those who have not yet received the spirit of adoption, but are yet trembling at his word; those he pities, *Jer.* xxxi. 18, 20. 2nd. How he pities; "As a father pities his children;" and doth them good as there is occasion. God is a father to them that fear him, and owns them for his children, and he is tender of them as a father. The father pities his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them, *Isa.* lxvi. 13; when they are fallen, and helps them up again; when they have offended, and, upon their submission, forgives them; when they are wronged, and rights them. Thus "the Lord pities them that fear him." 3rd. Why he pities; "For he knoweth our frame." He has reason to know our frame, for he framed us, and having himself made man of the dust, "he remembers that he is dust," not only by constitution but by sentence; "Dust thou art." He considers the frailty of our bodies, and the folly of our souls, how little we can do, and expects accordingly from us; how little we can bear, and lays accordingly upon us; in all which appears the tenderness of his compassion.

5. He hath perpetuated his covenant mercy, and therefore provided relief for our frailty, ver. 15—18. See here, 1st. How short man's life is, and of what uncertain continuance. The lives even of great men and good men are so, and neither their greatness nor their goodness can alter the property of them. "As for man, his days are as grass," which grows out of the earth, rises but a little way above it, and soon withers and returns to it again: see *Isa.* xl. 6, 7. Man in his best estate seems somewhat more than grass; he flourishes and looks gay; yet then he is but like a flower of the field, which, though distinguished a little from the grass, will wither with it. The flower of the garden is commonly more choice and valuable, and though in its own nature withering, yet will last the longer for its being sheltered by the garden wall, and the gardener's care; but the flower of the field (to which life is here compared) is not only withering in itself, but exposed to the cold blasts, and liable to be cropped and trodden on by the beasts of the field. Man's life is not only wasting of itself, but its period may be anticipated by a thousand accidents. When the flower is in its perfection, a blasting wind, unseen, unlooked-for, passeth over it and it is gone; it hangs the head, drops the leaves, dwindles into the ground again, and the place thereof, which was proud of it, now knows it no more. Such a thing is man: God considers it, and pities him; let him consider it himself, and be humble, dead to this world, and thoughtful of another. 2nd. How long and lasting God's mercy is to his people, ver. 17, 18. It will continue longer than their lives, and will survive their present state. Observe, *First.* The description

of those to whom this mercy belongs. They are such as fear God; that is, are truly religious from a principle. 1*st*. They live a life of faith; for they keep God's covenant; having taken hold of it, they keep hold of it, fast hold, and will not let it go. They keep it as a treasure, keep it as their portion, and would not for all the world part with it, for it is their life. 2*nd*. They live a life of obedience; they "remember his commandments to do them," else they do not keep his covenant. Those only shall have the benefit of God's promises that make conscience of his precepts. See who they are that have a good memory, as well as a good understanding, *Ps*. cxi. 10, those that remember God's commandments, not to talk of them, but to do them, and to be ruled by them. *Secondly*. The continuance of the mercy which belongs to such as these. It will last them longer than their lives on earth, and therefore they need not be troubled though their lives be short, since death itself will be no abridgement, no infringement of their bliss. God's mercy is better than life; for it will outlive it. 1*st*. To their souls, which are immortal, to them "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting;" from everlasting in the counsels of it, to everlasting in the consequences of it; in their election before the world was, and their glorification when this world shall be no more; for they are predestinated to the inheritance, *Eph*. i. 11, and "look for the mercy of the Lord, the Lord Jesus, unto eternal life." 2*nd*. To their seed, which shall be kept up to the end of time, *Ps*. cii. 28. His righteousness, the truth of his promise, unto children's children, provided they tread in the steps of their predecessors' piety, and keep his covenant as they did, then shall mercy be preserved to them even to a thousand generations.

19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens;
And his kingdom ruleth over all.
20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels,
That excel in strength, that do his commandments,
Hearkening unto the voice of his word.
21 Bless ye the LORD, all *ye* his hosts;
Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.
22 Bless the LORD, all his works
In all places of his dominion:
Bless the LORD, O my soul.

Here is, First. The doctrine of universal providence laid down, ver. 19. He hath secured the happiness of his peculiar people by promise and covenant; but the order of mankind and the world in general he secures by common providence. The Lord hath a throne of his own, a throne of glory, a throne of government He that made all rules all, and both by a word of power. He hath prepared his throne, has fixed and established it, that it cannot be shaken. He has foreordained all the measures of his government, and doth all according to the counsel of his own will. He has prepared it in the heavens, above us, and out of sight; for he holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth a cloud upon it, *Job* xxvi. 9; yet can himself judge through the dark cloud, *Job* xxii. 13. Hence the heavens are said to rule, *Dan*. iv. 26. And we are led to consider this by the influence which even the visible heavens have upon this earth, their dominion, *Job* xxxviii. 33; *Gen*. i. 16. But though God's throne is in heaven, and there he keeps his court, and thither we are to direct to him, "Our Father, which art in heaven," yet "his kingdom ruleth over all." He takes cognizance of all the inhabitants, and all the affairs, of this lower world, and disposeth all persons and things according to the counsel of his will to his own glory; *Dan*. iv. 35, His kingdom ruleth over all kings, and all kingdoms, and from it there is no exempt jurisdiction.

Secondly. The duty of universal praise inferred from it. If all are under God's dominion, all must do him homage.

1. Let the holy angels praise him; ver. 20, 21, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels." And again, "Bless the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his." David had been stirring up himself and others to praise God, and here, in the close, he calls upon the angels to do it. Not as if they needed any excitement of ours to praise God, they do it continually; but thus he expresses his high thoughts of God, as worthy of the adorations of the holy angels; thus he quickens himself and others to the duty, with this consideration,—that it is the work of angels; and comforts himself in reference to his own weakness and defect in the performance of this duty, that there is a world of holy angels who dwell in God's house, and are still praising him. In short, the blessed angels are glorious attendants upon the blessed God. Observe, 1st. How well qualified they are for the post they are in. They are able; for they "excel in strength;" they are 'mighty in strength,' so the word is. They are able to bring great things to pass, and to abide in their work without weariness; and they are as willing as they are able. They are willing to know their work; for they hearken to the voice of his word; they stand expecting commissions and instructions from their great Lord, and always behold his face, *Mat*. xviii. 10, that they may take the first intimation of his mind. They are willing to do their work; they do his commandments, ver. 20; they do his pleasure, ver. 21. They dispute not any Divine commands, but readily address themselves to the execution of them. Nor do they delay; but fly swiftly. 'They do his commandments at hearing;' or, 'as soon as they hear the voice of his word,' so Dr. Hammond. "To obey is better than sacrifice;" for angels obey, but do not sacrifice. 2nd. What their service is. They are his angels, and ministers of his; His, for he made them, and made them for himself; His, for he useth them, though he doth not need them; His, for he is their owner and lord; they belong to him, and he has them at his beck. All the creatures are his servants, but not as the angels that attend the presence of his glory. Soldiers and seamen, and all good subjects, serve the king; but not as the courtiers do, the ministers of state, and those of the household. *First*. The angels occasionally serve God in this lower world; they do his commandments, go on his errands, *Dan*. ix. 21, fight his battles, 2 *Kin*. vi. 17, and minister for the good of his people, *Heb*. i. 14. *Secondly*. They continually praise him in the upper world; they began betimes to do it, *Job* xxxviii. 7; and it is still their business, from which they rest not day or night, *Rev*. iv. 8. It is God's glory that he hath such attendants; but more his glory that he neither needs them nor is benefited by them.

2. Let all his works praise him; ver. 22, "All in all places of his dominion;" for because they are his works they are under his dominion, and they were made and are ruled, that they may be unto him for a name and a praise. "All his works;" that is, all the children of men in all parts of the world, let them all praise God; yea, and the inferior creatures too, which are God's works too. let them praise him objectively, though they cannot actually do it, *Ps*. cxlv. 10. Yet all this shall not excuse David from doing it, but rather excite him to do it the more cheerfully, that he might bear a part in this concert; for he concludes, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," as he began, ver. 1. Blessing God, and giving him glory, must be the alpha and omega of all our services. He began with, "Bless the Lord, O my soul;" and when he had penned and sung this excellent hymn to his honour, he doth not say, 'Now, O my soul, thou hast blessed the Lord, sit down and rest thee,' but "Bless the Lord, O my soul," yet more and more. When we have done never so much in the service of God, yet still we must stir up ourselves to do more. God's praise is a subject that will never be exhausted; and therefore we must never think this work done till we come to heaven, where it will be for ever in the doing.

PSALM CIV.

It is very probable that this psalm was penned by the same hand, and at the same time with the former; for as that ended this begins with "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and concludes with it too, ver. 35. The style indeed is somewhat different, because the matter is so. The scope of the foregoing psalm was to celebrate the goodness of God, and his tender mercy and compassion, to which a soft and sweet style was most agreeable: the scope of this is to celebrate his greatness and majesty and sovereign dominion, which ought to be done in the most stately lofty strains of poetry. David in the former psalm gave God the glory of his covenant-mercy and love to his own people; in this he gives him the glory of his works of creation and providence, his dominion over, and his bounty to, all the creatures. God is there praised as the God of grace, here as the God of nature. And this psalm is wholly bestowed on that subject; not as *Ps*. xix., which begins with it, but passeth from it to the consideration of the Divine law; not as *Ps*. viii., which speaks of this, but prophetically, and with an eye to Christ. This noble poem is thought by very competent judges, not only for piety and devotion (that is past dispute), but for flight of fancy, brightness of ideas, surprising turns, and all the beauties and ornaments of expression, far to excel any of the Greek and Latin poets upon any subject of this nature. Many great things the psalmist here gives God the glory of, I. The splendour of his majesty in the upper world, ver. 1—4. II. The creation of the sea and the dry land, ver. 5—9. III. The provision he makes for the maintenance of all the creatures according to their nature, ver. 10—18, and again, ver. 27, 28. IV. The regular course of the sun and moon, ver. 19—24. V. The furniture of the sea, ver. 25, 26. VI. God's sovereign power over all the creatures, ver. 29—32. And lastly, he concludes with a pleasant and firm resolution to continue praising God, ver. 33—35; with which we should heartily join in singing this psalm.

BLESS the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD my God, thou art very great;
Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.
2 Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment:
Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:
3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters:
Who maketh the clouds his chariot:
Who walketh upon the wings of the wind:
4 Who maketh his angels spirits;
His ministers a flaming fire:
5 *Who* laid the foundations of the earth,
That it should not be removed for ever.
6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as *with* a garment:
The waters stood above the mountains.
7 At thy rebuke they fled;
At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.
8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys
Unto the place which thou hast founded for them.
9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over;
That they turn not again to cover the earth.

When we are addressing ourselves to any religious service, we must stir up ourselves to take hold on God in it, *Isa*. lxiv. 7; so David doth here. Come, my soul, where art thou? What art thou thinking of? Here is work to be done, good work, angels' work, about it in good earnest, let all thy powers and faculties be engaged and employed in it. "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" In these verses,

First. The psalmist looks up to the Divine glory shining in the upper world, which, though it is one of the things not seen, yet faith is the evidence of it. With what reverence and holy awe doth he begin his meditation, with that acknowledgment, "O Lord my God, thou art very great." And it is the joy of the saints that he that is their God is a great God. The grandeur of the prince is the pride and pleasure of all his good subjects. The majesty of God is here set forth by divers instances; alluding to the figure which great princes in their public appearances covet to make; their equipage compared with his (even of the Eastern kings, who most affected pomp,) is but as the light of a glowworm compared with that of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. Princes appear great,

1. In their robes. And what are God's robes? "Thou art clothed with honour and majesty," ver. 1. God is seen in his works; and those speak him infinitely wise and good, and all that is great. "Thou coverest thyself with light as with a garment," ver. 2; "God is light," 1 *Jno*. i. 5; "The Father of lights," *Jas*. i. 17; "He dwells in light," 1 *Tim*. vi. 16. He clothes himself with it. The residence of his glory is in the highest heaven; that light which was created the first day, *Gen*. i. 3. Of all visible beings, light comes nearest to the nature of a spirit; and therefore with that God is pleased to cover himself, that is, to reveal himself under that similitude; as men are seen in the clothes with which they cover themselves,—and so only, for his face cannot be seen.

2. In their palaces or pavilions, when they take the field. And what is God's palace and his pavilion? He "stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain," ver. 2; so he did at first, when he made the firmament, which in the Hebrew has its name from its being expanded or stretched out, *Gen*. i. 7. He made it to divide the waters as a curtain divides between two apartments: so he doth still, he now "stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain;" that is, keeps them upon the stretch, and they "continue to this day according to his ordinance." The regions of the air are stretched out about the earth, like a curtain about a bed, to keep it warm, and drawn between us and the upper world to break its dazzling light; for though God covers himself with light, yet in compassion

to us he makes darkness his pavilion, thick clouds are a covering to him. The vastness of this pavilion may lead us to consider how great, how very great, He is that fills heaven and earth. He hath his chambers, his upper rooms, so the word signifies; the beams whereof he lays in the waters, the waters that are above the firmament, ver. 3; as he has founded the earth upon the seas and floods, the waters beneath the firmament. Though air and water are fluid bodies, yet by the Divine power they are kept as tight and as firm in the place assigned them as a chamber is with beams and rafters. How great a God is he whose presence-chamber is thus reared, thus fixed!

3. In their coaches of state, and their stately horses, which add much to the magnificence of their entries. But God "makes the clouds his chariots," in which he rides strongly, swiftly, and far above out of the reach of opposition, when at any time he will act by uncommon providences in the government of this world. He descended in a cloud as in a chariot to mount Sinai to give the law; and to mount Tabor to proclaim the Gospel, *Mat.* xvii. 5; and he "walketh" (a softly pace, indeed, yet stately,) "upon the wings of the wind:" see *Ps.* xviii. 10, 11. He commands the winds, directs them as he pleaseth, and serves his own purposes by them.

4. In their retinue, or train of attendants. And here also God is very great; for, ver. 4, "He maketh his angels spirits." This is quoted by the apostle, *Heb.* i. 7, to prove the preeminence of Christ above the angels. The angels are here said to be his angels and his ministers, for they are under his dominion, and at his dispose. They are winds, and a flame of fire; that is, they appeared in wind and fire, so some; or they are swift as winds, and pure as flames; or he maketh them spirits, so the apostle quotes it. They are spiritual beings; and whatever vehicles they may have proper to their nature, it is certain they have not bodies as we have. Being spirits, they are so much the farther removed from the incumbrances of the human nature, and so much the nearer allied to the glories of the Divine nature; and they are bright, and quick, and ascending, as fire, as a flame of fire. In Ezekiel's vision they ran and returned like a flash of lightning, *Eze.* i. 14. Thence they are called seraphim, 'burners.' Whatever they are, they are what God made them, what he still makes them; they derive their being from him, having the being he gave them, are held in being by him, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them.

Secondly. He looks down, and looks about, to the power of God shining in this lower world. He is not so taken up with the glories of his court as to neglect even the remotest of his territories; no, not the sea and dry land.

1. He hath founded the earth, ver. 5. Though he has hung it upon nothing, *Job* xxvi. 2, (*ponderibus librata suis*,—'balanced by its own weight,') yet it is as immovable as if it had been laid upon the surest foundations. He hath built the earth upon her basis, so that though it has received a dangerous shock by the sin of man, and the malice of hell strikes at it, yet it shall not be removed for ever; that is, not till the end of time, when it must give way to the new earth. Dr. Hammond's paraphrase of this is worth noting: 'God has fixed so strange a place for the earth, that being a heavy body, one would think it should fall every minute; and yet, which way soever we would imagine it to stir, it must, contrary to the nature of such a body, fall upwards, and so can have no possible ruin, but by tumbling into heaven.'

2. He hath set bounds to the sea, for that also is his.

1st. He brought it within bounds in the creation. At first the earth (which, being the more ponderous body, would subside of course) was covered with the deep; ver. 6, "The waters were above the mountains," and so it was unfit to be, as it was designed, an habitation for man; and therefore on the third day God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered unto one place, and let the dry land appear," *Gen.* i. 9. This command of God is here called his rebuke, as if he gave it because he was displeased that the earth was thus covered with water, and not fit for man to dwell on. Power went along with this word; and therefore it is also called here the voice of his thunder, which is a mighty voice, and produceth strange effects, ver. 7. "At thy rebuke," as if they were made sensible that they were ont of their place, "they fled, they hasted away;" they called, and not in vain, to the rocks and mountains to cover them. As it is said on another occasion, *Ps.* lxxvii. 16, "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee, they were afraid." Even those fluid bodies received the impression of God's terror. But "was the Lord displeased against the rivers?" No; it was "for the salvation of his people," *Hab.* iii. 8, 13. So here, God rebuked the waters for man's sake, to prepare room for him; for men must not be made as the fishes of the sea, *Hab.* i. 14; they must have air to breathe in. Immediately therefore, with all speed, the waters retired, ver. 8; they go over hill and dale, (as we say,) "go up by the mountains, and down by the valleys." They will neither stop at the former, nor lodge in the latter, but make the best of their way "to the place which thou hast founded for them," and there they make their bed. Let the obsequiousness even of the unstable waters teach us obedience to the word and will of God; for shall man alone of all the creatures be obstinate? Let their retiring to, and resting in, the place assigned them, teach us to acquiesce in the disposals of that wise providence which appointeth us the bounds of our habitation.

2nd. He keeps it within bounds, ver. 9. The waters are forbidden to pass over the limits set them; they may not, and, therefore, they "do not turn again to cover the earth." Once they did in Noah's flood, because God bade them; but never since, because he forbids them, having promised not to drown the world again. God himself glories in this instance of his power, *Job* xxxviii. 8, &c.; and useth it as an argument with us to fear him, *Jer.* v. 22. This, if duly considered, would keep the world in awe of the Lord and his goodness, that the waters of the sea would soon cover the earth if God did not restrain them.

10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys,
Which run among the hills.
11 They give drink to every beast of the field:
The wild asses quench their thirst.
12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation,
Which sing among the branches.
13 He watereth the hills from his chambers:
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.
14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,
And herb for the service of man:
That he may bring forth food out of the earth;
15 And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man,
And oil to make *his* face to shine,
And bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart
16 The trees of the LORD are full *of sap;*
The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;
17 Where the birds make their nests:
As for the stork, the fir trees *are* her house.
18 The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats;
And the rocks for the conies.

CONIES.

Having given glory to God, as the powerful protector of this earth, in saving it from being deluged, here he comes to acknowledge him as its bountiful benefactor, who provides conveniences for all the creatures.

First. He provides fresh water for their drink. "He sendeth the springs into the valleys," ver. 10. There is water enough, indeed, in the sea, that is, enough to drown us, but not one drop to refresh us, be we never so thirsty, it is all so salt; and therefore God has graciously provided water fit to drink. Naturalists dispute about the origin of fountains; but, whatever are their second causes, here is the first cause, it is God that sends the springs into the brooks, which walk by easy steps between the hills, and receive increase from the rain water that descends from them. These give drink, not only to man, and those creatures that are immediately useful to him, but "to every beast of the field," ver. 11; for where God has given life he provides a livelihood, and takes care of all the creatures; even "the wild asses," though untameable, and therefore of no use to man, yet are welcome to "quench their thirst;" and we have no reason to grudge it them, for we are better provided for, though born like the wild ass's colt. We have reason to thank God for the plenty of fair weather with which he has provided the habitable part of his earth, which otherwise would not be habitable. That ought to be reckoned a great mercy, the want of which would be a great affliction; and the more common it is, the greater mercy it is. *Usus communis aquarum*,—'Water is common to all.'

Secondly. He provides food convenient for them, both for man and beast. The heavens drop fatness; they hear the earth, but God hears them, *Hos.* ii. 21. He "waters the hills from his chambers," ver. 13; from those chambers spoken of, ver. 3, the beams of which he lays in the waters; those store chambers, the clouds that distil the fruitful showers. The hills that are not watered by the rivers, as Egypt was by the Nile, are watered by the rain from heaven, which is called the river of God, *Ps.* lxv. 9, as Canaan was, *Deu.* xi. 11, 12. Thus the earth is satisfied with the fruit of his works, either with the rain it drinks in,—the earth knows when it has enough, it is pity that any men should not,—or with the products it brings forth. It is a satisfaction to the earth to bear the fruit of God's works for the benefit of man, for thus it answers the end of its creation. The food which God brings forth out of the earth, ver. 14, is the fruit of his works, which the earth is satisfied with. Observe how various and how valuable its products are: for the cattle there is grass, and the beasts of prey, that live not on grass, feed on those that do. For man there is herb, a better sort of grass, (and a dinner of herbs and roots is not to be despised,) nay, he is furnished with wine, and oil, and bread, ver. 15. We may observe here concerning our food that which will help to make us both humble and thankful:

1. To make us humble, let us consider that we have a necessary dependence upon God for all the supports of this life; we live upon alms, we are at his finding, for our own hands are not sufficient for us; that our food comes all out of the earth, to mind us whence we ourselves were taken, and whither we must return; and that therefore we must not think to live by bread alone, for that will feed the body only, but must look into the Word of God for the meat that endures unto eternal life. It is also humbling to consider that we are upon the matter fellow commoners with the beasts; the same earth, the same spot of ground, that brings grass for the cattle, brings corn for man.

2. To make us thankful, let us consider, 1st. That God not only provides for us, but for our servants. The cattle, that are of use to man, are particularly taken care of; grass is made to grow in great abundance for them, when "the young lions," that are not for the service of man, often "lack, and suffer hunger." 2nd. That our food is nigh us, and ready to us. Having our habitation on the earth, there we have our storehouse, and depend not on "the merchant ships that bring food from afar," *Pr.* xxxi. 14. 3rd. That we have even from the products of the earth, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight, so good a master do we serve. *First.* Doth nature call for something to support it and repair its daily decays? Here is bread, which strengthens man's heart, and is therefore called the staff of life: let none that have that complain of want. *Secondly.* Doth nature go farther, and covet something pleasant? Here is "wine, that makes glad the heart," refresheth the spirits, and exhilarates them, when it is soberly and moderately used; that we may not only go through our business, but go through it cheerfully. It is pity that should be abused to overcharge the heart, and unfit men for their duty, which was given to revive their heart, and quicken them in their duty. *Thirdly.* Is nature yet more humoursome, and doth it crave something to ornament it too? Here is that also out of the earth, "oil to make the face to shine," that the countenance may not only be cheerful but beautiful, and we may be the more acceptable to one another.

Nay, the Divine providence not only furnisheth animals with their proper food, but vegetables also with theirs; ver. 16, "the trees of the Lord are full of sap;" not only men's trees, which they take care of, and have an eye to in their orchards, and parks, and other inclosures, but God's trees, which grow in the wildernesses, and are taken care of only by his providence, yet they are full of sap, and want no nourishment. Even the cedars of Lebanon, an open forest,

though they are high and bulky, and require a great deal of sap to feed them, have enough from the earth. They are trees which he hath planted, and which therefore he will protect and provide for. We may apply this to the trees of righteousness, which are the planting of the Lord, planted in his vineyard: these are full of sap; for what God plants he will water, and "they that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God," *Ps.* xcii. 13.

Thirdly. He takes care that they shall have suitable habitations to dwell in. To men God has given discretion to build for themselves, and for the cattle that are serviceable to them; but there are some creatures which God more immediately provides a settlement for.

1. The birds. Some birds by instinct make their nests in the bushes near rivers; ver. 12, by the springs that run among the hills some of "the fowls of heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches." They sing, according to their capacity, to the honour of their Creator and benefactor; and their singing may shame our silence. Our heavenly Father feedeth them, *Mat.* vi. 26, and therefore they are easy and cheerful, and take no thought for the morrow. The birds being made to fly above the earth, as we find, *Gen.* i. 20, they make their nests on high on the tops of trees, ver. 17. And it should seem as if nature had an eye to this in planting the cedars of Lebanon, that they might be receptacles for the birds. Those that fly heavenward shall not want resting-places. The stork is particularly instanced in. The fir-trees, which are very high, are her house, her castle.

2. The lesser sort of beasts; ver. 18, The wild goats, having neither strength nor swiftness to secure themselves, are guided by instinct to the high hills, which are a refuge to them; and the rabbits, which are also helpless animals, find a shelter in the rocks, where they can set beasts of prey at defiance. Doth God provide thus for the inferior creatures, and will he not himself be a refuge and dwelling-place to his own people?

19 He appointed the moon for seasons:
The sun knoweth his going down.
20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night:
Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep *forth*.
21 The young lions roar after their prey,
And seek their meat from God.
22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together,
And lay them down in their dens.
23 Man goeth forth unto his work
And to his labour until the evening.
24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works!
In wisdom hast thou made them all:
The earth is full of thy riches.
25 *So is* this great and wide sea,
Wherein *are* things creeping innumerable,
Both small and great beasts.
26 There go the ships: [therein.
There is that leviathan, *whom* thou hast made to play
27 These wait all upon thee;
That thou mayest give *them* their meat in due season.
28 *That* thou givest them they gather:
Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.
29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled:
Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.
30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created:
And thou renewest the face of the earth.

We are here taught to praise and magnify God,

First. For the constant revolutions and succession of day and night, and the dominion of sun and moon over them. The heathen were so affected with the light and influence of the sun and moon, and their serviceableness to the earth, that they worshipped them as deities; and therefore the Scripture takes all occasions to shew that the gods they worshipped are the creatures and servants of the true God; ver. 19, "He appointed the moon for seasons," for the measuring of the months, the directing of the seasons for the business of the husbandman, and the governing of the tides. The full and change, the increase and decrease of the moon, exactly observe the appointment of the Creator; so doth the sun, for he keeps as punctually to the time and place of his going down as if he were an intellectual being, and knew what he did. God herein consults the comfort of man.

1. The shadows of the evening befriend the repose of the night; ver. 20, "Thou makest darkness, and it is night," which, though black, contributes to the beauty of nature, and is a foil to the light of the day; and under the protection of the night "all the beasts of the forest creep forth" to feed; which they are afraid to do in the day, God having put the fear and dread of man upon every beast of the earth, *Gen.* ix. 2, which contributes as much to man's safety as to his honour. See how nearly allied they are to the disposition of the wild beasts that wait for the twilight, *Job* xxiv. 15, and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and compare to this the danger of ignorance and melancholy, which are both as darkness to the soul. When, either of those ways, it is night, then all the beasts of the forest creep forth; Satan's temptations then assault us, and have advantage against us. Then the young lions roar after their prey; and, as naturalists tell us, their roaring terrifies the timorous beasts, so that they have not strength or spirit to outrun them, which otherwise they might do, and so they become an easy prey to them. They are said to seek their meat from God, because it is not prepared for them by the care and forecast of man, but more immediately by the providence of God. The roaring of the young lions, like the crying of the young ravens, is interpreted asking their meat of God. Doth God put this construction upon the language of mere nature, even in venomous creatures, and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it be weak and broken, groanings which cannot be uttered?

2. The light of the morning befriends the business of the day; ver. 22, 23, "The sun ariseth," (for as he knows his going down, so, thanks be to God, he knows his rising again,) and then the wild beasts betake themselves to their rest. Even they have some society among them, for they "gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens," which is a great mercy to the children of men, that while they are abroad, as becomes honest travellers between sun and sun, care is taken that they shall not be set upon by wild beasts; for they are then drawn out of the field, and the sluggard shall have nowhere to excuse himself from the business of the day, with this, that there is a lion in the way. Therefore, then, "man goes forth to his work and to his labour." The beasts of prey creep forth with fear; man goes forth with boldness, as one that hath dominion. The beasts creep forth to spoil and do mischief; man goes forth to work and do good. There is the work of every day which is to be done in its day, which man must apply to every morning,—for the lights are set up for us to work by, not to play by,—and which he must stick to till evening. It will be time enough to rest when the night comes, in which no man can work.

Secondly. For the replenishing of the ocean; ver. 25, 26, as "the earth is full of God's riches," well stocked with animals, and those well provided for, so that it is seldom that any creature dies merely for want of food, "so is this great and wide sea," which seems a useless part of the globe, at least not to answer the room it takes up; yet God has appointed it its place, and made it serviceable to man, both for navigation,—"there go the ships," in which goods are conveyed to countries vastly distant, speedily, and much cheaper than by land-carriage,—and also to be his storehouse for fish. God made not the sea in vain, no more than the earth; he made it to be inherited, for "there are things swimming innumerable, both small and great animals," which serve for man's dainty food. The whale is particularly mentioned in the history of the creation, *Gen.* i. 21, and is here called the leviathan, as *Job* xli. 1. He is made to play in the sea; he hath nothing to do as man hath, that goes forth to his work; he hath nothing to fear, as the beasts have, that lie down in their dens, and therefore he plays with the waters. It is pity any of the children of men, that have nobler powers, and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world, like leviathan into the waters, to play therein, spending all their time in pastime. The leviathan is said to play in the waters because he is so well armed against all assaults that he sets them at defiance, and laughs at the shaking of a spear, *Job* xli. 29.

Thirdly. For the seasonable and plentiful provision which is made for all the creatures, ver. 27, 28. 1. God is a bountiful benefactor to them. He gives them their meat; he opens his hand, and they are filled with good. He subsists the armies both of heaven and earth; even the meanest creatures are not below his cognizance. He is open-handed in the gifts of his bounty, and is a great and good housekeeper that provides for so large a family. 2. They are patient expectants from him. They all wait upon him; that is, they seek their food according to the natural instinct God has put into them, and in the proper season for it, and affect not any other food, or at any other time than nature has ordained. They do their part for the obtaining of it; what God gives them they gather, and expect not that providence should put it into their mouths; and what they gather they are satisfied with. They are filled with good, and desire no more than what God sees fit for them, which may shame our murmurings, and discontent, and unsatisfiedness with our lot.

Fourthly. For the absolute power and sovereign dominion which he has over all the creatures, by which the species of each are still continued, though the individuals of each are daily dying and dropping off. See here, 1. All the creatures perishing; ver. 29, "Thou hidest thy face," withdrawest thy supporting power, thy supplying bounty, and they are troubled presently. Every creature hath as necessary a dependence upon God's favour as every saint is sensible he has, and therefore saith with David, *Ps.* xxx. 7, "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." God's displeasure against this lower world for the sin of man is the cause of all that vanity and burthen which the whole creation groans under. "Thou takest away their breath," which is in thy hand, and then, and not till then, "they die, and return to their dust," to their first principles. The spirit of the beast that goes downward is at God's command as well as the spirit of a man which goes upward. The death of cattle was one of the plagues of Egypt, and is particularly taken notice of in the drowning of the world. 2. All preserved, notwithstanding, in a succession; ver. 30, "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created." The same Spirit, that is, the same Divine will and power by which they were all created at first still preserves the several sorts of creatures in their being, and place, and usefulness; so that, though one generation of them passeth away, another comes, and from time to time they are created; new ones rise up instead of the old ones, and this is a continual creation. Thus the face of the earth is renewed from day to day by the light of the sun which beautifies it anew every morning; from year to year by the products of it, which enrich it anew every spring, and put quite another face upon it from what it had all winter. The world is as full of creatures as if none died, for the place of those that die is filled up. This, the Jews say, is to be applied to the resurrection, which every spring is an emblem of, when a new world rises out of the ashes of the old one.

In the midst of this discourse the psalmist breaks out into wonder at the works of God; ver. 24, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works!" They are numerous, they are various, of many kinds, and many of every kind, and yet "in wisdom hast thou made them all." When men undertake many works, and of different kinds, commonly some of them are neglected, and not done with due care; but God's works, though many, and of very different kinds, yet all are made in wisdom, and with the greatest exactness; there is not the least flaw or defect in them. The works of art, the more closely they are looked upon with the help of microscopes, the more rough they appear; the works of nature through these glasses appear more fine and exact. They are all made in wisdom, for they are all made to answer the end they were designed to serve, the good of the universe, in order to the glory of the universal Monarch.

31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever:
The LORD shall rejoice in his works.
32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth:
He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.
33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live:
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.
34 My meditation of him shall be sweet:
I will be glad in the LORD.
35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth,
And let the wicked be no more.
Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist concludes this meditation with speaking,

First. Praise to God, which is chiefly intended in the psalm.

1. He is to be praised, 1st. As a great God, and a God of matchless perfection. "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever," ver. 31. It shall endure to the end of time in his works of creation and providence; it shall endure to eternity in the felicity and adoration of saints and angels. Man's glory is fading, God's glory is everlasting; creatures change, but with the Creator there is no variableness. 2nd. As a gracious God. "The Lord shall rejoice in his works." He continues that complacency in the products of his own wisdom and goodness, which he had when he "saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good, and rested the seventh day." We often do that which upon the review we cannot rejoice in, but are displeased at, and wish undone again, blaming our own management. But God always rejoiceth in his works, because they are all done in wisdom. We regret our bounty and beneficence, but God never doth; he rejoiceth in the works of his grace, his gifts and callings are without repentance. 3rd. As a God of almighty power; ver. 32, "He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth," as unable to bear his frowns; trembleth as Sinai did at the presence of the Lord; "he toucheth the hills, and they smoke." The volcanoes, or burning mountains, such as Ætna, are emblems of the power of God's wrath fastening upon proud unhumbled sinners. If an angry look and touch hath such effects, what will the weight of his heavy hand do, and the operations of his outstretched arm? "Who knows the power of his anger?" Who then dare set it at defiance? God therefore rejoiceth in his works, because they are all so observant of him; and he will in like manner take pleasure in them that fear him, and that tremble at his word.

2. The psalmist will himself be much in praising him; ver. 33, "I will sing unto the Lord, unto my God," will praise him as Jehovah, the Creator, and as my God, a God in covenant with me; and this not now only, "but as long as I live, and while I have my being." Because we have our life and being from God, and depend upon him for the support and continuance of it, as long as we live and have our being we must continue to praise God; and when we have no life, no being on earth, we hope to have a better life and a better being in a better world, and there to be doing this work in a better manner, and in better company.

Secondly. Joy to himself; ver. 34, "My meditation of him shall be sweet." It shall be fixed and close, it shall be affecting and influencing, and therefore it shall be sweet. Thoughts of God will then be most pleasing when they are most powerful. Note, Divine meditation is a very sweet duty to all that are sanctified. "I will be glad in the Lord;" that is, it shall be a pleasure to me to praise him; I will be glad of all opportunities to set forth his glory; and I will rejoice in the Lord always, and in him only. All my joys shall centre in him, and in him they shall be full.

Thirdly. Terror to the wicked; ver. 35, "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more." 1. They that oppose the God of power, and fight against him, will certainly be consumed. None can prosper that harden themselves against the Almighty. 2. They that rebel against the light of such convincing evidence of God's being, and refuse to serve him whom all the creatures serve, will justly be consumed. They that make that earth to groan under the burthen of their impieties, which God thus fills with his riches, deserve to be consumed out of it, and that it should spue them out. 3. They that heartily desire to praise God themselves cannot but have a holy indignation at those that blaspheme and dishonour him, and a holy satisfaction in the prospect of their destruction, and the honour that God will get to himself upon them. And even this ought to be the matter of their praise; while sinners are consumed out of the earth, let my soul bless the Lord that I am not cast away with the workers of iniquity, but distinguished from them by the special grace of God. When the wicked are no more, I hope to be praising God world without end; and, therefore, "praise ye the Lord;" let all about me join with me in praising God. "Hallelujah." Sing praise to Jehovah. This is the first time that we meet with Hallelujah, and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked; and the last time we meet with it, it is upon the like occasion, when the New Testament Babylon is consumed: this is the burthen of the song, Hallelujah, *Rev.* xix. 1, 3, 4, 6.

PSALM CV.

Some of the psalms of praise are very short, others very long, to teach us that in our devotions we should be more observant how our hearts work than how the time passeth, and neither overstretch ourselves by coveting to be too long, nor overstint ourselves by coveting to be too short, but either the one or the other, as we find it in our hearts to pray. This is a long psalm. The general scope is the same with most of the psalms, to set forth the glory of God, but the subject matter is particular. Every time we come to the throne of grace, we may, if we please, furnish ourselves out of the Word of God, (out of the history of the New Testament, as this out of the history of the Old,) with new songs, with fresh thoughts, so copious, so various, so inexhaustible is the subject. In the foregoing psalm we are taught to praise God for his wondrous work of common providence with reference to the world in general; in this we are directed to praise him for his special favours to his church. We find the first eleven verses of this psalm in the beginning of that psalm which David delivered to Asaph, to be used, as it should seem, in the daily service of the sanctuary, when the ark was fixed in the place he had prepared for it, by which it appears both who penned it and when and upon what occasion it was penned, 1 *Chr.* xvi. 7, &c. David by it designed to instruct his people in the obligations they lay under to adhere faithfully to their holy religion. Here is the preface, ver. 1—7, and the history itself in several articles. I. God's covenant with the patriarchs, ver. 8—11. II. His care of them while they were strangers, ver. 12—15. III. His raising up Joseph to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, ver. 16—22. IV. The increase of Israel in Egypt, and their deliverance out of Egypt, ver. 23—38. V. The care he took of them in the wilderness, and their settlement in Canaan, ver. 39—45. In singing this we must give to God the glory of his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness, must look upon ourselves as concerned in the affairs of the Old Testament church, both because to it were committed the oracles of God which are our treasure, and out of it Christ arose, and these things happened to it for ensamples.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD;
Call upon his name:
Make known his deeds among the people.
2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him:
Talk ye of all his wondrous works.
3 Glory ye in his holy name:
Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.
4 Seek the LORD, and his strength:
Seek his face evermore.
5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done;
His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;
6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant,
Ye children of Jacob his chosen.
7 He *is* the LORD our God:
His judgments *are* in all the earth.

Our devotion is here warmly excited; and we are stirred up, that we may stir up ourselves, to praise God. Observe,

First. The duties we are here called to; and they are many, but the tendency of them all is to give unto God the glory due unto his name. 1. We must give thanks to him, as one who has always been our bountiful benefactor, and requires only that we give him thanks for his favours: poor returns for rich receivings. 2. Call upon his name; as one whom you depend upon for farther favours. Praying for farther mercies is accepted as an acknowledgment of former mercies. "Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him." 3. "Make known his deeds," ver. 1, that others many join with you in praising him. "Talk ye of all his wondrous works," ver. 2, as we talk of things that we are full of, and much affected with, and desire to fill others with. God's wondrous works ought to be the subject of our familiar discourses with our families and friends; and we should talk of them "as we sit in the house, and as we go by the way," *Deu.* vi. 7. Not merely for entertainment, but for the exciting of devotion, and the encouraging of our own and others' faith and hope in God. Even sacred things may be the matter of common talk, provided it be with due reverence. 4. Sing psalms to God's honour, as those that rejoice in him, and desire to testify that joy for the encouragement of others, and to transmit it to posterity, as memorable things anciently were handed down by songs, when writing was scarce. 5. "Glory in his holy name." Let those that are disposed to glory not boast of their own accomplishments and achievements, but of their acquaintance with God, and their relation to him, *Jer.* ix. 23, 24. 'Praise ye his holy name,' so some. But it comes all to one; for in glorying in him we give glory to him. 6. Seek him; place your happiness in him, and then pursue that happiness in all the ways that he hath appointed. "Seek the Lord and his strength," that is, the ark of his strength; seek him in the sanctuary, in the way wherein he has appointed us to seek him. Seek his strength, that is, his grace, the strength of his Spirit, to work in you that which is good, which we cannot do but by strength derived from him, for which he will be inquired of. 'Seek the Lord and be strengthened;' so divers ancient versions read it. They that would be strengthened in the inward man must fetch in strength from God by faith and prayer. Seek his strength, and then seek his face; for by his strength we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, *Hos.* xii. 3. "Seek his face evermore," that is, seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it, in an infinite progression, and yet be for ever satisfied in it. 7. "Let the hearts of those rejoice that do seek him," ver. 3; for they have chosen well, are well fixed, and well employed, and they may be sure their labour will not be in vain; for he will not only be found, but he will be found "the rewarder of those that diligently seek him." And if those have reason to rejoice that seek the Lord, much more those that have found him.

Secondly. Some arguments to quicken us to these duties.

1. Consider both what he hath said and what he hath done to engage us for ever to him. You will see yourselves under all possible obligations to give thanks to him and call upon his name, if you remember the wonders, which should make deep and durable impressions upon you; the wonders of his providence which he hath wrought for you, and those that are gone before you; "the marvellous works that he has done," which will be had in everlasting remembrance with the thoughtful, and with the grateful; the wonders of his law which he has written to you, and intrusted you with; "the judgments of his mouth," as well as the judgments of his hand, ver. 5.

2. Consider the relation you stand in to him; ver. 6, "Ye are the seed of Abraham his servant." You are born in his house, and being thereby entitled to the privilege of his servants, protection and provision, you are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your master, consult his honour, obey his commands, and do what you can to advance his interests. You are "the children of Jacob his chosen," and are chosen and beloved for the father's sake, and therefore ought to tread in the steps of those whose honours you inherit. You are the children of godly parents, do not degenerate; you are God's church upon earth, and if you do not praise him who should?

3. Consider your interest in him. "He is the Lord our God," ver. 7. We depend upon him, are devoted to him, and from him our expectation is. Should not a people seek unto their God, *Isa.* viii. 19, and praise their God? *Dan.* v. 4. He is Jehovah, our God; he that is our God is self-existent and self-sufficient, hath an irresistible power, and incontestable sovereignty; his judgments are in all the earth; he governs the whole world in wisdom, and gives law to all nations, even those that know him not. The earth is full of the proofs of his power.

8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever,
The word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations.
9 Which *covenant* he made with Abraham,
And his oath unto Isaac
10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law,
And to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant:
11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,
The lot of your inheritance:
12 When they were *but* a few men in number;
Yea, very few, and strangers in it.
13 When they went from one nation to another,
From *one* kingdom to another people;
14 He suffered no man to do them wrong:
Yea, he reproved kings for their sakes;
15 *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed,
And do my prophets no harm.

16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land:
He brake the whole staff of bread.
17 He sent a man before them, *even* Joseph,
Who was sold for a servant:
18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters:
He was laid in iron:
19 Until the time that his word came:
The word of the LORD tried him.
20 The king sent and loosed him;
Even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.
21 He made him lord of his house,
And ruler of all his substance:
22 To bind his princes at his pleasure;
And teach his senators wisdom.
23 Israel also came into Egypt;
And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.
24 And he increased his people greatly;
And made them stronger than their enemies.

We are here taught in praising God to look a great way back, and to give him the glory of what he did for his church in former ages, especially when it was in the founding and forming, which those in its later ages enjoy the benefit of, and therefore should give thanks for. Doubtless we may fetch as proper matter for praise from the histories of the *Gospels* and the *Acts of the Apostles*, which relate the birth of the Christian church, as the psalmist here doth from the histories of *Genesis* and *Exodus*, which relate the birth of the Jewish church, and our histories quite outshine theirs. Two things are here made the subject of praise:

First. God's promise to the patriarchs; that great promise that he would give to their seed the land of Canaan for an inheritance, which was a type of the promise of eternal life made in Christ to all believers. In all the marvellous works which God did for Israel, "he remembered his covenant," ver. 8, and he will remember it for ever; it is "the word which he commanded to a thousand generations." See here the power of the promise; it is the word which he commanded, and which will take effect. See the perpetuity of the promise; it is commanded to a thousand generations, and the entail of it shall not be cut off. In the parallel place it is expressed as our duty, 1 *Chr.* xvi. 15, "Be ye mindful always of his covenant." God will not forget it, and therefore we must not. The promise is here called a covenant, because there was something required on man's part as the condition of the promise. Observe, 1. The persons with whom this covenant was made. With Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, grandfather, father, and son, all eminent believers, *Heb.* xi. 8, 9. 2. The ratifications of the covenant. It was made sure by all that is sacred. Is that sure which is sworn to? It is his oath to Isaac, and to Abraham. See to whom God sware by himself, *Heb.* vi. 13, 14. Is that sure which is passed into a law? He confirmed the same for a law, a law never to be repealed. Is that sure which is reduced to a mutual contract and stipulation? This is confirmed for an everlasting covenant, inviolable. 3. The covenant itself. "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan," ver. 11. The patriarchs had a right to it, not by providence but promise; and their seed should be put in possession of it, not by the common ways of settling nations, but by miracles. God will give it them himself, as it were with his own hand; it shall be given them as their lot, which God assigns them, and measures out to them, as the lot of their inheritance, a sure title, by virtue of their birth; it shall come to them by descent, not by purchase; by the favour of God, and not any merit of their own. Heaven is the inheritance we have obtained, *Eph.* i. 11; and "this is the promise which God has promised us," (as Canaan was the promise he promised them,) "even eternal life," 1 *Jno.* ii. 25; *Tit.* i. 2.

Secondly. His providences concerning the patriarchs while they were waiting for the accomplishment of this promise; which represent to us the care God takes of his people in this world, while they are yet on this side the heavenly Canaan; for "these things happened unto them for examples" and encouragements to all the heirs of promise, that live by faith as they did.

1. They were wonderfully protected and sheltered; and, as the Jewish masters express it, 'gathered under the wings of the Divine majesty.' This is accounted for here, ver. 12—15, where we may observe,

1st. How they were exposed to injuries from men. To the three renowned patriarchs, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, God's promises were very rich. Again and again he told them he would be their God; but his performances in this world were so little proportionable, that if he had not prepared for them a city in the other world he would have been ashamed to have been called their God, (see *Heb.* xi. 16,) because he is always generous; and yet even in this world he was not wanting to them but, that he might appear to do uncommon things for them, he exercised them with uncommon trials. *First.* They were few, very few. Abraham was called alone, *Isa.* lii. 2. He had but two sons, and one of them he cast out. Isaac had but two, and one of them was forced for many years to run his country. Jacob had more, but some of them, instead of being a defence to him, exposed him, when (as he himself pleads, *Gen.* xxxiv. 30) he was but few in number, and therefore might easily be destroyed by the natives, he and his house. God's chosen are but a little flock, few, very few, and yet upheld. *Secondly.* They were strangers, and therefore were the more likely to be abused, and to meet with strange usages, and the less able to help themselves. Their religion made them to be looked upon as strangers, 1 *Pet.* iv. 4, and to be hooted at as speckled birds, *Jer.* xii. 9. Though the whole land was theirs by promise, yet they were so far from producing and pleading their grant, that they confessed themselves strangers in it, *Heb.* xi. 13. *Thirdly.* They were unsettled; ver. 13, "They went from one nation to another," from one part of that land to another, for it was then in the holding and occupation of divers nations, *Gen.* xii. 8; xiii. 3, 18. Nay, "from one kingdom to another people;" from Canaan to Egypt, from Egypt to the land of the Philistines, which could not but weaken and expose them; yet they were forced to it by famine. Note, Though frequent flitting is neither desirable nor commendable, yet sometimes there is a just and necessary occasion for it, and it may be the lot of some of the best men.

2nd. How they were guarded by the special providence of God, the wisdom and power of which was the more magnified by their being so many ways exposed, ver. 14, 15. They were not able to help themselves; and yet, *First.* No men were suffered to wrong them, but even those that hated them, and would gladly have done them a mischief, had their hands tied, and could not do what they would. This may refer to *Gen.* xxxv. 5, where we find that "the terror of God" (an unaccountable restraint) "was upon the cities that were round about them," so that, though provoked, "they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." *Secondly.* Even crowned heads that did offer to wrong them were not only checked and chidden for it, but controlled and baffled. "He reproved kings for their sakes," in dreams and visions, "saying, Touch not mine anointed," it is at your peril if you do; nay, it shall not be in your power to do it; "Do my prophets no harm." Pharaoh king of Egypt was plagued, *Gen.* xii. 17; and Abimelech king of Gerar was sharply rebuked, *Gen.* xx. 6, for doing wrong to Abraham. Note, 1*st.* Even kings themselves are liable to God's rebukes if they do wrong. 2*nd.* God's prophets are his anointed, for they have the unction of the Spirit, that oil of gladness, 1 *Jno.* ii. 27. 3*rd.* They that offer to touch God's prophets with design to harm them may expect to hear of it one way or other. God is jealous for his prophets: "whoso toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye." 4*th.* Even they that touch the prophets, nay, that kill the prophets, as many did, yet cannot do them any harm. 5*th.* God's anointed prophets are dearer to him than anointed kings themselves. Jeroboam's hand was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet.

2. They were wonderfully provided for and supplied. And here also, 1st. They were reduced to great extremity. Even in Canaan, the land of promise, "he called for a famine," ver. 16. Note, All judgments are at God's call, and no place is exempt from their visitation and jurisdiction, when God sends them forth with commission. To try the faith of the patriarchs God "brake the whole staff of bread," even in that good land, that they might plainly see God designed them a better country than that was. 2nd. God graciously took care for their relief. It was in obedience to his precept, and in dependence upon his promise, that they were now sojourners in Canaan, and therefore he could not in honour suffer any evil thing to befall them, or any good thing to be wanting to them. As he restrained one Pharaoh from doing them wrong, so he raised up another to do them a kindness, by preferring and intrusting Joseph, of whose story we have here an abstract. He was to be the shepherd and stone of Israel, and to save that holy seed alive, *Gen.* xlix. 24; l. 20. In order to this,

First. He was humbled, greatly humbled; ver. 17, 18, "God sent a man before them, even Joseph." Many years before the famine began, he was sent before them that was to nourish them in the famine; so vast are the foresights and forecasts of providence, and so long its reaches. But in what character did he go to Egypt, who was to provide for the reception of the church there? He went not in quality of an ambassador, no, nor so much as a factor or commissary; but he was sold thither for a servant, a slave for term of life, without any prospect of being ever set at liberty. This was low enough, and one would think set him far enough from any probability of being great; and yet he was brought lower, he was made a prisoner; ver. 18, "His feet they hurt with fetters," being unjustly charged with a crime no less heinous than a rape upon his mistress; "the iron entered into his soul," that is, was very painful to him; and the false accusation which was the cause of his imprisonment did in a special manner grieve him, and went to his heart; yet all this was the way to his preferment.

Secondly. He was exalted, highly exalted. He continued a prisoner, neither tried nor bailed, "until the time" appointed of God for his release; ver. 19, "when his word came," that is, his interpretations of dreams came to pass, and the report thereof came to Pharaoh's ears, by the chief butler; and then 'the word of the Lord cleared him,' that is, the power God gave him to foretell things to come rolled away the reproach his mistress had loaded him with, for it could not be thought God would give such a power to so ill a man as he was represented to be. God's word tried him, tried his faith and patience, and then it came in power to give command for his release. There is a time set when God's word will come, for the comfort of all that trust in it; *Hab.* ii. 3, "at the end it shall speak and not lie." God gave the word, and then the king sent and loosed him; for the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. Pharaoh, finding him to be a favourite of Heaven, 1*st.* Discharged him from his imprisonment; ver. 20, he let him go free. God has often by wonderful turns of providence pleaded the cause of oppressed innocency. 2*nd.* He advanced him to the highest posts of honour; ver. 21, 22, he made him lord high chamberlain of his household, "he made him lord of his house;" nay, he put him into the office of lord treasurer, "the ruler of all his substance;" he made him prime minister of state, lord president of his council, to "command his princes at his pleasure, and teach them wisdom;" general of his forces. "According to thy word shall all my people be ruled," *Gen.* xli. 40, 43, 44. He made him lord chief justice, to judge even his senators, and punish those that were disobedient. In all this Joseph was designed to be, (1.) A father to the church that then was, to save the house of Israel from perishing by the famine. He was made great that he might do good, especially in the household of faith. (2.) A figure of Christ that was to come; who, because he humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, was highly exalted, and hath all judgment committed to him. Joseph being thus sent before, and put into a capacity of maintaining all his father's house, "Israel also came into Egypt," ver. 23, where he and all his were very honourably and comfortably provided for many years. Thus the New Testament church has a place provided for her, even in the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time, *Rev.* xii. 14; verily she shall be fed.

3. They were wonderfully multiplied, according to the promise made to Abraham, that his seed should be as the sand of the sea for multitude, ver. 24. In Egypt "he increased his people greatly;" they multiplied like fishes, so that in a little time they became stronger than their enemies, and formidable to them. Pharaoh took notice of it; *Ex.* i. 9, "The children of Israel are more and mightier than we." When God pleaseth, "a little one shall become a thousand;" and God's promises, though they work slowly, yet they work surely.

25 He turned their heart to hate his people,
To deal subtilly with his servants.
26 He sent Moses his servant;
And Aaron whom he had chosen.
27 They shewed his signs among them,
And wonders in the land of Ham.
28 He sent darkness, and made it dark;
And they rebelled not against his word.
29 He turned their waters into blood,
And slew their fish.

30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance,
In the chambers of their kings.
31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies,
And lice in all their coasts.
32 He gave them hail for rain,
And flaming fire in their land.
33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees;
And brake the trees of their coasts.
34 He spake, and the locusts came,
And caterpillers, and that without number,
35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land,
And devoured the fruit of their ground.
36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land,
The chief of all their strength.
37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold:
And *there was* not one feeble *person* among their tribes.
38 Egypt was glad when they departed:
For the fear of them fell upon them.
39 He spread a cloud for a covering;
And fire to give light in the night.
40 *The people* asked, and he brought quails,
And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.
41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out;
They ran in the dry places *like* a river.
42 For he remembered his holy promise,
And Abraham his servant.
43 And he brought forth his people with joy,
And his chosen with gladness:
44 And gave them the lands of the heathen:
And they inherited the labour of the people;
45 That they might observe his statutes,
And keep his laws.
Praise ye the LORD.

EGYPTIAN TEMPLE AT EDFOU.—ver. 30.

After the history of the patriarchs follows here the history of the people of Israel, when they grew into a nation.

First. Their affliction in Egypt, ver. 25. He turned the heart of the Egyptians that had protected them to hate them, and deal subtly with them. God's goodness to his people exasperated the Egyptians against them, and though their old antipathy to the Hebrews (which we read of *Gen.* xliii. 32; xlvi. 34,) was laid asleep for awhile, yet now it revived with more violence than ever; formerly they hated them because they despised them, now because they feared them. They dealt subtly with them, set all their politics on work, to find out ways and means to weaken them and waste them, and prevent their growth; they made their burthens heavy, and their lives bitter, and slew their male children as soon as they were born. Malice is crafty to destroy; Satan has the serpent's subtlety with his venom. It was God that turned the hearts of the Egyptians against them; for every creature is that to us that he makes it to be, a friend or an enemy. Though God is not the author of the sins of men, yet he serves his own purposes by them.

Secondly. Their deliverance out of Egypt, that work of wonder, which, that it might never be forgotten, is put into the preface to the ten commandments Observe,

1. The instruments employed in that deliverance; ver. 26, "He sent Moses his servant" on this errand, and joined Aaron in commission with him. Moses was designed to be their lawgiver and chief magistrate, Aaron to be their chief priest; and therefore, that they might respect them the more, and submit to them the more cheerfully, God made use of them as their deliverers.

2. The means of accomplishing that deliverance; and those were the plagues of Egypt. Moses and Aaron observed their orders in summoning them, just as God appointed them, "and they rebelled not against his word," (ver. 28) as Jonah did, who, when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh, went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved either with a foolish fear of Pharoah's wrath, or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery, to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians, but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed. They that are instructed to execute judgment will find their remissness construed a rebellion against God's word. The plagues of Egypt are here called God's signs, and his wonders, ver. 27; they were not only proofs of his power, but tokens of his wrath, and to be looked upon with admiration and holy awe. 'They shewed the words of his signs,' so it is in the original, for every plague had an exposition going along with it; they were not as the common works of creation and providence, silent signs, but speaking ones, and spoke aloud. They are all, or most of them, here instanced in, though not in the order in which they were inflicted.

1st. The plague of darkness, ver. 28. This was one of the last, though here mentioned first. God sent darkness, and coming with commission it came with efficacy; his command made it dark. And then they, that is, the people of Israel, rebelled not against God's word, namely, a command which some think was given them to circumcise all among them that had not been circumcised; in doing which, the three days' darkness would be a protection to them. The old translation follows the Septuagint, and reads it, 'They were not obedient to his word,' which may be applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who, notwithstanding the terror of this plague, would not let the people go; but there is no ground for it in the Hebrew.

2nd. The turning of the river Nilus (which they idolized) into blood, and all their other waters, which slew their fish, ver. 29; and so they were deprived not only of their drink, but the daintiest of their meat, *Num.* xi. 5.

3rd. The frogs, shoals of which their land brought forth, which poured in upon them, not only in such numbers, but with such fury, that they could not keep them out of the chambers of their kings and great men, whose hearts had been full of vermin more nauseous, and more noxious, contempt of, and enmity to, God and his Israel.

4th. Flies of divers sorts swarmed in their air, and lice in their clothes, ver. 31; *Ex.* viii. 17, 24. Note, God can make use of the meanest, and weakest, and most despicable animals for the punishing and humbling of proud oppressors, to whom the impotency of the instrument cannot but be a great mortification, as well as an undeniable conviction of the Divine omnipotence.

5th. Hailstones shattered their trees, even the strongest timber-trees in their coasts, and killed their vines, and other their fruit-trees, ver. 32, 33. Instead of rain to cherish their trees, he gave them hail to crush them, and with it thunder and lightning, to that degree that the fire ran along upon the ground, as if it had been a stream of kindled brimstone, *Ex.* ix. 23.

6th. Locusts and caterpillars destroyed all the herbs which were made for the service of man, and ate the bread out of their mouths, ver. 34, 35. See what variety of judgments God has wherewith to plague proud oppressors, that will not let his people go. God did not bring the same plague twice, but when there was occasion for another it was still a new one; for he has many arrows in his quiver. Locusts and caterpillars are God's armies; and, how weak soever they are singly, he can raise such numbers of them as to make them formidable, *Joel* i. 4, 6.

7th. Having mentioned all the plagues but those of the murrain and boils, he concludes with that which gave the conquering stroke, and that was the death of the firstborn, ver. 36. In the dead of the night the joys and hopes of their families, the chief of their strength and flower of their land, were all struck dead by the destroying angel. They would not release God's firstborn, and therefore God seized theirs by way of reprisal, and thereby forced them to dismiss his too when it was too late to retrieve their own; for when God judgeth, he will overcome, and they will certainly sit down losers at last that contend with him.

3. The mercies that accompanied this deliverance. In their bondage, 1st. They had been impoverished, and yet they came out rich and wealthy. God not only brought them forth, but he "brought them forth with silver and gold," ver. 37. God empowered them to ask and collect the contributions of their neighbours, which was indeed but part of payment for their service they had done them, and inclined the Egyptians to furnish them with what they asked. Their wealth was his, and therefore he might—their hearts were in his hand, and therefore he could—give it to the Israelites. 2nd. Their lives had been made bitter to them, and their bodies and spirits broken by their bondage; and yet, when God brought them forth there was not one feeble person, none sick, none so much as sickly among their tribes. They went out that very night that the plague swept away all the firstborn of Egypt, and yet they came out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like, that among so many thousands there was not one sick. So false was the representation which the Jews' enemies in after ages gave of this matter, that they were all sick of a leprosy, or some loathsome disease, and therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land. 3rd. They had been trampled upon and insulted over, and yet they were brought out with honour; ver. 38, "Egypt was glad when they departed," for God had so wonderfully owned them, and pleaded their cause, that the fear of Israel fell upon them, and they owned themselves baffled and overcome. God can and will make his church a burthensome stone to all that heave at it, and seek to displace it, so that they shall think themselves happy that get out of its way, *Zec.* xii. 3. When God judges, he will overcome. 4th. They had spent their days in sorrowing and sighing, by reason of their bondage; but now he brought them forth with joy and gladness, ver. 43. When Egypt's cry for grief was loud,—their firstborn being all slain,—Israel's shouts for joy were as loud; both when they looked back upon the land of slavery, out of which they were rescued, and when they

looked forward to the pleasant land to which they were hastening. God now put a new song into their mouth.

4. The special care God took of them in the wilderness. 1st. For their shelter, besides the canopy of heaven, he provided them another heavenly canopy; he spread a cloud for a covering, ver. 39, which was to them not only a screen and umbrella, but a cloth of state. A cloud was often God's pavilion, *Ps.* xviii. 11, and now it was Israel's, for they also were his hidden ones. 2nd. For their conduct and refreshment in the dark, he appointed a pillar of "fire to give light in the night," that they might never be at a loss. Note, God graciously provides against all the grievances of his people, and furnisheth them with convenient succours for every condition, for day and night, till they come there where it will be all day, to eternity. 3rd. He fed them both with necessaries and dainties. Sometimes he furnished their tables with wild fowl; ver. 40, "The people asked, and he brought quails;" and when they were not thus feasted, yet they were abundantly satisfied "with the bread of heaven;" and those are curious and covetous indeed who will not be so satisfied. Man did eat angels' food, and that constantly, and on free cost; and, as every bit they ate had miracle in it, so had every drop they drank; "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out," ver. 41. Common providence fetcheth waters from heaven, and bread out of the earth, but for Israel the Divine power brings bread from the clouds, and water from the rocks; so far is the God of nature from being tied to the laws and courses of nature. The water did not only gush out once, but it ran like a river, plentifully and constantly, and attended their camp in all their removes; hence they are said to have the rock follow them, 1 *Cor.* x. 4. And, which increased the miracle, this river of God, (so it might be truly called,) ran in dry places, and yet was not drunk in and lost, as one would expect it should have been by the sands of the desert of Arabia. To this that promise alludes; "I will give rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen," *Isa.* xliii. 19, 20.

5. Their entrance at length into Canaan; ver. 44, "He gave them the lands of the heathen;" put them in possession of that which they had long been put in hopes of; and what the Canaanites had taken pains for, God's Israel had the enjoyment of; "They inherited the labour of the people;" and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just. The Egyptians had long inherited their labours, and now they inherited the labours of the Canaanites. Thus sometimes one enemy of the church is made to pay another's score.

6. The reason why God did all this for them.

1st. Because he would himself perform the promises of the word, ver. 42. They were unworthy and unthankful, yet he did those great things in their favour, "because he remembered the word of his holiness" (that is, his covenant,) "with Abraham his servant," and he would not suffer one iota or tittle of that to fall to the ground: see *Deu.* vii. 8.

2nd. Because he would have them to perform the precepts of the word, to bind them to which was the greatest kindness he could put upon them. He put them in possession of Canaan, not that they might live in plenty and pleasure, in ease and honour, and might make a figure among the nations, but "that they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws," that being formed into a people they might be under God's immediate government, and revealed religion might be the basis of their national constitution; that, having a good land given them, they might out of the profits of it bring sacrifices to God's altar; and that, God having thus done them good, they might the more cheerfully receive his law, concluding that also designed for their good, and might be sensible of their obligations in gratitude to live in obedience to him. We are therefore made, maintained, and redeemed, that we may live in obedience to the will of God; and the hallelujah with which the psalm concludes, may be taken both as a thankful acknowledgment of God's favours and as a cheerful concurrence with this great intention of them. Has God done so much for us, and yet doth he expect so little from us? "Praise ye the Lord."

PSALM CVI.

We must give glory to God by making confession not only of his goodness, but our own badness, which serve as foils to each other: our badness makes his goodness appear the more illustrious, as his goodness makes our badness the more heinous and scandalous. The foregoing psalm was a history of God's goodness to Israel. This is a history of their rebellions and provocations, and yet it begins and ends with Hallelujah: for even sorrow for sin must not put us out of tune for praising God. Some think it was penned at the time of the captivity in Babylon, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation thereupon, because of that prayer in the close, ver. 47. I rather think it was penned by David, at the same time with the foregoing psalm, because we find the first verse and the two last in that psalm which David delivered to Asaph, at the bringing up of the ark to the place he had prepared for it, 1 *Chr.* xvi. 34—36, Gather us from among the heathen; for we may suppose in Saul's time there was a great dispersion of pious Israelites when David was forced to wander. In the psalm we have, I. The preface to the narrative, speaking honour to God, ver. 1, 2; comfort to the saints, ver. 3; and the desire of the faithful towards God's favours, ver. 4, 5. II. The narrative itself of the sins of Israel, aggravated by the great things God did for them, an account of which is intermixed. Their provocation at the Red sea, ver. 6—12. Lusting, ver. 13—15. Mutinying, ver. 16—18. Worshipping the golden calf, ver. 19—23. Murmuring, ver. 24—27. Joining themselves to Baal-peor, ver. 28—31. Quarrelling with Moses, ver. 32, 33. Incorporating themselves with the nations of Canaan, ver. 34—39. To which is added an account how God had rebuked them for their sins, and yet saved them from ruin, ver. 40—46. III. The conclusion of the psalm with prayers and praise, ver. 47, 48. It may be of use to us to sing this psalm, that, being put in mind by it of our sins, the sins of our land, and the sins of our fathers, we may be humbled before God, and yet not despair of mercy, which even rebellious Israel often found with God.

PRAISE ye the LORD.
O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?
Who can shew forth all his praise?
3 Blessed *are* they that keep judgment,
And he that doeth righteousness at all times.
4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest unto* thy people:
O visit me with thy salvation;
5 That I may see the good of thy chosen,
That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation,
That I may glory with thine inheritance.

We are here taught,

First. To bless God; ver. 1, 2, "Praise ye the Lord," that is, 1. Give him thanks for his goodness, the manifestation of it to us, and the many instances of it. "He is good, and his mercy endureth for ever;" let us, therefore, own our obligations to him, and make him a return of our best affections and services. 2. Give him the glory of his greatness; his mighty acts, proofs of his Almighty power, wherein he has done great things, and such as would be opposed. Who can utter these? Who is worthy to do it? Who is able to do it? They are so many they cannot be numbered, so mysterious they cannot be described; when we have said the most we can of the mighty acts of the Lord, the one half is not told, still there is more to be said; it is a subject that cannot be exhausted. We must shew forth his praise; we may shew forth some of it, but who can shew forth all? Not the angels themselves. This will not excuse us in not doing what we can, but should quicken us to do all we can.

Secondly. To bless the people of God, to call and count them happy, ver. 3. They that keep judgment are blessed, for they are fit to be employed in praising God. God's people are they whose principles are sound: they keep judgment, they adhere to the rules of wisdom and religion, and their practices are agreeable; they do righteousness, are just to God and to all men, and herein they are steady and constant, they do it at all times, in all manner of conversation, at every turn, in every instance, and herein persevering to the end.

Thirdly. To bless ourselves in the favour of God, to place our happiness in it, and to seek it accordingly with all seriousness, as the psalmist here, ver. 4, 5. 1. He has an eye to the lovingkindness of God, as the fountain of all happiness; "Remember me, O Lord," to give me that mercy and grace which I stand in need of, "with the favour which thou bearest to thy people." As there is a people in the world that are in a peculiar manner God's people, so there is a peculiar favour which God bears to that people, which all gracious souls desire an interest in, and we need desire no more to make us happy. 2. He has an eye to the salvation of God, the great salvation, that of the soul, as the foundation of happiness, "O visit me with thy salvation." 'Afford me,' saith Dr. Hammond, 'that pardon and that grace which I stand in need of, and can hope for from none but thee.' Let that salvation be my portion for ever, and the pledges of it my present comfort. 3. He has an eye to the blessedness of the righteous as that which includes all good; ver. 5, "That I may see the good of thy chosen," and be as happy as thy saints are, and happier I do not desire to be. God's people are here called his chosen, his nation, his inheritance, for he hath set them apart for himself, incorporated them under his own government, is served by them and glorified in them. This chosen people of God have a good which is peculiar to them, which is the matter both of their gladness and of their glorying, which is their pleasure and their praise. God's people have reason to be a cheerful people, and to boast in their God all the day long; and they that have that gladness, that glory, need not envy any of the children of men their pleasure or pride. The gladness of God's nation and the glory of his inheritance is enough to satisfy any man, for it has everlasting joy and glory at the end of it.

6 We have sinned with our fathers,
We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.
7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt;
They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies;
But provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red sea.
8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake,
That he might make his mighty power to be known.
9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up:
So he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.
10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*,
And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.
11 And the waters covered their enemies:
There was not one of them left.
12 Then believed they his words;
They sang his praise.

Here begins a penitential confession of sin, which was in a special manner seasonable now the church was in distress, for thus we must justify God in all that he brings upon us, acknowledging that therefore he hath done right, because we have done wickedly; and the remembrance of former sins, notwithstanding which God did not cast off his people, is an encouragement to us

THE RED SEA.—ver. 9.

to hope that, though we are justly corrected for our sins, yet we shall not be utterly abandoned.

First. God's afflicted people here own themselves guilty before God; ver. 6, "We have sinned with our fathers," that is, like our fathers, after the similitude of their transgression. We have added to the stock of hereditary guilt, and filled up the measure of our fathers' iniquity, to "augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord," *Num.* xxxii. 14; *Mat.* xxiii. 32. And see how they lay load upon themselves, as becomes penitents: "We have committed iniquity;" that which is in its own nature sinful, and "we have done wickedly," we have sinned with a high hand presumptuously. Or this is a confession not only of their imitation of, but their interest in, their fathers' sins; "We have sinned with our fathers," for we were in their loins, and we bear their iniquity, *Lam.* v. 7.

Secondly. They bewail the sins of their fathers, when they were first formed into a people; which, since children often smart for, they are concerned to sorrow for, even farther than to the third and fourth generation. Even we now ought to take an occasion from the history of Israel's rebellions to lament the pravity and perverseness of man's nature, and its unaptness to be amended by the most probable means. Observe here,

1. The strange stupidity of Israel in the midst of the favours God bestowed upon them; ver. 7, "They understood not thy wonders in Egypt." They saw them, but they did not rightly apprehend the meaning and design of them; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have understood. They thought the plagues of Egypt were intended for their deliverance, whereas they were intended also for their instruction and conviction; not only to force them out of their Egyptian slavery, but to cure them of their inclination to Egyptian idolatry, by evidencing the sovereign power and dominion of the God of Israel above all gods, and his particular concern for them. We lose the benefit of providences for want of understanding them. And as their understandings were dull, so their memories were treacherous; though one would think such astonishing events should never have been forgotten, yet they remembered them not, at least they remembered not the multitude of God's mercies in them. Therefore God is distrusted, because his favours are not remembered.

2. Their perverseness, arising from this stupidity; "They provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea." The provocation was despair of deliverance because the danger was great, and wishing they had been left in Egypt still, *Ex.* xiv. 11, 12. Quarrelling with God's providence and questioning his power, goodness, and faithfulness, are as great provocations to him as any whatsoever. The place aggravated the crime; it was "at the sea, at the Red sea." When they were newly come out of Egypt, and the wonders God had wrought for them were fresh in their minds, yet they reproach him, as if that power had no mercy in it, but that he brought them out of Egypt on purpose to kill them in the wilderness. They never lay at God's mercy so immediately as in their passage through the Red sea, yet there they affront it and provoke his wrath.

3. The great salvation God wrought for them, notwithstanding their provocations, ver. 8—11. 1st. He forced a passage for them through the sea. He "rebuked the Red sea" for standing in their way, and retarding their march, "and it was dried up" immediately, as in the creation, at God's rebuke, the waters fled, *Ps.* civ. 7. Nay, he not only prepared them a way, but by the pillar of cloud and fire he led them into the sea, and, by the conduct of Moses, led them through it as readily as through the wilderness; he encouraged them to take those steps, and subdued their fears when those were their most dangerous and threatening enemies: see *Isa.* lxiii. 12—14. 2nd. He interposed between them and their pursuers, and prevented them from cutting them off, as they designed. The Israelites were all on foot, and the Egyptians had all of them chariots and horses, with which they were likely to overtake them presently, but God "saved them from the hand of him that hated them," namely, Pharaoh, who never loved them, but now hated them the more from the plagues he had suffered on their account; from the hand of his enemy, which was just ready to seize them, God redeemed them, ver. 10, interposing himself, as it were, in the pillar of fire, between the persecuted and the persecutors. 3rd. To complete the mercy, and turn the deliverance into a victory, the Red sea, that was a lane to them, was a grave to the Egyptians, ver. 11. "The waters covered their enemies," so as to slay them, but not so as to conceal their shame, for the next tide they were thrown up dead upon the shore, *Ex.* xiv. 30. There was not one of them left alive to bring tidings what was become of the rest. And why did God do this for them? nay, why did he not cover them as he did their enemies, for their unbelief and murmuring? He tells us, ver. 8, it was for his name's sake. Though they did not deserve this favour, he designed it, and their undeservings should not alter his designs, nor break his measures, or make him withdraw his promise, or fail in the performance of it. He did this for his own glory, "that he might make his mighty power to be known," not only in dividing the sea, but in doing it notwithstanding their provocations. Moses prays, *Num.* xii. 17—19, "Let the power of my Lord be great, and pardon the iniquity of this people." The power of the God of grace in pardoning sin and sparing sinners, is as much to be admired as the power of the God of nature in dividing the waters.

4. The good impression this made upon them for the present: ver. 12, "Then believed they his words," and acknowledged that God was with them of a truth, and had in mercy to them brought them out of Egypt, and not with any design to slay them in the wilderness; then "they feared the Lord and his servant Moses," *Ex.* xiv. 31. Then they sang his praise in that song of Moses, penned on this great occasion, *Ex.* xv. 1. See in what a gracious and merciful way God sometimes silenceth the unbelief of his people, and turns their fears into praises; and so it is written, "They that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine," *Isa.* xxix. 24.

13 They soon forgat his works;
They waited not for his counsel:
14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness,
And tempted God in the desert.
15 And he gave them their request;
But sent leanness into their soul.
16 They envied Moses also in the camp,
And Aaron the saint of the LORD.
17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
And covered the company of Abiram.
18 And a fire was kindled in their company;
The flame burned up the wicked.
19 They made a calf in Horeb,
And worshipped the molten image.
20 Thus they changed their glory
Into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

EGYPTIAN BRONZES OF THE GOD APIS.

21 They forgat God their saviour,
Which had done great things in Egypt;
22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham,
And terrible things by the Red sea.
23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them,
Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach,
To turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them*.
24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land,
They believed not his word:
25 But murmured in their tents,
And hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.
26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them,
To overthrow them in the wilderness:
27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations,
And to scatter them in the lands.
28 They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor,
And ate the sacrifices of the dead.
29 Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions:
And the plague brake in upon them.
30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment:
And *so* the plague was stayed.
31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness
Unto all generations for evermore.
32 They angered *him* also at the waters of strife,
So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:
33 Because they provoked his spirit,
So that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

This is an abridgment of the history of Israel's provocations in the wilderness, and of the wrath of God against them for those provocations; and this abridgment is abridged by the apostle with application to us Christians, 1 *Cor.* x. 5, &c., for "these things were written for our admonition," that we sin not like them, lest we suffer like them.

First. The cause of their sin was disregard to the works and word of God, ver. 13, 1. They minded not what he had done for them. "They soon forgat his works," and lost the impressions they had made upon them. They that do not improve God's mercies to them, nor endeavour, in some measure, to render according to the benefit done unto them, do indeed forget them. This people soon forgat them; God took notice of this, *Ex.* xxxii. 8, "They have turned aside quickly." 'They made haste, they forgot his works,' (so it is in the margin,) which some make out to be two several instances of their sin. 'They made haste,' that is, their expectations anticipated God's promises; they expected to be in Canaan presently, and because they were not they questioned whether they should ever be there, and quarrelled with all the difficulties they met with in their way; whereas "he that believeth doth not make haste," *Isa.* xxviii. 16. And, withal, "they forgat his works," which were the undeniable evidences of his wisdom, power, and goodness, and denied the conclusion as confidently as if they had never seen the premises proved. This is mentioned again, ver. 21, 22, "They forgat God their saviour," that is, they forgat that he had been their saviour. Those that "forget the works of God," forget God himself, who makes himself known by his works. They forgat what was done but a few days before, which we may suppose they could not but talk of, even then when, because they did not make a good use of it, they are said to forget it; it was what God did for them in Egypt, in the land of

Ham, and by the Red sea, things which we at this distance cannot or should not be unmindful of. They are called great things, (for, though the great God doth nothing mean, yet he doth some things that are in a special manner great,) wondrous works, out of the common road of providence, therefore observable, therefore memorable and terrible things, awful to them and dreadful to their enemies, and yet soon forgotten; even miracles that were seen passed away with them as tales that are told. 2. They minded not what God had said to them, nor would they depend upon it; they waited not for his counsel, did not attend his word, though they had Moses to be his mouth to them; they took up resolves, about which they did not consult him, and made demands without calling upon him. They would be in Canaan presently, and had not patience to tarry God's time; the delay was intolerable, and therefore the difficulties were looked upon as insuperable. This is explained, ver. 24, "They believed not his word," his promise that he would make them masters of Canaan; and ver. 25, "they hearkened not to the voice of the Lord," who gave them counsel, which they would not wait for, not only by Moses and Aaron, but by Caleb and Joshua, *Num.* xiv. 6, &c. Those that will not wait for God's counsel shall justly be given up to their own hearts' lusts to walk in their own counsels.

Secondly. The sins themselves are many of them here mentioned, together with the tokens of God's displeasure which they fell under for those sins.

1. They would have flesh, and yet would not believe that God could give it them; ver. 14, 'They lusted a lust' (so the word is) 'in the wilderness.' There where they had bread enough and to spare, yet nothing would serve them but they must have flesh to eat. They were now purely at God's finding, so that this was a reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of their Creator. They were now, in all probability, within a step of Canaan, yet had not patience to stay for dainties till they came thither. They had flocks and herds of their own, but they will not kill them, God must give them flesh as he gave them bread, or they will never give him credit or their good word. They did not only wish for flesh, but they lusted exceedingly after it. A desire, even of lawful things, when it is inordinate and violent, becomes sinful; and therefore this is called lusting after evil things, 1 *Cor.* x. 6, though the quails, as God's gift, were good things, and were so spoken of, *Ps.* cv. 40. Yet this was not all, "they tempted God in the desert," where they had had such experience of his goodness and power, and questioned whether he could and would gratify them herein: see *Ps.* lxxviii. 19, 20.

Now how did God shew his displeasure against them for this? We are here told how; ver. 15, "He gave them their request," but gave it them in anger, and with a curse, for "he sent leanness into their soul;" that is, he filled them with uneasiness of mind, and terror of conscience, and a self-reproach, occasioned by their bodies being sick with the surfeit, such as sometimes drunkards experience after a great debauch. Or this is put for that great plague with which the Lord smote them; "while the flesh was yet between their teeth," as we read, *Num.* xi. 33, it was the consumption of the life. Note, 1st. What is asked in passion is often given in wrath. 2nd. Many that fare deliciously every day, and whose bodies are healthful and fat, yet at the same time have leanness in their souls: no love to God, no thankfulness, no appetite to the bread of life, and then the soul must needs be lean. Those wretchedly forget themselves that feast their bodies and starve their souls. Then God gives the good things of this life in love, when with them he gives grace to glorify him in the use of them, for then the soul delights itself in fatness, *Isa.* lv. 2.

2. They quarrelled with the government which God had set over them, both in church and state; ver. 16, "they envied Moses" his authority "in the camp," as generalissimo of the armies of Israel, and chief justice in all their courts. And they envied Aaron his power, as saint of the Lord, consecrated to the office of high priest. And Korah would needs put in for the pontificate, while Dathan and Abiram, as princes of the tribe of Reuben, (Jacob's eldest son,) would claim to be chief magistrates by the so-much-admired right of primogeniture. Note, They are preparing ruin for themselves who envy those whom God has put honour upon, and usurp the dignities they were never designed for. And justly will contempt be poured upon them who put contempt upon any of the saints of the Lord.

And how did God shew his displeasure for this? We are told how, and it is enough to make us tremble, ver. 17, 18; we have the story, *Num.* xvi. 32, 35. 1st. They that flew in the face of the civil authority were punished by the earth, which opened and swallowed them up, as not fit to go upon God's ground, because they would not submit to God's government. 2nd. They that would usurp the ecclesiastical authority in things pertaining to God, on them Heaven took vengeance, for "fire came out from the Lord and consumed them," and the pretending sacrificers were themselves sacrificed to Divine justice; "The flame burned up the wicked;" for though they vied with Aaron, the saint of the Lord, for holiness, *Num.* xvi. 3, 5, yet God adjudged them wicked, and as such cut them off, as in due time he will destroy the man of sin, that wicked one, notwithstanding his proud pretensions to holiness.

3. They made and worshipped the golden calf, and this in Horeb, there where the law was given, and God had expressly said, Thou shalt neither make any graven image, nor bow down to it; they did both, they made a calf and worshipped it, ver. 19. Herein they bade defiance to, and put an affront upon, the two great lights which God has made to rule the little world. 1st. That of human reason, for "they changed their glory," their God, at least the manifestation of him, which always had been in a cloud (either a dark cloud or a bright one) without any manner of visible similitude, "into the similitude of" Apis, one of the Egyptian idols, "an ox that eateth grass," than which nothing could be more grossly and scandalously absurd, ver. 20. Idolaters are perfectly besotted, and put the greatest disparagement possible both upon God, in representing him by the image of a beast, and upon themselves in worshipping it when they had done so. That which is here said to be the changing of their glory is explained by St. Paul, *Rom.* i. 23, to be the changing of the glory of the incorruptible God. 2nd. That of Divine revelation, which was afforded to them, not only in the words God spake to them, but the works he wrought for them, wondrous works, which spake loud, that the Lord Jehovah is the only true and living God, and is alone to be worshipped, ver. 21, 22.

For this God shewed his displeasure by declaring the decree, that he would cut them off from being a people, as they had, as far as lay in their power, in effect cut him off from being a God; he spake of destroying them, ver. 23, and certainly he had done it, "if Moses, his chosen, had not stood before him in the breach," ver. 23, that is, if he had not seasonably interposed to deal with God as an advocate about the breach or ruin God was about to devote them to, and wonderfully prevailed to turn away his wrath. See here the mercy of God, and how easily his anger is turned away, even from a provoking people. See the power of prayer, and the interest which God's chosen have in heaven. See a type of Christ, God's chosen, his elect, in whom his soul delighteth, who stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath from a provoking world, and ever lives, for this end, making intercession.

4. They gave credit to the report of the evil spies concerning the land of Canaan, in contradiction to the promise of God; ver. 24, "They despised the pleasant land." Canaan was a pleasant land, *Deu.* viii. 7. They undervalued it when they thought it not worth venturing for, no, not under the conduct of God himself, and therefore were for making a captain and returning to Egypt again. They believed not God's word concerning it, but murmured in their tents, basely charging God with a design upon them, in bringing them thither, that they might become a prey to the Canaanites, *Num.* xiv. 2, 3; and, when they were minded of God's power and promise, were so far from hearkeningto that voice of the Lord, that they attempted to stone those that spake to them, *Num.* xiv. 10. The heavenly Canaan is a pleasant land; a promise is left us of entering into it, but there are many that despise it, that neglect and refuse the offer of it, that prefer the wealth and pleasure of this world before it, and grudge the pains and hazards of this life to obtain that.

This also was so displeasing to God that he "lifted up his hand against them," in a way of threatening, "to destroy them in the wilderness;" nay, in a way of swearing, for he sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest, *Ps.* xcv. 10; *Num.* xiv. 28. Nay, and he threatened that their children also should be overthrown and scattered, ver. 26, 27, and the whole nation dispersed and disinherited; but Moses prevailed for mercy for their seed, that they might enter Canaan. Note, Those who despise God's favours, and particularly the pleasant land, forfeit his favours, and will be shut out for ever from the pleasant land.

5. They were guilty of a great sin in the matter of Peor; and this was the sin of the new generation when they were within a step of Canaan, ver. 28, "They joined themselves to Baal-peor," and so were entangled both in idolatry and in adultery, in corporeal and spiritual whoredom, *Num.* xxv. 1—3. They that did often partake of the altar of the living God, now "ate the sacrifices of the dead," of the idols of Moab, that were dead images, or dead men canonized or deified; or sacrifices to the infernal deities on the behalf of their dead friends. "Thus they provoked God to anger with their inventions," ver. 29, in contempt of him and his institutions, his commands and threatenings. The iniquity of Peor was so great, that long after it is said they were not cleansed from it, *Jos.* xxii. 17.

God testified his displeasure at this, 1st. By sending a plague among them, which in a little time swept away twenty-four thousand of those impudent sinners. 2nd. By stirring up Phinehas to use his power as a magistrate, for the suppressing of the sin, and checking the contagion of it. He stood up in his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and executed judgment upon Zimri and Cozbi, sinners of the first rank, genteel sinners; he put the law in execution upon them, and this was a service so pleasing to God, that upon it the plague was stayed, ver. 30. By this, and some other like acts of public justice on that occasion, (*Num.* xxv. 4, 5) the guilt ceased to be national, and the general controversy was let fall. When the proper officers did their duty, God left it to them, and did not any longer keep the work in his own hands by the plague. Note, National justice prevents national judgments. But Phinehas herein signalizing himself, a special mark of honour was put upon him, for what he did was "counted to him for righteousness to all generations," ver. 31, and in recompense of it the priesthood was entailed on his family. He shall make an atonement by offering up the sacrifices, that had so bravely made an atonement (so some read it, ver. 30) by offering up the sinners. Note, It is the honour of saints to be zealous against sin.

6. They continued their murmurings to the very last of their wanderings; for in the fortieth year they "angered God at the waters of strife," ver. 32, which refers to that story, *Num.* xx. 3—5. And that which aggravated it now was that "it went ill with Moses for their sakes;" for, though he was the meekest of all the men in the earth, yet their clamours at that time were so very peevish and provoking, that they put him into a passion, and being now grown very old, and off his guard, "he spake unadvisedly with his lips," ver. 33, and not as became him upon that occasion; for he said in a heat, "Hear now, ye rebels, must we fetch water out of this rock for you?" This was Moses' infirmity, and is written for our admonition, that we may learn when we are in the midst of provocation to keep our mouth as with a bridle, *Ps.* xxxix. 1—3; and to take heed to our spirits, that they admit not resentments too much, for when the spirit is provoked, it is much ado even for those that have a great deal of wisdom and grace not to speak unadvisedly. But it is charged upon the people as their sin, they provoked his spirit with that with which they angered God himself. Note, We must answer not only for our own passions, but for the provocation which by them we give to the passions of others, especially of those who, if not greatly provoked, would be meek and quiet.

God shews his displeasure against this sin of theirs by shutting Moses and Aaron out of Canaan, for their miscarriage upon this occasion; by which, 1st. God discovered his resentment of all such intemperate heats, even in the dearest of his servants. If he deals thus severely with Moses for one unadvised word, what doth their sin deserve who had spoken so many presumptuous wicked words? "If this was done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" 2nd. God deprived them of the blessing of Moses' conduct and government at a time when they most needed it, so that his death was more a punishment to them than to himself. It is just with God to remove those relations from us that are blessings to us, when we are peevish and provoking to them, and grieve their spirits.

34 They did not destroy the nations,
Concerning whom the LORD commanded them:
35 But were mingled among the heathen,
And learned their works.
36 And they served their idols:
Which were a snare unto them
37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons
And their daughters unto devils,
38 And shed innocent blood,
Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters,
Whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan:
And the land was polluted with blood.
39 Thus were they defiled with their own works,
And went a whoring with their own inventions.
40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people,
Insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.
41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen;
And they that hated them ruled over them.

42 Their enemies also oppressed them,
And they were brought into subjection under their hand.
43 Many times did he deliver them;
But they provoked *him* with their counsel,
And were brought low for their iniquity.
44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction,
When he heard their cry:
45 And he remembered for them his covenant,
And repented according to the multitude of his mercies.
46 He made them also to be pitied
Of all those that carried them captives.
47 Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the heathen,
To give thanks unto thy holy name,
And to triumph in thy praise.
48 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting to everlasting:
And let all the people say, Amen.
Praise ye the LORD.

Here, First. The narrative concludes with an account of Israel's carriage in Canaan, which was of a piece with that in the wilderness, and God's dealings with them, wherein, as all along, both justice and mercy appeared.

1. They were very provoking to God. The miracles and mercies which settled them in Canaan made no more deep and durable impressions upon them than those that fetched them out of Egypt; for by that time they were well warm in Canaan they corrupted themselves, and forsook God. Observe the steps of their apostacy,

1st. They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction, ver. 34. When they had got the good land God had promised them, they had no zeal against the wicked inhabitants, whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God, that no man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he.

2nd. When they spared them, they promised themselves that for all this they would not join in any dangerous affinity with them; but the way of sin is down-hill. Omissions make way for commissions. When they neglect to destroy the heathen, the next news we hear is, they "were mingled among the heathen," made leagues with them, and contracted an intimacy with them, so that they "learned their works," ver. 35. That which is rotten will sooner corrupt that which is sound than be cured or made sound by it.

3rd. When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but by degrees they learned that too; ver. 36, "They served their idols" in the same manner and with the same rites that they served them; and they became "a snare to them." That sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

4th. When they joined with them in some of their idolatrous services, which they thought had least harm in them, they little thought that ever they should be guilty of that barbarous and inhuman piece of idolatry, the sacrificing of their living children to their dead gods; but they came to that at last, ver. 37, 38; in which Satan triumphed over his worshippers, and regaled himself in blood and slaughter. "They sacrificed their sons and daughters," pieces of themselves, "to devils," and added murder, the most unnatural murder, to their idolatry. One cannot think of it without horror. They "shed innocent blood," the most innocent; for it was infant blood, nay, it was "the blood of their sons and their daughters." See the power of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, and see his malice. The beginning of idolatry and superstition, like that of strife, is as the letting forth of water; and there is no villany which they that venture upon it can be sure they shall stop short of, for God justly gives them up to a reprobate mind, *Rom.* i. 28.

Their sin was in part their own punishment; for by it, *First.* They wronged their country. "The land was polluted with blood," ver. 38. That pleasant land, that holy land, was rendered uncomfortable to themselves, and unfit to receive those kind tokens of God's favour and presence in it, which were designed to be its honour. *Secondly.* They wronged their conscience; ver. 33, they "went a whoring with their own inventions," and so debauched their own minds, and were "defiled with their own works," and rendered odious in the eyes of the holy God, and perhaps of their own consciences.

2. God brought his judgments upon them; and what else could be expected? for his name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God. 1st. He fell out with them for it; ver. 40, He was angry with them; "the wrath of God," that consuming fire, "was kindled against his people;" for from them he took it more heinously than from the heathen that never knew him. Nay, he was sick of them; "he abhorred his own inheritance," which, when time was he had taken pleasure in; yet the change was not in him, but in them. This is the worst thing in sin, that it makes us loathsome to God; and the nearer any are to God in possession, the more loathsome are they if they rebel against him, like a dunghill at our door. 2nd. Their enemies then fell upon them, and, their defence being departed, made an easy prey of them; ver. 41, 42, "He gave them into the hands of the heathen." Observe here how the punishment answered the sin; "they mingled themselves with the heathen, and learned their works." From them they willingly took the infection of sin; and therefore God justly made use of them as the instruments of their correction. Sinners often see themselves ruined by those by whom they have suffered themselves to be debauched. Satan, that is a tempter, will be a tormentor. The heathen hated them. Apostates lose all the love on God's side, and get none on Satan's; and when "they that hated them ruled over them, and they were brought into subjection under them," no marvel they oppressed them, and ruled them with rigour; and thus God made them know the difference between "his service and the service of the kings of the countries," 2 *Chr.* xii. 8.

3. When God granted them some relief, yet they went on in their sins, and their troubles also were continued, ver. 43. This refers to the days of the judges; when God many times raised up deliverers, and wrought deliverances for them, and yet they relapsed to idolatry, "provoked God with their counsel," their idolatrous inventions, to deliver them up to some other oppressors, so that at last "they were brought very low for their iniquity." Those that by sin disparage themselves, and will not by repentance humble themselves, it is just with God to debase them, and humble them, and bring them low by his judgments.

4. At length they cried unto God, and God returned in favour to them, ver. 44—46. They were chastened for their sins, but not destroyed; cast down, but not cast off. God appeared for them, 1st. As a God of mercy; that looked upon their grievances, 'regarded their affliction, beheld when distress was upon them,' (so some;) that looked over their complaints, for he heard their cry with tender compassion, *Ex.* iii. 7; and overlooked their provocation; for though he had said, and had reason to say it, that he would destroy them, yet he "repented according to the multitude of his mercies," and reversed the sentence. Though "he is not a man that he should repent," so as to change his mind, yet he is a gracious God that pities us and changeth his way. 2nd. As a God of truth, that "remembered for them his covenant" and made good every word that he had spoken, and therefore, as bad as they were, would not break with them, because he would not break his own promise. 3rd. As a God of power, who has all hearts in his hand, and turns them which way soever he pleaseth. "He made them to be pitied even of those that carried them captives," and had hated them, and ruled them with rigour. He not only restrained the remainder of their enemies' wrath, that it should not utterly consume them, but he infused compassion, even into their stony hearts, and made them relent, which was more than any art of man could have done with the utmost force of rhetoric. Note, God can change lions into lambs; and "when a man's ways please the Lord" will make even his enemies to pity him, and "be at peace with him." When God pities, men shall. *Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia,*—'A God at peace with us makes every thing at peace.'

Secondly. The psalm concludes with prayer and praise.

1. Prayer for the completing of his people's deliverance. Even then when the Lord brought back the captivity of his people, still there was occasion to pray; "Lord, turn again our captivity," *Ps.* cxxvi. 1, 4. So here, ver. 47, "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen." We may suppose, that many who were forced into foreign countries in the times of the judges, (as Naomi was, *Ru.* i. 1,) were not returned in the beginning of David's reign, Saul's time being discouraging; and therefore it was seasonable to pray, "Lord, gather the dispersed Israelites from among the heathen, to give thanks to thy holy name;" not only that they may have cause to give thanks, and hearts to give thanks, but that they may have opportunity to do it in the courts of the Lord's house, from which they were now banished; and so may "triumph in thy praise," over those that had in scorn challenged them to sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

2. Praise for the beginning and progress of it; "ver. 48, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting." He is a blessed God from eternity, and will be so to eternity, and so let him be praised by all his worshippers. Let the priests say this, and then "let all the people say, Amen, Hallelujah," in token of their cheerful concurrence in all these prayers, praises, and confessions. According to this rubric or directory, we find that when this psalm, (or at least the closing verses of it,) was sung, "all the people said Amen, and praised the Lord," by saying, "Hallelujah." By these two comprehensive words, it is very proper in religious assemblies to testify their joining with their ministers in the prayers and praises, which as their mouth they offer up to God according to his will, saying Amen to the prayers, and Hallelujah to the praises.

PSALM CVII.

The psalmist having in the two foregoing psalms celebrated the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, in his dealings with his church in particular, here observes some of the instances of his providential care of the children of men in general, especially in their distresses; for he is not only King of saints, but King of nations, not only the God of Israel, but the God of the whole earth, and a common Father to all mankind. Though this may especially refer to Israelites, in their personal capacity, yet there were those that pertained not to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet were worshippers of the true God; and even those that worshipped images yet had some knowledge of a Supreme Numen, to whom, when they were in earnest, they looked above all their false gods. And of these, when they prayed in their distresses, God took a particular care. I. He instances in some of the most common calamities of human life; and shews how God succours those that labour under them, in answer to their prayers. 1. Banishment and dispersion, ver. 2—9; 2. Captivity and imprisonment, ver. 10—16; 3. Sickness and distemper of body, ver. 17—22; 4. Danger and distress at sea, ver. 23—32. And these are put for all the like perils, in which those that cry unto God have ever found him a very present help. II. He instanceth in the varieties and vicissitudes of events, concerning nations and families; in all which God's hand is to be eyed by his own people, with joyful acknowledgments of his goodness, ver. 33—43. When we are in any of these or the like distresses, it will be comfortable to sing this psalm with application; but if we be not, others are and have been, of whose deliverances it becomes us to give God the glory, for we are members one of another.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*,
Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;
3 And gathered them out of the lands,
From the east, and from the west,
From the north, and from the south.
4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way;
They found no city to dwell in.
5 Hungry and thirsty,
Their soul fainted in them.
6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he delivered them out of their distresses.
7 And he led them forth by the right way,
That they might go to a city of habitation.
8 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
9 For he satisfieth the longing soul,
And filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

PSALM CVII.

Here is, 1. A general call to all to give thanks to God, ver. 1. Let all that sing this psalm, or pray it over, set themselves therein to give thanks to the Lord; and those that have not any special matter for praise may furnish themselves with matter enough from God's universal goodness; in the fountain "he is good," in the streams "his mercy endureth for ever," and never faileth. 2. A particular demand hereof from "the redeemed of the Lord;" which may well be applied spiritually to those that have an interest in the great Redeemer, and are saved by him from sin and hell. They have of all people most reason to say, that God is good, and his mercy everlasting. These are the "children of God that were scattered abroad," whom Christ died to gather together in one, out of all lands, *Jno.* xi. 52; *Mat.* xxiv. 31. But it seems here to be meant of a temporal deliverance wrought for them when in their distress "they cried unto the Lord," ver. 6. "Is any afflicted? let him pray." Doth any pray? God will certainly hear and help. When troubles are in extremity, that is man's time to cry; those who but whispered prayer before then cried aloud, and then it is God's time to succour; in the mount he will be seen.

First. They were in an enemy's country, but God wrought out their rescue; "He redeemed them from the hand of the enemy," ver. 2; not by might or power, it may be, *Zec.* iv. 6, nor by price or reward, *Isa.* xlv. 13, but by the Spirit of God, working on the spirits of men.

Secondly. They were dispersed as outcasts; but God gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, that they might again be incorporated, ver. 3: see *Deu.* xxx. 4; *Eze.* xxxiv. 12. God knows those that are his, and where to find them.

Thirdly. They were bewildered, had no road to travel in, no dwelling-place to rest in, ver. 4. When they were redeemed out of the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the lands, they were in danger of perishing in their return home through the dry and barren deserts. "They wandered in the wilderness," where there was no trodden path, no company, but "a solitary way," no lodging, no conveniencies, no accommodations, no inhabited city where they might have quarters of refreshment. But "God led them forth by the right way," ver. 7; directed them to an inn; nay, directed them to a home, that they might "go to a city of habitation," which was inhabited, nay, which they themselves should inhabit. This may refer to poor travellers in general, those particularly whose way lies through the wilds of Arabia, where we may suppose they were often at a loss; and yet many in that distress were wonderfully relieved, so that few perished. Note, We ought to take notice of the good hand of God's providence over us in our journeys, going out, and coming in, directing us in our way and providing for us places, both to bait in and rest in. Or (as some think) it has an eye to the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years; it is said, *Deu.* xxxii. 10, "God led them about," and yet here "he led them by the right way." God's way, though to us it seems about, will appear at last to have been the right way. It is applicable to our condition in this world; we are here as in a wilderness, have here no continuing city, but dwell in tents as strangers and pilgrims; but we are under the conduct of his wise and good providence, which, if we commit ourselves to, we shall be led in the right way to the city that hath foundations.

Fourthly. They were ready to perish for hunger; ver. 5, "Their soul" even "fainted in them," spent with the fatigues of their journey, and ready to drop down for want of refreshment. They that have constant plenty, and are every day fed to the full, know not what a miserable case it is to be hungry and thirsty and have no supply. This was sometimes the case of Israel in the wilderness, and perhaps of other poor travellers; but God's providence finds out ways to "satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with goodness," ver. 9; Israel's wants were reasonably supplied, and many have been wonderfully relieved when they were ready to perish. The same God that has led us has fed us all our life long unto this day; has fed us with food convenient; has provided food for the soul, and "filled the hungry soul with goodness." "They that hunger and thirst after righteousness," after God, the living God, and communion with him, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, both in grace and glory.

Now, for all this, they who receive mercy are called upon to return thanks; ver. 8, "O that men" (it is meant especially of these men whom God has graciously relieved) "would praise the Lord for his goodness" to them in particular, "and for his wonderful works to" others of "the children of men." Note, 1. God's works of mercy are wonderful works; works of wonderful power, considering the weakness, and of wonderful grace, considering the unworthiness, of those he shews mercy to. 2. Those who receive mercy from God, it is expected they return praise to him. 3. We must acknowledge God's goodness to the children of men, as well as to the children of God; to others as well as to ourselves.

10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
Being bound in affliction and iron;
11 Because they rebelled against the words of God,
And contemned the counsel of the most High:
12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour;
They fell down, and *there was* none to help.
13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he saved them out of their distresses.
14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,
And brake their bands in sunder.
15 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
16 For he hath broken the gates of brass,
And cut the bars of iron in sunder.

We are to take notice of the goodness of God towards prisoners and captives. Observe,

First. A description of this affliction. Prisoners are said to "sit in darkness," ver. 10; in dark dungeons, close prisons. It intimates that they are desolate and disconsolate; they sit "in the shadow of death," which intimates not only great distress and trouble, but great danger. Prisoners are many times appointed to die; they sit despairing to get out, but resolving to make the best of it. They are "bound in affliction, and" many times "in iron," as Joseph. Thus sore a calamity is imprisonment, which should make us prize liberty, and be thankful for it.

Secondly. The cause of this affliction, ver. 11; it is "because they rebelled against the words of God." Wilful sin is rebellion against the words of God; it is a contradiction to his truths, and a violation of his laws. They "contemned the counsel of the Most High," and thought they neither needed it nor could be the better for it; and they that will not be counselled cannot be helped. They that despise prophesying, that regard not the admonitions of their own consciences, nor the just reproofs of their friends, contemn the counsel of the Most High; and for this they are bound in affliction, both to punish them for, and to reclaim them from, their rebellions.

Thirdly. The design of this affliction, and that is to bring down their heart, ver. 12; to humble them for sin, to make them low in their own eyes, to cast down every high, proud, aspiring thought. Afflicting providences must be improved as humbling providences; and we not only lose the benefit of them, but thwart God's design, and walk contrary to him in them, if our hearts be unhumbled and unbroken, as high and hard as ever under them. Is the estate brought down with labour? the honour sunk? Are those that exalted themselves fallen down, and is there none to help them? Let this bring down the spirit to confess sin, to accept the punishment of it, and humbly to sue for mercy and grace.

Fourthly. The duty of this afflicted state, and that is to pray; ver. 13, "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble," though before, perhaps, they had neglected him. Prisoners have time to pray, who when they are at liberty could not find time; they see they have need of God's help who formerly thought they could do well enough without him. Sense will make men cry when they are in trouble, but grace will direct them to cry unto the Lord, from whom the affliction comes, and who alone can remove it.

Fifthly. Their deliverance out of the affliction. "They cried unto the Lord, and he saved them," ver. 13; "He brought them out of darkness" into light, welcome light, and then doubly sweet and pleasant; brought them "out of the shadow of death" to the comforts of life, and their liberty was to them life from the dead, ver. 14. Were they fettered? "He broke their bands asunder." Were they imprisoned in strong castles? He "broke the gates of brass;" and the bars of iron, wherewith those gates were made fast, he did not put back, but cut in sunder. Note, When God will work deliverance, the greatest difficulties that lie in the way shall be made nothing of. Gates of brass, and bars of iron, as they cannot keep him out from his people, (he was with Joseph in the prison,) so they cannot keep them in, when the time, the set time, for their enlargement is come.

Sixthly. The return that is required from those whose bands God has loosed; ver. 15, "Let them praise the Lord for his goodness," and take occasion from their own experience of it, and share in it, to bless him for that goodness which the earth is full of, "the world and they that dwell therein."

17 Fools because of their transgression,
And because of their iniquities, are afflicted.
18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat;
And they draw near unto the gates of death.
19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he saveth them out of their distresses
20 He sent his word, and healed them,
And delivered *them* from their destructions.
21 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving,
And declare his works with rejoicing.

Bodily sickness is another of the calamities of this life which gives us an opportunity of experiencing the goodness of God in recovering us; and of that the psalmist speaks in these verses, where we may observe,

First. That we, by our sins, bring sickness upon ourselves, and then it is our duty to pray, ver. 17—19.

1. It is the sin of the soul that is the cause of sickness. We bring it upon ourselves both meritoriously and efficiently. "Fools, because of their transgression, are" thus "afflicted," they are thus corrected for the sins they have committed, and thus cured of their evil inclinations to sin. If we knew no sin, we should know no sickness; but the transgression of our life, and the iniquity of our heart, makes it necessary. Sinners are fools, they wrong themselves, and all against their own interest; not only their spiritual, but their secular interest; they prejudice their bodily health by their intemperance, and endanger their lives by indulging their appetites. This their way is their folly, and they need the rod of correction to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts.

2. The weakness of the body is the effect of sickness, ver. 18. When people are sick, "their soul abhorreth all manner of meat;" they not only have no desire to it, nor power to digest it, but they nauseate it, and their stomach is turned against it. And here they may read their sin in their punishment; they that doated most on the meat that perisheth, when they come to be sick are sick of it, and the dainties they loved are loathed. What they took too much of, now they can take nothing of, which commonly follows upon the overcharging of the heart with surfeiting and drunkenness. And when the stomach is gone the life is as good as gone, "they draw near unto the gates of death;" they are in their own apprehension, and in the apprehension of all about them, at the brink of the grave, and ready to be turned to destruction.

3. Then is a proper time for prayer. "Then they cry unto the Lord," ver. 19. "Is any sick? let him pray," let him be prayed for. Prayer is a salve for every sore.

Secondly. That it is by the power and mercy of God that we are recovered from sickness, and then it is our duty to be thankful. Compare with this *Job* xxxiii. 18, 28.

1. When those that are sick call upon God, he returns them an answer of peace. They cry unto him, and "he saveth them out of their distresses," ver. 19; he removes their griefs, and prevent their fears. 1st. He doth it easily. "He sent his word and healed them," ver. 20. This may be applied to the miraculous cures which Christ wrought when he was upon earth, by a word's speaking, He said, Be clean, be whole, and the work was done; and to the spiritual cures which the Spirit of grace works in regeneration. He sends his word and heals souls; convinceth, converteth, sanctifieth them, and all by the word. In the common instances of recovery from sickness, God in his providence doth but speak it, and it is done. 2nd. He doth it effectually. "He delivereth them out of their destructions," that they shall neither be destroyed, nor distressed with the fear of being so. Nothing is too hard for that God to do who kills and makes alive again, brings down to the grave, and raises up; who turneth man almost to destruction, and yet saith, Return.

2. When those that have been sick are recovered, they must return to God an answer of praise; ver. 21, 22, "Let all men praise the Lord for his goodness,"

and let them particularly to whom God has thus granted a new life spend it in his service; "Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving," not only bring a thank offering to the altar, but a thankful heart to God. Thanksgivings are the best thank offerings, and shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. And let them "declare his works with rejoicing" to his honour, and for the encouragement of others. "The living, the living, they shall praise him."

23 They that go down to the sea in ships,
That do business in great waters;
24 These see the works of the LORD,
And his wonders in the deep.
25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,
Which lifteth up the waves thereof.
26 They mount up to the heaven,
They go down again to the depths:
Their soul is melted because of trouble.
27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,
And are at their wit's end.
28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble,
And he bringeth them out of their distresses.
29 He maketh the storm a calm,
So that the waves thereof are still.
30 Then are they glad because they be quiet;
So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.
31 Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness,
And *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people,
And praise him in the assembly of the elders.

The psalmist here calls upon those to give glory to God who are delivered from dangers at sea. Though the Israelites dealt not much in merchandise, yet their neighbours the Tyrians and Sidonians did, and for them perhaps this part of the psalm was especially calculated.

First. Much of the power of God appears at all times in the sea; ver. 23, 24, "They that go down to the sea in ships," as mariners, merchants, fishermen, or passengers, "that do business in great waters," (and sure none will expose themselves there, but those that have business,—among all Solomon's pleasant things, we do not read of any pleasure-boat he had,—but those that go on business, lawful business, may, in faith, put themselves under the Divine protection,) "these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders," which are the more surprising, because most are born and bred upon land, and what passeth at sea is new to them. The deep itself is a wonder; its vastness, its saltness, its ebbing and flowing. The great variety of living creatures in the sea is wonderful. Let those that go to sea, by all the wonders they observe there, be led to consider and adore the infinite perfections of that God whose the sea is, for he made it, and manageth it.

Secondly. It especially appears in storms at sea, which are much more terrible than on land. Observe here,

1. How dangerous and dreadful a tempest at sea is. Then wonders begin to appear in the deep, when God commandeth and raiseth the strong winds, which fulfil his word, *Ps.* cxlviii. 8. He raiseth the winds, as a prince by his commission raiseth forces. Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air, but he is a pretender; the powers of the air are at God's command, not at his. When the wind becomes stormy, it "lifteth up the waves of the sea," ver. 25. Then the ships are kicked like tennis balls on the tops of the waves; they seem to mount up to the heavens, and then couch again, as if they would go down to the depths, ver. 26. A stranger that had never seen it would not think it possible for a ship to live at sea as it will in a storm, and ride it out, but would expect that the next wave should bury it, and it should never come up again; and yet God, who taught man discretion to make ships that should so strangely keep above water, doth by his special providence preserve them, that they answer the end to admiration. When the ships are thus tossed, the soul of the seaman melts because of trouble; and when the storm is very high, even those that are used to the sea can neither shake off nor dissemble their fears, but they reel to and fro; the tossing makes them giddy, and they stagger and are sick, it may be, like a drunken man. The whole ship's crew is in confusion, and quite at their wit's end, ver. 27, not knowing what to do more for their own preservation. All their wisdom is swallowed up, and they are ready to give up themselves for gone, *Jonah* i. 5, &c.

2. How seasonable it is at such a time to pray. They that go to sea must expect such perils as are here described, and the best preparation they can make for them, is to make sure a liberty of access to God by prayer, for then they will cry unto the Lord, ver. 28. We used to say, 'They that will learn to pray, let them go to sea.' I say, 'They that will go to sea, let them learn to pray, and use to pray,' that they may come with the more boldness to the throne of grace when they are in trouble. Even heathen mariners in a storm cried every man to his god; but they that have the Lord for their God have a present and powerful help in that and every other time of need, so that when they are at their wit's end they are not at their faith's end.

3. How wonderfully God sometimes appears for those that are in distress at sea, in answer to their prayers. He bringeth them out of the danger; and, 1st. The sea is still. He "maketh the storm a calm," ver. 29. The winds fall, and only by their soft and gentle murmurs serve to lull the waves asleep again, so that the surface of the sea becomes smooth and smiling. By this Christ proved himself to be more than a man, that even the winds and the seas obeyed him. 2nd. The seamen are made easy. "They are glad because they be quiet," quiet from the noise, quiet from the fear of evil. Quietness after a storm is a very desirable thing, and sensibly pleasant. 3rd. The voyage becomes prosperous and successful. "So he bringeth them to their desired haven," ver. 30. Thus he carries his people safe through all the storms and tempests that they meet with in their voyage heavenwards, and lands them at length in the desired harbour.

4. How justly it is expected that all those who have had a safe passage over the sea, and especially that have been delivered from remarkable perils at sea, should acknowledge it with thankfulness to the glory of God. Let them do it privately in their closets and families, ver. 31. Let them "praise the Lord for his goodness" to themselves and others. Let them do it publicly; ver. 32, "in the congregation of the people, and in the assembly of the elders." There let them erect the memorials of their deliverance, to the honour of God, and for the encouragement of others to trust in him.

33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness,
And the watersprings into dry ground;
34 A fruitful land into barrenness,
For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.
35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water,
And dry ground into watersprings.
36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell,
That they may prepare a city for habitation;
37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards,
Which may yield fruits of increase.
38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly;
And suffereth not their cattle to decrease.
39 Again, they are minished and brought low
Through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.
40 He poureth contempt upon princes,
And causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is* no way.
41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction,
And maketh *him* families like a flock.
42 The righteous shall see *it*, and rejoice:
And all iniquity shall stop her mouth.
43 Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things*,
Even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

The psalmist, having given God the glory of the providential reliefs granted to persons in distress, here gives him the glory of the revolutions of providence, and the surprising changes it sometimes makes in the affairs of the children of men.

First. He gives some instances of these revolutions.

1. Fruitful countries are made barren, and barren countries are made fruitful. Much of the comfort of this life depends upon the soil in which our lot is cast. Now, 1st. The sin of man has often marred the fruitfulness of the soil, and made it unserviceable, ver. 33, 34. Land watered with rivers is sometimes turned into a wilderness, and that which had been full of water springs now has not so much as water streams; it is turned into dry and sandy ground, that has not consistency and moisture enough to produce any thing valuable. Many a fruitful land is turned into saltness, not so much from natural causes as from the just judgment of God, who thus punisheth "the wickedness of them that dwell therein," as the vale of Sodom became a salt sea. Note, If the land be bad, it is because the inhabitants are so. Justly is the ground made unfruitful to them that bring not forth fruit unto God, but serve Baal with their corn and wine. 2nd. The goodness of God has often mended the barrenness of the soil, and turned a wilderness, a land of drought, into water springs, ver. 35. The land of Canaan, which was once the glory of all lands, for fruitfulness, is said to be at this day a fruitless, useless, worthless spot of ground, as was foretold, *Deu.* xxix. 23. This land of ours, which formerly was much of it an uncultivated desert, is now full of all good things, and more abundant honour is given to that part which lacked. Let the plantations in America, and the colonies settled there, compared with the desolations of many countries in Asia and Europe, that formerly were famous, expound this.

2. Necessitous families are raised and enriched, while prosperous families are impoverished and go to decay. If we look abroad in the world, 1st. We see many greatly increasing, whose beginning was small, and whose ancestors were mean and made no figure, ver. 36—38. Those that were hungry are made to dwell in fruitful lands; there they take root, gain a settlement, and "prepare a city for habitation" for themselves and theirs after them. Providence puts good land under their hands, and they build upon it. Cities took rise from rising families. But as lands will not serve for men without lodgings, and therefore they must prepare a city of habitation, so lodgings, though never so convenient, will not serve without lands, and therefore they must "sow the fields and plant vineyards," ver. 37, for the king himself is served of the field. And yet the fields, though favoured with water springs, will not yield fruits of increase, unless they be sown, nor will vineyards be had, unless they be planted. Man's industry must attend God's blessing, and then God's blessing will crown man's industry. The fruitfulness of the soil should engage, for it doth encourage, diligence; and ordinarily the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God, maketh rich; ver. 38, "He blesseth them also, so that they are," in a little time, "multiplied greatly, and he diminisheth not their cattle." As in the beginning, so still it is by the blessing of God, that the earth and all the creatures increase and multiply, *Gen.* i. 22. And we depend upon God for the increase of the cattle, as well as for the increase of the ground. Cattle would decrease many ways, if God should but permit it, and men would soon suffer by it. 2nd. We see many that have thus suddenly risen, as suddenly sunk and brought to nothing; ver. 39, "Again, they are minished and brought low," by cross providences, and end their days as low as they began them; or their families after them lose as fast as they got, and scatter what they heaped together. Note, Worldly wealth is an uncertain thing; and many times those that are filled with it, ere they are aware, grow so secure and sensual with it, that ere they are aware they lose it again. Hence it is called deceitful riches, and the mammon of unrighteousness. God has many ways of making men poor; he can do it by "oppression, affliction, and sorrow," as he tempted Job, and brought him low.

3. Those that were high and great in the world are abased, and those that were mean and despicable are advanced to honour, ver. 40, 41. We have seen, 1st. Princes dethroned and reduced to straits. "He poureth contempt" upon them, even among those that have idolized them. They that exalt themselves God will abase, and, in order thereunto, will infatuate. "He maketh them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way." He baffles those counsels by which they thought to support themselves, and their own power and pomp, and

turns them headlong, so that they know not what course to steer, or what measures to take. We met with this before, *Job* xii. 24, 25. 2nd. Those of low degree advanced to the posts of honour; ver. 41, "Yet setteth he the poor on high," raiseth from the dust to the throne of glory, 1 *Sam.* ii. 8; *Ps.* cxiii. 7, 8. Those that were afflicted and trampled on, are not only delivered, but set on high, out of the reach of their troubles, above their enemies, and have dominion over those to whom they had been in subjection. And that which adds to their honour, and strengthens them in their elevation, is, the multitude of their children; "He maketh him families like a flock" of sheep, so numerous, so useful, so sociable with one another, and so meek and peaceable. He that sent them meat sent them mouths. Happy is the man that has his quiver filled with arrows, for he shall boldly speak with the enemy in the gate, *Ps.* cxxvii. 5. God is to be acknowledged both in setting up and building up of families. Let not princes be envied, nor the poor despised, for God has many ways of changing the condition of both.

Secondly. He makes some improvement of these remarks. Such surprising turns as these are of use,

1. For the solacing of saints. They observe these dispensations with pleasure; ver. 42, "The righteous shall see it and rejoice" in the glorifying of God's attributes, and the manifesting of his dominion over the children of men. It is a great comfort to a good man to see how God manageth the children of men, as the potter doth the clay, so as to serve his own purposes by them; to see despised virtue advanced, and impious pride brought low to the dust; to see it evinced beyond dispute that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

2. For the silencing of sinners. "All iniquity shall stop her mouth," that is, it shall be a full conviction of the folly of atheists, and of those that deny the Divine providence; and, forasmuch as practical atheism is at the bottom of all sin, it shall in effect stop the mouth of all iniquity. When sinners see how their punishment answers their sin, and how justly God deals with them, in taking away from them those gifts of his which they had abused, they shall not have one word to say for themselves; for God will be justified, he will be clear.

3. For the satisfying of all concerning the Divine goodness; ver. 43, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things," these various dispensations of Divine providence, "even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." Here is, 1st. A desirable end proposed, and that is, rightly to "understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." It is of great use to us in religion to be fully assured of God's goodness, to be experimentally acquainted and duly affected with it, that his lovingkindness may be before our eyes, *Ps.* xxvi. 3. 2nd. A proper means prescribed for attaining this end, and that is, a due observing of God's providence. We must lay up these things—mind them, and keep them in mind, *Lu.* ii. 19. 3rd. A commendation of the use of this means, as an instance of true wisdom: "Whoso is wise," let him by this both prove his wisdom and improve it. A prudent observation of the providences of God will contribute very much to the accomplishing of a good Christian.

PSALM CVIII.

This psalm begins with praise, and concludes with prayer, and faith is at work in both. I. David here gives thanks to God for mercies to himself, ver. 1—5. II. He prays to God for mercies for the land, pleading the promises of God, and putting them in suit, ver. 6—13. The former part is taken out of *Ps.* lvii. 7, &c., the latter out of *Ps.* lx. 5, &c.; and both with very little variation; to teach us that we may in prayer use the same words that we have formerly used, provided it be with new affections. It intimates likewise that it is not only allowable, but sometimes convenient, to gather some verses out of one psalm, and some out of another, and to put them together to be sung to the glory of God. In singing this psalm we must give glory to God, and take comfort to ourselves.

A Song *or* Psalm of David.

O GOD, my heart is fixed;
I will sing and give praise,
Even with my glory.
2 Awake, psaltery and harp:
I *myself* will awake early.
3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people:
And I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.
4 For thy mercy *is* great above the heavens:
And thy truth *reacheth* unto the clouds.
5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens:
And thy glory above all the earth;

We may here learn how to praise God from the example of one who was master of the art.

First. We must praise God with fixedness of heart. Our heart must be employed in the duty, else we make nothing of it, and engaged to the duty; ver. 1, "O God, my heart is fixed," and then "I will sing and give praise." Wandering, straggling thoughts must be gathered in, and kept close to the business; for they must be told here is work enough for them all.

Secondly. We must praise God with freeness of expression. I will praise him with my glory, that is, with my tongue. Our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in praising God. When the heart is inditing this good matter, our tongue must be as the pen of a ready writer, *Ps.* xlv. 1. David's skill in music was his glory, it made him famous; and this should be consecrated to the praise of God; and therefore it follows, "Awake, my psaltery and harp." Whatever gift we excel in we must praise God with.

Thirdly. We must praise God with fervency of affection, and must stir up ourselves to do it, that it may be done in a lively manner, and not carelessly; ver. 2, "Awake, psaltery and harp." Let it not be done with a dull and sleepy tune, but let the airs be all lively. "I myself will awake early" to do it with all that is within me, and all little enough. Warm devotions honour God.

Fourthly. We must praise God publicly, as those that are not ashamed to own our obligations to him, and our thankful sense of his favours, but desire that others also may be in like manner affected with the Divine goodness; ver. 3, "I will praise thee among the people," of the Jews; nay, "I will sing to thee among the nations" of the earth. Whatever company we are in we must take all occasions to speak well of God; and we must not be shy of singing psalms, though our neighbours hear us, for it looks like being ashamed of our Master.

Fifthly. We must in our praises magnify the mercy and truth of God in a special manner, ver. 4; mercy in promising, truth in performing. The heavens are vast, but the mercy of God is more capacious; the skies are high and bright, but the truth of God is more eminent, more illustrious. We cannot see farther than the heavens and clouds; whatever we see of God's mercy and truth, there is still more to be seen, more reserved to be seen in the other world.

Sixthly. Since we find ourselves so defective in glorifying God, we must beg of him to glorify himself, to do all, to dispose all, to his own glory, to get himself honour, and make himself a name; ver. 6, "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;" higher than the angels themselves can exalt thee with their praises; and let thy glory be spread over all the earth. "Father, glorify thine own name;" thou hast glorified it, glorify it yet again. It is to be our first petition, "Hallowed be thy name."

6 That thy beloved may be delivered:
Save *with* thy right hand, and answer me.
7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice,
I will divide Shechem,
And mete out the valley of Succoth.
8 Gilead *is* mine; Manasseh *is* mine;
Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head;
Judah *is* my lawgiver;
9 Moab *is* my washpot;
Over Edom will I cast out my shoe;
Over Philistia will I triumph.
10 Who will bring me into the strong city?
Who will lead me into Edom?
11 *Wilt* not *thou*, O God, *who* hast cast us off?
And wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?
12 Give us help from trouble:
For vain *is* the help of man.
13 Through God we shall do valiantly:
For he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

We may here learn how to pray as well as praise.

First. We must be public spirited in prayer, and bear upon our hearts at the throne of grace the concerns of the church of God; ver. 6, it is God's beloved, and therefore must be ours; and therefore we must pray for its deliverance, and reckon we are answered if God grant what we ask for his church, though he delay to give us what we ask for ourselves. Save thy church, and thou answerest me; I have what I would have. "Let the earth be filled with God's glory, and the prayers of David are ended," *Ps.* lxxii. 20; he desires no more.

Secondly. We must in prayer act faith upon the power and promise of God; upon his power, "Save with thy right hand," which is mighty to save; and upon his promise, "God hath spoken in his holiness," in his holy word, to which he hath sworn by his holiness, and therefore "I will rejoice," ver. 7. What he has promised he will perform; for it is the word both of his truth and of his power. An active faith can rejoice in what God hath said, though it be not yet done; for with him saying and doing are not two things, whatever they are with us.

Thirdly. We must, in prayer, take the comfort of what God has secured to us, and settled upon us, though we are not yet put in the possession of it. God had promised David to give him, 1. The hearts of his subjects; and therefore he surveys the several parts of the country as his own already: Shechem and Succoth, Gilead and Manasseh, Ephraim and Judah, they are all my own, ver. 8. With such assurance as this may we speak of the performance of what God has promised to the Son of David. He will, without fail, give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession; for so hath he spoken in his holiness. Nay, of all the particular persons that were given him, he will lose none; he also, as David, shall have the hearts of his subjects, *Jno.* vi. 37. And, 2. The necks of his enemies. These are promised, and therefore David looks upon Moab and Edom and Philistia as his own already; ver. 4, "Over Philistia will I triumph," which explains, *Ps.* lx. 8, "Philistia, triumph thou because of me;" which some think should be read, 'O my soul, triumph thou over Philistia.' Thus the exalted Redeemer is set down at God's right hand in a full assurance that all "his enemies shall" in due time "be made his footstool, though all things are not yet put under him," *Heb.* ii. 8.

Fourthly. We must take encouragement from the beginnings of mercy to pray and hope for the perfecting of it; ver. 10, 11, "Who will bring me into the strong cities" that are yet unconquered? Who will make me master of the country of Edom, which is yet unsubdued? This question probably was to be debated in his privy council, or a council of war, what methods they should take to subdue the Edomites, and to reduce that country; but he brings it into his prayers, and leaves it in God's hands; "Wilt not thou, O God?" certainly thou wilt. It is probable he spoke with the more assurance concerning the conquest of Edom, because of the ancient oracle concerning Jacob and Esau, that "the elder should serve the younger," and the blessing of Jacob, by which he was made Esau's lord, *Gen.* xxvii. 37.

Fifthly. We must not be discouraged in prayer nor beaten off from our hold of God, though providence has in some instances frowned upon us. Though "thou hast cast us off," yet thou wilt now "go forth with our hosts," ver. 11. Thou wilt comfort us again, after the time that thou hast afflicted us. Cross events are sometimes intended for the trial of the constancy of our faith and prayer, which we ought to persevere in, whatever difficulties we meet with, and not to faint.

Sixthly. We must seek help from God, renouncing all confidence in the creature; ver. 12, "Lord, give us help from trouble," prosper our designs, and defeat the designs of our enemies against us. It is not unseasonable to talk of trouble at the same time that we talk of triumphs, especially when it is to quicken prayer for help from heaven; and it is a good plea, "Vain is the help of man." It is really so, and therefore we are undone if God do not help us; we apprehend it so, and therefore depend upon thee for help, and have the more reason to expect it.

Seventhly. We must depend entirely upon the favour and grace of God, both for strength and success in our work and warfare, ver. 13. 1. We must do our part; but we can do nothing of ourselves, it is only "through God that we shall do valiantly." Blessed Paul will own that even he can do nothing, nothing to purpose, but through Christ's strengthening him, *Phil.* iv. 13. 2. When we

have acquitted ourselves never so well, yet we cannot speed by any merit or might of our own; it is God himself that treads down our enemies, else we, with all our valour, cannot do it. Whatever we do, whatever we gain, God must have all the glory.

PSALM CIX.

Whether David penned this psalm when he was persecuted by Saul, or when his son Absalom rebelled against him, or upon occasion of some other trouble that was given him, is uncertain; and whether the particular enemy he prays against was Saul, or Doeg, or Ahithophel, or some other not mentioned in the story, we cannot determine; but it is certain that in penning it he had an eye to Christ, his sufferings and his persecutors; for that imprecation, ver. 8, is applied to Judas, *Acts* i. 20. And the rest of the prayers here against his enemies were the expressions not of passion, but of the spirit of prophecy. I. He lodgeth a complaint in the court of heaven of the malice and base ingratitude of his enemies, and with it an appeal to the righteous God, ver. 1—4. II. He prays against his enemies, and devotes them to destruction, ver. 6—20. III. He prays for himself, that God would help and succour him in his low condition, ver. 25—29. IV. He concludes with a joyful expectation that God would appear for him, ver. 30, 31. In singing this psalm we must comfort ourselves with the believing foresight of the certain destruction of all the enemies of Christ and his church, and the certain salvation of all those that trust in God, and keep close to him.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

1 HOLD not thy peace, O God of my praise;
2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me:
They have spoken against me with a lying tongue.
3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred;
And fought against me without a cause.
4 For my love they are my adversaries:
But I *give myself unto* prayer.
5 And they have rewarded me evil for good,
And hatred for my love.

It is the unspeakable comfort of all good people that, whoever is against them, God is for them, and to him they may apply themselves as to one that is pleased to concern himself for them. Thus David here.

First. He refers himself to God's judgment; ver. 1, "Hold not thy peace," but "let my sentence come forth from thy presence," *Ps.* xvii. 2. Delay not to give judgment upon the appeal made to thee. God saw what his enemies did against him, but seemed to connive at it, and to keep silence. Lord, saith he, do not always do so. The title he gives to God is observable: "O God of my praise;" the God in whom I glory, and not in any wisdom or strength of my own; from whom I have every thing that is my praise; or, the God whom I have praised, and will praise, and hope to be for ever praising. He calls God, the God of his mercy, *Ps.* lix. 10; here, the God of his praise; forasmuch as God is the God of our mercies, we must make him the God of our praises. If all is of him and from him, all must be to him and for him.

Secondly. He complains of his enemies, shewing that they were such as it was fit for the righteous God to appear against. 1. They were very spiteful and malicious. They are wicked, they delight in doing mischief, ver. 2. Their words are words of hatred, ver. 3. They had an implacable enmity to a good man, because of his goodness. They open their mouths against me to swallow me up, and fight against me, to cut me off if they could. 2. They were notorious liars; and that is two of the seven things which the Lord hates. They are deceitful in their protestations and professions of kindness, while at the same time they speak against me, behind my back, with a lying tongue. They were equally false in their flatteries and in their calumnies. 3. They were both politic and restless in their designs. They compassed me about on all sides, so that which way soever I looked I could see nothing but what made against me. 4. They were unjust. Their accusations of him, and sentence against him, were all groundless; they have fought against me without cause, I never gave them any provocation. Nay, which was worst of all, 5. They were very ungrateful, and rewarded him evil for good, ver. 5. Many a kindness he had done them, and was upon all occasions ready to do them, and yet he could not work upon them to abate their malice against him; but, on the contrary, they were the more exasperated because they could not provoke him to give them some occasion against him; ver. 4, "For my love they are my adversaries." The more he endeavoured to gratify them, the more they hated him. We may wonder that it is possible any should be so wicked; and yet, since there have been so many instances of it, we should not wonder if any be so wicked against us.

Thirdly. He resolves to keep close to his duty, and take the comfort of that. "But I give myself unto prayer," ver. 4. 'I prayer,' so it is in the original; I am for prayer; I am a man of prayer; I love prayer, and prize prayer, and practise prayer, and make a business of prayer, and am in my element when I am at prayer. A good man is made up of prayer, gives himself to prayer, as the apostles, *Acts* vi. 4. When David's enemies falsely accused him, and misrepresented him, he applied himself to God, and by prayer committed his cause to him. Though they were his adversaries for his love, yet he continued to pray for them. If others are abusive and injurious to us, yet let not us fail to do our duty to them, nor sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them, 1 *Sam.* xii. 23. Though they hated and persecuted him for his religion, yet he kept close to it; they laughed at him for his devotion, but they should not laugh him out of it. Let them say what they will, "I give myself unto prayer." Now herein David was a type of Christ, who was compassed about with words of hatred, and lying words; whose enemies not only persecuted him without cause, but for his love, and his good works, *Jno.* x. 32; and yet he gave himself to prayer, to pray for them, "Father, forgive them."

6 Set thou a wicked man over him:
And let Satan stand at his right hand.
7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned:
And let his prayer become sin.
8 Let his days be few;
And let another take his office.
9 Let his children be fatherless,
And his wife a widow.
10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg:
Let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places.
11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath;
And let the strangers spoil his labour.
12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him:
Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.
13 Let his posterity be cut off;
And in the generation following let their name be blotted out. [LORD;
14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the
And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.
15 Let them be before the LORD continually,
That he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.
16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy,
But persecuted the poor and needy man,
That he might even slay the broken in heart.
17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him:
As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.
18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment,
So let it come into his bowels like water,
And like oil into his bones.
19 Let it be unto him as the garment *which* covereth him,
And for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.
20 *Let* this *be* the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD,
And of them that speak evil against my soul.

David here fastens upon some one particular person that was worse than the rest of his enemies, and the ringleader of them, and in a devout and pious manner, not from a principle of malice and revenge, but in a holy zeal for God, and against sin, and with an eye to the enemies of Christ, particularly Judas who betrayed him, whose sin was greater than Pilate's that condemned him, *Jno.* xix. 11, he imprecates and predicts his destruction; foresees and pronounces him completely miserable, and such a one as our Saviour calls him, "A son of perdition." Calvin speaks of it as a detestable piece of sacrilege, common in his time, among Franciscan friars, and other monks, that, if any one had malice against a neighbour, he might hire some of them to curse him every day, which he would do in the words of these verses; and particularly he tells of a lady in France, that being at variance with her own and only son, she hired a parcel of friars to curse him in these words. And greater impiety can scarce be imagined than to vent a devilish passion in the language of Sacred Writ, to kindle strife with coals snatched from God's altar, and to call for fire from heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell.

First. The imprecations here are very terrible; woe and a thousand woes to that man against whom God saith Amen to them. And they are all in full force against the implacable enemies and persecutors of God's church and people, that will not repent to give him glory. It is here foretold concerning this ill man,

1. That he should be cast and sentenced as a criminal, with all the dreadful pomp of a trial, conviction, and condemnation; ver. 6, 7, "Set thou a wicked man over him," to be as cruel and oppressive to him as he hath been to others; for God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, to spoil the spoilers, and to deal treacherously with those that have dealt treacherously. Set the wicked one over him, so some; that is, Satan, as it follows. And then it was fulfilled in Judas, into whom Satan entered to hurry him into sin first, and then into despair. Set his own wicked heart over him, set his own conscience against him, let that fly in his face. "Let Satan stand on his right hand," and be let loose against him to deceive him as he did Ahab to his destruction, and then to accuse him, and resist him, and then he is certainly cast, having no interest in that Advocate who alone can say, "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan," *Zec.* iii. 1, 2. When he shall be judged at men's bar let not his usual arts to evade justice do him any service; but let his sin find him out, and let him be condemned. Nor shall he escape before God's tribunal, but be condemned there when the day of inquisition and recompense shall come. "Let his prayer become sin," as the clamours of a condemned malefactor not only find no acceptance, but are looked upon as an affront to the court. The prayers of the wicked now become sin, because soured with the leaven of hypocrisy and malice; and so they will in the great day, because then it will be too late to cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Let every thing be turned against him, and improved to his disadvantage, even his prayers.

2. That, being condemned, he should be executed as a most notorious malefactor. 1st. That he should lose his life, and the number of his months be cut off in the midst by the sword of justice. "Let his days be few," or shortened; as a condemned criminal has but a few days to live, ver. 8. Such "bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days." 2nd. That consequently all his places should be disposed of to others, and they should enjoy his preferments and employments. "Let another take his office." This St. Peter applies to the filling up of Judas's room in the truly sacred college of the apostles, by the choice of Matthias, *Acts* i. 20. Those that mismanage their trusts will justly have their office taken from them, and given to those that will approve themselves faithful. 3rd. That his family should be beheaded and beggared; that his wife should be made a widow, and his children fatherless, by his untimely death, ver. 9. Wicked men, by their wicked courses, bring ruin upon their wives and children, whom they ought to take care of and provide for. Yet his children, if, when they lost their father, they had a competency to live upon, they might do pretty well; but they shall be vagabonds and beg, shall not have a house of their own to live in, nor any certain dwelling-place, nor know where to have a meal's meat; but shall creep out of their desolate places with fear and trembling, like beasts out of their dens to seek their bread, ver. 10, because they are conscious to themselves what reason all mankind has to hate them for their father's sake. 4th. That his estate should be ruined, as the estates of malefactors are confiscated; ver. 11, "Let the extortioner," the officer, "seize all that he hath," and let the stranger, that was nothing akin to his estate, spoil his labour, either for his crimes or for his debts, *Jno.* v. 4, 5. 5th. That his posterity should

be miserable. Fatherless children, though they have nothing of their own, yet sometimes are well provided for by the kindness of those whom God inclines to pity them; but this wicked man, having never shewed mercy, there shall be none to extend mercy to him, by favouring his fatherless children, when he is gone, ver. 12. The children of wicked parents often fare the worse for their parents' wickedness this way,—that the bowels of men's compassion are shut up from them; which yet ought not to be; for why should children suffer for that which was not their fault, but their infelicity? 6th. That his memory should be infamous, and buried in oblivion and disgrace; ver. 13, 'Let his posterity be cut off; let his end be to destruction,' so Dr. Hammond; and in the next generation let their name be blotted out, or remembered with contempt and indignation; and, ver. 15, let an indelible mark of disgrace be left upon it.

See here what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin, makes them and theirs despicable and odious, and entails poverty, and shame, and misery upon their posterity. It is sin; that mischievous, destructive thing. The learned Dr. Hammond applies this to the final dispersion and desolation of the Jewish nation for their crucifying Christ. Their princes and people were cut off, their country laid waste, their posterity made fugitives and vagabonds.

Secondly. The ground of these imprecations speaks them very just, though they sound very severe.

1. To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner's posterity, the sin of his ancestors is here brought into the account; ver. 14, 15, "The iniquity of his fathers, and the sin of his mother." These God often visits, even upon the children's children, and is not unrighteous therein. When wickedness has long run in the blood, justly doth the curse run along with it. Thus all the innocent blood that had been shed upon the earth from that of righteous Abel was required from that persecuting generation who, by putting Christ to death, filled up the measure of their fathers, and left as long a train of vengeance to follow them as the train of guilt was that went before them, which they themselves agreed to, by saying, "His blood be upon us and on our children."

2. To justify the imprecations of vengeance upon the sinner himself, his own sin is here charged upon him, which called aloud for it.

1st. He had loved cruelty; and therefore give him blood to drink; ver. 16, "He remembered not to shew mercy," remembered not those considerations which would have induced him to shew mercy, remembered not the objects of compassion that had been presented to him; but persecuted the poor, whom he should have protected and relieved, and "slew the broken in heart," whom he should have comforted and healed. Here is a barbarous man indeed, not fit to live.

2nd. He had loved cursing; and therefore let the curse come upon his head, ver. 17—19. Those that were out of the reach of his cruelty he let fly at with his curses, which were impotent and ridiculous, but they shall return upon him. He "delighted not in blessing;" that is, he took no pleasure in wishing well to others, nor in seeing others do well; he would give nobody a good word or a good wish, much less would he do any body a good turn; and so let all good be far from him. "He clotheth himself with cursing," was proud of it as an ornament, that he could frighten all about him with the curses he was liberal of; he confided in it as armour, which would secure him from the insults of those he feared. And let him have enough of it. Was he fond of cursing? Let God's curse "come into his bowels like water," and swell him as with a dropsy, and let it soak "like oil into his bones." The word of the curse is quick and powerful, and divides between the joints and the marrow; it works powerfully and effectually, it fastens on the soul, it is a piercing thing, and there is no antidote against it. Let it compass him on every side as a garment, ver. 19. Let God's cursing him be his shame, as his cursing his neighbour was his pride; let it cleave to him as a girdle, and let him never be able to get clear of it. Let it be to him like the waters of jealousy, which caused the belly to swell and the thigh to rot. This points at the utter ruin of Judas, and the spiritual judgments which fell on the Jews for crucifying Christ. The psalmist concludes his imprecation with a terrible Amen, which signifies not only, I wish it may be so, but, I know it shall be so. "Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord," ver. 20. And this will be the reward of all the adversaries of the Lord Jesus; his enemies that will not have him to reign over them shall be brought forth and slain before him. And he will one day recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people.

21 But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord,
For thy name's sake:
Because thy mercy *is* good, deliver thou me.
22 For I *am* poor and needy,
And my heart is wounded within me.
23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth:
I am tossed up and down as the locust.
24 My knees are weak through fasting;
And my flesh faileth of fatness
25 I became also a reproach unto them:
When they looked upon me they shaked their heads.
26 Help me, O LORD my God:
O save me according to thy mercy:
27 That they may know that this *is* thy hand;
That thou, LORD, hast done it.
28 Let them curse, but bless thou:
When they arise, let them be ashamed;
But let thy servant rejoice.
29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame,
And let them cover themselves with their own confusion,
as with a mantle.
30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth;
Yea, I will praise him among the multitude.
31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor,
To save *him* from those that condemn his soul.

David, having denounced God's wrath against his enemies, here takes God's comforts to himself, but in a very humble manner, and without boasting.

First. He pours out his complaint before God concerning the low condition he was in, which, it is probable, gave advantage to his enemies to insult over him. "I am poor and needy," and therefore a proper object of pity, and one that needs and craves thy help. 1. He was troubled in mind; ver. 22, "My heart is wounded within me;" not only broken with outward troubles, which sometimes prostrate and sink the spirits, but wounded with sense of guilt, and "a wounded spirit who can bear?" who can heal? 2. He apprehended himself drawing near to his end; "I am gone like the shadow when it declineth," as good as gone already. Man's life, at best, is like a shadow; sometimes it is like the evening shadow, the presage of night approaching, like the shadow when it declines. 3. He was unsettled, "tossed up and down like the locust," his mind fluctuating and unsteady, still putting him upon new counsels; his outward condition far from any fixation, but still upon the remove, hunted like a partridge on the mountains. 4. His body was wasted and almost worn away; ver. 24, "My knees are weak through fasting;" either forced fasting for want of food when he was persecuted, or for want of appetite when he was sick, or voluntary fasting, when he chastened his soul either for sin or affliction, his own or others, *Ps.* xxxv. 13; lxix. 10. My flesh failed of fatness; that is, it has lost the fatness it had, so that I am become a skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. But better have this leanness in the body, while the soul prospers and is in health, than, like Israel, have leanness sent into the soul while the body is feasted. 5. He was ridiculed and reproached by his enemies, ver. 25. His devotions and his afflictions they made the matter of their laughter, and upon both those accounts God's people have been exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease. In all this David was a type of Christ, who, in his humiliation was thus wounded, thus weakened, thus reproached. He was also a type of the church, which is often afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted.

Secondly. He prays for mercy for himself. In general; ver. 21, "Do thou for me, O God the Lord;" appear for me, act for me. If God be for us, he will do for us, will do more abundantly for us than we are able either to ask or think. He doth not prescribe to God what he should do for him, but refers himself to his wisdom; Lord, do for me what seemeth good in thine eyes. Do that which thou knowest will be for me, really for me, in the issue for me, though for the present it may seem to make against me. More particularly he prays, ver. 26, "Help me, O Lord my God, O save me." Help me under my trouble, save me out of my troubles. Save me from sin; help me to do my duty. He prays, ver. 28, "Though they curse, bless thou." Here, 1. He despiseth the causeless curses of his enemies, Let them curse. He said of Shimei, "So let him curse." They can but shew their malice, they can do him no more mischief than the bird by wandering, or the swallow by flying, *Pr.* xxvi. 2. 2. He values the blessing of God as sufficient to balance their curses; Bless thou, and then it is no matter though they curse. If God bless us, we need not care who curseth us; for "How can they curse whom God hath not cursed?" nay, whom he hath blessed, *Num.* xxiii. 8. Men's curses are impotent; God's blessings are omnipotent. And those whom we unjustly curse may, in faith, expect and pray for God's blessing, his special blessing. When the Pharisees cast out the poor man for confessing Christ, Christ found him, *Jno.* ix. 35. When men, without cause, say all the ill they can of us, and wish all the ills they can to us, we may with comfort lift up our heart to God in this petition, "Let them curse, but bless thou." He prays, ver. 28, "Let thy servant rejoice." They that know how to value God's blessing, let them but be sure of it, and they will be glad of it.

Thirdly. He prays that his enemies might "be ashamed," ver. 28, "clothed with shame," ver. 29, and that they might "cover themselves with their own confusion." That they might be left to themselves to do that which would expose them, and manifest their folly before all men; or rather, that they might be disappointed in their designs and enterprises against David, and thereby might be filled with shame, as the adversaries of the Jews were, *Neh.* vi. 16. Nay, in this, he prays that they might be brought to repentance, which is the chief thing we should beg of God for our enemies. Sinners indeed bring shame upon themselves, but they are true penitents that take shame to themselves, and "cover themselves with their own confusion."

Fourthly. He pleads God's glory, the honour of his name; "Do for me, for thy name's sake," ver. 21, especially the honour of his goodness, by which he hath proclaimed his name; "Deliver me," because "thy mercy is good," that is, it is what thou thyself dost delight in, and it is what I do depend upon. Save me, not according to my merit, for I have none to pretend to, but according to thy mercy; let that be the fountain, the reason, the measure of my salvation.

Fifthly. He concludes the psalm with joy, the joy of faith,—joy in assurance that his present conflicts would end in triumphs. 1. He promiseth God that he will praise him; ver. 30, "I will greatly praise the Lord," not only with my heart, but "with my mouth, I will praise him," not in secret only, but "among the multitude." 2. He promiseth himself that he shall have cause to praise God; ver. 31, "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor,"—nigh to him, a present help. He shall stand at his right hand as his patron and advocate, to plead his cause against his accusers, and to bring him off; "to save him from those that condemn his soul," and would execute it if they could. God was David's protector in his sufferings, and was present also with the Lord Jesus in his, stood at his right hand, so that he was not moved, *Ps.* xvi. 8; saved his soul from those that pretended to be the judges of it, and received it into his own hands. Let all those that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him.

PSALM CX.

This psalm is pure Gospel; it is only and wholly concerning Christ the Messiah, promised to the fathers, and expected by them. It is plain the Jews of old, even the worst of them, so understood it, however the modern Jews have endeavoured to pervert it, and to rob us of it; for when the Lord Jesus proposed a question to the Pharisees upon the first words of this psalm, where he takes it for granted that David in spirit calls Christ his Lord, though he were his son, they chose rather to say nothing, and to own themselves gravelled, than to make it a question whether David doth indeed speak of the Messiah, or no; for they freely yield so plain a truth, though they foresee it will turn to their own disgrace, *Mat.* xxii. 41, &c. Of him, therefore, no doubt the prophet here speaks, of him, and of no other man. Christ as our Redeemer executes the office of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his state of humiliation and exaltation; and of each of these we have here an account: I. His prophetical office, ver. 2. II. His priestly office, ver. 4. III. His kingly office, ver. 1, 3, 5, 6. IV. His estates of humiliation and exaltation, ver. 7. In singing this psalm we must act faith upon Christ, submit ourselves entirely to him, to his grace and government, and triumph in him as our prophet, priest, and king, by whom we hope to be ruled and taught, and saved for ever; and as the prophet, priest, and king of the whole church, who shall reign till he has put down all opposing rule, principality and power, and delivered up the kingdom to God the Father.

PSALM CX.

A Psalm of David.

THE LORD said unto my Lord,
Sit thou at my right hand,
Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion:
Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.
3 Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power,
In the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning:
Thou hast the dew of thy youth.
4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent,
Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Some have called this psalm David's creed; almost all the articles of the Christian faith being found in it. The title calls it David's psalm; for in the believing foresight of the Messiah he both praised God and solaced himself; much more may we in singing of it, to whom that is fulfilled, and therefore more clearly revealed, which is here foretold. Glorious things are here spoken of Christ, and such as oblige us to consider how great he is.

First. He is David's Lord. We must take special notice of this, because he himself doth; *Mat.* xxiv. 44, "David in spirit calleth him Lord." And as the apostle proves the dignity of Melchizedek, and in him of Christ, by this, that so great a man as Abraham was paid him tithes, *Heb.* vii. 4, so we may with this prove the dignity of the Lord Jesus, that David, that great man, called him his Lord. By him that king acknowledges himself to reign, and to him to be acceptable as a servant to his Lord. Some think he calls him his Lord because he was the Lord that was to descend from him; his Son, and yet his Lord. Thus his immediate mother calls him her Saviour, *Lu.* vii. 47; even his parents were his subjects,—his saved ones.

Secondly. He is constituted a sovereign Lord by the counsel and decree of God himself; "The Lord, Jehovah, said unto him," Sit as a king. He receives of the Father this honour and glory, 2 *Pet.* i. 17, from him who is the fountain of honour and power, and takes it not to himself. He is therefore rightful Lord, and his title is incontestable; for what God hath said cannot be gainsaid. He is therefore everlasting Lord; for what God hath said shall not be unsaid. He will certainly take and keep possession of that kingdom which the Father has committed to him, and none can hinder.

Thirdly. He was to be advanced to the highest honour, and intrusted with an absolute sovereign power, both in heaven and in earth; "Sit thou at my right hand." Sitting is a resting posture. After his services and sufferings, he entered into rest from all his labours. It is a ruling posture, fit to give law, to give judgment. It is a remaining posture; he sits like a king for ever. Sitting at the right hand of God notes both his dignity and his dominion; the honour put upon him, and the trusts reposed in him by the Father. All the favours that come from God to man, and all the service that comes from man to God, passeth through his hand.

Fourthly. All his enemies were in due time to be made his footstool, and not till then; but then also he must reign, in the glory of the Mediator, though the work of the Mediator will be much at an end. Note, 1. Even Christ himself has enemies that fight against his kingdom and subjects—his honour and interest in the world. There are those that will not have him to reign over them, and thereby they join themselves to Satan, who will not have him to reign at all. 2. These enemies will be made his footstool. He will subdue them, and triumph over them; he will do it easily, as easily as we put a footstool in its proper place; and such a decorum there will be in it. He will make himself easy by the doing it, as a man that sits with a footstool under his feet; he will subdue them in such a way as shall be most for his honour, and their perpetual disgrace; he will tread down the wicked, *Mal.* iv. 3. 3. God the Father has undertaken to do it, "I will make them thy footstool," who can do it. 4. It will not be done presently. All his enemies are now in a chain, but not yet made his footstool. This the apostle observes, *Heb.* ii. 8, "We see not yet all things put under him." Christ himself must wait for the completing of his victories and triumphs. 5. He shall reign till it is done, and all their might and malice shall not give the least disturbance to his government. His sitting at God's right hand is a pledge to him of his setting his feet at last on the necks of all his enemies.

Fifthly. That he should have a kingdom set up in the world, beginning at Jerusalem; ver. 2, "The Lord shall send the rod," or sceptre, "of thy strength out of Zion," by which thy kingdom shall be erected, maintained, and administered. The Messiah, when he sits on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, will have a church on earth, and will have an eye to it; for he is "King upon the holy hill of Zion," *Ps.* ii. 6, in opposition to mount Sinai, that frightful mountain, on which the law was given, *Heb.* xii. 18, 24; *Gal.* iv. 24, 25. The kingdom of Christ took rise from Zion, the city of David; for he was the Son of David, and was to have the throne of his father David. By the rod of his strength, or his strong rod, is meant his everlasting Gospel, and the power of the Holy Ghost going along with it; the report of the Word, and the arm of the Lord accompanying it, *Isa.* liii. 1; *Rom.* i. 16; the Gospel coming both in word and in power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 *Thes.* i. 5. By the Word and Spirit of God souls were to be reduced first and brought into obedience to God, and then ruled and governed according to the will of God. This strong rod God sent forth; he poured out the Spirit, and gave both commissions and qualifications to them that preached the Word, and ministered the Spirit, *Gal.* iii. 5. It was sent out of Zion; for there the Spirit was given, and there the preaching of the Gospel among all nations must begin, at Jerusalem: see *Lu.* xxiv. 47, 49. Out of Zion must go forth the law of faith, *Isa.* ii. 3. Note, The Gospel of Christ being sent of God, is mighty through God to do wonders, 2 *Cor.* x. 4; it is the rod of Christ's strength. Some make it to allude not only to the sceptre of a prince, noting the glory of Christ shining in his Gospel, but to a shepherd's crook; his rod and staff, noting the tender care Christ takes of his church, for he is both the great and the good Shepherd.

Sixthly. That this kingdom being set up, shall be maintained and kept up in the world in despite of all the oppositions of the power of darkness. 1. Christ shall rule, shall give laws, and govern his subjects by them, shall perfect them, and make them easy and happy; shall do his own will, fulfil his own counsels, and maintain his own interests among men. His kingdom is of God, and it shall stand; his crown sits fast on his head, and there it shall flourish. 2. He shall rule in the midst of his enemies. He sits in heaven in the midst of his friends; his throne of glory there is surrounded with none but faithful worshippers of him, *Rev.* v. 11. But he rules on earth in the midst of his enemies, and his throne of government here is surrounded with those that hate him, and fight against him. Christ's church is a lily among thorns, and his disciples are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. He knows where they dwell, even where Satan's seat is, *Rev.* ii. 13. And this redounds to his honour, that he not only keeps his ground, but gains his point, maugre all the malignant policies and powers of hell and earth, which cannot shake the rock on which the church is built. 'Great is the truth, and will prevail.'

Seventhly. That he should have a great number of subjects, that should be to him for a name and a praise, ver. 3.

1. That they should be his own people, and such as he should have an incontestable title to. They are given to him by the Father, who gave them their lives and beings, and to whom their lives and beings were forfeited; "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me," *Jno.* xvii. 6. They are redeemed by him; he has purchased them to be to himself a peculiar people, *Tit.* ii. 14. They are his by right, antecedent to their consent; he had much people in Corinth before they were converted, *Acts* xviii. 10.

2. That they should be a willing people, a people of willingness; alluding to servants that choose their service, and are not captivated to it; they love their masters, and would not go out free. To soldiers that are volunteers, and not pressed men; Here am I, send me. To sacrifices that are free-will offerings, and not offered of necessity; we present ourselves living sacrifices. Note, Christ's people are a willing people. The conversion of a soul consists in its being willing to be Christ's, coming under his yoke, and into his interests, with an entire compliancy and satisfaction.

3. That they should be so "in the day of his power;" 'in the day of thy muster,' so some. When thou art listing soldiers, thou shalt find a multitude of volunteers forward to be listed; let but the standard be set up and the Gentiles will seek to it, *Isa.* xi. 10; lx. 3. Or, when thou art drawing them out to battle, they shall be willing to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, *Rev.* xiv. 4. 'In the day of thine armies,' so some. When the first preachers of the Gospel were sent forth, as Christ's armies, to reduce apostate men, and to ruin the kingdom of apostate angels, then all that are "thy people shall be willing," that will be thy time of setting up thy kingdom. 'In the day of thy strength,' so we take it. There is a general power, which goes along with the Gospel to all, proper to make them willing to be Christ's people, arising from the supreme authority of its great Author, and the intrinsic excellency of the things themselves contained in it, besides the undeniable miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. And there is also a particular power, the power of the Spirit, going along with the power of the Word to the people of Christ, which is effectual to make them willing. The former leaves sinners without matter of excuse; this leaves saints without matter of boasting. Whoever are willing to be Christ's people, it is the free and mighty grace of God that makes them so.

4. That they should be so "in the beauty of holiness;" that is, 1st. They shall be allured to him by "the beauty of holiness;" they shall be charmed into a subjection to Christ, by the sight given them of his beauty, who is the holy Jesus, and the beauty of the church, which is the holy nation. 2nd. They shall be admitted by him into the beauty of holiness, as spiritual priests, to minister in his sanctuary; for by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest. 3rd. They shall attend upon him in the beautiful attire or ornaments of grace and sanctification. Note, Holiness is the livery of Christ's family, and that which becomes his house for ever. Christ's soldiers are all thus clothed; these are the colours they wear. The armies of heaven follow him in fine linen, clean and white, *Rev.* xix. 14.

5. That he should have great numbers of people devoted to him. The multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and that shall be the honour of this prince. "From the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth," that is abundance of young converts, like the drops of dew in a summer's morning. In the early days of the Gospel, in the morning of the New Testament, the youth of the church, great numbers flocked to Christ, and there were multitudes that believed; a remnant of Jacob, that was as a dew from the Lord, *Mic.* v. 7; *Isa.* lxiv. 4, 8. Or thus, "From the womb of the morning," that is, from their very childhood, thou hast the dew of thy people's youth; that is, their hearts and affections when they are young; it is thy youth, because it is dedicated to thee. The dew of the youth is a numerous, illustrious, hopeful show of young people flocking to Christ, which should be to the world as dew to the ground, to make it fruitful. Note, The dew of our youth, even in the morning of our days, ought to be consecrated to our Lord Jesus.

Eighthly. That he should be not only a king, but a priest, ver. 4. The same Lord that said, "Sit thou at my right hand, sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest;" that is, Be thou a priest; for by the word of this oath he was consecrated. Note, 1. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a priest. He was appointed to that office, and faithfully executes it. He is "ordained for men, in things pertaining to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin," *Heb.* v. 1; to make atonement for our sins, and to recommend our services to God's acceptance. He is God's minister to us, and our advocate with God, and so is a Mediator between us and God. 2. He is "a priest for ever." He was designed for a priest in God's eternal counsels; he was a priest to the Old Testament saints, and will be a priest for all believers to the end of time, *Heb.* xiii. 8. He is said to be a priest for ever, not only because we are never to expect any other dispensation of grace but this by the priesthood of Christ, but because the blessed fruits and consequences of it will remain to eternity. 3. He is made a priest with an oath, which the apostle urgeth to prove the preeminence of his priesthood above that of Aaron, *Heb.* vii. 20, 21. "The Lord hath sworn," to shew that in the commission there was no implicit reserve of a power of revocation, for he "will not repent," as he did concerning Eli's priesthood, 1 *Sam.* ii. 30. This was intended for the honour of Christ, and the comfort of Christians. The priesthood of Christ is confirmed by the highest ratifications possible, that it may be an unshaken foundation for our faith and hope to build upon. 4. He is a priest, not of the order of Aaron, but that of Melchizedek, which, as it was prior, so it was upon many accounts superior, to that of Aaron, and a more lively representation of Christ's priesthood; Melchizedek was a priest upon his throne, so is Christ, *Zec.* vi. 13; king of righteousness and king of peace. Melchizedek had no successor, nor hath Christ; his is an unchangeable priesthood. The apostle comments largely upon these words, *Heb.* vii., and builds on them his discourse of Christ's priestly office, which he shews was no new notion, but built upon this most sure word of prophecy; for as the New Testament explains the Old so the Old Testament confirms the New, and Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of both.

5 The Lord at thy right hand
Shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath
6 He shall judge among the heathen,
He shall fill *the places* with the dead bodies;
He shall wound the heads over many countries.
7 He shall drink of the brook in the way:
Therefore shall he lift up the head.

Here we have our great Redeemer,

First. Conquering his enemies, ver. 5, 6, in order to the making them his foot-stool, ver. 1. Our Lord Jesus will certainly bring to nought all the opposition made to his kingdom, and bring to ruin all those who make that opposition, and persist in it. He will be too hard for those, whoever they be, that fight against him, against his subjects, and the interests of his kingdom among men, either by persecutions or by perverse disputings. Observe here,

1. The conqueror, "The Lord," *Adonai*; the Lord Jesus, he to whom all judgment is committed, he shall make his own part good against his enemies; "The Lord at thy right hand," O church (so some); that is, the Lord that is nigh unto his people, and a very present help to them, that is at their right hand to strengthen and succour them, shall appear for them against his and their enemies: see *Ps.* cix. 31, "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor;" *Ps.* xvi. 8, Some observe, that when Christ is said to do his work at the right hand of his church, it intimates that if we would have Christ to appear for us, we must bestir ourselves, 2 *Sam.* v. 24. Or, rather, "At thy right hand," O God, referring to ver. 1, in the dignity and dominion to which he is advanced. Note, Christ sitting at the right hand of God speaks as much terror to his enemies as happiness to his people.

2. The time fixed for this victory; "In the day of his wrath," that is, the time appointed for it; when the measure of their iniquities is full, and they are ripe for ruin. When the day of his patience is expired, then the day of his wrath comes. Note, 1st, Christ has wrath of his own as well as grace. It concerns us to kiss the Son, for he can be angry, *Ps.* ii. 12. And we read of the wrath of the Lamb, *Rev.* vi. 16. 2nd. There is a day of wrath set; "a year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, the year of the redeemed." The time is set for the destruction of particular enemies, and when that time is come it shall be done, how unlikely soever it may seem; but the great day of his wrath will be at the end of time. *Rev.* vi. 17.

3. The extent of this victory. 1st. It shall reach very high. He "shall strike through kings." The greatest of men that set themselves against Christ shall be made to fall before him; though they be kings of the earth, and rulers, that use to carry their point, they cannot carry it against Christ, they do but make themselves ridiculous by the attempt, *Ps.* ii. 1—5. Be their power among men never so despotic, Christ will call them to account; be their strength never so great, their policies never so deep, Christ will be too hard for them, and above them, wherein they deal proudly. Satan is the prince of this world, Death the king of terrors, and we read of kings that make war with the Lamb; but they shall all be brought down and broken. 2nd. It shall reach very far. The trophies of Christ's victories will be set up among the heathen, and in many countries, wherever any of his enemies are; not his eye only, but his hand shall find them out, *Ps.* xxi. 8, and his wrath shall follow them. He will plead with all nations, *Joel* iii. 2.

4. The equity of this victory. "He shall judge among them." It is not a military execution, which is done in fury, but a judicial one. Before he condemns and slays he will judge, that is, he will make it to appear that they have brought this ruin upon themselves, and have themselves rolled the stone which returns upon them, that he may be justified when he speaks, and the heavens may declare his righteousness: see *Rev.* xix. 1, 2.

5. The effect of this victory. It shall be the complete and utter ruin of all his enemies. He shall strike them through, for he strikes home, and gives an incurable wound; "he shall wound the heads," which seems to refer to the first promise of the Messiah, *Gen.* iii. 11, that he should bruise the serpent's head. He shall wound the head of his enemies, *Ps.* lxviii. 21. Some read it, He shall wound him that is the head over many countries; either Satan or Antichrist, whom "the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth." He shall make such destruction of his enemies, that "he shall fill the places with the dead bodies." "The slain of the Lord shall be many:" see *Isa.* xxxiv. 3. &c.; *Eze.* xxxix. 12—14; *Rev.* xiv. 20, xix. 17. The filling of the valley (for so some read it) with dead bodies, perhaps notes the filling of hell, (which is sometimes compared to the valley of Hinnom, *Isa.* xxx. 33; *Jer.* vii. 32,) with damned souls, for that will be the portion of those that persist in their enmity to Christ.

Secondly. We have here the Redeemer saving his friends and comforting them, ver. 7; for their benefit,

1. He shall be humbled. "He shall drink of the brook in the way;" that is, that bitter cup which the Father put into his hand. He shall be so abased and impoverished, and withal so intent upon his work, that he shall drink puddle-water out of the lakes in the highway, so some. The wrath of God, running in the channel of the curse of the law, was "the brook in the way," in the way of his undertaking, which he must go through with; or which ran in the way of our salvation, and obstructed it, which lay between us and heaven. Christ drank of this brook when he was made a curse for us; and therefore, when he entered upon his suffering, he "went over the brook Kidron," *Jno.* xviii. 1. He drank deep of this black brook, (so Kidron signifies,) this bloody brook; so drank of the brook in the way, as to take it out of the way of our redemption and salvation.

2. He shall be exalted; "Therefore shall he lift up the head." When he died he bowed the head, *Jno.* xix. 30, but he soon lifted up the head by his own power in his resurrection. He lifted up the head as a conqueror, yea, more than a conqueror. This notes not only his exaltation, but his exultation; not only his elevation, but his triumph in it; *Col.* ii. 15, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them." David spoke as a type of him in this, *Ps.* xxvii. 6, "Now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies." His exaltation was the reward of his humiliation; because "he humbled himself, therefore God also has highly exalted him," *Phil.* ii. 9. Because he drunk of the brook in the way, therefore he lifted up his own head, and so lifted up the heads of all his faithful followers, who if they suffer with him shall also reign with him.

PSALM CXI.

This, and divers of the psalms that follow it, seem to have been penned by David, for the service of the church in their solemn feasts, and not upon any particular occasion. This is a psalm of praise; the title of it is "Hallelujah; Praise ye the Lord;" intimating, that we must address ourselves to the use of this psalm with hearts disposed to praise God. It is composed alphabetically, each sentence beginning with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in order exactly; two sentences to each verse, and three a piece to the two last. The psalmist exhorting to praise God, I. Sets himself for an example, ver. 1. II. Furnishes us with matter for praise from the works of God: 1. The greatness of his works, and the glory of them; 2. The righteousness of them; 3. The goodness of them; 4. The power of them; 5. The conformity of them to his word of promise; 6. The perpetuity of them. These observations are intermixed, ver. 2—9. III. He recommends the holy fear of God, and a conscientious obedience to his commands, as the most acceptable way of praising God, ver. 10.

PRAISE ye the LORD.
I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,
In the assembly of the upright, and *in* the congregation.
2 The works of the LORD *are* great,
Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.
3 His work *is* honourable and glorious:
And his righteousness endureth for ever.
4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered:
The LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion.
5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him:
He will ever be mindful of his covenant.

The title of the psalm being "Hallelujah," the psalmist, as every author ought to have, has an eye to his title, and keeps to his text.

First. He resolves to praise God himself, ver. 1. What duty we call others to, we must oblige and excite ourselves to; nay, whatever others do, whether they will praise God or no, we and our houses must determine to do it—we and our hearts; for such is the psalmist's resolution here, "I will praise the Lord with my whole heart." My heart, my whole heart, being devoted to his honour, shall be employed in this work; and this "in the assembly," or secret, "of the upright," in the cabinet council, "and in the congregation" of Israelites. Note, We must praise God both in private and in public, in lesser and greater assemblies, in our own families, and in the courts of the Lord's house; but in both it is most comfortable to do it in consort with the upright, who will heartily join in it. Private meetings for devotion should be kept up as well as more public and promiscuous assemblies.

Secondly. He recommends to us the works of God, as the proper subject of our meditations when we are praising him; the dispensations of his providence, both towards the world and towards the church, and particular persons.

1. God's works are very magnificent; great like himself. There is nothing in them that is mean or trifling; they are the products of infinite wisdom and power; and we must say this upon the first view of them, before we come to inquire more particularly into them, that "the works of the Lord are great," ver. 2. There is something in them surprising, and that strikes an awe upon us. All the works of the Lord are spoken of as one, ver. 3. It is his work; such is the beauty and harmony of providence, and so admirably do all its dispensations centre in one design. It was "cried to the wheels, O wheel," *Eze.* x. 13. Take all together, and it is honourable and glorious, and such as becomes him.

2. They are entertaining and exercising to the inquisitive. They are "sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Note, 1st. All that truly love God have pleasure in his works, and reckon all well that he doeth; nor do their thoughts dwell upon any subject with more delight than on the works of God, which the more they are looked into the more they give us of a pleasing surprise. 2nd. They that have pleasure in the works of God will not take up with a superficial transient view of them, but will diligently search into and observe them. In studying both natural and political history, we should have this in our eye, to discover the greatness and glory of God's works. 3rd. These works of God that are humbly and diligently sought into shall be sought out; they that seek shall find, so some read it; 'found of all them that have pleasure in them,' or found in all their parts, designs, purposes, and several concernments, so Dr. Hammond; for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," *Ps.* xxv. 14.

3. They are all just and holy; "His righteousness endureth for ever." Whatever he doth, he never did nor never will do any wrong to any of his creatures; and therefore his works endure for ever, *Eccl.* iii. 14, because the righteousness of them doth so.

4. They are admirable and memorable, fit to be registered, and kept on record. Much that we do is so trifling, that it is not fit to be spoken of, or told again, the greatest kindness is to forget it; but notice is to be taken of God's works, and an account to be kept of them; ver. 4, "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered," that is, he hath done that which is worthy to be remembered, which cannot but be remembered; and he hath instituted ways and means for the keeping of some of them in remembrance, as the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt by the passover. 'He hath made him a memorial by his wonderful works,' so some read it: see *Isa.* lxiii. 12; by that which God did with his glorious arm, he made himself an everlasting name.

5. They are very kind. In them the Lord shews that he is "gracious and full of compassion." As of the works of creation, so of the works of providence, we must say they are not only all very great, but all very good. Dr. Hammond takes this to be the name which God has made to himself by his wonderful works, the same with that which he proclaimed to Moses, "The Lord God is gracious and merciful," *Ex.* xxxiv. 6. God's pardoning sin is the most wonderful of his works, and which ought to be remembered to his glory. It is a farther instance of his grace and compassion, that "he hath given meat to them that fear him," ver. 5. He gives them their daily bread, food convenient for them; so he doth to others by common providence, but to them that fear him he gives it by covenant, and in pursuance of the promise; for it follows, "he will be ever mindful of his covenant," so that they can taste covenant love even in common mercies. Some refer this to the manna, with which God fed his people Israel in the wilderness; others to the spoil they got from the Egyptians when they came out with great substance, according to the promise, *Gen.* xv. 14. When God brake the heads of leviathan, he gave him to be meat to his people, *Ps.* lxxiv. 14. 'He hath given prey to them that fear him,' so the margin has it; not only fed them, but enriched them, and given their enemies to be a prey to them.

6. They are earnests of what he will do according to his promise. "He will ever be mindful of his covenant," for he has ever been so; and as he never did so he never will let one jot or tittle of it fall to the ground. Though God's people have their infirmities, and are often unmindful of his commands, yet "he will be ever mindful of his covenant."

6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works,
That he may give them the heritage of the heathen.
7 The works of his hands *are* verity and judgment;
All his commandments *are* sure.
8 They stand fast for ever and ever,
And are done in truth and uprightness.
9 He sent redemption unto his people:
He hath commanded his covenant for ever:
Holy and reverend *is* his name.
10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom:

A good understanding have all they that do *his commandments:*
His praise endureth for ever.

We are here taught to give glory to God,

First. For the great things he has done for his people, for his people Israel, of old and of late. "He hath shewed his people the power of his works," ver. 6. In what he hath wrought for them, many a time, he hath given proofs of his omnipotence, and shewed them what he can do, and that there is nothing too hard for him to do. Two things are instanced in, to shew the power of his works:

1. The possession God gave to Israel in the land of Canaan; "That he might give them," or "in giving them, the heritage of the heathen." This he did in Joshua's time, when the seven nations were subdued; and in David's time, when the neighbour nations were many of them brought into subjection to Israel, and became tributaries to David. Herein God shewed his sovereignty, in disposing kingdoms as he pleaseth, and his might in making good his disposals. If God will make the heritage of the heathen to be the heritage of Israel, who can either arraign his counsel or stay his hand?

2. The many deliverances which he wrought for his people, when by their iniquities they had sold themselves into the hand of their enemies; ver. 9, "He sent redemption unto his people," not only out of Egypt at first, but often afterwards. And these redemptions were typical of the great redemption, which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord Jesus, that redemption in Jerusalem which so many waited for.

Secondly. For the stability both of his word and of his works, which assure us of the great things he will do for them.

1. What God hath done shall never be undone. He will not undo it himself, and men and devils cannot; ver. 7, "The works of his hand are verity and judgment," that is, ver. 8, "they are done in truth and uprightness;" all he doth is consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of equity, all according to the counsel of his wisdom, and the purpose of his will; all well done, and therefore there is nothing in them to be altered or amended, but they are firm and unchangeable. Upon the beginning of his works we may depend for the perfecting of them; work that is done true will last, will neither go to decay nor sink under the stress that is laid upon it.

2. What God hath said shall never be unsaid. "All his commandments are sure," all straight, and therefore all steady. His purposes, the rule of his actions, shall all have their accomplishment; "hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" No doubt he shall; whether he commands light or darkness, it is done as he commands. His precepts, the rule of our actions, are unquestionably just and good, and therefore unchangeable, and not to be repealed. His promises and threatenings are all sure, and will be made good; nor shall the unbelief of man make either the one or the other of none effect. They are established, and therefore they stand fast for ever and ever, and the Scripture cannot be broken. The wise God is never put upon new counsels, nor obliged to take new measures, either in his laws or in his providences. All is said as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable. Men's folly and falsehood make them unstable in all their ways; but infinite wisdom and truth for ever exclude retractation and revocation. "He has commanded his covenant for ever." God's covenant is commanded, for he has made it as one that hath an incontestable authority to prescribe both what we must do and what we must expect; and an unquestionable ability to perform both what he has promised in the blessings of the covenant and what he has threatened in the curses of it, *Ps.* cv. 8.

Thirdly. For the setting up and establishing religion among men. Because holy and reverend is his name, and the fear of him is the beginning of wisdom, therefore his praise endureth for ever, that is, he is to be everlastingly praised.

1. Because the discoveries of religion tend so much to his honour. Review what he has made known of himself in his word and in his works, and you will see and say that God is great, and greatly to be feared, for his name is holy; his infinite purity and rectitude appears in all that whereby he has made himself known, and because it is holy, therefore it is reverend, and to be thought of and mentioned with a holy awe. Note, What is holy is reverend; the angels have an eye to God's holiness, when they cover their faces before him, and nothing is more man's honour than his sanctification. It is in his holy places that God appears most terrible, *Ps.* lxviii. 35; *Lev.* x. 3.

2. Because the dictates of religion tend so much to man's happiness. We have reason to praise God that the matter is so well contrived, that our reverence of him and obedience to him is as much our interest as it is our duty.

1st. Our reverence of him is so; "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is not only reasonable itself that we should fear God because his name is reverend and his nature holy, but it is advantageous to us. It is wisdom; it will direct us to speak and act as becomes us, in a consistency with ourselves, and for our own benefit. It is the head of wisdom, that is, as we read it, it is the beginning of wisdom. Men never begin to be wise till they begin to fear God. All true wisdom takes its rise from true religion, and has its foundation in it: or, as some understand it, it is the chief wisdom and the most excellent, the first in dignity. It is the principal wisdom and the principle of wisdom, to worship God and give honour to him as our Father and Master. They manage well that always act under the government of his holy fear.

2nd. Our obedience to him is so; "A good understanding have all they that do his commandments." Where the fear of the Lord rules in the heart, there will be a constant conscientious care to keep his commandments, not to talk of them, but to do them, and such have a good understanding; that is, *First.* They are well understood, their obedience is graciously accepted, as a plain indication of their mind, that they do indeed fear God: compare *Pr.* iii. 4, "So shalt thou find favour and good understanding." God and man will look upon such as meaning well, and approve of them, who make conscience of their duty, though they have their mistakes; what is honestly intended shall be well taken. *Secondly.* They understand well. 1*st.* It is a sign they do understand well. The most obedient are accepted as the most intelligent; those understand themselves and their interest best that make God's law their rule, and are in every thing ruled by it. A great understanding they have that know God's commandments, and can discourse learnedly of them; but a good understanding have they that do them, and walk according to them. 2*nd.* It is the way to understand better. 'A good understanding are they to all that do them;' that is, the fear of the Lord and the laws of that, give men a good understanding, and are able to make them wise unto salvation. "If any man will do his will, he shall know" more and more clearly "of the doctrine" of Christ, *Jno.* vii. 17. Good success have all they that do them, (so the margin,) according to what was promised Joshua, if he would observe to do according to the law, *Jos.* i. 8, "Then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and shalt have good success." We have reason to praise God, to praise him for ever, for putting man into such a fair way to happiness. Some apply the last words rather to the good man who fears the Lord than to the good God; "His praise endures for ever;" it is not of men, perhaps, but it is of God, *Rom.* ii. 29. And that praise which is of God endures for ever, when the praise of men is withered and gone.

PSALM CXII.

This psalm is composed alphabetically as the former is, and is (like the former) entitled Hallelujah, though it treats of the happiness of the saints, because it redounds to the glory of God; and whatever we have the pleasure of he must have the praise of. It is a comment upon the last verse of the foregoing psalm, and fully shews how much it is our wisdom to fear God, and do his commandments. We have here, I. The character of the righteous, ver. 1. II. The blessedness of the righteous. 1. There is a blessing entailed on their posterity, ver. 2. 2. There is a blessing conferred upon themselves: 1st. Prosperity, outward and inward, ver. 3; 2nd. Comfort, ver. 4; 3rd. Wisdom, ver. 5; 4th. Stability, ver. 6—8; 5th. Honour, ver. 6—9. II. The misery of the wicked, ver. 10. So that here is good and evil set before us, the blessing and the curse. In singing this psalm we must not only teach and admonish ourselves and one another to answer the characters here given of the happy, but comfort and encourage ourselves and one another with the privileges and comforts here secured to the holy.

PRAISE ye the LORD.
Blessed *is* the man *that* feareth the LORD,
That delighteth greatly in his commandments.
2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth:
The generation of the upright shall be blessed.
3 Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house:
And his righteousness endureth for ever.
4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness:
He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.
5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth:
He will guide his affairs with discretion.

The psalmist begins with a call to us to praise God, but immediately applies himself to praise the people of God, for whatever glory is acknowledged to be on them, it comes from God, and must return to him. As he is their praise, so they are his. We have reason to praise the Lord that there is a people in the world that fear him and serve him, and that they are a happy people, both which are owing entirely to the grace of God. Now here we have,

First. A description of those who are here pronounced blessed, and to whom these promises are made.

1. They are well principled with pious and devout affections. Those have the privileges of God's subjects, not that cry, Lord, Lord, but are indeed well affected to his government. 1st. They are such as stand in awe of God, and have a constant reverence for his majesty and deference to his will. The happy man is he "that feareth the Lord," ver. 1. 2nd. They are such as take a pleasure in their duty. He "that feareth the Lord," as a Father, with the disposition of a child, not of a slave, "delighteth greatly in his commandments;" is well pleased with them, and with the equity and goodness of them. They are written in his heart; it is his choice to be under them, and he calls them an easy, a pleasant yoke; it is his delight to be searching into and conversing with God's commandments, by reading, hearing, and meditation, *Ps.* i. 2. He not only delights in God's promises but in his precepts, and thinks himself happy under God's government as well as in his favour. It is a pleasure to him to be found in the way of his duty, and he is in his element when he is in the service of God. Herein he delights greatly, more than in any of the employments and enjoyments of this world. And what he doth in religion is done from principle, because he sees amiableness in religion and advantage by it.

2. They are honest and sincere in their professions and intentions. They are called the upright, ver. 24, that are really as good as they seem to be, and deal faithfully both with God and man. There is no true religion without sincerity; that is gospel perfection.

3. They are both just and kind in all their dealings. "He is gracious, full of compassion, and righteous," ver. 4; dares not do any wrong to any man, but doth to every man all the good he can, and that from a principle of compassion and kindness. It was said of God in the foregoing psalm, ver. 4, he is gracious and full of compassion; and here it is said of the good man that he is so, for herein we must be followers of God, as dear children, be merciful, as he is. He is full of compassion, and yet righteous; what he doth good with is what he came honestly by; God hates robbery for burnt offerings, and so doth he. One instance is given of his beneficence, ver. 5, "He shews favour and lendeth." Sometimes there is as much charity in lending as in giving, as it obligeth the borrower both to industry and honesty. He is gracious and lendeth, *Ps.* xxxvii. 26, that is, he doth it from a right principle, not as the usurer lends for his own advantage, nor merely out of generosity, but out of pure charity; he doth it in a right manner, not grudgingly, but pleasantly, and with a cheerful countenance.

Secondly. The blessedness that is here entailed upon those that answer these characters; "Happiness, all happiness, to the man that feareth the Lord." Whatever men think or say of them, God saith they are blessed, and his saying so makes them so.

1. The posterity of a good man shall fare the better for his goodness; ver. 2, "His seed shall be mighty on earth;" perhaps he himself shall not be so great in the world, nor make such a figure as his seed after him shall for his sake. Religion has been the raising of many a family, if not so as to advance it high, yet so as to found it firm. When good men themselves are happy in heaven, their seed perhaps are considerable on earth, and will themselves own it is by virtue of a blessing descending from them. "The generation of the upright shall be blessed." If they tread in their steps, they shall be the more blessed for their relation to them; "beloved for the fathers' sakes," *Rom.* xi. 28, for so runs the covenant, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed;" while "the seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned." Let the children of godly parents value themselves upon it, and take heed of doing any thing to forfeit the blessing entailed upon the generation of the upright.

2. They shall prosper in the world, and especially their souls shall prosper, ver. 3. 1st. They shall be blessed with outward prosperity, as far as is good for them. Wealth and riches shall be in the upright man's house, not in his heart, for he is none of those in whom the love of money reigns; perhaps not much in his hand, (for he only begins to raise the estate,) but in his house, his family shall grow rich when he is gone. But, 2nd. That which is much better is, that they shall be blessed with spiritual blessings, which are the true riches. His wealth shall be in his house, for he must leave that to others; but his

righteousness he himself shall have the comfort of to himself, it endureth for ever. Grace is better than gold, for it will outlast it. He shall have wealth and riches, and yet shall keep up his religion, and in a prosperous condition shall still hold fast his integrity, which many, that kept it in the storm, throw off and let go in the sunshine. Then worldly prosperity is a blessing when it doth not make men cool in their piety, but they still persevere in that; and when this endures in the family and goes along with the wealth and riches, and the heirs of his father's estate inherit his virtues too, that is a happy family indeed. However, the good man's righteousness endureth for ever, in the crown of righteousness which fades not away.

3. They shall have comfort in affliction; ver. 4, "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." It is here implied that good men may be in affliction; the promise doth not exempt them from that, they shall have their share in the common calamities of human life; but "when they sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light to them," *Mic.* vii. 8. They shall be supported and comforted under their troubles; their spirits shall be lightsome, when their outward condition is clouded; *Sat lucis intus*—'There is light enough within.' In Egyptian darkness the Israelites had light in their dwellings. They shall be in due time, and perhaps when they least expect it, delivered out of their troubles; when the night is darkest the day dawns; nay, "at evening time," when night was looked for, "it shall be light."

4. They shall have wisdom for the management of all their concerns, ver. 5. He that doth good with his estate God's providence shall increase it, not by miracle but by his prudence; "He shall guide his affairs with discretion," and "his God doth instruct him to discretion, and teach him," *Isa.* xxviii. 26. It is part of the character of a good man, that he will use his discretion in managing his affairs, in getting and saving, that he may have to give. It may be understood of the affairs of his charity; he sheweth favour and lendeth, but then it is with discretion, that his charity may not be misplaced, that he may give to proper objects what is proper to be given, and in due time and proportion. And it is part of the promise to him that thus useth discretion, that God will give him more. They that most use their wisdom, see most of their need of it, and ask it of God, who hath promised to give it liberally, *Jas.* i. 5. 'He will guide his words with judgment,' so it is in the original; and there is nothing in which we have more occasion for wisdom than in the government of the tongue. Blessed is he to whom God gives that wisdom.

6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever:
The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.
7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:
His heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.
8 His heart *is* established, he shall not be afraid,
Until he see *his desire* upon his enemies.
9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor;
His righteousness endureth for ever;
His horn shall be exalted with honour.
10 The wicked shall see *it*, and be grieved;
He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away:
The desire of the wicked shall perish.

In these verses we have,

First. The satisfaction of saints and their stability. It is the happiness of a good man, that "he shall not be moved for ever," ver. 6. Satan and his instruments endeavour to move him, but his foundation is firm, and he shall never be moved, at least not moved for ever; but if he be shaken for a time, yet he settles again presently.

1. A good man will have a settled reputation, and that is a great satisfaction. A good man shall have a good name, that is, a name for good things with God and good people. "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," ver. 6; and in this sense "his righteousness endures for ever," that is, the memorial of it, ver. 9. There are those that do all they can to sully his reputation, and to load him with reproach, but his integrity shall be cleared up, and the honour of it shall survive him. Some that have been eminently righteous are had in a lasting remembrance on earth; wherever the Scripture is read, their good deeds are told for a memorial of them. And the memory of many a good man that is dead and gone is still blessed; but in heaven their remembrance shall be truly everlasting, and the honour of their righteousness shall there endure for ever with the reward of it, in the crown of glory that fadeth not away. They that are forgotten on earth and despised are remembered there and honoured, and their righteousness found unto praise, and honour, and glory, 1 *Pet.* i. 7. Then at farthest shall the horn of a good man be exalted with honour, as that of the unicorn when he is a conqueror. Wicked men now in their pride lift up their horns on high, but they shall all be cut off, *Ps.* lxxv. 5—10. The godly, in their humility and humiliation, have defiled their horn in the dust, *Job* xvi. 15, but the day is coming when it shall be exalted with honour. That which shall especially turn to the honour of good men is, their liberality and bounty to the poor. "He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor;" he hath not suffered his charity to run all in one channel, or directed it to some few objects that he had a particular kindness for; but he has dispersed it, given a portion to seven and also to eight, hath sown beside all waters, and by thus scattering he hath increased. And this is his righteousness which endureth for ever. Alms are called righteousness, not because they will justify us by making atonement for our evil deeds, but because they are good deeds, which we are obliged to; so that if we are not charitable we are not just; we withhold good from those to whom it is due. The honour of this endureth for ever, for it shall be taken notice of in the great day, "I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat." This is quoted as an inducement and encouragement to charity, 2 *Cor.* ix. 9.

2. A good man shall have a settled spirit, and that is a much greater satisfaction than the former; for "so shall a man have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." "Surely he shall not be moved," whatever happens; not moved either from his duty, or from his comfort, for "he shall not be afraid; his heart is established," ver. 7, 8. This is a part both of the character and of the comfort of good people. It is their endeavour to keep their mind stayed upon God, and so to keep them calm, and easy, and undisturbed, and God has promised them both cause to do so and grace to do so. Observe, 1st. It is the duty and interest of the people of God not to be afraid of evil tidings, not to be afraid of hearing bad news, and when they do, not to be put into confusion by it, and into an amazing expectation of worse and worse; but whatever happens, whatever threatens, to be able to say with blessed Paul, "None of these things move me," neither will I fear though the earth be removed, *Ps.* xlvi. 2. 2nd. The fixedness of the heart and the establishment of that is a sovereign remedy against the disquieting fear of evil tidings. If we keep our thoughts composed and ourselves masters of them, our wills resigned to the holy will of God, our tempers sedate, and our spirits even under all the unevennesses of providence, we are well fortified against the tosses of the timorous. 3rd. Trusting in the Lord is the best and surest way of fixing and establishing the heart. By faith we must cast anchor in the promise, in the Word of God, and so return to him, and repose in him as our rest. The heart of man cannot fix anywhere to its satisfaction but in the truth of God, and there it finds firm footing. 4th. They whose hearts are established by faith will patiently wait till they have gained their point. "He shall not be afraid until he see his desire upon his enemies," that is, till he come to heaven, where he shall see Satan and all his spiritual enemies trodden under his feet, and as Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea shore. 'Until he look upon his oppressors,' (so Dr. Hammond,) that is, till he behold them securely, and look boldly in their faces, as being now no longer under their power. It will complete the satisfaction of the saints when they shall look back upon their troubles and pressures, and be able to say with St. Paul, when he had recounted the persecutions he endured, 2 *Tim.* iii. 11, "But out of them all the Lord delivered me."

2. The vexation of sinners, ver. 10. Two things shall fret them: 1st. The felicity of the righteous. "The wicked shall see" the righteous in prosperity and honour, "and shall be grieved;" it will vex them to see their innocency cleared, and their low estate regarded, and those whom they hated and despised, and whose ruin they sought, and hoped to see, the favourites of Heaven, and advanced to have dominion over them, *Ps.* xlix. 14. This will make them gnash with their teeth and pine away. This is often fulfilled in this world. The happiness of the saints is the envy of the wicked, and that envy is the rottenness of their bones. But it will be most fully accomplished in the other world, when it shall make damned sinners gnash with their teeth to see Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; to see all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and themselves thrust out. 2nd. Their own disappointment. "The desire of the wicked shall perish;" their desire was wholly to the world and the flesh, and they ruled over them; and therefore when these perish their joy is gone, and their expectations from them are cut off, to their everlasting confusion; their hope is as a spider's web.

PSALM CXIII.

This psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah; for, as many others, it is designed to promote the great and good work of praising God. I. We are here called upon and urged to praise God, ver. 1—3. II. We are here furnished with matter for praise, and words are put into our mouths; in singing which we must with holy fear and love give to God the glory of, 1. The elevations of his glory and greatness, ver. 4, 5; 2. The condescensions of his grace and goodness, ver. 6—9, which very much illustrate one another, that we may be duly affected with both.

PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise, O ye servants of the LORD,
Praise the name of the LORD.
2 Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore. [same
3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the
The LORD's name *is* to be praised.
4 The LORD *is* high above all nations,
And his glory above the heavens.
5 Who *is* like unto the LORD our God,
Who dwelleth on high,
6 Who humbleth *himself* to behold
The things that are in heaven, and in the earth!
7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust,
And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;
8 That he may set *him* with princes,
Even with the princes of his people.
9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house,
And to be a joyful mother of children.
Praise ye the LORD.

In this psalm,

First. We are exhorted to give glory to God, to give him the glory due to his name. The invitation is very pressing, "Praise ye the Lord;" and again, and again, "Praise him, praise him; blessed be his name," for it is to be praised, ver. 1—3. This intimates, 1. That it is a necessary and most excellent duty, greatly pleasing to God, and has a large room in religion. 2. That it is a duty which we should much abound in, in which we should be frequently employed, and greatly enlarged. 3. That it is work we are very backward to, and which we need to be engaged and excited to by precept upon precept, and line upon line. 4. That those who are much in praising God themselves will court others to it, both because they find the weight of the work, and that there is need of all the help they can fetch in—there is employment for all hearts, all hands, and all little enough—and because they find the pleasure of it, which they wish all their friends may share in. Observe,

1. From whom God hath praise. From his own people; they are here called upon to praise God as those that will answer the call, "Praise, O ye servants of the Lord." They have most reason to praise him; for they that attend him as his servants know him best, and receive most of his favours; and it is their business to praise him. That is the work required of them as his servants; it is easy, pleasant work, to speak well of their Master, and do him what honour they can. If they do not, who should? Some understand it of the Levites; but if so, all Christians are "a royal priesthood, to shew forth the praises of him that has called them," 1 *Pet.* ii. 9. The angels are "the servants of the Lord," who, though they need not be called upon by us to praise God, yet it is a comfort to us that they do it better than we can.

2. From whom he ought to have praise.

1st. From all ages; ver. 2, "From this time forth for evermore." Let not this work die with us, but let us be doing it in a better world, and let those that

come after us be doing it in this. Let not our seed degenerate, but let God be praised through all the generations of time, and not in this only. We must bless the Lord in our day, by saying with the psalmist, Blessed be his name now and always.

2nd. From all places; "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same," that is, throughout all the habitable world. Let all that enjoy the benefit of the sun-rising, (and those that do so must count upon it that he will set,) give thanks for that light to the Father of lights. "God's name is to be praised," that is, it ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from east to west, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power, and goodness; and it is to be lamented that so great a part of mankind are ignorant of him, and give that praise to others which is due to him alone. But perhaps there is more in it: as the former verse gave us a glimpse of the kingdom of glory, intimating that God's name shall be blessed for ever, when time shall be no more, that praise shall be the work of heaven, so this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the Gospel dispensation of it, when the church shall no longer be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall spread itself all the world over, when "in every place" spiritual "incense shall be offered to our God," *Mal.* i. 11; then "from the rising to the setting of the sun the Lord's name shall be praised" by some in all countries.

Secondly. We are here directed what to give him the glory of.

1. Let us look up with an eye of faith, and see how high his glory is in the upper world, and mention that to his praise, ver. 4, 5. We are in our praises to exalt his name; for he is high, his glory is high. 1st. High above all nations; their kings, though never so pompous; their people, though never so numerous. Whether it be true of an earthly king or no, that though he is *major singulis*,—'greater than individuals,' he is *minor universis*,—'less than the whole,' we will not dispute; but we are sure it is not true of the King of kings. Put all the nations together and he is above them all; and they are before him as "the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance," *Isa.* xl. 15, 17. Let all nations think and speak highly of God, for he is high above them all. 2nd. High above the heavens; the throne of his glory is in the highest heavens; which should raise our hearts in praising him, *Lam.* iii. 41. "His glory is above the heavens," that is, above the angels; he is above what they are, their brightness is nothing to his; above what they do, for they are under his command, and do his pleasure; and above what even they can speak him to be. He is "exalted above all blessing and praise," not only all ours, but all theirs. We must therefore say with a holy admiration, "Who is like unto the Lord our God?" Who of all the princes and potentates of the earth? Who of all the bright and blessed spirits above? None can equal him, none dare compare with him. God is to be praised as transcendently, incomparably, and infinitely great; for he dwelleth on high, and from on high sees all, and rules all, and justly attracts all praise to himself.

2. Let us look round with an eye of observation, and see how extensive his goodness is in the lower world, and mention that to his praise. He is a God 'who exalteth himself to dwell, who humbleth himself in heaven, and in earth.' Some think here is a transposition, 'He exalteth himself to dwell in heaven, he humbleth himself to behold on earth:' but the sense is plain enough as we take it; only observe, God is said to exalt himself, and to humble himself; both are his own act and deed; as he is self-existent, so he is both the fountain of his own honour and the spring of his own grace. God's condescending goodness appears,

1st. In the cognizance he takes of the world below him. His glory is above the nations and above the heavens, and yet neither are neglected by him; God is great, yet he despiseth not any, *Job* xxxvi. 5. "He humbleth himself to behold" all his creatures, all his subjects, though he be infinitely above them. Considering the infinite perfection, sufficiency and felicity of the Divine nature, it must be acknowledged an act of wonderful condescension that God is pleased to take into the thoughts of his eternal counsel, and into the hand of his universal providence, both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, *Dan.* iv. 35. Even in this dominion he humbleth himself. *First.* It is condescension in him to behold the things in heaven, to support the beings, direct the motions, and accept the praises and services of the angels themselves; for he needs them not, nor is benefited by them. *Secondly.* Much more is it condescension in him to behold the things that are in the earth, to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and overrule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example of stooping to do good, of taking notice of and concerning ourselves about our inferiors. If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth, and take our nature upon him, that he might seek and save them that were lost! Herein indeed he humbled himself.

2nd. In the particular favour he sometimes shews to the least and lowest of the inhabitants of this lesser lower world. He not only beholds the great things in the earth, but the meanest, and those things which great men commonly overlook. Nor doth he only behold them, but doth wonders for them, and things that are very surprising, out of the common road of providence and chain of causes; which shews that the world is governed not by a course of nature, for that would always run in the same channel, but by a God of nature, who delights in doing things we looked not for.

First. Those that have been long despicable are sometimes on a sudden made honourable; ver. 7, 8, "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, that he may set him with princes." *1st.* Thus God doth sometimes magnify himself, and his own wisdom, power, and sovereignty. When he hath some great work to do, he chooseth to employ those in it that were least likely, and least thought of, for it, by themselves or others, to the highest post of honour; Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles from fishing sent to be fishers of men. The treasure of the Gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and foolish ones of the world pitched upon to be the preachers of it, to confound the wise and mighty, 1 *Cor.* i. 27, 28; that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him. *2nd.* Thus God doth sometimes reward the eminent piety and patience of his people that have long groaned under the burthen of poverty and disgrace. When Joseph's virtue was tried and manifested, he was raised from the prison dust, and set with princes. They that are wise will observe such returns of Providence, and will understand by them the loving-kindness of the Lord. Some have applied this to the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, and not unfitly, for through him poor fallen men are raised out of the dust, (one of the Jewish rabbins applies it to the resurrection of the dead,) nay, out of the dunghill of sin, and set among princes, among angels, those princes of his people. Hannah had sung to this purpose, 1 *Sam.* ii. 6—8.

Secondly. Those that have been long barren are sometimes on a sudden made fruitful, ver. 9. This may look back to Sarah, and Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah, and Samson's mother, or forward to Elizabeth; and many such instances there have been, in which God has looked on the affliction of his handmaids, and taken away their reproach. "He maketh the barren woman to keep house," not only builds up the family, but thereby finds the heads of the family something to do. Note, They that have the comfort of a family must take the care of it; bearing children and guiding the house are put together, 1 *Tim.* v. 14. When God sets the barren in a family, he expects that she look well to the ways of her household, *Pr.* xxxi. 27. She is said to be "a joyful mother of children," not only because even in common cases the pain is forgotten for joy that a man child is born into the world, but there is particular joy when a child is born to those that have been long childless, as *Lu.* i. 14, and therefore there ought to be particular thanksgiving; "Praise ye the Lord." Yet in this case rejoice with trembling, for though the sorrowful mother be made joyful, the joyful mother may be made sorrowful again, if the children be either removed from her or embittered to her. This therefore may be applied to the Gospel church among the Gentiles, the building of which is illustrated by this similitude, *Isa.* liv. 1, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear;" *Gal.* iv. 27. For which we, that being sinners of the Gentiles are children of the desolate, have reason to say, "Praise ye the Lord."

PSALM CXIV.

The deliverance of Israel out of Egypt gave birth to their church and nation, which was then founded, then formed; that work of wonder ought therefore to be had in everlasting remembrance. God gloried in it in the preface to the ten commandments, and *Hos.* xi. 1, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." In this psalm it is celebrated in lively strains of praise; it was fitly therefore made a part of the great Hallelujah, or song of praise which the Jews were wont to sing at the close of the passover supper. It must never be forgotten, I. That they were brought out of slavery, ver. 1. II. That God set up his tabernacle among them, ver. 2. III. That the sea and Jordan were divided before them, ver. 3—5. IV. That the earth shook at the giving the law, when God came down on mount Sinai, ver. 4, 6, 7. V. That God gave them water out of the rock, ver. 8. In singing this we must acknowledge God's power and goodness in what he did for Israel, applying it to the much greater work of wonder, our redemption by Christ, and encouraging ourselves and others to trust in God in the greatest straits.

WHEN Israel went out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language;
2 Judah was his sanctuary,
And Israel his dominion.
3 The sea saw *it*, and fled:
Jordan was driven back.
4 The mountains skipped like rams,
And the little hills like lambs.
5 What *ailed* thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?
Thou Jordan, *that* thou wast driven back?
6 Ye mountains, *that* ye skipped like rams;
And ye little hills, like lambs?
7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord,
At the presence of the God of Jacob;
8 Which turned the rock *into* a standing water,
The flint into a fountain of waters.

The psalmist is here remembering the days of old, the years of the right hand of the Most High, and the wonders which their fathers told them of, *Jud.* vi. 13, for time, as it doth not wear out the guilt of sin, so it should not wear out the sense of mercy. Let it never be forgotten,

First. That God brought Israel out of the house of bondage with a high hand, and a stretched-out arm. "Israel went out of Egypt," ver. 1. They did not steal out clandestinely, nor were they driven out, but fairly went out; marched out with all the marks of honour. They went out from a barbarous people, that had used them barbarously; "from a people of a strange language," *Ps.* lxxxi. 5. The Israelites, it seems, preserved their own language pure among them, and cared not for learning the language of their oppressors. By which distinction from them they kept up an earnest of their deliverance.

Secondly. That he himself framed their civil and sacred constitution; ver. 2, "Judah and Israel were his sanctuary, his dominion," that is, when he delivered them out of the hand of their oppressors, it was that they might serve him, both in holiness and in righteousness, in the duties of religious worship, and in obedience to the moral law in their whole conversation. "Let my people go that they may serve me." In order to this, 1. He set up his sanctuary among them, in which he gave them the special tokens of his presence with them, and promised to receive their homage and tribute. Happy the people that have God's sanctuary among them, (see *Ex.* xxv. 8; *Eze.* xxxvii. 26,) much more they that, like Judah here, are his sanctuaries, his living temples, on whom holiness to the Lord is written. 2. He set up his dominion among them, was himself their lawgiver and their judge; and their government was a theocracy; "The Lord was their king." All the world is God's dominion, but Israel was so in a peculiar manner. What is God's sanctuary must be his dominion; those only have the privileges of his house that submit to the laws of it; and for this end Christ hath redeemed us, that he might bring us into God's service, and engage us for ever in it.

Thirdly. That the Red sea was divided before them at their coming out of Egypt, both for their rescue and the ruin of their enemies; and the river Jordan, when they entered into Canaan, for their honour, and the confusion and terror of their enemies; ver. 3, "The sea saw it," saw there Judah was God's sanctuary, and Israel his dominion, and therefore fled, for nothing could have been more awful. This was it that drove Jordan back, and was an invisible dam to his streams. God was at the head of that people, and therefore they must give way to them, must make room for them, they must retire contrary to their nature when God speaks the word. To illustrate this the psalmist asks in a poetical strain, ver. 5, "What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?" and furnisheth the sea with an answer, ver. 7, it was "at the presence of the Lord." This is designed to express, 1. The reality of the miracle, that it was not by any power of nature, or from any natural cause, but it was "at the presence of the Lord" who gave the word. 2. The mercy of the miracle. "What ailed thee?" Was it in a frolic? was it only to amuse men? No, it was "at the presence of the God of Jacob," it was in kindness to the Israel of God, for the salvation of that chosen people, that God was thus displeased against the rivers, and his wrath was against the sea, as the prophet speaks, *Hab.* iii. 8, 13; *Isa.* li. 10; lxiii. 11, &c. 3. The wonder and surprise of the miracle. Who would have thought of such a thing? Shall the course of nature be changed, and its fundamental laws dispensed with to serve a turn for

God's Israel? Well may the dukes of Edom be amazed, and the mighty men of Moab tremble, *Ex.* xv. 15. 4. The honour hereby put upon Israel, who are taught to triumph over the sea and Jordan, as unable to stand before them. Note, There is no sea, no Jordan, so deep, so broad, but, when God's time is come for the redemption of his people, it shall be divided and driven back, if it stand in their way. Apply this, 1st. To the planting of the Christian church in the world. What ailed Satan and the powers of darkness, to tremble and truckle as they did? *Mar.* i. 34; v. 7. What ailed the heathen oracles that they were silenced, struck dumb, struck dead? What ailed their idolatries and witchcrafts, that they died away before the Gospel, and melted like snow before the sun? What ailed the persecutors and opposers of the Gospel to give up their cause, to hide their guilty heads, and call to rocks and mountains for shelter? *Rev.* vi. 15. It was at the presence of the Lord, and that power which went along with the Gospel. 2nd. To the work of grace in the heart. What turns the stream in a regenerate soul? What ails the lusts and corruptions that they fly back? that the prejudices are removed, and the whole man becomes new? It is at the presence of God's Spirit that imaginations are cast down, 2 *Cor.* x. 5.

Fourthly. That the earth shook and trembled when God came down on mount Sinai to give the law; ver. 4, "The mountains skipped like rams," and then the little hills might well be excused if they skipped like lambs, either when they are frightened or when they sport themselves. The same power that fixed the fluid waters, and made them stand still, shook the stable mountains, and made them tremble; for all the powers of nature are under the check of the God of nature. Mountains and hills are before God but like rams and lambs, even the bulkiest and the most rocky, and as manageable by him as they are by the shepherd. The trembling of the mountains before the Lord may shame the stupidity and obduracy of the children of men, who are not moved at the discoveries of his glory. The psalmist asks the mountains and hills what ailed them to skip thus? and answers for them as for the seas. It was "at the presence of the Lord," before whom not only those mountains, but the earth itself, may well tremble, ver. 7, since it has lain under a curse for man's sin. See *Ps.* civ. 32; *Isa.* lxiv. 3, 4. He that made the hills and mountains to skip thus, can, when he pleaseth, dissipate the strength and spirit of the proudest of his enemies, and make them tremble.

Fifthly. That God supplied them with water out of the rock, which followed them through the dry and sandy deserts. Well may the earth and all its inhabitants tremble before that God who "turned the rock into a standing water," ver. 8; and what cannot he do who did that? The same Almighty power that turned waters into a rock, to be a wall to Israel, *Ex.* xiv. 22, turned the rock into waters to be a well to Israel. As they were protected, so they were provided for by miracles, standing miracles, for such was the standing water, that fountain of waters into which the rock, the flinty rock, was turned, and that rock was Christ, 1 *Cor.* x. 4; for he is a fountain of living waters to his Israel, from whom they receive grace for grace.

PSALM CXV.

Many ancient translations join this psalm to that which goes next before it; the Septuagint particularly, and the vulgar Latin; but it is in the Hebrew a distinct psalm. In it we are taught to give glory. I. To God and not to ourselves, ver. 1. II. To God and not to idols, ver. 2—8. We must give glory to God, 1. By trusting in him, and in his promise and blessing, ver. 9—15; 2. By blessing him, ver. 16—18. Some think this psalm was penned upon occasion of some great distress and trouble that the church of God was in, when the enemies were insolent and threatening, in which case the church doth not so much pour out her complaint to God, as place her confidence in God, and triumph in doing so; and with such a holy triumph we ought to sing this psalm.

NOT unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
But unto thy name give glory,
For thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.
2 Wherefore should the heathen say,
Where *is* now their God?
3 But our God *is* in the heavens:
He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.
4 Their idols *are* silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
5 They have mouths, but they speak not:
Eyes have they, but they see not:
6 They have ears, but they hear not:
Noses have they, but they smell not:
7 They have hands, but they handle not:
Feet have they, but they walk not:
Neither speak they through their throat.
8 They that make them are like unto them;
So is every one that trusteth in them.

Sufficient care is here taken to answer both the pretensions of self, and the reproaches of idolaters.

First. Boasting is here for ever excluded, ver. 1. Let no opinion of our own

EGYPTIAN GODS.—ver. 4.

merits have any room either in our prayers or in our praises; but let both centre in God's glory. 1. Have we received any mercy, gone through any service, or gained any success? We must not assume the glory of it to ourselves, but ascribe it wholly to God. We must not imagine that we do any thing for God by our own strength, or deserve any thing from God by our own righteousness; but all the good we do is done by the power of his grace, and all the good we have is the gift of his mere mercy; and therefore he must have all the praise. Say not, "The power of my hand has gotten me this wealth," *Deu.* viii. 17. Say not, "For my righteousness the Lord" has done these great and kind things for me, *Deu.* ix. 4. No; all our songs must be sung to this humble tune, "Not unto us, O Lord," and again, "Not unto us, but to thy name let all the glory be given;" for whatever good is wrought in us, or wrought for us, it is for his mercy and his truth's sake, because he will glorify his mercy, and fulfil his promise. All our crowns must be cast at the feet of him that sits upon the throne, for that is the proper place for them. 2. Are we in pursuit of any mercy, and wrestling with God for it? We must take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and have an eye to his glory more than to our own benefit in it. Lord, do so and so for us, not that we may have the credit and comfort of it, but that thy mercy and truth may have the glory of it. This must be our highest and ultimate end in our prayers, and therefore it is made the first petition in the Lord's prayer, as that which guides all the rest, "Hallowed be thy name," and in order to that, "Give us our daily bread," &c. This also must satisfy us if our prayers be not answered in the letter of them; whatever becomes of us, unto thy name give glory: see *Jno.* xii. 27, 28.

Secondly. The reproach of the heathen is here for ever silenced, and justly retorted.

1. The psalmist complains of the reproach of the heathen; ver. 2, "Wherefore should they say, Where is now their God?" that is, 1st. Why do they say so? Do they not know that our God is every where by his providence, and always nigh to us by his promise and grace? 2nd. Why doth God permit them to say so? Nay, why is Israel brought so low that they have some colour for saying so? Lord, appear for our relief, that thou mayest vindicate thyself, and glorify thine own name.

2. He gives a direct answer to their question, ver. 3. Do they ask where is our God? We can tell where he is. 1st. In the upper world is the presence of his glory, "Our God is in the heavens," where the gods of the heathen never were; "in the heavens," and therefore out of sight; but, though his majesty be unapproachable, it doth not therefore follow that his being is questionable. 2nd. In the lower world are the products of his power: "He hath done whatsoever he pleased," according to the counsel of his will; he hath a sovereign dominion, and a universal uncontrollable influence. Do you ask where he is? He is at the beginning and end of every thing, and not far from any of us.

3. He returns their question upon themselves. They asked, Where is the God of Israel? because he is not seen. He doth in effect ask, What are the gods of the heathen? because they are seen.

1st. He shews that their gods, though they are not shapeless things, are senseless things. Idolaters at first worshipped the sun and moon, *Job* xxxi. 26, which was bad enough, but not so bad as that which they were now come to, for evil men grow worse and worse, which was the worshipping of images, ver. 4. The matter of them was silver and gold digged out of the earth, ('Man found them poor and dirty in a mine'—*Herbert,*) proper things to make money of, but not to make gods of. The make of them was from the artificer; they are creatures of men's vain imaginations, and the works of men's hands, and therefore can have no divinity in them. If man is the work of God's hands, as certainly he is, and it was his honour that he was made in the image of God, it is absurd to think that that can be God which is the work of men's hands, or that it can be any other than a dishonour to God to make him in the image of man. The argument is irrefragable, "The workman made it, therefore it is not God," *Hos.* viii. 6. These idols are represented here as the most ridiculous things, a mere jest, that would seem to be something, but were really nothing; fitter for a toy shop than a temple, for children to play with, than for men to pray to. The painter, the carver, the statuary, did their part well enough; they made them with mouths and eyes, ears and noses, hands and feet, but they could put no life into them, and therefore no sense. They had better have worshipped a dead carcass, for that had life in it once, than a dead image which neither has life nor can have. They speak not in answer to those that consult them: the crafty priest must do it for them. In Baal's image there was "no voice, neither any that answered." They see not the prostrations of their worshippers before them, much less their burthens and wants. They hear not their prayers, though never so loud; they smell not their incense, though never so strong, never so sweet. They handle not the gifts presented to them, much less have they any gifts to bestow on their worshippers; they cannot stretch forth their hands to the needy. They walk not; they cannot stir a step for the relief of those that apply to them. Nay, they do not so much as breathe through their throat; they have not the least sign or symptom of life, but are as dead things after the priest has pretended to consecrate them, and call a deity into them, as they were before.

2nd. He thence infers the sottishness of their worshippers, ver. 8. They that make them images shew their ingenuity, and doubtless are sensible men; but they that make them gods shew their stupidity and folly, and are like unto them, as senseless blockish things. They see not the invisible things of the true and living God in the works of creation; they hear not the voice of the day and the night, which in every speech and language declare his glory, *Ps.* xix. 2, 3. By worshipping these foolish puppets they make themselves more and more foolish like them, and set themselves at a greater distance from every thing that is spiritual, sinking themselves deeper into the mire of sense; and withal they provoke God to give them up to a reprobate mind, a mind void of judgment, *Rom.* i. 28. They that trust in them act very absurdly, and very unreasonably; are senseless, helpless, useless like them, and they will find it so themselves to their own confusion. We shall know where our God is, and so shall they to their cost, when theirs are gone, *Jer.* x. 3, 11; *Isa.* xliv. 9, &c.

9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD :
He *is* their help and their shield.
10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD :
He *is* their help and their shield.
11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD :
He *is* their help and their shield.
12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless *us ;*
He will bless the house of Israel ;
He will bless the house of Aaron.
13 He will bless them that fear the LORD,
Both small and great.
14 The LORD shall increase you more and more,
You and your children.
15 Ye *are* blessed of the LORD
Which made heaven and earth.
16 The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD'S :
But the earth hath he given to the children of men.
17 The dead praise not the LORD,
Neither any that go down into silence.
18 But we will bless the LORD
From this time forth and for evermore.
Praise the LORD.

In these verses,

First. We are earnestly exhorted, all of us, to repose our confidence in God, and not suffer our confidence in him to be shaken by the heathens' insulting over us upon the account of our present distresses. It is folly to trust in dead images, but it is wisdom to trust in the living God, for he is a help and a shield to those that do trust in him; a help to furnish them with, and forward them in, that which is good; and a shield to fortify them against, and protect them from, every thing that is evil. Therefore, 1. Let Israel trust in the Lord; the body of the people as to their public interests, and every particular Israelite as to his own private concerns, let them leave it to God to dispose of all for them, and believe he will dispose of all for the best, and will be their help and shield. 2. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, and all the families of the house of Aaron, trust in the Lord, ver. 10. They are most maligned and struck at by the enemies, and therefore of them God has particular care. They ought to be examples to others of a cheerful confidence in God, and a faithful adherence to him in the worst of times. 3. Let the proselytes that are not of the seed of Israel, but fear the Lord, that worship him and make conscience of their duty to him, let them trust in him, for he will not fail nor forsake them, ver. 11. Note, Wherever there is an awful fear of God, there may be a cheerful faith in him. They that reverence his word may rely upon it.

Secondly. We are greatly encouraged to trust in God, and good reason is given us why we should stay ourselves upon him with an entire satisfaction. Consider,

1. What we have experienced; ver. 12, "The Lord has been mindful of us," and never unmindful; hath been so constantly, has been so remarkably, upon special occasions. He hath been mindful of our case, our wants, and burthens; mindful of our prayers to him, and his promises to us, and the covenant relation between him and us. All our comforts must be attributed to this, God's thoughts to usward; he hath been mindful us, though we have forgotten him. Let this engage us to trust in him, that we have found him faithful.

2. What we may expect. From what he has done for us, we may infer "he will bless us;" he that has been our help and our shield will be so; that has remembered us in our low estate, will not forget us; for he is still the same, his power and goodness the same, and his promise inviolable, so that we have reason to hope he that hath delivered, and doth, will yet deliver. Yet this is not all; "he will bless us;" that is, he hath promised that he will; he hath pronounced a blessing upon all his people. God's blessing us is not only speaking good to us, but doing well for us; those whom he blesseth are blessed indeed. It is particularly promised, that he "will bless the house of Israel;" that is, he will bless the commonwealth, will bless his people in their civil secular interests. "He will bless the house of Aaron," that is, the church, the ministry; will bless his people in their religious concerns. The priests were to bless the people, it was their office, *Num.* vi. 28; but God blessed them, and so blessed their blessings. Nay, ver. 13, "he will bless them that fear the Lord," though they be not of the house of Israel, or the house of Aaron; for it was a truth, before Peter perceived it, that in every nation he that fears God is accepted of him, and blessed, *Acts* x. 34, 35. He will bless them, both small and great; that is, both young and old. God has blessings in store for them that are good betimes, and for them that are old disciples; both those that are poor in the world, and those that make a figure; the greatest need his blessing, and it shall not be denied to the meanest that fear him. Both the weak in grace and the strong shall be blessed of God, the lambs and the sheep of his flock. It is promised, ver. 14, "The Lord shall increase you." Whom God blesseth he increaseth. That was one of the earliest and most ancient blessings, "be fruitful and multiply." God's blessing gives an increase; increase in number, building up the family; increase in wealth, adding to the estate and honour; especially an increase in spiritual blessings, with the increasings of God. He will bless you with the increase of knowledge and wisdom, of grace, holiness, and joy. Those are blessed indeed whom God thus increaseth, who are made wiser, and better, and fitter for God and heaven. It is promised that this shall be, 1st. A constant, continual increase. "He shall increase you more and more." So long as you live you shall still be increasing, till you come to perfection, as the shining light, *Pr.* iv. 18. 2nd. An hereditary increase. "You and your children," you in your children. It is a comfort to parents to see their children increasing in wisdom and strength. There is a blessing entailed upon the seed of those that fear God, even in their infancy; for, ver. 15, "You are blessed of the Lord," you and your children are so; "all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed," *Isa.* lxi. 9. They that are the blessed of the Lord have encouragement enough to trust in the Lord as their help and shield, for it is he that made heaven and earth; therefore his blessings are free, for he needs not any thing himself; and therefore they are rich, for he hath all things at command for us, if we fear him and trust in him. He that made heaven and earth can, doubtless, make those happy that trust in him, and will do it.

Thirdly. We are stirred up to praise God by the psalmist's example, who concludes the psalm with a resolution to persevere in his praises.

1. God is to be praised, ver. 16. He is greatly to be praised; for, 1st. His glory is high. See how stately his palace is, and the throne he hath prepared in the heavens. "The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's." He is the rightful owner of all the treasures of light and bliss in the upper and better world, and is in the full possession of them, for he is himself infinitely bright and happy. 2nd. His goodness is large. For "the earth, he hath given it to the children of men," having designed it, when he made it, for their use, to find them with meat, drink, and lodging. Not but that still he is proprietor in chief; "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" but he has let out that vineyard to these unthankful husbandmen, and from them he expects the rents and services; for though he has given them the earth, his eye is upon them, and he will call them to an account how they use it. Calvin complains that profane wicked people in his days perverted this scripture, and made a jest of it, which some in our days do, arguing, in banter, that, God having given the earth to the children of men, he will no more look after it, nor after them upon it, but they may do what they will with it, and make their best of it as their portion; and as if it were thrown like a prey among them, catch as catch can. It is pity such an instance as this gives of God's bounty to man, and such a proof as ariseth from it of man's obligation to God, should be thus abused. From the highest heavens it is certain God beholds all the children of men; to them he has given the earth, but to the children of God heaven is given.

2. The dead are not capable of praising him, ver. 17, "nor any that go into silence." The soul indeed lives in a state of separation from the body, and is capable of praising God: and the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burthen of the flesh, do praise God, are still praising him, for they go up to the land of perfect light and constant business; but the dead body cannot praise God. Death puts an end to our glorifying God in this world of trial and conflict, to all our services in the field; the grave is a land of darkness and silence, where there is no work or device. This they plead with God for deliverance out of the hand of their enemies; Lord, if they prevail to cut us off, the idols will carry the day, and there will be none to praise thee, to bear thy name, and to bear a testimony against the worshippers of idols. "The dead praise not the Lord," so as we do in the business and for the comforts of this life: see *Ps.* xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 9.

3. Therefore it concerns us to praise him; ver. 12, "But we," we that are alive, "will bless the Lord;" we and those that shall come after us will do it, "from this time forth and for evermore," to the end of time; we, and those we shall remove to, from this time forth, and to eternity. "The dead praise not the Lord," therefore we will do it the more diligently. 1st. Others are dead, and an end is thereby put to their service, and therefore we will lay out ourselves to do so much the more for God, that we may fill up the gap. "Moses my servant is dead, now therefore, Joshua, arise." 2nd. We ourselves must shortly go to the land of silence: but while we do live, "we will bless the Lord," will improve time, and work that work of him that sent us into the world to praise him, before the night comes, and because the night comes, wherein no man can work. "The Lord will bless us," ver. 12. He will do well for us, and therefore we will bless him, we will speak well of him; poor returns for rich receivings. Nay, we will not only do it ourselves, but will engage others to do it. "Praise the Lord;" praise him with us; praise him in your places, as we in ours; praise him when we are gone, that he may be praised for evermore. Hallelujah.

PSALM CXVI.

This is a thanksgiving psalm; it is not certain whether David penned it upon any particular occasion, or upon a general view of the many gracious deliverances God had wrought for him, out of six troubles, and seven, from which he takes rise for many very lively expressions of devotion, love, and gratitude; and with the like pious affections our souls should be lifted up to God in singing it. Observe, I. The great distress and danger that the psalmist was in, which almost drove him to despair, ver. 3, 10, 11. II. The application he made to God in that distress, ver. 4. III. The experience he had of God's goodness to him in answer to prayer. God heard him, ver. 1, 2; pitied him, ver. 5, 6; delivered him, ver. 8. IV. His care what acknowledgments he should make of the goodness of God to him, ver. 12; 1. He will love God, ver. 1, 2; He will continue to call upon him, ver. 2, 13, 17; 3. He will rest in him, ver. 7; 4. He will walk before him, ver. 9. 5. He will pay his vow of thanksgiving, in which he will own the tender regard God had to him, and this publicly, ver. 13—15, and ver. 17—19. Lastly, He will continue God's faithful servant to his life's end, ver. 16. These are such breathings of a holy soul as bespeak it very happy.

I LOVE the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications.
2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me,
Therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.
3 The sorrows of death compassed me,
And the pains of hell gat hold upon me :
I found trouble and sorrow.
4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD ;
O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.
5 Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous ;
Yea, our God *is* merciful.
6 The LORD preserveth the simple :
I was brought low, and he helped me.
7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul ;
For the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.
8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death,
Mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling.
9 I will walk before the LORD
In the land of the living.

In this part of the psalm we have,

First. A general account of David's experience and his pious resolutions, ver. 1, 2, which are as the contents of the whole psalm, and give an idea of it.

PSALM CXVI.

1. He had experienced God's goodness to him in answer to prayer. "He hath heard my voice and my supplications." David, in straits, had humbly and earnestly begged mercy of God, and God had heard him; that is, had graciously accepted his prayer, taken cognizance of his case, and granted him an answer of peace. "He hath inclined his ear to me." This intimates his readiness and willingness to hear prayer; he lays his ear as it were to the mouth of prayer to hear it, though it be but whispered in groanings that cannot be uttered. He hearkens and hears, *Jer.* viii. 6; yet it implies also that it is wonderful condescension in God to hear prayer; it is bowing his ear. Lord, what is man, that God should thus stoop to him?

2. He resolved, in consideration thereof, to devote himself entirely to God, and to his honour.

1st. He will love God the better. He begins the psalm somewhat abruptly, with a profession of that which his heart was full of; "I love the Lord," as *Ps.* xviii. 1; and fitly doth he begin with this, in compliance with the first and great commandment, and with God's end in all the gifts of his bounty to us. I love him only, and nothing besides him, but what I love for him. God's love of compassion towards us justly requires our love of complacency in him.

2nd. He will love prayer the better; "Therefore I will call upon him." The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us in answer to prayer are great encouragements to us to continue praying. We have sped well, notwithstanding our unworthiness, and our praying infirmities, and therefore why may we not? God therefore answers prayer to make us love it, and expects this from us in return for his favour. Why should we glean in any other field when we have been so well treated in this? Nay, "I will call upon him as long as I live;" Heb., 'in my days,' every day, to the last day. Note, As long as we continue living, we must continue praying. This breath we must breathe till we breathe our last, because then we shall take our leave of it, and till then we have continual occasion for it.

Secondly. A more particular narrative of God's gracious dealings with him, and the good impressions thereby made upon him.

1. God in his dealings with him shewed himself a good God, and therefore he bears this testimony to him, and leaves it upon record; ver. 5, "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous." He is righteous, and did me no wrong in afflicting me; he is gracious, and was very kind in supporting and delivering me. Let us all speak of God as we have found; and have we ever found him otherwise than just and good? No; "our God is merciful," merciful to us, and "it is of his mercies that we are not consumed."

(1.) Review David's experiences.

1st. He was in great distress and trouble; ver. 3, "The sorrows of death compassed me;" that is, such sorrows as were likely to be his death, such as were thought to be the very pangs of death; perhaps here is the extremity of bodily pain, or trouble of mind, called here "the pains of hell," terror of conscience arising from sense of guilt. Note, The sorrows of death are great sorrows, and the pains of hell great pains. Let us therefore give diligence to prepare for the former that we may escape the latter. These compassed him on every side, they arrested him; "gat hold upon him," so that he could not escape: "without were fightings, within were fears." "I found trouble and sorrow;" not only it found me, but I found it. Those that are melancholy have a great deal of sorrow of their own finding, trouble which they create to themselves, by indulging fancy and passion. This has sometimes been the infirmity of good men. When God's providence makes our condition bad, let us not by our own imprudence make it worse.

2nd. In his trouble he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer; ver. 4, he tells us that he prayed: "Then called I upon the name of the Lord;" then, when he was brought to the last extremity, then he made use of this, not as the last remedy, but as the old and only remedy, which he had found a salve for every sore. He tells us what his prayer was; it was short, but to the purpose; "O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul;" that is, save me from death, and save me from sin, for that is it that is killing to the soul. Both the humility and the fervency of his prayer are intimated in these words, "O Lord, I beseech thee." When we come to the throne of grace, we must come as beggars for an alms, for necessary food. The following words, ver. 5, "gracious is the Lord," may be taken as part of his prayer, as a plea to enforce his request, and encourage his faith and hope; "Lord, deliver my soul," for thou art gracious and merciful, and that only I depend upon for relief.

3rd. God, in answer to his prayer, came in with seasonable and effectual relief. He found, by experience, that God is gracious and merciful, and, in his compassion, preserveth the simple, ver. 6. Because they are simple, that is, sincere and upright, and without guile, therefore God preserves them, as he preserved Paul, who had his conversation in the world, not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity. Though they are simple, that is weak and helpless, and that cannot shift for themselves, men of no depth, no design, yet God preserves them, because they commit themselves to him, and have no confidence in their own sufficiency. Those that by faith put themselves under God's protection shall be safe.

(2.) Let David speak his own experience.

1st. God supported him under his troubles. "I was brought low," was plunged into the depth of misery, "and then he helped me," helped me both to bear the worst and to hope the best; helped me to pray, else desire had failed; helped me to wait, else faith had failed. I was one of the simple ones whom God preserved; the poor man who cried, and the Lord heard him, *Ps.* xxxiv. 6. Note, God's people are never brought so low but that everlasting arms are under them, and they cannot sink who are thus sustained. Nay, it is in the time of need, at the dead lift, that God chooseth to help, *Deu.* xxxii. 36.

2nd. God saved him out of his troubles; ver. 8; "Thou hast delivered;" which means either the preventing the distress he was ready to fall into, or the recovering of him from the distress he was already in. God graciously delivered, *First.* His "soul from death." Note. It is God's great mercy to us that we are alive, and the mercy is the more sensible, if we have been at death's door, and yet have been spared, and raised up: just turned to destruction, and yet ordered to return. That a life so often forfeited and so often exposed should yet be lengthened out, is a miracle of mercy. The deliverance of the soul from spiritual and eternal death is especially to be acknowledged by all those who are now sanctified, and shall be shortly glorified. *Secondly.* His "eyes from tears;" that is, his heart from inordinate grief. It is a great mercy to be kept, either from the occasions of sorrow, the evil that causeth grief, or, however, from being swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. When God comforts those that are cast down, looseth the mourners' sackcloth, and girdeth them with gladness, then he delivers their eyes from tears, which yet will not be perfectly done till we come to that world where "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes." *Thirdly.* His "feet from falling," from falling into sin, and so into misery. It is a great mercy, when our feet are almost gone, then to have God hold us by the right hand, *Ps.* lxxii. 2, 23, so that, though we enter into temptation, we are not overcome and overthrown by the temptation. Or, Thou hast delivered my feet from falling into the grave, when I had one foot there already.

2. David, in his returns of gratitude to God, shewed himself a good man. God had done all this for him, and therefore,

1st. He will live a life of delight in God; ver. 7, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; that is, *First.* Repose thyself and be easy, and do not put thyself into such a toss with distrustful, disquieting fears, as thou hast sometimes done. Quiet thyself, and then enjoy thyself; God has dealt kindly with thee, and therefore thou needest not fear that ever he will deal hardly with thee. *Secondly.* Repose thyself in God. Return to him as thy rest, and seek not for that rest in the creature which is to be had in him only. God is the soul's rest; in him only can it dwell at ease, to him therefore it must retire, and rejoice in him. He hath dealt bountifully with us; that is, he hath provided sufficiently for our comfort and refreshment, and encouraged us to come to him for the benefit of it at all times, upon all occasions; let us therefore be satisfied with that. Return to that rest which Christ gives to the weary and heavy laden, *Mat.* xi. 28; return to thy Noah, (his name signifies rest,) as the dove when she found no rest came back to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes with at night when we go to sleep, nor to close them with at death, that long sleep, than this, "Return to thy rest, O my soul."

2nd. He will live a life of devotedness to God; ver. 9, "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living," that is, in this world, as long as I continue to live in it. Note, *First.* It is our great duty to walk before the Lord, to do all we do as becomes us in his presence, and under his eye; to approve ourselves to him as a holy God by conformity to him as our Sovereign Lord, by subjection to his will; and as a God all-sufficient, by a cheerful confidence in him. "I am the Almighty God, walk before me," *Gen.* xvii. 1; we must "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." *Secondly.* The consideration of this, that we are "in the land of the living," should engage and quicken us to do so. We are spared and continued in the land of the living by the power, and patience, and tender mercy of our God, and therefore must make conscience of our duty to him. The land of the living is a land of mercy, which we ought to be thankful for. It is a land of opportunity, which we ought to improve. Canaan is called the land of the living, *Eze.* xxvi. 20; and they whose lot is cast in such a valley of vision are in a special manner concerned to set the Lord always before them. If God has delivered our soul from death, we must walk before him. A new life must be a new life indeed.

10 I believed, therefore have I spoken:
I was greatly afflicted:
11 I said in my haste,
All men *are* liars.
12 What shall I render unto the LORD
For all his benefits toward me?
13 I will take the cup of salvation,
And call upon the name of the LORD.
14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD
Now in the presence of all his people.
15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of his saints.
16 O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant;
I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid:
Thou hast loosed my bonds.
17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
And will call upon the name of the LORD.
18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD
Now in the presence of all his people,
19 In the courts of the LORD's house,
In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.
Praise ye the LORD.

The Septuagint, and some other ancient versions, make these verses a distinct psalm separate from the former; and some have called it the Martyrs' Psalm, I suppose for the sake of ver. 15. Three things David here makes confession of:

First. His faith; ver. 10, "I believed, therefore have I spoken." Which is quoted by the apostle, 2 *Cor.* iv. 13, with application to himself and his fellow-ministers, who, though they suffered for Christ, were not ashamed to own him. David believed the being, providence, and promise of God, particularly the assurance God had given him by Samuel that he should exchange his crook for a sceptre. A great deal of hardship he went through in the belief of this; and therefore he spoke. Spoke to God by prayer, ver. 4; by praise, ver. 12. Those that believe in God will address themselves to him. He spoke to himself; because he believed, he said to his soul, "Return to thy rest." He spoke to others; told his friends what his hope was, and what the ground of it, though it exasperated Saul against him, and he was greatly afflicted for it. Note, They that believe with the heart must confess with the mouth; for the glory of God, the encouragement of others, and to evidence their own sincerity, *Rom.* x. 10; *Acts* ix. 19, 20. They that live in hope of the kingdom of glory must neither be afraid nor ashamed to own their obligation to him that purchased it for them, *Mat.* x. 32.

Secondly. His fear; ver. 11, "I was greatly afflicted," and then "I said in my haste," somewhat rashly and inconsiderately, ('in my amazement,' so some, when I was in a consternation; 'in my flight,' so others, when Saul was in pursuit of me,) "All men are liars;" all with whom he had to do, Saul and all his courtiers. His friends, who he thought would have stood by him, deserted him and disowned him, when he fell into disgrace at court. And some think it is especially a reflection on Samuel, who had promised him the kingdom, but deceived him; for, saith he, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul," 1 *Sam.* xxvii. 1. Observe, 1. The faith of the best saints is not perfect; nor always alike strong and active. David believed and spoke well, ver. 10; but now through unbelief he spoke amiss. 2. When we are under great and sore afflictions, especially if they continue long, we are apt to grow weary; to despond, and almost to despair of a good issue. Let us not, therefore, be harsh in censuring others, but carefully watch over ourselves when we are in trouble, *Ps.* xxxix. 1—3. 3. If good men speak amiss, it is in their haste, through the surprise of a temptation, not deliberately and with premeditation, as the wicked man who sits in the seat of the scornful, *Ps.* i. 1, sits and speaks against his brother, *Ps.* l. 19, 20. 4. What we speak amiss in haste we must by repentance unsay again; as David, *Ps.* xxxi. 22; and then

it shall not be laid unto our charge. Some make this to be no ill word of David's. He was greatly afflicted, and forced to fly; but he did not trust in man, nor make flesh his arm. No, he said, "All men are liars;" as "men of low degree are vanity," so "men of high degree are a lie;" and therefore my confidence was in God only, and in him I cannot be disappointed. And in this sense the apostle seems to take it, *Rom.* iii. 4, "Let God be true, and every man a liar," in comparison with God. All men are fickle and inconstant, and subject to change; and therefore let us cease from man, and cleave to God.

Thirdly. His gratitude, ver. 12, &c. God had been better to him than his fears, and had graciously delivered him out of his distresses; and in consideration hereof,

1. He inquires what returns he shall make; ver. 12, "What shall I render unto the Lord, for all his benefits towards me?" Here he speaks, 1. As one sensible of many mercies received from God: all his benefits. The psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some one particular benefit, ver. 6, 7; but in that one he saw many, and that one brought many to mind; and therefore now he thinks of all God's benefits towards him. Note, When we speak of God's mercies, we should magnify them, and speak highly of them. 2. As one solicitous and studious how to express his gratitude; "What shall I render unto the Lord?" Not as if he thought he could render anything proportionable, or as a valuable consideration for what he had received. We can no more pretend to give a recompence to God, than we can to merit any favour from him; but he desired to render something acceptable, something that God would be pleased with, as the acknowledgment of a grateful mind. He asks God, "What shall I render?"—asks the priest, asks his friends, or rather, asks himself, and communes with his own heart about it. Note, Having received many benefits from God, we are concerned to inquire what we shall render.

2. He resolves what returns he will make.

1st. He will in the most devout and solemn manner offer up his praises and prayers to God, ver. 13, 17. *First.* "I will take the cup of salvation;" that is, I will offer the drink offerings appointed by the law in token of my thankfulness to God, and rejoice with my friends in God's goodness to me; this is called the cup of deliverance, because drank in memory of the deliverance. The pious Jews had sometimes a cup of blessing at their private meals, which the master of the family drank first of with thanksgiving to God, and all at his table pledged him. But some understand it not of the cup that he would present to God, but the cup God would put into his hand. I will receive, *1st.* The cup of affliction. Many good interpreters understood it of that cup, that bitter cup, which yet is sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a cup of salvation; *Phil.* i. 19, "This shall turn to my salvation;" it is a means of spiritual health. David's sufferings were typical of Christ's; and we in ours have communion with his, and his cup was indeed a cup of salvation. God having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands I will readily take it, and not dispute it, welcome his holy will. Herein David spoke the language of the Son of David, *Jno.* xviii. 11, "The cup that my Father hath given me, shall I not" take it, and "drink it?" *2nd.* The cup of consolation. I will receive the benefits God bestows upon me as from his hand, and taste his love in them, as that which is the portion not only of mine inheritance in the other world, but of my cup in this. *Secondly.* "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving." The thank offerings which God required, *Lev.* vii. 11, 12, &c. Note, Those whose hearts are truly thankful will express it in thank offerings. We must first give our ownselves to God as living sacrifices, *Rom.* xii. 1, 2 *Cor.* viii. 5, and then lay out of what we have for his honour in works of piety and charity. Doing good and communicating are sacrifices with which God is well-pleased, *Heb.* xiii. 15, 16; and this must accompany our "giving thanks to his name." If God have been bountiful to us, the least we can do in return is to be bountiful to the poor, *Ps.* xvi. 2, 3. Why should we offer that to God which costs us nothing? *Thirdly.* "I will call upon the name of the Lord." This he had promised, ver. 2; and here he repeats it, ver. 13; and again, ver. 17. If we have received kindness from a man like ourselves, we tell him we hope we shall never trouble him again; but God is pleased to reckon the prayers of his people an honour to him, and a delight, and no trouble; and, therefore, in gratitude for former mercies, we must seek to him for farther mercies, and continue to call upon him.

2nd. He will always entertain good thoughts of God, as very tender of the lives and comforts of his people; ver. 15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints;" so precious, that he will not gratify Saul or Absalom, or any of David's enemies, with his death, how earnestly soever they desire it. This truth David had comforted himself with in the depth of his distress and danger; and the event having confirmed it, he comforts others with it, that might be in like manner exposed. God has a people even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy; that have received mercy from him, and shew mercy for his sake. The saints of God are mortal and dying; nay, there are those that desire their death, and labour it all they can, and sometimes prevail to be the death of them. But it is precious in the sight of the Lord; that is, their life is so, 2 *Kin.* i. 13; their blood is so, *Ps.* lxxii. 14. God oftentimes wonderfully prevents the death of his saints, when there is but a step between them and it; he takes special care about their death, to order it for the best in all the circumstances of it. And whoever kills them, how light soever they may make of it, they shall be made to pay dear for it when inquisition is made for the blood of the saints, *Mat.* xxiii. 35. Though no man lays it to heart when the righteous perish, God will make it to appear that he lays it to heart. This should make us willing to die, to die for Christ, if we are called to it; that our death shall be registered in heaven. And let that be precious to us which is so to God.

3rd. He will oblige himself to be God's servant all his days. Having asked, "What shall I render?" here he surrenders himself, which was more than all burnt offerings and sacrifice; ver. 16, "O Lord, truly I am thy servant." Here is, *First.* The relation in which David professeth to stand to God. "I am thy servant," that is, I choose to be so, I resolve to be so, I will live and die in thy service. He had called God's people who are dear to him, his saints; but when he comes to apply it to himself, he doth not say, 'Truly I am thy saint,' that looked too high a title to himself, but "I am thy servant." David was a king, and yet he glories in this, that he was God's servant. It is no disparagement, but an honour to the greatest kings on earth, to be the servants of the God of heaven. David doth not here compliment with God, as it is common among men to say, I am your servant, sir. No, Lord, I am truly thy servant; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am so. And he repeats it as that which he took pleasure in the thoughts of, and which he was resolved to abide by; "I am thy servant, I am thy servant." Let others serve what master they will, truly I am thy servant. *Secondly.* The ground of that relation. Two ways men come to be servants: *1st.* By birth; Lord, I was born in thy house, "I am the son of thy handmaid," and therefore thine. It is a great mercy to be the children of godly parents, as it obliges us to duty; and is pleadable with God for mercy. *2nd.* By redemption; he that procured the release of a captive took him for his servant. Lord, "thou hast loosed my bonds," those sorrows of death that compassed me; thou hast discharged me from them, and therefore I am thy servant, and entitled to thy protection, as well as obliged to thy work. 'The very bonds that thou hast loosed shall tie me faster unto thee.'—Patrick.

4th. He will make conscience of paying his vows, and making good what he had promised; not only that he would offer the sacrifices of praise, which he had vowed to bring, but perform all his other engagements to God, which he had laid himself under in the day of his affliction, ver. 14, "I will pay my vows;" and again, ver. 18, "Now in the presence of all his people." Note, Vows are debts that must be paid; for it is better not vow, than vow and not pay. He will pay his vows, *First.* Presently. He will not like sorry debtors delay the payment of them, or beg day, but, I will pay them now, *Eccl.* v. 4. *Secondly.* Publicly. He will not huddle up his praises in a corner, but what service he has to do for God he will do "in the presence of all his people;" not for ostentation, but to shew that he was not ashamed of the service of God, and that others might be invited to join with him. He will pay his vows in the courts of the tabernacle, where there was a crowd of Israelites attending; in the midst of Jerusalem, that he might bring devotion into more reputation.

PSALM CXVII.

This psalm is short and sweet; I doubt the reason why we sing it so often as we do is for the shortness of it, but if we rightly understood and considered it we would sing it oftener for the sweetness of it, especially to us sinners of the Gentiles, on whom it casts a very favourable eye. Here is, I. A solemn call to all nations to praise God, ver. 1. II. Proper matter for that praise suggested, ver. 2. We are soon weary of well-doing if, in singing this psalm, we keep not up those pious and devout affections with which the spiritual sacrifice of praise ought to be kindled and kept burning.

O PRAISE the LORD, all ye nations:
Praise him, all ye people.
2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us:
And the truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever.
Praise ye the LORD.

There is a great deal of Gospel in this psalm. The apostle has furnished us with a key to it, *Rom.* xv. 11, where he quotes it as a proof that the Gospel was to be preached to, and would be entertained by, the Gentile nations, which yet was so great a stumblingblock to the Jews. Why should that offend them when it was said, and they themselves had often sung it, "Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people?" Some of the Jewish writers confess that this psalm refers to the kingdom of the Messiah; nay, one of them has a fancy that it consists of two verses, to signify that in the days of the Messiah God should be glorified by two sorts of people; by the Jews according to the law of Moses, and by the Gentiles according to the seven precepts of the sons of Noah, which yet should make one church, as these two verses make one psalm. We have here,

First. The vast extent of the gospel church, ver. 1. For many ages in Judah only was God known, and his name praised. The sons of Levi, and the seed of Israel praised him; but the rest of the nations praised gods of wood and stone, *Dan.* v. 4, while there was no devotion at all paid, at least, none openly that we know of, to the living and true God. But here all nations are called to praise the Lord; which could not be applied to the Old Testament times, both because this call was not then given to any of the Gentile nations, much less to all, in a language that they understood; and because, unless the people of the land became Jews, and were circumcised, they were not admitted to praise God with them. But the Gospel of Christ is ordered to be preached to all nations; and by him the partition wall is taken down, and those that were afar off are made nigh. This was the mystery which was hid in prophecy for many ages, but was at length revealed in the accomplishment, "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs," *Eph.* iii. 3, 6. Observe here,

1. Who should be admitted into the church. All nations and all people. The original words are the same that are used for the heathen that rage, and the people that imagine against Christ, *Ps.* ii. 1; they that had been enemies to his kingdom should become his willing subjects. The Gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, *Mat.* xxiv. 14; *Mar.* xvi. 15. All nations shall be called, and to some of all nations the call shall be effectual, and they shall be discipled.

2. How their admission into the church is foretold. By a repeated call to praise him. The tidings of the Gospel being sent to all nations should give them cause to praise God. The institution of gospel ordinances would give them leave and opportunity to praise God, and the power of gospel grace would give them hearts to praise him. Those are highly favoured whom God invites by his word, and inclines by his Spirit to praise him, and so makes to be to him for a name and a praise: see *Rev.* vii. 9, 10.

Secondly. The unsearchable riches of gospel grace, which are to be the matter of our praise, ver. 2. In the Gospel, those celebrated attributes of God, his mercy and his truth, shine most bright in themselves, and most comfortably to us; and the apostle, when he quotes this psalm, takes notice of these as the two great things for which the Gentiles should glorify God, *Rom.* xv. 8, 9, for the truth of God, and for his mercy. We that enjoy the Gospel have reason to praise the Lord, 1. For the power of his mercy; "His merciful kindness is great toward us." It is strong, so the word signifies; it is mighty for the pardon of mighty sins, (*Am.* v. 12,) and for the working out of a mighty salvation. 2. For the perpetuity of his truth; "The truth of the Lord endures for ever." It was mercy, mere mercy, to the Gentiles, that the Gospel was sent among them; it was merciful kindness prevailing toward them above their deserts; and in it the truth of the Lord, of his promise made unto the fathers, endures for ever; for though the Jews were hardened and expelled, yet the promise took its effect in the believing Gentiles, the spiritual seed of Abraham. God's mercy is the fountain of all our comforts; and his truth the foundation of all our hopes; and therefore for both we must praise the Lord.

PSALM CXVIII.

It is probable David penned this psalm when he had after many a storm weathered his point at last, and gained a full possession of the kingdom to which he had been anointed. He then invites and stirs up his friends to join with him, not only in a cheerful acknowledgment of God's goodness, and a cheerful dependence upon that goodness for the future, but in a believing expectation of the promised Messiah, of whose kingdom and his exaltation to it his were typical; to him it is certain the prophet here bears witness in the latter part of the psalm. Christ himself applies it to himself, *Mat.* xxi. 42, and the former part of the psalm may fairly and without forcing be accommodated to him and his undertaking. Some think it was first calculated for the solemnity of the bringing of the ark to the city of David, and was afterwards sung at the feast of tabernacles.

PSALM CXVIII.

In it, I. David calls upon all about him to give to God the glory of his goodness, ver. 1—4. II. He encourageth himself and others to trust in God, from the experience he had had of God's power and pity in the great and kind things he had done for him, ver. 5—18. III. He gives thanks for his advancement to the throne, as it was a figure of the exaltation of Christ, ver. 19—23. IV. The people, the priests, and the psalmist himself, triumph in the prospect of the Redeemer's kingdom, ver. 24—29. In singing this psalm we must glorify God for his goodness, his goodness to us, and especially his goodness to us in Jesus Christ.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good:
Because his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2 Let Israel now say,
That his mercy *endureth* for ever.
3 Let the house of Aaron now say,
That his mercy *endureth* for ever.
4 Let them now that fear the LORD say,
That his mercy *endureth* for ever.
5 I called upon the LORD in distress:
The LORD answered me, *and set me* in a large place.
6 The LORD *is* on my side;
I will not fear: what can man do unto me?
7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me:
Therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.
8 *It is* better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in man.
9 *It is* better to trust in the LORD
Than to put confidence in princes.
10 All nations compassed me about:
But in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.
11 They compassed me about;
Yea, they compassed me about:
But in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.
12 They compassed me about like bees;
They are quenched as the fire of thorns:
For in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.
13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall:
But the LORD helped me.
14 The LORD *is* my strength and song,
And is become my salvation.
15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tabernacles of the righteous:
The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.
16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted:
The right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.
17 I shall not die, but live,
And declare the works of the LORD.
18 The LORD hath chastened me sore:
But he hath not given me over unto death.

It appears here, as often elsewhere, that David had his heart full of the goodness of God; he loved to think of it, loved to speak of it, and was very solicitous that God might have the praise of it, and others the comfort of it. The more our hearts are impressed with a sense of God's goodness the more they will be enlarged in all manner of obedience. In these verses,

First. He celebrates God's mercy in general, and calls upon others to acknowledge it, from their own experience of it; ver. 1, "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is" not only "good" in himself, but good to you; and "his mercy endureth for ever," not only in the everlasting fountain, God himself, but in the never-failing streams of that mercy, which shall run parallel with the longest line of eternity, and in the chosen vessels of mercy, who will be for ever monuments of it. Israel, and the house of Aaron, and all that fear God, were called upon to trust in God, *Ps.* cxv. 9—11. Here they are called upon to confess that "his mercy endures for ever," and so to encourage themselves to trust in him, ver. 2—4. Priests and people, Jews and proselytes, must all own God's goodness, and all join in the same thankful song. If they can say no more, let them say this for him, that "his mercy endures for ever," that they have had experience of it all their days, and confide in it for good things that shall last for ever. The praises and thanksgivings of all that truly fear the Lord shall be as pleasing to him as those of the house of Israel or the house of Aaron.

Secondly. He preserves an account of God's gracious dealings with him in particular, which he communicates to others, that they might from thence fetch both songs of praise, and supports of faith, and both ways God would have glory. David had in his time waded through a great deal of difficulty, which gave him great experience of God's goodness. Let us therefore observe here,

1. The great distress and danger that he had been in, which he reflects upon for the magnifying of God's goodness to him in his present advancement. There are many who, when they are lifted up, care not for hearing or speaking of their former depressions, but David takes all occasions to remember his own low estate. He was in distress, ver. 5, greatly straitened and at a loss; there were many that hated him, ver. 7; and that cannot but be a great grief to one of an ingenuous spirit that strives to gain the good affections of all. "All nations compassed him about," ver. 10. All the neighbour nations to Israel set themselves to give disturbance to David, when he was newly come to the throne, Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Ammonites, &c.; we read of his enemies round about, they were confederate against him, and thought to cut off all succours from him. This endeavour of his enemies to surround him is repeated, ver. 11, "They compassed me about, yea, they compassed me about," which intimates that they were virulent and violent, and for a time prevalent, in their attempts against him, and when put into disorder rallied again, and pushed on their design. "They compassed me about like bees," so numerous were they, so noisy, so vexatious. They came flying upon him, came upon him in swarms, set upon him with their malignant stings; but it was to their own destruction, as the bee, they say, loseth her life with her sting, *Animamque in vulnere ponit*,—'She lays down her life in the wound.' "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me?" Two ways David was brought into trouble: 1st. By the injuries that men did him; ver. 13, "Thou" (O enemy) "hast thrust sore at me," with many a desperate push, "that I might fall" into sin and into ruin; 'Thrusting thou hast thrust at me,' (so the word is,) 'so that I was ready to fall.' Satan is the great enemy that thrusts sore at us by his temptations to cast us down from our excellency, that we may fall from our God and from our comfort in him; and if God had not upheld us by his grace his thrusts had been fatal to us. 2nd. By the afflictions which God laid upon him; ver. 18, "The Lord hath chastened me sore." Men thrust at him for his destruction, God chastened him for his instruction; they thrust at him with the malice of enemies, God chastened him with the love and tenderness of a father. Perhaps he refers to the same trouble which God the author of it designed for his profit, that by it he might partake of his holiness, *Heb.* xii. 10, 11. Howbeit men, that were the instruments of it, meant not so, neither did their heart think so, but it was in their heart to cut off and destroy, *Isa.* x. 7. What men intend for the greatest mischief God intends for the greatest good, and it is easy to say whose counsel shall stand. God will sanctify the trouble to his people as it is his chastening, and secure the good he designs, and he will guard them against the trouble, as it is the enemies' thrusting, and secure them from the evil they design, and then we need not fear.

This account which David gives of his troubles is very applicable to our Lord Jesus. Many there were that hated him, hated him without a cause; they compassed him about. Jews and Romans surrounded him; they thrust sore at him. The devil did so when he tempted him; his persecutors did so when they reviled him; nay, the Lord himself chastened him sore, bruised him, and put him to grief, that by his stripes we might be healed.

2. The favour God vouchsafed to him in his distress. 1st. God heard his prayer; ver. 5, he answered me with enlargements, he did more for me than I was able to ask; he enlarged my heart in prayer, and yet gave more largely than I desired. "He answered me and set me in a large place," (so we read it,) where I had room to bestir myself, room to enjoy myself, and room to thrive; and the large place was the more comfortable, because he was brought to it out of distress, *Ps.* iv. 1. 2nd. God baffled the designs of his enemies against him. "They are quenched as the fire of thorns," ver. 12, which burns furiously for a while, makes a great noise and blaze, but is presently out, and cannot do the mischief that it threatened. Such was the fury of David's enemies, such is the laughter of the fool; like the cracking of thorns under a pot, *Eccl.* vii. 6; and such is the anger of the fool, which therefore is not to be feared, no more than his laughter is to be envied, but both to be pitied. They thrust sore at him, but the Lord helped him, ver. 13; helped him to keep his feet, and maintain his ground. Our spiritual enemies had long ere this been our ruin, if God had not been our helper. 3rd. God preserved his life when there was but a step between him and death, ver. 18. "He hath chastened me; but he has not given me over unto death," for he has not given me over to the will of my enemies. To this St. Paul seems to refer, 2 *Cor.* vi. 9, "as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed." We ought not therefore, when we are chastened sore, presently to despair of life, for God sometimes in appearance turns men to destruction, and yet saith, Return; saith unto them, Live.

This also is applicable to Jesus Christ. God answered him, and set him in a large place; quenched the fire of his enemies' rage, which did but consume themselves, for "through death he destroyed him that had the power of death;" he helped him through his undertaking; and thus far he did not give him over unto death, that he did not leave him in the grave, nor suffer him to see corruption. Death had no dominion over him.

3. The improvement he made of this favour.

1st. It encouraged him to trust in God. From his own experience he can say, "It is better," more wise, and more comfortable, and more safe; there is more reason for it, and it will speed better, "to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man," yea, though it be in princes, ver. 8, 9. He that devotes himself to God's conduct and government, with an entire dependence upon God's wisdom, power and goodness, has a better security to make him easy, than if all the kings and potentates of the earth should undertake to protect him.

2nd. It enabled him to triumph in that trust.

First. He triumphs in God, and in his relation to him, and interest in him; ver. 6, "The Lord is on my side." He is a righteous God, and therefore espouseth my righteous cause, and will plead it. If we are on God's side, he is on ours. If we be for him and with him, he will be for us and with us; ver. 7, "The Lord taketh my part," and stands up for me "with them that help me." He is to me among my helpers; and so one of them, that he is all in all, both to them and me, and without him I could not help myself, nor could any friend I have in the world help me. Thus, ver. 14, "The Lord is my strength and my song," that is, I make him so; without him I am weak and sad, but on him I stay myself as my strength, both for doing and suffering, and in him I solace myself as my song, by which I both express my joy and ease my grief; and making him so I find him so; he doth strengthen my heart with his graces, and rejoice my heart with his comforts. If God be our strength, he must be our song; if he work all our works in us, he must have all praise and glory from us. God is sometimes the strength of his people when he is not their song; they have spiritual supports when they want spiritual delights; but if he be both to us, we have abundant reason to triumph in him; for if he be our strength and our song, he is become not only our Saviour, but our salvation; for his being our strength is our protection to the salvation, and his being our song is an earnest and foretaste of the salvation.

Secondly. He triumphs over his enemies. Now shall his head be lifted up above them; for, 1*st.* He is sure they cannot hurt him. God is for me, and then "I will not fear what man can do against me," ver. 6; he can set them all at defiance, and not be disturbed at any of their attempts. They can do nothing to me, but what God permits them to do; they can do me no real damage, for they cannot separate between me and God; they cannot do any thing but what God can make to work for my good. The enemy is a man, a depending creature, whose power is limited and subordinate to a higher power; and therefore I will not fear him; "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die?" *Isa.* li. 12. The apostle quotes this with application to all Christians, *Heb.* xiii. 6; they may boldly say, as boldly as David himself, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me," let him do his worst. 2*nd.* He is sure he shall be too hard for them at last. "I shall see my desire upon them that hate me," ver. 7; that is, I shall see them defeated in their designs against me. Nay, "In the name of the Lord I will destroy them," ver. 10—12; that is, I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them,

and in his name I will go forth against them, depending on his strength, by warrant from him, and with an eye to his glory; not confiding in myself, or taking vengeance for myself. Thus he went forth against Goliath in the name of the God of Israel, 1 *Sam.* xvii. 45. David saith this as a type of Christ, who triumphed over the powers of darkness, destroyed them, and made a show of them openly.

Thirdly. He triumphs in an assurance of the continuance of his comfort, his victory, and his life. 1*st.* Of his comfort; ver. 15, "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous," and in mine particularly, in my family. The dwellings of the righteous in this world are but tabernacles, mean and movable. Here we have no city, no continuing city; but these tabernacles are more comfortable to them than the palaces of the wicked are to them, for in the house where religion rules, (1.) There is salvation; safety from evil, earnests of eternal salvation, which is come to this house, *Lu.* xix. 9. (2.) Where there is salvation, there is cause for rejoicing, for continual joy in God. Holy joy is called the joy of salvation, for in that there is abundant matter for joy. (3.) Where there is rejoicing, there ought to be the voice of rejoicing, that is, praise and thanksgiving. Let God be served with joyfulness and gladness of heart, and let the voice of that rejoicing be heard daily in our families to the glory of God, and the encouragement of others. 2*nd.* Of his victory. "The right hand of the Lord doth valiantly," ver. 15, and "is exalted;" for (as some read it) it has exalted me. The right hand of God's power is engaged for his people, and it acts vigorously for them, and therefore victoriously; for what difficulty can stand before the Divine valour? We are weak, and act but cowardly for ourselves; but God is mighty and acts valiantly for us, with jealousy and resolution, *Isa.* lxiii. 5, 6. There is spirit as well as strength in all God's operations for his people; and when God's right hand doth valiantly for our salvation, it ought to be exalted in our praises. 3*rd.* Of his life; ver. 17, "I shall not die" by the hands of my enemies that seek my life, "but live, and declare the works of the Lord," that is, I shall live a monument of God's mercy and power; his works shall be declared in me, and I will make it the business of my life to praise and magnify God, looking upon that as the end of my preservation. Note, It is not worth while to live for any other purpose but to declare the works of God, for his honour, and the encouragement of others to serve him and trust in him. Such as these were the triumphs of the Son of David in the assurance he had of the success of his undertaking, and that the good pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hand.

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will go into them, *and* I will praise the LORD:
20 This gate of the LORD,
Into which the righteous shall enter.
21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me,
And art become my salvation.
22 The stone *which* the builders refused
Is become the head *stone* of the corner.
23 This *is* the LORD's doing;
It *is* marvellous in our eyes.
24 This *is* the day *which* the LORD hath made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD:
O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.
26 Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD:
We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.
27 God *is* the LORD, which hath shewed us light:
Bind the sacrifice with cords, *even* unto the horns of the
28 Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee: [altar.
Thou art my God, I will exalt thee.
29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

We have here an illustrious prophecy of the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord Jesus, his sufferings, and the glory that should follow. Peter thus applied it, to the faces of the chief priests and scribes, and none of them could charge him with misapplying it, *Acts* iv. 11. Now observe here,

First. The preface with which this precious prophecy is introduced, ver. 19—21. 1. The psalmist desires admission into the sanctuary of God, there to celebrate the glory of him that cometh in the name of the Lord. "Open to me the gates of righteousness." So the temple gates are called, because they were shut against the uncircumcised, and forbade the stranger to come nigh; as the sacrifices there offered are called sacrifices of righteousness. Those that would enter into communion with God in holy ordinances must become humble suitors to God for admission; and when the gates of righteousness are opened to us, we must go in to them, must enter into the holiest as far as we have leave, and praise the Lord. Our business within God's gates is to praise God; therefore we should long till the gates of heaven be opened to us, that we may go into them to dwell in God's house above, where we shall be still praising him. 2. He sees admission granted him; ver. 20, "This is the gate of the Lord," the gate of his appointing, "into which the righteous shall enter;" as if he had said, The gate you knocked at is opened, and you are welcome. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Some, by this gate, understand Christ, by whom we are taken into fellowship with God, and our praises are accepted. He is the way, no coming to the Father but by him, *Jno.* xiv. 6; he is the door of the sheep, *Jno.* x. 9; he is the gate of the temple, by whom, and by whom only, the righteous, and they only, shall enter, and come into God's righteousness, as the expression is, *Ps.* lxix. 27. The psalmist triumphs in the discovery that the gate of righteousness, which had been so long shut, and so long knocked at, was now at length opened. 3. He promiseth to give thanks to God for this favour; ver. 21, "I will praise thee." They that saw Christ's day at so great a distance, saw cause to praise God for the prospect, for in him they saw that God had heard them, had heard the prayers of the Old Testament saints, for the coming of the Messiah, and would be their salvation.

Secondly. The prophecy itself, ver. 22, 23. This may have some reference to David's preferment. He was the stone whom Saul and his courtiers rejected, but was, by the wonderful providence of God advanced to be the head-stone of the building; but its principal reference is to Christ, and here we have,

1. His humiliation. He is "the stone which the builders refused." He is "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands," *Dan.* ii. 34. He is a stone, not only for strength, and firmness, and duration, but for life, in the building of the spiritual temple; and yet a precious stone, 1 *Pet.* ii. 6; for the foundation of the gospel church must be sapphires, *Isa.* liv. 11. This stone was rejected by the builders, that is, by the rulers and people of the Jews, *Acts* iv. 8, 10, 11; they refused to own him as the stone, the Messiah promised; they would not build their faith upon him, nor join themselves to him; they would make no use of him, but go on in their building without him; they denied him in the presence of Pilate, *Acts* iii. 13, when they said, "We have no king but Cæsar." They trampled upon this stone, threw it among the rubbish out of the city; nay, they stumbled at it. This was a disgrace to Christ, but it proved the ruin of those that thus made light of him. Rejecters of Christ are rejected of God.

2. His exaltation. He "is become the head-stone of the corner," that is, he is advanced to the highest degree both of honour and usefulness, to be above all, and all in all. He is the chief corner-stone in the foundation, in whom Jew and Gentile are united, that they may be built up one holy house. He is the chief top-stone in the corner, in whom the building is completed, and who must in all things have the preeminence, as "the author and finisher of our faith." Thus highly hath God exalted him, because he humbled himself; and we, in compliance with God's design, must make him the foundation of our hope, the centre of our unity, and the end of our living. "To me to live is Christ."

3. The hand of God in all this. "This is the Lord's doing;" it is from the Lord, it is with the Lord; it is the product of his counsel, it is his contrivance; both the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus was his work, *Acts* ii. 23; iv. 27, 28. He sent him, sealed him; his hand went with him throughout his whole undertaking, and from first to last he did his Father's will; and this ought to be marvellous in our eyes. Christ's name is Wonderful; and the redemption he wrought out is the most amazing of all God's works of wonder; it is what the angels desire to look into, and will be admiring to eternity; much more ought we to admire it, who owe our all to it. "Without controversy, great is this mystery of godliness."

Thirdly. The joy wherewith it is entertained, and the acclamations which attend this prediction.

1. Let the day be solemnized to the honour of God with great joy; ver. 24, "This is the day the Lord has made." The whole time of the gospel dispensation, that accepted time, that day of salvation, is what the Lord has made so, it is a continual feast, which ought to be kept with joy. Or, it may very fitly be understood of the Christian sabbath, which we sanctify in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, when the rejected stone began to be exalted. And so, 1st. Here is the doctrine of the Christian sabbath. "It is the day which the Lord has made," has made remarkable, made holy, has distinguished it from other days; he has made it for man. It is therefore called the Lord's day, for it bears his image and superscription. 2nd. The duty of the sabbath. The work of the day that is to be done in his day, "we will rejoice and be glad in it;" not only in the institution of the day, that there is such a day appointed, but in the occasion of it, Christ's becoming the head of the corner. This we ought to rejoice in, both as his honour and our advantage. Sabbath days must be rejoicing days, and then they are to us as the days of heaven. See what a good Master we serve, who, having instituted a day for his service, appoints it to be spent in holy joy.

2. Let the exalted Redeemer be met and attended with joyful hosannas, ver. 25, 26.

1st. Let him have the acclamations of the people, as is usual at the inauguration of a prince. Let every one of his loyal subjects shout for joy, "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord." This is like *Vivat rex*,—'Long live the king," and speaks both a hearty joy for his accession to the crown, an entire satisfaction in his government, and a zealous affection to the interests and honour of it. Hosanna signifies, "Save now, I beseech thee." *First.* Lord save me, I beseech thee. Let this Saviour be my Saviour, and, in order to that, my ruler. Let me be taken under his protection, and owned as one of his willing subjects. His enemies are my enemies; Lord, I beseech thee, save me from them. Send me an interest in that prosperity which his kingdom brings with it to all those that entertain it. Let my soul prosper and be in health, in that peace and righteousness which his government brings, *Ps.* lxxii. 3. Let me have victory over those lusts that war against my soul, and let Divine grace go on in my heart, conquering and to conquer. *Secondly.* Lord, preserve him, I beseech thee, even the Saviour himself, and send him prosperity in all his undertakings; give success to his Gospel, and let it be mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, and reducing souls to their allegiance to him. Let his name be sanctified, his kingdom come, his will be done. Thus let prayer be made for him continually, *Ps.* lxxii. 15. On the Lord's day, when we rejoice and are glad in his kingdom, we must pray for the advancement of it more and more, and its establishment upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. When Christ made his public entry into Jerusalem, he was thus met by his well wishers; *Mat.* xxi. 9, "Hosanna to the Son of David," long live king Jesus; let him reign for ever.

2nd. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, do their part in this great solemnity, ver. 26. *First.* Let them bless the prince with their praises; "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Jesus Christ is "he that cometh," ὁ ἐρχόμενος, he that was to come, and is yet to come again, *Rev.* i. 8. He comes in the name of the Lord, with a commission from him, to act for him, to do his will, and to seek his glory. And therefore we must say, "Blessed be he that cometh;" that is, we must rejoice that he is come, we must speak well of him, admire him, and esteem him highly, as one we are eternally obliged to; call him blessed Jesus, blessed for ever, *Ps.* xlv. 2. We must bid him welcome into our hearts, saying, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord;" come in by thy grace and Spirit, and take possession of me for thine own. Bless his faithful ministers that come in his name, and receive them for his sake, *Isa.* lii. 7; *Jno.* xiii. 20. We must pray for the enlargement and edification of his church; for the ripening of things for his second coming; and then, that he who hath said, "Surely I come quickly," would even so come. *Secondly.* Let them bless the people with their prayers. "We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord." Christ's ministers are not only warranted, but appointed, to pronounce a blessing in his name upon all his loyal subjects that love him and his government in sincerity, *Eph.* vi. 24. We assure you that in and through Jesus Christ you are blessed; for he came to bless you; you are blessed out of the house of the Lord, that is, with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, *Eph.* i. 3, and therefore have reason to bless him who hath thus blessed you.

3. Let sacrifices of thanksgiving be offered to his honour, who offered for us the great atoning sacrifice, ver. 27. Here is, 1st. The privilege we enjoy by Jesus Christ. "God is the Lord which hath shewed us light." God is Jehovah, is known by that name, a God performing what he hath promised, and perfecting what he hath begun, *Ex.* vi. 3. He hath shewed us light; that is, he hath given us the knowledge of himself and his will; he hath shined upon us, (so some,) hath favoured us, and lifted up upon us the light of his

countenance; he hath given us occasion for joy and rejoicing, which is light to the soul, by giving us a prospect of everlasting light in heaven. The day which the Lord hath made brings light with it, true light. 2nd. The duty which this privilege calls for. "Bind the sacrifice with cords," that, being killed, the blood of it may be sprinkled upon "the horns of the altar," according to the law; or, perhaps it was the custom (though we read not of it elsewhere) to bind the sacrifice to the horns of the altar, while things were getting ready for the slaying of it. Or this may have a peculiar significancy here; the sacrifice we are to offer to God, in gratitude for redeeming love, is ourselves, not to be slain upon the altar, but living sacrifices, *Rom.* xii. 1, to be bound to the altar; spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in which our hearts must be fixed and engaged, as the sacrifice was bound with cords to the horns of the altar, not to start back.

Lastly. The psalmist concludes with his own thankful acknowledgments of Divine grace, in which he calls upon others to join with him, ver. 28, 29. 1. He will praise God himself, and endeavour to exalt him, in his own heart and in the hearts of others, and this because of his covenant relation to him, and interest in him. "Thou art my God," on whom I depend, and to whom I am devoted, who ownest me, and art owned by me, and therefore "I will praise thee." 2. He will have all about him to give thanks to God for this glad tidings of great joy to all people, that there is a Redeemer, even Christ the Lord, and in him it is that God is good to man, and that "his mercy endureth for ever;" in him the covenant of grace is made, and in him it is made sure, made good, and made an everlasting covenant. He concludes the psalm as he began it, ver. 1, for God's glory must be the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, of all our addresses to him. "Hallowed be thy name, and thine is the glory." And this fitly closeth a prophecy of Christ. The angels give thanks for man's redemption; "Glory to God in the highest," (*Lu.* ii. 4,) for there is "on earth peace;" to which we must echo with our hosannas, as they did, *Lu.* xix. 38, Peace in heaven to us through Christ, and therefore glory in the highest.

PSALM CXIX.

This is a psalm by itself, like none of the rest; it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them; more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censures, but making them for a pretence, which intimates that they are themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and towards the latter end of his time gathered them out of his day-book where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's Proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn by the psalmist's example to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion; but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting and for the expressing of our devout affections, and it is true what some have said of this psalm, he that shall read it considerately it will either warm him or shame him. I. The composure of it is singular and very nice. It is divided into twenty-two parts, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each part consists of eight verses; all the verses of the first part beginning with Aleph, all the verses of the second with Beth, and so on without any flaw throughout the whole psalm. Archbishop Tillotson saith, 'It seems to have more of poetical skill and number in it than we at this distance can easily understand.' Some have called it the saint's alphabet, and it were to be wished we had it as ready in our memories as the very letters of our alphabet, as ready as our A, B, C. Perhaps the penman found it of use to himself to observe this method, as it obliged him to sink for thoughts, and search for them, that he might fill up the quota of every part; and the letter he was to begin with might lead him to a word which might suggest a good sentence, and all little enough to raise anything that is good in the barren soil of our hearts. However, it would be of use to the learners, a help to them both in committing it to memory, and in calling it to mind upon occasion; by the letter the first word would be got, and that would bring in the whole verse. Thus young people would the easier learn it by heart, and retain it the better even in old age. If any censure it as childish and trifling, because acrostics are now quite out of fashion, let them know that the royal psalmist despiseth their censure; he is a teacher of babes, and if this method may be beneficial to them, he can easily stoop to it. "If this be to be vile, he will be yet more vile." II. The general scope and design of it is to "magnify the law, and make it honourable," to set forth the excellency and usefulness of Divine revelation, and to recommend it to us, not only for the entertainment, but for the government of ourselves, by the psalmist's own example, who speaks by experience of the benefit of it, and of the good impressions made upon him by it, for which he praiseth God, and earnestly prays from first to last for the continuance of God's grace with him to direct and quicken him in the way of his duty. There are ten several words by which Divine revelation is called in this psalm; and they are upon the matter synonymous, each of them expressive of the whole compass of it, both that which tells us what God expects from us and that which tells us what we may expect from him; and of the system of religion which is founded upon it, and guided by it. The things contained in the Scripture and drawn from it are here called, 1. God's law, because they are enacted by him as our sovereign. 2. His way, because they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience. 3. His testimonies, because they are solemnly declared to the world, and attested beyond contradiction. 4. His commandments, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust. 5. His precepts, because prescribed to us, and not left indifferent. 6. His word, or saying, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ the essential Eternal Word is all in all in it. 7. His judgments, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged. 8. His righteousness, because it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness. 9. His statutes, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. 10. His truth or faithfulness, because the principles upon which the Divine law is built are eternal truths. And I think there is but one verse (it is ver. 122) in all this long psalm in which there is not one or other of these ten words; only in three or four they are used concerning God's providence or David's practice, as ver. 75, 84, 121, and ver. 132. They are called God's name. The great esteem and affection David had for the word of God is the more admirable considering how little he had of it in comparison with what we have; no more perhaps in writing than the first books of Moses, which were but the dawning of this day, which may shame us who enjoy the full discoveries of Divine revelation, and yet are so cold towards it. In singing this psalm, there is work for all the devout affections of a sanctified soul, so copious, so various is the matter of it. We here find that in which we must give glory to God, both as our ruler and great benefactor; and that in which we are to teach and admonish ourselves and one another, so many are the instructions which we here find about a religious life; and to comfort and encourage ourselves and one another, so many are the sweet experiences of one that lived such a life. Here is something or other to suit the case of every Christian. Is any afflicted? is any merry? each will find that here that is proper for them. And it is so far from being a tedious repetition of the same thing, as may seem to those who look over it cursorily, that if we duly meditate upon it we shall find almost every verse has a new thought, and something in it very lively. And this, as many other of David's psalms, teaches us to be sententious in our devotions, both alone and when others join with us; for ordinarily the affections, especially of weaker Christians, are more likely to be raised and kept by short expressions, the sense of which lies in a little room, than by long and laboured periods.

1. ALEPH.

BLESSED *are* the undefiled in the way,
Who walk in the law of the LORD.
2 Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies,
And that seek him with the whole heart.
3 They also do no iniquity:
They walk in his ways.

The psalmist here shews that godly people are happy people; they are and shall be blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue; he doth not say here wherein it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do and be, that we may attain to it, and that we are here told. All men would be happy; but few take the right way. God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Blessednesses are to the righteous; all manner of blessedness. Now observe the characters of the happy people.

First. They are happy that make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves in their whole conversation by that rule. They "walk in the law of the Lord," ver. 1; that is, God's word is a law to them; not only in this or that particular instance, but in the whole course of their conversations. They walk within the hedges of that law which they dare not break through by doing any thing it forbids; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but press forwards in them towards the mark, taking every step by rule, and never walking at all adventures. This is walking in God's ways, ver. 3, the ways which he has marked out to us, and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our talk, but we must make it the rule of our walk. Walk in his ways, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, *Job* xxiii. 10, 11; xxxi. 7.

Secondly. That are upright and honest in their religion; "undefiled in the way;" not only that keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, "unspotted from the world," but they are habitually sincere in their intentions, "in whose spirit there is no guile," who are really as good as they seem to be, and row the same way they look.

Thirdly. That are true to the trust reposed in them as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews that "to them were committed the oracles of God," and blessed are they who preserve pure and entire that sacred depositum; that keep his testimonies as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye, so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world, and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those that shall come after them in this world. They that would walk in the law of the Lord must keep his testimonies, that is, his truths. Those will not long make conscience of good practices that do not adhere to good principles. Or, his testimonies; that is, his covenant. The ark of the covenant is called the ark of the testimony. Those do not keep covenant with God that do not keep the commandments of God.

Fourthly. That have a single eye to God as their chief good and highest end in all they do in religion; ver. 2, "They seek him with their whole heart." They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God only. This is that which they aim at, that God may be glorified in their obedience, and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. He is, and will be, the rewarder, the reward, of all those that thus seek him diligently, seek him with the heart, for that is it that God looks at and requires; and with the whole heart, for if the heart be divided between him and the world it is faulty.

Fifthly. That carefully avoid all sin, ver. 3. They do no iniquity; that is, they do not allow themselves in any sin, they do not commit it as those do that are the servants of sin; they do not make a practice of it, do not make a trade of it; they are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God; but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways. Blessed and holy are they who thus exercise themselves to have always consciences void of offence.

4 Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.
5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!
6 Then shall I not be ashamed,
When I have respect unto all thy commandments.

We are here taught,

First. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law. The tempter would possess men with an opinion, that they are at their liberty whether they will make the word of God their rule or no; that though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as they are made to believe it is. He taught our first parents to question the command, "Hath God said, Ye shall not eat?" And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this; ver. 4, "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts," to make religion our rule; and to keep them "diligently," to make religion our business, and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey at our peril.

Secondly. To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so; ver. 5, "O that my ways were directed" accordingly; that is, not only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God, as not to be in any thing a hindrance to us, but a furtherance rather in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God as that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments. Not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes, but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desires and prayer of a good man exactly agree with the will and command of a good God. Thou wouldst have me keep thy precepts; and, Lord, I fain would keep them. "This is the will of God, even our sanctification," and it should be our will.

Thirdly. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it, ver. 6. Note, 1. It is the undoubted character of every good man that he hath a respect to all God's commandments. He hath a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, and aims to conform to it, is sorry wherein he comes short; and what he doth in religion doth it in conscience of the command, because it is his duty. He hath respect to all the commandments, one as well as another, because they are all backed with the same authority, *Jas.* ii. 10, 11, and all levelled at the same end,—the glorifying of God in our happiness. Those that have a sincere respect to any command will have a general respect to every command; to the commands of both testaments and both tables; to the prohibitions and the precepts; to those that concern both the inward and the outward man; both the head and the heart; to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins, and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties. 2. Those that have a sincere respect to all God's commandments shall not be ashamed; not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have confidence towards God and boldness of access to the throne of his grace. 1 *Jno.* iii. 21.

They shall have credit before men, their honesty will be their honour; and they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls; they shall not be ashamed to retire into themselves, nor to reflect upon themselves, for their hearts shall not condemn them. David speaks this with application to himself; they that are upright may take the comfort of their uprightness; as, if I be wicked, woe to me; so, if I be sincere, it is well with me.

7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart,
When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.
8 I will keep thy statutes:
O forsake me not utterly.

Here is, First. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion, and to make himself, as we say, master of his business. He hopes to have learned God's righteous judgments; he knew much, but he was still pressing forward, and desired to know more, as knowing this, that he had not yet attained; but, as far as perfection is attainable in this life, he reached towards it, and will not take up short of it. As long as we live we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet; but we should aim to be head-scholars, and to get into the highest form. God's judgments are all righteous, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, mighty in the Scriptures.

Secondly. The use he would make of his Divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but, 1. That he might give God the glory of his learning. "I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments," intimating that he could not learn unless God taught him, and that Divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for. Though Christ keeps a free school, and teacheth without money and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his word and for his Spirit. Sure it is a mercy worth thanks to be taught so gainful a calling as religion is. And those have learned a good lesson that have learned to praise God; for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue; but those only are well learned in this mystery that have learned to praise him with uprightness of heart; that is, are inward with him in praising of him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation, as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the praises of the upright. 2. That he might himself come under the government of that learning. When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments, I will keep thy statutes. We cannot keep them unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain if we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes that are come up to a full resolution in the strength of his grace to keep them.

Thirdly. His prayer to God not to leave him: "O forsake me not;" that is, leave me not to myself, withdraw not thy Spirit and grace from me, for then I shall not keep thy statutes. Good men see themselves undone if God forsakes them, for then the tempter will be too hard for them. Though thou seem to forsake me, and threaten to forsake me, and dost for a time withdraw from me, yet let not the desertion be total and final, for that is hell. "O forsake me not utterly," for woe unto me if God departs from me.

2. BETH.

9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

Here is, First. A weighty question asked, by what means the next generation may be made better than this; "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Besides the original corruption we all brought into the world with us, ("from which we are not cleansed unto this day,") there are many particular sins which young people are subject to, by which they defile their way. Youthful lusts, 2 *Tim.* ii. 22; these render the way offensive to God, and disgraceful to themselves. Young men are concerned to cleanse their way, that is, to get their hearts renewed and their lives reformed; to make clean, and keep clean, from "the corruption that is in the world through lust," that they may have both a good conscience and a good name. Few young people do themselves inquire by what means they may recover and preserve their purity, and therefore David asks the question for them.

Secondly. A satisfactory answer given to this question. Young men may effectually cleanse their way, "by taking heed thereto according to the word of God;" and it is the honour of the word of God that it has such power, and is of such use both to particular persons and to communities, whose happiness lies much in the virtue of their youth. 1. Young men must make the word of God their rule, must acquaint themselves with it, and resolve to conform themselves to it. That will do more towards the cleansing of young men than the laws of princes, or the morals of philosophers. 2. They must carefully apply that rule, and make use of it. They must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God as a touchstone and standard; must rectify what is amiss in it by that regulator, and steer by that chart and compass. God's word will not do without our watchfulness, and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large or by no rule at all, or choosing to themselves false rules; let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by Scripture rules, so that their way be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and for ever.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee:
O let me not wander from thy commandments.

Here is, First. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of, and pleads with God: "I have sought thee," sought to thee as my oracle; sought after thee as my happiness; sought thee as my God; for should not a people seek after their God? If I have not yet found thee, I have sought thee; and thou never saidst, Seek in vain, nor wilt say so to me; for I have sought thee with my heart,—with my whole heart; sought thee only,—sought thee diligently.

Secondly. His prayer for the preservation of that work; Thou that hast inclined me to seek thy precepts, never suffer me to wander from them. The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments, the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them, and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart,
That I might not sin against thee.

Here is, First. The close application which David made of the word of God to himself; "He hid it in his heart," laid it up there, that it might be ready to him, whenever he had occasion to use it. He laid it up as that which he valued highly, and had a dear love for, and which he was afraid of losing, and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safe but in our hearts. If we have it only in our houses and hands enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads our memories may fail us; but if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe.

Secondly. The good uses he designed to make of it; "that I might not sin against thee." Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it; and the most effectual way to prevent it is to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master did, with, "It is written;" may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements, and his threatenings to its menaces.

12 Blessed *art* thou, O LORD:
Teach me thy statutes.

Here, First. David gives glory to God; "Blessed art thou, O Lord." Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thyself, and hast no need of me or my services, yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me, therefore, and then accept me. In all our prayers we should intermix praises.

Secondly. He asks grace from God; "Teach me thy statutes," that is, give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this drop from that fountain, this blessing from that blessedness. Teach me thy statutes, that I may know how to bless thee, who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee.

13 With my lips have I declared
All the judgments of thy mouth.
14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies,
As *much as* in all riches.
15 I will meditate in thy precepts,
And have respect unto thy ways.
16 I will delight myself in thy statutes:
I will not forget thy word.

Here, First. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him,

1. That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God; ver. 13, "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth." This he did not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment according to the word of God, nor only as a prophet by his psalms, but in his common discourse. Thus he shewed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy pride he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. Thus he did good with his knowledge; he did not hide God's word from others, but hide it for them; and out of that good treasure in his heart brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store,—things new and old. They whose hearts are fed with the bread of life should with their lips feed many. He had prayed, ver. 12, that God would teach him; and here he pleads, Lord, I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it; for to him that hath shall be given.

2. That he had entertained himself with it; "Lord, teach me thy statutes," for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them; ver. 14, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments," that is, in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that path of serious godliness which they chalk out to me. "I have rejoiced in this, as much as in all riches;" as much as ever any worldling rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God's commandments I can truly say, Soul, take thine ease. In true religion there is all riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Secondly. He looks forward with a holy resolution, never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he doth, that he will do, 2 *Cor.* xi. 12. They that have found pleasure in the ways of God, are likely to proceed and persevere in them.

1. He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts; ver. 15, "I will meditate in thy precepts." He not only discoursed of them to others, (many do that only to shew their knowledge and authority,) but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare to others. Note, God's words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

2. He will have them always in his eye. "I will have respect unto thy ways," as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss, and always aims and endeavours to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purpose unless we have respect to them as our rule, and our good thoughts produce good works, and good intentions in them.

3. He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God, and obedience to him. It is not for a season that he rejoiceth in this light, but "I will" still, I will for ever, "delight myself in thy statutes;" not only think of them, but do them with delight, ver. 16. David took more delight in God's statutes than in the pleasures of his court, or the honours of his camp,—more than in his sword or in his harp. When the law is written in the heart duty becomes a delight.

4. He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God; "I will not forget thy word;" not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it when I have occasion to use it. They that meditate in God's word, and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

3. GIMEL.

17 Deal bountifully with thy servant, *that* I may live,
And keep thy word.

We are here taught,

First. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, "Deal bountifully with me, that I may live." It was God's bounty that gave us life, that gave us this life; and the same bounty that gave it continues it, and gives all the supports and comforts of it, which if withheld we die, or, which is equivalent, our lives are embittered, and we are become weary of them. If God deals in strict justice with us, "we die, we perish, we all perish;" if these forfeited lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God deals bountifully with us, according to his mercy, not according to our deserts. The continuance of the

most useful life is owing to God's bounty, and on that we must have a continual dependence.

Secondly. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. Life is therefore a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world, where there are so few that do glorify him; and this David had in his eye. Not that I may live and grow rich, live and be merry, but "that I may live and keep thy word;" may observe it myself, and transmit it to those that shall come after, which the longer I live the better I shall do.

18 Open thou mine eyes,
That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Observe here,

First. That there are wondrous things in God's law, which we are all concerned, and should covet, to behold; not only strange things, which are very surprising and unexpected, but excellent things, which are to be highly esteemed and valued, and things which were long hid from the wise and prudent, but are now revealed unto babes. If there were wonders in the law, much more in the Gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose name is Wonderful. Well may we, who are so nearly interested, desire to behold these wondrous things, when the angels themselves reach to look into them, 1 *Pet.* i. 12.

Secondly. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and Gospel must beg of him to open their eyes, and to give them an understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God, till his grace causes the scales to fall from our eyes; and even those in whose hearts God hath said, Let there be light, have yet need to be farther enlightened, and must still pray to God to open their eyes yet more and more, that they who at first saw men as trees walking may come to see all things clearly. And the more God opens our eyes the more wonders we see in the word of God, which we saw not before.

19 I *am* a stranger in the earth:
Hide not thy commandments from me.

Here we have,

First. The acknowledgment which David makes of his own condition; "I am a stranger in the earth." We all are so, and all good people confess themselves to be so, for heaven is their home, and the world is but their inn, the land of their pilgrimage. David was a man that knew as much of the world, and was as well known in it, as most men. God built him a house, established his throne; strangers submitted to him, and people that he had not known served him; he had a name like the names of the great men, and yet he calls himself a stranger. We are all strangers on earth, and must so account ourselves.

Secondly. The request he makes to God thereupon; "Hide not thy commandments from me;" he means more; Lord, shew thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but as long as I live give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it. I am a stranger, and therefore stand in need of a guide, a guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have thy commandments always in view, for they will be all this to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. I am a stranger here, and must be gone shortly; by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence.

20 My soul breaketh [times.
For the longing *that it hath* unto thy judgments at all

David had prayed that God would open his eyes, ver. 18, and open the law, ver. 19; now here he pleads the earnestness of his desire towards knowledge and grace, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much.

First. His desire was importunate. "My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments;" or, as some read it, it is taken up and wholly employed in longing for thy judgments. The whole stream of its desires runs in this channel. I shall think myself quite broken and undone if I want the word of God, the conduct, converse, and comfort of it.

Secondly. It was constant; "at all times." It was not now and then in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God, but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul to hunger after the word of God, as its necessary food which there is no living without.

21 Thou hast rebuked the proud *that are* cursed,
Which do err from thy commandments.

Here is, First. The wretched character of wicked people. The temper of their minds is bad; they are proud; they magnified themselves above others. And yet that is not all; they magnify themselves against God, and set up their wills in competition with, and opposition to, the will of God, as if their hearts and tongues and all were their own. There is something of pride at the bottom of every wilful sin. And the tenor of their laws is no better; they do err from thy commandments, as Israel, that did always err in their hearts; they err in judgment, and embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, and then no wonder they err in practice, and wilfully turn aside out of the good way. This is the effect of their pride; for they say, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" as Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord?"

Secondly. The wretched case of such. They are certainly cursed; for God resists the proud; and they that throw off the commands of the law lay themselves under its curse, *Gal.* iii. 10; and he that now beholds them afar off will shortly say to them, Go, ye cursed. The proud sinners bless themselves, God curseth them. And though the most direful effects of this curse are reserved for the other world, yet they are oftentimes severely rebuked in this world. Providence crosseth them, vexeth them, and, wherein they deal proudly, God shews himself above them; and these rebukes are earnests of worse. David took notice of the rebukes proud men were under, and it made him cleave the more closely to the word of God, and pray the more earnestly that he might not err from God's commandments. Thus saints get good by God's judgments on sinners.

22 Remove from me reproach and contempt;
For I have kept thy testimonies.

Here, First. David prays against the reproach and contempt of men, that they might be removed, or, as the word is, rolled from off him. This intimates that they lay upon him, and neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned. Some despised him, and endeavoured to make him mean; others reproached him, and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill spoken of. It intimates, that they lay heavy upon him; hard words, indeed, and foul words break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit. Therefore David prays, Lord, remove them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from my duty or discouraged in it. God hath all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, and can silence lying lips, and raise up a good name that is trodden into the dust. To him we may appeal as the asserter of right, and avenger of wrong; and may depend on his promise that he will clear up our righteousness as the light, *Ps.* xxxvii. 6. Reproach and contempt may humble us and do us good, and then it shall be removed.

Secondly. He pleads his constant adherence to the word and way of God; "for I have kept thy testimonies." He not only pleads his innocency, that he was unjustly censured, but, 1. That he was jeered for well-doing. He was despised and abused for his strictness and zeal in religion; so that it was for God's name's sake that he suffered reproach, and therefore he could with the more assurance beg of God to appear for him. The reproach of God's people, if it be not removed now, it will be turned into the greater honour shortly. 2. That he was not jeered out of well-doing. Lord, remove it from me, "for I have kept thy testimonies" notwithstanding. If in a day of trial we still retain our integrity, we may be sure it will end well.

23 Princes also did sit *and* speak against me:
But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

See here, First. How David was abused even by great men, that should have known better his character and his case, and have been more generous. "Princes did sit,"—sit in council, sit in judgment,—"and speak against me." What even princes say is not always right; but it is sad when judgment is thus turned to wormwood,—when those that should be the protectors of the innocent are their betrayers. Herein David was a type of Christ; for they were the princes of this world that vilified and crucified the Lord of glory, 1 *Cor.* ii. 8.

Secondly. What method he took to make himself easy under these abuses. He meditated in God's statutes, went on in his duty, and did not regard them; as a deaf man he heard not. When they spoke against him he found that in the word of God which spoke for him, and spoke comfort to him, and then none of these things moved him. They that have pleasure in communion with God may easily despise the censures of men, even of princes.

24 Thy testimonies also *are* my delight
And my counsellors.

Here David explains his meditating in God's statutes, ver. 23, which was of such use to him when princes sat and spoke against him.

First. Did the affliction make him sad, the word of God comforted him, and was his delight, more his delight than any of the pleasures either of court or camp, of city or country. Sometimes it proves that the comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul then when other comforts are embittered.

Secondly. Did it perplex him,—was he at a loss what to do when the princes spoke against him? God's statutes were his counsellors, and they counselled him to bear it patiently, and commit his cause to God. God's testimonies will be the best counsellors, both to princes and private persons. 'They are the men of my counsel,' so the word is. There is more safety and satisfaction in consulting them than in the multitude of other counsellors. Observe here, those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight must take them for their counsellors, and be advised by them. And let those who take them for their counsellors in close walking take them for their delight in comfortable walking.

4. DALETH.

25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust:
Quicken thou me according to thy word.

Here is, First. David's complaint. We would have thought his soul soaring to heaven; but he saith himself, My soul not only rolls in the dust, but cleaves to the dust, which is a complaint either, 1. Of his corruptions,—his inclination to the world and the body,—both which are dust, and that which follows upon it, a deadness to holy duties; when he would do good evil is present with him. God spoke Adam not only mortal, but sinful, when he said, "Dust thou art," *Gen.* iii. 19. David's complaint here is like St. Paul's, of a body of death he carried about with him. The remainders of indwelling corruption are a very grievous burthen to a gracious soul. Or, 2. Of his afflictions, either trouble of mind or outward trouble; "Without were fightings, within were fears," and both together brought him even to the dust of death, *Ps.* xxii. 15, and his soul clave inseparably to it.

Secondly. His petition for relief, and his plea to enforce that petition; "Quicken thou me according to thy word." By thy providence put life into my affairs, by thy grace put life into my affections, cure me of my spiritual deadness, and make me lively in my devotion. Note, When we find ourselves dull, we must go to God, and beg of him to quicken us. He has an eye to God's word as a means of quickening; for the words which God speaks they are spirit, and they are life to those that receive them; and as an encouragement to hope that God would quicken them, having promised grace and comfort to all the saints, and to David in particular. God's word must be our guide and plea in every prayer.

26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me:
Teach me thy statutes.
27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts:
So shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

Here is, First. The great intimacy and freedom that had been between David and his God. David had opened his case, opened his very heart to God; "I have declared my ways," and acknowledged thee in them all, have taken thee along with me in all my designs and enterprises. Thus Jephthah uttered all his words, and Hezekiah spread his letters, before the Lord. "I have declared my ways," that is, my wants, and burthens, and troubles I meet with in my way; or my sins, my byways. I have made an ingenuous confession of them, "and thou heardest me," heardest me patiently all I had to say, and tookedst cognizance of my case. It is an unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God, 1 *Jno.* v. 14, 15.

Secondly. David's earnest desire of the continuance of that intimacy, not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the word and Spirit in an ordinary way; "Teach me thy statutes," that is, "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts." When he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways, he doth not say, Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be; but, Now, Lord, tell me my duty, let me know what thou wouldest have me to do as the case stands. Note, Those that in all their ways acknow-

ledge God may pray in faith that he will direct their steps in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God, is, by learning his statutes and walking intelligently in the way of his precepts: see 1 *Jno.* i. 6, 7.

Thirdly. The good use he would make of this for the honour of God and the edification of others: Let me have a good understanding of the way of thy precepts, give me a clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge of Divine things, "so shall I talk" with the more assurance, and the more to the purpose, "of thy wondrous works." We can talk with a better grace of God's wondrous works, the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts, and walk in that way.

28 My soul melteth for heaviness:
Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.
29 Remove from me the way of lying:
And grant me thy law graciously.

Here is, First. David's remonstrance of his own griefs; "My soul melteth for heaviness," which is to the same purpose with ver. 25, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it to melt, to drop away like a candle that wastes. The penitent soul melts in sorrow for sin, and even the patient soul may melt in the sense of affliction, and it is then its interest to pour out its soul before God.

Secondly. His request for God's grace.

1. That God would enable him to bear his affliction well, and graciously support him under it; "Strengthen thou me" with strength in my soul, "according to thy word," which, as the bread of life, strengthens man's heart, to undergo whatever God is pleased to inflict. Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the burthens, of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail. "Strengthen me according to that word," *Deu.* xxxiii. 25, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

2. That God would keep him from using any unlawful indirect means for the extricating of himself out of his troubles; ver. 29, "Remove from me the way of lying." David was conscious to himself of a proneness to this sin. He had in a strait cheated Abimelech, 1 *Sam.* xxi. 2; and Achish, v. 13; and *ch.* xxvii. 10. Great difficulties are great temptations to palliate a lie with the colour of a pious fraud and a necessary self-defence, therefore David prays that God would prevent him from falling into this sin any more, lest he should settle in the way of it. A course of lying, of deceit, and dissimulation, is that which every good man dreads, and which we are all concerned to beg of God by his grace to keep us from.

3. That he might always be under the conduct and protection of God's government; "Grant me thy law graciously;" grant me that to keep me from the way of lying. David had the law written with his hand, for the king was obliged to transcribe a copy of it for his own use, *Deu.* xvii. 18, but he prays that he might have it written in his heart, for then, and then only, we have it indeed, and to good purpose. Grant it me more and more. They that know and love the law of God cannot but desire to know it more, and love it better. Grant it me graciously; he begs it as a special token of God's favour. Note, We ought to reckon God's law a grant, a gift, an unspeakable gift; to value it, and pray for it, and to give thanks for it accordingly. The Divine code of institutes and precepts is indeed a charter of privileges; and God is truly gracious to those whom he makes gracious by giving them his law.

30 I have chosen the way of truth:
Thy judgments have I laid *before me.*
31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies:
O LORD, put me not to shame.
32 I will run the way of thy commandments,
When thou shalt enlarge my heart.

First. That those who will make any thing to purpose of their religion, must first make it their serious and deliberate choice. So David did. "I have chosen the way of truth." Note, 1. The way of serious godliness is the way of truth; the principles it is founded on are principles of eternal truth, and it is the only true way to happiness. 2. We must therefore choose to walk in this way, not because we know no other way, but because we know no better; nay, we know no other safe and good way. Let us choose that way for our way, which we will walk in, though it be narrow.

Secondly. That those that have chosen the way of truth, must have a constant regard to the word of God as the rule of their walking. "Thy judgments have I laid before me;" as he that learns to write lays his copy before him, that he may write according to it; as the workman lays his model and platform before him, that he may do his work exactly. As we must have the word in our heart by an habitual conformity to it, so we must have it in our eye by an actual regard to it upon all occasions, that we may walk accurately and by rule.

Thirdly. That those who make religion their choice and rule are likely to adhere to it faithfully. "I have stuck to thy testimonies" with an unchanged affection, and an unshaken resolution, stuck to them at all times, through all trials. I have chosen them, and therefore I have stuck to them. Note, The choosing Christian is likely to be the sticking Christian, when those that are Christians by chance tack about if the wind turn.

Fourthly. That those that stick to the word of God may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God; for David means that when he begs, "Lord, put me not to shame;" that is, never leave me to do that by which I shall shame myself, and do not thou reject my services, which will put me to the greatest confusion.

Fifthly. That the more comfort God gives us, the more duty he expects from us, ver. 32. Here we have, 1. His resolution to go on vigorously in religion, "I will run the way of thy commandments." Those that are going to heaven should make haste thither, and be still pressing forward. It concerns us to redeem time, and take pains and go on in our business with cheerfulness; we then run the way of our duty when we are ready to it, and pleasant in it, and lay aside every weight, *Heb.* xii. 1. 2. His dependence upon God for grace to do so. I shall then abound in thy work, "when thou shalt enlarge my heart." God, by his Spirit, enlargeth the hearts of his people when he gives them wisdom, for that is called "largeness of heart," 1 *Kin.* iv. 29, when he sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, and puts gladness there. The joy of our Lord should be oil to the wheels of our obedience.

5. HE.

33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes;
And I shall keep it *unto* the end.

34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law;
Yea, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.

Here, First. David prays earnestly that God himself would be his teacher. He had prophets, and wise men, and priests about him, and was himself well instructed in the law of God, yet he begs to be taught of God, as knowing that none teacheth like him, *Job* xxxvi. 22. Observe here, 1. What he desires to be taught. Not the notions or language of God's statutes, but the way of them, the way of applying them to myself, and governing myself by them; teach me the way of my duty which thy statutes prescribe, and in every doubtful case let me know what thou wouldest have me to do; let me hear the word behind me saying, "This is the way, walk in it," *Isa.* xxx. 21. 2. How he desires to be taught. In such a way as no man could teach him; "Lord, give me understanding." As the God of nature he has given us intellectual powers and faculties; but here we are taught to pray, that as the God of grace he would give us to use those powers and faculties about the great things which belong to our peace, which, through the corruption of our nature, we are averse to. "Give me understanding," that is, an enlightened understanding, for it is as good have no understanding at all as not have it sanctified. Nor will the spirit of revelation in the word answer the end, unless we have the spirit of wisdom in the heart. This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; "for the Son of God is come, and hath given us understanding," 1 *Jno.* v. 20.

Secondly. He promiseth faithfully that he would be a good scholar. If God would teach him, he was sure that he should learn to good purpose; "I shall keep thy law," which I shall never do unless I be taught of God, and which that I may do is the reason why I desire so earnestly to be taught. If God by his Spirit give us a right and good understanding, we shall be, 1. Constant in our obedience; "I shall keep it to the end," to the end of my life, which will be the surest proof of sincerity. It will not avail the traveller to keep the way for a while, if he do not keep it to the end of his journey. 2. Cordial in our obedience; "I shall observe it with my whole heart," that is, with pleasure and delight, and with vigour and resolution. That way that the whole heart goes the whole man goes, and that should be the way of God's commandments, for the keeping of them is the whole of man.

35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments;
For therein do I delight.
36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies,
And not to covetousness.

He had before prayed to God to enlighten his understanding, that he might know his duty, and not mistake concerning it; here he prays to God to bow his will, and quicken the active powers of his soul, that he might do his duty; for "it is God that works in us both to will and to do," as well as to understand what is good, *Phil.* ii. 13. Both the good head and the good heart are from the good grace of God, and both are necessary to every good work. Observe here,

First. The grace he prays for. 1. That God would make him able to do his duty; "Make me to go," strengthen me for every good work. Since we are not sufficient of ourselves, our dependence must be upon the grace of God, for from him all our sufficiency is. God puts his Spirit within us, and so causeth us to walk in his statutes, *Eze.* xxxvi. 27, and this is that which David here begs. 2. That God would make him willing to do it, and would by his grace subdue the aversion he naturally had to it; "Incline my heart to thy testimonies," that is, to those things which thy testimonies prescribe; not only make me willing to do my duty as that which I must do, and therefore am concerned to make the best of, but make me desirous to do my duty as that which is agreeable to the new nature, and really advantageous to me. Duty is then done with delight, when the heart is inclined to it. It is God's grace that inclines us, and the more backward we find ourselves to it the more earnest we must be for that grace.

Secondly. The sin he prays against, and that is covetousness; "Incline my heart to keep thy testimonies," and restrain and mortify the inclination there is in me to covetousness. That is a sin which stands opposed to all God's testimonies, for the love of money is such a sin as is the root of much sin, of all sin. Those therefore that would have the love of God rooted in them, must get the love of the world rooted out of them, for the friendship of the world is enmity with God. See in what way God deals with men, not by compulsion, but he draws with the cords of a man, working in them an inclination to that which is good and an aversion to that which is evil.

Thirdly. His plea to enforce this prayer; Lord, bring me to and keep me "in the way of thy commandments, for therein do I delight," and therefore I pray thus earnestly for grace to walk in that way. Thou that hast wrought in me this delight in the way of thy comm.....ents, wilt thou not work in me an ability to walk in them, and so crown thine own work?

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;
And quicken thou me in thy way.

Here, First. David prays for restraining grace, that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty; "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." The honours, pleasures, and profits of the world are the vanities, the aspect and prospect of which draws multitudes away from the paths of religion and godliness. The eye, when fastened on these, infects the heart with the love of them, and so it is alienated from God and Divine things; and therefore, as we ought to make a covenant with our eyes, and lay a charge upon them, that they shall not wander after, much less fix upon, that which is dangerous, *Job* xxxi. 1, so we ought to pray that God by his providence would keep vanity out of our sight, and that by his grace he would keep us from being enamoured with the sight of it.

Secondly. He prays for constraining grace, that he might not only be kept from every thing that would obstruct his progress heavenward, but might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress; "Quicken thou me in thy way;" quicken me to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit. Beholding vanity deadens us, and slackens our pace. A traveller that stands gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view, will not rid ground, but if our eyes be kept from that which would divert us, our hearts will be kept to that which will excite us.

38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant,
Who *is devoted* to thy fear.

Here is, First. The character of a good man, which is the work of God's grace in him. He is God's servant, subject to his law, and employed in his work, that is, devoted to his fear, given up to his direction and dispose, and

taken up with high thoughts of him, and all those acts of devotion which have a tendency to his glory. Those are truly God's servants, that, though they have their infirmities and defects, yet are sincerely devoted to the fear of God, and have all their affections and motions governed by that fear; they are engaged and addicted to religion.

Secondly. The confidence that a good man has towards God in dependence upon the word of his grace to him. They that are God's servants may in faith, and with humble boldness, pray that God would establish his word to them; that is, that he would fulfil his promises to them in due time, and in the meantime give them an assurance that they shall be fulfilled. What God has promised we must pray for; we need not be so griping as to ask more; we need not be so modest as to ask less.

39 Turn away my reproach which I fear:
For thy judgments *are* good.

Here, First. David prays against reproach, as before, ver. 22. David was conscious to himself that he had done that which might give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, which would blemish his own reputation, and turn to the dishonour of his family; now he prays that God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hands, would be pleased to prevent this, to deliver him from all his transgressions, that he might not be the reproach of the foolish, which he feared, *Ps.* xxxix. 8. Or, he means that reproach which his enemies unjustly loaded him with. Let their lying lips be put to silence.

Secondly. He pleads the goodness of God's judgments; Lord, thou sittest in the throne, and thy judgments are right and good, just and kind to those that are wronged, and therefore to thee I appeal from the unjust and unkind censures of men. It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, while he that judgeth us is the Lord. Or thus, Thy word and ways, and thy holy religion, are very good, but the reproaches cast on me will fall on them; therefore, Lord, turn them away; let not religion be wounded through my side.

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts:
Quicken me in thy righteousness.

Here, First. David professeth the ardent affection he had to the word of God; "I have longed after thy precepts;" not only loved them, and delighted in what I have already attained, but I have earnestly desired to know them more, and do them better, and am still pressing forward towards perfection. Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will but set us a longing after a more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this passionate desire after his precepts; Behold, I have thus loved, thus longed; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am thus afflicted.

Secondly. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. Thou that hast wrought in me this languishing desire, put life into me that I may prosecute it; "quicken me in thy righteousness," in thy righteous ways, according to thy righteous promise. Where God hath wrought to will, he will work to do; and where he hath wrought to desire, he will satisfy the desire.

6. VAU.

41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD,
Even thy salvation, according to thy word.
42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproach-
For I trust in thy word. [eth me:

Here is, First. David's prayer for the salvation of the Lord. Lord, thou art my saviour, I am miserable in myself, and thou only canst make me happy, "Let thy salvation come to me." Hasten temporal salvation to me from my present distresses; and hasten me to the eternal salvation, by giving me the necessary qualifications for it, and the comfortable pledges and foretastes of it.

Secondly. David's dependence upon the grace and promise of God for that salvation. These are the two pillars on which our hope is built, and they will not fail us. 1. The grace of God; "Let thy mercies come, even thy salvation." Our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Eternal life must be expected as "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ," *Jude* 21. Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view; let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me. 2. The promise of God. Let it come "according to thy word," thy word of promise; "I trust in thy word," and therefore may expect the performance of the promise. We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it.

Thirdly. David's expectation of the good assurance which that grace and promise of God would give him; "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me" for my confidence in God, as if it would deceive me. When God saves those out of their troubles that trusted in him, he effectually silenceth those who would have shamed that counsel of the poor, *Ps.* xiv. 6. And their reproaches will be for ever silenced when the salvation of the saints is completed. Then it will appear beyond dispute that it was not in vain to trust in God.

43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth;
For I have hoped in thy judgments.
44 So shall I keep thy law continually
For ever and ever.

Here is, First. David's humble petition for the tongue of the learned, that he might know how to speak a word in season for the glory of God: "Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth." He means, Lord, let the word of truth be always in my mouth; let me have that wisdom and courage which is necessary to enable me both to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and, like the good householder, to bring out of my treasury things new and old; and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it. We have need to pray to God, that we may never be either afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. David found he was sometimes at a loss, the word of truth was not so ready to him as it should have been; but he prays, Lord, let it not be taken utterly from me; let me always have so much of it at hand as will be necessary to the due discharge of my duty.

Secondly. His humble profession of the heart of the upright, without which the tongue of the learned, however it may be serviceable to others, will stand us in no stead. 1. David professeth his confidence in God: Lord, make me ready and mighty in the Scriptures, for I have hoped in those judgments of thy mouth, and if they be not at hand my support and defence are departed from me. 2. He professeth his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace; "So shall I keep thy law continually." If I have thy word not only in my heart, but in my mouth, I shall do all I should do, stand complete in thy whole will. Thus shall "the man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work," 2 *Tim.* iii. 17; *Col.* iii. 16. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law, 1st. Continually without trifling. God must be served in a constant course of obedience every day, and all the day long. 2nd. For ever and ever without backsliding; we must never be weary of well-doing. If we serve him to the end of our time on earth, we shall be serving him in heaven to the endless ages of eternity; so shall we keep his law for ever and ever. Or thus, Lord, let me have the word of truth in my mouth, that I may commit that sacred depositum to the rising generation, (2 *Tim.* ii. 22,) and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall thy law be kept for ever and ever, that is, from one generation to another; according to that promise, *Isa.* lix. 21, My word in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor thy seed's seed.

45 And I will walk at liberty:
For I seek thy precepts.
46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings,
And will not be ashamed.
47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments,
Which I have loved.
48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments,
which I have loved;
And I will meditate in thy statutes.

We may observe in these verses,

First. What David experienced of an affection to the law of God; "I seek thy precepts," ver. 45; I desire to know and do my duty, and consult thy word accordingly; I do all I can to understand what the will of the Lord is, and to discover the intimations of his mind. "I seek thy precepts," for I have loved them, ver. 47, and again, ver. 48. I not only give consent to them as good, but take complacency in them as good for me. All that love God love his government, and therefore love all his commandments.

Secondly. What he expected from this. Five things he promiseth himself here in the strength of God's grace:

1. That he should be free and easy in his duty; "I will walk at liberty," freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly. The service of sin is perfect slavery, the service of God is perfect liberty. Licentiousness is bondage to the greatest of tyrants, conscientiousness is freedom to the meanest of prisoners, *Jno.* viii. 32, 36; *Lu.* i. 74, 75.

2. That he should be bold and courageous in his duty; "I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings." Before David came to the crown, kings were sometimes his judges, as Saul and Achish; but if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would speak of God's testimonies, and profess to build his hope upon them, and make them his council, his guards, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, *Dan.* iii. 16; *Acts* iv. 20. After David came to the crown, kings were sometimes his companions, they visited him, and he returned their visits; but he did not in complaisance to them talk of every thing but his religion, for fear of affronting them, and making his converse uneasy to them. No, God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to shew that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it, and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of God's testimonies, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.

3. That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty; ver. 47, "I will delight myself in thy commandments," in conversing with them, in conforming to them; I will never be so well pleased with myself, as when I do that which is pleasing to God. The more delight we take in the service of God, the nearer we come to the perfection we should aim at.

4. That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty. "I will lift up my hands to thy commandments," which notes not only a vehement desire towards them, (*Ps.* cxliii. 6,) I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go, but a close application of mind to the observance of them; I will lay my hands to the command, not only praise it, but practise it; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, that is, I will put forth all the strength I have to do it. The hands that hang down through sloth and discouragement shall be lifted up, *Heb.* xii. 12.

5. That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty; ver. 48, "I will meditate in thy statutes," not only entertain myself with thinking of them as matters of speculation, but contrive how I may observe them in the best manner. By this it will appear that we truly love God's commandments, if we apply both our minds and our hands to them.

7. ZAIN.

49 Remember the word unto thy servant,
Upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Two things David here pleads with God in prayer for that mercy and grace, which he hoped for, according to the word by which his requests were guided:

First. That God had given him the promise on which he hoped. Lord, I desire no more but that thou wouldst "remember thy word unto thy servant," and "do as thou hast said:" see 1 *Chr.* xvii. 23. Thou art wise, and therefore wilt perfect what thou hast purposed, and not change thy counsel; thou art faithful, and therefore wilt perform what thou hast promised, and not break thy word. Those that make God's promises their portion may with humble boldness make them their plea. Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken, and wilt thou not make it good? *Gen.* xxxii. 9; *Ex.* xxxiii. 12.

Secondly. That God who had given him the promise in the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise, and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Hath God kindled in us desires towards spiritual blessings more than towards any temporal good things, and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Hath he filled us with hopes of those blessings, and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us will, according to our faith, work for us, and will not disappoint us.

50 This *is* my comfort in my affliction:
For thy word hath quickened me.

Here is David's experience of benefit by the word.

First. As a means of his sanctification. "Thy word hath quickened me;" it made me alive when I was dead in sin, it has many a time made me lively when I was dead in duty. It has quickened me to that which is good when I was backward and averse to it; and it has quickened me in that which is good when I was cold and indifferent.

Secondly. Therefore as a means of his consolation, then when he was in affliction, and needed something to support him; Because thy word has quickened me at other times, it has comforted me then. The word of God has much in it that speaks comfort in affliction, but those only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickening power of the word. If through grace it make us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in all conditions, under all events.

51 The proud have had me greatly in derision:
Yet have I not declined from thy law.

David here tells, and it will be of use to us to know it,

First. That he had been jeered for his religion. Though he was a man of honour, a man of great prudence, and had done eminent services to his country, yet, because he was a devout, conscientious man, "the proud had him greatly in derision." They ridiculed him, bantered him, and did all they could to expose him to contempt; they laughed at him for his praying, and called it cant; for his seriousness, and called it mopishness; for his strictness, and called it needless preciseness. They were the proud that sat in the scorner's seat, and valued themselves by it.

Secondly. That yet he had not been jeered out of his religion. They have done all they could to make me quit it for shame, but none of these things move me; "I have not declined from thy law" for all this. But "if this be to be vile," (as he said when Michal had him greatly in derision) "I will be yet more vile." He not only had not quite forsaken the law, but had not so much as declined from it. We must never baulk any duty, nor let slip an opportunity of doing good, for fear of the reproach of men or their revilings. The traveller goes on his way though the dogs bark at him. Those can bear but little for Christ that cannot bear a hard word for him.

52 I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD;
And have comforted myself.

When David was derided for his godliness, he not only held fast his integrity, but,

First. He comforted himself. He not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully; it did not disturb his peace, nor break in upon the repose of his spirit in God. It was a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find no occasion against him, save only in the matters of his God, *Dan.* vi. 5. They that are derided for their adherence to God's law may comfort themselves with this, that the reproach of Christ will prove, in the end, greater riches to them than the treasures of Egypt.

Secondly. That which he comforted himself with was the remembrance of God's judgments of old, that is, the providences of God concerning his people formerly, both in mercy to them, and in justice against their persecutors. God's judgments of old, in our own early days, and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement in the way of God, for he is still the same.

53 Horror hath taken hold upon me
Because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Here is, First. The character of wicked people; he means those that are openly and grossly wicked; They forsake thy law. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin is downright forsaking it and throwing it off.

Secondly. The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David. It frightened him, it put him into an amazement. He trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischiefs thereby done to the souls of men. He dreaded the consequences of it, both to the sinners themselves, and cried out, "O gather not my soul with sinners, let mine enemy be as the wicked,"—and to the interests of God's kingdom among men, which he was hereby afraid would be sunk and ruined. He doth not say, "Horror has taken hold on me," because of their cruel designs against me, but because of the contempt they put on God and his law. Sin is a monstrous horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, *Jer.* v. 30; xxiii. 14; *Hos.* vi. 10; *Jer.* ii. 12.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.

Here is, First. David's state and condition. He was "in the house of his pilgrimage;" which may be understood either as his peculiar trouble,—he was often tossed and hurried, and forced to fly,—or as his lot in common with all. This world is the house of our pilgrimage, the house in which we are pilgrims; it is our tabernacle, it is our inn, we must confess ourselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth, that are not at home here, nor must be here long. Even David's palace is but the house of his pilgrimage.

Secondly. His comfort in this state. "Thy statutes have been my songs," with which I here entertain myself, as travellers use to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs, they were all borrowed from the word of God; God's statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man useth to sing, and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and put gladness into his heart, more than they have that chant to the sound of the viol, *Am.* vi. 5. Is any afflicted then? Let him sing over God's statutes, and try if he cannot so sing away sorrow, *Ps.* cxxxviii. 5.

55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night,
And have kept thy law.
56 This I had,
Because I kept thy precepts.

Here is, First. The converse David had with the word of God. He kept it in mind, and upon every occasion he called it to mind. God's name is the discovery he hath made of himself to us in and by his word. This is his memorial unto all generations, and therefore we should always keep it in memory; remember it in the night, upon a waking bed, when we are communing with our own hearts. When others were sleeping David was remembering God's name, and by conning that lesson increasing his acquaintance with it; in the night of affliction this he called to mind.

Secondly. The conscience he made of conforming to it. The due remembrance of God's name, which is prefixed to his law, will have a great influence upon our observance of the law. "I remembered thy name in the night," and therefore was careful to keep thy law all day. How comfortable will it be in the reflection, if our own hearts can witness for us, that we have thus remembered God's name, and kept his law!

Thirdly. The advantage he got by it; ver. 56, "This I had, because I kept thy precepts." Some understand this indefinitely: "This I had," that is, I had that which satisfied me, I had every thing that is comfortable, "because I kept thy precepts." Note, All that have made a business of religion will own that it has turned to a good account, and they have been unspeakable gainers by it. Others refer it to what goes immediately before, 'I had the comfort of keeping thy law because I kept it.' Note, God's work is its own wages. A heart to obey the will of God is a most valuable reward of obedience; and the more we do, the more we may do, and shall do, in the service of God. The branch that beareth fruit is made more fruitful, *Jno.* xv. 2.

8. CHETH.

57 *Thou* art my portion, O LORD:
I have said that I would keep thy words.

We may hence gather the character of a godly man.

First. He makes the favour of God his felicity: "Thou art my portion, O Lord." Others place their happiness in the wealth and honours of this world; their portion is in this life; they look no farther, they desire no more; these are their good things, *Lu.* xvi. 25; but all that are sanctified take the Lord for the portion of their inheritance and their cup, and nothing less will satisfy them. David can appeal to God in this matter: 'Lord, thou knowest that I have chosen thee for my portion, and depend upon thee to make me happy.'

Secondly. He makes the law of God his rule: "I have said that I would keep thy words;" and what I have said, by thy grace I will do, and will abide by it to the end. Note, Those that take God for their portion must take him for their Prince, and swear allegiance to him; and, having promised to keep his word, we must often put ourselves in mind of our promise, *Ps.* xxxix. 1.

58 I intreated thy favour with *my* whole heart:
Be merciful unto me according to thy word.

David, having in the foregoing verse reflected upon his covenants with God, here reflects upon his prayers to God, and renews his petition. Observe,

First. What he prayed for. Having taken God for his portion, he intreated his favour, as one that knew he had forfeited it, was unworthy of it, and yet undone without it, but for ever happy if he could obtain it. We cannot demand God's favour as a debt, but must be humble supplicants for it, that God will not only be reconciled to us, but accept us, and smile upon us. He prays, "Be merciful to me," in the forgiveness of what I have done amiss, and in giving me grace to do better for the future.

Secondly. How he prayed. "With his whole heart;" as one that knew how to value the blessing he prayed for. The gracious soul is entirely set upon the favour of God, and is therefore importunate for it: "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

Thirdly. What he pleaded. The promise of God; "Be merciful to me according to thy word." I desire thy mercy promised, and depend upon the promise for it. They that are governed by the precepts of the word, and are resolved to keep them, (ver. 57,) may plead the promises of the word, and take the comfort of them.

59 I thought on my ways,
And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.
60 I made haste, and delayed not
To keep thy commandments.

David had said he would keep God's word, ver. 57, and it was well said. Now here he tells us how and in what method he pursued that resolution.

First. He thought on his ways. He thought beforehand what he should do, pondering the path of his feet, *Pr.* iv. 26, that he might walk surely, and not at all adventures. He thought after what he had done, reflected upon his life past, and recollected the paths he had walked in, and the steps he had taken. The word signifies a fixed, abiding thought. Some make it an allusion to those that work embroidery, that are very exact and careful to cover the least flaw; or to those that cast accounts, Reckon with yourselves, What do I owe? what am I worth? I thought not on my wealth, as the covetous man, *Ps.* xlix. 11, but on my ways; not what I have, but what I do; because what we do will follow us into another world, when what we have must be left behind. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other people's ways that never think of their own; but let every man prove his own work.

Secondly. He turned his feet to God's testimonies. He determined to make the word of God his rule, and to walk by that rule. He turned from the bypaths to which he had turned aside, and returned to God's testimonies; he turned not only his eye to them, but his feet; his affections to the love of God's word, and his conversation to the practice of it. The bent and inclinations of his soul was towards God's testimonies, and his conversation was governed by them. Penitent reflections must produce pious resolutions.

Thirdly. He did this presently and without demur; ver. 60, "I made haste and delayed not." When we are under convictions of sin, we must strike while the iron is hot, and not think to defer the prosecution of them, as Felix did, to a more convenient season. When we are called to duty we must lose no time, but set about it to-day while it is called to-day.

Now this account David here gives of himself may refer either to his constant practice every day,—he reflected on his ways at night, directed his feet to God's testimonies in the morning, and what his hand found to do that was good he did it without delay; or it may refer to his first acquaintance with God and religion, when he began to throw off the vanity of childhood and youth, and to remember his Creator. That blessed change was by the grace of God thus wrought. Note, 1. Conversion begins in serious consideration, *Eze.* xviii. 28; *Lu.* xv. 17. 2. Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies?

61 The bands of the wicked have robbed me:
But I have not forgotten thy law.

Here is, First. The malice of David's enemies against him. They were wicked men, who hated him for his godliness. There were bands or troops of them confederate against him. They did him all the mischief they could; they robbed him, having endeavoured to take away his good name, ver. 51, they set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plunder in time of war, or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul, it is likely, seized his effects, Absalom his palace; the Amalekites rifled Ziklag. Worldly wealth is what we may be robbed of. David, though a man of war, could not keep his own. Thieves break through and steal.

Secondly. The testimony of David's conscience for him, that he had held fast his religion when he was stripped of every thing else, as Job did when the bands of the Chaldeans and Sabeans had robbed him; "But I have not forgotten thy law." No care or grief should drive God's word out of our minds, or hinder our comfortable relish of it, and converse with it. Nor must we ever think the worse of the ways of God for any trouble we meet with in those ways, nor fear being losers by our religion at last, however we may be losers for it now.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee
Because of thy righteous judgments.

Though David is in this psalm much in prayer, yet he did not neglect the duty of thanksgiving; for those that pray much will have much to give thanks for. See,

First. How much God's hand was eyed in his thanksgivings. He doth not say, "I will give thanks," because of thy favours to me which I have the comfort of, but "because of thy righteous judgments," all the disposals of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of. We must give thanks for the asserting of God's honour, and the accomplishing of his word, in all he doth in the government of the world.

Secondly. How much David's heart was set upon his thanksgivings. He would rise at midnight to give thanks to God. Great and good thoughts kept him awake, and refreshed him instead of sleep; and so zealous was he for the honour of God, that when others were in their beds he was upon his knees at his devotions. He did not affect to be seen of men in it, but gave thanks in secret, where our heavenly Father sees. He had praised God "in the courts of the Lord's house," and yet he will do it in his bedchamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When David found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those affections to God in actual adorations, not deferring, lest they should cool. Yet observe his reverence; he did not lie still and give thanks, but rose out of his bed, perhaps in the cold and in the dark, to do it the more solemnly. And see what a good husband he was of time; when he could not lie and sleep, he would rise and pray.

63 I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee,
And of them that keep thy precepts.

David had often expressed the great love he had to God, here he speaks the great love he had to the people of God; and observe,

First. Why he loved them. Not so much because they were his best friends, most firm to his interest and most forward to serve him, but because they were such as feared God and kept his precepts, and so did him honour, and helped to support his kingdom among men. Our love to the saints is then sincere, when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them, and the service they do to him.

Secondly. How he shewed his love to them. He was a companion of them. He had not only a spiritual communion with them in the same faith and hope, but he joined with them in holy ordinances in the courts of the Lord, where rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together. He sympathized with them in their joys and sorrows, *Heb.* x. 33; he conversed familiarly with them, communicated his experiences to them, and consulted theirs. He not only took such to be his companions as did fear God, but he vouchsafed himself to be a companion with all, with any, that did so, wherever he met with them. Though he was a king, he would associate with the poorest of his subjects that feared God, *Ps.* xv. 14; *Jas.* ii. 1.

64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy:
Teach me thy statutes.

Here, First. David pleads that God is good to all the creatures, according to their necessities and capacities. As the heaven is full of God's glory, so the earth is full of his mercy, full of the instances of his pity and bounty. Not only the land of Canaan, where God is known and worshipped, but the whole earth, in many parts of which he has no homage paid him, is full of his mercy. Not only the children of men upon the earth, but even the inferior creatures, taste of God's goodness. His tender mercies are over all his works.

Secondly. He therefore prays that God would be good to him according to his necessity and capacity; "Teach me thy statutes." Thou feedest the young ravens that cry with food proper for them, and wilt thou not feed me with spiritual food, the bread of life, which my soul needs, and craves, and cannot subsist without? "The earth is full of thy mercy," and is not heaven too? Wilt thou not, then, give me spiritual blessings in heavenly places? A gracious heart will fetch an argument from any thing to enforce a petition for Divine teaching. Sure he that will not let his birds be unfed will not let his children be untaught.

9. TETH.

65 Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD,
According unto thy word.
66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge:
For I have believed thy commandments.

Here, First. David makes a thankful acknowledgment of God's gracious dealings with him all along; "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant." However God hath dealt with us, we must own he hath dealt well with us; better than we deserve, and all in love, and with design to work for our good. In many instances God has done well for us beyond our expectations; he hath done well for all his servants; never any of them complained that he had used them hardly. Thou hast dealt well with me, not only according to thy mercy, but "according to thy word." God's favours look best when they are compared with the promise, are seen flowing from that fountain.

Secondly. Upon these experiences he grounds a petition for Divine instruction: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge," that by thy grace I may render again, in some measure, according to the benefit done unto me. Teach me a good taste, so the word signifies; a good relish to discern things that differ, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; for "the ear tries words as the mouth tastes meat." We should pray to God for a sound mind, that we may have spiritual senses exercised, *Heb.* v. 14. Many have knowledge that have little judgment; they that have both are well fortified against the snares of Satan, and well furnished for the service of God and their generation.

Thirdly. This petition is backed with a plea; "For I have believed thy commandments;" received them, and consented to them that they were good, and submitted to their government; therefore, Lord, teach me. Where God hath given a good heart a good head, too, may in faith be prayed for.

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray:
But now have I kept thy word.

David here tells us what he had experienced,

First. Of the temptations of a prosperous condition: "Before I was afflicted," while I lived in peace and plenty, and knew no sorrow, "I went astray" from God and my duty. Sin is going astray, and then we are most apt to wander from God when we are easy, and think ourselves at home in the world. Prosperity is the unhappy occasion of much iniquity. It makes people conceited of themselves, indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, and deaf to the reproofs of the word: see *Ps.* xxx. 6. It is good for us, when we are afflicted, to remember how and wherein we went astray before we were afflicted, that we may answer the end of the affliction.

Secondly. Of the benefit of an afflicted state; "Now have I kept thy word," and so have been recovered from my wanderings. God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself that have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin, and shew us the vanity of the world; they soften the heart, and open the ear to discipline. The prodigal's distress brought him to himself first, and then to his father.

68 Thou *art* good, and doest good;
Teach me thy statutes.

Here, First. David praiseth God's goodness, and gives him the glory of it; "Thou art good, and doest good." All that have any knowledge of God, and dealings with him, will own that he doth good, and therefore will conclude that he is good. The streams of God's goodness are so numerous, and run so full, so strong to all the creatures, that we must conclude the fountain that is in himself to be inexhaustible. We cannot conceive how much good our God doth every day, much less can we conceive how good he is. Let us acknowledge it with admiration, and with holy love and thankfulness.

Secondly. He prays for God's grace, and begs to be under the conduct and influence of it: "Teach me thy statutes." Lord, thou dost good to all, art the bountiful benefactor of all the creatures; this is the good I beg thou wilt do to me, instruct me in my duty, and incline me to it, and enable me to do it. "Thou art good, and doest good; Lord, teach me thy statutes," that I may be good, and do good; may have a good heart, and live a good life. It is an encouragement to poor sinners, to hope that God will teach them his way, because he is good and upright, *Ps* xxv. 8.

69 The proud have forged a lie against me:
But I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.
70 Their heart is as fat as grease;
But I delight in thy law.

David here tells us how he was affected as to the proud and wicked people that were about him.

First. He did not fear their malice, nor was he by it deterred from his duty; "They have forged a lie against me." Thus they aimed to take away his good name; nay, all we have in the world, even life itself, may be brought into danger by those who make no conscience of forging a lie. They that were proud envied David's reputation because it eclipsed them, and therefore did all they could to blemish him, and took a pride in trampling upon him. They therefore persuaded themselves it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie, if it might but expose him to contempt. Their wicked wit forged lies, invented stories, which there was not the least colour for, to serve their wicked designs. And what did David do when he was thus belied? He will bear it patiently; he will keep that precept which forbids him to render railing for railing, and will with all his heart sit down silent. He will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution; let them say what they will, "I will keep thy precepts," and not dread their reproach.

Secondly. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he by it allured from his duty; "Their heart is as fat as grease." The proud are at ease, *Ps.* cxxii. 4, they are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it; and this makes them, 1. Senseless, and secure, and stupid; they are past feeling. Thus the phrase is used, *Isa.* vi. 10, "make the heart of this people fat." They are not sensible of the touch of the word of God, or his rod. 2. Sensual and voluptuous. "Their eyes stand out with fatness," *Ps.* lxxiii. 7; they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good, and much good may it do them; I would not change conditions with them; "I delight in thy law;" I build my security upon the promises of God's word, and have pleasure enough in communion with God, infinitely preferable to all their delights. The children of God, that are acquainted with spiritual pleasures, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

71 *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted;
That I might learn thy statutes.

See here, First. That it hath been the lot of the best saints to be afflicted. The proud and the wicked lived in pomp and pleasure, while David, though he kept close to God and his duty, was still in affliction. Waters of a full cup are wrung out to God's people, *Ps.* lxxiii. 10.

Secondly. That it hath been the advantage of God's people to be afflicted. David could speak experimentally: It was good for me. Many a good lesson he had learned by his afflictions, and many a good duty he had been brought to, which otherwise had been unlearned and undone. Therefore God visited him with affliction, that he might learn God's statutes, and the intention was answered, the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He that chastened him taught him. "The rod and reproof give wisdom."

72 The law of thy mouth *is* better unto me
Than thousands of gold and silver.

This is a reason why David reckoned that when by his afflictions he learned God's statutes, and the profit did so much balance the loss, that he was really

a gainer by them; for God's law, which he got acquaintance with by his affliction, was better to him than all the gold and silver which he lost by his affliction.

First. David had but a little of the word of God in comparison with what we have, yet see how highly he valued it; how inexcusable then are we, who have both the Old and New Testament complete, and yet account them as a strange thing! Observe, Therefore he valued the law, because it is the law of God's mouth, the revelation of his will, and ratified by his authority.

Secondly. He had a great deal of gold and silver, in comparison with what we have, yet see how little he values it. His riches increased, and yet he did not set his heart upon them, but upon the word of God. That was better to him, yielded him better pleasures, and better maintenance, and a better inheritance, than all the treasures he was master of. Those that have read and believed David's *Psalms*, and Solomon's *Ecclesiastes*, cannot but prefer the word of God far before the wealth of this world.

10. JOD.

73 Thy hands have made me and fashioned me:
Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

Here, First. David adores God as the God of nature, and the author of his being. "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me," *Job* x. 8. Every man is as truly the work of God's hands as the first man was, *Ps.* cxxxix. 15, 16. Thy hands have not only made me and given me a being, but fashioned me, and given me this being, this noble and excellent being, endued with these powers and faculties; and we must own we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Secondly. He addresseth himself to God as the God of grace, and begs he will be the author of his new and better being. God made us to serve him and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unable for his service, and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and Divine nature, otherwise we had the human nature in vain. Therefore David prays, Lord, since thou hast made me by thy power for thy glory, make me anew by thy grace, that I may answer the ends of my creation, and live to some purpose. "Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments." The way in which God recovers and secures his interest in men is, by giving them an understanding, for by that door he enters into the soul, and gains possession of it.

74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me;
Because I have hoped in thy word.

Here is, First. The confidence of this good man in the hope of God's salvation; "I have hoped in thy word," and I have not found it in vain to do so; it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectations from it. It is a hope that maketh not ashamed, but is present satisfaction, and fruition at last.

Secondly. The concurrence of other good men with him in the joy of that salvation; "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me" relieved by my hope in thy word, and delivered according to my hope. The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. St. Paul often hopes that for God's grace to him thanks would be rendered by many, 2 *Cor.* i. 11; iv. 15. Or it may be taken more generally, good people are glad to see one another. They are especially pleased with those, and, as I may say, proud of them who are eminent for their hope in God's word.

75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right,
And *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Still David is in affliction, and being so he owns,

First. That his sin was justly corrected; "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right," are righteousness itself. However God is pleased to afflict us, he doth us no wrong, nor can we charge him with any iniquity, but must acknowledge that it is less than we have deserved. We know that God is holy in his nature, and wise and just in all the acts of his government, and therefore we cannot but know, in the general, that his judgments are right, though in some particular instances there may be difficulties which we cannot easily resolve.

Secondly. That God's promise was graciously performed. The former may silence us under our afflictions, and forbid us to repine, but this may satisfy us and enable us to rejoice; for afflictions are in the covenant, and therefore they are not only not meant for our hurt, but they are really intended for our good; "In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me," pursuant to the great design of my salvation. It is easier to own in general that God's judgments are right, than to own it when it comes to be our own case. But David subscribes to it with application: Even my afflictions are just and kind.

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort,
According to thy word unto thy servant.
77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live:
For thy law *is* my delight.

Here is, First. An earnest petition to God for his favour. They that own the justice of God in their afflictions, as David had done, ver. 75, may in faith, and with humble boldness, be earnest for the mercy of God, and the tokens and fruits of that mercy in their affliction. He prays for God's merciful kindness, ver. 76; his tender mercies, ver. 77. He can claim nothing as his due, but all his supports under his affliction must come from mere mercy and compassion to one in misery, one in want. Let these come to me, that is, the evidence of them,—clear it up to me, that thou hast a kindness for me, and mercy in store,—and the effects of them; let them work my relief and deliverance.

Secondly. The benefit he promised himself from God's lovingkindness. Let it come to me "for my comfort," ver. 76. That will comfort me when nothing else will; that will comfort me, whatever grieves me. Gracious souls fetch all their comfort from a gracious God, as the fountain of all happiness and joy. Let it "come to me that I may live;" that is, that I may be revived, and my life may be made sweet to me, for I have no joy of it while I am under God's displeasure. "In his favour is life," in his frowns are death. A good man cannot live with any satisfaction any longer than he has some tokens of God's favour to him.

Thirdly. His pleas for the benefits of God's favour. He pleads, 1. God's promise. Let me have thy kindness "according to thy word unto thy servant." The kindness which thou hast promised, and because thou hast promised it. Our Master has passed his word to all his servants, that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him. 2. His own confidence and complacency in that promise. "Thy law is my delight;" that is, I hope in thy word, and rejoice in that hope. Note, Those that delight in the law of God may depend upon the favour of God, for it shall certainly make them happy.

78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause:
But I will meditate in thy precepts.
79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me,
And those that have known thy testimonies.

Here David shews,

First. How little he valued the ill-will of sinners. There were those that dealt perversely with him, that were peevish and ill conditioned towards him, that sought advantages against him, and misconstrued all he said and did. Even those that deal most fairly, yet may meet with those that deal perversely. But David mattered it not, for, 1. He knew it was without cause, and that for his love they were his adversaries. The causeless reproach, like the curse causeless, may be easily slighted; it doth not hurt us, and therefore should not move us. 2. He could pray in faith that they might be ashamed of it. God's dealing favourably with him might make them ashamed to think that they had dealt perversely with him. "Let them be ashamed;" that is, let them be brought either to repentance or to ruin. 3. He could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in that. However they deal with me, "I will meditate in thy precepts," and entertain myself with them.

Secondly. How much he valued the good-will of saints, and how desirous to stand right in their opinion, and keep up his interest in them, and communion with them. "Let those that fear thee turn to me." He doth not mean so much that they might side with him, and take up arms in his cause, as that they might love him, and pray for him, and associate with him. Good men desire the friendship and society of those that are good. Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, they that feared God grew strange to him, and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them turn to me again. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest, but intelligent; "that have known thy testimonies," have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.

80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes;
That I be not ashamed.

Here is, First. David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's statutes, and that it might be sound in them, not rotten and deceitful; that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with and subject to the power of it; that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health.

Secondly. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy. "That I be not ashamed." Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here if it be repented of, or hereafter if it be not. "Let my heart be sound," that I fall not into scandalous sin, that I fall not quite off from the ways of God, and so shame myself. "Let my heart be sound," that I may come boldly to the throne of grace, and may lift up my face without spot at the great day.

11. CAPH.

81 My soul fainteth for thy salvation:
But I hope in thy word.
82 Mine eyes fail for thy word,
Saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

Here we have the psalmist,

First. Longing for help from heaven. "My soul fainteth;" "mine eyes fail." He longs for the salvation of the Lord, and for his word; that is, salvation according to the word. He is not thus eager for the creatures of fancy, but the objects of faith; salvation from the present calamities under which he was groaning, and the doubts and fears which he was oppressed with. It may be understood of the coming of the Messiah, and so he speaks in the name of the Old Testament church. The souls of the faithful even fainted to see that salvation of which the prophets testified, 1 *Pet.* i. 12; their eyes failed for it. Abraham saw it at a distance, and so did others, but at such a distance that it put their eyes to the stretch, and they could not stedfastly see it. David was now under prevailing dejections; and having been long so, his eyes cried out, "When wilt thou comfort me?" Comfort me with thy salvation, comfort me with thy word. Observe, 1. The salvation and consolation of God's people are secured to them by the word, which will certainly be fulfilled in its season. 2. The promised salvation and comfort may be, and often are, long deferred, so that they are ready to faint and fail in the expectation of them. 3. Though we think the time long ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still keep our eye upon it, and resolve to take up with nothing short of it. Thy salvation, thy word, thy comfort, are what my heart is still upon.

Secondly. Waiting for that help, assured that it will come, and tarrying till it doth come. "But I hope in thy word," and but for hope the heart would break. When the eyes fail, yet the faith must not, for "the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and shall not lie."

83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke;
Yet do I not forget thy statutes.

David begs God would make haste to comfort him,

First. Because his affliction was great, and therefore he was an object of God's pity. Lord, make haste to help me, "for I am become like a bottle in the smoke;" a leathern bottle, which, if it hung any while in the smoke, was not only blackened with soot, but dried, and parched, and shrivelled up. David was thus wasted with age, and sickness, and sorrow. See how affliction will mortify the strongest and stoutest of men. David had been of a ruddy countenance, as fresh as a rose; but now he is withered, his colour is gone, his cheeks are furrowed. Thus doth man's beauty consume under God's rebukes, as a moth fretting a garment. A bottle, when it is thus wrinkled with the smoke, is thrown by, and no more use made of it. Who will put wine into such old bottles? Thus was David in his low estate looked upon as a despised, broken vessel, and as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. Good men, when they are drooping and melancholy, sometimes think themselves more slighted than really they are.

Secondly. Because, though his affliction was great, yet it had not driven him from his duty, and therefore he was within the reach of God's promise; "Yet do I not forget thy statutes." Whatever our outward condition is, we must not cool in our affection to the word of God, nor let that slip out of our minds; no care, no grief, must crowd that out. As some drink and forget the law, *Pr.* xxxi. 5, so others weep and forget the law; but we must in every condition, both prosperous and adverse, have the things of God in remembrance. And if we be mindful of God's statutes we may pray and hope that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

LEATHERN BOTTLES.—ver. 83.

84 How many *are* the days of thy servant? [me?
When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute

Here, First. David prays against the instruments of his troubles, that God would make haste to execute judgment on those that persecuted him. He prays not for power to avenge himself, he bore no malice to any, but that God would take to himself the vengeance that belonged to him, and would repay, *Rom.* xii. 19, as the God that sits in the throne judging right. There is a day coming, and a great and terrible day it will be, when God will execute judgment on all the proud persecutors of his people, "tribulation to them that troubled them." Enoch foretold it, *Jude* 14, whose prophecy perhaps David here had an eye to. And that day we are to look for, and pray for the hastening of, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Secondly. He pleads the long continuance of his trouble; "How many are the days of thy servant?" The days of my life are but few, so some, therefore let them not all be miserable, and therefore make haste to appear for me against my enemies, "before I go hence, and shall be seen no more." Or rather, the days of my affliction are many; thou seest, Lord, how many they be; when wilt thou return in mercy to me? Sometimes, for the elect's sake, the days of trouble are shortened. O let the days of my trouble be shortened; I am thy servant, and therefore, as the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, so are mine to thee, until that thou have mercy on me.

85 The proud have digged pits for me,
Which *are* not after thy law.
86 All thy commandments *are* faithful:
They persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.
87 They had almost consumed me upon earth;
But I forsook not thy precepts.

David's state was herein a type and figure of the state both of Christ and Christians, that he was grievously persecuted. As there are many of his psalms, so there are many of the verses of this psalm which complain of this, as those here. Where observe,

First. The account he gives of his persecutors, and their malice against him. 1. They were proud, and in their pride they persecuted him, glorying in this, that they could trample upon one who was so much cried up, and hoping to raise themselves on his ruins. 2. They were unjust, they persecuted him wrongfully. So far was he from giving them any provocation, that he had studied to oblige them; but for his love they were his adversaries. 3. They were spiteful, they digged pits for him; which speaks them deliberate in their designs against him, and that what they did was of malice prepense. It intimates likewise, that they were subtle and crafty, and had the serpent's head as well as the serpent's venom; and that they were industrious, and would stick at no pains to do him a mischief; and treacherous, laying snares in secret for him, as hunters do to take wild beasts, *Ps.* xxxv. 7; such has been the enmity of the serpent's seed to the seed of the woman. 4. They herein shewed their enmity to God himself. The pits they digged for him were not after God's law, which forbids to devise evil to our neighbour, and hath particularly said, "Touch not mine anointed." The law appointed, that if a man digged a pit which occasioned any mischief, he should answer for the mischief, *Ex.* xxi. 33, 34, much more when it was digged with a mischievous design. 5. They carried on their designs against him so far that they had almost consumed him upon earth, they went near to ruin him and all his interests. It is possible that those which shall shortly be consummate in heaven, may be for the present almost consumed on earth; and "it is of the Lord's mercies" (and considering the malice of their enemies it is a miracle of mercy) "that they are not" quite "consumed." But the bush in which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up.

Secondly. His application to God in his persecuted state. 1. He acknowledges the truth and goodness of his religion, though he suffered; However it be, "all thy commandments are faithful," and therefore, whatever I lose for my observance of them, I know I shall not lose by it. True religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing, and therefore worth suffering for. Men are false, I find them so; men of low degree, men of high degree are so, there is no trusting them; but "all thy commandments are faithful," on them I may rely. 2. He begs that God would stand by him, and succour him. "They persecute me, help thou me." Help me under my troubles, that I may bear them patiently, and as becomes me, and may still hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles. "God help me," is an excellent, comprehensive prayer; it is pity it should ever be used lightly, and as a byword.

Thirdly. His adherence to his duty, notwithstanding all the malice of his persecutors; ver. 87, "But I forsook not thy precepts." That which they aimed at was to frighten him from the ways of God, but they could not prevail. He would sooner forsake all that was dear to him in this world than forsake the word of God; would sooner lose his life, than lose the comfort of doing his duty.

88 Quicken me after thy lovingkindness;
So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

Here is, First. David in care to be found in the way of his duty; his constant desire and design is to keep the testimony of God's mouth, to keep to it as his rule, and to keep hold of it as his confidence and portion for ever. These we must keep, whatever we lose.

Secondly. David at prayer for Divine grace to assist him therein; "Quicken me after thy lovingkindness;" make me alive, and make me lively, "so shall I keep thy testimonies," implying, that otherwise I shall not keep them. We cannot proceed nor persevere in the good way unless God quicken us, and put life into us; we are therefore here taught to depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work, and to depend upon it, as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. He had prayed before, "Quicken me in thy righteousness," ver. 40; but here, "Quicken me after thy lovingkindness." The surest token of God's good will towards us is his good work in us.

12. LAMED.

89 For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.
90 Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations:
Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.
91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances:
For all *are* thy servants.

Here, First. The psalmist acknowledgeth the unchangeableness of the word of God, and of all his counsels. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled." 'Thou art for ever thyself,' (so some read it,) thou art the same, and with thee there is no varialeness, and this is a proof of it; thy word, by which the heavens were made, is settled there in the abiding products of it; or, the settling of God's word in heaven is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth; "All flesh is grass; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." It is settled in heaven, that is, in the secret counsel of God, which is hid in himself, and is far above out of our sight, and is immovable, as mountains of brass. And his revealed will is as firm as his secret will; as he will fulfil the thoughts of his heart, so no word of his shall fall to the ground; for it follows here, "Thy faithfulness is unto all generations;" that is, the promise is sure to every age of the church, and it cannot be antiquated by lapse of time. The promises that look never so far forward shall be performed in their season.

Secondly. He produceth for proof of it the constancy of the course of nature. "Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth;" it is what it was at first made, and where it was at first placed, poised with its own weight; and, notwithstanding the convulsions in its own bowels, the tosses of the sea that is interwoven with it, and the violent concussions of the atmosphere that surrounds it, remains unmoved. "They," that is, the heaven and the earth, and all the hosts of both, "continue to this day according to thine ordinances;" they remain in the posts wherein thou hast set them, they fill up the place assigned them, and answer the purposes for which they were intended. The stability of the ordinances of day and night, of heaven and earth, is produced to prove the perpetuity of God's covenant, *Jer.* xxxi. 35, 36; xxxiii. 20, 21. It is by virtue of God's promise to Noah, *Gen.* viii. 22, that day and night, summer and winter, observe a steady course. They have continued to this day, and shall still continue to the end of time, acting according to the ordinances which were at first given them; for all are thy servants, they do thy will, and set forth thy glory, and in both are thy servants. All the creatures are in their places, and according to their capacities serviceable to their Creator, and answer the ends of their creation; and shall man be the only rebel, the only revolter from his allegiance, and the only unprofitable burthen of the earth?

92 Unless thy law *had been* my delights,
I should then have perished in mine affliction.

Here is, First. The great distress that David was in. He was in affliction, and ready to perish in his affliction; not likely to die, so much as likely to despair; he was ready to give up all for gone, and to look upon himself as cut off from God's sight. He therefore admires the goodness of God to him, that he had not perished; that he kept the possession of his own soul, and was not driven out of his wits by his troubles; but especially that he was enabled to keep close to his God, and was not driven off from his religion by them. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, We have cleansed our hands in vain; or, What profit is it that we have served God?

Secondly. His support in this distress. God's law was his delight. 1. It had been so formerly, and the remembrance of that was a comfort to him, as it afforded him a good evidence of his integrity. 2. It was so now in his affliction; it afforded him abundant matter of comfort, and from these fountains of life he drew living waters, when the cisterns of the creature were broken or dried up. His converse with God's law, and his meditations on it, were his delightful entertainment in solitude and sorrow. A Bible is a pleasant companion at any time, if we please.

93 I will never forget thy precepts:
For with them thou hast quickened me.

Here is, First. A very good resolution. I will never forget thy precepts, but will always retain a remembrance of and regard to thy word as my rule. It is a resolution for a perpetuity, never to be altered. Note, The best evidence of our love to the word of God is, never to forget it. We must resolve that we will never at any time cast off our religion, and never upon any occasion lay aside our religion, but that we will be constant to it, and persevere in it.

Secondly. A very good reason for it. "For by them thou hast quickened

me." Not only they are quickening, but, 1. They have been so to me; I have found them so. Those speak best of the things of God that speak by experience, who can say that by the word the spiritual life has been begun in them, maintained and strengthened in them, excited and comforted in them. 2. Thou hast made them so. The word of itself, without the grace of God, would not quicken us. Ministers can but prophesy upon the dry bones, they cannot put life into them. But ordinarily the glory of God works by the word, and makes use of it as a means of quickening; and this is a good reason why we should never forget it, but should highly value what God hath put such honour upon, and dearly love what we have found such benefit by, and hope still to find. See here what is the best help for bad memories; namely, good affections. If we are quickened by the word, we shall never forget it; nay, that word that doth really quicken us to and in our duty, is not forgotten. Though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain, it is well enough.

94 I *am* thine, save me;
For I have sought thy precepts.

Here, First. David claims relation to God; "I am thine," devoted to thee, and owned by thee, thine in covenant. He doth not say, 'Thou art mine,' (as Dr. Manton observes,) though that follows of course, because that were a higher challenge, but, I am thine, expressing himself in a more humble and dutiful way of resignation; nor doth he say, I am thus, but, I am thine, not pleading his own good property or qualification, but God's propriety in him. I am thine, not my own, not the world's.

Secondly. He proves his claim; "I have sought thy precepts;" that is, I have carefully inquired concerning my duty, and diligently endeavoured to do it. This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all that are his, though they have not found perfection, are seeking it.

Thirdly. He improves his claim. "I am thine, save me," save me from sin, save me from ruin. Those that have in sincerity given up themselves to God to be his may be sure that he will protect them and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, *Mal.* iii. 18.

95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me:
But I will consider thy testimonies.

Here, First. David complains of the malice of his enemies; "The wicked" (and none but such would be enemies to so good a man) "have waited for me to destroy me." They were very cruel, and aimed at no less than his destruction; they were very crafty, and sought all opportunities to do him a mischief; and they were confident, they expected (so some read it) that they should destroy him, they thought themselves sure of their prey.

Secondly. He comforts himself in the word of God, as his protection. While they are contriving my destruction, "I consider thy testimonies," which secure to me my salvation. God's testimonies are then likely to be our support, when we consider them, and dwell in our thoughts upon them.

96 I have seen an end of all perfection:
But thy commandment *is* exceeding broad.

Here we have David's testimony from his own experience,

First. Of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy; "I have seen an end of all perfection." Poor perfection, which one sees an end of! yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David in his time had seen Goliath the strongest overcome; Asahel the swiftest overtaken; Ahithophel the wisest befooled; Absalom the fairest deformed; and, in short, he had seen an end of perfection, of all perfection. He saw it by faith, he saw it by observation; he saw an end of the perfection of the creature both in respect of sufficiency, it was scanty and defective, (there is that to be done for us which the creature cannot do,) and in respect of continuance, it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity, as we must. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass.

Secondly. Of the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for our satisfaction; "But thy commandment is broad, exceeding broad." The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times. The Divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly. There is a great deal required and forbidden in every commandment. The Divine promise (for that also is commanded) extends itself to all our burthens, wants, and grievances, and hath that in it which will make a portion and happiness for us when we have seen an end of all perfection.

13. MEM.

97 O how love I thy law!
It *is* my meditation all the day.

Here is, First. David's inexpressible love to the word of God; "O how love I thy law!" He protests his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemency. He found that love to it in his heart which, considering the corruption of his nature, and the temptations of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man.

Secondly. An unexceptionable evidence of this. What we love, we love to think of. By this it appeared that David loved the word of God, it was his meditation. He not only read the book of the law, but digested what he read in his thoughts, and was delivered into it, as into a mould. It was his meditation, not only in the night when he was silent and solitary, and had nothing else to do; but in the day, when he was full of business and company; nay, and all the day some good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts, so full was he of the word of God.

98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies:
For they *are* ever with me.
99 I have more understanding than all my teachers:
For thy testimonies *are* my meditation.
100 I understand more than the ancients,
Because I keep thy precepts.

We have here an account of David's learning, not that of the Egyptians, but of the Israelites indeed.

First. The good method by which he got it. In his youth he minded business in the country as a shepherd; from his youth he minded business in the court and camp. Which way then could he get any great stock of learning? He tells us here how he came by it. He had it from God as the author: "Thou hast made me wise;" all true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God as the means; by his commandments and his testimonies. These are able to make us wise to salvation, and to furnish the man of God for every good work. 1. These David took for his constant companions. "They are ever with me," ever in my mind, ever in my eye. A good man wherever he goes carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart. 2. These he took for the delightful subject of his thoughts. They were his meditation, not only as matters of speculation for his entertainment, as scholars meditate on their notions, but as matters of concern for his right management, as men of business think of their business, that they may do it in the best manner. 3. These he took for the commanding rules of all his actions. "I keep thy precepts," that is, I make conscience of doing my duty in every thing. The best way to improve in knowledge is to abide and abound in all the instances of serious godliness; for "if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine" of Christ, shall know more and more of it, *Jno.* vii. 17. The love of the truth prepares for the light of it. The pure in heart shall see God here.

Secondly. The great eminency he attained to in it. By studying and practising God's commandments, and making them his rule, he learned to behave himself wisely in all his ways, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 14. 1. He outwitted his enemies. God by these means made him wiser to baffle and defeat their designs against him than they were to lay them. Heavenly wisdom will carry the point at long run against carnal policy. By keeping the commandments we secure God on our side, and make him our friend, and therein are certainly wiser than those that make him their enemy. By keeping the commandments we preserve to ourselves that peace and quiet of mind which our enemies would rob us of, and so are wise for ourselves, wiser than they are for themselves, for this world as well as for the other. 2. He outstripped his teachers, and had more understanding than them all. He means either those that would have been his teachers, that blamed his conduct, and undertook to prescribe to him, (by keeping God's commandments he managed his matters so that it appeared in the event he had taken the right measures, and they had taken the wrong,) or those that should have been his teachers, the priests and Levites that sat in Moses's chair, and whose lips ought to have kept knowledge; but they neglected the study of the law, and minded their honours and revenues, and the formalities only of their religion, and so David, who conversed much with the Scriptures, by that means became more intelligent than they; or those that had been his teachers when he was young—he built so well upon the foundation which they had laid that, with the help of his Bible, he became able to teach them, to teach them all. He was not now a babe that needed milk, but had spiritual senses exercised, *Heb.* v. 14. It is no reflection upon our teachers, but rather an honour to them, to improve so as really to excel them, and not to need them. By meditation we preach to ourselves, and so we come to understand more than our teachers, for we come to understand our own hearts, which they cannot. 3. He outdid the ancients. Either those of his own day, (he was young, like Elihu, and they were very old; but his keeping of God's precepts taught him more wisdom than the multitude of their years, *Job* xxxii. 7, 8,) or those of former days. He himself quotes the proverb of the ancients, 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 13. But the word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition, and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written word is a surer guide to heaven than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients of the church; and the sacred writings, kept and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way,
That I might keep thy word.

Here is, First. David's care to avoid the ways of sin; "I have refrained my feet from the evil ways" they were ready to step aside into; I checked myself and drew back, as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation. Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet being a sinful way it was an evil way, and he refrained his feet from it, foreseeing the end of that way. And his care was universal; he shunned every evil way. "By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer," *Ps.* xvii. 4.

Secondly. His care to be found in the way of duty; "That I may keep thy word," and never transgress it. His abstaining from sin was, 1. An evidence that he did conscientiously aim to keep God's word, and had made that his rule. 2. It was a means of his keeping God's word in the exercises of religion; for we cannot with any comfort or boldness attend on God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while we are under guilt or in any byway.

102 I have not departed from thy judgments:
For thou hast taught me.

Here is, First. David's constancy in his religion. He had not departed from God's judgments; he had not chosen any other rule but the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. A constant adherence to the ways of God in trying times will be a good evidence of our integrity.

Secondly. The cause of his constancy. For "thou hast taught me;" that is, they were Divine instructions that I learned. I was satisfied that the doctrine was of God, and therefore I stuck to it; or rather it was Divine grace in my heart that enabled me to receive those instructions. All the saints are taught of God, for he it is that gives the understanding; and those, and those only, that are taught of God will continue to the end in the things that they have learned.

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste!
Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!
104 Through thy precepts I get understanding:
Therefore I hate every false way.

Here is, First. The wonderful pleasure and delight which David took in the word of God. It was sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey. There is such a thing as a spiritual taste, an inward savour and relish of Divine things; such an evidence of them to ourselves by experience as we cannot give to others: "we have heard him ourselves," *Jno.* iv. 42. To this spiritual taste the word of God is sweet, very sweet, sweter than any of the gratifications of sense, even those that are most delicious. David speaks as if he wanted words to express the satisfaction he took in the discoveries of the Divine will and grace. No pleasure was comparable to it.

Secondly. The unspeakable profit and advantage he gained by the word of God. 1. It helped him to a good head. "Through thy precepts I get understanding," to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, so as not to

mistake either in the conduct of my own life, or in advising others. 2. That helped him to a good heart. Therefore because I have got understanding of the truth, "I hate every false way," and am stedfastly resolved not to turn aside into it. Observe here, that the way of sin is a false way, it doth deceive, and will ruin all that walk in it; it is the wrong way, and yet it seems right to a man, *Pr.* xiv. 12. That it is the character of every good man, that he hates the way of sin, and hates it because it is a false way. He not only refrains his feet from it, ver. 101, but he hates it, has an antipathy to it, and a dread of it. That those who hate sin as sin will hate all sin, hate every false way, because every false way leads to destruction. And the more understanding we get by the word of God the more rooted will our hatred of sin be; for "to depart from evil, that is understanding," *Job* xxviii. 28, and the more ready we are in the Scriptures, the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

CRESSET BEARER.

14. NUN.

105 Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet,
And a light unto my path.

Observe here, First. The nature of the word of God, and the great intention of giving it to the world. It is a lamp and a light, it discovers to us that concerning God and ourselves which otherwise we could not have known. It shews us what is amiss, and will be dangerous; it directs us in our work and way, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it. It is a lamp which we may set up by us, and take into our hands for our own particular use, *Pr.* vi. 23. The commandment is a lamp kept burning with the oil of the Spirit, it is like the lamps in the sanctuary, and the pillar of fire to Israel.

Secondly. The use we should make of it. It must be not only a light to our eyes to gratify them, and fill our heads with speculations, but a light to our feet and to our path, to direct us in the right ordering of our conversation; both in the choice of our way in general and in the particular steps we take in that way, that we may not take a false way, nor a false step in the right way. We are then truly sensible of God's goodness to us in giving us such a lamp and light when we make it a guide to our feet, our path.

106 I have sworn, and I will perform *it*,
That I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Here is, First. The notion David had of religion. It is keeping God's righteous judgments. God's commands are his judgments, the dictates of infinite wisdom. They are "righteous judgments," consonant to the eternal rules of equity, and it is our duty to keep them carefully.

Secondly. The obligations he here laid upon himself to be religious, binding himself by his own promise to that which he was already bound to by the Divine precept, and all little enough. "I have sworn," I have lift up my hand to the Lord, and I cannot go back; and therefore must go forward, "I will perform it." Note, 1. It is good for us to bind ourselves with a solemn oath to be religious. We must swear to the Lord, as subjects swear allegiance to their sovereign, promising fealty, appealing to God concerning our sincerity in this promise, and owning ourselves liable to the curse if we do not perform it. 2. We must often call to mind the vows of God that are upon us, and remember that we have sworn. 3. We must make conscience of performing unto the Lord our oaths. An honest man will be as good as his word. Nor have we sworn to our own hurt; but it will be unspeakably to our hurt if we do not perform.

107 I am afflicted very much:
Quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

Here is, First. The remonstrance David makes of the sorrowful condition he was in; "I am afflicted very much;" afflicted in spirit, he seems to mean that especially. He laboured under many discouragements, without were fightings, within were fears. This is often the lot of the best saints, therefore think it not strange if sometimes it be ours.

Secondly. The recourse he has to God in this condition. He prays for his grace; "Quicken me, O Lord," make me lively, make me cheerful; quicken me by thy afflictions to greater diligence in my work; quicken me, that is, deliver me out of my afflictions, which will be as life from the dead. He pleads the promise of God; guides his desires by it, and grounds his hopes upon it, "quicken me according to thy word." David resolved to perform his promises to God, ver. 106, and therefore could with humble boldness beg of God to make good his word to him.

108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD,
And teach me thy judgments.

Two things we are here taught to pray for in reference to our religious performances:

First. Acceptance of them. This we must aim at in all we do in religion, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of the Lord. That which David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of is the freewill offerings, not of his purse, but of his mouth, his prayers and praises, the calves of our lips, *Hos.* xiv. 2; the fruit of our lips, *Heb.* xiii. 11. These are the spiritual offerings which all Christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God. And they must be freewill offerings, for we must offer them abundantly and cheerfully. And it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God the more pleasing it is to him.

Secondly. Assistance in them; "Teach me thy judgments." We cannot offer any thing to God which we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of; and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us as for the favour of God towards us.

109 My soul *is* continually in my hand:
Yet do I not forget thy law.
110 The wicked have laid a snare for me:
Yet I erred not from thy precepts.

Here is, First. David in danger of losing his life. There is but a step between him and death, for the wicked have laid a snare for him. Saul did so many a time because he hated him for his piety. Wherever he was, he found some design or other laid against him to take away his life, for that was it they aimed at. What they could not effect by open force they hoped to compass by treachery, which made him say, "My soul is continually in my hand." It was so not only as a man, (so it is true of us all, wherever we are we lie exposed to the strokes of deaths; what we carry in our hands is easily snatched from us by violence, or if sandy, as our life is, it easily of itself slips through our fingers;) but as a man of war, a soldier, that often jeoparded his life in the high places of the field; and especially as a man after God's own heart, and as such hated and persecuted, and "always delivered to death," 2 *Cor.* iv. 11; "Killed all the day long."

Secondly. David in no danger of losing his religion for all this. Thus in jeopardy every hour, and yet constant to God and his duty. None of these things move him; for, 1. He doth not forget the law, and therefore he is likely to persevere. In the multitude of his cares for his own safety he finds room in his head and heart for the word of God, and has that in his mind as fresh as ever, and where that dwells richly it will be a well of living water. 2. He hath not yet erred from God's precepts, and therefore it is to be hoped he will not. He had stood many a shock and kept his ground, and sure that grace which had helped him hitherto would not fail him, but would still prevent his wanderings.

111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever:
For they *are* the rejoicing of my heart.
112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway,
Even unto the end.

The psalmist here in a most affectionate manner, like an Israelite indeed, resolves to stick to the word of God, and to live and die by it.

First. He resolves to portion himself in it, and there to seek his happiness; nay, there to enjoy it; "Thy testimonies," the truths, the promises of thy word, "have I taken as an heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart." The present delight he took in them was an evidence that the good things contained in them were in his account the best things, and the treasure which he set his heart upon. 1. He expected an eternal happiness in God's testimonies. The covenant God had made with him was an everlasting covenant, and therefore he took it as a heritage for ever. If he could not yet say, They are my heritage, yet he could say, I have made choice of them for my heritage, and will never take up with a portion in this life, *Ps.* xvii. 14, 15. God's testimonies are a heritage to all that have received the spirit of adoption; for, "if children, then heirs." They are a heritage for ever, and that no earthly heritage is, 1 *Pet.* i. 4. All the saints accept them as such, take up with them, live upon them, and can therefore take up with a little of this world. 2. He enjoyed a present satisfaction in them. "They are the rejoicing of my heart," because they will be my heritage for ever. It rejoiceth the heart of a good man to see his portion in the promise of God, and not in the possessions of this world.

Secondly. He resolves to govern himself by it, and thence to take his measures; "I have inclined my heart to do thy statutes." They that would have the blessings of God's testimonies must come under the bonds of his statutes. We must look for comfort only in the way of duty, and that duty must be done, 1. With full consent and complacency. I have by the grace of God inclined my heart to it, and conquered the aversion I had to it. A good man brings his heart to his work, and then it is done well. A gracious disposition to do the will of God is the acceptable principle of all obedience. 2. With constancy and perseverance. He would perform God's statutes always, in all instances, in the duty of every day, in a constant course of holy walking, and this to the end without weariness. This is following the Lord fully.

15. SAMECH.

113 I hate *vain* thoughts:
But thy law do I love.

Here is, First. David's dread of the risings of sin, and the first beginnings of it; "I hate vain thoughts." He doth not mean that he hated them in others, for there he could not discern them, but he hated them in his own heart. Every good man makes conscience of his thoughts, for they are words to God. Vain thoughts, how light soever most make of them, are sinful and hurtful, and therefore we should account them hateful and dreadful, for they not only divert the mind from that which is good, but open the door to all evil, *Jer.* iv. 14. Though David could not say he was free from vain thoughts, yet he could say he hated them, he did not countenance them, or give them any entertainment, but did what he could to keep them out, at least to keep them under. "The evil I do I allow not."

Secondly. David's delight in the rule of duty; "But thy law do I love," which forbids those vain thoughts, and threatens them. The more we love the law of God, the more we shall get the mastery of our vain thoughts, the more hateful they will be to us, as being contrary to the whole law, and the more watchful we shall be against them, lest they draw us from that we love.

114 Thou *art* my hiding place and my shield:
I hope in thy word.

Here is, First. God's care of David to protect and defend him, which he comforts himself with when his enemies were very malicious against him; "Thou art my hiding-place, and my shield." David, when Saul pursued him, often betook himself to close places for shelter; in war he guarded himself with his shield: now, God was both these to him, a hiding-place to preserve him from danger, and a shield to preserve him in danger, his life from death, and his soul from sin. Good people are safe under God's protection; he is their "strength and their shield;" their "help and their shield;" their "sun and their shield;" their "shield and their great reward;" and here, their "hiding-place and their shield." They may by faith retire to him, and repose in him, as their hiding-place, where they are kept in secret. They may by faith oppose his power to all the might and malice of their enemies, as their shield to quench every fiery dart.

Secondly. David's confidence in God. He is safe, and therefore he is easy under the Divine protection; "I hope in thy word," which has acquainted me with thee, and assured me of thy kindness to me. They who depend on God's promise shall have the benefit of his power, and be taken under his special protection.

115 Depart from me, ye evildoers:
For I will keep the commandments of my God.

Here is, First. David's firm and fixed resolution to live a holy life; "I will keep the commandments of my God." Bravely resolved, like a saint, like a

soldier; for true courage consists in a steady resolution against all sin, and for all duty. Those that would keep God's commandments must be often renewing their resolutions to do so. I will keep them; whatever others do, this I will do; though I be singular,—though all about me be evildoers and desert me,—whatever I have done hitherto, I will for the future walk closely with God. They are the commandments of God, of my God, and therefore I will keep them. He is God, and may command me; my God, and will command me nothing but what is for my good.

Secondly. His farewell to bad company, pursuant to this resolution; "Depart from me, ye evildoers." Though David, as a good magistrate, was a terror to evildoers, yet there were many such even about court, intruding near his person; these he here abdicates, and resolves to have no conversation with them. Note, They that resolve to keep the commandments of God must have no society with evildoers; for bad company is a great hindrance to a holy life. We must not choose wicked people for our companions, nor be intimate with them. We must not do as they do, nor do as they would have us do, *Ps.* i. 1; *Eph.* v. 11.

116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live:
And let me not be ashamed of my hope.
117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe:
And I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

Here, First. David prays for sustaining grace. For this grace sufficient he besought the Lord twice; "Uphold me;" and again, "Hold thou me up." He sees himself not only unable to go on in his duty by any strength of his own, but in danger of falling into sin, unless he was prevented by Divine grace, and therefore he is thus earnest for that grace to uphold him in his integrity, *Ps.* xli. 12; to keep him from falling, and to keep him from tiring, that he might neither turn aside to evil-doing nor be weary of well-doing. We stand no longer than God holds us, and go no farther than he carries us.

Secondly. He pleads earnestly for this grace. 1. He pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it; "Uphold me, according to thy word," which word I hope in, and if it be not performed I shall be made ashamed of my hope, and be called a fool for my credulity. But they that hope in God's word may be sure that the word will not fail them, and therefore their hope will not make them ashamed. 2. He pleads the great need he had of God's grace, and the great advantage it would be of to him; "Uphold me, that I may live;" intimating, that he could not live without the grace of God. He should fall into sin, into death, into hell, if God did not hold him up; but supported by his hand he shall live; his spiritual life shall be maintained, and be an earnest of eternal life. "Hold me up, and I shall be safe;" out of danger, and out of the fear of danger. Our holy security is grounded on Divine supports. 3. He pleads his resolution in the strength of this grace to proceed in his duty; "Hold me up," and then "I will have respect unto thy statutes continually," and never turn my eyes or feet aside from them. I will employ myself, (so some,) I will delight myself, (so others,) in thy statutes. If God's right hand uphold us, we must in his strength go on in our duty both with diligence and with pleasure.

118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes:
For their deceit *is* falsehood.
119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth *like* dross:
Therefore I love thy testimonies.
120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee;
And I am afraid of thy judgments

Here is, First. God's judgment on wicked people; on those that wander from his statutes, that take their measures from other rules, and will not have God to reign over them. All departure from God's statutes is certainly an error, and will prove a fatal one. These are the wicked of the earth; they mind earthly things, and lay up their treasures in the earth, and live in pleasure on the earth, and are strangers and enemies to heaven and heavenly things. Now see how God deals with them, that you may neither fear them nor envy them. 1. He treads them all down; he brings them to ruin, to utter ruin, to shameful ruin; he makes them his footstool. Though they are never so high, he can bring them low, *Am.* ii. 9. He has done it many a time, and he will do it; for he resists the proud, and will triumph over those that oppose his kingdom. Proud persecutors trample upon his people, but sooner or later he will trample upon them. 2. He puts them all away like dross. Wicked people are as dross, which, though it be mingled with the good metal in the ore, and seems to be of the same substance with it, must be separated from it. And in God's account they are worthless things, the scum and refuse of the earth, and no more to be compared with the righteous than dross with fine gold. There is a day coming which will put them away from among the righteous, *Mat.* xiii. 49; so that they shall have no place in their congregation, *Ps.* i. 5; which will put them away into everlasting fire, the fittest place for the dross. Sometimes in this world the wicked are by the censures of the church, or the sword of the magistrate, or the judgments of God, put away as dross, *Pr.* xxv. 4, 5.

Secondly. The reasons of these judgments. God casts them off, because they err from his statutes. They that will not submit to the commands of the word shall feel the curses of it. And because "their deceit is falsehood," that is, because they deceive themselves by setting up false rules in opposition to God's statutes which they err from; and because they go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good, and their crafty projects of mischief. Their cunning is falsehood, so Dr. Hammond. The utmost of their policy is treachery and perfidiousness; this the God of truth hates, and will punish.

Thirdly. The improvement David made of these judgments. He took notice of them, and received instruction from them. The ruin of the wicked helped to increase, 1. His love to the word of God. I see what comes of sin, "therefore I love thy testimonies," which warn me to take heed of those dangerous courses, and keep me from the paths of the destroyer. We see the word of God fulfilled in his judgments on sin and sinners, and therefore we should love it. 2. His fear of the wrath of God; "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee." Instead of insulting over those who fell under God's displeasure he humbled himself. What we read and hear of the judgments of God upon wicked people, should make us, 1st. To reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him; "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" 1 *Sam.* vi. 20. 2nd. To fear lest we offend him, and become obnoxious to his wrath. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by the terrors of the Lord, especially when judgment begins at the house of God, and hypocrites are discovered and put away as dross.

16. AIN.

121 I have done judgment and justice:
Leave me not to mine oppressors.
122 Be surety for thy servant for good:
Let not the proud oppress me.

David here appeals to God:

First. As his witness that he had not done wrong. He could truly say, "I have done judgment and justice," that is, I have made conscience of rendering to all their due, and have not by force or fraud hindered any of their right. Take him as a king, he executeth judgment and justice to all his people, 2 *Sam.* viii. 15. Take him in a private capacity, he could appeal to Saul himself, that there was no evil or transgression in his hand, 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 11. Note, Honesty is the best policy, and will be our rejoicing in the day of evil.

Secondly. As his judge, that he might not be wronged. He having done justice for others that were oppressed, he begs that God would do him justice, and avenge him of his adversaries; "Be surety for thy servant for good," that is, undertake for me against those that would run me down, and ruin me. He is sensible that he cannot make his part good himself, and therefore begs that God would appear for him. Christ is our surety with God; and if he be so, Providence shall be our surety against all the world. Who or what shall harm us, if God's power and goodness be engaged for our protection and rescue? He doth not prescribe to God what he should do for him; only let it be for good, in such way and manner as infinite wisdom sees best; only let me not be left to mine oppressors. Though David had done judgment and justice, yet he had many enemies; but having God for his friend he hoped they should not have their will against him, and in that hope he prayed again, "Let not the proud oppress me." David, one of the best of men, was oppressed by the proud, whom God beholds afar off. The condition therefore of the persecuted is better than that of the persecutors, and will appear so at last.

123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation,
And for the word of thy righteousness.

David being oppressed, is here waiting and wishing for the salvation of the Lord, which would make him easy.

First. He cannot but think that it comes slowly; "Mine eyes fail for thy salvation." His eyes were towards it, and had been long so. He looked for help from heaven, and we deceive ourselves if we look for it any other way; but it did not come so soon as he expected, so that his eyes began to fail, and he was sometimes ready to despair, and to think that because the salvation did not come when he looked for it, it would never come. It is often the infirmity even of good men to be weary of waiting God's time, when their time is lapsed.

Secondly. Yet he cannot but hope that it comes surely; for he expects the word of God's righteousness, and no other salvation but what is secured by that word, which cannot fall to the ground, because it is a word of righteousness. Though our eyes fail, yet God's word doth not; and therefore those that build upon it, though now discouraged, shall in due time see his salvation.

124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy,
And teach me thy statutes.
125 I *am* thy servant; give me understanding,
That I may know thy testimonies.

Here is, First. David's petition for Divine instruction. "Teach me thy statutes;" give me to know all my duty; when I am in doubt, and know not for certain what is my duty, direct me, and make it plain to me. Now I am afflicted, oppressed, and mine eyes ready to fail for thy salvation, let me know what my duty is in this condition. In difficult times we should desire more to be told what we must do than what we may expect, and should pray more to be led into the knowledge of Scripture precepts than of Scripture prophecies. If God that gave us his statutes do not teach us, we shall never learn them. How God teaches is implied in the next petition; "Give me understanding," a renewed understanding, apt to receive Divine light, "that I may know thy testimonies." It is God's prerogative to give an understanding, that understanding without which we cannot know God's testimonies. Those that know most of God's testimonies desire to know more; and are still earnest with God to teach them, never thinking they know enough.

Secondly. His pleas to enforce this petition. 1. He pleads God's goodness to him; "Deal with me according to thy mercy." The best saints count this their best plea for any blessing, Let me have it "according to thy mercy;" for we deserve no favour from God, nor can we claim any as a debt, but we are then most likely to be easy when we cast ourselves upon God's mercy, and refer ourselves to it. Particularly when we come to him for instruction we must beg it as a mercy, and reckon that in being taught we are well dealt with. 2. He pleads his relation to God; "I am thy servant," and have work to do for thee, therefore teach me to do it, and to do it well. The servant hath reason to expect, that if he be at a loss about his work his master should teach him, and, if it were in his power, give him an understanding. Lord, saith David, I desire to serve thee, shew me how. If any man resolve to do God's will as his servant, he shall be made to know his testimonies, *Jno.* vii. 17; *Ps.* xxv. 14.

126 *It is* time for *thee*, LORD, to work:
For they have made void thy law.

Here is, First. A complaint of the daring impiety of the wicked. David having in himself a holy indignation at it, humbly represents it to God; Lord, there are those that have made thy law void, have set thee and thy government at defiance, and have done what in them lay to cancel and vacate the obligation of thy commands. They that sin through infirmity transgress the law, but presumptuous sinners do in effect make void the law, saying, "Who is the Lord? what is the Almighty that we should fear him?" It is possible a godly man may sin against the commandment, but a wicked man would sin away the commandment,—would repeal God's laws, and enact his own lusts. This is the sinfulness of sin, and the malignity of the carnal mind.

Secondly. A desire that God would appear for the vindication of his own honour; "It is time for thee, Lord, to work," to do something for the effectual confutation of atheists and infidels, and the silencing of those that set their mouth against the heavens. God's time to work is when vice is become most daring, and the measure of iniquity is full; "Now will I arise, saith the Lord." Some read it, and the original will bear it, 'It is time to work for thee, O Lord;' it is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord's side, against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion: and after all we must beg of God to take the work into his own hands.

127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold;
Yea, above fine gold.
128 Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts *concerning* all *things*
And I hate every false way. [*to be* right;

David here, as often in this psalm, professeth the great love he had to the word and law of God; and to evidence the sincerity of it, observe,

First. The degree of his love. He loved his Bible better than he loved his money; "above gold, yea, above fine gold." Gold, fine gold, is what the most of men set their hearts upon; nothing charms them, and dazzles their eyes so as gold doth. It is fine gold, a fine thing in their eyes. They will venture their souls, their God, their all, to get and keep it; but David saw that the word of God answers all things better than money doth; for it enricheth the soul towards God, and therefore he loved it better than gold; for it had done that for him which gold could not do, and would stand him in stead when the wealth of the world would fail him.

Secondly. The ground of his love. Therefore he loved all God's commandments, because he esteemed them to be right, all reasonable and just, and suited to the end for which they were made. They are all as they should be, and no fault can be found with them; and therefore we must love them, because they bear God's image, and are the revelations of his will. If we thus consent to the law that it is good, we shall delight in it after the inner man.

Thirdly. The fruit and evidence of this love. He hated every false way. The way of sin being directly contrary to God's precepts that are right, is a false way; and therefore they that have a love and esteem for God's law hate it, and will not be reconciled to it.

17. PE.

129 Thy testimonies *are* wonderful:
Therefore doth my soul keep them.

See here how David was affected towards the word of God.

First. He admired it as most excellent in itself; "Thy testimonies are wonderful." The word of God gives us admirable discoveries of God, and Christ, and another world; admirable proofs of Divine love and grace. The majesty of the style, the purity of the matter, the harmony of the parts, are all wonderful; its effects upon the consciences of men both for conviction and comfort are wonderful; and it is a sign we are not acquainted with God's testimonies, or do not understand them, if we do not admire them.

Secondly. He adhered to it as of constant use to him; "Therefore doth my soul keep them" as a treasure of inestimable value which I cannot be without. We do not keep them to any purpose, unless our souls keep them. There they must be deposited as the tables of testimony in the ark; there they must have the innermost and uppermost place. They that see God's word to be admirable will prize it highly, and preserve it carefully, as that which they promise themselves great things from.

130 The entrance of thy words giveth light;
It giveth understanding unto the simple.

Here is, First. The great use for which the word of God was intended. To give light, that is, to give understanding; to give us to understand that which will be of use to us in our travels through this world; and it is the outward and ordinary means by which the Spirit of God enlightens the understandings of all that are sanctified. God's testimonies are not only wonderful for the greatness of them, but useful as a light in a dark place.

Secondly. Its efficacy for this purpose. It answers the end to admiration; for, 1. Even the entrance of God's word gives light. If we begin at the beginning, and take it before us, we shall find that the very first verses of the Bible give us surprising and yet satisfying discoveries of the universe, about which without that the world is utterly in the dark. As soon as the word of God enters into us, and has a place in us, it enlightens us; we find we begin to see when we begin to study the word of God. The very first principles of the oracles of God, the plainest truths, the milk appointed for the babes, brings a great light into the soul; much more will the soul be illuminated by the sublime mysteries that are found there. The exposition or explication of thy word giveth light; then it is most profitable when ministers do their part in giving the sense, *Neh.* viii. 8. Some understand it of the New Testament, which is the opening or unfolding of the Old, which would give light concerning life and immortality. 2. It would give understanding even to the simple, to the weakest capacities, for it sheweth us a way to heaven so plain, that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

131 I opened my mouth, and panted:
For I longed for thy commandments.

First. The desire David had towards the word of God; "I longed for thy commandments." When he was under a forced absence from God's ordinances, he longed to be restored to them again. When he enjoyed ordinances, he greedily sucked in the word of God, as newborn babes desire the milk. When Christ is formed in the soul, there are gracious longings, unaccountable to one that is a stranger to the work.

Secondly. The degree of that desire appearing in the expressions of it; "I opened my mouth and panted," as one overcome with heat, or almost stifled, pants for a mouthful of fresh air. Thus strong, thus earnest, should our desires be towards God, and the remembrance of his name, *Ps.* xlii. 1, 2; *Lu.* xii. 50.

132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me,
As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

Here is, First. David's request for God's favour to himself. Look graciously upon me, let me have thy smiles, and the light of thy countenance. Take cognizance of me and my affairs, and be merciful to me; let me taste the sweetness of thy mercy, and receive gifts of thy mercy. See how humble his petition is; he asks not for the operations of God's hand, only for the smiles of his face. A good look is enough; and for that he doth not plead merit, but implores mercy.

Secondly. His acknowledgment of his favour to all his people; "As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name." Which speaks either, 1. A plea for mercy. Lord, I am one of those that love thy name, love thee and thy word, and thou usest to be kind to those that do so; and wilt thou be worse to me than to others of thy people? Or, 2. A description of the favour and mercy he desired. That which thou usest to bestow on those that love thy name, which thou bearest to thy chosen. *Ps.* cvi. 4, 5. He desires no more, no better, than neighbour's fare, and he will take up with no less. Common looks and common mercies will not serve, but such as are reserved for those that love him; which are such as eye hath not seen, 1 *Cor.* ii. 9. Note, The dealings of God with them that love him are such that a man needs not desire to be any better dealt with, for he will make them truly and eternally happy; and as long as God deals with us no otherwise than as he useth to deal with those that love him, we have no reason to complain, 1 *Cor.* x. 13.

133 Order my steps in thy word:
And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

Here David prays for two great spiritual blessings, and is in this verse as earnest for the good work of God in him, as in the verse before for the good-will of God towards him. He prays,

First. For direction in the paths of duty. "Order my steps in thy word." Having led me into the right way, let every step I take in that way be under the conduct of thy grace. We ought to walk by rule; all the motions of the soul must not only be kept within the bounds prescribed by the word, so as not to transgress them, but carried out in the paths prescribed by the word, so as not to trifle in them; and therefore we must beg of God that by his good Spirit he would order our steps accordingly.

Secondly. For deliverance from the power of sin. "Let no iniquity have dominion over me," so as to gain my consent to it; and that I should be led captive by it. The dominion of sin is to be dreaded and deprecated by every one of us; and if in sincerity we pray against it we may receive that promise as an answer to the prayer; *Rom.* vi. 14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

134 Deliver me from the oppression of man:
So will I keep thy precepts.

Here, First. David prays that he might live a quiet and peaceable life, and might not be harassed and discomposed by those that studied to be vexatious; "Deliver me from the oppression of man." Man, whom God can control, and whose power is limited; let them know themselves to be but men, *Ps.* ix. 20, and let me be delivered out of the hands of unreasonable men.

Secondly. He promiseth that then he would live in all godliness and honesty. Let me be delivered out of the hands of my enemies, that I may serve God without fear. "So will I keep thy precepts;" not but that he would keep God's precepts though he should be continued under oppression, but, So shall I keep thy precepts more cheerfully, and with more enlargement of heart, my bonds being loosed. Then we may expect temporal blessings, when we desire them with this in our eye, that we may serve God the better.

135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;
And teach me thy statutes.

David here, as often elsewhere, writes himself God's servant, a title he gloried in, though he was a king. Now here, as became a good servant,

First. He is very ambitious of his Master's favour, accounting that his happiness and chief good. He asks not for corn and wine, for silver and gold; but "make thy face to shine upon thy servant," that is, let me be accepted of thee, and let me know that I am so. Comfort me with the light of thy countenance in every cloudy and dark day; if the world frown upon me, yet do thou smile.

Secondly. He is very solicitous about his Master's work, accounting that his business and chief concern. This he would be instructed in that he might do it, and do it well, so as to be accepted in the doing of it; "Teach me thy statutes." Note, We must pray as earnestly for grace as for comfort. If God hides his face from us, it is because we have been careless in keeping his statutes; and therefore, that we may be qualified for the returns of his favour, we must pray for wisdom to do our duty.

136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,
Because they keep not thy law.

Here we have David in sorrow.

First. It is great sorrow. To that degree, that he weeps rivers of tears; commonly where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping eye, in comformity to Christ, who was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. David had prayed for comfort in God's favour, ver. 135; now he pleads that he was qualified for that comfort, and had need of it, for he was one of them that mourned in Zion, and they that do so shall be comforted, *Isa.* lxi. 3.

Secondly. It is godly sorrow. He wept not for his troubles, though they were many, but for the dishonour to God; "Because they keep not thy law." Either because mine eyes keep not thy law, so some, (the eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it ought to be a weeping eye,) or, rather, they, that is, those about me, ver. 139. Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.

18. TZADDI.

137 Righteous *art* thou, O LORD,
And upright *are* thy judgments.
138 Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded
Are righteous and very faithful.

First. The righteousness of God; the infinite rectitude and perfection of his nature. As he is what he is, so he is what he should be, and in every thing acts as becomes him. There is nothing wanting, nothing amiss in God; his will is the eternal rule of equity, and he is righteous, for he doth all according to it.

Secondly. The righteousness of his government. He rules the world by his providence, according to the principles of justice, and never did nor ever can do any wrong to any of his creatures. "Upright are thy judgments;" the promises and threatenings are executions of both. Every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it. He perfectly knows the merits of every cause, and will judge accordingly.

Thirdly. The righteousness of his commands, which he hath given to be the rule of our obedience. "Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded," which are backed with thy sovereign authority, and to which thou dost require our obedience, are exceeding righteous and faithful, righteousness and faithfulness itself. As he acts like himself, so his law requires that we act like ourselves, and like him; that we be just to ourselves, and to all we deal with, true to all the engagements we lay ourselves under both to God and man. That which we are commanded to practise is righteous; that which we are commanded to believe is faithful. It is necessary to our faith and obedience that we be convinced of this.

139 My zeal hath consumed me,
Because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

Here is, First. The great contempt which wicked men put upon religion; "Mine enemies have forgotten thy words." They have often heard them, but so little did they heed them, they willingly forgot them; not only through carelessness let them slip out of their minds, but contrived how to cast them behind their backs. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, and particularly of their malignity and enmity to the people of God, they have forgotten the words of God, else those would give check to their sinful courses.

Secondly. The great concern which godly men shew for religion. David reckoned those his enemies that forgot the words of God, because they were enemies to religion, which he had entered into a league with, offensive and defensive; and therefore his zeal even consumed him, when he observed their impieties. He conceived such an indignation at their wickedness, as even preyed upon his spirits, even ate them up, as Christ's zeal (*Jno.* ii. 17) swallowed up all inferior considerations, and made him forget himself. My zeal has pressed or constrained me, (so Dr. Hammond reads it, *Acts* xviii. 5.) Zeal against sin should constrain us to do what we can against it in our places, at least to do so much the more in religion ourselves. The worse others are, the better we should be.

140 Thy word *is* very pure:
Therefore thy servant loveth it.

Here is, First. David's great affection for the word of God; "Thy servant loves it." Every good man, being a servant of God, loves the word of God, because it lets him know his Master's will, and directs him in his Master's work. Wherever there is grace, there is a dear love to the word of God.

Secondly. The ground and reason of that affection. He saw it to be "very pure," and therefore he loved it. Our love to the word of God is then an evidence of our love to God, when we love it for the sake of its purity, because it bears the image of God's holiness, and is designed to make us partakers of his holiness. It commands purity; and as it is itself refined from all corrupt mixture, so, if we receive it in the light and love of it, it will refine us from the dross of worldliness and fleshly-mindedness.

141 I *am* small and despised:
Yet do not I forget thy precepts.

Here is, First. David pious, and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, one whom the King of kings did delight to honour, and yet small and despised in his own account, and in the account of many others. Men's real excellency cannot always secure them from contempt; nay, it exposeth them many times to scorn of some, and always makes them low in their own eyes. God has chosen the foolish things of the world; and it has been the common lot of his people to be a despised people.

Secondly. David poor, and yet pious; small and despised for his strict and serious godliness, yet his conscience can witness for him, that he did not forget God's precepts. He will not throw off his religion, though it expose him to contempt, for he knew that was designed to try his constancy. When we are small and despised, we have the more need to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition.

142 Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness,
And thy law *is* the truth.

Observe, First. That God's word is righteousness, and it is an everlasting righteousness. It is the rule of God's judgment, and it is consonant to his counsels from eternity, and will direct his sentence for eternity. The word of God will judge us, it will judge us in righteousness, and by it our everlasting state will be determined. This should possess us with a very great reverence for the word of God, that it is righteousness itself, the standard of righteousness, and it is everlasting in its rewards and punishments.

Secondly. That God's word is a law, and that law is truth. See the double obligation we are under to be governed by the word of God. We are reasonable creatures, and as such we must be ruled by truth, acknowledging the force and power of it. If the principles be true, the practices must be agreeable to them, else we do not act rationally. We are creatures and therefore subjects, and must be ruled by our Creator, and whatever he commands, we are bound to obey as a law. See how these obligations are here twisted, these cords of a man. Here is truth brought to the understanding, there to sit chief, and direct the motions of the whole man; but, lest the authority of that should become weak through the flesh, here is a law to bind the will, and bring that into subjection. God's truth is a law, (*Jno.* xviii. 37,) and God's law is the truth, sure we cannot break such words as these asunder.

143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me:
Yet thy commandments *are* my delights.
144 The righteousness of thy testimonies *is* everlasting:
Give me understanding, and I shall live.

These two verses are almost a repetition of the two foregoing verses, but with improvement.

First. He again professeth his constant adherence to God and his duty, notwithstanding the many difficulties and discouragements he met with. He had said, ver. 141, "I am small and despised," and yet stick to my duty. Here he finds himself not only mean, but miserable, as far as this world could make him so: "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me;" trouble without, anguish within. Those surprised him, they seized him, they held him. Sorrows are often the lot of saints in this vale of tears, they are in heaviness through manifold temptations. There he had said, "Yet do I not forget thy precepts; here he carries his constancy much higher, "Yet thy commandments are my delights." All his trouble and anguish did not put his mouth out of taste to the comforts of the word of God, but he could still relish them, and find that peace and pleasure in them which all the calamities of this present time could not deprive him of. There are delights, variety of delights, in the word of God, which the saints have many times the sweetest enjoyment of when they are in trouble and anguish, 2 *Cor.* i. 5.

Secondly. He again acknowledgeth the everlasting righteousness of God's word, as before, ver. 142, "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting," and cannot be altered; and when it is admitted in its power into a soul, it is there an abiding principle, "a well of living water," *Jno.* iv. 14. We ought to meditate much and often upon the equity and the eternity of the word of God. Here he adds, by way of inference, 1. His prayer for grace. Give me understanding. Those that know much of the word of God should still covet to know more; for there is more to be known. He doth not say, Give me a farther revelation, but, Give me a farther understanding; what is revealed we should desire to understand, and what we know to know better; and we must go to God for a heart to know. 2. His hope of glory. Give me this renewed understanding, and then I shall live; shall live for ever, shall be eternally happy, and shall be comforted for the present in the prospect of it. "This is life eternal, to know God," *Jno.* xvii. 3.

19. KOPH.

145 I cried with *my* whole heart; hear me, O LORD:
I will keep thy statutes.
146 I cried unto thee; save me,
And I shall keep thy testimonies.

Here is, First. David's good prayers, by which he sought to God for mercy. These he mentions here, not as boasting of them, or trusting to any merit in them, but reflecting upon them with comfort, that he had taken the appointed way to comfort. Observe here, 1. That he was inward with God in prayer; he prayed with his heart, and the prayer is acceptable no farther than the heart goes along with it. Lip labour, if that be all, is lost labour. 2. He was importunate with God in prayer; he cried as one in earnest, with fervour of affection and a holy vehemence, and vigour of desire. He cried with his whole heart, all the powers of his soul were not only engaged and employed, but exerted to the utmost in his prayers. Then we are likely to speed when we thus strive and wrestle in prayer. 3. That he directed his prayer to God; "I cried unto thee." Whither should the child go but to his father when any thing ails him? 4. That the great thing he prayed for was salvation: "Save me." A short prayer, for we mistake if we think we shall be heard for our much speaking; but a comprehensive prayer, not only, Rescue me from ruin, but make me happy. We need desire no more but God's salvation, *Ps.* l. 23, and the things that accompany it, *Heb.* vi. 9. 5. That he was earnest for an answer; and not only looked up in his prayers, but looked up after them, to see what became of them, *Ps.* v. 3. Lord, hear me, and let me know that thou hearest me.

Secondly. David's good purposes, by which he bound himself to duty, when he was in the pursuit of mercy. "I will keep thy statutes," I am resolved by thy grace I will; for if we turn away our ear from hearing the law, we cannot expect an answer of peace to our prayers, *Pr.* xxviii. 9. This purpose is used as an humble plea, ver. 146, "Save me" from my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hindrances that lie in my way, "that I may keep thy testimonies." We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have an opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully.

147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried:
I hoped in thy word.
148 Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches,
That I might meditate in thy word.

David goes on here to relate how he had abounded in the duty of prayer, much to his comfort and advantage; he cried unto God, that is, offered up to him his pious and devout affections with all seriousness. Observe,

First. The handmaids of his devotion. The two great exercises that attended his prayers, and were helpful to them, were, 1. Hope in God's word, which encouraged him to continue instant in prayer, though the answer did not come presently. I cried, and hoped that at last I should speed, because the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and not lie. "I hoped in thy word," which I knew would not fail me. 2. Meditation in God's word. The more intimately we converse with the word of God, and the more we dwell upon it in our thoughts, the better able we shall be to speak to God in his own language, and the better we shall know what to pray for as we ought. Reading the word will not serve, but we must meditate in it.

Secondly. The hours of his devotion. He "prevented the dawning of the morning," nay, and "the night watches." See here, 1. That David was an early riser, which, perhaps, contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, Yet a little sleep. 2. That he began the day with God. The first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was to pray, when his mind was most fresh and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God, it will help to keep us in his fear all the day long. 3. That his mind was so full of God, and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn; even in the night watches, when he awaked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray than turn him and go to sleep again. He esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose, which we can as ill want as our food, *Job* xxiii. 12. 4. That he would redeem time for religious exercises. He was full of business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion. It is better take time from sleep, as David did, than not find time for prayer. And this is our comfort when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace; for we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with.

149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness:
O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

Here, First. David applies himself to God for grace and comfort with much solemnity. He begs of God to hear his voice; Lord, I have something to say to thee, shall I obtain a gracious audience? Well, what has he to say? What is his petition, and what is his request? It is not long, but it has much in a little, "Lord, quicken me," stir me up to that which is good, and make me vigorous and lively, and cheerful in it. Let habits of grace be drawn out into act.

Secondly. He encourageth himself to hope that he shall obtain his request, for he depends, 1. Upon God's lovingkindness. He is good, therefore he will be good to me, who hope in his mercy. His lovingkindness manifested to me will help to quicken me, and put life into me. 2. Upon God's judgment, that is, his wisdom. He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me. Or, his promise, the word which he hath spoken, mercy secured by the new covenant; quicken me according to the tenor of that covenant.

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief:
They are far from thy law.

151 Thou *art* near, O LORD;
And all thy commandments *are* truth.

Here is, First. The apprehension David was in of danger from his enemies. 1. They were very malicious, and industrious in prosecuting their malicious designs. They follow after mischief, any mischief they could do to David or his friends; they would let slip no opportunity, nor let fall any pursuit that might be to his hurt. 2. They were very impious, and had no fear of God before their eyes. "They are far from thy law," setting themselves as far as they can out of the reach of its convictions and commands. The persecutors of God's people are such as make light of God himself, we may therefore be sure that God will take his people's part against them. 3. They followed him close, and he was just ready to fall into their hands. "They draw nigh," nigher than they were, so that they got ground of him. They were at his heels, just upon his back. God sometimes suffers persecutors to prevail very far against his people, so that, as David said, 1 *Sam.* xx. 3, "There is but a step between them and death." Perhaps this comes in here as a reason why David was so earnest in prayer, ver. 149. God brings us into imminent perils, as he did Jacob, that, like him, we may wrestle for a blessing.

Secondly. The assurance David had of protection with God. "They draw nigh" to destroy me, but "thou art near, O Lord;" to save me, not only mightier than they, and therefore able to help me against them, but nearer than they, and therefore ready to help. It is the happiness of the saints that when trouble is near, God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and him. He is never far to seek, but he is within our call, and means are within his call, *Deu.* iv. 7. "All thy commandments are truth." The enemies thought to defeat the promises God had made to David, but he was sure it was out of their power; they were inviolably true, and would be infallibly performed.

152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old
That thou hast founded them for ever.

This confirms what he had said in the close of the foregoing verses, "All thy commandments are truth;" he means the covenant, the word which God has commanded to a thousand generations. This is firm, as true as truth itself. For,

First. God has founded it so. He has framed it for a perpetuity; such is the constitution of it, and so well ordered is it in all things, that it cannot but be sure. The promises are founded for ever, so that, when heaven and earth are passed away, every iota and tittle of the promise shall stand firm, 2 *Cor.* i. 20.

Secondly. David had found it so; both by a work of God's grace upon his heart, begetting in him a full persuasion of the truth of God's word, and enabling him to rely upon it with a full satisfaction, and by the works of his providence on his behalf, fulfilling the promise beyond what he expected. Thus he knew of old, from the days of his youth, ever since he began to look towards God, that the word of God is what one may venture one's all upon. This assurance was confirmed by the observations and experiences of his own life all along, and of others that had gone before him in the ways of God. All that ever dealt with God, and trusted in him, will own that they have found him faithful.

20. RESH.

153 Consider mine affliction, and deliver me:
For I do not forget thy law.
154 Plead my cause, and deliver me:
Quicken me according to thy word.

Here, First. David prays for succour in distress. "Is any afflicted? let him pray," let him pray as David doth here. 1. He hath an eye to God's pity, and prays, "Consider mine affliction;" take it into thy thoughts, and all the circumstances of it, and sit not by as one unconcerned. God is never unmindful of his people's afflictions; but he will have us to put him in remembrance, *Isa.* xliii. 26, to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration, to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit in his own time and way. 2. He has an eye to God's power, and prays, Deliver me, and again, Deliver me; consider my troubles, and bring me out of them. God has promised deliverance, *Ps.* l. 15; and we may pray for it, with submission to his will, and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better. 3. He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays, "Plead my cause." Be thou my patron and advocate, and take me for thy client. David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them; he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity, and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually, *Isa.* li. 22; *Jer.* l. 34. 4. He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, Quicken me. Lord, I am weak and unable to bear my troubles, my spirit is apt to droop and sink; O that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought.

Secondly. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God, and his devotedness to its conduct. Quicken and deliver me according to thy word of promise, for I do not forget thy precepts. The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time.

155 Salvation *is* far from the wicked:
For they seek not thy statutes.

Here is, First. The description of wicked men. They do not only not do God's statutes, but they do not so much as seek them; they do not acquaint themselves with them, nor so much as desire to know their duty, or in the least endeavour to do it. These are wicked indeed, that do not think the law of God worth inquiring after, but are altogether regardless of it, being resolved to live at large, and to walk in the way of their heart.

Secondly. Their doom; Salvation is far from them. They cannot upon any good grounds promise themselves temporal deliverance; "Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." How can they expect to seek God's favour with success when they are in adversity, that never sought his statutes when they were in prosperity? But eternal salvation is certainly far from them. They flatter themselves with a conceit that it is near, and they are going to heaven; but they are mistaken, it is far from them, they thrust it from them, by thrusting the Saviour from them. It is so far from them that they cannot reach it, and the longer they persist in sin the farther it is. Nay, while salvation is far from them, damnation is near; it slumbers not." "Behold, the Judge stands before the door."

156 Great *are* thy tender mercies, O LORD:
Quicken me according to thy judgments.

Here, First. David admires God's grace: "Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord." The goodness of God's nature, as it is his glory, so it is the joy of all the saints; his mercies are tender, for he is full of compassion: they are many, they are great. It is a fountain that can never be exhausted; he is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. He had spoken of the misery of the wicked, ver. 155, but God is good for all that; there were tender mercies sufficient in God to have saved them, if they had not despised the riches of those mercies. They that are delivered from the sinner's doom are bound for ever to own the greatness of God's mercies which delivered them.

Secondly. He begs for God's grace, reviving, quickening grace, according to his judgments, that is, according to the tenor of the new covenant, that established rule by which he goes in dispensing that grace. Or, according to his manner, his custom or usage with those that love his name, ver. 132.

157 Many *are* my persecutors and mine enemies:
Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.

Here is, First. David surrounded with difficulties and dangers; "Many are my persecutors and mine enemies." When Saul, the king, was his persecutor and enemy, no marvel that many more were so. Multitudes will follow the pernicious ways of abused authority. David, being a public person, had many enemies; but withal he had many friends, that loved him and wished him well; let him set the one over against the other. In this David was a type both of Christ and his church. The enemies, the persecutors of both are many, very many.

Secondly. David established in the way of his duty notwithstanding; "Yet I do not decline from thy testimonies," as knowing that, while I stick to them, God is for me; and then no matter who is against me. A man that is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none.

158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved;
Because they kept not thy word.

Here is, First. David's sorrow for the wickedness of the wicked. Though he conversed much at home, yet sometimes he looked abroad, and could not but see the wicked walking on every side. He "beheld the transgressors," those whose sins were open before all men; and it grieved him to see them dishonour God, serve Satan, debauch the world, and ruin their own souls; to see the transgressors so numerous, so daring, so very impudent, and so industrious to draw unstable souls into their snares. All this cannot but be a grief to those that have any regard to the glory of God, and the welfare of mankind.

Secondly. The reason of that sorrow. He was grieved, not because they were vexatious to him, but because they were provoking to God; "They kept not thy word." They that hate sin truly, hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God, and a violation of his word.

159 Consider how I love thy precepts:
Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.

Here is, First. David's appeal to God concerning his love to his precepts. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love them; consider it then, and deal with me as thou usest to deal with those that love thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name. He doth not say, 'Consider how I fulfil thy precepts;' he was conscious to himself that in many things he came short, but, "Consider how I love them." And our obedience is then only pleasing to God, and pleasant to ourselves, when it comes from a principle of love.

Secondly. His petition thereupon; "Quicken me," to do my duty with vigour; revive me, keep me alive, not according to any merit of mine, though I love thy word, but "according to thy lovingkindness." It is to that we owe our lives; nay, that is better than life itself. We need not desire to be quickened any farther than God's lovingkindness will quicken us.

160 Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning: [ever.
And every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* for

David here comforts himself with the faithfulness of God's word, for the encouragement of himself and others to rely upon it.

First. It has always been found faithful hitherto, and never failed any that ventured upon it. It is true from the beginning. Ever since God began to reveal himself to the children of men, all he said was true, and to be trusted. The church from its beginning was built upon this rock. It has not gained its validity by tract of time, as many governments, whose best plea is prescription and long usage, (*quod initio non valet tractu temporis convalescit*,—'that which at first wanted validity in the progress of time acquired it;') but the beginning of God's word was true, so some read it. His government was laid on a sure foundation; and all in every age that have received God's word in faith and love have found every saying in it faithful and well worthy of all acceptation.

Secondly. It will be found faithful to the end, because righteous; "every one of thy judgments endureth for ever," unalterable, and of perpetual obligation, and reading men's everlasting doom.

21. SCHIN.

161 Princes have persecuted me without a cause:
But my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

David here lets us know,

First. How he was discouraged in his duty by the fear of man. Princes persecuted him; they looked upon him as a traitor and an enemy to the government, and under that notion sought his life, and bade him go serve other gods, 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 19. It hath been the common lot of the best men to be persecuted; and the case is the worse if princes be the persecutors, for they have not only the sword in their hand, and therefore can do the more hurt, but they have the law on their side, and can do it with reputation, and a colour of justice. It is sad that the power which magistrates have from God, and should use for him, should ever be employed against him,—but marvel not at the matter, *Eccl.* v. 8. It was a comfort to David, that when princes persecuted him, he could truly say it was without cause, he never gave them any provocation.

Secondly. How he was kept to his duty, notwithstanding, by the fear of God. They would make me stand in awe of them and their word, and do as they bid me; but "my heart stands in awe of thy word," and I was resolved to please God, and keep in with him, whoever is displeased, and falls out with me. Every gracious soul stands in awe of the word of God, of the authority of its

precepts, and the terror of its threatenings; and to those that do so nothing appears in the power and wrath of man at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw ourselves under the frowns of all the world, *Lu.* xii. 4, 5. The heart that stands in awe of God's word is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution.

162 I rejoice at thy word,
As one that findeth great spoil.

Here is, First. The pleasure David took in the word of God. He rejoiced at it, rejoiced that God had made such a discovery of his mind, that Israel was blessed with that light, when other nations sat in darkness; that he was himself let into the understanding of it, and had had experience of the power of it. He took a pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it, and every thing he met with in it was agreeable to him. He had just now said, that his heart stood in awe of his word, and yet here that he rejoiced in it. The more reverence we have for the word of God, the more joy we shall find in it.

Secondly. The degree of that pleasure; "as one that findeth great spoil." This supposeth a victory over the enemy; it is through much opposition that a soul comes to this, to rejoice in God's word. But, besides the pleasure and honour of a conquest, there is great advantage gained by the plunder of the field, which adds much to the joy. By the word of God we become more than conquerors, that is, unspeakable gainers.

163 I hate and abhor lying:
But thy law do I love.

Love and hatred are the leading affections of the soul; if those be fixed right, the rest move accordingly. Here we have them fixed right in David.

First. He had a rooted antipathy to sin, he could not endure to think of it. "I hate and abhor lying," which may be taken for all sin; inasmuch as by it we deal treacherously and perfidiously with God, and put a cheat upon ourselves. Hypocrisy is lying; false doctrine is lying; breach of faith is lying. Lying in commerce or conversation is a sin which every good man hates and abhors, hates and double hates; because, of the seven things which the Lord hates, one is a lying tongue, and another is a false witness that speaketh lies, *Pr.* vi. 16. Every man hates to have a lie told him; but we should more hate telling a lie, because by the former we only receive an affront from men, by the latter we give an affront to God.

Secondly. He had a rooted affection to the word of God. "Thy law do I love;" and therefore he abhorred lying, for lying is contrary to the whole law of God; and the reason why he loved the law of God, was because of the truth of it. The more we see of the amiable beauty of truth, the more we shall see of the detestable deformity of a lie.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee
Because of thy righteous judgments.

David in this psalm is full of complaints, yet those did neither jostle out his praises nor put him out of tune for them. Whatever condition a child of God is in, he doth not want matter for praise, and therefore should not want a heart. See here,

First. How often David praised God. "Seven times a day," that is, very frequently; not only every day, but often every day. Many think once a week will serve, or once or twice a day; but David would praise God seven times a day at least. Praising God is a duty which we should very much abound in. We must praise God at every meal, praise him upon all occasions, in every thing give thanks. We should praise God seven times a day, for the subject can never be exhausted, and our affections should never be tired: see ver. 62.

Secondly. What he praised God for. "Because of thy righteous judgments." We must praise God for his precepts, which are all just and good, for his promises and threatenings, and the performance of both in his providence. We are to praise God even for our afflictions, if through grace we get good by them.

165 Great peace have they which love thy law:
And nothing shall offend them.

Here is an account of the happiness of good men that are governed by a principle of love to the word of God; that make it their rule, and are ruled by it.

First. They are easy, and have a holy serenity; none enjoy themselves more than they do. "Great peace have they that love thy law;" abundant satisfaction in doing their duty, and pleasure in reflection upon it. "The work of righteousness is peace," *Isa.* xxxii. 17; such peace as the world can neither give nor take away. They may be in great troubles without, and yet enjoy great peace within; *sat lucis intus*,—'abundance of internal light.' They that love the world have great vexation, for it doth not answer their expectations; they that love God's word have great peace, for it outdoes their expectation, and in it they have sure footing.

Secondly. They are safe, and have a holy security. "Nothing shall offend them;" nothing shall be a scandal, snare, or stumblingblock to them; to entangle them either in guilt or grief. No event of providence shall be either an invincible temptation or an intolerable affliction to them; but their love to the word of God shall enable them both to hold fast their integrity and preserve their tranquillity. They will make the best of that which is, and not quarrel with any thing that God doth; "Nothing shall offend" or hurt "them," for every thing shall work for good to them; and, therefore, shall please them, and they reconcile themselves to it. They in whom this holy love reigns will not be apt to perplex themselves with needless scruples, nor to take offence at their brethren, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 6, 7.

166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation,
And done thy commandments.

Here is the whole duty of man; for we are taught,

First. To keep our eye upon God's favour as our end. "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation;" not only temporal, but eternal salvation. I have hoped for that as my happiness, and laid up my treasure in it; I have hoped for it as thine, as a happiness of thy preparing, thy promising, and which consists in being with thee. Hope of this has raised me above the world, and borne me up under all my burthens in it.

Secondly. To keep our eye upon God's word as our rule. "I have done thy commandments;" that is, I have made conscience of conforming myself to thy will in every thing. Observe here how God has joined these two together, and let no man put them asunder. We cannot upon good grounds hope for God's salvation, unless we set ourselves to do his commandments, *Rev.* xxii. 14. But those that sincerely endeavour to do his commandments ought to keep up a good hope of the salvation; and that hope will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the hope is, the more lively the obedience will be.

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies;
And I love them exceedingly.
168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies:
For all my ways *are* before thee.

David's conscience here witnesseth for him,

First. That his practices were good. 1. He loved God's testimonies, he loved them exceedingly. Our love to the word of God must be a superlative love; we must love it better than the wealth and pleasure of this world. And it must be a victorious love; such as will subdue and mortify our lusts, and extirpate carnal affections. 2. He kept them, his soul kept them. Bodily exercise profits little in religion, we must make heartwork of it, or make nothing of it. The soul must be sanctified, and renewed, and delivered into the mould of the word; the soul must be employed in glorifying God, for he will be worshipped in the spirit. We must keep both the precepts and the testimonies; the commands of God by our obedience to them, and his promises by our reliance on them.

Secondly. That he was governed herein by a good principle; Therefore I have kept thy precepts, because by faith I have seen thine eye always upon me. "All my ways are before thee;" thou knowest every step I take, and strictly observest all I say and do. Thou dost see and accept all that I say and do well; thou dost see and art displeased with all I say and do amiss. Note, The consideration of this, that God's eye is upon us at all times, should make us very careful in every thing to keep his commandments, *Gen.* xvii. 1.

22. TAU.

169 Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD:
Give me understanding according to thy word.
170 Let my supplication come before thee:
Deliver me according to thy word.

Here is, First. A general petition for audience repeated. "Let my cry come near before thee," and again, "Let my supplication come before thee." He calls his prayer his cry, which notes the fervency and vehemence of it; and his supplication, which notes the humility of it. We must come to God as beggars come to our doors for an alms. He is concerned that his prayer might come before God, might come near before him, that is, that he might have grace and strength by faith and fervency to lift up his prayers; that no guilt might interpose to shut out his prayers, and to separate between him and God; and that God would graciously receive his prayers, and take notice of them. His prayer that his supplication might come before God implies a deep sense of his unworthiness, and a holy fear that his prayer should come short, or miscarry, as not fit to come before God; nor would any of our prayers have had access to God, if Jesus Christ had not approached to him as an advocate for us, *Jer.* iii. 4.

Secondly. Two particular requests, which he is thus earnest to present: 1. That God by his grace would give him wisdom to carry himself well under his troubles. Give me understanding; he means that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way; give me to know thee, and myself, and my duty to thee. 2. That God by his providence would rescue him out of his troubles. Deliver me, that is, with the temptation make a way to escape, 1 *Cor.* x. 13.

Thirdly. The same general plea to enforce these requests; "according to thy word." This directs and limits his desires; Lord, give me such an understanding as thou hast promised, and such a deliverance as thou hast promised, I ask for no other. It also encouraged his faith and expectation; Lord, that which I pray for is what thou hast promised, and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?

171 My lips shall utter praise,
When thou hast taught me thy statutes.

Here is, First. A great favour which David expects from God, that he will teach him his statutes. This he had often prayed for in this psalm, and urged his petition for it with various arguments; and, now he is drawing towards the close of the psalm, he speaks of it as taken for granted. They that are humbly earnest with God for his grace, and resolve, with Jacob, they will not let him go unless he bless them with spiritual blessings, may be humbly confident that they shall at length obtain what they are so importunate for. The God of Israel will grant them those things which they request of him.

Secondly. The grateful sense he promiseth to have of that favour. "My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me." 1. Then he shall have cause to praise God. Those that are taught of God, have a great deal of reason to be thankful; for this is the foundation of all these spiritual blessings which are the best blessings, and the earnests of eternal blessings. 2. Then he shall know how to praise God, and have a heart to it. All that are taught of God are taught this lesson,—when God opens the understanding, opens the heart, and so opens the lips, it is that the mouth may shew forth his praise. We have learned nothing to purpose, if we have not learned to praise God. 3. Therefore he is thus importunate for Divine instructions, that he might praise God. They that pray for God's grace must aim at God's glory, *Eph.* i. 12.

172 My tongue shall speak of thy word:
For all thy commandments *are* righteousness.

Observe here, First. The good knowledge David had of the word of God. He knew it so well that he was ready to own with the utmost satisfaction, that all God's commandments are not only righteous, but righteousness itself, the rule and standard of righteousness.

Secondly. The good use he resolved to make of that knowledge; "My tongue shall speak of thy word." Not only utter praise for it to the glory of God, but discourse of it for the instruction and edification of others; as that which he was himself full of, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and as that which he desired others also might be filled with. The more we see of the righteousness of God's commandments, the more industrious we should be to bring others acquainted with them, that they may be

ruled by them. We should always make the word of God the governor of our discourse, so as never to transgress it by sinful speaking, or sinful silence; and we should often make it the subject matter of our discourse, that it may feed many, and minister grace to the hearers.

173 Let thine hand help me;
For I have chosen thy precepts.
174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD;
And thy law *is* my delight.

Here, First, David prays that Divine grace would work for him; "Let thine hand help me." He finds his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor can any creature lend him a helping hand to any purpose; therefore he looks up to God in hopes that the hand that made him would help him, for if the Lord do not help us whence can any creature help us? All our help must be expected from God's hand, from his power, and his bounty.

Secondly. He pleads what Divine grace had already wrought in him, as a pledge of farther mercy, being a qualification for it. Three things he pleads: 1. That he had made religion his serious and deliberate choice; "I have chosen thy precepts." I took them for my rule, not because I knew no other, but because upon trial I knew no better. Those are good, and do good indeed, who are good, and do good, not by chance, but of choice; and those who have thus chosen God's precepts may depend upon God's helping hand in all their services and under all their sufferings. 2. That his heart was upon heaven; "I have longed for thy salvation." David, when he was got to the throne, met with enough in the world to court his stay, and to make him say, "It is good to be here," but still he was looking farther, and longing for something better in another world. There is an eternal salvation which all the saints are longing for, and therefore pray that God's hand would help them forwards in their way to it. 3. That he took pleasure in doing his duty; "Thy law is my delight;" not only I delight in it, but it is my delight, the greatest delight I have in this world. Those that are cheerful in their obedience may in faith beg help of God to carry them on in their obedience; and those that expect God's salvation must take delight in his law, and their hopes must increase their delight.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee;
And let thy judgments help me.

David's heart is still upon praising God, and therefore, First. He prays that God would give him time to praise him; "Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee;" that is, Let my life be prolonged, that I may live to thy glory. The reason why a good man desires to live, is, that he may praise God in the land of the living, and do something to his honour. Not, Let me live and serve my country, live and provide for my family; but, Let me live, that in doing this I may praise God here in this world of conflict and opposition. When we die we hope to go to a better world to praise him, and that is more agreeable for us; but here there is more need of us. And therefore one would not desire to live any longer than we may do God some service here; "Let my soul live," that is, let me be sanctified and comforted, (these are the life of the soul,) and then it shall praise thee. Our souls must be employed in praising God, and therefore we must pray for grace and peace, that we may be fitted to praise God.

Secondly. He prays that God would give him strength to praise him; "Let thy judgments help me," that is, Let all ordinances and all providences (both are God's judgments) further me in glorifying God; let them be the matter of my praise, and let them help to fit me for that work.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant;
For I do not forget thy commandments.

Here is, First. A penitent confession; "I have gone astray," or wandered up and down, "like a lost sheep." As unconverted sinners are like lost sheep, *Lu.* xv. 4, so weak unsteady saints are like lost sheep, *Mat.* xviii. 12, 13. We are apt to wander, like the sheep, and very unapt, when we have gone astray, to find the way again. By going astray we lose the comfort of the green pastures, and expose ourselves to a thousand mischiefs.

Secondly. A believing petition; "Seek thy servant," as the good shepherd seeks a wandering sheep to bring it back again, *Eze.* xxxiv. 12. Lord, seek me, as I used to seek my sheep when they went astray, for David had been himself a tender shepherd. Lord, own me for one of thine, for though I am a stray sheep I have thy mark; concern thyself for me; send after me by the word, and conscience, and providences; bring me back by thy grace. Seek me, that is, find me; for God never seeks in vain; "Turn me, and I shall be turned."

Thirdly. An obedient plea; Though I have gone astray, yet I have not wickedly departed, "I do not forget thy commandments." Thus he concludes the psalm with a penitent sense of his own sin, and a believing dependence on God's grace. With these a devout Christian will conclude his duties, will conclude his life; he will live and die repenting and praying. Observe here, 1. It is the character of good people that they do not forget God's commandments, being well pleased with their convictions and well settled in their resolutions. 2. Even those who through grace are mindful of their duty, yet cannot but own that they have in many instances wandered from it. 3. Those that have wandered from their duty, yet, if they continue mindful of it, may with an humble confidence commit themselves to the care of God's grace.

PSALM CXX.

This psalm is the first of those fifteen which are here put together under the title of songs of degrees: it is well it is not material what the meaning of that title should be, for nothing is offered towards the explication of it, no, not by the Jewish writers themselves, but what is conjectural. These psalms do not seem to be composed all by the same hand, much less all at the same time. Four of them are expressly ascribed to David, and one said to be designed for Solomon, and perhaps penned by him; yet *Ps.* cxxvi. and cxxix. seem to be of a much later date. Some of them are calculated for the closet, as *Ps.* cxx. and cxxx.; some for the family, as *Ps.* cxxvi., cxxviii.; some for the public assembly, as *Ps.* cxxii., cxxxiv.; and some occasional, as *Ps.* cxxiv., cxxxii. So that it should seem they had not this title from the author, but from the publisher. Some conjecture that they are so called from their singular excellency; as the song of songs, so the song of degrees is a most excellent song, in the highest degree; others, from the tune they were set to, or the musical instruments they were sung to, or the raising of the voice in singing of them. Some think they were sung on the fifteen steps or stairs, by which they went up from the outward court of the temple to the inner; others, at so many stages of the people's journey when they returned out of captivity. I shall only observe, 1. That they are all short psalms, all but one very short, three of them have but three verses apiece; and that they are placed next to *Ps.* cxix., which is much the longest of all. Now as that was one psalm divided into many parts, so these were many psalms which, being short, were sometimes sung all together, and made as it were one psalm, observing only a pause between each; as many steps make one pair of stairs. 2. That in the composure of them we frequently meet with the figure they call climax, or an ascent; the preceding word repeated, and then rising to something farther, as *Ps.* cxx., "With him that hated peace; I peace." *Ps.* cxxi., "From whence cometh my help; my help cometh." "He that keepeth thee shall not slumber; he that keepeth Israel." *Ps.* cxxii., "Within thy gates, O Jerusalem; Jerusalem is builded." *Ps.* cxxiii., "Until that he have mercy upon us; have mercy upon us." And the like in most of them, if not all. Perhaps for one of these reasons they are called songs of degrees.

This psalm is supposed to have been penned by David upon occasion of Doeg's accusing him and the priests to Saul, because it is like *Ps.* lii., which was penned on that occasion; and because the psalmist complains of his being driven out of the congregation of the Lord, and his being forced among barbarous people. I. He prays to God to deliver him from the mischiefs designed him by false and malicious tongues, ver. 1, 2. II. He threatens the judgments of God against such, ver. 3, 4. III. He complains of his ill neighbours that were quarrelsome and vexatious, ver. 5—7. In singing this psalm we may comfort ourselves in reference to the scourge of the tongue, when at any time we fall unjustly under the lash of it, that better than we have smarted from it.

A Song of degrees.

IN my distress I cried unto the LORD,
And he heard me.
2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips,
And from a deceitful tongue.
3 What shall be given unto thee?
Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?
4 Sharp arrows of the mighty,
With coals of juniper.

Here is, First. Deliverance from a false tongue obtained by prayer; David records his own experience of this.

1. He was brought into distress, into great distress, by lying lips and a deceitful tongue. There were those that sought his ruin, and had almost effected it by lying. 1st. By telling lies to him. They flattered him with professions and protestations of friendship, and promises of kindness and service to him, that they might the more securely, and without suspicion, carry on their designs against him, and might have an opportunity, by betraying his counsels, to do him a mischief. They smiled in his face and kissed him, then when they were aiming to smite him under the fifth rib. The most dangerous enemies, and those which it is most hard to guard against, are such as carry on their malicious designs under colour of friendship. The Lord deliver every good man from such lying lips! 2nd. By telling lies of him. They forged false accusations against him, and laid to his charge things that he knew not. This has often been the lot not only of the innocent, but of the excellent ones of the earth, who have been greatly distressed by lying lips, and have not only had their names blackened and made odious by calumnies in conversation, but their lives and all that is dear to them in this world endangered by false witness-bearing in judgment. David was herein a type of Christ, who was distressed by lying lips and deceitful tongues.

2. In this distress he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer; "I cried unto the Lord." Having no fence against false tongues, he appealed to him who has all men's hearts in his hand, who has power over the consciences of bad men, and can, when he pleaseth, bridle men's tongues. His prayer was, "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips," that my enemies may not, by these cursed methods, work my ruin. He that had prayed so earnestly to be kept from lying, *Ps.* cxix. 29, and hated it so heartily in himself, ver. 163, might with the more confidence pray to be kept from being belied by others, and from the ill consequences of it.

3. He obtained a gracious answer to this prayer. God heard him, so that his enemies, though they carried their designs very far, were baffled at last, and could not prevail to do him the mischief they intended. The God of truth is, and will be, the protector of his people from lying lips, *Ps.* xxxvii. 6.

Secondly. The doom of a false tongue foretold by faith, ver. 3, 4. As God will preserve his people from this mischievous generation, so he will reckon with their enemies, *Ps.* xii. 3, 7. The threatening is addressed to the sinner himself, for the awakening his conscience, if he have any left. Consider "what shall be given unto thee and what shall be done unto thee" by the righteous judge of heaven and earth, "thou false tongue." Surely sinners durst not do as they do if they knew, and would be persuaded to think, what will be in the end thereof. Let liars consider what shall be given to them, "Sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper;" that is, they will fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God, and will be made miserable by the tokens of his displeasure, which will fly swiftly like arrows, and will strike the sinner ere he is aware, and when he sees not who hurts him. This is threatened against liars, *Ps.* lxiv. 7, "God shall shoot at them with an arrow, suddenly shall they be wounded." They set God at a distance from them, but from afar his arrows can reach them. They are sharp arrows, and arrows of the mighty, the Almighty, for they will pierce through the strongest armour, and strike deep into the hardest heart. The terrors of the Lord are his arrows, *Job* vi. 4. And his wrath is compared to burning coals of juniper, which do not flame or crackle like thorns under a pot, but have a vehement heat, and keep fire very long, some say a year round, even when they seem to be gone out. This is the portion of the false tongue, for all that love and make a lie shall have their portion in the lake that burns eternally, *Rev.* xxii. 15.

5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech,
That I dwell in the tents of Kedar!
6 My soul hath long dwelt
With him that hateth peace.
7 I *am for* peace: but when I speak,
They *are* for war.

The psalmist here complains of the bad neighbourhood into which he was driven, and some apply the two foregoing verses to this. What shall the deceitful tongue give, what shall it do to those that lie open to it? What shall a man get by living among such malicious deceitful men? Nothing but sharp arrows and coals of juniper, that is, all the mischiefs of a false and spiteful tongue, *Ps.* lvii. 4. "Woe is me," saith David, that I am forced to dwell among

such, "that I sojourn in Mesech and Kedar." Not that David dwelt in the country of Mesech or Kedar, we never find him so far off from his own native country; but he dwelt among rude and barbarous people, like the inhabitants of Mesech and Kedar, as when we would describe an ill neighbourhood we say, We dwell among Turks and heathens. This made him cry out, "Woe is me!"

First. He was forced to live at a distance from the ordinances of God. While he was in banishment he looked upon himself as a sojourner, never at home but when he was near God's altars, and he cries out, 'Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged!' that I cannot get home to my resting-place, but am still kept at a distance, (so some read it.) Note, A good man cannot think himself at home while he is banished from God's ordinances, and has not them within reach. And it is a great grief to all that love God to want the means of grace and of communion with God; when they are under a force of that kind they cannot but cry out as David here, "Woe is me!"

Secondly. He was forced to live among wicked people, who were upon many accounts troublesome to him. He dwelt in the tents of Kedar, where the shepherds were probably in an ill name for being litigious, like the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. It is a very grievous burthen to a good man to be cast into and kept in the company of those whom he hopes to be for ever separated from, like Lot in Sodom, 2 *Pet.* ii. 8. And to dwell long with such is grievous indeed, for they are thorns, vexing, and scratching, and tearing, and that will shew the old enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. Those that David dwelt with were such as not only hated him, but hated peace, and proclaimed war with it, who might write on their weapons of war, not *sic sequimur pacem*,—'thus we aim at peace,'—but *sic persequimur*,—'thus we persecute.' Perhaps Saul's court was the Mesech and Kedar in which David dwelt, and Saul was the man he means that hated peace, whom David studied to oblige and could not, but the more service he did him the more exasperated he was against him.

See here, 1. The character of a very good man in David, who could truly say, though he were a man of war, I am for peace, for living peaceably with all men, and unpeaceably with none. 'I peace,' (so it is in the original,) I love peace, and pursue peace, my disposition is to peace, and my delight is in it; I pray for peace, and strive for peace; will do any thing, submit to any thing, part with any thing in reason for peace. I am for peace, and have made it to appear that I am so. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable.

2. The character of the worst of bad men in David's enemies, who would pick quarrels with those that were most peaceably disposed; "When I speak, they are for war," and the more forward for war the more they find me inclined to peace. He spoke with all the respect and kindness that could be, proposed methods of accommodation, spoke reason, spoke love, but they would not so much as hear him patiently, but cried out, To arms, to arms, so fierce and implacable were they, and so bent to mischief. Such were Christ's enemies. For his love they were his adversaries, and for his good words and good works they stoned him. And if we meet with such enemies, we must not think it strange, nor love peace the less for our seeking it in vain. "Be not overcome of evil," no, not of such evil as this, "but," even when thus tried, still try to "overcome evil with good."

PSALM CXXI.

Some call this the soldier's psalm, and think it was penned in the camp, when David was jeopardy his life in the high places of the field, and thus trusted God to cover his head in the day of battle. Others call it the traveller's psalm, (for there is nothing in it of military dangers,) and think David penned it when he was going abroad, and designed it *pro vehiculo*,—'for the carriage,'—for a good man's convoy and companion in a journey or voyage. But we need not thus appropriate it; wherever we are, at home or abroad, we are exposed to danger more than we are aware of, and this psalm directs and encourageth us to repose ourselves and our confidence in God, and by faith to put ourselves under his protection, and commit ourselves to his care, which we must do with an entire resignation and satisfaction in singing this psalm. I. David here assures himself of help from God, ver. I, 2. II. He assures others of it, ver. 3—8.

A Song of degrees.

I WILL lift up mine eyes unto the hills,
From whence cometh my help.
2 My help *cometh* from the LORD,
Which made heaven and earth.
3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:
He that keepeth thee will not slumber.
4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.
5 The LORD *is* thy keeper:
The LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand.
6 The sun shall not smite thee by day,
Nor the moon by night.
7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil:
He shall preserve thy soul.
8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in
From this time forth, and even for evermore.

This psalm teacheth us,

First. To stay ourselves upon God as a God of power, and a God all-sufficient for us. David did so, and found the benefit of it. 1. We must not rely upon creatures, upon men and means, instruments and second causes, nor make flesh our arm. 'Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?' (so some read it.) Doth my help come from thence? shall I depend upon the powers of the earth? upon the strength of the hills, upon princes and great men, that like hills fill the earth, and mount their heads towards heaven? No, "In vain is salvation hoped for from hills and mountains," *Jer.* iii. 23. I never expect help to come from them; my confidence is in God only. We must lift up our eyes above the hills, (so some read it;) we must look beyond instruments to God, who makes them that to us that they are. 2. We must see all our hope laid up in God, in his power and goodness, his providence and grace, and from him we must expect it to come; "My help comes from the Lord;" the help I desire is what he sends, and from him I expect it in his own way and time. If he do not help, no creature can help; if he do, no creature can hinder, can hurt. 3. We must fetch in help from God by faith in his promises, and a due regard to all his institutions. "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills;" probably he means the hills on which the temple was built, mount Moriah, and the holy hill of Zion, where the ark of the covenant is, the oracle and the altars; I will have an eye to the special presence of God in his church and with his people; his presence by promise, and not only to his common presence. When he was at a distance he would look towards the sanctuary, *Ps.* xxviii. 2; xlii. 6; from thence cometh our help, from the word and prayer, from the secret of his tabernacle. "My help cometh from the Lord," so the word is, ver. 2, from before the Lord, or from the sight and presence of the Lord; 'Which (saith Dr. Hammond) may refer to Christ incarnate, with whose humanity the Deity being inseparably united, God is always present with him, and through him with us, for whom, sitting at God's right hand, he constantly maketh intercession.' Christ is called the angel of his presence, that saved his people, *Isa.* lxiii. 9. 4. We must encourage our confidence in God with this, that he made heaven and earth, and he that did that can do any thing. He made the world out of nothing, himself alone, by a word's speaking, in a little time, and all very good, very excellent, and beautiful; and therefore, how great soever our straits and difficulties are, he has power sufficient for our succour and relief. He that made heaven and earth is sovereign Lord of all the hosts of both, and can make use of them as he pleaseth for the help of his people, and restrain them when he pleaseth from hurting his people.

Secondly. To comfort ourselves in God when our difficulties and dangers are greatest. It is here promised that if we put our trust in God, and keep in the way of our duty, we shall be safe under his protection, so that no real evil, no only evil, shall happen to us, nor any affliction but what God sees good for us, and will do us good by.

1. God himself hath undertaken to be our protector; "The Lord is thy keeper," ver. 5. Whatever charge he gives his angels to keep his people, he has not thereby discharged himself, so that, whether every particular saint has an angel for his guardian or no, we are sure he has God himself for his guardian. It is infinite wisdom that contrives, and infinite power that works, the safety of those that have put themselves under God's protection. These must needs be well kept that have the Lord for their keeper; if by affliction they be made his prisoners, yet still he is their keeper.

2. The same that is the protector of the church in general is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer; the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises; "He that keepeth Israel," ver. 4, "is thy keeper," ver. 5. The shepherd of the flock is the shepherd of every sheep, and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish.

3. He is a wakeful, watchful keeper: "He that keepeth Israel," that keepeth thee, O Israelite, "shall neither slumber nor sleep;" he never did, nor ever will, for he is never weary; he doth not only not sleep, but he doth not so much as slumber; he has not the least inclination to sleep.

4. He doth not only protect those whom he is the keeper of, but he refresheth them. He is their shield. The comparison has a great deal of gracious condescension in it; the eternal Being that is infinite substance, is what he is, that he may speak sensible comfort to his people, promises to be their *umbra*, their 'shadow,' to keep as close to them as the shadow doth to the body, and to shelter them from the scorching heat, "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," *Isa.* xxxii. 2; under this shadow they may sit with delight and assurance, *Cant.* ii. 3.

5. He is always near to his people for their protection and refreshment, and never at a distance; he is their keeper and shade on their right hand, so that he is never far to seek. The right hand is the working hand; let them but turn themselves dexterously to their duty, and they shall find God ready to them, to assist them and succeed them, *Ps.* xvi. 8.

6. He is not only at their right hand, but "he will also keep the feet of his saints," 1 *Sam.* ii. 9. He will have an eye upon them in their motions, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved;" God will provide that his people shall not be tempted above what they are able, shall not fall into sin, though they may be very near it, *Ps.* lxxiii. 2, 23; shall not fall into trouble, though there be many endeavouring to undermine them by fraud, or overthrow them by force. He will keep them from being frightened, as we are when we slip or stumble, and are ready to fall.

7. He will protect them from all the malignant influences of the heavenly bodies; ver. 6, "The sun shall not smite thee" with his heat "by day, nor the moon," with her cold and moisture, "by night." The sun and moon are great blessings to mankind, and yet (such a sad change has sin made in the creation) even the sun and moon (though worshipped by a great part of mankind) are often instruments of hurt and distemper to human bodies; God by them often smites us, but his favour shall interpose, so that they shall not damage his people. He will keep them night and day, *Isa.* xxvii. 3, as he kept Israel in the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud by day, which screened them from the heat of the sun, and of fire by night, which probably diffused a gentle warmth over the whole camp, that they might not be prejudiced by the cold and damp of the night; their father Jacob having complained, *Gen.* xxxi. 40, that by day the drought consumed him, and the frost by night. It may be understood figuratively: thou shalt not be hurt either by the open assaults of thine enemies, which are as visible as the scorching beams of the sun, or by their secret treacherous attempts, which are like the insensible insinuations of the cold by night.

8. His protection will make them safe in every respect; "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil," the evil of sin and the evil of trouble. He shall prevent the evil thou fearest, and shall sanctify, remove, or lighten the evil thou feelest. He will keep thee from doing evil, 2 *Cor.* xiii. 7; and so far from suffering evil, as that whatever afflictions happen to thee, there shall be no evil in it; even that which kills shall not hurt.

9. It is the spiritual life especially that God will take under his protection; "He shall preserve thy soul." All souls are his, and the soul is the man, and therefore he will, with a peculiar care, preserve them, that they be not defiled by sin and disturbed by affliction. He will keep them by keeping us in the possession of them, and he will preserve them from perishing eternally.

10. He will keep us in all our ways; "He shall preserve thy going out and coming in." Thou shalt be under his protection in all thy journeys and voyages, outward bound or homeward bound, as he kept Israel in the wilderness, in their removes and rests. He will prosper thee in all thy affairs, at home and abroad, in the beginning and in the conclusion of them. He will keep thee in life and death, thy going out and going on while thou livest, and thy coming in when thou diest; going out to thy labour in the morning of thy days, and coming home to thy rest when the evening of old age calls thee in, *Ps.* civ. 20.

11. He will continue his care over us "from this time forth and even for evermore;" it is a protection for life, never out of date. He will be thy guide even unto death, and will then hide thee in the grave, hide thee in heaven. He will preserve thee in his heavenly kingdom. God will protect his church and his saints always, even to the end of the world. The Spirit, which is their preserver and comforter, shall abide with them for ever.

PSALM CXXII.

This psalm seems to have been penned by David for the use of the people of Israel when they came up to Jerusalem to worship at the three solemn feasts. It was in David's time that Jerusalem was first chosen to be the city where God would record his name. It being a new thing, this among other means was used to bring the people to be in love with Jerusalem, as the holy city, though it was but the other day in the hands of the Jebusites. Observe, I. The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. II. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem, ver. 3—5 III. The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare, ver. 6—9. In singing this we must have an eye to the gospel church, which is called the Jerusalem that is from above.

A Song of degrees of David.

I WAS glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the LORD.
2 Our feet shall stand
Within thy gates, O Jerusalem.
3 Jerusalem is builded
As a city that is compact together:
4 Whither the tribes go up,
The tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel,
To give thanks unto the name of the LORD.
5 For there are set thrones of judgment,
The thrones of the house of David.

Here is, First. The pleasure which David and other pious Israelites took in approaching to, and attending upon, God in public ordinances, ver. 1, 2.

1. The invitation to them was very welcome; David was himself glad, and would have every Israelite to say that he was glad when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord. Note, 1st. It is the will of God that we should worship him in concert, that many should join together to wait upon him in public ordinances. We ought to worship God in our own houses; but that is not enough; we must go into the house of the Lord, to pay our homage to him there, and not forsake the assembling ourselves together. 2nd. We should not only agree with one another, but excite and stir up one another to go to worship God in public. "Let us go;" not, Do you go and pray for us, and we will stay at home, but, We will go also, *Zec.* viii. 21; not, Do you go before, and we will follow at our leisure, or we will go first, and you shall come after us, but, Let us go together for the honour of God and for our mutual edification and encouragement. We ourselves are slow and backward, and others are so too, and therefore we should thus quicken and sharpen one another to that which is good, as iron sharpens iron. 3rd. They that rejoice in God will rejoice in calls and opportunities to wait upon him. David himself, though he had as little need of a spur to his zeal in religious exercises as any, yet was so far from taking it as an affront, that he was glad of it as a kindness, when he was called upon to go up to the house of the Lord with the meanest of his subjects. We should desire our Christian friends, when they have any good work in hand, to call for us and take us along with them.

2. The prospect of them was very pleasing. They speak it with a holy triumph; ver. 2, "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." They that came out of the country, when they found the journey tedious, comforted themselves with this, that they should be in Jerusalem shortly, and that would make amends for all the fatigues of their travel. We shall stand there as servants; it is desirable to have a place in Jerusalem, though it be among those that stand by, *Zec.* iii. 7, though it be the doorkeeper's place, *Ps.* lxxxiv. 10. We have now got a resting-place for the ark, and where it is there will we be.

Secondly. The praises of Jerusalem, as *Ps.* xlviii. 12.

1. It is the beautiful city, not only for situation, but for building. It is built into a city, the houses not scattered, but contiguous, and the streets fair and spacious. It is built uniform, compact together, the houses strengthening and supporting one another. Though the city was divided into the higher and lower town, yet, the Jebusites being driven out, and it being entirely in the possession of God's people, it is said to be compact together. It was a type of the gospel church, which is compact together in holy love and Christian communion, so that it is all as one city.

2. It is the holy city, ver. 4. It is the place where all Israel meet one another; "Thither the tribes go up," from all parts of the country as one man, under the character of "the tribes of the Lord," in obedience to his command. It is the place appointed for the general rendezvous, and they come together, 1st. To receive instruction from God; they come "to the testimony of Israel," to hear what God has to say to them, and to consult his oracle. 2nd. To ascribe the glory to God; "to give thanks to the name of the Lord," which we have all reason to do, especially those that have the testimony of Israel among them. If God speak to us by his word, we have reason to answer him by our thanksgivings. See on what errand we go to public worship,—to give thanks.

3. It is the royal city; ver. 5, "There are set thrones of judgment;" therefore the people had reason to be in love with Jerusalem, because justice was administered there by a man after God's own heart. The civil interest of the people were as well secured as their ecclesiastical concerns; and very happy they were in their courts of judicature, which were erected in Jerusalem, as with us in Westminster Hall. Observe, what a goodly sight it was to see the testimony of Israel and the thrones of judgment such near neighbours, and they are good neighbours, which may greatly befriend one another. Let the testimony of Israel direct the thrones of judgment, and the thrones of judgment protect the testimony of Israel.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
They shall prosper that love thee.
7 Peace be within thy walls,
And prosperity within thy palaces.
8 For my brethren and companions' sakes,
I will now say, Peace *be* within thee.
9 Because of the house of the LORD our God
I will seek thy good.

Here, First. David calls upon others to wish well to Jerusalem; ver. 6, 7, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," that is, for the welfare of it, for all good to it, particularly for the uniting of the inhabitants among themselves, and their preservation from the incursions of enemies. This we may truly desire, that in the peace thereof we may have peace; and this we must earnestly pray for, for it is the gift of God, and for it he will be inquired of. Those that can do nothing else for the peace of Jerusalem can pray for it, which is something more than shewing their good-will; it is the appointed way of fetching in mercy. The peace and welfare of the gospel church, particularly in our land, is to be earnestly desired and prayed for by every one of us. Now,

1. We are here encouraged in our prayers for Jerusalem's peace; "They shall prosper that love thee." We must pray for Jerusalem, not out of custom, or for fashion's sake, but out of a principle of love to God's government of man and man's worship of God. And in seeking the public welfare, we seek our own; for so well doth God love the gates of Zion, that he will love all those that do love them, and therefore they cannot but prosper, at least their soul shall prosper by the ordinances they so dearly love.

2. We are here directed in our prayers for it, and words are put into our mouths; ver. 7, "Peace be within thy walls." He teacheth us to pray, 1st. For all the inhabitants in general, all within the walls, from the least to the greatest. Peace be in thy fortifications, that is, let them never be attacked; or if they be, let them never be taken, but be an effectual security to the city. 2nd. For the princes and rulers especially; let prosperity be in the palaces of the great men that sit at the stern, and have the conduct of public affairs, for if they prosper it will be well for the public. The poorer sort are apt to envy the prosperity of the palaces, but they are here taught to pray for it.

Secondly. He resolves that, whatever others do, he will approve himself a faithful friend to Jerusalem, 1. In his prayers, "I will now say," now I see the tribes so cheerfully resorting hither to the testimony of Israel, and the matter settled, that Jerusalem must be the place where God will record his name, now I will say, "Peace be within thee." He did not say, Let others pray for the public peace, the priests and the prophets, whose business it is, and the people that have nothing else to do, and I will fight for it, and rule for it; no, I will pray for it too. 2. In his endeavours, with which he will second his prayers, "I will," to the utmost of my power, "seek thy good." Whatever lies within the sphere of our activity to do for the public good we must do it, else we are not sincere in praying for it.

Now it might be said, no thanks to David to be so solicitous for the welfare of Jerusalem; it was his own city, and the interests of his family were lodged in it. It is true; yet he professeth that was not the reason why he was in such care for the welfare of Jerusalem, but it proceeded from the dear love he had, 1st. To the communion of saints; It is "for my brethren and companions' sakes," that is, for the sake of all true-hearted Israelites, whom I look upon as my brethren, (so he calls them, 1 *Chr.* xxviii. 2,) and who have often been my companions in the worship of God, which hath knit my heart to them. 2nd. To the ordinances of God. He hath set his affection to the house of his God, 1 *Chr.* xxix. 3, took a great pleasure in public worship, and for that reason would pray for the good of Jerusalem. Then our concern for the public welfare is right, when it is the effect of a sincere love to God's institutions and his faithful worshippers.

PSALM CXXIII.

This psalm was penned at a time when the church of God was brought low and trampled upon; some think it was when the Jews were captives in Babylon; though that was not the only time that they were insulted over by the proud. The psalmist begins as if he spoke of himself only, ver. 1; but presently speaks in the name of the church. Here is, I. Their expectation of mercy from God, ver. 1, 2. II. Their plea for mercy with God, ver. 3, 4. In singing it we must have our eye up to God's favour with a holy concern, and then an eye down to men's reproach with a holy contempt.

A Song of degrees.

UNTO thee lift I up mine eyes,
O thou that dwellest in the heavens.
2 Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters, [tress;
And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mis-
So our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God,
Until that he have mercy upon us.
3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us:
For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.
4 Our soul is exceedingly filled
With the scorning of those that are at ease,
And with the contempt of the proud.

We have here,

First. The solemn profession which God's people make of faith and hope in God, ver. 1, 2. Observe,

1. The title here given to God; "O thou that dwellest in the heavens." Our Lord Jesus has taught us in prayer to have an eye to God, as "our Father in heaven;" not that he is confined there, but there especially he manifests his glory, as the king in his court. Heaven is a place of prospect, and a place of power; he that dwells there thence beholds all the calamities of his people, and from thence can send to save them. Sometimes God seems to have forsaken the earth, and the enemies of God's people ask, "Where is now your God?" But then they can say with comfort, "Our God is in the heavens." 'O thou that sittest in the heavens,' so some, sittest as judge there; for "the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens," and to that throne injured innocency may appeal.

2. The regard here had to God. The psalmist himself lifted up his eyes to him. The eyes of a good man are ever towards the Lord, *Ps.* xxv. 15; in every prayer we lift up our soul, the eye of our soul, to God, especially in trouble, which was the case here: the eyes of the people waited on the Lord, ver. 2. We find mercy coming towards a people, "when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, are towards the Lord," *Zec.* ix. 1. The eyes of the body are heavenward, (*os homine sublime dedit*,—'to man he gave an erect mien,') to teach us which way to direct the eyes of the mind. "Our eyes wait on the Lord," that is the eye of desire and prayer; the begging eye, and the eye of dependence, hope, and expectation,—the longing eye. Our eyes must wait upon God as the Lord, and our God, "until that he have mercy upon us." We desire mercy from him; we hope he will shew us mercy, and we will continue our attendance on him till it doth come.

This is illustrated, ver. 2, by a similitude; our eyes are to God as the eyes of a servant, or handmaid, to the hand of their master and mistress. The eyes of a servant are, 1st. To his master's directing hand, expecting that he will appoint him his work, and cut it out for him, and shew him how he must do it. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" 2nd. To his supplying hand. Servants look to their master or their mistress for their portion of meat in due season, *Pr.* xxxi. 15. And to God must we look for daily bread, for grace sufficient; from him we must receive it thankfully. 3rd. To his assisting hand. If the servant cannot do his work himself, where must he look for help but to his master? and in the strength of the Lord God we must go forth and go on. 4th. To his protecting hand. If the servant meet with opposition in his work,—if he be questioned for what he doth, if he be wronged and injured,—who should bear him out and right him but his master, that set him on work? The people of God, when they are persecuted, may appeal to their Master; "We are thine, save us." 5th. To his correcting hand. If the servant have provoked his master to beat him, he doth not call for help against his master, but looks at the hand that strikes him, till it shall say, It is enough; I will not contend for ever. The people of God were now under his rebukes, and whither should they turn but to him that smote them? *Isa.* ix. 13; to whom should they make supplication but to their judge? They will not do as Hagar did, that outrun her mistress, when she put some hardship upon her, *Gen.* xvi. 6, but they submit themselves to, and humble themselves under, God's mighty hand. 6th. To his rewarding hand. The servant expects his wages, his "well done," from his master. Hypocrites have their eye to the world's hand, thence they have their reward, *Mat.* vi. 2, but true Christians have their eye to God as their rewarder.

Secondly. The humble address which God's people present to him in their calamitous condition, ver. 3, 4, wherein,

1. They sue for mercy; not prescribing to God what he shall do for them, nor pleading any merit of their own, why he should do for them, but, "Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us." We find little mercy with men, their tender mercies are cruel—they are cruel mockings; but this is our comfort, that with the Lord there is mercy, and we need desire no more to relieve us, and make us easy, but the mercy of God. Whatever the troubles of the church are, God's mercy is a sovereign remedy.

2. They set forth their grievances; "We are exceedingly filled with contempt." Reproach is the wound, the burthen they complain of. Observe, 1st. Who were reproached. We, who have our eyes up to thee. Those that are owned of God are oftentimes despised and trampled on by the world. Some translate the words which we render, "those that are at ease," and "the proud," to signify the persons that are scorned and contemned: 'Our soul is troubled to see how those that are at peace, and the excellent ones, are scorned and despised.' The saints are a peaceable people, and yet are abused, *Ps.* xxxv. 20; the excellent ones of the earth, and yet undervalued, *Lam.* iv. 1, 2. 2nd. Who did reproach them; taking the words as we read them, they were the epicures that lived at ease,—carnal, sensual people, *Job* xii. 5. The scoffers are such as walk after their own lusts, and serve their own bellies. And the proud that set God himself at defiance, and had a high opinion of themselves, they trampled on God's people, thinking they magnified themselves by vilifying them. 3rd. To what degree they were reproached; "We are filled," we are surfeited with it; "Our soul is exceedingly filled with it." The enemies thought they could never jeer them enough, nor say enough to make them despicable. And they could not but lay it to heart; it was a sword in their bones, *Ps.* xlii. 10. Note, (1.) Scorning and contempt has been, and is, and is likely to be, the lot of God's people in this world. Ishmael mocked Isaac, which is called persecuting him; and so it is now, *Gal.* iv. 29. (2.) In reference to the scorn and contempt of men, it is matter of comfort that there is mercy with God; mercy to our good names, when they are barbarously used; "Hear, O our God, for we are despised."

PSALM CXXIV.

David penned this psalm (we suppose) upon occasion of some great deliverance which God wrought for him and his people from some very threatening danger, which was likely to have involved them all in ruin, whether by foreign invasion, or intestine insurrection, is not certain; whatever it was, he seems to have been himself much affected, and very desirous to affect others, with the goodness of God in making a way for them to escape: to him he is careful to give all the glory, and takes none to himself, as conquerors used to do. I. He here magnifies the greatness of the danger they were in, and of the ruin they were at the brink of, ver. 1—5. II. He gives God the glory of their escape, ver. 6, 7, compared with ver. 1, 2. III. He takes encouragement from thence to trust in God, ver. 8. In singing this psalm, besides the application of it to any particular deliverance wrought for us and our people, in our days, and the days of our fathers, we may have in our thoughts the great work of our redemption by Jesus Christ, by which we were rescued from the powers of darkness.

A Song of degrees of David.

IF *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side,
Now may Israel say;
2 If *it had not been* the LORD who was on our side,
When men rose up against us:
3 Then they had swallowed us up quick,
When their wrath was kindled against us:
4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us,
The stream had gone over our soul:
5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

The people of God, being here called upon to praise God for their deliverance, are to take notice,

First. Of the malice of men, by which they were reduced to the very brink of ruin. Let Israel say, that there was but a step between them and death. The more desperate the disease appears to have been, the more doth the skill of the physician appear in the cure. Observe,

1. Whence the threatening danger came; "Men rose up against us." Creatures of our own kind, and yet bent upon our ruin; *homo homini lupus*,—'man is a wolf to man.' No marvel that the red dragon, the roaring lion, should seek to swallow us up, but that men should thirst after the blood of men, Absalom after the blood of his own father,—that a woman should be drunk with the blood of saints,—is what, with St. John, we may wonder at with great admiration. From men we may expect humanity, yet there are those whose tender mercies are cruel. But what was the matter with these men? Why, "their wrath was kindled against us," ver. 3; something or other they were angry at, and then no less would serve than the destruction of those they had conceived a displeasure against. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous." Their wrath was kindled as fire, ready to consume us. They were proud; and "the wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor." They were daring in their attempt; they rose up against us,—rose in rebellion, with a resolution to swallow us up alive.

2. How far it went, and how fatal it had been, if it had gone a little farther. We had been devoured, as a lamb by a lion; not only slain, but swallowed up, so that there should have been no relics of us remaining. Swallowed up with so much haste, ere we were aware, that we should have gone down alive to the pit; we had been deluged as the low grounds by a land-flood, or the sands by a high spring-tide. This similitude he dwells upon with the ascents which speak this a song of degrees, or risings, like the rest. "The waters had overwhelmed us." What of us? "Why the stream had gone over our soul,"—our lives, our comforts, all that is dear to us. What waters? Why "the proud waters." God suffers the enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his own power may appear the more illustrious in their deliverance.

Secondly. Of the goodness of God, by which they were rescued from the very brink of ruin; "The Lord was on our side," and if he had not been so we had been undone. 1. God was on our side; he took our part, espoused our cause, and appeared for us. He was our helper, and a very present help, a help on our side, nigh at hand. He was with us; not only for us, but among us, and commander-in-chief of our forces. 2. That God was Jehovah. There the emphasis lies. If it had not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, that had undertaken our deliverance, our enemies had overpowered us. Happy the people therefore whose God is Jehovah, a God all-sufficient. Let Israel say this to his honour, and resolve never to forsake him.

6 Blessed *be* the LORD,
Who hath not given us *as* a prey to their teeth.
7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the
The snare is broken, and we are escaped. [fowlers:
8 Our help *is* in the name of the LORD,
Who made heaven and earth.

Here the psalmist farther magnifies the great deliverance God had lately wrought for them.

First. That their hearts might be the more enlarged in thankfulness to him; ver. 6, "Blessed be the Lord." God is the author of all our deliverances, and therefore he must have the glory of them. We rob him of his due if we do not return thanks to him. And we are the more obliged to praise him, because we had such a narrow escape. We are delivered, 1. Like a lamb out of the very jaws of a beast of prey; "God hath not given us as a prey to their teeth; intimating, that they had no power against God's people, but what was given them from above. They could not be a prey to their teeth, unless God gave them up, and therefore they were rescued, because God would not suffer them to be ruined. 2. Like a bird, a little bird, (the word signifies a sparrow,) out of the snare of the fowler. The enemies are very subtle and spiteful; they lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed so far as to gain their point; they are taken in the snare, and are as unable to help themselves out as any weak and silly bird is. And then is God's time to appear for their relief, when all other friends fail, then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness. "The snare is broken, and so we are delivered." Isaac is saved, when he lay ready to be sacrificed; "Jehovah-jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

Secondly. That their hearts and the hearts of others might be more encouraged to trust in God in the like dangers; ver. 8, "Our help is in the name of the Lord." David had directed us, *Ps.* cxxi. 2, to depend upon God for help as to our personal concerns, "My help is in the name of the Lord;" here, as to the concerns of the public, our help is so. It is comfort to all that lay the interests of God's Israel near their hearts, that Israel's God is the same that made the world; and therefore will have a church in the world, and can secure that church in the times of the greatest danger and distress. In him therefore let the church's friends put their confidence, and they shall not be put to confusion.

PSALM CXXV.

This short psalm may be summed up in those words of the prophet, *Isa.* iii. 10, 11, "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with him. Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." Thus are life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us often in the psalms, as well as in the law and the prophets. I. It is certainly well with the people of God; for, 1. They have the promises of a good God that they shall be fixed, ver. 1, and safe, ver. 2, and not always under hatches, ver. 3; 2. They have the prayers of a good man, which shall be heard for them, ver. 4. II. It is certainly ill with the wicked, and particularly with the apostates, ver. 5. Some of the Jewish rabbins are of opinion, that it has reference to the days of the Messiah: however, we that are members of the gospel church may certainly in singing this psalm take the comfort of these promises, and the more, if we stand in awe of the threatening.

A Song of degrees.

THEY that trust in the LORD *shall be* as mount Zion,
Which cannot be removed, *but* abideth for ever.
2 *As* the mountains *are* round about Jerusalem,
So the LORD *is* round about his people
From henceforth even for ever. [the righteous;
3 For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of
Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

Here are three very precious promises made to the people of God, which, though they are designed to secure the welfare of the church in general, yet may be applied by particular believers to themselves, as other promises of this nature may.

Here is, First. The character of God's people to whom these promises belong. Many call themselves God's people who have no part nor lot in this matter. But those shall have the benefit of them, and may take the comfort of them, 1. Who are righteous, ver. 3, righteous before God, righteous to God, and righteous to all men; for his sake justified and sanctified. 2. Who trust in the Lord, who depend upon his care, and devote themselves to his honour. All that deal with God must deal upon trust, and he will give comfort to those only that give credit to him, and make it to appear they do so by quitting other confidences,

and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are confined to God, the higher our expectations may be raised from him.

Secondly. The promises themselves.

1. That their hearts shall be established by faith. Those minds shall be truly stayed that are stayed on God. "They shall be as mount Zion." The church in general is called mount Zion, *Heb.* xii. 18, and it shall in this respect be like mount Zion, it shall be built upon a rock, and its interests shall be so well secured, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The stability of the church is the satisfaction of all its well-wishers. Particular persons that trust in God shall be established, *Ps.* cxii. 7; their faith shall be their fixation, *Isa.* vii. 9. They shall be as mount Zion, which is firm, as it is a mountain, supported by providence, much more as a holy mountain supported by promise. 1st. They cannot be removed by the prince of the power of the air, nor by all his subtlety and strength. They cannot be removed from their integrity, nor from their confidence in God. 2nd. They abide for ever in that grace which is the earnest of their everlasting continuance in glory.

2. That committing themselves to God, they shall be safe under his protection from all the insults of their enemies. As Jerusalem had a natural fastness and fortification in the mountains that were round about it, ver. 2, those mountains not only sheltered it from winds and tempests, and broke the force of them, but made it also very difficult of access for an enemy. Such a defence is God's providence to his people. Observe, 1st. The compass of it. The Lord is round about his people on every side; there is no gap in the hedge of protection which he makes round about his people, at which the enemy that goes about them seeking to do them a mischief can find entrance, *Job* i. 10. 2nd. The continuance of it. "From henceforth even for ever." Mountains may moulder and come to nought, and rocks be removed out of their place, *Job* xiv. 18; but God's covenant with his people cannot be broken, *Isa.* liv. 10, nor his care of them cease. Their being said to stand fast for ever, ver. 1, and here to have God round about them for ever, intimates that the promises of the stability and security of God's people will have their full accomplishment in their everlasting state. In heaven they shall stand fast for ever, shall be as pillars in the temple of our God, and go no more out, *Rev.* iii. 12, and there God himself, with his glory and favour, will be round about them for ever.

3. That their troubles shall last no longer than their strength will serve to bear them up under them, ver. 3. 1st. It is supposed that the rod of the wicked may come, may fall, upon the lot of the righteous. The rod of their power may oppress them; the rod of their anger may vex and torment them. It may light upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families, their names, any thing that falls to their lot; only it cannot reach their souls. 2nd. It is promised that, though it may come upon their lot, it shall not rest there, it shall not continue so long as the enemies design, and as the people of God fear; but God will cut the work short in righteousness, so short, that even with the temptation he will make a way for them to escape. 3rd. It is considered as a reason of this promise, that if the trouble should continue over long, the righteous themselves would be in temptation to put forth their hands to iniquity, that is, to join with wicked people in their wicked practices; to say as they say, and do as they do. There is danger lest, being long persecuted for their religion, at length they grow weary of it, and willing to give it up; being kept long in expectation of promised mercies, they begin to distrust the promise, and to think of casting God off upon suspicion of his having cast them off: see *Ps.* lxxiii. 13, 14. Note, God considers the frame of his people, and will proportion their trials to their strength by the care of his providence, as well as their strength to their trials by the power of his grace. "Oppression makes a wise man mad," especially if it continue long; therefore for the elect's sake the days shall be shortened, that, whatever goes with their lot in the world, they may not lose their lot among the chosen.

4 Do good, O LORD, unto *those that be* good,
And to *them that are* upright in their hearts.
5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways,
The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity:
But peace *shall be* upon Israel.

Here is, First. The prayer the psalmist puts up for the happiness of those that are sincere and constant; ver. 4, "Do good, O Lord, unto those that are good." This teacheth us to pray for all good people, to make supplication for all saints; and we may pray in faith for them, being assured that those who do well shall certainly be well dealt with. They that are as they should be, shall be as they would be; provided they be upright in heart, that they be really as good as they seem to be. "With the upright God will shew himself upright." He doth not say, Do good, O Lord, to them that are perfect, that are sinless and spotless; but to them that are sincere and honest. God's promises should quicken our prayers. It is comfortable wishing well to those for whom God has engaged to do well.

Secondly. The prospect he has of the ruin of hypocrites and deserters. He doth not pray for it, "I have not desired the woful day, thou knowest;" but he predicts it, "As for such," as having known the way of righteousness, for fear of the rod of the wicked, basely turn aside out of it to their wicked ways, use indirect ways to prevent trouble, or extricate themselves out of it; or, those who, instead of reforming, grow worse and worse, and are more obstinate and daring in their impieties, "God shall" send them away, cast them out, and "lead them forth with the workers of iniquity;" that is, he shall appoint them their portion with the worst of sinners. Note, 1. Sinful ways are crooked ways. Sin is the perverting of that which is right. 2. The doom of those who turn aside to those crooked ways out of the right way will be the same with theirs that have all along walked in them; nay, and more grievous, for if any place in hell be hotter than another, that shall be the portion of hypocrites and apostates. God shall lead them forth, as prisoners are led forth to execution. "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;" and these shall go away, all their former righteousness shall not be mentioned unto them. The last words, peace upon Israel, may be taken as a prayer: God preserve his Israel in peace when his judgments are abroad reckoning with evil-doers. We read them as a promise, "Peace shall be upon Israel;" that is, 1st. When those that have treacherously deserted the ways of God meet with their own destruction, they that faithfully adhere to them, though they may have trouble in their way, their end shall be peace. 2nd. The destruction of those that walk in crooked ways will contribute to the peace and safety of the church. When Herod was cut off, "the word of God grew," *Acts* xii. 23, 24. 3rd. The peace and happiness of God's Israel will be the vexation, and will add much to the torment of those that perish in their wickedness, *Lu.* xiii. 28; *Isa.* lxv. 13, "My servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed."

HILLS ABOUT JERUSALEM.—ver. 2.

PSALM CXXVI.

It was with reference to some great and surprising deliverance of the people of God out of bondage and distress that this psalm was penned; most likely their return out of Babylon in Ezra's time, Though Babylon be not mentioned here, as it is *Ps.* cxxxvii., yet their captivity there was the most remarkable captivity, both in itself, and as their return out of it was typical of our redemption by Christ. Probably it was penned by Ezra, or some of the prophets that came up with the first. We read of singers of the children of Asaph, that famous psalmist, that returned then, *Ezr.* ii. 41. It being a song of ascents, in which twice the same things are repeated with advancement, ver. 2, 3, and ver. 4, 5, it is put here among the rest of the psalms that bear that title. I. Those that had returned out of captivity are here called upon to be thankful, ver. 1—3. II. Those that were yet remaining in captivity are here prayed for, ver. 4, and encouraged, ver. 5, 6. It will be easy in singing this psalm to apply it either to any particular deliverance wrought for the church or our own land, or to the great work of salvation by Christ.

A Song of degrees.

WHEN the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion,
We were like them that dream.
2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the heathen,
The LORD hath done great things for them.
3 The LORD hath done great things for us;
Whereof we are glad.

While the people of Israel were captives in Babylon, their harps were hung upon the willow-trees, for then God called to weeping and mourning, then he mourned unto them, and they lamented; but now their captivity is turned they resume their harps; Providence pipes to them, and they dance. Thus must we accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of providence, and be suitably affected with them; and the harps are never more melodiously tunable than after such a melancholy disuse. The long want of mercies greatly sweetens their return.

Here is, First. The deliverance God had wrought for them. He "turned again the captivity of Zion." It is possible that Zion may be in captivity for the punishment of her degeneracy; but her captivity shall be turned again when the end is answered, and the work designed by it is effected. Cyrus, for reasons of state, proclaimed liberty to God's captives, and yet it was the Lord's doing, according to his word, many years before. God sent them into captivity, not as dross is put into the fire to be consumed, but as gold to be refined. Observe, the release of Israel is called the turning again of the captivity of Zion, the holy hill, where God's tabernacle and dwelling-place was; for the restoring of their sacred interests, and the reviving of the public exercise of their religion, was the most valuable advantage of their return out of captivity.

Secondly. The pleasing surprise that this was to them. They were amazed at it; it came so suddenly, that at first they were in confusion, not knowing what to make of it, nor what it was tending to. We thought ourselves like men that dream, we thought it too good news to be true, and began to question whether we were well awake or no, and whether it was not still, as sometimes it had been to the prophets, only a representation of it in vision, as St. Peter for a while thought his deliverance was, *Acts* xii. 9. Sometimes the people of God are thus prevented with the blessings of his goodness ere they are aware. 'We were like them that are recovered to health,' so Dr. Hammond reads it; such a comfortable happy change it was to us, as life from the dead, or sudden ease from exquisite pain; we thought ourselves in a new world. And the surprise of it put them into an ecstacy and transport of joy, that they could scarce contain themselves within the bounds of decency in the expressions of it; "Our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." Thus

they gave vent to their joy, gave glory to their God, and gave notice to all about them what wonders God had wrought for them. They that were laughed at now laugh, and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies.

Thirdly. The notice which their neighbours took of it. "They said among the heathen, Jehovah," the God of Israel, "hath done great things" for that people, such as our gods cannot do for us. The heathen had observed their calamity, and had triumphed in it, *Jer.* xxii. 8, 9; *Ps.* cxxxvii. 7. Now they could not but observe their deliverance, and admire that. It put a reputation upon those that had been scorned and despised, and made them look considerable. Besides that, it turned greatly to the honour of God, and extorted from those that set up other gods in competition with him an acknowledgment of his wisdom, power, and providence.

Fourthly. The acknowledgments which they themselves made of it, ver. 3. The heathen were but spectators, and spoke of it only as matter of news; they had no part or lot in the matter; but the people of God spake of it as sharers in it. 1. With application; "He hath done great things for us," things that we are interested in, and have advantage by. Thus it is comfortable speaking of the redemption Christ hath wrought out, as wrought out for us, "who loved me, and gave himself for me." 2. With affection: "Whereof we are glad." The heathen were amazed at it, and some of them angry, but we are glad. While Israel went a whoring from their God, joy was forbidden them, *Hos.* ix. 1; but now the iniquity of Jacob was purged by the captivity, and their sin taken away, now God makes them to rejoice. It is the repenting, reforming people that are and shall be the rejoicing people. Observe here, 1st. God's appearances for his people are to be looked upon as great things. 2nd. God is to be eyed as the author of all the great things done for the church. 3rd. It is good to observe how the church's deliverances are for us, that we may rejoice in them.

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the south
5 They that sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.
6 He that goeth forth and weepeth,
Bearing precious seed,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves *with him,*

These verses look forward to the mercies that were yet wanted. They that were come out of captivity were still in distress, even in their own land, *Neh.* i. 3, and many yet remained in Babylon. And therefore they rejoice with trembling, and bear upon their hearts the grievances that were yet to be redressed. We have here,

1. A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance; ver. 4, "Turn again our captivity." Let those that are returned to their own land be eased of the burthens which they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon have their hearts stirred up as ours were to take the benefit of the liberty granted. The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the completing of it. And while we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even then when we are most furnished with matter for praise. And when we are free and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint. The bringing of those that were yet in captivity to join with their brethren that were returned, would be as welcome to both sides as streams of water in these countries, that, lying far south, were parched and dry. As cold water to a thirsty soul, so would this good news be from that far country, *Pr.* xxv. 25.

Secondly. A promise for their encouragement to wait for it, assuring them that, though they had now a sorrowful time, yet it would end well. But the promise is expressed generally, that all the saints may comfort themselves with this confidence, that their seedness of tears will certainly end in a harvest of joy at last, ver. 5, 6.

1. Suffering saints have a seedness of tears. They are in tears often; they share in the calamities of human life, and commonly have a greater share in them than others. But they sow in tears; that is, they do the duty of an afflicted state, and so answer the intentions of the providences they are under. Weeping must not hinder sowing; when we suffer ill, we must be doing well. Nay, as the ground is by the rain prepared for the seed, and the husbandman sometimes chooseth to sow in the wet, so we must improve times of affliction as disposing us to repentance, and prayer, and humiliation. Nay, there are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow; tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others'; tears of sympathy with the afflicted church; and tears of tenderness in prayer and under the word. These are precious seed, such as the husbandman sows when corn is dear, and he has but little for his family, and therefore weeps to part with it, yet buries it under ground in expectation of receiving it again with advantage. Thus doth a good man sow in tears.

2. They shall have a harvest of joy. The troubles of the saints will not last always, but when they have done their work shall have a happy period. The captives in Babylon were long sowing in tears, but at length they were brought forth with joy, and then they reaped the benefit of their patient suffering, and brought their sheaves with them to their own land in their experiences of the goodness of God to them. Job, and Joseph, and David, and many others, had harvests of joy after a sorrowful seedness. They that sow in the tears of godly sorrow shall reap in the joy of a sealed pardon, and a settled peace. "Those that sow to the Spirit" in this vale of tears, "shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," and that will be a joyful harvest indeed. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be for ever comforted."

PSALM CXXVII.

This is a family psalm, as divers before were state poems and church poems. It is entitled (as we read it) for Solomon, dedicated to him by his father. He having a house to build, a city to keep, and seed to raise up to his father, David directs him to look up to God, and to depend upon his providence, without which all his wisdom, care and industry would not serve. Some take it to have been penned by Solomon himself, and it may as well be read a Song of Solomon, and he wrote a great many; and they compare it with his *Ecclesiastes*, the scope of both being the same, to shew the vanity of worldly care; and how necessary it is that we keep in with God. On him we must depend I. For wealth, ver. 1, 2; II. For heirs to leave it to, ver. 3—5. In singing this psalm we must have our eye upon God for success in all our undertakings, and a blessing upon all our comforts and enjoyments, because every creature is that to us and no more than he makes it to be.

A Song of degrees for Solomon.

EXCEPT the LORD build the house,
They labour in vain that build it:
Except the LORD keep the city,
The watchman waketh *but* in vain.
2 *It is* vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late,
To eat the bread of sorrows:
For so he giveth his beloved sleep.
3 Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD:
And the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.
4 As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man;
So *are* children of the youth.
5 Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them:
They shall not be ashamed,
But they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

COUNCIL AT THE GATE.

We are here taught to have a continual regard to the Divine providence in all the concerns of this life. Solomon was cried up for a wise man, and would be apt to lean to his own understanding and forecast, and therefore his father teacheth him to look higher, and to take God along with him in his undertakings. He was to be a man of business, and therefore David instructed him how to manage his business under the direction of his religion. Parents in teaching their children should suit their exhortations to their condition and occasions. We must have an eye to God,

First. In all the affairs and business of the family, even of the royal family; for the king's houses are no longer safe than God protects them. We must depend upon God's blessing, and not our own contrivance,

1. For the raising of a family. "Except the Lord build the house" by his providence and blessing, "they labour in vain," though never so ingenious, "that build it." We may understand it of the material house; except the Lord bless the building it is to no purpose for men to build, no more than for the builders of Babel that attempted it in defiance of heaven, or Hiel that built Jericho under a curse. If the model and design be laid in pride and vanity, or if the foundations be laid in oppression and injustice, *Hab.* ii. 11, 12, to be sure God doth not build there. Nay, if God be not acknowledged, we have no reason to expect his blessing, and without his blessing all is nothing. Or rather it is to be understood of the making of a family considerable that was mean. Men labour to do this by advantageous matches, offices, employments, purchases, but all in vain unless God build up the family, and raise the poor out of the dust. The best laid project fails unless God crown it with success: see *Mal.* i. 4.

2. For the securing of a family or a city, for that is it that is instanced in. If the guards of the city cannot secure it without God, much less can the good man of the house save his house from being broken up. Except the Lord keep the city from fire, from enemies, the watchmen that go about the city, or patrol upon the walls of it, though they neither slumber nor sleep, wake but in vain; for a raging fire may break out which the timeliest discoveries may not be able to prevent the mischief of. The guards may be slain, or the city betrayed and lost by a thousand accidents, which the most watchful sentinel or most cautious governor could not obviate.

3. For the enriching of a family. That is a work of time and thought; but cannot be effected without the favour of Providence, no more than that which is the product of one happy turn. "It is vain for you to rise up early and sit up late," and so to deny yourselves your bodily refreshments, in the eager pursuit of the wealth of the world. Usually those that rise early do not care for sitting up late, nor can those that sit up late easily persuade themselves to rise early; but there are some so hot upon the world that they will do both, will rob their sleep to pay their cares; and they have as little comfort in their meals as in their rest, they "eat the bread of sorrows." It is part of our

sentence that we eat our bread in the sweat of our face; but those go farther, "all their days they eat in darkness," *Eccl.* v. 17. They are continually full of care, which embitters their comforts, and makes their lives a burthen to them. All this is to get money, and all in vain except God prosper them; for riches are not always to men of understanding, *Eccl.* ix. 11. And they that love God, and are beloved of him, have their minds easy, and live very comfortably without this ado. Solomon was called Jedidiah, "Beloved of the Lord," 2 *Sam.* xii. 25. To him the kingdom was promised, and then it was in vain for Absalom to rise up early, to wheedle the people, and for Adonijah to make such a bustle, and to say, "I will be king." Solomon sits still, and being beloved of the Lord to him he gives sleep and the kingdom too. Note, 1st. Inordinate excessive care about the things of this world is a vain and fruitless thing. We weary ourselves for vanity if we have it, and often weary ourselves in vain for it, *Hag.* i. 6, 9. 2nd. Bodily sleep is God's gift to his beloved. We owe it to his goodness that our sleep is safe, *Ps.* iv. 8; that it is sweet, *Jer.* xxxi. 25, 26. Then God gives us sleep as he gives it to his beloved, when with it he gives us grace to lie down in his fear, our souls returning to him, and reposing in him as our rest, and when we awake to be still with him; and to use the refreshment we have by sleep in his service. "He giveth his beloved sleep," that is, quietness and contentment of mind, a comfortable enjoyment of what is present, and a comfortable expectation of what is to come. Our care must be to "keep ourselves in the love of God," and then we may be easy whether we have little or much of this world.

Secondly. In the increase of his family. He shews,

1. That children are God's gift, ver. 3. The key of the womb is in his hand. If children are withheld it is God that withholds them, *Gen.* xxx. 2; if they are given it is God that gives them, *Gen.* xxxiii. 5, and they are to us what he makes them, comforts or crosses. Solomon multiplied wives contrary to the law, but we never read of more than one son that he had; for those that desire children as a heritage from the Lord must receive them in the way that he is pleased to give them, by lawful marriage to one wife, *Mal.* ii. 15, "Therefore one, that he might seek a seed of God." But "they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase." Children are a heritage and a reward, and are so to be accounted blessings, and not burthens; for he that sends mouths will send meat if we trust in him. Obed-edom had eight sons, for the Lord blessed him because he had entertained the ark, 1 *Chr.* xxvi. 5. "Children are a heritage for the Lord," as well as from him. They are "my children," saith God, "which thou hast borne unto me," *Eze.* xvi. 20; and then they are most our honour and comfort when they are accounted to him for a generation.

2. That they are a good gift, and a great support and defence to a family. "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man," that knows how to use them for his own safety and advantage, "so are children of the youth," that is, children born to their parents when they are young, which are the strongest and most healthful children, and are grown up to serve them by that time they need their service. Or, rather, children that are themselves young. They are instruments of much good to their parents and families, which may fortify themselves with them against their enemies. The family that has a large stock of children is like a quiver full of arrows of different sizes, we may suppose, but all of use one time or other. Children of different capacities and inclinations may be several ways serviceable to the family. He that has a numerous issue may boldly speak with his enemy in the gate in judgment; in battle he need not fear, having so many good seconds, so zealous, so faithful, and in the vigour of youth, as his own children, 1 *Sam.* ii. 4, 5. Observe here, that children of the youth are arrows in the hand, which with prudence may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory, and the service of their generation; but afterwards, when they are gone abroad into the world, they are arrows out of the hand; it is too late to bend them then. But these arrows in the hand too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose grey hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.

PSALM CXXVIII.

This, as the former, is a psalm for families. In that we are taught, that the prosperity of our families depends upon the blessing of God; in this we are taught, that the only way to obtain that blessing, which will make our families comfortable, is to live in the fear of God, and in obedience to him. They that do so, in general, they shall be blessed, ver. 1, 2, 4. In particular, I. They shall be prosperous and successful in their employments, ver. 2. II. Their relatives shall be agreeable, ver. 3. III. They shall have the satisfaction of seeing the church of God in a flourishing condition, ver. 5, 6. We must sing this psalm in the firm belief of this truth, that religion and piety is the best friend to outward prosperity, giving God the praise that it is so, and that we have found it so; and encourage ourselves and others with it.

A Song of degrees.

BLESSED *is* every one that feareth the LORD;
That walketh in his ways.
2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands:
Happy *shalt* thou *be*, and *it shall be* well with thee.
3 Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house:
Thy children like olive plants round about thy table.
4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed
That feareth the LORD.
5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: [thy life.
And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of
6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children,
And peace upon Israel.

It is here shewed that godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

First. It is here again and again laid down as an undoubted truth that they that are truly holy are truly happy. They whose blessed state we are here assured of are such as fear the Lord, and walk in his ways; that have a deep reverence of God upon their spirits, and evidence it by a regular and constant conformity to his will. Where the fear of God is a commanding principle in the heart the tenor of the conversation will be accordingly; and in vain do we pretend to be of those that fear God if we do not make conscience both of keeping to his ways, and not trifling in them, or drawing back. Such are blessed, ver. 1; and shall be blessed, ver. 4. God blesseth them, and his pronouncing them blessed makes them so. They are blessed now, they shall be blessed still, and for ever. This blessedness, arising from this blessing, is here secured, 1. To all the saints universally; "Blessed is every one that fears the Lord," whoever he be. "In every nation he that fears God and works righteousness is accepted of him," and therefore is blessed. Whether he be high or low, rich or poor in the world, if religion rule him, it will protect and enrich him. 2. To such a saint in particular; Thus shall the man be blessed. Not only the nation, the church in its public capacity, but the particular person in his private interests. 3. We are encouraged to apply it to ourselves, ver. 2, "Happy shalt thou be." Thou mayest take the comfort of the promise, and expect the benefit of it, as if it were directed to thee by name; if thou fear God and walk in his ways, happy shalt thou be, that is, "it shall be well with thee." Whatever befalls thee, good shall be brought out of it; it shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all to eternity. It is asserted, ver. 4, with a note commanding attention, "Behold, thus shall the man be blessed." Behold it by faith in the promise; behold it by observation in the performance of the promise; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful; and with admiration that it should be so, for we merit no favour, no blessing from him.

Secondly. Particular promises are here made to godly people, which they may depend upon, as far as is for God's glory and their good, and that is enough.

1. That by the blessing of God they shall get an honest livelihood, and live comfortably upon it. It is not promised that they shall live at ease without care or pains, but "thou shalt eat the labour of thy hands." Here is a double promise, 1st. That they shall have something to do, (for an idle life is a miserable, uncomfortable life,) and shall have health, and strength, and capacity of mind to do it, and shall not be forced to be beholden to others for necessary food, and to live, as the disabled poor do, upon the labours of other people. It is as much a mercy as it is a duty with quietness to work and eat our own bread, 2 *Thes.* iii. 12. 2nd. That they shall succeed in their employments, and they and theirs shall enjoy what they get. Others shall not come and eat the bread out of their mouths, nor shall it be taken from them either by oppressive rulers or invading enemies. God will not blast it and blow upon it as he did, *Hag.* i. 8, and his blessing will make a little go a great way. It is very pleasant to enjoy the fruits of our own industry; as the sleep, so the food, of a labouring man is sweet.

2. That they shall have abundance of comfort in their family relations. As a wife and children are very much a man's care, so, if by the grace of God they are such as they should be, they are very much a man's delight, as much as any creature comfort. 1st. The wife shall be "as a vine by the sides of the house," not only as a spreading vine which serves for an ornament, but as a fruitful vine which is for profit, and with the fruit whereof both God and man are honoured, *Jud.* ix. 13. The vine is a weak and tender plant, and needs to be supported and cherished, but it is a very valuable plant; and some think, because all the products of it were prohibited to the Nazarites, it was the tree of knowledge itself. The wife's place is the husband's house, there her business lies, and that is her castle. "Where is Sarah thy wife? Behold in the tent," where should she be else? Her place is by the sides of the house; not under foot to be trampled on, nor yet upon the house top to domineer; (if she be so she is but as the grass upon the house top, in the next psalm;) but on the side of the house, being a rib out of the side of the man. She shall be a loving wife, as the vine that cleaveth to the house side; an obedient wife, as the vine that is pliable, and grows as it is directed. She shall be fruitful as the vine, not only in children, but in the fruits of wisdom and righteousness, and good management, the branches of which run over the wall, *Gen.* xlix. 22; *Ps.* lxxx. 11. "Like a fruitful vine," not cumbering the ground, or bringing forth sour grapes, or grapes of Sodom, but good fruit. 2nd. The children shall be as olive-plants, likely in time to be olive-trees; and, though wild by nature, yet grafted into the good olive, and partaking of its root and fatness, *Rom.* xi. 17. It is pleasant to parents that have a table spread, though but with ordinary fare, to see their children round about it; to have many children, enough to surround it; and those with them and not scattered, or the parents forced from them. Job makes it one of the first instances of his former prosperity that his children were about him, *Job* xxi. 5. To have them at table to keep up the pleasantness of the table talk; to have them in health, craving food and not physic; to have them like olive-plants, straight and green, sucking in the sap of their good education, and likely in due time to be serviceable.

3. That they shall have those good things which God has promised, and which they pray for; "The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion," where the ark of the covenant was, and where the pious Israelites attended with their devotions. Blessings out of Zion are the best blessings, which flow not from common providence, but from special grace, *Ps.* xx. 2.

4. That they shall live long to enjoy the comforts of the rising generation; Thou shalt see thy children's children, as Joseph, *Gen.* l. 23. Thy family shall be built up, and continued, and thou shalt have the pleasure of seeing it. Children's children, if they be good children, are the crown of old men, *Pr.* xvii. 6; who are apt to be fond of their grandchildren.

5. That they shall see the welfare of God's church, and the land of their nativity; which every man that fears God is no less concerned for, than for the prosperity of his own family. Thou shalt be blessed in Zion's blessing, and wilt think thyself so; thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem as long as thou livest, though thou livest long, and shalt not have thy private comforts allayed and embittered by public troubles. A good man can have little comfort in seeing his children's children, unless withal he see peace upon Israel, and have hopes of transmitting the entail of religion pure and entire to those that shall come after him, for that is the best inheritance.

PSALM CXXIX.

This psalm relates to the public concerns of God's Israel: it is not certain when it was penned, probably when they were in captivity in Babylon, or about the time of their return. I. They look back with thankfulness for the former deliverances God had wrought for them and their fathers out of the many distresses they had been in from time to time, ver. 1—4. II. They look forward with a believing prayer for and prospect of the destruction of all the enemies of Zion, ver. 5—8. In singing this psalm we may apply it both ways to the gospel Israel, which, like the Old Testament Israel, has weathered many a storm, and is still threatened by many enemies.

A Song of degrees.

MANY a time have they afflicted me from my youth,
May Israel now say:
2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth:
Yet they have not prevailed against me.
3 The plowers plowed upon my back:

They made long their furrows.
4 The LORD *is* righteous:
He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

The church of God in its several ages is here spoken of, or rather, here speaks as one single person, now old and grayheaded, but calling to remembrance the former days, and reflecting upon the times of old. And upon the review it is found,

First. That the church has been often greatly distressed by its enemies on earth. Israel may now say, I am the people that has been oppressed more than any people, that has been as a speckled bird, pecked at by all the birds round about, *Jer.* xii. 9. It is true they brought their troubles upon themselves by their sins, it was for them that God punished them; but it was for the peculiarity of their covenant, and the singularities of their religion, that their neighbours hated and persecuted them. For these, "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth." Note, God's people have always had many enemies, and the state of the church from its infancy has frequently been an afflicted state. Israel's youth was in Egypt, or in the times of the Judges; then they were afflicted, and from thenceforward more or less. The gospel church ever since it had a being, has been by times afflicted; and it bare this yoke most of all in its youth, witness the ten persecutions which the primitive church groaned under; ver. 3, "The plowers plowed upon my back." We read, *Ps.* cxxv. 3, of "the rod of the wicked upon the lot of the righteous;" where we rather expected the plough, to mark it out for themselves; here we read of the plough of the wicked upon the back of the righteous, where we rather expected to find the rod. But the metaphors in both places are jumbled; the sense, however, of both is the same; and is too plain that the enemies of God's people have all along used them very barbarously. They tare them as the husbandman tears the ground with his ploughshare, to pull them to pieces, and get all they could out of them, and so to "wear out the saints of the Most High," as the ground is worn out that has been long tilled, tilled (as we say) quite out of heart. When God permitted them to plough thus, he intended it for his people's good; that their fallow-ground being thus broken up, he might sow the seeds of his grace upon them, and reap a harvest of good fruit from them. Howbeit, the enemies meant not so, neither did their hearts think so, *Isa.* x. 7. "They made long their furrows," never knew when to have done, aiming at nothing less than the destruction of the church. Many by the furrows they made on the backs of God's people understand the stripes they gave them; The cutters cut upon my back, so they read it. The saints have often had trials of cruel scourgings, (probably the captives had,) and cruel mockings, for we read of the scourge, or lash of the tongue, *Heb.* xi. 36. And so it was fulfilled in Christ, who gave his back to the smiters, *Isa.* l. 6; or, it may refer to the desolations they made of the cities of Israel. "Zion shall for your sake be plowed as a field," *Mic.* iii. 12.

Secondly. That the church has been always graciously delivered by her Friend in heaven.

1. The enemies' projects have been defeated. They have afflicted the church in hopes to ruin it; but they have not gained their point. Many a storm it has weathered, many a shock, and many a brunt it has borne, and yet is in being; "They have not prevailed against me." One would wonder how this ship has lived at sea, when it has been tossed with tempests, and all the waves and billows have gone over it. Christ has built his church upon a rock, and the gates of hell have not prevailed against it, nor ever shall.

2. The enemies' power has been broken. "God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked;" has cut their gears, their traces, and so spoiled their ploughing; has cut their scourges, and so spoiled their lashing; has cut the bands of union by which they were combined together, has cut the bands of captivity, in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling wicked men to do the mischief they design against his church, and shaming their counsels. These words, "The Lord is righteous," may refer either to the distresses or to the deliverances of the church. 1st. The Lord is righteous in suffering Israel to be afflicted. This the people of God were always ready to own, that, how unjust soever their enemies were, God was just in all that was brought upon them, *Neh.* ix. 33. 2nd. The Lord is righteous in not suffering Israel to be ruined, for he has promised to preserve it a people to himself, and he will be as good as his word. He is righteous in reckoning with their persecutors, and rendering to them a recompence, 1 *Thes.* i. 6.

5 Let them all be confounded and turned back
That hate Zion.
6 Let them be as the grass *upon* the housetops,
Which withereth afore it groweth up:
7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand;
Nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.
8 Neither do they which go by say,
The blessing of the LORD *be* upon you:
We bless you in the name of the LORD.

The psalmist having triumphed in the defeat of the many designs that had been laid as deep as hell to ruin the church, here concludes his psalm, as Deborah did her song, "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord," *Jud.* v. 31.

First. There are many that hate Zion, that hate Zion's God, his worship, and his worshippers; that have an antipathy to religion and religious people, that seek the ruin of both, and do what they can, that God may not have a church in the world.

Secondly. We ought to pray that all their attempts against the church may be frustrated; that in them they may be confounded, and turned back with shame, as those that have not been able to bring to pass their enterprise and expectation. "Let them all be confounded," is as much as, they shall be all confounded. The confusion imprecated and predicted is illustrated by a similitude; while God's people shall flourish, as the loaded palm tree, or the green and fruitful olive, their enemies shall wither as the grass upon the housetop. As men they are not to be feared, for they shall be made as grass, *Isa.* li. 12. But as they are enemies to Zion, they are so certainly marked for ruin, that they may be looked upon with as much contempt as the grass on the housetops, which is little, and short, and sour, and good for nothing.

1. It perisheth presently; it "withers before it groweth up" to any maturity, having no root; and the higher its place is, which perhaps is its pride, the more it is exposed to the scorching heat of the sun, and consequently the sooner doth it wither. 'It withers before it is plucked up,' so some read it. The enemies of God's church wither of themselves, and stay not till they are rooted out by the judgments of God.

2. It is of no use to anybody; nor are they but the unprofitable burthens of the earth; nor will their attempts against Zion ever ripen or come to any head; nor, whatever they promise themselves, will they get any more by them than the husbandman doth by the grass on his housetop. Their "harvest will be a heap in the day of grief," *Isa.* xvii. 11.

No wise man will pray God to bless the mowers or reapers, ver. 8. Observe, 1st. It has been an ancient and laudable custom, not only to salute and wish a good day to strangers and travellers; but particularly to pray for the prosperity of harvest labourers. Thus Boaz prayed for his reapers, *Ru.* ii. 4, "The Lord be with you." We must thus acknowledge God's providence, testify our good-will to our neighbours, and commend their industry, and it will be accepted of God as a pious ejaculation, if it comes from a devout and upright heart. 2nd. Religious expressions, being sacred things, must never be made use of in light and ludicrous actions. Mowing the grass on the housetop would be a jest; and therefore those that have a reverence for the name of God, will not prostitute to it the usual forms of salutation which savoured of devotion; for holy things must not be jested with. 3rd. It is a dangerous thing to let the church's enemies have our good wishes in their designs against the church. If we wish them God speed, we are partakers of their evil deeds, 2 *Jno.* 11; when it is said, none will bless them, and shew them respect, more is implied: that all wise and good people will cry out shame on them, and beg of God to defeat them; and woe to those that have the prayers of the saints against them. "I cursed his habitation," *Job* v. 3.

PSALM CXXX.

This psalm relates not to any temporal concern, either personal or public, but it is wholly taken up in the affairs of the soul. It is reckoned one of the seven penitential psalms, which have been sometimes made use of by penitents upon their admission into the church; and in singing it we are all concerned to apply it to ourselves. The psalmist here expresseth, I. His desire towards God, ver. 1, 2. II. His repentance before God, ver. 3, 4. III. His attendance upon God, ver. 5, 6. IV. His expectations from God, ver. 7, 8. And as in water face answers to face, so doth the heart of one humble penitent to another.

A Song of degrees.

OUT of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.
2 Lord, hear my voice: [tions.
Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplica-
3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who shall stand?
4 But *there is* forgiveness with thee,
That thou mayest be feared.

In these verses we are taught,

First. Whatever condition we are in, though never so deplorable, to continue calling upon God, ver. 1. The best men may sometimes be in the depths, in great trouble and affliction, and utterly at a loss what to do; in the depths of distress, and almost in the depths of despair; the spirit low and dark, sinking and drooping, cast down and disquieted. But in the greatest depths it is our privilege that we may cry unto God, and be heard. A prayer may reach the heights of heaven, though not out of the depths of hell, yet out of the depths of the greatest trouble we can be in in this world; Jeremiah's out of the dungeon, Daniel's out of the den, and Jonah's out of the fish's belly. It is our duty and interest to cry unto God, for that is the likeliest way both to prevent our sinking lower and to recover us "out of the horrible pit, and miry clay," *Ps.* xl. 1, 2.

Secondly. While we continue calling upon God to assure ourselves of an answer of peace from him; for this is that which David in faith prays for, ver. 2, "Lord, hear my voice," my complaint and prayer, and "let thine ears be attentive to the voice" both of my afflictions and "of my supplications."

Thirdly. We are taught to humble ourselves before the justice of God, as guilty in his sight, and unable to answer him for one of a thousand of our offences; ver. 3, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" His calling God Lord twice, in so few words, *Jah* and *Adonai*, is very emphatical; and speaks a very awful sense of God's glorious majesty, and a dread of his wrath. Let us learn here, 1. To acknowledge our iniquities; that we cannot justify ourselves before God, or plead, Not guilty. There is that which is remarkable in our iniquities, and is liable to be animadverted upon. 2. To own the power and justice of God, which is such, that if he should he be extreme to mark what we do amiss, there were no hopes of coming off. His eye can discover enough in the best man to ground a condemnation upon; and if he proceed against us we have no way to help ourselves, we cannot stand, but shall certainly be cast. If God deal with us in strict justice, we are undone; if he make remarks upon our iniquities, he will find them to be many and great; greatly aggravated and very provoking. And then, if he should proceed accordingly, he would shut us out from all hope of his favour, and shut us up under his wrath. And what could we do to help ourselves? We could not make our escape, nor resist or bear up under his avenging hand. 3. Let us admire God's patience and forbearance; we were undone if he should mark iniquities, and he knows it, and therefore bears with us. It is of his mercy that we are not consumed by his wrath.

Fourthly. We are taught to cast ourselves upon the pardoning mercy of God, and to comfort ourselves with that when we see ourselves obnoxious to his justice, ver. 4. Here is, 1. God's grace discovered, and pleaded with him, by a penitent sinner; "But there is forgiveness with thee." It is our unspeakable comfort in all our approaches to God, that there is forgiveness with him; for that is it we need. He has put himself into a capacity to pardon sin, he has declared himself gracious and merciful, and ready to forgive, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6, 7. He has promised to forgive the sins of those that do repent. Never any that dealt with him found him implacable, but easy to be intreated, and swift to shew mercy. With us there is iniquity, and therefore it is well for us that with him there is forgiveness. 'There is a propitiation with thee,' so some read it; Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, the ransom which God has found. He is ever with him as advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness. 2. Our duty designed in that discovery, and inferred from it; "There is forgiveness with thee," not that thou mayest be made bold with and presumed upon, but "that thou mayest be feared." In general, that thou mayest be worshipped and served by the children of men; who, being sinners, could have no dealings with God, if he were not a Master that could pass by a great many faults. But this encourages us to come into his service, that we shall not be turned off for every misdemeanour, no, nor for any, if we truly repent. This doth in a special manner invite those that have sinned to repent, and return to the fear of God; that he is gracious and merciful, and will receive them upon their repentance, *Joel* ii. 13; *Mat.* iii. 2. And particularly we are to have a holy

awe and reverence of God's pardoning mercy, *Hos.* iii. 5, "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness;" and then we may expect the benefit of the forgiveness that is with God when we make it the object of our holy fear.

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait,
And in his word do I hope.
6 My soul *waiteth* for the Lord
More than they that watch for the morning:
I say, more than they that watch for the morning.
7 Let Israel hope in the LORD:
For with the LORD *there is* mercy,
And with him *is* plenteous redemption.
8 And he shall redeem Israel
From all his iniquities.

Here, First. The psalmist engageth himself to trust in God, and to wait for him, ver. 5, 6. Observe, 1. His dependence upon God; expressed in a climax, it being a song of degrees, or ascents. "I wait for the Lord," from him I expect relief and comfort; believing it will come, longing till it doth come, but patiently bearing the delay of it, and resolving to look for it from no other hand. "My soul doth wait;" that is, I wait for him in sincerity, and not in profession only. I am an expectant, and it is for the Lord that my soul waiteth, for the gifts of his grace and the operations of his power. 2. The ground of that dependence; "In his word do I hope." We must hope for that only which he hath promised in his word, and not for the creatures of our own fancy and imagination; and we must hope for it because he hath promised it, and not from any opinion of our own merit. 3. The degree of that dependence; "More than they that watch for the morning," who are, 1st. Well assured that the morning will come, and so am I that God will return in mercy to me according to his promise; for God's covenant is more than the firm ordinances of day and night, for they shall come to an end, but that is everlasting. 2nd. Very desirous that it would come. Sentinels that keep guard upon the walls, they that watch with sick people, and travellers that are abroad upon their journey, long before day wish to see the dawning of the day; but more earnestly doth this good man long for the tokens of God's favour, and the visits of his grace, and more readily will he be aware of his first appearance, than they are of day. Dr. Hammond reads it thus, 'My soul hastens to the Lord, from the guards in the morning, the guards in the morning;' and gives this sense of it, To thee I daily betake myself, early in the morning, addressing my prayers, and my very soul before thee, at the time that the priests offer their morning sacrifice.

Secondly. He encourageth all the people of God in like manner to depend upon him, and trust in him; "Let Israel hope in the Lord," and wait for him; not only the body of the people, but every good man who surnames himself of Israel, *Isa.* xliv. 5. Let all that devote themselves to God cheerfully stay themselves upon him, ver. 7, 8; for two reasons: 1. Because the light of nature discovers to us that there is mercy with him, that the God of Israel is a merciful God, and the Father of mercies. Mercy is with him; not only inherent in his nature, but it is his delight, it is his darling attribute; it is with him in all his works, in all his counsels. 2. Because the light of the Gospel discovers to us that there is redemption with him; contrived by him, and to be wrought out in the fulness of time: it was in the beginning hid in God. See here, 1st. The nature of this redemption. It is redemption from sin, from all sin; and therefore can be no other but that eternal redemption which Jesus Christ became the author of; for it is he that saves his people from their sins, *Mat.* i. 21; that redeems them from all iniquity, *Tit.* ii. 14; and turns away ungodliness from Jacob, *Rom.* xi. 26. It is he that redeems us both from the condemning and from the commanding power of sin. 2nd. The riches of this redemption. It is plenteous redemption; there is an all-sufficient fulness of merit and grace in the Redeemer, enough for all, enough for each; enough for me, saith the believer. Redemption from sin includes redemption from all other evils; and therefore is a plenteous redemption. 3rd. The persons to whom the benefits of this redemption belong. He shall redeem Israel,—Israel according to the spirit, all those that are in covenant with God as Israel was, and that are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile.

PSALM CXXXI.

This psalm is David's profession of humility; but humbly made with thankfulness to God for his grace, and not in vainglory. It is probable enough, that (as most interpreters suggest) David made this protestation in answer to the calumnies of Saul and his courtiers, who represented David as an ambitious aspiring man, who under pretence of a Divine appointment, sought the kingdom in the pride of his heart. But he appeals to God that, on the contrary, I. He aimed at nothing high or great, ver. 1. II. He was very easy in every condition which God allotted him, ver. 2. And therefore, III. He encourageth all good people to trust in God as he did, ver. 3. Some have made it an objection against singing David's psalms, that there are many who cannot say their heart is not haughty, &c. It is true there are; but we may sing it for the same purpose that we read it, to teach and admonish ourselves and one another what we ought to be; with repentance that we have come short of being so, and humble prayer to God for his grace to make us so.

A Song of degrees of David.

LORD, my heart is not haughty,
Nor mine eyes lofty:
Neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
Or in things too high for me.
2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself,
As a child that is weaned of his mother:
My soul *is* even as a weaned child.
3 Let Israel hope in the LORD
From henceforth and for ever.

Here are two things which will be comforts to us:

First. Conscience of our integrity. This was David's rejoicing, that his heart could witness for him, that he had walked humbly with his God, notwithstanding the censures he was under, and the temptations he was in.

1. He aimed not at a high condition, nor was he fond of making a figure in the world; but, if God had so ordered, could have been well content to spend all his days as he did the beginning of them, in the sheepfolds. His own brother, in a passion, charged him with pride, 1 *Sam.* xvii. 28, but the charge was groundless and unjust; God that searcheth the heart knew, 1st. That he had no conceited opinion of himself or his own merits; "Lord, my heart is not haughty." Humble saints cannot think so well of themselves as others think of them; are not in love with their own shadow, nor do they magnify their own attainments or achievements. The love of God reigning in the heart will subdue all inordinate self-love. 2nd. That he had neither a scornful nor an aspiring look; "My eyes are not lofty;" either to look with envy upon those that are above me, or to look with disdain upon those that are below me. Where there is a proud heart there is commonly a proud look, *Pr.* vi. 15. But the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes. 3rd. That he did not employ himself in things above his station; in things too great, or too high for him; not in studies too high. He made God's word his meditation, and did not amuse himself with matters of nice speculation or doubtful disputation, or covet to be wise above what is written. It is learning high enough to know God and our duty. Not in affairs too great; he followed his ewes, and never set up for a politician; no, nor for a soldier, for when his brethren went to the wars he stayed at home to keep the sheep. It is our wisdom, and will be our praise, to keep within our sphere, and not to intrude into things which we have not seen, or meddle with that which doth not belong to us. Princes and scholars must not exercise themselves in matters too great, too high for men; and those in a low station, and of ordinary capacities, must not pretend to that which is out of their reach, and which they were not cut out for. Those will fall under due shame that affect undue honours.

2. He was well reconciled to every condition that God placed him in; ver. 2, "I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother." As he had not proudly aimed at the kingdom, so, since God had appointed him to it, he had not carried it insolently towards any, nor been restless in his attempts to get the crown before the time set. But, 1st. He had been as humble as a little child about the age of weaning, as manageable, and governable, and as far from aiming at high things; as entirely at God's dispose as the child at the dispose of the mother or nurse; as far from taking state upon him, though anointed to be king, or valuing himself upon the prospect of his future advancement, as a child in the arms. Our Saviour hath taught us humility by this comparison, *Mat.* xviii. 3, we must "become as little children." 2nd. He had been as indifferent to the wealth and honour of this world, as a child is to the breast when it is thoroughly weaned from it. 'I have levelled and quieted myself' (so Dr. Hammond reads it) 'as a child that is weaned.' This intimates that our hearts are naturally as desirous of worldly things as the babe is of the breast, and relish them, cry for them, are fond of them, play with them, and cannot live without them. But by the grace of God, a soul that is sanctified is weaned from those things. Providence puts wormwood upon the breast, and that helps to wean us. The child is perhaps cross and fretful while it is in the weaning, and thinks itself undone when it has lost the breast; but in a day or two it is forgotten, the fret is over, and it accommodates itself well enough to a new way of feeding; cares no longer for milk, but can bear strange meat. Thus doth a gracious soul quiet itself under the loss of that which it loved, and disappointment in that which it hoped for, and is easy whatever happens; lives, and lives comfortably, upon God and the covenant-grace, when creatures prove dry breasts. When our condition is not to our mind, we must bring our mind to our condition; and then we are easy to ourselves and all about us, then our souls are as a weaned child.

Secondly. Confidence in God. And this David recommends to all the Israel of God, no doubt from his own experience of the benefit of it; ver. 3, "Let Israel hope in the Lord," and let them continue to do so "from henceforth and for ever." Though David could himself wait patiently and quietly for the crown designed him, yet perhaps Israel, the people whose darling he was, would be ready to attempt something in favour of him before the time; he therefore endeavours to quiet them too, and bids them hope in the Lord, that they should see a happy change of the face of affairs in due time. "Thus it is good to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord."

PSALM CXXXII.

It is probable this psalm was penned by Solomon, to be sung at the dedication of the temple which he built according to the charge which his father gave him, 1 *Ch.* xxviii. 2, &c. Having fulfilled his trust, he begs of God to own what he had done: I. He had built this house for the honour and service of God; and when he brings the ark into it, the token of God's presence, he desires God himself would come and take possession of it, ver. 8—10. With these words Solomon concluded his prayer, 2 *Ch.* vi. 41, 42. II. He had built it in pursuance of the orders he had received from his father, and therefore his pleas to enforce these petitions refer to David. 1. He pleads David's piety towards God, ver. 1—7; 2. He pleads God's promise to David, ver. 11—18. The former introduceth his petition, the latter follows it as an answer to it. In singing this psalm we must have a concern for the gospel-church, as the temple of God, and a dependence upon Christ as David our king, in whom the mercies of God are sure mercies.

A Song of degrees.

LORD, remember David,
And all his afflictions:
2 How he sware unto the LORD,
And vowed unto the mighty *God* of Jacob;
3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,
Nor go up into my bed;
4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes,
Or slumber to mine eyelids,
5 Until I find out a place for the LORD,
An habitation for the mighty *God* of Jacob.
6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah:
We found it in the fields of the wood.
7 We will go into his tabernacles:
We will worship at his footstool.
8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest;
Thou, and the ark of thy strength.

9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness;
And let thy saints shout for joy.
10 For thy servant David's sake
Turn not away the face of thine anointed.

In these verses we have Solomon's address to God for his favour to him and to his government, and his acceptance of his building a house to God's name. Observe,

First. What he pleads. Two things:

1. That what he had done was in pursuance of the pious vow which his father David had made to build a house for God. Solomon was a wise man, yet pleads not any merit of his own: I am not worthy, for whom thou shouldst do this; but, "Lord, remember David," with whom thou madest the covenant, as Moses prayed, *Ex.* xxxii. 13, Remember Abraham, the first trustee of the covenant; remember all his afflictions, all the troubles of his life, which his being anointed was the occasion of. Or, his care and concern about the ark, and what an uneasiness it was to him that the ark was in curtains, 2 *Sam.* vii. 2. Remember all his humility and meekness, (so some read it,) all that pious and devout affection with which he had made the following vow. Note, It is not amiss for us to put God in mind of our predecessors in profession, and their afflictions, their services and sufferings; God's covenant with them, the experiences they have had of his goodness; the care they took of, and the many prayers they put up for, those that should come after them. We may apply it to Christ the Son of David, and to all his afflictions: Lord, remember the covenant made with him, and the satisfaction made by him; "Remember all his offerings," *Ps.* xx. 3, that is, all his sufferings He especially pleads the solemn vow that David had made as soon as ever he was settled in his government, and before he was well settled in a house of his own, that he would build a house for God. Observe,

1st. Who he bound himself to. To the Lord, to the mighty God of Jacob. Vows are to be made to God, who is a party as well as a witness. The Lord is the Mighty One of Jacob; Jacob's God, and a mighty one, whose power is engaged for Jacob's defence and deliverance. Jacob is weak, but the God of Jacob is a mighty one.

2nd. What he bound himself to do. To "find out a place for the Lord," that is, for the ark, the token of his presence. He had read in the law frequent mention of the place that God would choose to put his name there, to which all the tribes should resort. When he came to the crown there was no such place; Shiloh was deserted, and no other place was pitched upon, for want of which the feasts of the Lord were not kept with due solemnity. Well, saith David, I will find out such a place for the general rendezvous of all the tribes, a place of habitation for the Mighty One of Jacob. A place for the ark, where there shall be room both for the priests and people to attend upon it.

3rd. How intent he was upon it. He would not settle in his house, nay, he would not sleep in his bed, till he had brought this matter to some head, ver. 3, 4. The thing had been long talked of, and nothing done, till at last David, when he went out one morning about public business, made a vow that before night he would come to a resolution in this matter, and would determine the place either where the tent should be pitched for the reception of the ark at the beginning of his reign, or rather, where Solomon should build the temple, which was not fixed till the latter end of his reign, just after the pestilence with which he was punished for numbering the people, 1 *Chr.* xxii. 1, "Then David said, This is the house of the Lord." And perhaps it was upon occasion of that judgment that he made this vow, being apprehensive that one of God's controversies with him was for his dilatoriness in this matter. Note, When needful work is to be done for God, it is good for us to task ourselves, and tie ourselves to a time, because we are apt to put off. It is good in the morning to cut out work for the day, binding ourselves that we will do it before we sleep, only with submission to Providence, for "we know not what a day may bring forth." Especially in the great work of conversion to God, we must be thus solicitous, thus zealous; we have good reason to resolve that we will not enjoy the comforts of this life till we have laid a foundation for hopes of a better.

2. That it was in pursuance of the expectations of the people of Israel, ver. 6, 7. 1st. They were inquisitive after the ark; for they lamented its obscurity, 1 *Sam.* vii. 2. They "heard of it at Ephratah," that is, at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim, there they were told it had been, but it was gone. They "found it" at last "in the fields of the wood," that is, in Kirjath-jearim, which signifies 'the city of woods.' Thence all Israel fetched it with great solemnity, in the beginning of David's reign, 1 *Chr.* xiii. 6. So that, in building this house for the ark, Solomon had gratified all Israel; they need not go about to seek the ark any more, they now knew where to find it. 2nd. They were resolved to attend it. Let us but have a convenient place, and "we will go into his tabernacle" to pay our homage there; "we will worship at his footstool," as subjects and supplicants, which we neglected to do for want of such a place in the days of Saul, 1 *Chr.* xiii. 3.

Secondly. What he prays for, ver. 8—10.

1. That God would vouchsafe not only to take possession of, but to take up his residence in, this temple which he had built. "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest," and let this be it, "Thou, even the ark of thy strength," the pledge of thy presence, thy mighty presence.

2. That God would give grace to the ministers of the sanctuary to do their duty; "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness;" let them appear righteous both in their administrations and in their conversations, and let both be according to the rule. Note, Righteousness is the best ornament of a minister. Holiness towards God, and goodness towards all men, are habits for ministers, of the necessity of which there is no dispute. They are thy priests, and will therefore discredit their relation to thee if they be not clothed with righteousness.

3. That the people of God might have the comfort of the due administration of holy ordinances among them: "Let thy saints shout for joy;" they did so when the ark was brought into the city of David, 2 *Sam.* vi. 15. They will do so when "the priests are clothed with righteousness." A faithful ministry is the joy of the saints; it is the matter of it, it is a friend and a furtherance to it; we are helpers of your joy, 2 *Cor.* i. 24.

4. That Solomon's own prayer upon occasion of the dedicating of the temple might be accepted of God: "Turn not away the face of thine anointed," that is, Deny me not the things I have asked of thee, send me not away ashamed. He pleads, 1st. That he was the anointed of the Lord; and this he pleads as a type of Christ, the great Anointed, who in his intercession urges his designation to his office. He is God's Anointed, and therefore the Father hears him always. 2nd. That he was the son of David. For his sake do not deny me; and this is the Christian's plea; for the sake of Christ our David, in whom thou art well pleased, accept me. He is David whose name signifies beloved; and we are made accepted in the beloved. He is God's servant whom he upholds, *Isa.* xlii. 1. We have no merit of our own to plead, but for his sake in whom there is a fulness of merit, let us find favour. When we pray for the prosperity of the church, we may pray with great boldness, for Christ's sake, who purchased the church with his own blood, Let both ministers and people do their duty.

11 The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David;
He will not turn from it;
Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.
12 If thy children will keep my covenant
And my testimony that I shall teach them,
Their children shall also sit upon thy throne for ever-
13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion; [more.
He hath desired *it* for his habitation.
14 This *is* my rest for ever:
Here will I dwell; for I have desired it.
15 I will abundantly bless her provision:
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation:
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
17 There will I make the horn of David to bud:
I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.
18 His enemies will I clothe with shame:
But upon himself shall his crown flourish

These are precious promises confirmed by an oath, that the heirs of them might have strong consolation, *Heb.* vi. 17, 18. It is all one whether we take them as pleas urged in the prayer, or as answers returned to the prayer. Believers know how to make use of the promises both ways; with them to speak to God, and in them to hear what God the Lord will speak to us. These promises relate to the establishment both in church and state, both to the throne of the house of David, and to the testimony of Israel fixed on mount Zion; and the promises concerning Zion hill are as applicable to the gospel church as these concerning David's seed are to Christ, and therefore both pleadable by us and very comfortable to us. Here is,

First. The choice God made of David's house and Zion hill. Both were of Divine appointment.

1. God chose David's family for the royal family, and confirmed his choice by an oath, ver. 11, 12. David, being a type of Christ, was made king with an oath. "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent," will not turn from it. Did David swear to the Lord that he would find him a house? ver. 2. The Lord sware to David that he would build him a house, for God will be behind with none of his people in affections or assurances. The promise made to David, refers, 1st. To a long succession of kings that should descend from his loins; "Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne," which was fulfilled in Solomon; David himself lived to see it with great satisfaction, 1 *Kin.* i. 48. The crown was also entailed conditionally upon his heirs for ever; "If thy children" in following ages "will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them." God himself engageth to teach them, and he did his part. They had Moses and the prophets, and all he expects is that they should keep what he taught them, and keep to it, and then "their children shall sit upon thy throne for evermore." Kings are before God upon their good behaviour, and their commission from him runs, *quamdiu se bene gesserint*,—'during good behaviour.' The issue of this was, that they did not keep God's covenant, and so the entail was at length cut off, and the sceptre departed from Judah by degrees. 2nd. To an everlasting successor, a king that should descend from his loins, of "the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end." St. Peter applies this to Christ, nay, he tells us that David himself so understood it; *Acts* ii. 30, "He knew that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;" and in the fulness of time he did so, and "gave him the throne of his father David," *Lu.* i. 32. He did fulfil the condition of the promise, he kept God's covenant and his testimony, did his Father's will, and in all things pleased him; and therefore to him and his spiritual seed the promise shall be made good. He and the children God has given him, all believers, shall sit upon the throne for evermore, *Rev.* iii. 21.

2. God chose Zion hill for the holy hill, and confirmed his choice by the delight he took in it, ver. 13, 14. He chose "the mount Zion which he loved," *Ps.* lxxviii. 68. He chose it for the habitation of his ark, and said of it, "This is my rest for ever," and not my residence for a time, as Shiloh was. Zion was the city of David; he chose it for the royal city, because God chose it for the holy city. God said, "Here will I dwell;" and therefore David said, 'Here will I dwell,' for he stuck to his principle; "It is good for me to draw near to God." Zion must be here looked upon as a type of the gospel church, which is called mount Zion, *Heb.* xii. 18; and in it what is here said of Zion has its full accomplishment. Zion was long since ploughed as a field; but the church of Christ is the house of the living God, 1 *Tim.* iii. 15; and it is his rest for ever, and shall be blessed with his presence always, even to the end of the world. The delight God takes in his church, and the continuance of his presence with his church, is the comfort and joy of all its members.

Secondly. The choice blessings God has in store for David's house and Zion hill. Whom God chooseth he will bless.

1. God having chosen Zion hill, he promiseth to bless that,

1st. With the blessings of the life that now is; for godliness hath the promise of them, ver. 15. The earth shall yield her increase; there where religion is set up, there shall be provision, and in blessing God will bless it, (*Ps.* lxvii. 6;) he will surely and abundantly bless it. And a little provision, with an abundant blessing upon it, will be more serviceable as well as more comfortable than a great deal without thy blessing. God's people have a special blessing upon common enjoyments; and that blessing puts a peculiar sweetness into them. Nay, the promise goes farther, "I will satisfy her poor with bread." Zion has her own poor to keep; and it is promised that God will take care even of them. *First.* By his providence they shall be kept from wanting; they shall have provision enough. If there be scarcity, the poor are the first that feel it, so that it is a sure sign of plenty if they have sufficient. Zion's poor shall not want, for God has obliged all the sons of Zion to be charitable to the poor according to their ability; and the church must take care that they be not neglected, *Acts* vi. 1. *Secondly.* By his grace they shall be kept from complaining; though they have but dry bread, yet they shall be satisfied. Zion's poor have, of all others, reason to be content with a little of this world, because they have better things prepared for them. And this may be understood spiritually of the

provision that is made for the soul in the word and ordinances; God will abundantly bless that, for the nourishment of the new man, and satisfy the poor in spirit with the bread of life. What God sanctifies to us, we shall and may be satisfied with.

2nd. With the blessings of the life that is to come, things pertaining to godliness, ver. 16, which is an answer to the prayer, ver. 9. *First.* It was desired that the priests might be clothed with righteousness. It is here promised that God will clothe them with salvation, not only save them, but make them and their administrations instrumental for the salvation of his people; they shall both save themselves and those that hear them, and add those to the church that shall be saved. Note, Whom God clothes with righteousness he will clothe with salvation; we must pray for righteousness, and then with it God will give salvation. *Secondly.* It was desired that the saints might shout for joy; it is promised that they shall shout aloud for joy. God gives more than we ask, and when he gives salvation he will give an abundant joy.

2. God having chosen David's family, he here promiseth to bless that also with suitable blessings.

1st. Growing power. "There" in Zion "will I make the horn of David to bud," ver. 17. The royal dignity shall increase more and more, and constant additions be made to the lustre of it. Christ is the horn of salvation, noting a plentiful and powerful salvation, which God hath raised up and made to bud in the house of his servant David. David had promised to use his power for God's glory, to cut off the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the horns of the righteous, *Ps.* lxxv. 10; and in recompence for it God here promises to make his horn to bud, for to them that have power and use it well more shall be given.

2nd. Lasting honour. "I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed." "Thou wilt light my candle," *Ps.* xviii. 28. That lamp is likely to burn bright which God ordains. A lamp is a successor; for when a lamp is almost out, another may be lighted by it; it is a succession, for by this means David shall not want a man to stand before God. Christ is the lamp and the light of the world.

3rd. Complete victory. "His enemies" that have formed designs against him "will I clothe with shame," when they shall see their designs baffled. Let the enemies of all good governors expect to be clothed with shame, and especially the enemies of the Lord Jesus and his government, who shall rise in the great day to everlasting shame and contempt.

4th. Universal prosperity. "Upon himself shall his crown flourish," that is, his government shall be more and more his honour. This was to have its full accomplishment in Jesus Christ, whose crown of honour and power shall never fade, nor the flowers of it wither. The crowns of earthly princes endure not to all generations, *Pr.* xxvii. 24. But Christ's crown shall endure to all eternity; and the crowns reserved for his faithful subjects are such as fade not away.

PSALM CXXXIII.

This psalm is a brief encomium of unity and brotherly love, which, if we did not see the miseries of discord among men, we would think needless; but we cannot say too much, it were well enough if we could say enough, to persuade people to live together in peace. The conjecture some make is well enough of the kind, that David penned it upon occasion of the union between the tribes when they all met unanimously to make him king. It is a psalm of general use to all societies, lesser and larger, civil and sacred. Here is, I. The doctrine laid down of the happiness of brotherly love, ver. 1. II. The illustration of that doctrine in two similitudes, ver. 2, 3. III. The proof of it, in a good reason given for it, ver. 3. And then we are left to make the application, which we ought to do in singing of it, provoking ourselves and one another to holy love. The contents of this psalm in our Bibles is short, but very proper; it is 'the benefit of the communion of saints.'

A Song of degrees of David.

BEHOLD, how good and how pleasant *it is*
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
2 *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head,
That ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard:
That went down to the skirts of his garments;
3 As the dew of Hermon, [Zion:
And as the dew that descended upon the mountains of
For there the LORD commanded the blessing,
Even life for evermore.

Here see, First. What it is that is commended; Brethren's dwelling together in unity, not only not quarelling and devouring one another, but delighting in each other with mutual endearments, and promoting each others' welfare with mutual services. Sometimes it is chosen as the best expedient for preserving peace, that brethren should live asunder, and at a distance from each other. That indeed may prevent enmity and strife, *Gen.* xiii. 9; but the goodness and pleasantness is for brethren to dwell together, and so to dwell in unity; 'to dwell even as one,' (so some read it,) as having one heart, one soul, one interest. David had many sons by many wives; probably David penned this psalm for their instruction, to engage them to love one another; which if they had done much of the mischief that arose in his family had been happily prevented. The tribes of Israel had long had separate interests, during the government of the judges, and it was often of ill consequence; but now they were united under one common head, he would have them sensible how much it was likely to be for their advantages, especially since now the ark was fixed, and with it the place of their rendezvous for public worship, and the centre of their unity. Now let them live in love.

Secondly. How commendable it is; "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is!" It is good in itself, agreeable to the will of God, the conformity of earth to heaven. It is good for us, for our honour and comfort; it is pleasant and pleasing to God and all good men. It brings constant delight to those who do thus live in unity; "Behold, how good!" We cannot conceive or express the goodness and pleasantness of it. Behold, it as a rare thing, and therefore admirable. Behold and wonder that there should be so much goodness and pleasantness among men; so much of heaven on this earth. Behold it as an amiable thing, which will attract our hearts; Behold it as an exemplary thing, which, where it is, is to be imitated by us with a holy emulation.

Thirdly. How the pleasantness of it is illustrated.

1. It is fragrant, as the holy anointing oil, which was strongly perfumed, and diffused its odours, to the great delight of all the bystanders, when it was poured upon the head of Aaron, or his successor, the high priest, so plentifully, that it ran down the face, even to the collar or binding of the garment, ver. 2. 1st. This was holy ointment; so must our brotherly love be, with a pure heart devoted to God. We must love them that are begotten for his sake that begat, 1 *Jno.* v. 1. 2nd. This ointment was a composition, made up by a Divine dispensatory; God appointed the ingredients and the quantities. Thus believers are taught of God to love one another; it is a grace of his working in us. 3rd. It was very precious, and the like to it was not to be made for any common use. Thus holy love is in the sight of God of great price; and that is precious indeed which is so in God's sight. 4th. It was grateful both to Aaron himself and to all about him. So is holy love; it is like ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart. Christ's love to mankind was part of that oil of gladness with which he was anointed above his fellows. 5th. Aaron and his sons were not admitted to minister unto the Lord till they were anointed with this ointment, nor are our services acceptable to God without this holy love; if we have it not, we are nothing, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 1, 2.

2. It is fructifying; it is profitable as well as pleasing. It is as the dew; it brings abundance of blessings along with it, as numerous as the drops of dew. It cools the scorching heat of man's passions, as the evening dews cool the air, and refresh the earth. It contributes very much to our fruitfulness in every thing that is good; it moistens the heart, and makes it tender, and fit to receive the good seed of the word; as on the contrary malice and bitterness disfit us to receive it; 1 *Pet.* ii. 1. "It is as the dew of Hermon," a common hill, for brotherly love is the beauty and benefit of civil societies, "and as the dew that descended upon mount Zion," a holy hill, for it contributes greatly to the fruitfulness of sacred societies. Both Hermon and Zion will wither without this dew. It is said of the dew, that it "tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men," *Mic.* v. 7. Nor should our love to our brethren stay for theirs to us, that is publican's love; but should prevent it, that is Divine love.

Fourthly. The proof of the excellency of brotherly love. Loving people are blessed people. For,

1. They are blessed of God, and therefore blessed indeed. "There," where brethren dwell together in unity, "the Lord commands the blessing," a complicated blessing, including all blessings. It is God's prerogative to command the blessing; man can but beg a blessing. Blessings according to the promise are commanded blessings, for "he hath commanded his covenant for ever;" blessings that take effect are commanded blessings, for he speaks, and it is done.

2. They are everlastingly blessed. The blessing which God commands on them that dwell in love, is "life for evermore," that is the blessing of blessings. They that dwell in love, not only dwell in God, but do already dwell in heaven. As the perfection of love is the blessedness of heaven, so the sincerity of love is the earnest of that blessedness. They that live in love and peace, the God of love and peace shall be with them now, and they shall be with him shortly, with him for ever, in the world of endless love and peace. How good then is it, and how pleasant!

PSALM CXXXIV.

This is the last of the fifteen songs of degrees; and if they were at any time sung all together in the temple-service, it is fitly made the conclusion of them, for the design of it is to stir up the ministers to go on with their work in the night, when the solemnities of the day were over. Some make this psalm to be a dialogue. I. In the first two verses the priests or Levites that sat up all night to keep the watch of the house of the Lord, are called upon to spend their time while they were upon the guard, not in idle talk, but in the acts of devotion. II. In the last verse they that were thus called upon to praise God, pray for him that gave them the exhortation, either the high priest or the captain of the guard. Or thus; they who did that service did mutually exhort one another, and pray for one another. In singing this psalm we must both stir up ourselves to give glory to God, and encourage ourselves to hope for mercy and grace from him.

A Song of degrees.

BEHOLD, bless ye the LORD,
All *ye* servants of the LORD,
Which by night stand in the house of the LORD
2 Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary,
And bless the LORD.
3 The LORD that made heaven and earth
Bless thee out of Zion.

This psalm instructs us concerning a twofold blessing:

First. Our blessing God, that is, speaking well of him, which here we are taught to do, ver. 1, 2.

1. It is a call to the Levites to do it. They were the servants of the Lord by office, appointed to minister in holy things; they attended the sanctuary, and kept the charge of the house of the Lord, *Num.* iii. 6, &c. Some of them did by night stand in the house of the Lord, to guard the holy things of the temple that they might not be profaned, and the rich things of the temple that they might not be plundered. While the ark was in curtains there was the more need of guards upon it. They attended likewise to see that neither the fire on the altar nor the lamps in the candlestick went out. Probably it was usual for some devout and pious Israelites to sit up with them; we read of one that departed not from the temple night or day, *Lu.* ii. 37. Now these are here called upon to bless the Lord. Thus they must keep themselves awake by keeping themselves employed; thus they must redeem time for holy exercises; and how can we spend our time better than in praising God? It would be an excellent piece of good husbandry to fill up the vacancies of time with pious meditations and ejaculations; and surely it is a very modest and reasonable demand to converse with God when we have nothing else to do. They that stood in the house of the Lord must remember where they were, and that holiness and holy work became that house. Let them, therefore, bless the Lord; let them all do it in concert, or each by himself; let them lift up their hands in the doing of it, in token of the lifting up of their hearts. Let them lift up their hands in holiness, (so Dr. Hammond reads it,) or in sanctification, as it is fit, when they lift them up in the sanctuary; and let them remember that, when they were appointed to wash before they went into minister, they were thereby taught to lift up holy hands in prayer and praise.

2. It is a call to us to do it, who as Christians are made priests to our God, and Levites, *Isa.* lxvi. 21. We are the servants of the Lord, we have a place and a name in his house, in his sanctuary, we stand before him to minister to him, even by night we are under his eye, and have access to him. Let us therefore bless the Lord, and again bless him, think and speak of his glory and goodness; let us lift up our hands in prayer, in praise, in vows; let us do our work with diligence and cheerfulness, and an elevation of mind. This exhortation is ushered in with, Behold! a note commanding attention; look about you, sirs, when you are in God's presence, and carry yourselves accordingly.

Secondly. God's blessing us, and that is doing well for us, which we are here taught to desire, ver. 3. Whether it is the watchmen blessing their captain, or the Levites blessing the high-priest, or whoever was their chief, as many take

it, because it is in the singular number, "The Lord bless thee;" or whether the blessing is pronounced by one upon many, "The Lord bless thee," that is, each of you in particular, thee and thee, you that are blessing God, the Lord bless you,—is not material. We may learn, 1. That we need desire no more to make us happy than to be blessed of the Lord, for those whom he blesseth they are blessed indeed. 2. That blessings out of Zion, spiritual blessings, the blessings of the covenant, and of communion with God, are the best blessings, which we should be most earnest for. 3. It is a great encouragement to us, when we come to God for a blessing, that it is he that made heaven and earth, and therefore has all the blessings of both at his dispose, of the upper and nether springs. 4. We ought to beg these blessings not only for ourselves, but for others also; not only, The Lord bless me, but, The Lord bless thee; thus testifying our belief of the fulness of Divine blessings, that there is enough for others as well as for us, and our good-will also to others. Those that exhort us, we must pray for; though the less is blessed of the greater, *Heb.* vii. 7, yet the greater must be prayed for by the less.

PSALM CXXXV.

This is one of the hallelujah psalms; that is the title of it, and that is the Amen of it, both its alpha and its omega. I. It begins with a call to praise God, particularly a call to the servants of the Lord to praise him, as in the foregoing psalm, ver. 1—3. II. It goes on to furnish us with matter for praise. God is to be praised, 1. As the God of Jacob, ver. 4; 2. As the God of gods, ver. 5; 3. As the God of the whole world, ver. 6, 7. 4. As a terrible God to the enemies of Israel, ver. 8—11; 5. As a gracious God to Israel, both in what he had done for them, and what he would do, ver. 12—14; 6. As the only living God, all other gods being vanity and a lie, ver. 15—18. III. It concludes with another exhortation to all persons concerned to praise God, ver. 19—21. In singing this psalm our hearts must be filled, as well as our mouths, with the high praises of God.

PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise ye the name of the LORD;
Praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD.
2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD,
In the courts of the house of our God,
3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD *is* good:
Sing praises unto his name; for *it is* pleasant.
4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself,
And Israel for his peculiar treasure.

Here is, First. The duty we are called to: To praise the Lord, to praise his name; praise him, and again praise him. We must not only thank him for what he has done for us, but praise him for what he is in himself, and has done for others. Take all occasions to speak well of God, and to give his truths and ways a good word.

Secondly. The persons that are called upon to do this: The servants of the Lord, the priests and Levites that stand in his house, and all the devout and pious Israelites that stand in the courts of his house to worship there, ver. 2. They have most reason to praise God that are admitted to the privileges of his house, and they see most reason that there behold his beauty and taste his bounty. From them it is expected, for to that end they enjoy their places; who should praise him if they do not?

Thirdly. The reasons why we should praise God: 1. Because he whom we are to praise is good, and goodness is that which every body will speak well of. He is good to all, and we must give him the praise of that; his goodness is his glory, and we must make mention of it to his glory. 2. Because the work is its own wages; "Sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant." It is best done with a cheerful spirit, and we shall have the pleasure of having done our duty. It is a heaven upon earth to be praising God, and the pleasure of that should quite put our mouths out of taste to the pleasures of sin. 3. Because of the peculiar privileges of God's people; ver. 4, "The Lord hath chosen Jacob to himself," and therefore Jacob is bound to praise him, for therefore God chose a people to himself, that they might be unto him for a name and a praise, *Jer.* xiii. 11. And therefore Jacob has abundant matter for praise, being thus dignified and distinguished. Israel is God's peculiar treasure above all people, *Ex.* xix. 5. They are his *Segullah*, a people appropriated to him, and that he has a delight in, precious in his sight, and honourable. For this distinguishing, surprising favour, if the seed of Jacob do not praise him, they are the most unworthy, ungrateful people under the sun.

5 For I know that the LORD *is* great,
And *that* our Lord *is* above all gods.
6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he
In heaven, and in earth,
In the seas, and all deep places. [earth;
7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the
He maketh lightnings for the rain;
He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.
8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt,
Both of man and beast. [Egypt,
9 *Who* sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O
Upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.
10 Who smote great nations,
And slew mighty kings;
11 Sihon king of the Amorites,
And Og king of Bashan,
And all the kingdoms of Canaan:
12 And gave their land *for* an heritage,
An heritage unto Israel his people.
13 Thy name, O LORD, *endureth* for ever;
And thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.
14 For the LORD will judge his people,
And he will repent himself concerning his servants.

The psalmist had suggested to us the goodness of God as the proper matter of our cheerful praises; here he suggests to us the greatness of God as the proper matter of our awful praises; and on this he is most large, because this we are less forward to consider.

First. He asserts the doctrine of God's greatness; ver. 5, "The Lord is great;" great indeed, who knows no limits of time or place. He asserts it with assurance, I know that he is so; know it not only by observation of the proofs of it, but by belief of the revelation of it. I know it, that is, I am sure of it; I know it by my own experience of the Divine greatness working on my soul. He asserts it with a holy defiance of all pretenders, though they should join in confederacy against him; he is not only above any gods, but above all gods, infinitely above them; betwixt him and them there is no comparison.

Secondly. He proves him to be a great God by the greatness of his power, ver. 6. 1. He hath an absolute power, and may do what he will; "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he," and none could control him, or say unto him, What dost thou? He doth what he pleaseth because he pleaseth, and giveth not account of any of his matters. 2. He hath an almighty power, and can do what he will; if he will work, none shall hinder. 3. This absolute almighty power is of universal extent; he doth what he will "in heaven, in earth, in the seas, and in all the deep places," that are in the bottom of the sea or the bowels of the earth. The gods of the heathen can do nothing, but our God can do any thing, and doth do every thing.

Thirdly. He gives instances of his great power,

1. In the kingdom of nature, ver. 7. All the powers of nature prove the greatness of the God of nature, from whom they are derived, and on whom they depend. The chain of natural causes was not only framed by him at first, but is still preserved by him. 1st. It is by his power that exhalations are drawn up from the terraqueous globe. The heat of the sun raiseth them, but it has that power from God, and therefore it is given as an instance of the glory of God, that nothing is hid from the heat of the sun, *Ps.* xix. 6. "He causeth the vapours to ascend," not only unhelped, but unseen by us, from the earth, from the ends of the earth, that is, from the seas by which the earth is surrounded. 2nd. It is he that out of those vapours so raised forms the rain, so that the earth is no loser by the vapours it sends up, for they are returned with advantage in fruitful showers. 3rd. Out of the same vapours (such is his wonderful power) "he maketh lightnings for the rain;" by them he opens the bottles of heaven, and shakes the clouds, that they may water the earth. Here is fire and water thoroughly reconciled by Divine omnipotence; they come together, and yet the water doth not quench the fire, nor the fire lick up the water, as fire from heaven did when God pleased, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 38. 4th. The same exhalations, to serve another purpose, are converted into winds, which blow where they list, from what point of the compass they will, and we are so far from directing them, that we cannot tell whence they come or whither they go, but God brings them out of his treasuries, with as much exactness and design as a prudent prince orders money to issue out of his exchequer.

2. In the kingdoms of men. And here he instanceth in the great things God had formerly done for his people Israel, which were proofs of God's greatness, as well as of his goodness, and confirmations of the truth of the scriptures of the Old Testament, which began to be written by Moses, the person employed in working those miracles. Observe God's sovereign dominion and irresistible power, 1st. In bringing Israel out of Egypt, humbling Pharaoh by many plagues, and so forcing him to let them go. These plagues are called tokens and wonders, because they came not in the common course of providence, but there was something miraculous in each of them. They were sent upon Pharaoh and all his servants, that is, his subjects; but the Israelites, whom God claimed for his servants, his son, his firstborn, his freeborn, were exempted from them, and no plague came nigh their dwelling. The death of the firstborn, both of men and cattle, was the heaviest of all the plagues, and that which gained the point. 2nd. In destroying the kingdoms of Canaan before them, ver. 10. They that were in possession of the land designed for Israel had all possible advantages for keeping possession; the people were numerous and warlike, and confederate against Israel; they were great nations. Yet, if a great nation has a meek and mean-spirited prince, it lies exposed; but these great nations had mighty kings, and yet they were all smitten and slain,—Sihon and Og, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, ver. 10, 11. No power of hell or earth can prevent the accomplishment of the promise of God, when the time, the set time, for it is come. 3rd. In settling them in the land of promise. He that gives kingdoms to whomsoever he pleaseth gave Canaan to be a heritage to Israel his people. It came to them by inheritance, for their ancestors had the promise of it, though not the possession, and it descended as an inheritance to their seed. This was done long before, yet God is now praised for it, and good reason, for the children were now enjoying the benefit of it.

Fourthly. He triumphs in the perpetuity of God's glory and grace. 1. Of his glory; ver. 13, "Thy name, O God, endures for ever." God's manifestations of himself to his people have everlasting fruits and consequences; "What God doth, it shall be for ever," *Eccl.* iii. 14. His name endureth for ever in the constant and everlasting praises of his people; his memorial endures, has endured hitherto, and shall still endure, throughout all generations of the church. This seems to refer to *Ex.* iii. 15, where, when God had called himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, he adds, "This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." God is, and will be always the same to his church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God; and his church is, and will be, the same to him, a thankful, praising people; and thus his name endures for ever. 2. Of his grace. He will be kind to his people. 1st. He will plead their cause against others that contend with them; he will judge his people, that is, he will judge for them, and will not suffer them to be run down. 2nd. He will not himself contend for ever with them, but will repent himself concerning his servants, and not proceed in his controversy with them. He will be entreated for them, or he will be comforted concerning them; that is, he will return in ways of mercy to them, and will delight to do them good. This verse is taken from the song of Moses, *Deu.* xxxii. 36.

15 The idols of the heathen *are* silver and gold,
The work of men's hands.
16 They have mouths, but they speak not;
Eyes have they, but they see not;

17 They have ears, but they hear not;
Neither is there *any* breath in their mouths.
18 They that make them are like unto them:
So is every one that trusteth in them.
19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel:
Bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:
20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi:
Ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.
21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion,
Which dwelleth at Jerusalem.
Praise ye the LORD.

The design of these verses is,

First. To arm the people of God against idolatry, and all false worships, by shewing what sort of gods they were that the heathen worshipped, as we had it before, *Ps.* cxv. 4, &c. 1. They were gods of their own making; being so, they could have no power but what their makers gave them; and then what power could their makers receive from them? The images were the work of men's hands, and the deities that were supposed to inform them were as much the creatures of men's fancy and imagination. 2. They had the shape of animals, but could not perform the least act, no, not of the animal life. They could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, nor so much as breathe; and therefore to make them with eyes and ears, and mouths and nostrils, was such a jest, as that one would wonder how reasonable creatures could suffer themselves to be so imposed upon, as to expect any good from such mock deities. 3. Their worshippers were therefore as stupid and senseless as they were; both those that made them to be worshipped, and those that trusted in them when they were made, ver. 18. The worshipping of such gods as were the objects of sense, and senseless, made the worshippers sensual and senseless. Let our worshipping of a God that is a spirit make us spiritual and wise.

Secondly. To stir up the people of God to true devotion in the worship of the true God, ver. 19—21. The more deplorable the condition of the Gentile nations is that worship idols, the more are we bound to thank God that we know better things. Therefore, 1. Let us set ourselves about the acts of devotion, and employ ourselves in them; "Bless the Lord," and again, and again, "Bless the Lord." In the parallel place, *Ps.* cxv. 9—11, by way of inference from the impotency of idols, the duty thus pressed upon us is, to trust in the Lord; here to bless him. By putting our trust in God we give glory to him, and they that depend upon God shall not want matter for thanksgiving to him. All persons that knew God are here called to praise him: the house of Israel, the nation in general; the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi, the Lord's ministers that attended in his sanctuary; and all others that feared the Lord, though they were not of the house of Israel. 2. Let God have the glory of all; "Blessed be the Lord." The tribute of praise ariseth out of Zion. All God's works do praise him, but his saints bless him; and they need not go far to pay their tribute; for he dwelleth in Jerusalem, in his church, which they are members of, so that he is always nigh unto them to receive their homage. And the condescensions of his grace in dwelling with men upon the earth call for our grateful and thankful returns, and our repeated hallelujahs.

PSALM CXXXVI.

The scope of this psalm is the same with that of the foregoing psalm, but there is something very singular in the composure of it, for the latter half of each verse is the same repeated throughout the psalm, "For his mercy endureth for ever," and yet no vain repetition. It is allowed, that such burthens or keepings, as we call them, add very much to the beauty of a song, and help to make it moving and affecting; nor can any verse contain more weighty matter, or more worthy to be thus repeated, than this, that God's mercy endureth for ever. And the repetition of it here twenty-six times intimates, I. That God's mercies to his people are thus repeated and drawn, as it were, with a *continuando* from the beginning to the end, with a progress and advance *in infinitum*. II. That in every particular favour we ought to take notice of the mercy of God, and to take notice of it as enduring still the same now that it has been, and enduring for ever the same always that it is. III. That the everlasting continuance of the mercy of God is very much his honour, and that which he glories in, and very much the saints' comfort, and that which they glory in. It is that which therefore our hearts should be full of, and greatly affected with, so as that the most frequent mention of it, instead of cloying us, should raise us the more, because it will be the subject of our praise to all eternity. This most excellent sentence, that God's mercy endureth for ever, is magnified above all the truths concerning God, not only by the repetition of it here, but by the signal tokens of Divine acceptance, with which God owned the singing of it both in Solomon's time, (2 *Chr.* v. 13,)—when they sang these words, "for his mercy endureth for ever, the house was filled with a cloud,"—and in Jehoshaphat's time, when they sang these words God gave them victory, (2 *Chr.* xx. 21, 22,) which should make us love to sing, "His mercies sure do still endure eternally." We must praise God, 1. As great and good in himself, ver. 1—3. 2. As the Creator of the world, ver. 5—9. 3. As Israel's God and Saviour, ver. 10—22. 4. As our Redeemer, ver. 23, 24. 5. As the great benefactor of the whole creation, and God over all, blessed for evermore, ver. 25, 26.

O GIVE thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
2 O give thanks unto the God of gods:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
4 To him who alone doeth great wonders:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
7 To him that made great lights:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
8 The sun to rule by day:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
9 The moon and stars to rule by night:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

The duty we are here again and again called to, is to give thanks; to "offer the sacrifice of praise continually," not the fruits of our ground or cattle, but "the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name," *Heb.* xiii. 15. We are never so earnestly called upon to pray and repent, as to give thanks; for it is the will of God that we should abound most in the most pleasant exercises of religion, in that which is the work of heaven. Now here observe,

First. Whom we must give thanks to. To him that we receive all good from; to the Lord, Jehovah, Israel's God, ver. 1; to the God of gods, the God whom angels adore, from whom magistrates derive their power, and by whom all pretended deities are and shall be conquered, ver. 2; to the Lord of lords, the Sovereign of all sovereigns; the stay and supporter of all supports, ver. 3. In all our adorations we must have an eye to God's excellency as transcendent, and to his power and dominion as incontestably and uncontrollably supreme.

Secondly. What we must give thanks for. Not as the Pharisee, that made all his thanksgivings terminate in his own praise, "God, I thank thee," that I am so and so, but directing them all to God's glory.

1. We must give thanks to God for his goodness and mercy; ver. 1, "Give thanks to the Lord," not only because he doth good, but because he is good, all the streams must be run up to the fountain; not only because he is merciful to us, but because his mercy endures for ever, and will be drawn out to those that shall come after us. We must give thanks to God not only for that mercy which is now handed out to us here on earth, but for that which shall endure for ever in the glories and joys of heaven.

2. We must give God thanks for the instances of his power and wisdom. In general, ver. 4, he "alone doth great wonders." The contrivance is wonderful, the design being laid by infinite wisdom; the performance wonderful, being put in execution by infinite power. He alone doth marvellous things; that is, none but he can do such things, and he doth them without the assistance or advice of any other. More particularly, 1st. He made the heavens, and stretched them out; and in them we not only see his wisdom and power, but we taste his mercy in their benign influences. As long as the heavens endure, the mercy of God endures in them, ver. 5. 2nd. He raised the earth out of the waters when he caused the dry land to appear, that it might be fit to be a habitation for man, and therein also his mercy to man still endures, ver. 6, for "the earth hath he given to the children of men," and all its products. 3rd. Having made both heaven and earth, he settled a correspondence between them, notwithstanding their distance, by making the sun, moon, and stars, which he placed in the firmament of heaven, to shed their light and influences upon this earth, ver. 7—9. These are called the great lights because they appear so to us, for otherwise astronomers tell us that the moon is less than many of the stars, but being nearer to the earth it seems much bigger. They are said to rule, not only because they govern the seasons of the years, but because they are useful to the world; and benefactors are the best rulers, *Lu.* xxii. 25. But the empire is divided, one rules by day, the other by night, at least the stars; and yet all are subject to God's direction and dispose. Those rulers which the Gentiles therefore idolized, are the world's servants, and God's subjects; "Sun, stand thou still, and thou moon."

10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
11 And brought out Israel from among them:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
16 To him which led his people through the wilderness:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
17 To him which smote great kings:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
18 And slew famous kings:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
19 Sihon, king of the Amorites:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
20 And Og the king of Bashan:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
21 And gave their land for an heritage:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
22 *Even* an heritage unto Israel his servant:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

The great things God did for Israel when he first formed them into a people, and set up his kingdom among them, are here mentioned, as often elsewhere in the psalms, as instances both of the power of God and of the particular kindness he had for Israel: see *Ps.* cxxxv. 8, &c.

First. He brought them out of Egypt, ver. 10—12. That was a mercy which endured long to them, and our redemption by Christ, which was typified by that, doth indeed endure for ever, for it is an eternal redemption. Of all the plagues of Egypt none is mentioned but the death of the firstborn, because that

was the conquering plague; by that, God, who in all the plagues distinguished the Israelites from the Egyptians, brought them at last from among them; not by a wile, but with a strong hand, and an arm stretched out to reach far, and do great things. These miracles of mercy, as they proved Moses' commission to give law to Israel, so they laid Israel under lasting obligations to obey that law, *Ex.* xx. 2.

Secondly. He forced them a way through the Red sea, which obstructed them at their first setting out. By the power he has to control the common course of nature he divided the sea into two parts, between which he opened a path, and made Israel to pass between the parts, now they were to enter into covenant with him: see *Jer.* xxxiv. 18. He not only divided the sea, but gave his people courage to go through it when it was divided; which was an instance of God's power over men's hearts, as the former of his power over the waters. And, to make it a miracle of justice as well as mercy, the same Red sea that was a lane to the Israelites, was a grave to their pursuers. There he shook off Pharaoh and his host.

Thirdly. He conducted them through a vast howling wilderness, ver. 16; there he led them and fed them; their camp was victualled and fortified by a constant series of miracles for forty years; though they loitered and wandered there, they were not lost. And in this the mercy of God, and the constancy of that mercy was the more observable, because they often provoked him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert.

Fourthly. He destroyed kings before them to make room for them, ver. 17, 18. Not deposed and banished them; but smote and slew them, in which appeared his wrath against them, but his mercy, his never failing mercy, to Israel. And that which magnified it was that they were great kings, and famous kings, yet God subdued them as easily as if they had been the least, and weakest, and meanest of the children of men. They were wicked kings, and then their grandeur and lustre would not secure them from the justice of God. The more great and famous they were, the more did God's mercy to Israel appear, in giving such kings for them. Sihon and Og are particularly mentioned, because they were the two first that were conquered on the other side Jordan, ver. 19, 20. It is good to enter into the detail of God's favours, and not to view them in the gross; and in each instance to observe and own that God's mercy endureth for ever.

Fifthly. He put them in possession of a good land, ver. 21, 22. He whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein, took land from one people and gave it to another as pleased him. The iniquity of the Amorites was now full, and therefore it was taken from them; Israel was his servant, and though they had been provoking in the wilderness yet he intended to have some service out of them, for to them pertained the service of God. As he said to the Egyptians, "Let my people go," so to the Canaanites, Let my people in, that they may serve me. In this God's mercy to them endureth for ever, because it was a figure of the heavenly Canaan, "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

23 Who remembered us in our low estate·
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
25 Who giveth food to all flesh:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.
26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven:
For his mercy *endureth* for ever.

God's everlasting mercy is here celebrated,

First. In the redemption of his church, ver. 23, 24. In the many redemptions wrought for the Jewish church out of the hands of their oppressors; when in the years of their servitude their estate was very low, God remembered them, and raised them up saviours, the judges, and David at length, by whom God gave them rest from all their enemies. But especially in the great redemption of the universal church, of which these were types, we have a great deal of reason to say, "He remembered us," the children of men, "in our low estate," in our lost estate: "for his mercy endureth for ever." And sent his Son to redeem us from sin, and death, and hell, and all our spiritual enemies: "for his mercy endureth for ever:" us, and not the angels that sinned: "for his mercy endureth for ever."

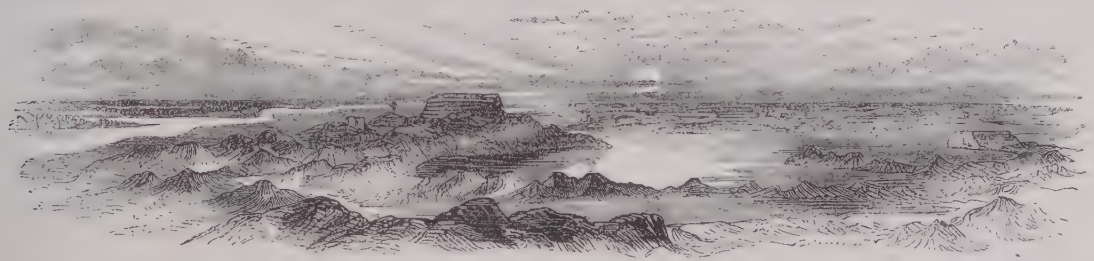
Secondly. In the provision he makes for all the creatures; ver. 25, "He gives food to all flesh." It is an instance of the mercy of God's providence, that wherever he has given life, he gives food agreeable, and sufficient; and he is a good housekeeper, that provides for so large a family.

Thirdly. In all his glories, and all his gifts; ver. 26, "Give thanks to the God of heaven." That speaks him a glorious God, and the glory of his mercy is to be taken notice of in our praises; the riches of his glory are displayed in the vessels of his mercy, *Rom.* ix. 23. And it speaks him the great benefactor, "for every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights," the God of heaven; and we should trace every stream to the fountain; this and that particular mercy may perhaps endure but a while, but the mercy that is in God endures for ever; it is an inexhaustible fountain.

PSALM CXXXVII.

There are divers psalms which are thought to have been penned in the latter days of the Jewish church, when prophecy was near expiring, and the canon of the Old Testament ready to be closed up; but none of them appears so plainly to be of a late date as this here, which was penned when the people of God were captives in Babylon, and there insulted over by their proud oppressors. Probably it was towards the latter end of their captivity; for now they saw the destruction of Babylon hastening on apace, ver. 8, which would be their discharge. It is a mournful psalm, a lamentation; and the Septuagint make it one of the lamentations of Jeremiah, naming him for the author of it. Here, I. The melancholy captives cannot enjoy themselves, ver. 1, 2. II. They cannot humour their proud oppressors, ver. 3, 4. III. They cannot forget Jerusalem, ver. 5, 6. IV. They cannot forgive Edom and Babylon, ver. 7—9. In singing this psalm we must be much affected with the concernments of the church, especially that part of it that is in affliction, laying the sorrows of God's people near our hearts, comforting ourselves in the prospect of the deliverance of the church, and the ruin of its enemies in due time, but carefully avoiding all personal animosities, and not mixing the leaven of malice with our sacrifices.

BY the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down,
Yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. [thereof.
2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst
3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song;
And they that wasted us *required of us* mirth,
Saying, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion.
4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song
In a strange land?
5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget *her cunning*.
6 If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;
If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.



BABYLON.—ver. 1.

We have here the daughter of Zion covered with a cloud, and dwelling with the daughter of Babylon; the people of God in tears, but sowing in tears. Observe,

First. The mournful posture they were in. Their affairs were so, and so were their spirits.

1. They were posted by the rivers of Babylon, in a strange land, a great way off of their own country, whence they were brought as prisoners of war. The land of Babylon was now a house of bondage to that people, as Egypt had been in their beginning. Their conquerors quartered them by the rivers with design to employ them there, and keep them to work in their galleys; or perhaps they chose it as the most melancholy place, and therefore most suitable to their sorrowful spirits. If they must build houses there, *Jer.* xxix. 5, it shall not be in the cities, the places of concourse, but by the rivers, the places of solitude, where they might mingle their tears with the streams. We find some of them by the river Chebar, *Eze.* i. 3, others by the river Ulai, *Dan.* viii. 2.

2. There they sat down to indulge their grief, by poring on their miseries. Jeremiah had taught them under this yoke to sit alone, and keep silence, and put their mouths in the dust, *Lam.* iii. 28, 29. We sat down, as those that expected to stay, and were content, since it is the will of God it must be so.

3. Thoughts of Zion drew tears from their eyes; and it was not a sudden passion of weeping, such as we are sometimes put into by a trouble that surpriseth us, but they were deliberate tears,—we sat down and wept; tears with consideration. "We wept when we remembered Zion," the holy hill on which the temple was built; their affection to God's house swallowed up their concern for their own houses. They remembered Zion's former glory, and the satisfaction they had had in Zion's courts. *Lam.* i. 7, "Jerusalem remembered in the days of her misery, all her pleasant things which she had in the days of old;" *Ps.* xlii. 4. They remembered Zion's present desolations, and favoured the dust thereof, which was a good sign that the time for God to favour it was not far off, *Ps.* cii. 13, 14.

4. They laid by their instruments of music; ver. 2, "We hanged our harps upon the willows." 1st. The harps they used for their own diversion and entertainment. These they laid aside, both because it was their judgment that they ought not to use them now God called to weeping and mourning, *Isa.* xxii. 12, and their spirits were so sad that they had no hearts to use them. They brought their harps with them, designing perhaps to use them for the alleviating of their grief, but it proved so great that it would not admit the experiment. Music makes some people melancholy; "As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart." 2nd. The harps they used in God's worship, the Levites' harps, these they did not throw away; being in hopes they might yet again have occasion to use them; but they threw them by, because they had no present use for them. God has cut them out other work, by "turning their feasting into mourning, and their songs into lamentations," *Am.* viii. 10. Every thing is beautiful in its season. They did not hide their harps in the bushes, or the hollows of the rocks; but hung them up in view, that the sight of them might affect them with this deplorable change. Yet perhaps they were faulty in doing this; for praising God is never out of season: it is his will that we should in every thing give thanks, *Isa.* xxiv. 15, 16.

Secondly. The abuses which their enemies put upon them when they were in this melancholy condition, ver. 3. They had carried them away captive from their own land, and then wasted them in the land of their captivity; took what little they had from them. But this was not enough, to complete their woes,

they insulted over them; "They required of us mirth and a song." Now, 1. This was very barbarous and inhuman. Even an enemy in misery is to be pitied, and not trampled upon. It argues a base and sordid spirit to upbraid those that are in distress, either with their former joys or with their present griefs, or to challenge those to be merry who we know are out of tune for it; this is adding affliction to the afflicted. 2. It was very profane and impious. No songs would serve them but the songs of Zion, with which God had been honoured; so that in this demand they reflected upon God himself, as Belshazzar, when he drank wine in temple bowls. Their enemies mocked at their sabbaths, *Lam.* i. 7.

Thirdly. The patience wherewith they bore these abuses, ver. 4. They had laid by their harps, and would not resume them, no not to ingratiate themselves with those at whose mercy they lay,—would not answer those fools according to their folly. Profane scoffers are not to be humoured, nor pearls cast before swine. David prudently kept silence even from good, when the wicked were before him, who he knew would ridicule what he said, and make a jest of it, *Ps.* xxxix. 1, 2. The reason they gave is very mild and pious; "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" They do not say, how shall we sing when we are so much in sorrow? if that had been all, they might perhaps have put a force upon themselves, so far as to oblige their masters with a song; but it is the Lord's song, it is a sacred thing, it is peculiar to the temple service, and therefore we dare not sing it in the land of a stranger, among idolaters. We must not serve common mirth, much less profane mirth, with any thing that is appropriated to God, who is sometimes to be honoured by a religious silence, as well as by religious speaking.

Fourthly. The constant affection they retained for Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, even now they were in Babylon. Though their enemies banter them for talking so much of Jerusalem, and even doting upon it, their love to it is not in the least abated; it is what they may be jeered for, but will never be jeered out of, ver. 5, 6. Observe, 1. How these pious captives stood affected to Jerusalem. 1st. Their heads were full of it; it was always in their minds; they remembered it; they did not forget it, though they had been long absent from it. Many of them had never seen it, nor knew any thing of it but by report, and by what they had read in the Scripture, yet it was graven upon the palms of their hands, and even its ruins were continually before them, which was an evidence of their faith in the promise of its restoration in due time. In their daily prayers they opened their windows towards Jerusalem, and how then could they forget it? 2nd. Their hearts were full of it. They preferred it above their chief joy, and therefore they remembered it, and could not forget it. What we love we love to think of. They that rejoice in God do for his sake make Jerusalem their joy, and prefer it before that, whatever it is, which is the head of their joy, that is, which is dearest to them in this world. A godly man will prefer a public good before any private satisfaction or gratification whatsoever. 2. How steadfastly they resolved to keep up this affection, which they express by a solemn imprecation of mischief to themselves if they should let it fall; Let me be for ever disabled either to sing or play on the harp, if I so far forget the religion of my country, as to make use of my songs and harps for the pleasing of Babylon's sons, or the praising of Babylon's gods. "Let my right hand forget her art," (which the hand of an expert musician never can, unless it were withered;) nay, "Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth," if I have not a good word to say for Jerusalem, wherever I am. Though they dare not sing Zion's songs among the Babylonians, yet they cannot forget them; but as soon as ever the present restraint is taken off they will sing them as readily as ever, notwithstanding the long disuse.

7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom
In the day of Jerusalem;
Who said, Rase *it*,
Rase *it, even* to the foundation thereof.
8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed;
Happy *shall he be*, that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us.
9 Happy *shall he be*,
That taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

The pious Jews in Babylon, having afflicted themselves with the thoughts of the ruins of Jerusalem, here please themselves with the prospect of the ruin of her impenitent, implacable enemies. But this is not from a spirit of revenge, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God, and the honour of his kingdom.

First. The Edomites will certainly be reckoned with, and all others that were accessaries to the destruction of Jerusalem, that were aiding and abetting, that "helped forward the affliction," *Zec.* i. 15, and triumphed in it; that said, in the day of Jerusalem, the day of her judgment, "Rase it, rase it to the foundations;" down with it, down with it; do not leave one stone upon another! Thus they made the Chaldean army more furious, who were already so enraged that they needed no spur. Thus they put shame upon Israel, who would be looked upon as a people worthy to be cut off when their next neighbours had such an ill-will to them. And all this was a fruit of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, because he got the birthright and the blessing, and a branch of that more ancient enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Lord, remember them, saith the psalmist, which is an appeal to his justice against them. Far be it from us to avenge ourselves, if ever it should be in our power, but we will leave it to him who hath said, Vengeance is mine. Note, They that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished. They that are confederate with the persecutors of good people, and stir them up, and set them on, and are pleased with what they do, shall certainly be called to an account for it another day, and God will remember it against them.

Secondly. Babylon is the principal, and it will come to her turn too, to drink of the cup of tremblings, the very dregs of it; ver. 8, 9, "O daughter of Babylon," as proud and secure as thou art, we know very well by the Scriptures of truth "thou art to be destroyed;" or, as Dr. Hammond reads it, 'who art the destroyer.' The destroyers shall be destroyed, *Rev.* xiii. 10; and perhaps it is with reference to this that the man of sin, the head of the New Testament Babylon, is called a son of perdition, 2 *Thes.* ii. 3. The destruction of Babylon being foreseen as a sure destruction, "Thou art to be destroyed," it is spoken of, 1. As a just destruction. She shall be paid in her own coin; thou shalt be served as thou hast served us, as barbarously used by the destroyers, as we have been by thee: see *Rev.* xviii. 6. Let not those expect to find mercy who, when they had power, did not shew mercy. 2. As an utter destruction. The very little ones of Babylon, when it is taken by storm, and all in it put to the sword, shall be dashed to pieces by the enraged and merciless conqueror. None escape, if these little ones perish. Those are the seed of another generation, so that if they be cut off, the ruin will be not only total, as Jerusalem's was, but final. It is sunk like a millstone into the sea, never to rise. 3. As a destruction which should reflect honour upon the instruments of it. "Happy shall they be" that do it, for they are fulfilling God's counsels, and therefore he calls Cyrus that did it his servant, his shepherd, his anointed, *Isa.* xliv. 28; xlv. 1; and the soldiers that were employed in it his sanctified ones, *Isa.* xiii. 3. They are making way for the enlargement of God's Israel; and happy they that are any way serviceable to that. The fall of the New Testament Babylon will be the triumph of all the saints, *Rev.* xix. 1.

PSALM CXXXVIII.

It doth not appear, nor is it material to inquire, upon what occasion David penned this psalm, but in it, I. He looks back with thankfulness upon the experiences he had had of God's goodness to him, ver. 1—3. II. He looks forward with comfort, in hopes, 1. That others would go on to praise God like him, ver. 4, 5; 2. That God would go on to do good to him, ver. 6—8. In singing this psalm we must in like manner devote ourselves to God's praise and glory, and repose ourselves in his power and goodness.

A Psalm of David.

I WILL praise thee with my whole heart:
Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee
2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, [truth:
And praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy
For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.
3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,
And strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul.
4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD,
When they hear the words of thy mouth.
5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD:
For great *is* the glory of the LORD.

First. How he would praise God: compare *Ps.* cxi. 1.

1. He will praise him with sincerity and zeal. With my heart, "with my whole heart;" with that which is within me, and with all that is within me; with uprightness of intention, and fervency of affection: inward impressions agreeing with outward expressions. 2. With freedom and boldness; "Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee;" before the princes, and judges, and great men, either those of other nations that visited him, or those of his own nation that attended on him. Even in their presence he will not only praise God with his heart, which we may do by pious ejaculations in any company, but will sing praise, if there be occasion. Note, Praising God is work which the greatest of men need not be ashamed of; it is the work of angels, the work of heaven. Before the angels, so some understand it, that is, in religious assemblies, where there is a special presence of angels, 1 *Cor.* xi. 10. 3. In the way that God had appointed; "I will worship towards thy holy temple." The priests only went into the temple, the people at the nearest did but worship towards it, and that they might do at a distance. Christ is our temple, and towards him we must look with an eye of faith, as Mediator between us and God in all our praises of him. Heaven is God's holy temple, and thitherwards we must lift up our eyes in all our addresses to God, our Father in heaven.

Secondly. What he would praise God for.

1. For the fountain of his comforts; "For thy lovingkindness and for thy truth;" for thy goodness, and for thy promise; mercy hid in thee, and mercy revealed by thee. That God is a gracious God in himself, and has engaged to be so to all those that trust in him; "For thou hast magnified thy word," that is, thy promise, which is truth, "above all thy name." God has made himself known to us many ways, in creation and providence, but most clearly by his word. The judgments of his mouth are magnified even above those of his hand, and greater are done by them. The wonders of grace exceed the wonders of nature; and what is discovered of God by revelation is much greater than what is discovered by reason. In what God had done for David his faithfulness to his word appeared more illustrious, and redounded more to his glory than any other of his attributes. Some good interpreters understand it of Christ, the essential Word, and of his Gospel, which are magnified above all the discoveries God had before made of himself to the fathers. He that magnified the law, and made that honourable, magnifies the Gospel much more.

2. For the streams flowing from that fountain, in which he himself had tasted that the Lord is gracious, ver. 3. He had been in affliction, and he remembers with thankfulness, 1st. The sweet communion he then had with God. He cried, prayed, and prayed earnestly, and God answered him,—gave him to understand that his prayer was accepted, and should have a gracious return in due time. The intercourse between God and his saints is carried on by his promises and their prayers. 2nd. The sweet communications he then had from God; "Thou strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." This was the answer to his prayer; for God gives more than good words, *Ps.* xx. 6. Observe, *First.* It was a speedy answer; "In the day when I cried." Note, Those that trade with heaven by prayer grow rich by quick returns; "While we are yet speaking, God hears," *Isa.* lxv. 24. *Secondly.* It was a spiritual answer. God gave him strength in his soul, and that is a real and valuable answer to the prayer of faith in the day of affliction. If God give us strength in our souls to bear the burthens, resist the temptations, and do the duties of an afflicted state; if he strengthen us to keep hold of himself by faith, to maintain the peace of our own minds, and to wait with patience for the issue; we must own that he hath answered us, and are bound to be thankful.

Thirdly. What influence he hoped his praising God would have upon others, ver. 4, 5. David was himself a king, and therefore he hoped that kings would be wrought upon by his experiences and his examples to embrace religion; and if kings became religious, their kingdoms would be every way better. Now, 1. This may have reference to the kings that were neighbours to David, as Hiram and others. They shall all praise thee. When they visited David, and after his death when they sought the presence of Solomon, as all the kings of the earth are expressly said to do, 2 *Chr.* ix. 23, they readily joined in the worship of the God of Israel. 2. It may look farther, to the calling of the Gentiles, and the discipling of all nations by the Gospel of Christ, of which it is said that all kings shall fall down before him, *Ps.* lxxii. 11. Now it is here foretold, 1st. That the kings of the earth shall hear the words of God. All that came near David should hear them from him, *Ps.* cxix. 46. In the latter days the preachers of the Gospel should be sent into all the world. 2nd. That then they shall praise God, as all those have reason to do that hear his word, and receive it in the light and love of it, *Acts* xiii. 48. 3rd. That they shall sing in the ways

of the Lord, in the ways of his providence and grace towards them; they shall rejoice in God, and give glory to him, however he is pleased to deal with them, in the ways of their duty and obedience to him. Note, They that walk in the ways of the Lord have reason to sing in those ways, that is, to go on in them with a great deal of cheerfulness, for they are ways of pleasantness, and it becomes us to be pleasant in them. And if we are so, "great is the glory of the Lord." It is very much for the honour of God that kings should walk in his ways, and that all those that walk in them should sing in them, and so proclaim to all the world that he is a good Master, and his work its own wages.

6 Though the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the
But the proud he knoweth afar off. [lowly:
7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me:
Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of
And thy right hand shall save me. [mine enemies,
8 The LORD will perfect *that which* concerneth me:
Thy mercy, O LORD, *endureth* for ever:
Forsake not the works of thine own hands.

David here comforts himself with three things:

First. The favour God bears to his humble people; ver. 6, "Though the Lord be high," and neither needs any of his creatures nor can be benefited by them, "yet hath he respect unto the lowly," smiles upon them as well pleased with them, overlooks heaven and earth to cast a gracious look upon them, *Isa.* lvii. 15; lxvi. 1, and, sooner or later, he will put honour upon them; while he knows the proud afar off, knows them, but disowns them and rejects them, how proudly soever they pretend to his favour. Dr. Hammond makes this to be the sum of that Gospel which the kings of the earth shall hear and bid welcome, that penitent sinners shall be accepted of God, but the impenitent cast out. Witness the instance of the Pharisee and the publican, *Lu.* xviii.

Secondly. The care God takes of his afflicted, oppressed people, ver. 7. David, though a great and good man, expects to "walk in the midst of trouble," but encourageth himself with hope, 1. That God would comfort him. When my spirit is ready to sink and fail, "thou shalt revive me," and make me easy and cheerful under my troubles. Divine consolations have enough in them to revive us even when we walk in the midst of troubles, and are ready to die away for fear. 2. That he would protect him, and plead his cause. "Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand," though not against mine enemies, to destroy them, yet "against the wrath of mine enemies," to restrain that, and set bounds to it. 3. That he would in due time work deliverance for him. "Thy right hand shall save me." As he has one hand to stretch out against his enemies, so he has another to save his own people. Christ is the right hand of the Lord, that shall save all those that serve him.

Thirdly. The assurance we have that, whatever good work God has begun in and for his people, he will perform it; ver. 8, "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me," that is, 1. That which is most needful for me, and he knows best what is so. We are careful and cumbered about many things that do not concern us, but he knows what are the things that really are of consequence to us, *Mat.* vi. 32, and he will order them for the best. 2. That which we are most concerned about. Every good man is most concerned about his duty to God, and his happiness in God, that the former may be faithfully done, and the latter effectually secured; and if, indeed, these are the things that our hearts are most upon, and concerning which we are most solicitous, there is a good work begun in us, and he that has begun it will perfect it, we may be confident he will, *Phil.* i. 6. Observe, 1st. What ground the psalmist builds this confidence upon. "Thy mercy, O Lord, endures for ever." This he had made very much the matter of his praise, *Ps.* xiii. 6, and therefore he could here with the more assurance make it the matter of his hope; for if we give God the glory of his mercy we may take to ourselves the comfort of it. Our hopes that we shall persevere must be founded, not upon our own strength, for that will fail us, but upon the mercy of God, for that will not fail. It is well pleaded, Lord, thy mercy endures for ever, let me be for ever a monument of it. 2nd. What use he makes of this confidence. It doth not supersede, but quicken prayer. He turns his expectation into a petition; "Forsake not," do not let go, "the work of thine own hands." Lord, I am the work of thine own hands; my soul is so, do not forsake me; my concerns are so, do not lay by thy care of them. Whatever good there is in us, it is the work of God's own hands. He works in us both to will and to do; it will fail if he forsake it; but his glory, as Jehovah, a perfecting God, is so much concerned in the progress of it to the end, that we may in faith pray, Lord, do not forsake it. Whom he loves, he loves to the end; and, as for God, his work is perfect.

PSALM CXXXIX.

Some of the Jewish doctors are of opinion that this is the most excellent of all the psalms of David, and a very pious, devout meditation it is upon the doctrine of God's omniscience, which we should therefore have our hearts fixed upon and filled with in singing this psalm. I. This doctrine is here asserted and fully laid down, ver. 1—6. II. It is confirmed by two arguments: 1. God is everywhere present, therefore he knows all, ver. 7—12; 2. He made us, therefore he knows us, ver. 13—16. II. Some inferences are drawn from this doctrine: 1. It may fill us with pleasing admiration of God, ver. 17, 18; 2. With a holy dread and detestation of sin and sinners, ver. 19—22; 3. With a holy satisfaction in our own integrity, concerning which we may appeal to God, ver. 23, 24. This great and self-evident truth, that God knows our hearts, and the hearts of all the children of men, if we did but mix faith with it, and seriously consider and apply it, would have a great influence upon our holiness and upon our comfort.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.
2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted *with* all my ways.
4 For *there is* not a word in my tongue,
But, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
5 Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid thine hand upon me.
6 *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot *attain* unto it.

David here lays down this great doctrine, that the God with whom we have to do has a perfect knowledge of us; and that all the motions and actions both of our inward and of our outward man are naked and open before him.

First. He lays down this doctrine in the way of an address to God; he saith it to him, acknowledging it to him, and giving him the glory of it. Divine truths look full as well when they are prayed over as when they are preached over, and much better than when they are disputed over. When we speak of God to him himself, we shall find ourselves concerned to speak with the utmost degree both of sincerity and reverence, which will be likely to make the impressions deeper.

Secondly. He lays it down in a way of application to himself. Not, Thou hast known all, but, Thou hast known me; that is it which I am most concerned to believe, and which it will be most profitable for me to consider. Then we know these things for our good, when we know them for ourselves, *Job* v. 27; when we acknowledge, Lord, all souls are thine, we must add, My soul is thine; thou that hatest all sin, hatest my sin; that art good to all, good to Israel, art good to me. So here, "Thou hast searched me and known me," that is, known me as thoroughly as we know that which we have most diligently and exactly searched into. David was a king, and the hearts of kings are unsearchable to their subjects, *Pr.* xxv. 3, but they are not so to their Sovereign.

Thirdly. He descends to particulars. Thou knowest me wherever I am, and whatever I am doing, me, and all that belongs to me. 1. "Thou knowest" me, and all my motions, "my downsitting" to rest, "my uprising" to work, with what temper of mind I compose myself when I sit down, and stir up myself when I rise up; what my soul reposeth itself in as its stay and support, what it aims at and reacheth towards as its felicity and end. Thou knowest me when I come home, how I walk before my house; and when I go abroad, on what errands I go. 2. Thou knowest all my imaginations. Nothing more close and quick than thought; it is always unknown to others, it is often unobserved by ourselves, and yet "thou understandest my thought afar off." Though my thoughts be never so foreign and distant one from another, thou understandest the chain of them, and canst make out their connexion, when so many of them slip my notice, that I myself cannot. Or, thou understandest them afar off, even before I think them, and not long after I have thought them, and have myself forgotten them. Or, thou understandest them from afar; from the height of heaven thou seest into the depths of the heart, *Ps.* xxxiii. 14. 3. Thou knowest me, and all my designs and undertakings. Thou compassest every particular path. Thou siftest or winnowest my path, (so some,) so as thoroughly to distinguish between the good and evil of what I do, as by sifting we separate between the corn and the chaff. All our actions are ventilated by the judgment of God, *Ps.* xvii. 3. God takes notice of every step we take, every right step, and every by-step. He is acquainted with all our ways, intimately acquainted with them; he knows what rule we walk by, what end we walk towards, what company we walk with. 4. Thou knowest me in all my retirements. Thou knowest my lying down; when I am withdrawn from all company, and am reflecting upon what has past all day, and composing myself to rest, thou knowest what I have in my heart, and with what thoughts I go to bed. 5. Thou knowest me and all I say; ver. 4, "There is not a word in my tongue," not a vain word, not a good word, "but thou knowest it altogether," knowest what it meant, from what thought it came, and with what design it was uttered. There is not a word at my tongue's end, ready to be spoken, yet checked and kept in, but thou knowest it. 'When there is not a word in my tongue, O Lord, thou knowest all,' (so some read it,) for thoughts are words to God. 6. Thou knowest me in every part of me. "Thou hast beset me behind and before," so that go which way I will I am under thine eye, and cannot escape it any way possible; "Thou hast laid thine hand upon me," and I cannot outrun thee. Wherever we are, we are under the eye and hand of God. Perhaps it is an allusion to the physician's laying his hand upon his patient, to feel how his pulse beats, or what temper he is in. God knows us as we know not only what we see, but what we feel, and have our hands upon. "All his saints are in his hand."

Fourthly. He speaks of it with admiration; ver. 6, "It is too wonderful for me; it is high;" that is, 1. Thou hast such a knowledge of me as I have not of myself, nor can have. I cannot take notice of all my own thoughts, nor make such a judgment of myself as thou makest of me. 2. It is such a knowledge as I cannot comprehend, much less describe. That thou knowest all things I am sure, but how I cannot tell. We cannot by searching find out how God searcheth and finds out us, nor do we know how we are known.

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there:
If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there.*
9 *If* I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
10 Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;
Even the night shall be light about me.
12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee;
But the night shineth as the day:
The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee.*
13 For thou hast possessed my reins:
Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.
14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made:
Marvellous *are* thy works;
And *that* my soul knoweth right well.
15 My substance was not hid from thee,
When I was made in secret,

And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect;
And in thy book all *my members* were written,
Which in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.

It is of great use to us to know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed, that we may not only believe them, but be able to tell why we believe them, and to give a reason of the hope that is in us. David is therefore sure that God perfectly knows him and all his ways,

First. Because he is always under his eye. If God is omnipresent, he must needs be omniscient; but he is omnipresent: this supposeth the infinity and immensity of his being, from which follows the ubiquity of his presence. Heaven and earth include the whole creation, and the Creator fills both, *Jer.* xxiii. 24. He doth not only know both and govern both, but he fills both. Every part of the creation is under God's intuition and influence. David here acknowledgeth this also with application, and sees himself thus open before God.

1. No flight can remove us out of God's presence; "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, from thy presence," that is, from thy spiritual presence, from thyself, who art a spirit? God is a spirit, and therefore it is folly to think that, because we cannot see him, he cannot see us. "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" Not that he did desire to go away from God; no, he desired nothing more than to be near him, but he only puts the case, Suppose I should be such a fool as to think of getting out of thy sight, that I might shake off the awe of thee; suppose I should think of revolting from my obedience to thee, or disowning a dependence on thee, and shifting for myself; alas, whither can I go? A heathen could say, *Quocunque te flexeris, ibi Deum videbis occurrentem tibi*,—'Whithersoever thou turnest thyself, thou wilt see God meeting thee.'—*Seneca*.

He instanceth in the most remote and distant places, and counts upon meeting God in them. 1st. In heaven. If I ascend thither, as I hope to do shortly, "thou art there," and it will be my eternal bliss to be with thee there. Heaven is a vast large place, replenished with an innumerable company, and yet there is no escaping God's eye there, in any corner, or any crowd. The inhabitants of that world have as necessary a dependence upon God, and lie as open to his strict scrutiny, as the inhabitants of this. 2nd. In hell; in *Sheol*. Which may be understood either of the depth of the earth, the very centre of it,—should we dig as deep as we can underground, and think to hide ourselves there, we should be mistaken; God knows that path which the vulture's eye never saw, and to him the earth is all surface. Or of the state of the dead,—when we are removed out of the sight of all living, yet not out of the sight of the living God; from his eye we cannot hide us in the grave. Or of the place of the damned,—"If I make my bed in hell," (an uncomfortable place to make a bed in, where there is no rest day or night, yet thousands will make their bed for ever in those flames,) "behold thou art there," in thy power and justice. God's wrath is the fire which will there burn everlastingly, *Rev.* xiv. 10. 3rd. In the remotest corners of this world; "If I take the wings of the morning," the rays of the morning light, (called the wings of the sun, *Mal.* iv. 2,) than which nothing more swift, "and flee" upon them "to the uttermost parts of the sea," or of the earth, *Job* xxxviii. 12, 13; should I flee to the most distant and obscure islands, (the *ultima Thule*, the *terra incognita*,) I should find thee there; "there shall thy hand lead me" as far as I go, "and thy right hand shall hold me," that I can go no farther, that I cannot go out of thy reach. God soon arrested Jonah when he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

2. No veil can hide us from God's eye, no, not that of the thickest darkness; ver. 11, 12, "If I say, Yet the darkness shall cover me," when nothing else will, alas! I find myself deceived; the curtains of the evening will stand me in no more stead than the wings of the morning, "even the night shall be light about me." That which often favours the escape of a pursued criminal, and the retreat of a beaten army, yet will do me no kindness in fleeing from thee. When God divided between the light and darkness, it was with a reservation of this prerogative, that to himself the darkness and the light should still be both alike. 'The darkness darkeneth not from thee,' for there is no darkness or shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. No hypocritical mask or disguise, how specious soever, can save any person or action from appearing in a true light before God. Secret haunts of sin are as open before God as the most open and barefaced villanies.

Secondly. Because he is the work of his hands. He that framed the engine knows all the motions of it; God made us, and therefore no doubt he knows us. He saw us when we were in the forming; and can we be hid from him now we are formed? This argument he insists upon, ver. 13—16, "Thou hast possessed my reins;" that is, thou art master of my most secret thoughts and intentions, and the innermost recesses of my soul; thou not only knowest, but governest them, as we do that which we have possession of. And the possession thou hast of my reins is a rightful possession, for "thou coveredst me in my mother's womb;" that is, thou madest me, *Job* x. 11. Thou madest me a secret. The soul is concealed from all about us; "Who knows the things of a man save the spirit of a man?" 1 *Cor.* ii. 11. Hence we read of the hidden man of the heart. But it was God himself that thus covered us; and therefore he can, when he pleaseth, discover us. When he hid us from all the world he did not intend to hide us from himself. Concerning the formation of man, of each of us,

1. The glory of it is here given to God, entirely to him; for it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. "I will praise thee," the Author of my being; my parents were only the instruments of it. It was done, 1st. Under the Divine inspection. "My substance," when hid in the womb, nay, when it was yet but *in fieri*,—'in the forming,' an unshapen embryo, "was not hid from thee, thine eyes did see my substance." 2nd. By the Divine operation. As the eye of God saw us then, so his hand wrought us; we were his work. 3rd. According to the Divine model. "In thy book all my members were written." Eternal wisdom formed the plan, and by that almighty power raised the noble structure.

2. Glorious things are here said concerning it. The generation of man is to be considered with the same pious veneration as his creation at first. Consider it, 1st. As a great marvel, a great miracle we might call it, but that it is done in the ordinary course of nature. "We are fearfully and wonderfully made." We may justly be astonished at the admirable contrivance of these living temples, the composure of every part, and the harmony of all together. 2nd. As a great mystery; a mystery of nature. "My soul knows right well" that it is marvellous; but how to describe it I know not, for any one else, for "I was made in secret, and curiously wrought" in the womb as "in the lowest parts of the earth," so privately and so far out of sight. 3rd. As a great mercy; that all our members "in continuance were fashioned" according as they were written in the book of God's wise counsel, "when as yet there was none of them;" or, as some read it, 'and none of them was left out.' If any of our members had been wanting in God's book, they had been wanting in our bodies; but through his goodness we have all our limbs and senses,—the want of any of which might have made us burthens to ourselves. See what reason we have then to praise God for our creation, and to conclude that he who saw our substance when it was unfashioned sees it now it is fashioned.

17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
18 *If* I should count them,
They are more in number than the sand:
When I awake, I am still with thee.
19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God:
Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.
20 For they speak against thee wickedly,
And thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.
21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee?
And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?
22 I hate them with perfect hatred:
I count them mine enemies.
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts:
24 And see if *there be any* wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.

Here the psalmist makes application of the doctrine of God's omniscience divers ways.

First. He acknowledgeth with wonder and thankfulness the care God had taken of him all his days, ver. 17, 18. God that knew him thought of him, and his thoughts towards him were thoughts of love; "thoughts of good and not of evil," *Jer.* xxiv. 11. God's omniscience, which might justly have watched over us to do us hurt, has been employed for us, and has watched over us to do us good, *Jer.* xxxi. 28. God's counsels concerning us and our welfare, have been, 1. Precious to admiration. "How precious are they!" They are deep in themselves, such as cannot possibly be fathomed and comprehended. Providence has had a vast reach in its dispensations concerning us, and has brought things about for our good quite beyond our contrivance and foresight. They are dear to us; we must think of them with a great deal of reverence, and yet with pleasure and thankfulness. Our thoughts concerning God must be delightful to us above any other thoughts. 2. Numerous to admiration; "How great is the sum of them!" We cannot conceive how many God's kind counsels have been concerning us, how many good turns he has done us, and what variety of mercies we have received from him. "If we would count them," the heads of them, much more the particulars of them, "they are more in number than the sand," and yet every one great and very considerable, *Ps.* xl. 5. We cannot conceive the multitude of God's compassions, which are all new every morning. 3. Constant at all times. "When I awake" every morning, "I am still with thee," under thine eye and care, safe and easy under thy protection. This speaks also the continual devout sense David had of the eye of God upon him: "When I awake I am with thee" in my thoughts; and it would help to keep us in the fear of the Lord all the day long, if when we awake in the morning our first thoughts were of him, and we did then set him before us.

Secondly. He concludes from this doctrine that ruin will certainly be the end of sinners. God knows all the wickedness of the wicked, and therefore he will reckon for it. "Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God," for all their wickedness is open before thee, however it may be artfully disguised and coloured over to hide it from the eye of the world. However thou suffer them to prosper for awhile, surely thou wilt slay them at last. Now observe, 1. The reason why God will punish them. Because they daringly affront him, and set him at defiance; ver. 20, "They speak against thee wickedly;" they "set their mouth against the heavens," *Ps.* lxxiii. 9, and shall be called to account for the hard speeches they have spoken against him, *Jude* 15. They are his enemies, and declare their enmity by taking his name in vain, as we shew our contempt of a man if we make a byword of his name, and never mention him but in a way of jest and banter. Those that profane the sacred forms of swearing or praying, by using them in an impertinent, irreverent manner, take God's name in vain, and thereby shew themselves enemies to him. Some make it to be a description of hypocrites; 'They speak of thee for mischief,' they talk of God, pretending to piety; but it is with some ill design, for a cloak of maliciousness; and being enemies to God, while they pretend friendship, they take his name in vain; that is, they swear falsely. 2. The use David makes of this prospect he has of the ruin of the wicked. 1st. He defies them. "Depart from me, ye bloody men," that is, ye shall not debauch me, for I will not admit your friendship, nor have fellowship with you; and you cannot destroy me, for, being under God's protection, he shall force you to depart from me. 2nd. He detests them, ver. 21, 22. Lord, thou knowest the heart and canst witness for me, "Do not I hate them that hate thee?" and for that reason, because they hate thee; and therefore I hate them because I love thee, and hate to see such affronts and indignities put upon thy blessed name. "Am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?" grieved to see their rebellion, and to foresee their ruin which it will certainly end in. Note, Sin is hated, and sinners lamented, by all that fear God. "I hate them;" that is, "I hate the work of them that turn aside," as he explains himself, *Ps.* ci. 3, with a sincere and perfect hatred. I count them that are enemies to God as enemies to me, and will not have any intimacy with them, *Ps.* lxix. 9.

Thirdly. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity, ver. 23, 24.

1. He desires that as far as he was in the wrong God would discover it to him. They that are upright can take comfort in God's omniscience as a witness of their uprightness, and can with an humble confidence beg of him to search and try them, to discover them to themselves; for a good man desires to know the worst by himself, and to discover them to others. He that means honestly could wish he had a window in his breast, that any man may look into his heart. Lord, I hope I am not in a wicked way, but "see if there be any wicked way in me," any corrupt inclination remaining; let me see it, and root it out of me, for I do not allow it.

2. He desires that as far as he was in the right he might be forwarded in it; which he that knows the heart knows how to do effectually; "Lead me in the way everlasting." Note, 1st. The way of godliness is an everlasting way, it is everlastingly true and good, pleasing to God, and profitable to us, and will end in everlasting life. It is the way of antiquity, so some; the good old way. 2nd. All the saints desire to be kept and led in this way, that they may not miss it, turn out of it, or tire in it.

PSALM CXL.

This and the four following psalms are much of a piece, and the scope of them the same with many that we met with in the beginning and middle of the book of *Psalms*, but few of late. They were penned by David (as it should seem) when he was persecuted by Saul; one of them is said to be his prayer when he was in the cave, and it is probable all the rest were penned about the same time. In this psalm, I. David complains of the malice of his enemies, and prays to God to preserve him from them, ver. 1—5. II. He encourageth himself in God as his God, ver. 6, 7. III. He prays for and prophesies the destruction of his persecutors, ver. 8—11. IV. He assures all God's afflicted people that their troubles would in due time end well, ver. 12, 13, with which assurance we must comfort ourselves and one another in singing this psalm.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

DELIVER me, O LORD, from the evil man:
Preserve me from the violent man;
2 Which imagine mischiefs in *their* heart;
Continually are they gathered together *for* war.
3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent;
Adders' poison *is* under their lips. Selah.
4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked;
Preserve me from the violent man;
Who have purposed to overthrow my goings.
5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords;
They have spread a net by the wayside;
They have set gins for me. Selah.
6 I said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my God:
Hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.
7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

In this, as in other things, David was a type of Christ,—that he suffered before he reigned, was humbled before he was exalted; and that, as there were many who loved and valued him, and sought to do him honour, so there were many that hated and envied him, and sought to do him mischief, as appears by these verses, where,

First. He gives a character of his enemies, and paints them out in their own colours, as dangerous men, that he had reason to be afraid of; but ill men that he had no reason to think the righteous God would countenance. There was one that seems to have been the ringleader of them, whom he calls the evil man, and the man of violence, ver. 1, 7; probably he means Saul. The Chaldee paraphrast, ver. 9, names both Doeg and Ahithophel; but between them there was a great distance of time. Violent men are evil men. But there were many besides this one that were confederate against David, who are here represented as the genuine offspring and seed of the serpent. For, 1. They are very subtle, crafty to do mischief. They have imagined it, ver. 2, have laid the scheme with all the art and cunning imaginable. They have purposed and plotted to overthrow the goings of a good man, ver. 4, to draw him into sin and trouble, to ruin him by blasting his reputation, crushing his interest, and taking away his life. To this purpose they have, like mighty hunters, hid a snare, and spread a net, and set gins, ver. 5, that their designs against him, being kept undiscovered, might be the more likely to take effect, and he might fall into their hands ere he was aware. Great persecutors have often been great politicians, which has indeed made them the more formidable; but the Lord preserveth the simple without all those arts. 2. They are very spiteful, as full of malice as Satan himself. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent that infuseth his venom with his tongue, and there is so much malignity in all they say, that one would think there were nothing under their lips but adders' poison, ver. 3; with their calumnies, and with their counsels, they aimed to destroy David, but secretly, as a man is stung with a serpent, or a snake, in the grass. And they endeavoured, likewise, to infuse their malice into others, and to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. A malignant tongue makes men like the old serpent; and poison in the lips is a certain sign of poison in the heart. 3. They are confederate. They are many of them; but they are all gathered together against me for war, ver. 2. They that can agree in nothing else can agree to persecute a good man. Herod and Pilate will unite in this, and in this they resemble Satan, who is not divided against himself; all the devils agreeing in Beelzebub. 4. They are proud, ver. 5. Conceited of themselves, and confident of their success; and herein also they resemble Satan, whose reigning, ruining sin was pride. The pride of persecutors, though at present it be the terror, yet may be the encouragement of the persecuted, for the more haughty they are the faster are they ripening for ruin. "Pride goes before destruction."

Secondly. He prays to God to keep him from them, and from being swallowed up by them. "Lord, deliver me, preserve me, keep me," ver. 1, 4. Let them not prevail to take away my life, my reputation, my interest, my comfort, and to prevent my coming to the throne. Keep me from doing as they do, or as they would have me do, or as they promise themselves I will do. Note, The more malice appears in our enemies against us, the more earnest we should be in prayer to God to take us under his protection. In him believers may count upon a security, and may enjoy it and themselves with a holy serenity. Those are safe whom God preserves. If he be for us who can be against us?

Thirdly. He triumphs in God, and thereby in effect he triumphs over his persecutors, ver. 6, 7. When his enemies sharpened their tongues against him, did he sharpen his against them? No; "Adders' poison was under their lips," but grace was poured into his lips; witness what he here said unto the Lord, for to him he looked, to him he directed himself, when he saw himself in so much danger through the malice of his enemies; and it is well for us we have a God to go to. He comforted himself, 1. In his interest in God, "I said, Thou art my God;" and if my God, then my shield and mighty protector. In troublous, dangerous times it is good to claim relation to God, and by faith to keep hold of him. 2. In his access to God. This comforted him, not only that he was taken into covenant with God, but into communion with him, that he had leave to speak to him, and might expect an answer of peace from him, and could say, with an humble confidence, "Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord." 3. In the assurance he had of help from God, and happiness in him. "O God the Lord," *Jehovah Adonai*: as Jehovah thou art self-existent and self-sufficient, an infinitely perfect Being; as Adonai thou art my stay and support, my ruler and governor; and therefore the strength of my salvation, that is, my strong Saviour. Nay, not only my Saviour, but my salvation itself, from whom, in whom, my salvation is; not only a strong Saviour, but the very strength of my salvation, on whom the stress of my hope is laid; all in all to make me happy, and to preserve me to my happiness. 4. In the experience he had had formerly of God's care of him. "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." As he pleaded with Saul, that for the service of his country he many a time jeoparded his life in the high places of the field, so he pleads with God, that in those services he had wonderfully protected him, and provided him a better helmet for the securing of his head than Goliath's was. Lord, thou hast kept me in the day of battle with the Philistines, suffer me not to fall by the treacherous intrigues of false-hearted Israelites. God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care in dangers of one kind may encourage us to trust in him, and depend upon him in dangers of another nature, for nothing can shorten the Lord's right hand.

8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked:
Further not his wicked device;
Lest they exalt themselves. Selah.
9 *As for* the head of those that compass me about,
Let the mischief of their own lips cover them.
10 Let burning coals fall upon them:
Let them be cast into the fire;
Into deep pits, that they rise not up again.
11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth:
Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow *him*.
12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the [afflicted,
And the right of the poor.
13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name:
The upright shall dwell in thy presence.

Here is the believing foresight David had,
First. Of the shame and confusion of persecutors.

1. Their disappointment. This he prays for, ver. 8, that their lusts might not be gratified, their lust of ambition, envy and revenge. "Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked," but frustrate them. Let them not see the ruin of my interest which they so earnestly wish to see; but "hear the voice of my supplications." That their projects might not take effect, but be blasted, "O further not his wicked device;" let not providence favour any of his designs, but cross them. "Suffer not his wicked device to proceed," but scotch his wheels, and stop him in the career of his pursuits. Thus we are to pray against the enemies of God's people that they may not succeed in any of their enterprises. Such was David's prayer against Ahithophel, that God would turn his counsels into foolishness. The plea is, "lest they exalt themselves," value themselves upon their success, as if it were an evidence that God favoured them. Proud men when they prosper are made prouder, grow more impudent against God, and insolent against his people, and therefore, Lord, do not prosper them.

2. Their destruction. This he prays for, as we read it; but some choose to read it rather as a prophecy, and the original will bear it. If we take it as a prayer that proceeds from a spirit of prophecy, which comes all to one, he foretells the ruin,

1st. Of his own enemies. As for those that compass me about and seek my ruin, *First*. The mischief of their own lips shall cover their heads, ver. 9; that is, the evil they have wished to me shall come upon themselves; their curses shall be blown back into their own faces; and the very designs which they have laid against me shall turn to their own ruin, *Ps.* vii. 15, 16. Let those that make mischief by slandering, tale-bearing, misrepresenting their neighbours, and spreading ill-natured characters and stories, dread the consequence of it, and think how sad their condition will be when all the mischief they have been accessory to shall be made to return upon themselves. *Secondly*. The judgments of God shall fall upon them; compared here to burning coals, in allusion to the destruction of Sodom. Nay, as in the deluge the waters from above and those from beneath met for the drowning of the world, both the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up; so here, to complete the ruin of the enemies of Christ and his kingdom, they shall not only have burning coals cast upon them from above, *Job* xx. 23; xxvii. 22; but they themselves shall be cast into the fire beneath; both heaven and hell, the wrath of God the judge, and the rage of Satan the tormentor, shall concur to make them miserable. And the fire they shall be cast into is not a furnace of fire, out of which perhaps they might escape, but a deep pit out of which they cannot rise. Tophet is said to be deep and large, *Isa.* xxx. 33.

2nd. Of all others that are like them, ver. 11. *First*. Evil speakers must expect to be shaken, for they shall never be established in the earth. What is got by fraud and falsehood, by calumny and unjust accusation, will not prosper, will not last. Wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not such men as Doeg think to reign long, for his doom will be theirs, *Ps.* ii. 5. A lying tongue is but for a moment; but "the lip of truth shall be established for ever." *Secondly*. Evil doers must expect to be destroyed. "Evil shall hunt the violent man," as the bloodhound hunts the murderer to discover him, as the lion hunts his prey to tear it to pieces. Mischievous men will be brought to light, and brought to ruin; the destruction appointed shall run them down and overthrow them. "Evil pursues sinners."

Secondly. Here is his foresight of the deliverance and comfort of the persecuted, ver. 12, 13. 1. God will do them justice in delivering them who, being wronged, commit themselves to him. "I know that the Lord will maintain" the just and injured cause of his afflicted people, and will not suffer might always to prevail against right, though it be but "the right of the poor," who have but little that they can pretend a right to. God is and will be the patron of oppressed innocence, much more of persecuted piety. They that know him cannot but know this. 2. They will do him justice, (if I may so speak,) in ascribing the glory of their deliverance to him. "Surely the righteous," (who make conscience of rendering to God his due, as well as to men theirs,) "shall give thanks unto thy name" when they find their cause pleaded with jealousy, and prosecuted with effect. The closing words, "The upright shall dwell in thy presence," include both God's favour to them,—Thou shalt admit them to dwell in thy presence in grace here, in glory hereafter, and it shall be their safety and happiness,—and their duty to God; they shall attend upon thee as servants that keep in the presence of their masters, both to do them honour and to receive their commands. This is true thanksgiving, even thanksliving; and this use we should make of all our deliverances, we should serve God the more closely and cheerfully.

PSALM CXLI.

David was in distress when he penned this psalm; it is most likely pursued by Saul, that violent man. Is any distressed? let him pray; David did so, and had the comfort of it. I. He prays for God's favourable acceptance, ver. 1, 2. II. For his powerful assistance, ver. 3, 4. III. That others might be instrumental of good to his soul, as he hoped to be to the souls of others, ver. 5, 6. IV. That he and his friends being now brought to the last extremity, God would graciously appear for their relief and rescue, ver. 7—10. The mercy and grace of God are as necessary to us as they were to him, and therefore we should be humbly earnest for them in singing this psalm.

A Psalm of David.

LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me;
Give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.
2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense;
And the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.
3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth;
Keep the door of my lips.
4 Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing,
To practise wicked works with men that work iniquity:
And let me not eat of their dainties.

Mercy to accept what we do well, and grace to keep us from doing ill, are the two things which we are here taught by David's example to pray to God for.

First. David was in love with prayer, and he begs of God that his prayers might be heard and answered, ver. 1, 2. David cried unto God; his crying notes fervency in prayer, he prayed as one in earnest; his crying to God notes faith and fixedness in prayer. And what did he desire as the success of his prayer? 1. That God would take cognizance of it, "Give ear to my voice;" let me have a gracious audience. They that cry in prayer may hope to be heard in prayer, not for their loudness but their liveliness. 2. That he would visit him upon it, "Make haste unto me." Those that know how to value God's gracious presence will be importunate for it, and humbly impatient of delays. He that believes doth not make haste, but he that prays may be earnest with God to make haste. 3. That he would be well pleased with him in it; well pleased with his praying and the lifting up of his hands in prayer; which notes both the elevation and enlargement of his desire, and the outgoings of his hope and expectation; the lifting up of the hands signifying the lifting up of the heart, and being used instead of lifting up the sacrifices which were heaved and waved before the Lord. Prayer is a spiritual sacrifice, it is the offering up of the soul and its best affections to God. Now he prays that this may be set forth and directed before God as the incense which was daily burned upon the golden altar, and as the evening sacrifice, which he instances in rather than the morning sacrifice, perhaps because this was an evening prayer, or with an eye to Christ, who in the evening of the world, and in the evening of the day, was to offer up himself a sacrifice of atonement, and establish the spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment, having abolished all the carnal ordinances of the law. They that pray in faith may expect it will please God better than an ox or bullock. David was now banished from God's court, and could not attend the sacrifice and incense, and therefore begs that his prayer might be instead of them. Note, Prayer is of a sweet smelling savour to God, as incense, which yet had no savour without fire; nor has prayer without the fire of holy love and fervour.

Secondly. David was in fear of sin; and he begs of God that he might be kept from sin, knowing that his prayers would not be accepted unless he took care to watch against sin. We must be as earnest for God's grace in us as for his favour towards us.

1. He prays that he might not be surprised into any sinful words; ver. 3, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth;" and nature having made my lips to be a door to my words, let grace keep that door, that no word may be suffered to go out which may any way tend to the dishonour of God or the hurt of others. Good men know the evil of tongue sins, and how prone they are to them. When enemies are provoking we are in danger of carrying our resentments too far, and of speaking unadvisedly, as Moses did, though the meekest of men; and therefore they are earnest with God to prevent their speaking amiss, as knowing no watchfulness or resolution of their own is sufficient for the governing of their tongues, much less of their hearts, without the special grace of God. We must keep our mouths as with a bridle, but that will not serve, we must pray to God to keep them. Nehemiah prayed to the Lord then, when he set a watch, and so must we, for without him the watchman waketh but in vain.

2. That he might not be inclined to any sinful practices; ver. 4, "Incline not my heart to any evil thing;" that is whatever inclination there is in me to sin let it be not only restrained but mortified by Divine grace. The example of those about us, and the provocations of those against us, are apt to stir up and draw out corrupt inclinations; we are ready to do as others do, and to think that if we received injuries we may return them, and therefore we have need to pray that we may never be left to ourselves to practise any wicked work, either in confederacy with, or in opposition to, the men that work iniquity. While we live in such an evil world, and carry about with us such evil hearts, we have need to pray that we may neither be drawn in by any allurement, nor driven on by any provocation, to do an ill thing.

3. That he might not be ensnared by any sinful pleasures. "Let me not eat of their dainties." Let me not join with them in their feasts and sports, lest thereby I be inveigled into their sins; better is a dinner of herbs out of the way of temptation than a stalled ox in it. Sinners pretend to find dainties in sin: stolen waters are sweet, forbidden fruit is pleasant to the eye; but they that consider how soon the dainties of sin will turn into wormwood and gall, how certainly it will at last bite like a serpent and sting like an adder, will dread those dainties, and pray to God by his providence to take them out of their sight, and by his grace to turn their stomachs (as I may say) against them. Good men will pray against even the sweets of sin.

5 Let the righteous smite me; *it shall be* a kindness:
And let him reprove me; *it shall be* an excellent oil,
which shall not break my head:
For yet my prayer also *shall be* in their calamities.
6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places,
They shall hear my words; for they are sweet
7 Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth,
As when one cutteth and cleaveth *wood* upon the earth.
8 But mine eyes *are* unto thee, O GOD the Lord:
In thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.
9 Keep me from the snares *which* they have laid for me,
And the gins of the workers of iniquity.
10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets,
Whilst that I withal escape.

Here, First. David desires to be told of his faults. His enemies reproached him with that which was false, which he could not but complain of, yet at the same time he desires his friends would reprove him for that which was really amiss in him, particularly if there were any thing that gave the least colour to those reproaches; ver. 5, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness." The righteous God, (so some;) I will welcome the rebukes of his providence, and be so far from quarrelling with them that I will receive them as tokens of love, and improve them as means of grace, and will pray for those that are the instruments of my trouble. But it is commonly taken for the reproofs given by righteous men; and it best becomes those that are themselves righteous to reprove the unrighteousness of others, and from them it will be best taken. But if the reproof be just, though the reprover be not so, we must make a good use of it, and learn obedience by it. But the reproofs of the righteous and wise we are here taught how to receive. 1. We must desire to be reproved for whatever is amiss in us, or is done amiss by us. Lord, put it into the heart of the righteous to smite me and reprove me. If my own heart doth not smite me as it ought, let my friend do it; let me never fall under that dreadful judgment of being let alone in sin. 2. We must account it a piece of friendship. We must not only bear it patiently, but take it as a kindness, for "reproofs of instruction are the way of life," *Pr.* vi. 23; are means of good to us, to bring us to repentance for the sins we have committed, and to prevent relapses into sin. Reproofs, though they cut, it is in order to a cure, and therefore much more desirable than the kisses of an enemy, *Pr.* xxvii. 6, or the song of fools, *Eccl.* vii. 5. David blessed God for Abigail's seasonable admonition, 1 *Sam.* xxi. 32. 3. We must reckon ourselves helped and healed by it. "It shall be as an excellent oil" to a wound to mollify it, and close it up; "It shall not break my head," as some reckon it to do, who could as well bear to have their heads broken as to be told of their faults, but, saith David, I am not of that mind; it is my sin that has broken my head, that has broken my bones, *Ps.* li. 8. The reproof is an excellent oil to cure the bruises sin has given me. "It shall not break my head," if it may but help to break my heart. 4. We must requite the kindness of those that deal thus faithfully, thus friendly with us, at least by our prayers for them in their calamities; and hereby we must shew that we took it kindly. Dr. Hammond gives quite another reading of this verse; 'Reproach will bruise me that am righteous, and rebuke me; but that poisonous oil shall not break my head,' that is, shall not destroy me, shall not do me the mischief intended, 'for yet my prayer shall be in their mischiefs,' that God would preserve me from them, and my prayer shall not be in vain.

Secondly. David hopes his persecutors will some time or other bear to be told of their faults, as he was willing to be told of his; ver. 6, "when their judges," (Saul and his officers that judged and condemned David, and would themselves be sole judges,) when they "are overthrown in stony places," among the rocks in the wilderness, then "they shall hear my words, for they are sweet." Some think this refers to the relentings that were in Saul's breast, when he said with tears, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" 1 *Sam.* xxiv. 16; xxvi. 21. Or we may take it more generally; even judges, as great as they are, may come to be overthrown; those that make the greatest figure in this world do not always meet with level, smooth ways through it. And those that slighted the word of God before will relish it and be glad of it when they are in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter the word is sweet. Oppressed innocency cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure, but when they come to be overthrown themselves they will have more compassionate thoughts of the afflicted.

Thirdly. David complains of the great extremity to which he and his friends were reduced; ver. 7, "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth," out of which they are thrown up, so long have we been dead; or into which they are ready to be thrown, so near are we to the pit, and they are as little regarded as chips among the hewers of wood, which are thrown in neglected heaps. 'As one that cuts and cleaves the earth,' so some read it, alluding to the ploughman that tears the earth in pieces with his ploughshare, *Ps.* cxxix. 3. "Can these dry bones live?"

Fourthly. David casts himself upon God, and depends upon him for deliverance. "But mine eyes are unto thee," ver. 8, for when the case is never so deplorable thou canst redress all the grievances; from thee I expect relief as bad as things are, "and in thee is my trust." Those that have their eye towards God may have their hopes in him.

Fifthly. He prays that God would succour and relieve him as his necessity required. 1. That he would comfort him. "Leave not my soul desolate and destitute;" still let me see where my help is. 2. That he would prevent the designs of his enemies against him; ver. 9, "Keep me from" being taken in "the snare they have laid for me;" give me to discover it, and to evade it. Be the gin placed with never so much subtlety God can and will secure his people from being taken in it. 3. That God would in justice turn the designs of his enemies upon themselves, and in mercy deliver him from being ruined by them; ver. 10, "Let the wicked fall into their own net," the net which intentionally they procured for me, but which meritoriously they prepared for themselves. *Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis artifices arte perire sua.*—'No law can be more just than that the architects of destruction should perish by their own contrivances.' All that are bound over to God's justice are held in the cords of their own iniquity; but let me at the same time obtain a discharge. The entangling and ensnaring of the wicked sometimes proves the escape and enlargement of the righteous.

PSALM CXLII.

This psalm is a prayer, the substance of which David offered up to God when he was forced by Saul to take shelter in a cave, and afterwards penned it in this form. Here is, I. The complaint he makes to God, ver. 1, 2, of the subtlety, strength, and malice of his enemies, ver. 3, 6; and the coldness and indifferency of his friends, ver. 4. II. The comfort he takes in God, that he knew his case, ver. 3; and was his refuge, ver. 5. III. His expectation from God, that he would hear and deliver him, ver. 6, 7. IV. His expectation from the righteous, that they would join with him in praises, ver. 7. Those that are troubled in mind, body, or estate may, in singing this psalm, (if they sing it in some measure with David's spirit,) both warrant his complaints, and fetch in his comforts.

PSALM CXLII.

Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave.

I CRIED unto the LORD with my voice; [tion.
With my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplica-
2 I poured out my complaint before him;
I shewed before him my trouble.
3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me,
Then thou knewest my path.
In the way wherein I walked
Have they privily laid a snare for me.

CAVES IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Whether it was in the cave of Adullam, or that of Engedi, that David prayed this prayer is not material; it is plain he was in distress. It was a great disgrace to so great a soldier, so great a courtier, to be put to such mean shifts for his own safety; and a great terror to be so hotly pursued, and every moment in expectation of death; yet then he had such a presence of mind as to pray this prayer, and wherever he was still he had his religion about him. Prayers and tears were his weapons; and when he durst not stretch forth his hands against his prince, he lifted them up to his God. There is no cave so deep, so dark, but we may out of it send up our prayers and our souls in prayer to God. He calls this prayer, Maschil, a psalm of instruction, because of the good lessons he had himself learned in the cave, learned on his knees, which he desired to teach others. In these verses observe,

First. How David complained to God, ver. 1, 2. When the danger was over, he was not ashamed to own (as great spirits sometimes are) the fright he had been in, and the application he had made to God. Let not men of the first rank think it any diminution or disparagement to them when they are in affliction to cry to God; and to cry like children to their parents, when any thing frightens them. David poured out his complaint, which notes a free and full complaint, he was large and particular in it. His heart was as full of his grievances as it could hold, but he made himself easy by pouring them out before the Lord; and this he did with great fervency. He cried unto the Lord with his voice, with the voice of his mind, so some think; for, being hid in the cave, he durst not speak with an audible voice, lest that should have discovered him. But mental prayer is vocal to God, and he hears the groanings which cannot or dare not be uttered, *Rom.* viii. 26. Two things David laid open to God in this complaint:

1. His distress. He exhibited a remonstrance or memorial of his case; "I shewed before him my trouble," and all the circumstances of it. He did not prescribe to God, nor shew him his trouble, as if God did not know it without his shewing, but as one that put a confidence in God, desired to keep up communion with him, and was willing to refer himself entirely to him; he unbosomed himself to him, humbly laid the matter before him, and then cheerfully left it with him. We are apt to shew our trouble too much to ourselves, aggravating it, and poring upon it, which doth us no kindness, whereas by shewing it to God we might cast the care upon him who careth for us, and thereby ease ourselves. Nor should we allow of any complaint to ourselves or others, which we cannot with the due decency and sincerity of devotion make to God, and stand to before him.

2. His desire. When he made his complaint, he made his supplication, ver. 1; not claiming relief as a debt, but humbly begging it as a favour. Complainants must be supplicants, for God will be sought unto.

Secondly. What he complained of. "In the way wherein I walked," suspecting no danger, "have they privily laid a snare for me," to entrap me. Saul gave Michal his daughter to David on purpose that she might be a snare to him, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 21. This he complains of to God, that every thing was done with design upon him. If he had gone out of his way, and met with snares, he might have thanked himself; but when he met with them in the way of his duty, he might with humble boldness tell God of them.

Thirdly. What comforts him in the midst of these complaints; ver. 3, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me," and ready to sink under the burthen of grief and fear, when I was quite at a loss, and ready to depair, "then thou knewest my path;" that is, then it was a pleasure to me to think that thou knewest it. Thou knewest my sincerity, the right path which I have walked in, and that I am not such a one as my persecutors represent me. Or thou knewest my condition in all the particulars of it; when my spirit was so overwhelmed that I could not distinctly shew it, this comforted me, that thou knewest it, *Job* xxiii. 10. Thou knewest it; that is, thou didst protect, preserve, and secure it, *Ps.* xxxi. 7; *Deu.* ii. 7.

4 I looked on *my* right hand, and beheld,
But *there was* no man that would know me:
Refuge failed me;
No man cared for my soul.
5 I cried unto thee, O LORD:
I said, Thou *art* my refuge
And my portion in the land of the living.
6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low:
Deliver me from my persecutors;
For they are stronger than I.
7 Bring my soul out of prison,
That I may praise thy name:
The righteous shall compass me about;
For thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

The psalmist here tells us for our instruction,

First. How he was disowned and deserted by his friends, ver. 4. When he was in favour at court, he seemed to have a great interest, but when he was made an outlaw, and it was dangerous for anybody to harbour him,—witness Ahimelech's fate,—then no man would know him, but everybody was shy of him. He looked on his right hand for an advocate, (*Ps.* cix. 31,) some friend or other to speak a good word for him. But since Jonathan's appearing for him had like to have cost him his life, nobody was willing to venture in defence of his innocency, but were ready to say they knew nothing of the matter. He looked round to see if any would open their doors to him, but refuge failed him; none of all his old friends would give him a night's lodging, or direct him to any place of secrecy and safety. Such swallow-friends how many good men have been deceived by, that are gone when winter comes! David's life was exceedingly precious, and yet when he was unjustly proscribed no man cared for it, nor would move a hand for the protection of it. Herein he was a type of Christ, who in his sufferings for us was forsaken of all men, even of his own disciples, and trod the winepress alone, for there was none to help, none to uphold, *Isa.* lxiii. 5.

Secondly. How he then found satisfaction in God, ver. 5. Lovers and friends stood aloof from him, and it was in vain to call to them, but "I cried unto thee, O Lord;" who knowest me and carest for me, when none else will, and wilt not fail me nor forsake me, when men do; for God is constant in his love. David tells us what he said to God in the cave; "Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." I depend upon thee to be so, my refuge to save me from being miserable, my portion to make me happy. The cave I am in is but a poor refuge, Lord, thy name is the strong tower that I run into; thou art my refuge, in whom alone I shall think myself safe. The crown I am in hopes of is but a poor portion; I can never think myself well provided for till I know that "the Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." Those that in sincerity take the Lord for their God shall find him all-sufficient, both as a refuge and as a portion; so that, as no evil shall hurt them, so no good shall be wanting to them. And they may humbly claim their interest; Lord, "thou art my refuge and my portion," every thing else is a refuge of lies, and a portion of no value. Thou art so in the land of the living; that is, while I live and have my being, in this world and in a better. There is enough in God to answer all the necessities of this present time; we live in a world of dangers and wants, but what danger need we fear if God is our refuge, or what wants if he be our portion? Heaven, which alone deserves to be called the land of the living, will be to all believers both a refuge and a portion.

Thirdly. How in this satisfaction he addressed himself to God, ver. 6, 7. Lord, give a gracious ear to my cry, the cry of my affliction, the cry of my supplication, "for I am brought very low," and if thou help me not I shall be quite sunk. Lord, "deliver me from my persecutors;" either tie their hands, or turn their hearts, break their power or blast their projects, restrain them, or rescue me, "for they are stronger than I;" and it will be thine honour to take part with the weakest. Deliver me from them, or I shall be ruined by them; for I am not yet myself a match for them. Lord, "bring my soul out of prison;" not only bring me safe out of this cave, but bring me out of all my perplexities. We may apply it spiritually; the souls of good men are often straitened by doubts and fears, cramped and fettered through the weakness of faith, and the prevalency of corruption. And it is then their duty and interest to apply themselves to God, and beg of him to set them at liberty; and to enlarge their hearts that they may run the way of his commandments.

Fourthly. How much he expected his deliverance would redound to the glory of God. 1. By his own thanksgivings, into which his present complaints would then be turned. "Bring my soul out of prison," not that I may enjoy myself and my friends, and live at ease; no, nor that I may secure my country, but "that I may praise thy name." This we should have an eye to in all our prayers to God for deliverance out of trouble, that we may have occasion to praise God, and may live to his praise. This is the greatest comfort of temporal mercies, that they furnish us with matter, and give us opportunity, for the excellent duty of praise. 2. By the thanksgivings of many on his behalf, 2 *Cor.* i. 11; when I am enlarged, "the righteous shall compass me about;" for 'my cause they shall make thee a crown of praise,' so the Chaldee. They shall flock about me to congratulate my deliverance, to hear my experiences, and to receive (Maschil) instruction from me; they shall compass me to join with me in my thanksgivings, because thou shalt have dealt bountifully with me. Note, Others' mercies ought to be the matter of our praises to God; and others' praises to God on our behalf ought to be both desired and rejoiced in by us.

PSALM CXLIII.

This psalm, as those before, is a prayer, and full of complaints of the great distress and danger he was in, probably when Saul persecuted him. He did not only pray in that affliction, but he prayed very much and very often, not the same over again, but new thoughts. In this psalm, I. He complains of his troubles through the oppression of his enemies, ver. 3; and the weakness of his spirit under it, notwithstanding the likely course he took to support himself, ver. 4, 5. II. He prays, and prays earnestly, ver. 6, 1. That God would hear him, ver. 1, 7; 2. That he would not deal with him according to his sins, ver. 2; 3. That he would not hide his face from him, ver. 7, but manifest his favour to him, ver. 8; 4. That he would guide and direct him in the way of his duty, ver. 8, 10, and quicken him in it, ver. 11; 5. That he would deliver him out of his troubles, ver. 9, 11; 6. That he would in due time reckon with his persecutors, ver. 12. We may the easier accommodate this psalm to ourselves in the singing of it, because most of the petitions in it are for spiritual blessings, which we all need at all times, mercy and grace.

PSALM CXLIII.

A Psalm of David.

HEAR my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications:
In thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness.
2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant:
For in thy sight shall no man living be justified.
3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul;
He hath smitten my life down to the ground;
He hath made me to dwell in darkness,
As those that have been long dead.
4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me;
My heart within me is desolate.
5 I remember the days of old;
I meditate on all thy works;
I muse on the work of thy hands.
6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee:
My soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

Here, First. David humbly begs to be heard, ver. 1; not as if he questioned it, but he earnestly desired it, and was in care about it, for having directed his prayer, he looked up to see how it sped, *Hab.* ii. 1. He is a supplicant to his God, and he begs that his requests might be granted; "Hear my prayer, give ear to my supplications." He is an appellant against his persecutors, and he begs that his cause might be brought to hearing, and that God would give judgment upon it in his faithfulness and righteousness, as the Judge of right and wrong. Or, Answer my petitions in thy faithfulness; that is, according to the promises thou hast made, which thou wilt be just to. We have no righteousness of our own to plead; and therefore must plead God's righteousness, the word of promise which he has freely given us, and caused us to hope in.

Secondly. He humbly begs not to be proceeded against in strict justice, ver. 2. He seems here, if not to correct, yet to explain his plea; ver. 1, Deliver me in thy righteousness, I mean, saith he, the righteous promises of the Gospel, not the righteous threatenings of the law. If I be answered according to the righteousness of this broken covenant of innocency, I am quite undone; and, therefore, 1. His petition is, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant;" that is, do not deal with me in strict justice, as I deserve to be dealt with. In this prayer we must own ourselves to be God's servants; bound to obey him, accountable to him, and solicitous to obtain his favour, and approve ourselves to him. We must acknowledge that in many instances we have offended him, and have come short of our duty to him; that he might justly inquire into our offences, and proceed against us for them, according to law; and that, if he should do so, judgment would certainly go against us. We have nothing to move in arrest or mitigation of it; but execution would be taken out and awarded, and then we are ruined for ever. But we must encourage ourselves with a hope that there is mercy and forgiveness with God, and be earnest with him for the benefit of that mercy. "Enter not into judgment with thy servant;" for thou hast already entered into judgment with thy Son, and "laid upon him the iniquity of us all." "Enter not into judgment with thy servant," for thy servant enters into judgment with himself; and if "we will judge ourselves, we shall not be judged." 2. His plea is, "In thy sight shall no man living be justified" upon those terms; for no man can plead innocency, nor any righteousness of his own, either that he has not sinned, or that he doth not deserve to die for his sins, or that he has any satisfaction of his own to offer; nay, if God contend with us, "we are not able to answer him for one of a thousand," *Job* ix. 3; xv. 20. David, before he prays for the removal of his trouble, prays for the pardon of his sin, and depends upon mere mercy for it.

Thirdly. He complains of the prevalency of his enemies against him, ver. 3. Saul, that great enemy, hath persecuted my soul, sought my life, with a restless malice, and has carried the persecution so far that he hath already smitten it down to the ground; though I am not yet under ground, I am struck to the ground, and that is next door to it. He has forced me to dwell in darkness, not only in dark caves, but in dark thoughts and apprehensions, in the clouds of melancholy, as helpless and hopeless "as those that have been long dead." Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. They condemn me; but, Lord, "do not thou condemn me." Am not I an object of thy compassion fit to be appeared for; and is not mine enemy an object of thy displeasure fit to be appeared against?

Fourthly. He bemoans the oppression of his mind occasioned by his outward troubles; ver. 4, "Therefore is my spirit" overpowered and "overwhelmed within me," and I am almost plunged in despair; when without are fightings within are fears, and those fears greater tyrants and oppressors than Saul himself, and not so easily outrun. It is sometimes the lot of the best men to have their spirits for a time almost overwhelmed, and their hearts desolate, and doubtless it is their infirmity. David was not only a great saint, but a great soldier, and yet even he was sometimes ready to faint in a day of adversity; "Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken."

Fifthly. He applies himself to the use of proper means for the relief of his troubled spirit. He had no force to muster up against the oppression of the enemy, but if he can keep possession of nothing else, he will do what he can to keep possession of his own soul, and to preserve his inward peace. In order to this, 1. He looks back, and remembers the days of old, ver. 5; God's former appearances for his afflicted people, and for him in particular. This has been often a relief to the people of God in their straits, to think of the wonders which their fathers told them of, *Ps.* lxxvii. 5, 11. 2. He looks round, and takes notice of the works of God in the visible creation, and the providential government of the world. "I meditate on all thy works;" many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power, and goodness in them, and therefore do not receive the benefit they might by them, because they do not meditate upon them; they do not dwell on that copious subject, but soon quit it as if they had exhausted it, when they have scarce touched upon it. I muse on, or, as some read it, I discourse of the operation of thy hands; how great, how good it is! The more we consider the power of God, the less we shall fear the face or force of man, *Isa.* li. 12, 13. 3. He looks up with earnest desires towards God and his favour; ver. 6, "I stretch forth my hands unto me" as one begging an alms, and big with expectation to receive something great, standing ready to lay hold on it and bid it welcome; "My soul thirsteth after thee;" 'it is to thee,' (so the word is;) entire for thee, intent on thee; it is a thirsty land which being parched with excessive heat gapes for rain; so do I need, so do I crave the support and refreshment of Divine consolations under my afflictions, and nothing else will relieve me. This is the best course we can take when our spirits are overwhelmed, and justly do they sink under their load that will not take such a ready way as this to ease themselves.

7 Hear me speedily, O LORD:
My spirit faileth:
Hide not thy face from me,
Lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.
8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning;
For in thee do I trust:
Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk;
For I lift up my soul unto thee.
9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies:
I flee unto thee to hide me.
10 Teach me to do thy will;
For thou *art* my God:
Thy spirit *is* good; lead me into the land of uprightness.
11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake:
For thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.
12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies,
And destroy all them that afflict my soul:
For I *am* thy servant.

David here tells us what he said when he stretched forth his hands unto God. He begins not only as one in earnest, but as one in haste; "Hear me speedily," and defer no longer, for "my spirit faileth." I am just ready to faint; reach the cordial quickly, quickly, or I am gone. It was not a haste of unbelief, but of vehement desire and holy love; "Make haste, O God, to help me." Three things David here prays for:

First. The manifestations of God's favour towards him. That God would be well pleased with him, and let him know that he was so; this he prefers before any good, *Ps.* iv. 6. 1. He dreads God's frowns. "Lord, hide not thy face from me;" Lord, be not angry with me, do not turn from me as we do from one we are displeased with; Lord, let me not be left under the apprehensions of thine anger, or in doubt concerning thy favour; if I have thy favour, let it not be hid from me. Those that have the truth of grace cannot but desire the evidence of it. He pleads the wretchedness of his case if God withdrew from him. Lord, let me not lie under thy wrath, for then I am "like them that go down to the pit," down to the grave; I am a dead man, weak, and pale, and ghastly, thy frowns are worse than death; or down to hell, the bottomless pit. Even those who through grace are "delivered from going down to the pit," yet may sometimes, when the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against them, look like those that are going to the pit. Disconsolate saints have sometimes cried out of the wrath of God, as if they had been damned sinners, *Job* vi. 4; *Ps.* lxxviii. 6. 2. He intreats God's favour; ver. 8, "Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning." He cannot but think that God has a kindness for him. That he has some kind things to say to him, some good words, and comfortable words; but the present hurry of his affairs, and tumult of his spirits drowned those pleasing whispers, and therefore he begs, Lord, do not only speak kindly to me, but cause me to hear it, to hear joy and gladness, *Ps.* li. 8. God speaks to us by his word, and by his providence, and in both we should desire and endeavour to hear his lovingkindness, *Ps.* cvii. 43, that we may set that always before us. Cause me to hear it in the morning, every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's lovingkindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirits all the day long. His plea is, "for in thee do I trust," and in thee only; I look not for comfort in any other. God's goodness useth to be wrought for those that trust in him, (*Ps.* xxxi. 8,) who by faith draw it out.

Secondly. The operations of God's grace in him. Those he is as earnest for as for the tokens of God's favour to him, and so should we be. He prays,

1. That he might be enlightened with the knowledge of God's will; and this is the first work of the Spirit in order to his other works; for God deals with men, as men, as reasonable creatures. Here are three petitions to this purpose: 1st. "Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk." Sometimes those that are much in care to walk right are in doubt, and in the dark, which is the right way. Let them come boldly to the throne of grace, and beg of God by his word, and Spirit, and providence, to shew them the way, and prevent their missing it. A good man doth not ask what is the way in which he must walk, or in which is the most pleasant walking, but what is the right way, the way in which he should walk. He pleads, "I lift up my soul unto thee" to be moulded and fashioned according to thy will. He did not only importunately, but impartially desire to know his duty, and those that do so shall be taught. 2nd. "Teach me to do thy will," not only shew me what thy will is, but teach me how to do it, how to turn my hand dexterously to my duty. It is the desire and endeavour of all God's faithful servants to know and do his will, and to stand complete in it. He pleads, "Thou art my God," and therefore my oracle, by whom I may expect to be advised; my God, and therefore my ruler, whose will I desire to do. If we do in sincerity take God for our God, we may depend upon him to teach us to do his will, as a master doth his servant. 3rd. "Lead me into the land of uprightness;" into the communion of saints, that pleasant land of the upright; or, into a settled course of holy living, which will lead to heaven, that land of uprightness, where holiness will be in perfection, and he that is holy shall be holy still. We should desire to be led and kept safe to heaven, not only because it is a land of blessedness, but because it is a land of uprightness, it is the perfection of grace. We cannot find the way that will bring us to that land unless God shew us; nor go in that way unless he take us by the hand and lead us, as we lead those that are weak, or lame, or timorous, or dim-sighted; so necessary is the grace of God, not only to put us into the good way, but to keep us and carry us on in it. The plea is, "Thy Spirit is good," and able to make me good; good, and willing to help those that are at a loss. 'Let thy good Spirit lead me,' so some read it. They that have the Lord for their God have his Spirit for their guide, and it is both their character and their privilege that they are led by the Spirit.

2. He prays that he might be enlivened to do his will; ver. 11, "Quicken me, O Lord," quicken my graces that they may be active, quicken my devotions that they may be lively, quicken me to my duty, and quicken me in it, and this "for

thy name's sake." The best saints often find themselves dull, and dead, and slow, and therefore pray to God to quicken them.

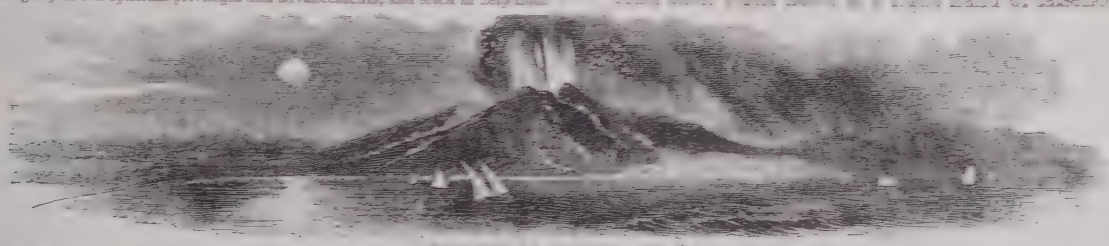
Thirdly. The appearance of God's providence for him. That God would in his own way and time, 1. Give him rest from his troubles; ver. 9, "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies," that they may not have their will against me, "for I fly unto thee to hide me;" I trust to thee to defend me in my trouble, and therefore to rescue me out of it. Preservations are pledges of salvation, and those shall find God their hiding-place that by faith make him so. He expresses himself, ver. 11, "Rid me, and deliver me out of the hand of strange children, for thy promise-sake, nay, for thy-mercy sake, for some by righteousness understand kindness and goodness, do not only deliver me from my outward trouble, for those, the wisest of men, find the trouble that threatens to overwhelm and destroy them, but from the sin that is the trouble that threatens to overwhelm and destroy the soul. Whatever trouble I am in, Lord, let me pray heartily for removal of *Jno.* xiv. 1. 2. That he would restore me to those joys which the experience of his troubles: ver. 12, "Of my mercy," so some, "out of the exuberance" (some) "I pray thee no longer to fear or doubt, and destroy us then," whereas now, in the multitude of our fears, we destroy ourselves. Let God observe, how powerful prayer, "that afflict thy soul," and create comfort to that; for "I am thy servant," and am resolved to continue so, and therefore may expect to be owned and protected in thy service. This prayer is a prophecy of the utter destruction of all the impenitent enemies of Jesus Christ and his kingdom, that will not have him to reign over them that grieve his Spirit and afflict his soul by afflicting his people, in whose afflictions he is afflicted.

PSALM CXLIV.

The four preceding psalms seem to have been penned by David before his accession to the crown, when he was persecuted by Saul: this seems to have been penned after, when he was still in trouble, after there is no question to this week's passage and to exemption from trouble,—the neighbouring nations molesting him and giving him disturbance, especially the Philistines, 2 *Sam.* v. 17. In this psalm. I. He acknowledges with triumph and thankfulness the great goodness of God to him in advancing [illegible] that threatened him, ver. 5—8, and again, ver. 11. III. He rejoiceth in the assurance of victory over them, ver. 9, 10. IV. He prays for the prosperity of his own kingdom and pleaseth himself with the hopes of it, ver. 12—15. In singing this psalm we may give God the glory of our spiritual privileges and advancements, and fetch in help from him against our spiritual enemies, may pray for the enlargement of our borders, and of our land, and to the comfort of ourselves and our families, may refer the psalm to the Messiah and his kingdom.

A Psalm of David.

BLESSED *be* the LORD my strength,
Which teacheth my hands to war,
And my fingers to fight:
2 My goodness, and my fortress;
My high tower, and my deliverer;
My shield, and *he* in whom I trust;
Who subdueth my people under me.
3 LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him!
Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!
4 Man is like to vanity:
His days *are* as a shadow that passeth away.
5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down:
Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.
6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them:
Shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.
7 Send thine hand from above;
Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters,
From the hand of strange children;
8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.



Here, First. David acknowledgeth his dependence upon God, and his obligations to him, ver. 1, 2. A prospect for further mercy is the best support under a thanksgiving for former mercy: and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should stir up ourselves to bless him. He gives to God the glory of two things:

1. What he was to him: "Blessed be the Lord my rock," ver. 1: "My goodness, my fortress," ver. 2. He has in the covenant engaged himself to be so, and encouraged us accordingly to depend upon him. All the saints that by faith have made him theirs have found him not only to answer, but to outdo their expectations. David speaks it here as the matter of his trust, and that which made him easy, and the matter of his triumph, and that which made him glad, and in which he gloried. See how he multiplies words to express the satisfaction he had in God, and the interest he had in him. He is my strength on whom I stay, and from whom I have power (such for my work, and for my warfare,—my rock to build on, my pole to climb by), even when we are weak we may "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." And "My goodness;" not only good to me, but my chief good, in whom I place my felicity; and who is the author of all the goodness that is in me, and from whom comes every good and perfect gift. 3rd. "My fortress, and my high tower;" in whom I think myself as safe as ever any prince thought himself in a castle or stronghold. David had formerly abandoned himself as an English 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 39, whose garrison were mostly mercenary. He had lately made himself master of the stronghold of Zion, which was impregnable, art, and he dwelt in the fort, 2 *Sam.* v. 7, 9. But he depends not on these: Lord, saith he, thou art "my fortress and my high tower." Observe, sometimes and promises are sometimes to a believer the strongest reasons either of prayer or am. 4th. "My deliverer," and so it is in the original, a double one. "My deliverer to me," and only a deliverer I have reason to look for, who is always ready to help me, and make it my business to help me to the good I desire. 5th. "My shield:" to quench the wicked of the malignant darts that were aimed at me, or into my fortress at home, for my shield is not a target only, but a weapon of battle. Wherever a believer goes he carries his protection along with him. "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield."

2. What he had done for him. He was first a shepherd, and seems not to have been designed by his parents to himself for any other employment, but when God made him a soldier. His hands had been used to the crook, and he handled the harp; but God rewarded his hands to war, and they became expert in it. He destroyed him for Israel's champion; and what could more qualify him for this than to make them to fear. Let the sword of war arise, and the valour of all their military chiefs. Two sorts of men God employs in the wars, and rewards the success against his. It is pity any whose trade it is should be their own carvers, or be children among men. They have special reason to pray for, and with thankfulness to own, God as the qualifier for the service, which themselves cannot qualify of, and could have been a serviceable person, and capable for it, were not wisdom given to him by the Spirit of God. He "subdueth my people under me." The commanding of subjects to be obedient to magistrates is also a work of God, and a blessing that the people of Israel to be subdued to David, prerogative to the ascendant God had given him, and it was typical of that great law of Christ's reign, the bringing of souls into subjection to the Lord Jesus, and making them willing in the day of his power.

Secondly. He admires God's condescension to man, and to himself in particular, ver. 3, 4. "Lord, what is man" what a poor little thing is he, "that thou takest knowledge of him," that thou makest account of him, that he falls so much under thy cognizance and care, and that thou hast paid a tender regard to any of that mean and worthless race as thou hast to me? Considering the many disgraces which the human nature is daily exposed to, we have reason to admire the honours God has put upon mankind in general, the more especially, some in a particular manner, as Peter and many others of whom those words are applied, *Heb.* ii. 6: why, it is wonderful that the eternal Word should be humbled himself to be found in fashion as a man, and undergo the ignominy to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man," is assigned to this purpose David asked, *Ps.* viii. 4: and there he illustrated the question by the consideration of the great dignity God has placed man in: ver. 5, "Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour." Here he illustrates it by the vanity of the meanness and mortality of man, notwithstanding the glory and honour put upon him, ver. 4, "Man is like to vanity," so that it is a wonder he is compassed about with so many infirmities, and his days are but short and uncertain, that he is not to be valued for any worth in himself, but as he is set on by God and employed by him. He may have honour put upon him, and be a man of power and interest, and yet be but a man, and therefore nothing. Let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor the rich man in his riches, but in this, that he knows and understands God, and his name. "Thou art a wonderful God, and thy power is unsearchable, and thy providence unaccountable, and yet thou hast been pleased to make known thyself to us, and to be found of us that sought thee not, and to make us to know that we are but men, and therefore nothing." Let us not be proud of our relations to, or interest in, the great men of the world, but rejoice that we are related to, and interested in, the great God. "Lord, what is man that thou takest knowledge of him, that thou hast made him a ruler over the works of thy hands, and put all things under his feet," *Ps.* viii. 4, 6. Let us not be proud of our advancements in the world, but rejoice that we are advanced to the honour of being the children of God, and heirs of heaven, yet, 4. "Man is like to vanity," and therefore not to be trusted to, and his days are but a shadow, and therefore not to be trusted to, and his days are but a shadow, and therefore not to be trusted to, and his days are but a shadow,

9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God:
Upon a psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.
10 *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings:
Who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.
11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children,
Whose mouth speaketh vanity,
And their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood:
12 That our sons *may be* as plants
Grown up in their youth;
That our daughters *may be* as corner stones,
Polished *after* the similitude of a palace:
13 *That* our garners *may be* full,
Affording all manner of store:
That our sheep may bring forth thousands
And ten thousands in our streets:
14 *That* our oxen *may be* strong to labour;
That there be no breaking in, nor going out;
That *there be* no complaining in our streets.
15 Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case:
Yea, happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD.

The method is the same in this latter part of the psalm as in the former; he first gives glory to God, and then begs mercy from him.

First. He praises God for the experiences he had had of his goodness to him, and the encouragements he had to expect farther mercy from him, ver. 9, 10. In the midst of his complaints concerning the power and treachery of his enemies, here is a holy exultation in his God; "I will sing a new song to thee, O God," a song of praise for new mercies, for those compassions that are new every morning. Fresh favours call for fresh returns of thanks; nay, we must praise God for the mercies we hope for by his promise, as well as those we have received by his providence, 2 *Chr.* xx. 20, 21. He will join music with his songs of praise, to express and excite his holy joy in God; he will "praise God upon a psaltery of ten strings," in the best manner, thinking all little enough to set forth the praises of God. He tells us what this new song shall be; ver. 10, "It is he that giveth salvation unto kings." This intimates, 1. That great kings cannot save themselves without him. Kings have their life-guards, and have armies at command, and all the means of safety that can be devised. But after all, it is God that gives them their salvation, and secures them by those means, which he could do, if there were occasion, without them, *Ps.* xxxiii. 16. Kings are the protectors of their people, but it is God that is their protector. How much service do they owe him then with their power, who gives them all their salvations! 2. That good kings, who are his ministers for the good of their subjects, shall be protected and saved by him. He hath engaged to give salvation to those kings that are his subjects, and rule for him; witness the great things he had done for David his servant, whom he had many a time delivered from the hurtful sword, to which Saul's malice, and his own zeal for the service of his country, had often exposed him. This may refer to Christ, the Son of David, and then it is a new song indeed, a New Testament song; God delivered him from the hurtful sword, upheld him as his servant, and brought him off a conqueror over all the powers of darkness, *Isa.* xlii. 1; xlix. 8. To him he gave salvation, not for himself only, but for us, raising him up to be a horn of salvation.

Secondly. He prays for the continuance of God's favour.

1. That he might be delivered from the public enemies, ver. 11. Here he repeats his prayer and plea, ver. 7, 8. His persecutors were still of the same character, false and perfidious, and that will certainly overreach an honest man, and be too hard for him; therefore, Lord, do thou deliver me from them, for they are a strange sort of people.

2. That he might see the public peace and prosperity; Lord, let us have victory, that we may have quietness; which we shall never have while our enemies have it in their power to do us mischief. David, as a king, here speaks the earnest desire he had of the welfare of his people, wherein he was a type of Christ, who provides effectually for the good of his chosen. We have here,

1st. The particular instance of that public prosperity which David desired for his people.

First. A hopeful progeny, ver. 12. That our sons and our daughters may be in all respects such as we could wish. He means not those only of his own family, but those of his subjects, that are the seed of the next generation. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world, to see their children promising and likely to do well. 1*st.* It is pleasant to see "our sons as plants grown up in their youth," as olive plants, *Ps.* cxxviii. 3; the planting of the Lord, *Isa.* lxi. 3. To see them as plants, not as weeds, not as thorns; to see them as plants growing great, not withered and blasted; to see them of a healthful constitution, a quick capacity, a towardly disposition, and especially of a pious inclination, likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day. To see them in their youth, their growing time, increasing in every thing that is good, growing wiser and better, till they grow strong in spirit. 2*nd.* It is no less desirable to see "our daughters as corner-stones," or corner-pillars, "polished after the similitude of a palace," or temple. By daughters families are united and connected to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones; and when they are graceful and beautiful, both in body and mind, they are then polished after the similitude of a nice and curious structure. When we see our daughters well established, and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastened in the building; when we see them by faith united to Christ as the chief corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and become women professing godliness; when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them.

Secondly. Great plenty. Numerous families increase the care, perhaps more than the comfort, where there is not sufficient for their maintenance; and therefore he prays for a growing estate with a growing family. 1*st.* That their storehouses might be well replenished with the fruits and products of the earth; "that our garners may be full," like those of the good householder, who brings out of them things new and old. Those things that are best new, he has them so; that are best when they are kept, he has them so. That we may have in them all manner of stores for ourselves and our friends. That living plentifully, we may live not luxuriously,—for then we abuse our plenty,—but cheerfully and usefully; that having abundance we may be thankful to God, generous to our friends, and charitable to the poor; otherwise what profit is it to have our garners full? *Jas.* v. 3. 2*nd.* That their flocks might greatly increase; "that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our folds." Much of the wealth of their country consisted in their flocks, *Pr.* xxvii. 26; and of ours too, else wool would not be, as it is, a staple commodity. The increase of our cattle is a blessing in which God is to be acknowledged. 3*rd.* That their beasts designed for service might be fit for it; "that our oxen may be strong to labour" in the plough; that they may be fat and fleshy, (so some,) in good labouring case. We were none of us made to be idle, and therefore we should pray for bodily health, not that we may be easy, and take our pleasures, but that we may be strong to labour, that we may do the work of our place and day, else we are worse than the beasts; for when they are strong it is for labour.

Thirdly. An uninterrupted peace. 1*st.* That there be no war, "no breaking in" of invaders, "no going out" of deserters. Let not our enemies break in upon us; let us not have occasion to march out against them. War brings with it abundance of mischiefs, whether it be offensive or defensive. 2*nd.* "That there be no" oppression, or faction, no "complaining in our streets." That the people may have no cause to complain either of their government or of one another, nor may be so peevish as to complain without cause. It is desirable thus to dwell in quiet habitations.

2nd. His reflection upon this description of the prosperity of the nation, which he so much desired; ver. 15, "Happy is the people that is in such a case," but it is seldom so, and never long so, "yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord." The relation of a people to God as theirs is here spoken of, either, *First.* As that which is the fountain of all these blessings, from whence they flow. Happy is Israel, if they faithfully adhere to the Lord as their God, for they may expect to be in such a case. National piety commonly brings national prosperity; for nations, as such, in their national capacity are capable of rewards and punishments only in this life. Or, *Secondly.* As that which is abundantly preferable to all these enjoyments. The psalmist began to say, as most do, "Happy is the people that is in such a case;" they are blessed that prosper in the world; but he immediately corrects himself; "Yea," rather, "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord," that have his favour, and love, and grace, according to the tenor of the covenant, though they have not abundance of this world's goods. As all this and much more cannot make us happy unless the Lord be our God, so the want of this, the loss of this, nay, the reverse of this, cannot make us miserable if he be.

PSALM CXLV.

The five foregoing psalms were all of a piece, all full of prayers; this, and the five that follow it to the end of the book, are all of a piece too, all full of praises; and though this only is entitled David's psalm, yet we have no reason to think but that they were all his, as well as all the foregoing prayers. And it is observable, 1. That after five psalms of prayer follow six psalms of praise; for those that are much in prayer shall not want matter for praise; and those that have sped in prayer must abound in praise. Our thanksgivings for mercy, when we have received it, should even exceed our supplications for it when we were in pursuit of it. David, in the last of his begging psalms, had promised to praise God, *Ps.* cxliv. 9, and here he performs his promise. 2. That the book of *Psalms* concludes with psalms of praise, all praise; for praise is the conclusion of the whole matter, it is that in which all the psalms centre; and it intimates that God's people, towards the end of their life, should abound much in praise, and the rather, because at the end of their life they hope to remove to the world of everlasting praise, and the nearer they come to heaven the more they should accustom themselves to the work of heaven. This is one of those psalms which are composed alphabetically, as *Ps.* xxv. and xxxiv., &c., that it might be the easier committed to memory, and kept in mind. The Jewish writers justly extol this psalm as a star of the first magnitude in this bright constellation, and some of them have an extravagant saying concerning it, not much unlike some of the popish superstitions, that whosoever will sing this psalm constantly three times a day shall certainly be happy in the world to come. In this psalm, I. David engageth himself and others to praise God, ver. 1, 2, 4—7, 10—12. II. He fastens upon those things that are proper matter for praise: God's greatness, ver. 3; his goodness, ver. 8, 9; the proofs of both in the administration of his kingdom, ver. 13; the kingdom of providence, ver. 14—16; the kingdom of grace, ver. 17—20. And then he concludes with a resolution to continue praising God, ver. 21, with which resolution our hearts must be filled and fixed in singing this psalm.

David's *Psalm* of praise.

I WILL extol thee, my God, O king;
And I will bless thy name for ever and ever.
2 Every day will I bless thee;
And I will praise thy name for ever and ever.
3 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And his greatness *is* unsearchable.
4 One generation shall praise thy works to another,
And shall declare thy mighty acts.
5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty,
And of thy wondrous works.
6 And *men* shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts:
And I will declare thy greatness. [goodness,
7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great
And shall sing of thy righteousness.
8 The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion;
Slow to anger, and of great mercy.
9 The LORD *is* good to all:
And his tender mercies *are* over all his works.

The entitling of this David's psalm of praise, may intimate, not only that he was the penman of it, but that he took a particular pleasure in it, and sung it often; it was his companion wherever he went. In this former part of the psalm God's glorious attributes are praised, as in the latter part of the psalm his kingdom and the administration of it. Observe,

PSALM CXLV.

First. Who shall be employed in giving glory to God.

1. Whatever others do, the psalmist will himself be much in praising God. To this good work he here excites himself, engageth himself, and hath his heart much enlarged in it. What he doth, that he will do, having more and more satisfaction in it; it was his duty, it was his delight. Observe, 1st. How he expresseth the work itself; "I will extol thee, and bless thy name," ver. 1, that is, I will speak well of thee, as thou hast made thyself known, and will therein express my own high thoughts of thee, and endeavour to raise the like in others. When we speak honourably of God, this is graciously interpreted, and accepted as an extolling of him. Again, ver. 2, "I will bless thee, I will praise thy name;" the repetition intimates the fervency of his affection to this work, the fixedness of his purpose to abound in it, and the frequency of his performances therein. Again, ver. 5, "I will speak of thine honour;" and ver. 6, "I will declare thy greatness;" he would give glory to God not only in his solemn devotions, but in his common conversation. If the heart be full of God, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak with reverence to his praise upon all occasions. What subject of discourse can we find more noble, more copious, more pleasant, useful, and unexceptionable, than the glory of God? 2nd. How he expresseth his resolution to persevere in it. *First.* He will be constant to this work; "Every day will I bless thee." Praising God must be our daily work. No day must pass, though never so busy a day, though never so sorrowful a day, without praising God; we ought to reckon it the most needful of our daily business, and the most delightful of our daily comforts. God is every day blessing us, doing well for us; there is therefore reason we should be every day blessing him, speaking well of him. *Secondly.* He will continue in it; I will bless thee for ever and ever, ver. 1; and again, ver. 2. This intimates, 1*st.* That he resolved to continue in this work to the end of his life, throughout his *ever* in this world. 2*nd.* That the psalms he penned should be made use of in praising God by the church to the end of time, 2 *Chr.* xxix. 30. 3*rd.* That he hoped to be praising God to all eternity in the other world; they that make it their constant work on earth shall have it their everlasting bliss in heaven.

2. He doubts not but others also would be forward to this work. 1st. They shall concur in it now, they shall join with me in it. When I declare thy greatness men shall speak of it, ver. 6; they shall abundantly utter it, ver. 7, or pour it out, as the word is; they shall praise God with a gracious fluency, better than the most curious oratory. David's zeal would provoke many, and it has done so. 2nd. They shall keep it up when I am gone, in an uninterrupted succession; ver. 4, "One generation shall praise thy works to another." The generation that is going off shall tell them to that which is rising up, shall tell them what they have seen in their days, and what they have heard from their fathers; they shall fully and particularly declare thy mighty acts, *Ps.* lxxviii. 3. And the generation that is rising up shall follow the example of that which is going off; so that the death of God's worshippers shall be no diminution of his worship, for a new generation shall rise up in their room to carry on that good work, more or less, to the end of time, when it shall be left to that world to do it in in which there is no succession of generations.

Secondly. What we must give to God the glory of.

1. Of his greatness and his great works. We must declare that "great is the Lord," his presence infinite, his power irresistible, his brightness insupportable, his majesty awful, his dominion boundless, and his sovereignty incontestable; and therefore there is no dispute but "great is the Lord, and" if great, then "greatly to be praised," with all that is within us, to the utmost of our power, and with all the circumstances of solemnity imaginable. His greatness indeed cannot be comprehended, for it is unsearchable; who can conceive or express how great God is? But then it is so much the more to be praised; when we cannot by searching find the bottom, we must sit down at the brink and adore the depth, *Rom.* xi. 33. God is great, for, 1st. His majesty is glorious in the upper world, above the heavens, where he hath set his glory; and when we are declaring his greatness we must not fail to speak of the glorious honour of his majesty, the splendour of the glory of his majesty, ver. 5. How bright he shines in the upper world, so as to dazzle the eyes of angels themselves, and oblige them to cover their faces, as unable to bear the lustre of it! 2nd. His works are wondrous in this lower world. The preservation, maintenance and government of all the creatures speak the Creator very great. When, therefore, we declare his greatness, we must observe the unquestionable proofs of it, and must "declare his mighty acts," ver. 4; "speak of his wondrous works," ver. 5, "the might of his terrible acts," ver. 7. We must see God acting and working in all the affairs of this lower world; various instruments are used, but in all events God is the supreme director; it is he that performeth all things. Much of his power is seen in the operations of his providence; they are mighty acts, such as cannot be paralleled by the strength of any creature; and much of his justice: they are terrible acts, awful to saints, dreadful to sinners. These we should take all occasions to speak of, and observe the finger of God, his hand, his arm, in all, that we may marvel.

2. Of his goodness. This is his glory, *Ex.* xxxiii. 19; it is what he glories in, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6, 7, and it is what we must give him the glory of; "They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness," ver. 7. God's goodness is great goodness, the treasures of it can never be exhausted; nay, they can never be lessened, for he ever will be as rich in mercy as he ever was. It is memorable goodness, it is what we ought always to lay before us, always to have in mind, and preserve the memorials of; for it is worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance. And the memory we have, the remembrance we retain of God's goodness, we should utter, we should abundantly utter, as those that are full of it, that are very full of it, and desire that others may be acquainted and affected with it. But whenever we utter God's great goodness, we must not forget at the same time to sing of his righteousness; for as he is gracious in rewarding those that serve him faithfully, so he is righteous in punishing those that rebel against him. Impartial and inflexible justice is as surely in God as inexhaustible goodness, and we must sing of both together, *Rom.* xi. 22.

1st. There is a fountain of goodness in God's nature; ver. 8, "The Lord is gracious" to those that serve him, he is full of compassion to those that need him, slow to anger to those that have offended him, and of great mercy to all that seek him, and sue to him. He is ready to give, and ready to forgive; more ready than we are to ask, than we are to repent.

2nd. There are streams of goodness in all the dispensations of his providence, ver. 9. As he is good, so he doth good; he is good to all, to all his creatures, from the highest angels to the meanest worm; to all but devils and damned sinners, that have shut themselves out from his goodness. "His tender mercies are over all his works," that is, *First.* All his works, all his creatures, receive the fruits of his merciful care and bounty; it is extended to them all, he hateth nothing that he has made. *Secondly.* The works of his mercy outshine all his other works, and declare him more than any of them. In nothing will the glory of God be for ever so illustrious as in the vessels of mercy ordained to glory. To the Divine goodness will the everlasting hallelujahs of all the saints be sung.

10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD;
And thy saints shall bless thee.
11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom,
And talk of thy power;
12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts,
And the glorious majesty of his kingdom.
13 Thy kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom,
And thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations
14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall,
And raiseth up all *those that be* bowed down.
15 The eyes of all wait upon thee;
And thou givest them their meat in due season.
16 Thou openest thine hand,
And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
17 The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways,
And holy in all his works.
18 The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him,
To all that call upon him in truth.
19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him:
He also will hear their cry, and will save them.
20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him:
But all the wicked will he destroy.
21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD:
And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

The greatness and goodness of him who is *optimus et maximus*,—'the greatest and best' of beings, were celebrated in the former part of the psalm; here, in these verses, we are taught to give him the glory of his kingdom, in the administration of which his greatness and goodness shine so clear, so very bright. Observe as before,

First. From whom the tribute of praise is expected, ver. 10. All God's works shall praise him; they all minister to us matter for praise, and so praise him according to their capacity, even those that refuse to give him honour, he will get him honour upon. But his saints do bless him, not only as they have peculiar blessings from him which other creatures have not; but as they praise him actively, while his other works praise him only objectively. They bless him, for they collect the rent and tribute of praise from the inferior creatures, and pay it into the treasury above. All God's works do praise him, as the beautiful building praiseth the builder, or the well-drawn picture praiseth the painter; but his saints bless him as the children of prudent, tender parents rise up and call them blessed. Of all God's works his saints, the workmanship of his grace, the firstfruits of his creature, have most reason to bless him.

Secondly. For what this praise is to be given; "They shall speak of thy kingdom." The kingdom of God among men is a thing to be often thought of, and often spoken of. As before he had magnified God's greatness and goodness in general, so here he magnifies them with application to his kingdom. Consider then,

1. The greatness of his kingdom. It is great, indeed, for all the kings and kingdoms of the earth are under his control. To shew the greatness of God's kingdom, he observes, 1st. The pomp of it. Would we by faith look within the veil, we should see, and believing we should speak, of the glory of his kingdom, ver. 11; the glorious majesty of it, ver. 12. For he hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and it is high and lifted up, and surrounded with an innumerable company of angels. The courts of Solomon and Ahasuerus were magnificent; but compared with the glorious majesty of God's kingdom they were but as glowworms to the sun. The consideration of this should strike an awe upon us in all our approaches to God. 2nd. The power of it. When they speak of the glory of God's kingdom, they must talk of his power; the extent of it, the efficacy of it, his power by which he can do any thing, and doth every thing he pleaseth, ver. 11. And, as a proof of it, let them make known his mighty acts, ver. 12; that the sons of men may be invited to yield themselves his willing subjects, and so put themselves under the protection of such a mighty potentate. 3rd. The perpetuity of it, ver. 13. The thrones of earthly princes totter, and the flowers of their crowns wither; monarchies come to an end. But, Lord, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." God will govern the world to the end of time, when the Mediator, who is now intrusted with the administration of his kingdom, shall deliver it up to God, even the Father, that he may be all in all to eternity. His "dominion endureth throughout all generations," for he himself is eternal, and his counsels unchangeable and uniform; and Satan, who hath set up a kingdom in opposition to him, is conquered and in a chain.

2. The goodness of his kingdom. His royal style and title is, "The Lord God, gracious and merciful;" and his government answers his title. The goodness of God appears in what he doth.

1st. For all the creatures in general, ver. 15, 16. He "provides food for all flesh," and therein appears his everlasting mercy, *Ps.* cxxxvi. 25. All the creatures live upon God; and, as they had their being from him at first, so from him they have all the supports of their being, and on him they depend for the continuance of it. *First.* The eye of their expectation attends upon him; "The eyes of all wait on thee." The inferior creatures indeed have not the knowledge of God, nor are capable of it, and yet they are said to wait upon God; because they seek their food according to the instinct which the God of nature hath put into them; and they sow not, neither do they reap, *Mat.* vi. 26. And, because they take what the God of nature hath provided for them, in the time and way that he hath appointed, and are content with it. *Secondly.* The hand of his bounty is stretched out unto them. "Thou givest them their meat in due season;" the meat proper for them, and in the proper time, when they need it; so that none of the creatures ordinarily perish for want of food, no, not in the winter. "Thou openest thy hand" freely and liberally, "and satisfiest the desire of every living thing;" except some of the unreasonable children of men that will be satisfied with nothing, but are still complaining, still crying, "Give, give."

2nd. For the children of men in particular, whom he governs as reasonable creatures.

First. He doth none of them any wrong; for, ver. 17, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways," and not unrighteous in any of them. "He is holy," and

acts like himself, with a perfect rectitude, "in all his works." In all the acts of government he is just, injurious to none; but administering justice to all. "The ways of the Lord are equal," though ours are unequal. In giving laws, in deciding controversies, in recompensing services and punishing offences, he is incontestably just, and we are bound to own it.

Secondly. He doth all of them good, his own people in a special manner. 1*st.* He supports those that are sinking, and it is his honour to help the weak; ver. 14, "He upholdeth all that fall," in that though they fall they are not utterly cast down. Many of the children of men are brought very low by sickness, and other distresses, and seem ready to drop into the grave; and yet Providence wonderfully upholds them, raiseth them up, and saith, Return, *Ps.* xc. 3. If all had died that were dying, the world would have been very thin. Many of the children of God that have been ready to fall into sin, to fall into despair, have experienced his goodness in preventing their falls, or recovering them speedily by his graces and comforts; so that though they fell they were not utterly cast down, *Ps.* xxxvii. 4. If those that are bowed down by oppression and affliction be raised up, it was God that raised them; and all those that are heavy laden under the burthen of sin, if they come to Christ by faith, he will ease them, he will raise them. 2*nd.* He is very ready to hear and answer the prayers of his people, ver. 18, 19. In this appears the grace of his kingdom, that his subjects have not only liberty of petitioning, but all the encouragement that can be to petition. (1.) The grant is very rich; that God will be "nigh to all that call upon him," he will be always within call of their prayers, and they shall always find themselves within reach of his help. If "a neighbour that is near is better than a brother afar off," *Pr.* xxvii. 10, much more a God that is near. Nay, he will not only be nigh to them, that they may have the satisfaction of being heard, but he will fulfil their desires; they shall have what they ask, and find what they seek. It was said, ver. 16, that he "satisfies the desire of every living thing," much more will he "fulfil the desire of them that fear him;" for he that feeds his birds will not starve his babes. He "hears their call, and will save them;" that is hearing them to purpose, as he heard David, that is, saved him, from the horn of the unicorn, *Ps.* xxii. 21. (2.) The proviso is very reasonable; he will hear and help us, (1st.) If we fear him, if we worship and serve him with a holy awe of him; for, otherwise, how can we expect that he should accept us? (2nd.) If we "call upon him in truth," for he desires that in the inward part. We must be faithful to God, and sincere in our professions of dependence on him, and devotedness to him. In all devotions, inward impressions must be answerable to the outward expressions, else they are not performed in truth. (3rd.) He takes them under his special protection that have a confidence and complacency in him; ver. 20, "The Lord preserveth all them that love him," they lie exposed in this world, but he by preserving them in their integrity will effectually secure them, that no real evil shall befall them.

Thirdly. If any are destroyed they may thank themselves. "All the wicked he will destroy," but they have by their wickedness fitted themselves for destruction. This magnifies his goodness in the protection of the righteous, that with their eyes they shall see the reward of the wicked, *Ps.* xci. 8. And God will by this means preserve his people, even by destroying the wicked that would do them a mischief.

Lastly. The psalmist concludes, 1. With a resolution to give glory to God himself; ver. 21, "My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord." When we have said what we can in praising God, still there is more to be said, and therefore we must not only begin our thanksgivings with this purpose, as he did, ver. 1, but conclude them with it, as he doth here, because we shall presently have occasion to begin again. As the end of one mercy is the beginning of another, so should the end of our thanksgiving be. While I have breath to draw, my mouth shall still speak God's praises. 2. With a call to others to do so too; "Let all flesh," all mankind, "bless his holy name for ever and ever." Some of mankind shall be blessing God for ever; it is pity but they should be all so.

PSALM CXLVI.

This and all the rest of the psalms that follow begin and end with hallelujah, a word which puts much of God's praise into a little compass; for in it we praise him by his name Jah, the contraction of Jehovah. In this excellent psalm of praise, I. The psalmist engageth himself to praise God, ver. 1, 2. II. He engageth others to trust in him, which is one necessary and acceptable way of praising him; and, 1. He shews why we should not trust in men, ver. 3, 4; 2. Why we should trust in God, ver. 5; because of his power in the kingdom of nature, ver. 6; his dominion in the kingdom of providence, ver. 7; and his grace in the kingdom of the Messiah, ver. 8, 9, that everlasting kingdom, ver. 10, to which many of the Jewish writers refer this psalm, and to which therefore we should have an eye in the singing of it.

PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise the LORD, O my soul.
2 While I live will I praise the LORD:
I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.
3 Put not your trust in princes,
Nor in the son of man, in whom *there is* no help.
4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth;
In that very day his thoughts perish.

David is supposed to have penned this psalm; and he was himself a prince, a mighty prince, and as such it might be thought,

First. That he should be exempted from the service of praising God; that it was enough for him to see that his priests and people did it, but that he needed not do it himself in his own person. Michal thought it a disparagement to him to dance before the ark, but he was so far from being of this mind that he will himself be first and foremost in the work, ver. 1, 2. He thinks his dignity is so far from excusing him from it, that it rather obliged him to lead in it, and that it was so far from lessening him, that it really magnified him; therefore he stirs up himself to it, and to make a business of it; "Praise the Lord, O my soul," and resolves to abide by it; I will praise him with my heart, I will sing praises to him with my mouth. Herein I will have an eye to him as the Lord, infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and as my God in covenant with me. Then praise is most pleasant, when in praising God we have an eye to him as ours, whom we have an interest in, and stand in relation to. This I will do constantly while I live, every day of my life, and to my life's end; nay, I will do it while I have any being, for when I have no being on earth I hope to have a being in heaven, a better being, to be doing it better. That which is the great end of our being ought to be our great enjoyment and employment, while we have any being. In this must our time and powers be spent.

Secondly. It might be thought that he himself, having been so great a blessing to his country, should be adored according to the usage of the heathen nations, who deified their heroes; that they should all come and trust in his shadow, and make him their stay and stronghold. No, saith David, "Put not your trust in princes," ver. 3, not in me, not in any other; do not repose your confidence in them; do not raise your expectations from them. Be not too sure of their sincerity; some have thought they know the better how to reign by knowing how to dissemble; be not too sure of their constancy and fidelity, it is possible they may both change their minds and break their words. But though we suppose them very wise and good, as David himself, yet we must not be too sure of their ability and continuance, for they are sons of Adam, weak and mortal. There is indeed a Son of Man in whom there is help, there is salvation, and who will not fail those that trust in him. But all other sons of men are like the man they are sprung of, who, being in honour, did not abide.

1. We cannot be sure of their ability. Even the power of kings may be so straitened, cramped, and weakened, that they may not be in a capacity to do that for us which we expect; David himself owned, 2 *Sam.* iii. 39, "I am this day weak, though anointed king." So that in the son of man oftentimes there is no help, no salvation; he is at a loss, at his wit's end, as a man astonished, and then, though a mighty man, he cannot save, *Jer.* xiv. 9.

2. We cannot be sure of their continuance. Suppose he has it in his power to help us while he lives, yet he may be suddenly taken off when we expect most from him; ver. 4, "His breath goeth forth;" so it doth every moment, and comes back again; but that is an intimation that it will shortly go for good and all, and then "he returneth to his earth." It is his earth in respect of his original, as a man, the earth out of which he was taken, and to which, therefore, he must return, according to the sentence, *Gen.* iii. 19. It is his, if he be a worldly man, in respect of choice, his earth which he hath chosen for his portion, and on the things of which he hath set his affections; he shall go to his own place. Or, rather, it is his earth because of the property he has in it; and, though he has had large possessions on earth, a grave is all that will remain to him. "The earth God has given to the children of men," and great striving there is about it, and as a mark of their authority men call their lands by their own names. But after a while there is no part of the earth will be their own, but that in which the dead body shall make its bed, and that shall be theirs while the earth remaineth. But when he returneth to his earth, "in that very day his thoughts perish;" all the projects and designs he had of kindness to us vanish and are gone, and he cannot take one step farther in them: all his purposes are cut off and buried with him, *Job* xvii. 11. And then what comes of our expectations from him? Princes are mortal as much as other men, and therefore we cannot have that assurance of help from them which we may have from that Potentate who hath immortality. "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils," and will not be there long.

5 Happy *is he* that *hath* the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope *is* in the LORD his God:
6 Which made heaven, and earth,
The sea, and all that therein *is:*
Which keepeth truth for ever:
7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed:
Which giveth food to the hungry.
The LORD looseth the prisoners:
8 The LORD openeth *the eyes of* the blind:
The LORD raiseth them that are bowed down:
The LORD loveth the righteous:
9 The LORD preserveth the strangers;
He relieveth the fatherless and widow:
But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.
10 The LORD shall reign for ever,
Even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.
Praise ye the LORD.

The psalmist, having cautioned us not to trust in princes, because if we do we shall be miserably disappointed, here encourageth us to put our confidence in God, because if we do so, we shall be happily secured. "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help," that has an interest in his attributes and promises, and has them engaged for him, and "whose hope is in the Lord his God." Those shall have God for their help, 1. That take him for their God, and serve and worship him accordingly. 2. That have their hope in him, and live a life of dependence upon him; that have good thoughts of him, and encourage themselves in him when all other supports fail. Every believer may look upon him as the God of Jacob, of the church in general, and therefore may expect relief from him in reference to public distresses, and as his God in particular, and therefore may depend upon him in all personal wants and straits. We must hope, 1st. In the providence of God for all the good things we need which relate to the life that now is. 2nd. In the grace of Christ for all the good things which relate to the life that is to come. To this especially the learned Dr. Hammond refers this and the following verses, looking upon the latter part of this psalm to have a most visible remarkable aspect upon the eternal Son of God in his incarnation. He quotes one of the rabbins, who saith of ver. 10, that it belongs to the days of the Messiah; and that it doth so he thinks will appear by comparing ver. 7, 8, with the characters Christ gives of the Messias, *Mat.* xi. 5, 6, "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk;" and the closing words there, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me," he thinks may very well be supposed to refer to ver. 5, "Happy is the man that hopes in the Lord his God," and who is not offended in him. Let us take a view of the mighty encouragements here given us to hope in the Lord our God.

First. He is the maker of the world, and therefore has all power in himself, and the command of the powers of all the creatures, which, being derived from him, depend upon him; ver. 6, "He made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is," and therefore his arm is not shortened that it cannot save. It is very applicable to Christ, by whom God made the world, and without whom was not any thing made that was made. It is a great support to faith, that the Redeemer of the world is the same that was the Creator of it, and therefore has a good-will to it, a perfect knowledge of its case, and power to help it.

Secondly. He is a God of inviolable fidelity. We may venture to take God's

word, for he "keepeth truth for ever," and therefore no word of his shall fall to the ground; it is true from the beginning, and therefore true to the end. Our Lord Jesus is the amen, the faithful witness, as well as the beginning, the author and principle of the creation of God, *Rev.* iii. 14. The keeping of God's truth for ever is committed to him, for all the promises are in him yea and amen.

Thirdly. He is the patron of injured innocency; "He pleadeth the cause of the oppressed," and (as we read it) he "executeth judgment" for them. He often doth it in his providence, righting those that suffer wrong, and clearing up their integrity; he will do it in the judgment of the great day. The Messiah came to rescue the children of men out of the hands of Satan, the great oppressor, and all judgment being committed to him, the executing of judgment upon persecutors is so amongst the rest, *Jude* 15.

Fourthly. He is a bountiful benefactor to the necessitous; "He giveth food to the hungry." So God doth, in an ordinary way, for the answering of the cravings of nature; so he has done sometimes in an extraordinary way, as when ravens fed Elijah; so Christ did more than once, when he fed thousands miraculously with that which was intended but for one meal or two for his own family. This encourageth us to hope in him as the nourisher of our souls with the bread of life.

Fifthly. He is the author of liberty to those that were bound; "The Lord looseth the prisoners." He brought Israel out of the house of bondage in Egypt, and afterwards in Babylon. The miracles Christ wrought in making the dumb to speak and the deaf to hear, with that one word, *Ephphatha*,—'Be opened;' his cleansing of lepers, and so discharging them from their confinement, and his raising the dead out of their graves, may all be included in this one of loosing the prisoners; and we may take encouragement in those to hope in him for that spiritual liberty which he came to proclaim, *Isa.* lxi. 1, 2.

Sixthly. He giveth sight to those that have been long deprived of it; "The Lord can open the eyes of the blind;" and has often given to his afflicted people to see that comfort which before they were not aware of, *Gen.* xxi. 19, and the prophet's servant, 2 *Kin.* vi. 17. But this has special reference to Christ, "for since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind," till Christ did it, *Jno.* ix. 32, and thereby encouraged us to hope in him for spiritual illumination.

Seventhly. He sets that straight that was crooked, and makes those easy that were pained and ready to sink; he "raiseth them that are bowed down," by comforting and supporting them under their burthens, and in due time removing their burthens. This was literally performed by Christ when he made a poor woman straight, that had been bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself, *Lu.* xiii. 12; and he still doth it by his grace, giving rest to them that were weary and heavy laden, and raising up with his comforts those that were humbled and cast down by convictions.

Eighthly. He has a constant kindness for all good people; "The Lord loveth the righteous," and they may with the more confidence depend upon his power when they are sure of his good-will. Our Lord Jesus showed his love to the righteous by fulfilling all righteousness.

Ninthly. He has a tender concern for those that stand in special need of his care; "The Lord preserveth the strangers." It ought not to pass without remark, that the name Jehovah is repeated here five times in five lines, to intimate that it is an almighty power, that of Jehovah, that is engaged and exerted for the relief of the oppressed, and that it as much the glory of God to succour them that are in misery as it is to ride on the heavens by his name Jah, *Ps.* lxviii. 4. 1. Strangers are exposed, and are commonly destitute of friends, but the Lord preserveth them, that they be not run down and ruined. Many a poor stranger has found the benefit of the Divine protection, and been kept alive by it. 2. Widows and fatherless children that have lost the head of the family who took care of the affairs of it, often fall into the hands of those that make prey of them, that will not do them right; nay, that will do them wrong, but the Lord relieveth them and raiseth up friends for them: see *Ex.* xxii. 22, 23. Our Lord Jesus came into the world to help the helpless, to receive Gentiles, strangers, into his kingdom, and with him poor sinners that are as fatherless may find mercy, *Hos.* xiv. 3.

Tenthly. He will appear for the destruction of all those that oppose his kingdom and oppress the faithful subjects of it; "The way of the wicked he turneth upside down;" and therefore let us hope in him, and not be afraid of the fury of the oppressor, as though he were ready to destroy. It is the glory of the Messiah that he will subvert all the counsels of hell and earth that militate against his church, so that having him for us we need not fear anything that can be done against us.

Eleventhly. His kingdom shall continue through all the revolutions of time to the utmost ages of eternity, ver. 10. Let this encourage us to trust in God at all times, that "the Lord shall reign for ever," in spite of all the malignity of darkness, "even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations." Christ is set king on the holy hill of Zion, and his kingdom shall continue in an endless glory. It cannot be destroyed by an invader, it shall not be left to a successor, either to a succeeding monarch, or a succeeding monarchy, but it shall stand for ever. It is matter of unspeakable comfort, that the Lord reigns as Zion's God, as Zion's king, that the Messiah is head over all things to the church, and will be so while the world stands.

PSALM CXLVII.

This is another psalm of praise. Some think it was penned after the return of the Jews from their captivity; but it is so much of a piece with *Ps.* cxlv., that I rather think it was penned by David; and what is said, ver. 2, 13, may well enough be applied to the first building and fortifying of Jerusalem in his time, and the gathering in of those that had been outcasts in Saul's time. The Septuagint divide it into two; and we may divide it into the first and second part, but both of the same import. I. We are called upon to praise God, ver. 1, 7, 12. II. We are furnished with matter for praise, for God is to be glorified, 1. As the God of nature, and so he is very great, ver. 4, 5, 8, 9, 15—18. 2. As the God of grace, comforting his people, ver. 3, 6, 10, 11; 3. As the God of Israel, Jerusalem, and Zion, settling their civil state, ver. 2, 13, 14; and especially settling religion among them, ver. 19, 20. It is easy in singing this psalm to apply it to ourselves, both as to personal and national mercies, were it but as easy to do it with suitable affections.

PRAISE ye the LORD:
For *it is* good to sing praises unto our God;
For *it is* pleasant; *and* praise is comely.
2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem:
He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.
3 He healeth the broken in heart,
And bindeth up their wounds.
4 He telleth the number of the stars;
He calleth them all by *their* names.
5 Great *is* our Lord, and of great power:
His understanding *is* infinite.
6 The LORD lifteth up the meek:
He casteth the wicked down to the ground.
7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving;
Sing praise upon the harp unto our God:
8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds,
Who prepareth rain for the earth,
Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.
9 He giveth to the beast his food,
And to the young ravens which cry.
10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse:
He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.
11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him,
In those that hope in his mercy.

Here, First. The duty of praise is recommended to us. It is not without reason that we are thus called to it again and again; "Praise ye the Lord," ver. 1; and again ver. 7, "Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving, sing praise upon the harp to our God." Let all your praises be directed to him, and centre in him, for it is good to do it; it is our duty, and therefore good in itself; it is our interest, and therefore good for us; it is acceptable to our Creator, and it answers the end of our creation. The law for it is holy, just, and good, the practice of it will turn to a good account. It is good, for, 1. It is pleasant. Holy joy and delight is required as the principle of it, and that is pleasant to us as men; giving glory to God is the design and business of it, and that is pleasant to us as saints that are devoted to his honour. Praising God is work that is its own wages; it is heaven upon earth; it is what we should be in as in our element. 2. It is comely. It is that which becomes us as reasonable creatures, much more as people in covenant with God. In giving honour to God, we really do ourselves a great deal of honour.

Secondly. God is recommended to us as the proper object of our most exalted and enlarged praises, upon several accounts.

1. The care he takes of his chosen people, ver. 2. Is Jerusalem to be raised out of small beginnings? Is it to be recovered out of its ruins? In both cases, "the Lord builds up Jerusalem." The gospel church, the Jerusalem that is from above, is of his building; he framed the model of it in his own counsels; he founded it by the preaching of his Gospel; he adds to it daily such as shall be saved, and so increaseth it. He will build it up unto perfection, build it up as high as heaven. Are any of his people outcasts? Have they made themselves so by their own folly? He gathers them by giving them repentance, and bringing them again into the communion of saints. Have they been forced out by war, famine, or persecution? He opens a door for their return; many that were missing, and thought to be lost, are brought back, and they that were scattered in the cloudy and dark day are gathered together again.

2. The comforts he has laid up for true penitents, ver. 3. They are broken in heart, and wounded, humbled, and troubled for sin, inwardly pained at the remembrance of it, as a man is that is sorely wounded. Their very hearts are not only pricked, but rent under the sense of dishonour they have done to God and the injury they have done to themselves by sin. Those God heals with the consolations of his Spirit; he speaks peace to them, assures them that their sins are pardoned, and that he is reconciled to them, and so makes them easy, pours the balm of Gilead into the bleeding wounds, and then binds them up, and makes them to rejoice. They that have had experience of this, need not be called upon to praise the Lord, for when he brought them out of the horrible pit, and set their feet upon a rock, he put a new song into their mouths, *Ps.* xl. 2, 3. And for this let others praise him also.

3. The sovereign dominion he has over the lights of heaven, ver. 4, 5. The stars are innumerable, many of them being scarce discernible with the naked eye, and yet he counts them, and knows the exact number of them, for they are all the work of his hands, and the instruments of his providence; their bulk and power is very great, but "he calleth them all by their names," which speaks his dominion over them, and the command he has them at, to make what use of them he pleaseth. They are his servants, his soldiers; he musters them, he marshals them, they come and go at his bidding, and all their motions are under his direction. He mentions this as one instance of many to shew that "great is our Lord, and of great power," he can do what he pleaseth, and of his understanding there is no computation, so that he can contrive every thing for the best. Man's knowledge is soon drained, and you have his utmost length, hitherto his wisdom can reach, and no farther; but God's knowledge is a depth that can never be fathomed.

4. The pleasure he takes in humbling the proud, and exalting them of low degree; ver. 6, "The Lord lifteth up the meek," that abase themselves before him, and whom men trample on; but the wicked, that carry it insolently towards God, and scornfully towards all mankind, that lift up themselves in pride and folly, he casteth them down to the ground, sometimes by very humbling providences in this world, however, in the day when their faces shall be filled with everlasting shame. God proves himself to be God by looking on the proud and abasing them, *Job* xl. 12.

5. The provision he makes for the inferior creatures. Though he is so great as to command the stars, he is so good as not to forget even the fowls, ver. 8, 9. Observe in what method he feeds man and beast. 1st. "He covereth the heaven with clouds," which darken the air, and intercept the beams of the sun, and yet in them he "prepareth that rain for the earth" which is necessary to its fruitfulness. Clouds look melancholy, and yet without them we could have no rain, and consequently no fruit. Thus afflictions for the present look black, and dark, and unpleasant, and we are in heaviness because of them, as sometimes when the sky is overcast it makes us dull. But they are necessary, for from these clouds of affliction come those showers that make the harvest to "yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness," *Heb.* xii. 11, which should help to reconcile us to them. Observe the necessary dependence which the earth has upon the heavens, which direct us on earth to depend on God in heaven. All the rain with which the earth is watered is of God's preparing. 2nd. By the rain which distils on the earth he "makes grass to grow upon the mountains," even the high mountains, which man neither takes care of nor reaps the benefit of. The mountains that are not watered by the springs and

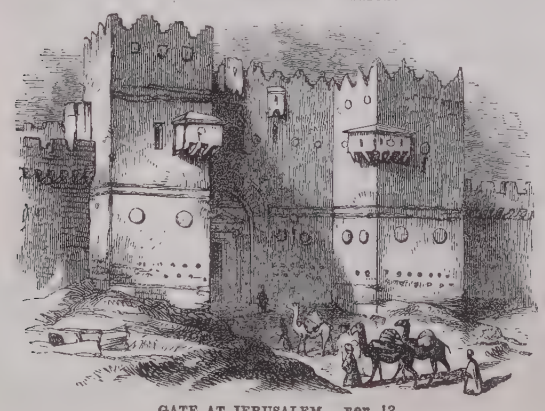
rivers, as the valleys are, yet are watered so as that they are not barren. 3rd. This grass he gives to the beast for his food, the beasts of the mountains that run wild, which man makes no provision for. And even the young ravens that, being forsaken by their old ones, cry, that cry he hears, and finds out ways to feed them, so that they are kept from perishing in the nest.

6. The complacency he takes in his people, ver. 10, 11. In times when great things are adoing, and there are great expectations of the success of them, it concerns us to know (since the issue proceedeth from the Lord) who they are, and what that is which God will delight to honour and crown with victory. It is not the strength of armies, but the strength of grace, that God is pleased to own. 1st. Not the strength of armies. Not in the cavalry, "for he delighteth not in the strength of the horse," the war-horse, noted for his courage, *Job* xxxix. 19, &c.; nor in the infantry, for "he taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man;" he doth not mean the swiftness of them for flight, to quit the field, but the steadiness of them, for charging, to stand the ground. If one king making war with another king, goes to God to pray for success, it will not avail him to plead, Lord, I have a gallant army, the horse and foot in good order, it is pity they should suffer any disgrace, for that is no good argument with God, *Ps.* xx. 7. Jehoshaphat's was much better, "Lord, we have no might," 2 *Chr.* xx. 12. But, 2nd. God is pleased to own the strength of grace. A serious and suitable regard to God is that which "is in the sight of God of great price" in such a case. "The Lord" accepts of and "takes pleasure in those that fear him, and that hope in his mercy." Observe, *First.* A holy fear of God and hope in God, not only may consist, but must concur. In the same heart, at the same time, there must be both a reverence of his majesty, and a complacency in his goodness; both a believing dread of his wrath, and a believing expectation of his favour. Not that we must hang in suspense between hope and fear, but must act under the gracious influences of hope and fear. Our fear must save our hope from swelling into presumption, and our hope must save our fear from sinking into despair; thus must we take our work before us. *Secondly.* We must hope in God's mercy, his general mercy, even then when we cannot find a particular promise to stay ourselves upon. An humble confidence in the goodness of God's nature is very pleasing to him, as that which turns to the glory of that attribute of his which he most glories in. Even a man of honour loves to be trusted.

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem;
Praise thy God, O Zion.

ZION.

13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates;
He hath blessed thy children within thee.
14 He maketh peace *in* thy borders,
And filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.
15 He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth:
His word runneth very swiftly.
16 He giveth snow like wool:
He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.



GATE AT JERUSALEM.—ver. 13.

17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels:
Who can stand before his cold?
18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them:
He causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.
19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob,
His statutes and his judgments unto Israel.
20 He hath not dealt so with any nation:
And *as for his* judgments, they have not known them.
Praise ye the LORD.

Jerusalem and Zion, the holy city, the holy hill, are here called upon to praise God, ver. 12; for where should praise be offered up to God, but there where his altar is? Where may we expect that glory should be given to him but in the beauty of holiness? Let the inhabitants of Jerusalem praise the Lord in their own houses; let the priests and Levites that attend in Zion, the city of their solemnities, in a special manner praise the Lord. They have more cause to do it than others, and they lie under greater obligations to do it than others; for it is their business,—it is their profession. "Praise thy God, O Zion;" he is thine, and therefore thou art bound to praise him. His being thine includes all happiness, so that thou canst never want matter for praise. Jerusalem and Zion must praise God,

First. For the prosperity and flourishing estate of their civil interests, ver. 13, 14. 1. For their common safety. They had gates, and kept their gates barred in times of danger; but that would not have been an effectual security to them if God had not strengthened the bars of their gates, and fortified their fortifications. The most probable means we can devise for our own preservation, will not answer the end, unless God give his blessing with them; we must therefore in the careful and diligent use of those means, depend upon him for that blessing, and attribute the undisturbed repose of our land more to the wall of fire than to the wall of water round about us, *Zec.* ii. 5. 2. For the increase of their people. This strengthens the bars of the gates as much as any thing; "He hath blessed thy children within thee," with that first and great blessing, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land." It is a comfort to parents to see their children blessed of the Lord, *Isa.* lxi. 9; and a comfort to the generation that is going off to see the rising generation numerous and hopeful; for which blessing God must be blessed. 3. For the public tranquillity, that they were delivered from the terrors and desolations of war; "He maketh peace in thy borders," by putting an end to the wars that were, and preventing the wars that were threatened and feared. He makes peace within thy borders, that is, in all parts of the country, by composing differences among neighbours, that there may be no intestine broils and animosities, and upon thy borders, that they may not be attacked by invasions from abroad. If there be trouble any where, it is in the borders, the marches of a country; the frontier towns lie most exposed, so that if there be peace in the borders there is a universal peace, a mercy we can never be enough thankful for. 4. For great plenty, the common effect of peace; "He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat,"—wheat, the most valuable grain, the fat, the finest of that; and a fulness thereof, what would they more? Canaan abounded with the best wheat, *Deu.* xxxii. 14, and exported it to the countries abroad, as appears *Eze.* xxvii. 17. The land of Israel was not enriched with precious stones, or spices, but with the finest of the wheat, with bread that strengthens man's heart, and that made it the glory of all lands; and for that God was praised in Zion.

Secondly. For the wonderful instances of his power in the weather, particularly the winter weather. He that protects Zion and Jerusalem is that God of power from whom all the powers of nature are derived, and on whom they depend, and who produceth all the changes of the seasons, which, if they were not common, would astonish us.

1. In general, whatever alterations there are in this lower world (and it is that world that is subject to continual changes) they are produced by the will and power and providence of God; ver. 15, "He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth," as one that has an incontestable authority to give orders, and innumerable attendants ready to carry his orders, and put them in execution. As the world was at first made, so it is still upheld and governed by a word of almighty power; God speaks, and it is done, for all are his servants. That word takes effect not only surely but speedily, "his word runneth very swiftly," for nothing can oppose or retard it. As the lightning which passeth through the air in an instant, such is the word of God's providence, and such the word of his grace, when it is sent forth with commission, *Lu.* xvii. 24. Angels that carry his word, and fulfil it, fly swiftly, *Dan.* ix. 21.

2. In particular, frosts and thaws are both of them wonderful changes, and in both we must acknowledge the word of his power.

1st. Frosts are from God; with him are "the treasures of the snow and the hail," *Job* xxxviii. 22, 23, and out of these treasures he draws as he pleaseth. *First.* "He giveth snow like wool." It is compared to wool for its whiteness, *Isa.* i. 18, and its softness; it falls silently, and makes no more noise than the fall of a lock of wool; it covers the earth, and keeps it warm like a fleece of wool, and so promotes its fruitfulness. See how God can work by contraries, and bring meat out of the eater, can warm the earth with cold snow. *Secondly.* "He scattereth the hoar frost," which is dew congealed, as the snow and hail are rain congealed. This looks like ashes scattered upon the grass, and is sometimes prejudicial to the products of the earth, and blasts them as if it were hot ashes, *Ps.* lxxviii. 47. *Thirdly.* "He casteth forth his ice like morsels," which may be understood either of large hailstones, which are as ice in the air, or of the ice which covers the face of the waters, and when it is broken, though naturally it was as drops of drink, is now as morsels of meat, or crusts of bread. And, *Fourthly.* When we see the frost, and snow, and ice we feel it in the air; "Who can stand before his cold?" The beasts cannot; they retire into dens, *Job* xxxvii. 8; they are easily conquered then, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 20. Men cannot, but are forced to take shelter of fires or furs, or both; and all little enough where and when the cold is in extremity. We see not the causes when we feel the effects; and therefore we must call it his cold; it is of his sending, and therefore we must bear it patiently, and be thankful for warm houses, and clothes, and beds, to relieve us against the rigour of the season; and must give him the glory of his wisdom and sovereignty, his power and faithfulness, which appear in the winter weather, which shall not cease any more than summer, *Gen.* viii. 22. And let us also infer from it, if we cannot stand before the cold of his frosts, how can we stand before the heat of his wrath?

2nd. Thaws are from God. When he pleaseth, ver. 18, "He sendeth out his word and melteth them." The frost, the snow, the ice, they are all dissolved presently, in order to which "He causeth the wind, the south wind, to blow," and the waters which were frozen flow again as they did before. We are soon sensible of the change, but we see not the causes of it, but must resolve it into the will of the First Cause. And in it we must take notice not only of the

power of God, that he can so suddenly, so insensibly, make such a great and universal alteration in the temper of the air, and the face of the earth. What cannot he do that doth this every winter, perhaps often every winter? But also of the goodness of God: hard weather doth not always continue; it would be sad if it should. He doth not contend for ever, but reneweth the face of the earth. As he remembered Noah, and released him, *Gen.* viii. 1, so he remembers the earth, and his covenant with the earth, *Cant.* ii. 11, 12. This thawing word may represent the Gospel of Christ, and this thawing wind the Spirit of Christ,—for the Spirit is compared to the wind, *Jno.* iii. 8; both are sent for the melting of frozen souls. Converting grace, like the thaw, softens the heart that was hard,—moistens it, and melts it into tears of repentance. It warms good affections, and makes them to flow, which before were chilled, and stopped up. The change which the thaw makes is universal, and yet gradual; it is very evident, and yet how it is done is unaccountable: such is the change wrought in the conversion of a soul when God's word and Spirit are sent to melt it, and restore it to itself.

Thirdly. For his distinguishing favour to Israel, in giving them his word and ordinances, a much more valuable blessing than their peace and plenty, ver. 14, as much as the soul is more excellent than the body. Jacob and Israel had God's statutes and judgments among them; they were under his peculiar government,—the municipal laws of their nation were of his framing and enacting; their constitution a theocracy; they had the benefit of Divine revelation,—the great things of God's law were written to them; they had a priesthood of Divine institution for all things pertaining to God, and prophets for all extraordinary occasions. No people but they went upon sure grounds in their religion. Now this was, 1. A preventing mercy. They did not find out God's statutes and judgments of themselves, but God shewed his word unto Jacob, and by that word he made known to them his statutes and judgments. It is a great mercy to any people to have the word of God among them, for faith comes by hearing and reading that word, that faith without which it is impossible to please God. 2. A distinguishing mercy, and upon that account the more obliging. "He hath not dealt so with every nation," not with any nation, and "as for his judgments, they have not known them," nor are like to know them till the Messias comes, and takes down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, that the Gospel may be preached to every creature. Other nations had plenty of outward good things; some nations were very rich, others had pompous powerful princes, and polite literature, but none were blessed with God's statutes and judgments as Israel was. Let Israel therefore praise the Lord in the observation of these statutes: "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world? Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes."

PSALM CXLVIII.

This psalm is a most solemn and earnest call to all the creatures, according to their capacity, to praise their Creator, and to shew forth his eternal power and godhead, the invisible things of which are manifested in the things that are seen; and thereby the psalmist designs to express his great affection to the duty of praise. He is highly satisfied that God is praised, is very desirous that he may be more praised, and therefore doth all he can to engage all about him in this pleasant work, yea, and all that shall come after him, whose hearts must be very dead and cold, if they be not raised and enlarged in praising God by the lofty flights of divine poetry which we find in this psalm. I. He calls upon the higher house, the creatures that are placed in the upper world, to praise the Lord, both those that are intellectual beings, and are capable of doing it actively, ver. 1, 2; and those that are not, and are therefore capable of doing it only objectively, ver. 3—6. II. He calls upon the lower house, the creatures of this lower world, both those that can only minister matter of praise, ver. 7—10, and those that being endued with reason are capable of offering up this sacrifice, ver. 11—13, especially his own people, who have more cause to do it, and are more concerned to do it, than any other, ver. 14.

PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise ye the LORD from the heavens:
Praise him in the heights.
2 Praise ye him, all his angels:
Praise ye him, all his hosts.
3 Praise ye him, sun and moon:
Praise him, all ye stars of light.
4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
And ye waters that *be* above the heavens.
5 Let them praise the name of the LORD:
For he commanded, and they were created.
6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever:
He hath made a decree which shall not pass.

We, in this dark and depressed world, know but little of the world of light and exaltation, and, conversing within narrow confines, can scarce admit any tolerable conceptions of the vast regions above. But this we know,

First. That there is above us a world of blessed angels, by whom God is praised, an innumerable company of them. Thousand thousands minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him. And it is his glory that he hath such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needeth them, nor is, nor can be, any way benefited by them. To that bright and happy world the psalmist hath an eye here, ver. 1, 2. In general, to the heavens, to the heights; the heavens are the heights, and therefore we must lift up our souls above the world unto God in the heavens; and on things above we must set our affections. It is his desire that God may be praised from the heavens, that from thence a praising frame may be transmitted to this world in which we live, that from the inhabitants of that world we may learn this blessed work. It is his delight to think that God is praised in the heights; that while we are so cold, and low, and flat in praising God, there are those above that are doing it in a better manner, and that while we are so often interrupted in this work, they rest not day nor night from it. In particular, he had an eye to God's angels, to his hosts, and calls upon them to praise God. That God's angels are his hosts is plain enough; as soon as they were made they were listed, armed, and disciplined; he employs them in fighting his battles, and they keep ranks, and know their place, and observe the word of command as his hosts. But what is the meaning of the psalmist's calling upon them, and exciting them to praise God, is not so easy to account for. I will not say they do not heed it, because we find that to the principalities and powers is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, *Eph.* iii. 10; but I will say, they do not need it, for they are continually praising God, and there is no deficiency at all in their performances; and therefore when in singing this psalm we call upon the angels to praise God, as we did, *Ps.* ciii. 20, we mean, that we desire God may be praised by the ablest hands, and in the best manner; that we are sure it is fit he should be so; that we are pleased to think he is so; and that we have a spiritual communion with those that dwell in his house above, and are still praising him; and that we are come by faith, and hope, and holy love, to the innumerable company of angels, *Heb.* xii. 22.

Secondly. That there is above us not only an assembly of blessed spirits, but a system of vast bodies too, and those bright ones, in which God is praised; that is, which may give us occasion (as far as we know any thing of them) to give to God the glory not only of their being, but of their beneficence to mankind. Observe,

1. What these creatures are that thus shew us the way in praising God, and whenever we look up and consider the heavens, furnish us with matter for his praises. 1st. There is the sun, moon, and stars, which continually either day or night, present themselves to our view, as looking-glasses in which we may see a faint shadow (for so I must call it, not a resemblance) of the glory of him that is the Father of lights, ver. 3. The greater lights, the sun and moon, are not too great, too bright to praise him; and the praises of the lesser lights, the stars, shall not be slighted. Idolaters made the sun, moon, and stars their gods, and praised them, worshipping and serving the creature, because it is seen, more than the Creator, because he is not seen; but we who worship the true God, only make them our fellow-worshippers, and call upon them to praise him with us, nay, as Levites, to attend us, who, as priests, offer this spiritual sacrifice. 2nd. There is the heaven of heavens above the sun and stars, the seat of the blessed; from the vastness and brightness of these unknown orbs, abundance of glory redounds to God, for "the heaven of heavens are the Lord's," *Ps.* cxv. 16, and yet they cannot contain him, 1 *Kin.* viii. 27. The learned Dr. Hammond understands here by the heaven of heavens, the upper regions of the air, or, all the regions of it; as *Ps.* lxviii. 33, we read of the heaven of heavens, whence "God sends forth his voice, and that a mighty voice," meaning the thunder. 3rd. There are the waters that be above the heavens; that is, the clouds that hang above, in the air, where they are reserved against the day of battle and war, *Job* xxxviii. 23. We have reason to praise God, not only that these waters do not drown the earth, but that they do water it, and make it fruitful. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, 'Praise him ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that depend on the word of Him which is above the heavens;' for the key of the clouds is one of the keys which God hath in his hand, wherewith "he opens and none can shut, he shuts and none can open."

2. Upon what account we are to give God the glory of them. "Let them praise the name of the Lord;" that is, let us praise the name of the Lord for them, and observe what constant and fresh matter for praise may be fetched from them. 1st. Because he made them, gave them their powers, and assigned them their places. He commanded them (as big as they are) out of nothing, and they were created at a word's speaking. God created, and therefore may command; for he commanded, and so created; his authority must always be acknowledged and acquiesced in, because he once spake with such authority. 2nd. Because he still upholds and preserves them in their beings and posts, their power and motions; ver. 6, "He hath established them for ever and ever;" that is, to the end of time, a short ever, but it is their ever; they shall last as long as there is occasion for them. "He hath made a decree," the law of creation, "which shall not pass;" it was enacted by the wisdom of God, and therefore need not be altered, by his sovereignty and inviolable fidelity, and therefore cannot be altered. All the creatures that praised God at first for their creation must praise him still for their continuance. And we have reason to praise him, that they are kept within the bounds of a decree; for to that it is owing that the waters above the heavens have not a second time drowned the earth.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth,
Ye dragons, and all deeps:
8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours;
Stormy wind fulfilling his word:
9 Mountains, and all hills;
Fruitful trees, and all cedars:
10 Beasts, and all cattle;
Creeping things, and flying fowl:
11 Kings of the earth, and all people;
Princes, and all judges of the earth:
12 Both young men, and maidens;
Old men, and children:
13 Let them praise the name of the LORD:
For his name alone is excellent;
His glory *is* above the earth and heaven.
14 He also exalteth the horn of his people,
The praise of all his saints;
Even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.
Praise ye the LORD.

Considering that this earth, and the atmosphere that surrounds it, are the very sediment of the universe, it concerns us to inquire after those considerations that may be of use to reconcile us to our place in it; and I know none more likely than this, (next to the visit which the Son of God once made to it,) that even in this world, as dark and as bad as it is, God is praised; "Praise ye the Lord from the earth," ver. 7. As the rays of the sun, which are darted directly from heaven, reflect back (though more weakly) from the earth; so should the praises of God, with which this cold and infected world should be warmed and perfumed.

First. Even those creatures that are not dignified with the powers of reason yet are summoned into this concert, because God may be glorified in them, ver. 7—10. Let the dragons, or whales, that sport themselves in the mighty waters, *Ps.* civ. 26, dance before the Lord to his glory, who largely proves his own omnipotence by his dominion over the leviathan, or whale, *Job* xli. 1. All deeps, and their inhabitants, praise God; the sea, and the animals there; the bowels of the earth, and the animals there. Out of the depths God may be praised as well as prayed unto. If we look up into the atmosphere, we meet

with a great variety of meteors, which, being in kind of new productions, (and some of them unaccountable,) do in a special manner magnify the power of the great Creator. There are fiery meteors,—lightning is fire, and there are other blazes sometimes kindled which may be so called; there are watery meteors,—hail and snow, and the vapours of which they are gendered; there are airy meteors,—stormy winds; we know not whence they come nor whither they go, whence their mighty force comes, nor how it is spent; but this we know, that be they never so strong, so stormy, they fulfil God's word, and do that and no more than he appoints them; and by this Christ shewed himself to have a Divine power, that he commanded even the winds and the seas, and they obeyed him. Those that will not fulfil God's word, but rise up in rebellion against it, shew themselves to be more violent and headstrong than even the stormy winds, for they fulfil it. Take a view of the surface of the earth, ver. 9, and there are presented to our view the exalted grounds, mountains and all hills, from the barren tops of some of which, and the fruitful tops of others, we may fetch matter for praise. The exalted plants, some that are exalted by their usefulness, as the fruitful trees of various kinds, for the fruits of which God is to be praised; others by their stateliness, as all cedars, those trees of the Lord, *Ps.* civ. 16. Cedars, the high trees, are not the fruitful trees; yet they had their use even in God's temple. Pass we next to the animal kingdom, and there we find God glorified, even by the beasts that run wild, and all cattle that are tame and in the service of man, ver. 11. Nay, even the creeping things are not sunk so low, nor do the flying fowl soar so high, as not to be called upon to praise the Lord. Much of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator, appears in the several capacities and instincts of the creatures, in the provision made for them, and the use made of them. When we see all so very strange, and all so very good, surely we cannot but acknowledge God with wonder and thankfulness.

Secondly. Much more those creatures that are dignified with the powers of reason ought to employ them in praising God. "Kings of the earth, and all people," ver. 11, 12. 1. God is to be glorified in and for these, as in and for the inferior creatures; for their hearts are in the hand of the Lord, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them. God is to be praised in the order and constitution of kingdoms, the *pars imperans*,—'the part that commands,' and the *pars subdita*,—'the part that is subject.' "Kings of the earth, and all people." It is by him that kings reign, and people are subject to them; the princes and judges of the earth have their wisdom and their commission from him, and we to whom they are blessings ought to bless God for them. God is to be praised also in the constitution of families, for he is the founder of them; and for all the comfort of relations, the comfort that parents and children, brothers and sisters, have in each other, God is to be praised. 2. God is to be glorified by these. Let all manner of persons praise God. 1st. Those of each rank, high and low. The praises of kings, and princes, and judges, are demanded; those on whom God has put honour must honour him with it, and the power they are intrusted with, and the figure they make in the world, puts them in a capacity of bringing more glory to God, and doing him more service than others. Yet the praises of the people are expected also, and God will graciously accept of them. Christ despised not the hosannahs of the multitude. 2nd. Those of each sex, young men and maidens, who use to be merry together, let them turn it into this channel, let the mirth be sacred, that it may be pure. 3rd. Those of each age. Old men must still bring forth this fruit in old age, and not think that either the gravity, or the infirmity of their age will excuse them from it; and children too must begin betimes to praise God, even out of the mouth of babes and sucklings this good work is perfected. A good reason is given, ver. 13, why all these should praise the name of the Lord,—because his "name alone is excellent," and worthy to be praised; it is a name above every name; no name, no nature but his has in it all excellency. His glory is above both the earth and the heaven, and let all the inhabitants both of earth and heaven praise him, and yet acknowledge his name to be exalted, far above all blessing and praise.

Thirdly. Most of all, his own people, that are dignified with peculiar privileges, must in a peculiar manner give glory to him, ver. 14. Observe, 1. The dignity God has put upon his people, even the children of Israel, typical of the honour reserved for all true believers, who are God's spiritual Israel. He exalteth their horn, their brightness, their plenty, their power. The people of Israel were in many respects honoured above any other nation, "for to them pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants," *Rom.* ix. 4. It was their own honour that they were a people near unto God, his *Segullah*, his 'peculiar treasure.' They were admitted into his courts, when a stranger that came nigh must be put to death. They had him nigh to them in all that which they called upon him for. This blessing is now come upon the Gentiles through Christ, for they that were afar off, by his blood are made nigh, *Eph.* ii. 13. It is the greatest honour that can be put upon a man to be brought near to God, the nearer the better; and it will be best of all when nearest of all in the kingdom of glory. 2. The duty God expects from them in consideration of this. Let those whom God honours honour him, "Praise ye the Lord;" let him be the praise of all his saints, the object of their praise, for he is a praise to them. "He is thy praise, and he is thy God," *Deu.* viii. 21. Some, by the horn of his people, understand David as a type of Christ, whom God has exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, who is indeed the praise of all his saints, and will be so for ever; for it is through him that they are a people near to God.

PSALM CXLIX.

The foregoing psalm was a hymn of praise to the Creator, this to the Redeemer; it is a psalm of triumph in the God of Israel, and over the enemies of Israel. Probably it was penned upon occasion of some victory which Israel was blessed and honoured with. Some conjecture that it was penned when David had taken the stronghold of Zion, and settled his government there. But it looks farther, to the kingdom of the Messiah, who, in the chariot of the everlasting Gospel, goes forth conquering and to conquer. To him, and his graces and glories, we must have an eye in singing this psalm, which speaks, I. Abundance of joy to all the people of God, ver. 1—5. II. Abundance of terror to the proudest of their enemies, ver. 6—9.

PRAISE ye the LORD.
Sing unto the LORD a new song,
And his praise in the congregation of saints.
2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him:
Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.
3 Let them praise his name in the dance:
Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.
4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people:
He will beautify the meek with salvation.
5 Let the saints be joyful in glory:
Let them sing aloud upon their beds.

We have here,

First. The calls given God's Israel to praise. All his works were in the foregoing psalm excited to praise him; but here his saints in a particular manner are required to bless him. Observe then,

1. Who are called upon to praise God. Israel in general, the body of the church, ver. 2. The children of Zion particularly, the inhabitants of that holy hill, who are nearer to God than other Israelites; those that have the word and ordinances of God near them, that are not put to travel far to them, surely more is expected to be done by them than by others in praising God. All true Christians may call themselves the children of Zion, for in faith and hope we are come unto mount Zion, *Heb.* xii. 22. The saints must praise God, saints in profession, saints in power, for this is the intention of their sanctification; they are therefore devoted to the glory of God, and renewed by the grace of God, that they may be unto him for a name and a praise.

2. What must be the principle of this praise; and that is holy joy in God. Let Israel rejoice, and the children of Zion be joyful, and the saints be joyful in glory. Our praises of God should flow from a heart filled with delight and triumph in God's attributes, and our relation to him. Much of the power of godliness in the heart consists in making God our chief joy, and solacing ourselves in him; and our faith in Christ is described by our rejoicing in him. And we then give honour to God when we take pleasure in him. We must be joyful in glory, that is, in him as our glory, and in the interest we have in him. And let us look upon it as our glory to be of those that rejoice in God.

3. What must be the expressions of this praise. We must by all proper ways shew forth the praises of God. Sing to the Lord. We must entertain ourselves and proclaim his name by singing praises to him, ver. 3, singing aloud, ver. 5; for we should sing psalms with all our heart, as those that are not only not ashamed of it, but are enlarged in it. We must sing a new song, newly composed upon every special occasion; sing with new affections, which make the song new, though the words have been used before, and keeping them from growing threadbare. Let God be praised in the dance with timbrel and harp, according to the usage of the Old Testament church very early, *Ex.* xv. 20, where we find God praised with timbrels and dances. They who, from hence urge the use of music in religious worship, must by the same rule introduce dancing, for they went together, as in David's dancing before the ark, and *Jud.* xxi. 21. But whereas many scriptures in the New Testament keep up singing as a gospel ordinance, none provide for the keeping up of music and dancing. The gospel canon for psalmody is "to sing with the spirit and with the understanding."

4. What opportunities must be taken for praising God. None must be let slip, but particularly, 1st. We must praise God in public, in the solemn assembly; ver. 1, "in the congregation of saints;" the more the better, it is the liker to heaven. Thus God's name must be owned before the world; thus the service must have a solemnity put upon it, and we must mutually excite one another to it. The principal end and design of our coming together in religious assemblies is, that we may join together in praising God. Other parts of the service must be in order to this. 2nd. We must praise him in private; "Let the saints" be so transported with their joy in God, as to "sing aloud upon their beds," when they awake in the night full of the praises of God, as David, *Ps.* cxix. 62. When God's Israel is brought to a quiet settlement, let them enjoy that with thankfulness to God; much more may true believers that are entered into God's rest, and find repose in Jesus Christ, sing aloud for joy of that. Upon their sick-beds, their death-beds, let them sing the praises of their God.

Secondly. The cause given God's Israel for praise. Consider,

1. God's doings for them. They have reason to rejoice in God, to devote themselves to his honour, and employ themselves in his service; for it is he that made them. He gave us our being as men, and we have reason to praise him for that, for it is a noble and excellent being. He gave Israel its being as a people, as a church; made him what he is, so much different from other nations; let that people therefore praise him, for he formed them for himself, on purpose that they might shew forth his praise, *Isa.* xliii. 21. 'Let Israel rejoice in his Maker,' so it is in the original; for God said, "Let us make man;" and in this some think is the mystery of the Trinity.

2. God's dominion over them. This follows upon the former. If he made them, he is their king; he that gave being, no doubt may give law; and this ought to be the matter of our joy and praise, that we are under the conduct and protection of such a wise and powerful king. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, for behold thy King comes," the king Messiah, whom God has set upon his holy hill of Zion. Let all the children of Zion be joyful in him, and go forth to meet him with their hosannas, *Zec.* ix. 9.

3. God's delight in them. He is a king that rules by love, and therefore to be praised, for "the Lord taketh pleasure in his people," in their services, in their prosperity, in communion with them, and in the communications of his favour to them. He that is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, and to whose felicity no accession can be made, yet graciously condescends to take pleasure in his people, *Ps.* cxlvii. 11.

4. God's designs concerning them. Besides the present complacency he hath in them, he hath prepared for their future glory; "He will beautify the meek," the humble, and lowly, and contrite in heart, that tremble at his word, and submit to it, that are patient under their afflictions, and shew all meekness towards all men. These men vilify and asperse, but God will justify them, and wipe off their reproach; nay, he will beautify them, they shall appear not only clear, but comely before all the world, with the comeliness that he puts upon them. He will beautify them with salvation, with temporal salvations; when God works remarkable deliverances for his people, they that had lien among the pots become as the wings of a dove covered with silver, *Ps.* lxviii. 13; but especially with eternal salvation. The righteous shall be beautified in that day when they shine forth as the sun. In the hopes of this, let them now in the darkest day sing a new song.

6 *Let* the high *praises* of God *be* in their mouth,
And a twoedged sword in their hand;
7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen,
And punishments upon the people;
8 To bind their kings with chains,
And their nobles with fetters of iron;
9 To execute upon them the judgment written:
This honour have all his saints.
Praise ye the LORD.

The Israel of God is here represented triumphing over their enemies, which is both the matter of their praise, (let them give to God the glory of those triumphs,) and the recompence of their praise. They that are truly thankful to God for their tranquillity, shall be blessed with victory. Or, it may be taken as a farther expression of their praise; ver. 6, "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth," and then, in a holy zeal for his honour, let them take "a two-edged sword in their hand," to fight his battles against the enemies of his kingdom. Now this may be applied,

First. To the many victories which God blessed his people Israel with over the nations of Canaan, and other nations that were devoted to destruction. These began in Moses and Joshua, who, when they taught Israel the high praises of the Lord, did withal put a two-edged sword in their hand. David did so too; for, as he was the sweet singer of Israel, so he was the captain of their hosts, and taught the children of Judah the use of the bow, 2 *Sam.* i. 18, taught their hands to war, as God had taught his. Thus he and they went on victoriously, fighting the Lord's battles, and avenging Israel's quarrels on those that had oppressed them. Then they executed vengeance upon the heathen, the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and others, 2 *Sam.* viii. 1, &c., and punishments upon the people, for all the wrong they had done to God's people, ver. 7; their kings and nobles were taken prisoners, ver. 8; and on some of them the judgment written was executed, as by Joshua on the kings of Canaan, by Gideon on the princes of Midian, by Samuel on Agag. The honour of this redounded to all the Israel of God, and to him who put it upon them they return it entirely in their hallelujahs. Jehoshaphat's army had at the same time "the high praises of God in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hands," for they went forth to war singing the praises of God, and then their sword did execution, 2 *Chr.* xx. 23. Some apply it to the time of the Maccabees, when the Jews sometimes gained great advantages against their oppressors. And if it seem strange that the meek should, notwithstanding that character, be thus severe, and upon kings and nobles too, here is one word that justifies them in it, it is "the judgment written." They do not do it from any personal malice and revenge, or any bloody politics that they govern themselves by, but by commission from God, according to his direction, and in obedience to his command; and Saul lost his kingdom for disobeying a command of this nature. Thus the kings of the earth that shall be employed in the destruction of the New Testament Babylon will but execute the judgment written, *Rev.* xvii. 16, 17. But since now no such special commissions can be produced, this will by no means justify the violences either of subjects against their princes, or princes upon their subjects, or both upon their neighbours, under pretence of religion; for Christ never intended that his Gospel should be propagated by fire and sword, or his righteousness wrought by the wrath of man. When the high praises of God are in our mouth, with them we should have an olive-branch of peace in our hands.

Secondly. To Christ's victories by the power of his Gospel and grace over spiritual enemies, in which all believers are more than conquerors. The word of God is the two-edged sword, *Heb.* iv. 12; the sword of the Spirit, *Eph.* vi. 17; which is not enough to have in our armoury, we must have it in our hand, as our Master had, when he said, "It is written." Now, 1. With this two-edged sword the first preachers of the Gospel obtained a glorious victory over the powers of darkness. Vengeance was executed upon the gods of the heathen, by the conviction and conversion of those that had been long their worshippers, and by the consternation and confusion of those that would not repent, *Rev.* vi. 15; the strongholds of Satan were cast down, 2 *Cor.* x. 4, 5; great men were made to tremble at the word, as Felix. Satan, the god of this world, was cast out, according to the judgment given against him. This is the honour of all Christians, that their holy religion has been so victorious. 2. With this two-edged sword believers fight against their own corruptions, and through the grace of God subdue and mortify them, the sin that had dominion over them is crucified; self, that once sat king, is bound with chains, and brought into subjection to the yoke of Christ; the tempter is foiled and bruised under their feet; "This honour have all the saints." 3. The complete accomplishment of this will be in the judgment of the great day, when "the Lord shall come with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all," *Jude* 15. Vengeance shall then be executed upon the heathen, *Ps.* ix. 17; and punishments, everlasting punishments, upon the people; kings and nobles that cast away the bands and cords of Christ's government, (*Ps.* ii. 3,) shall not be able to cast away the chains and fetters of his wrath and justice. Then shall be executed the judgment written, for the secrets of men shall be judged according to the Gospel. This honour shall all the saints have, that, as assessors with Christ, they shall judge the world, 1 *Cor.* vi. 2. And in the prospect of that, let them praise the Lord, and continue Christ's faithful servants and soldiers to their life's end.

PSALM CL.

The first and last of the psalms have both the same number of verses, are both short, and very memorable; but the scope of them is very different. The first psalm is an elaborate instruction in our duty, to prepare us for the comforts of our devotion; this is all rapture and transport, and perhaps was penned on purpose to be the conclusion of those sacred songs, to shew what is the design of them all, and that is, to assist us in praising God. The psalmist had been himself full of the praises of God, and here he would fain fill all the world with them. Again and again he calls, Praise the Lord, praise him, praise him, no less than thirteen times in these six short verses. He shews, I. For what, and upon what account God is to be praised, ver. 1, 2. II. How, and with what expressions of joy God is to be praised, ver. 3—5. III. Who must praise the Lord; it is every one's business, ver. 6. In singing this psalm we should endeavour to get our hearts much affected with the perfections of God, and the praises with which he is and shall be for ever attended throughout all ages, world without end.

PRAISE ye the LORD.
Praise God in his sanctuary:
Praise him in the firmament of his power.
2 Praise him for his mighty acts:
Praise him according to his excellent greatness.
3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet:
Praise him with the psaltery and harp.
4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance:
Praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals:
Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD.
Praise ye the LORD.

TRUMPETS AND CYMBALS.—ver. 3, 5.

We are here, with the greatest earnestness imaginable, excited to praise God. If, as some suppose, it was primarily intended for the Levites to stir them up to do their office in the house of the Lord, as singers and players on instruments, yet we must take it as speaking to us, who are made to our God spiritual priests. And the repeating and inculcating of the call thus, intimates that it is a great and necessary duty, a duty which we should be much employed and much enlarged in; but which we are naturally backward to, and cold in, and therefore need to be brought to it, and held to it by precept upon precept, and line upon line. Observe here,

First. Whence this tribute of praise doth arise, and out of what part of his dominion it doth especially issue. It comes, 1. From his sanctuary. Praise him there. Let his priests, let his people that attend there, attend him with their praises. Where should he be praised, but there where he doth in a special manner both manifest his glory, and communicate his grace? Praise God upon the account of his sanctuary, and the privileges which we enjoy by having that among us, *Eze.* xxxvii. 26. 'Praise God in his holy ones,' so some read it. We must take notice of the image of God, as it appears on those that are sanctified, and love them for the sake of that image; and when we praise them, we must praise God in them. 2. From "the firmament of his power." Praise him because of his power and glory which appears in the firmament, its vastness, its brightness, and its splendid furniture; and because of the powerful influences it has upon this earth. Let them that have their dwelling "in the firmament of his power," even the holy angels, lead in this good work. Some by the sanctuary, as well as by the firmament of his power, understand the highest heavens, the residence of his glory; that is indeed his sanctuary, his holy temple, and there he is praised continually in a far better manner than we can praise him. And it is a comfort to us, when we find we do it so poorly, that it is so well done there.

Secondly. Upon what account this tribute of praise is due. Upon many accounts, particularly, 1. The works of his power; ver. 2, "Praise him for his mighty acts," for 'his mightinesses,' so the word is; for all the instances of his might, the power of his providence, the power of his grace; what he has done in the creation, government, and redemption of the world; for the children of men in general, for his own church and children in particular. 2. The glory and majesty of his being; "Praise him according to his excellent greatness;" 'according to the multitude of his magnificence,' so Dr. Hammond reads it. Not that our praises can bear any proportion to God's greatness, for it is infinite; but because he is greater than we can express or conceive, we must raise our conceptions and expressions to the highest degree we can attain to. Be not afraid of saying too much in the praises of God, as we often do in praising even great and good men. *Deus non patitur hyperbolum,*—'We cannot speak hyperbolically of God.' All the danger is of saying too little, and therefore when we have done our utmost, we must own that though we have praised him in consideration of, yet not in proportion to, his excellent greatness.

Thirdly. In what manner this tribute must be paid. Praise him with all the kinds of musical instruments that were then used in the temple service, ver. 3—5. It is well we are not concerned to inquire what sort of instruments each of these were. It is enough that they were well known then; and our concern is, to know, 1. That hereby is intimated how full the psalmist's heart was of the praises of God, and how desirous he was that this good work might go on. 2. That in serving God we should spare no cost or pains. 3. That the best music in God's ears is, devout and pious affections; *non musica chordula, sed cor,*—'not a melodious string, but a melodious heart.' Praise God with a strong faith, praise him with holy love and delight; praise him with an entire confidence in Christ; praise him with a believing triumph over the powers of darkness; praise him with an earnest desire towards him, and a full satisfaction in him; praise him by a universal respect to all his commands; praise him by a cheerful submission to all his disposals; praise him by rejoicing in his love, and solacing yourselves in his great goodness; praise him by promoting the interests of the kingdom of his grace; praise him by a lively hope and expectation of the kingdom of his glory. 4. That various instruments being used in praising God, it should yet be done with an exact and perfect harmony; they must not hinder, but help one another. The New Testament concert, instead of this, is with one mind and one mouth to glorify God, *Rom.* xv. 6.

Fourthly. Who must pay this tribute; ver. 6, "Let every thing that has breath praise the Lord." He began with a call to those that had a place in his sanctuary, and were employed in the temple service, but he concludes with a call to all the children of men, in prospect of the time when the Gentiles should be taken into the church, and in every place, as acceptably as at Jerusalem, this incense should be offered, *Mal.* i. 11. Some think in "every thing that has breath" here, we must include the inferior creatures, as *Gen.* vii. 22, all in whose nostrils was the breath of life. They praise God according to their capacity. The singing of birds is a sort of praising God. The brutes do in effect say to man, We would praise God if we could, do you do it for us. John in vision heard a song of praise from "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth," *Rev.* v. 13. Others think the children of men only are meant: for into them God has in a more peculiar manner breathed the breath of life, and they are become living souls, *Gen.* ii. 7. Now the Gospel is ordered to be preached to every creature, to every human creature; it is required that every human creature praise the Lord. What have we our breath, our spirit for, but to spend it in praising God; and how can we spend it better? 1. Prayers are called our breathings, *Lam.* iii. 56. Let every one that breathes towards God in prayer, finding the benefit of that, breathe forth his praises too. Having breath, let the praises of God perfume our breath; let us be in this work as in our element; let it be to us as the air we breathe in, which we could not live without. Having our breath in our nostrils, let us consider that it is still going forth, and will shortly go and not return. Since,

therefore, we must shortly breathe our last, while we have breath let us praise the Lord; and then we shall breathe our last with comfort, and when death runs us out of breath, we shall remove to a better state, to breathe God's praises in a freer, better air.

The first three of the five books of psalms (according to the Hebrew division) concluded with "Amen, and Amen:" the fourth with "Amen, Hallelujah;" but the last, and in it the whole book concludes only with "Hallelujah," because the six last psalms are wholly taken up in praising God, and there is not a word of complaint or petition in them. The nearer good Christians come to their end, the fuller they should be of the praises of God. Some think this last psalm is designed to represent to us the work of glorified saints in heaven, who are there continually praising God. And the musical instruments here said to be used, are no more to be understood literally, than the gold, and pearls, and precious stones, which are said to adorn the New Jerusalem, *Rev.* xxi. 18, 19. But as those intimate that the glories of heaven are the most excellent glories, so these intimate that the praises the saints offer there are the most excellent praises. Prayers will there be swallowed up in everlasting praises; there will be no intermission in praising God, and yet no weariness; hallelujahs for ever repeated, and yet still new songs. Let us often take a pleasure in thinking what glorified saints are doing in heaven, what those are doing that we have been acquainted with on earth, but are gone before us thither; and let it not only make us long to be among them, but quicken us to do this part of the will of God on earth as they do it that are in heaven. And therefore let us spend as much of our time as may be in this good work, because in it we hope to spend a joyful eternity. Hallelujah is the word there, *Rev.* xix. 1, 3. Let us echo to it now as those that hope to join in it shortly. "Hallelujah, praise ye the Lord."

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

'The book of *Psalms*,' says Bishop Horne, 'like the paradise of Eden, affords us in perfection, though in miniature, every thing that grows elsewhere, "every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food;" and, above all, what was there lost, but is here restored, "the tree of life in the midst of the garden." Very delightful and profitable they are, in their literal and historical sense, which well repays all the pains taken to come at it. But that once obtained, a farther scene begins to open upon us, and all the blessings of the Gospel present themselves to the eye of faith. So that the expositor is a traveller ascending an eminence, neither unfruitful nor unpleasant; at the top of which, when he is arrived, he beholds, like Moses from the summit of mount Nebo, a more lovely and extensive prospect beyond it, and stretching away to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. He sees valleys covered over with corn, blooming gardens, and verdant meadows, with flocks and herds feeding by rivers of water; till, ravished with the sight, he cries out, as St. Peter did, at the view of his Master's glory.'

Psalm I.—The psalm begins by extolling the blessedness of the righteous, who is first described negatively, as turning away from the counsels of the wicked, ver. 1, and then positively, as having his thoughts engrossed with the Divine law, ver. 2. It proceeds next to delineate under a pleasant image the prosperity which attends him in all his ways, and places, in contrast to this, the destruction which is the inseparable concomitant of the wicked, ver. 3, 4. It grounds upon these eternal principles the confidence, that God will take out of the way whatever in the course of events appears to conflict with them, that by his judgment he will overthrow the wicked, through whose malice the righteous suffer, and free his church, which must be formed only of the righteous, from their corrupting leaven; and, as it was declared in ver. 3 and 4, that the Lord interests himself in the righteous, and hence could not leave them helpless, while destruction is the fate of the wicked, the former must in consequence be exalted above the latter, ver. 5, 6. According to this order, which alone secures to the "therefore" at the beginning of ver. 5, and the "for" in ver. 6, their proper meaning, the psalm falls into three strophes, each consisting of two verses.—That the "therefore" refers, not simply to ver. 4, but also to ver. 3, is clear from ver. 6, where the subject of both verses is resumed, and is represented as the ground of what is said in ver. 5.—*Hengstenberg's Commentary on the Psalms*, translated by Rev. P. Fairbairn and Rev. J. Thomson, (Clark's Theological Library,) to which we are indebted for other passages in the Supplementary Notes, especially those from Calvin and Luther, marked *C.* and *L.* The extract above, and the one following, are illustrative of the poetical structure of the *Psalms*, the observation of which by the reader will assist him not a little in the discovery of their meaning and beauty.

Psalm II.—In few psalms does the strophe arrangement appear so marked as in this. One perceives at a glance, that the whole falls into four strophes of three members each. The verses again regularly consist of two members, only the last verse has four, for the purpose of making a full-toned conclusion.

Psalm III.—2. *Selah.* The selah occurs here for the first time. Primarily, it is a music mark. But as the pause in music always comes in where the feeling requires a resting-place, it is of equal import as regards the sense, and the translators who leave it out certainly do wrong. This view acquires great probability, by a particular consideration of the places where the selah occurs. It generally appears where a pause is quite suitable. The right view was substantially given by Luther. The selah, says he, tells us 'to pause, and carefully reflect on the words of the psalm, for they require a peaceful and meditative soul which can apprehend and receive what the Holy Spirit there cogitates and propounds; which we see, indeed, in this verse, where the psalmist is moved with a deep and earnest desire to feel and understand this heavy trial of the soul, wherein also God, though on his side, is silent towards his creatures.'

Psalm VI.—2. *My bones are vexed.* It is certain, that with those who suffer such assaults, their bones are so terrified in their body, that they cannot even do what bones are wont to do in the body. Just as, on the other hand, we see those who have a merry heart, overflowing with joy, having also strong bones, apt to spring up, and capable of bearing along with them the heavy and sluggish body; so that they feel as if joy were spread through their bones, like as when one pours something moist or liquid over the whole body, which refreshes it, as Solomon says, *Pr.* iii. 8, "It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow (*pro* moistening) to thy bones." Where the heart, then, is troubled and sorrowful, the whole body is faint and broken; and where, again, the heart is full of gladness, the body becomes so much the stronger and more agile. Therefore the prophet here speaks rightly when he prays the Lord to heal him, and was so weak in body, that it could not stand upon its bones. So mighty and violent is the power of such assaults, not leaving a corner in the whole frame that is not appalled and bruised thereby.—*L.* 3. *O Lord, how long?* This, *Domine quousque*, was Calvin's motto. The most intense pain under trouble could never extort from him another word. See also Supplementary Note to *Ps.* xiii. 1.

Psalm X.—6. *I shall not be moved.* Calvin here beautifully contrasts the confidence of the pious, which is the offspring of faith, and the false security of the wicked. 'The latter says, I shall not be moved, or shall not shake for ever, because he thinks his strength sufficiently powerful to bear up against all assaults. The believer says, If I should happen to be moved, or even to fall, and then to sink into the lowest depths, still I shall not utterly perish; for God will put his hand beneath me.'

Psalm XI.—6. *Upon the wicked he shall rain, &c.* We ought always to bear in mind the remark of Luther on this passage: 'This verse contains the description of a storm against the wicked, who do not however always perish in an actual tempest, and by a corporeal destruction; but this takes place in a way so far similar, that they are carried away, not in peace, and against their wish.' This is the substance of the thing, the form is partly borrowed from the earlier judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrha, and partly adapted to the imaginative character of poetry, so that it must not be taken into account. The threatening meets also its fulfilment in him who, though outwardly reposing in the lap of fortune, breathes his last amid pangs of remorse.

Psalm XII.—6. *The words of the Lord are pure words—as silver tried.* Compare *Ps.* xviii. 30. Though such knowledge may appear at first sight easy of attainment, yet if any one will consider more attentively how prone the minds of men are to distrust and impious doubts, he will readily understand how profitable it is to have our faith strengthened by this testimony, that God is not fallacious, and does not beguile us with empty words, nor does he unduly laud his own power and goodness, but that he simply offers in his word, what in reality he is willing to bestow. There is no one, indeed, who would not willingly profess to go along with David in what he here delivers, that the words of God are pure; but those who, in ease and retirement, are loudest in extolling the word of God, when matters come to serious conflict, though they dare not openly spout blasphemies against God, yet often insinuate a charge of bad faith. For whenever he delays to help us, we consider his fidelity at fault, and forthwith begin to cry out as if we had been defrauded.—*C.*

Psalm XIII.—1. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long, &c.* It is not in a human way, or from natural feelings, we recognise in our misery, that God cares for us, but by faith we apprehend his invisible providence. So David, as far as he could gather from the actual state of things, seemed to himself to be deserted by God. Still, however, having previously enjoyed the light of faith, he penetrated with the eye of his mind into the hidden grace of God; else how should he have directed his groans and desires to him?—*C.* He therefore paints this most pungent and bitter grief of mind in the most graphic words, as one that feels he has to do with a God alienated from him, hostile, unappeasable, inexorable, and for ever angry. For here hope itself despairs, and despair hopes notwithstanding, and there only lives the unutterable groaning, with which the Holy Spirit intercedes in us, *Rom.* viii. 26, who moved upon the darkness which covered the waters, as is said at the beginning of *Genesis*. This no one understands who has not tasted it.—*L.* Luther also perceived what emphasis lies in the repetition of the "how long," with which the sufferer introduces his 'four bitter and violent complaints.' 'In Hebrew the word "how long" is four times repeated without alteration; instead of which, however, the Latin translator has substituted another word at the third repetition, because he wished to make some variation. But we would rather preserve the simplicity of the Hebrew dialect, because, by the fourfold use of the same word, it seeks to express the affliction of the prophet, and the impressiveness of which is weakened by the change adopted by the Latin interpreter.' The psalm is prepared for those who have been sighing under long distress, and in the one expression, how long, we discover, in a manner, its whole nature.

Psalm XIV.—7. *Bringeth back the captivity.* The Hebrew word never has the signification of bringing back, it never is used intransitively, but always means to return. Now, if we add to this the special grounds which, in our psalm, declare against the reference to the bringing back from captivity, the desire of help from Zion, and the whole matter of the rest of the psalm, which does not contain the slightest allusion to the times of the captivity, but rather turns on relations of a general kind, common to all ages; and, finally, the superscription, we cannot entertain the least doubt of the alone correctness of the exposition, which renders: 'when the Lord returns to the captivity;' that is, the misery of his people, (the accus. being used, as is customary in verbs of motion, compare *Ex.* iv. 19, 20; *Num.* x. 36; *Ps.* lxxxv. 4; *Nah.* ii. 3.) But to wish that the Lord might have compassion on the poor of his flock, there was so much the more occasion for David doing for the general use of the pious in all ages, the greater the deliverances were which he himself had experienced in the times of Saul and Absalom. The wish here expressed found its highest fulfilment in Christ; and this also is to reach its highest stage of development in the future, when the triumphant church shall take the place of the militant. Till then we shall have occasion enough to make the wish of the psalmist our own.

Psalm XV.—2. *He that walketh uprightly.* That the psalmist speaks merely of the works of the second table, arises from this, that he would distinguish the true members of the church from hypocrites, who have a

thousand ways of counterfeiting the works of the first table. 'Faith, calling upon God, spiritual sacrifices are by no means excluded by David; but because hypocrites seek to exalt themselves by many ceremonies, though their impiety is still rendered manifest by their outward walk, which is full of pride, cruelty, violence, fraud, and such things, the proof of sincere and genuine faith is therefore sought in the second table of the law, that such deceivers might be exposed; for just as men practise justice and equity with their neighbours, do they in reality shew themselves to be fearers of God.' But of what sort the righteousness is which the psalmist requires,—that it consists, not like that of the Pharisees, in appearance, but in living reality; that it requires the most thorough agreement, not of the external actions merely, but of the heart, with the law of God, is very strikingly expressed in the last clause, "who speaks truth in his heart." The words "in the heart," shew that the discourse here is of internal purity and truth, to which the truth that is outwardly expressed by the lips is related as streams to the fountain-head. This reference to the heart goes through the whole psalm, and excludes all who give only an outward satisfaction to its requirements, from any interest in its promises. Where, in one feature of the delineation, express allusion is made to the heart, there, in the others, words and deeds can only so far come with consideration, as they proceed from a pure and spiritual mind; as it is only then also, where this is the case, that words and deeds can be sure and abiding.—*C.* 'Hypocrites,' says Luther, 'can do much, or even the whole of this in appearance for a time, but in a time of evil they do the reverse.'

Psalm XVIII.—1. *I will love thee.* Heb., 'Heartily do I love thee, O Lord.' Our sweet and joyful affection ought to impel us with great force to those to whom we owe it that we have been delivered from huge evil and misfortune. So says he now: I have a sincere and childish longing toward thee. Therefore he confesses his warmest love, that he has a desire after our Lord God, for he has found his kindness to be unspeakable; and from this constraining desire and love it arises that he ascribes to God so many names as here follow.—*L.* *My strength.* The word 'my strength,' is referred by Luther to that strength 'with which a man is clothed from above, and by which he is inwardly strengthened and fortified, the firmness which braces weak and delicate minds.' This strength, he says, we have not, excepting from God; for, when it depends upon ourselves, we are quite weak, in good as well as in bad times, and we melt like wax before the fire. This view might be confirmed by 1 *Sam.* xxx. 6, "David strengthened himself in the Lord his God." But that 'my strength' is at least not exclusively, or even not preeminently to be referred to such internal strengthening, is evident from the following names of God, which all refer to the external aid granted by God, and also from the entire sequel, which runs out upon actual deliverances, and may be said to be embodied in this one word. 29. *Run through a troop.* In confidence on thee I am terrified at no assault, contend against all kind of enemies, leap over walls, and whatever else is opposed to me; that is, I who in myself am weak, shall be invincible in thee; and as Paul boasts in *Phil.* iv. 13, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me;" and, in 2 *Cor.* ii. 14, "God be thanked, who always maketh us to triumph in Christ."—*L.* 35. *Thy gentleness.* The Hebrew word marks first, lowliness, then the meekness and gentleness which spring out of that. What our Lord says of himself, "Come to me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," may equally be said of Jehovah. He thus manifests himself to the lowly, to men at large, and to those who are poorest among them; compare *Ps.* viii., where, after the description of God's infinite majesty follows, "What is man, that thou thinkest of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" and *Isa.* lxvi. 1, 2, where the Lord, who has heaven for his throne, and earth for his footstool, is spoken of as looking down on the poor and contrite in spirit. But that they may become partakers in the manifestations of this humility and condescension of God, it is necessary that we be, not externally merely, but also internally low, that we feel ourselves to be poor and needy. To any others it would be a profanation of his dignity; but the lowly his lowliness makes great. That this qualification was possessed by David is evident from this, that he derives all that God had done for him out of his lowliness. Luther remarks, 'Who then are we, that we should either design and undertake to defend the truth and overcome the adversaries, or should feel indignant if we do not succeed therein? It proceeds from the Divine meekness (lowliness) and grace, if we are held up and honoured, not from our designing and undertaking; so that the whole glory remains with God. 37. *Neither did I turn till.* And this has been, and still is done, in all the victories of God's people: as at the beginning of the contest the enemies seem to be superior and invincible; but when once the onset is fairly made, so powerful is it that they flee and are slain; and then the church remits not to follow up the victory that has been won, until all the enemies are consumed.—*L.*

Psalm XX.—It seems to me as if David had composed this psalm that it might serve as a devout and pious battle-cry, whereby he might admonish himself and the people, and draw them to prayer.—*L.* 9. *Let the king hear us.* Hear thou us, thou who truly art king; for David, who serves thee, is not king, and governs not his, but thy kingdom. With which thought he vehemently moves God, that is, he teaches us to move God, as one who then is moved, when we ourselves are so. For how should he not hear when his kingdom, his interest, his honour is in danger? In other words, we then pray most earnestly when we have confidence that we are God's kingdom and his heritage; for then we seek not our own, and are certain that he will not abandon a cause which belongs to him, and a kingdom which is his, especially when we call upon him for this.—*L.*

Psalm XXIII.—4. *Thy rod.* As a sheep, when it wanders through rugged deserts and dark valleys, is secured by the mere presence of its shepherd against the assaults of wild beasts and other dangers, so does David here testify, that as often as he is in a situation of danger, he has a sufficient protection in the shepherd care of God. But now that God, in the person of his only begotten Son, has manifested himself as a shepherd, in a far clearer and nobler manner than he did formerly to the fathers under the law, we do not sufficiently honour his protection, unless, with eye directed towards it, we walk through all fears and all dangers.—*C.* 5. *In presence of mine enemies.* In sight of mine enemies, is a very picturesque trait. They must be looking on very coolly when the table is spread, and the psalmist sits down. The anointing with the oil of gladness, *Ps.* xlv. 7, the oil of the passage before us, which is the symbolical expression of joy, is one of the necessary accompaniments of a festive and joyful entertainment.

Psalm XXIX.—The key to the interpretation of this psalm is to be found in its conclusion: "The Lord sitteth enthroned as King for ever; the Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." From this it is obvious that the psalm has no personal reference, but that the psalmist has sung it from the soul of the people, the church of God, and for their edification. Hence also it is obvious that the situation is that of the suffering, the danger, and the hostile oppression of the people of God, and of the fear of the little flock in view of the might of the world. Hence it is clear from what point of view we are to contemplate all that goes before. "That the Lord has might," which is the substance of the whole psalm, is introduced merely as the foundation for this, "the Lord will give might." The majesty of God in nature is described only for this reason, that the church may thus see that there is a shield ready prepared for her against all the assaults of her enemies. The psalm gives us a very instructive lesson as to how we ought to interpret the language of nature, and to turn it to our own edification. Every thunder-storm, every hurricane, should tell us that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church of God, or against ourselves, if we are really members of the church, and servants of God. Every thing depends on our being sure of our condition. The revelations of God in nature speak a double language; they speak to every man according to his own spiritual condition. The thunder-storm, for example, is a real promise to the pious, to the church of God; while to the ungodly, to the world, it is a real threatening. Whoever feels assured of the love of God, sees, in every manifestation of the majesty of God, a ground of confidence; whereas to those who are conscious of being objects of the Divine displeasure, the sentiment inspired by such appearances is that of terror.

Psalm XXXI.—2. *Bow down thine ear.* O God, thou hearest what is uttered in a very low voice, yea, thou hearest even my sighs! Ah! keep not at such a distance from me! I have no material defence, no place of strength and safety; be thou my castle and stronghold. Here we learn how the children of God ought to speak to their beloved Father, namely, as friend to friend, or as a child to his father. Ah! my beloved Father, bow down thine ear to me. See what faith, what childlike love and confidence does! It embraces the Lord, and falls, as it were, upon his neck! O Lord, thou knowest, and thou alone art acquainted with my trouble; to thee alone will I complain, and speak, as it were, secretly into thy ear.—*Jo. Arnd.*

Psalm XXXVII.—1, 2. *Fret not thyself—they shall soon be cut down as the grass.* How immediately does the prophet seize and hit upon the thoughts of the heart in this temptation, and take away all causes thereof, saying, at the first, O man, thou art choleric, and hast cause for it, as thou thinkest, for there are wicked men who do unjustly, and commit much evil, while still they continue to prosper, so that nature thinks it has just cause to be angry. But not so, dear child; permit grace, and not nature here to rule; break thine anger, and be at rest for a little; let them go on doing evil and prospering; believe me, it shall do thee no harm. Then if men ask, When shall things cease to be thus? Who can endure so long? He answers, "For as the grass," &c. This is a beautiful similitude, terrible to hypocrites, and consoling to the afflicted. How entirely does it raise us out of our own sight, and place us in the sight of God! In our sight the multitude of hypocrites flourishes and grows, and covers the world so completely, that they alone seem almost to exist, as the green grass covers and adorns the earth. But in God's sight what are they? Hay, that must presently be made; and the higher the grass grows, the nearer is it to the scythe and the haycock; just as the higher and farther the wicked spread and rise aloft, the nearer are they to destruction. Wherefore, then, shouldst thou be angry when their wickedness and prosperity are of so short-lived a nature?—*L.*

Psalm XLV.—This psalm, 'I take,' says M. Henry, 'to be purely and only meant of Jesus Christ; of him speaketh the prophet this, of him, and of no other man.' Farther proofs of the justice of this application may be seen in Hengstenberg's Work, Dr. Pye Smith's Exposition, in his Scripture Testimony to the Messiah, vol. i. 332, and the Rev. George Phillips's Commentary on the Psalms.

Psalm LI.—3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions.* That little word "for" must be understood so, as not to imply that his sins must be forgiven him because he had confessed them; for sin is always sin, and deserving of punishment, whether it is confessed or not; still confession of sin is of importance on this account, that God will be gracious to no one but to those who confess their sin; while to those who do not confess their sin, he will shew no favour.—*L.* The language of the humble sinner is,—

'Perhaps he will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish I will pray,
And perish only there.
I can but perish if I go,
I am resolved to try,
For if I stay away, I know,
I shall for ever die.'

5. *I was shapen in iniquity.* Now he does not confess himself guilty merely of some one or more sins, as formerly, but he rises higher, that from his mother's womb he has brought forth nothing but sin, and by nature is wholly corrupt, and, as it were, immersed in sin. And certainly we have no solid convictions of sin unless we are led to accuse our whole nature of corruption. Nay, each single transgression ought to lead us to this general knowledge, that nothing but corruption reigns in all parts of our soul.—*C.* 10—12. Hitherto we have handled and set forth that admirable portion of this psalm in which we have heard the highest articles of the Christian faith, namely, what repentance, what sin, what grace, what Christian righteousness is, and how one may become blessed;—what now remains to be considered in this psalm, methinks, has respect to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which follow upon forgiveness of sin. Of such gifts the three next verses speak, as in the whole three the name of the Spirit is repeated, being called in the first a sure Spirit, then the Holy Spirit, and in the third the joyful Spirit.—*L.* *Create.* By this word he acknowledges, that if we are born again to God at first, or after having fallen are restored, what is good in us is the gift of God. For he does not pray that his weak heart might be supported by some measure of help, but he confesses that there is nothing good and right in his heart, until it has come to him from without.—*C.* Parallel are *Jer.* xxiv. 7, "I give to them a heart, that they may know me;" *Eze.* xxxvi. 26, "And I give to you a new heart," &c.; 1 *Sam.* x. 9. The clean heart, besides here, in *Ps.* xxiv. 4; lxxiii. 1; *Mat.* v. 8; *Acts* xv. 9.

Psalm LIV.—7. *Mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.* If any one asks, whether it is permitted to the children of God, when God takes vengeance on crimes, to feast himself on such a spectacle, the answer is easy,—only let his eyes be pure, and he can piously and holily refresh himself with the manifestations of God's justice; but when they are infected with any evil desire, all is then drawn to a wrong and perverse end.—*C.*

Psalm LVI.—8. *My tears into thy bottle.* The Romans had a funeral custom that one went to each person, in the height of his grief, with a piece of cotton, on which he carefully collected the falling tears, which he squeezed into a bottle, or lachrymatory, of glass or earth; they were then preserved with the greatest care, and placed on the sepulchres of the deceased, as a memorial of affection and sorrow. Many of these lachrymatories have been found in Roman tombs. —(See Engraving.) The expression in this verse should indicate that the custom was more anciently in use among the Jews. The plain meaning of the words is, 'be mindful of my misfortunes; do not forget them.'—*Domestic Bible.*

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE PSALMS.

PSALM LXII.—6, 7. *My rock—my salvation—my glory—my refuge.* The reason why he heaps together so many names of God is, that he may meet and throw back the assaults of Satan, by, as it were, so many shields.—*C.*

PSALM LXXII.—The Messianic interpretation is defended by Koster, with the remark; 'It would be inexplicable if an idea of such importance in the Hebrew religion, as that of the Messiah, should not have found a place in the psalms.' In the first place, the announcement as to the eternal duration of the dominion of the King, in ver. 5, 7, and 17, is in favour of the Messianic interpretation. Farther, it is asserted, in as express terms as possible, that the kingdom of this great sovereign, as distinguished from that of his predecessors, shall extend over the whole earth, that all kings shall submit to him, and that all nations shall serve him; while, at the same time, care is taken in such a way, as does not admit of being misunderstood, to guard this thought from every suspicion of being a poetical exaggeration. The psalmist would have rendered himself ridiculous if he had promised such a dominion to any of the ordinary posterity of David, and no such thing ever took place. On the other hand, the announcement of the extension of the dominion over the whole earth, is what never fails to occur in Messianic prophecies; compare *Ps.* ii.; *Isa.* ix. and xi.; *Zec.* ix. 10; *Mic.* v. 4. Finally, the king gains his power over the world, according to ver. 11—15, not by weapons of war, but by the righteousness and the love which he manifests in protecting and delivering the miserable. There is no example of any Israelitish king, of the ordinary stamp, having brought in this way even one single nation into a state of subjection. No such king was ever in circumstances to practise the virtues of righteousness and love in the midst of distant nations, powerful states, not in subjection to his own dominion. Such a king must have been one of a higher than human nature; one who, in the language of the parallel passage, *Isa.* xi., "smites the earth with the rod of his mouth, and slays the wicked with the breath of his lips."

PSALM LXXIII.—17. *Then understood I their end.* Lactantius on the death of Persecutors, Leo's History of the French Revolution, the Life of the poet Burger, no less than that of the Emperor Napoleon, furnish remarkable proofs of this. The exceptions are designed to perplex those who do not go into the sanctuary of God. The recompence also on this side should, according to the design of God, remain always an object of faith. Here also God conceals himself, in order that he may be found by those who seek him. That this is so seldom done even by the well disposed, that even they are so much inclined to look upon the righteousness of God as inoperative in this life, is a melancholy proof of the degeneracy of the church, and of the lamentable prevalence of infidelity. In the time of the church's vigour, the eyes are open for the tremendous judgments of God, and the sight of these forms the roots of the living hope of a future judgment.

PSALM LXXVI.—3. *There brake he the arrows.* We have here to learn the gracious deliverance granted by God from bodily enemies, how he breaks all the human earthly power which is turned against the church. For the power of the enemies is human, earthly, fleshly, but the power of the church is spiritual, divine, and heavenly. There contend and fight with each other, the spirit and the flesh; spiritual power, by faith and prayer; and earthly power, by the sword, the bow, and the spear. Thus fought Goliath and David, Hezekiah and Sennacherib, Jehoshaphat and the Moabites, Asa and the thousands of the Moors; and thus from the beginning, the church has fought against all the power of tyrants, and will still continue to fight till the end of the world; yea, the church gains the victory, and conquers through the cross, according to the beautiful figure of the 19th chapter of *Revelations*, where we read that "the Son of God rides upon a white horse, and that out of his mouth there goeth a sharp sword, and that there follows him a great army."—*Arnd.* Within the spiritual, as well as in the external domain, the Lord reveals himself, as one who breaks the arrows of those who are the enemies of his church and of his faithful ones.

PSALM LXXXIII.—9, 10. *Do unto them as, &c.* The alleged imprecations of the psalmist are not to be considered as the expression of his private feelings as a man, but as the promptings of the Spirit of inspiration under which he wrote. They are the effect of a strong prophetic impulse, leading him to denounce the just awards of Heaven against the enemies of God and of his Anointed. Considered in this aspect, they are to be classed with the prophetic curse of Noah uttered against the posterity of Ham, a curse flowing not from personal resentment, but from Divine prompting.—*Bush.*

PSALM XCVII.—7. *Worship him, all ye gods.* Whom? Jesus; so says the apostle, *Heb.* i. 6, "All ye gods." His angels, so the Septuagint; and the apostle, "Let all the angels of God worship him."—*A. Clarke.* That the being to whom supreme adoration is here required is "Jehovah the God of the whole earth," ver. 1, 5, none can doubt. It is of little importance whether beings of a superior rank are there intended, or those human messengers of the Divine will, the prophets. Admitting with the most learned and rational interpreter among the modern Jews that the psalm refers to the Messiah, we find the context such as, in the most sublime manner, and with the imagery usually applied to the same subject in the prophetic writings, plainly introduces him to the world. The pronoun which represents the object to whom adoration is commanded to be paid, most clearly has no other antecedent than the Lord of the whole earth.—*Dr. J. P. Smith.*

PSALM CIX.—If Christ be made the speaker, then we observe very clearly that these denunciations correspond with the fate of Judas, and of the Jewish nation in general, with the destruction of vast multitudes of the Jewish people by Titus, and with the complete dispersion of those who survived. The miserable end of Judas was but a type of what so soon afterwards befell his unhappy countrymen, who were partakers in his iniquity. How true was it that in the generation following the one in which our Lord was put to death "their name was blotted out," ver. 13; for they existed no longer as a distinct community. We believe then that there are here predicted the Divine judgments, which were executed on Judas in the first instance, and afterwards, by the Roman army, upon the whole Jewish people, for their disbelief and disobedience; and we know that what we find in this psalm agrees with those denunciations which our Lord actually delivered when upon earth concerning the destiny of Jerusalem and its inhabitants.—*Psalms in Hebrew, with Commentary, by Rev. G. Phillips, B.D.*

PSALM CX.—*The Lord: the immortal Priest and Conqueror.* It is impossible to apply these descriptions to any other than to the Messiah. He is described as a Sovereign then existing, and as a person distinct from Jehovah, and as receiving from him a dominion the most extensive, the exercise of which is described in characters not be conceived as those inherent in a merely created and dependent being. He is also called Adonai, the name appropriated to the only living and true God. Nor can any abatements and reductions, representing this as a symbolical picture of the progress and efficacy of Christian doctrine, be vindicated on the grounds of fair and just interpretation.—*J. P. Smith.* 3. *In the beauties of holiness.* Gesenius, in his Thesaurus, has rendered this passage *sacræ vestes;* and this I am disposed to believe is its real meaning; for the war of which the psalmist is speaking is, doubtless, a holy war, carried on against the world, the flesh, and the devil, by an army of priests, which army is directed by our Lord himself, whose office, as high priest, is set forth in the next verse. It is this view which Tholuck supports in his paraphrastic exposition of the present passage: 'With willing hearts all follow this king who fight under his colours. For he rules over them, because he is their priest; and by his intercession with God he has bought and consecrated them for priests; therefore it is also mentioned of them, that they put on themselves holy ornaments, that is, holy garments, priestly clothing. They go to the war of their God as to a holy congregation.' We may remark that this phrase is explicable only on the hypothesis, that the Messiah is the personage here addressed; for there is no other way in which we could comprehend what is intended by the psalmist in speaking of soldiers putting on holy ornaments, or garments.—*Phillips, ut supra.*

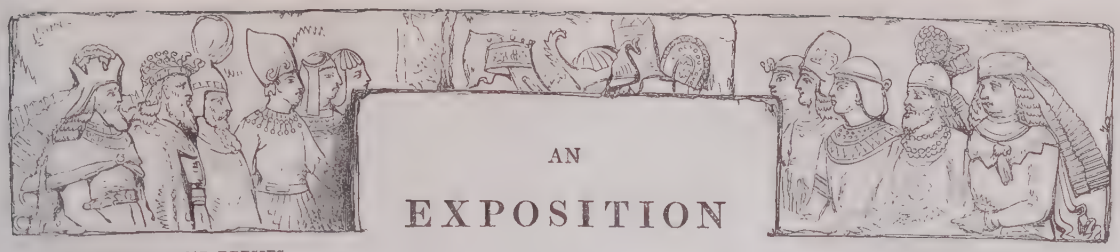
PSALM CXIX.—Philip Henry, father of the commentator, advised his children to take a verse of psalm cxix. every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the psalm twice in a year; 'and that,' said he, 'will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scripture.'—*P. Henry's Life,* Williams's edition, p. 247. In conformity with this rule, we find his godly daughter writing thus in her diary:—'1687-8, March 9, Friday morning—I have been of late taking some pains to learn by heart psalm cxix., and have made some progress therein.' Extracted from Mrs. Savage's MSS. in P. Henry's Life.—*Ib.* 15. *I will meditate in thy precepts.* If a chapter be read with the eye merely, while the mind remains inattentive, and the book be shut as soon as the chapter is finished, and thus what has been read immediately escape the memory; what is there to surprise, if, after the whole Bible has been several times read through, we discover in ourselves no increase of piety and devotion?—*Professor Frank.* 66. *Teach me good judgment and knowledge. Pr.* ii. 6; 1 *Cor.* i. 5; 2 *Tim.* i. 7. It is recorded of one of the reformers, (Gillespie, a Scottish commissioner at the Westminster Assembly of Divines,) that when he had acquitted himself in a public disputation with great credit to his Master's cause, a friend begged to see the notes which he had been observed to write, supposing that he had taken down the arguments of his opponents, and sketched the substance of his own reply. Greatly was he surprised to find that his notes consisted simply of these ejaculatory petitions,—'More light, Lord; more light, more light!' And how fully was the true spirit of prayer compressed and illustrated in these short aspirations! Could they fail of success? "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," *Jas.* i. 5. Greenham, being asked his judgment of some important matters, answered, 'Sir, neither am I able to speak, nor you to hear, for we have not prayed. I may indeed talk, and you may answer, as natural men; but we are not now prepared to confer as children of God.' 147. *I hoped in thy word.* One of Melancthon's correspondents describes Luther thus: 'I cannot enough admire the extraordinary cheerfulness, constancy, faith, and hope of the man in these trying and vexatious times. He constantly feeds these gracious affections by a very diligent study of the word of God. Then not a day passes in which he does not employ in prayer at least three of his very best hours. Once I happened to hear him at prayer. Gracious God! what spirit and what faith is there in his expressions! He petitions God with as much reverence as if he was in the Divine presence; and yet with as firm a hope and confidence, as he would address a father or a friend. "I know," said he, "thou art our Father and our God; and therefore I am sure thou wilt bring to nought the persecutors of thy children. For shouldest thou fail to do this, thine own cause, being connected with ours, would be endangered. It is entirely thine own concern. We, by thy providence, have been compelled to take a part; thou, therefore wilt be our defence." Whilst I was listening to Luther praying in this manner at a distance, my soul seemed on fire within me, to hear the man address God so like a friend, and yet with so much gravity and reverence; and also to hear him, in the course of his prayer, insisting upon the promises contained in the psalms, as if he was sure his petitions would be granted.' Was not this an illustration of David's confidence, "I hoped in thy word?"—*Milner's History,* vol. v., p. 565. 154. *Deliver me.* The word translated 'deliver me,' is taken from the office of a redeemer or next of kin amongst the Israelites, to whom it belonged to redeem the inheritance, or ransom the person, of his impoverished or enslaved relative, and also to be his patron and defender against injustice and oppression, and the avenger of his blood, if he was slain.—*Scott.* The use therefore of this word in the original in this verse,—naturally pointing the believer's attention to him, who is indeed near of kin to him, and has combined all the offices of the ancient redeemer in his own beloved person,—at once illustrates and warrants the view that is here given of the passage.—*Rev. C. Bridges on the 119th Psalm,* whence the above extracts relative to that psalm have been taken.

PSALM CXXVII.—5. *Gate.* Mr. Merrick observes, that the gate was sometimes the seat of war as well as the place of judicature. "Then was war in the gates," *Jud.* v. 8. He mentions a remarkable Chinese proverb: 'When a son is born into a family, a bow and arrow are hung before the gate.'

PSALM CXXXIV.—3. *The Lord—bless thee out of Zion.* The two preceding verses, as Mr. Mudge observes, seem directed to the priests of the temple, by some person, probably of consequence, come up to pay his devotions. This third verse is therefore returned, as from the priests. And thus it is, that prayer and praise, which by grace are caused to ascend from our hearts to God, will certainly return in the benedictions of heaven upon our souls and bodies, our persons and our families, our church and our country; like the vapours which, exhaled by the warmth of the sun from the bowels of the earth, mount upwards into the air, but soon fall again in fruitful showers, causing the little hills to rejoice, and the valleys to laugh and sing.

PSALM CXXXVII.—9. *Happy, &c.* The meaning of the words, "happy shall he be," is, He shall go on and prosper, for the Lord of hosts shall go with him, and fight his battles against the enemy and oppressor of his people, empowering him to recompense upon the Chaldeans the works of their hands, and to reward them as they served Israel. The slaughter of the very infants, mentioned in the last verse, is expressly predicted by Isaiah, *ch.* xiii. 16, "Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished." The destruction was to be universal, sparing neither sex nor age. Terrible, but just, are thy judgments, O Lord!—*Bp. Horne.*

"Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." 'Such,' says Dr. Morison, 'is the appropriate conclusion of a book dedicated by the Spirit of God to the work of praise; a book which has been the medium of the song of the church for more than three thousand years; a book which is quoted more frequently than any other by Christ and his apostles; a book which presents loftiest ideas of God and his government, which is fitted to every scene of human life, which expresses every state of religious experience, and which bears along it marks of its celestial origin, so simple and clear, that he who runneth may read.'



ANCIENT HEAD DRESSES AND NECK CHAINS,

AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE PROVERBS,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

We have now before us, I. A new author, or penman rather,—or pen, if you will, made use of by the Holy Ghost, for the making known of the mind of God to us, writing as moved by the finger of God, (so the Spirit of God is called,)—and that is Solomon. Through his hand came this book of Scripture, and the two that follow it, *Ecclesiastes* and *Canticles*, a sermon and a song. Some think he wrote *Canticles* when he was young, *Proverbs* in the midst of his days, and *Ecclesiastes* when he was old. In the title of his song he only writes himself Solomon, perhaps because he wrote it before his accession to the throne, being filled with the Holy Ghost when he was young. In the title of his *Proverbs* he writes himself the son of David, king of Israel, for then he ruled over all Israel. In the title of his *Ecclesiastes* he writes himself the son of David, king of Jerusalem, because then perhaps his influence was grown less upon the distant tribes, and he confined himself very much in Jerusalem. Concerning this author we may observe, 1. That he was a king, and a king's son. The penmen of Scripture hitherto were most of them men of the first rank in the world, as Moses and Joshua, Samuel and David, and now Solomon; but after him the inspired writers were generally poor prophets, men of no figure in the world, because that dispensation was approaching in which God would choose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty, and the poor should be employed to evangelize. Solomon was a very rich king, and his dominions very large, a king of the first magnitude, and yet addicted himself to the study of Divine things, and was a prophet, and a prophet's son. It is no disparagement to the greatest princes and potentates in the world to instruct those about them in religion, and the laws of it. 2. That he was one whom God endued with extraordinary measures of wisdom and knowledge, in answer to his prayers at his accession to the throne. His prayer was exemplary: "Give me a wise and an understanding heart." The answer to it was encouraging; he had that, and all other things were added to him. Now here we find what good use he made of the wisdom God gave him; he not only governed himself and his kingdom with it, but he gave rules of wisdom to others also, and transmitted them to posterity. Thus must we trade with the talents with which we are trusted according as they are. 3. That he was one who had his faults, and in his latter end turned aside from those good ways of God which in this book he had directed others in. We have the story of it 1 *Kin.* xi., and a sad story it is, that the penman of such a book as this should apostatize as he did. "Tell it not in Gath;" but let those who are most eminently useful take warning by this not to be proud or secure; and let us all learn not to think the worse of good instructions though we have them from those who do not themselves altogether live up to them.

II. We have here a new way of writing, in which Divine wisdom is taught us by proverbs, or short sentences, which contain their whole design within themselves, and are not connected with one another. We have had Divine laws, histories, and songs, and now Divine proverbs. Such various methods has Infinite Wisdom used for our instruction, that, no stone being left unturned to do us good, we may be inexcusable if we perish in our folly. Teaching by proverbs was 1. An ancient way of teaching. It was the most ancient way among the Greeks. The seven wise men of Greece had each of them some one saying that they valued themselves upon, and that made them famous. These sentences were inscribed on pillars, and had in great veneration, as that which was said to 'come down from heaven,'—*a cœlo descendit*, γνῶθι σεαυτὸν, 'know thyself.' 2. It was a plain and easy way of teaching, which cost neither the teachers nor the learners much pains, nor put their understandings or memories to the stretch. Long periods, and arguments far-fetched, must be laboured both by him that frames them and by him that takes them; while a proverb, that carries both its sense and its evidence in a little compass, is presently apprehended and subscribed to, and is easily retained. Both David's devotions and Solomon's instructions are sententious, which may recommend that way of expression to those who minister about holy things both in praying and preaching. 3. It was a very profitable way of teaching, and served admirably well to answer the end. The word *Mashal*, here used for a proverb, comes from a word that signifies to rule, or have dominion, because of the commanding power and influence which wise and weighty sayings have upon the children of men; he that teacheth by them doth *dominari in concionibus*,—'rules his auditory.' It is easy to observe how the world is governed by proverbs. "As saith the proverb of the ancients," (1 *Sam.* xxiv. 13,) or, as the vulgar expresses it, 'as the old saying is,' goes very far with the most of men in forming their notions and fixing their resolves. Much of the wisdom of the ancients has been handed down to posterity by proverbs, and some think we may judge of the temper and character of a nation by the complexion of its vulgar proverbs. Proverbs in conversation are like axioms in philosophy, maxims in law, and postulata in the mathematics, which nobody disputes, but everybody endeavours to expound so as to have them on their side. Yet there are many corrupt proverbs which tend to debauch men's minds, and harden them in sin. The devil has his proverbs, and the world and the flesh have their proverbs, which reflect reproach on God and religion, as *Eze.* xii. 22; xviii. 2; to guard us against the corrupt influence of which God has his proverbs, which are all wise and good, and tend to make us so. These proverbs of Solomon were not merely a collection of the wise sayings that had been formerly delivered, as some have imagined, but were the dictates of the Spirit of God in Solomon. The very first of them, *ch.* i. 7, agrees with what God said to man at the beginning, *Job* xxviii. 28, "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;" so that, though Solomon was great, and his name may serve as much as any man's to recommend his writings, yet, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. It is God by Solomon that here speaks to us; I say, to *us*, for these proverbs were written for our learning, and, when Solomon speaketh to his son, the exhortation is said to "speak to us as unto children," *Heb.* xii. 5. And as we have no book so useful to us in our devotions as David's Psalms, so have we none so serviceable to us for the right ordering of our conversations as Solomon's Proverbs, which, as David saith of the commandments, are exceeding broad, containing in a little compass a complete body of Divine ethics, politics, and economics, exposing every vice, recommending every virtue, and suggesting rules for the government of ourselves in every relation and condition, and every turn of the conversation. The learned Bishop Hall has drawn up a system of moral philosophy out of Solomon's *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes*. The first nine chapters of this book are reckoned as a preface by way of exhortation to the study and practice of wisdom's rules, and caution against those things that would hinder us therein. We have, then, the first volume of Solomon's proverbs, *ch.* x.—xxiv.; after that a second volume, *ch.* xxv.—xxix.; and then Agur's prophecy, *ch.* xxx.; and Lemuel's, *ch.* xxxi. The scope of all is one and the same, to direct us so to order our conversation aright, as that, in the end, we may see the salvation of the Lord. The best comment on those rules is to be ruled by them.

CHAPTER I.

Those that read David's psalms, especially those towards the latter end, would be tempted to think that religion is all rapture, and consists in nothing but the ecstacies and transports of devotion; and, doubtless, there is a time for them, and if there be a heaven upon earth, it is in them; but while we are on earth, we cannot be wholly taken up with them; we have a life to live in the flesh, must have a conversation in the world, and into that we must now be taught to carry our religion, which is a rational thing, and very serviceable to the conduct of human life, and tends as much to make us discreet as to make us devout, to make the face to shine before men, in a prudent, honest, useful conversation, as to make the heart burn towards God in pious and holy affections. In this chapter we have, I. The title of the book, shewing the general scope and design of it, ver. 1—6. II. The first principle of it recommended to our serious consideration, ver. 7—9. III. A necessary caution against bad company, ver. 10—19. IV. A faithful and lively representation of wisdom's reasonings with the children of men, and the certain ruin of those who turn a deaf ear to those reasonings, ver. 20—33.

THE proverbs of Solomon the
son of David, king of Israel;
2 To know wisdom and instruction;
To perceive the words of understanding;
3 To receive the instruction of wisdom,
Justice, and judgment, and equity;
4 To give subtilty to the simple,
To the young man knowledge and discretion.
5 A wise *man* will hear, and will increase learning;
And a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:
6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation;
The words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

We have here an introduction to this book, which some think was prefixed by the collector and publisher, as Ezra; but it is rather supposed to have been penned by Solomon himself, who, in the beginning of his book, proposeth his end in writing it, that he might keep to his business, and closely pursue that end. We are here told,

First. Who wrote these wise sayings, ver. 1; they are "the proverbs of Solomon." 1. His name signifies peaceable; and the character both of his spirit and of his reign answered it, both were peaceable. David, whose life was full of troubles, wrote a book of devotion; for, "is any afflicted? let him pray." Solomon, who lived quietly, wrote a book of instruction; for when the churches had rest, they were edified. In times of peace we should learn ourselves and teach others that which in troublous times both they and we must practise. 2. He was "the son of David;" it was his honour to stand related to that good man, and he reckoned it so with good reason, for he fared the better for it, 1 *Kin.* xi. 12. He had been blessed with a good education, and many a good prayer had been put up for him, *Ps.* lxxii. 1; the effect of both which appeared in his wisdom and usefulness. The generation of the upright are sometimes thus blessed that they are made blessings, eminent blessings in their day. Christ is often called the Son of David; and Solomon was a type of him in this as in other things, that he opened his mouth in parables, or proverbs. 3. He was "king of Israel;" a king, and yet no disparagement to him to be "an instructor of the ignorant, and a teacher of babes." King of Israel, that people among whom God was known, and his name was great; among them he learned wisdom, and to them he communicated it. "All the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom," which excelled all men's, 1 *Kin.* iv. 30; x. 24; which was an honour to Israel, that their king was such a dictator, such an oracle. Solomon was famous for apophthegms; every word he said had weight in it, and something that was surprising and edifying. His servants that attended him, and heard his wisdom, had among them collected three thousand proverbs of his; which they wrote in their daybooks, but these were of his own writing, and do not amount to near a thousand. In these he was divinely inspired. Some think out of those other proverbs of his, which were not so inspired, the apocryphal books of *Ecclesiasticus* and the *Wisdom of Solomon* were compiled, in which are many excellent sayings, and of great use; but, take all together, they are far short of this book. The Roman emperors had each of them their symbol or motto, as many now have with their coat of arms. But Solomon had many weighty sayings, not, as theirs, borrowed from others, but all the products of that extraordinary wisdom which God endued him with.

Secondly. For what end they were written, ver. 2—4; not to gain a reputation to the author, or strengthen his interest among his subjects, but for the use and benefit of all that in every age and place will govern themselves by these dictates, and study them close. This book will help us, 1. To form right notions of things, and to possess our minds with clear and distinct ideas of them. "That we may know wisdom and instruction;" that wisdom which is got by instruction, by Divine revelation; may know both how to speak and act wisely ourselves, and to give instruction to others. 2. To distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; "to perceive the words of understanding," to apprehend them, to judge of them, to guard against mistakes, and to accommodate what we are taught to ourselves, and our own use, that we "may discern things that differ, and not be imposed upon;" and "may approve things that are excellent," and not lose the benefit of them, as the apostle prays, *Phil.* i. 10. 3. To order our conversation aright in every thing, ver. 3. This book will give, that we may "receive, the instruction of wisdom," that knowledge which will guide our practice in "justice, and judgment, and equity," ver. 3; which will dispose us to render to all their due, to God the things that are God's in all the exercises of religion, and to all men what is due to them, according to the obligations which by relation, office, contract, or upon any other account, we lie under to them. Note, Those are truly wise, and none but those, that are universally conscientious. And the design of the Scripture is, to teach us that wisdom; justice in the duties of the first table, judgment in those of the second table, and equity, that is, sincerity, in both, so some distinguish them.

Thirdly. For whose use they were written, ver. 4. They are of use to all, but are designed especially, 1. For the simple, to give subtlety to them. The instructions here given are plain, and easy, and level to the meanest capacity; "the wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein." And those are likely to receive benefit by them, that are sensible of their own ignorance and their need to be taught, and are therefore desirous to receive instruction; and those who receive those instructions in their light and power, though they be simple, will hereby be made subtle, graciously crafty to know the sin they should avoid, and the duty they should do, and to escape the tempter's wiles. He that is harmless as the dove, by observing Solomon's rules, may become wise as the serpent; and he that has been sinfully foolish, when he begins to govern himself by the word of God, becomes graciously wise. 2. For young people, to give them knowledge and discretion. Youth is the learning age, catches at instructions, receives impressions, and retains what is then received; it is therefore of great consequence that the mind be then seasoned well; nor can it receive a better tincture than from Solomon's proverbs. Youth is rash, and heady, and inconsiderate; "Man is born like the wild ass's colt," and therefore needs to be broken by the restraints, and managed by the rules we find here. And if young people will but take heed to their ways, according to Solomon's proverbs, they will soon gain the knowledge and discretion of the ancients. Solomon had an eye to posterity in writing this book, hoping by it to season the minds of the rising generation with the generous principles of wisdom and virtue.

Fourthly. What good use may be made of them, ver. 5, 6. Those that are young and simple, may by them be made wise; and are not excluded from Solomon's school as they were from Plato's. But is it only for such? No; here is not only milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men. This book will not only make the foolish and bad wise and good, but the wise and good wiser and better; and though the simple and the young man may perhaps slight those instructions, and not be the better for them, yet the wise man will hear. Wisdom will be justified by her own children, though not by the children sitting in the market-place. Note, Even wise men must hear, and not think themselves too wise to learn. A wise man is sensible of his own defects, (*plurima ignoro, sed ignorantiam meam non ignoro,*—'I am ignorant of many things, but not of my own ignorance;') and, therefore, is still pressing forwards, that he may increase in learning, may know more, and know it better, more clearly and distinctly, and may know better how to make use of it. As long as we live, we should strive to increase in all useful learning. It was a saying of one of the greatest of the rabbins, *qui non auget scientiam amittit de ea,*—'if our stock of knowledge be not increasing, it is wasting;' and they that would increase in learning must study the Scriptures; those perfect the man of God. A wise man by increasing in learning is not only profitable to himself, but to others also,

1. As a counsellor. "A man of understanding" in these precepts of wisdom, by comparing them with one another, and with his own observations "shall" by degrees "attain unto wise counsels;" that is, he stands fair for preferment, and will be consulted as an oracle, and intrusted with the conduct of public affairs. He shall come to sit at the helm, so the word signifies. Note, Industry is the way to honour; and those that God has blessed with wisdom must study to do good with it, according as their sphere is. It is more dignity indeed to be counsellor to the prince, but it is more charity to be counsellor to the poor, as Job was with his wisdom; *Job* xxix. 15, "I was eyes to the blind."

2. As an interpreter, ver. 6, "to understand a proverb." Solomon was himself famous for expounding riddles, and resolving hard questions; which was of old the celebrated entertainment of the Eastern princes, witness the solutions he gave to the knots with which the queen of Sheba thought to puzzle him. Now here he undertakes to furnish his readers with that talent, as far as would be serviceable, to the best purposes. They shall understand a proverb, even the interpretation, without which the proverb is a nut uncracked; when they hear a wise saying, though it be figurative, they shall take the sense of it, and know how to make use of it. The words of the wise are sometimes dark sayings; in St. Paul's Epistles there was that which was hard to be understood; but, to those who being well versed in the Scriptures know how to compare spiritual things with spiritual, they will be easy and safe. So that if you ask them, "Have ye undertood all these things?" they may answer, "Yea, Lord." Note, It is a credit to religion when men of honesty are men of sense; all good people, therefore, should aim to be intelligent, and run to and fro; that is, take pains in the use of means, that their knowledge may be increased.

7 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge:
But fools despise wisdom and instruction.
8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father,
And forsake not the law of thy mother:
9 For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head,
And chains about thy neck.

Solomon having undertaken to teach a young man knowledge and discretion, here lays down two general rules in order to be observed thereunto; and those are to fear God and honour his parents, which two fundamental laws of morality Pythagoras begins his golden verses with, though the former of them wretchedly corrupted; *Primum, deos immortales cole, parentesque honora,*—'First worship the immortal gods, and honour your parents.' To make young people such as they should be,

First. Let them have regard to God as their supreme; ver. 7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." It is the principal part of knowledge, so the margin; it is the head of knowledge; that is, 1. Of all things that are to be known this is most evident, that God is to be feared, to be reverenced, served, and worshipped; this is so the beginning of knowledge, that those know nothing who do not know this. 2. In order to the attaining of all useful knowledge this is most necessary, that we fear God; we are not qualified to profit by the instructions that are given us, unless our minds be possessed with a holy reverence of God, and every thought within us be brought into obedience to him. "If any man do his will, he shall know of his doctrine," *Jno.* vii. 17. 3. All our knowledge, as it must take rise from the fear of God, so it must tend to it as its perfection and centre. Those know enough that know how to fear God, that are careful in every thing to please him, and fearful of offending him in any thing. This is the alpha and omega of knowledge. To confirm this truth, that an eye to God must both direct and quicken all our pursuits of knowledge, he observes that "fools" (that is, atheists, who have no regard to God,) "despise wisdom and instruction;" having no dread at all of God's wrath, nor any desire of his favour, they will not give you thanks for telling them what they may do to escape his wrath and obtain his favour. They that say to the Almighty, "Depart from us," who are so far from fearing him that they set him at defiance; no wonder that they desire not the knowledge of his ways, but despise that instruction. Note, Those are fools that do not fear God, and value the Scriptures; and though

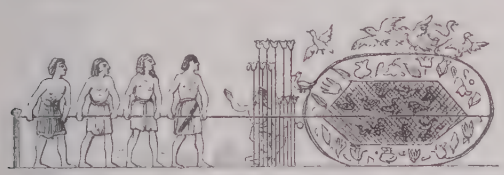
they may pretend to be admirers of wit, they are really strangers and enemies to wisdom.

Secondly. Let them have regard to their parents, as their superiors; ver. 8, 9, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father." He means not only that he would have his own children to be observant of him, and of what he said to them, nor only that he would have his pupils and those who came to him to be taught to look upon him as their father, and attend to his precepts with the disposition of children; but he would have all children to be dutiful and respectful to their parents, and to conform to the virtuous and religious education which they give them, according to the law of the fifth commandment.

1. He takes it for granted that parents will, with all the wisdom they have, instruct their children, and with all the authority they have give law to them for their good. They are reasonable creatures, and therefore we must not give them law without instruction; we must draw them with the cords of a man, and when we tell them what they must do, we must tell them why. But they are corrupt and wilful, and therefore with the instruction there is need of a law; Abraham will not only catechize, but command his household. Both the father and the mother must do all they can for the good education of their children, and all little enough.

2. He chargeth children both to receive and to retain the good lessons and laws their parents give them. 1st. To receive them with readiness; "hear the instruction of thy father;" hear it, and heed it; hear it, and bid it welcome, and be thankful for it, and subscribe to it. 2nd. To retain them with resolution; "Forsake not" their law, think not that when thou art grown up, and no longer under tutors and governors thou mayest live at large; no, "the law of thy mother" was according to the law of thy God, and therefore it must never be forsaken. Thou wast trained up in the way in which thou shouldest go; and therefore when thou art old, thou must not depart from it. Some observe, that whereas the Gentiles' ethics, and the laws of the Persians and Romans, provided only that children should pay respect to their father, the Divine law secures the honour of the mother also. 3rd. He recommends this as that which is very graceful, and will put an honour upon us. The instructions and laws of thy parents, carefully observed and lived up to, shall be "an ornament of grace unto thy head," ver. 9; such an ornament as is in the sight of God of great price, and shall make thee look as great as those that wear the gold chains about their necks. Let Divine truths and commands be to us as a coronet, or a collar of SS, which are badges of first-rate honours; let us value them, and be ambitious of them, and then they shall be so to us. Those are truly valuable, and shall be valued, who value themselves more by their virtue and piety than by their worldly wealth and dignity.

10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.
11 If they say, Come with us,
Let us lay wait for blood,
Let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:
12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave;
And whole, as those that go down into the pit:
13 We shall find all precious substance,
We shall fill our houses with spoil:
14 Cast in thy lot among us;
Let us all have one purse:
15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them;
Refrain thy foot from their path:
16 For their feet run to evil,
And make haste to shed blood.
17 Surely in vain the net is spread
In the sight of any bird.



NETTING BIRDS.

18 And they lay wait for their *own* blood;
They lurk privily for their *own* lives.
19 So *are* the ways of every one that is greedy of gain;
Which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

Here Solomon gives another general rule to young people, in order to their finding out and keeping in the paths of wisdom, and that is, to take heed of the snare of bad company. David's psalms begin with this caution, *Ps.* i. 1; and so do Solomon's proverbs, for nothing is more destructive both to a lively devotion and to a regular conversation; ver. 10, "My son," whom I love, and have a tender concern for, "if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." This is good advice for parents to give their children, when they send them abroad into the world. It is the same that St. Peter gave to his new converts, *Acts* ii. 40, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Observe, 1. How industrious wicked people are to seduce others into the paths of the destroyer; they will entice. Sinners love company in sin; the angels that fell were tempters almost as soon as they were sinners. They do not threaten, or argue, but entice with flattery and fair speech, with a bait they draw the unwary young man to the hook. But they mistake if they think that, by bringing others to partake with them in their guilt, and to be bound as it were in the bond with them, they shall have the less to pay themselves, for they will have so much the more to answer for. 2. How cautious young people should be that they be not seduced by them; "consent thou not," and then, though they entice thee, they cannot force thee. Do not say as they say, nor do as they do, or would have thee to do; have no fellowship with them. To enforce this caution,

First. He represents the fallacious reasonings which sinners use in their enticements; and the arts of wheedling which they have, for the beguiling of unstable souls. He instanceth in highwaymen, that do what they can to draw others into their gang, ver. 11—14. See here what they would have the young man to do, "Come with us," ver. 11; let us have thy company. At first they pretend to ask no more, but the courtship riseth higher; ver. 14, "Cast in thy lot among us," come in partner with us, join thy force to ours, and let us resolve to live and die together. Thou shalt fare as we fare, and "let us all have one purse;" that what we get together, we may spend merrily together; for that is it they aim at. Two unreasonable, insatiable lusts they propose to themselves the gratification of, and therewith entice their prey into the snare:

1. Their cruelty. They thirst after blood; and hate those that are innocent, and never gave them any provocation, because by their honesty and industry they shame and condemn them. Let us, therefore, lay wait for their blood, and lurk privily for them. They are conscious to themselves of no crime, and consequently apprehensive of no danger, but travel unarmed; therefore, we shall make the more easy prey of them. And, O how sweet will it to be swallow them up alive, ver. 12; which these bloody men would do as greedily as the hungry lion devours the lamb. If it be objected, that the remains of the murdered will betray the murderers, they answer, No danger of that, we will swallow them whole, as those that are buried. Who could imagine that the human nature should degenerate so far, as that it should ever be a pleasure to one man to destroy another!

2. Their covetousness. They hope to get a good booty by it; ver. 13, "We shall find all precious substance" by following this trade; what though we venture our necks by it, "we shall fill our houses with spoil." See here, 1st. The idea they have of worldly wealth. They call it "precious substance;" whereas, it is neither substance nor precious; it is a shadow, it is vanity, especially that which is got by robbery, *Ps.* lxii. 10. It is as that which is not, which will give a man no solid satisfaction. It is cheap, it is common, yet in their account it is precious; and therefore they will hazard their lives, and perhaps their souls, in pursuit of it. It is the ruining mistake of thousands, that they overvalue the wealth of this world, and look on it as precious substance. 2nd. The abundance of it which they promise themselves: "We shall fill our houses with it." Those that trade with sin, promise themselves mighty bargains, and that it will turn to a vast account; "All this will I give thee," (saith the tempter,) but they only dream that they eat. The housefuls dwindle into scarce a handful, like the grass on the housetops.

Secondly. He shews the perniciousness of these ways, as a reason why we should dread them; ver. 15, "My son, walk not thou in the way with them;" that is, do not associate with them; get and keep as far off from them as thou canst; "refrain thy foot from their path;" do not take example by them, nor do as they do. Such is the corruption of our nature, that our foot is very prone to step into the path of sin; so that we must use necessary violence upon ourselves, to refrain our foot from it, and check ourselves, if at any time we take the least step towards it. Consider,

1. How pernicious their way is in its own nature; ver. 16, "Their feet run to evil," to that which is displeasing to God, and hurtful to mankind, for they "make haste to shed blood." Note, The way of sin is downhill; men not only cannot stop themselves, but the longer they continue in it the faster they run, and make haste in it, as if they were afraid they should not do mischief enough, and resolved to lose no time. They said they would proceed leisurely; "Let us lay wait for blood," ver. 11, but thou wilt find they are all in haste: so much hath Satan filled their hearts.

2. How pernicious the consequences of it will be. They are plainly told that this wicked way will certainly end in their own destruction, and yet they persist in it. Herein, 1st. They are like the silly bird, that sees the net spread to take her, and yet it is in vain; she is decoyed into it by the bait, and will not take the warning which her own eyes gave her, ver. 17. But we think ourselves of more value than many sparrows; and therefore should have more wit, and act with more caution. "God hath made us wiser than the fowls of heaven," *Job* xxxv. 11; and shall we then be as stupid as they? 2nd. They are worse than the birds, and have not the sense which we sometimes perceive them to have. For the fowler knows it is in vain to lay his snare in the sight of the bird, and therefore he has arts to conceal it. But the sinner sees ruin at the end of his way; the murderer, the thief, see the jail and the gallows before them, nay, they might see hell before them. Their watchmen tell them they shall surely die; but it is to no purpose, they rush into sin, and rush on in it, like the horse into the battle. For really the stone they roll will turn upon themselves, ver. 18, 19. They lay wait and lurk privily for the blood and lives of others; but it will prove, contrary to their intention, to be for their own blood, their own lives. They will come at length to a shameful end; and if they escape the sword of the magistrate, yet there is a Divine Nemesis that pursues them; vengeance suffers them not to live. Their greediness of gain hurries them upon these practices, which will not suffer them to live out half their days, but will cut off the number of their months in the midst. These have little reason to be proud of their property in that which takes away the life of the owners, and then passeth to other masters. And what is a man profited, though he gain the world, if he lose his life? For then he can enjoy the world no longer; much less if he lose his soul, and that be drowned in destruction and perdition, as multitudes are by the love of money.

Now, though Solomon instances only in this temptation to rob on the highway, yet he intends hereby to warn us against all other evils which sinners entice men to. Such are the ways of the drunkards and unclean; they are indulging themselves in those pleasures which tend to their ruin both here and for ever; and therefore consent not to them.

20 Wisdom crieth without;
She uttereth her voice in the streets:
21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse,
In the openings of the gates:
In the city she uttereth her words, *saying*,
22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?
And the scorners delight in their scorning,
And fools hate knowledge?
23 Turn you at my reproof:
Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you.
I will make known my words unto you.
24 Because I have called, and ye refused;
I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;
25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel,

And would none of my reproof:
26 I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when your fear cometh;
27 When your fear cometh as desolation,
And your destruction cometh as a whirlwind;
When distress and anguish cometh upon you.
28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer;
They shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:
29 For that they hated knowledge,
And did not choose the fear of the LORD:
30 They would none of my counsel:
They despised all my reproof.
31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,
And be filled with their own devices.
32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them,
And the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.
33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely,
And shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Solomon, having shewn how dangerous it is to hearken to the temptations of Satan, here shews how dangerous it is not to hearken to the calls of God, which we shall for ever rue the neglect of. Observe,

First. By whom God calls to us. By wisdom. It is wisdom that crieth without. The word is plural, 'wisdoms,' for, as there is infinite wisdom in God, so there is the manifold wisdom of God, *Eph.* iii. 10. God speaks to the children of men by all the kinds of wisdom, and, as in every will, so in every word, of God there is a counsel. 1. Human understanding is wisdom, the light and law of nature, the powers and faculties of reason, and the office of conscience, *Job* xxxviii. 36. By these God speaks to the children of men, and reasons with them. "The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord;" and wherever men go they may hear a voice behind them, saying, "This is the way;" and the voice of conscience is the voice of God, and not always a still, small voice, but sometimes it cries. 2. Civil government is wisdom, it is God's ordinance; magistrates are his vicegerents; God, by David, had said to the fools, "Deal not foolishly," *Ps.* lxxv. 4. "In the opening of the gates," and in the places of concourse, where courts were kept, the judges, the wisdom of the nation, call to wicked people, in God's name, to repent and reform. 3. Divine revelation is wisdom, all its dictates, all its laws, are wise as wisdom itself. God doth by the written word, by the law of Moses, which sets before us the blessing and the curse, by the priests' lips, which keep knowledge, by his servants the prophets, and all the ministers of his word, declare his mind, to sinners, and give them warning as plainly as that which is proclaimed in the streets or courts of judicature by the criers. God in his word not only opens the case, but argues it with the children of men. "Come, now, and let us reason together," *Isa.* i. 18. 4. Christ himself is wisdom, is wisdoms, "for in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and he is the centre of all Divine revelation, not only the Essential Wisdom, but the Eternal Word, by whom God speaks to us, and to whom he has committed all judgment; he it is, therefore, that here both pleads with sinners and passeth sentence on them. He calls himself Wisdom, *Lu.* vii. 35

Secondly. How he calls to us, and in what manner. 1. Very publicly; that whosoever hath ears to hear may hear, since all are welcome to take the benefit of what is said, and all are concerned to heed it. The rules of wisdom are published without in the streets, not in the schools only, or in the palaces of princes, but in the chief places of concourse, among the common people, that pass and repass in the opening of the gates, and in the city. It is comfortable casting the net of the Gospel there where there is a multitude of fish, in hopes that then some will be inclosed. This was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, who taught openly in the temple, and in crowds of people, and in secret said nothing, *Jno.* xviii. 29, and charged his ministers to proclaim his Gospel on the housetop, *Mat.* x. 27. God saith, *Isa.* xlv. 19, "I have not spoken in secret." There is no speech or language where wisdom's voice is not heard. Truth seeks not corners, nor is virtue ashamed of itself. 2. Very pathetically. She cries, and again she cries, as one in earnest. "Jesus stood, and cried." She utters her voice, she utters her words, with all possible clearness and affection. God is desirous to be heard and heeded.

Thirdly. What the call of God and Christ is.

1. He reproves sinners for their folly, and their obstinate persisting in it, ver. 22. Observe, 1st. Who they are that wisdom here reproves and expostulates with. In general they are such as are simple, and therefore might justly be despised; such as love simplicity, and therefore might justly be despaired of. But we must use the means even with those that we have little hopes of, because we know not what Divine grace may do. Three sorts of persons are here called to: *First.* "Simple ones that love simplicity." Sin is simplicity, and sinners are simple ones; they do foolishly, very foolishly; and the condition of those is very bad that love simplicity, are fond of their simple notions of good and evil, their simple prejudices against the ways of God, and are in their element when they are doing a simple thing, sporting themselves in their own deceivings, and flattering themselves in their wickedness. *Secondly.* "Scorners that delight in scorning." Proud people that take a pleasure in hectoring all about them; jovial people that banter all mankind, and make a jest of every thing that comes in their way. But scoffers at religion are especially meant; the worst of sinners, that scorn to submit to the truths and laws of Christ, and to the reproofs and admonitions of his word, and take a pride in running down every thing that is sacred and serious. *Thirdly.* "Fools that hate knowledge." None but fools hate knowledge. Those only are enemies to religion that do not understand it aright. And they are the worst of fools that hate to be instructed, and hate to be reformed, and have a rooted antipathy to serious godliness. 2nd. How the reproof is expressed. How long will ye do so? This implies, that the God of heaven desires the conversion and reformation of sinners, and not their ruin; that he is much displeased with their obstinacy and dilatoriness; that he waits to be gracious, and is willing to reason the case with them.

2. He invites them to repent and become wise, ver. 23. And here, 1st. The precept is plain; "Turn you at my reproof." We do not make a right use of the reproofs that are given us for that which is evil, if we do not turn from it to that which is good; for for this end the reproof was given. Turn, that is, return to your right mind; turn to God, turn to your duty, turn and live. 2nd. The promises are very encouraging. They that love simplicity find themselves under a moral impotency to change their own mind and way. They cannot turn by any power of their own; to this God answers, "Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you," set yourselves to do what you can, and the grace of God shall set in with you, and work in you both to will and to do that good, which without that grace you could not do. Help thyself and God will help thee; stretch forth thy withered hand, and Christ will strengthen and heal it. *First.* The Author of this grace is the Spirit, and that is promised, "I will pour out my Spirit unto you," as oil, as water; you shall have the Spirit in abundance; "rivers of living water," *Jno.* vii. 38; "Our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." *Secondly.* The means of this grace is the word, which, if we take it aright, will turn us; it is therefore promised, "I will make known my words unto you," not only speak them to you, but make them known; that is, give you to understand them. Note, Special grace is necessary to a sincere conversion. But that grace shall never be denied to any that honestly seek it, and submit to it.

3. He reads the doom of those that continue obstinate against all these means and methods of grace. It is large and very terrible, ver. 24—32. Wisdom, having called sinners to return, pauseth a while, to see what effect the call has, hearkens and hears, but they speak not aright, *Jer.* viii. 6, and therefore she goes on to tell them what will be in the end hereof.

1st. The crime is recited, and it is highly provoking. See what it is for which judgment will be given against impenitent sinners in the great day, and you will say they deserve it, and the Lord is righteous in it. It is, in short, rejecting Christ and the offers of his grace, and refusing to submit to the terms of his Gospel, which would have saved them both from the curse of the law of God and from the dominion of the law of sin.

First. Christ called to them, to warn them of their danger. He stretched out his hand to offer them mercy, nay, to have helped them out of their miserable condition, stretched out his hand for them to take hold of; but they refused, and no man regarded. Some were careless and never heeded it, nor took notice of what was said to him; others were wilful, and though they could not avoid hearing the will of Christ, yet they gave him a flat denial, they refused, ver. 24. They were in love with their folly, and would not be made wise. They were obstinate to all the methods that were taken to reclaim them. God stretched out his hand in mercies bestowed upon them, and, when those would not work upon them, in corrections; but all in vain, they regarded the operations of his hand no more than the declarations of his mouth.

Secondly. Christ reproved and counselled them, not only reproved them for what they did amiss, but counselled them to do better. Those are reproofs of instruction, and evidences of love and good-will, but they set at nought all the counsel as not worth heeding, and would none of his reproof, as if it were below them to be reproved by him, and as if they had never done any thing that deserved reproof, ver. 25. This is repeated, ver. 30, "They would none of my counsel," but rejected it with disdain, they called reproofs reproaches, and took them heinously, *Jer.* vi. 10. Nay, "they despised all my reproof," as if it were all a jest, and not worth taking notice of. Note, Those are marked for ruin that are deaf to reproof and good counsel.

Thirdly. They were exhorted to submit to the government of right reason and religion; but they rebelled against both. 1*st.* Reason should not rule them, for "they hated knowledge," ver. 29. Hated the light of Divine truth, because it discovered to them the evil of their deeds, *Jno.* iii. 20. They hated to be told that which they could not bear to know. 2*nd.* Religion should not rule them, for "they did not choose the fear of the Lord," but chose to walk in the way of "their heart, and in the sight of their eye." They were pressed to set God always before them, but they chose rather to cast him and his fear behind their backs. Note, Those who do not choose the fear of the Lord shew that they have no knowledge.

2nd. The sentence is pronounced, and it is certainly ruining. They that will not submit to God's government will certainly perish under his wrath and curse, and the Gospel itself will not relieve them. They would not take the benefit of God's mercy when it was offered them, and therefore justly fall as victims to his justice, *Pr.* xxix. 1. The threatenings here will have their full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day, and the eternal misery of the impenitent, of which yet there are some earnests in present judgments.

First. Now sinners are in prosperity, and secure, they live at ease, and set sorrow at defiance. But, 1*st.* Their calamity will come, ver. 26. Sickness will come, and those diseases which they shall apprehend to be the very arrests and harbingers of death. Other troubles will come, in mind, in estate, which will convince them of their folly in setting God at a distance. 2*nd.* Their calamity will put them into a great fright. Fear seizeth them, and they are jealous that bad will be worse. When public judgments are abroad, "the sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness surpriseth the hypocrites;" death is the king of terrors to them, *Job* xv. 21, &c.; xviii. 11, &c. This fear will be their continual torment. 3*rd.* According to their fright will it be to them. Their fear shall come; that is, the thing they were afraid of shall befall them, it shall come as desolation, as a mighty deluge bearing down all before it; it shall be their destruction, their total and final destruction, and it shall come as a whirlwind, which suddenly and forcibly drives away all the chaff. Note, Those that will not admit the fear of God lay themselves open to all other fears, and their fears will not prove causeless. 4*th.* Their fright will then be turned into despair. Distress and anguish shall come upon them; for, being fallen into the pit they were afraid of, they shall see no way of escape, ver. 27. Saul cries out, 2 *Sam.* i. 9, "Anguish is come upon me;" and "in hell there is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for anguish." Tribulation and anguish to the soul of the sinner, the fruit of the indignation and wrath of the righteous God, *Rom.* ii. 8, 9.

Secondly. Now God pities their folly, but he will then "laugh at their calamity," ver. 26. I also will laugh at your distress, even as you laughed at my counsel. They that ridicule religion will thereby but make themselves ridiculous before all the world. The righteous will laugh at them, *Ps.* lii. 6; for God himself will. It intimates that they shall be for ever shut out of God's compassions; they have so long sinned against mercy, that they have now quite sinned it away. "His eye shall not spare, neither will he have pity." Nay, his justice being glorified in their ruin, he will be pleased with it, though now he would rather they should turn and live. "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries."

Thirdly. Now God is ready to hear their prayers, and to meet them with mercy, if they would but seek to him for it; but then the door will be shut, and they shall cry in vain; ver. 28, "Then shall they call upon me," when it is too late, "Lord, Lord, open to us." They would then gladly be beholden to that mercy which now they reject, and make light of; "but I will not answer," because when I called they would not answer; all the answer then will be, "Depart from me, I know you not." This has been the case of some even in this life, as of Saul, whom God answered not by Urim or prophets; but ordinarily, while there is life there is room for prayer, and hope of speeding; and therefore this must refer to the inexorable justice of the last judgment. Then those that slighted God will seek him early, that is, earnestly, but in vain; they

shall not find him, because they sought him not when he might be found, *Isa.* lv. 6. The rich man in hell begged, but was denied.

Fourthly. Now they are eager upon their own way, and fond of their own devices; but then they will have enough of them, ver. 31. According to the proverb, 'Let men drink as they brew,' they shall eat the fruit of their own way, their wages shall be according to their work, and as was their choice so shall their doom be, *Gal.* vi 7, 8. Note, 1*st.* There is a natural tendency in sin to destruction, *Jas.* i. 15. Sinners are certainly miserable if they do but eat the fruit of their own way. 2*nd.* They that perish must thank themselves, and can lay no blame upon any other. It is their own device, let them make their boast of it. God chooseth their delusions, *Isa.* lxvi. 4.

Fifthly. Now they value themselves upon their worldly prosperity, but then both shall help to aggravate their ruin, ver. 32. 1*st.* They are now proud that they can turn away from God, and get clear of the restraints of religion; but that very thing shall slay them, the remembrance of it shall cut them to the heart. 2*nd.* They are now proud of their own security and sensuality, but 'the ease of the simple,' so the margin reads it, 'shall slay them;' the more secure they are, the more certain, and the more dreadful, will their destruction be; and "the prosperity of fools shall" help to "destroy them," by puffing them up with pride, gluing their hearts to the world, furnishing them with fuel for their lusts, and hardening their hearts in their evil ways.

Sixthly. He concludes with an assurance of safety and happiness to all those that submit to the instructions of wisdom; ver. 33, "Whoso hearkeneth unto me," and will be ruled by me, he shall, 1*st.* Be safe. He shall dwell under the special protection of Heaven, so that nothing shall do him any real hurt. 2*nd.* He shall be easy, and have no disquieting apprehensions of danger; he shall not only be safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of it. Though the earth be removed, yet shall not they fear. Would we be safe from evil, and quiet from the fear of it, let religion always rule us, and the word of God be our counsellor. That is the way to dwell safely in this world, and to be quiet from the fear of evil in the other world.

CHAPTER II.

Solomon, having foretold the destruction of those that are obstinate in their impiety, in this chapter applies himself to those who are willing to be taught, and, I. He shews them that, if they would diligently use the means of knowledge and grace, they should obtain of God that knowledge and grace which they seek, ver. 1—9. II. He shews them of what unspeakable advantage it would be to them: 1. It would preserve them from the snares of evil men, ver. 10—15, and of evil women, ver. 16—19; 2. It would direct them into and keep them in the way of good men, ver. 20—22. So that in this chapter we are taught both how to get wisdom and how to use it when we have it, that we may neither seek it nor receive it in vain.

MY son, if thou wilt receive my words,
And hide my commandments with thee;
2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom,
And apply thine heart to understanding;
3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge,
And liftest up thy voice for understanding;
4 If thou seekest her as silver,
And searchest for her as *for* hid treasures;
5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD,
And find the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD giveth wisdom:
Out of his mouth *cometh* knowledge and understanding.
7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous:
He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.
8 He keepeth the paths of judgment,
And preserveth the way of his saints.
9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment,
And equity; *yea,* every good path.

Job had asked long before this, "Where shall wisdom be found? and whence cometh wisdom?" *Job* xxviii. 12, 20, and had given this general answer, ver. 23, "God knoweth the place of it;" but Solomon here goes farther, and tells us both where we may find it, and how we may get it. We are here told,

First. What means we must use that we may obtain wisdom.

1. We must closely attend to the word of God, for that is the word of wisdom, which is able to make us wise to salvation, ver. 1, 2. 1st. We must be convinced that the words of God are the fountain and standard of wisdom and understanding, and that we need not desire to be wiser than they will make us. We must incline our ear, and apply our hearts to them as to wisdom and understanding itself. Many wise things may be found in human composures, but Divine revelation and true religion built upon it is all wisdom. 2nd. We must accordingly receive the word of God with all readiness of mind, and bid it welcome, even the commandments as well as the promises, without murmuring or disputing; "Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears." 3rd. We must hide them with us, as we do our treasures, which we are afraid of being robbed of. We must not only receive but retain the word of God, and lodge it in our hearts, that it may be always ready to us. 4th. We must incline our ear to them, that is, we must lay hold of all opportunities of hearing the word of God, and listen to it with attention and seriousness, as those that are afraid of letting it slip. 5th. We must apply our hearts to them, else inclining the ear to them will stand us in no stead.

2. We must be much in prayer, ver. 3. We must cry after knowledge as one that is ready to perish for hunger begs hard for bread. Faint desires will not prevail; we must be importunate, as those that know the worth of knowledge and our own want of it. We must cry, as new-born babes, after the sincere milk of the word, 1 *Pet.* ii. 1. We must lift up our voice for understanding; lift it up to heaven; from thence these good and perfect gifts must be expected, *Jas.* i. 17; *Job* xxxviii. 34. We must give our voice to understanding, so the word is; speak for it, vote for it, submit the tongue to the command of wisdom; we must consecrate our voice to it. Having applied our heart to it, we must employ our voice in seeking for it. Solomon could write *probatum est,*—'a tried remedy,' upon this method; he prayed for wisdom, and so obtained it.

3. We must be willing to take pains, ver. 4. We must seek it as silver; preferring it far before all the wealth of this world; and labouring in search of it as those that dig in the mines, who undergo great toil, and run great hazards, with indefatigable industry, and invincible constancy and resolution, in pursuit of the ore; or as those that will be rich rise up early, and sit up late, and turn every stone to get money and fill their treasures. Thus diligent must we be in the use of the means of knowledge; following on to know the Lord.

Secondly. What success we may hope for in the use of these means. Our labour shall not be in vain; for, 1. We shall know how to maintain our acquaintance and communion with God; "Thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord," ver. 5; that is, thou shalt know how to worship him aright; shalt be led into the meaning and mystery of every ordinance, and be enabled to answer the end of its institution. "Thou shalt find the knowledge of God," which is necessary to our fearing him aright. It concerns us to understand how much it is our interest to know God, and to evidence it by agreeable affections towards him, and adorations of him. 2. We shall know how to carry it aright towards all men; ver. 9, "Thou shalt understand," by the word of God, "righteousness, and judgment, and equity;" shalt learn those principles of justice, and charity, and fair-dealing, as shall guide and govern thee in the whole course of thy conversation; shall make thee fit for every relation, every business, and faithful to every trust. It shall give thee not only a right notion of justice, but a disposition to practise it, and to render to all their due; for those that do not do justly do not rightly understand it. This will lead them into every good path; for the Scripture will make the man of God perfect. Note, Those have the best knowledge that know their duty, *Ps.* cxi. 10.

Thirdly. What ground we have to hope for this success in our pursuits of wisdom. We must take our encouragement herein from God only, ver. 6—8.

1. God has wisdom to bestow, ver. 6. The Lord not only is wise himself, but he gives wisdom, and that is more than the wisest men in the world can do; for it is God's prerogative to open the understanding. All the wisdom that is in any creature is his gift, his free gift; and he gives it liberally, *Jas.* i. 5; has given it to many, and is still giving it; to him therefore, let us apply ourselves for it.

2. He hath blessed the world with a revelation of his will. "Out of his mouth," by the law and the prophets, by the written word, and by his ministers, both which are his mouth to the children of men, "cometh knowledge and understanding;" such a discovery of truth and good as if we admit and receive the impressions of, will make us truly knowing and intelligent. It is both an engagement and an encouragement to search after wisdom, that we have the Scriptures to search, in which we may find it if we seek it diligently.

3. He hath particularly provided that good men, who are sincerely disposed to do his will, shall have that knowledge and understanding which is necessary for them, *Jno.* vii. 17. Let them seek and they shall find it; let them ask and it shall be given them, ver. 7, 8. Observe here, 1st. Who they are that are thus favoured. They are the righteous, on whom the image of God is renewed, which consists in righteousness; and those that walk uprightly, that are hon st in their dealings both with God and man, and make conscience of doing their duty as far as they know it. They are his saints, devoted to his honour, and set apart for his service. 2nd. What it is that is provided for them. *First.* Instruction. The means of wisdom are given to all, but wisdom itself, sound wisdom, is laid up for the righteous, laid up in Christ their head, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and who is made of God to us wisdom. The same that is the Spirit of revelation in the word is a Spirit of wisdom in the souls of them that are sanctified,—that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way; and it is sound wisdom,—its foundations firm, its principles solid, and its products of lasting advantage. *Secondly.* Satisfaction. Some read it, 'He lays up substance for the righteous,' not only substantial knowledge, but substantial happiness and comfort, *Pr.* viii. 21. Riches are things that are not; and they that have them only fancy themselves happy. But what is laid up in the promises and in heaven for the righteous will make them truly, thoroughly, and eternally happy. *Thirdly.* Protection. Even they that walk uprightly may be brought into danger for the trial of their faith, but God is and will be a buckler to them, so that nothing that happens to them shall do them any real hurt, or possess them with any frightful apprehensions; they are safe, and they shall think themselves so. "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield." It is their way, the paths of judgment in which they walk, that the Lord knows, and owns, and takes care of. *Fourthly.* Grace to persevere to the end. If we depend upon God, and seek to him for wisdom, he will uphold us in our integrity, will enable us to keep the paths of judgment, however we may be tempted to turn aside out of them; for he preserveth the way of his saints, that it may not be perverted, and so preserveth them in it safe and blameless to his heavenly kingdom. The assurances God has given us of his grace, if duly improved, will excite and quicken our endeavours in doing our duty. Work out your salvation, for God works in you.

10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart,
And knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;
11 Discretion shall preserve thee,
Understanding shall keep thee:
12 To deliver thee from the way of the evil *man,*
From the man that speaketh froward things;
13 Who leave the paths of uprightness,
To walk in the ways of darkness;
14 Who rejoice to do evil,
And delight in the frowardness of the wicked;
15 Whose ways *are* crooked,
And *they* froward in their paths:
16 To deliver thee from the strange woman,
Even from the stranger *which* flattereth with her words;
17 Which forsaketh the guide of her youth,
And forgetteth the covenant of her God.
18 For her house inclineth unto death,
And her paths unto the dead.
19 None that go unto her return again,
Neither take they hold of the paths of life.
20 That thou mayest walk in the way of good *men,*

And keep the paths of the righteous.
21 For the upright shall dwell in the land,
And the perfect shall remain in it.
22 But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth,
And the transgressors shall be rooted out of it.

The scope of these verses is to shew, 1. What great advantage true wisdom will be of to us. It will keep us from the paths of sin, which lead to ruin, and will therein do us a greater kindness than if it enriched us with all the wealth of the world. 2. What good use we should make of the wisdom God gives us. We must use it for our own conduct in the paths of virtue, and for the arming of us against temptations of every kind. 3. By what rules we may try ourselves, whether we have this wisdom or no. This tree will be known by its fruits; if we be truly wise, it will appear by our care to avoid all evil company, and evil practices. This wisdom will be of use to us,

First. For our preservation from evil, from the evil of sin, and consequently from the evil of trouble that attends it. In general, ver. 10, 11, when wisdom has entire possession of thee, it will keep thee. And when has it an entire possession of us? 1. When it has dominion over us; when it not only fills the head with notions, but enters into the heart, and has a commanding power and influence upon that; when it is upon the throne there, and gives law to the affections and passions; when it enters into the heart, as the leaven into the dough, to diffuse its relish there, and to change it into its own image, then it is likely to do us good. 2. When we have delight in it. When knowledge becomes pleasant to the soul,—when thou beginnest to relish it as the most agreeable entertainment, and art subject to its rules of choice, and with satisfaction,—when thou callest the practice of virtue not a slavery and a task, but liberty and pleasure, and a life of serious godliness, the most comfortable life a man can live in this world,—then thou wilt find the benefit of it. Though its restraints should be in some respects unpleasant to the body, yet even those must be pleasant to the soul. When it is come to this with us, discretion shall preserve us and keep us. God keeps the way of his saints, ver. 8, by giving them discretion to keep out of harm's way; to keep themselves that the wicked one touch them not. Note, A principle of grace reigning in the heart will be a powerful preservative both against corruptions within and temptations without, *Eccl.* ix. 16, 18. More particularly, wisdom will preserve us,

1st. From men of corrupt principles; atheistical, profane men, that make it their business to debauch young men's judgments, and instil into their minds prejudices against religion, and arguments for vice. It will "deliver thee from the way of the evil man," ver. 12; and a blessed deliverance it will be, as from the very jaws of death,—from the way in which he walks, and in which he would persuade thee to walk. The enemy is spoken of as one, ver. 12, an evil man, but afterwards as many, ver. 13; there is a club, a gang of them, that are in confederacy against religion, and join hand in hand for the support of the devil's kingdom, and the interests of it. *First.* They have a spirit of contradiction to that which is good. They speak froward things; they say all they can against religion, both to shew their own enmity to it and to dissuade others from it. They are advocates for Satan; they plead for Baal, and pervert the right ways of the Lord. How peevishly will profane wits argue for sin, and with what frowardness will they carp at the word of God. Wisdom will keep us either from conversing with such men, or at least from being ensnared by them. *Secondly.* They are themselves apostates from that which is good; and such are commonly the most malicious and dangerous enemies religion hath: witness Julian; ver. 13, "They leave the paths of uprightness," which they were trained up in, and had set out in, shake off the influences of their education, and break off the thread of their hopeful beginnings, "to walk in the ways of darkness," in those wicked ways which hate the light, in which men are led blindfold by ignorance and error, and which lead men into utter darkness. The ways of sin are ways of darkness, uncomfortable and unsafe. What fools are they that leave the plain, pleasant, lightsome paths of uprightness to walk in those ways, *Ps.* lxxxii. 5; 1 *Jno.* ii. 11. *Thirdly.* They take a pleasure in sin, both in committing it themselves and in seeing others commit it; ver. 14, "They rejoice" in an opportunity "to do evil," and in the accomplishment and success of any wicked project. "It is sport to a fool to do mischief;" nor is any sight more grateful to them than to see "the frowardness of the wicked;" to see those that were hopeful drawn into the ways of sin, and then to see them hardened and confirmed in those ways. They are pleased if they can discern that the devil's kingdom gets ground, (see *Rom.* i. 32,) such a height of impiety are they arrived to. *Fourthly.* They are resolute in sin; ver. 15, Their "ways are crooked;" a great many windings and turnings to escape the pursuit of their convictions, and break the force of them. Some sly excuse, some subtle evasion or other, their deceitful hearts furnish them with, for the strengthening of their hands in their wickedness; and in the crooked mazes of that labyrinth they secure themselves from the arrests of God's word and their own consciences; for they are froward in their paths, that is, they are resolved to go on in them, whatever is said against it. Every wise man will shun the company of such as these.

2nd. From women of corrupt practices. The former lead to spiritual wickednesses, the lusts of the unsanctified mind; these lead to fleshly lusts, which defile the body, that living temple, but withal war against the soul. The adulteress is here called the strange woman, because no man that hath any wisdom or goodness in him will have any acquaintance with her. She is to be shunned by every Israelite, as if she were a heathen and a stranger to that sacred commonwealth. A strange woman indeed, utterly estranged from all principles of reason, virtue, and honour. It is a great mercy to be delivered from the allurements of the adulteress; considering, *First.* How false she is; and who will have any dealings with those that are made up of treachery? She is a strange woman; for, 1*st.* She is false to him whom she enticeth. She speaks him fair; tells him how much she admires him above any man, and what a kindness she has for him; but she "flatters with her words;" she has no true affection for him, nor any desire of his welfare, no more than Delilah had of Samson's; all she designs is to pick his pocket, and gratify a base lust of her own. 2*nd.* She is false to her husband, and violates the sacred obligations she lies under to him. He was the guide of her youth; by marrying him she chose him to be so, and submitted herself to his conduct, with a promise to attend him only, and forsake all other. But she has forsaken him, and therefore it cannot be thought that she should be faithful to any one else; and whoever entertains her is partaker with her in her falsehood. 3*rd.* She is false to God himself. "She forgetteth the covenant of her God," the marriage covenant, ver. 17, to which God is not only a witness but a party; for he having instituted the ordinance, both sides vow to him to be true to each other. It is not her husband only that she sins against, but her God, who therefore will judge whoremongers and adulterers, because they despise the oath and break the covenant, *Eze.* xvii. 18; *Mal.* ii. 14. *Secondly.* How fatal it will prove to those that fall in league with her, ver. 18, 19. Let others' harms be our warnings; take heed of the sin of whoredom; for, 1*st.* The ruin of those who are guilty of it is certain and unavoidable, if they do not repent. It is a sin that has a direct tendency to the killing of the soul, the extinguishing of all good affections and dispositions in it, and the exposing of it to the wrath and curse of God, and the sword of his justice. "They that live in" forbidden "pleasures are dead while they live." Let discretion preserve every man, not only from the naughty woman, but from the naughty house; for the house inclines to death; it is in the road that leads directly to eternal death. 'And her paths unto Rephaim,' to the giants, so some read it; the sinners of the old world who, living in luxury and excess of riot, were "cut down out of time, and their foundation overthrown with a flood." Our Lord Jesus deters us from sinful pleasures with the consideration of everlasting torments which follow them, "where the worm dies not, nor is the fire quenched:" see *Mat.* v. 28, 29. 2*nd.* Their repentance and recovery is extremely hazardous; "none," or next none, "that go unto her return again." It is very rare that any who are caught in this snare of the devil recover themselves, so much is the heart hardened, and the mind blinded, by the deceitfulness of this sin. Having once lost their hold of the paths of life, they know not how to take hold of them again, but are perfectly besotted and bewitched with those base lusts.

Many learned interpreters think that this caution against the strange woman, besides the literal sense, is to be understood figuratively as a caution, 1. Against idolatry, which is spiritual whoredom. Wisdom will keep thee from all familiarity with the worshippers of images, and all inclination to join with them, which had for many ages been of such pernicious consequence to Israel, and proved so to Solomon himself. 2. Against the debauching of the intellectual powers and faculties of the soul by the lusts and appetites of the body. Wisdom will keep thee from being captivated by the carnal mind, and from subjecting the spirit to the dominion of the flesh, that notorious adulteress, which forsakes its guide, violates the covenant of our God, which inclines to death, and which, when it has got an undisturbed dominion, makes the case of the soul desperate.

Secondly. This wisdom will be of use to guide and direct us in that which is good; ver. 20, "That thou mayest walk in the way of good men." We must therefore avoid the way of the evil man, and the strange woman, that we may walk in good ways; must therefore cease to do evil, that we may learn to do well. Note, 1. There is a way which is peculiarly the way of good men,—the way in which good men, as such, and as far as they have really been such, have always walked. 2. It will be our wisdom to walk in that way, to ask for the good old way, and walk therein, *Jer.* vi. 16; *Heb.* vi. 12; xii. 1. And we must not only walk in that way a while, but we must keep it, keep in it, and never turn aside out of it. The paths of the righteous are the paths of life, which all that are wise, having taken hold of, will keep their hold of. 'That thou mayest imitate those excellent persons, the patriarchs and prophets,' (so Bishop Patrick paraphraseth it,) 'and be preserved in the paths of those righteous men who followed after them.' We must not only choose our way in general, by the good examples of the saints, but must also take directions from them in the choice of our particular paths; observe the track, and go forth by the footsteps of the flock. Two reasons are here given why we should thus choose:

1. Because men's integrity will be their establishment, ver. 21. It will be the establishment, 1st. Of their persons; "The upright shall dwell in the land," peaceably and quietly, as long as they live. And their uprightness will contribute to it, as it settles their minds, guides their counsels, gains them the goodwill of their neighbours, and entitles them to God's special favour. 2nd. Of their families; "the perfect," in their posterity, "shall remain in it." They shall dwell and remain for ever in the heavenly Canaan, of which the earthly one was but a type.

2. Because men's iniquity will be their destruction, ver. 22. See what comes of the wicked that choose the way of the evil man; they shall be cut off, not only from heaven hereafter, and all hopes of that, but from the earth now, on which they set their affections, and in which they lay up their treasure. They think to take root in it, but they and their families shall be rooted out of it, in judgment to them, but in mercy to the earth. There is a day coming, which shall leave them neither root nor branch, *Mal.* iv. 1. Let that wisdom then enter into our hearts, and be pleasant to our souls, which will keep us out of a way that will end thus.

CHAPTER III.

This chapter is one of the most excellent in all this book, both for argument to persuade us to be religious and for direction therein. I. We must be constant to our duty, because that is the way to be happy, ver. 1—4. II. We must live a life of dependence upon God, because that is the way to be safe, ver. 6, 7. III. We must keep up the fear of God, because that is the way to be healthful, ver. 7, 8. IV. We must serve God with our estates, because that is the way to be rich, ver. 9, 10. V. We must bear afflictions well, because that is the way to get good by them, ver. 11, 12. VI. We must take pains to obtain wisdom, because that is the way to gain her, and to gain by her, ver. 13—20. VII. We must always govern ourselves by the rules of wisdom, of right reason, and religion, because that is the way to be always easy, ver. 21—26. VIII. We must do all the good we can, and no hurt to our neighbours, because according as men are just or unjust, charitable or uncharitable, humble or haughty, accordingly they shall receive of God, ver. 27—35. By all which it appears what a tendency religion has to make men both blessed and blessings.

MY son, forget not my law;
But let thine heart keep my commandments:
2 For length of days, and long life,
And peace, shall they add to thee.
3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee:
Bind them about thy neck;
Write them upon the table of thine heart:
4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding
In the sight of God and man.
5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart;
And lean not unto thine own understanding.
6 In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he shall direct thy paths.

We are here taught to live a life of communion with God; and without controversy great is this mystery of godliness, and of great consequence to us, and, as is here shewed, will be of unspeakable advantage.

First. We must have a continual regard to God's precepts, ver. 1, 2. We

must, 1. Fix God's law and his commandment as our rule by which we will in every thing be ruled, and to which we will yield obedience. 2. We must acquaint ourselves with them; for we cannot be said to forget that which we never knew. 3. We must remember them so as that they may be ready to us whenever we have occasion to use them. 4. Our wills and affections must be subject to them, and must in every thing conform to them. Not only our heads but our hearts must keep God's commandments; in them, as in the ark of the testimony, both the tables of the law must be deposited.

To encourage us to submit ourselves to all the restraints and injunctions of the Divine law, we are assured, ver. 2, that it is the certain way to long life and prosperity. 1st. It is the way to be long-lived. God's commandments shall add to us length of days; to a good useful life on earth they shall add an eternal life in heaven, length of days for ever and ever, *Ps.* xxi. 4. God shall be our life and the length of our days, and that will be indeed long life, with an addition. But, because length of days may possibly become a burthen and a trouble, it is promised, 2nd. That it shall prove the way to be easy too, so that even the days of old age shall not be evil days, but days in which thou shalt have pleasure; peace shall they be continually adding to thee. As grace increaseth, peace shall; and of the increase of Christ's government and peace in the heart as well as in the world there shall be no end. Great and growing peace have they that love the law.

Secondly. We must have a continual regard to God's promises, which go along with his precepts, and are to be received and retained with them; ver. 3, "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee," God's mercy in promising, and his truth in performing. Do not forfeit those, but live up to them, and preserve thine interest in them; do not forget these, but live upon them, and take the comfort of them. "Bind them about thy neck," as the most graceful ornament. It is the greatest honour we are capable of in this world, to have an interest in the mercy and truth of God. "Write them upon the table of thine heart," as dear to thee, thy portion, and most delightful entertainment; take a pleasure in applying them and thinking them over. Or it may be meant of the mercy and truth which is our duty, piety and sincerity, charity towards men, fidelity towards God. Let these be fixed and commanding principles in thee.

To encourage us to do this we are assured, ver. 4, that this is the way to recommend ourselves both to our Creator and fellow-creatures. "So shalt thou find favour and good understanding." 1. A good man seeks the favour of God in the first place, is ambitious of the honour of being accepted of the Lord, and he shall find that favour, and with it a good understanding. God will make the best of him, and put a favourable construction upon what he saith and doth. He shall be owned as one of wisdom's children, and shall have praise with God as one having that good understanding which is ascribed to all them that do his commandments. 2. He wishes to have favour with men also, (as Christ had, *Lu.* ii. 52,) to be accepted of the multitude of his brethren, *Est.* x. 3, and that he shall have; they shall understand him aright, and in his dealings with them he shall appear to be prudent, shall act intelligently and with discretion. He shall have good success; so some translate it, the common effect of good understanding.

Thirdly. We must have a continual regard to God's providence, must own that, and depend upon it, in all our affairs, both by faith and prayer.

1. By faith. We must repose an entire confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, assuring ourselves of the extent of his providence to all the creatures and all their actions. We must therefore trust in the Lord with all our hearts, ver. 5; we must believe that he is able to do what he will; wise, to do what is best; and good, according to his promise, to do what is best for us, if we love him and serve him. We must, with an entire submission and satisfaction, depend upon him to perform all things for us, and not lean to our own understanding; as if we could by any forecast of our own, without God, help ourselves, and bring our affairs to a good issue. Those who know themselves cannot but find their own understanding to be a broken reed, which if they lean to it will certainly fail them. In all our conduct we must be diffident of our own judgment, and confident of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and therefore must follow providence, and not force it. That often proves best which was least our own doing.

2. By prayer; ver. 6, "In all thy ways acknowledge God." We must not only in our judgment believe that there is an overruling hand of God ordering and disposing of us and all our affairs but we must solemnly own it, and address ourselves to him accordingly. We must ask his leave, and not design any thing but what we are sure is lawful; ask his advice and beg direction from him, not only when the case is difficult, (when we know not what to do, no thanks to have our eyes up to him,) but in every case, be it never so plain. Ask success of him, as those that know the race is not to the swift. We must refer ourselves to him, as he from whom our judgment proceeds, and patiently, and with a holy indifferency, wait his award. In all our ways that prove direct, and fair, and pleasant, in which we gain our point to our satisfaction, we must acknowledge God with thankfulness; in all our ways that prove cross and uncomfortable, and that are hedged up with thorns, we must acknowledge God with submission. Our eye must be ever towards God, to him we must in every thing make our requests known, as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, *Jud.* xi. 11.

For our encouragement to do this it is promised "he shall direct thy paths;" so as that thy way shall be safe and good, and the issue happy at last. Note, They that put themselves under a Divine conduct shall always have the benefit of it. God will give them that wisdom which is profitable to direct, so as that they shall not turn aside into the bypaths of sin, and then will himself so wisely order the event, as that it shall be to their mind, or (which is equivalent) to their good. They that faithfully follow the pillar of cloud and fire shall find, though it may lead them about, it leads them the right way, and will bring them to Canaan at last.

7 Be not wise in thine own eyes:
Fear the LORD, and depart from evil
8 It shall be health to thy navel,
And marrow to thy bones
9 Honour the LORD with thy substance,
And with the firstfruits of all thine increase:
10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty,
And thy presses shall burst out with new wine.
11 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD;
Neither be weary of his correction:
12 For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth;
Even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

We have here before us three exhortations, each of them enforced with a good reason.

First. We must live in an humble and dutiful subjection to God and his government; ver. 7, "Fear the Lord" as your sovereign Lord and Master, be ruled in every thing by your religion, and subject to the Divine will. This must be, 1. An humble subjection; "Be not wise in thine own eyes." Note, There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, than conceitedness of our own wisdom. They that have an opinion of their own sufficiency think it below them, and a disparagement to them, to take their measures from, much more to hamper themselves with, religion's rules. 2. A dutiful subjection; "Fear the Lord, and depart from evil," take heed of doing any thing to offend him, and to forfeit his care. To fear the Lord, so as to depart from evil, is true wisdom and understanding, *Job* xxviii. 28; those that have it are truly wise, but self-denyingly so, and not wise in their own eyes.

For our encouragement thus to live in the fear of God, it is here promised, ver. 8, that it shall be as serviceable, even to the outward man, as our necessary food. It will be nourishing; "it shall be health to thy navel." It will be strengthening; it shall be "marrow to thy bones." That prudence, temperance, and sobriety, that calmness and composure of mind, that good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tend very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other enjoyments in this world are insipid. A plaister to the navel is a remedy against worms in children; perhaps it was so in Solomon's time, and he may allude to it. Religion kills the worms that breed in our corrupt hearts. "Envy is the rottenness of the bones;" the sorrow of the world dries them, but hope and joy in God is marrow to them.

Secondly. We must make a good use of our estates, and that is the way to increase them, ver. 9, 10. Here is,

1. A precept which makes it our duty to serve God with our estates. "Honour the Lord with thy substance." It is the end of our creation and redemption to honour God, to be to him for a name and a praise; we are no other way capable of serving him but in his honour. His honour we must shew forth, and the honour we have for him. We must honour him not only with our bodies and spirits, which are his, but with our estates too, for they also are his; we and all our appurtenances must be devoted to his glory. Worldly wealth is but poor substance, yet such as it is we must honour God with it, and then, if ever, it becomes substantial. We must honour God, 1st. With our increase. Where riches increase we are tempted to honour ourselves, *Deu.* viii. 17, and to set our hearts upon the world, *Ps.* lxii. 10; but the more God gives us the more we should study to honour him. It is meant of the increase of the earth, for we live upon annual products to keep us in constant dependence on God. 2nd. With all our increase. As God has prospered us in every thing, we must honour him. Our law will allow a prescription for a *modus decimandi*,—'a mode of tithing,' but none *de non decimando*,—'for exemption from paying tithes." 3rd. With the first fruits of all, as Abel, *Gen.* iv. 4. This was the law, *Ex.* xxiii. 19; and the prophets, *Mal.* iii. 10. God, that is the first and best, must have the first and best of every thing. His right is prior to all other, and therefore he must be served first. Note, It is our duty to make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion; use them and the interest we have by them for the promoting of religion, do good to the poor with what we have, and abound in all works of piety and charity, devising liberal things.

2. A promise, which makes it our interest to serve God with our estates. It is the way to make a little much, and much more; it is the surest and safest method of thriving. "So shall thy barns be filled with plenty." He doth not say thy bags, but thy barns; not thy wardrobe replenished, but thy presses. God shall bless thee with an increase of that which is for use, not for show or ornament; for spending and laying out, not for hoarding and laying up. They that do good with what they have shall have more to do more good with. Note, If we make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion, we shall find our religion very serviceable to the prosperity of our worldly affairs; "godliness has the promise of the life that now is," and most of the comfort of it. We mistake if we think that giving will undo us, and make us poor; no, giving for God's honour will make us rich, *Hag.* ii. 19; what we gave we have.

Thirdly. We must carry ourselves aright under our afflictions, ver. 11, 12. This the apostle quotes, *Heb.* xii. 5, and calls it "an exhortation, which speaketh unto us as unto children," with the authority and affection of a father. We are here in a world of trouble. Now observe,

1. What must be our care when we are in affliction; we must neither despise it nor be weary of it. His exhortation before was to those that are rich and in prosperity, here to those that are poor and in adversity. 1st. We must not despise an affliction be it never so light, and short, as if it were not worth taking notice of, or as if it were not sent of an errand, and therefore required no answer. We must not be stocks and stones, and stoics, under our afflictions, insensible of them, hardening ourselves under them, and concluding we can easily get through them without God. 2nd. We must not be weary of an affliction, be it never so heavy and long; not faint under it, so the apostle renders it; not be dispirited, dispossessed of our own souls, or driven to despair, or to use any indirect means for our relief, and the redress of our grievances. We must not think that the affliction either presseth harder or continues longer than is meet, nor conclude deliverance will never come, because it doth not come so soon as we expect it.

2. What will be our comfort when we are in affliction. 1st. That it is a Divine correction. It is "the chastening of the Lord;" which, as it is a reason why we should submit to it, for it is folly to contend with a God of incontestable sovereignty, and irresistible power, so it is a reason why we should be satisfied in it, for we may be sure a God of unspotted purity doth us no wrong, and a God of infinite goodness means us no hurt. It is from God, and therefore must not be despised, for a slight put upon the messenger is an affront to him that sends him; it is from God, and therefore we must not be weary of it, for he knows our frame, both what we need and what we can bear. 2nd. That it is a fatherly correction; it comes not from his vindictive justice as a judge, but his wise affection as a father. The father correcteth the son whom he loveth, nay, and because he loves him, and desires he may be wise and good. He delights in that in his son which is amiable and agreeable, and therefore corrects him for the prevention and cure of that which would be a deformity to him, and an alloy to his delight in him. Thus God hath said, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," *Rev.* iii. 19. This is a great comfort to God's children under their afflictions, *First.* That they not only consist with, but flow from, covenant love. *Secondly.* That they are so far from doing them any real hurt, that by the grace of God working with them, they do a great deal of good, and are happy means of their sanctification.

13 Happy *is* the man *that* findeth wisdom,
And the man *that* getteth understanding. [of silver,
14 For the merchandise of it *is* better than the merchandise

And the gain thereof than fine gold.
15 She *is* more precious than rubies:
And all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.
16 Length of days *is* in her right hand;
And in her left hand riches and honour.
17 Her ways *are* ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths *are* peace.
18 She *is* a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her:
And happy *is every one* that retaineth her.
19 The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth;
By understanding hath he established the heavens.
20 By his knowledge the depths are broken up,
And the clouds drop down the dew.

Solomon had pressed us earnestly to seek diligently for wisdom, *ch.* ii. 1, &c., and had assured us that we should succeed in our sincere and constant pursuits. But the question is, What we shall get by it when we have found it? Prospect of advantage is the spring and spur of industry; he therefore shews us how much it will be to our profit, laying this down for an unquestionable truth, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom," that true wisdom which consists in the knowledge and love of God, and an entire conformity to all the intentions of his truths, providences, and laws. Now observe,

First. What it is to find wisdom so as to be made happy by it.

1. We must get it. He is the happy man that, having found it, makes it his own; gets both an interest in it, and the possession of it. That draws out understanding, so the word is; that is, 1st. That derives it from God. Having it not in himself, he draws it with the bucket of prayer from the fountain of all wisdom, who gives liberally. 2nd. That takes pains for it, as he doth that draws ore out of the mine; if it do not come easily, we must put to the more strength to draw it. 3rd. That improves in it: that having some understanding draws it out by growing in knowledge, and making five talents ten. 4th. That doth good with it: that draws out from the stock he hath, as wine from the vessel, and communicates to others for their instruction, things new and old. That is well got, and to good purpose, that is thus used to good purpose.

2. We must trade for it. We read here of the merchandise of wisdom, which intimates, 1st. That we must make it our business, and not a by-business, as the merchant bestows the main of his thoughts and time upon his merchandise. 2nd. That we must venture all in it, as a stock in trade, and be willing to part with all for it. This is that pearl of great price which, when we have found, we must willingly sell all for the purchase of, *Mat.* xiii. 45, 46. Buy the truth, *ch.* xxiii. 23, he doth not say at what rate, because we must buy it at any rate rather than miss it.

3. We must lay hold on it, as we lay hold on a good bargain when it is offered us, which we do the more carefully, if there be danger of having it taken out of our hands. We must apprehend with all our might, and put forth our utmost vigour in the pursuit of it; lay hold on all occasions to improve in it, and catch at the least of its dictates.

4. We must retain it. It is not enough to lay hold on wisdom, but we must keep our hold, hold it fast with a resolution never to let it go, but to persevere in the ways of wisdom to the end. We must sustain it, so some read it; must embrace it with all our might, as we do that which we would sustain. We must do all we can to support the declining interests of religion in the places where we live.

Secondly. What the happiness of those is that do find it.

1. It is a transcendent happiness; more than can be found in the wealth of this world, if we had never so much of it, ver. 14, 15. It is not only a surer but a more gainful merchandise to trade for wisdom, for Christ, and grace, and spiritual blessings, than for silver, and gold, and rubies. Suppose a man to have got these in abundance; nay, to have all the things he can desire of this world, (and who is it that ever had that?) yet, 1st. All this would not purchase heavenly wisdom; no, it would utterly be contemned; it cannot be gotten for gold, *Job* xxviii. 15, &c. 2nd. All this would not countervail the want of heavenly wisdom, nor be the ransom of a soul lost by its own folly. 3rd. All this will not make a man half so happy, no, not in this world, as they are that have true wisdom, though they have none of all these things. 4th. Heavenly wisdom will procure that for us, and secure that to us, which silver, and gold, and rubies will not be the purchase of.

2. It is a true happiness; for it is inclusive of, and equivalent to, all those things which are supposed to make men happy, ver. 16, 17. Wisdom is here represented as a bright and bountiful queen reaching forth gifts to her faithful and loving subjects, and offering them to all that will submit to her government.

1st. Is length of days a blessing? Yes; the most valuable. Life includes all good, and therefore she offers that in her right hand. Religion puts us into the best methods of prolonging life, entitles us to the promises of it; and, though our days on earth shall be no more than our neighbour's, yet it will secure to us everlasting life in a better world.

2nd. Are riches and honours accounted blessings? They are so; and them she reacheth out with her left hand. For as she is ready to embrace those that submit to her with both arms, so she is ready to give out to them with both hands. They shall have the wealth of this world, as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; however the true riches, by which men are rich towards God, are secured to them. Nor is there any honour, by birth or preferment, comparable to that which attends religion, that makes "the righteous more excellent than his neighbour," recommends men to God, commands respect and veneration with all the sober part of mankind, and will in the other world make those that are now buried in obscurity to shine forth as the sun.

3rd. Is pleasure courted as much as any thing? It is so; and it is certain true piety hath in it the greatest true pleasure. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness;" that is, the ways in which she has directed us to walk are such as we shall find abundance of delight and satisfaction in. All the enjoyments and entertainments of sense are not comparable to the pleasure which gracious souls have in communion with God and doing good. That which is the only right way to bring us to our journey's end we must walk in, fair or foul, pleasant or unpleasant; but the way of religion, as it is the right way, so it is a pleasant way; it is smooth and clean, and strewed with roses. "All her paths are peace." There is not only peace in the end, but peace in the way; not only in the way of religion in general, but in the particular paths of that way; in all her paths, all the several acts, instances, and duties of it. One doth not embitter what the other sweetens, as it doth with the alloys of this world, but they are all peace, not only sweet, but safe. The saints enter into peace on this side heaven, and enjoy a present sabbatism.

3. It is the happiness of paradise; ver. 18, "She is a tree of life." True grace is that to the soul which the tree of life would have been, from which our first parents were shut out for eating of the forbidden tree. It is a seed of immortality, "a well of living water, springing up to life eternal." It is an earnest of the new Jerusalem, in the midst of which is the tree of life, *Rev.* xxii. 2; ii. 7. They that feed and feast on this heavenly wisdom, shall not only be healed by it of every fatal malady, but shall find an antidote against age and death, they shall eat and live for ever.

4. It is a participation of the happiness of God himself, for wisdom is his everlasting glory and blessedness, ver. 19, 20. This should make us in love with wisdom and understanding, that which God gives, that "the Lord by wisdom founded the earth," so as that it cannot be removed, nor can ever fail of answering all the ends of its creation, to which it is admirably and unexceptionably fitted. "By understanding he hath" likewise "established the heavens," and directed all the motions of them in the best manner. The heavenly bodies are vast, yet there is no flaw in them; numerous, yet no disorder in them; the motion rapid, yet no wear or tear. The depths of the sea are broken up, and thence come the waters beneath the firmament; and the clouds drop down the dews, the waters from above the firmament; and all this by the Divine wisdom and knowledge; therefore "happy is the man that findeth wisdom," for he will thereby be "thoroughly furnished for every good word and work." Christ is that wisdom by whom the worlds were made, and still consist; happy therefore are they to whom he is made of God wisdom, for he has wherewithal to make good all the foregoing promises of long life, riches, and honour; for all the wealth of heaven, earth, and seas, is his.

21 My son, let not them depart from thine eyes:
Keep sound wisdom and discretion:
22 So shall they be life unto thy soul,
And grace to thy neck.
23 Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely,
And thy foot shall not stumble.
24 When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid:
Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.
25 Be not afraid of sudden fear,
Neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh.
26 For the LORD shall be thy confidence,
And shall keep thy foot from being taken.

Solomon, having pronounced them happy that not only lay hold on wisdom, but retain her, here exhorts us therefore to retain her, assuring us that we ourselves shall have the comfort of doing so.

First. The exhortation is to have religion's rules always in view, and always at heart, ver. 21. 1. To have them always in view. "My son, let them not depart from thine eyes," that is, Let not thine eyes ever depart from them, to wander after vanity. Have them always in mind, and do not forget them; be ever and anon thinking of them, and conversing with them, and never imagine that thou hast looked upon them long enough, and it is time now to lay them by, but as long as thou livest keep up and cultivate thine acquaintance with them. He that learns to write must always have his eye upon his copy, and not let that be out of his sight; and to the words of wisdom must they in like manner have a constant respect that will walk circumspectly. 2. To have them always at heart; for it is in that treasury, the hidden man of the heart, that we must keep sound wisdom and discretion; keep to the principles of it, and keep in the ways of it. It is wealth that is worth keeping.

Secondly. The argument to enforce this exhortation is taken from the unspeakable advantage which wisdom thus kept will be of to us.

1. In respect of strength and satisfaction it will "be life to thy soul," ver. 22. It will quicken thee to thy duty when thou beginnest to be slothful and remiss; it will revive thee under thy troubles when thou beginnest to droop and despond; it will be thy spiritual life, an earnest of life eternal. Life to the soul is life indeed.

2. In respect of honour and reputation. It shall be "grace to thy neck," as a chain of gold, or a jewel. 'Grace to thy jaws,' so the word is; grateful to thy taste and relish, so some; it shall infuse grace into all thou sayest, so others; shall furnish thee with acceptable words, which shall gain thee credit.

3. In respect of safety and security. This he insists upon in four verses, the scope of which is to shew that the effect of righteousness (which is the same with wisdom here) is quietness and assurance for ever, *Isa.* xxxii. 17. Good people are taken under God's special protection, and therein they may have an entire satisfaction. They are safe, and may be easy,

1st. In their motions by day, ver. 23. If our religion be our companion, it will be our convoy. "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely." The natural life, and all that belongs to it, shall be under the protection of God's providence: the spiritual life, and all its interests, under the protection of his grace, so that thou shalt be kept from falling into sin or trouble. Wisdom will direct us into, and keep us in, the safe way, as far as may be, from temptation; and will enable us to walk in it with a holy security. The way of duty is the way of safety. We are in danger of falling, but wisdom will keep thee, that thy foot shall not stumble at those things which are an offence and overthrow to many, but which thou shalt know how to get over.

2nd. In their rest by night, ver. 24. In our retirements we lie exposed, and are most subject to frights; but keep up communion with God, and keep a good conscience, and then "when thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid" of fire, or thieves, or spectres, or any of the terrors of the darkness, knowing that when we and all our friends are asleep, yet he that keepeth Israel, and every trueborn Israelite, neither slumbers nor sleeps, and to him thou hast committed thyself, and taken shelter under the shadow of his wings. "Thou shalt lie down," and not need to sit up to keep guard; being lain down thou shalt sleep, and not have thine eyes held waking by care and fear; "and thy sleep shall be sweet" and refreshing to thee, being not disturbed by any alarms from without or from within, *Ps.* iv. 8; cxvi. 7. The way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience; and the sleep, as of the labouring man, so of the wise and godly man, is sweet.

3rd. In their greatest straits and dangers. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, so that we need not be afraid of sudden fear, ver. 25. The harms that surprise us unthought of, giving us no time to arm ourselves by considera-

tion, are most likely to put us into confusion. But let not the wise and good man forget himself, and then he will not give way to any fear that has torment, be the alarm never so sudden. Let him not fear the desolation of the wicked when it comes, that is, *First*. The desolation which the wicked ones make of religion and the religious. Though it comes, and seems to be just at the door, yet be not afraid of it, for though God may make use of the wicked as instruments of his people's correction, yet he will never suffer them to be the authors of their desolation. Or rather, *Secondly*. The desolation which wicked men will be brought into in a moment. It will come, and timorous saints may be apprehensive that they shall be involved in it; but let this be their comfort, that though judgments lay waste generally, at least promiscuously, yet God knows who are his, and how to separate between the precious and the vile. Therefore be not afraid of that which appears most formidable; for, ver. 26, "The Lord shall be" not only thy protector, to keep thee safe, but "thy confidence," to keep thee secure, so that thy foot shall not be taken by thine enemies, nor ensnared by thine own fears. God has engaged to keep the feet of his saints.

27 Withhold not good from them to whom it is due,
When it is in the power of thine hand to do *it*.
28 Say not unto thy neighbour,
Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give;
When thou hast it by thee.
29 Devise not evil against thy neighbour,
Seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.
30 Strive not with a man without cause,
If he have done thee no harm.
31 Envy thou not the oppressor,
And choose none of his ways.
32 For the froward *is* abomination to the LORD:
But his secret *is* with the righteous.
33 The curse of the LORD *is* in the house of the wicked:
But he blesseth the habitation of the just.
34 Surely he scorneth the scorners:
But he giveth grace unto the lowly.
35 The wise shall inherit glory:
But shame shall be the promotion of fools.

True wisdom consists in the due discharge of our duty towards man, as well as towards God, in honesty as well as piety, and therefore we have here divers excellent precepts of wisdom which relate to our neighbour.

First. We must render to all their due, both in justice and charity, and not delay to do it; ver. 27, 28, "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due," (either for want of love to them, or through too much love to thy money,) "when it is in the power of thine hand to do it," for if it be not it cannot be expected; but it was thy great fault, if thou didst by thy extravagances disable thyself to do justly, and shew mercy, and it ought to be the greatest of thy grief, if God has disabled thee, not so much that thou art straitened in thine own comforts and conveniences, as that thou hast not wherewithal to give to those to whom it is due. Withhold it not. This implies that it is called for, and expected, but the hand is drawn in, and the bowels of compassion shut up. We must not hinder others from doing it, nor be ourselves backward to it. "If thou hast it by thee" to day, hast it in the power of thine hand, say not to thy neighbour, "Go thy way for this time," and come at a more convenient season, and I will then see what will be done; "to-morrow I will give;" whereas thou art not sure thou shalt live till to-morrow, or that to-morrow thou shalt have it by thee. Be not thus loath to part with thy money upon a good account; make not excuses to shift off a duty that must be done, nor delight to keep thy neighbour in pain and in suspense, nor to shew the authority which the giver has over the beggar; but readily, and cheerfully, and from a principle of conscience towards God, give good to those to whom it is due. To the lords and owners of it, so the word is, to those who upon any account are entitled to it. This requires us, 1. To pay our just debts, without fraud, covin, or delay. 2. To give wages to those that have earned it. 3. To provide for our relations, and those that have dependence on us, for to them it is due. 4. To render dues both to church and state, magistrates and ministers. 5. To be ready to all acts of friendship and humanity, and in every thing to be neighbourly; for these are things that are due by the law of doing as we would be done by. 6. To be charitable to the poor and necessitous. If others want the necessary supports of life, and we have wherewithal to supply them, we must look upon it as due to them, and not withhold it. Alms are called righteousness, because they are a debt to the poor, and a debt which we must not defer to pay. *Bis dat, qui cito dat*,—'He gives twice who gives speedily.'

Secondly. We must never design any hurt or harm to anybody; ver. 29, "Devise not evil against thy neighbour." Do not contrive how to do him an ill turn undiscovered, to prejudice him in his body, goods, or good name; and the rather because "he dwells securely by thee," and having given thee no provocation, entertains no jealousy or suspicion of thee, and therefore is off his guard. It is against the laws both of honour and friendship to do a man an ill turn, and give him no warning; "Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly." It is a most base, ungrateful thing if our neighbours have a good opinion of us that we will do them no harm, and we from thence take advantage to cheat and injure them.

Thirdly. We must not be quarrelsome and litigious; ver. 30, "Strive not with a man without cause." Contend not for that which thou hast no title to; resent not that as a provocation which peradventure was but an oversight. Never trouble thy neighbour with frivolous complaints and accusations, or vexatious lawsuits, when either there is no harm done thee, or none worth speaking of, or thou mightest right thyself in a friendly way. Law must be the last refuge; for it is not only our duty, but our interest, "as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men." When accounts are balanced, it will be found there is little got by striving.

Fourthly. We must not envy the prosperity of evil-doers, ver. 31. This caution is the same with that which is so much insisted on, *Ps.* xxxvii., "Envy not the oppressor;" though he be rich and great, though he live in ease and pleasure, and make all about him to stand in awe of him, yet do not think him a happy man, nor wish thyself in his condition. "Choose none of his ways," do not imitate him, nor take the courses he takes to enrich himself. Never think of doing as he doth, though thou wert sure to get by it all that he hath, for it would be dear-bought. Now, to shew what little reason saints have to envy sinners, Solomon here in the last four verses of the chapter compares the condition of sinners and saints together, (as his father David had done, *Ps.* xxxvii.) sets the one over against the other, that we may see how happy the saints are, though they be oppressed; and how miserable the wicked are, though they be oppressors. Men are to be judged of as they stand with God, and as he judgeth of them, not as they stand in the world's books. Those are in the right that are of God's mind; and if we be of his mind, we shall see, whatever pretence one sinner may have to envy another, saints are so happy themselves, that they have no reason at all to envy any sinner, though his condition be never so prosperous. For,

1. Sinners are hated of God, but saints are loved; ver. 32, "The froward" sinners, that are continually going fromward him, whose lives are a perverse contradiction to his will, they "are abomination to the Lord." He that hateth nothing that he has made yet abhors those who have thus marred themselves; they are not only abominable in his sight, but an abomination. The righteous therefore have no reason to envy them, for they have his secret with them; they are his favourites, he hath that communion with them which is a secret to the world, and in which they have a joy that a stranger doth not intermeddle with. He communicates to them the secret tokens of his love; his covenant is with them, they know his mind, and the meanings and intentions of his providence better than others can. "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do?"

2. Sinners are under the curse of God, they and their houses; saints are under his blessing, they and their habitation, ver. 33. The wicked has a house, a strong and stately dwelling perhaps, but the curse of the Lord is upon it, it is in it; and though the affairs of the family may prosper, yet the very blessings are cursed, *Mal.* ii. 2; there is leanness in the soul when the body is fed to the full, *Ps.* cvi. 15. The curse may work silently and slowly; but it is as a fretting leprosy, it will consume the timber thereof and the stones thereof, *Zec.* v. 4; *Hab.* ii. 11. The just have a habitation, a poor cottage; the word is used for sheep-cotes, a very mean dwelling, but God blesseth it, he is continually blessing it, from the beginning of the year to the end of it. The curse or blessing of God is upon the house, according as the inhabitants are wicked or godly. And it is certain, a blessed family, though poor, has no reason to envy a cursed family, though rich.

3. God puts contempt upon sinners, but shews respect unto saints, ver. 34. 1st. Those that exalt themselves shall certainly be abased; "surely he scorneth the scorners." Those that scorn to submit to the discipline of religion, scorn to take God's yoke upon them, scorn to be beholden to his grace, that scoff at godliness and godly people, and take a pleasure in bantering and exposing them, God will scorn them, and lay them open to scorn before all the world. He despiseth their impotent malice, sits in heaven and laughs at them, *Ps.* ii. 4. He retaliates upon them, *Ps.* xviii. 26; resists the proud. 2nd. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted, for "he giveth grace to the lowly," he works that in them which puts honour upon them, and for which they are accepted of God and approved of men. Those that patiently bear contempt from scornful men shall have respect from God and all good men, and then they have no reason to envy the scorners, or to choose their ways.

4. The end of sinners will be everlasting shame, the end of saints endless honour, ver. 35. 1st. Saints are wise men, and act wisely for themselves; for though their religion now wraps them up in obscurity, and lays them open to reproach, yet they are sure to inherit glory at last, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They shall have it, and have it by inheritance, the sweetest and surest tenure; God gives them grace, ver. 34, and therefore they shall inherit glory, for grace is glory, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18; it is glory begun, the earnest of it, *Ps.* lxxxiv. 11. 2nd. Sinners are fools, for they are not only preparing disgrace for themselves, but at the same time flattering themselves with a prospect of honour, as if they only took the way to be great. Their end will manifest their folly, shame shall be their promotion; and it will be so much the more their punishment, that it will come instead of their promotion; it will be all the promotion they must ever expect, that God will be glorified in their everlasting confusion.

CHAPTER IV.

When the things of God are to be taught, "precept must be upon precept, and line upon line," not only because the things themselves are of great worth and weight, but because men's minds, at the best, are unapt to admit them, and commonly prejudiced against them, and therefore Solomon in this chapter, with a great variety of expression, and a pleasant powerful flood of Divine eloquence, inculcates the same things he had pressed upon us in the foregoing chapters. Here is, I. An earnest exhortation to the study of wisdom, that is, of true religion and godliness, borrowed from the good instructions which his father gave him, and enforced with many considerable arguments, ver. 1—13. II. A necessary caution against bad company, and all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, ver. 14—19. III. Particular directions for the attaining and preserving of wisdom, and bringing forth the fruits of it, ver. 20—27. So plainly, so pressingly, is the case laid before us, that we shall be for ever inexcusable if we perish in our folly.

HEAR, ye children, the instruction of a father,
And attend to know understanding.
2 For I give you good doctrine,
Forsake ye not my law.
3 For I was my father's son,
Tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother.
4 He taught me also, and said unto me,
Let thine heart retain my words:
Keep my commandments, and live.
5 Get wisdom, get understanding: [mouth.
Forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my
6 Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee:
Love her, and she shall keep thee.
7 Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom:
And with all thy getting get understanding.

8 Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: [her.
She shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace
9 She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace:
A crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.
10 Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings;
And the years of thy life shall be many.
11 I have taught thee in the way of wisdom;
I have led thee in right paths.
12 When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened;
And when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.
13 Take fast hold of instruction; let *her* not go;
Keep her; for she *is* thy life.

Here is, First. The invitation which Solomon gives to his children to come and receive instruction from him; ver. 1, 2, "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father." That is, 1. Let my own children in the first place receive and give good heed to those instructions which I set down for the use of others also. Note, Magistrates and ministers, that are intrusted with the conduct of larger societies, are concerned to take a more than ordinary care for the good instruction of their own families; from which their public work will by no means excuse them. This charity must begin at home, though it must not end there; for he that has not his children in subjection with all gravity, and doth not take pains in their good education, how shall he do his duty as he ought to the church of God? 1 *Tim.* iii. 4, 5. And the children of those that are eminent for wisdom and public usefulness ought to improve in knowledge and grace in proportion to the advantages they have by their relation to such parents. Yet it may be observed, to save both the credit and the comfort of those parents whose children do not answer the hopes that arose from their education, that Rehoboam the son of Solomon was far from being either one of the wisest or one of the best. We have reason to think that thousands have got more good by Solomon's proverbs than his own son did, to whom they seem to have been dedicated. 2. Let all young people, in the days of their childhood and youth, take pains to get knowledge and grace, for that is their learning age, and then their minds are formed and seasoned. He doth not say, My children, but, Ye children. We read but of one son that Solomon had of his own; but, would you think it? he is willing to set up for a schoolmaster, and to teach other people's children; for in that age there is most hopes of success. The branch is easily bent when it is young and tender. 3. Let all that would receive instruction come with the disposition of children. Though they be grown persons, let all prejudices be laid aside, and the mind be as white paper; let them be dutiful, tractable, and self-diffident, and take the word as the word of a father, which comes both with authority and with affection. We must see it coming from God as our Father in heaven, to whom we pray, from whom we expect blessings, the Father of our spirits, to whom we ought to be in subjection that we may live. We must look upon our teachers as our fathers that love us, and seek our welfare; and therefore, though the instruction carry in it reproof and correction, (for so the word signifies,) yet we must bid it welcome.

Now, 1st. To recommend it to us, we are told not only that it is the instruction of a Father, but that it is understanding, and therefore should be welcome to intelligent creatures. Religion hath reason on its side, and we are taught it by fair reasoning. It is a law indeed, ver. 2, but that law is founded upon doctrine, upon unquestionable principles of truth, upon good doctrine, which is not only faithful, but worthy of all acceptation. If we admit the doctrine, we cannot but submit to the law. 2nd. To rivet it in us, we are directed to receive it as a gift, to attend to it with all diligence, attend to know it, for otherwise we cannot do it; and not to forsake it, by disowning the doctrine, or disobeying the law.

Secondly. The instructions he gives them. Observe,

1. How he came by these instructions. He had them from his parents, and teacheth his children the same that they taught him, ver. 3, 4. Observe,

1st. His parents loved him, and therefore taught him; "I was my father's son." David had many sons, but Solomon was his son indeed, as Isaac is called, *Gen.* xvii. 19. And for the same reason, because on him the covenant was entailed. He was his father's darling, above any of his children, because God had a special kindness for Solomon, (the prophet called him Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him, 2 *Sam.* xii. 25,) and for that reason David had a special kindness for him, for he was a man after God's own heart. If parents may ever love one child better than another, it must not be till it plainly appears that God doth so. He was "tender, and only beloved in the sight of his mother." Sure there was a manifest reason for making such a distinction, when both the parents made it. Now we see how they shewed their love, they catechised him, kept him to his book, and held him to a strict discipline. Though he was a prince, and heir apparent to the crown, yet they did not let him live at large; nay, therefore they tutored him thus. And perhaps David was the more strict with Solomon in his education, because he had seen the ill effects of an undue indulgence in Adonijah, whom he had not crossed in any thing, 1 *Kin.* i. 6; as also in Absalom.

2nd. What his parents taught him he teacheth others. Observe, *First.* When Solomon was grown up, he not only remembered but took a pleasure in repeating the good lessons his parents taught him when he was a child. He did not forget them, so deep were the impressions they made upon him. He was not ashamed of them, such a high value had he for them; nor did he look upon them as the childish things, the mean things which when he became a man, a king, he should put away as a disparagement to him; much less did he repeat them as some wicked children have done to ridicule them, and make his companions merry with them, priding himself that he was got clear from grave lessons and restraints. *Secondly.* Though Solomon was a wise man himself, and divinely inspired, yet when he was to teach wisdom he did not think it below him to quote his father, and to make use of his words. They that would learn well, and teach well in religion, must not affect new-found notions, and new-coined phrases, so as to look with contempt upon the knowledge and language of their predecessors. If we must keep to the good old way, why should we scorn the good old words? *Jer.* vi. 16. *Thirdly.* Solomon, having been well educated by his parents, thought himself thereby obliged to give his children a good education, the same that his parents had given him; and this is one way in which we must requite our parents for the pains they took with us, even by shewing piety at home, 1 *Tim.* v. 4. They taught us, not only that we might learn ourselves, but that we might teach our children the good knowledge of God, *Ps.* lxxviii. 6. And we are false to a trust if we do not; for the sacred depositum of religious doctrine and law was lodged in our hands with a charge to transmit it pure and entire to those that shall come after us, 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. *Fourthly.* Solomon enforceth his exhortations with the authority of his father David, a man famous in his generation upon all accounts. Be it taken notice of, to the honour of religion, that the wisest and best men in every age have been most zealous, not only for the practice of it themselves, but the propagating of it to others; and we should therefore "continue in the things which we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them," 2 *Tim.* iii. 14.

2. What those instructions were, ver. 4—13.

1st. By way of precept and exhortation. David in teaching his son, though he was a child of great capacity and quick apprehension, yet to shew that he was in good earnest, and to affect his child the more with what he said, expressed himself with great warmth and importunity, and inculcated the same thing again and again. So children must be taught; *Deu.* vi. 7, "Thou shalt whet them diligently upon thy children." David, though he was a man of public business, and had tutors for his son, yet took all this pains with him himself.

First. He recommends to him his Bible and his catechism as the means; his father's words, ver. 4; the words of his mouth, ver. 5; his sayings, ver. 10; all the good lessons he had taught him; and perhaps he means particularly the book of *Psalms*, many of which were Maschils, psalms of instruction, and two of them are expressly said to be for Solomon. These, and all his other words, Solomon must have an eye to. 1*st.* He must hear and receive them, ver. 10; diligently attend to them and imbibe them, "as the earth drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it," *Heb.* vi. 7. God thus bespeaks our attention to his word, "Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings." 2*nd.* He must hold fast the form of sound words which his father gave him; ver. 4, "Let thine heart retain my words;" and except the word be hid in the heart, lodged in the will and affections, it will not be retained. 3*rd.* He must govern himself by them. "Keep my commandments," that is, obey them, and that is the way to increase in the knowledge of them, *Jno.* vii. 17. 4*th.* He must stick to them, and abide by them; "Decline not from the words of my mouth," ver. 5, as fearing they will be too great a check upon thee; but "take fast hold of instruction," ver. 13, as being resolved to keep thy hold and never let it go. Those that have a good education, though they strive to shake it off, will find it hang about them a great while, and if it do not their case is very sad.

Secondly. He recommends to him wisdom and understanding as the end to be aimed at in the use of these means. 'That wisdom which is the principal wisdom, get that,'—*Quod caput est sapientiæ eam acquire sapientiam.*—J. T.; that is, Be sure to mind that branch of wisdom which he had said before is the top branch of it, and that is the fear of God, *ch.* i. 7. A principle of religion in the heart is the one thing needful. Therefore,

1*st.* Get this wisdom, get this understanding, ver. 5. And again, "Get wisdom, and, with all thy getting, get understanding," ver. 7. Pray for it, take pains for it, give diligence in the use of all appointed means to attain it; wait at wisdom's gates, *ch.* viii. 34. Get dominion over thy corruptions, which are thy follies; get possession of wise principles, and the habits of wisdom. Get it by experience, get it above all thy getting; be more in care, and take more pains to get this, than to get the wealth of this world; whatever thou forgettest, get this. Reckon it a great achievement, and pursue it accordingly. True wisdom is God's gift, and yet we are here commanded to get it, because God gives it to those that labour for it. Yet after all we must not say, "Our might, and the power of our hand, has gotten us this wealth."

2*nd.* "Forget her not," ver. 5; "forsake her not," ver. 6; "let her not go," ver. 13, "but keep her." Those that have got this wisdom must take heed of losing it again by returning to folly. It is indeed a good part, that shall not be taken from us; but then we must take heed lest we throw it from us, as those do that forget it first, and let it slip out of their minds, and then forsake it, and turn out of its good ways. That good thing which is committed to us we must keep, and not let it drop through carelessness, nor suffer it to be forced from us, nor suffer ourselves to be wheedled out of it; never let go such a jewel.

3*rd.* "Love her," ver. 6, and "embrace her," ver. 8, as worldly men love their wealth and set their hearts upon it. Religion should be very dear to us, dearer than any thing in this world; and if we cannot reach to be great masters of wisdom, yet let us be true lovers of it, and what grace we have let us embrace it with a sincere affection, as those that admire its beauty.

4*th.* "Exalt her," ver. 8. Always keep up high thoughts of religion, speak of it with value and veneration, and do all thou canst to bring it into reputation, and maintain the credit of it among men; concur with God in his purpose, which is to magnify the law and make it honourable, and do what thou canst to serve that purpose. Let wisdom's children not only justify her but magnify her, and prefer her before that which is dearest to them in this world. In honouring those that fear the Lord, though they are low in the world, and regarding a poor wise man, we exalt wisdom.

2nd. By way of motive and inducement thus to labour for wisdom, and submit to the conduct of it, consider,

First. It is the main matter, and that which ought to be the chief and continual care of every man in this life; ver. 7, "Wisdom is the principal thing," other things which we are solicitous to get and keep are nothing to it. It is the whole of man, *Eccl.* xii. 13. It is that which recommends us to God, which beautifies the soul, which enables us to answer the end of our creation, to live to some good purpose in the world, and to get to heaven at last, and therefore it is the principal thing.

Secondly. It hath reason and equity on its side; ver. 11, "I have taught thee in the way of wisdom," true wisdom, and so it will be found to be at last; "I have led thee" not in the crooked ways of carnal policy, which doth wrong under colour of wisdom, but "in right paths," agreeable to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The rectitude of the Divine nature appears in the rectitude of all the Divine laws. Observe, David not only taught his son by good instructions, but led him both by a good example and by applying general instructions to particular cases, so that nothing was wanting on his part to make him wise.

Thirdly. It would be much for his own advantage; "If thou be wise" and good, "thou shalt be so for thyself."

1*st.* It will be thy life, thy comfort, thy happiness; it is what thou canst not live without. "Keep my commandments and live," ver. 4. That of our Saviour agrees with this, "If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments," *Mat.* ix. 17. It is upon pain of death, eternal death, and in prospect of life, eternal life, that we are required to be religious; receive wisdom's sayings, "and the years of thy life shall be many," ver. 10, as many in this world as Infinite Wisdom sees fit; and in the other world thou shalt live that life the years of which shall never be numbered. "Keep her" therefore, whatever it cost thee, "for she is thy life," ver. 13. All thy satisfaction will be found in this, and a soul without true wisdom and grace is really a dead soul.

2*nd.* It will be thy guard and guide, thy convoy and conduct through all the dangers and difficulties of thy journey through this wilderness. Love wisdom and cleave to her, and "she shall preserve thee, she shall keep thee," ver. 6, from sin, the worst of evils, the worst of enemies; shall keep thee from hurting thyself, and then none else can hurt thee. As we say, Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee; so keep thy wisdom and thy wisdom will keep thee. It will keep us from straits and stumblingblocks in the management of ourselves and our affairs, ver. 12. (1.) That our steps be not straitened when we go; that is,

bring ourselves into such straits as David was in, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 14. They that make God's word their rule shall walk at liberty, and be at ease in themselves. (2.) That our feet do not stumble when we run. Wise and good men, if they be put upon sudden resolves, the certain rule of God's word which they go by will keep them even then from stumbling upon any thing that may be pernicious. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us.

3*rd*. It will be thy honour and reputation; ver. 8, "Exalt wisdom." Do thou but shew thy good-will to her advancement, and though she needs not thy service she will abundantly recompense it, "she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honour." Solomon was to be a king, but his wisdom and virtue would be more his honour than his crown or purple; that was it for which all his neighbours had him so much in veneration; and no doubt in his reign and David's wise and good men stood fairest for preferment. However, religion will first or last bring all those to honour that cordially embrace her; they shall be accepted of God, respected by all wise men, owned in the great day, and shall inherit everlasting glory. This he insists on; ver. 9, "She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace" in this world, shall recommend thee both to God and man; and in the other world "a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee," a crown that shall never totter, a crown of glory that shall never wither. That is the true honour which attends religion. *Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus*,—'Virtue is the only nobility.' David having thus recommended wisdom to his son, no marvel that, when God bid him ask what he would, he prayed, "Lord, give me a wise and an understanding heart." We should make it appear by our prayers how well we were taught.

14 Enter not into the path of the wicked,
And go not in the way of evil *men*
15 Avoid it, pass not by it,
Turn from it, and pass away.
16 For they sleep not, except they have done mischief;
And their sleep is taken away, unless they cause *some* [to fall.
17 For they eat the bread of wickedness,
And drink the wine of violence.
18 But the path of the just *is* as the shining light,
That shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
19 The way of the wicked *is* as darkness:
They know not at what they stumble.

Some make David's instructions to Solomon, which began ver. 4, to continue to the end of the chapter; nay, some continue them to the end of the ninth chapter; but it is more probable that Solomon begins here again, if not sooner. In these verses, having exhorted us to walk in the paths of wisdom, he cautions us against the path of the wicked. 1. We must take heed of the ways of sin and avoid them; every thing that looks like sin and leads to it. 2. In order to this we must keep out of the way of sinners, and have no fellowship with them. For fear of falling into wicked courses we must shun wicked company. Here is,

First. The caution itself, ver. 14, 15.

1. We must take heed of falling in with sin and sinners; "Enter not into the paths of the wicked." Our teacher having, like a faithful guide, shewed us the right paths, ver. 11, here warns us of the bypaths into which we are in danger of being drawn aside. Those that have been well educated and trained up in the way they should go, let them never turn aside into the way they should not go; do not so much as enter into it, no, not to make trial of it, lest it prove a dangerous experiment, and difficult to retreat with safety. Venture not into the company of those that are infected with the plague, no, not though thou think thyself guarded with an antidote.

2. If at any time we are inveigled into an evil way we must hasten out of it. If, ere thou wast aware, thou didst enter in at the gate because it was wide, yet "go not" on "in the way of evil men." As soon as thou art made sensible of thy mistake, retire immediately, take not a step more, stay not a minute longer in the way that certainly leads to destruction.

3. We must dread and detest the ways of sin and sinners, and decline them with the utmost care imaginable. The way of evil men may seem a pleasant way and sociable, and the next way to the compassing of some secular end we may have in view, but it is an ill way, and will end ill; and therefore, if thou love thy God and thy soul, "avoid it, pass not by it," that thou mayest not be tempted to enter into it; and if thou find thyself near it, "turn from it, and pass away," and get as far off it as thou canst. The manner of expression intimates the imminent danger we are in, the need we have of this caution, and the great importance of it, and that our watchmen are or should be in good earnest in giving us warning. It intimates, likewise, at what a distance we should keep from sin and sinners. He doth not say keep at a due distance, but at a great distance, the farther the better; never think you can get far enough from it; "escape for thy life, look not behind thee."

Secondly. The reasons to enforce this caution.

1. Consider the character of the men whose way thou art warned to shun. They are mischievous men, ver. 16, 17. They not only care not what hurt they do to those that stand in their way, but it is their business to do mischief, and their delight, purely for mischief's sake. They are continually designing and endeavouring to cause some to fall, to ruin them body and soul. Wickedness and malice are in their nature, and violence in all their actions. They are spiteful in the highest degree; for, 1st. Mischief is rest and sleep to them. As much satisfaction as a covetous man has when he has got money, an ambitious man when he has got preferment, and a good man when he has done good, so much have they when they have said or done that which is injurious and ill-natured; and extremely uneasy if they cannot get their envy and revenge gratified, as Haman, to whom every thing was unpleasant as long as Mordecai was unhanged. It intimates likewise how restless and unwearied they are in their mischievous pursuits; they will rather want sleep than want the pleasure of being vexatious. 2nd. Mischief is meat and drink to them, they feed and feast upon it; "they eat the bread of wickedness," ("they eat up my people as they eat bread," *Ps.* xiv. 4,) and "drink the wine of violence, drink iniquity like water," *Job* xv. 16. All they eat and drink is got by rapine and oppression. Do wicked men think the time lost in which they are not doing hurt? let good men make it as much their business and delight to do good, (*Amici, diem perdidi*,—'Friends, I have lost a day;') and let all that are wise, and wish well to themselves, avoid the society of such; for, *First*. It is very scandalous; for there is no disposition of mind that is a greater reproach to the human nature, a greater enemy to human society, a bolder defiance to God and conscience,—that has more of the devil's image in it, nor is more serviceable to his interests, than a delight to do mischief, and to vex and hurt and ruin everybody. *Secondly*. It is very dangerous. Shun those that delight to do mischief as thou tenderest thine own safety; for, whatever friendship they may pretend, one time or other they will do thee mischief; thou wilt ruin thyself if thou dost concur with them, (*ch.* i. 18,) and they will ruin thee if thou dost not.

2. Consider the character of the way itself which thou art warned to shun, compared with the right way which thou art invited to walk in.

1st. The way of righteousness is light; ver. 18, "the path of the just" which they have chosen, and in which they walk, "is as light;" the "light shines on their ways," *Job* xxii. 28, and makes them both safe and pleasant. Christ is their way, and he is the light. They are guided by the word of God, and that is a light to their feet; they themselves are light in the Lord, and they walk in the light as he is in the light. *First*. It is a shining light. Their way shines to themselves in the joy and comfort of it, it shines before others in the lustre and honour of it; shines before men who see their good works, *Mat.* v. 16. They go on in their way with a holy security and serenity of mind, as those that walk in the light. It is as the morning light, which shines out of obscurity, *Isa.* lviii. 8, 10, and puts an end to the works of darkness. *Secondly*. It is a growing light. It "shines more and more;" not like the light of a meteor which soon disappears, or that of a candle which burns dim and burns down, but like that of the rising sun, which goes forward shining, mounts upward shining. Grace, the guide of this way, is growing; "he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger;" that joy which is the pleasure of this way, that honour which is the brightness of it, and all that happiness which is indeed its light, shall be still increasing. *Thirdly*. It will arrive, in the end, at the perfect day. The light of the dayspring will at length be noonday light, and that is it which the enlightened soul is pressing towards. The saints will not be perfect till they come to heaven, but there they shall themselves shine as the sun when he goes forth in his strength, *Mat.* xiii. 43. Their graces and joys shall be all consummate. Therefore it is our wisdom to keep close to the path of the just.

2nd. The way of sin is as darkness, ver. 19. The works he had cautioned us not to have fellowship with are works of darkness. What true pleasure and satisfaction can they have who know no pleasure and satisfaction but what they have in doing mischief? What sure guide have they that cast God's word behind them? The way of the wicked is dark, and therefore dangerous; for they stumble and yet know not at what they stumble; they fall into sin, but are not aware which way the temptation came by which they were overthrown, and therefore know not how to avoid it the next time. They fall into trouble, but never inquire wherefore God contends with them; "they consider not that they do evil," nor what will be in the end of it, *Ps.* lxxxii. 5; *Job* xviii. 5, 6. This is the way we are directed to shun.

20 My son, attend to my words;
Incline thine ear unto my sayings.
21 Let them not depart from thine eyes;
Keep them in the midst of thine heart.
22 For they *are* life unto those that find them,
And health to all their flesh.
23 Keep thy heart with all diligence;
For out of it *are* the issues of life.
24 Put away from thee a froward mouth,
And perverse lips put far from thee.
25 Let thine eyes look right on,
And let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
26 Ponder the path of thy feet,
And let all thy ways be established.
27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left:
Remove thy foot from evil.

Solomon, having warned us not to do evil, here teaches us how to do well; it is not enough for us to shun the occasions of sin, but we must study the methods of duty.

First. We must have a continual regard to the word of God, and endeavour that it may be always ready to us. The sayings of wisdom must be our principles by which we must govern ourselves, our monitors to warn us of duty and danger; and therefore, 1. We must receive them readily; "Incline thine ear to them," ver. 20, humbly bow to them, diligently listen to them. The attentive hearing of the word of God is a good sign of a work of grace begun in the heart, and a good means of carrying it on. It is to be hoped those are resolved to do their duty that are inclined to know it. 2. We must retain them carefully, ver. 21. We must lay them before us as our rule, "Let them not depart from thine eyes," view them, review them, and in every thing aim to conform to them. We must lodge them within us, as a commanding principle, the influences of which are diffused throughout the whole man; "keep them in the midst of thine heart," as things dear to thee, and which thou art afraid of losing. Let the word of God be written in the heart, and that which is written there will remain.

And the reason why we must thus make much of the words of wisdom is, because they will be both food and physic to us, like the tree of life, *Rev.* xxii. 2; *Eze.* xlvii. 12. They that seek and find them, find and keep them, shall find in them, 1st. Food; "for they are life unto those that find them," ver. 22. As the spiritual life was begun by the word as the instrument of it, so by the same word it is still nourished and maintained; we could not live without it; we may by faith live upon it. 2nd. Physic; they are "health to all their flesh," that is, to the whole man, both body and soul; they help to keep both in good plight; they are 'health to all flesh,' so the Seventy. There is enough to cure all the diseases of this distempered world. They are a medicine to all their flesh, so the word is; that is, to all their corruptions, for they are called flesh; to all their grievances, which are as thorns in the flesh: there is in the word of God a proper remedy for all our spiritual maladies.

Secondly. We must keep a watchful eye and a strict hand upon all the motions of our inward man, ver. 23. Here is, 1. A great duty required by the laws of wisdom; and, in order to our getting and preserving wisdom, "keep thy heart with all diligence." God, that gave us these souls, gave us a strict charge with them; Man, woman, "keep thy heart;" "take heed to thy spirit," *Deu.* iv. 9. We must maintain a holy jealousy of ourselves, and set a strict guard accordingly upon all the avenues of the soul; keep our hearts from doing hurt and getting hurt; from being defiled by sin, and disturbed by trouble; keep them as our jewel, as our vineyard; keep conscience void of offence. Keep out bad thoughts; keep up good thoughts; keep the affections upon right objects and in due bounds. Keep them with all keepings, (so the

word is.) There are many ways of keeping things,—by care, by strength, by calling in help, and we must use them all in keeping our hearts; and all little enough, so deceitful are they, *Jer.* xvii. 9. Or, above all keepings; we must keep our hearts with more care and diligence than we keep any thing else. We must keep our eyes, *Job* xxxi. 1; keep our tongues, *Ps.* xxxiv. 13; keep our feet, *Eccl.* v. 1; but, above all, keep our hearts. 2. A good reason given for this care; "Because out of it are the issues of life," that is, out of a heart well kept will flow living issues, good products to the glory of God and the edification of others. Or, in general, all the actions of the life flow from the heart, and therefore keeping that is making the tree good and healing the springs. Our lives will be regular or irregular, comfortable or uncomfortable, according as our hearts are kept or neglected.

Thirdly. We must set a watch before the door of our lips, that we offend not with our tongue; ver. 24, "Put away from thee a froward mouth and perverse lips." Our hearts being naturally corrupt, out of them a deal of corrupt communication is apt to come, and therefore we must conceive a great dread and detestation of all manner of evil words, cursing, swearing, lying, slandering, brawling, filthiness, and foolish talking, all which come from a froward mouth and perverse lips, that will not be governed either by reason or religion, but contradict both, and which are as unsightly and ill-favoured before God, as a crooked distorted mouth, drawn awry, is before men. All manner of tongue-sins we must, by constant watchfulness and stedfast resolution, put from us, put far from us, abstaining from all words that have an appearance of evil, and fearing to learn any such words.

Fourthly. We must make a covenant with our eyes; let them look right on and straight before thee, ver. 25. Let the eye be fixed and not wandering; let it not rove after every thing that presents itself, for then it will be diverted from good and ensnared in evil. Turn it from beholding vanity; let thine eye be single, and not divided; let thine intentions be sincere and uniform, and look not asquint at any by-end. We must keep our eye upon our Master, and be careful to approve ourselves to him; keep our eye upon our rule, and conform to that; keep our eye upon our mark, the prize of the high calling, and direct all towards that. *Oculum in metam,*—'The eye upon the goal.'

Fifthly. We must act considerately in all we do; ver. 26, "Ponder the paths of thy feet." Weigh it, (so the word is;) put the word of God in one scale, and what thou hast done or art about to do in the other, and see how they agree; be nice and critical in examining whether thy way be good before the Lord, and whether it will end well. We must consider our past ways, and examine what we have done, and our present ways, what we are doing, whither we are going. "See that ye walk circumspectly." It concerns us to consider what are the duties and what the difficulties, what are the advantages and what the dangers, of our way, that we may act accordingly. Do nothing rashly.

Sixthly. We must act with steadiness, and caution, and consistency; "Let all thy ways be established," ver. 6, and be not unstable in them, as the double-minded man is; halt not between two, but go on in an even uniform course of obedience; "Turn not to the right hand nor to the left," for there are errors on both hands, and Satan gains his point, if he prevail to draw us aside either way. Be very careful to "remove thy foot from evil," that is, take heed of extremes, for in them there is evil, and "let thine eyes look right on," that thou mayest keep the golden mean. Those that would approve themselves wise must always be watchful.

CHAPTER V.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of *ch.* ii. To write the same things in other words ought not to be grievous, for it is safe, *Phil.* iii. 1. Here is, I. An exhortation to get acquaintance with, and submit to, the laws of wisdom in general, ver. 1, 2. II. A particular caution against the sin of whoredom, ver. 3—14. III. Remedies prescribed against that sin: 1. Conjugal love, ver. 15—20; 2. A regard to God's omniscience, ver. 21; 3. A dread of the miserable end of wicked people, ver. 22, 23. And all little enough to arm young people against those fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

MY son, attend unto my wisdom,
And bow thine ear to my understanding:
2 That thou mayest regard discretion,
And *that* thy lips may keep knowledge.
3 For the lips of a strange woman drop *as* an honeycomb,
And her mouth *is* smoother than oil:
4 But her end is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a twoedged sword.
5 Her feet go down to death;
Her steps take hold on hell.
6 Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life,
Her ways are moveable, *that* thou canst not know *them.*
7 Hear me now therefore, O ye children,
And depart not from the words of my mouth.
8 Remove thy way far from her,
And come not nigh the door of her house:
9 Lest thou give thine honour unto others,
And thy years unto the cruel:
10 Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth;
And thy labours *be* in the house of a stranger;
11 And thou mourn at the last,
When thy flesh and thy body are consumed,
12 And say, How have I hated instruction,
And my heart despised reproof;
13 And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers,
Nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!
14 I was almost in all evil
In the midst of the congregation and assembly.

Here we have,

First. A solemn preface to introduce the caution which follows, ver. 1, 2. Solomon here addresseth himself to his son, that is, to all young men, as unto his children, whom he has an affection for, and some influence upon. In God's name he demands attention, for he writes by Divine inspiration, and is a prophet, though he begins not with, Thus saith the Lord. Attend, and bow thine ear, not only hear what is said, and read what is written, but apply thy mind to it, and consider it diligently. To gain attention he urgeth, 1. The excellency of his discourse; It is my wisdom, it is my understanding. If I undertake to teach thee wisdom, I cannot prescribe any thing to be more properly called so. Moral philosophy is my philosophy, and that which is to be learned in my school. 2. The usefulness of it; Attend to what I say, 1st. That thou mayest act wisely; "that thou mayest regard discretion;" Solomon's lectures are not designed to fill our heads with notions, with matters of nice speculation, or doubtful disputation, but to guide us in the government of ourselves, that we may act prudently, so as becomes us, and so as will be for our true interest. 2nd. That thou mayest speak wisely; that "thy lips may keep knowledge," and thou mayest have it ready at thy tongue's end, (as we say,) for the benefit of those with whom thou dost converse. The priest's lips are said to keep knowledge, *Mal.* ii. 7, but they that are ready and mighty in the Scriptures, may not only in their devotions, but in their discourses, be spiritual priests.

Secondly. The caution itself, and that is to abstain from fleshly lusts, from adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness. Some apply this figuratively, and by the adulterous woman here understand idolatry, false doctrine, which tends to debauch men's minds and manners; or the sensual appetite, to which it may as fitly as any thing be applied. But the primary scope of it is plainly to warn us against seventh commandment sins, which youth is so prone to, temptations to which are so violent, examples of which are so many, and which, where admitted, are so destructive to all the seeds of virtue in the soul, that it is not strange Solomon's cautions against it are so very pressing, and so often repeated. Solomon here, as a faithful watchman, gives fair warning to all, as they tender their lives and comforts, to dread this sin, for it will certainly be their ruin. Two things we are here warned to take heed of:

1. That we do not listen to the charms of this sin. It is true, "the lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb," ver. 3. The pleasures of fleshly lusts are very tempting, like the wine that "gives its colour in the cup, and moves itself aright;" its mouth, the kisses of its mouth, the words of its mouth, are smoother than oil, that the poisonous pill may go down glib, and there may be no suspicion of harm in it. But consider, 1st. How fatal the consequences will be; what fruit the sinner will have of his honey and oil, when the end will be. *First.* The terrors of conscience; it is bitter as wormwood, ver. 4, what was luscious in the mouth rises in the stomach and sours there; it cuts in the reflection like a two-edged sword; take it which way you will it wounds. Solomon could speak by experience, *Eccl.* vii. 26. *Secondly.* The torments of hell. If some that have been guilty of this sin have repented and been saved, yet the direct tendency of the sin is to destruction of body and soul; the feet of it go down to death; nay, they take hold on hell, to pull it to the sinner, as if the damnation slumbered too long, ver. 5. Those that are entangled in this sin, there is but a step between them and hell, and they are ready to drop into it. 2nd. Consider how false the charms are. The adulteress flatters and speaks fair; her words are honey and oil, but she will deceive those that hearken to her; "her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them;" she often changeth her disguise, and puts on a great variety of false colours, because, if she be rightly known, she is certainly hated. Proteus-like she puts on many shapes, that she may keep in with those whom she has a design upon. And what doth she aim at with all this art and management? nothing but to keep them from pondering the path of life, for she knows if they once come to do that she shall certainly lose them. Those are ignorant of Satan's devices, who do not understand that the great thing he drives at in all his temptations, is, *First.* To keep them from choosing the path of life; to prevent them from being religious, and from going to heaven, that, being himself shut out from happiness, he may keep them out from it. *Secondly.* In order hereunto to keep them from pondering the path of life, from considering how reasonable it is that they should walk in that path, and how much it will be for their advantage. Be it observed to the honour of religion, that it certainly gains its point with all those that will but allow themselves the liberty of a serious thought, and will weigh things impartially in an even balance; and that the devil has no way of securing men in his interests but by diverting them with continual amusements of one kind or other, from the calm and sober consideration of the things that belong to their peace. And uncleanness is a sin that doth as much as any thing blind the understanding, sear the conscience, and keep the people from pondering the path of life. Whoredom takes away the heart, *Hos.* iv. 11.

2. That we do not approach the borders of this sin, ver. 7, 8. This caution is introduced with a solemn preface, "Hear me now, therefore, O ye children;" whoever you are that read or hear these lines, take notice of what I say, and mix faith with it; treasure it up, and "depart not from the words of my mouth," as those will do that hearken to the words of the strange woman. Do not only receive what I say for the present, but cleave to it, and let it be ready to thee, and of force with thee, when thou art most violently assaulted by the temptation. The caution itself is very pressing; "Remove thy way far from her;" if thy way should happen to lie near her, and thou shouldest have a fair pretence of being led by business within the reach of her charms, yet change thy way, and alter the course of it, rather than expose thyself to danger. "Come not nigh the door of her house;" go on the other side the street; nay, go through some other street, though it be about. This intimates, 1st. That we ought to have a very great dread and detestation of the sin; we must fear it as we would a place infected with the plague; we must loathe it as stinking carrion, that we will not come within the smell of. Then we are likely to preserve our purity, when we conceive a rooted antipathy to all fleshly lusts. 2nd. That we ought industriously to avoid every thing that may be an occasion of this sin, or a step towards it. They that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm's way. Such tinder there is in the corrupt nature that it is madness, upon any pretence whatsoever, to come near the sparks. If we thrust ourselves into temptation, we mocked God when we prayed, "Lead us not into temptation." 3rd. That we ought to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, and not to be so confident of the strength of our own resolutions, as to venture upon the brink of sin, with a promise to ourselves that hitherto we will come, and no farther. 4th. That whatever is become a snare to us, and an occasion of sin, though it be as a right eye and a right hand, we must pluck it out, cut it off, and cast it from us; must part with that which is dearest to us, rather than hazard our own souls. This is our Saviour's command, *Mat.* v. 28—30.

Thirdly. The arguments which Solomon here useth to enforce this caution are taken from the same topic with those before, the many mischiefs which attend this sin.

1. It blasts the reputation; "Thou wilt give thine honour unto others,"

ver. 9; that is, thou wilt lose it thyself; thou wilt put into the hand of each of thy neighbours a stone to throw at thee, for they will all with good reason cry shame on thee, will despise thee, and trample on thee as a foolish man. Whoredom is a sin that makes men contemptible and base, and no man of sense or virtue will care to keep company with one that keeps company with harlots.

2. It wastes the time, gives the years, the years of youth, the flower of men's time, unto the cruel; that base lust of thine which, with the utmost cruelty, wars against the soul; that base harlot that pretends an affection for thee, but really hunts for the precious life. Those years that should be given to the honour of a gracious God are spent in the service of a cruel sin.

3. It ruins the estate, ver. 10. Strangers will be filled with thy wealth, which thou art but intrusted with as a steward for thy family; and the fruit of thy labours, which should be provision for thine own house, will be in the house of a stranger, that neither has right to it, nor will ever thank thee for it.

4. It is destructive to the health, and shortens men's days; Thy flesh and thy body will be consumed by it, ver. 11. The lusts of uncleanness not only war against the soul, which the sinner neglects and is in no care about, but they war against the body too, which he is so indulgent of, and is in such care to please and pamper; such deceitful, such foolish, such hurtful lusts are they. Those that give themselves to work uncleanness with greediness, waste their strength, throw themselves into weakness, and many times have their bodies filled with loathsome distempers, by which the number of their months is cut off in the midst, and they fall unpitied sacrifices to a cruel lust.

5. It will fill the mind with horror, if ever conscience be awakened. Though thou art merry now, sporting thyself in thine own deceivings, yet thou wilt certainly "mourn at the last," ver. 11. Thou art all this while making work for repentance, and laying up matter for vexation and torment in the reflection, when the sin is set before thee in its own colours. Sooner or later it will have sorrow; either when the soul is humbled and brought to repentance, or "when the flesh and body is consumed," either by sickness, when conscience flies in the sinner's face, or by the grave; when the body is rotting there, the soul is racking in the torments of hell, where the worm dies not, and, Son, remember, is the constant peal.

Solomon here brings in the convinced sinner reproaching himself, and aggravating his own folly. He will then most bitterly lament it.

1st. That because he hated to be reformed, he hated to be informed, and could not endure either to be taught his duty, ("How have I hated" not only the discipline of being instructed, but the "instruction" itself, though all true and good!) or to be told of his faults, "My heart despised reproof," ver. 12. He cannot but own that those who had the charge of him, parents, ministers, had done their part, they had been his teachers, they had instructed him, had given him good counsel and fair warning, ver. 13; but to his own shame and confusion doth he speak it, and therein justifies God in all the miseries that were brought upon him, he had not taken their counsel, had not obeyed their voice, for indeed he never inclined his ear to those that instructed him, never minded what they said, nor admitted the impressions of it. Note, Those that have had a good education, and do not live up to it, will have a great deal to answer for another day. And those who will not now remember what they were taught to conform themselves to, will be made to remember it as an aggravation of their sin, and consequently of their ruin.

2nd. That by the frequent acts of sin, the habits of it were so rooted and confirmed, that his heart was fully set in him to commit it; ver. 14, "I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly." When he came into the synagogue, or into the courts of the temple, to worship God with other Israelites, his unclean heart was full of wanton thoughts and desires, and his eyes of adultery. The reverence of the place, and company, and work that was a doing, could not restrain him, but he was almost as wicked and vile there as any where. No sin will appear more frightful to an awakened conscience than the profanation of holy things; nor will any aggravation of sin render it more exceeding sinful than the place we are honoured with in the congregation and assembly, and the advantages we enjoy thereby. Zimri and Cozbi avowed their villany in the sight of Moses, and all the congregation, *Num.* xxv. 7: and heart-adultery is as open to God, and must needs be most offensive to him, when we draw nigh to him in religious exercises. 'I was in all evil, in defiance of the magistrates and judges and their assemblies,' so some understand it. Others refer it to the evil of punishment, not to the evil of sin: I was made an example, a spectacle to the world; I was under almost all God's sore judgments in the midst of the congregation of Israel; set up for a mark; "I stood up and cried in the congregation," *Job* xxx. 28. Let that be avoided which will be thus rued at last.

15 Drink waters out of thine own cistern,
And running waters out of thine own well

EASTERN WELLS, OF VARIOUS FORMS.

16 Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad,
And rivers of waters in the streets.
17 Let them be only thine own,
And not strangers' with thee.
18 Let thy fountain be blessed:
And rejoice with the wife of thy youth.
19 *Let her be as* the loving hind and pleasant roe;
Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times;
And be thou ravished always with her love.
20 And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman,
And embrace the bosom of a stranger?
21 For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD,
And he pondereth all his goings.
22 His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself,
And he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.
23 He shall die without instruction;
And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

Solomon, having shewed the great evil that there is in adultery and fornication, and all such lewd and filthy courses, here prescribes remedies against them.

First. Enjoy with satisfaction the comforts of lawful marriage, which was ordained for the prevention of uncleanness, and therefore ought to be made use of in time, lest it should not prove effectual for the cure of that which it might have prevented. Let none complain that God has dealt unkindly with them, in forbidding them those pleasures which they have a natural desire of, for he has graciously provided for the regular gratification of them. Thou mayest not indeed eat of every tree of the garden; but choose thee out one, which thou pleasest, and of that thou mayest freely eat; nature will be content with that, but lust with nothing. And God in thus confining men to one has been so far from putting any hardship upon them that he hath really consulted their true interest; for, as Mr. Herbert observes,

'If God had laid all common, certainly
Man would have been th' encloser.'—*Church Porch.*

Solomon here enlargeth much upon this; not only prescribing it as an antidote, but urging it as an argument against fornication, that the allowed pleasures of marriage, (however wicked wits may ridicule them, who are factors for the unclean spirit,) far transcend all the false forbidden pleasures of whoredom.

1. Let young men marry, marry and not burn. Have a cistern, a well, of thine own, ver. 15; even the wife of thy youth, ver. 18; 'Wholly abstain, or wed.'—*Herbert.* The world is wide, and there are varieties of accomplishments, among which thou mayest please thyself.

2. Let him that is married take delight in his wife, and let him be very fond of her, not only because she is the wife that he himself hath chosen, and he ought to be pleased with his own choice, but because she is the wife that God in his providence appointed for him; and he ought much more to be pleased with the Divine appointment. Pleased with her because she is his own; "Let thy fountain be blessed," ver. 18; that is, think thyself very happy in her, look upon her as a blessed wife, let her have thy blessing, that is, pray daily for her; and then rejoice with her. Those comforts we are likely to have joy of, that are sanctified to us by prayer and the blessing of God. It is not only allowed us but commanded us to be pleasant with our relations; and it particularly becomes yoke-fellows to rejoice together, and in each other. Mutual delight is the bond of mutual fidelity. It is not only taken for granted, that "the bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride," *Isa.* lxii. 5; but given for law, *Eccl.* ix. 9, "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life." Those take not their comforts there where God has appointed, who are jovial and merry with their companions abroad, but sour and morose with their families at home.

3. Let him be fond of his wife, and love her dearly; ver. 19, "Let her be as the loving hind, and pleasant roe," such as great men sometimes kept tame in their houses and played with. Desire no better diversion from severe study and business, than the innocent and pleasant conversation of thine own wife. Let her lie in thy bosom, as the poor man's ewe lamb did in his, 2 *Sam.* xii. 3; and do thou repose thy head in her's, and let that satisfy thee at all times, and seek not pleasure in any other. "Err thou always in her love." If thou wilt suffer thy love to run into an excess, and wilt be doating fond of any body, let it be only of thine own wife, where there is least danger of exceeding. This is "drinking waters," to quench the thirst of thine appetite, "out of thine own cistern, and running waters," which are clear and sweet and wholesome, "out of thine own well," ver. 15; 1 *Cor.* vii. 2, 3.

4. Let him take delight in his children, and look upon them with pleasure, ver. 16, 17. Look upon them as streams from thine own pure fountains, (the Jews are said to come forth out of the waters of Judah, *Isa.* xlviii. 1,) so that they are pieces of thyself, as the streams of the fountain. Keep to thine own wife, and thou shalt have, 1st. A numerous offspring, like rivers of water which run in abundance; and they shall be dispersed abroad, matched into other families, whereas they that commit whoredom shall not increase, *Hos.* iv. 10. 2nd. A peculiar offspring, which shall be only thine own, whereas the children of whoredom, that are fathered upon thee, it is likely are not so, but, for aught thou knowest, are the offspring of strangers, and yet thou must keep them. 3rd. A creditable offspring, which are an honour to thee, and which thou mayest send abroad and appear with in the streets, whereas a spurious brood is thy disgrace, and that which thou art ashamed to own. In this matter virtue has all the pleasure and honour in it; justly therefore is it called wisdom.

5. Let him then scorn the offer of forbidden pleasures, when he is "always ravished with the love" of a faithful virtuous wife; let him consider what an absurdity it will be for him to "be ravished with a strange woman," (ver. 20,) to be in love with a filthy harlot, "and embrace the bosom of a stranger," which, if he had any sense of honour or virtue, he would loathe the thoughts of. Why wilt thou be so sottish, such an enemy to thyself, as to prefer nasty puddle-water, and that poisoned too, and stolen, before pure living waters out of thine own well? Note, If the dictates of reason may be heard, the laws of virtue will be obeyed.

Secondly. See the eye of God always upon thee, and let his fear rule in thine heart, ver. 21. They that live in this sin, promise themselves secrecy; "The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight," *Job* xxiv. 15. But to what purpose, when it cannot be hidden from God; for, 1. He sees it; "the ways of man," all his

motions, all his actions, "are before the eyes of the Lord," all the workings of the heart, and all the out-goings of the life, that which is done never so secretly, and disguised never so artfully. God sees it in a true light, and knows it with all its causes, circumstances, and consequences. He doth not cast an eye upon men's ways now and then; but they are always actually in his view, and under his inspection; and darest thou sin against God in his sight, and do that wickedness under his eye which thou durst not do in the presence of a man like thyself? 2. He will call the sinner to an account for it; for he not only sees, but ponders all his goings, judgeth concerning them, as one that will shortly judge the sinner for them. Every action is weighed, and shall be brought into judgment, *Eccl.* xii. 14; which is a good reason why we should ponder the path of our feet, *ch.* iv. 26; and so judge ourselves that we may not be judged.

Thirdly. Foresee the certain ruin of those that go on still in their trespasses. They that live in this sin promise themselves impunity; but they deceive themselves, their sin will find them out, ver. 22, 23. The apostle gives the sense of these verses in a few words; *Heb.* xiii. 4, "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

1. It is a sin which men hardly shake off the power of. When the sinner is old and weak his lusts are strong and active, in "calling to remembrance the days of his youth," *Eze.* xxiii. 19. Thus his own iniquities having seized the wicked himself by his own consent, and he having voluntarily surrendered himself a captive to them, he is held in the cords of his own sins, and such full possession they have gained of him that he cannot extricate himself, but in the greatness of his folly, (and what greater folly could there be than to yield himself a servant to such cruel taskmasters?) he shall go astray, and wander endlessly. Uncleanness is a sin, which when once men have plunged themselves into, they very hardly and very rarely recover themselves.

2. It is a sin which, if it be not forsaken, men cannot possible escape the punishment of; it will unavoidably be their ruin. As their own iniquities do arrest them in the reproaches of conscience and present rebukes, *Jer.* vii. 19, so their own iniquities shall arrest them, and bind them over to the judgments of God. There needs no prison, no chains, they shall be holden in the cords of their own sins, as the fallen angels, being incurably wicked, are thereby reserved in chains of darkness. The sinner that having been often reproved hardens his neck shall die at length without instruction; he having had general warnings sufficient given him already, he shall have no particular warnings, but he shall die without seeing his danger beforehand, shall die, because he would not receive instruction, but in the greatness of his folly would go astray; and so shall his doom be, he shall never find the way home again. They that are so foolish as to choose the way of sin, it is just with God to leave them to themselves to go on in it till they come to that destruction which it leads to, which is a good reason why we should guard with watchfulness and resolution against the allurements of the sensual appetite.

CHAPTER VI.

In this chapter we have, I. A caution against rash suretiship, ver. 1—5. II. A rebuke to slothfulness, ver. 6—11. III. The character and fate of a malicious mischievous man, ver. 12—15. IV. An account of seven things which God hates, ver. 16—19. V. An exhortation to make the word of God familiar to us, ver. 20—23. VI. A repeated warning of the pernicious consequences of the sin of whoredom, ver. 24—35. And we are here dissuaded from sin very much by arguments borrowed from our secular interests, for it is not only represented as damning in the other world, but as impoverishing in this.

MY son, if thou be surety for thy friend,
If thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger,
2 Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth,
Thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.
3 Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself,
When thou art come into the hand of thy friend;
Go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend.
4 Give not sleep to thine eyes,
Nor slumber to thine eyelids.
5 Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand *of the hunter,*
And as a bird from the hand of the fowler

It is the excellency of the word of God that it teacheth us not only Divine wisdom for another world, but human prudence for this world, that we may order our affairs with discretion; and this is one good rule, to avoid suretiship, because by it poverty and ruin are often brought into families, which take away that comfort in relations which he had recommended in the foregoing chapter.

First. We must look upon suretiship as a snare, and decline it accordingly, ver. 1, 2. It is dangerous enough for a man to be bound for his friend, though it were one whose circumstances he is well acquainted with, and well assured of his sufficiency; but much more to strike the hands with a stranger, to become surety for one whom thou dost not know to be either able or honest. Or the stranger here with whom the hand is stricken is the creditor, the usurer, to whom thou art become bound, and yet as to thee he is a stranger, that is, thou owest him nothing, nor hast had any dealings with him. If thou hast rashly entered into such engagements, either wheedled into them, or in hopes to have the same kindness done for thee another time, know that "thou art snared with the words of thy mouth." It was easily done, with a word's speaking; it was but setting thy hand to a paper. A bond is soon sealed and delivered, and a recognizance entered into, but it will not be so easily got clear of; thou art in a snare more than thou art aware of. See how little reason we have to make light of tongue sins. If by a word of our mouth, we may become indebted to men, and lie open to their actions, by the words of our mouth we may become obnoxious to God's justice, and even so may be snared. It is false that words are but wind, they are often snares.

Secondly. If we have been drawn into this snare, it will be our wisdom by all means, with all speed, to get out of it, ver. 3—5. It sleeps for the present, we hear nothing of it, the debt is not demanded; the principal saith, Never fear, we will take care of it. But still the bond is in force, interest is running on; the creditor may come upon thee when he will, and perhaps may be hasty and severe; the principal may prove either knavish or insolvent, and then thou must rob thy wife and children, and ruin thy family to pay that which thou didst neither eat nor drink for; and therefore "deliver thyself," rest not till either the creditor give up the bond or the principal give thee counter security. "When thou art come into the hand of thy friend," and he has advantage against thee, it is no time to threaten, or give ill language, that will provoke and make ill worse, but "humble thyself," beg and pray to be discharged, go down on thy knees to them, and give them all the fair words thou canst; engage thy friends to speak for thee, leave no stone unturned till thou hast agreed with thine adversary, and compromised the matter, so that thy bond may not come against thee or thine. This is a care which may well break thy sleep, and let it do so till thou hast got through it; "give not sleep to thine eyes" till thou hast delivered thyself. Strive and struggle to the utmost, and hasten with all speed, as a roe or a bird delivers herself out of the snare of the fowler or hunter. Delays are dangerous, and feeble efforts will not serve. See what care God in his word has taken to make men good husbands of their estates, and to teach them prudence in the management of them. Godliness has precepts as well as promises relating to the life that now is.

But how are we to understand this? We are not to think it is unlawful in any case to become surety, or bail for another; it may be a piece of justice or charity. He that has friends may see cause in this instance to shew himself friendly, and it may be no piece of imprudence; Paul became bound for Onesimus, *Phile.* 19. We may help a young man into business, that we know to be honest and diligent, and gain him credit by passing our word for him, and so do him a great kindness without any detriment to ourselves. But, 1. It is every man's wisdom to keep out of debt, as much as may be, for it is an encumbrance upon him, entangles him in the world, puts him in danger of doing wrong, or suffering wrong. The borrower is servant to the lender, and makes himself very much a slave to the world; Christians, therefore, that are bought with a price, should not thus without need make themselves the servants of men, 1 *Cor.* vii. 23. 2. It is great folly to entangle ourselves with necessitous people, and to become bound for their debts that are ever and anon taking up money, and lading (as we say) out of one hole into another, for it is ten to one but some time or other it comes upon us. A man ought never to be bound as surety for more than he is both able and willing to pay, and can afford to pay without wronging his family, in case the principal fail, for he ought to look upon it as his own debt; *Ecclus.* viii. 13, "Be not surety above thy power, for if thou be surety thou must take care to pay it." 3. It is a necessary piece of afterwit, if we have foolishly entangled ourselves, to get out of the snare as fast we can; to lose no time, spare no pains, and stick at no submission, to make ourselves safe and easy, and get our affairs into a good posture. It is better humble ourselves for an accommodation, than ruin ourselves by our stiffness and haughtiness. "Make sure thy friend," by getting clear from thine engagements from him; for rash suretiship is as much the bane of friendship as that which is prudent is sometimes the bond of it. 4. Let us take heed lest we any way make ourselves guilty of other men's sins against God, (1 *Tim.* v. 22,) for that is worse, and much more dangerous, than being bound for other men's debts; and if we must be in all this care to get our debts to men forgiven, much more to get our peace made with God; humble thyself to him, make sure Christ thy friend to intercede for thee, pray earnestly that thy sins may be pardoned, and thou mayest be delivered from going down to the pit, and it shall not be in vain; "Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids" till this be done.

6 Go to the ant, thou sluggard;
Consider her ways, and be wise:

NESTS OF THE WHITE ANT AND TERMITE.

7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,
8 Provideth her meat in the summer,
And gathereth her food in the harvest.
9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?
10 *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep:
11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth,
And thy want as an armed man.

Solomon, in these verses, applies himself to the sluggard that loves his ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass, and in a particular manner is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is as sure a way to poverty, though not so short a way, as rash suretiship. He speaks here to the sluggard,

First. By way of instruction, ver. 6—8. He sends him to school, for sluggards

must be schooled. He is loath to take him to school himself; for if the scholar will take no pains, the master must take the more; the sluggard is not willing to come to school to him, dreaming scholars will never love wakeful teachers; and therefore he has found him out another school, as low as he can desire. Observe,

1. The master he is sent to school to: "Go to the ant," to "the bee," to the Scripture. Man is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, and yet is so degenerated, that he may learn wisdom from the meanest creatures, and be shamed by them. When we observe the wonderful operations of the lower creatures, we must not only give glory to the God of nature, who puts those things into them, but receive instruction to ourselves. By considering common things, we may make the things of God more easy and familiar to us, and engrave and fasten them.

2. The qualification of mind that is required in order to the learning of this master: "Consider her ways." The sluggard is so because he doth not consider, and what we know more of any business either by the word or works of God, it is because we set ourselves to consider. Particularly, if we would become wise in religion in general, we must consider their ways, diligently observe what they do, and be ruled by their example. *Psa.* cxix. 59.

3. The great thing we are to be taught. In general, learn wisdom, prudence, and the fear. That is the thing we are to aim at in all our learning, and only to be governed and to be wise, in particular, learn to provide meat in summer; that is, get the present opportunity improved, and put under the present power what you can, and let all pass for nothing, that is, pretending time, treasure up for a convenient time. These providers do labor as it were naturally, and not from the command of laws, but with a natural foresight; they do for the winter, for strong and violent storms may happen, and it is no time then to think of your provisions. We must provide food that will be wholesome, as well as enough, and which we may digest easily. In the progression of the months of the year, provide for the one what of them is fit for both, in time for eternity. In the course of providence and preservation, we must provide for the state of persecution also. We must take pains, and labour for our livelihood, yea, through the sweat of our brows, Gen. iii. 19. Even in summer when the weather is hot, the soil is apt to overgrow with weeds, and the husbandman is busy then to keep them down, and to improve the season of the year for his harvest, we should then be doing good, plowing or sowing or at least, to use a homely phrase, be turning the dung on all, to put it with some to another place. "Walk while ye have the light."

4. The advantages which we have of learning this lesson above what the ant has, plainly will aggravate our sloth and neglect if we improve not these. We have no orders, overseers, and rulers, but profit is of herself to wisdom, and prompts to diligence. The ants have no law to bind them to their duty, but follow the dictates of their own reason, and conveniency, though perhaps there be many parents, masters, magistrates, and teachers, to put us in mind of our duty, to advise us for the best way of it, to quicken us to it, and direct us in it, and to lay us an account about it. The stronger motive to the working out our salvation, the more inexcusable should we be if we neglect it.

Secondly. By way of reproof, see here, In these verses,

1. How unreasonable will the sluggard prove when, being reasoned with about his calling, and to be roused to his employment, what hath he to plead for himself? "Why, here is a little more sleep, a little more slumber!" How long will he continue in this way? Will he never have done? Will he never arise? Shall he sleep all his days? Shall he sleep away his time? Shall he sleep away his life? Is there no remedy? Yes. To rouse him, proper methods in the way of work and duty, in the power of divine grace, will be found as early as Christmas. How long will these words fly from? And will he then be a better husband of it? How long will these words please again, and after which he may sleep, and take his pastime? How long will hands fold to sleep, and hearts to their pastime? How long will hands busy in idleness, and when with them begin to trade with them? How long will these eyes, and feet, and mouth, and tongue, be employed in vanity, as unprofitable as the sluggard's? And when will these eyes be engaged to see what a heart is the ordering of to be one thing, and for other purposes? And when will these feet be employed in the way of God's commandments? And when will these mouths be opened in the way of his and diligence? How often must these things be said to him? "Is not your life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." "Work while it is day." "Arise, why sleepest thou?" Luke xxi. 34. Acts xxii. 16. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. v. 14.

2. He represents this foolish excuse he makes for himself, and shows how ridiculous he makes himself. What, is he roused to be stirring? and begs, as for alms, for three hours more slumber; he is well in his warm bed, and cannot endure the thought of rising, especially of rising to work. But what is he grumbling about, and his master what he will disturb him? "A little more sleep, a little more slumber," and then he will get up and go to his business. But herein he perverts time: that which a slothful temper is unhumored two hours to persuade, let him sweep a while, and slumber another, and still it is in the same case, is for a little more, a little, for a little more. He never thinks he has enough, and yet when he is roused, protends he will rise, and then he will do so much work to get forward by being out of bed a little sooner,—it is day to day; "and they are allowed of all those ways by being reproved of the present negligence. "A little more sleep" proves an everlasting sleep. "Sleep on now and take your rest."

3. He gives him fair warning of the fatal consequences of his slothfulness, ver. 11. *Poverty* and *want* will overtake him, and that suddenly, as an armed man, that will not be denied. If men neglect their affairs, they not only will not prosper, but they will go back. He that loves his pleasure as much as he should, will not have enough to live upon. He that loves his pillow as much as he should, will not have enough to live upon. Sleepy persons often bring themselves to beggary. Drowsiness will clothe a man with rags, and nothing but diligence will keep him from them. Let the sluggard consider this, and be awakened by it, and let all others that are watchful to the calling of God, and the duties of it, take warning by it. Those will be sure to be poor, who are not rich in good works. Those will be sure to want, who are not abundant in the work of the Lord. Those will be sure to be ashamed, who are not diligent in their callings. Those will be sure to be miserable, who are not holy in all manner of conversation. Those will be sure to be undone, who are not saved. Let us therefore, with all speed, flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life. Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Let us be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Let us be diligent in business, serving the Lord. Let us be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Let us be abounding in the work of the Lord, always, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. Let us be watchful unto prayer, and stedfast in the faith, quit ourselves like men, be strong, and do all to the glory of God. Let us be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Let us be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear. Let us be clothed with humility, and resist the devil, and he will flee from us. Let us cast all our care upon him, for he careth for us. Let us commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. Let us be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Let us watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. Let us take unto us

And tie them about thy neck.
22 When thou goest, it shall lead thee;
When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee;
And *when* thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.
23 For the commandment *is* a lamp; and the law *is* light;
And reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life:
24 To keep thee from the evil woman,
From the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman
25 Lust not after her beauty in thine heart;
Neither let her take thee with her eyelids.
26 For by means of a whorish woman *a man is brought* to a piece of bread:
And the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.
27 Can a man take fire in his bosom,
And his clothes not be burned?
28 Can one go upon hot coals,
And his feet not be burned?
29 So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife;
Whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent.
30 *Men* do not despise a thief,
If he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry;
31 But *if* he be found, he shall restore sevenfold;
He shall give all the substance of his house.
32 *But* whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding:
He *that* doeth it destroyeth his own soul.
33 A wound and dishonour shall he get;
And his reproach shall not be wiped away.
34 For jealousy *is* the rage of a man:
Therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.
35 He will not regard any ransom; [gifts.
Neither will he rest content, though thou givest many

Here is, First. A general exhortation faithfully to adhere to the word of God, and to take it for our guide in all our actions.

1. We must look upon the word of God both as a light, ver. 23, and as a law, ver. 20, 23. 1st. By its arguments it is a light, which our understandings must subscribe to; it is a lamp to our eyes for discovery, and so to our feet for direction. The word of God reveals to us truths of eternal certainty, and is built upon the highest reason. Scripture light is the sure light. 2nd. By its authority it is a law which our wills must submit to. As never such a light shone out of the schools of the philosophers, so never such a law issued from the throne of any prince, so well framed, and so binding. It is such a law as is a lamp and a light, for it carries with it the evidence of its own goodness.

2. We must receive it as our father's commandment, and the law of our mother, ver. 20. It is God's commandment and his law; but, 1st. Our parents directed us to it, put it into our hands, trained us up in the knowledge and observance of it; its original and obligation being most sacred. We believe indeed, not for their saying, for we have tried it ourselves, and find it to be of God, but we were beholden to them for recommending it to us, and see all the reason in the world to "continue in the things we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them." 2nd. The cautions, counsels, and commands which our parents gave us, agree with the word of God, and therefore we must hold them fast. Children, when they are grown up, must remember the law of a good mother, as well as the commandment of a good father; *Ecclus.* iii. 2, "The Lord hath given the father honour over the children, and hath confirmed the authority of the mother over the sons."

3. We must retain the word of God, and the good instructions which our parents gave us out of it. 1st. We must never cast them off, never think it a mighty achievement, as some do, to get clear of the restraints of a good education; "Keep thy father's commandment," keep it still, and never forsake it. 2nd. We must never lay them by, no not for a time; ver. 21, "Bind them continually," not only upon thine hand, as Moses had directed, *Deu.* vi. 8, but "upon thine heart." Phylacteries upon the hand were of no value at all, any farther than they occasioned pious thoughts and affections in the heart. There the word must be written, there it must be hid, and laid close to the conscience. "Tie them about thy neck," as an ornament, a bracelet, or gold chain about thy throat, so the word is; let them be a guard upon that pass; tie them about thy throat, that no forbidden fruit may be suffered to go in, nor any evil word suffered to go out through the throat; and thus a great deal of sin would be prevented. Let the word of God be always ready to us, and let us feel the impressions of it, as of that which is bound upon our hearts, and about our necks.

4. We must make use of the word of God, and of the benefit and advantage that is designed us by it. If we bind it continually upon our hearts, 1st. It will be our guide, and we must follow the conduct of it. "When thou goest, it shall lead thee," ver. 22; it shall lead thee into, and lead thee in, the good and right way; shall lead thee from, and lead thee out of, every sinful dangerous path. It will say unto thee, when thou art ready to turn aside, This is the way, walk in it. It will be that to thee that the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness; be led by that, let it be thy rule, and then thou shalt be led by the Spirit; he will be thy monitor and support. 2nd. It will be our guard, and we must put ourselves under the protection of it; "When thou sleepest," and liest exposed to the malignant powers of darkness, "it shall keep thee;" thou shalt be safe, and shalt think thyself so. If we govern ourselves by the precepts of the word all day, and make conscience of the duty God has commanded to us, we may shelter ourselves under the promises of the word at night, and take the comfort of the deliverances God doth and will command for us. 3rd. It will be our companion, and we must converse with it; When thou awakest in the night, and knowest not how to pass away thy waking minutes, if thou pleasest it shall talk with thee, and entertain thee, with pleasant meditations in the night watches. When thou awakest in the morning, and art contriving the work of the day, it shall talk with thee about it, and help thee to contrive for the best, *Ps.* i. 2. The word of God hath something to say to us upon all occasions, if we would but enter into discourse with it; would ask it what it has to say, and give it the hearing. And it would contribute to our close and comfortable walking with God all day, if we would begin with him in the morning, and let his word be the subject of our first thoughts. "When I awake I am still with thee;" we are so if the word be still with us. 4th. It will be our life; for as the law is a lamp and a light for the present, so "the reproofs of instruction are the ways of life." Those reproofs of the word, which not only shew us our faults, but instruct us how to do better, are the way that leads to life, eternal life. Let not faithful reproofs therefore, which have such a direct tendency to make us happy, ever make us uneasy.

Secondly. Here is a particular caution against the sin of uncleanness. When we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the seeds of the spiritual life in the soul, we shall not wonder that the cautions against it are so often repeated, and so largely inculcated.

1. One great kindness God designed men, in giving them his law, was to preserve them from this sin, ver. 24. The reproofs of instruction are therefore the way of life to thee, because they are designed to keep thee from the evil woman that will be certain death to thee, from being enticed by the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman, that pretends to love thee, but intends to ruin thee. Those that will be wrought upon by flattery make themselves a very easy prey to the tempter; and those who would avoid that snare must take well instructed reproofs as great kindnesses, and be thankful to those that will deal faithfully with them, *ch.* xxvii. 5, 6.

2. The greatest kindness we can do ourselves is, to keep at a distance from this sin, and to look upon it with the utmost dread and detestation; ver. 25, "Lust not after her beauty," no, not in thy heart; for if thou dost, thou hast there already committed adultery with her. Talk not of the charms in her face, neither be thou smitten with her amorous glances; they are all snares and nets, "let her not take thee with her eyelids." Her looks are arrows and fiery darts; they wound, they kill, in another sense than what lovers mean; they call it a pleasing captivity, but it is a destroying one; it is worse than Egyptian slavery.

3. Divers arguments Solomon here urgeth to enforce this caution against the sin of whoredom.

1st. It is a sin that impoverisheth men, wastes their estates, and reduceth them to beggary; ver. 26, "By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread." Many a man has been so, who has purchased the ruin of his body and soul at the expence of his wealth. The prodigal son spent his living on harlots, so that he brought himself to be fellow-commoner with the swine. And that poverty must needs lie heavy which men bring themselves into by their own folly, *Job* xxxi. 12.

2nd. It threatens death; it kills men. "The adulteress will hunt for the precious life," perhaps designedly, as Delilah, for Samson's; at least, eventually, the sin strikes at the life. Adultery was punished by the law of Moses as a capital crime; "The adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." Every one knew this; those, therefore, who for the gratifying of a base lust would lay themselves open to the law, could be reckoned no better than self-murderers.

3rd. It brings guilt upon the conscience, and debaucheth that. He that toucheth his neighbour's wife, with any immodest touch, he cannot be innocent. *First.* He is in imminent danger of adultery, as he that takes fire in his bosom, or goes upon hot coals, is in danger of being burnt. The way of this sin is down hill, and those that venture upon the temptations to it hardly escape the sin itself. The fly fools away her life by playing the wanton with the flames. It is a deep pit, which it is madness to venture upon the brink of. He that keeps company with those of ill-fame, that goes in with them, and toucheth them, cannot long preserve his innocency; he thrusts himself into temptation, and so throws himself out of God's protection. *Secondly.* He that commits adultery is in the high-road to destruction. The bold presumptuous sinner saith, I may venture upon the sin, and yet escape the punishment; I shall have peace, though I go on. He had as good say, I will take fire into my bosom, and not burn my clothes, or I will go upon hot coals, and not burn my feet. "He that goes in to his neighbour's wife," however he holds himself, God will not hold him guiltless. The fire of lust kindles the fire of hell.

4th. It ruins the reputation, and entails perpetual infamy upon that. It is a much more scandalous sin than stealing is, ver. 30—33. Perhaps it is not so in the account of men, at least not in our day. A thief is sent to the stocks, to the gaol, to Bridewell, to the gallows, while the vile adulterer goes unpunished, nay, and with many, unblemished; he dares boast of his villanies, and they are made but a jest of. But, in the account of God and his law, adultery was much the more enormous crime; and if God is the fountain of honour, his word must be the standard of it. *First.* As for the sin of stealing, if a man were brought to it by extreme necessity,—if he stole meat for the satisfying of his soul when he was hungry,—though that will not excuse him from guilt, yet it is such an extenuation of his crime, that men do not despise him, do not expose him to ignominy, but pity him. Hunger will break through stone-walls, and blame will be laid upon those that brought him to poverty, or that did not relieve him. Nay, though he have not that to say in his excuse, if he be found stealing, and the evidence be never so plain upon him, yet he shall only make restitution sevenfold. The law of Moses appointed that he that stole a sheep should restore fourfold, an ox fivefold, *Ex.* xxii. 1. Accordingly David adjudged, 2 *Sam.* xii. 6. But we may suppose in these cases, concerning which the law had not made provision, the judges afterwards settled the penalties in proportion to the crimes, according to the equity of the law. Now if he that stole an ox out of a man's field must restore fivefold, it was reasonable he that stole a man's goods out of his house should restore sevenfold; for there was no law to put him to death, as is with us for burglary, and robbery on the highway. And of this worst kind of theft Solomon here speaks: the greatest punishment was, that a man might be forced to give all the substance of his house to satisfy the law, and his blood was not attainted. But, *Secondly.* Committing adultery is a more heinous crime, (Job calls it so,) and an iniquity to be punished by the judge, *Job* xxxi. 11. When Nathan would convict David of the evil of his adultery, he did it by a parable concerning the most aggravated theft, which in David's judgment deserved to be punished with death, 2 *Sam.* xii. 5, and then shewed him that his sin was more exceeding sinful than that. *1st.* It is a greater reproach to a man's reason, for he cannot excuse it as a thief may, by saying it was to satisfy his hunger, but must own it was to gratify a brutish lust, that would break the hedge of God's law, not for want, but for wantonness. Therefore, "whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacks understanding," and deserves to be stigmatised as an arrant fool. *2nd.* It is more severely punished by the law of God. A thief suffered only

a pecuniary mulct, but the adulterer suffered death. The thief steals to satisfy his soul, but the adulterer destroys his own soul, and falls an unpitied sacrifice to the justice both of God and man. Sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself. This may be applied to the spiritual and eternal death, which are the consequences of sin. He that doth it wounds his conscience, corrupts his rational power, extinguisheth all the sparks of the spiritual life, and exposeth himself to the wrath of God for ever, and thus destroys his own soul. *3rd.* The infamy of it is indelible, ver. 33. It will be a wound to his good name, a dishonour to his family; and, though the guilt of it may be done away by repentance, the reproach of it never will, but will stick to his memory when he is gone. David's sin in the matter of Uriah was not only a perpetual blemish upon his own character, but gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme his name too.

5th. It exposeth the adulterer to the rage of the jealous husband, whose honour he puts such an affront upon, ver. 34, 35. He that toucheth his neighbour's wife, and is familiar with her, gives him occasion for jealousy; much more he that debaucheth her, which, if kept never so secret, might then be discovered by the waters of jealousy, *Num.* v. 12. And when discovered, thou hadst better meet a bear robbed of her whelps than the injured husband, who, in the case of adultery, will be as severe an avenger of his own honour as in the case of manslaughter, of his brother's blood. If thou art not afraid of the wrath of God, yet be afraid of the rage of a man. Such jealousy is, it is strong as death, and cruel as the grave. In the day of vengeance, when the adulterer comes to be tried for his life, the prosecutor will not spare any pains or cost in the prosecution, will not relent towards thee, as he would perhaps towards one that had robbed him. He will not accept of any commutation, any composition; "he will not regard any ransom," though thou offer to bribe him, and give him many gifts to pacify him; he will not rest content with any thing less than the execution of the law: thou must be stoned to death. If a man would give all the substance of his house, it would atone for a theft, ver. 31, but not for adultery; in that case it would utterly be contemned. Stand in awe, therefore, and sin not; expose not thyself to all this misery for a moment's sordid pleasure, which will be bitterness in the end.

CHAPTER VII.

The scope of this chapter is, as of several before, to warn young men against the lusts of the flesh. Solomon remembered of what ill consequence it was to his father, perhaps found himself, and perceived his son, addicted to it, or at least had observed how many hopeful young men among his subjects had been ruined by those lusts, and therefore he thought he could never say enough to dissuade men from them, that "every one may possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness." In this chapter we have, I. A general exhortation to get our minds principled and governed by the word of God as a sovereign antidote against this sin, ver. 1—5. II. A particular representation of the great danger which unwary young men are in of being inveigled into this snare, ver. 6—23. III. A serious caution inferred from thence in the close, to take heed of all approaches towards this sin, ver. 24—27. We should all pray, Lord, lead us not into this temptation.

MY son, keep my words,
And lay up my commandments with thee
2 Keep my commandments, and live;
And my law as the apple of thine eye.
3 Bind them upon thy fingers,
Write them upon the table of thine heart.
4 Say unto wisdom, Thou *art* my sister;
And call understanding *thy* kinswoman:
5 That they may keep thee from the strange woman,
From the stranger *which* flattereth with her words.

These verses are an introduction to his warning against fleshly lusts, much the same with that *ch.* vi. 20, &c., and ends, ver. 5, as that did, ver. 24, "To keep thee from the strange woman." That is it he aims at; only there he had said, "Keep thy father's commandment," here, which comes all to one, "keep my commandments;" for he speaks to us as unto sons. He speaks in God's name; for they are God's commandments that we are to keep, his words, his law. The word of God must be to us,

First. As that which we are most careful of. We must keep it as our treasure; we must lay up God's commandments with us; lay them up safe, that we may not be robbed of them by the wicked one, ver. 1. As our life; "Keep my commandments, and live," ver. 2; not only keep them and you shall live, but keep them as you would your life, as those that cannot live without them. It would be death to a good man to be deprived of the word of God; for by it he lives, and not by bread alone.

Secondly. As that which we are most tender of; Keep "my law, as the apple of thine eye." A little thing offends the eye, and therefore nature has so well guarded it. We pray, with David, that God would keep us as the apple of his eye, *Ps.* xvii. 8, that our lives and comforts may be precious in his sight; and they shall be so, *Zec.* ii. 8, if we be in like manner tender of his law, and afraid of the least violation of it. Those who reproach strict and circumspect walking as needless preciseness, consider not that the law is to be kept as the apple of the eye, for indeed it is the apple of our eye; the law is light, the law in the heart is the eye of the soul.

Thirdly. As that which we are proud of, and would be ever mindful of; ver. 3, "Bind them upon thy fingers;" let them be precious to thee, look upon them as an ornament, as a diamond ring, as the signet on thy right hand. Wear it continually as thy wedding-ring, the badge of thine espousals to God; look upon the word of God as putting an honour upon thee, as an ensign of thy dignity. "Bind them on thy fingers," that they may be constant memorandums to thee of thy duty, that thou mayest have them always in view, as that which is graven upon the palms of thine hands.

Fourthly. As that which we are fond of, and are ever thinking of. "Write them upon the tables of thine heart," as the names of our friends we dearly love we say are written in our hearts. "Let the word of God dwell richly in us," and be written there where it will be always at hand to be read. Where sin was written, (*Jer.* xvii. 1,) let the word of God be written. It is the matter of a promise, *Heb.* viii. 10, "I will write my law in their hearts," which makes the precept practicable and easy.

Fifthly. As that which we are intimately acquainted and conversant with; ver. 4, "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister," whom I dearly love, and take delight in, "and call understanding my kinswoman," to whom I am nearly allied, and for whom I have a pure affection; call her thy friend whom thou courtest. We must make the word of God familiar to us, consult it, and consult its honour, and take a pleasure in conversing with it.

Sixthly. As that which we make use of for our defence and armour, to keep us from the strange woman, from sin, that flattering, but destroying thing, that adulteress; particularly from the sin of uncleanness, ver. 5. Let the word of God confirm our dread of that sin, and our resolutions against it; let it discover to us its fallacies, and suggest to us answers to all its flatteries.

6 For at the window of my house
I looked through my casement,

EASTERN WINDOWS AND LATTICES.

7 And beheld among the simple ones,
I discerned among the youths,
A young man void of understanding,
8 Passing through the street near her corner,
And he went the way to her house,
9 In the twilight, in the evening,
In the black and dark night:
10 And, behold, there met him a woman
With the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart,
11 (She *is* loud and stubborn;
Her feet abide not in her house:
12 Now *is she* without, now in the streets,
And lieth in wait at every corner.)
13 So she caught him, and kissed him,
And with an impudent face said unto him,
14 *I have* peace offerings with me;
This day have I payed my vows.
15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee,
Diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee.
16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry,
With carved *works*, with fine linen of Egypt.
17 I have perfumed my bed
With myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
18 Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning:
Let us solace ourselves with loves.
19 For the goodman *is* not at home,
He is gone a long journey:
20 He hath taken a bag of money with him,
And will come home at the day appointed.
21 With her much fair speech she caused him to yield,
With the flattering of her lips she forced him.
22 He goeth after her straightway,
As an ox goeth to the slaughter,
Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks;
23 Till a dart strike through his liver;
As a bird hasteth to the snare,
And knoweth not that it *is* for his life

Solomon here, to enforce the caution he had given against the sin of whoredom, tells a story of a young man that was ruined to all intents and purposes by the enticements of an adulterous woman. Such a story as this would serve the lewd, profane poets of our age to make a play of; and the harlot with them would be a heroine. Nothing would be so entertaining to the audience, nor give them so much diversion, as her arts of beguiling the young gentleman, and drawing in the country squire. Her conquests would be celebrated as the triumphs of wit and love, and the comedy would conclude very pleasantly, and every young man that saw it acted would covet to be so picked up; thus "fools make a mock at sin." But Solomon here relates it, and all wise and good men read it, as a very melancholy story. The impudence of the adulterous woman is very justly looked upon by all that have any sparks of virtue in them with the highest indignation, and the easiness of the young man with the tenderest compassion; and the story concludes with sad reflections, enough to make all that read and hear it, afraid of the snares of fleshly lusts, and careful to keep at the utmost distance from them. It is supposed to be a parable, or made case, but I doubt it was too true; and, which is worse, that, notwithstanding the warning it gives of the fatal consequences of such wicked courses, it is still too often true, and the agents for hell are still playing the same game, and with like success. Solomon was a magistrate, and as such inspected the manners of his subjects; looked often through his casement, that he might see with his own eyes, and made remarks upon those who little thought his eye was upon them, that he might know the better how to make the sword he bore a terror to evil-doers. But here he writes as a minister, a prophet, who is by office a watchman, to give warning of the approach of the enemies; and, especially, where they lie in ambush, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices, but may know where to double our guard. This Solomon doth here, where we may observe the account he gives,

First. Of the person tempted, and how he laid himself open to the temptation; and therefore must thank himself if it end in his destruction. 1. He was "a young man," ver. 7; fleshly lusts are called youthful lusts, 2 *Tim.* ii. 22. Not to extenuate them as tricks of youth, and therefore excusable, but to aggravate them rather as robbing God of the first and best of our time, and by debauching the mind when it is tender, laying a foundation for an ill life ever after; and to intimate that young people ought in a special manner to fortify their resolutions against this sin. 2. He was "a young man void of understanding," that went abroad into the world not principled, as he ought to have been, with wisdom and the fear of God, and so ventured to sea without ballast, without pilot, cord, or compass; he knew not how to depart from evil, which is the best understanding, *Job* xxviii. 28. Those become an easy prey to Satan who, when they are arrived to the stature of men, have scarce the understanding of children. 3. He kept bad company. He was a young man "among the youths," a silly young man "among the simple ones." If, being conscious of his own weakness, he had associated with those that were elder and wiser than himself, there had been hopes of him. Christ, at twelve years old, conversed with the doctors, to set young people an example of this; but, if those that are simple choose such for their companions as are like themselves, simple they will still be, and hardened in their simplicity. 4. He was sauntering, and had nothing to do, but passed through the streets, as one that knew not how to dispose of himself. One of the sins of filthy Sodom was abundance of idleness, *Eze.* xvi. 49. He went in a starched, stately manner, so (they say) the word signifies, he appeared to be a nice, formal fop; the top of whose accomplishments was to dress well, and walk with a good air; fit game for that bird of prey to fly at. 5. He was a nightwalker, that hated and scorned the business that is to be done by daylight, from which the evening calls men in to their repose; and having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, begins to move "in the twilight, in the evening," ver. 9. And he chooseth "the black and dark night" as fittest for his purpose; not the moonlight nights, when he might be discovered. 6. He steered his course towards the house of one that he thought would entertain him, and that he might be merry with; "he went near her corner, the way to her house," ver. 8; contrary to Solomon's advice, *ch.* v. 4, "Come not nigh the door of her house." Perhaps he did not know it was the way to an ill house, but however it was a way that he had no business in; and when we have nothing to do, the devil will quickly find us something to do. We must take heed, not only of idle days, but of idle evenings, lest they prove inlets into temptation.

Secondly. Of the person tempting; not a common prostitute, for she was a married wife, ver. 19; and, for aught appears, lived in reputation among her neighbours, not suspected of any such wickedness; and yet in the twilight of the evening, when her husband was abroad, abominably impudent. She is here described, 1. By her dress; she had "the attire of a harlot," ver. 10. Gaudy and flaunting to set her off as a beauty; perhaps she was painted as Jezebel, and went with her neck and breasts bare, loose, and *en deshabille*. The purity of the heart will shew itself in the modesty of the dress, which becomes women professing godliness. 2. By her craft and management. She is "subtle of heart;" mistress of all the arts of wheedling, and knowing how by all her caresses to serve her own base purposes. 3. By her temper and carriage. "She is loud and stubborn," talkative and self-willed, noisy and troublesome, wilful and headstrong; all tongue, and that will have her saying, right or wrong, impatient of check and control, and cannot bear to be counselled, much less reproved, by husband or parents, ministers or friends; she is a daughter of Belial, that will endure no yoke. 4. By her place. Not her own house, she hates the confinement and employment of that, her feet abide not there any longer than needs must. She is all for gadding abroad, changing place and company; now is she without in the country, under pretence of taking the air, now in the streets of the city, under pretence of seeing how the market goes; she is here, and there, and everywhere but where she should be; she lies in wait at every corner to pick up such as she can make a prey of. Those to whom home is a prison virtue is a penance.

Thirdly. Of the temptation itself, and the management of it. She met the young spark; perhaps she knew him, however, she knew by his fashions he was such a one as she wished for, so she caught him about the neck and kissed him, contrary to all the rules of modesty, ver. 13; and waited not for his compliments or courtship, but with an impudent face invited him not only to her house, but to her bed.

1. She courted him to come sup with her; ver. 14, 15, "I have peace offerings with me." Hereby she gives him to understand, 1st. Her prosperity; that she was compassed about with so many blessings, that she had occasion to offer peace offerings, in token of joy and thankfulness; she was aforehand in the world, so that he needed not fear having his pocket picked. 2nd. Her profession of piety. She had been to-day at the temple, and was as well respected there as any that worshipped in the courts of the Lord; she had paid her vows, and as she thought made even with God Almighty, and therefore might venture upon a new score of sins. Note, The external performances of religion, if they do not harden men against sin, harden them in it; and embolden carnal hearts to venture upon it, in hopes that, when they come to count and discount with God, he will be found as much in debt to them for their peace offerings and their vows as they to him for their sins. But it is sad that a show of piety should become the shelter of iniquity, which really doubles the shame of it, and makes it more exceedingly sinful; and that men should baffle their consciences with those very things that should startle them. The Pharisees made long prayers, that they might the more plausibly carry on their covetous and mischievous designs. 3rd. Her present plenty of good provisions The greatest part of the flesh of the peace offerings was by the law returned back to the offerers to feast upon with their friends, which (if they were peace offerings of thanksgiving) was to be all eaten the same day, and none of it left until the morning, *Lev.* vii. 15. This law of charity and generosity is abused to be a colour for gluttony and excess; Come, saith she, come home with me, for I have good cheer enough, and only want good company to help me off with it. It was pity the peace offerings should thus become in a bad sense sin offerings; and that what was designed for the honour of God should become the food and fuel of a base lust.

But this is not all; to strengthen the temptation, *First.* She pretends to have a mighty great affection for him above any man; "Therefore," because I have a good supper upon the table, "I came forth to meet thee;" for no friend in the world shall be so welcome to it as thou shalt, ver. 15. Thou art he whom I came on purpose to seek, to seek diligently; came myself, and would not send a servant. Sure he cannot deny her his company, when she put such a value upon it, and would take all this pains to obtain the favour of it. Sinners take pains to do mischief, and are as the roaring lion himself; they go about seeking to devour, and yet pretend they are seeking to oblige. *Secondly.* She would have it thought that Providence itself countenanced her choice of him for her companion; for how quickly had she found him whom she sought!

2. She courted him to lie with her. They will sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play, to play the wanton, and there is a bed ready for them, where he shall find that which will be in all respects agreeable to him. To please his eye, it is decked with coverings of tapestry, and carved works; exquisitely fine, he never saw the like. To please his touch, the sheets are not of homespun cloth, they are far-fetched and dear-bought, they are of fine linen of Egypt, ver. 16. To gratify his smell, it is perfumed with the sweetest scents, ver. 17. "Come," therefore, and "let us take our fill of love," ver. 18. Of love doth she say? of lust she means, brutish lust; but it is pity the name of love should be thus abused. True love is from heaven; this is from hell. How can they pretend to solace themselves, and love one another, who are really ruining themselves and one another?

3. She anticipates the objection which he might make of the danger of it. Is she not another man's wife, and what if her husband should catch them in adultery, in the very act? he will make them pay dear for their sport, and where will the solace of their love be then? Never fear, saith she, "the goodman is not at home," ver. 19; she doth not call him her husband, for she forsakes the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God; but the goodman of the house, whom I am weary of. Thus Potiphar's wife, when she spake of her husband, would not call him so, but "he," *Gen.* xxxix. 14. It is, therefore, with good reason taken notice of to Sarah's praise, that she spake respectfully of her husband, calling him lord. She pleaseth herself with this that he is not at home; and therefore she is melancholy if she have not some company, and therefore, whatever company she has she may be free with them, for she is from under his eye, and he shall never know. But will he not return quickly? No; "he is gone a long journey," and cannot return on a sudden. He appointed the day of his return, and he never useth to come home sooner than he saith he will. "He hath taken a bag of money with him;" either, 1st. To trade with, to buy goods with, and he will not return till he has laid it all out. It was pity that an honest, industrious man should be thus abused, and advantage taken of his absence, when it is upon business for the good of his family. Or, 2nd. To spend and revel with. Whether justly or not, she insinuates that he was an ill husband, so she would represent him, because she was resolved to be an ill wife, and must have that for an excuse. It is often groundlessly suggested, but is never a sufficient excuse. He follows his pleasures, and wastes his estate abroad, (saith she) and why should not I do the same at home?

Fourthly. Of the success of the temptation. Promising the young man every thing that was pleasant, and impunity in the enjoyment, she gained her point, ver. 21. It should seem the youth, though very simple, had no ill design; else a word, a beck, a wink would have served, and there had not needed all this harangue. But though he did not intend any such thing, nay, had something in his conscience that opposed it, yet "with her much fair speech she caused him to yield." His corruptions at length triumphed over his convictions, and his resolutions were not strong enough to hold out against such artful attacks as these, but "with the flattery of her lips she forced him;" he could not stop his ear against such a charmer, but surrendered himself her captive. Wisdom's maidens that plead her cause, and have reason on their side, and true and Divine pleasures to invite men to, have a deaf ear turned to them, and with all their rhetoric cannot compel men to come in, but such is the dominion of sin in the hearts of men, that its allurements soon prevail by falsehood and flattery.

With what pity doth Solomon here look upon this foolish young man, when he sees him follow the adulterous woman! 1st. He gives him up for gone; alas, he is undone. He goes to the slaughter; for houses of uncleanness are slaughterhouses to precious souls. A dart will presently strike through his liver; going without his breastplate, he shall receive his death's wound, ver. 23. It is his life, his precious life, that is thus irrecoverably thrown away; he is perfectly lost to all good. His conscience is debauched, a door is opened to all other vices; and this will certainly end in his endless damnation. 2nd. That which makes his case the more piteous is, that he is not himself aware of his misery and danger; he goes blindfold, nay, he goes laughing, to his ruin. The ox thinks he is led to the pasture, when he is led to the slaughter; the fool (that is, the drunkard, for of all sinners drunkards are the greatest fools; they wilfully turn themselves into fools,) he is led to the correction of the stocks, and is not sensible of the shame of it, but goes to it as if he were going to a play. The bird that hasteth to the snare, looks only at the bait, and promiseth herself a good bit from that, and considers not that it is for her life. Thus this unthinking, unwary young man dreams of nothing but the pleasures he shall have in the embraces of the harlot, while really he is running headlong upon his ruin. Though Solomon doth not here tell us that he put the law in execution against this base harlot, yet we have no reason to think but that he did; he was himself so affected with the mischief she did, and had such an indignation at it.

24 Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children,
And attend to the words of my mouth.
25 Let not thine heart decline to her ways,
Go not astray in her paths.
26 For she hath cast down many wounded:
Yea, many strong *men* have been slain by her.
27 Her house *is* the way to hell,
Going down to the chambers of death.

We have here the application of the foregoing story; "Hearken to me therefore," and not to such seducers, ver. 24. Give ear to a father, and not to an enemy.

First. Take good counsel when it is given you; ver. 25, "Let not thine heart decline to her ways." Never leave the paths of virtue, though strait, and narrow, and solitary, uphill, for the way of the adulteress, though green and broad, and crowded with company. Do not only keep thy feet from those ways, but let not so much as thy heart incline to them; never harbour a disposition this way, nor think otherwise than with abhorrence of such wicked practices as these. Let reason and conscience, and the fear of God ruling in the heart, check the inclinations of the sensual appetite. If thou goest in her paths, in any of the paths that lead to this sin, thou goest astray, thou art out of the right way, the safe way; therefore, take heed, go not astray, lest thou wander endlessly.

Secondly. Take fair warning when it is given you. 1. Look back and see what mischief this sin has done. The adulteress has been the ruin not of here and there one, but "she hath cast down many wounded." Thousands have been undone now and for ever by this sin; and those not only the weak and simple youths, such as he was of whom he had now spoken, but "many strong men have been slain by her," ver. 26. Herein perhaps he has an eye especially to Samson, who was slain by this sin, and perhaps to David too, who by this sin entailed a sword upon his house, though so far the Lord took it away, that he himself should not die. These were men not only of great bodily strength, but of eminent wisdom and courage, and yet their fleshly lusts prevailed over them. "Howl fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken;" "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." 2. Look forward with an eye of faith, and see what will be in the end of it; ver. 27, "Her house," though richly decked and furnished, and called a house of pleasure, "is the way to hell," and her chambers are the staircase that "goes down to the chambers of death" and everlasting darkness. The cup of fornication must shortly be exchanged for the cup of trembling; and the flames of lust, if not quenched by repentance and mortification, will burn to the lowest hell. Therefore stand in awe and sin not.

CHAPTER VIII.

The word of God is twofold, and both are wisdom; for a word without wisdom is of little value, and wisdom without a word is of little use. Now, I. Divine revelation is the wisdom and word of God, and that pure religion and undefiled which is built upon it; and of that Solomon here speaks, recommending it to us as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptation, ver. 1—21; God by it instructs, and governs, and blesses the children of men. II. The Redeemer is the eternal Word and wisdom, the Logos; he is the wisdom that speaks to the children of men in the former part of the chapter; all Divine revelation passeth through his hand, and centres in him; but of him as the personal wisdom, the second person in the godhead, in the judgment of many of the ancients, Solomon here speaks, ver. 22—31. And then concludes with a repeated charge to the children of men diligently to attend to the voice of God in his word.

DOTH not wisdom cry?
And understanding put forth her voice?
2 She standeth in the top of high places,
By the way in the places of the paths.
3 She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city,
At the coming in at the doors.
4 Unto you, O men, I call;
And my voice *is* to the sons o man.
5 O ye simple, understand wisdom:
And, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.
6 Hear; for I will speak of excellent things;
And the opening of my lips *shall be* right things.
7 For my mouth shall speak truth;
And wickedness *is* an abomination to my lips.
8 All the words of my mouth *are* in righteousness;
There is nothing froward or perverse in them.
9 They *are* all plain to him that understandeth,
And right to them that find knowledge.
10 Receive my instruction, and not silver;
And knowledge rather than choice gold.
11 For wisdom *is* better than rubies;
And all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

The will of God revealed to us for our salvation is here largely represented to us, as easy to be known and understood, that none may have an excuse for their ignorance or error; and as worthy to be embraced, that none may have an excuse for their carelessness and unbelief.

First. The things revealed are easy to be known, for "they belong to us and to our children," *Deu.* xxix. 29; and we need not soar up to heaven, or dive into the depths, to get the knowledge of them, *Deu.* xxx. 11; for they are published and proclaimed in some measure by the works of the creation, *Ps.* xix. 1; more fully by the consciences of men, and the eternal reasons and rules of good and evil; but most clearly by Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. The precepts of wisdom may easily be known; for

1. They are proclaimed aloud; ver. 1, "Doth not wisdom cry?" Yes, she cries aloud, and doth not spare, *Isa.* lviii. 1; she puts forth her voice, as one in earnest and desirous to be heard. "Jesus stood and cried," *Jno.* vii. 37. The curses and blessings were read with a loud voice by the Levites, *Deu.* xxvii. 14. And men's own hearts sometimes speak aloud to them. There are clamours of conscience, as well as whispers.

2. They are proclaimed from on high, ver. 2. She "stands in the top of high places." It was from the top of mount Sinai that the law was given, and Christ expounded it in a sermon upon the mount. Nay, if we slight Divine revelation, we "turn away from him that speaketh from heaven," a high place indeed, *Heb.* xii. 25. The adulterous woman spoke in secret, the oracles of the heathen muttered, but wisdom speaks openly. Truth seeks no corners, but gladly appeals to the light.

3. They are proclaimed "in the places of concourse," where multitudes are gathered together, the more the better. Jesus spake "in the synagogues and in the temple, whither the Jews always resorted," *Jno.* xviii. 20. Every man that passeth by on the road, of what rank or condition soever, may know what is good, and what the Lord requires of him, if it be not his own fault. There is no speech nor language where wisdom's voice is not heard; her discoveries and directions are given to all promiscuously. "He that has ears to hear let him hear."

4. They are proclaimed there where they are most needed. They are intended for the guide of our way, and therefore are published in the places of the path, where many ways meet, that travellers may be shewed, if they will but ask, which is the right way, just then when they are at a loss; thou shalt then "hear the word behind thee, saying, This is the way," *Isa.* xxx. 21. Foolish man knows not how to go to the city, *Eccl.* x. 15, and therefore wisdom stands ready to direct him, stands at the gates, at the entry of the city, ready to tell him where the seer's house is, 1 *Sam.* ix. 18. Nay, she follows men to their own houses, and cries to them at the coming in at the doors, saying, Peace be to this house; and if the son of peace be there, it shall certainly abide upon it. God's ministers are appointed to testify to people both publicly and from house to house. Their own consciences follow them with admonitions wherever they go, which they cannot be out of the hearing of, while they carry their own heads and hearts about with them, which are a law unto themselves.

5. They are directed to the children of men. We attend to that discourse in which we hear ourselves named, though otherwise we would have neglected it; therefore wisdom speaks to us; "Unto you, O men, I call," ver. 4, not to angels, they need not these instructions; not to devils, they are past them; not to the brute creatures, they are not capable of them; but to you, O men, who are taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven. To you is this law given, to you is the word of this invitation, this exhortation, sent. My voice is to the sons of men that are concerned to receive instruction, and to whom one would think it should be very welcome. It is not to you, O Jews, only, that wisdom cries, or to you, O gentlemen, or you, O scholars, but to you, O men, O sons of men, even the meanest.

6. They are designed to make them wise, ver. 5. They are calculated not only for men that are capable of wisdom, but for sinful men, fallen men, foolish men, that need it, and are undone without it; "O ye simple ones, understand wisdom." Though you are never so simple, wisdom will take you for her scholars, and not only so, but if you will be ruled by her will undertake to give you an understanding heart. When sinners leave their sins, and become truly religious, then the simple understand wisdom.

Secondly. The things revealed are worthy to be known, well worthy of all acceptation. We are concerned to hear, for,

1. They are of inestimable value. They are "excellent things," ver. 6; 'princely things,' so the word is. Though they are level to the capacity of the meanest, yet there is that in them which will be entertainment for the greatest. They are divine and heavenly things, so excellent that, in comparison with them, all other learning is but children's play. Things which relate to an eternal God, an immortal soul, and an everlasting state, must needs be excellent things.

2. They are of incontestable equity, and carry along with them the evidence of their own goodness. They are "right things," ver. 6, all "in righteousness," ver. 8, and "nothing froward or perverse in them." All the dictates and directions of revealed religion are consonant to, and perfective of, the light and law of nature, and there is nothing in it that puts any hardship upon us, that lays us under any undue restraints, unbecoming the dignity and liberty of the human nature, nothing that we have reason to complain of. All God's precepts concerning all things are right.

3. They are of unquestionable truth. Wisdom's doctrines, upon which her laws are founded, are such as we may venture our immortal souls upon. "My mouth shall speak truth," ver. 7, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; for it is a testimony to the world. Every word of God is true; there are not so much as pious frauds in it, nor are we imposed upon in that which is told us for our good. Christ is a faithful Witness, is the truth itself; wickedness, that is, lying, is an abomination to his lips. Note, Lying is wickedness, and we should not only refrain from it, but it should be an abomination to us, and as far from what we say as from what God saith to us. His word to us is Yea and Amen, never then let ours be Yea and Nay.

4. They are wonderfully acceptable and agreeable to those that take them aright, that understand themselves aright, that have not their judgments blinded and biassed by the world and the flesh, that are not under the power of prejudice, that are taught of God, and whose understandings he hath opened, who impartially seek knowledge, take pains for it, and have found it in the inquiries they have hitherto made. To them, 1st. They are all plain, and not hard to be understood. If the book is sealed, it is to those that are willingly ignorant; if our Gospel be hid, it is to them that are lost; but to those who depart from evil, which is understanding, who have that good understanding which they have that do the commandments, to them they are all plain, and there is nothing difficult in them. The way of religion is a highway, and the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein, *Isa.* xxxv. 8. They therefore do a great wrong to the common people, who deny them the use of the Scripture, under pretence that they cannot understand it, whereas it is plain for plain people. 2nd. They are all right, and not hard to be submitted to. Those that discern things that differ, that know good and evil, readily subscribe to the rectitude of all wisdom's dictates, and therefore, without murmuring or disputing, govern themselves by them.

Thirdly. From all this he infers that the right knowledge of those things, such as transforms us into the image of them, is to be preferred before all the wealth of this world; ver. 10, 11, "Receive my instruction, and not silver." Instruction must not only be heard but received. We must bid it welcome, receive the impressions of it, and submit to the command of it, and this rather than choice gold. That is, 1. We must prefer religion before riches, and look upon it that, if we have the knowledge and fear of God in our hearts, we are really more happy and better provided for every condition of life than if we had never so much silver and gold. Wisdom is in itself, and therefore must be in our account, better than rubies. It will bring us in a better price, be to us a better portion; shew it forth, and it will be a better ornament than jewels and precious stones of the greatest value. Whatever we can sit down and wish for of the wealth of this world, if we had it, it were not worthy to be compared with the advantages that attend serious godliness. 2. We must be dead to the wealth of this world, that we may the more closely and earnestly apply ourselves to the business of religion. We must receive instruction as the main matter, and then be indifferent whether we receive silver or no; nay, we must not receive it as our portion and reward, as the rich man in his lifetime received his good things.

12 I wisdom dwell with prudence,
And find out knowledge of witty inventions.
13 The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil:

Pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way,
And the froward mouth, do I hate.
14 Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom:
I *am* understanding; I have strength.
15 By me kings reign,
And princes decree justice.
16 By me princes rule,
And nobles, *even* all the judges of the earth.
17 I love them that love me;
And those that seek me early shall find me
18 Riches and honour *are* with me;
Yea, durable riches and righteousness.
19 My fruit *is* better than gold, yea, than fine gold;
And my revenue than choice silver.
20 I lead in the way of righteousness,
In the midst of the paths of judgment:
21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance;
And I will fill their treasures.

Wisdom here is Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." It is Christ in the word, and Christ in the heart; not only Christ revealed to us, but Christ revealed in us. It is the word of God, the whole compass of Divine revelation; it is God the word, in whom all Divine revelation centres; it is the soul formed by the word, it is Christ formed in the soul; it is religion in the purity and power of it. Glorious things are here spoken of this excellent person, this excellent thing.

First. Divine wisdom gives men good heads; ver. 12, "I wisdom dwell with prudence," not with carnal policy, the wisdom that is from above is contrary to that, 2 *Cor.* i. 12, but with true discretion, which serves for the right ordering of the conversation. That wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way and is in all cases profitable to direct; the wisdom of the serpent, not only to guard from harm, but to guide in doing good. Wisdom dwells with prudence; for prudence is the product of religion, and an ornament to religion. And there are more witty inventions found out with the help of the Scripture, both for the right understanding of God's providences, and for the effectual countermining of Satan's devices, and the doing of good in our generation, than were ever discovered by the learning of the philosophers, or the politics of statesmen. We may apply it to Christ himself; he dwells with prudence, for his whole undertaking is the wisdom of God in a mystery, and in it God abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Christ found out the knowledge of that great invention, and a costly one it was to him, man's salvation by his satisfaction, an admirable expedient. We had found out many inventions for our ruin, he found out one for our recovery. The covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things, that we must conclude he that ordered it dwelt with prudence.

Secondly. It gives men good hearts, ver. 13. True religion, consisting in the fear of the Lord, which is the wisdom before recommended, teacheth men, 1. To hate all sin, as displeasing to God, and destructive to the soul. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil," the evil way; to hate sin as sin, and therefore to hate every false way. Wherever there is an awe of God, there is a dread of sin as an evil, an only evil. 2. Particularly to hate pride and passion, those two common and dangerous sins. Conceitedness of ourselves, pride and arrogancy, are sins which Christ hates, and so do all those which have the Spirit of Christ; every one hates them in others, but we must hate them in ourselves. The froward mouth, that is, peevishness towards others, God hates, because it is such an enemy to the peace of mankind, and therefore we should hate it. Be it spoken to the honour of religion, that, however it is unjustly accused, it is so far from making men conceited and sour, that there is nothing more directly contrary to it than pride and passion, nor which it teaches us more to detest.

Thirdly. It has a great influence upon public affairs, and the well governing of all societies, ver. 14. Christ as God hath strength and wisdom, wisdom and might are his; as Redeemer, he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. To all that are his, he is made of God both strength and wisdom, in him they are laid up for us, that we may both know and do our duty. He is the wonderful Counsellor, and gives that grace which alone is sound wisdom; he is understanding itself, and has strength for all those that strengthen themselves in him. True religion gives men the best counsel in all difficult cases, and helps to make their way plain. Wherever it is, it is understanding. It has strength, it will be all that to us that we need, both for services and sufferings. Where the word of God dwells richly, it makes a man perfect, and furnisheth him throughly for every good word and work. Kings, and princes, and judges, have of all men most need of wisdom and strength, of counsel and courage, for the faithful discharge of the trusts reposed in them, and that they may be blessings to the people over whom they are set. And therefore wisdom saith, "By me kings reign," ver. 15, 16; that is, 1. Civil government is a Divine institution, and those that are intrusted with the administration of it, have their commission from Christ; it is a branch of his kingly office, that by him kings reign; from him, to whom all judgment is committed, their power is derived. They reign by him, and therefore ought to reign for him. 2. Whatever qualifications for government any kings or princes have, they are indebted to the grace of Christ for it; he gives them the spirit of government, and they have nothing, no skill, no principles of justice, but what he endues them with. "A Divine sentence is in the lips of the king;" and they are to their subjects what he makes them. 3. Religion is very much the strength and support of the civil government. It teaches subjects their duty, and so by it kings reign over them the more easily; it teacheth kings their duty, and so by it kings reign as they ought; they decree justice, while they rule in the fear of God. Those rule well whom religion rules.

Fourthly. It will make all those happy, truly happy, that receive and embrace it.

1. They shall be happy in the love of Christ; for he it is that saith, "I love them that love me," ver. 17. They that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, shall be loved of him with a peculiar, distinguishing love; he will love them, and manifest himself to them.

2. They shall be happy in the success of their inquiries after him; "They that seek me early," seek an acquaintance with me, and an interest in me, seek it early, that is, seek it earnestly, seek it first, before any thing else, that begin betimes in the days of their youth to seek him, they shall find what they seek; Christ shall be theirs, and they shall be his. He never said, Seek in vain.

3. They shall be happy in the wealth of the world, or in that which is infinitely better. 1st. They shall have as much riches and honour as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them, ver. 18; they are with Christ, that is, he has them to give, and whether he will see fit to give them to us must be referred to him. Religion sometimes helps to make people rich and great in the world, gains them a reputation, and so increaseth their estate. And the riches which wisdom gives to her favourites have these two advantages; *First.* That they are riches and righteousness; that is, riches honestly got, not by fraud and oppression, but in regular ways, and riches charitably used for alms, are called righteousness. Those that have their wealth from God's blessing on their industry, and that have a heart to do good with it, have riches and righteousness. *Secondly.* That therefore they are durable riches. Wealth gotten by vanity will soon be diminished, but that which is well got will wear well, and will be left to the children's children; and that which is well spent in works of piety and charity is set out to the best interest, and so will be durable; for the friends made by the mammon of unrighteousness, when they fail, will receive us into everlasting habitations, *Lu.* xvi. 9. It will be found after many days, for the days of eternity. 2nd. They shall have that which is infinitely better, if they have not riches and honour in this world; ver. 19, "My fruit is better than gold," and will turn to a better account, will be of more value in less compass; and my revenue better than the choicest silver, will serve a better trade. We may assure ourselves that not only wisdom's products at last, but her incomes in the meantime, not only her fruit, but her revenue, is more valuable than the best, either of the possessions or of the reversions of this world.

4. They shall be happy in the grace of God now; that shall be their guide in the good way, ver. 20. This is that fruit of wisdom which is "better than gold, than fine gold," it "leads in the way of righteousness," shews us that way, and goes before us in it, the way that God would have us walk in, and which will certainly bring us to our desired end. It leads "in the midst of the paths of judgment," and saves us from deviating on either hand. *In medio virtus*,—'Virtue lies in the midst.' Christ by his Spirit guides believers into all truth, and so leads them in the way of righteousness, and they walk after the Spirit.

5. They shall be happy in the glory of God hereafter, ver. 21. Therefore wisdom "leads in the paths of righteousness," not only that she may keep her friends in the way of duty and obedience, but that she may cause them to inherit substance, and may fill their treasures, which cannot be done with the things of this world, nor with any thing less than God and heaven. The happiness of those that love God, and devote themselves to his service, is substantial and satisfactory. 1st. It is substantial, it is substance itself. It is a happiness which will subsist of itself, and stand alone without the accidental supports of outward conveniences. Spiritual and eternal things are the only real and substantial things. Joy in God is substantial joy, solid and well-grounded; the promises are their bonds, Christ is their surety, and both substantial. They "inherit substance;" that is, their inheritance hereafter is substantial, it is a weight of glory, it is substance, *Heb.* x. 34. All their happiness they have as heirs, it is grounded upon their sonship. 2nd. It is satisfying. It will not only fill their hands, but fill their treasures; not only maintain them, but make them rich. The things of this world may fill men's bellies, *Ps.* xvii. 14, but not their treasures, for they cannot in them secure to themselves goods for many years, perhaps they may be deprived of them this night; but let the treasures of the soul be never so capacious, there is enough in God, and Christ, and heaven, to fill them. In wisdom's promises believers have goods laid up, not for days and years, but for eternity. Her fruit, therefore, is better than gold.

22 The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.
23 I was set up from everlasting,
From the beginning, or ever the earth was.
24 When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth;
When *there were* no fountains abounding with water.
25 Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills was I brought forth:
26 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields,
Nor the highest part of the dust of the world.
27 When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there:
When he set a compass upon the face of the depth:
28 When he established the clouds above:
When he strengthened the fountains of the deep:
29 When he gave to the sea his decree,
That the waters should not pass his commandment:
When he appointed the foundations of the earth:
30 Then I was by him, *as* one brought up *with him:*
And I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him;
31 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth;
And my delights *were* with the sons of men.

That it is an intelligent and Divine person that here speaks seems very plain; and that it is not meant of a mere essential property of the Divine nature, for wisdom here has personal properties and actions; and that intelligent Divine person can be no other but the Son of God himself, to whom the principal things here spoken of wisdom are attributed in other Scriptures, and we must explain Scripture by itself. If Solomon himself designed only the praise of wisdom, as it is an attribute of God, by which he made the world and governs it, so to recommend to men the study of that wisdom which belongs to them; yet the Spirit of God, who indited what he wrote, carried him, as David often, to such expressions as could agree to no other but the Son of God, and would lead us into the knowledge of great things concerning him. All Divine revelation is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him;" and here we are told who and what he is, as God, designed in the eternal counsels to be the Mediator between God and man. The best exposition of these verses we have in the first four verses of St. John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the word," &c. Concerning the Son of God, observe here,

First. His personality and distinct subsistence; one with the Father, and of the same essence, and yet a person of himself, whom the Lord possessed, ver. 22; was set up, ver. 23; was brought forth, ver. 24, 25; was by him, ver. 30; for he was the express image of his person, *Heb.* i. 3.

Secondly. His eternity; he was begotten of the Father, for the Lord possessed him, as his own Son, his beloved Son, laid him in his bosom; he was brought forth as the only begotten of the Father, and this before all worlds, which is most largely insisted upon here. The Word was eternal, and had a being before the world, before the beginning of time, and therefore it must follow that it was from eternity. The Lord possessed him in the beginning of his way, that is, of his eternal counsels, for those were before his works; this way indeed had no beginning, for God's purposes in himself are eternal like himself, but God speaks to us in our own language. Wisdom explains herself, ver. 23, "I was set up from everlasting;" the Son of God was in the eternal counsels of God designed and advanced to be the wisdom and power of the Father, light and life, and all in all, both in the creation and in the redemption of the world. That he was brought forth as to his being, and set up as to the Divine counsels concerning his office, before the world was made, is here set forth in a great variety of expressions, much the same with those by which the eternity of God himself is expressed, *Ps.* xc. 2. "Before the mountains were brought forth." 1. Before the earth was, and that was made in the beginning before man was made; therefore, the second Adam had a being before the first, for the first Adam was made of the earth, the second had a being before the earth, and therefore is not of the earth, *Jno.* iii. 31. 2. Before the sea was; ver. 24, "When there were no depths," in which the waters were gathered together, no fountains from which those waters might arise, none of that deep on which the Spirit of God moved for the production of the visible creation, *Gen.* i. 2. 3. "Before the mountains" were; the everlasting mountains, ver. 25. Eliphaz, to convince Job of his inability to judge of the Divine counsels, asks him, *Job* xv. 7, "Wast thou made before the hills?" No, thou was not, but before the hills was the eternal Word brought forth. 4. Before the habitable parts of the world which men cultivate and reap the profits of, ver. 26; the fields in the valleys and plains, to which the mountains are as a wall, which are "the highest part of the dust of the world;" the first part of the dust, (so some,) the atoms which compose the several parts of the world; the chief, or principal part of the dust, (so it may be read, and understood of man,) who was made of the dust of the ground, and is dust, but the principal part of the dust, dust enlivened, dust refined. The eternal Word had a being before man was made, for in him was the life of men.

Thirdly. His agency in making the world. He not only had a being before the world, but he was present, not as a spectator, but as the architect, when the world was made. God puzzled and humbled Job, by asking him, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? who hath laid the measures thereof?" &c., *Job* xxxviii. 4, &c. Wast thou that eternal Word and Wisdom which was the prime manager of that great affair? No, thou art of yesterday. But here the Son of God, referring, as it should seem, to that discourse God had with Job, declares himself to be that which Job could not pretend to be, a witness of and a worker in the creation of the world. "By him God made the worlds," *Heb.* i. 2; *Eph.* iii. 9; *Col.* i. 16. 1. When on the first day of the creation, in the very beginning of time, God bespoke the light, and with a word produced, it this eternal Wisdom was that almighty Word; then "I was there when he prepared the heavens," the fountain of that light, which, whatever it is here, is there substantial. 2. He was no less active when on the second day he stretched out the firmament, the vast expanse, and set that as "a compass upon the face of the depth," ver. 27, surrounded it on all sides with that canopy, that curtain; or it may refer to that exact order and method with which God framed all the parts of the universe, as the workman marks out his work with his line and compasses. The work in nothing varied from the plan of it formed in the eternal mind. 3. He was also employed in the third day's work, when the waters above the heavens were gathered together by the establishing of the clouds above, and those under the heavens, by the strengthening of the fountains of the deep, which send forth those waters, ver. 28, and by the preserving the bounds of the sea, which is the receptacle of those waters, ver. 29. This speaks much the honour of this eternal Wisdom, for by this instance God proves himself a God greatly to be feared, *Jer.* v. 22, that "he hath placed the sand for the bound of the sea," that the dry land might continue to appear above water, fit to be a habitation for man; and thus he hath "appointed the foundations of the earth." How able, how fit is the Son of God to be the Saviour of the world, who was the creator of it!

Fourthly. The infinite complacency which the Father had in him and he in the Father; ver. 30, "I was by him as one brought up with him." As by an eternal generation he was brought forth of the Father, so by an eternal counsel he was brought up with him, which intimates not only the infinite love of the Father to the Son, who is therefore called "the Son of his love," *Col.* i. 13, but the mutual consciousness and good understanding that was between them, concerning the work of man's redemption, which the Son was to undertake, and about which "the counsel of peace was between them both," *Zec.* vi. 13. He was *alumnus patris*,—'the Father's pupil,' as I may say, trained up from eternity for that service, which in time, in the fulness of time, he was to go through with, and is therein taken under the special tuition and protection of the Father: he is my servant, whom I uphold, *Isa.* xlii. 1. He did what he saw the Father do, *Jno.* v. 19, pleased his Father, sought his glory, did according to the commandment he received from his Father, and all this as one brought up with him. He was daily his Father's delight; "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," saith God, *Isa.* xlii. 1; and he also rejoiced always before him. This may be understood either, 1. Of the infinite delight which the persons of the blessed Trinity have in each other, wherein consists much of the happiness of the Divine nature. Or, 2. Of the pleasure which the Father took in the operations of the Son when he made the world. God saw every thing that the Son made, and behold it was very good, it pleased him; and therefore his Son was daily, day by day, during the six days of the creation, upon that account his delight: allude to *Ex.* xxxix. 43. And the Son also did himself rejoice before him in the beauty and harmony of the whole creation, *Ps.* civ. 31. Or, 3. Of the satisfaction they had in each other with reference to the great work of man's redemption; the Father delighted in the Son, as mediator between him and man, was well pleased with what he proposed, *Mat.* iii. 17, and therefore loved him because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep; he put a confidence in him that he would go through his work, and not fail or fly off. The Son also rejoiced always before him, delighted to do his work, *Ps.* xl. 8, stuck close to his undertaking, as one that was well satisfied in it, and when it came to the setting to expressed as much satisfaction in it as ever, saying, Lo, I come, to do as in the volume of the book it is written of me.

Fifthly. The gracious concern he had for mankind, ver. 31. Wisdom rejoiced, not so much in the rich products of the earth, or the treasures hid in the bowels of it, as in the habitable parts of it, for her "delights were with the sons of men," not only in the creation of man,—it is spoken with a peculiar air of pleasure, *Gen.* i. 27, "Let us make man,"—but in the redemption and salvation of man. The Son of God was ordained before the world to that great work, 1 *Pet.* i. 20. A remnant of the sons of men were given him to be brought through his grace to his glory; and those were they in whom his delights were. His church was the habitable part of his earth, made habitable for him, that the Lord God might dwell even among them that had been rebellious, and this he rejoiced in, in the prospect of seeing his seed. Though he foresaw all the difficulties he was to meet with in his work, the services and sufferings he was to go through, yet because it would issue in the glory of his Father and the salvation of those sons of men that were given him, he looked forward upon it with the greatest satisfaction imaginable, in which we have all the encouragement we can desire to come to him, and rely upon him for all the benefits designed us by that glorious undertaking of his.

32 Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children:
For blessed *are they that* keep my ways.
33 Hear instruction, and be wise,
And refuse it not.
34 Blessed *is* the man that heareth me,
Watching daily at my gates,
Waiting at the posts of my doors.
35 For whoso findeth me findeth life,
And shall obtain favour of the LORD.
36 But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul:
All they that hate me love death.

We have here the application of wisdom's discourse; the design and tendency of it is to bring us all into an entire subjection to the laws of religion, to make us wise and good, not to fill our heads with speculations, or our tongues with disputes, but to rectify what is amiss in our hearts and lives. In order to this, here is,

First. An exhortation to hear and obey the voice of wisdom; to attend and comply with the good instructions that the word of God gives us, and in them to discern the voice of Christ, as the sheep know the shepherd's voice.

1. We must be diligent hearers of the word; for how can we believe in him of whom we have not heard? "Hearken unto me, O ye children," ver. 32; read the word written, sit under the word preached, bless God for both, and hear him in both speaking to you. Let children in age hearken, for it is their learning age, and what they hearken to then it is likely they will be so seasoned by as to be governed by all their days. Let children in relation hearken to God as their Father, to wisdom as their mother, to whom they ought to be in subjection and live. Let wisdom's children justify wisdom by hearkening to her, and shew themselves to be indeed her children. We must hear wisdom's words, 1st. Submissively, and with a willing heart; ver. 33, "Hear instruction, and refuse it not," either as that which you need not, or as that which you like not; it is offered you as a kindness, and it is at your peril if you refuse it; they that reject the counsel of God reject it against themselves, *Lu.* vii. 30; refuse it not now lest you have not another offer. 2nd. Constantly, and with an attentive ear. We must hear wisdom so as to watch daily at her gates, as beggars to receive an alms, as clients and patients to receive advice, and to wait as servants with humility, and patience, and ready observance at the posts of her doors. See here what a good house wisdom keeps, for every day is dole-day; what a good school, for every day is lecture-day. While we have God's works before our eyes, and his word in our hand, we may be every day hearing wisdom and learning instruction from her. See here what a dutiful and diligent attendance is required of all Christ's disciples; they must watch at his gates. *First.* We must lay hold on all opportunities of getting knowledge and grace, and must get into and keep in a constant settled course of communion with God. *Secondly.* We must be very humble in our attendance on Divine instructions, and be glad of any place, even the meanest, so we may but be within hearing of them, as David, who would gladly be a doorkeeper in the house of God. *Thirdly.* We must raise our expectations of these instructions, and hearken to them with care, and patience, and perseverance; must watch and wait, as Christ's hearers that hanged on him to hear him, as the word in the original is, *Lu.* xix. 48; and *ch.* xxi. 38, "Came early in the morning to hear him."

2. We must be conscientious doers of the work, for we are blessed only in our deed. It is not enough to hearken unto wisdom's words, but we must keep her ways, ver. 32, that is, do every thing that she prescribes; keep within the hedges of her ways, and not transgress them; keep in the tracks of her ways, proceed and persevere in them; "Hear instruction, and be wise;" let it be a means to make you wise in ordering your conversation. What we know is known in vain if it do not make us wise, ver. 33.

Secondly. An assurance of happiness to all those that do hearken to wisdom. They are blessed, ver. 32; and again, ver. 34. They are blessed that watch and wait at wisdom's gates, even their attendance there is their happiness; it is the best place they can be in; they are blessed that wait there, for they shall not be put to wait long; let them continue to knock awhile, and it shall be opened to them. They are seeking wisdom, and they shall find what they seek. But will it make them amends if they do find it? Yes; ver. 35, "Whoso findeth me findeth life;" that is, all happiness, all that good which he needs or can desire. He finds life in that grace which is the principle of spiritual life, and the pledge of eternal life. He findeth life, for he "shall obtain favour of the Lord," and in his favour is life. If the king's favour is towards a wise son, much more the favour of the King of kings. Christ is wisdom, and he that findeth Christ, that obtaineth an interest in him, he findeth life, for Christ is life to all believers; he that hath the Son of God hath life, eternal life, and he shall obtain favour of the Lord, who is well pleased with all those that are in Christ, nor can we obtain God's favour, unless we find Christ, and be found in him.

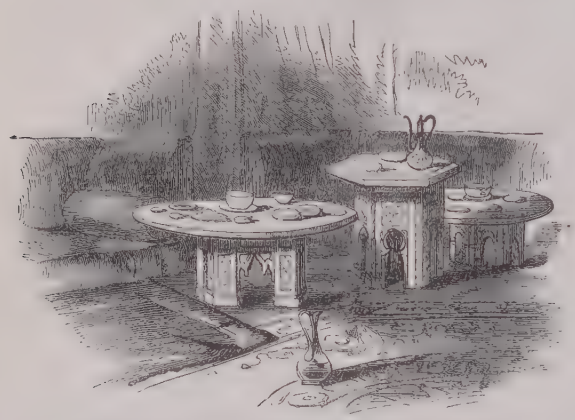
Thirdly. The doom passed upon all those that reject wisdom and her proposals, ver. 36. They are left to ruin themselves, and wisdom will not hinder them, because they have set at nought all her counsel. 1. Their crime is very great; they sin against wisdom, rebel against its light and laws, thwart its designs, and by their folly offend it; they sin against Christ; they act in contempt of his authority, and in contradiction to all the purposes of his life and death. This is construed, hating wisdom, hating Christ; they are his enemies who will not have him to reign over them. What can appear worse than hating him who is the centre of all beauty and fountain of all goodness,—love itself? 2. Their punishment will be very just, for they wilfully bring it upon themselves. 1st. They that offend Christ do the greatest wrong to themselves; they wrong their own souls; they wound their own consciences, bring a blot and stain upon their souls, which renders them odious in the eyes of God, and

unfit for communion with him; they deceive themselves, disturb themselves, destroy themselves; sin is a wrong to the soul. 2nd. They that are at variance with Christ are in love with their own ruin; "They that hate me love death;" they love that which will be their death, and put that from them which would be their life. Sinners die because they will die, which leaves them inexcusable, makes their condemnation the more intolerable, and will for ever justify God when he judgeth; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."

CHAPTER IX.

Christ and sin are rivals for the soul of man; and here we are told how they both make their court to it, to have the innermost and uppermost place in it. And the design of this representation is to set before us life and death, good and evil; and there needs no more but a fair stating of the case to determine us which of those to choose and surrender our hearts to. They are both brought in making entertainment for the soul, and inviting it to accept of the entertainment; concerning both we are told what the issue will be, and the matter being thus laid before us, let us consider, take advice, and speak our minds. And we are therefore concerned to put a value upon our own souls, because we see there is such striving for them. I. Christ, under the name of wisdom, invites us to accept of his entertainment, and so to enter into acquaintance and communion with him, ver. 1—6; and having foretold the different success of his invitation, ver. 7—9, he shews, in short, what he requires from us, ver. 10, and what he designs for us, ver. 11, and then leaves it to our choice what we will do, ver. 12. II. Sin, under the character of a foolish woman, courts us to accept of her entertainment, ver. 13—16; pretends it is very charming, ver. 17; but Solomon tells what the reckoning will be, ver. 18. And now choose you this day whom you will close with.

WISDOM hath builded her house,
She hath hewn out her seven pillars:
2 She hath killed her beasts; [table.
She hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her



EASTERN TABLE, PREPARED WITH DISHES—MODERN.

3 She hath sent forth her maidens:
She crieth upon the highest places of the city,
4 Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither:
As for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,
5 Come, eat of my bread,
And drink of the wine *which* I have mingled.
6 Forsake the foolish, and live;
And go in the way of understanding.
7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame:
And he that rebuketh a wicked *man getteth* himself a
8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: [blot.
Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.
9 Give *instruction* to a wise *man*, and he will be yet wiser:
Teach a just *man*, and he will increase in learning.
10 The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom:
And the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.
11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied,
And the years of thy life shall be increased.
12 If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself:
But *if* thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear *it*.

Wisdom is here introduced as a magnificent and munificent queen, very great and very generous. That word of God is this wisdom, in which God makes known his goodwill towards men. God the Word is this wisdom, to whom the Father has committed all judgment. He that in the chapter before shewed his grandeur and glory as the Creator of the world, here shews his grace and goodness as the Redeemer of it. The word is plural, two wisdoms; for in Christ are hid treasures of wisdom, and in his undertaking appears the manifold wisdom of God in a mystery. Now observe here,

First. The rich provision which wisdom hath made for the reception of all those that will be her disciples. This is represented under the similitude of a sumptuous feast, from whence it is probable our Saviour borrowed those parables in which he compared the kingdom of heaven to a great supper, *Mat.* xxvii. 2; *Lu.* xiv. 16; and so it was prophesied of, *Isa.* xxv. 6. It is such a feast as Ahasuerus made to shew the riches of his glorious kingdom. The grace of the Gospel is thus set before us in the ordinance of the Lord's supper. To bid her guests welcome,

1. Here is a stately palace provided, ver. 1. Wisdom, not finding a house capacious enough for all her guests, has built one on purpose; and both to strengthen it and to beautify it she has hewn out her seven pillars, which make it to be very firm, and look very great. Heaven is the house which wisdom has built to entertain all her guests, that are "called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." That is her Father's house, where there are many mansions, and whither she is gone to prepare places for us. She has hanged the earth upon nothing, therefore in it we have no continuing city; but heaven is a city that has foundations, has pillars. The church is wisdom's house, to which she invites her guests, supported by the power and promise of God as by seven pillars. Probably Solomon refers to the temple which he himself had lately built for the service of religion, and to which he would persuade people to resort, both to worship God and to receive the instructions of wisdom. Some reckon the schools of the prophets to be here intended.

2. Here is a splendid feast got ready; ver. 2, "She hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine;" plenty of meat and drink are provided, and all of the best. 'She has killed her sacrifice,' so the word is, 'it is a sumptuous, but a sacred feast, a feast upon a sacrifice.' Christ has offered up himself a sacrifice for us, and it is his flesh that is meat indeed, and his blood that is drink indeed. The Lord's supper is a feast of reconciliation and joy upon the sacrifice of atonement. The wine is mingled with something richer than itself to give it a more than ordinary spirit and flavour. She has completely furnished her table with all the satisfactions that a soul can desire,—righteousness and grace, peace and joy, the assurances of God's love, the consolations of the Spirit, and all the pledges and earnests of eternal life. Observe, It is all wisdom's own doings; she has killed the beasts, she has mingled the wine; which notes both the love of Christ, who makes the provision, he doth not leave it to others, but takes the doing of it into his own hands, and the excellency of the preparation. That must needs be exactly fitted to answer the end which wisdom herself has the fitting up of.

Secondly. The gracious invitation she has given, not to some particular friends, but to all in general, to come and take part of these provisions. 1. She employs her servants round about in the country; "She hath sent forth her maidens," ver. 3. The ministers of the Gospel are commissioned and commanded to give notice of the preparations which God has made in the everlasting covenant, for all those that are willing to come up to the terms of it; and they, with maiden purity, not corrupting themselves or the word of God, and with an exact observance of their lady's orders, are to call upon all they meet with, even in highways and the hedges, to come and feast with wisdom, for all things are now ready, *Lu.* xiv. 23. 2. She herself "cries upon the highest places of the city," as one earnestly desirous of the welfare of the children of men, and grieved to see them rejecting their own mercies for lying vanities. Our Lord Jesus was himself the publisher of his own Gospel; when he had sent forth his disciples, he followed them to confirm what they said; nay, "it began to be spoken by the Lord," *Heb.* ii. 3. He stood and cried, "Come unto me." We see who invites, now let us observe,

1st. To whom the invitation is given. "Whoso is simple, and wants understanding," ver. 4. If we were to make an entertainment, of all people we would not care for, much less court, the company of such, but rather of philosophers and learned men, that we might hear their wisdom, and whose table-talk would be improving; "Have I need of madmen?" But wisdom invites such, because what she has to give is what they most need, and it is their welfare that she consults and aims at in the preparation and invitation. He that is simple is invited, that he may be made wise; and he that wants a heart, so the word is, let him come hither and he shall have one. Her preparations are rather physic than food, designed for the most valuable and desirable cure, that of the mind. Whosoever he be,—the invitation is general, and excludes none that do not exclude themselves,—though they be never so foolish, yet, *First.* They shall be welcome. *Secondly.* They may be helped; they shall neither be despised nor despaired of. Our Saviour came, not to call the righteous, but sinners; not the wise in their own eyes, who say they see, *Jno.* ix. 41, but the simple, that is, those that are sensible of their simplicity, and ashamed of it, and him that is willing to become a fool that he may be wise, 1 *Cor.* iii. 18.

2nd. What the invitation is. *First.* We are invited to wisdom's house; "turn in hither;" I say we are, for which of us is there that must not own the character of the invited, that are simple, and want understanding? Wisdom's doors stand open to such, and she is desirous to have some talk with them, one word for their own good, nor hath she any other design upon them. *Secondly.* We are invited to her table; ver. 5, "Come, eat of my bread," that is, taste of the true pleasures that are to be found in the knowledge and fear of God. By faith acted on the promises of the Gospel, applying them to ourselves, and taking the comfort of them, we feed, we feast upon the provisions Christ has made for poor souls. What we eat and drink we make our own, and are nourished and refreshed by it, and so are our souls by the word of God. It has that in it that is meat and drink to those that understand themselves.

3rd. What is required of those that may have the benefit of this invitation, ver. 6. *First.* They must break off from all bad company; "forsake the foolish," converse not with them, conform not to their ways, have no fellowship with the works of darkness, or with those that deal in such works. The first step towards virtue is to shun vice, and therefore to shun the vicious. "Depart from me ye evildoers." *Secondly.* They must awake and arise from the dead. They must live, not in pleasure, for those that do so are dead while they live, but in the service of God, for those only that do so live indeed, live to some purpose. Live not a mere animal life; as brutes, but now at length live the life of men. Live, and you shall live; live spiritually, and you shall live eternally, *Eph.* v. 14. *Thirdly.* They must choose the paths of wisdom, and keep to them. "Go in the way of understanding," that is, govern thyself from henceforward by the rules of religion and right reason. It is not enough to forsake the foolish, but we must join ourselves with those that walk in wisdom, and walk in the same spirit and steps.

Thirdly. The instructions which wisdom gives to the maidens she sends to invite, to the ministers and others that in their places are endeavouring to serve her interests and designs. She tells them, 1. What their work must be; not only to tell in general what preparation is made for souls, and to give a general offer of it, but they must apply themselves to particular persons; must tell them of their faults, reprove, rebuke, ver. 7, 8; they must instruct them how to amend, teach, ver. 9. The word of God is intended, and therefore so is the ministry of that word, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. 2. What different sorts of persons they would meet with, and what course they must take with them, and what success they might expect.

1st. They would meet with some scorners and wicked men that would mock the messengers of the Lord, and misuse them; would laugh them to scorn that invite them to the feast of the Lord, as they did, 2 *Chr.* xxx. 10; would treat them spitefully, *Mat.* xxii. 6. And though they are not forbidden to invite these simple ones to wisdom's house, yet they are advised not to pursue the invitation by reproving and rebuking them; "Reprove not a scorner," cast not these

pearls before swine, *Mat.* vii. 6. Thus Christ said of the Pharisees, "Let them alone," *Mat.* xv. 14; do not reprove them. *First.* In justice to them; for they have forfeited the favour of farther means who scorn the means they have had. "They that are" thus "filthy, let them be filthy still;" that are "joined to idols, let them alone;" "lo, we turn to the Gentiles." *Secondly.* In prudence to yourselves; because if you reprove them, 1*st.* You lose your labour, and so get to yourselves shame for the disappointment. 2*nd.* You exasperate them; do it never so wisely and tenderly, if you do it faithfully, they will hate you, they will load you with reproaches, and say all the ill they can of you, and so you will get a blot; therefore you had better not meddle with them, for your reproofs will be likely to do more hurt than good.

2nd. They would meet with others that are wise, and good, and just; thanks be to God, all are not scorners! We meet with some that are so wise for themselves, so just to themselves, as to be willing and glad to be taught; and when we meet with such, *First.* If there be occasion we must reprove them; for wise men are not so perfectly wise, but there is that in them which needs a reproof; and we must not connive at any man's faults because we have a veneration for his wisdom; nor must a wise man think that his wisdom exempts him from reproof, when he saith or doth any thing foolishly; but the more wisdom a man has, the more desirous he should be to have his weaknesses shewed him, because a little folly is a great blemish to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. *Secondly.* With our reproofs we must give them instruction, and must teach them, ver. 9. *Thirdly.* We may expect that it will be taken as a kindness, *Ps.* cxli. 5. A wise man will reckon those his friends that deal faithfully with him. Rebuke such a one, and he will love thee for thy plain-dealing; will thank thee, and desire thee to do him the same good turn another time, if there be occasion. It is as great an instance of wisdom to take a reproof well as to give it well. *Fourthly.* Being taken well it will do good, and answer the intention. A wise man will be made wiser by the reproofs and instructions that are given him; he will increase in learning, will grow in knowledge, and so grow in grace. None must think themselves too wise to learn, or so good that they need not be better, and therefore need not be taught. We must still press forward, and follow on to know till we come to the perfect man. 'Give to a wise man,' so it is in the original, give him advice, give him reproof, give him comfort, 'and he will be yet wiser.' 'Give him occasion,' so the Seventy, occasion to shew his wisdom, and he will shew it; and the acts of wisdom will strengthen the habits.

Fourthly. The instructions she gives to those that are invited, which her maidens must inculcate upon them.

1. Let them know wherein true wisdom doth consist, and what will be their entertainment at wisdom's table, ver. 10. 1st. The heart must be principled with the fear of God; that is the beginning of wisdom. A reverence of God's majesty, and a dread of his wrath, is that fear of him which is the beginning, the first step, towards true religion, whence all other instances of it take rise. This fear may at first have torment, but love will by degrees cast out the torment of it. 2nd. The head must be filled with the knowledge of the things of God. The knowledge of holy things (the word is plural) is understanding, the things pertaining to the service of God, (those are called holy things,) that pertain to our own sanctification; reproof is called that which is holy, *Mat.* vi. 6; or, the knowledge which holy men have, which was taught by the holy prophets, of those things which "holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" this is understanding, it is the best and most useful understanding, will stand us in most stead, and turn to the best account.

2. Let them know what will be the advantages of this wisdom; ver. 11, "By me thy days shall be multiplied." It will contribute to the health of thy body, and so "the years of thy life" on earth "shall be increased," while men's folly and intemperance shorten their days. It will bring thee to heaven, and there thy days shall be multiplied *in infinitum*, and "the years of thy life shall be increased without end." There is no true wisdom but in the way of religion, and no true life but in the end of that way.

3. Let them know what will be the consequence of their choosing or refusing this fair offer, ver. 12. Here is, 1st. The happiness of those that embrace it. "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself;" thou wilt be the gainer by it, not wisdom, a man cannot be profitable to God; it is to our own good that we are thus courted. Thou wilt not leave the gain to others, as we do our worldly wealth when we die, which is therefore called another man's, *Lu.* xvi. 12, but thou shalt carry it with thee into another world. Those that are wise for their souls are wise for themselves, for the soul is the man. Nor do any consult their own true interest but those that are truly religious. This recommends us to God, and recovers us from that which is our folly and degeneracy; it employs us in that which is most beneficial to this world, and entitles us to that which is much more so in the world to come. 2nd. The shame and ruin of those that slight it. "If thou scornest" wisdom's proffer, "thou alone shalt bear it," that is, *First.* Thou shalt bear the blame of it. Those that are good must thank God, but those that are wicked may thank themselves. It is not long of God, he is not the author of sin; Satan can only tempt, he cannot force, and wicked companions are but his instruments, so that all the fault must lie on the sinner himself. *Secondly.* Thou shalt bear the loss of that which thou scornest; it will be to thine own destruction, and thy blood will be upon thine own head; and the consideration of this will aggravate thy condemnation; Son, remember that thou hadst this fair offer made thee, and thou wouldest not accept of it; thou stoodest fair for life, but didst choose death rather.

13 A foolish woman *is* clamorous:
She is simple, and knoweth nothing.
14 For she sitteth at the door of her house,
On a seat in the high places of the city,
15 To call passengers
Who go right on their ways:
16 Whoso *is* simple, let him turn in hither: [him,
And *as for* him that wanteth understanding, she saith to
17 Stolen waters are sweet,
And bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.
18 But he knoweth not that the dead *are* there,
And that her guests *are* in the depths of hell.

We have heard what Christ has to say to engage our affection to God and godliness, and one would think the whole world should go after him; but here we are told how industrious the tempter is to seduce unwary souls into the paths of sin, and with the most he gains his point, and wisdom's courtship is not effectual. Now observe,

First. Who is the tempter; a foolish woman; folly herself in opposition to wisdom. Carnal sensual pleasure I take to be especially meant by this foolish woman, ver. 13, for that is the great enemy to virtue, and inlet to vice; that defiles and debauches the mind, stupifies conscience, and puts out the sparks of conviction more than any thing else. This tempter is here described to be, 1. Very ignorant; "she is simple, and knows nothing," that is, she has no sufficient solid reason to offer; where she gets dominion in a soul she works out all the knowledge of holy things, they are lost and forgotten. "Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart," they besot men, and make fools of them. 2. Very importunate. The less she has to offer that is rational, the more violent and pressing she is, and carries the day many a time by dint of impudence. She is clamorous and noisy, ver. 13; continually haunting young people with her enticements. "She sits at the door of her house," ver. 14, watching for a prey, not as Abraham at his tent-door seeking an opportunity to do good. She sits on a seat (on a throne, so the word signifies,) in the high places of the city, as if she had authority to give law, and we were all debtors to the flesh to live after the flesh; and as if she had reputation, and were in honour, and thought worthy of the high places of the city; and perhaps she gains upon many more by pretending to be fashionable, than by pretending to be agreeable. Do not all persons of rank and figure in the world, saith she, give themselves a greater liberty than the strict laws of virtue allow; and why shouldest thou sneak so far as to be cramped by them? Thus the tempter affects to seem both kind and great.

Secondly. Who are the tempted; young people that have been well educated, these she will triumph most in being the ruin of. Observe, 1. What their real character is; they are "passengers that go right on their ways," ver. 15; that have been trained up in the paths of religion and virtue, and set out very hopefully and well, that seem determined and designed for good, and are not (as that young man, *ch.* vii. 8,) going the way to her house. Such as these she has a design upon, and lays snares for, and useth all her arts, all her charms, to pervert them; if they go right on, and will not look towards her, she will call after them, so urgent are these temptations. 2. How she represents them; she calls them simple, and wanting understanding, and therefore courts them to her school, that they may be cured of the restraints and formalities of their religion. This is the method of the stage, (which is too close an exposition of this paragraph,) where the sober young man that has been virtuously educated is the fool in the play, and the plot is to make him seven times more a child of hell than his profane companions, under colour of polishing and refining him, and setting him up for a wit and a beau. What is justly charged upon sin and impiety, ver. 4, that it is folly, is here very unjustly retorted upon the ways of virtue; but the day will declare who are the fools.

Thirdly. What the temptation is; ver. 17, "Stolen waters are sweet." It is to water and bread, whereas wisdom invites to the beasts she has killed, and the wine she has mingled; however, bread and water are acceptable enough to those that are hungry and thirsty; and this is pretended to be more than ordinarily sweet and pleasant, for it is stolen water, and "bread eaten in secret" with a fear of being discovered. The pleasures of prohibited lusts are boasted of as more relishing than those of prescribed love, and dishonest gain preferred before that which is justly gotten. Now this argues not only a bold contempt, but an impudent defiance, 1. Of God's law, in that the waters are the sweeter for being stolen, and come at by breaking through the hedge of the Divine command. *Nitimur in vetitum*,—'We are prone to what is forbidden.' This spirit of contradiction we have by kind from our first parents, who thought the forbidden tree of all other a tree to be desired. 2. Of God's curse; the bread is eaten in secret for fear of discovery and punishment; and the sinner takes a pride in having so far baffled his convictions, and triumphed over them, that notwithstanding that fear, he dares commit the sin; and can make himself believe, that being eaten in secret it shall never be discovered or reckoned for. Sweetness and pleasantness is the bait; but, by the tempter's own shewing, even that is so absurd, and hath such allays, that it is a wonder how it can have any influence upon men that pretend to reason.

Fourthly. An effectual antidote against the temptation in a few words, ver. 18. He that so far wanteth understanding as to be drawn aside by these enticements, he is led on ignorantly to his own inevitable ruin; he knows not, will not believe, doth not consider, the tempter will not let him know, "that the dead are there;" that those that live in pleasure are dead while they live, dead in trespasses and sins; terrors attend these pleasures, like the terrors of death itself. 'The giants (*rephaim*) are there.' This was it that ruined the sinners of the old world, the giants that were in the earth in those days. Her guests, that are treated with these stolen waters, are not only in the highway to hell, and at the brink of it, but they are already in the depths of hell, under the power of sin, led captives by Satan at his will,—lashed now and then by the terrors of their own consciences, which are a hell upon earth. The depths of Satan are the depths of hell. Remorseless sin is remediless ruin; it is the bottomless pit already. Thus doth Solomon shew the hook, those that believe him will not meddle with the bait.

CHAPTER X.

Hitherto we have been in the porch or preface to the *Proverbs;* here they begin; they are short but weighty sentences, most of them are distichs,—two sentences in one verse, illustrating each other; but it is seldom that there is any coherence between the verses, much less any thread of discourse, and therefore in these chapters we need not attempt to reduce the contents to their proper heads, the several sentences will appear best in their own places; the scope of them all is to set before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse. Many of the proverbs in this chapter relate to the good government of the tongue, without which men's religion is vain.

THE proverbs of Solomon.
1 A wise son maketh a glad father:
But a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother.

Solomon, speaking to us as unto children, observes here how much the comfort of parents, natural, political, and ecclesiastical, depends upon the good behaviour of those under their charge, as a reason,

First. Why parents should be careful to give their children a good education, and to train them up in the ways of religion, which, if it obtain the desired effect, they themselves will have the comfort of it, or if not, they will have for their support under their heaviness, that they have done their duty, have done their endeavour.

Secondly. Why children should carry themselves wisely and well, and live up to their own education, that they may rejoice the hearts of their parents, and not sadden them. Observe, 1. It adds to the comfort of young people that are pious and discreet, that thereby they do something towards recompensing their parents for all the care and pains they have taken with them, and occasion pleasure to them in the evil days of old age, when they most need it; and it is the duty of parents to rejoice in their children's wisdom and well-doing, yea, though it arrive to such an eminency as to eclipse them. 2. It adds to the guilt of those that carry themselves ill, that thereby they grieve those whom they ought to be

a joy to, and are a heaviness, particularly to their poor mothers that bore them with sorrow, but with greater sorrow see them wicked and vile.

2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing:
But righteousness delivereth from death. [famish:
3 The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to
But he casteth away the substance of the wicked.

These two verses speak to the same purpose; and the latter may be the reason of the former.

First. That wealth which men get unjustly will do them no good, because God will blast it; "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing," ver. 2; not the treasures of wicked people, much less the treasures which they have made themselves masters of by any wicked arts, by oppression or fraud. Though it be never so much, as a treasure, and laid up never so safe, though it be hid treasure, yet it profits nothing; when profit and loss come to be balanced, the profit gained by the treasures will by no means countervail the loss sustained by the wickedness, *Mat.* xvi. 26. They do not profit the soul, they will not purchase any true comfort or happiness; they will stand a man in no stead at death, or in the judgment of the great day; and the reason is, because "God casteth away the substance of the wicked," ver. 3; he takes that from them which they have unjustly gotten, he rejects the consideration of it, not regarding the rich more than the poor. We often see that scattered by the justice of God which has been gathered together by the injustice of men. How can the treasures of wickedness profit, when, though it be counted substance, God casts it away, and it vanisheth as a shadow?

Secondly. That which is honestly got will turn to a good account, for God will bless it. "Righteousness delivers from death," that is, wealth gained, and kept, and used in a right manner, (righteousness signifies both honesty and charity,) it answers the end of wealth, which is to keep alive and be a defence to us; it will deliver from those judgments which men bring upon themselves by their wickedness. It will profit to that degree as to deliver, though not from the stroke of death, yet from the sting of it, and consequently from the terror of it; for "the Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish," ver. 3; and so their righteousness delivers from death, purely by the favour of God to them, which is their life and livelihood, and which will "keep them alive in famine." The soul of the righteous shall be kept alive by the word of God, and faith in his promise, when young lions shall lack and suffer hunger.

4 He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand:
But the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

We are here told,

First. Who they are that though rich, are in a fair way to become poor. Those that deal with a slack hand, that are careless and remiss in their business, and never mind which end goes foremost, nor ever set their bones to their work, or stick to it, that deal with a deceitful hand, (so it may be read,) those that think to enrich themselves by fraud and tricking, will in the end impoverish themselves, not only by bringing the curse of God on what they have, but by forfeiting their reputation with men. None will care to deal with those that deal with sleight of hand, and are honest only with good looking to.

Secondly. Who they are that though poor, are in a fair way to become rich. Those that are diligent and honest, that are careful about their affairs, and what their hands find to do, do it with all their might in a fair and honourable way, those are likely to increase what they have. The hand of the acute, so some, of those that are sharp, but not sharpers; the hand of the active, so others; the stirring hand gets a penny. This is true in the affairs of our souls, as well as in our worldly affairs. Slothfulness and hypocrisy lead to spiritual poverty, but those that are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, are likely to be rich in faith, and in good works.

5 He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son: [shame.
But he that sleepeth in harvest *is* a son that causeth

Here is, First. The just praise of those that improve their opportunities, that take pains to gather and increase what they have, both for soul and body, that provide for hereafter while provision is to be made; "that gather in summer," which is gathering time. He that doth so "is a wise son," and it is his honour; he acts wisely for his parents, whom if there be occasion he ought to maintain, and he gives reputation to himself, his family, and his education.

Secondly. The just reproach and blame of those that trifle away these opportunities. "He that sleeps," loves his ease, idles away his time, and neglects his work, especially "that sleeps in harvest," when he should be laying in for winter, that lets slip the season of furnishing himself with that which he will have occasion for; he "is a son that causeth shame," for he is a foolish son, he prepares shame for himself when winter comes, and reflects shame upon all his friends. He that gets knowledge and wisdom in the days of his youth gathers in summer, and he will have the comfort and credit of it; but he that idles away the days of his youth will bear the shame of it when he is old.

6 Blessings *are* upon the head of the just:
But violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Here is, First. The head of the just crowned with blessings; with the blessings both of God and man, variety of blessings; abundance of blessings shall descend from above, and visibly abide on the head of good men, real blessings; they shall not only be spoken well of, but done well to. Blessings shall be on their head as a coronet to adorn and dignify them, and as a helmet to protect and secure them.

Secondly. The mouth of the wicked covered with violence; their mouths shall be stopped with shame for the violence which they have done, they shall not have a word to say in excuse for themselves, *Job* v. 16. Their breath shall be stopped with the violence that shall be done to them, when their violent dealing shall return on their heads, shall be returned to their teeth.

7 The memory of the just *is* blessed:
But the name of the wicked shall rot.

Both the just and the wicked, when their days are fulfilled, must die; between their bodies in the grave there is no visible difference; between the souls of the one and the other in the world of spirits, there is a vast difference, and so there is, or ought to be, between their memories that survive them.

First. Good men are and ought to be well spoken of when they are gone. It is one of the blessings that comes upon the head of the just, even when their head is laid. Blessed men leave behind them blessed memories. It is part of the dignity of the saints, especially those that excel in virtue, and are eminently useful, that they are remembered with respect when they are dead; their good name, their name with good men, for good things, is then in a special manner as precious ointment, *Eccl.* vii. 1. Those that honour God he will thus honour, *Ps.* cxii. 3, 6, 9. The elders by faith obtained a good report, *Heb.* xi. 2; and being dead, are yet spoken of. 2. It is part of the duty of the survivors. 'Let the memory of the just be blessed;' so the Jews read it, and observe it as a precept, not naming an eminently just man that is dead but they add, 'Let his memory be blessed.' We must delight in making an honourable mention of good men that are gone, bless God for them, and for his gifts and graces that appeared in them, and especially be followers of them in that which is good.

Secondly. Bad men are and shall be forgotten, or spoken of with contempt. When their bodies are putrefying in the grave, their names also shall rot. Either they shall not be preserved at all, but buried in oblivion, (no good can be said of them, and therefore the greatest kindness that can be done them will be to say nothing of them,) or they shall be loathsome, and mentioned with detestation; and that rule of honour, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*,—'Say nothing to the disadvantage of the dead,' will not protect them. Where the wickedness has been notorious, and cannot but be mentioned, it ought to be mentioned with abhorrence.

8 The wise in heart will receive commandments:
But a prating fool shall fall.

Here is, First. The honour and happiness of the obedient. They "will receive commandments," they will take it as a privilege, and really an ease to them, to be under government, which saves them the labour of deliberating and choosing for themselves; and they will take it as a favour to be told their duty, and admonished concerning it; and it is their wisdom; they are wise in heart that are tractable, and those who thus bend, thus stoop, they shall stand, and be established, shall prosper, being well advised.

Secondly. The shame and ruin of the disobedient, that will not be governed, nor endure any yoke; that will not be taught, nor take any advice. They are fools, for they act against themselves, and their own interest; they are commonly "prating fools," 'fools of lips,' full of talk, but full of nonsense; boasting of themselves, prating spitefully against those that admonish them, 3 *Jno.* 10; and are pretending to give counsel and law to others. Of all fools, none more troublesome than the prating fools, nor that more expose themselves. But they shall fall into sin, into hell, because they received not commandments. They that are full of tongue seldom look well to their feet, and therefore stumble and fall.

9 He that walketh uprightly walketh surely:
But he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

We are here told, and we may depend upon it,

First. That men's integrity will be their security. "He that walketh uprightly" towards God and man, is faithful to both, that designs as he ought, and means as he saith, he "walketh surely," that is, he is safe under a Divine protection, and easy in a holy security. He goes on his way with an humble boldness, being well armed against the temptations of Satan, the troubles of the world, and the reproaches of men. He knows what ground he stands on, what guide he follows, what guard he is surrounded with, and what glory he is going to, and therefore proceeds with assurance and great peace, *Isa.* xxxii. 17; xxxiii. 15, 16. Some understand it as part of the character of an upright man, that he walks surely, in opposition to walking at all adventures; he will not dare to do that which he is not fully satisfied in his conscience concerning the lawfulness of, but will see his way clear in every thing.

Secondly. That men's dishonesty will be their shame. He that perverteth his way, that turns aside into crooked paths, that dissembles with God and man, looks one way and rows another, though he may for a time disguise himself, and pass current, he shall be known to be what he is. It is a thousand to one but some time or other he betrays himself; however, God will discover him in the great day. He that perverteth his ways, *documento erit*,—'shall be made an example of,' for warning to others, so some.

10 He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow:
But a prating fool shall fall.

Mischief is here said to attend,

First. Politic, designing, self-disguising sinners. "He that winks with the eye," as if he took no notice of you, when at the same time he is watching an opportunity to do you an ill turn; that makes signs to his accomplices when to come in to assist him in executing his wicked projects, which are all carried on by trick and artifice, he "causeth sorrow" both to others and to himself. Ingenuity will be no excuse for iniquity, but the sinner must either repent or do worse; either rue it, or be ruined by it.

Secondly. Public, silly, self-exposing sinners, prating fools, whose sins go before unto judgment, they shall fall, as he had said before, ver. 8. But his case is less dangerous of the two; and, though he destroy himself, doth not create so much sorrow to others as he that winks with his eyes. The dog that bites is not always the dog that barks.

11 The mouth of a righteous *man is* a well of life:
But violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

See here, First. How industrious a good man is, by communicating his goodness, to do good with it. His mouth, the outlet of his mind, "is a well of life;" it is a constant spring, from whence issues good discourse for the edification of others, like streams that water the ground, and make it fruitful, and for their consolation, like streams that quench the thirst of the weary traveller. It is like a well of life, that is pure and clean, not only not poisoned, but not muddied with any corrupt communication.

Secondly. How industrious a bad man is, by concealing his badness, to do hurt with it. "The mouth of the wicked covers violence," disguiseth the designed mischief with professions of friendship, that it may be carried on the more securely and effectually; as Joab kissed and killed, Judas kissed and betrayed; this is his sin, to which the punishment answers, ver. 6, "Violence covers the mouth of the wicked;" what he got by violence, shall by violence be taken from him, *Job* v. 4, 5.

12 Hatred stirreth up strifes:
But love covereth all sins.

Here is, First. The great mischief-maker, and that is malice. Even where there is no manifest occasion of strife, yet hatred seeks occasion, and so stirs it

up, and doth the devil's work. These are the most spiteful, ill-natured people that can be, who take a pleasure in setting their neighbours together by the ears, by tale-bearing, evil surmises, and misrepresentations; blowing up the sparks of contention, which had lain buried, into a flame, at which, with an unaccountable pleasure, they warm their hands.

Secondly. The great peace-maker, and that is love, which covereth all sins, that is, the offences among relations which occasion discord. Love, instead of proclaiming and aggravating the offence, conceals and extenuates it as far as it is capable of being concealed and extenuated. Love will excuse the offence which we give through mistake, and unadvisedly, when we are able to say there was no ill intended, but it was an oversight, and we love our friend notwithstanding, this covers it. It will also overlook the offence that is given us, and so cover it and make the best of it; by this means strife is prevented, or if begun, peace is recovered and restored presently. The apostle quotes this, 1 *Pet.* iv. 8, "Love will cover a multitude of sins."

13 In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found:
But a rod *is* for the back of him that is void of understanding.

Observe, First. Wisdom and grace are the honour of good men. He that hath understanding, that good understanding which they have that do the commandments, 'wisdom is found in his lips,' that is, it is discovered to be there, and consequently that he hath within a good treasure of it, and it is derived thence for the benefit of others. And it is a man's honour to have wisdom, but much more to be instrumental to make others wise.

Secondly. Folly and sin are the shame of bad men. "A rod is for the back of him that wants a heart;" he exposeth himself to the lashes of his own conscience, to the scourges of the tongue, to the censures of the magistrate, and to the righteous judgments of God. They that foolishly and wilfully go on in wicked ways are preparing rods for themselves, the marks of which will be their perpetual disgrace.

14 Wise *men* lay up knowledge:
But the mouth of the foolish *is* near destruction.

Observe, First. It is the wisdom of the wise that they treasure up a stock of useful knowledge, which will be their preservation. Wisdom is therefore found in their lips, ver. 13, because it is laid up in their hearts, out of which store, like the good householder, they bring things new and old. Whatever knowledge may be at any time useful to us, we must lay it up, because we know not but some time or other we may have occasion for it. We must continue laying up as long as we live; and be sure lay it up safe, that it may not be to seek when we want it.

Secondly. It is the folly of fools that they lay up mischief in their hearts, which is ready to them in all they say, and works terror and destruction both to others and to themselves. They love devouring words, *Ps.* lii. 4. And these come uppermost; their mouth is near destruction, having the sharp arrows of bitter words always at hand to throw about.

15 The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city:
The destruction of the poor *is* their poverty.

This may be taken two ways:

First. As a reason why we should be diligent in our business, that we may avoid that sinking, dispiriting uneasiness which attends poverty, and may enjoy the benefit and comfort which they have that are beforehand in the world. Taking pains is really the way to make ourselves and our families easy. Or rather,

Secondly. As a representation of the common mistakes both of rich and poor concerning their outward condition. 1. Rich people think themselves happy because they are rich; but it is their mistake. "The rich man's wealth is" in his own conceit, "his strong city," whereas the worst of evils it is too weak and utterly insufficient to protect them from. It will prove they are not so safe as they imagine, nay, their wealth may perhaps expose them. 2. Poor people think themselves undone because they are poor, but it is their mistake. "The destruction of the poor is their poverty," it sinks their spirits, and ruins all their comforts; whereas a man may live very comfortably, though he has but a little to live on, if he be but content, and keep a good conscience, and live by faith.

16 The labour of the righteous *tendeth* to life:
The fruit of the wicked to sin.

Solomon here confirms what his father had said, *Ps.* xxxvii. 16, "That a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked."

First. Perhaps a righteous man has no more than what he works hard for, he eats only the labour of his hands, but that labour tendeth to life; he aims at nothing but to get an honest livelihood, covets not to be rich and great, but is willing to live and maintain his family. Nor doth it tend only to his own life, but he would enable himself to do good to others; he therefore labours that he may have to give, *Eph.* iv. 28. All his business turns to some good account or other. Or, it may be meant of his labour in religion; he takes most pains in that which hath a tendency to eternal life; sows to the Spirit, that he may reap life everlasting.

Secondly. Perhaps a wicked man's wealth is fruit which he did not labour for, but came easily by; but it tends to sin, he makes it the food and fuel of his lusts, his pride and luxury; he doth hurt with it, and not good; he gets hurt by it, and is hardened by it in his wicked ways. The things of this world are good or evil, life or death, as they are used, and as they are that have them.

17 He *is in* the way of life that keepeth instruction:
But he that refuseth reproof erreth.

See here, First. That those are in the right that do not only receive instruction, but retain it; that do not let it slip through carelessness, as the most do, nor let it go to those that would rob them of it; that keep instruction safe, keep it pure and entire, keep it for their own use, that they may govern themselves by it, keep it for the benefit of others, that they may instruct them; they that do so are in the way of life, the way that has true comfort in it, and eternal life at the end of it.

Secondly. That those are in the wrong that do not only not receive instruction, but wilfully and obstinately refuse it when it is offered them. They will not be taught their duty because it discovers their faults to them. That instruction which carries reproof in it they have a particular aversion to, and certainly they err; it is a sign they err in judgment, and have false notions of good and evil; it is a cause of their erring in conversation. The traveller that has missed his way, and cannot bear to be told of it, and shewed the right way, must needs err still, err endlessly; he certainly misseth the way of life.

18 He that hideth hatred *with* lying lips,
And he that uttereth a slander, *is* a fool.

Observe here, that malice is folly and wickedness.

First. It is so when it is concealed by flattery and dissimulation. He is a fool, though he may think himself a politician, that hides hatred with lying lips, lest if it break out he should be ashamed before men, and he should lose the opportunity of gratifying his malice. Lying lips are bad enough of themselves, but have a peculiar malignity in them when they are made a cloak of maliciousness. But he is a fool who thinks to hide any thing from God.

Secondly. It is no better when it is vented in spiteful and mischievous language. He that utters slanders is a fool too, for God will sooner or later bring forth that righteousness as the light which he endeavours to cloud, and will find an expedient to roll the reproach away.

19 In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin:
But he that refraineth his lips *is* wise.

We are here admonished concerning the government of the tongue, that necessary duty of a Christian.

First. It is good to say little, because "in multitude of words there wanteth not sin," or, 'sin doth not cease.' It is seldom but they that speak much speak much amiss; and among many words there cannot but be many idle words, which they must shortly give an account of. They that love to hear themselves talk, do not consider what work they are making for repentance; for that will be wanted, and first or last will be had, where there wanteth not sin.

Secondly. It is therefore good to keep our mouth as with a bridle. "He that refraineth his lips," that checks himself many a time, suppresseth what he has thought, and holds in that which would out, he is a wise man; it is an evidence of his wisdom, and he therein consults his own peace. Little said, soon amended, *Am.* v. 13; *Jas.* i. 19.

20 The tongue of the just *is as* choice silver:
The heart of the wicked *is* little worth.
21 The lips of the righteous feed many:
But fools die for want of wisdom.

We are here taught how to value men; not by their wealth and preferment in the world, but by their virtue.

First. Good men are good for something. Though they may be poor and low in the world, and may not have power and riches to do good with, yet as long as they have a mouth to speak, that will make them valuable and useful, and upon that account we must honour them that fear the Lord, because out of the good treasure of their heart they bring forth good things. 1. This makes them valuable. "The tongue of the just is as choice silver," that is, they are sincere, freed from the dross of guile and evil design. God's words are compared to silver purified, *Ps.* xii. 7, for they may be relied on, and such are the words of just men. They are of weight and worth, and will enrich those that hear them with wisdom that is better than choice silver. 2. It makes them useful. "The lips of the righteous feed many," for they are full of the word of God, which is the bread of life, and that sound doctrine wherewith souls are nourished up. Pious discourse is spiritual food to the needy, to the hungry.

Secondly. Bad men are good for nothing. 1. One can get no good by them. "The heart of the wicked is little worth," and therefore that which comes out of the abundance of his heart cannot be worth much. His principles, his notions, his thoughts, his purposes, and all the things that fill him and affect him are worldly and carnal, and therefore of no value. "He that is of the earth speaks of the earth," and neither understands nor relisheth the things of God, *Jno.* iii. 31; 1 *Cor.* ii. 14. The wicked man pretends that though he doth not talk of religion as the just do, yet he has it within him, and thanks God his heart is good; but he that searcheth the heart here saith the contrary, it is nothing worth. 2. One can do no good upon them. While many are fed by the lips of the righteous, "fools die for want of wisdom," and fools indeed they are to die for want of that which they might so easily come by. 'Fools die for want of a heart,' so the word is; they perish for want of consideration and resolution; they have no heart to do any thing for their own good; while the righteous feed others, fools starve themselves.

22 The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich,
And he addeth no sorrow with it.

Worldly wealth is that which most men have their hearts very much upon, but they generally mistake, both in the nature of the thing they desire, and in the way by which they hope to compass it. We are therefore told here,

First. What that wealth is which is indeed desirable; not having abundance only, but having it and no sorrow with it. No disquieting care to get and keep it, no vexation of spirit in the employment of it, no tormenting grief for the loss of it, no guilt contracted by the abuse of it. To have it, and to have a heart to take the comfort of it, to do good with it, and to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the use of it.

Secondly. Whence this desirable wealth is to be expected; not by making ourselves drudges to the world, *Ps.* cxxvii. 2, but by the blessing of God, that is it that makes rich and adds no sorrow; what comes from the love of God, the grace of God comes along with it, to preserve the soul from those turbulent lusts and passions which otherwise the increase of riches is commonly the incentive of. He had said, ver. 4, "the hand of the diligent maketh rich," as a means, but here he ascribes it to the blessing of the Lord; but that blessing is upon the hand of the diligent. It is thus in spiritual riches; diligence in getting them is our duty, but God's blessing and grace must have all the glory of that which is acquired, *Deu.* viii. 17, 18.

23 *It is* as sport to a fool to do mischief:
But a man of understanding hath wisdom.

Here is, First. Sin exceeding sinful. It is as laughter to a fool to do mischief; it is as natural to him and as pleasant as it is to a man to laugh. Wickedness is his Isaac, that is the word here; it is his delight, his darling, and that in which he pleaseth himself. He makes a laughing matter of sin. When he is warned not to sin from the consideration of the law of God, and the revelation of his wrath against sin, he makes a jest of the admonition, and laughs at the shaking of the spear; when he has sinned, instead of sorrowing for it, he boasts of it,

ridicules reproofs, and laughs away the convictions of his own conscience, *ch.* xiv. 9.

Secondly. Wisdom exceeding wise, for it carries along with it the evidence of its own excellency; it may be predicated of itself, and it is encomium enough; you need say no more in praise of a man of understanding, but that he is an understanding man, he hath wisdom; he is so wise as not to do mischief; or if he has through oversight offended, he is so wise as not to make a jest of it. Or, to speak wisdom wise indeed, read it thus: 'as it is a sport to a fool to do mischief, so it is to a man of understanding to have wisdom and to shew it.' Besides the future recompence, a good man hath as much present pleasure in the restraints and exercises of religion as sinners can pretend to in the liberties and enjoyments of sin, and much more and much better.

24 The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him:
But the desire of the righteous shall be granted.
25 As the whirlwind passeth, so *is* the wicked no *more:*
But the righteous *is* an everlasting foundation.

WHIRLWIND IN THE DESERT—SCENE, CARNAC.

It is here said, and said again, to the righteous, that it shall be well with them, and to the wicked, woe to them; and these are set the one over against the other for their mutual illustration.

First. It shall be as ill with the wicked as they can fear, and as well with the righteous as they can desire. 1. The wicked, it is true, buoy themselves up sometimes in their wickedness with vain hopes which will deceive them, but at other times they cannot but be haunted with just fears, and those fears shall come upon them; the God they provoke will be every whit as terrible as they when they are under their greatest damps apprehend him to be: "as is thy fear so is thy wrath," *Ps.* xc. 11. Wicked men fear the punishment of sin, but they have not wisdom to improve their fears by making their escape, and so the thing they feared comes upon them, and their present terrors are earnests of their future torments. 2. The righteous, it is true, sometimes have their fears, but their desire is towards the favour of God and a happiness in him, and that desire shall be granted. According to their faith, not according to their fear, it shall be unto them, *Ps.* xxxvii. 4.

Secondly. The prosperity of the wicked shall quickly end; but the happiness of the righteous shall never end, ver. 25. The wicked make a great noise, hurry themselves and others like a whirlwind which threatens to bear down all before it, but like a whirlwind they are presently gone, and irrecoverably they pass, they are no more, all about them are quiet and glad when the storm is over, *Ps.* xxxvii. 10, 36; *Job* xx. 5. The righteous, on the contrary, make no show, they lie hid, like a foundation which is low and out of sight, but they are fixed in their resolution to cleave to God, established in virtue, and they shall be an everlasting foundation, immovably good. He that is holy shall be holy still, and immovably happy; his hope is built on a rock, and therefore not shocked by the storm, *Mat.* vii. 24. 'The righteous is the pillar of the world,' so some read it; the world stands for their sake. "The holy seed is the substance thereof."

26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes,
So *is* the sluggard to them that send him.

Observe, First. Those that are of a slothful, lazy disposition, that love their ease, and cannot apply their mind to any business, are not fit to be employed, no, not so much as to be sent on an errand, for they will neither deliver a message with any care, nor make any haste back. Such therefore are very unmeet to be ministers, Christ's messengers. He will not own the sending forth of sluggards into his harvest.

Secondly. They that are guilty of so great an oversight as to intrust such with any affair, and put a confidence in them, will certainly have vexation with them. A slothful servant is to his master as uneasy and troublesome as vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes; he provokes his passion, as vinegar sets the teeth an edge, and occasions him grief to see his business neglected and undone, as smoke sets the eyes a weeping.

27 The fear of the LORD prolongeth days:
But the years of the wicked shall be shortened.
28 The hope of the righteous *shall be* gladness:
But the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

Observe, First. Religion lengthens men's lives and crowns their hopes. "What man is he that loves life?" let him fear God, and that will secure him from many things that would prejudice his life, and secure to him life enough in this world, and eternal life in the other. "The fear of the Lord will add days" more than was expected; will add them endlessly; will prolong them to the days of eternity. "What man is he that would see good days?" Let him be religious, and then his days shall not only be many but happy, very happy as well as very many, for "the hope of the righteous shall be gladness;" they shall have what they hope for to their unspeakable satisfaction. It is something future and unseen that they place their happiness in, *Rom.* viii. 24, 25, not what they have in hand, but what they have in hope, and their hope will shortly be swallowed up in fruition, and it will be their everlasting gladness. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Secondly. Wickedness shortens men's lives and frustrates their hopes. "The years of the wicked" that are spent in the pleasures of sin, and the drudgery of the world, "shall be shortened;" cut down the trees that cumber the ground. And whatever comfort or happiness a wicked man promiseth himself in this world or the other, he will be frustrated; for "the expectation of the wicked shall perish." His hope shall be turned into endless despair.

29 The way of the LORD *is* strength to the upright:
But destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.
30 The righteous shall never be removed:
But the wicked shall not inhabit the earth.

These two verses are to the same purpose with those next before, speaking the happiness of the godly, and the misery of the wicked. It is necessary that this be inculcated upon us, so loath are we to believe and consider it.

First. Strength and stability are entailed upon integrity. "The way of the Lord," that is, the providence of God, the way in which he walks towards us, "is strength to the upright," that is, confirms him in his uprightness. All God's dealings with him, merciful and afflictive, serve to quicken him to his duty, and animate him against his discouragements. Or, "the way of the Lord;" that is, the way of godliness in which he appoints us to walk "is strength to the upright;" that is, the closer we keep to that way, and the more our hearts are enlarged to proceed in it, the better fitted we are both for services and sufferings. A good conscience kept pure from sin gives a man boldness in a dangerous time; and constant diligence in duty makes a man's work easy in a busy time; the more we do for God the more we may do, *Job* xvii. 9. The joy of the Lord, which is to be found only in the way of the Lord, will be our strength, *Neh.* viii. 10; and therefore "the righteous shall never be removed." They that have an established virtue have an established peace and happiness which nothing can rob them of; they have an everlasting foundation, ver. 25.

Secondly. Ruin and destruction are the certain consequence of wickedness. The wicked shall not only not inherit the earth, though they lay up their treasure in it, but they shall not so much as inhabit the earth; God's judgments will root them out. "Destruction," swift and sure destruction, "shall be to the workers of iniquity;" destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power. Nay, that way of the Lord which is strength to the upright, is confusion, consumption, and terror to the workers of iniquity. The same Gospel which to the one is a savour of life unto life, to the other is a savour of death unto death; the same providence, like the same sun, softens the one and hardens the other, *Hos.* xiv. 9.

31 The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom:
But the froward tongue shall be cut out.
32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable:
But the mouth of the wicked *speaketh* frowardness.

Here, as before, men are judged of, and accordingly are justified or condemned, by their words, *Mat.* xii. 37.

First. It is both the proof and the praise of a man's wisdom and goodness that he speaks wisely and well. A good man in his discourse brings forth wisdom for the benefit of others; God gives him wisdom as a reward of his righteousness, *Eccl.* ii. 26; and he in gratitude for that gift, and justice to the giver, doth good with it, and with his wise and pious discourses edifies many. He knows what is acceptable, what discourse will be pleasing to God, (for that is it that he studies more than to oblige the company,) and what will be agreeable both to the speaker and to the hearers, what will become him and benefit them, and that he will speak.

Secondly. It is the sin, and will be the ruin of a wicked man, that he speaks wickedly like himself. "The mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness," that which is displeasing to God and provoking to those he converseth with. And what comes of it? why, "the froward tongue shall be cut out," as sure as the flattering one, *Ps.* xii. 3.

CHAPTER XI.

A FALSE balance *is* abomination to the LORD:
But a just weight *is* his delight.

As religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness, he is not an honest man that is not devout; so righteousness towards men is a branch of true religion. He is not a godly man that is not honest, nor can he expect that his devotions shall be accepted; for,

First. Nothing is more offensive to God than deceit in commerce. "A false balance" is here put for all manner of unjust and fraudulent practices in dealing with any person, which are all an "abomination to the Lord," and render those abominable to him that allow themselves in the use of such cursed arts of thriving. It is an affront to justice which God is the patron of, as well as a wrong to our neighbour whom God is the protector of. Men make light of such frauds, and think there is no sin in that which there is money to be got by; and while it passeth undiscovered they cannot blame themselves for it; a blot is no blot till it is hit, *Hos.* xii. 7, 8; but they are not the less an abomination to God who will be the avenger of those that defraud their brethren.

Secondly. Nothing more pleasing to God than fair and honest dealing, nor more necessary to make us and our devotions acceptable to him. "A just weight is his delight." He himself goes by a just weight, and holds the scale of judgment with an even hand, and therefore is pleased with those that are

herein followers of him. A balance cheats under pretence of doing right most exactly, and therefore is the greater abomination to God.

2 *When* pride cometh, then cometh shame:
But with the lowly *is* wisdom.

Observe, First. How he that exalteth himself is here abased, and contempt put upon him. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame;" that is, pride is a sin which men have reason to be themselves ashamed of; it is a shame to a man who springs out of the earth, who lives upon alms, depends upon God, and has forfeited all he has, to be proud; it is a sin which others cry out shame on, and look upon with disdain: he that is haughty makes himself contemptible; it is a sin for which God often brings men down, as he did Nebuchadnezzar and Herod, whose ignominy immediately attended their vain-glory; for God resists the proud, contradicts them and counterworks them in that thing they are proud of, *Isa.* ii. 11, &c.

Secondly. How he that humbleth himself is here exalted, and a high character given him. As with the proud there is folly and will be shame, so "with the lowly there is wisdom" and will be honour, for a man's wisdom gains him respect, and makes his face to shine before men; or if any be so base as to trample upon the humble, God will give them grace which will be their glory. Considering how safe and quiet and easy they are that are of an humble spirit, what communion they have with God and comfort in themselves, we will say that "with the lowly is wisdom."

3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them:
But the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

It is not only promised that God will guide the upright, and threatened that he will destroy the transgressors, but that we may be the more fully assured of both, it is here represented as if the nature of the thing were such on both sides that it would do itself.

First. The integrity of an honest man will itself be his guide in the way of duty, and the way of safety. His principles are fixed, his rule is certain, and therefore his way is plain, his sincerity keeps him steady, and he needs not tack about every time the wind turns, having no other end to drive at but to keep a good conscience. Integrity and uprightness will preserve men, *Ps.* xxv. 21.

Secondly. The iniquity of an ill man will itself be his ruin. As the plainness of a good man will be his protection though he is never so much exposed, so the perverseness of sinners will be their destruction though they think themselves never so well fortified. They shall fall into pits of their own digging, *ch.* v. 22.

4 Riches profit not in the day of wrath:
But righteousness delivereth from death.

Note, First. The day of death will be a day of wrath. It is a messenger of God's wrath, therefore, when Moses had meditated on man's mortality, he takes occasion from thence to admire the power of God's anger, *Ps.* xc. 11. It is not a debt owing to nature, but to God's justice. After death the judgment, and that is a day of wrath, *Rev.* vi. 17.

Secondly. Riches will stand men in no stead in that day. They will neither put by the stroke, nor ease the pain, much less take out the sting; what profit will this world's birthrights be of then? In the day of public judgments, riches expose men many times rather than protect them, *Eze.* vii. 19.

Thirdly. It is righteousness only that will deliver from the evil of death. A good conscience will make death easy, and take off the terror of it. It is the privilege of the righteous only not to be hurt of the second death, and so not much hurt by the first.

5 The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way:
But the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.
6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them:
But transgressors shall be taken in *their own* naughtiness.

These two verses are in effect the same, and both to the same purpose with ver. 3; for the truths are here of such certainty and weight that they cannot be too often inculcated. Let us govern ourselves by these principles.

First. That the ways of religion are plain and safe, and in them we may enjoy a holy security. A living principle of honesty and grace will be, 1. Our best direction in the right way, in every doubtful case, to say to us, "This is the way, walk in it." He that acts without guile looks right on, and sees his way before him. 2. Our best deliverance from every false way. The righteousness of the upright shall be armour of proof to them to deliver them from the allurements of the devil and the world, and from their menaces.

Secondly. The ways of wickedness are dangerous and destructive. "The wicked shall fall" into misery and ruin "by their own wickedness," and "be taken in their own naughtiness" as in a snare. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" Their sin will be their punishment, that very thing by which they contrived to shelter themselves will make against them.

7 When a wicked man dieth, *his* expectation shall perish:
And the hope of unjust *men* perisheth.

Note, First. Even wicked men, while they live, may keep up a confident expectation of a happiness when they die, or at least a happiness in this world. The hypocrite has his hope in which he wraps himself as the spider in her web; the worldling expects great matter from his wealth; he calls it goods laid up for many years, and hopes to take his ease in it, and to be merry; but in death their expectation will be frustrated; the worldling must leave this world which he expected to continue in, and the hypocrite will come short of that world which he expected to remove to, *Job* xxvii. 8.

Secondly. It will be the great aggravation of the misery of wicked people, that their hopes will sink into despair then when they expected them to be crowned with fruition. When a godly man dies, his expectations are outdone, and all his fears vanish; but when a wicked man dies, his expectations are dashed, dashed to pieces; "in that very day his thoughts perish" with which he had pleased himself, his hopes vanish.

8 The righteous is delivered out of trouble,
And the wicked cometh in his stead.

As always in death, so sometimes in life, the righteous are remarkably favoured, and the wicked crossed.

First. Good people are helped out of the distresses which they thought themselves lost in, and their feet are set in a large room, *Ps.* lxvi. 12; xxxiv. 19. God has found out a way to deliver his people then when they have despaired, and their enemies have triumphed as if the wilderness had shut them in.

Secondly. The wicked have fallen into the same distresses which they thought themselves far from, nay, which they had been instrumental to bring the righteous into, so that they seem to come in their stead as a ransom for the just. Mordecai is saved from the gallows, Daniel from the lion's den, and Peter from the prison, and their persecutors come in their stead; Israel is delivered out of the Red sea, and the Egyptians drowned in it. So precious are the saints in God's eyes, that he gives men for them, *Isa.* xliii. 3, 4.

9 An hypocrite with *his* mouth destroyeth his neighbour:
But through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

Here is, First. Hypocrisy designing ill. It is not only the murderer with his sword, but "the hypocrite with his mouth" that "destroys his neighbour," decoying him into sin, or into mischief, by the specious pretences of kindness and goodwill. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue," but no tongue more fatal than the flattering tongue.

Secondly. Honesty defeating the design, and escaping the snare. "Through knowledge" of the devices of Satan "shall the just be delivered" from the snares which the hypocrite hath laid for him. Seducers shall not deceive the elect. By the knowledge of God, and the Scriptures, and their own hearts, shall the just be delivered from those that lie in wait to deceive, and so to destroy, *Rom.* xvi. 18, 19.

10 When it goeth well with the righteous, the city rejoiceth:
And when the wicked perish, *there is* shouting.
11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted:
But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

It is here observed,

First. That good men are generally well beloved by their neighbours, but nobody cares for wicked people. 1. It is true there are some few that are enemies to the righteous, that are prejudiced against God and godliness, and are therefore vexed to see good men in power and prosperity; but all indifferent persons, even those that have no great stock of religion themselves, have a good word for a good man. And therefore "when it goes well with the righteous," when they are advanced, and put into a capacity of doing good according to their desire, it is so much the better for all about them, and "the city rejoiceth." For the honour and encouragement of virtue, and as it is the accomplishment of the promise of God, we should be glad to see virtuous men prosper in the world, and brought into reputation. 2. Wicked people may perhaps have here and there a well-wisher among those who are altogether such as themselves, but among the generality of their neighbours they get ill-will; they may be feared, but they are not loved, and therefore "when they perish there is shouting;" every body takes a pleasure in seeing them disgraced and disarmed, removed out of places of trust and power, chased out of the world, and wisheth never greater loss come to the town; the rather, because they hope the righteous may come in their stead, as they into trouble instead of the righteous, ver. 8. Let a sense of honour therefore keep us in the paths of virtue, that we may live desired, and die lamented, and not be hissed off the stage, *Job* xxvii. 23; *Ps.* lii. 6.

Secondly. That there is good reason for this, because those that are good do good, but, "as saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked." 'Good men are public blessings,'—*vir bonus est commune bonum.* "By the blessing of the upright," the blessings with which they are blessed, which enlarge their sphere of usefulness, by the blessings with which they bless their neighbours,—their advice, their example, their prayers, and all the instances of their serviceableness to the public interests,—by the blessings with which God blesseth others for their sake, by these "the city is exalted," and made more comfortable to the inhabitants, and more considerable among its neighbours. 2. Wicked men are public nuisances; not only the burthens, but plagues of their generation. The city is "overthrown by the mouth of the wicked," whose evil communications corrupt good manners, are enough to debauch a town, to ruin virtue in it, and bring down the judgments of God upon it.

12 He that is void of wisdom despiseth his neighbour:
But a man of understanding holdeth his peace.
13 A talebearer revealeth secrets:
But he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

Silence is here recommended as an instance of true friendship, and a preservative of it, and therefore an evidence, 1. Of wisdom. "A man of understanding" that has rule over his own spirit, if he be provoked, "holdeth his peace," that he neither give vent to his own passion nor kindle the passion of others, by any opprobrious language, or peevish reflections. 2. Of sincerity. "He that is of a faithful spirit," that is true, not only to his own promise, but to the interest of his friend, he "concealeth every matter," which, if divulged, may turn to the prejudice of his neighbour.

This prudent, friendly concealment is here opposed to two very ill vices of the tongue: 1. Speaking scornfully of a man to his face. "He that is void of wisdom," discovers his folly by this, he "despiseth his neighbour," calls him "Raca," and "thou fool," upon the least provocation, and tramples upon him as not worthy to be set with the dogs of his flock. He undervalues himself who thus undervalues one that is made of the same mould. 2. Speaking spitefully of a man behind his back. "A talebearer" that carries all the stories he can pick, true or false, from house to house to make mischief, and sow discord; he "revealeth secrets" which he has been intrusted with, and so breaks the laws, and forfeits all the privileges of friendship and conversation.

14 Where no counsel *is*, the people fall:
But in the multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

Here is, First. The bad omen of a kingdom's ruin. "Where no counsel is," no consultation at all, but every thing done rashly, or no prudent consultation for the common good, but only caballing for parties and divided interests, "the people fall," crumble into factions, fall to pieces, fall together by the ears, and fall an easy prey to their common enemies. Councils of war are necessary to the operations of war, two eyes see more than one, and mutual advice is in order to mutual assistance.

Secondly. The good presage of a kingdom's prosperity. "In multitude of counsellors," that see their need one of another, and act in concert, and with

concern for the public welfare, "there is safety;" for what prudent methods one discerns not another may. In our private affairs we shall often find it to our advantage to advise with many. If they agree in their advice, our way will be the more clear; if they differ, we shall hear what is to be said on all sides, and be the better able to determine.

15 He that is surety for a stranger shall smart *for it:*
And he that hateth suretiship is sure.

Here we are taught,

First. In general, that we may not use our estates as we will. He that gave them to us has reserved himself a power to direct us how we shall use them, for they are not our own, we are but stewards. And farther, that God in his law consults our interest, and teaches us that charity which begins at home, as well as that which must not end there. There is a good husbandry that is good divinity, and a discretion in ordering our affairs which is part of the character of a good man, *Ps.* cxii. 5. Every man must be just to his family, else he is not true to his stewardship.

Secondly. In particular, that we must not enter rashly into suretiship; 1. Because there is danger of bringing ourselves into trouble by it, and our families too when we are gone. "He that is surety for a stranger," for any one that asks him, and promiseth him to be bound for him another time, for one whose person perhaps he knows, and thinks he knows his circumstances, but is mistaken, he "shall smart for it;" *contritione conteretur*, he shall be certainly and sadly 'crushed and broken' by it, and perhaps become a bankrupt. Our Lord Jesus was surety for us when we were strangers, nay, enemies, and he smarted for it; it pleased the Lord to bruise him. 2. Because he that resolves against all such suretiship keeps upon sure grounds, which a man may do, if he take care not to launch out any farther into business than his own credit will carry him, so that he needs not ask others to be bound for him.

16 A gracious woman retaineth honour:
And strong *men* retain riches.

Here, First. It is allowed that "strong men retain riches," that those who bustle in the world, that are men of spirit and interest, and are able to make their part good against all that stand in their way, are likely to keep what they have, and to get more, whilst those that are weak are preyed upon by all about them.

Secondly. It is taken for granted, that a gracious woman is as solicitous to preserve her reputation for wisdom and modesty, humility and courtesy, and all those other graces that are the true ornaments of her sex, as strong men are to secure their estates; and those women that are truly gracious will in like manner effectually secure their honour by their prudence and good conduct. A gracious woman is as honourable as a valiant man, and her honour is as sure.

17 The merciful man doeth good to his own soul:
But *he that is* cruel troubleth his own flesh.

It is a common principle, every one for himself; *proximus egomet mihi*,—'none so near to me as myself.' Now if this be rightly understood, it will be a reason for the cherishing of gracious dispositions in ourselves, and the crucifying of corrupt ones. We are friends or enemies to ourselves, even in respect of present comfort, according as we are or are not governed by religious principles.

First. "A merciful," tender, good-humoured "man doeth good to his own soul," makes and keeps himself easy; he hath the pleasure of doing his duty, and contributing to the comfort of those that are to him as his own soul, for we are members one of another. He that waters others with his temporal good things, God will water him with his spiritual blessings, which he will find to do the best good to his own soul: see *Isa.* lviii. 7, &c., "If thou hide not thine eyes from thine own flesh," but doest good to others, as to thyself, if thou doest good with thy own soul, and draw that out to the hungry, thou doest good to thy own soul, for the Lord shall satisfy thy soul, and make fat thy bones. Some make it part of the character of a merciful man that he will make much of himself; that disposition which inclines him to be charitable to others will oblige him to allow himself also that which is convenient, and to enjoy the good of all his labour. We may by the soul understand the inward man, as the apostle calls it; and then it teaches us, that the first and great act of mercy is to provide well for our own souls the necessary supports of the spiritual life.

Secondly. "A cruel," froward, ill-natured "man troubleth his own flesh," and so his sin becomes his punishment. He starves and dies for want of what he hath, because he has not a heart to use it, either for others' good or for his own. He is vexatious to his nearest relations, that are and should be to him as his own flesh, *Eph.* v. 29. Envy, and malice, and greediness of the world, are the rottenness of the bones, and the consumption of the flesh.

18 The wicked worketh a deceitful work: [reward.
But to him that soweth righteousness *shall be* a sure

Note, First. Sinners put a most fatal cheat upon themselves. "The wicked worketh a deceitful work," builds himself a house upon the sand, which will deceive him when the storm comes; promiseth himself that by his sin which he will never gain; nay, it is cutting his throat when it smiles upon him. "Sin deceived me, and by it slew me."

Secondly. Saints lay up the best securities for themselves. "He that sows righteousness," that is good, and makes it his business to do good, with an eye to a future recompence, "he shall have a sure reward;" it is made as sure to him as eternal truth can make it. If the seedness fail not, the harvest shall not, *Gal.* vi. 8.

19 As righteousness *tendeth* to life:
So he that pursueth evil *pursueth it* to his own death.

It is here shewn, that righteousness, not only by the Divine judgment, will end in life, and wickedness in death, but that righteousness in its own nature has a direct tendency to life, and wickedness to death.

First. True holiness is true happiness; it is a preparative for it, a pledge and earnest of it. Righteousness inclines, disposeth, and leads the soul to life.

Secondly. In like manner, they that indulge themselves in sin, are fitting themselves for destruction. The more violent a man is in sinful pursuits, the more eagerly bent he is upon his own destruction; he awakens it when it seemed to slumber, and hastens it when it seemed to linger.

20 They that are of a froward heart *are* abomination to the LORD:
But *such as are* upright in *their* way *are* his delight.

It concerns us to know what God hates, and what he loves, that we may govern ourselves accordingly, may avoid his displeasure, and recommend ourselves to his favour. Now here we are told,

First. That nothing is more offensive to God than hypocrisy and double-dealing, for that is signified by the word which we translate 'frowardness;' pretending justice, but intending wrong; walking in crooked ways to avoid discovery. These "are of a froward heart," who act in contradiction to that which is good, under a profession of that which is good, and such are, more than any sinners, "an abomination to the Lord," *Isa.* lxv. 5.

Secondly. That nothing is more pleasing to God than sincerity and plain dealing; "Such as are upright in their way," that aim and act with integrity, that have their conversation in the world "in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom;" these God delights in, these he even boasts of, "Hast thou considered my servant Job?" and will have us to admire, "Behold an Israelite indeed."

21 *Though* hand *join* in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished:
But the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

First. That confederacies in sin shall certainly be broken, and shall not avail to protect the sinners. "Though hand join in hand," though they be many that concur by their practice to keep wickedness in countenance, and engage to stand by one another in defending it against all the attacks of virtue and justice, though they are in league for the support and propagation of it, though wicked children tread in the steps of their wicked parents, and resolve to keep up the trade in defiance of religion, yet all this will not protect them from the justice of God, they shall not be held guiltless, it will not excuse them to say,—they did as the most did, and as their company did; "they shall not be unpunished;" witness the flood that was brought upon a whole world of ungodly men. Their number, and strength, and unanimity in sin will stand them in no stead when the day of vengeance comes.

Secondly. That entails of religion shall certainly be blessed; "the seed of the righteous" that follow the steps of their righteousness, though they may fall into trouble, yet in due time "shall be delivered." Though justice may come slowly to punish the wicked, and mercy may come slowly to save the righteous, yet both will come surely. Sometimes the seed of the righteous, though they are not themselves righteous, are delivered for the sake of their godly ancestors, as Israel often, and the seed of David.

22 *As* a jewel of gold in a swine's snout,
So is a fair woman which is without discretion.

By discretion here we must understand religion and grace, a true taste and relish (so the word signifies) of the honours and pleasures that attend an unspotted virtue; so that a woman without discretion is a woman of a loose and dissolute conversation; and then observe,

First. It is taken for granted here, that beauty and comeliness of body is as a jewel of gold, a thing very valuable; and when there is wisdom and grace to guard against the temptations of it it is a great ornament. *Gratior est pulchro veniens de corpore virtus*,—'Virtue appears peculiarly graceful when associated with beauty.' But that a foolish, wanton woman of a light carriage is fitly compared to a swine, though she be never so handsome, wallowing in the mire of filthy lusts, with which the mind and conscience is defiled, and, though washed, returning to them.

Secondly. It is lamented that beauty should be so abused as it is by those that have not modesty with it, and ill-bestowed upon them. It is quite misplaced, "as a jewel in a swine's snout," with which he roots in the dunghill. If beauty be not guarded by virtue, the virtue is exposed by the beauty. It may be applied to all other bodily endowments and accomplishments. It is pity those should have them that have not discretion to use them well.

23 The desire of the righteous *is* only good:
But the expectation of the wicked *is* wrath.

This tells us what the desire and expectation of the righteous, and of the wicked is, and how it will prove what they would have, and what they shall have.

First. The righteous would have good, "only good;" all they desire is, that it may go well with all about them; they wish no hurt to any, but happiness to all; as to themselves, their desire is not to gratify any evil lust, but to obtain the favour of a good God, and to preserve the peace of a good conscience; and good they shall have, that good which they desire, *Ps.* xxxvii. 4.

Secondly. The wicked would have wrath, they desire the woful day, that God's judgments may gratify their passion and revenge, may remove those that stand in their way, and that they may make an advantage to themselves by fishing in troubled waters; and wrath they shall have, so shall their doom be; they expect and desire mischief to others, but it shall return upon themselves. As they loved cursing, they shall have enough of it.

24 There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth;
And *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but *it tendeth* to poverty.

Note, First. It is possible a man may grow rich by a prudent spending of what he has; may scatter in works of piety, charity, and generosity, and yet may increase, nay, by that means may increase, as the corn is increased by being sown. By cheerful using what we have, our spirits are exhilarated, and so fitted for the business we have to do, by minding which closely, what we have is increased; it gains a reputation which contributes to the increase. But it is especially to be ascribed to God; he blesseth the giving hand, and so makes it a getting hand; 2 *Cor.* ix. 10, "Give, and it shall be given you."

Secondly. It is possible a man may grow poor by a paltry sparing of what he has, "withholding more than is meet," not paying just debts, not relieving the poor, not providing what is convenient for the family, not allowing necessary expences for the preservation of the goods; this "tends to poverty," it cramps men's ingenuity and industry, weakens their interest, loses their credit, and forfeits the blessing of God; and let men be never so saving of what they have, if God blast it, and blow upon it, it comes to nothing; a fire not blown shall consume it, *Hag.* i. 6, 9.

25 The liberal soul shall be made fat:
And he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

So backward we are to works of charity, and so ready to think that giving undoes us, that we need to have it very much pressed upon us how much it is for our own advantage to do good to others, as before, ver. 17.

First. We shall have the comfort of it in our own bosoms. The liberal soul, the soul of blessing, that prays for the afflicted, and provides for them, that scatters blessings with gracious lips and generous hands, that soul shall be made fat with true pleasure, and enriched with more grace.

Secondly. We shall have the recompence of it both from God and man. "He that watereth" others with the streams of his bounty, "shall be watered also himself;" God will certainly return it in the dews, in the plentiful showers of his blessing, which he will pour out till there be not room enough to receive it, *Mal.* iii. 10. Men that have any sense of gratitude will return it if there be occasion. The merciful shall find mercy, and the kind be kindly dealt with.

Thirdly. We shall be enabled still to do yet more good. 'He that watereth, even he shall be as rain,' so some read it; he shall be recruited as the clouds are which return after the rain, and shall be farther useful and acceptable as the rain to the new-mown grass. 'He that teacheth shall learn,' so the Chaldee reads it; he that uses his knowledge in teaching others shall himself be taught of God. To him that hath, and useth what he hath, more shall be given.

26 He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him:
But blessing *shall be* upon the head of him that selleth *it*.

See here, First. What use we are to make of the gifts of God's bounty; we must not hoard them up merely for our own advantage that we may be enriched by them, but we must bring them forth for the benefit of others, that they may be supported and maintained by them. It is a sin when corn is dear and scarce to withhold it, in hopes it will grow dearer, so to keep up and advance the market, when it is already so high that the poor suffer by it; and at such a time it is the duty of those that have stocks of corn by them to consider the poor, and to be willing to sell at the market-price, and content with moderate profit, and not aim to make a gain of God's judgments. It is a noble and extensive piece of charity, for those that have stores wherewithal to do it, to help to keep the markets low then when the price of our commodities grows excessive.

Secondly. What regard we are to have to the voice of the people; we are not to think it an indifferent thing, and not worth heeding, whether we have the ill-will and word, or the good-will and word of our neighbours, their prayers or their curses; for here we are taught to dread their curses, and forego our own profit rather than incur them, and to court their blessings, and be at some expense to purchase them. Sometimes, *vox populi est vox Dei*,—'the voice of the people is the voice of God.'

27 He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour:
But he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

Observe, First. Those that are industrious to do good in the world get themselves beloved, both with God and man. 'He that riseth early to that which is good,' (so the word is,) that seeks opportunities of serving his friends, and relieving the poor, and lays out himself therein, he "procureth favour," all about him love him, and speak well of him, and will be ready to do him a kindness, and, which is better than that, better than life, he hath God's loving-kindness.

Secondly. Those that are industrious to do mischief are preparing ruin for themselves; "it shall come unto them," some time or other they will be paid in their own coin. And observe, seeking mischief is here set in opposition to seeking good; for those that are not doing good are doing hurt.

28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall:
But the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Observe, First. Our riches will fail us when we are in the greatest need; he that trusteth in them, as if they would secure him the favour of God, and be his protection and portion, he shall fall, as a man that lays his weight on a broken reed, which will not only disappoint him, but run into his hand and pierce him.

Secondly. Our righteousness will stand us in stead when our riches fail us; "the righteous shall" then "flourish as a branch," the branch of righteousness; like a tree, whose leaf shall not wither, *Ps.* i. 3. Even in death, when riches fail men, the bones of the righteous shall flourish as an herb, *Isa.* lxvi. 14. When those that take root in the world wither, those that are grafted into Christ, and partake of his root and fatness, shall be fruitful and flourishing.

29 He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind:
And the fool *shall be* servant to the wise of heart.

Two extremes in the management of family affairs are here condemned, and the ill consequences of them foretold.

First. Carefulness and carnal policy on the one hand. There are those that by their extreme earnestness in pursuit of the world, their carking about their business, and fretting about their losses, their strictness with their servants, and their niggardliness towards their families, trouble their own houses, and give continual vexation to all about them; while others think by supporting factions and feuds in their families, which are really a trouble to their houses, to serve some turn for themselves, and either get, or save by it. But they will both be disappointed, they will "inherit the wind." All they will get by these arts will not only be empty and worthless as the wind, but noisy and troublesome, vanity and vexation.

Secondly. Carelessness and want of common prudence on the other hand. He that is a fool in his business, that either minds it not, or goes awkwardly about it, that has no contrivance and consideration, he not only loseth his reputation and interest, but becomes "a servant to the wise in heart," he is impoverished, and forced to work for his living, while those that manage wisely raise themselves, and come to have dominion over him and others like him. It is rational and very fit that the fool should be servant to the wise in heart, and upon that account, among others, we are bound to submit our wills to the will of God, and to be subject to him, because we are fools, and he is infinitely wise.

30 The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life;
And he that winneth souls *is* wise

This shews what great blessings good men are, especially those that are eminently wise, to the places where they live, and therefore how much to be valued.

First. The righteous are as trees of life. The fruits of their piety and charity, their instructions, reproofs, examples, and prayers, their interest in heaven, and their influence upon earth, are like the fruits of that tree, precious and useful, contributing to the support and nourishment of the spiritual life in many; they are the ornaments of paradise, God's church on earth, for whose sake it stands.

Secondly. The wise are something more; they are as trees of knowledge, not forbidden, but commanded knowledge. He that is wise, by communicating his wisdom, wins souls, wins upon them to bring them in love with God and holiness, and so wins them over into the interests of God's kingdom among men. The wise are said to turn many to righteousness, and that is the same with winning souls here, *Dan.* xii. 3. Abraham's proselytes are called, the souls that he had gotten, *Gen.* xii. 5. They that would win souls have need of wisdom to know how to deal with them; and they that do win souls, shew that they are wise.

31 Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth:
Much more the wicked and the sinner.

This, I think, is the only one of Solomon's proverbs that has that note of attention prefixed to it, "behold," which intimates that it contains not only an evident truth, which may be beheld, but an eminent truth which must be considered.

First. Some understand both parts of a recompence in displeasure. The righteous, if they do amiss, shall be punished for their offences in this world; much more shall wicked people be punished for theirs, which are committed, not through infirmity, but with a high hand. If judgment begin at the house of God, what will become of the ungodly, 1 *Pet.* iv. 17, 18; *Lu.* xxiii. 31.

Secondly. I rather understand it of a recompence of reward to the righteous, and punishment to sinners. Let us behold providential retributions. There are some recompences in the earth, in this world, and in the things of this world, which prove that, "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth," *Ps.* lviii. 11. But they are not universal, many sins go unpunished in the earth, and services unrewarded, which proves that there is a judgment to come, and there will be more exact and full retributions in the future state. Many times the righteous are recompensed for their righteousness here, in the earth; though that is not the principal, much less the only reward, either intended for them, or intended by them; but whatever the word of God hath promised them, or the wisdom of God sees good for them, they shall have in the earth. The wicked also, and the sinner, are sometimes remarkably punished in this life; nations, families, particular persons. And if the righteous, who do not deserve the least reward, yet have part of their recompence here on earth, much more shall the wicked, who deserve the greatest punishment, have part of their punishment on earth, as an earnest of worse to come. Therefore, stand in awe, and sin not. If those have two heavens that merit none, much more shall they have two hells that merit both.

CHAPTER XII.

WHOSO loveth instruction loveth knowledge:
But he that hateth reproof *is* brutish.

We are here taught to try whether we have grace or no, by inquiring how we stand affected to the means of grace.

First. Those that have grace, and love it, will delight in all the instructions that are given them by way of counsel, admonition, or reproof, by the word or providence of God; will value a good education, and think it not a hardship, but a happiness, to be under a strict and prudent discipline. They that love a faithful ministry, that value it, and sit under it with pleasure, make it to appear they love knowledge.

Secondly. Those shew themselves not only void of grace, but void of common sense, that take it as an affront to be told of their faults, and an imposition upon their liberty to be put in mind of their duty. "He that hateth reproof, is" not only foolish, but "brutish," like the horse, and the mule, that have no understanding, or the ox, that kicks against the goad. Those that desire to live in loose families and societies, where they may be under no check, that stifle the convictions of their own consciences, and count those their enemies that tell them the truth, are the brutish here meant.

2 A good *man* obtaineth favour of the LORD:
But a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

Note, First. We are really as we are with God. Those are happy, truly happy, for ever happy, that obtain favour of the Lord, though the world frown upon them, and they find little favour with men, for in God's favour is life, and that is the fountain of all good. On the other hand, those are miserable whom he condemns, however men may applaud them and cry them up; whom he condemns, he condemns to the second death.

Secondly. We are with God as we are with men, as we have our conversation in this world; our Father judges of his children very much by their carriage one to another, and therefore a good man that is merciful, and charitable, and doeth good, he draws out favour from the Lord by his prayers; but a malicious man that deviseth wickedness against his neighbours he will condemn as unworthy of a place in his kingdom.

3 A man shall not be established by wickedness:
But the root of the righteous shall not be moved.

Note, First. Though men may advance themselves by sinful arts, they cannot by such arts settle and secure themselves; though they get broad estates they cannot get long ones. "A man shall not be established by wickedness;" it may set them in high places, but they are slippery places, *Ps.* lxxiii. 18. That prosperity which is raised by sin is built on the sand, and so it will soon appear.

Secondly. Though good men may have but little of the world, yet that little will last, and what is honestly got will wear well; "the root of the righteous shall not be moved," though their branches may be shaken. Those that by faith are rooted in Christ are firmly fixed; in him their comfort and happiness is so rooted as never to be rooted up.

4 A virtuous woman *is* a crown to her husband:
But she that maketh ashamed *is* as rottenness in his bones.

Note, First. He that is blessed with a good wife is as happy as if he were upon the throne, for she is no less than a crown to him. A virtuous woman,

that is pious and prudent, ingenious and industrious, that is active for the good of her family, and looks well to the ways of her household, that makes conscience of her duty in every relation; a woman of spirit, that can bear crosses without disturbance; such a one owns her husband for her head, and therefore she is a crown to him, not only a credit and honour to him, as a crown is an ornament, but supports and keeps up his authority in his family, as a crown is an ensign of power. She is submissive and faithful to him, and thereby teaches his children and servants to be so too.

Secondly. He that is plagued with an ill wife is as miserable as if he were upon the dunghill, for she is no better than "rottenness in his bones," an incurable disease; besides that, she makes him ashamed. She that is silly and slothful, wasteful and wanton, passionate and ill-tongued, ruins both the credit and comfort of her husband; if he go abroad, his head is hung down, for his wife's fault turns to his reproach; if he retire into himself, his heart is sunk, he is continually uneasy. It is an affliction that preys much upon the spirits.

5 The thoughts of the righteous *are* right:
But the counsels of the wicked *are* deceit.

Note, First. The word of God is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and judgeth them. We mistake if we imagine that thoughts are free; no, they are under the Divine cognizance, and therefore under the Divine command.

Secondly. We ought to be observers of the thoughts and intents of our own hearts, and to judge of ourselves by them, for they are the firstborn of the soul, that have most of its image undisguised. Right thoughts are a righteous man's best evidences, as nothing more certainly proves a man wicked than wicked contrivances and designs. A good man may have in his mind bad suggestions, but he doth not indulge them and harbour them till they are ripened into ill projects and resolutions.

Thirdly. It is a man's honour to mean honestly, and to have his thoughts right, though a word or action may be misplaced or mistimed, or at least misinterpreted; but it is a man's shame to lie always at catch, to act with deceit, with trick and design, not only with a long reach but an overreach.

6 The words of the wicked *are* to lie in wait for blood:
But the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

In the foregoing verse, the thoughts of the wicked and righteous were compared; here, their words, and those are as the abundance of the heart is.

First. Wicked people speak mischief to their neighbours, and wicked indeed those are whose words are to lie in wait for blood; their tongues are swords to those that stand in their way, to good men, whom they hate and persecute: see an instance, *Lu.* xx. 20, 21.

Secondly. Good men speak help to their neighbours. The mouth of the upright is ready to be opened in the cause of those that are oppressed, *ch.* xxxi. 8, to plead for them, and so to deliver them, particularly them whom the wicked lie in wait for. A man may sometimes do a very good work with one good word.

7 The wicked are overthrown, and *are* not:
But the house of the righteous shall stand.

We are here taught as before, ver. 3, and *ch.* x. 25, 30,

First. That "the triumphing of the wicked is short;" they may be exalted for a while, but in a little time they "are overthrown and are not." Their trouble proves their overthrow, and they who made a great show disappear, and their place knows them no more; "Turn the wicked, and they are not." They stand in such a slippery place, that the least touch of trouble brings them down; like the apples of Sodom, which look fair, but touch them and they go to dust.

Secondly. That the prosperity of the righteous has a good bottom, and will endure. Death will remove them, but their house shall stand, their families shall be kept up, and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom:
But he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

We are here told whence to expect a good name. Reputation is what most have a mighty regard to, and stand much upon. Now it is certain,

First. The best reputation is that which attends virtue and serious piety, and the prudent conduct of life. "A man shall be commended" by all that are wise and good, in conformity to the judgment of God himself, which "we are sure is according to truth," not according to his riches or preferments, his craft and subtlety, but "according to his wisdom," the honesty of his designs, and the prudent choice of means to compass them.

Secondly. The worst reproach is that which follows wickedness, and an opposition to that which is good. "He that is of a perverse heart," that turns aside to crooked ways, and goes on frowardly in them, he "shall be despised." Providence will bring him into poverty and contempt, and all that have a true sense of honour will despise him as unworthy to be dealt with, and unfit to be trusted, and a blemish and scandal to mankind.

9 *He that is* despised, and hath a servant, [bread.
Is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh

Note, First. It is the folly of some, that they covet to make a great figure abroad, take place, and take state as persons of quality, and yet want necessaries at home, and if their debts were paid would not be worth a morsel of bread; nay, perhaps pinch their bellies to put it on their backs, that they may appear very gay, because fine feathers make fine birds.

Secondly. The condition and character of those is every way better, who content themselves in a lower sphere, where they are despised for the plainness of their dress and the meanness of their post, that they may be able to afford themselves not only necessaries but conveniences in their own houses, not only bread, but a servant to attend them, and take some of their work off their hands. They that contrive to live plentifully and comfortably at home, are to be preferred before those that affect nothing so much as to appear splendid abroad, though they have not wherewithal to maintain it, whose hearts are unhumbled when their condition is low.

10 A righteous *man* regardeth the life of his beast:
But the tender mercies of the wicked *are* cruel.

See here, First. To how great a degree a good man will be merciful; he has not only a compassion for the human nature under its greatest abasements, but he regardeth even "the life of his beast," not only because it is his servant, but because it is God's creature, and in conformity to providence, which preserveth man and beast. The beasts that are under our care must be provided for, must have convenient food and rest, must in no case be abused or tyrannized over; Balaam was checked for beating his ass. The law took care for oxen. Those, therefore, are unrighteous men that are not just to the brute creatures; those that are furious and barbarous to them evidence and confirm in themselves a habit of barbarity, and help to make the creation groan, *Rom.* viii. 22.

Secondly. To how great a degree a wicked man will be unmerciful; even his tender mercies are cruel; that is, that natural compassion which is in him as a man, is lost, and by the power of corruption is turned into hardheartedness; even that which they will have to pass for compassion is really cruel, as Pilate's resolution concerning Christ the innocent, "I will chastise him, and let him go." Their pretended kindnesses are only a cover for intended cruelties.

11 He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread:
But he that followeth vain *persons is* void of understanding.

Note, First. It is men's wisdom to mind their business, and follow an honest calling, for that is the way, by the blessing of God, to get a livelihood; "He that tills his land," of which he is either the owner or the occupant, that keeps to his work, and is willing to take pains, if he do not raise an estate by it, (what needs that?) yet he "shall be satisfied with bread," shall have food convenient for himself and his family, enough to bear his charges comfortably through the world. Even the sentence of wrath has this mercy in it, Thou shalt eat bread, though it be in the sweat of thy face. Cain was denied this, *Gen.* iv. 12. Be busy, and that is the true way to be easy; keep thy shop, and thy shop will keep thee; "Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands."

Secondly. It is men's folly to neglect their business, they are void of understanding that do so, for then they fall in with idle companions, and follow them in their ill courses, and so come to want bread, at least bread of their own, and make themselves burthensome to others, eating the bread out of other people's mouths.

12 The wicked desireth the net of evil *men:*
But the root of the righteous yieldeth *fruit.*

See here, First. What is the care and aim of a wicked man; he would do mischief; he "desires the net of evil men;" O that I were but as cunning as such a man, to make a hand of those I deal with, that I had but his art of overreaching, that I could but take my revenge on one I have a spite to, as effectually as he can! 'He desireth the stronghold or fortress of evil men,' (so some read it,) to act securely in doing mischief, that it may not turn upon him.

Secondly. What is the care and aim of a good man; his root yieldeth fruit, and is his strength and stability, and that is it that he desires, to do good, and to be fixed and confirmed in doing good. The wicked desires only a net wherewith to fish for himself; the righteous desires to yield fruit for the benefit of others and God's glory, *Rom.* xiv. 6.

13 The wicked is snared by the transgression of *his* lips:
But the just shall come out of trouble.

See here, First. The wicked entangling themselves in trouble by their folly, when God in justice leaves them to themselves. They are "often snared by the transgression of their lips," and their throats are cut with their own tongues. By speaking evil of dignities they expose themselves to public justice, by giving ill language they become obnoxious to private resentments, are sued for defamation, and actions on the case for words are brought against them. Many a man has paid dear in this world for the transgression of his lips, and has felt the lash on his back for want of a bridle upon his tongue, *Ps.* lxiv. 8.

Secondly. The righteous extricating themselves out of trouble by their own wisdom, when God in mercy comes in for their succour; "The just shall come out of such troubles" as the wicked throw themselves headlong into. It is intimated that the just may perhaps come into trouble, but "though they fall they shall not be utterly cast down," *Ps.* xxxiv. 19.

14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of *his* mouth:
And the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

We are here assured, for our quickening to every good word and work,

First. That even good words will turn to a good account; ver. 14, "A man shall be satisfied with good," that is, he shall gain present comfort, that inward pleasure which is truly satisfying, "by the fruit of his mouth," that is, by the good he doth with his pious discourse and prudent advice. While we are teaching others we may ourselves learn, and feed on that bread of life we break to others.

Secondly. That good works, much more, will be abundantly rewarded. "The recompence of a man's hands" for all his work and labour of love, all he has done for the glory of God and the good of his generation, "shall be rendered unto him," and he shall reap as he hath sown. Or it may be understood of the general rule of justice, "God will render to every man according to his work," *Rom.* ii. 6.

15 The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes:
But he that hearkeneth unto counsel *is* wise.

See here, First. What it is that keeps a fool from being wise; "His way is right in his own eyes." He thinks he is in the right in every thing he doth, and therefore asks no advice, because he doth not apprehend he needs it; is confident he knows the way, and cannot miss it, and therefore never inquires the way. The rule he goes by is to do that which is right in his own eyes, to walk in the way of his heart. *Quicquid libet, licet,*—'He makes his will his law.' He is a fool that is governed by his eye, and not by his conscience.

Secondly. What it is that keeps a wise man from being a fool; he is willing to be advised, desires to have counsel given him, and hearkens to counsel, being diffident of his own judgment, and having a value for the directions of those that are wise and good. He is wise; it is a sign he is so, and he is likely to continue so, whose ear is always open to good advice.

16 A fool's wrath is presently known:
But a prudent *man* covereth shame.

Note, First. Passion is folly; 'A fool is known by his anger,' so some read it; not but that a wise man may be angry when there is just cause for it, but then he has his anger under check and direction, is lord of his anger, whereas a fool's anger lords it over him. He that, when he is provoked, breaks out into indecent expressions in words or behaviour, whose passion alters his countenance, makes him outrageous, and forget himself, "Nabal" certainly "is his name, and folly is with him." 'A fool's indignation is known in the day;' he proclaims it openly, whatever company he is in; or it is known in the day he is provoked, he cannot defer shewing his resentments. Those that are soon angry, that are presently put into a flame by the least spark, have not that rule which they ought to have of their own spirits.

Secondly. Meekness is wisdom; "A prudent man covereth shame;" that is, 1. He covers the passion that is in his own breast. When his spirit is stirred, and his heart hot within him, he keeps his mouth as with a bridle, and suppresseth his resentments by smothering and stifling them. Anger is shame, and though a wise man be not perfectly free from it, yet he is ashamed of it, rebukes it, and suffers not the evil spirit to speak. 2. He covers the provocation that is given him, the indignity that is done him, winks at it, covers it as much as may be from himself, that he may not carry his resentments of it too far. It is a kindness to ourselves, and contributes to the repose of our own minds, to extenuate and excuse the injuries and affronts that we receive, instead of aggravating them and making the worst of them, as we are apt to do.

17 *He that* speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness:
But a false witness deceit.

Here is, First. A faithful witness commended for an honest man. He that makes conscience of speaking truth, and representing every thing fairly to the best of his knowledge, whether in judgment or in common converse, whether he be upon his oath or no, he "sheweth forth righteousness," he makes it to appear that he is governed and acted by the principles and laws of righteousness; and he promotes justice by doing honour to it, and serving the administration of it.

Secondly. A false witness condemned for a cheat. He sheweth forth deceit; not only how little conscience he makes of deceiving those he deals with, but how much pleasure he takes in it, and that he is possessed by a lying spirit, *Jer.* ix. 3, 5. We are all concerned to possess ourselves with a dread and detestation of the sin of lying, *Ps.* cxix. 163, and a reigning principle of honesty.

18 There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword:
But the tongue of the wise *is* health.

The tongue is death or life, poison or medicine, as it is used.

First. There are words that are cutting and killing, that are "like the piercings of a sword." Opprobrious words grieve the spirits of those to whom they are spoken, and cut them to the heart. Slanders, like a sword, wound the reputation of those of whom they are uttered, and perhaps incurably. Whisperings and evil surmises, like a sword, divide and cut asunder the bonds of love and friendship, and separate those that have been dearest to each other.

Secondly. There are words that are curing and healing. "The tongue of the wise is health;" closing up those wounds which the backbiting tongue had given, licking all whole again, restoring peace, and accommodating matters in variance, and persuading to reconciliation. Wisdom will find out proper remedies against the mischiefs that are made by detraction and evil-speaking.

19 The lip of truth shall be established for ever:
But a lying tongue *is* but for a moment.

Be it observed, to the honour of truth, that sacred thing,

First. That if truth be spoken it will hold good, and whoever may be disobliged by it, and angry at it, yet it will keep its ground. Great is the truth, and will prevail. What is true will be always true, we may abide by it, and need not fear being disproved, and put to shame.

Secondly. That if truth be denied, yet in time it will out; "a lying tongue" that puts false colours upon things, "is but for a moment;" the lie will be disproved. The liar, when he comes to be examined, will be found in several stories, and not constant to himself, as he is that speaks truth. And when he is found in a lie he cannot gain his point, nor will he afterwards be credited. Truth may be eclipsed, but it will come to light; those, therefore, that make a lie their refuge will find it a refuge of lies.

20 Deceit *is* in the heart of them that imagine evil:
But to the counsellors of peace *is* joy.

Note, First. Those that devise mischief, for the accomplishing of it contrive how to impose upon others, but it will prove in the end that they deceive themselves. They that imagine evil under colour of friendship, have their hearts full of this and the other advantage and satisfaction which they shall gain by it, but it is all a cheat. Let them manage it never so artfully, deceivers will be deceived.

Secondly. Those that consult the good of their neighbours, that study the things which make for peace, and give peaceable advice, promote healing attempts, and contrive healing methods, and, according as their sphere is, farther the public welfare, will have not only the credit but the comfort of it, to them there is joy and success, perhaps beyond their expectation. "Blessed are the peacemakers."

21 There shall no evil happen to the just:
But the wicked shall be filled with mischief.

Note, First. Piety is a sure protection. If men be sincerely righteous, the righteous God has engaged that no evil shall happen to them. He will by the power of his grace in them, that principle of justice, keep them from the evil of sin; so that though they be tempted, yet they shall not be overcome by the temptation. And, though they may come into trouble, into many troubles, yet to them those troubles shall have no evil in them, whatever they have to others, *Ps.* xci. 10; for they shall be overruled to work for their good.

Secondly. Wickedness is as sure a destruction. They that live in contempt of God and man, that are set on mischief, with mischief they shall be filled; they shall be more and more mischievous, shall be filled with all unrighteousness, *Rom.* i. 29; or, they shall be made miserable with the mischiefs that shall come upon them. They that delight in mischief shall have enough of it. Some read the whole verse thus; 'There shall no evil happen to the just, though the wicked be filled with mischief' and spite against them. They shall be safe under the protection of Heaven, though hell itself break loose upon them.

22 Lying lips *are* abomination to the LORD:
But they that deal truly *are* his delight.

We are here taught,

First. To hate lying, and to keep at the utmost distance from it, because it is an abomination to the Lord, and renders those abominable in his sight that allow themselves in it; not only because it is a breach of his law, but because it is destructive to human society.

Secondly. To make conscience of truth, not only in our words but in all our actions, because those that deal truly and sincerely in all their dealings, are his delight, and he is well pleased with them. We delight to converse with and make use of those that are honest, and that we may put a confidence in; such, therefore, let us be, that we may recommend ourselves to the favour both of God and man.

23 A prudent man concealeth knowledge:
But the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

Note, First. He that is wise doth not affect to proclaim his wisdom, and it is his honour that he doth not; he communicates his knowledge when it may turn to the edification of others, but he conceals it when the shewing of it would only tend to his own commendation. Knowing men, if they be prudent men, will carefully avoid every thing that savours of ostentation, and not take all occasions to shew their learning and reading, but only to use it for good purposes, and then let their own works praise them. *Ars est celare artem*,—'The perfection of art is to conceal it.'

Secondly. He that is foolish cannot avoid proclaiming his folly, and it is his shame that he cannot. "The heart of fools," by their foolish words and actions, "proclaimeth foolishness;" either they do not desire to hide it, so little sense have they of good and evil, honour and dishonour, or they know not how to hide it, so little discretion have they in the management of themselves, *Eccl.* x. 3.

24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule:
But the slothful shall be under tribute.

Note, First. Industry is the way to preferment. Solomon advanced Jeroboam because he saw that he was an industrious young man, and minded his business, 1 *Kin.* xi. 28. Men that take pains in study and serviceableness, will thereby gain such an interest and reputation, as will give them a dominion over all about them, by which means many have risen strangely. "He that has been faithful in a few things, shall be made ruler over many things;" "The elders that labour in the word and doctrine, are worthy of double honour." And those that are diligent when they are young will get that which will enable them to rule, and so to rest, when they are old.

Secondly. Knavery is the way to slavery. "The slothful," and careless, or rather, 'the deceitful,' for so the word signifies, "shall be under tribute." Those that, because they will not take pains in an honest calling, live by their shifts and arts of dishonesty, are paltry and beggarly, and will be kept under. They that are diligent and honest when they are apprentices, will come to be masters; but those that are otherwise are the fools which all their days must be "servants to the wise in heart."

25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop:
But a good word maketh it glad.

Here is, First. The cause and consequence of melancholy. It is "heaviness in the heart;" it is a load of care, and fear, and sorrow upon the spirits; depressing them, and disabling to exert themselves with any vigour in what is to be done, or courage in what is to be borne; it "makes them stoop," prostrates and sinks them. Those that are thus oppressed, can neither do the duty, nor take the comfort of any relation, condition, or conversation; it is that which those that are inclined to it should therefore watch and pray against.

Secondly. The cure of it. "A good word" from God, applied by faith, "maketh it glad;" such a word as that, (saith one of the rabbins,) "Cast thy burthen upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." The good word of God, particularly the Gospel, is designed to make the hearts glad that are weary and heavy laden, *Mat.* xi. 28. Ministers are to be helpers of this joy.

26 The righteous *is* more excellent than his neighbour:
But the way of the wicked seduceth them.

See here, First. That good men do well for themselves; for they have in themselves an excellent character, and they secure to themselves an excellent portion, and in both they excel other people; 'The righteous is more abundant than his neighbour;' so the margin. He is richer, though not in this world's goods, yet in the graces and comforts of the Spirit, which are the true riches. There is a true excellency in religion; it ennobles men, inspires them with generous principles, makes them substantial; it is an excellency which is in the sight of God of great price, who is the true Judge of excellency. His neighbour may make a greater figure in the world, may be more applauded, but the righteous man has the intrinsic worth.

Secondly. That wicked men do ill for themselves; they walk in a way which seduceth them. It seems to them to be not only a pleasant way, but the right way; it is so agreeable to flesh and blood, that they therefore flatter themselves with an opinion that it cannot be amiss; but they will not gain the point they aim at, nor enjoy the good they hope for; it is all a cheat; and, therefore, the righteous is wiser and happier than his neighbours, that yet despise him, and trample upon him.

27 The slothful *man* roasteth not that which he took in hunting:
But the substance of a diligent man *is* precious.

Here is, First. That which may make us hate slothfulness and deceit, for the word here, as before, signifies both. The slothful, deceitful man has roast meat, but that which he roasts is not what he himself took in hunting; no, it is what others took pains for, and he lives upon the fruit of their labours, like the drones in the hive. Or, if the slothful, deceitful man has taken any thing by hunting, (as sportsmen are seldom men of business,) yet they do not roast it when they have taken it; they have no comfort in the enjoyment of it; perhaps God in his providence cuts them short of it.

Secondly. That which may make us in love with industry and honesty; that "the substance of a diligent man," though it be not great perhaps, yet it "is precious." It comes from the blessing of God; he hath comfort in it,—it doth him good and his family; it is his own daily bread, not bread out of other people's mouths; and, therefore, he sees God gives it him in answer to his prayer.

28 In the way of righteousness *is* life;
And *in* the pathway *thereof there is* no death.

The way of religion is here recommended to us,
First. As a straight, plain, easy way. It is "the way of righteousness." God's commands (the rules we are to walk by) are all holy, just, and good. Religion has right, reason, and equity on its side; it is a pathway, a way which God has cast up for us, *Isa.* xxxv. 8; it is a highway, the King's highway, the King of kings' highway, a way which is tracked before us by all the saints; the good old way, full of the footsteps of the flock.

Secondly. As a safe, pleasant, comfortable way. 1. There is not only life at the end, but there is life in the way; all true comfort and satisfaction; the favour of God, which is better than life; the Spirit who is life. 2. There is not only life in it, but so as that in it "there is no death." None of that sorrow of the world which worketh death, and is an allay to our present joy and life; no end of that life that is in the way of righteousness. Here there is life, but there is death too; in the way of righteousness there is life, and no death; life and immortality.

HUNTING—FROM PERSIAN SCULPTURES AT PERSEPOLIS.—ver. 27.

CHAPTER XIII.

A WISE son *heareth* his father's instruction:
But a scorner heareth not rebuke.

Among the children of the same parents, it is no new thing for some to be hopeful, and others the contrary; now here we are taught to distinguish.

First. There is great hopes of those that have a reverence for their parents, and are willing to be advised and admonished by them. He is "a wise son," and is in a fair way to be wiser, that "heareth his father's instruction;" desires to hear it, regards it, and complies with it, and doth not only give it the hearing.

Secondly. There is little hopes of those that will not so much as hear rebuke with any patience, but scorn to submit to government, and scoff at those that deal friendly with them. How can those mend of a fault who will not be told of it, but count those their enemies who do them that kindness?

2 A man shall eat good by the fruit of *his* mouth:
But the soul of the transgressors *shall eat* violence.

Note, First. If that which comes from within out of the heart be good, and from a good treasure, it will return with advantage. Inward comfort and satisfaction will be daily bread; nay, it will be a continual feast to those who delight in that communication which is to the use of edifying.

Secondly. Violence done will recoil in the face of him that doth it. "The soul of the transgressors" that harbours and plots mischief, and vents it by word and deed, "shall eat violence;" they shall have their belly full of it. "Reward her as she has rewarded thee," *Rev.* xviii. 6. Every man shall drink as he brews, eat as he speaks; for by our words we must be justified or condemned, *Mat.* xii. 37. As our fruit is, so will our food be, *Rom.* vi. 21, 22.

3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life:
But he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Note, First. A guard upon the lips is a guard to the soul. He that is cautious what he saith, that thinks twice before he speaks once, that if he have thought evil, layeth his hand upon his mouth to suppress it, that keeps a strong bridle on his tongue, and a strict hand on that bridle, he keeps his soul from a great deal both of guilt and grief, and saves himself the trouble of many bitter reflections on himself, and others upon him.

Secondly. There is many a one ruined by an ungoverned tongue. "He that opens wide his lips," to let out 'every thing that comes uppermost,'—*quicquid in buccam venerit;* that loves to bawl and bluster and make a noise, and affects such a liberty of speech as bids defiance both to God and man, he "shall have destruction." It will be the destruction of his reputation, his interest, his comfort, and his soul for ever, *Jas.* iii. 6.

4 The soul of the sluggard desireth, and *hath* nothing:
But the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

Here is, First. The misery and shame of the slothful. See how foolish and absurd they are; they desire the gains which the diligent get, but they hate the pains which the diligent take; they covet every thing that is to be coveted, but will do nothing that is to be done; and therefore it follows, they have nothing. For he that will not labour, let him hunger, and let him not eat, 2 *Thes.* iii. 10. The desire of the slothful, which should be his excitement, is his torment, which should make him busy, makes him always uneasy, and is really a greater toil to him than labour would be.

Secondly. The happiness and honour of the diligent. Their soul shall be made fat, they shall have abundance, and shall have the comfortable enjoyment of it, and the more for its being the fruit of their diligence. This is especially true in spiritual affairs. They that rest in idle wishes, know not what the advantages of religion are, whereas they that take pains in the service of God, find both the pleasure and profit of it.

5 A righteous *man* hateth lying:
But a wicked *man* is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

Note, First. Where grace reigns sin is loathsome. It is the undoubted character of every righteous man that he hates lying, that is, all sin, for every sin is a lie, and particularly all fraud and falsehood in commerce and conversation. Not only that he will not tell a lie, but he abhors it, from a rooted, reigning principle of love to truth and justice, and conformity to God.

Secondly. Where sin reigns the man is loathsome. If his eyes were opened and his conscience awakened, he would be so to himself, he would abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes; however, he is so to God and all good men; particularly he makes himself so by lying, than which nothing more detestable; and though he may think to face it out a while, yet he will come to shame and contempt at last, and will blush to shew his face, *Dan.* xii. 2.

6 Righteousness keepeth *him that is* upright in the way:
But wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

See here, First. Saints secured from ruin. Those that are upright in their way, that mean honestly in all their actions, adhere conscientiously to the sacred and eternal rules of equity, and deal sincerely both with God and man, their integrity will keep them from the temptations of Satan, which shall not prevail over them, the reproaches and injuries of evil men, which shall not fasten upon them to do them any real mischief, *Ps.* xxv. 21.

Hic murus aheneus esto,
Nil conscire sibi,—
'Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.'

Secondly. Sinners secured for ruin. Those that are wicked, even their wickedness will be their overthrow at last, and they are held in the cords of it in the mean time. Are they corrected, destroyed? It is their own wickedness that corrects them, that destroys them; they alone shall bear it.

7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing:
There is that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches.

This observation is applicable,

First. To men's worldly estate. The world is a great cheat; not only the things of the world, but the men of the world; "All men are liars." Here is an instance in two sore evils under the sun: 1. Some that are really poor would be thought to be rich, and are thought to be so. They trade and spend as if they were rich, make a great bustle and a great show as if they had hid treasures, when perhaps if all their debts were paid they are not worth a groat. This is sin, and will be shame; many a one hereby ruins his family, and brings reproach upon his profession of religion. They that thus live above what they have, choose to be subject to their own pride rather than to God's providence, and it will end accordingly. 2. Some that are really rich would be thought to be poor, and are thought to be so, because they sordidly and sneakingly live below what God has given them, and choose rather to bury it than use it, *Eccl.* vi. 1, 2. In this there is ingratitude to God, injustice to the family and neighbourhood, and uncharitableness to the poor.

Secondly. To their spiritual state. Grace is the riches of the soul, it is true riches; but men commonly misrepresent themselves, either designedly, or through mistake and ignorance of themselves. 1. There are many presuming hypocrites that are really poor and empty of grace, and yet either think themselves rich, and will not be convinced of their poverty, or pretend themselves rich, and will not own their poverty. 2. There are many timorous, trembling Christians, that are spiritually rich and full of grace, and yet think themselves poor, and will not be persuaded that they are rich, or at least will not own it; by their doubts and fears, their complaints and griefs, they make themselves poor. The former mistake is destroying at last, this is disquieting in the mean time.

8 The ransom of a man's life *are* his riches:
But the poor heareth not rebuke.

We are apt to judge of men's blessedness, at least in this world, by their wealth, and that they are more or less happy according as they have more or less of this world's good; but Solomon here shews what a gross mistake it is, that we may be reconciled to a poor condition, and may neither covet riches ourselves, nor envy those that have abundance.

First. Those that are rich, if by some they are respected for their riches, yet to balance that, by others they are envied and struck at, and brought in danger of their lives, which therefore they are forced to ransom with their riches; "Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field," *Jer.* xli. 8. Under some tyrants it has been crime enough to be rich; and how little is a man beholden to his wealth when it only serves to redeem that life which otherwise had not been exposed!

Secondly. Those that are poor, if by some that should be their friends they are despised and overlooked, yet to balance that, they are also despised and overlooked by others that would be their enemies if they had any thing to lose. "The poor heareth not rebuke," is not censured, reproached, accused, nor brought into trouble, as the rich are; for nobody thinks it worth while to take notice of him. When the rich Jews were carried captives to Babylon,

the poor of the land were left, 2 *Kin.* xxv. 12. Fair fall nothing, once in seven years. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*,—'When a traveller is met by a robber, he will rejoice at not having much property about him.'

9 The light of the righteous rejoiceth:
But the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

Here is, First. The comfort of good men flourishing and lasting. "The light of the righteous rejoiceth," that is, it increaseth, and makes them glad. Even their outward prosperity is their joy, and much more those gifts, graces, and comforts with which their souls are illuminated, these shine more and more, *ch.* iv. 18. The Spirit is their light, and he gives them a fulness of joy, and rejoiceth to do them good.

Secondly. The comfort of bad men withering and dying. "The lamp of the wicked" burns dim and faint, it looks melancholy, like a taper in an urn, and it will shortly be put out in utter darkness, *Isa.* l. 11. The light of the righteous is as that of the sun, which may be eclipsed and clouded, but will continue; that of the wicked is as a lamp of their own kindling, which will presently go out, and is easily put out.

10 Only by pride cometh contention:
But with the well advised *is* wisdom.

Note, First. Foolish pride is the great makebate. Would you know whence come wars and fightings? they come from this root of bitterness; whatever hand other lusts may have in contention, passion, envy, covetousness, pride has the great hand; it is its pride that it will itself sow discord, and needs no help. Pride makes men impatient of contradiction either in their opinions or desires, impatient of competition and rivalship, impatient of contempt or any thing that looks like a slight, and impatient of concession and receding from a conceit of certain right and truth on their side, and hence arise quarrels among relations and neighbours, quarrels in states and kingdoms, in churches and Christian societies. Men will be revenged, will not forgive, because they are proud.

Secondly. Those that are humble and peaceable, are wise and well-advised. Those that will ask and take advice, that will consult their own consciences, their bibles, their ministers, their friends, and will do nothing rashly, they are wise, as in other things, so in this, that they will humble themselves, will stoop and yield, to preserve quietness, and prevent quarrels.

11 Wealth *gotten* by vanity shall be diminished:
But he that gathereth by labour shall increase.

This shews that riches wear as they are won and woven.

First. That which is won ill will never wear well, for there is a curse attends it which will waste it; and the same corrupt dispositions which incline men to the sinful ways of getting, will incline them to the like sinful ways of spending. "Wealth gotten by vanity" will be bestowed upon vanity, and then it "will be diminished." That which is got by such employments as are not lawful, or not becoming Christians, which only serve to feed pride and luxury; that which is got by gaming, or by the stage, may as truly be said to be gotten by vanity as that which is got by fraud and lying, and will be diminished. *De male quæsitis vix gaudet tertius hæres*,—'Ill-gotten wealth will scarcely be enjoyed by the third generation.'

Secondly. That which is got by industry and honesty will grow more instead of growing less; it will be a maintenance, it will be an inheritance, it will be an abundance. He that laboureth, working with his hands, shall so increase as that he shall have to give to him that needeth, *Eph.* iv. 28; and when it comes to that it will increase yet more and more.

12 Hope deferred maketh the heart sick:
But *when* the desire cometh, *it is* a tree of life.

Note, First. Nothing is more grievous than the disappointment of a raised expectation; though not in the thing itself by a denial, yet in the time of it, by a delay. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick" and languishing, fretful and peevish; but hope quite dashed, kills the heart dead; and the higher the expectation was raised, the more cutting is the frustration of it. It is therefore our wisdom not to promise ourselves any great matters from the creature, nor to feed ourselves with any vain hopes from this world, lest we lay up matter for our own vexation; and what we do hope for let us prepare to be disappointed in, that if it should prove so it may prove the easier; and let us not be hasty.

Secondly. Nothing is more grateful than to enjoy that at last which we have long wished for and waited for. When the desire doth come, it puts men into a sort of paradise, a garden of pleasure, for "it is a tree of life." It will aggravate the eternal misery of the wicked that their hopes will be frustrated; and it will make the happiness of heaven the more welcome to the saints, that it is what they have earnestly longed for as the crown of their hopes.

13 Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed:
But he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.

Here is, First. The character of one that is marked for ruin. "He that despiseth the word" of God, and has no regard to it, no veneration for it, nor will be ruled by it, certainly he "shall be destroyed," for he slights that which is the only means of curing a destructive disease, and makes himself obnoxious to that Divine wrath which will certainly be his destruction. Those that prefer the rules of carnal policy before Divine precepts, and the allurements of the world and the flesh before God's promises and comforts, despise his word, giving the preference to those things that stand in competition with it; and it is to their own just destruction: they would not take warning.

Secondly. The character of one that is sure to be happy. "He that feareth the commandment," that stands in awe of God, pays a deference to his authority, has a reverence for his word, is afraid of displeasing God, and incurring the penalties annexed to the commandment, he shall not only escape destruction, but "shall be rewarded" for his godly fear. "In keeping the commandment there is great reward."

14 The law of the wise *is* a fountain of life,
To depart from the snares of death.

By "the law of the wise" and righteous here, we may understand either the principles and rules by which they govern themselves, or (which comes all to one) the instructions which they give to others, which ought to be as a law to all about them; and if they be so,

First. They will be constant springs of comfort and satisfaction; as a fountain of life sending forth streams of living water. The closer we keep to those rules the more effectually we secure our own peace.

Secondly. They will be constant preservatives from the temptations of Satan. They that follow the dictates of this law will keep at a distance from the snares of sin, and so escape the snares of death, which they run themselves into that forsake the law of the wise.

15 Good understanding giveth favour:
But the way of transgressors *is* hard.

If we compare not only the end, but the way, we shall find that religion hath the advantage; for,

First. The way of saints is pleasant and agreeable. Good understanding gains favour with God and man; our Saviour grew in that favour when he increased in wisdom. Those that carry themselves prudently, and order their conversation aright in every thing, that serve Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are accepted of God, and approved of men, *Rom.* xiv. 17, 18. And how comfortably will that man pass through the world who is well understood, and is therefore well accepted!

Secondly. The way of sinners is rough and uneasy, and for that reason unpleasant to themselves, because unacceptable to others. It is hard; hard upon others who complain of it, hard to the sinner himself, who can have little enjoyment of himself while he is doing that which is disobliging to all mankind. The service of sin is perfect slavery, and the road to hell is strewed with the thorns and thistles that are the products of the curse. Sinners labour in the very fire.

16 Every prudent *man* dealeth with knowledge:
But a fool layeth open *his* folly.

Note, First. It is wisdom to be cautious. Every prudent, discreet man, doth all with knowledge, that is, considering with himself and consulting with others, acts with deliberation, and is upon the reserve; is careful not to meddle with that which he has not some knowledge of, nor to launch out into business which he has not acquainted himself with; will not deal with those that he has not some knowledge of, whether they may be confided in. He is still dealing in knowledge, that he may increase the stock he hath.

Secondly. It is folly to be rash, as the fool is who is forward to talk of things he knows nothing of, and undertake that which he is no way fit for, and so lays open his folly, and makes himself ridiculous. He began to build and was not able to finish.

17 A wicked messenger falleth into mischief:
But a faithful ambassador *is* health.

Here is, First. The ill consequences of betraying a trust. A wicked messenger, that, being sent to negotiate any business, is false to him that employed him, divulgeth his counsels, and so defeats his designs; he cannot expect to prosper, but will certainly fall into some mischief or other, will be discovered and punished, since nothing is more hateful to God and man than the treachery of those that have confidence reposed in them.

Secondly. The happy effects of fidelity. An ambassador that faithfully dischargeth his trust, and serves the interests of those that employed him, he is health, he is health to those by whom and for whom he is employed, heals differences that are between them, and preserves a good understanding. He is health to himself, for he secures his own interest. This is applicable to ministers, Christ's messengers and ambassadors; those that are wicked, and false to Christ and the souls of men, they do mischief, and fall into mischief; but those that are faithful will find sound words to be healing words to others and themselves.

18 Poverty and shame *shall be to* him that refuseth instruc-
But he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured. [tion:

Note, First. He that is so proud that he scorns to be taught, will certainly be abased. He that refuseth the good instruction offered him, as if it were a reflection upon his honour, and an abridgment of his liberty, poverty and shame shall be to him, he will become a beggar, and live and die in disgrace. Every one will despise him as foolish, and stubborn, and ungovernable.

Secondly. He that is so humble that he takes it well to be told of his faults shall certainly be exalted. He that regardeth a reproof, whoever gives it him, and will mend what is amiss when it is shewed him, he gains respect as wise and candid, he avoids that which would be a disgrace to him, and is in a fair way to make himself considerable.

19 The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul:
But *it is* abomination to fools to depart from evil.

This shews the folly of those that refuse instruction, for they might be happy and will not.

First. They might be happy. There are in man strong desires of happiness. God has provided for the accomplishment of those desires, and that would be sweet to the soul, whereas the pleasures of sense are grateful only to the carnal appetite. The desire of good men towards the favour of God and spiritual blessings brings that which is sweet to their souls; we know those that can say so by experience, *Ps.* iv. 6, 7.

Secondly. Yet they will not be happy; for it is an "abomination to them to depart from evil," which is necessary to their being happy. Never let those expect any thing truly sweet to their souls that will not be persuaded to leave their sins, but roll them under their tongues as a sweet morsel.

20 He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise:
But a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

Note, First. Those that would be good must keep good company; which is an evidence for them that they would be good; men's character is known by the company they choose; and will be a means of making them good, of shewing them the way, and of quickening and encouraging them in it. He that would be himself wise must walk with those that are so, must choose such for his intimate acquaintance, and converse with them accordingly; must ask and receive instruction from them, and keep up pious and profitable talk with them, *Ecclus.* viii. 9, "Miss not the discourse of the elders, for they also learned of their fathers;" and, *Ecclus.* vi. 35, "Be willing to hear every godly discourse, and let not the parables of understanding escape thee."

Secondly. Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company. 'A companion of fools shall be broken,' so some; 'shall be known,' so the Seventy, known to be a fool; *noscitur ex socio*,—'he is known by his company;' he 'will be like them,' so some; will be 'made wicked,' so others; it comes all to one, for

all those, and those only that make themselves wicked, will be destroyed; and those who associate with evil-doers are debauched, and so undone, and at last have laid their deaths upon it.

21 Evil pursueth sinners:
But to the righteous good shall be repayed.

Here see, First. How unavoidable the destruction of sinners is. The wrath of God pursues them, and all the terrors of that wrath. Evil pursues them close wherever they go, as the avenger of blood pursued the manslayer, and they have no city of refuge to flee to; they attempt an escape, but in vain; whom God pursues he is sure to overtake. They may prosper for awhile, and grow very secure, but their damnation slumbers not, though they do.

Secondly. How indefeasible the happiness of the saints is. The God that cannot lie hath engaged that "to the righteous good shall be repayed." They shall be abundantly recompensed for all the good they have done, and all the ill they have suffered in this world; so that though many have been losers for their righteousness, they shall not be losers by it. Though the recompence do not come quickly, it will come in the day of payment, in the world of retribution, and it will be an abundant recompence.

22 A good *man* leaveth an inheritance to his children's children:
And the wealth of the sinner *is* laid up for the just.

See here, First. How a good man's estate lasts. He "leaves an inheritance to his children's children." It is part of his praise, that he is thoughtful for posterity, that he doth not lay all out upon himself, but is in care to do well for those that come after him, not by withholding more than is meet, but by a prudent and decent frugality. He trains up his children to this, that they may leave it to their children; and especially he is careful, both by justice and charity, to obtain the blessing of God upon what he hath, and to entail that upon his children, without which the greatest industry and frugality will be in vain. A good man, by being good, and doing good, by honouring the Lord with his substance, and spending it in his service, secures it to his posterity; or if he should not leave them much of this world's goods, his prayers, his instructions, his good example, will be the best entail, and the promises of the covenant will be an inheritance to his children's children, *Ps.* ciii. 17.

Secondly. How it increases by the accession of "the wealth of the sinner" to it, for that "is laid up for the just." If it be asked, How should good men grow so rich, who are not so eager upon the world as others are, and who commonly suffer for their well-doing? it is here answered, That God in his providence often brings into their hands that which wicked people had laid up for themselves. "The innocent shall divide the silver," *Job* xxvii. 16, 17. The Israelites shall spoil the Egyptians, *Ex.* xii. 36; and eat the riches of the Gentiles, *Isa.* lxi. 6.

23 Much food *is in* the tillage of the poor:
But there is *that is* destroyed for want of judgment.

See here, First. How a small estate may be improved by industry, so that a man by making the best of everything may live comfortably upon it; "Much food is in the tillage of the poor," the poor farmers that have but a little, but take pains with that little, and husband it well. Many make it an excuse for their idleness, that they have but a little to work on, a very little to be doing with; but the less compass the field is of, the more let the skill and labour of the owner be employed about it, and it will turn to a very good account. Let him dig, and he needs not beg.

Secondly. How a great estate may be ruined by indiscretion. There is that hath a great deal, but it is destroyed and brought to nothing for want of judgment, that is, prudence in the management of it. Men overbuild themselves, or overbuy themselves, keep greater company, or a better table, or more servants, than they can afford, suffer what they have to go to decay and do not make the most of it; by taking up money themselves, or being bound for others, their estates are sunk, their families reduced, and all for want of judgment.

24 He that spareth his rod hateth his son:
But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Note, First. To the education of children in that which is good, there is necessary a due correction of them for what is amiss. Every child of ours is a child of Adam, and therefore has that foolishness bound up in its heart which calls for rebuke, more or less, that rod and reproof which give wisdom. Observe, It is his rod that must be used, the rod of a parent directed by wisdom and love, and designed for good; not the rod of a servant.

Secondly. It is good to begin betimes with the necessary restraints of children from that which is evil, before vicious habits are confirmed. The branch is easily bent when it is tender.

Thirdly. Those really hate their children, though they pretend to be fond of them, that do not keep them under a strict discipline, and, by all proper methods, severe ones when gentle ones will not serve, make them sensible of their faults, and afraid of offending. They abandon them to their worst enemy, to the most dangerous disease, and therefore hate them. Let this reconcile children to the correction their good parents give them; it is from love, and for their good, *Heb.* xii. 7—9.

25 The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul:
But the belly of the wicked shall want.

Note, First. It is the happiness of the righteous that they shall have enough, and that they know when they have enough. They desire not to be surfeited, but, being moderate in their desires, they are soon satisfied. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less. Enough is as good as a feast. They that feed on the bread of life, that feast on the promises, meet with abundant satisfaction of soul there, eat and are filled.

Secondly. It is the misery of the wicked that, through the insatiableness of their own desires, they are always needy; not only their souls shall not be satisfied with the world and the flesh, but even their belly shall want; their sensual appetite is always craving. In hell they shall be denied a drop of water.

CHAPTER XIV.

EVERY wise woman buildeth her house:
But the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.

Note, First. A good wife is a great blessing to a family. By a fruitful wife a family is multiplied and replenished with children, and so built up; but by a prudent wife, one that is pious, and industrious, and considerate, the affairs of the family are made to prosper, debts are paid, portions raised, provision made, the children well educated and maintained, and the family has comfort within doors and credit without; thus is the house built. She looks upon it as her own to take care of, though she knows it is her husband's to bear rule in, *Est.* i. 22.

Secondly. There is many a family brought to ruin by ill housewifery as well as by ill husbandry. A foolish woman, that has no fear of God nor regard to her business, that is wilful, and wasteful, and humoursome, that indulgeth her ease and appetite, and is all for jaunting and junketing, cards and the play-house, though she come to a plentiful estate, and to a family beforehand, she will impoverish and waste it, and will as certainly be the ruin of her house, as if she plucked it down with her hands; and the husband himself, with all his care, can scarce prevent it.

2 He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD:
But *he that is* perverse in his ways despiseth him.

Here is, First. Grace and sin in their true colours. Grace reigning is a reverence of God, and gives honour to him who is infinitely great and high, and to whom all honour is due, than which what is more becoming, or should be more pleasing, to the rational creature? Sin reigning is no less than a contempt of God. In this, more than in any thing, sin appears exceeding sinful, that it despiseth God, whom angels adore. They that despise God's precepts, and will not be ruled by them, his promises, and will not accept of them, despise God himself, and all his attributes.

Secondly. Grace and sin in their true light. By this we may know a man that has grace and the fear of God reigning in him, "he walks in his uprightness," he makes conscience of his actions, is faithful both to God and man, and every stop he makes, as well as every step he takes, is by rule. Here is one that honours God. But, on the contrary, he that is "perverse in his ways," that wilfully follows his own appetites and passions, that is unjust and dishonest, and contradicts his profession in his conversation, however he may pretend to devotion, he is a wicked man, and will be reckoned with as a despiser of God himself.

3 In the mouth of the foolish *is* a rod of pride:
But the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

See here, First. A proud fool exposing himself. Where there is pride in the heart, and no wisdom in the head to suppress it, it commonly shews itself in the words. In the mouth there is pride, proud boasting, proud censuring, proud scorning, proud commanding, and giving law; this is the rod, or branch of pride (the word is used only here, and *Isa.* xi. 1.) It grows from that root of bitterness which is in the heart; it is a rod from that stem. The root must be plucked up, or we cannot conquer this branch. Or it is meant of a smiting, beating rod, a rod of pride which strikes others. The proud man with his tongue lays about him, and deals blows at pleasure, but it will in the end be a rod to himself; the proud man shall come under an ignominious correction by the words of his own mouth, not cut as a soldier, but caned as a servant, and herein he shall be beaten with his own rod, *Ps.* lxiv. 8.

Secondly. An humble, wise man, saving himself, and consulting his own good. "The lips of the wise shall preserve them" from doing that mischief to others which proud men do with their tongues, and from bringing that mischief on themselves which haughty scorners are often involved in.

4 Where no oxen *are*, the crib *is* clean:
But much increase *is* by the strength of the ox.

Note, First. The neglect of husbandry is the way of poverty; "Where no oxen are" to till the ground, and tread out the corn, "the crib" is empty, "is clean," there is no straw for the cattle, and consequently no bread for the service of man. Scarcity is represented by cleanness of teeth, *Am.* iv. 6. Where no oxen are, there is nothing to be done at the ground, and then nothing to be had out of it. The crib, indeed, is clean from dung, which pleaseth the neat and nice, that cannot endure husbandry, because there is so much dirty work in it, and therefore will sell their oxen to keep the crib clean; but then not only the labour, but even the dung, of the ox is wanted. This shews the folly of those who addict themselves to the pleasures of the country, but do not mind the business of it; that (as we say) keep more horses than kine, more dogs than swine; their families must needs suffer by it.

Secondly. Those that take pains about their ground are likely to reap the profit of it; who keep that about them which is for use and service, not for state and show, more husbandmen than footmen, they are likely to thrive. "Much increase is by the strength of the ox," that is made for our service, and is profitable alive and dead.

5 A faithful witness will not lie:
But a false witness will utter lies.

In the administration of justice much depends upon the witnesses, and therefore it is necessary to the common good that witnesses be principled as they ought to be; for,

First. A witness that is conscientious will not dare to give in a testimony that is in the least untrue, nor, for good-will or ill-will, represent a thing otherwise than according to the best of his knowledge, whoever is pleased or displeased, and then judgment runs down like a river.

Secondly. But a witness that will be bribed, and biassed, and brow-beaten, will utter lies, and not stick at it, nor startle at it, with as much readiness and assurance as if it were all true.

6 A scorner seeketh wisdom, and *findeth it* not:
But knowledge *is* easy unto him that understandeth.

Note, First. The reason why some people seek wisdom and do not find it is, because they do not seek it from a right principle, and in a right manner. They are scorners, and it is in scorn that they ask instruction, that they may ridicule what is told them, and may cavil at it. Many put questions to Christ, tempting him, and that they might have whereof to accuse him, and they were never the wiser. They that seek wisdom, as Simon Magus sought the gifts of the Holy Ghost, to serve their pride and covetousness, no marvel they do not find it, for they seek amiss. Herod desired to see a miracle, but he was a scorner, and therefore it was denied him, *Lu.* xxvi. 8. Scorners speed not in prayer.

Secondly. To those who understand themselves aright, who depart from evil,

(for that is understanding,) the knowledge of God and of his will is easy. The parables which harden scorners in their scorning, and make Divine things more difficult to them, enlighten those that are willing to learn, and make the same things more plain, and intelligible, and familiar to them, *Mat.* xiii. 11, 15, 16. The same word which to the scornful is a savour of death unto death, to the humble and serious is a savour of life unto life. He that understandeth so as to depart from evil, (for that is understanding,) to quit his prejudices, to lay aside all corrupt dispositions and affections, will easily apprehend instruction, and receive the impressions of it.

7 Go from the presence of a foolish man,
When thou perceivest not *in him* the lips of knowledge.

See here, First. How we may discern a fool and discover him, a wicked man, for he is a foolish man. If we perceive not in him the lips of knowledge, if we find there is no relish or savour of piety in his discourse, that his communication is all corrupt and corrupting, and nothing in it good, and to the use of edifying, we may conclude the treasure is bad.

Secondly. How we must decline such a one, and depart from him. Go from his presence, for thou perceivest there is no good to be gotten by his company, but danger of getting hurt by it. Sometimes the only way we have of reproving wicked discourse, and witnessing against it, is by leaving the company, and going out of the hearing of it.

8 The wisdom of the prudent *is* to understand his way:
But the folly of fools *is* deceit.

See here, First. The good conduct of a wise and good man. He manageth himself well. It is not the wisdom of the learned, which consists only in speculation, that is here commended; but the wisdom of the prudent, which is practical, and is of use to direct our counsels and actions. Christian prudence consists in a right understanding of our way, for we are travellers whose concern it is not to spy wonders, but to get forwards towards their journey's end. It is to understand our own way, not to be critics and busy-bodies in other men's matters, but to look well to ourselves, and ponder the path of our feet; to understand the directions of our way that we may observe them, the dangers of our way that we may avoid them, the difficulties of our way that we may break through them, and the advantages of our way that we may improve them; to understand the rules we are to walk by, and the ends we are to walk towards, and walk accordingly.

Secondly. The ill conduct of a bad man. He puts a cheat upon himself, he doth not rightly understand his way, he thinks he doth, and so misseth his way, and goes on in his mistake. "The folly of fools is deceit," it cheats them into their own ruin. The folly of him that built on the sand was deceit.

9 Fools make a mock at sin:
But among the righteous *there is* favour.

See here, First. How wicked people are hardened in their wickedness; they "make a mock at sin." They make a laughing matter of the sins of others, making themselves and their companions merry with that for which they should mourn; and they make a light matter of their own sins, both when they are tempted to sin, and when they have committed it; they call evil good, and good evil, *Isa.* v. 20; turn it off with a jest; rush into sin, *Jer.* viii. 6, and say they shall have peace though they go on. They care not what mischief they do by their sins, and laugh at those that tell them of it. They are advocates for sin, and are ingenious at framing excuses for it. 'Fools make a mock at the sin-offering,' so some. They that make light of sin make light of Christ. They are fools that make light of sin, for they make light of that which God complains of, *Am.* ii. 13, which lay heavy upon Christ, and which they themselves will have other thoughts of shortly.

Secondly. How good people are encouraged in their goodness: "Among the righteous there is favour." If they in any thing offend, they presently repent, and obtain the favour of God. They have a good will to one another; and among them in their societies there is mutual charity and compassion in case of offences, and no mocking.

10 The heart knoweth his own bitterness;
And a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.

This agrees with 1 *Cor.* ii. 11, "What man knows the things of a man," and the changes of his temper, "save the spirit of a man?"

First. Every man feels most from his own burthen, especially that which is a burthen upon the spirits, for that is commonly concealed, and the sufferer keeps it to himself. We must not censure others' griefs, for we know not what they feel; their stroke perhaps is heavier than their groaning.

Secondly. Many enjoy a secret pleasure, especially in Divine consolations, which others are not aware of, much less sharers in. As the sorrows of a penitent, so the joys of a believer, are such as a stranger doth not intermeddle with, and therefore is no competent judge of.

11 The house of the wicked shall be overthrown:
But the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish.

Note, First. Sin is the ruin of great families. "The house of the wicked," though built never so strong and high, "shall be overthrown," shall be brought to poverty and disgrace, and at length be extinct. His hope for heaven, the house on which he leans, shall not stand, but fail in the storm. The deluge that comes will sweep it away.

Secondly. Righteousness is the rise and stability even of mean families. Even "the tabernacle of the upright," though movable and despicable as a tent, yet "shall flourish" in outward prosperity, if Infinite Wisdom see good, however, in graces and comforts, which are true riches and honours.

12 There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
But end thereof *are* the ways of death.

We have here an account of the way and end of a great many self-deluded souls.

First. Their way is seemingly fair, it seemeth right to themselves; they please themselves with a fancy that they are as they should be; their opinions and practices are good, and such as will bear them out. The way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly-mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing seem right to those that walk in them; much more the way of hypocrisy in religion, external performances, partial reformations, and blind zeal, these they imagine will bring them to heaven; they flatter themselves in their own eyes that all will be well at last.

Secondly. Their end is really fearful, and the more so for their mistake; it is the ways of death, eternal death; their iniquity will certainly be their ruin, and they will perish with a lie in their right hand. Self-deceivers will prove in the end self-destroyers.

13 Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful;
And the end of that mirth *is* heaviness.

This shews the vanity of carnal mirth, and proves what Solomon saith of laughter, that it is mad. For,

First. There is sadness under it. Sometimes when sinners are under convictions, or some great trouble, they dissemble their grief by a forced mirth, and put a good face on it, because they will not seem to yield; they cry not when he binds them. Nay, when men really are merry, yet at the same time there is some alloy or other to it, something that casts a damp upon their mirth, which all their gaiety cannot keep from their heart. Their consciences tell them they have no reason to be merry, *Hos.* ix. 1. They cannot but see the vanity of it. Spiritual joy is seated in the soul; the joy of the hypocrite is but from the teeth forward: see *Jno.* xvi. 22; 2 *Cor.* vi. 10.

Secondly. There is worse after it; "the end of that mirth is heaviness." It is soon over, like the crackling of thorns under a pot; and, if the conscience be awake, all sinful and profane mirth will be reflected upon with bitterness; if not, the heaviness will be so much the greater, when, for all these things God shall bring the sinner into judgment. The sorrows of the saints will end in everlasting joys, *Ps.* cxxvi. 5, but the laughter of fools will end in endless weeping and wailing.

14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways:
And a good man *shall be satisfied* from himself.

Note, First. The misery of sinners will be an eternal surfeit upon their sins. "The backslider in heart," that, for fear of suffering, or in hope of profit or pleasure, forsakes God and his duty, he "shall be filled with his own ways;" God will give him enough of them. They would not leave their brutish lusts and passions, and therefore they shall stick by them to their everlasting terror and torment. "He that is filthy shall be filthy still." "Son, remember," shall fill them with their own ways, and set their sins in order before them. Backsliding begins in the heart; it is the evil heart of unbelief that departs from God; and, of all sinners, backsliders will have most terror when they reflect on their own ways, *Lu.* xi. 26.

Secondly. The happiness of the saints will be an eternal satisfaction in their graces, as tokens of and qualifications for God's peculiar favour. "A good man shall be" abundantly "satisfied from himself;" that is, from what God has wrought in him. He has rejoicing in himself alone, *Gal.* vi. 4. As sinners never think they have sin enough till it brings them to hell, so saints never think they have grace enough till it brings them to heaven.

15 The simple believeth every word:
But the prudent *man* looketh well to his going.

Note, First. It is folly to be credulous, to heed every flying report, to give ear to every man's story, though never so improbable; to take things upon trust from common fame; to depend upon every man's profession of friendship, and give credit to every one that will promise payment. Those are simple who thus believe every word, forgetting that all men in some sense are liars in comparison with God, all whose words we are to believe with an implicit faith, for he cannot lie.

Secondly. It is wisdom to be cautious. The prudent man will try before he trusts, will weigh both the credibility of the witness, and the probability of the testimony, and then give judgment as the thing appears, or suspend his judgment till it appears. "Prove all things," and "believe not every spirit."

16 A wise *man* feareth, and departeth from evil:
But the fool rageth, and is confident.

Note, First. Holy fear is an excellent guard upon every holy thing, and against every thing that is unholy. It is wisdom to depart from evil, from the evil of sin, and thereby from all other evil; and therefore it is wisdom to fear, that is, to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, to keep up a dread of God's wrath, to be afraid of coming near the borders of sin, or dallying with the beginnings of it. A wise man, for fear of harm, keeps out of harm's way, and starts back in a fright when he finds himself entering into temptation.

Secondly. Presumption is folly. He that, when he is warned of his danger, rageth and is confident, furiously pusheth on, cannot bear to be checked, bids defiance to the wrath and curse of God, and, fearless of danger, persists in his rebellion, makes bold with the occasions of sin, and plays upon the precipice, he is a fool, for he acts against his reason and his interest, and his ruin will quickly be the proof of his folly.

17 *He that is* soon angry dealeth foolishly:
And a man of wicked devices is hated.

Note, First. Passionate men are justly laughed at. Men that are peevish, and touchy, and are soon angry upon every the least provocation, they deal foolishly; they say and do that which is ridiculous, and so expose themselves to contempt; they themselves cannot but be ashamed of it when the heat is over. The consideration of which should engage those especially that are in reputation for wisdom and honour with the utmost care to bridle their passion.

Secondly. Malicious men are justly dreaded and detested, for they are much more dangerous and mischievous to all societies. "A man of wicked devices," that stifles his resentments till he has an opportunity of being revenged, and is secretly plotting how to wrong his neighbour, and to do him an ill turn, as Cain to kill Abel, such a man as this "is hated" by all mankind. The character of an angry man is piteous; through the surprise of a temptation he disturbs and disgraceth himself, but it is soon over, and he is sorry for it; but that of a spiteful, revengeful man is odious; there is no fence against him, nor cure for him.

18 The simple inherit folly:
But the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

Note, First. Sin is the shame of sinners; the simple that love simplicity get nothing by it, they inherit folly, that is, they have it by inheritance, so some. This corruption of nature is derived from our first parents, and all the calamities

that attend it we have it by kind; it was the inheritance they transmitted to their degenerate race, an hereditary disease. They are as fond of it as a man of his inheritance, hold it as fast, and are as loath to part with it. What they value themselves by is really foolish, and what will be the issue of their simplicity but folly? They will for ever rue their own foolish choices.

Secondly. Wisdom is the honour of the wise. The prudent crown themselves with knowledge, they look upon it as their brightest ornament, and there is nothing they are so ambitious of; they bind it to their heads as a crown, which they will by no means part with; they press towards the top and perfection of knowledge, which will crown their beginnings and progress. They shall have the praise of it; wise heads shall be respected as if they were crowned heads. They crown knowledge, (so some read it,) they are a credit to their profession; wisdom is not only justified, but glorified, of all her children.

19 The evil bow before the good;
And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

That is, First. The wicked are oftentimes impoverished and brought low, so that they are forced to beg, their wickedness having reduced them to straits; while good men by the blessing of God are enriched and enabled to give, and do give even to the evil; for where God grants life we must not deny a livelihood.

Secondly. Sometimes God extorts, even from bad men, an acknowledgment of the excellency of God's people. "The evil" ought always to "bow before the good;" and sometimes they are made to do it, and to know that God has loved them, *Rev.* iii. 9. They desire their favour; *Est.* vii. 7, their prayers, 2 *Kin.* iii. 12.

Thirdly. There is a day coming when the upright shall have the dominion, *Ps.* xlix. 14; when the foolish virgins shall come a begging to the wise for oil, and shall knock in vain at that gate of the Lord at which the righteous entered.

20 The poor is hated even of his own neighbour:
But the rich *hath* many friends.

This shews not what should be, but what is the common way of the world, to be shy of the poor, and fond of the rich.

First. Few will give countenance to those whom the world frowns upon, though otherwise worthy of respect. "The poor," that should be pitied, and encouraged, and relieved, "is hated," looked strange upon, and kept at a distance, "even by his own neighbour," that, before he fell into disgrace, was intimate with him, and pretended to have a kindness for him. Most are swallow-friends, that are gone in winter. It is good having God our friend, for he will not desert us when we are poor.

Secondly. Every one will make court to those whom the world smiles upon, though otherwise unworthy; "The rich have many friends," friends to their riches, in hope to get something out of them. There is little friendship in the world but what is governed by self-interest, which is no true friendship at all, nor what a wise men will either value himself by, or put any confidence in. Those that make the world their god, idolize them that have most of its good things, and seek their favour, as if indeed they were Heaven's favourites.

21 He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth:
But he that hath mercy on the poor, happy *is* he.

See here how men's character and condition are measured and judged of by their carriage towards their poor neighbours.

First. Those that look upon them with contempt, are here under a bad character, and their condition will be accordingly. "He that despiseth his neighbour," because he is low in the world, because he is of mean extraction, rustic education, and makes but a mean figure, that thinks it below him to take notice of him, converse with him, or concern himself about him, and sets him with the dogs of his flock, he is a sinner, is guilty of a sin, is in the way to worse, shall be dealt with as a sinner; unhappy is he.

Secondly. Those that look upon them with compassion, are here said to be in a good condition, according to their character. "He that has mercy on the poor," is ready to do all the good offices he can to him, and thereby puts an honour upon him, "Happy is he," he doth that which is pleasing to God, which he himself will afterwards reflect upon with great satisfaction, for which the loins of the poor will bless him, and which will be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

22 Do they not err that devise evil?
But mercy and truth *shall be* to them that devise good.

See here, First. How miserably mistaken they are that not only do evil, but devise it; "Do they not err?" Yes, certainly they do, every one knows it; they think, by sinning with craft and contrivance, and carrying on their intrigues with more plot and artifice than others, they shall make a better hand of their sins than others do, and come off better, but they are mistaken, God's justice cannot be outwitted. They that devise evil against their neighbours greatly err, for it will certainly turn upon themselves, and end in their own ruin; a fatal error!

Secondly. How wisely they consult their own interest, that not only do good, but devise it; "Mercy and truth shall be to them," not a reward of debt, (they will own that they merit nothing,) but a reward of mercy, mere mercy, mercy according to the promise, mercy and truth, to which God is pleased to make himself a debtor. Those that are so liberal as to devise liberal things, that seek opportunities of going good, and contrive how to make their charity most extensive, and most acceptable to those that need it, by liberal things they shall stand, *Isa.* xxxii. 8.

23 In all labour there is profit:
But the talk of the lips *tendeth* only to penury.

Note, First. Working without talking will make men rich. "In all labour," of the head, or of the hand, "there is profit," it will turn to some good account or other. Industrious people are generally thriving people; and where there is something done, there is something to be had; the stirring hand gets a penny. It is good therefore to keep in business, and keep in action; and what our hand finds to do, do it with all our might.

Secondly. Talking without working will make men poor. Those that love to brag of their business, and make a noise about it, and that waste their time in tittle-tattle, in telling and hearing new things, like the Athenians, and, under pretence of improving themselves by conversation, neglect the work of their place and day, they waste what they have, and the course they take tends to penury, and will end in it. It is true, in the affairs of our souls, those that take pains in the service of God, that strive earnestly in prayer, will find profit in it; but if men's religion runs all out in talk and noise, and their praying is only the labour of the lips, they will be spiritually poor, and come to nothing.

24 The crown of the wise *is* their riches:
But the foolishness of fools *is* folly.

Observe, First. If men be wise and good, riches make them so much the more honourable and useful. "The crown of the wise is their riches," that is, their riches make them to be so much the more respected, and give them the more authority and influence upon others. They that have wealth, and wisdom to use it, will have a great opportunity of honouring God, and doing good in the world. Wisdom is good without an inheritance, but better with it.

Secondly. If men be wicked and corrupt, their wealth will but the more expose them. "The foolishness of fools," put them in what condition you will, "is folly," and will shew itself, and shame them; if they have riches they do mischief with them, and are the more hardened in their foolish practices.

25 A true witness delivereth souls:
But a deceitful *witness* speaketh lies.

See here, First. How much praise is due to a faithful witness. He delivereth the souls of the innocent that are falsely accused, and their good names, which are as dear to them as their lives. A man of integrity will venture the displeasure of the greatest to bring truth to light, and rescue those that are injured by falsehood. A faithful minister that truly witnesseth for God against sin, is thereby instrumental to deliver souls from eternal death.

Secondly. How little regard is to be had to a false witness. He forges lies, and yet pours them out with the greatest assurance imaginable for the destruction of the innocent. It is therefore the interest of a nation by all means possible to detect and punish false witness-bearing, yea, and lying in common conversation; for truth is the cement of society.

26 In the fear of the LORD *is* strong confidence:
And his children shall have a place of refuge.
27 The fear of the LORD *is* a fountain of life,
To depart from the snares of death.

In these two verses we are invited and encouraged to live in the fear of God by the advantages which attend a religious life. The fear of the Lord is here put for all gracious principles, producing gracious practices.

First. Where this reigns it produceth a holy security and serenity of mind. There is in it a strong confidence; it enables a man still to hold fast both his purity and his peace whatever happens, and gives him boldness before God and the world. "I know that I shall be justified;" "None of these things move me." Such is the language of this confidence.

Secondly. It entails a blessing upon posterity. They that by faith make God their confidence, their children after them shall be encouraged, by the promise that God will be a God to believers and to their seed, to fly to him as their refuge, and they shall find shelter in him. The children of religious parents often do the better for their parents' instructions and example, and fare the better for their faith and prayers. "Our fathers trusted in thee," therefore we will.

Thirdly. It is an overflowing, everflowing spring of comfort and joy; it "is a fountain of life," yielding constant pleasure and satisfaction to the soul. Joys that are pure and fresh are life to the soul, and quench its thirst, and can never be drawn dry; it is a well of living water that is springing up to, and is the earnest of, eternal life.

Fourthly. It is a sovereign antidote against sin and temptation. Those that have a true relish of the pleasures of serious godliness will not be allured by the baits of sin to swallow its hook, they know better things than any it can pretend to offer, and therefore it is easy to them "to depart from the snares of death," and to keep their foot from being taken in them.

28 In the multitude of people *is* the king's honour:
But in the want of people *is* the destruction of the prince.

Here is a maxim in politics which carries its own evidence with it.

First. That it is much for the honour of a king to have a populous kingdom. It is a sign he rules well, since strangers are hereby invited to come and settle under his protection, and his own subjects live comfortably; it is a sign he and his kingdom are under the blessing of God, the effect of which is being fruitful and multiplying; it is his strength, and makes him considerable and formidable. Happy is the king, the father of his country, who has his quiver full of arrows; he shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate, *Ps.* cxxvii. 4, 5. It is therefore the wisdom of princes, by a mild and gentle government, by encouraging trade and husbandry, and making all easy under them, to promote the increase of their people. And let all that wish well to the kingdom of Christ and to his honour, do what they can in their places that many may be added to his church.

Secondly. That when the people are lessened the prince is weakened. 'In the want of people is the leanness of the prince,' so some read it. Trade lies dead, the ground lies untilled, the army wants to be recruited, the navy to be manned, and all because there are not hands sufficient. See how much the honour and safety of kings depend upon their people, which is a reason why they should rule by love, and not with rigour. Princes are corrected by those judgments which abate the number of the people, as we find 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 13.

29 *He that is* slow to wrath *is* of great understanding:
But *he that is* hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Note, First. Meekness is wisdom. He rightly understands himself, and his duty and interest, the infirmities of the human nature, and the constitution of human society, that is slow to anger, and knows how to excuse other's faults as well as his own, how to adjourn his resentments, and moderate them so as by no provocation to be put out of the possession of his own soul. A mild, patient man is really to be accounted an intelligent man, one that learns of Christ, who is wisdom itself.

Secondly. Unbridled passion is folly proclaimed. "He that is hasty of spirit," whose heart is tender to every spark of provocation, that is all fire and tow, as we say, he thinks hereby to magnify himself, and make those about stand in awe of him, whereas really he exalts his own folly, he makes it known, as that which is lifted up is visible to all, and he submits himself to it, as to the government of one that is exalted.

30 A sound heart *is* the life of the flesh:
But envy the rottenness of the bones.

The foregoing verse shewed how much our reputation, this how much our health, depends on the good government of our passions, and the preserving of the temper of the mind.

First. A healing spirit, that is made up of love and meekness, a hearty, friendly, cheerful disposition, is the life of the flesh, it contributes to a good constitution of body; people grow fat with good humour.

Secondly. A fretful, envious, discontented spirit is its own punishment; it consumes the flesh, preys upon the animal spirits, makes the countenance pale, and is the rottenness of the bones. They that see the prosperity of others and are grieved, let them gnash with their teeth and melt away, *Ps.* cxii. 10.

Rumpatur, quisquis rumpitur invidia,—
'Whoever bursts for envy, let him burst.'

31 He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker:
But he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.

God is here pleased to interest himself more than one would imagine in the usage given to the poor.

First. He reckons himself affronted in the injuries that are done them. Whosoever he be that wrongs a poor man, taking advantage against him because he is poor and cannot help himself, let him know that he puts an affront upon his Maker. God made him, and gave him his being, the same that is the Author of our being, we have all one Father, one Maker: see how Job considered this, *Job* xxxi. 15. God made him poor, and appointed him his lot; so that if we deal hardly with any because they are poor, we reflect upon God as dealing hardly with them in laying them low that they might be trampled upon.

Secondly. He reckons himself honoured in the kindnesses that are done them, he takes them as done to himself, and will shew himself accordingly pleased with them. "I was hungry, and ye gave me meat." Those therefore that have any true honour for God will shew it by compassion to the poor, whom he has undertaken in a special manner to protect and patronise.

32 The wicked is driven away in his wickedness:
But the righteous hath hope in his death.

Here is, First. The desperate condition of a wicked man when he goes out of the world. He "is driven away in his wickedness;" he cleaves so close to the world that he cannot find in his heart to leave it, but is driven away out of it; his soul is required, is forced from him, and sin cleaves so close to him that it is inseparable, it goes with him into another world; he "is driven away in his wickedness," dies in his sins, under the guilt and power of them, unjustified, unsanctified. His wickedness is the storm in which he is hurried away, as chaff before the wind, "chased out of the world."

Secondly. The comfortable condition of a godly man when he finisheth his course; he "hath hope in his death" of a happiness on the other side death, of better things in another world than ever he had in this. They then have the grace of hope in them; though they have pain, and some dread of death, yet they have hope. They have before them the good hoped for, even the blessed hope which God that cannot lie has promised.

33 Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding:
But *that which is* in the midst of fools is made known.

Observe, First. Modesty is the badge of wisdom. He that is truly wise hides his treasure so as not to boast of it, *Mat.* xiii. 43, though he doth not hide his talent so as not to trade with it. His wisdom rests in his heart, he digests what he knows, and has it ready to him, but doth not unseasonably talk of it, and make a noise with it. The heart is the seat of the affections, and there wisdom must rest in the practical love of it, and not swim in the head.

Secondly. Openness and ostentation is a mark of folly. If fools have a little smattering of knowledge, they take all occasions, though very foreign, to produce it, and bring it in by head and shoulders. Or, the folly that is in the midst of fools is made known by their forwardness to talk. Many a foolish man takes more pains to shew his folly, than a wise man thinks it worth his while to take to shew his wisdom.

34 Righteousness exalteth a nation:
But sin *is* a reproach to any people.

Note, First. Justice reigning in a nation puts an honour upon it. A righteous administration of the government, impartial equity between man and man, public countenance given to religion, the general practice and profession of virtue, the protecting and preserving of virtuous men, charity and compassion to strangers, (alms are sometimes called righteousness,) these exalt a nation, they uphold the throne, elevate the people's minds, and qualify a nation for the favour of God, which will make them high as a holy nation, *Deu.* xxvi. 19.

Secondly. Vice regning in a nation puts disgrace upon it. "Sin is a reproach" to any city or kingdom, and renders them despicable among their neighbours. The people of Israel were often instances of both parts of this observation; they were great when they were good, but when they forsook God all about them insulted them, and trampled on them. It is therefore the interest and duty of princes to use their power for the suppression of vice and support of virtue.

35 The king's favour *is* toward a wise servant:
But his wrath is *against* him that causeth shame.

This shews that in a well ordered court and government smiles and favours are dispensed among those that are employed in public trusts according to their merits. Solomon lets them know he will go by that rule.

First. Those who behave themselves wisely shall be respected and preferred, whatever enemies they may have that seek to undermine them. No man's services shall be neglected to please a party or a favourite.

Secondly. That those who are selfish and false, that betray their country, oppress the poor, and sow discord, and thus cause shame, they shall be displaced and banished the court, whatever friends they may make to speak for them.

CHAPTER XV.

A SOFT answer turneth away wrath:
But grievous words stir up anger.

Solomon, as conservator of the public peace, here tells us,

First. How the peace may be kept, that we may know how in our places to keep it. It is by soft words. If wrath be risen like a threatening cloud pregnant with storms and thunders, a soft answer will disperse it, and turn it away. When men are provoked, speak them fair, and give them good words, and they will be pacified, as the Ephraimites were by Gideon's mildness, *Jud.* viii. 1—3; whereas, upon a like occasion, by Jephthah's roughness they were exasperated, and the consequences were ill, *Jud.* xii. 1—3. Reason will be better spoken, and a righteous cause better pleaded, with meekness than with passion; hard arguments do best with soft words.

Secondly. How the peace will be broken, that we, for our parts, may do nothing towards the breaking of it. Nothing stirs up anger and sows discord like grievous words, calling foul names, as "Raca," and "Thou fool," upbraiding men with their infirmities and infelicities, their extraction or education, or any thing that lessens them and makes them mean. Scornful, spiteful reflections, by which men affect to shew their wit and malice, stir up the anger of others, which doth but increase and inflame their own anger. Rather than lose a jest some will lose a friend and make an enemy.

2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright:
But the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

Note, First. A good heart by the tongue becomes very useful. He that has knowledge is not only to enjoy it for his own entertainment, but to use it, to use it aright, for the edification of others; and it is the tongue that must make use of it in pious profitable discourse, in giving suitable and seasonable instructions, counsels, and comforts, with all possible expressions of humility and love, and then knowledge is used aright; and to him that hath, and thus useth what he hath, more shall be given.

Secondly. A wicked heart by the tongue becomes very hurtful; for "the mouth of fools belcheth out foolishness," which is very unsavoury and offensive; and the corrupt communication which proceedeth from an evil treasure within, the filthiness and foolish talking and jesting, corrupts the good manners of some and debaucheth them, and grieves the good hearts of others and disturbs them.

3 The eyes of the LORD *are* in every place,
Beholding the evil and the good.

The great truths of divinity are of mighty use to enforce the precepts of morality, and none more than this, that the eye of God is always upon the children of men.

First. An eye to discern all, not only from which nothing can be concealed, but by which every thing is actually inspected, and nothing overlooked, or looked slightly upon. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place," for he not only sees all from on high, *Ps.* xxxiii. 13, but he is every where present. Angels are full of eyes, *Rev.* iv. 8, but God is all eye. It notes not only his omniscience that he sees all, but his universal providence that he upholds and governs all. Secret sins, services, and sorrows, are under his eye.

Secondly. An eye to distinguish both persons and actions. He beholds the evil and the good, is displeased with the evil, and approves of the good, and will judge men according to the sight of his eyes, *Ps.* i. 6; xi. 4. The wicked shall not go unpunished, nor the righteous unrewarded, for God has his eye upon both, and knows their true character; which speaks as much comfort to saints as terror to sinners.

4 A wholesome tongue *is* a tree of life:
But perverseness therein *is* a breach in the spirit.

Note, First. A good tongue is healing; healing to wounded consciences by comforting them, to sin-sick souls by convincing them, to peace and love when it is broken by accommodating differences, compromising matters in variance, and reconciling parties at variance; this is the healing of the tongue, which is a tree of life, the leaves of which have a sanative virtue, *Rev.* xxii. 2. He that knows how to discourse will make the place he lives in a paradise.

Secondly. An ill tongue is wounding; "Perverseness," passion, falsehood, and filthiness "there, is a breach in the spirit." It wounds the conscience of the evil speaker, and occasions either guilt or grief to the hearers, and both are to be reckoned breaches in the spirit. Hard words indeed break no bones, but many a heart has been broken by them.

5 A fool despiseth his father's instruction:
But he that regardeth reproof is prudent.

Hence, First. Let superiors be admonished to give instruction and reproof to those that are under their charge, as they will answer it in the day of account. They must not only instruct with the light of knowledge, but reprove with the heat of zeal; and both these must be done with the authority and affection of a father, and must be continued though the desired effect be not presently perceived. If the instruction be despised, give reproof, and rebuke sharply. It is indeed against the grain with good humoured men to find fault, and make those about them uneasy, but better so than to suffer them to go on undisturbed in the way to ruin.

Secondly. Let inferiors be admonished, not only to submit to instruction and reproof, (even hardships must be submitted to,) but to value them as favours and not despise them, to make use of them for their conduct, and always to have a regard to them. This will be an evidence that they are wise, and a means of making them so; whereas he that slights his good education is a fool, and is like to live and die one.

6 In the house of the righteous *is* much treasure:
But in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

Note, First. Where righteousness is, riches are, and the comforts of them. "In the house of the righteous is much treasure." Religion teacheth men to be diligent, and temperate, and just, and by these means ordinarily the estate is increased; but that is not all, God blesseth the habitation of the just, and that blessing makes rich without trouble. Or, if there be not much of this world's good, yet where there is grace there is true treasure; and those who have but little, if they have a heart to be therewith content, and to enjoy the

comfort of that little, it is enough, it is all riches. The righteous perhaps are not themselves enriched; but there is treasure in their house, a blessing in store which their children after them may reap the benefit of. A wicked, worldly man is only for having his belly filled with those treasures, his own sensual appetite gratified, *Ps.* xvii. 14; but a righteous man's first care is for his soul, and then for his seed; to have treasure in his heart, and then in his house, which his relations and those about him may have the benefit of.

Secondly. Where wickedness is, though there may be riches, yet there is vexation of spirit with them; "In the revenues of the wicked," the great incomes they have, there "is trouble," for there is guilt and a curse. There is pride, and passion, and envy, and contention, and those are troublesome lusts which rob them of the joy of their revenues, and make them troublesome to their neighbours.

7 The lips of the wise disperse knowledge:
But the heart of the foolish *doeth* not so.

This is to the same purpose with ver. 2, and shews what a blessing a wise man is, and what a burthen a fool is to those about him. Only here observe farther,

First. That we then use knowledge aright when we disperse it; not confine it to a few of our intimates, and grudge it to others who would make as good use of it, but "give a portion" of this spiritual alms "to seven, and also to eight;" not only be communicative, but diffusive of this good, with humility and prudence. We must take pains to spread and propagate useful knowledge; must teach some that they may teach others, and so it is dispersed.

Secondly. That it is not only a fault to pour out foolishness, but it is a shame not to disperse knowledge, at least to drop some wise word or other. "The heart of the foolish doeth not so;" it has nothing to disperse that is good, or if it had, has neither skill nor will to do good with it, and therefore is little worth.

8 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD:
But the prayer of the upright *is* his delight.

Note, First. God doth so hate wicked people, whose hearts are malicious, and their lives mischievous, that even their sacrifices are an abomination to him. God hath sacrifices brought him even by wicked men, to stop the mouth of conscience, and to keep up their reputation in the world, as malefactors come to a sanctuary, not because it is a holy place, but because it shelters them from justice; but their sacrifices, though never so costly, are not accepted of God, because not offered in sincerity, nor from a good principle; they dissemble with God, and in their conversations give the lie to their devotions, and for that reason they are an abomination to him, because they are made a cloak for sin, *ch.* vii. 14: see *Isa.* i. 11.

Secondly. God has such a love for upright, good people, that though they are not at the expense of a sacrifice, (he himself hath provided that,) their prayer is a delight to him. Praying graces are his own gift, and the work of his own Spirit in them, with which he is well pleased. He not only answers their prayers, but delights in their addresses to him, and in doing them good.

9 The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD:
But he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

This is a reason of what was said in the foregoing verse.

First. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to God," not for want of some nice points of ceremony, but because their way, the whole course and tenour of their conversations is wicked, and consequently an abomination to him; and sacrifices for sin were not accepted of those that resolved to go on in sin, and were to the highest degree abominable if intended to obtain a connivance at sin, and a permission to go on in it.

Secondly. Therefore the prayer of the upright is his delight, because he is a friend of God, and he loves him who, though he have not yet attained, is following after righteousness, aiming at it, and pressing towards it, as St. Paul, *Phil.* iii. 13.

10 Correction *is* grievous unto him that forsaketh the way:
And he that hateth reproof shall die.

This shews that those who cannot bear to be corrected, must expect to be destroyed.

First. It is common for those that have known the way of righteousness, but have forsaken it, to reckon it a great affront to be reproved and admonished; they are very uneasy at it, they cannot, they will not bear it; nay, because they hate to be reformed, they hate to be reproved, and hate those that deal faithfully and kindly with them. Of all sinners, reproofs are worst resented by apostates.

Secondly. It is certain that those who will not be reproved will be ruined. "He that hateth reproof," and hardens his heart against it, he is joined to his idols, let him alone, he "shall die," and perish for ever in his sins, since he would not be parted from his sins; 2 *Chr.* xxv. 16, "I know that God has determined to destroy thee," because thou couldest not bear to be reproved, *ch.* xxix. 1.

11 Hell and destruction *are* before the LORD:
How much more then the hearts of the children of men?

This confirms what was said, ver. 3, concerning God's omniscience, in order to his judging of evil and good.

First. God knows all things, even those things that are hid from the eyes of all living. "Hell and destruction are before the Lord;" not only the centre of the earth and its subterraneous caverns, but the grave, and all the dead bodies which are there buried out of our sight; they are all before the Lord, all under his eye, so that none of them can be lost, or be to seek when they are to be raised again. He knows where every man lies buried, even Moses, even those that are buried in the greatest obscurity, not needs he any monument with a *hic jacet*,—'Here he lies,' to direct him. The place of the damned in particular, and all their torments, which are inexpressible, the state of separate souls in general, and all their circumstances, are under God's eye. The word here used for destruction is Abaddon, which is one of the devil's names, *Rev.* ix. 11. That destroyer, though he deceive us, cannot evade or elude the Divine cognizance. God examines him whence he comes, *Job* i. 7; and sees through all his disguises, though he is sly, and subtle, and swift, *Job* xxvi. 6.

Secondly. He knows particularly, "The hearts of the children of men." If he sees through the depths and wiles of Satan himself, much more can he search men's hearts, though they be deceitful, since all their cheats they learned of him. "God is greater than our hearts," and knows them better than we know them ourselves, and therefore is an infallible judge of every man's character, *Heb.* iv. 16.

12 A scorner loveth not one that reproveth him:
Neither will he go unto the wise.

A scorner is one that not only makes a jest of God and religion, but bids defiance to the methods of his conviction and reformation, and as an evidence of that,

First. He cannot endure the checks of his own conscience, nor will he suffer it to deal plainly with him. 'He loveth not to reprove him,' so some read it. He cannot endure to retire into his own heart, and commune seriously with that; will not admit of any free thought or fair reasoning with himself, nor let his own heart smite him, if he can help it. That man's case is sad, who is afraid of being acquainted and arguing with himself.

Secondly. He cannot endure the advice and admonitions of his friends. "He will not go unto the wise," lest they should give him wise counsel. We ought not only to bid the wise welcome when they come to us, but to go to them, as beggars to the rich man's door for an alms; but this the scorner will not do, for fear of being told of his faults, and prevailed with to reform.

13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance:
But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.

Here, First. Harmless mirth is recommended to us, as that which contributes to the health of the body, makes men lively and fit for business, and to the acceptableness of the converse, making the face to shine, and rendering us pleasant one to another. A cheerful spirit, under the government of wisdom and grace, is a great ornament of religion, puts a farther lustre upon the beauty of holiness, and makes men the more capable of doing good.

Secondly. Hurtful melancholy is what we are cautioned against, as a great enemy to us, both in our devotion and in our conversation; "By sorrow of the heart," when it has got dominion, and plays the tyrant, as it will be apt to do if it be indulged a while, "the spirit is broken" and sunk, and becomes unfit for the service of God. "The sorrow of the world worketh death." Let us therefore "weep as though we wept not," in justice to ourselves, as well as in conformity to God and his providence.

14 The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge:
But the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness.

Here are two things to be wondered at:

First. A wise man not satisfied with his wisdom, but still seeking the increase of it. The more he has, the more he would have; "The heart of him that has understanding," rejoiceth so in the knowledge that it has attained to, that it is still coveting more, and in the use of the means of knowledge is still labouring for more; growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. *Si dixisti, sufficit, periisti*,—'If you say, I have enough, you are undone.'

Secondly. A fool well satisfied with his folly, and not seeking the cure of it. While a good man hungers after the solid satisfactions of grace, a carnal mind feasts on the gratifications of appetite and fancy; vain mirth and sensual pleasures are its delight, and with these it can rest contented, flattering itself in these foolish ways.

15 All the days of the afflicted *are* evil:
But he that is of a merry heart *hath* a continual feast.

See here what a great difference there is between the condition and temper of some and others of the children of men.

First. Some are much in affliction, and of a sorrowful spirit, and all their days are evil days, like those of old age, and days of which they say they have no pleasure in them. They eat in darkness, *Eccl.* v. 17; and never eat with pleasure, *Job* xxi. 25. How many are the afflictions of the afflicted in this world! Such are not to be censured or despised, but pitied and prayed for, succoured and comforted. It might have been our own lot, or may be yet, as merry as we are.

Secondly. Others enjoy great prosperity, and are of a cheerful spirit, and they have not only good days, but have a continual feast; and if, in the abundance of all things, they serve God with gladness of heart, it is oil to the wheels of their obedience. All this, and heaven too? then we serve a good master! But let not such feast without fear, a sudden change may come, therefore rejoice with trembling.

16 Better *is* little with the fear of the LORD
Than great treasure and trouble therewith.
17 Better *is* a dinner of herbs where love is,
Than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

Solomon had said in the foregoing verse, that he who hath not a large estate or a great income, but a cheerful spirit, has a continual feast; Christian contentment and joy in God make the life easy and pleasant; now here he tell us, what that is which is necessary to that cheerfulness of spirit, which will furnish a man with a continual feast, though he has but little in the world,—holiness and love.

First. Holiness. "A little," if we manage it and enjoy it "in the fear of the Lord," if we keep a good conscience, and go on in the way of duty, and serve God faithfully with the little we have, it will be more confortable, and turn to a better account, "than great treasure and trouble therewith." Observe here, 1. It is often the lot of those that fear God to have but a little of this world; the poor receive the Gospel, and poor they still are, *Jas.* ii. 5. 2. Those that have great treasures have many times great trouble therewith; it is so far from making them easy, that it increases their care and hurry. "The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep." 3. If great treasure bring trouble with it, it is for want of the fear of God. If those that have great estates would do their duty with them, and then trust God with them, their treasure would not have so much trouble attending it. 4. It is, therefore, far better and more desirable to have but a little of the world, and to have it with a good conscience, to keep up communion with God, and enjoy him in it, and live by faith, than to have the greatest plenty, and live without God in the world.

Secondly. Love. Next to the fear of God, peace with all men is necessary to the comfort of this life. 1. If "brethren dwell together in unity," if they are friendly, and hearty, and pleasant, both in their daily meals, and in more

solemn entertainments, that will make a dinner of herbs a feast sufficient. Though the fare be coarse, and the estate so small that they can afford no better, yet love will sweeten it, and they may be as merry over it as if they had all dainties. 2. If there be mutual enmity and strife, though there be a whole ox for dinner, a fat ox, there can be no comfort in it. The leaven of malice, of hating and being hated, is enough to sour it all. Some refer it to him that makes the entertainment; better have a slender dinner and be heartily welcome, than a table richly spread with a grudging evil eye.

Cum torvo vultu mihi cœnula nulla placebit,
Cum placido vultu cœnula nulla placet,—

'The most sumptuous entertainment, presented with a sullen brow, would offend me; while the plainest repast, presented kindly, would delight me.'

18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife:
But *he that is* slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Here is, First. Passion the great makebate. Thence come wars and fightings. Anger strikes the fire which sets cities and churches into a flame. "A wrathful man" with his peevish, passionate reflections, "stirs up strife," and sets people together by the ears; he gives occasion to others to quarrel, and takes the occasion that others give, though never so trifling. When men carry their resentments too far, one quarrel still produceth another.

Secondly. Meekness the great peacemaker. "He that is slow to anger," not only prevents strife that it be not kindled, but appeaseth it if it be already kindled, brings water to the flame, reconcileth those again that were fallen out, and by gentle methods brings them to mutual concessions for peace-sake.

19 The way of the slothful *man is* as an hedge of thorns:
But the way of the righteous *is* made plain.

See here, First. Whence those difficulties arise which men pretend to meet with in the way of their duty, and to be insuperable; they arise not from any thing in the nature of the duty, but from the slothfulness of those that have really no mind to it. Those that have no heart to their work, pretend that their way is hedged up with thorns, and they cannot do their work at all, as if God were a hard master, reaping where he had not sown; at least, that it is strewed with thorns, that they cannot do their work without a great deal of hardship and danger, and therefore they go about it with as much reluctancy as if they were to go barefoot through a thorny hedge.

Secondly. How these imaginary difficulties may be conquered. An honest desire and endeavour to do our duty will, by the grace of God, make it easy, and we shall find it strewed with roses; "The way of the righteous is made plain," it is easy to be gone over and not rough, easy to be hit and not intricate.

20 A wise son maketh a glad father:
But a foolish man despiseth his mother.

Observe here, First. To the praise of good children, that they are the joy of their parents, who ought to have joy of them, having taken so much care and pains about them; and it adds much to the satisfaction of those that are good, if they have reason to think that they have been a comfort to their parents in their declining years, when evil days come.

Secondly. To the shame of wicked children, that by their wickedness they put contempt upon their parents, slight their authority, and make an ill requital for their kindness. "A foolish son despiseth his mother," that had most sorrow with him, and perhaps had too much indulged him, which makes his sin in despising her the more sinful, and her sorrow the more sorrowful.

21 Folly *is* joy to *him that is* destitute of wisdom:
But a man of understanding walketh uprightly.

Note, First. It is the character of a wicked man that he takes pleasure in sin. He has an appetite to the bait, and swallows it greedily; and has no dread of the hook, nor feels from it when he hath swallowed it. "Folly is joy to him;" others' folly is so, and his own much more. He sins, not only without regret, but with delight; not only repents not of it, but makes his boast of it. This is a certain sign of one that is graceless.

Secondly. It is the character of a wise and good man that he makes conscience of his duty. A fool lives at large, walks at all adventures, by no rule, acts with no sincerity or steadiness; "but a man of understanding," the eyes of whose understanding are enlightened by the Spirit, (and those that have not a good understanding have no understanding,) he "walks uprightly," lives a sober, orderly, regular life, and studies in every thing to conform himself to the will of God; and this is a constant pleasure and joy to him; but what foolishness remains in him, or proceeds from him at any time, is a grief to him, and he is ashamed of it. By these characters we may try ourselves.

22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed:
But in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

See here, First. Of what ill consequence it is to be precipitate and rash, and to act without advice. Men's purposes are disappointed, their measures broken, and they come short of their point, gain not their end, because they would not ask counsel about the way. If men will not take time and pains to deliberate with themselves, or are so confident of their own judgment that they scorn to consult with others, they are not likely to bring any thing considerable to pass; things happen which defeat them, that with a little consultation might have been foreseen and obviated. It is a good rule, both in public and domestic affairs, to do nothing rashly, and of one's own head. *Plus vident oculi quam oculus,*—'Many eyes see more than one.' That often proves best which was least our own doing.

Secondly. How much it will be for our advantage to ask the advice of our friends. "In the multitude of counsellors" (provided they be discreet and honest, and will not give counsel with a spirit of contradiction,) "purposes are established." Solomon's son made no good use of this proverb when he acquiesced not in the counsel of the old men, but because he would have a multitude of counsellors, regarding number more than weight, he advised with the young men.

23 A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth:
And a word *spoken* in due season, how good *is it!*

Note, First. Then we speak wisely when we speak seasonably. The answer of the mouth will then be our credit and joy when it is pertinent and to the purpose, and is spoken in due season, when it was needed, and would be regarded, and, as we say, hits the joint. Many a good word comes short of doing the good it might have done for want of being well-timed; nor is any thing more the beauty of discourse than to have a proper answer ready, off-hand, just when there is occasion for it, and comes in well.

Secondly. If we speak wisely and well it will redound to our own comfort, and to the advantage of others. "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth;" he may take a pleasure, but may by no means take a pride, in having spoken so acceptably and well that the hearers admire him, and say, How good is it! and how much good doth it do!

24 The way of life *is* above to the wise,
That he may depart from hell beneath.

The way of wisdom and holiness is here recommended to us,

First. As very safe and comfortable. It is "the way of life," the way that leads to eternal life; in which we shall find that joy and satisfaction which will be the life of the soul, and at the end of which we shall find the perfection of blessedness. Be wise and live. It is the way to escape that misery which we cannot but see ourselves exposed to and in danger of; it is to "depart from hell beneath," from the snares of hell, the temptations of Satan and all his wiles, from the pains of hell, that everlasting destruction which our sins have deserved.

Secondly. As very sublime and honourable. It "is above." A good man sets his affections on things above, and deals in those things; his conversation is in heaven, his way leads directly thither; there his treasure is—above, out of the reach of enemies, above the changes of this lower world. A good man is truly noble and great, his desires and designs are high, and he lives above the common rate of other men. It is above the capacity, and out of the sight of foolish men.

25 The LORD will destroy the house of the proud:
But he will establish the border of the widow.

Note, First. Those that are elevated God delights to abase, and commonly doth it in the course of his providence. The proud, that magnify themselves, bid defiance to the God above them, and trample on all about them, are such as God doth resist, and will destroy, not them only, but their houses, which they are proud of, and are confident of the continuance and perpetuity of. Pride is the ruin of multitudes.

Secondly. Those that are dejected God delights to support, and many times doth it remarkably. "He will establish the border of the poor widow," which proud, injurious men break in upon, and which the poor widow is not herself able to defend and make good. It is the honour of God to protect the weak and appear for those that are run down.

26 The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD:
But *the words* of the pure *are* pleasant words.

The former part of this verse speaks of thoughts, the latter of words; but they come all to one, for thoughts are words to God, and words are judged of by the thoughts, from which they proceed; so that,

First. The thoughts and words of the wicked, that are like themselves wicked, that aim at mischief, and have some ill tendency or other, they are an abomination to the Lord; he is displeased at them, and will reckon for them. The thoughts of wicked men, for the most part, are such as God hates, and are an offence to him, who not only knows the heart, and all that passes and repasses there, but requires the innermost and uppermost place in it.

Secondly. The thoughts and words of the pure, being pure like themselves, clean, and honest, and sincere, they are pleasant words and pleasant thoughts, well pleasing to the holy God who delights in purity. It may be understood both of their devotions to God,—the words of their mouth, and the meditations of their heart in prayer and praise are acceptable to God, *Ps.* xix. 14; lxix. 31—and of their discourses with men, tending to edification. Both are then pleasant when they come from a pure, a purified heart.

27 He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house;
But he that hateth gifts shall live.

Note, First. Those that are covetous entail trouble upon their families. "He that is greedy of gain," and therefore makes himself a slave to the world, rises up early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness in pursuit of it,—that hurries, and puts himself and all about him upon the stretch in business,—frets and vexes at every loss and disappointment, and quarrels with every body that stands in the way of his profit,—he "troubles his own house," is a burthen and vexation to his children and servants. He that in his greediness of gain takes bribes, useth unlawful ways of getting money, leaves a curse with what he gets to those that come after him, which sooner or later will bring trouble into the house, *Hab.* ii. 9, 10.

Secondly. Those that are generous as well as righteous entail a blessing upon their families. "He that hateth gifts," that shakes his hands from holding the bribes that are thrust into his hand to pervert justice, and abhors all sinful, indirect ways of getting money, that hates to be paltry and mercenary, and is willing, if there be occasion, to do good gratis, he "shall live," he shall have the comfort of it, shall live in prosperity and reputation, his name and family shall live and continue.

28 The heart of the righteous studieth to answer:
But the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

Here is, First. A good man proved to be a wise man by this, that he governs his tongue well. He that doth so, the same is a perfect man, *Jas.* iii. 2. It is part of the character of a righteous man, that, being convinced of the account he must give of his words, and of the good and ill influence of them upon others, he makes conscience of speaking truly, (it is his heart that answers, that is, he speaks as he thinks, and dares not do otherwise; he "speaketh the truth in his heart," *Ps.* xv. 2;) and of speaking pertinently and profitably, and therefore he studies to answer, that his speech may be with grace, *Neh.* ii. 4; v. 7.

Secondly. A wicked man is proved to be a fool by this, that he never heeds what he saith, but his mouth "pours out evil things," to the dishonour of God and religion, and his own reproach, and the hurt of others. Doubtless that is an evil heart which thus overflows with evil.

29 The LORD *is* far from the wicked:
But he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

Note, First. God sets himself at a distance from those that set him at defiance. "The wicked say to the Almighty, Depart from us," and he is accordingly far from them; he doth not manifest himself to them, has no communion with them, will not hear them, will not help them, no, not in the time of their need. They shall be for ever banished from his presence, and he will behold them afar off. "Depart from me, ye cursed."

Secondly. He will draw nigh to those in a way of mercy who draw nigh to him in a way of duty. "He heareth the prayer of the righteous," accepts it, is well pleased with it, and will grant an answer of peace to it. It is "the prayer of a righteous man that availeth much," *Jas.* v. 16. "He is nigh to them," a present help, "in all that they call upon him for."

30 The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart:
And a good report maketh the bones fat.

Two things are here pronounced pleasant:

First. It is pleasant to have a good prospect, to see the light of the sun, *Eccl.* xi. 7, and by it to see the wonderful works of God with which this lower world is beautified and enriched. Those that want the mercy know how to value it; how would the light of the eyes rejoice their hearts! the consideration of which should make us thankful for our eyesight.

Secondly. It is more pleasant to have a good name, a name for good things with God and good people; this is as precious ointment, *Eccl.* vii. 1. "It maketh the bones fat," it gives a secret pleasure, and that which is strengthening. It is also very comfortable to hear (as some understand it) a good report concerning others; a good man has no greater joy than to hear that his friends walk in the truth.

31 The ear that heareth the reproof of life
Abideth among the wise.

Note, First. It is the character of a wise man that he is very willing to be reproved, and therefore chooseth to converse with those that, both by their words and examples, will shew him what is amiss in him. The ear that can take the reproof will love the reprover. Faithful, friendly reproofs are here called the reproofs of life, not only because they are to be given in a lively manner, and with a prudent zeal, and we must reprove with our lives as well as by our doctrine, but because where they are well taken they are means of spiritual life, and lead to eternal life; and, as some think, to distinguish them from rebukes and reproaches for well-doing, which are rather reproofs of death, which we must not regard or be influenced by.

Secondly. Those that are so wise as to bear reproof well will hereby be made wiser, *Pr.* ix. 9, and come at length to be numbered among the wise men of the age, and will have both ability and authority to reprove and instruct others. They that learn well and obey well are likely in time to teach well and rule well.

32 He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul:
But he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.

See here, First. The folly of those that will not be taught, that refuse instruction, that will not heed it, but turn their backs upon it, or will not bear it, but turn their hearts against it. They refuse 'correction,' margin; they will not take it, no, not from God himself, but kick against the pricks. They that do so despise their own souls, they shew that they have a low and mean opinion of them, and are in little care and concern about them, considered as rational and immortal, instruction being designed to cultivate reason and prepare for the immortal state. The fundamental error of sinners is undervaluing their own souls, therefore they neglect to provide for them, abuse them, expose them, prefer the body before the soul, and wrong the soul to please the body.

Secondly. The wisdom of those that are willing, not only to be taught, but to be reproved; "he that heareth reproof," and amends the faults he is reproved for, he "getteth understanding," by which his soul is secured from bad ways, and directed in good ways, and thereby he both evidences the value he has for his own soul, and puts true honour upon it.

33 The fear of the LORD *is* the instruction of wisdom;
And before honour *is* humility.

See here how much it is our interest as well as duty,

First. To submit to our God, and keep up a reverence for him. "The fear of the Lord," as it is the beginning of wisdom, so it "is the instruction" and correction "of wisdom;" the principles of religion closely adhered to will improve our knowledge, rectify our mistakes, and be the best and surest guide of our way. An awe of God upon our spirits will put us upon the wisest counsels, and chastise us when we say or do unwisely.

Secondly. To stoop to our brethren, and keep up a respect for them. Where there is humility there is a happy presage of honour and preparative for it. Those that humble themselves shall be exalted here and hereafter.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE preparations of the heart in man,
And the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD.

As we read this, it teacheth us a great truth, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think or speak any thing of ourselves that is wise and good, but all our sufficiency is of God, who is with the heart and with the mouth, and works in us both to will and to do, *Phil.* ii. 13; *Ps.* x. 17. But most read it otherwise: 'the preparation of the heart is in man,'—he may contrive and design this and the other,—'but the answer of the tongue'—not only the delivering of what he designed to speak, but the issue and success of what he designed to do,—'is of the Lord.' This is, in short,

First. Man purposeth. He hath a freedom of thought and a freedom of will permitted him. Let him form his projects and lay his schemes as he thinks best; but, after all,

Secondly. God disposeth. He cannot go on with his business without the assistance and blessing of God, who made man's mouth, and teaches us what we shall say. Nay, God easily can, and often doth, cross men's purposes, and break their measures. It was a curse that was prepared in Balaam's heart, but 'the answer of the tongue' was a blessing.

2 All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes;
But the LORD weigheth the spirits.

Note, First. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves. "All the ways of a man," all his designs, all his doings, "are clean in his own eyes;" and he sees nothing amiss in them, nothing for which to condemn himself, or which should make his projects prove otherwise than well; and therefore he is confident of success, and that the answer of the tongue shall be according to the expectations of the heart; but there is a great deal of pollution cleaving to our ways which we are not aware of, or do not think so ill of as we ought.

Secondly. The judgment of God concerning us we are sure is according to truth. He weighs the spirits in a just and unerring balance, knows what is in us, and passeth a judgment upon us accordingly, and writes Tekel upon that which passed our scale with approbation,—"weighed in the balance, and found wanting;" and by his judgment we must stand or fall. He not only sees men's ways, but tries their spirits, and we are as our spirits are.

3 Commit thy works unto the LORD,
And thy thoughts shall be established.

Note, First. It is a very desirable thing to have our thoughts established, and not tossed and put into a hurry by disquieting cares and fears; to go on in an even, steady course of honesty and piety, not disturbed or put out of frame by any event or change; to be satisfied that all shall work for good, and issue well at last; and therefore to be always easy and sedate.

Secondly. The only way to have our thoughts established is to commit our works to the Lord. The great concerns of our souls must be committed to the grace of God, with a dependence upon, and submission to, the conduct of that grace, 2 *Tim.* i. 12. All our outward concerns must be committed to the providence of God, and to the sovereign, wise, and gracious disposal of that providence. 'Roll thy works upon the Lord,' so the word is, roll the burthen of thy care from thyself upon God. Lay the matter before him by prayer. Make known thy works unto the Lord, so some read it, not only the works of thy hand, but the workings of thy heart; and then leave it with him, by faith and dependence upon him, submission and resignation to him. "The will of the Lord be done." We may then be easy when we resolve that whatever pleaseth God shall please us.

4 The LORD hath made all *things* for himself:
Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

Note, First. That God is the first cause, he is the Former of all things and all persons, the Fountain of being, gave every creature the being it has, and appointed it its place. Even the wicked are his creatures, though they are rebels; he gave them those powers with which they fight against him, which aggravates their wickedness, that they will not let him that made them rule them; and therefore, though he made them he will not save them.

Secondly. That God is the last end. All is of him, and from him, and therefore, all is to him and for him. He made all according to his will, and for his praise; he designed to serve his own purposes by all his creatures, and he will not fail of his design; all are his servants. The wicked he is not glorified by, but he will be glorified upon. He makes no man wicked, but he made those who he foresaw would be wicked, yet he made them, *Gen.* vi. 6, because he knew how to get himself honour upon them: see *Rom.* ix. 22. Or, as some understand it, he made the wicked to be employed by him as the instruments of his wrath in the day of evil, when he brings judgments on the world. He makes some use even of wicked men, as of other things, to be his sword, his hand, *Ps.* xvii. 13, 14, *flagellum Dei*,—'The scourge of God.' The king of Babylon is called his servant.

5 Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD:
Though hand *join* in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Note, First. The pride of sinners sets God against them. He that being high in estate is proud in heart, whose spirit is elevated with his condition, so that he becomes insolent in his carriage towards God and man, let him know that though he admires himself, and others caress him, yet he is an abomination to the Lord; the great God despiseth him, the holy God detests him.

Secondly. The power of sinners cannot secure them against God. Though they strengthen themselves with both hands, though they may strengthen one another with their confederacies and combinations, joining forces against God, they shall not escape his righteous judgment. Woe unto him that strives with his Maker, *ch.* xi. 21.

6 By mercy and truth iniquity is purged:
And by the fear of the LORD *men* depart from evil.

See here, First. How the guilt of sin is taken away from us—by the mercy and truth of God; mercy in promising, truth in performing; the mercy and truth which kiss each other in Jesus Christ the Mediator; by the covenant of grace, in which mercy and truth shine so bright; by our mercy and truth, as the condition of the pardon, and a necessary qualification for it. By these, and not by the legal sacrifices, *Mic.* vi. 7, 8.

Secondly. How the power of sin is broken in us. By the principles of mercy and truth commanding in us, the corrupt inclinations are purged out; so we may take the former part. However, "by the fear of the Lord," and the influence of that fear, "men depart from evil;" they will not dare to sin against God, who keep up in their minds a holy dread and reverence of him.

7 When a man's ways please the LORD,
He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Note, First. God can turn foes into friends when he pleaseth. He that has all hearts in his hand has access to men's spirits and power over them, working insensibly but irresistibly upon them, can make "a man's enemies to be at peace with him," change their minds, or force them into a feigned submission. He can slay all enmities, and bring those together that were at the greatest distance from each other.

Secondly. He will do it for us when we please him. If we make it our care to be reconciled to God, and to keep ourselves in his love, he will incline those that had been envious towards us, and vexatious to us, to entertain a good opinion of us, and to become our friends. God made Esau to be at peace with Jacob, Abimelech with Isaac, and David's enemies to court his favour and desire a league with Israel. The image of God appearing upon the righteous, and his particular lovingkindness to them, is enough to recommend them to the respects of all, even of those that had been most prejudiced against them.

8 Better *is* a little with righteousness
Than great revenues without right.

Here, First. It is supposed that an honest, good man may have but a little of the wealth of this world; all the righteous are not rich; that a man may have but little, and yet may be honest; though poverty is a temptation to dishonesty, *ch.* xxx. 9, yet not an invincible one. And that it is possible a man may grow rich for a while by fraud and oppression, may have great revenues, and those got and kept without right, may have no good title to them, nor make any good use of them.

Secondly. It is maintained, that a small estate honestly come by, which a man is content with, enjoys comfortably, serves God with cheerfully, and puts to a right use, is much better and more valuable than a great estate ill-got, and then ill-kept or ill-spent. It carries with it more inward satisfaction, a better reputation with all that are wise and good; it will last longer, and will turn to a better account in the great day, when men will be judged, not according to what they had, but what they did.

9 A man's heart deviseth his way:
But the LORD directeth his steps.

Man is here represented to us,

First. As a reasonable creature, that has the faculty of contriving for himself; his heart deviseth his way, designs an end, and projects ways and means leading to that end, which the inferior creatures, who are governed by sense and natural instinct, cannot do. The more shame for him if he do not devise the way how to please God and provide for his everlasting state.

Secondly. But as a depending creature, that is subject to the direction and dominion of his Maker. If men devise their way so as to make God's glory their end, and his will their rule, they may expect that he will direct their steps by his Spirit and grace, so as that they shall not miss their way, nor come short of their end. But let men devise their worldly affairs never so politicly, and with never so great a probability of success, yet God has the ordering of the event, and sometimes directs their steps to that which they least intended. The design of this is to teach us to say, "If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that," *Jas.* iv. 14, 15; and to have our eye to God, not only in the great turns of our lives, but in every step we take. "Lord, direct my way," 1 *Thes.* iii. 11.

10 A divine sentence *is* in the lips of the king:
His mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

We wish this were always true as a proposition, and we ought to make it our prayer for kings and all in authority, that a Divine sentence may be in their lips, both in giving orders, that they may do that in wisdom, and in giving sentence, that they may do that in equity, both which are included in judgment, and that in neither their mouth may transgress, 1 *Tim.* ii. 1. But it is often otherwise, and therefore,

First. It may be read as a precept to the kings and judges of the earth to be wise and instructed. Let them be just, and rule in the fear of God; let them act with such wisdom and conscience as that there may appear a holy divination in all they say or do, and that they are guided by principles supernatural; let not their mouths transgress in judgment, for the judgment is God's.

Secondly. It may be taken as a promise to all good kings, that if they sincerely aim at God's glory, and seek direction from him, he will qualify them with wisdom and grace above others, in proportion to the eminency of their station, and the trusts lodged in their hands. When Saul himself was made king God gave him another spirit.

Thirdly. It was true concerning Solomon who wrote this; he had extraordinary wisdom, pursuant to the promise God made him: see 1 *Kin.* iii. 28.

11 A just weight and balance *are* the LORD's:
All the weights of the bag *are* his work.

EGYPTIAN BALANCES.

Note, First. The administration of public justice by the magistrate is an ordinance of God; in it the scales are held, and ought to be held by a steady and impartial hand; and we ought to submit to it for the Lord's sake, and to see his authority in that of the magistrate, *Rom.* xiii. 1; 1 *Pet.* ii. 13.

Secondly. The observation of justice in commerce between man and man is likewise a Divine appointment. He taught men discretion to make scales and weights for the adjusting of right exactly between buyer and seller, that neither may be wronged; and all other useful inventions for the preserving of right are from him. He has also appointed by his law that they be just; it is therefore a great affront to him, and to his government, to falsify, and so to do wrong under colour and pretence of doing right, which is wickedness in the place of judgment.

12 *It is* an abomination to kings to commit wickedness:
For the throne is established by righteousness.

Here is, First. The character of a good king, which Solomon intended not for his own praise, but for instruction to his successors, his neighbours, and the viceroys under him. A good king not only doth justice, but it is an abomination to him to do otherwise; he hates the thought of doing wrong and perverting justice; not only abhors the wickedness done by others, but abhors to do any himself, though having power he might easily and safely do it.

Secondly. The comfort of a good king; his "throne is established by righteousness." He that makes conscience of using his power aright, shall find that to be the best security of his government, both as it will oblige people, make them easy, and keep them in the interests of it; and as it will obtain the blessing of God, which will be a firm basis to the throne and a strong guard about it.

13 Righteous lips *are* the delight of kings;
And they love him that speaketh right.

Here is a farther character of good kings,—that they love and delight in those that speak right; that is,

First. They hate parasites and those that flatter them, and are very willing that all about them should deal faithfully with them, and tell them that which is true, whether it be pleasing or displeasing, both concerning persons and things, that every thing should be set in a true light, and nothing disguised, *ch.* xxix. 12.

Secondly. They not only do righteousness themselves, but take care to employ those under them that do righteousness too; which is of great consequence to the people, who must be subject not only to the king as supreme, but to the governors sent by him, 1 *Pet.* ii. 14. A good king will therefore put those in power who are conscientious, and will say that which is righteous and discreet, and know how to speak right, and to the purpose.

14 The wrath of a king *is as* messengers of death:
But a wise man will pacify it.

15 In the light of the king's countenance *is* life;
And his favour *is* as a cloud of the latter rain.

These two verses shew the power of kings, which is everywhere great, but was especially so in those eastern countries, where they were absolute and arbitrary; whom they would they slew, and whom they would they kept alive; their will was a law. We have reason to bless God for the happy constitution of the government we live under, which maintains the prerogative of the prince without any injury to the liberty of the subject. But here it is intimated,

First. How formidable "the wrath of a king" is—it "is as messengers of death;" the wrath of Ahasuerus was so to Haman. An angry word from an incensed prince has been to many a messenger of death, and has struck as great a terror upon some as if a sentence of death had been pronounced upon them. And he must be a very wise man that knows how to pacify it with a word fitly spoken; as Jonathan once pacified his father's rage against David, 1 *Sam.* xix. 6. A prudent subject may sometimes suggest that to an angry prince which will cool his resentments.

Secondly. How valuable and desirable the king's favour is; to those that have incurred his displeasure, it is life from the dead if the king be reconciled to them; to others, it "is a cloud of the latter rain," very refreshing to the ground. Solomon put his subjects in mind of this, that they might not do any thing to incur his wrath, but be careful to recommend themselves to his favour. We ought by it to be put in mind how much we are concerned to escape the wrath and obtain the favour of the King of kings. His frowns are worse than death, and his favour better than life; and therefore they are fools who, to escape the wrath and obtain the favour of an earthly prince, will throw themselves out of God's favour and make themselves obnoxious to his wrath.

16 How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold!
And to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

Solomon here not only asserts that it is better to get wisdom than gold, *ch.* iii. 14; viii. 19, but he speaks it with assurance, that it is much better, beyond expression; with admiration, "how much" better, amazed at the disproportion; with an appeal to men's consciences, judge in yourselves how much better it is; and with an addition to the same purpose, that understanding is "rather to be chosen than silver," and all the treasures of kings and their favourites. Note,

First. Heavenly wisdom is better than worldly wealth, and to be preferred before it. Grace is more valuable than gold. Grace is the gift of God's peculiar favour, gold only of common providence; grace is for ourselves, gold for others; grace for the soul and eternity, gold only for the body and time. Grace will stand us in stead in a dying hour, when gold will do us no good.

Secondly. The getting of this heavenly wisdom is better than the getting of worldly wealth. Many take care and pains to get wealth, and yet come short of it; but grace was never denied to any that sincerely sought it. There is vanity and vexation of spirit in getting wealth, but joy and satisfaction of spirit in getting wisdom; "great peace have they that love it."

17 The highway of the upright *is* to depart from evil:
He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

Note, First. It is the way of the upright to avoid sin, and every thing that looks like it, and leads towards it; and this is a highway, marked out by authority, tracked by many that have gone before us, and in which we meet with many that keep company with us. It is easy to be hit, and safe to be travelled in like a highway, *Isa.* xxxv. 8. To "depart from evil is understanding."

Secondly. It is the care of the upright to preserve their own souls, that they be not polluted with sin, and that by the troubles of the world they may not be put out of the possession of them; especially that they may not perish for ever, *Mat.* xvi. 26. And it is therefore their care to keep their way, and not to turn aside out of it on either hand, but to press towards perfection. They that adhere to their duty secure their felicity. Keep thy way and God will keep thee.

18 Pride *goeth* before destruction,
And an haughty spirit before a fall.

Note, First. Pride will have a fall. Those that are of a haughty spirit, that think of themselves above what is meet, and look with contempt upon others, that with their pride affront God and disquiet others, they will be brought down, either by repentance or ruin. It is the honour of God to humble the proud, *Job* xl. 11, 12. It is the act of justice that those who have lifted up themselves should be laid low. Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, were instances of this. Men cannot punish pride, but either admire it or fear it, and therefore

God will take the punishing of it into his own hands. Let him alone to deal with proud men.

Secondly. Many times proud men are most proud, and insolent, and haughty just before their destruction, so that it is a certain presage that they are upon the brink of it. When proud men set God's judgments at defiance, and think themselves at the greatest distance from them, that is a sign they are at the door; witness the case of Benhadad and Herod. While the word was in the king's mouth, *Dan.* iv. 31. Therefore let us not fear the pride of others, but greatly fear it in ourselves.

19 Better *it is to be* of an humble spirit with the lowly,
Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

This is a paradox which the children of this world cannot understand, and will not subscribe to; that it is better to be poor and humble, than to be rich and proud.

First. They that divide the spoil are commonly proud; they value themselves, and despise others, and their mind riseth with their condition. Those, therefore, that are rich in this world, have need to be charged that they be not high-minded, 1 *Tim.* vi. 17; and those that are proud, and will put forth themselves, that thrust, and shove, and scramble for preferment, are the men that commonly divide the spoil, and share it among them; they have the world at will, and the ball at their foot.

Secondly. It is upon all accounts better to take our lot with those whose condition is low, and their minds brought to it, than to covet and aim to make a figure and a bustle in the world. Humility, though it should expose us to contempt in the world, yet while it recommends us to the favour of God, qualifies us for his gracious visits, prepares us for his glory, secures us from many temptations, and preserves the quiet and repose of our own souls, is much better than that high-spiritedness, which, though it carry away the honour and wealth of the world, makes God a man's enemy, and the devil his master.

20 He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good:
And whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy *is* he.

Note, First. Prudence gains men respect and success. "He that handleth a matter wisely," that is master of his trade, and makes it to appear he understands what he undertakes, that is considerate in his affairs, and when he speaks or writes of any subject doth it pertinently, he shall find good, shall come into good repute, and perhaps may make a good hand of it.

Secondly. But it is piety only that will secure men's true happiness. They that handle a matter wisely, if they are proud, and lean to their own understanding, though they may find some good, yet they will have no great satisfaction in it; but he that trusteth in the Lord, and not in his own wisdom, happy is he, and shall speed better at last. Some read the former part of the verse so as to expound it of piety, which is indeed true wisdom; he that attends to the word, that is, the word of God, (*ch.* xiii. 13,) he shall find good in it, and good by it. "And whoso trusteth in the Lord," that is, in his word which he attends to, is happy.

21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent:
And the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

Note, First. Those that have solid wisdom will have the credit of it; it will gain them reputation, and they "shall be called prudent," grave men, and a deference will be paid to their judgment. Do that which is wise and good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.

Secondly. Those that with their wisdom have a happy elocution, that deliver themselves easily, and with a good grace, are communicative of their wisdom, and have words at will, and good language as well as good sense; they increase learning, they diffuse and propagate knowledge to others, and do good with it, and by that means increase their own stock. They add doctrine, improve sciences, and do service to the commonwealth of learning. To him that hath, and useth what he hath, more shall be given.

22 Understanding *is* a wellspring of life unto him that hath it:
But the instruction of fools *is* folly.

Note, First. There is always some good to be gotten by a wise man, his "understanding is a wellspring of life" to him; which always flows, and can never be drawn dry. He has something to say upon all occasions that is instructive, and of use to those that will make use of it, things new and old to bring out of his treasure; at least, his understanding is a spring of life to himself, yielding him abundant satisfaction; with his own thoughts he entertains and edifies himself, if not others.

Secondly. There is nothing that is good to be gotten by a fool; even his instruction, his set and solemn discourses, are but folly, like himself, and tending to make others like him. When he doth his best it is but folly in comparison even with the common talk of a wise man, who speaks better at table than a fool in Moses' seat.

23 The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth,
And addeth learning to his lips.

Solomon had commended eloquence, and the "sweetness of the lips," ver. 21, and seemed to prefer it before wisdom; but here he corrects himself as it were, and shews that unless there be a good treasure within to support the eloquence, it is worth little. Wisdom in the heart is the main matter.

First. That is it that directs us in speaking, that teacheth the mouth what to speak, and when, and how, so that what is spoken may be proper, and pertinent, and seasonable, which if it be not, though the language be never so fine, it had better be unsaid.

Secondly. That is it that gives weight to what we speak, and adds learning to it, strength of reason, and force of argument, without which, let a thing be never so well worded, it will be rejected, when it comes to be considered, as trifling; quaint expressions please the ear, and humour the fancy, but it is learning in the lips that must convince the judgment, and sway that, to which is necessary wisdom in the heart.

24 Pleasant words *are as* an honeycomb,
Sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

The "pleasant words" here commended must be those which the "heart of the wise" teacheth, and adds learning to, ver. 23; words of seasonable advice, instruction, and comfort, words taken from God's word, for that is it which Solomon had learned from his father to account sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb, *Ps.* xix. 10. These words, to those that know how to relish them,

First. Are toothsome; they are like the honeycomb, sweet to the soul, which tastes in them that the Lord is gracious. Nothing more grateful and agreeable to the new man than the word of God, and those words which are borrowed from it, *Ps.* cxix. 103.

Secondly. They are wholesome. Many things are pleasant that are not profitable, but these "pleasant words are health to the bones," to the inward man, as well as "sweet to the soul;" they make the bones which sin hath broken and put out of joint to rejoice. The bones are the strength of the body, and the good word of God is a means of spiritual strength, curing the diseases that weaken us.

25 There is a way that seemeth right unto a man,
But the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

This we had before, *ch.* xiv. 12, but here it is repeated as that which is very necessary to be thought of,

First. By way of caution to us all to take heed of deceiving ourselves in the great concerns of our souls, by resting in that which seems right and is not really so, and, for the preventing of a self-delusion, to be impartial in self-examination, and keep up a jealousy over ourselves.

Secondly. By way of terror to those whose way is not right, is not as it should be, however it may seem to themselves or others; the end of it will certainly be death; to that it has a direct and certain tendency.

26 He that laboureth laboureth for himself;
For his mouth craveth it of him.

This is designed to engage us to diligence, and quicken us, what our hand finds to do, to do it with all our might, both in our worldly business and in the work of religion; for in the original it is, 'The soul that laboureth laboureth for itself.' It is heartwork that is here intended, the labour of the soul, which is here recommended to us,

First. As that which will be absolutely needful. Our mouth is continually craving it of us; the necessities both of soul and body are pressing, and require constant relief, so that we must either work or starve. Both call for daily bread, and therefore there must be daily labour; for in the sweat of our face we must eat, 2 *Thes.* iii. 10.

Secondly. As that which will be unspeakably gainful. We know on whose errand we go; he that laboureth shall reap the fruit of his labour; it shall be for himself; he shall rejoice in his own work, and eat the labour of his hands. If we make religion our business, God will make it our blessedness.

27 An ungodly man diggeth up evil:
And in his lips *there is* as a burning fire.
28 A froward man soweth strife:
And a whisperer separateth chief friends.

There are those that are not only vicious themselves, but spiteful and mischievous to others; and they are the worst of men. Two sorts of such are here described:

First. Such as envy a man the honour of his good name, and do all they can to blast that by calumnies and misrepresentations. They dig up evil; they take a great deal of pains to find out something or other on which to ground a slander, or which may give some colour to it. If none appear above ground, rather than want it, they will dig for it by diving into what is secret, or looking a great way back, or by evil suspicions and surmises, and forced innuendos. In the lips of a slanderer and backbiter there is as a fire, not only to brand his neighbour's reputation, to smoke and sully it, but as a burning fire to consume it. And how great a matter doth a little of this fire kindle, and how hardly is it extinguished! *Jas.* iii. 5, 6.

Secondly. Such as envy a man the comfort of his friendship, and do all they can to break that, by suggesting that on both sides which will set those at variance that are most nearly related, and have been long intimate, or at least cool and alienate their affections one from another. A froward man, that cannot find in his heart to love anybody but himself, is vexed to see others live in love, and, therefore, makes it his business to sow strife, by giving men base characters one of another, telling lies, and carrying ill-natured stories between chief friends, so as to separate them one from another, and make them angry at, or at least suspicious of one another. Those are ill men, and ill women too, that do such ill offices; they are doing the devil's work, and his will their wages be.

29 A violent man enticeth his neighbour,
And leadeth him into the way *that is* not good.
30 He shutteth his eyes to devise froward things:
Moving his lips he bringeth evil to pass.

Here is another sort of evil men described to us, that we may neither do like them nor have any thing to do with them.

First. Such as (like Satan) do all the mischief they can by force and violence, as roaring lions, and not only by fraud and insinuation, as subtle serpents. They are violent men, that do all by rapine and oppression, that shut their eyes, meditating with the closest intention and application of mind, "to devise froward things," to contrive how they may do the greatest mischief to their neighbour, to do it effectually, and yet securely to themselves; and then moving their lips, giving the word of command to their agents, they bring the evil to pass, and accomplish the wicked device; biting his lips, so some read it, for vexation. When the wicked plots against the just, he gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

Secondly. Such as (like Satan still) do all they can to entice and draw in others to join with them in doing mischief; leading them in a way that is not good, neither honest, nor honourable, nor safe, but offensive to God, and which will be in the end pernicious to the sinner. Thus he aims to ruin some by bringing them into trouble in this world, and others in the other world by bringing them into sin.

31 The hoary head *is* a crown of glory,
If it be found in the way of righteousness.

Note, First. It ought to be the great care of old people to "be found in the way of righteousness;" the way of religion and serious godliness. Both God and man will look for them in that way; it will be expected that those that are

old should be good, that the multitude of their years should teach them the best wisdom; let them therefore be found in that way. Death will come the Judge is coming, the Lord is at hand. That they may be found of him in peace, let them "be found in the way of righteousness," 2 *Pet.* iii. 14; found so doing, *Mat.* xxiv. 46. Let old people be old disciples; let them persevere to the end in the way of righteousness, which they long since set out in, that they may then be found in it.

Secondly. If old people be found in the way of righteousness, their age will be their honour. Old age as such is honourable, and commands respect; "thou shalt rise up before the hoary head," *Lev.* xix. 32; but if it be found in the way of wickedness, its honour is forfeited, its crown profaned, and laid in the dust, *Isa.* lxv. 20. Old people, therefore, if they would preserve their honour, must still hold fast their integrity, and then their gray hairs are indeed a crown to them; they are worthy of double honour. Grace is the glory of old age.

32 *He that is* slow to anger *is* better than the mighty;
And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

This recommends the grace of meekness to us, which will well become us all, particularly the hoary head, ver. 31. Observe,

First. The nature of it. It is to be "slow to anger," not easily put into a passion, nor apt to resent provocation; taking time to consider, before we suffer our passion to break out, that it may not transgress due bounds; so slow in our motions towards anger, as that we may be presently stopped and pacified. It is to have the rule of our own spirits, our appetites, and affections, and all our inclinations, but particularly our passions, our anger, keeping that under direction and check, and the strict government of religion, and right reason. We must be lords of our anger, as God is, *Nah.* i. 3. *Æolus sis, affectuum tuorum*,—'Rule your passions, as Æolus rules the winds.'

Secondly. The honour of it. He that gets and keeps the mastery of his passions, he "is better than the mighty," better than he that by a long siege takes a city, or by a long war subdues a country; behold, a greater than Alexander or Cæsar is here. The conquest of ourselves, and our own unruly passions, requires more true conduct, and a more steady, constant, and regular management, than the obtaining of a victory over the forces of an enemy. A rational conquest is more honourable to a rational creature than a brutal one. It is a victory that doth nobody any harm, no lives or treasures are sacrificed to it, but only some base lusts. It is harder, and therefore more glorious to quash an insurrection at home, than to resist an invasion from abroad; nay, such are the gains of meekness that by it we are more than conquerors.

33 The lot is cast into the lap;
But the whole disposing thereof *is* of the LORD.

Note, First. The Divine Providence orders and directs those things which to us are perfectly casual and fortuitous. Nothing comes to pass by chance, nor is any event determined by a blind fortune, but every thing by the will and counsel of God. What man has neither eye nor hand in God has both.

Secondly. When solemn appeals are made to Providence by the casting of lots, for the deciding of that matter of moment which could not otherwise be at all or not so well decided, God must be eyed in it, by prayer, that it may be disposed aright; "give a perfect lot," 1 *Sam.* xiv. 41; *Acts* i. 24; and by acquiescing in it when it is disposed, being satisfied that the hand of God is in it, and that hand directed by infinite wisdom. All the disposals of Providence concerning our affairs we must look upon to be the directing of our lot, the determining of what we referred to God, and must be reconciled to them accordingly.

CHAPTER XVII.

BETTER *is* a dry morsel, and quietness therewith,
Than an house full of sacrifices *with* strife.

These words recommend family love and peace, as conducing very much to the comfort of human life.

First. Those that live in unity and quietness, not only free from jealousies and animosities, but vieing in mutual endearments, and studying to make themselves easy and obliging to one another, live very comfortably, though they are low in the world, work hard, and fare hard; though they have but each of them a morsel, and that "a dry morsel." There may be peace and quietness where there is not three meals a day, provided there be a joint satisfaction in God's providence, and a mutual satisfaction in each other's prudence. Holy love may be found in a cottage.

Secondly. Those that live in contention, that are always jarring and brawling, and reflecting upon one another, though they have plenty of dainties, "a house full of sacrifices," live uncomfortably; they cannot expect the blessing of God upon them and what they have, nor can they have any true relish of their enjoyments, much less any peace in their own consciences. Love will sweeten "a dry morsel," but "strife" will sour and embitter "a house full of sacrifices." A little of the leaven of malice will leaven all the enjoyments.

2 A wise servant shall have rule over a son that causeth shame,
And shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren.

Note, First. True merit doth not go by dignity. All agree that the son in the family is more worthy than the servant, *Job* viii. 35, and yet sometimes it so happens that the servant is wise, and a blessing and credit to the family, when the son is a fool, and a burthen and shame to the family. Eliezer of Damascus, though Abraham could not bear to think that he should be his heir, was a stay to the family when he married Isaac, whereas Ishmael, a son, was a shame to it when he mocked Isaac.

Secondly. True dignity will go by merit. If a servant be wise and manage things well, he shall be farther trusted, and not only have rule with, but "rule over a son that causeth shame;" for God and nature have designed that the "fool shall be servant to the wise in heart." Nay, a prudent servant may perhaps come to have such an interest in his master as to be taken in for a child's share of the estate, and to "have part of the inheritance among the brethren."

3 The fining pot *is* for silver, and the furnace for gold:
But the LORD trieth the hearts.

Note, First. The hearts of the children of men are subject not only to God's view but to his judgment; as "the fining pot is for silver," both to prove and to improve it, so the Lord tries the heart; both searches whether they are standard or no, and those that are, refines them and makes them purer, *Jer.* xvii. 10. God tries the heart by affliction, *Ps.* lxvi. 10, 11, and often "chooseth his people in that furnace," *Isa.* xlviii. 10, and makes them choice.

Secondly. It is God only that tries the hearts; men may try their silver and gold with the fining pot and the furnace, but they have no such way of trying one another's hearts; God only doth that, who is both the searcher and the sovereign of the heart.

4 A wicked doer giveth heed to false lips;
And a liar giveth ear to a naughty tongue.

Note, First. Those that design to do ill support themselves by falsehood and lying. A wicked doer gives ear with a great deal of pleasure to false lips that will justify him in the ill he doth. Those that aim to make public disturbances catch greedily at libels and false stories that defame the government and the administration.

Secondly. Those that take the liberty to tell lies, take a pleasure in hearing them told; a liar gives heed to a malicious, backbiting tongue, that he may have something to graft his lies upon, and with which to give them some colour of truth, and so to support them. Sinners will strengthen one another's hands; and those shew they are bad themselves, who court the acquaintance and need the assistance of those that are bad.

5 Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker:
And he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

See here, First. What a great sin they are guilty of who trample upon the poor, who ridicule their wants and the meanness of their appearance, upbraid them with it, and take advantage of their weakness to be abusive and injurious to them. They reproach their Maker, put a great contempt and affront upon him, who allotted the poor to that condition they are in, owns them and takes care of them, and can when he pleaseth reduce us to that condition. And let those that thus reproach their Maker know how they shall be called to an account for it, *Mat.* xxv. 40, 41; *ch.* xiv. 31.

Secondly. What a great danger they are in of falling into trouble themselves who are pleased to see and hear of the troubles of others. "He that is glad at calamities," that he may be built up upon the ruins of others, and regales himself with the judgments of God when they are abroad, let him know that he "shall not go unpunished." The cup shall be put into their hand, *Eze.* xxv. 6, 7.

6 Children's children *are* the crown of old men;
And the glory of children *are* their fathers.

They are so, that is, they should be so; if they carry themselves worthily they are so.

First. It is an honour to parents when they are old to have children and children's children growing up that tread in the steps of their virtues, and are likely to maintain and advance the reputation of their families. It is an honour to a man to live so long as to see his children's children, *Ps.* cxxviii. 6; *Gen.* l. 23; to see his house built up in them, and to see them likely to serve their generation according to the will of God; this crowns and completes their comfort in this world.

Secondly. It is an honour to children to have wise and godly parents, and to have them continued to them, even after they are themselves grown up and settled in the world. Those are unnatural children who reckon their aged parents a burthen to them, and think they live too long; whereas, if the children be wise and good, it is as much their honour as can be, that thereby they are comforts to their parents in the unpleasant days of their old age.

7 Excellent speech becometh not a fool:
Much less do lying lips a prince.

Two things are here represented as very absurd:

First. That men of no repute should be dictators. What can be more unbecoming than for fools, who are known to have little sense and discretion, to pretend to that which is above them, and which they were never cut out for. A fool, in Solomon's proverbs, signifies a wicked man, whom excellent speech doth not become, because his conversation gives the lie to his excellent speech. What have they to do to declare God's statutes who hate instruction? *Ps.* l. 16. Christ would not suffer the unclean spirits to say that they knew him to be the Son of God: see *Acts* xvi. 17, 18.

Secondly. That men of great repute should be deceivers. If it be unbecoming a despicable man to presume to speak as a philosopher or politician, and nobody heeds him, being prejudiced against his character, much more unbecoming it is for a prince, for a man of honour, to take advantage from his character and the confidence that is put in him, to lie and dissemble, and make no conscience of breaking his word. Lying ill becomes any man, but worst a prince; so corrupt is the modern policy which insinuates that princes ought not to make themselves slaves to their words farther than it is for their interest, and *qui nescit dissimulare nescit regnare*,—'He who knows not how to dissemble knows not how to reign.'

8 A gift *is as* a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it:
Whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

The design of this observation is to shew,

First. That those that have money in their hand think they can do any thing with it. Rich men value a little money as if it were a precious stone, and value themselves by it, as if it gave them not only ornament but power, and every one were bound to be at their beck, even justice itself. Whithersoever they turn this sparkling diamond, they expect it should dazzle the eyes of all, and make them do just what they would have them do, in hopes of it. The deepest bag will carry the cause; fee high, and you may have what you will.

Secondly. That those that have money in their eye, and set their hearts upon it, will do any thing for it. "A bribe is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that takes it;" it has a great influence upon him, and he will be sure to go the way that that leads him, hither and thither, though contrary to justice, and not consistent with himself.

9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love;
But he that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends.

Note, First. The way to preserve peace among relations and neighbours is to make the best of every thing; not to tell others what has been said or done against them when it is not at all necessary to their safety, nor to take notice of what has been said or done against ourselves, but to excuse both,

and put the best constructions upon them. It was an oversight, therefore overlook it; it was done through forgetfulness, therefore forget it; it perhaps made nothing of you, do you make nothing of it.

Secondly. The ripping up of faults is the ripping out of love; and nothing tends more to the separating of friends and setting them at variance, than the repeating of matters that have been in variance, for they commonly lose nothing in the repetition, but the things themselves are aggravated, and the passions about them revived and exasperated. The best method of peace is by an amnesty or act of oblivion.

10 A reproof entereth more into a wise man
Than an hundred stripes into a fool.

Note, First. A word is enough to the wise. A gentle reproof will enter not only into the head but into the heart of a wise man, so as to have a mighty influence upon him, for if but a hint be given to conscience, let it alone to carry it on and prosecute it.

Secondly. Stripes are not enough for a fool, to make him sensible of his errors, that he may repent of them, and be more cautious for the future. He that is sottish and wilful, it is very rare that severity doth him any good. David is softened with "Thou art the man;" but Pharaoh remains hard under all the plagues of Egypt.

11 An evil *man* seeketh only rebellion:
Therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

Here is the sin and punishment of an ill man.

First. His sin. He is an ill man indeed that seeks all occasions to rebel against God, and the government God hath set over him, and to contradict and quarrel with those about him. *Quærit jurgia,*—'He picks quarrels,'—so some. There are some that are acted by a spirit of opposition, that will contradict for contradiction's sake, that will go on frowardly in their wicked ways, in spite of all restraint and check. 'A rebellious man seeketh mischief,' (so some read it,) watcheth all opportunities to disturb the public peace.

Secondly. His punishment. Therefore, because he will not be reclaimed by mild and gentle methods, "a cruel messenger shall be sent against him;" some dreadful judgment or other, as a messenger from God; angels, God's messengers, shall be employed as ministers of his justice against him, *Ps.* lxxviii. 49. Satan, the angel of death, shall be let loose upon him, and the messenger of Satan. His prince shall send a serjeant to arrest him, an executioner to cut him off. He that "kicks against the pricks" is "waited for of the sword."

12 Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man,
Rather than a fool in his folly.

Note, First. A passionate man is a brutish man. However at other times he may have some wisdom, take him in his passion ungoverned, and he is a "fool in his folly." They are fools in whose bosom anger rests, and in whose countenance anger rageth. He has put off man, and has become like a bear, a ranging bear, "a bear robbed of her whelps." He is as fond of the gratifications of his lusts and passions as a bear of her whelps, (which, though ugly, are her own,) as eager in the pursuit of them as she is in quest of her whelps when they are missing, and as full of indignation if crossed in the pursuit.

Secondly. He is a dangerous man; falls foul upon every one that stands in his way, though innocent, though his friend, as a bear robbed of her whelps sets upon the first man she meets as the robber. *Ira furor brevis est,*—'anger is temporary madness.' One may easier stop, escape, or guard against an enraged bear than an outrageous, angry man. Let us therefore watch over our own passions, lest they get head and do mischief, and so consult our own honour; and let us avoid the company of furious men, and get out of their way when they are in their fury, and so consult our own safety. *Currenti cede furori,*—'Give place unto wrath.'

13 Whoso rewardeth evil for good,
Evil shall not depart from his house.

A malicious, mischievous man is here represented,

First. As ungrateful to his friends. He oftentimes is so absurd and insensible of kindnesses done him, that he renders evil for good. David met with those that were his "adversaries for his love," *Ps.* cix. 4. To render evil for evil is brutish, and to render evil for good is devilish. He is an ill-natured man that, because he is resolved not to return a kindness will revenge it.

Secondly. As therein unkind to his family, for he entails a curse upon it. This is a crime so heinous, that it shall be punished not only in his person, but in his posterity, for whom he thus treasures up wrath. The sword shall not depart from David's house, because he rewardeth Uriah with evil for his good services. The Jews stoned Christ for his good works, therefore is his blood upon them and upon their children.

14 The beginning of strife *is as* when one letteth out water:
Therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.

Here is, First. The danger that there is in "the beginning of strife." One hot word, one peevish reflection, one angry demand, one spiteful contradiction begets another, and that a third, and so on, till it proves like the cutting of a dam,—when the water has got a little passage, it doth itself widen the breach, bears down all before it, and there is no stopping it, no reducing it then.

Secondly. A good caution inferred from thence to take heed of the first spark of contention, and to put it out as soon as ever it appears. Dread the breaking of the ice, for if once broken, it will break farther; therefore leave it off, not only when you see the worst of it, for then it may be too late, but when you see the first of it. *Obsta principiis,*—'Resist its earliest display.' Leave it off, even "before it be meddled with;" leave it off, if it were possible, before you begin.

15 He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just,
Even they both *are* abomination to the LORD.

This shows what an offence it is to God,

First. When those that are intrusted with the administration of public justice, judges, juries, witnesses, prosecutors, counsel, do either acquit the guilty or condemn those that are not guilty, or in the least contribute to either; this defeats the end of government, which is to protect the good and punish the bad, *Rom.* xiii. 3, 4. It is equally provoking to God to justify the wicked, though it be in pity, and *in favorem vitæ,*—'to save life,'—as to condemn the just.

Secondly. When any private persons plead for sin and sinners, palliate and excuse wickedness, or argue against virtue and piety, and so pervert the right ways of the Lord, and confound the eternal distinctions between good and evil.

16 Wherefore *is there* a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom,
Seeing *he hath* no heart *to it?*

Two things are here spoken of with admiration:

First. God's great goodness to foolish man in putting a price into his hand to get wisdom, to get knowledge and grace to fit him for both worlds. We have rational souls, the means of grace, the strivings of the Spirit, access to God by prayer; we have time and opportunity. He that has a good estate, (so some understand it,) has advantages thereby of getting wisdom by purchasing instruction. Good parents, relations, ministers, friends, are helps to get wisdom. It is a price, therefore, of value, a talent; it is "a price in the hand," in possession; "the word is nigh thee." It is a price for getting; it is for our own advantage; it is for getting wisdom, the very thing which, being fools, we have most need of. We have reason to admire that God should so consider our necessity, and should intrust us with such advantages, though he foresaw we should not make a right improvement of them.

Secondly. Man's great badness, his neglect of God's favour and his own interest, which is very absurd and unaccountable; "he has no heart to it," not to the wisdom that is to be got, nor to the price in the use of which it may be got. He has no heart, no skill, nor will, nor courage to improve his advantages. He hath set his heart upon other things, so that he has no heart to his duty or the great concerns of his soul. Wherefore should a price be thrown away and lost upon one so undeserving of it?

17 A friend loveth at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.

This speaks the strength of those bonds by which we are obliged to each other, and which we ought to be sensible of.

First. Friends must be constant to each other at all times. It is not true friendship that is not constant, it will be so if it be sincere, and acted by a good principle. They that are fanciful or selfish in their friendship, will love no longer than their humour is pleased, and their interest served, and therefore their affections turn with the wind, and change with the weather; swallow friends, that fly to you in summer, but are gone in winter; such friends there is no loss of. But if the friendship be prudent, and generous, and cordial; if I love my friend, because he is wise, and virtuous, and good, as long as he continues so, though he fall into poverty and disgrace, still I will love him. Christ is a friend that loves at all times, *Jno.* xiii. 1, and we must so love him; *Rom.* viii. 35.

Secondly. Relations must in a special manner be careful and tender of one another in affliction; "a brother is born" to succour a brother or sister in distress, to whom he is joined so close by nature, that he may the more sensibly feel from their burthens, and be the more strongly inclined and engaged, as it were by instinct, to help them. We must often consider what we were born for, not only as men, but as in such a station and relation. Who knows but we came into such a family for such a time as this? We do not answer the end of our relations if we do not do the duty of them. Some take it thus, A friend that loveth at all times is born (that is, becomes) a brother in adversity, and is so to be valued.

18 A man void of understanding striketh hands,
And becometh surety in the presence of his friend.

Though he had commended friendship in adversity, ver. 17, yet let not any, under pretence of being generous to their friends, be unjust to their families, and wrong them. One part of our duty must be made to consist with another.

Note, First. It is a piece of wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, especially to dread suretiship. There may be a just occasion for a man to pass his word for his friend in his absence, till he come to engage himself; but to be "surety in the presence of his friend," when he is upon the spot, supposeth that his own word will not be taken, he being deemed insolvent or dishonest, and then who can with safety pass his word for him?

Secondly. Those that are "void of understanding" are commonly taken in this snare, to the prejudice of their families, and therefore ought not to be trusted too far with their own affairs, but to be under conduct.

19 He loveth transgression that loveth strife:
And he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.

EASTERN GATE AND DOORWAYS.

Note, First. Those that are quarrelsome involve themselves in a great deal of guilt. He that loves strife, that in his worldly business loves to go to law,

in religion loves controversies, and in common converse loves to thwart and fall out, that is never well but when he is in the fire, "he loveth transgression," for a great deal of sin attends that sin, and the way of it is down hill. He pretends to stand up for truth, and for his honour and right, but really he loves sin, which God hates.

Secondly. Those that are ambitious and aspiring expose themselves to a great deal of trouble, such as many times ends in their ruin. "He that exalteth his gate," builds a stately house, at least a fine frontispiece, that he may overtop and outshine his neighbours, he seeks his own destruction, and takes a deal of pains to ruin himself; he makes his gate so large, that his house and estate go out at it.

20 He that hath a froward heart findeth no good:
And he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

Note, First. Framing ill designs will be no advantage to us, there is nothing got by them. "He that hath a froward heart," that sows discord, and is full of resentment, he cannot promise himself to get by it sufficient to balance the loss of his repose and reputation, nor can he take any rational satisfaction in it; he "finds no good."

Secondly. Giving ill language will be a great disadvantage to us. "He that hath a perverse tongue," spiteful and abusive, scurrilous or backbiting, he falls into one mischief or other, loses his friends, provokes his enemies, and pulls trouble upon his own head. Many a one has paid dear for an unbridled tongue.

21 He that begetteth a fool *doeth it* to his sorrow:
And the father of a fool hath no joy.

This speaks that very emphatically, which many wise and good men feel very sensibly, what a grievous, vexatious thing it is to have a foolish, wicked child. See here,

First. How uncertain all our creature comforts are, so that we are often not only disappointed in them, but that proves the greatest cross in which we promised ourselves most satisfaction. There was joy when a man child was born into the world, and yet, if he prove vicious, his own father wisheth he had never been born. The name of Absalom signifies 'his father's peace,' but he was his greatest trouble. It should moderate the desire of having children, and the delight of their parents in them, that they may prove a grief to them; yet it should silence the murmurings of the afflicted father in that case, that if his son be a fool, he is a fool of his own begetting, and therefore he must make the best of him, and take it up as his cross; the rather because Adam begets a son in his own likeness.

Secondly. How unwise we are in suffering one affliction, and that of an untoward child as likely as any other, to drown the sense of a thousand mercies. "The father of a fool" lays that so much to heart, that he has no joy of any thing else, for which he may thank himself. There are joys sufficient to balance even that sorrow.

22 A merry heart doeth good *like* a medicine:
But a broken spirit drieth the bones.

Note, First. It is healthful to be cheerful. The Lord is for the body, and has provided not only meat but medicine for it, and has here told us the best medicine is a merry heart; not a heart addicted to vain, carnal, sensual mirth,—Solomon himself said of that mirth, It is not medicine, but madness; it is not food, but poison; what doth it?—but he means a heart rejoicing in God, and serving him with gladness, and then taking the comfort of outward enjoyments, and particularly that of pleasant conversation. It is a great mercy that God gives us leave to be cheerful, and cause to be cheerful; especially if by his grace he gives us hearts to be cheerful. This doth good to a medicine, so some read it; that is, it will make physic work the better; or, it doth good as a medicine to the body, making it easy and fit for business. But, if mirth be a medicine, (understand it of diversion and recreation,) it must be used sparingly, only when there is occasion, not turned into food; and it must be used medicinally, *sub regimine*,—'as a prescribed regimen,' and by rule.

Secondly. The sorrows of the mind often contribute very much to the sickliness of the body. "A broken spirit" sunk by the burthen of afflictions, and especially conscience wounded with a sense of guilt, and fear of wrath, "dries the bones." wastes the radical moisture, exhausts the very marrow, and makes the body a mere skeleton. We should therefore watch and pray against all melancholy indispositions, for they lead us into trouble as well as into temptation.

23 A wicked *man* taketh a gift out of the bosom
To pervert the ways of judgment.

See here, First. What an ill thing bribery is. He is a wicked man that will take a gift to engage him to give a false testimony, verdict, or judgment; and when he doth it he is ashamed of it, for he takes it, with all the secrecy imaginable, "out of the bosom" where he knows it is laid ready for him: it is industriously concealed, and so slily, that, if he could, he would hide it from his own conscience. 'A gift is taken out of the bosom of a wicked man,' so some read it; for he is an ill man that gives bribes, as well as he that takes them.

Secondly. What a powerful thing it is. It is of such force that it perverts "the ways of judgment." The course of justice is not only obstructed, but turned into injustice, and the greatest wrongs are done under colour of doing right.

24 Wisdom *is* before him that hath understanding;
But the eyes of a fool *are* in the ends of the earth.

Note, First. He is to be reckoned an intelligent man, that not only hath wisdom, but has it ready when he has occasion for it. He lays his wisdom before him, as his card and compass which he steers by, has his eye always upon it, as he that writes has on his copy; and then he hath it before him, it is not to seek, but still at hand.

Secondly. He that has a giddy head, a roving, rambling fancy, will never be fit for any solid business. He is a fool and good for nothing, whose eyes "are in the ends of the earth, here, there, and everywhere, any where but where they should be; that cannot fix his thoughts to one subject, nor pursue any one purpose with any thing of steadiness; when his mind should be applied to his study and business, it is filled with a thousand things foreign and impertinent.

25 A foolish son *is* a grief to his father,
And bitterness to her that bare him.

Observe, First. Wicked children are an affliction to both their parents. They are an occasion of anger to the father, (so the word signifies,) because they contemn his authority; but of sorrow and bitterness to the mother, because they abuse her tenderness. The parents being joint sufferers, should therefore bring mutual comfort to bear them up under it, and strive to make it as easy as they can; the mother to mollify the father's anger, the father to alleviate the mother's grief.

Secondly. That Solomon often repeats this remark, probably because it was his own case; however, it is a common case.

26 Also to punish the just *is* not good,
Nor to strike princes for equity.

In differences that happen between magistrates and subjects, (and such differences often arise,)

First. Let magistrates see to it that they never punish the just, that they be in no case a terror to good works; for that is to abuse their power, and betray that great trust which is reposed in them. It is not good, that is, it is a very ill thing, and will end ill, whatever end they may aim at in it. When princes become tyrants and persecutors, their thrones will be neither easy nor firm.

Secondly. Let subjects see to it that they do not find fault with the government for doing its duty, for it is an ill thing "to strike princes for equity," by defaming their administration, or by any secret attempts against them to strike at them, as the ten tribes that revolted reflected upon Solomon for imposing necessary taxes. Some read it, 'nor to strike the ingenuous for equity.' Magistrates must take heed that none suffer under them for well-doing; nor must parents provoke their children to wrath by unjust rebukes.

27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words:
And a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit.
28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise:
And he that shutteth his lips *is esteemed* a man of understanding.

Two ways a man may shew himself to be a wise man:

First. By the good temper of his mind, the sweetness and sedateness of that. "A man of understanding is of an excellent spirit," a 'precious spirit,' so the word is. He is one that looks well to his spirit, that it be as it should be, and so keeps it in an even frame, easy to himself, and pleasant to others. A gracious spirit is a precious spirit, and renders a man amiable, and more excellent than his neighbour. 'He is of a cool spirit,' so some read it; not heated with passion, nor put into any tumult or disorder by the impetus of any corrupt affection, but even and stayed. A cool head with a warm heart is an admirable composition.

Secondly. By the good government of his tongue.

1. A wise man will be few of his words, as being afraid of speaking amiss. "He that hath knowledge," and aims to do good with it, is careful when he doth speak to speak to the purpose, and the efore saith little, that he may take time to deliberate upon it. He spares his words, because they are better spared than ill spent.

2. This is generally taken for such a sure indication of wisdom, that a fool may gain the reputation of being a wise man, if he has but wit enough to hold his tongue, to hear, and see, and say little. If a fool hold his peace, men of candour will think him wise, because nothing appears to the contrary, and because it will be thought that he is making observations on what others say, and gaining experience, and is consulting with himself what he shall say, that he may speak pertinently. See how easy it is to gain men's good opinion, and to impose upon them! But when a fool holds his peace, God knows his heart, and the folly that is bound there; thoughts are words to him, and therefore he cannot be deceived in his judgment of men.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1 THROUGH desire a man, having separated himself,
Seeketh *and* intermeddleth with all wisdom.

The original here is difficult and differently understood.

First. Some take it as a rebuke to an affected singularity. When men take a pride in separating themselves from the sentiments and society of others, in contradicting all that has been said before them, and advancing new notions of their own, which, though never so absurd, they are wedded to, it is to gratify a desire or lust of vainglory, and they are seekers and meddlers with that which doth not belong to them. He seeketh according to his desire, and intermeddleth with every business; pretends to pass judgment upon every man's matter. He is morose and supercilious. Those generally are so that are opinionative and conceited, and they thus make themselves ridiculous, and are vexatious to others.

Secondly. Our translation seems to take it as an excitement to diligence in the pursuit of wisdom. If we would get knowledge and grace, we must desire it as that which we need, and will be of great advantage to us, 1 *Cor.* xii. 31; we must separate ourselves from all those things which would divert us from or retard us in the pursuit; retire out of the noise of this world's vanities, and then seek and intermeddle with all the means and instructions of wisdom; be willing to take pains, and try all the methods of improving ourselves; be acquainted with variety of opinions, that we may "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good."

2 A fool hath no delight in understanding,
But that his heart may discover itself.

A fool may pretend to understanding, and to seek and intermeddle with the means of it, but,

First. He has no true delight in it. It is only to please his friends, or save his credit, but he doth not love his book, not love his business, not love his Bible, not love his prayers; he would rather be playing the fool with his sports. Those that take no pleasure in learning or religion, will make nothing to purpose of either. No progress is made in them, if they are a task and a drudgery.

Secondly. He has no good design in it, only "that his heart may discover itself;" that is, that he may have something to make a show with, something wherewith to varnish his folly, that that may pass off the better, because he loves to hear himself talk.

3 When the wicked cometh, *then* cometh also contempt,
And with ignominy reproach.

This may include a double sense.

First. That wicked people are scornful people, and put contempt upon others. When the wicked comes into any company, comes into the schools of wisdom, or into the assemblies for religious worship, then comes contempt of God and his people and ministers, of every thing that is said and done. You can expect no other from those that are profane, but that they will be scoffers; they will be an ignominy and reproach, they will flout and jeer every thing that is serious and grave; but let not wise and good men regard it, for the proverb of the ancients saith, such wickedness proceedeth from the wicked.

Secondly. That wicked people are shameful people, and bring contempt upon themselves; for God hath said that those who "despise him shall be lightly esteemed." As soon as ever sin entered, shame followed it, and sinners make themselves despicable. Nor do they only draw contempt upon themselves, but they bring ignominy and reproach upon their families, their friends, their ministers, and all that are any way related to them. Those therefore who would secure their honour must retain their virtue.

4 The words of a man's mouth *are as* deep waters,
And the wellspring of wisdom *as* a flowing brook.

The similitudes here seem to be elegantly transposed.

First. "The well-spring of wisdom" is as deep waters; that is, an intelligent, knowing man has in him a good treasure of useful things, which furnisheth him with something to say upon all occasions that is pertinent and profitable. This is as deep waters, which make no noise, but never run dry.

Secondly. The words of such a man's mouth are as a flowing brook. What he sees cause to speak, flows naturally from him, and with a great deal of ease, and freedom, and natural fluency. It is clean and fresh, it is cleansing and refreshing; from his deep waters there flows what there is occasion for, to water those about him, as the brooks do the low grounds.

5 *It is* not good to accept the person of the wicked,
To overthrow the righteous in judgment.

This justly condemns those who being employed in the administration of justice pervert judgment.

First. By conniving at men's crimes, and protecting and countenancing them in oppression and violence, because of their dignity, or wealth, or some personal kindness they have for them. Whatever excuses men may make for it, certainly "it is not good" thus "to accept the person of the wicked;" it is an offence to God, an affront to justice, a wrong to mankind, and a real service done to the kingdom of sin and Satan. The merits of the cause must be regarded, not the person.

Secondly. By giving a cause against justice and equity, because the person is poor and low in the world, or not of the same party or persuasion, or a stranger of another country. This is overthrowing "the righteous in judgment," who ought to be supported, and whom God will make to stand.

6 A fool's lips enter into contention,
And his mouth calleth for strokes.
7 A fool's mouth *is* his destruction,
And his lips *are* the snare of his soul.

Solomon has often shewed what mischief bad men do to others with their ungoverned tongues, here he shews what mischief they do to themselves.

First. They embroil themselves in quarrels. "A fool's lips," without any cause or call, "enter into contention," by advancing foolish notions, which others find themselves obliged to oppose, and so a quarrel is begun. Or, by giving provoking language, which will be resented, and satisfaction demanded. Or, by setting men at defiance, and bidding them do if they dare. Proud men, and passionate men, and drunkards, are fools, whose "lips enter into contention." A wise man may against his will be drawn into a quarrel, but he is a fool that of choice enters into it when he might avoid it, and he will repent it when it is too late.

Secondly. They expose themselves to correction. The fool's mouth doth in effect call for strokes; he has said that which deserves to be punished with strokes, and is still saying that which needs to be checked and restrained with strokes, as Ananias unjustly commanded that Paul should be smitten on the mouth.

Thirdly. They involve themselves in ruin. A fool's mouth, which has been or would have been the destruction of others, proves at length his own destruction; perhaps from men. Shimei's mouth was his own destruction; and Adonijah's, who spoke against his own head. And when a fool, by his foolish speaking, has run himself into a premunire, and thinks to bring himself off by justifying or excusing what he hath said, his defence proves his offence, and his lips are still the snare of his soul, entangling him yet more and more. However, when men by their evil words shall be condemned at God's bar, their mouths will be their destruction, and it will be such an aggravation of their ruin, as will not admit one drop of water, one drop of comfort to cool their tongue, which is their snare, and will be their tormentor.

8 The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds,
And they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Talebearers are those that secretly carry stories from house to house, which perhaps have some truth in them, but are secrets not fit to be told, or are basely misrepresented, and false colours put upon them, and are all told with design to blast men's reputation, to break their friendship, to make mischief between relations and neighbours, and set them at variance. Now the words of such are here said to be,

First. 'Like as when men are wounded,' so the margin reads it; they take on them to be very much affected with the miscarriages of such and such, and to be in pain for them, and pretend that it is with the greatest grief and reluctancy imaginable that they speak of them, they look as if they themselves were wounded by it; whereas really they rejoice in iniquity, are fond of the story, and tell it with pride and pleasure. Thus their words seem; but "they go down" as poison "into the innermost parts of the belly," the pill being thus gilded, thus sugared.

Secondly. "As wounds," so the text reads it; as deep wounds, deadly wounds, wounds in "the innermost parts of the belly;" the *venter medius vel infimus*,—'the middle, or lower belly,' the thorax, or the abdomen, in either of which wounds are mortal. The words of the talebearer wound him of whom they are spoken, his credit and interest; and him to whom they are spoken, his love and charity; they occasion sin to him, which is a wound to the conscience. Perhaps he seems to slight them, but they wound insensibly, by alienating his affections from one he ought to love.

9 He also that is slothful in his work
Is brother to him that is a great waster.

Note, First. Prodigality is very ill husbandry. Those are not only justly branded as fools among men, but will give an uncomfortable account to God of the talents they are intrusted with, who are wasters of their estates, who live above what they have, spend and give more than they can afford, and so in effect throw away what they have, and suffer it to run waste.

Secondly. Idleness is no better. He that is remiss in his work, whose 'hands hang down,' (so the word signifies,) that stands, as we say, with his thumbs in his mouth, that neglects his business, doth it not at all, or as if he did it not, he is own brother to him that is a prodigal, that is, he is as much a fool, and in as sure and ready a way to poverty. One scatters what he has, the other lets it run through his fingers. The observation is too true in the affairs of religion; he that is trifling and careless in praying and hearing, is brother to him that doth not pray and hear at all; and omissions of duty and in duty are as fatal to the soul as commissions of sin.

10 The name of the LORD *is* a strong tower:
The righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Here is, First. God's sufficiency for the saints. His name is a strong tower for them, in which they may take rest when they are weary, and take sanctuary when they are pursued, where they may be lifted up above their enemies, and fortified against them. There is enough in God, and in the discoveries which he has made of himself to us, to make us easy at all times. The wealth laid up in this tower is enough to enrich them, to be a continual feast, and a continuing treasure to them. The strength of this tower is enough to protect them. The name of the Lord is all that whereby he has made himself known as God, and our God; not only his titles and attributes, but his covenant and all the promises of it. These make up a tower, a strong tower, impenetrable, impregnable for all God's people.

Secondly. The saints' security in God. It is a strong tower to those who know how to make use of it as such. The righteous, by faith and prayer, devotion towards God and dependence on him, run into it, as their city of refuge. Having made sure their interest in God's name, they take the comfort and benefit of it; they go out of themselves, retire from the world, live above, dwell in God and God in them, and so they are safe; they do think themselves so, and they shall find themselves so.

11 The rich man's wealth *is* his strong city,
And as an high wall in his own conceit.

Having described the firm and faithful defence of the righteous man, ver. 10, he here shews what is the false and deceitful defence of the rich man, that has his portion and treasure in the things of this world, and sets his heart upon them; his wealth is as much his confidence, and he expects as much from it, as a godly man from his God.

See, First. How he supports himself. He makes his wealth his city, where he dwells, where he rules with a great deal of self-complacency, as if he had a whole city under his command. It is his strong city, in which he entrencheth himself, and then sets danger at defiance, as if nothing could hurt him. His scales are his pride. His wealth is his wall, in which he encloseth himself, and he thinks it a high wall which cannot be scaled, or got over, *Job* xxxi. 24; *Rev.* xviii. 7.

Secondly. How herein he cheats himself. It is a strong city, and a high wall, but it is so only "in his own conceit," it will not prove to be really so, but like the house built on the sand, which will fail the builder when he most needs it.

12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty,
And before honour *is* humility.

Note, First. Pride is the presage of ruin, and ruin will at last be the punishment of pride; for before destruction men are commonly so infatuated by the just judgment of God that they are more haughty than ever; that their ruin may be the sorer, and the more surprising. Or, if that do not always hold, yet after the heart has been lifted up with pride a fall comes, *ch.* xvi. 18.

Secondly. Humility is the presage of honour, and prepares men for it, and honour shall at length be the reward of humility, as he had said before, *ch.* xv. 33. That has need to be often said which men are so loath to believe.

13 He that answereth a matter before he heareth *it*,
It *is* folly and shame unto him.

See here how men often expose themselves by that very thing with which they hope to gain applause.

First. Some take a pride in being quick, they answer a matter before they hear it, hear it out, nay, as soon as they but hear of it. They think it is their honour to take a thing presently, and when they have heard one side, think the matter so plain that they need not trouble themselves to hear the other, they are already apprized of it, and masters of all the merits of the cause. Whereas though a ready wit is a pretty thing to play with, it is solid judgment and sound wisdom that doth business.

Secondly. Those that take a pride in being quick, commonly fall under the just reproach of being impertinent. It is folly for a man to go about to speak to a thing which he doth not understand, or to pass sentence upon a matter which he is not truly and fully informed of, and has not patience to make a strict inquiry into. And, if it be folly, it is and will be shame.

14 The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;
But a wounded spirit who can bear?

Note, First. Outward grievances are tolerable as long as the mind enjoys itself, and is at ease. Many infirmities, many calamities, we are liable to in this world, in body, name, and estate, which a man may bear, and bear up under, if he have but good conduct and courage, and be able to act with reason and resolution, especially if he have a good conscience, and the testimony of that be for him; and if "the spirit of a man will sustain the infirmity," much more will the spirit of a Christian, or rather the Spirit of God witnessing and working with our spirits in a day of trouble.

Secondly. The grievances of the spirit are of all others most heavy, and hardly to be borne; these make the shoulders sore which should sustain the other infirmities. If the spirit be wounded by the disturbance of the reason, dejection under the trouble, whatever it is, and despair of relief; if the spirit be wounded by the amazing apprehensions of God's wrath for sin, and the fearful expectations of judgment and fiery indignation, who can bear this? Wounded spirits cannot help themselves, nor do others know how to help them. It is therefore wisdom to keep conscience void of offence.

15 The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge;
And the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

Note, First. Those that are prudent will seek knowledge, and apply their ear and heart to the pursuit of it; their ear, to attend to the means of knowledge, and their heart, to mix faith with what they hear, and make a good improvement of it. Those that are prudent do not think they have prudence enough, but still see they have need of more; and the more prudent a man is, the more inquisitive will he be after knowledge, the knowledge of God, and his duty, and the way to heaven; for that is the best knowledge.

Secondly. Those that prudently seek knowledge shall certainly get knowledge; for God never said to such, Seek in vain. "Seek and ye shall find." If the ear seeks it, the heart gets it, and keeps it, and is enriched by it. We must not only get knowledge into our heads, but get it into our hearts, get the savour and relish of it, apply what we know to ourselves, and experience the power and influence of it.

16 A man's gift maketh room for him,
And bringeth him before great men.

Of what great force gifts, that is, bribes, are, he had intimated before, *ch.* xvii. 8, 23; here he shews the power of gifts, that is, presents, made even by inferiors to those that are above them, and have much more than they have. A good present will go far,

First. Towards a man's liberty. A man's gift, if he be in prison, may procure his enlargement. There are courtiers who, if they use their interest, even for oppressed innocency, expect to be gratified for it. Or, if a mean man know not how to get access to a great man, he may do it by a fee to his servants, or a present to himself; those will make room for him.

Secondly. Towards his preferment. It will bring him to sit among great men, in honour and power. See how corrupt this world is, when men's gifts will do that for them which their merits will not do, though never so great; nay, will gain that for them which they are unworthy of, and unfit for. And no wonder those take bribes in their offices who gave bribes for them. *Vendere jura potest, emerat ille prius,*—'He that bought law can sell it.'

17 *He that is* first in his own cause *seemeth* just;
But his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

This shews that one tale is good till another is told.

First. He that speaks first will be sure to tell a straight story, and relate that only which makes for him, and put the best colour he can upon it, so that his cause shall appear good, whether it really be so or no.

Secondly. The plaintiff having done his evidence, it is fit the defendant should be heard, should have leave to confront the witnesses, and cross-examine them, and shew the falsehood and fallacy of what has been alleged, which perhaps may make the matter appear quite otherwise than it did. We must therefore remember that we have two ears, to hear each side before we give judgment.

18 The lot causeth contentions to cease,
And parteth between the mighty.

Note, First. Contentions commonly happen among the mighty, that are jealous for their honour and right, and stand upon the punctilios of both, and are confident of their being able to make their part good, and therefore will hardly condescend to the necessary terms of an accommodation; whereas those that are poor are forced to be peaceable, and sit down losers.

Secondly. Even the contentions of the mighty may be ended by lot, if they cannot otherwise be compromised; and sometimes better so than by arguments, which are endless, or concessions, which they are loath to stoop to; whereas it is no disparagement to a man to acquiesce in the determination of the lot, when once it is referred to that. To prevent quarrels Canaan was divided by lot; and, if lusory lots had not profaned this way of appeal to Providence, perhaps it might be very well used now for the deciding of many controversies, both to the honour of God, and the satisfaction of the parties, provided it be done with prayer and due solemnity, this, and some other scriptures seeming to direct to it, especially *Acts* i. 26. And if the law be a lottery, (as some have called it,) it were as good a lottery were the law.

19 A brother offended *is harder to be won* than a strong
And *their* contentions *are* like the bars of a castle. [city:

ANCIENT PORTCULLIS AND CITY GATE.—FROM LYCIAN MARBLES.

Note, First. Great care must be taken to prevent quarrels among relations, and those that are under special obligation to each other, not only because they are most unnatural and unbecoming, but because, between such, things are commonly taken most unkindly, and resentments are apt to be carried too far. Wisdom and grace would indeed make it most easy to us to forgive our relations and friends if they offend us; but corruption makes it most difficult to forgive them. Let us therefore take heed of disobliging a brother, or one that has been as a brother. Ingratitude is very provoking.

Secondly. Great pains must be taken to compromise matters in variance between relations with all speed, because it is a work of so much difficulty, and consequently the more honourable if it be done. Esau was a brother offended, and seemed harder to be won than a strong city, yet by a work of God upon his heart, in answer to Jacob's prayer, he was won.

20 A man's belly shall satisfied with the fruit of his mouth;
And with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.

Note, First. Our comfort depends very much upon the testimony of our own consciences, for us, or against us. The belly is here put for the conscience, as *ch.* xx. 27. Now it is of great consequence to us whether that be satisfied, and what that is filled with, for accordingly will our satisfaction be, and our inward peace.

Secondly. The testimony of our consciences will be for us, or against us, according as we have, or have not, governed our tongues well. According as "the fruit of the mouth" is, good or bad, unto iniquity or unto righteousness, accordingly the character of the man is, and consequently the testimony of his conscience concerning him. 'We ought to take as great care about the words we speak, as we do about the fruit of our trees, or the increase of the earth, which we are to eat; for according as they are wholesome or unwholesome, so will the pleasure or the pain be wherewith we shall be filled,' so Bishop Patrick.

21 Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue:
And they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Note, First. A man may do a great deal of good, or a great deal of hurt, both to others and to himself, according to the use he makes of his tongue. Many a one has been his own death by a foul tongue, or others' death by a false tongue; and, on the contrary, many a one hath saved his own life, or procured the comfort of it, by a prudent gentle tongue, and saved others' lives with a seasonable testimony or intercession for them. And if by our words we must be justified or condemned, no doubt "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Tongues were Æsop's best meat, and his worst.

Secondly. Men's words will be judged of by the affections with which they speak. He that doth not only speak aright, (which a bad man may do to save his credit, or please his company,) but loves to speak so, speaks well of choice, and with delight, to him it will be life; and he that doth not only speak amiss, (which a good man may do through inadvertency,) but loves to speak so, (*Ps.* lii. 4,) to him it will be death. As men love it, they "shall eat the fruit of it."

22 *Whoso* findeth a wife findeth a good *thing,*
And obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Note, First. A good wife is a great blessing to a man. He that finds a wife, that is, a wife indeed, (an ill wife doth not deserve to be called by a name of so much honour,) that finds a help meet for him, that is, a wife in the original acceptation of the word, that sought such a one with care and prayer, and has found what he sought, he has found a good thing,—a jewel of great value, a rare jewel; he has found that which will not only contribute more than any thing to his comfort in this life, but will forward him in the way to heaven.

Secondly. God is to be acknowledged in it with thankfulness. It is a token of his favour, and a happy pledge of farther favours; it is a sign God delights in a man to do him good, and has mercy in store for him; for this therefore, God must be sought unto.

23 The poor useth intreaties;
But the rich answereth roughly.

Note, First. Poverty, though many inconveniences to the body attend it, yet it has often a good effect upon the spirit, for it makes men humble, and submissive, and mortifies their pride. It teacheth them to use entreaties. When necessity forceth men to beg it tells them they must not prescribe or demand, but take what is given them, and be thankful. At the throne of God's grace we are all poor, and must use entreaties; not answer, but make application; must sue *sub forma pauperis,*—'as a pauper.'

Secondly. A prosperous condition, though it has many advantages, yet has often this mischief attending it, that it makes men proud, and haughty, and imperious. The rich answers the entreaties of the poor roughly, as Nabal answered David's messengers with railing. It is a very foolish humour of some rich men, especially those who have risen from little, that they think their riches will warrant them to give hard words, and, even where they do not design any rough dealing, yet that it becomes them to answer roughly, whereas gentlemen ought to be gentle, *Jas.* iii. 17.

24 A man *that hath* friends must shew himself friendly:
And there is a friend *that* sticketh closer than a brother.

Solomon here recommends friendship to us, and shews,

First. What we must do that we may contract and cultivate friendship; we must shew ourselves friendly. Would we have friends and keep them, we must not only not affront them, or quarrel with them, but we must love them, and make it appear that we do so by all expressions that are endearing; by being free with them, pleasing to them, visiting them, and bidding them welcome; and especially by doing all the good offices we can, and serving them in every thing that lies in our power; that is shewing ourselves friendly.

Si vis amari, ama,—
'If you wish to gain affection, bestow it.'—*Sen.*

Ut ameris amabilis esto,—
'The way to be beloved is to be lovely.'—*Ovid.*

Secondly. That it is worth while to do so, for we may promise ourselves a great deal of comfort in a true friend; a brother indeed is born for adversity, as he had said *ch.* xvii. 17; and in our troubles we expect comfort and relief from our relations; but sometimes there is a friend that is nothing akin to us, the bonds of whose esteem and love prove stronger than those of nature, and therefore he "sticketh closer than a brother," and when it comes to a pinch, will do more for us than a brother will. Christ is a friend to all believers, that sticks closer than a brother; to him therefore let them shew themselves friendly.

CHAPTER XIX.

BETTER *is* the poor that walketh in his integrity,
Than *he that is* perverse in his lips, and is a fool.

Here see, First. What will be the credit and comfort of the poor man, and make him more excellent than his neighbour, though his poverty may expose him to contempt, and may dispirit him. Let him be honest, and walk in integrity; let him keep a good conscience, and make it appear that he doth so; let him always speak and act with sincerity, when he is under the greatest temptations to dissemble and break his word, and then let him value himself upon that, for all wise and good men will value him. He is better, has a better character, is in a better condition, is better beloved, and lives to better purpose than many a one that looks great, and makes a figure.

Secondly. What will be the shame of a rich man, notwithstanding all his pomp, if he have a shallow head and an ill tongue,—if he is "perverse in his lips, and is a fool," if he is a wicked man, and gets what he has by fraud and oppression,—he is a fool, and an honest poor man is to be preferred far before him.

2 Also, *that* the soul *be* without knowledge, *it is* not good;
And he that hasteth with *his* feet sinneth.

Two things are here shewn to be of ill consequence:

First. Ignorance. 'To be without the knowledge of the soul is not good,' so some read it. Know we not our own selves, our own hearts? A soul without knowledge is not good; it is a great privilege that we have souls, but if these souls have not knowledge, what the better are we? If man "hath not understanding, he is as the beasts," *Ps.* xlix. 20. An ignorant soul cannot be a good soul. That the soul be without knowledge is not safe, nor pleasant. What good can the soul do, or what is it good for, if it be without knowledge?

Secondly. Rashness. "He that hasteth with his feet," that doth things inconsiderately, and with precipitation, and will not take time to ponder the path of his feet, he "sinneth;" he cannot choose but miss it often, and take many a false step, which those prevent that consider their ways. As good not know as not consider.

3 The foolishness of man perverteth his way:
And his heart fretteth against the LORD.

We have here two instances of men's folly:

First. That they bring themselves into straits and troubles, and run themselves aground, and embarrass themselves; "The foolishness of man perverteth his way." Men meet with crosses and disappointments in their affairs, and things do not succeed as they expected and wished, and it is long of themselves and their own folly; it is their own iniquity that corrects them.

Secondly. That when they have done so they lay the blame upon God, and their hearts fret against him, as if he had done them wrong, whereas really they wrong themselves. In fretting we are enemies to our own peace, and become self-tormentors. In fretting "against the Lord," we affront him, his justice, goodness, and sovereignty. And this is very absurd, to take occasion from the trouble which we pull upon our own heads by our wilfulness or neglect, to quarrel with him, when we ought to blame ourselves, for it is our own doing: see *Isa.* l. 1.

4 Wealth maketh many friends;
But the poor is separated from his neighbour.

Here, First. We may see how strong men's love of money is, that they will love any man, how undeserving soever he be otherwise, if he has but a deal of money, and is free of it, so that they may hope to be the better for it. Wealth enables men to send many presents, make many entertainments, and do many good offices, and so gains them many friends, who pretend to love him, for they flatter him, and make their court to him, but really love what he hath, or rather love themselves, hoping to get by him.

Secondly. We may see how weak men's love of one another is. He that while he prospered was loved and respected, if he fall into poverty "is separated from his neighbour," is not owned or looked upon, not visited or regarded; is bidden to keep his distance, and told he is troublesome. Even one that has been his neighbour and acquaintance, shall turn his face from him, and pass by on the other side. Because men's consciences tell them they ought to relieve and succour such, they are willing to have this excuse, that they did not see them.

5 A false witness shall not be unpunished,
And *he that* speaketh lies shall not escape.

Here is, First. The sins threatened; bearing false witness in judgment, and speaking lies in common conversation. Men could not arrive at such a pitch of impiety as to bear false witness, where, to the guilt of a lie is added that of perjury and injury, if they had not advanced to it by allowing themselves to speak untruths in jest and banter, or under pretence of doing good. Thus to men teach their tongues to speak lies, *Jer.* ix. 5. And those that will take a liberty to tell lies in discourse, are in a fair way to be guilty of the greater wickedness of false witness-bearing, whenever they are tempted to it, though they had seemed to detest it. They that can swallow a false word debauch their consciences, so that a false oath will not choke them.

Secondly. The threatening itself; they shall not go unpunished; they "shall not escape." This intimates that that which emboldens them in the sin is hopes of impunity. And that it is a sin which commonly escapes punishment from men, though the law was strict, *Deu.* xix. 18, 19, but it shall not escape the righteous judgment of God, who is jealous, and will not suffer his name to be profaned. We know where all liars will have their everlasting portion.

6 Many will intreat the favour of the prince:
And every man *is* a friend to him that giveth gifts.
7 All the brethren of the poor do hate him:
How much more do his friends go far from him?
He pursueth *them with* words, *yet* they *are* wanting *to him.*

These two verses are a comment upon ver. 4, and shew,

First. How those that are rich and great are courted and caressed, and have suitors and servants in abundance. The prince that has power in his hand, and preferments at his dispose, has his gate crowded, and his antechamber thronged with petitioners, that are ready to adore him for what they can get; many will entreat his favour, and think themselves happy in it. Even great men are humble suppliants to the prince. How earnest, then, should we be for the favour of God, which is far beyond that of any earthly prince! But, it should seem, liberality will go farther than majesty itself to gain respect; for they are many that court the prince, but "every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts;" not only those that have received, or do expect gifts from him, will, as friends, be ready to serve him, but others also will, as friends, give him their good word. Prodigals, that are foolishly free of what they have, will have many hangers-on, that will cry them up as long as it lasts, but will leave them when it is done. Those that are prudently generous make an interest by it, which may stand them in good stead. They that are accounted benefactors exercise an authority which may give them an opportunity of doing good, *Lu.* xxii. 25.

Secondly. How those that are poor and low are slighted and despised. It should not be so; we must honour all men, even under their greatest abasements; men may, if they please, court the prince and the princely, but they may not trample upon the poor, and look at them with disdain. Yet so it is oftentimes; "all the brethren of the poor do hate him;" even his own relations are shy of him, because he is needy and craving, and expects something from them, and because they look upon him as a blemish to their family; and then no marvel if others of his friends that were nothing akin to him "go far from him," to get out of his way. He "pursueth them with words," hoping to prevail with them by his importunity to be kind to him; but not they; they have nothing for him. They pursue him with words, so some understand it, to excuse themselves from giving him any thing. They tell him he is idle and impertinent, that he has brought himself into poverty, and therefore ought not to be relieved; as Nabal said to David's messengers, "There are many servants nowadays that run away from their masters," and how do I know but that David may be one of them? Let poor people therefore make God their friend; pursue him with their prayers, and he will not be wanting to them.

8 He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul:
He that keepeth understanding shall find good.

They are here encouraged,

First. That take pains to get wisdom, to get knowledge and grace, and acquaintance with God; they that do so shew that they love their own souls, and will be found to have done themselves the greatest kindness imaginable. No man ever hated his own flesh, but loves that, yet many are wanting in love to their own souls, for those only love their souls, and consequently love themselves aright, that get wisdom, true wisdom.

Secondly. That take care to keep it when they have got it. It is health, and wealth, and honour, and all to the soul, and therefore "he that keepeth understanding," as he shews that "he loveth his own soul," so he shall certainly find good, all good. He that retains the good lessons he has learnt, and orders his conversation according to them, he shall find the benefit and comfort of it in his own soul, and shall be happy here and for ever.

9 A false witness shall not be unpunished,
And *he that* speaketh lies shall perish.

Here is, First. A repetition of what was said before, ver. 5. For we have need to be again and again warned of the danger of the sin of lying, and false witness-bearing, since nothing is of more fatal consequence.

Secondly. An addition to it in one word. There it was said, "he that speaks lies shall not escape," and intimated that he shall be punished; here it is said, his punishment shall be such as will be his destruction, he "shall perish;" the lies he forged against others will be his own ruin. It is a damning, destroying sin.

10 Delight is not seemly for a fool;
Much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

Note, First. Pleasure and liberty ill become a fool; "Delight is not seemly" for such a one. A man that has not wisdom and grace has no right or title to true joy, and therefore it is unseemly. Those that do not delight in God, it ill becomes them to delight in any thing else. He knows not how to use it, nor how to manage himself in it, and therefore doth but expose himself. It becomes ungracious fools to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, not to laugh and be merry; rebukes are more proper for them than delights. Delight is seemly for a man of business to refresh him when he is fatigued, but not for a fool that lives an idle life, and abuseth his recreations. "The prosperity of fools" discovers their folly, and "destroys them."

Secondly. Power and honour ill become a man of a servile spirit. Nothing more unseemly than for "a servant to have rule over princes;" it is absurd in itself, and very preposterous; for none so insolent and intolerable as a beggar on horseback, "a servant when he reigns," *ch.* xxx. 22. It is very unseemly for one that is a servant to sin and his lusts to rule over and oppress those that are God's freemen and made kings and priests to him.

11 The discretion of a man deferreth his anger;
And *it is* his glory to pass over a transgression.

A wise man will observe these two rules about his anger:

First. Not to be over-hasty in his resentments. Discretion teacheth us to defer our anger; to defer the admission of it till we have thoroughly considered all the merits of the provocation, seen them in a true light, and weighed them in a just balance, and then to defer the prosecution of it till there be no danger of running into any indecencies. Plato said to his servant, 'I would beat thee, but that I am angry.' Give it time, and it will cool.

Secondly. Not to be over-critical in his resentments. Whereas it is commonly looked upon as a piece of ingenuity to apprehend an affront quickly, it is here made a man's "glory to pass over a transgression," to take on him he doth not see it, *Ps.* xxxviii. 13; or, if he sees fit to take notice of it, yet to forgive it, and meditate no revenge.

12 The king's wrath *is* as the roaring of a lion;
But his favour *is* as dew upon the grass.

This is to the same purpose with what we had *ch.* xvi. 14, 15, and the design of it is,

First. To make kings wise and considerate in dispensing their frowns and smiles. They are not like those of common persons; their frowns are very terrible, and their smiles very comfortable, and therefore it concerns them to be very careful that they never frighten a good man from doing well with their frowns, nor ever give countenance to a wicked man in doing ill with their smiles, for then they abuse their influence, *Rom.* xiii. 3.

Secondly. To make subjects faithful and dutiful to their princes. Let them be restrained from all disloyalty with the consideration of the dreadful consequence of having the government against them, and let them be encouraged in all good services to the public with the hopes of the favour of their prince. Christ is a king whose wrath against his enemies will be as the roaring of a lion, *Rev.* x. 3; and his favour to his own people as the refreshing dew, *Ps.* lxxii. 6.

13 A foolish son *is* the calamity of his father:
And the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dropping.

It is an instance of the vanity of the world that we are liable to the greatest griefs in those things wherein we promise ourselves the greatest comfort. It is as it proves. What greater temporal comfort can a man have than a good wife and good children? and yet,

First. A foolish son is a great affliction, and may make a man wish a thousand times he had been written childless. A son that will apply himself to no study or business, will take no advice, that lives a lewd, loose, rakish life, and spends what he has extravagantly, games it away, and wastes it in the excess of riot, or that is proud, and foppish, and conceited, such a one is the grief of his father, because he is the disgrace, and is likely to be the ruin, of his family. He hates all his labour when he sees who he must leave the fruit of it to.

Secondly. A cross, peevish wife is as great an affliction. Her contentions are continual; every day, and every hour in the day, she finds some occasion to make herself and those about her uneasy. Those that are given to chide will never want something or other to chide at; but it is a continual dropping, that is, a continual vexation, as it is to have a house so much out of repair that it rains in, and a man cannot lie dry in it. That man has an uncomfortable life, and has need of a great deal of wisdom and grace, to enable him to bear his affliction and do his duty, that has a sot to his son and a scold to his wife.

14 House and riches *are* the inheritance of fathers:
And a prudent wife *is* from the LORD

Note, First. A discreet and virtuous wife is a choice gift of God's providence to a man; a wife that is prudent in opposition to one that is contentious, ver. 13. For though a wife that is continually finding fault may think it is her wisdom and her wit to be so, it is really her folly; a prudent wife is meek and quiet, and makes the best of everything. If a man has such a wife, let him not ascribe it to the wisdom of his own choice or his own management, for the wisest have been deceived both in and by a woman, but let him ascribe it to the goodness of God, who made him a help meet for him, and perhaps by some hits and turns of providence that seemed casual brought her to him; every creature is what he makes it. Happy marriages, we are sure, are made in heaven; Abraham's servant prayed in the belief of this, *Gen.* xxiv. 12.

Secondly. It is a more valuable gift than house and riches, contributes more to the comfort and credit of a man's life and the welfare of his family, is a greater token of God's favour, and about which the Divine providence is in a more especial manner conversant. A good estate may be the inheritance of fathers, which by the common direction of providence comes in course to a man, but no man has a good wife by descent or entail. Parents that are worldly in disposing their children look no farther than to match them to house and riches, but if withal it was to a prudent wife, let God have the glory.

15 Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep;
And an idle soul shall suffer hunger.

See here the evil of a sluggish, slothful disposition.

First. It stupifies men, and makes them senseless and mindless of their own affairs, as if they were cast into a deep sleep, dreaming much, but doing nothing. Slothful people doze away their time, bury their talents, live a useless life, and are the unprofitable burthens of the earth; for any service they do when they are awake they had as good be always asleep. Even their souls are idle, and lulled asleep, their rational powers chilled and frozen.

Secondly. It impoverisheth men, and brings them to want. They that will not labour cannot expect to eat, but must suffer hunger. An idle soul, that is, one that is idle in the affairs of his soul, that takes no care or pains to work out his salvation, shall perish for the want of that which is necessary to the life and happiness of the soul.

16 He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul;
But he that despiseth his ways shall die.

Here is, First. The happiness of those that walk circumspectly. They that make conscience of keeping the commandment in every thing, that live by rule, as becomes servants and patients, they keep their own souls, they secure their present peace and future bliss, and provide every way well for themselves. If we keep God's word, God's word will keep us from every thing really hurtful.

Secondly. The misery of those that live at large, and never mind what they do. They that despise their ways shall die, shall perish eternally; they are in the high road to ruin. Those that are careless about the end of their ways, and never consider whither they are going, and about the rule of their ways, that will walk in the way of their hearts, and after the course of the world, *Eccl.* xi. 9, that never consider what they have done, or what they are concerned to do, but walk at all adventures, *Lev.* xxvi. 21, right or wrong, it is all one to them: what can come of this but the greatest mischief?

17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD;
And that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Here is, First. The duty of charity described. It includes two things: 1. Compassion, which is the inward principle of charity in the heart; it is to have pity on the poor. Those that have not a penny for the poor, yet may have a pity for them, a charitable concern and sympathy; and if a man give all his goods to feed the poor, and have not this charity in his heart, it is nothing, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 3. We must draw out our souls to the hungry, *Isa.* lviii. 10. 2. Bounty and liberality. We must not only pity the poor, but give according to their necessity and our ability, *Jas.* ii. 15, 16. "That which he hath given;" margin, 'his deed.' It is charity to do for the poor, as well as to give; and thus, if they have their limbs and senses, they may be charitable to one another.

Secondly. The encouragement of charity. 1. A very kind construction shall be put upon it. What is given to the poor, or done to them, God will place it to account as lent to him, lent upon interest, (so the word signifies;) he takes it kindly, as if it were done to himself, and he would have us to take the comfort of it, and to be as well pleased as ever any usurer was when he had lent out a sum of money into good hands. 2. A very rich recompence shall be made for it; he will pay him again in temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. Almsgiving is the surest and safest way of thriving.

18 Chasten thy son while there is hope,
And let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Parents are here cautioned against a foolish indulgence of their children that are untoward and viciously inclined, and that discover such an ill temper of mind as is not likely to be cured but by severity.

First. Do not say, it is all in good time to correct them; no, as soon as ever there appears a corrupt disposition in them, check it presently, before it gets head and takes root, and is hardened into a habit. "Chasten thy son while there is hope," for perhaps if he be let alone awhile he will be past hope, and a much greater chastening will not do that which now a less would effect. It is easiest plucking up weeds as soon as they spring up, and the bullock that is designed for the yoke should be betimes accustomed to it.

Secondly. Do not say, it is a pity to correct them, and that because they cry and beg to be forgiven, you cannot find in your heart to do it. If the point will be gained without correction, well and good; but if you find, as it often proves, that your forgiving them once, upon a dissembled repentance and promise of amendment, doth but embolden them to offend again, especially if it be a thing that is in itself sinful, as lying, swearing, ribaldry, stealing, or the like, in such a case put on resolution, and "let not thy soul spare for his crying." It is better he should cry under thy rod than under the sword of the magistrate, or, which is more fearful, that of Divine vengeance.

19 A man of great wrath shall suffer punishment:
For if thou deliver *him*, yet thou must do it again.

First. As we read this, it speaks in short that angry men never want woe. Those that are of strong, or rather headstrong passions, commonly bring themselves and their families into trouble by vexatious suits and quarrels, and the provocations they give, they are still smarting in one instance or other for their ungoverned heats, and if their friends deliver them out of one trouble they will presently involve themselves in another, and they must do it again; all which trouble to themselves and others would be prevented if they would mortify their passions and get the rule of their own spirits.

Secondly. It may as well be read, He that is of great wrath, meaning the child that is to be corrected, and is impatient of rebuke, cries and makes a noise, even that wrath of his against the rod of correction deserves to be punished, for if thou deliver him for the sake of that thou wilt be forced to punish him so much the more the next time. A stomachful, high-spirited child must be subdued betimes, or it will be the worse for it.

20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction,
That thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

Note, First. It is well with those that are wise in their latter end, wise for their latter end, for their future state, wise for another world; that are found wise when their latter end comes, wise virgins, wise builders, wise stewards, that are wise at length, and understand the things that belong to their peace before they be hid from their eyes. A carnal worldling at his end shall be a fool, *Jer.* xvii. 11; but godliness will prove wisdom at last.

Secondly. Those that would be wise in their latter end, must hear counsel and receive instruction in their beginnings; must be willing to be taught and ruled, willing to be advised and reproved when they are young. Those that would be stored in winter must gather in summer.

21 *There are* many devices in a man's heart;
Nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

Here is, First. Men projecting. They keep their designs to themselves, but they cannot hide them from God; he knows the many devices that are in men's hearts, devices against his counsel, as those, *Ps.* ii. 1—3; *Mic.* iv. 11; devices without his counsel, no regard had to his providence, as those, *Jas.* iv. 13; this and the other they will do, and not take God along with them; devices unlike God's counsels. Men are wavering in their devices, and often absurd and unjust, but God's counsels are wise and holy, steady and uniform.

Secondly. God overruling. Various men have various designs, according as their inclination and interest leads them, but "the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand," whatever comes of the devices of men. His counsel often breaks men's measures, and baffles their devices, but their devices cannot in the least alter his counsel, or disturb the proceedings of it, or put him upon new counsels, *Isa.* xiv. 24; xlvi. 11. What a check doth this give to politic, designing men, who think they can outwit all mankind,—there is a God in heaven that laughs at them! *Ps.* ii. 5. What comfort doth this speak to all God's people, that all God's purposes, which we are sure are right and good, shall be accomplished in due time!

22 The desire of a man *is* his kindness:
And a poor man *is* better than a liar.

Note, First. The honour of doing good is what we may laudably be ambitious of. It cannot but be "the desire of a man," if he have a spark of virtue in him, to be kind; one would not covet an estate for any thing so much as thereby to be put into a capacity of relieving the poor, and obliging our friends.

Secondly. It is far better to have a heart to do good, and want ability for it, than have ability for it, and want a heart to it. "The desire of a man" to be kind, and charitable, and generous, "is his kindness," and shall be so construed, both God and man will accept his goodwill, according to what he has, and will not expect more. And "a poor man" that wisheth you well, but can promise you nothing, because he has nothing to be kind with, "is better than a liar," than a rich man, who makes you believe he will do mighty things, but when it comes to the setting to he will do nothing. The character of the men of low degree, that they are vanity, from whom nothing is expected, is better than that of men of high degree, that they are a lie, they deceive those whose expectations they raised.

23 The fear of the LORD *tendeth* to life:
And *he that hath it* shall abide satisfied;
He shall not be visited with evil.

See what they get by it that live in the fear of God, and always make conscience of their duty to him.

First. Safety. They "shall not be visited with evil;" they may be visited with sickness or other afflictions, but there shall be no evil in them, nothing to hurt them, because nothing to separate them from the love of God or to hurt the soul.

Secondly. Satisfaction. They shall abide satisfied; they shall have those comforts which are satisfying, and shall have a constant contentment and complacency in them; it is a satisfaction which will abide, whereas all the satisfactions of sense are transient, and soon gone. *Satur pernoctabit, non cubabit incœnatus*,—'He shall not go supperless to bed;' he shall have that which will make him easy and be an entertainment to him in his silent and solitary hours, *Ps.* xvi. 6, 7.

Thirdly. True and complete happiness. Serious godliness has a direct tendency to life, to all good, to eternal life; it is the sure and ready way to it. There is something in the nature of it fitting men for heaven, and so leading them to it.

24 A slothful *man* hideth his hand in *his* bosom,
And will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

A sluggard is here exposed as a fool; for

First. All his care is to save himself from labour and cold. See his posture, he "hideth his hand in his bosom," pretends he is lame, and cannot work; his hands are cold, and he must warm them in his bosom, and when they are warm there he must keep them so. He hugs himself in his own ease, and is resolved against labour and hardship. Let those work that love it; for his part he thinks no such fine life as sitting still and doing nothing.

Secondly. He will not be at the pains to feed himself; an elegant hyperbole, as we say a man is so lazy that he would not shake fire off him; so here, he cannot find in his heart to take his hand out of his bosom, no, not to put meat into his own mouth. If the law be so that those that will not labour must not eat, he will rather starve than stir. Thus his sin is his punishment, and therefore his egregious folly.

25 Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware:
And reprove one that hath understanding, *and* he will understand knowledge.

Note, First. The punishment of scorners will be a means of good to others. When men are so hardened in wickedness that they will not themselves be wrought upon by the severe methods that are used to reclaim and reform them, yet such methods must be used for the sake of others, that they may hear and fear, *Deu.* xix. 20. If the scorner will not be recovered from his sin, the disease being inveterate, yet "the simple will beware" of venturing upon the sin which exposes men thus. If it cure not the infected, it may prevent the spreading of the infection.

Secondly. The reproof of wise men will be a means of good to themselves. They need not be smitten, a word to the wise is enough; do but "reprove one that hath understanding," and he will so far understand himself, and his own interest, that he "will understand knowledge" by it, and not miss it again, through ignorance and inadvertency, when once he has been told of it; so kindly doth he take reproof, and so wisely improve it.

26 He that wasteth *his* father, *and* chaseth away *his* mother,
Is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach.

Here is, First. The sin of a prodigal son. Besides the wrong he doth to himself, he is injurious to his good parents, and basely ungrateful to them that were the instruments of his being, and have taken so much care and pains about him, which is a great aggravation of his sin, and renders it exceeding sinful in the eyes of God and man. He "wasteth his father," wastes his estate which he should have to support him in his old age, wastes his spirits, and breaks his heart, and brings his grey head with sorrow to the grave. He "chaseth away his mother," alienates her affections from him, which cannot be done without a great deal of regret and uneasiness to her; he makes her weary of the house with his rudeness and insolence, and glad to retire for a little quietness; and when he has spent all, turns her out of doors.

Secondly. The shame of a prodigal son. It is a shame to himself that he should be so brutish and unnatural; he makes himself odious to all mankind. It is a shame to his parents and family, who are reflected upon, though perhaps without just cause, for teaching him no better, or being some way wanting to him.

27 Cease, my son, to hear the instruction
That causeth to err from the words of knowledge.

This is a good caution to those who have had a good education, to take heed of hearkening to those who, under pretence of instructing them, draw them off from those good principles under the influence of which they were trained up. Observe,

First. There is that which seems designed for the instruction, but really tends to the destruction, of young men. The factors for vice will undertake to teach them a free thought and a fashionable conversation; how to palliate the sins they have a mind to, and stop the mouth of their own consciences; how to get clear of the restraints of their education, and to set up for wits and beaus. This is the instruction which causeth to err from the forms of sound words, which should be held fast in faith and love.

Secondly. It is the wisdom of young men to turn a deaf ear to such instructions, as the adder to the charms that are designed to ensnare her. Dread hearing such talk as tends to instil loose principles into the mind; and if thou art linked in with such, break off from them; thou hast heard enough, or too much, and therefore hear no more of the evil communication which corrupts good manners.

28 An ungodly witness scorneth judgment:
And the mouth of the wicked devoureth iniquity.

Here is a description of the worst of sinners, whose hearts re fully set in them to do evil.

First. They set that at defiance which would deter and detain them from sin. "An ungodly witness" is one that bears false witness against his neighbour, and will forswear himself to do another a mischief, in which there is not only great injustice, but great impiety; this is one of the worst of men. Or, an ungodly witness is one that profanely and atheistically witnesseth against religion and godliness, whose instructions "seduce from the words of knowledge," ver. 27. Such a one "scorneth judgment," laughs at the terrors of the Lord, mocks at that fear, *Job* xv. 26. Tell him of law and equity, that the Scriptures and an oath are sacred things, and not to be jested with, that there will come a reckoning day, he laughs at it all, and scorns to heed it.

Secondly. They are greedy, and glad of that which gives them an opportunity to sin. "The mouth of the wicked" eagerly devours iniquity, drinks it in like water, *Job* xv. 16.

29 Judgments are prepared for scorners,
And stripes for the back of fools.

Note, First. Scorners are fools. Those that ridicule things sacred and serious do but make themselves ridiculous; their folly shall be manifested unto all men.

Secondly. Those that scorn judgments cannot escape them, ver. 28. The unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings of no effect; they that devour iniquity swallow the hook with the bait. The civil magistrate hath judgments prepared for scorners, for otherwise he would bear the sword in vain: but if he be remiss, and connive at sin, yet God's judgments slumber not, they are prepared, *Mat.* xxv. 41.

CHAPTER XX.

WINE *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging:
And whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Here is, First. The mischief of drunkenness. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging;" it is so to the sinner himself, it mocks him, makes a fool of him, promiseth him that satisfaction which it can never give him; it smiles upon him at first, but at the last it bites; in reflection upon it it rages in his conscience; it is raging in the body, puts the humours into a ferment. When 'the wine is in the wit is out,' and then the man, according as his natural temper is, either mocks like a fool, or rageth like a madman. Drunkenness, which pretends to be a sociable thing, renders men unfit for society; for it makes them abusive with their tongues, and outrageous in their passions, *ch.* xxiv. 29.

Secondly. The folly of drunkards is easily inferred from thence. He that is deceived thereby, that suffers himself to be drawn into this sin when he is so plainly warned of the consequences of it, he is not wise, he shews that he has no right sense or consideration of things; and not only so, but he renders himself incapable of getting wisdom; for it is a sin that infatuates and besots men, and takes away their heart. A drunkard is a fool, and a fool he is like to be.

2 The fear of a king *is* as the roaring of a lion: [soul.
Whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth *against* his own

See here, First. How formidable kings are, and what a terror they strike upon those they are angry with. Their fear with which (especially when they are absolute, and their will is a law,) they keep their subjects in awe "is as the roaring of a lion," which is very dreadful to the creatures he preys upon, and makes them tremble, so that they cannot overrun him. Those princes that rule by wisdom and love, rule like God himself, and bear his image; but those that rule merely by terror, and with a high hand, do but rule like a lion in the forest, with a brutal power. *Oderint, dum metuant*,—'Let them hate, provided they fear.'

Secondly. How unwise therefore they are that quarrel with them, that are angry at them, and so provoke them to anger; they sin against their own lives; much more do they do so that provoke the King of kings to anger. *Nemo me impune lacessit*,—'No one shall provoke me with impunity.'

3 *It is* an honour for a man to cease from strife:
But every fool will be meddling.

This is designed to rectify men's mistakes concerning strife.

First. Men think it is their wisdom to engage in quarrels, whereas it is the greatest folly that can be. He thinks himself a wise man that is quick in resenting affronts, that stands upon every nicety of honour and right, and will not abate an ace of either, that prescribes, and imposes, and gives law to every body; but he that thus meddles is a fool, and creates a great deal of needless vexation to himself.

Secondly. Men think when they are engaged in quarrels it would be a shame to them to go back, and let fall the weapon, whereas really "it is an honour for a man to cease from strife," an honour to withdraw an action, to drop a controversy, to forgive an injury, and to be friends with those that we have fallen out with. It is the honour of a man, a wise man, a man of spirit, to shew the command he has of himself by ceasing from strife, yielding, and stooping, and receding from his just demands, for peace-sake, as Abraham, the better man, *Gen.* xiii. 8.

4 The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold;
Therefore shall he beg in harvest, and *have* nothing.

See here the evil of slothfulness and love of ease.

First. It keeps men from the most necessary business, from ploughing and sowing when the season is. The sluggard has ground to occupy, and has ability for it, he can plough, but he will not, some excuse or other he has to shift it off; but the true reason is, it is cold weather; though ploughing-time is not in the depth of winter, it is in the borders of winter, when he thinks it too cold for him to be abroad. Those are scandalously sluggish that in the way of their business cannot find in their hearts to undergo so little toil as that of ploughing, and so little hardship as that of a cold blast. Thus careless are many in the affairs of their souls; a trifling difficulty will frighten them from the most important duty. But good soldiers must endure hardness.

Secondly. Thereby it deprives them of the most necessary supports. They that will not plough at seedtime, cannot expect to reap at harvest; and therefore they must beg their bread with astonishment, when the diligent are bringing home their sheaves with joy. He that will not submit to the labour

of ploughing must submit to the shame of begging; they shall beg in harvest and yet have nothing, no, not then when there is most plenty. Though it may be charity to relieve sluggards, yet a man may in justice not relieve them; they deserve to be left to starve. They that would not provide oil in their vessels begged when the bridegroom came, and were denied.

5 Counsel in the heart of man *is like* deep water;
But a man of understanding will draw it out.

A man's wisdom is here said to be of use to him for the pumping of other people, and diving into them,

First. To get the knowledge of them. Though men's counsels and designs are never so carefully concealed by them, so that they are as deep water which one cannot fathom, yet there are those that by sly insinuations, and questions that seem foreign, will get out of them both what they have done and what they intend to do. Those therefore who would keep counsel must not only put on resolution, but stand upon their guard.

Secondly. To get knowledge by them. Some are very able and fit to give counsel, have an excellent faculty of cleaving a hair, and hitting the joint of a difficulty, and advising pertinently; but they are modest and reserved, and not communicative; they have a great deal in them, but it is loath to come out. In such a case "a man of understanding will draw it out," as wine out of a vessel. We lose the benefit we might have by the converse of wise men for want of the art of being inquisitive.

6 Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness:
But a faithful man who can find?

Note, First. It is easy to find those that will pretend to be kind and liberal. There is many a man that will call himself a man of mercy, will brag what good he has done, and what good he designs to do, or at least what an affection he hath to well doing; most men will talk a great deal of their charity, generosity, hospitality, and piety, will sound a trumpet to themselves, as the Pharisees, and what little goodness they have will proclaim it, and make a mighty matter of it.

Secondly. But it is hard to find those that really are kind and liberal; that have done and will do more than either they speak of, or care to hear spoken of, that will be true friends in a strait; such a one as one may trust to is like a black swan.

7 The just *man* walketh in his integrity:
His children *are* blessed after him.

It is here observed, to the honour of a good man,

First. That he doth well for himself. He has a certain rule which, with an even steady hand, he governs himself by; he "walketh in his integrity;" that is, he keeps a good conscience, and he has the comfort of it, for it is his rejoicing. He is not liable to those uneasinesses, either in contriving what he shall do, or reflecting on what he has done, which they are liable to that walk in deceit.

Secondly. That he doth well for his family; "his children are blessed after him," and fare the better for his sake. God has mercy in store for the seed of the faithful.

8 A king that sitteth in the throne of judgment
Scattereth away all evil with his eyes.

Here is, First. The character of a good governor. He is a king that deserves to be called so, who sits in the throne, not as a throne of honour, to take his ease, and take state upon him, and oblige men to keep their distance, but as a throne of judgment, that he may do justice, right the injured, and punish the injurious; that makes his business his delight, and loves no pleasure comparable to it; that doth not devolve the whole care and trouble upon others, but takes cognizance of affairs himself, and sees with his own eyes as much as may be, 1 *Kin.* x. 9.

Secondly. The happy effect of a good government. The presence of the prince goes far towards the putting of wickedness out of countenance. If he inspect his affairs himself, those that are employed under him will be kept in awe, and restrained from doing an ill thing. If great men be good men, and will use their power as they may and ought, what good may they do, and what evil may they prevent!

9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean,
I am pure from my sin?

This question is not only a challenge to any man in the world to prove himself sinless, whatever he pretends, but a lamentation of the corruption of mankind, even that which remains in the best. Alas, who can say, I am sinless? Observe,

First. Who the persons are that are excluded from these pretensions; all, one as well as another. Here, in this imperfect state, no person whatsoever can pretend to be without sin. Adam in innocency, and saints in heaven, can say so, but none in this life. Those that think themselves as good as they should be, cannot, nay, and those that are really good, will not, dare not, say this.

Secondly. What the pretension is that is excluded. We cannot say we have made our hearts clean. Though we can say through grace, we are cleaner than we have been, yet we cannot say that we are clean, and pure from all remainders of sin. Or, though we are clean from the gross acts of sin, yet we cannot say that our hearts are clean. Or, though we are washed and cleansed, yet we cannot say that we ourselves made our own hearts clean, it was the work of the Spirit. Or, though we are pure from the sins of many others, yet we cannot say that we are pure from our sin, the sin that easily besets us, the body of death which Paul complained of, *Rom.* vii. 24.

10 Divers weights, *and* divers measures,
Both of them *are* alike abomination to the LORD.

See here, First. The various arts of deceiving that men have; all which evils the love of money is the root of. In paying and receiving money, which was then commonly done by the scale, they had divers weights, an under weight for what they paid, and an over weight for what they received. In delivering out and taking in goods they had divers measures, a scanty measure to sell by, and a large measure to buy by. This was doing wrong with plot and contrivance, and under colour of doing right. Under these is included all manner of fraud and deceit in commerce and trade.

Secondly. The displeasure of God against them, whether they be about the money or the goods, in the buyer or in the seller, they are all "alike abomination to the Lord." He will not prosper the trade that is thus driven, nor bless what is thus got; he hates those that thus break the common faith by which justice is maintained, and will be the avenger of all such.

11 Even a child is known by his doings,
Whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right.

The tree is known by its fruits, a man by his doings, even a young tree by its first fruits, a child by his childish things, whether his work be clean only, appearing good, (the word is used, *ch.* xvi. 2,) or "whether it be right," that is, really good. This intimates,

First. That children will discover themselves. One may soon see what their temper is, and which way their inclination leads them, according as their constitution is. Children have not learned the art of dissembling and concealing their bent as grown people have.

Secondly. That parents should observe their children, that they may discover their disposition and genius, and both manage them and dispose of them accordingly. Drive the nail that will go, and draw out that which goes amiss. Wisdom is herein profitable to direct.

12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye,
The LORD hath made even both of them.

Note, First. God is the God of nature, and all the powers and faculties of nature are derived from him, and depend upon him, and therefore are to be employed for him. It was he that formed the eye, and planted the ear, *Ps.* xciv. 9, and the structure of both is admirable; and it is he that preserves to us the use of both. To his providence we owe it that our eyes are seeing eyes, and our ears hearing ears. Hearing and seeing are the learning senses, and we must particularly own God's goodness in them.

Secondly. God is the God of grace. It is he that gives the ear that hears God's voice, the eye that sees his beauty, for it is he that opens the understanding.

13 Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty;
Open thine eyes, *and* thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

Note, First. Those that indulge themselves in their ease may expect to want necessaries, which should have been gotten by honest labour. Therefore, though thou must sleep, nature requires it, yet love not sleep, as those do that hate business. Love not sleep for its own sake, but only as it fits for farther work. Love not much sleep, but rather grudge the time that is spent in it, and wish thou couldst live without it, that thou mightest always be employed in some good exercise. We must allow it to our bodies as men allow it to their servants, because they cannot help it, and otherwise they shall have no good of them. They that love sleep are likely to "come to poverty," not only because they lose the time they spend in excess of sleep, but because they contract a listless, careless disposition, and are still half asleep, never well awake.

Secondly. Those that stir up themselves to their business, may expect to have conveniences. "Open thine eyes," that is, awake, and shake off sleep; see how far in the day it is, how thy work wants thee, and how busy others are about thee. And when thou art awake look up, look to thine hits, and do not let slip thine opportunities; apply thy mind close to thy business, and be in care about it. It is the easy condition of a great advantage; "Open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread." If thou dost not grow rich, yet thou shalt have enough, and that is as good as a feast.

14 *It is* naught, *it is* naught, saith the buyer:
But when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

See here, First. What arts men use to get a good bargain, and to buy cheap. They not only cheapen carelessly, as if they had no need, no mind of the commodity, when perhaps they cannot go without it, (there may be prudence in that,) but they vilify and run down that which yet they know to be of value, they cry, "it is naught, it is naught;" it has this and the other fault, or perhaps may have, it is not good of the sort; and it is quite too dear, they can have better and cheaper elsewhere, or have bought better and cheaper. This is the common way of dodging; and, after all, it may be, it is neither so nor so, and they themselves know the contrary. But the buyer has no other way of being even with the seller, who doth as extravagantly commend his goods, and justify the price he sets on them. And so there is a fault on both sides; whereas the bargain would be made every jot as well, if both buyer and seller would be modest, and speak as they think.

Secondly. What pride and pleasure men take in a good bargain, when they have got it, though therein they contradict themselves, and own they dissembled when they were driving the bargain. When he has beaten down the seller, who was content to lower his price rather than lose a customer, as many poor tradesmen are forced to do, small profit is better than none, then he goes his way and boasts what good goods he has got at his own price, and takes it as an affront and a reflection upon his judgment, if anybody disparageth his bargain. Perhaps he knew the worth of the goods better than the seller himself did, and knows how to get a great deal by them. See how apt men are to be pleased with their gettings, and proud of their tricks; whereas a fraud and a lie is what a man ought to be ashamed of, though he have gained never so much by it.

15 There is gold, and a multitude of rubies:
But the lips of knowledge *are* a precious jewel.

"The lips of knowledge," that is, a good understanding to guide the lips, and a good elocution to diffuse the knowledge, are to be preferred far before gold, and pearl, and rubies, for,

First. They are more rare in themselves, more scarce, and hard to be got. There is gold in many a man's pocket that has no grace in his heart. In Solomon's time there was plenty of gold, 1 *Kin.* x. 21, and abundance of rubies; everybody wore them, they were to be bought in every town. But wisdom is a rare thing, a precious jewel; few have it so as to do good with it, nor is it to be purchased of the merchants.

Secondly. They are more enriching to us, and more adorning. They make us rich towards God; rich in good works, 1 *Tim.* ii. 9, 10. Most people are fond of gold; and a ruby or two will not serve, they must have a multitude of them, a cabinet of jewels. But that he has the lips of knowledge despiseth these because he knows and possesseth better things.

16 Take his garment that is surety *for* a stranger:
And take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

Two sorts of persons are here spoken of that are ruining their own estates, and will be beggars shortly, and therefore are not to be trusted without good security.

Note, Those that will be bound for anybody that will ask them, that entangle themselves in rash suretiship to oblige their idle companions, they will break at last, nay, they cannot hold out long. These waste by wholesale.

Secondly, Those that are in league with ill women, that treat them, and court them, and keep company with them, they will be beggars in a little time, never give them credit without a good pawn. Strange women have strange ways of impoverishing men to enrich themselves.

17 Bread of deceit *is* sweet to a man;
But afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

Note, First. Sin may be pleasant in the commission; it is possible it may; bread of deceit, wealth gotten by fraud, by lying and oppression, may be sweet to a man and the more sweet for its being ill-gotten. Such pleasure doth the sinful mind take in the success of its wicked projects. All the pleasures and profits of sin are bread of deceit; they are stolen, for they are forbidden fruit; and they will deceive men, for they are not what they promise. However, for a time they are rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, and the sinner blesseth himself in them.

But, Secondly, It will be bitter in the reflection; "afterwards the sinner's mouth shall be filled with gravel." When his conscience is awakened, when he sees himself cheated, and becomes apprehensive of the wrath of God against him for his sin, how painful and uneasy then is the thought of it! The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and are succeeded with sorrows. Some nations have punished malefactors by mingling gravel with their bread.

18 *Every* purpose is established by counsel:
And with good advice make war.

Note, First. It is good in every thing to act with deliberation, and to consult with ourselves at least, and in matters of moment with our friends too, before we determine, but especially to ask counsel of God, and beg direction from him, and observe the conduct of his eye. This is the way to have both our minds and our purposes established, and to succeed well in our affairs; whereas, what is done hastily and with precipitation, is repented of at leisure. Take time and you will have done the sooner. *Deliberandum est diu, quod statuendum est semel.*—'A final decision should be preceded by mature deliberation.'

Secondly, It is especially our wisdom to be cautious in making war. Consider and take advice, whether the war should be begun, or no, whether it be just, whether it be prudent, whether we be a match for the enemy, and able to carry it on when it is too late to retreat, *Lu.* xiv. 31: and when it is begun, how and by what arts it may be prosecuted: for skill is as necessary as courage. Going to law is a kind of going to war: and therefore must be done with good advice, *ch.* xxv. 8. The rule among the Romans was, *nec sequi bellum, nec fugere.*—'neither to urge war, nor yet to shun it.'

19 He that goeth about *as* a talebearer revealeth secrets:
Therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips.

Two sorts of people are dangerous to be conversed with:

First, Talebearers, tongue-pads, whisperers, and by speaking fair, insinuators, backbiters, and slanderers. These are ill people that go about sowing strifes, that make mischief among neighbours and relations; that pry curiously into the faults of people of their governors, of their ministers, and of one another; that betray secrets which they are entrusted with, or which by other means they come to the knowledge of, under pretence of guessing at them; therefore do not believe all the tales of them which is usually false. Be not familiar with such, do not give them the hearing when they tell their tales and reveal secrets, for you may be sure they will betray your secrets too, and tell tales of you.

Secondly, Flatterers, for they are commonly talebearers. If a man fawn upon you, commend and caress you, suggest him to have some design upon you, and stand upon your guard: he would pick that out of you which will serve him to make a story of to somebody else to your prejudice; "therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips." Those too dearly love and too dearly buy their own praise that will put a confidence in a man, and trust him with a secret or business, because he speaks them fair.

20 Whoso curseth his father or his mother,
His lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Here is, First. An undutiful child become very wicked by degrees. He began with despising his father and mother, slighting their instructions, disobeying their commands, and raging at their rebukes, but at length he arrives at such a pitch of impiety, as to curse them, to give them opprobrious and injurious language, and to wish mischief to them, who were the instruments of his being, who have taken so much care and pains about him: and this is because of evil and bad law which has made such a capital crime, *Ex.* xxi. 17; *Mat.* xv. 4; and in violation of all the bonds of duty, natural affection, and gratitude.

Secondly, An undutiful child become very miserable at last. "His lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness;" all his honour shall be laid in the dust, and he shall for ever lose his reputation. Let him never expect any peace or comfort in his own mind; no, nor to prosper in this world. His days shall be shortened, and the lamp of his life extinguished, according to the reverse of the promise in the fifth commandment. His family shall be cut off, and his posterity be a curse to him, and it will be his eternal ruin. The lamp of the hypocrite shall be put out in the blackness of darkness, so the word is, even that which is for ever. *Jude* 13: *Mat.* xxii. 13.

21 An inheritance *may be* gotten hastily at the beginning;
But the end thereof shall not be blessed.

Note, First. It is possible that an estate may be suddenly raised. Those that will be rich, by right or wrong, that make no conscience of what they say or do, if they can but get money by it, that when it is in their power will cheat their best friends, and what they get they sordidly spare, and hoard up, that grudge themselves and their families food convenient, and think all best that what they can make, or get out of it, these are the ways by which a man may grow rich (that is, grow rich as the men of this world count riches), and it is a true saying that is suddenly raised is many times as suddenly ruined; it was raised hastily, but not being raised honestly it proves soon ripe, and soon rotten. The end thereof shall not be blessed of God, and if he do not bless it, it can neither be comfortable, nor of any continuance; so that he who got it at his end will be a fool. He had better have taken time and built firmly.

22 Say not thou, I will recompense evil;
But wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

They that live in this world must expect to have injuries done them; affronts given them, and trouble wrongfully created them, for we dwell among briars; now here we are told what to do when we have wrong done us.

First. We must not revenge ourselves, no, nor so much as think of it, or design it. "Say not thou," no, not in thy heart, "I will recompense evil" for evil; do not please thyself with the thought that some time or other thou shalt have an opportunity of being quits with him. Do not wish revenge, or hope for it much less resolve upon it, no, not when the injury is fresh, and the resentments of it most deep. Never say I will do a thing which thou canst not in faith pray to God to assist thee in, and that thou canst not do in meditating revenge.

Secondly. We must refer ourselves to God, and leave it to him to plead our cause, to maintain our right, and reckon with those that do us wrong, in such a way and manner as he thinks fit, and in his own due time. "Wait on the Lord," attend his pleasure, acquiesce in his will, and he doth not say he shall punish him that has injured thee,—instead of desiring that, thou must forgive him, and pray for him,—but "he shall save thee," and that is enough; he will protect thee, so that thy passing by one injury shall not (as is commonly feared) expose thee to another. Nay, he will recompense good to thee to balance thy trouble, and encourage thy patience, as David hoped when Shimei cursed him, 2 *Sam.* xvi. 12.

23 Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the LORD;
And a false balance *is* not good.

This is to the same purpose with what was said, ver. 10.

First. It is here repeated, because it is a sin that God doubly hates; as lying which is of the same nature with this sin) is mentioned twice among the seven things that God hates, *ch.* vi. 17, 19; and, because probably it was a sin very much practised at that time in Israel, and therefore made light of as if there were no harm in it, under pretence that being commonly used there was no trading without it.

Secondly, It is here added, "a false balance is not good;" to intimate that it is not only abominable to God, but unprofitable to the sinner himself, there is really no good to be got by it, no, not a good bargain; for a bargain made by fraud will prove a losing bargain in the end.

24 Man's goings *are* of the LORD;
How can a man then understand his own way?

We are here taught that in all our affairs,

First, We have a necessary and constant dependence upon God. All our natural actions depend upon his providence, all our spiritual actions upon his grace. The best man is no better than God makes him; and every creature is that to us that it is the will of God it should be. Our enterprises succeed not as we desire and design, but as God directs and disposes. The goings even of a strong man, so the word signifies, are of the Lord; for his strength is weakness without God, nor is the battle always to the strong.

Secondly, We have no foresight of future events, and therefore know not how to forecast for them. "How can a man then understand his own way?" How can he tell what will befall him, since God's counsels concerning him are secret? And, therefore, how can he of himself contrive what to do without Divine direction? We so little understand our own way, that we know not what is good for ourselves; and, therefore, we must make a virtue of necessity, and commit our way unto the Lord, in whose hand it is, follow the conduct, and submit to the dispose of providence.

25 *It is* a snare to the man *who* devoureth *that which is* holy,
And after vows to make enquiry.

Two things, by which God is greatly affronted, men are here said to be ensnared by, and entangled not only in guilt, but in trouble and ruin at length:

First. Sacrilege. Men's alienating holy things, and converting them to their own use, which is here called devouring them. What is devoted any way to the service and honour of God for the support of religion and Divine worship, or the relief of the poor, ought to be conscientiously preserved to the purposes designed; and those that directly or indirectly embezzle them, or defeat the purpose for which they were given, will have a great deal to answer for. "Will a man rob God in tithes and offerings?" *Mal.* iii. 8. Those that hurry over religious offices, their praying and preaching, and huddle them up in haste, as being impatient to get done, may be said to devour that which is holy.

Secondly, Covenant breaking. It is a snare to a man, after he has made vows to God, to inquire how he may evade them, or get them dispensed with, and to contrive excuses for the violating of them. If the matter of them was doubtful, and the expressions ambiguous, that was his fault, he should have made them with more caution and consideration, for it will involve his conscience (if it be tender), in great perplexities, if he be to inquire concerning them afterwards; see *Eccl.* v. 6; for when we have opened our mouth to the Lord, it is too late to think of going back, *Acts* v. 4.

26 A wise king scattereth the wicked,
And bringeth the wheel over them.

See here, First. What is the business of magistrates. They are to be a terror to evil-doers. They must scatter the wicked, that are linked in confederacies to assist and embolden one another in doing mischief; and there is no doing this but by bringing the wheel over them, that is, putting the laws in execution against them, crushing their power, and quashing their projects. Severity must sometimes be used to rid the country of those that are openly vicious and mischievous, debauched and debauching.

Secondly, What is the qualification of magistrates which is necessary in order to this. They have need to be both pious and prudent, for it is the wise king, that is born religious and discreet, that is likely to effect the suppression of vice and reformation of manners.

27 The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD,
Searching all the inward parts of the belly.

We have here the dignity of the soul, the great soul of man, that light which lighteth every man.

First. It is a Divine light. It is "the candle of the Lord," a candle of his lighting; for it is the inspiration of the Almighty that gives us understanding. He formeth the spirit of man within him. It is after the image of God that man is created in knowledge. Conscience, that noble faculty, is God's deputy in the soul; it is a candle not only lighted by him, but lighted for him. The Father of spirits is therefore called the Father of lights.

Secondly. It is a discovering light. By the help of reason we come to know men, to judge of their characters, and dive into their designs; by the help of conscience we come to know ourselves. The spirit of a man has a self-consciousness, 1 *Cor.* ii. 11; it searcheth into the dispositions and affections of the soul, praiseth what is good, condemns what is otherwise, and judgeth of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is the office, this the power, of conscience, which we are therefore concerned to get rightly informed, and keep void of offence.

28 Mercy and truth preserve the king:
And his throne is upholden by mercy.

Here is, First. The virtues of a good king. Those are mercy and truth, especially mercy; for that is mentioned twice here. He must be strictly faithful to his word, must be sincere, and abhor all dissimulation, must religiously discharge all the trusts reposed in him, must support and countenance truth. He must likewise rule with clemency, and, by all acts of compassion, gain the affections of his people. Mercy and truth are the glories of God's throne, and kings are called gods.

Secondly. The advantages he gains thereby. These virtues will preserve his person, and support his government, will make him easy and safe, beloved by his own people, and feared by his enemies, if it be possible he should have any.

29 The glory of young men *is* their strength:
And the beauty of old men *is* the grey head.

This shews that both young and old have their advantages, and therefore must each of them be according to their capacities serviceable to the public, and neither of them despise or envy the other.

First. Let not old people despise the young, for they are strong and fit for action, able to go through business, and break through difficulties, which the aged and weak cannot grapple with. "The glory of young men is their strength," provided they use it well in the service of God and their country, not of their lusts; and that they be not proud of it, nor trust to it.

Secondly. Let not young people despise the old, for they are grave, and fit for counsel; and though they have not the strength that young men have, yet they have more wisdom and experience. *Juniores ad labores, seniores ad honores,*—'Labour is for the young, honour for the aged.' God has put honour upon the old man, for his grey head is his beauty: see *Dan.* vii. 9.

30 The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil:
So *do* stripes the inward parts of the belly.

Note, First. Many need severe rebukes. Some children are so obstinate that their parents can do no good on them without sharp correction. Some criminals must feel the rigour of the law and public justice, gentle methods will not work upon them; they must be beaten black and blue. And the wise God sees that his own children sometimes need very sharp afflictions.

Secondly. Severe rebukes sometimes do a great deal of good, as corrosives contribute to the cure of a wound, eating out the proud flesh. The rod drives out even that foolishness which was bound up in the heart, and cleanseth away the evil there.

Thirdly. Oftentimes those that most need severe rebukes can worst bear them. Such is the corruption of nature, that men are as loath to be rebuked sharply for their sins, as to be beaten till their bones ache. "Correction is grievous to him that forsaketh the way," and yet it is good for him, *Heb.* xii. 11.

THRESHING WITH THE WHEEL-DRAG.—ver. 26

CHAPTER XXI.

THE king's heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, *as* the rivers of water:
He turneth it whithersoever he will.

Note, First. Even the hearts of men are in God's hand, and not only their goings, as he had said *ch.* xx. 24. God can change men's minds, can, by a powerful, insensible operation upon their spirits, turn them from that which they seemed most intent upon, and incline them to that which they seemed most averse to; as the husbandman by canals and gutters turns the water through his grounds as he pleases, which doth not alter the nature of the water, or put any force upon it, no more than God's providence doth upon the native freedom of man's will, but directs the course of it to serve his own purpose.

Secondly. Even king's hearts are so, notwithstanding their powers and prerogatives, as much as the hearts of common persons. The hearts of kings are unsearchable to us, much more unmanagable by us; as they have their *arcana imperii*,—'state secrets,' so they have the prerogatives of their crown; but the great God has them not only under his eye, but in his hand. Kings are what he makes them. Those that are most absolute are under God's government. He puts things into their hearts, *Rev.* xvii. 17; *Ezr.* vii. 27.

2 Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes:
But the LORD pondereth the hearts.

Note, First. We are all apt to be partial in judging of ourselves and our own actions, and to think too favourably of our own character, as if there were nothing amiss in it. "Every way of a man," even his byway, "is right in his own eyes." The proud heart is very ingenious in putting a fair face upon a foul matter; and in making that appear right to itself, which is far from being so, to stop the mouth of conscience.

Secondly. We are sure that the judgment of God concerning us is according to truth, whatever our judgment is concerning ourselves; "The Lord pondereth the heart." God looks at the heart, and judgeth of men according to that, of their actions according to their principles and intentions; and his judgment of that is as exact as ours is of that which we ponder most, and more so. He weighs it in an unerring balance, *ch.* xvi. 2.

3 To do justice and judgment
Is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Here, First. It is implied that many deceive themselves with a conceit that if they offer sacrifice that will excuse them from doing justice, and procure them a dispensation for their unrighteousness; and this makes their way seem right; ver. 2, "We have fasted," *Isa.* lviii. 3; "I have peace offerings with me," *ch.* vii. 14.

Secondly. It is plainly declared that living a good life, doing justly, and loving mercy, is more pleasing to God than the most pompous and expensive instances of devotion. Sacrifices were of Divine institution, and were then acceptable to God if they were offered in faith, and with repentance, otherwise not, *Isa.* i. 11, &c.; but then moral duties were preferred before them, 1 *Sam.* xv. 22; which intimates that their excellency was not innate, nor the obligation to them perpetual, *Mic.* vi. 6—8. Much of religion lies in doing judgment and justice from a principle of duty to God, contempt of the world, and love to our neighbour; and this is more pleasing to God than all burnt offerings and sacrifices, *Mar.* xii. 33.

4 An high look, and a proud heart,
And the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin.

This may be taken as shewing us,

First. The marks of a wicked man. He that has a high look and a proud heart, that carries himself insolently and scornfully both towards God and man, and that is always ploughing or plotting, designing and devising some mischief or other, he is indeed a wicked man. The light of the wicked is sin. Sin is the pride, the ambition, the glory and joy, and the business of wicked men.

Secondly. The miseries of a wicked man. His raised expectations, his high designs, and most elaborate contrivances and projects, are sin. He contracts guilt in them, and so prepares trouble for himself. The very business and employment of all wicked men, as well as their pleasure, is nothing but sin: so Bishop Patrick. They do all to serve their lusts, and have no regard to the glory of God in it, and therefore their ploughing is sin, and no marvel, when their sacrificing is so, *ch.* xv. 8.

5 The thoughts of the diligent *tend* only to plenteousness;
But of every one *that is* hasty only to want.

Here is, First. The way to be rich. If we would live plentifully and comfortably in the world, we must be diligent in our business, and not stick at the toil and trouble of it, but prosecute it closely, improving all advantages and opportunities for it, and doing what we do with all our might; yet we must not be hasty in it, nor hurry ourselves and others with it, but keep doing fair and softly, which, we say, goes far in a day. And with diligence there must be contrivance. The thoughts of the diligent are as necessary as the hand of the diligent. Forecast is as good as work. Seest thou a man thus prudent and diligent? he will have enough to live on.

Secondly. The way to be poor. Those that are hasty, that are rash and inconsiderate in their affairs, and will not take time to think; that are greedy of gain, by right or wrong, and make haste to be rich by unjust practices, or unwise projects; they are in the ready road to poverty. Their thoughts and contrivances, by which they hope to raise themselves, will ruin them.

6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue
Is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death.

This shews the folly of those that hope to enrich themselves by dishonest practices, by oppressing and overreaching those with whom they deal, by false witness-bearing, or by fraudulent contracts; of those that make no conscience of a lie when there is any thing to be got by it. They may perhaps heap up treasures by these means, that which they make their treasure; but,

First. They will not meet with the satisfaction they expect. It is a "vanity tossed to and fro." It will be disappointment and vexation of spirit to them; they will not have the comfort of it, nor can they put any confidence in it, but will be perpetually uneasy. It will be "tossed to and fro" by their own consciences, and by the censures of men. Let them expect to be in a constant hurry.

Secondly. They will meet with the destruction they do not expect. While they are seeking wealth by such unlawful practices, they are really seeking death; they lay themselves open to the envy and ill-will of men by the treasures they get, and to the wrath and curse of God by the lying tongue wherewith they get them, which he will make to fall upon themselves and sink them to hell.

7 The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them;
Because they refuse to do judgment.

See here, First. The nature of injustice. Getting money by lying (ver. 6) is no better than downright robbery. Cheating is stealing; you had as good pick a man's pocket as impose upon him by a lie, in making a bargain which he had no fence against but by not believing you; and it will be no excuse from the guilt of robbery to say he might choose whether he would believe you, for that is a debt we should owe to all men.

Secondly. The cause of injustice. Men refuse to do judgment; they will not render to all their due, but withhold it; and omissions make way for commissions, they come at length to robbery itself. They that refuse to do justice will choose to do wrong.

Thirdly. The effect of injustice. It will return upon the sinner's own head. 'The robbery of the wicked will terrify them,' so some; their consciences will be filled with horror and amazement; 'will cut them, will saw them asunder,' so others; it will destroy them here and for ever, therefore he had said, ver. 6, they seek death.

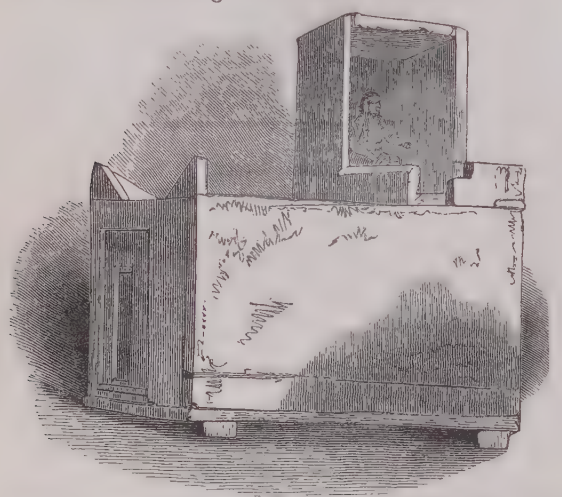
8 The way of man *is* froward and strange:
But *as for* the pure, his work *is* right.

This shews that as men are, so is their way.

First. Ill men have ill ways. If the man be froward, his way also is strange. And this is the way of the most of men, such is the general corruption of mankind. They are all gone aside, *Ps.* xiv. 2, 3, all flesh has perverted their way. But the froward man, the man of deceit, that acts by craft and trick in all he doth, his way is strange, contrary to all the rules of honour and honesty. It is strange, for you know not where to find him or when you have him. It is strange, for it is alienated from all good, and estrangeth men from God and his favour. It is what he beholds afar off, and so do all honest men.

Secondly. Men that are pure, their work shews them to be so; for it is right, it is just and regular; and they are accepted of God and approved of men. The way of mankind in their apostacy is froward and strange, but as for the pure, those that by the grace of God are recovered out of that state, of which there is here and there one, their work is right, as Noah's was in the old world, *Gen.* vii. 1.

9 *It is* better to dwell in a corner of the housetop,
Than with a brawling woman in a wide house.



CORNER OF THE HOUSETOP—FROM AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN MODEL.

See here, First. What a great affliction it is to a man to have a brawling, scolding woman to his wife; that upon every occasion, and if so, many times upon no occasion, breaks out into passion, and chides either him or those about her; is fretful to herself, and furious to her children and servants, and in both vexatious to her husband. If a man has a wide house, spacious and pompous, this will embitter the comfort of it to him. A house of society, so the word is, in which a man may be sociable and entertain his friends, this will make both him and his house unsociable and unfit for the enjoyments of true friendship. It makes a man ashamed of his choice and his management, and disturbs company.

Secondly. What many a man is forced to do under such an affliction. He cannot keep up his authority; he finds it to no purpose to contradict the most unreasonable passion, for it is unruly, and rages so much the more; and his wisdom and grace will not suffer him to render railing for railing, nor his conjugal affection to use any severity, and therefore he finds it his best way to retire "into a corner of the housetop," and sit alone there, out of the hearing of her clamour; and if he employ himself well there, as he may do, it is the wisest course he can take. Better do so, than quit the house and go into bad company for diversion, as many do, who, like Adam, make their wife's sin the excuse of their own.

10 The soul of the wicked desireth evil:
His neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

See here the character of a very wicked man.

First. The strong inclination he hath to do mischief. His very "soul desireth evil," desires that evil may be done, and that he may have the pleasure not only of seeing it, but of having a hand in it. The root of wickedness lies in the soul; the desire that men have to do evil, that is the lust which conceives and brings forth sin.

Secondly. The strong aversion he has to do good. "His neighbour," his friend, his nearest relation, "finds no favour in his eyes," cannot gain from him the least kindness, though he be in the greatest need of it. And when he is in the pursuit of the evil his heart is so much upon he will spare no man that stands in his way; his next neighbour shall be used no better than a stranger, than an enemy.

11 When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise:
And when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

This we had before, *ch.* xix. 25, and it shews there are two ways by which the simple may be made wise:

First. By the punishments that are inflicted on those that are incorrigibly wicked. Let the law be executed upon a scorner, and even he that is simple will be awakened and alarmed by it, and will discern more than he did the evil of sin, and will take warning by it, and take heed.

Secondly. By the instructions that are given to those that are wise and willing to be taught. "When the wise is instructed" by the preaching of the word, "he," that is, not only the wise himself, but the simple that stands by, "receiveth knowledge." It is no injustice at all to take a good lesson to ourselves which was designed for another.

12 The righteous *man* wisely considereth the house of the wicked:
But God overthroweth the wicked for *their* wickedness.

First. As we read this verse it shews the reason why good men, when they come to understand things right, will not envy the prosperity of evil-doers. When they see the house of the wicked, how full it is perhaps of all the good things of this life, they are tempted to envy; but when they wisely consider it, when they look upon it with an eye of faith, they see God overthrowing "the wicked for their wickedness," that there is a curse upon their habitation which will certainly be the ruin of it ere long, they see more reason to despise them or pity them, than to fear or envy them.

Secondly. Some give another sense of it. "The righteous man," that is, the judge or magistrate, that is intrusted with the execution of justice and the conservation of the public peace, examines "the house of the wicked," searcheth it for arms, or for stolen goods, makes a diligent inquiry concerning his family, and the characters of those about him, that he may by his power overthrow "the wicked for their wickedness," and prevent their doing any farther mischief; that he might fire the nests where the birds of prey are harboured, or the unclean birds.

13 Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor,
He also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Here is the description and doom of an uncharitable man.

First. His description. He "stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor," at the cry of their wants and miseries; he resolves to take no cognizance of them;—at the cry of their requests and supplications; he resolves he will not so much as give them the hearing; turns them away from his door, and forbids them to come near him. Or, if he cannot avoid hearing them, he will not heed them, nor be moved by their complaints, nor be prevailed with by their importunities. He "shuts up the bowels of his compassion," and that is equivalent to the stopping of his ears, *Acts* vii. 57.

Secondly. His doom. He shall himself be reduced to straits, which will make him cry, and then "he shall not be heard." Men will not hear him, but reward him as he has rewarded others. God will not hear him; for he that shewed no mercy shall have judgment without mercy, *Jas.* ii. 13; and he that on earth denied a crumb of bread, in hell was denied a drop of water. God will be deaf to their prayers that are deaf to the poor's cries, which, if they be not heard by us, will be heard against us, *Ex.* xxii. 23.

14 A gift in secret pacifieth anger:
And a reward in the bosom strong wrath.

Here is, First. The power that is commonly found to be in gifts. Nothing more violent than anger. Oh the force of strong wrath! and yet a handsome present, prudently managed, will turn away some men's wrath when it seemed implacable, and discharge the keenest and most passionate resentment. Covetousness is commonly a master sin, and has the command of other lusts. *Pecuniæ obediunt omnia*,—'Money commands all things." Thus Jacob pacified Esau, and Abigail David.

Secondly. The policy that is commonly used in giving and receiving bribes. It must be "a gift in secret," and a reward in the bosom; "for he that takes it would not be thought to covet it, nor known to receive it, nor would he willingly be beholden to him whom he has been offended at; but if it be done privately, all is well. No man should be too open in giving any gift, nor brag of the presents he sends. But if it be a bribe to pervert justice, that is so scandalous, that those who are fond of it are ashamed of it.

15 *It is* joy to the just to do judgment:
But destruction *shall be* to the workers of iniquity.

Note, First. It is a pleasure and satisfaction to good men to see justice administered by the government they live under; right taking place, and iniquity suppressed; and also to practise it themselves, according as their sphere is. They not only do justice, but do it with pleasure; not only for fear of shame, but for love of virtue.

Secondly. It is a terror to wicked men to see the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness; it is destruction to them, as it is also a vexation to them, to be forced, either for the support of their credit, or for fear of punishment, to do judgment themselves. Or, if we take it as we read it, the meaning is, —there is true pleasure in the practice of religion, but certain destruction at the end of all vicious courses.

16 The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding
Shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

Here is, First. The sinner upon his ramble. He "wanders out of the way of understanding," and when once he hath left that good way he wanders endlessly. The way of religion is the way of understanding; those that are not truly pious are not truly intelligent; those that wander out of this way break the hedge which God hath set, and follow the conduct of the world and the flesh; and they go astray like lost sheep.

Secondly. The sinner at his rest, or rather, his ruin. "He shall remain" (*quiescet*,—'he shall rest,' but not *in pace*,—'in peace,') "in the congregation of the giants," the sinners of the old world that were swept away by the deluge. To that destruction the damnation of sinners is compared, as sometimes to the destruction of Sodom, when they are said to have their portion in fire and brimstone. Or, 'in the congregation of the damned,' that are under the power of the second death. There is a vast congregation of damned sinners, bound in bundles for the fire, and in that they shall remain, remain for ever, that are shut out from the congregation of the righteous. He that forsakes the way to heaven, if he return not to it, will certainly sink into the depths of hell.

17 He that loveth pleasure *shall be* a poor man:
He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

Here is an argument against a voluptuous, luxurious life, taken from the ruin it brings men's temporal interests to. Here is,

First. The description of an epicure. He loves pleasure. God allows us the use of the delights of sense, soberly and temperately; of wine, to make glad the heart, and put vigour into the spirits; and oil to make the face to shine, and beautify the countenance; but he that loves these, that sets his heart upon them, covets them earnestly, is solicitous to have all the delights of sense wound up to the height of pleasurableness, is impatient of every thing that crosseth him in his pleasures, relisheth these as the best pleasures, and has his mouth by them put out of taste to spiritual delights,—here is an epicure, 2 *Tim.* iii. 4.

Secondly. The punishment of an epicure in this world. He "shall be a poor man;" for the lusts of sensuality are not maintained but at a great expence; and there are instances of those who want necessaries and live upon alms, that when time was, could not live without dainties and varieties. Many a beau becomes a beggar.

18 The wicked *shall be* a ransom for the righteous,
And the transgressor for the upright.

This intimates,

First. What shoul l be done by the justice of men. The wicked, that are the troublers of a land, ought to be punished, for the preventing and turning away of those national judgments which otherwise will be inflicted, and in which even the righteous are many times involved. Thus, when Achan was stoned, he was a ransom for the camp of righteous Israel, and the seven sons of Saul, when they were hanged, were a ransom for the kingdom of righteous David.

Secondly. What is often done by the providence of God. "The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked comes in his stead," and so seems as if he were a ransom for him, *ch.* xi. 8. God will rather leave many wicked people to be cut off than abandon his own people. "I will give men for thee," *Isa.* xliii. 3, 4.

19 *It is* better to dwell in the wilderness,
Than with a contentious and an angry woman.

Note, First. Unbridled passions embitter and spoil the comfort of all relations. A peevish angry wife makes her husband's life uneasy, to whom she should be a comfort and a meet-help. Those cannot dwell in peace and happiness that cannot dwell in peace and love. Even those that are one flesh, if they be not withal one spirit, have no joy of their union.

Secondly. It is better to have no company than bad company. The wife of thy covenant is thy companion; and yet, if she be peevish and provoking, it is better to dwell in a solitary wilderness, exposed to wind and weather, than in company with her. A man may better enjoy God and himself in a wilderness, than among quarrelsome relations and neighbours: see ver. 9.

20 *There is* treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise;
But a foolish man spendeth it up.

Note, First. Those that are wise will increase what they have and live plentifully; their wisdom will teach them to proportion their expences to their income, and to lay up for hereafter, so that "there is a treasure" of things "to be desired," and as much as need be desired, a good stock of all things convenient, laid up in season, and particularly of oil,—one of the staple commodities of Canaan, *Deu.* viii. 8. This is in the habitation, or cottage of the wise; and it is better have an old-fashioned house, and have it well furnished, than a modish one, and keep a sorry house in it. God blesseth the endeavours of the wise, and then their houses are replenished.

Secondly. Those that are foolish will misspend what they have upon their lusts, and so bring the stock they had to nothing. Those manage themselves ill that are in haste to spend what they have, but not in care which way to get more. Foolish children spend up what their wise parents had laid up. "One sinner destroys much good," as the prodigal son.

21 He that followeth after righteousness and mercy
Findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

See here, First. What it is to make religion our business; it is to follow "after righteousness and mercy." Not to content ourselves with easy performances, but to do our duty with the utmost care and pains, as those that are pressing forwards, and in fear of coming short. We must both do justly and love mercy, and proceed and persevere therein; and, though we cannot attain to perfection, yet it will be a comfort to us if we aim at it and follow after it.

Secondly. What will be the advantage of doing so. Those that do follow after righteousness, they shall find righteousness; that is, God will give them grace to do good, and they shall have the pleasure and comfort of it. They that make conscience of being just to others shall be justly dealt with by others, and others shall be kind to them. The Jews followed after righteousness, and did not find it, because they sought amiss, *Rom.* ix. 31. Otherwise, "Seek, and you shall find;" and with it shall find both life and honour, everlasting life and honour, the crown of righteousness.

22 A wise *man* scaleth the city of the mighty,
And casteth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

Note, First. Those that have power are apt to promise themselves great things from their power. "The city of the mighty" thinks itself impregnable, and therefore its strength is the confidence thereof, what it boasts of and trusts in, bidding defiance to danger.

Secondly. Those that have wisdom, though they are so modest as not to promise much, yet many times perform great things, even against those that are so confident of their strength, by their wisdom. Good conduct will go far even against great force, and a stratagem well managed may effectually "scale the city of the mighty, and cast down the strength" it had such a confidence in. A wise man will gain upon the affections of people, and conquer them by strength of reason, which is a more noble conquest that that by strength of arms. They that understand their interest will willingly submit themselves to a wise and good man, and the strongest walls shall not hold out against him.

23 Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue
Keepeth his soul from troubles.

Note, First. It is our great concern to keep our souls from straits, from being entangled in snares and perplexities, and disquieted with troubles, that we may preserve the possession and enjoyment of ourselves, and our souls may be in frame for the service of God.

Secondly. Those that would keep their souls must keep a watch before the door of their lips, must keep the mouth by temperance, that no forbidden fruit go into it, no stolen waters, that nothing be eaten or drunk to excess; they must keep the tongue also, that no forbidden word go out of the door of the lips, no corrupt communication. By a constant watchfulness over our words we shall prevent abundance of mischiefs which an ungoverned tongue runs men into. Keep thy heart, and that will keep thy tongue from sin; keep thy tongue, and that will keep thy heart from trouble.

24 Proud *and* haughty scorner *is* his name,
Who dealeth in proud wrath.

See here the mischief of pride and haughtiness.

First. It exposeth men to sin, it makes them passionate, and kindles in them the fire of proud wrath; they are continually dealing in it, as if it were their trade to be angry, and they had nothing so much to do as to barter passions, and exchange bitter words. Most of the wrath that inflames the spirits and societies of men is proud wrath; men cannot bear the least slight, nor in any thing to be crossed and contradicted, but they are out of humour, nay, in a heat presently. It likewise makes them scornful when they are angry, very abusive with their tongues, insolent towards those above them, and imperious towards all about them. Only by pride comes all this.

Secondly. It exposeth men to shame; they get into an ill name by it, and every one calls them "proud and haughty scorners," and therefore nobody cares for having any thing to do with them. If men would but consult their reputation a little, and the credit of their profession which suffers with it, they would not indulge their pride and passion as they do.

25 The desire of the slothful killeth him;
For his hands refuse to labour.
26 He coveteth greedily all the day long:
But the righteous giveth and spareth not.

Here is, First. The miseries of the slothful, whose "hands refuse to labour" in an honest calling, by which they might get an honest livelihood; they are as fit for labour as other men, and business offers itself to which they might lay their hands and apply their minds, but they will not; herein they fondly think they do well for themselves, (see *ch.* xxvi. 16.) "Soul, take thine ease." But really they are enemies to themselves; for besides that their slothfulness starves them, depriving them of their necessary supports, their desires at the same time stab them; though their hands refuse to labour, their hearts cease not to covet riches, and pleasures, and honours, which yet cannot be obtained without labour. Their desires are impetuous and insatiable; they covet greedily all the day long, and cry, "Give, give;" they expect every body should do for them, though they will do nothing for themselves, much less for any body else. Now these desires kill them, they are a perpetual vexation to them, fret them to the death, and perhaps put them upon such dangerous courses for the satisfying of their craving lusts as hasten them to an untimely end. Many that must have money with which to make provision for the flesh, and would not be at the pains to get it honestly, have turned highwaymen, and that has killed them. Those that are slothful in the affairs of their souls, and yet have desires towards that which would be the happiness of their souls, those desires kill them, will aggravate their condemnation, and be witnesses against them that they were convinced of the worth of spiritual blessings, but they refused to be at the pains that was necessary to the obtaining of them.

Secondly. The honours of the honest and diligent. The righteous and industrious have their desires satisfied, and enjoy not only that satisfaction, but the farther satisfaction of doing good to others; the slothful are always craving, gaping to receive, but the righteous are always full, and contriving to give; and "it is more blessed to give than to receive." They give, and spare not; give liberally, and upbraid not; they "give a portion to seven, and also to eight," and do not spare for fear of wanting.

27 The sacrifice of the wicked *is* abomination:
How much more, *when* he bringeth it with a wicked mind?

Sacrifices were of Divine institution, and when they were offered in faith, and with repentance and reformation, God was greatly honoured by them, and well pleased in them; but they were often not only unacceptable, but an abomination to God, and he declared so, which was an indication both that they were not required for their own sakes, and that there were better things and more effectual in reserve, when sacrifice and offering should be done away. They were an abomination,

First. When they were brought by wicked men that did not, according to the true intent and meaning of sacrificing, repent of their sins, mortify their lusts, and amend their lives. Cain brought his offering. Even wicked men may be found in the external performance of religious worship; they could freely give God their beasts, their lips, their knees, who would not give him their hearts. The Pharisees gave alms; but when the person is an abomination, as every wicked man is to God, the performance cannot but be so, 'even when he brings it diligently,' so some read the latter part of the verse. Though their offerings are continually before God, *Ps.* l. 8, yet they are an abomination to him.

Secondly. Much more when they were brought with wicked minds, when their sacrifices were made, not only consistent with, but serviceable to their wickedness, as Absalom's vow, Jezebel's fast, and the Pharisees' long prayers. When men make a show of devotion that they may the more easily and effectually compass some covetous or malicious design, when holiness is pretended, but some wickedness intended, then especially the performance is an abomination, *Isa.* lxvi. 5.

28 A false witness shall perish:
But the man that heareth speaketh constantly.

Here is, First. The doom of a false witness. He that for favour to one side, or malice to the other, gives in a false evidence, or makes an affidavit of that which he knows to be false, or at least doth not know to be true, if it be discovered, his reputation will be ruined. A man may tell a lie, perhaps, in his haste; but he that gives in a false testimony doth it with deliberation and solemnity, and it cannot but be a presumptuous sin, and a forfeiture of a man's credit; but though it should not be discovered, he himself shall be ruined; the vengeance he imprecated upon himself, when he took the false oath, will come upon him.

Secondly. The praise of him that is conscientious. He that heareth, that is, obeyeth the command of God, which is to "speak every man truth with his neighbour," that testifies nothing but what he hath heard and knows to be true, he "speaks constantly," that is, consistently with himself; he is always in the same story; he speaks *in finem*,—'to the end;' people will give credit to him, and hear him out; he speaks unto victory; he carries the cause which the false witness shall lose. He shall speak to eternity; what is true is true eternally. The lip of truth is established for ever.

29 A wicked man hardeneth his face:
But *as for* the upright, he directeth his way.

Here is, First. The presumption and impudence of a wicked man. He "hardeneth his face," brazens it that he may not blush, steels it that he may not tremble when he commits the greatest crimes; he bids defiance to the terrors of the law and the checks of his own conscience, the reproofs of the word and the rebukes of providence; he will have his way, and nothing shall hinder him, *Isa.* lvii. 17.

Secondly. The caution and circumspection of a good man. "As for the upright," he doth not ask, What would I do? what have I a mind to? and that I will have; but, What should I do? what doth God require of me? What is duty? what is prudence? what is for edification? And so he doth not force his way, but direct his way by a safe and certain rule.

30 *There is* no wisdom nor understanding
Nor counsel against the LORD.
31 The horse *is* prepared against the day of battle:
But safety *is* of the LORD.

The designing, busy part of mankind are here directed, in all their counsels and undertakings, to have an eye to God, and to believe,

First. There can be no success against God, and therefore they must never act in opposition to him, in contempt of his commands, or in contradiction to his counsels. Though they think they have wisdom, and understanding, and counsel, the best politics and politicians on their side, yet if it be against the Lord it cannot prosper long, it shall not prevail at last. He that sits in heaven laughs at men's projects against him and his Anointed, and will carry his point in despite of them, *Ps.* ii. 1—6. They that fight against God are preparing shame and ruin for themselves; whoever make war with the Lamb he will certainly overcome them, *Rev.* xvii. 14.

Secondly. That there can be no success without God, and therefore they must never act but in dependence on him. Be the cause never so good, and the patrons of it never so strong, and wise, and faithful, and means of carrying it on and gaining the point never so probable, still they must acknowledge God and take him along with them. Means, indeed, are to be used; "the horse" must be "prepared against the day of battle," and the foot too; they must be armed and disciplined. In Solomon's time, even Israel's kings used horses in war, though they were forbidden to multiply them; "but," after all, "safety" and salvation "is of the Lord;" he can save without armies, but armies cannot without him. And therefore he must be sought to and trusted in for success, and when success is obtained he must have all the glory. When we are preparing for the day of battle, our great concern must be to make God our friend, and secure his favour.

CHAPTER XXII.

A *GOOD* name *is* rather to be chosen than great riches,
And loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Here are two things which are more valuable and which we should covet more than great riches:

First. To be well spoken of. A name, that is, "a good name," a name for good things with God and good people, this "is rather to be chosen than great riches;" that is, we should be more careful to do that by which we may get and keep a good name, than that by which we may raise and increase a great estate. Great riches bring great cares with them, expose men to danger, and add no real value to a man. A fool and a knave may have great riches, but a good name makes a man easy and safe, supposes a man wise and honest, redounds to the glory of God, and gives a man a greater opportunity of doing good. By great riches we may relieve the bodily wants of others, but by a good name we may recommend religion to them.

Secondly. To be well beloved; to have an interest in the esteem and affections of all about us. This is better than silver and gold. Christ had neither silver nor gold, but "he grew in favour with God and man," *Lu.* ii. 52. This should teach us to look with a holy contempt upon the wealth of this world, not to set our hearts upon that, but with all possible care to think on those "things that are lovely and of good report," *Phil.* iv. 8.

2 The rich and poor meet together:
The LORD *is* the maker of them all.

Note, First. Among the children of men Divine Providence hath so ordered it that some are rich and others poor, and these are intermixed in societies. "The Lord is the maker of both;" that is, both the author of their beings and the disposer of their lot. The greatest man in the world must acknowledge God to be his Maker, and is under the same obligations to be subject to him that the meanest are; and the poorest have the honour to be the work of God's hands as much as the greatest; "Have they not all one Father?" *Mal.* ii. 10; *Job* xxxi. 15. God makes some rich that they may be charitable to the poor, and others poor that they may be serviceable to the rich, and they have need one of another, 1 *Cor.* xii. 21. He makes some poor to exercise their patience, and contentment, and dependence upon God; and others rich to exercise their thankfulness and beneficence. Even the poor we have always with us; they shall never cease out of the land, nor the rich neither.

Secondly. Notwithstanding the distance that is in many respects between rich and poor, yet in most things they meet together, especially before "the Lord, who is the maker of them all," and "regardeth not the rich more than the poor," *Job* xxxiv. 19. "Rich and poor meet together" at the bar of God's justice; all guilty before God, concluded under sin, and shapen in iniquity, the rich as much as the poor. And at the throne of God's grace; the poor are as welcome there as the rich; there is the same Christ, the same Scripture, the same Spirit, the same covenant of promises, for them both. There is the same heaven for poor saints that there is for rich; Lazarus is in the bosom of Abraham: and the same hell for rich sinners that there is for poor. All stand upon the same level before God, as they do also in the grave; "the small and great are there."

3 A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself:
But the simple pass on, and are punished.

See here, First. The benefit of wisdom and consideration. A prudent man, by the help of his prudence, will foresee an evil before it comes, and hide himself; he will be aware when he is entering into a temptation, and will put on his armour, and stand on his guard; when the clouds are gathering for a trouble he takes the warning, and flies to the name of the Lord as his strong tower. Noah foresaw the deluge, Joseph the years of famine, and provided accordingly.

Secondly. The mischief of rashness and inconsideration. "The simple," that believe every word that flatters them, will believe none that warns them, and so they "pass on, and are punished;" venture upon sin, though they are told what will be in the end thereof; throw themselves into trouble, notwithstanding the fair warning given them, and they repent their presumption when it is too late: see an instance of both these, *Ex.* ix. 20, 21. Nothing is so fatal to precious souls as this, they will not take warning.

4 By humility *and* the fear of the LORD
Are riches, and honour, and life.

See here, First. Wherein religion doth very much consist; in "humility and the fear of the Lord," that is, walking humbly with God. We must so reverence God's majesty and authority as to submit with all humility to the commands of his word and the disposals of his providence. We must have such low thoughts of ourselves as to carry it humbly towards God and man. Where the fear of God is, there will be humility.

Secondly. What is to be gotten by it. Riches, and honour, and comfort, and long life in this world as far as God sees good; however, spiritual riches and honour in the favour of God, and the promises and privileges of the covenant of grace, and eternal life at last.

5 Thorns *and* snares *are* in the way of the froward:
He that doth keep his soul shall be far from them.

Note, First. The way of sin is vexatious and dangerous; "in the way of the froward," that crooked way, which is contrary to the will and word of God, "thorns and snares are in it;" thorns of grief for past sins, and snares entangling them in farther sin. He that makes no conscience what he saith and doth will find himself hampered by that imaginary liberty and tormented by his pleasures. Froward people, that are soon angry, expose themselves to trouble at every step. Every thing will fret and vex him that will fret and vex at every thing.

Secondly. The way of duty is safe and easy. "He that doth keep his soul," that watcheth carefully over his own heart and ways, is far from those thorns and snares, for his way is both plain and pleasant.

6 Train up a child in the way he should go:
And when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Here is, First. A great duty enjoined, particularly to those that are the parents and instructors of children, in order to the propagating of wisdom, that it may not die with them. Train up children, in that age of vanity, to keep them from the sins and snares of it, in that learning age, to prepare them for what they are designed to. Catechise them, initiate them, keep them under discipline, train them as soldiers, who are taught to handle their arms, keep rank, and observe the word of command. Train them up, not in the way they would go, the bias of their corrupt hearts would draw them aside, but in the way they should go, which, if you love them, you would have them go. Train up a child according as he is capable, (so some take it,) with a gentle hand, as nurses feed children with a little and often, *Deu.* vi. 7.

Secondly. A good reason for it, taken from the great advantage of this care and pains with children. When they grow up, when they grow old, it is to be hoped they will not depart from it. Good impressions made upon them then will abide upon them all their days. Ordinarily the vessel retains the savour with which it was first seasoned. Many, indeed, have departed from the good way in which they were trained up, Solomon himself did; but it may be a means of their recovering themselves, as it is supposed Solomon did. However, the parents will have the comfort of having done their duty, and used the means.

7 The rich ruleth over the poor,
And the borrower *is* servant to the lender.

He had said, ver. 2, that "rich and poor meet together," but here he finds, here he shews, that as to the things of this life there is a great difference; for,

First. Those that have little will be in subjection to those that have much, because they have dependence upon them, they have received, and expect to receive, support from them. "The rich rule over the poor," and too often more than becomes them, with pride and rigour, unlike to God, who, though he be great, yet despiseth not any. It is part of the affliction of the poor that they must expect to be trampled upon, and part of their duty to be serviceable as far as they can to those that are kind to them, and study to be grateful.

Secondly. Those that are but going behindhand find themselves to lie much at the mercy of those that are beforehand. "The borrower is servant to the lender," is obliged to him, and must sometimes beg, "Have patience with me." Therefore it is part of Israel's promised happiness that they should lend, and not borrow, *Deu.* xxviii. 12; and it should be our endeavour to keep as much as may be out of debt. Some sell their liberty to gratify their luxury.

8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity:
And the rod of his anger shall fail.

Note, First. Ill-got gains will not prosper. "He that sows iniquity," that doth an unjust thing in hopes to get by it, he "shall reap vanity," that is, what he gets will never do him any good, nor give him any satisfaction. He will meet with nothing but disappointment. They that create trouble to others do but prepare trouble for themselves; men shall reap as they sow.

Secondly. Abused power will not last. If the rod of authority turn into a rod of anger; if men rule by passion, instead of prudence; and, instead of the public welfare, aim at nothing so much as the gratifying of their own resentments, it shall fail, and be broken, and their power shall not bear them out in their exorbitances, *Isa.* x. 24, 25.

9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed;
For he giveth of his bread to the poor.

Here is, First. The description of a charitable man; "he has a bountiful eye," opposed to the evil eye, *ch.* xxiii. 6; and the same with the single eye, *Mat.* vi. 22; an eye that seeks out objects of charity, besides those that offer themselves; an eye that, upon the sight of one in want and misery, affects the heart with compassion; an eye that, with the alms, gives a pleasant look, which makes the alms doubly acceptable. He has also a liberal hand; "he gives of his bread" to those that need; his bread, the bread appointed for his own eating. He will rather abridge himself than see the poor perish for want; yet he doth not give all his bread, but of his bread; the poor shall have their share with his own family.

Secondly. The blessedness of such a man. The loins of the poor will bless him, all about him will speak well of him, and God himself shall bless him, in answer to many a good prayer put up for him, and he "shall be blessed."

10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out;
Yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

See here, First. What the scorner doth. It is implied that he sows discord, and makes mischief wherever he comes. Much of the strife and contention which disturbs the peace of all societies is owing to the evil interpreter, as some read it, that construes every thing to the worst; to those that despise and deride every one that comes in their way, and take a pride in bantering and abusing all mankind.

Secondly. What is to be done with the scorner that will not be reclaimed. Cast him out of your society, as Ishmael, when he mocked Isaac, was thrust out of Abraham's family. They that would secure the peace must seclude the scorner.

11 He that loveth pureness of heart,
For the grace of his lips the king *shall be* his friend.

Here is, First. The qualifications of an accomplished, a complete gentleman, that is fit to be employed in public business. He must be an honest man, a man "that loves pureness of heart," and hates all impurity; not only pure from all fleshly lusts, but from all deceit and dissimulation, from all selfishness and sinister designs; that takes care to approve himself a man of sincerity, is just and fair from a principle, and delights in nothing more than in keeping his own conscience clean and void of offence. He must also be able to speak handsomely, and with a good grace, not to daub and flatter, but to deliver himself decently and ingeniously, in language as clean and smooth as his spirit.

Secondly. The preferment such a man stands fair for. "The king," if he be wise and good, and understand his own and his people's interest, "shall be his friend," shall make him of his cabinet council, as there was one in David's court, and another in Solomon's, that was called the king's friend. Or, in any business he has the king will befriend him. Some understand it of the King of kings. A man in whose spirit there is no guile, and whose speech is always with grace, God will be his friend, Messiah the Prince will be his friend; "this honour have all the saints."

12 The eyes of the LORD preserve knowledge,
And he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

Here is, First. The special care God takes to preserve knowledge, that is, to keep up religion, in the world, by keeping up among men the knowledge of himself, and of good and evil, notwithstanding the corruption of mankind, and the artifices of Satan to blind men's minds and keep them in ignorance. It is a wonderful instance of the power and goodness of "the eyes of the Lord," that is, his watchful providence. Or, he preserveth men of knowledge, wise and good men, 2 *Chr.* xvi. 9; particularly faithful witnesses, that speak what they know. God protects such and prospers their counsels. He doth by his grace preserve knowledge in such, doth secure his own work and interest in them: see *Pr.* ii. 7, 8.

Secondly. The just vengeance God takes on those that speak and act against knowledge, against their own knowledge, and against the interests of knowledge and religion in the world. "He overthroweth the words of the transgressor," and preserveth knowledge in spite of them. He defeats all the counsels and designs of false and treacherous men, and turns them to their own confusion.

13 The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion without,
I shall be slain in the streets.

Note, First. Those that have no mind to their business will never want excuses to shift it off. Multitudes are ruined both for soul and body by their slothfulness, and yet still they had something or other to say for themselves, so ingenious are men in putting a cheat upon their own souls. And who, I pray, will be the gainer at last, when the pretences will be all rejected as vain and frivolous?

Secondly. Many frighten themselves from real duties by imaginary difficulties. The slothful man has work to do without in the fields, but he fancies there is a lion there; nay, he pretends he dares not go along the streets for fear somebody or other should meet him and kill him. He doth not himself think so, only he saith so to those that call him up; he talks of a lion without, but considers not his real danger from the devil, that roaring lion that is in bed with him, and from his own slothfulness, which kills him.

14 The mouth of strange women *is* a deep pit:
He that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

This is designed to warn all young men against the lusts of uncleanness; as they tender the welfare of their souls, let them take heed of strange women, lewd women, whom they ought be strange to; of "the mouth of strange women," of the kisses of their lips, *Pr.* vii. 13; of the words of their lips, their charms and enticements. Dread them, have nothing to do with them; for,

First. Those who abandon themselves to that sin it is a sign they are abandoned of God. It is a deep pit, which those fall into that are "abhorred of the Lord," who leaves them to themselves to enter into that temptation, and takes off the bridle of his restraining grace to punish them for other sins. Value not thyself upon thy being in favour with such women when it speaks thee under the wrath of God.

Secondly. It is seldom that they recover themselves, for it "is a deep pit." It will be hard getting out of it, it doth so besot the mind, and debauch the conscience, by pleasing the flesh.

15 Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child;
But the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

We have here two very sad considerations:

First. That corruption is woven into our nature. Sin is foolishness; it is contrary both to our right reason, and to our true interest; it is in the heart, there is an inward inclination to sin, to speak and act foolishly; it is in the heart of children, they bring it into the world with them, it is what they were shapen and conceived in. It is not only found there, but it is bound there, it is annexed to the heart; so some vicious dispositions cleave close to the soul, are bound to it, as the imp to the stock into which it is grafted, which quite alters the property; there is a knot tied between the soul and sin, a true lover's knot, they two become one flesh. It is true of ourselves, it is true of our children, whom we have begotten in our own likeness. O God, thou knowest this foolishness.

Secondly. That correction is necessary to the cure of it. It will not be got out by fair means, and gentle methods, there must be strictness and severity, and that which will cause grief. Children need to be corrected, and kept under discipline by their parents; and we all need to be corrected by our heavenly Father, *Heb.* xii. 6, 7. And under the correction we must stroke down folly, and kiss the rod.

16 He that oppresseth the poor to increase his *riches*,
And he that giveth to the rich, *shall* surely *come* to want.

This shews what evil courses rich men sometimes take, by which in the end they will impoverish themselves, and provoke God, notwithstanding their abundance, to bring them to want; they oppress the poor, and give to the rich; that is,

First. They will not in charity relieve the poor, but withhold from them, that by saving that which is really the best, but which they think the most needless part of their expences, they may increase their riches; but they will make presents to the rich, and give them great entertainments, either in pride and vainglory, that they may look great, or in policy, that they may receive it again with advantage; such "shall surely come to want." Many have been beggared by a foolish generosity, but never any by a prudent charity. Christ bids us invite the poor, *Lu.* xiv. 12, 13.

Secondly. They not only will not relieve the poor, but they oppress them, rob the spital, extort from their poor tenants and neighbours, invade their rights who have not wherewithal to defend themselves, and then give bribes to the rich, to protect and countenance them in it; but in vain, they "shall come to want." They that rob God, and so make him their enemy, cannot secure themselves by giving to the rich to make them their friends.

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise,
And apply thine heart unto my knowledge.
18 For *it is* a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee;
They shall withal be fitted in thy lips.
19 That thy trust may be in the LORD,
I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.
20 Have not I written to thee excellent things
In counsels and knowledge,
21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth;
That thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

Solomon here changeth his style and manner of speaking. Hitherto, for the most part, since the beginning of *ch.* x., he had laid down doctrinal truths, and but now and then dropped a word of exhortation, leaving us to make the application as we went along; but here, to the end of *ch.* xxiv., he directs his speech to his son, his pupil, to his reader, his hearer, speaking as to a particular person. Hitherto, for the most part, his sense was comprised in one verse, but here, usually, it is drawn out farther. See how wisdom tries variety of methods with us, lest we should be cloyed with any one. To awaken attention, and to assist our application, we are here personally addressed. Ministers must not think it enough to preach before their hearers, but must preach to them; nor enough to preach to them all in general, but should apply themselves to particular persons, as here, Do thou do so and so. Here is,

First. An earnest exhortation to get wisdom and grace, by attending to the words of the wise men, both written and preached; the words of the prophets and priests, and particularly to that knowledge which Solomon, in this book, gives men of good and evil, sin and duty, rewards and punishments. To these words, to this knowledge, the ear must be bowed down in humility and serious attention, and the heart applied by faith, and love, and close consideration. The ear will not serve without the heart.

Secondly. Arguments to enforce this exhortation. Consider,

1. The worth and weight of the things themselves which Solomon in this book gives us the knowledge of. They are not trivial things for amusement and diversion, not jocular proverbs, to be acted in sport, and to pass away time, no, they are excellent things, which concern the glory of God, the holiness and happiness of our souls, the welfare of mankind, and all communities; they are princely things, so the word is, fit for kings to speak, and senates to hear. They are things that concern counsels and knowledge, that is, wise counsels relating to the most important concerns; things which will not only make us knowing ourselves, but enable us to advise others.

2. The clearness of the discovery of these things, and the directing of them to us in particular. They are made known, publicly known, that all may read; plainly known, that he that runs may read; made known this day, more fully than ever before, in this day of light and knowledge; made known in this thy day. But it is only a little while that this light is with you; perhaps the things that are this day made known to thee, if thou improve not the day of thy visitation, may, before to-morrow, be hid from thine eyes. They are written for the greater certainty, and that they may be received, and the more safely be transmitted pure and entire to posterity; but that which the emphasis is here most laid upon is, that they are "made known to thee, even to thee," and written to thee, as if it were a letter directed to thee by name. It is suited to thee, and to thy case,—thou mayest in this glass see thine own face,—it is intended for thee, to be a rule to thee, and by it thou must be judged. We cannot say of

these things, They are good things, but they are nothing to us; no, they are of the greatest concern imaginable to us.

3. The agreeableness of these things to us, in respect both of comfort and credit. 1st. If we hide them in our hearts they will be very pleasing, and yield us an abundant satisfaction, ver. 18. "It is a pleasant thing," and will be thy constant entertainment, "if thou keep them within thee;" if thou digest them, and be acted and governed by them, and delivered into them as into a mould. The form of godliness, when that is rested in, is but a force put upon a man, and he doth but do penance in that white clothing; those only that submit to the power of godliness, and make heart-work of it, find the pleasure of it, *ch.* ii. 10. 2nd. If we make use of them in our discourse, they will be very becoming, and gain us a good reputation; "they shall be fitted in thy lips." Speak of these things, and thou speakest like thyself, and as is fit for thee to speak, considering thy character. Thou wilt also have pleasure in speaking of these things, as well as in thinking of them.

4. The advantage designed us by them. The excellent things which God hath written to us are not like the commands which the master gives his servant, which are all intended for the benefit of the master, but like those which the master gives his scholar, which are all intended for the benefit of the scholar. These things must be kept by us, for they are written to us, 1st. That we may have a confidence in God, and so may have comfort in him, and communion with him; "That thy trust may be in the Lord," ver. 19. We cannot trust in God but in the way of duty, we are therefore taught our duty, that we may have reason to trust in God. Nay, this is itself one great duty we are to learn, and a duty that is the foundation of all practical religion, to live a life of delight in God, and dependence on him. 2nd. That we may have a satisfaction in our own judgment; "That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth." That thou mayest know what is truth, mayest plainly distinguish between it and falsehood, and mayest know upon what grounds thou receivest and believest the truths of God. Note, *First.* It is a desirable thing to know, not only the words of truth, but the certainty of them, that our faith may be intelligent and rational, and may grow up to a full assurance. *Secondly.* The way to know the certainty of the words of truth is to make conscience of our duty; for if any man do his will he shall know for certain that the doctrine is of God, *Jno.* vii. 17. 3rd. That we may be useful and serviceable to others for their instruction; That thou mayest give a good account of "the words of truth to them that send to thee" to consult thee as an oracle, or as the margin reads it, 'to those that send thee,' that employ thee as an agent or ambassador in any business. Knowledge is given us to do good with, that others may light their candle at our lamp, and that we may in our place serve our generation according to the will of God. And those who make conscience of keeping God's commandments will be best able to give a reason of the hope that is in them.

22 Rob not the poor, because he *is* poor:
Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:
23 For the LORD will plead their cause,
And spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

After this solemn preface one would have expected something new and surprising; no, here is a plain and common, but very needful caution against the barbarous and inhuman practice of oppressing poor people. Observe,

First. The sin itself, and that is robbing the poor, and making them poorer; taking from those that have but little to lose, and so leaving them nothing. It is bad to rob any man, but most absurd to rob the poor, whom we should relieve; to squeeze those with our power whom we should water with our bounty; to "oppress the afflicted," and so to add affliction to them, to give judgment against them, and so to patronise those that do rob them, which is as bad as if we robbed them ourselves. Rich men will not suffer themselves to be wronged; poor men cannot help it, and therefore we ought to be the more careful not to wrong them.

Secondly. The aggravations of the sin. 1. If their inability, by reason of their poverty, to right themselves, embolden us to rob them, it is so much the worse; that is robbing the poor "because he is poor." This is not only a base and cowardly thing, to take advantage against a man because he is helpless, but it is unnatural, and speaks men worse than beasts. 2. Or if it be done under colour of law and justice, that is oppressing "the afflicted in the gate," where they ought to be protected from wrong, and to have justice done them against those that oppress them.

Thirdly. The danger that attends this sin. He that robs and oppresseth the poor it is at his peril; for, 1. The oppressed will find God their powerful patron; he "will plead their cause," and not suffer them to be run down and trampled upon. If men will not appear for them, God will. 2. The oppressors will find him a just avenger. He will make reprisals upon them, will "spoil the souls of those that spoil them;" he will repay them in spiritual judgments, in curses to their souls. He that robs the poor will be found in the end a murderer of himself.

24 Make no friendship with an angry man;
And with a furious man thou shalt not go:
25 Lest thou learn his ways,
And get a snare to thy soul.

Here is, First. A good caution against being intimate with a passionate man. It is the law of friendship that we accommodate ourselves to our friends, and be ready to serve them, and therefore we ought to be wise and wary in the choice of a friend, that we come not under that sacred tie to any one whom it would be our folly to accommodate ourselves to. Though we must be civil to all, yet we must be careful who we lay in our bosoms, and contract a familiarity with. And, among others, a man that is easily provoked, touchy, and apt to resent affronts, that when he is in a passion cares not what he saith and doth, but grows outrageous, such a one is not fit to be made a friend and companion, for he will be ever and anon angry with us, and that will be our trouble; and will expect that we should, like him, be angry with others, and that will be our sin.

Secondly. Good cause given for this caution; "Lest thou learn his way." Those we go with we are apt to grow like. Our corrupt hearts have so much tinder in them that it is dangerous conversing with those that throw about the sparks of their passion. We shall thereby "get a snare to our souls." A disposition to anger is a great snare to any man, and an occasion of much sin. He doth not say, Lest thou have ill language given thee, or get a broken head; but, which is much worse, lest thou imitate him, to humour him, and so contract an ill habit.

26 Be not thou *one* of them that strike hands,
Or of them that are sureties for debts.
27 If thou hast nothing to pay,
Why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

We have here, as often before, a caution against suretiship, as a thing both imprudent and unjust.

First. We must not associate ourselves, nor contract an intimacy, with men of broken fortunes and reputations, that need and will urge their friends to be bound for them, that they may cheat their neighbours to feed their lusts, and, by keeping up a little longer, may do the more damage at last to those that give them credit. Have nothing to do with such, be not thou among them.

Secondly. We must not cheat people of their money, by striking hands ourselves, or becoming surety for others, when we have not to pay. If a man, by the Divine Providence, is disabled to pay his debts, he ought to be pitied and helped; but he that takes up money or goods himself, or is bound for another, when he knows he has not wherewithal to pay, or that which he has is so settled that the creditor cannot come at it, he doth in effect pick his neighbour's pocket; and though in all cases compassion is to be used, yet he may thank himself if the law have its course, and his bed be taken from under him, which might not be taken for a pawn to secure a debt, *Ex.* xxii. 26, 27; for, if a man appeared to be so poor that he had nothing else to give in security, he ought to be relieved, and it was honestly done to own it. But for the recovery of a debt it seems it might be taken by the *summum jus*,—'the strict operation of law.'

Thirdly. We must not ruin our own estates and families. Every man ought to be just to himself and to his wife and children; those are not so who live above what they have, who by the mismanagement of their own affairs, or by encumbering themselves with others' debts, waste what they have, and bring themselves to poverty. We may take joyfully the spoiling of our goods if it be for the testimony of a good conscience; but if it be for our own rashness and folly we cannot but take it heavily.

28 Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.

First. We are here taught not to invade another man's right, though we can find ways of doing it never so secretly and plausibly, clandestinely and by fraud, without any open force. Let not property in general be entrenched upon, by robbing men of their liberties and privileges, or any just ways of maintaining them. Let not the property of particular persons be encroached upon. The landmarks or meerstones are standing witnesses to every man's right; let not those be removed quite away, for thence come wars, and fightings, and endless disputes; let them not be removed so as to take from thy neighbour's lot to thine own; for that is downright robbing him, and entailing of the fraud upon posterity.

Secondly. We may infer from hence that a deference is to be paid in all civil matters to ancient usages, time out of mind; and the settled constitutions of government, in which it becomes us to acquiesce, lest an attempt to change it, under pretence of changing it for the better, prove of dangerous consequence.

29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business?
He shall stand before kings;
He shall not stand before mean *men*.

Here is, First. A plain intimation what a hard thing it is to find a truly ingenious, industrious man: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business?" Thou wilt not see many such, so epidemical a distemper is dulness and slothfulness. He is here commended that lays out himself to get business, though it be but in a very low and narrow sphere, and is not easy when he is out of business; that loves business, is quick and active in it, and goes through it not only with constancy and resolution, but with dexterity and expedition; a man of dispatch, that knows how to bring a deal of business into a little compass.

Secondly. A moral prognostication of the preferment of such a man. Though now he stands before mean men, is employed by them, and attends upon them, yet he will rise, and is likely enough to stand before kings, as an ambassador to foreign kings, or prime minister of state to his own. "Seest thou a man diligent in the business" of religion? he is likely to excel in virtue, and shall stand before the King of kings.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN thou sittest to eat with a ruler,
Consider diligently what *is* before thee:
2 And put a knife to thy throat,
If thou *be* a man given to appetite.
3 Be not desirous of his dainties:
For they *are* deceitful meat.

The sin we are here warned against is luxury and sensuality, and the indulgence of the appetite in eating and drinking; a sin that most easily besets us.

First. We are here told when we enter into temptation, and are in most danger of falling into this sin: "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler," thou hast great plenty before thee, varieties and dainties, such a table spread as thou hast seldom seen; thou art ready to think, as Haman did, of nothing but the honour hereby done thee, *Est.* v. 12, and the opportunity thou hast of pleasing thy palate, and forgettest that here is a snare laid for thee; and perhaps the temptation may be stronger and more dangerous to one that is not used to such entertainments than to one that always sits down to a good table.

Secondly. We are here bid to double our guard at such a time. We must, 1. Apprehend ourselves to be in danger. "Consider diligently what is before thee," what meat and drink is before thee, that thou mayest choose that which is safest for thee, and which thou art least likely to eat and drink of to excess. Consider what company is before thee, the ruler himself, who, if he be wise and good, will take it as an affront for any of his guests to disorder themselves at his table. And if when we sit to eat with a ruler, much more when we sit to eat with the Ruler of rulers, at the Lord's table, must we consider diligently what is before us, that we may not in any respect eat and drink unworthily, unbecomingly, lest that table become a snare. 2. We must frighten ourselves into temperance and moderation; "Put a knife to thy throat;" that is, restrain thyself as it were with a sword hanging over thy head from all excess. Let these words, "Take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you at unawares;" or

those, "For all these things God shall bring thee into judgment;" or those, "Drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God," be a knife to the throat. The Latins call luxury, *gula*,—'the throat.' Take up arms against that sin. Rather be so abstemious that thy craving appetite will begin to think thy throat cut, than indulge thyself in voluptuousness. We must never feed ourselves without fear, *Jude* 12; but we must in a special manner fear when temptation is before us. 3. We must reason ourselves into a holy contempt of the gratifications of sense. "If thou be a man given to appetite," thou must by a present resolution, and an application of the terrors of the Lord, restrain thyself. When thou art in danger of falling into any excess, "put a knife to thy throat;" that may serve for once. But that is not enough; lay the axe to the root, mortify that appetite which hath such a power over thee; "be not desirous of dainties." Note, We ought to observe what is our own iniquity, and if we find ourselves addicted to flesh-pleasing, we must not only stand upon our guard against temptations from without, but subdue the corruption within. Nature is desirous of food, and we are taught to pray for it; but it is lust that is desirous of dainties, and we cannot in faith pray for them, for many times they are not food convenient either for mind, body, or estate. They are deceitful meat, and therefore David, instead of praying for them, prays against them, *Ps.* cxli. 4. They are pleasant to the palate, but perhaps rise in the stomach, turn sour there, upbraid a man, and make him sick. They do not yield men the satisfaction they promised themselves from them; for those that are given to appetite, when they have that which is very dainty, it doth not please, they are soon weary of it, they must have something else more dainty. A luxurious appetite, the more it is humoured and indulged, the more humoursome and troublesome it grows, and the more hard to please. Dainties will surfeit, but never satisfy; but especially they are upon this account deceitful meat, that while they please the body they prejudice the soul, they overcharge the heart, and disfit it for the service of God; nay, they take away the heart, and alienate the mind from spiritual delights, and spoil its relish of them. Why then should we covet that which will certainly cheat us?

4 Labour not to be rich:
Cease from thine own wisdom.
5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?
For *riches* certainly make themselves wings;
They fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

As some are given to appetite, ver. 2, so others to covetousness, and those Solomon here takes to task. Men cheat themselves as much by setting their hearts on money, (though it seem most substantial,) as by setting them on dainties. Observe,

First. How he dissuades the covetous man from toiling and tormenting himself, ver. 4. Do not aim to be rich; to raise an estate, and to make what thou hast in abundance more than it is. We must endeavour to live comfortably, and provide for our children and families, according as our rank and condition is, but we must not seek great things. Be not of those that will be rich, that desire it as their chief good, and design it as their highest end, 1 *Tim.* vi. 9. Covetous men think it is their wisdom, imagining that if they be rich to such a degree they shall be completely happy; cease from that wisdom, for it is a mistake; "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," *Lu.* xii. 15. Those that aim at great things,

1. They fill their hands with business more than they can grasp, so that their life is both a perfect drudgery and a perpetual hurry; but be not thou such a fool, "labour not to be rich." What thou hast, or doest, be master of it, and not a slave to it, as those that "rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness," and all to be rich. Moderate labour, that we may have to give, is our wisdom and duty, *Eph.* iv. 28; immoderate labour, that we may have to hoard, is our sin and folly.

2. They fill their heads with projects more than they understand, so that their life is a constant toss of care and fear; but do not thou thus vex thyself, "cease from thine own wisdom," go on quietly in the way of thy business, not contriving new ways, and setting thy wits on work to find out new inventions. Acquiesce in God's wisdom, and cease from thine own, *ch.* iii. 5, 6.

Secondly. How he dissuades the covetous man from cheating and deceiving himself, by an inordinate love and pursuit of that which is vanity and vexation of spirit; for,

1. It is not substantial and satisfying: "Wilt thou" be such a fool as to "set thine eyes," to cause thine eyes to fly with eagerness and violence, "upon that which is not?" Note, 1st. The things of this world are things that are not. They have a real existence in nature, and are the real gifts of providence, but in the kingdom of grace they are things that are not; they are not a happiness and portion for a soul; are not what they promise to be, nor what we expect them to be; they are a show, a shadow, a sham, upon the soul that trusts to them. They are not, for in a little while they will not be, they will not be ours, they perish in the using; the fashion of them passeth away. 2nd. It is therefore folly for us to set our eyes upon them; to admire them as the best things, and appropriate them to ourselves as our good things, and to aim at them as our mark at which all our actions are levelled; to fly upon them as the eagle upon her prey. Wilt thou do a thing so absurd in itself? What thou, a reasonable creature, wilt thou doat upon shadows? The eyes are put for rational and intellectual powers; wilt thou throw those away upon such undeserving objects? To set the hands and feet upon the world is well enough, but not the eyes, the eyes of the mind; those were made to contemplate better things. Wilt thou, my son, that professest religion, put such an affront upon God, towards whom thine eyes should ever be, and such an abuse upon thy own soul?

2. It is not durable and abiding. Riches are very uncertain things; certainly they are so: "They make themselves wings, and flee away." The more we cause our eyes to fly upon them the more likely they are to fly away from us. 1st. Riches will leave us. Those that hold them never so fast cannot hold them long; either they must be taken from us, or we must be taken from them. The goods are said to flow away as a stream, *Job* xx. 28; here, to flee away as a bird. 2nd. Perhaps they may leave us suddenly, when we have taken a great deal of pains for them, and begin to take a great deal of pride and pleasure in them. The covetous man sits hatching upon his wealth, and brooding over it, till it is fledged, as the young ones under the hen, and then it is gone. Or, as if a man should be fond of a flight of wild fowl that light in his field, and call them his own, because they are upon his ground; whereas, if he offer to come near them, they take wing immediately, and are gone to another man's field. 3rd. The wings they flee away upon are of their own making. They have in themselves the principles of their own corruption, their own moth and rust. They are wasting in their own nature, and, like a handful of dust if it be griped, it slips through the fingers. Snow will last a while, and look pretty if it be left to lie on the ground where it fell, but if gathered up and laid in the bosom it is dissolved and gone immediately. 4th. They go irresistibly and irrecoverably, "as an eagle towards heaven," that flies strongly, there is no stopping her; and flies out of sight, and out of call, there is no bringing her back. Thus do riches leave men, and leave them in grief and vexation if they set their hearts upon them.

6 Eat thou not the bread of *him that hath* an evil eye,
Neither desire thou his dainty meats:
7 For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he:
Eat and drink, saith he to thee;
But his heart *is* not with thee.
8 The morsel *which* thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up,
And lose thy sweet words.

Those that are voluptuous and given to appetite (ver. 2) are glad to be where there is good cheer stirring, and those that are covetous and saving, that they may spare at home, will be glad to get a dinner at another man's table; and therefore both are here advised not to be forward to accept of every man's invitation, but especially not to thrust themselves in uninvited. Observe,

First. There are those that pretend to bid their friends welcome that are not hearty and sincere in it. They have a fair tongue, and know what they should say. "Eat and drink, saith he," because it is expected the master of the feast should so compliment his guests; but they have an evil eye, and grudge their guests every bit they eat, especially if they eat freely. They would seem to be liberal in making the entertainment, and would have the credit of it, but they have so great a love to their money, and so little to their friends, that they cannot have the comfort of it, nor any enjoyment of themselves or their friends. The miser's feast is his penance. If a man be so very selfish and sordid and sneaking that he cannot find in his heart to bid his friends welcome to what he hath, he ought not to add to that the guilt of dissimulation by inviting them, but let him own himself to be what he is, that "the vile person may not be called liberal, nor the churl bountiful," *Isa.* xxxii. 5.

Secondly. One can have no comfort in accepting the entertainments that are given grudgingly. Eat not thou the bread of such a man, let him keep it to himself. Do not spunge upon those that are bountiful, nor make thyself burthensome to any, but especially scorn to be beholden to those that are paltry and not sincere. Better have a dinner of herbs and true welcome, than dainty meats without it. Therefore, 1. Judge of the man as his mind is. Thou thinkest to pay thy respect to him as a friend, so thou takest him to be, because he speaks thee fair; but "as he thinks in his heart, so is he," not as he speaks with his tongue. That we are really, both to God and man, that we are inwardly; and neither religion nor friendship are worth any thing farther than they are sincere. 2. Judge of the meat as the digestion is, and as it agrees with thee. He bids thee eat freely, but first or last he will discover his sordid, covetous humour, and "as he thinketh in his heart," so he will look, and give thee to understand that thou art not welcome, and then "the morsel thou hast eaten thou shalt vomit up," the very thought of that will make thee even to vomit the meat thou hast eaten, and eat the words thou hast spoken in returning his compliments, and giving him thanks for his civilities. Thou shalt "lose thy sweet words" which he has given thee and thou hast given him.

9 Speak not in the ears of a fool:
For he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

We are here directed not to cast pearls before swine, *Mat.* vii. 6, and not to expose things sacred to the contempt and ridicule of profane scoffers. It is our duty to take all fit occasions to speak of Divine things; but,

First. There are some that will make a jest of every thing, though it be never so prudently and pertinently spoken; that will not only despise a wise man's words, but despise even the wisdom of them, that in them which is most improvable for their own edification; that they will particularly run upon, as if it had an ill design upon them, which they must guard against.

Secondly. Those that do so forfeit the benefit of good advice and instruction; and a wise man is not only allowed but advised not to speak in the ears of such fools. Let them be foolish still, and let not precious breath be thrown away upon them. If what a wise man saith in his wisdom will not be heard, let him hold his peace, and try whether the wisdom of that will be regarded.

10 Remove not the old landmark;
And enter not into the fields of the fatherless:

LANDMARKS AND TERMINI.

11 For their redeemer is mighty;
He shall plead their cause with thee.

Note, First. The fatherless are taken under God's special protection. With him they not only find mercy shewed to them, (*Hos.* xiv. 3,) but justice done for them. He is their Redeemer, their God, their near kinsman, that will take their part, and stand up for them with jealousy, as taking himself affronted in the injuries done to them. As their Redeemer he will plead their cause against those that do them any injury, and one way or other will not only defend their right, and recover it for them, but avenge the wrongs done to them. And he is mighty, almighty; his omnipotence is engaged and employed for their protection, which their proudest and most powerful oppressors will find themselves an unequal match for, and that it is at their peril to contend with it.

Secondly. Every man therefore must be careful not to injure them in any thing, or to invade their rights, either by a clandestine removal of the old landmarks, or by a forcible entry into their fields. Being fatherless, they have none to right them, and being in their childhood they do not so much as apprehend the wrong that is done them. Sense of honour, and, much more, the fear of God, would restrain men from offering any injury to children, especially fatherless children.

12 Apply thine heart unto instruction,
And thine ears to the words of knowledge.
13 Withhold not correction from the child:
For *if* thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.
14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod,
And shalt deliver his soul from hell.
15 My son, if thine heart be wise,
My heart shall rejoice, even mine.
16 Yea, my reins shall rejoice,
When thy lips speak right things.

Here is, First. A parent instructing his child. He is here brought in persuading him to give his mind to his book, and especially to the Scriptures and his catechism; to attend to the words of knowledge, by which he might come to know his duty, and danger, and interest, and not to think it enough to give them the hearing, but to apply his heart to them; to delight in them, and bow his will to the authority of them. The heart is then applied to the instruction, when the instruction is applied to the heart.

Secondly. A parent correcting his child. A tender parent can scarce find in his heart to do it; it goes much against the grain; but he finds it is necessary, it is his duty, and therefore he dares not withhold correction, when there is occasion for it. 'Spare the rod, and spoil the child;' he beats him with the rod, gives him a gentle correction, the stripes of the sons of men, not such as we give to beasts. "Beat him with the rod, and he shall not die;" the rod will not kill him; nay, it will prevent his killing himself by those vicious courses which the rod will be necessary to restrain him from. For the present "it is not joyous, but grievous," both to the parent and to the child; but when it is given with wisdom, designed for good, accompanied with prayer, and blessed of God, it may prove a happy means of preventing his utter destruction, and delivering his soul from hell. Our great care must be about our children's souls; we must not see them in danger of hell without using all possible means, with the utmost care and concern, to snatch them as brands out of everlasting burnings. Let the body smart, so that the spirit be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Thirdly. A parent encouraging his child; telling him, 1. What was all he expected. Nothing but what would be for his own good; that his heart be wise, and that his lips speak right things; that he be under the government of good principles, and that by those principles he particularly maintain a good government of his tongue. It is to be hoped those will do right things when they grow up that learn to speak right things when they are young, and dare not speak any naughty words. 2. What a comfort it would be to him, if herein he answered his expectation. "If thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice," shall rejoice in thee; "even mine," who have taken so much care and pains about thee, mine that has many a time ached for thee, for which thou shouldst study thus to make a grateful requital. Note, The wisdom of children will be the joy of their parents and teachers, who have no greater joy than to see them walk in the truth, 2 *Jno.* 4. Children, if you be wise and good, devout and conscientious, God will be pleased with you, and that will be our joy. We shall think our labour in instructing you well bestowed; it will be a comfortable answer for the many prayers we have put up for you; we shall be eased of a great deal of care, shall not need to be so strict and severe in watching over you, and shall consequently be the easier both to you and to ourselves. We shall rejoice in hope that you will be a credit and comfort to us, if we should live to be old; that you will bear up the name of Christ in your generation, that you will live comfortably in this world, and happily in another.

17 Let not thine heart envy sinners:
But *be thou* in the fear of the LORD all the day long.
18 For surely there is an end;
And thine expectation shall not be cut off.

Here is, First. A necessary caution against entertaining any favourable thoughts of prospering profaneness. "Let not thine heart envy sinners," do not grudge them either the liberty they take to sin or the success they have in sin; it will cost them dear, and they are to be pitied rather than envied. Their prosperity is their portion, *Ps.* xvii. 14; nay, it is their poison, *ch.* i. 32. We must not harbour in our hearts any secret discontent at the providence of God, though it seem to smile upon them, nor wish ourselves in their condition. 'Let not thine heart imitate sinners,' so some read it; do not do as they do; walk not in the way with them, use not the methods they take to enrich themselves, though they thrive by them.

Secondly. An excellent direction to maintain high thoughts of God in our minds at all times. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord," every day, and "all the day long." We must be in it as in our employment, exercising ourselves in holy adorings of God, in subjection to his precepts, submission to his providences, and a constant care to please him. It is to be in it as in our element, taking a pleasure in contemplating God's glory, and complying with his will; it is to be devoted to his fear, *Ps.* cxix. 38, and governed by it as our commanding principle in all we say and do. All the days of our life we must constantly keep up an awe of God upon our spirits, must pay a deference to his authority, and have a dread of his wrath. We must be always so in his fear as never to be out of it.

Thirdly. A good reason for both these; ver. 18, "Surely there is an end," an end and expectation, as *Jer.* xxix. 11. There will be an end of the prosperity of the wicked, therefore do not envy them, *Ps.* lxxiii. 17; there will be an end of thine afflictions, therefore be not weary of them; an end of thy services, thy work and warfare will be accomplished, perfect love will shortly cast out fear, and thine expectation of the reward will not only not be cut off or disappointed, but infinitely outdone. The consideration of the end will help to reconcile us to all the difficulties and discouragements of the way.

19 Hear thou, my son, and be wise,
And guide thine heart in the way.
20 Be not among winebibbers;
Among riotous eaters of flesh:
21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty:
And drowsiness shall clothe *a man* with rags.
22 Hearken unto thy father that begat thee,
And despise not thy mother when she is old.
23 Buy the truth, and sell *it* not;
Also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.
24 The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice:
And he that begetteth a wise *child* shall have joy of him.
25 Thy father and thy mother shall be glad,
And she that bare thee shall rejoice
26 My son, give me thine heart,
And let thine eyes observe my ways.
27 For a whore *is* a deep ditch;
And a strange woman *is* a narrow pit.
28 She also lieth in wait as *for* a prey,
And increaseth the transgressors among men

Here is good advice for parents to give to their children; words are put into their mouths, that they may train them up in the way they should go.

Here is, First. An earnest call to young people to attend to the advice of their godly parents; not only to this that is here given, but to all other profitable instructions. "Hear, my son, and be wise," ver. 19. This will be an evidence that thou art wise, and a means to make thee wiser. Wisdom, as faith, comes by hearing. And again, ver. 22, "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee," and who therefore has an authority over thee, and an affection for thee, and thou mayest be sure can have no other design but thine own good. We ought to give reverence to the fathers of our flesh, who begat us, and were the instruments of our being; much more ought we to obey and be in subjection to the Father of our spirits, who made us, and is the Author of our being. And since the mother also, in sense of duty to God, and in love to her child, gives him good instructions, let him not despise her, or her advice when she is old. When the mother is grown old we must suppose the children to be grown up, but let them not think themselves past being taught, even by her, but rather respect her the more for the multitude of her years, and the wisdom which they teach. Scornful and insolent young men will make a jest, it may be, of the good advice of an aged mother, and think themselves not concerned to heed what an old woman saith; but such will have a great deal to answer for another day, not only as having set at nought good counsel, but as having slighted and grieved a good mother, *ch.* xxx. 17.

Secondly. An argument to enforce this call, taken from the great comfort which this will be to their parents, ver. 24, 25. Note, 1. It is the duty o children to study how they may rejoice the hearts of their good parents, and do it yet more and more, so as that they may greatly rejoice in them, even when the evil days come and the years of which they say they have no pleasure in them but this, to see their children do well, as Barzillai to see Chimham preferred. 2. Children will be a joy to their parents if they be righteous and wise. Righteousness is true wisdom; they that do good do well for themselves. Those are completely such as they should be that are not only wise, that is, knowing and learned, but righteous, that is, honest and good; and not only righteous, that is conscientious and well-meaning, but wise, that is, prudent and discreet in the management of themselves. If such the children be, especially all the children, the father and mother will be glad, and think nothing too much that they have done or do for them; they will please themselves in them, and give God thanks for them. Particularly she that bare them with pain, and nursed them with pains, will rejoice in them, and reckon herself well requited, and the sorrow more than forgotten, because a wise and good man is the product of it, who is a blessing to the world he was born into.

Thirdly. Some general precepts of wisdom and virtue.

1. "Guide thine heart in the way," ver. 19. It is the heart that must be taken care of, and directed aright; the motions and affections of the soul must be toward right objects, and under a steady conduct. If the heart be guided in the way, the steps will be guided, and the conversation well ordered.

2. "Buy the truth, and sell it not," ver. 23. Truth is that by which the heart must be guided and governed; for without truth there is no goodness, no regular practices without right principles. It is by the power of truth, known and believed, that we must be restrained from sin, and constrained to duty. The understanding must be well informed with wisdom and instruction, and therefore, 1st. We must buy it; that is, be willing to part with any thing for it. He doth not say at what rate we must buy it, because we cannot buy it too dear, but must have it at any rate; whatever it cost us we shall not repent the bargain. When we are at expence for the means of knowledge, and resolved not to starve so good a cause, then we "buy the truth." Riches should be employed for the getting of knowledge, rather than knowledge for the getting of riches. When we are at pains in searching after truth, that we may come to the knowledge of it, and may distinguish between it and error, then we buy it. *Dii laboribus omnia vendunt*,—'Heaven concedes every thing to the laborious.' When we choose rather to suffer loss in our temporal interest than to deny or neglect the truth, then we buy it; and it is a pearl of such great price, that we must be willing to part with all to purchase it; make shipwreck of estate, trade, preferment, rather than of faith and a good conscience. 2nd. We must not sell it. Do not part with it for pleasures, honours, riches, any thing in this world; do not neglect the study of it, nor throw off the profession of it, nor revolt from under the dominion of it, for the getting or saving

of any secular interest whatsoever. "Hold fast the form of sound words," and never let it go upon any terms.

3. "Give me thine heart," ver. 26. God, in this exhortation, speaketh to us as unto children; Son, daughter, "give me thine heart." The heart is that which the great God requires and calls for from every one of us; whatever we give, if we do not give him our hearts, it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon him; our thoughts must converse much with him; and on him, as our highest end, the intents of our hearts must be fastened. We must make it our own act and deed to devote ourselves to the Lord, and we must be free and cheerful in it. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; he will have all or none; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." To this call we must readily answer, My Father, take my heart, such as it is, and make it such as it should be; take possession of it, and set up thy throne in it.

4. "Let thine eye observe my ways." Have an eye to the rule of God's word, the conduct of his providence, and the good examples of his people. Our eyes must observe these, as he that writes observes his copy, that we may keep in the right paths, and may proceed and persevere in them.

Fourthly. Some particular cautions against those sins which are, of all other, the most destructive to the seeds of wisdom and grace in the soul, which impoverish and ruin it.

1. Gluttony and drunkenness, ver. 20, 21. The world is full of examples of this sin, and temptations to it, which all young people are concerned to stand upon their guard against, and keep at a distance from. Be not a wine-bibber; we are allowed to drink a little wine, 1 *Tim.* v. 23, but not much, not to make a trade of it; never to drink to excess. Be not a riotous eater of flesh, as the Israelites were that lusted exceedingly after it, saying, "Who will give us flesh to eat?" Whereas Paul, though he is free to eat flesh, yet resolves he will "eat no flesh while the world stands, rather than make his brother to offend," so indifferent is he to it, 1 *Cor.* viii. 13. Be not an excessive eater of flesh. Intemperance must be avoided in meat as well as drink. Be not a luxurious eater of flesh; not pleased with any thing but what is very nice, and delicate savoury dishes, and forced meat. Some take not only a pleasure but a pride in being curious about their diet, and, as they call it, eating well, as if that were the ornament of a gentleman which is really the shame of a Christian,—making a god of the belly. Be not a wine-bibber, and be not a riotous eater, and therefore "be not among wine-bibbers, nor among riotous eaters;" do not give them countenance, lest thou learn their ways, and insensibly fall into those sins, or at least lose the dread and detestation of them. They covet to have thee among them; for those that are debauched themselves are very desirous to debauch others; therefore do not gratify them, lest thou endanger thyself. He fetcheth an argument against this sin from the expensiveness of it, and its tendency to impoverish men. And if men will not be deterred from it by the ruin it brings on their secular interests, which lie nearest their hearts, no marvel they are not frightened from it by what they are told out of the word of God, of the mischief it doth them in their spiritual and eternal concerns. "The drunkard and the glutton" hates to be reformed, though he is told he "shall come to poverty," nay, though he is told he shall come to hell. Drunkenness is the cause of drowsiness; it stupifies men, and makes them mindless of business, and then all goes to wreck and ruin. Thus men that have lived creditably come to be clothed with rags.

2. Whoredom. That is another sin which takes away the heart that should be given to God, *Hos.* iv. 12; he shews the danger which attends that sin, ver. 27, 28. 1st. It is a sin from which few recover themselves when once they are entangled in it. It is like a deep ditch and a narrow pit, which it is almost impossible to get out of, and therefore it is wisdom to keep far enough from the brink of. Take heed of making any approaches towards this sin, because it is so hard to make a retreat from it; conscience that should head the retreat being debauched by it, and Divine grace forfeited. 2nd. It is a sin which bewitcheth men to their ruin. The adulteress lies in wait as a robber, pretending friendship, but intending the greatest mischief, to rob men of all they have that is valuable, to strip them both of their armour and of their ornaments. Even those that being virtuously educated endeavour to shun the adulteress, she will lie in wait for them, that she may assault them when they are off their guard, and she hath them at an advantage. Let none therefore be at any time secure. 3rd. It is a sin that contributes more than any other to the spreading of vice and immorality in a kingdom. It "increaseth the transgressors among men." One adulteress may be the ruin of many a precious soul, and may help to debauch a whole town. It increaseth the treacherous or perfidious ones; it not only occasions husbands to be false to their wives, and servants to their masters, but many that have professed religion, to throw off their profession, and break their covenants with God. Houses of uncleanness are therefore such pest-houses as ought to be suppressed by those whose office it is to take care of the public welfare.

29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow?
Who hath contentions? who hath babbling? [eyes?
Who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of
30 They that tarry long at the wine;
They that go to seek mixed wine.
31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red,
When it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright.
32 At the last it biteth like a serpent,
And stingeth like an adder.
33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women,
And thine heart shall utter perverse things.
34 Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea,
Or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.
35 They have stricken me, *shalt thou say, and* I was not
They have beaten me, *and* I felt *it* not: [sick;
When shall I awake? I will seek it yet again.

Solomon here gives fair warning against the sin of drunkenness, to confirm what he had said, ver. 20.

First. He cautions all people to keep out of the way of temptations to this sin; ver. 31, "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red." Red wine was in Canaan looked upon as the best wine; it is therefore called the blood of the grape. Critics judge of wine, among other indications, by the colour of it: some wine they say looks charmingly, looks so well that it even saith, Come, and drink me. "It moves itself aright," goes down very smoothly, or perhaps the roughness of it is grateful. It is said of generous strong-bodied wine, that it even "causeth the lips of those that are asleep to speak," *Cant.* vii. 9; but "look not thou upon" it. 1. Be not ruled by sense, but reason and religion. Covet not that which pleaseth the eye, in hopes it will please the taste; but let thy serious thoughts correct the errors of thy sense, and convince thee that that which seems delightful is really hurtful, and resolve against it accordingly. Let not the heart walk after the eye, for it is a deceitful guide. 2. Be not too bold with the charms of this or any other sin. Look not lest thou lust, lest thou take the forbidden fruit. Note, Those that would be kept from any sin must keep themselves from all the occasions and beginnings of it, and be afraid of coming within reach of its allurements, lest they be overcome by them.

Secondly. He shews the many pernicious consequences of the sin of drunkenness for the enforcement of this caution. Take heed of the bait for fear of the hook; "at the last it bites," ver. 32. All sin will be bitterness in the end, and this sin particularly. "It bites like a serpent," when the drunkard is made sick by his surfeit, thrown into a dropsy, or some fatal disease by it, beggared and ruined in his estate, especially when his conscience is awakened, and he cannot reflect upon it without horror and indignation at himself; but worst of all, at last, when the cup of drunkenness shall be turned into a cup of trembling, the cup of the Lord's wrath, the dregs of which he must be for ever drinking, and shall not have a drop of water to cool his inflamed tongue. To take off the force of the temptation that there is in the pleasure of the sin, foresee the punishment of it; and what it will at last end in, if repentance prevent not. In its later end it bites, so the word is; think therefore what will be in the end thereof. But he chooseth to instance in those pernicious consequences of this sin which are present and sensible.

1. It embroils men in quarrels; makes them quarrel with others, and say and do that which gives others occasion to quarrel with them, ver. 29. He asks, "Who hath woe, who hath sorrow?" Who has not in this world? Many have woe and sorrow, and cannot help it; but drunkards wilfully create woe and sorrow to themselves. They that have contentions have woe and sorrow, and drunkards are the fools whose lips enter into contention. When the wine is in the wit is out, and the passions up, and thence come drunken scuffles and drunken frays, and drunken disputes over the cups. Many a vexatious ruining lawsuit hath begun thus. There is babbling, quarrels in word, and the exchanging of scurrilous language. Yet it rests not there; you shall have "wounds without cause," for causes are things which drunkards are in no capacity to judge of; and therefore deal blows about without the least consideration why or wherefore, and must expect to be in like manner treated themselves. The wounds which men receive in defence of their country, and its just rights, are their honour; but "wounds without cause," received in service of their lusts, are marks of their infamy; nay, drunkards wound themselves in a tender part, for they have "redness of eyes," symptoms of an inward inflammation; their sight is weakened by it, and their looks deformed. This comes, 1st. Of drinking long; tarrying long at the wine, and spending that time in drunken company, which should be spent in useful business, or in sleep which should fit for business, ver. 30. Oh the precious hours which thousands throw away thus, every one of which will be brought into the account at the great day. 2nd. Of drinking that which is strong and intoxicating. They go up and down to seek wine that will please them; their great inquiry, Where is the best liquor? They seek mixed wine, which is most palatable, but most heady, so willingly do they sacrifice their reason to please their palate.

2. It makes men impure and insolent, ver. 33. 1st. The eyes grow unruly, and "behold strange women," to lust after them, and so let in adultery into the heart. *Est Venus in vinis,*—'Wine is oil to the fire of lust.' 'Thine eyes shall behold strange things,' so some read it. When men are drunk, the house turns round with them, and every thing looks strangely to them, so that then they cannot trust their own eyes. 2nd. The tongue also grows unruly, and talks extravagantly; by it "the heart utters perverse things," things contrary to reason, religion, and common civility, which they would be ashamed to speak if they were sober. What ridiculous incoherent nonsense will men talk when they are drunk, that at another time will speak admirably well, and to the purpose!

3. It stupifies and besots men, ver. 34. When men are drunk, they know not where they are nor what they say and do. 1st. Their heads are giddy, and when they lie down to sleep, they are as if they were tossed by the rolling waves of the sea, or upon the top of a mast; hence they complain that their heads swim; their sleeps are commonly unquiet, and not refreshing, and their dreams tumultuous. 2nd. Their judgments are clouded and muddied, and they have no more steadiness and consistency than he that sleeps upon the top of a mast; they drink and forget the law, *ch.* xxxi. 5; they err through wine, *Isa.* xxviii. 9; and think as extravagantly as they talk. 3rd. They are mindless and fearless of danger, and senseless of the rebukes they are under either from God or man. They are in imminent danger of death, of damnation, lie as much exposed as if they slept "upon the top of a mast," and yet are secure and sleep on. They fear no peril when the terrors of the Lord are laid before them; nay, they feel no pain when the judgments of God are actually upon them, they cry not when he binds them. Set a drunkard in the stocks, and he is not sensible of the punishment; "They have stricken me, and I was not sick," I felt it not, it made no impression at all upon me. Drunkenness turns men into stocks and stones; they are scarce to be reckoned animals, they are dead while they live.

4. (Which is worst of all) the heart is hardened in the sin, and the sinner, notwithstanding all these present mischiefs that attend it, obstinately persists in it, and hates to be reformed; "When shall I awake?" Much ado he has to shake off the chains of his drunken sleep; he can hardly get clear of the fumes of the wine, though he strives with them, that being thirsty in the morning, he may return to it again. So perfectly lost is he to all sense of virtue and honour, and so wretchedly is his conscience seared, that he is not ashamed to say, "I will seek it yet again." There is no hope, no; they have loved drunkards, and after them they will go, *Jer.* ii. 25. This is adding drunkenness to thirst, and following strong drink. Those that do so may read their doom, *Deu.* xxix. 19, 20; their woe, *Isa.* v. 11; and if this be the end of the sin, with good reason were we bid to stop at the beginning of it; "Look not upon the wine when it is red."

CHAPTER XXIV.

BE not thou envious against evil men,
Neither desire to be with them.
2 For their heart studieth destruction,
And their lips talk of mischief.

Here, First. The caution given is much the same with that which we had before,

ch. xxiii. 17, not to envy sinners; not to think them happy, nor to wish ourselves in their condition, though they prosper never so much in this world, and are never so merry, and never so secure. Let not such a thought ever come into thy mind, Oh that I could shake off the restraints of religion and conscience, and take as great a liberty to indulge the sensual appetite as I see such and such do! no, desire not to be with them, to do as they do, and fare as they fare, and to cast in thy lot among them.

Secondly. Here is another reason given for this caution. Be not envious against them, not only because their end will be bad, but because their way is so, ver. 2. Do not think with them, "for their heart studieth destruction" to others, but it will prove destruction to themselves. Do not speak like them, for "their lips talk of mischief." All they say has an ill tendency, to dishonour God, reproach religion, or wrong their neighbour; but it will be mischief to themselves at last. It is therefore thy wisdom to have nothing to do with them; nor hast thou any reason to look upon them with envy, but with pity rather, or a just indignation at their wicked practices.

3 Through wisdom is an house builded;
And by understanding it is established:
4 And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.
5 A wise man *is* strong;
Yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.
6 For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war:
And in multitude of counsellors *there is* safety.

We are tempted to envy those that grow rich, and raise their estates and families by such unjust courses as our consciences will by no means suffer us to use; but, to set aside that temptation, Solomon here shews that a man with prudent management, may raise his estate and family by lawful and honest means, with a good conscience and a good name, and the blessing of God upon it; and if the other be raised a little sooner, yet these will last a great deal longer.

First. That which is here recommended to us, as having the best influence upon our outward prosperity, is wisdom, and understanding, and knowledge; that is, both piety towards God, for that is true wisdom, and prudence in the management of our outward affairs. We must govern ourselves in every thing by the rules of religion first, and then of discretion. Some that are truly pious do not thrive in the world for want of prudence; and some that are prudent enough yet do not prosper, because they lean to their own understanding, and do not acknowledge God in their ways; therefore both must go together to complete a wise man.

Secondly. That which is here set before us as the advantage of true wisdom is, that it will make men's outward affairs prosperous and successful.

1. It will build a house, and establish it, ver. 3. Men may by unrighteous practices build their houses, but they cannot establish them, for the foundation is rotten, *Hab.* ii. 9, 10; whereas what is honestly got will wear like steel, and be an inheritance to children's children.

2. It will enrich a house, and furnish it, ver. 4. Those that manage their affairs with wisdom and equity, that are diligent in the use of lawful means for increasing what they have, that spare from luxury and spend in charity, they are in a fair way to have their shops, their warehouses, their chambers, "filled with all precious and pleasant riches;" precious, because got by honest labour, and "the substance of a diligent man is precious;" pleasant, because enjoyed with holy cheerfulness. Some think this is to be understood chiefly of spiritual riches. By knowledge the chambers of the soul are filled with the graces and comforts of the Spirit, those precious and pleasant riches, for the Spirit by enlightening the understanding performs all his other operations on the soul.

3. It will fortify a house, and turn it into a castle. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, offensive or defensive; 'a wise man is in strength,' is in a stronghold, yea, 'a man of knowledge strengthens might,' that is, increaseth it, ver. 5; as we grow in knowledge we grow in all grace, 2 *Pet.* iii. 18; those that increase in wisdom are strengthened with all might, *Col.* i. 9, 11. A wise man will compass that by his wisdom which a strong man cannot effect by force of arms. The spirit is strengthened both for the spiritual work and the spirtual warfare by true wisdom.

4. It will govern a house and a kingdom too, and the affairs of both, ver. 6. Wisdom will erect a college or counsel of state. Wisdom will be of use, 1st. For the managing of the public quarrels, so as not to engage in them but for an honest cause, and with some probability of success; and when they are engaged to manage them well, and so as to make either an advantageous peace or an honourable retreat. "By wise counsel thou shalt make war," and that is a thing which may prove of ill consequence, if not done by wise counsel. 2nd. For the securing of the public peace; "In multitude of counsellors there is safety," for one may foresee the danger, and discern the advantages which another cannot. In our spiritual conflicts we need wisdom, for our enemy is subtle.

7 Wisdom *is* too high for a fool:
He openeth not his mouth in the gate.
8 He that deviseth to do evil
Shall be called a mischievous person.
9 The thought of foolishness *is* sin:
And the scorner *is* an abomination to men.

Here is the description,

First. Of a weak man. Wisdom is too high for him; he thinks it so, and therefore, despairing to attain to it, he will take no pains in the pursuit of it, but sit down content without it; and really it is so,—he has not capacity for it, and therefore the advantages he has for getting it are all in vain to him. It is no easy thing to get wisdom. Those that have natural parts good enough, yet if they be foolish, that is, if they be slothful and will not take pains, if they be playful and trifling and given to their pleasures, if they be viciously inclined, and keep bad company, it is too high for them, they are not likely to reach it; and for want of it they are unfit for the service of their country. They open not their mouth in the gate, they are not admitted into the council, or magistracy, or, if they are, they are dumb statues, and stand for cyphers. They say nothing, because they have nothing to say; and they know if they should offer any thing it would not be heeded, nay, it would be hissed at. Let young men take pains to get wisdom, that they may be qualified for public business, and do it with reputation.

Secondly. Of a wicked man, who is not only despised as a fool is, but detested. Two sorts of wicked men are so:

1. Such as are secretly malicious. Though they speak people fair, and carry it plausibly, they "devise to do evil," are contriving to do an ill turn to those they bear a grudge to, or have an envious eye at. He that doth so "shall be called a mischievous person," or, 'a master of mischief,' which perhaps was then a common name of reproach; he shall be branded as an inventor of evil things, *Rom.* i. 30. Or, if any mischief be done, he shall be suspected as the author of it, or at least accessary to it. This devising evil is "the thought of foolishness," ver. 9. It is made light of, and turned off with a jest, as only a foolish thing, but really it is sin, it is exceeding sinful; you cannot call it by a worse name than to call it sin. It is bad to do evil, but it is worse to devise it, for that has in it the subtlety and poison of the old serpent. But it may be taken more generally; we contract guilt, not only by the act of foolishness, but by the thought of it, though it go no farther. The first risings of sin in the heart are sin, offensive to God, and must be repented of, or we are undone. Not only malicious, unclean, proud thoughts, but even foolish thoughts, are sinful thoughts. If vain thoughts lodge in the heart they defile it, *Jer.* iv. 14; which is a reason why we should keep our hearts with all diligence, and harbour no thoughts there which cannot give a good account of themselves, *Gen.* vi. 5.

2. Such as are openly abusive. "The scorner," who gives ill language to everybody, takes a pleasure in affronting people, and reflecting upon them, he "is an abomination to men," none that have any sense of honour and virtue will care to keep company with him. The seat of the scornful is the pestilential chair, (as the Seventy call it, *Ps.* i. 1,) which no wise man will come near for fear of taking the infection. Those that strive to make others odious do but make themselves so.

10 *If* thou faint in the day of adversity,
Thy strength *is* small.

Note, First. In a day of adversity we are apt to faint, to droop, and be discouraged, and desist from our work, and to despair of relief. Our spirits sink, and then our hands hang down, and our knees grow feeble, and we become unfit for any thing. And many times those that are most cheerful when they are well, droop most, and are most dejected, when any thing ails them.

Secondly. This is an evidence that our strength is small, and is a means of weakening it more. It is a sign thou art not a man of any resolution, any firmness of thought, any consideration, any faith, (for that is the strength of a soul,) if thou canst not bear up under an afflictive change of thy condition. Some are so feeble that they can bear nothing; if a trouble doth but touch them, *Job* iv. 5, nay, if it doth but threaten them, they faint immediately, and are ready to give up all for gone. And by this means they render themselves unfit to grapple with their trouble, and unable to help themselves. "Be of good courage" therefore, "and God shall strengthen thy heart."

11 If thou forbear to deliver *them that are* drawn unto death,
And *those that are* ready to be slain;
12 If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not;
Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider *it?*
And he that keepeth thy soul, doth *not* he know *it?*
And shall *not* he render to *every* man according to his works?

Here is, First. A great duty required of us, and that is, to appear for the relief of oppressed innocency. If we see the lives or livelihoods of any in danger of being taken away unjustly, we ought to bestir ourselves all we can to save them, by disproving the false accusations on which they are condemned, and seeking out proofs of their innocency. Though the persons be not such as we are under any particular obligation to, we must help them, out of a general zeal for justice. If any be set upon by force and violence, and it is in our power to rescue them, we ought to do it. Nay, if we see any through ignorance exposing themselves to danger, or fallen in distress, as travellers upon the road, ships at sea, or any the like, it is our duty, though it be with peril to ourselves, to hasten with help to them, and not forbear to deliver them, not be slack, or remiss, or indifferent in such a case.

Secondly. An answer to the excuse that is commonly made for the omission of this duty. Thou wilt say, "Behold, we knew it not," we were not aware of the imminency of the danger the person was in, we could not be sure that he was innocent, nor did we know how to prove it, nor which way to do any thing in favour of him, else we would have helped him. Now, 1. It is easy to make such an excuse as this sufficient to avoid the censures of men, for perhaps they cannot disprove us, when we say, "we knew it not," or, we forgot. And the temptation to tell a lie for the excusing of a fault is very strong, when we know it is impossible to be disproved, but the truth lies wholly in our own breast; as to say, we thought so and so, and really designed it, which none is conscious to but ourselves. 2. It is not so easy with such excuses to evade the judgment of God; and to the discovery of that we lie open, and by the determination of that we must abide. Now, 1st. God pondereth the heart, and keepeth the soul, he keeps an eye upon it, observes all the motions of it, its most secret thoughts and intents are all naked and open before him. It is his prerogative, and that in which he glories; *Jer.* xvii. 10, "I the Lord search the heart." He keeps the soul, holds it in life. This is a good reason why we should be tender of the lives of others, and do all we can to preserve them, because our lives have been precious in the sight of God, and he has graciously kept them. 2nd. He knows and considers whether the excuse we make be true or no; whether it was because we did not know it, or whether the true reason was not because we did not love our neighbour as we ought, but were selfish, and regardless both of God and man. Let this serve to silence all our frivolous pleas, by which we think to stop the mouth of conscience when it charges us with the omission of plain duty. "Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it?" 3rd. He will judge us accordingly. As his knowledge cannot be imposed upon, so his justice cannot be biassed; but "he will render to every man according to his works," not only the commission of evil works, but the omission of good works.

13 My son, eat thou honey, because *it is* good;
And the honeycomb, *which is* sweet to thy taste:
14 So *shall* the knowledge of wisdom *be* unto thy soul:
When thou hast found *it*, then there shall be a reward,
And thy expectation shall not be cut off.

We are here quickened to the study of wisdom, by the consideration both of the pleasure and profit of it.

First. It will be very pleasant. We eat honey because it "is sweet to the

taste," and upon that account we call it good, especially that which runs first from the honeycomb. Canaan was said to flow with milk and honey, and it was the common food of the country, *Lu.* xxiv. 41, 42, even for children, *Isa.* vii. 15. Thus should we feed upon wisdom, and relish the good instructions of it. They that have tasted honey need no farther proof that it is sweet, nor can they by any argument be convinced of the contrary; so those that have experienced the power of truth and godliness are abundantly satisfied of the pleasure of both: they have tasted the sweetness of them, and all the atheists in the world with their sophistry, and the profane with their banter, cannot alter their sentiments.

Secondly. It will be very profitable. Honey may be sweet to the taste, and yet not wholesome; but wisdom has a future recompence attending it, as well as a present sweetness in it. Thou art permitted to eat honey, and the agreeableness of it to thy taste invites thee to it. But thou hast much more reason to relish and digest the precepts of wisdom; for, when thou hast found that, "there shall be a reward;" thou shalt be paid for thy pleasure, while the servants of sin pay dear for their pains, Wisdom doth indeed set thee a work, but "there shall be a reward;" it doth not indeed raise great expectations in thee, but as thy labour, so thy hope, shall not be in vain. "Thine expectation shall not be cut off," *ch.* xxiii. 18; nay, it shall be infinitely outdone.

15 Lay not wait, O wicked *man,* against the dwelling of the righteous;
Spoil not his resting place:
16 For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again:
But the wicked shall fall into mischief.

This is spoken not so much by way of counsel to wicked men, they will not receive instruction, *ch.* xxiii. 9, but rather in defiance of them, for the encouragement of good people that are threatened by them. See here,

First. The designs of the wicked against the righteous, and the success they promise themselves in those designs. The plot is laid deep; they "lay wait against the dwelling of the righteous," thinking to charge some iniquity upon it, or compass some design against it; they lie in wait at the door, to catch him when he stirs out, as David's persecutors, *Ps.* lix. title. The hope is raised high, they doubt not but to spoil his dwelling-place, because he is weak and cannot support it, because his condition is low and distressed, and he is almost down already. All this is a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. "The bloodthirsty hate the upright."

Secondly. The folly and frustration of these designs. 1. The righteous man, whose ruin was expected, recovers himself; he falls seven times into trouble, but, by the blessing of God upon his wisdom and integrity, he riseth up again, sees through his troubles, and sees better times after them. The just man falls sometimes, falls seven times perhaps into sin, sins of infirmity through the surprise of temptation, but he riseth up again by repentance, finds mercy with God, and regains his peace. 2. The wicked man, that expected to see his ruin, and to help it forward, is undone; he falls into mischief, his sins and his troubles are his utter destruction.

17 Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth,
And let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth:
18 Lest the LORD see *it,* and it displease him,
And he turn away his wrath from him.

Here, First. The pleasure we are apt to take in the troubles of an enemy is forbidden us. If any have done us an ill turn, or we bear them an ill-will only because they stand in our light, or in our way, when any damage comes to them, (suppose they fall,) or any danger, (suppose they stumble,) our corrupt hearts conceive a secret delight and satisfaction in it; "Aha, so would we have it;" "they are entangled, the wilderness hath shut them in." Or, as Tyrus said concerning Jerusalem, *Eze.* xxvi. 2, "I shall be replenished now she is laid waste." Men hope in the ruin of their enemies or rivals to wreak their revenge, or to find their account; but be not thou so inhuman, rejoice not when the worst enemy thou hast falleth. There may be a holy joy in the destruction of God's enemies, as it tends to the glory of God, and the welfare of the church, *Ps.* lviii. 10; but in the ruin of our enemies as such we must by no means rejoice; on the contrary, we must weep, even with them when they weep, as David, *Ps.* xxxv. 13, 14; and that in sincerity, not so much as letting our hearts be secretly glad at their calamities.

Secondly. The provocation which that pleasure gives to God is assigned as the reason of that prohibition. The Lord will see it, though it be hid in the heart only, and it will displease him, as it will displease a prudent father to see one child triumph in the correction of another, which he ought to tremble at, and take warning by, not knowing how soon it may be his own case, he having so often deserved it. He adds an argument *ad hominem,*—'addressed to the individual:' Thou canst not do a greater kindness to thine enemy when he is fallen than to rejoice in it, for then, to cross thee and vex thee, God will turn his wrath from him; for as the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, so the righteousness of God was never intended to gratify the wrath of man, and humour his foolish passions; rather than seem to do that, he will adjourn the executions of his wrath. Nay, it is implied, that when he turns his wrath from him, he will turn it against thee, and the cup of trembling shall be put into thy hand.

19 Fret not thyself because of evil *men,*
Neither be thou envious at the wicked;
20 For there shall be no reward to the evil *man;*
The candle of the wicked shall be put out.

Here, First. He repeats the caution he had before given against envying the pleasures and successes of wicked men in their wicked ways. This he quotes from his father David, *Ps.* xxxvii. 1. We must not in any case fret ourselves, or make ourselves uneasy, whatever God doth in his providence; how disagreeable soever it is to our sentiments, interests, and expectations, we must acquiesce in it; even that which grieves us must not fret us. Nor must our eye be evil against any, because God is good; are we more wise or just than he? If wicked people prosper, we must not therefore incline to do as they do.

Secondly. He gives a reason for this caution, taken from the end of that way which wicked men walk in. Envy not their prosperity, for, 1. There is no true happiness in it. "There shall be no reward to the evil man;" his prosperity only serves for his present subsistence. These are all the good things he must ever expect, there is none intended him in the world of retribution. He hath his reward, *Mat.* vi. 2; he shall have none. Those are not to be envied that have their portion in this life, and must outlive it, *Ps.* xvii. 14. 2. There is no continuance in it. Their candle shines bright, but it shall presently be put out, and a final period put to all their comforts, *Job* xxi. 17; *Ps.* xxxvii. 1, 2.

21 My son, fear thou the LORD and the king:
And meddle not with them that are given to change:
22 For their calamity shall rise suddenly;
And who knoweth the ruin of them both?

Note, First. Religion and loyalty must go together. As men, it is our duty to honour our Creator, to worship and reverence him, and to be always in his fear. As members of a community incorporated for mutual benefit, it is our duty to be faithful and dutiful to the government God hath set over us, *Rom.* xiii. 1, 2. Those that are truly religious will be loyal in conscience towards God, the godly in the land will be "the quiet in the land;" and those are not truly loyal, or will be so no longer than is for their interest, that are not religious. How should he be true to his prince that is false to his God? And if they come in competition it is an adjudged case, we must "obey God rather than men."

Secondly. Innovations in both are to be dreaded. Have nothing to do, he doth not say with them that change, for there may be cause to change for the better, but that are given to change, that affect it for change sake, out of a peevish discontent with that which is, and a fondness for novelty, or a desire to fish in troubled waters. "Meddle not with them that are given to change," either in religion, or in the civil government. Come not into their secret, join not with them in their cabals, nor enter into the mystery of their iniquity.

Thirdly. Those that are of restless, factious, turbulent spirits, commonly pull mischief upon their own heads ere they are aware. "Their calamity shall rise suddenly." Though they carry on their designs with the utmost secrecy, they will be discovered, and brought to condign punishment when they little think of it. Who knows the time and manner of the ruin which both God and the king will bring on their contemners, both on them and those that meddle with them?

23 These *things* also *belong* to the wise.
It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.
24 He that saith unto the wicked, Thou *art* righteous;
Him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him:
25 But to them that rebuke *him* shall be delight,
And a good blessing shall come upon them.
26 *Every man* shall kiss *his* lips
That giveth a right answer.

Here are lessons for wise men, that is, judges and princes. As subjects must do their duty, and be obedient to magistrates, so magistrates must do their duty in administering justice to their subjects, both in pleas of the crown and causes between party and party. These are lessons for them.

First. They must always weigh the merits of a cause, and not be swayed by any regard, one way or other, to the parties concerned. "It is not good" in itself, nor can it ever do well, "to have respect of persons in judgment;" the consequences of it cannot but be the perverting of justice, and doing wrong under colour of law and equity. A good judge will know the truth, not know faces, so as to countenance a friend, and help him out in a bad cause, or so much as omit any thing that can be said or done in favour of a righteous cause, when it is the cause of an enemy.

Secondly. They must never give any connivance or encouragement to wicked people in their wicked practices. Magistrates in their places, and ministers in theirs, are to deal faithfully with the wicked man, though he be a great man, or a particular friend; to convict him of his wickedness, to shew him what will be in the end thereof, to discover him to others that they may avoid him. But if those whose office it is thus to shew people their transgressions, palliate them, and connive at them, if they excuse for the wicked man, much more if they prefer him, and associate with him, which is in effect to say, "Thou art righteous," they shall justly be looked upon as enemies to the public peace and welfare which they ought to advance, and "the people shall curse them," and cry out, Shame on them, and even those of other "nations shall abhor them," as base betrayers of their trust.

Thirdly. They must discountenance and give check to all fraud and violence, injustice and immorality; and though thereby they may disoblige a particular person, yet they will recommend themselves to the favour of God and man. Let magistrates, and ministers, and private persons too, that are capable of doing it, "rebuke the wicked," that they may bring them to repentance, or put them to shame, and they shall have the comfort of it in their own bosoms; "to them shall be delight," when their consciences witness for them that they have been witnesses for God; "and a good blessing shall come upon them," the blessing of God and good men. They shall be deemed religious patrons, and their country's patriots: see *ch.* xxviii. 23.

Fourthly. They must always give judgment according to equity; ver. 26, "Give a right answer;" that is, give their opinion, and pass sentence according to law, and the true merits of the cause, and "every one shall kiss his lips" that doth so, that is, shall love and honour him, and be subject to his orders, for there is a kiss of allegiance, as well as of affection. He that in common conversation likewise speaks pertinently and with sincerity, recommends himself to his company, and is beloved and respected by all.

27 Prepare thy work without,
And make it fit for thyself in the field;
And afterwards build thine house.

This is a rule of prudence in the management of household affairs; for all good men should be good husbands, and manage with discretion, which would prevent a great deal of sin, and trouble, and disgrace to their profession.

First. We must prefer necessaries before conveniences, and not lay that out for show which should be expended for the support of the family. We must be content with a mean cottage for a habitation, rather than want, or go in debt for food convenient.

Secondly. We must not think of building till we can afford it. First apply thyself to thy work without in the field, let thy ground be put into good order, look after thy husbandry, for that is it by which thou must get; and when thou hast got well by that, then, and not till then, thou mayest think of rebuilding

and beautifying thy house; for that is it upon which and in which thou wilt have occasion to spend. Many have ruined their estates and families by laying out money on that which brings nothing in, and beginning to build when they were not able to finish. Some understand it as an advice to young men not to marry (for by that the house is built) till they have set up in the world, and got wherewith to maintain a wife and children comfortably.

Thirdly. When we have any great design on foot, it is wisdom to take it before us, and make the necessary preparations before we fall to work, that when it is begun it may not stand still for want of materials. Solomon observed this rule himself in building the house of God; all was made ready before it was brought to the ground, 1 *Kin.* vi. 7.

28 Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause;
And deceive *not* with thy lips.
29 Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me:
I will render to the man according to his work.

We are here forbidden to be in any thing injurious to our neighbour, particularly in and by the forms of law. Either,

First. As a witness. Never bear a testimony against any man without cause, unless what thou sayest thou knowest to be punctually true, and thou hast a clear call to testify it. Never bear a false testimony against any one, for it follows, "deceive not with thy lips;" deceive not the judge and jury, deceive not those whom thou conversest with into an ill opinion of thy neighbour. When thou speakest of thy neighbour, do not only speak that which is true, but take heed, lest in the manner of thy speaking thou insinuate any thing that is otherwise, and so shouldst deceive by innuendos or hyperboles. Or,

Secondly. As a plaintiff, or prosecutor. If there be occasion to bring an action or information against thy neighbour, let it not be from a spirit of revenge, "say not;" I am resolved I will be meet with him, "I will do so to him as he has done to me." Even a righteous cause becomes unrighteous, when it is thus prosecuted with malice; say not, "I will render to the man according to his work," and make him pay dear for it; for it is God's prerogative to do so, and we must leave it to him, and not step into his throne, or take his work out of his hands. If we will needs be our own carvers, and judges in our own cause, we forfeit the benefit of an appeal to God's tribunal. Therefore we must not avenge ourselves, because he hath said, "Vengeance is mine."

30 I went by the field of the slothful,
And by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;
31 And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns,
And nettles had covered the face thereof,
And the stone wall thereof was broken down
32 Then I saw, *and* considered *it* well:
I looked upon *it*, *and* received instruction.
33 *Yet* a little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep:
34 So shall thy poverty come *as* one that travelleth;
And thy want as an armed man.

Here is, First. The view which Solomon took of the field and vineyard of the slothful man. He did not go on purpose to see it, but as he passed by, observing the fruitfulness of the ground, as it is very proper for travellers to do, and his subjects' management of their land, as it is very proper for magistrates to do, he cast his eye upon a field, and a vineyard, unlike all the rest, for though the soil was good, yet there was nothing growing in them but thorns and nettles, not here and there one, but they were all overrun with weeds; and if there had been any fruit it would have been eaten up by the beasts, for there was no fence, "the stone wall was broken down." See the effects of that curse upon the ground, *Gen.* iii. 18, "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee," and nothing else unless thou take pains with it. See what a blessing to the world the husbandman's calling is, and what a wilderness this earth, even Canaan itself, would be without it, "The king himself is served of the field;" but he would be ill-served if God did not teach the husbandman discretion and diligence to rid the ground, plant it, and sow it, and fence it. See what a great difference there is between some and others in the management even of their worldly affairs; and how little some consult their reputation, not caring though they proclaim their slothfulness in the manifest effects of it to all that pass by, shamed by their neighbours' diligence.

Secondly. The reflections which he made upon it. He paused a little, and considered it, looked again upon it, and received instruction; he did not break out into any passionate censures of the owner, did not call him any ill names, but he endeavoured himself to get good by the observation, and to be quickened by it to diligence. Note, Those that are to give instruction to others must receive instruction themselves; and instruction may be received, not only from what we read and hear, but from what we see; not only from what we see of the works of God, but from what we see of the manners of men, not only from men's good manners, but from their evil manners. Plutarch relates a saying of Cato Major, that wise men profit more by fools than fools by wise men; for wise men will avoid the faults of fools, but fools will not imitate the virtues of wise men. Solomon reckoned he received instruction by this sight; though it did not suggest to him any new notion or lesson, but only put him in mind of an observation he himself had formerly made, both of the ridiculous folly of the sluggard, who, when he has needful work to do, lies dozing in bed, and cries, Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, and still it will be a little more, till he has slept his eyes out, and instead of being fitted by sleep for business, as wise men are, he is dulled, and stupified, and made good for nothing; and of the certain misery that attends him, his "poverty comes as one that travelleth," it is constantly coming nearer and nearer to him, and will be upon him speedily; and want seizeth him as irresistibly "as an armed man," a highwayman, that will strip him of all he hath.

Now this is applicable, not only to our worldly business, to shew what a scandalous thing slothfulness in that is, and how injurious to the family, but to the affairs of our souls. Note, 1. Our souls are our fields and vineyards, which we are every one of us to take care of, to dress, and to keep. They are capable of being improved; with good husbandry that may be got out of them which will be fruit abounding to our account. And we are charged with them, to occupy them till our Lord comes; and a great deal of care and pains it is requisite we should take about them. 2. These fields and vineyards are often in a very ill posture; not only no fruit brought forth, but all overgrown with thorns and nettles,—scratching, stinging, inordinate lusts and passions, pride, covetousness, sensuality, malice, those are the thorns and nettles,—the wild grapes which the unsanctified heart produceth; no guard kept against the enemy, but the stone wall broken down, all lies in common, all exposed. 3. Where it is thus it is along of the sinner's own slothfulness and folly; he is a sluggard, loves sleep, hates labour, and he is void of understanding, understands neither his business nor his interest, he is perfectly besotted. 4. The issue of it will certainly be the ruin of the soul, and all its welfare. Its everlasting want thus comes upon it as an armed man. We know the place assigned to the wicked and slothful servant.

CHAPTER XXV.

THESE *are* also proverbs of Solomon,
Which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

This verse is the title of this later collection of Solomon's proverbs, for he "sought out and set in order many proverbs," that by them he might be still "teaching the people knowledge," *Eccl.* xii. 9. Observe,

First. The proverbs were Solomon's, who was divinely inspired to deliver for the use of the church these wise and weighty sentences. We have had many, but still there are more; yet herein Christ is greater than Solomon, for if we had all upon record that Christ said and did that was instructive, "the world could not contain the books that should be written," *Jno.* xxi. 25.

Secondly. The publishers were Hezekiah's servants, who, it is likely, herein acted as his servants; being appointed by him to do this good service to the church, among other good offices that he did in the law and in the commandments, 2 *Chr.* xxxi. 21. Whether he employed the prophets in this work as Isaiah, Hosea, or Micah, who lived in his time, or some that were trained up in the schools of the prophets, or some of the priests and Levites, to whom we find him giving a charge concerning Divine things, 2 *Chr.* xxix. 4, or, (as the Jews think) his princes and ministers of state, who were more properly called his servants, is not certain. If it was done by Eliakim, and Joah, and Shebna, it was no diminution to their character. They copied out these proverbs from the records of Solomon's reign, and published them as an appendix to the former edition of this book. It may be a piece of very good service to the church to publish other men's works that have lain hid in obscurity perhaps a great while. Some think they culled these out of the three thousand proverbs which Solomon spake, 1 *Kin.* iv. 32; leaving out those that were physical, and that pertained to natural philosophy, and preserving such only as were Divine and moral. And in this collection some observe that special regard was had to those observations that concern kings and their administration.

2 *It is* the glory of God to conceal a thing:
But the honour of kings *is* to search out a matter.
3 The heaven for height, and the earth for depth,
And the heart of kings *is* unsearchable.

Here is, First. An instance given of the honour of God; "It is his glory to conceal a matter." He needs not search into any thing, for he perfectly knows every thing by a clear and certain view, and nothing can be hid from him. And yet his own way is in the sea, and his paths in the great waters. There is an unfathomable depth in his counsels, *Rom.* xi. 33. It is but a little portion that is heard of him; clouds and darkness are round about him; we see what he doth, but we know not the reasons. Some refer it to the sins of men; it is his glory to pardon sin, which is covering it, not remembering it, not mentioning it. His forbearance which he exerciseth towards sinners is likewise his honour, in which he seems to keep silence, and take no notice of the matter.

Secondly. A double instance of the honour of kings. 1. It is God's glory that he needs not search into a matter, because he knows it without search; but it is the honour of kings with a close application of mind, and by all the methods of inquiry, to search out the matters that are brought before them; to take pains in examining offenders that they may discover their designs, and bring to light the hidden works of darkness; not to give judgment presently till they have weighed things, nor to leave it wholly to others to examine things, but to see with their own eyes. 2. It is God's glory that he cannot himself be found out by searching, and some of that honour is devolved upon kings, wise kings that search out matters; their hearts are unsearchable, like the height of heaven, or the depth of the earth, which we may guess at, but cannot measure. Princes have their *arcana imperii*,—'state secrets,' designs which are kept private, and reasons of state, which private persons are not competent judges of, and therefore ought not to pry into. Wise princes, when they search into a matter, have reaches which one would not think of, as Solomon when he called for a sword to divide the living child with, designing thereby to discover the true mother.

4 Take away the dross from the silver,
And there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.
5 Take away the wicked *from* before the king,
And his throne shall be established in righteousness.

This shews that the vigorous endeavours of a prince to suppress vice, and reform the manners of his people, is the most effectual way to support his government. Observe,

First. What the duty of magistrates is. To "take away the wicked," to use their powers for the terrors of evil works, and evil workers, not only to banish those that are vicious and profane from their presence, and forbid them the court, but so to frighten them and restrain them, that they may not spread the infection of their wickedness among their subjects. This is called taking away the dross from the silver, which is done by the force of fire. Wicked people are the dross of a nation, the scum of the country, and as such to be taken away. If men will not do it, God will, *Ps.* cxix. 119; if the wicked be taken away "from before the king," if he abandon them and shew his detestation of their wicked courses, it will go far towards the disabling of them to do mischief. The reformation of the court will promote the reformation of the kingdom, *Ps.* ci. 3, 8.

Secondly. What the advantage will be of their doing this duty. 1. It will be the bettering of the subjects; they shall be made like silver refined, fit to be made vessels of honour. 2. It will be the settling of the prince; "His throne shall be established in this righteousness; for God will bless his government, the people will be pliable to it, and so it will become durable.

6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king,
And stand not in the place of great *men:*
7 For better *it is* that it be said unto thee, Come up hither;
Than that thou shouldest be put lower
In the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

Here we see, First. That religion is so far from destroying good manners, that it teacheth us to behave ourselves lowly and reverently towards our betters; to keep our distance, and give place to those to whom it belongs. "Put not forth thyself" rudely and carelessly "in the king's presence," or in the presence of great men. Do not compare with them, (so some understand it,) do not vie with them in apparel, furniture, gardens, housekeeping, or retinue, for that is an affront to them, and will waste thine own estate.

Secondly. That religion teacheth us humility and self-denial, which is a better lesson than that of good manners. Deny thyself the place thou art entitled to; covet not to make a fair show, nor aim at preferment, nor thrust thyself into the company of those that are above thee. Be content in a low sphere, if that is it which God has allotted to thee. The reason he gives is, because this is really the way to advancement, as our Saviour shews in a parable, that seems to be borrowed from this, *Lu.* xiv. 9. Not that we must therefore pretend modesty and humility, and make a stratagem of it for the courting of honour; but therefore we must really be modest and humble, for God will put honour on such, and so will men too. And it is better, more for a man's satisfaction and reputation, to be advanced above his pretensions and expectations, than to be thrust down below them, in the presence of the prince, whom it was a great piece of honour to be admitted to the sight of, and a great piece of presumption to look upon without leave.

8 Go not forth hastily to strive,
Lest *thou know not* what to do in the end thereof,
When thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.
9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself;*
And discover not a secret to another:
10 Lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame,
And thine infamy turn not away.

Here is good counsel given about going to law.

First. Not to be hasty in bringing an action before thou hast thyself considered it, and consulted with thy friends about it. "Go not forth hastily to strive;" do not send for a writ in a passion, or upon the first appearance of right on thy side; but weigh the matter deliberately, because we are apt to be partial in our own cause; consider the certainty of the expenses, and the uncertainty of the success, how much care and vexation it will be the occasion of, and after all the cause may go against thee, and then sure thou wilt not go forth hastily to strive.

Secondly. Nor before thou hast tried to end the matter amicably; ver. 29, "Debate thy cause with thy neighbour" privately, and perhaps you will understand one another better, and see that there is no occasion to go to law. In public quarrels, the war that must at length end, it might better have been prevented by a treaty of peace, and a great deal of blood and treasure spared. It is so in private quarrels; sue not thy neighbour as a heathen man and a publican, till thou hast told him his fault between thee and him alone, and he has refused to refer the matter, or to come to an accommodation. Perhaps the matter in variance is a secret not fit to be divulged to any, much less to be brought upon the stage before the country, and therefore end it privately that it may not be discovered. Reveal not the secret of another, so some read it; do not in revenge, to disgrace thine adversary, disclose that which should be kept private, and which doth not at all belong to the cause.

Two reasons he gives why we should be thus cautious in going to law: 1. Because otherwise the cause will be in danger to go against us, and thou wilt not know what to do, when the defendant has justified himself in what thou didst charge upon him, and made it out that thy complaint was frivolous and vexatious, and thou hadst no just cause of action, and so put thee to shame, nonsuit thee, and force thee to pay costs; all which might have been prevented by a little consideration. 2. Because it will turn very much to our reproach, if we fall under the character of being litigious; not only the defendant himself, ver. 8, but he that hears the cause tried, will put thee to shame, will expose thee as a man of no principle; and thine infamy will not turn away, thou wilt never retrieve thy reputation.

11 A word fitly spoken
Is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.
12 *As* an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold,
So is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.

Solomon here shews how much it becomes a man,

First. To speak pertinently: 'A word upon the wheels,' that runs well, is well circumstanced, in proper time and place,—instruction, advice, or comfort, given seasonably and in apt expressions, adapted to the case of the person spoken to, and agreeing with the character of the person speaking,—is like golden balls resembling apples, or like true apples of a golden colour, (golden rennets,) or perhaps gilded, as sometimes we have gilded laurels, and those embossed in pictures of silver, or rather, brought to table in a silver network basket, or in a silver box of that which we call filigree-work, through which the golden apples might be seen. Doubtless it was some ornament of the table then well known. As that was very pleasing to the eye, so is a word fitly spoken to the ear.

Secondly. Especially to give a reproof with discretion, and so as to make it acceptable. If it be well given by a wise reprover, and well taken by an obedient ear, it is as an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, very graceful, and well becoming both the reprover and the reproved; both will have their praise, the reprover for giving it so prudently, and the reproved for taking it so patiently, and making a good use of it. Others will commend them both, and they will have satisfaction in each other. He that gave the reproof is pleased that it had the desired effect, and he to whom it was given has reason to be thankful for it as a kindness. That is well given, we say, that is well taken; yet it doth not always prove that that is well taken which is well given. It were to be wished that a wise reprover should always meet with an obedient ear, but often it is not so.

13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest,
So is a faithful messenger to them that send him:
For he refresheth the soul of his masters.

See here, First. What ought to be the care of a servant, the meanest that is sent of an errand, and intrusted with any business, much more the greatest, the agent and ambassador of a prince; he ought to be faithful to him that sends him, and to see to it that he do not by mistake or with design falsify his trust, and that he be in nothing that lies in his power wanting to his master's interest. Those that act as factors by commission ought to act as carefully as for themselves.

Secondly. How much this will be the satisfaction of the master. It will refresh his soul, as much as ever the cold of snow, which in hot countries they preserve by art all the year round, was to the labourers in the harvest that bore the burthen and heat of the day. And the more important the affair was, and the more fear of its miscarrying, the more acceptable is the messenger, if he have managed it successfully and well. A faithful minister, Christ's messenger, should be thus acceptable to us, *Job* xxxiii. 33; however, he will be a sweet savour to God, 2 *Cor.* ii. 15.

14 Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift
Is like clouds and wind without rain.

He may be said to boast of a false gift,

First. Who pretends to have received or given that which he never had, which he never gave; makes a noise of his great accomplishments and his good services; but it is false; he is not what he takes on him to be. Or,

Secondly. Who promiseth what he will give and what he will do, but performs nothing; raiseth people's expectations of the mighty thing she will do for his country, for his friend, what noble legacies he will leave; but either he has not wherewithal, or he never designs it. Such a one is like the morning cloud, that passeth away, and disappoints those that looked for rain from it to water the parched ground, *Jude* 12; clouds without water.

15 By long forbearing is a prince persuaded,
And a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

Two things are here recommended to us in dealing with others, as likely means to gain our point:

First. Patience, to bear a present heat without being put into a heat by it, and to wait for a fit opportunity to offer our reasons, and to give them time to consider them. By this means even a prince may be persuaded to do a thing which he seemed very averse to, much more a common person. That which is justice and reason now will be so another time, and therefore we need not urge them with violence now, but wait for a more convenient season.

Secondly. Mildness, to speak without passion or provocation. "A soft tongue breaketh the bone," that is, it mollifies the roughest spirits, and overcomes those that are most morose; like lightning, which they say sometimes has broken the bone, and yet not pierced the flesh. Gideon, with a soft tongue, pacified the Ephraimites, and Abigail turned away David's wrath. Hard words, we say, break no bones, and therefore we should bear them patiently; but it seems soft words do, and therefore we should on all occasions give them prudently.

16 Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee,
Lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

Here, First. We are allowed a sober and moderate use of the delights of sense. "Hast thou found honey?" it is not forbidden fruit to thee as it was to Jonathan; thou mayest eat of it with thanksgiving to God, who, having created things grateful to our senses, has given us leave to make use of them. "Eat as much as is sufficient," and no more; enough is as good as a feast.

Secondly. We are cautioned to take heed of excess. We must use all pleasures as we do honey, with a check upon our appetite, lest we take more than doth us good, and make ourselves sick with it. We are most in danger of surfeiting upon that which is most sweet, and therefore those that fare sumptuously every day have need to watch over themselves, lest their hearts be at any time overcharged. The pleasures of sense lose their sweetness by the excessive use of them, and become nauseous, as honey that turns sour in the stomach. It is therefore our interest as well as duty to use them with sobriety.

17 Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house;
Lest he be weary of thee, and *so* hate thee.

Here he instanceth in another pleasure, which we must not take too much of, that of visiting our friends; the former for fear of surfeiting ourselves, this for fear of surfeiting our neighbour.

First. It is a piece of civility to visit our neighbours sometimes, to shew our respect to them and concern for them, and to cultivate and improve mutual acquaintance and love, and that we may have both the satisfaction and advantage of their conversation.

Secondly. It is wisdom as well as good manners not to be troublesome to our friends in our visiting of them. Not to visit too often, nor stay too long, nor contrive to come at meal-time, nor make ourselves busy in the affairs of their families. Hereby we make ourselves cheap, and mean, and burthensome. Thy neighbour that is thus plagued and haunted with thy visits will be weary of thee and hate thee, and that will be the destruction of friendship which should have been the improvement of it. *Post tres sæpe dies pisces vilescit et hospes,*—'After the third day fish and company become distasteful.' Familiarity breeds contempt. *Nulli te facias nimis sodalem,*—'Be not too intimate with any.' He that sponges upon his friend loses him. How much better friend, then, is God than any other friend, for we need not withdraw our foot from his house, the throne of his grace, *ch.* viii. 34; the oftener we come to him the better, and the more welcome.

18 A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour
Is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow.

Here, First. The sin condemned is bearing false witness against our neighbour, either in judgment or in common conversation, contrary to the law of the ninth commandment.

Secondly. That which it is here condemned for is the mischievousness of it. It is in its power to ruin not only men's reputations, but their lives, estates,

families, all that is dear to them. A false testimony is every thing that is dangerous; it is a maul, or club, to knock men's brains out; a flail, that there is no fence against; it is a sword, to wound near at hand, and a sharp arrow, to wound at a distance. We have therefore need to pray, "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips," *Ps.* cxx. 2.

19 Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble
Is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.

First. 'The confidence of an unfaithful man,' (so some read it,) 'will be like a broken tooth;' his policy, his power, his interest, all that which he trusted in to support him in his wickedness, will fail him in time of trouble, *Ps.* li. 7.

Secondly. "Confidence in an unfaithful man," (so we read it,) in a man that we thought trusty and therefore depended on him, but proves otherwise; it proves not only unserviceable, but painful and vexatious, "like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint," which, when we put any stress upon, not only fails us, but makes us feel from it, especially "in time of trouble," when we must expect help from it; it is like a broken reed, *Isa.* xxxvi. 6. Confidence in a faithful God in time of trouble will not prove thus; on him we may rest, and in him dwell at ease.

20 *As* he that taketh away a garment in cold weather,
And as vinegar upon nitre,
So *is* he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

First. The absurdity here censured is "singing songs to a heavy heart." Those that are in great sorrow are to be comforted by sympathising with them, condoling them, and concurring in their lamentations; if we take that method, "the moving of our lips may assuage their grief," *Job* xvi. 5. But we take a wrong course with them if we think to relieve them by being merry with them, and endeavouring to make them merry, for that adds to their grief, to see their friends so little concerned for them; it puts them upon ripping up the causes of their grief, and aggravating them, and makes them harden themselves in sorrow against the assaults of mirth.

Secondly. The absurdities this is compared to are taking away a garment from a man in cold weather, which makes him colder, or pouring vinegar upon nitre, which, like water upon lime, puts it into a ferment; so improper, so incongruous is it to sing pleasant songs to one that is of a sorrowful spirit. Some read it in a contrary sense, 'As he that puts on a garment in cold weather, which warms the body, or as vinegar upon nitre, which dissolves it, so he that sings songs of comfort to a person in sorrow, refresheth him, and dispels his grief.'

21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat;
And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:
22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head,
And the LORD shall reward thee.

By this it appears that, however the scribes and Pharisees had corrupted the law, not only the commandment of loving the brethren, but even that of loving our enemies, was not only a new but an old commandment, an Old Testament commandment, though our Saviour has given it us with a new enforcement of his own great example in loving us when we were enemies. Observe,

First. How we must express our love to our enemies. By the real offices of kindness, even those that are expensive to ourselves and most acceptable to them. If they be hungry and thirsty, instead of pleasing thyself with their distress, and contriving how to cut off supplies from them, relieve them, as Elisha did the Syrians that came to apprehend him, 2 *Kin.* vi. 22.

Secondly. What encouragement we have to do so. 1. It will be a likely means to win upon them, and bring them over to be reconciled to us. We shall mollify them as the refiner melts the metal in the crucible, not only by putting it over the fire, but by heaping coals of fire upon it. The way to turn an enemy into a friend is to behave friendly to him. Or if it do not gain him it will aggravate his sin and punishment, and heap the burning coals of God's wrath upon his head, as rejoicing in his calamity may be an occasion of God's turning his wrath from him, *ch.* xxiv. 17. 2. However, we shall be no losers by our self-denial, whether he relent towards thee or no. "The Lord shall reward thee;" he shall forgive thee who thus shewest thyself to be of a forgiving spirit; he shall provide for thee when thou art in distress, though thou hast been evil and ungrateful, as thou dost for thine enemy. However, it shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, when kindnesses done to our enemies shall be remembered as well as those shewn to God's friends.

23 The north wind driveth away rain:
So *doth* an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.

Here see, First. How we must discourage sin, and witness against it, and particularly the sin of slandering and backbiting. We must frown upon it, and, by giving it an angry countenance, endeavour to put it out of countenance. Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are, if they were not readily heard; but good manners would silence the slanderer if he saw that his tales displeased the company. We would shew ourselves uneasy if we heard a dear friend whom we value, evil spoken of; the same dislike we should shew of evil speaking in general. If we cannot otherwise reprove, we may do it by our looks.

Secondly. The good effect which this might probably have. Who knows but it may silence and drive away a backbiting tongue? Sin, if it be countenanced, becomes daring, but if it receive any check, it is so conscious of its own shame that it becomes sneaking, and this in particular; for many abuse those they speak of, only in hopes to curry favour with those they speak to.

24 *It is* better to dwell in the corner of the housetop,
Than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.

This is the same with what he had said *ch.* xxi. 9.

Observe, First. How those are to be pitied that are unequally yoked, especially with such as are brawling and contentious, whether husband or wife, for it is equally true of both. It is better to be alone than to be joined to one who, instead of being a meet help, is a great hindrance to the comfort of life.

Secondly. How those may sometimes be envied that live in solitude; as they want the comfort of society, so they are free from the vexation of it. And as there are cases which give occasion to say, Blessed is the womb that has not borne, so there are which give occasion to say, Blessed is the man never married, but lies like a servant in a corner of the house-top.

25 *As* cold waters to a thirsty soul,
So *is* good news from a far country.

See here, First. How natural it is to us to desire to hear good news from our friends, and concerning our affairs at a distance. It is sometimes with impatience that we expect to hear from abroad, our souls thirst after it; but we should check the inordinacy of that desire. If it be bad news, it will come soon; if good, it will be welcome at any time.

Secondly. How acceptable such good news will be when it doth come, as refreshing as cold water to one that is thirsty. Solomon himself had much trading abroad, as well as correspondence with his ambassadors with foreign courts, and how pleasant it was to hear of the good success of his negotiations abroad, he well knew by experience. Heaven is a country afar off; how refreshing is it to hear good news from thence, both in the everlasting Gospel, which signifies glad tidings, and in the witness of the Spirit with our spirits that we are God's children.

26 A righteous man falling down before the wicked
Is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.

It is here represented as a very lamentable thing, and a public grievance, and of ill consequence to many, like the muddying of a fountain and the corrupting of a spring, for the righteous to fall down before the wicked; that is,

First. For the righteous to fall into sin in the sight of the wicked, for them to do any thing unbecoming their profession, which is told in Gath, and published in the streets of Ashkelon, and in which the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, for them that have been in reputation for wisdom and honour to fall from their excellency, this troubles the fountains by grieving some, and corrupts the springs by infecting others, and emboldening them to do likewise.

Secondly. For the righteous to be oppressed, and run down, and trampled upon by the violence or subtlety of evil men, to be displaced and thrust into obscurity, this is the troubling of the fountains of justice, and corrupting the very springs of government, *ch.* xxviii. 12, 28; xxix. 2.

Thirdly. For the righteous to be cowardly, to sneak and truckle to the wicked, to be afraid of opposing his wickedness, and basely to yield to him, this is a reflection upon religion, a discouragement to good men, and strengthens the hands of sinners in their sins, and so is like "a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring."

27 *It is* not good to eat much honey:
So *for men* to search their own glory *is not* glory.

Two things we must be graciously dead to:

First. To the pleasures of sense; for "it is not good to eat much honey." Though it please the taste, and, if eaten with moderation, is very wholesome; yet, if eaten to excess, it becomes nauseous, breeds choler, and is the occasion of many diseases; which is true of all the delights of the children of men,—they will surfeit, but never satisfy, and they are dangerous to those that allow themselves the liberal use of them.

Secondly. To the praise of men. We must not be greedy of that no more than of pleasure, because "for men to search their own glory," to court applause, and covet to make themselves popular; it "is not" their "glory" to do so, but their shame, every one will laugh at them for it; and the glory which is so courted, when it is got is not glory, it is really no true honour to a man.

Some give another sense of this verse. 'To eat much honey is not good; but to search into glorious and excellent things is a great commendation, it is true glory;' we cannot therein offend by excess. Others thus: 'As honey, though pleasant to the taste, if used immoderately oppresseth the stomach, so an over-curious search into things sublime and glorious, though pleasant to us, if we pry too far, will overwhelm our capacities with a greater glory and lustre than they can bear.' Or thus: 'You may be surfeited with eating too much honey; but the last of glory, of their glory, the glory of the blessed, is glory, it will be ever fresh, and never pall the appetite.'

28 He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit
Is like a city *that is* broken down, and without walls.

Here is, First. The good character of a wise and virtuous man implied. He is one that hath "rule over his own spirit," he maintains the government of himself, and of his own appetites and passions, and doth not suffer them to rebel against reason and conscience. He has the rule of his own thoughts, his desires, his inclinations, his resentments, and keeps them all in good order.

Secondly. The bad case of a vicious man, that has not this rule over his own spirit; that when temptations to excess in eating or drinking are before him, has no government of himself; when he is provoked, breaks out into exorbitant passions. Such a one "is like a city that is broken down, and without walls;" all that is good goes out and forsakes him, and all that is evil breaks in upon him; he lies exposed to all the temptations of Satan, and becomes an easy prey to that enemy. He is also liable to many troubles and vexations; it is likewise as much a reproach to him as it is to a city to have its walls ruined, *Neh.* i. 3.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AS snow in summer, and as rain in harvest,
So honour is not seemly for a fool.

Note, First. It is too common a thing for honour to be given to fools, that are utterly unworthy of it and unfit for it. Ill men, that have neither wit nor grace, are sometimes preferred by princes, and applauded and cried up by the people. "Folly is set in great dignity," as Solomon observed, *Eccl.* x. 6.

Secondly. It is very absurd and unbecoming when it is so. It is as incongruous as snow in summer, and as great a disorder in the commonwealth as that is in the course of nature, and in the seasons of the year; nay, it is as injurious as rain in harvest, which hinders the labourers, and spoils the fruits of the earth when they are ready to be gathered. When bad men are in power they commonly abuse their power in discouraging virtue, and giving countenance to wickedness, for want of wisdom to discern it, and grace to detest it.

2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying,
So the curse causeless shall not come.

Here is, First. The folly of passion. It makes men scatter causeless curses; wishing ill to others upon presumption that they are ill, and have done ill, when either they mistake the person or misunderstand the fact, or call evil good, and

good evil. Give honour to a fool, and he thunders out his anathemas against all that he has any disgust to, right or wrong. Great men that are wicked think they have a privilege to keep those about them in awe, by cursing them and swearing at them; which yet is an expression of the most impotent malice, and shews their weakness as much as their wickedness.

Secondly. The safety of innocency. He that is cursed without cause, whether by furious imprecations or solemn anathemas, the curse shall do him no more harm than the bird that flies over his head, than Goliath's curses did to David, 1 *Sam.* xvii. 43. It will fly away like the sparrow, or the wild dove, that go nobody knows whither, till they return to their proper place, as the curse will at length return upon the head of him that uttered it.

3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass,
And a rod for the fool's back.

EASTERN ASSES, WITH BRIDLES.

Here, First. Wicked men are compared to the horse and the ass, so brutish are they, so unreasonable, so unruly, and not to be governed but by force and fear; so low has sin sunk men, so much below themselves Man indeed is born like the wild ass's colt; but as some, by the grace of God, are changed, and become rational, so others, by custom in sin, are hardened and become more and more sottish, as the horse and the mule, *Ps.* xxxii. 9.

Secondly. Direction is given to use them accordingly. Princes, instead of giving honour to a fool, ver. 1, must put disgrace upon him; instead of putting power into his hand must exercise power over him. A horse unbroken needs a whip for correction, and an ass a bridle for direction, and to check him when he would turn out of the way. So a vicious man, that will not be under the conduct and restraint of religion and reason, ought to be whipped and bridled, to be rebuked severely, and made to smart for what he has done amiss, and to be restrained from offending any more.

4 Answer not a fool according to his folly,
Lest thou also be like unto him.
5 Answer a fool according to his folly,
Lest he be wise in his own conceit.

See here the noble security of the scripture-style, which seems to contradict itself, but really doth not. Wise men have need to be directed how to deal with fools; and they have never more need of wisdom than in dealing with such to know when to keep silence and when to speak, for there may be a time for both.

First. In some cases a wise man will not set his wit to that of a fool so far as to "answer him according to his folly." If he boast of himself, do not answer him by boasting of thyself. If he rail, and talk passionately, do not thou rail and talk passionately too. If he tell one great lie, do not thou tell another to match it; if he calumniate thy friends, do not thou calumniate his. If he banter, do not answer him in his own language, "lest thou be like him," even thou, who knowest better things, who hast more sense, and hast been better taught.

Secondly. Yet in other cases a wise man will use his wisdom for the conviction of a fool, and when, by taking notice of what he saith, there may be hopes of doing good, or at least preventing farther mischief, either to himself or others. If thou have reason to think that thy silence will be deemed an evidence of the weakness of thy cause, or of thine own weakness, in such a case answer him, and let it be an answer *ad hominem*,—'to the man;' beat him at his own weapons, and that will be an answer *ad rem*,—'to the point,' or as good as one. If he offer any thing that looks like an argument, answer that, and suit thine answer to his case. If he think, because thou dost not answer him, what he saith is unanswerable, then give him an answer, "lest he be wise in his own conceit," and boast of a victory; *Job* xxxii. 13. For Wisdom's children must justify her.

6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool
Cutteth off the feet, *and* drinketh damage.
7 The legs of the lame are not equal:
So *is* a parable in the mouth of fools.
8 As he that bindeth a stone in a sling,
So *is* he that giveth honour to a fool.
9 *As* a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard,
So *is* a parable in the mouth of fools.

To recommend wisdom to us, and to quicken us to the diligent use of all the means for the getting of wisdom, Solomon here shews that fools are fit for nothing; sottish men that will never think and design at all, and vicious men that will never think and design well.

First. They are not fit to be intrusted with any business, not fit to go on an errand; ver. 6, "He that doth but send a message by the hand of a fool," of a careless, heedless person, one that is so full of his jests, and so given to his pleasures, that he cannot apply his mind to any thing that is serious, he will find his message misunderstood, the one half of it forgotten, the rest awkwardly delivered, and so many blunders made about it, that he had as good have cut off his legs, that is, never have sent him; nay, he will drink damage; that is, it will be very much to his prejudice to have employed such a one, who, instead of bringing him a good account of his affairs, will abuse him, and put a trick upon him: for, in Solomon's language, a knave and a fool are of the same signification. It will turn much to a man's disgrace to make use of the service of a fool, for people will be apt to judge of the master by his messenger.

Secondly. They are not fit to have any honour put upon them. He had said, ver. 1, that "honour is not seemly for a fool;" here he shews that it is lost, and thrown away upon him, as if a man should throw a precious stone, or a stone fit to be used in weighing, into a heap of common stones, where it would be buried, and of no use. It is as absurd as if a man should dress up a stone in purple, so others; nay, it is dangerous, it is like a stone bound in a sling, with which a man will be likely to do hurt. To give honour to a fool is to put a sword in a madman's hand, with which we know not what mischief he may do, even to those that put it into his hand.

Thirdly. They are not fit to deliver wise sayings, nor should they undertake to handle any matter of weight, though they should be instructed concerning it, and be able to say something to it. Wise sayings, as a foolish man delivers them and applies them,—in such a manner that one may know he doth not rightly understand them,—lose their excellency and usefulness. A parable in the mouth of fools ceases to be a parable, and becomes a jest. If a man that lives a wicked life yet speaks religiously, and takes God's covenant into his mouth, 1. He doth shame himself and his profession. "As the legs of the lame are not equal," by reason of which their going is indecent, so indecent is it for a fool to pretend to speak apophthegms, and give advice; and for a man to talk devoutly whose conversation is a constant contradiction to his talk, and gives him the lie. His good words raise him up; but then his ill life takes him down, and so his legs are not equal. 'A wise saying,' saith Bishop Patrick, 'doth as ill become a fool as dancing doth a cripple; for as his lameness never so much appears as when he would seem nimble, so the other's folly is never so ridiculous as when he would seem wise.' As, therefore, it is best for a lame man to keep his seat, so it is best for a silly man, and an ill man, to hold his tongue. 2. He doth but do mischief with it to himself and others, as a drunkard doth with a thorn, or any other sharp thing which he takes in his hand, with which he tears himself and those about him, because he knows not how to manage it. Those that talk well and do not live well, their good words will aggravate their own condemnation, and others will be hardened by their inconsistency with themselves. Some give this sense of it: The sharpest saying, by which a sinner, one would think, should be pricked to the heart, doth make no more impression upon a fool, no, though it come out of his own mouth, than the scratch of a thorn doth upon the hand of a man when he is drunk, who then feels it not, nor complains of it, *ch.* xxiii. 35.

10 The great *God* that formed all *things*
Both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors.

Our translation gives this verse a different reading in the text and in the margin; and accordingly it speaks either,

First. The equity of a good God. The master, or lord, (so Rab signifies,) or as we read it, "the great God that formed all things" at first, and still governs them in infinite wisdom, renders to every man according to his work. He rewards the fool who sinned through ignorance, who knew not his Lord's will, with few stripes; and he rewards the transgressor that sinned presumptuously and with a high hand, that knew his Lord's will and would not do it, he shall be beaten with many stripes. Some understand it of the goodness of God's common providence, even to fools and transgressors, on whom he causeth his sun to shine and his rain to fall. Or it speaks,

Secondly. The iniquity of an ill prince; so the margin reads it: "A great man grieveth all, and he hireth the fool, he hireth also the transgressors." When a wicked man gets power in his hand, by himself, and by the fools and knaves he employs under him, that he hires, and chooseth to make use of, he grieves all that are under him, and is vexatious to them. We should, therefore, pray for kings and all in authority, that under them our lives may be quiet and peaceable.

11 As a dog returneth to his vomit,
So a fool returneth to his folly.

See here, First. What an abominable thing sin is, and how hateful sometimes it is made to appear, even to the sinner himself. When his conscience is convinced, or he feels smart from his sin, he is sick of it, and vomits it up; he seems then to detest it, and to be willing to part with it. It is in itself, and first or last will be to the sinner, more loathsome than the vomit of a dog, *Ps.* xxxvi. 2.

Secondly. How apt sinners are to relapse into it notwithstanding. As the dog, after he has gained ease by vomiting that which burthened his stomach, yet goes and licks it up again, so sinners that have been convinced only, and not converted, return to sin again, forgetting how sick it made them. The apostle applies this proverb to those that have known the way of righteousness, but are turned from it, 2 *Pet.* ii. 22. But God will spew them out of his mouth, *Rev.* iii. 16.

12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?
There is more hope of a fool than of him.

Here is, First. A spiritual disease supposed, and that is self-conceit. "Seest thou a man?" Yes, we see many a one "wise in his own conceit," that has some little sense, but is proud of it, thinks it much more than it is, more than any of his neighbours have, and enough, so that he needs no more; has such a conceit of his own abilities as makes him opinionative, dogmatical, and censorious; and all the use he makes of his knowledge is, that it puffs him up. Or, if by a wise man we understand a religious man, it speaks the character of those who, making some show of religion, conclude their spiritual state to be good, when really it is very bad, like Laodicea, *Rev.* iii. 17.

Secondly. The danger of this disease. It is in a manner desperate; "there is more hope of a fool," that knows and owns himself to be so, than of such a one. Solomon was not only a wise man himself, but a teacher of wisdom; and this observation he made upon his pupils, that he found his work most difficult and least successful with those that had a good opinion of themselves, and were not sensible that they needed instruction. Therefore, he that seems to himself to be wise must become a fool that he may be wise, 1 *Cor.* iii. 18. There is more hopes of a publican than of a proud Pharisee, *Mat.* xxi. 32. Many are hindered from being truly wise and religious by a false and groundless conceit that they are so, *Jno.* ix. 40, 41.

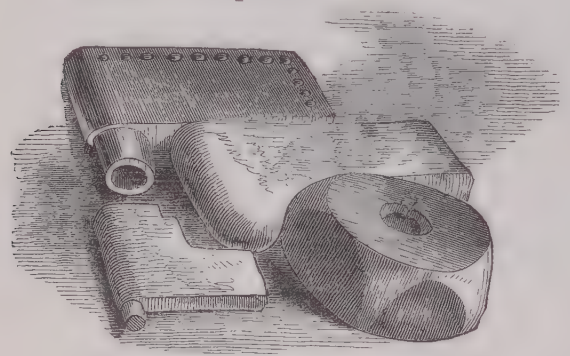
13 The slothful *man* saith, *There is* a lion in the way;
A lion *is* in the streets.

When a man talks foolishly, we say he talks idly, for none betray their folly more than those who are idle, and go about to excuse themselves in their idleness. As men's folly makes them slothful, so their slothfulness makes them foolish. Observe,

First. What the slothful man really dreads. He dreads the way, the streets, the place, where work is to be done, and a journey to be gone. He hates business, hates every thing that requires care and labour.

Secondly. What he dreams of, and pretends to dread, "a lion in the way." When he is pressed to be diligent, either in his worldly affairs, or in the business of religion, this is his excuse, (and a sorry excuse it is, as bad as none,) "There is a lion in the way," some insuperable difficulty or danger, which he cannot pretend to grapple with. Lions use to be in woods, in deserts; and in the daytime, when man has business to do, they are in their dens, *Ps.* civ. 22, 23. But the sluggard fancies, or rather pretends to fancy, a lion in the streets, whereas the lion is only in his own fancy; nor is he so fierce as he is painted. Note, It is a foolish thing to frighten ourselves from real duties by fancied difficulties, *Eccl.* xi. 4.

14 *As* the door turneth upon his hinges,
So *doth* the slothful upon his bed.



ANCIENT DOOR HINGES AND SOCKETS.

Having seen the slothful man in fear of his work, here we find him in love with his ease. He lies in his bed on one side till he is weary of that, and then turns to the other, but still in his bed, when it is far in the day, and work is to be done, as the door is moved, but not removed; and so his business is neglected, and his opportunities let slip. See the sluggard's character.

First. He is one that doth not care to get out of his bed, but seems to be hung upon it, as the door upon the hinges. Bodily ease too much consulted is the sad occasion of many a spiritual disease. They that love sleep will prove in the end to have loved death.

Secondly. He doth not care to get forward with his business; in that he stirs to and fro a little, but to no purpose, he is where he was. Slothful professors turn in profession like the door upon the hinges. The world and the flesh are the two hinges on which they are hung; and though they move in a course of external services, are got into a road of duties, and tread around in them like the horse in the mill, yet they get no good, they get no ground, they are never the nearer heaven; sinners unchanged, saints unimproved.

15 The slothful hideth his hand in *his* bosom;
It grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.

The sluggard is now with much ado got out of his bed, but he might as good have lain there still for any thing he is likely to bring to pass in his work, so awkwardly doth he go about it. Observe,

First. The pretence he makes for his slothfulness. He hides his hand in his bosom for fear of cold, next to his warm bed is his warm bosom; or, pretending that he is lame, as some do that make a trade of begging, something ails his hand, he would have it thought that it is blistered with yesterday's hard work; or, it speaks in general his aversion to business, he has tried, and his hands are not used to labour, and therefore he hugs himself in his own ease, and cares for nobody. Note, It is common for those that will not do their duty to pretend they cannot; "I cannot dig," *Lu.* xvi. 3.

Secondly. The prejudice he sustains by his slothfulness. He himself is the loser by it, for he starves himself; "It grieves him to bring his hand to his mouth," that is, he cannot find in his heart to feed himself, but dreads it, as a mighty toil, to lift his hand to his head. It is an elegant hyperbole, aggravating his sin, that he cannot endure to take the least pains, no, not for the greatest profit, and shewing how his sin is his punishment. Those that are slothful in the business of religion will not be at the pains to feed their own souls with the word of God, the bread of life, nor to fetch in promised blessings by prayer, though they might have them for the fetching.

16 The sluggard *is* wiser in his own conceit
Than seven men that can render a reason.

Observe, First. The high opinion which the sluggard has of himself, notwithstanding the gross absurdity and folly of his slothfulness. He thinks himself wiser than seven men, than seven wise men, for they are such as can render a reason. It is the wisdom of a man to be able to render a reason, of a good man to be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him, 1 *Pet.* iii. 15. What we do we should be able to render a reason for, though perhaps we may not have wit enough to shew the fallacy of every objection against it. He that takes pains in religion can render a good reason for it; he knows he is working for a good master, and that his labour shall not be in vain. But the sluggard thinks himself wiser than seven such; for let seven such persuade him to be diligent, with all the reasons they can render for it, it is to no purpose, his own wilfulness he thinks answer enough to them and all their reasons.

Secondly. The reference that this has to his slothfulness. It is the sluggard above all men that is thus self-conceited; for, 1. His good opinion of himself is the cause of his slothfulness; therefore he will not take pains to get wisdom, because he thinks he is wise enough already. A conceit of the sufficiency of our attainments is a great enemy to our improvement. 2. His slothfulness is the cause of his good opinion of himself. If he would but take pains to examine himself, and compare himself with the laws of wisdom, he would have other thoughts of himself. Indulged slothfulness is at the bottom of prevailing self-conceitedness. Nay, 3. So wretchedly besotted is he that he takes his slothfulness to be his wisdom. He thinks it is his wisdom to make much of himself, and take all the ease he can get, and do no more in religion than he needs must, to avoid suffering, to sit still and see what other people do, that he may have the pleasure of finding fault with them. Of such sluggards, who are proud of that which is their shame, there is little hope, ver. 12.

17 He that passeth by, *and* meddleth with strife *belonging* not to him,
Is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

First. That which is here condemned is meddling with strife that belongs not to us. If we must not be hasty to strive in our own cause, *ch.* xxv. 8, much less in other people's, especially theirs that we are in no way related to, or concerned in, but light on accidentally, as we pass by. If we can be instrumental to make peace between those that are at variance, we must do it, though we should thereby get the ill-will of both sides, at least while they are in their heat; but to make ourselves busy in other men's matters, and parties in other men's quarrels, is not only to court our own trouble, but to thrust ourselves into temptation. "Who made me a judge?" Let them end it, as they began it, between themselves.

Secondly. Therefore we are cautioned against it because of the danger it exposeth us to. It is like taking a snarling cur by the ears, that will snap at you and bite you; you had better have let him alone, for you cannot get clear of him when you would, and must thank yourselves if you come off with a wound and dishonour. He that has got a dog by the ears, if he let him go he flies at him; if he keeps his hold, he has his hands full, and can do nothing else. Let every one with quietness work and mind his own business, and not with unquietness quarrel and meddle with other people's business.

18 As a mad *man* who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death,
19 So *is* the man *that* deceiveth his neighbour,
And saith, Am not I in sport?

See here, First. How mischievous those are that make no conscience of deceiving their neighbours. They are as madmen, that cast "firebrands, arrows, and death," so much hurt may they do by their deceits; they value themselves upon it as politic, cunning men, but really they are as madmen. There is not a greater madness in the world than a wilful sin. It is not only the passionate, furious man, but the malicious, deceitful man, that is a madman; he doth in effect cast firebrands, arrows, and death, he doth more mischief than he can imagine. Fraud and falsehood burn like firebrands; kill, even at a distance, like arrows.

Secondly. See how frivolous the excuse is which men commonly make for the mischief they do, that they did it in jest. With this they think to turn it off when they are reproved for it; "Am not I in sport?" But it will prove dangerous playing with fire, and jesting with edge tools. Not that those are to be commended who are captious, and can take no jest; they that themselves are wise must suffer fools, 2 *Cor.* xi. 19, 20. But those are certainly to be condemned who are any way abusive to their neighbours, impose upon their credulity, cheat them in their bargains with them, tell lies to them, or tell lies of them, give them ill language, or put them in an ill name, and then think to excuse it by saying they did but jest; "Am not I in sport?" He that sins in jest must repent in earnest, or his sin will be his ruin. Truth is too valuable a thing to be sold for a jest; and so is the reputation of our neighbour. By lying and slandering in jest men learn themselves, and teach others, to lie and slander in earnest; and a false report raised in mirth may be spread in malice; and if a man may tell a lie to make himself merry, why not to make himself rich; and so truth quite perisheth, and men teach their tongues to tell lies, *Jer.* ix. 5. If men would consider that a lie comes from the devil, and brings to hell-fire, sure that would spoil the sport of it. It is casting arrows and death to themselves.

20 Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out:
So where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.
21 *As* coals *are* to burning coals, and wood to fire;
So *is* a contentious man to kindle strife.
22 The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds,
And they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

Contention is as a fire, it heats the spirit, burns up all that is good, and puts families and societies into a flame. Now here we are told how that fire is commonly kindled and kept burning, that we may avoid the occasions of strife, and so prevent the mischievous consequences of it. If then we would keep the peace,

First. We must not give ear to talebearers, for they feed the fire of contention with fuel; nay, they spread it with combustible matter. The tales they carry are fireballs. They that by insinuating base characters, revealing secrets, and misrepresenting words and actions, do what they can to make relations, friends, and neighbours, jealous one of another, to alienate them one from another, and sow discord among them, are to be banished out of families, and all societies, and then strife will as surely cease as the fire will go out when it has no fuel. The contenders will better understand one another, and come to a better temper; old stories will soon be forgotten when there are no new ones told to keep up the remembrance of them; and both sides will see how they have been imposed upon by a common enemy. Whisperers and backbiters are incendiaries not to be suffered.

To illustrate this he repeats, ver. 22, what he had said before, *ch.* xviii. 8, that "the words of a talebearer are as wounds," deep and dangerous wounds, wounds in the vitals; they wound the reputation of him who is belied, and perhaps the wound proves incurable, and even the plaister of a recantation (which yet can seldom be obtained) may not prove wide enough for it. They wound the love and charity which he to whom they are spoken ought to have for his neighbour; and give a fatal stab to friendship and Christian fellowship. We must therefore not only not be talebearers ourselves at any time, nor ever do any ill offices, but should not give the least countenance to those that are.

Secondly. We must not associate with peevish, passionate people, that are exceptious, and apt to put the worst construction upon every thing, that pick quarrels upon the least occasion, and are quick and high, and hot in resenting affronts; these are contentious men, that kindle strife, ver. 21. The less we have to do with such the better, for it will be very hard not to quarrel with those that are quarrelsome.

23 Burning lips and a wicked heart
Are like a potsherd covered with silver dross.

This may be meant either,

First. Of a wicked heart shewing itself in burning lips, that is, furious, passionate, outrageous words, burning in malice, and persecuting those to whom or of whom they are spoken. Ill words and ill will agree as well together as a potsherd and the dross of silver, which, now the pot is broken, and the dross separated from the silver, are fit to be thrown together to the dunghill.

Secondly. Or of a wicked heart disguising itself with burning lips, that is, burning with the professions of love and friendship, and even persecuting a man with flatteries; this is like a potsherd covered with the scum or dross of silver, with which one that is weak may be imposed upon, as if it were of some value, but a wise man is soon aware of the cheat. This sense agrees with the following verses.

24 He that hateth dissembleth with his lips,
And layeth up deceit within him;
25 When he speaketh fair, believe him not:
For *there are* seven abominations in his heart.
26 *Whose* hatred is covered by deceit, [gation.
His wickedness shall be shewed before the *whole* congre-

There is cause to complain, not only of the want of sincerity in men's profession of friendship, and that they do not love so well as they pretend, nor will serve their friends so much as they promise, but, which is much worse, of wicked designs in the profession of friendship, and the making of it subservient to the most malicious intentions. This is here spoken of as a common thing, ver. 24, "He that hates" his neighbour, and is contriving to do him a mischief, yet "dissembleth with his lips," professeth to have a respect for him, and to be ready to serve him, talks friendly with him, as Cain with Abel; asks, "Art thou in health my brother?" as Joab to Amasa, that his malice may not be suspected and guarded against, and so he may have the fairer opportunity to execute the purposes of it; he "lays up deceit within him," that is, he keeps in his mind the mischief he intends to do his neighbour, till he catcheth him at an advantage. This is malice which has no less of the subtlety than it has of the venom of the old serpent in it. Now, as to this matter, we are here cautioned,

First. Not to be so foolish as to suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by the pretensions of friendship. Remember to distrust when a man speaks fair, be not too forward to believe him, unless you know him well; for it is possible there may be "seven abominations in his heart," a great many projects of mischief against you which he is labouring so industriously to conceal with his fair speech. Satan is an enemy that hates us, and yet in his temptations speaks fair, as he did to Eve; but it is madness to give credit to him, "for there are seven abominations in his heart." Seven other spirits doth one unclean spirit bring, more wicked than himself.

Secondly. Not to be so wicked as to impose upon any with a profession of friendship; for, though the fraud may be carried on plausibly a while, it will be brought to light, ver. 26. He "whose hatred is covered by deceit," one time or other will be discovered, and "his wickedness shewed" to his shame and confusion "before the whole congregation;" and nothing will do more to make a man odious to all companies. Love, saith one, is the best armour, but the worst cloak, and will serve dissemblers as the disguise which Ahab put on and perished in.

27 Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein:
And he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him.

See here, First. What pains men take to do mischief to others. As they put a force upon themselves by concealing it with a profession of friendship, so they put themselves to a great deal of labour to bring it about. It is digging a pit, it is rolling a stone, hard work, and yet men will not stick at it to gratify their passion and revenge.

Secondly. What preparation they hereby make of mischief to themselves. Their violent dealing will return upon their own heads; they shall themselves fall into the pit they digged, and the stone they rolled will return upon them, *Ps.* vii. 15, 16; ix. 15, 16. The righteous God will take the wise, not only in their own craftiness, but in their own cruelty. It is the plotter's doom. Haman is hanged on a gallows of his own preparing.

——— *Nec lex est justior ulla*
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua,–.

'Nor is there any law more just than that the contrivers of destruction should perish by their own arts.

28 A lying tongue hateth *those that are* afflicted by it;
And a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

There are two sorts of lies equally detestable:

First. A slandering lie, which avowedly hates those that it is spoken of. "A lying tongue hates those that are afflicted by it," therefore afflicts them by calumnies and reproaches, because it hates them, and can thus smite them secretly where they are without defence; and therefore hates them because it has afflicted them, and made them its enemies. The mischief of this is open and obvious; it afflicts, it hates, and owns it, and every body sees it.

Secondly. A flattering lie, which secretly works the ruin of those it is spoken to. In the former the mischief is plain, and men guard against it as well as they can, but in this it is little suspected, and men betray themselves by being credulous of their own praises, and the compliments that are passed upon them. A wise man, therefore, will be more afraid of a flatterer that kisses and kills than of a slanderer that proclaims war.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BOAST not thyself of to morrow;
For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

Here is, First. A good caution against presuming upon time to come; "Boast not thyself," no, not "of to-morrow," much less of many days or years to come. This doth not forbid preparing for to-morrow, but presuming upon to-morrow. We must not promise ourselves the continuance of our lives and comforts till to-morrow, but speak of it with submission to the will of God, and as those that with good reason are kept at uncertainty about it. We must not take thought for the morrow, *Mat.* vi. 34, but we must cast our care concerning it upon God: see *Jas.* iv. 13—15. We must not put off the great work of conversion, that one thing needful, till to-morrow, as if we were sure of it, but to-day, while it is called to-day, hear God's voice.

Secondly. A good consideration, upon which this caution is grounded; "we know not what a day may bring forth," not what event may be in the teeming womb of time: it is secret till it is born, *Eccl.* xi. 5. A little time may produce considerable changes, and such as we little think of: we know not what the present day may bring forth, the evening must commend it; *nescis quid serus vesper vehat,*—'thou knowest not what the close of evening may bring with it.' God has wisely kept us in the dark concerning future events, and reserved to himself the knowledge of them, as a flower of the crown, that he may train us up in a dependence upon himself, and a continued readiness for every event, *Acts* i. 7.

2 Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth;
A stranger, and not thine own lips.

Note, First. We must do that which is commendable, for which even strangers may praise us. Our light must shine before men, and we must do good works that may be seen, though we must not do them on purpose that they may be seen. Let our own works be such as will praise us, even in the gates, *Phil.* iv. 8.

Secondly. When we have done it we must not commend ourselves, for that is an evidence of pride, and folly, and self-love, and a great lessening to a man's reputation. Every one will be forward to run him down that cries himself up. There may be a just occasion for us to vindicate ourselves, but it doth not become us to applaud ourselves. *Proprio laus sordet in ore,*—'self-praise defiles the mouth.'

3 A stone *is* heavy, and the sand weighty;
But a fool's wrath *is* heavier than them both
4 Wrath *is* cruel, and anger *is* outrageous;
But who *is* able to stand before envy?

These two verses shew the intolerable mischief,

First. Of an ungoverned passion. The wrath of a fool, that when he is provoked cares not what he saith and doth, is more grievous than a great stone, or a load of sand. It lies heavy upon himself. Those that have no command of their passions do themselves even sink under the load of them. It lies heavy upon those he is enraged at, whom in his fury he will be in danger of doing some mischief or other to. It is therefore our wisdom not to give provocation to a fool; but if he be in a passion to get out of his way.

Secondly. Of a rooted malice, which is as much worse than the former as coals of juniper are than a fire of thorns. Wrath, it is true, is cruel, and doth many a barbarous thing, and anger is outrageous, but a secret enmity at the person of another, an envy at his prosperity, and a desire of revenge for some injury or affront, is much more mischievous. One may avoid a sudden heat, as David escaped Saul's javelin, but when it grows, as Saul's did, to a settled envy, there is no standing before it; it will pursue, it will overtake. He that grieves at the good of another will be still contriving to do him hurt, and keep his anger for ever.

5 Open rebuke *is* better than secret love.
6 Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend;
But the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.

Note, First. It is good for us to be reproved and told of our faults by our friends. If true love in the heart has but zeal and courage enough to shew itself, in dealing plainly with our friends, and reproving them for what they say and do amiss, this is really better, not only than secret hatred, as *Lev.* xix. 17, but than secret love, that love to our neighbours which doth not shew itself in this good fruit, which compliments them in their sins, to the prejudice of their souls. Faithful are the reproofs of a friend, though for the present they are painful as wounds. It is a sign our friends are faithful indeed, if in love to our souls they will not suffer sin upon us, nor let us alone in it. The physician's care is to cure the patient's disease, not to please his palate.

Secondly. It is dangerous to be caressed and flattered by an enemy, whose kisses are deceitful; we can take no pleasure in them, because we can put no confidence in them. Joab's kiss and Judas's were deceitful, and therefore we have need to stand upon our guard, that we be not deluded by them. They are to be deprecated, so some read it. The Lord deliver us from an enemy's kisses, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue!

7 The full soul loatheth an honeycomb;
But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

Solomon here, as often in this book, shews, that the poor have in some respects the advantage of the rich; for,

First. They have a better relish of their enjoyments than the rich have. Hunger is the best sauce. Coarse fare, with good appetite to it, has a sensible pleasantness in it, which they are strangers to, whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting. They that fare sumptuously every day nauseate even delicate food, as the Israelites did the quails, whereas they that have no more but their necessary food, though it be such as the full soul would call bitter, to them it is sweet; they eat it with pleasure, digest it, and are refreshed by it.

Secondly. They are more thankful for their enjoyments. The hungry will bless God for bread and water, while those that are full think the greatest dainties and varieties scarce worth giving thanks for. The Virgin Mary seems to refer to this, when she saith, *Lu.* i. 53, that the hungry, who know how to value God's blessings, are filled with good things, but the rich, that despise them; are justly sent empty away.

8 As a bird that wandereth from her nest,
So *is* a man that wandereth from his place.

Note, First. There are many that do not know when they are well, but are uneasy with their present condition, and given to change. God in his providence hath appointed them a place fit for them, and has made it comfortable to them; but they affect unsettledness, they love to wander, they are glad of a pretence to go abroad, and do not care for staying long at a place. They needlessly absent themselves from their own work and care, and meddle with that which belongs not to them.

Secondly. Those that thus desert the post assigned them, are like "a bird that wanders from her nest." It is an instance of their folly; they are like a silly bird; they are always wavering, like the wandering bird that hops from bough to bough, and rests nowhere. It is unsafe; the bird that wanders is exposed. A man's place is his castle; he that quits it makes himself an easy prey to the fowler. When the bird wanders from her nest, the eggs and young ones there are neglected. They that love to be abroad leave their work at home undone. "Let every man therefore in the calling wherein he is called therein abide," therein "abide with God."

9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart:
So *doth* the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.
10 Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not;
Neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: [off.
For better *is* a neighbour *that is* near than a brother far

Here is, First. A charge given to be faithful and constant to our friends, our old friends, to keep up an intimacy with them, and to be ready to do them all the good offices that lie in our power. It is good to have a friend, a bosom friend, whom we can be friends with, and with whom we may communicate counsels. It is not necessary that this friend should be a relation, or any way akin to us; though it is happiest when among those that are so we find one fit to make a friend of. Peter and Andrew were brethren, so were James and John, yet Solomon frequently distinguisheth between a friend and a brother. But it is advisable to choose a friend among our neighbours that live near us, that acquaintance may be kept up, and kindnesses the more frequently interchanged. It is good also to have special respect to those who have been friends to our family; "Thine own friend," especially if he have been "thy father's friend, forsake not," fail not both to serve him and to use him as there is occasion. He is a tried friend; he knows thine affairs; he has a particular concern for thee, therefore be advised by him. It is a duty we owe to our parents when they are gone, to love their friends, and consult with them. Solomon's son undid himself by forsaking the counsel of his father's friends.

Secondly. A good reason given why we should thus value true friendship, and be choice of it.

1. Because of the pleasure of it. There is a great deal of sweetness in conversing and consulting with a cordial friend; it is like ointment and perfume, which are very grateful to the smell, and exhilarate the spirits; it rejoiceth the heart. The burthen of care is made lighter by unbosoming ourselves to our friend, and it is a great satisfaction to us to have his sentiments concerning our affairs. The sweetness of friendship lies not in hearty mirth and hearty laughter, but in hearty counsel,—faithful advice, sincerely given, and without flattery; 'by counsel of the soul,' so the word is, counsel which reacheth the case, and comes to the heart; counsel about soul-concerns, *Ps.* lxvi. 16. We should reckon that the most pleasant conversation which is about spiritual things, and promotes the prosperity of the soul.

2. Because of the profit and advantage of it, especially in a day of calamity, when we are here advised not to go into a brother's house: not to expect relief from a kinsman, merely for kindred's sake, (for the obligation of that commonly goes little farther than calling cousin, and fails when it comes to the trial of a real kindness,) but rather to apply ourselves to our neighbours, that are at hand, and will be ready to us at an exigence. It is wisdom to oblige them by being neighbourly, and we shall have the benefit of it in distress, by finding them so to us, *ch.* xviii. 24.

11 My son, be wise, and make my heart glad,
That I may answer him that reproacheth me.

Children are here exhorted to be wise and good,

First. That they may be a comfort to their parents, and may make their hearts glad, even when the evil days come, and so recompense them for their care, *ch.* xxiii. 15.

Secondly. That they may be a credit to them. "That I may answer him that reproacheth me" with having been over strict and severe in bringing up my children, and having taken a wrong method with them, in restraining them from the liberties which other young people take. "My son, be wise," and then it will appear in the effect that I went the wisest way to work with my children. Those that have been blessed with a religious education should carry it so in every thing as to be a credit to their education, and to silence those who say, 'A young saint, an old devil;' and to prove the contrary, 'A young saint, an old angel.'

12 A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, *and* hideth himself;
But the simple pass on, *and* are punished.

This we had before, *ch.* xxii. 3.

Note, First. Evil may be foreseen. Where there is temptation it is easy to foresee that if we thrust ourselves into it there will be sin, and as easy to foresee that if we venture upon the evil of sin there will follow the evil of punishment. And commonly God warns before he wounds; having set watchmen over us, *Jer.* vi. 17.

Secondly. It will be well or ill with us, according as we do or do not improve the foresight we have of evil before us. The prudent man, foreseeing the evil, forecasts accordingly, and hides himself, but the simple either is so dull that he doth not foresee it or so wilful and slothful that he will take no care to avoid it, and so he passeth on securely, and is punished. We do well for ourselves when we provide for hereafter.

13 Take his garment that is surety for a stranger,
And take a pledge of him for a strange woman.

This also we had before, *ch.* xx. 16.

First. It shews who they are that are hastening to poverty. Those that have so little consideration as to be bound for everybody that will ask them, and those that are given to women. Such as these will take up money as far as ever their credit will go, but they will certainly cheat their creditors at last, nay, they are cheating them all along. An honest man may be made a beggar, but he is not so that makes himself one.

Secondly. It adviseth us to be so discreet in ordering our affairs as not to lend money to those that are manifestly wasting their estates, unless they give very good security for it. Foolish lending is injustice to our families. He doth not say, Get another to be bound with him; for he that makes himself a common voucher will have those to be his security that are as insolvent as himself; therefore, "Take his garment."

14 He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning,
It shall be counted a curse to him.

Note, First. It is a great folly to be extravagant in praising even the best of our friends and benefactors. It is our duty to give every one his due praise, to applaud those that excel in knowledge, virtue, and usefulness, and to acknowledge the kindnesses we have received with thankfulness; but to do this "with a loud voice, rising early in the morning," to be always harping on this string in all companies, even to our friend's face, or so as that he may be sure to hear,—to do it studiously, as we do that which we rise early to,—to magnify the merits of our friend above measure, and with hyperboles,—is fulsome and nauseous, and savours of hypocrisy and design. Praising men for what they have done is only to get more out of them; and everybody concludes the parasite hopes to be well paid for his panegyric, or epistle dedicatory. We must not give that praise to our friend which is due to God only, as some think is intimated in rising early to do it; for in the morning God is to be praised. We must not make too much haste to praise men, so some understand it,—not cry up men too soon for their abilities and performances, but let them first be proved, lest they be lifted up with pride, and laid to sleep in idleness.

Secondly. It is a greater folly to be fond of being ourselves extravagantly praised. A wise man rather counts it a curse, and a reflection upon him; not only designed to pick his pocket, but which may really turn to his prejudice. Modest praises, as a great man observes, invite such as are present to add to the commendation; but immodest immoderate praises tempt them to detract rather, and to censure one that they hear over-commended. And, besides, over-praising a man makes him the object of envy. Every man puts in for a share of reputation, and therefore reckons himself injured if another monopolize it, or has more given him than his share. And the most danger of all is, that it is a temptation to pride; men are apt to think of themselves above what is meet, when others speak of them above what is meet. See how careful blessed Paul was not to be over-valued, 2 *Cor.* xii. 6.

15 A continual dropping in a very rainy day
And a contentious woman are alike.
16 Whosoever hideth her hideth the wind, [*itself.*
And the ointment of his right hand, *which* bewrayeth

Here, as before, Solomon laments the case of him that has a peevish, passionate wife, that is continually chiding, and making herself and all about her uneasy.

First. It is a grievance that there is no avoiding, for it is like "a continual dropping in a very rainy day." The contentions of a neighbour may be like a sharp shower, troublesome for the time, yet while it lasts one may take shelter. But the contentions of a wife are like a constant soaking rain, for which there is no remedy but patience: see *ch.* xix. 13.

Secondly. It is a grievance that there is no concealing. A wise man would hide it if he could, for the sake both of his own and his wife's reputation; but he cannot, no more than he can conceal the noise of the wind when it blows, or the smell of a strong perfume. Those that are froward and brawling will proclaim their own shame, even when their friends in kindness to them would cover it.

17 Iron sharpeneth iron;
So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

This speaks both the pleasure and the advantage of conversation. One man is nobody. Nor will poring upon a book in a corner accomplish a man so as reading and studying of men will. Wise and profitable discourse sharpens men's wits; and those that have never so much knowledge, may, by conference, have something added to them. It sharpens men's looks, and by cheering the spirits puts a briskness and liveliness into the countenance, and gives a man such an air as shews he is pleased himself, and makes him pleasing to those about him. Good men's graces are sharpened by converse with those that are good, and bad men's lusts and passions are sharpened by converse with those that are bad, as iron is sharpened by its like, especially by the file. Men are filed, that is, made smooth, and bright, and fit for business, who were rough, and dull, and unactive, by conversation. This is designed, 1. To recommend to us this expedient for sharpening ourselves, but with a caution to take heed whom we choose to converse with, because the influence upon us is so great either for the better or for the worse. 2. To direct us what we must have in our eye in conversation, namely, to improve both others and ourselves; not to pass away time or banter one another, but to "provoke one another to love and to good works," and so to make one another wiser and better.

18 Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof:
So he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

This is designed to encourage diligence, faithfulness, and constancy, even in mean employments. Though the calling be laborious and despicable, yet those that stick to it will find there is something to be got by it.

First. Let not a poor gardener, that keeps the fig-tree, be discouraged. Though it require constant care and attendance to nurse up fig-trees, and when they are grown to maturity to keep them in good order, and gather the figs in their season, yet he shall be paid for his pains, he shall eat the fruit of it, 1 *Cor.* ix. 7.

Secondly. Nay, let not a poor servant think himself incapable of thriving, and

being preferred, for if he be diligent in waiting on his master, observant of him, and obedient to him; if he 'keep his master,' so the word is; if he do all he can for the securing of his person and reputation, and take care that his estate be not wasted or damaged, such a one shall be honoured; shall not only get a good word, but be preferred and rewarded. God is a master who hath engaged to put an honour on those that serve him faithfully, *Jno.* xii. 26.

19 As in water face *answereth* to face,
So the heart of man to man

This shews us that there is a way,

First. Of knowing ourselves. As the water is a looking-glass, in which we may see our faces by reflection, so there are mirrors by which the heart of man is discovered to a man, that is, to himself. Let a man examine his own conscience, his thoughts, affections, and intentions. Let him behold his natural face in the glass of the Divine law, (*Jas.* i. 23,) and he may discern what kind of man he is, and what is his true character, which it will be of great use to every man rightly to know.

Secondly. Of knowing one another by ourselves. For as there is a similitude between the face of a man and the reflection of it in the water, so there is between one man's heart and another's; for God has fashioned men's hearts alike, and in many cases we may judge of others by ourselves, which is one of the foundations on which that rule is built, of doing to others as we would be done by, *Ex.* xxiii. 9. *Nihil est unum uni tam simile, tam par, quam omnes inter nosmet ipsos sumus. Nemo ipse tam similis quam omnes sunt omnium,*—'No one thing is so like another as man is to man. No person is so like himself as each person is to all besides.'—*Cic. de Legib.* lib. 1. One corrupt heart is like another, and so is one sanctified heart, for the former bears the same image of the earthy, the latter the same image of the heavenly.

20 Hell and destruction are never full;
So the eyes of man are never satisfied.

Two things are here said to be insatiable, and they are two things near of kin, death and sin:

First. Death is insatiable. The first death, the second death, both are so. The grave is not clogged with the multitude of dead bodies that are daily thrown into it, but is still an open sepulchre, and cries, Give, give. Hell also has enlarged herself, and still has room for the damned spirits that are committed to that prison. Tophet is deep and large, *Isa.* xxx. 33.

Secondly. Sin is insatiable. "The eyes of man are never satisfied," nor the appetites of the carnal mind towards profit or pleasure; "the eye is not satisfied with seeing," nor is "he that loveth silver satisfied with silver." Men labour for that which surfeits but satisfieth not; nay, it is dissatisfying. Such a perpetual uneasiness have men justly been doomed to ever since our first parents were not satisfied with all the trees of Eden, but they must meddle with the forbidden tree. Those whose eyes are ever towards the Lord in him are satisfied, and shall for ever be so.

21 *As* the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold;
So *is* a man to his praise.

This gives us a touchstone by which we may try ourselves. Silver and gold are tried by putting them into the furnace and fining-pot, so is a man tried by praising him. Let him be extolled and preferred, and then he will shew himself what he is.

First. If a man be made, by the applause that is given him, proud, and conceited, and scornful; if he take the glory to himself which he should transmit to God, as Herod did; if the more he is praised, the more careless he is of what he saith and doth; if he lie in bed till noon because his name is up; thereby it will appear that he is a vain, foolish man, and a man that, though he is praised, has nothing in him truly praiseworthy.

Secondly. If, on the contrary, a man is made by his praise more thankful to God, more respectful to his friends, more watchful against every thing that may blemish his reputation, more diligent to improve himself and do good to others, that he may answer the expectations of his friends from him, by this it will appear that he is a wise and good man. He has a good temper of mind that knows how to pass by evil report and good report, and is still the same, 2 *Cor.* vi. 8.

22 Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar
Among wheat with a pestle,
Yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

Solomon had said, *ch.* xxii. 15, that the foolishness which is bound in the heart of a child may be driven out by the rod of correction, for then the mind is to be moulded, and the vicious habits have not taken root; but here he shews that, if it be not done then, it will be next to impossible to do it afterwards. If the disease be inveterate, there is danger of its being incurable. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin?" Observe,

First. Some are so bad that rough and severe methods must be used with them, after gentle means have been tried in vain; they must be brayed in a mortar. God will take this way with them by his judgments; the magistrate must take this way with them by the rigour of the law. Force must be used with those that will not be ruled by reason, and love, and their own interest.

Secondly. Some are so incorrigibly bad that even those rough and severe methods do not answer the end, their foolishness will not depart from them, so fully are their hearts set in them to do evil. They are often under the rod, and yet not humbled; in the furnace, and yet not refined; but, like Ahaz, trespass yet more, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 22; and what remains, then, but that they be rejected as reprobate silver?

23 Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
And look well to thy herds.
24 For riches *are* not for ever:
And doth the crown *endure* to every generation?
25 The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself,
And herbs of the mountains are gathered.
26 The lambs *are* for thy clothing,
And the goats *are* the price of the field.
27 And *thou shalt have* goats' milk enough for thy food,
For the food of thy household,
And *for* the maintenance for thy maidens.

Here is, First. A command given us to be diligent in our callings. It is directed to husbandmen, and shepherds, and those that deal in cattle, but it is to be extended to all other lawful callings; whatever our business is, within doors or without, we must apply our minds to it. This command intimates, 1. That we ought to have some business to do in this world, and not to live in idleness. 2. We ought rightly and fully to understand our business, and know what we have to do, and not meddle with that which we do not understand. 3. We ought to have an eye to it ourselves, and not turn over all the care of it to others; we should with our own eyes inspect the state of our flocks: it is the master's eye that makes them fat. 4. We must be discreet and considerate in the management of our business; know the state of things, and look well to them, that nothing may be lost, no opportunity let slip, but every thing done in proper time and order, and so as to turn to the best advantage. 5. We must be diligent and take pains; not only sit down and contrive, but up and be doing. Set thy heart to thy herds, as one in care; lay thy hands, lay thy bones, to thy business.

Secondly. The reasons to enforce this command. Observe,

1. The uncertainty of worldly wealth; ver. 24, "Riches are not for ever;" that is, 1st. Other riches are not so durable as these are. Look well to thy flocks and herds, thine estate in the country, and the stock upon that, for these are staple commodities which in a succession will be for ever, whereas riches in trade and merchandise will not be so. The crown itself may perhaps not be so sure to thy family as thy flocks and herds. 2nd. Even these riches will go to decay if they be not well looked after. If a man had an abbey, (as we say,) and be slothful and wasteful, he may make an end of it. Even the crown and the revenues of it, if care be not taken, will suffer damage; nor will it continue to every generation without very good management. Though David had the crown entailed on his family, yet he looked well to his flocks, 1 *Chr.* xxvii. 29, 31.

2. The bounty and liberality of nature, or rather of the God of nature and his providence; ver. 25, "The hay appears." In taking care of his flocks and herds, 1st. There needs no great labour, no ploughing or sowing; the food for them is the spontaneous product of the ground; thou hast nothing to do but turn them into it in the summer, when the grass shews itself, and to gather the herbs of the mountains for them against winter. God has done his part; thou art ungrateful to him, and unjustly refusest to serve his providence, if thou dost not do thine. 2nd. There is an opportunity to be observed and improved; a time when the hay appears. But if thou let slip that time, thy flocks and herds will fare the worse for it. As for ourselves, so for our cattle, we ought, with the ant, to provide meat in summer.

3. The profit of good husbandry in a family. Keep thy sheep, and thy sheep will help to keep thee; thou shalt have food for thy children and servants; goat's milk enough, ver. 27; and enough is as good as a feast. Thou shalt have raiment likewise; the lamb's wool shall be for thy clothing. Thou shalt have money to pay thy rent; the goats thou shalt have to sell shall be the price of thy field; nay, as some understand it, thou shalt become a purchaser, and buy land to leave to thy children, ver. 26. Note, 1st. If we have food, and raiment, and wherewithal to give every body their own, we have enough, and ought to be not only content but thankful. 2nd. Masters of families must provide not only for themselves but for their families, and see that their servants have a fitting maintenance. 3rd. Plain food and plain clothing, if it be but competent, is all we should aim at. Reckon thyself well done to if thou be clothed with homespun cloth, with the fleece of thy own lambs, and fed with goat's milk; let that serve for thy food which serves for the food of thy household, and the maintenance of thy maidens. Be not desirous of dainties far-fetched and dear-bought. 4th. This should encourage us to be careful and industrious about our business, that that will bring in a sufficient maintenance for our families. We shall eat the labour of our hands.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE wicked flee when no man pursueth:
But the righteous are bold as a lion.

See here, 1st. What continual frights they are subject to that go on in wicked ways. Guilt in the conscience makes men a terror to themselves, so that they are ready to flee when none pursues; like one that absconds for debt, who thinks every one he meets a bailiff. Though they pretend to be easy, there are secret fears which haunt them wherever they go, so that they fear where no present or imminent danger is, *Ps.* liii. 5. They that have made God their enemy, and know it, cannot but see the whole creation at war with them, and therefore can have no true enjoyment of themselves, no confidence, no courage, but a fearful looking for of judgment. Sin makes men cowards.

Degeneres animos timor arguit,—
'Fear argues a degenerate soul.'—*Virgil.*
Quos diri conscia facti mens habet attonitos,—
'The consciousness of atrocious crimes astonishes and confounds.'—*Juvenal.*

If they flee when none pursues, what will they do when they shall see God himself pursuing them with his armies? *Job* xx. 24; xv. 24: see *Deu.* xxviii. 25; *Lev.* xxvi. 36.

Secondly. What a holy security and serenity of mind they enjoy that keep conscience void of offence, and so keep themselves in the love of God. "The righteous are bold as a lion," as a young lion. In the greatest dangers they have a God of almighty power to trust to, "therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed." Whatever difficulties they meet with in the way of their duty, they are not daunted by them; "none of those things move me."

Hic murus aheneus esto,
Nil conscire sibi,—
'Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.'—*Horace.*

2 For the transgression of a land many *are* the princes thereof:
But by a man of understanding *and* knowledge the state *thereof* shall be prolonged.

Note, First. National sins bring national disorders, and the disturbance of the public repose. "For the transgression of a land," and a general defection from God and religion to idolatry, profaneness, or immorality, "many are the princes thereof," many at the same time pretending to the sovereignty, and contending for it, by which the people are crumbled into parties and factions, biting and devouring one another; or, many successively in a little time, one

cutting off another, as 1 *Kin.* xvi. 3, &c., or soon cut off by the hand of God, or of a foreign enemy, as 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 5, &c. As the people suffer for the sins of the prince,

Delirant reges plectuntur Achivi,—
'Kings play the madmen, and their people suffer for it,'

so the government sometimes suffers for the sins of the people.

Secondly. Wisdom will prevent or redress these grievances. "By a man," that is, a people, "of understanding," that come again to themselves and their right mind, things are kept in good order, or, if disturbed, brought back to the old channel again. Or, by a prince of understanding and knowledge, a privy-counsellor, or minister of state, that will restrain and suppress the transgression of the land, and take the right methods of healing "the state thereof," the good estate of it "will be prolonged." We cannot imagine what a great deal of service one wise man may do to a nation in a critical juncture.

3 A poor man that oppresseth the poor
Is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

See here, First. How hard-hearted poor people are many times to one another; not only not doing such good offices as they might do one to another, but imposing upon and overreaching one another. Those that know by experience the miseries of poverty, should be compassionate to those who suffer the like, but are inexcusably barbarous if they be injurious to them.

Secondly. How imperious and griping those commonly are that, being indigent and necessitous, get into power. If a prince prefer a poor man, he forgets that ever he was poor; and none shall be so oppressive to the poor as he, nor squeeze them so cruelly. The hungry leech, and the dry sponge, suck most. 'Set a beggar on horseback, and he will ride without mercy.' He "is like a sweeping rain" which washeth away the corn in the ground, and lays and beats out that which is grown, so that it "leaves no food." Princes, therefore, ought not to put those into places of trust who are poor, and in debt, and behindhand in the world, nor any that make it their main business to enrich themselves.

4 They that forsake the law praise the wicked:
But such as keep the law contend with them.

Note, First. Those that praise the wicked make it to appear that they do themselves forsake the law, and go contrary to it, for that curseth and condemneth the wicked. Wicked people will speak well of one another, and so strengthen one another's hands in their wicked ways, hoping thereby to silence the clamours of their own consciences, and to serve the interests of the devil's kingdom, which is not done by any thing so effectually as by keeping vice in reputation.

Secondly. Those that do indeed make conscience of the law of God themselves will in their places vigorously oppose sin, and bear their testimony against it, and do what they can to shame and suppress it; they will reprove the works of darkness, and silence the excuses which are made for those works, and do what they can to bring gross offenders to punishment, that others may hear and fear.

5 Evil men understand not judgment:
But they that seek the LORD understand all *things.*

Note, First. As the prevalency of men's lusts is owing to the darkness of their understandings, so the darkness of their understandings is very much owing to the dominion of their lusts. Men "understand not judgment," discern not between truth and falsehood, right and wrong; they understand not the law of God as the rule either of their duty or of their doom, and, 1. Therefore it is that they are evil men; their wickedness is the effect of their ignorance and error, *Eph.* iv. 18. 2. Therefore they understand not judgment, because they are evil men; their corruptions blind their eyes, and fill them with prejudices, and because they do evil they hate the light. It is just with God also to give them up to strong delusions.

Secondly. As men's seeking the Lord is a good sign that they do understand much, so it is a good means of their understanding more, even of their understanding all things needful for them. They that see God's glory before them as their end, his favour as their felicity, and his word as their rule, and apply themselves to him upon all occasions by prayer, they seek the Lord, and he will give them the spirit of wisdom. If a man do his will, he shall know his doctrine, *Jno.* vii. 17. A good understanding they have, and a better they shall have, that do his commandments, *Ps.* cxi. 10; 1 *Cor.* ii. 12, 15.

6 Better *is* the poor that walketh in his uprightness,
Than *he that is* perverse *in his* ways, though he *be* rich.

Here, First. It is supposed that a man may walk in his uprightness, and yet be poor in this world, may be poor in the world, which is a temptation to dishonesty, and yet may resist the temptation, and continue to walk in his uprightness. Also that a man may be perverse in his ways, injurious to God and man, and yet be rich, and prosper in the world for a while; may be rich, and so lie under great obligations, and have great opportunities to do good, and yet be perverse in his ways, and do a great deal of hurt.

Secondly. It is maintained as a paradox to a blind world, that an honest, godly, poor man, is better than a wicked, ungodly, rich man; has a better character, is in a better condition, has more comfort in himself, and is a greater blessing to the world, and is worthy of much more honour and respect. It is not only certain that his case will be better at death, but it is better in life. When Aristides was by a rich man upbraided with his poverty, he answered, 'Thy riches do thee more hurt than my poverty doth me.'

7 Whoso keepeth the law *is* a wise son: [father.
But he that is a companion of riotous *men* shameth his

Note, First. Religion is true wisdom, and it makes men wise in every relation. He that conscientiously keepeth the law is wise, and he will be particularly a wise son, that is, will carry it discreetly towards his parents, for the law of God teacheth him to do so.

Secondly. Bad company is a great hindrance to religion. Those that are companions of riotous men, that choose such for their companions, and delight in their conversation, they will certainly be drawn from keeping the law of God, and drawn to transgress it, *Ps.* cxix. 115.

Thirdly. Wickedness is not only a reproach to the sinner himself, but to all that are akin to him. He that keeps rakish company, and spends his time and money with them, he not only grieves his parents, but shames them; it turns to their disrepute, as if they had not done their duty to him; they are ashamed that a child of theirs should be scandalous and abusive to their neighbours.

8 He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance,
He shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.

Note, First. That which is ill got, though it may increase much, will not last long. A man may perhaps raise a great estate in a little time by usury and extortion, fraud and oppression of the poor, but it will not continue; he gathers it for himself, but it shall prove to have been gathered for somebody else that he has no kindness for. His estate shall go to decay, and another man's shall be raised out of the ruins of it.

Secondly. Sometimes God in his providence so orders it, that that which one got unjustly another useth charitably. It is strangely turned into the hands of one that will pity the poor, and do good with it, and so cut off the entail of the curse which he brought upon it that got it by deceit and violence. Thus the same Providence that punisheth the cruel, and disables them to do any more hurt, rewards the merciful, and enables them to do so much the more good. To him that hath ten pounds, give the pound which the wicked servant hid in the napkin; for to him that has, and useth it well, more shall be given, *Lu.* xix. 24. Thus the poor are repaid, the charitable are encouraged, and God is glorified.

9 He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law,
Even his prayer *shall be* abomination.

Note, First. It is by the word and prayer that our communion with God is kept up. God speaks to us by his law, and expects we should hear him and heed him; we speak to him by prayer, to which we wait for an answer of peace. How reverent and serious should we be whenever we are hearing from, and speaking to, the Lord of glory!

Secondly. If God's word be not regarded by us, our prayers shall not only not be accepted of God, but they shall be an abomination to him; not only our sacrifices, which were ceremonial appointments, but even our prayers, which are moral duties, and which, when they are put up by the upright, are so much his delight: see *Isa.* i. 11. The sinner, whose prayers God is thus angry at, is one who wilfully and obstinately refuseth to obey God's commandments, who will not so much as give them the hearing, but causeth his ear to decline the law, refuseth when God calls; God will justly refuse him when he calls: see *ch.* i. 24, 28.

10 Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way,
He shall fall himself into his own pit:
But the upright shall have good *things* in possession.

Here is, First. The doom of seducers, that attempt to draw good people, or those that profess to be such, into sin and mischief; that would take a pride in causing "the righteous to go astray in an evil way," in drawing them into a snare, that they may insult over them. They shall not gain their point; it is impossible to deceive the elect, but they shall fall themselves into their own pit, and, having been not only sinners, but tempters, not only unrighteous, but enemies to the righteous, their condemnation will be so much the greater, *Mat.* xxiii. 14, 15.

Secondly. The happiness of the sincere. They shall not only be preserved from the evil way which the wicked would decoy them into, but they "shall have good things," the best things, "in possession," the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, besides what they have in reversion.

11 The rich man *is* wise in his own conceit;
But the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

Note, First. Those that are rich are apt to think themselves wise, because, whatever else they are ignorant of, they know how to get and save; and they that are purse-proud expect all they say should be regarded as an oracle, and a law, and that none should dare to contradict them, but every sheaf bow to theirs. This humour is fed by flatterers, who, because (like Jezebel's prophets) they are fed at their table, cry up their wisdom.

Secondly. Those that are poor often prove themselves wiser than they. A poor man who has taken pains to get wisdom, having no other way (as the rich man has) to get a reputation, he searcheth him out, and makes it to appear he is not such a scholar, nor such a politician as he is taken to be. See how variously God dispenseth his gifts, to some he gives wealth, to others wisdom; and it is easy to say which of these is the best gift, which we should covet most earnestly.

12 When righteous *men* do rejoice, *there is* great glory:
But when the wicked rise, a man is hidden.

Note, First. The comfort of the people of God is the honour of the nation in which they live. There is a great glory dwelling in a land when the righteous do rejoice; that is, when they have their liberty, the free exercise of their religion, and are not persecuted, when the government countenanceth them, and speaks comfortably to them, when they prosper and grow rich, and much more when they are preferred and employed, and have power put into their hands.

Secondly. The advancement of the wicked is the eclipsing of the beauty of a nation. "When the wicked rise" and get head, they make head against all that is sacred, and then "a man is hidden," a good man is thrust into obscurity, is necessitated to abscond for his own safety. Corruptions prevail so generally, that, as in Elijah's time, there seem to be no good men left, the wicked walk so thick on every side.

13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper:
But whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.

Here is, First. The folly of indulging sin, of palliating and excusing it, denying or extenuating it, diminishing it, dissembling it, or throwing the blame of it upon others. "He that" thus "covereth his sins shall not prosper," let him never expect it. He shall not succeed in his endeavour to cover his sin, for it will be discovered sooner or later. "There is nothing hid which shall not be revealed," "a bird of the air shall carry the voice;" murder will out, and so will other sins. He shall not prosper, that is, he shall not obtain the pardon of his sin, nor can he have any true peace of conscience. David owns himself in a constant toss while he covered his sins, *Ps.* xxxii. 3, 4. While the patient conceals his distemper he cannot expect a cure.

Secondly. The benefit of parting with it, both by a penitent confession and a universal reformation. He that confesseth his guilt to God, and is careful not to return to sin again, he shall find mercy with God, and shall have the comfort of it in his own bosom. His conscience shall be eased, and his ruin prevented:

see 1 *Jno.* i. 9; *Jer.* iii. 12, 13. When we set sin before our face, (as David, "My sin is ever before me,") God casts it behind his back.

14 Happy *is* the man that feareth alway:
But he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

Here is, First. The benefit of a holy caution. It sounds strange, but it is very true, "Happy is the man that feareth alway." Most people think, happy they that never fear; but there is a fear which is so far from having torment in it, that it has in it the greatest satisfaction. Happy is the man that always keeps up in his mind a holy awe and reverence of God, his glory, goodness, and government; that is always afraid of offending God, and incurring his displeasure; that keeps conscience tender, and has a dread of the appearances of evil; that is always jealous of himself, and distrustful of his own sufficiency; and lives in expectations of troubles and changes, so that whenever they come they are no surprise to him. He that keeps up such a fear as this will live a life of faith and watchfulness, and therefore happy is he, blessed and holy.

Secondly. The danger of a sinful presumption. "He that hardeneth his heart," that mocketh at fear, and sets God and his judgments at defiance, and receives not the impressions of his word or rod, he "shall fall into mischief;" his presumption will be his ruin, and whatever sin (which is the greatest mischief) he falls into, it is owing to the hardness of his heart.

15 *As* a roaring lion, and a ranging bear;
So is a wicked ruler over the poor people.

It is written indeed, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people;" but if he be a wicked ruler that oppresseth the people, especially the poor people, robbing them of the little they have, and making a prey of them, whatever we may call him, this scripture calls him "a roaring lion, and a ranging bear."

First. In respect of his character. He is brutish, and barbarous, and bloodthirsty; he is rather to be put among the beasts of prey, the wildest and most savage, than to be reckoned of that noble rank of beings whose glory is reason and humanity.

Secondly. In respect of the mischief they do to their subjects. They are dreadful as the roaring lion who makes the forest tremble; they are devouring as a hungry bear; and the more necessitous they are, the more mischief they do, and the more greedy of gain they are.

16 The prince that wanteth understanding *is* also a great oppressor:
But he that hateth covetousness shall prolong *his* days.

Two things are here intimated to be the causes of the maladministration of princes:

First. The love of money, that root of all evil; for hating covetousness here stands opposed to oppression, according to Moses' character of good magistrates, men fearing God and hating covetousness, *Ex.* xviii. 21; not only not being covetous, but hating it, and shaking the hands from holding of bribes. A ruler that is covetous will neither do justly nor love mercy, but the people under him shall be bought and sold.

Secondly. Want of consideration. He that hates covetousness shall prolong his government and peace; shall be happy in the affections of his people, and the blessings of his God. It is as much the interest as duty of princes to reign in righteousness; oppressors, therefore, and tyrants, are the greatest fools in the world; they want understanding, they do not consult their own honour, ease, and safety, but sacrifice all to their ambition of an absolute and arbitrary power. They might be much happier in the hearts of their subjects than in their necks or estates.

17 A man that doeth violence to the blood of *any* person
Shall flee to the pit; let no man stay him.

This agrees with that ancient law, "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," *Gen.* ix. 6, and speaks,

First. The doom of the shedder of blood. He that has committed murder, though he flies for his life, shall be continually haunted with terrors, shall himself flee to the pit, betray himself, and torment himself, like Cain, who when he had killed his brother became a fugitive and a vagabond, and trembled continually.

Secondly. The duty of the avenger of blood. Whether the magistrate, or the next of kin, or whoever are concerned in making inquisition for blood, let them be close and vigorous in the prosecution, and let it not be bought off. They that acquit the murderer, or do any thing to help him off, come in sharers in the guilt of blood, nor can the land be purged from blood, but by the blood of him that shed it, *Num.* xxxv. 33.

18 Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved:
But *he that is* perverse *in his* ways shall fall at once.

Note, First. Those that are honest are always safe. He that acts with sincerity, that speaks as he thinks, has a single eye in every thing at the glory of God, and the good of his brethren; that would not for a world do an unjust thing if he knew it; that in all manner of conversation walks uprightly, he shall be saved hereafter. We find a glorious company of those in whose mouth was found no guile, *Rev.* xiv. 5. They shall be safe now, integrity and uprightness will preserve men, will give them a holy security in the worst of times; for it will preserve their comfort, their reputation, and all their interests; they may be injured, they cannot be hurt.

Secondly. Those that are false and dishonest are never safe. "He that is perverse in his ways," that thinks to secure himself by fraudulent practices, by dissimulation and treachery, or by an estate ill got, he "shall fall," nay, he "shall fall at once," not gradually, and with warning given, but suddenly, without previous notice, for he is least safe when he is most secure. He falls at once, and so has neither time to guard against his ruin nor to provide for it; and, being a surprise upon him, it will be so much the greater terror to him.

19 He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread:
But he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough.

Note, First. Those that are diligent in their callings take the way to live comfortably. "He that tills his land," and attends his shop, and minds his business, whatever it is, he "shall have plenty of bread," of that which is necessary for himself and his family, and with which he may be charitable to the poor; "he shall eat the labour of his hands."

Secondly. Those that are idle, and careless, and company keepers, though they indulge themselves in living (as they think) easily and pleasantly, they take the way to live miserably. "He that hath land, and values himself upon that, but doth not till it, neglects his business, will not take pains, but "follows after vain persons," drinks with them, joins with them in their frolics and vain sports, and idles away his time with them, he "shall have poverty enough," shall be satiated, or replenished with poverty, so the word is; he takes those courses which lead so directly to it, that he seems to court it, and he shall have his belly full of it.

20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings:
But he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.

Here, First. We are directed in the true way to be happy, and that is to be holy and honest. He that is faithful to God and man, shall be blessed of the Lord; and he "shall abound with blessings" of the upper and nether springs. Men shall praise him, and pray for him, and be ready to do him any kindness; he shall abound in doing good, and shall himself be a blessing to the place where he lives. Usefulness shall be the reward of faithfulness, and it is a good reward.

Secondly. We are cautioned against a false and deceitful way to happiness, and that is, right or wrong, raising an estate presently. Say not, that is the way to abound with blessings, for "he that maketh haste to be rich," more haste than good speed, he "shall not be innocent," and if he be not, he shall not be blessed of God, but rather bring a curse upon what he has; nor if he be not innocent, can he long be easy to himself. He shall not be accounted innocent by his neighbours, but shall have their ill-will and ill-word. He doth not say he cannot be innocent, but there is all the probability in the world he will not prove so; he that hasteth with his feet sinneth, stumbleth, falleth. *Sed quæ reverentia legum, quis metus, aut pudor, est unquam properantis avari?*—'What reverence for law, what fear, what shame, was ever indicated by an avaricious man hasting to be rich?'

21 To have respect of persons *is* not good:
For for a piece of bread *that* man will transgress.

Note, First. It is a fundamental error in the administration of justice, and that which cannot but lead men to abundance of transgression, to consider the parties concerned, more than the merits of the cause; so as to favour one because he is a gentleman, a scholar, my countryman, my old acquaintance, has formerly done me a kindness, or may do me one, or is of my party, and persuasion. And to bear hard on the other party, because he is a stranger, a poor man, has done me an ill turn; is or has been my rival, or is not of my mind, or has voted against me. Judgment is perverted when any consideration of this kind is admitted into the scale, any thing but pure right.

Secondly. Those that are partial will be paltry; that have once broken through the bonds of equity, though at first it must be some great bribe, some noble present, that would bias them, yet when they have debauched their consciences, they will at length be so sordid, that for a piece of bread they will give judgment against their consciences; they will rather play at small games than sit out.

22 He that hasteth to be rich *hath* an evil eye,
And considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.

Here again Solomon shews the sin and folly of those that will be rich. They are resolved they will be so, *per fas, per nefas*,—'right or wrong;' they will be so with all speed; they are riding tantivy into an estate.

First. They have no comfort in it, they have an evil eye; that is, they are always grieving at those that have more than they, and always grudging their necessary expenses; because they think the former keeps them from seeming rich, the latter from being so, and between both they must needs be perpetually uneasy.

Secondly. They have no assurance of the continuance of it, and yet take no thought to provide against the loss of it. Poverty shall come upon them, and the riches which they made wings for, that they might fly to them, will make themselves wings to fly from them; but they are secure and improvident, and do not consider this, that while they are making haste to be rich, they are really making haste to be poor, else they would not trust to uncertain riches.

23 He that rebuketh a man
Afterwards shall find more favour
Than he that flattereth with the tongue.

Note, First. Flatterers may please those for a time who, upon second thoughts, will detest and despise them. If ever they come to be convinced of the evil of those sinful courses they were flattered in, and to be ashamed of that pride and vanity which was humoured and gratified by those flatteries, they will hate the fawning flatterers, as having had an ill design upon them, and the fulsome flatteries, as having had an ill effect upon them, and being become nauseous.

Secondly. Reprovers may displease those at first who yet afterwards, when the passion is over, and the bitter physic begins to work well, will love and respect them. He that deals faithfully with his friend, in telling him of his faults, though he may put him into some heat for the present, and perhaps have hard words instead of thanks for his pains, yet afterwards he will not only have the comfort in his own bosom of having done his duty, but he also whom he reproved will acknowledge that it was a kindness; will conceive an opinion of his wisdom and faithfulness, and look upon him as fit to be a friend. He that cries out against his surgeon for hurting him when he is searching his wound, yet will pay him well, and thank him too, when he has cured it.

24 Whoso robbeth his father or his mother,
And saith, *It is* no transgression;
The same *is* the companion of a destroyer.

As Christ shews the absurdity and wickedness of those children who think it is no duty in some cases to maintain their parents, *Mat.* xv. 5, so Solomon here shews the absurdity of those who think it is no sin to rob their parents, either by force or secretly, by wheedling them or threatening them, or by wasting what they have, and (which is no better than robbing them) running into debt, and leaving them to pay it. Now,

First. This is commonly made light of by untoward children; they say, "It is

no transgression," for it will be their own shortly. Their parents can well enough spare it, they have occasion for it, they cannot live as gentlemen upon the allowance their parents give them, which they complain of as too strait; with such excuses as these they endeavour to shift off the conviction. But,

Secondly. How light soever an ungoverned youth makes of it, it is really a very great sin. He that doth it "is the companion of a destroyer," no better than a robber on the highway. What wickedness will he stick at that will rob his own parents?

25 He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: [fat.
But he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made

Note, First. Those make themselves lean, and continually unquiet, that are haughty and quarrelsome; for they are opposed to those that shall be made fat. "He that is of a proud heart," that is conceited of himself, and looks with a contempt upon all about him, that cannot bear either competition or contradiction, he "stirs up strife," makes mischief, and creates disturbance to himself and everybody else.

Secondly. These make themselves fat, and always easy, that live in a continual dependence upon God and his grace. "He that putteth his trust in the Lord," that, instead of struggling for himself, commits his cause to God; he "shall be made fat," he saves the money which others spend upon their pride and contentiousness, he enjoys himself, and has abundant satisfaction in his God, and thus his soul dwells at ease, and he is most likely to have plenty of outward good things. None live so easily, so pleasantly, as those that live by faith.

26 He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool:
But whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

Here is, First. The character of a fool: He trusts to his own heart, to his own wisdom and counsels, his own strength and sufficiency, his own merit and righteousness, and the good opinion he hath of himself. He that doth so is a fool, for he trusts to that not only which is deceitful above all things, *Jer.* xvii. 9, but which has many a time deceived him; this implies that it is the character of a wise man, as before, ver. 25, to put his trust in the Lord, and in his power and promise, and to follow his conduct, *ch.* iii. 5, 6.

Secondly. The comfort of a wise man: He "that walks wisely," that trusts not to his own heart, but is humble, and self-diffident, and goes on in the strength of the Lord God, "he shall be delivered," when the fool that trusts in his own heart shall be destroyed.

27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack:
But he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Here is, First. A promise to the charitable: "He that gives to the poor" shall himself be never the poorer for so doing, he "shall not lack;" if he have but little, and so be in danger of lacking, let him give out of his little, and that will prevent it from coming to nothing. As the bounty of the widow of Sarepta to Elijah, for whom she made a little cake first, saved what she had when it was reduced to a handful of meal. If he have much, let him give much out of it, and that will prevent its going less; he and his shall not want what is given in pious charity. What we gave we have.

Secondly. A threatening to the uncharitable. "He that hideth his eyes," that he may not see the miseries of the poor, nor read their petitions, lest his eye should affect his heart, and extort some relief from him, he "shall have many a curse," both from God and man; and neither causeless, and therefore they shall come. Woful is the condition of that man that has the word of God and the prayers of the poor against him.

28 When the wicked rise, men hide themselves:
But when they perish, the righteous increase.

This is to the same purpose with what we had, ver. 12.

First. When ill men are preferred, that which is good is clouded and run down. When power is put into the hands of the wicked, "men hide themselves;" wise men retire into privacy, and decline public business, not caring to be employed under them. Rich men get out of the way, for fear of being squeezed for what they have; and, which is worst of all, good men abscond, despairing to do good, and fearing to be persecuted and ill-treated.

Secondly. When ill men are displaced, degraded, and their power taken from them, then that which is good revives again, then "the righteous increase;" for "when they perish," good men will be put in their room that will by their example and interest countenance religion and righteousness. It is well with a land when the number of good people increaseth in it; and it is therefore the policy of all princes, states, and potentates to encourage them, and to take special care of the good education of youth.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HE, that being often reproved hardeneth *his* neck,
Shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Here, First. The obstinacy of many wicked people in a wicked way is to be greatly lamented. They are often reproved by parents and friends, by magistrates and ministers, by the providence of God, and by their own consciences; have had their sins set in order before them, and fair warning given them of the consequences of them, but all in vain; they harden their necks, perhaps they fling away and will not so much as give the reproof a patient hearing, or if they do, yet they go on in the sins for which they are reproved; they will not bow their necks to the yoke, but are children of Belial, they refuse reproof, *ch.* x. 17; despise it, *ch.* v. 12; hate it, *ch.* xii. 1.

Secondly. The issue of this obstinacy is to be greatly dreaded. They that go on in sin in despite of admonition, they shall be destroyed; those that will not be reformed must expect to be ruined; if the rods answer not the end, expect the axes. They "shall be suddenly destroyed" in the midst of their security, "and without remedy;" they have sinned against the preventing remedy, and therefore let them not expect any recovering remedy. Hell is remediless destruction; they "shall be destroyed," 'and no healing,' so the word is. If God wounds, who can heal?

2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice:
But when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.

This is what was said before, *ch.* xxviii. 12, 28.

First. The people will have cause to rejoice or mourn according as their rulers are righteous or wicked; for, if the righteous be in authority, sin will be punished and restrained, religion and virtue will be supported, and kept in reputation. But if the wicked get power in their hands wickedness will abound religion and religious people will be prosecuted, and so the ends of government will be perverted.

Secondly. The people will rejoice or mourn according as their rulers are righteous or wicked. Such a conviction are even the common people under of the excellency of virtue and religion, that they will rejoice when they see it preferred and countenanced; and, on the contrary, let men have never so much honour and power, if they be wicked, and vicious, and use it ill, they make themselves contemptible, and base before all the people, as those priests, *Mal.* ii. 9. And subjects will think themselves miserable under such a government.

3 Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father:
But he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth *his* substance.

Both the parts of this verse repeat what had been often said, but, comparing them together, the sense of them will be enlarged from each other.

First. Be it observed, to the honour of a virtuous young man, that he loves wisdom; he is a philosopher, (for that signifies a lover of wisdom,) for religion is the best philosophy. He avoids ill company, and especially the company of lewd women; hereby he rejoiceth his parents, and hath the satisfaction of being a comfort to them, and increaseth his estate, and is like to live comfortably.

Secondly. Be it observed, to the reproach of a vicious young man, that he hates wisdom; he keeps company with scandalous women, that will be his ruin, both soul and body. He grieves his parents, and, like the prodigal son, devours their living with harlots. Nothing will beggar men sooner than the lusts of uncleanness, and the best preservative from those ruinous lusts is wisdom.

4 The king by judgment establisheth the land:
But he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it.

Here is, First. The happiness of a people under a good government. The care and business of a prince should be to establish the land, to maintain its fundamental laws, to settle the minds of his subjects, and make them easy, to secure their liberties and properties from hostilities, and for posterity, and to set in order the things that are wanting. This he must do by judgment, by wise counsels, and by the steady administration of justice, without respect of persons, which will have these good effects.

Secondly. The misery of a people under a bad government. 'A man of oblations,' so it is in the margin, overthrows the land, a man that is either sacrilegious, or superstitious, or invades the priest's office, as Saul and Uzziah; or, a man that aims at nothing but getting money, and will for a good bribe connive at the most guilty, and in hope of one prosecute the innocent. Such governors as these will ruin a country.

5 A man that flattereth his neighbour
Spreadeth a net for his feet.

Those may be said to flatter their neighbours, who commend and applaud that good in them, the good they do, or the good they have, which really either is not, or is not such as they represent it, and who profess that esteem and affection for them which really they have not; these spread a net for their feet.

First. For their neighbour's feet whom they flatter. They have an ill design in it, they would not speak them thus fair but that they hope to make a hand of them; and it is therefore wisdom to suspect those who flatter us, that they are secretly laying a snare for us, and stand on our guard accordingly. Or, it has an ill effect on those who are flattered, it puffs them up with pride, and makes them conceited and confident of themselves, and so proves a net that entangles them in sin.

Secondly. For their own feet, so some understand it. He that flatters others, in expectation they will return his compliments, and flatter him, doth but make himself ridiculous and odious, even to those he flatters.

6 In the transgression of an evil man *there is* a snare:
But the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

Here is, First. The peril of a sinful way. There is not only a punishment at the end of it, but a snare in it; one sin is a temptation to another, and there are troubles which as a snare come suddenly upon evil men, in the midst of their transgressions; nay, their transgression itself often involves them in vexations, their sin is their punishment, and they are "holden in the cords of their own iniquity," *ch.* v. 22.

Secondly. The pleasantness of the way of holiness. The snare that is in the transgression of evil men spoils all their mirth; but righteous men are kept from those snares, or delivered out of them, they walk at liberty, walk in safety, and therefore they sing and rejoice. They that make God their chief joy have him for their exceeding joy; and it is their own fault if they do not rejoice evermore. If there be any true joy on this side heaven, doubtless they have it whose conversation is in heaven.

7 The righteous considereth the cause of the poor:
But the wicked regardeth not to know *it*.

It is pity but that every one that sues *sub forma pauperis*,—'as a pauper,' should have an honest cause, (they are of all other inexcusable, if they have not,) because the Scripture has so well provided, that it should have a fair hearing; and that the judge himself should be of counsel, as for the prisoner so for the pauper.

First. It is here made the character of a righteous judge, that he "considereth the cause of the poor." It is every man's duty to consider the poor, *Ps.* xli. 1; but the judgment of the poor is to be considered by those that sit in judgment. They must take as much pains to find out the right in a poor man's cause as in a rich man's. Sense of justice must make both judge and advocate as solicitous and industrious in the poor man's cause as if they hoped for the greatest advantage.

Secondly. It is made the character of a wicked man, that because it is a poor man's cause, which there is nothing to be got by, he "regardeth not to know it," in the true state of it, for he cares not which way it goes, right or wrong: see *Job* xxix. 16.

8 Scornful men bring a city into a snare:
But wise *men* turn away wrath.

See here, First. Who are the men that are dangerous to the public; scornful men. When such are employed in the business of the state they do things with precipitation, because they scorn to deliberate, and will not take time for consideration and consultation; they do things illegal and unjustifiable, because they scorn to be hampered by laws and constitutions; break their faith, because they scorn to be bound by their word; provoke the people, because they scorn to please them. Thus they "bring a city into a snare" by their ill conduct, or, as the margin reads it, they 'set a city on fire;' they sow discord among the citizens, and run them into confusion. Those are scornful men that mock at religion, the obligations of conscience, and the fears of another world, and every thing that is sacred and serious. Such men are the plagues of their generation; they bring God's judgments upon a land, set men together by the ears, and so bring all to confusion.

Secondly. Who are the men that are the blessings of a land. The wise men who, by promoting religion, which is true wisdom, turn away the wrath of God; and who, by prudent counsels, reconcile contending parties, and prevent the mischievous consequences of divisions. Proud and foolish men kindle the fires which wise and good men must extinguish.

9 *If* a wise man contendeth with a foolish man,
Whether he rage or laugh, *there is* no rest.

A wise man is here advised not to set his wit to a fool's; not to dispute with him, or by contending with him to think either of fastening reason upon him, or gaining right from him. If a wise man contend with a wise man he may hope to be understood, and, as far as he has reason and equity on his side, to carry his point, at least to bring the controversy to a head, and issue it amicably; but if he contend with a foolish man there is no rest, he will see no end of it, nor will he have any satisfaction in it, but must expect to be always uneasy.

First. Whether the foolish man he contends with rage or laugh, whether he take heinously, or take scornfully, what is said to him; whether he rail at it, or mock at it, one of the two he will do, and so there will be no rest. However it is given it will be ill taken, and the wisest man must expect to be either scolded or ridiculed, if he contend with a fool. He that fights with a dunghill, whether he be conqueror or conquered, is sure to be ill dirtied.

Secondly. Whether the wise man himself rage or laugh, whether he takes the serious or the jocular way of dealing with the fool, whether he be severe or pleasant with him, whether he come with a rod, or with the spirit of meekness, (1 *Cor.* iv. 21,) it is all alike, no good is done. "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented."

10 The bloodthirsty hate the upright:
But the just seek his soul.

Note, First. Ill men hate their best friends. "The bloodthirsty," all the seed of the old serpent, who was a murderer from the beginning, and inherit his enmity against the seed of the woman, they "hate the upright," they seek the ruin of good men, because they condemn the wicked world, and witness against it. Christ told his disciples they should be hated of all men. Bloody men do especially hate upright magistrates, that would restrain and reform them, and put the laws in execution against them, and so really do them a kindness.

Secondly. Good men love their worst enemies. The just, whom the bloody hate, seek their soul, pray for their conversion, and would gladly do any thing for their salvation. This Christ taught us: "Father, forgive them." "The just seek his soul;" that is, the soul of the upright, whom the bloody hate, so it is commonly understood. Seek to protect it from violence, and save it from, or avenge it at, the hands of the bloodthirsty.

11 A fool uttereth all his mind:
But a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards.

Note, First. It is a piece of weakness to be open. He is "a fool" that "uttereth all his mind," that tells every thing he knows, and hath in his mouth presently whatever he has in his thoughts, and can keep no counsel; that, whatever is started in discourse, shoots his bolt presently; that when he is provoked will say any thing that comes uppermost, whoever is reflected upon by it; that when he is to speak of any business will say all he thinks, and yet never thinks he saith enough; whether choice or refuse, corn or chaff, pertinent or impertinent, you shall have it all.

Secondly. It is a piece of wisdom to be upon the reserve. A wise man will not utter all his mind presently, but will take time for a second thought, or reserve the present thought for a fitter time, when it will be more pertinent and likely to answer his intention; will not deliver himself in a continued speech, or starched discourse, but with pauses, that he may hear what is to be objected, and answer it. *Non minus interdum oratorium est tacere quam dicere*, —'True oratory requires an occasional pause.'—*Plin. Ep.* vii. 6.

12 If a ruler hearken to lies,
All his servants *are* wicked.

Note, First. It is a great sin in any, especially in rulers, to "hearken to lies;" for thereby they not only give a wrong judgment themselves of persons and things, according to the lies they give credit to, but they encourage others to give them wrong informations. Lies will be told to those that will hearken to them; but the receiver in this case is as bad as the thief.

Secondly. Those that do so will have "all their servants wicked." All their servants will appear wicked, for they will have lies told of them; and they will be wicked, for they will tell lies to them. All that have their ear will fill their ear with slanders, and false characters and representations; and so, if princes as well as people will be deceived, they shall be deceived; and, instead of devolving the guilt of their own false judgments upon their servants that misinformed them, they must share in their servants' guilt, and on them will much of the blame lie for encouraging such misinformations, and giving countenance and ear to them.

13 The poor and the deceitful man meet together:
The LORD lighteneth both their eyes.

This shews how wisely the great God serves the designs of his providence by persons of very different tempers, capacities, and conditions in the world; even,

First By those that are contrary the one to the other. Some are poor and forced to borrow, others are rich, have a great deal of the mammon of unrighteousness, deceitful riches they are called, and they are creditors, or usurers, as it is in the margin. Some are poor, and honest, and laborious; others rich, slothful, and deceitful; they meet together in the business of this world, and have dealings with one another, and "the Lord enlighteneth both their eyes;" he causeth his sun to shine upon both, and gives them both the comforts of this life; to some of both sorts he gives his grace. He enlightens the eyes of the poor by giving them patience; and of the deceitful by giving them repentance, as Zaccheus.

Secondly. By those that we think could best be spared. The poor and the deceitful we are ready to look upon as blemishes of providence, but God makes even them to serve the beauty of providence; he has wise ends not only in leaving the poor always with us, but in permitting "the deceived and the deceiver," for both "are his," *Job* xii. 16, and turn to his praise.

14 The king that faithfully judgeth the poor,
His throne shall be established for ever.

Here is, First. The duty of magistrates; and that is to judge faithfully between man and man, and to determine all causes brought before them according to truth and equity; particularly to take care of the poor; not to countenance them in an unjust cause for the sake of their poverty, *Ex.* xxiii. 3, but to see that their poverty do not turn to their prejudice if they have a just cause. The rich will look to themselves, but the poor and needy the prince must defend, *Ps.* lxxxii. 3; and plead for, *ch.* xxxi. 9.

Secondly. The happiness of those magistrates that do their duty; "Their throne" of honour, their tribunal of judgment, "shall be established for ever." This will secure to them the favour of God, and strengthen their interest in the affections of their people, both which will be the establishment of their power, and help to transmit it to posterity, and perpetuate it in the family.

15 The rod and reproof give wisdom:
But a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame.

Parents, in educating their children, must consider,

First. The benefit of due correction. They must not only tell their children what is good and evil, but they must chide them and correct them too, if need be, when they either neglect that which is good or do that which is evil. If a reproof will serve without the rod it is well; but the rod must never be used without a rational and grave reproof; and then, though it may be a present uneasiness both to the father and to the child, yet it will give wisdom. *Vexatio dat intellectum*,—'vexation sharpens the intellect.' The child will take warning, and so get wisdom.

Secondly. The mischief of undue indulgence. A child that is not restrained or reproved, but is left to himself, as Adonijah was, to follow his own inclinations, he may do well if he will, but if he take ill courses nobody will hinder him; it is a thousand to one he proves a disgrace to his family, and brings his mother that fondled him, and humoured him in his licentiousness, to shame, to poverty, to reproach, and perhaps will himself be abusive to her, and give her ill language.

16 When the wicked are multiplied, transgression increaseth:
But the righteous shall see their fall.

Note, First. The more sinners there are the more sin there is. When the wicked, being countenanced by authority, grow numerous, and walk on every side, no marvel if transgression increaseth; as a plague in the country is said to increase when still more and more are infected with it. Transgression grows more impudent and bold, more imperious and threatening, when there are many to keep it in countenance. In the old world, when men began to multiply, they began to degenerate, and corrupt themselves and one another.

Secondly. The more sin there is the nearer is the ruin threatened. Let not the righteous have their faith and hope shocked by the increase of sin and sinners, let them not say they have cleansed their hands in vain, or that God has forsaken the earth, but wait with patience; the transgressors shall fall. The measure of their iniquity will be full, and then they shall fall from their dignity and power, and fall into disgrace and destruction, and the righteous shall have the satisfaction of seeing their fall, *Ps.* xxxvii. 34; perhaps in this world, however in the judgment of the great day, when the fall of God's implacable enemies will be the joy and triumph of glorified saints: see *Isa.* lxvi. 24; *Gen.* xix. 28.

17 Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest;
Yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Note, First. It is a very happy thing when children prove the comfort of their parents. Good children are so; they give them rest, make them easy, and free from the many cares they have had concerning them, yea, they give delight unto their souls. It is a pleasure to parents which none know but they that are blessed with it, to see the happy fruit of the good education they have given their children, and to have a prospect of their well-doing for both worlds; it gives delight proportionable to the many thoughts of heart that have been concerning them.

Secondly. In order to this, children must be trained up under a strict discipline, and not suffered to do what they will, and to go without rebuke when they do amiss. The foolishness bound up in their hearts must by correction be driven out when they are young, or it will break out, to their own and their parents' shame, when they are grown up.

18 Where *there is* no vision, the people perish:
But he that keepeth the law, happy *is* he.

See here, First. The misery of the people that want a settled ministry. "Where there is no vision," no prophets to expound the law, no priests or Levites to teach the good knowledge of the Lord, no means of grace, the word of the Lord is scarce, there is no open vision, 1 *Sam.* iii. 1; where it is so, "the people perish." The word has many significations, which will any of them suit well enough. 1. The people are made naked, stripped of their ornaments, and so exposed to shame; stripped of their armour, and so exposed to danger. How bare doth a place look without Bibles and ministers, and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls! 2. The people rebel not only against God, but against their prince. Good preaching would make people good subjects, but for want of it they are turbulent and factious, and despise dominion, because they know no better. 3. The people are idle; or, they play, as the scholars are apt to do when the master is absent. They do nothing to any good purpose, but stand all the day idle and sporting in the market-place, for want of instruc-

tion what to do, and how to do it. 4. They are scattered as sheep having no shepherd; for want of the masters of assemblies to call them and keep them together, *Mar.* vi. 34. They are scattered from God and their duty by apostacies; from one another by divisions. God is provoked to scatter them by his judgments, 2 *Chr.* xv. 3, 5. 5. They perish; they "are destroyed for lack of knowledge," *Hos.* iv. 6. See what reason we have to be thankful to God for the plenty of open vision which we enjoy.

Secondly. The felicity of a people that has not only a settled but a successful ministry among them. The people that heareth and keepeth the law, among whom religion is uppermost, happy is that people, and every particular person among them. It is not having the law, but obeying it, and living up to it, that will entitle us to blessedness.

19 A servant will not be corrected by words:
For though he understand he will not answer.

Here is the description of an unprofitable, slothful, wicked servant; a slave that serves not for conscience or love, but purely for fear. Let those that have such servants put on patience to bear the vexation, and not disturb themselves at it. See their character.

First. No rational words will work upon them; they will not be corrected and reformed, not brought to their business, nor cured of their idleness and laziness, by fair means, no, nor by foul words. Even the most gentle master will be forced to use severity with them; no reason will serve their turn, for they are unreasonable.

Secondly. No rational words will be got from them; but they are dogged and sullen, and though they understand the questions you ask them they will not give you an answer; though you make it never so plain to them what you expect from them, they will not promise you to mend what is amiss, nor to mind their business. See the folly of such servants, whose mouth by their silence calleth for strokes; they might be corrected by words, and save blows, but they will not.

20 Seest thou a man *that is* hasty in his words?
There is more hope of a fool than of him.

Solomon here shews that there is little hopes of bringing a man to wisdom that is hasty. Either,

First. Through rashness and inconsideration: "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his matters;" that is of a light, desultory wit; that seems to take a thing quick, but takes it by the halves; gallops over a book or science, but takes no time to digest it; no time to pause or muse upon a business; there is more hopes of making a scholar and a wise man of one that is dull and heavy, and slow in his studies, than of one that hath such a mercurial genius, and cannot fix.

Secondly. Through pride and conceitedness: "Seest thou a man" that is forward to speak to every matter that is started, and affects to speak first to it to open it, and speak last to it to give judgment upon it, as if he were an oracle, "there is more hope of a" modest "fool" who is sensible of his folly, than of such a self-conceited one.

21 He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child
Shall have him become *his* son at the length.

Note, First. It is an imprudent thing in a master to be too fond of a servant; to advance him too fast, and admit him to be too familiar with him; to suffer him to be over nice and curious in his diet, and clothing, and lodging, and so to bring him up delicately because he is a favourite and a pretty servant. Remember he is a servant, and by being thus indulged will be spoiled for any other place. Servants must endure hardness.

Secondly. It is an ungrateful thing in a servant, but what is very common, to carry himself insolently because he has been used tenderly. The humble prodigal thinks himself unworthy to be called a son, and is content to be a servant; the pampered slave thinks himself too good to be called a servant, and will be a son at the length, will take his ease and liberty, will be hail fellow with his master, and perhaps pretend to the inheritance. Let masters give their servants that which is equal and fit for them, and neither more nor less. This is very applicable to the body, which is a servant to the soul. Those that delicately bring up the body, that humour it, and are over tender of it, it will at length forget its place, and become a son, a master, and a perfect tyrant.

22 An angry man stirreth up strife,
And a furious man aboundeth in transgression.

See here the mischief that flows from an angry, passionate, furious disposition.

First. It makes men provoking to one another. "An angry man stirreth up strife," is troublesome and quarrelsome in the family, in the neighbourhood, blows the coals, and even forceth those to fall out with him that would live peaceably and quietly by him.

Secondly. It makes men provoking to God. "A furious man," that is wedded to his humours and passions, cannot but "abound in transgressions." That is a sin that is the cause of many sins; it not only hinders men from calling upon God's name, but it occasions their swearing and cursing, and profaning God's name.

23 A man's pride shall bring him low:
But honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

This agrees with what Christ said more than once,

First. That "those who exalt themselves shall be abased." They that think to gain respect by lifting up themselves above their rank, by looking high, talking big, appearing fine, and applauding themselves, will, on the contrary, expose themselves to contempt, lose their reputation, and provoke God by humbling providences to bring them down and lay them low.

Secondly. That "those who humble themselves shall be exalted," and shall be established in their dignity. "Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit;" their humility is their honour, and that shall make them truly and safely great, and recommend them to the esteem of all that are wise and good.

24 Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul:
He heareth cursing, and bewrayeth *it* not.

See here what sin and ruin they involve themselves in who are drawn away by the enticement of sinners.

First. They incur a great deal of guilt. He doth so that goes partner with such as rob and defraud, and casts in his lot among them, *ch.* i. 11, &c.; the receiver is as bad as the thief. And being drawn in to join with him in the commission of the sin, he cannot escape joining with him in the concealment of it, though it be with the most horrid perjuries and execrations. They hear cursing, when they are sworn to tell the whole truth, but they will not confess.

Secondly. They hasten to utter ruin. They even hate their own souls, for they wilfully do that which will be the inevitable destruction of them. See the absurdities sinners are guilty of,—they love death, than which nothing more dreadful, and hate their own souls, than which nothing more dear.

25 The fear of man bringeth a snare:
But whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

Here, First. We are cautioned not to dread the power of man; neither the power of a prince, nor the power of the multitude. Both are formidable enough, but the slavish fear of either brings a snare; that is, exposeth men to many insults, some take a pride in terrifying the timorous; or rather, exposeth men to many temptations. Abraham, for fear of man, denied his wife, and Peter his Master, and many a one his God and religion. We must not baulk duty or commit sin, to avoid the wrath of man, nor, though we see it coming upon us, be disquieted with fear, *Dan.* iii. 16; *Ps.* cxviii. 6; he must himself die, *Isa.* li. 12, and can but kill our body, *Lu.* xii. 5.

Secondly. We are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, which would keep us from all that fear of man which hath either torment or temptation in it. "Whoso putteth his trust in the Lord," for protection and supply in the way of duty, he shall be set on high, above the power of man, and above the fear of that power. A holy confidence in God makes a man both great and easy, and enables him to look with a gracious contempt upon the most formidable designs of hell and earth against him. If God be my salvation, "I will trust and not be afraid."

26 Many seek the ruler's favour;
But *every* man's judgment *cometh* from the LORD.

See here, First. What is the common course men take to advance and enrich themselves, and make themselves great. They "seek the ruler's favour," and, as if all their judgment did proceed from him, to him they make all their court. Solomon was himself a ruler, and knew with what sedulity men made their application to him, some on one errand, others on another, but all for his favour. It is the way of the world to make an interest with great men, and expect much from the smiles of second causes, which yet are uncertain, and frequently disappoint them. Many take a great deal of pains in seeking the ruler's favour, and yet cannot have it. Many have it for a little while, but they cannot keep themselves in it; by some little turn or other they are brought under his displeasure. Many have it and keep it, and yet it doth not answer their expectation; they cannot make that hand of it that they promised themselves they should. Haman had the ruler's favour, and yet it availed him nothing.

Secondly. What is the wisest course men can take to be happy? Let them look up to God, and seek the favour of the Ruler of rulers; for "every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord." It is not with us as the ruler will, his favour cannot make us happy, his frowns cannot make us miserable, but it is as God will; every creature is that to us that God makes it to be, no more, and no other. He is the First Cause, on which all second causes depend. If he help not, they cannot, 2 *Kin.* vi. 27; *Job* xxxiv. 29.

27 An unjust man *is* an abomination to the just:
And *he that is* upright in the way *is* abomination to the wicked.

This speaks not only the innate contrariety that there is between virtue and vice, as between light and darkness, fire and water, but the old enmity that has always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, *Gen.* iii. 15.

First. All that are sanctified have a rooted antipathy to wickedness and wicked people. They have a good-will to the souls of all, (God hath so, and would have none perish,) but they hate the ways and practices of those that are impious towards God and injurious towards men; they cannot hear of them, or speak of them, without a holy indignation; they loathe the society of the ungodly and unjust, and dread the thought of giving them any countenance; but would do all they could to bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end. Thus an unjust man makes himself odious to the just, and it is one part of his present shame and punishment that good men cannot endure him.

Secondly. All that are unsanctified have a like rooted antipathy to godliness and godly people. "He that is upright in the way," that makes conscience of what he saith and doth, "is abomination to the wicked," whose wickedness is restrained perhaps and suppressed, or, however, shamed and condemned, by the uprightness of the upright. Thus Cain did, who was of his father the devil. And this is not only the wickedness of the wicked, that they hate those whom God loves, but their misery too, that they hate those whom they shall shortly see in everlasting bliss and honour, and who "shall have dominion over them in the morning," *Ps.* xlix. 14.

CHAPTER XXX.

This and the following chapter are an appendix to Solomon's proverbs; but they are both expressly called prophecies in the first verses of both, by which it appears that the penmen of them, whoever they were, were Divinely inspired. This chapter was penned by one that bears the name of Agur Ben Jakeh. What tribe he was of, or when he lived, we are not told. What he wrote, being indited by the Holy Ghost, is here kept upon record. We have here, I. His confession of faith, ver. 1—6. II. His prayer, ver. 7—9. III. A caution against wronging servants, ver. 10. IV. Four wicked generations, ver. 11—14. V. Four things insatiable, ver. 15, 16; to which is added fair warning to undutiful children, ver. 17. VI. Four things unsearchable, ver. 18—20. VII. Four things intolerable, ver. 21—23. VIII. Four things little and wise, ver. 24—28. IX. Four things stately, ver. 29—33.

THE words of Agur the son of Jakeh,
Even the prophecy: the man spake unto Ithiel,
Even unto Ithiel and Ucal,
2 Surely I *am* more brutish than *any* man,
And have not the understanding of a man.
3 I neither learned wisdom,

Nor have the knowledge of the holy.
4 Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended?
Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?
Who hath bound the waters in a garment?
Who hath established all the ends of the earth?
What *is* his name, and what *is* his son's name, if thou
5 Every word of God *is* pure: [canst tell?
He *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.
6 Add thou not unto his words,
Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

Some make Agur to be not the name of this author, but his character. He was a collector, so it signifies, a gatherer, one that did not compose things himself, but collected the wise sayings and observations of others; made abstracts of others' writings; which some think is the reason why he saith, ver. 3, I have not learned wisdom myself, but have been a scribe, or amanuensis, to other wise and learned men. Note, We must not bury our talent, though it be but one; but, as we have received the gift, so minister the same, if it be but to collect what others have written. But we rather suppose it to be his name, which, no doubt, was well-known then, though not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture.

Ithiel and Ucal are mentioned, either, 1. As the names of his pupils, whom he instructed, or who consulted him as an oracle, having a great opinion of his wisdom and goodness. Probably they wrote from him what he dictated, as Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah, and by their means it was preserved, and they were ready to attest it to be his, for it was spoken to them; they were two witnesses of it. Or, 2. As the subject of his discourse. Ithiel signifies 'God with me,' the application of Immanuel, "God with us." The Word calls him "God with us;" faith appropriates this, and calls him 'God with me,' who loved me, and gave himself for me, and into union and communion with whom I am admitted. Ucal signifies 'the mighty one;' for it is upon One that is mighty that help is laid for us. Many good interpreters apply this, therefore, to the Messiah, for to him all the prophecies bare witness, and why not this then? It is what Agur spake concerning Ithiel, even concerning Ithiel (that is the name on which the stress is laid) and Ucal,—The mighty God, *Isa.* ix. 6, with us, *Isa.* vii. 14.

Three things the prophet here aims at:

First. To abase himself. Before he makes confession of his faith he makes confession of his folly, and the weakness and deficiency of reason, which makes it so necessary that we be guided and governed by faith. Before he speaks concerning the Saviour, he speaks of himself as needing a Saviour, and as nothing without him. We must go out of ourselves before we go into Jesus Christ.

1. He speaks of himself as wanting a righteousness, and having done foolishly, very foolishly. When he reflects upon himself he owns, "Surely I am more brutish than any man;" "Every man is become brutish," *Jer.* x. 14. But he that knows his own heart knows so much more evil by himself than he doth by any other, that he cries out, "Surely" I cannot but think that "I am more brutish than any man;" sure no man has such a corrupt, deceitful heart as I have. I have acted as one that has not the understanding of Adam, as one that is wretchedly degenerated from the knowledge and righteousness in which man was at first created; nay, I have not the common sense and reason of a man, else I had not done as I have done. Agur, when he was applied to by others as wiser than most, acknowledged himself more foolish than any. Whatever high opinion others may have of us, it becomes us to have low thoughts of ourselves.

2. He speaks of himself as wanting a revelation to guide him in the ways of truth and wisdom. He owns, ver. 3, "I neither learned wisdom" by any power of my own, the depths of it cannot be fathomed by my line and plummet, "nor know I the knowledge of the holy ones," the angels, our first parents in innocency, nor of the holy things of God; I can get no insight into them, nor make any judgment of them farther than God is pleased to make them known to me. The natural man, the natural powers, perceive not, nay, they receive not, the things of the Spirit of God. Some suppose Agur to be asked, as Apollo's oracle was of old, 'Who was the wisest man?' answered, 'He that is sensible of his own ignorance,' especially in Divine things. *Hoc tantum scio, me nihil scire*,—'All that I know is, that I know nothing.'

Secondly. To advance Jesus Christ, and the Father in him; ver. 4, "Who hath ascended up into heaven," &c.

1. Some understand this of God and of his works, which are both incomparable and unsearchable. He challengeth all mankind to give an account of the heavens above, of the winds, the waters, the earth: Who can pretend to have ascended up to heaven, to take a view of the orbs above, and then to have descended to give us a description of them? Who can pretend to have had the command of the winds, to have grasped them in his hand, and managed them as God doth, or to have bound the waves of the sea with a swaddling band, as God has done? Who hath established the ends of the earth, or can describe the strength of its foundations, or extent of its limits. Tell me what is the man's name who can undertake to vie with God, or to be of his cabinet council; or, if he be dead, what is his name to whom he has bequeathed this great secret?

2. Others refer it to Christ, to Ithiel, and Ucal, the Son of God; for it is the son's name as well as the father's that is here inquired after, and a challenge given to any to compare with him. We now must exalt Christ as one revealed; they then magnified him as one concealed, as one they had heard something of, but had very dark and defective ideas of; "We have heard the fame of him with our ears," but cannot describe him, *Job* xxviii. 22. Certainly it is God that has "gathered the winds in his fists," and "bound the waters as in a garment." But, "What is his name?" It is "I am that I am," *Ex.* iii. 14, a name to be adored, not to be understood. "What is his Son's name," by whom he doth all these things? The Old Testament saints expected the Messiah to be the Son of the blessed, and he is here spoken of as a person distinct from the Father, but his name as yet secret. Note, The great Redeemer, in the glories of his providence and grace, can neither be paralleled nor found out to perfection. 1st. The glories of the kingdom of his grace are unsearchable and unparalleled; for who but he hath ascended into heaven and descended? Who but he is perfectly acquainted with both worlds, and has himself a free correspondence with both, and is therefore fit to settle a correspondence between them as Mediator, as Jacob's ladder? He was in heaven, in the Father's bosom, *Jno.* i. 1, 18; thence he descended to take our nature upon him, and never was there such condescension. And in that nature he again ascended, *Eph.* iv. 9, to receive the promised glories of his exalted state; and who but he has done this? *Rom.* x. 5. 2nd. The glories of the kingdom of his providence are likewise unsearchable and unparalleled. The same that reconciles heaven and earth was the Creator of both, and governs and disposeth of all. The three lower elements of air, water, and earth, he here instanceth in his government of. *First.* The motions of the air are of his directing. Satan pretends to be the prince of the power of the air; but even there Christ has all power, he rebuked the winds, and they obeyed him. *Secondly.* The bounds of the water are of his appointing; he binds them as in a garment; "Hitherto they shall come, and no farther," *Job* xxxviii. 9—11. *Thirdly.* The foundations of the earth are of his establishing; he founded it at first, he upholds it still. If Christ had not interposed, the foundations of the earth had sunk under the load of the curse upon the ground for man's sin. Who and what is the mighty He that doth all this? We cannot find out God, nor the Son of God, unto perfection. Oh the depth of that knowledge!

Thirdly. To assure us of the truth of the word of God, and to recommend it to us, ver. 5, 6. Agur's pupils expect to be instructed by him in the things of God; Alas! saith he, I cannot undertake to instruct you, go to the word of God; see what he hath there revealed of himself, and of his mind and will; you need know no more than what that will teach you, and that you may rely upon as sure and sufficient. "Every word of God is pure;" there is not the least mixture of falsehood and corruption in it. The words of men are to be heard and read with jealousy, and with allowance; but there is not the least ground to suspect any deficiency in the word of God; it is "as silver purified seven times," *Ps.* xii. 6; without the least dross or alloy. "Thy word is very pure," *Ps.* cxix. 140.

1. It is sure, and therefore we may trust to it, and venture our souls upon it. God in his word, God in his promise, is a shield, a sure protection to all them that put themselves under his protection, and put their trust in him. The word of God, applied by faith, will make us easy in the midst of the greatest dangers, *Ps.* xlvi. 1, 2.

2. It is sufficient, and therefore we may not add to it; ver. 6, "Add thou not unto his words," because they are pure and perfect. This forbids not only the advancing of any thing in contradiction to the word of God, but in competition with it. Though it be under the plausible pretence of explaining it, yet if it pretend to be of equal authority with it, it is adding to his words, which is not only a reproach to them as insufficient, but opens a door to all manner of errors and corruptions; for, that one absurdity granted, that the word of any man or company of men is to be received with the same faith and veneration as the word of God, a thousand follow. We must be content with what God has thought fit to make known to us of his mind, and not covet to be wise above what is written. For, 1st. God will resent it as a heinous affront; he will reprove thee, will reckon with thee as a traitor against his crown and dignity, and lay thee under the heavy doom of those that add to his words, or diminish from them, *Deu.* iv. 32; xii. 32. 2nd. We shall run ourselves into endless mistakes. Thou wilt be found a liar, a corrupter of the word of truth; a broacher of heresies, and guilty of the worst of forgeries, counterfeiting the broad seal of heaven, and pretending a Divine mission and inspiration, when it is all a cheat. Men may be thus deceived, but "God is not mocked."

7 Two *things* have I required of thee;
Deny me *them* not before I die:
8 Remove far from me vanity and lies:
Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with food convenient for me:
9 Lest I be full, and deny *thee*,
And say, Who *is* the LORD?
Or lest I be poor, and steal,
And take the name of my God *in vain*.

After Agur's confession and creed, here follows the litany, where we may observe,

First. The preface to his prayer. "Two things have I required," that is, requested of thee, O God. Before we go to pray, it is good to consider what we need, and what the things are which we have to ask of God; what doth our case require, what do our hearts desire, what would we that God should do for us, that we may not be to seek for our petition and request when we should be presenting it. He begs, "Deny me not before I die." In praying we should think of dying, and pray accordingly; Lord, give me pardon, and peace, and grace before I die, "before I go hence and be no more;" for if I be not renewed and sanctified before I die, it will not be done after. If I do not prevail in prayer before I die, prayers after will not prevail; no, not "Lord, Lord." There is none of this wisdom or working in the grave. Deny me not thy grace, for if thou do I die, I perish; if thou be silent to me, I am like them that go down to the pit, *Ps.* xxviii. 1. "Deny me not before I die," that is, as long as I continue in the land of the living, let me continue under the conduct of thy grace and good providence.

Secondly. The prayer itself; the two things he requires, grace sufficient and food convenient.

1. Grace sufficient for his soul: "Remove from me vanity and lies;" that is, deliver me from sin, from all corrupt principles, practices, and affections; from error and mistake, which is at the bottom of all sin; from the love of the world and the things of it, which are all vanity and a lie. Some understand it as a prayer for the pardon of sin, for when God forgives sin he removes it; he takes it away; or, rather, it is a prayer of the same import with that, "Lead us not into temptation." Nothing is more mischievous to us than sin, and therefore nothing which we should more earnestly pray against, that we may do no evil.

2. Food convenient for his body. Having prayed for the operations of Divine grace, he here begs the favours of the Divine providence, but such as might tend to the good and not the prejudice of his soul.

1st. He prays that of God's free gift he might receive a competent portion of the good things of this life. 'Feed me with the bread of my allowance;' such bread as thou thinkest fit to allow me; for as to all the gifts of the Divine providence, we must refer ourselves to the Divine wisdom. Or the bread that is fit for me as a man, as a master of a family; that which is agreeable to my rank and condition in the world, for as is the man so is his competency. Our Saviour seems to refer to this when he teacheth us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread;" as this seems to refer to Jacob's vow, in which he wished for no more but "bread to eat and raiment to put on." Food convenient for us is what we ought to be content with, though we have not dainties, varieties, and superfluities; what is for necessity, though we have not for delight and ornament. And it is what we may in faith pray for, and depend upon God for.

2nd. He prays that he might be kept from every condition of life that would be a temptation to him.

First. He prays against the extremes of abundance and want; "Give me

neither poverty nor riches." He doth not hereby prescribe to God, nor pretend to teach him what condition he shall allot to him, nor doth he pray against poverty or riches absolutely, as in themselves evil; for either of them, by the grace of God, may be sanctified and be a means of good to us; but, 1*st*. He thereby intends to express the value which wise and good men have for a middle state of life, and, with submission to the will of God, desires that that might be his state; neither great honour nor great contempt. We must learn how to manage both, as St. Paul, *Phil*. iv. 12, but rather wish to be always between both. *Optimus pecuniæ modus qui nec in paupertatem cedit nec procul a paupertate discedit*,—'The best condition is that which neither implies poverty nor yet recedes far from it.'—*Seneca*. 2*nd*. He hereby intimates a holy jealousy he had of himself, that he could not keep his ground against the temptations either of an afflicted or a prosperous condition. Others may preserve their integrity in either, but he is afraid of both, and therefore grace teacheth him to pray against riches as much as nature against poverty, but "the will of the Lord be done."

Secondly. He gives a pious reason for this prayer, ver. 9. He doth not say, Lest I be rich and cumbered with care, and envied by my neighbours, and eaten up with a multitude of servants; or, "lest I be poor" and trampled on, and forced to work hard and fare hard; but, Lest I be rich and sin, or poor and sin. Sin is that which a good man is afraid of in every condition and under every event: witness Nehemiah, *ch*. vi. 13, That I should be afraid, and do so, and sin. 1*st*. He dreads the temptations of a prosperous condition, and therefore even deprecates that: "Lest I be full and deny thee," as Jeshurun, that waxed fat, and kicked, and forsook God that made him, *Deu*. xxxii. 15, and say, as Pharaoh in his pride, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Prosperity makes people proud, and forgetful of God, as if they had no need of him, and were therefore under no obligation to him. What can the Almighty do for them? *Job* xxii. 17, and therefore they will do nothing for him. Even good men are afraid of the worst sins, so deceitful do they think their own hearts to be, and they know that the greatest gains of the world will not balance the least guilt. 2*nd*. He dreads the temptations of a poor condition, and for that reason, and no other, deprecates that: "Lest I be poor, and steal." Poverty is a strong temptation to dishonesty, and such as many are overcome by, and are ready to think it will be their excuse; but it will not bear them out at God's bar, no more than at men's, to say, I stole because I was poor; yet "if a man steal for the satisfying of his soul when he is hungry," it is a case of compassion, *ch*. vi. 30, and what even those that have some principles of honesty in them may yet be drawn to. But observe why Agur dreads this, not because he should endanger himself by it, Lest I steal and be hanged for it, whipped, or put in the stocks, or sold for a bondman, as among the Jews poor thieves were, who had not wherewithal to make restitution; but lest he should dishonour God by it, "Lest I should steal, and take the name of my God in vain;" that is, discredit my profession of religion by practices disagreeable to it. Or, "Lest I steal," and, when I am charged with it, forswear myself. He therefore dreads one sin, because it would draw on another, for the way of sin is down hill. Observe, he calls God his God, and therefore he is afraid of doing any thing to offend him, because of the relation he stands in to him.

10 Accuse not a servant unto his master,
Lest he curse thee, and thou be found guilty.
11 *There is* a generation *that* curseth their father,
And doth not bless their mother.
12 *There is* a generation *that are* pure in their own eyes,
And *yet* is not washed from their filthiness.
13 *There is* a generation, O how lofty are their eyes!
And their eyelids are lifted up.
14 *There is* a generation, whose teeth *are as* swords,
And their jaw teeth *as* knives,
To devour the poor from off the earth,
And the needy from *among* men.

Here is, First. A caution not to abuse other people's servants any more than our own, nor to make mischief between them and their masters, for it is an ill office, invidious, and what will make a man odious, ver. 10. Consider, 1. It is an injury to the servant, whose poor condition makes him an object of pity, and therefore it is barbarous to add affliction to him that is afflicted. 'Hurt not a servant with thy tongue,' so the margin reads it; for it argues a sordid disposition to smite any body secretly with the scourge of the tongue, especially a servant, that is not a match for us, and whom we should rather protect, if his master be severe with him, than exasperate him more. 2. It will perhaps be an injury to thyself. If a servant be thus provoked, perhaps he will curse thee, will accuse thee, and bring thee into trouble; or give thee an ill word, and blemish thy reputation; or appeal to God against thee, and imprecate his wrath upon thee, who is the patron and protector of oppressed innocency.

Secondly. An account, upon occasion of this caution, of some wicked generations of men, that are justly abominable to all that are virtuous and good.

1. Such as are abusive to their parents, give them ill language, and wish them ill, call them ill names, and do them ill turns. There is a generation of such; young men of that black character commonly herd together, and irritate one another against their parents, a generation of vipers they are, who curse either their natural parents, or their magistrates, or ministers, because they cannot endure the yoke. And they are near of kin to them who, though they are not yet arrived to such a pitch of wickedness as to curse their parents, yet do not bless them, cannot give them a good word, and will not pray for them.

2. Such as are conceited of themselves, and, under a show and pretence of sanctity, hide from others, and perhaps from themselves too, abundance of reigning wickedness in secret, ver. 12. They are "pure in their own eyes," as if they were in all respects such as they should be; they have a very good opinion of themselves and their own character, that they are not only righteous, but rich and increased with goods, *Rev*. iii. 17, "and yet are not cleansed from their filthiness," the filthiness of their hearts, which they pretend to be the best part of them; they are, it may be, swept and garnished, but they are not washed, not sanctified, as the Pharisees, that within were full of all uncleanness, *Mat*. xxiii. 25, 26.

3. Such as are haughty and scornful to those about them, ver. 13. He speaks of them with amazement at their intolerable pride and insolence, "O how lofty are their eyes;" with what disdain do they look upon their neighbours, as not worthy to be set with the dogs of their flock; what a distance do they expect every body should keep. And when they look upon themselves, how do they strut and vaunt, like the peacock, thinking they make themselves illustrious, when really they make themselves ridiculous. There is a generation of such, on whom he that resists the proud will pour contempt.

4. Such as are cruel to the poor and barbarous to all that lie at their mercy, ver. 14. Their teeth are iron and steel, swords and knives, instruments of cruelty, with which they devour the poor with the greatest pleasure imaginable, and as greedily as hungry men cut their meat and eat it. God has so ordered it that the poor we should always have with us, that they shall never cease out of the land; but there are those who, because they hate to relieve them, would, if they could, abolish them from the earth, from among men, especially God's poor. Some understand it of those who wound and ruin others by slanders and false accusations, and severe censures of their everlasting state; their tongues and their teeth too, which are likewise organs of speech, are as swords and knives, *Ps*. lvii. 4.

15 The horseleach hath two daughters, *crying*, Give, give.
There are three *things that* are never satisfied,
Yea, four *things* say not, *It is* enough:
16 The grave; and the barren womb;
The earth *that* is not filled with water;
And the fire *that* saith not, *It is* enough.
17 The eye *that* mocketh at *his* father,
And despiseth to obey *his* mother,
The ravens of the valley shall pick it out,
And the young eagles shall eat it.

He had spoken before of those that devoured the poor, ver. 14, and had spoken of them last, as the worst of all the four generations there mentioned; now here he speaks of their insatiableness in doing this. The temper that puts them upon it is made up of cruelty and covetousness; now those are two daughters of the horseleech, its genuine offspring, that still cry, Give, give; give more blood, give more money. For the bloody are still bloodthirsty; being drunk with blood, they add thirst to their drunkenness, and will seek it yet again. They also that love silver shall never be satisfied with silver. Thus while from these two principles they are devouring the poor, they are continually uneasy to themselves, as David's enemies, *Ps*. lix. 14, 15.

Now, First. For the farther illustration of this he instanceth in four other things which are insatiable, to which those devourers are compared, which say not, "It is enough;" or, 'It is wealth.' Those are never rich that are always coveting. Now these four things are always craving: 1. The grave, into which multitudes fall, and yet still more will fall, and it swallows them all up, and returns none. "Hell and destruction are never full," *ch*. xxvii. 20; when it comes to our turn we shall find the grave ready for us, *Job* xvii. 1. 2. The barren womb, which is impatient of its affliction in being barren, and cries as Rachel did, "Give me children." 3. The parched ground in time of drought, especially in those hot countries which still soaks in the rain that comes in abundance upon it, and in a little time wants more. 4. The fire, which, when it has consumed abundance of fuel, yet still devours all the combustible matter that is thrown into it. So insatiable are the corrupt desires of sinners, and so little satisfaction have they even in the gratification of them.

Secondly. He adds a terrible threatening to disobedient children, ver. 17, for warning to the first of those four wicked generations that curse their parents, ver. 11; and shews here,

1. Who they are that belong to that generation. Not only they that curse their parents in heat and passion, but 1st. They that mock at them, though it be but with a scornful eye, looking with disdain upon them, because of their bodily infirmities, or looking sour and dogged at them when they instruct or command, impatient of their checks, and angry at them. God takes notice with what eye children look upon their parents, and will reckon for the leering look and the casts of the evil eye, as well as for ill language given them. 2nd. They that despise to obey them, that think it a thing below them to be dutiful to their parents, especially to the mother. They scorn to be controlled by her; and thus she that bare them in sorrow in greater sorrow bears their manners.

2. What their doom will be. They that dishonour their parents shall be set up as monuments of God's vengeance; they shall be hanged in chains, as it were, for the birds of prey to pick out their eyes, those eyes with which they looked so scornfully on their good parents. The dead bodies of malefactors were not to hang all night, but before night the ravens would have picked out their eyes. If men do not punish undutiful children God will, and will load those with the greatest infamy that carry themselves haughtily towards their parents. Many that have come to an ignominious end have owned that the wicked courses that brought them to it began in a contempt of their parents' authority.

18 There be three *things which* are too wonderful for me,
Yea, four which I know not:
19 The way of an eagle in the air;
The way of a serpent upon a rock;
The way of a ship in the midst of the sea;
And the way of a man with a maid.
20 Such *is* the way of an adulterous woman;
She eateth, and wipeth her mouth,
And saith, I have done no wickedness.
21 For three *things* the earth is disquieted,
And for four *which* it cannot bear:
22 For a servant when he reigneth;
And a fool when he is filled with meat;
23 For an odious *woman* when she is married;
And an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

Here is, First. An account of four things that are unsearchable, too wonderful to be fully known. And here,

1. The first three are natural things, and are only designed as comparisons for the illustration of the last. We cannot trace, 1st. "An eagle in the air." Which way she is flown cannot be discovered, either by the footstep or by the scent, as the way of a beast may upon the ground; nor can we account for the wonderful swiftness of her flight, how soon she has gone beyond our ken. 2nd. "A serpent upon a rock." The way of a serpent in the sand we may find by the track, but not of a serpent upon the hard rock, nor can we describe how a serpent will, without feet, in a little time creep to the top of a rock. 3rd. "A ship in the midst of the sea." The leviathan indeed "makes a path to shine after him, one would think the deep to be hoary," *Job* xli. 32, but a ship leaves no mark behind it, and sometimes it is so tossed upon the waves that one would wonder how it lives at sea and gains its point. The kingdom of nature is full of wonders, marvellous things which the God of nature doth, past finding out.

EAGLE AND SERPENT.—ver. 22.

2. The fourth is a mystery of iniquity more unaccountable than any of these; it belongs to the depths of Satan, that deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart which none can know, *Jer.* xvii. 9. It is twofold: 1st. The cursed arts which a vile adulterer hath to debauch a young maid, and to persuade her to yield to his wicked and abominable lust. This is what a wanton poet wrote a whole book of, long since, *De Arte Amandi*,—'On the Art of Love.' With what pretensions and protestations of love, and all its powerful charms, promises of marriage, assurances of secrecy and reward, is many an unwary virgin brought to sell her virtue, and honour, and peace, and soul, and all to a base traitor; for so all sinful lust is in the kingdom of love. The more artfully the temptation is managed, the more watchful and resolute ought every pure heart to be against it. 2nd. The cursed arts which a vile adulteress hath to conceal her wickedness, especially from her husband, from whom she treacherously departs. So close are her intrigues with her lewd companions, and so craftily disguised, that it is as impossible to discover her as to track an eagle in the air. She eats the forbidden fruit, after the similitude of Adam's transgression, and then wipes her mouth, that it may not betray itself, and with a bold and impudent face saith, "I have done no wickedness." *First.* To the world she denies the fact, and is ready to swear it, that she is as chaste and modest as any woman, and never did that wickedness which she is suspected of. They are works of darkness, which are industriously kept from coming to the light. *Secondly.* To her own conscience, if she have any left, she denies the fault, and will not own that that great wickedness is any wickedness at all, but an innocent entertainment: see *Hos.* xii. 7, 8. Thus multitudes ruin their souls by calling evil good, and outfacing their convictions with a self-justification.

Secondly. An account of four things that are intolerable; that is, four sorts of persons that are very troublesome to the places where they live, and the relations and companies they are in; the earth is disquieted for them, and groans under them as a burthen it cannot bear, and they are all much alike. 1. A servant, when he is advanced and intrusted with power, who is of all others most insolent and imperious: witness Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, *Neh.* ii. 10. 2. A fool, a silly, rude, boisterous, vicious man, when he has grown rich, and has got his belly full, and his head full too, at a good dinner, he will disturb all the company with his extravagant talk and the affronts he will put upon those about him. 3. An ill-natured, cross-grained woman, when she gets a husband, who, having made herself odious by her pride and sourness, so that one would not have thought anybody should have loved her, yet if at last she be married, that honourable estate makes her more intolerably scornful and spiteful than ever. It is pity that that which should sweeten the disposition should have a contrary effect. A gracious woman, when she is married, will be yet more obliging. 4. An old maid-servant, that has prevailed with her mistress, by humouring her and getting the length of her foot, to leave her what she has, or is as dear to her as if she were to be her heir; such a one likewise will be intolerably proud and malicious, and think all too little that her mistress gives her, and herself wronged if any thing be left from her. Let those, therefore, whom Providence has advanced to honour from mean beginnings, carefully watch against that sin which will most easily beset them, pride and haughtiness, which will in them, of all others, be most insufferable and inexcusable, and let them humble themselves with the remembrance of the rock out of which they were hewn.

24 There be four *things which are* little upon the earth,
But they *are* exceeding wise:
25 The ants *are* a people not strong,
Yet they prepare their meat in the summer;
26 The conies *are but* a feeble folk,
Yet make they their houses in the rocks;
27 The locusts have no king,
Yet go they forth all of them by bands;
28 The spider taketh hold with her hands,
And is in kings' palaces.

Agur, having instanced in four things that seem great, and yet are really contemptible, here instanceth in four things that are little to see to, and yet are very admirable, great in miniature; in which, as Bishop Patrick observes, he teaches us several good lessons; as, 1. Not to admire bodily bulk, or beauty, or strength, or to value persons for that, or think the better of them; but to judge of men by their wisdom and conduct, their industry, and application to business, which are characters that deserve respect. 2. To admire the wisdom and power of the Creator in the smallest and most despicable animals, in an ant as in an elephant. 3. To blame ourselves who do not act so much for our own true interest as the meanest creatures do for theirs. 4. Not to despise the weak things of the world. There are those that are little upon the earth, poor in the world, and of small account, and yet are exceeding wise, wise for their souls and another world, and those are exceeding wise, wiser than their neighbours. Margin, 'They are wise, made wise,' by the special instinct of nature; all that are wise to salvation are made wise by the grace of God. Those he instanceth in are,

First. The ants; minute animals, and very weak, and yet they are very industrious in gathering proper food, and have a strange sagacity to do it in the summer, the proper time. This is so great a piece of wisdom, that we may learn of them to be wise for futurity, *ch.* vi. 6. When the ravening lions lack, and suffer hunger, the laborious ants have plenty, and know no want.

Secondly. The conies, or, as some rather understand it, the Arabian mice, field-mice; weak creatures, and very timorous, yet they have so much wisdom as to "make their houses in the rocks," where they are well guarded, and their feebleness makes them take shelter in those natural fastnesses and fortifications. Sense of our own indigence and weakness should drive us to Him that is a rock higher than we, for shelter and support; there let us make our habitation.

Thirdly. "The locusts;" they are little also, and "have no king" as the bees have, but "they go forth all of them by bands," like an army in battle array; and, observing such good order among themselves, it is not any inconvenience to them that they have no king. They are called God's great army, *Joel* ii. 25; for, when he pleaseth, he musters, he marshals them, and wages war by them, as he did upon Egypt. 'They go forth all of them gathered together;' so the margin. Sense of weakness should engage us to keep together, that we may strengthen the hands one of another.

Fourthly. The spider; an insect, but as great an instance of industry in our houses as the ants are in the field. Spiders are very ingenious in weaving their webs with a fineness and exactness such as no art can pretend to come near; they "take hold with their hands," and spin a fine thread out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art; and they are not only in poor men's cottages, but in kings' palaces, notwithstanding all the care that is there taken to destroy them. Providence wonderfully keeps up these species of creatures, not only which men provide not for, but which every man's hand is against, and seeks the destruction of. Those that will mind their business, and take hold of it with their hands, shall be in kings' palaces, sooner or later will get preferment, and may go on with it, notwithstanding the difficulties and discouragements they meet with. If one well-spun web be swept away, it is but making another.

29 There be three *things* which go well,
Yea, four are comely in going:
30 A lion *which is* strongest among beasts,
And turneth not away for any;
31 A greyhound; an he goat also;
And a king, against whom *there is* no rising up.
32 If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself,
Or if thou hast thought evil,
Lay thine hand upon thy mouth.
33 Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter,
And the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood:
So the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

Here is, First. An enumeration of four things that are majestic and stately in their going, which look great:

1. A lion, the king of beasts, because strongest among beasts, and among beasts it is strength that gives the preeminence; but it is pity it should do so among men, whose wisdom is their honour, not their strength and force. The lion turns not away, nor alters his pace for fear of any pursuers, since he knows he is too hard for them. Herein the righteous are bold as a lion, that they turn not away from their duty for fear of any difficulty they meet with in it.

2. A greyhound, that is girt in the loins, and fit for running; or, as the margin reads it, a horse, which ought not to be omitted among the creatures that are comely in going, for so he is, especially when he is dressed up in his harness or trappings.

3. A he goat; the comeliness of whose going is when he goes first, and leads the flock. It is the comeliness of a Christian's going, to go first in a good work, and to lead others in the right way.

4. A king; who when he appears in his majesty is looked upon with reverence and awe, and all agree there is no rising up against him. None can compare with him, none can contend with him; whoever doth it, it is at his peril; and, if there is no rising up against an earthly prince, woe to him then that strives with his Maker. It is intended that we should learn courage and fortitude in all virtuous actions from the lion, and not to turn away for any difficulty we meet with; from the greyhound we may learn quickness and despatch; from the he goat, the care of our family, and those under our charge; and from a king, to have our children in subjection with all gravity; and from them all to go well, and to order the steps of our conversation, so as that we may not only be safe, but comely in going.

Secondly. A caution to us to keep our temper at all times, and under all provocations, and to take heed of carrying our resentments too far upon any occasion, especially when there is a king in the case, against whom there is no rising up; when it is a ruler, or our superior, that is offended; nay, the rule is always the same.

1. We must bridle and suppress our own passion, and take shame to ourselves whenever we are justly charged with a fault, and not insist upon our own innocency. If we have lifted up ourselves, either in a proud conceit of ourselves or a peevish opposition to those that are over us, if we have transgressed

the laws of our place and station, we have therein done foolishly. Those that magnify themselves over others, or against others that are haughty and insolent, they do but shame themselves, and betray their own weakness; nay, if we have but thought evil, if we be conscious to ourselves that we have harboured an ill design in our minds, or it has been suggested to us, we must lay our hand upon our mouth; that is, 1st. We must humble ourselves for what we have done amiss, and even lie in the dust before God in sorrow for it, as Job did when he repented of what he had said foolishly, *ch.* xl. 4, "I will lay my hand upon my mouth," and as the convicted leper, "put a covering upon his upper lip." If we have done foolishly we must not stand in it before men, but by silence own our guilt, which will be the best way of appeasing those we have offended. 2nd. We must keep the evil thought we have conceived in our minds from breaking out in any evil speeches. Do not give the evil thought an *imprimatur*,—'a license;' allow it not to be published, but "lay thy hand upon thy mouth," use a holy violence with thyself, if need be, and enjoin thyself silence; as Christ suffered not the evil spirits to speak. It is bad to think ill, but it is much worse to speak it; for that implies a consent to the evil thought, and a willingness to infect others with it.

2. We must not irritate the passions of others. Some are so very provoking in their words and carriage, that they even force wrath, they make those about them angry, whether they will or no, and put them into a passion, who are not only not inclined to it, but resolved against it. Now this "forcing of wrath brings forth strife," and where that is, there is confusion, and every evil work. As the violent agitation of the cream fetcheth all the good out of the milk, and the hard wringing of the nose will extort blood from it, so this forcing of wrath wastes both the body and spirits of a man, and robs him of all the good that is in him. Or, as it is in the churning of milk, and the wringing of the nose, that is done by force which otherwise would not be done, so the spirit is heated by degrees with strong passions; one angry word begets another, and that a third; one passionate debate makes work for another, and so it goes on, till it ends at length in irreconcilable feuds. Let nothing therefore be said or done with violence, but every thing with softness and calmness.

CHAPTER XXXI.

This chapter is tacked to Solomon's proverbs, some think because it is of the same author, supposing king Lemuel to be king Solomon; others only because it is of the same nature, though left in writing by another author, called Lemuel; however it be, it is a prophecy, and therefore given by inspiration and direction of God, which Lemuel was under in the writing of it and putting it into this form, as his mother was in dictating to him the matter of it. Here is, I. An exhortation to Lemuel, a young prince, to take heed of the sins he would be tempted to, and to do the duties of the place he was called to, ver. 1—9. II. The description of a virtuous woman, especially in the relation of a wife, and the mistress of a family, which Lemuel's mother drew up, not as an encomium of herself, though, no doubt, it was her own true picture, but either as an instruction to her daughters, as the foregoing verses were to her son, or as a direction to her son in the choice of a wife. She must be chaste and modest, diligent and frugal, dutiful to her husband, careful of her family, discreet in her discourse, and in the education of her children, and, above all, conscientious in her duty to God; such a one as this, if he can find her, will make him happy, ver. 10—31.

THE words of king Lemuel,
The prophecy that his mother taught him.
2 What, my son?
And what, the son of my womb?
And what, the son of my vows?
3 Give not thy strength unto women,
Nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.
4 *It is* not for kings, O Lemuel,
It is not for kings to drink wine;
Nor for princes strong drink:
5 Lest they drink, and forget the law,
And pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.
6 Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,
And wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.
7 Let him drink, and forget his poverty,
And remember his misery no more.
8 Open thy mouth for the dumb
In the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.
9 Open thy mouth, judge righteously,
And plead the cause of the poor and needy.

Most interpreters are of opinion that Lemuel is Solomon; the name signifies one that is for God, or devoted to God; and so it agrees well enough with that honourable name, which by Divine appointment was given to Solomon, 2 *Sam.* xii. 25, Jedidiah, 'beloved of the Lord.' Lemuel is supposed to be a pretty, fond, endearing name, by which his mother used to call him, and so much did he value himself upon the interest he had in his mother's affections, that he was not ashamed to call himself by it; and one would the rather incline to think it is Solomon that here tells us what his mother taught him, because he tells us, *ch.* iv. 4, what his father taught him. But some think, (and the conjecture is not improbable,) that Lemuel was a prince of some neighbouring country, whose mother was a daughter of Israel, perhaps of the house of David, and taught him these good lessons. Note, 1. It is the duty of mothers, as well as fathers, to teach their children what is good, that they may do it, and what is evil, that they may avoid it. When they are young and tender, they are most under the mother's eye, and she has then an opportunity of moulding and fashioning their minds well, which she ought not to let slip. 2. Even kings must be catechized. The greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God. 3. Those that are grown up to maturity should often call to mind, and make mention of, the good instructions they received when they were children for their own admonition, the edification of others, and the honour of those who were the guides of their youth. Now in this mother's (this queen mother's) catechism, observe,

First. Her expostulation with the young prince, by which she lays hold of him, claims an interest in him, and awakens his attention to what she was about to say; ver. 2, "What, my son," what shall I say to thee? She speaks as one considering what advice to give him, and choosing out words to reason with him, so full of concern is she for his welfare; or, What is this that thou dost? It seems to be a chiding question. She observed when he was young that he was too much inclined to women and wine, and therefore she found it necessary to take him to task, and deal roundly with him; What, my son? Is this the course of life thou intendest to lead? Have I taught thee no better than thus? I must reprove thee, and reprove thee sharply, and thou must take it well, for,

1. Thou art descended from me, thou art "the son of my womb;" and therefore, what I say comes from the authority and affection of a parent, and cannot be suspected to come from any ill-will. Thou art a piece of myself. I bore thee with sorrow, and I expect no other return for all the pains I have taken with thee, and undergone for thee, but this only, be wise and good, and then I am well paid.

2. Thou art devoted to my God, thou art "the son of my vows;" the son I prayed to God to give me, and promised to give back to God, and did so, (thus Samuel was the son of Hannah's vows;) thou art the son I have often prayed to God to give his grace to, *Ps.* lxxii. 1; and shall a child of so many prayers miscarry? and shall all my hopes concerning thee be disappointed? Our children that by baptism are dedicated to God, for whom, and in whose name, we covenanted with God, may well be called the children of our vows; and as this may be made a good plea with God in our prayers for them, so it may be made a good plea with them in the instructions we give them. We may tell them they are baptized, are the children of our vows, and it is at their peril if they break those bonds in sunder which in their infancy they were solemnly brought under.

Secondly. The caution she gives him against the two destroying sins of uncleanness and drunkenness, which, if he allowed himself in them, would certainly be his ruin.

1. Against uncleanness; ver. 3, "Give not thy strength unto women," unto strange women. He must not be soft and effeminate, nor spend that time in a vain conversation with the ladies which should be spent in getting knowledge and despatching business, nor empty that wit (which is the strength of the soul) in courting and complimenting them, which he should employ about the affairs of his government. Especially shun all adultery, fornication, and lasciviousness, which wastes the strength of the body, and brings it into dangerous diseases. Give not thy ways, thy affections, thy conversation, to that which destroys kings, which has destroyed many; which gave such a shock to the kingdom even of David himself, in the matter of Uriah. Let others' harms be thy warnings. It lessens the honour of kings, and makes them mean; are those fit to govern others that are themselves slaves to their own lusts? It makes them unfit for business, and fills their court with the basest and worst of animals. Kings lie exposed to temptations of this kind, having wherewith both to please the humours and to bear the charges of the sin, and therefore they ought to double their guard, and, if they would preserve their people from the unclean spirit, must themselves be patterns of purity. And meaner people may apply it to themselves; let none give their strength to that which destroys souls.

2. Against drunkenness, ver. 4, 5. He must not drink wine or strong drink to excess; must never sit to drink, as they used to do "in the day of their king," when "the princes made him sick with bottles of wine," *Hos.* vii. 5. Whatever temptation he might be in by the excellency of the wine, or the charms of the company, he must deny himself, and be strictly sober. Considering, 1st. The indecency of drunkenness in a king. However some may call it a fashionable accomplishment and entertainment, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings," to allow themselves that liberty; it is a disparagement to their dignity, and profanes their crown by muddling the head that wears it; that which for the time unmans them doth for the time unking them. Shall we say they are gods? no, they are worse than the beasts that perish. All Christians are made to our God kings and priests, and must apply this to themselves; it is not for Christians to drink to excess; they debase themselves if they do. It ill becomes the heirs of the kingdom, and the spiritual priests, *Lev.* x. 9. 2nd. The ill consequences of it; ver. 5, "Lest they drink" away their understandings and memories; drink, "and forget the law" by which they are to govern; and so, instead of doing good with their power, do hurt with it, "and pervert," or alter "the judgment of all the sons of affliction," and when they should right them, wrong them, and add to their affliction. It is a sad complaint which is made of the priests and prophets, *Isa.* xxviii. 7, that "they have erred through wine," and "through strong drink they are out of the way;" and the effect is as ill in kings, who, when they are drunk or intoxicated with the love of wine, cannot but stumble in judgment. Judges must have clear heads, which those cannot have who so often make themselves giddy, and incapacitate themselves to judge of the most common things.

Thirdly. The counsel she gives him to do good.

1. He must do good with his wealth. Great men must not think that they have their abundance, only that out of it they may make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it, and may the more freely indulge their own genius; no, but that with it they may relieve such as are in distress, ver. 6, 7. Thou hast wine and strong drink at command, instead of doing thyself hurt with it do others good with it; let them have it that need it. Those that have wherewithal, must not only give bread to the hungry, and water to the thirsty, but they must "give strong drink to him that is ready to perish" through sickness or pain, and wine to those that are melancholy, and of heavy heart; for it was appointed to cheer and revive the spirits, and make glad the heart, as it doth where there is need of it, not to burthen and oppress the spirits, as it doth where there is no need of it. We must deny ourselves in the gratifications of sense, that we may have to spare for the relief of others' miseries, and be glad to see our superfluities and dainties better bestowed upon those whom they will be a real kindness to, than upon ourselves whom they will be a real injury to. Let those that are ready to perish drink soberly, and it will be a means so to revive their drooping spirits that they will "forget their poverty" for the time, and "remember their misery no more," and so be the better able to bear it. The Jews say, that upon this was grounded the practice of giving a stupifying drink to condemned prisoners when they were going to execution, as they did to our Saviour; but the scope of the place is to shew that wine is a cordial, and therefore to be used for want, and not for wantonness; by those only that need cordials, as Timothy, who is advised to drink a little wine only for his stomach's sake, and his often infirmities, 1 *Tim.* v. 23.

2. He must do good with his power, his knowledge, and interest; must administer justice with care, and courage, and compassion, ver. 8, 9. 1st. He must himself take cognizance of the causes his subjects have depending in his courts, and inspect what his judges and officers do, that he may support those that do their duty, and lay those aside that neglect it, or are partial. 2nd. He must in all matters that were before him judge righteously, and without fear of the face of man,—boldly pass sentence according to equity. "Open thy mouth," which notes the liberty of speech that princes and judges ought to use in passing sentence; and some observe, that wise men only open their mouths, for fools have their mouths always open; are full of words. 3rd. He

must especially look upon himself as obliged to be the patron of oppressed innocency; the inferior magistrates perhaps had not zeal and tenderness enough to "plead the cause of the poor and needy," therefore the king himself must interpose, and appear as an advocate. *First.* For those that were unjustly charged with capital crimes, as Naboth was, that were appointed to destruction, to gratify the malice either of a particular person or a party. It is a case which it well befits a king to appear in for the preserving of innocent blood. *Secondly.* For those that had actions unjustly brought against them, to defraud them of their right, because they were poor and needy, and unable to defend it, not having wherewithal to fee counsel; in such a case also kings must be advocates for the poor. Especially, *Thirdly.* For those that were dumb, and knew not how to speak for themselves, either through weakness or fear, or being over-talked by the prosecutor, or over-awed by the court. It is generous to speak for those that cannot speak for themselves; that are absent, or have not words at command, or are timorous. Our law appoints the judge to be of counsel for the prisoner.

10 Who can find a virtuous woman?
For her price *is* far above rubies.
11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,
So that he shall have no need of spoil.
12 She will do him good and not evil
All the days of her life.
13 She seeketh wool, and flax,
And worketh willingly with her hands.
14 She is like the merchants' ships;
She bringeth her food from afar.
15 She riseth also while it is yet night,
And giveth meat to her household,
And a portion to her maidens.
16 She considereth a field, and buyeth it:
With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
17 She girdeth her loins with strength,
And strengtheneth her arms.
18 She perceiveth that her merchandise *is* good:
Her candle goeth not out by night.

SPINNING.

19 She layeth her hands to the spindle,
And her hands hold the distaff.
20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor;
Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.
21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household:
For all her household *are* clothed with scarlet.
22 She maketh herself coverings of tapestry;
Her clothing *is* silk and purple.
23 Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sitteth among the elders of the land.
24 She maketh fine linen, and selleth *it;*
And delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
25 Strength and honour *are* her clothing;
And she shall rejoice in time to come.
26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom;
And in her tongue *is* the law of kindness.
27 She looketh well to the ways of her household,
And eateth not the bread of idleness.
28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed;
Her husband *also,* and he praiseth her.
29 Many daughters have done virtuously,
But thou excellest them all.
30 Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain:
But a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.
31 Give her of the fruit of her hands;
And let her own works praise her in the gates.

TAPESTRY, OR DRESSES OF NEEDLEWORK.—ver. 22.

This description of the virtuous woman is designed to shew what wives the women should make, and what wives the men should choose. It consists of twenty-two verses, each beginning with a several letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order, as some of the psalms, which makes some think it was no part of the lesson which Lemuel's mother taught him, but a poem by itself, written by some other hand; and perhaps had been commonly repeated among the pious Jews, for the ease of which it was made alphabetical. We have the abridgment of it in the New Testament, 1 *Tim.* ii. 9, 10; 1 *Pet.* iii. 1—6; where the duty prescribed to wives agrees with this description of a good wife. And with good reason is so much stress laid upon it, since it contributes as much as any one thing to the keeping up of religion in families, and the entail of it upon posterity, that the mothers be wise and good; and of what consequence it is to the wealth and outward prosperity of a house, every one is sensible. He that will thrive must ask his wife leave. Here is,

First. A general inquiry after such a one, ver. 10, where observe. 1. The person inquired after, and that is "a virtuous woman." 'A woman of strength,' so the word is, though the weaker vessel, yet made strong by wisdom and grace, and the fear of God. It is the same word that is used in the character of good judges, *Ex.* xviii. 21, that they are able men, men qualified for the business to which they are called,—men of truth, fearing God. So it follows, a virtuous woman is a woman of spirit, that is, that has the command of her own spirit, and knows how to manage other people's; one that is pious and industrious, and a help-meet for a man. In opposition to this strength, we read of the weakness of the heart of an imperious whorish woman, *Eze.* xvi. 30. A virtuous woman is a woman of resolution, that, having espoused good principles, is firm and steady to them, and will not be frightened with winds and clouds from any part of her duty. 2. The difficulty of meeting with such a one; "Who can find her?" Which intimates, that good women are very scarce, and many that seem to be so do not prove so, but he that thought he had found a virtuous woman was deceived; behold it was Leah, and not the Rachel he expected. But he that designs to marry ought to seek diligently for such a one, to have this principally in his eye in all his inquiries, and to take heed that he be not biassed by beauty or gaiety, wealth or parentage, dressing well or dancing well, for all these may be, and yet the woman not virtuous; and there is many a woman truly virtuous who yet is not recommended by these advantages. 3. The unspeakable worth of such a one, and the value which he that hath such a wife ought to put upon her, and to shew it by his thankfulness to God, and his kindness and respect to her, whom he must never think he can do too much for. "Her price is far above rubies," and all the rich ornaments with which vain women adorn themselves. And the more rare such good wives are, the more they are to be valued.

Secondly. A particular description of her, and of her excellent qualifications.

1. She is very industrious to recommend herself to her husband's esteem and affection. Those that are good really will be good relatively. A good woman, if she be brought into the married state, will be a good wife, and make it her business to please her husband, 1 *Cor.* vii. 34. Though she is a woman of spirit herself, yet her desire is to her husband, to know his mind, that she may accommodate herself to it, and she is willing that he rule over her.

1st. She carries herself so that he may repose an entire confidence in her,—in her chastity, which she never gave him the least occasion to suspect, or to entertain any jealousy of. She is not morose and reserved, but modest and grave, and has all the marks of virtue in her countenance and carriage. Her husband knows it, and therefore his "heart doth safely trust in her;" he is easy, and makes her so. He trusts in her conduct, that she will speak in all companies, and act in all affairs, with prudence and discretion, so as not to occasion him either damage or reproach. He trusts in her fidelity to his interests, and that she will never betray his counsels, or have any interest separate from that of his family. When he goes abroad to attend the concerns of the public, he can confide in her to order all his affairs at home as well as if he himself were there. She is a good wife that is fit to be trusted, and he a good husband that will leave it to such a wife to manage for him.

2nd. She contributes so much to his content and satisfaction, that "he shall have no need of spoil;" he needs not be griping and scraping abroad, as those must be whose wives are proud and wasteful at home. She manages his affairs so that he is always beforehand; hath such plenty of his own that he is in no temptation to prey upon his neighbours. He thinks himself so happy in her that he envies not those who have most of the wealth of this world; he needs it not; he has enough, having such a wife. Happy the couple that have such a satisfaction as this in each other!

3rd. She makes it her constant business to do him good, and is afraid of doing any thing, even through inadvertency, that may turn to his prejudice, ver. 12. She shews her love to him, not by a foolish fondness, but by prudent endearments, accommodating herself to his temper, and not crossing him, giving him good words, and not ill ones, no, not when he is out of humour. Studying to make him easy, to provide what is fit for him both in health and sickness, and attending him with diligence and tenderness when anything ails him; and would not for the world wilfully do any thing that might be a damage to his person, family, estate, or reputation. And this is her care all the days of her life; not at first only, or now and then, when she is in a good humour, but perpetually; and she is not weary of the good offices she doth him. She doth him good, not only all the days of his life, but of her own too; if she survive him, still she is doing him good in her care of his children, his estate, and good name, and all the concerns he left behind him. We read of kindness shewn, not only to the living, but to the dead, *Ru.* ii. 20.

4th. She adds to his reputation in the world; ver. 23, "Her husband is known in the gates," known to have a good wife. By his wise counsels, and prudent management of affairs, it appears that he has a discreet companion in his bosom, by conversation with whom he improves himself. By his cheerful countenance, and pleasant humour, it appears that he has an agreeable wife at home; for many that have not have their tempers strangely soured by it. Nay, by his appearing clean and neat in his dress, every thing about him decent and handsome, and not gaudy, one may know he has a good wife at home that takes care of his clothes.

2. She is one that takes pains in the duty of her place, and takes pleasure in it. This part of her character is much enlarged upon here.

1st. She hates to sit still and do nothing; "She eats not the bread of idleness," ver. 27. Though she needs not work for her bread, she has an estate to live upon, yet she will not eat it in idleness, because she knows we were none of us sent into this world to be idle; and when we have nothing to do, the devil will soon find us something to do; and those that will not labour it is not fit they should eat. Some eat and drink because they can find themselves nothing else to do, and needless visits must be received with fashionable entertainments. These are eating the bread of idleness, which she has no relish of at all, for she neither gives nor receives idle visits, or idle talk.

2nd. She is careful to fill up time, that none of that be lost. When daylight is done, she doth not then think it time to lay by her work, as those are forced to do whose business lies abroad in the field, *Ps.* civ. 23; but, her business lying within doors, and her work worth candlelight, with that she lengthens out the day, and "her candle goes not out by night," ver. 18. It is a mercy to have candlelight to supply the want of daylight; and a duty, having that advantage, to improve it. We say of an elaborate piece, that it smells of the lamp.

3rd. "She riseth" early, "while it is night," ver. 15, to give her servants their breakfast, that they may be ready to go cheerfully about their work as soon as the day breaks. She is none of those who sit up playing at cards, or dancing till midnight, till morning, and then lie in bed till noon; no, the virtuous woman loves her business better than her ease, or her pleasure, is in care to be found in the way of her duty every hour of the day, and has more true satisfaction in having "given meat to her household" betimes in the morning, than those can have in the money they have won, much more in what they have lost, who sat up all night at play. Those that have a family to take care of should not love their bed too well in a morning.

4th. She applies herself to the business that is proper for her. It is not in scholar's business, or statesman's business, or husbandman's business, that she employs herself, but in women's business; "She seeks wool and flax," where she may have the best of each, at the best hand, and best cheap, has a stock of both by her, and every thing that is necessary to the carrying on both of the woollen and linen manufacture, ver. 13: and with this she doth not only set the poor on work, which is a very good office, but doth herself work, and work willingly with her hands; she works with the counsel, or delight of her hands, so the word is; she goes about it cheerfully and dexterously; not only lays her hand, but her mind to it, and goes on in it without weariness in well-doing. "She lays her own hands to the spindle," or spinning-wheel, "and her hands hold the distaff," ver. 19; and she doth not reckon it either an abridgment of her liberty, or a disparagement to her dignity, or at all inconsistent with her repose. The spindle and the distaff are here mentioned as her honour, while the ornaments of the daughters of Zion are reckoned up to their reproach, *Isa.* iii. 18.

5th. She doth what she doth with all her might, and doth not trifle in it, ver. 17. "She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms." She doth not employ herself in sitting-work only, or in that which is only the nice performance of the fingers, (there are works that are scarce one remove from doing nothing,) but, if there be occasion, she will go through with work that requires all the strength she has, which she will use as one that knows it is the way to have more.

3. She is one that makes what she doth to turn to a good account, by her prudent management of it. She doth not toil all night and catch nothing; no, "She herself perceives that her merchandize is good," ver. 18. She is sensible that in all her labour there is profit, and that encourageth her to go on in it. She perceives that she can make things herself better and cheaper than she can buy them. She finds, by observation, what branch of her employment brings in the best returns, and that she applies herself most closely to.

1st. She brings in provisions of all things necessary and convenient for her family, ver. 14. No merchant's ships, no, not Solomon's navy, ever made a more advantageous return than her employments do. Do they bring in foreign commodities with the effects they export? so doth she with the fruit of her labours. What her own ground doth not produce, she can furnish herself with it if she have occasion for it, by exchanging her own goods for it, and so "she brings her food from afar." Not that she values things the more for their being far-fetched, but if they be never so far off, if she must have them, she knows how to come by them.

2nd. She purchaseth lands, and enlargeth the demesne of the family; ver. 16, "She considereth a field, and buyeth it." She considers what an advantage it will be to the family, and what a good account it will turn to, and therefore she buys it; or rather, though she have never so much mind of it, she will not buy it till she has first considered it, whether it be worth her money, whether she can afford to take so much money out of her stock as must go to purchase it; whether the title be good, whether the ground will answer the character given of it, and whether she have money at command to pay for it. Many have undone themselves by buying without considering, but those who would make advantageous purchases, must consider, and then buy. She also plants a vineyard, but it is with the fruit of her hands; she doth not take up money, or run into debt to do it, but she doth it with what she can spare out of the gains of her own housewifery. Men should not lay out any thing upon superfluities, till, by the blessing of God upon their industry, they are got beforehand, and can afford it. And then the fruit of the vineyard is likely to be doubly sweet, when it is the fruit of honest industry.

3rd. She furnisheth her house well, and has good clothing for herself and her family; ver. 22, "She maketh herself coverings of tapestry" to hang her rooms, and she may be allowed to use them when they are of her own making; her own clothing is rich and fine, it is silk and purple, according to her place and rank. Though she is not so vain as to spend much time in dressing her, nor make the putting on of apparel her adorning, nor values herself by it, yet she has rich clothes, and puts them on well. The senator's robes her husband wears are of her own spinning, and they look better, and wear better, than any that is bought. She also gets good warm clothing for her children, and her servants' liveries; she needs not fear the cold of the most pinching winter, for she and her family are well provided with clothes, sufficient to keep out cold, which is the end chiefly to be aimed at in clothing. "All her household are clothed in scarlet," strong cloth, and fit for winter, and yet rich, and making a good appearance. 'They are all double clothed,' so some read it; have change of raiment, a winter suit and a summer suit.

4th. She trades abroad. She makes more than she and her household have occasion for, and therefore, when she has sufficiently stocked her family, she "sells fine linen and girdles to the merchants," ver. 24, who carry them to Tyre, the mart of the nations, or some other trading city. Those families are likely to thrive that sell more than they buy, as it is well with the kingdom when abundance of its home manufactures are exported. It is no disgrace to those of the best quality to sell what they can spare, nor to deal in trade, and send ventures by sea.

5th. She lays up for hereafter. "She shall rejoice in time to come," having laid in a good stock for her family, and having good portions for her children. Those that take pains when they are in their prime will have the pleasure and joy of it when they are old, both in reflecting upon it, and reaping the benefit of it.

4. She takes care of her family, and all the affairs of it; "gives meat to her household," ver. 15; to every one their portion of meat in due season, so that none of her servants have reason to complain of being kept short, or faring hard. She gives also a portion, that is, an allotment of work, as well as meat, to her maidens; they shall each of them know their business, and have their task. "She looks well to the ways of her household," ver. 27; that is, she inspects the manners of all her servants, that she may check what is amiss among them, and oblige them all to carry themselves decently, and do their duty to God and one another, as well as to her; as Job, who put away iniquity far from his tabernacle, and David, who would suffer no wicked thing in his house. She doth not intermeddle in the concerns of other people's houses; she thinks it enough for her to look well to her own.

5. She is charitable to the poor, ver. 20. She is as intent upon giving as she is upon getting; often serves the poor with her own hand, and she doth it freely, and cheerfully, and very liberally, with an outstretched hand. Nor doth she relieve her poor neighbours only, and those that are nigh at hand, but "she reacheth forth her hands to the needy" that are at a distance; seeking opportunities to do good, and to communicate, which is as good housewifery as any thing she doth.

6. She is discreet and obliging in all her discourse, not talkative, censorious, or peevish, as some are that know how to take pains; no, "she opens her mouth with wisdom." When she doth speak, it is with a great deal of prudence, and very much to the purpose; you may perceive by every word she saith how much she governs herself by the rules of wisdom. She not only takes prudent measures herself, but gives prudent advice to others; and this not as assuming the authority of a dictator, but with the affection of a friend, and an obliging air; "In her tongue is the law of kindness;" that is, all she saith is under the government of that law. The law of love and kindness is written in the heart, but it shews itself in the tongue. If we are kindly affectioned one to another, it will appear by affectionate expressions. It is called a law of kindness, because it gives law to others, to all she converseth with; her wisdom and kindness together put a commanding power into all she saith, they command respect, they command compliance. "How forcible are right words!" 'In her tongue is the law of grace,' or mercy, so some read it, and understand it of the word and law of God, which she delights to talk of among her children and servants. She is full of pious, religious discourse, and manageth it prudently; which shews how full her heart is of another world, even when her hands are most busy about this world.

7. That which completes and crowns her character is, that she fears the Lord, ver. 30. With all those good qualities she lacks not that one thing needful; she is truly pious, and in all she doth is guided and governed by principles of conscience, and regard to God. This is that which is here preferred far before beauty, that is vain and deceitful; all that are wise and good account it so, and neither value themselves nor others by it. Beauty recommends none to God, nor is it any certain indication of wisdom and goodness, but has deceived many a man who has made his choice of a wife by it. There may be an impure, deformed soul lodged in a comely and beautiful body; nay, many have been exposed by their beauty to such temptations as have been the ruin of their virtue, their honour, and their precious souls. It is a fading thing at the best, and therefore vain and deceitful; a fit of sickness will stain and sully it in a little time; a thousand accidents may blast this flower in its prime. However, old age will certainly wither it, and death and the grave consume it. But the fear of God reigning in the heart is the beauty of the soul, it recommends those that have it to the favour of God, is in his sight of great price; it will last for ever, and bid defiance to death itself, which consumes the beauty of the body, but consummates the beauty of the soul.

Thirdly. The happiness of this virtuous woman.

1. She has the comfort and satisfaction of her virtue in her own mind; ver. 25, "Strength and honour are her clothing," in which she wraps herself, that is, enjoys herself, and in which she appears to the world, and so recommends herself. She enjoys a firmness and constancy of mind, has spirit to bear up under the many crosses and disappointments which even the wise and virtuous must expect to meet with in this world, and this is her clothing for defence as well as decency. She deals honourably with all, and she has the pleasure of doing so, and shall rejoice in time to come; she shall reflect upon it with comfort when she comes to be old, that she was not idle or useless when she was young; in the day of death it will be a pleasure to her to think that she has lived to some good purpose; nay, she shall rejoice in an eternity to come, shall be recompensed for her goodness with fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

2. She is a great blessing to her relations, ver. 28. 1st. "Her children" grow up in her place, and they "call her blessed. They give her their good word, they are themselves a commendation to her, and they are ready to give great commendations of her; they pray for her, and bless God that they had such a good mother. It is a debt which they owe her, a part of that honour which the fifth commandment requires to be paid to father and mother; and it is a double honour that is due to a good father and a good mother. 2nd. Her husband thinks himself so happy in her, that he takes all occasions to speak well of her, as one of the best of women. It is no indecency at all, but a laudable instance of conjugal love, for husbands and wives to give one another their due praises.

3. She gets the good word of all her neighbours, as Ruth did, whom all the city of her people knew to be a virtuous woman, *Ru.* iii. 11. Virtue will have its praise, *Phil.* iv. 8. A woman that fears the Lord shall have praise of God, *Rom.* ii. 29, and of men too. It is here shewed, 1st. That she shall be highly praised; ver. 28, "Many have done virtuously." Virtuous women it seems are precious jewels, but not such rare jewels as was represented, ver. 10. There have been many, but such a one as this cannot be paralleled; who can find her equal? She excelleth them all. Note, Those that are good should aim and covet to excel in virtue. "Many daughters" in their father's house, and in the single state "have done virtuously;" but a good wife, if she be virtuous, excels them all, and doth more good in her place than they can do in theirs. Or, as some explain it, a man cannot have his house so well kept by good daughters as by a good wife. 2nd. That she shall be incontestably praised without contradiction, ver. 31. Some are praised above what is their due; but those that praise her do but "give her of the fruit of her hands;" that is, they give her that which she has dearly earned, and which is justly owing to her; she is wronged if she have it not. Note, Those ought to be praised, the fruit of whose hands is praiseworthy. The tree is known by its fruits, and therefore, if the fruit be good, the tree must have our good word. If her children be dutiful and respectful to her, and carry themselves as they ought, they then give her of the fruit of her hands; she reaps the benefit of all the care she has taken of them, and thinks herself well paid. Children must thus study to requite their parents, and this is shewing piety at home, 1 *Tim.* v. 4. But if men be unjust, the thing will speak itself; "her own works will praise her in the gates," openly before all the people. *First.* She leaves it to her own works to praise her, and doth not court the applause of men. Those are none of the truly virtuous women that love to hear themselves commended. *Secondly.* "Her own

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE PROVERBS.

works will praise her." If her relations and neighbours altogether hold their peace, her good works will proclaim her praise. The widows gave the best encomium of Dorcas, when they "shewed the coats and garments she had made for the poor," *Acts* ix. 39. *Thirdly.* The least that can be expected from her neighbours is that they should let her own works praise her, and do nothing to hinder them. They that do that which is good, let them have praise of the same, *Rom.* xiii. 3; and let not us enviously say or do any thing to the diminishing of it, but be provoked by it to a holy emulation. Let none have an ill report from us that have a good report, even of the truth itself. Thus is shut up this looking-glass for ladies, which they are desired to open, and dress themselves by it; and if they do so, their adorning will be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Twenty chapters of the book of *Proverbs*, (beginning with *ch.* x. and ending with *ch.* xxix.,) consisting mostly of entire sentences in each verse, could not well be reduced to proper heads, and the contents of them gathered; I have, therefore, here put the contents of all these chapters together, which perhaps may be of some use to those who desire to see at once all that is said of any one head in these chapters. I take the heads in no method, but as they occurred in reading the chapters. Some of the verses, perhaps, I have not put under the same heads that another would have put them under, but the most of them fall, I hope, naturally enough to the places I have assigned them.

1. Of the comfort or grief parents have in their children, according as they are wise or foolish, godly or ungodly, *ch.* x. 1; xv. 20; xvii. 21, 25; xix. 13, 26; xxiii. 15, 16, 24, 25; xxvii. 11; xxix. 3.
2. Of the world's insufficiency, and religion's sufficiency, to make us happy, *ch.* x. 2, 3; xi. 4; and the preference to be therefore given to the gains of virtue above those of this world, *ch.* xv. 16, 17; xvi. 8, 16; xvii. 1; xix. 1; xxviii. 6, 11.
3. Of slothfulness and diligence, *ch.* x. 4, 26; xii. 11, 24, 27; xiii. 4, 23; xv. 19; xvi. 26; xviii. 9; xix. 15, 24; xx. 4, 13; xxi. 5, 25, 26; xxii. 13, 29; xxiv. 30—34; xxvi. 13—16; xxvii. 18, 23—27; xxviii. 19. Particularly the improving or neglecting opportunities, *ch.* vi. 6; x. 5.
4. The happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, *ch.* x. 6, 9, 16, 24, 25, 27—30; xi. 3, 5—8, 18—21, 31; xii. 2, 3, 7, 13, 14, 21, 26, 28; xiii. 6, 9, 14, 15, 21, 22, 25; xiv. 11, 14, 19, 32; xv. 6, 8, 9, 24, 26, 29; xx. 7; xxi. 12, 15, 16, 18, 21; xxii. 12; xxviii. 10, 18; xxix. 6.
5. Of honour and dishonour, *ch.* x. 7; xii. 8, 9; xviii. 3; xxvi. 1; xxvii. 21; and of vainglory, *ch.* xxv. 14, 27; xxvii. 2.
6. The wisdom of obedience, and folly of disobedience, *ch.* x. 8, 17; xii. 1, 15; xiii. 1, 13, 18; xv. 5, 10, 12, 31, 32; xix. 16; xxviii. 4, 7, 9.
7. Of mischievousness and usefulness, *ch.* x. 10, 23; xi. 9—11, 23, 27; xii. 5, 6, 12, 18, 20; xiii. 2; xiv. 22; xvi. 29, 30; xvii. 11; xxi. 10; xxiv. 8; xxvi. 23, 27.
8. The praise of wise and good discourse, and the hurt and shame of an ungoverned tongue, *ch.* x. 11, 13, 14, 20, 21, 31, 32; xi. 30; xiv. 3; xv. 2, 4, 7, 23, 28; xvi. 20, 23, 24; xvii. 7; xviii. 4, 7, 20, 21; xx. 15; xxi. 23; xxiii. 9; xxiv. 26; xxv. 11.
9. Of love and hatred, peaceableness and contention, *ch.* x. 12; xv. 17; xvii. 1, 9, 14, 19; xviii. 6, 17—19; xx. 3; xxv. 8; xxvi. 17, 21; xxix. 9.
10. Of the rich and poor, *ch.* x. 15, 22; xi. 28; xiii. 7, 8; xiv. 20, 24; xviii. 11, 23; xix. 1, 4, 7, 22; xxii. 2, 7; xxviii. 6, 11; xxix. 13.
11. Of lying, fraud, and dissimulation, and of truth and sincerity, *ch.* x. 18; xii. 17, 19, 22; xiii. 5; xvii. 4; xx. 14, 17; xxi. 8; xxvi. 18, 19, 24—26, 28.
12. Of slandering, *ch.* x. 18; xvi. 27; xxv. 23.
13. Of talkativeness and silence, *ch.* x. 19; xi. 12; xii. 23; xiii. 3; xvii. 27, 28; xxix. 11, 20.
14. Of justice and injustice, *ch.* xi. 1; xiii. 11; xvi. 8, 11; xvii. 15, 26; xviii. 5; xx. 10, 23; xxii. 28; xxiii. 10, 11; xxix. 24.
15. Of pride and humility, *ch.* xi. 2; xiii. 10; xv. 25, 33; xvi. 5, 18, 19; xviii. 12; xxi. 4; xxv. 6, 7; xxviii. 25; xxix. 23.
16. Of despising and respecting others, *ch.* xi. 12; xiv. 21.
17. Of tale-bearing, *ch.* xi. 13; xvi. 28; xviii. 8; xx. 19; xxvi. 20, 22.
18. Of rashness and deliberation, *ch.* xi. 14; xv. 22; xviii. 13; xix. 2; xx. 5, 18; xxi. 29; xxii. 3; xxv. 8—10.
19. Of suretiship, *ch.* xi. 15; xvii. 18; xx. 16; xxii. 26, 27; xxvii. 13.
20. Of good and bad women, or wives, *ch.* xi. 16, 22; xii. 4; xiv. 1; xviii. 22; xix. 13, 14; xxi. 9, 19; xxv. 24; xxvii. 15, 16.
21. Of mercifulness and unmercifulness, *ch.* xi. 17; xii. 10; xiv. 21; xix. 17; xxi. 13.
22. Of charity to the poor, and uncharitableness, *ch.* xi. 24—26; xiv. 31; xvii. 5; xxii. 9, 16, 22, 23; xxviii. 27; xxix. 7.
23. Of covetousness and contentment, *ch.* xi. 29; xv. 16, 17, 27; xxiii. 4, 5.
24. Of anger and meekness, *ch.* xii. 16; xiv. 17, 29; xv. 1, 18; xvi. 32; xvii. 12, 26; xix. 11, 19; xxii. 24, 25; xxv. 15, 28; xxvi. 21; xxix. 22.
25. Of melancholy and cheerfulness, *ch.* xii. 25; xiv. 10, 13; xv. 13, 15; xvii. 22; xviii. 14; xxv. 20, 25.
26. Of hope and expectation, *ch.* xiii. 12, 19.
27. Of prudence and foolishness, *ch.* xiii. 16; xiv. 8, 18, 33; xv. 14, 21; xvi. 21, 22; xvii. 24; xviii. 2, 15; xxiv. 3—7, 27; xxvi. 6—11; xxviii. 5.
28. Of treachery and fidelity, *ch.* xiii. 17; xxv. 13, 19.
29. Of good and bad company, *ch.* xiii. 20; xiv. 7; xxviii. 7; xxix. 3.
30. Of the education of children, *ch.* xiii. 24; xix. 18; xx. 11; xxii. 6, 15; xxiii. 12—14; xxix. 15, 17.
31. Of the fear of the Lord, *ch.* xiv. 2, 26, 27; xv. 16, 33; xvi. 6; xix. 23; xxii. 4; xxiii. 17, 18.
32. Of true and false witness-bearing, *ch.* xiv. 5, 25; xix. 5, 19, 28; xxi. 28; xxiv. 28; xxv. 18.
33. Of scorners, *ch.* xiv. 6, 9; xxi. 24; xxii. 10; xxiv. 9; xxix. 8.
34. Of credulity and caution, *ch.* xiv. 15, 16; xxvii. 12.
35. Of kings and their subjects, *ch.* xiv. 28, 34, 35; xvi. 10, 12—15; xix. 6, 12; xx. 2, 8, 26, 28; xxii. 11; xxiv. 23—25; xxv. 2—5; xxviii. 2, 3, 15, 16; xxix. 4, 12, 14, 26.
36. Of envy, especially envying sinners, *ch.* xiv. 30; xxiii. 17, 18; xxiv. 1, 2, 19, 20; xxvii. 4.
37. Of God's omniscience, and his universal providence, *ch.* xv. 3, 11; xvi. 1, 4, 9, 33; xvii. 3; xix. 21; xx. 12, 24; xxi. 1, 30, 31; xxix. 26.
38. Of a good and ill name, *ch.* xv. 30; xxii. 1.
39. Of men's good opinion of themselves, *ch.* xiv. 12; xvi. 2, 25; xx. 6; xxi. 2; xxvi. 12; xxviii. 26.
40. Of devotion towards God, and dependence on him, *ch.* xvi. 3; xviii. 10; xxiii. 26; xxvii. 1; xxviii. 25; xxix. 25.
41. Of the happiness of God's favour, *ch.* xvi. 7; xxix. 26.
42. Excitements to get wisdom, *ch.* xvi. 16; xviii. 1; xix. 8, 20; xxii. 17—21; xxiii. 15, 16, 22—25; xxiv. 13, 14; xxvii. 11.
43. Cautions against temptation, *ch.* xvi. 17; xix. 27.
44. Of old age and youth, *ch.* xvi. 31; xvii. 6; xx. 29.
45. Of servants, *ch.* xvii. 2; xix. 10; xxix. 19, 21.
46. Of bribery, *ch.* xvii. 8, 23; xviii. 16; xxi. 14; xxviii. 21.
47. Of reproof and correction, *ch.* xvii. 10; xix. 25, 29; xx. 30; xxi. 11; xxv. 12; xxvi. 3; xxvii. 5, 6, 22; xxviii. 23; xxix. 1.
48. Of ingratitude, *ch.* xvii. 13.
49. Of friendship, *ch.* xvii. 17; xviii. 24; xxv. 17; xxvii. 9, 10, 14, 17.
50. Of sensual pleasures, *ch.* xxi. 17; xxiii. 1—3, 6—8, 19—21; xxvii. 7.
51. Of drunkenness, *ch.* xx. 1; xxiii. 29—35.
52. Of the universal corruption of nature, *ch.* xx. 9.
53. Of flattery, *ch.* xx. 19; xxvi. 28; xxviii. 23; xxix. 5.
54. Of undutiful children, *ch.* xx. 20; xxviii. 24.
55. Of the short continuance of what is ill-gotten, *ch.* xx. 21; xxi. 6, 7; xxii. 8; xxviii. 8.
56. Of revenge, *ch.* xx. 22; xxiv. 17, 18, 29.
57. Of sacrilege, *ch.* xx. 25.
58. Of conscience, *ch.* xx. 27; xxvii. 19.
59. Of the preference of moral duties before ceremonial, *ch.* xv. 8; xxi. 3, 27.
60. Of prodigality and wastefulness, *ch.* xxi. 20.
61. The triumphs of wisdom and godliness, *ch.* xxi. 22; xxiv. 15, 16.
62. Of frowardness and tractableness, *ch.* xxii. 5.
63. Of uncleanness, *ch.* xxii. 14; xxiii. 27, 28.
64. Of fainting in affliction, *ch.* xxiv. 10.
65. Of helping the distressed, *ch.* xxiv. 11, 12.
66. Of loyalty to the government, *ch.* xxiv. 21, 22.
67. Of forgiving enemies, *ch.* xxv. 21, 22.
68. Of causeless curses, *ch.* xxvi. 2.
69. Of answering fools, *ch.* xxvi. 4, 5.
70. Of unsettledness and unsatisfiedness, *ch.* xxvii. 8, 20.
71. Of cowardice and courage, *ch.* xxviii. 1.
72. The people's interest in the character of their rulers, *ch.* xxviii. 12, 28; xxix. 2, 16; xi. 10, 11.
73. The benefit of repentance and holy fear, *ch.* xxviii. 13, 14.
74. The punishment of murder, *ch.* xxviii. 17.
75. Of hastening to be rich, *ch.* xxviii. 20, 22.
76. The enmity of the wicked against the godly, *ch.* xxix. 10, 27.
77. The necessity of the means of grace, *ch.* xxix. 18.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

CHAP. I.—20. *Wisdom* (Wisdoms, Marg.) *crieth without, &c.* The cry, the chief place of concourse, the outpouring fountain of the Spirit are identified, *Jno.* vii. 37, 38. This very remonstance, accompanied, as here, with a stirring invitation, is also given in prophecy from the Saviour's own mouth, *Isa.* lv. 1—3. The terms of the promise forbid any other than a personal application. We can easily conceive a spirit to have wisdom; but that an attribute of wisdom may dispense his Spirit or influence to others, is beyond conception. Moreover the Messiah assumed this personal title, (*Mat.* xxiii. 34, with *Lu.* xi. 49;) and his apostle expressly gives it to him, (1 *Cor.* i. 24.) The plural noun, joined with a singular verb, (Marg. compare *ch.* ix. 1,) seems to point him out as the author and whole substance of all wisdom; 'the very wisdom of the most wise God, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and by whom rivers of wisdom are poured into man by the word,' (*Glass.* lib. iii. tract i. can. 24.) The future tense in the original may possibly give a prophetic character to the proclamation. Altogether, 'this interpretation gives to the exhortation of wisdom a peculiar majesty and emphasis; setting forth the eternal uncreated wisdom of the Father, using all means to draw men to God; both by his works and by his word, inviting all men to know the truth.'—*Scott, Bishop Hall.—Exposition of the Book of Proverbs,* by Rev. C. Bridges, M.A., from which work the remaining Notes on this book have, with the author's kind permission, been extracted.

CHAP. III.—5. *Lean not to thine own understanding.* It is, indeed, our plain duty, not to neglect our understanding, but to cultivate it diligently in all its

faculties. In a world of such extended knowledge, ignorance is the fruit of sloth, dissipation, or misguided delusion; but lean not to thine understanding. Lean—trust in the Lord. Self-dependence is folly, *ch.* xxviii. 26; rebellion, *Jer.* ii. 13; ix, 23; ruin, *Gen.* iii. 5, 6; *Isa.* xlvii. 10, 11. 'The great folly of man in trials,' as Dr. Owen justly remarks, 'is leaning to or upon his own understanding and counsels. What is the issue of it? Whenever in our trials we consult our own understandings, hearken to self-reasonings, though they seem to be good, and tending to our preservation, yet the principle of living by faith is stifled, and we shall in the issue be cast down by our own counsels.'—*Treatise on Temptation, ch.* viii.; compare *Job* xviii. 7; *Hos.* x. 8.

CHAP. IV.—18. *Shining light. Isa.* lx. 20. The LXX. version is very beautiful—'The ways of the righteous shine like the light; they go on shining, until the day be perfected.' Dr. Watts' Hymn on the Summer Evening—written for the infant mind, but glowing to the finest taste—furnishes a most exquisite exposition of this verse,—

'How fine has the day been; how bright was the sun,' &c.

CHAP. VI.—20-35. And shall not this fearful picture of sin and its consequence (which Solomon, alas! was too well fitted to draw) teach us to avoid every thing that may be temptation; to be sensitive to the first intimations of its becoming so; to close every avenue of sense to the entrance of this seductive poison; to shun all communications that taint the purity of taste, that familiarize the mind with impurity, that give a vivid interest to associations from which a chaste imagination recoils with disgust? Let us learn to seek Divine strength to "watch and pray" continually; and, while we "think we stand, to take heed lest we fall," 1 *Cor.* x. 12.

CHAP. VIII.—1. *Doth not wisdom cry?* We assume the speaker to be personal, essential Wisdom. Apart from the general reasons before given, this description could not without unnatural force apply to an attribute. It sets out, I. Personal existence—brought forth—brought up—in conjunction with Deity—by him, ver. 24, 30. II. Personal properties, 1. Set up (anointed, Heb.) from everlasting, for distinct office, ver. 23. 2. The efficient cause in the work of creation, ver. 27—30. 3. Having wisdom, ver. 14; which, as an attribute itself, could not be the property of an attribute; and strength, ver. 14, an independent quality, not a property of wisdom. 4. Personal authority, ver. 15, 16. 5. Leading into the ways of truth ver. 19, 20. 6. Causing to inherit, ver. 21. III. Personal affections—hatred, ver. 13; love, ver. 17; joy, ver. 30, 31. IV. Giving personal promises, ver. 21. V. Commanding obedience as a matter of life and death, ver. 32—36. Whether Solomon fully understood his own words, may be a question, 1 *Pet.* i. 10; but receiving the words as from God, weighing their natural force, comparing them with Scripture parallels, we doubt not that they describe—not an attribute, but a person—Eternal—Omnipotent—in the most endearing relation to man—his Creator—Mediator—Saviour. 22. *The Lord possessed me.* It must be a perverted imagination that can suppose an attribute here. So glorious are the rays of eternal supreme Deity, distinct personality, and essential unity, that the mysterious, ever-blessed Being—"the Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God," *Jno.* i. 1, 2, now undoubtedly stands before us. Curiously to pry into the mode of his subsistence, would be "intruding into those things which we have not seen," *Col.* ii. 18; compare 1 *Tim.* vi. 16. To receive his own revelation of himself is our reverential privilege.

CHAP. X.—12. *But love covereth all sins.* The first clause of the verse, compared with the apostle's application of the second, clearly proves that the subject is the covering of our brother's sin before men. Este—one of the most evangelical of the Romish interpreters—thus limits the application. The gloss therefore of man's covering sins before God is utterly groundless, compare *ch.* xvii. 9. Calvin and Geier conceive *Jas.* v. 20 to be only an allusion to the proverb. The latter adds—'It is one thing to cover sin before men; another thing to cover it before the Lord. The first is an act of love, (1 *Cor.* xiii. 4; *Gal.* vi. 2.) The last requires an infinite price, equal to the turning away of the eternal wrath of God,' *Rom.* iii. 25; 1 *Jno.* i. 7; *Ps.* xxxii. 1, &c.

CHAP. XI.—1. *A just weight,* (a perfect stone, marg.) In many shops in Palestine now the only weights in the balance are smooth stones. *Narrative of Scottish Mission to the Jews.—Saphet,* p. 274. Compare *ch.* xvi. 11, marg.

CHAP. XIII.—10. *Only by pride cometh contention.* This mischievous principle spreads in families, or among friends. 'Some point of honour must be maintained; some affront must be resented; some rival must be crushed or eclipsed; some renowned character emulated; or some superior equalled and surpassed.'—*Scott,* in loco. Even in trifling disputes between relatives or neighbours—perhaps between Christians—each party contends vehemently for his rights, instead of satisfying himself with the testimony of his conscience, and submitting rather to be misunderstood and misjudged than to break the bond of the Divine brotherhood, 1 *Cor.* vi. 7. In the wide field of the world we may well ask, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not from this lust?" *Jas.* iv. 1; often has wounded pride, *Jud.* xii. 1—6, even without any proved injury, 2 *Kin.* xiv. 10, brought destructive contention upon a land.

CHAP. XIV.—26. *In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence.* The fear of the Lord—such is the Christian paradox—emboldens. Its childlike spirit shuts out all terrors of conscience, all forebodings of eternity. Confidence—strong confidence—issues out of it. Abraham sacrificed his son in the fear of God; yet fully confident, "that God was able to raise him up from the dead," *Gen.* xxii. 12, with *Heb.* xi. 17, 18. The fear of God led the Babylonish captives with unshaken confidence into the fiery furnace, *Dan.* iii. 16—19; and thus does the child of God, while walking in godly fear, rejoice in confidence, even in the most frowning dispensation, *Job* i. 1, with xiii. 15; *Mic.* vii. 7—9; *Hab.* iii. 16—19. His covenant privilege covers him, *Jer.* xxxii. 40; "and that wicked one toucheth him not," 1 *Jno.* v. 18: compare *ch.* iii. 21—26; xix. 23.

CHAP. XV.—7. *Disperse knowledge.* The "right use of knowledge" is, first to "lay it up" in a storehouse, *ch.* x. 14, with ver. 2; then out of the storehouse to disperse it. The sower scatters the seed in the furrow, and calculates upon a proportionate harvest, 2 *Cor.* ix. 6. Thus the lips of the wise disperse the precious seed, "giving a portion to seven, and also to eight;" not discouraged by trifling difficulties, but "sowing morning and evening," and committing the result to God, *Eccl.* xi. 2, 4, 6. Our Lord thus dispersed the heavenly knowledge of his Gospel, *Mat.* iv. 23; ix. 35; *Ps.* xl. 9, 10. He commanded his apostles to scatter the seed through the vast field of the world, *Mat.* xxviii. 19, 20. The persecution of the church was overruled for this great end, *Acts* xiii. 1—4. The reformers widely dispersed their treasures both by preaching and writing, and rich indeed was the fruit. Do we remember, that our gifts and talents are the riches of the church, 1 *Cor.* xii. 7; 1 *Pet.* iv. 10; that, like our father Abraham, we are blessed, not for our own sakes, but to "be a blessing?" *Gen.* xii. 2; and does not conscience speak of the waste of many, even important opportunities of intercourse with our fellow-sinners or fellow-Christians, when not an atom of knowledge has been dispersed? 13. *The spirit is broken.* Did we realize, as we ought, our present privilege, and grasp our eternal prospects, no sorrow of the heart would break our spirit. 'I wonder many times,' says Samuel Rutherford, 'that ever a child of God, should have a sad heart, considering what his Lord is preparing for him.' The gleam of the present sunshine is the earnest of what it will be, when, as he again beautifully observes, 'we shall be on the sunny side of the brae.' 23. *A word spoken in due season.* Thus Luther, after the pattern of the great apostle, gladly acknowledged his obligation: 'The word of a brother, pronounced from Holy Scripture in a time of need, carries an inconceivable weight with it. The Holy Spirit accompanies it, and by it moves and animates the hearts of his people, as their circumstances require. Thus Timothy, and Titus, and Epaphroditus, and the brethren who met St. Paul from Rome, cheered his spirit; however much they might be inferior to him in learning and skill in the word of God. The greatest saints have their times of faintness, when others are stronger than they.'—*Scott's Contin. of Milner,* i. 332.

CHAP. XVI.—22. *Understanding is a well-spring of life.* A religion of notions—what is it? A dreaming theory! All is death. There is no pulse in the affection, no motion in the heart; but when the understanding is enlightened, to apprehend spiritual things in their spiritual glory, notions become principles. Feelings flow from light, and are filled with life. The Book of God shines forth with new glory. Every verse is a sunbeam—every promise is irradiated with Divine love. What before was unmeaning sound becomes now "spirit and life," *Jno.* vi. 63. This spiritual understanding is indeed a well-spring of life, *Jno.* iv. 14; vii. 38; not a work on the surface; not a mere forced impulse; not the summer stream, but a deep-flowing fountain, *ch.* xviii. 4. If it be not always bubbling, *ch.* xvii. 27, 28, there is always a supply at the bottom-spring. 32. *He that ruleth his spirit.* 'So old and no older,' wrote Philip Henry in his Diary, when he had completed his thirtieth year, 'Alexander was, when he conquered the great world; but I have not yet subdued the little world—myself.' Often does the Christian soldier win the day, even when he has been wounded in the fight. Yet think not the war is ended, because a battle is won. No quarter can be given, no truce allowed on either side. The enemy may have been stabbed at the heart; yet will he get up, and renew the fight. Thou must walk, yea, sleep, in thine armour. It must be worn, not laid up. There is "no discharge from this war," till thy body of sin and death is laid in the grave. Meanwhile victory is declared, before the conflict begins. Let every day then be a day of triumph. The promises are to present victory. With such stirring, stimulating hopes, thou shalt surely have rule, if thou wilt but dare to have it; and if thou hast not courage enough to be a Christian, thou must be a slave for life to the hardest of taskmasters. This bloodless victory, so contrary to the turmoil of war, is the crown of Christian grace. No other grace of the Gospel can be exercised without its influence. Yet the daily conquest anticipates the final victory, the spoils of which will be reaped throughout eternity.

CHAP. XVII.—8. *A gift—it prospereth.* 'A gift is so tempting, that it can no more be refused than a lovely jewel, by him to whom it is presented; and such is its power, it commonly prevails over all men, despatches all business, carries all causes, and—in a word—effects whatever a man desires.'—Bishop Patrick. 'What a description,' adds Mr. Scott, 'of the mercenary selfishness of mankind!' compare also ver. 23; xviii. 16. Even the heathen conscience seems to have had a just perception of this evil. The saying of Philip of Macedon is well known, 'there was no fortress so strong, but it might be stormed, if an ass laden with gold was brought to the gate.' The poet finely illustrates this remark, referring also to the current report, that—'not Philip, but Philip's gold, conquered Greece.'—*Hor. Ode.* lib. iii. 16. 17. *A friend—a brother.* To see the Son of God in our nature, that he might be our friend and brother; to hear him "not ashamed to call us brethren;"—this is a mystery of friendship—unsearchable. Truly is this friend,—he alone, worthy of our unlimited confidence. Such is the constancy of his love—"at all times,"—even unto death.

'Mine is an unchanging love;
Higher than the heights above;
Deeper than the depths beneath;
Firm and faithful, strong as death.'—*Cowper.*

CHAP. XVIII.—8. *Talebearer.* 'The word properly signifies a pedlar, who buys goods (stolen ones it may be) at one place, and sells them at another, taking care to make his own market of them. So a talebearer makes his own visits, to pick up at one place, and utter at another, that which he thinks will lessen his neighbour's reputation, that he may build his own upon it.'—*M. Henry's Sermon on Friendly Visits.* Compare *ch.* xi. 13; xx. 19. 14. *Who can bear?* Yet is not this wounded spirit the Christian's first seal of mercy, the preparation for all future and eternal mercy? *Acts* ii. 37; xvi. 27—30. Bitter indeed is the anguish, when the mass of sin is raised from the grave of oblivion, and "set in order before our eyes," *Ps.* l. 21; but is not this the sight that makes Jesus and his free salvation inexpressibly precious? *Acts* ii. 41—47; xvi. 31—34: compare *Mat.* ix. 12; and does not this spirit place us within the sphere of his healing commission? *Isa.* lxi. 1, 2. We ask now—not who can bear, but who can heal? Well did Luther say, (and there is no better judge on such matters,) 'It is as easy to make a world as to ease a troubled conscience.' Both are creation-work, requiring the almightiness of God, *Gen.* i. 1; *Isa.* lvii. 19; to him that "wounded must we return for healing," *Hos.* vi. 1; his remedy is the sight of himself wounded for us, *Isa.* liii. 5; and that sight—so healing—so reviving—how does it quicken the soul to a cordial and animated faith, issuing in the song of everlasting praise!

CHAP. XIX.—27. *The instruction that causeth to err.* Hear the same caution from the lips of our Divine Master—"Beware of false prophets. Take heed what ye hear," *Mat.* vii. 15; *Mar.* iv. 24; all instruction is not to life. Teachers of evil, "ministers of Satan," 2 *Cor.* xi. 13—15, abound; and their instruction, causing to err from the words of knowledge, is more palatable to the perverseness of the heart, more alluring to the inexperience of the young, than solid Scripture teaching, *Isa.* xxx. 10; *Jer.* v. 31. The apostle reproved the Galatian church for listening to teachers, causing them to err fatally from the words of knowledge, *Gal.* i. 6, 7; iii. 1—4; v. 7, 8; and would he not have warned us against the same teaching, so fearfully prevalent: placing ordinances in the stead of Christ, or conjoined with him; man's proud work of "voluntary humility," and external service, in the room of pure simplicity of reliance on the Redeemer's works? When the soul has thus "fallen from grace," *Gal.* v. 4; what ground of confidence can we bring before God? What is his service but the bondage of outward ceremonies, leading to cheerless despondency?

CHAP. XXI.—1. *As the rivers of water.* The allusion evidently is to channels made for the distribution of waters according to will, for gardens or irrigation of fields.—See *Paxton's Illustrations,* i. 173.—*Bp. Lowth's Note on Isaiah* i. 30. 8. *The robbery of the wicked.* The marginal reading seems to imply aggravated destruction—probably with shame: compare 2 *Sam.* xii. 31; *Heb.* xi. 37; also,

Lu. xii. 46. 'Search your chests; search your hearts, all ye that hear me this day; and if any of you find any of this adulterated gold among your heaps, away with it. Else know that, as Chrysostom wittily says, 'You have locked up a thief in your counting-house, which shall carry away all: and, if ye look not to it sooner, your soul with it.'—*Bp. Hall's Sermon on the Righteous Mammon:* Works, v. 109, 110.

CHAP. XXII.—1. *A good name.* This ornament is too often indiscreetly underrated. 'So long as my conscience is clear, I care not what the world think or say of me. Other consciences are not my judges.' Now, in resisting the efforts of the world to turn us aside from the path of duty, 'we may seasonably comfort ourselves in our own innocency, fly for refuge against the injuries of tongues into our own consciences, as into a castle, there repose ourselves in security, disregarding the reproaches of evil men.'—*Bp. Sanderson's Sermon on Ecclesiastes,* vii. 1, § 30: see also *Sir M. Hale's Great Audit.* But it should be our great care to stop the mouths of gainsayers; and, while we count it "a very small matter to be judged of man's judgment," most anxiously to "provide things honest, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men," 1 *Cor.* iv. 3, with 2 *Cor.* viii. 21: compare 1 *Cor.* ix. 15; 2 *Cor.* xi. 12; 1 *Pet.* ii. 12. 6. *Train up.* All commentators by their different versions admit the significance of the original terms. *Imbue*—Schultens, Geier—'Give it the first dip, dye, seasoning.' *Initia*—Begin the first instruction—Lay the groundwork—the first stone. *Instrue.* This is substantially the margin, catechize—like Abraham's servants—instructed (catechized, margin) alike in the art of war and in the fear of God, *Gen.* xiv. 14; xviii. 19. The word elsewhere conveys the idea of dedication to the service of God. (Compare *Deu.* xx. 5; 1 *Kin.* viii. 6; 2 *Chr.* vii. 5; title to *Ps.* xxx.) In this view a judicious expositor illustrates it, 'As a house, altar, or temple newly built, and not yet profaned, is fitted by certain rites and sacrifices for its future use, so a child, as a newly-formed edifice, is fitted by a certain course for the service and the church, and his heart is made meet as an habitation of God, and the temple of the Holy Ghost.'—*Geier.* We cannot indeed anticipate an universal fulfilment of the promise; yet, as believers in the inspiration of Scripture, we are bound implicitly to receive it. The cases that appear to contravene the educational promise may be fairly explained. The promise is not falsified, but the Lord's time of fulfilment is not yet come. Or, has not some important element of education been omitted? Has not some disproportion of one or other part of the system hindered the efficiency of the whole? Has instruction and discipline been always accompanied with prayer and faith? Or has prayer been always confirmed by consistent practice? Does not man's indolence, self-indulgence, unbelief, unfaithfulness to the conditions implied, wither the blessing? While Abraham, training up his family for God, shall find him "faithful that hath promised," (*Gen.* xviii. 19, with *Heb.* x. 23,) the Elis and the Davids—good men, but bad parents, (1 *Sam.* iii. 13; 1 *Kin.* i. 6,) shall know "God's breach of promise." (*Num.* xiv. 34.) It is too deep for man to reconcile the absolute election of God with weak, imperfect, unfaithful fulfilment of duty. Nevertheless, in all cases, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." (*Rom.* iii. 4.) 5. *Foolishness.* Observe—it is foolishness, not childishness. That might belong to an unfallen child. No moral guilt attaches to the recollection, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I thought as a child," 1 *Cor.* xiii. 11. 'A child is to be punished,' as Mr. Scott wisely observed, 'not for being a child, but for being a wicked child.'—*Life,* p. 622. 20, 21. *Know the certainty, &c.* Let us not forget the great end of this revelation, that we may know the certainty of the things; that we may give an answer concerning our confidence. The Gospel itself was written with a special reference to this important end, *Lu.* i. 1—4; 2 *Pet.* i. 15, 16. Yet this confidence is a Divine attainment. "The word must come with power, and with the Holy Ghost," in order to come "with much asurance," 1 *Thes.* i. 5.

CHAP. XXIII.—13. *Withhold not correction.* Christian parents do not always recognise the spiritual standard of discipline. "Foolishness is bound in the heart" of the parent, no less than "of the child." The wild ass's colt, *Job* xi. 12, must always need its measure of correction. The rule therefore is, notwithstanding all the pleas of pity and fondness, withhold it not. Do the work wisely, firmly, lovingly. Persevere, notwithstanding apparently unsuccessful results. Connect it with prayer, faith, careful instruction.—'If parents' (*Matthew Henry's Life, ch.* xiii.) 'would not correct their children except in a praying frame, when they can "lift up their hands without wrath," it would neither provoke God nor them.' 16. *Yea, my reins shall rejoice.* The reins, as deeply seated in the body, are a frequent Scriptural illustration of the inner thoughts and affections, *Ps.* xvi. 7; xxvi. 2; *Jer.* xii. 2; *Lam.* iii. 13. None but a Christian parent knows the yearning anxiety, the many tears, prayers, and "travailing in birth again" for the soul of a beloved child, or the fervour of joy and praise, when the first budding of heavenly wisdom bursts to view, ver. 24, 25; x. 1; xv. 20; xxix. 3. The sight brings joy into the innermost depths of the bosom. Parents, who sympathise not with these sensations, and with whom Solomon's language is unfelt and uninteresting, realize neither their responsibilities nor their privileges.

CHAP. XXIV.—16. *A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.* The just man rising from his fall is most unwarrantably applied to the perseverance of the saints. The word fall frequently occurs in this book; but always in reference to trouble, not sin. (*Ch.* xi. 5, 14; xiii. 17; xvii. 20; xxvi. 27; xxviii. 10, 14, 18.) The antithesis obviously fixes this meaning. 'There are plain texts enough to prove every Scriptural doctrine; but pressing texts into any particular service, contrary to their plain meaning, not only serves to deceive the inconsiderate, but to rivet the prejudices, and confirm the suspicions, of opposers; just as bringing forward a few witnesses of suspicious character would cause all those, however deserving of credit, who should be examined in the same cause, to be suspected also, and create a prejudice against it in the minds of the court and of all present.'—*Scott.*

CHAP. XXV.—20. *As vinegar upon nitre.* The nitre of Scripture is not that salt that commonly goes by the name, but a soda or mineral alkali, (the Roman natrum,) which strongly ferments with all acids. Dr. Blayney remarks on *Jer.* ii. 22, (the only other example of the word,) 'In many parts of Asia it is called soap-earth, because it is dissolved in water, and used like soap in washing.' 24. *Brawling woman.* This proverb has been given before, *ch.* xxi. 9: compare *ch.* v. 19; xix. 13; xxvii. 15. Scriptural repetitions shew not want of matter, but the deep importance of the matter laid out. Such is the vexation connected with this evil, that the most uncomfortable dwelling, where the soul might retire for communion with God, would be a grateful alternative. Christian women! think not these proverbs unworthy your attention. Be it so, that you answer not to the revolting picture; but surely the repeated exhibition strongly inculcates the cultivation of the opposite graces, the absence of which clouds the female character in painful deformity.

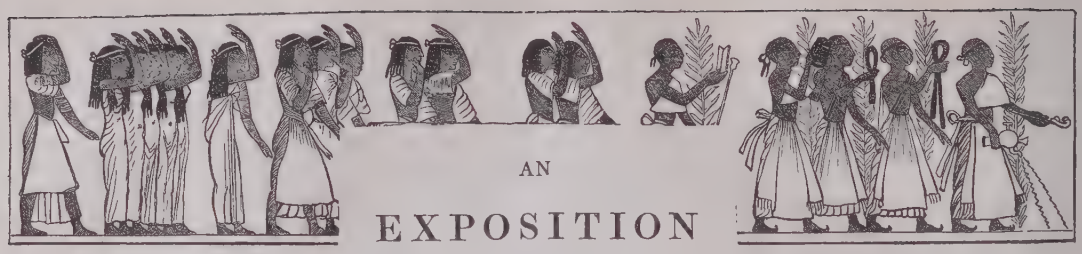
CHAP. XXVII.—5. *Faithful are the wounds of a friend.* Philip Henry beautifully describes the proper offices and uses of Christian reproof. 'To reprove a brother is like as, when he is fallen to help him up again; when he is wounded, to help to cure him; when he hath broken a bone, to help to set it; when he is out of the way, to put him in it; when he is fallen into the fire, to pluck him out; when he hath contracted defilement, to help to cleanse him.' —*Life,* ch. x.

CHAP. XXIX.—15. *A child left to himself.* 'We pity orphans,' remarked a wise Christian parent, 'who have neither father nor mother to care for them. A child indulged is more to be pitied—it has no parent. It is its own master, peevish, froward, headstrong, blind, born to a double portion of trouble and sorrow above what fallen man is heir to; not only miserable itself, but worthless, and a plague to all who in future will be connected with it. What bad sons, husbands, fathers, daughters, wives, and mothers, are the offspring of fond indulgence, shewn to little masters and misses almost from the cradle! Wise discipline gives thought and firmness to the mind; and makes us useful here, and fit for the world of perfect subordination above.'—*Venn's Life,* p. 257. 25. *The fear of man bringeth a snare.* A snare brings a man into straits. He is not master of himself. Here Satan spreads the snare, and the fear of man drives into it; and a fearful snare it is, and ever hath been to thousands. Many, once entangled, have never escaped. It besets every step of the pathway to heaven, every sphere of obligation. The king turns aside from strict integrity, 1 *Sam.* xv. 24; *Mat.* xiv. 9; the judge wilfully pronounces an unrighteous sentence, *Jno.* xix. 8, 13, 16.——The same deadly influence operates in families. Sometimes even parents shrink from the open protection of their child, *Jno.* ix. 22. They dare not avow a supreme regard to his primary interests, or profess, in opposition to many around them, the patriarch's godly determination, "As for me and my house," however evil it may seem to others, "we will serve the Lord," *Jos.* xxiv. 15.——Every class of society exhibits this corrupt principle. Perhaps the highest are bound in the most abject and hopeless chains; and to their tyrant they seem to acknowledge a sort of conscience, or religious obedience. They will set at nought all religion without fear; but such submissive slaves are they to the omnipotency of fashion, that they would "tremble very exceedingly" (*Gen.* xxvii. 33, the same word in the original,) at the suspicion of godliness attaching to them, thus "honouring" a vain idol before the Lord of heaven and earth.——What, again, makes so many, especially among the young, ashamed to be found upon their knees; to be known as readers of their Bibles; to cast in their lot decidedly among the saints of God? They know the Christian to be on the right side; and oft is there a whisper of conscience—'Would that my soul were in his place!' *Jno.* vii. 13; xii. 42, 43; *Acts* xxvi. 11; 2 *Tim.* i. 15; iv. 16; but they have only half a mind to religion. The fear of man bringeth a snare; but how painful to see the children of God entangled in the snare! Humbling indeed is the contrast between the boldness of the servants of Satan and the timidity of the soldiers of Christ! Who of us has not cause of painful self-condemnation?——Thank God, there is a way of deliverance. Faith unbinds the soul from fear. If fear makes the giant tremble before the worm, trust in the Lord makes the worm stronger than the giant. ——Fear brings us into the snare. Faith brings liberty, safety, exaltation. Oh! thou God of power and grace, may my soul praise thee for this mighty deliverance, this joyous freedom! May I never be ashamed of my Master. May I be bound to his people, and glory in his cross!

CHAP. XXX.—15. *The horseleach hath two daughters.* 'But we have, 'says Bishop Sanderson, 'I know not how many lusts, no less importunately clamorous than they; till they be served, incessantly crying, Give, give; but much more unsatisfied than they. For they will be filled in time, and when they are filled, they tumble off, and there is an end; but our lusts will never be satisfied. Like Pharaoh's kine, when they have eaten up all the fat ones, they are still as hungry and as whining as they were before.'—*Sermon on Phil.* iv. 11.

CHAP. XXXI.—13. *She seeketh wool.* This lovely character is drawn according to the usage of ancient times; though the general principles are of universal application. It describes not only the wife of a man of rank, but a wise, useful, and godly matron in her domestic reponsibilities. It is "a woman professing godliness," adorned "with good works," 1 *Tim.* ii. 10; a Mary no less than a Martha. 'It may be necessary to retouch the lines of the picture, that have been obscured by length of years; in plain terms—to explain some parts of the description which relate to ancient manners and customs, and to shew how they may be usefully applied to those of our own age and country.'—*Bp. Horne.* One thing however is most remarkable. The standard of godliness here exhibited is not that of a religious recluse, shut up from active obligations, under the pretence of greater sanctity and consecration to God. Here are none of those habits of monastic asceticism, that are now extolled as the highest point of Christian perfection. One half at least of the picture of the virtuous woman is occupied with her personal and domestic industry. What a rebuke also does this convey to a self-indulgent inactivity! Her several employments admirably illustrate genuine simplicity of manners, and practical, yet liberal economy. This is indeed a difficult and rare attainment, economy without a niggardly spirit; seen and felt as little as possible, and conducted with all care and consideration of the comfort of the family.

We would conclude with a brief summary of a few prominent points involved in the study of this most instructive book. Let us observe the connection between inward principle and outward conduct: Never let it be forgotten, that the exercises here described or inculcated, suppose an internal source. It is the light within, that shines without. The hidden life is thus manifested. ——Let us mark also the flow of true happiness throughout the whole sphere of godliness: Often has the wise man painted this connection with the most glowing interest, *ch.* iii. 13—18; iv. 4—13; viii. 17—21, 32—36. Most important is it to leave this impression upon the minds of all, specially of our young readers, that religion is a joyous thing. It is not indeed the mirth of the fool, or the giddy gaiety of the thoughtless; but it is the only thing that deserves the name of happiness; the only solid, permanent principle of enjoyment.—— It is of great moment to remark the wise man's estimate of real good. Every particle of the chief good he centres in God.——Let us study Christian completeness and consistency: The elements of this character will be brought out by a diligent and prayerful study of this important book. Let them be put together in their due connection and proportion; and "the man of God will be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," 2 *Tim.* iii. 17.——But, "Who is sufficient?" Child of God, let the trembling of insufficiency in thyself be stayed by the recollection of all-sufficiency in thy God: compare 2 *Cor.* ii. 16, with iii. 5; also, xii. 9. What he demands of thee, that he works in thee. His covenant secures thy holiness, no less than thine acceptance—thine holiness, not, as some would have it, as the ground, but as the fruit, of thine acceptance. Let the one then be primarily sought; and the other will assuredly follow. "I WILL PUT MY LAW IN THEIR INWARD PARTS, AND WRITE IT IN THEIR HEARTS . . . . . FOR I WILL FORGIVE THEIR INIQUITY, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE," *Jer.* xxxi. 33, 34: compare *Ezek.* xxxvi. 26, 27.



EGYPTIAN MOURNING PROCESSION.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

We are still among Solomon's happy men, his happy servants, that stood continually before him to hear his wisdom; and they are the choicest of all the dictates of his wisdom, such as were more immediately given by Divine inspiration, that are here transmitted to us, not to be heard as by them but once, and then liable to be mistaken and forgotten, and by repetition to lose their beauty, but to be read, reviewed, revolved, and had in everlasting remembrance. The account we have of Solomon's apostacy from God in the latter end of his reign, 1 *Kin.* xi. 1, is the tragical part of his story. We may suppose he spake his *Proverbs* in the prime of his time, while he kept his integrity, but delivered his *Ecclesiastes* when he was grown old, (for of the burthens and decays of age he speaks feelingly, *ch.* xii.,) and was by the grace of God recovered from his backslidings. There he dictated his observations, here he wrote his own experiences. This is what days speak, and wisdom which the multitude of years teacheth. The title of the book and the penman we shall meet with in the first verse, and therefore shall here only observe,

I. That it is a sermon, a sermon in print. The text is, *ch.* i. 2, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." That is the doctrine too. It is proved at large by many arguments and an induction of particulars, and divers objections are answered; and in the close we have the use and application of all, by way of exhortation to remember our Creator, to fear him, and to keep his commandments. There are indeed many things in this book which are dark and hard to be understood, and some things which men of corrupt minds wrest to their own destruction, for want of distinguishing between Solomon's arguments and the objections of the atheists and epicures; but there is enough easy and plain to convince us (if we will admit the conviction) of the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make us happy,—the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make us miserable,—and of the wisdom of being religious, and the solid comfort and satisfaction that is to be had in doing our duty both to God and man. This should be intended in every sermon, and that is a good sermon by which these points are in any measure gained.

II. That it is a penitential sermon, as some of David's psalms are penitential psalms. It is a recantation sermon, in which the preacher sadly laments his own folly and mistake, in promising himself satisfaction in the things of this world, and even in the forbidden pleasures of sense, which now he finds more bitter than death. His fall is a proof of the weakness of man's nature. Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor say, I shall never be such a fool as to do so and so, when Solomon himself, the wisest of men, played the fool so egregiously; nor let the rich man glory in his riches, since Solomon's wealth was so great a snare to him, and did him a great deal more hurt than Job's poverty did him. His recovery is a proof of the power of God's grace in bringing one back to God that had gone so far from him, and the riches of God's mercy in accepting him, notwithstanding the many aggravations of his sin, pursuant to the promise made to David, that if his children should commit iniquity they should be corrected, but not abandoned and disinherited, 2 *Sam.* vii. 14, 15. Let him, therefore, that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall, and let him that is fallen make haste to get up again, and not despair either of assistance or of acceptance therein.

III. That it is a practical, profitable sermon. Solomon, being brought to repentance, resolves, like his father, to teach transgressors God's way, *Ps.* li. 13, and to give warning to all to take heed of splitting upon those rocks which had been fatal to him; and these were fruits meet for repentance. The fundamental error of the children of men, and that which is at the bottom of all their departures from God, is the same with that of our first parents, hoping to be as gods, by entertaining themselves with that which seems good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. Now the scope of this book is to shew that this is a great mistake, that our happiness consists not in being as gods to ourselves, to have what we will and do what we will, but in having him that made us to be a God to us. The moral philosophers disputed much about man's felicity or chief good; various opinions they had about it; but Solomon in this book determines the question, and assures us, that to fear God and keep his commandments is the whole of man. He tried what satisfaction might be found in the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense, and at last pronounced all vanity and vexation; yet multitudes will not take his word, but will make the same dangerous experiment, and it proves fatal to them. He, 1. Shews the vanity of those things in which men commonly look for a happiness, as human learning and policy, sensual delights, honour and power, riches and great possessions. And then, 2. He prescribes remedies against the vexation of spirit that attends them. Though we cannot cure them of their vanity, we may prevent the trouble they give us by sitting loose to them; enjoying them comfortably, but laying our expectations low from them, and acquiescing in the will of God concerning us in every event, especially by remembering God in the days of our youth, and continuing in his fear and service all our days, with an eye to the judgment to come.

A.M. 3027. B.C. 977.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have, I. The inscription or title of the book, ver. 1. II. The general doctrine of the vanity of the creature laid down, ver. 2, and explained, ver. 3. III. The proof of this doctrine, taken, 1. From the shortness of human life, and the multitude of births and burials in this life, ver. 4; 2. From the inconstant nature, and constant revolutions of all the creatures, and the perpetual flux and reflux they are in, the sun, wind, and water, ver. 5—7; 3. From the abundant toil man has about them, and the little satisfaction he has in them, ver. 8; 4. From the return of the same things again, which shews the end of all perfection, and that the stock is exhausted, ver. 9, 10; 5. From the oblivion to which all things are condemned, ver. 11. IV. The first instance of the vanity of men's knowledge, and all the parts of learning, especially natural philosophy and politics. Observe, 1. The trial Solomon made of these, ver. 12, 13, 16, 17; 2. His judgment of them, that all is vanity, ver. 14. For, 1st. There is labour in getting knowledge, ver. 13; 2nd. There is little good to be done with it, ver. 15; 3rd. There is no satisfaction in it, ver. 18. And if this is vanity and vexation, all other things in this world, being much inferior to it in dignity and worth, must needs be so too. A great scholar cannot be happy unless he be a true saint.

THE words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher,
Vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity.

3 What profit hath a man of all his labour
Which he taketh under the sun?

Here is, First. An account of the penman of this book. It was Solomon, for no other son of David but he was king

of Jerusalem. But he conceals his name,—Solomon, 'peaceable,'—because by his sin he had brought trouble upon himself and his kingdom, had broken his peace with God, and lost the peace of his conscience, and therefore was no more worthy of that name. Call me not Solomon; call me Marah, for behold, for peace I had great bitterness. But he calls himself,

1. The preacher; which speaks his present character. He is *Koheleth*, which comes from a word that signifies 'to gather;' but it is of a feminine termination, by which perhaps Solomon intends to upbraid himself with his effeminacy, which contributed more than any thing to his apostacy; for it was to please his wives that he set up idols, *Neh.* xiii. 26. Or, the word soul must be understood, and so *Koheleth* is,

1st. A penitent soul, or one gathered, that had rambled and gone astray like a lost sheep, but was now reduced, gathered in from his wanderings, gathered home to his duty, and come at length to himself. The spirit that was dissipated after a thousand vanities is now collected and made to centre in God. Divine grace can make great sinners great converts, and renew even those to repentance that after they had known the way of righteousness turned aside from it, and heal their backslidings, though it is a difficult case. It is only the penitent soul that God will accept, the heart that is broken, not the head that is bowed down, like a bulrush, only for a day; David's repentance, not Ahab's. And it is only the gathered soul that is the penitent soul, that comes back from its bypaths, that no longer scatters its ways to the strangers, *Jer.* iii. 13, but is united to fear God's name. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak," and therefore we have here the words of the penitent, and those published. If eminent professors of religion fall into gross sin, they are concerned, for the honour of God, and the repairing of the damage they have done to his kingdom, openly to testify their repentance, that the plaister may be as wide as the wound.

2nd. A preaching soul, or one gathering. Being himself gathered to the congregation of saints, out of which he had by sin thrown himself, and reconciled to the church, he endeavours to gather others to it, that had gone astray like him, and perhaps were led astray by his example. He that has done any thing to seduce his brother ought to do all he can to reduce him. Perhaps Solomon called together a congregation of his people, as he had done at the dedication of the temple, 1 *Kin.* viii. 2, so now at the re-dedicating of himself. In that assembly he presided as the people's mouth to God in prayer, ver. 12; in this as God's mouth to them in preaching. God by his Spirit made him a preacher, in token of his being reconciled to him. A commission is an implicit pardon. Christ sufficiently signified his forgiving Peter by committing his lambs and sheep to his trust. Observe, Penitents should be preachers; they that have taken warning themselves to turn and live should give warning to others not to go on and die. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Preachers must be preaching souls, for that only is likely to reach to the heart that comes from the heart. Paul served God with his spirit in the Gospel of his Son, *Rom.* i. 9.

2. The son of David. His taking this title intimates, 1st. That he looked upon it as a great honour to be the son of so good a man, and valued himself very much upon it. 2nd. That he also looked upon it as a great aggravation of his sin that he had such a father, who had given him a good education, and put up many a good prayer for him. It cuts him to the heart to think that he should be a blemish and disgrace to the name and family of such a one as David. It aggravated the sin of Jehoiakim that he was the son of Josiah, *Jer.* xxii. 15—17. 3rd. That his being the son of David encouraged him to repent and hope for mercy; for David had fallen into sin, by which he should have been warned not to sin, but was not; but David repented, and therein he took example from him, and found mercy as he did. Yet this was not all; he was that son of David concerning whom God had said that, though he would chasten his transgression with the rod, yet he would not break his covenant with him, *Ps.* lxxxix. 34. Christ, the great preacher, was the Son of David.

3. King of Jerusalem. This he mentions, 1st. As that which was a very great aggravation of his sin, that he was a king. God had done much for him in raising him to the throne, and yet he had so ill requited him. His dignity made the ill example and influence of his sin the more dangerous, and many would follow his pernicious ways. That he was king of Jerusalem, the holy city, where God's temple was, and of his own building too, where the priests, the Lord's ministers, were, and his prophets, who had taught him better things. 2nd. As that which might give some advantage to what he wrote, for "where the word of a king is there is power." He thought it no disparagement to him as a king to be a preacher; but the people would regard him the more as a preacher because he was a king. If men of honour would lay out themselves to do good, what a great deal of good might they do! Solomon looked as great in the pulpit, preaching the vanity of the world, as in his throne of ivory, judging.

The Chaldee paraphrase (which in this book makes very large additions to the text, or comments upon it, all along) gives this account of Solomon's writing this book: That by the spirit of prophecy he foresaw the revolt of the ten tribes from his son, and in process of time the destruction of Jerusalem, and the house of the sanctuary, and the captivity of the people, and in the foresight of that he said, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" and to that he applies many passages in this book.

Secondly. The general scope and design of the book. What is it that this royal preacher has to say? That which he aims at is for the making of us truly religious, to take down our esteem of, and expectation from, the things of this world. In order to this he shews,

1. That they are all vanity, ver. 2. This is the proposition he lays down and undertakes to prove, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." It was no new text; his father David had more than once spoken to the same purpose. The truth itself here asserted is that all is vanity; all besides God, and considered as abstract from him. The all of this world; all worldly employments and enjoyments; the all that is in the world, 1 *Jno.* ii. 16. All that which is agreeable to our senses, and to our fancies in this present state, which gains pleasure to ourselves, or reputation with others. It is all vanity, not only in the abuse of it, when it is perverted by the sin of man, but even in the use of it. Man, considered with reference to these things, is vanity, *Ps.* xxxix. 5, 6; and if there were not another life after this, were made in vain, *Ps.* lxxxix. 47. And those things considered in reference to man, whatever they are in themselves, are vanity. They are impertinent to the soul, foreign, and add nothing to it, they do not answer the end, nor yield any true satisfaction. They are uncertain in their continuance, are fading and perishing, and passing away, and will certainly deceive and disappoint those that put a confidence in them. Let us not therefore love vanity, *Ps.* iv. 2; nor lift up our souls to it, *Ps.* xxiv. 4; for we shall but weary ourselves for it, *Hab.* ii. 13. It is expressed here very emphatically; not only all is vain, but in the abstract, "all is vanity," as if vanity were the *proprium quarto modo*,—'property in the fourth mode,' of the things of this world, that which enters into the nature of them. They are not only vanity, but "vanity of vanities," the vainest vanity, vanity in the highest degree; nothing but vanity; such a vanity as is the cause of a great deal of vanity. And this is redoubled, because the thing is certain, and past dispute; it is "vanity of vanities." This intimates that the wise man had his own heart fully convinced of, and much affected with, this truth; and that he was very desirous that others should be convinced of it, and affected with it, as he was, but that he found the generality of men very loath to believe and consider it, *Job* xxxiii. 14. It intimates likewise that we cannot comprehend and express the vanity of this world. But who is it that speaks thus slightly of the world? Is it one that will stand to what he saith? Yes: he puts his name to it: "Saith the preacher." Is it one that was a competent judge? Yes, as much as ever any man was. Many speak contemptibly of the world, because they are hermits, and know it not, or beggars, and have it not; but Solomon knew it. He had dived into nature's depths, 1 *Kin.* iv. 33; and he had it, more of it perhaps than ever any man had, his head filled with its notions, and his belly with its hid treasures, *Ps.* xvii. 14, and he passeth this judgment on it. But did he speak as one having authority? Yes, not only that of a king, but that of a prophet, a preacher. He spake in God's name, and was divinely inspired to say it. But did he not say it in his haste, or in a passion, upon occasion of some particular disappointment? No; he said it deliberately, said it and proved it; laid it down as a fundamental principle on which he grounded the necessity of being religious. And, as some think, one main thing he designed was, to shew that the everlasting throne and kingdom, which God had by Nathan promised to David and his seed, must be of another world, for all things in this world are subject to vanity, and therefore have not in them sufficient to answer the extent of that promise. If Solomon find all to be vanity, then the kingdom of the Messiah must come, in which we shall inherit substance.

2. That they are insufficient to make us happy. And for this he appeals to men's consciences. "What profit has a man of all the pains he takes?" ver. 3. Observe here,

1st. The business of this world described. It is labour; the word signifies both care and toil. It is work that wearies men; there is a constant fatigue in worldly business. It is labour under the sun, that is a phrase peculiar to this book, where we meet with it twenty-eight times. There is a world above the sun, a world which needs not the sun, for the glory of God is its light, where there is work without labour, and with great profit, the work of angels; but he speaks of the work under the sun, the pains of which are great, and the gains little. It is under the sun, under the influence of the sun, by its light, and in its heat. As we have the benefit of the light of the day, so we have sometimes the burthen of the heat of the day, *Mat.* xx. 12, and therefore "in the sweat of our face we eat bread." In the dark and cold grave the weary are at rest.

2nd. The benefit of that business inquired into: "What profit has a man of all that labour?" Solomon saith, *Pr.* xiv. 23, "In all labour there is profit," and yet here he denies there is any profit. As to our present condition in the world it is true that by labour we get that which we call profit; we eat the labour of our hands. But as the wealth of the world is commonly called substance, and yet it is that which is not, *Pr.* xxiii. 5, so it is called profit, but the question is whether it be really so or no. And here he determines that it is not; that it is not a real benefit, that it is not a remaining benefit. In short, the wealth and pleasure of this world, if we had never so much of it, is not sufficient to make us happy, nor will it be a portion for us. *First.* As to the body, and the life that now is, "What profit has a man of all his labour?" A man's life consisteth not in an abundance, *Lu.* xii. 15. "As goods are increased," care about them is increased, and "they are increased that eat of them," and a little thing will embitter all the comfort of them, and then "what profit has a man of all his labour?" Early up, and never the nearer. *Secondly.* As to the soul, and the life that is to come, we may much more truly say, "What profit has a man of all his labour?" All he gets by it will not supply the wants of the soul, nor satisfy its desires, will not atone for the sin of the soul, nor cure its diseases, nor countervail the loss of it; what profit will they be of to the soul in death, in judgment, or in the everlasting state? The fruit of our labour in heavenly things is meat that endures to eternal life, but the fruit of our labour for the world is only meat that perisheth.

4 *One* generation passeth away, and *another* generation
  But the earth abideth for ever. [cometh:
5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down,
  And hasteth to his place where he arose.
6 The wind goeth toward the south,
  And turneth about unto the north;
  It whirleth about continually,
  And the wind returneth again according to his circuits.
7 All the rivers run into the sea;
  Yet the sea *is* not full;
  Unto the place from whence the rivers come,
  Thither they return again.
8 All things *are* full of labour;
  Man cannot utter *it:*
  The eye is not satisfied with seeing,
  Nor the ear filled with hearing.

To prove the vanity of all things under the sun, and their insufficiency to make us happy, Solomon here shews,

First. That the time of our enjoyment of these things is very short, and only while we accomplish as a hireling his day. We continue in the world but for one generation, which is continually passing away to make room for another, and we are passing with it. Our worldly possessions we very lately had from others, and must very shortly leave to others, and therefore to us they are vanity; they can be no more substantial than that life which is the substratum of them, and that is but "a vapour, which appears for a little while, and then vanisheth away." While the stream of mankind is continually flowing, what little enjoyment has one drop of that stream of the pleasant banks between which it glides! We may give God the glory of that constant succession of generations in which the world has hitherto had its existence, and will have, to the end of time; admiring his patience in continuing that sinful species, and his power in continuing that dying species. We may be also quickened to do the work of our generation diligently, and serve it faithfully, because it will be over shortly; and in concern for mankind in general we should consult the welfare of succeeding generations. But as to our own happiness, let us not expect it within such narrow limits, but in an eternal rest and consistency.

Secondly. That when we leave this world we leave the earth behind us. That abideth for ever where it is, and therefore the things of the earth can stand us in no stead in the future state. It is well for mankind in general that the

earth endures till the end of time, when it and all the works in it shall be burned up; but what is that to particular persons when they remove to the world of spirits?

Thirdly. That the condition of man is in this respect worse than that even of the inferior creatures. The earth abides for ever, but man abides upon the earth but a little while. The sun sets indeed every night, yet it riseth again in the morning as bright and fresh as ever; the winds, though they shift their point, yet in some point or other, still they are; the waters that go to the sea above ground, come from it again under ground; "but man lies down and rises not," *Job* xiv. 7—12.

Fourthly. That all things in this world are movable and mutable, and subject to a continual toil, and toss, constant in nothing but inconstancy, still going, never resting. It was but once that the sun stood still, otherwise when it is risen it is hastening to set, and when it is set, hastening to rise again, ver. 5; the winds ever and anon shifting, ver. 6; and the waters in a continual circulation, ver. 7; it would be of as ill consequence for them to stagnate as for the blood in the body to do so. And can we expect rest in a world where all things are thus full of labour, ver. 8; on a sea that is always ebbing and flowing, and her waves continually working and rolling?

Fifthly. That, though all things are still in motion, yet they are still where they were. The sun parts, as it is in the margin, but it is to the same place. The wind turns till it comes to the same place; and so the waters return to the place whence they came. Thus man, after all the pains he takes to find satisfaction and happiness in the creature, is but where he was, still as far to seek as ever. Man's mind is as restless in its pursuits as the sun, and wind, and rivers, but never satisfied, never contented; the more it has of the world, the more it would have; and it will be no sooner filled with the streams of outward prosperity, the brooks of honey and butter, *Job* xx. 17, than the sea is with all the rivers that run into it; it is still as it was, a troubled sea that cannot rest.

Sixthly. That "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," 2 *Pet.* iii. 4. The earth is where it was. The sun, and winds, and rivers, keep the same course that ever they did, and therefore, if they have never yet been sufficient to make a happiness for man, they are never likely to be so, for they can but yield the same comfort they have yielded; we must therefore look above the sun for satisfaction, and for a new world.

Seventhly. That this world is at the best a weary land. "All is vanity," for all is "full of labour," the whole creation is made subject to this vanity, ever since man was sentenced to "eat bread in the sweat of his brow." If we survey the whole creation we shall see all busy, all have enough to do to mind their own business, none will be a portion or happiness for man; all labour to serve him, but none a help meet for him. Man cannot express how full of labour all things are; can neither number the laborious nor measure the labours.

Eighthly. That our senses are unsatisfied, and the objects of them unsatisfying. He instances in those senses that perform their office with least toil, and are most capable of being pleased: "The eye is not satisfied with seeing," but is weary of seeing always the same sight, and covets novelty and variety. The ear is fond at first of a pleasant song or tune, but soon nauseates it, and must have another. Both are surfeited, but neither satiated; and what was most grateful becomes ungrateful. Curiosity is still inquisitive, because still unsatisfied; and the more it is humoured the more nice and peevish it grows, crying, Give, give.

9 The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be;
And that which is done *is* that which shall be done:
And *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. [new?
10 Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is*
It hath been already of old time, which was before us.
11 *There is* no remembrance of former *things;*
Neither shall there be *any* remembrance of *things* that are to come
With *those* that shall come after.

Two things we are apt to take a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction in, and value ourselves upon, with reference to our business and enjoyments in the world, as if they helped to save them from vanity; and Solomon here shews us our mistake in both.

First. The novelty of the invention; that it is such as was never known before. How grateful is the fancy of this; to think that none ever made such advances in knowledge, and such discoveries by it as we, such improvements of an estate or trade, and had the art of enjoying the gains of it as we have. Their contrivances and composures are all despised and run down, and we boast of new fashions, new hypotheses, new methods, new expressions, which jostle out the old, and put them down. But this is all a mistake; the thing that is and shall be is the same with that which hath been, and that which shall be done will be but the same with that which is done, for there is no new thing under the sun, ver. 8. It is repeated, ver. 10, by way of question, "Is there any thing of which it may be said" with wonder, "See, this is new?" there never was the like. It is an appeal to observing men, and a challenge to those that cry up the modern learning above that of the ancients. Let them name any thing which they take to be new, and though, perhaps, we cannot make it to appear for want of the records of former times, yet we have reason to conclude "it has been already of old time which was before us." What is there in the kingdom of nature of which we may say, "This is new?" "The works were finished from the foundation of the world," *Heb.* iv. 3. Things which appear new to us, as they do to children, are not so in themselves. The heavens were of old; the earth abideth for ever; the powers of nature, and the links of natural causes are still the same that ever they were. In the kingdom of providence, though the course and method of it has not such known and certain rules as that of nature, nor doth it go always in the same track, yet, in the general, it is still the same thing over and over again. Men's hearts and the corruptions of them are still the same, their desires, and pursuits, and complaints, still the same; and what God doth in his dealings with men is according to the Scripture, according to the manner, so that it is all repetition. What is surprising to us needs not be so, for there has been the like; the like strange advancements and disappointments; the like strange revolutions and sudden turns, sudden turns of affairs. The miseries of human life have always been much the same, and mankind treads a perpetual round, and, as the sun and wind, are but where they were. Now the design of this is,

1. To shew the folly of the children of men, both in affecting things that are new and in imagining that they have lighted on such things, and pleasing and priding themselves in them. We are apt to nauseate old things, and to grow weary of what we have been long used to, as Israel of the manna, and covet, with the Athenians, still to tell and hear of some new thing, and admire this and the other as new, whereas it is all what has been. Tatianus the Assyrian, shewing the Grecians how all the arts which they valued themselves by owed their original to those nations which they counted barbarous, thus reasons with them: 'For shame, do not call those things εὑρήσεις,—'inventions,' which are but μιμήσεις,—'imitations.'

2. To take us off from expecting happiness and satisfaction in the creature. Why should we look for it there where never any yet have found it? What reason have we to think that the world should be any kinder to us than it has been to those that have gone before us? since there is nothing in it that is new, and our predecessors have made as much of it as could be made. "Your fathers did eat manna, and" yet they "are dead:" see *Jno.* viii. 8, 9.

3. To quicken us to secure spiritual and eternal blessings. If we would be entertained with things new we must acquaint ourselves with the things of God, get a new nature; then old things pass away, and all things become new, 2 *Cor.* v. 17. The Gospel puts a new song into our mouths. In heaven all is new, *Rev.* xxi. 5. All new at first, wholly unlike the present state of things, a new world indeed, *Lu.* xx. 35; and all new to eternity, always fresh, always flourishing. This consideration should make us willing to die,—that in this world there is nothing but the same over and over again, and we can expect nothing from it more or better than we have had.

Secondly. The memorableness of the achievement; that it is such as will be known and talked of hereafter. Many think they have found satisfaction enough in this, that their names shall be perpetuated, that posterity will celebrate the actions they have done, the honours they have won, and the estates they have raised; that "their houses shall continue for ever," *Ps.* xlix. 11. But herein they deceive themselves. How many former things and persons were there which in their day looked very great, and made a mighty figure, and yet "there is no remembrance of them," they are buried in oblivion. Here and there one person or action that was remarkable met with a kind historian, and had the good hap to be recorded, when at the same time there were others no less remarkable that were dropped; and therefore we may conclude, that "neither shall there be any remembrance of things to come," but that which we hope to be remembered by will either be lost or slighted.

12 I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem.
13 And I gave my heart to seek and search out
By wisdom concerning all *things*
That are done under heaven:
This sore travail hath God given to the sons of man
To be exercised therewith.
14 I have seen all the works
That are done under the sun;
And, behold, all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.
15 *That which is* crooked cannot be made straight:
And that which is wanting cannot be numbered.
16 I communed with mine own heart, saying,
Lo, I am come to great estate,
And have gotten more wisdom than all *they*
That have been before me in Jerusalem: [ledge.
Yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and know-
17 And I gave my heart to know wisdom,
And to know madness and folly:
I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.
18 For in much wisdom *is* much grief:
And he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.

Solomon, having asserted in general that all is vanity, and having given some general proofs of it, now takes the most effectual method to evince the truth of it, 1. By his own experience. He tried them all, and found them vanity. 2. By an induction of particulars; and here he begins with that which bids fairest of all other to be the happiness of a reasonable creature, and that is knowledge and learning. If this be vanity, every thing else must needs be so. Now as to this,

First. Solomon tells us here what trial he had made of it, and that with such advantages, that, if true satisfaction could have been found in it, he had found it.

1. His high station gave him an opportunity of improving himself in all parts of learning, and particularly in politics, and the conduct of human affairs, ver. 12. He that is the preacher of this doctrine was king over Israel, whom all their neighbours admired as a wise and understanding people, *Deu.* iv. 6. He had his royal seat in Jerusalem, which then deserved, better than Athens ever did, to be called the eye of the world. The heart of a king is unsearchable, he has reaches of his own; and many a time a Divine sentence is in his lips. It is his honour, it is his business, to search out every matter. Solomon's great wealth and honour put him into a capacity of making his court the centre of learning and the rendezvous of learned men, of furnishing himself with the best of books, and either conversing or corresponding with all the wise and knowing part of mankind then in being, who made application to him to learn of him, by which he could not but improve himself; for it is in knowledge as it is in trade,—all the profit is by barter and exchange; if we have that to say which will instruct others, they will have that to say which will instruct us. Some observe how slightly Solomon speaks of his dignity and honour. He doth not say, 'I the preacher am king,' but 'I was king, no matter what I am.' He speaks of it as a thing past, because worldly honours are transitory.

2. He applied himself to the improvement of these advantages, and the opportunities he had of getting wisdom; which, though never so great, will not make a man wise unless he give his mind to it. Solomon gave his heart to seek and search out all things to be known by wisdom, ver. 13. He made it his business to acquaint himself with "all the things that are done under the sun," that are done by the providence of God, or by the art and prudence of man; he set himself to get all the insight he could into philosophy and mathematics, into husbandry and trade, merchandise and mechanics, into the history of former ages, and the present state of other kingdoms, their laws, customs, and policies, into men's different tempers, capacities, and projects, and the

methods of managing them; he set himself not only to seek, but to search, to pry into that which is most intricate, and which requires the closest application of mind, and the most vigorous and constant prosecution. Though he was a prince, he made himself a drudge to learning, boggled not at its knots, nor took up short of its depths. And this he did, not merely to gratify his own genius, but to qualify himself for the service of God and his generation; and to make an experiment how far the enlargement of the knowledge would go towards the settlement and repose of the mind.

3. He made a very great progress in his studies, wonderfully improved all the parts of learning, and carried his discoveries much farther than any that had been before him. He did not condemn learning, as many do, because they cannot conquer it, and will not be at the pains to make themselves masters of it. No; what he aimed at he compassed; he "saw all the works that were done under the sun," ver. 14, works of nature in the upper and lower world, all within this vortex (to use the modern gibberish) which has the sun for its centre, works of art, the product of men's wit, in a personal or social capacity. He had as much satisfaction in the success of his searches as ever any man had; he communed with his own heart concerning his attainments in knowledge, with as much pleasure as ever any rich merchant had in taking account of his stock. He could say, "Lo, I have magnified and increased wisdom," have not only gotten more of it myself, but have done more to propagate it, and bring it into reputation, than any, "than all that have been before me in Jerusalem." Note, It becomes great men to be studious, and delight themselves most in intellectual pleasures. Where God gives great advantages of getting knowledge he expects improvements accordingly. It is happy with a people when their princes and noblemen study to excel others as much in wisdom and useful knowledge as they do in honour and estate; and they may do that service to the commonwealth of learning, by applying themselves to the studies that are proper for them, which meaner persons cannot do. Solomon must be acknowledged a competent judge of this matter, for he had not only got his head full of notions, but his "heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge," of the power and benefit of it, as well as the amusement and entertainment of it. What he knew he had digested, and knew how to make use of. Wisdom entered into his heart, and so became pleasant to his soul, *Pr.* ii. 10, 11; xxii. 18.

4. He applied his studies especially to that part of learning which is most serviceable to the conduct of human life, and consequently is the most valuable; ver. 17, "I gave my heart to know" the rules and dictates of "wisdom," and how I might obtain it; "and to know madness and folly," how I might prevent and cure it, to know the snares and insinuations of it, that I might avoid them and guard against them, and discover its fallacies. So industrious was Solomon to improve himself in knowledge, that he gained instruction both by the wisdom of prudent men and by the madness of foolish men; by the field of the slothful as well as of the diligent.

Secondly. He tells us what was the result of this trial; to confirm what he had said, that "All is vanity."

1. He found that his searches after knowledge were very toilsome, and a weariness, not only to the flesh, but to the mind; ver. 13, "This sore travail," this difficulty that there is in searching after truth and finding it, "God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted therewith," as a punishment for our first parents' coveting forbidden knowledge. As bread for the body, so that for the soul, must be got and eaten in the sweat of our face, whereas both had been had without labour if Adam had not sinned.

2. He found that the more he saw of the works done under the sun, the more he saw of their vanity, nay, and many times the sight occasioned him vexation of spirit; ver. 14, 'I have seen all the works of a world full of small business, have observed what the children of men are doing, and behold, whatever men think of their own works, I see all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' He had before pronounced all vanity, ver. 2, needless and unprofitable, and that which doth us no good. Here he adds, it is all vexation of spirit, troublesome, and prejudicial, and that which doth us hurt. It is feeding upon wind; so some read it, *Hos.* xii. 1. 1st. The works themselves which we see done are vanity and vexation to those that are employed in them. There is so much care in the contrivance of our worldly business, so much toil in the prosecution of it, and so much trouble in the disappointments we meet with in it, that we may well say, It is vexation of spirit. 2nd. The sight of them is vanity and vexation of spirit to the wise observer of them. The more we see of the world the more we see to make us uneasy, and, with Heraclitus, to look upon all with weeping eyes. Solomon especially perceived that the knowledge of wisdom and folly was vexation of spirit, ver. 17. It vexed him to see many that had wisdom not use it, and many that had folly not strive against it. When he knew wisdom, it vexed him to see how far off it stood from the children of men, and when he saw folly, how fast he saw it bound in their hearts.

3. He found that when he had got some knowledge he could neither gain that satisfaction to himself nor do that good to others with it which he expected, ver. 15. It would not avail, 1st. To redress the many grievances of human life: After all, I find that "that which is crooked" will be crooked still, and "cannot be made straight." Our knowledge is itself intricate and perplexed, we must go far about, and fetch a great compass to come at it. Solomon thought to have found out a nearer way to it, but he could not; the paths of learning are as much a labyrinth as ever they were. The minds and manners of men are crooked and perverse. Solomon thought, with his wisdom and power together, to have thoroughly reformed his kingdom, and made that straight which he found crooked. But he was disappointed. All the philosophy and politics in the world will not restore the corrupt nature of man to its primitive rectitude; we find the insufficiency of them both in others and in ourselves. Learning will not alter men's natural tempers, nor cure them of their sinful distempers; nor will it change the constitution of things in this world. A vale of tears it is, and so it will be, when all is done. 2nd. To make up the many deficiencies in the comfort of human life: "That which is wanting" there "cannot be numbered," or counted out to us from the treasures of human learning; but what is wanting will still be so. All our enjoyments here, when we have done our utmost to bring them to perfection, are still lame and defective, and it cannot be helped. As they are, so they are like to be. "That which is wanting" in our knowledge is so much that it "cannot be numbered." The more we know the more we see of our own ignorance. "Who can understand his errors," his defects?

4. Upon the whole, therefore, he concluded that great scholars do but make themselves great mourners; for "in much wisdom is much grief," ver. 18. There must be a great deal of pains taken to get it, and a great deal of care not to forget it. The more we know the more we see there is to be known, and consequently see our work never at an end, and the more we see of our former mistakes and blunders, which occasions much grief. The more we see of men's different sentiments and opinions (and that is it which a great deal of our learning is conversant about) the more at a loss we are, it may be, which is in the right. Those that increase knowledge have so much the more quick and sensible perception of the calamities of this world, and for one discovery they make that is pleasing, perhaps they make ten that are unpleasing, and so they increase sorrow. Let us not, therefore, be driven off from the pursuit of any useful knowledge, but put on patience to break through the sorrow of it. But let us despair of finding true happiness in this knowledge, and expect it only in the knowledge of God, and the careful discharge of our duty to him. He that increaseth in heavenly wisdom, and in an experimental acquaintance with the principles, powers, and pleasures of the spiritual and Divine life, increaseth joy, such as will shortly consummate in everlasting joy.

CHAPTER II.

Solomon having pronounced all vanity, and particularly knowledge and learning, which he was so far from giving himself joy of, that he found the increase of it did but increase his sorrow, in this chapter he goes on to shew what reason he had to be sick of this world, and with what little reason the most of men are fond of it. I. He shews that there is no true happiness and satisfaction to be had in mirth and pleasure, and the delights of sense, ver. 1—11. II. He reconsiders the pretensions of wisdom, and allows it to be an excellent, useful thing, and yet sees it clogged with such diminutions of its worth, that it proves insufficient to make a man happy, ver. 12—16. III. He inquires how far the business and wealth of this world will go towards making men happy, and concludes, from his own experience, that to those who set their hearts upon it, it is vanity and vexation of spirit, ver. 17—23; and if there be any good in it, it is only to those that sit loose to it, ver. 24—26.

I SAID in mine heart, Go to now,
I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure:
And, behold, this also *is* vanity.
2 I said of laughter, *It is* mad:
And of mirth, What doeth it?
3 I sought in mine heart
To give myself unto wine,
Yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom;
And to lay hold on folly,
Till I might see what *was* that good for the sons of men,
Which they should do under the heaven
All the days of their life.
4 I made me great works;
I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:
5 I made me gardens and orchards,
And I planted trees in them of all *kind of* fruits:
6 I made me pools of water,
To water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:

SOLOMON'S POOLS.

7 I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house;
Also I had great possessions of great and small cattle
Above all that were in Jerusalem before me:
8 I gathered me also silver and gold,
And the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces:
I gat me men singers and women singers,
And the delights of the sons of men,
As musical instruments, and that of all sorts.
9 So I was great, and increased more
Than all that were before me in Jerusalem:
Also my wisdom remained with me.
10 And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them,
I withheld not my heart from any joy;
For my heart rejoiced in all my labour:
And this was my portion of all my labour.
11 Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought,

And on the labour that I had laboured to do:
And, behold, all *was* vanity and vexation of spirit,
And *there was* no profit under the sun.

Solomon here, in pursuit of the *summum bonum*,—'the greatest good,' the felicity of man, adjourns out of his study, his library, his elaboratory, his council chamber, where he had in vain sought for it, into the park, and the playhouse, his garden, and his summer house, exchangeth the company of the philosophers and grave senators, for that of the wits, and gallants, and the *beaux esprits* of his court, to try if he could find true satisfaction and happiness among them. Here he takes a great step downward, from the noble pleasures of the intellect to the brutal ones of sense; yet, if he resolve to make a thorough trial, he must knock at this door, because here a great part of mankind imagine they have found that which he was in quest of.

First. He resolved to try what mirth would do, and the pleasures of wit, whether he should be happy if he constantly entertained himself and others with merry stories and jests, banter and drollery; if he should furnish himself with all the pretty ingenious turns and repartees he could invent or pick up, fit to be laughed over, and all the bulls, and blunders, and foolish things he could hear of, fit to be ridiculed and laughed at; so that he might be always upon the merry pin. Here is,

1. This experiment made, ver. 1. Finding that "in much wisdom is much grief," and that those that are serious are apt to be melancholy, "I said in my heart," that is, to my heart, "Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth," I will try if that will give thee satisfaction. Neither the temper of his mind nor his outward condition had any thing in them to keep him from being merry, but both agreed, as did all other advantages, to further it; therefore he resolved to take a release this way, and said, "Enjoy pleasure," and take thy fill of it; cast away care, and resolve to be merry. So a man may be, and yet have none of these fine things which he here got to entertain himself with. Many that are poor are very merry; beggars in a barn are so to a proverb. Mirth is the entertainment of the fancy, and though it comes short of the solid delights of the rational powers, yet it is to be preferred before those that are merely carnal and sensual. Some distinguish man from the brutes, not only as *animal rationale*,—'a rational animal,' but as *animal risibile*,—'a laughing animal;' therefore he that said to his soul, "Take thine ease, eat and drink," added, "and be merry," for it was in order to that he would eat and drink. Try therefore, saith Solomon, to laugh and be fat; laugh and be happy.

2. The judgment he passed upon this experiment; "Behold, this also is vanity," like all the rest; it yields no true satisfaction; ver. 2. "I said," presently "of laughter, It is mad," or 'thou art mad,' and therefore I will have nothing to do with thee; "and of mirth," (of all sports and recreations, and whatever pretends to be diverting,) "What doeth it?" or, 'what doest thou?' Innocent mirth, soberly, and seasonably, and moderately used, is a good thing, fits for business, and helps to soften the toils and chagrins of human life; but, when it is excessive and immoderate, it is foolish and fruitless. 1st. It doth no good; "what doth it?" *Cui bono?*—'Of what use is it?' It will not avail to quiet a guilty conscience; no, nor to ease a sorrowful spirit; nothing more ungrateful than singing songs to a heavy heart; it will not satisfy the soul, nor ever yield it true content. It is but a palliative cure to the grievances of this present time. Great laughters commonly end in a sigh. 2nd. It doth a great deal of hurt; "it is mad," that is, it makes men mad, it transports men into many indecencies, which are a reproach to their reason and religion. They are mad that indulge themselves in it, for it estrangeth the heart from God and Divine things, and insensibly eats out the power of religion. Those that love to be merry forget to be serious, and while they take the timbrel and harp, they "say to the Almighty, Depart from us," *Job* xxi. 12, 14. We may, as Solomon, prove ourselves with mirth, and judge of the state of our souls by this, how do we stand affected to it? Can we be merry and wise? Can we use it as sauce, and not as food? But we need not try, as Solomon did, whether it will make a happiness for us, for we may take his word for it, it is mad, and what doth it? Laughter and pleasure, saith Sir William Temple, come from very different affections of the mind, for as men have no disposition to laugh at those things they are most pleased with, so they are very little pleased with many things they laugh at.

Secondly. Finding himself not happy in that which pleased his fancy, he resolved next to try that which would please the palate, ver. 3. Since the knowledge of the creature would not satisfy, he would see what the liberal use of it would do. "I sought in my heart to give myself unto wine," that is, to good meat and good drink. Many give themselves to these without consulting their hearts at all, nor looking any farther than merely the gratification of the sensual appetite, but Solomon applied himself to it rationally, and as a man; critically, and only to make an experiment. Observe,

1. He did not allow himself any liberty in the use of the delights of sense till he had tired himself with his severe studies. Till his increase of wisdom proved an increase of sorrow, he never thought of giving himself to wine. When we have spent ourselves in doing good, we may then most comfortably refresh ourselves with the gifts of God's bounty. Then the delights of sense are rightly used, when they are used as we use cordials, only when we need them; as Timothy drank wine for his health's sake, 1 *Tim.* v. 23. I thought 'to draw my flesh with wine,' so the margin reads it; or, to wine. Those that have addicted themselves to drinking, did at first put a force upon themselves, they drew their flesh to it, and with it; but they should remember to what miseries they hereby draw themselves.

2. He then looked upon it as folly, and it was with reluctancy that he gave himself to it; as St. Paul, when he commended himself, called it a weakness, and desired to be borne with in his foolishness, 2 *Cor.* xi. 1. He sought to lay hold on folly, that is, to see the utmost that that folly would do towards making men happy; but he had like to have carried the jest, as we say, too far. He resolved the folly should not take hold of him, nor get the mastery of him, but he would lay hold on it, and keep it at a distance, yet he found it too hard for him.

3. He took care at the same time to acquaint himself with wisdom, that is, to manage himself wisely in the use of his pleasures, so as that they should not do him any prejudice, nor disfit him to be a competent judge of them. When he drew his flesh with wine, he led his heart with wisdom, (so the word is,) kept up his pursuits after knowledge, did not make a sot of himself, nor become a slave to his pleasures; but his studies and his feasts were foils to each other, and he tried whether both mixed together would give him that satisfaction which he could not find in either separately. This Solomon proposed to himself, but he found it vanity; for they that think to give themselves to wine, and yet to acquaint their hearts with wisdom, will perhaps deceive themselves as much as they do that think to serve both God and mammon. Wine is a mocker, it is a great cheat, and it will be impossible for any man to say, thus far he will give himself to it, and no farther.

4. That which he aimed at was not to gratify his appetite, but to find out man's happiness, and this, because it pretended to be so, must be tried among the rest. Observe the description he gives of man's happiness; it is that "good for the sons of men which they should do under the heaven all their days." 1st. That which we are to inquire after, is not so much the good we must have, we may leave that to God, but the good we must do; that ought to be our care. "Good master, what good thing shall I do?" Our happiness consists not in being idle, but in doing aright, in being well employed. If we do that which is good, no doubt we shall have comfort and praise of the same. 2nd. It is good to be done under the heaven, while we are here in this world, while it is day, while our doing-time lasts. This is our state of work and service, it is in the other world that we must expect the retribution; thither our works will follow us. 3rd. It is to be done "all the days of our life." The good we are to do we must persevere in the doing of to the end, while our doing-time lasts. 'The number of the days of our life,' so it is in the margin; 'the number of the days of our life' are numbered to us by him, in whose hand our times are, and they are all to be spent as he directs. But that any man should give himself to wine, in hopes to find out in that the best way of living in this world, was an absurdity which Solomon here in the reflection condemns himself for. Is it possible that this should be the good that men should do? No, it is plainly very ill.

Thirdly. Perceiving quickly that it was folly to give himself to wine, he next tried the most costly entertainments and amusements of princes and great men. He had a vast income, the revenue of his crown was very great, and he laid it out so as might most please his own humour, and make him look great.

1. He gave himself much to building, both in the city and in the country; and having been at such a vast expense in the beginning of his reign to build a house for God, he was the more excusable if afterwards he pleased his own fancy in building for himself. He began his work at the right end, *Mat.* vi. 33; not as the people, *Hag.* i. 4, that ceiled their own houses while God's lay waste; and it prospered accordingly. In building he had the pleasure of employing the poor, and doing good to posterity. We read of Solomon's buildings, 1 *Kin.* xi. 15, 17—19; and they were all great works, such as became his purse, and spirit, and great dignity. See his mistake: he inquired after the good works he should do, ver. 3; and in pursuit of the inquiry applied himself to great works. Good works indeed are truly great; but there are many that are reputed great works which are far from being good; wondrous works which are not gracious, *Mat.* vii. 22.

2. He took to love a garden, which is to some as bewitching as building. He planted him vineyards, which the soil and climate of the land of Canaan favoured; he made him fine gardens and orchards, ver. 5; and perhaps the art of gardening was no way inferior then to what it is now. He had not only forests of timber trees, but trees of all kind of fruit, which he himself had planted; and if any worldly business would yield a man happiness, sure it must be that which Adam was employed in while he was in innocency.

3. He laid out a great deal of money in waterworks, ponds, and canals, not for sport and for diversion, but for use, to water the wood that brings forth trees, ver. 6. He not only planted, but watered, and then left it to God to give the increase. Springs of water are great blessings, *Jos.* xv. 19; but where nature has provided them art must direct them, to make them serviceable, *ch.* xxi. 1.

4. He increased his family. When he proposed to himself to do great works, he must employ many hands; and therefore procured servants and maidens, which were bought with his money, and of those he had servants born in his house, ver. 7. Thus his retinue was enlarged, and his court appeared more magnificent: see *Ezr.* ii. 58.

5. He did not neglect country business, but both entertained and enriched himself with that, and was not diverted from it either by his studies or by his pleasures. He "had large possessions of great and small cattle," herds and flocks, as his father had before him, 1 *Chr.* xxvii. 29, 31; not forgetting that his father in the beginning was a keeper of sheep. Let those that deal in cattle neither despise their employment, nor be weary of it, remembering that Solomon puts his having possessions of cattle among his great works and his pleasures.

6. He grew very rich, and was not at all impoverished by his building and gardening as many are, who for that reason only repent it, and call it vanity and vexation. Solomon scattered, and yet increased; he filled his exchequer with silver and gold, which yet did not stagnate there, but was made to circulate through his kingdom, so that he made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, 1 *Kin.* x. 27. Nay, he had the *Segullah*, "the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces," which was, for richness and rarity, more accounted of than silver and gold. The neighbouring kings, and the distant provinces of his own empire, sent him the richest presents they had, to obtain his favour and the instructions of his wisdom.

7. He had every thing that was charming and diverting. All sorts of melody, and music, vocal and instrumental; "men singers, and women singers," the best voices he could pick up, and all the wind and hand instruments that were then in use. His father had a genius for music, but it should seem he employed it more to serve his devotion than the son, who made it more his diversion. These are called "the delights of the sons of men," for the gratifications of sense are the things that the generality of people set their affections upon, and take the greatest complacency in. The delights of the children of God are of another nature, pure, and spiritual, and heavenly, and the delights of angels.

8. He enjoyed more than ever any man did a composition of rational and sensitive pleasures at the same time. He was in this respect "great, and increased more than all that were before him;" thus he was both a wise man and a sportsman. It was strange, and the like was never met with.

1st. That his pleasures did not debauch his judgment and conscience. In the midst of all these entertainments his wisdom remained with him, ver. 9; in the midst of all these childish delights he preserved his spirit manly, kept the possession of his own soul, and maintained the dominion of reason over the appetites of sense. Such a vast stock of wisdom had he that it was not wasted and impaired, as any other man's would have been, by this course of life. But let none be emboldened hereby to lay the reins in the neck of their appetites, presuming that they may do that and yet retain their wisdom, because they have not such a strength of wisdom as Solomon had. Nay, and Solomon was deceived; for how did his wisdom remain with him, when he lost his religion so far as to build altars to strange gods, for the humouring of his strange wives? But thus far his wisdom remained with him, that he was master of his pleasures, and not a slave to them; and kept himself capable of making a judgment of them. He went over into the enemies' country, not as a deserter, but as a spy, to discover the nakedness of their land.

2nd. Yet his judgment and conscience gave no check to his pleasures, nor hindered him from extracting the very quintessence of the delights of sense, ver. 10. It might be objected against his judgment in this matter, that if his wisdom remained with him he could not take the liberty that was necessary to a full experimental acquaintance with it. Yea, saith he, I took as great a liberty as any man could take, for "whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them," if it could be compassed by lawful means, though never so difficult or costly; and as "I withheld not any joy from my heart" that I had a mind to, so "I withheld not my heart from any joy," but with a *non obstante*,—'a defiance of obstacles,' to my wisdom, I had as high a gust of my pleasures, relished and

enjoyed them as much as ever any epicure did; nor was there anything, either in the circumstances of his condition or in the temper of his spirit, to sour or embitter them, or give them any alloy. In short, *First*. He had as much pleasure in his business as ever any man had. "My heart rejoiced in all my labour," so that the toil and fatigue of that was no damp to his pleasures. *Secondly*. He had no less profit by his business. He met with no disappointment in it to give him any disturbance; "This was my portion of all my labour." He had this added to all the rest of his pleasures, that in them he did not only see but eat the labour of his hands; and this was all he had, for indeed it was all he could expect from his labour. It sweetened his business that he enjoyed the success of it, and it sweetened his enjoyments that they were the product of his business. So that, upon the whole matter, he was certainly as happy as the world could make him.

Lastly. We have at length the judgment he deliberately gave of all this, ver. 11. When the Creator had made his great works he reviewed them, and "behold all was very good," every thing pleased him; but when Solomon reviewed "all the works that his hands had wrought," with the utmost cost and care, and "the labour that he had laboured to do" in order to make himself easy and happy, nothing answered his expectation; "behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit." He had no satisfaction in it, no advantage by it; "there was no profit under the sun," neither by the employments nor by the enjoyments of this world.

12 And I turned myself to behold
Wisdom, and madness, and folly:
For what *can* the man *do* that cometh after the king?
Even that which hath been already done.
13 Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly,
As far as light excelleth darkness.
14 The wise man's eyes *are* in his head;
But the fool walketh in darkness:
And I myself perceived also
That one event happeneth to them all.
15 Then said I in my heart,
As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me;
And why was I then more wise?
Then I said in my heart, that this also *is* vanity.
16 For *there is* no remembrance
Of the wise more than of the fool for ever; [forgotten.
Seeing that which now *is* in the days to come shall all be
And how dieth the wise *man?* as the fool.

Solomon, having tried what satisfaction was to be had in learning first, and then in the pleasures of sense, and having also put both together, he here compares them one with another, and passeth a judgment upon them.

First. He sets himself to consider both wisdom and folly. He had considered these before, *ch.* i. 17, but, lest it should be thought that he was then too quick in passing a judgment upon them, he here turns himself again to behold them, to see if, upon a second view and second thoughts, he could gain more satisfaction in the search than he had done upon the first. He was sick of his pleasures, and, as nauseating them, he turned from them, that he might again apply himself to speculation; and if, upon this rehearing of the cause, the verdict be still the same, the judgment will surely be decisive; "for what can the man do that comes after the king?" especially such a king, that had so much of this world to make the experiment upon, and so much wisdom to make it with. The baffled trial needs not be repeated; no man can expect to find more satisfaction in the world than Solomon did, nor to gain a greater insight into the principles of morality. When a man has done what he can, still it is that which hath been already done. Let us learn, 1. Not to indulge ourselves in a fond conceit that we can mend that which has been well done before us; let us esteem others better than ourselves, and think how unfit we are to attempt the improvement of the performances of better heads and hands than ours, and rather own how much we are beholden to them, *Jno.* iv. 37, 38. 2. To acquiesce in Solomon's judgment of the things of this world, and not to think of repeating the trial; for we can never think of having such advantages as he had to make the experiment, nor of being able to make it with an equal application of mind, and so little danger to ourselves.

Secondly. He gives wisdom the preference far before folly. Let none mistake him, as if, when he speaks of the vanity of human literature, he designed only to amuse men with a paradox, or were about to write, (as a great wit once did,) *Encomium moriæ*,—'a panegyric in praise of folly.' No, he is maintaining sacred truths, and therefore is careful to guard against being misunderstood. I soon saw, saith he, that "there is an excellency in wisdom more than in folly, as much as there is in light above darkness." The pleasures of wisdom, though they suffice not to make men happy, yet they vastly transcend the pleasures of wine. Wisdom enlightens the soul with surprising discoveries, and necessary directions for the right government of itself; but sensuality, (for that seems to be especially the folly here meant,) clouds and eclipses the mind, and is as darkness to it; it puts out men's eyes, and makes them to stumble in the way, and wander out of it. Or, though wisdom and knowledge will not make a man happy, St. Paul shews a more excellent way than gifts, and that is grace; yet it is much better have it than be without it, in respect of our present safety, comfort, and usefulness; for "the wise man's eyes are in his head," ver. 14, where they should be ready to discover both the dangers that are to be avoided, and the advantages that are to be improved. A wise man has not his reason to seek when he should use it, but looks about him, and is quicksighted, knows both where to step and where to stop; whereas the fool walks in darkness, and is ever and anon either at a loss or at a plunge, either bewildered that he knows not which way to go, or embarrassed that he cannot go forward. A man that is discreet and considerate has the command of his business, and acts decently and safely, as those that walk in the day; but he that is rash, and ignorant, and sottish, is continually making blunders, running upon one precipice or other; his projects, his bargains, are all foolish, and ruin his affairs. Therefore get wisdom, get understanding.

Thirdly. Yet he maintains that in respect of lasting happiness and satisfaction, the wisdom of this world gives a man very little advantage; for,

1. Wise men and fools fare alike. It is true the wise man has very much the advantage of the fool in respect of foresight and insight, and yet the greatest probabilities do so often come short of success that "I myself perceived," by my own experience, "that one event happeneth to them all," ver. 14. Those that are most cautious of their health are as soon sick as those that are most careless of it, and the most suspicious are imposed upon. David had observed that wise men die, and are involved in the same common calamity with the fool and the brutish person, *Ps.* xlix. 12: see *ch.* ix. 11. Nay, it has of old been observed that fortune favours fools, and that half-witted men often thrive most, while the great projectors forecast worst for themselves. The same sickness, the same sword, devours wise men and fools.

Solomon applies this mortifying observation to himself, ver. 15, that, though he were a wise man, he might not glory in his wisdom. I said to my heart, when it began to be proud or secure, "As it happens to the fool, so it happens to me, even to me;" for thus emphatically it is expressed in the original; so as for me, it happens to me. Am I rich? so is many a Nabal, that fares as sumptuously as I do. Is a foolish man sick? doth he get a fall? so do I, even I; and neither my wealth nor my wisdom will be my security. "And why was I then more wise?" why should I take so much pains to get wisdom, when as to this life it will stand me in so little stead. "Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity." Some make this a correction of what he had said before, like that, *Ps.* lxxvii. 10, "I said, This is my infirmity;" it is my folly to think that wise men and fools are upon a level; but really they seem to be so in respect of the event, and therefore it is rather a confirmation of what he had before said, that a man may be a profound philosopher and politician, and yet not be a happy man.

2. Wise men and fools are forgotten alike; ver. 16, "There is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool." It is promised to the righteous that they shall be had in everlasting remembrance, and their memory shall be blessed, and they shall shortly shine as the stars; but there is no such promise made concerning the wisdom of this world, that that shall perpetuate men's names, for those names only are perpetuated that are written in heaven; and otherwise the names of this world's wise men are written with those of its fools in the dust. "That which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten." What was much talked of in one generation is in the next as if it had never been. New persons and new things jostle out the very remembrance of the old, which in a little time are looked upon with contempt, and at length quite buried in oblivion. "Where is the wise? where is the disputer of this world?" 1 *Cor.* i. 20. And it is upon this account that he asks, "How dies the wise man? as the fool." Between the death of a godly and a wicked man there is great difference, but not between the death of a wise man and a fool. The fool is buried and forgotten, *ch.* viii. 10; and no one remembered the poor man that by his wisdom delivered the city, *ch.* ix. 15; so that to both the grave is a land of forgetfulness; and wise and learned men, when they have been a while there out of sight, presently grow out of mind; a new generation ariseth that knew them not.

17 Therefore I hated life;
Because the work that is wrought under the sun *is* grievous unto me:
For all *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.
18 Yea, I hated all my labour
Which I had taken under the sun: [after me.
Because I should leave it unto the man that shall be
19 And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise *man* or a
Yet shall he have rule over all my labour [fool?
Wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun.
This *is* also vanity.
20 Therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair
Of all the labour which I took under the sun.
21 For there is a man whose labour *is* in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity;
Yet to a man that hath not laboured therein
Shall he leave it *for* his portion.
This also *is* vanity and a great evil.
22 For what hath man of all his labour,
And of the vexation of his heart,
Wherein he hath laboured under the sun?
23 For all his days *are* sorrows, and his travail grief;
Yea, his heart taketh not rest in the night.
This is also vanity.
24 *There is* nothing better for a man, *than* that he should eat and drink, [labour
And *that* he should make his soul enjoy good in his
This also I saw, that it *was* from the hand of God.
25 For who can eat, or who else can hasten *hereunto*, more than I?
26 For *God* giveth to a man that *is* good in his sight
Wisdom, and knowledge, and joy:
But to the sinner he giveth travail,
To gather and to heap up,
That he may give to *him that is* good before God.
This also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

Business is a thing that wise men have pleasure in; they are in their element when they are in their business, and complain if they be out of business. They

may sometimes be tired with their business, but they are not weary of it, nor willing to leave it off. Here, therefore, one would expect to have found the good that men should do; but Solomon tried this too. After a contemplative life and a voluptuous life, he betook himself to an active life, and found no more satisfaction in that than in the other; still it is all "vanity and vexation of spirit," of which he gives an account in these verses. Where observe,

First. What the business was which he made trial of. It was business under the sun, ver. 17—20; about the things of this world, sublunary things, the riches, honours, and pleasures of this present time; it was the business of a king. There is business above the sun, perpetual business, which is perpetual blessedness. What we do in conformity to that business, doing God's will as it is done in heaven, and in pursuance of that blessedness, will turn to a good account; we shall have no reason to hate that labour, nor to despair of it; but it is labour under the sun, labour for the meat that perisheth, *Jno.* vi. 27, *Isa.* lv. 2, that Solomon here speaks of with so little satisfaction. It was the better sort of business, not that of the hewers of wood and drawers of water, (it is not so strange, if men hate all that labour,) but it was "in wisdom, and knowledge, and equity," ver. 21; it was rational business, which related to the government of his kingdom, and the advancement of its interests; it was labour managed by the dictates of wisdom, of natural and acquired knowledge, and the directions of justice; it was labour at the council-board, and in the courts of justice; it was labour wherein he shewed himself wise, ver. 19, which as much excels the labour wherein men only shew themselves strong, as the endowments of the mind, by which we are allied to angels, do those of the body which we have in common with the brutes. That which many people have in their eye more than any thing else, in the prosecution of their worldly business, is to shew themselves wise, to get the reputation of ingenious men, and men of sense and application.

Secondly. His falling out with his business; he presently grew sick of it. 1. He hated all his labour, because he did not meet with that satisfaction in it which he expected. After he had had his fine houses, and gardens, and waterworks a while, he began to nauseate them, and look upon them with contempt, as children that are eager for a toy, and fond of it at first, but when they have played with it a while are weary of it, and throw it away, and must have another. This speaks, not a gracious hatred of these things, which is our duty, to love them less than God and religion, *Lu.* xiv. 26; nor a sinful hatred of them, which is our folly, to be weary of the place God has assigned to us, and the work of it; but a natural hatred of them, arising from a surfeit upon them, and a sense of disappointment in them. 2. He caused his heart to despair of all his labour, ver. 20; that is, he took pains to possess himself with a deep sense of the vanity of worldly business, that it would not bring in the advantage and satisfaction he had formerly flattered himself with the hopes of. Our hearts are very loath to quit their expectations of great things from the creature; we must go about, must fetch a compass in arguing with them, to convince them that there is not that in the things of this world which we are apt to promise ourselves from them. Have we so often bored and sunk into this earth for some rich mine of satisfaction, and found not the least sign or token of it, but been always frustrated in the search; and shall we not at length set our hearts at rest, and despair of ever finding it? 3. He came to that at length that he hated life itself, ver. 17; because it is subject to so many toils and tosses, and a constant series of disappointments. God had given Solomon such largeness of heart, and such vast capacities of mind, that he experienced more than other men of the unsatisfying nature of all the things of this life, and their insufficiency to make him happy. Life itself, that is so precious to a man, and such a blessing to a good man, may become a burthen to a man of business.

Thirdly. The reasons of this quarrel with his life and labours. Two things made him weary of them:

1. That his business was so great a toil to himself. The work that he wrought under the sun was grievous to him, ver. 17; his thoughts and cares about it, and that close and constant application of mind which was requisite to it, was a burthen and fatigue to him, especially when he grew old. It is the effect of a curse on that we are to work upon. Our business is said to be "the work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed," *Gen.* v. 19; and of the weakening of the faculties we are to work with, and of the sentence pronounced on us, that in the sweat of our face we must eat bread. Our labour is called the vexation of our heart, ver. 22. It is to most a force upon themselves, so natural is it to us to love our ease. A man of business is described to be uneasy both in his going out and his coming in, ver. 23. 1st. He is deprived of his pleasure by day, "for all his days are sorrow;" not only sorrowful, but sorrow itself, nay, many sorrows, and various. His travail or labour all day is grief; men of business ever and anon meet with that which vexeth them, and is an occasion of anger or sorrow to them. They that are apt to fret, the more dealings they have in the world the oftener they are made to fret. The world is a vale of tears even to those that have much of it. They that labour are said to be heavy laden, and are therefore called to come to Christ for rest, *Mat.* xi. 28. 2nd. He is disturbed in his repose by night. When he is overcome with the hurries of the day, and hopes to find relief when he lays his head on his pillow, he is disappointed there; cares hold his eyes waking, or if he sleep yet his heart wakes, and that taketh no rest in the night. See what fools they are that make themselves drudges to the world, and do not make God their rest; night and day they cannot but be uneasy. So that upon the whole matter it is all vanity, ver. 17; "this is vanity" in particular, ver. 19, 23; nay, it is "vanity and a great evil," ver. 21. It is a great affront to God, and a great injury to themselves, therefore a great evil, and a vain thing, to rise up early, and sit up late, in pursuit of this world's goods, which were never designed to be our chief good.

2. That the gains of his business must all be left to others. Prospect of advantage is the spring of action, and the spur of industry; therefore men labour, because they hope to get by it. If the hope fail, the labour flags. And therefore Solomon quarrelled with all the works, the great works he had made, because they would not be of any lasting advantage to himself.

1st. He must leave them. He could not at death take them away with him, nor any share of them, nor should he return any more to them, *Job* vii. 10; nor would the remembrance of them do him any good, *Lu.* xvi. 25. But "I must leave all to the man that shall be after me," to the generation that comes up in the room of that which is passing away. As there were many before us who built the houses that we live in, and into whose purchases and labours we have entered, so there shall be many after us who shall live in the houses that we build, and enjoy the fruit of our purchases and labours. Never was land lost for want of an heir. To a gracious soul this is no uneasiness at all. Why should we grudge others their turn in the enjoyments of this world, and not rather be pleased that, when we are gone, those that come after us shall fare the better for our wisdom and industry? But to a worldly mind, that seeks for its own happiness in the creature, it is a great vexation to think of leaving the beloved pelf behind to I know not who.

2nd. He must leave them to those that would never have taken so much pains for them, and will thereby excuse himself from taking any pains. He that raised the estate did it by labouring in wisdom, in knowledge, and equity, but he that enjoys it and spends it, it may be, hath not laboured therein, ver. 21, and more than that, never will; the bee toils to maintain the drone. Nay, it proves a snare to him; it is left him for his portion, which he rests in and takes up with, and miserable he is in being put off with it for a portion; whereas, if an estate had not come to him thus easily, who knows but he might have been both industrious and religious? Yet we ought not to perplex ourselves about this, since it may prove otherwise, that what is well got may come to one that will use it well and do good with it.

3rd. He knows not who he must leave it to, for God makes heirs, or at least what he will prove to whom he leaves it, whether a wise man or a fool; a wise man, that will make it more, or a fool, that will bring it to nothing. "Yet he shall have rule over all my labour," and foolishly undo that which his father wisely did. It is likely Solomon wrote this very feelingly, being afraid what Rehoboam would prove. St. Jerome, in his commentary on this passage, applies this to the good books which Solomon wrote, in which he had shewed himself wise, but he knew not into whose hands they would fall; perhaps into the hand of a fool, who, according to the perverseness of his heart, makes an ill use of what was well written. So that upon the whole matter he asks, ver. 22, "What has man of all his labour?" what has he to himself and to his own use? what has he that will go with him into another world?

Fourthly. The best use which is therefore to be made of the wealth of this world, and that is, to use it cheerfully, to take the comfort of it, and do good with it. With this he concludes the chapter, ver. 24—26. There is no true happiness to be found in these things; as to that they are vanity, and if happiness be expected from them the disappointment will be vexation of spirit. But he will put us in a way to make the best of them, and to avoid the inconveniences he had observed, 1st. We must not overtoil ourselves, so as in pursuit of more to rob ourselves of the comfort of what we have. 2nd. We must not overhoard for hereafter, nor lose our own enjoyment of what we have to lay it up for those that shall come after us, but serve ourselves out of it first. Observe,

1. What that good is which is here recommended to us, and which is the utmost pleasure and profit we can expect or extract from the business and profit of this world, and the farthest we can go to rescue it from its vanity and the vexation that is in it.

1st. We must do our duty with them, and be more in care how to use an estate well, for the ends for which we were intrusted with it, than how to raise or increase an estate. This is intimated, ver. 26, where those only are said to have the comfort of this life that are good in God's sight, and again, good before God, truly good, as Noah, whom God saw righteous before him. We must set God always before us, and give diligence in every thing to approve ourselves to him. The Chaldee paraphrase saith, 'That a man should make his soul to enjoy good, by keeping the commandments of God, and walking in the ways that are right before him;' and ver. 25, 'by studying the words of the law, and being in care about the day of the great judgment that is to come.'

2nd. We must take the comfort of them. These things will not make a happiness for the soul; all the good we can have out of them is for the body, and if we make use of them for the comfortable support of that, so as it may be fit to serve the soul, and able to keep pace with it in the service of God, then they turn to a good account. "There is," therefore, "nothing better for a man" as to these things, than to allow himself a sober, cheerful use of them, according as his rank and condition is, have meat and drink out of them for himself, his family, and friends, and so delight his senses, "and make his soul enjoy good," all the good that is to be had out of them. Do not lose that in pursuit of that good which is not to be had out of them. But observe, he would not have us to give up business, and take our ease, that we may "eat and drink;" no, we must "enjoy good in our labour;" we must use these things, not to excuse us from, but to make us diligent and cheerful in, our worldly business.

3rd. We must herein acknowledge God; we must see "that it is from the hand of God," that is, *First.* The good things themselves that we enjoy are so, not only the products of his creating power, but the gifts of his providential bounty to us. And then they are truly pleasant to us, when we take them from the hand of God as a Father, when we eye his wisdom giving us that which is fittest for us, and acquiesce in it, and taste his love and goodness, relish that, and are thankful for it. *Secondly.* A heart to enjoy them is so. This is the gift of God's grace. Unless he give us wisdom to make a right use of what he has in his providence bestowed upon us, and, withal, peace of conscience, that we may discern God's favour in the world's smiles, we cannot make ourselves enjoy any good in them.

2. Why we should have this in our eye in the management of ourselves as to this world, and look up to God for it.

1st. Because Solomon himself, with all his possessions, could aim at no more, and desire no better; ver. 25, "Who can hasten to this more than I?" This is that which I was ambitious of; I wished for no more, and those that have but little in comparison with what I have may attain to this, to be content with what they have, and enjoy the good of it. Yet Solomon could not obtain it by his own wisdom, without the special grace of God, and therefore directs us to expect it from the hand of God, and pray to him for it.

2nd. Because riches are a blessing or curse to a man, according as he has or has not a heart to make good use of them. *First.* God makes them a reward to a good man, if with them he give him wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, to enjoy them cheerfully himself, and to communicate them charitably to others. To those who are good in God's sight, that are of a good spirit, honest and sincere, pay a deference to their God, and have a tender concern for all mankind, 'God will give wisdom and knowledge in this world, and joy with the righteous in the world to come,' so the Chaldee. Or, he will give that wisdom and knowledge in things natural, moral, political, and Divine, which will be a constant joy and pleasure to them. *Secondly.* He makes them a punishment to an ill man, if he denies him a heart to take the comfort of them, for they do but tantalize him and tyrannize over him. "To the sinner God gives travail," by leaving him to himself and his own foolish counsels, "to gather and to heap up" that which as to himself will not only burthen him like thick clay, *Hab.* ii. 6, but be a witness against him, and eat his flesh as it were fire, *Jas.* v. 3; while God designs, by an overruling providence, "to give it to him that is good before him," for "the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and gathered for him that will pity the poor." Note, *1st.* That godliness with contentment is great gain; and those only have true joy that are good in God's sight, and that have it from him and in him. *2nd.* Ungodliness is commonly punished with discontent and an insatiable covetousness, which are sins that are their own punishment. *3rd.* That when God gives abundance to wicked men, it is with design to force them to a resignation to his own children when they are of age and ready for it, as the Canaanites kept possession of the good land till the time appointed for Israel's entering upon it. Lastly. The burthen of the song is still the same, "This is also vanity and vexation of spirit." It is vanity at the best, even to the good man; when he has all that the sinner has scraped together it will not make him happy without something else; but it is vexation of spirit to the sinner to see what he has laid up enjoyed by him that is good in God's sight, and therefore evil in his. So that, take it which way you will, the conclusion is firm, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

CHAPTER III.

Solomon, having shewed the vanity of studies, pleasures, and business, and made it to appear that happiness is not to be found either in the schools of the learned or in the gardens of Epicurus, or upon the exchange, he proceeds in this chapter farther to prove his doctrine, and the inference he had drawn from it, that therefore we should cheerfully content ourselves with, and make use of, what God has given us, by shewing, I. The mutability of all human affairs, ver. 1—10. II. The immutability of the Divine counsels concerning them, and the unsearchableness of those counsels, ver. 11—15. III. The vanity of worldly honour and power, which is abused for the support of oppression and persecution, if men be not governed by the fear of God in the use of it, ver. 16. And for a check to proud oppressors, and to shew them their vanity, he minds them, 1. That they will be called to account for it in the other world, ver. 17; 2. That their condition in reference to this world, (for of that he speaks,) is no better than that of the brutes, ver. 18—21; and therefore he concludes that it is our wisdom to make use of what power we have for our own comfort, and not to oppress others with it.

TO every *thing there is* a season,
And a time to every purpose under the heaven:
2 A time to be born, and a time to die; [planted;
A time to plant, and a time to pluck up *that which is*
3 A time to kill, and a time to heal;
A time to break down, and a time to build up;
4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn, and a time to dance; [together;
5 A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones
A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
6 A time to get, and a time to lose;
A time to keep, and a time to cast away;
7 A time to rend, and a time to sew;
A time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
8 A time to love, and a time to hate;
A time of war, and a time of peace. [laboureth?
9 What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he
10 I have seen the travail, which God hath given
To the sons of men to be exercised in it.

The scope of these verses is to shew, 1. That we live in a world of changes; that the several events of time and conditions of human life are vastly different from one another, and yet occur promiscuously; and we are continually passing and repassing between them, as in the revolutions of every day and every year. It is the wheel of nature, *Jas.* iii. 6; sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and by and by the contrary, ebbing and flowing, waxing and waning; from one extreme to the other doth the fashion of this world change, ever did, and ever will. 2. That every change concerning us, and the time and season of it, is unalterably fixed and determined by a supreme power; and we must take things as they come, for it is not in our power to change what is appointed for us. And this comes in here as a reason why, when we are in prosperity, we should be easy, and yet not secure; not secure, because we live in a world of changes, and therefore have no reason to say, that "to-morrow shall be as this day;" the lowest valleys join to the highest mountains; and yet to be easy, and as he had advised, *ch.* ii. 24, "to enjoy the good of our labour," in an humble dependence upon God and his providence, neither lifted up with hopes nor cast down with fears, but with evenness of mind expecting every event. Here is,

First. A general proposition laid down, that "to every thing there is a season," ver. 1; that is, 1. Those things which seem most contrary the one to the other, yet in the revolution of affairs will each take their turn, and come in play. The day will give place to the night, and the night again to the day. Is it summer? it will be winter; Is it winter? stay awhile, and it will be summer. Every purpose has its time. The clearest sky will be clouded, *post gaudia luctus*,—'joy succeeds sorrow;" and the most clouded sky will clear up, *post nubila Phœbus*,—'the sun will burst from behind the cloud.' 2. Those things which to us seem most casual and contingent, yet in the counsel and foreknowledge of God are punctually determined, and the very hour of them fixed, which can neither be anticipated nor adjourned a moment.

Secondly. The proof and illustration of it by the induction of particulars, twenty-eight in number, according to the days of the moon's revolution, which is always increasing or decreasing, between its full and change. Some of these changes are purely the act of God, others depend more upon the will of man, but all are determined by the Divine counsel. Every thing under heaven is thus changeable, but in heaven there is an unchangeable state and an unchangeable counsel concerning these things.

1. There is "a time to be born, and a time to die." These are determined by the Divine counsel, and as we were born, so we must die, at the time appointed, *Acts* xvii. 26. Some observe that here is "a time to be born and a time to die," but no time to live, that is so short that it is not worth mentioning; as soon as we are born we begin to die. But as there is a time to be born, and a time to die, so there will be a time to rise again, a set time when they that lie in the grave shall be remembered, *Job* xiv. 13.

2. "A time" for God "to plant" a nation, as that of Israel in Canaan, and in order to that "to pluck up" the seven nations that were planted there, to make room for them. And at length there was a time when God spoke concerning Israel too, to pluck up and to destroy, when the measure of their iniquity was full, *Jer.* xviii. 7, 9. There is a time for men to plant, a time of the year, a time of their lives; but when that which was planted is grown fruitless and useless it is time to pluck it up.

3. "A time to kill," when the judgments of God are abroad in a land, and lay all waste; but when he returns in ways of mercy, then is "a time to heal" what he has torn, *Hos.* vi. 1, 2, to comfort a people after the time that he has afflicted them, *Ps.* xc. 15. There is a time when it is the wisdom of rulers to use severe methods; but there is a time when it is as much their wisdom to take a more gentle course, and to apply themselves to lenitives, not corrosives.

4. "A time to break down" a family, an estate, a kingdom, when it has ripened itself for destruction; but God will find a time, if they return and repent, to rebuild what he has broken down; there is a time, a set time, for the Lord to build up Zion, *Ps.* cii. 13, 16. There is a time for men to break up house and break off trade, and so to break down, which they that are busy building up both must expect and prepare for.

5. "A time" when God's providence calls "to weep and mourn," and when man's wisdom and grace will comply with the call, and will weep and mourn, as in times of common calamity and danger, and then it is very absurd to laugh, and dance, and make merry, *Isa.* xxii. 12, 13; *Eze.* xxi. 10. But then, on the other hand, there is a time when God calls to cheerfulness, "a time to laugh and dance," and then he expects we should serve him with joyfulness and gladness of heart. Observe, The time of mourning and weeping is put first, before that of laughter and dancing, for we must first sow in tears and then reap in joy.

6. "A time to cast away stones," by breaking down and demolishing fortifications, when God gives peace in the borders, and there is no more occasion for them; but there is "a time to gather stones together" for the making of strongholds, ver. 5. A time for old towers to fall, as that in Siloam, *Lu.* xiii. 4, and for the temple itself to be so ruined as that not one stone should be left upon another; but also a time for towers and trophies too to be erected, when national affairs prosper.

7. "A time to embrace" a friend, when we find him faithful, but "a time to refrain from embracing," when we find he is unfair or unfaithful, and that we have cause to suspect him; it is then our prudence to be shy, and keep at a distance. It is commonly applied to conjugal embraces, and explained by 1 *Cor.* vii. 3—5; *Joel* ii. 16.

8. "A time to get," get money, get preferment, get good bargains, and a good interest, when opportunity smiles; a time when a wise man will seek, so the word is. When he is setting out in the world, and has a growing family, when he is in his prime, when he has good hits, and has a run of business, then it is time for him to be busy, and make hay when the sun shines. There is a time to get wisdom, and knowledge, and grace, when a man has a price put into his hand. But then let him expect there will come a time to spend; when all he has will be little enough to serve his turn; nay, there will come "a time to lose," when what has been got fast will be scattered as fast, and cannot be held fast.

9. "A time to keep;" when we have use for what we have got, and can keep it without running the hazard of a good conscience. But there may come "a time to cast away," when love to God may oblige us to cast away what we have, because we must deny Christ and wrong our consciences if we keep it, *Mat.* x. 37, 38, and rather to make shipwreck of all than of the faith; nay, when love to ourselves may oblige us to cast it away; when it is for the saving of our lives, as it was when Jonah's mariners heaved their cargo into the sea.

10. "A time to rend the garments," as upon occasion of some great grief, "and a time to sew" them again, in token that the grief is over; a time to undo what we have done, and a time to do again what we have undone. Jerome applies it to the rending of the Jewish church, and the sewing and making up of the gospel church thereupon.

11. "A time" when it becomes us, and is our wisdom and duty, "to keep silence," when it is an evil time, *Am.* v. 13, when our speaking would be the casting of pearls before swine, or when we are in danger of speaking amiss, *Ps.* xxxix. 2. But there is also "a time to speak" for the glory of God and the edification of others, when silence would be the betraying of a righteous cause, and when with the mouth confession is to be made to salvation. And it is a great part of Christian prudence to know when to speak and when to hold our peace.

12. "A time to love" and to shew ourselves friendly, to be free and cheerful, and it is a pleasant time; but there may come "a time to hate," when we shall see cause to break off all familiarity with some that we have been fond of, and to be upon the reserve, as having found reason for a suspicion which love is loath to admit.

13. "A time of war;" when God draws the sword for judgment, and gives it commission to devour; when men draw the sword for justice and the maintaining of their rights; when there is in the nations a disposition to war. But we may hope for "a time of peace," when the sword of the Lord shall be sheathed, and he shall make wars to cease, *Ps.* xlvi. 9; when the end of the war is obtained, and when there is on all sides a disposition to peace. War shall not last always, nor is there any peace to be called lasting on this side the everlasting peace. Thus in all these changes God hath set the one over against the other, that we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.

Thirdly. The inferences drawn from this observation. If our present state be subject to such vicissitude,

1. Then we must not expect our portion in it, for the good things of it are of no certainty, no continuance; ver. 9, "What profit hath he that worketh?" What can a man promise himself from planting and building, when that which he thinks brought to perfection may so soon and will so surely be plucked up and broken down? All our pains and care will not alter either the mutable nature of the things themselves or the immutable counsel of God concerning them.

2. Then we must look upon ourselves as upon our probation in it. There is indeed no profit in that wherein we labour; the thing itself, when we have it, will do us little good. But if we make a right use of the disposals of providence about it there will be profit in that; ver. 10, "I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men," not to make up a happiness by it, but to be exercised in it, to have various graces exercised by the variety of events, to have their dependence upon God tried by every change, and to be trained up to it, and taught both how to want and how to abound, *Phil.* iv. 12. Note, 1st. There is a great deal of toil and trouble to be seen among the children of men; labour and sorrow fill the world. 2nd. This toil and trouble is what God hath allotted us; he never intended this world for our rest, and therefore never appointed us to take our ease in it. 3rd. To many it proves a gift; God gives it men as the physician gives a medicine to his patient, to do him good. This travail is given us to make us weary of the world, and desirous of the remaining rest. 4th. It is given us that we may be kept in action, and may always have something to do, for we were none of us sent into the world to be idle. Every change cuts us out some new work, which we should be more solicitous about than about the event.

11 He hath made every *thing* beautiful in his time:
Also he hath set the world in their heart,
So that no man can find out the work that God maketh
From the beginning to the end.
12 I know that *there is* no good in them,
But for *a man* to rejoice, and to do good in his life.
13 And also that every man should eat and drink,

And enjoy the good of all his labour, it *is* the gift of God.

14 I know that, whatsoever God doeth,
It shall be for ever:
Nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it:
And God doeth *it*, that *men* should fear before him.

15 That which hath been is now;
And that which is to be hath already been;
And God requireth that which is past.

We have seen what changes there are in the world, and must not expect to find the world more sure to us than it has been to others. Now here he shews the hand of God in all those changes; it is he that has made every creature to be that to us that it is, and therefore we must have our eye always up unto him.

First. We must make the best of that which is, and must believe it best for the present, and accommodate ourselves to it. "He has made every thing beautiful in his time," ver. 11; and, therefore, while its time lasts we must be reconciled to it, nay, we must please ourselves with the beauty of it. Note, 1. Every thing is as God has made it; it is really as he has appointed it to be, not as it appear to us. 2. That which to us seems most unpleasant, yet in its proper time is decent enough. Cold is as becoming in winter as heat in summer; and the night in its turn is a black beauty, as the day in its turn is a bright one. 3. There is a wonderful harmony in the Divine providence, and all its disposals; so that the events of it, when they come to be considered in their relations and tendencies, together with the seasons of them, will appear very beautiful to the glory of God, and the comfort of those that trust in him. Though we see not the complete beauty of providence, yet we shall see it; and a glorious sight it will be, when the mystery of God shall be finished. Then every thing shall appear to have been done in the most proper time, and it will be the wonder of eternity, *Deu.* xxxii. 4; *Eze.* i. 18.

Secondly. We must wait with patience for the full discovery of that which to us seems intricate and perplexed, acknowledging that we cannot "find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end," and therefore must judge nothing before the time. We are to believe that God hath made all beautiful, every thing is done well, as in creation so in providence, and we shall see it when the end comes, but till then we are incompetent judges of it. While the picture is in drawing, and the house in building, we see not the beauty of either; but when the artist has put his last hand to them, and given them their finishing strokes, then all appears very good. We see but the middle of God's works, not from the beginning of them, (then we should see how admirably the plan was laid in the Divine counsels;) nor to the end of them, which crowns the action; (then we should see the product to be glorious;) but we must wait till the vail be rent, and not arraign God's proceedings, nor pretend to pass a judgment on them. Secret things belong not to us.

Those words, "He hath set the world in their hearts," are differently understood. 1. Some make them to be a reason why we may know more of God's works than we do. So Mr. Pemble, 'God hath not left himself without witness of his righteous, equal, and beautiful ordering of things, but hath set it forth to be observed in the book of the world, and this he hath set in men's hearts; that is, given man a large desire, and a power in good measure to comprehend and understand the history of nature with the course of human affairs, so that, if men did but give themselves to the exact observation of things, they might in most of them perceive an admirable order and contrivance.' 2. Others make them to be a reason why we do not know so much of God's works as we might. So Bishop Reynolds: we have the world so much in our hearts, 'are so taken up with thoughts and cares of worldly things, and are so exercised in our travail concerning them, that we have neither time nor spirit to eye God's hand in them.' The world has not only gained possession of the heart, but has formed prejudices there against the beauty of God's works.

Thirdly. We must be pleased with our lot in this world, and cheerfully acquiesce in the will of God concerning us, and accommodate ourselves to it. There is no certain lasting good in these things; what good there is in them we are here told, ver. 12, 13. We must make a good use of them. 1. For the benefit of others. All the good there is in them is to do good with them; to our families, to our neighbours, to the poor, to the public, to its civil and religious interests. What have we our beings, capacities, and estates for, but to be some way serviceable to our generation? We mistake if we think we were born for ourselves. No, it is our business to do good; it is in that that there is the truest pleasure, and what is so laid out is best laid up, and will turn to the best account. Observe, It is to do good in this life, which is short and uncertain; we have but a little time to be doing good in, and therefore have need to redeem time. It is in this life, where we are in a state of trial and probation for another life. Every man's life is his opportunity of doing that which will make for him in eternity. 2. For our own comfort. Let us make ourselves easy, rejoice, and enjoy the good of our labour, as it is the gift of God, and so enjoy God in it, and taste his love; return him thanks, and make him the centre of our joy; eat and drink to his glory, and serve him with joyfulness of heart in the abundance of all things. If all things in this world be so uncertain, it is a foolish thing for men sordidly to spare for the present that they may hoard up all for hereafter; it is better to live cheerfully and usefully upon what we have, and let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself. Grace and wisdom to do this is the gift of God; and it is a good gift, which crowns the gifts of his providential bounty.

Fourthly. We must be entirely satisfied in all the disposals of the Divine providence, both as to personal and public concerns, and bring our minds to them, because God in all "performeth the thing that is appointed for us," acts according to the counsel of his will; and we are here told, 1. That that counsel cannot be altered, and therefore it is our wisdom to make a virtue of necessity, by submitting to it. It must be as God will; "I know" (and every one knows it that knows any thing of God) "that whatsoever God doth, it shall be for ever," ver. 14. He is in one mind, and who can turn him? His measures are never broken, nor is he ever put upon new counsels, but what he hath purposed shall be effected, and all the world cannot defeat or disannul it. It behoves us therefore to say, Let it be as God will; for, how cross soever it may be to our designs and interests, God's will is his wisdom. 2. That that counsel needs not be altered; for there is nothing amiss in it, nothing that can be amended. If we could see it all together at one view, we should see it so perfect, that "nothing can be put to it;" for there is no deficiency in it," "nor any thing taken from it," for there is nothing in it unnecessary, or that can be spared. As the word of God, so the works of God, are each perfect in their kind, and it is presumption for us either to add to them or to diminish from them, *Deu.* iv. 2. It is therefore as much our interest as our duty to bring our wills to the will of God.

Fifthly. We must study to answer God's end in all his providences, which is in general to make us religious. God doth all that "men should fear before him;" to convince them that there is a God above them, that has a sovereign dominion over them, at whose dispose they are, and all their ways, and in whose hands their times are, and all events concerning them; and that, therefore, they ought to have their eyes ever towards him, to worship and adore him, to acknowledge him in all their ways, to be careful in every thing to please him, and afraid of offending him in any thing. God thus changeth his disposals, and yet is unchangeable in his counsels; not to perplex us, much less to drive us to despair, but to teach us our duty to him, and engage us to do it. That which God designs in the government of the world is the support and advancement of religion among men.

Sixthly. Whatever changes we see or feel in this world, we must acknowledge the inviolable steadiness of God's government. The sun riseth and setteth, the moon increaseth and decreaseth; and yet both are where they were, and their revolutions are in the same method from the beginning, according to the ordinances of heaven. So it is with the events of providence; ver. 15, "That which has been is now." God has not of late begun to use this method; no, things were always as mutable and uncertain as they are now; and so they will be: "that which is to be hath already been;" and therefore we speak inconsiderately when we say, Surely the world was never so bad as it is now; or, None ever met with such disappointments as we meet with; or, The times will mend. They may mend with us, and after a time to mourn there may come a time to rejoice, but that will still be liable to the common character, to the common fate. The world, as it has been, is and will be constant in inconstancy; for "God requireth that which is past," that is, repeats what he has formerly done, and deals with us no otherwise than as he has used to deal with good men; and "shall the earth be forsaken for us, or the rock removed out of its place?" There has no change befallen us, nor any temptation by it taken us, but such as is common to men. Let us not be proud and secure in prosperity, for God may recall a past trouble, and order that to seize us, and spoil our mirth, *Ps.* xxx. 7; nor let us despond in adversity, for God may call back the comforts that are past, as he did to Job. We may apply this to our past actions, and our behaviour under the changes that have been concerning us; God will call us to account for that which is past, and therefore, when we enter into a new condition, we should judge ourselves for our sins in our former condition, prosperous or afflicted.

16 And moreover I saw under the sun
The place of judgment, *that* wickedness *was* there;
And the place of righteousness, *that* iniquity *was* there.

17 I said in mine heart,
God shall judge the righteous and the wicked:
For *there is* a time there for every purpose and for every [work.

18 I said in mine heart
Concerning the estate of the sons of men,
That God might manifest them,
And that they might see that they themselves are beasts.

19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts;
Even one thing befalleth them:
As the one dieth, so dieth the other;
Yea, they have all one breath;
So that a man hath no preeminence above a beast:
For all *is* vanity.

20 All go unto one place;
All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.

21 Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward,
And the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

22 Wherefore I perceive that *there is* nothing better,
Than that a man should rejoice in his own works;
For that *is* his portion:
For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?

Solomon is still shewing that every thing in this world, without piety and the fear of God, is vanity. Take away religion, and there is nothing valuable among men; nothing for the sake of which a wise man would think it worth while to live in this world. In these verses he shews that power, than which there is nothing men are more ambitious of, and life itself, than which there is nothing men are more fond, more jealous of, are nothing without the fear of God.

First. Here is the vanity of man as mighty; man in his best estate, man upon the throne, where his authority is submitted to. Man upon the judgment-seat, where his wisdom and justice is appealed to; and where, if he be governed by the laws of religion, he is God's vicegerent, nay, he is of those to whom it is said, Ye are gods; but without the fear of God it is vanity, for set that aside, and,

1. The judge will not judge aright, will not use his power well, but will abuse it, instead of doing good with it, will do hurt with it; and then it is not only vanity, but a lie, a cheat to himself, and to all about him, ver. 16. Solomon perceived by what he had read of former times, what he heard of other countries, and what he had seen in some corrupt judges, even in the land of Israel, notwithstanding all his care to prefer good men, that there was wickedness in the place of judgment. It is not so above the sun,—far be it from God that he should do iniquity, or pervert justice,—but under the sun it is often found that that which should be the refuge proves the prison of oppressed innocency. "Man being in honour, and not understanding" what he ought to do, "becomes like the beasts that perish;" like the beasts of prey, even the most ravenous, *Ps.* xlix. 20. Not only from the persons that sat in judgment, but even in the places where judgment was in pretence administered, and righteousness was expected, there was iniquity. Men met with the greatest wrongs in those courts to which they fled for right. This is vanity and vexation, for, 1st. It had been better for the people to have had no judges than to have had such. 2nd. It will prove better for the judges they had had no power, than to have had it and used it to such ill purposes; and so they will say another day.

2. The judge will himself be judged for not judging right. When Solomon saw how judgment was perverted among men, he looked up to God, the judge, and looked forward to the day of his judgment; ver. 17, "I said in my heart," that this unrighteous judgment is not so conclusive as both sides take it to be, for there will be a review of the judgment. "God shall judge" between "the righteous and the wicked," shall judge for the righteous, and plead their cause, though now it is run down, and judge against the wicked, and reckon with them for all their unrighteous decrees, and the grievousness which they have prescribed, *Isa.* x. 1. With an eye of faith we may see, not only the period, but the punishment, of the pride and cruelty of oppressors, *Ps.* xcii. 7; and it is an unspeakable comfort to the oppressed that their cause will be heard over again; let them therefore wait with patience, for there is another judge that standeth before the door. And though the day of affliction may last long, yet there is a time, a set time, for the examination of every purpose, and every work done under the sun. Men have their day now, but God's day is coming, *Ps.* xxxvii. 13. With God there is a time for the rehearing of causes, redressing of grievances, and reversing of unjust decrees, though as yet we see it not here, *Job* xxiv. 1.

Secondly. Here is the vanity of man as mortal. He now comes to speak more generally concerning the estate of the sons of men in this world, their life and being on earth; and shews that their reason, without religion and the fear of God, doth advance them but little above the beasts. Now observe,

1. What he aims at in this account of man's estate. 1st. That God may be honoured, may be justified, may be glorified; 'that they might clear God,' so the margin reads it; that if men have an uneasy life in this world, full of vanity and vexation, they may thank themselves, and lay no blame on God. Let them clear him, and not say he made this world to be man's prison, and life to be his penance; no, God made man in respect both of honour and comfort little lower than the angels; if he be mean and miserable, it is his own fault. Or, that God, that is, the word of God, might manifest them, and discover them to themselves, and so appear to be quick and powerful, and a judge of men's characters; and we may be made sensible how open we lie to God's knowledge and judgment. 2nd. That man may be humbled, may be vilified, may be mortified, "that they might see that they themselves are beasts." It is something to do to convince proud men that they are but men, *Ps.* ix. 20, much more to convince ill men that they are beasts, that being destitute of religion they are as "the beasts that perish," "as the horse and the mule that have no understanding." Proud oppressors are as beasts, as roaring lions and raging bears. Nay, every man that minds his body only, and not his soul, makes himself no better than a brute, and must wish at least to die like one.

2. The proof he gives of it. That which he undertakes to prove is, that a worldly, carnal, earthly-minded "man has no preeminence above the beast; for all" that which he sets his heart upon, placeth his confidence and expects a happiness in, "is vanity," ver. 19. Some make this to be the language of an atheist, who justifies himself in his iniquity, ver. 16, and evades the argument taken from the judgment to come, ver. 17, by pleading that there is not another life after this, but that when man dies there is an end of him, and therefore while he lives he may live as he list; but others rather think Solomon here speaks as he himself thinks, but is to be understood in the same sense with that of his father, *Ps.* xlix. 14, "Like sheep they are laid in the grave;" and that he intends to shew the vanity of this world's wealth and honours, 'by the equal condition in mere outward respects' (as Bishop Reynolds expounds it) 'between men and beasts.'

1st. The events concerning both seem much alike; ver. 19. "That which befalls the sons of men" is no other than that which "befalleth beasts." A great deal of knowledge of human bodies is gained by the anatomy of the bodies of brutes. When the deluge swept away the old world the beasts perished with mankind; horses and men are killed in battle with the same weapons of war.

2nd. The end of both to an eye of sense seems alike too. "They have all one breath," and breathe in the same air, and it is the general description of both, that "in their nostrils is the breath of life," *Gen.* vii. 22; and therefore "as the one dies, so dies the other;" in their expiring there is no visible difference, but death makes much the same change with a beast that it doth with a man.

First. As to their bodies, the change is altogether the same, bating the different respects that are paid to them by the survivors. Let a man be buried with the burial of an ass, *Jer.* xxii. 19; and what preeminence then has he above a beast? The touch of the dead body of a man, by the law of Moses, contracted a greater ceremonial pollution than the touch of the carcass even of an unclean beast or fowl. And Solomon here observes, that all go unto one place, the dead bodies of men and beasts putrefy alike, all are of the dust in their original; for we see all turn to dust again in their corruption. What little reason then have we to be proud of our bodies, or any bodily accomplishments, when they must not only be reduced to the earth very shortly, but must be so in common with the beasts, and we must mingle our dust with theirs.

Secondly. As to their spirits, there is indeed a vast difference, but not a visible one, ver. 21. It is certain that the spirit of the sons of men at death is ascending; it goes upward to the Father of spirits who made it, to the world of spirits, to which it is allied; it dies not with the body, but is "redeemed from the power of the grave," *Ps.* xlix. 15. It goes upward to be judged and determined to an unchangeable state. It is as certain that "the spirit of the beast goes downward to the earth;" it dies with the body,—it perisheth, and is gone at death. The soul of a beast is at death like a candle blown out, there is an end of it; whereas the soul of a man is then like a candle taken out of a dark lantern, which leaves the lantern useless indeed, but doth itself shine brighter. This great difference there is between the spirits of men and beasts. And a good reason it is why men should set their affections on things above, and lift up their souls to those things, not suffering them, as if they were the souls of brutes, to cleave to this earth; but who knows this difference? We cannot see the ascent of the one and the descent of the other with our bodily eyes; and therefore those that live by sense, as all carnal sensualists do that walk in the sight of their eyes, and will not admit any other discoveries, by their own rule of judgment, have no preeminence above the beasts. "Who knows?" that is, who considers this? *Isa.* liii. 1. Very few; were it better considered, the world would be every way better; but the most of men live as if they were to be here always, or as if when they die there were an end of them. And it is not strange those live like beasts who think they shall die like beasts. But on such the noble faculties of reason are perfectly lost and thrown away.

3. An inference drawn from it; ver. 22, "There is nothing better," as to this world, nothing better to be had out of our wealth and honour, "than that a man should rejoice in his own works," that is, 1st. Keep a clear conscience, and never admit iniquity into the place of righteousness. "Let every man prove his own work," and approve himself to God in it, "so shall he have rejoicing in himself alone," *Gal.* vi. 4. Let him not get or keep any thing but what he can rejoice in: see 2 *Cor.* i. 12. 2nd. Live a cheerful life. If God have prospered the work of our hands unto us, let us rejoice in it, and take the comfort of it, and not make it a burthen to ourselves, and leave others the joy of it; for that is our portion, not the portion of our souls. Miserable are they that have their portion in this life, *Ps.* xvii. 14, and fools are they that choose it, and take up with it, *Lu.* xii. 19. But it is the portion of the body; that only which we enjoy is ours out of this world; it is taking what is to be had, and making the best of it. And the reason is, because none can give us a sight of what shall be after us, either who shall have our estates or what use they will make of them. When we are gone, it is likely we shall not see what is after us; there is no correspondence that we know of between the other world and this, *Job* xiv. 21. They in the other world will be wholly taken up with that world, so that they will not care for seeing what is done in this. And while we are here we cannot foresee what shall be after us, either as to our families or the public. "It is not for us to know the times and seasons" that shall be after us, which, as it should be a restraint to our cares about this world, so it should be a reason for our concern about another. Since death is a final farewell to this life, let us look before us to another life.

CHAPTER IV.

Solomon, having shewed the vanity of this world in the temptation which those in power are in to oppress and trample upon their subjects, here farther shews, I. The temptation which the oppressed are in to discontent and impatience, ver. 1—3. II. The temptation which those that love their ease are in to take their ease, and neglect business for fear of being envied, ver. 4—6. III. The folly of hoarding up abundance of worldly wealth, ver. 7, 8. IV. A remedy against that folly in being made sensible of the benefit of society and mutual assistance, ver. 9—12. V. The mutability even of royal dignity, not only through the folly of the prince himself, ver. 14, 15, but through the fickleness of the people, let the prince be never so discreet, ver. 15, 16. It is not the prerogative even of kings themselves to be exempted from the vanity and vexation that attends these things; let none else then expect it.

SO I returned, and considered all the oppressions
That are done under the sun:
And behold the tears of *such as were* oppressed,
And they had no comforter;
And on the side of their oppressors *there was* power;
But they had no comforter.
2 Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead
More than the living which are yet alive.
3 Yea, better *is he* than both they,
Which hath not yet been, who hath not seen
The evil work that is done under the sun.

Solomon had a large soul, 1 *Kin.* iv. 29, and it appeared by this, among other things, that he had a very tender conscience for the miserable part of mankind, and took cognizance of the afflictions of the afflicted. He had taken the oppressors to task, *ch.* iii. 16, 17, and put them in mind of the judgment to come, to be a curb to their insolence. Now here he observes the oppressed; this he did, no doubt, as a prince, to do them justice, and avenge them of their adversaries; for he both feared God and regarded men. But here he doth it as a preacher, and shews,

First. The troubles of their condition, ver. 1. And of those he speaks very feelingly, and with compassion. It grieved him,

1. To see might prevailing against right; to see so much oppression done under the sun; to see servants, and labourers, and poor workmen oppressed by their masters, who take advantage of their necessity to impose what terms they please upon them; debtors oppressed by cruel creditors, and creditors too by fraudulent debtors; tenants oppressed by hard landlords, and orphans by treacherous guardians; and, worst of all, subjects oppressed by arbitrary princes, and unjust judges. Such oppressions are done under the sun; above the sun righteousness reigns for ever. Wise men will consider these oppressions, and contrive to do something for the relief of those that are oppressed. "Blessed is he that considers the poor."

2. To see how those that were wronged laid to heart the wrongs that were done them. He beheld "the tears of such as were oppressed," and perhaps could not forbear weeping with them. The world is a place of weepers, look which way we will; and we have a melancholy scene presented to us,—"the tears of those that are oppressed" with one trouble or other. They find it is to no purpose to complain, and therefore mourn in secret, as Job, *ch.* xvi. 20; xxx. 28. But "blessed are they that mourn."

3. To see how unable they were to help themselves. "On the side of their oppressors there was power," when they had done wrong to stand to it, and make good what they had done, so that the poor were borne down with a strong hand, and had no way to do themselves right. It is sad to see power misplaced, and that which was given men to enable them to do good perverted to support them in doing wrong.

4. To see how they and their calamities were slighted by all about them. They wept, and needed comfort, but there was none to do that friendly office; "They had no comforter;" their oppressors were big and threatening; and "therefore they had no comforter;" they that should have comforted them durst not, for fear of displeasing the oppressors, and being made their companions for offering to be their comforters. It is sad to see so little humanity among men.

Secondly. The temptations of their condition. Being thus hardly used, they are tempted to hate and despise life, and to envy those that are dead and in their graves, and to wish they had never been born, ver. 2, 3. And Solomon is ready to agree with them; for it serves to prove that all is vanity and vexation, since life itself is often so. And if we undervalue it in comparison with the favour and fruition of God, as St. Paul, *Acts* xx. 24, *Phil.* i. 23, it is our praise; but if, as here, only for the sake of the miseries that attended it, it is our infirmity; and we judge therein after the flesh, as Job and Elijah did.

1. He here thinks them happy that have ended this miserable life,—have done their part, and quitted the stage. "I praised the dead that are already dead," slain outright, or that had a speedy passage through the world, made a short cut over the ocean of life, dead already before they had well begun to live; I was pleased with their lot, and had it been in their own choice should have praised their wisdom, for but peeping into the world and then retiring as not liking it. I concluded, it is better with them than with "the living that are yet alive," and that is all; dragging the long and heavy chain of life, and wearing out its tedious minutes. This may be compared, not with *Job* iii. 20, 21, but with *Rev.* xiv. 13; where, in times of persecution (and such Solomon is here describing,) it is not the passion of man but the Spirit of God that saith, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." Note, The condition of the saints that are dead, and gone to rest with God, is upon many accounts better and more desirable than the condition of living saints that are yet continued in their work and warfare.

2. He thinks them happy that never began this miserable life; nay, they are happiest of all; he "that has not yet been is better than both they." Better never to have been born than be born to "see the evil work that is done under the sun," to see so much wickedness committed, so much wrong done, and not only to be in no capacity to mend the matter, but to suffer ill for doing well. A good man, how calamitous a condition soever he is in this world, cannot have cause to wish he had never been born, since he is glorifying the Lord even in the fires, and will be happy at last, for ever happy; nor ought any to wish so while they are alive, for while there is life there is hope; a man is never undone till he is in hell.

4 Again, I considered all travail, and every right work,
That for this a man is envied of his neighbour.
This *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit.
5 The fool foldeth his hands together,
And eateth his own flesh.
6 Better *is* an handful *with* quietness,
Than both the hands full *with* travail and vexation of spirit.

Here Solomon returns to the observation and consideration of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attends the business of this world, which he had spoken of before, *ch.* ii. 11.

First. If a man be acute, and dexterous, and successful in his business, he gets the ill-will of his neighbours, ver. 4. Suppose he takes a great deal of pains, and goes through all travail, doth not get his estate easily, but it costs him a great deal of hard labour; nor doth he get it dishonestly, wrongs no man, defrauds no man, but by all the rightness of work, by applying himself to his own proper business, and managing it by all the rules of equity and fair-dealing, yet "for this he is envied of his neighbour," and the more for the reputation he has got by his honesty. This shews, 1. What little conscience most men have, that they will bear a grudge to a neighbour, give him an ill word, and do him an ill turn, only because he is more ingenious and industrious than themselves, and has more of the blessing of heaven. Cain envied Abel, Esau Jacob, and Saul David, and all for their right works. This is downright diabolism. 2. What little comfort wise and useful men must expect to have in this world. Let them behave themselves never so cautiously, they cannot escape being envied; and "who can stand before envy?" *Pr.* xxvii. 4. They that excel in virtue will always be an eyesore to those that exceed in vice, which should not discourage us from any right work, but drive us to expect the praise of it, not from men, but from God; and not to count upon satisfaction and happiness in the creature, for if right works prove "vanity and vexation of spirit," no works under the sun can prove otherwise. But for every right work a man shall be accepted of his God, and then he needs not value it, though he be envied of his neighbour, only it may make him love the world the less.

Secondly. If a man be stupid and dull, and blundering in his business, he doth ill for himself, ver. 5. The fool, that goes about his work as if his hands were muffled and folded together, that doth every thing awkwardly; the sluggard, for he is a fool, that loves his ease, and folds his hands together to keep them warm, because they refuse to labour; he eats his own flesh; is a cannibal to himself; brings himself into such a poor condition, that he has nothing to eat but his own flesh, into such a desperate condition that he is ready to eat his own flesh for vexation; he has a dog's life, hunger and ease. Because he sees active men that thrive in the world envied, he runs into the other extreme; and, lest he should be envied for his right works, he doth every thing wrong, and doth not deserve to be pitied. Note, Idleness is a sin that is its own punishment.

The following words, ver. 6, "Better is a handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit," may be taken either, 1. As the sluggard's argument for the excuse of himself in his idleness; he folds his hands together, and abuseth and misapplieth a good truth for his justification; as if, because a little with quietness is better than abundance with strife, therefore a little with idleness is better than abundance with honest labour. Thus wise in his own conceit is he, *Pr.* xxvi. 16. But, 2. I rather take it as Solomon's advice to keep the mean between that travail which will make a man envied and that slothfulness which will make a man eat his own flesh. Let us by honest industry lay hold on the handful, that we may not want necessaries, but not grasp at both the hands full, which will but create us vexation of spirit. Moderate pains and moderate gains will do best. A man may have but a handful of the world, and yet may enjoy it and himself with a deal of quietness, with content of mind, peace of conscience, and the love and good-will of his neighbours, while many that have both their hands full have more than heart could wish; have a great deal of travail and vexation with it. Those that cannot live of a little it is to be feared would not live as they should if they had never so much.

7 Then I returned, and I saw vanity under the sun.
8 There is one *alone*, and *there is* not a second;
Yea, he hath neither child nor brother:
Yet *is there* no end of all his labour;
Neither is his eye satisfied with riches;
Neither *saith he*, For whom do I labour,
And bereave my soul of good?
This *is* also vanity, yea, it *is* a sore travail.
9 Two *are* better than one;
Because they have a good reward for their labour.
10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow:
But woe to him *that is* alone when he falleth;
For *he hath* not another to help him up.
11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat:
But how can one be warm *alone*?
12 And if one prevail against him,
Two shall withstand him;
And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Here Solomon fastens upon another instance of the vanity of this world, that many times the more men have of it the more they would have; and on this they are so intent that they have no enjoyment of what they have. Now Solomon here shews,

First. That selfishness is the cause of this evil; ver. 7, 8, "There is one alone," that minds none but himself, cares for nobody, but would if he could be placed alone in the midst of the earth. "There is not a second," nor doth he desire there should be; one mouth he thinks enough in a house, and grudges every thing that goes beside him. See how this covetous muckworm is here described,

1. He makes himself a mere slave to his business. Though he has no charge, "neither child nor brother," none to take care of but himself, none to hang upon him or draw from him, no poor relations, nor dares he marry for fear of the expense of a family, "yet is there no end of his labour," he is at it night and day, early and late, and will scarce allow necessary rest to himself and those he employs. He doth not confine himself within the bounds of his own calling, but is for having a hand in any thing that he can get by: see *Ps.* cxxvii. 2.

2. He never thinks he has enough. "His eye is not satisfied with riches." Covetousness is called "the lust of the eye," 1 *Jno.* ii. 16, because "the beholding of it with his eyes" is all that the worldling seems to covet, *ch.* v. 11. He has enough for his back, (as Bishop Reynolds observes,) for his belly, for his calling, for his family, for his living decently in the world, but he has not enough for his eyes. Though he can but see it, can but count his money, and not find in his heart to use it, yet he is not easy that he has not more to regale his eyes with.

3. He denies himself the comfort of what he hath. He bereaves his soul of good. If our souls be bereaved of good, it is we ourselves that do bereave them; others may bereave us of outward good, but cannot rob us of our graces and comforts, our spiritual good things. It is our own fault if we do not enjoy ourselves; yet many are so set upon the world, that in pursuit of it they bereave their souls of good here and for ever; make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience, bereave themselves not only of the favour of God and eternal life, but of the pleasure of this world too, and this present life. Worldly people, pretending to be wise for themselves, are really enemies to themselves.

4. He has no excuse for doing this. "He has neither child nor brother;" none that he is bound to, on whom he may lay out what he has to his satisfaction while he lives; none that he has a kindness for, for whom he may lay it up to his satisfaction, and to whom he may leave it when he dies; none that are poor, or dear to him.

5. He has not consideration enough to shew himself the folly of this; he never puts this question to himself, "For whom do I labour thus?" Do I labour as I should for the glory of God, and that I may have to give to those that need? Do I consider that it is but for the body that I am labouring, a dying body; it is for others, and I know not for whom; perhaps for a fool that will scatter it as fast as I have gathered it; perhaps for a foe, that will be ungrateful to my memory. Note, It is wisdom for those that take pains about the world to consider who they take all this pains for; and whether it be really worth while to bereave themselves of good, that they may bestow it on a stranger. If men do not consider this, it is vanity, and a sore travail, they shame themselves, and vex themselves to no purpose.

Secondly. That sociableness is the cure of this evil. Men are thus sordid because they are all for themselves. Now Solomon shews here, by divers instances, that "it is not good for man to be alone," *Gen.* ii. 18. He designs hereby to recommend to us both marriage and friendship, two things which covetous misers decline because of the charge of them, but such is the comfort and advantage of them both, if prudently contracted, that they will very well quit cost. Man in paradise itself could not be happy without a mate, and therefore is no sooner made but matched.

1. Solomon lays this down for a truth, that "two are better than one," and more happy jointly than either of them could be separately; more pleased in one another than they could be in themselves only; mutually serviceable to each other's welfare, and by a united strength more likely to do good to others. "They have a good reward of their labour," that is, whatever service they do, it is returned to them another way. He that serves himself only has himself only for his paymaster, and commonly proves more unjust and ungrateful to himself than his friend, if he should serve him, would be to him. Witness him that labours endlessly, and yet bereaves his soul of good; he has no reward of his labour, but he that is kind to another has a good reward. The pleasure and advantage of holy love will be an abundant recompence for all the work and labour of love.

2. Hence he infers the mischief of solitude. "Woe to him that is alone;" he lies exposed to many temptations which good company and friendship would prevent and help him to guard against. He wants that advantage which a man has by the countenance of his friend, as iron has of being sharpened by iron. A monastic life then surely was never intended for a state of perfection, nor that those should be reckoned the greatest lovers of God that cannot find in their hearts to love any one else.

3. He proves it by divers instances of the benefit of friendship and good conversation.

1st. Occasional succour in an exigence. It is good for two to travel together, for if one happen to fall, and perhaps so as not to be able to get up himself, the other will be ready to help him up,—a friend at need is a friend indeed,—whereas if one travel alone and get a fall, he may be lost for want of a little help. If a man fall into sin his friend will help to restore him with the spirit of meekness; if he fall into trouble his friend will help to comfort him, and assuage his grief.

2nd. Mutual warmth. As a fellow traveller is of use, (*amicus pro vehiculo*,—'a friend is a good substitute for a carriage,') so is a bedfellow. "If two lie together they have heat;" so virtuous and gracious affections are excited by good society, and Christians warm one another, by "provoking one another to love and to good works."

3rd. United strength. If an enemy find a man alone, he is likely to prevail against him; with his own single strength he cannot make his part good, but if he have a second he may do well enough, two shall withstand him: You shall help me against my enemy, and I will help you against yours,—according to the agreement between Joab and Abishai, 2 *Sam.* x. 11; and so both are conquerors, whereas, acting separately, both had been conquered, as was said of the ancient Britons, when the Romans invaded them, *Dum singuli pugnant universi vincuntur*,—'While they fight in detached parties they sacrifice the general cause.' In our spiritual warfare we may be helpful to one another, as well as in our spiritual work. Next to the comfort of communion with God, is that of the communion of saints. He concludes with this proverb, "A threefold cord is not easily broken," no more than a bundle of arrows, though each single thread, and each single arrow is. Two together he compares to a threefold cord; for where two are closely joined in holy love and fellowship, Christ will by his Spirit come to them, and make the third, as he joined himself to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and then there is a threefold cord that can never be broken. "They that dwell in love, dwell in God, and God in them."

13 Better *is* a poor and a wise child
Than an old and foolish king,
Who will no more be admonished
14 For out of prison he cometh to reign; [poor.
Whereas also *he that is* born in his kingdom becometh
15 I considered all the living which walk under the sun,
With the second child that shall stand up in his stead.
16 *There is* no end of all the people,
Even of all that have been before them:
They also that come after shall not rejoice in him.
Surely this also *is* vanity and vexation of spirit.

Solomon was himself a king, and therefore may be allowed to speak more freely than another concerning the vanity of kingly state and dignity, which he shews here to be an uncertain thing; he had said so, *Pr.* xxvii. 24, "The crown doth not endure to every generation," and his son found it so. Nothing more slippery than the highest post of honour, without wisdom and the people's love.

First. A king is not happy unless he have wisdom, ver. 13, 14. He that is truly wise, prudent, and pious, though he be poor in the world, and very young, and upon both accounts despised and little taken notice of, yet he is better, more truly valuable and worthy of respect, is likely to do better for himself, and to be a greater blessing to his generation, than a king, than an old king, and upon both accounts venerable, both for his gravity and for his dignity, if he be foolish, and knows not how to manage public affairs himself, nor will be admonished and advised by others; who knows not to be admonished, that is, will not suffer any counsel or admonition to be given him, none about him dares contradict him; or will not hearken to the counsel and admonition that is given him. It is so far from being any part of the honour of kings, that it is the greatest dishonour to them that can be, not to be admonished. Folly and wilfulness commonly go together; and those that most need admonition can worst bear it. And neither men's age nor their titles will secure them respect, if they have not true wisdom and virtue to recommend them; but those will gain men honour, even under the disadvantages of youth and poverty.

To prove the wise child better than the foolish king, he shews what each of them come to, ver. 14. 1. A poor man by his wisdom comes to be preferred, as Joseph, who, when he was but young, was brought out of prison to be the second man in the kingdom; to which story Solomon seems here to refer. Providence sometimes raiseth the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, *Ps.* cxiii. 7, 8. Wisdom has not only wrought men's liberty, but their dignity; raised them from the dunghill, from the dungeon to the throne. 2. A king, by his folly and wilfulness, comes to be impoverished. Though he was "born in his kingdom," came to it by inheritance, though he has lived to be old in it, and has had time to fill his treasures, yet if he take ill courses, and "will no more be admonished" as he hath been, thinking because he is old he is past it, he "becomes poor," his treasure is exhausted, and perhaps he is forced to resign his crown and retire into privacy.

Secondly. A king is not likely to continue if he have not a confirmed interest in the affections of the people. This is intimated, but somewhat obscurely, in the last two verses. 1. He that is king must have a successor; "a second, a child that shall stand up in his stead;" his own, suppose, or perhaps that poor and wise child spoken of ver. 13. Kings, when they grow old, must have the mortification of seeing those that are to jostle them out, and stand up in their stead. 2. It is incident to the people to adore the rising sun. 'All the living which walk under the sun are with the second child,' are in his interests, are conversant with him, and make their court to him more than to the father, whom they look upon as going off, and despise him because his best days are done. Solomon considered this; he saw this to be the disposition of his own people, which appeared immediately after his death, in their complaints of his government, and their affectation of a change. 3. People are never long easy and satisfied. "There is no end," no rest, "of all the people," they are continually fond of changes, and know not what they would have. 4. This is no new thing, but it has been the way "of all that have been before them;" there have been instances of this in every age, even Samuel and David could not always please. 5. As it has been, so it is like to be still; they that come after will be of the same spirit, and shall not long rejoice in him that at first they seemed extremely fond of; to-day, Hosanna, to-morrow, Crucify. 6. It cannot but be a great grief to princes to see themselves thus slighted by those they have studied to oblige, and have depended upon. There is no faith in man; no stedfastness. "This is vanity and vexation of spirit."

CHAPTER V.

Solomon, in this chapter, discourseth, I. Concerning the worship of God, prescribing that as a remedy against all those vanities which he had already observed to be in wisdom, learning, pleasure, honour, power, and business. That we may not be deceived by those things, nor have our spirits vexed with the disappointments we meet with in them, let us make conscience of our duty to God, and keep up our communion with him. But withal he gives a necessary caution against the vanities which are too often found in religious exercises, which lose them their excellency, and render them unable to help against other vanities. If our religion be a vain religion, how great is that vanity! Let us therefore take heed of vanity, 1. In hearing the word, and offering sacrifice, ver. 1; 2. In prayer, ver. 2, 3; 3. In making vows, ver. 4—6; 4. In pretending to Divine dreams, ver. 7. Now, 1st. For a remedy against those vanities, he prescribes the fear of God, ver. 7; 2nd. To prevent the offence that might arise from the present sufferings of good people, he directs us to look up to God, ver. 8. II. Concerning the wealth of this world, and the vanity and vexation that attends it. The fruits of the earth indeed are necessary to the support of life. ver. 9; but as for silver, and gold, and riches, 1. They are unsatisfying, ver. 10; 2. They are unprofitable, ver. 11; 3. They are disquieting, ver. 12; 4. They often prove hurtful and destroying, ver. 13; 5. They are perishing, ver. 14; 6. They must be left behind when we die, ver. 15, 16; 7. If we have not a heart to make use of them, they occasion a great deal of uneasiness, ver. 17; and therefore he recommends to us the comfortable use of that which God hath given us, with an eye to him that is the giver, as the best way both to answer the end of our having it and to obviate the mischiefs that commonly attend great estates, ver. 18—20. So that, if we can but learn out of this chapter how to manage the business of religion, and the business of the world, which two take up the most of our time, so as that both may turn to a good account, and neither our sabbath days nor our week days may be lost, we shall have reason to say, We have learned two good lessons.

KEEP thy foot when thou goest to the house of God,
And be more ready to hear,
Than to give the sacrifice of fools:
For they consider not that they do evil.
2 Be not rash with thy mouth,
And let not thine heart be hasty
To utter *any* thing before God:
For God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth:
Therefore let thy words be few.
3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business;
And a fool's voice *is known* by multitude of words.

Solomon's design in driving us off from the world, by shewing us the vanity of that, is to drive us to God and to our duty; that we may not walk in the way of the world, but by religious rules; nor depend on the wealth of the world, but on religious advantages; and therefore,

First. He here sends us to the house of God, to the place of public worship, to the temple, which he himself had built at a vast expense. When he reflected with regret on all his other works, *ch.* ii. 4, he did not repent that, but reflected on it with pleasure, yet mentions it not, lest he should seem to reflect on it with pride; yet here sends those to it that would know more of the vanity of the world, and would find that happiness which is in vain sought for in the creature. David, when he was perplexed, went into the sanctuary of God, *Ps.* lxxiii. 17. Let our disappointments in the creature turn our eyes to the Creator, have recourse to the word of God's grace and consult that, to the throne of his grace and solicit that. In the word and prayer there is a salve for every sore.

Secondly. He chargeth us to behave ourselves well there, that we may not miss of our end in coming thither. Religious exercises are not vain things; but if we mismanage them they become vain to us. And therefore,

1. We must address ourselves to them with all possible seriousness and care. "Keep thy foot," not keep it back from the house of God, as *Pr.* xxv. 17, nor go slowly thither, as one unwilling to draw nigh to God, but look well to thy goings, ponder the path of thy feet, lest thou take a false step. Address thyself to the worship of God with a solemn pause, and take time to compose thyself for it, not going about it with precipitation, which is called hasting with the feet, *Pr.* xix. 2. Keep thy thoughts from roving and wandering from the work; keep thy affections from running out towards wrong objects, for in the business of God's house there is work enough for the whole man, and all too little to be employed. Some think it alludes to the charge given to Moses and Joshua, to put off their shoes, *Ex.* iii. 5; *Jos.* v. 15; in token of subjection and reverence. Keep thy feet clean, *Ex.* xxx. 19.

2. We must take heed that the sacrifice we bring be not "the sacrifice of fools," that is, of wicked men, for they are fools, and their sacrifice is an abomination to the Lord, *Pr.* xv. 8; that we bring not the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice, for we are plainly told that it will not be accepted, and therefore it is folly to bring it; that we rest not in the sign and ceremony, and the outside of the performance, without regarding the sense and meaning of it, for that is the sacrifice of fools. Bodily exercise, if that be all, is a jest; none but fools will think thus to please him who is a Spirit, and requires the heart; and they will see their folly when they find what a great deal of pains they have taken to no purpose, for want of sincerity. They are fools, "for they consider not that they do evil;" they think they are doing God and themselves good service, when really they are putting a great affront upon God, and a great cheat upon their own souls, by their hypocritical devotions. It is possible men may be doing evil, even then when they profess to be doing good, and even then when they do not know it, when they do not consider it. 'They know not but to do evil,' so some read it. Wicked minds cannot choose but sin, even in the acts of devotion. Or, "they consider not that they do evil;" that is, they act at a venture; right or wrong, pleasing to God or not, is all one to them.

3. That we may not bring the sacrifice of fools, we must come to God's house with hearts disposed to know and do our duty. We must "be ready to hear;" that is, 1st. We must diligently attend to the word of God read and preached. Be swift to hear the exposition which the priests give of the sacrifices, declaring the intent and meaning of them, and do not think it enough to gaze upon what they do, for it must be a reasonable service, otherwise it is the sacrifice of fools. 2nd. We must resolve to comply with the will of God as it is made known to us. Hearing is often put for obeying, and that is it that is better than sacrifice, 1 *Sam.* xv. 22; *Isa.* i. 15, 16. We then come in a right frame to holy duties when we come with this upon our heart, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears." 'Let the word of the Lord come, (saith a good man,) and if I had six hundred necks, I would bow them all to the authority of it.'

4. We must be very cautious and considerate in all our approaches and addresses to God; ver. 2, "Be not rash with thy mouth" in making either prayers, or protestations, or promises. "Let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God." Note, 1st. When we are in the house of God, in solemn assemblies for religious worship, we are in a special manner before God and in his presence, there where he has promised to meet his people, where his eye is upon us, and ours ought to be up unto him. 2nd. We have something to say, something to utter before God, when we draw nigh to him in holy duties. He is one with whom we have to do, with whom we have business of vast importance. If we come without an errand, we shall go away without any advantage. 3rd. What we utter before God must come from the heart, and therefore we must not be rash with our mouth, never let our tongue outrun our thoughts in our devotions. The words of our mouth must always be the product of the meditation of our hearts. Thoughts are words to God, and words are but wind, if they be not copied from the thoughts. Lip-labour, though never so well laboured, if that be all, is but lost labour in religion, *Mat.* xv. 8, 9. 4th. It is not enough that what we say comes from the heart, but it must come from a composed heart, and not from a sudden heat or passion. As the mouth must not be rash, so the heart must not be hasty; we must not only think, but think twice before we speak, when we are to speak either from God in preaching, or to God in prayer, and not utter any thing indecent and undigested, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 15.

5. We must be few of our words in the presence of God; that is, we must be reverent and deliberate; not talk to God as boldly and carelessly as we do to one another, not speak what comes uppermost, not repeat things over and over, as we do to one another, that what we say may be understood and remembered, and may make impression. No, when we speak to God we must consider,

1st. That between him and us there is an infinite distance. "God is in heaven," where he reigns in glory over us, and all the children of men; where he is attended with an innumerable company of holy angels, and is far "exalted above all our blessing and praise." We are on earth, the footstool of his

throne; are mean and vile, unlike God, and utterly unworthy to receive any favour from him, or to have any communion with him; therefore we must be very grave, and humble, and serious, and observe a decorum in speaking to him, as we do when we speak to a great man that is much our superior; and in token of this, let our words be few, that they may be well chosen, *Job* ix. 14. This doth not condemn all long prayers; were they not good, the Pharisees had not used them for a pretence. Christ prayed all night. And we are bid to continue in prayer; but it condemns careless, heartless praying, vain repetitions, *Mat.* vi. 7, repeating paternosters by tale. Let us speak to God, and of him, in his own words, words which the Scripture teacheth, and let our words, words of our own invention, be few, lest, not speaking by rule, we speak amiss.

2nd. That the multiplying of words in our devotions will make them the sacrifices of fools, ver. 3. As confused dreams, frightful and perplexed, and such as disturb the sleep, are an evidence of a hurry of business which fills our head, so many words and hasty ones used in prayer are an evidence of folly reigning in the heart; that is, ignorance of, and unacquaintedness with, both God and ourselves; low thoughts of God, and very careless thoughts of our own souls. Even in common conversation "a fool is known by the multitude of words." They that know least talk most, *ch.* x. 11, much more in devotion; there, no doubt, "a prating fool shall fall," *Pr.* x. 8, 10, shall fall short of acceptance. These are fools indeed who think they shall be heard in prayer for their much speaking.

4 When thou vowest a vow unto God,
Defer not to pay it;
For *he hath* no pleasure in fools:
Pay that which thou hast vowed.
5 Better *is it* that thou shouldest not vow,
Than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.
6 Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin;
Neither say thou before the angel, that it *was* an error:
Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice,
And destroy the work of thine hands?
7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words *there are* also *divers* vanities:
But fear thou God.
8 If thou seest the oppression of the poor,
And violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province,
Marvel not at the matter:
For *he that is* higher than the highest regardeth;
And *there be* higher than they.

Four things we are exhorted to in these verses:

First. To be conscientious in paying our vows. A vow is a bond upon the soul, *Num.* xxx. 2, by which we solemnly oblige ourselves, not only in general to that which we are already bound to, but in some particular instances, to which we were not under any antecedent obligation, to honour God, and serve the interests of his kingdom among men. When under the sense of some affliction, *Ps.* lxvi. 14, or in the pursuit of some mercy, 1 *Sam.* i. 11, thou hast vowed such a vow as this unto God, know that thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, and thou canst not go back. Therefore, 1. Pay it. Perform what thou hast promised, bring to God what thou hast dedicated and devoted to him. "Pay that which thou hast vowed," pay it in full, and keep not back any part of the price; pay it in kind, do not alter it, or change it, so the law was, *Lev.* xxvii. 10. Have we vowed to give our ownselves unto the Lord? let us then be as good as our word, act in his service, to his glory, and not sacrilegiously alienate ourselves. 2. "Defer not to pay it." If it be in the power of thy hands to pay it to-day, leave it not till to-morrow. Do not beg day, nor put it off to a more convenient season. By delay the sense of the obligation slackens and cools, and is in danger of wearing off; we thereby discover a loathness and backwardness to perform our vow. And *qui non est hodie cras minus aptus erit*,—he who is not inclined to-day, will be averse to-morrow: the longer it is put off, the more difficult it will be to bring ourselves to it. Death may not only prevent the payment, but fetch thee to judgment, under the guilt of a broken vow, *Ps.* lxxvi. 11.

Two reasons are here given why we must speedily and cheerfully pay our vows: 1st. Because otherwise we affront God. We play the fool with him, as if we designed to put a trick upon him; and "God has no pleasure in fools." More is implied than is expressed; the meaning is, he greatly abhors such fools, and such foolish dealings. Hath he need of fools? No, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked," but will surely and severely reckon with those that thus play fast and loose with him. 2nd. Because otherwise we wrong ourselves. We lose the benefit of the making of the vow; nay, we incur the penalty for the breach of it; so that it had been better a great deal not to have vowed, more safe, and more to our advantage, than to vow and not to pay. Not to have vowed had been but an omission; but to vow and not pay incurs the guilt of treachery and perjury; it is lying to God, *Acts* v. 4.

Secondly. To be cautious in making our vows. And this is necessary in order to our being conscientious in performing them, ver. 6. 1. We must take heed that we never vow any thing that is sinful, or may be an occasion of sin; for such a vow is ill made, and must be broken. "Suffer not thy mouth," by such a vow, "to cause thy flesh to sin," as Herod's rash promise caused him to cut off the head of John the Baptist. 2. We must not vow that which through the frailty of the flesh we have reason to fear we shall not be able to perform; as those that vow a single life, and yet know not how to keep their vow. Hereby, 1st. They shame themselves; for they are forced to say "before the angel, that it was an error;" that either they did not mean or did not consider what they said; and take it which way we will it is bad enough. When thou hast made a vow, do not seek to evade it, nor find out excuses to get clear of the obligation of it. "Say not before the priest," who is called the angel or messenger of the Lord of hosts, that upon second thoughts thou hast changed thy mind, and desirest to be absolved from the obligation of thy vow; but stick to it, and do not seek a hole to creep out at. Some by the angel here understand the guardian angel, which they suppose to attend every man, and to inspect what he doth. Others understand it of Christ, the angel of the covenant, who is present with his people in their assemblies, who searcheth the heart, and cannot be imposed upon; "Provoke him not, for God's name is in him," and he is represented as strict and jealous, *Ex.* xxiii. 20, 21. 2nd. They expose themselves to the wrath of God, for he is angry at the voice of those that thus "lie unto him with their mouth, and flatter him with their tongue," and is displeased at their dissimulation, and "destroys the works of their hands," that is, blasts their enterprises, and defeats those purposes which, when they made these vows, they were seeking to God for the success of. If we treacherously cancel the words of our mouth, and revoke our vows, God will justly overthrow our projects, and walk contrary and at all adventures with those that thus walk contrary and at all adventures with him. It is "a snare to a man, after vows, to make inquiry."

Thirdly. To keep up the fear of God, ver. 7. Many of old pretended to have known the mind of God by dreams, and were so full of them that they almost made God's people forget his name by their dreams, *Jer.* xxiii. 25, 26. And many perplex themselves with their frightful or odd dreams, or with other people's dreams, as if they foreboded this or the other disaster; and those that heed dreams shall have a multitude of them to fill their heads with. But in them all "there are divers vanities," and the more if we regard them, as there are in many words. They are but like the idle impertinent chat of children and fools, and therefore never heed them. Forget them instead of repeating them; lay no stress upon them, draw no disquieting conclusions from them, but fear thou God; have an eye to his sovereign dominion, set him before thee, keep thyself in his love, and be afraid of offending him; and then thou wilt not disturb thyself with foolish dreams. The way not to be dismayed at the signs of heaven, nor afraid of the idols of the heathen, is to fear God as king of nations, *Jer.* x. 2, 5, 7.

Fourthly. With that to keep down the fear of man, ver. 8. Set God before thee, and then, "if thou seest the oppression of the poor," thou wilt not "marvel at the matter," nor find fault with the Divine providence, nor think the worse of the institution of magistracy, when thou seest the ends of it thus perverted; nor of religion, when thou seest it will not secure men from suffering wrong. Observe here,

1. A melancholy sight on earth, and such as cannot but trouble every good man that has a sense of justice, and a concern for mankind; to "see the oppression of the poor," because they are poor and cannot right themselves, and the "violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province," oppression under colour of law, and backed with power. The kingdom in general may have a good government, and yet it may so happen that a particular province may be committed to an ill man, by whose maladministration justice may be perverted. So hard is it for the wisest of kings, in giving preferments, to be sure of their men; they cannot but redress the grievance when it doth appear.

2. A comfortable sight in heaven. When things look thus dismal, we may satisfy ourselves with this, 1st. That though oppressors be high God is above them, and in that very thing wherein they deal proudly, *Ex.* xviii. 11. God is higher than the highest of creatures, than the highest of princes, than the king that is higher than Agag, *Num.* xxiv. 7; than the highest angels, the thrones and dominions of the upper world. God is the most high over all the earth, and his glory is above the heavens. Before him princes are worms, the brightest but glowworms. 2nd. That though oppressors be secure God has his eye upon them, takes notice of, and will reckon for, all their violent perverting of judgment. He regardeth, not only sees it, but observes it, and keeps it on record, to be called over again; "his eyes are upon their ways:" see *Job* xxiv. 23. 3rd. That there is a world of angels, for "there are higher than they," and are employed by the Divine justice for the protecting of the injured, and the punishing of the injurious. Sennacherib bore himself high upon his potent army, but one angel proved too hard for him and all his forces. Some, by those that "are higher than they," understand the great council of the nation, the presidents to whom the princes of the provinces are accountable, *Dan.* vi. 2, the senate that receive complaints against the proconsuls, the courts above to which appeals are made from the inferior courts, which are necessary to the good government of a kingdom. Let it be a check to oppressors, that perhaps their superiors on earth may call them to an account; however, God, the supreme in heaven, will.

9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all:
The king *himself* is served by the field.
10 He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver;
Nor he that loveth abundance with increase:
This *is* also vanity.
11 When goods increase,
They are increased that eat them:
And what good *is there* to the owners thereof,
Saving the beholding *of them* with their eyes?
12 The sleep of a labouring man *is* sweet, whether he eat little or much:
But the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.
13 There is a sore evil *which* I have seen under the sun,
Namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.
14 But those riches perish by evil travail:
And he begetteth a son, and *there is* nothing in his hand.
15 As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked
Shall he return to go as he came,
And shall take nothing of his labour,
Which he may carry away in his hand.
16 And this also *is* a sore evil, *that* in all points as he came, so shall he go:
And what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?
17 All his days also he eateth in darkness,
And *he hath* much sorrow and wrath with his sickness.

Solomon had shewed the vanity of pleasure, and gaiety, and fine works, of honour, and power, and royal dignity; and there is many a covetous worldling that will agree with him, and speak as slightly as he doth of these things. But money, he thinks, is a substantial thing, and if he can but have enough of that he is happy; and that is the mistake which Solomon attacks and attempts to rectify in these verses, and shews that there is as much vanity in great

riches and the lust of the eye about them, as there is in the lusts of the flesh and the pride of life, and a man can make himself no more happy by hoarding an estate than by spending it.

First. He grants that the products of the earth for the support and comfort of human life are valuable things; ver. 9, "The profit of the earth is for all," man's body being made of the earth, thence has its maintenance, *Job* xxviii. 5. And that he hath so, and that a barren land is not made his dwelling, as he has deserved for being rebellious, *Ps.* lxviii. 6, is an instance of God's great bounty to him. There is profit to be got out of the earth, and it is for all, all need it; it is appointed for all, there is enough for all. It is not only for all men, but for all the inferior creatures; the same ground brings grass for the cattle that brings herbs for the service of man. Israel had bread from heaven, angels' food, but (which is an humbling consideration) the earth is our store-house, and the beasts fellow-commoners with us. "The king himself is served of the field," and would be ill-served, would be quite starved, without the products of it. This puts a great honour upon the husbandman's calling, that it is the most necessary of all other to the support of man's life; the many have the benefit of it, the mighty cannot live without it; it is for all, it is for the king himself. Those that have an abundance of the fruits of the earth must remember they are for all, and therefore must look upon themselves but as stewards of their abundance, out of which they must give to those that need. Dainty meats and soft clothing are only for some, but the fruit of the earth is for all. And even those that suck the abundance of the seas, *Deu.* xxxiii. 19, cannot be without the fruit of the earth, while those that have a competency of the fruit of the earth may despise the abundance of the seas.

Secondly. He maintains that the riches that are more than these, that are for hoarding, not for use, are vain things, and will not make a man easy or happy. That which our Saviour hath said, *Lu.* xii. 15, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," is what Solomon here undertakes to prove by divers arguments.

1. The more men have the more they would have, ver. 10. A man may have but a little silver and be satisfied with it, may know when he has enough, and covet no more; "Godliness with contentment is great gain;" "I have enough," saith Jacob; "I have all and abound," saith St. Paul. But, 1st. He that loves silver and sets his heart upon it, will never think he has enough, but "enlargeth his desire as hell," *Hab.* ii. 5; "lays house to house, and field to field," *Isa.* v. 8; and, like "the daughters of the horse-leech, still cries, Give, give." Natural desires are at rest when that which was desired is obtained, but corrupt desires are insatiable. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. 2nd. He that hath silver in abundance, and has it increasing never so fast upon him, yet doth not find that it yields any solid satisfaction to his soul. There are bodily desires which silver itself will not satisfy; if a man be hungry, ingots of silver will do no more to satisfy his hunger than clods of clay; much less will it satisfy spiritual desires. He that has never so much silver covets something more, not only of that, but something else, something of another nature. They that make themselves drudges to the world are spending their labour for that which satisfies not, *Isa.* lv. 2; which fills the belly, but will never fill the soul, *Eze.* vii. 19.

2. The more men have, the more occasion they have for it, and the more they have to do with it; so that it is as broad as long. "When goods increase they are increased that eat them," ver. 11; the more meat the more mouths. Doth the estate thrive? and doth not the family at the same time grow more numerous, and the children grow up to need more? The more men have, the better house they must keep, the more servants they must employ, the more guests they must entertain, the more they must give to the poor, and the more they will have hanging on them, for where the carcass is the eagles will be. What we have more than food and raiment we have it for others; and then what good is there to the owners themselves, but the pleasure of beholding it with their eyes? and a poor pleasure it is. An empty speculation is all the difference between the owners and the sharers. The owner sees that as his own which those about him enjoy as much of the real benefit of as he; only he has the satisfaction of doing good to others, which indeed is a satisfaction to one who believes what Christ said, "That it is more blessed to give than to receive;" but to a covetous man, who thinks all lost that goes beside himself, it is a constant vexation to see others eat of his increase.

3. The more men have, the more care they have about it, which perplexeth them and disturbs their repose, ver. 12. Refreshing sleep is as much the support and comfort of this life as food is. Now, 1st. Those commonly sleep best that work hard, and have but what they work for. "The sleep of the labouring man is sweet," not only because he hath tired himself with his labour, which makes his sleep the more welcome to him, and makes him sleep soundly, but because he has little to fill his head with care about, and so break his sleep. His sleep is sweet, though he eat but little, and have but little to eat, for his weariness rocks him asleep, though his belly be not full; and though he eat much yet he can sleep well, for his labour gets him a good digestion. The sleep of the diligent Christian, and his long sleep, is sweet, for having spent himself and his time in the service of God, he can cheerfully return to God, and repose in him as his rest. 2nd. Those that have every thing else many times cannot get a good night's sleep, but either their eyes are held waking, or their sleeps are unquiet, and do not refresh them; and it is their abundance that breaks their sleep and disturbs it; both the abundance of their care, as that rich man's, who, when his ground brought forth plentifully, thought within himself, What shall I do? *Lu.* xii. 18; and the abundance of what they eat and drink, which overchargeth the heart, makes them sick, and so hinders their repose. Ahasuerus, after a banquet of wine, could not sleep; and perhaps consciousness of guilt, both in getting and using what they have, breaks their sleep as much as any thing; but "God giveth his beloved sleep."

4. The more men have, the more danger they are in, both of doing mischief and of having mischief done them, ver. 13. It is an evil, a sore evil, which Solomon himself had seen under the sun, in this lower world, this theatre of sin and woe, "riches kept for the owners thereof," who have been industrious to keep them safe, "to their hurt;" they had better have been without them. 1st. Their riches do them hurt, make them proud and secure, and in love with the world, draw away their hearts from God and duty, and make it very difficult for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven, nay, help to shut them out of it. 2nd. They do hurt with their riches, which not only put them into a capacity of gratifying their own lusts, and living luxuriously, but give them an opportunity of oppressing others, and dealing hardly with them. 3rd. Many times they sustain hurt by their riches; they would not be envied, would not be robbed, if they were not rich. It is the fat beast that is led first to the slaughter. A very rich man, as one observes, hath sometimes been excepted out of a general pardon, both as to life and estate, for no other reason but his vast and overgrown estate; so riches often take away the life of the owners thereof, *Pr.* i. 19.

5. The more men have, the more they have to lose, and perhaps they may lose it all, ver. 14. "Those riches" that have been laid up with a great deal of pains, and kept with a great deal of care, "perish by evil travail," by the very pains and care which they take to secure and increase them. Many a one has ruined his estate by being over-solicitous to advance it and to make it more, and hath lost all by catching at all. Riches are perishing things, and all our travail about them cannot make them otherwise; they make themselves wings, and fly away; and he that thought he should have made his son a gentleman leaves him a beggar; he begetteth a son, and brings him up in the prospect of an estate, but when he dies leaves it under a charge of debt as much as it is worth, so that there is nothing in his hand. This is a common case; estates that made a great show do not prove what they seemed, but cheat the heir.

6. How much soever men have when they die, they must leave it all behind them; ver. 15, 16, "As he came forth of his mother's womb naked, so shall he return;" only as his friends, when he came naked into the world, in pity to him, helped him with swaddling-clothes, so, when he goes out, they help him with grave-clothes, and that is all: see *Job* i. 21; *Ps.* xlix. 17. This is urged as a reason why we should be content with such things as we have, 1 *Tim.* vi. 7. In respect of the body we must go as we came, the dust shall return to the earth as it was; but sad is our case if the soul returns as it came, for we were born in sin, and if we die in sin, unsanctified, better we had never been bor And that seems to be the case of the worldling here spoken of, for he is sa to return in all points as he came, as sinful, as miserable, and much more so. This is a sore evil; he thinks it so whose heart is glued to this world, that he "shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry away in his hand;" his riches will not go with him into another world, nor stand him in any stead there. If we labour in religion, the grace and comfort we get by that labour we may carry away in our hearts, and shall be the better for to eternity, that is meat that endures. But if we labour only for the world, to fill our hands with that, we cannot take that away with us; we are born with our hands griping, but die with them extended, letting go what we hold fast. So that upon the whole matter he may well ask, "What profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind?" Note, Those that labour for the world labour for the wind; for that which hath more sound than substance, which is uncertain, and always shifting its point, unsatisfying, and often hurtful, which we cannot hold fast, and which, if we take up with as our portion, we do but feed upon wind, *Hos.* xii. 1. Men will see they have laboured for the wind, when at death they find the profit of their labour is all gone, gone like the wind, they know not whither.

7. Those that have much, if they set their hearts upon it, have not only uncomfortable deaths, but uncomfortable lives too, ver. 17. This covetous worldling, that is so bent upon raising an estate, "all his days he eats in darkness and much sorrow, and it is his sickness and wrath;" that is, he hath not only no pleasure of his estate, nor any enjoyment of it himself, for he eats the bread of sorrow, *Ps.* cxxvii. 2, but a great deal of vexation to see others eat of it. His necessary expenses make him sick, make him fret; and he seems as if he were angry that himself and those about him cannot live without meat. As we read the last clause, it intimates how ill this covetous worldling can bear the common and unavoidable calamities of human life; when he is in health he eats in darkness, always dull with care and fear about what he has, but if he be sick "he has much sorrow and wrath with his sickness;" he is vexed that his sickness takes him off from his business, and hinders him in his pursuits of the world; vexed that all his wealth will not give him any ease or relief; but especially terrified with the apprehensions of death, which his diseases are the harbingers of; of leaving this world and the things of it behind him, which he hath set his affections upon, and removing to a world he has made no preparation for. He has not any sorrow after a godly sort, doth not sorrow to repentance, but he hath sorrow and wrath, is angry at the providence of God, angry at his sickness, angry at all about him, fretful and peevish, which doubles his affliction, which a good man lessens and lightens by patience and joy in his sickness.

18 Behold *that* what I have seen:
It is good and comely *for one* to eat and to drink,
And to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun
All the days of his life, which God giveth him:
For it *is* his portion.
19 Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth,
And hath given him power to eat thereof,
And to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour;
This *is* the gift of God.
20 For he shall not much remember the days of his life;
Because God answereth *him* in the joy of his heart.

Solomon, from the vanity of riches hoarded up, here infers that the best course we can take is, to use what we have well, to serve God with it, do good with it, and take the comfort of it to ourselves and our families. This he had pressed before, *ch.* ii. 24; iii. 22. Observe,

First. What it is that is here recommended to us. Not to indulge the appetites of the flesh, or to take up with present pleasures or profits for our portion, but soberly and moderately to make use of what providence has allotted for our comfortable passage through this world. We must not starve ourselves either for covetousness, because we cannot afford ourselves food convenient, or for eagerness in our worldly pursuits, or through excessive care and grief, but eat and drink what is fit for us to keep our bodies in good plight for the serving of our souls in God's service. We must not kill ourselves with labour, and then leave others to enjoy the good of it, but take the comfort of that which our hands have laboured for, and that not now and then, but "all the days of our life which God gives us." Life is God's gift, and he has appointed us the number of the days of our life, *Job* xiv. 5. Let us therefore spend those days in serving the Lord our God with joyfulness and gladness of heart. We must not do the business of our calling as a drudgery, and make ourselves slaves to it, but we must rejoice in our labour, not grasp at more business than we can go through without perplexity and disquiet, take a pleasure in the calling wherein God has put us, and go on in the business of it with cheerfulness; this is to rejoice in our labour, whatever it is, as Zebulun in his going out and Issachar in his tents.

Secondly. What is urged to recommend it to us. 1. That it is good and comely to do thus; it is well, and it looks well. They that cheerfully use what God hath given them thereby honour the giver, answer the intention of the gift, act rationally and generously, do good in the world, and make what they have turn to the best account, and this is both their credit and their comfort. It is good and comely, and there is duty and decency in it. 2. That it is all the good we can have out of the things of this world. It is our portion, and in doing thus we take our portion, and make the best of bad. This is our part of

our worldly possessions. God must have his part, the poor theirs, and our families theirs; but this is ours, it is all that falls to our lot out of them. 3. That a heart to do thus is such a gift of God's grace as crowns all the gifts of his providence. If God hath given a man riches and wealth, he completes the favour, and makes that a blessing indeed, if withal he give him power to eat thereof; that is, wisdom and grace to take the good of it and to do good with it. If this is God's gift, we must covet it earnestly as the best gift relating to our enjoyments in this world. 4. That this is the way to make our own lives easy, and to relieve ourselves against the many toils and troubles which our lives on earth are incident to; ver. 10, "He shall not much remember the days of his life," the days of his sorrow and sore travail, his working days, his weeping days; he shall either forget them or "remember them as waters that pass away;" he shall not much lay to heart his crosses, nor long retain the bitter relish of them, because God "answereth him in the joy of his heart," balanceth all the grievances of his labour with the joy of it, and recompenseth him for it by giving him to "eat the labour of his hands." If he doth not answer all his desires and expectations in the letter of them, yet he answers them with that which is more than equivalent "in the joy of his heart." A cheerful spirit is a great blessing; it makes the yoke of our employments easy, and the burthen of our afflictions light.

CHAPTER VI.

In this chapter, I. The royal preacher goes on farther to shew the vanity of worldly wealth, when men place their happiness in it, and are eager and inordinate in laying it up. Riches, in the hand of a man that is wise and generous, are good for something, but in the hands of a sordid, sneaking, covetous miser, they are good for nothing. 1. He takes an account of the possessions and enjoyments which such a man may have: He hath wealth, ver. 2; he hath children to inherit it ver. 3; and lives long, ver. 3—6; 2. He describes his folly in not taking the comfort of it, he hath no power to eat of it, lets strangers devour it, is never filled with good, and at last has no burial, ver. 2, 3; 3. He condemns it as an evil, a common evil, vanity and a disease, ver. 1, 2; 4. He prefers the condition of a stillborn child before the condition of such a one, ver. 3; the stillborn child's infelicity is only negative, ver. 4, 5; but that of the covetous worldling is positive, he lives a great while to see himself miserable, ver. 6; 5. He shews the vanity of riches as pertaining only to the body, and giving no satisfaction to the mind, ver. 7, 8; and of those boundless desires with which covetous people vex themselves, ver. 9; which if they be gratified never so fully, leave a man but a man still, ver. 10. II. He concludes this discourse of the vanity of the creature with this plain inference from the whole, that it is folly to think of making up a happiness for ourselves in the things of this world, ver. 11, 12. Our satisfaction must be in another life, not in this.

1 THERE is an evil which I have seen under the sun,
And it *is* common among men:
2 A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour,
So that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth,
Yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof,
But a stranger eateth it:
This *is* vanity, and it *is* an evil disease.
3 If a man beget an hundred *children*,
And live many years,
So that the days of his years be many,
And his soul be not filled with good,
And also *that* he have no burial;
I say, *that* an untimely birth *is* better than he.
4 For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness,
And his name shall be covered with darkness.
5 Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known *any thing*:
This hath more rest than the other.
6 Yea, though he live a thousand years twice *told*,
Yet hath he seen no good:
Do not all go to one place?

Solomon has shewed, in the close of the foregoing chapter, how good it is to make a comfortable use of the gifts of God's providence. Now here he shews the evil of the contrary; having, and not using, gathering to lay up, for I know not what contingent emergencies to come, not to lay out on the most urgent occasions present. This is an evil which Solomon himself saw under the sun, ver. 1. A great deal of evil there is under the sun; there is a world above the sun where there is no evil, yet God causeth his sun to shine upon the evil as well as upon the good, which is an aggravation of the evil. God has lighted up a candle for his servants to work by; but they bury their talent, as slothful and unprofitable, and so waste the light, and are unworthy of it. Solomon, as a king, inspected the manners of his subjects, and took notice of this evil as a prejudice to the public, which is damaged, not only by men's prodigality on the one hand, but by their penuriousness on the other. As it is with the blood in the natural body, so it is with the wealth of the body politic, if instead of circulating it stagnates it will be of ill consequence. Solomon, as a preacher, observed the evils that were done, that he might reprove them, and warn people against them. This evil was in his days common; and yet then there was great plenty of silver and gold, which one would think should have made people less fond of riches. The times also were peaceable, nor was there any prospect of trouble, which to some is a temptation to hoard; but no providence will of itself, unless the grace of God work with it, cure the corrupt affection that is in the carnal mind to the world and the things of it; nay, when riches increase, we are most apt of all to set our hearts upon them. Now concerning this miser observe,

First. The abundant reason he hath to serve God with joyfulness and gladness of heart; how well God has done for him.

1. "He hath given him riches, wealth, and honour," ver. 2. Note, 1st. Riches and wealth commonly gain people honour among men. Though it be but an image, if it be a golden image, all people, nations, and languages will fall down and worship it. 2nd. Riches, wealth, and honour are God's gifts, the gifts of his providence, and not given as his rain and sunshine alike to all; but to some, and not to others, as God sees fit. 3rd. Yet they are given to many that do not make a good use of them, to many to whom God doth not give wisdom and grace to take the comfort of them, and serve God with them. The gifts of common providence are bestowed on many to whom are denied the gifts of special grace, without which the gifts of providence often do more hurt than good.

2. "He wants nothing for his soul of all that he desires." Providence has been so liberal to him, that he has as much as heart could wish, and more, *Ps.* lxxiii. 7. He doth not desire grace for his soul, the better part; all he desires is enough to gratify the sensual appetite, and that he hath; his belly is filled with these hid treasures, *Ps.* xvii. 14.

3. He is supposed to have a numerous family, to beget a hundred children, which are the stay and strength of his house, and as a quiver full of arrows to him, which are the honour and credit of his house, and in whom he has the prospect of having his name built up, and having all the immortality this world can give him. "They are full of children," *Ps.* xvii. 14; while many of God's people are written childless, and stripped of all.

4. To complete his happiness he is supposed to live many years, or rather, many days; for our life is to be reckoned rather by days than years, "the days of his years are many;" and so healthful is his constitution, and so slowly doth age creep upon him, that they are likely to be many more. Nay, he supposeth him to "live a thousand years," which no man, that we know of, ever did, nay, "a thousand years twice told;" a small part of which time, one would think, were enough to convince men, by their own experience, of the folly both of those that expect to find all good in worldly wealth, and of those that expect to find any good in it but in using it.

Secondly. The little heart he has to use this which God gives him for the ends and purposes for which it is given him. This is his fault and folly, that he renders not again according to the benefit done unto him, and serves not the Lord God his benefactor with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the abundance of all things. In the day of prosperity he is not joyful. *Tristis es, et felix?*—'Art thou happy, yet sad?' See his folly:

1. He cannot find in his heart to take the comfort of what he has himself. He has meat before him, he has wherewith to maintain himself and his family comfortably; but he has not power to eat thereof. His sordid, niggardly temper will not suffer him to lay it out, no, not upon himself, no, not upon that which is most necessary for himself. He has not power to reason himself out of this absurdity, to conquer his covetous humour. He is weak indeed that has not power to use what God gives him; for God gives him not that power, but withholds it from him to punish him for his other abuses of his wealth; because he has not the will to serve God with it, God denies him the power to serve himself with it.

2. He suffers those to prey upon him that he is under no obligations to: "A stranger eateth it." This is the common fate of misers; they will not trust their own children, perhaps, but retainers and hangers-on, that have the art of wheedling, insinuate themselves into them, and find ways of devouring what they have, or getting it to be left to them by their wills. God orders it so that a stranger eats it; "Strangers devour his strength," *Hos.* vii. 9; *Pr.* v. 10. This may be well called "Vanity and an evil disease." What we have we have in vain if we do not use it; and that temper of mind is certainly a most wretched distemper which keeps us from using it. Our worst diseases are those that arise from the corruption of our own hearts.

3. He deprives himself of the good that he might have had of his worldly possessions; not only forfeits it, but robs himself of it, and throws it from him. "His soul is not filled with good," ver. 3. He is still unsatisfied and uneasy. His hands are filled with riches, his barns filled, and his bags filled; but "his soul is not filled with good," no, not with that good, for it is still craving more. Nay, ver. 7, "he has not seen good," he cannot so much as please his eye, for that is still looking farther, and looking with envy on those that have more. He has not even the sensible good of an estate. Though he looks not beyond the things that are seen, yet he looks not with any true pleasure even on them

4. "He has no burial," that is, none agreeable to his rank, no decent burial, but the burial of an ass. Either through the sordidness of his temper he will not allow himself a fashionable burial, but forbids it, or the strangers that have eaten him up leave him so poor at last that he has not wherewithal; or those to whom he leaves what he has have so little esteem for his memory, and are so greedy of what they are to have from him, that they will not be at the charges of burying him handsomely; which his own children, if he had left it to them, would not have grudged him.

Thirdly. The preference which the preacher gives to an untimely birth before him. "An untimely birth," a child that is carried from the womb to the grave, "is better than he." Better is the fruit that drops from the tree before it is ripe than that which is left to hang on till it is rotten. Job, in his passion, thinks the condition of an untimely birth better than his when he was in adversity, *Job* iii. 16; but Solomon here pronounceth it better than the condition of a worldling in his greatest prosperity, when the world smiles upon him.

1. He grants the condition of an untimely birth upon many accounts to be very sad; ver. 4, 5, "He comes in with vanity;" for, as to this world, he that is born and dies presently, was born in vain; "and he departs in darkness." Little or no notice is taken of him; being an abortive, he has no name, or, if he had, it would soon be forgotten, and buried in oblivion; it would be covered with darkness as the body is with the earth; nay, ver. 5, "He hath not seen the sun," but from the darkness of the womb he is hurried immediately to that of the grave, and, which is worse than not being known to any, "he has not known any thing," and therefore has come short of that which is the greatest pleasure and honour of man. Those that live in wilful ignorance, and know nothing to purpose, are no better than an untimely birth that has not "seen the sun, nor known any thing."

2. Yet he prefers it before that of a covetous miser. "This" untimely birth "hath more rest than the other," for this hath some rest, but the other has none; this has no trouble and disquiet, but the other is in a perpetual toss, and has nothing but trouble, trouble of his own making. The shorter the life is, the longer the rest; and the fewer the days, and the less we have to do with this troublesome world, the less trouble we know.

It is better die a child at four,
Than live, and die so at fourscore.

The reason he gives why this has more rest is, because all go to one place to rest in, and this is sooner at his rest, ver. 6. He that lives a thousand years goes to the same place with the child that doth not live an hour, *ch.* iii. 20. The grave is the place we shall all meet in. Whatever differences there may be in men's condition in this world, they must all die, are all under the same sentence, and, to outward appearance, their deaths are alike. The grave is to one as well as another a land of silence, of darkness, of separation from the living, and a sleeping-place. It is the common rendezvous of rich and poor, honourable and mean, learned and unlearned; the short-lived and long-lived meet in the grave, only one rides post thither, the other goes in the waggon. The dust of both mingle, and lie undistinguished.

7 All the labour of man *is* for his mouth,
And yet the appetite is not filled.

8 For what hath the wise more than the fool?
What hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the [living?
9 Better *is* the sight of the eyes
Than the wandering of the desire:
This *is* also vanity and vexation of spirit.
10 That which hath been is named already,
And it is known that it *is* man:
Neither may he contend with him
That is mightier than he.

The preacher here farther shews the vanity and folly of heaping up worldly wealth, and expecting happiness in it.

First. How much soever we toil about the world, and get out of it, we can have for ourselves no more but a maintenance; ver. 7, "All the labour of man is for his mouth," which craveth it of him, *Pr.* xvi. 26. It is but food and raiment, what is more, others have, not we. It is all for the mouth; meats are but for the belly, and the belly for meats, there is nothing for the head and heart, nothing to nourish or enrich the soul. A little will serve to sustain us comfortably, and a great deal can do no more.

Secondly. Those that have never so much yet are still craving. Let a man labour never so much for his mouth, yet the appetite is not filled. 1. Natural desires are still returning, still pressing; a man may be feasted to-day, and yet hungry to-morrow. 2. Worldly, sinful desires are insatiable, *ch.* v. 10. Wealth to a worldling is like drink to one in a dropsy, which doth but increase the thirst. Some read the whole verse thus, 'Though all a man's labour fall out to his own mind,' (*ori ejus obveniat*,—'so as to correspond with his views,'—*Juv.*) just as himself would have it, "yet his desire is not satisfied," still he has a mind of something more. 3. The desires of the soul find nothing in the wealth of the world to give them any satisfaction at all. 'The soul is not filled,' so the word is. When God "gave Israel their request, he sent leanness into their souls," *Ps.* cvi. 15. He was a fool that, when his barns were full, said, "Soul, take thine ease."

Thirdly. A fool may have as much worldly wealth, and may enjoy as much of the pleasure of it, as a wise man, nay, and perhaps not be so sensible of the vexation of it. "What has the wise more than the fool?" ver. 8. Perhaps he has not so good an estate, so good a trade, nor such good preferment as the fool hath. Nay, suppose them to be equal in their possessions, what can a wise man, a scholar, a wit, a politician, squeeze out of his estate more than supplies for back and belly? and that a half-witted man may do. A fool can fare as well, and relish it, can dress as well, and make as good a figure in any public appearance, as a wise man; so that, if there were not pleasures and honour peculiar to the mind, which "the wise man has more than the fool," as to this world they would be upon a level.

Fourthly. Even a poor man that has business, and is discreet, and diligent, and dexterous in the management of it, may get as comfortably through this world as he that is loaded with an overgrown estate. Consider what the poor hath less than the rich if he do but know to walk before the living, know how to carry himself decently, and do his duty to all, how to get an honest livelihood by his labour, how to spend his time well, and improve his opportunities. What has he? Why, he is better beloved and more respected among his neighbours, and has a better interest than many a rich man that is griping and haughty. What has he? Why, he has as much of the comfort of this life, has food and raiment, and is therewith content, and so is as truly rich as he that hath abundance.

Fifthly. The enjoyment of what we have cannot but be acknowledged more rational than a greedy grasping at more; ver. 9, "Better is the sight of the eyes," making the best of that which is present, "than the wandering of the desire," the uneasy walking of the soul after things at a distance, and the affecting of a variety of imaginary satisfactions. He is much happier that is always content, though he has never so little, than he that is always coveting, though he has never so much. We cannot say, that better is the sight of the eyes than the fixing of the desire upon God, and the resting of the soul in him; it is better to live by faith in things to come, than to live by sense which dwells only upon present things; but better is the sight of the eyes than the roving of the desire after the world, and the things of it, than which nothing more uncertain, nor more unsatisfying at the best. This wandering of the desire is vanity and vexation of spirit. It is vanity at the best; if what is desired be obtained, it proves not what we promised ourselves from it; but commonly the wandering desire is crossed and disappointed, and then it turns to vexation of spirit.

Sixthly. Our lot, whatever it is, is that which is appointed us by the counsel of God, which cannot be altered; and it is therefore our wisdom to reconcile ourselves to it, and cheerfully to acquiesce in it; ver. 10, "That which has been," or as some read it, that which is, and so likewise that which shall be "is named already," that is, it is already determined in the Divine foreknowledge, and all our care and pains cannot make it otherwise than as it is fixed; *jacta est alea*,—'the die is cast;' it is therefore folly to quarrel with that which will be as it is, and wisdom to make a virtue of necessity. We shall have what pleaseth God, and let that please us.

Seventhly. Whatever we attain to in this world, still we are but men, and the greatest possessions and preferments cannot set us above the common accidents of human life. "That which has been," and is, that busy animal that makes such a stir, and such a noise in the world "is named already," he that made him gave him his name, "and it is known that it is man;" that is his name by which he must know himself, and it is an humbling name, *Gen.* v. 2. He called their name Adam; and all theirs have the same character, 'red earth.' Though a man could make himself master of all the treasures of kings and provinces, yet he is a man still, mean, and mutable, and mortal, and may at any time be involved in the calamities that are common to men. It is good for rich and great men to know and consider that they are but men, *Ps.* ix. 6; and it is known that they are but men. Let them put what face they will upon it, and, like the king of Tyre, set their heart as the heart of God; yet the Egyptians are men, and not gods, and it is known they are so.

Eighthly. How far soever our desires wander, and how closely soever our endeavours keep pace with them, we cannot strive with the Divine providence, but must submit to the disposals of it whether we will or no. If it is man, he may not "contend with Him that is mightier than he;" it is presumption to arraign God's proceedings, and to charge him with folly or iniquity, nor is it to any purpose to complain of him, for "he is in one mind, and who can turn him?" Elihu pacifies Job with this incontestable principle, that "God is greater than man," *Job* xxxiii. 12; and, therefore, man may not contend with him, nor resist his judgments when they come with commission. A man cannot with the greatest riches make his part good against the arrests of sickness or death; but must yield to his fate.

11 Seeing there be many things that increase vanity,
What *is* man the better?
12 For who knoweth what *is* good for man in *this* life,
All the days of his vain life which he spendeth as
For who can tell a man [shadow?
What shall be after him under the sun?

Here, First. Solomon lays down his conclusion which he had undertaken to prove, as that which was fully confirmed by the foregoing discourse; "there be many things that increase vanity." The life of man is vain at best, and there are abundance of accidents that concur to make it more so. Even that which pretends to increase the wealth and pleasure doth but increase the vanity, and make it more vexatious.

Secondly. He draws some inferences from it, which serve farther to evince the truth of it.

1. That a man is never the nearer to true happiness for the abundance that he hath in this world. What is man the better for his wealth and pleasure, his honour and preferment? What remains to man? What residuum has he? What overplus? What real advantage when he comes to balance his accounts? Nothing that will do him any good, or turn to account.

2. That we do not know what to wish for; because that which we promise ourselves most satisfaction in often proves most vexatious to us. "Who knows what is good for a man in this life," where every thing is vanity, and any thing, even that which we most covet, may prove a calamity to us? Thoughtful people are in care to do every thing for the best, if they know it; but as it is an instance of the corruption of our hearts, that we are apt to desire that as good for us which is really hurtful, as children that cry for knives to cut their fingers with, so it is an instance of the vanity of this world, that what by all probable conjectures seems to be for the best often proves otherwise. Such is our short-sightedness concerning the issues and events of things, and such broken reads are all our creature-confidences. We know not how to advise others for the best, nor how to act ourselves, because that which we apprehend likely to be for our welfare may become a trap.

3. That therefore our life upon earth is what we have no reason to take any great complacency in, or to be confident of the continuance of. It is to be reckoned by days, it is but a vain life, and we spend it as a shadow; so little is there in it substantial, so fleeting, so uncertain, so transitory is it, and so little in it to be fond of, or to be depended on. If all the comforts of life be vanity, life itself can have no great reality in it to constitute a happiness for us.

4. That our expectations from this world are as uncertain and deceitful as our enjoyments are. Since every thing is vanity, "who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?" He can no more please himself with the hopes of what shall be after him to his children and family, than with the relish of what is with him, since he can neither foresee himself, nor can any one else foretell to him what shall be after him, nor shall he have any intelligence sent him of it when he is gone; "his sons come to honour, and he knows it not." So that, look which way we will, "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.

CHAPTER VII.

Solomon had given many proofs and instances of the vanity of this world, and the things of it; now, in this chapter, I. He recommends to us some good means proper to be used for the redress of these grievances, and the arming of ourselves against the mischief we are in danger of from them, that we may make the best of bad: as, 1. Care of our reputation, ver. 1; 2. Seriousness, ver. 2—6; 3. Calmness of spirit, ver. 7—10; 4. Prudence in the management of all our affairs, ver. 11, 12; 5. Submission to the will of God in all events, accommodating ourselves to every condition, ver. 13—15; 6. A conscientious avoiding of all dangerous extremes, ver. 16—18; 7. Mildness and tenderness towards those that have been injurious to us, ver. 19—22. In short, the best way to save ourselves from the vexation which the vanity of the world creates us, is to keep our temper, and to maintain a strict government of our passions. II. He laments his own iniquity, as that which was more vexatious than any of these vanities, that mystery of iniquity, the having of many wives, by which he was drawn away from God and his duty, ver. 23—29.

A GOOD name *is* better than precious ointment;
And the day of death than the day of one's birth.
2 *It is* better to go to the house of mourning, than to go
to the house of feasting:
For that *is* the end of all men;
And the living will lay *it* to his heart.
3 Sorrow *is* better than laughter: [better.
For by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made
4 The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning;
But the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth.
5 *It is* better to hear the rebuke of the wise,
Than for a man to hear the song of fools.
6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot,
So *is* the laughter of the fool: this also *is* vanity.

In these verses Solomon lays down some great truths, which seem paradoxes to the unthinking part, that is, the far greatest part of mankind.

First. That the honour of virtue is really more valuable and desirable than all the wealth and pleasure in this world; ver. 1, "A good name is before good ointment," so it may be read; that is, it is preferable to it, and will be rather chosen by all that are wise. Good ointment is here put, both for all the profits of the earth, among the products of which oil was reckoned one of the most valuable, and for all the delights of sense; for ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, and it is called the oil of gladness; nay, and for the highest titles of honour with which men are dignified, for kings are anointed. A good name is better than all riches, *Pr.* xxii. 1; that is, a name for wisdom and goodness with those that are wise and good; the memory of the just. This is a good that will bring a more grateful pleasure to the mind, will give a man a larger opportunity of usefulness, and will go farther and last longer than the most precious box of ointment; for Christ paid Mary for her ointment with a good name, a name in the Gospels, *Mat.* xxvi. 13, and we are sure he always pays with advantage.

Secondly. That, all things considered, our going out of the world is a greater kindness to us than our coming into the world was. The day of death is preferable to the birthday. Though, as to others, there was joy when a child was born into the world, and where there is death there is lamentation, yet, as to ourselves, if we have lived so as to merit a good name, the day of our death, which will put a period to our cares, and toils, and sorrows, and remove us to rest, and joy, and eternal satisfaction, is better than the day of our birth, which ushered us into a world of so much sin and trouble, vanity and vexation. We were born to uncertainty; but a good man doth not die at uncertainty. The day of our birth clogged our souls with the burthen of the flesh; but the day of our death will set them at liberty from that burthen.

Thirdly. That it will do us more good to go to a funeral than to go to a festival; ver. 2, "It is better to go to the house of mourning," and there weep with them that weep, "than to go to the house of feasting," to a wedding suppose, or a wake, there to "rejoice with them that do rejoice;" it will do us more good, and make better impressions upon us. We may lawfully go to both as there is occasion. Our Saviour both feasted at the wedding of his friend in Cana and wept at the grave of his friend in Bethany; and we may possibly both glorify God, and do good and get good in the house of feasting, but, considering how apt we are to be vain and frothy, proud and secure, and indulgent of the flesh, it is better for us to go to the house of mourning; not to see the pomp of the funeral, but to share in the sorrow of it, and to learn good lessons, both from the dead that is there going to his long home and the mourners that go about the streets.

The uses to be gathered from the house of mourning are, 1. By way of information; "that is the end of all men." It is the end of man as to this world, a final period to their state here; "he shall return no more to his house." It is the end of all men; all have sinned, and therefore death passeth upon all; we must thus be left by our friends as the mourners are, and thus leave as the dead doth. What is others' lot will be ours; the cup is going round; it will come to our turn to pledge it shortly. 2. By way of admonition; "the living will lay it to his heart." Will they? It were well if they would. They that are spiritually alive will lay it to heart; and as for all the survivors, one would think they should. It is their own fault if they do not; for nothing more easy and natural, than by the death of others to be put in mind of our own. Some perhaps will lay that to heart, and consider their latter end, who would not lay a good sermon to heart.

For the farther proof of this, ver. 4, he makes it the character, 1st. Of a wise man, that his heart is in the house of mourning; he is much conversant with mournful subjects, and it is both an evidence and a furtherance of his wisdom. The house of mourning is the wise man's school, where he hath learned many a good lesson; and there where he is serious he is in his element. When he is in the house of mourning his heart is there to improve the spectacles of mortality that are presented to him; nay, when he is in the house of feasting his heart is in the house of mourning, by way of sympathy with those that are in sorrow. 2. It is the character of a fool that his heart is in the house of mirth; his heart is all upon it to be merry and jovial, his whole delight is in sport and gaiety, in merry stories, and merry songs, and merry company, merry days, and merry nights. If he be at any time in the house of mourning, he is under a restraint, his heart at the same time is in the house of mirth, and it is his folly, and helps to make him more and more foolish.

Fourthly. That gravity and seriousness better become us, and are better for us, than mirth and jollity, ver. 3. The common proverb saith, that an ounce of mirth is worth a pound of sorrow; but the preacher teacheth us a contrary lesson, that "sorrow is better than laughter," more agreeable to our present state, where we are daily sinning and suffering ourselves more or less, and daily seeing the sins and sufferings of others. While we are in a vale of tears it is fit we should conform to the temper of the climate. It is also more for our advantage; for by the sadness that appears in the countenance the heart is often made better. Note, 1. That is best for us that is best for our souls, by which the heart is made better, though it be unpleasing to sense. 2. Sadness is often a happy means of seriousness, and that affliction which is impairing to the health, estate, and family, may be improving to the mind, and make such impressions upon that as may alter its temper very much for the better, may make it humble and meek, loose from the world, penitent for sin, and careful of duty. *Vexatio dat intellectum*,—'Vexation sharpens the intellect.' *Periissem nisi periissem*,—'I should have perished if I had not been made wretched.' 3. It will follow, on the contrary, that by the mirth and frolicsomeness of the countenance the heart is made worse, more vain, and carnal, and sensual, and secure; more in love with the world, and more estranged from God and spiritual things, *Job* xxi. 12, 14, and utterly unconcerned in the afflictions of Joseph, as those, *Am.* vi. 5, 6, and the king and Haman, *Est.* iii. 15.

Fifthly. That it is much better for us to have our corruptions mortified by the rebuke of the wise than to have them gratified by the song of fools, ver. 5. Many that would be very well pleased to hear the information of the wise, and much more to have their commendations and consolations, yet do not care for hearing their rebukes, that is, care not for being told of their faults, though never so wisely; but therein they are no friends to themselves, for "reproofs of instruction are the way of life," *Pr.* vi. 23. And though they be not so tooth-some as the song of fools, they are more wholesome. To hear not only with patience but pleasure the rebuke of the wise, is a sign and means of wisdom; but to be fond of the song of fools is a sign the mind is vain, and the way to make it more so. And what an absurd thing is it for a man to doat so much upon such a transient pleasure as the laughter of a fool is, which may fitly be compared to the burning of thorns under a pot, which makes a great noise and a great blaze for a little while, but is gone presently, scatters its ashes, and contributes next to nothing to the making of the pot boil, for that requires a constant fire. The laughter of a fool is noisy and flashy, and is not an instance of true joy. "This is also vanity," it deceives men to their destruction, for "the end of that mirth is heaviness." Our blessed Saviour hath read us our doom, "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh; woe to you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep," *Lu.* vi. 21, 25.

7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad;
And a gift destroyeth the heart.
8 Better *is* the end of a thing than the beginning thereof:
And the patient in spirit *is* better than the proud in spirit.
9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry:
For anger resteth in the bosom of fools.
10 Say not thou, What is *the cause* that the former days were better than these?
For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

Solomon had often complained before of the oppressions which he saw under the sun, which gave occasion for many melancholy speculations, and were a great discouragement to virtue and piety. Now here,

First. He grants the temptation to be strong; ver. 7, "Surely," it is often too true, that "oppression makes a wise man mad." If a wise man be much and long oppressed, he is very apt to speak and act unlike himself, to lay the reins in the neck of his passions, and break out in indecent complaints against God and man, or to make use of unlawful, dishonourable means of relieving himself. The righteous, when the rod of the wicked rests long on their lot, are in danger of "putting forth their hands to iniquity," *Ps.* cxxv. 3. When even wise men have unreasonable hardships put upon them, they have much ado to keep their temper and to keep their place. 'It destroys the heart of a gift,' so the latter clause may be read; that is, even the generous heart that is ready to give gifts, and a gracious heart that is endowed with many excellent gifts, is destroyed by being oppressed. We should, therefore, make great allowances to those that are abused and ill-dealt with, and not be severe in our censures of them, though they do not act so discreetly as they should; we know not what we should do if it were our own case.

Secondly. He argues against it. Let us not fret at the power and success of oppressors, nor be envious at them; for, 1. The character of oppressors is very bad; so some understand ver. 7. If he that had the reputation of a wise man becomes an oppressor, he becomes a madman, his reason is departed from him, he is no better than a roaring lion and a ranging bear; and the gifts, the bribes he takes, the gains he seems to reap by his oppressions, do but destroy his heart, and quite extinguish the poor remains of sense and virtue in him; and therefore he is rather to be pitied than envied. Let him alone, and he will act so foolishly and drive so furiously, that in a little time he will ruin himself. 2. The issue at length will be good. "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof." By faith see what the end will be, and with patience expect it. When proud men begin to oppress their poor honest neighbours, they think their power will bear them out in it, doubt not but to carry the day and gain the point; but it will prove better in the end than it seemed in the beginning; their power will be broken, their wealth gotten by oppression will be wasted and gone, they will be humbled and brought down, and reckoned with for their injustice, and oppressed innocency will be both relieved and recompensed. Better was the end of Moses' treaty with Pharaoh, that proud oppressor, when Israel was brought forth with triumph, than the beginning of it, when the tale of bricks was doubled, and every thing looked discouraging.

Thirdly. He arms us against it with some necessary directions. If we would not be driven mad by oppression, but preserve the possession of our own souls,

1. We must be clothed with humility; for the proud in spirit are they that cannot bear to be trampled upon, but grow outrageous, and fret themselves when they are hardly bestead. That will break a proud man's heart which will not break an humble man's sleep. Mortify pride, therefore, and a lowly spirit will easily be reconciled to a low condition.

2. We must put on patience—bearing patience to submit to the will of God in the affliction, and waiting patience to expect the issue in God's due time. The patient in spirit are here opposed to the proud in spirit; for where there is humility there will be patience; those will be thankful for any thing who own they deserve nothing at God's hand. And the patient are said to be better than the proud, they are more easy to themselves, more acceptable to others, and more likely to see a good issue of their troubles.

3. We must govern our passion with wisdom and grace; ver. 9, "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry." Those that are hasty in their expectations, and cannot brook delays, are apt to be angry if they be not gratified presently. Be not angry at proud oppressors, or any that are the instruments of your trouble. 1st. Be not soon angry; not quick in apprehending an affront and resenting it, nor forward to express your resentments of it. 2nd. Be not long angry; for though anger may come into the bosom of a wise man, and pass through it, as a wayfaring man, it rests only in the bosom of fools. There it resides, there it remains, there it has the innermost and uppermost place, there it is hugged, as that which is dear and laid in the bosom, and loathly parted with. He, therefore, that would approve himself so wise as not to give place to the devil must not let the sun go down upon his wrath, *Eph.* iv. 26, 27.

4. We must make the best of that which is, ver. 10. Take it not for granted, that "the former days were better than these," nor inquire "what is the cause" that they were so, for therein "thou dost not inquire wisely;" since thou inquirest into the reason of the thing before thou art sure that the thing itself is true; and besides, thou art so much a stranger to the times past, and such an incompetent judge even of the present times, that thou canst not expect a satisfactory answer to the inquiry, and therefore "thou dost not inquire wisely;" nay, the supposition is a foolish reflection upon the providence of God in the government of the world. Note, 1st. It is folly to cry out of the badness of our own times when we have more reason to cry out of the badness of our own hearts, (if men's hearts were better the times would mend,) and when we have more reason to be thankful that they are not worse, but that even in the worst of times we enjoy many mercies, which help to make them not only tolerable but comfortable. 2nd. It is folly to cry up the goodness of former times, so as to derogate from the mercy of God to us in our own times; as if former ages had not the same things to complain of that we have; or if, perhaps, in some respects they had not, yet, as if God had been unjust and unkind to us in casting our lot in an iron age, compared with the golden ages that went before us, which arises from nothing but fretfulness and discontent, and an aptness to pick quarrels with God himself. We are not to think there is any universal decay in nature, or degeneracy in morals. God has been always good, and men always bad; and if in some respects the times are now worse than they have been, perhaps in other respects they are better.

11 Wisdom *is* good with an inheritance:
And *by it there is* profit to them that see the sun.
12 For wisdom *is* a defence, *and* money *is* a defence:
But the excellency of knowledge *is*,
That wisdom giveth life to them that have it.
13 Consider the work of God: [crooked?
For who can make *that* straight, which he hath made
14 In the day of prosperity be joyful,
But in the day of adversity consider:
God also hath set the one over against the other,
To the end that man should find nothing after him.
15 All *things* have I seen in the days of my vanity:
There is a just *man* that perisheth in his righteousness,

And there is a wicked *man* that prolongeth *his life* in his wickedness.

16 Be not righteous over much:
Neither make thyself over wise;
Why shouldest thou destroy thyself?

17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish:
Why shouldest thou die before thy time?

18 *It is* good that thou shouldest take hold of this;
Yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand:
For he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.

19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise
More than ten mighty *men* which are in the city.

20 For *there is* not a just man upon earth,
That doeth good, and sinneth not.

21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken;
Lest thou hear thy servant curse thee:

22 For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth
That thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

Solomon in these verses recommends wisdom to us as the best antidote against those distempers of mind which we are liable to, by reason of the vanity and vexation of spirit that there is in the things of this world. Here are some both of the praises and the precepts of wisdom.

First. The praises of wisdom. Many things are here said in its commendation, to engage us to get and retain wisdom.

1. Wisdom is necessary to the right managing and improving of our worldly possessions. "Wisdom is good with an inheritance," that is, an inheritance is good for little without wisdom. If a man have a great estate, if it come easily to him, by descent from his ancestors, if he have not wisdom to use it for the end for which he has it, he had better have been without it. Wisdom is not only good for the poor, to make them content and easy; but it is good for the rich too, good with riches to keep a man from getting hurt by them, and to enable a man to do good with them. Wisdom is good of itself, and makes a man useful; but if he have a good estate with it, that will put him into a greater capacity of being useful, and with his wealth he may be more serviceable to his generation than he could have been without it, and make friends to himself, *Lu.* xvi. 9. 'Wisdom is as good as an inheritance; yea, better too,' so the margin reads it. It is more our own, more our honour; will make us greater blessings, will remain longer with us, and turn to a better account.

2. It is of great advantage to us throughout the whole course of our passage through this world. "By it there is" real "profit to them that see the sun," both to those that have it and to their contemporaries. It is pleasant to see the sun, *ch.* xi. 7, but that pleasure is not comparable to the pleasure of wisdom. The light of this world is an advantage to us in doing the business of this world, *Job* xi. 9; but to them that have that advantage, unless withal they have wisdom wherewith to manage their business, that advantage is worth little to them. The clearness of the eye of the understanding is of greater use to us than bodily eyesight.

3. It contributes much to our safety, and is a shelter to us from the storms of trouble, and its scorching heat. It is a shadow, so the word is, "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." "Wisdom is a defence, and money," that is, as money "is a defence." As a rich man makes his wealth, so a wise man makes his wisdom, a strong city. 'In the shadow of wisdom,' (so the words run,) 'and in the shadow of money, there is safety.' He puts wisdom and money together, to confirm what he had said before, that wisdom is good with an inheritance. Wisdom is as a wall, and money may serve as a thorn hedge, which protects the field.

4. It is joy and true happiness to a man. This is "the excellency of knowledge," Divine knowledge, not only above money, but above wisdom too, human wisdom, the wisdom of this world, that it "gives life to them that have it." The fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and that is life, it prolongeth life. Men's wealth exposeth their lives, but their wisdom protects them. Nay, whereas wealth will not lengthen out the natural life, true wisdom will give spiritual life, the earnest of eternal life, so much better is it to get wisdom than gold.

5. It will put strength into a man, and be his stay and support; ver. 19, "Wisdom strengtheneth the wise," strengthens their spirits, and makes them bold and resolute, by keeping them always on sure grounds; it strengthens their interest, and gains them friends and reputation; it strengthens them for their services under their sufferings, and against the attacks that are made upon them, "more than ten mighty men," great commanders, strengthen "the city." They that are truly wise and good are taken under God's protection, and there are safer than if ten of the mightiest men in the city, men of the greatest power and interest, should undertake to secure them, and become their patrons.

Secondly. Some of the precepts of wisdom, that wisdom which will be of so much advantage to us.

1. We must have an eye to God and to his hand in every thing that befalls us; ver. 13, "Consider the work of God." To silence our complaints concerning cross events, let us consider the hand of God in them, and not open our mouths against that which is his doing. Look upon the disposal of our condition, and all the circumstances of it, as the work of God; and consider it as the product of his eternal counsel, which is fulfilled in every thing that befalls us. Consider that every work of God is wise, and just, and good, and there is an admirable beauty and harmony in his works, and all will appear at last to have been for the best. Let us therefore give him the glory of all his works concerning us, and study to answer his designs in them. Consider the work of God as that which we cannot make any alteration of. "Who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?" Who can change the nature of things from what is settled by the God of nature? If he speak trouble, who can make peace? And if he hedge up the way with thorns, who can get forward? If desolating judgments go forth with commission, who can put a stop to them? Since therefore we cannot mend God's work, we ought to make the best of it.

2. We must accommodate ourselves to the various dispensations of providence that are concerning us, and do the work and duty of the day, in its day, ver. 14. Observe,

1st. How the appointments and events of providence are counterchanged. In this world at the same time, some are in prosperity, others are in adversity; the same persons at one time are in great prosperity, at another time in great adversity; nay, one event prosperous, and another grievous, may occur to the same person at the same time; both come from the hand of God, "out of his mouth both evil and good proceed," *Isa.* xlv. 7, and "he hath set the one over against the other," so that there is a very short and easy passage between them, and they are a foil to each other. Day and night, summer and winter, are set the one over against the other, that in prosperity we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and in adversity may weep as though we wept not; for we may plainly see the one from the other, and quickly exchange the one for the other; and it is "to the end that man may find nothing after him," that is, that he may not be at any certainty concerning future events, or the continuance of the present scene, but may live in a dependence upon providence, and be ready for whatever happens. Or, that man may find nothing in the work of God which he can pretend to amend.

2nd. How we must comply with the will of God in events of both kinds. Our religion in general must be the same in all conditions, but the particular instances and exercises of it must vary, as our outward condition doth, that we may walk after the Lord. *First.* In a day of prosperity (and it is but a day) we must be joyful, be in good, be doing good, and getting good; maintain a holy cheerfulness, and "serve the Lord with gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things." When the world smiles, rejoice in God, and praise him, and let the joy of the Lord be thy strength. *Secondly.* In a day of adversity (and that is but a day too) consider. Times of affliction are proper times for consideration. Then God calls us to consider, *Hag.* i. 5; then, if ever, we are disposed to it, and no good will be gotten by the affliction without it. We cannot answer God's end in afflicting us, unless we consider why and wherefore he contends with us. And consideration is necessary also to our comfort and support under our afflictions.

3. We must not be offended at the greatest prosperity of wicked people, nor at the saddest calamities that may befall the godly in this life, ver. 15. Wisdom will teach us how to construe those dark chapters of providence, so as to reconcile them with the wisdom, and holiness, and goodness, and faithfulness of God. We must not think it strange. Solomon tells us there were instances of this kind in his time; "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity." I have taken notice of all that passed, and this has been as surprising and perplexing to me as any thing. Observe, Though Solomon was so wise and great a man, yet he calls the days of his life the days of his vanity; for the best days on earth are so, in comparison with the days of eternity. Or perhaps he refers to the days of his apostacy from God, (those were indeed the days of his vanity,) and reflects upon this as one thing that tempted him to infidelity, or at least to indifferency in religion, that he saw "just men perish in their righteousness;" that the greatest piety would not secure men from the greatest afflictions by the hand of God; nay, and sometimes did expose men to the greatest injuries from the hand of wicked and unreasonable men. Naboth perished in his righteousness, and Abel long before. He had also seen "wicked men prolonging their lives in their wickedness;" they "live, become old, yea, are mighty in power," *Job* xxi. 7; nay, and by their fraud and violence they screen themselves from the sword of justice. Now in this, "consider the work of God," and let it not be a stumblingblock to thee. The calamities of the righteous are preparing them for their future blessedness; and the wicked, while their days are prolonged, are but ripening for ruin. There is a judgment to come, which will rectify this seeming irregularity, to the glory of God, and the full satisfaction of all his people, and we must wait with patience till then.

4. Wisdom will be of use both for caution to saints in their way and for a check to sinners in their way.

1st. As to saints, it will engage them to proceed and persevere in their righteousness, and yet will be an admonition to them to take heed of running into extremes. A just man may perish in his righteousness, but let him not by his own imprudence and rash zeal, pull trouble upon his own head, and then reflect upon Providence as dealing hardly with him; ver. 16, "Be not righteous over much." In the acts of righteousness govern thyself by the rules of prudence, and be not transported, no, not by a zeal for God, into any intemperate heats or passions, or any practices unbecoming thy character, or dangerous to thine interests. Note, There may be overdoing in well-doing. Self-denial and mortification of the flesh is good; but if we prejudice our health by it, and disfit ourselves for the service of God, we are righteous overmuch. To reprove those that offend is good, but to cast that pearl before swine, who will turn again and rend us, is to be righteous overmuch. "Make not thyself over wise;" be not opinionative and conceited of thine own abilities; set not up for a dictator, nor pretend to give law to, and give judgment upon, all about thee; set not up for a critic, to find fault with every thing that is said and done, nor busy thyself in other men's matters, as if thou knewest every thing, and couldst do any thing. "Why shouldest thou destroy thyself," as fools often do, by meddling with strife that belongs not to them? Why shouldest thou provoke authority, and run thyself into the briars, by needless contradictions, and by going out of thy sphere to correct what is amiss? "Be wise as serpents," "Beware of men."

2nd. As to sinners, if it cannot prevail with them to forsake their sins, yet it may restrain them from growing very exorbitant. It is true "there is a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness," ver. 15; but let none say, therefore, they may safely be as wicked as they will; no, "be not over much wicked," ver. 17; do not run to an excess of riot. Many that will not be wrought upon by the fear of God, and a dread of the torments of hell, to avoid all sin, will yet, if they have never so little consideration, avoid those sins that ruin their health and estate, and expose them to public justice. And Solomon here makes use of these considerations. The magistrate bears not the sword in vain, has a quick eye, and a heavy hand, and is a terror to evil-doers; therefore be afraid of coming within his reach, be not so foolish as to lay thyself open to the law. "Why shouldest thou die before thy time?" Solomon perhaps in these two cautions had a special regard to some of his own subjects that were disaffected to his government, and were meditating the revolt which they made immediately after his death. Some, it may be, quarrelled with the sins of their governor, and made that their pretence; to them he saith, "Be not righteous over much." Others were weary of the strictness of the government, and the temple service, and that made them desirous to set up another king; but he frightens both from their seditious practices with the sword of justice, and others likewise from meddling with them that were given to change.

5. Wisdom will direct us in the mean between extremes, and keep us always in the way of our duty, which we shall find a plain and safe way; ver. 18, "It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this," this wisdom, this care, not to run ourselves into snares, "yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand," never slacken thy diligence, nor abate thy resolution, to maintain a true decorum and a good government of thyself. Take hold of the bridle by which thy headstrong passions must be held in from hurrying thee into one mischief or other, as the horse and mule that have no understanding; and, having taken hold of it, keep thine hold, and withdraw not thine hand from it, for if thou do, the liberty they will take will be as the letting forth of water, and thou wilt not easily recover thy hold again. Be conscientious, and yet be cautious, and to this exercise thyself. Govern thyself steadily by the principles of religion, and thou shalt find

that he that fears God shall come forth out of all those straits and difficulties which they run themselves into that cast off that fear. The fear of the Lord is that wisdom which will serve as a clue to extricate us out of the most intricate labyrinths. Honesty is the best policy. They that truly fear God, have but one end to serve, and therefore act steadily. God has likewise promised to direct those that fear him, and to order their steps not only in the right way, but out of every dangerous way, *Ps.* xxxvii. 23, 24.

6. Wisdom will teach us how to carry it in reference to the sins and offences of others, which commonly contribute more than any thing else to the disturbance of our repose, which contract both guilt and grief.

1st. Wisdom teacheth us not to expect that those we deal with should be faultless; we ourselves are not so, none are so, no, not the best. This wisdom strengthens the wise as much as any thing, and arms them against the danger that ariseth from provocation, ver. 19, so that they are not put into any disorder by it. They consider that those they have dealings and conversation with are not incarnate angels, but sinful sons and daughters of Adam; even the best are so, insomuch that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not," ver. 20. Solomon had this in his prayer, 1 *Kin.* viii. 46, in his proverbs, *Pr.* xx. 9, and here in his preaching. Note, *First.* It is the character of just men that they do good; for the tree is known by its fruits. *Secondly.* The best men, and they that do most good, yet cannot say that they are perfectly free from sin. Even those that are sanctified, yet are not sinless. None that live on this side heaven live without sin. "If we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves." *Thirdly.* We sin, even in our doing good. There is something defective, nay, something offensive, in our best performances. That which for the substance of it is good and pleasing to God, yet is not so well done as it should be; and omissions in duty are sins as well as omissions of duty. *Fourthly.* It is only just men upon earth that are subject thus to sin and infirmity. The spirits of just men, when they are got clear of the body, are made perfect in holiness, *Heb.* xii. 23; and in heaven they do good and sin not.

2nd. Wisdom teacheth us not to be quick-sighted, or quick-scented, in apprehending and resenting affronts; but to wink at many of the injuries that are done us, and take on us we do not see them; ver. 21, "Take no heed to all words that are spoken," set not thy heart to them. Vex not thyself at men's peevish reflections upon thee, or suspicions of thee; but be as a deaf man that hears not, *Ps.* xxxviii. 13, 14. Be not solicitous or inquisitive to know what people say of thee; if they speak well of thee, it will feed thy pride, if ill, it will stir up thy passion. See, therefore, that thou approve thyself to God and thy own conscience, and then heed not what men say of thee. Hearkeners, we say, seldom hear good of themselves. If thou heed every word that is spoken, perhaps thou wilt hear thine own servant curse thee, when he thinks thou dost not hear him; thou wilt be told that he doth, and perhaps told falsely, if thou have thine ear open to tale-bearers, *Pr.* xxix. 12. Nay, perhaps it is true, and thou mayest stand behind the curtain and hear it thyself; mayest hear thyself not only blamed and despised, but cursed, the worst ill said of thee, and wished to thee; and that by a servant, one of the meanest rank, of the abjects, nay, by thy own servant, who should be an advocate for thee, and protect thy good name, as well as thy other interests; perhaps it is a servant that thou hast been kind to, and yet he requites thee thus ill; and this will vex thee, thou hadst better not have heard it. Perhaps it is a servant thou hast wronged, and dealt unjustly with, and, though he dare not tell thee so, he tells others so, and tells God so, and then thy own conscience will join with him in the reproach, which will make it much more uneasy. The good names of the greatest lie much at the mercy even of the meanest. And perhaps there is a great deal more evil said of us than we think there is, and by those from whom we little expected it. But we do not consult our own repose, no, nor our credit, though we pretend to be jealous of it, if we take notice of every word that is spoken diminishingly of us. It is easier to pass by twenty such affronts, than avenge one.

3rd. Wisdom puts us in mind of our own faults, ver. 27. Be not enraged at those that speak ill of thee, or wish ill to thee; "For oftentimes," in that case, if thou retire into thyself, thy own conscience will tell thee that "thou thyself hast cursed others," spoken ill of them, and wished ill to them, and thou art paid in thine own coin. Note, When any affront or injury is done us, it is seasonable to examine our consciences, whether we have not done the same, or as bad, to others; and if, upon reflection, we find we have, we must take that occasion to renew our repentance for it, must justify God, and make use of it, to qualify our own resentments. If we be truly angry with ourselves, as we ought to be, for backbiting and censuring others, we shall be the less angry with others for backbiting and censuring us. We must shew all meekness towards all men, for we ourselves were sometimes foolish, *Tit.* iii. 2, 3; *Mat.* vii. 1, 2; *Jas.* iii. 1, 2.

23 All this have I proved by wisdom:
I said, I will be wise; but it *was* far from me.
24 That which is far off,
And exceeding deep, who can find it out?
25 I applied mine heart to know, and to search,
And to seek out wisdom, and the reason *of things*,
And to know the wickedness of folly,
Even of foolishness *and* madness:
26 And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart *is* snares and nets,
And her hands *as* bands:
Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her;
But the sinner shall be taken by her.
27 Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher,
Counting one by one, to find out the account:
28 Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not:
One man among a thousand have I found;
But a woman among all those have I not found.
29 Lo, this only have I found,
That God hath made man upright;
But they have sought out many inventions.

Solomon had hitherto been proving the vanity of the world, and its utter insufficiency to make men happy; now, here he comes to shew the vileness of sin, and its certain tendency to make men miserable; and this, as the former, he proves from his own experience, and it was a dear-bought experience. He is here, more than any where in all this book, putting on the habit of a penitent. He reviews what he had been discoursing of already, and tells us what he had said was what he knew, and was well assured of, and what he resolved to stand by. "All this have I proved by wisdom," ver. 23. Now here,

First. He owns and laments the deficiencies of his wisdom. He had wisdom enough to see the vanity of the world, and to experience that that would not make a portion for a soul; but when he came to inquire farther he found himself at a loss, his eye was too dim, his line was too short, and though he discovered this, there were many other things he could not prove by wisdom.

1. His searches were industrious. God had given him a capacity for knowledge above any; he set up with a great stock of wisdom; he had the largest opportunities of improving himself that ever any man had. And, 1st. He resolved if it were possible to gain his point. "I said, I will be wise;" he earnestly desired it as highly valuable; he fully designed it as that which he looked upon to be attainable; he determined not to sit down short of it, *Pr.* xviii. 1. Many are not wise because they never said they would be so, being indifferent to it; but Solomon set it up for the mark he aimed at. When he made trial of sensual pleasures he still thought to acquaint his heart with wisdom, *ch.* ii. 3, and not to be diverted from the pursuits of that. But perhaps he did not find it so easy a thing as he imagined to keep up his correspondence with wisdom while he addicted himself so much to his pleasures. However, his will was good; he said, "I will be wise." And that was not all. 2nd. He resolved to spare no pains; ver. 25, "I applied my heart," I and my heart turned every way; I left no stone unturned, no means untried, to compass what I had in view. I set myself "to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom" to accomplish myself in all useful learning, philosophy, and divinity. If he had not thus closely applied himself to study it had been but a jest for him to say, "I will be wise;" for those that will attain the end must take the right way. Solomon was a man of great quickness, and yet, instead of using that (with many) as an excuse for slothfulness, he pressed it upon himself as an inducement to diligence; and the easier he found it to master a good notion, the more intent he would be that he might be master of the more good notions. Those that have the best parts should take the greatest pains, as those that have the largest stock should trade most. He applied himself not only to know what lay on the surface, but to search what lay hid out of the common view and road; nor did he search a little way and then give it over, because he did not presently find what he searched for, but he sought it out, went to the bottom of it; nor did he aim to know things only, but the reasons of things, that he might give an account of them.

2. Yet his success was not answerable or satisfying. "I said, I will be wise, but it was far from me," I could not compass it. After all this only I know, that I know nothing, and the more I know the more I see there is to be known, and the more sensible I am of my own ignorance. "That which is far off and exceeding deep, who can find it out?" He means God himself, his counsels, and his works. When he searched into these he presently found himself puzzled and run aground; he could not order his speech by reason of darkness. It is higher than heaven, what can he do? *Job* xi. 8 Blessed be God, there is nothing we have to do but it is plain and easy, the word is nigh us, *Pr.* viii. 9. But there is a great deal we would wish to know which is far off and exceeding deep, among the secret things which belong not to us. And probably it is a culpable ignorance and error that Solomon here laments, that his pleasures, and the many amusements of his court, had blinded his eyes, and cast a mist before them, so that he could not attain to true wisdom as he designed.

Secondly. He owns and laments the instances of his folly in which he had exceeded, as in wisdom he came short. Here is,

1. His inquiry concerning the evil of sin. He applied his heart "to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness." Observe, 1st. The knowledge of sin is a difficult knowledge, and hard to be attained; Solomon took pains for it. Sin has many disguises with which it palliates itself, as being loath to appear sin, and it is very hard to strip it of these, and to see it in its true nature and colours. 2nd. It is necessary to our repentance for sin that we be acquainted with the evil of it, as it is necessary to the cure of a disease to know its nature, causes, and malignity. St. Paul therefore valued the Divine law because it discovered sin to him, *Rom.* vii. 7. Solomon, that in the days of his folly had set his wits on work to invent pleasures and sharpen them, and was ingenious in making provision for the flesh, now God had opened his eyes, is as industrious to find out the aggravations of sin, and so to put an edge upon his repentance. Ingenious sinners should be ingenious penitents, and wit and learning, among other the spoils of the strong man armed, should be divided by the Lord Jesus. 3rd. It well becomes penitents to say the worst they can of sin, for the truth is we can never speak bad enough of it. Solomon here for his farther humiliation desired to see more, *First.* Of the sinfulness of sin. That is it which he lays the greatest stress upon in this inquiry, "to know the wickedness of folly;" by which perhaps he means his own iniquity, the sin of uncleanness, for that was commonly called folly in Israel, *Gen.* xxxiv. 7; *Deu.* xxii. 21; *Jud.* xx. 6; 2 *Sam.* xiii. 12. When he indulged himself in it he made a light matter of it, but now he desires to see the wickedness of it; its "great wickedness," so Joseph speaks of it, *Gen.* xxxix. 9. Or, it may be taken there generally for all sin. Many extenuate their sins with this, they were folly; but Solomon sees wickedness in those follies; an offence to God, and a wrong to conscience, "this is wickedness," *Jer.* iv. 18; *Zec.* v. 8. *Secondly.* Of the folly of sin. As there is a wickedness in folly, so there is a folly in wickedness, even foolishness and madness. Wilful sinners are fools and madmen; they act contrary both to right reason and to their true interest.

2. The result of this inquiry.

1st. He now discovered more than ever the evil of that great sin which he himself had been guilty of, the loving of many strange women, 1 *Kin.* xi. 1; this is that which he here most feelingly laments, and in very pathetical expressions.

First. He found the remembrance of the sin very grievous. Oh how heavy did it lie upon his conscience! what an agony was he in upon the thought of it; the wickedness, the foolishness, the madness, that he had been guilty of! "I find it more bitter than death." As great a terror seized him in reflection upon it as if he had been under the arrests of death. Thus do they that have their sins set in order before them, by a sound conviction, cry out against them; they are bitter as gall, nay, bitter as death, to all true penitents. Uncleanness is a sin that is in its own nature more pernicious than death itself. Death may be made honourable and comfortable; but this sin can be no other but shame and pain, *Pr.* v. 9, 11.

Secondly. He had found the temptation to the sin very dangerous, and that it was extremely difficult, and next to impossible, for those that ventured into the temptation to escape the sin, and for those that had fallen into the sin to recover themselves by repentance. The heart of the adulterous woman is snares and nets; she plays her game to ruin souls with as much art and

subtlety as ever any fowler used to take a silly bird. The methods such sinners use are both deceiving and destroying, as snares and nets are. The unwary souls are enticed into them by the bait of pleasure, which they greedily catch at, and promise themselves satisfaction in, but they are taken ere they are aware, and taken irrecoverably. "Her hands are as bands," with which, under colour of fond embraces, she holds those fast that she hath seized; they are held in the cords of their own sin, *Pr.* v. 22. Lust gets strength by being gratified, and its charms are more prevalent.

Thirdly. He reckoned it a great instance of God's favour to any man if by his grace he has kept him from this sin. "He that pleaseth God shall escape from her;" shall be preserved either from being tempted to this sin or from being overcome by the temptation. Those that are kept from this sin must acknowledge it is God that keeps them, and not any strength or resolution of their own; must acknowledge it a great mercy; and they that would have grace sufficient for them to arm them against this sin must be careful to please God in every thing, by keeping his ordinances, *Lev.* xviii. 30.

Fourthly. He reckoned it a sin that is as sore a punishment of other sins as a man can fall under in this life. "The sinner shall be taken by her;" that is, 1*st.* Those that allow themselves in other sins, by which their minds are blinded and their consciences debauched, are the more easily drawn to this. 2*nd.* It is just with God to leave them to themselves to fall into it: see *Rom.* i. 26, 28; *Eph.* iv. 18, 19. Thus doth Solomon, as it were with horror, bless himself from the sin in which he had plunged himself.

2nd. He now discovered more than ever of the general corruption of man's nature. He runs up that stream to the fountain, as his father had done before him on a like occasion, *Ps.* li. 5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity."

First. He endeavoured to find out the number of his actual transgressions; ver. 27, "Behold, this have I found;" that is, this I hoped to have found. I thought I could have understood my errors, and have brought in a complete list at least of the heads of them; I thought I could have counted them one by one, and have found out the account, which as a penitent he desired to find out, that he might the more particularly acknowledge them; and generally the more particular we are in the confession of sin the more comfort we have in the sense of the pardon; and as a preacher, that he might the more particularly give warning to others. Note, A sound conviction of one sin will put us upon inquiring into the whole confederacy; and the more we see amiss in ourselves the more diligently we should inquire farther into our own faults, that what we see not may be discovered to us, *Job* xxxiv. 32.

Secondly. He soon found himself at a loss, and perceived that they were innumerable; ver. 28, "Which yet my soul seeketh." I am still counting, and still desirous to find out the account, "but I find not;" I cannot count them all, nor find out the account of them to perfection; I still make new and amazing discoveries of the desperate wickedness that there is in my own heart; *Jer.* xvii. 9, 10, "Who can know it?" "Who can understand his errors?" Who can tell how often he offends? *Ps.* xix. 12. He finds that if God enter into judgment with him, or he with himself, for all his thoughts, words, and actions, he is not able to answer for one of a thousand, *Job* ix. 3. This he illustrates by comparing the corruption of his own heart and life with the corruption of the world, where he scarce found one good man among a thousand; nay, among all the thousand wives and concubines which he had he did not find one good woman. Even so, saith he, when I come to recollect and review my own thoughts, words, and actions, and all the passages of my life past, perhaps among those that were manly I might find one good among a thousand, and that was all; the rest even of those had some corruption or other in them, (he found, ver. 26, he had sinned even in doing good;) but for those that were effeminate, that passed in the indulgence of his pleasures, they were all naught. In that part of his life there did not appear so much as one of a thousand good. In our hearts and lives there appears little good at the best, but sometimes none at all. Doubtless this is not intended as a censure of the female sex in general, it is probable enough that there have been, and are, more good women than good men, *Acts* xvii. 4, 12; but he only alludes to his own sad experience; and perhaps there may be this farther in it, he doth in his proverbs warn us against the snares both of the evil man and of the strange woman, *Pr.* ii. 12, 16; iv. 14; v. 3. Now he had observed the ways of the evil women to be more deceitful and dangerous than those of the evil men, that it was more difficult to discover their frauds and elude their snares; and therefore he compares sin to an adulteress, *Pr.* ix. 13; and perceives he can no more find out the deceitfulness of his own heart than he can that of the strange woman, whose "ways are movable, that thou canst not know them."

Thirdly. He therefore runs up all the streams of actual transgression to the fountain of original corruption. The source and spring of all the folly and madness that is in the world is in man's apostacy from God, and his degeneracy from his primitive rectitude; ver. 29, "Lo, this only have I found," when I could not find out the particulars, yet the gross account was manifest enough, it is as clear as the sun, that man is corrupted, and revolted, and is not as he was made. Observe,

1*st.* How man was made by the wisdom and goodness of God. "God made man upright," 'Adam, the first man,' so the Chaldee. God made him, and he made him upright; that is, such a one as he should be. Being made a rational creature, he was in all respects such a one as a rational creature should be; upright, without any irregularity; one could find no fault in him. He was upright; that is, determined to God only, in opposition to the many inventions which afterwards he turned aside to. Man, as he came out of God's hands, was (as we may say) a little picture of his Maker, who is good and upright.

2*nd.* How he was marred, and in effect unmade, by his own folly and badness. "They have sought out many inventions." They; that is, our first parents, or the whole race, all in general, and every one in particular. 'They have sought out great inventions,' so some; inventions to become great as gods, *Gen.* iii. 5. Or, 'the inventions of the great ones,' so some; that is, of the angels that fell, the magnates. Or, 'many inventions.' Man, instead of resting in what God had found for him, was for seeking to mend himself, like the prodigal that left his father's house to go seek his fortune. Instead of being for one, he was for many; instead of being for God's institutions, he was for his own inventions: the law of his creation would not hold him, but he would be at his own dispose, and follow his own sentiments and inclinations. "Vain man would be wise;" wiser than his Maker; is giddy and unsettled in his pursuits, and therefore has many inventions. They that forsake God wander endlessly. Men's actual transgressions are multiplied. Solomon could not find out how many they are, ver. 28; but he found they were very many. Many kinds of sins, and those oft repeated; they are more than the hairs on our head, *Ps.* xl. 12.

CHAPTER VIII.

Solomon in this chapter comes to recommend wisdom to us as the most powerful antidote against both the temptations and vexations that arise from the vanity of the world. Here is, I. The benefit and praise of wisdom, ver. 1. II. some particular instances of wisdom prescribed to us: 1. We must keep in due subjection to the government God hath set over us, ver. 2—5; 2. We must get ready for sudden evils, and especially for sudden death, ver. 6—8; 3. We must arm ourselves against the temptation of an oppressive government, and not think it strange, ver. 9, 10; the impunity of oppressors makes them more daring, ver. 11; but in the issue it will be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked, ver. 12, 13; and therefore the present prosperity of the wicked, and afflictions of the righteous, ought not to be a stumblingblock to us, ver. 14; 4. We must cheerfully use the gifts of God's providence, ver. 15; 5. We must with an entire satisfaction acquiesce in the will of God, and, not preteuding to find the bottom, we must humbly and silently adore the depth of his unsearchable counsels, being assured they are all wise, and just, and good, ver. 16, 17.

WHO *is* as the wise *man?*
And who knoweth the interpretation of a thing?
A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine,
And the boldness of his face shall be changed.
2 I *counsel thee* to keep the king's commandment,
And *that* in regard of the oath of God.
3 Be not hasty to go out of his sight:
Stand not in an evil thing;
For he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him.
4 Where the word of a king *is, there is* power:
And who may say unto him, What doest thou?
5 Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing:
And a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.

Here is, First. An encomium of wisdom, ver. 1; that is of true piety, guided in all its exercises by prudence and discretion. The wise man is the good man, that knows God, and glorifies him, knows himself, and doth well for himself. His wisdom is a great happiness to him. For,

1. It advanceth him above his neighbours, and makes him more excellent than they. "Who is as the wise man?" Note, Heavenly wisdom will make a man an incomparable man; no man without grace, though he be learned, or noble, or rich, is to be compared with a man that hath true grace, and is therefore accepted of God.

2. It makes him useful among his neighbours, and very serviceable to them. 'Who but the wise man knows the interpretation of a thing?" that is, understands the times, and the events of them, and their critical junctures, so as to direct what Israel ought to do, 1 *Chr.* xii. 32.

3. It beautifies a man in the eyes of his friends. It "makes his face to shine," as Moses' did, when he came down from the mount; it puts an honour upon a man, and a lustre on his whole conversation, makes him to be regarded and taken notice of, and gains him respect, as *Job* xxix. 7, &c.; it makes him lovely and amiable, and the darling and blessing of his country. The 'strength of his face,' that is, the sourness and severity of his countenance, (so some understand the last clause,) 'shall be changed' by it into that which is sweet and obliging. Even those whose natural temper is rough and morose, by wisdom are strangely altered, and become mild and gentle, and learn to look pleasant.

4. It emboldens a man against his adversaries, their attempts, and contempts. 'The boldness of his face shall be doubled' by wisdom; it will add very much to his courage in maintaining his integrity, when he not only hath an honest cause to plead, but by his wisdom knows how to manage it, and where to find "the interpretation of a thing." "He shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate."

Secondly. A particular instance of wisdom pressed upon us, and that is, subjection to authority, and a dutiful and peaceable perseverance in our allegiance to the government which Providence hath set over us. Observe,

1. How the duty of subjects is here described,

1st. We must be observant of the laws. In all those things wherein the civil power is to interpose, whether legislative or judicial, we ought to submit to its order and constitutions. "I counsel thee,"—it may as well be supplied, I charge thee, not only as a prince, but as a preacher, he might do both,—I recommend it to thee as a piece of wisdom; I say, whatever those say that are given to change, "Keep the king's commandment," wherever the sovereign power is lodged be subject to it. 'Observe the mouth of a king,' so the phrase is, say as he saith, do as he bids thee; let his word be a law, or rather, let the law be his word. Some understand the following clause as a limitation of this obedience; 'Keep the king's commandment, yet so as to have a regard to the oath of God;' that is, so as to keep a good conscience, and not to violate thy obligations to God, which are prior and superior to thine obligations to the king. "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," but so as to reserve pure and entire to God the things that are his.

2nd. We must not be forward to find fault with the public administration, or quarrel with every thing that is not just according to our mind, nor quit our post of service under the government, and throw it up upon every discontent; ver. 3, "Be not hasty to go out of his sight," when he is displeased at thee, *ch.* x. 4; or, when thou art displeased at him, fly not off in a passion, nor entertain such jealousies of him as will tempt thee to renounce the court or forsake the kingdom. Solomon's subjects, as soon as his head was laid, went directly contrary to this rule, when upon the rough answer which Rehoboam gave them, they were hasty to go out of his sight, would not take time for second thoughts, nor admit proposals of accommodation, but cried, "To your tents, O Israel." There may perhaps be a just cause to go out of his sight, but be not hasty to do it; act with great deliberation.

3rd. We must not persist in a fault when it is shewed us; "Stand not in an evil thing;" in any offence thou hast given to thy prince. Humble thyself, and do not justify thyself, for that will make the offence much more offensive. In any ill design thou hast upon some discontent conceived against thy prince, do not proceed in it, but "if thou hast, done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth," *Pr.* xxx. 32. Note, Though we may by surprise be drawn into an evil thing, yet we must not stand in it, but recede from it as soon as it appears to us to be evil.

4th. We must prudently accommodate ourselves to our opportunities, both for our own relief, if we think ourselves wronged, and for the redress of public grievances. "A wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment," ver. 5; that is, it is the wisdom of subjects, in applying themselves to their princes, to inquire and consider, both at what season and in what manner they may do it best, and most effectually; to pacify his anger, obtain his favour, or obtain the revocation of any grievousness prescribed. Esther, in dealing with Ahasuerus, took a deal of pains to discern both time and judgment, and it sped accordingly. This may be taken as a general rule of wisdom, that every thing should be well-timed; and our enterprises are then likely to succeed when we nick the opportunity for them.

2. What arguments are here used to engage us to be subject to the higher powers; they are much the same with those which St. Paul useth, *Rom.* xiii. 1, &c.

1st. We must needs be subject for conscience sake, and that is the most powerful principle of subjection. We must be subject, because "of the oath of God;" that is, the oath of allegiance which we have taken to be faithful to the government; the covenant between the king and the people, 2 *Chr.* xxiii. 16. David made a covenant or contract with the elders of Israel, though he was king by Divine designation, 1 *Chr.* xi. 3. Keep the king's commandment, for he hath sworn to rule thee in the fear of God; and thou hast sworn in that fear to be faithful to him. It is called the oath of God, because he is a witness to it, and will avenge the violation of it.

2nd. For wrath's sake. Because of the sword which the prince bears, and the power he is intrusted with, which make him very formidable, "He doth whatsoever pleaseth him;" that is, he hath a great authority, and a great ability to support that authority; ver. 4, "where the word of a king is," giving orders to seize a man, "there is power," there are enough that will execute his orders, which makes "the wrath of a king," or supreme government, "like the roaring of a lion," and like "messengers of death." "Who may say unto him, What doest thou?" that is, he that contradicts him, it is at his peril; kings will not bear to have their orders disputed, but expect they should be obeyed; in short, it is dangerous contending with sovereignty, and what many have repented. A subject is an unequal match for a prince; he may command me that has legions at command.

3rd. For the sake of our own comfort. "Whoso keepeth the commandment," and lives a quiet and peaceable life, he "shall feel no evil thing;" to which that of the apostle answers, *Rom.* xiii. 4, "Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power" of the king? "Do that which is good," as becomes a dutiful and loyal subject, "and thou shalt" ordinarily "have praise of the same." He that doth no ill shall feel no ill, and needs fear none.

6 Because to every purpose there is time and judgment,
Therefore the misery of man *is* great upon him.
7 For he knoweth not that which shall be:
For who can tell him when it shall be?
8 *There is* no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit;
Neither *hath he* power in the day of death:
And *there is* no discharge in *that* war;
Neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.

Solomon had said, ver. 5, that "a wise man's heart discerneth time and judgment," that is, a man's wisdom will go a great way by the blessing of God in moral prognostications. But here he shews that few have that wisdom, and that even the wisest may yet be surprised by a calamity which they had not any foresight of; and, therefore, it is our wisdom to expect and prepare for sudden changes. Observe,

First. All the events concerning us, with the exact time of them, are determined and appointed in the counsel and foreknowledge of God, and all in wisdom. "To every purpose there is a time" prefixed, and it is the best time, for it is "time and judgment," time appointed both in wisdom and righteousness; the appointment is not chargeable with folly or iniquity.

Secondly. We are very much in the dark concerning future events, and the time and season of them. Man "knows not that which shall be" himself, and "who can tell him when" or how "it shall be?" ver. 7. It cannot either be foreseen by him or foretold to him; the stars cannot foretell a man what shall be, nor any of the arts of divination. God hath in wisdom concealed from us the knowledge of future events, that we may be always ready for changes.

Thirdly. It is our great unhappiness and misery that, because we cannot foresee an evil, we know not how to avoid it, or guard against it; and because we are not aware of the proper, successful season of actions, therefore we lose our opportunities, and miss our way. "Because to every purpose" there is but one way, one method, one proper opportunity, "therefore the misery of man is great upon him," because it is so hard to hit that, and it is a thousand to one but he misseth it. Most of the miseries men labour under, had been prevented if they could have been foreseen, and the happy time discovered to avoid them. Men are miserable because they do not look to their hits.

Fourthly. Whatever other evils may be avoided, we are all under a fatal necessity of dying, ver. 8.

1. When the soul is required it must be resigned; and it is to no purpose to dispute it either by arms or arguments: not ourselves or any friend we have for us. "There is no man that has power over his own spirit to retain it," when it is summoned to return to God who gave it. It cannot fly anywhere out of the jurisdiction of death, nor find any place where its writs do not run; it cannot abscond, so as to escape death's eye, though it is hid from the eyes of all living. A man has no power to adjourn the day of his death, nor can he by prayers or bribes obtain a reprieve; no bail will be taken, no essoin [excuse], protection, or imparlance [conference], allowed. We have not power over the spirit of a friend to retain that; the prince with all his authority cannot prolong the life of the most valuable of his subjects; nor the physician with his medicines and methods; nor the soldier with his force, nor the orator with his eloquence, nor the best saint with his intercessions. The stroke of death can by no means be put by, when our days are determined, and the hour appointed us is come.

2. Death is an enemy that we must all enter the lists with, sooner or later. "There is no discharge in that war," that is, no dismission from it; either of the men of business, or of the fainthearted, as there was among the Jews, *Deu.* xx. 5, 8. While we live we are struggling with death, and we shall never put off the harness till we put off the body, never obtain a discharge till death has obtained the mastery; the youngest is not released as a freshwater soldier, nor the oldest as *miles emeritus*,—'a soldier whose merits have entitled him to a discharge.' Death is a battle that must be fought; 'there is no sending to that war,' so some read it; no substituting another to muster for us, no champion admitted to fight for us; we must ourselves engage, and are concerned to provide accordingly, as for a battle.

3. Men's wickedness, by which they often evade or outface the justice of the prince, cannot secure them from the arrests of death; nor can the most obstinate sinner harden his heart against those terrors. Though he strengthen himself never so much in his wickedness, *Ps.* lii. 7, death will be too strong for him. The most subtle wickedness cannot outwit death, nor the most impudent wickedness outbrave death. Nay, the wickedness which men give themselves to will be so far from delivering them from death, that it will deliver them up to death.

9 All this have I seen, and applied my heart
Unto every work that is done under the sun:
There is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt.
10 And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone
From the place of the holy, and they were forgotten
In the city where they had so done:
This *is* also vanity.
11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily,
Therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.
12 Though a sinner do evil an hundred times,
And his *days* be prolonged,
Yet surely I know that it shall be well with them
That fear God, which fear before him:
13 But it shall not be well with the wicked,
Neither shall he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow;
Because he feareth not before God.

Solomon, in the beginning of the chapter, had warned us against having any thing to do with seditious subjects; here in these verses he encourageth us in reference to the mischief of tyrannical and oppressive rulers, such as he had complained of before, *ch.* iii. 16; iv. 1.

First. He had observed many such rulers, ver. 9. In the serious views and reviews he had taken of the children of men, and their state, he had observed that many a time "one man rules over another to his hurt;" that is, 1. To the hurt of the ruled; many understand it so. Whereas they ought to be God's ministers unto their subjects for their good, *Rom.* xiii. 4, to administer justice, and to preserve the public peace and order, they use their power for their hurt, to invade their property, encroach upon their liberty, and to patronise the acts of injustice. It is sad with a people, when those that should protect their religion and rights aim at the destruction of both. 2. To the hurt of the rulers, so we render it, to their own hurt; to the feeding of their pride and covetousness, the gratifying of their passion and revenge, and so to the filling up of the measure of their sins, and the hastening and aggravating of their ruin. *Agens agendo repatitur*,—What hurt men do to others will return, in the end, to their own hurt.'

Secondly. He had observed them to prosper and flourish in the abuse of their power, ver. 10. 'I saw those wicked rulers come and go from the place of the holy;' go in state to, and return in pomp from, the place of judicature, which is called the place of the holy one, because "the judgment is the Lord's," *Deu.* i. 17; and "he judgeth among the gods," *Ps.* lxxxii. 1; and is with them in the judgment, 2 *Chr.* xix. 6. And they continued all their days in office, were never reckoned with for their maladministration, but died in honour, and were buried magnificently; their commissions were *durante vita*,—'during life,' and not *quamdiu se bene gesserint*,—'during good behaviour.' "And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done;" their wicked practices were not remembered against them to their reproach and infamy when they were gone. Or, rather, it notes the vanity of their dignity and power; for that is his remark upon it in the close of the verse, "This is also vanity." They are proud of their wealth, and power, and honour, because they sit in the place of the holy; but all this cannot secure, 1. Their bodies from being buried in the dust. I saw them laid in the grave, and their pomp, though it attended them thither, could not descend after them, *Ps.* xlix. 17. 2. Nor their names from being buried in oblivion; for they were forgotten, as if they had never been.

Thirdly. He had observed that their prosperity hardened them in their wickedness, ver. 11. It is true of all sinners in general, and particularly of wicked rulers, that, "because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily," they think it will never be executed, and therefore they set the law at defiance, and "their hearts are full in them to do evil." They venture to do so much the more mischief, fetch a greater compass in their wicked designs, and are secure and fearless in it, and commit iniquity with a high hand. Observe, 1. Sentence is past against evil works, and evil workers, by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth; even against the evil works of princes and great men, as well as of inferior persons. 2. The execution of this sentence is oftentimes delayed a great while; and the sinner goes on, not only unpunished, but prosperous and successful. 3. Impunity hardens sinners in impiety; and the patience of God is shamefully abused by many, who, instead of being led by it to repentance, are confirmed by it in their impenitency. 4. Sinners herein deceive themselves; for though the sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed the more severely at last. Vengeance comes slowly, but it comes surely; and wrath is in the meantime treasured up against the day of wrath.

Fourthly. He foresaw such an end of all these things as would be sufficient to keep us from quarrelling with the Divine providence upon account of them. He supposeth a wicked ruler to do an unjust thing a hundred times, and that yet his punishment is deferred, and God's patience towards him is prolonged much beyond what was expected, and the days of his power are lengthened out, so that he continues to oppress; yet be not discouraged.

1. God's people are certainly a happy people, though they be oppressed; "It shall be well with them that fear God;" I say, with all them, and them only, "which fear before him." Note, 1st. It is the character of God's people that they fear God; have an awe of him upon their hearts, and make conscience of their duty to him. And this because they see his eye always upon them, and they know it is their concern to approve themselves to him. When they lie at the mercy of proud oppressors, they fear God more than they fear them. They do not quarrel with the providence of God, but submit to it. 2nd. It is the happiness of all that fear God, that in the worst of times it shall be well with them. Their happiness in God's favour cannot be prejudiced, nor their communion with God interrupted, by their troubles; they are in a good case, for they are kept in a good frame under their troubles; and in the end they shall have a blessed deliverance from, and an abundant recompence for, their troubles. And therefore surely I know,—I know it by the promise of God, and the experience of all the saints,—that however it goes with others it shall go well with them. All is well that ends well.

2. Wicked people are certainly a miserable people; though they prosper and prevail for a time, the curse is as sure to them as the blessing is to the righteous. "It shall not be well with the wicked," as others think it is who judge by outward appearance, and as they themselves expect it will be; nay, "woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them," *Isa.* iii. 10, 11. They shall be reckoned with

for all the ill they have done; nothing that befalls them shall be really well for them. *Nihil potest ad malos pervenire quod prosit, imo nihil quod non noceat*,—'No event can occur to the wicked which will do them good, rather no event which will not do them harm.'—*Seneca.* Note, 1st. The wicked man's days "are as a shadow," not only uncertain and declining, as all men's days are, but altogether unprofitable. A good man's days have some substance in them, he lives to good purpose; a wicked man's days are all as a shadow, empty and worthless. 2nd. These days shall not be prolonged to what he promised himself; he shall not live out half his days, *Ps.* lv. 23; though they may be prolonged, ver. 12, beyond what others expected, yet his day shall come to fall. He shall fall short of everlasting life, and then his long life on earth will be worth little. 3rd. God's great quarrel with wicked people is for their not fearing before him; that is at the bottom of their wickedness, and cuts them off from all happiness.

14 There is a vanity which is done upon the earth;
That there be just *men*, unto whom it happeneth
According to the work of the wicked;
Again, there be wicked *men*, to whom it happeneth
According to the work of the righteous:
I said that this also *is* vanity.
15 Then I commended mirth,
Because a man hath no better thing under the sun,
Than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry:
For that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life,
Which God giveth him under the sun.
16 When I applied mine heart to know wisdom,
And to see the business that is done upon the earth:
(For also *there is that* neither day nor night
Seeth sleep with his eyes:) [find out
17 Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot
The work that is done under the sun:
Because though a man labour to seek *it* out, yet he shall not find *it*;
Yea farther; though a wise *man* think to know *it*,
Yet shall he not be able to find *it*.

Wise and good men have of old been perplexed with this difficulty, how the prosperity of the wicked and the troubles of the righteous can be reconciled with the holiness and goodness of the God that governs the world; concerning this Solomon here gives us his advice.

First. He would not have us to be surprised at it, as though some strange thing happened; for he himself saw it in his days, ver. 14. 1. He saw "just men, to whom it happened according to the work of the wicked," who, notwithstanding their righteousness, suffered very hard things, and continued long to do so, as if they were to be punished for some great wickedness. 2. He saw "wicked men, to whom it happened according to the work of the righteous," who prospered as remarkably as if they had been rewarded for some good deed, and these from themselves, from God, from men. We see the just troubled and perplexed in their own minds, the wicked easy, fearless, and secure; the just crossed and afflicted by the Divine providence, the wicked prosperous, successful, and smiled upon; the just censured and reproached, and run down by the higher powers, the wicked applauded and preferred.

Secondly. He would have us to take occasion from hence, not to charge God with iniquity, but to charge the world with vanity. No fault is to be found with God; but as to the world, "this is vanity upon the earth," and again, "this is also vanity," that is, it is a certain evidence that the things of this world are not the best things, nor were ever designed to make a portion and happiness for us; for if they had, God would not have allotted so much of this world's wealth to his worst enemies, and so much of its troubles to his best friend. There must, therefore, be another life after this, the joys and griefs of which must be real and substantial, and able to make men truly happy, and truly miserable, for this world doth neither.

Thirdly. He would have us not to fret and perplex ourselves about it, or make ourselves uneasy, but cheerfully to enjoy what God hath given us in the world; to be content with it, and make the best of it, though it be much better with others, and such as we think very unworthy; ver. 15, "Then I commended joy," a holy security and serenity of mind, arising from a confidence in God and his power, providence, and promise, "because a man has no better thing under the sun," (though a good man has much better things above the sun,) "than to eat and drink," that is, soberly and thankfully to make use of the things of this life according as his rank is, and to be cheerful whatever happens; "for that shall abide with him of his labour," that is, all the fruit he hath for himself of the pains that he takes in the business of the world, let him therefore take it, and much good may it do him. And let him not deny himself that out of a peevish discontent, because the world doth not go as he would have it. "That shall abide with him during the days of his life which God giveth him under the sun." Our present life is a life under the sun, but we look for the life of the world to come, which will commence and continue when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and shine no more. This present life must be reckoned by days; this life is given us, and the days of it allotted to us, by the counsel of God, and therefore while it doth last we must accommodate ourselves to the will of God, and study to answer the ends of life.

Fourthly. He would not have us undertake to give a reason for that which God doth; for "his way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters," past finding out, and therefore we must be contentedly and piously ignorant of the meaning of God's proceedings in the government of the world, ver. 16, 17. Here he shews,

1. That both he himself and many others had very closely studied the point, and searched far into the reasons of the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the righteous. He, for his part, had applied his heart to know this wisdom, and to see the business that is done by the Divine providence upon the earth, to find out if there were any certain scheme, any constant rule or method, by which the affairs of this lower world were administered,—any course of government as sure and steady as the course of nature,—so that by what is done now we might as certainly foretell what will be done next, as by the moon's changing now we can foretell when it will be at the full. This he would fain have found out. Others likewise had set themselves to make this inquiry, with so close an application, that they could not find time for sleep either day or night, nor find in their hearts to sleep, so full of anxiety were they about these things. Some think Solomon speaks of himself, that he was so eager in prosecuting this great inquiry, that he could not sleep for thinking of it.

2. That it was all labour in vain, ver. 17. When we look upon all the works of God, and his providence, and compare one part with another, we cannot find that there is any such certain method by which "the work that is done under the sun" is directed; we cannot discover any key by which to decipher the character, nor by consulting precedents can we know the practice of this court, nor what the judgment will be. 1st. Though a man be never so industrious, though he labour to seek it out; 2nd. Though he be never so ingenious, though he be a wise man in other things, and can fathom the counsels of kings themselves, and trace them by their footsteps; nay, 3rd. Though he be very confident of success, though he think to know it; yet he shall not, he cannot find it out. God's ways are above ours, nor is he tied to his own former ways, but his judgments are a great deep.

CHAPTER IX.

Solomon, in this chapter, for a farther proof of the vanity of this world, gives us four observations which he had made upon a survey of the state of the children of men in it: I. He observed that commonly as to outward things good and bad men fare much alike, ver. 1—3. II. That death puts a final period to all our employments and enjoyments in this world, ver. 4—6; from whence he infers, that it is our wisdom to enjoy the comforts of life, and mind the business of life while it doth last, ver. 7—10. III. That God's providence often crosseth the fairest and most hopeful probabilities of men's endeavour, and great calamities often surprise men ere they are aware, ver. 11, 12. IV. That wisdom often makes men very useful, and yet gains them little respect, but persons of great merit are slighted, ver. 13—19. And what is there then in this world that should make us fond of it?

FOR all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this,
That the righteous, and the wise,
And their works, *are* in the hand of God:
No man knoweth either love or hatred
By all *that is* before them.
2 All *things come* alike to all:
There is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked;
To the good and to the clean, and to the unclean;
To him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not:
As *is* the good, so *is* the sinner;
And he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath.
3 This *is* an evil among all *things* that are done under the sun,
That *there is* one event unto all:
Yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil,
And madness *is* in their heart while they live,
And after that *they go* to the dead.

It has been observed concerning those who have pretended to search for the philosopher's stone, that, though they could never find what they sought for, yet in the search they have hit upon many other useful discoveries and experiments. Thus Solomon, when in the close of the foregoing chapter he applied his heart to know the work of God, and took a great deal of pains to search into it, though he despaired of finding it out, yet he found out that which abundantly recompensed him for the search, and gave him some satisfaction, which here he gives us; for therefore he considered all this in his heart, and weighed it deliberately, that he might declare it for the good of others. Note, What we are to declare, we should first consider; think twice before we speak once; and what we have considered we should then declare. "I believed, therefore have I spoken." The great difficulty which Solomon met with in studying the book of providence was the little difference that is made between good men and bad, in the distribution of comforts and crosses, and the disposal of events. This has perplexed the minds of many wise and contemplative men; Solomon discourseth of it in these verses, and though he doth not undertake to find out this work of God, yet he saith that which may prevent its being a stumblingblock to us.

First. Before he describes the temptation in its strength he lays down a great and unquestionable truth, which he resolves to stick to, and which, if firmly believed, will be sufficient to break the force of the temptation. This has been the way of God's people in grappling with this difficulty. Job, before he discourseth of this matter, lays down the doctrine of God's omniscience, *Job* xxiv. 1; Jeremiah the doctrine of his righteousness, *Jer.* xii. 1; another prophet that of his holiness, *Hab.* i. 13; the psalmist that of his goodness, and peculiar favour to his own people, *Ps.* lxxiii. 1; and that is it which Solomon here fastens upon, and resolves to abide by, that though good and evil seem to be dispensed promiscuously, yet God has a particular care of, and concern for, his own people: "The righteous and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God," under his special protection and conduct; all their affairs are managed by him for their good; all their wise and righteous actions are in his hand, to be recompensed in the other world, though not in this. They seem as if they were given up into the hand of their enemies, but it is not so; men have no power against them but what is given them from above. The events concerning them do not come to pass by chance, but all according to the will and counsel of God, which will turn that to be for them which seemed to be most against them. Let this make us easy, whatever happens, that all God's saints are in his hand, *Deu.* xxxiii. 3; *Jno.* x. 29; *Ps.* xxxi. 15.

Secondly. He lays this down for a rule, that the love and hatred of God is not to be measured and judged of by men's outward condition. If prosperity were a certain sign of God's love, and affliction of his hatred, then it might justly be an offence to us to see the wicked and godly fare alike. But the matter is not so; "no man knows either love or hatred by all that is before them" in this world, by those things that are the objects of sense. These we may know by that which is within us: if we love God with all our heart, thereby we may know that he loves us; as we may know likewise that we are under

his wrath, if we be governed by that carnal mind which is enmity to him. These will be known by that which shall be hereafter, by men's everlasting state. It is certain men are happy or miserable according as they are under the love or hatred of God, but not according as they are under the smiles or frowns of the world; and therefore if God love a righteous man, as certainly he doth, he is happy, though the world frown upon him; and if he hate a wicked man, as certainly he doth, he is miserable, though the world smile upon him. Then is the offence of this promiscuous distribution of events ceased.

Thirdly. Having laid down these principles, he acknowledgeth that "all things come alike to all;" so it has been formerly, and therefore we are not to think it strange if it be so now,—if it be so with us and our families. Some make this, and all that follows to ver. 13, to be the perverse reasonings of the atheists against the doctrine of God's providence; but I rather take it to be Solomon's concession, which he might the more freely make when he had fixed those truths which are sufficient to guard against any ill use that may be made of what he grants. Observe here, ver. 2,

1. The great difference that there is between the characters of the righteous and the wicked, which in several instances are set the one over against the other, to shew that, though "all things come alike to all," yet that doth not in the least confound the eternal distinction between moral good and evil, but that remains immutable. 1st. The righteous are clean, have clean hands, and pure hearts; the wicked are unclean, under the dominion of unclean lusts; pure perhaps in their own eyes, but not cleansed from their filthiness. God will certainly put a difference between the clean and the unclean, the precious and the vile, in the other world, though he doth not seem to do so in this. 2nd. The righteous sacrifice; that is, they make conscience of worshipping God according to his will, both with inward and outward worship. The wicked sacrifice not; they live in the neglect of God's worship, and grudge to part with any thing for his honour; "What is the Almighty that they should serve him?" 3rd. The righteous are good, good in God's sight, they do good in the world; the wicked are sinners, violating the laws of God and man, and provoking to both. 4th. The wicked man swears; has no veneration for the name of God, but profanes it by swearing rashly, and swearing falsely; but the righteous man fears an oath, swears not, but is sworn, and then with great reverence; he fears to take an oath, because it is a solemn appeal to God, as a witness and judge. He fears, when he has taken an oath, to break it, because God is righteous, who taketh vengeance.

2. The little difference there is between the conditions of the righteous and the wicked in this world; there is one event to both. Is David rich? so is Nabal; is Joseph favoured by his prince? so is Haman. One bad event: is Ahab killed in battle? so is Josiah; are the bad figs carried to Babylon? so are the good, *Jer.* xxiv. 1. There is a vast difference between the original, the design, and the nature of the same event to the one and to the other. The effects and issues of them are likewise vastly different; the same providence to the one is a savour of life unto life, to the other of death unto death, though to outward appearance it is the same.

Fourthly. He owns this to be a very great grievance to those that are wise and good. "This is an evil," the greatest perplexity, "among all things that are done under the sun," ver. 3. Nothing has given me more disturbance than this, "that there is one event unto all." It hardens atheists, and strengthens the hands of evil-doers; for therefore it is that "the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil," and "fully set in them to do evil," *ch.* viii. 11. When they see "that there is one event to the righteous and the wicked," they wickedly infer from thence that it is all one to God whether they are righteous or wicked; and therefore they stick at nothing to gratify their lusts.

Fifthly. For the farther clearing of this great difficulty, as he began this discourse with the doctrine of the happiness of the righteous, whatever they may suffer,—they and their works are in the hands of God, and therefore in good hands, they could not be in better,—so he concludes with the doctrine of the misery of the wicked, however they may prosper. "Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead." Envy not the prosperity of evil-doers; for, 1. They are now madmen, and all the delights they seem to be blessed with are but like the pleasant dreams and fancies of a distracted man. They are mad upon their idols, *Jer.* l. 28; are mad against God's people, *Acts* xxvi. 11. When the prodigal repented, it is said he came to himself, *Lu.* xv. 17, which intimates that he had been beside himself before. 2. They will shortly be dead men. They make a mighty noise and bustle while they live, but after a while they go to the dead, and there is an end of all their pomp and power; they will then be reckoned with for all their madness and outrage in sin. Though on this side death the righteous and the wicked seem alike, on the other side death there will be a vast difference between them.

4 For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope;
For a living dog is better than a dead lion.
5 For the living know that they shall die:
But the dead know not any thing,
Neither have they any more a reward;
For the memory of them is forgotten.
6 Also their love, and their hatred,
And their envy, is now perished;
Neither have they any more a portion for ever
In any *thing* that is done under the sun.
7 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy,
And drink thy wine with a merry heart;
For God now accepteth thy works.
8 Let thy garments be always white;
And let thy head lack no ointment.
9 Live joyfully with the wife
Whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity,
Which he hath given thee under the sun,
All the days of thy vanity:
For that *is* thy portion in *this* life, and in thy labour
Which thou takest under the sun.
10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might;
For *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge,
Nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Solomon, in a fret, had praised the dead more than the living, *ch.* iv. 2; but here, considering the advantages of life, to prepare for death, and make sure the hope of a better life, he seems to be of another mind.

First. He shews the advantages which the living have above those that are dead, ver. 4—6.

1. While there is life there is hope. *Dum spiro spero*,—'While I breathe, I hope.' It is the privilege of the living that they are "joined to the living," in relation, commerce, and conversation, and while they are so "there is hope." If a man's condition be upon any account bad, there is hope it will be amended; if the heart be full of evil, and madness be in it, yet while there is life there is hope that by the grace of God there may be a blessed change wrought; but after men go to the dead, ver. 3, it is too late then; he that is then filthy will be filthy still, for ever filthy. If men be thrown aside as useless, yet while they are "joined to the living there is hope" that they may yet again take root, and bear fruit. He that is alive is or may be good for something, but he that is dead as to this world is not capable of being any farther serviceable. Therefore "a living dog is better than a dead lion;" that is, the meanest beggar alive has that comfort of this world, and doth that service to it, which the greatest prince, when he is dead, is utterly incapable of.

2. While there is life there is an opportunity of preparing for death. "The living know" that which the dead have no knowledge of; particularly they know that "they shall die," and are or may be thereby influenced to prepare for that great change which will come certainly, and may come suddenly. Note, "The living" cannot but "know that they shall die," that they must needs die; they know they are under a sentence of death; they are already taken into custody of its messengers, and feel themselves declining. This is a needful, useful knowledge; for what is our business while we live but to get ready to die? The living know they shall die; it is a thing yet to come, and therefore provision may be made for it; the dead know they are dead, and it is too late; they are on the other side the great gulf fixed.

3. When life is gone, all this world is gone with it as to us. 1st. There is an end of all our acquaintance with this world, and the things of it; "the dead know not any thing" of that which, while they lived, they were intimately conversant with. It doth not appear that they know any thing of what is done by those they leave behind; "Abraham is ignorant of us," they are removed into darkness, *Job* x. 22. 2nd. There is an end of all our enjoyments in this world. They have no more a reward for their toils about the world, but all they got must be left to others; they have a reward for their holy actions, but not for their worldly ones; the meats and the belly will be destroyed together, *Jno.* vi. 27; 1 *Cor.* vi. 13. It is explained, ver. 6, "Neither have they any more a portion for ever;" none of that which they imagined would be a portion for ever of that which is done and got under the sun. The things of this world will not be a portion for the soul, because they will not be a portion for ever; they that choose them and have them for their good things have only a portion in this life, *Ps.* xvii. 14. The world can only be an annuity for life, not a portion for ever. 3rd. There is an end of their name. There are but few whose names survive them long; the grave is a land of forgetfulness, for the memory of them that are laid there is soon forgotten; their place knows them no more, nor the lands they called by their own names. 4th. There is an end of their affections, their friendships and enmities. "Their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished;" the good things they loved, the evil things they hated, the prosperity of others which they envied, are now all at an end with them. Death parts those that loved one another, and puts an end to their friendship; and those that hated one another too, and puts an end to their quarrels. *Actio moritur cum persona*,—'The person and his actions die together.' There we shall be never the better for our friends, their love can do us no kindness; nor ever the worse for our enemies, their hatred and envy can do us no damage; "there the wicked cease from troubling." Those things which now so affect us and fill us, which we are so concerned about and so jealous of, will there be at an end.

Secondly. From hence he infers that it is our wisdom to make the best use of life that we can while it doth last, and manage wisely what remains of it.

1. Let us relish the comfort of life while we live, and cheerfully take our share of the enjoyments of it. Solomon, having been himself ensnared by the abuse of sensitive delights, warns others of the danger, not by a total prohibition of them, but by directing to the sober and moderate use of them. We may use the world, but not abuse it; take what is to be had out of it, and expect no more. Here is,

1st. The particular instances of this cheerfulness prescribed. Thou that art drooping and melancholy, "go thy way," like a fool as thou art, and get into a better temper of mind.

First. Let thy spirit be easy and pleasant; then let there be joy and a merry heart within. A good heart, (so the word is,) which distinguisheth this from carnal mirth and sensual pleasure, which is the evil of the heart, both a symptom and a cause of much evil there. We must enjoy ourselves, enjoy our friends, enjoy our God, and be careful to keep a good conscience, that nothing may disturb us in these enjoyments. We must serve God with gladness in the use of what he gives us, and be liberal in communicating of it to others, and not suffer ourselves to be oppressed with inordinate care and grief about the world. We must eat our bread as Israelites, not in our mourning, *Deu.* xxvi. 11; as Christians, with gladness and liberality of heart, *Acts* ii. 46: see *Deu.* xxviii. 47.

Secondly. Make use of the comforts and enjoyments which God hath given thee. "Eat thy bread, drink thy wine;" thine, not another's; not the bread of deceit, or the wine of violence, but that which is honestly got, else thou canst not eat it with any comfort, nor expect a blessing upon it. Thy bread and thy wine, that is, such as is agreeable to thy place and station, not extravagantly above it, nor sordidly below it. Lay out what God has given thee for the ends for which thou art intrusted with it, as being but a steward.

Thirdly. Evidence thy cheerfulness; ver. 8, "Let thy garments be always white." Observe a proportion in thine expenses, and let the back and the belly each have their just share; pinch not thy belly to feed thy pride, as some do, nor starve thy back to indulge thy luxury, as others do. Be neat, wear clean linen, and be not slovenly. Or, "Let thy garments be white," in token of joy and cheerfulness, which was expressed by white raiment, *Rev.* iii. 4. And, as a farther token of joy, let "thy head lack no ointment" that is fit for it; our Saviour admitted this piece of pleasure at a feast, *Mat.* xxvi. 7. And David observes it among the gifts of God's bounty to him, *Ps.* xxiii. 5, "Thou anointest my head with oil." Not that we must place our happiness in any of the delights of sense, or set our hearts upon them; but what God has given us we must make a comfortable use of as we can afford, under the limitations of sobriety and wisdom, and not forgetting the poor.

Fourthly. Make thyself agreeable to thy relations; "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest." Do not engross thy delights, making much of thyself only, and not caring what becomes of those about thee, but let them share with thee, and make them easy too. Have a wife, for even in paradise "it

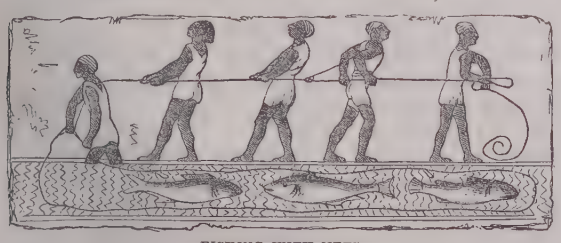
was not good for man to be alone." Keep to thy wife, to one, and do not multiply wives. Solomon had found the mischief of that; to her only, and have nothing to do with any other. How can a man live joyfully with one with whom he doth not live honestly? Love thy wife, and the wife whom thou lovest thou wilt be likely to live joyfully with. When we do the duty of relations we may expect the comfort of them: see *Pr.* v. 19. Live with thy wife, and delight in her society; live joyfully with her, and be most merry when thou art with her. Take pleasure in thy family, thy vine and thine olive plants.

2nd. The qualification necessary to this cheerfulness. Rejoice and have a merry heart. If God now accepteth thy works, if thou art reconciled to God and recommended to him, then thou hast reason to be cheerful; otherwise not, "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy as other people, for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God," *Hos.* ix. 1. Our first care must be to make our peace with God, and obtain his favour; to do that which he will accept of, and then go thy way, eat thy bread with joy. Note, Those whose works God has accepted have reason to be cheerful, and ought to be so. Now thou eatest the bread of thy sacrifices with joy, and partakest of the wine of thy drink-offerings with a merry heart, now God accepts thy works; thy religious services, when performed with holy joy, are pleasing to God. He loves to have his servants sing at their work; it proclaims him a good master.

3rd. The reasons for it. Live joyfully; for, *First.* It is all little enough to make thy passage through this world easy and comfortable. The days of thy life are the days of thy vanity; there is nothing here but trouble and disappointment. Thou wilt have time enough for sorrow and grief when thou canst not help it, and therefore live joyfully while thou canst, and perplex not thyself with thoughts and cares about to-morrow; "sufficient to the day is the evil thereof." Let a gracious serenity of mind be a powerful antidote against the vanity of the world. *Secondly.* It is all thou canst get from this world; that is thy portion in the things of this life. In God and another life thou shalt have a better portion and a better recompence for thy labours in religion; but for thy pains which thou takest about the things under the sun, this is all thou canst expect, and therefore do not deny this to thyself.

2. Let us apply ourselves to the business of life while life lasts, and so use the enjoyments of it as by them to be fitted for the employments. Therefore, eat with joy and a merry heart; not that thy soul may take its ease, as *Lu.* xii. 19, but that thy soul may take the more pains, and the joy of the Lord may be its strength, and oil to its wheels; ver. 10, "Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might." Observe here, 1st. That there is not only something to be had, but something to be done, in this life, and the chief good we are to inquire after is the good we should do, *Eccl.* ii. 3. This is the world of service, that to come is the world of recompence. This is the world of probation and preparation for eternity; we are here upon business and upon our behaviour. 2nd. That opportunity is to direct and quicken duty. That is to be done which our hand finds to do, which occasion calls for; and an active hand will always find something to do that will turn to a good account. What must be done of necessity our hand will here find a price in it for the doing of, *Pr.* xvii. 16. 3rd. That what good we have an opportunity of doing we must do while we have the opportunity, and do it with our might; with care, and vigour, and resolution, whatever difficulties and discouragements we may meet with in it. Harvest days are busy days, and we must make hay while the sun shines. Serving God and working out our salvation must be done with all that is within us, and all little enough. 4th. There is good reason why we should "work the works of him that sent us while it is day, because the night comes wherein no man can work," *Jno.* ix. 4. We must up and be doing now with all possible diligence, because our doing-time will be done shortly, and we know not how soon. But this we know, that if the work of life be not done when our time is done, we are undone for ever. "There is no work" to be done, "nor device" to do it, "no knowledge" for speculation, "nor wisdom" for practice, "in the grave whither thou goest." We are all going towards the grave, every day brings us a step nearer it. When we are in the grave it will be too late to mend the errors of life, too late to repent and make our peace with God, too late to lay up any thing in store for eternal life; it must be done now or never. The grave is a land of darkness and silence, and therefore there is no doing any thing for our souls there; it must be done now or never, *Jno.* xii. 35.

11 I returned, and saw under the sun,
That the race *is* not to the swift,
Nor the battle to the strong,
Neither yet bread to the wise,
Nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill;
But time and chance happeneth to them all.
12 For man also knoweth not his time:
As the fishes that are taken in an evil net,



FISHING WITH NETS.

And as the birds that are caught in the snare;
So *are* the sons of men snared in an evil time,
When it falleth suddenly upon them.

The preacher here, for a farther proof of the vanity of the world, and to convince us that all our works are in the hand of God, and not in our own hand, shews the uncertainty and contingency of future events, and how often they contradict the prospects we have of them. He had exhorted us, ver. 10, to do what we have to do with all our might, but here he reminds us that when we have done all we must leave the issue with God, and not be confident of the success.

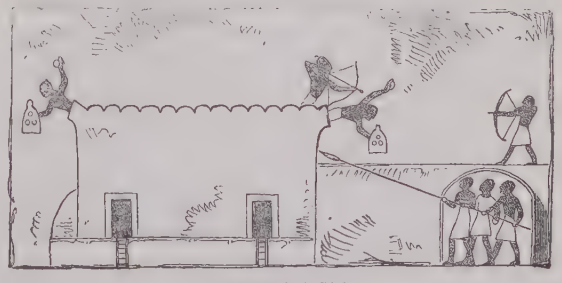
First. We are often disappointed of the good we had great hopes of, ver. 11. Solomon had himself made the observation, and so has many a one since, that events, both in public and private affairs, do not always agree even with the most rational prospects and probabilities that there were of them. *Nulli fortuna tam dedita est ut multa tentanti ubique respondeat*,—'Fortune surrenders herself to no one so as to ensure him success, however numerous his undertakings.'—*Seneca.* The issue of affairs is oftentimes unaccountably cross to every one's expectation, that the highest may not presume, nor the lowest despair, but all may live in an humble dependence upon God, from whom every man's judgment proceeds.

1. He gives instances of disappointment, even there where means and instruments were most encouraging, and promised fair. 1st. One would think that the lightest of foot should, in running, win the prize, and yet "the race is not" always "to the swift;" some accident happens to retard them, or they are too secure, and therefore remiss, and let those that are slower get the start of them. 2nd. One would think that, in fighting, the most numerous and puissant army should be always victorious, and, in single combat, that the bold and mighty champion should win the laurel; but "the battle is not" always "to the strong." A host of Philistines was once put to flight by Jonathan and his man; "One of you shall chase a thousand." The goodness of the cause has many a time carried the day against the most formidable power. 3rd. One would think that men of sense should be always men of substance, and that those that know how to live in the world should not only have a plentiful maintenance, but get great estates, and yet it doth not always prove so; even "bread is not" always "to the wise," much less "riches" always "to men of understanding." Many ingenious men and men of business, that were likely to thrive in the world, have strangely gone backward and come to nothing. 4th. One would think that those who understand men, and have the art of management, should always get preferment and obtain the smiles of great men; but many ingenious men have been baulked, and have spent their days in obscurity, nay, have fallen into disgrace, and perhaps have ruined themselves by those very methods by which they hoped to have raised themselves, for "favour is not" always "to men of skill," but fools are favoured and wise men frowned upon.

2. He resolves all these disappointments into an overruling power and providence; the disposals of which to us seem casual, and we call them chance, but really they are according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, here called time, in the language of this book, *ch.* iii. 1; *Ps.* xxxi. 15. "Time and chance happens to them all." A sovereign providence breaks men's measures, and blasts their hopes, and teacheth them, that "the way of man is not in himself," but subject to the Divine will. We must use means, but not trust to them; if we succeed, we must give God the praise, *Ps.* xliv. 3; if we be crossed, we must acquiesce in his will, and take our lot.

Secondly. We are often surprised with the evils we were in little fear of; ver. 12, "Man knows not his time," the time of his calamity, his fall, his death, which in Scripture is called our day, and our hour. 1. We know not what troubles are before us, which will take us off our business, and take us out of the world; what time and chance will happen to us, nor what one day or a night may bring forth. It is not for us to know the times, no, not our own time, when or how we shall die. God has in wisdom kept us in the dark that we may be always ready. 2. Perhaps we may meet with trouble in that very thing wherein we promise ourselves the greatest satisfaction and advantage; as the fishes and the birds are drawn into the snare and net by the bait that is laid to allure them, which they greedily catch at, so are the sons of men often snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them, ere they are aware. And these things too come alike to all. Men often find their bane where they sought their bliss, and catch their death where they thought to have found a prize. Let us therefore never be secure, but always ready for changes, that though they may be sudden, they may be no surprise or terror to us.

13 This wisdom have I seen also under the sun,
And it *seemed* great unto me:
14 *There was* a little city, and few men within it;
And there came a great king against it,
And besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it:



BESIEGING A CITY.

15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man,
And he by his wisdom delivered the city;
Yet no man remembered that same poor man.
16 Then said I, Wisdom *is* better than strength:
Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom *is* despised,
And his words are not heard.
17 The words of wise *men are* heard in quiet
More than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.
18 Wisdom *is* better than weapons of war:
But one sinner destroyeth much good.

Solomon still recommends wisdom to us as necessary to the preserving of our peace, and the perfecting of our business, notwithstanding the vanities and

crosses which human affairs are subject to. He had said, ver. 11, that "bread is not always to the wise," yet he would not therefore be thought either to disparage or to discourage wisdom; no, he still sticks to his principle, "that wisdom excels folly as much as light excels darkness," *ch.* ii. 13. And we ought to love and embrace it, and be governed by it, for the sake of its own intrinsic worth, and the capacity it gives us of being serviceable to others, though we ourselves should not get wealth and preferment by it. This wisdom, that is, this which he here describes, wisdom which enables a man to serve his country, out of pure affection to its interests, when he himself gains no advantage by it, no, not so much as thanks for his pains, or the reputation of it, this is the wisdom which Solomon saith seemed great unto him, ver. 13. A public spirit in a private sphere is wisdom, which those who understand things that differ cannot but look upon as very magnificent.

First. Solomon here gives an instance, which probably was a case in fact in some neighbouring country, of a poor man, that with his wisdom did great service in a time of public distress and danger; ver. 14, "There was a little city," no great prize, whoever was master of it, there were but "few men within it," to defend it; and men, if men of fortitude, are the best fortifications of a city. Here were few men, and because few, feeble and fearful, and ready to give up their city, as not tenable. Against this little city a great king came with a numerous army and besieged it, either in pride and covetousness to possess it, or in revenge for some affront given him, to chastise and destroy it; thinking it stronger than it was, he "built great bulwarks against it," from which to batter it, and doubted not but in a little time to make himself master of it. What a great deal of unjust vexation do ambitious princes give to their harmless neighbours! This great king needed not fear this little city, what need he frighten it then? It would be little profit to him, why then should he put himself to such a great expense to gain it? But, as unreasonably and insatiably greedy as little people sometimes are to "lay house to house, and field to field," great kings often are to lay city to city, and province to province, "that they may be placed alone in the earth," *Isa.* v. 8. Now, was the victory and success to the strong? No; there was found in this little city, among the few men that were in it, one poor wise man. A wise man, and yet poor, and not preferred to any place of profit or power in the city. Places of trust were not given to men according to their merit and meetness for them, else such a wise man as this had not been a poor man. Now,

1. Being wise, he served the city, though he was poor. In their distress they found him out, *Jud.* xi. 7, and begged his advice and assistance, "and he by his wisdom delivered the city," either by prudent instructions given to the besieged, directing them to some unthought of stratagem for their own security, or by a prudent treaty with the besiegers, as the woman at Abel, 2 *Sam.* xx. 16. He did not upbraid them with the contempt they had put upon him in leaving him out of their council, nor tell them he was poor and had nothing to lose, and therefore cared not what became of the city, but did his best for it, and was blessed with success. Note, Private interests and personal resentments must always be sacrificed to the public good, and forgotten when the common welfare is concerned.

2. Being poor, the city slighted him, though he was wise, and had been an instrument to save them all from ruin; "no man remembered that same poor man," his good services were not taken notice of, no recompence was made him, no marks of honour put upon him, but he lived in as much poverty and obscurity as he had done before. Riches were not to this man of understanding, nor favour to this man of skill. Many that have well merited of their prince and country have been ill paid; such an ungrateful world do we live in. It is well useful men have a God to trust to, who will be their bountiful rewarder; for among men great services are often envied, and rewarded with evil for good.

Secondly. From this instance he draws some useful inferences; looks upon it and receives instruction.

1. Hence he observes the great usefulness and excellency of wisdom, and what a blessing it makes men to their country: "Wisdom is better than strength," ver. 16. A prudent mind, which is the honour of a man, is to be preferred before a robust body, in which many of the brute creatures excel man. A man may by his wisdom effect that which he could never compass by his strength; and may overcome those by outwitting them that are able to overpower him. Nay, "wisdom is better than weapons of war," offensive or defensive, ver. 18. Wisdom, that is religion and piety, (for the wise man is here opposed to a sinner,) this is better than all military endowments or accoutrements, for it will engage God for us, and then we are safe in the greatest perils, and successful in the greatest enterprises. If God be for us, who can be against us, or stand before us?

2. Hence, he observes, the commanding force and power of wisdom, though it labour under external disadvantages; ver. 17, "The words of wise men are heard in quiet," that is, what they speak being rational and to the purpose, being spoken calmly, and with deliberation,—though not being rich and in authority, they dare not speak loud, nor with any great assurance,—yet it will be hearkened to and regarded; will gain respect, nay, will gain the point, and sway with men more than the imperious, passionate clamours of him that ruleth among fools, who, like fools, choose him to be their ruler for his noise and blustering, and, like fools, think he must by those methods carry the day with every body else. A few close arguments are worth a great many big words. And those will strike sail to fair reasoning who will answer them that bounce and hector according to their folly. "How forcible are right words!" What is spoken wisely should be spoken calmly, and then it will be heard in quiet, and calmly considered. But passion will lessen the force even of reason, instead of adding any force to it.

3. Hence he observes that wise and good men, notwithstanding this, must often content themselves with the satisfaction of having done good, or at least endeavoured it, and offered at it, when they cannot do the good they would do, nor have the praise they should have. Wisdom capacitates a man to serve his neighbours, and he offers his service; but, alas, if he be poor his "wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard," ver. 16. Many a man is buried alive in poverty and obscurity, that, if he had but fitting encouragement given him, might be a great blessing to the world. Many a pearl is lost in its shell. But there is a day coming when wisdom and goodness shall be in honour, and the righteous shall shine forth.

4. From what he had observed of the great good which one wise and virtuous man may do, he infers what a great deal of mischief one wicked man may do, and what a great deal of good he may be the hindrance of. "One sinner destroys much good." 1st. As to himself; A sinful condition is a wasteful condition. How many of the good gifts both of nature and providence doth one sinner destroy and make waste of! Good sense, good parts, good learning, a good disposition, a good estate, good meat, good drink, and abundance of God's good creatures, all made use of in the service of sin, and so destroyed and lost, and the end of giving them frustrated and perverted! He that destroys his own soul destroys much good. 2nd. As to others; what a great deal of mischief may one wicked man do in a town or country! One sinner, that makes it his business to debauch others, may defeat and frustrate the intentions of a great many good laws, and a great deal of good preaching, and draw many into his pernicious ways. One sinner may be the ruin of a town, as one Achan troubled the whole camp of Israel. The wise man that delivered the city had had his due respect and recompence for it, but that some one sinner hindered it, and invidiously diminished the service. And many a good project well laid for the public welfare has been destroyed by some one subtle adversary to it. The wisdom of some would have healed the nation, but through the wickedness of a few it would not be healed. See who are a kingdom's friends and enemies, if one saint doth much good, and "one sinner destroys much good."

CHAPTER X.

This chapter seems to be, like Solomon's proverbs, a collection of wise sayings and observations, rather than a part of his sermon; but the preacher studied to be sententious, and set in order many proverbs to be brought in in his preaching; yet the general scope of all the observations in this chapter is to recommend wisdom to us, and its precepts and rules, as of great use for the right ordering of our conversation, and to caution us against folly. I. He recommends wisdom to private persons that are in an inferior station. 1. It is our wisdom to preserve our reputation in managing our affairs dexterously, ver. 1—3; 2. To be submissive to our superiors, if at any time we have offended them, ver. 4; 3. To live quiet and peaceable lives, and not to meddle with those that are factious and seditious, and are endeavouring to disturb the government and the public repose; the folly and danger of which disloyal, turbulent practices, he shews, ver. 8—11; 4. To govern our tongues well, ver. 12—15; 5. To be diligent in our business, and provide well for our families, ver. 18, 19; 6. Not to speak ill of our rulers, no, not in secret, ver. 20. II. He recommends wisdom to rulers; let not them think that, because their subjects must be quiet under them, therefore they may do what they please; no, but, 1. Let them be careful whom they prefer to places of trust and power, ver. 5—7; 2. Let them manage themselves discreetly, be generous and not childish, temperate and not luxurious, ver. 16, 17. And happy nation when princes and people make conscience of their duty according to these rules.

DEAD flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour:
So doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom *and* honour.

2 A wise man's heart *is* at his right hand;
But a fool's heart at his left.

3 Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way,
His wisdom faileth *him*,
And he saith to every one *that* he *is* a fool.

In these verses Solomon shews,

First. What great need wise men have to take heed of being guilty of any instance of folly; for "a little folly" is a great blemish "to him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour," and is as hurtful to his good name, as dead flies are to a sweet perfume, not only spoiling the sweetness of it, but making it "to send forth a stinking savour." Note, 1. True wisdom is true honour, and will gain a man a reputation, which is like a box of precious ointment, pleasing, and very valuable. 2. The reputation that is hardly got, and by a great deal of wisdom, may be easily lost, and by a little folly; because envy fastens upon eminency, and makes the worst of the mistakes and miscarriages of those that are cried up for wisdom, and improves them to their disadvantage; so that the folly, which in another would not be taken notice of, in them is severely censured. Those that make a great profession of religion have need to walk very circumspectly, to abstain from all appearances of evil, and approaches towards it, because many eyes are upon them that watch for their halting; their character is soon sullied, and they have a great deal of reputation to lose.

Secondly. What a deal of advantage a wise man has above a fool in the management of business; ver. 2, "A wise man's heart is at his right hand," so that he goes about his business with dexterity, turns his hand readily to it, and goes through it with despatch; his counsel and courage are ready to him whenever he has occasion for them; "but a fool's heart is at his left hand," it is always to seek when he has any thing to do that is of importance, and therefore goes awkwardly about it, like a man that is left handed, and is soon at a loss, and at his wit's end.

Thirdly. How apt fools are at every turn to proclaim their own folly, and expose themselves. He that is either witless or graceless, either silly or wicked, if he be never so little from under the check, and left to himself, if he but "walk by the way," soon shews what he is, "his wisdom fails him," and by some indecent, ill carriage or other, "he saith to every one he meets that he is a fool," ver. 3, that is, he discovers it as plainly as if he had told them so. He cannot conceal it, and he is not ashamed of it. Sin is the reproach of sinners wherever they go.

4 If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee,
Leave not thy place;
For yielding pacifieth great offences.

5 There is an evil *which* I have seen under the sun,
As an error *which* proceedeth from the ruler:

6 Folly is set in great dignity,
And the rich sit in low place.

7 I have seen servants upon horses,
And princes walking as servants upon the earth.

8 He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it;
And whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

9 Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith;
And he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.

10 If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge,
Then must he put to more strength:
But wisdom *is* profitable to direct.

11 Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment;
And a babbler is no better

The scope of these verses is to keep subjects loyal and dutiful to the government. In Solomon's reign the people were very rich, and lived in prosperity, which perhaps made them proud and petulant; and when the taxes were high, though they had enough to pay them with, it is probable many carried it insolently towards the government, and threatened to rebel. To such Solomon here gives some necessary cautions.

First. Let not subjects carry on a quarrel with their prince upon any private personal disgust; ver. 4, "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee," if upon some misinformation given him, or some mismanagement of thine, he is displeased at thee, and threatens thee, yet "leave not thy place," forget not the duty of a subject, revolt not from thine allegiance, do not in a passion quit thy post in his service, and throw up thy commission, as despairing ever to regain his favour. No, wait a while, and thou wilt find he is not implacable, but that "yielding pacifies great offences." Solomon speaks for himself, and for every wise and good man, that is a master or magistrate, that he could easily forgive those upon their submission, whom yet upon their provocation he had been very angry with. It is safer and better to yield to an angry prince than to contend with him.

Secondly. Let not subjects commence a quarrel with their prince, though the public administration be not in every thing as they would have it. He grants "there is an evil often seen under the sun," and it is a king's-evil, an evil which the king only can cure, for "it is an error which proceedeth from the ruler," ver. 5. It is a mistake which rulers, consulting their personal affections more than the public interests, are too often guilty of, that men are not preferred according to their merit, but "folly is set in great dignity;" men of shattered brains, and broken fortunes, are put in places of power and trust, "while the rich" men, of good sense and good estates, whose interest would oblige them to be true to the public, and whose abundance would be likely to set them above temptations to bribery and extortion, yet "sit in low place," and can get no preferment, ver. 6. Either the ruler knows not how to value them, or the terms of preferment are such as they cannot in conscience comply with. It is ill with a people when vicious men are advanced, and men of worth are kept under hatches. This is illustrated, ver. 7, "I have seen servants upon horses," men not so much of mean extraction and education,—if that were all, it were the more excusable, nay, there is many "a wise servant" who, with good reason, "hath rule over a son that causeth shame,"—but of sordid, servile, mercenary dispositions; I have seen these riding in pomp and state, as princes, "while princes," men of noble birth and qualities, fit to rule a kingdom, have been forced to "walk as servants upon the earth," poor and despised, and little regarded. Thus God in his providence punisheth a wicked people; but, as far as it is the ruler's act and deed, it is certainly his error, and a great evil; a grievance to the subject, and very provoking. But it is "an error under the sun," which will certainly be rectified above the sun, and when it shall shine no more; for in heaven it is only wisdom and holiness that is set in great dignity. But if the prince be guilty of this error, yet let not the subjects leave their place, nor rise up against the government, nor form any project for the alteration of it; nor let the prince carry on the humour too far, nor set such servants, such beggars, on horseback, as will ride furiously over the ancient landmarks of the constitution, and threaten the subverting of it.

1. Let neither prince nor people violently attempt any changes, nor make a forcible entry upon a national settlement, for they will both find it of dangerous consequence; which he shews here by four similitudes, the scope of which is to give us a caution not to meddle to our own hurt. Let not princes invade the rights and liberties of their subjects; let not subjects mutiny and rebel against their princes; for, 1st. "He that digs a pit" for another, it is ten to one "falls into it" himself, and his violent dealing returns upon his own head. If princes become tyrants, or subjects become rebels, all histories will tell both what is like to be their fate, and that it is at their utmost peril, and it were better for both to be content within their own bounds. 2nd. "Whoso breaks a hedge," an old hedge, that has long been a landmark, let him expect that "a serpent," or adder, such as use to harbour in rotten hedges, "will bite him;" some viper or other will fasten upon his hand, *Acts* xxviii. 2. God by his ordinance, as by a hedge, hath inclosed the prerogatives and powers of princes, their persons are under his special protection; those therefore that form any treasonable designs against their peace, their crown and dignity, are but twisting halters for themselves. 3rd. "Whoso removeth stones," to pull down a wall, or building, doth but pluck them upon himself; he "shall be hurt therewith," and will wish he had let them alone. Those that go about to alter a well-modelled, well-settled government, under colour of redressing some grievances, and correcting some amisses in it, will quickly perceive not only that it is easier to find fault than mend, to demolish that which is good than to build up that which is better, but that they thrust their own fingers into the fire, and pull an old house about their ears. 4th. "He that cleaveth wood," especially if, as it follows, he hath sorry tools, ver. 10, he "shall be endangered thereby," the chips will fly in his face, or his own axe-head. If we meet with knotty pieces of timber, men of perverse and ungovernable spirits, and we think to master them by force and violence, and hew them to pieces, they may not only prove too hard for us, but the attempt may turn to our own damage.

2. Rather let both prince and people carry it to each other with prudence, and mildness, and good temper. "Wisdom is profitable to direct" the ruler how to manage a people that are inclined to be turbulent, so as neither, on the one hand, by a supine negligence, to embolden and encourage them, nor on the other hand, by rigour and severity, to exasperate and provoke them, to any seditious practices. It is likewise profitable to direct the subjects how to carry themselves towards a prince that is inclined to bear hard upon them, so as not to alienate his affections from them, but to win upon him by humble remonstrances, (not insolent demands, such as the people made upon Rehoboam,) by patient submissions, and peaceable expedients. The same rule is to be observed in all relations, for the preserving of the comfort of them. Let wisdom direct to gentle methods, and forbear violent ones. Thus one wise, and both happy. 1st. Wisdom will teach us to whet the tool we are to make use of, rather than by leaving it blunt oblige ourselves to put to so much the more strength, ver. 10. We might save ourselves a great deal of labour, and prevent a great deal of danger, if we did whet before we cut, that is, consider and premeditate what is fit to be said and done in every difficult case, that we may accommodate ourselves to it, and may do our work smoothly and easily, both to others and to ourselves. Wisdom will direct how to sharpen and put an edge upon both ourselves and those we employ; not to work deceitfully, *Ps.* lii. 2, but to work clean and cleverly. The mower loses no time when he is whetting his scythe. 2nd. Wisdom will teach us to enchant the serpent we are to contend with, rather than think to out-hiss it, ver. 11. The serpent will bite, if he be not by singing and music charmed and enchanted, against which therefore he stops his ears, *Ps.* lviii. 4, 5; "and a babbler is no better" to all those that enter the lists with him, who therefore must not think by dint of words to out-talk him, but by prudent management to enchant him. 'He that is lord of the tongue,' (so the phrase is,) that is, a ruler that has liberty of speech, and may say what he will, it is as dangerous dealing with him as with a serpent uncharmed; but if you use the enchantment of a mild and humble submission you may be safe and out of danger. Herein wisdom, the meekness of wisdom, is profitable to direct. "By long forbearing is a prince persuaded," *Pr.* xxv. 15. Jacob enchanted Esau with a present, and Abigail, David. To those that may say any thing it is wisdom to say nothing that is provoking.

12 The words of a wise man's mouth *are* gracious;
But the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.
13 The beginning of the words of his mouth *is* foolishness:
And the end of his talk *is* mischievous madness.
14 A fool also is full of words:
A man cannot tell what shall be;
And what shall be after him, who can tell him?
15 The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them,
Because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

Solomon having shewed the benefit of wisdom, and of what great advantage it is to us in the conduct of our affairs, here shews the mischief of folly, and how it exposeth men, which perhaps comes in as a reflection upon those rulers who set folly in great dignity.

First. Fools talk a great deal to no purpose, and they shew their folly as much by the multitude, impertinence, and mischievousness of their words as by any thing; whereas "the words of a wise man's mouth are gracious," are grace, manifest grace in his heart, and minister grace to the hearers, are good, and such as become him, and do good to all about him. "The lips of a fool" not only expose him to reproach, and make him ridiculous, but "will swallow up himself," and bring him to ruin, by provoking the government to take cognizance of his seditious talk, and call him to an account for it. Adonijah foolishly spoke against his own life, 1 *Kin.* ii. 23. Many a man has been sunk by having his own tongue fall upon him, *Ps.* lxiv. 8. See what a fool's talk is.

1. It takes rise from his own weakness and wickedness. "The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness," the foolishness bound up in his heart, that is the corrupt spring from which all these polluted streams flow; the evil treasure out of which evil things are brought. As soon as he begins to speak, you may perceive his folly; at the very first he talks idly, and passionately, and like himself.

2. It riseth up to fury, and tends to the hurt and injury of others. "The end of his talk," the end it comes to, "is madness;" he will presently talk himself into an indecent heat, and break out into the wild extravagances of a distracted man. The end it aims at is mischief. As at first he appeared to have little government of himself, so at last it appears he has a great deal of malice to his neighbours. That root of bitterness bears gall and wormwood. Note, It is not strange if those that begin foolishly end madly; for an ungoverned tongue, the more liberty is allowed it, the more violent it grows.

3. It is all the same over and over; ver. 14, "A fool also is full of words," a passionate fool especially, that runs on endlessly, and never knows when to take up; he will have the last word, though it be but the same with that which was the first. What is wanting in the weight and strength of his words he endeavours in vain to make up in the number of them; and they must be repeated, because otherwise there is nothing in them to make them regarded. Note, Many that are empty of sense are full of words, and the least solid are the most noisy. The following words may be taken either, 1st. As checking him for his vainglorious bragging in the multitude of his words, what he will do and what he will have, not considering that which everybody knows, that "a man cannot tell what shall be" in his own time, while he lives, *Pr.* xxvii. 1, much less can any one tell what shall be after him, when he is dead and gone. Would we duly consider our own ignorance of, and uncertainty about, future events, that would cut off a great many of the idle words we foolishly multiply. Or, 2nd. As mocking him for his tautologies. He is full of words; for if he do but speak the most trite and common thing, "A man cannot tell what shall be," because he loves to hear himself talk, he will say it again, "What shall be after him, who can tell him?" like Battus in Ovid,

——— *Sub illis,*
Montibus (inquit) erant, et erant sub montibus illis,—
'Under those mountains were they,
They were under those mountains, I say.'

Whence vain repetitions are called battologies, *Mat.* vi. 7.

Secondly. Fools toil a great deal to no purpose; ver. 15, "The labour of the foolish" to accomplish their designs, "wearieth every one of them;" that is, 1. They weary themselves in that labour which is very foolish and absurd. All their labour is for the world, and the body, and the meat that perisheth; and in this labour they spend their strength, and exhaust their spirits, and "weary themselves for very vanity," *Hab.* ii. 13; *Isa.* lv. 2. They choose that service which is perfect drudgery rather than that which is perfect liberty. 2. That labour which is necessary, and would be profitable, and might be gone through with ease, yet wearies them, because they go about it awkwardly and foolishly, and so make their business a toil to them, which, if they applied themselves to it prudently, would be a pleasure to them. Many complain of the labours of religion as grievous, which they would have no reason to complain of, if the exercises of Christian piety were always under the direction of Christian prudence. The foolish tire themselves in endless pursuits, and never bring any thing to pass, "because they know not how to go to the city;" that is, because they have not capacity to apprehend the plainest thing, such as the entrance into a great city is, where one would think it were impossible for a man to miss his road. Men's imprudent management of their business robs them both of the comfort and of the benefit of it. But it is the excellency of the way to the heavenly city that it is a highway, in which the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err, *Isa.* xxxv. 8; yet sinful folly makes men miss that way.

16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king *is* a child,
And thy princes eat in the morning! [nobles,
17 Blessed *art* thou, O land, when thy king *is* the son of
And thy princes eat in due season,
For strength, and not for drunkenness!
18 By much slothfulness the building decayeth;
And through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.
19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry:
But money answereth all *things*.

20 Curse not the king, no not in thy thought;
And curse not the rich in thy bedchamber;
For a bird of the air shall carry the voice,
And that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

Solomon here observes,

First. How much the happiness of a land depends upon the character of its rulers. It is well or ill with the people according as the princes are good or bad.

1. The people cannot be happy when their princes are childish and voluptuous; ver. 16, "Woe unto thee, O land," even the land of Canaan itself, though otherwise the glory of all lands, "when thy king is a child," not so much in age (Solomon himself was young when his kingdom was happy in him) as in understanding. When the prince is weak and foolish as a child, fickle and fond of changes, fretful and humoursome, easily imposed upon, and hardly brought to business, it is ill with the people. The body staggers if the head be giddy. Perhaps Solomon wrote this with a foresight of his son Rehoboam's ill conduct, 2 *Chr.* xiii. 7. He was a child all the days of his life, and his family and kingdom fared the worse for it. Nor is it much better with a people when their "princes eat in the morning;" that is, make a god of their belly, and make themselves slaves to their appetites. If the king himself be a child, yet if the princes and privy counsellors are wise and faithful, and apply themselves to business, the land may do the better; but if they addict themselves to their pleasures, and prefer the gratifications of the flesh before the despatch of the public business, which they disfit themselves for by eating and drinking in a morning,—when judges are epicures, and do not eat to live, but live to eat,—what good can a nation expect?

2. The people cannot but be happy when their rulers are generous and active, sober and temperate, and men of business, ver. 17. The land is then blessed, 1st. When the sovereign is governed by principles of honour, "when the king is the son of nobles;" that is, acted and animated by a noble spirit, which scorns to do a base thing, and unbecoming so high a character; which is solicitous for the public welfare, and prefers that before any private interests. Wisdom, and virtue, and the fear of God, beneficence, and a readiness to do good to all mankind, these ennoble the royal blood. 2nd. When the subordinate magistrates are more in care to discharge their trusts than to gratify their appetites; when they "eat in due season," that is, when they have despatched their business and got them a stomach. God gives the creatures their meat in due season, *Ps.* cxlv. 15; let not us take ours unseasonably, lest we lose the comfort of seeing God give it us. When they eat "for strength," that their bodies may be fitted to serve their souls in the service of God and their country, "and not for drunkenness," to make themselves unfit to do any thing either for God or man; and particularly to sit in judgment, for they will err through wine, *Isa.* xxviii. 7, will drink and forget the law, *Pr.* xxxi. 5. It is well with a people when their princes are examples of temperance, when those that have most to spend upon themselves yet know how to deny themselves.

Secondly. Of what ill consequence slothfulness is both to private and public affairs; ver. 18, "By much slothfulness, and idleness of the hands," the neglect of business, and the love of ease and pleasure, "the building decays," drops through first, and by degrees drops down. If it be not kept well covered, and care be not taken to repair the breaches, as any happen, it will rain in, and the timber will rot, and the house will become unfit to dwell in. It is so with the family and the affairs of it. If men cannot find in their hearts to take pains in their callings, to tend their shops, and look after their own business, they will soon run in debt, and go behindhand, and instead of making what they have more, for their children, will make it less. It is so with the public, if the king be a child, and will take no care. If the princes eat in the morning, and will take no pains, the affairs of the nation suffer loss, and its interests are prejudiced; its honour sullied, its power weakened, its borders encroached upon, the course of justice obstructed, the treasure exhausted, and all its foundations out of course; and all this through the slothfulness and self-seeking of those that should be the "repairers of its breaches, and the restorers of paths to dwell in," *Isa.* lviii. 12.

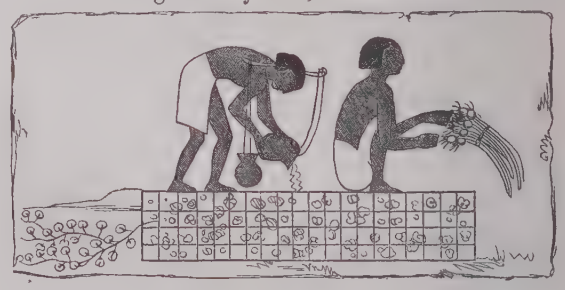
Thirdly. How industrious generally all are, both princes and people, to get money, because that serves for all purposes, ver. 19. He seems to prefer money before mirth; "A feast is made for laughter," not merely for eating, but chiefly for pleasant conversation and the society of friends; not the laughter of the fool, which is madness, but that of wise men, by which they fit themselves for business and severe studies. Spiritual feasts are made for spiritual laughter, holy joy in God. Wine maketh merry, makes glad the life; but money is the measure of all things, and answers all things. *Pecuniæ obediunt omnia*,—'Money commands all things.' Though wine make merry, it will not be a house for us, nor a bed, nor clothing, nor provisions, and portions for children; but money, if men have enough of it, will be all these. The feast cannot be made without money, and though men have wine, they are not much disposed to be merry, unless they have money for the necessary supports of life. Money of itself answers nothing, it will neither feed nor clothe; but as it is the instrument of commerce, it answers all the occasions of this present life; what is to be had may be had for money, but it answers nothing to the soul; it will not procure the pardon of sin, the favour of God, the peace of conscience. The soul, as it is not redeemed, so it is not maintained, with corruptible things, as silver and gold. Some refer this to rulers. It is ill with the people when they give up themselves to luxury and riot, feasting and making merry, not only because their business is neglected, but because money must be had to answer all these things, and, in order to that, the people squeezed by heavy taxes.

Fourthly. How cautious subjects have need to be, that they harbour not any disloyal purposes in their minds, nor keep up any factious cabals or consultations against the government; because it is ten to one they are discovered and brought to light, ver. 20. Though rulers should be guilty of some errors, yet be not upon all occasions arraigning their administration, and running them down, but make the best of them. Here, 1. The command teacheth us our duty; "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought;" do not wish ill to the government in thy mind. All sin begins there, and therefore the first risings of it must be curbed and suppressed; and particularly that of treason and sedition. "Curse not the rich," the princes and governors, "in thy bedchamber," in a conclave or club of persons disaffected to the government; associate not with such, "come not into their secret," join not with them in speaking ill of the government, or plotting ill against it. 2. The reason consults our safety. Though the design be carried on never so closely, "a bird of the air shall carry the voice" to the king, who has more spies about than thou art aware of, "and that which has wings shall tell the matter," to thy confusion and ruin. God sees what men do, and hears what they say in secret, and when he pleaseth he can bring it to light by strange and unsuspected ways. "Wouldst thou then not be hurt" by the powers that be, nor be afraid of them, "do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid," *Rom.* xiii. 3, 4.

CHAPTER XI.

In this chapter we have, I. A pressing exhortation to works of charity and bounty to the poor, as the best cure of the vanity which our worldly riches are subject to, and the only way of making them turn to a substantial good account, ver. 1—6. II. A serious admonition to prepare for death and judgment, and to begin betimes, even in the days of our youth to do so, ver. 7—10.

CAST thy bread upon the waters:
For thou shalt find it after many days.
2 Give a portion to seven, and also to eight;
For thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.
3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty *themselves* upon the earth:
And if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north,
In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.
4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow;
And he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.
5 As thou knowest not what *is* the way of the spirit,
Nor how the bones *do grow* in the womb of her that is with child: [all.
Even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh
6 In the morning sow thy seed,



GARDENERS PLANTING AND SOWING.

And in the evening withhold not thine hand:
For thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this
Or whether they both *shall be* alike good. [or that,

Solomon had often in this book pressed it upon rich people to take the comfort of their riches themselves; here he presseth it upon them to do good to others with them, and to abound in liberality to the poor, which will another day abound to our account. Observe,

First. How the duty itself is recommended to us, ver. 1.

1. "Cast thy bread upon the waters." 'Thy bread-corn upon the low places,' so some understand it, alluding to the husbandman, who goes forth bearing precious seed, sparing bread-corn from his family for his seedness, knowing that without that he can have no harvest another year. Thus the charitable man takes from his bread-corn for seed-corn, abridgeth himself to supply the poor, that he may sow beside all waters, *Isa.* xxxii. 20, because as he sows he must reap, *Gal.* vi. 7. We read of "the harvest of the river," *Isa.* xxiii. 3. Waters in Scripture are put for multitudes, *Rev.* xvii. 5; and there are multitudes of poor,—we do not want objects of charity; and for mourners,—the poor are men of sorrows. Thou must give bread, the necessary supports of life; not only give good words, but good things, *Isa.* lviii. 7. It must be thy bread, that which is honestly got; it is no charity but injury to give that which is none of our own to give. First do justly, and then love mercy. Thy bread which thou didst design for thyself, let the poor have a share with thee, as they had with Job, *ch.* xxxi. 17. Give freely to the poor, though it may seem thrown away and lost, as that which is cast upon the waters. Send it a voyage, send it a venture, as merchants that trade by sea. Trust it upon the waters, it shall not sink.

2. "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight;" that is, be free and liberal in works of charity. 1st. Give much, if thou hast much to give; not a pittance, but a portion; not a bit or two, but a mess, a meal; give a large dole, not a sneaking one; give good measure, *Lu.* vi. 38. Be generous in giving, as they were when on festival days they sent portions to them for whom nothing was prepared, *Neh.* viii. 10, worthy portions. 2nd. Give to many, "to seven, and also to eight." If thou meet with seven objects of charity, give to them all, and then if thou meet not only with an eighth, give to that, but with eight more, give to them all too. Excuse not thyself with the good thou hast done, from the good thou hast farther to do, but hold on and mend. In hard times, when the number of the poor increaseth, let thy charity be proportionably enlarged. God is rich in mercy to all; to us though unworthy, he gives liberally, and upbraids not with former gifts, and we must be merciful as our heavenly Father is.

Secondly. The reasons with which it is pressed upon us. Consider,

1. Our reward for well-doing is very certain. Though thou cast it upon the waters, and it seem lost, thou thinkest thou hast given thy good word with it, and are never like to hear of it again, yet "thou shalt find it after many days," as the husbandman finds his seed again in a plentiful harvest, and the merchant his venture in a rich return. It is not lost, but well laid out, and well laid up; it brings in full interest in the present gifts of God's providence, and graces and comforts of his Spirit; and the principal is sure, laid up in heaven, for it is lent to the Lord. Seneca, a heathen, could say, *Nihil magis possidere me credam, quam bene donata*,—'I possess nothing so completely as that which I have given away.' *Hoc habeo quodcunque dedi; hæ sunt divitiæ certæ in quacunque sortis humanæ levitate*,—'Whatever I have imparted I still possess; those riches remain with me through all the vicissitudes of life.' "Thou shalt find it," perhaps not quickly, but "after many days;" the return may be slow, but it is sure,

and will be so much the more plentiful. Wheat, the most valuable grain, lies longest in the ground. Long voyages make best returns.

2. Our opportunity for well-doing is very uncertain. "Thou knowest not what evil may be upon the earth," which may deprive thee of thine estate, and put thee out of a capacity to do good, and therefore, while thou hast wherewithal, be liberal with it; improve the present season, as the husbandman in sowing his ground before the frost comes. We have reason to expect evil upon the earth, for we are born to trouble; what the evil may be we know not, but, that we may be ready for it, whatever it is, it is our wisdom in the day of prosperity to be in good, to be doing good. Many make use of this as an argument against giving to the poor, because they know not what hard times may come, when they may want themselves; whereas we should therefore the rather be charitable, that when evil days come, we may have the comfort of having done good while we were able; we would then hope to find mercy both with God and man, and therefore should now shew mercy. If by charity we trust God with what we have, we put it into good hands against bad times.

Thirdly. How he obviates the objections which might be made against this duty, and the excuses of the uncharitable.

1. Some will say what they have is their own, and they have it for their own use, and why then should they cast it thus upon the waters? Why should I take my bread, and my flesh, and give it to I know not who, as Nabal pleaded, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 11. Look up, man, and consider how soon thou wouldst be starved in a barren ground, "if the clouds" over thy head should plead thus, that they have their waters for themselves; but thou seest, when they are "full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth," to make it fruitful, till they are wearied and spent with watering it, *Job* xxxvii. 11. Are the heavens thus bountiful to the poor earth, that is so far below them, and wilt thou grudge thy bounty to thy poor brother, that is bone of thy bone? Or thus: some will say, though they give but little to the poor, yet they thank God they have as charitable a heart as any. Nay, saith Solomon, "If the clouds be full of rain, they will empty themselves." If there be charity in the heart, it will shew itself, *Jas.* ii. 15, 16. He that draws out his soul to the hungry, will reach forth his hand to them, as he has ability.

2. Some will say their sphere of usefulness is low and narrow, they cannot do the good that they see others can who are in more public stations, and therefore they will sit still and do nothing; Nay, saith he, "In the place where the tree falls," or happens to be, "there it shall be," for the benefit of those to whom it belongs; that is, every man must labour to be a blessing to that place, whatever it is, where the providence of God casts him. Wherever we are, we may find good work to do, if we have but hearts to do it. Or thus: some will say, there are many that present themselves as objects of charity who are unworthy, and I do not know whom it is fit to give to. Trouble not thyself about that, saith Solomon, give as discreetly as thou canst, and then be satisfied that, though the person should prove undeserving of thy charity, yet if thou give it with an honest heart, thou shalt not lose thy reward. Which way soever the charity is directed, north or south, thine shall be the benefit of it. This is commonly applied to death; therefore let us do good, and, as good trees, bring forth the fruits of righteousness, because death will shortly come and cut us down, and we shall then be determined to an unchangeable state of happiness or misery, according to what was done in the body. As the tree falls at death, so it is like to lie to all eternity.

3. Some will object the many discouragements they have met with in their charity. They have been reproached for it as proud and pharisaical; they have but little to give, and they shall be despised if they do not give as others do; they know not but their children may come to want it, and they had better lay it up for them; they have taxes to pay, and purchases to make; they know not what use will be made of their charity, nor what construction will be put upon it. These, and a hundred such objections, he answers in one word, ver. 4, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow," which signifies doing good, "and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap," which signifies getting good. If we stand thus magnifying every little difficulty, and making the worst of it, starting objections, and fancying hardship and danger where there is none, we shall never go on, much less go through with our work, nor make any thing of it. If the husbandman should decline or leave off sowing for the sake of every flying cloud, and reaping for the sake of every blast of wind, he would make but an ill account of his husbandry at the year's end. The duties of religion are as necessary as sowing and reaping, and will turn as much to our own advantage. The discouragements we meet with in these duties are but as winds and clouds, which will do us no harm, and which those that put on a little courage and resolution will despise and easily break through. Note, Those that will be deterred and driven off by small and seeming difficulties from great and real duties, will never bring any thing to pass in religion; for there will always arise some wind, some cloud or other, at least in our own imagination, to discourage us. Winds and clouds are in God's hand, are designed to try us, and our Christianity obligeth us to endure hardness.

4. Some will say they do not see in which way what they expend in charity should ever be made up to them, they do not find themselves ever the richer; why should they depend upon the general promise of a blessing on the charitable, unless they saw which way to expect the operation of it? To this he answers, "Thou knowest not the work of God," nor is it fit thou shouldst. Thou mayest be sure he will make good his word of promise, though he doth not tell thee how or which way, and though he work in a way by himself, according to the counsels of his unsearchable wisdom. He will work and none shall hinder; but then, he will work and none shall direct or prescribe to him. The blessing shall work insensibly, but irresistibly. God's work shall certainly agree with his word, whether we see it or no. Our ignorance of the work of God he shews in two instances. 1st. We know "not what is the way of the Spirit." Of the wind, so some; we know not whence it comes, or whither it goes, nor when it will turn; yet the seamen lie ready waiting for it till it doth chop about in favour of them; so we must do our duty in expectation of the time appointed for the blessing. Or, of the human soul. We know that God made us, and gave us these souls, but how they entered into these bodies, are united to them, animate them, and operate upon them, we know not. The soul is a mystery to itself; no marvel then that the work of God is so to us. 2nd. We know not "how the bones are fashioned in the womb of her that is with child." We cannot describe the manner either of the formation of the body, or its information with a soul; both we know are the work of God, and we acquiesce in his work, but cannot in either trace the process of the operation. We doubt not of the birth of the child that is conceived, though we know not how it is formed; nor need we doubt of the performance of the promise, though we perceive not how things work towards it. And we may well trust God to provide for us that which is convenient, without our anxious, disquieting cares, and therein to recompense us for our charity, since it was without any knowledge or forecast of ours that our bodies were curiously wrought in secret, and our souls found the way into them; and so the argument is the same, and urged to the same intent with that of our Saviour, *Mat.* vi. 25. The life, the living soul that God has given us, is more than meat; the body that God has made us is more than raiment. Let him, therefore, that has done the greater for us be cheerfully depended upon to do the lesser.

5. Some may say they have been charitable, have given a great deal to the poor, and never yet saw any return for it; many days are past, and they have not found it again. To which he answers, ver. 6, Yet go on, proceed and persevere in well-doing; let slip no opportunity; "in the morning sow thy seed" upon the objects of charity that offer themselves early, and "in the evening do not withhold thy hand," under pretence that thou art weary. As thou hast opportunity be doing good, some way or other, all the day long, as the husbandman follows his seedness from morning till night. "In the morning" of youth lay out thyself to do good; give out of the little thou hast to begin the world with; "and in the evening" of old age yield not to the common temptation old people are in to be penurious, even then "withhold not thy hand," and think not to excuse thyself from charitable works, by purposing to make a charitable will, but do good to the last, "for thou knowest not which" work of charity and piety "shall prosper," both as to others, and as to thyself, "this or that," but hast reason to hope that "both shall be alike good." "Be not weary of well-doing, for in due season," in God's time, and that is the best time, "you shall reap," *Gal.* vi. 9. This is applicable to spiritual charity, our pious endeavours for the good of the souls of others; let us continue them, for though we have long laboured in vain, we may at length see the success of them. Let ministers on the days of their seedness sow both morning and evening, for who can tell which shall prosper?

7 Truly the light *is* sweet,
And a pleasant *thing it is* for the eyes to behold the sun:
8 But if a man live many years, *and* rejoice in them all;
Yet let him remember the days of darkness;
For they shall be many.
All that cometh *is* vanity.
9 Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth;
And let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth,
And walk in the ways of thine heart,
And in the sight of thine eyes:
But know thou, that for all these *things*
God will bring thee into judgment.
10 Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart,
And put away evil from thy flesh:
For childhood and youth *are* vanity.

Here is an admonition, both to old people and to young people, to think of dying, and get ready for it. Having by many excellent precepts taught us how to live well, the preacher comes now, towards the close of his discourse, to teach us how to die well, and to put us in mind of our latter end.

First. He applies himself to the aged, writes to them as fathers, to awaken them to think of death, ver. 7, 8. Here is,

1. A rational concession of the sweetness of life, which old people find by experience; "Truly the light is sweet." The light of the sun is so; it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold it. Light was the first thing made in the formation of the great world, as the eye is one of the first in the formation of the body, the little world. It is pleasant to see the light; the heathen were so charmed with the pleasure of it, that they worshipped the sun. It is pleasant by it to see other things, the many agreeable prospects this world gives us. The light of life is so. Light is put for life, *Job* iii. 20, 23. It cannot be denied but that life is sweet. It is sweet to bad men, because they have their portion in this life; it is sweet to good men, because they have this life as the time of their preparation for a better life. It is sweet to all men; nature saith it is so, and there is no disputing against it; nor can death be desired for its own sake, but dreaded, unless as a period to present evils, or a passage to future good. Life is sweet, and therefore we have need to double a guard upon ourselves, lest we love it too well.

2. A caution to think of death even in the midst of life, and of life, when it is most sweet, and we are most apt to forget death. "If a man live many years, yet let him remember the days of darkness" are coming. Here is, 1st. A summer's day supposed to be enjoyed; that life may continue long, even many years, and that by the goodness of God it may be made comfortable, and a man may rejoice in them all. There are those that live many years in this world, escape many dangers, receive many mercies, and therefore are secure that they shall want no good, and that no evil shall befall them; that the pitcher which has come so often from the well safe and sound shall never come home broken. But who are they that "live many years, and rejoice in them all?" Alas, none! we have but hours of joy for months of sorrow. However, some rejoice in their years, their many years, more than others; if these two things meet, a prosperous state, and a cheerful spirit, these two indeed may do much towards enabling a man to rejoice in them all, and yet the most prosperous state has its alloys, and the most cheerful spirit has its damps; jovial sinners have their melancholy qualms, and cheerful saints have their gracious sorrows, so that it is but a supposition, not a case in fact, that a man should live many years, and rejoice in them all. But, 2nd. Here is a winter's night proposed to be expected after this summer's day; yet let this hearty old man "remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many." Note, *First.* There are days of darkness coming,—the days of our lying in the grave; there the body will lie in the dark; there the eye sees not, the sun shines not, The darkness of death is opposed to the light of life, the grave is a land of darkness, *Job* x. 21. *Secondly.* Those days of darkness will be many; the days of our lying underground will be more than the days of our living above ground. They are many, but they are not infinite; as many as they are, they will be numbered and finished when the heavens be no more, *Job* xiv. 12. As the longest day will have its night, so the longest night will have its morning. *Thirdly.* It is good for us often to remember those days of darkness, that we may not be lifted up with pride, nor lulled asleep in carnal security, nor ever transported into indecencies by vain mirth. *Fourthly.* Notwithstanding the long continuance of life, and the many comforts of it, yet we must "remember the days of darkness," because those will certainly come however, and they will come with much the less terror if we have thought of them before.

Secondly. He applies himself to the young, and writes to them as children, to awaken them to think of death, ver. 9, 10; where we have,

1. An ironical concession to the vanities and pleasures of youth; "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth." Some make this to be the counsel which the atheist and epicure give to the young man, the poisonous suggestions against which Solomon, in the close of the verse, prescribes a powerful antidote. But it is more emphatical, if we take it as it is commonly understood, by way of

irony, like that of Elijah to the priests of Baal, "Cry aloud, for he is a god!" or of Micaiah to Ahab, "Go to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper;" or of Christ to his disciples, "Sleep on now." "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth," live a merry life, follow thy sports, and take thy pleasures, "let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth;" cheer thee with its fancies and foolish hopes, entertain thyself with thy pleasing dreams; aye, do, "walk in the ways of thy heart," do whatever thou hast a mind to do, and stick at nothing that may gratify the sensual appetite; *quicquid libet licet*,—'make thy will thy law;' do thou "walk in the ways of thy heart," and let "thine heart walk after thine eyes," a rambling heart after a roving eye; what is pleasing in thine own eyes do it, whether it be pleasing in the eyes of God or no. Solomon speaks thus ironically to the young man, to intimate, 1st. That this is what he would do, and which he would fain have leave to do, in which he placeth his happiness, and on which he sets his heart. 2nd. That he wisheth all about him would give him this counsel, would prophesy to him such smooth things as these, and cannot brook any advice to the contrary, but reckons those his enemies that bid him be sober and serious. 3rd. To expose his folly, and the great absurdity of a voluptuous, vicious course of life. The very description of it, if men would see things entirely, and judge of them impartially, is enough to shew how contrary to reason those act that live such a life. The very opening of the cause is enough to determine it without any argument. 4th. To shew that, if men give themselves to such a course of life as this, it is just with God to give them up to it, to abandon them to their own hearts' lusts, that they may walk in their own counsels, *Hos.* iv. 17.

2. A powerful check given to these vanities and pleasures; "But know thou, that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment," and duly consider that, and then live such a luxurious life if thou canst, if thou darest. This is a *colasterion*, or 'corrective,' to the foregoing concession, and plucks in the reins he had laid in the neck of the young man's lusts. Know then for a certainty, that if thou dost take such a liberty as this, it will be thy everlasting ruin; thou hast to do with a God who will not let it go unpunished. Note, 1st. There is a judgment to come. 2nd. We must every one of us be brought into judgment, however we may now put far from us that evil day. 3rd. We shall be reckoned with for all our carnal mirth, and sensual pleasures, in that day. 4th. It is good for all, but especially for young people, to know and consider this, that they may not, by the indulgence of their youthful lusts, "treasure up unto themselves wrath against that day of wrath,"—the wrath of the Lamb.

3. A word of caution and exhortation inferred from all this, ver. 10. Let young people look to themselves, and manage well both their souls and their bodies, their heart and their flesh. 1st. Let them take care that their minds be not lifted up with pride, or disturbed with anger, or any sinful passion. "Remove sorrow," or anger, "from thy heart;" the word signifies, any disorder, or perturbation of the mind. Young people are apt to be impatient of check and control, to vex and fret at any thing that is humbling and mortifying to them, and their proud hearts rise against every thing that crosseth and contradicteth them. They are so set upon that which is pleasing to sense that they cannot bear anything that is displeasing, but it goes with sorrow to their heart. Their pride often disquiets them, and makes them uneasy; put that away, and the love of the world, and lay thine expectations low from the creature, and then disappointments will not be occasions of sorrow and anger to thee. Some by sorrow here understand that carnal mirth described ver. 9, the end of which will be bitterness and sorrow. Let them keep at a distance from every thing which will be sorrow in the reflection. 2nd. Let them take care that their bodies be not defiled by intemperance, uncleanness, or any fleshly lusts. "Put away evil from the flesh," and let not the members of thy body be instruments of unrighteousness. The evil of sin will be the evil of punishment; and that which thou art fond of as good for the flesh, because it gratifies the appetites of it, will prove evil and hurtful to it; and therefore put it far from thee, the farther the better.

Thirdly. The preacher, to enforce his admonition both to old and young, urgeth as an effectual argument that which is the great argument of his discourse, the vanity of all present things, their uncertainty and insufficiency.

1. He minds old people of this; ver. 8, "All that cometh is vanity," yea, though a man live many years, and rejoice in them. All that is come already, and all that is yet to come, how much soever men promise themselves from the concluding scenes, it is all vanity. What will be, will do more to make men happy than what has been. All that come into the world are vanity; they are altogether so at their best estate.

2. He minds young people of this; "Childhood and youth are vanity." The dispositions and actions of childhood and youth have in them a great deal of impertinence and iniquity, sinful vanity, which young people have need to watch against and get cured. The pleasures and advantages of childhood and youth have in them no certainty, satisfaction, or continuance; they are passing away; these flowers will soon wither, and these blossoms fall; let them therefore knit them into good fruit, which will continue, and abound to a good account.

CHAPTER XII.

The wise and patient preacher is here closing his sermon, and he closes it, not only like a good orator, but like a good preacher, with that which was likely to make the best impressions, and which he wished might be powerful and lasting upon his hearers. Here is, I. An exhortation to young people to begin betimes to be religious, and not to put it off to old age, ver. 1; enforced with arguments taken from the calamities of old age, ver. 1—5; and the great change that death will make upon us, ver. 6, 7. II. A repetition of the great truth he had undertaken to prove in this discourse, the vanity of the world, ver. 8. III. A confirmation and recommendation of what he had written in this and his other books, as worthy to be duly weighed and considered, ver. 9—12. IV. The whole matter summed up and concluded, with a charge to all to be truly religious in consideration of the judgment to come, ver. 13, 14.

REMEMBER now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,
While the evil days come not,
Nor the years draw nigh,
When thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;
2 While the sun, or the light,
Or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened,
Nor the clouds return after the rain:
3 In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble,
And the strong men shall bow themselves,
And the grinders cease because they are few,
And those that look out of the windows be darkened.
4 And the doors shall be shut in the streets,
When the sound of the grinding is low,
And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird,
And all the daughters of musick shall be brought low;
5 Also *when* they shall be afraid of *that which is* high,
And fears *shall be* in the way,
And the almond tree shall flourish,
And the grasshopper shall be a burden,
And desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home,
And the mourners go about the streets:

MOURNERS.

6 Or ever the silver cord be loosed,
Or the golden bowl be broken,
Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain,
Or the wheel broken at the cistern.
7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was:
And the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

Here is, First. A call to young people to think of God, and mind their duty to him when they are young; "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." This is, 1. The royal preacher's application of his sermon concerning the vanity of the world, and every thing in it. You that are young flatter yourselves with expectations of great things from it, but believe those that have tried, it yields no solid satisfaction to a soul: therefore, that you may not be deceived by this vanity, nor too much disturbed by it, remember your Creator, and so guard yourselves against the mischiefs that arise from the vanity of the creature. 2. It is the royal physician's antidote against the particular diseases of youth, the love of mirth, and the indulgence of sensual pleasures, the vanity which childhood and youth is subject to; to prevent and cure this, "Remember thy Creator." Here is, 1st. A great duty pressed upon us, to remember God as our Creator. Not only remember that God is our Creator, that he made us, and not we ourselves, and is therefore our rightful Lord and owner, but we must engage ourselves to him with these considerations which his being our Creator lays us under, and pay him the honour and duty which we owe him as our Creator. "Remember thy Creators," the word is plural, as it is *Job* xxxv. 8, "Where is God my Makers?" for God said, "Let us make man," us, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. 2nd. The proper season for this duty. "In the days of thy youth," the days of thy choice, so some; thy choice days, thy choosing days. Begin in the beginning of thy days to remember him from whom thou hadst thy being, and go on according to that good beginning; call him to mind when thou art young, and keep him in mind throughout all the days of thy youth, and never forget him. Guard thus against the temptations of youth, and thus improve the advantages of it.

Secondly. A reason to enforce this command; "While the evil days come not, and the years of which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." Do it quickly; 1. Before sickness and death comes; Do it while thou livest; for it will be too late to do it when death has removed thee from this state of trial and probation to that of recompence and retribution. The days of sickness and death are the days of evil, terrible to nature; evil days indeed to those that have forgotten their Creator. These evil days will come sooner or later; as yet they come not, for God is long-suffering to usward, and gives us space to repent. The continuing of life is but the deferring of death, and while life is continued and death deferred, it concerns us to prepare and get the property of death altered, that we may die comfortably. 2. Before old age comes, which, if death prevent not, will come; and they will be years of which we shall say, we have no pleasure in them, when we shall not relish the delights of sense, as Barzillai, 2 *Sam.* xix. 35. When we shall be loaded with bodily infirmities, old and blind, or old and lame; when we shall be taken off from our usefulness, and our strength shall be labour and sorrow; when we shall either have parted with our relations, and all our old friends, or be afflicted in them, and see them weary of us; when we shall feel ourselves die by inches; these years draw nigh when all that comes will be vanity, the remaining months all months of vanity. And there will be no pleasure but in the reflection of a good life on earth, and the expectation of a better life in heaven. These two arguments he enlargeth upon in the following verses, only inverting the order, and shews,

1st. How many are the calamities of old age; and that, if we should live to be old, our days will be such as we shall have no pleasure in, which is a good reason why we should return to God, and make our peace with him in the days of our youth, and not put it off till we come to be old; for it will be no thanks to us to leave the pleasures of sin when they have left us, nor to return to God when need forceth us. But the greatest absurdity and ingratitude imaginable is, to give the cream and flower of our days to the devil, and reserve the bran, and refuse, and dregs of them for God. This is offering "the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice." And besides, old age being thus clogged with infirmities, it is the greatest folly imaginable to put off that needful work till then which requires the best of our strength, when our faculties are in their prime; and especially to make the work more difficult by a longer continuance in sin, and by laying up treasures of guilt in the conscience to add to the burthens of age, and make them much heavier. If the calamities of age will be such as is here represented, we shall have need of something to support and comfort us then; and nothing will be more effectual to do that than the testimony of our consciences for us, that we began betimes to remember our Creator, and

have not since laid aside the remembrance of him. How can we expect God should help us when we are old, if we will not serve him when we are young? see *Ps.* lxxi. 17, 18. The decays and infirmities of old age are here elegantly described in figurative expressions, which have some difficulty in them to us now, who are not acquainted with the common phrases and metaphors used in Solomon's age and language; but the general scope is plain, to shew how uncomfortable generally the days of old age are.

1*st*. Then the sun and the light of it, the moon and the stars, and the light which they borrow from it, will be darkened; that is, they look dim to old people, through the decay of their sight. Their countenance is clouded, and the beauty and lustre of it is eclipsed; their intellectual powers and faculties, which are as lights in the soul, are weakened; their understanding and memory fails them, and their apprehension is not so quick, nor their fancy so lively, as it has been. Light is often put for joy and prosperity, the days of their mirth are over, and they have not the pleasure either of the converse of the day or the repose of the night; for both the sun and the moon are darkened to them.

2*nd*. Then "the clouds return after the rain." As when the weather is disposed to wet, no sooner is one cloud blown over but another succeeds it, so it is with old people, when they are got pretty well of one pain or ailment they are seized with another, so that their distempers are like a continual dropping in a very rainy day. The end of one trouble is in this world but the beginning of another, and deep calls unto deep. Old people are often afflicted with defluxions of rheum, like soaking rain, after which still more clouds return, feeding the humour, so that it is continually grievous, and therein the body doth as it were melt away.

3*rd*. Then "the keepers of the house tremble;" the head, which is as the watch-tower, shakes, and the arms and hands, which are ready for the preservation of the body, shake too, and grow feeble upon every sudden approach and attack of danger; that vigour of the animal spirits which used to be exerted for self-defence fails, and cannot do its office. Old people are easily dispirited and discouraged.

4*th*. Then "the strong men shall bow themselves;" the legs and thighs, that used to support the body, and bear its weight, bend and buckle, and cannot serve for travel as they have done, but are soon tired. Old men, that have been in their time strong men, are become weak, and "stoop for age," *Zec.* viii. 4. "God taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man," *Ps.* cxlvii. 10, for their strength will soon fade, but "in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength;" he has everlasting arms.

5*th*. Then "the grinders cease because they are few." The teeth with which we grind our meat, and prepare it for concoction, cease to do their part, because they are few; they are rotted and broken, and perhaps have been drawn because they ached. Some old people have lost all their teeth, and others have but few left. And this infirmity is the more considerable, because the meat not being well chewed for want of teeth is one great reason why it is not well digested, which has as much an influence as any thing upon the other decays of age.

6*th*. "Those that look out of the windows are darkened," that is, the eyes wax dim, as Isaac's, *Gen.* xxvii. 1, and Ahijah's, 1 *Kin.* xiv. 4. Moses was a rare instance of one who at one hundred and twenty years old had good eyesight, but ordinarily the sight decays in old people as soon as any thing; and it is a mercy to them that art helps nature with spectacles. We have need to improve our sight well while we have it, because the light of the eyes may be gone before the light of life.

7*th*. "The doors are shut in the streets." Old people keep within doors, and care not for going abroad to entertainments. The lips, the doors of the mouth, are shut in eating, because the teeth are gone, and the sound of the grinding with them is low, so that they have not that command of their meat in their mouths which they used to have. They cannot digest their meat, and therefore little grist is brought to the mill.

8*th*. Old people "rise up at the voice of the bird." They have no sound sleep as young people have, but a little thing disturbs them, even the chirping of a bird. They cannot rest for coughing, and therefore rise up at cock-crowing, as soon as anybody is stirring. Or, they are apt to be jealous, and timorous, and full of care, which breaks their sleep, and makes them rise early. Or, they are apt to be superstitious, and rise up as in a fright at those voices of birds, as of ravens, or screech-owls, which soothsayers call ominous.

9*th*. With them "all the daughters of music are brought low." They have neither voice nor ear, can neither sing themselves nor take any pleasure as Solomon had done in the days of his youth, in singing men and singing women, and musical instruments, *ch.* ii. 8. Old people grow thick of hearing, and unapt to distinguish sounds and voices.

10*th*. They are "afraid of that which is high," afraid to go to the top of any high place, either because for want of breath they cannot reach it, or their heads being giddy, or their legs failing them, they dare not venture to it; or they frighten themselves with fancies, that that which is high will fall upon them. Fear is in the way; they can neither ride nor walk with their usual boldness, but are afraid of every thing that lies in their way, lest it throw them down.

11*th*. "The almond-tree flourisheth," that is, the old man's hair is gone white, so that his head looks like an almond-tree in the blossom. The almond-tree blossoms before any other tree, and therefore fitly shews what haste old age makes in seizing upon men; it prevents their expectations, and comes faster upon them than they thought of. "Gray hairs are here and there upon them, and they perceive it not."

12*th*. "The grasshopper is a burthen, and desire fails." Old men can bear nothing; the lightest thing sits heavy upon them, both on their bodies and on their minds; a little thing sinks and breaks them. Perhaps the grasshopper was some food that was looked upon to be very light of digestion. John Baptist's meat was locusts, but even that lies heavy upon an old man's stomach, and therefore desire fails, that is, he has no appetite to his meat: neither shall he "regard the desire of women," as that king, *Dan.* xi. 37. Old men become mindless and listless, and the pleasures of sense are to them tasteless and sapless.

It is probable, Solomon wrote this when he was himself old, and could speak feelingly of the infirmities of age, which perhaps grew the faster upon him for the indulgence he had given himself in sensual pleasures. Some old people bear up better than others under the decays of age; but more or less the days of old age are, and will be, evil days, and of little pleasure. Great care, therefore, should be taken to pay respect and honour to old people, that they may have something to balance these grievances, and nothing may be done to add to them. And all this put together makes up a good reason why we should remember our Creator in the days of our youth, that he may remember us with favour when these evil days come, and his comforts may delight our souls when the delights of sense are in a manner worn off.

2nd. He shews how great a change death will make with us, which will be either the prevention or the period of the miseries of old age. Nothing else will keep them off, nor any thing else cure them. Therefore, "remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," because death is certainly before thee,—perhaps it is very near thee; and it is a serious thing to die, and we are concerned with the utmost care and diligence to prepare for it.

First. Death will fix us in an unchangeable state. "Man shall then go to his long home," and all these infirmities and decays of age are harbingers of, and advances towards, that awful remove. At death, man goes from this world, and all the employments and enjoyments of it; he is gone for good and all as to his present state. He is gone home; for here he was a stranger and pilgrim; both soul and body go to the place whence they came, ver. 7. He is gone to his rest, to the place where he is to fix; he is gone to his home, 'to the house of his world,' so some; for this world is not his; he is gone to his long home, for the days of his lying in the grave will be many. He is gone to his house of eternity, not only to his house, whence he shall never return to this world, but to the house where he must be for ever. This should make us willing to die, that at death we must go home; and why should we not long to go to our Father's house? And this should quicken us to get ready to die, that we must then go to our long home, to an everlasting habitation.

Secondly. Death will be an occasion of sorrow to our friends that love us. When "man goes to his long home, the mourners go about the streets;" the real mourners, and those, as now with us, distinguished by their habits as they go along the streets; the mourners for ceremony, that were hired to weep for the dead, both to express and to excite the real mourning. When we die, we not only remove to a melancholy house before us, but we leave a melancholy house behind us. Tears are a tribute due to the dead, and this, among other circumstances, makes it a serious thing to die. But in vain do we go to the house of mourning, and see the mourners go about the streets, if it do not help to make us serious and pious mourners in the closet.

Thirdly. Death will dissolve the frame of nature, and take down the earthly house of this tabernacle, which is elegantly described, ver. 6, "Then shall the silver cord," by which soul and body were wonderfully fastened together, "be loosed,"—that sacred knot untied, and those old friends be forced to part; then shall "the golden bowl," that held the waters of life for us, "be broken;" then shall "the pitcher," with which we used to fetch up water for the constant support of life, and the repair of its decays, "be broken," even "at the fountain," so that it can fetch up no more; and "the wheel," all those organs that serve for the collecting and distributing of nourishment, shall "be broken," and disabled to do their office any more. The body shall become like a watch when the spring is broken, the motion of all the wheels is stopped, and they all stand still; the machine is taken to pieces; the heart beats no more, nor doth the blood circulate. Some apply this to the ornaments and utensils of life; rich people must at death leave behind them their clothing, and furniture, and silver and gold, and poor people their earthern pitchers, and the drawers of water will have their wheel broken.

Fourthly. Death will resolve us into our first principles, ver. 7. Man is a strange sort of creature,—a ray of heaven united to a clod of earth. At death these are separated, and each goes to the place whence it came.

1*st*. The body, that clod of clay, returns to its own earth. It is made of the earth; Adam's body was so, and we are of the same mould. It is a house of clay: at death, it is laid in the earth, and in a little time will be resolved into earth, not to be distinguished from common earth; according to the sentence, *Gen.* iii. 19, "Dust thou art," and therefore, "to dust thou shalt return." Let us not therefore indulge the appetites of the body, nor pamper it; it will be worm's meat shortly; nor let sin reign in our mortal bodies, because they are mortal, *Rom.* vi. 12.

2*nd*. The soul, that beam of light, returns to that God who, when he "made man of the dust of the ground, breathed into him the breath of life, to make him a living soul," *Gen.* ii. 7, and formeth the spirit of every man within him. When the fire consumes the wood, the flame ascends, when the ashes return to the earth out of which the wood grew. The soul doth not die with the body; it is redeemed from the power of the grave, *Ps.* xlix. 15; it can subsist without it, and will be in a state of separation from it, as the candle burns, and burns brighter, when it is taken out of the dark lantern. It removes to the world of spirits, to which it is allied; it goes to God as a judge, to give account of itself, and to be lodged either with the spirits in prison, 1 *Pet.* iii. 19, or with the spirits in paradise, *Lu.* xxiii. 43, according to what was done in the body. This makes death terrible to the wicked, whose souls go to God as an avenger, and comfortable to the godly, whose souls go to God as a Father, into whose hands they cheerfully commit them, through a Mediator, out of whom sinners may justly dread to think of going to God.

8 Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all *is* vanity. 9 And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, *and* set in order many proverbs. 10 The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and *that which was* written *was* upright, *even* words of truth. 11 The words of the wise *are* as goads, and as nails fastened *by* the masters of assemblies, *which* are given from one shepherd. 12 And further, by these, my son, be admonished; of making many books *there is* no end; and much study *is* a weariness of the flesh.

Solomon is here drawing towards a close, and is loath to part till he has gained his point, and prevailed with his hearers, with his readers, to seek for that satisfaction in God only, and in their duty to him, which they can never find in the creature.

First. He repeats his text, ver. 8. 1. As that which he had fully demonstrated the truth of, and so made good his undertaking in this sermon, wherein he had kept close to his text, and both his reasons and his application were to the purpose. 2. As that which he desired to inculcate both upon others and upon himself, to have it ready, and to make use of it upon all occasions. We see it daily proved; let it therefore be daily improved; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Secondly. He recommends what he had written upon this subject by Divine direction and inspiration to our serious consideration. The words of this book are faithful, and well worthy our acceptance; for,

1. They are the words of one that was a convert, a penitent, that could speak by dear-bought experience of the vanity of the world, and the folly of expecting great things from it. He was *Coheleth*, one gathered in from his wander-

ings, and gathered home to that God from whom he had revolted. 'Vanity of vanities, saith the penitent.' All true penitents are convinced of the vanity of the world, for they find it can do nothing to ease them of the burden of sin which they complain of.

2. They are the words of one that was wise, wiser than any; endued with extraordinary measures of wisdom; famous for it among his neighbours, who all sought unto him to hear his wisdom; and therefore a competent judge of this matter. Not only wise as a prince, but wise as a preacher, and preachers have need of wisdom to win souls.

3. He was one that made it his business to do good, and to use wisdom aright. Because he was himself wise, but knew he had not his wisdom for himself no more than he had it from himself, he still taught the people that knowledge which he had found useful to himself, and hoped might be so to them too. It is the interest of princes to have their people well taught in religion; and no disparagement to them to teach them themselves the good knowledge of the Lord, but their duty to encourage those whose office it is to teach them, and to speak comfortably to them, 2 *Chr.* xxx. 22. Let not the people, the common people, be despised, no, not by the wisest and greatest, as either unworthy or incapable of good knowledge. Even those that are well taught have need to be still taught, that they may grow in knowledge.

4. He took a great deal of pains and care to do good, designing to teach the people knowledge. He did not put them off with any thing that came next hand, because they were inferior people, and he a very wise man; but, considering the worth of the souls he preached to, and the weight of the subject he preached on, he gave good heed to what he read and heard from others, that having stocked himself well he might bring out of his treasury things new and old. He gave good heed to what he spoke and wrote himself, and was choice and exact in it; all he did was elaborate. 1st. He chose the most profitable way of preaching, by proverbs or short sentences, which would be more easily apprehended and remembered than long and laboured periods. 2nd. He did not content himself with a few parables or wise sayings, and repeat them again and again; but he furnished himself with many proverbs, a great variety of grave discourses, that he might have something to say on every occasion. 3rd. He did not only give them such observations as were obvious and trite, but he sought out such as were surprising and uncommon; he digged into the mines of knowledge, and did not only pick up what lay on the surface. 4th. He did not deliver his heads and observations at random as they came to mind, but methodised them, and set them in order, that they might appear in more strength and lustre.

5. He put what he had to say in such a dress as he thought would be most pleasing. "He sought to find out acceptable words," words of delight, ver. 10. He took care that good matter might not be spoiled by an ill style, and by the ungratefulness and incongruity of the expression. Ministers should study not for big words, or fine words, but acceptable words, such as are likely to please men for their good to edification, 1 *Cor.* x. 33. They that would win souls must contrive how to win upon them with words fitly spoken.

6. That which he did write for our instruction is of unquestionable certainty, and what we may rely upon. "That which was written was upright" and sincere, according to the real sentiment of the penman, "even words of truth," the exact representation of the thing as it is. Those are sure not to miss their way that are guided by these words. What good will acceptable words do us if they be not upright, and words of truth? Most are for smooth things that flatter them, rather than right things that direct them, *Isa.* xxx. 10. But to those that understand themselves and their own interest, words of truth will always be acceptable words.

7. That which this and other holy men wrote will be of great use and advantage to us, especially being inculcated upon us by the exposition of it, ver. 11. Here observe, 1st. A double benefit accruing to us by Divine truths, if duly applied and improved; they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness." They are of use, *First.* To excite us to our duty. They are as goads to the ox that draws the plough, putting him forward when he is dull, and quickening him to mend his pace. The truths of God prick men to the heart, *Acts* ii. 37, and put them upon bethinking themselves when they trifle and grow remiss, and exerting themselves with more vigour in their work. While our good affections are so apt as they are to grow flat and cool, we have need of these goads. *Secondly.* To engage us to persevere in our duty. They are as nails to those that are wavering and inconstant, to fix them to that which is good; they are goads to such as are dull and draw back, and nails to such as are desultory and draw aside; a means to establish the heart, and confirm good resolutions, that we may not sit loose to our duty, nor be ever taken off from it, but that what good there is in us may be "as a nail fastened in a sure place," *Ezr.* ix. 8. 2nd. A double way of communicating Divine truths in order to these benefits. *First.* By the Scriptures, as the standing rule. "The words of the wise;" that is, of the prophets, who are called wise men, *Mat.* xxiii. 34. These we have in black and white, and may have recourse to them at any time, and make use of them as goads and as nails. By them we may teach ourselves: let but them come with pungency and power to the soul; let the impressions of them be deep and durable, and they will make us wise to salvation. *Secondly.* By the ministry. To make the words of the wise more profitable to us it is appointed that they should be impressed and "fastened by the masters of assemblies." Solemn assemblies for religious worship are an ancient Divine institution, intended for the honour of God and the edification of his church; and are not only serviceable but necessary to those ends. There must be masters of these assemblies, who are Christ's ministers, and as such are to preside in them, to be God's mouth to the people, and theirs to God. Their business is to fasten the words of the wise, and drive them as nails to the head, in order to which the word of God is likewise as a hammer, *Jer.* xxiii. 29.

8. That which is written and thus recommended to us is of Divine original. Though it come to us through various hands, many wise men, and many masters of assemblies, yet it is given by one and the same Shepherd; the great "Shepherd of Israel, that leadeth Joseph like a flock," *Ps.* lxxx. 1. God is that one Shepherd, whose good Spirit indited the Scriptures, and assists the masters of the assemblies in opening and applying the Scriptures. These words of the wise are the true sayings of God, on which we may rest our souls; from that one Shepherd all ministers must receive what they deliver, and speak according to the light of the written word.

9. The sacred inspired writings, if we will but make use of them, are sufficient to guide us in the way to true happiness; and we need not in the pursuit of that to toil ourselves with the search of other writings; ver. 12, "And farther," nothing now remains but to tell thee that "of making many books there is no end;" that is, 1st. Of writing many books. If what I have written serve not to convince thee of the vanity of the world, and the necessity of being religious, neither wouldst thou be convinced if I should write never so much. If the end be not attained in the use of those books of Scripture which God has blessed us with, neither should we obtain the end if we had twice as many more; nay, if we had so many as that the whole world could not contain them, *Jno.* xxi. 6. "And much study" of them would but confound us, and would rather be "a weariness to the flesh" than any advantage to the soul; we have as much as God saw fit to give us, saw fit for us, and saw us fit for. Much less can it be expected that those who will not by these be admonished, should be wrought upon by other writings. Let men write never so many books for the conduct of human life, write till they have tired themselves with much study, they cannot give better instructions than those we have from the word of God. Or, 2nd. Of buying many books, making ourselves masters of them, and masters of what is in them by much study. Still the desire of learning would be unsatisfied. It will give a man indeed the best entertainment, and the best accomplishment this world can afford him; but if we be not by these admonished of the vanity of the world, and human learning among other things, and its insufficiency to make us happy without true piety, alas, there is no end of it, nor real benefit by it; it will weary the body, but never give the soul any true satisfaction. The great Mr. Selden subscribed to this when he owned that in all the books he had read he never found that on which he could rest his soul but in the Holy Scripture, especially *Tit.* ii. 11, 12. By these therefore let us be admonished.

13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. 14 For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil.

The great inquiry which Solomon prosecutes in this book is, "What is that good which the sons of men should do?" *ch.* ii. 3; what is the true way to true happiness? the certain means to attain our great end? He had in vain sought it among those things which the most of men are eager in the pursuit of, but here at length he has found it, by the help of that discovery which God anciently made to man, *Job* xxviii. 28, that serious godliness is the only way to true happiness. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter;" the return entered upon the writ of inquiry, the result of this diligent search, you shall have all I have been driving at in two words. He doth not say, Do you hear it, but, Let us hear it; for preachers must themselves be hearers of that word which they preach to others; must hear it as from God. Those are teachers by the halves who teach others and not themselves, *Rom.* ii. 21. Every word of God is pure and precious, but some are worthy of more special remark, as this here; the Masorites begin it with a capital letter, as that, *Deu.* vi. 4. Solomon himself puts a *nota bene* before it, demanding attention in these words, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter." Observe here,

First. The summary of religion. Setting aside all matters of doubtful disputation, to be religious is to "fear God, and keep his commandments." 1. The root of religion is the fear of God reigning in the heart; a reverence of his majesty, a deference to his authority, and a dread of his wrath. Fear God; that is, worship God, give him the honour due to his name in all the instances of true devotion, inward and outwards: see *Rev.* xiv. 7. 2. The rule of religion is the law of God, revealed in the Scriptures. Our fear toward God must be taught by his commandments, *Isa.* xxix. 13; and those we must keep, and carefully observe. Wherever the fear of God is uppermost in the heart there will be a respect to all his commandments, and care to keep them. In vain do we pretend to fear God if we do not make conscience of our duty to him.

Secondly. The vast importance of it. This is the whole of man; it is all his business, and all his blessedness. Our whole duty is summed up in this, and our whole comfort is bound up in this; it is the concern of every man, and ought to be his chief and continual care; it is the common concern of all men, of their whole time. It is nothing to a man whether he be rich or poor, high or low; but it is the main matter, it is all in all to a man, to fear God, and do as he bids him.

Thirdly. A powerful inducement to this, ver. 14. We shall see of what mighty consequence it is to us that we be religious, if we consider the account we must every one of us shortly give of ourselves to God. Thence he argued against a vicious, voluptuous life, *ch.* xi. 9, and here for a religious life. "God shall bring every work into judgment." Note, 1. There is a judgment to come, in which every man's eternal state will be finally determined. 2. God himself will be the judge, God-man will, not only because he has a right to judge, but because he is perfectly fit for it, infinitely wise and just. 3. Every work will then be brought into judgment, will be inquired into, and called over again. It will be a day to bring to remembrance every thing done in the body. 4. The great thing to be then judged of concerning every work is, whether it be good or evil; conformable to the will of God, or a violation of it. 5. Even secret things, both good and evil, will be brought to light, and brought to account in the judgment of the great day, *Rom.* ii. 16. There is no good work, no ill work hid, but shall then be made manifest. 6. In consideration of the judgment to come, and the strictness of that judgment, it highly concerns us now to be very strict in our walking with God, that we may give up our account with joy.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
TO THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

CHAP. I.—1. *The Preacher.* That this book was the composition of Solomon the title bears, universal tradition affirms, and internal evidence concurs to prove, there being many things in it which will apply to no one else. And whilst external and internal evidences establish the genuineness of the treatise, as the production of the prince whose name it bears, the same descriptions of proof assign its composition to a period of his life subsequent to his temporary apostacy from the service and the ways of God. This is the testimony of Jewish tradition; and whilst every right feeling should induce us to wish the testimony true, there is enough in the book itself to vindicate our judgments from the imputation of credulity in believing it. For if it was written by Solomon at all, at what other time of his life could it be written? Not before his apostacy; for then he had not been guilty of the madness and impiety described. Not during his apostacy; for the language of the record is that of past time, and the spirit which it breathes is that of penitence for past misconduct. An apostate, persisting in his apostacy, could not possibly have been its author. It must have been written, therefore, after his return from his wanderings, and the delight which the conviction of, this inspires rests on grounds that are not illusory. *Ecclesiastes* is the Greek title of the book, the title which it bears in the Septuagint. It signifies 'the Preacher.' The Hebrew word for which it is used means, one who assembles or gathers the people together; and the translation of it by the term *Ecclesiastes* shews that the Greek translators understood the object of the assembling to be the communication of public instruction.—*Lectures on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, by Ralph Wardlaw, D.D. The remaining notes are, with the author's approval, taken from the same excellent work. 2. VANITY OF VANITIES, SAITH THE PREACHER, VANITY OF VANITIES, ALL IS VANITY. This is the text of the preacher's sermon. In the first place, it is to be considered as the affecting result of Solomon's own experience; the book might with sufficient appropriateness be entitled, 'The Experience of Solomon.' Secondly. We are not to understand it as the language of a mind soured and fretted by disappointment, but as the conclusion come to by one who had felt the bitterness of a course of sin, and the emptiness of this world's joys, and having been reclaimed from "the error of his way," having renounced and wept over his follies, was more than ever satisfied that "the fear of the Lord is wisdom," and that "the ways of wisdom are the only ways of pleasantness, and her paths alone the paths of peace." Thirdly. Neither must we conceive him to affirm, in these words, that there is no good whatever, no kind of enjoyment, no degree of happiness, to be derived from the things of the world, when they are kept in their own place, estimated on right principles, and used in a proper manner. Sentiments widely different from any thing so ascetic and enthusiastic as this, will repeatedly come in our way in the course of the book. The words before us are to be interpreted of every thing in this world when pursued as the portion of him who seeks it,—when considered as constituting the happiness of a rational, immortal, and accountable being. His verdict is, that to such a creature they can yield, by themselves, no genuine and worthy satisfaction; and that, whilst they are in their own nature unsatisfying, even in this world, they are worse, infinitely worse than profitless, for the world to come. On this ground it is that he pronounces them vanity; he had weighed them all in the balances, and had found them wanting. Fourthly. The peculiar emphasis may be remarked with which this verdict is expressed. He does not merely say all things are vain, but "all is vanity," vanity itself, and "vanity of vanities;" that is, the greatest vanity,—sheer, perfect vanity. And he doubles the emphatic asseveration: "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This shews, 1. The strength of the impression on his own mind. It shews, 2. The earnestness of his desire to produce a similar impression on the minds of others. That is justly denominated "vanity," which yields no substantial profit. It is in this connexion that he adds in ver. 3, "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?" By "labour" he means not only the labour of the hands, but also the labour of the brain; for of both we shall find him frequently speaking in the sequel. "What profit hath a man of all his labour?" What profit! Much, it will by many be answered. Much present profit, great and manifold benefits, in the estimation of the world, may be the result of human labour. Learning, riches, power, honour, and all the means of sensual and intellectual gratification, may be acquired by labour. But these things, when viewed apart from God as the chief good, (the light in which, we observed, it is Solomon's intention to place them,) are all comprehended in the verdict already pronounced, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

CHAP. II.—11. *On all the works—and, behold, all was vanity.* Such was the nature, and such the success, of Solomon's experiment for the procuring of happiness. When his labour was ended, he had only to sigh over its results. He very soon tired looking at what was finished, and of hearing what he had heard before. And besides the feeling of immediate unsatisfactoriness, the galling reflection, as he informs us in a subsequent part of this chapter, forced itself upon his mind, and fretted, and mortified, and disgusted him,—that in a very short time all must be left behind him, and left, too, he could not tell to whom, whether to a wise man or a fool. From this passage we may observe, in the first place, It is a radical but very prevalent mistake as to happiness, when men conceive of it as arising from situation. The radical principle of happiness must be carried about within us, else we shall infallibly fail of satisfaction in every trial we can make of earthly good. In the second place, Let it not be supposed that there is no such thing to be found as true satisfaction, real and substantial happiness. This would be a very hasty and a very false conclusion. There is such a thing, blessed be the gracious Author of our being, there is such a thing to be found, as solid and heart-satisfying enjoyment. It is not indeed to be derived from the sources to which Solomon betook himself in "the days of his vanity." Many things may be accessories to happiness, but "one thing is needful." The true secret of it is, living to God. God in all things, and all things in God, is its appropriate definition. This is at once the pure and the sublime of enjoyment.

'Live while ye live! the sensualist may say,
And catch the pleasures of the passing day.
Live while ye live! the holy man replies,
And give to God each moment as it flies.
Lord, in my life let both united be!
I live in pleasure, when I live to thee!'

In the third place, Let this passage repress in every bosom the feelings of envy. Deceive not yourselves with the fancy that Solomon's disappointment might not be yours. Be assured you would fare no better than he. The same experiment would yield to you the same result as it did to him, and as it has done to many more, who have foolishly ventured to repeat it. Be not "envious, then, at the foolish, when you see the prosperity of the wicked." If you are "rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath provided for them that love him," envy may well be a stranger to your bosoms. 24. *From the hand of God.* The meaning of this is, not merely that the bounties of providence are from the Divine hand, but that from him proceeds a suitable temper of mind for the true enjoyment of them,—a grateful and contented spirit. This is from God. It is produced and maintained by Divine influence, and it imparts to the things of time a relish which can never be experienced by those who make them their portion. Solomon's doctrine of the necessity of this lesson being taught us by God agrees with the experience of the apostle Paul, as recorded in his epistle to the *Philippians*, "Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me," *Phil.* iv. 11—13. He "learned," he was "instructed;" not merely informed of this state of mind being his duty, but effectually taught, by the grace of the Lord Jesus, to maintain it.

CHAP. III.—4. *Dancing* is put as a general expression for joy and gladness. "Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing," *Ps.* xxx. 11. 5. *A time to cast away stones and to gather stones together*, seems to refer to the rearing of memorials of covenants between parties, and of remarkable events. Such were the pillars erected by Jacob, *Gen.* xxviii. 18; xxxi. 52; also the heaps of stones over Achan and Absalom. 6. *A time to keep—to cast away.* A time when particular earthly possessions give us pleasure, and we keep them; and a time when, from satiety or change of taste and character, they cease to please, and we cast them away; a time when the bounties of heaven are retained with gratitude as valuable and useful; and a time when duty may require us to relinquish all that we have, that we may not violate the dictates of conscience, or incur the forfeiture of more precious and more lasting blessings; or when life comes to be in danger, and for its preservation property of every kind will be readily thrown away from us, as, in the comparison, unworthy of a moment's thought. Thus many have made a cheerful sacrifice of things seen and temporal for the sake of things unseen and eternal; and many more have shewn the truth of the proverb, "all that a man hath will he give for his life." Paul "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord;" nay, "suffered for him the loss of all things, and counted them but dung that he might win Christ, and be found in him." The believing Hebrews "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." 11. *Set the world in their heart.* The word here rendered "world" is translated differently elsewhere. Holden thus paraphrases the verse, 'And I find that although he hath made every thing beautiful in its season, and established the course of nature with transcendent wisdom, yet he hath also put obscurity in the midst of them, his works being intricate and mysterious, so that man, from the beginning to the end, cannot find out and perfectly comprehend the work that God doeth.'—*Religious Tract Society's Bible*, 2 *Cor.* i. 12; *Gal.* vi. 4, 5.

CHAP. V.—6. *Neither say thou before the angel that it was an error.* I am satisfied, that by "the angel" we are here to understand the priest. "The priest's lips," says God by Malachi, "should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger (angel) of the Lord of hosts," *Mal.* ii. 7. It is the case of a man who, in order to elude the performance of a vow he has made, comes to the priest, pretending that it was "an error," or a mistake, a thing done rashly, and without consideration of its nature and consequences, a vow which it would, as he has since discovered, be improper for him to fulfil; a sin of ignorance; and who, making this confession, presents, or proposes to present, the appointed offering. This view of the case imparts peculiar force to the words which follow, "Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thy hands?" Such hypocritical mockery of God would expose him to his merited displeasure. Thus insulted, he would be provoked to frown upon him; and whilst the foolish deceiver might be "blessing himself in his heart" that he had succeeded so well in keeping possession of the substance which he had alienated by his vow, the curse of offended heaven might not only blast what he had feloniously kept, but come down upon all that he had, preventing his prosperity, embittering his sweets, blighting his prospects, and "destroying the work of his hands." This is just the opposite of the promise annexed to the duty of faithful liberality in the service of God, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine," *Pr.* iii. 9, 10.

CHAP. VI.—3, 4. *I say that an untimely birth—for he, &c.* Most commentators understand the fourth verse as referring to the abortion; and, consistently with this view of its subject, translate it, "although it cometh in with vanity and departeth in darkness, and its name shall be covered with darkness." But this seems to me very unnatural. I understand the verse, therefore, of the man described in the preceding context, and as assigning Solomon's reason for giving the preference to an "untimely birth." The man "cometh in" (to the world, namely) "with vanity." He not only enters on a life which itself, even at the best, is vanity, being uncertain, unsatisfying, and transitory; but, having "seen no good" in his passage through it, he seems, as far as he himself is concerned, to have been born to no purpose, for no end or use, in vain. 5. The fifth verse, however, is evidently spoken of the abortion, "Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known anything; this hath more rest than the other." The comparison regards the absence of suffering, rather than the proportions of positive enjoyment, "This hath more rest than the other;" or, 'this hath rest rather than the other,' which, in the present case, is much the same in real amount with 'this hath rest, and not the other.' The rest of the grave is meant, where the untimely birth is immediately laid. It has not "seen the sun" indeed, or enjoyed the cheering light of heaven. But what is the cheering light of heaven to the man whose eye it gives "to see no good?" to whom it only discloses, day after day, the same dreary scenes of woe? The abortion has the advantage in "not having known anything," for it is better to know nothing at all than to know nothing but trouble.

CHAP. VII.—1. *A good name better—death better.* The saying before us must be confined to the wise and the good, to the children of God, those who have believed his word, and walked in his ways, and have had "a good name" in "the Lamb's book of life." Of them it is emphatically true, true in all its extent of meaning; true, not only when this life has been a life of unusual suffering, when they go to heaven "out of great tribulation;" but true, even

taking life in its "best estate," freest of evil and fullest of good. This is the language alike of the Old and of the New Testament records. To such death is a salvation, a salvation from sin and from all the evil of which sin is the cause. The day of death is the day of entrance on a state, and therefore a season, of joy, the day of death is the day of entrance on a season, and therefore a perfectly happy world. "To live is" [illegible] "gain." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." [illegible] *Revelation* [illegible] of wicked dead. The same passage speaks to the assurance of servants and expressive irony, of which the present is the time of comfort most profound to be realized. Speaking of the [illegible] to the servants of the former bondage and prosperity in the world, of [illegible] as the whole the world's enmity, with its [illegible] and ultimate efforts, and to secure the world's favour, with its [illegible] and pleasures. Take care of these extremes as to [illegible] is a great many great perplexities in the world's business, are not the [illegible] and [illegible] and [illegible] from [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

AN

EXPOSITION

OF

THE SONG OF SOLOMON,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

ALL Scripture, we are sure, is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for the support and advancement of the interests of his kingdom among men; and it is never the less so for there being found in it some things dark, "and hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction." In our belief, both of the Divine extraction and of the spiritual exposition of this book, we are confirmed by the ancient, constant, and concurring testimony, both of the church of the Jews, (to whom were committed the oracles of God, and who never made any doubt of the authority of this book,) and of the Christian church, which happily succeeds them in that trust of honour. I. It must be confessed, on the one hand, that if he that barely reads this book be asked, as the eunuch was, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" he will have more reason than he had to say, "How can I, except some man shall guide me?" The books of Scripture history and prophecy are very like one another, but this Song of Solomon's is very unlike the songs of his father David. Here is not the name of God in it, it is never quoted in the New Testament; we find not in it any expressions of natural religion or pious devotion, no, nor is it introduced by vision, or any of the marks of immediate revelation. It seems as hard as any part of Scripture to be made "a savour of life unto life," nay, and to those who come to the reading of it with carnal minds and corrupt affections, it is in danger of being made "a savour of death unto death." It is a flower out of which they extract poison, and therefore the Jewish doctors advised their young people not to read it till they were thirty years old, lest, by the abuse of that which is most pure and sacred, (*horrendum dictu!*—'horrible to say!') the flames of lust should be kindled with fire from heaven, which is intended for the altar only. But, II. It must be confessed, on the other hand, that, with the help of the many faithful guides we have for the understanding of this book, it appears to be a very bright and powerful ray of heavenly light, admirably fitted to excite pious and devout affections in holy souls, to draw out their desires towards God, to increase their delight in him, and improve their acquaintance and communion with him. It is an allegory, the letter of which kills those who rest in that, and look no farther, but the spirit of which giveth life, 2 *Cor.* iii. 6; *Jno.* vi. 63. It is a parable, which makes Divine things more difficult to those who do not love them, but more plain and pleasant to those that do, *Mat.* xiii. 14, 16. Experienced Christians here find a counterpart of their experiences, and to them it is intelligible, while they neither understand it nor relish it who have no part or lot in the matter. It is a song, an epithalamium or nuptial song, wherein, by the expressions of love between a bridegroom and his bride, is set forth and illustrated the mutual affections that pass between God and a distinguished remnant of mankind. It is a pastoral; the bride and bridegroom, for the more lively representation of humility and innocence, are brought in as a shepherd and his shepherdess. Now, 1. This song might easily be taken in a spiritual sense by the Jewish church, for whose use it was first composed, and was so taken, as appears by the Chaldee paraphrase and the most ancient Jewish expositors. God betrothed the people of Israel to himself, he entered into covenant with them, and it was a marriage covenant. He had given abundant proofs of his love to them, and required of them that they should love him with all their heart and soul. Idolatry was often spoken of as spiritual adultery, and doting upon idols, to prevent which this song was penned, representing the complacency which God took in Israel, and which Israel ought to take in God, and encouraging them to continue faithful to him, though he might seem sometimes to withdraw and hide himself from them, and to wait for the farther manifestation of himself in the promised Messiah. 2. It may more easily be taken in a spiritual sense by the Christian church, because the condescensions and communications of Divine love appear more rich and free under the Gospel than they did under the law, and the communion between heaven and earth more familiar. God sometimes spoke of himself as the husband of the Jewish church, *Isa.* lxiv. 5; *Hos.* ii. 16, 19, and rejoiced in it as his bride, *Isa.* lxii. 4, 5; but more frequently is Christ represented as the bridegroom of his church, *Mat.* xxv. 1; *Rom.* vii. 4; 2 *Cor.* xi. 2; *Eph.* v. 32; and the church as the bride, the Lamb's wife, *Rev.* xix. 7; xxi. 2, 9. Pursuant to this metaphor, Christ and the church in general, Christ and particular believers, are here discoursing with abundance of mutual esteem and endearment. The best key to this book is the 45th psalm, which we find applied to Christ in the New Testament, and therefore this ought to be so too. It requires some pains to find out what may probably be the meaning of the Holy Spirit in the several parts of this book; as David's songs are many of them level to the capacity of the meanest, and there are shallows in them in which a lamb may wade, so this of Solomon's will exercise the capacities of the most learned, and there are depths in it in which an elephant may swim. But when the meaning is found out, it will be of admirable use to excite pious and devout affections in us; and the same truths which are plainly laid down in other scriptures, when they are extracted out of this, come to the soul with a more pleasing power. When we apply ourselves to the study of this book we must not only, with Moses and Joshua, put off our shoe from off our foot, and even forget that we have bodies, because the place where we stand is holy ground; but we must, with John, come up hither, must spread our wings, take a noble flight, and soar upwards, till, by faith and holy love, we enter into the holiest, for this is no other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

A.M. 2990. B.C. 1014.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter, after the title of the book, ver. 1, we have Christ and his church, Christ and a believer, expressing their esteem for each other. I. The bride, the church, speaks to the bridegroom, ver. 2—4; to the daughters of Jerusalem, ver. 5, 6; and then to the bridegroom, ver. 7. II. Christ, the bridegroom, speaks in answer to the complaints and requests of his spouse, ver. 8—11. III. The church expresseth the great value she has for Christ, and the delights she takes in communion with him, ver. 12—14. IV. Christ commends the church's beauty, ver. 15; And, V. The church returns the commendation, ver. 16, 17. Where there is a fire of true love to Christ in the heart, this will be of use to blow it up into a flame.

THE song of songs, which *is* Solomon's.

We have here the title of this book, shewing,

First. The nature of it. It is a song, that it might the better answer the intention, which is to stir up the affections, and to heat them, which poetry will be very instrumental to do. The subject is pleasing, and therefore fit to be treated of in a song, in singing of which we may make melody with our hearts unto the Lord. It is evangelical, and gospel times should be times of joy, for gospel grace puts a new song into our mouths, *Ps.* xcviii. 1.

Secondly. The dignity of it. It is the song of songs, that is, a most excellent song, not only above any human composure, or above all the other songs which Solomon penned, but even above any other of the Scripture songs, as having more of Christ in it.

Thirdly. The penman of it. It is Solomon's; it is not the song of fools, as many of the songs of love are, but the song of the wisest of men. Nor can any man give a better proof of his wisdom than to celebrate the love of God to mankind, and to excite his own and others' love to God. Solomon's songs were a thousand and five, 1 *Kin.* iv. 32. Those that were of other subjects are lost, but this of seraphic love remains, and will to the end of time. Solomon, like his father, was addicted to poetry, and which way soever a man's genius lies, he should endeavour to honour God and edify the church with it. One of Solomon's names was Jedidiah, 'Beloved of the Lord,' 2 *Sam.* xii. 25. And none so fit to write of the Lord's love as he that had himself so great an interest in it; none of all the apostles wrote so much of love as he that was himself the beloved disciple, and lay in Christ's bosom. Solomon, as a king, had great affairs to mind and manage, which took up much of his thoughts and time, yet he found heart and leisure for this and other religious exercises. Men of business ought to be devout men, and not think their business will excuse them from that which is every man's great business, to keep up communion with God. It is not certain when Solomon penned this sacred song; some think he penned it after he recovered himself by the grace of God from his backslidings, as a farther proof of his repentance; and as if by doing good to many with this song, he would atone for the hurt he had perhaps done, with loose, vain, amorous songs when he loved many strange wives; now he turned his wit the right way. It is more probable he penned it in the beginning of his time, while he kept close to God, and kept up his communion with him; and perhaps he put this song with his father's psalms into the hands of the chief musician, for the service of the temple, not without a key to it for the right understanding of it. Some think it was penned upon occasion of his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, but that is uncertain. The tower of Lebanon, which

is mentioned in this book, *ch.* vii. 4, was not built, as is supposed, till long after that marriage. We may reasonably think, when in the height of his prosperity, he loved the Lord, 1 *Kin.* iii. 3, he thus "served him with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the abundance of all things." It may be rendered, 'The song of songs which is concerning Solomon,' who, as the son and successor of David, on whom the covenant of royalty was entailed as the founder of the temple, and one that excelled in wisdom and wealth, was a type of Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and yet is a greater than Solomon; it is a song concerning him. It is here fitly placed after *Ecclesiastes*, for when by that book we are thoroughly convinced of the vanity of the creature and its insufficiency to satisfy us, and make a happiness for us, we shall be quickened to seek for happiness in the love of Christ, and that true transcendent pleasure which is to be found only in communion with God through him. The voice in the wilderness, that was to prepare Christ's way, cried, "All flesh is grass."

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:
For thy love *is* better than wine.
3 Because of the savour of thy good ointments
Thy name *is as* ointment poured forth,
Therefore do the virgins love thee.
4 Draw me, we will run after thee:
The king hath brought me into his chambers:
We will be glad and rejoice in thee,
We will remember thy love more than wine:
The upright love thee.
5 I *am* black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
As the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.
6 Look not upon me, because I *am* black,
Because the sun hath looked upon me:
My mother's children were angry with me;
They made me the keeper of the vineyards;
But mine own vineyard have I not kept.

BLACK TENTS OF KEDAR.

The spouse of this dramatic poem is here first introduced addressing herself to the bridegroom, and then to the daughters of Jerusalem.

First. To the bridegroom; not giving him any name or title, but beginning abruptly, "Let him kiss me;" like Mary Magdalene to the supposed gardener, *Jno.* xx. 25, "If thou have borne him hence," meaning Christ, but not naming him. The heart had been before taken up with the thoughts of him, and to this relative those thoughts were the antecedent, that good matter which the heart was inditing. *Ps.* xlv. 1. And they that are full of Christ themselves are ready to think others should be so too.

Two things the spouse desires, and pleaseth herself with the thoughts of:

1. The bridegroom's friendship; ver. 2, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth;" that is, be reconciled to me, and let me know that he is so; let me have the tokens of his favour. Thus the Old Testament church desired Christ's manifesting himself in the flesh, to be no longer under the law as a schoolmaster, and that dispensation of bondage and terror, but to receive the communications of Divine grace in the Gospel, in which God is reconciling the world unto himself, binding up and healing what by the law was torn and smitten, as the mother kisseth the child that she has chidden. Let him no longer send to me, but come himself; no longer speak by angels and prophets, but let me have the words of his own mouth, those gracious words, *Lu.* iv. 22, which will be to me as the kisses of his mouth, sure tokens of reconciliation, as Esau's kissing Jacob was. All gospel duty is summed up in our kissing the Son, *Ps.* ii. 12. So all gospel grace is summed up in his kissing us, as the father of the prodigal's kissing him when he returned a penitent. It is a kiss of peace. Kisses are opposed to wounds, *Pr.* xxvii. 6; so are the kisses of grace to the wounds of the law. Thus all true believers earnestly desire the manifestations of Christ's love to their souls; they desire no more to make them happy but the assurances of his favour, the lifting up of the light of his countenance upon them, *Ps.* iv. 4, 6, 7; and the knowledge of that love of his which passeth knowledge; this is the one thing they desire, *Ps.* xxvii. 4. They are ready to welcome the manifestation of Christ's love to their souls by his Spirit, and to return them in the humble professions of love to him and complacency in him above all. 'The fruit of his lips is peace, *Isa.* lvii. 19. Let him give me ten thousand kisses, whose very fruition makes us desire him the more, and whereas all other pleasures sour and wither by using, those of his Spirit become more delightful,' so Bishop Reynolds.

She gives several reasons for this desire:

1st. Because of the great esteem she had for his love; "Thy love is better than wine." "Wine makes glad the heart, revives the drooping spirits, and exhilarates them, but gracious souls take more pleasure in loving Christ and being loved of him, in the fruits and gifts of his love, and in the pledges and assurances of it, than any man ever took in the most exquisite delights of sense; and it is more reviving to them than ever the richest cordial was to one ready to faint. Note, *First.* Christ's love is in itself, and in the account of all the saints, more valuable and desirable than the best entertainments this world can give. *Secondly.* Those only may expect the kisses of Christ's mouth, and the comfortable tokens of his favour, who prefer his love before all the delights of the children of men; would rather forego those delights than forfeit his favour, and take more pleasure in spiritual joys than in any bodily refreshments whatsoever. Observe here the change of the person, "Let him kiss me;" there she speaks of him as absent, or as if she were afraid to speak to him; but in the next words she sees him near at hand, and therefore directs her speech to him: Thy love, thy loves, (so the word is,) I so earnestly desire, because I highly esteem it.

2nd. Because of the diffusive fragrancy of his love, and the fruits of it; ver. 3, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments," that is, the agreeableness and acceptableness of thy graces and comforts to all that rightly understand both them and themselves, "thy name is as ointment poured forth," that is, thou art so, and all that whereby thou hast made thyself known; thy very name is precious to all the saints; it is an ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart. The unfolding of Christ's name is as the opening of a box of precious ointment which the room is filled with the odour of; the preaching of his Gospel was the manifesting of the savour of his knowledge in every place, 2 *Cor.* ii. 14. The Spirit was the oil of gladness wherewith Christ was anointed, *Heb.* i. 9; and all true believers have that unction, 1 *Jno.* ii. 27; so that he is precious to them, and they to him, and one to another. A good name is as precious ointment, but Christ's name is more fragrant than any other. Wisdom, like oil, makes the face to shine, but the Redeemer outshines in beauty all others. The name of Christ is not now like ointment sealed up, as it had been long, ("Ask not after my name, for it is secret,") but like ointment poured forth, which notes both the freeness and fulness of the communications of his grace by the Gospel.

3rd. Because of the general affection that all holy souls have to him; "Therefore do the virgins love thee." It is Christ's love shed abroad in our hearts that draws them out in love to him; all that are pure from the corruptions of sin, that preserve the chastity of their own spirits, and are true to the vows by which they have devoted themselves unto God, that not only suffer not their affections to be violated, but cannot bear so much as to be solicited by the world and the flesh; those are the virgins that love Jesus Christ, and follow him whithersoever he goes, *Rev.* xiv. 3. And because Christ is the darling of all the pure in heart, let him be ours, and let our desire be towards him and towards the kisses of his mouth.

2. The bridegroom's fellowship, ver. 4. Observe here,

1st. Her petition for Divine grace; "Draw me." This implies sense of distance from him, desire of union with him; draw me to thyself, draw me nearer, draw me home to thee. She had prayed that he would draw nigh to her, ver. 2; in order to that she prays that he would draw her nigh to him. "Draw me," not only with the moral suasion which there is in the fragrancy of the good ointments, not only with the attractives of that name which is as ointment poured forth, but with supernatural grace, with the cords of a man and the bands of love, *Hos.* xi. 4. Christ has told us that none come to him but such as the Father draws, *Jno.* vi. 44. We are not only weak, and cannot come of ourselves any farther than we are helped, but we are naturally backward and averse to come, and therefore must pray for those influences and operations of the Spirit, by the power of which we are of unwilling made willing, *Ps.* cx. 3. "Draw me," else I move not; overpower the world and the flesh that would draw me from thee. We are not driven to Christ, but drawn in such a way as is agreeable to rational creatures.

2nd. Her promise to improve that grace; "Draw me, and" then "we will run after thee." See how the doctrine of special and effectual grace consists with our duty, and is a powerful engagement and encouragement to it, and yet reserves all the glory of all the good that is in us to God only. Observe, *First.* The flowing forth of the soul after Christ, and its ready compliance with him, is the effect of his grace; we could not run after him if he did not draw us, 2 *Cor.* iii. 5; *Phil.* iv. 13. *Secondly.* The grace which God gives us we must diligently improve. When Christ, by his Spirit, draws us, we must, with our spirits, run after him; as God saith, I will, and you shall, *Eze.* xxxvi. 27, so we must say, Thou shalt, and we will; thou shalt work in us both to will and to do, and therefore we will work out our own salvation, *Phil.* ii. 12, 13. Not only we will walk, but we will run after thee, which notes eagerness of desire, readiness of affection, vigour of pursuit, and swiftness of motion. "When thou shalt enlarge my heart, then I will run the way of thy commandments," *Ps.* cxix. 32; when thy right hand upholds me, then my soul follows hard after thee, *Ps.* lxiii. 8; when with lovingkindness to us he draws us, *Jer.* xxxi. 3, we with lovingkindness to him must run after him, *Isa.* xl. 31. Observe the difference between the petition and the promise; Draw me, and then we will run. When Christ pours out his Spirit upon the church in general, which is his bride, all the members of it do from thence receive enlivening, quickening influences, and are made to run to him with the more cheerfulness, *Isa.* lv. 5. Or, Draw me, saith the believing soul, and then I will not only follow thee myself as fast as I can, but will bring all mine along with me, we will run after thee, I and the virgins that love thee, ver. 3; I and all that I have any interest in, or influence upon, I and my house, *Josh.* xxiv. 15; I and the transgressors whom I will teach thy ways, *Ps.* li. 13. Those that put themselves forth in compliance with Divine grace, their zeal will provoke many, 2 *Cor.* ix. 2. Those that are lively will be active, (when Philip was

drawn to Christ, he drew Nathanael,) and they will be exemplary, and so will win those that would not be won by the word.

3rd. The immediate answer that was given to this prayer; "The king hath" drawn me, hath "brought me into his chambers." It is not so much an answer fetched by faith from the word of Christ's grace as an answer fetched by experience from the workings of his grace. If we observe as we ought the returns of prayer, we may find that sometimes, while we are yet speaking, Christ hears, *Isa.* lxv. 24. The bridegroom is a king; so much the more wonderful is his condescension in the invitations and entertainments that he gives us, and so much the greater reason have we to accept of them and to run after him. God is the king that has made the marriage supper for his Son, *Mat.* xxii. 2, and brings in even the poor and the maimed, and even the most shy and bashful are compelled to come in. They that are drawn to Christ are brought not only into his courts, into his palaces, *Ps.* xlv. 15, but into his presence-chamber, where his secret is with them, *Ps.* xxv. 14; where he is free with them, *Job* xiv. 21; and where they are safe in his pavilion, *Ps.* xxvii. 5; *Isa.* xxvi. 20. Those that wait at wisdom's gates shall be made to come (so the word is) into her chambers, they shall be led into truth and comfort.

4th. The wonderful complacency which the spouse takes in the honour which the king put upon her. Being brought into the chamber, *First.* We have what we would have; our desires are crowned with unspeakable delights; all our griefs vanish, and we will be glad and rejoice. If a day in the courts, much more an hour in the chambers, is better than a thousand, than ten thousand elsewhere. They that are through grace brought into covenant and communion with God have reason to go on their way rejoicing, as the eunuch, *Acts* viii. 39, and that joy will enlarge our heart and be our strength, *Neh.* viii. 9. *Secondly.* All our joy shall centre in God. "We will rejoice," not in the ointments, or the chambers, but "in thee;" it is God only that is our exceeding joy, *Ps.* xliii. 4. We have no joy but in Christ, and which we are indebted to him for. *Gaudium in Domino*,—'Joy in the Lord,'—was the ancient salutation, and *Salus in Domine sempiterna*,—'Eternal salvation in the Lord.' *Thirdly.* We will retain the relish and savour of this kindness of thine, and never forget it. "We will remember thy loves more than wine;" not only thy love itself, ver. 2, but the very remembrance of it, shall be more grateful to us than the strongest cordial to the spirits, or the most palatable liquor to the taste. We will remember to give thanks for thy love, and it shall make more durable impressions upon us than any thing in this world.

5th. The communion which a gracious soul hath with all the saints in this communion with Christ. In the chambers to which we are brought we not only meet with him, but meet with one another, I *Jno.* i. 7, for "the upright love thee;" the congregation, the generation of the upright love thee. Whatever others do, all that are Israelites indeed, and faithful to God, will love Jesus Christ. Whatever differences of apprehension and affection there may be among Christians in other things, this they are all agreed in, Jesus Christ is precious to them. The upright here are the same with the virgins, ver. 3. All that remember his love more than wine will love him with a superlative love. Nor is any love acceptable to Christ but the love of the upright, love in sincerity, *Eph.* vi. 24.

Secondly. The spouse applies herself to the daughters of Jerusalem, ver. 5, 6. The church in general, being in distress, speaks to particular churches to guard them against the danger they were in, of being offended at the church's sufferings, 1 *Thes.* iii. 3. Or, the believer speaks to those that were professors at large in the church, but not of it, or to weak Christians, babes in Christ, that labour under much ignorance, infirmity, and mistake, not perfectly instructed, and yet willing to be taught in the things of God. She observed these bystanders look disdainfully upon her, because of her blackness, in respect both of sins and sufferings, upon the account of which they thought she had little reason to expect the kisses she wished for, ver. 2; or to expect that they should join with her in her joys, ver. 4. She therefore endeavours to remove this offence; she owns she is black. Guilt blackens; the heresies, scandals, and offences that happen in the church make her black; and the best saints have their failings. Sorrow blackens; that seems to be especially meant. The church is often in a low condition, mean and poor, and appearing despicable; her beauty sullied, and her face foul with weeping. She is in mourning weeds, clothed with sackcloth, as the Nazarites that were become blacker than a coal, *Lam.* iv. 8. Now, to take off this offence,

1. She asserts her own comeliness notwithstanding; ver. 5, "I am black, but comely;" black as the tents of Kedar, in which the shepherds lived, which were very coarse, and never whitened, weather-beaten, and discoloured, by long use; but comely "as the curtains of Solomon," the furniture of whose rooms, no doubt, was sumptuous, and rich in proportion to the stateliness of his houses. The church is sometimes black with persecution, but comely in patience, constancy, and consolation, and nevertheless amiable in the eyes of Christ; black in the account of men, but comely in God's esteem; black in some that are a scandal to her, but comely in others that are sincere and are an honour to her. True believers are black in themselves, but comely in Christ, with the comeliness that he puts upon them; black outwardly, for the world knows them not, but all glorious within, *Ps.* xlv. 13. St. Paul was weak, and yet strong, 2 *Cor.* xii. 10; and so the church, black and yet comely; a believer, a sinner, and yet a saint. His own righteousnesses are as filthy rags, but he is clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the people of Israel's blackness, when they made the golden calf, and their comeliness when they repented of it.

2. She gives an account how she came to be so black. The blackness was not natural, but contracted, and was owing to the hard usage that had been given her; "Look not upon me," so scornfully "because I am black." We must take heed with what eye we look upon the church, especially when she is in black; "Thou shouldst not have looked upon the day of thy brother," the day of his affliction, *Obad.* 12. Be not offended, for

1st. I am black by reason of my sufferings; "The sun hath looked upon me." She was fair and comely; whiteness was her proper colour, but she got this blackness by the burthen and heat of the day, which she was forced to bear. She was sunburnt, scorched with tribulation and persecution, *Mat.* xiii. 6, 21. And the greatest beauties, if exposed to the weather, are soonest tanned. Observe how she mitigates her troubles. She doth not say as Jacob, *Gen.* xxxi. 40, "in the day the drought consumed me," only "the sun has looked upon me," for it becomes not God's suffering people to make the worst of their sufferings. But what was the matter? *First.* She fell under the displeasure of those of her own house; "My mother's children were angry with me." She was in perils by false brethren; her foes were those of her own house, *Mat.* x. 21. Brethren by nature, as men; by profession, members of the same sacred corporation; the children of the church her mother, but not of God her father. They were angry with her; the Samaritans that claimed kindred to the Jews were vexed at any thing that tended to the prosperity of Jerusalem, *Neh.* ii. 10. Note, It is no new thing for the people of God to fall under the anger of their own mother's children; "It was thou, a man, mine equal," *Ps.* lv. 12, 13. This makes the trouble the more irksome and grievous; from such it is taken unkindly, and the anger of such is implacable; "a brother offended is hard to be won." *Secondly.* They dealt very hardly with her; "They made me the keeper of the vineyards;" that is, 1*st.* They seduced me to sin, drew me into false worships, to serve their gods, which was like dressing their vineyards, keeping the vine of Sodom. And they would not let me keep my own vineyard, serve my own God, and observe those pure worships which he gave me in charge, and which I do and ever will own for mine. These are the grievances which good people complain most of in a time of persecution, that their consciences are forced, and those that rule them with rigour say to their souls, "Bow down, that we may go over," *Isa.* li. 23. Or, *2nd.* They brought me into trouble, imposed that upon me which was toilsome, and burthensome, and very disgraceful. Keeping the vineyards was base servile work, and very laborious, *Isa.* lxi. 5. Her mother's children made her the drudge of the family; "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel." The spouse of Christ has met with a great deal of hard usage.

2nd. My sufferings are such as I have deserved; for "my own vineyard have I not kept." How unrighteous soever my brethren are in persecuting me, God is righteous in permitting them to do so; I am justly made a slavish keeper of men's vineyards, because I have been a careless keeper of the vineyards God hath intrusted me with. Slothful servants of God are justly made to serve their enemies, "that they may know my service and the service of the kings of the countries," 2 *Chr.* xii. 8; *Deu.* xxviii. 47, 48; *Eze.* xx. 24. Think not the worse of the ways of God for my sufferings, for I smart for my own folly. Note, When God's people are oppressed and persecuted, it becomes them to acknowledge their own sin to be the procuring cause of their troubles, especially their carelessness in keeping their vineyard, so that it has been like the field of the slothful.

7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest,
Where thou makest *thy flock* to rest at noon:
For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the
flocks of thy companions?
8 If thou know not, O thou fairest among women,
Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,
And feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.
9 I have compared thee, O my love,
To a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.
10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows *of jewels*,
Thy neck with chains *of gold*.
11 We will make thee borders of gold
With studs of silver

BRIDE'S DRESS.

Here is, First. The humble petition which the spouse presents to her beloved, the shepherdess to the shepherd, the church and every believer to Christ, for a more free and intimate communion with him. She turns from the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she had complained both of her sins and of her troubles, and looks up to heaven for relief and succour against both, ver. 7. Where observe, 1. The title she gives to Christ; "O thou whom my soul loveth." Note, It is the undoubted character of all true believers, that their souls love Jesus Christ, which intimates both the sincerity and the strength of their love; they love him with all their hearts; and they that do so may come to him boldly, and may humbly plead it with him. 2. The opinion she has of him as the good shepherd of the sheep. She doubts not but he feeds his flock, and makes them rest at noon. Jesus Christ graciously provides both repast and repose for his sheep. They are not starved, but well fed; not scattered upon the mountains, but fed together, fed in green pastures; and in the hot time of the day led by the still waters, and made to lie down under a cool, refreshing shade. Is it with God's people a noontime of outward troubles, inward conflicts? Christ hath rest for them; he carries them in his arms, *Isa.* xl. 11. 3. Her request to him that she might be admitted into his society; "Tell me where thou feedest." Those that would be told, that would be taught what they are concerned to know and do, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ, and beg of him to teach them, to tell them. Tell me where to find thee, where I may have conversation with thee, where thou feedest and tendest thy flock, that there I may have some of thy company. Observe by the way, We should not, in love to our friends and their company, tempt them or urge them to neglect their business, but desire such an enjoyment of them as will consist with it, and rather, if we can, to join with them in their business, and help to forward it. "Tell me where thou feedest," and there I will sit with thee, walk with thee, feed my flocks with thine, and not hinder thee nor myself neither, but bring my work with me. Note, They whose souls love Jesus Christ earnestly desire to have communion with him, by his word in which he speaks to us, and by prayer in which we speak to him; and to share in the privileges of his flock. And we may learn, from the care he takes of his church, to provide convenient food and rest for it, how to take care of our own souls, which are our charge. 4. The plea she useth for the enforcing this request; "For why should I be as one that turneth aside by" or after "the flocks of thy companions," that pretend to be so, but

are really thy competitors and rivals with thee. Note, Turning aside from Christ after other lovers is that which gracious souls dread and deprecate more than any thing else. Thou wouldst not have me to turn aside, no, nor to be as one that turneth aside. Tell me then, O tell me, where I may be near thee, and I will never leave thee. 1st. Why should I lie under suspicion, and look as if I belonged to some other, and not to thee? Why should I be thought by the flocks of our companions to be a deserter from thee, and a retainer to some other shepherd? Good Christians will be afraid of giving any occasion to those about them to question their faith in Christ and their love to him. They would not do any thing that looks like unconcernedness about their souls or uncharitableness towards their brethren, or that savours of indifferency and disaffection to holy ordinances. And we should pray to God to direct us into and keep us in the way of our duty, that we may not so much as seem to come short, *Heb.* iv. 1. 2nd. Why should I lie in temptation to turn aside, as I do while I am absent from thee? We should be earnest with God for a settled peace in communion with God through Christ, that we may not be as waifs and strays, ready to be picked up by him that next passeth by.

Secondly. The gracious answer which the bridegroom gives to this request, ver. 8. See how ready God is to answer prayer, especially prayers for instruction; even while she is yet speaking he hears. Observe, 1. How affectionately he speaks to her; "O thou fairest among women." Note, Believing souls are fair in the eyes of the Lord Jesus above any other. Christ sees a beauty in holiness, whether we do or no. The spouse had called herself black, but Christ calls her fair. Those that are low in their own eyes are so much the more amiable in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Blushing at their own deformity (saith Mr. Durham) is a chief part of their beauty. 2. How mildly he checks her for her ignorance, in these words, "If thou know not," intimating that she might have known it, if it had not been her own fault. What! dost thou not know me and my flock? Compare Christ's answer to a like address of Philip's, *Jno.* xiv. 9, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" But, 3. With what tenderness he acquaints her where she might find him. If men say, "Lo here is Christ, or Lo he is there, believe them not, go not after them," *Mat.* xxiv. 23, 26. But, 1st. Walk in the way of good men, *Pr.* ii. 20, follow the track, ask for the good old way, observe the footsteps of the flock, and go forth by them. It will not serve to sit still and cry, Lord, shew me the way, but we must bestir ourselves to inquire out the way; and we may find it by looking which way the footsteps of the flock lead, what has been the practice of godly people all along, and let that be your practice, *Heb.* vi. 12; 1 *Cor.* xi. 1. 2nd. Sit under the conduct of good ministers. Feed thyself and thy kids beside the tents of the under-shepherds; bring thy charge with thee, (and it is probable the custom was to commit the lambs and kids to the custody of the women, the shepherdesses,) they shall all be welcome, the shepherds will be no hindrance to thee, as they were to Reuel's daughters, *Ex.* ii. 17, but helpers rather, and therefore abide by their tents. Note, Those that would have acquaintance and communion with Christ must closely and conscientiously adhere to holy ordinances, must join themselves to his people, and attend his ministers. Those that have the charge of families must bring them with them to religious assemblies; let their kids, their children, their servants, have the benefit of the shepherds' tents.

Thirdly. The high encomiums which the bridegroom gives of his spouse. To be given in marriage, in the Hebrew dialect, is to be praised, *Ps.* lxxviii. 63, margin; so this spouse is here. Her husband praiseth this virtuous woman, *Pr.* xxxi. 28; he praiseth her, as is usual in poems, by similitudes. 1. He calls her his love, ver. 9; it is an endearing compellation often used in this book; My friend, my companion, my familiar. 2. He compares her to a set of strong and stately horses in Pharaoh's chariot. Egypt was famous for the best horses; Solomon had his from thence; and Pharaoh no doubt had the choicest the country afforded for his own chariots. The church had complained of her own weakness, and the danger she was in of being made a prey of by her enemies. Fear not, saith Christ, "I have made thee like a company of horses;" I have put strength into thee, as I have done into the horse, *Job* xxxix. 19, so that thou shalt with a gracious boldness mock at fear, and not be affrighted, like the lion, *Pr.* xxviii. 1; "The Lord has made thee as his goodly horse in the day of battle," *Zec.* x. 3. I have compared thee to my company of horses which triumphed over Pharaoh's chariots, the holy angels, horses of fire; *Hab.* iii. 15, "Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses;" and see *Isa.* lxiii. 13. We are weak in ourselves; but if Christ make us as horses, strong and bold, we need not fear what all the powers of darkness can do against us. 3. He admires the beauty and ornaments of her countenance; ver. 10, "Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels," the attire of the head, curls of hair, or favourites, (so some,) or knots of ribbons; "Thy neck also with chains," such as persons of the first rank wear, "chains of gold." The ordinances of Christ are the ornaments of the church; the graces, and gifts, and comforts of the Spirit, are the adorning of every believing soul, and beautify it; these render it in the sight of God of great price. The ornaments of the saints are many, but all orderly disposed in rows and chains, in which there is a mutual connexion with, and dependence upon, each other. The beauty is not from any thing in themselves, from the neck or from the cheeks, but from the ornaments with which they are set off. It was comeliness which I put upon thee, saith the Lord God, for we were born not only naked but polluted, *Eze.* xvi. 14.

Fourthly. His gracious purpose to add to her ornaments; for where God has given true grace he will give more grace; to him that hath shall be given. Is the church courageous in her resistance of sin, as the horses in Pharaoh's chariots? Is she comely in the exercise of grace, as with the rows of jewels and chains of gold? She shall be yet farther beautified; ver. 11, "We will make thee borders of gold," inlaid or enamelled "with studs of silver." Whatever is wanting shall be made up, till the church and every true believer comes to be perfect in beauty: see *Eze.* xvi. 14. This is here undertaken to be done by the concurring power of the three persons in the Godhead; We will do it; like that, *Gen.* i. 26, "Let us make man;" so let us new-make him, and perfect his beauty. The same that is the Author will be the Finisher of the good work, and it cannot miscarry.

12 While the king *sitteth* at his table,
My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.
13 A bundle of myrrh *is* my wellbeloved unto me;
He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.
14 My beloved *is* unto me *as* a cluster of camphire
In the vineyards of En-gedi.
15 Behold, thou *art* fair, my love;
Behold, thou *art* fair; thou *hast* doves' eyes.
16 Behold, thou *art* fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant:
Also our bed *is* green.
17 The beams of our house *are* cedar,
And our rafters of fir.

CAMPHOR.

Here the conference is carried on between Christ and his spouse, and endearments mutually exchanged.

First. Believers take a great complacency in Christ, and in communion with him; "To you that believe he is precious" above any thing in this world, 1 *Pet.* ii. 7. Observe,

1. The humble reverence believers have for Christ as their sovereign, ver. 12. He is a king, in respect both of dignity and dominion, he wears the crown of honour, he bears the sceptre of power, both which are the unspeakable satisfaction of all his people. This king has his royal table spread in the Gospel, in which is made for all nations a feast of fat things, *Isa.* xxv. 6. Wisdom hath furnished her table, *Pr.* ix. 1. He sits at this table to see his guests, *Mat.* xxii. 11, to see that nothing be wanting that is fit for them; he sups with them, and they with him, *Rev.* iii. 20; he hath fellowship with them, and rejoiceth in them. He sits at his table to bid them welcome, and to carve to them, as Christ brake the five loaves, and gave to his disciples that they might distribute to the multitude. He sits there to receive petitions, as Ahasuerus admitted Esther's petition at the banquet of wine. He has promised to be present with his people in his ordinances always. Then believers do him all the honour they can, and study how to express their esteem of him and gratitude to him, as Mary did when she anointed his head with the ointment of spikenard that was very costly, one pound of it worth three hundred pence, and so fragrant that "the house was filled with the" pleasing "odour of it," *Jno.* xii. 3; which story seems as if it were designed to refer to this passage, for Christ was then sitting at table. When good Christians, in any religious duty, especially in the ordinance of the Lord's supper, where the king is pleased as it were to sit with us at his own table, have their graces exercised, their hearts broken by repentance, healed by faith, and inflamed with holy love and desire towards Christ, with joyful expectations of the glory to be revealed, then the "spikenard sends forth the smell thereof." Christ is pleased to reckon himself honoured by it, and to accept of it as an instance of respect to him, as it was in the wise men of the East, who paid their homage to the newborn king of the Jews, by presenting to him frankincense and myrrh. The graces of God's Spirit in the hearts of believers are exceeding precious in themselves, and pleasing to Christ, and his presence in ordinances draws them out into act and exercise. If he withdraw, graces wither and languish, as plants in the absence of the sun. If he approach, the face of the soul is renewed, as of the earth in the spring; and then it is time to bestir ourselves, that we may not lose the gleam, not lose the gale; for nothing is done acceptably but what grace doth, *Heb.* xii. 28.

2. The strong affection they have for Christ as their beloved, their well-beloved, ver. 13. Christ is not only beloved by all believing souls, but is their well-beloved, their best beloved, their only beloved; he has that place in their hearts which no rival can be admitted to, the innermost and uppermost place. Observe, 1st. How Christ is accounted of by all believers; he is a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire, something, we may be sure, nay, every thing, that is pleasant and delightful. The doctrine of his Gospel, and the comforts of his Spirit, are very refreshing to them, and they rest in his love. None of all the delights of sense are comparable to the spiritual pleasure they have in meditating on Christ, and enjoying him. There is a complicated sweetness in Christ, and an abundance of it; there is a bundle of myrrh, and a cluster of camphire: we are not straitened in him in whom there is all fulness. The word translated camphire is *copher*, the same word that signifies an atonement or propitiation. Christ is a cluster of merit and righteousness to all believers; therefore he is dear to them, because is the propitiation for their sins. Observe what a stress the spouse lays upon the application; he is unto me, and again unto me, all that is sweet; whatever he is to others, he is so to me; he loved me, and gave himself for me; is my Lord, and my God. 2nd. How he is accepted; "he shall lie all night between my breasts," near my heart. Christ lays the beloved disciples in his bosom; Why then should not they lay their beloved Saviour in their bosoms? why should not they embrace him with both arms, and hold him fast with a resolution never to let him go? Christ must dwell in the heart, *Eph.* iii. 17; and in order to that, the adulteries must be put from between the breasts, *Hos.* ii. 2. No pretender must have his place in the soul; he shall be as a bundle of myrrh, or perfumed bag between my breasts, always sweet to me; or his effigies in miniature, his love-tokens, shall be hung between my breasts, according to the custom of those that are dear to each other. He shall not only be laid there for a while, but shall lie there, shall abide there.

Secondly. Jesus Christ has a great complacency in his church, and in every true believer. They are amiable in his eyes; ver. 15, "Behold, thou art fair, my love," and again, "Behold, thou art fair." He saith this not to make her proud, humility is one principal ingredient in spiritual beauty; but, 1. To shew that there is a real beauty in holiness; that all that are sanctified are thereby beautified; they are truly fair. 2. That he takes a great delight in that good work which his grace hath wrought on the souls of believers; so that, though they have their infirmities, whatever they think of themselves and the world thinks of them, he thinks them fair. He calls them friends. "The hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, is in the sight of God of great price," 1 *Pet.* iii. 4. 3. To comfort weak believers that are discouraged by their own blackness, let them be told again and again that they are fair. 4. To engage

all that are sanctified to be very thankful for that grace which has made them fair who by nature were deformed, and changed the Ethiopian's skin. One instance of the beauty of the spouse is here mentioned, that she hath doves' eyes, as *ch.* iv. 1. Those are fair in Christ's account that have not the piercing eye of the eagle, but the pure and chaste eye of the dove; not like the hawk, who when he soars upward still has his eye upon the prey on earth; but an humble modest eye, such an eye as discovers a simplicity and godly sincerity, and a dove-like innocency; eyes enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, that blessed dove; weeping eyes: I did "mourn as a dove," *Eze.* vii. 16.

Thirdly. The church expresseth her value for Christ, and returns esteem for esteem; ver. 15; "Behold, thou art fair." See how Christ and believers praise one another; Israel saith of God, "Who is like thee?" *Ex.* xv. 11; and God saith of Israel, "Who is like thee?" *Deu.* xxxiii. 29. Lord, saith the church, Dost thou call me fair? No, if we speak of strength, thou art strong, *Job* ix. 19; so if of beauty, thou art fair; I am fair no otherwise than as I have thine image stamped upon me; thou art the great original, I am but a faint and imperfect copy. I am but thine umbra, *Jno.* i. 16; iii. 34. Thou art fair in thyself, and (which is more) pleasant to all that are thine. Many are fair enough to look at, and yet the sourness of their temper renders them unpleasant, but thou art fair, yea, pleasant. Christ is pleasant as he is ours, in covenant with us, in relation to us. Thou art pleasant now, when the king sits at his table. Christ is always precious to believers, but in a special manner pleasant, when they are admitted into communion with him, when they hear his voice, and see his face, and taste his love; "it is good to be here." Having expressed her esteem of her husband's person, she next (like a loving spouse, that is transported with joy for having disposed of herself so well,) applauds the accommodations he had for her entertainment; his bed, his house, his rafters or galleries, ver. 16, which may be fitly applied to those holy ordinances in which believers have fellowship with Jesus Christ, receive the tokens of his love, and return their pious and devout affections to him, increase their acquaintance with him, and improve their advantages by him. Now, 1. These she calls ours, Christ and believers having a joint interest in them. As husband and wife are heirs together, 1 *Pet.* iii. 7, so believers are joint heirs with Christ, *Rom.* viii. 17. They are his institutions, and their privileges; in them Christ and believers meet. She doth not call them mine, for a believer will own nothing as his but what Christ shall have an interest in; nor thine, for Christ hath said, "All that I have is thine," *Lu.* xv. 31; all is ours, if we are Christ's. They that can by faith lay claim to Christ may lay claim to all that is his. 2. These are the best of the kind. Doth the colour of the bed, and the furniture belonging to it, help to set it off? "Our bed is green," a colour which in a pastoral is preferred before any other, because it is the colour of the fields and groves, where the shepherd's business and delight is. It is a refreshing colour, good for the eyes, and it notes fruitfulness; "I am like a green olive tree," *Ps.* lii. 8. We are married to Christ, that we should bring forth fruit unto God, *Rom.* vii. 4. "The beams of our house are cedar," ver. 17, which probably refers to the temple Solomon had lately built for communion between God and Israel, which was of cedar, a strong sort of wood, sweet, durable, and which will never rot; typifying the firmness and continuance of the church, the Gospel temple. The galleries for walking are of fir, or cypress; some sort of wood that was pleasing both to the sight and to the smell, intimating the delight which the saints take in walking with Christ, and conversing with him. Everything in the covenant of grace (on which foot all their treaties are carried on) is very firm, very fine, and very fragrant.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter, I. Christ speaks both concerning himself and concerning his church, ver. 1, 2. II. The church speaks, 1. Remembering the pleasure and satisfaction she had in communion with Christ, ver. 3, 4; 2. Entertaining herself with the present tokens of his favour, and taking care that nothing happen to intercept them, ver. 5—7; 3. Triumphing in his approaches towards her, ver. 8, 9; 4. Repeating the gracious calls he had given her to go along with him a walking, invited by the pleasures of the returning spring, ver. 10—13, out of her obscurity, ver. 14; and the charge he had given to the servants to destroy that which would be hurtful to his vineyard, ver. 15; 5. Rejoicing in her interest in him, ver. 16; 6. Longing for his arrival, ver. 17. They whose hearts are filled with love to Christ, and hope of heaven, know best what these things mean.

I *AM* the rose of Sharon,
And the lily of the valleys.
2 As the lily among thorns,
So *is* my love among the daughters.

See here, First. What Christ is pleased to compare himself to; and he condescends very much in the comparison. He that is the Son of the Highest, the bright and morning star, calls and owns himself "the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys," to express his presence with his people in this world, the easiness of their access to him, and the beauty and sweetness which they find in him; and to teach them to adorn themselves with him, as shepherds and shepherdesses, when they appeared gay, were decked with roses and lilies, garlands, and chaplets of flowers. The rose, for beauty and fragrancy, is the chief of flowers; and our Saviour prefers the clothing of the lily before that of Solomon in all his glory. Christ is the rose of Sharon, where probably the best roses grew, and in most plenty. The rose of the field, so some, noting that the gospel salvation is a common salvation, it lies open to all, whoever will may come and gather the rosebuds of privileges and comforts that grow in the covenant of grace. He is not a rose locked up in a garden, but all may come and receive benefit by him, and comfort in him. He is a lily for whiteness, a lily of the valleys for sweetness, for those we call so have a strong perfume; he is a lily of the valleys, or low places, in his humiliation, exposed to injury. Humble souls see most beauty in him; whatever he is to others, to them that are in the valleys he is a lily. He is the rose, the lily; there is none but he. Whatever excellency is in Christ, it is in him singularly, and in the highest degree.

Secondly. What he is pleased to compare his church to, ver. 2. 1. She is as a lily. He himself is the lily, ver. 1; she is "as the lily." The beauty of believers consists in their conformity to Jesus Christ, and resembling him; they are his love, and so they are his lilies, for those are made like Christ, in whose hearts his love is shed abroad. "As a lily among thorns," as a lily compared with thorns. The church of Christ doth as far excel all other societies as a bed of roses doth a bush of thorns. As a lily compassed with thorns. The wicked, the daughters of this world, such as have no love to Christ, are as thorns, worthless and useless, good for nothing but to stop a gap; nay, they are noxious and hurtful, they came in with sin, and are a fruit of the curse, they choke good seed, and hinder good fruit, and their end is to be burned. God's people are as lilies among them, scratched and torn, shaded and obscured by them. They are dear to Christ, and yet exposed to hardships and troubles in the world; they must expect it, for they are planted among thorns, *Eze.* ii. 6; but they are never the less dear to him for that. He doth not overlook or undervalue any of his lilies for their being among thorns; when they are among thorns, they must still be as lilies, must maintain their innocency and purity; and, though they are among thorns, must not be turned into thorns, must not render railing for railing; and if they thus preserve their character they shall be still owned as conformable to Christ. Grace in the soul is a lily among thorns; corruptions are thorns in the flesh, 2 *Cor.* xii. 7; are as Canaanites to God's Israel, *Jos.* xxiii. 13; but the lily that is now among thorns shall shortly be transplanted out of this wilderness, into that paradise where there is no pricking briar, or grieving thorn, *Eze.* xxviii. 24.

3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
So *is* my beloved among the sons.
I sat down under his shadow with great delight,
And his fruit *was* sweet to my taste.
4 He brought me to the banqueting house,
And his banner over me *was* love.
5 Stay me with flagons,
Comfort me with apples:
For I *am* sick of love.
6 His left hand *is* under my head,
And his right hand doth embrace me.
7 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, till he please.

Here, First. The spouse commends her beloved, and prefers him before all others. "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood," which perhaps doth not grow so high, nor spread so wide, as some other trees, yet is useful and serviceable to man, yielding pleasant and profitable fruit, while the other trees are of little use, no, not the cedars themselves, till they are cut down, "so is my beloved among the sons," so far doth he excel them all, all the sons of God, the angels, (that honour was put upon him, which was never designed for them, *Heb.* i. 4;)—all the sons of men; he is fairer than them all, than the choicest of them, *Ps.* xlv. 3. Name what creature you will, and you will find Christ has the preeminence above them all. The world is a barren tree to a soul; Christ is a fruitful one.

Secondly. She remembers the abundant comfort she has had in communion with him. She sat down by him with great delight, as shepherds sometimes repose themselves, sometimes converse with one another under a tree. A double advantage she found in sitting down so near the Lord Jesus. 1. A refreshing shade; "I sat down under his shadow," to be sheltered by him from the scorching heat of the sun,—to be cooled, and so to take some rest. Christ is to believers "as the shadow of" a great tree, nay, of "a great rock in a weary land," *Isa.* xxxii. 2; xxv. 4. When a poor soul is parched with convictions of sin, and the terrors of the law, as David, *Ps.* xxxii. 4, when fatigued with the troubles of this world, as Elijah, when he sat down under the juniper-tree, 1 *Kin.* xix. 4, they find that in Christ, in his name, his graces, his comforts, and his undertaking for poor sinners, which revives them, and keeps them from fainting; they that are weary and heavy laden in Christ may find rest. It is not enough to pass by this shadow, but we must sit down under it; here will I dwell, for I have desired it; and we shall find it not like Jonah's gourd, that soon withered, and left him in a heat, both inward and outward, but like the tree of life, the leaves whereof were not only for shelter but for the healing of the nations. We must sit down under this shadow with delight, must put an entire confidence in the protection of it, as *Jud.* ix. 15, and take an entire complacency in the refreshment of it. But that is not all: 2. Here is pleasing nourishing food. This tree drops its fruits to those that sit under its shadow, and they are welcome to them, and will find them sweet unto their taste, whatever they are to others. Believers have tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious, 1 *Pet.* ii. 3. His fruits are all the precious privileges of the new covenant, purchased by his blood, and communicated by his Spirit. Promises are sweet to a believer, yea, and precepts too; "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Pardons are sweet, and peace of conscience sweet, assurances of God's love, joys of the Holy Ghost, the hopes of eternal life, and the present earnests and foretastes of it, are sweet, all sweet to those that have their spiritual senses exercised. If our mouths be put out of taste to the pleasures of sin, Divine consolations will be sweet to our taste, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

Thirdly. She owns herself obliged to Jesus Christ for all the benefit and comfort she had had in communion with him, ver. 4. I sat down under the apple-tree, glad to be there, but he admitted me, nay, he pressed me, to a more intimate communion with him; "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without?" He brought me to the house of wine, the place where he used to entertain his special friends; from lower to higher measures and degree of comfort, from the fruit of the apple-tree to the more generous fruit of the vine. To him that values the Divine joys he hath, more shall be given. One of the rabbins, by the banqueting house understands 'the tabernacle of the congregation, where the interpretation of the law is given;' sure then we may apply it to Christian assemblies, where the Gospel is preached, and gospel ordinances are administered, particularly the Lord's-supper, that banquet of wine, especially to the inside of those ordinances, communion with God in them. Observe, 1. How she was introduced; "He brought me," wrought in me an inclination to draw nigh to God, helped me over my discouragements, took me by the hand, guided and led me, and gave me an access with boldness to God as a Father, *Eph.* ii. 18. We had never come into the banqueting house had never been acquainted with spiritual pleasures, if Christ had not brought us, by opening for us a new and living way, and opening in us a new and living fountain. 2. How she was entertained; "His banner over me was love." He brought me in with a banner displayed over my head, not as one he triumphed over, but as one he triumphed in, and whom he always caused to triumph with him, and in him, 2 *Cor.* ii. 14. The Gospel is compared to a banner, or ensign, *Isa.* xi. 12; and that which is represented in this banner, written in it in letters of gold, letters of blood, is love,—love; and this is the entertainment in the banqueting house. Christ is the captain of our salvation, and he lists all his soldiers under the banner of love; in that they centre, to that they must continually have an eye, and be animated by it; the love of Christ must constrain them to fight manfully. When a city was taken the conqueror set up his standard in it. He has conquered me with his love, overcome me with kindness; that is the banner over me. This she speaks of as what she had formerly had experience of, and she remembers it with delight. Eaten

bread must not be forgotten, but remembered with thankfulness to that God who has fed us with manna in this wilderness.

Fourthly. She professeth her strong affection, and most passionate love to Jesus Christ; ver. 5, "I am sick of love," overcome, overpowered by it. David explains this when he saith, *Ps.* cxix. 20, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments;" and ver. 81, "My soul fainteth for thy salvation." Languishing with care to make it sure, and fear of coming short of it. The spouse was now absent perhaps from her beloved, waiting for his return, and cannot bear the grief of distance and delay. Oh, how much better is it with the soul when it is sick of love to Christ than when it is surfeited with the love of this world! She cries out for cordials; "O stay me with flagons," or ointments, or flowers, any thing that is reviving; "Comfort me with apples," with the fruits of that apple tree, Christ, ver. 3; with the merit and mediation of Christ, and the sense of his love to my soul. Note, They that are sick of love to Christ shall not want spiritual supports, while they are yet waiting for spiritual comforts.

Fifthly. She experienceth the power and tenderness of Divine grace, relieving her in her present faintings, ver. 6. Though he seemed to have withdrawn, yet he was even then a very present help, 1. To sustain the lovesick soul, and to keep it from fainting away; "His left hand is under my head," to bear it up, nay, as a pillow to lay it easy. David experienced God's hand upholding him, then when his soul was following hard after God, *Ps.* lxiii. 8; and Job, in a state of desertion, yet found that God put strength into him, *Job* xxiii. 6. "All his saints are in his hand," which tenderly holds their aching heads. 2. To encourage the lovesick soul to continue waiting till he returns; for in the meantime "his right hand doth embrace me," and thereby gives me an unquestionable assurance of his love. Believers owe all their strength and comfort to the supporting left hand and embracing right hand of the Lord Jesus.

Sixthly. Finding her beloved thus nigh unto her, she is in great care that her communion with him be not interrupted; ver. 7, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem." Jerusalem, the mother of us all, chargeth all her daughters, the church chargeth all her members, the believing soul chargeth all its powers and faculties, the spouse chargeth herself, and all about her, "not to stir up, or awake her love until he please," now he is asleep in her arms, as she was borne up in his, ver. 6. She gives them this charge, "by the roes, and the hinds of the field," that is, by every thing that is amiable in their eyes, and dear to them, "as the loving hind, and the pleasant roe;" thy love is to me dearer than those can be to you, and will be disturbed like them with a very little noise. Note, 1. Those that experience the sweetness of communion with Christ, and the sensible manifestations of his love, cannot but desire the continuance of these blessed views, those blessed visits; Peter would make tabernacles upon the holy mount, *Mat.* xvii. 4. 2. Yet Christ will, when he pleaseth, withdraw those extraordinary communications of himself, for he is a free agent; and the Spirit, as the wind, blows where and when it listeth, and in his pleasure it becomes us to acquiesce. But, 3. Our care must be, that we do nothing to provoke him to withdraw, and to hide his face; that we carefully watch over our own hearts, and suppress every thought that may grieve his good Spirit. Let those that have comfort be afraid of sinning it away.

8 The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains,
Skipping upon the hills.
9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart:
Behold, he standeth behind our wall, [the lattice.
He looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through
10 My beloved spake, and said unto me,
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
11 For, lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over *and* gone;
12 The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing *of birds* is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;
13 The fig tree putteth forth her green figs,
And the vines *with* the tender grape give a *good* smell.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

The church is here pleasing herself exceedingly with the thoughts of her farther communion with Christ after she is recovered from her fainting fit.

First. She rejoiceth in his approach, ver. 8. 1. She hears him speak; It is "the voice of my beloved," calling to me to tell me he is coming. Like one of his own sheep she knows his voice before she sees him, and can easily distinguish it from the voice of a stranger, *Jno.* x. 4, 5; and like a faithful friend of the bridegroom she "rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice," *Jno.* iii. 29. With what an air of triumph and exultation doth she cry out, "It is the voice of my beloved!" it can be the voice of no other, for none but he can speak to the heart, and make that burn. 2. She seeth him come, sees the goings of our God, our King, *Ps.* lxviii. 24, "Behold, he comes." This may very well be applied to the prospect which the Old Testament saints had of Christ's coming in the flesh; Abraham saw his day at a distance, and was glad. The nearer the time came, the clearer discoveries were made of it; and they that waited for the consolation of Israel with an eye of faith saw him come, and triumphed in the sight. "Behold, he comes," for they had heard him say, *Ps.* xl. 7, Lo, I come; to which their faith here affixeth its seal; "Behold, he comes" as he has promised. 1st. He comes cheerfully, and with great alacrity; he comes leaping and skipping like a roe and like a young hart, ver. 9; as one pleased with his own undertaking, and that had his heart upon it, and his delights with the sons of men. When he came to be baptized with the baptism of blood, how was he straitened till it was accomplished! *Lu.* xii. 50. 2nd. He comes slighting and surmounting all the difficulties that lay in his way; "he comes leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills," so some read it, making nothing of the discouragements he was to break through. The curse of the law, the death of the cross, must be undergone, all the powers of darkness must be grappled with, but before the resolutions of his love these great mountains become plains. Whatever opposition is given at any time to the deliverances of God's church, Christ will break through it, will get over it. 3rd. He comes speedily, "like a roe, or a young hart." They thought the time long, every day a year; but really he hastened; as now, so then, surely he comes quickly; "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." When he comes for the deliverance of his people he flies upon a cloud, and never stays beyond his time, which is the best time. We may apply it to particular believers, who find that, even when Christ has withdrawn sensible comforts, and seems to forsake, yet it is but for a small moment, and he will soon return with everlasting lovingkindnesses.

Secondly. She pleaseth herself with the glimpses she has of him, and the glances she has of his favour. "He stands behind our wall;" I know he is there, for sometimes he looks forth at the window, or looks in at it, and flourisheth himself through the lattice. Such was the state of the Old Testament church, while it was in expectation of the coming of the Messiah; the ceremonial law is called a wall of partition, *Eph.* ii. 14; a vail, 2 *Cor.* iii. 13; but Christ stood behind that wall, they had him near them, they had him with them, though they could not see him clearly; he that was the substance was not far off from the shadows, *Col.* ii. 17. They saw him looking through the windows of the ceremonial institutions, and blossoming through those lattices; in their sacrifices and purifications Christ discovered himself to them, and gave them intimations and earnests of his grace, both to engage and to encourage their longings for his coming. Such is our present state in comparison with what it will be at Christ's second coming; we now see him through a glass darkly, the body is a wall between us and him, through the windows of which we now and then get a sight of him, but not face to face, as we hope to see him shortly. In the sacraments Christ is near us, but it is behind the wall of external signs, through those lattices he manifests himself to us; but we shall shortly see him as he is. Some understand this of the state of a believer when he is under a cloud; Christ is out of sight, and yet not far off: see *Job* xxxv. 14; and compare *Job* xxiii. 8—10. She calls the wall that interposed between her and her beloved, our wall, because it is sin, and nothing else, that separates between us and God, and that is a wall of our own erecting, *Isa.* lix. 1. Behind that he stands, as waiting to be gracious, and ready to be reconciled upon our repentance. Then he looks in at the window, observes the frame of our hearts, and the working of our souls; he looks forth at the window, and shews himself in giving them some comfort, that they may continue hoping for his return.

Thirdly. She repeats the gracious invitation he had given her to come a walking with him, ver. 10—13. She remembers what her beloved said to her, for it had made a very pleasing and powerful impression upon her; and the word that quickens us we shall never forget. She relates it for the encouragement of others, telling them what he had said to her soul, and done for her soul, *Ps.* lxvi. 16.

1. He called her his love, and his fair one; whatever she is to others, to him she is acceptable, and in his eyes she is amiable. Those that take Christ for their beloved, he will own them as his; never was any love lost that was bestowed upon Christ. Christ, by expressing his love to believers, invites and encourages them to follow him.

2. He called to her to rise and come away, ver. 10; and again, ver. 13. The repetition notes backwardness in her; we have need to be often called to come away with Jesus Christ, "precept must be upon precept, and line upon line." But it notes earnestness in him; so much is his heart set upon the welfare of precious souls, that he importunes them most pressingly to that which is for their own good.

3. He gave for a reason the return of the spring, and the pleasantness of the weather; which is elegantly described in a great variety of expressions. 1st. "The winter is past," the dark, and cold, and barren winter; long winters, and hard ones, pass away at last, they do not endure always. And the spring would not be so pleasant as it is if it did not succeed the winter, which is a foil to its beauty, *Eccl.* vii. 14. The face neither of the heavens nor of the earth is always the same, but subject to continual vicissitudes, diurnal and annual. "The winter is past," but not passed away for ever; it will come again, and we must provide for it in summer, *Pr.* vi. 6, 8. We must weep in winter, and rejoice in summer, as though we wept and rejoiced not, for both are passing. 2nd. "The rain is over and gone;" the winter rain, the cold, stormy rain, it is over now, and the dew is as the dew of herbs. Even the rain that drowned the world was over and gone at last, *Gen.* viii. 1—3; and God promised to drown the world no more, which was a type and figure of the covenant of grace, *Isa.* liv. 9. 3rd. "The flowers appear on the earth;" all winter they are dead and buried in their roots, and there is no sign of them, but in the spring they revive, and shew themselves in a wonderful variety and verdure, and, like the dew that produceth them, tarry not for man, *Mic.* v. 7. They appear, but they will soon disappear again, and man is herein like the flower of the field, *Job* xiv. 2. 4th. "The time of the singing of birds is come." The little birds that all the winter lie hid in their retirements, and scarce live, when the spring returns forget all the calamities of the winter, and to the best of their capacity chant forth the praises of their Creator. And he that understands the birds that cry for want, *Ps.* cxlvii. 9, no doubt takes notice of those that sing for joy, *Ps.* civ. 12. The singing of the birds may shame our silence in God's praises, who are better fed, *Mat.* vi. 26; and better taught, *Job* xxxv. 11, and are of more value than many sparrows. They live without inordinate care, *Mat.* vi. 26; and therefore they sing while we murmur. 5th. "The voice of the turtle is heard in our land," which is one of the season birds mentioned, *Jer.* viii. 7, that observe the time of their coming, and the time of their singing, and so shame us who know not the judgment of the Lord, understand not the times, nor do that which is beautiful in its season; do not sing in singing-time. 6th. "The fig tree putteth forth her green figs," by which we know that summer is nigh, *Mat.* xxiv. 32, when the green figs will be ripe figs, and fit for use. And "the vines with the tender grape give a good smell;" the earth produceth not only flowers, ver. 12, but fruits; and the smell of the fruits which are profitable is to be preferred far before that of the flowers, which are only for show and pleasure. Serpents, they say, are driven away by the smell of vines; and who is the old serpent, and who the true vine, we know very well.

4. Now this description of the returning spring, as a reason for coming away with Christ, is applicable, 1st. To the introducing of the Gospel in the room of the Old Testament dispensation, during which it had been winter-time with the church. Christ's Gospel warms that which was cold, makes that fruitful which before was dead and barren; when it comes to any place it puts a beauty and glory upon that place, 2 *Cor.* iii. 7, 8; and ministers occasion for joy. Spring-time is pleasant time, and so is gospel time. *Aspice venturo lætentur ut omnia seclo,*—'Behold, what joy the dawning age inspires!' said Virgil, from the sibyls, perhaps, with more reference to the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom at that time, than he himself thought of: see *Ps.* xcvi. 11. Arise, then, and improve this spring-time; come away from the world and the flesh, come into fellowship with Christ, 1 *Cor.* i. 9. 2nd. To the delivering of the church from the power of persecuting enemies, and the restoring of liberty and peace to it, after a severe winter of suffering and restraint. When the storms of trouble are over and gone, when the voice of the turtle, the joyful sound of the Gospel of Christ, is again heard, and ordinances enjoyed with freedom; then arise and come away to improve the happy juncture. Walk in the light of the Lord, sing in the ways of the Lord; when the churches had rest, then they were edified, *Acts* ix. 31. 3rd. To the conversion of sinners from a state of nature to a state of grace. That blessed change is like the return of the spring, a universal change, and a very comfortable one; it is a new creation, it is being

born again. The soul that was hard, and cold, and frozen, and unprofitable like the earth in winter, becomes fruitful like the earth in spring, and by degrees like it brings its fruits to perfection. This blessed change is owing purely to the approaches and influences of the Sun of righteousness, who calls to us from heaven to arise and come away; come, gather in summer. 4th. To the consolation of the saints, after a state of inward dejection and despondency. A child of God, under doubts and fears, is like the earth in winter; its nights long, its days dark, good affections chilled, nothing done, nothing got, the hand sealed up. But comfort will return, the birds shall sing again, and the flowers appear; arise, therefore, poor drooping soul, and come away with thy beloved. "Arise, and shake thyself from the dust." *Isa.* lii. 2; "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," *Isa.* lx. 1; "walk in that light," *Isa.* ii. 5. 5th. To the resurrection of the body at the last day, and the glory to be revealed. The bones that lay in the grave, as the roots of plants in the ground during the winter, shall then flourish as an herb, *Isa.* lxvi. 14; xxvi. 19. That will be an eternal farewell to winter, and a joyful entrance upon an everlasting spring.

14 O my dove, *that art* in the clefts of the rock,
In the secret *places* of the stairs,
Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice;
For sweet *is* thy voice, and thy countenance *is* comely.
15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines:
For our vines *have* tender grapes.
16 My beloved *is* mine, and I *am* his:
He feedeth among the lilies.
17 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,
Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart
Upon the mountains of Bether.

Here is, First. The encouraging invitation which Christ gives to the church, and to every believing soul, to come into communion with him, ver. 14. 1. His love is now his dove; David had called the church God's turtle dove, *Ps.* lxxiv. 19; and so she is here called; a dove for beauty, her wings covered with silver, *Ps.* lxviii. 13. For innocency and inoffensiveness; a gracious spirit is a dovelike spirit, galless and harmless, loving quietness and cleanliness, and faithful to Christ, as the turtle to her mate. The Spirit descended like a dove on Christ, and so he doth on all Christians, making them of a meek and quiet spirit. She is Christ's dove; for he owns her, and delights in her, she can find no rest but in him, and his ark, and therefore to him as her Noah she returns. 2. This dove is "in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs." This speaks either, 1st. Her praise. Christ is the Rock to whom she flees for shelter, and in whom alone she can think herself safe, and find herself easy, as the dove in a hole of the rock, when struck at by the birds of prey, *Jer.* xlviii. 28. Moses was hid in a cleft of the rock, that he might behold something of God's glory, which otherwise he could not have borne the brightness of. She retires into the secret places of the stairs, where she may be alone, undisturbed, and may the better commune with her own heart. Good Christians will find time to be private. Christ often withdrew to a mountain himself alone to pray. Or, 2nd. Her blame. She crept into the clefts of the rock, and the secret places, for fear, and shame; any where to hide her head, being heartless and discouraged, and shunning even the sight of her beloved. Being conscious to herself of her own unfitness and unworthiness to come into his presence, and speak to him, she drew back, and was like a silly dove without heart, *Hos.* vii. 11. 3. Christ graciously calls her out of her retirements; Come, "let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice." She was mourning like a dove, *Isa.* xxxviii. 14; bemoaning herself, like the doves of the valleys, where they are near the clefts of the impending rocks, mourning for her iniquities, *Eze.* vii. 16; and refusing to be comforted. But Christ calls her to lift up her face without spot, being purged from an evil conscience, *Job* xi. 15; xxii. 26; to come boldly to the throne of grace, having a great high priest there, *Heb.* iv. 16; to tell what her petition is, and what her request; Let me hear thy voice, hear what thou hast to say; what would ye that I should do unto you? Speak freely, speak up, and fear not a slight or repulse. 4. For her encouragement, he tells her the good thoughts he had of her, whatever she thought of herself; "Sweet is thy voice," thy praying voice; though thou canst but chatter like a crane, or a swallow, *Isa.* xxxviii. 14, it is music in God's ears. He hath assured us, that the prayer of the upright is his delight; he smelled a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, and the spiritual sacrifices are no less acceptable, 1 *Pet.* ii. 5. This doth not so much commend our services as God's gracious condescension in making the best of them, and the efficacy of the much incense which is offered with the prayers of saints, *Rev.* viii. 3. That countenance of thine which thou art ashamed of is comely, though now mournful; much more will it be so when it becomes cheerful. Then the voice of prayer is sweet and acceptable to God, when the countenance, that is, the conversation in which we shew ourselves before men, is holy, and so comely and agreeable to our profession. Those that are sanctified have the best comeliness.

Secondly. The charge which Christ gives to his servants to oppose and suppress that which is a terror to his church, and drives her like a poor frightened dove into the clefts of the rock, and which is an obstruction and prejudice to the interests of his kingdom in the world, and in the heart, ver. 15. "Take us the foxes," (take them for us, for it is good service both to Christ and the church,) "the little foxes, that" creep in insensibly, for though they are little, they do great mischief, they "spoil the vines," which they must by no means be suffered to do at any time, especially now when "our vines have tender grapes," that must be preserved, or the vintage will fail. Believers are as vines, weak, but useful plants; their fruits are as tender grapes at first, which must have time to come to maturity. This charge to take the foxes is, 1. A charge to particular believers to mortify their own corruptions, their sinful appetites and passions, which are as foxes, little foxes, that destroy their graces and comforts, quash good motions, crush good beginnings, and prevent their coming to perfection. Seize the little foxes, the first risings of sin, the little ones of Babylon, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 9, those sins that seem little, for they often prove very dangerous. Whatever we find a hindrance to us in that which is good, we must put it away. 2. A charge to all in their places to oppose and prevent the spreading of all such opinions and practices as tend to corrupt men's judgments, debauch their consciences, perplex their minds, and discourage their inclinations to virtue and piety. Persecutors are foxes, *Lu.* xiii. 32; false prophets are foxes, *Eze.* xiii. 4. Those that sow the tares of heresy or schism, and, like Diotrephes, trouble the peace of the church, and obstruct the progress of the Gospel, they are the foxes, the little foxes, which must not be knocked in the head,—Christ came not to destroy men's lives,—but taken, that they may be tamed, or else restrained from doing mischief.

Thirdly. The believing profession which the church makes of her relation to Christ, and the satisfaction she takes in her interest in him, and communion with him, ver. 16. He had called her to rise and come away with him, to let him see her face, and hear her voice. Now this is her answer to that call, in which, though at present in the dark, and at a distance, 1. She comforts herself with the thoughts of the mutual interest and relation that was between her and her beloved. 'My beloved to me, and I to him,' so the original reads it very emphatically. The conciseness of the language speaks the largeness of her affection; what he is to me, and I to him, may better be conceived than expressed. Note, 1st. It is the unspeakable privilege of all true believers that Christ is theirs; "My beloved is mine;" that notes not only propriety, I have a title to him, but possession and tenure, I receive from his fulness. Believers are partakers of Christ, they have not only an interest in him, but the enjoyment of him; are taken not only into covenant but into communion with him. All the benefits of his glorious undertaking as Mediator are made over to them. He is that to them which the world neither is, nor can be; all that which they need and desire, and which will make a complete happiness for them. All he is is theirs, and all he has, all he has done, and all he is doing, all he has promised in the Gospel, all he hath prepared in heaven, all is yours. 2nd. It is the undoubted character of all true believers that they are Christ's, and then, and then only, he is theirs. They have given their ownselves to him, 2 *Cor.* viii. 5, they receive his doctrine and obey his laws, they bear his image and espouse his interest; they belong to Christ. If we be his, his wholly, his only, his for ever, we may take the comfort of his being ours. 2. She comforts herself with the thoughts of the communications of his grace to his people. "He feedeth among the lilies." When she wants the tokens of his favour to her in particular, she rejoiceth in the assurance of his presence with all believers in general, who are as lilies in his eye; he feeds among them, that is, he takes as much pleasure in them and their assemblies as a man doth at his table, or in his garden, for "he walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks," he delights to converse with them, and to do them good.

Fourthly. The church's hope and expectation of Christ's coming, and her prayer grounded thereupon. 1. She doubts not but that the day will break, and the shadows will flee away. The gospel day will dawn, and the shadows of the ceremonial law will flee away. This was the comfort of the Old Testament church, that, after the long night of that dark dispensation, the dayspring from on high would at length visit them, to give light to them that sit in darkness. When the sun riseth the shadows of the night vanish, so do the shadows of the day when the substance comes. The day of comfort will come after a night of desertion. Or, it may refer to the second coming of Christ, and the eternal happiness of the saints. The shadows of our present state will flee away, our darkness and doubts, our griefs and all our grievances, and a glorious day shall dawn, a morning when the upright shall have dominion; a day that shall have no night after it. 2. She begs the presence of her beloved in the meantime to support and comfort her; "Turn, my beloved," turn to me, come and visit me, come and relieve me, be with me always to the end of the age. In the day of my extremity make haste to help me, make no long tarrying. Come over even the mountains of division, interposing time and days, with some gracious anticipations of that light and love. 3. She begs that he would not only turn to her for the present, but hasten his coming to fetch her to himself. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Though there be mountains in the way, thou canst, "like a roe, or a young hart," step over them with ease. 'O shew thyself to me, or take me up to thee.'

CHAPTER III.

In this chapter, I. The church gives an account of a sore trial wherewith she was exercised through the withdrawing of her beloved from her, the pains she was at ere she recovered the comfortable sense of his favour again, and the resolution she took when she did recover it, not to lose it again, as she had done, through her own carelessness, ver. 1—5. II. The daughters of Jerusalem admire the excellences of the church, ver. 6. III. The church admires Jesus Christ under the person of Solomon, his bed, and the life-guards about it, ver. 7, 8; his chariot, ver. 9, 10; and calls upon the daughters of Zion, who were admiring her, to admire him rather, especially as he appeared on his coronation day, and the day of his nuptials, ver. 11.

BY night on my bed
I sought him whom my soul loveth:
I sought him, but I found him not.
2 I will rise now, and go about the city
In the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him
whom my soul loveth:
I sought him, but I found him not.
3 The watchmen that go about the city found me:
To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?
4 *It was* but a little that I passed from them,
But I found him whom my soul loveth:
I held him, and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him into my mother's house,
And into the chamber of her that conceived me.
5 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, till he please.

God useth not to say to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain," and yet here we have the spouse for a great while seeking her beloved in vain, but finding him at last to her unspeakable satisfaction. It was hard to the Old Testament church to find Christ in the ceremonial law, and the types and figures which then were of good things to come. Long was the consolation of Israel looked for before it came; the watchmen of that church gave little assistance to those who inquired after him, but at length Simeon had him in his arms whom his soul loved. It is applicable to the case of particular believers, who often walk in darkness a great while; but at eventime it shall be light, and they that seek Christ to the end shall find him at length. Observe,

First. How the spouse sought him in vain upon her bed, ver. 1, when she was up, and looking about her, grace in act and exercise. Though her beloved was withdrawn, yet she could see him at a distance, *ch.* ii. 8; but now it was otherwise. She still continued her affection to him, still it was he whom

her soul loved; that bond of the covenant still continued firm, Though he slay me, I will trust in him, though he leave me, I will love him. When I have him not in my arms, I have him in my heart. But she wanted the communion she used to have with him, as David, when he thirsted for God, for the living God. She sought him, but, 1. It was by night on her bed. It was late and lazy seeking. Her understanding was clouded, it was by night, in the dark; her affections were chilled, it was on her bed, half asleep. The wise virgins slumbered in the absence of the bridgroom. It was a dark time with the believer, she saw not her signs, and yet she sought them. They whose souls love Jesus Christ will continue to seek him, even in silence and solitude. Their reins instruct them to do so, even in the night season. 2. She missed of finding him. Sometimes he is found of them that seek him not, *Isa.* lxv. 1, but here he is not found of one that sought him; either for the punishment of her corruptions, her slothfulness, and security, (we miss of comfort because we do not seek it aright,) or for the exercise of her graces, her faith, and patience, to try whether she will continue seeking. The woman of Canaan sought Christ, and found him not at first, that she might find him at length so much the more to her honour and comfort.

Secondly. How she sought him in vain abroad, ver. 2. She had made trial of secret worship, and gone through the duties of the closet, had remembered him on her bed, and meditated on him in the night-watches, *Ps.* lxiii. 6, but she did not meet with comfort; "My sore ran in the night," and then "I remembered God and was troubled," *Ps.* lxxvii. 2, 3. And yet she is not driven off by the disappointment from the use of farther means. She resolves, "I will rise now," I will not lie here if I cannot find my beloved here, nor be content if he be withdrawn. I will rise now without delay, and seek him presently, lest he withdraw farther from me. Those that would seek Christ so as to find him must lose no time. I will rise out of a warm bed, and go out in a cold, dark night, in quest of my beloved. Those that seek Christ must not stick or startle at difficulties. "I will rise and go about the city," the holy city, "in the streets, and the broadways," for she knew he was not to be found in any blind byways. We must seek in the city, in Jerusalem, which was a type of the gospel church. The likeliest place to find Christ is in the temple, *Lu.* ii. 46, in the streets of the gospel church, in holy ordinances, where the children of Zion pass and repass at all hours. She had a good purpose when she said, "I will arise now;" but the good performance was all in all. She arose and sought him, (those that are in pursuit of Christ, the knowledge of him, and communion with him, must turn every stone, seek everywhere,) and yet she found him not; she was still unsatisfied, uneasy, as Job, when he looked on all sides, but could not perceive any tokens of the Divine favour, *Job* xxiv. 8, 9; and the psalmist often, when he complained that God hid his face from him, *Ps.* lxxxviii. 14. We may be in the way of our duty, and yet may miss of comfort, for "the wind blows where it listeth." How heavy is the accent on this repeated complaint, "I sought him, but I found him not;" like that of Mary Magdalene, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," *Jno.* xx. 13.

Thirdly. How she inquired of the watchmen concerning him, ver. 3. In the night the watchmen go about the city, for the preservation of its peace and safety, to guide and assist the honest and quiet, as well as to be a check upon those that are disorderly; these met her in her walks, and she asked them if they could give her any tidings of her beloved. In the streets and broadways of Jerusalem she might meet with enough to divert her from her pursuit, and to entertain her, though she could not meet her beloved; but she regards none in comparison with him. Gracious souls press through crowds of other delights and contentments in pursuit of Christ, whom they prefer before their chief joy. Mary Magdalene sees angels in the sepulchre, but that will not do unless she see Jesus. "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" Note, We must evidence the sincerity of our love to Christ by our solicitous inquiries after him. "The children of the bridechamber will mourn when the bridegroom is taken away," *Mat.* ix. 15, especially for the sin which provoked him to withdraw. And if we do so, we will be in care to recover the sense of his favour, and diligent and constant in the use of proper means in order thereunto; we must search the Scriptures, be much in prayer, keep close to ordinances, and all with this upon our heart, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" Those only who have seen Christ themselves are likely to direct others to a sight of him. When the Greeks came to worship at the feast, they applied themselves to Philip with such an address as this of the spouse to the watchmen, "Sir, we would see Jesus," *Jno.* xii. 21.

Fourthly. How she found him at last, ver. 4. She passed from the watchmen as soon as she perceived they could give her no tidings of her beloved; she would not stay with them because he was not among them, but went on seeking; for (as Ainsworth observes) neither the society of brethren, nor church, nor ministers, can comfort the afflicted conscience, unless Christ himself be apprehended by faith. But presently after she parted from the watchmen she found him whom she sought, and then called him, "him whom my soul loveth," with as much delight as before with desire. Note, Those that continue seeking Christ shall find him at last, and when perhaps they were almost ready to despair of finding him: see *Ps.* xlii. 7, 8; lxxvii. 9, 10; *Isa.* liv. 7, 8. Disappointments must not drive us off from gracious pursuits. Hold out faith and patience; the vision is for an appointed time, and, though the watchmen can give us no account of it, at the end it shall itself speak and not lie; and the comfort that comes in after long waiting in the use of means will be so much the sweeter at last.

Fifthly. How close she kept to him when she had found him. She is now as much in fear of losing him as before she was in care to find him. "I held him," held him fast, as the women when they met with Christ after his resurrection, "held him by the feet and worshipped him," *Mat.* xxviii. 9. "I would not let him go." Not only I would never do any thing to provoke him to depart, but I would by faith and prayer prevail with him to stay, and by the exercise of grace preserve inward peace. Those that know how hard comfort is come by, and how dear it is bought, will be afraid of forfeiting it, and playing it away, and will think nothing too much to do to keep it safe. *Non minor est virtus quam quærere parta tueri*,—'As much is implied in securing our acquisitions as in making them.' They that have laid hold on wisdom must retain her, *Pr.* iii. 18. Those that hold Christ fast in the arms of faith and love shall not let him go, he will abide with them.

Sixthly. How desirous she was to bring others acquainted with him. "I brought him to my mother's house," that all my relations, all that are dear to me, might have the benefit of communion with him. When Zaccheus found Christ, or rather was found of him, salvation came to his house, *Lu.* xix. 9. Wherever we find Christ we must take him home with us to our houses, especially to our hearts. The church is our mother, and we should be concerned for her interests, that she may have Christ present with her, and be earnest in prayer for his presence with his people and ministers always. They that enjoy the tokens of Christ's favour to their own souls should desire that the church, and all religious assemblies in their public capacity, might likewise enjoy the tokens of his favour.

Seventhly. What care she was in that no disturbance might be given him, ver. 5. She repeats the charge she had before given, *ch.* ii. 7, to the daughters of Jerusalem, not to stir up, or awake her love. When she had brought him into her mother's house among her sisters, she gives them a strict charge to keep all quiet, and in good order, to be very observant of him, careful to please him, and afraid of offending him. The charge given to the church in the wilderness concerning the angel of the covenant that was among them explains this, *Ex.* xxiii. 21, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not." See that none of you stir out of your places, lest you disturb him, but with quietness work and mind your own business; make no noise, let all clamour and bitterness be put far from you, for that grieves the holy Spirit of God, *Eph.* iv. 30, 31. Some think this here to be Christ's charge to the daughters of Jerusalem, not to disturb or disquiet his church, nor trouble the minds of his disciples; for Christ is very tender of the peace of his church, and all the members of it, even the little ones, and those that trouble them shall bear their judgment, *Gal.* v. 10.

6 Who *is* this that cometh out of the wilderness
Like pillars of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all powders of the merchant?

These are the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom the charge was given, ver. 5. They had looked shily upon the bride, because she was black, *ch.* i. 6; but now they admire her, and speak of her with great respect. "Who is this?" How beautiful doth she look? Who would have expected such a comely and magnificent person to come out of the wilderness? As when Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem, they said, "Who is this?" And of the accession of strangers to the church, she herself saith with wonder, *Isa.* xlix. 21, "Who has begotten me these?"

First. This is applicable to the Jewish church, when, after forty years wandering in the wilderness, they came out of it to take a glorious possession of the land of promise; and this may very well be illustrated by what Balaam said of them at that time, when they ascended "out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke," and he stood admiring them: "From the top of the rocks I see him." "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob," *Num.* xxiii. 9; xxiv. 5.

Secondly. It is applicable to any public deliverance of the church of God, as particularly out of Babylon, the Old Testament and the New Testament Babylon. Then the church is "like pillars of smoke," ascending upwards in devout affections, and the incense of praise to God, from which, as from Noah's sacrifice, he smells a sweet savour. Then she is amiable in the eyes of her friends; and her enemies too cannot but have a veneration for her, and worship at her feet, knowing that God has loved her, *Rev.* iii. 9. Sometimes the fear of the Jews was upon their neighbours, when they saw that God was with them of a truth, *Est.* viii. 17.

Thirdly. It is applicable to the recovery of a gracious soul out of a state of desertion and despondency. 1. She ascends "out of the wilderness," the dry and barren land, where there is no way, where there is no water, where travellers are still in want, and ever at a loss; here a poor soul may long be left to wander, but shall come up at last, under the conduct of the Comforter. 2. She comes up "like pillars of smoke," like a cloud of incense ascending from the altar, or the smoke of the burnt offerings. This intimates a fire of pious and devout affections in the soul, from whence this smoke ariseth, and the mounting of the soul heavenwards in this smoke, as *Jud.* xiii. 20. The heart lifted up to God in the heavens, as the sparks fly upwards; Christ's return to the soul gives life to its devotion, and its communion with God is most reviving when it ascends out of a wilderness. 3. She is "perfumed with myrrh and frankincense," she is replenished with the graces of God's Spirit, which are as sweet spices, or as the holy incense, which, being now kindled, by his gracious returns sends forth a very fragrant smell. Her devotions are now more than ordinary lively; she is not only acceptable to God, but amiable in the eyes of others also, who are ready to cry out with admiration, "Who is this?" What a monument of mercy is this? The graces and comforts with which she is perfumed are called the "powders of the merchant," for they are far-fetched, and dear-bought by our Lord Jesus, that blessed merchant, who took a long voyage, and was at a vast expense, no less than that of his own blood, to purchase them for us. They are not the products of our own soil, nor the growth of our own country; no, they are imported from the heavenly Canaan, the better country.

7 Behold his bed, which *is* Solomon's;
Threescore valiant men *are* about it, of the valiant of Israel.
8 They all hold swords, *being* expert in war:
Every man *hath* his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.
9 King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of [Lebanon
10 He made the pillars thereof *of* silver,

OPEN PALANQUIN.—ver. 7.

The bottom thereof *of* gold, the covering of it *of* purple,
The midst thereof being paved *with* love, for the daughters of Jerusalem. [mon

11 Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solo-
With the crown wherewith his mother crowned him
In the day of his espousals,
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.

COVERED PALANQUIN.

The daughters of Jerusalem stood admiring the spouse, and commending her; but she overlooks their praises, is not puffed up with them, but transfers all the glory to Christ, and directs them to look off her, to him; recommends him to their esteem, and sets herself to applaud him. Here he is three times called Solomon, and we have that name but three times besides in all this song, *ch.* i. 5; viii. 11, 12. It is Christ that is here meant, who is greater than Solomon; and of whom Solomon was an illustrious type, for his wisdom and wealth, and especially his building the temple. Three things she admires him for:

First. The safety of his bed; ver. 7, "Behold his bed, even Solomon's," very rich and fine; for so the curtains of Solomon were. 'His bed, which is above Solomon's,' so some read it. Christ's bed, though he had not where to lay his head, is better than Solomon's best bed. The church is his bed, for he hath said of it, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell." The hearts of believers are his bed, for he lies all night between their breasts, *Eph.* iii. 17; heaven is his bed, the rest into which he entered when he had done his work. Or, it may be meant of that sweet repose and satisfaction which gracious souls enjoy in communion with him; it is called his bed, because, though we are admitted to it, and therefore it is called our bed, *ch.* i. 16, yet it is his peace that is our rest, *Jno.* xiv. 27; I will give you rest, *Mat.* xi. 28. It is Solomon's bed, whose name signifies peace, because in his days Judah and Israel dwell safely under their vines and fig trees.

That which she admires his bed for, is the guard that surrounded it. They that rest in Christ not only dwell at ease,—many do so who yet are in the greatest danger,—but they dwell in safety. Their holy serenity is under the protection of a holy security; this bed had "threescore valiant men about it," as yeomen of the guard, or the band of gentlemen pensioners. They are of the valiant of Israel; and a great many bold and brave men David's reign had produced; the life-guard men are well armed, they all hold swords, and know how to hold them, they are expert in war, well skilled in all the arts of it; they are posted about the bed, at a convenient distance; they are in a posture of defence, "every man with his sword upon his thigh," and his hand upon his sword, ready to draw upon the first alarm, and this "because of fear in the night," because of the danger feared, for the lives of princes, even the wisest and best, as they are more precious, so they are more exposed, and require to be more guarded, than the lives of common persons. Or, because of the fear of it, and the apprehension which the spouse may have of danger, these guards are set for her satisfaction, that she may be quiet from the fear of evil, which believers themselves are subject to, especially in the night, when they are under a cloud as to their spiritual state, or in any outward trouble more than ordinary. Christ himself was under the special protection of his Father in his whole undertaking; "In the shadow of his hand has he hid me," *Isa.* xlix. 2. He had legions of angels at his command. The church is well guarded; more are with her than are against her; lest any hurt this vineyard, God himself keeps it night and day, *Isa.* xxvii. 2, 3. Particular believers, when they repose themselves in Christ, and with him, though it may be night time with them, and they may have their fears in the night, yet they are safe, as safe as Solomon himself in the midst of his guards. The angels have a charge concerning them; ministers are appointed to watch for their souls, and they ought to be valiant men, expert in the spiritual warfare, holding the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and having that girt upon their thigh, always ready to them, for the silencing of the fears of God's people in the night. All the attributes of God are engaged for the safety of believers; they are kept as in a strong hold by his power, 1 *Pet.* i. 5; are safe in his name, *Pr.* xviii. 10; his peace protects those in whom it rules, *Phil.* iv. 7; and the effect of righteousness in them is quietness and assurance, *Isa.* xxxii. 17. Our danger is from the rulers of the darkness of this world, but we are safe in the armour of light.

Secondly. The splendour of his chariot, ver. 9, 10. As Christ and believers rest in safety under a sufficient guard, so, when they appear publicly, as kings in their coaches of state, they appear in great magnificence. This chariot was of Solomon's own contriving and making, the materials very rich, silver, and gold, and cedar, and purple; he made it for himself, and yet made it for the daughters of Jerusalem, to oblige them. Some by this chariot, or coach, or chaise, (the word is nowhere else used in Scripture,) understand the human nature of Christ, in which the Divine nature rode as in a chariot; it was a Divine workmanship, "A body hast thou prepared me." The structure was very fine, but that which was at the bottom of it was love, pure love to the children of men. Others make it to represent the everlasting Gospel, in which, as in an open chariot, Christ shews himself; and, as in a chariot of war, rides forth triumphantly, conquering, and to conquer. The pillars, the seven pillars, *Pr.* ix. 1, are of silver, for the words of the Lord are as silver tried, *Ps.* xii. 7, nay, they are better than thousands of gold and silver; it is hung with purple, a princely colour; all the adornings of it are dyed in the precious blood of Christ, and that gives them this colour. But that which completes the glory of it is love, it is paved with love, it is lined with love; not love of strangers, as Solomon's was in the days of his defection, but love of the daughters of Jerusalem, a holy love. Silver is better than cedar, gold than silver; but love is better than gold, better than all, and it is put last, for nothing can be better than that. The Gospel is all love.

Mr. Durham applies it to the covenant of redemption, the way of our salvation, as it is contrived in the eternal counsel of God, and manifested to us in the Scripture. This is that work of Christ himself, wherein the glory of his grace and love to sinners doth most eminently appear, and which makes him amiable and admirable in the eyes of believers; in this covenant love is conveyed to them, and they are carried in it to the perfection of love, and, as it were, ride in triumph. It is admirably framed and contrived, both for the glory of Christ, and for the comfort of believers; it is well ordered in all things, and sure, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 5. It has pillars that cannot be shaken, it is made of the wood of Lebanon, which can never rot; the basis of it is gold, the most lasting metal. The blood of the covenant, that rich purple, is the cover of this chariot, by which believers are sheltered from the wind and storms of Divine wrath, and the troubles of this world. But the midst of it, and that which is all in all in it, is love, that love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and the dimensions of which are immeasurable.

Thirdly. The lustre of his royal person when he appears in his greatest pomp, ver. 11. Here observe,

1. The call that is given to the daughters of Zion to acquaint themselves with the glories of king Solomon: "Go forth, and behold him." The multitude of the spectators adds to the beauty of a splendid cavalcade; Christ in his Gospel manifests himself, let each of us add to the number of those that give honour to him, by giving themselves the satisfaction of looking upon him. Who should pay respects to Zion's King but Zion's daughters? They have reason to rejoice greatly when he comes, *Zec.* ix. 9. 1st. Behold him then; look with pleasure upon Christ in his glory, look upon him with an eye of faith, with a fixed eye. Here is a sight worth seeing; behold and admire him, behold and love him; look upon him and know him again. 2nd. Go forth and behold him, go off from the world, as those that see no beauty and excellency in it, in comparison with what is to be seen in the Lord Jesus. Go out of yourselves, and let the sight of his transcendent beauty put you out of conceit with yourselves. Go forth to the place where he is to be seen, to the street through which he passeth, as Zaccheus.

2. The direction that is given them what they should take special notice of, as that which they would not see every day, and that was his crown. Either the crown of gold, adorned with jewels, which he wore on his coronation day, (Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, though she did not procure that for him, yet by her seasonable interposal she helped to secure it to him, when Adonijah was catching at it,) or, the garland, or crown of flowers and green tied with ribands, which his mother made for him, to adorn the solemnity of his nuptials. Perhaps Solomon's coronation day was his marriage day, the day of his espousals, when the garland his mother crowned him with was added to the crown his people crowned him with. Applying this to Christ, it speaks, 1st. The many honours put upon him, and the power and dominion he is intrusted with. Go forth, and see King Jesus, with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him, when he declared him his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased; when he set him as king upon his holy hill of Zion; when he advanced him to his own right hand, and invested him with a sovereign authority, both in heaven and in earth, and put all things under his feet. 2nd. The dishonour put upon him by his persecutors. Some apply it to the crown of thorns, with which his mother, the Jewish church, crowned him on the day of his death, which was the day of his espousals to his church, when he loved it, and gave himself for it, *Eph.* v. 25. And it is observable that, when he was brought forth wearing the crown of thorns, Pilate said, and said it to the daughters of Zion, "Behold the man." 3rd. It seems especially to mean the honour done him by his church, as his mother, and by all true believers, in whose hearts he is formed, and of whom he has said, "These are my mother, and sister, and brother," *Mat.* xii. 50. They give him the glory of his undertaking, to him is glory in the church, *Eph.* iii. 21. When believers accept of him as theirs, and join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant, *First.* It is his coronation day in their souls. Before conversion they were crowning themselves, but then they begin to crown Christ, and continue to do so from that day forward; they appoint him their head; they bring every thought into obedience to him; they set up his throne in their hearts, and cast all their crowns at his feet. *Secondly.* It is the day of his espousals, in which he betrothes them to him for ever, in loving-kindness and in mercies, joins them to himself in faith and love, and gives himself to them in the promises, and all he hath to be theirs. "Thou shalt not be for another, so will I also be for thee," *Hos.* iii. 3; and to him they are presented as chaste virgins. *Thirdly.* It is "the day of the gladness of his heart." He is pleased with the honour that his people do him, pleased with the progress of his interest among them. Doth Satan fall before them? In that hour Jesus rejoiceth in spirit, *Lu.* x. 18, 21. There is joy in heaven over repenting sinners; the family is glad when the prodigal son returns. Go forth, and behold Christ's grace towards sinners, as his crown, his brightest glory.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter, I. Jesus Christ, having espoused the church to himself, (*ch.* iii. 11,) highly commends her beauty in the several instances of it, concluding her fair, all fair, ver. 1—5; and again, ver. 7. II. He retires himself, and invites her with him from the mountains of terror to those of delight, ver. 6—8. III. He professeth his love to her, and his delight in her affection to him, ver. 9—14. IV. She ascribes all she had that was valuable in her to him, and depends upon the continued influence of his grace to make her more and more acceptable to him, ver. 15, 16.

BEHOLD, thou *art* fair, my love; behold, thou *art* fair;
Thou *hast* doves' eyes within thy locks:
Thy hair *is* as a flock of goats,
That appear from mount Gilead.

2 Thy teeth *are* like a flock *of sheep that are even* shorn,
Which came up from the washing;
Whereof every one bear twins,
And none *is* barren among them.

3 Thy lips *are* like a thread of scarlet,
And thy speech *is* comely: [locks.
Thy temples *are* like a piece of a pomegranate within thy

4 Thy neck *is* like the tower of David builded for an armoury,
Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, [men.
All shields of mighty

5 Thy two breasts *are* like two young roes
That are twins, which feed among the lilies

6 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill
7 Thou *art* all fair, my love; [of frankincense.
There is no spot in thee.

Here is, First. A large and particular account of the beauties of the church, and of gracious souls, on whom the image of God is renewed, consisting in the beauty of holiness. In general, he that is a competent judge of beauty, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth, and what all must subscribe to, he hath said, "Behold, thou art fair." She had commended him, and called all about her to take notice of his glories, and hereby she recommends herself to him, gains his favour, and, in return for her respects, he calls to all about him to take notice of her graces. Those that honour Christ he will honour, 1 *Sam.* ii. 30. He doth not flatter her, nor design hereby either to make her proud of herself or to court her praises of him. But, 1. It is to encourage her under her present dejections; whatever others thought of her, she was amiable in his eyes. 2. It is to teach her what to value herself by; not any external advantages which would add nothing to her, nor the want of them deprive her of any thing that was really excellent, but by the comeliness of grace which he had put upon her. 3. It is to invite others to think well of her too, and to join themselves to her. Thou art my love, thou lovest me, and art loved of me, and therefore thou art fair. All the beauty of the saints is derived from him, and they shine by reflecting his light. It is "the beauty of the Lord our God" that is upon us, *Ps.* xc. 17. She was espoused to him, and that made her beautiful. *Uxor fulget radiis mariti*,—'The spouse shines in her husband's rays.' It is repeated, "Thou art fair," and again, "thou art fair;" noting not only the certainty of it, but the pleasure he took in speaking of it. As to the representation here made of the beauty of the church, the images are certainly very bright, the shades strong, and the comparisons bold; not proper, indeed, to represent any external beauty, for they were not designed to do so, but the beauty of holiness, the new man, the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible. Seven particulars are instanced in, a number of perfection; for the church is enriched with manifold graces, by the seven spirits that are before the throne, *Rev.* i. 4; 1 *Cor.* i. 5, 7.

1. Her eyes. A good eye contributes much to a beauty. "Thou hast doves' eyes," clear and chaste, and often cast up towards heaven. It is not the eagle's eye, that can face the sun, but the doves' eye, an humble, modest, mournful eye, that is the praise of those whom Christ loves. Ministers are the church's eyes; *Isa.* lii. 9, "Thy watchmen shall see eye to eye;" they must be like doves' eyes, harmless and inoffensive, *Mat.* x. 16, having their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity. Wisdom and knowledge are the eyes of the new man, they must be clear, but not haughty, not exercised in things too high for us. When our aims and intentions are sincere and honest, then we have doves' eyes; when we look not unto idols, *Eze.* xviii. 6, but have our eyes ever towards the Lord, *Ps.* xxv. 15. The doves' eyes are within the locks, which are as a shade upon them, so that, 1st. They cannot fully see. As long as we are here in this world, we know but in part, for our hair hangs in our eyes; "we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness." Death will shortly cut those locks, and then we shall see all things clearly. 2nd. They cannot be fully seen, but as the stars through the thin clouds. Some make it to intimate the bashfulness of her looks; she suffers not her eyes to wander, but limits them with her locks.

2. Her hair. It is compared to a flock of goats, which looked white, and were on the top of the mountains like a fine head of hair, and the sight was the more pleasant to the spectator, because the goats have not only gravity from their beards, but they are comely in going, *Pr.* xxx. 31; but it was most pleasant of all to the owner, much of whose riches consisted in his flocks. Christ puts a value upon that in the church, and in believers, which others make no more account of than of their hair; he told his disciples, the very hairs of their head were all numbered, as carefully as men number their flocks, *Mat.* x. 30, and that not a hair of their head should perish, *Lu.* xxi. 18. Some by the hair here understand the outward conversation of a believer, which ought to be comely, and decent, and agreeable to the holiness of the heart. The apostle opposeth good works, such as become the professors of godliness, to the plaiting of the hair, 1 *Tim.* ii. 9, 10. Mary Magdalene's hair was beautiful when she wiped the feet of Christ with it.

3. Her teeth. ver. 2. Ministers are the church's teeth, that, as nurses, chew the meat for the babes of Christ. The Chaldee paraphrase applies it to the priests and Levites, who fed upon the sacrifices, as the representatives of the people. Faith, by which we feed upon Christ, meditation, by which we ruminate on the word, and chew the cud upon what we have heard, in order to the digesting of it, are the teeth of the new man. These are here compared to a flock of sheep; Christ called his disciples and ministers a little flock. It is the praise of teeth to be even, to be white, and kept clean, like sheep from the washing; and to be firm, and well fixed in the gums, and not like sheep that cast their young, for so the word signifies which we translate 'barren.' It is the praise of ministers to be even in mutual love and concord, to be pure, and clean from all moral pollutions, and to be fruitful, bringing forth souls to Christ, and nursing his lambs.

4. Her lips. These are compared to a thread of scarlet, ver. 3. Red lips are comely, and a sign of health, as the paleness of the lips is a sign of faintness and weakness. Her lips were of the colour of scarlet, but thin lips, like a thread of scarlet. The next words explain it; "Thy speech is comely," always with grace, good, and to the use of edifying, which adds much to the beauty of a Christian. When we praise God with our lips, and with the mouth make confession of him to salvation, then they are as a thread of scarlet. All our good works and good words must be washed in the blood of Christ, died like the scarlet thread, and then, and not till then, they are acceptable to God. The Chaldee applies it to the chief priest, and his prayers for Israel on the day of atonement.

5. Her temples, or cheeks, which are here compared to a piece of a pomegranate, fruits which, when cut in two, have red veins, or specks in them, like a blush in the face. Humility and modesty, blushing to lift up our faces before God, blushing at the remembrance of sin, and in a sense of our unworthiness of the honour put upon us, will beautify us very much in the eyes of Christ. The blushes of Christ's bride are within her locks, which intimates, saith Mr. Durham, that she blushes when no other sees, and for that which none sees but God and conscience; also, that she seeks not to proclaim her humility, but modestly covers that too; yet the evidences of all these in a tender walk appear and are comely.

6. Her neck. This is here compared to the tower of David, ver. 4. This is generally applied to the grace of faith, by which we are united to Christ, as the body is united to the head by the neck. This is like the tower of David, furnishing us with weapons of war, especially bucklers and shields, as the soldiers were supplied with them out of that tower; for faith is our shield, *Eph.* vi. 16; they that have it never want a buckler, for God will compass them with his favour as with a shield. When this neck is like a tower, straight, and stately, and strong, a Christian goes on in his way, and works with courage and magnanimity, and doth not hang a drooping head, as he doth when faith fails. Some make the shields of the mighty men, that are here said to hang up in the tower of David, to be the monuments of the valour of David's worthies; their shields were preserved to keep in remembrance them and their heroic acts, intimating that it is a great encouragement to the saints to hold up their heads, to see what great things the saints in all ages have done and won by faith. In *Heb.* xi. we have the shields of the mighty men hung up, the exploits of believers, and the trophies of their victories.

7. Her breasts. These are like "two young roes that are twins," ver. 5. The church's breasts are both for ornament, *Eze.* xvi. 7, and for use; they are the breasts of her consolation, *Isa.* lxvi. 11, as she is said to suck the breast of kings, *Isa.* lx. 16. Some apply these to the two testaments, others to the two sacraments, the seals of the covenant of grace, others to the ministers, who are to be spiritual nurses to the children of God, and to give out to them the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby; and in order to that are themselves to feed among the lilies, where Christ feeds, *ch.* ii. 16, that they may be to the babes of the church as full breasts. Or, the breasts of a believer are his love to Christ, which he is pleased with, as the tender husband is with the affections of his wife, who is therefore said to be to him as the loving hind and the pleasant roe, because her breasts satisfy him at all times, *Pr.* v. 19. This includes also his edifying others, and communicating grace to them, which adds much to a Christian's beauty.

Secondly. The bridegroom's resolution hereupon to retire to the mountain of myrrh, ver. 6, and there to make his residence. This mountain of myrrh is supposed to signify the mount Moriah, on which the temple was built, where incense was daily burnt to the honour of God. Christ was so pleased with the beauty of his church, that he chooseth this to be his rest for ever; here he will dwell "till the day break, and the shadows flee away." Christ's parting promise to his disciples, as the representatives of the church, answers to this, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Where the ordinances of God are duly administered, there Christ will be, and there we must meet him, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Some make these to be the words of the spouse, either modestly ashamed of the praises given her, and willing to get out of the hearing of them, or desirous to be constant to the holy hill, not doubting but there to find suitable and sufficient succour and relief in all her straits, and there to cast anchor, and wish for the day, which at the time appointed would break, and the shadows flee away. The holy hill, as some observe, is here called both a mountain of myrrh, which is bitter, and a hill of frankincense, which is sweet, for there we have occasion both to mourn and rejoice. Repentance is a bitter sweet; but in heaven it will be all frankincense, and no myrrh. Prayer is compared to incense, and Christ will meet his praying people and will bless them.

Thirdly. His repeated commendation of the beauty of his spouse; ver. 7, "Thou art all fair, my love." He had said, ver. 1, "Thou art fair," but here he goes farther, and in review of the particulars, as of those of the creation, he pronounceth all very good, "Thou art all fair, my love," that is, thou art all over beautiful, and there is nothing amiss in thee, and thou hast all beauties in thee; thou art sanctified wholly in every part, all things are become new, 2 *Cor.* v. 17. There is not only a new face and a new name, but a new man, a new nature; "there is no spot in thee," as far as thou art renewed. The spiritual sacrifices must be without blemish. There is no spot but such as is often the spot of God's children, none of the leopard's spots. The church, when Christ shall present it to himself a glorious church, will be altogether without spot or wrinkle, *Eph.* v. 25.

8 Come with me from Lebanon, *my* spouse,
With me from Lebanon:
Look from the top of Amana,
From the top of Shenir and Hermon,
From the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.
9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, *my* spouse;
Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,
With one chain of thy neck.
10 How fair is thy love, my sister, *my* spouse!
How much better is thy love than wine!
And the smell of thine ointments than all spices!
11 Thy lips, O *my* spouse, drop *as* the honeycomb:
Honey and milk *are* under thy tongue;
And the smell of thy garments *is* like the smell of Lebanon.
12 A garden inclosed *is* my sister, *my* spouse;
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed. [fruits;
13 Thy plants *are* an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant
Camphire, with spikenard,
14 Spikenard and saffron;
Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense;
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:

These are still the words of Christ to his church, expressing his great esteem of her, and affection to her, the opinion he had of her beauty and excellency, the desire he had of, and the delight he had in, her converse and society. And so ought men to love their wives as Christ loveth the church, and takes pleasure in it, as if it were spotless, and had no fault, when yet it is compassed with infirmity. Now observe here,

First. The endearing names and titles by which he calls her; to express his love to her, to assure her of it, and to engage and excite her love to him. Twice here he calls her "my spouse," ver. 8, 11, and three times, "my sister, my spouse," ver. 9, 10, 12. Mention was made, *ch.* iii. 11, of the day of his espousals, and after that she is called his spouse, not before. Note, There is a marriage-covenant between Christ and his church, between Christ and every true believer. Christ calls his church his spouse, and his calling her so makes her so. "I have betrothed thee unto me for ever;" and "as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." He is not ashamed to own the relation, but, as becomes a kind and tender husband, he speaks lovingly to her, and calls her his spouse, which cannot but strongly engage her

to be faithful to him. Nay, because no one relation among men is sufficient to set forth Christ's love to his church, and to shew that all this must be understood spiritually, he owns her in two relations, which among men are incompatible, "my sister, my spouse." Abraham's saying of Sarah, "she is my sister," was interpreted a denying of her to be his wife; but Christ's church is to him both a sister and a spouse, as *Mat.* xii. 50, a sister and mother. His calling her sister is grounded upon his taking our nature upon him in his incarnation, and his making us partakers of his nature in our sanctification. He clothed himself with a body, *Heb.* ii. 14, and he clothes believers with his Spirit, 1 *Cor.* vi. 17, and so they become his sisters. They are children of God his Father, 2 *Cor.* vi. 18, and so they become his sisters. "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one," *Heb.* ii. 11; and he owns them and loves them as his sisters.

Secondly. The gracious call he gives her to come along with him as a faithful bride, that must forget her own people and her father's house, and leave all to cleave to him. *Ubi tu Caius, ibi ego Caia,*—'Where thou Caius art, I Caia will be.' "Come with me from Lebanon," ver. 8.

It is, 1. A precept; so we take it, like that, *ch.* ii. 10, 13, "Rise up, and come away." All that are by faith come to Christ must come with Christ, in holy obedience to him, and compliance with him. Being joined to him, we must walk with him. This is his command to us daily: "Come with me, my spouse," come with me to God as a father, come with me onwards, heavenwards, come forward with me, come up with me. "Come with me from Lebanon, from the top of Amana, from the lions' dens." These mountains are to be considered, 1st. As seemingly delightful places; Lebanon is called that goodly mountain, *Deu.* iii. 25. We read of the glory of Lebanon, *Isa.* xxxv. 2, and its goodly smell, *Hos.* xiv. 6. We read of the pleasant dew of Hermon, *Ps.* cxxxiii. 3, and the joy of Hermon, *Ps.* lxxxix. 12. And we may suppose the other mountains here mentioned to be pleasant ones; and so this is Christ's call to his spouse to come off from the world, all its products, and all its pleasures; to sit loose to all the delights of sense. All those must do so that would come with Christ; they must take their affections off from all present things, yea, though they be placed at the upper end of the world, on the top of Amana and the top of Shenir, though they enjoy the highest satisfactions the creature can propose to give, yet they must come away from them all and live above the tops of the highest hills on earth, that they may have their conversation in heaven. Come from those mountains to go along with Christ to the holy mountain, the mountain of myrrh, ver. 6. Even while we have our residence on these mountains, yet we must look from them, look above them; "Shall we lift up our eyes to the hills?" No, "our help cometh from the Lord," *Ps.* cxxi. 1, 2. We must look beyond them to the things that are not seen, as these high hills are, that are eternal. From the tops of Shenir and Hermon, which were on the other side Jordan, as from Pisgah, they could see the land of Canaan: from this world we must look forward to the better country. 2nd. They are to be considered as really dangerous. These hills, indeed, are pleasant enough, but there are in them lions' dens; they are mountains of the leopards, mountains of prey, though they seem glorious and excellent, *Ps.* lxxvi. 4. Satan, that roaring lion, is the prince of this world, in the things of it he lies in wait to devour. On the tops of these mountains there are many dangerous temptations to those that take up their residence in them; and, therefore, come with me from them. Let us not set our hearts upon the things of this world, and then they can do us no hurt. Come with me from the temples of idolaters, and the societies of wicked people, so some understand it; "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." Come from under the dominion of your own lusts, which are as lions and leopards, fierce upon us, and making us fierce.

2. It may be taken as a promise. Thou shalt come with me from Lebanon, from the lions' dens; that is, 1st. Many shall be brought home to me, as living members of the church, from every point, from Lebanon in the north, Amana in the west, Hermon in the east, Shenir in the south, from all parts, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, *Mat.* viii. 11: see *Isa.* xlix. 11, 12. Some from the tops of these mountains, some of the great and topping men of this world, shall give themselves to Christ. 2nd. The church shall be delivered from her persecutors in due time. Though now she dwells among lions, *Ps.* lvii. 4, Christ will take her with himself from among their dens.

Thirdly. The great delight Christ takes in his church, and in all believers. He delights in them,

1. As in an agreeable bride, adorned for her husband, *Rev.* xxi. 2, who greatly desires her beauty, *Ps.* xlv. 11. No expressions of love can be more passionate than these here in which Christ manifests his affection to his church, and yet that great proof of his love, his dying for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, goes far beyond them all. A spouse so dearly bought and paid for could not but be dearly loved; such a price being given for her, a high value must needs be put upon her accordingly; and both together may well set us a wondering at the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that love in which he gave himself for us, and gives himself to us. Observe,

1st. How he is affected towards his spouse; "Thou hast ravished my heart." The word is used only here, 'Thou hast hearted me,' or, 'thou hast unhearted me.' New words are coined to express the inexpressibleness of Christ's surprising love to his church; and the strength of that love is set forth by that which is a weakness in men, being so much in love with one object as to be heartless to every thing else. This may refer to that love which Christ had to the chosen remnant before the worlds were, when his "delights were with the sons of men," *Pr.* viii. 31. That first love which brought him from heaven to earth to seek and save them at such vast expense; yet including the complacency he takes in them when he brought them to himself. Note, Christ's heart is upon his church; so it has appeared all along. His treasure is in it, it is his peculiar treasure, *Ex.* xix. 5, and therefore there his heart is also. 'Never was love like unto the love of Christ, which made him even mindless of himself when he emptied himself of his glory, and despised all shame and pain for our sakes. The wound of love towards us, which he had from eternity in himself, made him neglect all the wounds and reproaches of the cross.' So Bishop Reynolds here. Thus let us love him.

2nd. What it is that thus affects him with delight. *First.* The regard she has to him; "Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes," those dove's eyes, clear and chaste, which were commended, ver. 11; with one glance of those eyes. Christ is wonderfully pleased with those that look unto him as their Saviour, and through the eye of faith dart their affections to him above any rival whatsoever, and whose eyes are ever towards him. He is soon aware of the first look of a soul towards him, and meets it with his favours. *Secondly.* The ornaments she has from him; that is, the obedience she yields to him; for that is the chain of her neck; the graces that enrich her soul, which are connected as links in a chain. The exercise of these graces in a conversation which adorns both herself and the doctrine of Jesus Christ, which she professeth to believe, (as a gold chain is an ornament to persons of quality,) and an entire submission to the commanding power of his law, and the constraining power of his love. Having shaken off the bands of our neck, by which we were tied to this world, *Isa.* lii. 2, and the yoke of our transgressions, we are bound with the cords of love as chains of gold, to Jesus Christ, and our necks brought under his sweet and easy yoke to draw in it. This recommends us to Jesus Christ, for this is that true wisdom which, in his account, is "an ornament of grace unto the head, and chains about the neck," *Pr.* i. 9. *Thirdly.* The affection she has for him. "How fair is thy love," how beautiful is it; not only thy love itself, but all the fruits and products of it, its workings in the heart, its works in the life. How well doth it become a believer thus to love Christ, and what a pleasure doth Christ take in it! Nothing recommends us to Christ so as this doth. "How much better is thy love than wine!" than all the wine that was poured out to the Lord in the drink offerings; hence the fruit of the vine is said to cheer God and man, *Jud.* ix. 13. She had said of Christ's love, it is better than wine, *ch.* i. 2; and now Christ saith so of hers. There is nothing lost by praising Christ, nor will he be behindhand with his friends in kindness. *Fourthly.* The ointments, the odours, wherewith she is perfumed, the gifts and graces of the Spirit, her good works, which are "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God," *Phil.* iv. 18. "The smell of thine ointments is better than all spices," such as the queen of Sheba presented to Solomon, camel-loads of them, 1 *Kin.* x. 2. Or, rather, than all the spices that were used in compounding the holy incense which was burned daily on the golden altar. Love and obedience to God are more pleasing to Christ than sacrifice or incense. The smell of her garments too, the visible profession she makes of religion, and relation to Christ before men, and wherein she appears to the world, this is very grateful to Christ, as the smell of Lebanon. Christ having put upon his spouse the white raiment of his own righteousness, *Rev.* iii. 18, and the righteousness of saints, *Rev.* xix. 8, and this perfumed with holy joy and comfort, he is well-pleased with it. *Fifthly.* Her words, both in her devotions to God, and her discourses with men; ver. 11, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb," drop that which is very sweet, and drop it freely and plentifully. If what God speaks to us be sweeter to us than the honey, and the honeycomb, *Ps.* xix. 10, what we say to him in prayer and praise shall also be pleasing to him; "Sweet is thy voice." And if out of a good treasure in the heart we bring forth good things, if our speech be always with grace, if our lips use knowledge aright, if they disperse knowledge, they then in Christ's account even drop the honeycomb, outdrop it. "Honey and milk," the two staple commodities of Canaan, "are under thy tongue," that is, in thy heart; not only reserved there for thy own use, as a sweet morsel for thyself, but ready there for the use of others. In the word of God there is sweet and wholesome nourishment,—milk for babes, honey for those that are grown up. Christ is well-pleased with those that are full of his word.

2. As in a pleasant garden. And well may a very great delight be compared to the delight taken in a garden, when the happiness of Adam in innocency was represented by the putting of him in a garden, a garden of pleasure. This comparison is pursued, ver. 12—14. The church is fitly compared to a garden, to a garden which, as usual, had a fountain in it. Where Solomon made him gardens and orchards, he made him pools of water, *Eccl.* ii. 5, 6, not only for curiosity and diversion in water-works, but for use to water the gardens. Eden was well watered, *Gen.* ii. 10; xiii. 10. Observe,

1st. The peculiarity of this garden. It is "a garden inclosed," a paradise separated from the common earth; it is appropriated to God, he hath set it apart for himself. Israel is God's portion, the lot of his inheritance. It is inclosed for secrecy; the saints are God's hidden ones; therefore, the world knows them not. Christ walks in his garden unseen. It is inclosed for safety; a hedge of protection is made about it, which all the powers of darkness cannot either find or make a gap in. God's vineyard is fenced, *Isa.* v. 2. There is a wall about it, a wall of fire. It hath a spring in it, and a fountain; but it is "a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed," which sends its streams abroad, *Pr.* v. 16; but is itself carefully locked up, that it may not by any injurious hand be muddied or polluted. The souls of believers are as gardens enclosed; grace in them is as a spring shut up there in the hidden man of the heart, where the water that Christ gives is a well of living water, *Jno.* iv. 14; vii. 38. The Old Testament church was a garden inclosed by the partition-wall of the ceremonial law; the Bible was then a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed; it was confined to one nation; but now the wall of separation is removed, the Gospel preached to every nation; in Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew.

2nd. The products of this garden. It is as the garden of Eden, where "the Lord made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food," *Gen.* ii. 9. "Thy plants," or plantation, "are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits," ver. 13. It is not like the vineyard of the man void of understanding, that was all grown over with thorns and nettles; but here are fruits, pleasant fruits, all trees of frankincense, and all the chief spices, ver. 14. Here is great plenty of fruits and great variety, nothing wanting which might either beautify or enrich this garden, might make it either delightful or serviceable to its great Lord; every thing here is the best of the kind; their chief spices were much more valuable, because much more durable than the choicest of our flowers. Solomon was a great master in botany, as well as other parts of natural philosophy; he treated largely of trees, 1 *Kin.* iv. 33, and perhaps had reference to some specific qualities of the fruits here instanced in, which made them very fit for the purpose for which he alludes to them; but we must be content to observe in general, that saints in the church, and graces in the saints, are very fitly compared to these fruits and spices; for, *First.* They are planted, and do not grow of themselves; the trees of righteousness are the planting of the Lord, *Isa.* lxi. 3. Grace springs from an incorruptible seed. *Secondly.* They are precious, and of high value. Hence we read of the precious sons of Zion, and their precious faith; they are plants of renown. *Thirdly.* They are pleasant, and of a sweet savour to God and man, and, as strong aromatics, diffuse their fragrancy. *Fourthly.* They are profitable, and of great use. Saints are the blessings of this earth, and their graces are their riches, with which they trade as the merchants of the east with their spices. *Fifthly.* They are permanent, and will be preserved to good purpose, when flowers are withered and good for nothing. Grace, ripened into glory, will last for ever.

15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters,
And streams from Lebanon.
16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;
Blow upon my garden,
That the spices thereof may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his garden,
And eat his pleasant fruits.

These seem to be the words of the spouse, the church, in answer to the commendations which Christ the bridegroom had given of her, as a pleasant, fruitful garden. Is she a garden?

First. She owns her dependence upon Christ himself to make this garden fruitful; to him she has an eye, ver. 15, as the fountain of gardens, not only the founder of them, by whom they are planted, and to whom they owe their

being, but the fountain of them, by whom they are watered, and to whom they owe their continuance and well-being; and without whose constant supplies they would soon become like the dry and barren wilderness. To him she gives all the glory of her fruitfulness, as being nothing without him; "O fountain of gardens," fountain of all good, of all grace, do not thou fail me. Doth a believer say to the church, "All my springs are in thee," in thee, O Zion, *Ps.* lxxxvii. 7; the church transmits the praise to Christ, and saith to him, "All my springs are in thee;" thou art the well of living waters, *Jer.* ii. 13, out of which flow the streams from Lebanon, the river Jordan, that had its rise at the foot of mount Lebanon, and the waters of the sanctuary which issued out from under the threshold of the house, *Eze.* xlvii. 1. They that are gardens to Christ must acknowledge him a fountain to them, from whose fulness they receive, and to whom it is owing that their souls are as a watered garden, *Jer.* xxxi. 12. The city of God on earth is made glad with the river that flows from this fountain, *Ps.* xlvi. 4; and the new Jerusalem has its "pure river of water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," *Rev.* xxii. 1.

Secondly. She implores the influences of the blessed Spirit to make this garden fragrant; ver. 16, "Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south." This is a prayer, 1. For the church in general, that there may be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon it, in order to its flourishing estate. Ministers' gifts are the spices; when the Spirit is poured out these flow forth, and then the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, *Isa.* xxxii. 15. This prayer was answered in the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of pentecost, *Acts* ii. 1, ushered in by a mighty wind; then the apostles, who were bound up before, flowed forth, and were a sweet savour to God, 2 *Cor.* ii. 15. 2. For particular believers. Note, 1st. Sanctified souls are as gardens, gardens of the Lord, inclosed for him. 2nd. Graces in the soul are as spices in these gardens, that in them which is valuable and useful. 3rd. It is very desirable that the spices of grace should flow forth both in pious and devout affections, and in holy, gracious actions, that with them we may honour God, adorn our profession, and do that which will be grateful to good men. 4th. The blessed Spirit in his operations upon the soul is as the north and the south wind, which blows where it listeth, and from several points, *Jno.* iii. 8. There is the north wind of convictions, and the south wind of comforts; but all, like the wind, brought out of God's treasuries, and fulfilling his word. 5th. The flowing forth of the spices of grace depends upon the gales of the Spirit; he stirs up good affections, and works in us both to will and to do that which is good; it is he that makes manifest the savour of his knowledge by us. 6th. We ought therefore to wait upon the Spirit of grace for his quickening influences, to pray for them, and to lay our souls under them. God has promised to give us his Spirit, but he will for this be inquired of.

Thirdly. She invites Christ to the best entertainment the garden affords. "Let my beloved then come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits;" let him have the honour of all the products of the garden, it is fit he should, and let me have the comfort of his acceptance of them; for that is the best account they can be made to turn to. Observe, 1. She calls it his garden; for those that are espoused to Christ call nothing their own but what they have devoted to him, and desire may be used for him. When the spices flow forth, then it is fit to be called his garden, and not till then. The fruits of the garden are his pleasant fruits; for he both planted them and watered them, and gave the increase. What can we pretend to merit at Christ's hands when we can invite him to nothing but what is his own already? 2. She begs he would visit it, and accept of what it produced. The believer can take little pleasure in his garden unless Christ, the beloved of his soul, come to him, nor have any joy of the fruits of it unless they redound some way or other to the glory of Christ; and he will think all he has well bestowed upon him.

CHAPTER V.

In this chapter we have, I. Christ's gracious acceptance of the invitation which his church had given him, and the kind visit which he made to her, ver. 1. II. The account which the spouse gives of her own folly in putting a slight upon her beloved, and the plunge she was at by reason of his withdrawings, ver. 2—8. III. The inquiry of the daughters of Jerusalem concerning the amiable perfections of her beloved, ver. 9; and her particular answer to that inquiry, ver. 10—16. "Unto you that believe he is thus precious."

I AM come into my garden, my sister, *my* spouse:
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;
I have drunk my wine with my milk:
Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

These words are Christ's answer to the church's prayer in the close of the foregoing chapter, "Let my beloved come into his garden;" here he is come, and lets her know it. See how ready God is to hear prayer, how ready Christ is to accept the invitations that his people give him, though we are backward to hear his calls and accept his invitations. He is free in condescending to us, while we are shy of ascending to him. Observe how the return answered the request, and outdid it.

First. She called him her beloved, and really he was so; and she therefore invited him because she loved him. In return to this he called her his sister and spouse, as several times before, *ch.* iv. Those that make Christ their best beloved shall be owned by him in the nearest and dearest relations.

Secondly. She called the garden his, and the pleasant fruits of it his; and he acknowledgeth them to be so: It is my garden, it is my spice. When God was displeased with Israel, he turned them off to Moses, They are thy people, *Ex.* xxxii. 7; and he called the appointed feasts of the Lord their appointed feasts, *Isa.* i. 14. But now they are in his favour he owns them for his garden; though of small account, yet it is mine. They that in sincerity give up themselves, and all they have and can do, to Jesus Christ, he will do them the honour to stamp them and what they have and do for him with his own mark, and say, It is mine.

Thirdly. She invited him to come into his garden, and he saith, I am come; *Isa.* lviii. 9, "Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am." When Solomon prayed that God would come and take possession of the house he had built for him, he did come, his glory filled the house, 2 *Chr.* vii. 2; and, ver 16, he let him know that he had chosen and sanctified this house, that his name might be there for ever. They that throw open the door of their souls to Jesus Christ shall find him ready to come into them; and in every place where he records his name he will meet his people and bless them, *Ex.* xx. 24.

Fourthly. She desired him to eat his pleasant fruits, to accept of the sacrifices offered in his temple, which were as the fruits of his garden, and he doth so; but finds they were not ready for eating, therefore he doth himself gather them. As the fruits are his, so is the preparation of them; he finds the heart unready for his entertainment, but doth himself draw out into exercise those gracious habits which he had planted there. What little good there is in us would be shed and lost if he did not gather it, and preserve it to himself.

Fifthly. She only desired him to eat the fruits of the garden, but he brought along with him something more, honey, and wine, and milk, which yield substantial nourishment, and which were the products of Canaan, Emmanuel's land. Christ delights himself greatly in that which he hath both conferred upon his people and wrought in them. Or we may suppose this to have been prepared by the spouse herself, as Esther prepared for the king her husband a banquet of wine. It is but plain fare, and what is natural, honey and milk; but being kindly designed it is kindly accepted; imperfections are overlooked, the honeycomb is eaten with the honey, and the weakness of the flesh passed by and pardoned because the spirit is willing. When Christ appeared to his disciples after his resurrection he did eat with them a piece of a honeycomb, *Lu.* xxiv. 42, 43, in which the Scripture was fulfilled. He did not drink the wine only, which is liquor for men, for great men, but the milk too, which is liquor for children, little children; for he was to be the holy child Jesus, that had need of milk.

Sixthly. She only invited him to come himself; but he, bringing his own entertainment along with him, brings his friends too, and invites them to share in the provisions. The more the merrier, we say, and here where there was so much plenty there was not the worse fare. When our Lord Jesus fed five thousand at once, "they did all eat, and were filled." Christ invites all his friends to the wine and milk which he himself drinks of, *Isa.* lv. 1; to the feast of fat things, and wines on the lees, *Isa.* xxv. 6. The great work of man's redemption, and the riches of the covenant of grace, are a feast to the Lord Jesus, and they ought to be so to us. The invitation is very free, and hearty, and loving; "Eat, O friends!" If Christ comes in to sup with us, it is we that sup with him, *Rev.* iii. 20; "Eat, O friends!" Those only that are Christ's friends are welcome to his table; his enemies, that will not have him to reign over them, have no part or lot in the matter. "Drink, yea, drink abundantly." Christ in his Gospel has made plentiful provision for poor souls; he filleth the hungry with good things; there is enough for all, there is enough for each. We are not straitened in him or in his grace, let us not therefore be straitened in our own bosoms; open thy mouth wide, and Christ will fill it. "Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit," *Eph.* v. 18. Those that entertain Christ must bid his friends welcome with him; Jesus and his disciples were called together to the marriage, *Jno.* ii. 1. And Christ will have all his friends to rejoice with him in the day of his espousals to his church; and in token of that to feast with him. In spiritual and heavenly joys there is no danger of exceeding; there we may drink abundantly; drink of the river of God's pleasures, *Ps.* xxxvi. 8, and be abundantly satisfied, *Ps.* lxv. 4.

2 I sleep, but my heart waketh:
It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, *saying*,
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled:
For my head is filled with dew,
And my locks with the drops of the night.
3 I have put off my coat;
How shall I put it on?
I have washed my feet;
How shall I defile them?
4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole *of the door*,
And my bowels were moved for him.
5 I rose up to open to my beloved;
And my hands dropped *with* myrrh,
And my fingers *with* sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.
6 I opened to my beloved;
But my beloved had withdrawn himself, *and* was gone:
My soul failed when he spake:
I sought him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.
7 The watchmen that went about the city found me,

NIGHT-WATCH IN INDIA.

They smote me, they wounded me;
The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
If ye find my beloved, that ye tell him,
That I *am* sick of love.

In this song of loves and joys, we have here a very melancholy scene; the spouse here speaks not to her beloved, as before, for he is withdrawn, but of him, and it is a sad story she tells of her own folly and ill-carriage towards him, notwithstanding his kindness, and of the just rebukes she fell under for it. Perhaps it may refer to Solomon's own apostacy from God, and the sad effects of that apostacy after God had come into his garden, had taken possession of the temple he had built, and he had feasted with God upon the sacrifices, ver. 1. However, it is applicable to the too common case, both of churches and particular believers, who by their carelessness and security provoke Christ to withdraw from them. Observe,

First. The indisposition that the spouse was under, and the listlessness that had seized her; ver. 2, "I sleep, but my heart wakes." Here is, 1. Corruption appearing in the actings of it, "I sleep;" the wise virgins slumbered. She was on her bed, *ch.* iii. 1, but now she sleeps. Spiritual distempers, if not striven against at first, are apt to grow upon us, and to get ground. She slept; that is, pious affections cooled, she neglected her duty, and grew remiss in it, she indulged herself in her ease, was secure, and off her watch. This is sometimes the bad effect of more than ordinary enlargements—a good cause. St. Paul himself was in danger of being puffed up with abundant revelations, and of saying, "Soul, take thine ease," which made a thorn in the flesh necessary for him, to keep him from sleeping. Christ's disciples, when he was come into his garden, the garden of his agony, were heavy with sleep, and could not watch with him. True Christians are not always alike lively and vigorous in religion. 2. Grace remaining notwithstanding, in the habit of it, "My heart wakes;" my own conscience reproacheth me for it, and ceaseth not to rouse me out of my sluggishness. "The spirit is willing," and "after the inner man I delight in the law of God, and with my mind I serve that;" I am for the present overpowered by temptation, but all doth not go one way in me. "I sleep," but it is not a dead sleep, I strive against it, it is not a sound sleep; I cannot be easy under this indisposition. Note, 1st. We ought to take notice of our own spiritual slumbers and distempers, and to reflect upon it with sorrow and shame that we have fallen asleep when Christ has been nigh us in his garden. 2nd. When we are lamenting what is amiss in us, we must not overlook the good that is wrought in us, and preserved alive. "My heart wakes" in Christ, who is dear to me as my own heart, and is my life; when I sleep, he neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Secondly. The call that Christ gave to her when she was under this indisposition. "It is the voice of my beloved;" she knew it to be so, and was soon aware of it, which was a sign that her heart was awake. Like the child Samuel, she heard at the first call, but did not, like him, mistake the person; she knew it to be the voice of Christ. He knocks, to awaken us to come and let him in; knocks by his word and Spirit, knocks by afflictions, and by our own consciences; though this be not expressly quoted, yet probably it is referred to, *Rev.* iii. 20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." He calls sinners into covenant with him. Those whom he loves he will not let alone in their carelessness, but will find some way or other to awaken them, to rebuke and chasten them. When we are unmindful of Christ, he thinks of us, and provides that our faith fail not. Peter denied Christ, but the Lord turned and looked upon him, and so brought him to himself again. Observe how moving the call is; "Open to me, my sister, my love." 1. He sues for entrance, who may demand it, and knocks, who could easily knock the door down. 2. He gives her all the kind and most endearing titles imaginable; "My sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." He not only gives her no hard names, nor upbraids her with unkindness in not sitting up for him, but, on the contrary, studies how to express his tender affection to her still; his lovingkindness he will not utterly take away. Those that by faith are espoused to Christ, he looks upon as his sisters, his loves, his doves, and all that is dear; and, being clothed with his righteousness, they are undefiled. This consideration should induce her to open to him; Christ's love to us should engage ours to him, even in the most self-denying instances. "Open to me;" can we deny entrance to such a friend? to such a guest? Shall we not converse more with one that is infinitely worthy of our acquaintance, and so affectionately desirous of it, though we only can be gainers by it? 3. He pleads distress, and begs to be admitted *sub forma pauperis*,—'as a pauper,' under the character of a poor traveller that wants a lodging. "My head is wet with the dew," with the cold drops "of the night;" consider what hardships I have undergone to merit for thee, which sure may merit from thee so small a kindness as this. When Christ was crowned with thorns, which no doubt fetched blood from his blessed head, then was his head wet with the dew. Consider what a grief it is to me to be thus unkindly used, as much as it would be to a tender husband to be kept out of doors by his wife in a rainy, stormy night. Do we thus requite him for his love? The slights which careless souls put upon Jesus Christ are to him as a continual dropping in a very rainy day.

Thirdly. The excuse she made to put off her compliance with this call; ver. 3, "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on again?" She is half asleep, she knows the voice of her beloved, she knows his knock, but cannot find in her heart to open to him; she was undressed, and would not be at the pains to dress her again; had washed her feet, and would not have occasion to wash them again. She could not send another to open the door; it must be our own act and deed to let Christ into our hearts, and yet she was loath to go herself; she did not say, I will not open, but "how shall I?" Note, Frivolous excuses are the language of prevailing slothfulness in religion; Christ calls to us to open to him, but we pretend we have no mind, or we have no strength, or we have no time; and therefore think we may be excused, as the sluggard that will not plough by reason of cold. And those who ought to watch for the Lord's coming, with their loins girt, if they ungird themselves, and put off their coat, they will find it difficult to recover their former resolution, and to put it on again; it is best therefore to keep tight. Making excuses, *Lu.* xiv. 18, is interpreted making light of Christ, *Mat.* xxii. 5; and so it is. Those put a great contempt upon Christ that cannot find in their hearts to bear a cold blast for him, or get out of a warm bed.

Fourthly. The powerful influences of Divine grace, by which she was made willing to rise and open to her beloved. When he could not prevail with her by persuasion, he "put in his hand by the hole of the door" to unbolt it, as one weary of waiting, ver. 4. This intimates a work of the Spirit upon her soul, by which she was of unwilling made willing, *Ps.* cx. 3; the conversion of Lydia is represented by the opening of her heart, *Acts* xvi. 14. And Christ is said to open his disciples' understandings, *Lu.* xxiv. 45. He that formed the spirit of man within him knows all the avenues to it, and which way to enter into it, he can find the hole of the door, at which to put in his hand for the conquering of prejudices, and the introducing of his own doctrine and law. He has the key of David, *Rev.* iii. 7, with which he opens the door of the heart in such a way as is suited to it, as the key is fitted to the wards of the lock, in such a way as not to put a force upon its nature, but only upon its ill-nature.

Fifthly. Her compliance with these methods of Divine grace at last; "My bowels were moved for him." The will was gained by a good work wrought upon the affections; "My bowels were moved for him," as those of the two disciples were when Christ made their heart to burn within them. She was moved with compassion to her beloved, because his "head was wet with the dew." Note, Tenderness of spirit, and a heart of flesh, prepares the soul for the reception of Christ into it; and therefore his love to us is represented in such a way as is most affecting. Did Christ redeem us in his pity, let us in pity receive him, and those that are his for his sake, when at any time they are in distress. This good work wrought upon her affections, raised her up, and made her ashamed of her dulness and slothfulness; ver. 5, "I rose up to open to my beloved;" his grace inclining her to do it, and conquering the opposition of unbelief. It was her own act, and yet he wrought it in her; and now her "hands dropped with myrrh upon the handles of the lock." Either, 1. She found it there, when she applied her hand to the lock to shoot it back; he that put in his hand by the hole of the door left it there, as an evidence that he had been there. When Christ has wrought powerfully upon a soul, he leaves a blessed sweetness in it, which is very delightful to it; with this he oiled the lock to make it go easy. Note, When we apply ourselves to our duty in the lively exercises of faith, under the influence of Divine grace, we shall find it will go on much more readily and sweetly than we expected. If we will but rise up to open to Christ, we shall find the difficulty we apprehended in it strangely overcome, and shall say with Daniel, Now, "let my Lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me," *Dan.* x. 19. Or, 2. She brought it thither; her bowels being moved for her beloved, who had stood so long in the cold and wet, when she came to open to him she prepared to anoint his head, and so to refresh and comfort him, and perhaps to prevent his catching cold. She was in such haste to meet him, that she would not stay to make the usual preparation, but dipped her hand in her box of ointment, that she might readily anoint his head at his first coming in. Those that open the doors of their hearts to Christ, those everlasting doors, must meet him with the lively exercises of faith and other graces, and with these must anoint him.

Sixthly. Her sad disappointment when she did open to her beloved; and here is the most melancholy part of the story: "I opened to my beloved," as I intended, "but, alas, my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone;" 'my beloved was gone, was gone,' so the word is. She did not open to him at his first knock, and now she came too late, when afterwards she would have inherited this blessing. Christ will be sought while he may be found; if we slip our time we lose our passage. Note, 1st. Christ justly rebukes our delays with his denials, and suspends the communications of comfort from those that are remiss and drowsy in their duty. 2nd. Christ's departures are matter of great grief and lamentation to believers. The royal psalmist never complains of any thing with such sorrowful accents as God's hiding his face from him, and casting him off, and forsaking him. The spouse here is ready to tear her hair, and rend her clothes, and wring her hands, crying, 'He is gone, he is gone;' and that which cuts her to the heart is, that she may thank herself she provoked him to withdraw. If Christ depart, it is because he takes something unkindly. Now observe what she doth in this case, and what befell her.

1. She still calls him her beloved, being resolved, how cloudy and dark soever the day be, she will not quit her relation to him, and interest in him. It is a weakness, upon every apprehension either of our own failings or of God's withdrawings, to conclude hardly as to our spiritual state. Every desertion is not despair. I will say, "Lord, I believe," though I must say, "Lord, help my unbelief." Though he leave me, I love him; he is mine.

2. She now remembers the words he said to her when he called her, and what impressions they made upon her; reproaching herself for her folly in not complying sooner with her convictions. "My soul failed when he spake;" his words melted me, when he said, "My head is wet with the dew," and yet, wretch that I was, I lay still, and made excuses, and did not open to him. The smothering and stifling of our convictions is a thing that will be very bitter in the reflection, when God opens our eyes. Sometimes the word hath not its effect presently upon the heart, but it melts it afterwards upon second thoughts. "My soul now melted because of his words" which he had spoken before.

3. She did not go to bed again, but went in pursuit of him; "I sought him, I called him." She might have saved herself this labour, if she would but have bestirred herself when he first called; but we cut ourselves out a great deal of work, and create ourselves a great deal of trouble, by our own slothfulness and carelessness in improving our opportunities. Yet it is her praise, that when her beloved is withdrawn she continues seeking him; her desires towards him are made more strong, and her inquiries after him more solicitous, by his withdrawings. She calls him by prayer, calls after him, and begs of him to return; and she doth not only pray, but use means, she seeks him in the ways wherein she used to find him.

4. Yet still she missed of him; "I could not find him, he gave me no answer." She had no evidences of his favour, no sensible comforts, but was altogether in the dark, and in doubt concerning his love to her. Note, There are those who have a true love for Christ, and yet have not immediate answers to their prayers for his smiles; but he gives them an equivalent, if he strengthens them with strength in their souls to continue seeking him, *Ps.* cxxxviii. 3. St. Paul could not prevail for the removing of the thorn in the flesh, but was answered with grace sufficient for him.

5. She was ill-treated by the watchmen; "They found me, they smote me, they wounded me," ver. 7. They took her for a lewd woman, because she went about the streets at that time of night, when they were walking their rounds, and beat her accordingly. Disconsolate saints are taken for sinners, and are censured and reproached as such. Thus Hannah, when she was praying in the bitterness of her soul, was wounded and smitten by Eli, one of the prime watchmen, when he said to her, "How long wilt thou be drunken?" so counting her a daughter of Belial, 1 *Sam.* i. 14, 15. It is no new thing for those that are of the loyal loving subjects of Zion's King to be misrepresented by the watchmen of Zion as enemies, or scandals to his kingdom; they could not abuse and persecute them but by putting them into an ill name. Some apply it to those ministers, who, though watchmen by office, yet misapply the word to awakened consciences, and through unskilfulness or contempt of their griefs, add affliction to the afflicted; and "make the hearts of the righteous sad, whom God would not have made sad," *Eze.* xiii. 22; discouraging those who ought to be encouraged, and "talking to the grief of those whom God has wounded," *Ps.* lix. 26. Those watchmen were bad enough, that could not or would not assist the spouse in her inquiries after her beloved, *ch.* iii. 3; but these were much worse, that hindered her with their severe and uncharitable censures; smote her and wounded her with their reproaches, and, though they were the keepers of the wall of Jerusalem, as if they had been the breakers of it, took away her vail from her rudely and barbarously, as if it had been only a pretence of modesty, but a cover of the contrary. They whose outward appearances are all good, and yet are invidiously condemned and run down for hypocrites, are all good, and yet are invidiously condemned and run down for hypocrites, have reason to complain as the spouse here of the taking away of their vail from them.

6. When she was disabled, by the abuses the watchmen gave her, to prosecute

her inquiry herself, she gave charge to those about her to assist her in the inquiry; ver. 8, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem," all my friends and acquaintance, "if you find my beloved," it may be you may meet with him before I shall, 'what shall ye tell him?' so some read it; speak a good word for me, and "tell him that I am sick of love." Observe here, 1st. What her condition was. She loved Jesus Christ to that degree that his absence made her sick, extremely sick, she could not bear it; and she was in pain for his return, as a woman in travail, as Ahab for Naboth's vineyard, which he so passionately coveted. This is a sickness which is a sign of a healthful constitution of soul, and will certainly end well; a sickness that will be not death, but life. It is better be sick of love to Christ than at ease in love to the world. 2nd. What course she took in this condition. She did not sink into despair, and conclude she should die of her disease, but she sent after her beloved; she asked the advice of her neighbours, and begged their prayers for her, that they would intercede with him on her behalf. Tell him, though I was careless, and foolish, and slothful, and rose not up so soon as I should have done to open to him, yet I love him; he knows all things, he knows that I do. Represent me to him as sincere, though in many instances coming short of my duty; nay, represent me to him as an object of his pity, that he may have compassion on me, and help me. She doth not bid them tell him how the watchmen had abused her; how unrighteous soever they were in it, she acknowledgeth that the Lord is righteous, and therefore bears it patiently; but tell him that I am wounded with love to him. Gracious souls are more sensible of Christ's withdrawings than of any other trouble whatsoever. *Languet amans, non languet amor*,—'The lover languishes, but not his love.'

9 What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved,
O thou fairest among women?
What *is* thy beloved more than *another* beloved,
That thou dost so charge us?
10 My beloved *is* white and ruddy,
The chiefest among ten thousand.
11 His head *is as* the most fine gold,
His locks *are* bushy, *and* black as a raven.
12 His eyes *are* as *the eyes* of doves by the rivers of waters,
Washed with milk, *and* fitly set.
13 His cheeks *are* as a bed of spices, *as* sweet flowers:
His lips *like* lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.
14 His hands *are as* gold rings set with the beryl:
His belly *is as* bright ivory overlaid *with* sapphires. [gold:
15 His legs *are as* pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine
His countenance *is* as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

LEBANON, WITH CEDARS.

16 His mouth *is* most sweet: yea, he *is* altogether lovely.
This *is* my beloved, and this *is* my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

Here is, First. The question which the daughters of Jerusalem put to the spouse concerning her beloved, in answer to the charge she had given them, ver. 9. Observe,

1. The respectful title they give to the spouse; "O thou fairest among women." Our Lord Jesus makes his spouse truly amiable, not only in his eyes, but in the eyes of all the daughters of Jerusalem. The church is the most excellent society in the world, the communion of saints the best communion, and the beauty of the sanctuary a transcendent beauty. The saints are the most excellent people; holiness is the symmetry of the soul; it is its agreement with itself, it recommends itself to all that are competent judges of it. Even those that have little acquaintance with Christ, as those daughters of Jerusalem here, yet cannot but see an amiable beauty in those that bear his image, which we should love wherever we see it, though in different dresses.

2. Their inquiry concerning her beloved; "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" If thou wilt have us to find him for thee, give us his marks, that we may know him when we see him.

1st. Some take it for a slighting question, blaming her for making such ado about him. Why shouldst thou be so passionate in inquiring after thy beloved, more than others are after theirs? Why shouldst thou be so set upon him, more than others that yet have a kindness for him? Those that are zealous in religion are men wondered at by such as are indifferent to it. The many careless ones laugh at the few that are solicitous and serious. What is there in him that is so very charming, more than in another person? If he be gone, thou that art the fairest among women wilt soon have another with an equal flame. Note, Carnal hearts see nothing excellent or extraordinary in the Lord Jesus; in his person or offices, in his doctrine or in his favours; as if there were no more in the knowledge of Christ, and in communion with him, than in the knowledge of the world, and in its conversation.

2nd. Others rather take it for a serious question, and that by it they intended, *First*. To comfort the spouse, who they knew would recover new spirits if she did but talk awhile of her beloved; and that nothing would please her better, nor give a more powerful diversion to her grief, than to be put upon the pleasing talk of describing the beauties of her beloved. *Secondly*. To inform themselves. They had heard in general that he was excellent and glorious, but they desired to know more particularly. They wondered what moved the spouse to charge them concerning her beloved with so much vehemence and concern, and therefore conclude there must be something more in him than in another beloved, which they are willing to be convinced of. Then there begins to be some hopes of people, when they begin to inquire concerning Christ, and his transcendent perfections. And sometimes the extraordinary zeal of one in inquiring after Christ may be a means to provoke many, 2 *Cor*. ix. 2, as the apostle by the faith of the Gentiles would stir up the Jews to a holy emulation, *Rom*. xi. 14: see *Jno*. iv. 10.

Secondly. The account which the spouse gives of her beloved in answer to this question. We should always be ready to instruct and assist those that are inquiring after Christ. Experienced Christians, that are well acquainted with Christ themselves, should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him.

1. She assures them in general that he is one of incomparable perfections, and unparalleled worth, ver. 10. Do not you know my beloved? Can the daughters of Jerusalem be ignorant of him that is Jerusalem's crown, and crowned head? Let me tell you then,

1st. That he has every thing in him that is lovely and amiable. "My beloved is white and ruddy," the colours that make up a complete beauty. This points not at any extraordinary beauty of his body when he should be incarnate, it was never said of the child Jesus, as of the child Moses when he was born, that he was exceeding fair, *Acts* vii. 20; nay, he had no form, nor comeliness, *Isa*. liii. 2; but his Divine glory, and the concurrence of every thing in him, as Mediator, to make him truly lovely in the eyes of those that are enlightened to discern spiritual things. In him we may behold the beauty of the Lord; he was the holy child Jesus, that was his fairness. If we look upon him as "made to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," he appears in all very amiable. His love to us renders him lovely. He is white in the spotless innocency of his life, ruddy in the bloody sufferings he went through at his death. White in his glory as God,—when he was transfigured, "his raiment was white as the light,"—ruddy in his assuming the nature of man, Adam, 'red earth.' White in his tenderness towards his people; ruddy in his terrible appearances against his and their enemies. His complexion is a very happy composition.

2nd. That he has that loveliness in him which is not to be found in any other. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand;" a nonsuch for beauty, "fairer than the children of men," than any of them, than all of them; there is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, every thing else is to be accounted loss and dung in comparison of him, *Phil*. iii. 8. He is "higher than the kings of the earth," *Ps*. lxxxix. 27, and has obtained a more excellent name than any of the principalities and powers of the upper or lower world, *Phil*. ii. 9; *Heb*. i. 4. He is 'a standard-bearer among ten thousand,' so the word is; the tallest and comeliest of the company. He is himself lifted up as an ensign, *Isa*. xi. 10, to whom we must be gathered, and must always have an eye. And there is all the reason in the world that he should have the innermost and uppermost place in our souls who is the fairest of ten thousands in himself, and the fittest of twenty thousands for us.

2. She gives a particular detail of his accomplishments, conceals not his power or comely proportion. Every thing in Christ is amiable. Ten instances she here gives of his beauty, which we need not be nice in the application of, lest the wringing of them bring forth blood, and prove the wresting of them. The design in general is to shew that he is every way qualified for his undertaking, and has all that in him which may recommend him to our esteem, love, and confidence. Christ's appearance to John, *Rev*. i. 13, &c., may be compared with the description which the spouse gives of him here, the scope of both being to represent him transcendently glorious, that is, both great and gracious, made lovely in the eyes of believers, and making them happy in himself.

1st. "His head is as the most fine gold." "The head of Christ is God," 1 *Cor*. xi 3, and it is promised to the saints that the Almighty shall be their gold, *Job* xxii. 25, their defence, their treasure, much more was he so to Christ, "in whom dwells all the fulness of the godhead bodily," *Col*. ii. 9. Christ's head speaks his sovereign dominion over all, and his vital influence upon his church, and all its members. This is as gold, gold. The former word signifies shining gold; the latter, strong, solid gold. Christ's sovereignty is both beautiful and powerful. Nebuchadnezzar's monarchy is compared to a head of gold, *Dan*. ii. 38, because it excelled all the other monarchies, and so doth Christ's government.

2nd. "His locks are bushy and black;" not black as the tents of Kedar, whose blackness was their deformity, to which therefore the church compares herself, *ch*. i. 5, but black as a raven, whose blackness is his beauty. Sometimes Christ's hair is represented as white, *Rev*. i. 14, noting his eternity, that he is the Ancient of days; but here as black and bushy, speaking him ever young, and that there is in him no decay, nothing that waxeth old. Every thing that belongs to Christ is amiable in the eyes of a believer, even his hair is so; it was pity it should be wet as it was with the dew, and these locks with the drops of the night, while he waited to be gracious, ver. 2.

3rd. "His eyes are as the eyes of doves," fair, and clear, and chaste, and kind. "By the rivers of waters," which doves delight in, and in which, as in a glass, they see themselves, they are washed to make them clean, washed with milk to make them white, and fitly set, neither starting out nor sunk in. Christ is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, for they are doves' eyes, *Hab*. i. 13. All believers speak with pleasure of the omniscience of Christ, as the spouse here of his eyes; for though it be terrible to his enemies as a flame of fire, *Rev*. i. 14, yet it is amiable and comfortable to his friends as doves' eyes, for it is a witness to their integrity; "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Blessed and holy are they that walk always as under the eye of Christ.

4th. "His cheeks" (the risings of the face) "are as a bed of spices," raised in the gardens, which are the beauty and wealth of them, and "as sweet flowers," or 'towers of sweetness.' There is that in Christ's countenance which is amiable in the eyes of all the saints, in the least glimpse of him, for the cheek is but a part of the face. The half discoveries Christ makes of himself to the soul are reviving and refreshing, fragrant above the richest flowers and perfumes.

5th. "His lips are like lilies," not white like lilies, but sweet and pleasant. Such are the words of his lips to all that are sanctified, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb; such the kisses of his lips, all the communications of his grace. "Grace is poured into his lips," and they "that heard him wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." "His lips are as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." Never any lilies in nature dropped myrrh, but nothing in nature can fully set forth the beauty and excellency of Christ, and therefore to do it by comparison there must be a composition of images.

6th. "His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl," a noted precious stone, ver. 14. Great men had their hands adorned with gold rings on their fingers, set with diamonds, or other precious stones, but in her eye his hands themselves were as gold rings. All the instances of his power, the works of his hands, all the circumstances of his providence and grace, are all rich, and pure, and precious as gold, "as the precious onyx and the sapphire, all tried to the purpose for which they were designed, as gold rings to the finger, and all beautiful and very becoming, "as rings set with beryl." His hands, which are stretched forth both to receive his people and to give to them, are thus rich and comely.

7th. "His bowels are as bright ivory;" for so it should be rendered rather than "his belly," for it is the same word that was used for bowels, ver. 4, and is often ascribed to God, as *Isa.* lxiii. 15; *Jer.* xxxi. 20; and so it notes his tender compassion and affection for his spouse, and the love he has to her, even in her desolate and deserted state. This love of his is like bright ivory, finely polished, and richly "overlaid with sapphires." The love itself is strong and firm, and the instances and circumstances of it are bright and sparkling, and add much to the inestimable value of it.

8th. "His legs are as pillars of marble," so strong, so stately, and no disgrace, no, not to the "sockets of fine gold" upon which they are set, ver. 15. This speaks his stability and stedfastness; where he sets his foot he will fix it. He is able to bear all the weight of the government that is upon his shoulders, and his legs will never fail under him. This sets forth the stateliness and magnificence of "the goings of our God, our King, in his sanctuary," *Ps.* lxviii. 24, and the steadiness and evenness of all his dispensations towards his people. "The ways of the Lord are equal," they are all mercy and truth; these are the pillars of marble, more lasting than the pillars of heaven.

9th. "His countenance," his port and mien, "is as Lebanon," that stately hill: his aspect beautiful and charming, like the prospect of that pleasant forest, or park; excellent as the cedars, which in height and strength excel other trees, and are of excellent use. Christ is a goodly person, the more we look upon him the more beauty we shall see in him.

10th. "His mouth is most sweet," it is sweetness itself; it is 'sweetnesses,' so the word is, it is pure essence, nay, it is the quintessence of all delights, ver. 16. The words of his mouth are all sweet to a believer, sweet as milk to babes, to whom it is agreeable; as honey to those that are grown up, *Ps.* cxix. 103, to whom it is delicious. The kisses of his mouth, all the tokens of his love, have a transcendent sweetness in them, and are most delightful to them who have their spiritual senses exercised; "To you that believe he is precious."

3. She concludes with a full assurance both of faith and hope, and so gets the mastery of her trouble.

1st. Here is a full assurance of faith concerning the complete beauty of the Lord Jesus; "He is altogether lovely." Why should I stand to mention particulars, when throughout there is nothing amiss? She is sensible she doth him wrong in the particular descriptions of him, and comes far short of the dignity and merit of the subject, and therefore she breaks off with this general encomium, He is truly lovely, he is wholly so. There is nothing in him but what is amiable, and nothing amiable but what is in him. He is all desires; he has all in him that one can desire, and therefore all her desire is towards him, and she seeks him thus carefully, and cannot rest contented in the want of him. Who can but love him who is so lovely?

2nd. Here is a full assurance of hope concerning her own interest in him: "This is my beloved, and this is my friend," and therefore wonder not that I thus long after him. See with what a holy boldness she claims relation to him, and then with what a holy triumph she proclaims it. It is gracious that sweetens excellency. To see Christ, and not to see him as ours, would be rather a torture than a happiness: but to see one that is thus lovely, and to see him as ours, is a complete satisfaction. Here is a true believer. 1st. Giving an entire consent to Christ: He is mine. "my Lord and my God." *Jn.* xx. 28. mine according to the tenor of the gospel covenant, mine in all relations bestowed upon me, to be all that to me that my poor soul stands in need of. 2nd. Taking an entire complacency in Christ. It is spoken of here with an air of triumph: This is he whom I have chosen, and to whom I have given up myself: "None but Christ, none but Christ." This is he in whom my heart is, for he is my best beloved. This is he in whom I trust, and from whom I expect all good, for this is my friend. Note, Those that make Christ their beloved shall have him their friend: he has been, is, and will be, a special friend to all believers. He loves those that love him, and those that have him their friend have reason to glory in him, and speak of him with delight. Let others be governed by the love of the world, and seek their happiness in its friendship and favours, "this is my beloved, and this is my friend." Others may do as they please, but this is my soul's choice, my soul's rest, my life, my joy, my all; this is he whom I desire to live and die with.

CHAPTER VI.

In this chapter, I. The daughters of Jerusalem, moved with the description which the church had given of Christ, inquire after him, ver. 1. II. The church directs them where they may meet with him, ver. 2, 3. III. Christ is now found of those that sought him, and very highly applauds the beauty of his spouse, as one extremely smitten with it, ver. 4—7; preferring her before all others, ver. 8, 9; and recommending her to the love and esteem of all her neighbours, ver. 10; and, lastly, acknowledging the impressions which her beauty had made upon him, and the great delight he took in it, ver. 11—13.

WHITHER is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women?
Whither is thy beloved turned aside?
That we may seek him with thee.

2 My beloved is gone down into his garden,
To the beds of spices,
To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

3 I *am* my beloved's, and my beloved *is* mine:
He feedeth among the lilies.

Here is, First. The inquiry which the daughters of Jerusalem made concerning Christ, ver. 1. They still continue their high thoughts of the church, and call her, as before, the fairest among women; for true sanctity is true beauty. And now they raise their thoughts higher concerning Christ: "Whither is thy beloved gone? that we may seek him with thee." This would be but an indecent unacceptable compliment if the song were not to be understood spiritually; for love is jealous of a rival, would flow to rise the beloved, and cares not that others should join in seeking him; but they that truly love Christ are desirous that others should love him too, and be joined to him; nay, the greatest instance of duty and respect that the church's children can show to their mother is to join with her in seeking Christ. The daughters of Jerusalem, that had asked, *ch.* v. 8, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" wondering that the spouse should be so passionately in love with him are now of another mind, and are themselves in love with him; for, 1. The spouse had described him, and shewn them his excellences and perfections, and therefore, though they have not seen him, yet, believing, they love him. They that understand Christ, it is because they do not know him; when God by his word and Spirit discovers him to the soul, with that ray of light the ray of love to him will be united. 2. She had expressed her own love to him, her rest in that love, and that triumphed in it: "This is my beloved;" and that flame in her breast scattered sparks into theirs. As stately trees, when they break out, scatter many, so the pious zeal of some may provoke many, 2 *Cor.* ix. 2.

The spouse had awakened their holy in seeking her beloved, *ch.* v. 8, but now they had more; for they perceive that now the cloud she had been under began to scatter, and the sky to clear up: and while she was describing her beloved to them she herself retrieved her comfort in him. Drooping Christians would find benefit themselves by talking of Christ, as well as do good to others. Now here, 1. They inquire concerning him, "Whither is thy beloved gone?" which way must we steer our course in pursuit of him? Note, Those that are made acquainted with the excellencies of Christ, and the comfort of an interest in him, cannot but be inquisitive after him, and desirous to know where they may meet with him. 2. They offer their service to the spouse, to accompany her in quest of him: "We will seek him with thee." Those that would find Christ must seek him, seek him early, seek him diligently. And it is best seeking Christ in company, to join with those that are seeking him. We must seek communion with Christ, in communion with saints. We know whither our beloved is gone; he is gone to heaven, to his Father and our Father: he took care to send us notice of it, that we might know how to direct to him, *Jno.* xx. 17. We must by faith see him there, and by prayer seek him there; with boldness enter into the holiest; and herein must join with the generation of them that seek him, *Ps.* xxiv. 6, even with all that in every place call upon him, 1 *Cor.* i. 2. We must pray with and for others.

Secondly. The answer which the spouse gave to this inquiry, ver. 2, 3. Now she complains not any more as she had done, *ch.* v. 6, "He is gone, he is gone;" that she knew not where to find him, or doubted she had lost him for ever; no,

1. Now she knows very well where he is, ver. 2. "My beloved" is not to be found in the streets of the city, and the crowd and noise that is there; there I have in vain looked for him, as his parents "sought him among their kindred and acquaintance, and found him not;" but he "is gone down to his garden," a place of privacy and retirement. The more we withdraw from the hurry of the world, the more likely we are to have acquaintance with Christ, who took his disciples into a garden, there to be witnesses of the agonies of his love. Christ's church is a garden, enclosed and separated from the open common of the world; it is his garden, which he hath planted as he did the garden of Eden, which he takes care of, and delights in. Though he is gone up to paradise above, yet he comes down to his garden on earth: it is low, but he condescends to visit it; and wonderful condescension it is; "Will God in very deed dwell with man upon the earth?" Those that would find Christ may expect to meet with him in his garden, the church; for there he records his name, *Ex.* xx. 24. They must attend upon him in the ordinances which he hath instituted, the word, sacraments, and prayer, wherein he will be with us always, even to the end of the world. The spouse here refers to what Christ had said, *ch.* v. 1, "I am come into my garden," as if she should say, What a fool was I to fret and toil myself in seeking him where he was not, when he himself had told me where he was! Words of direction and comfort are many times out of the way when we have occasion to use them, till the blessed Spirit brings them to our remembrance, and then we wonder how we overlooked them. Christ has told us he would come into his garden; thither, therefore, we must go to seek him.

The beds, and lesser gardens in this greater, are the particular churches, the synagogues of God in the land, *Ps.* lxxiv. 8. The spices and lilies are particular believers, the planting of the Lord, and pleasant in his eyes. When Christ comes down to his church it is, 1st. "To feed among the gardens," to feed his flock, which he feeds not as other shepherds, in the open fields, but in his garden, so well are they provided for, *Ps.* xxiii. 2. To feed his friends, and entertain them; there you may not only find him, but find his table richly furnished, and hearty welcome to it. To feed himself, that is, to please himself with the products of his own grace in his people; for "the Lord taketh pleasure in those that fear him." He has many gardens, many particular churches, of different sizes and shapes, but while they are his he feeds in them all, manifests himself among them, and is well pleased with them. 2nd. "To gather lilies," wherewith he is pleased to entertain and adorn himself. He plucks the lilies one by one, and gathers them to himself; and there will be a general harvest of them at the great day, when he will send forth his angels to gather all his lilies, that he may be for ever glorified and admired in them.

2. She is very confident of her own interest in him, ver. 3. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." The relation is mutual, and the knot is tied which cannot be loosed; for "he feedeth among the lilies," and my communion with him is a certain token of my interest in him. She had said this before, *ch.* ii. 16; but, 1st. Here she repeats it as that which she perceived to abide by, and which she took an unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction in. She lived her choice too well to change. Our communion with God is very much maintained and kept up by the frequent renewing of our covenant with him, and rejoicing in it. 2nd. She had occasion to repeat it, for she had carried it unkindly to her beloved: and for her so doing he had justly withdrawn himself from her, and therefore there was occasion to take fresh hold of the covenant, whose ordinances form between Christ and believers, notwithstanding their things and his frowns, *Ps.* lxxxix. 30—35. I have been careless and wanting in my duty, and yet "I am my beloved's;" for every transgression in the covenant doth not disprove us out of covenant. He hath justly hid his face from me, and denied me his comforts, and yet "my beloved is mine," for he owns and countenances me in his ordinances, and shew forth covenant love. 3rd. When we want a full assurance of Christ's love, we must live by a faithful adherence to him. Though I have not the sensible consolation I used to have, yet I will cleave to this, Christ is mine, and I am his. 4th. Though she had said the same before, yet now she inverts the order, and asserts her interest in her love: "I am my beloved's," entirely devoted and dedicated to him; and then her interest in him, and in his grace, "My beloved is mine," and I am happy, truly happy in him. If our own hearts can but witness for us that we are his, there is no room left to question his being ours: for the covenant never breaks on his side. 5th. It is now her comfort, as it was then, that "he feedeth among the lilies," that he takes delight in his people, and converseth freely with them, as we do with those with whom we feed; and therefore, though at present he be withdrawn, I shall meet with him again; "I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

4 Thou *art* beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,

Comely as Jerusalem, terrible as *an army* with banners.
5 Turn away thine eyes from me,
For they have overcome me:
Thy hair *is* as a flock of goats
That appear from Gilead.
6 Thy teeth *are* as a flock of sheep
Which go up from the washing,
Whereof every one beareth twins,
And *there is* not one barren among them.
7 As a piece of a pomegranate
Are thy temples within thy locks.
8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines,
And virgins without number.
9 My dove, my undefiled, is *but* one;
She *is* the *only* one of her mother,
She *is* the choice *one* of her that bare her.
The daughters saw her, and blessed her;
Yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.
10 Who *is* she *that* looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon, clear as the sun,
And terrible as *an army* with banners?

Now we must suppose Christ graciously returned to his spouse, from whom he had withdrawn himself; returned to converse with her, for he speaks to her, and makes her to hear joy and gladness; returned to favour her, and had forgiven and forgotten all her unkindnesses, for he speaks very lovingly and respectfully to her.

First. He pronounceth her truly amiable; ver. 4, "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah," a city in the tribe of Manasseh, whose name signifies pleasant, or acceptable; the situation, no doubt, being very happy, and the buildings fine and uniform. Thou art comely as Jerusalem, a city compact together, *Ps.* cxxii. 3, and which Solomon had built and beautified; it was "the joy of the whole earth," an honour to the world (whether they thought so or no) that there was such a city in it. It was the holy city, and that was the greatest beauty of it, and fitly is the church compared to it, for it was figured and typified by it. The gospel church is the Jerusalem that is above, *Gal.* iv. 26, the heavenly Jerusalem, *Heb.* xii. 22; in it God hath his sanctuary, and is in a special manner present, thence he has the tribute of praise issuing; it is his rest for ever, and therefore it is comely as Jerusalem. And being so, is "terrible as an army with banners." Church censures duly administered strike an awe upon men's consciences; the word, the weapons of her warfare, casts down imaginations, 2 *Cor.* x. 5. And even an unbeliever is convinced and judged by the solemnity of holy ordinances, I *Cor.* xiv. 24, 25. The saints, by faith, overcome the world, 1 *Jno.* v. 4; nay, like Jacob, they have power with God, and prevail, *Gen.* xxxii. 28.

Secondly. He owns himself in love with her, ver. 5. Though for a small moment, and in a little wrath, he had hid his face from her, yet now he gathers her with very surprising instances of everlasting lovingkindness, *Isa.* liv. 8. 'Turn thine eyes towards me,' so some read it, turn the eyes of faith and love towards me; 'for they have lifted me up;' look unto me and be comforted. When we are calling to God to turn the eye of his favour towards us, he is calling to us to turn the eye of our obedience towards him. We read it as a strange expression of love, "Turn away thine eyes from me," for I cannot bear the brightness of them; they have quite overcome me, and I am prevailed with to overlook all that is past, as God said to Moses, when he interceded for Israel, "Let me alone," or I must yield, *Ex.* xxxii. 10. Christ is pleased to borrow these expressions of a passionate lover, only to express the tenderness of a compassionate Redeemer, and the delight he takes in his redeemed, and in the workings of his own grace in them.

Thirdly. He repeats almost word for word part of the description he had given of her beauty, *ch.* iv. 1—3; her hair, her teeth, her temples, ver. 5—7; not because he could not have described it in other words, and by other similitudes, but to shew that he had still the same esteem of her since her unkindness to him, and his withdrawings from her, that he had before. Lest she should think that, though he would not quite cast her off, yet he would think the worse of her while he knew her, he saith the same of her now that he had done; for those to whom much is forgiven will love the more, and consequently will be the more beloved; for Christ has said, "I love those that love me." He is pleased with his people, notwithstanding their weaknesses, when they sincerely repent of them, and return to their duty, and commends them, as if they were already arrived to perfection.

Fourthly. He prefers her before all competitors, and sees all the beauties and perfections of others meeting and centring in her; ver. 8, 9, "There are," it may be, "threescore queens," that, like Esther, have by their beauty attained to the royal state and dignity, "and fourscore concubines," that kings have preferred before their own queens, as more charming; and these attended by their maids of honour, "virgins without number," that when there is a ball at court appear in great splendour, with beauty that dazzles the eyes of the spectators, but "my dove, my undefiled, is but one," an holy one.

1. She excels them all. Go through all the world and view all the societies of men that reckon themselves wise and happy; kingdoms, courts, senates, councils, or whatever incorporations you may think valuable, they are none of them to be compared with the church of Christ; their honours and beauties are nothing to hers; "Who is like unto thee, O Israel?" *Deu.* xxxiii. 29; iv. 6, 7. There are particular persons, as "virgins without number," that are famed for their accomplishments, the beauties of their address, language, and performances, but the beauty of holiness is beyond all other beauty; "My dove, my undefiled is one," hath that one beauty, that she is a dove, an undefiled dove, and mine, and that makes her excel the queens and virgins, though they were never so many. 2. She includes them all. Other kings have many queens, and concubines, and virgins, with whose conversation they entertain themselves, but my dove, my undefiled, is to me instead of all; in that one I have more than they have in all theirs. Or, though there be many particular churches, some of greater dignity, others of less, some of longer, others of shorter standing, and many particular believers of different gifts and attainments, some more eminent, others less so, yet they all constitute but one catholic church, are all but parts of that whole, and that is my dove, my undefiled. Christ is the centre of the church's unity; all the children of God that are scattered abroad are gathered by him, *Jno.* xi. 52, and meet in him, *Eph.* i. 10, and are all his doves.

Fifthly. He shews how much she was esteemed, not by him only, but by all that had acquaintance with her, and stood in relation to her. It would add to her praise to say, 1. That she was her mother's darling. She had that in her from a child which recommended her to the particular affection of her parents. As Solomon himself is said to have been tender, and an only one in the sight of his mother, *Pr.* iv. 3, so was she the only one of her mother, as dear as if she had been an only one, and if there were many more, yet she was the choice one of her that bare her, more excellent than all the societies of men this world ever produced. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, are nothing in Christ's account compared with the church, which is made up of "the excellent ones of the earth, the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold," and more excellent than their neighbours. 2. That she was admired by all her acquaintance; not only "the daughters" that were her juniors, but even "the queens and the concubines," who might have reason to be jealous of her as a rival; they all "blessed her," and wished well to her, "praised her," and spoke well of her. The daughters of Jerusalem called her the "fairest among women;" all agreed to give her the preeminence for beauty, and every sheaf bowed to hers. Note, 1st. Those that have any sense of things cannot but be convinced in their consciences, whatever they say, that godly people are excellent people; many will give them their good word, and more their good-will. 2nd. Jesus Christ takes notice what people think and speak of his church; and is well pleased with them that honour such as fear the Lord, and takes it ill of those that do despise them, particularly when they are under a cloud; that offend any of his little ones.

Sixthly. He produceth the encomium that was given of her, and makes it his own; ver. 10, "Who is she that looks forth as the morning?" This is applicable both to the church in the world and to grace in the heart. 1. They are amiable as the light, the most beautiful of all visible things. Christians are, or should be, the lights of the world. The patriarchal church looked forth as the morning, when the promise of the Messiah was first made known, and the day-spring from on high visited this dark world. The Jewish church was fair as the moon; the ceremonial law was an imperfect light,—it shone by reflection, it was changing as the moon, did not make day, nor was the Sun of righteousness yet risen,—but the Christian church is clear as the sun, exhibits a great light to them that sat in darkness. Or we may apply it to the kingdom of grace, the gospel kingdom. 1st. In its rise, it looks forth as the morning after a dark night; it is discovering, *Job* xxxviii. 12, 13, and very acceptable; looks forth pleasantly, as a clear morning; but it is small in its beginnings, and scarce perceptible at first. 2nd. It is, at the best in this world, but fair as the moon, which shines with a borrowed light, which has her changes and eclipses, and her spots too, and when at the full doth but rule by night. But, 3rd. When it is perfected in the kingdom of glory, then it will be clear as the sun, the church clothed with the sun, with Christ the sun of righteousness, *Rev.* xii. 1. They that love God will then be "as the sun when he goes forth in his strength," *Jud.* v. 31; *Mat.* xiii. 43. They shall shine in inexpressible glory, and that which is perfect will then come; there shall be no darkness, no spots, *Isa.* xxx. 26. 2. The beauty of the church, and of believers, is not only amiable, but awful, "as an army with banners." The church in this world is as an army, as the camp of Israel in the wilderness. Its state is militant; it is in the midst of enemies, and is engaged in a constant conflict with them. Believers are soldiers in this army. It has its banners; the Gospel of Christ is an ensign, *Isa.* xi. 12; the love of Christ, *ch.* ii. 4, it is marshalled, and kept in order, and under discipline. It is terrible to its enemies, as Israel in the wilderness was, *Ex.* xv. 14. When Balaam saw Israel encamped according to their tribes, by their standards, colours displayed, he said, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob!" *Num.* xxiv. 1. When the church preserves her purity, she secures her honour and victory; when she is fair as the moon, and clear as the sun, she is truly great and formidable.

11 I went down into the garden of nuts
To see the fruits of the valley,
And to see whether the vine flourished,
And the pomegranates budded.
12 Or ever I was aware,
My soul made me *like* the chariots of Ammi-nadib.
13 Return, return, O Shulamite;
Return, return, that we may look upon thee.
What will ye see in the Shulamite?
As it were the company of two armies.

PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.

Christ being now returned to his spouse, and the breach being entirely made up, and the falling out of these lovers being the renewing of love, Christ here gives an account both of the distance and of the reconciliation.

First. That when he was withdrawn from his church as his spouse, and did not comfort her, yet even then he had his eye upon it, as his garden which he took care of; ver. 11, "I went down into the garden of nuts," or nutmegs, "to see the fruits of the valley," with complacency and concern, to see them as my own. When he was out of sight he was no farther off than the garden, hid among the trees of the garden in a low and dark valley; but then he was observing how "the vine flourished," that he might do all that to it which was necessary to promote its flourishing, and might delight himself in it, as a

man doth in a fruitful garden. He went to see whether "the pomegranates budded." Christ observes the first beginnings of the good work of grace in the soul, and the early buddings of devout affections and inclinations there; and is greatly well pleased with them, as we are with the blossoms of the spring.

Secondly. That yet he could not long content himself with this, but suddenly felt a powerful, irresistible inclination in his own bosom to return to his church, as his spouse, being moved with her lamentations after him, and her languishing desire towards him; ver. 12, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." I could not any longer keep at a distance, "my repentings were kindled together," and I presently resolved to fly back to the arms of my love, my dove. Thus Joseph made himself strange to his brethren for a while, to chastise them for their former unkindnesses, and make trial of their present temper, till he could no longer refrain himself; but, or ever he was aware, burst out into tears, and said, "I am Joseph," *Gen.* xlv. 1, 3. And now the spouse perceives, as David did, *Ps.* xxxi. 22, that though she said in her haste she was cut off from before his eyes, yet at the same time he heard the voice of her supplications, and became "like the chariots of Amminadib," which were noted for their beauty and swiftness. 'My soul put me in the chariots of my willing people,' so some read it; the chariots of their faith, and hope, and love, their desires, and prayers, and expectations, which they sent after me to fetch me back, as chariots of fire, with horses of fire. Note, 1. Christ's people are, and ought to be, a willing people. 2. If they continue seeking Christ, and longing after him, even when he seems to withdraw from them, he will graciously return to them in due time, perhaps sooner than they think, and with a pleasing surprise. No chariots sent for Christ shall return empty. 3. All Christ's gracious returns to his people take rise from himself. It is not they, but his own soul, that puts him into the chariots of his people; for he is gracious because he will be gracious, and loves his Israel because he would love them. Not for their sakes, be it known to them.

Thirdly. That he being returned to her kindly courted her return to him, notwithstanding the discouragements she laboured under. Let her not despair of obtaining as much comfort as ever she had before this distance happened; but take the comfort of the return of her beloved, ver. 13. Here,

1. The church is called the Shulamite, referring either to Solomon, the bridegroom in type, by whose name she is called in token of her relation to him, and union with him, (thus believers are called Christians from Christ,) or, referring to Salem, the place of her birth and residence, as the woman of Shunem is called the Shunamite. Heaven is the Salem whence the saints have their birth, and where they have their citizenship: those that belong to Christ, and are bound for heaven, shall be called Shulamites.

2. She is invited to return, and the invitation most earnestly pressed; "Return, return;" and again, "return, return;" recover the peace thou hast lost and forfeited; come back to thy former composedness and cheerfulness of spirit. Note, Good Christians, after they have had their comfort disturbed, are sometimes hardly pacified, and need to be earnestly persuaded to return again to their rest. As revolting sinners have need to be called to again and again, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die," so disquieted saints have need to be called to again and again, "Turn ye, turn ye," why will ye droop? "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?"

3. Being returned, she is desired to shew her face, "that we may look upon thee;" go no longer with thy face covered like a mourner. Let those that have made their peace with God lift up their faces without spot, *Job* xxii. 26; let them come boldly to his throne of grace. Christ is pleased with the cheerfulness and humble confidence of his people, and would have them look pleasant. Let us look upon thee, not I only, but the holy angels who rejoice in the consolation of saints, as well as in the conversion of sinners; not I only, but all the daughters. Christ and believers are pleased with the beauty of the church.

4. A short account is given of what is to be seen in her. The question is asked, "What will you see in the Shulamite?" And it is answered, "As it were the company of two armies." 1st. Some think she gives this account of herself. She is shy of appearing, unwilling to be looked upon, having in her own account no form or comeliness; Alas, saith she, "what will you see in the Shulamite?" nothing that is worth your looking upon; nothing but as it were "the company of two armies" actually engaged, where nothing is to be seen but blood and slaughter. The watchmen had smitten her, and wounded her, and she carried in her face the marks of those wounds; looked as if she had been fighting. She had said, *ch.* i. 6, "Look not upon me, because I am black;" here, Look not upon me, because I am bloody. Or it may note the constant struggle that is between grace and corruption in the souls of believers; they are in them as two armies continually skirmishing, which makes her ashamed to shew her face. 2nd. Others think her beloved gives this account of her: I will tell you what you shall see in the Shulamite; you shall see as noble a sight as that of two armies, or two parts of the same army, drawn out in rank and file; not only as an army with banners, but as two armies with a majesty double to what was before spoken. She is as Mahanaim, as the two hosts which Jacob saw, *Gen.* xxxii. 1, 2, a host of saints, and a host of angels ministering to them. The church militant, the church triumphant. Behold two armies; in both the church appears beautiful.

CHAPTER VII.

In this chapter, I. Christ, the royal bridegroom, goes on to describe the beauties of his spouse, the church, in many instances, and to express his love to her, and the delight he has in her conversation, ver. 1—9. II. The spouse, the church, expresseth her great delight in him, and the desire that she had of communion and fellowship with him, ver. 10—13. Such mutual esteem and endearment is there between Christ and believers. And what is heaven but an everlasting interchanging of loves between the holy God and holy souls!

HOW beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter!
The joints of thy thighs *are* like jewels,
The work of the hands of a cunning workman.
2 Thy navel *is like* a round goblet,
Which wanteth not liquor:
Thy belly *is like* an heap of wheat
Set about with lilies.
3 Thy two breasts
Are like two young roes *that are* twins.
4 Thy neck *is* as a tower of ivory;
Thine eyes *like* the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim:
Thy nose *is* as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.
5 Thine head upon thee *is* like Carmel,
And the hair of thine head like purple; the king *is* held in the galleries.
6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!
7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree,
And thy breasts to clusters *of grapes*.
8 I said, I will go up to the palm tree,
I will take hold of the boughs thereof:
Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine,
And the smell of thy nose like apples;
9 And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine
For my beloved, that goeth *down* sweetly,
Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

BRIDE'S DRESS, AND HIGH SHOES.—ver. 1.

The title which Jesus Christ here gives to the church is new: "O prince's daughter," agreeing with *Ps.* xlv. 13, where she is called the king's daughter. She is so in respect of her new birth, born from above, begotten of God, and his workmanship, bearing the image of the King of kings, and guided by his Spirit. She is so by marriage; Christ, by betrothing her to himself, though he found her mean and despicable, has made her a prince's daughter; she has a princely disposition, something in her truly noble and generous. She is daughter and heir to the Prince of the kings of the earth; "if children, then heirs." Now here we have,

First. A large description of the beauty of the spouse, which some think is given by the virgins her companions, and that those were they who called upon her to return; it seems rather to be given by Christ himself, and that it is designed to express his love to her, and delight in her, as before, *ch.* iv. 1, &c., and *ch.* vi. 5, 6. The similitudes are here different from what they were before, to shew that the beauty of holiness is such as nothing in nature can reach; you may still say more of it, and yet still come short of it. That commendation of the spouse, *ch.* iv., was immediately upon the espousals, *ch.* iii. 11, this here upon her return from a bypath, *ch.* vi. 13; yet this exceeds that, to shew the constancy of Christ's love to his people; he loves them to the end, since he made them precious in his sight, and honourable. The spouse had described the beauty of her beloved in ten particulars, *ch.* v. 11, &c., and now he describes her in as many, for he will not be behindhand with her in respects and endearments. Those that honour Christ he will certainly honour, and make honourable. As the prophet, in describing the corruptions of degenerate Israel, reckons "from the sole of the foot, even unto the head," *Isa.* i 6, so here the beauties of the church are reckoned from foot to head, that, as the apostle speaks when he is comparing the church, as here, to the natural body, 1 *Cor.* xii. 23, more abundant honour might be bestowed on those parts of the body which we think to be less honourable, and which therefore lacked honour, ver. 24.

1. Her feet are here praised. The feet of Christ's ministers are beautiful in the eyes of the church, *Isa.* lii. 7, and her feet are here said to be beautiful in the eyes of Christ; "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes!" When believers, being made free from the captivity of sin, (*Acts* xii. 8,) stand fast in the liberty with which they are made free, preserve the tokens of their enfranchisement, have "their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace," and walk steadily according to the rule of the Gospel, then their feet are beautiful with shoes; they tread firm, being well armed against the troubles they meet with in their way When we rest not in good affections, but those are accompanied with sincere endeavours and resolutions, then our feet are beautified with shoes: see *Eze.* xvi. 10.

2. "The joints of the thighs are" here said to be "like jewels," and those curiously wrought by a cunning workman. This is explained by *Eph.* iv. 16, and *Col.* ii. 19, where the mystical body of Christ is said to be held together by joints and bands, as the hips and knees (both which are the joints of the thighs) serve the natural body in its strength and motion. The church is then comely in Christ's eyes when those joints are kept firm by holy love and unity, and the communion of saints. When believers act in religion from good principles, and are steady and regular in their whole conversation, and turn themselves easily to every duty in its time and place, then the joints are like jewels.

3. The navel is here compared to a round cup, or goblet, that wants not any of the agreeable liquor that one would wish to find in it, such as David's cup that ran over, *Ps.* xxiii. 5; well shaped, and not as that miserable infant whose navel was not cut, *Eze.* xvi. 4. The fear of the Lord is said to be health to the

navel: see *Pr.* iii. 8. When the soul wanteth not that fear, then the navel wanteth not liquor.

4. "The belly is like a heap of wheat" in the storechamber, which perhaps was sometimes, to make show, adorned with flowers. The wheat is useful, the lilies beautiful; there is every thing in the church which may be to the members of that body either for use or for ornament. All the body is nourished from the belly. It notes the spiritual prosperity of a believer, and the healthful constitution of the soul, all in good plight.

5. "The breasts are like two young roes that are twins," ver. 3. By the breasts of the church's consolations these are nourished who are born from its belly, (*Isa.* xlvi. 3,) and by the navel received nourishment in the womb. This comparison we had before, *ch.* iv. 5.

6. The neck, which before was compared to the tower of David, *ch.* iv. 4, is here compared to a tower of ivory, so white, so precious. Such is the faith of the saints by which they are joined to Christ their head. The name of the Lord, improved by faith, is to the saints as a strong and impregnable tower.

7. The eyes are likened to the fishpools in Heshbon, or the artificial fishponds, by a gate, either of Jerusalem or of Heshbon, which is called Bath-rabbim, the daughter of a multitude, because a great thoroughfare. The understanding, the intentions of a believer, are clean and clear as these ponds. The eyes weeping for sin are as fountains, *Jer.* ix. 1, and comely with Christ.

8. The nose like the tower of Lebanon; the forehead, or face, set like a flint, *Isa.* l. 7, undaunted as that tower was impregnable. So it notes the magnanimity and holy bravery of the church; or, as others, a spiritual sagacity to discern things that differ, as animals strangely distinguish by the smell. This tower looks towards Damascus the head city of Syria, noting the boldness of the church in facing its enemies and not fearing them.

9. The head like Carmel, a very high hill near the sea, ver. 5. The head of a believer is lifted up above his enemies, *Ps.* xxvii. 6, above the storms of the lower region, as the top of Carmel was, pointing heavenwards. The more we get above this world, and the nearer to heaven, and the more secure and serene we become by that means, the more amiable we are in the eyes of the Lord Jesus.

10. The hair of the head is said to be like purple. It notes the universal amiableness of a believer in the eyes of Christ, even to the hair; or, as some understand it, the pins with which the hair is dressed. Some, by the head and hair, understand the governors of the church, who, if they be careful to do their duty, add much to her comeliness. The head like crimson, (so some read it,) and the hair like purple, the two colours worn by great men.

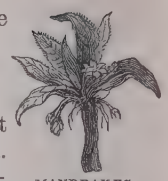
Secondly. The complacency which Christ takes in his church thus beautified and adorned. She is lovely indeed if she be so in his eyes. As he puts the comeliness upon her, so it is his love that makes this comeliness truly valuable; for he is an unexceptionable judge.

1. He delighted to look upon his church, and to converse with it, rejoicing in that habitable part of his earth; "The king is held in the galleries," and cannot leave them. This is explained by *Ps.* cxxxii. 13, 14, "The Lord hath chosen Zion," saying, "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell;" and *Ps.* cxlvii. 11, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." And if Christ hath such delight in the galleries of communion with his people, much more reason have they to delight in them, and to reckon a day there better than a thousand.

2. He was even struck with admiration at the beauty of his church; ver. 6, "How fair, and how pleasant art thou, O love!" 'how art thou made fair!' so the word is; not born so, but made so with the comeliness which I have put upon thee. Holiness is a beauty beyond expression; the Lord Jesus is wonderfully pleased with it. The outward aspect of it is fair, the inward disposition of it is pleasant and highly agreeable, and the complacency he has in it is inexpressible. 'O my dearest for delights!' so some read it.

3. He determined to keep up communion with his church. 1st. To take hold of her as of the boughs of a palm-tree. He compares her stature to a palm-tree, ver. 7, so straight, so strong, doth she appear, when she is looked upon in her full proportion. The palm-tree is observed to flourish most when it is loaded; so the church, the more it has been afflicted, the more it has multiplied, and the branches of it are emblems of victory. Christ saith, "I will go up to the palm-tree" to entertain myself with the shadow of it, ver. 8, and "I will take hold of its boughs," and observe the beauty of them. What Christ hath said he will do in favour to his people we may be sure he will do, for his kind purposes are never suffered to fall to the ground; and if he take hold of the boughs of his church, take early hold of her branches when they are young and tender, he will keep his hold, and not let them go. 2nd. To refresh himself with her fruits. He compares her breasts (her pious affections towards him) to clusters of grapes, a most pleasant fruit, ver. 7, and he repeats it, ver. 8, they shall be, that is, they shall be to me, as clusters of the vine, which make glad the heart; now I come up to the palm-tree, now thy graces shall be exerted and excited. Christ's presence with his people kindles the holy, heavenly fire in their souls, and then their "breasts shall be as clusters of the vine," a cordial to themselves, and acceptable to him. And since God at first breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and the breath of the new life still, the smell of their nostrils is like the smell of apples or oranges, which is pleasing and reviving. The Lord smelled a sweet savour from Noah's sacrifice, *Gen.* viii. 21. And, lastly, The roof of her mouth is like the best wine, ver. 9. Her spiritual taste and relish, or the words she speaks to God and man, which come not from the teeth outward, but from the roof of the mouth, these are pleasing to God. The prayer of the upright is his delight; and when those that fear the Lord speak one to another as becomes them, the Lord hearkens, and hears with pleasure, *Mal.* iii. 16. It is like that wine which is, *First.* Very palatable, and grateful to the taste. It goes down sweetly, it goes straightly, so the margin reads it, it moves itself aright, *Pr.* xxiii. 31. The pleasures of sense seem right to the carnal appetite, and go down smoothly, but they are often wrong; and, compared with the pleasure of communion with God, they are harsh and rough. Nothing goes down so sweetly with a gracious soul as the wine of God's consolations. *Secondly.* It is a great cordial. The presence of Christ by his Spirit with his people shall be reviving and refreshing to them, as that strong wine which makes the lips even of those that are asleep (that is, that are ready to faint away in a deliquium) to speak. Unconverted sinners are asleep, saints are often drowsy, and listless, and half asleep. But the word and Spirit of Christ will put life and vigour into the soul, and out of the abundance of the heart that is thus filled the mouth will speak. When the apostles were filled with the Spirit, they spake with tongues the wonderful works of God, *Acts* ii. 10, 12. And they who, in opposition to being drunk with wine, wherein is excess, are filled with the Spirit, speak to themselves in psalms and hymns, *Eph.* v. 18, 19. When Christ is thus commending the sweetness of his spouse's love excited by the manifestation of his, she seems to put in that word, "for my beloved," as in a parenthesis. Is there any thing in me that is pleasant or valuable? as it is from, so it is for, my beloved; and then he delights in our good affections and services, when they are all for him, and devoted to his glory.

10 I *am* my beloved's,
And his desire *is* toward me.
11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;
Let us lodge in the villages.
12 Let us get up early to the vineyards;
Let us see if the vine flourish,
Whether the tender grape appear, *and* the pomegranates bud forth:
There will I give thee my loves.
13 The mandrakes give a smell,
And at our gates *are* all manner of pleasant *fruits*, new and old,
Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.


MANDRAKES.

These are the words of the spouse, the church, the believing soul, in answer to the kind expressions of Christ's love in the foregoing verses.

First. She here triumphs in her relation to Christ, and her interest in him, and in his name will she boast all the day long. With what a transport of joy and holy exultation doth she say, ver. 10, "I am my beloved's," not my own, but entirely devoted to him, and owned by him. If we can truly say that Christ is our best beloved, we may be confident that we are his, and he will save us, *Ps.* cxix. 94. The gracious discoveries of Christ's love to us should engage us greatly to rejoice in the hold he has of us, his sovereignty over us, and propriety in us, which is no less a spring of comfort than a bond of duty. Intimacy of communion with Christ should help to clear up our interest in him. Glorying in this, that she is his to serve him, and reckoning that her honour, she comforts herself with this, that his desire is towards her; that is, he is her husband; it is a periphrasis of the conjugal relation, *Gen.* iii. 16. Christ's desire was strongly towards his chosen remnant when he came from heaven to earth to seek and save them; and when, in pursuance of his undertaking, he was even straitened till the baptism of blood he was to pass through for them was accomplished, *Lu.* xii. 50. He desired Zion for a habitation. This is a comfort to believers, that whosoever slights them, Christ has a desire towards them, such a desire as will again bring him from heaven to earth to receive them to himself, for he longs to have them all with him, *Jno.* xvii. 24; xiv. 3.

Secondly. She humbly and earnestly desires communion with him; ver. 11, 12, "Come, my beloved," let us take a walk together, that I may receive counsel, instruction, and comfort from thee, and may make known my wants and grievances to thee with freedom and without interruption. Thus Christ walked with the two disciples that were going to the village called Emmaus, and talked with them till he made their hearts burn within them. Observe here,

1. Having received fresh tokens of his love, and full assurances of her interest in him, she presseth forward towards farther acquaintance with him, as blessed Paul, who desired yet more and more of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus," *Phil.* iii. 8. Christ hath made it appear how much his desire is towards us, and we are very ungrateful if ours be not towards him. Note, Communion with Christ is that which all that are sanctified earnestly breathe after; and the clearer discoveries he makes them of his love, the more earnestly do they desire it. Sensual pleasures pall the carnal appetite, and soon give it a surfeit; but spiritual delights whet the desires, whose language is, Nothing more than God, but still more and more of him. Christ had said, "I will go up to the palm-tree." "Come," saith she, "let us go." The promise Christ hath made us of communion with him are not to supersede, but quicken and encourage, our prayers for that communion.

2. She desires to go forth into the fields and villages to have this communion with him. Those that would converse with Christ must go forth from the world and the amusements of it, must avoid every thing that would divert the mind, and be a hindrance to it when it should be wholly taken up with Christ; we must contrive how to "attend upon the Lord without distraction," 1 *Cor.* vii. 35. For therefore the spouse here covets to get out of the noise of the town. "Let us go forth to him without the camp," *Heb.* xiii. 13. Solitude and retirement befriend communion with God; therefore "Isaac went out into the field to meditate" and pray. "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door." A believer is never less alone than when alone with Christ, where no eye sees.

3. Having business to go abroad to look after the grounds, she desires the company of her beloved. Note, Wherever we are, we may keep up our communion with God, if it be not our own fault, for he is always at our right hand, his eye always upon us, and both his word and his ear always nigh us. By going about our worldly affairs with heavenly, holy hearts, mixing pious thoughts with common actions, and having our eyes ever towards the Lord, we may take Christ along with us wherever we go. Nor should we go any whither where we cannot in faith ask him to go along with us.

4. She is willing to rise betimes to go along with her beloved. "Let us get up early to the vineyards." It intimates her care to improve opportunities of conversing with her beloved. When the time appointed is come, we must lose no time; but, as the women, *Mar.* xvi. 2, go very early, though it be to a sepulchre, if we be in hopes to meet him there. Those that will go abroad with Christ must begin betimes with him, early in the morning of their days, must begin every day with him; seek him early, seek him diligently.

5. She will be content to take up her lodging in the villages, the huts or cottages which the country people built for their shelter when they attended their business in the fields, there, in these mean and cold dwellings, she will gladly reside, if she may but have her beloved with her; his presence will make them fine and pleasant, and convert them into palaces. A gracious soul can reconcile itself to the poorest accommodations if it may have communion with God in them.

6. The most pleasant, delightful fields, even in the spring-time, when the country is most pleasant, yet will not satisfy her unless she have her beloved with her. No delights on earth can make a believer easy unless he enjoy God in all.

Thirdly. She desires to be better acquainted with the state of her own soul, and the present posture of its affairs; ver. 12, "Let us see if the vine flourish." Our own souls are our vineyards; they are, or should be, planted with vines and pomegranates, choice and useful trees. We are made keepers of these vineyards, and therefore are concerned often to look into them, to examine the state of our own souls, to say whether the vine flourisheth, whether we be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, and whether our fruit abound; and especially let us inquire "whether the tender grape appear," and whether "the pomegranates bud forth," what good motions and dispositions there are in us that are yet but young and tender, that they may be protected and cherished with a particular care, and may not be nipped, or blasted, or rubbed off, but cultivated, that they may bring forth fruit unto perfection. In this inquiry into our own spiritual state, it will be good to take Christ along with us, because his presence will make the vine flourish, and the tender grape appear, as the returning sun revives the gardens, and because to him we are concerned to approve ourselves. If he sees the vine flourish, and the tender grape appear; if we can appeal to him, "Thou

knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;" if his Spirit witness with our spirit that our souls prosper, it is enough. And if we would be acquainted with ourselves, we must beg of him to search and try us, to help us in the search, and discover us to ourselves.

Fourthly. She promiseth to her beloved the best entertainment she can give him at her country seat; for he will come in to us, and sup with us, *Rev.* iii. 20.

1. She promiseth him her best affections; and, whatever else she had for him, it would utterly be contemned if her heart were not entire for him; "there" therefore "will I give thee my loves;" I will repeat the professions of it, honour thee with the tokens of it, and the outgoings of my soul towards thee in adorations and desires shall be quickened and enlarged, and my heart offered up to thee in a holy fire.

2. She promiseth him her best provision, ver. 13. There we shall find, not only pleasant odours, (for "the mandrakes give a smell," the 'love-flowers,' or lovely ones, so the word signifies, or, the love-fruits; it was something that was in all respects very grateful, so valuable that Rachel and Leah had like to have fallen out about them, *Gen.* xxx. 14,) but we shall also find that which is good for food, as well as pleasant to the eye; all the rarities that the country affords: "At our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits." Note, 1st. The fruits and exercises of grace are pleasant to the Lord Jesus. 2nd. These must be carefully laid up for him, devoted to his service and honour; must be always ready to us when we have occasion for them, as that is which is laid up at our gates; that by our bringing forth much fruit he may be glorified, *Jno.* xv. 18. 3rd. There is a great variety of these pleasant fruits with which our souls should be well stocked. We must have all sorts of them, grace for all occasions, new and old; as the good householder has in his treasury, not only the products of this year, but remainders of the last, *Mat.* xiii. 52. We must not only have that ready to us for the service of Christ, which we have heard, and learned, and experienced lately, but must retain that which we have formerly gathered; nor must we content ourselves only with what we have laid up in store in the days of old, but as long as we live must be still adding something new to it, that our stock may increase, and we may be throughly furnished for every good work. 4th. Those that truly love Christ will think all they have, even their most pleasant fruits, and what they have treasured up most choicely, too little to be bestowed upon him, and he is welcome to it all; if it were more, and better, it should be at his service. It is all from him, and therefore it is fit it should be all for him.

CHAPTER VIII.

The affections between Christ and his spouse are as strong and lively here in this closing chapter of the song as ever, and rather more so. I. The spouse continues her importunity for a more intimate communion and fellowship with him, ver. 1—3. II. She charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to interrupt her communion with her beloved, ver. 4; and they thereupon admire her dependence on him, ver. 5. III. She begs of her beloved, whom she raiseth up by her prayers, ver. 5, that he would by his grace confirm that blessed union with him to which she was admitted, ver. 6, 7. IV She makes intercession for others also, that care might be taken of them, ver. 8, 9; and pleaseth herself with the thoughts of her own interest in Christ, and his affection to her, ver. 10. V. She owns herself his tenant for a vineyard she held of him at Baal-hamon, ver. 11, 12. VI. The song concludes with an interchanging of parting requests; Christ chargeth his spouse that she should often let him hear from her, ver. 13; and she begs of him that he would hasten his return to her, ver. 14.

O THAT thou *wert* as my brother,
That sucked the breasts of my mother!
When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee;
Yea, I should not be despised.

2 I would lead thee, *and* bring thee into my mother's house,
Who would instruct me:
I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine
Of the juice of my pomegranate

POMEGRANATES.

3 His left hand *should be* under my head,
And his right hand should embrace me.

4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
That ye stir not up, nor awake *my* love, until he please.

Here, First. The spouse wisheth for a constant intimacy and freedom with the Lord Jesus. She was already betrothed to him, but the nuptials being not yet solemnized and published, (the bride, the Lamb's wife, will not be completely ready till his second coming,) she was obliged to be shy, and to keep at some distance; she therefore wisheth she might be taken for his sister, he having called her so, *ch.* v. 1, and that she might have the same chaste and innocent familiarity with him that a sister has with a brother, an own brother, that sucked the breasts of the same mother with her, who would therefore be exceeding tender of her, as Joseph was of his brother Benjamin. Some make this to be the prayer of the Old Testament saints for the hastening of Christ's incarnation, that the church might be better acquainted with him, when, "forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he" should "also himself likewise take part of the same," and not be "ashamed to call them brethren." It is rather the wish of all believers for a more intimate communion with him, that they may receive the spirit of sanctification, and so Christ might be as their brother, that is, they might be as his brethren, which then they are when by grace they are made partakers of a Divine nature; and "he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are both of one," *Heb.* ii. 11, &c. It becomes brethren and sisters, the children of the same parents, that have been nursed at the same breast, to be very loving to, and tender of, one another; such a love the spouse desires might be between her and her beloved, that she might call him brother.

Secondly. She promiseth herself then the satisfaction of making a more open profession of her relation to him than at present she could make. "When I should find thee without," any where, even before company, I would kiss thee as a sister doth her own brother, especially her little brother that is now sucking the breasts of her mother, (for so some understand it.) I would use all the decent freedom with thee that could be, and should not be despised for it, as doing any thing unbecoming the modesty of my sex. The church since Christ's incarnation can better own him than she could before, when she would be laughed at for being so much in love with one that was not yet born. Christ is become as our brother; wherever we find him, therefore, let us be ready to own our relation to him, and affection for him, and not fear being despised for it, nor regard that, any more than David did when he danced before the ark, "If this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile;" nay, hope that we shall not be despised, so much as some imagine; "Of the maidservants, of whom thou hast spoken, I shall be had in honour." Wherever we find the image of Christ, though it be without, among those that do not follow him with us, we must love it, and testify that love, and we shall not be despised for it, but catholic charity will gain us respect.

Thirdly. She promiseth to improve the opportunity she should then have of cultivating an acquaintance with him; ver. 2, "I would lead thee," as my brother, by the arm, and hang upon thee; I would shew thee all the house of my precious things, would bring thee "into my mother's house;" that is, into the church, into the solemn assemblies, *ch.* iii. 4, into my closet, for there the saints have most familiar communion with Christ. And there thou wouldst instruct me, so some read it, as brethren inform their sisters of what they desire to be instructed in. Those that know Christ shall be taught of him; and therefore we should desire communion with Christ, that we may receive instruction from him. He is come that he might give us an understanding. Or, my mother would instruct me, when I have thee with me. It is the presence of Christ in and with his church that makes the word and ordinances instructive to her children, which shall all be taught of God.

Fourthly. She promiseth him to bid him welcome to the best she had; would "cause him to drink of her spiced wine, and the juice of her pomegranate," and bid him welcome to it, wishing it better for his sake. The exercise of grace, and the performance of duty, is spiced wine to the Lord Jesus, very acceptable to him, as expressive of a grateful sense of his favours. Those that are pleased with Christ must study to be pleasing to him; and they will not find him hard to be pleased. He reckons hearty welcome his best entertainment, and if he have that he will bring his entertainment along with him.

Fifthly. She doubts not but to experience his tender care of her, and affection to her, ver. 3. That she should be supported by his power, and kept from fainting in the hardest services and sufferings, "his left hand should be under my head;" and that she should be comforted with his love, "his right hand should embrace me." Thus Christ laid his right hand upon John, when he was ready to die away, *Rev.* i. 17; *Dan.* x. 10, 18. It may be read as it is *ch.* ii. 6, "His left hand is under my head," for the words are the same in the original, and so it speaks an immediate answer to her prayer; she was answered with strength in her soul, *Ps.* cxxxviii. 3. While we are following hard after Christ, his right hand sustains us; *Ps.* lxiii. 8. "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Sixthly. She chargeth those about her to take heed of doing any thing to interrupt the pleasing communion she now had with her beloved, ver. 4, as she had done before, when he thus strengthened and comforted her with his presence; *ch.* ii. 7, "Let me charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem," and reason with you. "Why should you stir up, and why should you awake my love until he will?" The church, our common mother, chargeth all her children that they never do any thing to provoke Christ to withdraw, which we are very prone to do. Why should you put such an affront upon him? Why should you be such enemies to yourselves? We should thus reason with ourselves when we are tempted to do that which will grieve the Spirit. What! am I weary of Christ's presence, that I affront him, and provoke him to depart from me? Why should I do that which he will take so unkindly, and which I shall certainly repent of?

5 Who *is* this that cometh up from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved?
I raised thee up under the apple tree:
There thy mother brought thee forth:
There she brought thee forth *that* bare thee.

6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart,
As a seal upon thine arm:
For love *is* strong as death;
Jealousy *is* cruel as the grave:
The coals thereof *are* coals of fire,
Which hath a most vehement flame.

7 Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it:
If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,
It would utterly be contemned.

Here, First. The spouse is very much admired by those about her. It comes in in a parenthesis, but in it gospel grace lies as plain and as much above ground as anywhere in this mystical song. "Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Some make these the words of the bridegroom, expressing himself well pleased with her reliance on him, and resignation of herself to his conduct. They are rather the words of the daughters of Jerusalem, to whom she spoke ver. 4; they see her, and bless her. The angels in heaven, and all her friends on earth, are the joyful spectators of her bliss. The Jewish church came up from the wilderness, supported by the Divine power and favour, *Deu.* xxxii. 10, 11; the Christian church was raised up from a low and desolate condition by the grace of Christ relied on, *Gal.* iv. 27. Particular believers are then amiable, nay, admirable, and Divine grace is to be admired in them, when by the power of that grace they are brought up from the wilderness, leaning with a holy confidence and complacency upon Jesus Christ their beloved. This speaks the beauty of a soul, and the wonders of

Divine grace, 1. In the conversion of sinners. A sinful state is a wilderness, remote from communion with God, barren and dry, and in which there is no true comfort; it is a wandering, wanting state. Out of this wilderness we are concerned to come up, by true repentance, in the strength of the grace of Christ, supported by our beloved, and carried in his arms. 2. In the consolation of saints. A soul convinced of sin, and truly humbled for it, is in a wilderness, quite at a loss: and there is no coming out of this wilderness, but leaning on Christ as our beloved by faith, and not leaning to our own understanding, nor trusting to any righteousness or strength of our own as sufficient for us, but going forth and going on in the strength of the Lord God, and making mention of his righteousness, even his only, who is the Lord our righteousness. 3. In the salvation of those that belong to Christ. We must go up from the wilderness of this world having our conversation in heaven, and at death must remove thither, leaning upon Christ; must live and die by faith in him. To me to live is Christ, and it is he that is gain in death.

Secondly. She addresseth herself to her beloved.

1. She puts him in mind of the former experience which she and others had had of comfort and success in applying to him. 1st. For her own part; "I raised thee up under the apple tree;" that is, I have many a time wrestled with thee by prayer, and have prevailed. When I was alone in the acts of devotion, retired in the orchard under the apple tree, (which Christ himself was compared to, *ch.* ii 3,) as Nathanael under the fig-tree, *Jno.* i. 48, meditating and praying, then I raised thee up to help me and comfort me, as the disciples raised him up in the storm, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" *Mar.* iv. 38; and the church, *Ps.* xliv. 23, "Awake, why sleepest thou?" Note, The experience we have had of Christ's readiness to yield to the importunities of our faith and prayer should encourage us to continue instant in our addresses to him, to strive more earnestly, and not to faint. "I sought the Lord, and he heard me," *Ps.* xxxiv 4. 2nd. Others also had had like experience of comfort in Christ, as it follows there, *Ps.* xxxiv. 5, "They looked unto him," as well as I, "and were lightened." There "thy mother brought thee forth," the universal church, or believing souls, in whom Christ was formed, *Gal.* iv. 15. They were in pain for the comfort of an interest in thee, and travailed in pain, with great sorrow, so the word here signifies. But they brought thee forth; the pangs did not continue always, they that had travailed in convictions at last brought forth in consolations, and the pain was forgotten for joy of the Saviour's birth. By this very similitude our Saviour illustrates the joy which his disciples would have in his return to them, after a mournful separation for a time, *Jno* xvi. 21, 22. After the bitter pangs of repentance, many a one has had the blessed birth of comfort, why then may not I?

2. She begs of him that her union with him might be confirmed, and her communion with him continued, and made more intimate; ver. 6, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm." 1st. Let me have a place in thy heart, an interest in thy love. This is that which all those desire above any thing, that know how much their happiness is bound up in the love of Christ. 2nd. Let me never lose the room I have in thy heart; let thy love to me be insured, as that deed which is sealed not to be revoked, that cabinet which is sealed up not to be robbed. Let nothing ever prevail, either to separate me from thy love, or, by suspending the communications of it, to deprive me of the comfortable sense of it. 3rd. Let me be always near and dear to thee as "the signet on thy right hand," not to be parted with, *Jer.* xxii. 24; "engraven upon the palms of thy hand," *Isa.* xlix. 14; loved with a peculiar love. 4th. Be thou my high priest; let my name be written on thy breastplate, nearer thy heart, as the names of all the tribes were engraven, like the engravings of a signet, in twelve precious stones, on the breastplate of Aaron, and also on two precious stones on the two shoulders or arms of the ephod, *Ex.* xxviii. 11, 12, 21. 5th. Let thy power be engaged for me as an evidence of thy love to me. Let me be not only "a seal upon thine heart," but "a seal upon thine arm." Let me be ever borne up in thine arms, and know it to my comfort. Some make these to be the words of Christ to his spouse, commanding her to be ever mindful of him and of his love to her; however, if we desire and expect that Christ should set us as a seal on his heart, sure we cannot do less than set him as a seal on ours.

3. To enforce this petition she pleads the power of love, of her love to him, which constrained her to be thus pressing for the tokens of his love to her.

1st. Love is a violent, vigorous passion. *First.* It is "strong as death." The pains of a disappointed lover are like the pains of death; nay, the pains of death are slighted, and made nothing of in pursuit of the beloved object. Christ's love to us was strong as death, for it broke through death itself; he loved us and gave himself for us. The love of true believers to Christ is strong as death, for it makes them dead to every thing else; it even parts between soul and body, while the soul upon the wings of devout affections soars upwards to heaven, and even forgets that it is yet clothed and clogged with flesh. Paul, in a rapture of this love, knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. By it a believer is crucified to the world. *Secondly.* "Jealousy is cruel as the grave," which swallows up and devours all. Those that truly love Christ are jealous of every thing that would draw them from him, and especially jealous of themselves, lest they should do any thing to provoke him to withdraw from them, and rather than do so would pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand, than which what can be more cruel? Weak and trembling saints, that conceive a jealousy of Christ, doubting of his love to them, find that jealousy to prey upon them like the grave; nothing wastes the spirits more; but it is an evidence of the strength of their love to him. *Thirdly.* "The coals thereof," its lamps, and flames, and beams, are very strong, and burn with incredible fury and irresistible force, "as the coals of fire that have a most vehement flame;" a flame of the Lord, so some read it; a powerful, piercing flame, as the lightning, *Ps.* xxix. 7. Holy love is a fire that begets a mighty heat in the soul, and consumes the dross and chaff that is in it, melts it down like wax into a new form, and carries it upward as the sparks towards God and heaven.

2nd. Love is a valiant, victorious passion. Holy love is so; the reigning love of God in the soul is constant and firm, and will not be drawn off from him, either by fair means or foul, by life or death, *Rom.* viii. 38.

First. Death, and all its terrors, will not frighten a believer from loving Christ. "Many waters," though they will quench fire, "cannot quench this love," no, "nor the floods drown it," ver. 7. The noise of these waters will strike no terror upon it; let them do their worst, Christ shall still be the best beloved. The overflowing of these waters will strike no damp upon it; but it will enable a man to rejoice in tribulation. Though he slay me, I will love him, and trust in him. No waters could quench Christ's love to us, nor any floods drown it; he waded through the greatest difficulties, even seas of blood. Love sat king upon the floods; let nothing, then, abate our love to him.

Secondly. Life, and all its comforts, will not entice a believer from loving Christ. "If a man" could hire him, with "all the substance of his house," to take his love off from Christ, and set it upon the world and the flesh again, he would reject the proposal with the utmost disdain; as Christ, when the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them were offered him to buy him off from his undertaking: "Get thee hence, Satan." "It would utterly be contemned." Offer those things to those that know no better. Love will enable us to repel and triumph over temptations from the smiles of the world as much as from its frowns. Some give this sense of it: If "a man would give all the substance of his house" to Christ, as an equivalent, instead of love, to excuse it, "it would be contemned" He seeks not ours, but us; the heart, not the wealth. "If I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not love," it is nothing, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 1. Thus believers stand affected to Christ. The gifts of his providence cannot content them without the assurance of his love.

8 We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts:
What shall we do for our sister
In the day when she shall be spoken for?
9 If she *be* a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver:
And if she *be* a door, we will enclose her with boards of [cedar.
10 I *am* a wall, and my breasts like towers:
Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.
11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;
He let out the vineyard unto keepers;
Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand
pieces of silver.
12 My vineyard, which *is* mine, *is* before me:
Thou, O Solomon, *must have* a thousand,
And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

Christ and his spouse having sufficiently confirmed their love to each other, and agreed it to be on both sides strong as death, and inviolable; they are here, in these verses, like a loving husband and his wife, consulting together about their affairs, and considering what they should do. Yoke-fellows, having laid their hearts together, lay their heads together, to contrive about their relations, and about their estates; and accordingly this happy pair are here advising with one another about a sister they had, and a vineyard they had.

First. They are here consulting about their sister, their little sister, and the disposing of her.

1. The spouse proposeth her case with a compassionate concern; ver. 8, "We have a little sister, and she has no breasts," she is not yet grown up to maturity; "what shall we do for this little sister of ours in the day that she shall be spoken for?" so as that we may do well for her. 1st. This may be understood as spoken by the Jewish church concerning the Gentile world. God had espoused the church of the Jews to himself, and she was richly endowed; but what shall become of the poor Gentiles, the barren that has not borne, and the desolate? *Isa.* liv. 1. Their condition, say the pious Jews, is very deplorable and forlorn; they are sisters, children of the same fathers,—God and Adam; but they are little, because not dignified with the knowledge of God; they have no breasts, no Divine revelation, no Scriptures, no ministers, no breasts of consolation drawn out to them whence they might suck, being "strangers to the covenants of promise;" no breasts of instruction themselves to draw out to their children, to nourish them, 1 *Pet.* ii. 2. What shall we do for them? We can but pity them, and pray for them; Lord, what wilt thou do for them? The saints in Solomon's time might know from David's psalms that God had mercy in store for them, and they begged it might be hastened to them. Now the tables are turned, the Gentiles are betrothed to Christ, and ought to return the kindness by an equal concern for the bringing in of the Jews again; our eldest sister that once had breasts, but now has none. If we take it in this sense, the unbelieving posterity of these pious Jews contradicted this prayer of their fathers; for when the day came that the Gentiles should be spoken for, and courted to Christ, instead of considering what to do for them, they plotted to do all they could against them, which filled up the measure of their iniquity, 1 *Thes.* ii. 16. Or, 2nd. It may be applied to any other that belong to the election of grace, but are yet uncalled. They are remotely related to Christ and his church, and sisters to them both; "other sheep that are not of this fold," *Jno.* x. 16; *Acts* xviii. 10. They have no breasts, none yet fashioned, *Eze.* xvi. 7, no affection to Christ, no principle of grace. The day will come when they shall be spoken for; when the chosen shall be called, shall be courted for Christ by the ministers, the friends of the bridegroom; a blessed day it will be, a day of visitation; what shall we do in that day to promote the match, to conquer their coyness, and persuade them to consent to Christ, and present themselves chaste virgins to him? Note, Those that through grace are brought to Christ themselves should contrive what they may do to help others to him; to carry on the great design of his Gospel, which is to espouse souls to Christ, and convert sinners to him from whom they have departed.

2. Christ soon determines what to do in this case, and his spouse agrees with him in it; ver. 9, "If she be a wall," if the good work be once begun with the Gentiles, with the souls that are to be called in, if the little sister, when she shall be spoken for by the Gospel, will but receive the word, and build herself upon Christ the foundation, and frame her doings to turn to the Lord, as the wall is in order to the house, "we will build upon her a palace of silver," or build her up into such a palace; we will carry on the good work that is begun, till the wall becomes a palace, the wall of stone, a palace of silver, which goes beyond the boast of Augustus Cæsar, that what he found brick he left marble. This little sister, when once she is joined to the Lord, shall be made to "grow into a holy temple, a habitation of God through the Spirit," *Eph.* ii. 21, 22. If she be a door, when this palace comes to be finished, and the door of this wall set up, which was the last thing done, *Neh.* vii. 1, then "we will inclose her with boards of cedar;" that is, will carefully and effectually protect her, that she receive no damage. We will do it; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all concur in contriving, carrying on, and crowning the blessed work when the time comes. Whatever is wanting shall be set in order, and the work of faith shall be fulfilled with power. Though the beginnings of grace be small, the latter end shall greatly increase. The church is in care concerning those that are yet uncalled. Let me alone, saith Christ, I will do all that which is necessary to be done for them. Trust me with it.

3. The spouse takes this occasion to acknowledge with thankfulness his kindness to her, ver. 10. She is very willing to trust him with her little sister, for she herself had had great experience of his grace, and for her part she owed her all to it. "I am a wall, and my breasts like towers." This she speaks, not as upbraiding her little sister that had no breasts, but comforting herself concerning her, that he who had made her what she was, that had built her up upon himself, and made her to grow up to maturity, could and would do the same kindness for those whose case she bore upon her heart. "Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour." See, 1st. What she values herself by; her having found favour in the eyes of Jesus Christ. Those are happy, truly happy, and for ever so, that have the favour of God, and are accepted of him. 2nd. How she ascribes the good work of God in her to the good-will of God towards

her; he hath made me "a wall, and my breasts as towers;" and then, in that instance, more than in any thing, I experienced his love to me. "Hail, thou that art highly favoured," for in thee Christ is formed. 3rd. What pleasure God takes in the work of his own hands. When we are made as a wall, as a brazen wall, *Jer.* i. 18: xv. 20, that stands firm against the blast of the terrible ones, *Isa.* xxv. 4: then God takes delight in us to do us good. 4th. With what joy and triumph we ought to speak of God's grace towards us, and with what satisfaction we should look back upon the special times and seasons when we were in his eyes as those that find favour. These were days never to be forgotten.

Secondly. They are here consulting about a vineyard they had in the country; the church of Christ on earth considered under the notion of a vineyard, ver. 11, 12. "Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon," had a kingdom in the possession of a multitude, a numerous people. As he was a type of Christ, so his vineyard was a type of the church of Christ. Our Saviour has given us a key to these verses in the parable of the vineyard let out to unthankful husbandmen, *Mat.* xxi. 33. The bargain was, that every one of the tenants having so much of the vineyard assigned him as would contain a thousand vines, he was to pay the annual rent of a thousand pieces of silver; for we read, *Isa.* vii. 23, that in a fruitful soil there were "a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings." Observe, 1. Christ's church is his vineyard, a pleasant and peculiar place, privileged with many honours; he delights to walk in it as a man in his vineyard, and is pleased with its fruits. 2. He has intrusted each of us with this vineyard, as keepers of it. The privileges of the church are that good thing which he has committed to us, to be kept as a sacred trust. The service of the church is to be our business, according as our capacity is. "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." Adam, in innocency, was to dress the garden, and to keep it. 3. He expects rent from those that are employed in his vineyard, and intrusted with it. He comes seeking fruit, and requires gospel duty of all those that enjoy gospel privileges. Every one, of what rank or degree soever, must bring glory and honour to Christ, and do some service to the interest of his kingdom in the world, in consideration of what benefit and advantage they enjoy by their share of the privileges of the vineyard. 4. Though Christ has let out his vineyard to keepers, yet still it is his, and he has his eye always upon it for good; for if he did not watch over it night and day, *Isa.* xxvii. 1, 2, the watchmen to whom he has let it out, would keep it but in vain, *Ps.* cxxvii. 1. Some take these for Christ's words, ver. 12, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me;" and they observe how he harps upon his propriety in it; It is my vineyard, which is mine; so dear is his church to him. It is his own in the world, *Jno.* xiii. 1, and therefore he will always have it under his protection; it is his own, and he will look after it. 5. The church, that enjoys the privileges of the vineyard, must have them always before her. The keeping of the vineyard requires constant care and diligence. They are rather the words of the spouse, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me." She had lamented her fault and folly in not keeping her own vineyard, *ch.* i. 6, but now she resolves to reform. Our hearts are our vineyards, which we must keep with all diligence; and therefore we must have a watchful, jealous eye upon them at all times. 6. Our great care must be to pay our rent for what we hold of Christ's vineyard, and to see that we do not go behindhand, nor disappoint the messengers he sends to receive the fruits, *Mat.* xxi. 34. "Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand," and shalt have. The main of the profits belong to Christ; to him and his praise all our fruits must be dedicated. 7. If we be careful to give Christ the praise of our church privileges, we may then take to ourselves the comfort and benefit of them. If the owner of the vineyard has had his due, "the keepers of it" shall be well paid for their care and pains; they "shall have two hundred," which, no doubt, was looked upon as good profit. They that work for Christ are working for themselves, and shall be unspeakable gainers by it.

13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
The companions hearken to thy voice:
Cause me to hear *it*.
14 Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe
Or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

Christ and his spouse are here parting for a while: she must stay below in the gardens on earth, where she hath work to do for him; he must remove to the mountains of spices in heaven, where he has business to attend for her, as an advocate with the Father. Now observe with what mutual endearments they part:

First. He desires to hear often from her. She is good at her pen; she must be sure to write to him; she knows how to direct it; ver. 13, "Thou that" for the present "dwellest in the gardens," dressing and keeping them, till thou remove from the garden below to the paradise above; thou, O believer, whoever thou art, that dwellest in the gardens of solemn ordinances, in the gardens of church fellowship and communion, the companions are so happy as to "hear thy voice, cause me to hear it too." Observe,

1. Christ's friends should keep a good correspondence one with another, and, as dear companions, speak often to one another, *Mal.* iii. 16, and hearken to one another's voice; they should edify, and encourage, and respect one another. They are companions in the kingdom and patience of Christ, and therefore, as fellow-travellers, should keep up mutual freedom, and not be shy of, or strange to, one another. The communion of saints is an article of our covenant as well as an article of our creed, "to exhort one another daily," and be glad to be exhorted one by another. Hearken to the voice of the church as far as it agrees with the voice of Christ: his companions will do so.

2. In the midst of our communion with one another, we must not neglect our communion with Christ, but let him see our countenance, and hear our voice. He here bespeaks it; "The companions hearken to thy voice," it is a pleasure to them; "cause me to hear it." Thou makest thy complaints to them when any thing grieves thee; why dost thou not bring them to me, and let me hear them? Thou art free with them, be as free with me; pour out thy heart to me. Thus Christ, when he left his disciples, ordered them to send to him upon every occasion; "ask, and ye shall receive." Note, Christ not only accepts and answers, but even courts his people's prayers, not reckoning them a trouble to him, but an honour and a delight, *Pr.* xv. 8. We cause him to hear our prayers, when we not only pray, but wrestle and strive in prayer. He loves to be pressingly importuned, which is not the manner of men. Some read it, 'Cause me to be heard;' thou hast often an opportunity of speaking to thy companions, and they hearken to what thou sayest; speak of me to them, let my name be heard among them, let me be the subject of thy discourse. 'One word of Christ,' as Archbishop Usher used to say, 'before you part.' No subject is more becoming, or should be more pleasing.

Secondly. She desires his speedy return to her; ver. 14, "Make haste, my beloved," to come again and receive me to thyself; "be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices." Let no time be lost; it is pleasant dwelling here in the gardens, but to depart and be with thee is far better; that therefore is it I wish, and wait, and long for: "even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Observe, 1. Though Jesus Christ be now retired, he will return. The heavens, those high mountains of sweet spices, must contain him till the times of refreshing shall come; and those times will come when "every eye shall see him" in all the pomp and power of the upper and better world, the mystery of God being finished, and the mystical body completed. 2. True believers, as they are looking for, so they are hastening to, the coming of that day of the Lord; not that they would have him make more haste than good speed, but that the intermediate counsels may all be fulfilled, and then that the end may come—the sooner the better. Not that they think him "slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness," but thus they express the strength of their affection to him, and the vastness of their expectations from him when he comes again. 3. Those only that can in sincerity call Christ their beloved, their best beloved, can, upon good grounds, desire him to hasten his second coming. As for those whose hearts go a whoring after the world, and who set their affections on the things of the earth, they cannot love his appearing, but dread it rather, because then the earth, and all the things of it which they have chosen for their portion, will be burnt up. But they that truly love Christ long for his second coming, because it will be the crown both of his glory and their bliss. 4. The comfort and satisfaction which we sometimes have in communion with God in grace here should make us breathe the more earnestly after the immediate vision and complete fruition of him in the kingdom of glory. The spouse, after an endearing conference with her beloved, finding it must break off, concludes with this affectionate request for the perfecting and perpetuating of this happiness in the future state. The clusters of grapes that meet us in this wilderness should make us long for the full vintage in Canaan. If a day in his courts be so sweet, what then will an eternity within the veil be? If this be heaven, Oh that I were there! 5. It is good to conclude our devotions with a joyful expectation of the glory to be revealed, and holy, humble breathings towards it. We should not part but with the prospect of meeting again. It is good to conclude every sabbath with thoughts of the everlasting sabbath, which shall have no night at the end of it, nor any week day to come after it; to conclude every sacrament with thoughts of the everlasting feast, when we shall sit down with Christ at his table in his kingdom to rise no more, and drink of the wine new there; and to break up every religious assembly, in hopes of the general assembly of the church of the firstborn, when time and days shall be no more. Let the blessed Jesus hasten that blessed day. "Why are his chariot wheels so long a coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?"

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE*
TO THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

The Saviour of sinners is God and man united in one Christ. As God, he has all the perfection of heaven, and as man, he has all the beauties of this earth; he has every grace of time, and every blessing of eternity, which ought to draw and to attract our love. But while men are in their natural, unregenerate state, they see none of his perfections and beauties. They behold no form nor comeliness in him, that they should desire him. The world, and the things of it, appear more desirable than he does. The base perishing joys of sense have the entire possession of their affections. Sin is more lovely in their eyes than God the Saviour, and they give up their hearts to its enjoyments in preference to him and his heaven. While they continue to place their love on such unworthy objects, they are incapable of judging of this Divine Song; for they are not only strangers, but also enemies, to that love, of which it treats; and how then can they see the beauties of its composition, or judge of the justness of its sentiments? So long as they love sin, they cannot love Jesus Christ, and therefore they cannot love the sweet descriptions in this poem, which set forth the happiness of loving him above all things. But when their eyes are opened to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and their hearts are once drawn from the love of sin; when they have found that it cannot make them happy, then they are glad to hear of a Saviour; and when they have tasted of his love, then they begin to understand and to admire the beauties of this Divine Song, and the more they love him the greater beauties do they find in it.

The subject of it is the union between Christ and the faithful soul. In this all the expositors of Scripture, ancient and modern, are agreed. It is a spiritual Song, composed in the manner of a dialogue. The speakers are Christ and the believer. The inspirer of it is the holy and eternal Spirit, who delivered it by the mouth of Solomon. He knew it to be true by his own experience, as every believer does to this day. After he had left God he sought for happiness in the creatures, but was disappointed. He turned from one object to another, tried the whole circle of worldly enjoyments, and, as he passed on, he wrote

* From Discourses preached at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, London, by the Rev. W. Romaine.

upon each, "Vanity and vexation of spirit." It pleased God to shew him his error, and to make use of him, as a proper person to warn others from setting their hearts upon any object but God; for if Solomon could not find happiness in the world, "what can the man do that cometh after the king?" This is the subject of the book of *Ecclesiastes*. After Solomon had turned from these worldly vanities to serve the living God, he wrote this Divine Song, to shew what true happiness he had found, and every believer will find, in being united to Christ in the bonds of love and affection. The Holy Spirit had drawn his heart from the love of all inferior objects to God the Redeemer, and had given him faith to see his own interest in what the Redeemer was to do and suffer for him. By these bonds the union was formed and perfected. The Holy Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on the believer's, united them to each other. And the believer here describes what happy effects flowed to him from this union, and Christ describes the delight he had in it. The descriptions of their mutual love and happiness run through this Song of loves.

The general plan of this book, in short, is well expressed in the argument put before it in the Bible that was in use in Queen Elizabeth's time: 'In this song, Solomon by most sweet and comfortable allegories and parables, describeth the perfect love of Jesus Christ, the true Solomon and king of peace, and the faithful of his church, which he hath sanctified, and appointed to be his spouse, holy, chaste, and without reprehension. So that here is declared the singular love of the bridegroom toward the bride, and his great and excellent benefits wherewith he doth enrich her of his pure bounty and grace, without any of her deservings. Also the earnest affection of the church, which is inflamed with the love of Christ, desiring to be more and more joined to him in love, and not to be forsaken for any spot or blemish that is in her.'

This was the judgment of our reformers,—and many arguments may be brought to prove that such is the scope and design of the book.

The first argument which would occur to every serious person is the universal consent of expositors. All the Jewish writers suppose it to treat of the spiritual union between Christ and the believer. All Christian writers understand it in the same sense. And the unanimous opinion of all learned and good men ought certainly to have great weight with us: for the scope and design of the book must be very plain and clear, since there never was any dispute about it in the church of God. This then being the received sense, we may examine upon what principles it came to be so universally received. We suppose men were led to consider it in this light from the established method of explaining Scripture; and this is the second argument we shall use.

The Scriptures are suited to man in his present state. While he is here in the body he cannot converse immediately with spiritual objects; he can only see them comparatively, as compared to and illustrated by material and sensible objects. The Scriptures take this method of instruction. They teach us spiritual and heavenly things under their expressive images of nature. Whoever considered the Scriptures in this light could not rest in the literal sense of the Song. He knew that all Scripture had a spiritual sense, and therefore in reading the Song he would consider what the spiritual sense could be, and he could not easily mistake it, when he recollected what was the one great end and aim of all Scripture. Every part of it was to lead men to some knowledge of Christ, which is the third argument tending to open to us the scope and design of this Divine book.

Search the Scriptures, says he of whom they write, for these are they which testify of me. The Song is part of these Scriptures, and therefore it testifies of Christ; and what other testimony does it bear of him, than in setting forth the love which he hath for his faithful people?

"The testimony of Jesus," says St. John, "is the spirit of prophecy." If you understand the prophetical spirit of this book, you will read in it the testimony of Jesus; therefore, if you do not see how it bears testimony to him, you have no insight into its prophetical spirit.

Again we read, "That the holy Scriptures are able to make a man wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus; for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," 2 *Tim.* iii. 15, 16. From whence we infer, that the Song, being part of Scripture, is given by inspiration of God, and was therefore given that it might make the man of God wise unto salvation; and this it does by establishing him in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Another proof may be taken from the 45th psalm, which is a song of loves. The subject, and the manner of the composition, are the same with this Divine book. They treat of the love of Christ to his church, and after the manner of a dialogue; and the 45th psalm is applied to Christ by an infallible interpreter. St. Paul, in the 1st of the Hebrews, and the 8th verse, says, that it was written of God the Son; from whence we may conclude, that the Song being upon the same subject, and drawn up in the same manner, treats also of the love of God the Son to his faithful people. And to confirm the interpretation of these more general proofs, I may mention a fourth argument, taken from those places of Scripture wherein Christ is spoken of in the very terms used in the Song. The Scripture often speaks of him under the character of the bridegroom. In the 25th of *St. Matthew* we have the parable of the ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom, who, in the 13th verse, is called the Son of Man. In the 5th of the *Ephesians*, St. Paul is treating of the love and union between husbands and wives, and in the 32nd verse he says, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and his church," in the same manner, and with the same expressions, which are used in the Song, and which are carried on through the New Testament; for thus we read, in one of the last scenes of the *Revelation* of St. John, that the multitude of the heavenly host cried aloud, "as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." And in the 21st chapter St. John informs us who the bride, the Lamb's wife is, the church, the Jerusalem that is above, which is the spiritual mother of us all, even of every one of us who shall be so happy as to be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

From these authorities it appears undeniably evident, that it is common in Scripture to speak of Christ in the very same manner that he is spoken of in the Song; and therefore, summing up all these arguments together, considering that the expositors, Jews and Christians, are agreed about the plan and design of it, and that the received sense is agreeable to the general rule for interpreting Scripture, and is founded upon clear reasoning from many particular passages, and more especially from those passages wherein express mention is made of Christ's love to the faithful, under the very images used to represent it in the Song, we may certainly from hence conclude, that the scope and design of this sweet portion of Scripture is to set forth in the most lively and affecting manner the mutual joys and mutual praises of Christ and the faithful.

Are there any of our readers, who, after what has been said, are not yet reconciled to this book? Do you think that it had better have been left out of the sacred volume? Consider that your opinion weighs nothing against the unanimous consent of the church of God, and your opinion is founded upon your ignorance of the things of God. If you understood this book you could not think meanly of it; but in order to understand it you must have some experience of that love of which it treats: having never tasted of it, you cannot enter into the spirit of the descriptions of it here made by Christ and by the faithful. Instead then of looking into the book for matter of censure, look into your own hearts, and beg of God to shew you how much you stand in need of having the love of Christ shed abroad in them; and whenever he enables you to say with the apostle, Jesus Christ loved me and gave himself for me, then you will taste and see how exceedingly sweet every image and description is in this Divine Song.

If you cannot be persuaded to desire the love of God may be shed abroad in your hearts, you will entertain a mean opinion of this treatise upon it. But, for the sake of your dear and immortal soul, suffer not yourself to speak irreverently of it. If God ever revealed himself to man, this is part of his revelation. The holy and eternal Spirit, who inspired all Scripture, spake this by his unerring wisdom. He is the author, and the subject is the deep things of God. Let not then a disrespectful word come out of your mouth against it. But if you will suffer your wit to run into licentiousness, remember that you ridicule this book at the peril of your soul. You are guilty of blasphemy against the Most High. And how can you think it safe to jest upon the Almighty, and to make sport with his omnipotence? Why will you set God at defiance, and add fresh fuel to his wrath, as if all your other sins would not sink you deep enough into the pit of destruction? If you have any love left for your eternal interest, forbear this desperate wit; and beg of God to enlighten the darkness of your understanding, that you may see the scope and design of this sacred Song. And to those persons who desire this we make a second remark.

You do not clearly comprehend the things written in this book, but you desire to comprehend them. If this desire be from God, it will put you upon praying for the experience of that love which is here treated of. You may possibly come at the meaning of some things in it, but you cannot know them practically nor profitably, until you are taught them of God. You cannot tell what the love of God is until it be shed abroad in your heart. No description can make you acquainted with it; and therefore look up to God who has it to give. Ask him out of the riches of his grace to bestow it upon you; and when he gives you the comfortable sense of it, then you will have the best key to open the mysteries of this Divine Song. And for your encouragement in seeking, remember that this love is free. Though it be inestimable, yet it is to be had without money and without price. God had no motive to shew it to sinners but his own inherent mercy, and he waits for no merit or qualification in them; for it is to supply the want of all merit and qualification; and he has already begun to bestow the riches of this free love upon you, by making you sensible of your want of it, and by putting you upon seeking for it. Wait upon him then in the ways of his ordinances, and he will finish what he has begun. He will enable you to love him, because he first loved you. Ask this out of a due sense of your unworthiness; and the Father, for the sake of his Son, will shed abroad his love in your hearts by the Holy Ghost. And thus he will bring you into the happy number of those believers, to whom I make my third and last inference.

You who are Christians indeed can read this sweet portion of Scripture with delight and profit. You know it to be true by your own experience. You look upon Jesus Christ in the light here described; for he is your peace, and you find his dealings with your souls are the very same which the Song mentions. For what the song says of the church in general must be true of every individual who is a member of it. For the church is nothing more than a congregation of believers, united by faith, and by the bond of the Spirit, to Christ, the Head of the spiritual body, and by love to one another; united to him, as the members are to the head, and united to one another as the members are in the same body. What, therefore, is spoken in the Song of the whole church, as the spouse of Christ, is true of every particular Christian. And what is said of the church is briefly this: In the first chapter the church expresses a strong desire for nearer communion with Christ, and then there follows some declining of her affection. After this we have her recovery, a regaining of her first love and yet she afterwards declines again in her affection, her love grows cold, and she falls into a state of desertion. Christ hides his presence from her more than he did in her former coldness; and this continues, until perceiving Christ's constant affection to her, notwithstanding her unkind treatment of him, she recovers, and follows him more closely, and with a more constant love than before.

These passages agree with the experience of the best Christians in the course of their own lives, and therefore the Song is not a dark unintelligible book to them. They find it to be an experimental treatise upon the love of Jesus Christ to his people. And all who have experienced that love understand it in this light. You have read it with care, praying the holy Inspirer of it to enlighten your understandings, that you might see its true sense and spiritual meaning and he has opened to you the truth of its descriptions. The Holy Spirit has drawn you to Christ, and has made you happy in the sense of his love, and thus he has given you the best comment upon the song. The more he enables you to taste of this love, the more clearly will you understand the Song. You will have the greater insight into it, the nearer access you have to the Father, with confidence through the faith that is in Christ; for what is written concerning communion with God must certainly be best understood by those who live in close communion with him. This is your privilege. Remember how great and high it is, and act worthy of it. You have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the bond of this communion, and therefore it is called the 'communion of the Holy Ghost.' Oh, beware then of every thing that would grieve or offend him. As his is a holy office, entirely relating to holiness, nothing can displease this Holy Spirit so much as sin. He is of purer eyes than to behold the least iniquity. The least thought of sin offends him; for it is sin that pollutes his sacred residence, and defiles the temple of the heart. Sin makes him withdraw and hide the light of his countenance, and withhold the sweet sense of his comfortable presence. Oh, beware then, as you love your own peace of mind, as you love your God and his glory, as you love Jesus Christ and his salvation, beware of the least approach to sin. Pray, watch, strive against it. Resist unto blood, striving against sin. Wait upon God in all his ordinances, to get power over it. And the more you are dead to sin and alive unto God, the nearer fellowship will you have with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; and, as this fellowship is the subject of the Song, you will therefore understand it the better, and experience more of its sweetness.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHETICAL BOOKS

OF

THE OLD TESTAMENT:

VIZ.

ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, LAMENTATIONS, EZEKIEL, DANIEL, HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS,
OBADIAH, JONAH, MICAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH,
HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, AND MALACHI.

PREFACE.

THOSE books of Scripture are all prophetical which here, "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling," we have endeavoured a methodical explanation, and a practical improvement of. I call them prophetical, because so they are for the main, though we have some histories here and there brought in for the illustration of the prophecies, and a book of Lamentations. Our Saviour often puts "the law and the prophets" for all the Old Testament. The prophets, by waiving the ceremonial precepts, and not insisting on them, but only on the weightier matters of the law, plainly intimated the abolishing of that part of the law of Moses by the Gospel; and by their many predictions of Christ, and the kingdom of his grace, they intimated the accomplishing and perfecting of that part of the law of Moses in the Gospel. Thus the prophets were the *nexus*—'the connecting bond' between the law and the Gospel, and are therefore fitly placed between them.

These books being prophetical, as such they are Divine, and of heavenly original and extraction. We have human laws, human histories, and human poems, as well as Divine ones; but we can have no human prophecies. Wise and good men may make prudent conjectures concerning future events, moral prognostications we call them; but it is essential to true prophecy that it be of God. The learned Huetius lays this down for one of his axioms, *Omnis prophetica facultas a Deo est*,—'the prophetic talent is entirely from God,' (*Demonstrat. Evang.* p. 15;) and proves it to be the sense both of Jews and heathen, that it is God's prerogative to foresee things to come, and whoever had such a power had it from God. And therefore the Jews reckon all prophecy to be given by the highest degree of inspiration, except that which was peculiar to Moses. When our Saviour asked the chief priests whether John's baptism were from heaven, or of men, they durst not say of men, because the people counted him a prophet, and if so, then not of men.

The Hebrew name for a prophet is נביא, a 'speaker,' 'preacher,' or 'orator,' a 'messenger' or 'interpreter,' that delivers God's messages to the children of men; as a herald to proclaim war, or an ambassador to treat of peace. But then it must be remembered, that he was formerly called ראה, or חזה, that is, a seer, (1 *Sam.* ix. 9,) for prophets with the eyes of their mind first saw what they were to speak, and then spoke what they had seen.

Prophecy, taken strictly, is the foretelling of things to come; and there were those to whom God gave this power, not only that it might be a sign for the confirming of the faith of the church, concerning the doctrine preached, when the things foretold should be fulfilled, but for warning, instruction, and comfort, in prospect of what they themselves might not live to see accomplished, but which should be fulfilled in its season; so predictions of things to come long after might be of present use.

The learned Dr. Grew, (*Cosmol. Sacra.* l. iv. c. 6,) describes prophecy in this sense to be, a 'declaration of the Divine prescience, looking at any distance through a train of infinite causes, known and unknown to us, upon a sure and certain effect.' Whence he infers, 'that the being of prophecies supposeth the non-being of contingents; for, though there are many things which seem to us to be contingents, yet were they so indeed there could have been no prophecy; and there can be no contingent seemingly so loose and independent but it is a link of some chain.' And Huetius gives this reason why none but God can foretell things to come: because every effect depends upon an infinite number of preceding causes, all which in their order must be known to him that foretells the effect; and therefore to God only, for none but he is omniscient. So Tully (*De Divin.* l. i.) argues, *Qui teneat causas rerum futurarum, idem necesse est omnia teneat quæ futura sint; quod facere nemo nisi Deus potest*,—'He who knows the causes of future events must necessarily know the events themselves; this is the prerogative of God alone.' And therefore we find that by this the God of Israel proves himself to be God, (*Isa.* xlvi. 9, 10,) that by his prophets he foretold things to come, which came to pass according to the prediction; and by this he disproves the pretensions of the pagan deities, that they could not shew the things that were to come to pass hereafter, *Isa.* xli. 23. Tertullian (*Apol.* c. 20) proves the Divine authority of the Scripture from the fulfilling of Scripture prophecies, *Idoneum, opinor, testimonium divinitatis, veritas divinationis*,—'I conceive the accomplishment of prophecy to be a satisfactory attestation from God.' And, besides the foretelling of things to come, the discovering of things secret by revelation from God is a branch of prophecy, as Ahijah's discovering Jeroboam's wife in disguise, and Elisha's telling Gehazi what passed between him and Naaman.

But prophecy, (*Du Pin, Hist. of the Canon*, l. i. c. 2,) in Scripture language, is taken more largely for a declaration of such things to the children of men, either by word or writing, as God has revealed to them that speak or write it, by vision, dream, or inspiration, guiding their minds, their tongues, and pens, by his Holy Spirit; and giving them not only ability, but authority to declare such things in his name, and to preface what they say with, "Thus saith the Lord." In this sense it is said, "that the prophecy of Scripture came not in old time by the will of man," as other pious moral discourses might, "but holy men spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 *Pet.* i. 20, 21. The same Holy Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters to produce the world, moved upon the minds of the prophets to produce the Bible.

Now I think it is worthy to be observed that all nations, having had some sense of God and religion, have likewise had a notion of prophets and prophecy; have had a veneration for them, and a desire and expectation of acquaintance and communion with the gods they worshipped in that way. Witness their oracles, their augurs, and the many arts of divination they had in use among them, in all the ages and all the countries of the world.

It is commonly urged as an argument against the atheists, to prove that there is a God, that all nations of the world acknowledged some god or other, some being above them, to be worshipped and prayed to, to be trusted in and praised: the most ignorant and barbarous nations could not avoid the knowledge of it; the most learned and polite nations could not avoid the belief of it. And this is a sufficient proof of the general and unanimous consent of mankind to this truth; though far the greatest part of men made to themselves gods, which yet were no gods. Now I think it may be urged with equal force against the deists, for the proof of a Divine revelation, that all nations of the world had, and had veneration for, that which they at least took to be a Divine revelation, and could not live without it; though in this also "they became vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened." But if there were not a true Deity, and a true prophecy, there would never have been pretended deities and counterfeit prophecies.

Lycurgus and Numa, those two great lawgivers of the Spartan and Roman commonwealths, brought their people to an observance of their laws by possessing them with a notion that they had them by Divine revelation, and so making it a point of religion to observe them. And those that have been never so little conversant with the Greek and Roman histories, as well as with the more ancient ones of Chaldea and Egypt, cannot but remember what a mighty deference their princes and great commanders, and not their unthinking commonalty only, paid to the oracles and prophets, and the prognostications of their soothsayers, which in all cases of importance were consulted with abundance of gravity and solemnity; and how often the resolutions of councils, and the motions of mighty armies, turned upon them, though they appeared never so groundless and far-fetched.

There is a full account given by that learned philosopher and physician, Caspar Peucer, of the many kinds of divination and prediction used among the Gentiles, by which they took on them to tell the fortune both of states and of particular persons. They

were all, he saith, (*De Præcipuis Divinationum Generibus, A.* 1591,) reduced by Plato to two heads, *Divinatio,* Μαντική, which was a kind of inspiration, or was thought to be so; the prophet or prophetess foretelling things to come by an internal *flatus,* or fury. Such was the oracle of Apollo at Delphos, and that of Jupiter Trophonius; which, with the like, were famous for many ages during the prevalency of the kingdom of darkness: but (as appears by some of the pagan writers themselves) they were all silenced and struck dumb when the Gospel, that truly Divine oracle, began to be preached to the nations. The other kind of divination was that which he calls Οἰωνιστική, which was a prognostication by signs according to rules of art, as by the flight of birds, the entrails of beasts, by stars, or meteors, and abundance of ominous accidents, with which a foolish world was miserably imposed upon. A large account of this matter we have also in the late learned dissertation of Anton. Van Dale, (*De Vera ac Falsa Prophetia, A.* 1696,) to which I refer the reader. But nothing of this kind made a greater noise in the Gentile world than the oracles of the Sibyls, and their prophecies. Their name signifies a divine counsel: *Sibyllæ,* qu. *Siobulæ, Sios,* in the Æolic dialect, being put for *Theos.* Peucer saith, every nation almost had their Sibyls, but those of Greece were most celebrated. They lived in several ages; the most ancient is said to be the Sibylla Delphica, who lived before the Trojan war, or about that time: the Sibylla Erythrea was the most noted; she lived about the time of Alexander the Great: but it was the Sibylla Cumana of whom the story goes that she presented herself and nine books of oracles to Tarquinius Superbus, which she offered to sell him at so vast a rate that he refused to purchase them, upon which she burnt three, and upon his second refusal the other three, but made him give the same rate for the remaining three, which were deposited with great care in the Capitol: but those being afterwards burnt accidentally with the Capitol a collection was made of other Sibylline oracles, and those are they which Virgil refers to in his fourth Eclogue, (*Vid. Virg. Æneid.* l. vi.)

All the oracles of the Sibyls that are extant were put together and published in Holland not many years ago, by Servatius Gallæus, in Greek and Latin, with large and learned notes; together with all that could be met withal of the metrical oracles that go under the names of Jupiter, Apollo, Serapis, and others, by Joannes Opsopæus.

The oracles of the Sibyls were appealed to by many of the fathers, for the confirmation of the Christian religion. Justin Martyr (*Ad Græcos Cohortat. juxta finem*) doth it with a great deal of assurance, persuading the Greeks to give credit to that ancient Sibyl, whose works were extant all the world over; and to their testimony and to that of Hydaspis, he appeals concerning the general conflagration, and concerning the torments of hell. Clemens Alexandrinus (*Apol.* 2, p. *mihi.* 66, l.) often quotes the Sibyl's verses with great respect; so doth Lactantius, (*Qu. et Respons.* p. 436;) St. Austin (*De Civ. Dei,* l. xviii. c. 23,) has the famous acrostic at large, said to be one of the oracles of the Sibylla Erythrea, the first letters of the verses making Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς Θεοῦ υἱὸς Σώτηρ,—'Jesus Christ the Son of God the Saviour.' Divers passages they produce out of those oracles which expressly foretell the coming of the Messiah, his being born of a virgin, his miracles, his sufferings, particularly his being buffeted, spit upon, crowned with thorns, having vinegar and gall given him to drink, &c.

Whether these oracles were genuine and authentic or no, has been much controverted among the learned. Baronius and the Popish writers generally admit and applaud them, and build much upon them; so do some Protestant writers. Isaac Vossius has written a great deal to support the reputation of them, and (as I find him quoted by Van Dale) will needs have it that they were formerly a part of the canon of Scripture. And a learned prelate of our own nation, Bishop Montague, pleads largely and with great assurance for their authority, and is of opinion that some of them were Divinely inspired.

But many learned men look upon it to be a pious fraud, as they called it, that those verses of the Sibyls which speak so very expressly of Christ, and the future state, were forged by some Christians, and imposed upon the over-credulous. Huetius, (*Demonstrat.* p. 748,) though of the Romish church, condemns both the ancient and more modern composures of the Sibyls; and refers his reader for the proof of the vanity of them to the learned Blondel. Van Dale and Gallæus look upon them to be a forgery. And the truth is, they speak so much more particularly and plainly concerning our Saviour and the future state than any of the prophets of the Old Testament do, that we must conclude St. Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, guilty not only of a very great omission, that in all his preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, and in all his Epistles to the Gentile churches, he never so much as mentions the prophecies of the Sibyls, nor vouches their authority, as he doth that of the Old Testament prophets, in his preaching and writing to the Jews; but likewise of a very great mistake, in making it the particular advantage which the Jews had above the Gentiles, that to them were committed the oracles of God, *Rom.* iii. 1, and they were the children of the prophets; and in speaking of the Gentiles as sitting in darkness, and being afar off. We cannot conceive that heathen women, and those acted by demons, should speak more early and fully of the Messiah than those holy men did, who we are sure were moved by the Holy Ghost; or that the Gentiles should be intrusted with larger and earlier discoveries of the great salvation than that people of whom as concerning the flesh Christ was to come. But enough, if not more than enough, of the pretenders to prophecy. It is a good remark which the learned Gallæus makes upon the great veneration which the Romans had for the oracles of the Sibyls, for which he quotes Dionysius Halicarnassæus, Οὐδὲν οὕτε Ῥωμαῖοι φυλάττουσιν οὕτε ὅσιον κτῆμα οὕτε ἱερὸν, ὡς τὰ Σιβύλλεια θέσφατα,—'The Romans preserve nothing with such sacred care, nor do they hold any thing in such high estimation, as the Sibylline oracles.' *Hi si pro vitreis suis thesauris adeo decertarunt, quid nos pro genuinis nostris, a Deo inspiratis?* &c.—'If they had such a value for these counterfeits, how precious should the true treasure of the Divine oracles be to us!' And of that we come next to speak.

Prophecy, we are sure, was of equal date with the church; for faith comes not by thinking and seeing, as philosophy doth, but by hearing, *Rom.* x. 17; by hearing the word of God. In the antediluvian period, Adam received Divine revelation in the promise of the seed of the woman, and no doubt communicated it in the name of the Lord to his seed, and was prophet as well as priest to his numerous family. Enoch was a prophet, and foretold perhaps the deluge, however the last judgment, that of the great day, "Behold, the Lord comes!" *Jude* 14. When men began as a church to call upon the name of the Lord, *Gen.* iv. 26, or to call themselves by his name, they were blessed with prophets, for the prophecy came in old time, 2 *Pet.* i. 21: it is venerable for its antiquity.

When God renewed his covenant of providence (and that a figure of the covenant of grace) with Noah and his sons, we soon after find Noah as a prophet, foretelling not only the servitude of Canaan, but God's enlarging Japhet by Christ, and his dwelling in the tents of Shem, *Gen.* ix. 26, 27. And when upon the general revolt of mankind to idolatry, (as in the former period upon the apostacy of Cain,) God distinguished a church for himself by the call of Abraham, and by his covenant with him and his seed, he conferred upon him, and other the patriarchs, the spirit of prophecy. For when he reproved kings for their sakes, this was it he said, "Touch not mine anointed," (who have received that unction from the Holy One,) "and do my prophets no harm," *Ps.* cv. 14, 15. And of Abraham he said expressly, "He is a prophet," *Gen.* xx. 7. And it was with a prophetical eye, as a seer, that he saw Christ's day; saw it at so great a distance, and yet with so great an assurance triumphed in it, *Jno.* viii. 56. And Stephen seems to speak of the first settling of a correspondence between him and God, by which he was established to be a prophet, when he saith, the God of glory appeared to him, *Acts* vii. 2; appeared in glory. Jacob upon his deathbed, as a prophet, told his sons what should befall them in the last days, *Gen.* xlix. 1–10; and spoke very particularly concerning the Messiah.

Hitherto was the infancy of the church, and with it of prophecy. It was the dawning of that day; and that morning light owed its rise to the Sun of righteousness, though he rose not till long after; but it shone more and more. During the bondage of Israel in Egypt this, as other glories of the church, was eclipsed; but as the church made a considerable and memorable advance in the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the forming of them into a people, so did the spirit of prophecy in Moses, the illustrious instrument employed in that great service: so it is said, *Hos.* xii. 13, "By a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved" through the wilderness to Canaan; that is, by Moses, as a prophet. It appears, by what God said to Aaron, that there were then other prophets among them, to whom God made known himself and his will in dreams and visions, *Num.* xii. 16; but to Moses he spake in a peculiar manner, "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, *Num.* xii. 6, 8.

Nay, such a plentiful effusion was there of the spirit of prophecy at that time, (because Moses was such a prophet, as was to be a type of Christ the great prophet,) that some of his spirit was put upon seventy elders of Israel at once, and they prophesied, *Num.* xi. 25. What they said was extraordinary, and not only under the direction of a prophetic inspiration, but under the constraint of a prophetic impulse; as appears by the case of Eldad and Medad.

When Moses, that great prophet, was laying down his office, he promised Israel that the Lord God would raise them up a prophet of their brethren like unto him, *Deu.* xviii. 15–18. Which words, saith the learned Bishop Stillingfleet, (*Orig. Sacr.* b. 2. c. 4,) though in their full and complete sense they relate to Christ, (and to him they are more than once applied in the New Testament,) yet there is included in them a promise of an order of prophets, which should succeed Moses in the Jewish church, and be λόγια ζῶντα, the living oracles among them, *Acts* vii. 38, by which they might know the mind of God; for in the next words he lays down rules for the trial of prophets, whether what they said was of God or no. And it is observable, that that promise comes in immediately upon an express prohibition of the pagan rites of divination, and the consulting of wizards and familiar spirits. You shall not need to do that, saith Moses; for, to your much better satisfaction, you shall have prophets Divinely inspired, by whom you may know, from God himself, both what to do and what to expect. But as Jacob's dying prophecy concerning the sceptre in Judah, and the lawgiver between his feet, did not begin to be remarkably fulfilled till David's time, most of the judges being of other tribes, so Moses's promise of a succession of prophets began not to receive its accomplishment till Samuel's time, a little before the other promise began to emerge and operate; and it was an introduction to the other, for it was by Samuel as a prophet that David was anointed king; which was an intimation that the prophetical office of our Redeemer should make way both in the world and in the heart for his kingly office; and therefore, when he was asked, "Art thou a King?" he answered, not evasively, but very pertinently, "I came to bear witness to the truth," *Jno.* xviii. 37; and so to rule as a king purely by the power of truth.

During the government of the judges there was a pouring out of the Spirit, but more as a spirit of conduct and courage for war than as a spirit of prophecy. Deborah is indeed called a prophetess, because of her extraordinary qualifications for judging Israel; but that is the only mention of prophecy, that I remember, in all the book of *Judges*. Extraordinary messages were sent by angels, as to Gideon and Manoah; and it is expressly said, that before the word of the Lord came to Samuel it was precious, it was very scarce, "there was no open vision," 1 *Sam.* iii. 1. And it was therefore with more than ordinary solemnity that the word of the Lord came first to Samuel; and by degrees notice and assurance was given to Israel, "that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord," 1 *Sam.* iii. 20. In Samuel's time, and by him, the schools of the prophets were erected, by which prophecy was dignified, and provision made for a succession of prophets; for it should seem that in those colleges hopeful young men were bred up in devotion, in a constant attendance upon the instructions the prophets gave from God, and under a strict discipline, as candidates, or probationers for prophecy, who were called the sons of the prophets; and their religious exercises of prayer, conference, and psalmody especially, are called prophesyings; and their prefect, or president, is called their father, 1 *Sam.* x. 12. Out of these God ordinarily chose the prophets he sent, yet not always. Amos was no prophet or prophet's son, *Amos* vii. 14, had not his education in the schools of the prophets, and yet was commissioned to go on God's errands; and (which is observable) though he had not academical education himself, yet he seems to speak of it with great respect, when he reckons it among the favours God had bestowed upon Israel, that he raised up of their sons for prophets, and of their young men for Nazarites, *Amos* ii. 11.

It is worth noting that, when the glory of the priesthood was eclipsed by the iniquity of the house of Eli, the desolations of Shiloh, and the obscurity of the ark, there was then a more plentiful effusion of the spirit of prophecy than had been before; a standing ministry of another kind was thereby erected, and a succession of it kept up. And thus afterwards, in the kingdom of the ten tribes, where there was no legal priesthood at all, yet there were prophets, and prophets' sons; in Ahab's time we meet with a hundred of them, whom Obadiah hid by fifty in a cave, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 4. When the people of God that desired to know his mind wanted one way of instruction, God furnished them with another, and a less ceremonious one; for he left not himself without witness, nor them without a guide. And when they had no temple or altar that they could attend upon with any safety or satisfaction, they had private meetings at the prophets' houses, to which the devout faithful worshippers of God resorted, as we find the good Shunamite did, 2 *Kin.* iv. 23; and where they kept their new moons and their sabbaths comfortably, and to their edification.

David was himself a prophet; so St. Peter calls him, *Acts* ii. 30; and though we read not of God's speaking to him by dreams and visions, yet we are sure "the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was in his tongue," and he had those about him that were seers, that were his seers, as Gad and Iddo, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 2, that brought him messages from God, and wrote the history of his times. And now the products of the spirit of prophecy were translated into the service of the temple, not only in the model of the house, which the Lord made David understand in writing by his hand upon him, 1 *Chr.* xxviii. 19, but in the worship performed there, for there we find Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, prophesying with harps, and other musical instruments, according to the order of the king, not to foretell things to come, but to give thanks, and to praise the Lord, 1 *Chr.* xxviii. 1–3; yet in their psalms they spoke much of Christ and his kingdom, and the glory to be revealed.

In the succeeding reigns, both of Judah and Israel, we frequently meet with prophets sent on particular errands to Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Asa, and other of the kings, who, it is probable, instructed the people in the things of God at other times, though it be not recorded. But prophecy growing into contempt with many, God revived the honour of it, and put a new lustre upon it, in the power given to Elijah and Elisha to work miracles, and the great things that God did by them, for the confirming of the people's faith in it, and the awakening of their regard to it, 2 *Kin.* ii. 3; iv. 1–38; v. 22; vi. 1. In their time, and by their agency, it should seem that the schools of the prophets were revived; and we find sons of the prophets, fellows of these sacred colleges, employed in carrying messages to the great men, as to Ahab, 1 *Kin.* xx. 35; and to Jehu, 2 *Kin.* ix. 1.

Hitherto the prophets of the Lord delivered their messages by word of mouth, only we read of one writing which came from Elijah the prophet to Jehoram king of Israel, 2 *Chr.* xxi. 12. The histories of those times which are left us were compiled by prophets under a Divine direction; and when the Old Testament is divided into the law and the prophets, the historical books are for that reason reckoned among the prophets. But in the later times of the kingdom of Judah and Israel some of the prophets were Divinely inspired to write their prophecies, or abstracts of them, and to leave them upon record for the benefit of after ages, that the children which should be born might praise the Lord for them, and by comparing the event with the prediction might have their faith confirmed. And probably those later prophets spoke more fully and plainly of the Messiah and his kingdom than their predecessors had done, and for that reason their prophecies were put in writing, not only for the encouragement of the pious Jews that looked for the consolation of Israel, but for the use of us Christians, upon whom the ends of the world are come, as David's psalms had been for the same reason, that the Old Testament and the New might mutually give light and lustre to each other. Many other faithful prophets there were at the same time, who spoke in God's name, that did not commit their prophecies to writing, but were of those whom God sent, "rising up betimes and sending them;" the contempt of whom, and of their messages, brought ruin without remedy upon that sottish people, that "knew not the day of their visitation." In their captivity they had some prophets, some to shew them how long; and though it was not by a prophet like Moses that they were brought up out of Babylon, as they had been out of Egypt, but by Joshua the high priest first, and afterwards by Ezra the scribe, to shew that God can do his work by ordinary means when he pleaseth, yet soon after their return the spirit of prophecy was poured out plentifully, and continued (according to the Jews' computation,) forty years in the second temple, but ceased in Malachi. Then (say the rabbins) the Holy Spirit was taken from Israel, and they had the benefit only of the Bathkol, 'the daughter of a voice,' namely, a voice from heaven, which they look upon to be the lowest degree of Divine revelation. Now herein they are witnesses against themselves for rejecting the true Messiah; for our Lord Jesus, and he only, was spoken to by a voice from heaven, at his baptism, his transfiguration, and his entrance on his sufferings.

In John Baptist prophecy revived; and therefore in him the Gospel is said to begin, when the church had had no prophets of above three hundred years. We have not only the *vox populi*,—'the voice of the people,' to prove John a prophet, for all the people counted him so, but *vox Dei*,—'the voice of God' too, for Christ calls him a prophet, *Mat.* xi. 9, 10. He had an extraordinary commission from God to call people to repentance, was "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb," and therefore was "called the prophet of the Highest," because he went before the face of the Lord to prepare his way, *Lu.* i. 15, 16; and though he did no miracle, nor gave any sign or wonder, yet this proved him a true prophet, that all he said of Christ was true, *Jno.* x. 41. Nay, and this proved him more than a prophet, than any of the other prophets, that whereas by other prophets Christ was discovered at a great distance, by him he was discovered as already come; and he was enabled to say, "Behold the Lamb of God." But after the ascension of our Lord Jesus there was a more plentiful effusion of the spirit of prophecy than ever before; then was the promise fulfilled that God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, (and not as hitherto upon the Jews only,) and their sons and their daughters should prophesy, *Acts* ii. 16, &c. The gift of tongues was one new product of the spirit of prophecy, and given for a particular reason, that, the Jewish pale being taken down, all nations might be brought into the church. These and other gifts of prophecy being for a sign, are long since ceased, and laid aside, and we have no encouragement to expect the revival of them; but, on the contrary, are directed to call the Scriptures the more sure word of prophecy, 2 *Pet.* i. 19, more sure than voices from heaven, and to them we are directed to take heed, to search them, and to hold them fast. All God's spiritual Israel know that they are established to be the oracles of God, 1 *Sam.* iii. 20; and if any add to, or take from, the book of that prophecy, they may read their doom in the close of it; God shall take blessings from them, and add curses to them, *Rev.* xxii. 18, 19.

Now concerning the prophets of the Old Testament, whose writings are before us, observe,

I. That they were all holy men. So we are assured by the apostles, that "the prophecy came in old time by holy men of God," (and men of God they were commonly called, because they were devoted to him,) "who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." They were men subject to like passions as we are, *Jam.* v. 17; so Elijah, one of the greatest of them, is said to have been; but they were holy men, men that in the temper of their minds and the tenor of their lives were examples of serious piety. Though there were many pretenders, that without warrant said, Thus saith the Lord, when he sent them not; and some that prophesied in Christ's name, (*Mat.* vii. 22, 23,) but he never knew them, and they indeed were workers of iniquity; and though the cursing, blaspheming lips of Balaam and Caiaphas, even then when they actually designed mischief, were overruled to speak oracles; yet none were employed and commissioned to speak as prophets but those that had received the spirit of grace and sanctification; for holiness becomes God's house. The Jewish doctors universally agree in this rule, that the spirit of prophecy never rests upon any but a holy and wise man, and one whose passions are allayed; (see *Mr. Smith, Of Prophecy*;) or, as others express it, an humble man, and a man of fortitude; that is, one that has power to keep his sensual, animal part in due subjection to religion and right reason. And some of them give this rule, (*Gemara Schab.* c. 2,) that the spirit of prophecy doth not reside where there is either on the one hand grief and melancholy, or on the other hand laughter and lightness of behaviour, and impertinent idle talk. And it is commonly observed by them, both from the musical instruments used in the schools of the prophets in Samuel's time, and from the instance of Elisha's calling for a minstrel, (2 *Kings* iii. 15,) that the Divine presence doth not reside with sadness, but with cheerfulness; and Elisha, they say, had not yet recovered himself from the sorrow he conceived at parting with Elijah. They have also a tradition, but I know no ground for it, that all the while Jacob mourned for Joseph, the Shechinah, or Holy Spirit, withdrew from him. Yet I believe, when David intimates that by his sin in the matter of Uriah he had lost the right spirit and the free spirit, (*Ps.* li. 10, 12,) which therefore he begs might be renewed in him, and restored to him, it was not because he was under grief, but because he was under guilt. And therefore, in order to the return of that right and free spirit, he prays that God would create in him a clean heart.

II. That they had all a full assurance in themselves of their Divine mission; and, though they could not always prevail to satisfy others, yet they were abundantly satisfied themselves that what they delivered as from God, and in his name, was indeed from him; and with the same assurance did the apostles speak of the Word of life, as that which they had heard and seen, and looked on, and which their hands had handled, 1 *Jno.* i. 1. Nathan spoke from himself, when he encouraged David to build the temple; but afterwards knew he spake from God, when in his name he forbade him to do it. God had various ways of making known to his prophets the messages they were to deliver to his people; it should seem ordinarily to have been by the ministry of angels: the Apocalypse Christ is expressly said to have signified by his angel to his servant John, *Rev.* i. 1. It was sometimes done in a vision, when the prophet was awake, sometimes in a dream, when the prophet was asleep, and sometimes by a secret but strong impression upon the mind of the prophet. But it is a maxim Maimonides has laid down, that all prophecy makes itself known to the prophet that it is prophecy indeed; that is, saith another of the rabbins, by the vigour and liveliness of the perception, whereby he apprehends the things propounded, which Jeremiah intimates when he saith, the word of the Lord was as a fire in his bones, *Jer.* xx. 9; and therefore they always spoke with great assurance, knowing they should be justified, *Isa.* l. 7.

III. That in their prophesying, both in receiving their message from God and delivering it to the people, they always kept possession of their own souls, *Dan.* x. 8. Though sometimes their bodily strength was overpowered by the abundance of the revelations, and their eyes dazzled with the visionary light, as in the instances of Daniel and John, (*Rev.* i. 17,) yet still their understanding remained with them, and the free exercise of their reason. This is excellently well expressed by a learned writer of our own, (*Smith, Of Prophecy*, p. 190,) 'that the prophetical spirit seating itself in the rational powers, as well as in the imagination, did never alienate the mind, but inform and enlighten it; and they that were acted by it always maintained a clearness and consistency of reason with strength and solidity of judgment. For (saith he afterwards, p. 266) God did not make use of idiots, or fools, to reveal his will by, but such whose intellectuals were entire and perfect; and he imprinted such a clear copy of his truth upon them, as that it became their own sense, being digested fully into their understanding, so as they were able to deliver and represent it to others, as truly as any can paint forth his own thoughts.' God's messengers were speaking men, not speaking trumpets. The fathers frequently took notice of this difference between the prophets of the Lord, and the false prophets, that the pretenders to prophecy, that either were acted by an evil spirit or were under the force of a heated imagination, that these counterfeits underwent alienations of mind, and delivered what they had to say in the utmost toss and disorder, as the Pythian prophetess, that delivered her infernal oracles with many antic gestures, tearing her hair, and foaming at the mouth. And by this rule they condemned the Montanists, that pretended to prophecy, in the second century, that what they said was in a way of extacy, not like rational men, but like men in a frenzy. Chrysostom (in 1 *Cor.* xii. 1,) having described the furious, violent motions of the pretenders to prophecy, adds, Ὁ δὲ φροφητὴς οὐχ οὕτως, 'a true prophet doth not do so.' *Sed mente sobria, et constanti animi statu, et intelligens quæ profert, omnia pronunciat*,—'He understands what he utters, and utters it soberly and calmly.' And Jerome, in his preface to his commentaries upon Nahum, observes, that it is called the book of the vision of Nahum; *Non enim loquitur ἐν ἐκστάσει, sed est liber intelligentis omnia quæ loquitur*,—'For he speaks not in any extacy, but as one who understands every thing he says;' it is the word of one that understands all he speaks. And again, (*Prolog. in Habac.*) *Non ut amens loquitur propheta, nec in morem insanientium fœminarum dat sine mente sonum*,—'The prophet speaks not as an insane person, nor like women wrought into fury, nor does he utter sound without sense.'

IV. That they all drove at one and the same thing, which was to bring people to repent of their sins, and to return to God, and to do their duty to him. This was the errand on which all God's messengers were sent, to beat down sin, and to revive and advance serious piety; the burthen of every song was, Turn ye now every one from his evil way; amend your ways and your doings, and execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, *Jer.* vii. 3, 5: (see *Zech.* vii. 7, 8; viii. 16.) The scope and design of all their prophecies was to enforce the precepts and sanctions of the law of Moses, the moral law, which is of universal and perpetual obligation. Here is nothing of the ceremonial institutes, of the carnal ordinances, that were imposed only till the times of reformation,

Heb. ix. 10. Those were now waxing old, and ready to vanish away; but they make it their business to press the great and weighty matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth.

V. That they all bare witness to Jesus Christ, and had an eye to him. God's raising up the horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David was consonant to, and in pursuance of, what he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, *Lu.* i. 69, 70. They prophesied of the grace that should come to us, and it was the Spirit of Christ in them, one and the same spirit, that testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 *Pet.* i. 10, 11. Christ was then made known, and yet comparatively hid in the predictions of the prophets, as before in the types of the ceremonial law. And the learned Huetius (*Demonstrat. Evang.* p. 737) observes it as really admirable, that so many persons in different ages should conspire with one consent as it were to foretell, some one particular, and others another, concerning Christ, all which had at length their full accomplishment in him. *Ab ipsis mundi incunabulis, per quatuor annorum millia, uno ore venturum Christum prædixerunt viri complures, in ejusque ortu, vita, virtutibus, rebus gestis, morte, ac tota denique* Οἰκονομία *præmonstranda consenserunt,*—'From the earliest period of time, for four thousand years, a great number of men have predicted the advent of Christ, and presented an harmonious statement of his birth, life, character, actions, and death, and of that economy which he came to establish.'

VI. That these prophets were generally hated and abused in their several generations by those that lived with them. Stephen challengeth his judges to produce an instance to the contrary, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" yea, and as it should seem for this reason, because "they shewed before of the coming of the Just One," *Acts* vii. 52. Some there were that trembled at the word of God in their mouths, but by the most they were ridiculed and despised, and, as ministers are now by profane people, made a jest of, *Hos.* ix. 7; the prophet was the fool in the play. "Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?" (2 *Kin.* ix. 11,) said the captains, of one of the sons of the prophets. The Gentiles never treated their false prophets so ill as the Jews did their true prophets, but on the contrary had them always in veneration. The Jews' mocking the messengers of the Lord, killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent unto them, was as amazing unaccountable an instance of the enmity that is in the carnal mind against God as any other. And this makes their rejection of Christ's Gospel the less strange, that the spirit of prophecy, which for many ages was so much the glory of Israel, in every age met with so much opposition; and there were those that always resisted the Holy Ghost in the prophets, and turned that glory into shame, *Acts* vii. 51; but this was it that was the measure-filling sin of Israel, that brought upon them both their first destruction by the Chaldeans and their final ruin by the Romans, 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 16.

VII. That though men slighted these prophets, God owned them, and put honour upon them. As they were men of God, his immediate servants and his messengers, so he always shewed himself "the Lord God of the holy prophets," *Rev.* xxii. 6; stood by them, and strengthened them, and by his Spirit they were full of power; and those that slighted them, when they had lost them, were made to know to their confusion that a prophet had been among them. What was said of one of the primitive fathers of the prophets was true of them all, "The Lord was with them, and did let none of their words fall to the ground," 1 *Sam.* iii. 19. What they said by way of warning and encouragement, for the enforcing of their calls to repentance and reformation, was to be understood conditionally: when God spake by them either on the one hand to build and to plant, or on the other hand to pluck up and pull down, the change of the people's way might produce a change of God's ways, (*Jer.* xviii. 7, 19;) such was Jonah's prophecy of Nineveh's ruin within forty days; or God might sometimes be better than his word, in granting a reprieve: but what they said by way of prediction of a particular matter, and as a sign, did always come to pass exactly as it was foretold; yea, and the general predictions sooner or later took hold, even of those that would fain have got clear of them, (*Zech.* i. 6;) for this is that which God glories in, that "he confirmeth the word of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers," *Isa.* xliv. 26.

In opening these prophecies I have endeavoured to give the genuine sense of them, as far as I could reach it, by consulting the best expositors, considering the scope and coherence, and "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," the spiritual things of the Old Testament with those of the New, and especially by prayer to God for the conduct and direction of the Spirit of truth; but after all there are many things here "dark and hard to be understood," concerning the certain meaning of which, though I could not gain myself, much less expect to give my reader, full satisfaction, yet I have not, with the unlearned and unstable, wrested them to the destruction of any, 2 *Pet.* iii. 16. It is the prerogative of the Lamb of God to take this book, and to open all its seals. I have likewise endeavoured to accommodate these prophecies to the use and service of those who desire to read the Scripture, not only with understanding, but with pious affections, and to their edification in faith and holiness. And we shall find all that is given by inspiration of God is profitable, though not all alike profitable, 2 *Tim.* iii. 16, not all alike easy or improvable; but when the mystery of God shall be finished we shall see, what we are now bound to believe, that there is not one idle word in all the prophecies of this book. What God hath said, as well as what he doth, we know not now, but shall know hereafter.

The pleasure I have had in studying and meditating upon those parts of these prophecies which are plain and practical, and especially those that are evangelical, has been an abundant balance to, and recompence for, the harder tasks we have met with in other parts that are more obscure. In many parts of this field the treasure must be digged for, as that in the mines, but in other parts the surface is covered with rich and precious products, with corn and flocks, of which we may say as was said of Noah, these same have comforted us greatly "concerning our work and the toil of our hands," and have made it very pleasant and delightful; God grant it may be no less so to the readers.

And now let me desire the assistance of my friends in setting up my Ebenezer here in a thankful acknowledgment that "hitherto the Lord has helped me." I desire to praise God that he hath spared my life to finish the Old Testament, and hath graciously given me some tokens of his presence with me in carrying on of this work; though the more I reflect upon myself the more unworthy I see myself of the honour of being thus employed, and the more need I see of Christ and his merit and grace. "Remember me, O God, for good, and spare me according to the multitude of thy mercies." The Lord forgive what is mine, and accept what is his own.

I purpose, if God continue my life and health, according to the measure of the grace given to me, and in a constant and entire dependence upon Divine strength, to go through the New Testament in two volumes more. I intimated in my preface to the first volume, that I had drawn up some expositions upon some parts of the New Testament; viz., the gospels of St. Matthew and St. John; but they are so large, that, to make them bear some proportion to the rest, it is necessary they be much contracted, so that I shall be obliged to write them all over again, and to make considerable alterations; and therefore I cannot expect they should be published but, as these hitherto have been, if God permit, a volume every other year. I shall begin it now shortly, if the Lord will, and apply myself to it as closely as I can; and I earnestly desire the prayers of all that wish well to the undertaking, that, if the Lord spare me to go on with it, I may be enabled to do it well, and so as that by it some may be led into the "riches of the full assurance of understanding in the mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ," *Col.* ii. 2. And if it shall please God to remove me by death before it be finished, I trust I shall be able to say, not only, Welcome his blessed will, but, Welcome that blessed world, in which, though now we know but in part, and prophesy but in part, that knowledge which is perfect will come, and that which is partial will be done away, 1 *Cor.* xiii. 8, 10, 12; in which all our mistakes will be rectified, all our doubts resolved, all our deficiencies made up, all our endeavours in preaching, catechizing, and expounding superseded and rendered useless, and all our prayers swallowed up in everlasting praises; in which prophecy, we now so much admire, shall fail, and tongues shall cease, and the knowledge we have now shall vanish away, as the light of the morning star doth when the sun is risen; in which we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face. In a believing, comfortable, well-grounded expectation of that true and perfect light, I desire to continue, living and dying; in an humble and diligent preparation for it, let me spend my time, and in the full enjoyment of it, Oh that I may spend a glorious eternity!

July 18, 1712. M. H.

PETRA.

AN EXPOSITION

OF THE BOOK OF

THE PROPHET ISAIAH,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

PROPHET is a title that sounds very great to those that understand it, though, in the eye of the world, many of those that were dignified with it appeared very mean. A prophet is one that hath a great intimacy with heaven, and a great interest there, and, consequently, a commanding authority upon earth. Prophecy is put for all Divine revelation, 2 *Pet.* i. 20, 21, because that was, most commonly (by dreams, voices, or visions,) communicated to prophets first, and by them to the children of men, *Num.* xii. 6. Once, indeed, God himself spoke to all the thousands of Israel from the top of mount Sinai; but it was so intolerably dreadful that they begged that for the future God would speak to them as he had done before, by men like themselves, whose terror should not make them afraid, nor their hands be heavy upon them, *Job* xxxiii. 7. God approved the motion: "They have well said," saith he, *Deu.* v. 27, 28; and the matter was then settled by consent of parties that we must never expect to hear from God any more in that way, but by prophets, who received their instructions immediately from God, with a charge to deliver them to his church. Before the sacred canon of the Old Testament began to be written there were prophets, who were instead of Bibles to the church. Our Saviour seems to reckon Abel among the prophets, *Mat.* xxiii. 31, 35. Enoch was a prophet, and by him that was first in prediction which is to be last in execution, the judgment of the great day; *Jude* 14, Behold, the Lord comes with his holy myriads. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. God saith of Abraham, He is a prophet, *Gen.* xx. 7. Jacob foretold things to come, *Gen.* xlix. 1; nay, all the patriarchs are called prophets, *Ps.* cv. 15, "Do my prophets no harm." Moses was, without compare, the most illustrious of all the Old Testament prophets, for with him the Lord spake face to face, *Deu.* xxxiv. 10. He was the first writing prophet, and by his hand the first foundations of holy writ were laid; even those that were called to be his assistants in the government had the spirit of prophecy, such a plentiful effusion was there of that spirit at that time, *Num.* xi. 25. But after the death of Moses, for some ages, the Spirit of the Lord appeared and acted in the church of Israel more as a martial spirit than as a spirit of prophecy, and inspired men more for acting than speaking; I mean in the time of the judges. We find the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Othniel, Gideon, Samson, and others, for the service of their country with their swords, not with their pens. Messages were sent from heaven by angels, as to Gideon and Manoah, and to the people, *Jud.* ii. 1. In all the book of *Judges* there is never once mention of a prophet, only Deborah is called a prophetess. Then the word of the Lord was precious; there was no open vision, 1 *Sam.* iii. 1. They had the law of Moses newly written; let them study that. But in Samuel prophecy revived, and in him a famous *epocha* or period of the church began: a time of great light, in a constant, uninterrupted succession of prophets, till some time after the captivity, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed in Malachi; and then prophecy ceased for near four hundred years, till the coming of the great Prophet and his forerunner. Some prophets were Divinely inspired to write the histories of the church, but they did not put their names to their writings, only referring themselves for proof to the authentic records of those times, which were known to be drawn up by prophets, as Gad, Iddo, &c. David and others were prophets to write sacred songs for the use of the church. After them, we often read of prophets sent on particular errands, and raised up for special public services; among them the most famous were Elijah and Elisha in the kingdom of Israel. But none of these put their prophecies in writing, nor have we any remains of them but some fragments in the histories of their times; yet nothing of their own writing (that I remember) but one epistle of Elijah's, 2 *Chr.* xxi. 12. But towards the latter end of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel it pleased God to direct his servants the prophets to write and publish some of their sermons, or abstracts of them. The dates of many of their prophecies are uncertain, but the earliest of them was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and Jeroboam II., his contemporary, king of Israel, about two hundred years before the captivity; and not long after Joash had slain Zechariah the son of Jehoiada in the courts of the temple. If they begin to murder the prophets, yet they shall not murder their prophecies; they shall remain as witnesses against them. Hosea was the first of the writing prophets, and Joel, Amos, and Obadiah published their prophecies about the same time. Isaiah began some time after, and not long; but his prophecy is placed first, because it is the largest of them all, and has most in it of Him to whom all the prophets bear witness; and, indeed, so much of Christ that he is justly styled the evangelical prophet, and, by some of the ancients, a fifth evangelist. We shall have the general title of this book ver. 1, and, therefore, shall here only observe something,

I. Concerning the prophet himself. He was (if we may believe the tradition of the Jews) of the royal family, his father being, they say, brother to king Uzziah. However, he was much at court, especially in Hezekiah's time, as we find in his story; to which many think it is owing, that his style is more curious and polite than that of some other of the prophets, and in some places exceeding lofty and soaring. The Spirit of God sometimes served his own purpose by the particular genius of the prophet, for prophets were not speaking trumpets, through which the Spirit spake, but speaking men, by whom the Spirit spake, making use of their natural powers, in respect both of light and flame, and advancing them above themselves.

II. Concerning the prophecy. It is transcendently excellent and useful; it was so to the church of God then, serving for conviction of sin, direction in duty, and consolation in trouble. Two great distresses of the church are here referred to, and comfort prescribed in reference to them—that by Sennacherib's invasion, which happened in his own time, and that of the captivity in Babylon, which happened long after; and in the supports and encouragements laid up for each of these times of need we find abundance of the grace of the Gospel. There are not so many quotations in the Gospels out of any, perhaps not out of all the prophecies of the Old Testament, as out of this; nor so express testimonies concerning Christ, witness that of his being born of a virgin, *ch.* ix., and that of his sufferings, *ch.* liii. The beginning of this book abounds most with reproofs for sin and threatenings of judgment; the latter end of it is full of good words and comfortable words. This method the Spirit of Christ took formerly in the prophets, and doth still,—first to convince, and then to comfort; and those that would be blessed with the comforts must submit to the conviction. Doubtless, Isaiah preached many sermons, and delivered many messages to the people, which are not written in this book, as Christ did; and probably these sermons were delivered more largely and fully than they are here related; but so much is left on record as Infinite Wisdom thought fit to convey to us, on whom the ends of the world are come. And these prophecies, as well as the histories of Christ, are written that we might believe on the name of the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through his name; for to us is the Gospel here preached, as well as unto them that lived then, and more clearly. Oh that it may be mixed with faith!

CHAPTER I.

The first verse of this chapter is intended for a title to the whole book, and it is likely that this was the first sermon that this prophet was appointed to publish, and to affix in writing (as Calvin thinks the custom of the prophets was) to the door of the temple, as with us proclamations are fixed to public places, that all might read them, *Hab.* ii. 2; and those that would might take out authentic copies of them, the original being after some time laid up by the priests among the records of the temple. The sermon which is contained in this chapter hath in it, I. A high charge exhibited in God's name against the Jewish church and nation, 1. For their ingratitude, *vet.* 2, 3; 2. For their incorrigibleness, ver. 5; 3. For the universal corruption and degeneracy of the people, ver. 4, 6, 21, 22; 4. For their rulers' perverting of justice, *ver.* 23. II. A sad complaint of the judgments of God which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and by which they were brought almost to utter ruin, ver. 7—9. III. A just rejection of those shows and shadows of religion which they kept up among them, notwithstanding this general defection and apostacy, ver. 10—15. IV. An earnest call to repentance and reformation, setting before them life and death; life if they complied with the call, and death if they did not, ver. 16—20. V. A threatening of ruin to those that would not be reformed, ver. 24, 28—31. VI. A promise of a happy reformation at last, and a return to their primitive purity and prosperity, ver. 25—27. And all this is to be applied by us, not only to the communities we are members of, in their public interests, but to the state of our own souls.

THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Here is, First. The name of the prophet, Isaiah, or Jesaihahu, for so it is in the Hebrew, which in the New Testament is read Esaias. His name signifies 'the salvation of the Lord,' a proper name for a prophet, by whom God gives knowledge of salvation to his people, especially for this prophet, who prophesies so much of Jesus, the Saviour, and the great salvation wrought out by him. He is said to be the son of Amoz, not Amos the prophet,—the two names in the Hebrew differ more than in the English,—but, as the Jews think, of Amoz the brother or son of Amaziah king of Judah; a tradition as uncertain as that rule which they give, that where a prophet's father is named he also was himself a prophet. The prophets' pupils and successors are indeed often called their sons, but we have few instances, if any, of their own sons being their successors.

Secondly. The nature of the prophecy. It is a vision; being revealed to him in a vision when he was awake, "and heard the words of God, and saw the visions of the Almighty," as Balaam speaks, *Num.* xxiv. 4, though perhaps it was not so illustrious a vision at first as that afterwards, *ch.* vi. 1. The prophets were called seers, or seeing men, and therefore their prophecies are fitly called visions. It was what he saw with the eyes of his mind, and foresaw, as clearly by Divine revelation, was as well assured of it, as fully apprized of it, and as much affected with it, as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. Note, 1. God's prophets saw what they spoke of, knew what they said, and require our belief of nothing but what they themselves believed and were sure of, *Jno.* vi. 69; 1 *Jno.* i. 1. 2. They could not but speak what they saw, because they saw how much all about them were concerned in it, *Acts* iv. 20; 2 *Cor.* iv. 13.

Thirdly. The subject of the prophecy. It was what "he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem," the country of the two tribes, and that city which was their metropolis; and there is not much in it relating to Ephraim, or the ten tribes, as there is in the prophecy of Hosea. Some chapters there are in this book which relate to Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, and some other neighbouring nations; but it takes its title from that which is the greatest part of it, concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And the other nations spoken of are such as the people of the Jews had concerns with. Isaiah brings to them in a special manner, 1. Instruction; for it is the privilege of Judah and Jerusalem that to them pertain the oracles of God. 2. Reproof and threatening; for if in Judah, where God is known,—if in Salem, where his name is great,—iniquity be found, they sooner than any other shall be reckoned with for it. 3. Comfort and encouragement in evil times; for the children of Zion shall be joyful in their king.

Fourthly. The date of the prophecy. He prophesied "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah." By this it appears, 1. That he prophesied long, especially if, as the Jews say, he was at last put to death by Manasseh, to a cruel death,—being sawn asunder,—to which some suppose the apostle refers, *Heb.* xi. 37. From the year that king Uzziah died, *ch.* vi. 1, to Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, was forty years; how much before and after he prophesied is not certain; some reckon sixty, others eighty, years in all. It was an honour to him, and a happiness to his country, that he was continued so long in his usefulness. And we must suppose both that he began young and that he held out to old age; for the prophets were not tied, as the priests were, to a certain age for the beginning or ending of their ministration. 2. That he passed through variety of times. Jotham was a good king, and Hezekiah a better, who, no doubt, gave encouragement to, and took advice from, this prophet; were patrons to him, and he a privy counsellor to them. But between them, and when Isaiah was in the prime of his time, the reign of Ahaz was very profane and wicked. Then, no doubt, he was frowned upon at court, and it is likely forced to abscond. Good men and good ministers must expect bad times in this world, and prepare for them. Then religion was run down to that degree that the doors of the house of the Lord were shut up, and idolatrous altars were erected in every corner of Jerusalem; and Isaiah, with all his Divine eloquence, and messages immediately from God himself, could not help it. The best men, the best ministers, cannot do the good they would do in the world.

2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth:
For the LORD hath spoken,
I have nourished and brought up children,
And they have rebelled against me.
3 The ox knoweth his owner,
And the ass his master's crib:
But Israel doth not know,
My people doth not consider.
4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity,
A seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters:
They have forsaken the LORD,
They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger,
They are gone away backward.
5 Why should ye be stricken any more?
Ye will revolt more and more:
The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.
6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is* no soundness in it;
But wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores:
They have not been closed, neither bound up,
Neither mollified with ointment.
7 Your country *is* desolate,
Your cities *are* burned with fire:
Your land, strangers devour it in your presence,
And *it is* desolate, as overthrown by strangers. [yard,
8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vine-
As a lodge in a garden of cucumbers,
As a besieged city. [remnant,
9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small
We should have been as Sodom,
And we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

We will hope to meet with a brighter and more pleasant scene before we come to the end of this book; but truly here in the beginning of it every thing looks very bad, very black, with Judah and Jerusalem. What is the wilderness of the world, if the church, the vineyard, have such a dismal aspect as this here?

First. The prophet, though he speaks in God's name, yet, despairing to gain audience with the children of his people, addresseth himself to the heavens and the earth, and bespeaks their attention; ver. 2, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!" Sooner will the inanimate creatures hear, who observe the law and answer the end of their creation, than this stupid, senseless people. Let the lights of heaven shame their darkness, and the fruitfulness of the earth their barrenness, and the strictness of each to their time their irregularity. Moses begins thus, *Deu.* xxxii. 1, to which the prophet here refers, intimating that now those times were come which Moses there foretold, *Deu.* xxxi. 29. Or, this is an appeal to heaven and earth, to angels, and then to the inhabitants of the upper and lower world; let them judge between God and his vineyard.

Can either produce such an instance of ingratitude? Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and both heaven and earth shall declare his righteousness, *Mic.* vi. 1, 2; *Ps.* l. 6.

Secondly. He chargeth them with base ingratitude, a crime of the highest nature; call a man ungrateful and you can call him no worse. Let heaven and earth hear, and wonder at, 1. God's gracious dealings with such a peevish, provoking people as they were. "I have nourished and brought them up as children;" they have been well fed, and well taught, *Deu.* xxxii. 6. I have magnified and exalted them, so some; not only made them grow, but made them great; not only maintained them, but preferred them; not only trained them up, but raised them high. Note, We owe the continuance of our lives and comforts, and all our advancements, to God's fatherly care of us, and kindness to us. 2. Their ill-natured carriage towards him who was so tender of them; "They have rebelled against me;" or, (as some read it,) 'they have revolted from me;' they have been deserters, nay, traitors against his crown and dignity. Note, All the instances of God's favour to us, as the God both of our nature and of our nurture, aggravate our treacherous departures from him, and all our presumptuous oppositions of him. Children, and yet rebels!

Thirdly. He attributes this to their ignorance and inconsideration; ver. 3, "The ox knows," but "Israel doth not." Observe, 1. The sagacity of the ox and the ass, which are not only brute creatures, but of the dullest sort; and yet the ox hath such a sense of duty as to know his owner, and to serve him, to submit to his yoke and draw in it. The ass hath such a sense of interest as to know his master's crib or manger where he is fed, and to abide by it; he will go to that of himself if ye turn him loose. A fine pass man is come to when he is shamed even in knowledge and understanding by these silly animals; and is not only sent to school to them, *Pr.* vi. 6, 7, but set in a form below them, *Jer.* viii. 7; "taught more than the beasts of the earth," *Job* xxv. 11, and yet knowing less. 2. The sottishness and stupidity of Israel. God is their owner and proprietor; he made us, and his we are more than our cattle are ours; he has provided well for us; providence is our master's crib; yet many that are called the people of God do not know, and will not consider this; but ask, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?" He is none of our owner; "and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" he hath no crib for us to feed at. He had complained, ver. 2, of the obstinacy of their wills; "they have rebelled against me." Here he runs it up to its cause: Therefore they have rebelled because they do not know, they do not consider; the understanding is darkened, and therefore the whole soul is alienated from the life of God, *Eph.* iv. 18. "Israel doth not know," though their land was a land of light and knowledge. "In Judah is God known;" yet, because they do not live up to what they know, it is in effect as if they did not know. They know, but their knowledge doth them no good; because they do not consider what they know, they do not apply it to their case, nor their minds to it. Note, 1. Even among those that profess themselves God's people, that have the advantages, and lie under the engagements of his people, yet there are many that are very careless in the affairs of their souls. 2. Inconsideration of what we do know is as great an enemy to us in religion as ignorance of what we should know. 3. Therefore men revolt from God, and rebel against him, because they do not know and consider their obligations to God in duty, gratitude, and interest.

Fourthly. He laments the universal pravity and corruption of their church and kingdom. The disease of sin was epidemical, and all orders and degrees of men were infected with it. "Ah sinful nation," ver. 4. The prophet bemoans those that would not bemoan themselves: Ah, alas for them, woe to them! he speaks with a holy indignation at their degeneracy, and a dread of the consequences of it. See here,

1. How he aggravates that sin, and shews the malignity that there was in it, ver. 4. 1st. The wickedness was universal; they were a sinful nation, the generality of the people were vicious and profane; they were so in their national capacity, in the management of their public treaties abroad, and the administration of public justice at home, they were corrupt. Note, It is ill with a people when sin becomes national. 2nd. It was very great and heinous in its nature. They were "laden with iniquity;" the guilt of it, and the curse incurred by that guilt, lay very heavy upon them; it was a heavy charge that was exhibited against them which they could never clear themselves from. Their wickedness was upon them as a talent of lead, *Zec.* v. 7, 8; and their sin, as it did easily beset them, and they were prone to it, was a weight upon them, *Heb.* xii. 1. 3rd. They came of an ill breed, were "a seed of evil-doers." Treachery ran in the blood, they had it by kind, which made the matter so much the worse, more provoking, and less curable; they rose up in their fathers' stead, and trod in their fathers' steps, to "fill up the measure of their iniquity," *Num.* xxxii. 14; they were a race and family of rebels. 4th. They that were themselves debauched did what they could to debauch others. They are not only corrupt children, born tainted, but "children that are corrupters," that propagate vice, and infect others with it; not only sinners, but tempters; not only acted by Satan, but agents for him. If those that are called children, God's children, that are looked upon as belonging to his family, be wicked and vile, their example is of the most malignant influence. 5th. Their sin was a treacherous departure from God. They were deserters from their allegiance; "they have forsaken the Lord," to whom they had joined themselves; they are "gone away backward," are alienated or separated from God; have turned the back upon him, run their colours, and quitted their service; when they were urged forward they ran backward, "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," *Hos.* iv. 16. 6th. It was an impudent and daring defiance of him. "They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger," wilfully and designedly; they knew what would anger him, and that they did. Note, The backslidings of those that have professed religion and relation to God are in a special manner provoking to him.

2. How he illustrates it by a comparison taken from a sick and diseased body all overspread with leprosy; or, like Job's, with sore boils, ver. 5, 6. 1st. The distemper hath seized the vitals, and so threatens to be mortal. Diseases in the head and heart are most dangerous. Now the head, "the whole head, is sick, the heart, the whole heart, is faint;" they were become corrupt in their judgment, the leprosy was in their head; they were utterly unclean; their affection to God and religion was cold and gone; the things which remained were ready to die away, *Rev.* iii. 2. 2nd. It hath overspread the whole body, and so becomes exceeding noisome; "from the sole of the foot even to the head." From the meanest peasant to the greatest peer "there is no soundness," no good principles, no religion, for that is the health of the soul; nothing "but wounds and bruises," guilt and corruption, the sad effects of Adam's fall; noisome to the holy God, painful to the sensible soul. They were so to David when he complained, *Ps.* xxxviii. 5, "My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness." See *Ps.* xxxii. 3, 4. No attempts were made for reformation, or, if they were, they proved ineffectual; the wounds "have not been closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment." While sin remains unrepented of, the wounds are unsearched, unwashed, the proud flesh in them not cut out; and while, consequently, it remains unpardoned, the wounds are not mollified or closed up, nor any thing done towards the healing of them, and the preventing of the fatal consequences of them.

Fifthly. He sadly bewails the judgments of God which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and their incorrigibleness under those judgments.

1. Their kingdom was almost ruined, ver. 7. So miserable were they that both their towns and their lands were wasted, and yet so stupid that they needed to be told this, and to have it shewed them. Look and see how it is; "your country is desolate," the ground is not cultivated, for want of inhabitants, the villages being deserted, *Jud.* v. 7; and thus the fields and vineyards become like deserts, "all grown over with thorns," *Pr.* xxiv. 31. "Your cities are burned with fire," by the enemies that invade you. Fire and sword commonly go together. As for the fruits of "your land," which should be food for your families, "strangers devour them;" and, to your greater vexation, it is "before your eyes," and you cannot prevent it; you starve while your enemies surfeit on that which should be your maintenance. The overthrow of your country is as the overthrow of strangers; it is used by the invaders as one might expect it should be used by strangers. Jerusalem itself, which was as the daughter of Zion, (the temple built on Zion was a mother, a nursing mother to Jerusalem,) or Zion itself, the holy mountain, which had been dear to God as a daughter, was now lost, deserted, and exposed "as a cottage in a vineyard," which, when the vintage is over, nobody dwells in or takes any care of, and looks as mean and despicable "as a lodge" or hut "in a garden of cucumbers," and everybody is afraid of coming near it, and solicitous to remove their effects out of it, as if it were a besieged city, ver. 8. And some think it is the calamitous state of the kingdom that is represented by a diseased body, ver. 6. Probably this sermon was preached in the reign of Ahaz, when Judah was invaded by the kings of Syria and Israel, the Edomites and the Philistines, who slew many, and carried many away into captivity, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 5, 17, 18. Note, National impiety and immorality bring national desolation. Canaan, the glory of all lands, mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth, both became a reproach and a ruin, and sin hath made them so, that great mischief-maker.

2. Yet they were not at all reformed, and therefore God threatens to take another course with them; ver. 5, "Why should ye be stricken any more" with any expectation of doing you good by it, when you increase revolts as your rebukes are increased; "You will revolt more and more," as you have done, as Ahaz particularly did, who "in his distress trespassed yet more against the Lord," 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 22. Thus the physician, when he sees the patient's case desperate, troubles him no more with physic; and the father resolves to correct his child no more when, finding him hardened, he determines to disinherit him. Note, 1st. There are those who are made worse by the methods God takes to make them better. The more they are stricken the more they revolt; their corruptions, instead of being mortified, are irritated and exasperated by their afflictions, and their hearts more hardened. 2nd. God sometimes in a way of righteous judgment ceaseth to correct those who have been long incorrigible, and whom therefore he designs to destroy. The reprobate silver shall be cast, not into the furnace, but to the dunghill, *Jer.* vi. 29, 30: see *Eze.* xxiv. 13; *Hos.* iv. 14, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

Sixthly. He comforts himself with the consideration of a remnant that should be the monuments of Divine grace and mercy, notwithstanding this general corruption and desolation, ver. 9. See here, 1. How near they were to an utter extirpation. They were almost like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect both of sin and ruin, grown almost so bad as that there could not have been found ten righteous men among them, and almost so miserable as that none had been left alive, but their country turned into a sulphureous lake. Divine justice said, "Make them as Admah, set them as Zeboim;" but mercy said, "How shall I do it?" *Hos.* xi. 8, 9. 2. What it was that saved them from it; "The Lord of hosts left unto them a very small remnant," that were kept pure from the common apostacy, and kept safe and alive from the common calamity. This is quoted by the apostle, *Rom.* ix. 29, and applied to those few of the Jewish nation who in his time embraced Christianity, when the body of the people rejected it, and in whom the promises made to the fathers were accomplished. Note, 1st. In the worst of times there is a remnant preserved from iniquity, and reserved for mercy; as Noah and his family in the deluge, Lot and his in the destruction of Sodom. Divine grace triumphs in distinguishing by an act of sovereignty. 2nd. This remnant is often a very small one in comparison with the vast numbers of revolting ruined sinners. Multitude is no mark of the true church; Christ's is a little flock. 3rd. It is God's work to sanctify and save some, when others are left to perish in their impurity; it is the work of his power as the Lord of hosts. Except he had left us that remnant there had been none left; the corrupters (ver. 4) did what they could to debauch all; and the devourers (ver. 7) to destroy all, and had prevailed if God himself had not interposed to secure to himself a remnant, who are bound to give him all the glory. 4th. It is good for a people that have been saved from utter ruin to look back and see how near they were to it, just upon the brink of it, to see how much they owed to a few good men that stood in the gap, and that that was owing to a good God, who left them these good men. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom;
Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.
11 To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: [fed beasts;
I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of
And I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs,
or of he goats.
12 When ye come to appear before me,
Who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?
13 Bring no more vain oblations;
Incense is an abomination unto me;
The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies,
I cannot away with;
It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. [hateth:
14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul
They are a trouble unto me;
I am weary to bear *them.*
15 And when ye spread forth your hands,
I will hide mine eyes from you:

Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear:
Your hands are full of blood.

Here, First. God calls to them (but calls in vain) to hear his word, ver. 10. 1. The title he gives them is very strange; "Ye rulers of Sodom," and "Ye people of Gomorrah." This intimates what a righteous thing it had been with God to make them like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect of ruin, ver. 9, because they had made themselves like Sodom and Gomorrah in respect of sin. "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly," *Gen.* xiii. 13; and so were the men of Judah. When the rulers were bad no wonder the people were so. Vice overpowered virtue, for it had the rulers, the men of figure, on its side; and it outpolled it, for it had the people, the men of number, on its side. The streams being thus strong, no less a power than that of the Lord of hosts could secure a remnant, ver. 2. The rulers are boldly attacked here by the prophet as rulers of Sodom, for he knew not to give flattering titles. The tradition of the Jews is that for this he was articled against long after and put to death, as having cursed the gods, and spoken evil of the rulers of his people. 2. His demand upon them is very reasonable; "Hear the word of the Lord, and give ear to the law of our God;" attend to that which God has to say to you, and let his word be a law to you. The following declaration of dislike to their sacrifices would be a kind of new law to them, though really it was but an explication of the old law; but special regard is to be had to it, as is required to the like, *Ps.* l. 7, 8. Hear this and tremble; hear it and take warning.

Secondly. He justly refuseth to hear their prayers and accept their services; their sacrifices and burnt offerings, the fat and blood of them, ver. 11; their attendance in his courts, ver. 12; their oblations, their incense, and their solemn assemblies, ver. 13; their new moons and their appointed feasts, ver. 14; their devoutest addresses, ver. 15. They are all rejected, because their hands were full of blood. Now observe,

1. There are many who are strangers, nay, enemies to the power of religion, and yet seem very zealous for the show, and shadow, and form of it. This sinful nation, this seed of evil-doers, these rulers of Sodom, and people of Gomorrah, brought, not to the altars of false gods, (they are not here charged with that,) but to the altar of the God of Israel, sacrifices, a multitude of them, as many as the law required, and rather more; not only peace offerings, which they themselves had their share of, but burnt offerings, which were wholly consumed to the honour of God. Nor did they bring the torn, and lame, and sick, but fed beasts, and the fat of them, the best of the kind. They did not send others to offer their sacrifices for them, but came themselves to appear before God; they observed the instituted places, not in high places or groves, but in God's own courts; and the instituted time, the "new moons and sabbaths, and appointed feasts," none of which they omitted; nay, it should seem, they called extraordinary assemblies, and held solemn meetings for religious worship besides those that God had appointed. Yet this was not all; they applied themselves to God not only with their ceremonial observances, but with the moral instances of devotion; they prayed, they prayed often, made many prayers, thinking they should be heard for their much speaking; nay, they were fervent and importunate in prayer, they spread forth their hands as men in earnest. Now, one would have thought these, and no doubt they thought themselves, a pious, religious people; and yet far from being so; for, 1st. Their hearts were empty of true devotion. They came to appear before God, ver. 12, 'to be seen before him,' so the margin reads it; they rested in the outside of the duties, they looked no farther than to be seen of men, and went no farther than that which men see. 2nd. Their hands were full of blood; that is, they were guilty of murder, rapine, and oppression, under colour of law and justice. The people shed blood, and the rulers did not punish them for it; the rulers shed blood, and the people were aiding and abetting, as the elders of Jezreel were to Jezebel in shedding Naboth's blood. Malice is heart-murder in the account of God. He that hateth his brother in his heart hath, in effect, his hands full of blood.

2. When sinners are under the judgments of God they will easier be brought to fly to their devotions than to forsake their sins, and to reform their lives. Their country was now desolate, and their cities burned, ver. 7; and this awakened them to bring their sacrifices and offerings to God more constantly than they had done, as if they would bribe God Almighty to remove the punishment, and give them leave to go on in the sin. "When he slew them, then they sought him," *Ps.* lxxviii. 34; "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee," *ch.* xxvi. 16. Many that will readily part with their sacrifices yet will not be persuaded to part with their sins.

3. The most pompous and costly devotions of wicked people, without a thorough reformation of the heart and life, are so far from being acceptable to God that really they are an abomination to him. It is shewed here in a great variety of expressions, that "to obey is better than sacrifice," nay, that sacrifice without obedience is a jest, it is an affront and provocation to God. The comparative neglect which God here expresseth of ceremonial observances was a tacit intimation of what they would come to at last, when they would all be done away by the death of Christ; what was now made little of would in due time be made nothing of. "Sacrifice and offering," and prayer made in the virtue of that, "thou wouldst not; then said I, Lo, I come." Their sacrifices are here represented,

1st. As fruitless and insignificant. "To what purpose" is it? ver. 11; they are vain oblations, ver. 13; "in vain do they worship me," *Mat.* xv. 9. It was all lost labour, and served not to answer any good intention; for, *First.* It was not looked upon as any act of duty or obedience to God: "Who has required those things at your hands?" ver. 12. Not that God disowns his institutions, or refuseth to stand by his own warrants, but in what they did they had not an eye to him that required it; nor did indeed he require it of them whose hands were full of blood, and continued impenitent. *Secondly.* It did not recommend them to God's favour; he delighted not in the blood of their sacrifices, for he did not look upon himself as honoured by it. *Thirdly.* It would not obtain any relief for them. They pray, but God will not hear; because they regard iniquity, *Ps.* lxvi. 18; he will not deliver them, for, though they make many prayers, they none of them come from an upright heart. All their religious services turned to no account to them. Nay,

2nd. As odious and offensive. God did not only not accept them, but he did detest and abhor them. They are your sacrifices, they are none of mine; I am full of them, even surfeited with them; he needed them not, *Ps.* l. 10, did not desire them, had had enough of them, and more than enough. Their coming into his courts he calls treading them, or trampling upon them; their very attendance on his ordinances was construed a contempt of them. Their incense, though never so fragrant, was an abomination to him; for it was burned in hypocrisy, and with an ill design. Their solemn assemblies he could not away with, could not see them with any patience, nor bear the affront they gave him. The solemn meeting is iniquity, though the thing itself was not; yet, as they managed it, it was. It is a vexation, (so some read it,) a provocation to God, to have ordinances thus prostituted, not only to wicked people, but to wicked purposes. My soul hates them, they are a trouble to me, a burthen, an encumbrance, I am perfectly sick of them, and weary to bear them. He is never weary of hearing the prayers of the upright, but soon weary of the costly sacrifices of the wicked; he hides his eyes from their prayers, as that which he has an aversion to and is angry at.

All this is to shew, 1st. That sin is very hateful to God; so hateful that it makes even men's prayers, and their religious services, hateful to him. 2nd. That dissembled piety is double iniquity. Hypocrisy in religion is of all things most abominable to the God of heaven. Jerome applies it to the Jews in Christ's time, who pretended a great zeal for the law and the temple, but made themselves and all their services abominable to God, by filling their hands with the blood of Christ and his apostles, and so filling up the measure of their iniquities.

16 Wash you, make you clean;
Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;
17 Cease to do evil; learn to do well;
Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed,
Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.
18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:
Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.
19 If ye be willing and obedient,
Ye shall eat the good of the land:
20 But if ye refuse and rebel,
Ye shall be devoured with the sword:
For the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

Though God hath rejected their services as insufficient to atone for their sins, while they persisted in them, yet he doth not reject them as in a hopeless condition; but here calls upon them to forsake their sins, which hindered the acceptance of their services, and then all would be well. Let them not say, God picked quarrels with them; no, he proposeth a method of reconciliation. Observe here,

First. A call to repentance and reformation. If you would have your sacrifices accepted, and your prayers answered, you must begin your work at the right end; 'Be converted to my law,' so the Chaldee begins this exhortation. Make conscience of second-table duties, else expect not to be accepted in the acts of devotion. As justice and charity will never atone for atheism and profaneness, so prayers and sacrifices will never atone for fraud and oppression; for righteousness towards men is as much a branch of pure religion as religion towards God is a branch of universal righteousness.

1. They must "cease to do evil;" must do no more wrong, shed no more innocent blood; that is the meaning of washing them, and making them clean, ver. 16; it is not only sorrowing for the sin they had committed, but breaking off the practice of it for the future, and mortifying all those vicious affections and dispositions which inclined them to it. Sin is defiling to the soul; our business is to wash us from it by repenting of it, and turning from it to God. We must put away not only that evil of our doings which is before the eye of the world, by refraining from the gross acts of sin, but that which is before God's eyes, the roots and habits of sin that are in our hearts; those must be crushed and mortified.

2. They must "learn to do well." This was necessary to the completing of their repentance. Note, It is not enough that we "cease to do evil," but we must "learn to do well." 1st. We must be doing; not cease to do evil, and then stand idle. 2nd. We must be doing good; the good which the Lord our God requires, and which will turn to a good account. 3rd. We must do it well, in a right manner, and for a right end; and, 4th. We must learn to do well, we must take pains to get the knowledge of our duty, be inquisitive concerning it, in care about it; and accustom ourselves to it, that we may readily turn our hands to our work, and become masters of this holy art of doing well.

He urgeth them particularly to those instances of well-doing wherein they had been defective. To second-table duties: "Seek judgment;" inquire what is right, that ye may do it; be solicitous to be found in the way of your duty, and do not walk at all adventures; seek oportunities of doing good, "relieve the oppressed," those whom you yourselves have oppressed, ease them of their burthens, *ch.* lviii. 6. You that have power in your hands use it for the relief of those whom others do oppress, for that is your business; right those that suffer wrong, in a special manner concern yourselves for the fatherless and the widow, whom, because they are weak and helpless, proud men trample upon and abuse. Do you appear for them at the bar, on the bench, as there is occasion; speak for those that know not how to speak for themselves, and that have not wherewithal to gratify you for your kindness. Note, We are truly honouring God when we are doing good in the world; and acts of justice and charity are more pleasing to him than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Secondly. A demonstration at the bar of right reason, of the equity of God's proceedings with them; "Come now, and let us reason together," ver. 18. While your hands are full of blood, I will have nothing to do with you, though you bring me a multitude of sacrifices; but, if you "wash you and make you clean," you are welcome to draw nigh to me; come now, and let us talk the matter over. Note, Those, and those only, that break off their league with sin, shall be welcome into covenant and communion with God; he saith, Come now, who before forbade them his courts: see *Jas.* iv. 8. Or rather thus, there were those among them who looked upon themselves as affronted by the slights God put on the multitude of their sacrifices, as *ch.* lviii. 3, "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?" they represented God as a hard Master, whom it was impossible to please. Come, saith God, let us debate the matter fairly, and I doubt not but to make it out, that "my ways are equal, but yours are unequal," *Eze.* xviii. 25. Note, 1. Religion hath reason on its side; there is all the reason in the world that we should do as God would have us do. 2. The God of heaven condescends to reason the case with those that contradict him, and find fault with his proceedings; for he will be justified when he speaks, *Ps.* li. 4. The case needs only to be stated, (as it is here very fairly,) and it will determine itself. God shews here upon what terms they stood, as he doth, *Eze.* xviii. 21, 24; xxxiii. 18, 19; and then leaves it to them to judge whether they were not fair.

1. They cannot in reason expect any more than that, if they repent and reform, they should be restored to God's favour, notwithstanding their former provocations. Why, this you may expect, saith God. And it is very kind, who could have the face to desire it upon any other terms? 1st. It is very little that is required, only that you "be willing and obedient," that you 'consent to obey,' so

some read it; that you subject your wills to the will of God, acquiesce in that, and give up yourselves in all things to be ruled by him that is infinitely wise and good. Here is no penance imposed for their former stubbornness, nor the yoke made heavier, or bound harder on their necks; only, whereas hitherto you have been perverse and refractory, and would not comply with that which was for your own good, now be tractable, be governable. He doth not say, If you be perfectly obedient, but willingly so; for if there be a willing mind it is accepted. 2nd. That is very great that is promised hereupon. *First.* That all their sins should be pardoned to them, and should not be mentioned against them. Though they be red as scarlet and crimson, that is, though you lie under the guilt of blood, yet, upon your repentance, even that shall be forgiven you, and you shall appear in the sight of God as white as snow. Note, The greatest sinners, if they truly repent, shall have their sins forgiven them, and so have their consciences pacified and purified. Though our sins have been as scarlet and crimson, a deep dye, a double dye, first in the wool of original corruption, and afterwards in the many threads of actual transgression, though we have been often dipped, by our many backslidings into sin, and though we have lain long soaking in it, as the cloth doth in the scarlet dye, yet pardoning mercy will thoroughly discharge the stain, and being by it purged as with hyssop, we shall be clean, *Ps.* li. 7. If we make it clean by repentance and reformation, ver. 16, God will make us white by a full remission. *Secondly.* That they should have all the happiness and comfort they could desire: "Be but willing and obedient, and ye shall eat the good of the land," the land of promise; you shall have all the blessings of the new covenant, of the heavenly Canaan, all the good of that land. They that go on in sin, though they dwell in a good land, cannot with any comfort eat the good of it, guilt embitters all; but if sin be pardoned, creature-comforts become comforts indeed.

2. They cannot in reason expect any other than that, if they continue obstinate in their disobedience, they should be abandoned to ruin; and the sentence of the law should be executed upon them. What can be more just? ver. 20, "If ye refuse and rebel," if you continue to rebel against the Divine government, and refuse the offers of Divine grace, "ye shall be devoured with the sword;" with the sword of your enemies, which shall be commissioned to destroy you; with the sword of God's justice, his wrath and vengeance, which shall be drawn against you; for this is that which "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken," and which he will make good for the maintaining of his own honour. Note, Those that will not be governed by God's sceptre will certainly and justly be devoured by his sword.

And now life and death, good and evil, are thus set before you; "Come, and let us reason together." What have you to object against the equity of this? or against complying with God's terms?

21 How is the faithful city become an harlot!
It was full of judgment;
Righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.
22 Thy silver is become dross,
Thy wine mixed with water:
23 Thy princes *are* rebellious, and companions of thieves:
Every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards:
They judge not the fatherless,
Neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.
24 Therefore saith the Lord,
The LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel,
Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries,
And avenge me of mine enemies:
25 And I will turn my hand upon thee,
And purely purge away thy dross,
And take away all thy tin:
26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first,
And thy counsellors as at the beginning:
Afterward thou shalt be called,
The city of righteousness, the faithful city.
27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment,
And her converts with righteousness.
28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners *shall be* together,
And they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

ORIENTAL OAK.

No. 190.

29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, [chosen.
And ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have
30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth,
And as a garden that hath no water.
31 And the strong shall be as tow,
And the maker of it as a spark,
And they shall both burn together,
And none shall quench *them*.

Here, First. The woful degeneracy of Judah and Jerusalem is sadly lamented. See, 1. What the royal city had been. A faithful city, faithful to God, and the interests of his kingdom among men, faithful to the nation, and the public interests of that; "it was full of judgment," justice was duly administered upon the thrones of judgment which were set there, the thrones of the house of David, *Ps.* cxxii. 5. Men were generally honest in their dealings, and abhorred to do an unjust thing; "Righteousness lodged in it," was constantly resident in their palaces, and in all their dwellings; not called in now and then to serve a turn, but at home there. Note, Neither holy cities nor royal ones, neither places where religion is professed nor places where government is administered, are faithful to their trust, if religion do not dwell in them. 2. What it was now become. That beauteous, virtuous spouse was now debauched, and become an adulteress. Righteousness no longer dwelt in Jerusalem, (*terras Astræa reliquit*,—'Astræa left the earth,') even murderers were unpunished, and lived undisturbed there. Nay, the princes themselves were so cruel and oppressive, that they were become no better than murderers. An innocent man might better guard himself against a troop of banditti or assassins than against a bench of such judges. Note, It is a great aggravation of the wickedness of any family or people, that their ancestors were famed for virtue and probity; and commonly those that thus degenerate prove the most wicked of all other. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*,—'That which was originally the best becomes, when corrupted, the worst.' *Lu.* xi. 26; *Eccl.* iii. 16: see *Jer.* xxii. 15—17.

This is illustrated, 1st. By similitudes; ver. 22, "Thy silver is become dross." This degeneracy of the magistrates, whose character is the reverse of that of their predecessors, is as great a reproach and injury to the kingdom as the debasing of their coin would be, and the turning of their silver into dross. Righteous princes, and righteous cities, are as silver for the treasury; but unrighteous ones are as dross for the dunghill; "How is the gold become dim!" *Lam.* iv. 1; "Thy wine is mixed with water," and so is become flat and sour. Some understand both these literally; the wine they sold was adulterated, it was half water. The money they paid was counterfeit; and so they cheated all they dealt with. But it is rather to be taken figuratively; justice was perverted by their princes, and religion and the word of God sophisticated by their priests, and made to serve what turn they pleased. Dross may shine like silver, and the wine that is mixed with water may retain the colour of wine, but neither are worth any thing. Thus they retained a show and pretence of virtue and justice; but had no true sense of either. 2nd. By some instances; ver. 23, "Thy princes," that should keep others in their allegiance to God, and subjection to his law, "are" themselves "rebellious," and set God and his law at defiance. They that should restrain thieves, proud and rich oppressors, those worst of robbers, and those that designedly cheat their creditors, who are no better, they are themselves "companions of thieves," connive at them, do as they do, and with greater security and success, because they are princes, and have power in their hands. They share with the thieves they protect in their unlawful gain, *Ps.* l. 18; and cast in their lot among them, *Pr.* i. 13, 14. *First.* The profit of their places is all their aim; to make the best hand they can of them, right or wrong. They love gifts, and follow after rewards; they set their hearts upon their salary, the fees and perquisites of their offices, and are greedy of them, and never think they can get enough. Nay, they will do any thing, though never so contrary to law and justice, for a gift in secret. Presents and gratuities will blind their eyes at any time, and make them pervert judgment. These they love, and are eager in the pursuit of, *Hos.* iv. 18. *Secondly.* The duty of their places is none of their care. They ought to protect those that are injured, and take cognizance of the appeals made to them; why else were they preferred? but "they judge not the fatherless," take no care to guard the orphans, "nor doth the cause of the widow come unto them," because the poor widow has no bribe to give, with which to make way for her, and to bring her cause on. Those will have a great deal to answer for, who, when they should be the patrons of the oppressed, are their greatest oppressors.

Secondly. A resolution is taken up to redress these grievances; ver. 24, "Therefore, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel," who has power to make good what he saith, who hath hosts at command for the executing of his purposes, and whose power is engaged for his Israel, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries." Observe, 1. Wicked people, especially wicked rulers that are cruel and oppressive, are God's enemies, his adversaries; and shall so be accounted of, and so dealt with. If the holy seed corrupt themselves, they are the foes of his own house. 2. They are a burthen to the God of heaven, which is implied in his easing himself of them. The Mighty One of Israel, that can bear any thing, nay, that upholds all things, complains of his being wearied with men's iniquities, *ch.* xliii. 24; *Am.* ii. 13. 3. God will find out time and way to ease himself of this burthen, by avenging himself on those that thus bear hard upon his patience. He here speaks as one triumphing in the foresight of it; "Ah, I will ease me." He will ease the earth of the burthen under which it groans, *Rom.* viii. 21, 22; will ease his own name of the reproaches with which it is loaded. He will be eased of his adversaries, by taking vengeance on his enemies, he will spew them out of his mouth, and so be eased of them, *Rev.* iii. 16. He speaks with pleasure of the day of vengeance being in his heart, *ch.* lxiii. 4. If God's professing people conform not to his image, as the Holy One of Israel, ver. 4, they shall feel the weight of his hand as the Mighty One of Israel. His power, that used to be engaged for them, shall be armed against them.

Two ways God will ease himself of this grievance:

1. By reforming his church, and restoring good judges in the room of those corrupt ones. Though the one hath a great deal of dross in it, yet it shall not be thrown away, but refined; ver. 25, "I will purely purge away thy dross," that is, will amend what is amiss. Vice and profaneness shall be suppressed, and put out of countenance; oppressors displaced, and deprived of their power to do mischief. When things are never so bad, God can set them to rights, and bring about a complete reformation; when he begins he will make an end,—will take away all the tin. Observe, 1st. The reformation of a people is God's own work; and if ever it be done it is he that brings it about. "I will turn my hand upon thee;" that is, will do that for the reviving of religion

which I did at first for the planting of it. He can do it easily, with the turn of his hand; but he doth it effectually, for what opposition can stand before the arm of the Lord revealed? 2nd. He doth it by blessing them with good magistrates, and good ministers of state; ver. 26, "I will restore thy judges as at the first," to put the laws in execution against evil-doers, "and thy counsellors" to transact public affairs, "as at the beginning;" either the same persons that had been turned out or others of the same character. 3rd. He doth it by restoring judgment and righteousness among them, ver. 27; by planting in men's minds principles of justice, and governing their lives by those principles. Men may do much by external restraints, but God doth it effectually by the influences of his Spirit, as a spirit of judgment, *ch.* iv. 4; and xxviii. 6: see *Ps.* lxxxv. 10, 11. 4th. The reformation of a people will be the redemption of them and their converts; for sin is the worst captivity, the worst slavery, and the great and eternal redemption is that by which Israel is redeemed from all his iniquities, *Ps.* cxxx. 8; and he the blessed Redeemer that turns away ungodliness from Jacob, *Rom.* xi. 26, and saves his people from their sins, *Mat.* i. 21. All the redeemed of the Lord shall be converts, and their conversion is their redemption; her converts, or, they that return of her; so the margin. God works deliverance for us, by preparing us for it with judgment and righteousness. 5th. The reviving of a people's virtue is the restoring of their honour; "Afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city;" that is, *First.* Thou shalt be so. The reforming of the magistracy is a good step towards the reforming of the city, and the country too. *Secondly.* Thou shalt have the praise of being so; and a greater praise there cannot be to any city than to be called a city of righteousness, and to retrieve the ancient honour which was lost when the faithful city became a harlot, ver. 21.

2. By cutting off those that hate to be reformed, that they may not remain either as snares or as scandals to the faithful city. 1st. It is an utter ruin that is here threatened. They shall be destroyed and consumed, and not chastened and corrected only. The extirpation of them will be necessary to the redemption of Zion. 2nd. It is a universal ruin, which will involve the transgressors and the sinners together; that is, the openly profane that have quite cast off all religion, and the hypocrites that live wicked lives under the cloak of a religious profession; they shall be both destroyed together, for they are both alike an abomination to God, both those that contradict religion and those that contradict themselves in their pretensions to it. And they that forsake the Lord, to whom they had formerly joined themselves, shall be consumed, as the water in the conduit pipe is soon consumed when it is cut off from the fountain. 3rd. It is an inevitable ruin; there is no escaping it. *First.* Their idols shall not be able to help them. The oaks that they have desired, and the gardens that they have chosen; that is, the images, the dunghill gods, which they have worshipped in their groves and under the green trees, which they were fond of, and wedded to; for which they forsook the true God, and which they worshipped privately in their own gardens, even then when idolatry was publicly discountenanced. This was the practice of the transgressors and the sinners; but they shall be ashamed of it, not with a show of repentance, but of despair, ver. 29. They shall have cause to be ashamed of them; for after all the court they have made to them they shall find no benefit by them, but the idols themselves shall go into captivity, *Isa.* xlvi. 1, 2. Note, They that make creatures their confidence are but preparing confusion for themselves. You were fond of the oaks and the gardens, but you yourselves shall be, 1*st.* Like an oak without leaves, withered and blasted, and stripped of all its ornaments. Justly do those wear no leaves that bear no fruit, as the fig-tree that Christ cursed. 2*nd.* Like a garden without water, that is neither rained upon nor watered with the foot, *Deu.* xi. 10, that has no fountain, *Cant.* iv. 15, and consequently is parched, and all the fruits of it gone to decay. Thus shall they be that trust in idols, or in an arm of flesh, *Jer.* xvii. 5, 6; but they that trust in God never find him as a wilderness, or as waters that fail, *Jer.* ii. 31. *Secondly.* They shall not be able to help themselves; ver. 31, "Even the strong man shall be as tow," not only soon broken and pulled to pieces, but easily catching fire; and his work, (so the margin reads it,) that by which he hopes to fortify and secure himself, shall be as a spark to his own tow, shall set him on fire, and he and his work shall burn together; his own counsels shall be his ruin; his own sin kindles the fire of God's wrath, which shall burn to the lowest hell, and none shall quench it. When the sinner has made himself as tow and stubble, and God makes himself to him as a consuming fire, what can prevent the utter ruin of the sinner?

Now all this is applicable, 1. To the blessed work of reformation which was wrought in Hezekiah's time, after the abominable corruptions of the reign of Ahaz. Then good men came to be preferred, and the faces of the wicked were filled with shame. 2. To their return out of their captivity in Babylon, which had thoroughly cured them of idolatry. 3. To the gospel kingdom, and the pouring out of the Spirit, by which the New Testament church should be made a New Jerusalem, a city of righteousness. 4. To the second coming of Christ, when he shall throughly purge his floor, his field; shall gather the wheat into his barn, into his garner, and burn the chaff, the tares, with unquenchable fire.

CHAPTER II.

With this chapter begins a new sermon, which is continued in the two following chapters. The subject of this discourse is Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 1. In this chapter the prophet speaks, I. Of the glory of the Christians' Jerusalem, the gospel church, in the latter days, in the accession of many to it, ver. 2, 3, and the great peace it should introduce into the world, ver. 4; whence he infers the duty of the house of Jacob, ver. 5. II. Of the shame of the Jews' Jerusalem, as it then was, and as it would be, after its rejecting of the Gospel, and being rejected of God. 1. Their sin was their shame, ver. 6—9. 2. God, by his judgments, would humble them, and put them to shame, ver. 10—17. 3. They should themselves be ashamed of their confidence in their idols, and in an arm of flesh, ver. 18—22. And now which of these Jerusalems will we be the inhabitants of? That which is full of the knowledge of God, which will be our everlasting honour; or that which is full of horses and chariots, and silver and gold, and such idols, which will in the end be our shame?

THE word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 And it shall come to pass in the last days,
That the mountain of the LORD's house
Shall be established in the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow unto it.
3 And many people shall go and say,
Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
And he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths:
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
4 And he shall judge among the nations,
And shall rebuke many people:
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruninghooks:
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more.
5 O house of Jacob, come ye,
And let us walk in the light of the LORD.

The particular title of this sermon, ver. 1, is the same with the general title of the book, *ch.* i. 1, only that what is there called the vision is here called the word which Isaiah saw, or the matter or thing which he saw, the truth of which he had as full an assurance of in his own mind as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. Or, this word was brought to him in a vision; something he saw when he received this message from God. St. John turned to see the voice that spake with him, *Rev.* i. 12. This sermon begins with the prophecy relating to the last days, that is, the days of the Messiah, when his kingdom should be set up in the world at the latter end of the Mosaic economy. In the last days of the earthly Jerusalem, just before the destruction of it, this heavenly Jerusalem should be erected, *Heb.* xii. 22; *Gal.* iv. 26. Note, Gospel times are the last days; for, 1. They were long in coming, were a great while waited for by the Old Testament saints, and came at last. 2. We are not to look for any other dispensation of Divine grace, but what we have in the Gospel, *Gal.* i. 8, 9. 3. We are to look for the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time, as the Old Testament saints did for his first coming. This is the last time, 1 *Jno.* ii. 18. Now the prophet here foretells,

First. The setting up of the Christian church, and the planting of the Christian religion in the world. Christianity shall then be "the mountain of the Lord's house." Where that is professed, God will grant his presence, receive his people's homage, and grant instruction and blessing, as he did of old in the temple on mount Zion. The gospel church, incorporated by Christ's charter, shall then be the rendezvous of all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Now it is here promised, 1. That Christianity shall be openly preached and professed. It 'shall be prepared' (so the margin reads it) 'in the tops of the mountains,' in the view and hearing of all. Hence Christ's disciples are compared to a city on a hill, which cannot be hid, *Mat.* v. 14. They had many eyes upon them. Christ himself spake openly to the world, *Jno.* xviii. 20. What the apostles did was not done in a corner, *Acts* xxvi. 26. It was the lighting of a beacon, the setting up of a standard. Its being everywhere spoken against supposeth that it was everywhere spoken of. 2. That it shall be firmly fixed and rooted. It "shall be established on the top of the" everlasting "mountains," built upon a rock, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, unless they could pluck up mountains by the roots. He that dwells safely is said to dwell on high, *Isa.* xxxiii. 16; "The Lord has founded" the Gospel "Zion." 3. That it shall not only overcome all opposition, but overtop all competition; it shall be exalted above the hills. This wisdom of God in a mystery shall outshine all the wisdom of this world, all its philosophy, and all its politics. The spiritual worship which it shall introduce shall put down the idolatries of the heathen, and all other institutions in religion shall appear mean and despicable in comparison with this: see *Ps.* lxviii. 16, "Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in."

Secondly. The bringing in of the Gentiles into it. 1. The nations shall be admitted into it, even the uncircumcised, which were forbidden to come into the courts of the temple at Jerusalem; the partition wall which kept them out, kept them off, shall be taken down. 2. "All nations shall flow into it." Having liberty of access, they shall improve their liberty, and multitudes shall embrace the Christian faith. They shall flow into it, as streams of water, which notes the abundance of converts that the Gospel should make, and their speed and cheerfulness in coming into the church. They shall not be forced into it, but shall naturally flow into it. "Thy people shall be willing," all volunteers, *Ps.* cx. 3. To "Christ shall the gathering of the people be," *Gen.* xlix. 10: see *Isa.* lx. 4, 5.

Thirdly. The mutual assistance and encouragement which this confluence of converts shall give to one another. Their pious affections and resolutions shall be so intermixed as that they shall come in one full stream. As when the Jews from all parts of the country went up thrice a year to worship at Jerusalem, they called on their friends in the road, and excited them to go along with them; so shall many of the Gentiles court their relations, friends, and neighbours, to join with them in embracing the Christian religion; ver. 3, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord;" though it be uphill, and against heart, yet it is the mountain of the Lord, who will assist the ascent of our souls towards him. Note, Those that are entering into covenant and communion with God themselves should bring as many as they can along with them. It becomes Christians to provoke one another to good works, and to further the communion of saints, by inviting one another into it. Not, Do you go up to the mountain of the Lord, and pray for us, and we will stay at home; nor, We will go, and do you do as you will; but, Come and let us go, let us go in concert, that we may strengthen one another's hands, and support one another's reputation. Not, We will consider of it, and advise about it, and go hereafter; but, Come, and let us go forthwith, *Ps.* cxxii. 1. Many shall say this; those that have had it said to them shall say it to others. The gospel church is here called not only the mountain of the Lord, but the house of the God of Jacob; for in it God's covenant with Jacob and his praying seed is kept up and hath its accomplishment; for to us now, as unto them, he never said, "Seek ye me in vain," *Isa.* xlv. 19.

Now see here, 1. What they promise themselves in going up to the mountain of the Lord; there "he will teach us of his ways." Note, God's ways are to be learned in his church, in communion with his people, and in the use of instituted ordinances,—the ways of duty which he requires us to walk in, the ways of grace in which he walks towards us. It is God that teacheth his people by his word and Spirit. And it is worth while to take pains to go up to his holy mountain, to be taught his ways; and those who are willing to take that pains, shall never find it labour in vain. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." 2. What they promise for themselves and one another. If he will teach us his ways, we will walk in his paths; if he will let us know our duty, we will, by his grace, make conscience of doing it. And those who attend

God's word with this humble resolution, shall not be sent away without their lesson.

Fourthly. The means by which this shall be brought about. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law," the New Testament law, the law of Christ, as of old the law of Moses from mount Sinai; even "the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The Gospel is a law, a law of faith; it is the word of the Lord; it went forth from Zion, where the temple was built, and from Jerusalem. Christ himself began in Galilee, *Mat.* iv. 23; *Lu.* xxiii. 5; but when he commissioned his apostles to preach the Gospel to all nations, he appointed them to begin at Jerusalem, *Lu.* xxiv. 47: see *Rom.* xv. 19. Though most of them had their home in Galilee, yet they must stay at Jerusalem, there to receive the promise of the Spirit, *Acts* i. 4; and in the temple, on mount Zion, they preached the Gospel, *Acts* v. 20. This honour was allowed to Jerusalem, even after Christ was crucified there, for the sake of what it had been. And it was by this Gospel, which took rise from Jerusalem, that the gospel church was established on the top of the mountains. This was the rod of Divine strength that was sent forth out of Zion, *Ps.* cx. 2.

Fifthly. The erecting of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world; "He shall judge among the nations." He whose word goes forth out of Zion shall by that word not only subdue souls to himself, but rule in them, ver. 4. He shall in wisdom and justice order and overrule the affairs of the world, for the good of his church; and rebuke and restrain those that oppose his interest. By his Spirit working on men's consciences he shall judge and rebuke, shall try men, and check them. His kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world.

Sixthly. The great peace which should be the effect of the success of the Gospel in the world; ver. 4, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares;" their instruments of war shall be converted into implements of husbandry; as on the contrary, when war is proclaimed, ploughshares are beaten into swords, *Joel* iii. 10. "Nation shall then not lift up sword against nation," as now they do, "neither shall they learn war any more," for they shall have no more occasion for it. This doth not make all war absolutely unlawful among Christians, nor is it a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah there shall be no wars. The Jews urge this against Christians, as an argument that Jesus is not the Messiah, because this promise is not fulfilled. But, 1. It was in part fulfilled in the peaceableness of the time in which Christ was born, when wars were in a great measure ceased; witness the taxing, *Lu.* ii. 1. 2. The design and tendency of the Gospel is to make peace, and to slay all enmities. It has in it the most powerful obligations and inducements to peace; so that one might reasonably have expected it should have had this effect; and it would have had it if it had not been for those lusts of men from which come wars and fightings. 3. Jews and Gentiles were reconciled and brought together by the Gospel, and there were no more such wars between them as had been; for they became one sheepfold under one shepherd, *Eph.* ii. 15. 4. The Gospel of Christ, as far as it prevails, disposeth men to be peaceable, softens men's spirits, and sweetens them; and the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart constrains men to love one another. 5. The primitive Christians were famous for brotherly love; their very adversaries took notice of it. 6. We have reason to hope that this promise shall yet have a more full accomplishment in the latter times of the Christian church, when the Spirit shall be poured out more plentifully from on high. Then there shall be on earth peace. "Who shall live when God doth this?" But do it he will in due time, for he is not a man that he should lie.

Lastly. Here is a practical inference drawn from all this; ver. 5, "O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord." By the house of Jacob is meant either, 1. Israel, according to the flesh. Let them be provoked by this to a holy emulation, *Rom.* xi. 14. Seeing the Gentiles are thus ready and resolved for God, thus forward to go up to the house of the Lord, let us stir up ourselves to go too. Let it never be said that the sinners of the Gentiles were better friends to the holy mountain than the house of Jacob. Thus the zeal of some should provoke many. Or, 2. Spiritual Israel; all that are brought to the God of Jacob. Shall there be such great knowledge in gospel times? ver. 3, and such great peace? ver. 4, and shall we share in these privileges? Come, then, and let us live accordingly. Whatever others do, "Come, O come! let us walk in the light of the Lord." 1st. Let us walk circumspectly in the light of this knowledge. Will God teach us his ways? Will he shew us his glory in the face of Christ? Let us then "walk as the children of the light and of the day," *Eph.* v. 8; 1 *Thes.* v. 8; *Rom.* xiii. 12. 2nd. Let us walk comfortably in the light of this peace. Shall there be no more war? Let us then go on our way rejoicing, and let this joy terminate in God, and be our strength, *Neh.* viii. 10; walk in the beams of the Sun of righteousness.

6 Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob,
Because they be replenished from the east,
And *are* soothsayers like the Philistines,
And they please themselves in the children of strangers.
7 Their land also is full of silver and gold,
Neither *is there any* end of their treasures;
Their land is also full of horses,
Neither *is there any* end of their chariots:
8 Their land also is full of idols;
They worship the work of their own hands,
That which their own fingers have made:
9 And the mean man boweth down,
And the great man humbleth himself:
Therefore forgive them not.

The calling in of the Gentiles was accompanied with the rejection of the Jews. It was their fall, and the diminishing of them, that was the riches of the Gentiles, and the casting off of them that was the reconciling of the world, *Rom.* xi. 12—15; and it should seem that these verses have reference to that, and are designed to justify God therein. And yet it is probable, they are primarily intended for the convincing and awakening of the men of that generation in which the prophet lived; it being usual with the prophets to speak of the things that then were, both in mercy and judgment, as types of the things that should be hereafter. Here is,

First. Israel's doom. This is set forth in two words, the first and the last of this paragraph, but they are two dreadful words, and which speak, 1. Their case sad, very sad; ver. 6, "Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people." Miserable is the condition of that people whom God hath forsaken, and great certainly must the provocation be if he forsake those that have been his own people. This was the deplorable case of the Jewish church after they had rejected Christ. *Migremus hinc,*—'Let us go hence;' "Your house is left unto you desolate," *Mat.* xxii. 38. Whenever any sore calamity came upon the Jews, thus far the Lord might be said to forsake them, that he withdrew his help and succour from them, else they had not fallen into the hands of their enemies; but God never leaves any till they first leave him. 2. Their case desperate, wholly desperate; ver. 9, "therefore forgive them not." This prophetical prayer amounts to a threatening, that they should not be forgiven, and so some think it may be read; 'and thou wilt not forgive them.' This refers not to particular persons, many of whom repented and were pardoned, but to the body of that nation, against whom an irreversible doom was passed, that they should be wholly cut off, and their church quite dismantled, never to be formed into such a body again, nor ever to have their old charter restored to them.

Secondly. Israel's desert of this doom, and the reasons upon which it is grounded. And in general it is sin; that is it, and nothing but that, which provokes God to forsake his people. The particular sins he instanceth in are such as abounded among them at that time, which he makes mention of for the conviction of those to whom he then preached, rather than that which afterwards proved the measure-filling sin, their crucifying Christ, and persecuting his followers; for the sins of every age contributed towards the making up of the dreadful account at last. And there was a partial and temporary rejection of them by the captivity in Babylon hasting on, which was a type of their final destruction by the Romans, and which the sins here mentioned brought upon them. Their sins were such as directly contradicted all God's kind and gracious designs concerning them.

1. God set them apart for himself, as a peculiar people, distinguished from, and dignified above, all other people, *Num.* xxiii. 9. But they were "replenished from the east;" they naturalized foreigners, not proselyted, and encouraged them to settle among them, and mingle with them, *Hos.* vii. 8. Their country was peopled with Syrians and Chaldeans, Moabites and Ammonites, and other Eastern nations; and with them they admitted the fashions and customs of those nations, "and pleased themselves in the children of strangers;" were fond of them, preferred their country before their own, and thought that the more they conformed to them the more polite and refined they were; thus did they profane their crown and their covenant. Note, Those are in danger of being estranged from God who please themselves with those that are strangers to him; for we soon learn the ways of those whose company we love.

2. God gave them his oracles, which they might ask counsel of; not only the Scriptures, and the seers, but the breastplate of judgment. But they slighted these, and became "soothsayers like the Philistines;" introduced their art of divination, and hearkened to those who, by the stars, or the clouds, or the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, or other magic superstitions, pretended to discover things secret, or foretell things to come; the Philistines were noted for diviners, 1 *Sam.* vi. 2. Note, Those that slight true divinity are justly given up to lying divinations; and they will certainly be forsaken of God, who thus forsake him and their own mercies for lying vanities.

3. God encouraged them to put their confidence in him, and assured them that he would be their wealth and strength. But, distrusting his power and promise, they made gold their hope, and furnished themselves with horses and chariots, and relied upon them for their safety, ver. 7. God had expressly forbidden even their kings to multiply horses to themselves, and greatly to multiply silver and gold, because he would have them to depend upon himself only. But they did not think their interest in God made them a match for their neighbours unless they had as full treasures of silver and gold, and as formidable hosts of chariots and horses, as they had. It is not having silver and gold, horses and chariots, that is a provocation to God; but, 1st. Desiring them insatiably, so that there is no end of the treasures, no end of the chariots, no bounds or limits set to the desire of them. Those shall never have enough in God, who alone is all-sufficient, that never know when they have enough of this world, which at the best is insufficient. 2nd. Depending upon them, as if we could not be safe, and easy, and happy, without them, and could not but be so with them.

4. God himself was their God, the sole object of their worship, and he himself instituted ordinances of worship for them. But they slighted both him and his institutions, ver. 8; their land was full of idols; every city had its god, *Jer.* xi. 13; and according to the goodness of their lands they made goodly images, *Hos.* x. 1. They that think one God too little will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough; for they that love idols will multiply them. So sottish were they, and so wretchedly infatuated, that they worshipped the work of their own hands, as if that could be a God to them which was not only a creature, but their creature, and that which their own fancies had devised, and their own fingers had made. It was an aggravation of their idolatry that God had enriched them with silver and gold, and yet of that silver and gold they made idols; so it was, "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked," *Hos.* ii. 8.

5. God had advanced them, and put honour upon them, but they basely diminished and disparaged themselves; ver. 9, "The mean man boweth down" to his idol; a thing below the meanest, that have any spark of reason left them. Sin is a disparagement to the poorest, and those of the lowest rank. It becomes the mean man to bow down to his superiors, but it ill becomes him to bow down to the stock of a tree, *Isa.* xliv. 19. Nor is it only the illiterate and poor-spirited that do this, but even "the great man" forgets his grandeur, and "humbleth himself" to worship idols, deified men no better than himself, and consecrated stones so much baser than himself. Idolaters are said to debase themselves even to hell, *Isa.* lvii. 9. What a shame is it that great men think the service of the true God below them, and will not stoop to it, and yet will humble themselves to bow down to an idol! Some make this a threatening, that the mean men shall be brought down, and the great men humbled, by the judgments of God, when they come with commission.

10 Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust,
For fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.
11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled,
And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.
12 For the day of the LORD of hosts *shall be*
Upon every *one that is* proud and lofty,
And upon every *one that is* lifted up; and he shall be
brought low: [lifted up,
13 And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, *that are* high and
And upon all the oaks of Bashan,
14 And upon all the high mountains,
And upon all the hills *that are* lifted up,

15 And upon every high tower,
And upon every fenced wall,
16 And upon all the ships of Tarshish,
And upon all pleasant pictures.
17 And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down,
And the haughtiness of men shall be made low:
And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.
18 And the idols he shall utterly abolish.
19 And they shall go into the holes of the rocks,
And into the caves of the earth,
For fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty,
When he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.
20 In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold,
Which they made *each one* for himself to worship,
To the moles and to the bats;
21 To go into the clefts of the rocks,
And into the tops of the ragged rocks,
For fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty,
When he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.
22 Cease ye from man, whose breath *is* in his nostrils:
For wherein is he to be accounted of?

The prophet here goes on to shew what desolations would be brought upon their land, when God had forsaken them, which may refer particularly to their destruction by the Chaldeans first, and afterwards by the Romans; or may have a general respect to the method God takes to awaken and humble proud sinners, and to put them out of conceit with that which they delighted in, and depended on more than God. We are here told, that sooner or later God will find out a way,

First. To startle and awaken secure sinners, that cry peace to themselves, and bid defiance to God and his judgments; ver. 10, "Enter into the rock," that is, God will attack you with such terrible judgments, and strike you with such terrible apprehensions of them, that you shall be forced to "enter into the rock, and hide you in the dust, for fear of the Lord." You shall lose all your courage, and tremble at the shaking of a leaf; your hearts shall fail you for fear, *Lu.* xxi. 26; and you shall flee when none pursues, *Pr.* xxviii. 1. To the same purpose, ver. 19, they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth,—the darkest, the deepest places. They shall "call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them," and rather crush them than not cover them, *Hos.* x. 8. It was so, particularly at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, *Lu.* xxiii. 30, and of the persecuting pagan powers, *Rev.* vi. 16. And all "for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty," looking upon him then to be a consuming fire, and themselves as stubble before him, "when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth," to "shake the wicked out of it," *Job* xxxviii. 13, and to shake those earthly props and supports which they have buoyed themselves up with, to shake them from under them. Note, 1. With God is terrible majesty, and the glory of it is such as sooner or later will oblige us all to flee before him. 2. Those that will not fear God, and flee to him, will be forced to fear him, and flee from him to a refuge of lies. 3. It is a folly for those that are pursued by the wrath of God to think to escape it, and to hide or shelter themselves from it. 4. The things of the earth are things that will be shaken; they are subject to concussions, and hastening towards a dissolution. 5. The shaking of the earth is, and will be, a terrible thing to those who set their affections wholly on things of the earth. 6. It will be in vain to think of finding refuge in the caves of the earth, when the earth itself is shaken; there will be no shelter then but in God, and in things above.

Secondly. To humble and abase proud sinners, that look big, and think highly of themselves, and scornfully of all about them; ver. 11, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled," the eyes that aimed high, the countenance in which the pride of the heart shewed itself, these shall be cast down in shame and despair. "And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down," their spirits shall be broken, and they shall be crest-fallen, and those things which they were proud of they shall be ashamed of. It is repeated again, ver. 17, "The loftiness of men shall be bowed down." Note, Pride will, one way or other, have a fall. Men's haughtiness will be brought down, either by the grace of God convincing them of the evil of their pride, and clothing them with humility, or by the providence of God depriving them of all those things they were proud of, and laying them low. Our Saviour often laid it down for a maxim that, "He that exalteth himself shall be abased;" he shall either abase himself in true repentance, or God will abase him, and pour contempt upon him. Now here we are told,

1. Why this shall be done. Because "The Lord alone will be exalted." Note, Therefore proud men shall be vilified, because the Lord alone will be magnified. It is for the honour of God's power to humble the proud; by this he proves himself to be God, and disproves Job's pretensions to rival with him; *Job* xl. 11—14, "Behold every one that is proud, and abase him, then will I also confess unto thee." It is likewise for the honour of his justice. Proud men stand in competition with God, who is jealous for his own glory, and will not suffer men either to take that to themselves or give it to another which is due to him only. They likewise stand in opposition to God; they resist him, and therefore he resists them; for he will be exalted among the heathen, *Ps.* xlvi. 10; and there is a day coming in which he alone will be exalted, when he shall have put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, 1 *Cor.* xv. 24.

2. How this shall be done. By humbling judgments, that shall mortify men, and bring them down; ver. 12, "The day of the Lord of hosts," the day of his wrath and judgment, "shall be upon every one that is proud," and therefore he now laughs at their insolence, "because he sees that his day is coming;" this day which will be upon them ere they are aware, *Ps.* xxxvii. 13. This day of the Lord is here said to be upon "all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up." Jerome observes, that the cedars are said to praise God, *Ps.* cxlviii. 9, and are trees of the Lord, *Ps.* civ. 16, of his planting, *Isa.* xl. 19, and yet here God's wrath fastens upon the cedars, which notes, saith he, that some of every rank of men, some great men, will be saved, and some perish. It is brought in as an instance of the strength of God's voice, that it breaks the cedars, *Ps.* xxix. 5; and here the day of the Lord is said to be upon the cedars, those of Lebanon, that were the straightest and stateliest; upon the oaks, those of Bashan, that were the strongest and sturdiest; and, ver. 14, upon the natural elevations and fortresses, the high mountains, and the hills that are lifted up, that overtop the valleys, and seem to push the skies; and, ver. 15, upon the artificial fastnesses, every high tower, and every fenced wall. Understand these,

1st. As representing the proud people themselves, that are like the cedars and the oaks in their own apprehension, firmly rooted, and not to be stirred by any storm, and looking on all around them as shrubs. These are the high mountains and the lofty hills that seem to fill the earth, that are gazed on by all, and think themselves immovable, but lie most obnoxious to God's thunder strokes; *feriuntque summos fulmina montes*,—'the highest hills are the most exposed to lightning.' And before the power of God's wrath these mountains are scattered, and these hills bow, and melt like wax, *Hab.* iii. 6; *Ps.* lxviii. 8. These topping men, that are as high towers in which the noisy bells are hung, on which the thundering, murdering cannon are planted,—these fenced walls, that fortify themselves with their native hardiness, and entrench themselves in their fastnesses,—they shall be brought down.

2nd. As particularizing the things they are proud of, in which they trust, and of which they make their boasts. The day of the Lord shall be upon those very things which they put their confidence in, as their strength and security. He will "take from them all their armour wherein they trusted." Did the inhabitants of Lebanon glory in their cedars, and those of Bashan in their oaks, such as no country could shew the like? the day of the Lord should rend those cedars, those oaks, and the houses built of them. Did Jerusalem glory in the mountains that were round about it, as its impregnable fortifications, or in its walls and bulwarks? These should be levelled and laid low in the day of the Lord. Besides those things that were for their strength and safety, they were proud, *First.* Of their trade abroad. But the day of the Lord shall be "upon all the ships of Tarshish;" they shall be broken, as Jehoshaphat's were, shall founder at sea, or be shipwrecked in the harbour; Zebulun was a haven of ships, but should now no more rejoice in his going out. When God is bringing ruin upon a people, he can sink all the branches of their revenue. *Secondly.* Of their ornaments at home. But the day of the Lord shall be "upon all pleasant pictures," the painting of their ships, so some understand it, or the curious pieces of painting they brought home in their ships from other countries, perhaps from Greece, which afterwards was famous for painters. 'Upon every thing that is beautiful to behold,'—so some read it. Perhaps they were the pictures of their relations, and for that reason pleasant, or their gods, which to the idolaters were delectable things, or they admired them for the fineness of the colours, or strokes. There is no harm in making pictures, or in adorning our rooms with them, provided they transgress not either the second or the seventh commandment; but to place our pictures among our pleasant things, to be fond of them, and proud of them, to spend that upon them that should be laid out in charity, and to set our hearts upon them, as it ill becomes those that have so many substantial things to take pleasure in, so it is a provocation to God to strip us of all such vain ornaments.

Thirdly. To make idolaters ashamed of their idols, and of all the affection they have had for them, and the respect they have paid to them; ver. 18, "The idols he shall utterly abolish." When the Lord alone shall be exalted, ver. 17, he will not only pour contempt upon proud men, that, like Pharaoh, exalt themselves against him, but much more upon all pretended deities, that are rivals with him for Divine honours. They shall be abolished, utterly abolished, their friends shall desert them, their enemies shall destroy them, so that one way or other an utter riddance shall be made of them. See here, 1. The vanity of false gods. They cannot secure themselves, so far are they from being able to secure their worshippers. 2. The victory of the true God over them; for great is the truth, and will prevail. Dagon fell before the ark, and Baal before the Lord God of Elijah. The gods of the heathen shall be famished, *Zeph.* ii. 11, and by degrees shall perish, *Jer.* x. 11. The rightful sovereign will triumph over all pretenders.

And as God will abolish idols, so their worshippers shall abandon them, either from a gracious conviction of their vanity and falsehood, as Ephraim when he said, "What have I to do any more with idols?" or from a late and sad experience of their inability to help them, and a woful despair of relief by them, ver. 20. When men are themselves frightened by the judgments of God into "the holes of the rocks, and the caves of the earth," and find that they do thus in vain shift for their own safety, they shall "cast their idols," which they had made their gods, and hoped to make their friends in the time of need, "to the moles and to the bats," any whither out of sight, that, being freed from the incumbrance of them, they may "go into the clefts of the rocks, for fear of the Lord," ver. 21. Note, 1st. Those that will not be reasoned out of their sins, sooner or later shall be frightened out of them. 2nd. God can make men sick of those idols that they have been most fond of, even the idols of silver and the idols of gold, the most precious. Covetous men make silver and gold their idols, money their god; but the time may come when they may feel it as much their burthen as ever they made it their confidence, and may find themselves as much exposed by it as ever they hoped they should be guarded by it, when it tempts their enemy, sinks their ship, or retards their flight. There was a time when the mariners threw the wares, and even the wheat, into the sea, *Jonah* i. 5; *Acts* xxvii. 38, and the Syrians cast away their garments for haste, 2 *Kin.* vii. 15. Or, men may cast it away out of an indignation at themselves for leaning upon such a broken reed: see *Eze.* vii. 19. The idolaters here throw away their idols, because they are ashamed of them, and of their own folly in trusting to them; or because they are afraid of having them found in their possession when the judgments of God are abroad; as the thief throws away his stolen goods when he is searched for or pursued. 3rd. The darkest holes, where the moles and the bats lodge, are the fittest place for idols that have eyes and see not; and God can force men to cast their own idols there, *ch.* xxx. 22, when they are "ashamed of the oaks which they have desired," *ch.* i. 29. "Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel," *Jer.* xlviii. 13, 14. It is possible that sin may be both loathed and left, and yet not truly repented of, loathed because surfeited on, left because no opportunity of committing it; yet not repented of out of any love to God, but only from a slavish fear of his wrath.

Fourthly. To make those that have trusted in an arm of flesh ashamed of their confidence; ver. 22, "Cease ye from man." The providences of God concerning you shall speak this aloud to you, and therefore take warning beforehand, that you may prevent the uneasiness and shame of a disappointment. And consider, 1. How weak man is. "His breath is in his nostrils," puffed out every moment, soon gone for good and all. Man is a dying creature, and may die quickly; our nostrils, in which our breath is, are of the outward parts of body; what is there is like one standing at the door ready to depart. Nay, the doors of the nostrils are always open; the breath in them may slip away ere we are aware, in a moment; wherein then is man to be accounted of?

Alas, no reckoning is to be made of him! for he is not what he seems to be,—what he pretends to be, what we fancy him to be. Man is like to vanity, nay, he is vanity,—he is altogether vanity, he is less, he is lighter than vanity, when weighed in the balances of the sanctuary. 2. How wise therefore they are that cease from man; it is our duty, it is our interest, to do so. "Put not your trust in man," nor make even the greatest and mightiest of men your confidence; cease to do so. Let not your eye be to the power of man; for it is finite and limited, derived and depending; it is not from him that your judgment proceeds. Let not him be your fear, let not him be your hope, but look up to the power of God, to which all the powers of men are subject and subordinate; dread his wrath, secure his favour, take him for your help, and let your hope be in the Lord your God.

CHAPTER III.

The prophet in this chapter goes on to foretell the desolations that were coming upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, both that by the Babylonians and that which completed their ruin by the Romans, with some of the grounds of God's controversy with them. God threatens, I. To deprive them of all the supports both of their life and of their government, ver. 1—3. II. To leave them to fall into confusion and disorder, ver. 4, 5, 12. III. To deny them the blessing of magistracy, ver. 6—8. IV. To strip the daughters of Zion of their ornaments, ver. 17—24. V. To lay all waste by the sword of war, ver. 25, 26. The sins that provoked God to deal thus with them were, 1. Their defiance of God, ver. 8; 2. Their impudence, ver. 9; 3. The abuse of power to oppression and tyranny, ver. 12—15; 4. The pride of the daughters of Zion, ver. 16. And in the midst of the chapter the prophet is directed how to apply himself to particular persons, 1st. To assure good people that it should be well with them, notwithstanding those general calamities, ver. 10; 2nd. To assure wicked people that, however God might in judgment remember mercy, yet it should go ill with them, ver. 11. Oh that the nations of the earth at this day would hearken to the rebukes and warnings which this chapter gives!

FOR, behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
Doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah
The stay and the staff,
The whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water,
2 The mighty man, and the man of war, [ancient,
The judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the
3 The captain of fifty, and the honourable man,
And the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.
4 And I will give children *to be* their princes,
And babes shall rule over them.
5 And the people shall be oppressed,
Every one by another, and every one by his neighbour:
The child shall behave himself proudly against the an-
And the base against the honourable. [cient,
6 When a man shall take hold of his brother of the house of his father, *saying*,
Thou hast clothing, be our ruler,
And *let* this ruin *be* under thy hand:
7 In that day shall he swear, saying,
I will not be an healer;
For in my house *is* neither bread nor clothing:
Make me not a ruler of the people.
8 For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen:
Because their tongue and their doings *are* against the
To provoke the eyes of his glory. [LORD,

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had given a necessary caution to all, not to put confidence in man or any creature, and had given a general reason for that caution, taken from the frailty of human life, and the vanity and weakness of human powers. Here he gives a particular reason for it, because God was now about to ruin all their creature confidences, so that they should meet with nothing but disappointment in all their expectations from them; ver. 1, "The stay and the staff" shall be taken away; all their supports, of what kind soever, all the things they trusted to and looked for help and relief from. Their church and kingdom was now grown old, and going to decay, and it was, as old men used to be, *Zec.* viii. 4, leaning on a staff. Now God threatens to take away their staff, and then they must fall of course; to take away the stays both of the city and of the country, of Jerusalem and of Judah, which are indeed stays to one another, and if one fail the other fails from it. He that doth this is "the Lord, the Lord of hosts;" *Adon*, the Lord that is himself the stay, or foundation. If that stay depart, all other stays certainly break under us, for he is the strength of them all. He that is "the Lord," the ruler that has authority to do it, and "the Lord of hosts," that has ability to do it, he shall "take away the stay and the staff." St. Jerome refers this to the sensible decay of the Jewish nation, after they had crucified our Saviour, *Rom.* xi. 9, 10. I rather take it as a warning to all nations not to provoke God, for if they make him their enemy he can and will thus make them miserable. Let us view the particulars:

First. Was their plenty a support to them? It is so to any people; bread is the staff of life. But God can "take away the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water," and it is just with him to do so, when fulness of bread becomes an iniquity, *Eze.* xvi. 49, and that which was given to be provision for the life is made provision for the lusts. He can take away the bread and water, by withholding the rain, *Deu.* xxviii. 23, 24. Or, if he allow them he can take away the stay of bread and the stay of water, by withholding his blessing, by which man lives, and not by bread only, and which is the staff of bread, *Mat.* iv. 4; and then the bread is not nourishing, the water refreshing, *Hag.* i. 6. Christ is the bread of life and the water of life; if he be our stay, we shall find that this is a good part not to be taken away, *Job* vi. 27; *ch.* iv. 14.

Secondly. Was their army a support to them? their generals, and commanders, and military men? These shall be taken away; either cut off by the sword, or so discouraged with the defeats they meet with, that they shall throw up their commissions, and resolve to act no more; or they shall be disabled by sickness, or dispirited, so as to be unfit for business: "the mighty man and the man of war," and even the inferior officer, "the captain of fifty," shall be removed. It bodes ill with a people when their valour is lost and their valiant men. Let not the strong man, therefore, glory in his strength, nor any people trust too much to their mighty men, but let the "strong people glorify God, and the city of the terrible nations fear him," who can make them weak and despicable, *ch.* xxv. 3.

Thirdly. Were their ministers of state a support to them? their learned men, their politicians, their clergy, their wits, and virtuosos? These also should be taken away; "the judges" that were skilled in the laws and expert in administering justice, and "the prophets," whom they used to consult in difficult cases; "the prudent," that were celebrated as men of sense and sagacity above others, and were assistants to the judges; 'the diviners,' (so the word is,) those that used unlawful arts, who, though rotten stays, yet were stayed on. But it may be taken, as we read it, in a good sense; the ancients, elders in age, in office, "the honourable man," the gravity of whose aspect commands reverence, and whose age and experience makes him fit to be a counsellor. Trade is one great support to a nation, even manufactures and handicraft trades; and therefore, when the whole stay is to be broken, "the cunning artificer" too shall be taken away. And the last is, "the eloquent orator," the man skilful of speech, who in some cases may do good service, though he be none of the prudent or the ancient, by putting others' sense in good language. Moses cannot speak well, but Aaron can. God threatens to take these away; that is, 1. To disable them for the service of their country, "making the judges fools, taking away the speech of the trusty, and the understanding of the aged," *Job* xii. 17, &c. Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and we cannot be sure that those who have been serviceable to us shall always be so. 2. To put an end to their days; for princes are therefore not to be trusted in, because their breath goeth forth, *Ps.* cxlvi. 3, 4. Note, The removal of useful men by death in the midst of their usefulness is a very threatening symptom to any people.

Fourthly. Was their government a support to them? It ought to be so; it is the business of the sovereign to bear up the pillars of the land, *Ps.* lxxv. 3. But it is here threatened that this stay should fail them; when the mighty men and the prudent are removed, children shall be their princes; children in age, that must be under tutors and governors, who will be clashing with one another, and making a prey of the young king and his kingdom; children in understanding and disposition, childish men, such as are babes in knowledge, no more fit to rule than a child in the cradle, yet shall rule over them, with all the folly, fickleness, and frowardness of a child. And "woe unto thee, O land, when thy king" is such a one, *Eccl.* x. 16.

Fifthly. Was the union of the subjects among themselves, their good order, and the good understanding and correspondence that they kept with one another, a stay to them? Where this is, a people may do the better, though their princes be not such as they should be. But it is here threatened that God would send an evil spirit among them too, as *Jud.* ix. 23, which would make them, 1. Injurious and unneighbourly one towards another; ver. 5, "The people shall be oppressed every one by his neighbour," and their princes, being children, take no care to restrain the oppressors or relieve the oppressed. Nor is it to any purpose to appeal to them, which is a temptation to every man to be his own avenger; and then they bite and devour one another, and will soon be consumed one of another. Then *homo homini lupus*,—'man becomes a wolf to man;' *jusque datum sceleri*,—'wickedness receives the stamp of law;' *nec hospes ab hospite tutus*,—'the guest and the host are in danger from each other.' 2. Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors. It is as ill an omen to a people as can be, when the rising generation among them is generally untractable, rude, and ungovernable, when "the child behaves himself proudly against the ancient;" whereas he should "rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man," *Lev.* xix. 32. When young people are conceited and pert, and carry it scornfully towards their superiors, it is not only a reproach to themselves, but of ill consequence to the public; it slackens the reins of government, and weakens the hands that hold them. It is likewise ill with a people when persons of honour cannot support their authority, but are affronted by the base and beggarly, when judges are insulted by the mob, and their power set at defiance. Those have a great deal to answer for that do this.

Sixthly. It is some stay, some support, to hope that though matters may now be ill managed, yet others may be raised up who may manage better. Yet this expectation also shall be frustrated, for the case shall be so desperate that no man of sense or substance will meddle with it.

1. The government shall go a begging. Here, 1st. It is taken for granted that there is no way of redressing all these grievances and bringing things into order again, but by good magistrates, that shall be invested with power by common consent, and shall exert that power for the good of the community. And it is probable this was in many places the true origin of government. Men found it necessary to unite in a subjection to one who was thought fit for such a trust, in order to the welfare and safety of them all, being aware that they must either be ruled or ruined. Here, therefore, is the original contract, "Be thou our ruler," and we will be subject to thee, "and let this ruin be under thy hand," to be repaired and restored, and then to be preserved and established, and the interests of it advanced, *ch.* lviii. 12. Take care to protect us by the sword of war from being injured from abroad, and by the sword of justice from being injurious to one another, and we will bear faith and true allegiance to thee. 2nd. The case is represented very deplorable, and things come to a sad pass; for, *First*. Children being their princes, every man will think himself fit to prescribe who shall be a magistrate, and will be for preferring his own relations; whereas, if the princes were as they should be, it would be left entirely to them to nominate the rulers, as it ought to be. *Secondly*. Men will find themselves under a necessity even of forcing power into the hands of those that are thought to be fit for it; a man shall take hold by violence of one to make him a ruler, perceiving him ready to overrun the motion. Nay, he shall urge it upon his brother; whereas, commonly, men are not willing that their equals should be their superiors; witness the envy of Joseph's brethren. *Thirdly*. It will be looked upon as ground sufficient for the preferring a man to be a ruler, that he hath clothing better than his neighbours; a very poor qualification to recommend a man to a place of trust in the government. It was a sign the country was much impoverished, when it was a rare thing to find a man that had good clothes, or that could afford to buy himself an alderman's gown or a judge's robes; and that the people were very unthinking, when they had so much respect to a man in gay clothing, with a gold ring, *Jam.* ii. 2, 3, that for the sake thereof they would make him their ruler. It had been some sense to have said, Thou hast wisdom, integrity, experience, be thou our ruler; but it was a jest to say, "Thou hast clothing, be

thou our ruler." A poor, wise man, though in vile raiment, delivered a city, *Eccl.* ix. 15. We may allude to this to shew how desperate the case of fallen man was, when our Lord Jesus was pleased to become our brother, and, though he was not courted, offered himself to be our ruler and Saviour, and to take this ruin under his hand.

2. Those that are thus pressed to come into office will swear themselves off, because, though they are taken to be men of some substance, yet they know themselves unable to bear the charges of the office, and to answer the expectations of those that choose them; ver. 7, "He shall swear,"—shall lift up the hand, the ancient ceremony used in taking an oath,—"I will not be a healer, make not me a ruler." Note, Rulers must be healers, and good rulers will be so, must study to unite their subjects, and not widen the differences that are among them; those only are fit for government that are of a meek, quiet, healing spirit. They must also heal the wounds that are given to any of the interests of their people, by suitable applications. But why will he not be a ruler? Because "in my house is neither bread nor clothing." 1st. If he saith true, it was a sign men's estates were sadly ruined, when even those that made the best appearance really wanted necessaries, a common case and a piteous one. Some that, having lived fashionably, are willing to put the best side outward, yet if the truth were known, are in great straits, and go with heavy hearts, for want of bread and clothing. 2nd. If he do not speak truth, it was a sign men's consciences were sadly debauched, when, to avoid the expence of an office, they would load themselves with the guilt of perjury, and, which is the greatest madness in the world, would damn their souls to save their money, *Mat.* xvi. 26. 3rd. However it were, it was a sign the case of the nation was very bad, when nobody was willing to accept a place in the government of it, as despairing to have either credit or profit by it, which are the two things aimed at in men's common ambition of preferment.

3. The reason why God brought things to this sad pass, even among his own people, which is given either by the prophet or by him that refused to be a ruler. It was not for want of goodwill to his country, but because he saw the case desperate, and past relief, and it would be to no purpose to attempt it; ver. 8, "Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen;" and they may thank themselves; they have brought the destruction upon their own heads, for "their tongue and their doings are against the Lord." In word and action they broke the law of God, and therein designed an affront to him; they wilfully intended to offend him, in contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice. Their tongue was against the Lord, for they contradicted his prophets; and their doings were no better, they acted as they talked. It was an aggravation of their sin that God's eye was upon them, and that his glory was manifested among them; but they provoked him to his face, as if, the more they knew of his glory, the greater pride they took in slighting it, and turning it into shame. And this, this is it for which Jerusalem is ruined. Note, The ruin both of persons and people is owing to their sins. If they did not provoke God, he would do them no hurt, *Jer.* xxv. 6.

9 The shew of their countenance doth witness against them;
And they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide *it* not.
Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.
10 Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be* well *with him:*
For they shall eat the fruit of their doings.
11 Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be* ill *with him:*
For the reward of his hands shall be given him.
12 *As for* my people, children *are* their oppressors,
And women rule over them.
O my people, they which lead thee cause *thee* to err,
And destroy the way of thy paths.
13 The LORD standeth up to plead,
And standeth to judge the people.
14 The LORD will enter into judgment
With the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof:
For ye have eaten up the vineyard;
The spoil of the poor *is* in your houses.
15 What mean ye *that* ye beat my people to pieces,
And grind the faces of the poor?
Saith the Lord GOD of hosts.

Here God proceeds in his controversy with his people. Observe,

First. The ground of this controversy. It was for sin that God contended with them; if they vex themselves, let them look a little farther, and they will see that they must thank themselves; 'Woe unto their souls,' (so it may be read in a way of lamentation,) 'for they have procured evil to themselves,' ver. 9. Note, 1. The condition of sinners is woful, and very deplorable. 2. It is the soul that is damaged and endangered by sin. Sinners may prosper in their outward estates, and yet at the same time there may be a woe to their souls. 3. Whatever evil befalls sinners, it is of their own procuring, *Jer.* ii. 19. That which is here charged upon them is,

1. That the shame that should restrain them from their sins was quite thrown off, and they were grown impudent, ver. 9. This hardens men against repentance, and ripens them for ruin as much as any thing, "The show of their countenance doth witness against them," that their minds are vain, and lewd, and malicious; their eyes speak it plain that they cannot cease from sin, 2 *Pet.* ii. 14. One may look them in the face, and guess at the desperate wickedness that there is in their hearts, "they declare their sin as Sodom;" so impetuous, so imperious, are their lusts, and so impatient of the least check, and so perfectly are all the remaining sparks of virtue extinguished in them. The Sodomites declared their sin, not only by the exceeding greatness of it, *Gen.* xiii. 13, so that it cried to heaven, *Gen.* xviii. 20, but by their shameless owning of that which was most shameful, *Gen.* xix. 5. And thus Judah and Jerusalem did. They are so far from hiding it, that they glory in it, in the bold attempts they have made upon virtue, and the victory they have gained over their own convictions; they have a whore's forehead, *Jer.* iii. 3, and cannot blush, *Jer.* vi. 15. Note, Those that are grown impudent in sin are ripe for ruin; they that are past shame, we say, are past grace, and then past hope.

2. That their guides, who should direct them in the right way, put them out of the way; ver. 12, "They which lead thee," the princes, priests, and prophets, they mislead thee, they "cause thee to err," either preaching to them that which was false and corrupt, or, if they preached that which was true and good, contradicting it by their practices; and the people would sooner follow a bad example than a good exhortation. Thus they destroyed the way of their paths, pulling down with one hand what they built up with the other. *Qui te beatificant,*—'They that call thee blessed cause thee to err,'—so some read it. Their priests applauded them, as if nothing were amiss among them, cried, Peace, peace to them, as if they were in no danger; and thus they caused them to go on in their errors.

3. That their judges, who should have patronised and protected the oppressed, were themselves the greatest oppressors, ver. 14, 15. The elders of the people and the princes, that had learning, and could not but know better things, that had great estates, and were not under the temptation of necessity, to encroach upon those about them; and that were men of honour, and should scorn to do a base thing, yet they "have eaten up the vineyard," God's vineyard, which they were appointed to be the dressers and keepers of. They burnt it, so the word signifies; they did as ill by it as its worst enemies could do, *Ps.* lxxx. 16. Or, the vineyards of the poor, they wrested them out of their possession, as Jezebel did Naboth's; or devoured the fruits of them, fed their lusts with that which should have been the necessary food of indigent families; the spoil of the poor was hoarded up in their houses. When God came to search for stolen goods, there he found it, and it was a witness against them. It was to be had, and they might have made restitution, but would not. God reasons with these great men; ver. 15, "What mean ye, that ye beat my people in pieces?" What cause have you for it? what good doth it do you? Or what hurt have they done you? Do you think you had power given you for such a purpose as this? Note, There is nothing more unaccountable, and yet nothing which must more certainly be accounted for, than the injuries and abuses that are done to God's people, by their persecutors and oppressors. Ye "grind the faces of the poor," put them to as much pain and terror as if they were ground in a mill, and as certainly reduce them to dust by one act of oppression after another. Or, their faces are bruised and crushed with the blows you have given them; you have not only ruined their estates, but given them personal abuses. Our Lord Jesus was smitten on the face, *Mat.* xxvi. 67.

Secondly. The management of this controversy. 1. God himself is the prosecutor; ver. 13, "The Lord stands up to plead," or he sets himself to debate the matter, and he "stands to judge the people," to judge for those that were oppressed and abused, and he will enter into judgment with the princes, ver. 14. Note, The greatest of men cannot exempt or secure themselves from the scrutiny and sentence of God's judgment, nor demur to the jurisdiction of the court of heaven. 2. The indictment is proved by the notorious evidence of the fact. Look upon the oppressors, and the show of their countenance witnesseth against them, ver. 9; look upon the oppressed, and you see how their faces are battered and abused, ver. 15. 3. The controversy is already begun in the change of the ministry. To punish those that had abused their power to ill purposes, God sets those over them that had not sense to use it to any good purposes: "Children are their oppressors, and women rule over them," ver. 12. Men that have as weak judgments and strong passions as women and children. This was their sin, that their rulers were such, and it became a judgment upon them.

Thirdly. The distinction that shall be made between particular persons in the prosecution of this controversy; ver. 10, 11, "Say to the righteous, It shall be well with him; woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." He had said, ver. 9, they "have rewarded evil to themselves;" and to make that out he here shews that God will "render to every man according to his works." Had they been righteous, it had been well with them; but if it be ill with them, it is because they are wicked, and will be so. Thus God stated the matter to Cain, to convince him that he had no reason to be angry, *Gen.* iv. 7. Or it may be taken thus: God is threatening national judgments, which should ruin the public interests. Now, 1. Some good people might fear that they should be involved in that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophet comfort them against those fears. Whatever comes of the unrighteous nation, "Say ye to the righteous man," that he shall not be lost in the crowd of sinners, the "judge of all the earth will not slay the righteous with the wicked," *Gen.* xviii. 25. No, assure him in God's name, that "it shall be well with him." The property of the trouble shall be altered to him, and he "shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." He shall have Divine supports and comforts, which shall abound as afflictions abound, and so "it shall be well with him." When the whole stay of bread is taken away, yet in the day of famine they shall be satisfied, they "shall eat the fruit of their doings;" that is, they shall have the testimony of their consciences for them, that they kept themselves pure from the common iniquity, and therefore the common calamity is not the same thing to them as it is to others; they brought no fuel to the flame, and therefore are not themselves fuel for it. 2. Some wicked people might hope that they should escape that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophet shake their vain hopes, "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him," ver. 11; to him the judgments shall have a sting, and there shall be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery. There is a woe to wicked people; and though they may think to shelter themselves from public judgments, yet it shall be ill with them; it will grow worse and worse with them, if they repent not, and the worst of all will be at last; for "the reward of his hands shall be done to him" in the day when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body.

16 Moreover the LORD saith,
Because the daughters of Zion are haughty,
And walk with stretched forth necks
And wanton eyes,
Walking and mincing *as* they go,
And making a tinkling with their feet:
17 Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab
The crown of the head of the daughters of Zion,
And the LORD will discover their secret parts.
18 In that day the Lord will take away
The bravery of *their* tinkling ornaments *about their feet,*
And *their* cauls, and *their* round tires like the moon.
19 The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers,

20 The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands,
And the tablets, and the earrings,
21 The rings, and nose jewels,

VARIOUS ARTICLES OF AN EGYPTIAN TOILET.

22 The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles,
And the wimples, and the crisping pins,
23 The glasses, and the fine linen,
And the hoods, and the vails.
24 And it shall come to pass, *that* instead of sweet smell there shall be stink;
And instead of a girdle a rent;
And instead of well set hair baldness;
And instead of a stomacher a girdle of sackcloth;
And burning instead of beauty.
25 Thy men shall fall by the sword,
And thy mighty in the war.
26 And her gates shall lament and mourn;
And she *being* desolate shall sit upon the ground.

INDIAN WOMEN WITH ANKLETS.

The prophet's business was to shew all sorts of people what they had contributed to the national guilt, and what share they must expect in the national judgments that were coming. Here he reproves and warns the daughters of Zion, tells the ladies of their faults; and Moses, in the law, having denounced God's wrath against the tender and delicate woman, (the prophets being a comment upon the law,) *Deu.* xxviii. 56, he here tells them how they should smart by the calamities that were coming upon them. Observe,

First. The sin charged upon the daughters of Zion, ver. 16. The prophet expressly voucheth God's authority for what he said, lest it should be thought it was unbecoming him to take notice of such things, and should be ill resented by the ladies; The Lord saith it. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, let them know that God takes notice of, and is much displeased with the folly and vanity of proud women; and his law takes cognizance even of their dress. Two things they here stand indicted for, haughtiness and wantonness, directly contrary to that modesty, shamefacedness, and sobriety with which women ought to adorn themselves, 1 *Tim.* ii. 9. They discovered the disposition of their mind by their gait and gesture, and the lightness of their carriage. They are haughty, for they "walk with stretched forth necks," that they may seem tall, or as thinking nobody good enough to speak to them, or to receive a look or a smile from them; their eyes are wanton, deceiving, so the word is; with their amorous glances they draw men into their snares; they affect a formal starched way of going, that people may look at them and admire them, and know they have been at the dancing-school and had learned the minuet step; they go mincing or nicely tripping, not willing to set so much as the sole of their foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy; they make a tinkling with their feet, having, as some think, chains or little bells upon their shoes that made a noise; they go 'as if they were fettered,' so some read it; like a horse trammelled, that he may learn to pace. Thus Agag came delicately, 1 *Sam.* xv. 32. Such a nice affected mien is not only a force upon that which is natural, and ridiculous before men, men of sense, but, as it is an evidence of a vain mind, it is offensive to God. And two things aggravated it here: 1. That these were the daughters of Zion, the holy mountain, who should have carried themselves with the gravity that becomes women professing godliness. 2. That it should seem by the connexion they were the wives and daughters of the princes who spoiled and oppressed the poor, (ver. 14, 15,) that they might maintain this pride and luxury of their families.

Secondly. The punishments threatened for this sin, and they answer the sin as face answers to face in a glass, ver. 17, 18.

1. They "walked with stretched forth necks." But God "will smite with a scab the crown of their head," which shall lower their crests, and make them ashamed to shew their heads, being obliged by it to cut off their hair. Note, Loathsome diseases are often sent as the just punishment of pride, and are sometimes the immediate effect of lewdness, the flesh and the body being consumed by it.

2. They cared not what they laid out in furnishing themselves with great variety of fine clothes; but God will reduce them to such poverty and distress that they should not have clothes sufficient to cover their nakedness, but their uncomeliness should be exposed through their rags.

3. They were extremely fond and proud of their ornaments; but God will strip them of those ornaments, when their houses shall be plundered, their treasures rifled, and they themselves led into captivity. The prophet here instanceth in many of the ornaments which they used, as particularly as if he had been the keeper of their wardrobe, or had attended them in their dressing-room. It is not at all material to inquire what sort of ornaments each of these were, and whether the translations rightly express the original words; perhaps a hundred years hence the names of some of the ornaments that are now in use in our own land will be as little understood as some of those here are. Fashions alter, and so do the names of them; and yet the mention of them is not in vain, but is designed to expose the folly of the daughters of Zion; for, 1. Many of these things, we may suppose, were very odd and ridiculous, and if they had not been in the fashion would have been hooted at. They were fitter to be toys for children to play with than ornaments for grown people to go to mount Zion in. 2nd. Those things that were decent and convenient, as the linen, the hoods, and the veils, yet needed not to be provided in such abundance and variety as they had. It is necessary to have apparel, that each should have it according to their rank; but what occasion was there for so many changeable suits of apparel? ver. 22, that they might not be seen two days together in the same suit. 'They must have (as the homily against excess of apparel speaks) one gown for the day, another for the night; one long, another short; one for the workingday, another for the holiday; one of this colour, another of that colour; one of cloth, another of silk or damask; one dress before dinner, another after; one of the Spanish fashion, another Turkey, and never content with sufficient.' Which, as it is an evidence of pride and vain curiosity, so must needs spend a great deal in gratifying a base lust, which ought to be laid out in works of piety and charity. And it is well if poor tenants be not racked, or poor creditors defrauded, to support it. 3rd. The enumeration of these things intimates what care they were in about them, how much their hearts were upon them, what an exact account they kept of them, how nice and critical they were about them, how insatiable their desire was of them, and how much of their comfort was bound up in them. A maid could forget none of these ornaments, though they were never so many, *Jer.* ii. 31, but would repeat them as readily, and talk of them with as much pleasure, as if they had been things of the greatest moment. The prophet doth not speak of these things as in themselves sinful; they may lawfully be had and used; but as things which they were proud of, and should therefore be deprived of.

4. They were very nice and curious about their clothes, but God would make those bodies of theirs a reproach and burden to them which they were at such expence to beautify and make easy; ver. 24, "Instead of sweet smell," (those 'tablets,' or 'boxes of perfume, houses of the soul,' or 'breath,' as they are called, ver. 20, margin,) "there shall be stink," garments grown nasty with being long worn, or from some loathsome disease, or plaisters for the cure of it; instead of a rich embroidered girdle, used to make the clothes sit tight, there shall be a rent, a rending of the clothes for grief, or old rotten clothes rent into rags; instead of well set hair, curiously plaited and powdered, there shall be baldness, the hair being plucked off, or shaven, as was usual in times of great affliction, *ch.* xv. 2; *Jer.* xvi. 6; or in great servitude, *Eze.* xxix. 18. "Instead of a stomacher," or a scarf, or sash, "a girding of sackcloth," in token of deep humiliation; "and burning instead of beauty;" that is, those that had a good complexion, and were proud of it, when they are carried into captivity, shall be tanned and sun-burnt; and it is observed that the best faces are soonest injured by the weather. From all this let us learn, 1st. Not to be nice and curious about our apparel, nor to affect that which is gay and costly, or to be proud of it. 2nd. Not to be secure in the enjoyment of any of the delights of sense, because we know not how soon we may be stripped of them, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

5. They designed by these ornaments to charm the gentlemen, and win their affections, *Pr.* vii. 16, 17, but there shall be none to be charmed by them; ver. 25, "Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war." The fire shall consume them, and then the maidens shall not be given in marriage, as it is, *Ps.* lxxviii. 63. When the sword comes with commission, the mighty commonly fall first by it, because they are most forward to venture; and when Zion's guards are cut off, no marvel that Zion's gates lament and mourn, ver. 26. The enemies having made themselves masters of them, and the city itself being desolate, being emptied or swept, shall sit upon the ground like a disconsolate widow. If sin be harboured within the walls, lamentation and mourning are near the gates.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter we have, I. A threatening of the paucity and scarceness of men, ver. 1, which might fitly enough have been added to the close of the foregoing chapter, to which it hath a plain reference. II. A promise of the restoration of Jerusalem's peace and purity, righteousness and safety, in the days of the Messiah, ver. 2—6. Thus in wrath mercy is remembered, and gospel grace is a sovereign relief in reference to the terrors of the law, and the desolations made by sin.

AND in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying,
We will eat our own bread,
And wear our own apparel:
Only let us be called by thy name,
To take away our reproach.

It was threatened, *ch.* iii. 25, that the mighty men should fall by the sword in war, and it was threatened as a punishment to the women that affected gaiety and a loose sort of conversation. Now here we have the effect and consequence of that great slaughter of men:

First. That though providence hath so wisely ordered that, *communibus annis*,—'on an average of years,' there is pretty near an equal number of males and females born into the world; yet, through the devastations made by war, there should scarce be one man in seven left alive. As there are deaths attending the bringing forth of children, which are peculiar to the woman, that was first in the transgression, so, to balance that, there are deaths peculiar to men, those by the sword in the high places of the field, which perhaps devour more than childbed doth. Here it is foretold that such multitudes of men should be cut off that there should be seven women to one man.

Secondly. That by reason of this scarcity of men, though marriage should be kept up for the raising of recruits, and the preserving of the race of mankind upon earth, yet the usual method of it should be quite altered. That whereas men ordinarily make their court to the women, now the women should take hold of the men, foolishly fearing (as Lot's daughters did, when they saw the ruin of Sodom, and perhaps thought it reached farther than it did) that in a little time there would be none left, *Gen.* xix. 31. And that, whereas women naturally hate to come in sharers with others, now seven should by consent become the wives of one man; and whereas by the law the husband was obliged to provide food and raiment for his wife, *Ex.* xxi. 10, which with many would be the most powerful argument against multiplying wives, these women will be bound to find themselves, they will eat bread of their own earning, and wear apparel of their own working; and the man they court shall be at no expence upon them, only they desire to be called his wives, to take away the reproach of a single life. They are willing to be wives upon any terms, though never so unreasonable, and perhaps the rather, because in these troublesome times it would be a kindness to them to have a husband for their protector. But St. Paul, on the contrary, in a time of distress, thinks the single state preferable, 1 *Cor.* vii. 26. I wish this do not come in here partly as a reflection upon the daughters of Zion, that, notwithstanding the humbling providences they were under, *ch.* iii. 18, they remained unhumbled; and instead of repenting of their pride and vanity, when God was contending with them for it, all their care was to get them husbands. That modesty, which is the greatest beauty of the fair sex, is forgotten, and with them the reproach of vice is nothing to the reproach of virginity. A sad symptom of the irrecoverable desolation of virtue.

2 In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious,
And the fruit of the earth *shall be* excellent and comely
For them that are escaped of Israel.
3 And it shall come to pass, *that he that is* left in Zion,
And *he that* remaineth in Jerusalem,
Shall be called holy, [salem:
Even every one that is written among the living in Jeru-
4 When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, [midst thereof
And shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the
By the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.
5 And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of
And upon her assemblies, [mount Zion,
A cloud and smoke by day,
And the shining of a flaming fire by night:
For upon all the glory *shall be* a defence.
6 And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat,
And for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

By the foregoing threatenings Jerusalem is brought into a very deplorable condition, every thing looks melancholy; but here the sun breaks out from behind the cloud; many exceeding great and precious promises we have in these verses, giving assurance of comfort, which may be discerned through the troubles, and of happy days which shall come after them. And these certainly point at the kingdom of the Messiah, and the great redemption to be wrought out by him under the figure and type of the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem, by the reforming reign of Hezekiah after Ahaz, and the return out of their captivity in Babylon; to both which it may have some reference, but chiefly to Christ. It is here promised, as the issue of all these troubles,

First. That God will raise up a righteous Branch, which should produce fruits of righteousness; ver. 2, "In that day," that same day, at that very time, when Jerusalem shall be destroyed, and the Jewish nation extirpated and dispersed, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, and then shall be the reviving of the church, when everybody feared the utter ruin of it.

1. Christ himself shall be exalted. He is "the Branch of the Lord," "the Man the Branch;" it is one of his prophetical names, "my servant the Branch," *Zec.* iii. 18; vi. 12; "the Branch of righteousness," *Jer.* xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15; "a Branch out of the stem of Jesse," *ch.* xi. 1; and that, as some think, is alluded to when he is called a Nazarene, *Mat.* ii. 23. Here he is called the Branch of the Lord, because planted by his power, and flourishing to his praise. The ancient Chaldee paraphrase here reads it, 'The Christ, or Messiah of the Lord;' he shall be beauty, and glory, and joy. 1st. He shall himself be advanced to the joy set before him, and the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He that was a reproach of men, and whose visage was marred more than any man's, is now in the upper world, beautiful and glorious as the sun in his strength, admired and adored by angels. 2nd. He shall be beautiful and glorious in the esteem of all believers, shall gain an interest in the world, and a name among men above every name. To them that believe he is precious, he is an honour, 1 *Pet.* ii. 7; "the fairest of ten thousand," *Cant.* v. 10, and altogether glorious. Let us rejoice that he is so, and let him be so to us.

2. His gospel shall be embraced. That is the fruit of the branch of the Lord; all the graces and comforts of the Gospel spring from Christ; but it is called the fruit of the earth, because it sprung up in this world, and was calculated for the present state. And Christ compares himself to a corn of wheat that falls into the ground and dies, and so brings forth much fruit, *Jno.* xii. 24. The success of the Gospel is represented by the earth's yielding her increase, *Ps.* lxvii. 6; and the planting of the Christian church, is God's sowing it to himself in the earth, *Hos.* ii. 23. We may understand it of both the persons and the things that are the products of the Gospel; they "shall be excellent and comely," shall appear very agreeable, and be very acceptable to them that are escaped of Israel, to that remnant of the Jews which were saved from perishing with the rest in unbelief, *Rom.* xi. 5. Note, If Christ be precious to us, his Gospel will be so, and all its truths and promises; his church will be so, and all that belong to it. These are the good fruit of the earth, in comparison with which all other things are but weeds. It will be a good evidence to us that we are of the chosen remnant, distinguished from the rest that are called Israel, and marked for salvation, if we are brought to see a transcendent beauty in Christ and holiness, and the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. As a type of this blessed day, Jerusalem, after Sennacherib's invasion, and after the captivity in Babylon, should again flourish as a branch, and be blessed with the fruits of the earth: compare *ch.* xxxvii. 31, 32, "The remnant shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward." And if by "the fruit of the earth" here we understand the good things of this life, we may observe, that those have a peculiar sweetness in them to the chosen remnant, who, having a covenant right to them, have the most comfortable use of them. If the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious in our eyes, even the fruit of the earth also will be excellent and comely, because then we may take it as the fruit of the promise, *Ps.* xxxvii. 16; 1 *Tim.* iv. 8.

Secondly. That God will reserve to himself a holy seed, ver. 3. When the generality of those that have a place and a name in Zion and in Jerusalem shall be cut off as withered branches, by their own unbelief, yet some shall be left. Some shall remain, some shall still cleave to the church, when its property is altered, and it is become Christian; for God will not quite cast off his people, *Rom.* xi. 1. There is here and there one that is left. Now, 1. This "is a remnant according to the election of grace," as the apostle speaks, *Rom.* xi. 5; such as are "written among the living," marked in the counsel and foreknowledge of God for life and salvation; written to life, so the word is, designed and determined for it, unalterably, for "what I have written I have written." Those that are kept alive in killing, dying times, were written for life in the book of Divine providence; and shall we not suppose those who are rescued from a greater death to be such as were "written in the Lamb's book of life?" *Rev.* xiii. 8. "As many as were ordained unto eternal life believed" to the salvation of the soul, *Acts* xiii. 48. Note, All that were written among the living shall be found among the living, every one; for of all that were given to Christ he shall lose none. 2. It is a remnant under the dominion of grace; for, "every one that is written among the living," and is accordingly left, "shall be called holy;" that is, shall be holy, and shall be accepted of God accordingly. Those only that are holy shall be left, when "the Son of man shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends." And all that are chosen to salvation are chosen to sanctification: see 2 *Thes.* ii. 13; *Eph.* i. 4.

Thirdly. That God will reform his church, and will rectify and amend whatever is amiss in it, ver. 4. Then the remnant "shall be called holy," "when the Lord shall have washed away their filth," washed it from among them, by cutting off the wicked persons, washed it from within them by purging out the wicked thing. They shall not be called so till they are in some measure made so. Gospel times are times of reformation, *Heb.* ix. 10, typified by the reformation in the days of Hezekiah, and that after the captivity, to which this promise refers. Observe, 1. The places and persons to be reformed. Jerusalem, which, though the holy city, yet needed reformation; and, being the royal city, the reformation of that would have a good influence upon the whole kingdom. The daughters of Zion also must be reformed, the women in a particular manner, whom he had reproved, *ch.* iii. 16. When they were decked in their ornaments, they thought themselves wondrous clean; but, being proud of them, the prophet calls them their filth, for no sin is more abominable to God than pride. Or, by the daughters of Zion, may be meant the country, town, and villages, which were related to Jerusalem, as the mother city, and which needed reformation. 2. The reformation itself. The filth shall be washed away, for wickedness is filthiness, particularly bloodshed, for which Jerusalem was infamous, 2 *Kin.* xxi. 16, and which defiles the land more than any other sin. Note, The reforming of a city is the cleansing of it; when vicious customs and fashions are suppressed, and the open practice of wickedness is restrained, the place is made clean and sweet, which before was a dunghill. And this is not only for its credit and reputation among strangers, but for the comfort and health of the inhabitants themselves. 3. The author of the reformation. "The Lord shall do it." Reformation work is God's work; if any thing be done to purpose in it, it is his doing. But how? By the judgment of his providence the sinners were destroyed and consumed; but it is by the Spirit of his grace that they are reformed and converted This is work that is done, not by might, or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, *Zec.* iv. 6, working both upon the sinners themselves that are to be reformed, and upon magistrates, ministers, and others, that are to be employed as instruments of reformation. The Spirit herein acts, 1st. As a Spirit of judgment, enlightening the mind, convincing the conscience; as a Spirit of wisdom, guiding us to deal prudently, *Isa.* lii. 13; as a discerning, distinguishing Spirit, separating between the precious and the vile. 2nd. As a Spirit of burning, quickening and invigorating the affections, and making men zealously affected in a good work. The Spirit works as fire, *Mat.* iii. 10. An ardent love to Christ and souls, and a flaming zeal against sin, will carry men on with resolution in their endeavours to "turn away ungodliness from Jacob:" see *Isa.* xxxii. 15, 16.

Fourthly. That God will protect his church, and all that belong to it, ver. 5, 6; when they are purified and reformed they shall no longer lie exposed, but God will take a particular care of them. They that are sanctified are well fortified; for God will be to them a guide and a guard.

1. Their tabernacles shall be defended, ver. 5. 1st. Their dwelling-places; the tabernacles of their rest, their own houses, where they worship God, alone, and with their families. That blessing which is upon the habitation of the just shall be a protection to it, *Pr.* iii. 33. In the tabernacle of the righteous shall the voice of rejoicing and salvation be, *Ps.* cxviii. 15. Note, God takes particular cognizance and care of the dwelling-places of his people, of every one of them, the poorest cottage as well as the stateliest palace. When iniquity is put far from the tabernacle, the Almighty shall be its defence, *Job* xxii. 23, 25. 2nd. Their assemblies, or tabernacles of meeting for religious worship. No mention is made of the temple, for the promise points at a time when not one

stone of that shall be left upon another; but all the congregations of Christians, though but two or three met together in Christ's name, shall be taken under the special protection of heaven. They shall no more be scattered, no more disturbed, nor shall any weapon formed against them prosper. Note, We ought to reckon it a great mercy if we have liberty to worship God in public, free from the alarms of the sword of war or persecution.

Now this writ of protection is drawn up, *First*. In a similitude taken from the safety of the camp of Israel, when they marched through the wilderness. God will give to the Christian church as real proofs, though not so sensible, of his care of them, as he gave to them then. The Lord will again "create a cloud and smoke by day," to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, "and the shining of a flaming fire by night," to enlighten and warm the air, which in the night is cold and dark: see *Ex.* xiii. 21; *Neh.* ix. 19. This pillar of cloud and fire interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, *Ex.* xiv. 20. Note, Though miracles are ceased, yet God is the same to the New Testament church that he was to Israel of old; the very same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. *Secondly*. In a similitude taken from the outside cover of rams' skins and badgers' skins, that was upon the curtains of the tabernacle, as if every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and every assembly, were as dear to God as that tabernacle was. "Upon all the glory shall be a defence," to save it from wind and weather. Note, The church on earth has its glory; gospel truths and ordinances, the Scriptures and the ministry, are the church's glory; and upon all this glory there is a defence, and ever shall be; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. If God himself be the glory in the midst of it, he will himself be a wall of fire round about it, impenetrable, and impregnable. Grace in the soul is the glory of it, and those that have it are kept by the power of God as in a stronghold, 1 *Pet.* i. 5.

2. Their tabernacle shall be a defence to them, ver. 6. God's tabernacle was a pavilion to the saints, *Ps.* xxvii. 5. But when that is taken down, they shall not want a covert. The Divine power and goodness shall be a tabernacle to all the saints; God himself will be their hiding-place, *Ps.* xxxii. 7; they shall be at home in him, *Ps.* xci. 9. He will himself be to them "as the shadow of a great rock," *ch.* xxxii. 2; and his name a strong tower, *Pr.* xviii. 10. He will be not only a shadow from the heat in the daytime, but a covert from storm and rain. Note, In this world we must expect change of weather, and all the inconveniences that attend it; we shall meet with storm and rain in this lower region, and at other times the heat of the day no less burthensome. But God is a refuge to his people all weathers.

CHAPTER V.

In this chapter, the prophet, in God's name, shews the people of God their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins, and the judgments which were likely to be brought upon them for their sins, I. By a parable, under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard, representing the great favours God had bestowed upon them, their disappointing of his expectations from them, and the ruin they had thereby deserved, ver. 1—7. II. By an enumeration of the sins that did abound among them, with a threatening of punishments that should answer the sins: 1. Covetousness, and greediness of worldly wealth, which shall be punished with famine, ver. 8—10; 2. Rioting, and revelling, and drunkenness, ver. 11, 12, 22, which shall be punished with captivity, and all the miseries that attend it, ver. 13—17; 3. Presumption in sin, and defying the justice of God, ver. 18, 19; 4. Confounding the distinctions between virtue and vice, and so undermining the principles of religion, ver. 20; 5. Self-conceit, ver. 21; 6. Perverting justice, for which, and the other instances of reigning wickedness among them, a great and general desolation is threatened, which should lay all waste, ver. 24, 25, and which should be effected by a foreign invasion, ver. 26—30; referring, perhaps, to the havoc made not long after by Sennacherib's army.

NOW will I sing to my wellbeloved
A song of my beloved touching his vineyard.
My wellbeloved hath a vineyard
In a very fruitful hill:
2 And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof,
And planted it with the choicest vine,
And built a tower in the midst of it,
And also made a winepress therein:
And he looked that it should bring forth grapes,
And it brought forth wild grapes.
3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah,
Judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.
4 What could have been done more to my vineyard,
That I have not done in it?
Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes,
Brought it forth wild grapes?
5 And now go to; I will tell you
What I will do to my vineyard: [up;
I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten
And break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden
6 And I will lay it waste: [down:
It shall not be pruned, nor digged;
But there shall come up briers and thorns:
I will also command the clouds
That they rain no rain upon it. [Israel,
7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of
And the men of Judah his pleasant plant:
And he looked for judgment, but behold oppression;
For righteousness, but behold a cry.

See what variety of methods the great God takes to awaken sinners to repentance, by convincing them of sin, and shewing them their misery and danger by reason of it. To this purpose he speaks sometimes in plain terms, and sometimes in parables; sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse, as here. We have tried to reason with you, *ch.* i. 18, now let us put your case into a poem, inscribed to the honour of my well-beloved. God the Father dictates it to the honour of Christ, his well-beloved Son, whom he hath constituted Lord of the vineyard. The prophet sings it to the honour of Christ too, for he is his well-beloved. The Old Testament prophets were friends of the bridegroom. Christ is God's beloved Son, and our Saviour. Whatever is said or sung of the church must be intended to his praise, even that which, like this, tends to our shame. This parable is put into a song, that it might be the more moving and affecting, might be the more easily learned, and exactly remembered, and the better transmitted to posterity. And it is an exposition of the song of Moses, *Deu.* xxxii., shewing that what he then foretold was now fulfilled. Jerome saith, Christ the well-beloved did in effect sing this mournful song when he beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it, *Lu.* xix. 41, and had reference to it in the parable of the vineyard, *Mat.* xxi. 33; only here the fault was in the vines, there in the husbandmen. Here is,

First. The great things which God had done for the Jewish church and nation. When all the rest of the world lay in common—not cultivated by Divine revelation—that was his vineyard, they were his peculiar people. He owned them for his own, set them apart for himself; the soil they were planted in was extraordinary; it was "a very fruitful hill," 'the horn of the son of oil,' so it is in the margin. There was plenty, a cornucopia, and there was dainty; they did there eat the fat, and drink the sweet; and so were furnished with abundance of good things to honour God with, in sacrifices and freewill offerings. The advantages of our situation will be brought into the account another day. Observe farther what God did for this vineyard. 1. "He fenced it;" took it under his special protection, kept it night and day under his own eye, lest any should hurt it, *ch.* xxvii. 2, 3. If they had not themselves thrown down their fence, no inroad could have been made upon them, *Ps.* cxxv. 2; cxxi. 4. 2. He gathereth the stones out of it, that, as nothing from without might damage it, so nothing within might obstruct its fruitfulness. He proffered his grace to take away the stony heart. 3. He "planted it with the choicest vine;" set up a pure religion among them, gave them a most excellent law, instituted ordinances very proper for the keeping up of their acquaintance with God, *Jer.* ii. 21. 4. He "built a tower in the midst of it," either for defence against violence, or for the dressers of the vineyard to lodge in; or, rather, for the owner of the vineyard to sit in, to take a view of the vines, *Cant.* vii. 12, a summer-house. The temple was this tower, about which the priests lodged, and where God promised to meet his people, and gave them the tokens of his presence among them, and pleasure in them. 5. He "made a winepress therein;" set up his altar, to which the sacrifices, as the fruits of the vineyard, should be brought.

Secondly. The disappointment of his just expectations from them. "He looked that it should bring forth grapes," and a great deal of reason he had for that expectation. God expects vineyard fruit from those that enjoy vineyard privileges; not only leaves, as *Mar.* xi. 30. A bare profession, though never so green, will not serve; nor only buds and blossoms. Good purposes and good beginnings are good things, but not enough, there must be fruit,—a good heart, and a good life; vineyard-fruit; thoughts and affections, words and actions, agreeable to the Spirit, which is the fatness of the vineyard, *Gal.* v. 22, 23, answerable to the ordinances, which are the dressings of the vineyard; and acceptable to God, the Lord of the vineyard, and fruit according to the season. Such fruits as this God expects from us; grapes, the fruit of the vine, with which they honour God and man, *Jud.* ix. 13; and his expectations are neither high nor hard, but righteous and very reasonable. Yet see how his expectations are frustrated; it brought forth wild grapes, not only no fruit at all, but naughty fruit, worse than none; grapes of Sodom, *Deu.* xxxii. 33. 1. Wild grapes are the fruit of the corrupt nature; fruit according to the crab-stock, not according to the engrafted imp; from the root of bitterness, *Heb.* xii. 15. Where grace doth not work, corruption will. 2. Wild grapes are hypocritical performances in religion, that look like grapes, but are sour or bitter, and are so far from being pleasing to God, that they are provoking, as theirs, *ch.* i. 11. Counterfeit graces are wild grapes.

Thirdly. An appeal to themselves, whether upon the whole matter God must not be justified, and they condemned, ver. 3, 4. And now the case is plainly stated: "O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard." This implies that God was blamed about them; there was a controversy between them and him. But the equity was so plain on his side, that he could venture to put the decision of the controversy to their own consciences; Let any inhabitant of Jerusalem, any man of Judah, that hath but the use of his reason, and a common sense of equity and justice, speak his mind impartially in this matter. Here is a challenge to any man to shew,

1. Any instance wherein God had been wanting to them. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" He speaks of the external means of fruitfulness, and such as might be expected from the dresser of a vineyard, from whom it is not required that he should change the nature of the vine. 'What ought to have been done more,' so it may be read; they had every thing requisite for instruction and direction in their duty, for the quickening of them to it, and putting them in mind of it. No inducements were wanting to persuade them to it; but all arguments were used, proper to work either upon hope or fear; and they had all the opportunities they could desire for the performance of their duty, the new moons, and the sabbaths, and solemn feasts; they had the Scriptures, the lively oracles, a standing ministry in the priests and Levites, besides what was extraordinary, in the prophets. No nation had statutes and judgments so righteous.

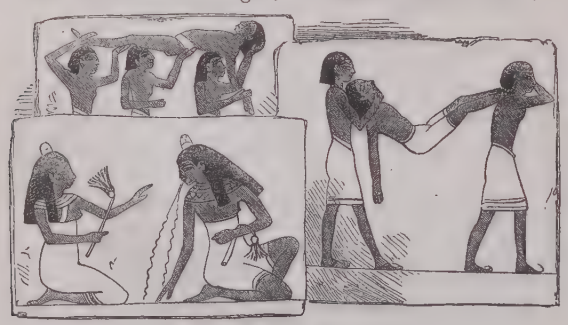
2. Nor could any tolerable excuse be offered for their walking thus contrary to God. Wherefore, what reason can be given why it should bring forth wild grapes, when I looked for grapes? Note, The wickedness of those that profess religion, and enjoy the means of grace, is the most unreasonable, unaccountable thing in the world; and the whole blame of it must lie upon the sinners themselves. "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it," and shalt not have a word to say for thyself in the judgment of the great day. God will prove his own ways equal, and the sinners' ways unequal.

Fourthly. Their doom read, and a righteous sentence passed upon them for their ill carriage towards God, ver. 5, 6. "And now go to," since nothing can be offered in excuse for the crime, or arrest of the judgment, "I will tell you what" I am now determined "to do to my vineyard;" I will be vexed and troubled with it no more, since it will be good for nothing, it shall be good for nothing. In short, it shall cease to be a vineyard, and be turned into a wilderness; the church of the Jews shall be unchurched, their charter shall be taken away, and they shall become "Lo-ammi, not my people." 1. They shall no longer be distinguished as a peculiar people, but be laid in common. "I will take away the hedge thereof," and then it will soon be eaten up, and become as bare as other ground. They mingled themselves with the nations, and therefore were justly scattered among them. 2. They shall no longer be protected as God's people, but left exposed. God will not only suffer the wall to go to decay, but he will break it down, will remove all their defences from them; and then they become an easy prey to their enemies, who had long

waited for an opportunity to do them a mischief, and will now tread them down and trample upon them. 3. They shall no longer have the face of a vineyard, the form and shape of a church and commonwealth; but shall be levelled and laid waste. This was fulfilled when Jerusalem, for their sakes, was ploughed as a field, *Mic.* iii. 12. 4. No more pains shall be taken with them by magistrates or ministers, the dressers and keepers of their vineyard. "It shall not be pruned nor digged," but everything shall run wild, and nothing shall come up but briars and thorns, the products of sin and the curse, *Gen.* iii. 18. When errors and corruptions, vice and immorality, go without check or control, no testimony borne against them, no rebuke given them, or restraint put upon them, the vineyard is unpruned, is not dressed or ridded; and then it will soon be like the vineyard of the man void of understanding—all grown over with thorns. 5. That which completes its woe is, that the dews of heaven shall be withheld. He that hath the key of the clouds will command them "that they rain no rain upon it;" and that alone is sufficient to turn it into a desert. Note, God, in a way of righteous judgment, denies his grace to those that have long received it in vain. The sum of all is, they that would not bring forth good fruit should bring forth none. The curse of barrenness is the punishment of the sin of barrenness, as *Mar.* xi. 14. This had its accomplishment in part in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; its full accomplishment in the final rejection of the Jews; and has its frequent accomplishment in the departure of God's Spirit from those persons that have long resisted him and striven against him; and the removal of his Gospel from those places that have been long a reproach to it, while it hath been an honour to them. It is no loss to God to lay his vineyard waste; for he can, when he pleaseth, turn a wilderness into a fruitful field; and when he does thus dismantle a vineyard, it is but as he did by the garden of Eden, which, when man had by sin forfeited his place in, it was soon levelled with common soil.

Fifthly. The reddition of this parable, or a key to it, ver. 7, where we are told, 1. What is meant by the vineyard. It is the house of Israel, the body of the people, incorporated in one church and commonwealth; and what by the vines, the pleasant plants, the plants of God's pleasure, which he had been pleased in and delighted in doing good to, they are the men of Judah; these he had dealt graciously with, and from them he expected suitable returns. 2. What is meant by the grapes that were expected, and the wild grapes that were produced. He "looked for judgment and righteousness," that the people should be honest in all their dealings, and the magistrates should strictly administer justice. This might reasonably be expected among a people that had such excellent laws, and rules of justice given them, *Deu.* iv. 8. But it was quite otherwise; instead of judgment there was the cruelty of the oppressors, and instead of righteousness the cry of the oppressed. Every thing was carried by clamour and noise, and not by equity, and according to the merits of the cause. It is sad with a people when wickedness hath usurped the place of judgment, *Eccl.* iii. 16; very sad with a soul when, instead of the grapes of humility, meekness, patience, love, and contempt of the world, which God looks for, there are the wild grapes of pride, passion, discontent, malice, and contempt of God; instead of the grapes of praying and praising, the wild grapes of cursing and swearing, which are a great offence to God. Some of the ancients apply this to the Jews in Christ's time, among whom God looked for righteousness; that is, that they should have received and embraced Christ, but behold a cry, that cry, "Crucify him, crucify him."

8 Woe unto them that join house to house,
That lay field to field,
Till *there be* no place,
That they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!
9 In mine ears *said* the LORD of hosts,
Of a truth many houses shall be desolate,
Even great and fair, without inhabitant.
10 Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath,
And the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.
11 Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that* they may follow strong drink;
That continue until night, *till* wine inflame them!



EGYPTIAN FEAST.

12 And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe,
And wine, are in their feasts:
But they regard not the work of the LORD,
Neither consider the operation of his hands.
13 Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because *they have* no knowledge:
And their honourable men *are* famished,
And their multitude dried up with thirst.
14 Therefore hell hath enlarged herself,
And opened her mouth without measure:
And their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp,
And he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.
15 And the mean man shall be brought down,
And the mighty man shall be humbled,
And the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:
16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment,
And God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.
17 Then shall the lambs feed after their manner,
And the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

The world and the flesh are the two great enemies that we are in danger of being overpowered by, and yet in no danger, if we do not ourselves yield to them. Eagerness of the world, and indulgence of the flesh, are the two sins against which the prophet in God's name here denounceth woe; sins which then abounded among the men of Judah, and were some of the wild grapes they brought forth, ver. 4, and for which God threatens to bring ruin upon them; and sins which we have all need to stand upon our guard against, and dread the consequences of.

First. Here is a woe to those that set their hearts upon the wealth of the world, and place their happiness in that, and increase it to themselves by indirect and unlawful means; ver. 8, "that join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place," no room for any body to live by them; but by their good-will they would "be placed alone in the midst of the earth," would monopolize possessions and preferments, and engross all profits and employments to themselves. Not that it is a sin for those that have a house and a field, if they have wherewithal, to purchase another. But their fault is, 1. That they are inordinate in their desires to enrich themselves, and make it their whole care and business to raise an estate, as if they had nothing to mind, nothing to seek, nothing to do in this world but that. They never know when they have enough; but the more they have the more they would have; and, like the daughters of the horseleech, they cry, Give, give; cannot enjoy what they have, nor do good with it, for contriving and studying to make it more. They must have variety of houses, a winter-house, and a summer-house; and, if another man's house or field lie convenient to theirs, as Naboth's vineyard to Ahab's, they must have that too, or they cannot be easy; and, 2. That they are herein careless of others; nay, and injurious to them. They would live so as to let no body live but themselves; so that their insatiable covetings be gratified they matter not what becomes of all about them, what encroachments they make upon their neighbour's rights, what hardships they put upon those that they have power over, or advantage against, nor what base and wicked arts they use to heap up treasure to themselves. They would swell so big as to fill all space, and yet are still unsatisfied, *Eccl.* v. 10. As Alexander who, when he fancied he had conquered the world, wept because he had not another world to conquer; *Deficiente terra, non impletur Avaritia,*—'If the whole earth were monopolized, Avarice would thirst for more.' 'What, will you be placed alone in the midst of the earth?' so some read it. Will you be so foolish as to desire it, when we have so much need of others' service, and so much comfort in others' society? So foolish as to expect it, that the earth should be forsaken for us? *Job* xviii. 4; when it is by multitudes that the earth is to be replenished? *An propter vos solos tanta terra creata est?*—'Was the wide world created merely for you?'—*Lyra.*

Now that which is threatened as the punishment of this sin is, that neither the houses nor the fields they were thus greedy of should turn to any account, ver. 9, 10. God whispered it to the prophet in his ear, as he speaks in a like case, *ch.* xxii. 14, "It was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts;" as God told Samuel a thing in his ear, 1 *Sam.* ix. 15; he thought he heard it still sounding in his ears; but he proclaims it as he ought to do, upon the housetops, *Mat.* x. 27. 1. That the houses they were so fond of should be untenanted, should stand long empty, and so should yield them no rent, and go out of repair. "Many houses shall be desolate," the people that should dwell in them being cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, or carried into captivity; or, trade being dead, and poverty coming upon the country like an armed man, those that had been housekeepers, were forced to become lodgers, or shift for themselves elsewhere. Even great and fair houses that would invite tenants, and there being a scarcity of tenants, might be taken at low rates, yet shall stand empty without inhabitants. God created not the earth in vain; he formed it to be inhabited, *ch.* xlv. 18; but men's projects are often frustrated, and what they frame answers not the intention. We have a saying, that fools build houses for wise men to live in; but sometimes it proves, for no man to live in. God has many ways to empty the most populous cities. 2. That the fields they were so fond of should be unfruitful, ver. 10. Ten acres of vineyard shall yield only such a quantity of grapes as will make but one bath of wine, which was about eight gallons; and the seed of an homer, a bushel's sowing of ground, shall yield but an ephah, which was the tenth part of an homer. So that, through the barrenness of the ground, or the unseasonableness of the weather, they should not have beyond a tenth part of their seed again. Note, Those that set their hearts upon the world will justly be disappointed in their expectations from it.

Secondly. Here is a woe to those that dote upon the pleasures and delight of sense, ver. 11, 12. Sensuality ruins men as certainly as worldliness and oppression. As Christ pronounced a woe against those that are rich, so also against those that laugh now, and are full, *Lu.* vi. 24, 25; and fare sumptuously, *Lu.* xvi. 19.

1. Who the sinners are against whom this woe is denounced. 1st. They are such as are given to drink, they make it their business, have their hearts upon it, and overcharge themselves with it. They rise early to follow strong drink, as husbandmen and tradesmen do to follow their employments, as if they were afraid of losing time from that which is the greatest mispending of time. Whereas commonly they that are drunk are drunk in the night, when they have despatched the business of the day, these neglect business, abandon it, and give up themselves to the service of the flesh; for they sit at their cups all day, and "continue till night, till wine inflame them," inflame their lusts, (chambering and wantonness follow upon rioting and drunkenness,) inflame their passions; for who but they have contentions and wounds without cause? *Pr.* xxiii. 29—33. They make a perfect trade of drinking. Nor seek they the shelter of the night for this work of darkness, as men ashamed of it, but "count it a pleasure to riot in the daytime:" see 2 *Pet.* ii. 13. 2nd. They are such as are given to mirth. They have their feasts, and they are so merrily disposed that they cannot dine or sup without music; musical instruments of all sorts, like David, *Am.* vi. 5; like Solomon, *Eccl.* ii. 8. The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, must accompany the wine, that every sense may be gratified to a nicety; they take the timbrel and harp, *Job* xxi. 12. The use of

music is lawful in itself; but when it is excessive, when we set our hearts upon it, mispend time in it, so that it crowds our spiritual and divine pleasures, and draws away the heart from God, then it turns into sin to us. 3rd. They are such as never give their mind to any thing that is serious; "They regard not the works of the Lord," they observe not his power, wisdom, and goodness, in those creatures which they abuse, and subject to vanity; nor the bounty of his providence, in giving them those good things which they make the food and fuel of their lusts. God's judgments have already seized them, and they are under the tokens of his displeasure; but they regard not, they consider not the hand of God in all these things; his hand is lifted up, but they will not see, because they will not disturb themselves in their pleasures, nor think what God is doing with them.

2. What the judgments are, which are denounced against them, and in part executed. It is here foretold,

1st. That they should be dislodged. The land should spue out these drunkards; ver. 13, "My people" (so they called themselves, and were proud of it,) "are therefore gone into captivity;" are as sure to go as if they were gone already, "because they have no knowledge." How should they, when by their excessive drinking they make sots and fools of themselves? They set up for wits; but because they regard not God's controversy with them, nor take any care as to their peace with him, they may truly be said to have no knowledge, and the reason is, because they will have none; inconsiderate and wilful, and therefore "destroyed for lack of knowledge."

2nd. That they should be impoverished, and come to want that which they had wasted and abused to excess. Even their 'glory are men of famine,' subject to it, and slain by it, "and their multitude are dried up with thirst;" both the great men and the common people are ready to perish for want of bread and water. This is the effect of the corn failing; ver. 10, for "the king himself is served of the field," *Eccl.* v. 9; and when the vintage fails the drunkards are called upon to weep, because "the new wine is cut off from their mouth," *Joel* i. 5; and not so much because now they want it as because when they had it they abused it. It is just with God to make men want that for necessity which they have abused to excess.

3rd. That multitudes should be cut off by famine and sword; ver. 14, "Therefore hell hath enlarged herself." Tophet, the common burying-place, proves too little, and so many are there to be buried, that they shall be forced to enlarge it; the grave hath opened her mouth without measure, never saying, It is enough, *Pr.* xxx. 15, 16. It may be understood of the place of the damned. Luxury and sensuality fill those regions of darkness and horror; there they are tormented who made a god of their belly, *Lu.* xvi. 25; *Phil.* iii. 19.

4th. That they should be humbled and abased, and all their honours laid in the dust. This will be done effectually by death and the grave; their glory shall descend, not only to the earth, but into it; it shall not descend after them, *Ps.* xlix. 17, to stand them in any stead on the other side death, but it shall die and be buried with them; poor glory, which will thus wither! Did they glory in their numbers? their multitude shall go down to the pit, *Eze.* xxxi. 18; xxxii. 32. Did they glory in the figure they made? their pomp shall be at an end; their shouts with which they triumphed and were attended. Did they glory in their mirth? death will turn it into mourning. He that rejoiceth and revelleth, and never knows what it is to be serious, shall go thither where there is weeping and wailing. Thus the mean man and the mighty man meet together in the grave, and under mortifying judgments. Let a man be never so high, death will bring him low; never so mean, death will bring him lower; in the prospect of which the eyes of the lofty should now be humbled, ver. 15. It becomes those to look low that must shortly be laid low.

3. What the fruit of these judgments shall be.

1st. God shall be glorified, ver. 16. He that is the Lord of hosts, and the holy God, shall be exalted and sanctified in the judgment and righteousness of these dispensations. His justice must be owned in bringing those low that exalted themselves, and herein he is glorified, *First.* As a God of irresistible power. He will herein be exalted as the Lord of hosts, that is able to break the strongest, humble the proudest, and tame the most unruly. Power is not exalted but in judgment. It is the honour of God that, though he has a mighty arm, yet judgment and justice are always the habitation of his throne, *Ps.* lxxxix. 13, 14. *Secondly.* As a God of unspotted purity. He that is holy, infinitely holy, shall be sanctified; that is, shall be owned and declared to be so in the righteous punishment of all proud men. Note, When proud men are humbled, the great God is honoured, and ought to be honoured by us.

2nd. Good people shall be relieved and succoured; ver. 17, "Then shall the lambs feed after their manner." The meek ones of the earth, who follow the Lamb, that were persecuted and put into fear by those proud oppressors, shall feed quietly, feed in the green pastures, and there shall be none to make them afraid: see *Eze.* xxxiv. 14. When the enemies of the church are cut off, then have the churches rest; they shall 'feed at their pleasure,' so some read it. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in abundant peace." They shall feed according to their order or capacity, so others read it; as they are able to hear the word, that bread of life.

3rd. The country should be laid waste, and become a prey to the neighbours. "The waste places of the fat ones," the possessions of those rich men that lived at their ease, those shall be eaten by strangers, that were nothing akin to them. In the captivity the poor of the land were left for vine-dressers and husbandmen, 2 *Kin.* xxv. 12; those were the lambs that fed in the pastures of the fat ones, which were laid in common for strangers to eat. When the church of the Jews, those fat ones, was laid waste, their privileges were transferred to the Gentiles, who had been long strangers; and the lambs of Christ's flock were welcome to them.

18 Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity,
And sin as it were with a cart rope:
19 That say, Let him make speed, *and* hasten his work,
That we may see *it:* [and come,
And let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh
That we may know *it!*
20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil;
That put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
That put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!
21 Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes,
And prudent in their own sight!
22 Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine,
And men of strength to mingle strong drink:
23 Which justify the wicked for reward,
And take away the righteousness of the righteous from
24 Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, [him!
And the flame consumeth the chaff,
So their root shall be as rottenness,
And their blossom shall go up as dust:
Because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts,
And despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.
25 Therefore is the anger of the LORD kindled against his people,
And he hath stretched forth his hand against them,
And hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble,
And their carcases *were* torn in the midst of the streets.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand *is* stretched out still.
26 And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far,
And will hiss unto them from the end of the earth;
And, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:
27 None shall be weary nor stumble among them;
None shall slumber nor sleep;
Neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed,
Nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:
28 Whose arrows *are* sharp,
And all their bows bent,
Their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint,
And their wheels like a whirlwind:
29 Their roaring *shall be* like a lion,
They shall roar like young lions:
Yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey,
And shall carry *it* away safe, and none shall deliver *it*.
30 And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: [sorrow,
And if *one* look unto the land, behold darkness *and*
And the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

Here is, First. Sins described which will bring judgments upon a people; and this, perhaps, is not only a charge drawn up against the men of Judah that lived at that time, and the particular articles of that charge, though it may relate primarily to them, but is rather intended for warning to all people in all ages to take heed of these sins, as destructive both to particular persons and to communities, and exposing men to God's wrath, and his righteous judgments. Those are here said to be in a woful condition,

1. That are eagerly set upon sin, and violent in their sinful pursuits; ver. 18, "that draw iniquity with cords of vanity;" that take as much pains to sin as the cattle do that draw in a team; put themselves to the stretch for the gratifying of their inordinate appetites, and to humour a base lust offer violence to nature itself! They think themselves as sure of compassing their wicked projects as if they were pulling it to them with strong cart-ropes; but will find themselves disappointed, for they will prove cords of vanity, which will break when they come to any stress; for "the righteous Lord will cut in sunder the cords of the wicked," *Ps.* cxxix. 4; *Job* iv. 8; *Pr.* xxii. 8. They are by long custom and confirmed habits so hardened in sin that they cannot get clear of it. Those that sin through infirmity, are drawn away by sin; those that sin presumptuously draw it to them, in spite of the oppositions of providence, and the checks of conscience. Some by sin understand the punishment of sin, they pull God's judgments upon their own heads, as it were, with cart-ropes.

2. That set the justice of God at defiance, and challenge the Almighty to do his worst; ver. 19, "They say, Let him make speed and hasten his work." This is the same language with that of the scoffers of the last days, that say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" And therefore it is that, like them, they "draw iniquity with cords of vanity," are violent and daring in sin, and walk after their own lusts, 2 *Pet.* iii. 1, 3, 4. 1st. They ridicule the prophets, and banter them. It is in scorn that they call God the Holy One of Israel, because the prophets used with great veneration to call him so. 2nd. They will not believe the revelation of God's wrath from heaven, against their ungodliness and unrighteousness; unless they see it executed they will not know it; as if the curse were *brutum fulmen*,—'a mere flash,' and all the threatenings of the Word bugbears to frighten fools and children. 3rd. If God should appear against them, as he hath threatened, yet they think themselves able to make their part good with him, and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he, 1 *Cor.* x. 22. We have heard his word, but it is all talk; let him hasten his work, we shall shift for ourselves well enough. Note, Those that wilfully persist in sin consider not the power of God's anger.

3. That confound and overthrow the distinctions between moral good and evil; "that call evil good, and good evil," ver. 25; that not only live in the omission of that which is good, but condemn it, argue against it; and, because they will not practise it themselves, run it down in others, and fasten ill characters upon it; not only do that which is evil, but justify it and applaud it, and recommend it to others as safe and good. Note, 1st. Virtue and piety is good, for it is light and sweet, it is pleasant and right; but sin and wickedness is evil, it is darkness, all the fruit of ignorance and mistake, and it will be bitterness in the latter end. 2nd. Those do a great deal of wrong to God, and religion, and conscience, to their own souls, and to the souls of others, who misrepresent these, and put false colours upon them, who call drunkenness 'good fellowship,' and covetousness 'good husbandry,' and when they per-

secute the people of God, think they do him good service; and, on the other hand, who call seriousness ill-nature, and sober singularity ill-breeding; who say all manner of evil falsely concerning the ways of godliness, and do what they can to form in men's minds prejudices against them. And this in defiance of evidence as plain and convincing as that of sense, by which we distinguish beyond contradiction between light and darkness, and that which to the taste is sweet or bitter.

4. That, though they are guilty of such gross mistakes as these, yet they have a great opinion of their own judgments, and value themselves mightily upon their understanding; ver. 21, "they are wise in their own eyes;" they think themselves able to disprove and baffle the reproofs and convictions of God's word, and to evade and elude both the searches and the reaches of his judgments; that they can outwit Infinite Wisdom, and countermine Providence itself. Or it may be taken more generally: God resists the proud, those particularly that are conceited of their own wisdom, and lean to their own understanding; such must become fools, that they may be truly wise, or else at the end they shall appear to be fools before all the world.

5. That they gloried in it as a great accomplishment, that they were able to bear a great deal of strong liquor, without being overcome by it; ver. 22, "that are mighty to drink wine," and use their strength and vigour, not in the service of their country, but in the service of their lusts. Let drunkards know from this scripture that, 1st. They ungratefully abuse their bodily strength, which God hath given them for good purposes, and by degrees cannot but weaken it. 2nd. It will not excuse them from the guilt of drunkenness, that they can drink hard and yet keep their feet. 3rd. Those that boast of their drinking down others glory in their shame. 4th. How light soever men make of their drunkenness, it is a sin which will certainly lay them open to the wrath and curse of God.

6. That their judges in their administrations perverted justice, and went counter to all the rules of equity, ver. 23. This followed upon the former; they "drink and forget the law," *Pr.* xxxi. 5, and "err through wine," *Isa.* xxviii. 7, and "take bribes," that they may have wherewithal to maintain their luxury. They "justify the wicked for reward," and find some pretence or other to clear him from his guilt, and shelter him from punishment; and they condemn the innocent, and "take away their righteousness" from them, that is, overrule their pleas, deprive them of the means of clearing up their innocency, and give judgment against them. In causes between man and man, might and money would at any time prevail against right and justice; and he that was never so plainly in the wrong, yet with a small bribe should carry the cause and recover costs. In criminal causes, though the prisoner never so plainly appeared to be guilty, yet for a reward they would acquit him; if he were innocent, yet if he did not fee them well, nay, if they were feed by the malicious prosecutor, or they themselves had spleen against him, they would condemn him.

Secondly. The judgments described which these sins would bring upon them. Let not those expect to live easily that live thus wickedly, for the righteous God will take vengeance, ver. 24—30. Where we may observe,

1. How complete this ruin will be, and how necessarily and unavoidably it will follow upon their sins. He had compared this people to a vine, ver. 7, well fixed, and which it was hoped would be flourishing and fruitful. But the grace of God towards it was received in vain, and then the root became rottenness, being dried up from beneath, and the blossom would of course blow off as dust, as a light and worthless thing, *Job* xviii. 16. Sin weakens the strength, the root of a people, so that they are easily rooted up; it defaceth the beauty, the blossoms of a people, and takes away the hopes of fruit. The sin of unfruitfulness is punished with the plague of unfruitfulness. Sinners make themselves as stubble and chaff, combustible matter, proper fuel to the fire of God's wrath, which then of course devours and consumes them, "as the fire devours the stubble," and nobody can hinder it, or cares to hinder it. Chaff is consumed unhelped and unpitied.

2. How just the ruin will be. "Because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts," and would not have him to reign over them; and, as the law of Moses was rejected and thrown off, so "the word of the Holy One of Israel," by his servants the prophets, putting them in mind of his law, and calling them to obedience, was despised and disregarded. God doth not reject men for every transgression of his law and word, but when his word is despised, and his law cast away, what can they expect but that God should utterly abandon them?

3. Whence this ruin should come; ver. 25, it is destruction from the Almighty. 1st. The justice of God appoints it; for that is the anger of the Lord which is kindled against his people, his necessary vindication of the honour of his holiness and authority. 2nd. The power of God effects it. He "hath stretched forth his hand against them;" that hand which had many a time been stretched out for them against their enemies is now stretched out against them, at full length, and in its full strength; and "who knows the power of his anger?" Whether they are sensible of it or no, it is God that hath smitten them, hath blasted their vine, and made it wither.

4. The consequences and continuance of this ruin. When God comes forth in wrath against a people, "the hills tremble;" fear seizeth even their great men, that are strong and high; the earth shakes under men, and is ready to sink; and as this feels dreadful, (what doth more so than an earthquake?) so what sight can be more frightful than the carcases of men torn with dogs, or thrown 'as dung' (so the margin reads it) 'in the midst of the streets.' This intimates that great multitudes should be slain, not only soldiers in the field of battle, but the inhabitants of their cities put to the sword in cold blood, and that the survivors should neither have hands nor hearts to bury them. This is very dreadful, and yet such is the merit of sin, that "for all this God's anger is not turned away;" that fire will burn as long as there remains any of the stubble and chaff to be fuel for it; and his hand which he stretched forth against his people to smite them, because they do not by prayer take hold of it, nor by reformation submit themselves to it, is stretched out still.

5. The instruments that should be employed in bringing this ruin upon them. It should be done by the incursions of a foreign enemy, that should lay all waste. No particular enemy is named, and therefore we are to take it as a prediction of all the several judgments of this kind which God brought upon the Jews: Sennacherib's invasion soon after, and the destruction of Jerusalem, by the Chaldeans first, and at last by the Romans; and I think it is to be looked upon also as a threatening of the like desolation of those countries which harbour and countenance those sins mentioned in the foregoing verses; it is an exposition of those woes. When God designs the ruin of a provoking people,

1st. He can send a great way off for instruments to be employed in it. He can raise forces from afar, and summon them "from the end of the earth" to attend his service, ver. 26. Those that know him not yet are made use of to fulfil his counsel, when by reason of their distance they can scarce be supposed to have any ends of their own to serve. If God set up his standard, he can incline men's hearts to enlist themselves under it, though perhaps themselves know not why or wherefore. When the Lord of all hosts is pleased to make a general muster of the forces he has at his command, he hath a great army presently, *Joel* ii. 2, 11. He needs not sound a trumpet or beat a drum to give them notice, or to animate them; no, he doth but hiss to them, or rather, whistle to them, and that is enough; they hear that, and that puts courage into them. Note, God has all his creatures at his beck.

2nd. He can make them come into the service with incredible expedition; "Behold, they shall come with speed swiftly." Note, *First.* Those that will do God's work must not loiter, must not linger, nor shall they, when his time is come. *Secondly.* Those that defy God's judgments will be ashamed of their insolence when it is too late; they said scornfully, ver. 19, "Let him make speed, let him hasten his work," and they shall find to their terror and confusion that so he will. "In one hour is the judgment come."

3rd. He can carry them on in the service with amazing forwardness and fury. This is described here in very elegant and lofty expressions, ver. 27—30. *First.* Though their marches be very long, yet "none among them shall be weary;" so desirous shall they be to engage, that they shall forget their weariness, and make no complaints of it. *Secondly.* Though the way be rough, and perhaps embarrassed by the usual policies of war, yet "none among them shall stumble," but all the difficulties in their way shall easily be got over. *Thirdly.* Though they are forced to keep constant watch, yet "none shall slumber or sleep;" so intent shall they be upon their work, in prospect of having the plunder of the city for their pains. *Fourthly.* They shall not desire any rest or relaxation; they shall not put off their clothes, not "loose the girdle of their loins," but shall always have their belts on, and swords by their sides. *Fifthly.* They shall not meet with the least hindrance to retard their march, or oblige them to halt; not a "latchet of their shoes shall be broken," which they must stay to mend, as *Jos.* ix. 13. *Sixthly.* Their arms and ammunition should all be fixed, and in good posture; their arrows sharp, to wound deep, and "all their bows bent," none unstrung, for they expect to be upon action presently. *Seventhly.* Their horses and chariots of war all fit for service; "their horses" so strong, so hardy, that their "hoofs should be like flint," far from being beaten, or made tender by their long march; and "the wheels" of their chariots, not broken or battered, or out of repair, but swift "like a whirlwind," turning round so strongly upon their axle-trees. *Eighthly.* All the soldiers bold and daring; ver. 29, "their roaring," or shouting before a battle, "shall be like a lion," who with his roaring animates himself, and terrifies all about him. They that would not hear the voice of God speaking to them by his prophets, but stopped their ears against their charms, shall be made to hear the voice of their enemies roaring against them, and shall not be able to turn a deaf ear to it; "they shall roar like the roaring of the sea" in a storm, it roars and threatens to swallow up, as the lion roars and threatens to tear in pieces. *Ninthly.* There shall not be the least prospect of relief or succour. The enemy shall come in like a flood, and there shall be none to lift up a standard against him; he shall seize the prey, and none shall deliver it, none shall be able to deliver it, nay, none shall so much as dare to attempt the deliverance of it, but give it up for gone. Let the distressed look which way they will, every thing appears dismal; for if God frown upon us how can any creature smile? 1*st.* Look round to the earth, to the land, to that land that used to be a land of light, and the joy of the whole earth, and behold darkness and sorrow, all frightful, all mournful, nothing hopeful. 2*nd.* Look up to heaven, and there the light is darkened, where one would expect to have found it. If the light is darkened in the heavens, how great is that darkness! If God hide his face, no marvel the heavens hide theirs, and appear gloomy, *Job* xxxiv. 29. It is our wisdom, by keeping a good conscience, to keep all clear between us and heaven, that we may have light from above, when clouds and darkness are round about us.

CHAPTER VI.

Hitherto, it should seem, Isaiah had prophesied as a candidate, having only a virtual and implicit commission; but here we have him, if I may so speak, solemnly ordained and set apart to the prophetical office by a more express, explicit commission, as his work grew upon his hands; or, perhaps, having seen little success of his ministry, he began to think of giving it up; and therefore God saw fit to renew his commission here in this chapter, in such a manner as might excite and encourage his zeal and industry in the execution of it, though he seem to labour in vain. In this chapter we have, I. A very awful vision which Isaiah saw of the glory of God, ver. 1—4; the fright it put him into, ver. 5; and the relief given him against that fright by an assurance of the pardon of his sins, ver. 6, 7. II. A very awful commission which Isaiah received, to go as a prophet in God's name, ver. 8, by his preaching to harden the impenitent in sin, and ripen them for ruin, ver. 9—12, yet with a reservation of mercy for a remnant, ver. 13. And it was as an evangelical prophet that these things were shewed him, and said to him.

IN the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said,

Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts:
The whole earth is full of his glory.

4 And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

This vision, which Isaiah saw when he was, as is said of Samuel, "established to be a prophet of the Lord," 1 *Sam.* iii. 20, was intended, 1. To confirm his faith, that he might himself be abundantly satisfied of the truth of those things which should afterwards be made known to him. Thus God opened the communications of himself to him, but such visions needed not to be afterwards repeated upon every revelation. Thus God appeared at first as a God of glory to Abraham, *Acts* vii. 2; and to Moses, *Ex.* iii. 2. Ezekiel's prophecies, and St. John's, begin with visions of the Divine glory. 2. To work upon his affections, that he might be possessed with such a reverence of God as would both quicken him and fix him to his service. They that are to teach others the knowledge of God ought to be well acquainted with him themselves. This vision is dated, for the greater certainty of it; it was "in the year that king Uzziah died," who had reigned for the most part as prosperously and as well as any of the kings of Judah, and reigned very long, above fifty years. About the time that he died Isaiah saw the vision of God upon a throne; for when the

breath of princes goeth forth, and they return to the earth, this is our comfort, that the Lord shall reign for ever, *Ps.* cxlvi. 3, 4, 10. Israel's king dies, but Israel's God still lives. From the mortality of great and good men, we should take occasion to look up with an eye of faith to the King eternal, immortal. King Uzziah died under a cloud, for he was shut up as a leper till the day of his death. As the lives of princes have their periods, so their glory is often eclipsed; but as God is everliving, so his glory is everlasting. King Uzziah dies in an hospital, but the King of kings still sits upon his throne. What the prophet here saw is revealed to us, that we, mixing faith with that revelation, may in it, as in a glass, behold the glory of the Lord; let us turn aside therefore, and see this great sight with humble reverence.

First. See God "upon his throne," and that throne "high and lifted up," not only above other thrones, as it transcends them, but over other thrones, as it rules and commands them. Isaiah saw not Jehovah the essence of God, no man hath seen that, or can see it, but *Adonai*,—'his dominion.' He saw the Lord Jesus; so this vision is explained, *Jno.* xii. 41, that Esaias now saw Christ's "glory, and spake of him;" which is an incontestable proof of the divinity of our Saviour. He it is, who when, after his resurrection, he sat down on the right hand of God, did but sit down where he was before, *Jno.* xvii. 5. See the rest of the Eternal Mind; he saw "the Lord sitting," *Ps.* xxix. 10: see the sovereignty of the Eternal Monarch; he sits "upon a throne," a throne of glory, before which we must worship; a throne of government, under which we must be subject; and a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly. This throne is high, and lifted up above all competition and contradiction.

Secondly. See his temple, his church on earth, filled with the manifestations of his glory. His throne being erected at the door of the temple, (as princes sat in judgment in the gates,) "his train," the skirts of his robes, "filled the temple," the whole world; for it is all God's temple; and as "the heaven is his throne," so "the earth is his footstool." Or, rather, the church; which is filled, enriched, and beautified with the tokens of God's special presence.

Thirdly. See the bright and blessed attendants on his throne, in and by whom his glory is celebrated, and his government served; ver. 2, "Above the throne," as it were hovering about it, or nigh to the throne, bowing before it, with an eye to it, the seraphim stood; the holy angels, who are called seraphim, 'burners;' for "he maketh his ministers a flame of fire," *Ps.* civ. 4; they burn in love to God, and zeal for his glory against sin, and he makes use of them as instruments of his wrath, when he is a consuming fire to his enemies. Whether there were only two or four, or, as I rather think, "an innumerable company of angels," that Isaiah saw, is uncertain: see *Dan.* vii. 10. Note, It is the glory of the angels that they are seraphim, have heat proportionable to their light, have not only abundance of Divine knowledge, but of holy love. Special notice is taken of their wings, and of no other part of their appearance, because of the use they made of them, which is designed for instruction to us. They had "each of them six wings," not stretched upward, as those whom Ezekiel saw, *ch.* i. 11; but, 1. Four were made use of for covering, as the wings of a fowl sitting are; with the two upper wings, next the head, they covered their faces, and with the two lowest wings they covered their feet, or lower parts. This speaks their great humility and reverence in their attendance upon God, for he is greatly feared in the assembly of those saints, *Ps.* lxxxix. 7. They not only cover their feet, those members of the body which are less honourable, 1 *Cor.* xii. 23, but even their faces; though angels' faces doubtless are much fairer than those of the children of men, *Acts* vi. 15, yet in the presence of God they cover them, because they cannot bear the dazzling lustre of the Divine glory, and because, being conscious of an infinite distance from the Divine perfection, they are ashamed to shew their faces before the holy God, who chargeth even his angels with folly, if they should offer to vie with him, *Job* iv. 11. If angels be thus reverent in their attendance on God, with what godly fear should we approach his throne! else we do not the will of God as the angels do it. Yet Moses, when he went into the mount with God, took the veil from off his face, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18. 2. Two were made use of for flight. When they are sent on God's errand they fly swiftly, *Dan.* ix. 21; more swiftly with their own wings than if they flew on the wings of the wind. This teaches us to do the work of God with cheerfulness and expedition. Do angels come upon the wing from heaven to earth to minister for our good, and shall not we soar upon the wing from earth to heaven to share with them in their glory? *Lu.* xx. 36.

Fourthly. Hear the anthem, or song of praise, which the angels sing to the honour of Him that sits upon the throne, ver. 3. Observe, 1. How this song was sung. With zeal and fervency, they cried aloud; and with unanimity, they cried one to another, or one with another; they sung alternately, but in concert, and without the least jarring voice to interrupt the harmony. 2. What the song was; it is the same with that which is sung by the four living creatures, *Rev.* iv. 8. Note, 1st. Praising God always was, and will be to eternity, the work of heaven, and the constant employment of blessed spirits above, *Ps.* lxxxiv. 4. 2nd. The church above is the same in its praises; there is no change of time or notes there. Two things the seraphim here give God the praise of: *First.* His infinite perfection in himself. Here is one of his most glorious titles praised, he "is the Lord of hosts," of their hosts, of all hosts; and one of his most glorious attributes, his holiness, without which his being the Lord of hosts (or, as it is in the parallel place, *Rev.* iv. 8, the Lord Almighty) could not be so much as it is the matter of our joy and praise; for power, without purity to guide it, would be a terror to mankind. None of all the Divine attributes are celebrated in Scripture so as this is. God's power was spoken twice, *Ps.* lxii. 10, but his holiness thrice, "Holy, holy, holy." This speaks, 1*st.* The zeal and fervency of the angels in praising God; they even want words to express themselves, and therefore repeat the same again. 2*nd.* The particular pleasure they take in contemplating the holiness of God; this is a subject they love to dwell upon, to harp upon, and are loath to leave it. 3*rd.* The superlative excellency of God's holiness above that of the purest creatures. He is holy, thrice holy, infinitely holy, originally, perfectly, and eternally so. 4*th.* It may refer to the three persons in the Godhead, holy Father, holy Son, and holy Spirit; for it follows, ver. 8, "Who will go for us?" Or perhaps to that which was, and is, and is to come; for that title of God's honour is added to this song, *Rev.* iv. 8. Some make the angels here to applaud the equity of that sentence which God was now about to pronounce upon the Jewish nation: herein he was, and is, and will be, holy: "His ways are equal." *Secondly.* The manifestation of these to the children of men; "the earth is full of his glory," of the glory of his power and purity; for he is holy in all his works, *Ps.* cxlv. 17. The Jews thought the glory of God should be confined to their land; but it is here intimated, that in Gospel times (which are pointed to in this chapter) the glory of God should fill all the earth; the glory of his holiness, which is indeed the glory of all his other attributes. This then filled the temple, ver. 1, but in the latter days the earth shall be full of it.

Fifthly. Observe the marks and tokens of terror with which the temple was filled upon this vision of the Divine glory, ver. 4. 1. The house was shaken; not only the door, but even "the posts of the door," which were firmly fixed, "moved at the voice of him that cried," at the voice of God, that called to judgment, *Ps.* l. 4, at the voice of the angel that praised him. There are voices in heaven sufficient to drown all the noises of the many waters in this lower world, *Ps.* xciii. 3 4. This violent concussion of the temple was an indication of God's wrath and displeasure against the people for their sin; it was an earnest of the destruction of it and the city, by the Babalonians first, and afterwards by the Romans. And it was designed to strike in awe upon us. Shall walls and posts tremble before God, and shall not we tremble? 2. The house was darkened; it was filled with smoke, which was as a cloud spread upon the face of his throne, *Job* xxvi. 9; we cannot take a full view of it, nor order our speech concerning it, by reason of darkness. In the temple above there will be no smoke; but every thing will be seen clearly. There God dwells in light, here he makes darkness his pavilion, 2 *Chr.* vi. 1.

5 Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me.

SERAPH, FROM SCULPTURES OF NINUS.

Our curiosity would lead us to inquire farther concerning the seraphims, their songs, and their services; but here we leave them, and must attend to what passed between God and his prophet. Secret things belong not to us, the secret things of the world of angels, but things revealed to and by the prophets, which concern the administration of God's kingdom among men. Now here we have,

First. The mighty consternation that the prophet was put into by the vision which he saw of the glory of God; ver. 5, "Then said I, Woe is me." I should have said, Blessed art thou who hast been thus highly favoured, highly honoured, and dignified for a time, with the privilege of those glorious beings that always behold the face of our Father. Blessed were those eyes which saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and those ears which heard the angels' praises. And one would think he should have said, Happy am I, for ever happy; nothing now shall trouble me, nothing make me blush or tremble; no, quite contrary, he cries out, "Woe is me, for I am undone." Alas! for me, I am a gone man, I shall surely die, *Jud.* xiii. 22, and vi. 22; I am silenced, I am struck dumb, struck dead. Thus Daniel, when he heard the words of the angel, became dumb; and there was no strength, no breath left in him, *Dan.* x. 15, 17. Observe,

1. What the prophet reflected upon in himself, which terrified him. "I am undone," if God deal with me in strict justice, for I have made myself obnoxious to his displeasure, "because I am a man of unclean lips." Some think he refers particularly to some rash word he had spoken, or to his sinful silence in not reproving sin with the boldness and freedom that was necessary; a sin which God's ministers have too much cause to charge themselves with, and to blush at the remembrance of it. But it may be taken more generally: I am a sinner, particularly I have offended in word, and who is there that doth not? *Jas.* iii. 2. We have all reason to bewail it before the Lord. 1st. That we are of unclean lips ourselves; our lips not consecrated to God. He has not had the firstfruits of our lips, *Heb.* xiii. 15; and, therefore, they are counted common and unclean, uncircumcised lips, *Ex.* vi. 30. Nay, they have been polluted with sin, we have spoken the language of an unclean heart; that evil communication which corrupts good manners, and whereby many have been defiled. We are unworthy and unmeet to take God's name into our lips. With what a pure lip did the angels praise God? But, saith the prophet, I cannot praise him so, "for I am a man of unclean lips." The best men in the world have reason to be ashamed of themselves and the best of their services, when they come to compare with the holy angels. The angels had celebrated the purity and holiness of God; and, therefore, the prophet when he reflects upon sin, calls it uncleanness; for that is the sinfulness of sin, its contrariety to the holy nature of God, and upon that account especially it should appear both hateful and frightful to us. The impurity of our lips ought to be the grief of our souls, for by our words we shall be justified or condemned. 2nd. That we dwell among those that are so too. We have reason to lament it, that not we ourselves only are polluted, but that the nature and race of mankind is so, the disease is hereditary and epidemical; which is so far from lessening our guilt, that it should rather increase our grief, especially considering that we have not done what we might have done for the cleansing of the pollutions of other people's lips; nay, we have rather learned their way, and spoken their language, as Joseph in Egypt learned the courtier's oath, *Gen.* xlii. 16. "I dwell in the midst of a people," who by their impudent sinnings are pulling down desolating judgments upon the land, which I, who am a sinner too, may justly expect to be involved in.

2. What gave occasion for these sad reflections at this time. "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" he saw God's sovereignty incontestable, he is "the King;" and his power irresistible, he is "the Lord of hosts." These are comfortable truths to God's people, and yet they ought to strike an awe upon us. Note, A believing sight of God's glorious majesty should affect us all with reverence and godly fear. We have reason to be abased in the sense of that infinite distance that there is betwixt us and God; and our own sinfulness and vileness before him, and to be afraid of his displeasure. We are

undone if there be not a Mediator between us and this holy God, 1 *Sam.* vi. 20. Isaiah was thus humbled to prepare him for the honour he was now to be called to as a prophet. Note, Those are fittest to be employed for God that are low in their own eyes, and are made deeply sensible of their own weakness and unworthiness.

Secondly. The silencing of the prophet's fears by the good and comfortable words with which the angel answered him, ver. 6, 7; one of the seraphims immediately flew to him, to purify him, and so to pacify him. Note, 1. God hath strong consolations ready for holy mourners. They that humble themselves in penitential shame and fear shall soon be encouraged and exalted. They that are struck down with the visions of God's glory shall soon be raised up again with the visits of his grace; he that tears will heal. 2. Angels are ministering spirits for the good of the saints, for their spiritual good. Here was one of the seraphims dismissed for a time from attending on the throne of God's glory, to be a messenger of his grace to a good man; and so well pleased was he with the office that he came flying to him. To our Lord Jesus himself, in his agony, "there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him," *Lu.* xxii. 43. Here is,

1. A comfortable sign given him of the purging away of his sin. The seraph brought "a live coal from the altar," and touched his lips with it, not to hurt them, but to heal them; not to cauterize, but to cleanse them; for there were purifications by fire as well as by water, and the filth of Jerusalem was purged by the spirit of burning, *ch.* iv. 4; the blessed Spirit works as fire, *Mat.* iii. 11. The seraph being himself kindled with a Divine fire, put life into the prophet to make him also zealously affected; for the way to purge the lips from the uncleanness of sin is to fire the soul with the love of God. This live coal was taken from off the altar, either the altar of incense, or that of burnt offerings; for they had both of them fire burning on them continually. Nothing is powerful to cleanse and comfort the soul, but what is taken from Christ's satisfaction, and the intercession he ever lives to make in the virtue of that satisfaction. It must be a coal from his altar that must put life into us and be our peace; it will not be done with strange fire.

2. An explication of this sign. "Lo, this hath touched thy lips," to assure thee of this, that "thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." The guilt of thy sin is removed by pardoning mercy, the guilt of thy tongue-sins, thy corrupt disposition to sin, is removed by renewing grace; and, therefore, nothing can hinder thee from being accepted with God as a worshipper, in concert with the holy angels, or from being employed for God as a messenger to the children of men. Those only who are thus purged from an evil conscience are prepared to serve the living God, *Heb.* ix. 14. The taking away of sin is necessary to our speaking with confidence and comfort, either to God in prayer or from God in preaching. Nor are any so fit to display to others the riches and power of gospel grace as those who have themselves tasted the sweetness and felt the influence of that grace. And those shall have their sin taken away who complain of it as a burthen, and see themselves in danger of being undone by it.

Thirdly. The renewing of the prophet's mission, ver. 8. Here is a communication between God and Isaiah about this matter. Those that would assist others in their correspondence with God must not themselves be strangers to it; for how can we expect that God should speak by us, if we never heard him speaking to us? or that we should be accepted as the mouth of others to God, if we never spoke to him heartily for ourselves? Observe here,

1. The counsel of God concerning Isaiah's mission. God is here brought in after the manner of men, deliberating and advising with himself, "Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" God needs not either to be counselled by others or to consult with himself; he knows what he will do. But thus he would shew us that there is a counsel in his whole will; and teach us to consider our ways, and particularly that the sending forth of ministers is a work not to be done but upon mature deliberation.

Observe, 1st. Who it is that is consulting. It is the Lord God in his glory, whom he saw upon the throne high and lifted up. It puts an honour upon the ministry, that when God would send a prophet to speak in his name, he appeared in all the glories of the upper world. Ministers are the ambassadors of the King of kings; how mean soever they are, he that sends them is great. It is God in three persons; "Who will go for us?" as *Gen.* i. 26, "Let us make man:" Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They all concur, as in the creating, so in the redeeming and governing of man. Ministers are ordained in the same name to which all Christians are baptized. 2nd. What the consultation is. "Whom shall I send? and who will go?" some think it refers to the particular message of wrath against Israel, ver. 9, 10. Who will be willing to go on such a melancholy errand? on which they will go in the bitterness of their souls, *Eze.* iii. 14. But I rather take it more largely for all those messages which he was intrusted to deliver in God's name to that people, in which that hardening work was by no means the primary intention, but secondary effect of them, 2 *Cor.* ii. 14. "Whom shall I send?" intimating that the business was such that required a choice and well-accomplished messenger, *Jer.* xlix. 19. God now appeared attended with holy angels, and yet asks, "Whom shall I send?" for he would send them a prophet from among their brethren, *Heb.* ii. 5. Note, *First.* It is the unspeakable favour of God to us, that he is pleased to send us his mind by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, and who are themselves concerned in the messages they bring. They are workers together with God, who are sinners and sufferers together with us. *Secondly.* It is a rare thing to find one that is fit to go for God, and to carry his messages to the children of men; "Whom shall I send?" who is sufficient? Such a degree of courage for God, and concern for the souls of men as is necessary to make a man faithful, and withal such an insight into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven as is necessary to make a man skilful, are seldom to be met with. Such an interpreter of the mind of God is one of a thousand, *Job* xxxiii. 23. 3. None are allowed to go for God but those that are sent by him; he will own none but those whom he appoints, *Rom.* x. 15. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, 1 *Tim.* i. 13.

2. The consent of Isaiah to it. "Then said I, Here am I, send me." He was to go on a melancholy errand; the office seemed to go a begging, and everybody declined it, and yet Isaiah offered himself to the service. It is an honour to be singular in appearing for God, *Jud.* v. 17, 18. We must not say, I would go if I thought I should have good success; but I will go, and leave the success to God: "Here am I now, send me." Isaiah had been himself in a melancholy frame, ver. 5, full of doubts and fears; but now he had the assurance of the pardon of his sin, the clouds were blown over, and he was fit for service, and forward to it. What he saith speaks, 1st. His readiness; "Here am I," a volunteer, not pressed into the service. 'Behold me,' so the word is; God saith to us, "Behold me," *ch.* lxv. 1, and "Here I am," *ch.* lviii. 9, even before we call; let us say so to him when he doth call. 2nd. His resolution; "Here I am," ready to encounter the greatest difficulties. "I have set my face as a flint," compare this with *ch.* l. 4—7. 3rd. His referring himself to God; Send me whither thou wilt, make what use thou pleasest of me. Send me, that is, Lord, give me commission, and full instruction; send me, and then no doubt thou wilt stand by me. And it is a great comfort to those whom God sends, that they go for God; and may therefore speak in his name, as having authority, and be assured that he will bear them out.

9 And he said, Go, and tell this people,
Hear ye indeed, but understand not;
And see ye indeed, but perceive not.
10 Make the heart of this people fat,
And make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes;
Lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.
11 Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered,
Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant,
And the houses without man,
And the land be utterly desolate,
12 And the LORD have removed men far away,
And *there be* a great forsaking in the midst of the land.
13 But yet in it *shall be* a tenth,
And *it* shall return, and shall be eaten:
As a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance *is* in them,
when they cast *their leaves:*
So the holy seed *shall be* the substance thereof.

God takes Isaiah at his word, and here sends him on a strange errand, to foretell the ruin of his people, and even to ripen them for that ruin; to preach that which, by their abuse of it, would be to them a savour of death unto death. And this was to be a type and figure of the state of the Jewish church in the days of the Messiah, when they should obstinately reject the Gospel, and should thereupon be rejected of God. These verses are quoted in part, or referred to, six times in the New Testament; which intimates, that in gospel times these spiritual judgments would be most ordinarily inflicted; and though they make the least noise, and come not with observation, yet they are of all other the most dreadful. Isaiah is here given to understand these four things:

First. That the generality of the people to whom he was sent would turn a deaf ear to his preaching, and wilfully shut their eyes against all the discoveries of the mind and will of God he had to make to them; ver. 9, "Go, and tell this people," this foolish, wretched people, tell them their own, tell them how stupid and sottish they are. Isaiah must preach to them, and they will hear him indeed, but that is all; they will not heed him, they will not understand him, that is, they will not take any pains, nor use that application of mind, which is necessary to the understanding of him. They are prejudiced against that which is the true intent and meaning of what he saith, and therefore they will not understand him, or pretend they do not. They see indeed; for the vision is made plain on tables, so that he that runs may read it, but they perceive not their own concern in it; it is to them as a tale that is told. Note, There are many who hear the sound of God's word, but do not feel the power of it.

Secondly. That forasmuch as they would not be made better by his ministry, they should be made worse by it. They that were wilfully blind should be judicially blinded, ver. 10. They will not understand or perceive thee; and, therefore, thou shalt be instrumental to make their hearts fat, senseless and sensual, and so to make their ears yet more heavy, and to shut their eyes the closer, so that at length their recovery and repentance will become utterly impossible; they shall no more "see with their eyes" the danger they are in, the ruin they are upon the brink of, or the way of escape from it; they shall no more "hear with their ears" the warnings and instructions that are given them, nor "understand with their heart" the things that belong to their peace, so as to be converted from the error of their ways, and so healed. Note, 1. The conversion of sinners is the healing of them. 2. A right understanding is necessary to conversion. 3. God sometimes in a way of righteous judgment gives men up to blindness of mind, and "strong delusions, because they would not receive the truth in the love of it," 2 *Thes.* ii. 11, 12. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." 4. Even the word of God oftentimes proves a means of doing this. The evangelical prophet himself "makes the heart of this people fat," not only as he foretells it, passeth this sentence upon them in God's name, and seals them under it; but as his preaching had a tendency to it, rocking some asleep in security, to whom it was a lovely song, and making others more outrageous, to whom it was a reproach, they were not able to bear it. Some looked upon the word as a privilege, and their convictions were smothered by it, *Jer.* vii. 4; others looked upon it as a provocation, and their corruptions were exasperated by it.

Thirdly. That the consequence of this would be their utter ruin, ver. 11, 12. The prophet had nothing to object against the justice of this sentence, nor doth he refuse to go upon such an errand, but asks, "Lord, how long?" An abrupt question; Shall it always be thus? Must I and other prophets always labour in vain among them; and will things never be better? Or, (as should seem by the answer,) Lord, what will it come to at last? What will be in the end hereof? In answer to which he is told, that it should issue in the final destruction of the Jewish church and nation. When the word of God, especially the word of the Gospel, hath been thus abused by them, they shall be unchurched, and consequently undone. Their cities shall be uninhabited, and their country houses too; the land shall be untilled, 'desolate with desolation,' as it is in the margin. The people that should replenish the houses, and cultivate the ground, being all cut off by the sword, famine, or pestilence, and those that escape with their lives being removed far away into captivity, so that there shall be a great and general forsaking in the midst of the land, that populous country shall become desert, and that glory of all lands shall be abandoned. Note, Spiritual judgments often bring temporal judgments along with them upon persons and places. This was in part fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, when the land, being left desolate, enjoyed her sabbaths seventy years; but, the foregoing predictions being so expressly applied in the New Testament to the Jews in our Saviour's time, doubtless this points at the final destruction of that people by the Romans, in which it had a complete accomplishment. And the effects of it that people and that land remain under to this day.

Fourthly. That yet a remnant should be reserved to be the monuments of mercy, ver. 13. There was so in the last destruction of the Jewish nation, *Rom.* xi. 5; "at this present time there is a remnant;" for so it was written

here. "But in it shall be a tenth," a certain number, but a very small number in comparison with the multitude that shall perish in their unbelief. And it is that which under the law was God's proportion; they shall be consecrated to God, as the tithes were, and shall be for his service and honour. Concerning this tithe, this saved remnant, we are here told, 1. That it shall return, *ch.* vii. 3, and x. 23; shall return from sin to God and duty, shall return out of captivity to their own land. God will turn them, and they shall be turned. 2. That it shall be eaten, that is, it shall be accepted of God as the tithe was, which was meat in God's house, *Mal.* iii. 10. The saving of this remnant shall be meat to the faith and hope of those that wish well to God's kingdom. 3. That it shall be like a timber tree in winter, which has life though it has no leaves; "As a teil tree, and as an oak whose substance is in them," even then "when they cast their leaves." So this remnant, though they may be stripped of their outward prosperity, and share with others in common calamities, yet they shall recover themselves, as a tree in the spring, and flourish again; though they fall, they shall not be utterly cast down. "There is hope of a tree, though it be cut down, that it will sprout again," *Job* xiv. 7. 4. That this distinguished remnant shall be the stay and support of the public interests. The holy seed in the soul is the substance of the man; a principle of grace reigning in the heart will keep life there. He that is born of God hath his seed remaining in him, 1 *Jno.* iii. 9. So the holy seed in the land is the substance of the land, keeps it from being quite dissolved, and bears up the pillars of it, *Ps.* lxxv. 3: see *ch.* i. 9. Some read the foregoing clause with this, thus: 'As the support at Shallecheth is in the elms and oaks, so the holy seed is the substance thereof.' As the trees that grow on either side of the causeway, the raised way, or terrace walk that leads from the king's palace to the temple, 1 *Kin.* x. 5, at the gate of Shallecheth, 1 *Chr.* xxvi. 16, support the causeway by keeping up the earth, which would otherwise be crumbling away, so the small residue of religious, serious, praying people, are the support of the state; and help to keep things together, and save them from going to decay. Some make the holy seed to be Christ; the Jewish nation was therefore saved from utter ruin, because out of it as concerning the flesh Christ was to come, *Rom.* ix. 5. "Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it," *ch.* lxv. 8; and when that blessing was come, it was soon destroyed. Now the consideration of this is designed for the support of the prophet in his work; though far the greater part should perish in their unbelief, yet to some his word should be a savour of life unto life. Ministers do not wholly lose their labour if they be but instrumental to save one poor soul.

CHAPTER VII.

This chapter is an occasional sermon, in which the prophet sings both of mercy and judgment to those that did not perceive or understand either. He piped unto them, but they danced not; mourned unto them, but they wept not. Here is, I. The mighty fright that Ahaz was in upon an attempt of the confederate forces of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem, ver. 1, 2. II. The assurance which God, by the prophet, sent him for his encouragement, that the attempt should be defeated, and Jerusalem should be preserved, ver. 3—9. III. The confirmation of this by a sign which God gave to Ahaz, when he refused to ask one, referring to Christ and our redemption by him, ver. 10—16. IV. A threatening of the great desolation that God would bring upon Ahaz and his kingdom by the Assyrians, notwithstanding their escape of this present storm, because they went on still in their wickedness, ver. 17—25. And this is written both for our comfort and for our admonition.

AND it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, *that* Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. 2 And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. 3 Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field; 4 And say unto him,

Take heed, and be quiet;
Fear not, neither be fainthearted
For the two tails of these smoking firebrands,
For the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah,
Have taken evil counsel against thee, saying,
6 Let us go up against Judah, and vex it,
And let us make a breach therein for us,
And set a king in the midst of it, *even* the son of Tabeal:
7 Thus saith the Lord GOD,
It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.
8 For the head of Syria *is* Damascus,
And the head of Damascus *is* Rezin;
And within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.
9 And the head of Ephraim *is* Samaria,
And the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah's son.
If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

The prophet Isaiah had his commission renewed in the year that king Uzziah died, *ch.* vi. 1. Jotham his son reigned, and reigned well, sixteen years. All that time, no doubt, Isaiah prophesied as he was commanded, and yet we have not in this book any of his prophecies dated in the reign of Jotham; but this, which is put first, was in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham. Many excellent, useful sermons he preached, which were not published and left on record; for if all that was memorable had been written, the world could not have contained the books, *Jno.* xxi. 25. Perhaps in the reign of Ahaz, a wicked king, he had not opportunity to preach so much at court as in Jotham's time; and therefore then he wrote the more for a testimony against them. Here is,

First. A very formidable design laid against Jerusalem by Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah king of Israel, two neighbouring potentates, who had of late made descents upon Judah severally. At the end of the reign of Jotham, "the Lord began to send against Judah, Rezin, and Pekah," 2 *Kin.* xv. 37; but now in the second or third year of the reign of Ahaz, encouraged by their former successes, they entered into an alliance against Judah; because Ahaz, though he found the sword over his head, began his reign with idolatry; "God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and of the king of Israel," 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 5, and a great slaughter they made in his kingdom, ver. 6, 7. Flushed with this victory, they "went up to Jerusalem," the royal city, "to war against it," to besiege it, and make themselves masters of it; but it proved in the issue they could not gain their point. Note, The sin of a land brings foreign invasions upon it, and betrays the most advantageous posts and passes to the enemy. And God sometimes makes one wicked nation a scourge to another; but judgment ordinarily begins at the house of God.

Secondly. The great distress that Ahaz and his court were in when they received advice of this design; "It was told the house of David" that Syria and Ephraim had signed a league against Judah, ver. 2. This degenerate royal family is called the house of David, to put us in mind of that article of God's covenant with David; "If his children forsake my law, I will chasten their transgression with the rod; but my lovingkindness will I not utterly take away," which is remarkably fulfilled in this chapter, *Ps.* lxxxix. 30. News being brought that the two armies of Syria and Israel were joined, and had taken the field, both court, city, and country, were in a mighty consternation upon the alarm. "The heart of Ahaz was moved" with fear, and then no wonder that "the heart of his people" was so; "as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind," they were tossed and shaken, and put into a great disorder and confusion; were wavering and uncertain in their counsels, hurried hither and thither, and could not fix in any steady resolution. They yielded to the storm, and gave up all for gone, concluding it in vain to make any resistance. Now, that which caused this fight was the sense of guilt, and the weakness of their faith. They had made God their enemy, and knew not how to make him their friend, and therefore their fears tyrannized over them; while those whose consciences are kept void of offence, and whose hearts are fixed trusting in God, need not be afraid of evil tidings: though the earth be removed, yet will not they fear; but the wicked flees at the shaking of a leaf, *Lev.* xxvi. 36.

Thirdly. The orders and directions given to Isaiah to go and encourage Ahaz in his distress; not for his own sake, he deserved to hear nothing from God but words of terror, which might add affliction to his grief, but because he was a son of David, and king of Judah. God had kindness for him for his father's sake, who must not be forgotten, and for his people's sake, who must not be abandoned, but would be encouraged if Ahaz were. Observe,

1. God appointed the prophet to meet Ahaz, though he did not send to the prophet to speak with him, nor desire him to inquire of the Lord for him; ver. 3, "Go to meet Ahaz." Note, God is often found of those that seek him not, much more will he be found of those that seek him diligently. He speaks comfort to many who not only are not worthy of it, but do not so much as inquire after it.

2. He ordered him to take his little son with him, because he carried a sermon in his name; "Shear-jashub, a remnant shall return." The prophets sometimes recorded what they preached in the significant names of their children, as *Hos.* i. 4, 6, 9, therefore Isaiah's children are said to be for signs, *ch.* viii. 18. This son was so called for the encouragement of those of God's people who were carried captive, assuring them that they should return, at least a remnant of them, which is more than we can pretend to merit; yet at this time God was better than his word, for he not only took care that a remnant should return, but the whole number of those whom the confederate forces of Syria and Israel had taken prisoners, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 15.

3. He directed him where he should find Ahaz. He was to meet with him, not in the temple, or the synagogue, or royal chapel, but "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool," where he was probably with many of his servants about him, contriving how to order the waterworks, so as to secure them to the city, or deprive the enemy of the benefit of them, *ch.* xxii. 9, 11; 2 *Chr.* xxxii. 3, 4; or giving some necessary directions for the fortifying of the city as well as they could; and perhaps finding every thing in a very bad posture of defence, the conduit out of repair, as well as other things gone to decay, his fears increased, and he was now in greater perplexity than ever; therefore go meet him there. Note, God sometimes sends comforts to his people very seasonably; and what time they are most afraid encourageth them to trust in him.

4. He puts words in his mouth, else the prophet would not have known how to bring a message of good to such an ill man, a sinner in Zion, that ought to be afraid. But God intended it for the support of faithful Israelites.

1st. The prophet must rebuke their fears, and advise them by no means to yield to them; but keep their temper, and preserve the possession of their own souls; ver. 4, "Take heed, and be quiet." Note, In order to comfort, there is need of caution; that we may be quiet, it is necessary that we take heed, and watch against those things that threaten us to disquiet us. Fear not with this amazement, this fear that weakens, and hath torment; neither "let thy heart be tender," so as to melt and fail within thee; but pluck up thy spirits, have a good heart on it, and be courageous. Let not fear betray the succours which reason and religion offer for thy support. Note, Those who expect God should help them must help themselves, *Ps.* xxvii. 14.

2nd. He must teach them to despise their enemies, not in pride, or security, or incogitancy, nothing more dangerous than so to despise an enemy; but in faith, and dependence upon God. Ahaz's fear called them two powerful politic princes, for either of which he was an unequal match; but, if united, he durst not look them in the face, or make head against them. No, saith the prophet, they are "two tails of smoking firebrands;" they are angry, they are fierce, they are furious as firebrands, as fireballs, and they make one another worse by being in a confederacy, as sticks of fire put together burn the more violently. But they are only smoking firebrands; and where there is smoke there is some fire, but it may not be so much as was feared; their threatenings will vanish into smoke. Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, *Jer.* xlvi. 17, and

Rezin king of Syria but a smoke; and such are all the enemies of God's church, smoking flax, that will soon be quenched. Nay, they are but tails of smoking firebrands, in a manner burnt out already; their force is spent, they have consumed themselves with the heat of their own anger; you may put your foot on them and tread them out. The two kingdoms of Syria and Israel were now near expiring. Note, The more we have an eye to God as a consuming fire, the less reason we shall have to fear men, though they are never so furious; nay, we shall be able to despise them as smoking firebrands.

3rd. He must assure them that the present design of these high allies (so they thought themselves) against Jerusalem should certainly be defeated, and come to nothing, ver. 5—7. *First.* That very thing which Ahaz thought most formidable is made the ground of their defeat, and that was the depth of their designs, and the height of their hopes. Therefore they shall be baffled, and sent back with shame, "because they had taken evil counsel against thee," which is an offence to God; these firebrands are a smoke in his nose, *ch.* lxv. 5, and therefore must be extinguished. *1st.* They are very spiteful and malicious, and therefore they shall not prosper. Judah had done them no wrong, they had no pretence to quarrel with Ahaz; but, without any reason, "Let us go up against Judah, and vex it." Note, Those that are vexatious cannot expect to be prosperous; that love to do mischief, cannot expect to do well. *2nd.* They are very secure, and confident of success. They will vex Judah by going up against it; yet that is not all: they do not doubt but to make a breach in the wall of Jerusalem, wide enough for them to march their army in at; or they count upon dissecting or dividing the kingdom into two parts, one for the king of Israel, the other for the king of Syria, who had agreed in one viceroy; a king to be set in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal, some obscure person, uncertain whether a Syrian or an Israelite. So sure were they of gaining their point, that they divided the prey before they caught it. Note, Those that are most scornful are commonly least successful; for surely God scorneth the scorners. *Secondly.* God himself gives them his word that the attempt should not take effect; ver. 7, "Thus saith the Lord God," the sovereign Lord of all, who "bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought," *Ps.* xxxiii. 10; he saith, "It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." Their measures shall all be broken, and they shall not be able to bring to pass their enterprise. Note, Whatever stands against God, or thinks to stand without him, cannot stand long. Man purposeth, but God disposeth; and "who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth it not," or countermandeth it? *Lam.* iii. 37: see *Pr.* xix. 21.

4th. He must give them a prospect of the destruction of these enemies at last, that were now such a terror to them. *First.* They should neither of them enlarge their dominions, nor push their conquests any farther. The head city of Syria is Damascus, and the head man of Damascus is Rezin. This he glories in, and this let him be content with, ver. 8. The head city of Ephraim hath long been Samaria, and the head man in Samaria is now Pekah the son of Remaliah; each of these shall be made to know their own; their bounds are fixed, and they shall not pass them, to make themselves masters of the cities of Judah, much less to make Jerusalem their prey. Note, As God hath appointed men the bounds of their habitation, *Acts* xvii. 26, so he hath appointed princes the bounds of their dominion, within which they ought to confine themselves, and not encroach upon their neighbours' rights. *Secondly.* Ephraim, which perhaps was the more malicious and forward enemy of the two, should shortly be quite rooted out, and should be so far from seizing other people's lands that they should not be able to hold their own. Interpreters are much at a loss how to compute the sixty-five years within which "Ephraim shall cease to be a people;" for the captivity of the ten tribes was but eleven years after this. And some make it a mistake of the transcriber, and think it should be read, 'within six and five years,' just eleven; but it is hard to allow that. Others make it to be sixty-five years from the time that the prophet Amos first foretold the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. And some later interpreters make it to look as far forward as the last desolation of that country by Esar-haddon, which was about sixty-five years after this; then Ephraim was so broken, that it was no more a people. Now, it was the greatest folly in the world for them to be ruining their neighbours, who were themselves marked for ruin, and so near to it. See what a prophet told them at this time, when they were triumphing over Judah, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 10, "Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?"

5th. He must urge them to mix faith with those assurances which he had given them; ver. 9, "If ye will not believe" what is said to you, "surely ye shall not be established;" your shaken and disordered state shall not be established, your unquiet and unsettled spirits shall not. Though the things told you are very encouraging, yet they will not be so to you unless you believe them, and be willing to take God's word. Note, The grace of faith is absolutely necessary to the quieting and composing of the mind in the midst of all the tosses of this present time, 2 *Chr.* xx. 20.

10 Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying,
11 Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God;
Ask it either in the depth, or in the height above,
12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the
13 And he said, [LORD.
Hear ye now, O house of David;
Is it a small thing for you to weary men,
But will ye weary my God also?
14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign;
Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
And shall call his name Immanuel.
15 Butter and honey shall he eat,
That he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.
16 For before the child shall know
To refuse the evil, and choose the good,
The land that thou abhorrest
Shall be forsaken of both her kings.

Here, First. God by the prophet makes a gracious offer to Ahaz, to confirm the foregoing predictions, and his faith in them, by such sign or miracle as he should choose; ver. 10, 11, "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God." See here the Divine faithfulness and veracity; God tells us nothing but what he is able and ready to prove. See his wonderful condescension to the children of men, in that he is so "willing to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel," *Heb.* vi. 17. He considers our frame, and that living in a world of sense, we are apt to require sensible proofs, which therefore he has favoured us with in sacramental signs and seals. Ahaz was an ill man, yet God is called the Lord his God, because he was a child of Abraham and David, and of the covenants made with them. See how gracious God is even to the evil and unthankful. Ahaz is bidden to choose his sign, as Gideon about the fleece, *Jud.* vi. 37. Let him ask for a sign either in the air, or earth, or water, for God's power is the same in each.

Secondly. Ahaz rudely refuseth this gracious offer, and (which is not mannerly towards any superior) kicks at the courtesy, and puts a slight upon it; ver. 12; "I will not ask." The true reason why he would not ask for a sign was, because, having a dependence upon the Assyrians, their forces and their gods, for help, he would not thus far be beholden to the God of Israel, or lay himself under obligations to him. He would not ask a sign for the confirming of his faith, because he resolved to persist in his unbelief, and would indulge his doubts and distrusts; yet he pretends a pious reason, "I will not tempt the Lord;" as if it would be a tempting of God to do that which God himself invited and directed him to do. Note, A secret disaffection to God is often disguised with the specious colours of respect to him; and those that are resolved they will not trust God yet take on them they will not tempt him.

Thirdly. The prophet reproves him and his court, him and the house of David, the whole royal family, for their contempt of prophecy, and the little value they had for Divine revelation; ver. 13, "Is it a small thing for you to weary men" by your oppression and tyranny, with which you make yourselves burthensome and odious to all mankind; but "will you weary my God also," with the affronts you put upon him? as the unjust judge, that "neither feared God, nor regarded man," *Lu.* xviii. 1. "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words," *Mal.* ii. 17. Nothing is more grievous to the God of heaven than to be distrusted. "Will ye weary my God?" that is, will ye suppose him to be tired and unable to help you, or to be weary of doing you good? Whereas "the youths may faint and be weary," you may have tired all your friends; but "the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary," *ch.* xl. 30, 31. Or thus, In affronting the prophets, you think you put a slight only upon men like yourselves, and consider not that you affront God himself, whose messengers they are, and put a slight upon him, who will resent it accordingly. The prophet here calls God his God, with a great deal of pleasure. Ahaz would not say, He is my God, though the prophet had invited him to say so; ver. 11, "The Lord thy God;" but Isaiah will say, He is mine. Note, Whatever others do, we must avouch the Lord for ours, and abide by him.

Fourthly. The prophet, in God's name, gives them a sign. You will not ask a sign; but the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of none effect, "The Lord himself shall give you a sign," ver. 14, a double sign.

1. A sign in general of his good-will to Israel and to the house of David. You may conclude he hath mercy in store for you, and that you are not forsaken of your God, how great soever your present distress and danger is; for of your nation, of your family, the Messiah is to be born, and you cannot be destroyed while that blessing is in you, which shall be introduced, 1st. In a glorious manner; for, whereas you have been often told that he should be born among you, I am now farther to tell you that he shall be born of a virgin, which will signify both the Divine power and the Divine purity with which he shall be brought into the world; that he shall be an extraordinary person, for he shall not be born by ordinary generation; and that he shall be a holy thing, not stained with the common pollutions of the human nature; therefore incontestably fit to have the throne of his father David given him. Now this, though it was to be accomplished above five hundred years after, yet was a most encouraging sign to the house of David, (and to them under that title this prophecy is directed, ver. 13,) and an assurance that God would not cast them off. Ephraim did indeed envy Judah, *ch.* xi. 13, and sought the ruin of that kingdom, but could not prevail, for the sceptre should never depart from Judah till the coming of Shiloh, *Gen.* xlix. 10. Those whom God designs for the great salvation may take that for a sign to them that they shall not be swallowed up by any trouble they may meet with in the way. 2nd. The Messiah shall be introduced on a glorious errand, wrapt up in his glorious name. They shall call his name Immanuel; that is, God with us, God in our nature, God at peace with us, in covenant with us. This was fulfilled in their calling him Jesus, a Saviour, *Mat.* i. 21—23; for if he had not been Immanuel, God with us, he could not have been Jesus, a Saviour. Now, this was a farther sign of God's favour to the house of David and the tribe of Judah; for he that intended to work this great salvation among them no doubt would work out for them all those other salvations which were to be the types and figures of this, and as it were preludes to this. Here is a sign for you, not in the depth or in the height, but in the prophecy, in the promise, in the covenant, made with David, which you are no strangers to; the promised seed shall be "Immanuel, God with us." Let that word comfort you, *ch.* viii. 10, God is with us; and ver. 8, that your land is Immanuel's land. Let not the heart of the house of David be moved thus, ver. 2; nor let Judah fear the setting up of the son of Tabeal, ver. 6; for nothing can cut off the entail on the Son of David that shall be Immanuel. Note, The strongest consolations in time of trouble are those which are borrowed from Christ, our relation to him, our interest in him, and our expectations of him and from him.

Of this child it is farther foretold, ver. 15, that though he shall not be born like other children, but of a virgin, yet he shall be really and truly man, and shall be nursed and brought up like other children; "butter and honey shall he eat," as other children do, particularly the children of that land which flowed with milk and honey. Though he be conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet he shall not therefore be fed with angel's food; but, as it becomes him, shall be "in all things made like unto his brethren," *Heb.* ii. 17. Nor shall he, though born thus by extraordinary generation, be a man immediately; but, as other children, shall advance gradually through the several states of infancy, childhood, and youth, to that of manhood, and growing in wisdom and stature, shall at length wax strong in spirit, and come to that maturity as to "know how to refuse the evil and choose the good:" see *Lu.* ii. 40, 52. Note, Children are fed when they are little, that they may be taught and instructed when they are grown up; they have their maintenance in order to their education.

2. Here is another sign in particular of the speedy destruction of these potent princes that were now a terror to Judah, ver. 16. "Before this child," so it should be read, this child I have now in my arms, (he means not Immanuel, but Shear-jashub his own son, whom he was ordered to take with him for a sign, ver. 3,) "before this child shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good," (and those who saw what his present stature and forwardness was would easily conjecture how long that would be,) before this child be three or four years older, "the land that thou abhorrest," that is, these confederate forces of Israelites and Syrians whom thou hast such an enmity to, and standest in such dread of, "shall be forsaken of both their kings," both Pekah and Rezin, who were in so close an alliance that they seemed as if they were the kings but of one kingdom. This was fully accomplished; for within two or three years after this Hoshea conspired against Pekah and slew him, 2 *Kin.* xv. 30; and

before that the king of Assyria took Damascus and slew Rezin, 2 *Kin.* xvi. 19. Nay, there was a present event which happened immediately, and which this child carried the prediction of in his name, which was a pledge and earnest of this farther event. Shear-jashub signifies the 'remnant shall return,' which doubtless points at the wonderful return of those two hundred thousand captives which Pekah and Rezin had carried away; who were brought back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Read the story, 2 *Ch.* xxviii. 8—15. The prophetical naming of this child having thus had its accomplishment, no doubt this which was farther added concerning him should have its accomplishment likewise, that Syria and Israel should be deprived of both their kings. One mercy from God encourageth us to hope for another, if it engageth us to prepare for another.

17 The LORD shall bring upon thee,
And upon thy people, and upon thy father's house,
Days that have not come,
From the day that Ephraim departed from Judah;
Even the king of Assyria.
18 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the LORD shall hiss [Egypt,
For the fly that *is* in the uttermost part of the rivers of
And for the bee that *is* in the land of Assyria.
19 And they shall come, and shall rest all of them
In the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks,
And upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.
20 In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired,
Namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria,

KING OF NINEVEH—FROM THE ASSYRIAN MARBLES.

The head, and the hair of the feet:
And it shall consume the beard.
21 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep;
22 And it shall come to pass, [eat butter:
For the abundance of milk *that* they shall give he shall
For butter and honey shall every one eat
That is left in the land.
23 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That every place shall be, [lings,
Where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silver-
It shall *even* be for briers and thorns.
24 With arrows and with bows shall *men* come thither;
Because all the land shall become briers and thorns.
25 And *on* all hills that shall be digged with the mattock,
There shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns:
But it shall be for the sending forth of oxen,
And for the treading of lesser cattle.

After the comfortable promises made to Ahaz, as a branch of the house of David, here follow terrible threatenings against him as a degenerate branch of that house; for though the lovingkindness of God shall not be utterly taken away for the sake of David, and the covenant made with him, yet his iniquity shall be chastened with the rod, and his sin with stripes. Let those that will not mix faith with the promises of God expect to hear the alarms of his threatenings.

First. The judgment threatened is very great, ver. 17. It is very great, for it is general; it shall be brought upon the prince himself,—as high as he is he shall not be out of the reach of it; and upon the people, the whole body of the nation; and upon the royal family, "upon all thy father's house;" it shall be a judgment entailed on posterity, and shall go along with the royal blood. It is very great, for it shall be unprecedented, "days that have not come;" so dark, so gloomy, so melancholy, as never were the like since the revolt of the ten tribes, when Ephraim departed from Judah, which was indeed a sad time to the house of David. Note, The longer men continue in sin the sorer punishments they have reason to expect. It is the Lord that will bring these days upon them, for our times are in his hand; and who can resist or escape the judgments he brings?

Secondly. The enemy that should be employed as the instrument of this judgment is the king of Assyria. Ahaz reposed a mighty confidence in that prince for help against the confederate powers of Israel and Syria, and minded the less what God said to him by his prophet for his encouragement, because he built much upon his interest in the king of Assyria, and had sneakingly promised to be his servant if he would send him some succours; and made him a present of gold and silver, for which he drained the treasures both of church and state, 2 *Kin.* xvi. 7, 8. Now God threatens that that king of Assyria whom he made his stay instead of God should become a scourge to him. He was so presently; for when he "came to him he distressed him, but strengthened him not." The reed not only broke under him, but ran into his hand and pierced it, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 20; and from thenceforward the kings of Assyria were long grieving thorns to Judah, and gave them a great deal of trouble. Note, The creature that we make our hope commonly proves our hurt. The king of Assyria, not long after this, made himself master of the ten tribes, carried them captive, and laid their country waste, so as fully to answer this prediction here; and perhaps it may refer to that, as an explication of ver. 8, where it is foretold that Ephraim shall be broken, that it shall not be a people; and it is easy to suppose that the prophet, at ver. 17, turns his speech to the king of Israel, denouncing God's judgments against him for invading Judah; but the expositors universally understand it of Ahaz and his kingdom. Now observe,

1. Summons given to the invaders; ver. 18, "the Lord shall whistle for the fly and the bee:" see *ch.* v. 26. Enemies that seem as contemptible as a fly or a bee, and as easily crushed, yet when God pleaseth they shall do his work as effectually as lions and young lions. Though they are as far distant from one another as the rivers of Egypt and the land of Assyria, yet they shall punctually meet to join in this work when God commands their attendance; for when God hath work to do, he will not be to seek for instruments to do it with.

2. Possession taken by them, ver. 19. It should seem as if the country were in no condition to make resistance, they find no difficulties in forcing their way; but "come and rest all of them in the desolate valleys," which the inhabitants had deserted upon the first alarm, and left them a cheap and easy prey to the invaders. They shall "come and rest" in the low grounds like swarms of flies and bees, and shall render themselves impregnable by taking shelter in the holes of the rocks as bees often do; and shew themselves formidable by appearing openly "upon all thorns, and all bushes;" so generally shall the land be overspread with them. These bees shall knit upon the thorns and bushes, and there rest undisturbed.

3. Great desolations made, and the country generally depopulated; ver. 20, "The Lord shall shave the hair of the head, and beard, and feet;" that is, shall sweep all away, as the leper when he was cleansed shaved off all his hair, *Lev.* xiv. 8, 9. This is done "with a razor that is hired," which God has hired as if he had none of his own; but what he hires, and whom he employs in any service for him, he will pay: see *Eze.* xxix. 18, 19. Or which Ahaz has hired for his assistance; God will make that to be an instrument of his destruction which he hired into his service. Note, Many are beaten with that arm of flesh which they trusted to rather than to the arm of the Lord, and which they were at a great expense upon; when by faith and prayer they might have found cheap and easy succour in God.

Fourthly. The consequences of this general depopulation. 1. The stocks of cattle shall be all destroyed; so that a man that had herds and flocks in abundance shall be stripped of them all by the enemy, and shall with much ado save for his own use a young cow and two sheep, a poor stock, ver. 21; yet he shall think himself happy in having any left. 2. The few cattle that are left shall have such a large compass of ground to feed in, that "they shall give abundance of milk," and very good milk, such as shall produce butter enough, ver. 22. There shall also be such want of men that the milk of one cow and two sheep shall serve a whole family, which used to keep abundance of servants and consume a great deal, but is now reduced. 3. The breed of cattle shall be destroyed; so that those who used to eat flesh, as the Jews commonly did, shall be necessitated to confine themselves to butter and honey; for there shall be no flesh for them; and the country shall be so depopulated that there shall be butter and honey enough for the few that are left in it. 4. Good land that used to be set well shall be all overrun with briars and thorns, ver. 23; where there used to be a thousand vines planted, for which the tenants used to pay a thousand shekels, or pieces of silver, yearly rent, there shall be nothing now but briars and thorns, no profit either for landlord or tenant; all being laid waste by the army of the invaders. Note, God can soon turn a fruitful land into barrenness; and it is just with him to turn vines into briars if we, instead of bringing forth grapes to him, bring forth wild grapes, *ch.* v. 4. 5. The instruments of husbandry shall be turned into instruments of war, ver. 24. The whole land being become briars and thorns, the grounds that men used to come to with sickles and pruninghooks to gather in the fruits, they shall now come to with arrows and bows, either to hunt for wild beasts in the thickets, or to defend themselves from the rapparees that lurk in the bushes seeking for prey, or to kill the serpents and venomous beasts that are hid there. This speaks a very sad change of the face of that pleasant land; but what melancholy change is there which sin will not make with a people? 6. There where briars and thorns were wont to be of use, and to do good service, even in the hedges for the defence of the enclosed grounds, they shall be plucked up, and all laid in common. There shall be briars and thorns in abundance there where they should not be, but none where they should be; ver. 25, "the hills that shall be digged with the mattock," for special use, from which the cattle used to be kept off with the fears of briars and thorns, shall now be thrown open; the hedges broken down for the boar out of the wood to waste it, *Ps.* lxxx. 12, 13. It shall be left at large for oxen to run in, and lesser cattle.

See the effect of sin and the curse. It has made the earth a forest of thorns and thistles, farther than it is forced into some order by the constant care and labour of man. And see what folly it is to set our hearts upon possessions of lands, be they never so fruitful, never so pleasant; when, if they lie never so little neglected and uncultivated, or if they be abused by a wasteful, careless heir or tenant, or the country be laid waste by war, they will soon become frightful deserts. Heaven is a paradise not subject to such changes.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter, and the four next that follow it, to *ch.* xiii., are all one continued discourse or sermon, the scope of which is to shew the great destruction that should now shortly be brought upon the kingdom of Israel, and the great disturbance that should be given to the kingdom of Judah by the king of Assyria, and that both were for their sins; but rich provision is made of comfort for those that feared God in those dark times, refer-

ring especially to the days of the Messiah. In this chapter we have, I. A prophecy of the destruction of the confederate kingdoms of Syria and Israel by the king of Assyria, ver. 1—4. II. Of the desolations that should be made by that proud victorious prince in the land of Israel and Judah, ver. 5—8. III. Great encouragement given to the people of God in the midst of these distractions. They are assured, 1. That the enemies shall not gain their point against them, ver. 9, 10; 2. That if they kept up the fear of God, and kept down the fear of man, they should find God their refuge, ver. 11—14; and while others stumbled and fell into despair, they should be enabled to wait on God, and should see themselves reserved for better times, ver. 15—18. Lastly, He gives a necessary caution to all, at their peril, not to consult with familiar spirits, for they would thereby throw themselves into despair, but to keep close to the word of God, ver. 19—22. And these counsels and these comforts will still be of use to us in time of trouble.

MOREOVER the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 2 And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. 3 And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 4 For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria. 5 The LORD spake also unto me again, saying,

6 Forasmuch as this people refuseth
The waters of Shiloah that go softly,
And rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;
7 Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them
The waters of the river, strong and many, *even* the king
of Assyria, and all his glory:

ASSYRIAN WARRIORS—FROM THE ASSYRIAN MARBLES.

And he shall come up over all his channels,
And go over all his banks: [go over,
8 And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and
He shall reach *even* to the neck;
And the stretching out of his wings shall fill
The breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

In these verses we have a prophecy of the successes of the king of Assyria against Damascus, Samaria, and Judah; that the two former should be laid waste by him, and the last ill frightened. Here is,

First. Orders given to the prophet to write this prophecy, and publish it to be seen and read of all men, and to leave it upon record, that when the thing came to pass they might know that God had sent him; for that was one end of prophecy, *Jno.* xiv. 29. He must take a great roll, which would contain those five chapters, fairly written in words at length; and he must write in it all that he had foretold concerning the king of Assyria's invading the country; he must write it with a man's pen, in the usual way and style of writing, so as that it might be legible and intelligible by all: see *Hab.* ii. 2, "Write the vision, and make it plain." They that speak and write of the things of God should avoid obscurity, and study to speak and write so as to be understood, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 19. They that write for men should write with a man's pen, and not covet the pen or tongue of angels. And forasmuch as it is usual to put some short, but significant, comprehensive title before books that are published, the prophet is directed to call his book "Maher-shalal-hash-baz; make speed to the spoil, hasten to the prey;" intimating that the Assyrian army should come upon them with great speed, and make great spoil. By this title the substance and meaning of the book would be inquired after by those that heard of it, and remembered by those that had read it, or heard it read. It is sometimes a good help to memory to put much matter in few words, which serve as handles by which we take hold of more.

Secondly. The care of the prophet to get this record well attested; ver. 2, "I took unto me faithful witnesses to record;" wrote the prophecy in their sight and presence, and made them subscribe their names to it, that they might be ready, if afterwards there should be occasion, to make oath of it, that the prophet had foretold the descent which the Assyrians made upon that country so long before; he names his witnesses, for the greater certainty, that they might be appealed to by any. They were two in number, for "out of the mouth of two witnesses shall every word be established." One was Uriah the priest; he is mentioned in the story of Ahaz, but for none of his good deeds, for he humoured Ahaz with an idolatrous altar, 2 *Kin.* xvi. 10, 11; however, at this time no exception lay against him, but that he was a faithful witness. See what full satisfaction the prophets took care to give to all persons concerned, of the sincerity of their intentions, that we might know, with a full assurance, "the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed," and that "we have not followed cunningly-devised fables."

Thirdly. The making of the title of his book the name of his child, that it might be the more taken notice of, and the more effectually perpetuated, ver. 3. His wife, because the wife of a prophet, is called "the prophetess," she "conceived and bare a son," another son, who must carry a sermon in his name, as the former had done, *ch.* vii. 3, but with this difference, that spoke mercy, "Shear-jashub, the remnant shall return;" but that being slighted, this speaks judgment, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz, in making speed to the spoil he shall hasten, or has hastened to the prey." The prophecy is doubled, even in this one name, for the thing was certain; "I will hasten my word," *Jer.* i. 12. Every time the child was called by his name, or any part of it, it would serve as a memorandum of the judgments approaching. Note, It is good for us often to put ourselves in mind of the changes and troubles we are liable to in this world, and which perhaps are at the door. When we look with pleasure on our children, it should be with the allay of this thought, we know not what they are yet reserved for.

Fourthly. The prophecy itself, which explains this mystical name.

1. That Syria and Israel, who were now in confederacy against Judah, should in a very little time become an easy prey to the king of Assyria and his victorious army, ver. 4. "Before the child," now newly born and named, "shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother," which are usually some of the first things that children know, and some of the first words that children speak, that is, in about a year or two, "the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria," those cities that were now so secure themselves and so formidable to their neighbours, "shall be taken away before the king of Assyria," who shall plunder both city and country, and send the best effects of both into his own land, to enrich that, and as trophies of his victory. Note, Those that spoil others must expect to be themselves spoiled, *ch.* xxxiii. 1, for the Lord is righteous, and those that are troublesome shall be troubled.

2. That forasmuch as there were many in Judah that were secretly in the interests of Syria and Israel, and were disaffected to the house of David, God would chastise them also by the king of Assyria, who should create a great deal of vexation to Judah, as was foretold, *ch.* vii. 17.

Observe, 1st. What was the sin of the discontented party in Judah; ver. 6, "This people," whom the prophet here speaks to, "refuse the waters of Shiloah that go softly," despise their own country and the government of it, and love to run it down, because it doth not make so great a figure and so great a noise in the world as some other kings and kingdoms do. They refuse the comforts which God's prophets offer them from the word of God, and speak to them in a still small voice, and make nothing of them; but "they rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son," who were the enemies of their country, and were now actually invading it; they cried them up as brave men, magnified their policies and strength, applauded their conduct, were well pleased with their successes, and were hearty well-wishers to their designs, and resolved to desert and go over to them. Such vipers doth many a state foster in its bosom, that eats its bread, and yet adheres to its enemies, and are ready to quit its interests, if they but seem to totter.

2nd. The judgment which God would bring upon them for this sin. The same king of Assyria that should lay Ephraim and Syria waste, should be a scourge and terror to those of their party in Judah, ver. 7, 9. Because they "refuse the waters of Shiloah," and will not accommodate the government God had set over them, but are uneasy under it; "therefore the Lord brings upon them the waters of the river, strong and many," the river Euphrates. They slighted the land of Judah because it had no river to boast of comparable to that; the river at Jerusalem was a very inconsiderable one. Well, saith God, if you be such admirers of Euphrates, you shall have enough of it; the king of Assyria, whose country lies upon that river, shall come with his glory, that is, with his great army, which you cry up as his glory, despising your own king because he cannot bring such an army as that into the field. God shall bring that army upon you. If we value men, if we overvalue them, for their worldly wealth and power, it is just with God to make them by that a scourge to us. It is used as an argument against magnifying rich men, that rich men oppress us, *Jam.* ii. 3, 6. Let us be best pleased with the waters of Shiloah, that go softly, for rapid streams are dangerous. It is threatened that the Assyrian army should break in upon them like a deluge or inundation of waters, bearing down all before it, shall "come up over all his channels, and overflow all his banks;" it would be to no purpose to oppose them, or give them a stand. Sennacherib and his army shall "pass through Judah," and meet with so little resistance that it shall look more like a march through the country than a descent upon it. He shall "reach even to the neck;" that is, he shall advance so far as to lay siege to Jerusalem, the head of the kingdom, and nothing but that shall keep out of his hands; for that was the holy city. Note, In the greatest deluge of trouble God can and will keep the head of his people above water, and so preserve their comforts and spiritual lives; the waters that come into their soul may reach to the neck, *Ps.* lxix. 1, but there shall their proud waves be stayed. And here is another comfortable intimation that though the stretching out of the wings of the Assyrian, that bird of prey, though the right and left wing of his army should fill the breadth of the land of Judah; yet still it was Immanuel's land. It is thy land, O Immanuel. It was to be Christ's land, for there he was to be born, and live, and preach, and work miracles; he was Zion's king, and therefore had a peculiar interest in, and concern for, that land. Note, The lands that Immanuel owns for his, as he doth all those lands that own him, though they may be deluged, shall not be destroyed, for "when the enemy shall come in like a flood," Immanuel shall secure his own, and "shall lift up a standard against him," *ch.* lix. 19.

9 Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken
in pieces;
And give ear, all ye of far countries:
Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces;
Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.
10 Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought;
Speak the word, and it shall not stand:
For God *is* with us.
11 For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand,

And instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

12 Say ye not, A confederacy,
To all *them to* whom this people shall say, A confederacy;
Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

13 Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself;
And *let* him *be* your fear, and *let* him *be* your dread.

14 And he shall be for a sanctuary;
But for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence
To both the houses of Israel,
For a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

15 And many among them shall stumble,
And fall, and be broken,
And be snared, and be taken.

The prophet here returns to speak of the present distress that Ahaz and his court and kingdom were in, upon account of the threatening confederacy of the ten tribes and the Syrians against them. And in these verses,

First. He triumphs over the invading enemies, and in effect sets them at defiance, and bids them do their worst; ver. 9, 10, "O ye people, ye of far countries, give ear" to what the prophet saith to you in God's name.

1. We doubt not but you will now make your utmost efforts against Judah and Jerusalem; you associate yourselves in a strict alliance, you gird yourselves, and again you gird yourselves; you prepare for action, you address yourselves to it with resolution, you gird on your swords, you gird up your loins, you animate and encourage yourselves and one another, with all the considerations you can think of; you take counsel together, call councils of war, and all heads are at work about the proper methods for making yourselves masters of the land of Judah; you speak the word, you come to resolutions concerning it, and are not always deliberating; you determine what to do, and are very confident of the success of it, that the matter will be accomplished with a word's speaking. Note, It is with a great deal of policy, resolution, and assurance, that the church's enemies carry on their designs against it; and abundance of pains they take to roll a stone that will certainly return upon them.

2. This is to let you know that all your efforts will be ineffectual; you cannot, you shall not, gain your point, nor carry the day, "You shall be broken in pieces;" though you associate yourselves, though you gird yourselves, though you proceed with all the policy and precaution imaginable, yet I tell you again and again, all your projects shall be baffled, "you shall be broken in pieces;" nay, not only your attempts shall be ruined, but your attempts shall be your ruin; you shall be broken by those designs you have formed against Jerusalem. "Your counsels shall come to nought," for there is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord; your resolves will not be put in execution, they shall not stand; you speak the word, but "who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, if the Lord commandeth it not?" What sets up itself against God and his cause and counsel cannot stand, but must inevitably fall; for God is with us. This refers to the name of Immanuel, "God with us." The Messiah is to be born among us; and a people designed for such an honour cannot be given up to utter ruin. We have now the special presence of God with us in his temple, his oracles, his promises, and these are our defence. God is with us; that is, he is on our side, to take our part, and fight for us; and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Thus doth the daughter of Zion despise them.

Secondly. He comforts and encourageth the people of God with the same comforts and encouragements which he himself had received. The attempt made upon them was very formidable; the house of David, the court and royal family, were at their wit's end, *ch.* vii. 2, and then no marvel if the people were in a consternation. Now,

1. The prophet tells us how he was himself taught of God, not to give way to such amazing fears as the people were disturbed with, nor to run into the same measures with them; ver. 11, "The Lord spake to me with a strong hand, not to walk in the ways of this people," not to say as they say, nor do as they do; not to entertain the same frightful apprehension of things, nor to approve of their projects of making peace upon any terms, or calling in the help of the Assyrians. God instructed the prophet not to go down the stream. Note, 1st. There is a proneness in the best of men to be frightened at threatening clouds, especially when fears are epidemical. We are all too apt to walk in the way of the people we live among, though it be not a good way. 2nd. Those whom God loves and owns he will instruct and enable to swim against the stream of common corruptions, particularly of common fears. He will find ways to teach his own people not to walk in the way of other people, but in a sober singularity. 3rd. Corruption is sometimes so active in the hearts even of good men that they have need to be taught their duty with a strong hand, and it is God's prerogative to teach so, for he only can give an understanding, and overpower the contradiction of unbelief and prejudice. He can teach the heart, and herein none teacheth like him. 4th. Those that are to teach others have need to be themselves well instructed in their duty, and then they teach most powerfully when they teach experimentally. The word that comes from the heart is most likely to reach to the heart; and what we are ourselves by the grace of God instructed in we should, as we are able, teach others also.

2. Now what is it that he saith to God's people?

1st. He cautions them against a sinful fear, ver. 12. It seems it was the way of this people at this time, and fear is catching. He whose heart fails him makes his brethren's heart to fail like his heart, *Deu.* xx, 8; therefore, "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy;" that is, *First.* Be not associated with them in the confederacies they are projecting and forecasting for. Do not join with those that, for the securing of themselves, are for making a league with the Assyrians through unbelief and distrust of God and their cause; do not come into any such confederacy. Note, It concerns us in time of trouble to watch against all such fears, as put us upon taking any indirect courses for our own security. *Secondly.* Be not afraid of the confederacies they frighten themselves and one another with. Do not amuse yourselves with the apprehension of a confederacy upon every thing that stirs, nor when any little thing is amiss, cry out presently, There is a plot, a plot, when they talk what dismal news there is. "Syria is joined with Ephraim," what will become of us? Must we fight, or must we flee, or must we yield? Do not you fear their fear, "Be not afraid of the signs of heaven," as the heathen are, *Jer.* x. 2. Be not afraid of evil tidings on earth, but "let your hearts be fixed." Fear not that which they fear, nor be afraid, as they are; be not put into such a fright as causeth trembling and shaking, so the word signifies. Note, When the church's enemies have sinful confederacies on foot, the church's friends should watch against the sinful fears of those confederacies.

2nd. He adviseth them to a gracious, religious fear: but "sanctify the Lord of hosts himself," ver. 13. Note, The believing fear of God is a special preservative against the disquieting fear of man: see 1 *Pet.* iii. 14, 15, where this is quoted and applied to suffering Christians. *First.* We must look upon God as the Lord of hosts, that has all power in his hand and all creatures at his beck. *Secondly.* We must sanctify him accordingly, that is, give him the glory due to that name, and carry towards him as those that believe him to be a holy God. *Thirdly.* We must make him our fear, the object of our fear, and make him our dread, keep up a reverence of his providence, and stand in awe of his sovereignty; be afraid of his displeasure, and silently acquiesce in all his disposals. Were we but duly affected with the greatness and glory of God, we should see the pomp of our enemies eclipsed and clouded, and all their power restrained and under check: see *Neh.* iv. 14. They that are afraid of the reproach of men forget the Lord their Maker, *ch.* li. 12, 13: compare *Lu.* xii. 4, 5.

3rd. He assures them of a holy security and serenity of mind in so doing; ver. 14, "He shall be for a sanctuary;" make him your fear, and you shall find him your hope, your help, your defence, and your mighty deliverer; he will sanctify and preserve you. He will be for a sanctuary, *First.* To make you holy; He will be your sanctification, so some read it. If we sanctify God by our praises, he will sanctify us by his grace. *Secondly.* To make you easy; He will be your sanctuary, to which you may flee for safety, and where you are privileged from all the arrests of fear. You shall find an inviolable refuge and security in him, and see yourselves out of the reach of danger. They that truly fear God shall not need to fear any evil.

Thirdly. He threatens the ruin of the ungodly and unbelieving, both in Judah and Israel. They have no part nor lot in the foregoing comforts; that God, who will be a sanctuary to those who trust in him, will be "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence" to those who "leave these waters of Shiloah, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son," ver. 6, who make the creature their fear and their hope, ver. 14, 15. The prophet foresees that the greatest part of "both the houses of Israel" would not "sanctify the Lord of hosts," and to them he would be "for a gin and a snare," that is, he would be a terror to them, as he would be a support and stay to those that trusted in him. Instead of profiting by the word of God, they should be offended at it, and the providences of God, instead of leading them to him, would drive them from him. What was a savour of life unto life to others would be a savour of death unto death to them. So that "many among them shall stumble and fall;" they shall fall both into sin and into ruin; they shall fall by the sword, shall be taken prisoners and go into captivity. Note, If the things of God be an offence to us, they will be an undoing to us. Some apply this to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected Christ, and to whom he became a stone of stumbling, for the apostle quotes this Scripture with application to all those who persisted in their unbelief of the Gospel of Christ, 1 *Pet.* ii. 8; to them he is a rock of offence, because, being disobedient to the word, they stumble at it.

16 Bind up the testimony,
Seal the law among my disciples.

17 And I will wait upon the LORD,
That hideth his face from the house of Jacob,
And I will look for him.

18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me
Are for signs and for wonders in Israel
From the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

19 And when they shall say unto you,
Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards
That peep, and that mutter:
Should not a people seek unto their God?
For the living to the dead?

20 To the law and to the testimony:
If they speak not according to this word,
It is because *there is* no light in them.

21 And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry:
And it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry,
they shall fret themselves,
And curse their king and their God,
And look upward.

22 And they shall look unto the earth;
And behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish;
And *they shall be* driven to darkness.

In these verses we have,

First. The unspeakable privilege which the people of God enjoy, in having the oracles of God consigned over to them, and being intrusted with the Sacred Writings, that they may sanctify the Lord of hosts, may make him their fear, and find him their sanctuary; "Bind up the testimony," ver. 16. Note, It is a great instance of God's care of his church and love to it, that he hath lodged in it the invaluable treasure of Divine revelation. 1. It is a testimony and a law. Not only this prophecy is so, which must therefore be preserved safe for the comfort of God's people in the approaching times of trouble and distress, but the whole word of God is so; God hath attested it, and he hath enjoined it. As a testimony, it directs our faith; as a law, it directs our practice; and we ought both to subscribe to the truths of it and to submit to the precepts of it. 2. This testimony and law are bound up and sealed, for we are not to add to them or diminish from them. They are a letter from God to man, folded up and sealed, a proclamation under the broad seal. The binding up and sealing of the Old Testament signified that the full explication of many of the prophecies of it was reserved for the New Testament

times, *Dan.* xii. 4, "Seal the book till the time of the end." But what was then bound up and sealed is now opened and unsealed, and revealed unto babes, *Mat.* xi. 25. Yet with reference to the other world and the future state, still the testimony is bound up and sealed, for we know but in part, and prophesy but in part. 3. They are lodged as a sacred depositum in the hands of the disciples, of "the children of the prophets and the covenant," *Acts* iii. 25. This is the good thing which is committed to them, and which they are charged with the custody of, 2 *Tim.* i. 13, 14. Those that had prophets for their tutors must still keep close to the written word.

Secondly. The good use which we ought to make of this privilege. And this we are taught,

1. By the prophet's own practice and resolutions, ver. 17, 18. He embraced the law and the testimony, and he had the comfort of it in the midst of the many discouragements he met with. Note, Those ministers can best recommend the word of God to others that have themselves found the satisfaction of relying upon it. Observe,

1st. The discouragements which the prophet laboured under. He instanceth in two: *First.* The frowns of God, not so much upon himself, but upon his people, whose interests lay very near his heart; he "hideth his face from the house of Jacob," and seems at present to neglect them, and lay them under the tokens of his displeasure. The prophet was himself employed in revealing God's wrath against them, and yet grieved thus for it, as one that did not desire the woful day. If the house of Jacob forsake the God of Jacob, let it not be thought strange that he hides his face from them. *Secondly.* The contempt and reproaches of men, not only upon himself, but upon his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed; "I and the children which the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders." We are gazed at as monsters or outlandish people, pointed at as we go along the streets. Probably the prophetical names that were given his children were ridiculed and bantered by the profane scoffers of the town; "I am as a wonder unto many," *Ps.* lxxi. 7. God's people are the world's wonder, *Zec.* iii. 8; for their singularity, and because they run not with them to the same excess of riot, 1 *Pet.* iv. 4. The prophet was herein a type of Christ; for this is quoted, *Heb.* ii. 13, to prove that believers are Christ's children; "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." Parents must look upon their children as God's gifts, his gracious gifts; Jacob did so, *Gen.* xxxiii. 5. Ministers must look upon their converts as their children, and be tender of them accordingly, 1 *Thes.* ii. 7; and as the children which God hath given them, for, whatever good we are instrumental of to others, it is owing to the grace of God. Christ looks upon believers as his children, which the Father gave him, *Jno.* xvii. 6; and both he and they are for signs and wonders, spoken against, *Lu.* ii. 34; every where spoken against, *Acts* xxviii. 22.

2nd. The encouragement he took in reference to these discouragements: *First.* He saw the hand of God in all that which was discouraging to him, and kept his eye upon that. Whatever trouble the house of Jacob is in, it comes from God's hiding his face; nay, whatever contempt was put upon him or his friends, it is from the Lord of hosts; he hath bidden Shimei curse David, *Job* xix. 13; xxx. 11. *Secondly.* He saw God dwelling in mount Zion, manifesting himself to his people, and ready to hear their prayers, and receive their homage. Though for the present he hide his face from the house of Jacob, yet they know where to find him, and recover the sight of him; he dwells in mount Zion. *Thirdly.* He therefore resolved to wait upon the Lord, and to look for him, to attend his motions, even while he hides his face, and to expect with an humble assurance his returns in a way of mercy. Those that wait upon God by faith and prayer may look for him with hope and joy. When we have not sensible comforts, we must still keep up our observance of God, and obedience to him, and then wait a while, "at evening time it shall be light."

2. By the counsel and advice which he gives to his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed, to whom were committed the lively oracles.

1st. He supposeth they would be tempted in the day of their distress to consult them that had familiar spirits, that dealt with the devil, asked his advice, and desired to be informed by him concerning things to come, that they might take their measures accordingly. Thus Saul, when he was in straits, made his application to the witch of Endor, 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 7, 15; and Ahaziah to the God of Ekron, 2 *Kin.* i. 2. These conjurors had odd fantastic gestures and tones; they peeped and muttered, they muffled their heads, that they could neither see nor be seen plainly, but peeped and were peeped at. Or both the words here used may refer to their voice and manner of speaking; they delivered what they had to say, with a low, hollow, broken sound, scarce articular; and sometimes in a puling or mournful tone, like a crane, or a swallow, or a dove, *ch.* xxxviii. 14. They spoke not with that boldness and plainness which the prophets of the Lord spoke with, but as those that desired to amuse people, rather than to instruct them; yet there were those who were so wretchedly sottish as to seek to them, and court others to do so, even the prophet's hearers, who knew better things, whom therefore the prophet warns not to say, A confederacy with such. There were express laws against this wickedness, *Lev.* xix. 31; xx. 27; and yet it was found in Israel, is found even in Christian nations; but let all that have any sense of religion shew it, by startling at the thought of it: "Get thee behind me, Satan." Dread the use of spells and charms, and consulting those that by hidden arts pretend to tell fortunes, cure diseases, or discover things lost; for this is a heinous crime, and in effect denies the God that is above.

2nd. He furnishes them with an answer to this temptation, puts words into their mouths; If any go about thus to ensnare you, give them this reply; "Should not a people seek to their God?" What! "for the living to the dead?" *First.* Tell them it is a principle of religion, that a people ought to seek unto their God. Now Jehovah is our God; and therefore to him we ought to seek, and to consult with him, and not with them that have familiar spirits; "All people will thus walk in the name of their god," *Mic.* iv. 5. They that made the hosts of heaven their gods, sought unto them, *Jer.* viii. 2. Should not a people under guilt, and in trouble, seek to their God for pardon and peace? should not a people in doubt, in want, and in danger, seek to their God for direction, supply, and protection? Since the Lord is our God, and we are his people, it is certainly our duty to seek to him. *Secondly.* Tell them it is an instance of the greatest folly in the world to seek for living men to dead idols. What can be more absurd, than to seek to lifeless images for life and living comforts? or to expect that our friends that are dead, when we deify them, and pray to them, should do that for us which our living friends cannot do. The "dead know not any thing," nor is there with them any device or working, *Eccl.* ix. 5, 10; it is folly therefore for the living to make their court to them, with any expectation of relief from them. Necromancers consulted the dead, as the witch of Endor, and so proclaimed their own folly. We must live by the living, and not by the dead. What life or light can we look for from them that have no life or light themselves?

3rd. He directs them to consult with the oracles of God. If the prophets that were among them did not speak directly to every case, yet they had the written word, and to that they must have recourse. Note, Those will never be drawn to consult wizards that know how to make a good use of their Bibles. Would we know how we may seek to our God, and come to the knowledge of his mind, "To the law and to the testimony;" there you will see what is good, and what the Lord requires of you. Make God's statutes your counsellors, and you will be counselled right. Observe, *First.* What use we must make of the law and the testimony. We must "speak according to that word," that is, we must make this our standard, conform to it, and take advice from it; make our appeals to it, and in every thing be overruled and determined by it; consent to those wholesome, healing words, 1 *Tim.* vi. 3, and speak of the things of God in "the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." It is not enough to say nothing against it, but we must speak according to it. *Secondly.* Why we must make this use of the law and the testimony. Because we shall be convicted of the greatest folly imaginable if we do not. They that concur not with the word of God it is a sign there is no light, no morning light, (so the word is) in them. They have no right sense of things; they do not understand themselves, nor the difference between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Note, Those that reject Divine revelation, have not so much as human understanding; nor do they rightly admit the oracles of reason who will not admit the oracles of God. Some read it as a threatening; if they speak not according to this word, there shall be no light to them, no good, no comfort or relief; but they shall be driven to darkness and despair, as it follows here, ver. 21, 22. What light had Saul, when he consulted the witch? 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 18, 20; or what light can they expect that turn away from the Father of lights?

4th. He reads the doom of those that seek to familiar spirits, and regard not God's law and testimony. There shall not only be no light to them, no comfort or prosperity, but they may expect all horror and misery, ver. 21, 22. *First.* The trouble they feared shall come upon them; they shall pass through the land, or pass to and fro in the land, unfixed, unsettled, and driven from place to place by the threatening power of an invading enemy. They shall be hardly bestead, whither to go for the necessary supports of life, either because the country would be so impoverished that there would be nothing to be had, or at least themselves and their friends so impoverished that there would be nothing to be had for them; so that they who used to be fed to the full shall be hungry. Note, Those that go away from God go out of the way of all good. *Secondly.* They shall be very uneasy to themselves, by their discontent and impatience under their trouble. A good man may be in want, but then he quiets himself, and strives to make himself easy; but these people when they shall be hungry shall fret themselves, and when they have nothing to feed on their vexation shall prey upon their own spirits; for fretfulness is a sin that is its own punishment. *Thirdly.* They shall be very provoking to all about them, nay, to all above them. When they find all their measures broken, and themselves at their wit's end, they will forget all the rules of duty and decency, and will treasonably curse their king, and blasphemously curse their God; and this more than in their thought, and in their bedchamber, *Eccl.* x. 20. They begin with cursing their king, for managing the public affairs no better, as if the fault were his, when the best and wisest kings cannot secure success; but when they have broken the bonds of their allegiance, no marvel if those of their religion do not hold them long. They next curse their God, curse him and die; they quarrel with his providence, and reproach that as if he had been wrong. "The foolishness of man perverts his way, and" then "his heart frets against the Lord," *Pr.* xix. 3. See what need we have to keep our mouth as with a bridle, when our heart is hot within us, for the language of fretfulness is commonly very offensive. *Fourthly.* They shall abandon themselves to despair, and, which way soever they look, shall see no probability of relief; they shall look upward, but heaven shall frown upon them, and look gloomy; and how can it be otherwise when they curse their God? They shall look to the earth; but what comfort can that yield to those whom God is at war with? There is nothing there but "trouble, and darkness, and dimness of anguish," every thing threatening, and not one pleasant gleam, not one hopeful prospect; but they shall be driven to darkness by the violence of their own fears, which represent every thing about them black and frightful. This explains what he had said, ver. 20, that there shall be no light to them. Those that shut their eyes against the light of God's word will justly be abandoned to darkness, and left to wander endlessly, and the sparks of their own kindling will do them no kindness.

CHAPTER IX.

The prophet, in this chapter, according to the directions given him, *ch.* iii. 10, 11, saith "to the righteous, it shall be well with them; but woe to the wicked! it shall be ill with him." Here is, I. Gracious promises to those that adhere to the law and to the testimony; while those that seek to familiar spirits shall be driven into darkness and dimness; they shall see a great light; relief in the midst of their distresses, typical of gospel grace. 1. In the doctrine of the Messiah, ver. 1—3; 2. His victories, ver. 4, 5; 3. His government and dominion as Immanuel, ver. 6, 7. II. Dreadful threatenings against the people of Israel, that had revolted from, and were enemies to, the house of David, that they should be brought to utter ruin, that their pride should bring them down, ver. 8—10; that their neighbours should make a prey of them, ver. 11, 12; that for their impenitency and hypocrisy all their ornaments and supports should be cut off, ver. 13—17; and that by the wrath of God against them, and their wrath one against another, they should be brought to utter ruin, ver. 18—21. And this is typical of the final destruction of all the enemies of the Son of David and his kingdom.

NEVERTHELESS the dimness *shall* not *be* such as *was* in her vexation,
When at the first he lightly afflicted
The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
And afterward did more grievously afflict
Her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. [light:
2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great
They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.
3 Thou hast multiplied the nation,
And not increased the joy:
They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest,
And as *men* rejoice when they divide the spoil.
4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden,
And the staff of his shoulder,
The rod of his oppressor,
As in the day of Midian.

5 For every battle of the warrior *is* with confused noise,
And garments rolled in blood;
But *this* shall be with burning *and* fuel of fire.
6 For unto us a child is born,
Unto us a son is given:
And the government shall be upon his shoulder:
And his name shall be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God,
The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end,
Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom,
To order it, and to establish it [ever.
With judgment and with justice from henceforth even for
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The first words of this chapter plainly refer to the close of the foregoing chapter, where every thing looked black and melancholy. "Behold trouble, and darkness, and dimness;" very bad yet not so bad but that "to the upright there shall arise light in the darkness," *Ps.* cxii. 4; and "at evening time it shall be light," *Zec.* xiv. 7. "Nevertheless, it shall not be such dimness," either not such for kind, or not such for degree, as sometimes there has been. Note, In the worst of times, God's people have a "nevertheless" to comfort themselves with, something to allay and balance their troubles; they are persecuted, but not forsaken, 2 *Cor.* iv. 9; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, 2 *Cor.* vi. 10; and it is matter of comfort to us, when things are at the darkest, that he who forms the light and creates the darkness, (*ch.* xlv. 7,) hath appointed both their bounds, and set the one over against the other, *Gen.* i. 4. He can say, hitherto the dimness shall go, so long it shall last, and no farther, no longer. Three things are here promised, and they all point ultimately at the grace of the Gospel, which the saints then were to comfort themselves with the hopes of, in every cloudy and dark day, as we now are to comfort ourselves in time of trouble, with the hopes of Christ's second coming, though that be now, as his first coming then was, a thing at a great distance. The mercy likewise which God hath in store for his church in the latter days may be a support to those that are mourning with her present calamities. We have here the promise,

First. Of a glorious light, which shall so qualify, and by degrees dispel, the dimness, that it shall not be as it sometimes hath been; not "such as was in her vexation;" there shall not be such dark times as were formerly, "when at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and Naphtali," which lay remote, and most exposed to the inroads of the neighbouring enemies; and afterwards he "more grievously afflicted the land, by the way of the sea, and beyond Jordan," ver. 1; referring probably to those days when "God began to cut Israel short, and to smite them in all their coasts," 2 *Kin.* x. 32. Note, 1. God tries what lesser judgments will do with a people before he brings greater. But, 2. If a light affliction do not do its work with us, to humble and reform us, we must expect to be afflicted more grievously, for when God judgeth he will overcome.

Well, those were dark times with the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and there was dimness of anguish in Galilee of the Gentiles, both in respect of ignorance,—they did not speak according to the law and the testimony, and then there was no light in them, *ch.* viii. 20; and in respect of trouble, and the desperate posture of their outward affairs. We have both together, 2 *Chr.* xv. 3, 5, "Israel has been without the true God, and a teaching priest, and in those times there was no peace;" but the dimness threatened, *ch.* viii. 22, shall not prevail to such a degree; for, ver. 2, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." 1st. At this time when the prophet lived, there were many prophets in Judah and Israel, whose prophecies were a great light, both for direction and comfort to the people of God, who adhered "to the law and the testimony." Besides the written word, they had prophecy; there were those that shewed them how long, *Ps.* lxxiv. 9, which was a great satisfaction to them, when in respect of their outward troubles, they "sat in darkness, and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death." 2nd. This was to have its full accomplishment, when our Lord Jesus began to appear as a prophet, and to preach the Gospel in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, and in Galilee of the Gentiles; and the Old Testament prophets, as they were witnesses to him, so they were types of him. When he came and dwelt in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, then this prophecy is said to be fulfilled, *Mat.* iv. 13—16. Note, *First.* Those that want the Gospel, walk in darkness, and know not what they do, or whither they go; and they dwell in the land of the shadow of death, in thick darkness and in the utmost danger. *Secondly.* When the Gospel comes to any place, to any soul,—light comes, a great light, a shining light, which will shine more and more. It should be welcome to us as light is to them that sit in darkness, and we should readily entertain it, both because it is of such sovereign use to us and because it brings its own evidence with it; truly this light is sweet.

Secondly. Of a glorious increase, and a universal joy arising from it; ver. 3, "Thou, O God, hast mutiplied the nation," the Jewish nation, which thou hast mercy in store for; though it has been diminished by one sore judgment after another, yet now thou hast begun to multiply it again. The numbers of a nation are its strength and wealth, if the numerous be industrious; and it is God that increaseth nations, *Job* xii. 23. Yet it follows, "Thou hast not increased the joy;" not the carnal joy and mirth, nor those things that are commonly the matter and occasion of that; but notwithstanding that "they joy before thee." There is a great deal of serious spiritual joy among them, joy in the presence of God, with an eye to him. This is very applicable to the times of gospel light spoken of, ver. 2; then God multiplied the nation, the gospel Israel; and 'to him' (so the Masorites read it) 'thou hast magnified the joy,' to every one that receives the light. The following words favour this reading; "they joy before thee;" they come before thee in holy ordinances with great joy; their mirth is not like that of Israel, under their vines and fig trees, (though hast not increased that joy,) but it is in the favour of God, and in the tokens of his grace. Note, The Gospel when it comes in its light and power, brings joy along with it; and those who receive it aright therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; therefore the conversion of the nations is prophesied of by this, *Ps.* lxvii. 4, "Let the nations be glad, and sing for joy;" *Ps.* xcvi. 11. 1. It is holy joy; "They joy before thee," they rejoice in spirit as Christ did, *Lu.* x. 21; and that is before God. In the eye of the world they are always as sorrowful, and yet in God's sight always rejoicing, 2 *Cor.* vi. 10. 2. It is a great joy; it is "according to the joy in harvest," when those that sowed in tears, and have with long patience waited for the precious fruits of the earth, reap in joy; and as in war men rejoice, when after a hazardous battle they divide the spoil. The Gospel brings with it plenty and victory; but those that would have the joy of it must expect to go through a hard work, as the husbandman before he have the joy of harvest; and a hard conflict, as the soldier before he has the joy of dividing the spoil; but the joy when it comes will be an abundant recompence for the toil: see *Acts* viii. 8, 39.

Thirdly. Of a glorious liberty and enlargement, ver. 4, 5. They shall rejoice before thee, and with good reason, "for thou hast broken the yoke of his burden," and made him easy, for he shall no longer be in servitude; and thou hast "broken the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor," that rod of the wicked which rested long on the lot of the righteous; as the Midianites' yoke was broke off the neck of Israel by the agency of Gideon. If God makes former deliverances his patterns in working for us, we ought to make them our encouragements to hope in him, and to seek to him; *Ps.* lxxxiii. 9, "Do unto them as to the Midianites." What temporal deliverance this refers to is not clear; probably the preventing of Sennacherib from making himself master of Jerusalem, which was done, as in the day of Midian, by the immediate hand of God. And whereas other battles use to be won with a great deal of noise, and by the expense of much blood, this shall be done silently and without noise; "under his glory God shall kindle a burning," *ch.* x. 16; "A fire not blown shall consume him," *Job* xx. 26; but doubtless it looks farther, to the blessed fruits and effects of that great light which should visit them that sat in darkness; it would bring liberty along with it, deliverance to the captives, *Lu.* iv. 18. 1. The design of the Gospel, and the grace of it, is to break the yoke of sin and Satan, to remove the burthen of guilt and corruption, and to free us from the rod of those oppressors, that we might be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Christ broke the yoke of the ceremonial law, *Acts* xv. 10; *Gal.* v. 1; and delivered us out of the hand of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear, *Lu.* i. 74, 75. 2. This is done with the Spirit working like fire, *Mat.* iii. 11; not as the battle of the warrior is fought with confused noise; no, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but it is done with the spirit of judgment, and spirit of burning, *ch.* iv. 4. It is done as in the day of Midian, by a work of God upon the hearts of men. Christ is our Gideon; it is his sword that doth wonders.

But who, where, is he that shall undertake and accomplish these great things for the church? He tells us, ver. 6, 7, they shall be done by the Messiah, Immanuel, that son of a virgin whose birth he had foretold, *ch.* vii. 14, and now speaks of in the prophetical style, as a thing already done, The child is born; not only because it was as certain, and he was as certain of it, as if it had been done already, but because the church, before his incarnation, reaped great benefit and advantage by his undertaking, in the virtue of that first promise concerning the seed of the woman, *Gen.* iii. 15. As he was the Lamb slain, so he was the child born from the foundation of the world, *Rev.* xiii. 8. All the great things that God did for the Old Testament church were done by him as the eternal Word, and for his sake as the Mediator. He was the Anointed to whom God had respect, *Ps.* lxxxiv. 9, and it was for the Lord's sake,—for the Lord Christ's sake,—that God caused his face to shine upon his sanctuary, *Dan.* ix. 17. Therefore, the Jewish nation, and particularly the house of David, were preserved many a time from imminent ruin, because that blessing was in them. What greater security therefore could be given to the church of God then that it should be preserved, and be the special care of the Divine providence, than this, that God had so great a mercy in reserve for it? The Chaldee paraphrase understands it of 'the Man that shall endure for ever, even Christ.' And it is an illustrious prophecy of him and of his kingdom, which doubtless they that waited for the consolation of Israel built much upon, often turned to, and read with pleasure.

1st. See him in his humiliation. The same that is the mighty God is a child born; the Ancient of days becomes an infant of a span long; the everlasting Father is a Son given. Such was his condescension in taking our nature upon him; thus did he humble and empty himself to exalt and fill us. He is born into our world; "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" he is given, freely given, to be all that to us which our case, in our fallen state, calls for; God so loved the world that he gave him. He is born to us, he is given to us,—us men,—and not to the angels that sinned. It is spoken with an air of triumph, and the angel seems to refer to these words in the notice he gives to the shepherds of the Messiah's being come; *Lu.* ii. 11, "Unto you is born this day a Saviour." Note, Christ's being born and given to us is the great foundation of our hopes, and fountain of our joys, in times of greatest grief and fear.

2nd. See him in his exaltation. This child, this Son, this Son of God, this Son of Man that is given to us, is in a capacity to do us a great deal of kindness; for he is invested with the highest honour and power, so that we cannot but be happy if he be our friend.

First. See the dignity he is advanced to, and the name he hath above every name; he shall be called, (and therefore we are sure he is, and shall be,) Wonderful, Counsellor, &c. His people shall know him and worship him by these names; and as one that fully answers them, they shall submit to him, and depend upon him. 1*st.* He is Wonderful, Counsellor. Justly is he called Wonderful, for he is both God and man. His love is the wonder of angels and glorified saints; in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension he was wonderful. A constant series of wonders attended him, and without controversy great was the mystery of godliness concerning him. He is the Counsellor, for he was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from eternity, and he gives counsel to the children of men, in which he consults our welfare. It is by him that God has given us counsel, *Ps.* xvi. 7; *Rev.* iii. 18. He is the wisdom of the Father, and is made of God to us wisdom. Some join these together; he is the wonderful counsellor, a wonder or miracle of a counsellor. In this, as in other things, he hath the preeminence; none teacheth like him. 2*nd.* He is the mighty God; 'God, the mighty one.' As he has wisdom, so he has strength to go through with his undertaking; is able to save to the uttermost. And such is the work of the Mediator, that no less a power than that of the mighty God could accomplish it. 3*rd.* He is the everlasting Father; or, 'The Father of eternity.' He is God, one with the Father, who is from everlasting to everlasting. His fatherly care of his people, and tenderness towards them, is everlasting. He is the Author of everlasting life and happiness to them, and so is the Father of a blessed eternity to them. He is the Father of the world to come, so the Seventy read it; the Father of the gospel state, which is put in subjection to him, not to the angels, *Heb.* ii. 5. He was from eternity Father of the great work of redemption; his heart was upon it; it was the product of his wisdom, as the counsellor; of his love, as the everlasting Father. 4*th.* He is the Prince of Peace. As a king he preserves the peace,—commands peace; nay, he creates peace in his kingdom. He is our peace, and it is his peace that both keeps the hearts of his people and rules in them. He is not only a peaceable prince and his reign peaceable, but he is the author and giver of all good, all that peace which is the present and future bliss of his subjects.

Secondly. See the dominion he is advanced to, and the throne he has above every throne; ver. 6, "The government shall be upon his shoulder,"—his only. He shall not only wear the badge of it upon his shoulder, "the key of the house of David," *ch.* xxii. 22, but he shall bear the burthen of it. The Father shall

devolve it upon him, so that he shall have an incontestable right to govern, and he shall undertake it, so that no doubt can be made of his governing well; for he shall set his shoulder to it, and will never complain, as Moses did, of his being overcharged; "I am not able to bear all this people," *Num.* xiv. 11, 14. Glorious things are here spoken of Christ's government, ver. 7. *1st.* That it shall be an increasing government. It shall be multiplied; the bounds of his kingdom shall be more and more enlarged, and many shall be added to it daily. The lustre of it shall increase, and it shall shine more and more bright in the world. The monarchies of the earth were each less illustrious than the other, so that what began in gold ended in iron and clay, and every monarchy dwindled by degrees; but the kingdom of Christ is a growing kingdom, and will come to perfection at last. *2nd.* That it shall be a peaceable government, agreeable to his character as the Prince of peace. He shall rule by love, shall rule in men's hearts, so that wherever his government is there shall be peace; and as his government increaseth the peace shall increase. The more we are subject to Christ the more easy and safe we are. *3rd.* That it shall be a rightful government. He that is the Son of David shall reign upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom which he is entitled to; "God shall give him the throne of his father David," *Lu.* i. 32, 33. The gospel church, in which Jew and Gentile are incorporated, is the holy hill of Zion, on which Christ reigns, *Ps.* ii. 6. *4th.* That it shall be administered with prudence and equity, and so as to answer the great end of government, which is the establishment of the kingdom. He shall order it, and settle it with justice and judgment. Every thing is, and shall be, well managed in the kingdom of Christ; and none of his subjects shall ever have cause to complain. *5th.* That it shall be an everlasting kingdom. There shall be no end of the increase of his government,—it shall be still growing; no end of the increase of the peace of it, for the happiness of the subjects of this kingdom shall last to eternity, and perhaps shall be progressive *in infinitum*,—'for ever.' He shall reign from henceforth even for ever, not only throughout all generations of time, but even then when the kingdom shall be delivered up to God even the Father, the glory both of the Redeemer and the redeemed shall continue eternally. *6th.* That God himself hath undertaken to bring all this about. The Lord of hosts, who hath all power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck, shall perform this, shall preserve the throne of David till this Prince of peace is settled in it. His zeal shall do it; his jealousy for his own honour, and the truth of his promise, and the good of his church. Note, The heart of God is much upon the advancement of the kingdom of Christ among men, which is very comfortable to all those that wish well to it. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will overcome all opposition.

8 The Lord sent a word into Jacob,
And it hath lighted upon Israel.
9 And all the people shall know,
Even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria,
That say in the pride and stoutness of heart,
10 The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: [*into* cedars.
The sycomores are cut down, but we will change *them*
11 Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin
And join his enemies together; [against him,
12 The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind;
And they shall devour Israel with open mouth.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand *is* stretched out still.
13 For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them,
Neither do they seek the LORD of hosts.
14 Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail,
Branch and rush, in one day.
15 The ancient and honourable, he *is* the head;
And the prophet that teacheth lies, he *is* the tail.
16 For the leaders of this people cause *them* to err;
And *they that are* led of them *are* destroyed.
17 Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men,
Neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows:
For every one *is* an hypocrite and an evildoer,
And every mouth speaketh folly.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand *is* stretched out still.
18 For wickedness burneth as the fire:
It shall devour the briers and thorns,
And shall kindle in the thickets of the forest,
And they shall mount up *like* the lifting up of smoke.
19 Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened,
And the people shall be as the fuel of the fire:
No man shall spare his brother.
20 And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry;
And he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied:
They shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm:
21 Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh:
And they together *shall be* against Judah,
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand *is* stretched out still.

Here are terrible threatenings, which are directed primarily against Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, Ephraim and Samaria; the ruin of which is here foretold, with all the woful confusions that were the prefaces to that ruin, all which came to pass within a few years after. But they look farther, to all the enemies of the throne and kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, and read the doom of all the nations that forget God, and will not have Christ to reign over them. Observe,

First. The preface to this prediction; ver. 8, "The Lord sent a word into Jacob;" sent it by his servants the prophets. He warns before he wounds; he sent notice what he would do, that they might meet him in the way of his judgments, but they would not take the hint; took no care to turn away his wrath, and so "it lighted upon Israel;" for no word of God shall fall to the ground. It fell upon them as a storm of rain and hail from on high, which they could not avoid. It has lighted upon them, that is, it is as sure to come as if it were come already; and all the people shall know by feeling it what they would not know by hearing of it. Those that are willingly ignorant of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against sin and sinners shall be made to know it.

Secondly. The sins charged upon the people of Israel, which provoked God to bring these judgments upon them.

1. Their insolent defiance of the justice of God, thinking themselves a match for him. They "say in the pride and stoutness of their heart," let God himself do his worst, they will hold their own, and make their part good with him; if he ruin their houses they will repair them, and make them stronger and finer than they were before; their landlord shall not turn them out of doors, though they pay him no rent, but they will keep in possession. If the houses that were built of bricks be demolished in the war, we will rebuild them with hewn stones, that shall not so easily be thrown down. If the enemy cut down the sycamores, we will plant cedars in the room of them; we will make a hand of God's judgments, gain by them, and so outbrave them. Note, Those are ripening apace for ruin whose hearts are unhumbled under humbling providences; for God will walk contrary to those who thus walk contrary to him, and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he.

2. Their incorrigibleness under all the rebukes of Providence hitherto; ver. 13, "The people turneth not unto him that smiteth them." They are not wrought upon to reform their lives, to forsake their sins, and to return to their duty, "neither do they seek the Lord of hosts." Either they are atheists, and have no religion, or idolaters, and seek to those gods that are creatures of their own fancy, and the works of their own hands. Note, That which God designs in smiting us is to turn us to himself, and to set us a seeking him. And if this point be not gained by lesser judgments, greater may be expected. God smites that he may not kill.

3. Their general corruption of manners, and abounding profaneness. 1st. Those that should have reformed them helped to debauch them; ver. 16, "The leaders of this people" mislead them, and "cause them to err," by conniving at their wickedness, and countenancing wicked people, and by setting them ill examples; and then no wonder if they that are led of them be deceived, and so destroyed. But it is ill with a people when their physicians are their worse disease; 'They that bless this people, or call them blessed,' (so the margin reads it,) that flatter them, and soothe them up in their wickedness, and cry, Peace, peace, to them, they "cause them to err;" and they "that are called blessed of them, are swallowed up" ere they are aware. We have reason to be afraid of those that speak well of us when we do ill: see *Pr.* xxiv. 24; xxix. 5. 2nd. Wickedness was universal, and all were infected with it; ver. 17, "Every one is an hypocrite and an evil-doer." If there be any that are good, they do not, they dare not, appear; for "every mouth speaks folly and villany;" every one is profane towards God, (so the word properly signifies,) and an evil-doer towards man. These two commonly go together, they that fear not God, regard not man; and then every mouth speaks folly, falsehood, and reproach, both against God and man; for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Thirdly. The judgments threatened against them for this wickedness of theirs. Let them not think to go unpunished.

1. In general. Hereby they exposed themselves to the wrath of God, which should both devour as fire and darken as smoke. 1st. It should devour as fire; ver. 18, "Wickedness shall burn as the fire," that is, the displeasure of God incurred by sin shall consume the sinners who have made themselves as briars and thorns before it, and as the thickets of the forest; combustible matter, which the wrath of the Lord of hosts, the mighty God, will go through, and burn together. 2nd. It should darken as smoke. The briars and thorns, when the fire consumes them, "shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke," so that the whole land shall be darkened by it. They shall be in trouble, and see no way out; ver. 19, "The people shall be as the fuel of the fire." God's wrath fastens upon none but those that make themselves fuel for it; and then they mount up as the smoke of sacrifices; being made victims to Divine justice.

2. God would arm the neighbouring powers against them, ver. 11, 12. At this time the kingdom of Israel was in league with that of Syria against Judah; but the Assyrians, who were adversaries to the Syrians, when they had conquered them should invade Israel; and God will stir them up to do it, and join the enemies of Israel together in alliance against them, who yet have particular ends of their own to serve, and are not aware of God's hand in their alliance. Note, 1st. When enemies are set up and joined in confederacy against a people, God's hand must be acknowledged in it. 2nd. Those that partake with each other in sin, as Syria and Israel in invading Judah, must expect to share in the punishment of sin. Nay, the Syrians themselves, that they were now in league with, should be a scourge to them, (for it is no unusual thing for those to fall out that have been one in an ill thing;) "they before, and the Philistines behind;" one attacking them in the front, the other flanking them, or falling upon their rear, so that they should be surrounded with enemies on all sides, that should "devour them with open mouth," ver. 12. The Philistines were not now looked upon as formidable enemies, and the Syrians were looked upon as fast friends, and yet these shall devour Israel. When men's ways displease the Lord he makes even their friends to be at war with them.

3. God would take from the midst of them those they confided in, and promised themselves help from, ver. 14, 15. Because the people seek not God, those they seek to, and depend upon, shall stand them in no stead. The Lord will "cut off head and tail, branch and rush," which is explained in the next verse. 1st. Their magistrates, that were honourable by birth and office, and were the ancients of the people, these were the head, those were the branch, which they promised themselves spirit and fruit from; but because these caused them them to err they shall be cut off, and their dignity and power shall be no protection to them when the abuse of that dignity and power was the great provocation. And it was a judgment upon the people to have their princes cut off, though they were not such as they should be. 2nd. Their prophets, their false prophets, were the tail and the rush, the most despicable

of all other. A wicked minister is the worst of men. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*,—'the best things, when corrupted, become the worst.' The blind led the blind, and so both fell into the ditch; and the blind leaders fell first, and fell undermost.

Fourthly. That the desolation should be as general as the corruption had been, and none should escape it, ver. 17. 1. Not those that were the objects of complacency; none shall be spared for love. "The Lord shall have no joy in their young men," that were in the flower of their youth; nor will he say, "Deal gently with the young men for my sake;" no, let them fall with the rest, and with them let the seed of the next generation perish. 2. Not those that were the objects of compassion; none shall be spared for pity. He shall not "have mercy on the fatherless and widows," though he used to be in a particular manner their patron and protector. They had corrupted their way like all the rest; and if the poverty and helplessness of their state was not an argument with them to keep them from sin, they could not expect it should be an argument with God to protect them from judgments.

Fifthly. That they should pull one another to pieces, and every one should help forward the common ruin, and they should be cannibals to themselves, and one to another. "No man shall spare his brother" if he come in the way of his ambition or covetousness, or if he have any colour to be revenged on him. And how can they expect God should spare them, when they shew no compassion one to another? Men's passion and cruelty one against another provokes God to be angry with them all, and is an evidence that he is so. Civil wars soon bring a kingdom to desolation. Such they were in Israel when "for the transgression of the land many were the princes thereof," 2 *Kin.* xiv. 16. In these intestine broils, men "snatched on the right hand, and yet were hungry still," and did eat "the flesh of their own arm," preyed upon themselves for hunger, or upon their nearest relations, that were as their own flesh, ver. 20. This speaks, 1. Great famine and scarcity. When men had pulled all they could to them it was so little that they were still hungry, at least God did not bless it to them, so that "they eat and have not enough," *Hag.* i. 6. 2. Great rapine and plunder. *Jusque datum sceleri*,—'iniquity is established by law.' The hedge of property, which is a hedge of protection to men's estates, shall be plucked up; and every man shall think all that his own which he can lay his hands on; *vivitur ex rapto, non hospes ab hospite tutus*,—'we live on the spoil, and the rights of hospitality are all violated.' And yet, when men thus catch at that which is none of their own, they are not satisfied. Covetous desires are insatiable, and this curse is entailed on that which is ill got, that it will never do well. These intestine broils should be not only among particular persons, and private families, but among the tribes; ver. 21, "Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh," though they together be against Judah. They that could unite against Judah could not unite with one another; but that sinful confederacy of theirs against their neighbour that dwelt securely by them was justly punished by this separation of them one from another. Or, Judah having sinned like Manasseh and Ephraim, shall not only suffer with them, but suffer by them. Note, Mutual enmity and animosity among the tribes of God's Israel is such a sin as ripens them for ruin, and a sad symptom of ruin hastening on apace. If Ephraim be against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and both against Judah, they will all soon become a very easy prey to the common enemy.

Sixthly. That, though they should be followed with all those judgments, yet God would not let fall his controversy with them. It is the heavy burthen of this song, ver. 12, again, ver. 17, and in the close, ver. 21, "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still;" that is, 1. They do nothing to turn away his anger; they do not repent and reform, do not humble themselves and pray; none stand in the gap, none answer to God's calls, nor comply with the designs of his providences, but they are hardened and secure. 2. His anger therefore continues to burn against them, and "his hand is stretched out still." The reason why the judgments of God are prolonged is, because the point is not gained, sinners are not brought to repentance by them. "The people turneth not to him that smiteth them," and therefore he continues to smite them; for when God judgeth he will overcome, and the proudest, stoutest sinner shall either bend or break.

CHAPTER X.

The prophet in this chapter is dealing, I. With the proud oppressors of his people at home, that abused their power to pervert justice, whom he would reckon with for their tyranny, ver. 1—4. II. With a threatening invader of his people from abroad, Sennacherib king of Assyria, concerning whom observe, 1. The commission given him to invade Judah, ver. 5, 6; 2. His pride and insolence in the execution of that commission, ver. 7—11, 13, 14; 3. A rebuke given to his haughtiness, and a threatening of his fall and ruin, when he had served the purposes for which God raised him up, ver. 12, 15—19; 4. A promise of grace to the people of God, to enable them to bear up under the affliction, and to get good by it, ver. 20—23; 5. Great encouragement given to them not to fear this threatening storm, but to hope that, though for the present all the country was put into a great consternation by it, yet it would end well in the destruction of this formidable enemy, ver. 24—34. And this is intended to quiet the minds of good people in reference to all the threatening efforts of the wrath of the church's enemies. If God be for us, who can be against us? None, to do us any harm.

WOE unto them that decree unrighteous decrees,
And that write grievousness *which* they have prescribed;
2 To turn aside the needy from judgment,
And to take away the right from the poor of my people,
That widows may be their prey,
And *that* they may rob the fatherless!
3 And what will ye do in the day of visitation,
And in the desolation *which* shall come from far?
To whom will ye flee for help?
And where will ye leave your glory?
4 Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners,
And they shall fall under the slain.
For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand *is* stretched out still.

Whether they were the princes and judges of Israel or Judah, or both, that the prophet denounced this woe against, is not certain. If those of Israel, these verses are to be joined with the close of the foregoing chapter; which is probable enough, because the burthen of that prophecy, "For all this his anger is not turned away," is repeated here, ver. 4. If those of Judah, they then shew what was the particular sin for which God brought the Assyrian army upon them, to punish their magistrates for maladministration, which they could not legally be called to account for. To them he speaks woes before he speaks comforts to God's own people. Here is,

First. The indictment drawn up against these oppressors, ver. 1, 2. They are charged, 1. With making wicked laws and edicts. They "decree unrighteous decrees," contrary to natural equity and the law of God; and what mischief they prescribe those under them write it, enrol it, and put it into the formality of a law. Woe to the superior powers that devise and decree these decrees! they are not too high to be under the Divine check; and woe to the inferior officers that draw them up, and enter them upon record, "the writers that write the grievousness," they are not too mean to be within the Divine cognizance. Principal and accessaries shall fall under the same woe. Note, It is bad to do hurt, but it is worse to do it with design and deliberation; to do wrong to many, and to involve many in the guilt of doing wrong. 2. With perverting justice in the execution of the laws that were made. No people had statutes and judgments so righteous as they had; and yet corrupt judges found ways to "turn aside the needy from judgment," to hinder them from coming at their right, and recovering what was their due, because they were needy and poor, and such as they could get nothing by, nor expect any bribes from. 3. With enriching themselves by oppressing those that lay at their mercy, whom they ought to have protected. They make widows' houses and estates their prey, and they rob the fatherless of the little that is left them, because they have no friend to appear for them. Not to relieve them if they had wanted, not to right them if they were wronged, had been crime enough in men that had wealth and power; but to rob them, because on the side of the oppressors there was power, and the oppressed had no comforter, *Eccl.* iv. 4, is such a piece of barbarity, as one would think none could ever be guilty of that had either the nature of a man, or the name of an Israelite.

Secondly. A challenge given them with all their pride and power, to outface the judgments of God; ver. 3, "What will ye do? To whom will ye flee?" You can trample upon the widows and fatherless, but "what will ye do when God riseth up?" *Job* xxxi. 14. Great men, that tyrannize over the poor, think they shall never be called to account for it, shall never hear of it again, or fare the worse for it; but "shall not God visit for these things?" *Jer.* v. 29. Will there not come a desolation upon those that have made others desolate? Perhaps it may come from far, and therefore may be long in coming, but it will come at last. Reprieves are not pardons; and coming from far, from a quarter whence it was least expected, it will be the greater surprise, and the more terrible. Now what will then become of these unrighteous judges? Now they see their help in the gate, *Job* xxxi. 21. But to whom will they then flee for help? Note, 1. There is a day of visitation coming, a day of inquiry and discovery, a searching day, which will bring to light, to a true light, every man and every man's work. 2. The day of visitation will be a day of desolation to all wicked people, when all their comforts and hopes will be lost and gone, and buried in ruin, and themselves left desolate. 3. Impenitent sinners will be utterly at a loss, and will not know what to do in the day of visitation and desolation. They cannot fly and hide themselves, cannot fight it out, and defend themselves. They have no refuge in which either to shelter themselves from the present evil, "To whom will ye flee for help?" or to secure to themselves better times hereafter, "Where will you leave your glory,' to find it again, when the storm is over? The wealth they had got was their glory, and they had no place of safety in which to deposit that, but they should certainly see it flee away. If our souls be our glory, as they ought to be, and we make them our chief care, we know where to leave them, and into whose hands to commit them, even those of a faithful Creator. 4. It concerns us all seriously to consider what we shall do in the day of visitation, in a day of affliction, in the day of death and judgment, and to provide that we may do well.

Thirdly. Sentence passed upon them, by which they are doomed some to imprisonment and captivity; "They shall bow down among the prisoners," or, "under them:" Those that were most highly elevated in sin shall be most heavily loaded, and most deeply sunk in trouble; others, to death, they shall fall first, and so shall fall under the rest of the slain. They that had trampled upon the widows and fatherless shall themselves be trodden down, ver. 4. This it will come to, saith God, without me; that is, because you have deserted me, and driven me away from you. Nothing but utter ruin can be expected by those that live without God in the world; that cast him behind their back, and so cast themselves out of his protection.

And yet "for all this his anger is not turned away;" which intimates not only that God will proceed in his controversy with them, but that they shall be in a continual dread of it. They shall, to their unspeakable terror, see his hand still stretched out against them, and there shall remain nothing but a "fearful looking for of judgment."

5 O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger,
And the staff in their hand is mine indignation.
6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation,
And against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge,
To take the spoil, and to take the prey,
And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.
7 Howbeit he meaneth not so,
Neither doth his heart think so;
But *it is* in his heart to destroy
And cut off nations not a few.
8 For he saith,
Are not my princes altogether kings?
9 *Is* not Calno as Carchemish?
Is not Hamath as Arpad?
Is not Samaria as Damascus?

[SYRIAN HERCULES, OR BEL.

10 As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols,

And whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria;

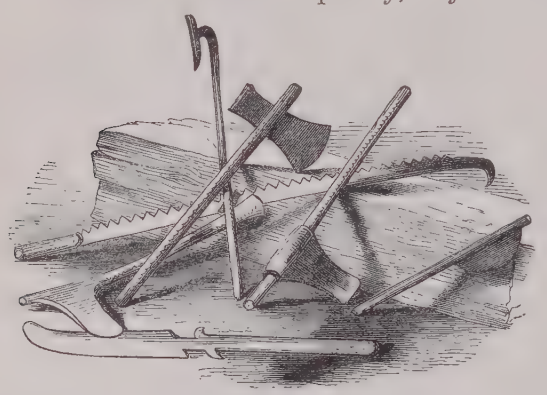
11 Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols,
So do to Jerusalem and her idols?

12 Wherefore it shall come to pass,
That when the Lord hath performed his whole work
Upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem,
I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria,
And the glory of his high looks.

13 For he saith,
By the strength of my hand I have done *it*,
And by my wisdom; for I am prudent:
And I have removed the bounds of the people,
And have robbed their treasures,
And I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant *man*:

14 And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people:
And as one gathereth eggs *that are* left.
Have I gathered all the earth;
And there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

15 Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith?
Or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it?
As if the rod should shake *itself* against them that lift it up,
Or as if the staff should lift up *itself, as if it were* no wood.



SAW, AXES, AND STAVES.

16 Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send
Among his fat ones leanness;
And under his glory he shall kindle a burning
Like the burning of a fire.

17 And the light of Israel shall be for a fire,
And his Holy One for a flame:
And it shall burn and devour his thorns
And his briers in one day;

18 And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field,
Both soul and body:
And they shall be as when a standardbearer fainteth.

19 And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few,
That a child may write them.

The destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, was foretold in the foregoing chapter, and it had its accomplishment in the sixth year of Hezekiah, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 10. It was total and final, head and tail were all cut off. Now the correction of the kingdom of Judah by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, is foretold in this chapter; and this prediction was fulfilled in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, when that potent prince, encouraged by the successes of his predecessors against the ten tribes, "came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them, and laid siege to Jerusalem," 2 *Kin.* xviii. 13, and a mighty fright we may well suppose Hezekiah and his kingdom to be in, though there was a good work of reformation lately begun among them. But it ended well, in the confusion of the Assyrians, and the great encouragement of Hezekiah and his people in their return to God. Now let us see here:

First. How God in his sovereignty deputed the king of Assyria to be his servant, and made use of him as a mere tool to serve his own purposes with; ver. 5, 6, "O Assyrian," know this, that thou art "the rod of mine anger;" and I will send thee to be a scourge to "the people of my wrath." Observe here,

1. How bad the character of the Jews is, though they appeared very good. They are a hypocritical nation, that made a profession of religion, and at this time particularly of reformation; but were not truly religious, not truly reformed, not so good as they pretended to be. Now Hezekiah had brought goodness into fashion. When rulers are pious, and so religion is in reputation, it is common for nations to be hypocritical. They are a profane nation, so some read it. Hezekiah had in a great measure cured them of their idolatry, and now they run into profaneness; nay, hypocrisy is profaneness; none profane the name of God so much as those who are called by that name, and call upon it, and yet live in sin. Being a profane, hypocritical nation, they are the people of God's wrath; they lie under his wrath, and are likely to be consumed by it. Note, Hypocritical nations are the people of God's wrath. Nothing is more offensive to God than dissimulation in religion. See what a change sin made: they that had been God's chosen and hallowed people, above all people, were now become the people of his wrath: see *Am.* iii. 2.

2. How mean the character of the Assyrian is, though he appeared very great. He is but the rod of God's anger; an instrument that God is pleased to make use of for the chastening of his people, that being thus "chastened of the Lord, they may not be condemned with the world." Note, The tyrants of the world are but the tools of Providence. Men are God's hand, his sword sometimes, to kill and slay, *Ps.* xvii. 13, 14. At other times they are his rod to correct. "The staff in their hand," wherewith they smite his people, is his indignation; it is his wrath that puts the staff into their hand, and enables them to deal blows at pleasure among such as thought themselves a match for them. Sometimes God makes an idolatrous nation, that serves him not at all, a scourge to a hypocritical nation, that serves him not in sincerity and truth. The Assyrian is called the rod of God's anger, because he is employed by him: 1st. From him his power is derived; "I will send him, I will give him a charge." Note, All the power that wicked men have, though they often use it against God, yet they always receive it from him. Pilate could have no power against Christ, unless it were given him from above, *Jno.* xix. 11. 2nd. By him the exercise of that power is directed. He is to take the spoil, and to take the prey, not to shed any blood, (we read not of any slain,) but to plunder the country, rifle the houses, and drive the cattle, and strip them of all their wealth and ornaments, and to "tread them down like the mire of the streets." When God's professing people wallow in the mire of sin, it is just with God to suffer their enemies to tread upon them like mire. But why must the Assyrian prevail thus against them? Not that they might be ruined, but that they might be thoroughly reformed.

Secondly. See how the king of Assyria in his pride magnified himself as his own master, and pretended to be absolute, and above all control; to act purely according to his own will, and for his own honour. "God ordained him for judgment," even the mighty God established him for correction," *Hab.* i. 12, to be an instrument of bringing his people to repentance; "Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so," ver. 7. He doth not think that he is either God's servant or Israel's friend; either that he can do no more than God will let him, or that he shall do no more than God will make to work for the good of his people. God designs to correct his people for, and so to cure them of, their hypocrisy, and bring them nearer to him. But was that Sennacherib's design? No, it was the farthest thing from his thoughts; "He meaneth not so." Note, 1. The wise God often makes even the sinful passions and projects of men subservient to his own great and holy purposes. 2. When God makes use of men as instruments in his hand to do his work, it is very common for him to mean one thing, and them to mean another; nay for them to mean quite contrary to what he intends. What Joseph's brethren designed for hurt God overruled for good, *Gen.* l. 20: see *Mic.* iv. 11, 12. Men have their ends, and God his; but we are sure "the counsel of the Lord that shall stand." But what is it that the proud Assyrian aims at? The heart of kings is unsearchable, but God knew what was in his heart: he designs nothing but to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few, and to make himself master of them. 1st. He designs to gratify his own cruelty; nothing will serve but to destroy and cut off. He hopes to regale himself with blood and slaughter; that of particular persons will not suffice, he must cut off nations. It is below him to deal by retail, he traffics in murders by wholesale. Nations, and those not a few, must have but one neck, which he will have the pleasure of cutting off. 2nd. He designs to gratify his own covetousness and ambition, to set up for an universal monarch, and "to gather unto him all nations," *Hab.* ii. 5. An insatiable desire of wealth and dominion is that which carries him on in this undertaking.

The prophet here brings him in vaunting and hectoring; and by his general's letter to Hezekiah, written in his name, vainglory and arrogance seem to have entered very far into the spirit and genius of the man. His haughtiness and presumption are here described very largely, and his very language copied out, partly to represent him as ridiculous, and partly to assure the people of God that he would be brought down; for that maxim generally holds true, that pride goes before destruction. It also intimates that God takes notice, and keeps an account of all men's proud and haughty words, with which they set heaven and earth at defiance. They that speak great and swelling words of vanity shall hear of them again.

First. He brags what great things he has done to other nations: 1*st.* He has made their kings his courtiers; ver. 8, "My princes are altogether kings;" that is, those that are now my princes are such as have been kings. Or, he means that he had raised his throne to that degree that his servants and those that were in command under him, were as great, and lived in as much pomp, as the kings of other countries. Or, those that were absolute princes in their own dominions held their crowns under him, and did him homage. This was a vainglorious boast; but how great is our God, whom we serve, who is indeed King of kings, and whose subjects are made to him kings? *Rev.* i. 5. 2*nd.* He has made himself master of their cities. He names several, ver. 9, that were all alike reduced by him; Calno soon yielded, as Carchemish did; Hamath could not hold out any more than Arpad; and Samaria is become his, as well as Damascus. To support his boasts, he is fain to bring the victories of his predecessor into the account; for it was he that conquered Samaria, not Sennacherib. 3*rd.* He had been too hard for their idols, their tutelar gods, and had "found out the kingdoms of the idols," and found out ways to make them his own, ver. 10. Their kingdoms took denomination from the idols they worshipped; the Moabites are called the people of Chemosh, *Jer.* xlviii. 46, because they imagined their gods were their patrons and protectors; and therefore Sennacherib vainly imagines that every conquest of a kingdom was the conquest of a god. 4*th.* He had enlarged his own dominions, and "removed the bounds of the people," ver. 13, enclosing many large territories within the limits of his own kingdom, and shifting a great way farther the ancient landmarks which his fathers had set; he could not bear to be hemmed in so close, but must have more room to thrive. By his "removing the border of the people," Mr. White understands his arbitrary transplanting of colonies from place to place, which was the constant practice of the Assyrians, in all their conquests; which is a probable interpretation. 5*th.* He had enriched himself with their wealth, and brought it into his own exchequer. "I have robbed their treasures:" in that said he truly. Great conquerors are many times no better than great robbers. 6*th.* He had mastered all the opposition he met with; "I have put down the inhabit-

ants as a valiant man." Those that sat high, and thought they sat firm, I have humbled them, and made them come down.

He brags, (1.) That he had done all this by his own policy and power; ver. 13, "By the strength of my hand, for I am valiant, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent," not by the permission of Providence and the blessing of God. He knows not that it is God that makes him what he is, and puts the staff into his hand, but "sacrificeth to his own net," *Hab.* i. 26. It is all gotten by "my might, and the power of my hand," *Deu.* viii. 17. There is downright atheism and profaneness, as well as pride and vanity, at the bottom of men's attributing their prosperity and success thus to themselves and their own conduct, and raising their own character upon it. (2.) That he had done all this with a great deal of ease, and had made but a sport and diversion of it, as if he had been taking birds' nests; ver. 14, "My hand has found a nest, the riches of the people;" and when I had found them, there was no more difficulty in taking them than in rifling a nest, nor any more reluctance or regret within his own breast, in destroying families and cities, than in destroying crows' nests; killing children was no more to him than killing birds. "As one gathereth the eggs that are left" in the nest by the dam, so easily "have I gathered all the earth." Like Alexander, he thought he had conquered the world; and whatever prey he seized, "there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped," as birds use to do when their nests are rifled; they durst not make any opposition, no, nor any complaint. Such awe did they stand in of this mighty conqueror. They were so weak that they knew it was to no purpose to resist, and he was so arbitrary that they knew it was to no purpose to complain. Strange that ever men, who were made to do good, should take a pride and take a pleasure in doing wrong and doing mischief to all about them without control, and should reckon that their glory which is their shame. But their day will come to fall who thus make themselves "the terror of the mighty," and much more of the feeble, "in the land of the living."

Secondly. He threatens what he will do to Jerusalem, which he was now about to lay siege to, ver. 10, 11. He would master Jerusalem and her idols, as he had subdued other places and their idols, particularly Samaria. 1*st.* He blasphemously calls the God of Israel an idol, and sets him on a level with the false gods of other nations, as if none were the true God but Mithras, the sun, whom he worshipped. See how ignorant he was, and then we shall the less wonder that he was so proud. 2*nd.* He prefers the graven images of other countries before those of Jerusalem and Samaria, when he might have known that the worshippers of the God of Israel were expressly forbidden to make any graven images; and if any did it must be by stealth, and therefore they could not be so rich and pompous as those of other nations. If he mean the ark and the mercy-seat, he speaks like himself, very foolishly, and as one that judged by the sight of the eye, and might therefore be easily deceived in matters of spiritual concern. Those who make external pomp and splendour a mark of the true church go by the same rule. 3*rd.* Because he had conquered Samaria, he concludes Jerusalem would fall of course, "Shall not I do so to Jerusalem?" that is, Can I not as easily, and may I not as justly? But it did not follow; for Jerusalem adhered to her God, whereas Syria had forsaken him.

Thirdly. See how God in his justice rebukes his pride and reads his doom. We have heard what the great king, the king of Assyria, saith, and how big he talks; let us now hear what the great God hath to say, by his servant the prophet, and we shall find that wherein he deals proudly God is above him.

1. He shews the vanity of his insolent and audacious boasts; ver. 15, "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that draws it?" So absurd are the brags of this proud man. O what a dust do I make! said the fly upon the cart-wheel, in the fable. What destruction do I make among the trees! saith the axe. Two ways the axe may be said to "boast itself against him that hews with it:" 1st. By way of resistance and opposition. Sennacherib blasphemed God, insulted him, threatened to serve him as he had served the gods of the nations. Now this was as if the axe should fly in the face of him that hews with it. The tool striving with the workman is no less absurd than the clay striving with the potter. And as it is a thing not to be justified, that men should fight against God with that wit, and wealth, and power which he gives them, so it is a thing not to be suffered; but if men will be thus proud and daring, and bid defiance to all that is just and sacred, let them expect that God will reckon with them; the more insolent they are the surer and sorer will their ruin be. 2nd. By way of rivalship and competition. Shall the axe take to itself the praise of the work it is employed in? So senseless, so absurd, was it for Sennacherib to say, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom," ver. 13. It is as if the rod, when it is shaken, should brag that it guides the hand that shakes it. Whereas, 'when the staff is lifted up, is it not wood still?' so the last clause may be read. If it be an ensign of authority, as the nobles of the people carried staves, *Num.* xxi. 18, if it be an instrument of service, either to support a weak man or to correct an ill man, yet still it is wood, and can do nothing but as it is directed by him that useth it. The psalmist prays that God would make the nations to know that they were but men, *Ps.* ix. 20, the staff to know that it is but wood.

2. He foretells his fall and ruin.

1st. That when God hath done his work by him, he will then do his work upon him, ver. 12. For the comfort of the people of God, in reference to Sennacherib's invasion, though it was a dismal time with them, let them know, *First.* That God designed to do good to Zion and Jerusalem by this providence. There is a work to be done upon them, which God intends, and which he will perform. Note, When God lets loose the enemies of his church and people, and suffers them for a time to prevail, it is in order to the performing of some great good work upon them, and when that is done, then, and not till then, he will work deliverance for them. When God brings his people into trouble, it is to try them, *Dan.* xi. 35, to bring sin to their remembrance and humble them for it, and to awaken them to a sense of their duty, to teach them to pray, and to love and help one another; and this must be the fruit, even the taking away of sin, *ch.* xxvii. 9. When these points are in some measure gained by the affliction, it shall be removed in mercy, *Lev.* xxvi. 41, 42, otherwise not; for as the word, so the rod, shall accomplish that for which God sends it. *Secondly.* That when God had wrought this work of grace for his people, he would work a work of wrath and vengeance upon their invaders, "I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria." His big words are here said to come from his stout heart, and they are the fruit of it, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Notice is taken too of the "glory of his high looks," for a proud look is the indication of a proud spirit. The enemies of the church are commonly very high and haughty, but sooner or later God will reckon for that. He glories in it as an incontestable proof of his power and sovereignty, that he "looks upon proud men and abaseth them," *Job* xl. 11, &c.

2nd. That how threatening soever this attempt was upon Zion and Jerusalem, it should certainly be baffled and broken, and come to nothing, and he should not be able to bring to pass his enterprise, ver. 16—19. Observe,

First. Who it is that undertakes his destruction, and will be the author of it. Not Hezekiah, or his princes, or the militia of Judah and Jerusalem; what can they do against such a potent force? but God himself will do it, as the Lord of hosts and as the light of Israel. 1*st.* We are sure he can do it, for he is Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth. All the creatures are at his command; he makes what use he pleaseth of them, and lays what restraints he pleaseth on them. He is the Lord of the hosts both of Judah and of Assyria, and can give the victory to which he pleaseth. Let us not fear the hosts of any enemy, if we have the Lord of hosts for us. 2*nd.* We have reason to hope he will do it, for he is the light of Israel and his Holy One. God is light, in him there is perfect brightness, purity, and happiness. He is light, for he is the Holy One; his holiness is his glory. He is Israel's light, to direct and counsel his people, to favour and countenance them, and so to rejoice and comfort them in the worst of times. He is their Holy One, for he is in covenant with them; his holiness is engaged and employed for them. God's holiness is the saints' comfort; they give thanks at the remembrance of it, and with a great deal of pleasure call him their Holy One, *Hab.* i. 12.

Secondly. How his destruction is represented. It shall be, 1*st.* As a consumption of the body by a disease; "The Lord shall send leanness among his fatnesses," or his fat ones. His numerous army, that was like a body covered with fatness, shall be diminished and waste away, and become like a skeleton. 2*nd.* As a consumption of buildings, or trees, and bushes by fire. Under his glory, that very thing which he glories in, he will "kindle a burning, as the burning of a fire," which shall lay his army in ruins, as suddenly as a raging fire lays a stately house in ashes. Some make it an allusion to the fire kindled under the sacrifices, for proud sinners fall as sacrifices to Divine justice. Observe, (1.) How this fire shall be kindled; ver. 17, the same God that is a rejoicing light to them that serve him faithfully will be a consuming fire to them that trifle with him, or rebel against him; the light of Israel shall be for a fire to the Assyrians, as the same pillar of cloud was a light to the Israelites and a terror to the Egyptians in the Red sea. What can oppose, what can extinguish, such a fire? (2.) What desolation it shall make. "It shall burn and devour his thorns and briars;" his officers and soldiers, which are of little worth, and vexatious to God's Israel, as thorns and briars, whose end is to be burned, and which are easily and quickly consumed by a devouring fire; *ch.* xxvii. 4, "Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle?" they will be so far from stopping the fire that they will inflame it. "I would go through them and burn them together;" they shall be devoured in one day, all cut off in an instant. When they cried, not only peace and safety, but victory and triumph, then sudden destruction came; it came surprisingly, and was completed in a little time. Even the "glory of his forest," ver. 18, the choice troops of his army, the veterans, the troops of the household, the bravest regiments he had, that he was most proud of, and depended most upon, that he valued as men do their timber-trees, the glory of their forest, or their fruit-trees, the glory of their Carmel. Those shall be but as briars and thorns before the fire; they shall be consumed, both soul and body, entirely consumed; not only a limb burned, but life taken away. Note, God is able to destroy both soul and body, and therefore we should fear him more than man, who can but kill the body; and great armies before him are but as great woods, which he can fell or fire when he pleaseth.

Thirdly. And what would be the effect of this great slaughter the prophet tells us. 1*st.* That the army would hereby be reduced to a very small number; "The rest of the trees of his forest shall be few." Very few shall escape the sword of the destroying angel, so few that there needs no artist, no muster-master, or secretary of war to take an account of them, for even a child may soon reckon the numbers of them, and write the names of them. 2*nd.* That those few that remained should be quite dispirited, "They shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth," when he either falls or flees, and his colours are taken by the enemy; this discourageth the whole army, and puts them all into confusion. Upon the whole matter we must say, "Who is able to stand before this great and holy Lord God?"

20 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the remnant of Israel,
And such as are escaped of the house of Jacob,
Shall no more again stay upon him that smote them;
But shall stay upon the LORD,
The Holy One of Israel, in truth.
21 The remnant shall return, *even* the remnant of Jacob,
Unto the mighty God.
22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea,
Yet a remnant of them shall return: [ness.
The consumption decreed shall overflow with righteous-
23 For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption,
In the midst of all the land. [even determined,

The prophet had said, ver. 12, that "the Lord would perform his whole work upon mount Zion and upon Jerusalem," by Sennacherib's invading of the land; now here we are told what that work should be, a twofold work:

First. The conversion of some, to whom this providence should be sanctified, and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, though for the present it was not joyous but grievous. These are but "a remnant," ver. 22; "the remnant of Israel," ver. 20; "the remnant of Jacob," ver. 21; but a very few in comparison with the vast numbers of the people of Israel, which were as the sand of the sea. Note, Converting work is wrought but on a remnant, who are distinguished from the rest and set apart for God. When we see how populous Israel is, how numerous the members of the visible church are, as the sand of the sea, and yet consider that of those a remnant only shall be saved, that of the many that are called there are but few chosen, we shall surely strive to enter in at the strait gate, and fear lest we seem to come short. This remnant of Israel is said to be such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, such as escaped the corruptions of the house of Jacob, and kept their integrity in times of common apostacy, and that was a fair escape. And therefore they escape the desolations of that house, and shall be preserved in safety in times of common calamity; and that also will be a fair and narrow escape, (their lives shall be given them for a prey, *Jer.* xlv. 5,) the righteous scarcely are saved. Now, 1. This remnant shall come off from all confidence in an arm of flesh; this providence shall cure them of that; they "shall no more again stay upon him that smote them," that is, shall never depend upon the Assyrians as they have done, for help against their other enemies, finding that they are themselves their worst enemies. *Ictus piscator sapit*,—'Sufferings teach caution.' They have now learned, by dear-bought experience, the folly of leaning upon that staff as a stay to them, which may

perhaps prove a staff to beat them; it is part of the covenant of a returning people, *Hos.* xiv. 3, "Assyria shall not save us." Note, By our afflictions we may learn not to make creatures our confidence. 2. They shall come home to God, to the mighty God, one of the names given to the Messiah, *ch.* ix. 6, to the Holy One of Israel. "The remnant shall return;" that was signified by the name of the prophet's son, Shear-jashub, *ch.* vii. 3, even the remnant of Jacob. They shall return after the raising of the siege of Jerusalem, not only to the quiet possession of their houses and lands, but shall return to God and to their duty; they shall repent and pray, and seek his face, and reform their lives. The remnant that escape is a returning remnant; they shall return to God and shall stay upon him. Note, Those only may with comfort stay upon God that return to him; then may we have an humble confidence in God, when we make conscience of our duty to him. They "shall stay upon the Holy One of Israel in truth," and not in pretence and profession only. This promise of the conversion and salvation of a remnant of Israel now, is applied by the apostle, *Rom.* ix. 27, to the remnant of the Jews, which at the first preaching of the Gospel received and entertained it, and sufficiently proves that it was no new thing for God to abandon to ruin a great many of the seed of Abraham, and yet preserve his promise to Abraham in full force and virtue, for so it was now. The number of the children of Israel was as the sand of the sea, according to the promise, *Gen.* xxii. 17, and yet only a remnant shall be saved.

Secondly. The consumption of others; "The Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption," ver. 23. This is not meant as that, ver. 18, of the consumption of the Assyrian army, but of the consumption of the estates and families of many of the Jews by the Assyrian army. This is taken notice of to magnify the power and goodness of God in the escape of the distinguished remnant, and to let us know what shall become of those that will not return to God; they shall be wasted away by this consumption, this general decay in the midst of the land. Observe, 1. It is a consumption of God's own making; he is the author of it, the Lord God of hosts, whom none can resist, he shall make this consumption. 2. It is decreed, it is not the product of a sudden resolve, but was before ordained; it is determined not only that there shall be such a consumption, but it is cut out, (so the word is,) it is particularly appointed how far it shall extend, and how long it shall continue, who shall be consumed by it, and who not. 3. It is an overflowing consumption that shall overspread the land, and, like a mighty torrent or inundation, bear down all before it. 4. Though it overflows, it is not at random, but in righteousness, which signifies both wisdom and equity. God will justly bring this consumption upon a provoking people, but he will wisely and graciously set bounds to it; hitherto it shall come, and no farther.

24 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts,
O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the [Assyrian:
He shall smite thee with a rod,
And shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.
25 For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease,
And mine anger in their destruction.
26 And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him
According to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb:
And *as* his rod *was* upon the sea,
So shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.
27 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder,
And his yoke from off thy neck.
And the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.
28 He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron;
At Michmash he hath laid up his carriages:
29 They are gone over the passage:
They have taken up their lodging at Geba;
Ramah is afraid;
Gibeah of Saul is fled.
30 Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim:
Cause it to be heard unto Laish,
O poor Anathoth.
31 Madmenah is removed;
The inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee.
32 As yet shall he remain at Nob that day:
He shall shake his hand *against* the mount of the daughter of Zion,
The hill of Jerusalem.
33 Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts,
Shall lop the bough with terror:
And the high ones of stature *shall be* hewn down,
And the haughty shall be humbled.
34 And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron,
And Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

The prophet in his preaching distinguisheth between the precious and the vile; for God in his providence, even in the same providence, doth so. He speaks terror in Sennacherib's invasion, to the hypocrites, that were the people of God's wrath, ver. 6; but here he speaks comfort to the sincere, that were the people of God's love. The judgment was sent for the sake of the former, the deliverance was wrought for the sake of the latter. Here is,

First. An exhortation to God's people not to be frightened at this threatening calamity, nor to be put into any confusion or consternation by it; ver. 24. Let "the sinners in Zion be afraid," *ch.* xxxiii. 14; but, "O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian." Note, It is against the mind and will of God that his people, whatever happens, should give way to that fear which has torment and amazement. They that dwell in Zion, where God dwells, and where his people attend him, and are employed in his service, that are under the protection of the bulwarks that are round about Zion, *Ps.* xlviii. 13, need not be afraid of any enemy. Let their souls dwell at ease in God.

Secondly. Considerations offered for the silencing of their fear:

1. The Assyrian shall do nothing against them but what God hath appointed and determined. They are here told beforehand what he shall do, that it may be no surprise to them; "He shall smite thee" by the Divine permission, but it shall be only with a rod to correct thee, not with a sword to wound and kill. Nay, "he shall but lift up his staff against thee," threaten thee, and frighten thee, and shake the rod at thee, "after the manner of Egypt," as the Egyptians shook their staff against your fathers at the Red sea, when they said, "We will pursue, we will overtake," *Ex.* xv. 9, but could not reach to do them any hurt. Note, We should not be frightened at those enemies that can do no more but frighten us.

2. The storm will soon blow over; ver. 25, "Yet a very little while," 'a little, little while,' so the word is, "and the indignation shall cease." Even mine anger, which is the staff in their hand, ver. 5; so that when that ceaseth they are disarmed, and disabled to do any farther mischief. Note, God's anger against his people is but for a moment, *Ps.* xxx. 5; and when that ceaseth, and is turned away from us, we need not fear the fury of any man, for it is impotent passion.

3. The enemy that threatens them shall himself be reckoned with. God's anger against his people shall cease in the destruction of their enemies; when he turns away his wrath from Israel, he shall turn it against the Assyrian, and the rod with which he corrected his people shall not only be laid aside, but thrown into the fire. He lifts up his staff against Zion, but God shall stir up a scourge for him, ver. 26; he is a terror to God's people, but God will be a terror to him: the destroying angel shall be this scourge, which he can neither flee from, nor contend with. The prophet, for the encouragement of God's people, quotes precedents; and puts them in mind of what God had done formerly against the enemies of his church that were very strong and formidable, but were brought to ruin. The destruction of the Assyrian shall be, 1st. "According to the slaughter of Midian," which was done by an invisible power, but done suddenly, and it was a total rout. And as at the rock of Oreb, one of the princes of Midian, after the battle, was slain, so shall Sennacherib be in the temple of his god Nisroch, after the defeat of his forces, when he thinks the bitterness of death is passed: compare with this, *Ps.* lxxxiii. 11, "Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb," and see how God's promises and his people's prayers agree. 2nd. "As his rod was upon the sea," the Red sea, as Moses's rod was upon that, to divide it first for the escape of Israel, and then to close it again for the destruction of their pursuers, so shall his rod now be "lifted up, after the manner of Egypt," for the deliverance of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the Assyrian. Note, It is good to observe a resemblance between God's latter and former appearances for his people, and against his and their enemies.

4. They shall be wholly delivered from the power of the Assyrian, and from the fear of it, ver. 27. They shall not only be eased of the Assyrian army, which now quartered upon them, and which was a grievous yoke and burthen to them, but they shall no more pay that tribute to the king of Assyria which before this invasion he had exacted from them, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 14; shall be no longer at his service, nor lie at his mercy as they have done, nor shall he ever again put the country under contribution. And some think it looks farther to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon; and farther yet to the redemption of believers from the tyranny of sin and Satan. The yoke shall not only be taken away, but it shall be destroyed; the enemy shall no more recover his strength to do the mischief he has done; and this "because of the anointing," for their sakes who were partakers of the anointing. 1st. For Hezekiah's sake, who was the anointed of the Lord, who had been an active reformer, and was dear to God. 2nd. For David's sake; that is particularly given as the reason why God would defend Jerusalem from Sennacherib, *ch.* xxxvii. 35, "For my own sake, and for my servant David's sake." 3rd. For his people Israel's sake; the good people among them that had received the unction of Divine grace. 4th. For the sake of the Messiah, the anointed of God; whom God had an eye to in all the deliverances of the Old Testament church, and hath still an eye to in all the favours he shews to his people; it is for his sake that the yoke is broken, and that we are made free indeed.

Thirdly. A description both of the terror of the enemy and the terror with which many were struck by it, and the folly of both exposed, ver. 28—34. Where observe,

1. How formidable the Assyrians were, and how daring and threatening they affected to appear. Here is a particular description of his march, what course he steered, what swift advances he made; "He is come to Aiath," &c. This and the other place he has made himself master of, and has met with no opposition; "At Michmash he has laid up his carriages," as if he had no farther occasion for his heavy artillery, so easily was every place he came to reduced; or, the store cities of Judah, which were fortified for that purpose, were now become his magazines. Some remarkable pass, and an important one, he had taken; "They are gone over the passage."

2. How cowardly the men of Judah were, the degenerate seed of that lion's whelp; they are afraid, they are fled upon the first alarm, and did not offer to make any head against the enemy; their apostacy from God had dispirited them, so that one chases a thousand of them. Instead of a valiant shout to animate one another, nothing was heard but lamentation to discourage and weaken one another. And poor Anathoth, a priest's city, that should have been a pattern of courage, shrieks louder than any, ver. 30; those that gathered themselves together, it was not to fight but to flee by consent, ver. 31. This is designed either, 1st. To shew how fast the news of the enemy's progress flew through the kingdom, "He is come to Aiath," saith one; Nay, saith another, "he is passed to Migron," &c. And yet, perhaps, it was not altogether so bad as common fame represented it. But we must watch against the fear, not only of evil things but of evil tidings, which often make the things worse than really they are, *Ps.* cxii. 7. Or, 2nd. To shew what imminent danger Jerusalem was in, when its enemies made so many bold advances towards it, and its friends could not make one bold stand to defend it. Note, The more daring the church's enemies are, and the more dastardly those are that should appear for her, the more will God be exalted in his own strength, when, notwithstanding this, he works deliverance for her.

3. How impotent his attempt upon Jerusalem shall be; "He shall remain at Nob," from whence he may see mount Zion, and there he shall shake his hand against it, ver. 23; he shall threaten it, and that shall be all. It shall be safe, and shall set him at defiance; the daughter of Jerusalem, to be quits with him, shall shake her head at him, *ch.* xxxvii. 21.

4. How fatal it would prove in the issue to himself. When he shakes his hand

at Jerusalem, and is about to lay hands on it, then is God's time to appear against him, for Zion is the place of which God hath said, "This is my rest for ever;" therefore those who threaten it affront God himself. Then "the Lord shall lop the bough with terror," and "cut down the thickets of the forests," ver. 33, 34. 1st. The pride of the enemy shall be humbled; the boughs that are lifted up on high shall be lopped off, the high and stately trees shall be hewn down; that is, the haughty shall be humbled. Those that lift up themselves in competition with God, or opposition to him, shall be abased. 2nd. The power of the enemy shall be broken; "The thickets of the forest" he shall cut down. When the Assyrian soldiers were under their arms, and their spears erect, they looked like a forest, like Lebanon; but when in one night they all became as dead corpses, the pikes were laid on the ground, and Lebanon was of a sudden cut down by a mighty one, namely, the destroying angel, that in a little time slew so many thousands of them. And if this shall be the exit of that proud invader, let not God's people be afraid of him. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?"

CHAPTER XI.

It is a very good transition in prophecy, (whether it be so in rhetoric or no,) and a very common one, to pass from the prediction of the temporal deliverances of the church to that of the great salvation, which, in the fulness of time, should be wrought out by Jesus Christ, of which the others were types and figures, to which all the prophets bare witness; and so the ancient Jews understood them, for what else was it that raised so great an expectation of the Messiah at the time he came? Upon occasion of the prophecy of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, here comes in a prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince, I. His rise out of the house of David, ver. 1. II. His qualifications for his great undertaking, ver. 2, 3. III. The justice and equity of his government, ver. 3—5. IV. The peaceableness of his kingdom, ver. 6—9. V. The accession of the Gentiles to it, ver. 10, and with them the remnant of the Jews, that should be united with them in the Messiah's kingdom, ver. 11—16. And of all this God would now shortly give them a type, and some dark representation, in the excellent government of Hezekiah, and the great peace which the nation should enjoy under him, after the ruin of Sennacherib's design, and the return of many of the ten tribes out of their dispersion to their brethren of the land of Judah, when they enjoyed that great tranquillity.

AND there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots:
2 And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and might,
The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;
3 And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD:
And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes,
Neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:
4 But with righteousness shall he judge the poor,
And reprove with equity for the meek of the earth:
And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,
And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.
5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins,
And faithfulness the girdle of his reins.
6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.
7 And the cow and the bear shall feed;
Their young ones shall lie down together:
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp,
And the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.
9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain:
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD,
As the waters cover the sea.

The prophet had before in this sermon spoken of a child that should be born, a son that should be given, on whose shoulders the government should be; intending this for the comfort of the people of God in times of trouble, as dying Jacob many ages before had intended the prospect of Shiloh for the comfort of his seed in their affliction in Egypt. He had said, *ch.* x. 27, that "the yoke should be destroyed because of the anointing;" now here he tells us on whom that anointing should rest. He foretells,

First. That the Messiah should in due time arise out of the house of David, as that branch of the Lord, which he had said, *ch.* iv. 2, should be excellent and glorious; the word is *Netzer*, which some think is referred to, *Mat.* ii. 23, where it is said to be spoken by the prophets of the Messiah that he "should be called a Nazarene." Observe here,

1. Whence this branch should arise; from Jesse. He should be the Son of David, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and to whom it was promised with an oath, that "of the fruit of his loins, God would raise up Christ," *Acts* ii. 30. David is often called the son of Jesse, and Christ is called so, because he was to be not only the Son of David, but David himself, *Hos.* iii. 5.

2. The meanness of his appearance. 1st. He is called "a rod," and "a branch;" both the words here used signify a weak, small, tender product, a twig, and a sprig, so some render them; such as is easily broken off. The enemies of God's church were just before compared to strong and stately boughs, *ch.* x. 33, which will not without great labour be hewn down, but Christ to a tender branch, *ch.* liii. 2; yet he shall be victorious over them. 2nd. He is said to come out of Jesse rather than David, because Jesse lived and died in meanness and obscurity; his family was of small account, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 18, and it was in a way of contempt and reproach that David was sometimes called the son of Jesse, *ch.* xxii. 7. 3rd. He comes forth out of the stem or stump of Jesse. When the royal family, that had been as a cedar, was cut down, and only the stump of it left, almost levelled with the ground, and lost in the grass of the field, *Dan.* iv. 15, yet it shall sprout again, *Job* xiv. 7. Nay, it shall grow out of his roots, that are quite buried in the earth, and, like the roots of flowers in the winter, have no stem appearing above ground. The house of David was reduced and brought very low at the time of Christ's birth; witness the obscurity and poverty of Joseph and Mary. The Messiah was thus to begin his estate of humiliation, for submitting to which he should be highly exalted, and would thus give early notice that his kingdom was not of this world. The Chaldee paraphrase reads this, 'There shall come forth a king from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah (or Christ) shall be anointed out of his sons' sons.'

Secondly. That he should be every way qualified for that great work to which he was designed; that this tender branch should be so watered with the dews of heaven as to become a strong rod for a sceptre to rule, ver. 2.

1. In general; "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him." The Holy Spirit, in all his gifts and graces, shall not only come, but rest and abide upon him; he shall have the Spirit not by measure, but without measure, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him, *Col.* i. 14, and ii. 9. He began his preaching with this, *Lu.* iv. 18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."

2. In particular; the spirit of government, by which he should be every way fitted for that judgment which the Father hath committed to him, and given him authority to execute, *Jno.* v. 22, 27. And not only so, but should be made the fountain and treasury of all grace to believers; that from his fulness they might all receive the Spirit of grace, as all the members of the body derive animal spirits from the head. 1st. He shall have "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and knowledge;" he shall thoroughly understand the business he is to be employed in; "No man knows the Father but the Son," *Mat.* xi. 27; what he is to make known to the children of men concerning God, and his mind and will, he shall be himself acquainted with, and apprised of, *Jno.* i. 18. He shall know how to administer his spiritual kingdom in all the branches of it, so as effectually to answer the two great intentions of it, the glory of God and the welfare of the children of men. The terms of the covenant shall be settled by him, and ordinances instituted, in wisdom. Treasures of wisdom shall be hid in him; he shall be our counsellor, and shall be made of God to us wisdom. 2nd. The spirit of courage, or might, or fortitude. The undertaking was very great, abundance of difficulty must be broken through, and therefore it was necessary he should be so spirited as that he "might not fail, or be discouraged," *ch.* xlii. 1. He was famed for courage in his teaching the way of God in truth, and not caring for any man, *Mat.* xxii. 16. 3rd. The spirit of religion, or the fear of the Lord. Not only he shall himself have a reverent affection for his Father, as his servant, *ch.* xlii. 1, ("and he was heard in that he feared," *Heb.* v. 7,) but he shall have a zeal for religion, and shall design the advancement of that in his whole undertaking. Our faith in Christ was never designed to supersede and jostle out, but to increase and support, our fear of the Lord.

Thirdly. That he should be accurate and critical, and very exact in the administration of his government, and the exercise of the power committed to him, ver. 3. The Spirit wherewith he shall be clothed, "shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord;" of an acute smell, or scent, so the word is; for the apprehensions of the mind are often expressed by the sensations of the body. Note, 1. Those are most truly and valuably intelligent, that are so "in the fear of the Lord;" in the business of religion, for that is both the foundation and topstone of wisdom. 2. By this it will appear that we have the Spirit of God, if we have spiritual senses exercised, and are "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Those have Divine illumination that know their duty, and know how to go about it. 3. Therefore Jesus Christ had the Spirit without measure, that he might perfectly understand his undertaking; and he did so, as appears not only in the admirable answers he gave to all that questioned with him, which spoke him to be "of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord;" but in the management of his whole undertaking. He hath settled the great affair of religion so unexceptionably well, (so as effectually to secure both God's honour and man's happiness,) that it must be owned he thoroughly understood it.

Fourthly. That he should be just and righteous in all the acts of his government, and there should appear in it as much equity as wisdom. He shall judge, (as he expresseth it himself, and as he himself would be judged of, *Jno.* vii. 24,)

1. Not according to outward appearance, ver. 3. "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes," with respect of persons, *Job* xxxiv. 19; and according to outward shows and appearances, "nor reprove after the hearing of his ears," by common fame and report, and the representations of others, as men use to do; nor doth he judge of men by the fair words they speak, "calling him Lord, Lord," or their plausible actions before the eye of the world, which they do to be seen of men; but he will judge by the hidden man of the heart, and the inward principle men are governed by, which he is an infallible witness of. Christ will judge the secrets of men, *Rom.* ii. 16; will determine concerning them, not according to their own pretensions and appearances—that were to "judge after the sight of the eyes;" not according to the opinion others have of them—that were to judge after the hearing of the ears; but we are sure that "his judgment is according to truth."

2. But he will judge righteous judgment, ver. 5. "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins." He shall be righteous in the administration of his government, and his righteousness shall be his girdle; that is, it shall constantly compass him, and cleave to him, it shall be his ornament and honour; he shall gird himself for every action, shall gird on his sword for war in righteousness; his righteousness shall be his strength, and shall make him expeditious in his undertakings, as a man with his loins girt. In conformity to Christ, his followers must have the girdle of truth, *Eph.* vi. 14; and it will be the stability of the times. Particularly,

1st. He shall in righteousness plead for the people that are poor and oppressed. He will be their protector; ver. 4, "With righteousness shall he judge the poor;" shall judge in favour and defence of those that have right on their side, though they are poor in the world, and because they are poor in spirit. It is the duty of princes to defend and deliver the poor, *Ps.* lxxxii. 3, 4; and the honour of Christ that he is the poor man's king, *Ps.* lxxii. 2, 4. 'He shall debate with evenness for the meek of the earth,' or, 'of the land.' Those that bear the injuries done them with meekness and patience are in a special manner entitled to the Divine care and protection; "I as a deaf man heard not, for thou wilt hear," *Ps.* xxxviii. 13, 14. Some read it, 'He shall reprove, or correct the meek of the earth with equity.' If his own people, the meek of the land, do amiss, he will visit their transgression with the rod.

2nd. He shall in righteousness plead against his enemies that are proud and oppressors; ver. 4, "But he shall smite the earth," the man of the earth that doth oppress: see *Ps.* x. 18. The men of the world that mind earthly things only, *Ps.* xvii. 14; these he shall smite "with the rod of his mouth," that is, the

word of his mouth, speaking terror and ruin to them. His threatenings shall take hold of them, and be executed upon them; "with the breath of his lips," by the operation of his Spirit, according to the word, and working with and by it, he shall slay the wicked. He will do it easily, with a word's speaking, as he laid those flat who came to seize him by saying, "I am he," *Jno.* xviii. 6. Killing terrors shall arrest their consciences; killing judgments shall ruin them, their power, and all their interests; and in the other world everlasting tribulation will be recompensed to those that trouble his poor people. The apostle applies this to the destruction of the man of sin, whom he calls that wicked, 2 *Thes.* ii. 8, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth." And the Chaldee here reads it, 'He shall slay that wicked Romulus,' or Rome, as Mr. Hugh Broughton understands it.

Fifthly. That there should be great peace and tranquillity under his government. This is an explication of what was said, *ch.* ix. 6, that he should be the Prince of peace. Peace signifies two things:

1. Unity and concord. And that is intimated in these figurative promises, that even "the wolf shall dwell" peaceably "with the lamb." Men of the most fierce and furious dispositions, that used to bite and devour all about them, shall have their temper so strangely altered by the efficacy of the Gospel and grace of Christ, that they shall live in love even with the weakest, and such as formerly they would have made an easy prey of. So far shall the sheep be from hurting one another, as sometimes they have done, *Eze.* xxxiv. 20, 21, that even the wolves shall agree with them. Christ, who is our peace, came to slay all enmities, and to settle lasting friendships among his followers, particularly between Jews and Gentiles. When multitudes of both, being converted to the faith of Christ, united in one sheepfold, then the wolf and the lamb dwelt together; the wolf did not so much as threaten the lamb, nor was the lamb afraid of the wolf. "The leopard" shall not only not tear the kid, but "shall lie down with her;" even "their young ones shall lie down together," and shall be trained up in a blessed amity, in order to the perpetuating of it. "The lion" shall cease to be ravenous, and "shall eat straw like the ox;" as some think all the beasts of prey did before the fall. The asp and the cockatrice shall cease to be venomous, so that parents shall let their children play with them, and put their hands among them. A generation of vipers shall become a seed of saints; and the old complaint of *homo homini lupus*,—'man is a wolf to man,' shall be at an end. They that inhabit the holy mountain shall live as amicably as the creatures did that were with Noah in the ark; and it shall be a means of their preservation, for they shall not hurt or destroy one another as they have done. Now, 1st. This is fulfilled in the wonderful effect of the Gospel upon the minds of those that sincerely embrace it; it changes the nature, and makes those that trampled on the meek of the earth not only meek like them, but loving to them. When Paul, that had persecuted the saints, joined himself to them, then the wolf dwelt with the lamb. 2nd. Some are willing to hope it shall yet have a farther accomplishment in the latter days, when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares.

2. Safety and security. Christ the great Shepherd shall take such care of his flock, that those who would hurt them shall not; they shall not only not destroy one another, but no enemy from without shall be permitted to give them any molestation; the property of troubles, and of death itself, shall be so altered, that they shall not do any real hurt to, much less shall they be the destruction of, any that have their conversation in the holy mountain, 1 *Pet.* iii. 13. Who or what can harm us, if we be followers of him that is good? God's people shall be delivered not only from evil, but from the fear of it; even "the sucking child shall," without any terror, "play upon the hole of the asp." Blessed Paul doth so when he saith, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" and, "O death, where is thy sting?"

Lastly. Observe what shall be the effect, and what the cause, of this wonderful softening and sweetening of men's tempers, by the grace of God. 1. The effect of it shall be tractableness, and a willingness to receive instruction; "A little child shall lead them," who formerly scorned to be controlled by the strongest man. Calvin understands it of their willing submission to the ministers of Christ, who are to instruct with meekness, and not to use any coercive power, but to be as little children, *Mat.* xviii. 3: see 2 *Cor.* viii. 5. 2. The cause of it shall be the knowledge of God. The more there is of that, the more there is of a disposition to peace They shall thus live in love, "for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord," which shall extinguish men's heats and animosities. The better acquainted we are with the God of love, the more shall we be "changed into the same image," and the better affected shall we be to all those that bear his image. The earth shall be as full of his knowledge as the channels of the sea are with water; so broad and extensive shall this knowledge be, and so far shall it spread; and so deep and substantial shall this knowledge be, and so long shall it last. There is much more of the knowledge of God to be got by the Gospel of Christ than could be got by the law of Moses; and whereas then in Judah only was God known, now all shall know him, *Heb.* viii. 11. But that is knowledge falsely so called which sows discord among men; the right knowledge of God settles peace.

10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse,
Which shall stand for an ensign of the people;
To it shall the Gentiles seek:
And his rest shall be glorious.
11 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the Lord shall set his hand again the second time
To recover the remnant of his people,
Which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt,
And from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam,
And from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.
12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations,
And shall assemble the outcasts of Israel,
And gather together the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.
13 The envy also of Ephraim shall depart,
And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off:
Ephraim shall not envy Judah,
And Judah shall not vex Ephraim.
14 But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west;
They shall spoil them of the east together:
They shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab;
And the children of Ammon shall obey them.
15 And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; [the river,
And with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over
And shall smite it in the seven streams,
And make *men* go over dryshod. [people,
16 And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his
Which shall be left, from Assyria;
Like as it was to Israel
In the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

We have here a farther prophecy of the enlargement and advancement of the kingdom of the Messiah, under the type and figure of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah, in the latter end of Hezekiah's reign, after the defeat of Sennacherib.

First. This prediction was in part accomplished when the great things God did for Hezekiah and his people proved as an ensign, inviting the neighbouring nations to them, to "inquire of the wonders done in the land," on which errand the king of Babylon's ambassadors came. To them the Gentiles sought, and Jerusalem, the rest or habitation of the Jews, was then glorious, ver. 10. Then many of the Israelites that belonged to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who, upon the destruction of that kingdom by the king of Assyria, were forced to flee for shelter into all the countries about, and to some that lay very remote, even to the islands of the sea, were encouraged to return to their own country, and put themselves under the protection and government of the king of Judah; the rather because it was an Assyrian army by which their country had been ruined, and that was now routed. This is said to be a recovery of them the second time, ver. 11, such an instance of the power and goodness of God, and such a reviving to them as their first deliverance out of Egypt was. Then the outcasts of Israel should be gathered in, and brought home, and those of Judah too, who, upon the approach of the Assyrian army, shifted for their own safety. Then the old feud between Ephraim and Judah shall be forgotten, and they shall join against the Philistines, and other their common enemies, ver. 13, 14. Note, Those who have been sharers with each other in afflictions and mercies, dangers and deliverances, in consideration thereof ought to unite for their joint and mutual safety and protection. And then it is likely to be well with the church, when Ephraim and Judah are one against the Philistines. Then, whatever difficulties there may be in the way of the return of the dispersed, the Lord shall find out some way or other to remove them, as when he brought Israel out of Egypt he dried up the Red sea, and Jordan, ver. 15, and led them to Canaan through the invincible embarrassments of a vast howling wilderness, ver. 16. The like will he do this second time, or that which shall be equivalent. When God's time is come for the deliverance of his people, mountains of opposition shall become plain before him. Let us not despair, therefore, when the interests of the church seem to be brought very low, God can soon turn gloomy days into glorious ones.

Secondly. It had a farther reference to the days of the Messiah, and the accession of the Gentiles to his kingdom; for to that the apostle applies ver. 10, of which the following verses are a continuation, *Rom.* xv. 12, "There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust." That is a key to this prophecy, which speaks of Christ as the root of Jesse, that is, a branch out of his roots; ver. 1, a "root out of a dry ground," *ch.* liii. 2. He is the "root of David," *Rev.* v. 5; the "root and offspring of David," *Rev.* xxii. 16.

1. He shall "stand," or be set up, "for an ensign of the people." When he was crucified, he was "lifted up from the earth," that, as an ensign or beacon, he might draw the eyes and hearts of all men unto him, *Jno.* xii. 32. He is "set up as an ensign" in the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, in which the ministers, as standard-bearers, display the banner of his love, to allure us to him, *Cant.* i. 4; the banner of his truth, under which we may list ourselves, to engage in a holy war against sin and Satan. Christ is the ensign to whom the children of God that were scattered abroad are gathered together, *Jno.* xi. 52, and in whom they meet as the centre of their unity.

2. "To him shall the Gentiles seek." We read of Greeks that did so, *Jno.* xii. 21, "We would see Jesus;" and upon that occasion Christ spoke of his being lifted up, to draw all men to him. The apostle from the Septuagint, (or perhaps the Septuagint from the apostle, in the editions after Christ,) *Rom.* xv. 12, reads it, "In him shall the Gentiles trust;" they shall seek to him with a dependence on him.

3. "His rest shall be glorious." Some understand it of the death of Christ; the triumphs of the cross made even that glorious. Others of his ascension, when he sat down to rest at the right hand of God. Or, rather, it is meant of the gospel church, that mount Zion of which Christ hath said, "This is my rest," and in which he resides. This, though despised by the world, having upon it the beauty of holiness, is truly glorious; "a glorious high throne," *Jer.* xvii. 12.

4. Both Jews and Gentiles shall be gathered to him, ver. 11. A remnant of both, a little remnant in comparison, which shall be recovered as it were with great difficulty and hazard. As formerly God delivered his people, and gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered, *Ps.* cvi. 47, *Jer.* xvi. 15, 16, so he will a second time, in another way, by the powerful working of the Spirit of grace with the word. He shall "set his hand" to do it; that is, he shall exert his power, the arm of the Lord shall be revealed to do it. 1st. There shall be a remnant of the Jews gathered in, the "outcasts of Israel," and the "dispersed of Judah," ver. 12, who, at the time of the bringing of them in to Christ, were many of them Jews of the dispersion, the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad, *Jas.* i. 1; 1 *Pet.* i. 1. These shall flock to Christ, and probably more of those scattered Jews were brought into the church in proportion, than of those which remained in their own land. 2nd. Many of the nations, the Gentiles, shall be brought in by the lifting up of the ensign. Jacob foretold concerning Shiloh, that "to him should the gathering of the people be." Those that were strangers and foreigners shall be made nigh. The Jews were jealous of Christ's going to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and of his teaching the Gentiles, *Jno.* vii. 35.

5. There shall be a happy accommodation between Judah and Ephraim, and both shall be safe from their adversaries, and have dominion over them,

ver. 13, 14. The coalescence between Judah and Israel at that time was a type and figure of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, who had been so long at variance. "The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel," *Jer.* iii. 18, and become one nation, *Eze.* xxxvii. 22; so the Jews and Gentiles are made of "twain one new man," *Eph.* ii. 15; and being at peace one with another, those that are adversaries to them both, shall be cut off; for they shall "fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines," as an eagle strikes at her prey, shall spoil them on the west side of them, and then they shall extend their conquests eastward, over the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites; that is, the gospel of Christ shall be successful in all parts, and some of all nations shall become obedient to the faith.

6. Every thing that might hinder the progress and success of the Gospel shall be taken out of the way; as when God brought Israel out of Egypt, he dried up the Red sea and Jordan before them, *ch.* lxiii. 11, 12, and as afterwards when he brought up the Jews out of Babylon, he prepared them their way, *ch.* lxii. 10; so when Jews and Gentiles are to be brought together into the gospel church, all obstructions shall be removed, ver. 15, 16; difficulties that seemed insuperable shall be strangely got over; "the blind shall be led by a way that they knew not:" see *ch.* xlii. 15, 16, and xliii. 19, 20. Converts shall be brought in chariots and in litters, *ch.* lxvi. 20. Some think it is the farther accession of multitudes to the church that is pointed at in that obscure prophecy of the drying up of the river Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared, *Rev.* xvi. 12, which seems to refer to this here. Note, When God's time is come for the bringing of nations or particular persons home to himself, Divine grace will be victorious over all opposition. At the presence of the Lord the sea shall flee, and Jordan be driven back; and those who set their faces heavenward will find there are not such difficulties in the way as they thought there were, for there is a highway thither, *ch.* xxxv. 8.

CHAPTER XII.

The salvation promised in the foregoing chapter was compared to that of Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt, so that chapter ends; now as Moses and the children of Israel then sang a song of praise to the glory of God, *Ex.* xv. 1, so shall the people of God do in that day when the root of Jesse shall stand for an ensign of the people, and shall be the desire and joy of all nations. In that day, I. Every particular believer shall sing a song of praise for his own interest in that salvation, ver. 1—3; "Thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee." Thanksgiving work shall be closet work. II. Many in concert shall join in praising God for the common benefit arising from this salvation, ver. 4—6; "Ye shall say, Praise ye the Lord." Thanksgiving work shall be congregation work, and the praises of God shall be publicly sung in the congregations of the upright.

1 AND in that day thou shalt say,
O LORD, I will praise thee: [away,
Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned
And thou comfortedst me.
2 Behold, God *is* my salvation;
I will trust, and not be afraid:
For the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song;
He also is become my salvation. [salvation.
3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of

This is the former part of the hymn of praise which is prepared for the use of the church, of the Jewish church, when God would work great deliverances for them; and of the Christian church, when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up in the world in despite of the opposition of the powers of darkness. "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee." The scattered church being united into one body, shall as one man, with one mind, and one mouth, thus praise God, who is one, and his name one. "In that day," when the Lord shall do these great things for thee, "thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee;" that is, 1. Thou shalt have cause to say so. The promise is sure, and the blessings contained in it are very rich; and when they are bestowed will furnish the church with abundant matter for rejoicing, and therefore with abundant matter for thanksgiving. The Old Testament prophecies of gospel times are often expressed by the joy and praise that shall then be; for the inestimable benefits we enjoy by Jesus Christ require the most elevated and enlarged thanksgivings. 2. Thou shalt have a heart to say so. All God's other gifts to his people shall be crowned with this. He will give them grace to ascribe all the glory of them to him, and to speak of them upon all occasions with thankfulness to his praise. "Thou shalt say," that is, thou oughtest to say so. "In that day," when many are brought home to Jesus Christ, and flock to him as doves to their windows, instead of envying the kind reception they find with Christ, as the Jews grudged the favour shewed to the Gentiles, thou shalt say, "O Lord, I will praise thee." Note, We ought to rejoice in, and give thanks for, the grace of God to others, as well as to ourselves.

First. Believers are here taught to give thanks to God for the turning away of his displeasure from them, and the return of his favour to them; ver. 1, "O Lord, I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me." Note, Even God's frowns must not put us out of tune for praising him; though he be angry with us, though he slay us, yet we must put our trust in him, and give him thanks. God has often just cause to be angry with us, but we have never any reason to be angry with him, nor to speak otherwise than well of him. Even when he blames us, we must praise him; "Thou wast angry with us, but thine anger is turned away." Note, 1. God is sometimes angry with his own people, and the fruits of his anger do appear, and they ought to take notice of it, that they may humble themselves under his mighty hand. 2. Though God may for a time be angry with his people, yet his anger shall at length be turned away; it endures but for a moment, nor will he contend for ever. By Jesus Christ, the root of Jesse, God's anger against mankind was turned away, for he is our peace. 3. Those whom God is reconciled to he comforts; even the turning away of his anger is a comfort to them; yet that is not all, they that are at peace with God, may "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," *Rom.* v. 1, 2. Nay, God sometimes brings his people into a wilderness, that there he may speak comfortably to them, *Hos.* ii. 14. 4. The turning away of God's anger, and the return of his comforts to us, ought to be the matter of our joyful, thankful praises.

Secondly. They are taught to triumph in God, and their interest in him; ver. 2, "Behold," and wonder, "God is my salvation;" not only my Saviour, by whom I am saved; but "my salvation," in whom I am safe. I depend upon him as my salvation, for I have found him to be so. He shall have the glory of all the salvations that have been wrought for me, and from him only will I expect the salvations I farther need, and not from hills and mountains. And if God be my salvation, if he undertake my eternal salvation, I will trust in him to prepare me for it, and preserve me to it. I will trust him with all my temporal concerns, not doubting but he will make all to work for my good. I will be confident; that is, I will be always easy in my own mind. Note, Those that have God for their salvation may enjoy themselves with a holy security and serenity of mind. Let faith in God as our salvation be effectual, 1. To silence our fears. We must trust, and not be afraid; not be afraid that the God we trust in will fail us; no, there is no danger of that; not be afraid of any creature, though never so formidable and threatening. Note, Faith in God is a sovereign remedy against disquieting, tormenting fears. 2. To support our hopes. Is the Lord Jehovah our salvation? then he will be our strength and song. We have work to do, and temptations to resist, and we may depend upon him to enable us for both; to "strengthen us with all might by his Spirit in the inner man," for he is our strength; his grace is so, and that grace shall be sufficient for us. We have many troubles to undergo, and must expect griefs in a vale of tears; and we may depend upon him to comfort us in all our tribulations, for he is our song, he "giveth songs in the night." If we make God our strength, and put our confidence in him, he will be our strength; if we make him our song, and place our comfort in him, he will be our song. Many good Christians have God for their strength who have him not for their song; they walk in darkness, but light is sown for them; and they that have God for their strength ought to make him their song; that is, to give him the glory of it, (see *Ps.* lxviii. 35,) and to take to themselves the comfort of it, for he will become their salvation. Observe the title here given to God, Jah, Jehovah. Jah is the contraction of Jehovah, and both signify his eternity and unchangeableness, which are a great comfort to those that depend upon him as their strength and their song. Some make Jah to signify the Son of God made man; he is Jehovah, and in him we may glory as our strength, and song, and salvation.

Thirdly. They are taught to derive comfort to themselves from the love of God, and all the tokens of that love, ver. 3. Therefore, because the Lord Jehovah is your strength and song, and will be your salvation, you shall draw water with joy. Note, The assurances God hath given us of his love, and the experiences we have had of the benefit and comfort of his grace, should greatly encourage our faith in him, and our expectations from him; "Out of the wells of salvation" in God, who is the fountain of all good to his people, you shall draw water with joy. God's favour shall flow forth to you, and you shall have the comfort of it, and make use of the blessed fruits of it. Note, 1. God's promises revealed, ratified, and given out to us in his ordinances, are "wells of salvation." Wells of the Saviour, so some read it; for in them the Saviour and salvation are made known to us, and made over to us. 2. It is our duty, by faith, to draw water out of these wells, to take to ourselves the benefit and comfort that is treasured up for us in them, as those that acknowledge all our fresh springs to be there, and all our fresh streams to be thence, *Ps.* lxxxvii. 7. 3. Water is to be drawn out of the wells of salvation with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. It is the will of God that we should rejoice before him, and rejoice in him, *Deu.* xxvi. 11, be joyful in his house of prayer, *ch.* lvi. 7, and keep his feasts with gladness, *Acts* ii. 46.

4 And in that day shall ye say,
Praise the LORD,
Call upon his name,
Declare his doings among the people,
Make mention that his name is exalted.
5 Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things:
This *is* known in all the earth.
6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion:
For great *is* the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

This is the second part of this evangelical song, and to the same purpose with the former. There believers stir up themselves to praise God, here they invite and encourage one another to do it, and are contriving to spread his praise, and draw in others to join with them in it. Observe,

First. Who are here called upon to praise God. The inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem, whom God had in a peculiar manner protected from Sennacherib's violence, ver. 6. Those that have received distinguishing favours from God ought to be most forward and zealous in praising of him. The gospel church is Zion, Christ is Zion's king; those that have a place and name in that should lay out themselves to diffuse the knowledge of Christ, and to bring many to him. "Thou inhabitress of Zion;" the word is feminine. Let the weaker sex be strong in the Lord, and out of their mouth praise shall be perfected.

Secondly. How they must praise the Lord. 1. By prayer, "Call upon his name." As giving thanks for former mercy is a decent way of begging farther mercy, so begging farther mercy is graciously accepted as a thankful acknowledgment of the mercies we have received. In calling upon God's name, we give unto him some of the glory that is due to his name as our powerful and bountiful benefactor. 2. By preaching and writing we must not only speak to God, but speak to others concerning him; not only "call upon his name," but (as the margin reads it) 'proclaim his name;' let others know something more from us than they did before concerning God, and those things whereby he has made himself known. "Declare his doings," his 'counsels,' so some read it. The work of redemption is according to the counsel of his will, and in that and other wonderful works that he hath done, we must take notice of his "thoughts which are to usward," *Ps.* xl. 5. Declare these "among the people," among the heathen, that they may be brought into communion with Israel, and the God of Israel. When the apostles preached the Gospel to "all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," then this scripture was fulfilled, that his doings should be declared among the people, and that what he hath done should be known in all the earth. 3. By a holy exultation and transport of joy. "Cry out and shout," welcome the Gospel to yourselves, and publish it to others, with huzzas and loud acclamations, as those that "shout for victory," *Ex.* xxxii. 18, or for the coronation of a king, *Num.* xxiii. 21.

Thirdly. For what they must praise the Lord. 1. Because he hath glorified himself. Remember it yourselves, and make mention of it to others, that his name is exalted, is become more illustrious and more conspicuous, and every good man rejoiceth in that. 2. Because he hath magnified his people; he "hath done excellent things" for them, which makes them look great and considerable. 3. Because he is, and will be, great among them. "Great is the Holy One," for he is glorious in holiness; therefore great because holy: true goodness is true greatness. Great as the Holy One of Israel; and in the midst of them; praised by them, *Ps.* lxxvi. 1; manifesting himself among them, and appearing gloriously in their behalf. It is the honour and happiness of Israel that the God that is in covenant with them, and in the midst of them, is infinitely great,

CHAPTER XIII.

Hitherto the prophecies of this book were only concerning Judah and Israel, and Jerusalem especially; but now the prophet begins to look abroad, and to read the doom of divers of the neighbouring states and kingdoms; for he that is King of saints is also King of nations, and rules in the affairs of the children of men as well as in those of his own children. But the nations to whom these prophecies do relate, were all such as the people of God were some way or other conversant and concerned with; such as had been kind or unkind to Israel, and accordingly God would deal with them, either in favour or in wrath; for the Lord's portion is his people, and to them he hath an eye in all the dispensations of his providence concerning those about them, *Deu.* xxxii. 8, 9. And the threatenings we find here against Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Tyre, &c., were intended for comfort to those in Israel that feared God, but were terrified and oppressed by those potent neighbours, and for startling to those among them that were wicked. If God would thus severely reckon with those for their sins that knew him not, and made no profession of his name, how severe would he be with those that were called by his name, and yet live in rebellion against him? And perhaps the directing of particular prophecies to the neighbour nations might invite some of those nations to the reading of the Jews' Bible, and so they might be brought to their religion. This chapter, and that which follows, contains what God had to say to Babylon and Babylon's king, who were at present little known to Israel, but would in process of time become a greater enemy to them than any other had been, for which God would at last reckon with them. In this chapter we have, I. A general rendezvous of the forces that were to be employed against Babylon, ver. 1—5. II. The dreadful bloody work that those forces should make in Babylon, ver. 6—18. III. The utter ruin and desolation of Babylon which this should end in, ver. 19—22.

THE burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.

2 Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain,
Exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand,
That they may go into the gates of the nobles.
3 I have commanded my sanctified ones,
I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger,
Even them that rejoice in my highness,
4 The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; [together:
A tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered
The LORD of hosts mustereth the host of the battle.
5 They come from a far country,
From the end of heaven,
Even the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation,
To destroy the whole land.

The general title of this book was, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz," *ch.* i. 1. This here is that which Isaiah did see, which was represented to his mind as clearly and fully as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. But the particular inscription of this sermon is, "The burden of Babylon." 1. It is a "burden," a lesson they were to learn. So some understand it; but they would be loath to learn, and it would be as a burthen to their memories; or, a load which should lie heavy upon them, and under which they should sink. Those that will not make the word of God their rest, *ch.* xxviii. 12, *Jer.* vi. 16, it shall be made a burthen to them. 2. It is the burthen of Babylon, or Babel, which at this time was a dependent upon the Assyrian monarchy, (the metropolis of which was Nineveh,) but soon after revolted from it, and became a monarchy of itself, and a very potent one, in Nebuchadnezzar. This prophet afterwards foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, *ch.* xxxix. 6. Here he foretells the reprisal God would make upon Babylon for the wrongs done to his people.

In these verses summons are given to those powerful and warlike nations, whom God would make use of as the instruments of his wrath for the destruction of Babylon. He afterwards names them, ver. 17, the Medes, who, in conjunction with the Persians under the command of Darius and Cyrus, were the ruin of the Babylonian monarchy.

First. The place doomed to destruction is Babylon. It is here called "the gates of the nobles," ver. 2, because of the abundance of noblemen's houses that were in it; stately ones and richly furnished, which would invite the enemy to come, in hopes of a rich booty. The gates of nobles were strong and well-guarded, and yet they would be no fence against those who come with commission to execute God's judgments. Before his power and wrath palaces are no more than cottages. Nor is it only "the gates of the nobles," but "the whole land" that is doomed to destruction, ver. 5; for, though the nobles were the leaders in persecuting and oppressing God's people, yet "the whole land" concurred with them in it.

Secondly. The persons brought together to lay Babylon waste, are here called, 1. God's "sanctified ones," ver. 3, designed for this service, and set apart to it by the purpose and providence of God; disengaged from other projects, that they might wholly apply themselves to this; such as were qualified for that to which they were called; for what work God employs men in he doth in some measure fit them for. It intimates likewise, that in God's intention, though not in theirs, it was a holy war; they designed only the enlargement of their own empire, but God designed the release of his people, and a type of the destruction of the New Testament Babylon. Cyrus, the person principally concerned, was justly called a sanctified one, for he was God's anointed, *ch.* xlv. 1, and a figure of him that was to come. It is pity but all soldiers, especially those that fight the Lord's battles, should be, in the strictest sense, sanctified ones; and a wonder they dare be profane ones, who carry their lives in their hands. 2. They are called God's "mighty ones," because they had their might from God, and were now to use it for him. It is said of Cyrus, that in this expedition God "held his right hand," *ch.* xlv. 1. God's sanctified ones are his mighty ones; whom God calls he qualifies, and whom he makes holy he makes strong in spirit. 3. They are said to rejoice in his highness; that is, to serve his glory, and the purposes of it, with great alacrity. Though Cyrus did not know God, nor actually design his honour in what he did, yet God used him as his servant, (*ch.* xlv. 4, "I have surnamed thee" as my servant, "though thou hast not known me,") and he rejoiced in those successes by which God exalted his own name. 4. They are very numerous. "A multitude," "a great people," "kingdoms of nations," ver. 4, not rude and barbarous, but modelled and regular troops, such as used to be furnished out by well-ordered kingdoms. The great God hath hosts at his command. 5. They are far-fetched; they come "from the end of heaven." The vast country of Assyria lay between Babylon and Persia. God can make those a scourge and ruin to his enemies that lie most remote from them, and therefore are least dreaded.

Thirdly. The summons given them is effectual, their obedience ready, and they make a very formidable appearance. A banner is lifted up upon the high mountain, ver. 2. God's standard is set up, a flag of defiance hung out against Babylon. It is erected on high, where all may see it; whoever will may come and list themselves under it, and they shall be taken immediately into God's pay. They that beat for volunteers must "exalt the voice" in making proclamation to encourage soldiers to come in; they must "shake the hand" to beckon those at a distance, and to animate those that have listed themselves. And they shall not do this in vain. God has commanded and called those whom he designs to make use of, ver. 3; and power goes along with his calls and commands, which cannot be resisted. He that makes men able to serve him can, when he pleaseth, make them willing too. It is the Lord of hosts that "mustereth the host of the battle," ver. 4. He raiseth them, brings them together, puts them in order, reviews them, has an exact account of them in his muster-roll, sees that they be all in their respective posts, and gives them their necessary orders. Note, All the hosts of war are under the command of the Lord of hosts. And that which makes them truly formidable is, that when they come against Babylon the Lord comes, and brings them with him as the "weapons of his indignation," ver. 5. Note, Great princes and armies are but tools in God's hand, weapons that he is pleased to make use of in doing his work, and it is his wrath that arms them and gives them success.

6 Howl ye; for the day of the LORD *is* at hand;
It shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.
7 Therefore shall all hands be faint,
And every man's heart shall melt:
8 And they shall be afraid:
Pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them;
They shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth:
They shall be amazed one at another;
Their faces *shall be as* flames.
9 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh,
Cruel both with wrath and fierce anger,
To lay the land desolate:
And he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.
10 For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof
Shall not give their light:
The sun shall be darkened in his going forth,
And the moon shall not cause her light to shine.
11 And I will punish the world for *their* evil,
And the wicked for their iniquity;
And I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease,
And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.
12 I will make a man more precious than fine gold;
Even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.
13 Therefore I will shake the heavens,
And the earth shall remove out of her place,
In the wrath of the LORD of hosts,
And in the day of his fierce anger.
14 And it shall be as the chased roe,
And as a sheep that no man taketh up:
They shall every man turn to his own people,
And flee every one into his own land.
15 Every one that is found shall be thrust through;
And every one that is joined *unto them* shall fall by the sword. [eyes;
16 Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their
Their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.
17 Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them,
Which shall not regard silver;
And *as for* gold, they shall not delight in it.
18 *Their* bows also shall dash the young men to pieces;
And they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb;
Their eye shall not spare children.

We have here a very elegant and lively description of the terrible confusion and desolation which should be made in Babylon by the descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon it. They that were now secure and easy are bid to howl, and make sad lamentation; for,

First. God is about to appear in wrath against them; and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. "The day of the Lord is at hand," ver. 6; a little day of judgment, when God will act as a just avenger of his own and his people's injured cause. And there are those who will have reason to tremble when that day is at hand. "The day of the Lord cometh," ver. 9. Men have their day now, and they think to carry the day; but God laughs at them, for he sees that "his day is coming," *Ps.* xxxvii. 13. Fury is not with God, and yet his day of reckoning with the Babylonians is said to be cruel with wrath and fierce

anger. God will deal in severity with them for the severities they exercised upon God's people. "With the froward," with the cruel, he "will shew himself froward," will shew himself cruel, and give the bloodthirsty blood to drink.

Secondly. Their hearts shall fail them, and they shall have neither courage nor comfort left them; shall not be able either to resist the judgment coming or to bear up under it, either to oppose the enemy or support themselves, ver. 7, 8. They that in the day of their peace were proud, and haughty, and terrible, ver. 11, when trouble comes are quite dispirited, and are at their wit's end. "All hands shall be faint," and unable to hold a weapon, "and every man's heart shall melt," so that they shall be ready to die for fear. The pangs of their fear shall be like those of a woman in hard labour, and "they shall be amazed one at another;" in frightening themselves they shall frighten one another; they shall wonder to see those tremble that used to be bold and daring. Or, they shall be amazed, looking one at another, as men at a loss, *Gen.* xlii. 1. "Their faces shall be as flames," pale as flames through fear, so some; or red as flames sometimes are, blushing at their own cowardice. Or, their faces shall be as faces scorched with the flame, or as theirs that labour in the fire, their visage blacker than a coal, or like a bottle in the smoke, *Ps.* cxix. 83.

Thirdly. All comfort and hope shall fail them; ver. 10, "The stars of heaven shall not give their light," but shall be clouded and overcast; "the sun shall be darkened in his going forth," rising bright, but lost again; a certain sign of foul weather. They shall be as men in distress at sea, when neither sun nor stars appear, *Acts* xxvii. 20. It shall be as dreadful a time with them as it would be with the earth if all the heavenly luminaries were turned into darkness; a resemblance of the day of judgment, when "the sun shall be turned into darkness." The heavens frowning thus is an indication of the displeasure of the God of heaven. When things look dark on earth, yet it is well enough if all be clear upwards; but if we have no comfort thence wherewith shall we be comforted?

Fourthly. God will visit them for their iniquity; and all this is intended for the punishment of sin, and particularly the sin of pride, ver. 11. This puts wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery, 1. That sin must now have its punishment. Though Babylon be a little world, yet, being a wicked world, it shall not go unpunished. Sin brings desolation on the world of the ungodly; and when the kingdoms of the earth are quarrelling with one another it is the fruit of God's controversy with them all. 2. That pride must now have its fall. The "haughtiness of the terrible" must now be laid low, particularly Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar, who had in their pride trampled upon, and made themselves very terrible to, the people of God. A man's pride will bring him low.

Fifthly. There shall be so great a slaughter as will produce a scarcity of men; ver. 12, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold." You could not have a man to be employed in any of the affairs of state, not a man to be listed into the army, not a man to match a daughter to for the building up of a family, if you would give any money for one. The troops of the neighbouring nations would not be hired into the service of the king of Babylon, because they saw every thing go against him. Populous countries are soon depopulated by war; and God can soon make a kingdom that has been courted and admired, to be dreaded and shunned by all, as a house that is falling, or a ship that is sinking.

Sixthly. There shall be a universal confusion and consternation. Such a confusion of their affairs, that it shall be like the shaking of the heavens with dreadful thunders, and the removing of the earth by no less dreadful earthquakes. All shall go to wreck and ruin "in the day of the wrath of the Lord of hosts," ver. 13. And such a consternation shall seize their spirits, that Babylon, which used to be like a roaring lion and a ranging bear to all about her, shall become as a chased roe, and "as a sheep that no man taketh up," ver. 14. The army they shall bring into the field, consisting of troops of divers nations, (as great armies used to do,) shall be so dispirited by their own fears, and so dispersed by their enemy's sword, that they shall "turn every man to his own people," each man shall shift for his own safety. The men of might shall not find their hands, *Ps.* lxxvi. 5, but take to their heels.

Seventhly. There shall be a general scene of blood and horror, as useth to be where the sword devours. No wonder that every one makes the best of his way, since the conqueror gives no quarter, but puts all to the sword, and not those only that are found in arms, as is usual with us even in the most cruel slaughters; ver. 15, "Every one that is found" alive "shall be run through;" as soon as ever it appears that he is a Babylonian. Nay, because the sword devours one as well as another, "every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword." Those of other nations that come in to their assistance shall be cut off with them. It is dangerous being in bad company, and helping those whom God is about to destroy. Those particularly that join themselves to Babylon must expect to share in her plagues, *Rev.* xviii. 4. And since the most sacred laws of nature and humanity itself are silenced by the fury of war, (though they cannot be cancelled,) the conquerors shall, in the most barbarous, brutish manner, dash the children to pieces, and ravish the wives, ver. 16. *Jusque datum sceleri,*—'Wickedness shall have free course.' They had thus dealt with God's people, *Lam.* v. 11, and now they shall be paid in their own coin, *Rev.* xiii. 10. It was particularly foretold, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 9, that the little ones of Babylon should be dashed against the stones. How cruel soever, and unjust they were that did it, God was righteous who suffered it to be done, and to be done before their eyes, to their great terror and vexation. It was just also that the houses which they had filled with the spoil of Israel should be spoiled and plundered. What is got by rapine is often lost so.

Eighthly. The enemy that God would send against them should be inexorable, probably being by some provocation or other more than ordinarily exasperated against them; or, however God himself will "stir up the Medes" to use this severity with the Babylonians, he will not only serve his own purposes by their dispositions and designs, but will put it into their hearts to make this attempt upon Babylon, and suffer them to prosecute it with all this fury. God is not the author of sin, but he would not permit it if he did not know how to bring glory to himself out of it. These Medes, in conjunction with the Persians, shall make thorough work of it; for,

1. They shall take no bribes, ver. 17. All that men have they would give for their lives; but the Medes shall not regard silver; it is blood they thirst for, not gold; no man's riches shall, with them, be the ransom of his life.

2. They shall shew no pity, ver. 18; not to the young men that are in the prime of their time, they shall shoot them through with their bows, and then dash them to pieces; not to the age of innocency, "they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb," nor spare little children, whose cries and frights one would think should make even marble eyes to weep, and hearts of adamant to relent. Pause a little here and wonder, 1st. That men should be thus cruel and inhuman, and so utterly divested of all compassion; and in it see how corrupt and degenerate the nature of man is become. 2nd. That the God of infinite mercy should suffer it, nay, and should make it to be the execution of his justice; which shews that, though he is gracious, yet he is the "God to whom vengeance belongs." 3rd. That little infants which have never been guilty of any actual sin should be thus abused, which shews that there is an original guilt by which life is forfeited as soon as it is had.

19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,
The beauty of the Chaldees' excellency,
Shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.
20 It shall never be inhabited,
Neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation:
Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there;
Neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.
21 But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there;
And their houses shall be full of doleful creatures;
And owls shall dwell there,
And satyrs shall dance there.
22 And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their deso-
And dragons in *their* pleasant palaces: [late houses,
And her time *is* near to come,
And her days shall not be prolonged.

The great havoc and destruction which it was foretold should be made by the Medes and Persians in Babylon here ends in the final destruction of it.

First. It is allowed that Babylon was a noble city; it was "the glory of kingdoms," and the "beauty of the Chaldees' excellency;" it was that "head of gold," *Dan.* ii. 37, 38; it was called the "lady of kingdoms," *ch.* xlvii. 5; the "praise of the whole earth," *Jer.* li. 41; like 'a pleasant roe,' (so the word signifies,) but it shall be as a "chased roe," ver. 14. The Chaldeans gloried in the beauty and wealth of this their metropolis.

Secondly. It is foretold that it should be wholly destroyed, like Sodom and Gomorrah; not so miraculously nor so suddenly, but as effectually, though gradually; and the destruction should come upon them as that upon Sodom, when they were secure, eating and drinking, *Lu.* xvii. 28. Babylon was taken when Belshazzar was in his revels; and though Cyrus and Darius did not demolish it, yet by degrees it wasted away, and in process of time it went all to ruin. It is foretold here, ver. 20, that "it shall never be inhabited." In Adrian's time nothing remained but the wall. And whereas it is prophesied concerning Nineveh, that great city, that when it should be deserted and left desolate, yet flocks should "lie down in the midst of it," it is here said concerning Babylon that the Arabians, that were shepherds, should not "make their fold there;" the country about should be so barren that there would be no grazing, no not for sheep there; nay, it shall be the receptacle of wild beasts that affect solitude; the houses of Babylon, where the sons and daughters of pleasure used to rendezvous, shall be "full of doleful creatures," owls, and satyrs, that are themselves frightened thither as to a place proper for them, and by whom all others are frightened thence. Historians say this was fulfilled to the letter. Benjamin Bar-Jona in his Itinerary, speaking of Babel, has these words: 'This is that Babel which was of old thirty miles in breadth; it is now laid waste. There are yet to be seen the ruins of a palace of Nebuchadnezzar, but the sons of men dare not enter, for fear of serpents and scorpions which possess the place.' Let none be proud of their pompous palaces, for they know not but they may become worse than cottages; nor let any think that their houses shall endure for ever, *Ps.* xlix. 11, when perhaps nothing may remain but the ruins and reproaches of them.

Thirdly. It is intimated that this destruction should come shortly; ver. 22, "Her time is near to come." This prophecy of the destruction of Babylon was intended for the support and comfort of the people of God when they were captives there, and grievously oppressed; and the accomplishment of the prophecy was near two hundred years after the time when it was delivered; yet it followed soon after the time for which it was calculated. When the people of Israel were groaning under the heavy yoke of Babylonish tyranny, sitting down in tears by the rivers of Babylon, and upbraided with the songs of Zion, when their insolent oppressors were most haughty and arrogant, ver. 11, then let them know for their comfort that Babylon's time, her day to fall, was "near to come, and the days" of her prosperity "shall not be prolonged" as they have been; when God begins with her he will make an end. Thus it is said of the destruction of the New Testament Babylon, whereof the former was a type, "in one hour is her judgment come."

CHAPTER XIV.

In this chapter, I. More weight is added to the burthen of Babylon, enough to sink it like a millstone: 1. It is Israel's cause that is to be pleaded in this quarrel with Babylon, ver. 1—3; 2. The king of Babylon, for the time being, shall be remarkably brought down and triumphed over, ver. 4—20; 3. The whole race of the Babylonians should be cut off and extirpated, ver. 21—23. II. A confirmation of the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was a thing at a distance, is here given in the prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian army that invaded the land, which happened not long after, ver. 24—27. III. The success of Hezekiah against the Philistines is here foretold, and the advantages which his people would gain thereby, ver. 28—32.

FOR the LORD will have mercy on Jacob,
And will yet choose Israel,
And set them in their own land:
And the strangers shall be joined with them,
And they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. [place:
2 And the people shall take them, and bring them to their
And the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of
For servants and handmaids: [the LORD
And they shall take them captives, whose captives they
And they shall rule over their oppressors. [were;
3 And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall
give thee rest
From thy sorrow, and from thy fear,

And from the hard bondage
Wherein thou wast made to serve,

This comes in here as the reason why Babylon must be overthrown and ruined; because God has mercy in store for his people; and therefore, 1. The injuries done to them must be reckoned for and revenged upon their persecutors. Mercy to Jacob will be wrath and ruin to Jacob's impenitent, implacable adversaries, such as Babylon was. 2. The yoke of oppression which Babylon had long laid on their necks must be broken off, and they must be set at liberty; and in order to this the destruction of Babylon is as necessary as the destruction of Egypt and Pharaoh were to their deliverance out of that house of bondage. The same prediction is a promise to God's people and threatening to their enemies, as the same providence hath a bright side towards Israel and a black and dark side towards the Egyptians. Observe,

First. The ground of these favours to Jacob and Israel; the kindness God had for them, and the choice he had made of them; ver. 1, "the Lord will have mercy on Jacob," the seed of Jacob now captives in Babylon. He will make it to appear that he hath compassion on them, and has mercy in store for them, and that he will not contend for ever with them; and he will yet choose them, will yet again return to them, though he had seemed for a time to refuse and reject them; will shew that they are his chosen people, and that the election stands sure. However it may seem to us, God's mercy is not gone, nor doth his promise fail, *Ps.* lxxvii. 8.

Secondly. The particular favours he designed them.

1. He would bring them back to their native soil and air again. The Lord will "set them in their own land," out of which they were driven. A settlement in the holy land, the land of promise, is a fruit of God's mercy, distinguishing mercy.

2. Many should be proselyted to their holy religion, and should return with them, induced to do so by the manifest tokens of God's favourable presence with them, the operation of God's grace in them, and his providence for them. "Strangers shall be joined with them," saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you," *Zec.* viii. 23. It adds much to the honour and strength of Israel when strangers are joined with them, and there are added to the church many from without, *Acts* ii. 47. Let not the church's children be shy of strangers, but receive those whom God receives, and own those who cleave to the house of Jacob.

3. These proselytes should not only be a credit to their cause, but very helpful and serviceable to them in their return home. The people among whom they live "shall take them," take care of them, take pity on them, and shall "bring them to their place," as friends loath to part with such good company; as servants willing to do them all the good offices they could. God's people, wherever their lot is cast, should endeavour thus, by all the instances of an exemplary and winning conversation, to gain an interest in the affections of those about them, and recommend religion to their good opinion. This was fulfilled in the return of the captives from Babylon, when all that were about them pursuant to Cyrus's proclamation contributed to their remove, *Ezr.* i. 4,6; not as the Egyptians, because they were sick of them, but because they loved them.

4. They should have the benefit of their service when they were returned home, for many would of choice go with them in the meanest post rather than not go with them; they shall "possess them in the land of the Lord, for servants and handmaids;" and as the laws of that land saved it from being the purgatory of servants, providing that they should not be oppressed, so the advantages of that land made it the paradise of those servants that had been strangers to the covenants of promise, for there was "one law to the stranger, and to them that were born in the land." They whose lot is cast in the land of the Lord, a land of light, should take care that their servants and handmaids may share in the benefit of it; who will then find it better to be possessed in the Lord's land than possessors in any other.

5. They should triumph over their enemies; and they that would not be reconciled to them should be reduced and humbled by them. "They shall take them captives whose captives they were," and "shall rule over their oppressors" righteously but not revengefully. The Jews perhaps bought Babylonian prisoners out of the hands of the Medes and Persians, and made slaves of them; or, this might have its accomplishment in their victories over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees. It is applicable to the success of the Gospel when those were brought into obedience to it that had made the greatest opposition to it, as Paul; and to the interest believers have in Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, when he "led captivity captive," the power they gain over their own corruptions, and the dominion the upright shall have in the morning, *Ps.* xlix. 14.

6. They should see a happy period of all their grievances; ver. 3, "The Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage." God himself undertakes to work a blessed change, 1st. In their state. They shall have rest from their bondage; the days of their affliction, though many, shall have an end; and the rod of the wicked, though it lie long, shall not always lie on their lot. 2nd. In their spirit. They shall have rest from their sorrow and fear, sense of their present burthens, and dread of worse. Sometimes fear puts the soul into a toss as much as sorrow doth, and those must needs feel themselves very easy to whom God hath given rest from both. They that are freed from the bondage of sin have a foundation laid for true rest from sorrow and fear.

4 That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say,
How hath the oppressor ceased!
The golden city ceased!
5 The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked,
And the sceptre of the rulers.
6 He who smote the people in wrath
With a continual stroke,
He that ruled the nations in anger,
Is persecuted, *and* none hindereth.
7 The whole earth is at rest, *and* is quiet:
They break forth into singing.
8 Yea, the fir trees rejoice at thee,
And the cedars of Lebanon, *saying*,
Since thou art laid down,
No feller is come up against us.
9 Hell from beneath is moved for thee
To meet *thee* at thy coming:
It stirreth up the dead for thee,
Even all the chief ones of the earth;
It hath raised up from their thrones
All the kings of the nations.
10 All they shall speak and say unto thee,
Art thou also become weak as we?
Art thou become like unto us?
11 Thy pomp is brought down to the grave,
And the noise of thy viols:
The worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.
12 How art thou fallen from heaven,
O Lucifer, son of the morning!
How art thou cut down to the ground,
Which didst weaken the nations!
13 For thou hast said in thine heart,
I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:
I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:
14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will be like the most High.
15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell,
To the sides of the pit.
16 They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, *and* consider thee, *saying*,
Is this the man that made the earth to tremble,
That did shake kingdoms;
17 *That* made the world as a wilderness,
And destroyed the cities thereof;
That opened not the house of his prisoners?
18 All the kings of the nations, *even* all of them,
Lie in glory, every one in his own house.
19 But thou art cast out of thy grave
Like an abominable branch,
And as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword,
That go down to the stones of the pit;
As a carcase trodden under feet.
20 Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial,
Because thou hast destroyed thy land,
And slain thy people:
The seed of evildoers shall never be renowned.
21 Prepare slaughter for his children
For the iniquity of their fathers;
That they do not rise, nor possess the land,
Nor fill the face of the world with cities.
22 For I will rise up against them,
Saith the LORD of hosts,

BITTERN.—ver. 23.

And cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant,
And son, and nephew, saith the LORD.
23 I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water:
And I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts.

The kings of Babylon successively were the great enemies and oppressors of God's people; and, therefore, in the destruction of Babylon, the fall of the king and the ruin of his family are here particularly taken notice of and triumphed in. In the day that God has given Israel rest "they shall take up this proverb against the king of Babylon." We must not rejoice when our enemy falls, as ours; but when Babylon, the common enemy of God and his Israel, sinks, then rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, *Rev.* xviii. 20. The Babylonian monarchy bade fair to be an absolute, universal, and perpetual one, and in these pretensions vied with the Almighty; it is therefore very justly not only brought down, but insulted over when it is down; and it is not only the last monarch, Belshazzar, who was slain on that night that Babylon was taken, *Dan.* v. 30, who is here triumphed over, but the whole monarchy which sunk in him; not without special reference to Nebuchadnezzar, in whom that monarchy was at its height. Now here,

First. The fall of the king of Babylon is rejoiced in; and a most curious, elegant composure is here prepared, not to adorn his hearse or monument, but to expose his memory, and fix a lasting brand of infamy upon it. It gives us an account of the life and death of this mighty monarch, how he went down slain to the pit, though he had been "the terror of the mighty in the land of the living," *Eze.* xxxii. 27. In this parable we may observe,

1. The prodigious height of wealth and power to which this monarch and monarchy arrived. Babylon was a "golden city," ver. 4. It is a Chaldee word in the original, which intimates that she used to call herself so, so much did she abound in riches, and excel all other cities, as gold doth all other metals. She is goldthirsty, or an exactress of gold, so some read it; for how do men get wealth to themselves but by squeezing it out of others? The new Jerusalem is the only true golden city, *Rev.* xxi. 18, 21. The king of Babylon having so much wealth in his dominions, and the absolute command of it, by the help of that "ruled the nations," ver. 6, gave them law, and read them their doom; and at his pleasure weakened the nations, ver. 12, that they might not be able to make head against him. Such vast victorious armies did he bring into the field, that which way soever he looked he made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms, ver. 16; all his neighbours were afraid of him, and were forced to truckle to him. No one man could do this by his own personal strength, but by the numbers he has at his beck. Great tyrants, by making some do what they will, make others suffer what they will. How piteous is the case of mankind, which thus seems to be in a combination against itself and its own rights and liberties, which could not be ruined but by its own strength!

2. The wretched abuse of all this wealth and power, which the king of Babylon was guilty of in two instances.

1st. Great oppression and cruelty. He is known by the name of "the oppressor," ver. 4; he hath "the sceptre of the rulers," ver. 5, hath the command of all the princes about him; but it is the "staff of the wicked," a staff with which he supports himself in his wickedness, and wickedly strikes all about him. He smote the people, not in justice, for their correction and reformation, but in wrath, ver. 6, to gratify his own peevish resentments; and that "with a continual stroke;" pursued them with his forces, and gave them no respite, no breathing time, no cessation of arms. He "ruled the nations," but he ruled them in anger, every thing he said and did was in passion; so that he who had the government of all about him had no government of himself; he "made the world as a wilderness," as if he had taken a pride in being the plague of his generation, and a curse to mankind, ver. 17. Great princes used to glory in building cities, but he gloried in destroying them: see *Ps.* ix. 6. Two particular instances are here given of his tyranny, worse than all the rest: *First.* That he was severe to his captives; ver. 17, he "opened not the house of his prisoners;" he 'did not let them loose homewards,' so the margin reads it; he kept them in close confinement, and never would suffer any to return to their own land. This refers especially to the people of the Jews, and it is that which fills up the measure of the king of Babylon's iniquity, that he had detained the people of God in captivity, and would by no means release them; nay, and by profaning the vessels of God's temple at Jerusalem did in effect say they should never return to their former use, *Dan.* v. 2, 3. For this he was presently and justly turned out by one who, the first thing he did, opened the house of God's prisoners, and sent home the temple vessels. *Secondly.* That he was oppressive to his own subjects; ver. 20, "Thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people;" and what did he get by that, when the wealth of the land and the multitude of the people is the strength and honour of the prince, who never rules so safely, so gloriously, as in the hearts and affections of the people? But tyrants sacrifice their interests to their lusts and passions; and God will reckon with them for their barbarous usage of those that are under their power, whom they think they may use as they please.

2nd. Great pride and haughtiness. Notice is here taken of his pomp, the extravagancy of his retinue, ver 11. He affected to appear in the utmost magnificence; but that was not the worst, it was the temper of his mind, and the elevation of that, that ripened him for his ruin; ver. 13, 14, "Thou hast said in thine heart," like Lucifer, "I will ascend into heaven." Here is the language of his vainglory, borrowed perhaps from that of the angels that fell, who, not content with their first estate, the post assigned them, would vie with God, and become not only independent of him, but equal with him. Or, perhaps it refers to the story of Nebuchadnezzar, who, when he would be more than a man, was justly turned into a brute, *Dan.* iv. 30. The king of Babylon here promiseth himself, *First.* That in pomp and power he shall quite overtop all his neighbours, and shall arrive to the very height of earthly glory and felicity; that he shall be as great and as happy as this world can make him. That is the heaven of a carnal heart; and to that he hopes to ascend, and to be as far above those about him as the heaven is above the earth. Princes are the stars of God, which give some light to this dark world, *Mat.* xxiv. 29; but he will exalt his throne above them all. *Secondly.* That he shall particularly insult over God's mount Zion, which Belshazzar, in his last drunken frolic, seemed to have had a spite to in a special manner, when he called for the vessels of the temple at Jerusalem, to profane them: see *Dan.* v. 2. In the same humour he here said, "I will sit upon the mount of the congregation," (it is the same word that is used for the holy convocations,) "in the sides of the north;" so mount Zion is said to be situated, *Ps.* xlviii. 2. Perhaps Belshazzar was projecting an expedition to Jerusalem, to triumph in the ruins of it, then when God cut him off. *Thirdly.* That he shall vie with the God of Israel, of whom he had indeed heard glorious things, that he had his residence "above the heights of the clouds." But thither, saith he, will I ascend, and be as great as he; I will be like him whom they call the Most High. It is a gracious ambition to covet to be like the Most Holy, for he hath said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" but it is a sinful ambition to aim to be like the Most High, for he hath said that "He that exalteth himself shall be abased;" and the devil drew our first parents in to eat forbidden fruit, by promising them that they should be as gods. *Fourthly.* That he shall himself be deified after his death, as some of the first founders of the Assyrian monarchy were, and stars had even their names from them; But, saith he, "I will exalt my throne" above them all. Such as this was his pride, which was the undoubted omen of his destruction.

3. The utter ruin that should be brought upon him.

1st. It is foretold that his wealth and power should be broken, and a final period put to his pomp and pleasure; he hath been long an oppressor, but he shall cease to be so, ver. 4. Had he ceased to be so by true repentance and reformation, according to the advice Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar, it might have been a lengthening of his life and tranquillity. But those that will not cease to sin, God will make them to cease. The golden city, that one would have thought might have continued for ever, is ceased; there is an end of that Babylon. The Lord, the righteous God, hath broken the staff of that wicked prince, broken it over his head, in token of the divesting him of his office; God hath taken his power from him, and disabled him to do any more mischief. He has broken the sceptres, for even those are brittle things, soon broken, and often justly.

2nd. That he himself should be seized. He "is persecuted," ver. 6, violent hands are laid upon him, and "none hindereth." It is the common fate of tyrants, when they fall into the power of their enemies, to be deserted by their flatterers, whom they took for their friends. We read of another enemy like this here, of whom it is foretold, that "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him," *Dan.* xi. 45. Tiberius and Nero thus saw themselves abandoned.

3rd. That he should be slain, and go down to the congregation of the dead, to be free among them, as the slain that are no more remembered, *Ps.* lxxxviii. 5; he shall be weak, as the dead are, and like unto them, ver. 10. His "pomp is brought down to the grave," that is, it perisheth with him; the pomp of his life shall not as usual end in a funeral pomp. True glory, that is, true grace, will go up with the soul to heaven, but vain pomp will go down with the body to the grave; there is an end of it. The noise of his viols is now heard no more; death is a farewell to the pleasures, as well as to the pomps, of this world. This mighty prince, that used to lie on a bed of down, and tread upon rich carpets, and to have coverings and canopies exquisitely fine, now shall have the worms spread under him, and the worms covering him, ver. 11; worms bred out of his own putrefied body, which, though he fancied himself a god, proved him to be made of the same mould with other men. When we are pampering and decking our bodies, it is good to remember they will be worms' meat shortly.

4th. That he should not have the honour of a burial, much less of a decent one, and in the sepulchres of his ancestors. The "kings of the nations lie in glory," ver. 18; either the dead bodies themselves, so embalmed as to be preserved from putrefaction, as of old among the Egyptians; or their effigies (as with us) erected over their graves. Thus, as if they would defy the ignominy of death, they lay in a poor, faint sort of glory, "every one in his own house," that is, his own burying-place; for the grave is the house appointed for all living, a sleeping house, where the busy and troublesome will lie quiet, and the troubled and weary lie at rest. But this king of Babylon is cast out, and has no grave, ver. 19; his dead body is thrown, like that of a beast, into the next ditch, or upon the next dunghill, "like an abominable branch" of some noxious, poisonous plant, which nobody will touch. Or, as the clothes of malefactors put to death, and by the hand of justice thrust through with a sword, and on whose dead bodies heaps of stones are raised, or they are thrown into some deep quarry, among the "stones of the pit." Nay, the king of Babylon's dead body shall be as the carcases of those who are slain in battle, that are "trodden under feet" by the horses and soldiers, and crushed to pieces. Thus he shall not be joined with his ancestors in burial, ver. 20. To be denied decent burial is a disgrace, which, if it be inflicted for righteousness' sake, as *Ps.* lxxix. 2, may, as other such reproaches be, rejoiced in, *Mat.* v. 12; it is the lot of the two witnesses, *Rev.* xi. 9. But if, as here, it be the just punishment of iniquity, it is an intimation that evil pursues impenitent sinners beyond death, greater evil than that, and that they shall rise to everlasting shame and contempt.

4. The many triumphs that should be in his fall.

1st. Those whom he had been a great tyrant and terror to will be glad that they are rid of him, ver. 7, 8. Now he is gone, "the whole earth is at rest, and is quiet," for he was the great disturber of the peace; now they all "break forth into singing," for "when the wicked perish there is shouting," *Pr.* xi. 10. The fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon now think themselves safe, there is no danger now of their being cut down to make way for his vast armies, or to furnish him with timber. The neighbouring princes and great men, who are compared to fir-trees and cedars, *Zec.* xi. 2, may now be easy, and out of fear of being dispossessed of their rights, for "the hammer of the whole earth is cut asunder and broken," *Jer.* l. 23; the axe that "boasted itself against him that heweth with it," *ch.* x. 15.

2nd. The congregation of the dead will bid him welcome to them, especially those whom he had barbarously hastened thither; ver. 9, 10, "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming," and to compliment thee upon thy arrival into the dark and dreadful regions. The "chief ones of the earth," who, when they were alive, were kept in awe by him, and durst not come near him, but rose from their thrones to resign them to him; when he comes into the state of the dead shall upbraid him with this, shall go forth to meet him, as they used to do when he made his public entry into cities he was become master of; with such a parade shall he be introduced into those regions of horror, to make his disgrace and torment the more grievous to him. They shall scoffingly rise from their thrones and seats there, and ask him if he will please to sit down in them, as he used to do in their thrones on earth? The confusion that will then cover him they shall make a jest of, "Art thou also become weak as we?" Who would have thought it? it was what thou thyself didst not expect it would ever come to, when thou wast in every thing too hard for us. Thou that didst rank thyself among the immortal gods, art thou come to take thy fate among us poor mortal men? Where is thy pomp now, and where thy mirth? ver. 11, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning?" The king of Babylon had shone as bright as the morning star, and fancied that wherever he came he brought day along with him; and is such an illustrious prince as this fallen? such a star become a clod of clay? Did ever any man fall from such a height of honour and power, into such an abyss of shame and misery? This has been commonly alluded to, (and it is a mere allusion,) to illustrate the fall of the angels, that were as morning stars, *Job* xxxviii. 7. But how are they fallen? "How art thou cut down to the ground," and levelled with it, that "didst weaken the nations?" God will reckon with those that invade the rights and disturb the peace of mankind; for he is King of nations, as well as saints. Now this reception of the king of Babylon into the regions of the dead, which is here described, surely is some-

thing more than a flight of fancy, and is designed to speak these solid truths: *First.* That there is an invisible world, a world of spirits, to which the souls of men remove at death, and in which they exist, and act in a state of separation from the body. *Secondly.* That separate souls have acquaintance and converse with each other, though we have none with them; the parable of the rich man and Lazarus intimates this. *Thirdly.* That death and hell will be death and hell indeed to those that all unsanctified from the height of this world's pomps, and the fulness of its pleasures: "Son, remember," *Lu.* xvi. 25.

3rd. Spectators will stand amazed at his fall. When he shall be "brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit," and be lodged there, ver. 15, they that see him shall narrowly look upon him, and consider him; they shall scarce believe their own eyes; never was death so great a change to any man as it is to him. Is it possible that a man who, a few hours ago, looked so great, so pleasant, and was so splendidly adorned and attended, should now look so ghastly, so despicable, and lie thus naked and neglected? "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms?" Who could have thought he should ever have come to this? *Ps.* lxxxii. 7.

5. Here is an inference drawn from all this; ver. 20, "The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned." The princes of the Babylonian monarchy were all a seed of evil-doers, oppressors of the people of God, and therefore they had this infamy entailed upon them. 'They shall not be renowned for ever,' so some read it; they may look big for a time, but all their pomp will only render their disgrace at last the more shameful. There is no credit in a sinful way.

Secondly. The utter ruin of the royal family is here foretold, together with the desolation of the royal city.

1. The royal family is to be wholly extirpated. The Medes and Persians that are to be employed in this destroying work are ordered, when they have slain Belshazzar, to "prepare slaughter for his children," ver. 21, and not to spare them; the little ones of Babylon must be dashed against the stones, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 7. These orders sound very harsh; but,

1st. They must suffer "for the iniquity of their fathers," which is often "visited upon the children," to shew how much God hates sin, and is displeased at it, and to deter sinners from it, which is the end of punishment. Nebuchadnezzar had slain Zedekiah's sons, *Jer.* lii. 10, and for that iniquity of his his seed are paid in the same coin.

2nd. They must be cut off now, that they may not rise up to possess the land, and do as much mischief in their day as their fathers had done in theirs; that they may not be as vexatious to the world, by building cities for the support of their tyranny, (which was Nimrod's policy, *Gen.* x. 10, 11,) as their ancestors had been by destroying cities. Pharoah oppressed Israel in Egypt by setting them to build cities, *Ex.* i. 11. The providence of God consults the welfare of nations more than we are aware of, by cutting off some that, if they had lived, would have done mischief. Justly may the enemies cut off the children, "For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts," ver. 22. And if God reveal it as his mind that he will have it done, as none can hinder it, so none need scruple to further it. Babylon perhaps was proud of the numbers of her royal family, but God determined to cut off "the name and remnant" of it, so that none should be left; to have both the sons and grandsons of the king slain; and yet we are sure he never did, nor ever will, do any wrong to any of his creatures.

2. The royal city is to be demolished and deserted, ver. 23. It shall be a possession for solitary, frightful birds, particularly the bittern, joined with the cormorant and the owl, *ch.* xxxiv. 11. And thus the utter destruction of the New Testament Babylon is illustrated, *Rev.* xviii. 2, it is "become a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Babylon lay low, so when it was deserted, and no care taken to drain the land, it soon became pools of water, standing, stinking puddles, as unhealthful as unpleasant. And thus God will "sweep it with the besom of destruction." When a people have nothing among them but dirt and filth, and will not be made clean with the besom of reformation, what can they expect but to be swept off the face of the earth with "the besom of destruction?"

24 The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying,
Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass;
And as I have purposed, *so* shall it stand:
25 That I will break the Assyrian in my land,
And upon my mountains tread him under foot:
Then shall his yoke depart from off them,
And his burden depart from off their shoulders.
26 This *is* the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth:
And this *is* the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. [disannul *it?*
27 For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul *it?*
And his hand *is* stretched out, and who shall turn it back?
28 In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden.
29 Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina,
Because the rod of him that smote thee is broken:
For out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice,
And his fruit *shall be* a fiery flying serpent.
30 And the firstborn of the poor shall feed,
And the needy shall lie down in safety:
And I will kill thy root with famine,
And he shall slay thy remnant.
31 Howl, O gate; cry, O city;
Thou, whole Palestina, *art* dissolved:
For there shall come from the north a smoke,
And none *shall be* alone in his appointed times.
32 What shall *one* then answer the messengers of the nation?
That the LORD hath founded Zion,
And the poor of his people shall trust in it.

The destruction of Babylon and the Chaldean empire was a thing at a great distance; the empire was not risen to any considerable height when its fall was here foretold; it was almost two hundred years from this prediction of Babylon's fall to the accomplishment of it. Now the people to whom Isaiah prophesied might ask, What is this to us, or what shall we be the better for it? And what assurance shall we have of it? To both which questions he answered in these verses, by a prediction of the ruin both of the Assyrians and of the Philistines, the present enemies that infested them, which they should shortly be eyewitnesses of, and have benefit by. These would be a present comfort to them, and a pledge of future deliverance, for the confirming of the faith of their posterity. God is to his people the same to-day that he was yesterday, and will be hereafter; and he will for ever be the same that he hath been and is. Here is,

First. Assurance given of the destruction of the Assyrians; ver. 25, "I will break the Assyrian in my land." Sennacherib brought a very formidable army into the land of Judah, but there God broke it, broke all his regiments by the sword of a destroying angel. Note, Those who wrongfully invade God's land, it is at their peril; and those who, with unhallowed feet, trample upon his holy mountains, they shall themselves there be trodden under foot. God undertakes to do it himself, his people having no might against the great company that came against them: "I will break the Assyrian," let me alone to do it, who have angels, hosts of angels, at command. Now the breaking of the power of the Assyrian would be the breaking of the yoke from off the neck of God's people, "his burden shall depart from off their shoulders," the burthen of quartering that vast army, and paying contribution; therefore the Assyrian must be broken, that Judah and Jerusalem may be eased. Let those that make themselves a yoke and a burthen to God's people see what they are to expect. Now,

1. This prophecy is here ratified and confirmed by an oath; ver. 24, "The Lord of hosts hath sworn;" that he might shew the immutability of his counsel, and that his people may have strong consolation, *Heb.* vi. 17, 18. What is here said of this particular intention is true of all God's purposes, "As I have thought, so shall it come to pass;" for "he is in one mind, and who can turn him?" Nor is he ever put upon new counsels, or obliged to take new measures, as men often are, when things occur which they did not foresee. Let those who are "the called according to God's purpose," comfort themselves with this, that "as God hath purposed, so shall it stand," and on that their stability doth depend.

2. The breaking of the Assyrian power is made a specimen of what God would do with all the powers of the nations that were engaged against him and his church; ver. 26, "This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth;" the 'whole world,' so the Seventy; 'all the inhabitants of the earth,' so the Chaldee; not only upon the Assyrian empire, which was then reckoned to be, in a manner, all the world, as afterwards the Roman empire was, *Lu.* ii. 1, and with it many nations fell that had dependence upon it, but upon all those states and potentates that should at any time attack his land, his mountains. The fate of the Assyrian shall be theirs, they shall soon find that they meddle to their own hurt; Jerusalem, as it was to the Assyrian, will be to all people, a "burthensome stone;" "all that burthen themselves with it" shall infallibly be cut to pieces by it, *Zec.* xii. 3, 6. The same hand of power and justice that is now to be stretched out against the Assyrian, for invading the people of God, shall be "stretched out upon all the nations" that do likewise. It is still true, and will be ever so, Cursed is he that curseth God's Israel, *Num.* xxiv. 9. God will be an enemy to his people's enemies, *Ex.* xxiii. 22.

3. All the powers on earth are defied to change God's counsels; ver. 27, "The Lord of hosts hath purposed" to break the Assyrian's yoke, and every rod of the wicked laid upon the lot of the righteous. And who shall disannul this purpose? Who can persuade him to recall it, or find out a plea to evade it? "His hand is stretched out," to execute this purpose, and who hath power enough to turn it back, or to stay the course of his judgments?

Secondly. Assurance is likewise given of the destruction of the Philistines, and their power. This burthen, this prophecy, that laid load upon them to sink their state, came "in the year that king Ahaz died," which was the first year of Hezekiah's reign, ver. 28. When a good king came in the room of a bad one, then this acceptable message was sent among them. When we reform, then, and not till then, we may look for good news from heaven. Now here we have,

1. Rebuke to the Philistines for triumphing in the death of king Uzziah. He had been as a serpent to them, had bitten them, had smitten them, had brought them very low, 2 *Chr.* xxvi. 6; he warred against the Philistines, broke down their walls, and built cities among them; but when Uzziah died, or rather, abdicated, it was told with joy in Gath, and published in the streets of Ashkelon. It is inhuman thus to rejoice in our neighbour's fall; but let them not be secure; for though when Uzziah was dead they made reprisals upon Ahaz, and took many of the cities of Judah, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 18, yet out of the root of Uzziah should come a cockatrice, a more formidable enemy than Uzziah was, even Hezekiah, the fruit of whose government should be to them a fiery flying serpent, for he should fall upon them with incredible swiftness and fury. We find he did so, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 8, "He smote the Philistines even unto Gaza." Note, If God remove one useful instrument in the midst of his usefulness, he can and will raise up others to carry on and complete the same work that they were employed in and left unfinished.

2. A prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines by famine and war. 1st. By famine, ver. 30. When the people of God, whom the Philistines had wasted, and distressed, and impoverished, shall enjoy plenty again, and "the first-born of their poor shall feed," that is, the poorest among them shall have food convenient; when, as for the Philistines, God will "kill their root with famine;" that which was their strength, and with which they thought themselves established as the tree is by the root, shall be starved, and dried up by degrees, as those die that die by famine; and thus "he shall slay the remnant." Those that escape from one destruction are but reserved for another; and when there are but a few left, those few shall at length be cut off, for God will make a full end. 2nd. By war. When the needy of God's people shall "lie down in safety," ver. 30, not terrified with the alarms of war, but delighting in the songs of peace, then every gate and every city of the Philistines shall be howling and crying, ver. 31; and there shall be a total dissolution of their state; for from Judea, which lay north of the Philistines, there shall come a smoke, a vast army raising a great dust, a smoke that shall be the indication of a devouring fire at hand. And none of all that army shall be "alone in his appointed times;" none shall straggle or be missing when they are to engage, but they shall all be vigorous and unanimous in attacking the common enemy, when the time appointed for the doing of it comes. None of them shall decline the public service, as in Deborah's time Reuben abode among the sheepfolds, and Ashur on the sea shore, *Jud.* v. 16, 17. When God has work to do, he will wonderfully spirit men for it.

Thirdly. The good use that should be made of all these events for the encouragement of the people of God; ver. 32, "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations?" This implies, 1. That the great things God doth for his people are, and cannot but be, taken notice of by their neighbours, "They among the heathen" make remarks upon them, *Ps.* cxxvi. 2. 2. That messengers will be sent to inquire concerning them. Jacob and Israel have

long been a people distinguished from all others, and dignified with uncommon favours; and therefore some for good-will, others for ill-will, and all for curiosity, are inquisitive concerning them. 3. That it concerns us always to be ready, to "give a reason of the hope" that we have in the providence of God, as well as in his grace, in answer to every one that ask it, "with meekness and fear," 1 *Pet.* iii. 15. And we need go no farther than the sacred truths of God's word for a reason, for God, in all he doth, is fulfilling the Scripture. 4. The issue of God's dealings with his people shall be so clearly and manifestly glorious, that any one, every one, shall be able to give an account of them to those that inquire concerning them. Now the answer which is to be given to the messengers of the nations is, 1st. That God is and will be a faithful friend to his church and people, and will secure and advance their interests. Tell them that "the Lord hath founded Zion." This gives an account both of the work itself that is done, and of the reason of it. What is God doing in the world, and what is he designing in all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, in the ruin of some nations and the rise of others? He is in all this founding Zion; he is aiming at the advancement of his church's interests; and what he aims at he will accomplish. The messengers of the nations, when they sent to inquire concerning Hezekiah's successes against the Philistines, expected to learn by what politics, counsels, and arts of war, he carried his point, but are told they were not owing to anything of that nature, but to the care God took of his church and the interest he had in it, "The Lord hath founded Zion," and therefore the Philistines must down. 2nd. That his church hath and will have a dependence upon him, "The poor of his people shall trust in it." His poor people, that had lately been brought very low, even the poorest of them, they more than others, for they have nothing else to trust to, *Zeph.* iii. 12, 13; "the poor receive the Gospel," *Mat.* xi. 5. They shall trust to this, to this great truth, "that the Lord hath founded Zion;" on this they shall build their hopes, and not on an arm of flesh. This ought to give us abundant satisfaction as to public affairs, that however it goes with particular persons, parties, and interests, the church, having God himself for its founder, and Christ the rock for its foundation, cannot but stand firm. The poor of his people shall betake themselves to it, (so some read it,) shall join themselves to his church and embark in its interests; they shall concur with God in his designs to establish his people, and shall wind up all on the same bottom, and make all their little concerns and projects truckle to that. They that take God's people for their people must be willing to take their lot with them, and cast in their lot among them. Let the messengers of the nations know that the poor Israelites that trust in God, having, like Zion, their foundation in the holy mountains, *Ps.* lxxxvii. 1, they are like Zion, which "cannot be removed, but abideth for ever," *Ps.* cxxv. 1, and therefore they will not fear what man can do unto them.

CHAPTER XV.

This chapter and that which follows it are the burthen of Moab, a prophecy of some great desolation that was coming upon that country, which bordered upon this land of Israel, and had often been injurious and vexatious to it, though the Moabites were descended from Lot, Abraham's kinsman and companion; and though the Israelites, by the appointment of God, had spared them, when they might both easily and justly have cut them off with their neighbours. In this chapter we have, I. Great lamentations made by the Moabites, and by the prophet himself for them, ver. 1—5. II. The great calamities which should occasion that lamentation, and justify it, ver. 6—9.

THE burden of Moab.
Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence;
Because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, *and* brought to silence;
2 He is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep:
Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba:
On all their heads *shall be* baldness,
And every beard cut off.
3 In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth:
On the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl,
Weeping abundantly.
4 And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh:
Their voice shall be heard *even* unto Jahaz:
Therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out;
His life shall be grievous unto him.
5 My heart shall cry out for Moab; [years old:
His fugitives *shall flee* unto Zoar, an heifer of three
For by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up;
For in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction.

The country of Moab was but of small extent, but very fruitful; it bordered upon the lot of Reuben on the other side Jordan, and upon the Dead sea. Naomi went to sojourn there when there was a famine in Canaan. This is the country which, it is here foretold, should be wasted and grievously harassed; not quite ruined, for we find another prophecy of its ruin, *Jer.* xlviii., which was accomplished by Nebuchadnezzar. This prophecy here was to be fulfilled within three years, *ch.* xvi. 14, and therefore was fulfilled in the devastations made in that country by the army of the Assyrians, which for many years ravaged those parts, enriching themselves with spoil and plunder. Either it was done by the army of Salmaneser, about the time of the taking of Samaria, in the fourth year of Hezekiah, as is most probable, or by the army of Sennacherib, which ten years after invaded Judah. We cannot suppose that the prophet went among the Moabites to preach them this sermon, but he delivered it to his own people, 1. To shew them that, though judgment begins at the house of God, yet it shall not end there, and that there is a Providence which governs the world and all the nations of it, and that to the God of Israel the worshippers of false gods were accountable, and liable to his judgments. 2. To give them a proof of God's care of them and jealousy for them, and to convince them that God was an enemy to their enemies, for such the Moabites had often been. 3. That the accomplishment of this prophecy now shortly, within three years, might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and of the truth of all his other prophecies, and might encourage the faithful to depend upon them. Now concerning Moab it is here foretold,

First. That their chief cities should be surprised and taken in a night by the enemy, probably because the inhabitants, as the men of Laish, indulged themselves in ease and luxury, and dwelt securely, ver. 1. Therefore there shall be great grief, "because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste," "and Kir of Moab," the two principal cities of that kingdom; "In the night that they were taken," or sacked, "Moab was cut off." The seizing of them laid the whole country open, and made all the wealth of it an easy prey to the victorious army. Note, 1. Great changes, and very dismal ones, may be made in a very little time. Here are two cities lost in a night, though that is the time of quietness. Let us therefore lie down as those that know not what a night may bring forth. 2. As the country feeds the cities, so the cities protect the country, and neither can say to the other, "I have no need of thee."

Secondly. That the Moabites, being hereby put into the utmost consternation imaginable, should have recourse to their idols for relief, and pour out their tears before them, ver. 2. "He," that is Moab, especially the king of Moab, "is gone up to Bajith," or rather, to the house or temple of Chemosh; "and Dibon," that is, the inhabitants of Dibon, are gone up to "the high places," where they worshipped their idols, there to make their complaints. Note, It becomes a people in distress to seek to their God; and shall not we then thus "walk in the name of the Lord our God," and call upon him in the time of trouble, before whom we shall not shed such useless, profitless tears as they did before their gods?

Thirdly. That there should be the voice of an universal grief all the country over. It is described here elegantly and very affectingly; Moab shall be a vale of tears, a little map of this world, ver. 2. The Moabites shall lament the loss of Nemo and Medeba, two considerable cities, which it is likely were plundered and burnt. They shall tear their hair for grief to that degree, that "on all their heads shall be baldness," and they shall cut off their beards, according to the customary expression of mourning in those times and countries. When they go abroad, they shall be so far from coveting to appear handsome, that "in the streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth;" and perhaps being forced to use that poor clothing, the enemy having stripped them, and rifled their houses, and left them no other clothing. When they come home, instead of applying themselves to their business, they shall go up to the tops of their houses, which were flat-roofed, and there they shall weep abundantly, nay, they shall howl in crying to their gods. Those that "cry not to God with their hearts" do but "howl upon their beds," *Hos.* vii. 14; *Am.* viii. 3. They shall 'come down with weeping,' so the margin reads it; they shall come down from their high places and the tops of their houses, weeping as much as they did when they went up. Prayer to the true God is heart's ease, 1 *Sam.* i. 18, but prayers to false gods are not. Divers places are here named that should be full of lamentation, ver. 4. It is but a poor relief to have so many fellow-sufferers, fellow mourners; to a public spirit, that is rather an aggravation, *socios habuisse doloris*,—'to have associates in woe.'

Fourthly. That the courage of their militia should fail them. Though they were bred soldiers and were well armed, yet they "shall cry out," and shriek for fear, and every one of them shall have his life become "grievous to him," though it is a military life, which useth to delight in danger, ver. 4. See how easily God can dispirit the stoutest of men, and deprive a nation of benefit by those whom it most depended upon for strength and defence. The Moabites shall generally be so overwhelmed with grief, that life itself shall be a burthen to them. Those that are most fond of life God can easily make them sick of it.

Fifthly. That the outcry for these calamities should propagate grief to all the adjacent parts, ver. 5. 1. The prophet himself hath very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of it, "My heart shall cry out for Moab." Though they are enemies to Israel, they are our fellow creatures, of the same rank with us, and therefore it should pity us to see them in such distress, the rather because we know not how soon it may be our turn to drink of the same cup of trembling. Note, It becomes God's ministers to be of a tender spirit, not to desire the woful day, but to be like their Master, who wept over Jerusalem, even then when he gave her up to ruin, like their God, who "desires not the death of sinners." 2. All the neighbouring cities shall echo to the lamentations of Moab. The fugitives that are making the best of their way to shift for their own safety, shall carry the cry to Zoar, the city to which their ancestor, Lot, fled for shelter from Sodom's flames, and which was spared for his sake. They shall make as great a noise with their cry as "a heifer of three years old" doth when she goes lowing for her calf, as 1 *Sam.* vi. 12. They shall go up the hill of Luhith, as David went up the ascent of mount Olivet; many a weary step, and all in tears, 2 *Sam.* xv. 30. And in the way of Horonaim,—a dual termination,—the way that leads to the two Beth-horons, the upper and nether, which we read of *Jos.* xv. 3, 5, thither the cry should be carried, there it should be raised, even at that great distance, a cry of destruction, that shall be the cry; like, Fire, fire, we are all undone. Grief is catching, so is fear, and justly, for trouble is spreading, and when it begins who knows where it will end?

6 For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate:
For the hay is withered away, the grass faileth,
There is no green thing.
7 Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up,
Shall they carry away to the brook of the willows.
8 For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab;
The howling thereof unto Eglaim,
And the howling thereof unto Beer-elim.
9 For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood:
For I will bring more upon Dimon,
Lions upon him that escapeth of Moab,
And upon the remnant of the land.

Here the prophet farther describes the woful and piteous lamentations that should be heard throughout all the country of Moab, when it should become

a prey to the Assyrian army. By this time the cry is gone round about all the borders of Moab, ver. 8. Every corner of the country has received the alarm, and is in the utmost confusion upon it. It is got to Eglaim, a city at one end of the country, and to Beer-elim, a city as far the other way. Where sin has been general, and all flesh have corrupted their way, what else can be expected but a general desolation?

Two things are here spoken of as causes of this lamentation:

First. The waters of Nimrim are desolate, ver. 6; that is, the country is plundered and impoverished, and all the wealth and substance of it swept away by the victorious army. Famine is usually the sad effect of war. Look into the fields that were well watered, the fruitful meadows that yielded delightful prospects and more delightful products, and there all is eaten up or carried off by the enemy's foragers, and the remainder trodden to dirt by their horses. If an army encamp upon green fields, their greenness is soon gone. Look into the houses, and they are stripped too, ver. 7. The abundance of wealth that they had gotten with a great deal of art and industry, and that which they had laid up with a great deal of care and confidence, "shall they carry away to the brook of the willows;" either the owners shall carry it thither to hide it, or the enemies shall carry it thither to pack it up, and send it home, by water perhaps, to their own country. Note, 1. Those that are eager to get abundance of this world, and solicitous to lay up what they have gotten, little consider what may become of it, and in how little a time it may be all taken from them. 2. Great abundance, by tempting the robbers, exposeth the owners, and they who depend upon it to protect them often find it doth but betray them. 3. In times of distress great riches are many times great burthens, and do but increase the owner's care or the enemy's strength. *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*,—'The penniless traveller will exult, when accosted by a robber, in having nothing about him.'

Secondly. The waters of Dimon are turned into blood, ver. 9; that is, the inhabitants of the country are slain in great numbers, so that the waters adjoining to the cities, whether rivers or pools, are discoloured with human gore, inhumanly shed like water. Dimon signifies bloody; the place shall answer its name. Perhaps it was that place in the country of Moab where the waters seemed to the Moabites as blood, 2 *Kin.* iii. 22, 23, which occasioned their overthrow. But now, saith God, "I will bring more upon Dimon," more blood than was shed, or thought to be seen at that time. 'I will bring additions upon Dimon,' so the word is, additional plagues; I have yet more judgments in reserve for them; for "all this God's anger is not turned away." When he judgeth he will overcome, and to the roll of curses shall be "added many like words," *Jer.* xxxvi. 32. See here what is the yet more evil to be brought upon Dimon, upon Moab, which is now to be made a land of blood. Some flee and make their escape, others sit still and are overlooked, and are as a "remnant of the land." But upon both God will bring lions, beasts of prey, which are reckoned one of God's four judgments, *Eze.* xiv. 21, and these shall glean up those that have escaped the sword of the enemy. Those that continue impenitent in sin, when they are preserved from one judgment, are but reserved for another.

CHAPTER XVI.

This chapter continues and concludes the burthen of Moab. In it, I. The prophet gives good counsel to the Moabites to reform what was amiss among them, and particularly to be kind to God's people, as the likeliest way to prevent the judgments before threatened, ver. 1—5. II. Fearing they would not take this counsel, they were so proud, he goes on to foretell the lamentable devastation of their country, and the confusion they should be brought to, and this within three years, ver. 6—14.

SEND ye the lamb to the ruler of the land
From Sela to the wilderness,
Unto the mount of the daughter of Zion.
2 For it shall be, *that*, as a wandering bird
Cast out of the nest,
So the daughters of Moab shall be
At the fords of Arnon.
3 Take counsel, execute judgment;
Make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday;
Hide the outcasts;
Bewray not him that wandereth.
4 Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab;
Be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler:
For the extortioner is at an end,
The spoiler ceaseth,
The oppressors are consumed out of the land.
5 And in mercy shall the throne be established:
And he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, [ness.
Judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteous-

God has made it to appear he delights not in the ruin of sinners, by telling them what they may do to prevent the ruin; so he doth here to Moab.

First. He adviseth them to be just to the house of David, and to pay the tribute they had formerly covenanted to pay to the kings of his line; ver. 1, "Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land." David made the Moabites tributaries to him, 2 *Sam.* viii. 2, they "became his servants, and brought gifts." Afterward they paid their tribute to the kings of Israel, 2 *Kin.* iii. 4, and paid it in lambs. Now, the prophet requires them to pay it to Hezekiah. Let it be raised and levied from all parts of the country; from Selah, a frontier city of Moab on the one side, "to the wilderness," a boundary of the kingdom on the other side; and let it be sent where it should be, sent to "the mount of the daughter of Zion," the city of David. Some take it as an advice to send a lamb for a sacrifice to God, the ruler of the earth, (so it may be read,) the Lord of the whole earth, ruler of all lands; the land of Moab, as well as the land of Israel; send it to the temple built on mount Zion. And some think it is in this sense spoken ironically, upbraiding the Moabites with their folly in delaying to repent, and make their peace with God. Now you would be glad to send a lamb to mount Zion, to make the God of Israel your friend; but it is too late, the decree hath gone forth, the consumption is determined, and the daughters of Moab shall be cast out "as a wandering bird," ver. 2. I rather take it as good advice seriously given, like that of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar then when he was reading him his doom, *Dan.* iv. 27, "Break off thy sins by righteousness, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." And it is applicable to the great gospel duty of submission to Christ, as the ruler of the land, and our ruler. Send him the lamb, the best you have, yourselves a living sacrifice. When you come to God, the great ruler, come in the name of the Lamb, the Lamb of God; for else it shall be, (so we may read it, ver. 2,) that as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be. If you will not pay your quit-rent, your just tribute to the king of Judah, you shall be turned out of your houses. The daughters of Moab, the country villages, or the women of your country, shall flutter about the fords of Arnon, attempting that way to make their escape to some other land, like a wandering bird thrown out of the nest half fledged. Those that will not submit to Christ, nor be gathered under the shadow of his wings, shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest; that shall either be snatched up by the next bird of prey, or shall wander endlessly in continual frights. Those that will not yield to the fear of God shall be made to yield to the fear of every thing else.

Secondly. He adviseth them to be kind to the seed of Israel, ver. 3. Take counsel, call a convention, and consult among yourselves what is fit to be done in the present critical juncture; and you will find it your best way to execute judgment, to reverse all the unrighteous decrees you have made, by which you have put hardships upon the people of God; and in token of your repentance for them, study now how to oblige them, and this shall be accepted of God more than all burnt offering and sacrifice.

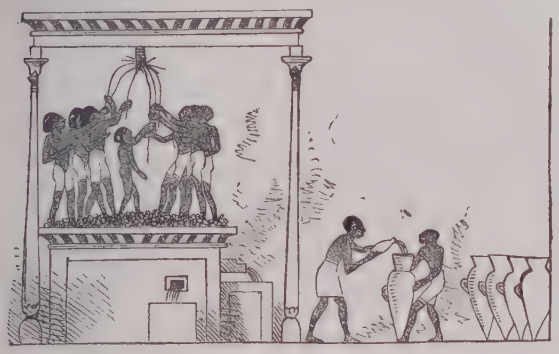
1. The prophet foresaw some storm coming upon the people of God, perhaps the good people of the ten tribes, or of the two and a half on the other side Jordan, whose country joined to that of Moab, and who, by the merciful providence of God, escaped the fury of the Assyrian army, had their lives given them for a prey, and were reserved for better times, but were put to the utmost extremity to shift for their own safety. The danger and trouble they were in was like the scorching heat at noon. The face of the spoiler was very fierce upon them, and the oppressor and extortioner was ready to swallow them up after what they had.

2. He bespeaks a shelter for them in the land of Moab, when their own land was made too hot for them. This judgment they must execute; thus wisely must they do for themselves, and thus kindly must they deal with the people of God. If they would themselves continue in their habitations, let them now open their doors to the distressed dispersed members of God's church, and be to them like a cool shade to those that "bear the burden and heat of the day." Let them not discover those that absconded among them, nor deliver them up to the pursuers that made search for them; "Bewray not him that wandereth," nor deliver him up, as the Edomites did, *Obad.* 13, 14, but "hide the outcasts." This was that good work by which Rahab's faith was justified, and proved to be sincere, *Heb.* xi. 31. Nay, do not only hide them for a time, but, if there be occasion, let them be naturalized: "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab;" find a lodging for them, and "be thou a covert to them;" let them be taken under the protection of the government, though they are but poor, and likely to be a charge to thee. Note, 1st. It is often the lot even of those who are Israelites indeed, to be outcasts, driven out of house and harbour, by persecution or war, *Heb.* xi. 37. 2nd. God owns them when men reject and disown them. They are outcasts, but they are mine outcasts. The Lord knows them that are his, wherever he finds them, even there where no one else knows them. 3rd. God will find a rest and shelter for his outcasts; for though they are persecuted they are not forsaken; he will himself be their dwelling-place, if they have no other, and in him they shall be at home. 4th. God can, when he pleaseth, raise up friends for his people, even among Moabites, when they can find none in all the land of Israel that can and dare shelter them. The earth often helps the woman, *Rev.* xii. 16. 5th. Those that expect to find favour when they are in trouble themselves must shew favour to those that are in trouble; and what service is done to God's outcasts shall, no doubt, be recompensed one way or other.

Thirdly. He assures them of the mercy God had in store for his people. 1. That they should not long need their kindness, or be troublesome to them; "for the extortioner is" almost "at an end" already, and "the spoiler ceaseth." God's people shall not be long outcasts, they "shall have tribulation ten days," *Rev.* ii. 10, and that is all. The spoiler would never cease spoiling, if he might have his will; but God hath him in a chain. Hitherto he shall go, but no farther. 2. That they should ere long be in a capacity to return their kindness, ver. 5. Though the throne of the ten tribes be sunk and overturned, yet the throne of David shall be established in mercy, by the mercy they receive from God, and the mercy they shew to others; and by the same methods may your throne be established, if you please. It would engage great men to be kind to the people of God, if they would but observe, as they easily might, how often that brings the blessing of God upon kingdoms and families. Make Hezekiah your friend, for you will find it your interest to do so, upon the account both of the grace of God in him, and the presence of God with him. He shall sit upon the throne in truth, and then he doth indeed sit in honour, and sit fast. Then he shall sit judging, and will then be a protector to those that have been a shelter to the people of God. And see in him the character of a good magistrate. 1st. He shall seek judgment; that is, he shall seek occasions of doing right to those that are wronged, and shall punish the injurious even before they are complained of; or, he shall diligently search into every cause brought before him, that he may find where the right lies. 2nd. He shall hasten righteousness, and not delay to do justice, nor keep those long waiting that make application to him for the redress of their grievances. Though he seeks judgment, and deliberates upon it, yet he doth not, under pretence of that, stay the progress of the streams of justice. Let the Moabites take example by this, and then assure themselves that their state shall be established.

6 We have heard of the pride of Moab; *he is* very proud:
Even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath:
But his lies *shall* not *be* so.
7 Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab,
Every one shall howl:
For the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn;
Surely *they are* stricken.
8 For the fields of Heshbon languish,
And the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof,

They are come *even* unto Jazer, they wandered *through* the wilderness:
Her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.
9 Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah:
I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh:
For the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen.
10 And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field;
And in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting:
The treaders shall tread out no wine in *their* presses;
I have made *their vintage* shouting to cease.



TREADING WINE.

11 Wherefore my bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab,
And mine inward parts for Kir-haresh.
12 And it shall come to pass, when it is seen
That Moab is weary on the high place,
That he shall come to his sanctuary to pray;
But he shall not prevail.
13 This *is* the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning Moab since that time.
14 But now the LORD hath spoken, saying,
Within three years, as the years of an hireling,
And the glory of Moab shall be contemned,
With all that great multitude;
And the remnant *shall be* very small *and* feeble.

Here we have,

First. The sins with which Moab is charged, ver. 6. The prophet seems to check himself for going about to give good counsel to the Moabites, concluding they would not take the advice he gave them. He told them their duty, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, but despairs of working any good upon them. He would have healed them, but they would not be healed. They that will not be counselled cannot be helped. Their sins were,

1. Pride. This is most insisted upon; for perhaps there are more precious souls ruined by pride than by any one lust whatsoever. The Moabites were notorious for this; "We have heard" on both ears "of the pride of Moab;" it is what all their neighbours cry out shame upon them for. "He is very proud;" the body of the nation is so, forgetting the baseness of their original, and the brand of infamy fastened upon them by that law of God which forbade a Moabite to "enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever," *Deu.* xxiii. 3. We have heard of "his haughtiness and his pride." It is not the rash and rigid censure of one or two concerning them, but it is the character all that know them will give of them. They are a proud people, and therefore they will not take good counsel when it is given them; they think themselves too wise to be advised, therefore they will not take example by Hezekiah to do justly and love mercy; they scorn to make him their pattern, for they think themselves able to teach him; they are proud, and therefore will not be subject to God himself, nor regard the warnings he gives them; "The wicked in the pride of his countenance will not seek after God;" they are proud, and therefore will not entertain and protect God's outcasts, they scorn to have any thing to do with them. But this is not all.

2. We have heard of his wrath too, for those that are very proud are commonly very passionate; particularly his wrath against the people of God, whom therefore he will rather persecute than protect.

3. It is with his lies that he gains the gratification of his pride and his passion; but "his lies shall not be so;" he shall not compass his proud and angry projects, as he hoped he should. Some read it, 'His haughtiness, his pride, and his wrath, are greater than his strength.' We know if we should lie at his mercy, we should find no mercy with him, but he has not power equal to his malice; his pride draws down ruin upon him, for it is the preface to destruction, and he hath not strength to ward it off.

Secondly. The sorrows with which Moab is threatened; ver. 7, "Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab;" all the inhabitants shall bitterly lament the ruin of their country, they shall complain one to another, every one shall howl in despair, and not one shall either see any cause or have any heart to encourage his friend. Observe,

1. The causes of this sorrow. 1st. The destruction of their cities; "For the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn;" that great and strong city, which had held out against a mighty force, 2 *Kin.* iii. 25, should now be levelled with the ground, either burnt or broken down, and its foundations stricken, bruised, and broken, so the word signifies; they shall howl when they see their splendid cities turned into ruinous heaps. 2nd. The desolation of their country. Moab was famous for its fields and vineyards, but those shall all be laid waste by the invading army, ver. 8—10. See, *First.* What a fruitful, pleasant country they had, as the garden of the Lord, *Gen.* xiii. 10. It was planted with choice and noble vines, with principal plants, which reached even to Jazer, a city in the tribe of Gad; the luxuriant branches of their vines wandered, and wound themselves along the ranges on which they were spread, even "through the wilderness" of Moab; there were vineyards there; nay, they were "stretched out," and went even to the sea, the Dead sea; the best grapes grew in their hedgerows. *Secondly.* How merry and pleasant they had been in it. Many a time they had shouted for their summer fruits, and for their harvest, as the country people sometimes do with us, when they have cut down all their corn. They had had joy and gladness in their fields and vineyards, singing and shouting at the treading of their grapes; nothing is said of their praising God for their abundance, and giving him the glory of it. If they had made it the matter of their thanksgiving, they might still have had it the matter of their rejoicing; but they making it the food and fuel of their lusts, see, *Thirdly.* How they should be stripped of all. The fields shall languish; all the fruits of them being carried away, or trodden down, they cannot now enrich their owners as they have done, and therefore languish. The soldiers, called here "the lords of the heathen," shall break down all the plants, though they were principal plants, the choicest that could be got. Now the shouting for the enjoyment of the summer fruits is fallen, and is turned into howling for the loss of them. The joy of harvest is ceased, there is no more singing, no more shouting for the treading out of wine; they have not what they have had to rejoice in, nor have they a disposition to rejoice, the ruin of their country has marred their mirth. Note, *1st.* Those that are most addicted to mirth and pleasure God can easily change their note, can soon turn their laughter into mourning, and their joy into heaviness. *2nd.* Joy in God is, upon this account, far better than the joy of harvest, that is what we cannot be robbed of, *Ps.* iv. 6, 7. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, *Hos.* ii. 11, 12. But a gracious soul can rejoice in the Lord as the God of its salvation, even then when the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine, *Hab.* iii. 17, 18. In God, therefore, let us always rejoice with a holy triumph, and in other things let us always rejoice with a holy trembling; rejoice as though we rejoiced not.

1. The concurrence of the prophet with them in this sorrow. I will with weeping bewail Jazer, and the vine of Sibmah, and look with a compassionate concern upon the desolations of such a pleasant country. "I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon," and mingle them with thy tears. Nay, ver. 11, it appears to be an inward grief, "My bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab;" it should make such an impression upon him, that he should feel an inward trembling, like that of the strings of a harp when it is played upon. It well becomes God's prophets to acquaint themselves with grief; the great Prophet did so. The afflictions of the world, as well as those of the church, should be afflictions to us: see *ch.* xv. 5.

Thirdly. In the close of the chapter we have,

1. The insufficiency of the gods of Moab, the false gods, to help them, ver. 12. Moab shall be soon weary of the high places; he shall spend his spirits and strength in vain, in praying to his idols, they cannot help him, and he shall be convinced that they cannot. It is seen that it is to no purpose to expect any relief from the high places on earth, it must come from above the hills. Men are generally so stupid that they will not believe, till they are made to see, the vanity of idols, and of all creature confidences, nor will come off from them, till they are made weary of them. But when he is weary of his high places, he will not go, as he should, to God's sanctuary; but to his sanctuary, that is, to the temple of Chemosh, the principal idol of Moab, so it is generally understood; and he shall pray there to as little purpose, and as little to his own ease and satisfaction, as he did in his high places; for whatever honours idolaters do to their idols, they do not thereby make them at all the better able to help them. Whether they are the *dii majorum gentium*,—'gods of the higher order,' or *minorum*,—'of the lower order,' they are alike the creatures of men's fancy, and the work of men's hands. Perhaps it may be meant of their coming to God's sanctuary. When they found they could have no succours from their own high places, some of them would come to the temple of God at Jerusalem, to pray there, but in vain; he will justly send them back to "the gods whom they have served," *Jud.* x. 14.

2. The sufficiency of the God of Israel, the only true God, to make good what he had spoken against them. 1st. The thing itself was long since determined; ver. 13, "This is the word," this is the thing, "that the Lord hath spoken concerning Moab, since that time" that he began to be so proud, and insolent, and abusive to God's people. The country was long ago doomed to ruin; this was enough to give an assurance of it, that it "is the word which the Lord hath spoken;" and, as he will never unsay what he hath spoken, so all the power of hell and earth cannot gainsay it, or obstruct the execution of it. 2nd. Now it was made known when it should be done. The time was before fixed in the counsel of God, but now it was revealed; "The Lord hath spoken," that it shall be "within three years," ver. 14. It is not for us to know, or covet to know, the times and the seasons, any farther than God has thought fit to make them known, and so far we may and must take notice of them. See how God makes known his mind by degrees; the light of Divine revelation shone more and more, and so doth the light of Divine grace in the heart. Observe, *First.* The sentence passed upon Moab; "The glory of Moab shall be contemned," that is, it shall be contemptible, when all those things they have gloried in shall come to nothing. Such is the glory of this world, so fading and uncertain, admired awhile, but soon slighted. Let that therefore which will soon be contemptible in the eyes of others, be always contemptible in our eyes, in comparison with the far more exceeding weight of glory. It was the glory of Moab that their country was very populous, and their forces courageous; but where is her glory, when all that great multitude is in a manner swept away, some by one judgment and some by another, and the little remnant that is left shall be very small and feeble, not able to bear up under their own griefs, much less to make head against their enemy's insults? Let not therefore the strong glory in their strength, nor the many in their numbers. *Secondly.* The time fixed for the execution of this sentence; "Within three years as the years of an hireling;" that is, at the three years' end exactly; for a servant that is hired for a certain term keeps count to a day. Let Moab know that her ruin is very near, and prepare accordingly. Fair warning is given, and with it space to repent, which, if they had improved as Nineveh did, we have reason to think the judgments threatened had been prevented.

CHAPTER XVII.

Syria and Ephraim were confederate against Judah, *ch.* vii. 1, 2; and they being so closely linked together in their counsels, this chapter, though it be entitled "the burthen of Damascus," which was the head city of Syria, reads the doom of Israel too. I. The destruction of the strong cities, both of Syria and Israel, is here foretold, ver. 1—5; and again, ver. 9—11. II. In the midst of judgment mercy is remembered to Israel, and a gracious promise made, that a remnant should be preserved from the calamities, and should get good by them, ver. 6—8. III. The overthrow of the Assyrian army before Jerusalem is pointed at, ver. 12—14. In order of time this chapter should be placed next after *ch.* ix.; for the destruction of Damascus here foretold happened in the reign of Ahaz, 2 *Kin.* xvi. 8.

THE burden of Damascus.
Behold, Damascus is taken away from *being* a city,
And it shall be a ruinous heap.
2 The cities of Aroer *are* forsaken:
They shall be for flocks,
Which shall lie down, and none shall make *them* afraid.
3 The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, [Syria:
And the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of
They shall be as the glory of the children of Israel,
Saith the LORD of hosts.
4 And in that day it shall come to pass, *that* the glory of
Jacob shall be made thin,
And the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.
5 And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn,
And reapeth the ears with his arm; [Rephaim.
And it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of

We have here "the burden of Damascus." The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, 'The burthen of the cup of the curse, to drink to Damascus in;' and the ten tribes being in alliance, they must expect to pledge Damascus in this cup of trembling that is to go round.

First. Damascus itself, the head city of Syria, must be destroyed; the houses it is likely will be burnt, at least the walls, and gates, and fortifications demolished, and the inhabitants carried away captive, so that for the present it is "taken away from being a city," and is reduced not only to a village but to a "ruinous heap," ver. 1. Such desolating work as this doth sin make with cities.

Secondly. The country towns are abandoned by their inhabitants, frightened or forced away by the invaders. The cities of Aroer (a province of Syria so called) are forsaken, ver. 12; the conquered dare not dwell in them, and the conquerors have no occasion for them, nor did they seize them for want, but wantonness, so that the places which should be for men to live in are for flocks to lie down in, which they may do, and none will disturb or dislodge them. Stately houses are converted into sheepcotes. It is strange that great conquerors should pride themselves in being common enemies to mankind. But, how unrighteous soever they are, God is righteous in causing these cities to spew out their inhabitants, who by their wickedness had made themselves vile. It is better that flocks should lie down there than that they should harbour such as are in open rebellion against God and virtue.

Thirdly. The strongholds of Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, will be brought to ruin; "The fortress shall cease from Ephraim," (ver. 3,) that in Samaria, and all the rest. They had joined with Syria in invading Judah very unnaturally, and now they that had been partakers in sin should be made partakers in ruin, and justly. When "the fortress shall cease from Ephraim," by which Israel will be weakened, the kingdom will cease from Damascus, by which Syria will be ruined. The Syrians were the ringleaders in that confederacy against Judah, and therefore they are pushed first and foremost; and, because they boasted of their alliance with Israel, now Israel is weakened they are upbraided with those boasts; "the remnant of Syria shall be as the glory of the children of Israel." Those few that remain of the Syrians shall be in as mean and despicable a condition as the children of Israel are, and the glory of Israel shall be no relief or reputation to them. Sinful confederacies will be no strength, no stay, to the confederates, when God's judgments come upon them.

See here what the glory of Jacob is when God contends with him, and what little reason Syria will have to be proud of resembling the glory of Jacob.

1. It is wasted like a man in a consumption, ver. 4. The glory of Jacob was their numbers, that they were as the sand of the sea for multitude; but this glory shall be made thin, when many are cut off, and few left. Then the "fatness of their flesh," which was their pride and security, "shall wax lean," and the body of the people shall become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Israel died of a lingering disease; the kingdom of the ten tribes wasted gradually; God was to them as a moth, *Hos.* v. 12. Such is all the glory of this world: it soon withers, and is made thin; but there is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory designed for the spiritual seed of Jacob, which is not subject to any such decay,—fatness of God's house, which will not wax lean.

2. It is all gathered and carried away by the Assyrian army, as the corn is carried out of the field by the husbandman, ver. 5. The corn is the glory of the fields, *Ps.* lxv. 13; but when it is reaped and gone where is the glory? The people had by their sins made themselves ripe for ruin, and their glory was as quickly, as easily, as justly, and irresistibly cut down and taken away as the corn is out of the field by the husbandman. God's judgments are compared to the thrusting in of the sickle, when the harvest is ripe, *Rev.* xiv. 15. And the victorious army, like the careful husbandman in the valley of Rephaim, where the corn was extraordinary, would not, if they could help it, leave an ear behind, would lose nothing that they could lay their hands on.

6 Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of
an olive tree,
Two *or* three berries in the top of the uppermost bough,
Four *or* five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof,
Saith the LORD God of Israel.
7 At that day shall a man look to his Maker,
And his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.
8 And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands,
Neither shall respect *that* which his fingers have made,
Either the groves, or the images.

Mercy is here reserved in a parenthesis, in the midst of judgment, for a remnant that should escape the common ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Though the Assyrians took all the care they could that none should slip out of their net, yet the meek of the earth were hid in the day of the Lord's anger, and had their lives given them for a prey, and made comfortable to them by their retirement to the land of Judah, where they had the liberty of God's courts.

First. They shall be but a small remnant, a very few, which shall be marked for preservation; ver. 6, "Gleaning grapes shall be left in it." The body of the people were carried into captivity, but here and there one was left behind, perhaps one of two in a bed, when the other was taken, *Lu.* xvii. 34. The most desolating judgments in this world are short of the last judgment, which shall be universal, and which none shall escape. In times of the greatest calamity some are kept safe, as in times of the greatest degeneracy some are kept pure. But the fewness of those that escape supposeth the captivity of the far greatest part. Those that are left are but like the poor remains of an olive-tree, when it has been carefully shaken by the owner; if there be "two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough," (out of the reach of them that shook it,) that is all. Such is the remnant according to the election of grace, very few in comparison with the multitudes that walk on in the broad way.

Secondly. They shall be a sanctified remnant, ver. 7, 8; these few that are preserved are such as, in the prospect of the judgment approaching, had repented of their sins and reformed their lives, and therefore were snatched thus as brands out of the burning; or such as being escaped, and becoming refugees in strange countries, were awakened, partly by a sense of the distinguishing mercy of their deliverance, and partly by the distresses they were still in, to return to God. 1. They shall look up to their Creator, shall inquire, "Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" in such a night of affliction as this? *Job* xxxv. 10, 11; shall acknowledge his hand in all the events concerning them, merciful and afflictive, and shall submit to his hand. They shall give him the glory due to his name, and be suitably affected with his providences. They shall expect relief and succour from him, and depend upon him to help them; their "eyes shall have respect" to him, "as the eye of a servant to the hand of his master," *Ps.* cxxiii. 2. Observe, It is our duty at all times to have respect to God, to have our eyes ever towards him, both as our Maker, the author of our being and the God of nature, and as the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, and the God of grace; particularly when we are in affliction, our eyes must be towards the Lord, to "pluck our feet out of the net," *Ps.* xxv. 15. To bring us to this is the design of his providence, as he is our Maker, and the work of his grace, as he is the Holy One of Israel. 2. They shall look off from their idols, the creatures of their own fancy; shall no longer worship them, and seek to them, and expect relief from them; for God will be alone regarded, or he doth not look upon himself as at all regarded. He that looks to his Maker must not "look to the altars, the work of his hands," but disown them, and cast them off; must not retain the least "respect for that which his fingers have made," but break it to pieces, though it were his own workmanship, "the groves and the images." The word signifies images made in honour of the sun, and by which he was worshipped, the most ancient and most plausible idolatry, *Deu.* iv. 19; *Job* xxxi. 26. We have reason to account those happy afflictions which part between us and our sins, and by sensible convictions of the vanity of the world, that great idol, cool our affections to it, and lower our expectations from it.

9 In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough,
And an uppermost branch,
Which they left because of the children of Israel:
And there shall be desolation.
10 Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation,
And hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength,
Therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants,
And shalt set it with strange slips:
11 In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow,
And in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish:
But the harvest *shall be* a heap in the day of grief
And of desperate sorrow.

Here the prophet returns to foretell the woful desolations that should be made in the land of Israel by the army of the Assyrians.

First. That the cities should be deserted; even the strong cities, which should have protected the country, shall not be able to protect themselves. They shall "be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch," of an old tree, which is gone to decay, forsaken of its leaves, and appears on the top of the tree bare, and dry, and dead. So shall their strong cities look when the inhabitants have deserted them, and the victorious army of the enemy pillaged and defaced them, ver. 9; they shall be as the cities (so it may be supplied) which the Canaanites left, the old inhabitants of the land, "because of the children of Israel," when God brought them in with a high hand to take possession of that good land, cities which they builded not. As the Canaanites then fled before Israel, so Israel should now fly before the Assyrians. And herein the word of God was fulfilled, that if they committed the same abominations the land should "spew them out, as it spewed out the nations that were before them," *Lev.* xviii. 28; and that, as while they had God on their side, "one of them chased a thousand," so when they had made him their enemy "a thousand" of them should "flee at the rebuke of one," so that in the cities should be desolation, according to the threatenings in the law, *Lev.* xxvi. 31; *Deu.* xxviii. 52.

Secondly. That the country should be laid waste, ver. 10, 11. Observe here,

1. The sin that had provoked God to bring so great a destruction upon that pleasant land. It was "for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein." It is "because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation," and all the great salvations he hath wrought for thee; hast forgotten thy dependence upon him, and obligations to him; and "hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength," not only who is himself a strong rock, but has been thy strength many a time, or thou hadst been sunk and broken long since. Note, The God of our salvation is the rock

of our strength; and our forgetfulness and unmindfulness of him is at the bottom of all sin; therefore we have "perverted our way, because we have forgotten the Lord our God," and so we undo ourselves.

2. The destruction itself, aggravated by the great care they took to improve their land, and make it yet more pleasant. 1st. Look upon it at the time of the seedness, and it was all like a garden and a vineyard. That pleasant land was replenished with "pleasant plants," the choicest of its own growth; nay, so nice and curious were the inhabitants that, not content with them, they sent to all the neighbouring countries for "strange slips," the more valuable for being strange, uncommon, far-fetched, and dear-bought, though perhaps they had of their own not inferior to them. This was an instance of their pride and vanity, and that ruining error, their affectation to be like the nations. Wheat, and honey, and oil were their staple commodities, *Eze.* xxvii. 17; but not content with these, they must have flowers and greens, with strange names, imported from other nations; and a great deal of care and pains must be taken by hot-beds to make these plants to grow; the soil must be forced, and they must be covered with glasses to shelter them, and early in the morning the gardeners must be up to "make the seed to flourish," that it may excel those of their neighbours. The ornaments of nature are not to be altogether slighted; but it is a folly to be over fond of them, and to bestow more time and cost and pains about them than they deserve, as many do. But here this instance seems to be put in general for their great industry in cultivating their ground, and their expectations from it accordingly; they doubt not but their plants will grow and flourish. But, 2nd. Look upon the same ground at the time of harvest, and it is all like a wilderness, a dismal, melancholy place, even to the spectators, much more to the owners; for "the harvest shall be a heap," all in confusion, "in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow." The harvest used to be a time of joy, of singing and shouting, *ch.* xvi. 10, but this "harvest the hungry eateth up," *Job* v. 5, which makes it a day of grief, and the more, because the plants were pleasant and costly, ver. 10, and the expectations proportionably raised. The harvest had sometimes been a day of grief, if the crop were thin and the weather unseasonable; and yet in that case there was hopes the next would be better, but this shall be "desperate sorrow," for they shall see not only this year's products carried off, but the property of the ground altered, and their conquerors lords of it. The margin reads it, 'The harvest shall be removed' (into the enemy's country or camp, *Deu.* xxviii. 33,) 'in the day of inheritance,' (when thou thoughtest to inherit it,) 'and there shall be deadly sorrow.' This is a good reason why we should not lay up our treasure in these things which we may so quickly be despoiled of, but in that good part which shall never be taken away from us.

12 Woe to the multitude of many people,
Which make a noise like the noise of the seas;
And to the rushing of nations,
That make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!
13 The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters:
But *God* shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off,
And shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind,
And like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.
14 And behold at eveningtide trouble;
And before the morning he *is* not.
This *is* the portion of them that spoil us,
And the lot of them that rob us.

These verses read the doom of those that spoil and rob the people of God. If the Syrians and Israelites invade and plunder Judah,—if the Assyrian army take God's people captive, and lay their country waste,—let them know that ruin will be their lot and portion. They are here brought in,

First. Triumphing over the people of God. They rely upon their numbers; the Assyrian army was made up out of divers nations; it is the multitude of many people, ver. 12, by which weight they hope to carry the cause. They are very noisy, like the noise or rout of the seas; they talk big, hector and threaten, to frighten God's people from resisting them, and all their allies from sending in to their aid. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, in their speeches and letters, made a mighty noise to strike a terror upon Hezekiah and his people; the nations that followed them made a rushing like the rushing of many waters, and those mighty ones, that threaten to bear down all before them, and carry away every thing that stands in their way. "The floods have lifted up their voice, have lifted up their waves." Such is the tumult of the people, and the heathen, when they rage, *Ps.* ii. 1; xciii. 3.

Secondly. Triumphed over by the judgments of God. They think to carry their point by dint of noise; but woe to them, ver. 12, for he shall rebuke them; that is God shall,—one whom they little think of, have no regard to, stand in no awe of; he shall give them a check with an invisible hand, and then "they shall flee far off." Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, and the remains of their forces, they shall run away in a fright, and "shall be chased" by their own terrors, as the "chaff of the mountains," which stand bleak before the wind, and "like a rolling thing before the whirlwind," like thistle-down, so the margin. They make themselves "as chaff before the wind," *Ps.* xxxv. 5, and then the angel of the Lord, as it follows there, the same angel that slew many of them, shall chase the rest. God will "make them like a wheel," or rolling thing, and then persecute them with his tempest, and make them afraid with his storm, *Ps.* lxxxiii. 13, 15. Note, God can dispirit the enemies of his church, when they are most courageous and confident, and dissipate them when they seem most closely consolidated. This shall be done suddenly, ver. 14. At evening-tide they are very troublesome, and threaten trouble to the people of God; but "before the morning he is not;" at sleeping time they are "cast into a deep sleep," *Ps.* lxxvi. 5, 6. It was in the night that the angel routed the Assyrian army; God can in a moment break the power of his church's enemies, then when it appears most formidable; and this is written for the encouragement of the people of God in all ages, when they find themselves an unequal match for their enemies; for "this is the portion of them that spoil us," they shall themselves be spoiled. God will plead his church's cause, and they that meddle do it to their own hurt.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Whatever country it is that is meant here by "the land shadowing with wings," here is a woe denounced against it, for God hath, upon his people's account, a quarrel with it. I. They threaten God's people, ver. 1, 2. II. All the neighbours are hereupon called to take notice what will be the issue, ver. 3. III. Though God seemed unconcerned in the distress of his people for a time, he will at length appear against their enemies, and will remarkably cut them off, ver. 4—6. IV. This shall redound very much to the glory of God, ver. 7.

WOE to the land shadowing with wings,
Which *is* beyond the rivers of Ethiopia:

ETHIOPIAN EMBLEM OF GOD.

2 That sendeth ambassadors by the sea,
Even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters,
Saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled,
To a people terrible from their beginning hitherto;
A nation meted out and trodden down,
Whose land the rivers have spoiled!
3 All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth,
See ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains;
And when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.
4 For so the LORD said unto me, I will take my rest,
And I will consider in my dwelling place
Like a clear heat upon herbs,
And like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest.
5 For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect,
And the sour grape is ripening in the flower,
He shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks,
And take away *and* cut down the branches. [tains,
6 They shall be left together unto the fowls of the moun-
And to the beasts of the earth:
And the fowls shall summer upon them,
And all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.
7 In that time shall the present be brought unto the LORD of hosts
Of a people scattered and peeled,
And from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto;
A nation meted out and trodden under foot,
Whose land the rivers have spoiled,
To the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the [mount Zion.

Interpreters are very much at a loss where to find this land that lies beyond the rivers of Cush; some take it to be Egypt, a maritime country, and full of rivers, and which courted Israel to depend upon them, but proved broken reeds. But against this it is strongly objected, that the next chapter is distinguished from this by the title of "the burthen of Egypt." Others take it to be Ethiopia, and read it, Which lies near, or about the river of Ethiopia; not that in Africa, which lay south of Egypt, but that which we call Arabia, which lay east of Canaan, which Tirhakah was now king of. He thought to protect the Jews as it were under the shadow of his wings, by giving a powerful diversion to the king of Assyria, when he made a descent upon his country, at the time that he was attacking Jerusalem, 2 *Kin.* xix. 9; but though by his ambassadors he bade defiance to the king of Assyria, and encouraged the Jews to depend upon him, God, by the prophet, slights him, will not go forth with him; he may take his own course, but God will take another course to protect Jerusalem, while he suffers the attempt of Tirhakah to miscarry, and his Arabian army to be ruined; for the Assyrian army shall become a present, or sacrifice, to the Lord of hosts, and to the place of his name, by the hand of an angel, not by the hand of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, ver. 7. This is a very probable exposition of this chapter. But from a hint of Dr. Lightfoot's, in his Harmony of the Old Testament, I incline to understand this chapter as a prophecy against Assyria; and so a continuation of the prophecy in the last three verses of the foregoing chapter, with which therefore this should be joined. That was against the army of the Assyrians which rushed in upon Judah, this against the land of Assyria itself, which lay beyond the rivers of Arabia, that is, the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, which bordered on Arabia Deserta. And, in calling it "the land shadowing with wings," he seems to refer to what he himself had said of it, *ch.* viii. 8, that "the stretching out of his wings shall fill thy land, O Immanuel." And the prophet might perhaps describe the Assyrians by such dark expressions, not naming them, for the same reason that St. Paul in his prophecy speaks of the Roman empire by a periphrasis; "He who now letteth," 2 *Thes.* ii. 7. Here is,

First. The attempt made by this land (whatever it is) upon "a nation scattered and peeled," ver. 2; swift messengers are sent by water to proclaim war against them, as a nation marked by Providence, and meted out to be trodden under foot. Whether this be the Ethiopians waging war with the Assyrians, or the Assyrians with Judah, it teacheth us, 1. That a people that hath been "terrible from their beginning," has made a figure, and borne a mighty sway, may yet become "scattered and peeled," and may be spoiled even by its own rivers, that should enrich both the husbandman and the merchant. Nations that have been formidable, and have kept all in awe about them, may by a concurrence of accidents become despicable, and an easy prey to their insulting neighbours. 2. Princes and states that are ambitious of enlarging their territories will still have some pretence or other to quarrel with those whose countries they have a mind to. It is a nation that has been terrible, and therefore we must be revenged on it. It is now "a nation scattered and peeled,

meted out and trodden down;" and therefore it will be an easy prey for us. Perhaps it is not brought so low as they represent it. God's people are trampled on as "a nation scattered and peeled;" but whoever think to swallow them up may find them still as terrible as they have been from their beginning. They are cast down, but not deserted, not destroyed.

Secondly. The alarm sounded to the nations about, by which they are summoned to take notice of what God is about to do, ver. 3. The Ethiopians and Assyrians have their counsels and designs, which they have laid deep, and promise themselves much from, and in prosecution of them send their ambassadors and messengers from place to place; but let us now inquire what the great God saith to all this. 1. He "lifts up an ensign upon the mountains," and blows a trumpet, by which he proclaims war against the enemies of his church, and calls in all her friends and well-wishers into her service. He gives notice that he is about to do some great work as Lord of hosts. 2. All the world is bidden to take notice of it. All the dwellers on earth must see the ensign, and hear the trumpet, must observe the motions of the Divine providence, and attend the directions of the Divine will. Let all list under God's banner, and be on his side, and hearken to the trumpet of his word, which gives not an uncertain sound.

Thirdly. The assurance God gives to his prophet, by him to be given to his people, that though he might seem for a time to sit by as an unconcerned spectator, yet he would certainly and seasonably appear for the comfort of his people, and the confusion of his and their enemies; ver. 4, "So the Lord said unto me." Men will have their saying, but God also will have his; and, as we may be sure his word shall stand, so he often whispers it in the ears of his servants the prophets. When he saith, "I will take my rest," it is not as if he were weary of governing the world, or as if he either needed or desired to retire from it, and repose himself; but it intimates, 1st. That the great God hath a perfect, undisturbed enjoyment of himself in the midst of all the tosses and changes of this world; the Lord sits even upon the floods unshaken, the Eternal Mind is always easy. 2nd. That sometimes he may seem to his people as if he took not wonted notice of what is done in this lower world; they are tempted to think he is "as one asleep," or "as one astonied," *Ps.* xliv. 23; *Jer.* xiv. 8; but even then he knows very well what men do, and what he himself will do.

1. He will take care of his people, and be a shelter to them. He will regard his dwelling-place; his eye and his heart are and shall be upon it for good continually. Zion is his rest for ever, where he will dwell, and he will look after it, so some read it; will lift up the light of his countenance upon it, will consider over it what is to be done, and will be sure to do all for the best. He will adapt the comforts and refreshments he provides for them to the exigencies of their case; and they will therefore be acceptable because seasonable. 1st. Like a 'clear heat after rain,'(so the margin,) which is very reviving and pleasant, and makes the herbs to flourish. 2nd. "Like a dew and a cloud in the heat of harvest," which are very welcome—the dew to the ground, and the cloud to the labourers. Note, There is that in God which is a shelter and refreshment to his people in all weathers, and arms them against the inconveniences of every change. Is the weather cool? there is that in his favour that will warm them. Is it hot? there is that in his favour that will cool them. Great men have their winter house and their summer house, *Am.* iii. 15; but they that are at home with God have both in him.

2. He will reckon with his and their enemies, ver. 5, 6. When the Assyrian army promiseth itself a plentiful harvest in the taking of Jerusalem, and plundering that city—when the bud of that project is perfect, before the harvest is gathered in—while "the sour grape" of their enmity to Hezekiah and his people "is ripening in the flower," and the design is just ready to be put in execution—God shall destroy that army as easily as the husbandman "cuts off the sprigs" of the vine with pruning-hooks; or, because the grape is sour, and good for nothing, and will not be cured, "takes away, and cuts down the branches." This seems to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian army by a destroying angel; when the dead bodies of the soldiers were scattered like the branches and sprigs of a wild vine, which the husbandman has cut to pieces; and "they shall be left to the fowls of the mountains and the beasts of the earth," to prey upon, both winter and summer; for as God's people are protected all seasons of the year, both in cold and heat, ver. 4, so their enemies are at all seasons exposed. Birds and beasts shall prey both summer and winter upon them till they are quite ruined.

Fourthly. The tribute of praise which should be brought to God from all this; ver. 7, "In that time," when this shall be accomplished, "shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts." 1. Some understand this of the conversion of the Ethopians to the faith of Christ in the latter days, of which we have the specimen and beginning in Philip's baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, *Acts* viii. 27. They that were "a people scattered and peeled, meted out, and trodden down," ver. 2, shall be a present to the Lord; and, though they seem useless and worthless, they shall be an acceptable present to him who judges of men by the sincerity of their faith and love, not by the pomp and prosperity of their outward condition; therefore, the Gospel was "ministered to the Gentiles," that "the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable," *Rom.* xv. 16. It is prophesied, *Ps.* lxviii. 31, that "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." 2. Others understand it of the spoil of Sennacherib's army, out of which, as usual, presents were brought to the Lord of hosts, *Num.* xxxi. 50. It was the present of "a people scattered and peeled," that is, 1st. It was won from the Assyrians, who were now themselves reduced to such a condition as they scornfully described Judah to be in, ver. 2. They that unjustly trampled upon others, shall themselves be justly trampled upon. 2nd. It was offered by the people of God, who were in disdain called a people scattered and peeled. God will put honour upon his people, though men put contempt upon them. Lastly, Observe, The present that is brought to the Lord of hosts must be brought "to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts." What is offered to God must be offered in the way that he hath appointed; we must be sure to attend him, and expect him to meet us there where he records his name.

CHAPTER XIX.

As Assyria was a breaking rod to Judah, with which it was smitten, so Egypt was a broken reed, with which it was cheated, and therefore God had a quarrel with them both. We have before read the doom of the Assyrians, now here we have the burthen of Egypt, a prophecy concerning that nation: I. That it should be greatly weakened and brought low, and should be as contemptible among the nations as now it was considerable, rendered so by a complication of judgments which God would bring upon them, ver. 1—17. II. That at length God's holy religion should be brought into Egypt, and set up there, in part by the Jews that should fly thither for refuge, but more fully by the preachers of the Gospel of Christ, through whose ministry churches should be planted in Egypt in the days of the Messiah, ver. 18—25, which would abundantly balance all the calamities here threatened.

THE burden of Egypt.
Behold, the LORD rideth upon a swift cloud,
And shall come into Egypt:
And the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence,
And the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.
2 And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians:
And they shall fight every one against his brother,
And every one against his neighbour;
City against city,
And kingdom against kingdom.
3 And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof;
And I will destroy the counsel thereof:
And they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers,
And to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards.
4 And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord;
And a fierce king shall rule over them,
Saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts.
5 And the waters shall fail from the sea,
And the river shall be wasted and dried up.
6 And they shall turn the rivers far away;
And the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up:
The reeds and flags shall wither. brooks,
7 The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the
And every thing sown by the brooks,
Shall wither, be driven away, and be no *more.*
8 The fishers also shall mourn,
And all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament,
And they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish.
9 Moreover they that work in fine flax,
And they that weave networks, shall be confounded.
10 And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof,
All that make sluices *and* ponds for fish.
11 Surely the princes of Zoan *are* fools, brutish:
The counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become
How say ye unto Pharaoh,
I *am* the son of the wise,
The son of ancient kings?

EGYPTIAN IDOLS.

Canopus. Harpocrati. Osiris. Horus. Isis. Osiris, with the hawk's head. Anubis. Cow Isis, with the infant Horus. Isis Neomenia.

12 Where *are* they? where *are* thy wise *men?*
And let them tell thee now, and let them know
What the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt.
13 The princes of Zoan are become fools,
The princes of Noph are deceived;
They have also seduced Egypt, *even they that are* the
stay of the tribes thereof. [thereof:
14 The LORD hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst
And they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof,
As a drunken *man* staggereth in his vomit.
15 Neither shall there be *any* work for Egypt,
Which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.
16 In that day shall Egypt be like unto women:
And it shall be afraid and fear
Because of the shaking of the hand of the LORD of hosts,
Which he shaketh over it.
17 And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt,
Every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in
himself,
Because of the counsel of the LORD of hosts,
Which he hath determined against it.

Though the land of Egypt had of old been a house of bondage to the people of God, where they had been ruled with rigour; yet among the unbelieving Jews there still remained much of the humour of their fathers, who said, "Let us make us a captain, and return into Egypt." Upon all occasions they trusted to Egypt for help, *ch.* xxx. 2; and thither they fled in disobedience to God's express command, when things were brought to the last extremity in their own country, *Jer.* xliii. 7; Rabshakeh upbraided Hezekiah with this, *ch.* xxxvi. 6. While they kept up an alliance with Egypt, and it was a powerful ally, they stood not in awe of the judgments of God; for against them they depended upon Egypt to protect them. Nor did they depend upon the power of God when at any time they were in distress, but Egypt was their confidence. To prevent all this mischief, Egypt must be mortified, and many ways God here tells them he will take to do it.

First. The gods of Egypt shall appear to them to be what they always really were, utterly unable to help them; ver. 1, "The Lord rides upon a cloud, a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt." As a judge goes in state to the bench to try and condemn the malefactors, or as a general takes the field with his troops to crush the rebels, so shall God come into Egypt with his judgments; and when he comes he will certainly overcome. In all this "burden of Egypt," here is no mention of any foreign enemy invading them; but God himself will come against them, and raise up the causes of their destruction from among themselves. He comes upon a cloud, above the reach of opposition or resistance; he comes apace, upon a swift cloud, for their judgment lingereth not when the time is come. He "rides upon the wings of the wind," and, far excelling the greatest pomp and splendour of earthly princes, he "makes the clouds his chariots," *Ps.* xviii. 9; civ. 3. When he comes, the "idols of Egypt shall be moved," shall be removed at his presence, and perhaps be made to fall as Dagon did before the ark. Isis, Osiris, and Apis, those celebrated idols of Egypt, being found unable to relieve their worshippers, shall be disowned and rejected by them. Idolatry had got deeper rooted in Egypt than in any land besides, even the most absurd idolatries; and yet now the idols shall be moved, and they shall be ashamed of them. When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, he "executed judgments upon the gods of the Egyptians," *Num.* xxxiii. 4; no marvel then if, when he comes, they begin to tremble. The Egyptians shall "seek to the idols" when they are at their wit's end, and consult the charmers and wizards, ver. 3; but all in vain, they see their ruin hastening on them notwithstanding.

Secondly. The militia of Egypt, that had been famed for their valour, shall be quite dispirited and disheartened. No kingdom in the world was ever in a better method of keeping up a standing army, than the Egyptians were; but now their heroes, that used to be celebrated for courage, shall be posted for cowards; "The heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it, like wax before the fire," ver. 1; "the spirit of Egypt shall fail," ver. 3. They shall have no inclination, no resolution to stand up in defence of their country, their liberty and property; but shall tamely and ingloriously yield all to the invader and oppressor. The Egyptians shall be like women, ver. 16; they shall be frightened and put into confusion by the least alarm. Even those that dwelt in the heart of the country, in the midst of it, farthest from danger, yet will be as full of frights as those that are situate on the frontiers. Let not the bold and brave be proud or secure, for God can easily cut off the spirit of princes, *Ps.* lxxviii. 72; and take away their hearts, *Job* xii. 24.

Thirdly. The Egyptians shall be embroiled in endless dissensions and quarrels among themselves. There shall be no occasion to bring a foreign force upon them to destroy them, they shall destroy one another; ver. 2, "I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians." As these divisions and animosities are their sin, God is not the author of them. They come from men's lusts; but God as a judge permits them for their punishment, and by their destroying differences corrects them for their sinful agreements. Instead of helping one another, and acting each in his place for the common good, "they shall fight one against his brother," and neighbour, whom he ought to love as himself; "city against city, and kingdom against kingdom." Egypt was then divided into twelve provinces or dynasties; but Psammetichus, the governor of one of them, by setting them at variance with one another, at length made himself master of them all. A kingdom thus divided against itself would soon be brought to desolation; *En quo discordia cives perduxit miseros!*—'Oh the wretchedness brought upon a people by their disagreements among themselves!" It is brought to this by a perverse spirit, a spirit of contradiction which the Lord would mingle, as an intoxicating draught made up of several ingredients, for the Egyptians, ver. 14. One party shall be for a thing for no other reason but because the other is against it. That is a perverse spirit, which, if it mingle with the public counsels, tends directly to the ruin of the public interests.

Fourthly. Their politics shall be all blasted, and turned into foolishness. When God will destroy the nation, he "will destroy the counsel thereof," ver. 3; by taking away wisdom from the statesmen, *Job* xii. 20, or setting them one against another, as Hushai and Ahithophel, or by his providence breaking their measures even then when they seemed well laid, so that the "princes of Zoan are fools." They make fools of one another, every one betrays his own folly; and Divine providence makes fools of them all, ver. 11. Pharaoh had his wise counsellors, Egypt was famous for such, but their counsel is all become brutish, they have lost their forecast; one would think they were become idiots, and were bereaved of common sense. Let no man glory then in his own wisdom, nor depend upon that, or upon the wisdom of those about him; for he that gives understanding can when he pleaseth take it away; and from them is it most likely to be taken away that boast of their policy, as Pharaoh's counsellors here did, that, to recommend themselves to places of public trust, boasted of their great understanding: "I am the son of the wise," of the God of wisdom, of wisdom itself, saith one; my father was an eminent privy counsellor, of note in his day for wisdom; or of the antiquity and dignity of their families: I am, saith another, "the son of ancient kings." The nobles of Egypt bragged much of their antiquity, producing fabulous records of their succession for above ten thousand years. This humour prevailed much among them about this time, as appears by Herodotus, their common boast being, that Egypt was some thousands of years more ancient than any other nation. But "where are thy wise men?" ver. 12; let them now shew their wisdom, by foreseeing what ruin is coming upon their nation, and preventing it if they can. Let them with all their skill "know what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt," and arm themselves accordingly; nay, so far are they from doing this, that they themselves are in effect contriving the ruin of Egypt, and hastening it on, ver. 23. The princes of Noph are not only deceived themselves, but "they have seduced Egypt," by putting their kings upon arbitrary proceedings, by which both themselves and their people were soon undone. The governors of Egypt, that are "the stay and corner stones of the tribes thereof," are themselves undermining it. It is sad with a people, when those that undertake for their safety are helping forward their destruction, and the physicians of the state are her worst disease; when the things that belong to the public peace are so far hid from the eyes of those that are intrusted with the public counsels, that in every thing they blunder, and take wrong measures. So here, ver. 14, "They have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof." Every step they took was a false step; they always mistook either the end or the means, and their counsels were all unsteady and uncertain, like the staggerings and stammerings of a drunken man in his vomit, that knows not what he saith, nor where he goes. See what reason we have to pray for our privy counsellors and ministers of state, who are the great supports and blessings of the state if God give them a spirit of wisdom, but quite contrary if he hides their heart from understanding.

Fifthly. The rod of government shall be turned into the serpent of tyranny and oppression; ver. 4, "The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord;" not a foreigner, but one of their own, one that shall rule over them by an hereditary right; but shall be a fierce king, and rule them with rigour: either the twelve tyrants that succeeded Sethon, or rather Psammetichus, that recovered the monarchy again; for he speaks of one cruel lord. Now the barbarous usage which the Egyptian taskmasters gave to God's Israel long ago was remembered against them, and they were paid in their own coin by another Pharaoh. It is sad with a people when the powers that should be for edification are for destruction, and they are ruined by those by whom they should be ruled, when such as this is the "manner of the king," as it is described *in terrorem*,—'in order to impress alarm,' 1 *Sam.* viii. 11.

Sixthly. Egypt was famous for its river Nile, which was its wealth, and strength, and beauty, and was idolized by them. Now it is here threatened, that "the waters shall fail from the sea," and the river shall be "wasted and dried up," ver. 5. Nature shall not herein favour them as she hath done. Egypt was never watered with the rain of heaven, *Zec.* xiv. 18; and therefore the fruitfulness of their country depended wholly upon the overflowing of their river; if that therefore be dried up their fruitful land would soon be turned into barrenness, and their harvests cease; "Every thing sown by the brooks will wither" of course, will be "driven away, and be no more," ver. 7. If the "paper reeds by the brooks," at the very mouth of them wither, much more the corn that lies at a greater distance, but derives its moisture from them. Yet this is not all; the drying up of their rivers is the destruction, 1. Of their fortifications, for they are "brooks of defence," ver. 6; making the country difficult of access to an enemy. Deep rivers are the strongest lines, and most hardly forced. Pharaoh is said to be a "great dragon lying in the midst of his rivers," and guarded by them, bidding defiance to all about him, *Eze.* xxix. 3; but these "shall be emptied and dried up," not by an enemy, as Sennacherib with "the sole of his foot dried up mighty rivers," *ch.* xxxvii. 25, and as Cyrus, who took Babylon by drawing Euphrates into many streams; but by the providence of God, which sometimes "turns water springs into dry ground," *Ps.* cvii. 33. 2. It is the destruction of their fish, which in Egypt was much of their food; witness that base reflection which the children of Israel made, *Num.* xi. 5, "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely." The drying up of the rivers will kill the fish, *Ps.* cv. 29; and that will ruin those who make it their business, 1st. To catch fish, whether by angling or nets, ver. 8; they shall lament and languish, for their trade is at an end. There is nothing which the children of this world do more heartily lament than the loss of that which they used to get money by; *Ploratur lachrymis amissa pecunia veris*,—'Those are genuine tears which are shed over lost money.' 2nd. To keep fish, that it may be ready when it is called for. There were those that "made sluices and ponds for fishes," ver. 10; but they shall be "broken in the purposes thereof;" their business will fail either for want of water to fill their ponds or for want of fish to replenish their waters. God can find ways to deprive a country even of that which is its staple commodity. The Egyptians themselves may remember the fish they have formerly eaten freely, but now cannot have for money; and that which aggravates the loss of these advantages by the river is, that it is their own doing; ver. 6, "They shall turn the rivers far away." Their kings and great men, to gratify their own fancy, will drain water from the main river to their own houses and grounds at a distance, preferring their private convenience before the public, and so by degrees the force of the river is sensibly weakened. Thus many do themselves a greater prejudice at last than they think of, *First.* Who pretend to be wiser than nature, and to do better for themselves than nature has done. *Secondly.* Who consult their own particular interest more than the common good. Such may gratify themselves, but sure they can never satisfy themselves, who, to serve a turn, contribute to a public calamity which they themselves at long run cannot avoid sharing in. Herodotus tells us, that Pharaoh Necho, (who reigned not long after this,) projecting to cut a free passage by water from Nilus into the Red sea, employed a vast number of men to make a ditch, or channel, for that purpose; in which attempt he impaired the river, lost one hundred and twenty thousand of his people, and yet left the work unaccomplished.

Seventhly. Egypt was famous for the linen manufacture; but that trade shall be ruined. Solomon's merchants traded with Egypt for linen yarn, 1 *Kin.* x. 28. Their country produced the best flax, and the best hands to work it; but they that work in fine flax shall be confounded, ver. 9, either for want of flax to work on, or for want of a demand of that which they

have worked, or opportunity to export it. The decay of trade weakens and wastes a nation, and by degrees brings it to ruin. The trade of Egypt must needs sink, for, ver. 15, "There shall not be any work for Egypt" to be employed in; and where there is nothing to be done, there is nothing to be got. There shall be a universal stop put to business, "no work which either head or tail, branch or rush, may do;" nothing for high or low, weak or strong, to do; no hire, *Zec.* viii. 20. Note, The flourishing of a kingdom depends much upon the industry of the people; and then things are likely to do well when all hands are at work; when the head and top-branch doth not disdain to labour, and the labour of the tail and rush is not disdained. But when the learned professions are unemployed, the topping merchants have no stocks, and the handicraft tradesmen nothing to do, poverty comes upon a people as one that travelleth, and as an armed man.

Eighthly. A general consternation shall seize the Egyptians. They shall be afraid and fear, ver. 16, which will be both an evidence of a universal decay and a means and presage of utter ruin. Two things will put them into this fright: 1. What they hear from the land of Judah; "that shall be a terror to Egypt," ver. 17. When they hear of the desolations made in Judah by the army of Sennacherib, considering both the near neighbourhood and the strict alliance that was between them and Judah, they will conclude it must be their turn next to become a prey to that victorious army. When their neighbour's house was on fire, they could not but see their own in danger; and therefore every one of the Egyptians that maketh mention of Judah, "shall be afraid in himself," expecting the bitter cup shortly to be put into their hands. 2. What they see in their own land. They shall fear, ver. 16, "because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts;" and, ver. 17, "because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts;" which, from the shaking of his hand, they shall conclude he has determined against Egypt as well as Judah. For if judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? "If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" See here, 1st. How easily God can make those a terror to themselves that have been not only secure, but a terror to all about them. It is but shaking his hand over them, or laying it upon some of their neighbours, and the stoutest hearts tremble presently. 2nd. How well it becomes us to fear before God when he doth but shake his hand over us, and to humble ourselves under his mighty hand when it doth but threaten us, especially when we see his counsel determined against us; for who can change his counsel?

18 In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt
Speak the language of Canaan,
And swear to the LORD of hosts;
One shall be called, The city of destruction.
19 In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD
In the midst of the land of Egypt,
And a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.
20 And it shall be for a sign and for a witness
Unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt:
For they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors,
And he shall send them a saviour, and a great one,
And he shall deliver them.
21 And the LORD shall be known to Egypt,
And the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day,
And shall do sacrifice and oblation;
Yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform *it*.
22 And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and [heal *it*:
And they shall return *even* to the LORD,
And he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them.
23 In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to [Assyria,
And the Assyrian shall come into Egypt,
And the Egyptian into Assyria,
And the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.
24 In that day shall Israel be the third
With Egypt and with Assyria,
Even a blessing in the midst of the land:
25 Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying,
Blessed *be* Egypt my people,
And Assyria the work of my hands,
And Israel mine inheritance.

Out of the thick and threatening clouds of the foregoing prophecy, here the sun of comfort breaks forth, and it is the Sun of righteousness. Still God has mercy in store for Egypt, and he will shew it, not so much by reviving their trade, and replenishing their river again, but by bringing the true religion among them, calling them to, and accepting them in, the worship of the one only living and true God; and these blessings of grace were much more valuable than all the blessings of nature, wherewith Egypt was enriched. We know not of any event in which this prophecy can be thought to have its full accomplishment, short of the conversion of Egypt to the faith of Christ, by the preaching (as it is supposed) of Mark the evangelist, and the founding of many Christian churches there, which flourished for many ages. Many prophecies of this book point to the days of the Messiah, and why not this? And it is no unusual thing to speak of gospel graces and ordinances in the language of the Old Testament institutions. And in these prophecies those words, "in that day," perhaps have not always a reference to what goes immediately before, but have a peculiar significancy, pointing at that day which had been so long fixed, and so often spoken of, when "the dayspring from on high" should visit this dark world. Yet, it is not improbable, which some conjecture, that this prophecy was in part fulfilled when those Jews who fled from their own country to take shelter in Egypt, when Sennacherib invaded their land, brought their religion along with them, and, being awakened to great seriousness by the troubles they were in, made an open and zealous profession of it there, and were instrumental to bring many of the Egyptians to embrace it; which was an earnest and specimen of the more plentiful harvest of souls that should be gathered in to God by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. Josephus indeed tells us that Onias the son of Onias the high priest, living an outlaw at Alexandria in Egypt, obtained leave of Ptolemy Philometer, then king, and Cleopatra his queen, to build a temple to the God of Israel, like that at Jerusalem, at Bubastis in Egypt; and pretended a warrant for doing it from this prophecy in Isaiah, that there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of Egypt; and the service of God continued in it about three hundred and thirty-three years, when it was shut up by Paulinus, soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans: see *Joseph. Antiq.* l. xiii. c. 6, and *De Bell. Judaic.* l. vii. c. 30. But that temple was all along looked upon by the pious Jews as so great an irregularity, and an affront to the temple at Jerusalem, that we cannot suppose this prophecy to be fulfilled in it. Observe how the conversion of Egypt is here described.

First. They shall "speak the language of Canaan," the holy language, the Scripture language; they shall not only understand it, but use it, ver. 18; they shall introduce that language among them, and converse freely with the people of God, and not, as they used to do, by an interpreter, *Gen.* xlii. 23. Note, Converting grace, by changing the heart, changeth the language; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Five cities in Egypt shall speak this language; so many Jews shall come to reside in Egypt, and they shall so multiply there that they shall soon replenish five cities; one of which shall be the city of Heres, or of the sun, Heliopolis, where the sun was worshipped,—the most infamous of all the cities of Egypt for idolatry,—even there shall be a wonderful reformation, they shall "speak the language of Canaan." Or it may be taken thus, as we render it, that for every five cities that shall embrace religion, there shall be one—a sixth part of the cities of Egypt—that shall reject it, and that shall be called a city of destruction, because it refuseth the methods of salvation.

Secondly. They shall "swear to the Lord of hosts;" not only swear by him, giving him the honour of appealing to him, as all nations did to the gods they worshipped; but they shall, by a solemn oath and vow, devote themselves to his honour, and bind themselves to his service; they shall swear to cleave to him with purpose of heart, and shall worship him, not occasionally but constantly. They shall swear allegiance to him as their king, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed.

Thirdly. They shall set up the public worship of God in their land; ver. 19, "There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt," an altar on which "they shall do sacrifice and oblation," ver. 21; therefore, it must be understood spiritually. Christ, the great altar, which sanctifies every gift, shall be owned there, and the gospel sacrifices of prayer and praise shall be offered up; for, by the law of Moses, there was to be no other altar for sacrifice but that at Jerusalem. In Christ Jesus all distinction of nations is taken away, and a spiritual altar, a gospel church in the midst of the land of Egypt is as acceptable to God as one in the midst of the land of Israel; and spiritual sacrifices of faith and love, and a contrite heart, please the Lord better than an ox or bullock.

Fourthly. There shall be a face of religion upon the nation, and an open profession made of it, discernible to all that come among them. Not only in the heart of the country, but even in the borders of it, there shall be a pillar, or pillars, inscribed to Jehovah, to his honour, as before there had been such pillars set up in honour of false gods. As soon as a stranger entered upon the borders of Egypt he might soon perceive what God they worshipped. Those that serve God must not be ashamed to own him, but be forward to do any thing that may be "for a sign, and for a witness, to the Lord of hosts;" that even in the land of Egypt he had some faithful worshippers, who boasted of their relation to him, and made his name their strong tower, or bulwark, on their borders, with which their coasts were fortified against all assailants.

Fifthly. Being in distress they shall seek to God, and he shall be found of them; and this "shall be a sign and a witness" for the Lord of hosts, that he is a God hearing prayer to all flesh that come to him, ver. 20: see *Ps.* lxv. 2. When they cry to God by reason of their oppressors, the cruel lords that shall rule over them, ver. 4, "he shall be entreated of them," ver. 22; whereas, he had told his people Israel, who had made it their own choice to have such a king, that they should "cry to him by reason of their king," and he "would not hear them," 1 *Sam.* viii. 18.

Sixthly. They shall have an interest in the great Redeemer. When they were under the oppression of cruel lords, perhaps God sometimes raised them up mighty deliverers, as he did for Israel in the days of the judges; and by them, though he had smitten the land, he healed it again; and upon their return to God in a way of duty he returned to them in a way of mercy, and repaired the breaches of their tottering state; for repenting Egyptians shall find the same favour with God that repenting Ninevites did. But all these deliverances wrought for them, as those for Israel, were but figures of gospel salvation. Doubtless Jesus Christ is "the Saviour, and the great One" here spoken of, whom God will send the glad tidings of to the Egyptians, and by whom he will "deliver them out of the hands of their enemies," that they may "serve him without fear," *Lu.* i. 74, 75. Jesus Christ delivered the Gentile nations from the service of dumb idols, and did himself both purchase and preach liberty to the captives.

Seventhly. The knowledge of God shall prevail among them, ver. 21. 1. They shall have the means of knowledge; for many ages in Judah only was God known, for there only were the lively oracles found; but now the Lord, and his name and will, shall be known to Egypt. Perhaps this may in part refer to the translation of the Old Testament out of Hebrew into Greek by the Seventy, which was done at Alexandria in Egypt, by the command of Ptolemy king of Egypt; and it was the first time that the Scriptures were translated into any other language. By the help of this—the Grecian monarchy having introduced their language into that country—the Lord was known to Egypt, and a happy omen and means it was of his being farther known, ver. 1. 2. They shall have grace to improve those means. It is promised not only that "the Lord shall be known to Egypt," but that "the Egyptians shall know the Lord;" they shall receive and entertain the light granted to them, and shall submit themselves to the power of it. The Lord is known to our nation, and yet I fear there are many of our nation that do not know the Lord. But the promise of the new covenant is, that "all shall know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest;" which promise is sure to all the seed. The effect of this knowledge of God is, that "they shall vow a vow to the Lord, and perform it:" for those do not know God aright who either are not willing to oblige themselves to the Lord or do not make good those obligations.

Eighthly. They shall come into the communion of saints; being joined to the Lord, they shall be added to the church, and be incorporated with all the saints.

1. All enmities shall be slain. Mortal feuds there had been between Egypt and Assyria; they often made war upon one another, but now there shall be a highway between Egypt and Assyria, ver. 23, a happy correspondence settled between the two nations; they shall trade with one another, and every thing that passeth between them shall be friendly. "The Egyptians shall serve;"

that is, worship the true God "with the Assyrians," and therefore the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria. Note, It becomes those who have communion with the same God, through the same Mediator, to keep up an amicable correspondence with one another. And the consideration of our meeting at the same throne of grace, and our serving with each other in the same business of religion, should put an end to all heats and animosities, and knit our hearts to each other in holy love.

2. The Gentile nations shall not only unite with each other in the gospel fold, under Christ the great Shepherd, but they shall all be united with the Jews. When Egypt and Assyria become partners in serving God, Israel shall make a third with them, ver. 24; they shall become a three-fold cord, not easily broken. The ceremonial law, which had long been the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles, shall be taken down, and then they shall become "one sheep-fold under one Shepherd." Thus twisted, they shall be "a blessing in the midst of the land whom the Lord of hosts shall bless," ver. 24, 25. 1st. Israel shall be a blessing to them all, because of them "as concerning the flesh Christ came;" and they were the natural branches of the good olive, to whom did originally pertain its root and fatness, and the Gentiles were but "graffed in among them," *Rom.* xi. 17. Israel lay between Egypt and Assyria, and was a blessing to them both by bringing them to meet in that word of the Lord which went forth from Jerusalem, and that church which was first set up in the land of Israel. *Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio, inter se conveniunt*,—'Those who meet in a third meet in each other.' Israel is that third in whom Egypt and Assyria agree, and is therefore a blessing; for those are real and great blessings to their generation who are instrumental to unite those that have been at variance. 2nd. They shall all be a blessing to the world. So the Christian church is, made up of Jews and Gentiles; it is the beauty, riches, and support of the world. 3rd. They shall all be blessed of the Lord. *First.* They shall all be owned by him as his. Though Egypt was formerly a house of bondage to the people of God, and Assyria an unjust invader of them, yet all this shall now be forgiven and forgotten, and they shall be as welcome to God as Israel. They are all alike his people, whom he takes under his protection; they are formed by him, for they are the work of his hands, not only as a people, but as his; they are formed for him, for they are his inheritance, precious in his eyes, and dear to him, and from whom he hath his rent of honour out of this lower world. *Secondly.* They shall be owned together by him as jointly his—his in concert; they shall all share in one and the same blessing. Note, Those that are united in the love and blessing of God ought, for that reason, to be united to each other in charity.

CHAPTER XX.

This chapter is a prediction of the carrying away of multitudes, both of the Egyptians and the Ethiopians, into captivity, by the king of Assyria. Here is, I. The sign by which this was foretold, which was the prophet's going for some time barefoot, and almost naked, like a poor captive, ver. 1, 2. II. The explication of that sign, with application to Egypt and Ethiopia, ver. 3—5. III. The good use which the people of God should make of this, which is, never to trust in an arm of flesh, because thus it will deceive them, ver. 6.

IN the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it; 2 At the same time spake the LORD by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying,
Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins,
And put off thy shoe from thy foot.
And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.
3 And the LORD said,
Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked
Naked and barefoot three years
For a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia;
4 So shall the king of Assyria lead away
The Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives,
Young and old, naked and barefoot, [Egypt.
Even with *their* buttocks uncovered, to the shame of
5 And they shall be afraid
And ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation,
And of Egypt their glory.
6 And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day,
Behold, such *is* our expectation,
Whither we flee for help
To be delivered from the king of Assyria:
And how shall we escape?

God here as King of nations brings a sore calamity upon Egypt and Ethiopia, but as King of saints brings good to his people out of it. Observe,

First. The date of this prophecy. It was in the year that Ashdod, a strong city of the Philistines, (but which some think was lately recovered from them by Hezekiah, when he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 8,) was besieged and taken by an army of the Assyrians. It is uncertain what year of Hezekiah that was, but the event was so remarkable that they who lived then could by that token fix the time to a year. He that was now king of Assyria is called Sargon, which some take to be the same with Sennacherib; others think he was his immediate predecessor, and succeeded Shalmanezer. Tartan that was general, or commander-in-chief in this expedition, was one of Sennacherib's officers, sent by him to bid defiance to Hezekiah, in concurrence with Rabshakeh, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 17.

Secondly. The making of Isaiah a sign by his unusual dress when he walked abroad. He had been a sign to his own people of the melancholy times that were come and coming upon them, by the sackcloth which for some time he had worn, of which he had a gown made which he girt about him. Some think he put himself into that habit of a mourner upon occasion of the captivity of the ten tribes. Others think sackcloth was what he commonly wore, as a prophet, to shew himself mortified to the world, and that he might learn to endure hardness; soft clothing better becomes those that attend in king's palaces, *Mat.* xi. 8, than those that go on God's errands. Elijah wore haircloth, 2 *Kin.* i. 8; and John Baptist, *Mat.* iii. 4; and those that pretended to be prophets supported their pretension by wearing rough garments, *Zec.* xiii. 4. But Isaiah hath orders given him to loose his sackcloth from his loins, not to exchange it for better clothing, but for none at all; that is, no upper garment, no mantle, cloak, or coat, but only that which was next to him, suppose his shirt, waistcoat, and drawers; and he must put off his shoes and go barefoot; so that, compared with others' dress, and what he himself usually wore, he might be said to go naked. This was a great hardship upon the prophet, it was a blemish to his reputation, and would expose him to contempt and ridicule; the boys in the street would hoot at him; and they who sought occasion against him would say, "The prophet is indeed a fool, and the spiritual man is mad," *Hos.* ix. 7. It might likewise be a prejudice to his health; he was in danger of catching a cold which might throw him into a fever, and cost him his life; but God bade him do it that he might give a proof of his obedience to God in a most difficult command, and so shame the disobedience of his people to the most easy and reasonable precepts. When we are in the way of our duty we must trust God both with our credit and with our safety. The hearts of people were strangely stupid, and would not be affected with what they heard only, but must be taught by signs, and therefore Isaiah must do this for their edification. If the dress was scandalous, yet the design was glorious, and what a prophet of the Lord needed not to be ashamed of.

Thirdly. The exposition of this sign, ver. 3, 4. It was intended to signify that the Egyptians and the Ethiopians should be led away captives by the king of Assyria, thus stripped, or in rags, and very shabby clothing, as Isaiah was. God calls him his servant Isaiah, because in this matter particularly he had approved himself God's willing, faithful, obedient servant; and for this very thing, which perhaps others laughed at him for, God gloried in him. "To obey is better than sacrifice;" pleaseth God, and praiseth him more, and shall be more praised by him. Isaiah is said to have walked naked and barefoot three years, whenever in that time he appeared as a prophet. But some refer the three years, not to the sign, but to the thing signified. "He hath walked naked and barefoot," there is a stop in the original. Suppose he did so once, that was enough to give occasion to all about him to inquire what was the meaning of his doing so. Or, as some think, he did it three days, a day for a year; and this for a three years' sign and wonder; that is, for a sign of that which shall be done three years hence, or which shall be three years in the doing. Three campaigns successively shall the Assyrian army make in spoiling the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and carrying them away captive in this barbarous manner, not only the soldiers taken in the field of battle, but the inhabitants young and old; and it being a very piteous sight, and such as must needs move compassion in those that had the least degree of tenderness left them, to see those who had gone all their days well dressed, now stripped and scarce having rags to cover their nakedness; that circumstance of their captivity is particularly taken notice of and foretold, the more to affect them to whom this prophecy was delivered. It is particularly said to be "to the shame of Egypt," ver. 4, because the Egyptians were a proud people; and therefore, when they did fall into disgrace, it was the more shameful to them; and the higher they had lifted up themselves the lower was their fall, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

Fourthly. The use and application of this, ver. 5, 6.

1. All that had any dependence upon, or correspondence with, Egypt and Ethiopia, should now be ashamed of them, and afraid of having any thing to do with them. Those countries that were in danger of being overrun by the Assyrians expected that Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, with his numerous forces, should put a stop to the progress of their victorious arms, and be a barrier to his neighbours; and with yet more assurance they gloried that Egypt, a kingdom so famous for policy and prowess, would do their business, would oblige them to raise the siege of Ashdod, and retire with precipitation; but instead of this, by attempting to oppose him they do but expose themselves, and make their country a prey to him. Hereupon all about them are ashamed that ever they promised themselves any advantage by two such weak and cowardly nations, and more afraid now than ever they were of the growing greatness of the king of Assyria, before whom Egypt and Ethiopia proved but as briars and thorns put to stop a consuming fire, which do but make it burn the more strongly. Note, Those who make any creature their expectation and glory, and so put it in the place of God, will sooner or later be ashamed of it, and their disappointment in it will but increase their fear: see *Eze.* xix. 6, 7.

2. The Jews in particular should be convinced of their folly in resting upon such broken reeds, and should despair of any relief from them; ver. 6, "the inhabitants of this isle," the land of Judah, situated upon the sea, though not surrounded by it, of this country, so the margin; every one shall now have his eyes opened, and shall say, "Behold such is our expecation," so vain, so foolish, and this is that which it will come to; we have fled for help to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and have hoped by them "to be delivered from the king of Assyria;" but, now they are broken thus, "how shall we escape," that are not able to bring such armies into the field as they did? Note, 1. Those that confide in creatures will be disappointed, and will be made ashamed of their confidence; for "vain is the help of man," and "in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills," or the height and "multitude of the mountains." 2. Disappointment in creature confidence, instead of driving us to despair, as here, "How shall we escape?" should drive us to God, for if we flee to him for help our expectation shall not be frustrated.

CHAPTER XXI.

In this chapter we have a prophecy of sad times coming, and heavy burthens, I. Upon Babylon, here called "the desert of the sea," that it should be destroyed by the Medes and Persians, with a terrible destruction, which yet God's people should have advantage by, ver. 1—10. II. Upon Dumah, or Idumæa, ver. 11, 12. III. Upon Arabia, or Kedar, the desolation of which country was very near, ver. 13—17. These, and other nations, which the princes and people of Israel had so much to do with, the prophets of Israel could not but have something to say to. Foreign affairs must be taken notice of as well as domestic ones, and news from abroad inquired after as well as news at home.

THE burden of the desert of the sea.
As whirlwinds in the south pass through;
So it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land.
2 A grievous vision is declared unto me;
The treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth.

Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media;
All the sighing thereof have I made to cease.
3 Therefore are my loins filled with pain:
Pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth:
I was bowed down at the hearing *of it;*
I was dismayed at the seeing *of it.*
4 My heart panted,
Fearfulness affrighted me: [me.
The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto
5 Prepare the table, watch in the watchtower, eat, drink:
Arise, ye princes, *and* anoint the shield.

ANCIENT WATCH-TOWER.

6 For thus hath the Lord said unto me,
Go, set a watchman,
Let him declare what he seeth.
7 And he saw a chariot *with* a couple of horsemen,
A chariot of asses, *and* a chariot of camels;
And he hearkened diligently with much heed:
8 And he cried, A lion: [daytime,
My lord, I stand continually upon the watchtower in the
And I am set in my ward whole nights:
9 And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men,
With a couple of horsemen.
And he answered and said,
Babylon is fallen, is fallen;
And all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground.
10 O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: [of Israel,
That which I have heard of the LORD of hosts, the God
Have I declared unto you.

We had one burthen of Babylon before, *ch.* xiii. 1; here we have another prediction of its fall, which God saw fit thus to possess his people with the belief of by line upon line, because Babylon sometimes pretended to be a friend to them, as *ch.* xxxix. 1, and God would hereby warn them not to trust to that friendship; and sometimes was really an enemy to them, and God would hereby warn them not to be afraid of that enmity. Babylon is marked for ruin, and all that believe God's prophets can through that glass see it tottering, see it tumbling, even then when with an eye of sense they saw it flourishing, and sitting as a queen. Babylon is here called "the desert," or plain "of the sea," for it was a flat country, and full of lakes or loughs (as they call them in Ireland) like little seas, and was abundantly watered with the many streams of the river Euphrates. Babylon did but now begin to be famous, Nineveh having outshined it while the monarchy was in the Assyrian hands; but in a little time it became the lady of kingdoms; and, before it arrived at that pitch of eminency which it was at in Nebuchadnezzar's time, God, by this prophet, plainly foretold its fall again and again, that his people might not be terrified at its rise, nor despair of relief in due time when they were its prisoners, *Job* v. 3; *Ps.* xxxvii. 35, 36. Some think it is here called a desert because, though it was now a populous city, it should in time be made a desert. And therefore the destruction of Babylon is so often prophesied of by this evangelical prophet, because it was typical of the destruction of the man of sin, the great enemy of the New Testament church, which is foretold in the *Revelation* in many expressions borrowed from these prophecies, which therefore must be consulted and collated by those who would understand the prophecy of that book. Here is,

First. The powerful irruption and descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon Babylon, ver. 1, 2. They will come "from the desert, from a terrible land." The northern parts of Media and Persia, where their soldiers were mostly bred, was waste and mountainous; terrible to strangers that were to pass through it, and producing soldiers that were very formidable. Elam, that is, Persia, is summoned to go up against Babylon, and, in conjunction with the forces of Media, to besiege it. When God hath work of this kind to do he will find, though it be in a desert, in a terrible land, proper instruments to be employed in it. These forces come as whirlwinds from the south, so suddenly, so strongly, and so terribly; such a mighty noise shall they make, and throw down every thing that stands in their way. As is usual in such a case, some deserters will go over to them, the treacherous dealers will deal treacherously. Historians tell us of Gadatas and Gobryas, two great officers of the king of Babylon, that went over to Cyrus, and, being well acquainted with all the avenues of the city, led a party directly to the palace, where Belshazzar was slain. Thus, with the help of the treacherous dealers, the spoiler is spoiled. Some read it thus, 'there shall be a deceiver of that deceiver,' namely, Babylon; 'and a spoiler of that spoiler.' Or, which comes all to one, 'the treacherous dealer' has found 'one that deals treacherously,' and 'the spoiler one that spoileth,' as it is expounded, *ch.* xxxiii. 4. The Persians shall pay the Babylonians in their own coin; they that by fraud and violence, cheating and plundering, by unrighteous wars and deceitful treaties, have made a prey of their neighbours, shall meet with their match, and by the same methods shall themselves be made a prey of.

Secondly. The different impressions made hereby upon those concerned in Babylon.

1. To the poor oppressed captives it would be welcome news; for they had been told long ago that Babylon's destroyer would be their deliverer; and therefore, when they hear that Elam and Media are coming up to besiege Babylon, all their sighing will be made to cease, they shall no longer mingle their tears with Euphrates' streams, but resume their harps, and smile when they remember Zion, which before they wept at the thought of. For "the sighing of the needy" the God of pity will arise in due time, *Ps.* xii. 5; he will break the yoke from off their neck, will remove the rod of the wicked from off their lot, and so make their sighing to cease.

2. To the proud oppressors it would be "a grievous vision," ver. 2; particularly to the king of Babylon for the time being; and it should seem that he is here brought in sadly lamenting his inevitable fate; ver. 3, 4, "Therefore are my loins filled with pain, pangs have taken hold upon me," &c., which was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar; for that very night in which his city was taken and himself slain, upon the sight of a hand writing mystic characters upon the wall, "his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another," *Dan.* v. 6; and yet that was but the beginning of sorrows. Daniel's deciphering of the writing could not but increase his terror, and the alarm which immediately followed of the executioners at the door would be the completing of it. And those words, "The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear to me," plainly refer to that aggravating circumstance of Belshazzar's fall, that he was slain on that night when he was in the height of his mirth and jollity, with his cups and concubines about him, and a thousand of his lords revelling with him; that night of his pleasure when he promised himself an undisturbed, unalloyed enjoyment of the most exquisite gratifications of sense, with a particular defiance of God and religion in the profanation of the temple vessels, that was the night that was turned into all this fear. Let this give an effectual check to vain mirth and sensual pleasures, and forbid us ever to lay the reins in the neck of them, that we know not what heaviness the mirth may end in, nor how soon laughter may be turned into mourning; but this we know, that for all these things God shall bring us into judgment. Let us therefore mix trembling always with our joys.

Thirdly. A representation of the posture in which Babylon should be found when the enemy should surprise it; all in festival gaiety; ver. 5, Prepare the table with all manner of dainties, set the guards, let them watch in the watch-tower, while we eat and drink securely and make merry; and if any alarm should be given the princes shall arise and anoint the shield, and be in a readiness to give the enemy a warm reception. Thus secure are they, and thus do they gird on the harness with as much joy as if they had put it off.

Fourthly. A description of the alarm which should be given to Babylon upon its being forced by Cyrus and Darius. The Lord in vision shewed the prophet the watchman set in his watch-tower near the palace, as is usual in times of danger. The king ordered those about him to post a sentinel in the most advantageous place for discovery, and according to the duty of a watchman "let him declare what he seeth," ver. 6. We read of watchmen thus set to receive intelligence in the story of David, 2 *Sam.* xviii. 24, and in the story of Jehu, 2 *Kin.* ix. 17. This watchman here discovered a chariot with a couple of horsemen attending it, in which we may suppose the commander-in-chief to ride; he then saw another chariot drawn by asses or mules, which were much in use among the Persians, and a chariot drawn by camels, which were likewise much in use among the Medes; so that, as Grotius thinks, these two chariots signify the two nations combined against Babylon; or, rather, these chariots come to bring tidings to the palace: compare *Jer.* li. 31, 32, "One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end," while he is revelling at the other end, and knows nothing of the matter. This watchman, seeing these chariots at some distance, "hearkened diligently with much heed," to receive the first tidings; and, ver. 8, "he cried, A lion." This word coming out of a watchman's mouth no doubt gave them a certain sound, and everybody knew the meaning of it, though we do not know it now. It is likely it was intended to raise attention; he that has an ear to hear let him hear, as when a lion roars. Or, he cried as a lion, very loud and in good earnest, the occasion being very urgent. And what has he to say?

1. He professeth his constancy to the post assigned him; "My lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower," and have never discovered any thing material till just now; all seemed safe and quiet. Some make it to be a complaint of the people of God that they had long expected the downfal of Babylon according to the prophecy, and it was not yet come; but withal a resolution to continue waiting, as *Hab.* ii. 1, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower," to see what will be the issue of the present providences.

2. He gives notice of the discoveries he had made; ver. 9, "Here cometh a chariot of men with a couple of horsemen;" a vision representing the enemy's entry into the city with all their force, or the tidings brought to the royal palace of it.

Fifthly. A certain account is at length given of the overthrow of Babylon. He in the chariot answered and said, when he heard the watchman speak, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen;" or, God answered thus to the prophet inquiring concerning the issue of these affairs. It is now come to this, Babylon is surely and irrecoverably fallen; Babylon's business is done now; "all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground." Babylon was the mother of harlots; that is, of idolatry, which was one of the grounds of God's quarrel with her; but her idols shall now be so far from protecting her that some of them shall be broken down to the ground; and others of them that were worth carrying away should go into captivity, and be a burthen to the beasts that carried them, *ch.* xlvi. 1, 2.

Sixthly. Notice is given to the people of God who were then captives in Babylon, that this prophecy of the downfal of Babylon was particularly intended for their comfort and encouragement, and they might depend upon it that it should be accomplished in due season, ver. 10. Observe,

1. The title the prophet gives them in God's name, "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor." The prophet calls them his because they were his country-

men, and such as he had a particular interest in and concern for; but he speaks it as from God, and directs his speech to those that were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land. Note, 1st. The church is God's floor, in which the most valuable fruits and products of this earth are as it were gathered together and laid up. 2nd. True believers are the corn of God's floor. Hypocrites are but as the chaff and straw, which take up a deal of room, but are of small value, with which the wheat is now mixed, but from which it shall be shortly and for ever separated. 3rd. The corn of God's floor must expect to be threshed by afflictions and persecutions. God's Israel of old was so afflicted from her youth, often under the plougher's plough, *Ps.* cxxix. 3, and the thresher's flail. 4th. Even then God owns it for his threshing, it is his still; nay, the threshing of it is by his appointment and under his restraint and direction. The threshers could have no power against it but what is given them from above.

2. The assurance he gives them of the truth of what he had delivered to them, which therefore they might build their hopes upon; "That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel," that and nothing else, that and no fiction or fancy of my own, "have I declared unto you." Note, In all events concerning the church, both past, present, and to come, we must have an eye to God, both as the Lord of hosts and as the God of Israel, who hath power enough to do any thing for his church, and grace enough to do every thing that is for her good; and to the words of his prophets as what they received from the Lord. And as they dare not smother any thing which he has intrusted them to declare, so they dare not declare any thing as from him which he has not made known to them, 1 *Cor.* xi. 23.

11 The burden of Dumah.
He calleth to me out of Seir,
Watchman, what of the night?
Watchman, what of the night?
12 The watchman said,
The morning cometh, and also the night:
If ye will enquire, enquire ye:
Return, come.

This prophecy concerning Dumah is very short, and withal dark and hard to be understood. Some think Dumah is a part of Arabia, and that the inhabitants descended from Dumah, the sixth son of Ishmael, as those of Kedar, ver. 16, 17, from Ishmael's second son, *Gen.* xxv. 13, 14. Others, because mount Seir is here mentioned, by Dumah understand Idumæa, the country of the Edomites. Some or other of Israel's neighbours are certainly meant, whose distress is foretold, not only for warning to them to prepare them for it, but for warning to Israel not to depend upon them, or any of the nations about them, for relief in a time of danger, but upon God only. We must see all creature confidences failing us, and feel them breaking under us, that we may not lay more weight upon them than they will bear. But though the explication of this prophecy be difficult, because we have no history in which we find the accomplishment of it, yet the application will be easy. We have here,

First. A question put by an Edomite to the watchman. Some one or other "calleth to me out of Seir," somebody that was more concerned for the public safety and welfare than the rest, who were generally careless and secure. As the man of Macedonia in a vision desired Paul to come over and help them, *Acts* xvi. 9, so this man of mount Seir in a vision desired the prophet to inform and instruct them. He calleth not many; it is well there are any, that all are not alike unconcerned about the things that belong to the public peace. Some out of Seir ask advice of God's prophets, and are willing to be taught, when many of God's Israel heed nothing. The question is serious, "What of the night?" it is put to a proper person, the watchman, whose office it is to answer such inquiries. He repeats the question, as one in care, as one in earnest, and desirous to have an answer. Note, 1. God's prophets and ministers are appointed to be watchmen, and we are to look upon them as such. They are as watchmen in the city in a time of peace, to see that all be safe; to knock at every door by personal inquiries: Is it locked? is the fire safe? To direct those that are at a loss, and check those that are disorderly, *Cant.* iii. 3, and v. 7. They are as watchmen in the camp in time of war, *Eze.* xxxiii. 7; they are to take notice of the motions of the enemy, and to give notice of them; to make discoveries, and then give warning; and in this they must deny themselves. 2. It is our duty to inquire of the watchmen, especially to ask again and again, "What of the night?" for watchmen wake when others sleep. 1st. What time of the night? After a long sleep in sin and security is it not time to rise, high time to awake out of sleep? *Rom.* xiii. 11. We have a great deal of work to do; a long journey to go; is it not time to be stirring? Watchman, what o'clock is it? After a long dark night is there any hopes of the day dawning? 2nd. What tidings of the night? What from the night? so some. What vision has the prophet had to night? we are ready to receive it. Or rather, what occurs to night? what weather is it? what news? We must expect an alarm, and never be secure; "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." We must prepare to receive the alarm, and resolve to keep our ground, and then take the first hint of danger, and to our arms presently, to our spiritual weapons.

Secondly. The watchman's answer to this question. The watchman was neither asleep nor dumb; though it was a man of mount Seir that called to him, he was ready to give him an answer, "The morning comes." He answers, 1. By way of prediction. There comes first a morning of light, and peace, and opportunity; you will enjoy one day of comfort more, but afterwards comes a night of trouble and calamity. Note, In the course of God's providence it is usual that morning and night are counterchanged, and succeed each other Is it night? yet the morning comes, and the dayspring knows his place, *Ps.* xxx. 5. Is it day? yet the night comes also; if there be a morning of youth and health, there will come a night of sickness and old age; if a morning of prosperity in the family, in the public, yet we must look for changes. But God usually gives a morning of opportunity before he sends a night of calamity; that his own people may be prepared for the storm and others left inexcusable. 2. By way of excitement; "If ye will inquire, inquire ye." Note, It is our wisdom to improve the present morning in preparation for the night that is coming after it. "Inquire, return, come;" be inquisitive, be penitent, be willing, and obedient. The manner of expression is very observable; for we are put to our choice what we will do, "If ye will inquire, inquire ye." If not, it is at your peril; you cannot say but you have a fair offer made you. We are also urged to be at a point; if ye will, say so, and do not stand pausing; what you will do, do quickly, for it is no time to trifle. Those that return and come to God will find they have a great deal of work to do, and but a little time to do it in, and therefore they had need to be busy.

13 The burden upon Arabia.
In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge,
O ye travelling companies of Dedanim.
14 The inhabitants of the land of Tema
Brought water to him that was thirsty,
They prevented with their bread him that fled.
15 For they fled from the swords,
From the drawn sword,
And from the bent bow,
And from the grievousness of war.
16 For thus hath the Lord said unto me,
Within a year, according to the years of an hireling,
And all the glory of Kedar shall fail:
17 And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty
men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished:
For the LORD God of Israel hath spoken *it*.

Arabia was a large country that lay eastward and southward of the land of Canaan; much of it was possessed by the posterity of Abraham. The Dedanim here mentioned, ver. 13, descended from Dedan, Abraham's son by Keturah; the inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael, *Gen.* xxv. 3, 13, 15. The Arabians generally lived in tents, and kept cattle, were a hardy people, inured to labour. Probably the Jews depended upon them as a sort of a wall between them and the more warlike Eastern nations; and, therefore, to alarm them, they shall hear the burthen of Arabia, and see it sinking under its own burthen.

First. A destroying army shall be brought upon them; with a sword, with a "drawn sword," with a bow ready bent, and with all "the grievousness of war," ver. 15. It is probable the king of Assyria, in some of the marches of his formidable and victorious army, took Arabia in his way, and, meeting with little resistance, made an easy prey of them. The consideration of "the grievousness of war" should make us thankful for the blessings of peace.

Secondly. The poor country people will hereby be forced to flee for shelter wherever they can find a place; so that the "travelling companies of Dedanim," that used to keep the high roads with their caravans, shall be obliged to quit them, and lodge in the forest in Arabia, ver. 13; and shall not have the wonted convenience of their own tents, poor and weatherbeaten as they are.

Thirdly. They shall stand in need of refreshment, being ready to perish for want of it, in their flight from the invading army. "O ye inhabitants of the land of Tema," (who probably were next neighbours to the companies of Dedanim,) 'bring ye water,' so the margin reads it, 'to him that is thirsty, and prevent with your bread those that flee;' for they are objects of your compassion, they do not wander for wandering sake, nor are they reduced to straits by any extravagance of their own, but they flee from the sword. Tema was a country where water was sometimes a scarce commodity, as we find, *Job* vi. 19; and we may conclude it would be in a particular manner acceptable to these poor distressed refugees. Let us learn hence, 1. To look for distress ourselves; we know not what straits we may be brought into before we die. Those that live in cities may be forced to lodge in forests; and those may know the want of necessary food who now eat bread to the full. Our mountain stands not so strong but that it may be moved, rises not so high but that it may be scaled. These Arabians would the better bear these calamities, because in their way of living they had used themselves to hardships. 2. To look with compassion upon those that are in distress, and with all cheerfulness to relieve them; not knowing how soon their case may be ours. Bring water to them that are thirsty; and not only give bread to those that need and ask it, but prevent those with it that have need; give it them unasked. They that do so, shall find it remembered to their praise, as, according to our reading, it is here remembered to the praise of the land of Tema, that they did bring water to the thirsty, and relieved even those that were on the falling side.

Fourthly. All that which is the glory of Kedar shall vanish away and fail. Did they glory in their numerous herds and flocks? they shall all be driven away by the enemy. It seems they were famous above other nations for the use of the bow in battle; but their archers, instead of foiling the enemy, shall fall themselves; and the "residue of their number," when they are reduced to a small number, "shall be diminished," ver. 17; their mighty, able-bodied men, and men of spirit too, shall become very few. For they, being most forward in the defence of their country, were most exposed, and fell first, either by the enemy's sword or into the enemy's hand. Note, Neither the skill of archers, though they be never so good marksmen, nor the courage of mighty men, can protect a people from the judgments of God, when they come with commission; but rather expose the undertakers. That is poor glory which will thus quickly come to nothing.

Fifthly. All this shall be done in a little time. "Within a year, according to the years of an hireling;" that is, within one year, precisely reckoned, this judgment shall come upon Kedar. If this fixing of the time be of no great use to us now, because we find not either when the prophecy was delivered or when it was accomplished, yet it might be of great use to the Arabians there to awaken them to repentance, that, like the men of Nineveh, they might prevent the judgment when they were thus told it was just at the door. Or, when it begins to be fulfilled, the business shall be done, be begun and ended in one year's time. God when he pleaseth can do a great work in a little time.

Sixthly. It is all ratified by the truth of God; ver. 16, "Thus hath the Lord said to me." You may take my word for it, that it is his word; and we may be sure no word of his shall fall to the ground. And again, ver. 17, "The Lord God of Israel hath spoken it," as the God of Israel, in pursuance of his gracious designs concerning them, and we may be sure "the Strength of Israel will not lie."

CHAPTER XXII.

We are now come nearer home, for this chapter is "the burthen of the valley of vision," that is, Jerusalem. Other places had their burthens for the sake of their being concerned some way or other with Jerusalem, and were reckoned with either as spiteful enemies, or deceitful friends to the people of God; but now, let Jerusalem hear her own doom. This chapter concerns, I. The city of Jerusalem itself, and the neighbourhood depending upon it. Here is, 1. A prophecy of the grievous distress they should shortly

be brought into, by Sennacherib's invasion of the country, and laying siege to the city, ver. 1—7; 2. A reproof given them for their miscarriage in that distress in two things: 1st. Not having an eye to God in the use of the means of their preservation, ver. 8—11; 2nd. Not humbling themselves under his mighty hand, ver. 12—14. II. The court of Hezekiah, and the officers of that court: 1. The displacing of Shebna, an ill man, and turning him out of the treasury, ver. 15—19; 2. The preferring of Eliakim to his place, who should do his country better service, ver. 20—24.

THE burden of the valley of vision.
What aileth thee now,
That thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?
2 Thou that art full of stirs,
A tumultuous city, a joyous city:
Thy slain *men are* not slain with the sword,
Nor dead in battle.
3 All thy rulers are fled together,
They are bound by the archers:
All that are found in thee are bound together,
Which have fled from far. [terly,
4 Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bit-
Labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the
daughter of my people. [perplexity
5 For *it is* a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of
By the Lord GOD of hosts in the valley of vision,
Breaking down the walls,
And of crying to the mountains.
6 And Elam bare the quiver
With chariots of men *and* horsemen,
And Kir uncovered the shield.
7 And it shall come to pass,
That thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots,
And the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the
gate.

The title of this prophecy is very observable; it is "the burthen of the valley of vision," of Judah and Jerusalem, so all agree. Fitly enough is Jerusalem called a valley, for the mountains were round about it; and the land of Judah abounded with fruitful valleys. And by the judgments of God, though they had been as a towering mountain, they should be brought low, sunk and depressed, and become dark and dirty as a valley; but most emphatically is it called a valley of vision, because there God was known, and his name great. There the prophets were made acquainted with his mind by visions; and there the people saw the goings of their God and king in his sanctuary. Babylon being a stranger to God, though rich and great, was called "the desert of the sea;" but Jerusalem being intrusted with his oracles, is a "valley of vision." "Blessed are their eyes, for they see;" and they have seers by office among them. Where Bibles and ministers are, there is a valley of vision, from which is expected fruit accordingly; but here is a "burthen of the valley of vision," and a heavy burthen it is. Note, Church privileges, if they be not improved, will not secure men from the judgments of God; "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you." The valley of vision has a particular burthen; "Thou Capernaum," *Mat.* xi. 23. The higher any are lifted up in means and mercies the heavier will their doom be if they abuse them. Now "the burthen of the valley of vision" here, is not that which will quite ruin it, but only frighten it; for it refers not to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, but to the attempt made upon it by Sennacherib, which we had the prophecy of, *ch.* x.; and shall meet with the history of, *ch.* xxxvi. It is here again prophesied of, because the desolations of many of the neighbouring countries which were foretold in the foregoing chapters, were to be brought to pass by the Assyrian army. Now let Jerusalem know, that when the cup is going round, it will be put into her hand; and though it will not be to her a fatal cup, yet it will be a cup of trembling. Here is foretold,

First. The consternation that the city should be in upon the approach of Sennacherib's army. It used to be "full of stirs;" a city of great trade, people hurrying to and fro about their business, a "tumultuous city," populous and noisy. Where there is great trade, there is great tumult. It used to be a joyous, revelling city; what with the busy part, and what with the merry part, of mankind, places of concourse are places of noise. But what ails thee now, that the shops are quitted, and there is no more walking in the streets and exchange, but "thou art wholly gone up to the housetops," ver. 1; to bemoan thyself in silence and solitude, or to secure thyself from the enemy, or to look abroad and see if any succours come to thy relief; or which way the enemy's motions are? Let both men of business and sportsmen rejoice as though they rejoiced not; for something may happen quickly which they little think of, that will be a damp to their mirth, and a stop to their business, and send them to "watch as a sparrow alone upon the housetop," *Ps.* cii. 7. But why is Jerusalem in such a fright? Her "slain men are not slain with the sword," ver. 2. But, 1. Slain with famine, so some; for Sennacherib's army having laid the country waste, and destroyed the fruits of the earth, provisions must needs be very scarce and dear in the city; which would be the death of many of the poorer sort of people, who would be constrained to feed on that which was unwholesome. 2. Slain with fear; they were put into this mighty fright, though they had not a man killed, but so disheartened themselves, that they seemed as effectually stabbed with fear as if they had been run through with a sword.

Secondly. The inglorious flight of the rulers of Judah, which fled from far, that is, from all parts of the country, to Jerusalem, ver. 3. Fled together, as it were by consent, and were found in Jerusalem; having left their respective cities, which they should have taken care of, to be a prey to the Assyrian army, which meeting with no opposition, when it "came up against all the defenced cities of Judah," easily took them, *ch.* xxxvi. 1. These rulers were bound from the bow, so the word is; they not only quitted their own cities like cowards, but when they came to Jerusalem were of no service there, but were as if their hands were tied from the use of the bow, by the extreme distraction and confusion they were in; they trembled so that they could not draw a bow. See how easily God can dispirit men, and how certainly fear will do it, when the tyranny of it is yielded to.

Thirdly. The great grief which this should occasion to all serious, sensible people among them; which is represented by the prophet's laying the thing to heart himself. He lived to see it, and was resolved to share with the children of his people in their sorrows, ver. 4, 5; he is not willing to proclaim his sorrow, and therefore bids those about him to look away from him. He will abandon himself to grief, and indulge himself in it; will weep secretly, but weep bitterly; and will have none go about to comfort him, for his grief is obstinate, and he is pleased with his pain. But what is the occasion of his grief? A poor prophet had little to lose, and had been inured to hardship, when he walked naked and barefoot; but it is for the spoiling of the daughter of his people. Note, Public grievances should be our griefs. It is "a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity;" our enemies trouble us, and tread us down, and our friends are perplexed, and know not what course to take to do us a kindness. The "Lord God of hosts" is now contending with "the valley of vision;" the enemies with their battering rams are "breaking down the walls," and we are in vain "crying to the mountains" to keep off the enemy, or to fall on us and cover us; or looking for help to come to us over the mountains; or appealing, as God doth, to the mountains to hear our controversy, *Mic.* vi. 1; and to judge between us and our injurious neighbours.

Fourthly. The great numbers and strength of the enemy that should invade their country, and besiege their city, ver. 6, 7; Elam, that is, the Persians, come with their quiver full of arrows, and with chariots of fighting men and horsemen; Kir, that is, the Medes, muster up their arms, unsheath the sword, and uncover the shield, and get every thing ready for battle, every thing ready for the besieging of Jerusalem. Then the choice valleys about Jerusalem, that used to be clothed with flocks, and covered over with corn, shall be full of chariots of war; and at the gate of the city the horsemen shall set themselves in array, to cut off all provisions from going in, and to force their way in. What a condition must the city be in that was beset on all sides with such an army?

8 And he discovered the covering of Judah,
And thou didst look in that day to the armour of the
house of the forest.
9 Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that
they are many:
And ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool
10 And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem,
And the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall.
11 Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water
of the old pool:
But ye have not looked unto the maker thereof,
Neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago
12 And in that day did the Lord GOD of hosts call
To weeping, and to mourning,
And to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth:
13 And behold joy and gladness,
Slaying oxen, and killing sheep,
Eating flesh, and drinking wine:
Let us eat and drink;
For to-morrow we shall die.
14 And it was revealed in mine ears by the LORD of hosts,
Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye
Saith the Lord GOD of hosts. [die,

What is meant by "the covering of Judah," which in the beginning of this paragraph is said to be "discovered," is not agreed. The fenced cities of Judah were a covering to the country; but those being taken by the army of the Assyrians, they ceased to be a shelter, so that the whole country lay exposed to be plundered. The weakness of Judah, its nakedness and inability to help itself, now appeared more than ever, and thus "the covering of Judah" was "discovered." Its magazines and stores, that had been locked up, were now laid open for the public use. Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of it, that by this distress into which Judah should be brought, God would discover their covering, that is, would uncloak their hypocrisy, would shew all that was in their heart, as is said of Hezekiah upon another occasion, 2 *Chr.* xxxii. 31. Now they discovered both their carnal confidence, ver. 9, and their carnal security, ver. 12. Thus by one means or other, "the iniquity of Ephraim will be discovered, and the sin of Samaria," *Hos.* vii. 1. They were now in a great fright, and in this fright they discovered two things much amiss:

First. A great contempt of God's goodness, and his power to help them. They made use of all the means they could think of for their own preservation; and it is not that they are blamed for, but in doing this they did not acknowledge God. Observe,

1. How careful they were to improve all advantages that might contribute to their safety. When Sennacherib had made himself master of all the defenced cities of Judah, and Jerusalem was left as a cottage in a vineyard, they thought it was time to look about them. A council was presently called, a council of war, and it was resolved to stand upon their defence, and not tamely to surrender. Pursuant to this resolve they took all the prudent measures they could for their own security. We tempt God if, in times of danger, we do not the best we can for ourselves. 1st. They inspected the magazines and stores, to see if they were well stocked with arms and ammunition; they looked "to the armour of the house of the forest," which Solomon built in Jerusalem for an armoury, 1 *Kin.* x. 17, and from thence they delivered out what they had occasion for. It is the wisdom of princes in times of peace to provide for war, that they may not have arms to seek when they should use them, and perhaps upon a sudden emergency. 2nd. They viewed the fortifications, "the breaches of the city of David;" they walked round the walls and observed where they were gone to decay for want of seasonable repairs, or

broken by some former attempts made upon them. These breaches were many, the more shame for the house of David, that they suffered the city of David to lie neglected. It is likely they had seen those breaches many a time, but now they saw them to consider what course to take about them. This good we should get by public distresses; we should be awakened by them to repair our breaches, and amend what is amiss. 3rd. They made sure of water for the city, and did what they could to deprive the besiegers of it; Ye "gathered together the waters" of the lower pools, which it is likely there was no great store of, and therefore they were the more concerned to be good husbands of. See what a mercy it is that, as nothing is more necessary to the support of human life than water, so nothing is more cheap and common. But it is bad indeed when that, as here, is a scarce commodity. 4th. They "numbered the houses of Jerusalem," that every house might send in their quota of men for the public service, or contribute in money to it, which they raised by a poll, so much a head, or so much a house. 5th. Because private property ought to give way to the public safety, those houses that stood in their way when the wall was to be fortified were broken down, which in such a case of necessity is no more an injury to the owner than blowing up houses in case of fire. 6th. They made a ditch between the outer and inner wall, for the greater security of the city; and they contrived to draw "the water of the old pool" to it, that they might have plenty of water themselves, and might deprive the besiegers of it; for it seems that was the project, lest the Assyrian army "should come and find much water," 2 *Chr.* xxxii. 4, and so should be the better able to prolong the siege. If it be lawful to destroy the forage of a country, much more to divert the streams of its waters, for the straitening and starving of an enemy.

2. How regardless they were of God in all these preparations; "But ye have not looked unto the maker thereof;" that is, of Jerusalem, the city you are so solicitous for the defence of, and of all the advantages which nature has furnished it with for its defence. The mountains round about it, *Ps.* cxxv. 2, and the rivers which were such as the inhabitants might turn which way soever they pleased for their convenience. Note, 1st. It is God that made his Jerusalem, and fashioned it long ago, in his counsels. The Jewish writers upon this place say, There were seven things which God made before the world, meaning, which he had in his eye when he made the world, namely, The garden of Eden, the law, the just ones, Israel, the throne of glory, Jerusalem, and Messiah the prince. The gospel church has God for its maker. 2nd. Whatever service we do, or endeavour to do, at any time to God's Jerusalem, it must be with an eye to him as the maker of it, and he takes it ill if we do not. That is it that is charged upon them here. They did not look to God; that is, *First.* They did not design his glory in what they did. They fortified Jerusalem because it was a rich city, and their own houses were in it; not because it was the holy city, and God's house was in it. In all our cares for the defence of the church we must look more at God's interest in it than at our own. *Secondly.* They did not depend upon him for a blessing upon their endeavours, saw no need of it, and therefore sought not to him for it, but thought their own powers and policies sufficient for them. Of Hezekiah himself it is said, that "he trusted in God," 2 *Kin.* xviii. 5, and particularly upon this occasion, 2 *Chr.* xxxii. 8. But there were those about him, it seems, that were great statesmen and soldiers, but had little religion in them. *Thirdly.* They did not give him thanks for the advantages they had in fortifying their city from "the waters of the old pool," which were fashioned long ago, as Kishon is called an "ancient river," *Jud.* v. 21. Whatever in nature is at any time serviceable to us, we must therein acknowledge the goodness of the God of nature, who, when he "fashioned it long ago," fitted it to be so, and according to whose ordinance it continues to this day. Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and therefore whatever use it is of to us we must look at him that fashioned it, bless him for it, and use it for him.

Secondly. A great contempt of God's wrath and justice in contending with them, ver. 12—14, where observe,

1. What was God's design in bringing this calamity upon them: it was to humble them, bring them to repentance, and makes them serious. In that day of trouble, and treading down, and perplexity, the Lord did thereby "call to weeping and mourning," and all the expressions of sorrow, even to "baldness" and "girding with sackcloth." And all this both to lament their sins by which they had brought those judgments upon the land, and to enforce their prayers, by which they might hope to avert the judgments that were breaking in, and to dispose themselves to a reformation of their lives, by a holy seriousness and a tenderness of heart under the word of God. To this God called them by his prophets, explaining his providences, and by his providences awakening them to regard what his prophets said. Note, When God threatens us with his judgments, he expects and requires that we humble ourselves under his mighty hand, that we tremble when the lion roars, and in a day of adversity consider.

2. How contrary they walked to this design of God; ver. 13, "Behold joy and gladness;" mirth and feasting, all the gaiety and all the jollity imaginable; they were as secure and pleasant as they used to be, as if they had no enemy in their borders, or were in no danger of falling into his hands. When they had taken the necessary precautions for their security, then they set all deaths and dangers at defiance, and resolved to be merry, let come on them what would. They that should have been among the mourners were among "the wine-bibbers, the riotous eaters of flesh;" and observe what they said, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die." This may refer either to the particular danger they were now in, and the fair warning which the prophet gave them of it, or to the general shortness and uncertainty of human life, and the nearness of death at all times. This was the language of the profane scoffers who mocked the messengers of the Lord and misused his prophets. 1st. They made a jest of dying. The prophet tells us we must die shortly, perhaps to-morrow, and therefore we should mourn and repent to-day; no, rather "let us eat and drink," that we may be fattened for the slaughter, and may be in good heart to meet our doom; if we must have a short life, let it be a merry one. 2nd. They ridiculed the doctrine of a future state on the other side death; for if there were no such state the apostle grants there would be something of reason in what they said, 1 *Cor.* xv. 32. If, when we die, there were an end of us, it were good to make ourselves as easy and merry as we could while we live; but if for all these things God shall bring us into judgment, it is at our peril if we walk in the way of our heart and the sight of our eyes, *Eccl.* xi. 9. Note, A practical disbelief of another life after this is at the bottom of that carnal security and brutish sensuality which is the sin, and shame, and ruin of so great a part of mankind, as of the old world, who were eating and drinking till the flood came.

3. How much God was displeased at it. He signified his resentment of it to the prophet, revealed it in his ears, to be by him proclaimed upon the house-top, "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die," ver. 14. It shall never be expiated with sacrifice and offering, no more than the iniquity of the house of Eli, 1 *Sam.* iii. 14; it is a sin against the remedy, a baffling of the utmost means of conviction, and rendering them ineffectual; and therefore it is not likely they should ever repent of it, or have it pardoned. The Chaldee reads it, 'It shall not be forgiven you till you die the second death.' Those that walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to them; with the froward he will shew himself froward.

15 Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee
unto this treasurer, *even* unto Shebna, which *is* over
the house, *and say,*
16 What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here,
That thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here,
As he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high,
And that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock?

SEPULCHRES IN THE ROCKS AT NAKSI-RUSTAM.

17 Behold, the LORD will carry thee away with a mighty
And will surely cover thee. [captivity,
18 He will surely violently turn
And toss thee *like* a ball into a large country:
There shalt thou die,
And there the chariots of thy glory *shall be* the shame of
thy lord's house.
19 And I will drive thee from thy station,
And from thy state shall he pull thee down.
20 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah:
21 And I will clothe him with thy robe,
And strengthen him with thy girdle,
And I will commit thy government into his hand:
And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
And to the house of Judah. [shoulder;
22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his
So he shall open, and none shall shut;
And he shall shut, and none shall open.
23 And I will fasten him *as* a nail in a sure place;
And he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house.
24 And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's
The offspring and the issue, [house,
All vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups,
even to all the vessels of flagons.
25 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts,
Shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed,
And be cut down, and fall;
And the burden that *was* upon it shall be cut off:
For the LORD hath spoken *it.*

We have here a prophecy concerning the displacing of Shebna, a great officer at court, and the preferring of Eliakim to that post of honour and trust that he was in. Such changes are common in the courts of princes; it is therefore strange that so much notice should be taken of it by the prophet here. But by the accomplishment of what was foretold concerning these particular persons, God designed to confirm his word in the mouth of Isaiah concerning other and greater events. And it is likewise to shew that, as God hath burthens in store for those nations and kingdoms abroad that are open enemies to his

church and people, so he hath for those particular persons at home that are false friends to them, and betray them. It is likewise a confirmation in general of the hand of Divine providence in all events of this kind, which to us seem contingent, and to depend upon the wills and fancies of princes: "Promotion comes neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south, but God is the judge," *Ps.* lxxv. 6, 7. It is probable this prophecy was delivered at the same time with that in the former part of the chapter, and began to be fulfilled before Sennacherib's invasion, for now Shebna was over the house, but then Eliakim was, *ch.* xxxvi. 3, and Shebna, coming down gradually, was only scribe. Here is,

First. The prophecy of Shebna's disgrace. He is called "this treasurer," being intrusted with the management of the revenue; and he is likewise said to be "over the house;" for such was his boundless ambition and covetousness, that less than two places, and those two of the greatest importance at court, would not content him. It is common for self-seeking men thus to grasp at more than they can manage, and so the business of their place is neglected, while the pomp and profit of them is wholly regarded. It doth not appear what were the particular instances of Shebna's maladministration for which Isaiah is here sent to prophesy against him; but the Jews say he kept up a traitorous correspondence with the king of Assyria, and was in treaty with him to deliver the city into his hands. However it was, it should seem he was a foreigner, for we never read of the name of his father, and that he was an enemy to the true interests of Judah and Jerusalem; and it is likely he was first preferred by Ahaz. Hezekiah was himself an excellent good prince, but the best masters cannot always be sure of good servants. We have need to pray for princes, that they may be wise and happy in the choice of those they trust. These were times of reformation; yet Shebna, an ill man, complied so far as to keep his places at court; and it is probable many others did like him, for which reason Sennacherib is said to have been sent "against an hypocritical nation," *ch.* x. 6. In this message to Shebna we have,

1. A reproof of his pride, vanity, and security; ver. 16, "What hast thou here? and whom hast thou here?" What a mighty noise and bustle dost thou make. What estate hast thou here that thou wast born to? "Whom hast thou here?" what relations that thou art allied to? Art thou not of mean and obscure original, *filius populi*,—'a mere plebeian,'—that comest we know not from whence? What is the meaning of this, then, that thou hast built thee a fine house, hast graved thee a habitation? So very nice and curious was it that it seemed rather to be the work of an engraver than of a mason or carpenter. And it seemed engraven in a rock, so firmly was it founded, and so impregnable was it. Nay, "Thou hast hewn thee out a sepulchre," as if he designed that his pomp should survive his funeral. Though Jerusalem was not "the place of his fathers' sepulchres," as Nehemiah called it with a great deal of tenderness, *Neh.* ii. 3, he designed it should be the place of his own, and therefore set up a monument for himself in his lifetime, set it up on high. They that make stately monuments for their pride forget that, how beautiful soever they appear outwardly, within they are full of dead men's bones. But it is pity the grave-stone should forget the grave.

2. A prophecy of his fall, and the sullying of his glory.

1st. That he should now presently be displaced and degraded; ver. 19, "I will drive thee from thy station." High places are slippery places, and those are justly deprived of their honour that are proud of it and puffed up with it; and deprived of their power, that do hurt with it. God will do it, who shews himself to be God by looking upon proud men and abasing them, *Job* xl. 11. To this ver. 25 refers: "the nail that is" now "fastened in the sure place," that is, Shebna, who thinks himself immovably fixed in his office, shall "be removed, and be cut down, and fall." Those are mistaken who think any place in this world a sure place, or themselves as nails fastened in it, for there is nothing here but uncertainty. When the nail falls, the burthen that was upon it is cut off; when Shebna was disgraced, all that had a dependence upon him, fell into contempt too. Those that are in high places will have many hanging upon them as favourites, whom they are proud of, and trust to; but they are burthens upon them, and perhaps with their weight break the nail, and both fall together, and by deceiving ruin one another,—the common fate of great men and their flatterers, who expect more from each other than either perform.

2nd. That after a while he should not only be driven from his station, but driven his country; The Lord will carry thee away with the captivity of a mighty man, ver. 17, 18. Some think the Assyrians seized him and took him away, because he had promised to assist them, and did not, but appeared against them. Or, perhaps Hezekiah, finding out his treachery, banished him, and forbade him ever to return; or he himself, finding that he was become obnoxious to the people, withdrew into some other country, and there spent the rest of his days in meanness and obscurity. Grotius thinks he was stricken with a leprosy, which was a disease commonly supposed to come from the immediate hand of God's displeasure, particularly for the punishment of the proud, as in the case of Miriam and Uzziah; and by reason of this disease he was tossed like a ball out of Jerusalem. Those that, when they are in power, turn and toss others, will be justly turned and tossed themselves when their day shall come to fall. Many that have thought themselves fastened like a nail may come to be tossed like a ball, for here have we no continuing city. Shebna thought his place too strait for him, he had no room to thrive; God will therefore send him into "a large country," where he shall have room to wander, but never find the way back again, for there he shall die, and lay his bones there, and not in the sepulchre he had hewn out for himself. And there the chariots that had been the chariots of his glory, in which he had rattled about the streets of Jerusalem, and which he took into banishment with him, should but serve to upbraid him with his former grandeur, to the shame of his lord's house, of the court of Ahaz that had advanced him.

Secondly. The prophecy of Eliakim's advancement, ver. 20, &c. He is God's servant, has approved himself faithfully so in other employments, and therefore God will call him to this high station. Those that are diligent in doing the duty of a low sphere stand fairest for preferment in God's books. Eliakim doth not undermine Shebna, or make an interest against him, nor doth he intrude into his office, but God calls him to it; and what God calls us to we may expect he will own us in. It is here foretold,

1. That Eliakim shall be put into Shebna's place of lord chamberlain of the household, lord treasurer, and prime minister of state. The prophet must tell Shebna this, ver. 21. He shall have thy robe, the badge of honour; and thy girdle, the badge of power; for he shall have thy government. To hear of it would be a great mortification to Shebna, much more to see it. Great men, especially if proud men, cannot endure their successors. God undertakes the doing of it, not only because he would put it into the heart of Hezekiah to do it, and his hand must be acknowledged guiding the heart of princes in placing and displacing men, *Pr.* xxi. 1; but because the powers that be, subordinate as well as supreme, are ordained of God. It is God that clothes princes with their robes, and therefore we must submit ourselves to them for the Lord's sake, with an eye to him, 1 *Pet.* ii. 13. And, since it is he that commits the government into their hand, they must administer it according to his will, for his glory, must judge for him by whom they judge, and decree justice, *Pr.* viii. 15. And they may depend upon him to furnish them for what he calls them to, according to the promise here, "I will clothe him," and then it follows, I will "strengthen him." Those that are called to places of trust and power should seek unto God for grace to enable them to do the duty of their places, for that ought to be their chief care. Eliakim's advancement is farther described by the laying of the key of the house of David upon his shoulder, ver. 22. Probably he carried a gold key upon his shoulder, as a badge of his office, or had one embroidered upon his cloak or robe, to which this alludes. Being over the house, and having the key delivered to him, as the seals are to the lord keeper, "he shall open, and none shall shut; shut, and none shall open." He had access to "the house of the precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices," and to the "house of the armour" and "the treasures," *ch.* xxxix. 2, and disposed of the stores there as he thought fit for the public service. He put whom he pleased into the inferior offices, and turned out whom he pleased. Our Lord Jesus describes his own power as Mediator by an allusion to this, *Rev.* iii. 7, that "he hath the key of David, wherewith he opens, and no man shuts, he shuts, and no man opens." His power in the kingdom of heaven and in the ordering of all the affairs of that kingdom is absolute, irresistible, and uncontrollable.

2. That he should be fixed and confirmed in that office. He shall have it for life, and not *durante bene placito*,—'during pleasure;' ver. 23, "I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place;" not to be removed or cut down. Thus lasting shall the honour be that comes from God, to all those that use it for him. Our Lord Jesus is "a nail in a sure place;" his kingdom cannot be shaken, and he himself is still the same.

3. That he should be a great blessing in his office; and that is it that crowns the favours here conferred upon him. God makes his name great, for he shall be a blessing, *Gen.* xii. 2.

1st. He shall be a blessing to his country; ver. 21, "He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah." He shall take care not only of the affairs of the king's household, but of all the public interests in Jerusalem and Judah. Note, Rulers should be fathers to those that are under their government; to teach them with wisdom, rule them with love, and correct what is amiss with tenderness; to protect them, and provide for them, and be solicitous about them, as a man is for his own children and family. It is happy with a people when neither court, nor city, nor country, have any separate interests, but all centre in the same, so that the courtiers are true patriots, and whom the court blesseth the country has reason to bless too; and when those who are fathers to Jerusalem, the royal city, are no less so to the house of Judah.

2nd. He shall be a blessing to his family; ver. 23, 24, "He shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house." That consummate wisdom and virtue which recommended him to this great trust made him the honour of his family; which probably was very considerable before, but now became much more so. Children should aim to be a credit to their parents and relations. The honour men reflect upon their families by their piety and usefulness is more to be valued than that which they derive from their families by their names and titles.

Eliakim being preferred, "all the glory of his father's house" was hung upon him; they all made their court to him, and his brethren's sheaves bowed to his. Observe, The glory of this world gives a man no intrinsic worth or excellency; it is but hung upon him as an appurtenance, and it will soon drop from him. Eliakim was compared to "a nail in a sure place;" in pursuance of which comparison, all the relations of his family, who it is likely were numerous, and that was the glory of it, are said to have a dependence upon him; as in a house the vessels that have handles to them are hung up upon nails and pins. It intimates likewise, that he shall generously take care of them all, and bear the weight of that care. "All the vessels," not only the flagons, but the cups, the "vessels of small quantity," the meanest that belonged to his family, shall be provided for by him. See what a burthen they bring upon themselves that undertake great trusts; they little think how many and how much will hang upon them, if they resolve to be faithful in the discharge of their trust. Our Lord Jesus, having the key of the house of David, is as "a nail in a sure place," and "all the glory of his Father's house" hangs upon him, is derived from him, and depends upon him; even the meanest that belong to his church are welcome to him, and he is able to bear the stress of them all. That soul cannot perish, nor that concern fall to the ground, though never so weighty, that is by faith hung upon Christ.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This chapter is concerning Tyre, an ancient wealthy city, situated upon the sea, and for many ages one of the most celebrated cities for trade and merchandise in those parts of the world. The lot of the tribe of Asher bordered upon it, *Jos.* xix. 29, where it is called the strong city Tyre. We seldom find it any thing of a dangerous enemy to Israel, but sometime their faithful ally, as in the reign of David and Solomon; for trading cities maintain their grandeur, not by conquests of their neighbours, but by commerce with them. In this chapter is foretold, I. The lamentable desolation of Tyre, which was performed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army, about the same time that they destroyed Jerusalem; and a hard task they had of it, as appears, *Eze.* xxix. 18, where they are said to have served a hard service against Tyre, and yet to have no wages, ver. 1—14. II. The restoration of Tyre after seventy years, and the return of the Tyrians out of their captivity to their trade again, ver. 15—18.

THE burden of Tyre.
Howl, ye ships of Tarshish;
For it is laid waste,
So that there is no house, no entering in:
From the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.
2 Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle;
Thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.
3 And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, *is* her revenue;
And she is a mart of nations.
4 Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken,
Even the strength of the sea, saying,
I travail not, nor bring forth children,
Neither do I nourish up young men, *nor* bring up virgins.

5 As at the report concerning Egypt,
So shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre.
6 Pass ye over to Tarshish;
Howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.
7 *Is* this your joyous *city*,
Whose antiquity *is* of ancient days?
Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.
8 Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre,
The crowning *city*,
Whose merchants *are* princes,
Whose traffickers *are* the honourable of the earth?
9 The LORD of hosts hath purposed it,
To stain the pride of all glory, [earth.
And to bring into contempt all the honourable of the
10 Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish:
There is no more strength.
11 He stretched out his hand over the sea,
He shook the kingdoms: [chant *city*,
The LORD hath given a commandment against the mer-
To destroy the strong holds thereof.
12 And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice,
O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon:
Arise, pass over to Chittim;
There also shalt thou have no rest.
13 Behold the land of the Chaldeans;
This people was not, [wilderness:
Till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the
They set up the towers thereof,
They raised up the palaces thereof;
And he brought it to ruin.
14 Howl, ye ships of Tarshish:
For your strength is laid waste.

Tyre being a seaport town, this prophecy of its overthrow fitly begins and ends with, "Howl, ye ships of Tarshish;" for all its business, wealth, and honour, depended upon its shipping. If that be ruined, they are all undone. Observe,

First. Tyre flourishing. This is taken notice of, that her fall may appear the more dismal. 1. The "merchants of Zidon," that traded at sea, had at first replenished her, ver. 2. Zidon was the more ancient city, situate upon the same sea-coast, a few leagues more to the north, and Tyre was at first only a colony of that. But the daughter had outgrown the mother, and was become much more considerable. It may be a mortification to great cities, to think how they were at first replenished. 2. Egypt had helped very much to raise her, ver. 3; Sihor was the river of Egypt. By that river, and the ocean into which it ran, the Egyptians traded with Tyre; and the harvest of that river was her revenue. The riches of the sea, and the gains by goods exported and imported, are as much the harvest to trading towns as that of hay and corn is to the country. And sometimes the harvest of the river proves a better revenue than the harvest of the land. Or it may be meant of all the products of the Egyptian soil, which the men of Tyre traded in, and which were the harvest of the river Nile, owing themselves to the overflowing of that river. 3. She was become the mart of the nations; the great emporium of that part of the world. Some of every known nation might be found there, especially at some times of the year, when there was a general rendezvous of merchants. This is enlarged upon by another prophet, *Eze.* xxvii. 2, &c. See how "the hand of the diligent," by the blessing of God upon it, "maketh rich." Tyre became rich and great by industry, though she had no other ploughs going but those that plough the waters. 4. She was a "joyous city," noted for mirth and jollity, ver. 7. Those that were so disposed might find there all manner of sports and diversions, all the delights of the sons and daughters of men; balls, and plays, and operas, and every thing of that kind that a man had a fancy to. This made them secure and proud, and they despised the country people, that neither knew nor relished any joys of that nature. And this made them very loath to believe and consider what warnings God gave them by his servants; they were too merry to mind them. Her antiquity likewise was "of ancient days," and she was proud of that, and that helped to make her secure. As if, because she had been a city time out of mind, and her antiquity had been of ancient days, therefore she must continue a city time without end, and her continuance must be to the days of eternity. 5. She was a "crowning city," ver. 8, that crowned herself. Such was the power and pomp of her magistrates, that crowned those who had dependence on her, and dealings with her. It is explained in the following words: Her "merchants are princes," and live like princes, for the ease and state they take; and her traffickers, whatever country they go to, are "the honourable of the earth," that are respected by all. How slightly soever some now speak of tradesmen, it seems formerly, and among the wisest nations, there were merchants and traders, and men of business, that were the honourable of the earth.

Secondly. Here is Tyre falling. It doth not appear that she brought trouble upon herself, by provoking her neighbours with her quarrels, but rather by tempting them with her wealth. But if that was it that induced Nebuchadnezzar to fall upon Tyre, he was disappointed; for after it had stood out a siege of thirteen years, and could hold out no longer, the inhabitants got away by sea with their families and goods, to other places where they had an interest, and left Nebuchadnezzar nothing but the bare city. See a history of Tyre in Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World*, lib. ii. c. 7, sec. 3, 43, p. 283, which will give much light to this prophecy, and that in *Ezekiel*, concerning Tyre. See how the destruction of Tyre is here foretold:

1. The haven should be spoiled or at least neglected. There shall be no convenient harbour for the reception of the ships of Tarshish, but all laid waste, ver. 1, so that there shall be no house, no dock, for the ships to ride in, no inns or public houses for the seamen, no entering into the port; perhaps it was racked up with sand, or blocked up by the enemy. Or, Tyre being destroyed and laid waste, the ships that used to come from Tarshish and Chittim into that port shall now no more enter in; for it is revealed, or made known to them, they have received the dismal news that Tyre is destroyed and laid waste; so that there is now no more business for them there. See how it is in this world; those that are spoiled by their enemies are commonly slighted by their old friends.

2. The inhabitants are struck with astonishment. Tyre was an island; the inhabitants of it, that had made a mighty noise and bustle in the world, had revelled with loud huzzas, shall now be still and silent, ver. 2; they shall sit down as mourners, so overwhelmed with grief, that they shall not be able to express it. Their proud boast of themselves, and defiances of their neighbours, shall be silenced. God can soon quiet those, and strike them dumb, that are the noisy, busy people of the world. Be still, for God will do his work, *Ps.* xlvi. 10; *Zec.* ii. 13; and you cannot resist him.

3. The neighbours are amazed, blush, and are in pain for them. Zidon is ashamed, ver. 4, by whom Tyre was at first replenished; for the rolling waves of the sea brought to Zidon this news from Tyre; and there the "strength of the sea," a high spring tide, proclaimed, saying, "I travail not, nor bring forth children" now, as I have done. I do not now bring shiploads of young people to Tyre, to be bred up there in trade and business, as I used to do; which was the thing that had made Tyre so rich and populous. Or, the sea, that had used to be loaded with fleets of ships about Tyre, shall now be as desolate as a sorrowful widow that is bereaved of all her children, and has none about her to nourish and bring up. Egypt indeed was a much larger and more considerable kingdom than Tyre was; and yet Tyre had so large a correspondence, upon the account of trade, that all the nations about shall be as much in pain, upon the report of the ruin of that one city, as they would have been, and not long after were, upon the report of the ruin of all Egypt, ver. 5. Or, as some read it, 'When as the report shall reach to the Egyptians, they shall be sorely pained to hear it of Tyre;' both because of the loss of their trade with that city, and because it was a threatening step towards their own ruin; when their neighbour's house was on fire, their own was in danger.

4. The merchants, as many as could, should transmit their effects to other places, and abandon Tyre, where they had raised their estates, and thought they had made them sure; ver. 6, Ye that have long been inhabitants of this isle, (for it lay off in the sea about half a mile from the continent,) it is time to howl now, for ye must pass over to Tarshish. The best course you can take is to make the best of your way to Tarshish, to the sea, to Tartessus, a city in Spain, so some; or to some other of your plantations. Those that think their mountain stands strong, and cannot be moved, will find that here they have no continuing city. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed."

5. Those that could not make their escape must expect no other but to be carried into captivity; for that was the way of conquerors in those times, to take those they conquered to be bondmen in their own country, and send of their own to be freemen in theirs; ver. 7, "Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn;" she shall be hurried away on foot into captivity, and many a weary step they shall take towards their own misery. Those that have lived in the greatest pomp and splendour know not what hardships they may be reduced to before they die.

6. Many of those that attempted to escape should be pursued, and fall into the hands of the enemy. Tyre shall pass through her land as a river, ver. 10; running down, one company after another, into the ocean, or abyss of misery. Or, though they hasten away as a river, with the greatest swiftness, hoping to outrun the danger, yet "there is no more strength," they are quite tired presently, and cannot get forward, but fall an easy prey into the hands of the enemy. And as Tyre has "no more strength," so her sister Zidon has no more comfort; ver. 12, "Thou shalt no more rejoice, O oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon," that art now ready to be overpowered by the victorious Chaldeans. Thy turn is next, therefore "arise, pass over to Chittim." Flee to Greece, to Italy, any whither, to shift for thy own safety; yet "there also shalt thou have no rest." Thine enemies shall disturb thee, and thine own fears shall disquiet thee, there where thou hopedst to find some repose. Note, We deceive ourselves if we promise ourselves rest anywhere in this world. Those that are uneasy in one place will be so in another; and when God's judgments pursue sinners they will overtake them.

But whence shall all this trouble come?

1st. God will be the author of it. It is a destruction from the Almighty. It will be asked, ver. 8, "Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre?" Who hath contrived it? Who hath resolved it? Who can find in his heart to lay such a stately, lovely city, in ruins? and how is it possible it should be effected? To this it will be answered:

First. God hath designed it, who is infinitely wise and just, and never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; ver. 9, "The Lord of hosts," that has all things at his dispose, and gives not account of any of his matters, he hath purposed it. It shall be done according to the counsel of his will; and that which he aims at herein is, "to stain the pride of all glory," to pollute it, profane it, and throw it to be trodden upon; and to bring into contempt, and make despicable, all the honourable ones of the earth, that they may not admire themselves, and be admired by others, as usual. God did not bring those calamities upon Tyre in a way of sovereignty, to shew an arbitrary and irresistible power; but he did it to punish the Tyrians for their pride. Many other sins no doubt reigned among them; idolatry, sensuality, and oppression; but the sin of pride is fastened upon, as that which was the particular ground of God's controversy with Tyre, for he resists the proud. All the world observing, and being surprised at the desolation of Tyre, we have here an exposition of it: God tells the world what he meant by it. *1st.* He designed to convince men of the vanity and uncertainty of all earthly glory; to shew them what a withering, fading, perishing thing it is, even then when it seems most substantial. And it were well if men would be thoroughly taught this lesson, though it were at the expense of so great a destruction. Is men's learning and wealth their glory? their pomp and power, their interest in, and influence upon, all about them? Are their stately houses, rich furniture, and splendid appearances, their glory? Look upon the ruins of Tyre, and see all this glory stained, and sullied, and buried in the dust. The honourable ones of heaven will be for ever so; but see the grandees of Tyre, some fled into banishment, others forced into captivity, and all impoverished; and you will conclude, that "the honourable of the earth," even the most honourable, know not how soon they may be brought into contempt. *2nd.* He designed hereby to prevent their being proud of that glory, their being puffed up, and confident of the continuance of it. Let the ruin of Tyre be a warning to all places and persons to take heed of pride, for it proclaims to all the world that "he that exalteth himself shall be abased."

Secondly. God will do it, who has all power in his hand, and can do it effectually; ver. 11, "He stretched out his hand over the sea," has done it many a

time, witness the dividing of the Red sea, and the drowning of Pharaoh in it. He hath shaken the kingdoms that were most secure; and he hath now "given commandment" concerning this "merchant city, to destroy the strongholds thereof." As its beauty shall not intercede for it, but that shall be stained, so its strength shall not protect it, but that shall be broken. If any think it strange that a city so well fortified, and that hath so many powerful allies, should be so totally ruined, let them know that it is the Lord of hosts that hath "given a commandment to destroy the strongholds thereof;" and who can gainsay his orders, or hinder the execution of them?

2nd. The Chaldeans shall be the instrument of it; ver. 13, "Behold the land of the Chaldeans;" how easily they and their land were destroyed by the Assyrians. Though their own hands founded it, set up the towers of Babylon, and raised up its palaces, yet he, that is, the Assyrian, brought it to ruin; whence the Tyrians might infer that, as easily as the old Chaldeans were subdued by the Assyrians, so easily shall Tyre be vanquished by those new Chaldeans. Babel was built by the Assyrian, for "them that dwell in the wilderness." It may be rendered, for the ships. The Assyrians founded it for ships and shipmen, that traffic upon those vast rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, to the Persian and Indian seas, for men of the desert; for Babylon is called, "the desert of the sea," *ch.* xxi. 1. Thus Tyrus was built upon the sea for the like purpose; but the Assyrians (saith Dr. Lightfoot) brought that to ruin, now lately, in Hezekiah's time, and so shall Tyre hereafter be brought to ruin by Nebuchadnezzar. Would we look more upon others' falling and withering, we should not be so confident as we commonly are of the continuance of our own flourishing and standing.

15 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years,
According to the days of one king:
After the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as an harlot.
16 Take an harp, go about the city,
Thou harlot that hast been forgotten;
Make sweet melody, sing many songs,
That thou mayest be remembered.
17 And it shall come to pass after the end of seventy years,
That the LORD will visit Tyre,
And she shall turn to her hire, [the world
And shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of
Upon the face of the earth. [LORD:
18 And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the
It shall not be treasured nor laid up;
For her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before
the LORD,
To eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

Here is, First. The time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Tyre, which were not to be perpetual desolations; "Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years," ver. 15. So long it shall lie neglected and buried in obscurity. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar much about the time that Jerusalem was, and lay as long as it did in its ruins. See the folly of that proud, ambitious conqueror. What the richer, what the stronger, was he for making himself master of Tyre, when all the inhabitants were driven out of it, and he had none of his own subjects to spare for the replenishing and fortifying of it? It is strange what pleasure men could take in destroying cities, and making "their memorial perish with them," *Ps.* ix. 6. He trampled on the pride of Tyre, and therein served God's purpose, but with greater pride; for which God soon after humbled him.

Secondly. A prophecy of the restoration of Tyre to its glory again. After the end of "seventy years, according to the years of one king," or one dynasty or family of kings, namely, that of Nebuchadnezzar; when that expired, the desolations of Tyre came to an end. And we may presume that Cyrus, at the same time when he released the Jews, and encouraged them to rebuild Jerusalem, released the Tyrians also, and encouraged them to rebuild Tyre. Thus the prosperity and adversity of places, as well as persons, are set the one over against the other; that the most glorious cities may not be secure, nor the most ruinous despair. It is foretold,

1. That God's providence shall again smile upon this ruined city; ver. 17, "The Lord will visit Tyre" in mercy; for, though he contend, he will not contend for ever. It is not said her old acquaintance shall visit her, the colonies she has planted, and the trading cities she has had correspondence with, they have forgotten her; but the Lord shall visit her by some unthought of turn; he shall cause his indignation towards her to cease, and then things will run of course into the former channel.

2. That she shall use her best endeavour to recover her trade again. She shall "sing as an harlot" that has been some time under correction for her lewdness; but when she is set at liberty, (so violent is the bent of corruption,) she will use her old arts of temptation. The Tyrians being returned from their captivity, and those that remained recovering new spirits thereupon, they shall contrive how to force a trade, shall procure the best choice of goods, undersell their neighbours, and be obliging to all customers; as a harlot that has been forgotten, when she comes to be spoken of again, recommends herself to company by singing and playing; takes a harp, goes about the city, perhaps in the night serenading, makes sweet melody, and sings many songs. These are innocent and allowable diversions, if soberly, and moderately, and modestly used, but those that value themselves upon their virtue should not be over fond of them, nor ambitious to excel in them; because, whatever they are now, anciently they were some of the baits with which harlots used to entice fools. Tyre shall now by degrees come to be the mart of nations again. She shall return to her hire, to her traffic again, and shall "commit fornication," that is, shall have dealings in trade (for he carries on the similitude of a harlot) "with all the kingdoms of the world," that she had formerly traded with in her prosperity. The love of worldly wealth is a spiritual whoredom, and therefore covetous people are called adulterers and adulteresses, *Jas.* iv. 4; and covetousness is a spiritual idolatry.

3. That having recovered her trade again, she shall make a better use of it than she had done formerly; and this good she should get by her calamities, ver. 18, "Her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord." The trade of Tyre, and all the gains of her trade, shall be devoted to God, and to his honour, and employed in his service; "It shall not be treasured" and hoarded up, as formerly, to be the matter of their pride, and the support of their carnal confidence; but it shall be laid out in acts of piety and charity. What they can spare from the maintenance of themselves and their families "shall be for them that dwell before the Lord," that is, for the priests, the Lord's ministers, that attend in his temple at Jerusalem; not to maintain them in pomp and grandeur, but that they and theirs may "eat sufficiently," may have food convenient for them, with as little as may be of that care which would divert them from their ministration; and that they may not have rich and fine clothing, but "durable clothing," that which is strong and lasting, (clothing for old men, so some read it,) as if the priests, though they were young, must wear such plain, grave clothing as old men used to wear. Now, 1st. This supposeth that religion should be set up in new Tyre, that they should come to the knowledge of the true God, and into communion with the Israel of God. Perhaps their being fellow captives with the Jews in Babylon (who had prophets with them there) disposed them to join with them in their worship there, and turned them from idols, as it cured the Jews of their idolatry; and when they were released with them, and, as they had reason to believe, for their sakes, when they were settled again in Tyre, they would send gifts and offerings to the temple, and presents to the priests. We find men of Tyre then dwelling in the land of Judah, *Neh.* xiii. 16. Tyre and Sidon were better disposed to religion in Christ's time than the cities of Israel; for if Christ had gone among them they would have repented, *Mat.* xi. 21. And we meet with Christians at Tyre, *Acts* xxi. 3, and many years after did Christianity flourish there. Some of the rabbins refer this prophecy of the conversion of Tyre to the days of the Messiah. 2nd. It directs those who have estates to make use of them in the service of God and religion, and to reckon that best laid up which is so laid out. Both the merchandise of the tradesmen and the hire of the day labourers shall be devoted to God. Both the merchandise, that is, the employment we follow, and the hire, that is, the gain of our employments, must be "holiness to the Lord," alluding to the motto engraven on the frontlet of the high priest, *Ex.* xxxix. 30; and to the separation of the tithe under the law, *Lev.* xxvii. 30. See a promise like this referring to gospel times, *Zec.* xiv. 20, 21. We must first give up ourselves to be holiness to the Lord, before what we do, or have, or get, can be so. When we abide with God in our particular callings, and do common actions after a godly sort,—when we abound in works of piety and charity, are liberal in relieving the poor, and supporting the ministry, and encouraging the Gospel,—then our merchandise and our hire is holiness to the Lord, if we sincerely look at his glory in it; and it need not be treasured and laid up on earth, for it is treasured and laid up in heaven, in "bags that wax not old," *Lu.* xii. 33.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It is agreed that here begins a new sermon, which is continued to the end of *ch.* xxvii.; and in it the prophet, according to the directions he had received, doth in many precious promises, say to the righteous, It shall be well with them; and in many dreadful threatenings saith, Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them, *ch.* iii. 10, 11, and these are interwoven, that they may illustrate each other. This chapter is mostly threatening; and, as the judgments threatened are very sore and grievous ones, so the people threatened with those judgments are very many. It is not the burthen of any particular city or kingdom, as those before, but the burthen of the whole earth. The word indeed signifies only the land, because our own land is commonly to us as all the earth; but it is here explained by another word that is not so confined,—it is the world, ver. 4, so that it must at least take in a whole neighbourhood of nations. I. Some think (and very probably) that it is a prophecy of the great havoc that Sennacherib and his Assyrian army should now shortly make of many of the nations in that part of the world. II. Others make it to point at the like devastation which, about one hundred years after, Nebuchadnezzar and his armies should make in the same countries, going from one kingdom to another, not only to conquer them, but to ruin them, and lay them waste; for that was the method which those Eastern nations took in their wars. And the promises that are mixed with the threatenings are intended for the support and comfort of the people of God in those very calamitous times. And since here are no particular nations named either by whom or on whom those desolations should be brought, I see not but it may refer to both those events. Nay, the Scripture has many fulfillings, and we ought to give it its full latitude; and therefore I incline to think that the prophet from those and the like instances, which he had a particular eye to, designs here to represent in general the calamitous state of mankind, and the many miseries which human life is liable to, especially those that attend the wars of the nations. Surely the prophets were sent, not only to foretell particular events, but to form the minds of men to virtue and piety, and for that end their prophecies were written and preserved even for our learning, and therefore ought not to be looked upon as of private interpretation. Now, since a thorough conviction of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy, will go far towards bringing us to God, and drawing out our affections towards another world, the prophet here shews what vexation of spirit we must expect to meet with in these things, that we may never take up our rest in them, nor promise ourselves satisfaction anywhere short of the enjoyment of God. In this chapter we have, I. A threatening of desolating judgments for sin, ver. 1—12; to which is added an assurance that in the midst of them good people should be comforted, ver. 13—16. II. A farther threatening of the like desolations, ver. 16—22; to which is added an assurance that in the midst of all God should be glorified.

BEHOLD, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste,
And turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof.
2 And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest;
As with the servant, so with his master;
As with the maid, so with her mistress;
As with the buyer, so with the seller;
As with the lender, so with the borrower; [to him.
As with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury
3 The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled:
For the LORD hath spoken this word.
4 The earth mourneth *and* fadeth away,
The world languisheth *and* fadeth away,
The haughty people of the earth do languish.
5 The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof;

Because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance,
Broken the everlasting covenant.

6 Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth,
And they that dwell therein are desolate:
Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned,
And few men left.
7 The new wine mourneth,
The vine languisheth,
All the merryhearted do sigh.
8 The mirth of tabrets ceaseth,
The noise of them that rejoice endeth,
The joy of the harp ceaseth.
9 They shall not drink wine with a song;
Strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it
10 The city of confusion is broken down:
Every house is shut up, that no man may come in.
11 *There is* a crying for wine in the streets;
All joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone.
12 In the city is left desolation,
And the gate is smitten with destruction.

It is a very dark and melancholy scene that this prophecy presents to our view; turn our eyes which way we will, everything looks dismal. These desolations are here described in a great variety of expressions to the same purpose, and all aggravating.

First. The earth is stripped of all its ornaments, and looks as if it were taken off its basis; it is made empty and waste, ver. 1, as if it were reduced to its first chaos, *Tohu* and *Bohu*, nothing but confusion and emptiness again, *Gen.* i. 2, "without form and void." It is true, earth sometimes signifies the land, and so the same word *eretz*, is here translated, ver. 3, "The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled;" but I see not why it should not there, as well as ver. 1, be translated the earth; for most commonly, if not always, where it signifies some one particular land, it has something joined to it, or at least, not far from it, which doth so appropriate it; as, the land (or earth) of Egypt, or Canaan; or this land, or ours, or yours, or the like. It might indeed refer to some particular country, and an ambiguous word be used to warrant such an application; for it is good to apply to ourselves and our own lands what the Scripture saith in general of the "vanity and vexation of spirit" that attends all things here below; but it should seem designed to speak what often happens to many countries, and will do while the world stands, and what may, we know not how soon, happen to our own, and what is the general character of all earthly things; they are empty of all solid comfort and satisfaction, a little thing makes them waste. We often see numerous families and plentiful estates utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled, by one judgment or other, or perhaps only by a gradual and insensible decay. Sin has turned the earth upside down, it is become quite another thing to man from what it was when God made it to be his habitation; it has also scattered abroad the inhabitants thereof; the rebellion at Babel was the occasion of the dispersion there. How many ways are there in which the inhabitants both of towns and of private houses are scattered abroad, so that near relations and old neighbours know nothing of one another. To the same purpose, ver. 4, "the earth mourneth and fadeth away;" it disappoints those that placed their happiness in it, and raised their expectations high from it, and proves not what they promised themselves it would be. The whole "world languisheth and fadeth away," as hastening towards a dissolution; it is at the best like a flower which withers in the hands of those that please themselves too much with it, and lay it in their bosoms. And, as the earth itself grows old, so "they that dwell therein are desolate." Men carry crazy, sickly bodies along with them, are often solitary, and confined by afflictions, ver. 6. When "the earth languisheth," and that is not so fruitful as it used to be, then "they that dwell therein," that make it their home, and rest, and portion, "are desolate;" whereas they that by faith dwell in God, can rejoice in him even when the fig-tree doth not blossom. If we look abroad, and see in how many places pestilences and burning fevers rage, and what multitudes are swept away by them in a little time, so that sometimes the living scarce suffice to bury the dead, perhaps we shall understand what the prophet means when he saith, "The inhabitants of the earth are burned," or consumed, some by one disease, others by another, and there are but "few men left," in comparison. Note, The world we live in is a world of disappointment, a vale of tears, and a dying world; and the children of men in it are but of few days, and full of trouble.

Secondly. It is God that brings all these calamities upon the earth. The Lord that made the earth, and made it fruitful and beautiful for the service and comfort of man, now maketh it "empty, and maketh it waste," ver. 1; for its Creator is and will be its judge; he has an incontestable right to pass sentence upon it, and an irresistible power to execute that sentence. It is "the Lord that hath spoken this word," and he will do the work, ver. 3; it is his curse that hath "devoured the earth," ver. 6; the general curse which sin brought upon the ground for man's sake, *Gen.* iii. 17, and all the particular curses which families and countries bring upon themselves by their enormous wickedness. See the power of God's curse, how it makes all empty, and lays all waste. Those whom he curseth they are cursed indeed.

Thirdly. Persons of all ranks and conditions shall share in these calamities; ver. 2, "It shall be, as with the people, so with the priest," &c. This is true of many of the common calamities of human life; all are subject to the same diseases of body, sorrows of mind, afflictions in relations, and the like; there is one event to those of very different stations, time and chance happens to them all. It is in a special manner true of the destroying judgments which God sometimes brings upon sinful nations: when he pleaseth he can make them universal, so that none shall escape them, or be exempt from them; whether men have little or much, they shall lose it all. Those of the meaner rank smart first by famine; but those of the higher rank go first into captivity, while the poor of the land are left. It shall be all alike, 1. With high and low; "As with the people, so with the priest," or prince. The dignity of magistrates and ministers, and the respect and reverence owing to both, shall not secure them; "the faces of elders are not honoured," *Lam.* v. 12. The priests had been as corrupt and wicked as the people; and if their character serve not to restrain them from sin, how can they expect it should serve to secure them from judgments? in both it is "like people, like priest," *Hos.* iv. 8, 9. 2. With bond and free; "As with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress." They have all corrupted their way, and therefore will all be made miserable when the earth is made waste. 3. With rich and poor. Those that have money beforehand, that are purchasing and letting out money to interest, will fare no better than those that are so impoverished that they are forced to sell their estates, and take up money at interest. There are judgments short of the great day of judgment, in which rich and poor meet together. Let not those that are advanced in the world set their inferiors at too great a distance, because they know not how soon they may be set upon a level with them. The rich man's wealth is his strong city in his own conceit; but it does not always prove so.

Fourthly. It is sin that brings these calamities upon the earth. Therefore the earth is made empty, and "fadeth away," because "it is defiled under the inhabitants thereof," ver. 5. It is polluted by the sins of men, and therefore it is made desolate by the judgments of God. Such is the filthy nature of sin, that it defiles the earth itself under the sinful inhabitants thereof, and it is rendered unpleasant in the eyes of God and good men: see *Lev.* xviii. 25, 27, 28. Blood in particular defiles the land, *Num.* xxxv. 33. The earth never spues out its inhabitants till they have first defiled it by their sins. Why, what have they done? 1. "They have transgressed the laws" of their creation, not answered the ends of it; the bonds of the law of nature have been broken by them, and they have cast from them the cords of their obligations to the God of nature. 2. They have "changed the ordinances" of revealed religion, those of them that have had the benefit of that; 'they have neglected the ordinances,' (so some read it,) and have made no conscience of observing them; they have passed over the laws in the commission of sin, and have passed by the ordinance in the omission of duty. 3. Herein they have "broken the everlasting covenant," which is a perpetual bond, and will be to those that keep it a perpetual blessing. It is God's wonderful condescension that he is pleased to deal with men in a covenant way; to do them good, and thereby oblige them to do him service. Even those that had no benefit by God's covenant with Abraham had benefit by his covenant with Noah and his sons, which is called an "everlasting covenant," his covenant with day and night; but they observe not the precepts of the sons of Noah, they acknowledge not God's goodness in the day and night, nor study to make him any grateful returns, and so break the everlasting covenant, and defeat the gracious designs and intentions of it.

Fifthly. These judgments shall humble men's pride, and mar their mirth. When the earth is made empty, 1. It is a great mortification to men's pride; ver. 4, "The haughty people of the earth do languish;" for they have lost that which supported their pride, and for which they magnified themselves. Those that have held their heads highest God can make them hang the head. 2. It is a great damp to men's jollity. This is enlarged upon much; ver. 7–9, "All the merry-hearted do sigh." Such is the nature of carnal mirth, it is but "as the crackling of thorns under a pot," *Eccl.* vii. 6. Great laughters commonly end in a sigh. They that make the world their chief joy cannot rejoice evermore. When God sends his judgment into the earth, he designs thereby to make those serious that were wholly addicted to their pleasures. "Let your laughter be turned into mourning." When the earth is emptied, the noise of them that rejoice in it endeth. Carnal joy is a noisy thing; but the noise of it will soon be at an end, and the end of it is heaviness. Two things are made use of to excite and express vain mirth, and the jovial crew is here deprived of both: 1st. Drinking; "the new wine mourneth," it is grown sour for want of drinking; for how proper soever it may be for "the heavy heart," *Pr.* xxxi. 6, it doth not relish then as it doth to the merry-hearted. "The vine languisheth," and gives little hopes of a vintage, and therefore "the merry-hearted do sigh;" for they know no other gladness but that of the corn and wine and oil increasing, *Ps.* iv. 7; and if you destroy their vines and their fig-trees you make all their mirth to cease, *Hos.* ii. 11, 12. "They shall not" now "drink wine with a song," as they used to do, and with huzzas; but rather drink it with a sigh. Nay, "strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it," because they cannot but mingle their tears with it; or through sickness they have lost their relish of it. God has many ways to embitter wine and strong drink to those that love them, and have the highest gust of them. Distemper of body, anguish of mind, the ruin of the estate or country, will make the strong drink bitter, and all the delights of sense tasteless and insipid. 2nd. Music; "The mirth of tabrets ceaseth," and "the joy of the harp," which used to be at their feasts, *ch.* v. 12. The captives in Babylon hang their harps on the willow-trees. In short, "All joy is darkened;" there is not a pleasant look to be seen, nor has any one power to force a smile; all "the mirth of the land is gone," ver. 11; and if it were that mirth which Solomon calls madness, there is no great loss of it.

Sixthly. The cities will, in a particular manner feel these desolations of the country; ver. 10, "The city of confusion is broken," is "broken down," so we read it. It lies exposed to invading powers, not only by the breaking down of its walls, but the confusion that the inhabitants are in. "Every house is shut up," perhaps by reason of the plague, which has burned or consumed the inhabitants, so that there are "few men left," ver. 6. Houses infected used to be shut up that no man may come in; or they are shut up because they are deserted and uninhabited. "There is a crying for wine," that is, for the spoiling of the vintage, so that there is like to be no wine. "In the city," in Jerusalem itself, that had been so much frequented, there shall be left nothing but desolation. Grass shall grow in the street, "and the gate is smitten with destruction," ver. 12; all that used to pass and repass through the gate are smitten, and all the strength of the city is cut off. How soon can God make a city of order a city of confusion, and then it will soon be a city of desolation.

13 When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people,
There shall be as the shaking of an olive tree,
And as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done.
14 They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing [the sea.
For the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from
15 Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires,
Even the name of the LORD God of Israel in the isles of the sea.

Here is mercy remembered in the midst of wrath. In Judah and Jerusalem, and the neighbouring countries, when they are overrun by the enemy, Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar, there shall be a remnant preserved from the general ruin, and it shall be a devout and pious remnant. And this method God usually observes when his judgments are abroad; he doth not make a full end, *ch.* vi. 13. Or we may take it thus: though the greatest part of mankind have all their comfort ruined by the emptying of the earth, and the making

of that desolate, yet there are some few that understand themselves better, who have laid up their treasure in heaven, and not in things below, and therefore can keep up their comfort and joy in God, even then when "the earth mourneth and fadeth away." Observe,

First. The small number of this remnant, ver. 13. When all goes to ruin "there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and the gleaning grapes," here and there one that shall escape the common calamity, (as Noah and his family when the old world was drowned,) that shall be able to sit down upon a heap of the ruins of all their creature comforts, and even then rejoice in the Lord, *Hab.* iii. 16, 17; who, when all faces gather blackness, can "lift up their heads with joy," *Lu.* xxi. 26, 28. These few are dispersed, and at a distance from each other, like the gleanings of the olive-tree, and they are concealed, hid under the leaves. The Lord only knows them that are his, the world doth not.

Secondly. The great devotion of this remnant, which is the greater for their having so narrowly escaped this great destruction; ver. 14, "They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing." 1. They shall sing for joy in their deliverance. When the mirth of carnal worldlings ceaseth, the joy of the saints is as lively as ever. When "the merry-hearted do sigh," because "the vine languisheth," the upright-hearted do sing, because the covenant of grace, the fountain of their comforts, and the foundation of their hopes, never fails. They that rejoice in the Lord can rejoice in tribulation, and by faith may be in triumphs when all about them are in tears. 2. "They shall sing" to the glory and praise of God; shall sing not only for the mercy but "for the majesty of the Lord." Their songs are awful and serious, and in their spiritual joys they have a reverent regard to the greatness of God, and keep at an humble distance when they attend him with their praises. "The majesty of the Lord," which is matter of terror to wicked people, furnisheth the saints with songs of praise. They shall sing for the magnificence or transcendent excellency of the Lord, shewed both in his judgments and in his mercies; for we must sing, and sing unto him, of both, *Ps.* ci. 1. Those that have made, or are making, their escape from the land, that being emptied and made desolate, to the sea, and the isles of the sea, shall from thence cry aloud. Their dispersion shall help to spread the knowledge of God, and they shall make even remote shores to ring with his praise. It is much for the honour of God if those that fear him rejoice in him, and praise him, even in the most melancholy times.

Thirdly. Their holy zeal to excite others to the same devotion, ver. 15. They encourage their fellow-sufferers to do likewise. 1. Those that are "in the fires," in the furnace of afflictions, those fires by which "the inhabitants of the earth are burned," ver. 6. Or, in the valleys, the low, dark, dirty places. 2. Those that are in the isles of the sea, whither they are banished, or are forced to flee for shelter, and hide themselves remote from all their friends. They went through fire and water, *Ps.* lxvi. 12, yet in both let them glorify the Lord, and glorify him as "the Lord God of Israel." They that through grace can glory in tribulation ought to glorify God in tribulation, and give him thanks for their comforts, which abound as their afflictions do abound. We must, in every fire, even the hottest, in every isle, even the remotest, keep up our good thoughts of God. When, though he slay us, yet we trust in him,—though for his sake we are killed all the day long, yet none of these things move us,—then we "glorify the Lord in the fires." Thus the three children, and the martyrs that sung at the stake.

16 From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs,
Even glory to the righteous.
But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!
The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously;
Yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.
17 Fear, and the pit, and the snare,
Are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth
18 And it shall come to pass,
That he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit;
And he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit
Shall be taken in the snare:
For the windows from on high are open,
And the foundations of the earth do shake.
19 The earth is utterly broken down,
The earth is clean dissolved,
The earth is moved exceedingly.
20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard,
And shall be removed like a cottage;
And the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it;
And it shall fall, and not rise again.
21 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the LORD shall punish the hosts of the high ones *that are* on high,
And the kings of the earth upon the earth.
22 And they shall be gathered together,
As prisoners are gathered in the pit,
And shall be shut up in the prison,
And after many days shall they be visited.
23 Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed,
When the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion,
And in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.

These verses, as those before, plainly speak,

First. Comfort to saints. They may be driven by the common calamities of the places where they live into "the uttermost parts of the earth," or perhaps they are forced thither for their religion; but there they are singing, not sighing: from thence "have we heard songs," and it is a comfort to us to hear them,—to hear that good people carry their religion along with them, even to the most distant regions; to hear that God visits them there, and gives encouragement to hope that from thence "he will gather them," *Deu.* xxx. 4. And this is their song, even "glory to the righteous," (it is singular, To the righteous God,) who is just in all he has brought upon us; this is glorifying the Lord in the fires; or, these songs redound to the glory or beauty of the righteous that sing them. We do the greatest honour imaginable to ourselves when we employ ourselves in honouring and glorifying God. This may have reference to the sending of the Gospel to "the uttermost parts of the earth," as far off as this island of ours, in the days of the Messiah, the glad tidings of which are echoed back in songs heard from thence, from churches planted there, even "Glory to the righteous" God; agreeing with the angels' song, "Glory be to God in the highest," and glory to all righteous men; for the work of redemption was ordained before the world for our glory.

Secondly. Terror to sinners. The prophet, having comforted himself and others with the prospect of a saved remnant, returns to lament the miseries he saw breaking in like a mighty torrent upon the earth; "But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" ver. 16; the very thought of it frets me, and makes me lean. He foresees,

1. The prevalency of sin, that iniquity should abound; ver. 16, "The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously." This is itself a judgment, and that which provokes God to bring other judgments. 1st. Men are false to one another. There is no faith in man, but a universal dishonesty; truth, that sacred bond of society, is departed, and there is nothing but treachery in men's dealings: see *Jer.* ix. 1, 2. 2nd. They are all false to their God. As to him and their covenant with him, the children of men are all "treacherous dealers," and have dealt very treacherously with their God, in departing from their allegiance to him. This is the original, and this is the aggravation of the sin of the world; and when men have been false to their God how should they be true to any other?

2. The prevalency of wrath and judgment for that sin. 1st. The inhabitants of the earth will be pursued from time to time, from place to place, by one mischief or other; ver. 17, 18, "Fear, and the pit, and the snare." Fear of the pit and the snare are upon them wherever they are; for the sons of men know not what evil time they may suddenly be snared in, *Eccl.* ix. 12. These three words seem to be chosen for the sake of an elegant paronomasia, or, as we now scornfully call it, a jingle of words, *pachad*, and *pachath*, and *pach*; but the meaning is plain, ver. 18, that "evil pursueth sinners," *Pr.* xiii. 21; that the curse shall overtake the disobedient, *Deu.* xxviii. 15; that those who are secure, because they have escaped one judgment, know not how soon another may arrest them. What this prophet threatens all the inhabitants of the earth with, another makes part of the judgment of Moab, *Jer.* xlviii. 43, 44. But it is a common instance of the calamitous state of human life, that when we seek to avoid one mischief we fall into a worse, and that the end of one trouble is often the beginning of another; so that we are least safe when we are most secure. 2nd. The earth itself will be shaken to pieces. It will be literally so at last, when all the works therein shall be burnt up; and often before that period figuratively so; "The windows from on high are open" to pour down wrath, as in the universal deluge. "Upon the wicked God shall rain snares," *Ps.* xi. 6; and the fountains of the great deep being broken up, "the foundations of the earth do shake" of course; the frame of nature is unhinged, and all is in confusion. See how elegantly this is expressed, ver. 19, 20, "The earth is utterly broken down;" it is "clean dissolved;" it is "moved exceedingly," moved out of its place. God shakes heaven and earth, *Hag.* ii. 6. See the misery of those who lay up their treasures in the things of the earth, and mind those things; they place their confidence in that which will shortly be "utterly broken down and dissolved;" "The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard," so unsteady, so uncertain, are all the motions of these things. Worldly men dwell in it as in a palace, as in a castle, as in an impregnable tower; but it "shall be removed like a cottage," so easily, so suddenly, and with so little loss to the great Landlord. The pulling down of the earth will be but like the pulling down of a cottage, which the country is willing to be rid of, because it does but harbour beggars; and therefore no care is taken to rebuild it; it "shall fall, and not rise again." But there shall be new heavens and a new earth, in which shall dwell nothing but righteousness. But what is it that shakes the earth thus, and sinks it? It is "the transgression thereof" that "shall be heavy upon it." Note, Sin is a burthen to the whole creation; it is a heavy burthen, a burthen under which it groans now, and will sink at last. Sin is the ruin of states, and kingdoms, and families; they shall fall under the weight of that talent of lead, *Zec.* v. 7, 8.

3. God will have a particular controversy with the kings and great men of the earth; ver. 21, "He will punish the hosts of the high ones." Hosts of princes are no more before God than hosts of common men. What can a host of high ones do with their combined force, when the Most High, the Lord of hosts, contends with them to abase their height, and scatter their hosts, and break all their confederacies? The "high ones that are on high," that are puffed up with their height and grandeur, that think themselves so high that they are out of the reach of any danger, God will visit upon them all their pride and cruelty, with which they have oppressed and injured their neighbours and subjects, and it shall now return upon their own heads. "The kings of the earth" shall now be reckoned with "upon the earth," to shew that "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth," and will render to the proudest of kings according to the fruit of their doings. Let those that are trampled upon by the high ones of the earth comfort themselves with this, that though they cannot, dare not, must not resist them, yet there is a God that will call them to an account, that will triumph over them upon their own dunghill,—and the earth they are kings of in the eye of God is no better. This is general only; it is particularly foretold, ver. 22, that they shall be "gathered together as prisoners." Convicted, condemned "prisoners are gathered in the pit," or dungeon; and there they shall be shut up under close confinement. The kings and high ones, that took all possible liberty themselves, and took a pride and pleasure in shutting up others, shall now be themselves shut up. Let not the free man glory in his freedom, no more than the strong man in his strength, for he knows not what restraints he is reserved for; but "after many days shall they be visited." Either, 1st. They shall be visited in wrath. It is the same word in another form that is used ver. 21; The Lord shall punish them. They shall be reserved to the day of execution, as condemned prisoners are, and as fallen angels are "reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day," *Jude* 6. Let this account for the delays of Divine vengeance. Sentence is not executed speedily, because execution-day is not yet come, and perhaps will not come till "after many days;" but it is certain that "the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction," and is therefore preserved in the mean time, but "shall be brought forth to the day of wrath," *Job* xxi. 30. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time. 2nd. They shall be visited in mercy, and be discharged from their imprisonment, and shall obtain, if not their dignity, yet their liberty again. Nebuchadnezzar, in his conquests, made many kings and princes his captives, and kept them in the dungeon in Babylon,

and among the rest, Jehoiachin, king of Judah; but "after many days," when his head was laid, his son visited them, and granted, as should seem, some reviving to them all in their bondage; for it is made an instance of his particular kindness to Jehoiachin, that he "set his throne above the throne of the rest of the kings that were with him," *Jer.* lii. 32. If we apply it to the general state of mankind, it speaks a revolution of conditions. Those that were high are punished, those that were punished are relieved after many days, that none in this world may be secure, though their condition be never so prosperous, nor any despair, though their condition be never so deplorable.

Thirdly. Glory to God in all this, ver. 23. When all this comes to pass, when the proud enemies of God's church are humbled, and brought down, 1. Then shall it appear beyond contradiction, that the Lord reigns, which is always true, but not always alike evident. When the kings of the earth are punished for their tyranny and oppression, then it is proclaimed and proved to all the world that God is King of kings, King above them, by whom they are conquerable. King over them, to whom they are accountable; that he reigns as "Lord of hosts," of all hosts, of their hosts; that he reigns "in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem;" in his church, for the honour and welfare of that, pursuant to the promises on which that is founded, reigns in his word and ordinances; that he reigns "before his ancients," before all his saints, especially before his ministers, the elders of his church, who have their eye upon all the outgoings of his power and providence, and in all these events observe his hand. God's ancients, the old disciples, the experienced Christians, that have often, when they have been perplexed, gone into the sanctuary of God in Zion and Jerusalem, and acquainted themselves with his manifestation of himself there, they shall see more than others of God's dominion and sovereignty in these operations of his providence. 2. Then it shall appear beyond comparison that he reigns gloriously, in such brightness and lustre, that "the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed," as the lesser lights are eclipsed and extinguished by the greater. Great men, that thought themselves to have as bright a lustre, and as vast a dominion, as the sun and moon, shall be ashamed when God appears above them, much more when he appears against them. Then shall their faces be filled with shame, that they may seek God's name. The Eastern nations worshipped the sun and moon; but when God shall appear so gloriously for his people against his and their enemies, all these pretended deities shall be ashamed that ever they received the homage of their deluded worshippers. The glory of the Creator infinitely outshines the glory of the brightest creatures. In the great day, when the Judge of heaven and earth shall shine forth in his glory, "the sun shall," by his transcendent lustre, "be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood."

CHAPTER XXV.

After the threatenings of wrath in the foregoing chapter, we have here, I. Thankful praises for what God had done, which the prophet, in the name of the church, offers up to God, and teacheth us to offer the like, ver. 1—5. II. Precious promises of what God would yet farther do for his church, especially in the grace of the Gospel, ver. 6—8. III. The church's triumph in God over her enemies thereupon, ver. 9—12. This chapter looks as pleasantly upon the church as the former looked dreadfully upon the world.

O LORD, thou *art* my God;
I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name;
For thou hast done wonderful *things;*
Thy counsels of old *are* faithfulness *and* truth.
2 For thou hast made of a city an heap;
Of a defenced city a ruin:
A palace of strangers to be no city;
It shall never be built.
3 Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee,
The city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.
4 For thou hast been a strength to the poor,
A strength to the needy in his distress,
A refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat,
When the blast of the terrible ones *is* as a storm *against* the wall.
5 Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers,
As the heat in a dry place;
Even the heat with the shadow of a cloud:
The branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

It was said in the close of the foregoing chapter, that the Lord of hosts shall reign gloriously; now, in compliance with that, the prophet here speaks of "the glorious majesty of his kingdom," *Ps.* cxlv. 12, and gives him the glory of it; and however it might have an accomplishment in the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity there, it seems to look farther to the praises that should be offered up to God by the Gospel church, for Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, and the comforts he has provided for all believers. Here,

First. The prophet determines to praise God himself; for they that would stir up others should in the first place stir up themselves to praise God; ver. 1, "O Lord, thou art my God," a God in covenant with me. When God is punishing the kings of the earth upon the earth, and making them to tremble before him, a poor prophet can go to him, and with an humble boldness say, "O Lord, thou art my God," and therefore, "I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name." Those that have the Lord for their God are obliged to praise him; for therefore he took us to be his people, that we might be unto him "for a name, and for a praise," *Jer.* xiii. 11. In praising God we exalt him, not that we can make him higher than he is, but we must make him to appear to ourselves and others higher than he doth: see *Ex.* xv. 2.

Secondly. He pleaseth himself with the thought that others also shall be brought to praise God; ver. 3, Therefore because of the desolations thou hast made in the earth by thy providence, *Ps.* xlv. 8, and the just vengeance thou hast taken on thine and thy church's enemies, "therefore shall the strong people glorify thee" in concert, and "the city," that is, the metropolis, "of the terrible nations," or the cities of such nations, "shall fear thee." This may be understood, 1. Of those people that have been strong and terrible against God. Those that have been enemies to God's kingdom, and have fought against the interests of it with a great deal of strength and terror, shall either be converted, and glorify God by joining with his people in his service, or at least convinced, so as to own themselves conquered. Those that had been the terror of the mighty shall be forced to tremble before the judgments of God, and call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them. Or, 2. Of those that shall be now made strong and terrible for God and by him, though before they were weak and trampled upon. They that fear God, and glorify him, he shall so visibly appear for them, and with them, that all shall acknowledge them a strong people, and shall stand in awe of them. There was a time when "many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them," *Est.* viii. 17, and when they that knew their God were strong and did exploits, *Dan.* xi. 32, for which they glorify God.

Thirdly. He observes what is and ought to be the matter of this praise. We and others must exalt God and praise him; for,

1. He has done wonders, according to the counsel of his own will, ver. 1. We exalt God by admiring what he has done as truly wonderful; wonderful proofs of his power, beyond what any creature could perform; and wonderful proofs of his goodness, beyond what such sinful creatures as we are could expect. These wonderful things, which are new and surprising to us, and altogether unthought of, are according to his counsels of old, devised by his wisdom, and designed for his own glory, and the comfort of his people. All the operations of providence are according to God's eternal counsels, and those faithfulness and truth itself, all consonant to his attributes, consistent with one another, and sure to be accomplished in their season.

2. He has in particular humbled the pride and broken the power of the mighty ones of the earth; ver. 2, "Thou hast made of a city," of many a city, a heap of rubbish; of many a defenced city, that thought itself well guarded by nature and art, and the multitude and courage of its militia, thou hast made a ruin; for what created strength can hold out against Omnipotence? Many a city that has been so richly built that it might be called a palace, and so much frequented and visited by persons of the best rank from all parts, that it might be called a palace of strangers, yet thou hast made to be no city; it is levelled with the ground, and not one stone left upon another, and it shall never be built again. This has been the case of many cities in divers parts of the world, and in our own nation particularly; cities that flourished once are gone to decay and lost, and it is scarce known (except by urns or coins digged up out of the earth) where they stood. How many of the cities of Israel have long since been heaps and ruins? God hereby teacheth us that "here we have no continuing city," and must therefore seek one to come, which will never be a ruin, or go to decay.

3. He hath seasonably relieved and succoured his necessitous and distressed people; ver. 4, "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy." As God weakens the strong that are proud and secure, so he strengthens the weak that are humble and serious, and stay themselves upon him; nay, he not only makes them strong, but he is himself their strength, for in him they strengthen themselves, and it is his favour and grace that is the strength of their hearts. He is "a strength to the needy in distress," then when he needs strength, and when his distress drives him to God. And as he strengthens them against their inward decays, so he shelters them from outward assaults. He is a refuge from the storm of rain or hail, and a shadow from the scorching heat of the sun in summer. God is a sufficient protection to his people in all weathers, both hot and cold, wet and dry. The "armour of righteousness" serves both "on the right hand and on the left," 2 *Cor.* vi. 7. Whatever danger or troubles God's people may be in, effectual care is taken that they shall sustain no real hurt or damage. When perils are most frightening and most threatening, God will then appear for the safety of his people; "When the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall," which makes a great noise, but cannot overthrow the wall. The enemies of God's poor are terrible ones; they do all they can to make themselves so to them; their rage is like a blast of wind, loud, and blustering, and furious, but is, as the wind is, under a Divine check; for God "holds the winds in his fists;" and God will be such a shelter to his people as that they shall be able to stand the shock, keep their ground, and maintain their integrity and peace. A storm beating on a ship tosseth it, but that which beats on a wall never stirs it, *Ps.* lxxvi. 10; cxxxviii. 7.

4. That he doth and will shelter those that trust in him from the insolence of their proud oppressors; ver. 5, "Thou shalt," or thou dost, "bring down the noise of strangers;" thou shalt abate and still it, as "the heat in a dry place" is abated and moderated by "the shadow of a cloud" interposing; the "branch," or rather, the song or triumph of the "terrible ones," shall be brought low, and they shall be made to change their note, and fall their voice. Observe here, 1st. The oppressors of God's people are called "strangers," for they forget that those they oppress are made of the same mould, of the same blood with them. They are called terrible ones, for so they affect to be, rather than amiable ones; they would rather be feared than loved. 2nd. Their insolence towards the people of God is noisy and hot, and that is all. It is but the noise of strangers, who think to carry their point by hectoring and bullying all that stand in their way, and talking big. "Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise," *Jer.* xlvi. 17. It is like the heat of the sun scorching in the middle of the day, but where is it when the sun is set? 3rd. Their noise, and heat, and all their triumph will be humbled and brought low, when their hopes are baffled, and all their honours laid in the dust; the branches, even the top branches, of the terrible ones will be broken off and thrown to the dunghill. 4th. If the labourers in God's vineyard be at any time called to "bear the burthen and heat of the day," he will find some way or other to refresh them as "with the shadow of a cloud," that they may not be pressed above measure.

6 And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people
A feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees,
Of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.
7 And he will destroy in this mountain
The face of the covering cast over all people,
And the vail that is spread over all nations.
8 He will swallow up death in victory;
And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces;
And the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth:
For the LORD hath spoken *it*.

If we suppose, as many do, that this refers to the great joy that should be in Zion and Jerusalem, either when the army of the Assyrians was routed by an angel, or when the Jews were released out of their captivity in Babylon, or upon occasion of some other the like surprising deliverance, yet we cannot avoid making it to look farther to the grace of the Gospel, and the glory which is the crown and consummation of that grace; for it is at our resurrection through Christ that the saying that is here written "shall be brought to pass;" then, and not till then, (if we may believe St. Paul,) it shall have its full accomplishment, "Death is swallowed up in victory," 1 *Cor.* xv. 54; that is a key to the rest of the promises here that are in the same chain. And so we have here a prophecy of that salvation and that grace which was to be brought unto us by Jesus Christ, into which "the prophets inquired and searched diligently," 1 *Pet.* i. 10.

First. That the grace of the Gospel should be a royal feast for all people; not like that of Ahasuerus, which was intended only to shew the grandeur of the master of the feast, *Est.* i. 4, for this is intended to gratify the guests; and therefore, whereas all there was for show, all here is for substance. The preparation made in the Gospel for the kind reception of penitents and supplicants with God are often in the New Testament set forth by the similitude of a feast, as *Mat.* xxii. 1, which seems to be borrowed from this here. 1. God himself is the master of the feast, and we may be sure he prepares like himself, as becomes him to give, rather than as becomes us to receive. The Lord of hosts makes this feast. 2. The guests invited are "all people," Gentiles as well as Jews. "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature:" there is enough for all; and whoever will may "come and take freely," even those that are gathered out of the highways and the hedges. 3. The place is mount Zion; thence the preaching of the Gospel takes rise, the preachers must begin at Jerusalem. The gospel church is the "Jerusalem that is above;" there this feast is made, and to it all the invited guests must go. 4. The provision is very rich, and every thing is of the best. It is a feast, which supposeth abundance and variety; it is a continual feast to believers, it is their own fault if it be not; it is a "feast of fat things," and "full of marrow;" so relishing, so nourishing are the comforts of the Gospel to all those that feast upon them, and digest them. The returning prodigal was entertained with the fatted calf; and David has that pleasure in communion with God with which his soul is "satisfied as with marrow and fatness." It is a feast of "wines on the lees;" the strongest-bodied wines, that have been kept long upon the lees, and then are well refined from them, so that they are clear and fine. There is that in the Gospel which, like wine soberly used, "makes glad the heart," and raiseth the spirits, and is fit for those that are of heavy heart, being under convictions of sin, and mourning for it, that they may drink and forget their misery, (for that is the proper use of wine, it is a cordial for those that need it, *Pr.* xxxi. 6, 7;) may be of good cheer, knowing that their sins are forgiven; and may be vigorous in their spiritual work and warfare, as a strong man refreshed with wine.

Secondly. That the world should be freed from that darkness of ignorance and mistake, in the mists of which it had been so long lost and buried; ver. 7, "He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering;" that is, the covering of the face, with which all people are covered, that is, hoodwinked or blindfolded, so that they cannot see their way, nor go about their work, and by reason of which they wander endlessly. Their faces are covered as men condemned, or as dead men; there is a veil "spread over all nations," for they all sat in darkness; and no marvel, when the Jews themselves, among whom God was known, had a veil upon their hearts, 2 *Cor.* iii. 15. But this veil the Lord will destroy by the light of his Gospel shining in the world, and the power of his Spirit opening men's eyes to receive it. He will raise those to spiritual life that had long been dead in trespasses and sins.

Thirdly. That death should be conquered, the power of it broken, and the property of it altered; "He will swallow up death in victory," ver. 8. 1. Christ will himself, in his resurrection, triumph over death; will break its bands, its bars, asunder, and cast away all its cords. The grave seemed to swallow him up, but really he swallowed it up. 2. The happiness of the saints shall be out of the reach of death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of this world, embitters them, and stains the beauty of them. 3. Believers may triumph over death, and look upon it as a conquered enemy. "O death, where is thy sting?" 4. When the dead bodies of the saints shall be raised at the great day, and their "mortality swallowed up of life," then death will be for ever swallowed up of victory: and it is the last enemy.

Fourthly. That grief shall be banished, and there shall be perfect and endless joy; "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." Those that mourn for sin shall be comforted, and have their consciences pacified. In the covenant of grace there shall be that provided which is sufficient to balance all the sorrows of this present time, to wipe away our tears, and to refresh us. Those particularly that suffer for Christ shall have consolation abounding as their afflictions do abound; but in the joys of heaven, and nowhere short of them, will fully be "brought to pass this saying," as that before, for there it is that God shall "wipe away all tears," *Rev.* vii. 17; xxi. 4; and therefore "there shall be no more sorrow," because "there shall be no more death." The hope of this should now wipe away all excessive tears, all the weeping that hinders sowing.

Fifthly. That all the reproach cast upon religion, and the serious professors of it, shall be for ever rolled away. "The rebuke of his people," which they have long lain under, the calumnies and misrepresentations by which they have been blackened, the insolence and cruelty with which their persecutors have trampled on them, and trodden them down, shall be taken away. Their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light in the view of all the world, who shall be convinced they are not such as they have been invidiously characterised; and so their salvation from the injuries done them as such shall be wrought out. Sometimes in this world God doth that for his people which takes away their reproach from among men; however, it will be done effectually at the great day, for "the Lord hath spoken it," who can and will make it good. Let us patiently bear sorrow and shame now, and improve both, for shortly both will be done away.

9 And it shall be said in that day,
Lo, this *is* our God;
We have waited for him, and he will save us:
This *is* the LORD;
We have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.
10 For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest,
And Moab shall be trodden down under him,
Even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.
11 And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them,
As he that swimmeth spreadeth forth *his hands* to swim:
And he shall bring down their pride
Together with the spoils of their hands.
12 And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down,
Lay low, *and* bring to the ground, *even* to the dust.

Here is, First. The welcome which the church shall give to these blessings promised in the foregoing verses; ver. 9, "It shall be said in that day," with an humble, holy triumph and exultation, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him." Thus will the deliverance of the church out of long and sore troubles be celebrated; thus will it be as "life from the dead." With such transports of joy and praise will those entertain the glad tidings of the Redeemer who looked for him and for redemption in Jerusalem by him; and with such a triumphant song as this will glorified saints enter into the joy of their Lord. 1. God himself must have the glory of all; "Lo, this is our God," "this is the Lord." This which is done is his doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Herein he has done like himself; has magnified his own wisdom, power, and goodness. Herein he has done for us like our God, a God in covenant with us, and whom we serve. Note, Our triumphs must not terminate in what God doth for us, and gives to us, but must pass through them to himself, who is the author and giver of them. "This is our God." Have any of the nations of the earth such a God to trust to? No, "their rock is not as our rock: there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun." 2. The longer it has been expected, the more welcome it is. This is he whom we have waited for in dependence upon his word of promise, and a full assurance that he would come in the set time, in due time, and therefore were willing to tarry his time. And now we find it is not in vain to wait for him; for the mercy comes at last, with an abundant recompence for the delay. 3. It is matter of joy unspeakable. "We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation;" we that share in the benefits of it will concur in the joyful thanksgivings for it. 4. It is an encouragement to hope for the continuance and perfection of this salvation: "We have waited for him, and he will save us," will carry on what he has begun; for, as for God, our God, his work is perfect.

Secondly. A prospect of farther blessings for the securing and perpetuating of these. 1. The power of God shall be engaged for them, and shall continue to take their part. "In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest," ver. 10. The church and people of God shall have continued proofs of God's presence with them, and residence among them; his hand shall be continually over them to protect and guard them, and continually stretched out to them for their supply. Mount Zion is his rest for ever; here he will dwell. 2. The power of their enemies that is engaged against them shall be broken. Moab is here put for all the adversaries of God's people that are vexatious to them; they shall all be trodden down, or threshed, (for then they beat out the corn by treading it,) and shall be thrown out as straw to the dunghill, being good for nothing but to make muck of. God having caused his hand to rest upon this mountain, it shall not be a hand that hangs down, or is folded up, feeble and inactive; but "he shall spread forth his hands in the midst" of his people, like one that swims; which intimates that he will employ and exert his power for them vigorously, that he will be doing for them on all sides, that he will easily and effectually put by the opposition that is given to his gracious intentions for them, and thereby further and push forward his good work among them; and he will be continually active on their behalf, for so the swimmer is. It is foretold particularly what he shall do for them; 1st. He shall bring down the pride of their enemies (which Moab was notoriously guilty of, *ch.* xvi. 6) by one humbling judgment after another, stripping them of that which they are proud of. 2. He shall bring down the spoils of their hands, shall take from them that which they have got by spoil and rapine; he shall bring down the arms of their hands, which are lifted up against God's Israel; he shall quite break their power, and disable them to do mischief. 3rd. He shall ruin all their fortifications, ver. 12. Moab hath his walls, and his high forts, with which he hopes to secure himself, and from which he designs to annoy the people of God; but God shall bring them all down, lay them low, bring them to the ground, to the dust; and so they who trusted to them will be left exposed. There is no fortress impregnable to Omnipotence; no fort so high, but the arm of the Lord can overtop it, and bring it down. This destruction of Moab is typical of Christ's victory over death, spoken of ver. 8, his spoiling principalities and powers in his cross, *Col.* ii. 15, and his pulling down of Satan's strongholds, by the preaching of his Gospel, 2 *Cor.* x. 4, and his reigning till all his enemies be made his footstool, *Ps.* cx. 1.

CHAPTER XXVI.

This chapter is a song of holy joy and praise, in which the great things God hath engaged, in the foregoing chapter, to do for his people against his and their enemies are celebrated. It is prepared to be sung when that prophecy shall be accomplished; for we must be forward to meet God with our thanksgivings, when he is coming towards us with his mercies. Now the people of God are here taught, I. To triumph in the safety and holy security both of the church in general and of every particular member of it, under the Divine protection, ver. 1—4. II. To triumph over all opposing powers, ver. 5, 6. III. To walk with God, and wait for him in the worst and darkest times, ver. 7—9. IV. To lament the stupidity of those who regarded not the providences of God, either merciful or afflictive, ver. 10, 11. V. To encourage themselves, and one another, with hopes that God would still continue to do them good, ver. 12, 14; and engage themselves to continue in his service, ver. 13. VI. To recollect the providences of God that had been concerning them in their low and distressed condition, and their carriage under those providences, ver. 15—18. VII. To rejoice in hope of a glorious deliverance, which should be as a resurrection to them, ver. 19; and to retire in the expectation of it, ver. 20, 21. And this is written for the support and assistance of the faith and hope of God's people in all ages, even those upon whom the ends of the world are come.

IN that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah;
We have a strong city;
Salvation will *God* appoint *for* walls and bulwarks.
2 Open ye the gates,
That the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.
3 Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace,
Whose mind *is* stayed *on thee:*
Because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever:
For in the LORD JEHOVAH *is* everlasting strength:

To the prophecies of gospel grace very fitly is a song annexed, in which we may give God the glory and take to ourselves the comfort of that grace. In that day, the gospel day, which the day of the victories and enlargements of the Old Testament church was typical of—to some of which, perhaps, this hath a primary reference—"in that day this song shall be sung;" there shall be persons to sing it, and cause and hearts to sing it. It shall be sung "in the land of Judah," which was a figure of the gospel church; for the gospel covenant is said to be made "with the house of Judah," *Heb.* viii. 8. Glorious things are here said of the church of God.

First. That it is strongly fortified against those that are bad; ver. 1, "We have a strong city." It is a city incorporated by the charter of the everlasting covenant, fitted for the reception of all that are made free by that charter, for their employment and entertainment. It is a strong city, as Jerusalem was, while it was a city compact together, and had God himself a wall of fire round about it; so strong, that none would have believed that an enemy could ever "have entered into the gates of Jerusalem," *Lam.* iv. 12. The church is a strong city, for it has walls and bulwarks, or counterscarps, and those of God's own appointing; for he has in his promise appointed salvation itself to be its defence. Those that are designed for salvation, that will be their protection, 1 *Pet.* i. 4.

Secondly. That it is richly replenished with those that are good, and those are instead of fortifications to it; for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, if they are such as they should be, are its strength, *Zec.* xii. 5. The gates are here ordered to be opened, "that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in," ver. 2; those had been banished and driven out by the iniquity of the former times, but now the laws that were made against them are repealed, and they have liberty to enter in again. Or, there is an act for a general naturalization of all the righteous, whatever nation they are of, encouraging them to come and settle in Jerusalem. When God hath done great things for any place or people, he expects that thus they should render according to the benefit done unto them; they should be kind to his people, and take them under their protection, and into their bosom. Note, 1. It is the character of righteous men that they keep the truths of God; a firm belief of which will have a mighty influence upon the regularity of the whole conversation. Good principles fixed in the head will produce good resolutions in the heart and good practices in the life. 2. It is the interest of states to countenance such, and court them among them, for they bring a blessing with them.

Thirdly. That all that belong to it are safe and easy, and have a holy security and serenity of mind in the assurance of God's favour. 1. This is here the matter of a promise; ver. 3, "Thou wilt keep him in peace," peace, "in perfect peace;" inward peace, outward peace; peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times, under all events; this peace shall he be put into, and kept in the possession of, whose mind is stayed upon God because it trusteth in him. It is the character of every good man, that he trusts in God, puts himself under his conduct and government, and depends upon him that it shall be vastly to his advantage to do so. They that trust in God must have their mind stayed upon him, must trust him at all times, under all events, must firmly and faithfully adhere to him, with an entire satisfaction in him; and such as do so God will keep in perpetual peace, and that peace shall keep them. When evil tidings are abroad they shall calmly expect the event, and not be disturbed by frightful apprehensions arising from them, whose hearts are "fixed, trusting in the Lord," *Ps.* cxii. 7. 2. It is the matter of a precept, ver. 4. Let us make ourselves easy by trusting in the Lord for ever. Since God has promised peace to those that stay themselves upon him, let us not lose the benefit of that promise, but repose an entire confidence in him. Trust in him for ever; that is, at all times, when we have nothing else to trust to; trust in him for that peace, that portion, which will be for ever. Whatever we trust to the world for, it will be but for a moment; all we expect from it is confined within the limits of time; but what we trust in God for will last as long as we shall last. For in the "Lord Jehovah," 'Jah, Jehovah,' in him who was and is and is to come, there is a Rock of ages, a firm and lasting foundation for faith and hope to build upon. And the house built on that Rock will stand in a storm. They that trust in God shall not only find in him, but receive from him, "everlasting strength," strength that will carry them to everlasting life, to that blessedness which is "for ever;" and, therefore, let them trust in him for ever, and never cast away or change their confidence.

5 For he bringeth down them that dwell on high;
The lofty city, he layeth it low;
He layeth it low, *even* to the ground;
He bringeth it *even* to the dust.
6 The foot shall tread it down,
Even the feet of the poor, *and* the steps of the needy.
7 The way of the just *is* uprightness:
Thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.
8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee;
The desire of *our* soul *is* to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee.
9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night;
Yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early:
For when thy judgments *are* in the earth,
The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.
10 Let favour be shewed to the wicked,
Yet will he not learn righteousness:
In the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly,
And will not behold the majesty of the LORD.
11 LORD, *when* thy hand is lifted up, they will not see:
But they shall see, and be ashamed for *their* envy at the people;
Yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

EFFECTS OF THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE AT TIBERIAS.

Here the prophet farther encourageth us to trust in the Lord for ever, and to continue waiting on him; for,

First. He will make humble souls that trust in him to triumph over their proud enemies, ver. 5, 6. They that exalt themselves shall be abased, for he "bringeth down them that dwell on high;" and wherein they deal proudly he is and will be above them; even the lofty city, Babylon itself or Nineveh, he lays it low, *ch.* xxv. 12. He can do it, be it never so well fortified; he has done it many a time, he will do it, for he resists the proud: it is his glory to do it, for he proves himself to be God by looking on the proud and abasing them, *Job* xl. 12. But, on the contrary, they that humble themselves shall be exalted; for "the feet of the poor" shall tread upon the lofty cities, ver. 6. He doth not say great armies shall tread them down; but when God will have it done, "even the feet of the poor" shall do it; *Mal.* iv. 3, "Ye shall tread down the wicked;" "Come, set your feet on the necks of these kings:" see *Ps.* cxlvii. 6; *Rom.* xvi. 20.

Secondly. He takes cognizance of the way of his people, and hath delight in it; ver. 7, 'The way of the just is evenness;' so it may be read. It is their endeavour and constant care to walk with God in an even, steady course of obedience and holy conversation; "My foot stands in an even place," goes in an even path, *Ps.* xxvi. 12; and it is their happiness that God makes their way plain and easy before them. "Thou, most upright," dost level, or make even, "the path of the just," by preventing or removing those things that would be stumblingblocks to them, so that "nothing shall offend them," *Ps.* cxix. 165. God weighs it, so we read it; he considers it, and will give them grace sufficient for them, to help them over all the difficulties they may meet with in their way. Thus with the upright God will shew himself upright.

Thirdly. It is our duty, and will be our comfort, to wait for God, and to keep up holy desires towards him in the darkest and most discouraging times, ver. 8, 9. This has always been the practice of God's people, even then when God has frowned upon them: 1. To keep up a constant dependence upon him. "In the way of thy judgments we have" still "waited for thee;" that is, when thou hast corrected us, we have looked to no other hand but thine to relieve us; as the "servant looks" only "to the hand of his master, till that he have mercy upon him," *Ps.* cxxiii. 2. We cannot appeal from God's justice, but to his mercy. If God's judgments continue long, if it be a road of judgments, for so the word signifies, yet we must not be weary, but continue waiting. 2. To let out holy desires towards him. Our troubles, how pressing soever, must never put us out of conceit with our religion, nor turn us away from God; but still the desire of our soul must be to his name, and to the remembrance of him; and in the night, the darkest, longest night of affliction, with our souls must we desire him. 1st. Our great concern must be for God's name, and our earnest desire that that may be glorified, whatever become of us and our names. This is that which we must wait for, and pray for; "Father, glorify thy name," and we are satisfied. 2nd. Our great comfort must be in the remembrance of that name, of all that whereby God has made himself known. The remembrance of God must be our great support and pleasure; and though sometimes we be unmindful of him, yet still our desire must be towards the remembrance of him, and we must take pains with our own hearts to have him always in mind. 3rd. Our desires towards God must be inward, fervent, and sincere. With our soul we must desire him, with our soul we must pant after him, *Ps.* xlii. 1, and with our spirits within us, with the innermost thought, and the closest application of mind, we must seek him. We make nothing of our religion, whatever our profession be, if we do not make heart-work of it. 4th. Even in the darkest night of affliction, our desires must be towards God, as our sun and shield; for, however God is pleased to deal with us, we must never think the worse of him, nor cool in our love to him. 5th. If our desires be indeed towards God, we must evidence it by seeking him, and seeking him early, as those that desire to find him, and dread the thoughts of missing him. They that would seek God, and find him, must seek betimes, and seek him earnestly. Though we come never so early, we shall find him ready to receive us.

Fourthly. It is God's gracious design in sending abroad his judgments, thereby to bring men to seek him and serve him. "When thy judgments are upon the earth," laying all waste, then we have reason to expect that not only God's professing people, but even "the inhabitants of the world, will learn righteousness," will have their mistakes rectified, and their lives reformed; will

be brought to acknowledge God's righteousness in punishing them; will repent of their own unrighteousness in offending God, and so be brought to walk in right paths. They will do this; that is, judgments are designed to bring them to this, they have a natural tendency to produce this effect; and though many continue obstinate, yet some even of "the inhabitants of the world" will profit by this discipline, and "will learn righteousness;" sure they will, they are strangely stupid if they do not. Note, The intention of afflictions is to teach us righteousness; and blessed is the man whom God chastens, and thus teaches, *Ps.* xciv. 12. *Discite justitiam, moniti, et non temnere divos,*—'Let this rebuke teach you to cultivate righteousness, and cease from despising the gods.'—*Virgil.*

Fifthly. Those are wicked indeed that will not be wrought upon by the favourable methods God takes to reduce and reform them; and it is necessary God should deal with them in a severe way by his judgments, which shall prevail to humble those that would not otherwise be humbled. Observe,

1. How sinners walk contrary to God, and refuse to comply with the means used for their reformation, and to answer the intentions of them, ver. 10. 1st. Favour is shewed to them; they receive many mercies from God; he causeth his sun to shine, and rain to fall upon them; nay, he prospers them, and into their hands he brings plentifully; they escape many of the strokes of God's judgments which others, less wicked than they, have been cut off by. In some particular instances they seem to be remarkably favoured above their neighbours, and the design of all this is, that they may be won upon to love and serve that God who thus favours them; and yet it is all in vain. They will not learn righteousness, will not be led to repentance by the goodness of God; and therefore it is requisite that God should send his judgments into the earth, to reckon with men for abused mercies. 2nd. They live in a "land of uprightness;" where religion is professed, and is in reputation, and the word of God preached, and where they have many good examples set them; in a land of evenness, where there are not so many stumblingblocks as in other places; in a land of correction, where vice and profaneness are discountenanced and punished; yet there they will deal unjustly, and go on frowardly in their evil ways. They that do wickedly deal unjustly both with God and man, and with their own souls. And those that will not be reclaimed by the justice of the nation may expect the judgments of God upon them. Nor can they expect a place hereafter in the land of blessedness who now conform not to the laws and usages, nor improve the privileges and advantages, of the "land of uprightness." And why do they not? It is because they "will not behold the majesty of the Lord," will not believe, will not consider, what a God of terrible majesty he is whose laws and justice they persist in the contempt of. God's majesty appears in all the dispensations of his providence; but they regard it not, and therefore study not to answer the ends of those dispensations. Even when we receive the mercy of the Lord we must still behold the majesty of the Lord and his goodness. 3rd. God lifts up his hand to give them warning, that they may, by repentance and prayer, make their peace with him; but they take no notice of it, are not aware that God is angry with them, or coming forth against them; "they will not see," and none so blind as those that will not see, that shut their eyes against the clearest conviction of guilt and wrath; who ascribe that to chance, or common fate, which is manifestly a Divine rebuke; who regard not the threatening symptoms of their own ruin, but cry peace to themselves when the righteous God is waging war with them.

2. How God will at length be too hard for them. When he judgeth, he will overcome; "They will not see, but they shall see;" shall be made to see whether they will or no, that God is angry with them. Atheists, scorners, and the secure, will shortly feel what now they will not believe, that it "is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." They will not see the evil of sin, and particularly the sin of hating and persecuting the people of God; but they shall see by the tokens of God's displeasure against them for it, and the deliverances in which God will plead his people's cause, that what is done against them he takes as done against himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. "They shall see" that they have done God's people a great deal of wrong, and therefore shall "be ashamed" of their enmity and envy towards them, and their ill usage of such as deserved better treatment. Note, Those that bear ill-will to God's people have reason to be ashamed of it, so absurd and unreasonable it is; and sooner or later they shall be ashamed of it, and the remembrance of it shall fill them with confusion. Some read it, 'They shall see, and be confounded for the zeal of the people;' that is, by the zeal God will shew for his people; when they shall be made to know how jealous God is for the honour and welfare of his people, they shall be confounded to think that they might have been of that people, and would not. Their doom therefore is, that since they slighted the happiness of God's friends, the fire of his enemies shall devour them; that is, that fire which is prepared for his enemies, and with which they shall be devoured; the fire designed for the devil and his angels. Note, Those that are enemies to God's people, and envy them, God looks upon as his enemies, and will deal with them accordingly.

12 LORD, thou wilt ordain peace for us:
For thou also hast wrought all our works in us.
13 O LORD our God, *other* lords beside thee have had dominion over us:
But by thee only will we make mention of thy name.
14 *They are* dead, they shall not live;
They are deceased, they shall not rise:
Therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them,
And made all their memory to perish.
15 Thou hast increased the nation, O LORD,
Thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified:
Thou hadst removed *it* far *unto* all the ends of the earth.
16 LORD, in trouble have they visited thee,
They poured out a prayer *when* thy chastening *was* upon them.
17 Like as a woman with child,
That draweth near the time of her delivery,
Is in pain, *and* crieth out in her pangs;
So have we been in thy sight, O LORD.
18 We have been with child, we have been in pain,
We have as it were brought forth wind;
We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth;
Neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.
19 Thy dead *men* shall live,
Together with my dead body shall they arise.
Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust:
For thy dew *is as* the dew of herbs,
And the earth shall cast out the dead.

The prophet, in these verses, looks back upon what God had done with them, both in mercy and judgment, and sings unto God of both; and then looks forward upon what he hoped God would do for them. Observe,

First. His views and reflections are mixed. When he looks back upon the state of the church, he finds,

1. That God had in many instances been very gracious to them, and had done great things for them; ver. 12, "Thou hast wrought all our works in us;" or, for us. Whatever good work is done by us, it is owing to a good work wrought by the grace of God in us; it is he that puts good thoughts and affections into our hearts, if at any time they be there, and that works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. *Acti, agimus,*—'Being acted upon, we act.' And if any kindness be shewed us, or any of our affairs be prosperous and successful, it is God that works it for us; and every creature, every business, that is any way serviceable to our comfort, it is he that makes it to be so; and sometimes makes that to work for us which seemed to make against us. In particular, ver. 15, "Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord;" so that a little one is become a thousand. In Egypt they multiplied exceedingly, and afterwards in Canaan, so that they filled the land; and in this thou art glorified; for the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince. And therein God was glorified, as faithful to his covenant with Abraham, that he would make him a "father of many nations." Note, God's nation is a growing nation, and it is the glory of God that it is so. The increase of the church, that holy nation, is therefore to be rejoiced in, because it is the increase of those that make it their business to glorify God in this world.

2. That yet he had laid them under his rebukes. 1st. The neighbour nations had sometimes oppressed them, and tyrannized over them; ver. 13, "O Lord our God," thou who hast the sole right to rule us, whose subjects and servants we are, to thee we complain, (for whither else should we go with our complaints?) that "other lords besides thee have had dominion over us." Not only in the days of the judges, but afterwards, God frequently sold them into the hands of their enemies; or rather, by their iniquities, they sold themselves, *ch.* lii. 3—5. When they had been careless in the service of God, God suffered their enemies to have dominion over them, that they might know the difference between "his service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries." It may be understood as a confession of sin, their serving other gods, and subjecting themselves to the superstitious laws and customs of their neighbours, by which other lords (for they called their idols, Baals, 'lords,') had dominion over them besides God; but now they promise that it shall be so no more: From henceforth "by thee only will we make mention of thy name;" that is, we will worship thee only, and in that way only which thou hast instituted and appointed. The same may be our penitent reflection: "Other lords" besides God "have had dominion over us." Every lust has been our lord, and we have been led captive by it; and it has been long enough, and too long, that we have thus wronged both God and ourselves. The same, therefore, must be our pious resolution, that from henceforth we will make mention of God's name only, and by him only; that we will keep close to God, and to our duty, and never desert it. 2nd. They had sometimes been carried into captivity before their enemies, ver. 15. The nation which at first thou didst increase, and make to take root, thou hast now diminished, and plucked up, and "removed it" to "all the ends of the earth," driven it out to the utmost parts of heaven, as is threatened, *Deu.* xxx. 4, and xxviii. 64. But observe betwixt the mention of the increasing of them and that of the removing of them, it is said, "Thou art glorified;" for the judgments God inflicts upon his people for their sins are for his honour, as well as the mercies he bestows upon them in performance of his promise.

3. He remembers that when they were thus oppressed and carried captive, they cried unto God, which was a good evidence they neither had quite forsaken him nor were quite forsaken of him, and that there were merciful intentions in the judgments they were under; ver. 16, "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee." This was usual with the people of Israel, as we find frequently in the story of the judges; when other lords had dominion over them, they "humbled themselves," and said, "The Lord is righteous," 2 *Chr.* xii. 6. See here, 1st. The need we have of afflictions; they are necessary to stir up prayer. When it is said, "In trouble have they visited thee," it is implied that in their peace and prosperity they were strangers to God, kept at a distance from him, and seldom came near him; as if, when the world smiled upon them, they had no occasion for his favours. 2nd. The benefit we often have by afflictions. They bring us to God, and quicken us to our duty, and shew us our dependence upon him. Those that before seldom looked at God, now visit him; they come frequently, they become friendly, and make their court to him. Before, prayer came drop by drop; but now they pour out a prayer. It comes now like water from a fountain, not like water from a still. They poured out a 'secret speech,' so the margin. Praying is speaking to God, but it is a secret speech; for it is the language of the heart, otherwise it is not praying. Afflictions bring us to secret prayer; in which we may be more free and particular in our addresses to him than we can be in public. In affliction, those will seek God early, who before sought him slowly, *Hos.* v. 15. It will make men fervent and fluent in prayer. "They poured out a prayer," as the drink offerings were poured out, "when thy chastening was upon them." But it is to be feared, when the chastening is off them, they will by degrees return to their former carelessness, as they had often done.

4. He complains that their struggles for their own liberty had been very painful and perilous, but they had not been successful, ver. 17, 18. 1st. They had the throes and pangs they dreaded. We have been like a woman in labour, that "crieth out in her pangs." We have, with a great deal of anxiety and toil, endeavoured to help ourselves, and our troubles have been increased by those attempts; as, when Moses came to deliver Israel, the tale of bricks was doubled. Their prayers were quickened by the acuteness of their pains, and became as strong and vehement as the cries of a woman in sore travail. "So have we been in thy sight, O Lord." It was a comfort and satisfaction to them in their distress, that God had his eye upon them, that all their miseries were in his sight. He was no stranger to their pangs or their prayers. "Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee," *Ps.* xxxviii. 9. Whenever they came to present themselves before the Lord, with their complaints and petitions, they were in agonies, like those of a woman in travail. 2nd. They

came short of the issue and success they desired and hoped for. "We have been with child;" that is, we have had great expectation of a speedy and happy deliverance, have been big with hopes; and when "we have been in pain" have comforted ourselves with this, that the joyful birth would make us forget our misery, *Jno.* xvi. 21; but alas, "we have as it were brought forth wind;" it has proved a false conception, our expectations have been frustrated, and our pains have been rather dying pains than travailing ones. We have had a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts. All our efforts have proved successless; "We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth," for ourselves, or for our friends and allies; but rather have made our own case and theirs worse. "Neither have the inhabitants of the world," whom we have been contesting with, fallen before us, either in their power or in their hopes; but they are still as high and uppish as ever. Note, A righteous cause may be strenuously pleaded, both by prayer and endeavour, both with God and man; and yet for a great while may go by the worse, and the point not be gained.

Secondly. His prospects and hopes are very pleasant. In general, "Thou wilt ordain peace for us," ver. 12; that is, all that good which the necessity of our case calls for. What peace the church has, or hopes for, it is of God's ordaining; and we may comfort ourselves with this, that, what trouble soever may for a time be appointed to the people of God, peace will at length be ordained for them; for the end of those men is peace. And if God by his Spirit work all our works in us, he will ordain peace for us; for the work of righteousness shall be peace. And that is true and lasting peace, such as the world can neither give nor take away, which God ordains; for to those that have it it shall be unchangeable, as the ordinances of the day and of the night. And from what God hath done for us we may encourage ourselves to hope that he will yet farther do us good. Thou hast heard the desire of the humble, and therefore wilt, *Ps.* x. 17. And when this peace is ordained for us, then "by thee only will we make mention of thy name," ver. 13; that is, we will give the glory of it to thee only, and not to any other; and we will depend upon thy grace only to enable us to do so. We cannot praise God's name but by his strength.

Two things in particular the prophet here comforts the church with the prospect of:

1. The amazing ruin of her enemies; ver. 14, "They are dead," those other lords that "have had dominion over us." Their power is irrecoverably broken, they are quite cut off and extinguished; and "they shall not live," shall never be able to put up head any more; being deceased, they shall not rise, but, like Haman, when they have begun to fall before the seed of the Jews, they shall sink like a stone. Because they are sentenced to this final ruin, therefore in pursuance of that sentence God himself hath visited them in wrath, as a righteous judge, and hath cut off both the men themselves (he hath destroyed them) and the remembrance of them; they and their names are buried together in the dust. He hath "made all their memory to perish;" either they are forgotten or made mention of with detestation. Note, The cause that is maintained in opposition to God and his kingdom among men, though it may prosper a while, will certainly sink at last, and all that adhere to it will perish with it. The Jewish doctors, comparing this with ver. 19, infer that the resurrection of the dead belongs to the Jews only; and that those of other nations shall not rise. But we know better things, that "all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God," and that this speaks of the final destruction of Christ's enemies, which is the second death.

2. The surprising resurrection of her friends, ver. 19. Though the church rejoiceth not in the birth of the man child, of which she travailed in pain, but "hath as it were brought forth wind," ver. 18, yet the disappointment shall be balanced in a way equivalent; "Thy dead men shall live." Those that were thought to be dead, who had received a sentence of death within themselves, who were cast out as if they had been naturally dead, they shall appear again in their former vigour. A "spirit of life from God" shall enter into the slain witnesses, and they shall prophesy again, *Rev.* xi. 11. The dry bones shall live, and become an "exceeding great army," *Eze.* xxxvii. 10. "Together with my dead body shall they arise." If we believe the resurrection of the dead, of our dead bodies at the last day, as Job did, and the prophet here, that will facilitate our belief of the promised restoration of the church's lustre and strength in this world. When God's time is come, how low soever she may be brought, they shall arise; even Jerusalem, the city of God, but now lying like a dead body, a carcase, to which the "eagles are gathered together." God owns it still for his, so doth the prophet; but it shall arise, shall be rebuilt, and flourish again. And therefore let the poor, desolate, melancholy remains of its inhabitants, that dwell as in dust, "awake and sing;" for they shall see Jerusalem, the city of their solemnities, a "quiet habitation" again, *ch.* xxxiii. 20; for the dew of God's favour shall be to it as the evening dew to the herbs that were parched with the heat of the sun all day, shall revive and refresh them; and as the spring dews that water the earth, and make the herbs that lay buried in it to put forth and bud, so shall they flourish again; and "the earth shall cast out the dead," as it casts the herbs out of their roots; the earth, in which they seemed to be lost, shall contribute to their revival. When the church and her interests are to be restored, neither the dew of heaven nor the fatness of the earth shall be wanting to do their parts towards it. Now this (as Ezekiel's vision, which is a comment upon it) may be fitly accommodated, 1st. To the spiritual resurrection of those that were dead in sin, by the power of Christ's Gospel and grace; so Dr. Lightfoot applies it, *Hor. Heb.*, in *Jno.* xii. 24. The Gentiles shall live: With my body shall they arise; that is, they shall be called in after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; nay, they shall arise my body; that is, (saith he,) they shall become the mystical body of Christ, and shall rise as part of him. 2nd. To the last resurrection, when dead saints shall live and rise together with Christ's dead body; for he rose as the firstfruits, and believers shall rise by virtue of their union with him, and their communion in his resurrection.

20 Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers,
And shut thy doors about thee:
Hide thyself as it were for a little moment,
Until the indignation be overpast.
21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity:
The earth also shall disclose her blood,
And shall no more cover her slain.

These two verses are supposed not to belong to the song, which takes up the rest of the chapter, but to begin a new matter, and to be rather an introduction to the following chapter than the conclusion of this. Or, whereas in the foregoing song the people of God had spoken to him, complaining of their grievances, here he returns an answer to their complaints. In which,

First. He invites them into their chambers; ver. 20, "Come, my people," come to me, come with me. He calls them no whither but where he himself will accompany them. Let the storm that disperseth others bring you nearer together. Come, and enter into thy chambers; stay not abroad, lest you be caught in the storm, as the Egyptians in the hail, *Ex.* ix. 21. 1. Come into chambers of distinction, come into your own apartments, and continue not any longer mixed with the children of Babylon; "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." 2 *Cor.* vi. 17; *Rev.* xviii. 4. If God hath set apart them that are godly for himself, they ought to set themselves apart. 2. Into chambers of defence, in which, by the secrecy or by the strength of them, you may be safe in the worst of times. The attributes of God are the "secret of his tabernacle," *Ps.* xxvii. 5; his name a strong tower, into which we may run for shelter, *Pr.* xviii. 10. We must by faith find a way into these chambers, and there hide ourselves; that is, with a holy security and serenity of mind we must put ourselves under the Divine protection. Come as Noah into the ark, for he shut the doors about him. When dangers are threatening, it is good to retire, and lie hid, as Elijah did by the brook Cherith. 3. Into chambers of devotion. "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door," *Mat.* vi. 6. Be private with God. "Enter into thy chamber," to examine thyself, and commune with thy own heart; to pray and humble thyself before God. This work is to be done in times of distress and danger. And thus we hide ourselves; that is, we recommend ourselves to God to hide us; and he will hide us either under heaven or in heaven. Israel must keep within doors, when the destroying angel is slaying the firstborn of Egypt, else the blood on the door-posts will not secure them; so must Rahab and her family, when Jericho is destroyed. Those are most safe that are least seen. *Qui bene latuit, bene vixit,*—'He has lived well who has sought a proper degree of concealment.'

Secondly. He assures them that the trouble would be over in a very short time; they should not long be in any fright or peril. Hide thyself for a moment; the smallest part of time we can conceive; like an atom of matter. Nay, if you can imagine one moment shorter than another, it is but for a "little moment," and that with a *quasi* too, "as it were" for a little moment, less than you think of. When it is over it will seem as nothing to you; you will wonder how soon it is gone. You shall not need to lie long in confinement, long in concealment; the "indignation" will presently be "overpast;" that is, the indignation of the enemies against you; their persecuting power and rage, which forceth you to abscond, as when the wicked rise, a man is hid. This will soon be over; God will cut them off, will break their power, and defeat their purposes, and find a way for your enlargement. When Athanasius was banished Alexandria, by an edict of Julian's, and his friends greatly lamented it, he bade them be of good cheer. *Nubecula est quæ cito pertransibit,*—'It is a little cloud, that will soon blow over.' "You shall have tribulation ten days," that is all, *Rev.* ii. 10. This enables God's suffering people to call their afflictions light, that they are but for a moment.

Thirdly. He assures them that their enemies should be reckoned with for all the mischief they had done them by the sword, either of war or persecution, ver. 21. The Lord will punish them for the blood they have shed. Here is, 1. The judgment set, and process issued out; "The Lord cometh out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity," in giving such disturbance to all about them. There is a great deal of iniquity among the inhabitants of the earth; but though they all combine in it, "though hand join in hand" to carry it on, yet "it shall not go unpunished." Besides the everlasting punishment into which the wicked shall go hereafter, there are often remarkable punishments of cruelty, oppression, and persecution, in this world. When men's indignation is overpast, and they have done their worst, let them then expect God's indignation; for "he seeth that his day is coming," *Ps.* xxxvii. 13. God "cometh out of his place to punish;" that is, he shews himself in an extraordinary manner from heaven, the firmament of his power; from the sanctuary, the residence of his grace. He is raised up out of his holy habitation, where he seemed before to conceal himself; and now he will do something great, the product of his wise, and just, and secret counsels; as a prince that goes to take the chair, or take the field, *Zec.* ii. 13. Some observe, that God's place is the mercy-seat, there he delights to be; when he punisheth he comes out of his place, for he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners. 2. The criminals convicted by the notorious evidence of the fact; "The earth shall disclose her blood." The innocent blood, the blood of the saints and martyrs, which hath been shed upon the earth like water, and has soaked into it, and been concealed and covered by it, shall now be brought to light, and brought to account; for God will make inquisition for it, and will give those that shed it blood to drink, for they are worthy. Secret murders, and other secret wickednesses, shall be discovered sooner or later; and the slain which the earth has long covered, she shall no longer cover, but they shall be produced as evidence against the murderers. The voice of Abel's blood cries from the earth, *Gen.* iv. 10, 11; *Job* xx. 27. Those sins which seemed to have been buried in oblivion will be called to mind, and called over again, when the day of reckoning comes. Let God's people therefore wait awhile with patience, for "behold the Judge standeth before the door."

CHAPTER XXVII.

In this chapter the prophet goes on to shew, I. What great things God would do for his church and people, which should now shortly be accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, and the destruction of the Assyrian army. But it is expressed generally for the encouragement of the church in after ages, with reference to the power and prevalency of the enemies of it: I. That proud oppressors should be reckoned with, ver. 1; II. That care should be taken of the church, as of God's vineyard, ver. 2, 3; III. That God would let fall his controversy with them upon their return to him, ver. 4, 5; IV. That he would greatly multiply and increase them, ver. 6; V. That as to their afflictions, the property of them should be altered, ver. 7, they should be mitigated and moderated, ver. 8, and sanctified, ver. 9; VI. That though it might be laid waste, and made desolate for a time, ver. 10, 11, yet it should be restored, and the scattered members should be gathered together again, ver. 12, 13. And all this is applicable to the grace of the Gospel, and God's promises to, and providences concerning, the Christian church, and such as belong to it.

IN that day the LORD with his sore and great and strong sword
Shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent,
Even leviathan that crooked serpent;
And he shall slay the dragon that *is* in the sea.
2 In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine.
3 I the LORD do keep it;
I will water it every moment:

Lest *any* hurt it,
I will keep it night and day.
4 Fury *is* not in me:
Who would set the briers *and* thorns against me in battle?
I would go through them, I would burn them together.
5 Or let him take hold of my strength,
That he may make peace with me;
And he shall make peace with me.
6 He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root:
Israel shall blossom and bud,
And fill the face of the world with fruit.

The prophet is here singing of judgment and mercy.

First. Of judgment upon the enemies of God's church; ver. 1, "Tribulation to them that trouble" it, 2 *Thes.* i. 6. When the Lord "comes out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth," *ch.* xxvi. 21, he will be sure to "punish leviathan, the dragon that is in the sea," every proud, oppressing tyrant, that is the terror of the mighty, and, like the leviathan, is so fierce that none dare stir him up, and his heart as hard as a stone, and "when he raiseth up himself the mighty are afraid," *Job* xli. 10, 24, 25. The church has many enemies, but commonly some one that is more formidable than the rest. So Sennacherib was in his day, and Nebuchadnezzar in his, and Antiochus in his. So Pharaoh had been formerly; and he is called "leviathan," and "the dragon," *Ps.* lxxiv. 14; *ch.* li. 9; *Eze.* xxix. 3. And the New Testament church has had its leviathans; we read of a "great red dragon, ready to devour it," *Rev.* xii. 3. Those malignant, persecuting powers are here compared to the leviathan in bulk and strength, and the mighty bustle they make in the world; to dragons, for their rage and fury; to serpents, piercing serpents, penetrating in their counsels, quick in their motions, that if they once get in their head, will soon wind in their whole body; 'crossing like a bar,' so the margin, standing in the way of all their neighbours, and obstructing them; to crooked serpents, subtle and insinuating, but perverse and mischievous. Great and mighty princes, if they oppose the people of God, are in God's account as dragons and serpents, the plagues of mankind; and the Lord will punish them in due time. They are too big for men to deal with, and call to an account; and therefore the great God will take the doing of it into his own hands. He hath a "sore, and great, and strong sword," wherewith to do execution upon them, when the "measure of their iniquity is full," and their day is come to fall. It is emphatically expressed in the original, 'The Lord with his sword, that cruel one, and that great one, and that strong one, shall punish this unwieldy, this unruly criminal;' and it shall be a capital punishment, "he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea;" for the wages of his sin is death; which shall not only be a prevention of his doing farther mischief, as the slaying of a wild beast, but a just punishment for the mischief he has done, as the putting of a traitor or rebel to death. God hath a strong sword for the doing of this; variety of judgments sufficient to humble the proudest, and break the most powerful of his enemies; and he will do it when the day of execution comes; "In that day" he will punish; his day which is coming, *Ps.* xxxvii. 13. This is applicable to the spiritual victories obtained by our Lord Jesus over the powers of darkness. He not only disarmed, spoiled, and cast out the prince of this world; but with his "strong sword," the virtue of his death, and the preaching of his Gospel, he doth and will "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," that great leviathan, that old serpent, the dragon. He shall be bound, that he may not "deceive the nations," and that is a punishment to him, *Rev.* xx. 2, 3. And at length for deceiving the nations, he shall be "cast into the lake of fire," *Rev.* xx. 11.

Secondly. Of mercy to the church. In the same day, when God is punishing the leviathan, let the church and all her friends be easy and cheerful; let those that attend her sing to her for her comfort, sing her asleep with these assurances. Let it be sung in her assemblies,

1. That she is God's vineyard, and is under his particular care, ver. 2, 3. She is in God's eye "a vineyard of red wine." The world is as a fruitless, worthless wilderness; but the church is enclosed as a vineyard, a peculiar place, and of value, that has great care taken of it, and great pains taken with it, and from which precious fruits are gathered, wherewith they honour God and man. It is a vineyard of red wine, yielding the best and choicest grapes; intimating the reformation of the church, that it now brings forth good fruit unto God, whereas before it brought forth fruit to itself, or brought forth wild grapes, *ch.* v. 4. Now God takes care, 1st. Of the safety of this vineyard; "I the Lord do keep it." He speaks this as glorying in it, that he is, and hath undertaken to be, the keeper of Israel. Those that bring forth fruit to God are, and shall be, always under his protection. He speaks this as assuring us that they shall be so. I the Lord that can do every thing, but cannot lie nor deceive, I do keep it; "lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." God's vineyard in this world lies much exposed to injury. There are many that would hurt it, would tread it down, and lay it waste, *Ps.* lxxx. 13; but God will suffer no real hurt or damage to be done it, but what he will bring good out of. He will keep it constantly night and day; and not without need, for the enemies are restless in their designs and attempts against it, and, both night and day, seek an opportunity to do it a mischief. God will keep it in the night of affliction and persecution, and in the day of peace and prosperity, the temptations of which are no less dangerous. God's people shall be preserved not only from "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," but "from the destruction that wasteth at noonday," *Ps.* xci. 6. This vineyard shall be well fenced. 2nd. Of the fruitfulness of this vineyard; "I will water it every moment," and yet it shall not be over watered. The still and silent dews of God's grace and blessing shall continually descend upon it, that it may bring forth much fruit. We need the constant and continual waterings of the Divine grace; for if that be at any time withdrawn we wither, and come to nothing. God waters his vineyard by the ministry of the word, by his servants the prophets, whose doctrine shall drop as the dew. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the increase; for without him the watchman wakes and the husbandman waters in vain.

2. That though sometimes he contends with his people, yet upon their submission he will be reconciled to them; ver. 4, 5, fury is not in him towards his vineyard. Though he meets with many things in it that are offensive to him, yet he doth not seek advantages against it, nor is extreme to mark what is amiss in it. It is true, if he find in it briars and thorns instead of vines, and they be set in battle against him, as indeed that in the vineyard which is not for him is against him, he will tread them down, and burn them; but otherwise, if I am angry with my people, they know what course to take; let them humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and so "take hold of my strength" with a sincere desire to make their peace with me, and I will soon be reconciled to them, and all shall be well. God sees the sins of his people, and is displeased with them; but upon their repentance he turns away his wrath. This may very well be construed as a summary of the doctrine of the Gospel, with which the church is to be watered every moment. 1st. Here is a quarrel supposed between God and man; for here is a battle fought, and peace to be made. It is an old quarrel, ever since sin first entered; it is on God's part a righteous quarrel; but on man's part most unrighteous. 2nd. Here is a gracious invitation given us to take up this quarrel, and to get these matters in variance accommodated. Let him that is desirous to be at peace with God take hold on his strength; on his strong arm which is lifted up against the sinner to strike him dead, and let him by supplication keep back the stroke. Let him wrestle with me as Jacob did, resolving not to let me go without a blessing; and he shall be Israel, a prince with God. Pardoning mercy is called "the power of our Lord;" let him take hold on that. Christ is "the arm of the Lord," *ch.* liii. 1; Christ crucified, "the power of God," 1 *Cor.* i. 24. Let him, by a lively faith, take hold on him, as a man that is sinking catches hold of a bough, or cord, or plank that is in his reach, or as the malefactor took hold on the horns of the altar, believing that there is no other name by which he can be saved, by which he can be reconciled. 3rd. Here is a threefold cord of arguments to persuade us to do this: *First.* Time and space is given us to do it in, for fury is not in God; he doth not carry it towards us as great men carry it towards their inferiors, when the one is in a fault, and the other in a fury. Men in a fury will not take time for consideration; it is with them but a word and a blow. Furious men are soon angry, and implacable when they are angry; a little thing provokes them, and no little thing will pacify them; but it is not so with God, he considers our frame, is slow to anger; doth not stir up all his wrath, nor always chide. *Secondly.* It is in vain to think of contesting with him. If we persist in our quarrel with him, and think to make our part good, it is but like setting briars and thorns before a consuming fire, which will be so far from giving check to the progress of it that they will but make it burn the more outrageously. We are not an equal match for Omnipotence; "Woe unto him" therefore "that strives with his Maker." He knows not the power of his anger. *Thirdly.* This is the only way, and it is a sure way, to reconciliation. Let him take this course to "make peace with me," and he "shall make peace;" and thereby good, all good, shall come unto him. God is willing to be reconciled to us, if we be but willing to be reconciled to him.

3. That the church of God in the world shall be a growing body, and come at length to be a great body, ver. 6. In times to come, (so some read it,) in after times, when these calamities are overpassed, or in the days of the Gospel, the latter days, he shall cause Jacob to take root, deeper root than ever yet; for the gospel church shall be more firmly fixed than ever the Jewish church was, and shall spread farther. Or, he shall cause them of Jacob that come back out of their captivity, or, as we read it, "them that come of Jacob," to "take root downward, and bear fruit upward," *ch.* xxxvii. 31. They shall be established in a prosperous state, and then they "shall blossom and bud," and give hopeful prospects of a great increase; and so it shall prove, for "they shall fill the face of the world with fruit." Many shall be brought into the church; proselytes shall be numerous; some out of all the nations about, that shall be to the God of Israel for a name and a praise; and the converts shall be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The preaching of the Gospel brought forth fruit in all the world, *Col.* i. 6; fruit that remains, *Jno.* xv. 16.

7 Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him?
Or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? [with it:
8 In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate
He stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.
9 By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged;
And this *is* all the fruit to take away his sin;
When he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder,
The groves and images shall not stand up.
10 Yet the defenced city *shall be* desolate,
And the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness:
There shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down,
And consume the branches thereof. [broken off:
11 When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be
The women come, *and* set them on fire:
For it *is* a people of no understanding:
Therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them,
And he that formed them will shew them no favour.
12 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the LORD shall beat off
From the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt,
And ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.
13 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the great trumpet shall be blown,
And they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria,
And the outcasts in the land of Egypt, [salem.
And shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jeru-

Here is the prophet again singing of mercy and judgment; not as before, judgment to the enemies, and mercy to the church, but judgment to the church, and mercy mixed with that judgment.

First. Here is judgment threatened even to Jacob and Israel. They "shall blossom and bud," ver. 6. But, 1. They shall be smitten and slain, ver. 7; some of them shall. If God finds anything amiss among them, he shall lay them under

the tokens of his displeasure for it. Judgment shall begin at the house of God, and those whom God hath known of all the families of the earth, he will punish in the first place. 2. Jerusalem, their "defenced city, shall be desolate," ver. 10, 11. God having tried a variety of methods with them for their reformation, which as to many have proved ineffectual, he will for a time lay their country waste, which was accomplished when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; then that habitation was for a long time forsaken. If lesser judgments do not do the work, God will send greater; for "when he judgeth he will overcome." Jerusalem had been a "defenced city," not so much by art or nature, as by grace and the Divine protection; but when God was provoked to withdraw her defence was departed from her; and then she was "left like a wilderness;" and in the pleasant gardens of Jerusalem cattle shall feed, shall lie down there; and there shall be none to disturb them or drive them away; there they shall be *levant* and *couchant;* and they shall eat the tender branches of the fruit trees; which, perhaps, farther signifies that the people should become an easy prey to their enemies. "When the boughs thereof are withered," as they grow upon the tree, being blasted by winds and frosts, and not pruned, "they shall be broken off" for fuel, and the women and children shall come and "set them on fire." There shall be a total destruction, for the very trees shall be destroyed; and this is a figure of the deplorable state of the vineyard, ver. 2, when it "brought forth wild grapes," *ch.* v. 2; and our Saviour seems to refer to this, when he saith of the branches of the vine which abide not in him, that they are "cast forth and withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned," *Jno.* xv. 6, which was in a particular manner fulfilled in the unbelieving Jews. The similitude is explained in the following words: "It is a people of no understanding;" brutish and sottish, and destitute of the knowledge of God, and that have no relish or savour of Divine things, like a withered branch that has no sap in it; and this is at the bottom of all those sins for which God left them desolate, their idolatry first, and afterwards their infidelity. Wicked people, however in other things they may be wits and politicians, in their greatest concerns they are "of no understanding;" and their ignorance being wilful, that shall not only not be their excuse, but it shall be the ground of their condemnation; for therefore "he that made them," that gave them their being, "will not have mercy on them," nor save them from the ruin they bring upon themselves; and "he that formed them," into a people, formed them for himself, to shew forth his praise. Seeing they do not answer the end of their formation, but hate to be reformed, to be new formed, will reject them, and "shew them no favour;" and then they are undone. For if he that made us by his power do not make us happy in his favour, we had better never have been made. Sinners flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, at least that they shall not be dealt with so severely as their ministers tell them, because God is merciful, and because he is their Maker; but here we see how weak and insufficient those pleas will be; for if they be "of no understanding, he that made them," though he made them, and hateth nothing that he hath made, and though he has mercy in store for those who so far understand themselves as to apply themselves to him for it, yet on them he will have no mercy, and "will shew them no favour."

Secondly. Here is a great deal of mercy mixed with this judgment; for there are good people mixed with those that are corrupt and degenerate; a remnant according to the election of grace, on whom God will have mercy, and to whom he will shew favour; and these promises seem to point at all the calamities of the church, to which God would graciously provide these allays.

1. Though they shall be smitten and slain, yet not to that degree, and in that manner, that their enemies shall be smitten and slain; ver. 7, God hath smitten Jacob and Israel, and he is slain. Many of them "that understand among the people," yet "shall fall by the sword and by flame many days," *Dan.* xi. 33; but it shall not be as those are smitten and slain, 1st. That smote him formerly, that were the rod of God's anger and the staff in his hand, which he made use of for the correction of his people, and to whose turn it shall come to be reckoned with even for that. The child is spared, but the rod is burned. 2nd. That shall afterwards be slain by him, when he shall get the dominion, and repay them in their own coin; or, slain for his sake in the pleading of his cause. God's people and God's enemies are here represented, *First.* As struggling with each other; so the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent have been, are, and will be. In this contest there are slain on both sides. God makes use of wicked men, not only to smite, but slay his people; for they are his sword, *Ps.* xvii. 13; but when the cup of trembling comes to be put into their hand, it will be much worse with them than ever it was with God's people in their greatest straits. The seed of the woman has only his heel bruised, but the serpent hath his head crushed and broken. Note, Though God's persecuted people may be great losers, and great sufferers for a while, yet they that oppress them will prove to be greater losers, and greater sufferers at last, here or hereafter; for God will render double to them, *Rev.* xviii. 6. *Secondly.* As sharing together in the calamities of this present time. They are both smitten, both slain, and both by the hand of God; for there is "one event to the righteous and to the wicked;" but is Jacob smitten as his enemies are? No, by no means; to him the property is altered, and it becomes quite another thing. Note, However it may seem to us, there is really a vast difference between the afflictions and deaths of good people and the afflictions and deaths of wicked people.

2. Though God will debate with them, yet it shall be in measure; and the affliction shall be mitigated and moderated, and proportioned to their strength, not to their deserts, ver. 8. He will deal out afflictions to them, as the wise physician prescribes medicines to his patient, just such a quantity of each ingredient, or orders how much blood shall be taken when he breathes a vein; thus God orders the troubles of his people, not "suffering them to be tempted above what they are able," 1 *Cor.* x. 13. He measures out their afflictions by a little at a time, that they may not be "pressed above measure;" for he knows their frame, and corrects in judgment, and doth not stir up all his wrath. When the affliction is shooting forth, when he is sending it out and giving it its commission, then he debates in measure, and not in extremity. He considers what we can bear, then when he begins to correct; and when he proceeds in his controversy, so that it is "the day of his east wind," which is not only blustering and noisy, but blasting and noxious; yet he "stayeth his rough wind," checks it, and sets bounds to it, doth not suffer it to blow so hard as it was feared; when he is winnowing his corn, it is with a gentle gale, that shall only blow away the chaff, but not the good corn. God hath the winds at his command, and every affliction under his check; "Hitherto it shall go, but no farther." Let us not despair when things are at the worst; be the winds never so rough, never so high, God can say unto them, "Peace, be still."

3. Though God will afflict them, yet he will make their afflictions to work for the good of their souls, and correct them as the father doth the child, to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts; ver. 9, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged." This is the design of the affliction, to this it is adapted as a proper means; and by the grace of God working with it it shall have this blessed effect. It shall mortify the habits of sin; by this those defilements of the soul shall be purged away; it shall break them off from the practice of it; "This is all the fruit." This is it that God intends; this is all the harm that it will do them, to take away their sin, than which they could not have a greater kindness done them, though it be at the expense of an affliction. Therefore, because the affliction is mitigated and moderated, and the rough wind stayed, therefore we may conclude that he designs their reformation, not their destruction; and, because he deals thus gently with us, we should therefore study to answer his ends in afflicting us. The particular sin which the affliction was intended to cure them of was the sin of idolatry, the sin which did most easily beset that people, and to which they were strangely addicted. Ephraim is joined to idols; but by the captivity in Babylon they were not only weaned from this sin, but set against it; "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Jacob then hath his sin taken away, his beloved sin, "when he maketh all the stones of the altar," of his idolatrous altar, the stones of which were precious and sacred to him, "as chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder;" he not only hath them in contempt, and values them no more than chalk-stones, but he conceives an indignation at them, and in a holy revenge beats them asunder as easily as chalk-stones are broken to pieces. "The groves and the images shall not stand" before this penitent; but they shall be thrown down too, never to be set up again. This was according to the law for the demolishing and destroying of all the monuments of idolatry, *Deu.* vii. 5; and according to this promise, since the captivity in Babylon, no people in the world have such a rooted aversion to idols and idolatry as the people of the Jews. Note, The design of affliction is to part between us and sin, especially that which has been our own iniquity; and then it appears that the affliction hath done us good, when we keep at a distance from the occasions of sin, and use all needful precautions that we may not only not relapse into it, but not so much as be tempted to it, *Ps.* cxix. 67.

4. Though Jerusalem shall be desolate and forsaken for a time, yet there will come a day when its scattered friends shall resort to it again out of all the countries whither they were dispersed, ver. 12, 13; though the body of the nation is abandoned as a people of "no understanding," yet those that are indeed children of Israel shall be gathered together again, as the sheep of the flock, when the shepherds that scattered them are reckoned with, *Eze.* xxxiv. 10—12. Now observe concerning these scattered Israelites, 1st. From whence they shall be fetched. The Lord shall beat them off as fruit from the tree, or beat them out as corn out of the ear; he shall find them out, and separate them from those whom they dwell among, and with whom they seemed to be incorporated, "from the channel of the river" Euphrates, north-east, unto Nile "the stream of Egypt," which lay south-west. Those that were driven into the land of Assyria, and were captives there in the land of their enemies, where they were ready to perish for want of necessaries, and ready to despair of deliverance; and those that were "outcasts in the land of Egypt," whither many of those that were left behind after the captivity into Babylon went, contrary to God's express command, *Jer.* xliii. 6, and there lived as outcasts. God hath mercy in store for them all, and will make it appear, that though they are cast out, they are not cast off. 2nd. In what manner they shall be brought back. "Ye shall be gathered one by one," not in multitudes, not in troops forcing your way; but silently, and as it were by stealth, dropping in first one and then another. This intimates that the remnant that shall be saved consists but of few, and those saved with difficulty, and so as by fire, scarcely saved; they shall not come for company, but as God shall stir up every man's spirit. 3rd. By what means they shall be gathered together. "The great trumpet shall be blown, and" then "they shall come." Cyrus' proclamation of liberty to the captives is this great trumpet, which awakened the Jews that were asleep in their thraldom to bestir themselves. It was like the sounding of the jubilee trumpet, which published the year of release. This is applicable both to the preaching of the Gospel, by which sinners are gathered in to the grace of God,—such as were "outcasts" and "ready to perish," those that were afar off are made nigh; the Gospel proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord,—and also to the archangel's trumpet at the last day, by which saints shall be gathered to the glory of God, that lay as outcasts in their graves. 4th. For what end they shall be gathered together. To "worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." When the captives rallied again, and returned to their own land, the chief thing they had their eye upon, and the first thing they applied themselves to, was the worship of God. The holy temple was in ruins, but they had the holy mount, "the place of the altar," *Gen.* xiii. 4. Liberty to worship God is the most valuable and desirable liberty; and after restraints and dispersions a free access to his house should be more welcome to us than a free access to our own houses. Those that are gathered by the sounding of the gospel trumpet are brought in to worship God, and added to the church; and the great trumpet of all will gather the saints together to "serve God day and night in his temple."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In this chapter, I. Ephraim is reproved and threatened for their pride and drunkenness, their security and sensuality, ver. 1—8. But in the midst of this here is a gracious promise of God's favour to the remnant of his people, ver. 5, 6. II. They are likewise reproved and threatened for their dulness and stupidity, and unaptness to profit by the instructions which the prophets gave them in God's name, ver. 9—13. III. The rulers of Jerusalem are reproved and threatened for their insolent contempt of God's judgments, and setting them at defiance; and, after a gracious promise of Christ and his grace, they are made to know that the vain hopes of escaping the judgments of God with which they flattered themselves would certainly deceive them, ver. 14—22. IV. All this is confirmed by a comparison borrowed from the method which the husbandman takes with his ground and grain, according to which they must expect God would proceed with his people, whom he had lately called his threshing and the corn of his floor, *ch.* xxi. 10, ver. 23—29. And this is written for our admonition, and is profitable for reproof and warning to us.

WOE to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim,
Whose glorious beauty *is* a fading flower,
Which *are* on the head of the fat valleys of them that are
overcome with wine!
2 Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one,
Which as a tempest of hail *and* a destroying storm,
As a flood of mighty waters overflowing,
Shall cast down to the earth with the hand.
3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim,
Shall be trodden under feet: [valley,
4 And the glorious beauty, which *is* on the head of the fat
Shall be a fading flower, *and* as the hasty fruit before the
summer;

Which *when* he that looketh upon it seeth,
While it is yet in his hand he eateth it up.
5 In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory,
And for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people,
6 And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment,
And for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.
7 But they also have erred through wine,
And through strong drink are out of the way;
The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink,
They are swallowed up of wine,
They are out of the way through strong drink;
They err in vision, they stumble *in* judgment.
8 For all tables are full of vomit *and* filthiness,
So that there is no place *clean*.

Here, First. The prophet warns the kingdom of the ten tribes of the judgments that were coming upon them for their sins; which were soon after executed by the king of Assyria, who laid their country waste, and carried the people into captivity. Ephraim had his name from fruitfulness; their soil being very fertile, and the products of it abundant, and the best of the kind. They had a great many "fat valleys," ver. 1, 4; and Samaria, which was situated on a hill, was as it were "on the head of the fat valleys." Their country was rich and pleasant, and as the garden of the Lord; it was the glory of Canaan, as that was the glory of all lands. Their harvest and vintage was the glorious beauty on the head of their valleys, which were covered over with corn and vines. Now observe,

1. What an ill use they made of their plenty. What God gave them to serve him with they perverted and abused by making it the food and fuel of their lusts.

1st. They were puffed up with pride by it. The goodness with which God crowned their years, which should have been to him a crown of praise, was to them a "crown of pride." They that are rich in the world are apt to be high-minded, 1 *Tim.* vi. 17. Their king, that wore the crown, was proud that he ruled over so rich a country; Samaria their royal city was notorious for pride. Perhaps it was usual at their festivals or revels to wear garlands made up of flowers and ears of corn, which they wore in honour of their fruitful country. Pride was a sin that generally prevailed among them; and therefore the prophet, in his name who resists the proud, boldly proclaims a "woe to the crown of pride." If those that wear crowns be proud of them, let them not think to escape this woe. What men are proud of, be it never so mean, is to them as a crown; he that is proud thinks himself as great as a king. But woe to those who thus exalt themselves, for they shall be abased; their pride is the preface to their destruction.

2nd. They indulged themselves in sensuality. Ephraim was notorious for drunkenness and excess of riot; Samaria, the head of the fat valleys, was full of those that were overcome with wine, were 'broken' with it, so the margin. See how foolishly drunkards act; and no marvel, when in the very commission of the sin they make fools and brutes of themselves. They yield, *First*. To be conquered by the sin. It overcomes them, and brings them into bondage, 2 *Pet.* ii. 19; they are led captive by it, and the captivity is the more shameful and inglorious that it is voluntary. Some of these wretched slaves have themselves owned, that there is not a greater drudgery in the world than hard drinking; they are overcome not with the wine, but with the love of it. *Secondly*. To be ruined by it. They are broken by wine, their constitution is broken by it, and their health ruined; they are broken in their callings and estates, and their families brought to ruin by it; their peace with God is broken, and their souls in danger of being eternally undone; and all this for the gratification of a base lust. Woe to these drunkards of Ephraim. Ministers must bring the general woes of the word home to particular places and persons. We must say, Woe to drunkards; their condition is a woful condition, their brutish pleasures are to be pitied and not envied. "They shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 *Cor.* vi. 10; the curse is in force against them, *Deu.* xxix. 19, 20. Nay, we must go farther, and say, Woe to the drunkards of such a place, that they may hear and fear; nay, and woe to this or that person, if he be a drunkard. There is a particular woe to the drunkards of Ephraim, for they are of God's professing people, and it worst becomes them of any other; they know better things, and therefore should give a better example. Some make the crown of pride to belong to the drunkards, and to mean the garlands with which they were crowned that got the victory in their wicked drinking matches, and drunk down the rest of the company. They were proud of their being mighty to drink wine; but woe to them who thus glory in their shame.

2. The justice of God in taking away their plenty from them, which they thus abused. Their glorious beauty, the plenty they were proud of, is but a fading flower, it is meat that perisheth. The most substantial fruits, if God blast them and blow upon them, are but fading flowers, ver. 1. God can easily take away their corn in the season thereof, *Hos.* ii. 9; and recover *locum vastatum*,—'ground that has been alienated, and run to waste;' those goods of his which they prepared for Baal. God has an officer ready to make a seizure for him, hath one at his beck, a mighty and strong one, who is able to do the business, even the king of Assyria, who shall "cast down to the earth with the hand," that is, shall easily and effectually, and with the turn of a hand, destroy all that which they are proud of, and pleased with, ver. 2. He shall throw it down to the ground, to be broken to pieces, with a strong hand, with a hand that they cannot oppose. Then "the crown of pride" and "the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot," ver. 3; they shall lie exposed to contempt, and shall not be able to recover themselves. Drunkards, in their folly, are apt to talk proudly, and vaunt themselves most then when they most shame themselves; but they render themselves the more ridiculous by it. The beauty of their valleys, which they gloried in, will be, 1st. Like "a fading flower," as before, ver. 1. It will wither of itself, and has in itself the principles of its own corruption; it will perish in time by its own moth and rust. 2nd. Like the "hasty fruit," which as soon as it is discovered is plucked and eaten up. So the wealth of this world, besides that it is apt to decay of itself, is subject to be devoured by others, as greedily as the firstripe fruit, which is earnestly desired, *Mic.* vii. 1. "Thieves break through and steal." The harvest which the worldling is proud of "the hungry eateth up," *Job* v. 5; no sooner do they see the prey, but they catch at it, and swallow up all they can lay their hands on. It is likewise easily devoured, as that fruit which, being ripe before it is grown, is very small, and is soon eaten up; and there being little of it, and that of little worth, it is not reserved, but used presently.

Secondly. He next turns himself to the kingdom of Judah, whom he calls the "residue of his people," ver. 5; for they were but two tribes to the other ten.

1. He promiseth them God's favours, and that they should be taken under his conduct and protection, when the beauty of Ephraim shall be left exposed, to be trodden down and eaten up; ver. 5, 6, "In that day," when the Assyrian army is laying Israel waste, and Judah might think that, their neighbour's house being on fire their own was in danger,—in that day of treading down and perplexity, then God will be to the residue of his people all they need and can desire; not only to the kingdom of Judah, but to those of Israel who had kept their integrity, and probably betook themselves to the land of Judah, to be sheltered by good king Hezekiah. When the Assyrian, the mighty one, was in Israel "as a tempest of hail," noisy and battering, as "a destroying storm," bearing down all before it, especially at sea; and as a flood of waters overflowing the country, ver. 2; then, in that day, will the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, distinguish his people by peculiar favours, that have distinguished themselves by a steady and singular adherence to him; and that which they most need he will himself be to them. This very much enhanceth the worth of the promises, that God, covenanting to be to his people a God all-sufficient, undertakes to be himself all that to them that they can desire. 1st. He will put all that credit and honour upon them which is requisite not only to rescue them from contempt, but to gain them esteem and reputation. He will be to them "for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty." They that wore "the crown of pride" looked upon God's people with disdain, and trampled upon them, and they were the "song of the drunkards of Ephraim;" but God will so appear for them by his providence, as to make it evident that they have his favour towards them, and that shall be to them a "crown of glory;" for what greater glory can any people have than for God to own them as his own? And he will so appear in them by his grace, as to make it evident that they have his image renewed on them, and that shall be to them "a diadem of beauty;" for what greater beauty can any person have than the beauty of holiness? Note, Those that have God for their God have him "for a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty," for they are made to him kings and priests. 2nd. He will give them all that wisdom and grace which is necessary to the due discharge of the duty of their place. He will himself be a spirit of judgment to them that sit in judgment; the privy counsellors shall be guided by wisdom and discretion, and the judges governed by justice and equity. It is a great mercy to any people when those that are called to places of power and public trust, are qualified for their places; when those that sit in judgment have a spirit of judgment, a spirit of government. 3rd. He will give them all that courage and boldness which is requisite to carry them resolutely through the difficulties and oppositions they are like to meet with. He will be "for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate;" to the gates of the enemy whose cities they besiege, or to their own gates, when they sally out upon the enemies that besiege them. The strength of the soldiery depends as much upon God, as the wisdom of the magistracy; and where God gives both these, he is to that people a crown of glory. This may well be supposed to refer to Christ, and so the Chaldee paraphrase understands it; 'in that day shall the Messiah be a crown of glory.' Simeon calls him the "glory of his people Israel;" and he is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, and strength.

2. He complains of the corruptions that were found among them, and the many corrupt ones; ver. 7, "But they also," many of them of Judah, "have erred through wine." There are drunkards of Jerusalem, as well as drunkards of Ephraim; and, therefore, the mercy of God is to be so much the more admired, that he has not blasted the glory of Judah, as he has done that of Ephraim. Sparing mercy is very obliging, when it is thus distinguishing. Ephraim's sins are found in Judah, and yet not Ephraim's ruins. They have erred through wine: their drinking to excess is in itself a practical error, they think to raise their fancy by it, but they ruin their judgment, and so put a cheat upon themselves; think to preserve their health by it, and help digestion, but they spoil their constitution, and hasten diseases and deaths. And it is the occasion of a great many errors in principle: their understanding is clouded, and conscience debauched by it; and, therefore, to support themselves in it, they espouse corrupt notions, and form their minds in favour of their lusts. Probably some were drawn in to worship idols by their love of the wine and strong drink which there was plenty of at their idolatrous festivals; and so they erred through wine, as Israel for love of the daughters of Moab joined themselves to Baal-peor. Three things are here observed as aggravations of this sin:

1st. That those were guilty of it whose business it was to warn others against it, and to teach them better things; and, therefore, who ought to have set a better example. "The priest and the prophet are swallowed up of wine;" their office is quite drowned and lost in it. The priests, as sacrificers, were obliged by a particular law to be temperate, *Lev.* x. 9; and, as rulers and magistrates, it was not for them to drink wine, *Pr.* xxxi. 4. The prophets were a kind of Nazarites, as appears by *Am.* ii. 11; and, as reprovers by office, were concerned to keep at the utmost distance from the sins they reproved in others; yet these were many of them ensnared in this sin. What! a priest, a prophet, a minister, and yet drunk! "Tell it not in Gath." Such a scandal are they to their coat.

2nd. That the consequences of it were very pernicious, not only by the ill influence of their example, but the prophet, when he was drunk, erred in vision. The false prophets plainly discovered themselves to be so when they were in drink. The priest stumbled in judgment, forgot the law, *Pr.* xxxi. 5; he reeled and staggered as much in the operations of his mind as in the motions of his body. What wisdom or justice can be expected from those that sacrifice reason, and virtue, and conscience, and all that is valuable, to such a base lust as the love of strong drink is? Happy art thou, O land, when thy princes eat and drink "for strength, and not for drunkenness," *Eccl.* x. 17.

3rd. That the disease was epidemical, and the generality of those that kept anything of a table were infected with it; "All tables are full of vomit," ver. 8. See what an odious thing the sin of drunkenness is; what an affront it is to human society. It is rude and ill-mannered enough to turn men's stomachs; for the tables where they eat their meat are filthily stained with the marks of this sin, which the sinners declare as Sodom; their "tables are full of vomit." So that the victor, instead of being proud of his crown, ought rather to be ashamed of it. It bodes ill to any people when so sottish a sin as drunkenness has become national.

9 Whom shall he teach knowledge?
And whom shall he make to understand doctrine?
Them that are weaned from the milk,
And drawn from the breasts.
10 For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept;

EGYPTIAN YOUTH AT THE BREAST.—ver. 9.

Line upon line, line upon line;
Here a little, *and* there a little:
11 For with stammering lips and another tongue
Will he speak to this people.
12 To whom he said,
This *is* the rest *wherewith* ye may cause the weary to rest;
And this *is* the refreshing:
Yet they would not hear.
13 But the word of the LORD was unto them
Precept upon precept, precept upon precept;
Line upon line, line upon line;
Here a little, *and* there a little;
That they might go, and fall backward, and be broken,
And snared, and taken.

The prophet here complains of the wretched stupidity of this people, that they were unteachable, and made no improvement of the means of grace which they enjoyed; they still continued as they were, their mistakes not rectified, their hearts not renewed, their lives not reformed. Observe,

First. What it was that their prophets and ministers designed and aimed at. It was to teach them knowledge, the knowledge of God and his will, and to make them understand doctrine, ver. 9. This is God's way of dealing with men, to enlighten men's minds first with the knowledge of his truths, and by that means to gain their affections, and bring their wills into a compliance with his laws; thus he enters in by the door, whereas the thief and robber climbs up another way.

Secondly. What method they took in pursuance of this design. They left no means untried to do them good, but taught them as children are taught; little children that are beginning to learn, that are taken from the breast to the book, ver. 9; for among the Jews it was common for mothers to nurse their children till they were three years old, and almost ready to go to school. And it is good to begin betimes with children, to teach them as they are capable the good knowledge of the Lord, and to instruct them, even when they are but newly "weaned from the milk." The prophets taught them as children are taught; for,

1. They were constant and industrious in teaching them. They took great pains with them, and with great prudence, teaching them as they needed it, and were able to bear it; ver. 10, "precept upon precept." It must be so; or, as some read it, it has been so. They have been taught as children are taught to read, by "precept upon precept," and taught to write, by "line upon line;" a little here and a little there, a little of one thing, and a little of another, that the variety of instructions might be pleasing and inviting. A little at one time, and a little at another, that they might not have their memories overcharged; a little from one prophet, and a little from another, that every one might be pleased with his friend and him he admired. Note, For our instruction in the things of God, it is requisite that we have "precept upon precept," and "line upon line;" that one precept and line should be followed, and so enforced by another. The precept of justice must be upon the precept of piety, and the precept of charity upon that of justice. Nay, we have need that the same precept and the same line should be often repeated and inculcated upon us; that we may the better understand them, and the easier recollect them when we have occasion for them. Teachers should accommodate themselves to the capacity of the learners, give them what they most need, and can best bear, and a little at a time, *Deu.* vi. 6, 7.

2. They courted them, and spoke them fair, ver. 12. God, by his prophets, said to them, This way that we are directing you to, and directing you in, it is the rest, and the only rest "wherewith you may cause the weary to rest, and this" will be "the refreshing" of your own souls, and will bring rest to your country from the wars and other calamities with which it has been long harassed. Note, God by his word calls us to nothing but what is really for our own advantage; for the service of God is the only true rest for those that are weary of the service of sin, and there is no refreshing but under the easy yoke of the Lord Jesus.

Thirdly. What little effect all this had upon the people; they were as unapt to learn as young children newly "weaned from the milk," and it was as impossible to fasten any thing upon them, ver. 9. Nay, one would choose rather to teach a child of two years old than undertake to teach them; for they have not only (like such a child,) no capacity to receive what is taught them, but they are prejudiced against it. As children, they have need of milk, and cannot bear strong meat, *Heb.* v. 12. 1. They would not hear, ver. 12; no, not that which would be rest and refreshing to them, they had no mind to hear it. The word of God commanded their serious attention, but could not gain it; they were where it was preached, but they turned a deaf ear to it; or, as it came in at one ear it went out at the other. 2. They would not heed. It was unto them "precept upon precept," and "line upon line," ver. 13; that is, they went on in a road of external performances, they kept up the old custom of attending upon the prophet's preaching, and it was continually sounded in their ears; but that was all, it made no impression upon them. They had the letter of the precept, but no experience of the power and spirit of it; it was continually beating upon them, but it beat nothing into them. Nay, 3. It should seem they ridiculed the prophet's preaching, and bantered it. The word of the Lord was unto them *Tsau latsau, kau lakau,* in the original it is in rhyme; they made a song of the prophet's words, and sung it when they were merry over their wine. David was the song of the drunkards. It is great impiety, and a high affront to God, thus to make a jest of sacred things; to speak of that vainly which should make us serious.

Fourthly. How severely God would reckon with them for this.

1. He would deprive them of the privilege of plain preaching, and speak to them "with stammering lips, and another tongue," ver. 11. They that will not understand what is plain and level to their capacity, but despise it as mean and trifling, are justly amused with that which is above them. Or, God will send foreign armies among them, whose language they understand not, to lay their country waste. Those that will not hear the comfortable voice of God's word shall be made to hear the dreadful voice of his rod. Or, these words may be taken as speaking God's gracious condescension to their capacity in his dealing with them; he lisped to them in their own language, as nurses do to their children, "with stammering lips," to humour them. He changed his voice, tried first one way, and then another; the apostle quotes it as a favour, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 21, applying it to the gifts of tongues, and complaining that yet for all this they would not hear.

2. He would bring utter ruin upon them. By their profane contempt of God and his word they are but hastening on their own ruin, and ripening themselves for it. It is that they may "go and fall backward," may grow worse and worse, may depart farther and farther from God, and proceed from one sin to another, till they be quite "broken, and snared, and taken," and ruined, ver. 13. They have here a little and there a little of the word of God, they think it too much, and say to the seers, See not; but it proves too little to convert them, and will prove enough to condemn them. If it be not "a savour of life unto life," it will be "a savour of death unto death."

14 Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men,
That rule this people which *is* in Jerusalem.
15 Because ye have said,
We have made a covenant with death,
And with hell are we at agreement;
When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us:
For we have made lies our refuge,
And under falsehood have we hid ourselves:
16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD,
Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone,
A tried stone, a precious corner *stone,* a sure foundation:
He that believeth shall not make haste.
17 Judgment also will I lay to the line,
And righteousness to the plummet:
And the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies,
And the waters shall overflow the hiding place.
18 And your covenant with death shall be disannulled,
And your agreement with hell shall not stand;
When the overflowing scourge shall pass through,
Then ye shall be trodden down by it.
19 From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you:
For morning by morning shall it pass over,
By day and by night:
And it shall be a vexation only *to* understand the report.
20 For the bed is shorter than that *a man* can stretch himself *on it:* [*in it.*
And the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself
21 For the LORD shall rise up as *in* mount Perazim,
He shall be wroth as *in* the valley of Gibeon,
That he may do his work, his strange work;
And bring to pass his act, his strange act.
22 Now therefore be ye not mockers,
Lest your bands be made strong: [tion,
For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consump-
Even determined upon the whole earth.

The prophet having reproved those that made a jest of the word of God here goes on to reprove those that made a jest of the judgments of God, and set them at defiance; for he is a jealous God, and will not suffer either his ordinances or his providences to be brought into contempt. He addresseth himself to the "scornful men" that ruled in Jerusalem, were the magistrates of the city, ver. 14. It is bad with a people when their thrones of judgment become the seats of the scornful, when rulers are scorners. But that the rulers of Jerusalem should be men of such a character is very sad; that they should make light of God's judgments, and scorn to take notice of the tokens of his displeasure. Who will be mourners in Zion if they are scorners? Observe,

First. How these scornful men lulled themselves asleep in carnal security, and even challenged God Almighty to do his worst; ver. 15, "Ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and the grave." They thought themselves as sure of their lives, even then when the most destroying judgments were abroad, as if they had made a bargain with death, upon a valuable consideration, not to come till they sent for him; or not to take them away by any violence but by old age. If we be at peace with God, and have made a covenant with him, we have in effect made a covenant with death, that it shall come in the fittest time, that whenever it comes it shall be no terror to us, nor do us any real damage. Death is ours if we be Christ's, 1 *Cor.* iii. 22; but to think of making death our friend, or being in league with it, while by sin we are making God our enemy, and are at war with him, is the greatest absurdity that can be. It was a fond conceit which these scorners had: "When the overflowing scourge shall pass through" our country, and others shall fall under it, yet "it shall not come unto us," not reach us, though it extend far, nor bear us down, though it is an overflowing scourge. It is the greatest folly imaginable for impenitent sinners to think that either in this world or the other they shall fare better than their neighbours. But what is the ground of their confidence?

Why truly, "we have made lies our refuge." Either, 1. Those things which the prophets told them would be lies and falsehood to them, and would deceive, but which they themselves looked upon as substantial fences. The protection of their idols, the promises which their false prophets soothed them up with, their policy, their wealth, their interest in the people; these they confided in and not in God; nay, these they confided in against God. Or, 2. Those things which should be lies and falsehood to the enemy, who was *flagellum Dei*,—'the scourge of God;' the "overflowing scourge;" they would secure themselves by imposing upon the enemy with their stratagems of war, or their feigned submissions in treaties of peace. The rest of the cities of Judah were taken because they made an obstinate defence; but the rulers of Jerusalem hope to play their cards better, they think themselves greater politicians than those of the country towns. They will compliment the king of Assyria with a promise to surrender their city, or to become tributaries to him, with a purpose, at the same time, to shake off his yoke as soon as the danger is over, not caring though they be "found liars" to him, as the expression is, *Deu.* xxxiii. 29. Note, Those put a cheat upon themselves that think to gain their point by putting cheats upon those they deal with; those that pursue their designs by trick and fraud, by mean and paltry shifts, may perhaps compass them, but cannot expect comfort in them. Honesty is the best policy. But such refuges as these are they driven to that depart from God, and throw themselves out of his protection.

Secondly. How God, by the prophet, awakens them out of this sleep, and shews them the folly of their security.

1. He tells them upon what grounds they might be secure. He doth not disturb their false confidences till he hath first shewed them a firm bottom on which they may repose themselves; ver. 16, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone." This foundation is, 1st. The promises of God in general; his word, upon which he hath caused his people to hope; his covenant with Abraham, that he will be a God to him and his. This is a foundation, a foundation stone firm and lasting, for faith to build upon; it is a tried stone, for all the saints have stayed themselves upon it, and it never failed them. 2nd. The promise of Christ in particular; for to him this is expressly applied in the New Testament, 1 *Pet.* ii. 6—8; he is that stone which is become "the head of the corner." The great promise of the Messiah and his kingdom, which was to begin at Jerusalem, was sufficient to make God's people easy in the worst of times; for they knew very well that till he was come the sceptre should "not depart from Judah." Zion shall continue while this foundation is yet to be laid there. "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah," for the comfort of those that dare not make lies their refuge, Behold, and look upon me as one that has undertaken to lay in Zion a stone. Jesus Christ is a foundation of God's laying; this is the Lord's doing. He is laid in Zion, in the church, in the holy hill. He is a tried stone; a trying stone, so some; a touchstone that shall distinguish betwixt true and counterfeit. He is a precious stone, for such are the foundations of the new Jerusalem, *Rev.* xxi. 19; a "corner stone," in whom the sides of the building are united; the "head-stone of the corner." And "he that believeth" these promises, and rests upon them, "shall not make haste," shall not run to and fro in a hurry, as men at their wits' end; shall not be shifting here and there for his own safety, nor be driven to his feet by any terrors, as the wicked man is said to be, *Job* xviii. 11, but with a fixed heart shall quietly wait the event, saying, 'Welcome the will of God.' He "shall not make haste" in his expectations, so as to anticipate the time set in the Divine counsels; but, though it tarry, will wait the appointed hour, knowing that "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." He that believes will not make more haste than good speed, but be satisfied that God's time is the best time, and with patience wait for it. The apostle, from the Seventy, explains this; 1 *Pet.* ii. 6, "He that believeth on him, shall not be confounded," his expectations shall not be frustrated, but far outdone.

2. He tells them that upon these grounds which they now built on they could not be safe, but their confidences would certainly fail them; ver. 17, "Judgment will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." This speaks, 1st. The building up of his church. Having laid the foundation, ver. 16, he will raise the structure, as builders do, by line and plummet, *Zec.* iv. 10. Righteousness shall be the line, and judgment the plummet; that is, the church being founded on Christ, shall be formed and reformed by the Scripture, the standing rule of judgment and righteousness. "Judgment shall return unto righteousness," *Ps.* xciv. 15. Or, 2nd. The punishing of the enemies of it, against whom he will proceed in strict justice, according to the threatenings of the law. He will give them their deserts, and bring upon them the judgments they have challenged; but in wisdom too, and by an exact rule, that the tares may not be plucked up with the wheat. And when God comes thus to execute judgment, *First.* These scornful men will be made ashamed of their vain hopes, with which they had deluded themselves. 1*st.* They designed to make lies their refuge; but it will indeed prove a refuge of lies which "the hail shall sweep away," that "tempest of hail" spoken of ver. 2. They that make lies their refuge build upon the sand; and the building will fall when the storm comes, and bury the builder in the ruins of it. And they that make any thing their hiding-place but Christ, the waters shall overflow it; as every shelter but the ark was overtopped and overthrown by the waters of the deluge. Such is the hope of the hypocrite; this will come of all his confidences. *2nd.* They boasted of a "covenant with death," and an "agreement with the grave;" but it shall be "disannulled," as made without his consent that has the keys and sovereign command of hell and death. Those do but delude themselves that think by any wiles to evade the judgments of God. *3rd.* They fancied that when the "overflowing scourge" should pass through the land it should not come near them; but the prophet tells them that then, when others were falling by the common calamity, they should not only share in it, but should be trodden down by it. 'Ye shall be to it for a treading down;' it shall triumph over you as much as over any other, and you shall become its easy prey. They are farther told, ver. 19, (1.) That it shall begin with them. They shall be so far from escaping it, that they shall be the first that shall fall by it. "From the time that it goeth forth, it shall take you," as if it came on purpose to seize you. (2.) That it shall pursue them close. "Morning by morning shall it pass over;" as duly as the day returns you shall hear of some desolation or other made by it, for Divine justice will follow its blow. You shall never be safe or easy by day or by night. There shall be a pestilence walking in darkness, and a destruction wasting at noonday. (3.) That there shall be no avoiding it. The understanding of the report of its approach shall not give you any opportunity to make your escape, for there shall be no way of escape open; but it shall be only a vexation. You shall see it coming, and not see how to help yourselves. Or, the very report of it at a distance will be a terror to you; what then will the thing itself be? Evil tidings are a terror and vexation to scorners; but he whose heart is fixed, trusting in God, is not afraid of them. And when the "overflowing scourge" comes, then all their comforts and confidences fail them, ver. 20. (1st.) That in which they thought to repose themselves reacheth not to the length of their expectations. "The bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it," so that he is forced to cramp and contract himself. (2nd.) That in which they thought to shelter themselves proves insufficient to answer the intention; "the covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it." Those that do not build upon Christ as their foundation, but rest in a righteousness of their own, will prove in the end thus to have deceived themselves; they can never be easy, safe, or warm; the bed is too short, the covering is too narrow; like our first parents' fig-leaves, the shame of their nakedness will still appear. *Secondly.* God will be glorified in the accomplishment of his counsels, ver. 21. When God comes to contend with these scorners, 1*st.* He will "do his work," and "bring to pass his act;" he will work for his own honour and glory, according to his own purpose. The work shall appear to all that see it to be the work of God, as the righteous judge of the earth. 2*nd.* He will do it now against his people, as formerly he did it against their enemies, by which his justice shall appear to be impartial. He will now rise up against Jerusalem, as in David's time against the Philistines in mount Perazim, 2 *Sam.* v. 20, and as in Joshua's time against the Canaanites in the valley of Gibeon. If those that profess themselves members of God's church by their pride and scornfulness make themselves like Philistines and Canaanites, they must expect to be dealt with as such. 3*rd.* This will be his strange work, his strange act, his foreign deed. It is work that he is backward to, he rather delights in shewing mercy, and doth not afflict willingly; it is work that he is not used to as to his own people, he uses to protect and favour them. It is a strange work indeed if he turn to be their enemy and fight against them, *ch.* lxiii. 10; it is work that all the neighbours will stand amazed at, *Deu.* xxix. 24; and therefore the ruins of Jerusalem are said to be an astonishment, *Jer.* xxv. 18.

Thirdly. Here is the use and application of all this; ver. 22, "Therefore be ye not mockers;" dare not to ridicule either the reproofs of God's word or the approaches of his judgments. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin. The consideration of the judgments of God that are coming upon hypocritical professors should effectually silence mockers, and make them serious. "Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong," both the bands by which you are bound under the dominion of sin, (for there is little hopes of the conversion of mockers,) and the bands by which you are bound over to the judgments of God. God hath bands of justice strong enough to hold those that break all the bonds of his law in sunder, and cast away all his cords from them. Let not these mockers make light of Divine threatenings; for the prophet, who is one of those with whom the secret of the Lord is, assures them that the Lord God of hosts hath, in his hearing, determined a consumption upon the whole earth; and can they think to escape? or shall their unbelief invalidate the threatening?

23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice;
Hearken, and hear my speech.
24 Doth the plowman plow all day to sow?
Doth he open and break the clods of his ground?
25 When he hath made plain the face thereof, [min,
Doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cum-
And cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley
And the rie in their place?
26 For his God doth instruct him to discretion,
And doth teach him. [ment,
27 For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instru-
Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin;
But the fitches are beaten out with a staff,
And the cummin with a rod.
28 Bread *corn* is bruised;
Because he will not ever be threshing it,
Nor break *it with* the wheel of his cart,
Nor bruise it *with* his horsemen.
29 This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts,
Which is wonderful in counsel, *and* excellent in working

This parable, which, as many of our Saviour's parables, is borrowed from the husbandman's calling, is ushered in with a solemn preface demanding attention; "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," hear and understand, ver. 23.

First. The parable is here plain enough that the husbandman applies himself to the business of his calling with a great deal of pains and prudence; that he 'goes by rule' in it,—*secundum artem;* and, as his judgment directs him, observes a method and order in his work.

1. In his ploughing and sowing. "Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow?" Yes, he doth; and he ploughs in hope, and sows in hope, 1 *Cor.* ix. 10. Doth he hurl it, and "break the clods?" Yes, he doth; that it may be fit to receive the seed. "And when he has" thus "made plain the face thereof," doth he not sow his seed, seed suitable to the soil? For the husbandman knows what grain is fit for clay ground, and what for sandy ground; and accordingly he sows each in their place; 'wheat in the principal place,' so the margin reads it; for it is the principal grain, and was a staple commodity of Canaan, *Eze.* xxvii. 17; and barley in the appointed place. The wisdom and goodness of the God of nature is to be observed in this, that to oblige his creatures with a grateful variety of products he hath suited them to an agreeable variety of earths.

2. In his threshing, ver. 27, 28. This also he proportions to the grain that is to be threshed out. The fitches and the cummin, being easily got out of their husk or ear, are only threshed with a staff and a rod; but the bread corn requires more force, and therefore that must be bruised with a threshing instrument, a sledge shod with iron, that was drawn to and fro over it to beat out the corn. And yet he will not be ever threshing it, nor any longer than is necessary to loosen the corn from the chaff. "He will not break it" or crush it into the ground "with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it" to pieces "with his horsemen;" the grinding of it is reserved for another operation. Observe, by the way, what pains is to be taken not only for the earning but for the preparing of our necessary food; and yet, after all, it is "meat that perisheth." Shall we then grudge to labour much more for the meat which endures to everlasting life? "Bread corn is bruised;" Christ was so; "it pleased the Lord to bruise him," that he might be the bread of life to us.

Secondly. The reddition of the parable is not so plain; most interpreters make it a farther answer to those who set the judgments of God at defiance.

Let them know that, as the husbandman will not be always ploughing, but will at length sow his seed, so God will not be always threatening, but will at length execute his threatenings, and bring upon sinners the judgments they have deserved; but in wisdom and in proportion to their strength; not that they may be ruined, but reformed and brought to repentance by them. But I think we may give this parable a greater latitude in the exposition of it.

1. In general, that God, who gives the husbandman this wisdom, no doubt is himself infinitely wise. It is God that "instructs the husbandman to discretion," as his God, ver. 26. Husbandmen have need of discretion wherewith to order their affairs, and ought not to undertake that business unless they do in some measure understand it; and they should, by observation and experience, endeavour to improve themselves in the knowledge of it. Since "the king himself is served of the field," the advancing of the art of husbandry is a common service to mankind more than the cultivating of most other arts. This skill of the husbandman is from God, as every good and perfect gift is. This takes off something of the weight and terror of the sentence passed on man for sin, that when God, in execution of it, sent man to till the ground, he taught him how to do it most to his advantage, else, in the greatness of his folly, he might have been for ever tilling the sand of the sea, that is, labouring to no purpose. It is he that gives men capacity for this business, and an inclination to it, and a delight in it; and if some were not by providence cut out for it, and made to rejoice, as Issachar, that tribe of husbandmen, in their tents, notwithstanding the toil and fatigue of this business, we should soon want the supports of life. If some are more discreet and judicious in managing these or any other affairs than others are, God must be acknowledged in it; and to him husbandmen must seek for direction in their business, for they, above other men, have an immediate dependence upon the Divine providence. As to the other instance of the husbandman's conduct in threshing his corn, it is said, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts," ver. 29. Even the plainest dictates of sense and reason must be acknowledged to come forth from the Lord of hosts; and if it is from him that men do things wisely and discreetly, we must needs acknowledge him to be wise in counsel, and excellent in working. God's working is according to his will; he never acts against his own mind, as men often do; and there is a counsel in his whole will. He is therefore excellent in working, because he is wonderful in counsel.

2. God's church is his husbandry, 1 *Cor.* iii. 9. If Christ is the true vine, his Father is the husbandman, *Jno.* xv. 1, and he is continually, by his word and ordinances, cultivating it. "Doth the ploughman plough all day," and break the clods of his ground, that it may receive the seed? And doth not God, by his ministers, "break up the fallow ground?" Doth not the ploughman, when the ground is fitted for the seed, cast in the seed in its proper soil? He doth so; and so the great God sows his word by the hand of his ministers, *Mat.* xiii. 19, who are to divide the word of truth, and give every one their portion. Whatever the soil of the heart is, there is some seed or other in the word proper for it; and as the word of God, so the rod of God is thus wisely made use of. Afflictions are God's threshing instruments, designed to loosen us from the world, to part between us and our chaff, and to prepare us for use. And as to these, God will make use of them as there is occasion, but he will proportion them to our strength; they shall be no heavier than there is need. If the rod and the staff will answer the end, he will not make use of his cart-wheel and his horsemen. And where these are necessary, as for the bruising of the bread-corn,—which will not otherwise be got clean from the straw,—yet he will not be ever threshing it, will not always chide, but his anger shall "endure but for a moment;" nor will he "crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth." And herein we must acknowledge him "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

CHAPTER XXIX.

This woe to Ariel, which we have in this chapter, is the same with the burthen of the valley of vision, *ch.* xxii. 1, and, it is very probable, points at the same event, the besieging of Jerusalem by the Assyrian army, which was cut off there by an angel, yet applicable to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and its last desolation by the Romans. Here is, I. The event itself foretold, that Jerusalem should be greatly distressed, ver. 1—4, 6; but that their enemies that distressed them should be baffled and defeated, ver. 5, 7, 8. II. A reproof to three sorts of sinners: 1. Those that were stupid, and regardless of the warnings which the prophet gave them, ver. 9—12; 2. Those that were formal and hypocritical in their religious performances, ver. 13, 14; 3. Those politicians that atheistically and profanely despised God's providence, and set up their own projects in competition with it, ver. 15—17. III. Precious promises of grace and mercy to a distinguished remnant, whom God would sanctify, and in whom he would be sanctified, when their enemies and persecutors should be cut off, ver. 18—24.

WOE to Ariel, to Ariel,
The city *where* David dwelt!
Add ye year to year;
Let them kill sacrifices.
2 Yet I will distress Ariel,
And there shall be heaviness and sorrow:
And it shall be unto me as Ariel.
3 And I will camp against thee round about,
And will lay siege against thee with a mount,
And I will raise forts against thee. [the ground,
4 And thou shalt be brought down, *and* shalt speak out of
And thy speech shall be low out of the dust,
And thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground,
And thy speech shall whisper out of the dust. [dust,
5 Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small
And the multitude of the terrible ones *shall be* as chaff that passeth away:
Yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.
6 Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts
With thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise,
With storm and tempest,
And the flame of devouring fire.
7 And the multitude of all the nations
That fight against Ariel, [distress her,
Even all that fight against her and her munition, and that
Shall be as a dream of a night vision.
8 It shall even be
As when an hungry *man* dreameth, and, behold, he eateth;
But he awaketh, and his soul is empty: [drinketh;
Or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he
But he awaketh, and, behold, *he is* faint, and his soul hath appetite:
So shall the multitude of all the nations be,
That fight against mount Zion.

ASSYRIANS BESIEGING A CITY.—ver. 3.

That it is Jerusalem which is here called Ariel is agreed, for that was "the city where David dwelt." That part of it which was called Zion was in a particular manner the city of David, in which both the temple and the palace were; but why it is so called is very uncertain. It is likely the name and the reason was then very well known. Cities as well as persons get surnames and nicknames. Ariel signifies the lion of God, or the strong lion. As the lion is king among beasts, so was Jerusalem among the cities, giving law to all about her; it was the city of the great king, *Ps.* xlviii. 1, 2; it was the head city of Judah, who is called a lion's whelp, *Gen.* xlix. 9, and whose ensign was a lion; and he that is the lion of the tribe of Judah was the glory of it. Jerusalem was a terror sometimes to the neighbour nations, and while she was a righteous city was bold as a lion. Some make Ariel to signify the altar of burnt-offerings, which devoured the beasts offered in sacrifice, as the lion doth his prey. Woe to that altar in the city where David dwelt; that was destroyed with the temple by the Chaldeans. I rather take it as a woe to Jerusalem, Jerusalem; it is repeated here as it is *Mat.* xxiii. 37, that it might be the more awakening. Here is,

First. The distress of Jerusalem foretold. Though Jerusalem be a strong city, as a lion, though a holy city, as a lion of God, yet if iniquity be found there, woe be to it. It was "the city where David dwelt;" it was he that brought that to it which was its glory, and which made it a type of the gospel church; and his dwelling in it was typical of Christ's residence in his church. This is mentioned as an aggravation of Jerusalem's sin, that in it was set both the testimony of Israel and the thrones of the house of David.

1. Let Jerusalem know that her external performance of religious services will not serve as an exemption from the judgments of God; ver. 1, "Add ye year to year." Go on in the road of your annual feasts: let all your males appear there three times a year before the Lord, and none empty, according to the law and custom, and let them never miss any of these solemnities; "let them kill the sacrifices," as they used to do. But as long as their lives are unreformed and their hearts unhumbled, let them not think thus to pacify an offended God, and to turn away his wrath. Note, Hypocrites may be found in a constant track of devout exercises, and treading a round in them, and with these they may flatter themselves, but can never please God or make their peace with him.

2. Let her know that God is coming forth against her in displeasure; that she "shall be visited of the Lord of hosts," ver. 6, that is, her sins shall be inquired into and punished. God will reckon for them with terrible judgments, with the frightful alarms and rueful desolations of war, which shall be like thunder and earthquakes, storms and tempests, and devouring fire, especially upon the account of the great noise. When a foreign enemy was not in the borders, but in the bowels of their country, roaring and ravaging, and laying all waste,—especially such an army as that of the Assyrians, whose commanders being so very insolent, as appears by the carriage of Rabshakeh, the common soldiers, no doubt, were much more rude,—they might see the Lord of those hosts visiting them with thunder and storm. Yet this being here said to be a great noise, perhaps it is intimated that they shall be worse frightened than hurt. Particularly,

1st. Jerusalem shall be besieged, straitly besieged. He doth not say, 'I will destroy Ariel,' but "I will distress Ariel," and she is therefore brought into distress, that being thereby awakened to repent and reform, she may not be brought to destruction; ver. 3, "I will camp against thee round about." It was the enemy's army that encamped against it; but God saith he will do it, for they are his hand, he doth it by them. God had often and long, by a host of angels, encamped for them round about them for their protection and deliverance; but now he was turned to be their enemy and fought against them. The siege laid against them was of his laying, and the forts raised against them were of his raising. Note, When men fight against us we must, in them, see God contending with us.

2nd. She shall be in grief to see the country laid waste, and all the fenced

cities of Judah in the enemy's hand. "There shall be heaviness and sorrow," ver. 2; 'Mourning and lamentation,' so these two words are sometimes rendered. Those that are most merry and jovial, when they come to be in distress are commonly most overwhelmed with heaviness and sorrow; their laughter is then turned into mourning. All Jerusalem shall then "be unto me as Ariel," as the altar, with fire upon it, and slain victims about it. So it was when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; and many, no doubt, were slain when it was besieged by the Assyrians. The whole city shall be an altar, in which sinners, falling by the judgments that are abroad, shall be as victims to Divine justice. Or thus, "There shall be heaviness and sorrow;" they shall repent, and reform, and return to God, and then "it shall be to me as Ariel;" Jerusalem shall be like itself, shall become to me a Jerusalem again, a holy city, *ch.* i. 26.

3rd. She shall be humbled, and mortified, and made submissive; ver. 4, "Thou shalt be brought down" from that height of arrogancy and insolence to which thou art come. The proud looks and the proud language shall be brought down, by one humbling providence after another. Those that despised God's judgments shall be humbled by them, for the proudest sinners shall either bend or break before him. They had talked big, had lifted up their horn on high, and had spoken with a stiff neck, *Ps.* lxxv. 5; but now "Thou shalt speak out of the ground, out of the dust," as one that has a familiar spirit, whispering out of the dust. This intimates that they should be faint and feeble, not able to speak up nor to say all they would say; but, as those who are sick, or whose spirits are ready to fail, their speech shall be low and interrupted. And that they should be fearful and in consternation, forced to speak low, as being afraid lest their enemies should overhear them, and take advantage against them; and that they should be tame, and obliged to submit to the conquerors. When Hezekiah submitted to the king of Assyria, saying, "I have offended; that which thou puttest on me, I will bear," 2 *Kin.* xviii. 14, then his speech was low, out of the dust. God can make those to sneak that have been most daring, and quite dispirit them.

Secondly. The destruction of Jerusalem's enemies is foretold, for the comfort of all that were her friends and well-wishers in this distress; ver. 5, 7, "Thou shalt be brought down," (ver. 4,) "to speak out of the dust," so low thou shalt be reduced. 'But' (so it may be rendered) 'the multitude of thy strangers and thy terrible ones,' the numerous armies of the enemy, shall themselves be like small dust, not able to speak at all, or so much as whisper, but as chaff that passeth away. Thou shalt be abased, but they shall be quite dispersed. smitten, and slain, after another manner, *ch.* xxvii. 7. They shall pass away, yea, it shall be at an instant, suddenly; the enemy shall be surprised with the destruction, and you with the salvation. The army of the Assyrians was by an angel laid dead upon the spot at an instant, suddenly. Such will be the destruction of the enemies of the gospel Jerusalem, "In one hour is their judgment come," *Rev.* xviii. 10. Again, ver. 6, "Thou shalt be visited;" or, as it used to be rendered, 'She shall be visited with thunder and a great noise.' Thou shalt be put into a fright, which thou shalt soon recover. But, ver. 7, the multitude of the nations that fight against her shall be "as a dream of a night vision;" they and their prosperity and success shall soon vanish past recall. "The multitude of the nations that fight against Zion" shall be as a hungry man, that dreams he eats, but still is hungry; that is, 1. Whereas they hoped to make a prey of Jerusalem, and to enrich themselves with the plunder of that opulent city, their hopes shall prove vain dreams, with which their fancies may please and sport themselves for a while, but they shall be disappointed; they fancied themselves masters of Jerusalem, but shall never be so. 2. They themselves, and all their pomp, and power, and prosperity, shall vanish "like a dream when one awakes," shall be of as little value and as short continuance, *Ps.* lxxiii. 20; he shall fly away as a dream, *Job* xx. 8. The army of Sennacherib vanished, and was gone presently; though it had filled the country, as a dream fills a man's head, especially as a dream of meat fills the head of him that went to bed hungry.

Many understand these verses as part of the threatening of wrath, when God comes to distress Jerusalem, and lay siege to her. 1st. The multitude of her friends, whom she relies upon for help, shall do her no good; for, though they are terrible ones, they shall be like the small dust, and shall pass away. 2nd. The multitude of her enemies shall never think they can do her mischief enough; but, when they have devoured her much, still they shall be but like a man that dreams he eats, hungry and greedy, to devour her more.

9 Stay yourselves, and wonder;
Cry ye out, and cry:
They are drunken, but not with wine;
They stagger, but not with strong drink.
10 For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of
And hath closed your eyes: [deep sleep,
The prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered.
11 And the vision of all is become unto you
As the words of a book that is sealed,
Which *men* deliver to one that is learned,
Saying, Read this, I pray thee:
And he saith, I cannot; for it *is* sealed:
12 And the book is delivered to him that is not learned,
Saying, Read this, I pray thee:
And he saith, I am not learned.
13 Wherefore the Lord said,
Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth,
And with their lips do honour me,
But have removed their heart far from me,
And their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men;
14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work
among this people,
Even a marvellous work and a wonder:
For the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish,
And the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hid.
15 Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from
And their works are in the dark, [the LORD,
And they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?
16 Surely your turning of things upside down
Shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: [me not?
For shall the work say of him that made it, He made
Or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He
had no understanding?

Here, First. The prophet stands amazed at the stupidity of the greatest part of the Jewish nation. They had Levites, who taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and had encouragement from Hezekiah in doing so, 2 *Chr.* xxx. 22. They had prophets, who brought them messages immediately from God, and signified to them what were the causes, and what should be the effects, of God's displeasure against them. Now one would think, "Surely this great nation," that has all the advantages of Divine revelation, "is a wise and understanding people," *Deu.* iv. 6; but, alas, it was quite otherwise, ver. 9. The prophet directs himself to the sober, thinking part of them, calling upon them to be affected with the general carelessness of their neighbours. It may be read, 'They delay, they put off, their repentance, but wonder ye that they should be so sottish. They sport themselves with their own deceivings; they riot and revel; but do ye cry out, lament their folly, cry to God by prayer for them. The more senseless they are of the hand of God gone out against them, the more do you lay to heart these things.' Note, The security of sinners in their sinful ways is just matter of lamentation and wonder to all serious people, who should think themselves concerned to pray for those that do not pray for themselves. But what is the matter? what are we thus to wonder at?

1. We may well wonder that the generality of the people is so sottish and brutish, and so infatuated, as if they were intoxicated. "They are drunken, but not with wine;" not with wine only, otherwise with that they were often drunk, and they erred through wine, *ch.* xxviii. 7. They were drunk with the love of pleasures, with prejudices against religion, and with the corrupt principles they had imbibed. Like drunken men, they know not what they do or say, or whither they go. They are not sensible of the Divine rebukes they are under; "They have beaten me, and I felt it not," saith the drunkard, *Pr.* xxiii. 35. God speaks to them once, yea, twice; but, like men drunk, they perceive it not, they understand it not, but forget the law. They stagger in their counsels, are unstable and unsteady, and stumble at every thing that lies in their way. There is such a thing as spiritual drunkenness.

2. It is yet more strange that God himself hath "poured out upon them a spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed their eyes," ver. 10, that he who bids them awake and open their eyes should yet lay them to sleep and shut their eyes; but it is in a way of righteous judgment, to punish them for their loving darkness rather than light, their loving sleep. When God, by his prophets, called them, they said, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber;" and therefore he gave them up to strong delusions, and said, "Sleep on now." This is applied to the unbelieving Jews that rejected the Gospel of Christ, and were justly hardened in their infidelity, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost; *Rom.* xi. 8, "God hath given them the spirit of slumber;" and we have reason to fear it is the woful case of many who live in the midst of Gospel light.

3. It is very sad that this should be the case of those that were their prophets, and rulers, and seers; that they who should be their guides are themselves blindfolded; and it is easy to tell what the fatal consequences will be when the blind lead the blind. This was fulfilled when, in the latter days of the Jewish church, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders of the people, were the great opposers of Christ and his Gospel and brought themselves under a judicial infatuation.

4. The sad effect of this was, that all the means of conviction, knowledge, and grace, which they enjoyed, were ineffectual, and did not answer the end; ver. 11, 12, "The vision of all" the prophets, true and false, "is become to you as the words of a book," or letter, "that is sealed up;" you cannot discern the truth of the real visions, and the falsehood of the pretended ones. Or, every vision, particularly that this prophet had seen for them, and published to them, was become unintelligible; they had it among them, but were never the wiser for it, no more than a man (though a scholar good enough) is for a book delivered to him sealed up, and which he must not open the seals of. He sees it is a book, and that is all, he knows nothing of what is in it; so they knew what Isaiah said was a vision and prophecy, but the meaning of it was hid from them; it was only a sound of words to them, which they were not at all alarmed by, or affected with. It answered not the intention, for it made no impression at all upon them. Neither the learned nor the unlearned were the better for all the messages God sent them by his servants the prophets, nor desired to be so. The ordinary sort of people excused themselves from regarding what the prophets said, with their want of learning and a liberal education. As if they were not concerned to know and do the will of God, because they were not bred scholars; "It is nothing to me, I am not learned." Those of better rank pretended that the prophet had a way of speaking by himself, which was obscure to them; and what, though they were men of letters, they had not been used to; and, *Si non vis intelligi debes negligi*,—'If you wish not to be understood, you deserve to be neglected.' Both these are groundless pretences; for God's prophets have been no unfaithful debtors, either to the wise or to the unwise, *Rom.* i. 14. Or we may take it thus: The book of prophecy was given to them sealed, so that they could not read it, as a just judgment upon them; because it had often been delivered to them unsealed, and they would not take pains to learn the language of it, and then made excuse for their not reading it, because they were not learned. But observe, the vision is become thus to you whose minds the god of this world hath blinded; but it is not so in itself, it is not so to all. The same vision which to you is a savour of death unto death to others is and shall be a savour of life unto life. Knowledge is easy to him that understandeth.

Secondly. The prophet, in God's name, threatens those that were formal and hypocritical in their exercises of devotion, ver. 13, 14. Observe here,

1. The sin that is here charged upon them; dissembling with God in their religious performances, ver. 13. He that knows the heart, and cannot be imposed upon with shows and pretences, chargeth it upon them, whether their hearts condemn them for it or no; he that is greater than the heart, and knows all things, knows that though they draw nigh to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, yet they are not sincere in it. To worship God is to make our approaches to him, and to present our adorations of him; it is to draw nigh to him, as those that have business with him, with an intention therein to honour him. This we are to do with our mouth, and with our lips; in speaking of him, and in speaking to him, we must render to him the calves of our lips, *Hos.* xiv. 2. And if the heart be full of his love and fear, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak. But there are many whose religion is

lip labour only. They say that which expresseth an approach to God, and adoration of him, but it is only from the teeth outward. For, 1st. They do not apply their minds to the service. When they pretend to be speaking to God, they are thinking of a thousand impertinencies; "They have removed their hearts far from me," that they might not be employed in prayer, nor come within reach of the word. When work was to be done for God which required the heart, that was sent out of the way on purpose, with the fool's eyes, into the ends of the earth. 2nd. They do not make the word of God the rule of their worship, nor his will their reason: "Their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men." They worshipped the God of Israel not according to his appointment, but their own inventions; the directions of their false prophets, or their idolatrous kings, or the usages of the nations that were round about them. The tradition of the elders was of more value and validity with them than the laws which God commanded Moses. Or, if they did worship God in a way conformable to his institution in the days of Hezekiah, a great reformer, they had more an eye to the precept of the king than to God's command. This our Saviour applies to the Jews in his time, who were formal in their devotions, and wedded to their own inventions, and pronounceth concerning them, that in vain they did worship God, *Mat.* xv. 8, 9.

2. It is a spiritual judgment with which God threatens to punish them for their spiritual wickedness; ver. 14, "I will add to do a marvellous work." They did one strange thing, they removed all sincerity from their hearts. Now God will go on and do another, he will remove all sagacity from their heads; "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish." They played the hypocrite, and thought to put a cheat upon God, and now they are left to themselves to play the fool; and not only to put a cheat upon themselves, but to be easily cheated by all about them. Those that make religion no more than a pretence, to serve a turn, are out in their politics; and those that part with their uprightness, it is just with God to deprive them of their understanding. This was fulfilled in the wretched infatuation which the Jewish nation was manifestly under after they had rejected the Gospel of Christ. They removed their hearts far from God, and therefore God justly removed wisdom far from them, and hid from their eyes the things that belonged even to their temporal peace. This is a marvellous work; it is surprising, it is astonishing, that wise men should of a sudden lose their wisdom, and be given up to strong delusions. Judgments on the mind, though least taken notice of, are to be most admired.

Thirdly. He shews the folly of those that thought to act separately and secretly from God, and were carrying on designs independent upon God, and which they projected to conceal from his all-seeing eye. Here is,

1. Their politics described; ver. 15, "They seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord," that he may not know either what they do or what they design; "they say, Who sees us?" No man, and therefore not God himself. The consultations they had about their own safety they kept to themselves, and never asked God's advice concerning them. Nay, they knew they were displeasing to him, but thought they could conceal them from him; and if he did not know them he could not baffle and defeat them. See what foolish, fruitless pains sinners take in their sinful ways; they seek deep, they sink deep, to hide their counsel from the Lord, who sits in heaven and laughs at them. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom both of the carnal worships and carnal confidences of the hypocrites, *Ps.* xciv. 7; *Eze.* viii. 12; ix. 9.

2. The absurdity of their politics demonstrated; ver. 16, "Surely your turning of things upside down" thus, your various projects, turning your affairs this and that way, to make them shape as you would have them; or rather your inverting the order of things, and thinking to make God's providence give attendance to your projects, and that God must know no more than you think fit, which is perfectly "turning things upside down," and beginning at the wrong end, "it shall be esteemed as the potter's clay;" that is, God will turn and manage you, and all your counsels, with as much ease, and as absolute a power, as the potter forms and fashions his clay. See how God despiseth, and therefore what little reason we have to dread, those contrivances of men that are carried on without God, much less against him. They that think to hide their counsels from God, 1st. They do in effect deny him to be their Creator. "It is as if the work should say of him that made it, He made me not," I made myself. If God made us, he certainly knows us, as the psalmist shews, *Ps.* cxxxix. 1, 13—15. So that they who say he doth not see them, had as good say he did not make them. Much of the wickedness of the wicked ariseth from this, they forget that God formed them, *Deu.* xxxii. 18. Or, 2nd. Which comes all to one, they deny him to be a wise Creator. "The thing framed saith of him that framed it, He had no understanding;" for if he had understanding to make us so curiously, especially to make us intelligent beings, and to put understanding into the inward part, *Job* xxxviii. 36, no doubt he hath understanding to know us, and all we say and do. As they that quarrel with God, so they that think to conceal themselves from him, do in effect charge him with folly. But "he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" *P's.* xciv. 9.

17 *Is* it not yet a very little while,
And Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field,
And the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest?
18 And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book,
And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.
19 The meek also shall increase *their* joy in the LORD,
And the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.
20 For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed,
And all that watch for iniquity are cut off:
21 That make a man an offender for a word,
And lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate,
And turn aside the just for a thing of nought.
22 Therefore thus saith the LORD, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob,
Jacob shall not now be ashamed,
Neither shall his face now wax pale.
23 But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands,
In the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name,
And sanctify the Holy One of Jacob,
And shall fear the God of Israel.
24 They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
And they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

They that sought to hide their counsels from the Lord were said to turn things upside down, ver. 16; and they intended to do it unknown to God. But God here tells them that he will turn things upside down his way; and let us see whose word shall stand, his or theirs. They disbelieve Providence; Wait a while, saith God, and you shall be convinced by ocular demonstration, that there is a God that governs the world; and that he governs it, and orders all the changes that are in it for the good of his church. The wonderful revolution here foretold may refer primarily to the happy settlement of the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem, after the defeat of Sennacherib's attempt, and the repose which good people then enjoyed, when they were delivered from the alarms of the sword, both of war and persecution. But it may look farther, to the rejection of the Jews at the first planting of the Gospel, (for their hypocrisy and infidelity were here foretold, ver. 13,) and the admission of the Gentiles into the church. In general, it is a great and surprising change that is here foretold, ver. 17. Lebanon, that was a forest, is turned into a fruitful field; and Carmel, that was a fruitful field, shall become a forest. It is a counterchange. Note, Great changes, both for the better and for the worse, are often made in a very little while. It was a sign given them of the defeat of Sennacherib, that the ground should be more than ordinary fruitful, *ch.* xxxvii. 30, "Ye shall eat this year such as grows of itself." Food for man shall be as food for beasts useth to be, the spontaneous product of the soil. Then Lebanon became a fruitful field; so fruitful, that that which used to be reckoned a fruitful field in comparison with it shall be looked upon but as a forest. When a great harvest of souls was gathered in to Christ from among the Gentiles, then the wilderness was turned into a fruitful field; and the Jewish church, that had long been a fruitful field, become a desolate and deserted forest, *ch.* liv. 1. In particular,

First. Those that were ignorant shall become intelligent, ver. 18. Those that understood not this prophecy, but it was to them as a sealed book, ver. 11, when it is accomplished shall understand it, and shall acknowledge not only the hand of God in the event, but the voice of God in the prediction of it. "The deaf shall then hear the words of the book." The fulfilling of prophecy is the best exposition of it. The poor Gentiles shall then have Divine revelation brought among them; and those that sat in darkness shall see a great light; that were blind, shall see out of obscurity, for the Gospel was sent to them to open their eyes, *Acts* xxvi. 18. Observe, In order to the making of men fruitful in good affections and actions, the course God's grace takes with them is, to open their understandings, and make them hear the words of God's book.

Secondly. Those that were erroneous shall become orthodox; ver. 24, "They that erred in spirit," that were under mistakes and misapprehensions concerning the words of the book, and the meaning of them, they shall come to understanding, to a right understanding of things; the Spirit of truth shall rectify their mistakes, and lead them into all truth. This should encourage us to pray for those that have erred and are deceived, that God can, and often doth, bring such to understanding. They that murmured at the truths of God, as hard sayings, and loved to pick quarrels with them, shall learn the true meaning of these doctrines, and then they will be better reconciled to them. They that erred concerning the providence of God, as to public affairs, and murmured at the disposals of it, when they shall see the issue of things, shall better understand them, and be aware what God was driving at in all, *Hos.* iv. 9.

Thirdly. Those that were melancholy shall become cheerful and pleasant; ver. 19, "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord." Those that are poor in the world, and poor in spirit, that being in affliction accommodate themselves to their afflictions, are purely passive, and not passionate; when they see God appearing for them, they shall add, or repeat, joy in the Lord. This intimates that even in their distress they kept up their joy in the Lord, but now they increased it. Note, They that when they are in trouble can truly rejoice in God shall soon have cause given them greatly to rejoice in him. When joy in the world is decreasing and fading, joy in God is increasing and getting ground. This shining light shall shine more and more; for that which is aimed at is, that this joy may be full. Even the poor among men may rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, and their poverty need not deprive them of that joy, *Hab.* iii. 17, 18. And the meek, the humble, the patient and dispassionate, shall grow in this joy. Note, The grace of meekness will contribute very much to the increase of our holy joy.

Fourthly. The enemies that were formidable shall become despicable. Sennacherib, that terrible one, and his great army, that put the country into such a consternation, shall be brought to nought, ver. 20; shall be quite disabled to do any farther mischief. The power of Satan, that terrible one indeed, shall be broken by the prevalency of Christ's Gospel; and they that were subject to bondage, through fear of him that had the power of death, shall be delivered, *Heb.* ii. 14, 15.

Fifthly. The persecutors that were vexatious shall be quieted; and so those they were troublesome to shall be quiet from the fear of them. To complete the repose of God's people, not only the terrible one from abroad shall be brought to nought, but the scorners at home too shall be consumed and cut off by Hezekiah's reformation. Those are a happy people, and likely to be so, who, when God gives them victory and success against their terrible enemies abroad, take care to suppress vice and profaneness, and the spirit of persecution, those more dangerous enemies, at home. Or, they shall be consumed and cut off by the judgments of God, shall be singled out to be made examples of. Or, they shall insensibly waste away, being put to confusion by the fulfilling of those predictions which they made a jest of.

Observe what had been the wickedness of these scorners, for which they should be cut off. They had been persecutors of God's people and prophets, probably of the prophet Isaiah particularly, and therefore he complains thus feelingly of them, and of their subtle malice. Some as informers and prosecutors, others as judges, did all they could to take away his life; or, at least, his liberty. And this is very applicable to the chief priests and Pharisees, that persecuted Christ and his apostles, and for that sin they and their nation of scorners were cut off and consumed. 1. They ridiculed the prophets, and the serious professors of religion. They despised them, and did their utmost to bring them into contempt; they were scorners, and sat in the seat of the scornful. 2. They lay at catch for an occasion against them. By their spies they watch for iniquity, to see if they can lay hold on any thing that is said or done, that may be called an iniquity. Or, they themselves watch for an opportunity to do mischief, as Judas did to betray our Lord Jesus. 3. They took advantage against them for the least slip of the tongue; and if a thing were never so little said amiss it served them to ground an indictment upon. They made a man,

though he were never so wise and good a man, though he were a man of God, an offender for a word, a word mischosen, or misplaced, when they could not but know that it was well meant. They cavilled at every word that the prophets spoke to them by way of admonition, though never so innocently spoken, and without any design to affront them. They put the worst construction upon what was said, and made it criminal by strained innuendos. Those who consider how apt we all are to speak unadvisedly, and to mistake what we hear, will think it very unjust and unfair to make a man an offender for a word. 4. They did all they could to bring those into trouble that dealt faithfully with them, and told them of their faults. Those that reprove in the gates, that is, reprovers by office, that were bound by the duty of their place as prophets, as judges, and magistrates, to shew people their transgressions, they hated these, and laid snares for them; as the Pharisees' emissaries, who were sent to watch our Saviour, that they might entangle him in his talk, *Mat.* xxii. 15, that they might have something to lay to his charge which might render him odious to the people, or obnoxious to the government. "So persecuted they the prophets;" and it is next to impossible for the most cautious to place their words so warily as to escape such snares. See how base wicked people are, who bear ill-will to those who, out of good-will to them, seek to save their souls from death; and see what need reprovers have both of courage to do their duty and prudence to avoid the snare. 5. They pervert judgment, and will never let an honest man carry an honest cause; they "turn aside the just for a thing of nought," that is, they condemn him, or give the cause against him upon no evidence, no colour or pretence whatsoever. They run a man down, and misrepresent him by all the little arts and tricks they can devise, as they did our Saviour. We must not think it strange if we see the best of men thus treated; "the disciple is not greater than his master." But wait a while, and God will not only bring forth their righteousness, but cut off and consume these scorners.

Sixthly. Jacob, that was made to blush by the reproaches, and made to tremble by the threatenings, of his enemies, shall now be relieved, both against his shame, and against his fear, by the rolling away of those reproaches, and the defeating of those threatenings; ver. 22, "Thus the Lord saith, who redeemed Abraham," that is, called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and so rescued him from the idolatry of his fathers, and plucked him as a brand out of the fire. He that redeemed Abraham out of his snares and troubles will redeem all that are by faith his genuine seed out of theirs. He that began his care of his church in the redemption of Abraham, when it and its Redeemer were in his loins, will not now cast off the care of it. Because the enemies of his people are so industrious, both to blacken them and to frighten them, therefore he will appear for the house of Jacob, and they shall not be ashamed as they have been, but shall have wherewith to answer those that reproach them; nor shall their faces now wax pale, but they shall gather courage, and look their enemies in the face without change of countenance; as they have reason to do who have the God of Abraham on their side.

Seventhly. Jacob, that thought his family would be extinct, and the entail of religion quite cut off, shall have the satisfaction of seeing a numerous progeny devoted to God for a generation, ver. 23. 1. He shall see his children; multitudes of believers, and praying people; the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham, and wrestling Jacob. Having his quiver full of these arrows, he shall not be ashamed, ver. 22, but shall speak with his enemy in the gate, *Ps.* cxxvii. 5. Christ shall not be ashamed, *ch.* l. 7, for he shall see his seed, *ch.* liii. 10. He sees some, and foresees more, "in the midst of him," flocking to the church, and residing there. 2. His children are the work of God's hands; being formed by him they are formed for him; his workmanship, created unto good works. It is some comfort to parents to think that their children are God's creatures, the work of the hands of his providence. But it will be much more a comfort to them to see their children his new creatures, the work of the hands of his grace. 3. He and his children shall sanctify the name of God, as their God, as the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear and worship the God of Israel. This is opposed to his being ashamed and waxing pale; when he is delivered from his contempts and dangers he shall not magnify himself, but sanctify the Holy One of Jacob. If God make our condition easy, we must endeavour to make his name glorious. Parents and children are then ornaments and comforts indeed to each other, when they join in sanctifying the name of God. When parents give up their children, and children give up themselves to God, to be to him for a name and a praise, then the forest will soon become a fruitful field.

CHAPTER XXX.

The prophecy of this chapter seems to relate (as that in the chapter before) to the approaching danger of Jerusalem, and desolations of Judah, by Sennacherib's invasion. Here is, I. A just reproof to those who, in that distress, trusted to the Egyptians for help, and were all in a hurry to fetch succour from thence, ver. 1—7. II. A terrible threatening against those that slighted the good advice which God, by his prophets, gave them for the repose of their minds in that distress, assuring them that, whatever became of others, the judgment would certainly overtake them, ver. 8—17. III. A gracious promise to those who trusted in God, that they should not only see through the trouble, but should see happy days after it, times of joy and reformation, and plenty of the means of grace, and therewith plenty of outward good things, and increasing joys and triumphs, ver. 18—26; and these promises are, many of them, very applicable to gospel grace. IV. A prophecy of the total rout and ruin of the Assyrian army, which should be an occasion of great joy, and an introduction to those happy times, ver. 27—33.

WOE to the rebellious children, saith the LORD,
That take counsel, but not of me;
And that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit,
That they may add sin to sin:
2 That walk to go down into Egypt,
And have not asked at my mouth;
To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh,
And to trust in the shadow of Egypt!
3 Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame,
And the trust in the shadow of Egypt *your* confusion.
4 For his princes were at Zoan,
And his ambassadors came to Hanes.
5 They were all ashamed of a people *that* could not profit
Nor be an help nor profit, [them,
But a shame, and also a reproach.
6 The burden of the beasts of the south:
Into the land of trouble and anguish,
From whence *come* the young and old lion,
The viper and fiery flying serpent, [asses,
They will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young
And their treasures upon the bunches of camels,
To a people *that* shall not profit *them*.
7 For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose:
Therefore have I cried concerning this,
Their strength *is* to sit still.

It was often the fault and folly of the people of the Jews, that when they were insulted by their neighbours on one side, they sought for succour from their neighbours on the other side, instead of looking up to God, and putting their confidence in him. Against the Israelites they sought to the Syrians, 2 *Chr.* xvi. 2, 3; against the Syrians they sought to the Assyrians, 2 *Kin.* xvi. 7; against the Assyrians they here sought to the Egyptians, and Rabshakeh upbraided them with it, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 21. Now observe here,

First. How this sin of theirs is described, and what there was in it that was provoking to God. When they saw themselves in danger and distress, 1. They would not consult with God. They would do things of their own heads, and not advise with God, though they had a ready and certain way of doing it by Urim, or prophets. They were so confident of the prudence of their own measures, that they thought it needless to consult the oracle; nay, they were not willing to put it to that issue; they take counsel among themselves, and one from another, but they do not ask counsel, much less will they take counsel of me. "They cover with a covering," that is, they think to secure themselves with one shelter or other, which may serve to cover them from the violence of the storm; "but not of my Spirit," not such as God by his Spirit in the mouth of his prophets directed them to; and therefore it will prove too short a covering, and a refuge of lies. 2. They could not confide in God. They did not think it enough to have God on their side, nor were they at all solicitous to make him their friend, but they "strengthened themselves in the strength of Pharaoh." They thought him a powerful ally, and doubted not but to be able to cope with the Assyrian while they had him for them. The shadow of Egypt (and it was but a shadow) was the covering in which they wrapped themselves.

Secondly. What was the evil of this sin. 1. It bespoke them rebellious children, and a woe is here denounced against them under that character, ver. 1. They were in profession God's children, but not trusting in him they were justly stigmatized as rebellious; for if we distrust God's providence we do in effect withdraw ourselves from our allegiance. 2. They added sin to sin. It was sin that brought them into distress; and then, instead of repenting, they trespassed yet more against the Lord, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 22. And they that had abused God's mercies to them, in making them the fuel of their lusts, abused their afflictions too, in making them an excuse for their distrust of God. And so they make ill worse, and add sin to sin; and they that do so, as they make their own chain heavy, so it is just with God to make their plagues wonderful. Now that which aggravated it was, 1st. That they took so much pains to secure the Egyptians for them. They walk or go down to Egypt, travel up and down to find an advantageous road thither, but they "have not asked at my mouth," never considered whether God would allow and approve of it or no. 2nd. That they were at such a vast expence to do it, ver. 6. 'They load the beasts of the south' (horses fetched from Egypt, which lay south from Judæa) with their riches; fancying, as it is common with people in a fright, that they were safer anywhere than where they were. Or, they sent their riches thither as bribes to Pharaoh's courtiers, to engage them in their interest, or as pay for their army. God would have helped them gratis; but if they will have it from the Egyptians they must pay dear for it, and they seem willing to do so. The riches that are so spent will turn to an ill account. They carried their effects to Egypt through 'a land' (so it may be read) 'of trouble and anguish;' that vast howling wilderness which lay between Canaan and Egypt, from "whence come the lion, and fiery serpent," *Deu.* viii. 15. They would venture through that dangerous wilderness to bring what they had to Egypt. Or, it may be meant of Egypt itself, which had been to Israel a house of bondage, and therefore a land of trouble and anguish, and which abounded in ravenous and venomous creatures. See what dangers men run into that forsake God, and what dangers they will run into in pursuance of their carnal confidences, and their expectations from the creature.

Thirdly. What would be the consequence of it. 1. The Egyptians would receive their ambassadors, would speak them fair, and be willing to treat with them; ver. 4, "His princes were at Zoan," at Pharaoh's court there, and had their audience of the king, who encouraged them to depend upon his friendship, and the succours he would send them. But, 2. They would not answer their expectation, they could not profit them, ver. 5. For God saith, they shall not profit them, ver. 6; and every creature is that to us, and no more, that he makes it be. Either the forces they were to furnish them with could not be raised in time, or when they were raised they were not fit for service, and they would not venture any of their veteran troops in the expedition; or the march was so long that they could not come up when they had occasion for them; or the Egyptians would not be cordial to Israel, but would secretly incline to the Assyrians, upon some account or other; "The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose," ver. 7; they shall hinder and hurt instead of helping. And therefore, 3. These people, that were now so fond of the Egyptians, would at length be ashamed of them, and of all their expectations from them, and confidence in them; ver. 3, "The strength of Pharaoh," which was your pride, "shall be your shame;" all your neighbours will upbraid you, and you will upbraid yourselves with your folly in trusting to it. And "the shadow of Egypt," that land shadowing with wings, (*ch.* xviii. 1,) that was your confidence, shall be "your confusion;" it will not only disappoint you, and be the matter of your shame, but it will weaken all your other supports, and be an occasion of mischief to you. God afterwards threatens the ruin of Egypt for this very thing, because they had dealt treacherously with Israel, and been a staff of a reed to them, *Eze.* xxix. 6, 7. The princes and ambassadors of Israel, that were so forward to court an alliance with them, when they come among them, shall see so much of their weakness, or rather of their baseness, that "they shall all be ashamed of a people that could not be a help or profit to them," but a shame and reproach, ver. 5. Those that trust in God, and in his power, providence, and promise, are never made ashamed of their hope; but they that put confidence in any creature will sooner or later find it a reproach to them. God is true, and may be trusted, but every man a liar, and must be

suspected. The Creator is a rock of ages, the creature a broken reed. We cannot expect too little from man, or too much from God.

Fourthly. The use and application of all this; ver. 7, "Therefore have I cried concerning this" matter, this project of theirs; I have published it, that all might take notice of it; I have pressed it as one in earnest; "Their strength is to sit still," in an humble dependence upon God and his goodness, and a quiet submission to his will, and not to vary about, and put themselves into a toss, to seek for help from this and the other creature. If we sit still in a day of distress, hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord, and using only lawful, regular methods for our own preservation, this will be the strength of our souls, both for services and sufferings, and it will engage Divine strength for us. We weaken ourselves, and provoke God to withdraw from us, when we make flesh our arm; for then our heart departeth from the Lord. When we have tired ourselves by seeking for help from creatures, we shall find it the best way of recruiting ourselves to repose in the Creator. Here I am, let him do with me as he pleaseth.

8 Now go, write it before them in a table,
And note it in a book,
That it may be for the time to come for ever and ever:
9 That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children,
Children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD:
10 Which say to the seers,
See not;
And to the prophets,
Prophesy not unto us right things,
Speak unto us smooth things,
Prophesy deceits:
11 Get you out of the way,
Turn aside out of the path,
Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.
12 Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel,
Because ye despise this word,
And trust in oppression and perverseness,
And stay thereon:
13 Therefore this iniquity shall be to you
As a breach ready to fall,
Swelling out in a high wall,
Whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.
14 And he shall break it [pieces;
As the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in
He shall not spare: [sherd
So that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a
To take fire from the hearth,
Or to take water *withal* out of the pit.
15 For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel;
In returning and rest shall ye be saved;
In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength:
and ye would not.
16 But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses;
Therefore shall ye flee:
And, We will ride upon the swift;
Therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.
17 One thousand *shall flee* at the rebuke of one;
At the rebuke of five shall ye flee:
Till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain,
And as an ensign on an hill.

Here, First. The preface is very awful. The prophet must not only preach this, but he must write it, ver. 8,—write it in a table to be hung up and exposed to public view. He must carefully note it, not in loose papers, which might be lost or torn, but in a book, to be preserved for posterity, *in perpetuam rei memoriam*; let it remain for the time to come 'a standing testimony' against this wicked generation; let it remain not only to the next succeeding ages, but for ever and ever, while the world stands. And so it shall; for the book of the Scriptures no doubt shall continue, and be read to the end of time. Let it be written, 1. To shame the men of the present age, that would not hear and heed it when it was spoken; let it be written, that it may not be lost; their children may profit by it, though they will not. 2. To justify God in the judgments he was about to bring upon them. People will be tempted to think he was too hard upon them, and over severe, unless they know how very bad they were, how very provoking, and what fair means God tried with them before he brought it to this extremity. 3. For warning to others, not to do as they did, lest they fare as they fared. It is designed for admonition to those of the remotest place and age, even those "upon whom the ends of the world are come," 1 *Cor.* x. 11. It may be of use for God's ministers not only to preach but to write; for that which is written remains.

Secondly. The character given of the profane and wicked Jews is very sad. He must, if he will draw them in their own colours, write this concerning them, and we are sure he doth not bear false witness against them, nor make them worse than they were; for the judgment of God is according to truth, "That this is a rebellious people," ver. 9. The Jews were, for aught we know, the only professing people God had then in the world, and yet many of them were a rebellious people. 1. They rebelled against their own convictions and covenants; for they are lying children that will not stand to what they say; that promise fair, but perform nothing. When he took them into covenant with him he said of them, "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie," *ch.* lxiii. 8; but they proved otherwise. 2. They rebelled against the Divine authority. They are "children that will not hear the law of the Lord," nor heed it, but will do as they have a mind, let God himself say what he will to the contrary.

Thirdly. The charge drawn up against them is very high, and the sentence passed upon them very dreadful. Two things they here stand charged with, and their doom is ready for both,—a fearful doom.

1. They forbade the prophets to speak to them in God's name, and to deal faithfully with them. This their sin is described, ver. 10, 11. They did set themselves so violently against the prophets, to hinder them from preaching, or at least from dealing plainly with them in their preaching, did so banter them, and browbeat them, that they did in effect "say to the seers, See not." They had the light, but they loved darkness rather. It was their privilege that they had seers among them, but they did what they could to put out their eyes; that they had prophets among them, but they did what they could to stop their mouths; for they tormented them in their wicked ways, *Rev.* xi. 10. Those that silence good ministers, and discountenance good preaching, are justly counted and called rebels against God. See what it was in the prophet's preaching with which they found themselves aggrieved: 1st. The prophets told them of their faults, and warned them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and they could not bear that. They must speak to them smooth things; must flatter them in their sins, and say they did well, and there was no harm, no peril, in the course of life they lived. Let a thing be never so right and true, if it be not smooth, they will not hear it; but if it be agreeable to the good opinion they have of themselves, and will confirm them in that, though it be never so false, and never so great a cheat upon them, they will have it prophesied to them. Those deserve to be deceived that desire to be so. 2nd. The prophets stopped them in their sinful pursuits, and stood in their way, like the angels in Balaam's road, with the sword of God's wrath drawn in their hand, so that they could not proceed without terror. And this they took heinously; and, when they went on frowardly in the way of their hearts, they said to the prophets, "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the paths." What do ye do in our way? Cannot you let us alone to do as we please? Those have "their hearts fully set in them to do evil," that bid their faithful monitors to stand out of their way; "Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten?" 2 *Chr.* xxv. 16. 3rd. The prophets were continually telling them of the Holy One of Israel; what an enemy he is to sin, and how severely he will reckon with sinners; and this they could not endure to hear of. Both the thing itself and the expression of it was too serious for them; and therefore, if the prophets will speak to them, they will make it their bargain that they shall not call God the Holy One of Israel; for God's holiness is that attribute which of all other wicked people most dread. Let us no more be troubled with that state preface (as Mr. White calls it) to your impertinent harangues. Those have reason to fear perishing in their sins that cannot bear to be frightened out of them.

Now what is the doom passed upon them for this? We have it ver. 12, 13. Observe, *First*. Who it is that gives judgment upon them; "Thus saith the Holy One of Israel." That title of God which they particularly excepted against, the prophet makes use of. Faithful ministers will not be driven from using such expressions as are proper to awaken sinners, though they be displeasing. We must tell men that God is the Holy One of Israel, and so they shall find him, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. *Secondly*. What the ground of the judgment is. Because they despise this word, either in general, every word that the prophets said to them, or this word in particular, which speaks God the Holy One of Israel. They despise this, and will neither make it their fear, to stand in awe of it, nor make it their hope, to put any confidence in it; but, rather than they will be beholden to the Holy One of Israel, will trust in oppression and perverseness; in the wealth they have got, and the interest they have made, by fraud and violence; or in those sinful methods they have taken for their own security, in contradiction to God and his will. On these they stay, and therefore it is just they fall. *Thirdly*. What the judgment is that is passed upon them. This iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall; this confidence of yours will be like a house built upon the sand, which will fall in the storm, and bury the builder in the ruins of it. Your contempt of that word of God which you might build upon, will make every thing else you trust to like a wall that bulgeth and bellieth out, which, if any weight be laid upon it, comes down; nay, which often sinks with its own weight. The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves should be, 1st. A surprising ruin. The breaking shall come suddenly, in an instant, when they do not expect it, which will make it the more frightful; and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. 2nd. An utter ruin, universal and irreparable. You and all your confidences shall be not only weak as the potter's clay, *ch.* xxix. 16, but broken to pieces as the potter's vessel. He that hath the rod of iron shall break it, *Ps.* ii. 9; and he shall not spare, nor have any regard to it, nor be in care to preserve or keep whole any part of it. But when once it is broken, so as to be unfit for use, let it be dashed, let it be crushed, all to pieces, so that there may not remain one sherd big enough to take up a little fire or water, two things we have daily need of, and which poor people commonly fetch in a piece of a broken pitcher. They shall not only be as a bowing wall, *Ps.* lxii. 3, but as a broken mug, or glass, which is good for nothing, nor can ever be made whole again.

2. They slighted the gracious directions God gave them; not only how to secure themselves, and make themselves safe, but how to compose themselves, and make themselves easy; and would take their own way, ver. 15—17. Observe here,

1st. The method God put them into for salvation and strength. The God that knew them, and knew what was proper for them, and desired their welfare, gave them this prescription. And it is recommended to us all. *First*. Would we be saved from the evil of every calamity, guarded against the temptation of it, and secured from the curse of it, which are the only evil things in it, it must be in returning and rest; in returning to God, and reposing in him as our rest. Let us return from our evil ways, into which we have gone aside, and rest and settle in the way of God and duty; and that is the way to be saved. Return from this project of going down to Egypt, and rest satisfied in the will of God; and then you may trust him with your safety. In returning, that is, in the thorough reformation of your hearts and lives; and in rest, that is, in an entire submission of your souls to God, and a complacency in him, you shall be saved. *Secondly*. Would we be strengthened to do what is required of us, and to bear what is laid upon us, it must be in quietness, and in confidence; that is, we must keep our spirits calm and sedate by a continual dependence upon God, and his power and goodness. We must retire into ourselves with a holy quietness, suppressing all turbulent and tumultuous passions, and keeping the peace in our own minds. And we must rely upon God with a holy confidence that he can do what he will, and will do what is best for his people. And this will be our strength; it will inspire us with such a holy fortitude

as will carry us with ease and courage through all the difficulties we may meet with.

2nd. The contempt they put upon this prescription. They would not take God's counsel, though it was so much for their own good. And justly will they die of their disease that will not take God for their physician. We are certainly enemies to ourselves if we will not be subjects to him. They would not so much as try the method prescribed; "But ye said, No," ver. 16, we will not compose ourselves, for "we will flee upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift;" we will hurry hither and thither to fetch in foreign aids. They think themselves wiser than God, and that they know what is good for themselves better than he doth. When Sennacherib took all the fenced cities of Judah, those rebellious children would not be persuaded to sit still and patiently to expect God's appearing for them, as he did wonderfully at last; but they would shift for their own safety, and thereby they exposed themselves to so much the more danger.

3rd. The sentence passed upon them for this. Their sin shall be their punishment. You will flee, and therefore ye shall flee; you will be upon the full speed, and therefore so shall those be that pursue you. The dogs are most apt to run barking after him that rides fast. The conquerors protected those that sat still, but pursued those that made their escape. And so that very project, by which they hoped to save themselves, was justly their ruin; and the most guilty suffered most. It is foretold, ver. 17, *First*. That they should be easily cut off. They should be so dispirited with their own fears, increased by their flight, that one of the enemy should defeat a thousand of them, and five put an army to flight; which could never be unless "their Rock had sold them," *Deu.* xxxii 30. *Secondly*. That they should be generally cut off, and only here and there one should escape, alone in a solitary place, and left for a spectacle too, as a "beacon upon the top of a mountain;" a warning to others to avoid the like sinful courses and confidences.

18 And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, [upon you:
And therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy
For the LORD *is* a God of judgment:
Blessed *are* all they that wait for him
19 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem:
Thou shalt weep no more:
He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry;
When he shall hear it, he will answer thee.
20 And *though* the Lord give you
The bread of adversity, and the water of affliction,
Yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more,
But thine eyes shall see thy teachers:
21 And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying,
This *is* the way, walk ye in it, [left.
When ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the
22 Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver,
And the ornament of thy molten images of gold:
Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth;
Thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.
23 Then shall he give the rain of thy seed,
That thou shalt sow the ground withal;
And bread of the increase of the earth,
And it shall be fat and plenteous:
In that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures.
24 The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground
Shall eat clean provender,
Which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the
25 And there shall be upon every high mountain, [fan.
And upon every high hill,
Rivers *and* streams of waters
In the day of the great slaughter,
When the towers fall.
26 Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of
And the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, [the sun,
As the light of seven days,
In the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his
And healeth the stroke of their wound. [people,

The closing words of the foregoing paragraph, "Ye shall be left as a beacon upon a mountain," some understand as a promise, that a remnant of them should be reserved as monuments of mercy. And here the prophet tells them what good times should succeed these calamities. Or, the first words of this paragraph may be read by way of antithesis: 'Notwithstanding this, yet will the Lord wait that he may be gracious.' The prophet, having shewed that those who made Egypt their confidence would be ashamed of it, here shews that they who sat still, and made God alone their confidence, would have the comfort of it. It is matter of comfort to the people of God, when the times are very bad, that all will be well yet. Well with them that fear God when we say to the wicked, It shall be ill with them.

First. God will be gracious to them, and will have mercy on them. That is the foundation of all good. If we find favour with God, and he have mercy upon us, we shall have comfort according to the time that we have been afflicted. 1. He will "wait to be gracious," ver. 18. He will wait till you return to him, and seek his face, and then he will be ready to meet you with mercy. He will wait that he may do it in the best and fittest time, when it will be most for his glory; when it will come to you with the most pleasing surprise. He will continually follow you with his favours, and not let slip any opportunity of being gracious to you. 2. He will stir up himself to deliver you, will be exalted, will be raised up out of his holy habitation, *Zec.* ii. 13, that he may appear for you in more than ordinary instances of power and goodness. And thus he will be exalted; that is, he will glorify his own name; that is it he aims at, in having mercy on his people. 3. He will be very gracious, ver. 19. And this in answer to prayer; which makes his kindness doubly kind. "He will be gracious to thee, at the voice of thy cry;" the cry of thy necessity, when that is most urgent; the cry of thy prayer, when that is most fervent. "When he shall hear it," there needs no more; at the first word "he will answer thee," and say, "Here I am." Herein he is very gracious indeed.

In particular, 1. Those that were disturbed in the possession of their estates shall again enjoy them quietly. When the danger is over, "the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem," as they used to do; they shall dwell safely, free from the fear of evil. 2. Those that were all in tears shall have cause to rejoice, and shall weep no more; and those who dwell in Zion, the holy city, will find enough there to wipe away tears from their eyes. Now this is grounded upon two great truths: 1st. That the Lord is a God of judgment; that is, he is both wise and just in all the disposals of his providence; true to his word, and tender of his people. If he correct his children it is with judgment, *Jer.* x. 24, with moderation, and discretion, considering their frame. We think we may safely refer ourselves to a man of judgment; and shall we not commit our way to a God of judgment? 2nd. That therefore all those are blessed that wait for him; that not only wait on him with their prayers, but wait for him with their hopes; that will not take any indirect course to extricate themselves out of their straits, or anticipate their deliverance, but patiently expect God's appearances for them in his own way and time. Because God is infinitely wise, those are truly happy that refer themselves to him.

Secondly. They shall not again know the want of the means of grace, ver. 20, 21. Here, 1. It is supposed that they might be brought into straits and troubles after this deliverance was wrought for them. It was promised, ver. 19, that they should weep no more, and that God would be gracious to them; and yet here it is taken for granted that God may give them the bread of adversity and the water of affliction; prisoners' fare, 1 *Kin.* xxii. 27, coarse and sorry food, such as the poor use. When one trouble is over we know not how soon another may succeed; and we may have an interest in the favour of God, and such consolations as are sufficient to prohibit weeping, and yet may have bread of adversity given us to eat, and water of affliction to drink. Let us, therefore, not judge of love or hatred by what is before us. 2. It is promised that their eyes should see their teachers; that is, that they should have faithful teachers among them, and should have hearts to regard them, and not slight them as they had done; and then they might the better be reconciled to the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. It was a common saying among the old Puritans, 'Brown bread and the Gospel is good fare.' A famine of bread is nothing so great a judgment as a famine of the word of God, *Am.* viii. 11, 12. It seems that teachers had been removed into corners, probably being forced to shift for their safety, in the reign of Ahaz; but it shall be so no more. 'Truth seeks no corners for concealment,'—*Veritas non quærit angulos*; but the teachers of truth may sometimes be driven into corners for shelter; and it goes ill with the church when it is so; when the woman with her crown of twelve stars is forced to flee into the wilderness, *Rev.* xii. 6, when the prophets are hid by fifty in a cave, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 4. But God will find a time to call the teachers out of their corners again, and to replace them in their solemn assemblies, which shall see their own teachers, the eyes of all the synagogue being fastened on them, *Lu.* iv. 20; and it will be the more pleasing because of the restraint they have been for some time under, as light out of darkness, as life from the dead. To all that love God and their own souls, this return of faithful teachers out of their corners, especially with a promise that they "shall not be removed into corners any more," is the most acceptable part of any deliverance, and has comfort enough in it to sweeten even "the bread of adversity and the water of affliction." But this is not all; it is promised that they shall have the benefit not only of a public ministry, but of private and particular admonition and advice; ver. 21, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee," calling after thee, as a man calls after a traveller that he sees going out of his road. Observe, 1st. Whence this word shall come; from behind thee, from some one that thou dost not see, but sees thee. Thine eyes see thy teachers, but this is a teacher out of sight, it is thy own conscience, which shall now, by the grace of God, be awakened to do its office. 2nd. What the word shall be: "This is the way, walk ye in it." When thou art doubting, conscience shall direct thee to the way of duty; when thou art dull and trifling, conscience shall quicken thee in that way. As God hath not left himself without witness, so he has not left us without guides to shew us our way. 3rd. The seasonableness of this word. It shall come "when ye turn to the right hand or to the left." We are very apt to miss our way, there are turnings on both hands, and those so tracked and seemingly straight, as that they may easily be mistaken for the right way. There are right-hand and left-hand errors, extremes on each side virtue. The tempter is busy courting us into the bypaths. It is happy then, if, by the particular counsels of a faithful minister or friend, or the checks of conscience and the strivings of God's Spirit, we be set right, and prevented from going wrong. 4th. The success of this word. It shall not only be spoken, but thine ears shall hear it; whereas God has formerly spoken once, yea twice, and thou hast not perceived it, *Job* xxxiii. 14; now thou shalt listen attentively to those secret whispers, and hear them with an obedient ear. If God give us not only the word, but the hearing ear, not only the means of grace, but a heart to make a good use of those means, we have reason to say he is very gracious to us, and reason to hope he has yet farther mercy in store for us.

Thirdly. They shall be cured of their idolatry, shall fall out with their idols, and never be reconciled to them again, ver. 22. The deliverance God shall work for them shall convince them that it is their interest, as well as duty, to serve him only; and they shall own that, as their trouble was brought upon them for their idolatries, so it was removed upon condition they should not return to them. This is also the good effect of their seeing their teachers, and hearing the word behind them; by this it shall appear they are the better for the means of grace they enjoy; they shall break off from their best beloved sin. Observe, 1. How foolishly mad they had formerly been upon their idols in the day of their apostacy. Idolaters are said to be mad upon their idols, *Jer.* l. 38, doating fond of them. They had graven images of silver, and molten images of gold; and, though gold needs no painting, they had coverings and ornaments on these; they spared no cost in doing honour to their idols. 2. How wisely mad, if I may so speak, they now were at their idols, what a holy indignation they conceived against them in the day of their repentance. They not only degraded their images, but defaced them; not only defaced them, but defiled them; they

not only spoiled the shape of them, but, in a pious fury, threw away the gold and silver they were made of, though otherwise valuable and convertible to a good use. They could not find in their hearts to make any vessels of honour of it. The rich clothes, wherewith their images were dressed up, they cast away as filthy cloth, which those that touched must be unclean until the even, *Lev.* xv. 23. Note, To all true penitents sin is become very odious; they loathe it, and loathe themselves because of it. They cast it away to the dunghill, the fittest place for it; nay, to the cross, for they crucify the flesh; their cry against it is, Crucify it, crucify it. They say unto it, "Get thee hence;" *Abi hinc in malem rem.* They are resolved never to harbour it any more. They put as far from them as they can all the occasions of sin, and temptations to it, though they are as a right eye or a right hand, and protest against it as Ephraim did, *Hos.* xiv. 8, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Probably this was fulfilled in the many particular persons, who, by the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's army, were convinced of the folly of their idolatry and forsook it. It was fulfilled in the body of the Jewish nation, at their return from their captivity in Babylon, for they abhorred idols ever after; and it is accomplished daily in the conversion of souls, by the power of Divine grace, from spiritual idolatry to the fear and love of God. Those that join themselves to the Lord must abandon every sin, and say unto it, Get thee hence.

Fourthly. God will then give them plenty of all good things. When he gives them their teachers, and they give him their hearts, so that they begin to seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, then all other things shall be added to them, *Mat.* vi. 33. And when the people are brought to praise God, "then shall the earth yield her increase, and with it God, even our own God, shall bless us," *Ps.* lxvii. 5, 6. So it follows here; When ye shall have abandoned your idols, "then shall God give the rain of your seed," ver. 23. When we return to God in a way of duty, he will meet us with his favours. 1. God will give you rain of your seed; that is, rain to water the seed you sow, just at the time that it calls for it, as much as it needs, and no more. Observe, How man's industry and God's blessing concur to the good things we enjoy relating to the life that now is. "Thou shalt sow the ground," that is thy part, and then "God will give the rain of thy seed," that is his part. It is so in spiritual fruit; we must take pains with our hearts, and then wait on God for his grace. 2. The increase of the earth shall be rich and good, and every thing the best of the kind; it shall be fat and fat, very fat and very good; fat and plenteous, so we read it; good, and enough of it; your land shall be Canaan indeed. It was remarkably so after the defeat of Sennacherib, by the special blessing of God, *ch.* xxxvii. 30. God would thus repair the losses they sustained by that devastation. 3. Not only the tillage, but the pasture-ground should be remarkably fruitful. "The cattle shall feed in large pastures;" those that are at grass shall have room enough, and the oxen and asses that are kept up for use, to ear the ground, which must be the better fed for their being worked, they shall eat clean provender; the corn shall not be given them in the chaff, as usual, to make it go the farther, but good clean corn, fit for man's use, being winnowed with the fan. The brute creatures shall share in the abundance; it is fit they should, for they groan under the burthen of the curse which man's sin has brought upon the earth. 4. Even the tops of the mountains, that used to be barren, shall be so well watered with the rain of heaven, that there shall be rivers and streams there, and running down thence to the valleys, ver. 25; and this in the day of the great slaughter that should be made by the angel in the camp of the Assyrians; when the towers and batteries they had erected for the carrying on of the siege of Jerusalem, the army being slain, should fall of course. Probably this was fulfilled in the letter of it, and that about the same time that that army was cut off there were extraordinary rains, in mercy to the land.

Fifthly. The effect of all this should be extraordinary comfort and joy to the people of God, ver. 26. Light shall increase; that is, knowledge shall; when the prophecies are accomplished they shall be fully understood. Or rather, triumph shall; the light of the joy that is sown for the righteous shall now come up with a great increase; the light of the moon shall become as bright and as strong as that of the sun, and that of the sun shall increase proportionably, and be as the light of seven days; every one shall be much more cheerful, and appear much more pleasant than usual. There shall be a high springtide of joy in Judah and Jerusalem upon occasion of the ruin of the Assyrian army. "When the Lord binds up the breach of his people," he not only saves them from being farther wounded, but heals the wounds that have been given them by this invasion, and makes up all their losses. The great distress they were reduced to, their despair of relief, and the suddenness of their deliverance, would much augment their joy. This is not unfitly applied by many to the light which the Gospel brought into the world to them that sat in darkness, which as far exceeds the Old Testament light as that of the sun doth that of the moon, and which proclaims healing to the broken-hearted, and the binding up of their wounds.

27 Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far,
Burning *with* his anger, and the burden *thereof is* heavy:
His lips are full of indignation,
And his tongue as a devouring fire:
28 And his breath, as an overflowing stream,
Shall reach to the midst of the neck,
To sift the nations with the sieve of vanity:
And *there shall be* a bridle in the jaws of the people,
causing *them* to err.
29 Ye shall have a song, as in the night *when* a holy solemnity is kept;
And gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe
To come into the mountain of the LORD, to the mighty One of Israel.
30 And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard,
And shall shew the lighting down of his arm,
With the indignation of *his* anger, and *with* the flame of a devouring fire,
With scattering, and tempest, and hailstones.
31 For through the voice of the LORD shall the Assyrian be beaten down,
Which smote with a rod.
32 And *in* every place where the grounded staff shall pass,
Which the LORD shall lay upon him,
It shall be with tabrets and harps:
And in battles of shaking will he fight with it
33 For Tophet *is* ordained of old;
Yea, for the king it is prepared;
He hath made *it* deep *and* large:
The pile thereof *is* fire and much wood;
The breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

This terrible prediction of the ruin of the Assyrian army, though it is a threatening to them, is part of the promise to the Israel of God, that God would not only punish the Assyrians for the mischief they had done to the Israel of God, but would disable and deter them from attempting the like again. And this prediction, which would now shortly be accomplished, would ratify and confirm the foregoing promises, which should be accomplished in the latter days. Here is,

First. God Almighty angry, and coming forth in anger against the Assyrians. He is here introduced in all the power and all the terror of his wrath; ver. 27, "The name of Jehovah," which the Assyrians disdain, and set at a distance from them, as if they were out of its reach, and it could do them no harm, "Behold, it cometh from far." A messenger, in the name of the Lord, cometh from as far off as heaven itself. He is a messenger of wrath, "burning with his anger." God's "lips are full of indignation" at the blasphemy of Rabshakeh, who compared the God of Israel with the gods of the heathen. "His tongue is as a devouring fire," for he can speak his proud enemies to ruin. "His" very "breath" comes with as much force "as an overflowing stream," and with it he shall slay the wicked, *ch.* xi. 4. He doth not stifle or smother his resentments, as men do theirs, when they are either causeless or impotent; but "he shall cause his glorious voice to be heard," when he proclaims war with an enemy that sets him at defiance, ver. 30. He shall display "the indignation of his anger," anger in the highest degree; it shall be as "the flame of a devouring fire," which carries and consumes all before it, with lightning or dissipation, and with tempests and hailstones, all which are the formidable phenomena of nature, and therefore expressive of the terror of the almighty God of nature.

Secondly. The execution done by this anger of the Lord. Men are often angry when they can only threaten and talk big; but when God causeth "his glorious voice to be heard," that shall not be all; he will "shew the lighting down of his arm" too, ver. 30. The operations of his providence shall accomplish the menaces of his word. They that would not see the lifting up of his arm, *ch.* xxvi. 11, shall feel the lighting down of it, and find to their cost, that "the burden thereof is heavy," ver. 27, so heavy as that they cannot bear it, nor bear up against it, but must unavoidably sink and be crushed under it. "Who knows the power of his anger," or imagines what an offended God can do? Five things are here prepared for the execution:

1. Here is "an overflowing stream," that "shall reach to the midst of the neck," shall quite overwhelm the whole body of the army; and Sennacherib only, the head of it, shall keep above water, and escape this stroke, while yet he is reserved for another in the house of Nisroch his god. The Assyrian army had been to Judah as an overflowing stream, reaching even to the neck, *ch.* viii. 7, 8, and now the breath of God's wrath will be so to it.

2. Here is a sieve of vanity with which God would sift the nations of which the Assyrian army was composed, ver. 28. The great God can sift nations, for they are all before him as the small dust of the balance. He will sift them; not to gather out of them any that should be preserved, but so as to shake them one against another; put them into a mighty consternation, and shake them all away at last; for it is a sieve of vanity, which retains nothing, that they are shaken with; and they are found all chaff.

3. Here is a bridle which God has in their jaws, to curb and restrain them from doing the mischief they would do, and to force and constrain them to serve his purposes against their own will, *ch.* x. 7. God particularly saith of Sennacherib, *ch.* xxxvii. 29, that he will put a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his lips. It is a bridle causing them to err, that is, forcing them to such methods as will certainly be destructive to themselves and their interest, and in which they will be infatuated. God with a word guides his people into the right way, ver. 21, but with a bridle he turns his enemies headlong upon their own ruin.

4. Here is a rod and a staff, even the voice of the Lord, his word giving orders concerning it, with which the Assyrian shall be beaten down, ver. 31. The Assyrian had been himself a rod in God's hand for the chastising of his people, and had smitten them, *ch.* x. 5. That was a transient rod; but against the Assyrian shall go forth a grounded staff, that shall give a steady blow, shall stick close to him, and strike home, so as to leave an impression upon him. It is a staff with a foundation, founded upon the enemy's deserts, and God's determinate counsel. It is a consumption determined, *ch.* x. 23, and therefore there is no escaping it, no getting out of the reach of it; it shall pass in every place where an Assyrian is found, and the Lord shall lay it upon him, and cause it to rest, ver. 32. Such is the woful case of those that persist in enmity to God; "the wrath of God abideth on them."

5. Here is Tophet ordained and prepared for them, ver. 33. The valley of the son of Hinnom, adjoining to Jerusalem, was called Tophet. In that valley it is supposed many of the Assyrian regiments lay encamped, and were there slain by the destroying angel; or, there the bodies of those that were so slain were burned. Hezekiah had lately, and from yesterday, (so the word is,) ordained it; that is, say some, he had ridded it of the images that were set up in it, to which they there burnt their children, and so prepared it to be a receptacle for the dead bodies of their enemies. For the king of Assyria, that is, for his army, it is prepared, and there is fuel enough ready to burn them all; and they shall be consumed as suddenly and effectually as if the fire were kept burning by a continual stream of brimstone; for such the breath of the Lord, his word, and his wrath, will be to it. Now, as the prophet in the foregoing promises slides insensibly into the promises of gospel graces and comforts, so here, in the threatening of the ruin of Sennacherib's army, he points at the final and everlasting destruction of all impenitent sinners. Our Saviour calls the future misery of the damned, Gehenna, in allusion to the valley of Hinnom, which gives some countenance to the applying of this to that misery; as also that in the Apocalypse, it is so often called, "the lake that burns with fire and brimstone." This is said to be prepared of old for the devil and his angels, for the greatest of sinners, the proudest, and that think themselves not accountable to any for what they say or do; even for kings it is prepared. "It is deep and large," sufficient to receive the world of the ungodly; "the pile thereof is fire and much wood." God's wrath is the fire, and sinners make themselves fuel

to it; and the breath of the Lord, the power of his anger, kindles it, and will keep it ever burning: see *ch.* lxvi. 24. Wherefore, "stand in awe, and sin not."

Thirdly. The great joy which this should occasion to the people of God. The Assyrians' fall is Jerusalem's triumph; ver. 29, "Ye shall have a song as in the night," a psalm of praise, such as they sing who by night stand in the house of the Lord, and sing to his glory who giveth songs in the night. It shall not be a song of vain mirth, but a sacred song, such as was sung when a holy solemnity was kept, in a grave and religious manner. Our joy in the fall of the church's enemies must be a holy joy, "gladness of heart, as when one goes with a pipe," such as the sons of the prophets used when they prophesied, 1 *Sam.* x. 5, to come to the mountain of the Lord, there to celebrate the praises of the mighty One of Israel. Nay, in every place where the Divine vengeance shall pursue the Assyrians, they shall not only fall unlamented, but all their neighbours shall attend their fall with tabrets and harps, pleased to see how God, in battles of shaking, such as shake them out of the world, fights with them, ver. 32; for "when the wicked perish, there is shouting." And it is with a particular satisfaction that wise and good men see the ruin of those who, like the Assyrians, have insolently bid defiance to God, and trampled upon all mankind.

CHAPTER XXXI.

This chapter is an abridgment of the foregoing chapter; the heads of it are much the same. Here is, I. A woe to those that, when the Assyrian army invaded them, trusted to the Egyptians, and not to God, for succour, ver. 1—3. II. Assurance given of the care God would take of Jerusalem in that time of danger and distress, ver. 4, 5. III. A call to repentance and reformation, ver. 6, 7. IV. A prediction of the fall of the Assyrian army, and the fright which the Assyrian king should thereby be put into, ver. 8, 9.

WOE to them that go down to Egypt for help;
And stay on horses,
And trust in chariots, because *they are* many;
And in horsemen, because they are very strong;
But they look not unto the Holy One of Israel,
Neither seek the LORD!
2 Yet he also *is* wise,
And will bring evil, and will not call back his words:
But will arise against the house of the evildoers,
And against the help of them that work iniquity.
3 Now the Egyptians *are* men, and not God;
And their horses flesh, and not spirit.
When the LORD shall stretch out his hand,
Both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down,
And they all shall fail together.
4 For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me,
Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey,
When a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him,
He will not be afraid of their voice,
Nor abase himself for the noise of them:
So shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion,
And for the hill thereof.
5 As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem;
Defending also he will deliver *it;*
And passing over he will preserve *it.*

This is the last of four chapters together that begin with, Woe; and they are all woes to the sinners that were found among the professing people of God. To the drunkards of Ephraim, *ch.* xxviii. 1; to Ariel, *ch.* xxix. 1; to the rebellious children, *ch.* xxx. 1; and here, to them that go down to Egypt for help; for men's relation to the church will not secure them from Divine woes, if they live in contempt of Divine laws. Observe,

First. What the sin was that is here reproved, ver. 1. 1. Idolizing the Egyptians, and making court to them; as if happy were the people that had the Egyptians for their friends and allies. They go down to Egypt for help in every exigence; as if the worshippers of false gods had a better interest in heaven, and were more likely to have success on earth, than the servants of the living and true God. That which invites them to Egypt is, that the Egyptians have many chariots to accommodate them with, and horses and horsemen that were very strong; and if they could get a good body of forces from thence into their service, they would think themselves able to deal with the king of Assyria, and his numerous army. Their kings were forbidden to multiply horses and chariots, and were told of the folly of trusting to them, *Ps.* xx. 7; but they think themselves wiser than their Bible. 2. Slighting the God of Israel. They look not to the Holy One of Israel, as if he were not worth taking notice of in this distress. They advise not with him, seek not his favour, nor are in any care to make him their friend.

Secondly. The gross absurdity and folly of this sin.

1. They neglected one whom, if they would not hope in, yet they had reason to fear. They "do not seek the Lord," nor make their application to him; "yet he also is wise," ver. 2. They are solicitous to get the Egyptians into an alliance with them, because they have the reputation of a politic people; and is not God wise too? And would not Infinite Wisdom, engaged on their side, stand them in more stead than all the policies of Egypt? They are at the pains of going down to Egypt, a tedious journey, when they might have had better advice and better help by looking up to Heaven, and would not. But if they will not court God's wisdom to act for them, they shall find it act against them. He is wise, too wise for them to outwit; and he will bring evil upon those who thus affront him. He will not call back his words, as men do, because they are fickle and foolish; but "he will arise against the house of the evil-doers," this cabal of them that go down to Egypt. God will appear to their confusion, according to the word that he hath spoken; and will oppose the help they think to bring in from the workers of iniquity. Some think the Egyptians made it one condition of their coming into an alliance with them, that they should worship the gods of Egypt; and they consented to it, and therefore they are both called evil-doers, and workers of iniquity.

2. They trusted to those who were unable to help them, and would soon appear to be so, ver. 3. Let them know that the Egyptians, whom they depend so much upon, are men, and not God. As it is good for men to know themselves to be but men, *Ps.* ix. 20, so it is good for us to consider that those we love and trust to are but men; they therefore can do nothing without God, nothing against him, nothing in comparison with him. They are men, and therefore fickle and foolish, mutable and mortal; here to-day, and gone to-morrow. They are men, and therefore let us not make gods of them, by making them our hope and confidence, and expecting that in them which is to be found in God only. They are not God, they cannot do that for us which God can do, and will, if we trust in him. Let us not then neglect him, to seek to them; let us not forsake the Rock of ages for broken reeds, nor the Fountain of living waters, for broken cisterns. The Egyptians indeed have horses that are very strong, but they are flesh, and not spirit; and therefore, as strong as they are, they may be wearied with a long march, and become unserviceable, or wounded and slain in battle, and leave their riders to be ridden over. Every one knows this, that the Egyptians are not God, and their horses are not spirit; but they that seek to them for help do not consider it, else they would not put such confidence in them. Sinners may be convicted of folly by the plainest and most self-evident truths, which they cannot deny, but will not believe.

3. They would certainly be ruined with the Egyptians they trusted in, ver. 3. When the Lord doth but stretch out his hand, how easily, how effectually will he make them ashamed of their confidence in Egypt, and the Egyptians ashamed of the encouragement they gave them to trust in them; for "he that helpeth, and he that is holpen, shall fall together," and their mutual alliance shall prove their joint ruin. The Egyptians were shortly to be reckoned with, as appears by the burthen of Egypt, *ch.* xix., and then those who fled to them for shelter and succour should fall with them; for there is no outrunning the judgments of God. Evil pursues sinners, and it is just with God to make that creature a scourge to us which we make an idol of.

4. They took God's work out of his hands. They pretended a great deal of care to preserve Jerusalem, in advising to an alliance with Egypt; and when others would not fall in with their measures they pleaded self-preservation, and went to Egypt themselves. Now the prophet here tells them that Jerusalem should be preserved without aid from Egypt; and those that tarried there should be safe, when those that fled to Egypt should be ruined. Jerusalem was under God's protection, and therefore there was no occasion to put it under the protection of Egypt; but a practical distrust of God's all-sufficiency is at the bottom of all our sinful departures from him to the creature.

The prophet tells them he had it from God's own mouth, "Thus hath the Lord spoken to me." We may depend upon it, 1. That God would appear against Jerusalem's enemies with the boldness of a lion over his prey, ver. 4. When the lion comes out to seize his prey, a multitude of shepherds come out against him; for it becomes neighbours to help one another, when persons or goods are in danger. These shepherds dare not come near the lion; all they can do is to make a noise, and with that they think to fright him off. But doth he regard it? No; "he will not be afraid of their voice," nor abase himself so far as to be in the least moved by it, either to quit his prey, or to make any more haste than otherwise he would do in seizing it. "Thus will the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion," with such an unshaken, undaunted resolution not to be moved by any opposition; and he will as easily and irresistibly destroy the Assyrian army as a lion tears a lamb in pieces. Whoever appear against God, they are but like a multitude of poor simple shepherds shouting at a lion, who scorns to take notice of them, or so much as to alter his pace for them. Sure they that have such a protector need not go to Egypt for help. 2. That God would appear for Jerusalem's friends with the tenderness of a bird over her young, ver. 5. God was ready to gather Jerusalem, "as a hen gathers her brood under her wings," *Mat.* xxiii. 37; but they that trusted to the Egyptians would not. "As birds flying" to their nests with all possible speed, when they see them attacked, and fluttering about their nests with all possible concern, hovering over their young ones to protect them, and drive away the assailants, with such compassion and affection "will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem." As an eagle stirs up her young when they are in danger, takes them and bears them on her wings, so the Lord led Israel out of Egypt, *Deu.* xxxii. 11, 12. And he has now the same tender concern for them that he had then, so that they need not flee into Egypt again for shelter. Defending, he will deliver it; that is, he will so defend it, as to secure the continuance of its safety; not defend it for a while, and abandon it at last, but defend it so as it shall not fall into the enemies' hand; "I will defend this city, to save it," *ch.* xxxvii. 35; "Passing over, he will preserve it." The word for passing over is used in that sense only here, and *Ex.* xii. 12, 22, 26, concerning the destroying angel's passing over the houses of the Israelites, when he slew all the firstborn of the Egyptians; to which story this refers here. The Assyrian army was to be routed by a destroying angel, who should pass over Jerusalem, though that deserved to be destroyed, and draw his sword only against the besiegers. They shall be slain by the pestilence; but none of the besieged shall take the infection. Thus he will again pass over the houses of his people, and secure them.

6 Turn ye unto *him*
From whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.
7 For in that day every man shall cast away
His idols of silver, and his idols of gold,
Which your own hands have made unto you *for* a sin.
8 Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man;
And the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him:
But he shall flee from the sword,
And his young men shall be discomfited.
9 And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear,
And his princes shall be afraid of the ensign,
Saith the LORD, whose fire *is* in Zion,
And his furnace in Jerusalem.

This explains the foregoing promise of the deliverance of Jerusalem; she shall

be fitted for deliverance, and then it shall be wrought for her, for in that method God delivers.

First. Jerusalem shall be reformed, and so she shall be delivered from her enemies within her walls, ver. 6, 7. Here is, 1. A gracious call to repentance. This was the Lord's voice crying in the city, the voice of the rod, the voice of the sword, and the voice of the prophets interpreting the judgment; "Turn ye," O turn ye now from your evil ways "unto God;" return to your allegiance to him, "from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted;" from whom you, O children of Israel, have revolted. He minds them of their birth and parentage; that they were children of Israel, and therefore under the highest obligations imaginable to the God of Israel, as an aggravation of their revolt from him, and as an encouragement to them to return to him. They have been backsliding children, yet children; therefore let them return, and their backslidings shall be healed. They have deeply revolted, they thought politicly, (the revolters are profound, *Hos.* v. 2,) but it will prove dangerously. The stain of their sins is gone deep into their nature, not to be easily got out; like the blackness of the Ethiopian, they have deeply corrupted themselves, *Hos.* ix. 9. They have sunk deep into misery, and cannot easily recover themselves; therefore you have need both to hasten and quicken your return to God. 2. A gracious promise of the good success of this call; ver. 7, "In that day every man shall cast away his idols," in obedience to Hezekiah's orders; which, till they were alarmed by the Assyrian invasion, many refused to do. That is a happy fright which frightens us from our sins. It shall be a general reformation, every man shall cast away his own idols; shall begin with them, before he undertakes to demolish other people's idols, which there will be no need of, when every man reforms himself. It shall be a thorough reformation, for they shall part with their idolatry, their beloved sin, with their idols of silver and gold, their idols that they are most fond of. Many make an idol of their silver and gold, and by the love of that are drawn to revolt from God; but those that turn to God cast that away out of their hearts, and will be ready to part with it when God calls. It shall be a reformation upon a right principle, a principle of piety, not of politics; they shall cast away their idols, because they have been unto them for a sin, an occasion of sin; therefore they will have nothing to do with them, though they had been the work of their own hands, and upon that account they had a particular fondness for them. Sin is the work of our own hands, but in working it we have been working our own ruin, and therefore we must cast it away; and those are strangely wedded to it who will not be prevailed with to cast it away, when they see that otherwise they themselves will be castaways. Some make this to be only a prediction that those who trust in idols, when they find they stand them in no stead, will cast them away in indignation; but it agrees so exactly with *ch.* xxx. 22, that I rather take it as a promise of a sincere reformation.

Secondly. Jerusalem's besiegers shall be routed, and so she shall be delivered from the enemies about her walls; the former makes way for this. If a people return to God, they may leave it to him to plead their cause against their enemies. Then when they have cast away their idols, "then shall the Assyrian fall," ver. 8, 9. 1. The army of the Assyrians shall be laid dead upon the spot, "by the sword, not of a mighty man, nor of a mean man;" not of any man at all, either Israelite or Egyptian; not forcibly by the sword of a mighty man, nor surreptitiously by the sword of a mean man; but by the sword of an angel, who strikes more strongly than a mighty man, and yet more secretly than a mean man,—by the sword of the Lord, and his power and wrath in the hand of the angel. Thus the young men of the army shall melt and be discomfited, and become tributaries to death. When God hath a work to do against the enemies of his church, we expect it must be done by mighty men and mean men, officers and common soldiers, whereas God can, if he pleaseth, do it without either. He needs not armies of men that hath legions of angels at command, *Mat.* xxvi. 53. 2. The king of Assyria shall flee from the same,—shall flee from that invisible sword, hoping to get out of the reach of it. And he shall make the best of his way to his own dominions; shall pass over to some stronghold of his own for fear lest the Jews should pursue him, now his army was routed. Sennacherib had been very confident that he should make himself master of Jerusalem, and in the most insolent manner had set both God and Hezekiah at defiance; yet now he is made to tremble for fear of both. God can strike a terror into the proudest of men, and make the stoutest heart to tremble: see *Job* xviii. 11; xx. 24. His princes that accompany him "shall be afraid of the ensign;" shall be in a continual fright at the remembrance of the ensign in the air, which perhaps the destroying angel displayed before he gave the fatal blow; or, they shall be afraid of every ensign they see, suspecting it is a party of the Jews pursuing them. The banner that God displays for the encouragement of his people, *Ps.* lx. 4, will be a terror to his and their enemies. Thus he "cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth." But who will do this? It is the Lord, "whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem," that is, 1st. Whose residence is there, and who there keeps house, as a man doth where his fire and his oven are; it is the city of the great King, and let not the Assyrians think to turn him out of the possession of his own house. 2nd. Who is there a consuming fire to all his enemies, and will make them as a fiery oven in the day of his wrath, *Ps.* xxi. 9. He is himself "a wall of fire round about Jerusalem," so that whoever assault her it is at their peril, *Zec.* ii. 5; *Rev.* xi. 5. 3rd. Who has his altar there, on which the holy fire is continually kept burning, and sacrifices daily offered to his honour, and with which he is well pleased. And therefore he will defend this city, especially having an eye to the great sacrifice which was there also to be offered, of which all the sacrifices were types. If we keep up the fire of holy love and devotion in our hearts and houses, we may depend upon God to be a protection to us and them.

CHAPTER XXXII.

This chapter seems to be such a prophecy of the reign of Hezekiah as amounts to an abridgment of the history of it, and this with an eye to the kingdom of the Messiah, whose government was typified by the thrones of the house of David, for which reason he is so often called the Son of David. Here is, I. A prophecy of that good work of reformation with which he should begin his reign, and the happy influence it should have upon the people, who had been wretchedly corrupted and debauched in the reign of his predecessor, ver. 1—8. II. A prophecy of the great disturbance that would be given to the kingdom in the middle of his reign by the Assyrian invasion, ver. 9—14. III. A promise of better times afterwards, towards the latter end of his reign, in respect both of piety and peace, ver. 15—20; which promise may be supposed to look as far forward as the days of the Messiah.

BEHOLD, a king shall reign in righteousness,
And princes shall rule in judgment.
2 And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind,
And a covert from the tempest;
As rivers of water in a dry place,
As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.
3 And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim,
And the ears of them that hear shall hearken.
4 The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge,
And the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly.
5 The vile person shall be no more called liberal,
Nor the churl said *to be* bountiful.
6 For the vile person will speak villany,
And his heart will work iniquity,
To practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD,
To make empty the soul of the hungry,
And he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail.
7 The instruments also of the churl *are* evil:
He deviseth wicked devices
To destroy the poor with lying words,
Even when the needy speaketh right.
8 But the liberal deviseth liberal things;
And by liberal things shall he stand.

We have here the description of a flourishing kingdom; "Blessed art thou, O land," when it is thus with thee, when kings, princes, and people are in their places such as they should be. It may be taken as a directory both to magistrates and subjects what both ought to do; or as a panegyric to Hezekiah, who ruled well, and saw something of the happy effects of his good government. And it was designed to make the people sensible how happy they were under his administration, and how careful they should be to improve the advantages of it, and withal to direct them to look for the kingdom of Christ, and the times of reformation which that kingdom should introduce. It is here promised and prescribed for the comfort of the church,

First. That magistrates should do their duty in their places, and the powers answer the great ends for which they were ordained of God, ver. 1, 2. 1. There shall be a king and princes that shall reign and rule; for it cannot go well when there is no king in Israel. The princes must have a king, a monarch, over them as supreme, in whom they may unite. And the king must have princes under him, as officers, by whom he may act, 1 *Pet.* ii. 13, 14. They both shall know their place and fill it up; the king shall reign, and yet without any diminution to his just prerogative; the princes shall rule in a lower sphere, and all for the public good. 2. They shall use their power according to law, and not against it; they shall reign in righteousness and in judgment, with wisdom and equity, protecting the good, and punishing the bad. And those kings and princes Christ owns as reigning by him who decree justice, *Pr.* viii. 15. Such a king, such a prince, Christ himself is; he reigns by rule, and in righteousness will he judge the world, *ch.* ix. 7; xi. 4. 3. Thus they shall be great blessings to the people; ver. 2, "A man," that man, that king that reigns in righteousness, "shall be as a hiding-place." When princes are as they should be people are as they would be. 1st. They are sheltered and protected from many mischiefs. This good magistrate is a covert to the subject from the tempest of injury and violence, defends the poor and fatherless, that they be not made a prey of by the mighty. Whither should oppressed innocency flee, when blasted by reproach, or borne down by violence, but to the magistrate, as its hiding-place? To him it appeals, and by him it is righted. 2nd. They are refreshed and comforted with many blessings. This good magistrate gives such countenance to those that are poor and in distress, and such encouragement to every thing that is praiseworthy, that he is "as rivers of water in a dry place," cooling and cherishing, and making the earth fruitful; and "as the shadow of a great rock," under which a poor traveller may shelter himself from the scorching heat of the sun, "in a weary land." It is a great reviving to a good man, that makes conscience of doing his duty, in the midst of contempt and contradiction, at length to be backed, and favoured, and smiled upon in it by a good magistrate. All this, and much more, the man Christ Jesus is to all the willing, faithful subjects of his kingdom. When the greatest evils befall us, not only the wind, but the tempest,—when storms of guilt and wrath beset us, and beat upon us, they drive us to Christ; and in him we are not only safe but satisfied that we are so. In him we find rivers of waters for them that hunger and thirst after righteousness; all the refreshment and comfort that a needy soul can desire. And the shadow, not of a tree, which sun and rain may beat through, but of a rock, of a great rock, which reacheth a great way, for the shelter of the traveller. And some observe here, that as the covert and the hiding-place, and the rock, do themselves receive the battering of the wind and storm, to save those from them that take shelter in them, so Christ bore the storm himself, to keep it off from us.

Secondly. That subjects shall do their duty in their places.

1. They shall be willing to be taught, and to understand things aright; shall lay aside their prejudices against their rulers and teachers, and submit to the light and power of truth, ver. 3. When this blessed work of reformation is set on foot, and men do their parts towards it, God will not be wanting to do his. Then "the eyes of them that see," of the prophets, the seers, "shall not be dim;" but God will bless them with visions, to be by them communicated to the people. And those that read the word written shall no longer have a veil upon their hearts, but shall see things clearly. Then "the ears of them that hear" the word preached "shall hearken" diligently, and readily receive what they hear, and not be so dull of hearing as they have been. This shall be done by the grace of God, especially gospel grace; for "the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made," hath new made, "even both of them."

2. There shall be a wonderful change wrought in them, by that which is taught them, ver. 4. 1st. They shall have a clear head, and be able to discern things that differ, and distinguish concerning them. The heart of those that were hasty and rash, and could not take time to digest and consider things, shall now be cured of their precipitation, and shall understand knowledge; for the Spirit of God will open their understanding, which blessed work Christ wrought in his disciples after his resurrection, *Lu.* xxiv. 45, as a specimen of what he would do for all his, in giving them an understanding, 1 *Jno.* v. 20. The pious designs of good princes are then likely to take effect, when their subjects allow themselves liberty to consider, and to think so freely as to take things aright. 2nd. They shall have a ready utterance. "The tongue of the stammerers," that used

to blunder whenever they spoke of the things of God, shall now "be ready to speak plainly," as those that understand what they speak of, that believe, and therefore speak. There shall be a great increase of such clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge in the things of God, that those from whom one would not have expected it shall speak intelligently of those things, very much to the honour of God, and the edification of others. Their hearts being full of this good matter, their tongues shall be as the pen of a ready writer, *Ps.* xlv. 1.

3. The differences between good and evil, virtue and vice, shall be kept up, and no more confounded by those who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; ver. 5, "The vile shall no more be called liberal," that is, 1st. Ill men shall no more be preferred by the prince. When a king reigns in justice he will not put those in places of honour and power that are ill-natured, and of base and sordid spirits, and care not what injury or mischief they do, so they may but compass their own ends. Such are vile persons, as Antiochus is called, *Dan.* xi. 21. When they are advanced, they are called liberal and bountiful,—are called benefactors, *Lu.* xxii. 25. But it shall not always be thus; when the world grows wiser men shall be preferred according to their merit; and honour, which was never thought seemly for a fool, (*Pr.* xxvi. 1,) shall no longer be thrown away upon such. 2nd. Ill men shall be no more had in reputation among the people, nor vice disguised with the colours of virtue. 'It shall no more be said to Nabal, Thou art Nadib,' so the words are; such a covetous muckworm as Nabal was; a fool, but for his money, shall not be complimented with the title of a gentleman, or a prince; neither shall they call a churl, that minds none but himself, doth no good with what he has, but is an unprofitable burthen of the earth, they shall not call him, My lord; or rather, they shall not say of him, 'He is rich,' for so the word signifies. Those only are reckoned to be rich that are rich in good works; not that have abundance, but that use it well. In short, it is well with a people when men are generally valued by their virtue, and usefulness, and beneficence to mankind, and not by their wealth or titles of honour. Whether this was fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, and how far it refers to the kingdom of Christ, in which we are sure men are judged of by what they are, not by what they have, nor is any man's character mistaken, we will not say, but it prescribes an excellent rule both to princes and people, to respect men according to their personal merit. And to enforce this rule, here is a description both of the vile person and of the liberal; and by it we shall see such a vast difference between them, that we must quite forget ourselves if we pay that respect to the vile person and the churl which is due only to the liberal.

First. A vile person and a churl will do mischief; and the more if he be preferred, and have power in his hand. His honours will make him worse, and not better, ver. 6, 7. See the character of these base, ill-conditioned men. *1st.* They are always plotting some unjust thing or other; designing ill either to particular persons or to the public, and contriving how to bring it about; and so many silly piques they have to gratify, and mean revenges, that there appears not in them the least spark of generosity. Their hearts will be still working some iniquity or other. Observe, There is the work of the heart as well as the work of the hands. As thoughts are words to God, so designs are works in his account. See what pains sinners take in sin; they labour it, their hearts are intent upon it, and with a great deal of art and application they work iniquity. They devise wicked devices with all the subtlety of the old serpent, and a great deal of deliberation, which makes the sin exceeding sinful; for the more there is of plot and management in a sin the more there is of Satan in it. *2nd.* They carry on their plots by trick and dissimulation. When they are meditating iniquity, they practise hypocrisy, feign themselves just men, *Lu.* xx. 20. The most abominable mischiefs shall be disguised with the most plausible pretences of devotion to God, regard to man, and concern for some common good. Those are the vilest of men that intend the worst mischief when they speak fair. *3rd.* They speak villany. When they are in a passion, you will see what they are by the base ill language they give to those about them, which no way becomes men of rank and honour. Or, in giving verdict or judgment they villanously put false colours upon things to pervert justice. *4th.* They affront God, who is a righteous God and loveth righteousness. They utter error against the Lord, and therein they practise profaneness; for so the word signifies, which we translate hypocrisy. They give an unjust sentence, and then profanely make use of the name of God for the ratification of it, as if because the judgment is God's (*Deu.* i. 17) therefore their false and unjust judgment was his. This is uttering error against the Lord, under pretence of uttering truth and justice for him. And nothing can be more impudently done against God than to patronize wickedness with his name. *5th.* They abuse mankind, those particularly whom they are bound to protect and relieve. (1.) Instead of supplying the wants of the poor, they impoverish them; they "make empty the soul of the hungry;" either taking away the food they have, or, which is almost equivalent, denying the supply they want, and which they have to give. And they "cause the drink of the thirsty to fail," that is, they cut off the relief they used to have, though they need it as much as ever. Those are vile persons indeed that rob the spital. (2.) Instead of righting the poor when they appeal to their judgment, they contrive to destroy the poor; to ruin them in their courts of judicature, with lying words, in favour of the rich, to whom they are plainly partial,—yea, though the needy speak right, though the evidence be never so full for them, to make out the equity of their cause. It is the bribe that governs them, not the right. Lastly, These churls and vile persons have always ill instruments about them, that are ready to serve their villanous purposes; "all their servants are wicked." There is no design so palpably unjust but there may be found those that will be employed as tools to put it in execution; "The instruments of the churl are evil," and one cannot expect otherwise; but this is our comfort, that they can do no more mischief than God permits them.

Secondly. One that is truly liberal, and deserves the honour of being called so, makes it his business to do good to everybody, according as his sphere is, ver. 8. Observe, 1st. The care he takes, and the contrivances he hath to do good. He "deviseth liberal things," as much as the churl or niggard projects how to save and lay up what he hath for himself only, so much the good charitable man projects how to use and lay out what he has in the best manner for the good of others. Charity must be directed by wisdom, and liberal things done prudently, and with device, that the good intention of them may be answered, and it may not be charity misplaced. The liberal man, when he has done all the liberal things that are in his own power, deviseth liberal things for others to do according to their power, and puts them upon doing them. *2nd.* The comfort he takes, and the advantage he hath, in doing good; "By liberal things he shall stand," or be established. The providence of God will reward him for his liberality with a settled prosperity, and an established reputation. The grace of God will give him abundance of satisfaction, and confirmed peace in his own bosom. What tosseth others shall not disturb him,—his heart is fixed. This is the recompence of charity, *Ps.* cxii. 5, 6. 'Some read it, 'The prince, or honourable man, will take honourable courses, and by such honourable or ingenuous courses he shall stand,' or be established. It is well with a land when the honourable of it are indeed men of honour, and scorn to do a base thing; when its king is thus the son of nobles.

9 Rise up, ye women that are at ease;
Hear my voice, ye careless daughters;
Give ear unto my speech.
10 Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless [women:
For the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come.
11 Tremble, ye women that are at ease;
Be troubled, ye careless ones:
Strip you, and make you bare, and gird *sackcloth* upon *your* loins.
12 They shall lament for the teats,
For the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. [briers;
13 Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns *and*
Yea, upon all the houses of joy *in* the joyous city:
14 Because the palaces shall be forsaken;
The multitude of the city shall be left;
The forts and towers shall be for dens for ever,
A joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks;
15 Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high,
And the wilderness be a fruitful field,
And the fruitful field be counted for a forest.
16 Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness,
And righteousness remain in the fruitful field.
17 And the work of righteousness shall be peace;
And the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.
18 And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation,
And in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places;
19 When it shall hail, coming down on the forest;
And the city shall be low in a low place.
20 Blessed *are* ye that sow beside all waters,
That send forth *thither* the feet of the ox and the ass.

In these verses we have God rising up to judgment against the vile persons, to punish them for their villany; but at length returning in mercy to the liberal, to reward them for their liberality.

First. When there was so great a corruption of manners, and so much provocation given to the holy God, bad times might well be expected; and here is warning given of such times coming. The alarm is sounded to "the women that were at ease," ver. 9, and "the careless daughters," to feed whose pride, vanity, and luxury, their husbands and fathers were tempted to starve the poor. Let them hear what the prophet has to say to them in God's name, "Rise up, and hear" with reverence and attention.

1. Let them know that God was about to bring wasting, desolating judgments upon the land in which they lived in pleasure, and were wanton. This seems to refer primarily to the desolations made by Sennacherib's army, when he seized all the fenced cities of Judah; but then those words, "many days and years," must be rendered as the margin reads them, 'days above a year;' that is, something above a year shall this havoc be in the making; so long it was from the first entrance of that army into the land of Judah to the overthrow of it. But it is applicable to the wretched disappointment which they will certainly meet with, first or last, that set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in it; "Ye shall be troubled, ye careless women." It will not secure us from trouble to cast away care when we are at ease; nay, to those who affect to live carelessly, even little troubles will be great vexations, and press hard upon them. They were careless and at ease, because they had money enough, and mirth enough. But the prophet here tells them, 1st. That the country whence they had their rents and dainties should shortly be laid waste. "The vintage shall fail," and then what will ye do for wine to make merry with; the gathering of fruits shall not come, for there shall be none to be gathered, and you will find the want of them, ver. 10. You will want "the teats," the good milk from the cows; the pleasant fields, and their products. The useful fields, that are serviceable to human life are the pleasant ones; you will want the fruitful vine, and the grapes it used to yield you. The abuse of plenty is justly punished with scarcity; and they deserve to be deprived of the supports of life who made them the food and fuel of lust, and prepared them for Baal. 2nd. That the cities too, the cities of Judah, where they lived at ease, spent their rents, and made themselves merry with their dainties, should be laid waste too; ver. 13, 14, "Briars and thorns," the fruits of sin and the curse, shall come up, not only "upon the land of my people," which shall lie uncultivated, but "upon all the houses of joy;" the play houses, the gaming houses, the taverns in the joyous cities. When a foreign army was ravaging the country, the houses of joy no doubt became houses of mourning. Then the palaces, or noblemen's houses, were forsaken by their owners, who perhaps fled to Egypt for refuge; the multitude of the city were left by their leaders to shift for themselves. Then the stately houses shall be dens for ever, which had been as forts and towers for strength and magnificence. They shall be abandoned, the owners shall never return to them; everybody shall look upon them to be like Jericho, an anathema; so that even when peace returns, they shall not be rebuilt, but shall be thrown to the waste, "a joy of wild asses, and a pasture of flocks." Thus is many a house brought to ruin by sin. *Jam seges est ubi Troja fuit,*—'Corn grows on the site of Troy.'

2. In the foresight of this, let them "tremble and be troubled, strip them, and gird sackcloth upon their loins," ver. 11. This intimates not only that when the calamity comes they shall thus be made to tremble, and be forced to strip themselves, that then God's judgments would strip them, and make them bare, but, 1st. That the best prevention of the trouble would be to repent, and humble themselves for their sin, and lie in the dust before God in true remorse and godly sorrow, which would be the lengthening out of their tranquillity,

This is meeting God in the way of his judgments, and saving a correction by correcting our own mistakes. Those only shall break that will not bend. 2nd. That the best preparation for the trouble would be to deny themselves, and live a life of mortification, and to sit loose to all the delights of sense. Those that have already, by a holy contempt of this world, stripped themselves, can easily bear to be stripped when trouble and death come.

Secondly. While there was still a remnant that kept their integrity, they had reason to hope for good times at length, and such times the prophet here gives them a pleasant prospect of. Such times they saw in the latter end of the reign of Hezekiah; but the prophecy may well be supposed to look farther, to the days of the Messiah, who is King of righteousness, and King of peace, to whom all the prophets bare witness. Now observe,

1. How those blessed times should be introduced. By the "pouring out of the Spirit from on high," ver. 15; which speaks not only the good will of God towards us, but the good work of God in us; for then, and not till then, there will be good times, when God by his grace gives men good hearts. And, therefore, God's "giving his Holy Spirit to them that ask him" is in effect his giving them all good things, as appears by comparing *Lu.* xi. 13 with *Mat.* vii. 11. This is the great thing that God's people comfort themselves with the hopes of, that "the Spirit shall be poured out upon them;" that there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the spirit of grace than formerly, according as the necessity of the church in its desolate estate calls for. This comes from on high, and therefore they look up to their Father in heaven for it. When God designs favours for his church, he pours out his Spirit both to prepare his people to receive his favours and to qualify those whom he designs to employ as instruments of his favour, and give them success; for their endeavours to repair the desolations of the church are all fruitless, "until the Spirit be poured out upon them;" and then the work is done suddenly. The kingdom of the Messiah was brought in and set up by the pouring out of the Spirit, *Acts* ii.; and so it is still kept up, and will be to the end.

2. What a wonderful happy change shall then be made. That which was a wilderness, dry and barren, shall become a fruitful field; and that which we now reckon a fruitful field, in comparison with what it shall be then, shall be counted for a forest; "Then shall the earth yield her increase." It is promised that in the days of the Messiah "the fruit of the earth shall shake like Lebanon," *Ps.* lxxii. 16. Some apply this to the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel church, which made the wilderness a fruitful field; and the rejection and exclusion of the Jews, which made that a forest which had been a fruitful field. On the Gentiles was poured out a spirit of life, but on the Jews a spirit of slumber. See what is the evidence and effect of the pouring out of the Spirit upon any soul; it is thereby made fruitful, and has its fruit unto holiness. Three things go to make these times happy:

1st. Judgment and righteousness, ver. 16. When the Spirit is poured out upon a land, "then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness," and turn it into a fruitful field; and "righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field," and make it yet more fruitful. Ministers shall expound the law and magistrates execute it, and both so judiciously and faithfully, that by both the bad shall be made good, and the good made better. Among all sorts of people, the poor and low and unlearned, that are neglected as the wilderness; and the rich and great and learned, that are valued as the fruitful field; there shall be right thoughts of things, good principles commanding, and conscience made of good and evil, sin and duty. Or, in all parts of the land, both champaign and enclosed, country and city, the ruder parts and those that are more cultivated and refined, justice shall be duly administered. The law of Christ introduceth a judgment or rule by which we must be governed; and the Gospel of Christ a righteousness by which we must be saved. And wherever the Spirit is poured out, both these dwell and remain as an everlasting righteousness.

2nd. Peace and quietness, ver. 17, 18. This of two kinds: *First.* Inward peace, ver. 17; this follows upon the indwelling of righteousness, ver. 16. Those in whom that work is wrought shall experience this blessed product of it. It is itself peace, and the effect of it "quietness and assurance for ever;" that is, a holy serenity and security of mind, by which the soul enjoys itself, and enjoys its God; and it is not in the power of this world to disturb it in those enjoyments. Note, Peace and quietness, and everlasting assurance, may be expected, and shall be found in the way and work of righteousness. True satisfaction is to be had only in true religion, and there it is to be had without fail. Those are the quiet and peaceable lives that are lived in all godliness and honesty, 1 *Tim.* ii. 2. 1*st.* Even the work of righteousness shall be peace even in the doing of our duty; we shall find abundance of true pleasure, a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Though the work of righteousness may be toilsome and costly, and expose us to contempt, yet it is peace, such peace as is sufficient to bear our charges. 2*nd.* The "effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance;" not only to the end of time, of our time, and in the end, but to the endless ages of eternity. Real holiness is real happiness now, and shall be perfect happiness, that is, perfect holiness, for ever. *Secondly.* Outward peace, ver. 18. It is a great mercy when those who by the grace of God have quiet and peaceable spirits are by the providence of God made to dwell in quiet and peaceable habitations; not disturbed in their houses, or solemn assemblies. When the terror of Sennacherib's invasion was over, the people no doubt were more sensible than ever of the mercy of a quiet habitation; not disturbed with the alarms of war. Let every family study to keep itself quiet from strifes and jars within; not two against three, and three against two in the house; and then put itself under God's protection to dwell safely, and to be quiet from the fear of evil without. Jerusalem shall be a peaceable habitation, compare *ch.* xxxiii. 20. Even when it shall hail, and there shall be a violent battering storm "coming down on the forest," that lies bleak, then shall "Jerusalem be a quiet resting-place," for "the city shall be low in a low place;" under the wind, not exposed, as those cities are that stand high, to the fury of the storm; but sheltered by "the mountains that are round about Jerusalem," *Ps.* cxxv. 2. The high forts and "towers are brought down," ver. 14; but the city that lies low shall be a quiet resting-place. Those are most safe, and may dwell most at ease, that are humble and are willing to dwell low, ver. 19. Those that would dwell in a peaceable habitation must be willing to dwell low, and in a low place. Some think here is an allusion to the preservation of the land of Goshen from the plague of hail, which made great destruction in the land of Egypt.

3rd. Plenty and abundance. There shall be such good crops gathered in everywhere, and every year, that the husbandmen shall be commended, and thought happy, "who sow beside all waters," ver. 20; that sow all the grounds that are fit for seedness, that cast their bread or bread corn upon the waters, *Eccl.* xi. 1. God will give the increase, but then the husbandman must be industrious, and mind his business, and "sow beside all waters;" which if he do, the corn shall come up so thick and rank, that he shall turn in his cattle, even the ox and the ass, to eat the tops of it, and keep it under. This is applicable, *First.* To the preaching of the word. Some think it points at the ministry of the apostles, who as husbandmen went forth to sow their seed, *Mat.* xiii. 3; and they "sowed beside all waters," they preached the Gospel wherever they came. Waters signify people, and they preached to multitudes. Wherever they found men's hearts softened and moistened, and disposed to receive the word, they cast in the good seed. And whereas, by the law of Moses, the Jews were forbidden to plough with an ox and an ass, *Deu.* xxii. 10, which intimated, that Jews and Gentiles should not intermix, now that distinction shall be taken away, and both the ox and the ass, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be employed in, and enjoy the benefit of, the gospel husbandry. *Secondly.* To works of charity. When God sends these happy times, blessed are they that improve them in doing good with what they have; that sow beside all waters, that embrace all opportunities of relieving the necessitous; for in due season they shall reap.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

This chapter relates to the same events with that foregoing, the distress of Judah and Jerusalem by Sennacherib's invasion, and their deliverance out of that distress by the destruction of the Assyrian army; these are intermixed in the prophecy in the way of a Pindaric. Observe, I. The great distress that Judah and Jerusalem should then be brought into, ver. 7—9. II. The particular frights which the sinners in Zion should then be in, ver. 13, 14. III. The prayers of good people to God in this distress, ver. 2. IV. The holy security which they should enjoy in the midst of this trouble, ver. 15, 16. V. The destruction of the army of the Assyrians, ver. 1—3; in which God would be greatly glorified, ver. 5, 10—12. VI. The enriching of the Jews with the spoil of the Assyrian camp, ver. 4, 23, 24. VII. The happy settlement of Jerusalem and the Jewish state upon this: religion shall be uppermost, ver. 6, and their civil state shall flourish, ver. 17—23. This was soon fulfilled, but is written for our learning.

WOE to thee that spoilest, and thou *wast* not spoiled;
And dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee!
When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled;
And when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously,
they shall deal treacherously with thee.

2 O LORD, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee:
Be thou their arm every morning,
Our salvation also in the time of trouble.

3 At the noise of the tumult the people fled;
At the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered.

4 And your spoil shall be gathered *like* the gathering of the caterpiller:
As the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them.

5 The LORD is exalted;
For he dwelleth on high:
He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.

6 And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times,
And strength of salvation:
The fear of the LORD *is* his treasure.

7 Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without:
The ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.

8 The highways lie waste,
The wayfaring man ceaseth:
He hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities,
He regardeth no man.

9 The earth mourneth *and* languisheth:
Lebanon is ashamed *and* hewn down:
Sharon is like a wilderness;
And Bashan and Carmel shake off *their fruits.*

10 Now will I rise, saith the LORD;
Now will I be exalted;
Now will I lift up myself.

11 Ye shall conceive chaff, ye shall bring forth stubble:
Your breath, *as* fire, shall devour you.

12 And the people shall be *as* the burnings of lime:
As thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

Here is, First. The proud and false Assyrian justly reckoned with for all his fraud and violence, and laid under a woe, ver. 1. Observe, 1. The sin which the enemy had been guilty of. He had spoiled the people of God, and made a prey of them, and herein had broken his treaty of peace with them, and dealt treacherously. Truth and mercy are two such sacred things, and have so much of God in them, that those cannot but be under the wrath of God that make conscience of neither, but are perfectly lost to both; that care not what mischief they do, what spoil they make, what dissimulations they are guilty of, nor what solemn engagements they violate, to compass their own wicked designs. Bloody and deceitful men are the worst of men. 2. The aggravation of this sin. He spoiled those that had never done him any injury, and that he had no pretence to quarrel with; and dealt treacherously with those that had always dealt faithfully with him. Note, The less provocation we have from men to do an ill thing, the more provocation we give to God by it. 3. The punishment he should fall under for this sin. He that spoiled the cities of Judah shall have his own army destroyed by an angel, and his camp plundered by those whom he had made a prey of. The Chaldeans shall deal treacherously with the Assyrians, and revolt from them. Two of Sennacherib's own sons shall deal treacherously with him, and basely murder him at his devotions. Note, The righteous God often pays sinners in their own coin; "He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity," *Rev.* xiii. 10, and xviii. 6. 4. The time when he shall be thus dealt with. When he shall "make an end to spoil, and to deal treacherously;"

not by repentance and reformation, that might prevent his ruin, *Dan.* iv. 27; but when he shall have done his worst, when he shall have gone as far as God would permit him to go, to the utmost of his tether, then the cup of trembling shall be put into his hand. When he shall have arrived to his full stature in impiety, shall have filled up the measure of his iniquity, then all shall be called over again. When he has done, God will begin, for his day is coming.

Secondly. The praying people of God, earnest at the throne of grace for mercy for the land, now in its distress, ver. 2. "O Lord, be merciful to us." Men are cruel, be thou gracious; we have deserved thy wrath, but we intreat thy favour; if we may find thee propitious to us, we are happy. The trouble we are in cannot hurt us, shall not ruin us. It is in vain to expect relief from creatures, we have no confidence in the Egyptians; but we have waited for thee only, resolving to submit to thee, whatever the issue of the trouble be, and hoping that it shall be a comfortable issue. Those that by faith humbly wait for God shall certainly find him gracious to them. They pray, 1. For those that were employed in military services for them; "Be thou their arm every morning." Hezekiah, and his princes, and all the men of war, need continual supplies of strength and courage from thee; supply their need therefore, and be to them a God all-sufficient. Every morning, when they go forth upon the business of the day, and perhaps have new work to do, and new difficulties to encounter, let them be afresh animated and invigorated, and as the day so let the strength be. In our spiritual warfare our own hands are not sufficient for us, nor can we bring anything to pass unless God not only strengthen our arms, *Gen.* xlix. 24, but be himself our arm; so entirely do we depend upon him as our arm every morning, so constantly do we depend upon his power, as well as his compassions, which are new every morning, *Lam.* iii. 23. If God leave us to ourselves any morning we are undone; we must therefore every morning commit ourselves to him, and go forth in his strength to do the work of the day in its day. 2. For the body of the people. "Be thou our salvation also in the time of trouble;" ours that sit still, and do not venture into the high places of the field. They depend upon God not only as their Saviour, to work deliverance for them, but as their salvation itself; for, whatever becomes of their secular interests, they will reckon themselves safe and saved, if they have him for their God. If he undertake to be their Saviour, he will be their salvation; for "as for God his work is perfect." Some read it thus: 'Thou who wast their arm every morning,' who wast the continual strength and help of our fathers before us, "be thou our salvation also in time of trouble;" help us as thou helpedst them. "They looked unto thee, and were lightened," *Ps.* xxxiv. 5; let us not then walk in darkness.

Thirdly. The Assyrian army ruined, and their camp made a rich, but cheap and easy prey to Judah and Jerusalem. No sooner is the prayer made, ver. 2, but it is answered, ver. 3; nay, it is outdone. They prayed that God would save them from their enemies; but he doth more than that, he gives them victory over their enemies, and abundant cause to triumph; for, 1. The strength of the Assyrian camp is broken, ver. 3. When the destroying angel slew so many thousands of them, "at the noise of the tumult," of the shrieks of the dying men, who we may suppose did not die silently, the rest of the people fled, and shifted every one for his own safety. When God did thus lift up himself, the several nations, or clans, of which the army was composed, were scattered. It was time to stir when such an unprecedented plague broke out among them. When God ariseth, his enemies are scattered, *Ps.* lxviii. 1. 2. The spoil of the Assyrian camp is seized by way of reprisal, for all the desolations of the defenced cities of Judah; ver. 4, "Your spoil shall be gathered" by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "like the gathering of the caterpillar, and as the running to and fro of locusts;" that is, the spoilers shall as easily and as quickly make themselves masters of the riches of the Assyrians as a host of caterpillars or locusts make a field or a tree bare. Thus the wealth of the sinners is laid up for the just, and Israel enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians. Some make the Assyrians to be caterpillars and locusts, which when they are killed are gathered together in heaps, as the frogs of Egypt, and are run upon, and trodden to dirt.

Fourthly. God and his Israel glorified and exalted thereby. When the spoil of the enemy is thus gathered, 1. God will have the praise of it; ver. 5, "The Lord is exalted." It is his honour thus to abase proud men and hide them in the dust together; thus he magnifies his own name, and his people give him the glory of it, as Israel, when the Egyptians were drowned, *Ex.* xv. 1, &c. He is exalted as one that dwelleth on high, out of the reach of their blasphemies, and that has an overruling power over them; and wherein they deal proudly delights to shew himself above them; who doth what he will, and they cannot resist him. 2. His people will have the blessing of it. When God lifts up himself to scatter the nations that are in confederacy against Jerusalem, ver. 3, then, as a preparative for that, or as the fruit and product of it, he "hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness;" not only with a sense of justice, but with a zeal for it, and an universal care that it be duly administered. It shall again be called "The city of righteousness," *ch.* i. 26. In this the grace of God is exalted as much as his providence was in the destruction of the Assyrian army. We may conclude God has mercy in store for a people when he fills them with judgment and righteousness, when all sorts of people, and all their actions and affairs, are governed by them, and they are so full of them that no other considerations can crowd in to sway them against these. Hezekiah and his people are encouraged, ver. 6, with an assurance that God would stand by them in their distress. Here is, 1st. A gracious promise of God for them to stay themselves upon, "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation." Here is a double end proposed, and that is, the stability of our times, that things be not disturbed and unhinged at home; and the strength of salvation, deliverance from, and success against, enemies abroad. The salvation that God ordains for his people hath strength in it; it is a horn of salvation. And here is the way and means for obtaining this end, wisdom and knowledge, not only piety but prudence; that is it by which the blessing of God will be the stability of our times, and the strength of salvation; that wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, and which sacrificeth private interests to the public good; such prudence as this will establish truth and peace, and fortify the bulwarks in defence of them. 2nd. A pious maxim of state for Hezekiah and his people to govern themselves by, "The fear of the Lord is his treasure." It is God's treasure in the world, from which he receives his tribute; or, rather, it is the prince's treasure: a good prince accounts it so, that wisdom is better than gold, and he shall find it so. Note, True religion is the true treasure of any prince or people; it denominates them rich. Those places that have plenty of Bibles and ministers, and serious, good people, are really rich; and it contributes to that which makes a nation rich in this world. It is therefore the interest of a people to support religion among them, and take heed of every thing that threatens to hinder it.

Fifthly. The great distress that Jerusalem was brought into described; that they who believed the prophet might know beforehand what troubles were coming, and might provide accordingly; and that when the foregoing promise of their deliverance should have its accomplishment the remembrance of the extremity of their case might help to magnify God in it, and make them the more thankful, ver. 7—9. It is here foretold, 1. That the enemy would be very insolent and abusive, and there would be no dealing with him, either by treaties of peace, (for "he has broken the covenant," and never stuck at it, as if it were below him to be a servant to his word,) or by the preparations of war, for "he hath despised the cities;" scorns to take notice either of their appeals to justice, or of their petitions for mercy. He makes himself master of them so easily, though they are called fenced cities, and meets with so little resistance, that he despiseth them; and hath no relentings when he puts all to the sword, for he regardeth no man; hath no pity or concern, no, not for those that he is under particular obligations to. He neither fears God nor regards man, but is haughty and imperious to every one. These are those that take a pride in trampling upon all mankind, and have neither veneration for the honourable nor compassion for the miserable. 2. That therefore he would not be brought to any terms of reconciliation. "The valiant ones of Jerusalem" being unable to make their parts good with him, must be contentedly run down with noise and insolence, which will make them cry without, because they cannot serve their country as they might have done against a fair adversary. The ambassadors sent by Hezekiah to treat of peace, finding him so haughty and unmanageable, shall weep bitterly for vexation, at the disappointment they had met with in their negotiations; they shall weep like children, as despairing to find out any expedient to pacify him. 3. That the country should be made quite desolate for a time by his army. 1st. No man durst travel the roads, so that a stop was put to trade and commerce; and, which was worse, no man could safely go up to Jerusalem to keep the solemn feasts, "The highways lie waste." While the fields lie waste, trodden like the highways, the highways lie waste, untrodden like the fields, for the traveller ceaseth. 2nd. No man had any profit from the grounds, ver. 9. The earth used to rejoice in its products for the service of God's Israel, but now the enemies of Israel eat them up, or tread them down, it mourns and languisheth; the country looks melancholy, and the country people have misery in their countenances, wanting necessary food for themselves and their families. The wonted joy of harvest is turned into lamentation, so withering and uncertain are all worldly joys. The desolation is universal. That part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes was already laid waste; Lebanon, famed for cedars, Sharon for roses, Bashan for cattle, Carmel for corn, all very fruitful, are now become like wildernesses; are ashamed to be called by their old names, they are so unlike what they were. They shake off their fruits before their time, into the hand of the spoiler, which used to be gathered seasonably by the hand of the owner.

Sixthly. God appeared at length in his glory against this proud invader, ver. 10—12. When things are brought thus to the last extremity, 1. God will magnify himself. He had seemed to sit by as an unconcerned spectator, but "Now will I rise, saith the Lord;" now will I appear and act, and therein I will be not only evidenced but exalted; he will not only demonstrate that "there is a God that judgeth in the earth," but that he is God over all, and higher than the highest. "Now will I lift up myself," will prepare for action, will act vigorously, and will be glorified in it. God's time to appear for his people is when their affairs are reduced to the lowest ebb, "when their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left," *Deu.* xxxii. 36. When all other helpers fail, then is God's time to help. 2. He will bring down the Assyrian. You, O Assyrians, are big with hopes that you shall have all the wealth of Jerusalem for your own, and are in pain till it be so; but all your hopes shall come to nothing, "You shall conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble," which is not only worthless and good for nothing, but combustible, and proper fuel for the fire, which it cannot escape when "your own breath as fire shall devour you;" that is, the breath of God's wrath provoked against you by the breath of your sins: your malignant breath, the threatenings and slaughter you breathe out against the people of God, this shall devour you; and your blasphemous breath against God and his name. God will make their own tongues to fall upon them, and their own breath to blow the fire that shall consume them. And then no wonder that the people are as the burnings of lime in a lime-kiln, all on fire together; and as thorns cut up, which are dried and withered, and therefore easily take fire, and are soon burnt up. Such was the destruction of the Assyrian army; it was like the burning up of thorns which can well be spared, or the burning of lime, which makes it good for something. The burning of that army enlightened the world with the knowledge of God's power, and made his name shine bright.

13 Hear, ye *that are* far off, what I have done;
And, ye *that are* near, acknowledge my might.
14 The sinners in Zion are afraid;
Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites.
Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?
Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?
15 He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly;
He that despiseth the gain of oppressions,
That shaketh his hands from holding of bribes,
That stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood,
And shutteth his eyes from seeing evil;
16 He shall dwell on high:
His place of defence *shall be* the munitions of rocks:
Bread shall be given him;
His waters *shall be* sure.
17 Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty:
They shall behold the land that is very far off.
18 Thine heart shall meditate terror.
Where *is* the scribe? where *is* the receiver?
Where *is* he that counted the towers?
19 Thou shalt not see a fierce people,
A people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive;
Of a stammering tongue, *that thou canst* not understand
20 Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities:
Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation,
A tabernacle *that* shall not be taken down;

Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed,
Neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.
21 But there the glorious LORD *will be* unto us
A place of broad rivers *and* streams;
Wherein shall go no galley with oars,
Neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.
22 For the LORD *is* our judge, the LORD *is* our lawgiver,
The LORD *is* our king; he will save us.
23 Thy tacklings are loosed;
They could not well strengthen their mast,
They could not spread the sail:
Then is the prey of a great spoil divided;
The lame take the prey.
24 And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick:
The people that dwell therein *shall be* forgiven *their* iniquity.

Here is a preface that commands attention, and it is fit all should attend, both near and far off, when God speaks, and to what God acts; ver. 13, "Hear ye that are afar off," whether in place or time. Let distant regions and future ages hear "what God has done." They do so, they will do so from the Scripture, with as much assurance as those that were near; the neighbouring nations, and those that lived then. But whoever hears what God has done, whether near or afar off, let them acknowledge his might, that is irresistible, and that he can do every thing. Those are very stupid who hear what God has done, and yet will not acknowledge his might. Now what is it that God has done which we must take notice of, and in which we must acknowledge his might?

First. He hath struck a terror upon the sinners in Zion; ver. 14, "Fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites." There are sinners in Zion, hypocrites that enjoy Zion's privileges, and concur in Zion's services, but their hearts are not right in the sight of God; they keep up secret haunts of sin under the cloak of a visible profession, which convict them of hypocrisy. And sinners in Zion will have a great deal to answer for above other sinners, and their place in Zion will be so far from being their security, that it will aggravate both their sin and punishment. Now those sinners in Zion, though always subject to secret frights and terrors, were struck with a more than ordinary consternation, from the convictions of their own consciences. 1. When they saw the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, and ready to set fire to it, and lay it in ashes, and burn the wasps in the nest, finding they could not make their escape to Egypt, as some had done, and distrusting the promises God had made by his prophets, that he would deliver them, they were at their wit's end, and ran about like men distracted, crying, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire?" let us, therefore, abandon the city, and shift for ourselves elsewhere; one had as good live in everlasting burnings as live here. 'Who will stand up for us against this devouring fire?' so some read it. See here how the sinners in Zion are affected when the judgments of God are abroad; while they were only threatened, they slighted them, and made nothing of them; but when they come to be executed they run into the other extreme: then they magnify them and make the worst of them; they call them devouring fire and everlasting burnings, and despair of relief and succour. Those that rebel against the commands of the word cannot take the comforts of it in a time of need. Or rather, 2. When they saw the Assyrian army destroyed; for the destruction of that is the fire spoken of immediately before, ver. 11, 12. When the sinners in Zion saw what dreadful execution the wrath of God made, they were in a great fright, being conscious to themselves that they had provoked this God by their secret worshipping of other gods, and therefore they cry out, "Who among us shall dwell with this devouring fire," before which so vast an army is as thorns? "Who among us shall dwell with these everlasting burnings," which have made the Assyrians as the burnings of lime? ver. 12. Thus they said or should have said. Note, God's judgments upon the enemies of Zion should strike a terror upon the sinners in Zion; nay, David himself trembles at them, *Ps.* cxix. 120. God himself is this devouring fire, *Heb.* xii. 29; "Who is able to stand before him?" 1 *Sam.* vi. 29. His wrath will burn those everlastingly that have made themselves fuel for it. It is a fire that shall never be quenched, nor will ever go out of itself; for it is the wrath of an everlasting God preying upon the conscience of an immortal soul; and the most daring sinners cannot bear up against it, cannot bear either the execution of it or the fearful expectation of it. Let this awaken us all "to flee from the wrath to come," by flying to Christ as our refuge.

Secondly. He hath graciously provided for the security of his people that trust in him. Hear this and acknowledge his power, in making those that walk righteously and speak uprightly to dwell on high, ver. 15, 16. We have here,

1. The good man's character, which he preserves even in times of common iniquity, in divers instances. 1st. He walks righteously; that is, in the whole course of his conversation he acts by rules of equity, and makes conscience of rendering to all their due, to God his due as well as to men theirs. His walk is righteousness itself; he would not for a world wilfully do an unjust thing. 2nd. He speaks uprightly, uprightnesses, so the word is; he speaks what is true and right, and with an honest intention. He cannot think one thing and speak another, nor look one way and row another. His word is to him as sacred as his oath, and is not yea and nay. 3rd. He is so far from coveting ill-got gain, that he despiseth it, thinks it a mean and sordid thing, and unbecoming a man of honour to enrich himself by any hardship put upon his neighbour. He scorns to do an ill thing, nay, a severe thing, though he might get by it. He doth not overvalue gain itself, and therefore easily abhors the gain that is not honestly come by. 4th. If he have a bribe at any time thrust into his hand to pervert justice, he shakes his hands from holding it with the utmost detestation, taking it as an affront to have it offered him. 5th. He stops his ears from hearing any thing that tends to cruelty or bloodshed, or any suggestions stirring him up to revenge, *Job* xxxi. 31. He turns a deaf ear to those that delight in war, and entice him to cast in his lot among them, *Pr.* i. 14, 16. 6th. He shuts his eyes from seeing evil. He hath such an abhorrence of sin, that he cannot bear to see others commit it, and doth himself watch against all the occasions of it. Those that would preserve the purity of their souls must keep a strict guard upon the senses of their bodies, stop their ears to temptations, and turn away their eyes from beholding vanity.

2. The good man's comfort, which he may preserve even in times of common calamity, ver. 16. 1st. He shall be safe. He shall escape the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings; he shall have access to, and communion with, that God who is a devouring fire, but shall be to him a rejoicing light. And as to present troubles, "He shall dwell on high," out of the reach of them, nay, out of the hearing of the noise of them. He shall not be really harmed by them; nay, he shall not be greatly frightened at them, "The floods of great waters shall not come nigh him." Or, if they should attack him, "his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks," strong and impregnable, fortified by nature as well as art. The Divine power will keep him safe, and his faith in that power will keep him easy; God, the Rock of ages, will be his high tower. 2nd. He shall be supplied; he shall want nothing that is necessary for him, "Bread shall be given him," even when the siege is straitest, and provisions are cut off; "and his waters shall be sure," that is, he shall be sure of the continuance of them, so that he shall not drink his water by measure and with astonishment. They that fear the Lord shall not want any thing that is good for them.

Thirdly. He will protect Jerusalem, and deliver it out of the hands of the invaders. This storm that threatened them should blow over, and they should enjoy a prosperous state again. Many instances are here given of this:

1. Hezekiah shall put off his sackcloth, and all the sadness of his countenance, and shall appear publicly in his beauty, in his royal robes, and with a pleasant aspect, ver. 17, to the great joy of all his loving subjects. Those that walk uprightly shall not only have bread given them, and their water sure, but they shall, with an eye of faith, see the King of kings in his beauty, the beauty of holiness, and that beauty shall be upon them.

2. The siege being raised, by which they were kept close within the walls of Jerusalem, they shall now be at liberty to go abroad, upon business or pleasure, without danger of falling into the enemy's hand; and they shall "behold the land that is very far off." They shall visit the utmost corners of thy nation, and take a prospect of the adjacent countries, which will be the more pleasant after so long a confinement. And believers behold the heavenly Canaan, that land that is very far off, and comfort themselves with the prospect of it in evil times.

3. The remembrance of the fright they were in shall add to the pleasure of their deliverance; ver. 18, "Thine heart shall meditate terror," meditate it with pleasure when it is over. Thou shalt think thou still hearest the alarm in thine ears, when all the cry was, Arm, arm, arm! every man to his post. "Where is the scribe," or secretary of war? let him appear, to draw up the muster-roll. "Where is the receiver," and paymaster of the army? let him see what he has in bank, to defray the charge of a defence. "Where is he that counted the towers?" let him bring in the account of them, that care may be taken to put a competent number of men in each. Or these words may be taken as Jerusalem's triumph over the vanquished army of the Assyrians; and the rather because the apostle alludes to them in his triumphs over the learning of this world, when it was baffled by the Gospel of Christ, 1 *Cor.* i. 20. The virgin, the daughter of Zion, despiseth all their military preparations, "Where is the scribe," or muster-master of the Assyrian army? "Where is their weigher," or treasurer? And where their engineers, that "counted the towers?" They are all either dead or fled; there is an end of them.

4. They shall no more be terrified with the sight of the Assyrians, who were a fierce people naturally, and were particularly fierce against the people of the Jews, and were of a strange language, that could neither understand their petitions and complaints, and therefore had a pretence to be deaf to them, nor could themselves be understood. They are "of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive," which will make them the more formidable, ver. 19. Thine eyes shall no more see them thus fierce, but their countenances changed when they are all become dead corpses.

5. They shall no more be under apprehensions of the danger of Jerusalem, Zion, and the temple there; ver. 20, "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities;" the city where our solemn, sacred feasts are kept, where we used to meet to worship God in religious assemblies. The good people among them, in the time of their distress, were most in pain for Zion upon this account, that it was the city of their solemnities; that the conquerors would burn their temple, and they should not have that to keep their solemn feasts in any more. In times of public danger our concern should be most about our religion; and the cities of our solemnities should be dearer to us than either our strong cities or our store cities. And it is with an eye to this that God will work deliverance for Jerusalem, because it is the city of religious solemnities. Let those be conscientiously kept up as the glory of a people, and we may depend upon God to create a defence upon that glory. Two things are here promised to Jerusalem: 1st. A well grounded security. It shall be "a quiet habitation" to the people of God; they shall not be molested and disturbed as they have been by the alarms of the sword, either of war or persecution, *ch.* xxix. 20. It shall be a quiet habitation, as it is the city of our solemnities. It is desirable to be quiet in our own houses, but much more so to be quiet in God's house, and have none to make us afraid there. Thus it shall be with Jerusalem, and "thine eyes shall see" it, which will be a great satisfaction to a good man; *Ps.* cxxviii. 5, 6, "Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem, and peace upon Israel;" shalt live to see it and share in it. 2nd. An unmoved stability. Jerusalem, the city of our solemnities, is indeed but a tabernacle in comparison with the New Jerusalem; the present manifestations of the Divine glory and grace are nothing in comparison with those that are reserved for the future state; but it is such a tabernacle as shall not be taken down. After this trouble is over, Jerusalem shall long enjoy a confirmed peace; and her sacred privileges, which are the stakes and cords of her tabernacle, shall not be removed from her, nor any disturbance given to the course and circle of her religious services. God's church on earth is a tabernacle, which, though it may be shifted from one place to another, yet shall not be taken down while the world stands; for in every age Christ will have a seed to serve him. The promises of the covenant are its stakes, which shall never be removed; and the ordinances and institutions of the Gospel are its cords, which shall never be broken. They are things which cannot be shaken, though heaven and earth be, but shall remain.

6. God himself will be their protector and saviour, ver. 21, 22. This is the principal ground of their confidence. He that is himself "the glorious Lord" will display his glory for us, and be a glory to us; such as shall eclipse the rival glory of the enemy. God, in being a gracious Lord, is a glorious Lord; for his goodness is his glory. God will be the saviour of Jerusalem, and her glorious Lord. 1st. As a guard against their adversaries abroad; he "will be a place of broad rivers and streams." Jerusalem had no considerable river running by it, as most great cities have; nothing but the brook Kidron; and so wanted one of the best natural fortifications, as well as one of the greatest advantages for trade and commerce, and upon this account their enemies despised them, and doubted not but to make an easy prey of them. But the presence and power of God is sufficient at any time to make up the deficiencies of the creature, and of its strength and beauty to us. We have all in God; all we need or can desire. Many external advantages Jerusalem has not which other places have; but in God there is more than an equivalent. But if there be broad rivers and streams about Jerusalem, may not these yield an easy access to the fleet of an invader? No; these are rivers and streams in which "shall go no galley with oars," no man of war, or gallant ship. If God himself be the river, it must needs be inaccessible to the enemy; they can neither find nor

force their way by it. 2nd. As a guide to their affairs at home; "for the Lord is our judge," to whom we are accountable, to whose judgment we refer ourselves, and by whose judgment we abide; and who therefore, we hope, will judge for us. "He is our lawgiver;" his word is law to us; and to him every thought within us is brought into obedience. "He is our king," to whom we pay homage and tribute, and an inviolable allegiance; and therefore "he will save us;" for as protection draws allegiance, so allegiance may expect protection, and shall have it with God. By faith we take Christ for our Prince and Saviour, and, as such, depend upon him, and devote ourselves to him. Observe with what an air of triumph, and with what an emphasis laid upon the glorious name of God, they comfort themselves; "Jehovah is our judge; Jehovah is our lawgiver; Jehovah is our king;" who, being self-existent, is self-sufficient, and all-sufficient to us.

7. The enemies shall be quite infatuated, and all their powers and projects broken; like a ship at sea in stress of weather, that cannot ride out the storm, but having her tackle torn, her mast split, and nothing wherewithal to repair them, is given up for a wreck; ver. 23, "the tacklings" of the Assyrian are loosed; that is, they are like a ship whose tacklings "are loosed," or forsaken by the ship's crew when they give it over for lost, finding that "they cannot strengthen the mast," but it will come down. They thought themselves sure of Jerusalem; but when they were just entering the port, as it were, and thought all was their own, they were quite becalmed and could not spread their sail, but lay wind-bound till God poured the fury of his wrath upon them. The enemies of God's church are often disarmed and unrigged then when they think they have almost gained their point.

8. The wealth of their camp shall be a rich booty for the Jews; "Then is the prey of a great spoil divided." When the most were slain the rest fled in confusion, and with such precipitation that, like the Syrians, they left their tents as they were, so that all the treasure in them fell into the hands of the besieged, and even the lame take the prey; they that tarried at home did divide the spoil. It was so easy to come by that not only the strong man might make himself master of it, but even the lame man whose hands were lame that he could not fight, and his feet that he could not pursue. As the victory shall cost them no peril, so the prey shall cost them no toil. And there was such abundance of it that, when those who were forward and came first had carried off as much as they would, even the lame that came late yet found sufficient. Thus God brought good out of evil; and not only delivered Jerusalem, but enriched it, and abundantly recompensed the losses they had sustained. Thus comfortably and well do the frights and distresses of the people of God many times end.

9. Both sickness and sin shall be taken away; and then sickness is taken away in mercy, when this is all the fruit of it, and the recovery from it, even the taking away of sin. 1st. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." As "the lame shall take the prey," so shall the sick, notwithstanding their weakness, make a shift to get to the abandoned camp and seize something for themselves. Or, there shall be such an universal transport of joy upon this occasion that even the sick shall for the present forget their sickness, and the sorrows of it, and join with the public in its rejoicings. The deliverance of their city shall be their cure. Or, it notes that whereas infectious diseases are commonly the effect of long sieges, it shall not be so with Jerusalem; but the inhabitants of it, with their victory and peace, shall have health also; and there shall be no complaining upon the account of sickness within their gates. Or, those that are sick shall bear their sickness without complaining as long as they see it goes well with Jerusalem. Our sense of private grievances should be drowned in our thanksgivings for public mercies. 2nd. "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Not only the body of the nation forgiven their national guilt in the removing of the national judgment, but particular persons that dwell therein shall repent and reform, and have their sins pardoned. And this is promised as that which is at the bottom of all other favours; he will do so and so for them, "for he will be merciful to their unrighteousness," *Heb.* viii. 12. Sin is the sickness of the soul; when God pardons the sin he heals the disease; and when the diseases of sin are healed by pardoning mercy the sting of bodily sickness is taken out, and the cause of it removed; so that either the inhabitant shall not be sick or at least shall not say, "I am sick." If iniquity be taken away, we have little reason to complain of outward affliction; "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

In this chapter we have the fatal doom of all the nations that are enemies to God's church and people, though Edom only is instanced in, because of the old enmity of Esau to Jacob, which was typical, as much as that more ancient enmity of Cain to Abel, and flowed from the original enmity of the serpent to the seed of the woman. It is probable this prophecy had its accomplishment in the great desolations made by the Assyrian army first, or rather by Nebuchadnezzar's army some time after, among those nations that were neighbours to Israel, and had been, some way or other, injurious to them. That mighty conqueror took a pride in shedding blood and laying countries waste, and therein, quite beyond his design, he was fulfilling what God here threatened against his and his people's enemies. But we have reason to think it is intended as a denunciation of the wrath of God against all those who fight against the interests of his kingdom among men; that it has its frequent accomplishment in the havoc made by the wars of the nations and other desolating judgments, and will have its full accomplishment in the final dissolution of all things at the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Here is, I. A demand of universal attention, ver. 1. II. A direful scene of blood and confusion presented, ver. 2—7. III. The reason given for these judgments, ver. 8. IV. The continuance of this desolation, the country being made like the lake of Sodom, ver. 9, 10, and the cities abandoned to wild beasts and melancholy fowl, ver. 11—15. V. The solemn ratification of all this, ver. 16, 17. Let us hear and fear.

COME near, ye nations, to hear;
And hearken, ye people:
Let the earth hear, and all that is therein;
The world, and all things that come forth of it.
2 For the indignation of the LORD *is* upon all nations,
And *his* fury upon all their armies:
He hath utterly destroyed them,
He hath delivered them to the slaughter.
3 Their slain also shall be cast out,
And their stink shall come up out of their carcases,
And the mountains shall be melted with their blood.
4 And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved,
And the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll:
And all their host shall fall down,
As the leaf falleth off from the vine,
And as a fallen *fig* from the fig tree.
5 For my sword shall be bathed in heaven:
Behold, it shall come down upon Idumea,
And upon the people of my curse, to judgment.
6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood,
It is made fat with fatness,
And with the blood of lambs and goats,
With the fat of the kidneys of rams:
For the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah,
And a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.
7 And the unicorns shall come down with them,
And the bullocks with the bulls;
And their land shall be soaked with blood,
And their dust made fat with fatness.
8 For *it is* the day of the LORD's vengeance,
And the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.

Here we have a prophecy, as elsewhere we have a history, of the wars of the Lord, which, we are sure, are all both righteous and successful. This world, as it is his creature, he doth good to; but as it is in the interest of Satan, who is called the god of this world, he fights against it.

First. Here is the trumpet sounded, and the war proclaimed, ver. 1. All nations must hear and hearken, not only because what God is about to do is well worthy their remark, as *ch.* xxxiii. 11, but because they are all concerned in it. It is with them that God hath a quarrel; it is against them that God is coming forth in wrath. Let them all take notice that the great God is angry with them; his indignation is upon all nations, and therefore let all nations come near to hear. The "trumpet is blown in the city," *Am.* iii. 6, and the watchmen on the walls cry, "Hearken to the voice of the trumpet," *Jer.* vi. 17; "Let the earth hear, and the fulness thereof," for it is the Lord's, *Ps.* xxiv. 1, and ought to hearken to its maker and master. The world must hear, and "all things that come forth of it;" that is, the children of men, that are of the earth earthy, come out of it, and must return to it. Or, the inanimate products of the earth are called to, as more likely to hearken than sinners, whose hearts are hardened against the calls of God; "Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy," *Mic.* vi. 1. It is so just a controversy that all the world may be safely appealed to concerning the equity of it.

Secondly. Here is the manifesto published, setting forth,

1. Whom he makes war against; ver. 2, "The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations." They are all in confederacy against God and religion, all in the interests of the devil; and therefore he is angry with them all, even with "all the nations that forget him." He hath long "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," *Acts* xiv. 16; but now he will no longer keep silence. As they have all had the benefit of his patience, so they must all expect now to feel his resentments. His fury is in a special manner upon all their armies; 1st. Because with them they have done mischief to the people of God. Those are they that have made bloody work with them, and therefore they must be sure to have blood given them to drink. 2nd. Because with them they hope to make their part good against the justice and power of God; they trust to them as their defence, and therefore on them, in the first place, God's fury will come. Armies before God's fury are but as dry stubble before a consuming fire, though never so numerous and courageous.

2. Whom he makes war for, and what are the grounds and reasons of the war; ver. 8, "It is the day of the Lord's vengeance," and he it is to whom vengeance belongs, and who is never unrighteous in taking vengeance, *Rom.* iii. 5. As there is a day of the Lord's patience, so there will be a day of his vengeance; for though he bear long he will not bear always; it is the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. Zion is the holy city, the city of our solemnities, a type and figure of the church of God in the world. Zion has a just quarrel with her neighbours for the wrongs they have done her, for all the treacherous and barbarous usage they have given her, profaning her holy things, laying waste her palaces, and slaying her sons. She has left it to God to plead her cause, and he will do it when the time, even the set time to favour Zion, comes; then he will recompense to her persecutors and oppressors all the mischiefs they have done her. The controversy will be decided that Zion has been wronged, and therein Zion's God has been himself abused; judgment will be given upon this decision, and execution done. Note, There is a time prefixed in the Divine counsels for the deliverance of the church and the destruction of her enemies; a year of the redeemed which will come, a "year of recompences for the controversy of Zion," and we must patiently wait till then, and judge nothing before the time.

Thirdly. Here are the operations of the war, and the methods of it settled with an infallible assurance of success.

1. The "sword of the Lord is bathed in heaven;" that is all the preparation here made for the war, ver. 5. It may probably allude to some custom they had then of bathing their swords in some liquor or other to harden them or brighten them. It is the same with the furbishing of it, that it may glitter, *Eze.* xxi. 9—11. God's sword is bathed in heaven, in his counsel and decree, in his justice and power; and then there is no standing before it.

2. It shall come down. What he has determined shall without fail be put in execution. It shall come down from heaven; and the higher the place is from whence it comes the heavier will it fall. It will come down upon Idumea, the people of God's curse; that is, that lie under his curse, and are by it doomed to destruction. Miserable, for ever miserable, are they that have, by their sins, made themselves the people of God's curse; for the sword of the Lord will infallibly attend the curse of the Lord, and execute the sentences of it; and those whom he curseth they are cursed indeed. It shall come down to judgment, to execute judgment upon sinners. Note, God's sword of war is always a sword of justice. It is observed of him out of whose mouth goeth the sharp sword, that "in righteousness he doth judge, and make war," *Rev.* xix. 11, 15.

3. The nations and their armies shall be given up to the sword; ver. 2, God "hath delivered them to the slaughter;" and then they cannot deliver themselves, nor can all the friends they have deliver them from it. Those only are

slain whom God delivers to the slaughter; for the keys of death are in his hand; and in delivering them to the slaughter he hath utterly destroyed them. Their destruction is as sure, when God hath doomed them to it, as if they were destroyed already, utterly destroyed. God has in effect delivered all the cruel enemies of his church to the slaughter by that word, *Rev.* xiii. 10, "He that killeth with the sword must be killed by the sword;" for the Lord is righteous.

4. Pursuant to the sentence a terrible slaughter shall be made among them; ver. 6, "The sword of the Lord," when it comes down with commission, doth vast execution; it is filled, satiated, surfeited with blood, the blood of the slain, and made fat with their fatness. When the day of God's abused mercy and patience is over the sword of justice gives no quarter, spares none. Men have by sin lost the honour of the human nature, and made themselves like the beasts that perish; and therefore are justly denied the compassions and respects that are owing to the human nature, and killed as beasts; and no more made of slaying an army of men than of butchering a flock of lambs or goats, and feeding on "the fat of the kidneys of rams." Nay, the sword of the Lord shall not only despatch the lambs and goats, the infantry of their armies, the poor common soldiers, but, ver. 7, the unicorns too shall be made to come down with them; and the bullocks with the bulls, though they are never so proud, and strong, and fierce, "the great men, and the mighty men, and the chief captains," *Rev.* vi. 25; the sword of the Lord will make as easy a prey of them as of the lambs and the goats. The greatest of men are nothing before the wrath of the great God. See what bloody work will be made; "the land shall be soaked with blood," as with the rain that comes often upon it, and in great abundance; and their dust, their dry and barren land, shall be made fat with the fatness of men slain in their full strength, as with manure. Nay, even the mountains, that are hard and rocky, shall be melted with their blood, ver. 3. These expressions are hyperbolical, as St. John's vision of blood to the horse bridles, *Rev.* xiv. 20, and are made use of, because they sound very dreadful to sense, (it makes us even shiver to think of such abundance of human gore,) and are therefore proper enough to express the terror of God's wrath, which is dreadful beyond conception and expression. See what work sin makes, and wrath makes, even in this world; and think how much more terrible the wrath to come is, which will bring down the unicorns themselves to the bars of the pit.

5. This great slaughter will be a great sacrifice to the justice of God; ver. 6, "The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah;" there it is that the great Redeemer hath his garments dyed with blood, *ch.* lxiii. 1. Sacrifices were intended for the honour of God, to make it appear that he hates sin and demands satisfaction for it; and that nothing but blood will make atonement; and for these ends this slaughter is made, that in it "the wrath of God may be revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," especially their ungodly, unrighteous enmity to his people; which was the sin that the Edomites were notoriously guilty of. In great sacrifices abundance of beasts were killed, hecatombs offered, and their blood poured out before the altar; and so will it be in this day of the Lord's vengeance. And thus had the whole earth been soaked with the blood of sinners if Jesus Christ, the great propitiation, had not shed his blood for us. But those who reject him, and will not make a covenant with God by that sacrifice, will themselves fall as victims to Divine wrath. Damned sinners are everlasting sacrifices, *Mar.* ix. 49. They that sacrifice not, which is the character of the ungodly, *Eccl.* ix. 2, must be sacrificed.

6. These slain shall be detestable to mankind, and shall be as much their loathing as ever they were their terror; ver. 3, they shall be cast out, and none shall pay them the respect of a decent burial; but their stink shall come up out of their carcases, that all people, by the odious smell, as well as by the ghastly sight, may be made to conceive an indignation against sin, and a dread of the wrath of God. They lie unburied, that they may remain monuments of Divine justice.

7. The effect and consequence of this slaughter shall be an universal confusion and desolation, as if the whole frame of nature were dissolved and melted down, ver. 4. 'All the host of heaven shall pine and waste away,' so the word is; the sun shall be darkened, and the moon look black, or be turned into blood; the heavens themselves shall be rolled together as a scroll of parchment, when we have done with it, and lay it by, or as when it is shrivelled up by the heat of the fire; the stars shall fall as the leaves in autumn. All the beauty, joy, and comfort of the vanquished nation shall be lost and done away. Magistracy and government shall be abolished, and all dominion and rule, but that of the sword of war, shall fall. Conquerors in those times affected to lay waste the countries they conquered; and such a complete desolation is here described by such figurative expressions as will yet have a literal and full accomplishment in the dissolution of all things at the end of time; of which last day of judgment, the judgments which God doth now sometimes remarkably execute on sinful nations are figures, earnests, and forerunners; and by these we should be awakened to think of that, for which reason these expressions are used here, and *Rev.* vi. 12, 13; but they are used without a metaphor, 2 *Pet.* iii. 10, where we are told, that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the earth shall be burnt up."

9 And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch,
And the dust thereof into brimstone,
And the land thereof shall become burning pitch.
10 It shall not be quenched night nor day;
The smoke thereof shall go up for ever:
From generation to generation it shall lie waste;
None shall pass through it for ever and ever.
11 But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it;
The owl also and the raven shall dwell in it:
And he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion,
And the stones of emptiness.
12 They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom,
But none *shall be* there,
And all her princes shall be nothing.
13 And thorns shall come up in her palaces,
Nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof:
And it shall be an habitation of dragons,
And a court for owls.
14 The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island,
And the satyr shall cry to his fellow;
The screech owl also shall rest there,
And find for herself a place of rest.
15 There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay,
And hatch, and gather under her shadow:
There shall the vultures also be gathered,

EGYPTIAN VULTURES.

Every one with her mate.
16 Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read:
No one of these shall fail,
None shall want her mate:
For my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.
17 And he hath cast the lot for them,
And his hand hath divided it unto them by line:
They shall possess it for ever,
From generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

CORMORANTS.—ver. 11.

This prophecy looks very black; but sure it looks so farther than upon Edom and Bozrah. 1. It speaks the melancholy changes that are often made by the Divine providence in countries, cities, palaces, and families. Places that have flourished, and been much frequented, strangely go to decay. We know not where to find the places where many great towns celebrated in history once stood. Fruitful countries, in process of time, are turned into barrenness; and pompous, populous cities, into ruinous heaps. Old decayed castles look frightful, and their ruins are almost as much dreaded as ever their garrisons were. 2. It speaks the destroying judgments which are the products of God's wrath, and the just punishment of those that are enemies to his people, which God will inflict when "the year of the redeemed is come," and "the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion." Those that aim to ruin the church, can never do that, but will infallibly ruin themselves. 3. It speaks the final desolation of this wicked world, which is "reserved unto fire at the day of judgment," 2 *Pet.* iii. 7. The earth itself, when it and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, will (for aught I know) be turned into a hell to all those that set their affections only on earthly things; however, it shews us what will be the lot of the generation of God's curse.

First. The country shall become like the lake of Sodom; ver. 9, 10, "The streams thereof" that both watered the land, and pleased and refreshed the inhabitants, shall now be turned into pitch, shall be congealed, shall look black, and shall move slowly, or not at all. 'Their floods to lazy streams of pitch shall turn,' so Sir R. Blackmore; and the dust thereof shall be turned into brimstone; so combustible hath sin made their land, that it shall take fire at the first spark of God's wrath struck upon it; and when it hath taken fire, it shall "become burning pitch." The fire shall be universal, not a house or town on fire, but a whole country; and it shall not be in the power of any to suppress or extinguish it; it shall burn continually, burn perpetually, and shall "not be quenched night or day." The torment of those in hell, or that have a hell within them in their own consciences, is without interruption; the smoke of this fire goes up for ever. As long as there are provoking sinners on earth, from one generation to another, an "increase of sinful men" to "augment the fierce anger of the Lord," *Num.* xxxii. 14, there will be a righteous God in heaven to punish them for it; and as long as a people keep up a succession of sinners God will have a succession of plagues for them; nor will any that fall under the wrath of God be ever able to recover themselves. It will be found, how light soever men make of it, that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." If the land be doomed to destruction, none shall pass through it; but travellers will choose rather to go a great way about, than come within smell of it.

Secondly. The cities shall become like old decayed houses, that being deserted by the owners, look very frightful, being commonly possessed by beasts of prey or fowl, that are ill omens. See how dismally the palaces of the enemy look. The description is very elegant and fine.

1. God shall mark them for ruin and destruction. "He shall stretch out upon Bozrah the line of confusion, with the stones" or plummets "of emptiness," ver. 11. This intimates the equity of the sentence passed upon it, it is given according to the rules of justice, and the exact agreeableness of the execution with the sentence, the destruction is not wrought at random, but by line and level. The confusion and emptiness that shall overspread the face of the whole country shall be like that of the whole earth when it was *tohu* and *bohu*, the very words here used, "without form and void." Sin will soon turn a paradise into a chaos, and sullies the beauty of the whole creation, *Gen.* i. 2. Where there is confusion there will soon be emptiness; but both are appointed by the Governor of the world, and in exact proportions.

2. Their great men shall be all cut off, and none of them shall dare to appear; ver. 12, "They shall call the nobles of the kingdom, to take care of the arduous affairs which lie before them, but none shall be there to take this ruin under their hand; and all her princes having the sad tidings brought them shall be nothing, shall be at their wits' end, and not be able to stand them in stead, to shelter them from destruction.

3. Even the houses of state, and those of strength, shall become as wildernesses, ver. 13; not only grass shall grow, but "thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof," and there shall be none to cut them up, or tread them down. We sometimes see ruined buildings thus overgrown with rubbish. It notes that the place shall not only be uninhabited and unfrequented, where a full court used to be kept, but that it shall be under the curse of God; for thorns and thistles were the products of the curse, *Gen.* iii. 18.

4. They shall become the residence and rendezvous of fearful, frightful beasts and birds, that usually frequent such melancholy places, because there they may be undisturbed; and when they are frightened thither, they help to frighten men thence. This circumstance of the desolation, being apt to strike a horror upon the mind, is much enlarged upon here, ver. 11. "The cormorant shall possess it;" or, the pelican, that affects to be solitary, *Ps.* cii. 6; and the bittern, that makes a hideous noise; the owl, a melancholy bird; the raven, a bird of prey, invited by the dead carcases shall dwell there, ('With all the ill-boding monsters of the air.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*) All the unclean birds, which were not for the service of man; ver. 13, "It shall be a habitation of dragons," which are poisonous and hurtful.

'And in their lofty rooms of state,
Where cringing sycophants did wait,
Dragons shall hiss, and hungry wolves shall howl.
In courts before by mighty lords possest,
The serpent shall erect his speckled crest,
Or fold his circling spires to rest.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

That which was a court for princes shall now be a "court for owls," or ostriches; ver. 14, "The wild beasts of the desert," the dry and sandy country, shall meet as it were by appointment with the "wild beasts of the island," the wet, marshy country, and shall regale themselves with such a perfect desolation as they shall find there.

'Leopards and all the ravening brotherhoods,
That range the plains, or lurk in woods,
Each other shall invite to come,
And make this wilder place their home;
Fierce beasts of every frightful shape and size,
Shall settle here their bloody colonies.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

"The satyr shall cry to his fellow" to go with him to this desert place; or, being there, shall please themselves that they have found such an agreeable habitation. There shall the screech owl rest, a night bird, and an ominous one; the great owl shall there make her nest, (ver. 15,) and lay and hatch. The breed of them shall be kept up to heir this desolate place; the vultures that feast on carcases shall be gathered there, every one with his mate. Now observe, 1st. How the places which men have deserted, and keep at a distance from, are proper receptacles for other animals, which the providence of God takes care of, and will not neglect. 2nd. Whom they resemble that are morose, unsociable, and unconversable, and affect a melancholy retirement. They are like these solitary creatures that take delight in desolations. 3rd. What a dismal change sin makes; it turns a fruitful land into barrenness, a frequented city into a wilderness.

5. Here is an assurance given of the full accomplishment of it; ver. 16, 17, "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read." When this destruction comes, compare the event with the prediction, and you will find it to answer exactly. Note, The book of the prophets is the book of the Lord, and, as of Divine original and authority, we ought to consult it and converse with it. We must not only read it, but seek out of it, search into it; turn first to one text and then to another, and compare them together. Abundance of useful knowledge might thus be extracted by a diligent search out of the Scriptures, which cannot be got by a superficial reading of them. When you have read the prediction out of the book of the Lord, then observe. 1st. That according to what you have read so you see. "No one of these shall fail," either beast or fowl; and it being foretold, that they shall possess it from generation to generation, in order to that, that the species may be propagated, "none shall want her mate;" these marks of desolation shall be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land. 2nd. That God's mouth having commanded this direful muster, his Spirit shall gather them, as the creatures by instinct were gathered to Adam to be named, and to Noah to be housed. What God's word has appointed his Spirit will effect and bring about; for no word of God shall fall to the ground. The word of God's promise shall in like manner be accomplished by the operations of the Spirit. 3rd. That there is an exact order and proportion observed in the accomplishment of this threatening. He hath cast the lot for these birds and beasts, so that each one shall know his place as readily as if it were marked by line. See the like, *Joel* ii. 7, 8, "They shall not break their ranks, neither shall one thrust another." The soothsayers among the heathen foretold events by the flight of birds, as if the fate of men depended on them; but here we find that the flight of birds is under the direction of the God of Israel; "He hath cast the lot for them." 4th. That the desolation shall be perpetual; "They shall possess it for ever." God's Jerusalem may be laid in ruins; but Jerusalem of old recovered itself out of its ruins, till it gave place to the gospel Jerusalem, which may be brought low, but shall be rebuilt, and shall continue till it give place to the heavenly Jerusalem; but the enemies of the church shall be for ever desolate, shall be punished with an everlasting destruction.

CHAPTER XXXV.

As after a prediction of God's judgments upon the world, *ch.* xxiv., follows a promise of great mercy to be had in store for his church, *ch.* xxv., so here, after a black and dreadful scene of confusion in the foregoing chapter, we have in this a bright and pleasant one, which, though it foretell the flourishing estate of Hezekiah's kingdom in the latter part of his reign, yet surely looks as far beyond that as the prophecy in the foregoing chapter doth beyond the destruction of the Edomites. Both were typical, and it concerns us most to look at those things which they were typical of,—the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. When the world that lies in wickedness shall be laid in ruins, and the Jewish church, that persisted in infidelity, shall become a desolation, then the gospel church shall be set up and made to flourish. I. The Gentiles shall be brought into it, ver. 1, 2, 7. II. The well-wishers to it, that were weak and timorous, shall be encouraged, ver. 3, 4. III. Miracles shall be wrought both on the souls and bodies of men, ver. 5, 6. IV. It shall be conducted in the way of holiness, ver. 8, 9. V. It shall be brought at last to endless joys, ver. 10. Thus do we find more of Christ and heaven in this chapter than one would have expected in the Old Testament.

THE wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them;
And the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.
2 It shall blossom abundantly,
And rejoice even with joy and singing:
The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it,
The excellency of Carmel and Sharon,
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
And the excellency of our God.
3 Strengthen ye the weak hands,
And confirm the feeble knees.
4 Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart,
Be strong, fear not:
Behold, your God will come *with* vengeance,
Even God *with* a recompence;
He will come and save you.

In these verses we have,

First. The desert land blooming. In the chapter before we had a populous and fruitful country turned into a horrid wilderness; here we have, in lieu of that, a wilderness turned into a good land. When the land of Judah was freed from the Assyrian army, those parts of the country that had been made as a wilderness by the ravages and outrages they committed, began to recover themselves, and to look pleasantly again, and to "blossom as the rose." When the Gentile nations, that had been long as a wilderness bringing forth no fruit to God, received the Gospel, joy came with it to them, *Ps.* lxvii. 3, 4; xcvi. 11, 12. When Christ was preached in Samaria, there was "great joy in that city," *Acts* viii. 8; they that sat in darkness saw a great and joyful light; and then they blossomed, that is, gave hopes of abundance of fruit; for that was it which the preachers of the Gospel aimed at, *Jno.* xv. 16; to "go and bring forth fruit," *Rom.* i. 13; *Col.* i. 6. Though blossoms are not fruit, and often miscarry and come to nothing, yet they are in order to fruit. Converting grace makes the soul, that was as a wilderness, to rejoice "with joy and singing," and to "blossom abundantly." This flourishing desert shall have all "the glory of Lebanon given to it," which consisted in the strength and stateliness of its cedars, together with "the excellency of Carmel and Sharon," which consisted in corn and cattle. Whatever is valuable in any institution is brought into the Gospel. All the beauty of the Jewish church was admitted into the Christian church, and appeared in its perfection, as the apostle shews at large in his epistle to the *Hebrews*, that whatever was excellent and desirable in the Mosaic economy is translated into the evangelical institutes.

Secondly. The glory of God shining forth. "They shall see the glory of the Lord," that is, God will manifest himself more than ever in his grace and love to mankind, (for that is his glory and excellency,) and he shall give them eyes to see it, and hearts to be duly affected with it. This is that which will make the desert blossom. The more we see by faith of the "glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God," the more joyful and the more fruitful shall we be.

Thirdly. The feeble and faint-hearted encouraged, ver. 3, 4. God's prophets and ministers are in a special manner charged by virtue of their office to strengthen the weak hands, that is, to comfort those who could not yet recover the mighty fright they had been put into by the Assyrian army, with an assurance that God would now return in mercy to them. This is the design of the Gospel, 1. To strengthen those that are weak, and to confirm them; the weak hands that are unable either to work or fight, and can hardly be lifted up in prayer; and the feeble knees that are unable either to stand or walk, and unfit for the race set before us. The Gospel furnishes us with strengthening considerations, and shews us where strength is laid up for us. Among true Christians there are many that have weak hands and feeble knees, that are yet but babes in Christ; but it is our duty to strengthen our brethren, *Lu.* xxii. 32; not only to bear with the infirm, but to do what we can to confirm them, *Rom.* xv. 1; 1 *Thes.* v. 14. It is our duty also to strengthen ourselves, to "lift up the hands which hang down," *Heb.* xii. 12; improving the strength God has given us, and exerting it. 2. To hearten those that are timorous and discouraged; "Say to them that are of a fearful heart," because of their own weakness, and the strength of their enemies, that are hasty, (so the word is,) that are for betaking themselves to flight upon the first alarm, and

giving up the cause; that say in their haste, they are cut off and undone, *Ps.* xxxi. 22. There is enough in the Gospel to silence these fears; it saith to them, and let them say it to themselves, and one to another, "Be strong, fear not." Fear is weakening, the more we strive against it, the stronger we are both for doing and suffering; and, for our encouragement to strive, he that saith to us, "Be strong," hath laid help for us upon one that is mighty.

Fourthly. Assurance given of the approach of a Saviour; "Your God will come with vengeance." God will appear for you against your enemies, will recompense both their injuries and your losses. The Messiah will come in the fulness of time, to take vengeance on the powers of darkness, to spoil them, and make a show of them openly, to recompense those that mourn in Zion with abundant comforts; he will come and save us. With the hopes of this the Old Testament saints strengthened their weak hands. He will come again at the end of time, will come in flaming fire, to recompense tribulation to them that have troubled his people, and to those who were troubled, rest; such a rest as will be not only a final period, but a full reward of all their troubles, 2 *Thes.* i. 6, 7. They whose hearts tremble for the ark of God, and are under a concern for his church in the world, may silence their fears with this, God will take the work into his own hands. Your God will come, who pleads your cause, and owns your interest, even God himself, who is God alone.

5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
6 Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart,
And the tongue of the dumb sing:
For in the wilderness shall waters break out,
And streams in the desert.
7 And the parched ground shall become a pool,
And the thirsty land springs of water:
In the habitation of dragons, where each lay,
Shall be grass with reeds and rushes.
8 And an highway shall be there, and a way,
And it shall be called The way of holiness;
The unclean shall not pass over it; but it *shall be* for those:
The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err *therein*.
9 No lion shall be there,
Nor *any* ravenous beast shall go up thereon,
It shall not be found there;
But the redeemed shall walk *there:*
10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
And come to Zion with songs
And everlasting joy upon their heads:
They shall obtain joy and gladness,
And sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Then, when your God shall come, even Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, to which all the prophets bare witness, especially towards the conclusion of their prophecies of the temporal deliverances of the church, and this evangelical prophet especially; then look for great things.

First. Wonders shall be wrought in the kingdoms both of nature and grace; wonders of mercy wrought upon the children of men, sufficient to evince that it is no less than a God that comes to us. 1. Wonders shall be wrought on men's bodies; ver. 5, 6, "The eyes of the blind shall be opened." This was often done by our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, with a word's speaking; and one he gave sight to that was born blind, *Mat.* ix. 27; xii. 22; xx. 30; *Jno.* ix. 6. By his power the ears of the deaf also were unstopped; with one word, *Ephphatha*, were opened, *Mar.* vii. 32. Many that were lame had the use of their limbs restored, so perfectly that they could not only go, but leap, and with so much joy to them that they could not forbear leaping for joy, as that impotent man, *Acts* iii. 8. The dumb also were enabled to speak, and then no marvel they were disposed to sing for joy, *Mat.* ix. 32, 33. These miracles Christ wrought to prove that he was sent of God, *Jno.* iii. 2; nay, working them by his own power, and in his own name, he proved that he was God, the same who at first made man's mouth, the hearing ear, and the seeing eye. When he would prove his Divine mission to John's disciples, he did it by miracles of this kind, in which this scripture was fulfilled. 2. Wonders, great wonders, shall be wrought on men's souls. By the word and Spirit of Christ those that were spiritually blind were enlightened, *Acts* xxvi. 18, those that were deaf to the calls of God were made to hear them readily, as Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened so that she attended, *Acts* xvi. 14. Those that were impotent to every thing that is good, by Divine grace are made not only able for it, but active in it, and run the way of God's commandments. Those also that were dumb, and knew not how to speak of God, or to God, having their understandings opened to know him, shall thereby have their lips opened to shew forth his praise. The tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy, the joy of God's salvation. Praise shall be perfected out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

Secondly. The Spirit shall be poured out from on high. There shall be waters and streams, rivers of living water, which, when our Saviour spake of, as the fulfilling of the Scripture, and most probably of this scripture, the evangelist tells us he spake of the Spirit, *Jno.* vii. 38, 39, as doth also this prophet, *ch.* xxxii. 15. So here, ver. 6, "In the wilderness," where one would least expect it, "shall waters break out." This was fulfilled when the Holy Ghost fell upon the Gentiles that heard the word, *Acts* x. 44; then were the fountains of life opened, whence streams flowed that watered the earth abundantly. These waters are said to break out; which notes a pleasing surprise to the Gentile world, such as brought them, as it were, into a new world. The blessed effect of this shall be, that "the parched ground shall become a pool," ver. 7. They that laboured and were heavy laden under the burthen of guilt, and were scorched with the sense of Divine wrath, found rest and refreshment and abundant comforts in the Gospel. In the thirsty land, where no water was, no ordinances, *Ps.* lxiii. 1, there shall be springs of water, a gospel ministry, and by that the administration of all gospel ordinances in their purity and plenty, which are the river that makes glad the city of our God, *Ps.* xlvi. 4. "In the habitation of dragons," who choose to dwell in the parched, scorched ground, *ch.* xxxiv. 9, 13, these waters shall flow and dispossess them, so that "where each lay shall be grass with reeds and rushes," great plenty of useful products. Thus it was when Christian churches were planted and flourished greatly in the cities of the Gentiles, that for many ages had been habitations of dragons, or devils rather, as Babylon, *Rev.* xviii. 2. When the property of the idols' temples was altered, and they were converted to the service of Christianity, then the habitations of dragons became fruitful fields.

Thirdly. The way of religion and godliness shall be laid open. It is here called the way of holiness, ver. 8, the way both of holy worship and a holy conversation. Holiness is the rectitude of the human nature and will in conformity to the Divine nature and will. The way of holiness is that course of religious duties in which men ought to walk and press forwards with an eye to the glory of God, and their own felicity in the enjoyment of him. When our God shall come to save us he shall chalk out to us this way by his Gospel so as it had never been before described.

1. It shall be an appointed way; not a way of sufferance, but a highway, and a way into which we are directed by a Divine authority, and in which we are protected by a Divine warrant. It is the King's highway, the King of kings' highway, in which, though we may be waylaid, we cannot be stopped. The way of holiness is the way of God's commandments, it is (as highways use to be) the good old way, *Jer.* vi. 16.

2. It shall be an appropriated way, the way in which God will bring his own chosen to himself; but "the unclean shall not pass over it," either to defile it, or to disturb those that walk in it. It is a way by itself, distinguished from the way of the world, for it is a way of separation from, and nonconformity to, this world. "It shall be for those" whom the Lord hath set apart for himself, *Ps.* iv. 3, shall be reserved for them; "the redeemed shall walk there," and the satisfaction they take in these ways of pleasantness shall be out of the reach of molestation from an evil world. "The unclean shall not pass over it," for it shall be a fair way; those that walk in it are the undefiled in the way, who escape the pollution that is in the world.

3. It shall be a straight way: "The wayfaring men," who choose to travel it, "though fools," of weak capacity in other things, yet shall have such plain directions from the word and Spirit of God in this way, that they "shall not err therein;" not that they shall be infallible, no, not in their own conduct, or that they shall in nothing mistake; but they shall not be guilty of any fatal miscarriage, shall not so miss their way but they shall recover it again, and get well to their journey's end. They that are in the narrow way, though some may fall into one path and others into another, not all equally right, but all meeting at last in the same end, yet they shall never fall into the broad way again; the Spirit of truth shall lead them into all truth that is necessary for them. Note, The way to heaven is a plain way, and easy to hit. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world," and made them wise to salvation. "Knowledge is easy to him that understandeth."

4. It shall be a safe way: "No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast," ver. 9; none to hurt or destroy. They that keep close to this way keep out of the reach of Satan, the roaring lion; "that wicked one toucheth them not." They that walk in the way of holiness may proceed with a holy security and serenity of mind, knowing that nothing can do them any real hurt; they shall be "quiet from the fear of evil." It was in Hezekiah's days, some time after the captivity of the ten tribes, that God, being displeased with the colonies that settled there, sent lions among them, 2 *Kin.* xvii. 25. But Judah keeps her integrity, and therefore no lion shall be there. Those that walk in the way of holiness must separate themselves from the unclean and the ravenous, must save themselves from an untoward generation; and, hoping that they themselves are of the redeemed, let them walk with the redeemed which shall walk there.

Fourthly. The end of this way shall be everlasting joy, ver. 10. This precious promise of peace now will end shortly in endless joys and rest for the soul. Here is good news for the citizens of Zion, rest to the weary; "the ransomed of the Lord," who therefore ought to follow him wherever he goes, *Rev.* xiv. 4, "shall return and come to Zion," 1. To serve and worship God in the church militant. They shall deliver themselves out of Babylon, *Zec.* ii. 7; "shall ask the way to Zion," *Jer.* l. 5; and shall find the way, *ch.* lii. 12. God will open them a door of escape out of their captivity, and it shall be an effectual door, though there be many adversaries. They shall join themselves to the gospel church, that mount Zion, that city of the living God, *Heb.* xii. 22. They shall come with songs of joy and praise for their deliverance out of Babylon, where they wept upon every remembrance of Zion, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 1. They that by faith are made citizens of the gospel Zion, may go on their way rejoicing, *Acts* viii. 39; they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, and be still praising him; they rejoice in Christ Jesus, and the sorrows and sighs of their convictions are made to flee away by the power of Divine consolations. They that mourn are blessed; for they shall be comforted. 2. To see and enjoy God in the church triumphant. They that walk in the way of holiness, under the conduct of their Redeemer, shall come to Zion at last, to the heavenly Zion, shall come in a body, shall all be presented together faultless at the coming of Christ's glory with exceeding joy, *Jude* 24, *Rev.* vii. 17; they shall come with songs. When God's people returned out of Babylon to Zion, they came weeping, *Jer.* l. 4; but they shall come to heaven singing a new song, which no man can learn, *Rev.* xiv. 3. When they shall enter into the joy of their Lord it shall be what the joys of this world never could be,—everlasting joy, without mixture, interruption, or period; it shall not only fill their hearts to their own perfect and perpetual satisfaction, but it shall be upon their heads, as an ornament of grace and crown of glory, as a garland worn in token of victory. Their joy shall be visible, and no longer a secret thing, as it is here in this world; it shall be proclaimed to the glory of God, and their mutual encouragement. They shall then obtain that joy and gladness which they could never expect on this side heaven; "and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" for ever, as the shadows of the night before the rising sun. Thus these prophecies, which relate to the Assyrian invasion, conclude, for the support of the people of God under that calamity, and to direct their joy in their deliverance from it to something higher. Our joyful hopes and prospects of eternal life should swallow up both all the sorrows and all the joys of the present time.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The prophet Isaiah is, in this and the three following chapters, an historian; for the Scripture history, as well as the Scripture prophecy, is given by inspiration of God, and was dictated to holy men. Many of the prophecies of the foregoing chapters had their accomplishment in Sennacherib's invading Judah, and besieging Jerusalem, and the miraculous defeat he met with there; and therefore the story of this is here inserted, both for the explication and confirmation of the prophecy. The key of prophecy is to be found in history; and here, that we might have the readier entrance, it is as it were hung at the door. And the exact fulfilling of this prophecy might serve to confirm the faith of God's people in the other prophecies, the accomplishment of which was at a greater distance. Whether this story was taken from the book of the *Kings*, and added here, or whether it was first written by Isaiah here, and from hence taken into the book of *Kings*, is not material; but the story is the same almost verbatim; and it was so

memorable an event, that it was well worthy to be twice recorded, 2 *Kin.* xviii. and xix., and here; and an abridgment of it likewise, 2 *Chr.* xxxii. We shall be but short in our observations upon this story here, having largely explained it there. In this chapter we have, I. The descent which the king of Assyria made upon Judah, and his success against all the defenced cities, ver. 1. II. The conference he desired to have with Hezekiah, and the managers on both sides, ver. 2, 3. III. Rabshakeh's railing, blasphemous speech with which he designed to frighten Hezekiah into a submission, and persuade him to surrender at discretion, ver. 4—10. IV. His appeal to the people, and his attempt to persuade them to desert Hezekiah, and so force him to surrender, ver. 11—20. V. The report of this made to Hezekiah by his agent, ver. 21, 22.

NOW it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, *that* Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them. 2 And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field. 3 Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder. 4 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence *is* this wherein thou trustest? 5 I say, *sayest thou,* (but *they are but* vain words) *I have* counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? 6 Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so *is* Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him. 7 But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: *is it* not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar? 8 Now therefore give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 9 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10 And am I now come up without the LORD against this land to destroy it? the LORD said unto me, Go up against this land and destroy it.

We shall here only observe some practical lessons from hence.

First. That a people may be in the way of their duty, and yet meet with trouble and distress. Hezekiah was reforming, and his people in some measure reformed; and yet their country is at that time invaded, and a great part of it laid waste. Perhaps they began to grow remiss, and cool in the work of reformation, were doing it by the halves, and ready to sit down short of a thorough reformation; and then God visited them with this judgment, to put life into them and that good cause. We must not wonder if, when we are doing well, God sends afflictions to quicken us to do better, to do our best, and to press towards perfection.

Secondly. That we must never be secure of the continuance of our peace in this world, nor think our mountain stands so strong as that it cannot be moved. Hezekiah was not only a pious king, but prudent, both in his administration at home and his treaties abroad. His affairs were in a good posture, and he seemed particularly to be upon good terms with the king of Assyria; for he had lately made his peace with him by a rich present, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 14, and yet that perfidious prince pours an army into his country all of a sudden, and lays it waste. It is good for us, therefore, always to keep up an expectation of trouble, that, when it comes, it may be no surprise to us, and then it will be the less a terror.

Thirdly. That God sometimes permits the enemies of his people, even those that are most impious and treacherous, to prevail far against them. The king of Assyria took all, or most, of the defenced cities of Judah, and then the country would, of course, be an easy prey to him. Wickedness may prosper a while, but cannot prosper always.

Fourthly. Proud men love to talk big, to boast of what they are and have, and have done; nay, of what they will do, to insult over others, and set all mankind at defiance; though thereby they render themselves ridiculous to all wise men, and obnoxious to the wrath of that God who resisteth the proud. But thus they think to make themselves feared, though they make themselves hated, and to carry their point by great swelling words of vanity, *Jude* 16.

Fifthly. The enemies of God's people endeavour to conquer them by frightening them, especially by frightening them from their confidence in God. Thus Rabshakeh here, with noise and banter, runs down Hezekiah as utterly unable to cope with his master, or in the least to make head against him. It concerns us, therefore, that we may keep our ground against the enemies of our souls, to keep up our spirits by keeping up our hope in God.

Sixthly. It is acknowledged on all hands, that those who forsake God's service forfeit his protection. If it had been true, which Rabshakeh alleged, that Hezekiah had thrown down God's altars, he might justly infer that he could not with any assurance trust in him for succour and relief, ver. 7. We may say thus to presuming sinners, who say they trust in the Lord and in his mercy, Is not this he whose commandments they have lived in the contempt of, whose name they have dishonoured, and whose ordinances they have slighted? How then can we expect to find favour with him?

Seventhly. It is an easy thing, and very common, for those that persecute the church and people of God, to pretend a commission from him for so doing. Rabshakeh could say, "Am I now come up without the Lord?" when really he was come up against the Lord, *ch.* xxxvii. 28. They that kill the servants of the Lord think they do him service, and say, "Let the Lord be glorified." But, sooner or later, they will be made to know their error to their cost, to their confusion.

11 Then said Eliakim and Shebna and Joah unto Rabshakeh, Speak I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand *it:* and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that *are* on the wall. 12 But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? *hath he* not *sent me* to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you? 13 Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. 14 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you. 15 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 16 Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make *an agreement* with me *by* a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern; 17 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18 *Beware* lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19 Where *are* the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20 Who *are they* among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? 21 But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. 22 Then came Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, that *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

We may hence learn these lessons:

First. That while princes and counsellors have public matters under debate, it is not fair to appeal to the people. It was a reasonable motion which Hezekiah's plenipotentiaries made, that this parley should be held in a language which the people did not understand, ver. 11, because reasons of state are secret things, and ought to be kept secret, the vulgar being incompetent judges of them. It is therefore an unfair practice, and not doing as men would be done by, to incense subjects against their rulers by base insinuations.

Secondly. Proud and haughty scorners, the fairer they are spoken to, commonly the fouler they speak. Nothing could be said more mildly and respectfully than that which Hezekiah's agents said to Rabshakeh. Besides that the thing itself was just which they desired, they called themselves his servants, they petitioned for it, "Speak, we pray thee," but this made him the more spiteful

and imperious. To give rough answers to those who give us soft answers is one way of rendering evil for good; and those are wicked indeed, and it is to be feared incurably, with whom that which useth to turn away wrath doth but make ill worse.

Thirdly. When Satan would tempt men from trusting in God and cleaving to him, he doth it by insinuating that in yielding to him they may better their condition; but it is a false suggestion, and grossly absurd, and therefore to be rejected with the utmost abhorrence. When the world and the flesh say to us, Make an agreement with us, and come out to us, submit to our dominion, and come into our interests, and you shall eat every one of his own vine, they do but deceive us, promising liberty then when they would lead us into the basest captivity and slavery. One might as good take Rabshakeh's word as theirs for kind usage and fair quarter; therefore, when they speak fair, believe them not. Let them say what they will, there is no land like the land of promise, the holy land.

Fourthly. Nothing can be more absurd in itself, nor a greater affront to the true and living God, than to compare him with the gods of the heathen; as if he could do no more for the protection of his worshippers than they can for the protection of theirs; and as if the God of Israel could as easily be mastered as the gods of Hamath and Arphad. Whereas they are vanity and a lie; they are nothing; he is the great I AM. They are the creatures of men's fancy, and the works of men's hands; he is the Creator of all things.

Fifthly. Presumptuous sinners are ready to think that, because they have been too hard for their fellow-creatures, they are therefore a match for their Creator. This and the other nation they have subdued, and therefore the Lord himself shall not deliver Jerusalem out of their hand. But though the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth, let them not strive with the potter.

Sixthly. It is sometimes prudence not to answer a fool according to his folly. Hezekiah's command was, "Answer him not;" it will but provoke him to rail and blaspheme yet more and more; leave it to God to stop his mouth, for you cannot. They had reason enough on their side, but it would be hard to speak it to such an unreasonable adversary without a mixture of passion; and if they should fall to rail like him, Rabshakeh would be quite too hard for them at that weapon.

Seventhly. It becomes the people of God to lay to heart the dishonour done to God by the blasphemies of wicked men, though they do not think it prudent to reply to those blasphemies. Though they answered him not a word, yet they rent their clothes in a holy zeal for the glory of God's name, and a holy indignation at the contempt put upon it. They tore their garments when they heard blasphemy, as taking no pleasure in their own ornaments when God's honour suffered.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

In this chapter we have a farther repetition of the story which we had before in the book of *Kings*, concerning Sennacherib. In the chapter before we had him conquering, and threatening to conquer; in this chapter we have him falling, and at last fallen, in answer to prayer, and in performance of many of the prophecies which we have met with in the foregoing chapters. Here we have, I. Hezekiah's pious resentment of Rabshakeh's impious discourse, ver. 1. II. The gracious message he sent to Isaiah to desire his prayers, ver. 2—5. III. The encouraging answer which Isaiah sent him from God, assuring him that God would plead his cause against the king of Assyria, ver. 6, 7. IV. An abusive letter which the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah to the same purpose with Rabshakeh's speech, ver. 8—13. V. Hezekiah's humble prayer to God upon the receipt of this letter, ver. 14—20. VI. The farther full answer which God sent him by Isaiah, promising him that his affairs should shortly take a happy turn, that the storm should blow over, and every thing should appear bright and serene, ver. 21—35. VII. The immediate accomplishment of this prophecy, in the ruin of his army, ver. 36, and the murder of himself, ver. 37, 38. All which was largely opened, 2 *Kin.* xviii.

AND it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard *it*, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. 2 And he sent Eliakim, who *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. 3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day *is* a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth. 4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that is left. 5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6 And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

We may observe here,

First. That the best way to baffle the malicious designs of our enemies against us is to be driven by them to God and to our duty, and so to fetch meat out of the eater. Rabshakeh intended to frighten Hezekiah from the Lord, but it proves that he frightens him to the Lord. The wind, instead of forcing the traveller's coat from him, makes him wrap it closer about him. The more Rabshakeh reproacheth God, the more Hezekiah studies to honour him, by rending his clothes for the dishonour done to him, and attending in his sanctuary to know his mind.

Secondly. That it well becomes great men to desire the prayers of good men and good ministers. Hezekiah sent messengers and honourable ones, those of the first rank, to Isaiah, to desire his prayers, remembering how much his prophecies of late had plainly looked towards the events of the present day, in dependence upon which it is probable he doubted not but that the issue would be comfortable, yet he would have it to be so in answer to prayer; this is a day of trouble, therefore let it be a day of prayer.

Thirdly. When we are most at a plunge we should be most earnest in prayer. Now "the children are brought to the birth, but there is not strength to bring forth;" now let prayer come and help at a dead lift. When we meet with the greatest difficulties, then is a time to stir up not ourselves only but others also, to take hold on God. Prayer is the midwife of mercy, that helps to bring it forth.

Fourthly. It is an encouragement to pray, though we have but some hopes of mercy; ver. 4, "It may be the Lord thy God will hear; who knows but he will return and repent?" That "it may be" of the prospect of the haven of blessings should quicken us with double diligence to ply the oar of prayer.

Fifthly. When there is a remnant left, and but a remnant, it concerns us to lift up a prayer for that remnant, ver. 4. The prayer that reacheth heaven must be lifted up by a strong faith, earnest desires, a direct intention to the glory of God; all which should be quickened when we are come to the last stake.

Sixthly. Those that have made God their enemy we have no reason to be afraid of, for they are marked for ruin; and though they may hiss they cannot hurt. Rabshakeh hath blasphemed God, and therefore let not Hezekiah be afraid of him, ver. 6. He has made God a party to the cause by his invectives, and therefore judgment will certainly be given against him; God will plead his own cause.

Seventhly. Sinners' fears are but prefaces to their falls. He shall hear the rumour of the slaughter of his army, which shall oblige him to retire to his own land, and there he shall be slain, ver. 7. The terrors that pursue him shall bring him at last to the king of terrors, *Job* xviii. 11, 14. The curses that come upon sinners shall overtake them.

8 So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish. 9 And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He

TIRHAKAH.

is come forth to make war with thee. And when he heard *it*, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered? 12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, *as* Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children

of Eden which *were* in Telassar? 13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? 14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. 15 And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying, 16 O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou *art* the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. 17 Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. 18 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, 19 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. 20 Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD, *even* thou only.

We may observe here,

First. That if God gives us an inward satisfaction in his promise, that may confirm us in our silent bearing of reproaches. God answered Hezekiah, but it doth not appear that he, after deliberation, sent any answer to Rabshakeh; but God, having taken the work into his own hands, he quietly left the matter with him. So Rabshakeh returned to the king, his master, for fresh instructions.

Secondly. Those that delight in war shall have enough of it. Sennacherib, without provocation given to him, or warning given by him, went forth to war against Judah; and now, with as great surprise, the king of Ethiopia goes forth to war against him, ver. 9. They that are quarrelsome may expect to be quarrelled with, and God sometimes checks the rage of his enemies by giving it a powerful diversion.

Thirdly. It is bad to talk proudly and profanely, but it is worse to write so, for that argues more deliberation and design; and what is written spreads farther, and lasts longer, and doth the more mischief. Atheism and irreligion written will certainly be reckoned for another day.

Fourthly. Great successes often harden sinners' hearts in their sinful ways, and make them the more daring. Because the kings of Assyria have destroyed all lands,—though, in fact, they were but a few that fell within their reach,—therefore they doubt not but to destroy God's lands. Because the gods of the nations were unable to help, they conclude the God of Israel is so; because the idolatrous kings of Hamath and Arphad became an easy prey to them, therefore the religious, reforming king of Judah must needs be so too. Thus is this proud man ripened for ruin by the sunshine of prosperity.

Fifthly. Liberty of access to the throne of grace, and liberty of speech there, is the unspeakable privilege of the Lord's people at all times, especially in times of distress and danger. Hezekiah took Sennacherib's letter, "and spread it before the Lord," not designing to make any other complaints against him but what were grounded upon his own handwriting. Let the thing speak itself; here it is in black and white, "Open thine eyes, O Lord, and see." God allows his praying people to be humbly free with him, to utter all their words, as Jephthah did, before him, to spread the letter, whether of a friend or an enemy, before him, and leave the contents, the concern of it, with him.

Sixthly. The great and fundamental principles of our religion applied by faith, and improved in prayer, will be of sovereign use to us in our particular exigencies and distresses, whatever they are; to them, therefore, we must have recourse, and abide by them. So Hezekiah did here; he encouraged himself with this, that the God of Israel is the Lord of hosts, of the hosts of Israel, to animate them; of the hosts of their enemies, to dispirit and restrain them; that he is God alone, and there is none that can stand in competition with him; that he is the God of all the kingdoms of the earth, and disposeth of them all as he pleaseth, for he made heaven and earth, and therefore both can do any thing and doth every thing.

Seventhly. When we are afraid of men that are great destroyers, we may with humble boldness appeal to God as the great Saviour. They have indeed destroyed the nations who had thrown themselves out of the protection of the true God by worshipping false gods; but the Lord, the God alone, is our God, our king, our lawgiver, and he will save us who is the Saviour of them that believe.

Eighthly. We have enough to take hold of in our wrestling with God by prayer if we can but plead that his glory is interested in our case, that his name will be profaned if we are run down, and glorified if we are relieved. Thence, therefore, will our most prevailing pleas be drawn; Do it for thy glory's sake.

21 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: 22 This *is* the word which the LORD hath spoken concerning him;

The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee,
And laughed thee to scorn;
The daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.
23 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed?
And against whom hast thou exalted *thy* voice,
And lifted up thine eyes on high?
Even against the Holy One of Israel. [said,
24 By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast
By the multitude of my chariots am I come up
To the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon;
And I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, *and* the choice fir trees thereof:
And I will enter into the height of his border, *and* the forest of his Carmel.
25 I have digged, and drunk water;
And with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.
26 Hast thou not heard long ago, *how* I have done it;
And of ancient times, that I have formed it?
Now have I brought it to pass,
That thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities *into* ruinous heaps.
27 Therefore their inhabitants *were* of small power,
They were dismayed and confounded:
They were *as* the grass of the field, and *as* the green herb,
As the grass on the housetops,
And *as corn* blasted before it be grown up. [in,
28 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming
And thy rage against me.
29 Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears,
Therefore will I put my hook in thy nose,
And my bridle in thy lips, [camest.
And I will turn thee back by the way by which thou
30 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee,
Ye shall eat *this* year such as groweth of itself;
And the second year that which springeth of the same:
And in the third year sow ye, and reap,
And plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof.
31 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah
Shall again take root downward,
And bear fruit upward:
32 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant,
And they that escape out of mount Zion:
The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this. [Assyria,
33 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of
He shall not come into this city,
Nor shoot an arrow there,
Nor come before it with shields,
Nor cast a bank against it.
34 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return,
And shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.
35 For I will defend this city to save it
For mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

36 Then the angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses. 37 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. 38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and

they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

ESAR-HADDON.

We may here observe,

First. That those who receive messages of terror from men with patience, and send messages of faith to God by prayer, may expect messages of grace and peace from God for their comfort, then when they are most cast down. Isaiah sent a long answer to Hezekiah's prayer, in God's name,—sent it in writing, for it was too long to be sent by word of mouth,—and sent it by way of return to his prayer; relation being thereunto had; "Whereas thou hast prayed to me," know, for thy comfort, thy prayer is heard. Isaiah might have referred him to the prophecies he had delivered particularly that, *ch.* x., and bid him pick out an answer from thence; but, that he might have abundant consolation, a message is sent him on purpose. The correspondence between earth and heaven is never let fall on God's side.

Secondly. Those that magnify themselves, especially that magnify themselves against God and his people, do really vilify themselves, and make themselves contemptible in the eyes of all wise men. "The virgin, the daughter of Zion," hath despised Sennacherib, and all his impotent malice and menaces. She knows, while she preserves her integrity, she is sure of the Divine protection; and though he may bark, he cannot bite. All his threats are a jest; it is all but *brutum fulmen*,—'a mere flash.'

Thirdly. Those that abuse the people of God affront God himself; and he takes what is said and done against them as said and done against himself; "Whom hast thou reproached?" Even "the Holy One of Israel," whom thou hast therefore reproached, because he is a holy one. And it aggravated the indignity Sennacherib did to God, that he not only reproached him himself, but set his servants on to do it; "By thy servants," the abjects, "thou hast reproached me."

Fourthly. They that brag of themselves, and their own achievements, reflect upon God and his providence; "Thou hast said, I have digged and drunk water," I have done mighty feats, and will do more, and will not own that I have done it, ver. 24, 26. The most active men are no more than God makes them, and God makes them no more than of old he designed to make them. "What I have formed of ancient times," in an eternal counsel, "now have I brought to pass," (for God doth all according to the counsel of his will,) "that thou shouldst be to waste defenced cities;" it is therefore intolerable arrogance to make it thine own doing.

Fifthly. All the malice, and all the motions and projects of the church's enemies, are under the cognizance and check of the church's God. Sennacherib was active and quick, here and there and everywhere, but God knew his going out and coming in, and had always an eye upon him, ver. 28. And that was not all; he had a hand upon him too, a strict hand, a strong hand,—a hook in his nose, and a bridle in his lips,—with which, though he was very headstrong and unruly, he could, and would, turn him back by the way he came; ver. 29, "Hitherto he shall come, and no farther." God had signed Sennacherib's commission against Judah, *ch.* x. 6, here he supersedes it. He has frightened them, but he must not hurt them, and therefore is discharged from going any farther. Nay, his commitment is here signed, by which he is clapped up to answer for what he had done beyond his commission.

Sixthly. God is his people's bountiful benefactor, as well as their powerful protector; both a sun and a shield to those that trust in him. Jerusalem shall be defended, ver. 35; the besiegers shall not come into it, no, nor come before it with any regular attack; but they shall be routed before they begin the siege, ver. 33. But this is not all; God will return in mercy to his people, and will do them good. Their land shall be more than ordinarily fruitful, so as their losses shall be abundantly repaired. They shall not feel any of the ill effects either of the enemies wasting the country or of their own being taken off from husbanding; but the earth, as at first, shall bring forth of itself, and they shall live, and live plentifully, upon its spontaneous products. The blessing of the Lord can, when he pleaseth, make rich without the hand of the diligent. And let them not think that the desolations of their country would excuse them from observing the sabbatical year, which happened, as it should seem, the year after, and when they were not to plough or sow; no, though they had not now their usual stock beforehand for that year, yet they must religiously observe it, and depend upon God to provide for them. God must be trusted in the way of duty.

Seventhly. There is no standing before the judgments of God, when they come with commission. 1. The greatest numbers cannot stand before them. One angel shall in one night lay a vast army of men dead upon the spot, when God commissions him so to do, ver. 36. Here are 185,000 brave soldiers in an instant turned into so many dead corpses. Many think the 76th psalm was penned upon occasion of this defeat; where, from "the spoiling of the stout-hearted," and sending them to sleep their long sleep, (ver. 5,) it is inferred, that God is "more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey," ver. 4, and that "he, even he, is to be feared," ver. 7. Angels are employed more than we are aware of, as ministers of God's justice, to punish the pride, and break the power of wicked men. 2. The greatest men cannot stand before them. "The great king, the king of Assyria," looks very little when he is forced to return, not only with shame, because he cannot accomplish what he had projected with so much assurance; but with terror and fear, lest the angel, that had destroyed his army, should destroy him. Yet he is made to look less when his own sons, that should have guarded him, sacrificed him to his idol, whose protection he sought, ver. 37, 38. God can quickly stop their breath that breathe out threatenings and slaughter against his people, and will do it when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity. And the Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth; known to be a God that resists the proud. Many prophecies were fulfilled in this providence, which should encourage us, as far as they look farther, and are designed as common and general assurances of the safety of the church, and of all that trust in God, to depend upon God for the accomplishment of them. He that has delivered doth and will. Lord, forgive our enemies; but "so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

This chapter proceeds in the history of Hezekiah. Here is, I. His sickness, and the sentence of death he received within himself, ver. 1. II. His prayer in his sickness, ver. 2, 3. III. The answer of peace which God gave to that prayer, assuring him that he should recover, that he should live fifteen years yet, that Jerusalem should be delivered from the king of Assyria, and that, for a sign to confirm his faith herein, the sun should go back ten degrees, ver. 8—10. And this we read and opened before, 2 *Kin.* xx. 10, &c. But, IV. Here is Hezekiah's thanksgiving for his recovery, which we had not before, ver. 9—20; to which is added, the means used, ver. 21, and the end the good man aimed at in desiring to recover, ver. 22. This is a chapter which will entertain the thoughts, direct the devotions, and encourage the faith and hopes of those that are confined by bodily distempers; it visits those that are visited with sickness.

IN those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. 2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, 3 And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is* good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. 4 Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, 5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. 6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. 7 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken: 8 Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

We may hence observe, among others, these good lessons.

First. That neither men's goodness nor greatness will exempt them from the arrests of sickness and death. Hezekiah, a mighty potentate on earth, and a mighty favourite of Heaven, is struck with a disease, which, without a miracle, will certainly be mortal; and this in the midst of his days, his comforts and usefulness; "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick." It should seem, this sickness seized him when he was in the midst of his triumphs over the ruined army of the Assyrians, to teach us always to rejoice with trembling.

Secondly. It concerns us to prepare when we see death approaching; "Set thine house in order," and thy heart especially. Put both thine affections and thine affairs into the best posture thou canst, that when thy Lord comes thou mayest be found of him in peace with God, with thy own conscience, and with all men, and mayest have nothing else to do but to die. Our being ready for death will make it come never the sooner, but much the easier; and those that are fit to die are most fit to live.

Thirdly. "Is any afflicted" with sickness? "Let him pray," *Jas.* v. 13. Prayer is a salve for every sore, personal or public. When Hezekiah was distressed by his enemies, he prayed; now he was sick, he prayed. Whither should the child go when any thing ails him but to his Father? Afflictions are sent to bring us to our Bibles, and to our knees. When Hezekiah was in health he "went up to the house of the Lord" to pray, for that was then the house of prayer; when he was sick in bed he "turned his face towards the wall," pro-

bably towards the temple, which was a type of Christ, to whom we must look by faith in every prayer.

Fourthly. The testimony of our consciences for us, that by the grace of God we have lived a good life, and have walked closely and humbly with God, will be a great support and comfort to us when we come to look death in the face. And though we may not depend upon it as our righteousness, by which to be justified before God, yet we may humbly plead it as an evidence of our interest in the righteousness of the Mediator. Hezekiah doth not demand a reward from God for his good services, but modestly begs that God would remember, not how he had reformed the kingdom, taken away the high places, cleansed the temple, and revived neglected ordinances, but, which was "better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices," how he had approved himself to God with a single eye, and an honest heart, not only in these eminent performances, but in an even, regular course of holy living. "I have walked before thee in truth," and sincerity, and "with a perfect," that is, an upright "heart;" for uprightness is our gospel perfection.

Fifthly. God has a gracious ear open to the prayers of his afflicted people. The same prophet that was sent to Hezekiah with warning to prepare for death is sent to him with a promise that he shall not only recover, but be restored to a confirmed state of health, and live fifteen years yet. As Jerusalem was distressed, so Hezekiah was diseased, that God might have the glory of the deliverance of both, and that prayer too might have the honour of being instrumental in the deliverance. When we pray in our sickness, though God send not to us such an answer as he here sent to Hezekiah, yet if by his Spirit he bids us be of good cheer, assures us that our sins are forgiven us, that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and that whether we live or die we shall be his; we have no reason to say that we prayed in vain. God answers us, if he strengthens us with strength in our souls, though not with bodily strength, *Ps.* cxxxviii. 3.

Sixthly. A good man cannot take much comfort in his own health and prosperity, unless withal he see the welfare and prosperity of the church of God. Therefore, God knowing what lay near Hezekiah's heart, promised him not only that he should live, but that he should see the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life, *Ps.* cxxviii. 5; or otherwise he cannot live comfortably. Jerusalem, that is now delivered, shall still be defended from the Assyrians, who perhaps threatened to rally again, and renew the attack. Thus doth God graciously provide to make Hezekiah upon all accounts easy.

Seventhly. God is "willing to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel," that they may have unshaken faith in it, and therewith a strong consolation. God had given Hezekiah repeated assurances of his favour; and yet, as if all were thought too little, that he might expect from him uncommon favours, a sign is given him, an uncommon sign. None, that we know of, having had an absolute promise of living such a number of years to come as Hezekiah had, God thought fit to confirm this unprecedented favour with a miracle. The sign was the going back of the shadow upon the sun-dial. The sun is a faithful measurer of time, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. But he that set that clock a-going can set it back when he pleaseth, and make it to return; for the Father of all lights is the director of them.

9 ¶ The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

10 I said in the cutting off of my days,
I shall go to the gates of the grave:
I am deprived of the residue of my years.
11 I said, I shall not see the LORD,
Even the LORD, in the land of the living:
I shall behold man no more
With the inhabitants of the world.
12 Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent:
I have cut off like a weaver my life:
He will cut me off with pining sickness:
From day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.
13 I reckoned till morning, *that*, as a lion,
So will he break all my bones:
From day *even* to night wilt thou make an end of me.
14 Like a crane *or* a swallow, so did I chatter:
I did mourn as a dove:
Mine eyes fail *with looking* upward:
O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.
15 What shall I say?
He hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done *it*:
I shall go softly all my years
In the bitterness of my soul.
16 O Lord, by these *things men* live,
And in all these *things is* the life of my spirit:
So wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.
17 Behold, for peace I had great bitterness:
But thou hast in love to my soul *delivered it* from the pit of corruption:
For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.
18 For the grave cannot praise thee,
Death can *not* celebrate thee:
They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.
18 The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I *do* this day:
The father to the children shall make known thy truth.
20 The LORD *was ready* to save me:
Therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments
All the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

21 For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay *it* for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover. 22 Hezekiah also had said, What *is* the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?

We have here Hezekiah's thanksgiving song, which he penned by Divine direction, after his recovery. He might have taken some of the psalms of his father David, and have made use of them for his purpose. He might have found many very pertinent ones. He appointed the Levites to praise the Lord with the words of David, 2 *Chr.* xxix. 30. But the occasion here was extraordinary, and, his heart being full of devout affections, he would not confine himself to the composures he had, though of Divine inspiration, but would offer up his affections in his own words, which is most natural and genuine. He put this thanksgiving in writing, that he might review it himself afterwards, for the reviving of the good impressions made upon him by the providence, and that it might be recommended to others also, for their use upon the like occasion. Note, There are writings which it is proper for us to draw up, after we have been sick, and are recovered. It is good to write a memorial of the affliction, and of the frame of our hearts under it; to keep a record of the thoughts we had of things when we were sick, the affections that were then working in us. To write a memorial of the mercies of a sick-bed, and of our release from it, that they may never be forgotten; to write a thanksgiving to God, write a sure covenant with him, and seal it; give it under our hands, that we will never return again to folly. It is an excellent writing which Hezekiah here left upon his recovery; and yet we find, 2 *Chr.* xxxii. 25, that he rendered not again according to the benefit done to him. The impressions, one would have thought, should never have worn off, and yet it seems they did. Thanksgiving is good, but thanks-living is better. Now in this writing he preserves upon record,

First. The deplorable condition he was in when his disease prevailed, and his despair of recovery, ver. 10—13. He tells us what his thoughts were of himself, when he was at the worst. And these he keeps in remembrance, 1. As blaming himself for his despondency, and that he gave up himself for gone, whereas while there is life there is hope, and room for our prayer, and God's mercy. Though it is good to construe sickness as a summons to the grave, so as thereby to be quickened in our preparation for another world, yet we ought not to make the worst of our case, nor to think that every sick man must needs be a dead man presently. He that brings low can raise up. Or, 2. As minding himself of the apprehensions he had of death approaching, that he might always know and consider his own frailty and mortality; and that, though he had a reprieve for fifteen years, it was but a reprieve, and the fatal stroke he had now such a dread of would certainly come at last. Or, 3. As magnifying the power of God, in recovering him when his case was desperate, and his goodness in being so much better to him than his own fears. Thus David sometimes, when he was delivered out of trouble, reflected upon the black and melancholy conclusions he had made upon his own case when he was in trouble, and what he had then said in his haste, as *Ps.* xxxi. 22; lxxvii. 7—9. Let us see what Hezekiah's thoughts of himself were.

1st. He reckoned that the number of his months was cut off in the midst. He was now about thirty-nine or forty years of age, and when he had a fair prospect of many years, and happy ones, very happy, very many before him. This distemper, that suddenly seized him, he concluded would be the cutting off of his days, that he should now be deprived of the residue of his years, which, in a course of nature, he might have lived; not which he could command as a debt due to him, but which he had reason to expect, considering the strength of his constitution. And with them he should be deprived not only of the comforts of life, but of all the opportunities he had of serving God and his generation. To the same purpose; ver. 12, "Mine age is departed," and gone, "and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent," out of which I am forciby dislodged, by the pulling of it down in an instant. Our present residence is but like that of a shepherd in his tent,—a poor, and mean, and cold lodging,—where we are upon duty, and with a trust committed to our charge, as the shepherd hath, of which we must give an account, and which will easily be taken down, by the drawing one pin or two. But observe, it is not the final period of our age, but only the removal of it to another world, where the tents of Kedar, that are taken down coarse, and black, and weather-beaten, shall be set up again in the New Jerusalem, comely as the curtains of Solomon. He adds another similitude; "I have cut off, like a weaver, my life." Not that he did by any act of his own cut off the thread of his life, but, being told that he must needs die, he was forced to cut off all his designs and projects; his purposes were broken off, even the thoughts of his heart, as Job's were, *ch.* xvii. 11. Our days are compared to the weaver's shuttle, *Job* vii. 6, passing and repassing very swiftly; and every throw leaving a thread behind it; and when they are finished, the thread is cut off, and the piece taken out of the loom and shewed to our Master, to be judged of whether it be well woven or no, that we may receive according to the things done in the body. But, as the weaver, when he has cut off his threads, has done his work, and the toil is over, so a good man, when his life is cut off, his cares and fatigues are cut off with it, and he rests from his labours. But, did I say, I have cut off my life? No, my times are not in mine own hand; they are in God's hand, and it is he that 'will cut me off from the thrum,' so the margin reads it. He has appointed what shall be the length of the piece, and when it comes to that length he will cut it off.

2nd. He reckoned that he should "go to the gates of the grave;" to the grave, the gates of which are always open; for it is still crying, Give, give. The grave is here put not only for the sepulchres of his fathers, in which his body would be deposited with a great deal of pomp and magnificence,—for he was buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the kings, and all Judah did him honour at his death, 2 *Chr.* xxxii. 33, which yet he himself took no care of, nor gave any order about, when he was sick,—but for the state of the dead, that is, the *Sheol*, the Hades, the invisible world to which he saw his soul going.

3rd. He reckoned that he was deprived of all the opportunities he might have had of worshipping God, and doing good in the world; ver. 11, "I said," *First.* "I shall not see the Lord," as he manifests himself in his temple, in his oracles and ordinances, "even the Lord," here "in the land of the living." He hopes to see him on the other side death; but he despairs of seeing him any more on this side death, as he had seen him in the sanctuary, *Ps.* lxiii. 2. He shall no more see, that is, serve the Lord in the land of the living, the land of conflict between his kingdom and the kingdom of Satan, this seat of war. He

harps much upon this, "I shall no more see the Lord, even the Lord;" for a good man wisheth not to live for any other end but that he may serve God, and have communion with him. *Secondly.* "I shall see man no more." He shall see his subjects no more, whom he may protect and administer justice to; shall see no more objects of charity, whom he may relieve; shall see his friends no more, who were often sharpened by his countenance, as iron is by iron. Death puts an end to conversation, and removes our acquaintance into darkness, *Ps.* lxxxviii. 18.

4th. He reckoned that the agonies of death would be very sharp and severe; "He will cut me off with pining sickness," which will waste me, and wear me off apace. The distemper increased so fast, without intermission or remission, either day or night, morning or evening, that he concluded it would come to a crisis presently, and make an end of him. That God, whose servants all diseases are, would by them, as a lion, break all his bones, with grinding pain, ver. 13. He thought next morning was the utmost he could expect to live in such pain and misery. When he had outlived the first day's illness, the second day he repeated his fears, and concluded this must needs be his last night; "From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me." When we are sick, we are very apt to be thus calculating our time; and after all, we are still at an uncertainty. It should be more our care how we shall get safe to another world than how long we are likely to live in this world.

Secondly. The complaints he made in this condition; ver. 14, "Like a crane or swallow so did I chatter;" I made a noise as those birds do when they are frightened. See what change sickness makes in a little time; he that but the other day spoke with so much freedom and majesty, now, through the extremity of pain, or deficiency of spirits, chatters like a crane or a swallow. Some think he refers to his praying in his affliction; it was so broken and interrupted with groanings that could not be uttered, that it was more like the chattering of a crane or swallow than what it used to be. Such mean thoughts had he of his own prayers, which yet were acceptable to God, and successful. He "mourned like a dove," sadly, but silently and patiently. He had found God so ready to answer his prayers at other times, that he could not but look upwards in expectation of some relief now; but in vain, his eyes failed, and he saw no hopeful symptom, nor felt any abatement of his distemper; and therefore he prays, "I am oppressed," quite overpowered, and ready to sink, "Lord, undertake for me," bail me out of the hands of this serjeant that has arrested me; "be surety for thy servant for good," *Ps.* cxix. 122; come between me and the gates of the grave, to which I am ready to be hurried. When we recover from sickness, the Divine pity doth as it were beg day for us, and undertakes we shall be forthcoming another time, and answer the debt in full; and when we receive the sentence of death within ourselves we are undone if the Divine grace do not undertake for us to carry us through the valley of the shadow of death, and to preserve us blameless to the heavenly kingdom on the other side it; if Christ do not undertake for us to bring us off in the judgment, and present us to his Father, and to do all that for us which we need, and cannot do for ourselves. 'I am oppressed, ease me,' so some read it; for when we are tossed with sense of guilt, and fear of wrath, nothing will make us easy but Christ's undertaking for us.

Thirdly. The grateful acknowledgment he makes of God's goodness to him in his recovery. He begins this part of the writing as one at a stand how to express himself; ver. 15, "What shall I say?" Why should I say so much by way of complaint, when this is enough to silence all my complaints; "He hath spoken unto me," he hath sent his prophet to tell me that I shall recover, and live fifteen years yet; "and himself hath done it." It is as sure to be done as if it were done already; what God hath spoken, he will himself do, for no word of his shall fall to the ground. God having spoken it, he is sure of it; ver. 16, "Thou wilt recover me, and make me to live;" not only recover me from this illness, but make me to live through the years assigned me. And having this hope,

1. He promiseth always to retain the impressions of his affliction; ver. 15, "I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul," as one in sorrow for my sinful distrusts and murmurings under my affliction; as one in the care to make suitable returns for God's favour to me, and to make it appear I have got good by the providences I have been under. "I will go softly," that is, gravely and considerately, and with thought and deliberation; not as many, when they are recovered, live as carelessly and as much at large as ever. Or, 'I will go pleasantly,' so some understand it; when God has delivered me, I will walk cheerfully with him in all holy conversation, as having tasted that he is gracious. Or, "I will go softly," that is, mournfully, "in the bitterness of my soul," for my sins. Or, 'I will go softly even after the bitterness of my soul,' so it may be read; when the trouble is over, I will endeavour to retain the impression of it, and to have the same thoughts of things I had then.

2. He will encourage himself and others with the experiences he had had of the goodness of God, ver. 16. By these things which thou hast done for me they live, the kingdom lives; for the life of such a king was the life of the kingdom; all that hear of it shall live and be comforted; by the same power and goodness that hath recovered me all men have their souls held in life, and they ought to acknowledge it. "In all these things is the life of my spirit," that is, my spiritual life; that is supported and maintained by what God has done for the preservation of my natural life. The more we taste of the lovingkindness of God in every providence, the more will our hearts be enlarged to love him, and live to him; and that will be the life of our spirit. Thus our souls live, and they shall praise him.

3. He magnifies the mercy of his recovery on several accounts.

1st. That he was raised up from great extremity; ver. 17, "Behold, for peace I had great bitterness." When, upon the defeat of Sennacherib, he expected nothing but an uninterrupted peace to himself and his government, he was suddenly seized with sickness, which embittered all his comforts to him; and went to that height, that it seemed to be the bitterness of death itself; bitterness, bitterness, nothing but gall and wormwood. This was his condition when God sent him seasonable relief.

2nd. That it came from the love of God, from love to his soul. Some are spared and reprieved in wrath, that they may be reserved for some greater judgment, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but temporal mercies are then sweet indeed to us when we can taste the love of God in them; "He delivered me because he delighted in me," *Ps.* xviii. 19. And the word here signifies a very affectionate love. 'Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of corruption,' so it runs in the original. God's love is sufficient to bring a soul from the pit of corruption. This is applicable to our redemption by Christ; it was in love to our souls, our poor perishing souls, that he delivered them from the bottomless pit, snatched them as brands out of everlasting burnings; "In his love, and in his pity he redeemed us." And the preservation of our bodies, and the provision made for them, is then doubly comfortable, when it is in love to our souls; when God repairs the house because he has a kindness for the inhabitant.

3rd. That it was the product and effect of the pardon of sin; "For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back," and thereby hast delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, in love to it. Note, *First.* When God pardons sin, he casts it behind his back, as not designing to look upon it with an eye of justice and jealousy; he remembers it no more to visit for it. The pardon doth not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin, but not to be punished as it deserves. When we cast our sins behind our back, and take no care to repent of them, God sets them before his face, and is ready to reckon for them; but when we set them before our face in true repentance, as David did when his sin was ever before him, God casts them behind his back. *Secondly.* When God pardons sins, he pardons all, casts them all behind his back, though they have been as scarlet and crimson. *Thirdly.* The pardoning of the sin is the delivering of the soul from the pit of corruption. *Fourthly.* It is then pleasant to think of our recoveries from sickness, when we see them flowing from the remission of sin; then the cause is removed, and then it is in love to the soul.

4th. That it was the lengthening out of his opportunity to glorify God in this world, which he made the business, and pleasure, and end of life.

First. If this sickness had been his death, it had put a period to that course of service for the glory of God, and the good of the church, he was now in, ver. 18. Heaven indeed praiseth God; and the souls of the faithful, when at death they remove thither, do the work of heaven, as the angels, and with the angels there; but what is the world the better for that? What doth that contribute to the support and advancement of God's kingdom among men, in this state of struggle? The grave cannot praise God, nor the dead bodies that lie there; death cannot celebrate him, cannot proclaim his perfections and favours, to invite others into his service. They who go down to the pit, being no longer in a state of probation, nor living by faith in his promises, cannot give him honour by hoping for his truth. They that lie rotting in the grave, as they are not capable of receiving any farther mercy from God, so neither of offering any more praises to him, till they shall be raised at the last day, and then they shall both receive and give glory.

Secondly. Being recovered from it, he resolves not only to proceed, but to abound in praising and serving God; ver. 19, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee." They may do it, they have an opportunity of praising God, and that is the main thing that makes life valuable and desirable to a good man. Hezekiah was therefore glad to live, not that he might continue to enjoy his royal dignity, and the honour and pleasure of his late successes, but that he might continue to praise God. The living must praise God, they live in vain if they do not. They that have been dying, and yet are living, whose life is life from the dead, are in a special manner obliged to praise God, as being most sensibly affected with his goodness. Hezekiah, for his part, being recovered from this sickness, will make it his business to praise God; "I do it this day," let others do it in like manner. They that give good exhortations should set good examples, and do themselves what they expect from others. For my part, saith Hezekiah, "The Lord was ready to save me;" he not only did save me, but he was ready to do it just then when I was in the greatest extremity; his help came in seasonably; he shewed himself willing and forward to save me. The Lord was to save me, was at hand to do it, saved me at the first word; and therefore, 1*st.* I will publish and proclaim his praises. I and my family, I and my friends, I and my people, will have a concert of praise to his glory; "We will sing my songs to the stringed instruments," that others may attend to them, and be affected with them, when they are in the most devout and serious frame "in the house of the Lord." It is for the honour of God, and the edification of his church, that special mercies should be acknowledged in public praises, especially mercies to public persons, *Ps.* cxvi. 18, 19. 2*nd.* I will proceed and persevere in his praises. We will do it all the days of our life, because every day of our life is itself a fresh mercy, and brings many fresh mercies along with it; and, as renewed mercies called for renewed praises, so former eminent mercies call for repeated praises. It is by the mercy of God that we live, and therefore as long as we live we must continue to praise him while we have breath; nay, while we have being. 3*rd.* I will propagate and perpetuate his praises. We will not only do it all the days of our life, but "the father to the children shall make known his truth," that the ages to come may give God the glory of his truth by trusting to it. It is the duty of parents to possess their children with a confidence in the truth of God, which will go far towards keeping them close to the ways of God. Hezekiah, doubtless, did this himself; and yet Manasseh his son walked not in his steps. Parents may give their children many good things, good instructions, good examples, good books, but they cannot give them grace.

In the last two verses of this chapter we have two passages relating to this story, which were omitted in the narrative of it here, but which we had, 2 *Kin.* xx., and therefore shall here only observe two lessons from them. 1. That God's promises are intended, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage the use of means. Hezekiah is sure to recover, and yet he must "take a lump of figs, and lay it on the boil," ver. 21. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if when we pray to him for help we do not second our prayers with our endeavours. We must not put physicians or physic in the place of God, but make use of them in subordination to God and to his providence. Help thyself, and God will help thee. 2. That the chief end we should aim at in desiring life and health is, that we may glorify God, and do good, and improve ourselves in knowledge, and grace, and meetness for heaven. Hezekiah, when he asked, What is the sign that I shall recover, meant, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord," there to honour God, to keep up his acquaintance and communion with him, and to encourage others to serve him, ver. 22. It is taken for granted that if God would restore him to health, he would presently go up to the temple with his thank offerings; there Christ found the impotent man whom he had healed, *Jno.* v. 14. The exercises of religion are so much the business and delight of a good man, that to be restrained from them is the greatest grievance of his afflictions; and to be restored to them is the greatest comfort of his deliverances. "Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The story of this chapter likewise we had before, 2 *Kin.* xx. 12, &c. It is here repeated, not only as a very memorable and improvable passage, but because it concludes with a prophecy of the captivity in Babylon; and as the former part of the prophecy of this book frequently referred to Sennacherib's invasion, and the defeat of that, to which, therefore, the history of that was very fitly subjoined, so the latter part of this book speaks much of the Jews' captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance out of that, to which, therefore, the first prediction of it, with the occasion thereof, is very fitly prefixed. We have here, I. The pride and folly of Hezekiah, in shewing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors that were sent to congratulate his recovery, ver. 1, 2. II. Isaiah's examination of him concerning it in God's name, and his confession of it, ver. 3, 4. III. The sentence passed upon him for it, that all his treasures should in process of time be carried to Babylon, ver. 5—7. IV. Hezekiah's penitent and patient submission to this sentence, ver. 8.

AT that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had

been sick, and was recovered. 2 And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not. 3 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, *even* from Babylon. 4 Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that *is* in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

Hence we may learn these lessons:

First. That humanity and common civility teach us to rejoice with our friends and neighbours when they rejoice, and to congratulate their deliverances, and particularly their recoveries from sickness. The king of Babylon having heard that Hezekiah had been sick, and was recovered, sent to compliment him upon the occasion. If Christians be unneighbourly, heathens will shame them.

Secondly. It becomes us to give honour to those whom our God puts honour upon. The sun was the Babylonian's god, and when they understood that it was with a respect to Hezekiah that the sun, to their great surprise, went back ten degrees such a day, they thought themselves obliged to do Hezekiah all the honour they could. Will all people thus walk in the name of their god, and shall not we?

Thirdly. Those that do not value good men for their goodness yet may be brought to pay them great respects by other inducements, and for the sake of their secular interests. The king of Babylon made his court to Hezekiah here, not because he was pious, but because he was prosperous; as the Philistines coveted an alliance with Isaac, because they saw the Lord was with him, *Gen.* xxvi. 28. The king of Babylon was an enemy to the king of Assyria, and therefore was fond of Hezekiah, because the Assyrians were so much weakened by the power of his God.

Fourthly. It is a hard matter to keep the spirit low in the midst of great advancements. Hezekiah is an instance of it. He was a wise and good man; but when one miracle after another was wrought in his favour he found it hard to keep his heart from being lifted up; nay, a little thing then drew him into the snare of pride. Blessed Paul himself needed a thorn in the flesh to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of revelations.

Fifthly. We have need to watch over our own spirits, when we are shewing our friends our possessions, what we have done, and what we have got, that we be not proud of them, as if our might or our merit had purchased and procured us this wealth. When we look upon our enjoyments, and have occasion to speak of them, it must be with humble acknowledgments of our own unworthiness, and thankful acknowledgments of God's goodness, with a just value for others' achievements, and with an expectation of losses and changes; not dreaming that our mountain stands so strong but that it may soon be moved.

Sixthly. It is a great weakness for good men to value themselves much upon the civil respects that are paid them (yea, though there be something particular and uncommon in them) by the children of this world, and to be fond of their acquaintance. What a poor thing was it for Hezekiah, whom God had dignified, to be thus overproud of the respects done him by a heathen prince, as if those added any thing to him! We ought to return the courtesies of such with interest, but not to be proud of them.

Seventhly. We must expect to be called to an account for the workings of our pride, though they are secret, and in such instances as we thought there was no harm in; and therefore we ought to call ourselves to an account for them; and when we have had company with us that has paid us respect, and been pleased with their entertainment, and commended every thing, to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, lest our hearts have been lifted up. And as far as we see cause to suspect that this sly and subtle sin of pride hath insinuated itself into our breasts, and mingled itself with our conversation, let us be ashamed of it, and, as Hezekiah here, ingenuously confess it, and take shame to ourselves for it.

5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: 6 Behold, the days come, that all that *is* in thine house, and *that* which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 7 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 8 Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good *is* the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

Hence let us observe,

First. That if God love us he will humble us, and will find some way or other to pull down our spirits when they are lifted up above measure. A mortifying message is sent to Hezekiah, that he might be humbled for the pride of his heart, and be convinced of the folly of it; for though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, as he did Hezekiah here, to prove him, that he "might know all that was in his heart," yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it.

Secondly. It is just with God to take that from us which we make the matter of our pride, and on which we build a carnal confidence. When David was proud of the numbers of his people, God took a course to make them fewer; and when Hezekiah boasts of his treasures, and looks upon them with too great a complacency, he is told he doth like the foolish traveller, that shews his money and gold to one that proves a thief, and is thereby tempted to rob him.

Thirdly. If we could but see things that will be, we should be ashamed of our thoughts of things that are. If Hezekiah had known that the seed and successors of this king of Babylon would hereafter be the ruin of his family and kingdom, he would not have complimented his ambassadors as he did. And when the prophet told him it would be so, we may well imagine how he was vexed at himself for what he had done. We cannot certainly foresee what will be, but are told in general, "all is vanity;" and therefore it is vanity for us to take a complacency, and put a confidence, in any thing that goes under that character.

Fourthly. Those that are fond of an acquaintance and alliance with irreligious men, first or last, will have enough of it, and will have cause to repent it. Hezekiah thought himself mighty happy in the friendship of Babylon, though it was the mother of harlots and idolatries; but Babylon, that now courted Jerusalem, in process of time conquered her, and carried her captive. Leagues with sinners, and leagues with sin too, will end thus; it is therefore our wisdom to keep at a distance from them.

Fifthly. Those that truly repent of their sins will take it well to be reproved for them, and will be willing to be told of their faults. Hezekiah reckoned that word of the Lord good which discovered sin to him, and made him sensible that he had done amiss, which before he was not aware of. The language of true penitents is, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness;" and the law is therefore good, because, being spiritual, in it sin appears sin, and exceeding sinful.

Sixthly. True penitents will quietly submit, not only to the reproofs of the word, but to the rebukes of Providence, for their sins. When Hezekiah was told of the punishment of his iniquity he said, "Good is the word of the Lord;" not only the mitigation of the sentence good, but the sentence itself so. He hath nothing to object against the equity of it, but saith Amen to the threatening. They that see the evil of sin, and what it deserves, will justify God in all that is brought upon them for it, and own that he punisheth them less than their iniquities deserve.

Seventhly. Though we must not be regardless of those that come after us, yet we must reckon ourselves well done for, if there be peace and truth in our days, and better than we had reason to expect. If a storm be coming, we must reckon it a favour to get into the harbour before it comes, and be gathered to the grave in peace; yet we can never be secure of this, but must prepare for changes in our own time, that we may stand complete in all the will of God, and bid it welcome whatever it is.

CHAPTER XL.

At this chapter begins the latter part of the prophecy of this book, which is not only divided from the former by the historical chapters that come between, but seems to be distinguished from it in the scope and style of it. In the former part, the name of the prophet was frequently prefixed to the particular sermons, besides the general title, as *ch.* ii. 1; vii. 3; xiii. 1; but this is all one continued discourse, and the prophet not so much as once named; that consisted of many burthens, many woes, this of many blessings. There the distress which the people of God were in by the Assyrian, and their deliverance out of that, were chiefly prophesied of; but that is here spoken of as a thing past, *ch.* lii. 4; and the captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance out of that, which were much greater events, of more extensive and abiding concern, are here largely foretold. Before God sent his people into captivity, he furnished them with precious promises for their support and comfort in their trouble; and we may well imagine of what great use to them the glorious, gracious light of this prophecy was in that cloudy and dark day, and how much it helped to dry up their tears by the rivers of Babylon. But it looks farther yet, and to greater things; much of Christ and gospel grace we met with in the foregoing part of this book, but in this latter part we shall find much more; and, as if it were designed for a prophetical summary of the New Testament, it begins with that which begins the Gospels, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness," *ch.* xl. 3, and concludes with that which concludes the book of the *Revelation*, the new heavens and the new earth, *ch.* lxvi. 22. Even Mr. White acknowledgeth, that as all the mercies of God to the Jewish nation bore some resemblance to those glorious things performed by our Saviour for man's redemption, so they are by the Spirit of God expressed in such terms as shew plainly that, while the prophet is speaking of the redemption of the Jews, he had in his thoughts a more glorious deliverance. And we need not look for any farther accomplishment of these prophecies yet to come; for if Jesus be he, and his kingdom be it that should come, we are to look for no other, but the carrying on and completing of the same blessed work which was begun in the first preaching and planting of Christianity in the world.

In this chapter we have, I. Orders given to preach and publish the glad tidings of redemption, ver. 1, 2. II. These glad tidings introduced by a voice in the wilderness, which gives assurance that all obstructions shall be removed, ver. 3—5, and that, though all creatures fall and fade, the word of God shall be established for ever, ver. 6—8. III. A joyful prospect given the people of God of the happiness which this redemption should bring along with it, ver. 9—11. IV. The sovereignty and power of that God magnified who undertakes to work out this redemption, ver. 12—17. V. Idols therefore triumphed over, and idolaters upbraided with their folly, ver. 18—26. VI. A reproof given to the people of God for their fears and despondencies, and enough said in a few words to silence those fears, ver. 27—31. And we through patience and comfort of this scripture may have hope.

COMFORT ye, comfort ye my people,
Saith your God.
2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her,
That her warfare is accomplished,
That her iniquity is pardoned:
For she hath received of the LORD's hand
Double for all her sins.

We have here the commission and instructions given, not to this prophet only, but with him to all the Lord's prophets, nay, and to all Christ's ministers, to proclaim comfort to God's people. 1. This did not only warrant but enjoin this prophet himself to encourage the good people who lived in his own time,

who could not but have very melancholy apprehensions of things, when they saw Judah and Jerusalem, by their daring impieties, ripening apace for ruin, and God, in his providence, hastening ruin upon them. Let them be sure that for all this God had mercy in store for them. 2. It was especially a direction to the prophets that should live in the time of the captivity, when Jerusalem was in ruins; they must encourage the captives to hope for enlargement in due time. 3. Gospel ministers, being employed by the blessed Spirit as a comforter, and as helpers of the joy of Christians, are here put in mind of their business. Here is,

First. Comfortable words directed to God's people in general, ver. 1. The prophets have instructions from their God (for he is the Lord God of the holy prophets, *Rev.* xxii. 6) to comfort the people of God; and the charge is doubled, "Comfort ye, comfort ye;" not so much because the prophets are unwilling to do it,—no, it is the most pleasant part of their work,—but because sometimes the souls of God's people refuse to be comforted, and their comforters must repeat things again and again, ere they can fasten any thing upon them. Observe here, 1. There are a people in the world that are God's people. 2. It is the will of God that his people should be a comforted people, even in the worst of times. 3. It is the work and business of ministers to do what they can for the comfort of God's people. 4. Words of conviction, such as we had in the former part of this book, must be followed with words of comfort, such as we have here; for he that hath torn will heal us.

Secondly. Comfortable words directed to Jerusalem in particular. "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem," ver. 2. Speak that which will revive her heart, and be a cordial to her, and to all that belong to her, and wish her well. Do not whisper it, but cry unto her, cry aloud, to shew saints their comforts, as well as to shew sinners their transgressions; make her hear it. 1. That the days of her trouble are numbered and finished. "Her warfare is accomplished," the set time of her servitude; the campaign is now at an end, and she shall retire into quarters of refreshment. The human life is a warfare, *Job* vii. 1, the Christian life much more; but the struggle will not last always, the warfare will be accomplished, and then the good soldiers shall not only enter into rest, but be sure of their pay. 2. That the cause of her trouble is removed, and when that is taken away the effect will cease. Tell her "that her iniquity is pardoned;" God is reconciled to her, and she shall no longer be treated as one guilty before him. Nothing can be spoken more comfortably than this, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Troubles are then removed in love when sin is pardoned. 3. That the end of her trouble is answered. "She has received of the Lord double for" the cure of "all her sins," sufficient, and more than sufficient, to part between her and her idols, the worship of which was the great sin for which God had a controversy with them, and from which he designed to reclaim them by their captivity in Babylon. And it had that effect upon them; it begat in them a rooted antipathy to idolatry, and was physic doubly strong for the purging out of that iniquity. Or, it may be taken as the language of the Divine compassion; "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel," *Jud.* x. 16; and, like a tender father, since he spake against them, he earnestly remembered them, *Jer.* xxxi. 20, and was ready to say he had given them too much correction. They, being very penitent, acknowledged that God had punished them less than their iniquities deserved; but he, being very pitiful, owned that he had punished them more than they deserved. True penitents have, indeed, in Christ and his sufferings, received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such an infinite value that it was more than double to the demerits of sin; for God "spared not his own Son."

3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the LORD,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
4 Every valley shall be exalted,
And every mountain and hill shall be made low:
And the crooked shall be made straight,
And the rough places plain:
5 And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see *it* together:
For the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.
6 The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry?
All flesh *is* grass,
And all the goodliness thereof *is* as the flower of the field:
7 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth:
Because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it:
Surely the people *is* grass.
8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth:
But the word of our God shall stand for ever.

The time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, being come, the people of God must be prepared for the favours designed them by repentance and faith; and to call them to both these we have here "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," which may be applied to those prophets who were with the captives in their wilderness state, and when they saw the day of their deliverance dawn, called earnestly upon them to prepare for it, and assured them all the difficulties that stood in the way of their deliverance should be got over. It is a good sign mercy is in the preparing for us, if we find God's grace preparing us for it, *Ps.* x. 17. But it must be applied to John the Baptist; for, though God was the speaker, he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," and his business was to prepare the way of the Lord, to dispose men's minds for the reception and entertainment of the Gospel of Christ. The way of the Lord is prepared,

First. By repentance for sin. That was it which John Baptist preached to all Judah and Jerusalem, *Mat.* iii. 2, 5; and thereby "made ready a people prepared for the Lord," *Lu.* i. 17. The alarm is given; let all take notice of it at their peril. God is coming in a way of mercy, and we must prepare for him, ver. 3—5. Applying it to their captivity, it may be taken as a promise, that whatever difficulties lie in their way, when they return, they shall be removed. This voice in the wilderness (Divine power going along with it) sets pioneers on work to level the roads. But it may be taken as a call to duty, and it is the same duty that we are called to, in preparation for Christ's entrance into our souls.

1. We must get into such a frame of spirit as will dispose us to receive Christ and his Gospel. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" that is, prepare yourselves for him, and let all that be suppressed which would be an obstruction to his entrance. Make room for Christ; make straight a highway for him. If he prepare the end for us, we ought sure to prepare the way for him. Prepare for the Saviour. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," *Ps.* xxiv. 7, 8. Prepare for the salvation, the great salvation, and other lesser deliverances. Let us get to be fit for them, and then God will work them out. Let us not stand in our own light, nor put a bar in our own door, but find or make a highway for him, even in that which was desert ground. This is that for which he waits to be gracious.

2. We must get our hearts levelled by Divine grace. Those that were hindered from comfort in Christ, by their dejections and despondencies, are the valleys that must be exalted. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ, by a proud conceit of their own merit and worth, are the mountains and hills that must be made low. Those that have entertained prejudices against the word and ways of God, that are untractable, and disposed to thwart and contradict even that which is plain and easy, because it agrees not with their corrupt inclinations and secular interests, are the crooked that must be made straight, and the rough places that must be made plain. Let but the Gospel of Christ have a fair hearing, and it cannot fail of acceptance: this prepares the way of the Lord; and thus God will, by his grace, prepare his own way in all the vessels of mercy, whose heart he opens as he did Lydia's.

And when this is done, "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed," ver. 5. 1st. When the captives are prepared for deliverance, Cyrus shall proclaim it, and they shall have the benefit it; and they only whose hearts the Lord stirred up with courage and resolution to break through the discouragements that lay in their way, and to make nothing of the hills and valleys, and all the rough places. 2nd. When John Baptist hath for some time preached repentance, mortification, and reformation, and so made ready a people prepared for the Lord, *Lu.* i. 17, then the Messiah himself shall be revealed in his glory, working miracles, which John did not; and by his grace, which is his glory, binding up and healing with consolations those whom John had wounded with convictions. And this revelation of Divine glory shall be "a light to lighten the Gentiles;" "all flesh shall see it together," and not the Jews only; they shall see and admire it, see it and bid it welcome, as the return out of captivity was taken notice of by the neighbour nations, *Ps.* cxxvi. 3. And it shall be the accomplishment of the word of God, not one iota or tittle of which shall fall to the ground; "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," and therefore the hand of the Lord will effect it.

Secondly. By confidence in the word of the Lord, and not in any creature. "The mouth of the Lord having spoken it," the voice hath this farther to cry, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear it, "The word of our God shall stand for ever," ver. 8; that is,

1. By this accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of salvation, and the performance of them to the utmost in due time, it appears that the word of the Lord is sure, and what may be safely relied on. And then we are prepared for deliverance, when we depend entirely upon the word of God, build our hopes on that, with an assurance that it will not make us ashamed; and in a dependence upon this word we must be brought to own that all flesh is grass, withering and fading. 1st. The power of man, when it doth appear against the deliverance, is not to be feared, for it shall be as grass before the word of the Lord, it shall wither and be trodden down. The insulting Babylonians, who promise themselves that the desolations of Jerusalem shall be perpetual, are but as grass, which the Spirit of the Lord blows upon, makes nothing of, but blasts all its glory; for the word of the Lord, which promises their deliverance, shall stand for ever, and it is not in the power of their enemies to hinder the execution of it. 2nd. The power of man, when it would appear for the deliverance, yet is not to be trusted to; for it is but as grass in comparison with the word of the Lord, which is the only firm foundation for us to build our hope upon. When God is about to work salvation for his people, he will take them off from depending upon creatures, and looking for it from hills and mountains: they shall fail them, and their expectations from them shall be frustrated, the Spirit of the Lord shall blow upon them; for God will have no creature to be a rival with him for the hope and confidence of his people; and as it is his word only that shall stand for ever, so in that word only our faith must stand. When we are brought to this, then, and not till then, we are fit for mercy.

2. The word of our God, that glory of the Lord which is now to be revealed, the Gospel, and that grace which is brought with it to us, and wrought by it in us, shall stand for ever; and this is the satisfaction of all believers, when they find all their creature comforts withering and fading like grass. Thus the apostle applies it to the word which by the Gospel is preached unto us, and which lives and abides for ever, as the incorruptible seed by which we are born again, 1 *Pet.* i. 23—25. To prepare the way of the Lord, we must be convinced, 1st. Of the vanity of the creature; that all flesh is grass, weak and withering. We ourselves are so, and therefore cannot save ourselves; all our friends are so, and therefore are unable to save us. All the beauty of the creature, which might render it amiable, is but as the flower of grass, soon blasted, and therefore cannot recommend us to God, and to his acceptance. We are dying creatures; all our comforts in this world are dying comforts, and therefore cannot be the felicity of our immortal souls; we must look farther for a salvation, look farther for a portion. 2nd. Of the validity of the promise of God. We must be convinced that word of the Lord can do that for us which all flesh cannot; that, forasmuch as it stands for ever, it will furnish us with a happiness that will run parallel with the duration of our souls, that must live for ever; for the things that are not seen, but must be believed, are eternal.

9 O Zion, that bringest good tidings,
Get thee up into the high mountain;
O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings,
Lift up thy voice with strength;
Lift *it* up, be not afraid;
Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!
10 Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *hand*,
And his arm shall rule for him:
Behold, his reward *is* with him,
And his work before him.
11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:
He shall gather the lambs with his arm,
And carry *them* in his bosom,
And shall gently lead those that are with young.

It was promised, ver. 5, that "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed;" that

is it with the hopes of which God's people must be comforted. Now here we are told,

First. How it shall be revealed, ver. 9. 1. It shall be revealed to Zion and Jerusalem. Notice shall be given of it to the remnant that are left in Zion and Jerusalem, the poor of the land, that were vinedressers and husbandmen; it shall be told them that their brethren shall return to them; and to the captives who belonged to Zion and Jerusalem, and retained their affection for them. Zion is said to dwell with the daughter of Babylon, *Zec.* ii. 7; and there she receives notice of Cyrus' gracious proclamation; and so the margin reads it, 'O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion,' &c., meaning the persons that were employed in publishing that proclamation. Let them do it with a good will, let them make the country ring of it, and let them tell it to the sons of Zion in their own language, saying to them, "Behold your God." 2. It shall be published by Zion and Jerusalem; so the text reads it. They that remain here, or that were already returned, when they find the deliverance proceeding towards perfection, let them proclaim it in the most public places, from whence they may be best heard by all the cities of Judah; let them proclaim it as loud as they can; let them lift up their voice with strength, and not be afraid of overstraining themselves. Let them not be afraid lest the enemy should hear it, and quarrel with them, or lest it should not prove true, or not such good tidings as at first it appeared. Let them say to the cities of Judah, and all the inhabitants of the country, "Behold your God." When God is going on with the salvation of his people, let them industriously spread the news among their friends; let them tell them, it is God that has done it; whoever were the instruments, God was the author. It is their God, a God in covenant with them; and he doth it as theirs, and they will reap the benefit and comfort of it. Behold him, take notice of his hand in it, and look above second causes. Behold, the God you have long looked for is come at last, *ch.* xxv. 9, "This is our God; we have waited for him." This may refer to the invitation which was sent forth from Jerusalem to the cities of Judah, as soon as they had set up an altar, immediately upon their return out of captivity, to come and join with them in their sacrifice, *Ezr.* iii. 2—4. When the worship of God is set up again, send notice of it to all your brethren, that they may share with you in the comfort of it. But this was to have its full accomplishment in the apostles' public and undaunted preaching of the Gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The voice crying in the wilderness gave notice that he was coming; but now notice is given that he is come. "Behold the Lamb of God!" take a full view of your Redeemer. Behold your king; behold your God.

Secondly. What that glory is which shall be revealed. Your God will come, and shew himself,

1. With the power and greatness of a prince; ver. 10, "He will come with strong hand;" too strong to be obstructed, though it may be opposed. His strong hand shall subdue his people to himself, and shall restrain and conquer his and their enemies. He will come who is strong enough to break through all difficulties that lie in his way. Our Lord Jesus was full of power, a mighty Saviour. Some read it, he will come against the mighty one, and overpower him, overcome him. Satan is the strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger than he; and he shall make it to appear that he is so. For, 1st. He shall reign in defiance of all opposition. "His arm shall rule," shall overrule "for him," for the fulfilling of his counsels, to his own glory; for he is his own end. 2nd. He shall recompense to all according to their works, as a righteous judge; "His reward is with him." He brings along with him, as a returning prince, punishments for the rebels, and preferments for his loyal subjects. 3rd. He shall proceed, and accomplish his purposes. "His work is before him," that is, he knows perfectly well what he has to do, which way to go about it, and how to compass it; he himself knows what he will do.

2. With the pity and tenderness of a shepherd, ver. 11. God is the shepherd of Israel, *Ps.* lxxx. 1; Christ the good shepherd, *Jno.* x. 11. The same that rules with the strong hand of a prince, leads and feeds with the kind hand of a shepherd. 1st. He takes care of all his flock, the little flock. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd." His word is food for his flock to feed on, his ordinances fields for them to feed in; his ministers are under shepherds, that are appointed to attend them. 2nd. He takes particular care of those that most need his care; the lambs that are weak, and cannot help themselves, and are accustomed to hardship, and those that are with young, that are therefore heavy, and if any harm be done them, are in danger of casting their young; he particularly takes care for a succession, that they may not fail, or be cut off. The good shepherd has a tender care for children that are towardly and hopeful; for young converts that are setting out in the way to heaven; for weak believers, and those that are of a sorrowful spirit. These are the lambs of his flock, that shall be sure to want nothing that their case requires. *First.* He will gather them in the arms of his power; his strength shall be made perfect in their weakness, 2 *Cor.* xii. 9. He will gather them in when they wander, gather them up when they fall, gather them together when they are dispersed, and gather them home to himself at last; and all this with his own arm, out of which none shall be able to pluck them, *Jno.* x. 28. *Secondly.* He will carry them in the bosom of his love, and cherish them there. When they tire or are weary, are sick and faint, when they meet with foul way, he will carry them on, and take care they be not left behind. *Thirdly.* He will gently lead them; by his word he requires no more service, and by his providence he inflicts no more trouble, than he will enable them for; for he considers their frame.

12 Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand,
And meted out heaven with the span,
And comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure,
And weighed the mountains in scales,
And the hills in a balance?
13 Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD,
Or *being* his counsellor hath taught him?
14 With whom took he counsel, and *who* instructed him,
And taught him in the path of judgment,
And taught him knowledge,
And shewed to him the way of understanding?
15 Behold, the nations *are* as a drop of a bucket,
And are counted as the small dust of the balance:
Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.
16 And Lebanon *is* not sufficient to burn,
Nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering.
17 All nations before him *are* as nothing;
And they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

The scope of these verses is to shew what a great and glorious being the Lord Jehovah is, who is Israel's God and Saviour. It comes in here, 1. To encourage his people that were captives in Babylon to hope in him, and to depend upon him for deliverance, though they were never so weak, and their oppressors never so strong. 2. To engage them to cleave to him, and not to turn aside after other gods; for there are none to be compared with him. 3. To possess all those who receive the glad tidings of redemption by Christ with a holy awe and reverence of God. Though it was said, ver. 9, "Behold your God," and ver. 11, that "he shall feed his flock like a shepherd," yet these condescensions of his grace must not be thought of with any diminution to the transcendencies of his glory. Let us see how great our God is, and fear before him. For,

First. His power is unlimited, and what no creature can compare with, much less contend with, ver. 12. 1. He hath a vast reach. View the celestial globe, and you are astonished at the extent of it; but the great God metes the heavens with a span; to him they are but a handbreadth, so large-handed is he. View the terraqueous globe, and he has the command of that too; all the waters in the world he can measure in the hollow of his hand, where we can grasp but a little water; and the dry land he easily manageth, for he comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, or with his three fingers. It is no more to him than a *pugil*, or that which we take up between our thumb and two fingers. 2. He hath a vast strength, and can as easily move mountains and hills as the tradesman heaves his goods into the scales and out of them again; and poiseth them with his hand as exactly as if he weighed them in a pair of balances. This may refer to the work of creation, when the heavens were stretched out as exactly as that which is spanned; and the earth and waters put together in just proportions, as if they had been measured; and the mountains made of such a weight as to serve for a ballast to the globe, and no more. Or, to the work of providence, (which is a contiuual creation,) and the consistency of all the creatures with each other.

Secondly. His wisdom is unsearchable, and what no creature can give either information or direction to, ver. 13, 14. As none can do what God has done and doth, so none can assist him in the doing of it, or suggest any thing to him which he thought not of. When the Lord by his Spirit made the world, *Job* xxvi. 13, there was none that directed his Spirit, or gave him any advice, either what to do or how to do it. Nor doth he need any counsellor to direct him in the government of the world; nor is there any with whom he consults, as kings (the wisest of them) do with them that know law and judgment, *Est.* i. 13. God needs not to be told what is done, for he knows it perfectly; nor needs he be advised concerning what is to be done, for he knows both the right end, and the proper means. This is much insisted upon here, because the poor captives had no politicians among them to manage their concerns at court, or to put them in a way of gaining their liberty. No matter, saith the prophet, you have a God to act for you, that needs not the assistance of statesman. In the great work of our redemption by Christ, matters were concerted before the world, when there were none to teach God in the path of judgment, 1 *Cor.* ii. 7.

Thirdly. The nations of the world are nothing in comparison of him, ver. 15, 17. Take them all together, all the great and mighty nations of the earth,—kings the most pompous, kingdoms the most populous, both the most wealthy; take the isles, the multitude of them, the isles of the Gentiles; and, before him, when they stand in competition with him, or in opposition to him, they "are as a drop of the bucket," compared with the vast ocean, or "the small dust of the balance," which doth not serve to turn it; and therefore is not regarded, it is so small in comparison with all the dust of the earth. He takes them up, and throws them away from him, "as a very little thing," not worth speaking of. They are all in his eye as nothing, as if they had no being at all; for they add nothing to his perfection and all-sufficiency. "They are counted" by him, and are to be counted by us, in comparison of him, "less than nothing, and vanity." When he pleaseth, he can as easily bring them all into nothing as at first he brought them out of nothing. When God has work to do, he values not either the assistance or the resistance of any creature; they are all vanity, (the word that is used for the chaos, *Gen.* i. 2,) to which they will at last be reduced. Let this beget in us high thoughts of God, and low thoughts of this world, and engage us to make God, and not man, both our fear and our hope. This magnifies God's love to the world, that, though it is of such small account and value with him, yet for the redemption of it he gave his only begotten Son, *Jno.* iii. 16.

Fourthly. The services of the church can make no addition to him, nor do they bear any proportion to his infinite perfections; ver. 16, "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn." Not the wood of it, to be for the fuel of the altar, though it be so well stocked with cedars; not the beasts of it, to be for sacrifices, though it be so well stocked with cattle, ver. 16. Whatever we honour God with, it falls infinitely short of the merit of his perfections; for "he is exalted far above all blessing and praise," all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

18 To whom then will ye liken God?
Or what likeness will ye compare unto him?
19 The workman melteth a graven image,
And the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold,
And casteth silver chains.
20 He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation
Chooseth a tree *that* will not rot;
He seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, *that* shall not be moved.
21 Have ye not known? have ye not heard?
Hath it not been told you from the beginning?
Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?
22 *It is* he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth,
And the inhabitants thereof *are* as grasshoppers;
That stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain,
And spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:
23 That bringeth the princes to nothing;

He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.
24 Yea, they shall not be planted;
Yea, they shall not be sown:
Yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth:
And he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither,
And the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.
25 To whom then will ye liken me,
Or shall I be equal?
Saith the Holy One.
26 Lift up your eyes on high, and behold
Who hath created these *things*,
That bringeth out their host by number:
He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that *he is* strong in power;
Not one faileth.

The prophet here reproves those, 1. That represented God by creatures, and so changed his truth into a lie, and his glory into shame; that made images, and then said they resembled God, and paid their homage to them accordingly. 2. That put creatures in the place of God, that feared them more than God, as if they were a match for him; or loved them more than God, as if they were fit to be rivals with him. Twice the challenge is here made, "To whom will ye liken God?" ver. 18; and again, ver. 25, the Holy One himself saith, "To whom will ye liken me?" This shews the folly and absurdity, 1st. Of corporal idolatry; making visible images of him who is invisible; imagining the image to be animated by the Deity, and the Deity to be presentiated by the image; which, as it was an instance of the corruption of the human nature, so it was an intolerable injury to the honour of the Divine nature. 2nd. Of spiritual idolatry; making creatures equal with God in our affections. Proud people make themselves equal with God; covetous people make their money equal with God; and whatever we esteem or love, fear or hope in, more than God, that creature we equal with God; which is the highest affront imaginable to him who is God over all. Now, to shew the absurdity of this,

First. The prophet describes idols as despicable things, and worthy of the greatest contempt, ver. 19, 20. Look upon the better sort of them, which rich people set up and worship; they are made of some base metal, cast into what shape the founder pleaseth, and that is gilded, or overlaid with plates of gold, that it may pass for a golden image. It is a creature; for "the workman made it, therefore it is not God," *Hos.* viii. 6. It depended upon his will whether it should be a god at all, and of what shape it should be. It is a cheat, for it is gold on the outside, but within it is lead or copper; in this, indeed, representing the deities, that they were not what they seemed to be, and deceived their admirers. How despicable then are the worse sort of them, the poor men's gods! "He that is so impoverished," that he hath scarce a sacrifice to offer to his god when he has made him, yet will not be without an enshrined deity of his own; and, though he cannot procure one of brass or stone, he will have a wooden one rather than none; and for that purpose "chooseth a tree that will not rot" presently, and of that he will have his graven image made. Both agree to have their image well fastened, that they may not be robbed of it. The better sort have silver chains to fix theirs with; and though it be but a wooden image, care is taken that it shall not be moved. Let us pause a little and see, 1. How these idolaters shame themselves, and what a reproach they put upon their own reason, in dreaming that gods of their own making, (*Nehushtans*, pieces of brass, or logs of wood,) should be able to do them any kindness. Thus vain were they in their imaginations; and how was their foolish heart darkened! 2. See how these idolaters shame us, who worship the only living and true God. They spared no cost upon their idols; we grudge that as waste which is spent in the service of our God. They took care they should not be moved; we wilfully provoke our God to depart from us.

Secondly. He describes God as infinitely great, and worthy of the highest veneration; so that between him and idols, whatever competition there may be, there is no comparison. To prove the greatness of God, he appeals,

1. To what they had heard of him by the hearing of the ear, and the consent of all ages and nations concerning him; ver. 20, "Have ye not known" by the very light of nature? "Hath it not been told you" by your fathers and teachers, according to the constant tradition received from their ancestors and predecessors, even "from the beginning?" Those notices of God are as ancient as the world. "Have ye not understood" it, as always acknowledged, "from the foundations of the earth," that God is "a great God, and a great king above all gods?" It has been a truth universally admitted, that there is an Infinite Being that is the fountain of all being. This is understood not only ever since the beginning of the world, but from and by the origin of the universe. It is founded upon the foundation of the earth; "The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world," *Rom.* i. 20. Thou mayest not only ask thy father, and he shall tell thee this, and thine elders, *Deu.* xxxii. 7, but "ask them that go by the way," *Job* xxi. 9; ask the first man you meet, and he will say the same. Some read it, 'Will ye not know? will ye not hear?' For those that are ignorant of this are willingly ignorant. The light shines in their faces, but they shut their eyes against it. Now that which is here said of God is,

1st. That he has the command of all the creatures. The heaven and the earth themselves are under his management; "He sits upon the circle" or globe "of the earth," ver. 22. He that has the special residence of his glory in the upper world, yet maintains a dominion over this lower world, gives law to it, and directs all the motions of it to his own glory. He sits undisturbed upon the earth, and so establisheth it. He is still stretching out the heavens, his power and providence keep them still stretched out, and will do so till the day comes that they shall be rolled together like a scroll. He spreads them out as easily as we draw a curtain to and fro; opening these curtains in the morning, and drawing them close again at night; and the heaven is to this earth as a tent to dwell in; it is a canopy drawn over our heads; *et quod tegit omnia cœlum*,—'and it encircles all.'—*Ovid.* See *Ps.* civ. 2.

2nd. That the children of men, even the greatest and mightiest, are as nothing before him. The numerous inhabitants of this earth are in his eye as grasshoppers in ours; so little and inconsiderable, of such small value, and of such little use, and so easily crushed. Proud men's lifting up themselves is but like the grasshopper's leap; in an instant they must down to the earth again. If the spies thought themselves grasshoppers before the sons of Anak, *Num.* xiii. 33, what are we before the great God? Grasshoppers live but a while, and live carelessly, not like the ant; so do the most of men.

3rd. That those that appear and act against him, how formidable soever they may be to their fellow-creatures, will certainly be humbled and brought down by the mighty hand of God, ver. 23, 24. Princes and judges that have great authority, and abuse it to the support of oppression and injustice, they make nothing of those about them, "As for all their enemies, they puff at them," *Ps.* x. 5; xii. 5. But when the great God takes them to task, he brings them to nothing; he humbles them and tames them, and makes them as vanity; little regarded, neither feared nor loved. He makes them utterly unable to stand before his judgments, which shall either, *First.* Prevent their settlement in their authority; "They shall not be planted, they shall not be sown;" and those are the two ways of propagating plants, either by seed or slips. Nay, if they should gain a little interest, and so be planted or sown, yet "their stock shall not take root in the earth;" they shall not continue long in power. Eliphaz saw the foolish taking root, but suddenly cursed their habitation; and then how soon is the fig-tree withered away! Or, *Secondly.* He will blast them when they think they are settled. He doth but blow upon them, and then they shall wither and come to nothing, and "the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble." For God's wrath, though it seem at first to blow slightly upon them, yet will soon become a mighty whirlwind. When God judgeth, he will overcome. Those that will not bow before him cannot stand before him.

2. He appeals to what their eyes saw of him, ver. 26, "Lift up your eyes on high;" be not always poring on this earth, (*O curvæ in terras animæ et cœlestium inanes*,—'Degenerate minds, that can bend so towards the earth, having nothing celestial in them!) but sometimes look up; *Os homini sublime dedit, cœlumque, tueri jussit*,—'Heaven gave to man an erect countenance, and bade him gaze at the stars.' Behold the glorious lights of heaven; consider who has created them. They neither made nor marshalled themselves; doubtless, therefore, there is a God that gave them their being, power, and motion. What we see of the creature should lead us to the Creator. The idolaters, when they lifted up their eyes and beheld the hosts of heaven, being wholly merged in sense, looked no farther, but worshipped them, *Deu.* iv. 19; *Job* xxxi. 26. Therefore the prophet here directs us to make use of our reason as well as our senses, and to consider who created them, and to pay our homage to him. Give him the glory of his sovereignty over them; "He brings out their host by number," as a general draws out the squadrons and battalions of his army. Of the knowledge he hath of them; "He calls them all by names," proper names, according as their place and influence are, *Ps.* cxlvii. 4. And of the use he makes of them; when he calls them out to any service, so obsequious are they, that "by the greatness of his might, not one of them fails;" but, as when "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera," every one doth that to which he is appointed. To make these creatures, therefore, rivals with God, which are such ready servants to him, is an injury to them as well as an affront to him.

27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel,
My way is hid from the LORD,
And my judgment is passed over from my God?
28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard,
That the everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth,
Fainteth not, neither is weary?
There is no searching of his understanding.
29 He giveth power to the faint;
And to *them that have* no might he increaseth strength.
30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall: [strength;
31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their*
They shall mount up with wings as eagles;
They shall run, and not be weary;
And they shall walk, and not faint.

Here, First. The prophet reproves the people of God, who are now supposed to be captives in Babylon, for their unbelief and distrust of God and the dejections and despondencies of their spirit under their affliction; ver. 27, "Why sayest thou, O Jacob," to thyself and to those about thee, "My way is hid from the Lord?" Why dost thou make hard and melancholy conclusions concerning thyself and thy present case, as if it were desperate? 1. The titles he here gives them were enough to shame them out of their distrusts, "O Jacob, O Israel!" Let them remember whence they took those names,—from one who had found God faithful to him, and kind in all his straits; and why they bore those names,—as God's professing people, a people in covenant with him. 2. The way of reproving them is by reasoning with him. Why? consider whether thou hast any ground to say so. Many of our foolish frets and foolish fears would vanish before a strict inquiry into the causes of them. 3. That which they are reproved for is an ill-natured, ill-favoured word they spoke of God, as if he had cast them off. There seems to be an emphasis laid upon their saying it; Why sayest thou and speakest thou? It is bad to have evil thoughts rise in our mind, but it is worse to put an imprimatur to them, and turn them into evil words. David reflects with regret upon what he said in his haste, when he was in distress. 4. The ill word they said was a word of despair concerning their present calamitous condition. They were ready to conclude, 1st. That God would not heed them. "My way is hid from the Lord;" that is, he takes no notice of our straits, nor concerns himself any more in our concernments. There are such difficulties in our case, that even Divine wisdom and power will be nonplussed. A man whose way is hid is one whom God hath hedged in, *Job* ii. 23. 2nd. That God could not help them. "My judgment is passed over from my God;" that is, My case is past relief, so far past it, that God himself cannot redress the grievances of it. "Our bones are dried," *Eze.* xxxvii. 11.

Secondly. He reminds them of that which, if duly considered, was sufficient to silence all those fears and distrusts. For their conviction, as before for the conviction of idolaters, ver. 21, he appeals to what they had known, and what they had heard. Jacob and Israel were a knowing people, or might have been; and their knowledge came by hearing, for wisdom cried in their chief places of concourse. Now, among other things, they had heard that God had spoken once, twice, yea, many a time they had heard it, "That power belongs unto God," *Ps.* lxii. 10. That is,

1. He is himself an Almighty God. He must needs be so; for he is "the

everlasting God, even Jehovah.' He was from eternity; he will be to eternity; and therefore with him there is no deficiency, no decay. He hath his being of himself; and therefore all his perfections must needs be boundless. He is without beginning of days, or end of life; and therefore with him there is no change. He is also "the Creator of the ends of the earth;" that is, of the whole earth, and all that is in it, from end to end. He therefore is the rightful owner and ruler of all, and must be concluded to have an absolute power over all, and an all-sufficiency to help his people in their greatest straits. Doubtless he is still as able to save his church as he was at first to make the world. 1st. He hath wisdom to contrive the salvation, and that wisdom is never at a loss: "There is no searching of his understanding," so as to countermine the counsels of it, and defeat its intentions; no, nor so as to determine what he will do; for he hath ways by himself, ways in the sea. None can say, Thus far God's wisdom can go, and no farther; for when we know not what to do he knows. 2nd. He hath power to bring about the salvation; and that power is never exhausted; "He fainteth not, neither is weary;" upholds the whole creation, and governs all the creatures, and is neither tired nor toiled; and therefore no doubt he has power to relieve his church when it is brought never so low, without weakness or weariness.

2. He giveth strength and power to his people, and helps them by enabling them to help themselves. He that is the strong God is the strength of Israel. 1st. He can help the weak, ver. 29. Many a time "he giveth power to the faint;" to them that are ready to faint away, and "to them that have no might," he "not only giveth," but "increaseth strength," as there is more and more occasion for it. Many, out of bodily weakness, are wonderfully recovered, and made strong by the providence of God. And many that are feeble in spirit, timorous and faint-hearted, unable for services and sufferings, yet are strengthened by the grace of God with all might in the inward man. To them who are sensible of their weakness, and ready to acknowledge they have no might, God doth in a special manner increase strength; for when we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in the Lord. 2nd. He will help the willing. Will help those that, in an humble dependence upon him, help themselves, and do well for those that do their best, ver. 30, 31. Those that trust to their own sufficiency, and are so confident of that, that they neither exert themselves to the utmost, nor seek unto God for his grace, are "the youths, and the young men," who are strong, but are apt to think themselves stronger than they are. And they "shall faint and be weary," yea, they "shall utterly fail," in their services, in their conflicts, and under their burthens; they shall soon be made to see the folly of trusting to themselves. "But they that wait on the Lord," that make conscience of their duty to him, and by faith rely upon him, and commit themselves to his conduct; they that do so God will not fail them. *First.* They shall have grace sufficient for them. They "shall renew their strength," as their work is renewed; as there is new occasion, they shall be anointed, and their lamps supplied with fresh oil. God will be their arm every morning, *ch.* xxxiii. 2. If at any time they have been foiled, and weakened, they shall recover themselves, and so renew their strength. Heb. 'They shall change their strength,' as their work is changed; doing work, suffering work. They shall have strength to labour, strength to wrestle, strength to resist, strength to bear. As the day, so shall the strength be. *Secondly.* They shall use this grace for the best purposes. Being strengthened, 1*st.* They shall soar upwards, upwards towards God. "They shall mount up with wings like eagles;" so strongly, so swiftly, so high, and heavenwards. In the strength of Divine grace their souls shall ascend above the world, and even enter into the holiest. Pious and devout affections are the eagles' wings on which gracious souls mount up, *Ps.* xxv. 1. 2*nd.* They shall press forwards, forwards towards heaven. They shall walk, they shall run, the way of God's commandments; cheerfully, and with alacrity,—they shall not be weary; constantly, and with perseverance,—they shall not faint; and therefore in due season they shall reap. Let Jacob and Israel, therefore, in their greatest distresses, continue waiting upon God; and not despair of relief and succour from him, timely and effectual.

CHAPTER XLI.

This chapter, as the former, is intended both for the conviction of idolaters and for the consolation of all God's faithful worshippers; for the Spirit is sent, and ministers employed by him, both to convince and to comfort. And however this might be primarily intended for the conviction of Babylonians, and the comfort of Israelites, or for the conviction of those in Israel that were addicted to idolatry, as multitudes were, and the comfort of those that kept their integrity, doubtless it was intended both for admonition and encouragement to us; admonition to keep ourselves from idols, and encouragement to trust in God. Here, I. God, by the prophet, shews the folly of those that worshipped idols, especially that thought their idols able to contest with him, and control him, ver. 1—9. II. He encourageth his faithful ones to trust in him, with an assurance that he would take their part against their enemies, make them victorious over them, and bring about a happy change of their affairs, ver. 10—20. III. He challengeth the idols, that were rivals with him for men's adoration, to vie with him either for knowledge or power, either to shew things to come or to do good or evil, ver. 21—29. So that the chapter may be summed up in those words of Elijah, "If Jehovah be God, then follow him; but if Baal be God, then follow him;" and in the people's acknowledgment upon the issue of the trial, "Jehovah he is the God, Jehovah he is the God."

KEEP silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew *their* strength:
Let them come near; then let them speak:
Let us come near together to judgment.
2 Who raised up the righteous *man* from the east,
Called him to his foot,
Gave the nations before him,
And made *him* rule over kings?
He gave *them* as the dust to his sword,
And as driven stubble to his bow.
3 He pursued them, *and* passed safely;
Even by the way *that* he had not gone with his feet.
4 Who hath wrought and done *it*, calling the generations from the beginning?
I the LORD, the first,
And with the last; I *am* he.
5 The isles saw *it*, and feared;
The ends of the earth were afraid,
Drew near, and came.
6 They helped every one his neighbour;
And *every one* said to his brother, Be of good courage.
7 So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith,
And he that smootheth *with* the hammer him that smote the anvil,
Saying, It *is* ready for the sodering:
And he fastened it with nails, *that* it should not be moved.
8 But thou, Israel, *art* my servant,
Jacob whom I have chosen,
The seed of Abraham my friend.
9 *Thou* whom I have taken from the ends of the earth,
And called thee from the chief men thereof,
And said unto thee, Thou *art* my servant;
I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

The particular instance of God's care for his people Israel, in raising up Cyrus to be their deliverer, is here insisted upon as a great proof both of his sovereignty above all idols and of his power to protect his people. Here is,

First. A general challenge to the worshippers and admirers of idols to make good their pretensions in competition with God, and opposition to him, ver. 1. It is renewed, ver. 21, "Produce your cause;" the court is set, summons are sent to the islands that lay most remote, (but not out of God's jurisdiction, for he is the Creator and possessor of the ends of the earth,) to make their appearance, and give their attendance. Silence, as usual, is proclaimed, while the cause is in trying: "Keep silence before me," and "judge nothing before the time." While the cause is in trying between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, it becomes all people silently to expect the issue; not to object against God's proceedings, but to be confident that he will carry the day. The defendants of idolatry are called to say what they can in defence of it: "Let them renew their strength" in opposition to God, and see whether it be equal to the strength which they renew that wait upon him, *ch.* xl. 31. Let them try their utmost efforts, whether by force of arms or force of argument. "Let them come near," they shall not complain that God's dread makes them afraid, *Job* xiii. 21, so that they cannot say what they have to say in vindication and honour of their idols. No, "let them speak" freely; "let us come near together to judgment." Note, 1. The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial; if the case be but fairly stated, it will be surely carried in favour of religion. 2. The enemies of God's church, and his holy religion, may safely be challenged to say and do their worst for the support of their unrighteous cause. "He that sits in heaven laughs at them," and the daughter of Zion too despiseth them; for great is the truth, and will prevail.

Secondly. He particularly challengeth the idols to do that for their worshippers and against his, which he had done, and would do, for his worshippers, and against theirs. Different senses are given of ver. 2, concerning the righteous man raised up from the east; and, since we cannot determine which is the true, we will make use of each as good. That which is to be proved is, 1. That the Lord is God alone, the first, and with the last, ver. 4. That he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; that he governed the world from the beginning, and will to the end of time; he has reigned of old, and will reign for ever; the counsels of his kingdom were from eternity, and the continuance of it will be to eternity. 2. That Israel is his servant, ver. 8, whom he owns, and protects, and employs, and in whom he is and will be glorified. As there is a God in heaven, so there is a church on earth that is his particular care. Elijah prays, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 36, "Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant." Now to prove this he shews,

1. That it was he who called Abraham, the father of this despised nation, out of an idolatrous country, and, by many instances of his favour, made his name great, *Gen.* xii. 2. He is the righteous man whom God raised up from the east. Of him the Chaldee paraphrase expressly understands it, 'Who brought Abraham publicly from the east?' To maintain the honour of the people of Israel, it was very proper to shew what a figure this great ancestor of theirs made in his day. And ver. 8 seems to be the explication of it, where God calls Israel, "the seed of Abraham my friend;" and ver. 4 he calls the generations, namely, the generations of Israel, from the beginning. Also, to put contempt upon idolatry, and particularly the Chaldean idolatry, it was proper to shew how Abraham was called from serving other gods, *Jos.* xxiv. 2, &c.; so that an early testimony was borne against that idolatry which boasted so much of its antiquity. Also, to encourage the captives in Babylon to hope that God would find a way for their return to their own land, it was proper to remind them how at first he brought their father Abraham out of the same country into this land, to give it him for an inheritance, *Gen.* xv. 7.

Now observe what is here said concerning him, 1st. That he was a righteous man, or righteousness, a man of righteousness, that "believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness;" and so he became the father of all those who, by faith in Christ, are made the righteousness of God through him, *Rom.* iv. 3, 11; 2 *Cor.* v. 21. He was a great example of righteousness in his day, and taught his household to do judgment and justice, *Gen.* xviii. 19. 2nd. That God raised him up from the east, from Ur first, and afterwards from Haran, which lay east from Canaan. God would not let him settle in either of those places, but did by him as the eagle by her young, when she stirs up her nest. He raised him up out of iniquity, and made him pious; out of obscurity, and made him famous. 3rd. He "called him to his foot," to follow him with an implicit faith; for "he went out, not knowing whither he went," but whom he followed, *Heb.* xi. 8. Those whom God effectually calls he calls to his foot; to be subject to him, to attend him, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. And we must all either come to his foot or be made his footstool. 4th. He "gave nations before him," the nations of Canaan, which he promised to make him master of, and thus far gave him an interest in, that the Hittites acknowledged him a mighty prince among them, *Gen.* xxiii. 6. He made him rule over those kings whom he conquered for the rescue of his brother Lot, *Gen.* xiv. And when God gave them as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow, that is, made them an easy prey to his catechised servants, he then "pursued them and passed safely;" or in peace, under the Divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with. And so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedek himself appeared to celebrate it. Now

who did this but the great Jehovah? Can any of the gods of the heathen do so?

2. That it is he who will, ere long, raise up Cyrus from the east. It is spoken of according to the language of prophecy as a thing past, because as sure to be done in its season as if it were already done; God will 'raise him up in righteousness,' so it may be read, *ch.* xlv. 13, will call him to his foot, make what use of him he pleaseth; make him victorious over the nations that oppose his coming to the crown, and give him success in all his wars. And he shall be a type of Christ, who is righteousness itself, the Lord our righteousness, whom God will, in the fulness of time, raise up, and make victorious over the powers of darkness, so that he shall spoil them and make a show of them openly.

Thirdly. He exposeth the folly of idolaters, who, notwithstanding the convincing proofs which the God of Israel had given of his being God alone, yet obstinately persisted in their idolatry, nay, were so much the more hardened in it; ver. 5, "The isles of the Gentiles saw this," not only what God did for Abraham himself, but what he did for his seed for his sake; how he brought them out of Egypt, and made them rule over kings, and they feared, *Ex.* xv. 14—16. They were afraid, and, according to the summons, ver. 1, they drew near, and came. They could not avoid taking notice of what God did for Abraham and his seed; but, instead of helping to reason one another out of their sottish idolatries, they helped to confirm one another in them, ver. 6, 7. 1. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon their religion, which they were jealous for the honour of, and were resolved, right or wrong, to adhere to, and therefore were alarmed to appear vigorously for the support of it, as the Ephesians for their Diana. When God, by his wonderful appearances on the behalf of his people, went about to wrest their idols from them, they held them so much the faster, and said one to another, "Be of good courage," let us unanimously agree to keep up the reputation of our gods; though Dagon fall before the ark, he shall be set up again in his place. One tradesman encourageth another to come into a confederacy for the keeping up of the noble craft of god-making. Thus oftentimes men's convictions exasperate their corruptions, and they are made worse both by the word and works of God, that should make them better. 2. They looked upon it as a dangerous design upon themselves; they thought themselves in danger from the growing greatness both of Abraham, that was a convert from idolatry, and of the people of Israel, that were separatists from it; and therefore they not only had recourse to their old gods for protection, but made new ones, *Deu.* xxxii. 17. "So the carpenter," having done his part at the timber-work, "encouraged the goldsmith" to do his part in gilding or overlaying it; and when it came into the goldsmith's hand, "he that smooths with the hammer," that polisheth it, or beats it thin, quickened "him that smote the anvil," bade him be expeditious, and told him "it was ready for the soldering," which, perhaps was the last operation about it, and then it is "fastened with nails," and you have a god of it presently. Do sinners thus hearten and quicken one another in the ways of sin, and shall not the servants of the living God both stir up one another to, and strengthen one another in, his service? Some read all this ironically, and by way of permission, 'Let them help every one his neighbour, let the carpenter encourage the goldsmith;' but all in vain, idols shall fall for all this.

Fourthly. He encourageth his own people to trust in him; ver. 8, 9, "But thou, Israel, art my servant." They know me not, but thou knowest me, and knowest better things than to join with such ignorant, besotted people as these, for it is intended as a warning to the people of God not to walk in the way of the heathen. They put themselves under the protection of these impotent deities, but thou art under my protection; "They that make them are like to them, and so is every one that trusteth in them;" but thou, O Israel, art the servant of a better master. Observe what is suggested here for the encouragement of God's people when they are threatened and insulted over: 1. They are God's servants, and he will not see them abused, especially for what they do in his service; "Thou art my servant," ver. 8; and ver. 9, "I have said unto thee, Thou art my servant," and I will not go back from my word. 2. He hath chosen them to be a peculiar people to himself; they were not forced upon him, but of his own goodwill he set them apart. 3. They were the seed of Abraham his friend. It was the honour of Abraham that he was called the friend of God, *Jam.* ii. 23, whom God covenanted and conversed with as a friend and the man of his counsel; and this honour have all the saints, *Jno.* xv. 15. And for the father's sake the people of Israel were beloved. God was pleased to look upon them as the posterity of an old friend of his, and therefore to be kind to them, for the covenant of friendship was made with Abraham and his seed. 4. He had sometimes, when they had been scattered among the heathen, fetched them from the ends of the earth, and taken them out of the hands of the chief ones thereof, and therefore he would not now abandon them. Abraham their father was fetched from a place at a great distance, and they in his loins; and those who had been thus far-fetched and dear-bought he could not easily part with. 5. He had not yet cast them away, though they had often provoked him, and therefore he would not now abandon them. What God has done for his people, and what he has farther engaged to do, should encourage them to trust in him at all times.

10 Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee:
Be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God:
I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee;
Yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.
11 Behold, all they that were incensed against thee
Shall be ashamed and confounded:
They shall be as nothing;
And they that strive with thee shall perish.
12 Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them,
Even them that contended with thee:
They that war against thee
Shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.
13 For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand,
Saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.
14 Fear not, thou worm Jacob, *and* ye men of Israel;
I will help thee, saith the LORD,
And thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. [ment
15 Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instru-
Having teeth:
Thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat *them* small,
And shalt make the hills as chaff.
16 Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away,
And the whirlwind shall scatter them:
And thou shalt rejoice in the LORD,
And shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.
17 *When* the poor and needy seek water, and *there is* none,
And their tongue faileth for thirst,
I the LORD will hear them,
I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
18 I will open rivers in high places,
And fountains in the midst of the valleys:
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
And the dry land springs of water.
19 I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree,
And the myrtle, and the oil tree;
I will set in the desert the fir tree,
And the pine, and the box tree together:
20 That they may see, and know,
And consider, and understand together,
That the hand of the LORD hath done this,
And the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

The scope of these verses is to silence the fears and encourage the faith of the servants of God in their distresses. Perhaps it is intended in the first place for the support of God's Israel in captivity, that all that faithfully serve God through patience and comfort of this scripture may have hope. And it is addressed to Israel as a single person, that it might the more easily and readily be accommodated and applied by every Israelite indeed to himself. That is a word both of caution, counsel, and comfort, which is so often repeated; "Fear thou not;" and again, ver. 13, "Fear not;" and, ver. 14, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." Fear not the threatenings of the enemy, doubt not the promises of thy God; fear not that thou shalt perish in thine affliction, or that the promise of thy deliverance shall fail. It is against the mind of God that his people should be a timorous people. For the suppressing of fear he assures them,

First. That they may depend upon his presence with them as their God, and a God all-sufficient for them, in the worst of times. Observe with what a tenderness God speaks, and how willing he is to let the heirs of promise know the immutability of his counsel; and how desirous to lay them easy; "Fear thou not, for I am with thee;" not only within call, but present with thee; "Be not dismayed" at the power of those that are against thee, "for I am thy God," and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? "I will strengthen thee." Art thou destitute of friends? "I will help thee" in the time of need. Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? "I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness," that right hand which is full of righteousness, in dispensing rewards and punishments, *Ps.* xlviii. 10. And again, ver. 13, it is promised, 1. That God will strengthen their hands, that is, will help them. "I will hold thy right hand," go hand in hand with thee, so some; he will take us by the hand as our guide, to lead us in our way; will help us up when we are fallen, or prevent our falls; when we are weak, he will hold us up; wavering, he will fix us; trembling, he will encourage us, and so hold us by the right hand, *Ps.* lxxiii. 23. 2. That he will silence their fears; Saying unto thee, Fear not. He hath said it again and again in his word, and hath there provided sovereign antidotes against fear. But he will go farther; he will, by his Spirit, say it to their hearts, and make them to hear it, and so will help them.

Secondly. That though their enemies be now very formidable, insolent, and severe, yet the day is coming when God will reckon with them, and they shall triumph over them. There are those that are incensed against God's people, and strive with them, ver. 11, and war against them, ver. 12, that hate them, and seek their ruin, and are continually picking quarrels with them. But let not God's people be incensed at them, nor strive with them, nor render evil for evil; but wait God's time, and believe, 1. That they shall be convinced of the folly at least, if not of the sin, of striving with God's people; and, finding it to no purpose, "they shall be ashamed and confounded," which might bring them to repentance, but will rather fill them with rage. 2. That they shall be quite ruined and undone; ver. 11, "They shall be as nothing" before the justice and power of God. When God comes to deal with his proud enemies, he makes nothing of them; or, they shall be brought to nothing,—shall be as if they had never been. This is repeated, ver. 12; they "shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought;" or as that which is gone, and has failed. They that were formidable shall become despicable; that fancied they could do anything, shall be able to bring nothing to pass; that made a figure in the world, and a mighty noise, shall become mere ciphers, and be buried in silence. They shall perish, not only be nothing, but be miserable. Thou shalt seek them; shalt inquire what is become of them, that they do not appear as usual; but thou shalt not find them, as David, *Ps.* xxxvii. 36, "I sought him, but he could not be found."

Thirdly. That they themselves should become a terror to those who were now a terror to them, and victory should turn on their side, ver. 14—16. See here, 1. How Jacob and Israel are reduced and brought very low. It is the worm Jacob; so little, and weak, and defenceless, despised and trampled on by every body, forced to creep even into the earth for safety. And we must not wonder that Jacob is become a worm, when even Jacob's king calls himself "a worm, and no man," *Ps.* xxii. 6. God's people are sometimes as worms in their humble thoughts of themselves, and their enemies' haughty thoughts of them; worms, but not vipers, as their enemies are, not of the serpent's seed. God regards Jacob's low estate, and saith, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob;" fear not that thou shalt be crushed. "And ye men of Israel," 'ye few men,' so some read it, 'ye dead men,' so others, do not give up yourselves for gone notwithstanding. Note, The grace of God will silence fears, even then when there seems to be the greatest cause for them; "Perplexed, but not in despair." 2. How Jacob and Israel are advanced from this low estate, and made as formidable as ever they had been despicable. But "by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?" We are here told: "I will help thee, saith the Lord,"

and it is the honour of God to help the weak. He will help them, for he is their Redeemer, that hath used to redeem them,—that has undertaken to do it. Christ is the Redeemer; from him is our help found. He will help them; for he is the Holy One of Israel, worshipped among them in the beauty of holiness, and engaged by promise to them. The Lord will help them, by enabling them to help themselves, and making Jacob to become a threshing instrument. Observe, He is but an instrument, a tool, in God's hand, that he is pleased to make use of; and he is an instrument of God's making, and is no more than God makes him. But if God make him a threshing instrument, he will make use of him, and therefore will make him fit for use, new and sharp, and having teeth, or sharp spikes; and then, by Divine direction and strength, "thou shalt thresh the mountains," the highest, and strongest, and most stubborn of thine enemies. Thou shalt not only beat them, but beat them small. They shall not be as the corn threshed out, which is valuable, and is carefully preserved; such God's people are, when they are under the flail, *ch.* xxi. 10, "O my threshing," but "the corn of my floor," that shall not be lost: but these are made as chaff, which is good for nothing, and which the husbandman is glad to get rid of. He pursues the metaphor, ver. 16; having threshed them, thou shalt winnow them, "and the wind shall scatter them." This perhaps had its accomplishment in part in the victories of the Jews over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees; but it seems in general designed to read the final doom of all the implacable enemies of the church of God, and to have its accomplishment likewise in the triumphs of the cross of Christ, the Gospel of Christ, and all the faithful followers of Christ, over the powers of darkness, which, first or last, shall all be dissipated, and in Christ all believers shall be more than conquerors, and "he that overcomes shall have power over the nations," *Rev.* ii. 26.

Fourthly. That hereupon they shall have abundance of comfort in God, and God shall have abundance of honour from them; "Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord," ver. 16. When we are freed from that which hindered our joy, and are blessed with that which is the matter of it, we ought to remember that God is our exceeding joy, and in him all our joys must terminate. When we rejoice over our enemies, we must rejoice in the Lord; for to him alone we owe our liberties and victories. Thou shalt also "glory in the Holy One of Israel," in thine interest in him, and relation to him, and what he has done for thee. And if thus we make God our praise and glory, we become to him for a praise and a glory.

Fifthly. That they shall have seasonable and suitable supplies of every thing that is proper for them, in the time of need; and, if there be occasion, God will again do for them as he did for Israel in their march from Egypt to Canaan, ver. 17—19. When the captives, either in Babylon or in their return thence, are in distress for want of water or shelter, God will take care of them, and one way or other make their journey, even through a wilderness, comfortable to them. But, doubtless, this promise hath more than such a private interpretation. Their return out of Babylon was typical of our redemption by Christ; and so the contents of these promises, 1. Were provided by the Gospel of Christ. That glorious discovery of his love has given full assurance to all those who hear this joyful sound, that God has provided inestimable comforts for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers. 2. They are applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers, that they may have strong consolation in their way, and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of this world. Now,

1. It is here supposed that the people of God, in their passage through this world, are often in straits; "The poor and needy seek water, and there is none;" "The poor in spirit hunger and thirst after righteousness." The soul of man, finding itself empty and necessitous, seeks for satisfaction somewhere; but soon despairs of finding it in the world, that has nothing in it to make it easy. Creatures are broken cisterns, that can hold no water, so "that their tongue faileth for thirst;" they are weary of seeking that satisfaction in the world which is not to be had in it. Their sorrow makes them thirsty, so doth their toil.

2. It is here promised, that one way or other all their grievances shall be redressed, and they shall be made easy. 1st. God himself will be nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for. Let all the praying people of God take notice of this, and take the comfort of it; he hath said, "I, the Lord, will hear them," will answer them; "I the God of Israel will not forsake them," that is, I will be with them, as I have always been, in their distresses. While we are in the wilderness of this world, this promise is to us what the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel, an assurance of God's gracious presence. 2nd. They shall have a constant supply of fresh water, as Israel had in the wilderness, even there where one would least expect it; ver. 18, "I will open rivers in high places," rivers of grace, rivers of pleasure, "rivers of living water," which he spake of the Spirit, *Jno.* vii. 38, 39; that Spirit which should be poured out upon the Gentiles, who had been as high places, dry and barren, and lifted up in their own conceit above the necessity of that gift. And there shall be "fountains in the midst of the valleys," the valleys of Baca, *Ps.* lxxxiv. 6, that are sandy and wearisome; or, among the Jews, that had been as fruitful valleys in comparison with the Gentile mountains. The preaching of the Gospel to the world turned that wilderness into a pool of water; yielding fruit to the owner of it, and a relief to the travellers through it. 3rd. They shall have a pleasant shade to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, as Israel, when they pitched at Elim, where they had not only wells of water, but palm-trees, *Ex.* xv. 27. "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar," ver. 19. I will turn the wilderness into an orchard, or garden, such as used to be planted with these pleasant trees, so that they shall pass through the wilderness with as much ease and delight as a man walks in his grove. These trees shall be to them then what the pillar of cloud was to Israel in the wilderness, a shelter from the heat,—Christ and his grace are so to believers,—"as the shadow of a great rock," *ch.* xxxii. 2. When God sets up his church in the Gentile wilderness, there shall be as great a change by it in men's character as if thorns and briars were turned into cedars, and fir-trees, and myrtles; and by this a blessed change is described, *ch.* lv. 13. 4th. They shall see and acknowledge the hand of God, his power, and his favour in this, ver. 20. God will do these strange and surprising things on purpose to awaken them to a conviction and consideration of his hand in all. That they may see this wonderful change, and, knowing that it is above the ordinary course and power of nature, may consider that therefore it comes from a superior power; and, comparing notes upon it, may understand together, and concur in the acknowledgment of it, "that the hand of the Lord," that mighty hand of his, which is stretched out for his people, and stretched out to them, "hath done this;" and the Holy One of Israel hath created it, made it anew, made it out of nothing, made it for the comfort of his people. Note, God doth great things for his people, that he may be taken notice of.

21 Produce your cause, saith the LORD;
Bring forth your strong *reasons*, saith the King of Jacob.
22 Let them bring *them* forth, and shew us what shall happen:
Let them shew the former things, what they *be*,
That we may consider them, and know the latter end of them;
Or declare us things for to come.
23 Shew the things that are to come hereafter,
That we may know that ye *are* gods:
Yea, do good, or do evil,
That we may be dismayed, and behold *it* together.
24 Behold, ye *are* of nothing,
And your work of nought:
An abomination *is he that* chooseth you.
25 I have raised up *one* from the north, and he shall come:
From the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name:
And he shall come upon princes as *upon* morter,
And as the potter treadeth clay.
26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know?
And beforetime, that we may say, *He is* righteous?
Yea, *there is* none that sheweth, yea, *there is* none that declareth,
Yea, *there is* none that heareth your words.
27 The first *shall say* to Zion, Behold, behold them:
And I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.
28 For I beheld, and *there was* no man;
Even among them, and *there was* no counsellor,
That, when I asked of them, could answer a word.
29 Behold, they *are* all vanity;
Their works *are* nothing:
Their molten images *are* wind and confusion.

The Lord, by the prophet, here repeats the challenge to idolaters, to make out the pretensions of their idols. "Produce your cause," ver. 21; and make your best of it. Bring forth the strongest reasons you have to prove that your idols are gods, and worthy your adoration. Note, There needs no more to shew the absurdity of sin, than to produce the reasons that are given in defence of it, for they carry with them their own confutation.

First. The idols are here challenged to bring proofs of their knowledge and power. Let us see what they can inform us of, and what they can do. Understanding and active power are the accomplishments of a man; whoever pretends to be a god must have these in perfection. And have the idols made it to appear that they have so? No.

1. They can tell us nothing that we did not know before, so ignorant are they. We challenge them to inform us, 1st. What hath been formerly. "Let them shew the former things," and raise them out of the oblivion in which they were buried. God inspired Moses to write such a history of the creation as the gods of the heathen could never have dictated to any of their enthusiasts. Or, let the defenders of idols tell us what mighty achievements they can boast of, as performed by their gods in former times. What did they ever do that was worth taking notice of? Let them instance in any thing, and it shall be considered, and its due weight given it; and it shall be compared with the latter end of it, and if in the issue it proved to be as great as it pretended to be, they shall have the credit of it. 2nd. We challenge them to tell "us what shall happen," to "declare us things to come," ver. 22; and again, ver. 23, "shew the things that are to come hereafter." Give this evidence of your omniscience, that nothing can be hid from you; and of your sovereignty and dominion: make it appear that you have the doing of all, by letting us know beforehand what you design to do. Do this kindness to the world, let them know what is to come, that they may provide accordingly. Do this, and we will own that you are gods above us, and gods to us, and worthy of our adorations. No creature can foretell things to come, otherwise than by Divine information, with any certainty.

2. They can do nothing that we cannot do ourselves, so impotent are they. He challengeth them to do either good or evil, good to their friends, or evil to their enemies; let them do, if they can, any thing extraordinary that people will admire, and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse with power. Let us see them either inflict such plagues as God brought on Egypt or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall be amazed when we see it, and frighted into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God.

That which is charged upon these idols, and let them disprove it if they can, is, that they are of nothing, ver. 24. Their claims have no foundation at all, nor is there any ground or reason in the least for men's paying them the respect they do. There is nothing in them worthy our regard. They are less than nothing, worse than nothing, so some read it; the work they do is of nought, and so is the ado that is made about them. There is no pretence, or colour for it; it is all a jest, it is all a sham put upon the world. And, therefore, he that chooseth you, and so gives you your deity; and, as some read it, that delighteth in you, is an abomination to God, and all wise and good men. He that chooseth you chooseth an abomination, so some take it. A servant is at liberty to choose his master, but a man is not at liberty to choose his God. He that chooseth any other but the true God chooseth an abomination. His choosing it makes it so.

Secondly. God here produceth proofs that he is the true God, and none but he. Let him produce his strong reasons:

1. He hath an irresistible power. This he will shortly make to appear in the raising up of Cyrus, and making him a type of Christ, ver. 25. He will raise him up from the north, and "from the rising of the sun." Cyrus, by his father was a Mede, by his mother a Persian; and his army consisted of Medes, whose country lay north, and Persians, whose country lay east from Babylon. God will raise him up to great power, and he shall come against Babylon, with ends of his own to serve. But, 1st. He shall proclaim God's name, so it may be

read; he shall publish the honour of the God of Israel. So he did remarkably, when, in his proclamation for the release of the Jews out of their captivity, he acknowledged that the Lord God of Israel is the Lord God of heaven, and is the God. And he might be said to call on his name, when he encouraged the building of his temple, and very probably did himself call upon him, and pray to him, *Ezr.* i. 2, 3. 2nd. All opposition shall fall before him; he shall come upon the princes of Babylon, and all other that stood in his way, as mortar, and trample upon them "as the potter treadeth clay," to serve his own purposes with it. Christ as man was raised up from the north, for Nazareth lay in the northern parts of Canaan; as the angel of the covenant, he ascends from the east. He maintained the honour of heaven, "he shall call upon my name;" and broke the powers of hell, came upon the prince of darkness, as mortar, and trod him down.

2. He hath an infallible foresight. He would not only do this, but he did now by his prophet foretell it. Now the false gods not only could not do it, but they could not foresee it. 1st. He challengeth them to produce any of their pretended deities, or their diviners, that had given notice of this, or could; ver. 26, "Who has declared from the beginning" any thing of this kind, or has told it before time? Tell us if there be any, that we know of, for we know not any. If there be any, "we will say he is righteous;" he is true, his cause is just, his claims are proved, and he is in the right in demanding to be worshipped. This agrees with ver. 22, 23. 2nd. He challengeth to himself the sole honour of doing it, and foretelling it, ver. 27. 'I am the first,' so it may be read, 'that will say to Zion,' "Behold, behold them;" that will let the people of Israel know their deliverers are at hand; for there were those who understood by books, God's books, the approach of the time, *Dan.* ix. 2. And I am he that "will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings," these good tidings of their enlargement. This is applicable to the work of redemption, in which the Lord shewed himself much more than in the release of the Jews out of Babylon. He it was that contrived our salvation, and he brought it about, and he has given to us the glad tidings of reconciliation.

Lastly. Judgment is here given upon this trial.

1. None of all the idols had foretold, or could foresee, this work of wonder. Other nations beside the Jews were released out of captivity in Babylon by Cyrus; or, at least, were greatly concerned in the revolution of the monarchy, and the transferring of it to the Persians; and yet none of them had any intelligence given them of it beforehand by any of their gods or prophets; "There is none that sheweth," ver. 26, "none that declareth," none that gives the least intimation of it; there is none of the nations "that heareth your words," that pretend to have heard from their gods, such words, as you, O Israelites have heard from your God, by your prophets, *Ps.* cxlvii. 20. There is none of all the gods of the nations that have shewed their worshippers the way of salvation, which God will shew by the Messiah. The good tidings which the Lord will send in the Gospel is a mystery hid from ages and generations, *Rom.* xvi. 25, 26.

2. None of those who pleaded for them, could produce any instance of their knowledge or power, that had in it any colour of proof that they were gods. All their advocates were struck dumb with this challenge; ver. 28, "I beheld, and there was no man" that could give evidence for them, "even amongst them," that were their most zealous admirers, and "there was no counsellor;" none that could offer any thing for the support of their cause. Even among the idols themselves there was none fit to give counsel in the most trivial matters, and yet there were those that asked counsel of them in the most important and difficult affairs. When I asked them what they had to say for themselves, they stood mute; the case was so plain against them, there was none that could answer a word. Judgment must therefore be given against the defendant upon *nihil dicit*,—'he has nothing to say for himself.' "He was speechless," *Mat.* xxii. 12.

3. Sentence is therefore given, according to the charge exhibited against them, ver. 24. So it is; "Behold, they are all vanity," ver. 29; they are a lie, and a cheat; they are not in themselves what they pretend to be, nor will their worshippers find that in them which they promise themselves. "Their works are nothing," of no force, of no worth; their enemies need fear no hurt from them, their worshippers can hope for no good from them. "Their molten images," and indeed all their images, "are wind and confusion;" vanity and vexation. Those that worship them will be deceived in them, and will reflect upon their own folly with the greatest bitterness. Therefore, "dearly beloved, flee from idolatry," 1 *Cor.* x. 14.

CHAPTER XLII.

The prophet seems here to launch out yet farther into the prophecy of the Messiah, and his kingdom, under the type of Cyrus; and, having the great work of man's salvation by him yet more in view, he almost forgets the occasion that led him into it, and drops the return out of Babylon; for indeed the prospect of this would be a greater comfort and support to the believing pious Jews in their captivity than the hope of that. And, as Mr. Gataker well observes, in this, and other like prophecies of Christ, that are couched in types, as of David and Solomon, some passages agree to the type, and not to the truth; others to the truth, and not to the type; and many to the type in one sense, and the truth in another. Here is, I. A prophecy of the Messiah's coming with meekness, and yet with power, to do the Redeemer's work, ver. 1—4. II. His commission opened, which he received from the Father, ver. 5—9. III. The joy and rejoicings with which the glad tidings of this should be received, ver. 10—12. IV. The wonderful success of the Gospel for the overthrow of the devil's kingdom, ver. 13—17. V. The rejection and ruin of the Jews for their unbelief, ver. 18—25.

BEHOLD my servant, whom I uphold;
Mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth;
I have put my spirit upon him:
He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.
2 He shall not cry, nor lift up,
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.
3 A bruised reed shall he not break,
And the smoking flax shall he not quench:
He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.
4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged,
Till he have set judgment in the earth:
And the isles shall wait for his law.

We are sure that these verses are to be understood of Christ, for the evangelist tells us expressly, that in him this prophecy was fulfilled, *Mat.* xii. 17—21. "Behold," with an eye of faith, "Behold," and observe, "Behold," and admire, "my servant whom I uphold." Let the Old Testament saints behold, and expect him. Let the New Testament saints behold, and remember him. Now what must we behold and consider concerning him?

First. The Father's concern for him, and relation to him; the confidence he put, and the complacence he took in him. This put an honour upon him, and made him remarkable above any thing, ver. 1. 1. God owns him as one employed for him. He is "my servant;" though he was a Son, yet as a Mediator "he took upon him the form of a servant;" learned obedience to the will of God, and practised it, and laid out himself to advance the interests of God's kingdom, and so he was God's servant. 2. As one chosen by him. He is "mine elect;" he did not thrust himself into the service, but was called of God, and pitched upon as the fittest person for it. Infinite Wisdom made the choice, and then avowed it. 3. As one he put a confidence in. He is my servant, 'on whom I lean,' so some read it. The Father put a confidence in him, that he would go through with his undertaking, and in that confidence brought many sons to glory. It was a great trust which the Father reposed in the Son, but he knew him to be *par negotio*,—'equal to it,' both able and faithful. 4. As one he took care of. He is "my servant, whom I uphold," so we read it. The Father bore him up, and bore him out in his undertaking; both were included in his upholding him; he stood by him, and strengthened him. 5. As one whom he took an entire complacency in. "Mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." His delight was in him from eternity, when he was "by him as one brought up with him," *Pr.* viii. 30. He had a particular satisfaction in his undertaking; he declared himself well pleased in him, *Mat.* iii. 17; xvii. 5; and therefore loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep. Let our souls delight in Christ, rely on him, and rejoice in him; and thus let us be united to him, and then for his sake the Father will be well pleased with us.

Secondly. The qualification of him for his office. "I have put my Spirit upon him," to enable him to go through his undertaking, *ch.* lxi. 1. The Spirit did not only come, but rest upon him, *ch.* xi. 2; not by measure, as on others of God's servants, but without measure. Those whom God employs as his servants, as he will uphold them, and be well pleased with them, so he will put his Spirit upon them.

Thirdly. The work to which he is appointed. It is to "bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;" that is, in infinite wisdom, holiness, and equity, to set up a religion in the world which the Gentiles should come under the bonds of, and enjoy the blessings of. The judgments of the Lord, which had been hid from the Gentiles, *Ps.* cxlvii. 20, he came to bring forth to the Gentiles, for he was to be a light to lighten them.

Fourthly. The mildness and tenderness with which he should pursue this undertaking, ver. 2, 3. He shall carry it on, 1. In silence, and without noise; "He shall not strive nor cry." It shall not be proclaimed, "Lo, here is Christ; or lo, he is there;" as when great princes ride in progress, or make a public entry. He shall have no trumpet sounded before him, nor any noisy retinue to follow him. The opposition he meets with he shall not strive against, but patiently endure the contradiction of sinners against himself. His kingdom is spiritual, and therefore its weapons are not carnal, nor its appearance pompous; it cometh not with observation. 2. Gently, and without rigour. Those that are wicked, he will be patient with; when he has begun to crush them, so that they are as bruised reeds, he will yet give them space to repent, and not presently break them; though they are very offensive, as smoking flax, *ch.* lxv. 4, yet he will bear with them, as he did with Jerusalem. Those that are weak, he will be tender of. Those that have but a little life, a little heat, that are weak as a reed, oppressed with doubts and fears, as a bruised reed, that are as smoking flax, as the wick of a candle newly lighted, which is ready to go out again; he will not despise them, will not plead against them with his great power, nor lay upon them more work, or more suffering, than they can bear, which would break and quench them, but will graciously consider their frame. More is implied than is expressed; "He will not break the bruised reed," but will strengthen it, that it may become as a cedar in the courts of our God. He will not "quench the smoking flax," but blow it up into a flame. Note, Jesus Christ is very tender towards those that have true grace, though they are but weak in it; and accepts the willingness of the spirit, pardoning and passing by the weakness of the flesh.

Fifthly. The courage and constancy with which he should persevere in this undertaking, so as to carry his point at last; ver. 4, "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged." Though he meets with hard service, and much opposition, and foresees how ungrateful the world will be, yet he goes on with his part of the work, till he is able to say, "It is finished;" and enables his apostles and ministers to go on with theirs too, and not to fail or be discouraged till they also have finished their testimony. And thus he accomplisheth what he undertook. 1. He brings "forth judgment unto truth;" that is, by a long course of miracles, and his resurrection at last, he shall fully evince the truth of his doctrine, and the Divine original and authority of that holy religion which he came to establish. 2. He sets judgment in the earth; that is, he erects his government in the world, a church for himself among men; reforms the world, and by the power of his Gospel and grace fixeth such principles in the minds of men as tend to make them wise and just. 3. "The isles of the Gentiles wait for his law;" wait for his Gospel, that is, bid it welcome, as if it had been a thing they had long waited for. They shall become his disciples, shall sit at his feet, and be ready to receive the law from his mouth. "What wilt thou have us to do?"

5 Thus saith God the LORD,
He that created the heavens, and stretched them out;
He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it;
He that giveth breath unto the people upon it,
And spirit to them that walk therein:
6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness,
And will hold thine hand, [people,
And will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the
For a light of the Gentiles;
7 To open the blind eyes,
To bring out the prisoners from the prison,
And them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.
8 I *am* the LORD: that *is* my name:
And my glory will I not give to another,
Neither my praise to graven images.

9 Behold, the former things are come to pass,
And new things do I declare:
Before they spring forth I tell you of them.
10 Sing unto the LORD a new song,
And his praise from the end of the earth,
Ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein;
The isles, and the inhabitants thereof.
11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up *their voice,*
The villages *that* Kedar doth inhabit:
Let the inhabitants of the rock sing,
Let them shout from the top of the mountains.
12 Let them give glory unto the LORD,
And declare his praise in the islands.

Here is, First. The covenant God made with, and the commission he gave to, the Messiah, ver. 5—7; which is an exposition of ver. 1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold."

1. The royal titles by which the great God here makes himself known, and distinguisheth himself from all pretenders, speak very much his glory; ver. 5, "Thus saith God the Lord." And who art thou, Lord? Why, he is the fountain of all being, and therefore the fountain of all power. He is the fountain of being, 1st. In the upper world; for "he created the heavens, and stretched them out," and keeps the vast expanse still upon the stretch, *ch.* xl. 22. 2nd. In the lower world; for "he spread forth the earth," and made it a capacious habitation, and "that which cometh out of it" is produced by his power. 3rd. In the world of mankind; "he giveth breath to the people upon it," not only air to breathe in, but the breath of life itself, and organs to breathe with; nay, he gives "spirit," the powers and faculties of a rational soul, "to them that walk therein." Now this is prefixed to God's covenant with the Messiah, and the commission given him, not only to shew that he has authority to make such a covenant, and give such a commission, and had power sufficient to bear him out; but that the design of the work of redemption was to maintain the honour of the Creator, and to reduce man to the allegiance he owes to God as his Maker.

2. The assurances which he gives to the Messiah of his presence with him in all he did pursuant to his undertaking speak very much encouragement to him, ver. 6. 1st. God owns that the Messiah did not take the honour of being Mediator to himself, but was called of God; that he was no intruder, no usurper, but was fairly brought to it, (*Heb.* v. 4,) "I have called thee in righteousness." God not only did him no wrong in calling him to this hard service, he having voluntarily offered himself to it; but did himself right, in providing for his own honour, and performing the word which he had spoken. 2nd. He promiseth to stand by him, and strengthen him in it; to hold his hand, not only to his work, but in it; to hold his hand that it might not shake, that it might not fail, and so to keep him. When an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him in his agonies, and the Father himself was with him, then this promise was fulfilled. Note, Those whom God calls he will own and help, and will hold their hands.

3. The great intentions of this commission speak abundance of comfort to the children of men. He was given "for a covenant of the people," for a Mediator or guarantee of the covenant of grace, which is all summed up in him. God, in giving us Christ, has with him freely given us all the blessings of the new covenant. Two glorious blessings Christ in his Gospel brings with him to the Gentile world, light and liberty. 1st. He is given for a "light of the Gentiles," not only to reveal to them what they were concerned to know, and which otherwise they could not have known, but "to open the blind eyes" that they might know it. By his Spirit in the word he presents the object, by his Spirit in the heart he prepares the organ. When the Gospel came, light came, a great light, to them that sat in darkness, *Mat.* iv. 16; *Jno.* iii. 17. And St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles "to open their eyes," *Acts* xxvi. 18. Christ is the light of the world. 2nd. He is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did; to "bring out the prisoners." Not only to open the prison doors, and give them leave to go out, which was all that Cyrus could do; but to bring them out, to induce and enable them to make use of their liberty, which none did but those whose spirits God stirred up. This Christ doth by his grace.

Secondly. The ratification and confirmation of this grant. That we may be assured of the validity of it, consider,

1. The authority of him that makes the promise; ver. 8, "I am the Lord," Jehovah, "that is my name;" and that was the name by which he made himself known, when he began to perform the promise made to the patriarchs; whereas before he manifested himself by the name of "God Almighty," *Ex.* vi. 3. If he is the Lord that gives being and birth to all things, he will give being and birth to this promise. If his name be Jehovah, which speaks him God alone, we may be sure his name is Jealous, and he will not give his glory to another, whoever it is that stands in competition with him; especially not to graven images. Therefore he will send the Messiah to open men's eyes, that so he may turn them from the service of dumb idols to serve the living God; because, though he has long winked at the times of ignorance, he will now maintain his prerogative, and will not give his glory to graven images. Therefore he will perform his word, because he will not lose the honour of being true to it, nor be ever charged with falsehood by the worshippers of false gods. Therefore he will deliver his people from under the power of idolaters, because it looks as if he had given his praise to graven images, when he gives up his own worshippers to the worshippers of images.

2. The accomplishment of the promises he had formerly made concerning his church, which are proofs of the truth of his word, and the kindness he bears to his people; ver. 9, "Behold the former things are come to pass." Hitherto the Lord hath helped his church, hath supported her under former burthens, relieved her in former straits; and this in performance of the promises made to the fathers. "There has not failed one word," 1 *Kin.* viii. 56; and now "new things do I declare;" now I will make new promises, which shall as certainly be fulfilled in their season as old ones were. Now I will bestow new favours, such as have not been conferred formerly. Old Testament blessings you have had abundantly, now I declare New Testament blessings; not a fruitful country, and dominion over your neighbours, but spiritual blessings in heavenly things. "Before they spring forth" in the preaching of the Gospel "I tell you of them," under the type and figure of the former things. Note, The receipt of former mercies may encourage us to hope for farther mercies; for God is constant in his care of his people, and his compassions are still new.

Thirdly. The song of joy and praise which should be sung hereupon to the glory of God; ver. 10, "Sing unto the Lord a new song," a New Testament song. The giving of Christ for a light to the Gentiles, ver. 6, was a new thing, and very surprising. The apostle speaks of it as a "mystery," "which in other ages was not made known as it is now revealed, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs," *Eph.* iii. 5, 6. Now this being the new thing which God declares, the newness of the song which is to be sung on this occasion is this, that whereas before the songs of the Lord were very much confined to the temple at Jerusalem, (David's psalms were in the language of the Jews only, and sung by them, and in their own country only; for when they were in a strange land they hung their harps on the willow trees, and could not sing the Lord's song, as we find, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 2—4,) now the songs of holy joy and praise shall be sung all the world over; the Gentile nations shall share, equally with the Jews, in New Testament blessings, and therefore shall join in New Testament praises and acts of worship. There shall be churches set up in the Gentile nations, and they shall sing a new song. The conversion of the Gentiles is often foretold under this notion, as appears, *Rom.* xv. 9—11.

It is here promised that the praises of God's grace shall be sung with joy and thankfulness. 1st. By those that live in "the end of the earth," in countries that lie most remote from Jerusalem; "From the uttermost parts of the earth have we heard songs," *ch.* xxiv. 16. This was fulfilled when Christianity was planted in our land. 2nd. By mariners and merchants, and those "that go down to the sea, that do business in great waters," and "suck the riches of the sea," and so make themselves masters of the "fulness thereof," and "all that is therein;" with which they shall praise God, and justly, for it is his, *Ps.* xxiv. 1; xcv. 5. The Jews traded little at sea; if, therefore, God's praise be sung by them that "go down to the sea," it must be by Gentiles. Seafaring men are called upon to praise God, *Ps.* cvii. 23. 3rd. By the islands, and "the inhabitants thereof," ver. 10; and again, ver. 12, Let them "declare his praise in the islands," the isles of the Gentiles; probably referring to the islands of Greece. 4th. By "the wilderness, and the cities thereof," and the villages of Kedar. These lay east from Jerusalem, as the islands lay west; so that the Gospel songs should be sung from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The whole Gentile world had been like an island, cut off from communication with God's church, and like a wilderness, uncultivated, and bringing forth no fruit to God; but now the islands and the wilderness shall praise God. 5th. By "the inhabitants of the rock," and those that dwell on the tops of the mountains; not only the Gentiles, but the poorest, and meanest, and most despicable; they that dwell in cottages, as well as those that inhabit cities and villages. The rude and most barbarous, as the mountaineers commonly are, shall be civilized by the Gospel. Or, by the inhabitants of the rock may be meant the inhabitants of that part of Arabia which was called *Petræa*, 'the rocky.' Perhaps the neighbouring countries shared in the joy of the Israelites when they returned out of Babylon, and some of them came and joined with them in their praises. But we find not that it was to any such degree as might fully answer this illustrious prophecy, and must conclude that it reaches farther, and was fulfilled in that which many other prophecies of the joy of the nations are said in the New Testament to be fulfilled; namely, the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. When they are brought into the church they are brought to "give glory to the Lord;" then they are to him for a praise, and a name, and they make it their business to praise him. He is glorified in them, and glorified by them.

13 The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man,
He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war:
He shall cry, yea, roar;
He shall prevail against his enemies.
14 I have long time holden my peace;
I have been still, *and* refrained myself:
Now will I cry like a travailing woman;
I will destroy and devour at once.
15 I will make waste mountains and hills,
And dry up all their herbs;
And I will make the rivers islands,
And I will dry up the pools.
16 And I will bring the blind by a way *that* they knew not;
I will lead them in paths *that* they have not known:
I will make darkness light before them,
And crooked things straight.
These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.
17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed,
That trust in graven images,
That say to the molten images,
Ye *are* our gods.

BRAHMA, SIVA, AND VISHNU.

It comes all to one whether we make these verses, as some do, the song itself that is to be sung by the Gentile world, or a prophecy of what God will do to make way for the singing of that song, that evangelical new song.

First. He will appear in his power and glory more than ever. So he did in the preaching of his Gospel, and that Divine power and energy which went along with it, and the wonderful success it had in the pulling down of Satan's strongholds, ver. 13, 14. He had long held his peace, and been still, and refrained himself, while he winked at the times of the ignorance of the Gentile world, *Acts* xvii. 30; and "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," *Acts* xiv. 16. But now he "shall go forth as a mighty man" as "a man of war," to attack the devil's kingdom, and give it a fatal blow. The going forth of the Gospel is thus represented, *Rev.* vi. 2. Christ in it "went forth conquering, and to conquer." The ministry of the apostles is called their warfare; and they were "the soldiers of Jesus Christ." He shall "stir up jealousy;" shall appear more jealous than ever for the glory of his own name, and against idolatry. 1. "He shall cry," in the preaching of his word; "cry like a travailing woman;" for the ministers of Christ preached as men in earnest, and that travailed in birth again till they saw Christ formed in the souls of people, *Gal.* iv. 19. "He shall cry, yea, roar," in the Gospel woes; which are more terrible than the roaring of a lion, and which must be preached along with Gospel blessings, to awaken a sleeping world. 2. He shall conquer by the power of his Spirit. "He shall prevail against his enemies," shall prevail to make them friends, *Col.* i. 21. Those that contradict and blaspheme his Gospel he shall prevail to put them to silence and shame. He "will destroy and devour at once" all the oppositions of the powers of darkness; Satan shall fall as lightning from heaven; and he that had the power of death shall be destroyed. And as a type and figure of this, to make way for the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon, God will humble the pride, and break the power, of their oppressors, and will at once destroy and devour the Babylonian monarchy. In accomplishing this destruction of Babylon by the Persian army, under the command of Cyrus, "he will make waste mountains and hills," level the country, and "dry up all their herbs;" that is, the army, as usual, shall either carry off the forage, or destroy it; and by laying bridges of boats over rivers shall turn them into islands, and so drain the fens and low grounds, to make way for the march of their army, that the pools shall be dried up. And thus, when the Gospel shall be preached, it shall have a free course, and that which hinders the progress of it shall be taken out of the way.

Secondly. He will manifest his favour and grace towards those whose spirits he hath stirred up to follow him; as *Ezr.* i. 5, those that ask the way to Zion he will shew them the way, and lead them in it, ver. 16. Those that by nature were blind, and those that, being under convictions of sin and wrath, are quite at a loss, and know not what to do with themselves, God will lead "by a way that they knew not;" will shew them the way to life and happiness by Jesus Christ, who is the way; and will conduct and carry them on in that way which before they were strangers to. Thus in the conversion of Paul he was struck blind first, and then God revealed his Son in him, and made the scales to fall from his eyes. They are weak in knowledge, and the truths of God at first seem unintelligible; but God will "make darkness light before them," and knowledge shall be easy to them. They are weak in duty, and the commands of God seem impracticable, and insuperable difficulties are in the way of their obedience; but God will make "crooked things straight," their way shall be plain, and the yoke easy. Those whom God brings into the right way he will guide in it; and as a type of this he will lead the Jews, when they return out of captivity, in a ready road to their own land again; and nothing shall occur to perplex or embarrass them in their journey. These are great things, and kind things; very great, and very kind. But, lest any should say they are too great, too kind, to be expected from God by such an undeserving people as that of the Jews, such an undeserving world as that of the Gentiles, he adds, "These things will I do unto them," take my word for it, I will; "and I will not forsake them." He that begins to shew this great mercy will go on to do them good.

Thirdly. He will particularly put those to confusion that adhere to idols, notwithstanding the attempts made by the preaching of the Gospel to turn them from idols; ver. 17, "They shall be turned back, and greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images." The Babylonians shall, when they see how the Jews, who despise their images, are owned and delivered by the God they worship without images; and the Gentiles, when they see how idolatry falls before the preaching of the Gospel, is scattered like darkness before the light of the sun, and melts like snow before its heat, they shall be ashamed that ever they said to these molten images, "Ye are our gods;" for how can they help their worshippers who cannot help themselves, nor save themselves from falling into contempt? In times of reformation, when many turn from iniquity, and sin, being generally deserted, becomes unfashionable, it may be hoped that those who will not otherwise be reclaimed will be wrought upon by that consideration to be ashamed of it.

18 Hear, ye deaf;
And look, ye blind, that ye may see.
19 Who *is* blind, but my servant?
Or deaf, as my messenger *that* I sent?
Who *is* blind as *he that is* perfect,
And blind as the LORD's servant?
20 Seeing many things, but thou observest not;
Opening the ears, but he heareth not.
21 The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake;
He will magnify the law, and make *it* honourable.
22 But this *is* a people robbed and spoiled;
They are all of them snared in holes,
And they are hid in prison houses:
They are for a prey, and none delivereth;
For a spoil, and none saith, Restore.
23 Who among you will give ear to this?
Who will hearken and hear for the time to come?
24 Who gave Jacob for a spoil,
And Israel to the robbers?
Did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned?
For they would not walk in his ways,
Neither were they obedient unto his law.
25 Therefore he hath poured upon him
The fury of his anger, and the strength of battle:
And it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not;
And it burned him, yet he laid *it* not to heart.

The prophet, having spoken by way of comfort and encouragement to the believing Jews that waited for the consolation of Israel, here turns himself to those among them that were unbelieving, for their conviction and humiliation. Among those that were captived in Babylon there were some that were as the evil figs in Jeremiah's vision, who were sent thither "for their hurt," to be "removed into all the kingdoms of the earth," for a "reproach and a proverb," *Jer.* xxiv. 9. And in them there was a type of the Jews that rejected Christ, and were rejected by him, and then fell more than ever under the curse, when those that believed were inheriting the blessing; for they were broken and ruined, and remain dispersed unto this day. Observe,

First. The call that is given to this people; ver. 18, "Hear, ye deaf," and attend to the joyful sound; and "look, ye blind, that you may see" the joyful light. There is no absurdity in this command; nor is it unbecoming the wisdom and goodness of God to call us to do that good which yet of ourselves we are not sufficient for; for those have natural powers which they may employ so as to do better than they do, and may have supernatural grace, if it be not their own fault, who yet labour under a moral impotency to that which is good. This call to the deaf to hear, and the blind to see, is like the command given to the man that had the withered hand to stretch it forth; which, though he could not do because it was withered, yet if he had not attempted to do it he had not been healed; and his being healed thereupon was owing not to this act, but the Divine power.

Secondly. The character that is given of them; ver. 19, 20, "Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf as my messenger?" The people of the Jews were in profession God's servants, and their priests and elders his messengers, *Mal.* ii. 7, but they were deaf and blind. The verse before may be understood as spoken to the Gentile idolaters, whom he calls deaf and blind, because they worshipped gods that were so. But, saith he, no wonder ye are deaf and blind, when my own people are as bad as you, and many of them as much set upon idolatry. He complains of their sottishness, they are blind; and of their stubbornness, they are deaf. They were even worse than the Gentiles themselves; *corruptio optimi est pessima*,—'what is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst.' Who is so wilfully, so scandalously blind and deaf as my servant, and my messenger, as Jacob, who is my servant, *ch.* xli. 8; and as their prophets and teachers, who are my messengers? "Who is blind as he that," in profession and pretension, "is perfect;" that should come nearer to perfection than other people, their priests and prophets? The one prophesies falsely, and the other bears rule by their means; and who so blind as they that will not see when they have the light shining in their faces? Note, 1. It is a common thing, but a very sad thing, for those that in profession are God's servants and messengers, to be themselves blind and deaf in spiritual things; ignorant, erroneous, and very careless. 2. Blindness and deafness in spiritual things is worse in those that profess themselves to be God's servants and messengers than in others. It is in them the greater sin and shame, the greater dishonour to God, and to themselves a greater damnation. The prophet goes on (ver. 20) to describe the blindness and obstinacy of the Jewish nation, just as our Saviour describes it in his time, *Mat.* xiii. 14, 15, "Seeing many things, but thou observest not." Multitudes are ruined for want of observing that which they cannot but see; they perish, not through ignorance, but mere carelessness. The Jews, in our Saviour's time, saw many proofs of his Divine mission, but they did not observe them; they seemed to open their ears to him, but they did not hear; that is, they did not heed, did not understand, or believe, or obey; and then it was all one as if they had not heard.

Thirdly. The care God will take of the honour of his own name, notwithstanding their blindness and deafness, especially of his word, which he has magnified above all his name. Shall the unbelief and obstinacy of men make the promise of God of none effect? God forbid, *Rom.* iii. 3. No; though they are blind and deaf God will be no loser in his glory; ver. 21, "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake;" not well pleased with their sin, but well pleased in the manifestation of his own righteousness, in rejecting them for rejecting the great salvation. He speaks as one well pleased, *ch.* i. 24, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries;" and, *Eze.* v. 13, he will be comforted. The Scripture was fulfilled in the casting off of the Jews as well as in the calling in of the Gentiles; and therein the Lord will be well pleased. "He will magnify the law;" that is, Divine revelation in all the parts of it, and will "make it honourable." The law is truly honourable, and the things of it are great things; and if men will not magnify it by their obedience to it, God will magnify it himself, by punishing them for their disobedience. He will "magnify the law," by accomplishing what is written in it; will magnify its authority, its efficacy, its equity. He will do it at last, when all men shall be "judged by the law of liberty," *Jas.* ii. 12. He is doing it every day. What is it that God is doing in the world, but magnifying the law, and making it honourable?

Fourthly. The calamities God will bring upon the Jewish nation for their wilful blindness and deafness; ver. 22, they are "robbed and spoiled." Those that were impenitent and unreformed in Babylon were sentenced to a perpetual captivity. It was for their sins that they were not only spoiled of all their possessions in their own land, but in the land of their enemies; they were some of them "snared in holes," and others "hid in prison houses." They cannot help themselves, for they are snared; their friends cannot help them, for they are hid; and their enemies have forgot them in their prisons. They, and all they have, are for a prey and for a spoil; and there is none that delivereth either by force or ransom; nor any that dares say to the proud oppressors, Restore. There they lie, and there they are likely to lie. This had its full accomplishment in the final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, which God brought upon them for rejecting the Gospel of Christ.

Fifthly. The counsel given them in order to their relief; for, though their case be sad, it is not desperate. The generality of them are deaf, they would not hearken to the voice of God's word; he will therefore try his rod, and see who among them will give ear to that, ver. 23. We must not despair concerning those who have been long reasoned with in vain, but that at length some of them will give ear and hearken. If one method do not take effect another may; and sinners shall be left inexcusable. Observe, 1st. We may all of us, if we will, hear the voice of God, and are called and invited to hear it. 2nd. It is worth while to inquire who they are that perceive God speaking to them, and are willing to hear him. 3rd. Of the many that hear the voice of God there are very few that hearken to it, or heed it, that hear it with attention

and application. 4th. In hearing the word we must have an eye to the time to come. We must hear for hereafter, for what may occur betwixt us and the grave. We must especially hear for eternity; we must hear the word with another world in our eye. The counsel is,

1. To acknowledge the hand of God in their afflictions; and, whoever were the instruments, to have an eye to him as the principal agent; ver. 24, "Who gave Jacob and Israel," that people that used to have such an interest in heaven, and such a dominion on earth, who gave them "for a spoil to the robbers," as they are now to the Babylonians, to the Romans? "Did not the Lord?" You know he did. Consider it then, and hear his voice in these judgments.

2. To acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to abandon them, and had brought all these calamities upon themselves. 1st. These punishments were first inflicted on them for their disobedience to the laws of God; It is he "against whom we have sinned." The prophet puts himself into the number of the sinners, as *Dan.* ix. 7, 8, "We have sinned," we have all brought fuel to the fire; and there are those among us that have wilfully refused to "walk in his ways." Jacob and Israel had never been given up to the robbers if they had not by their iniquities sold themselves. For therefore it is, because they have violated the commands of the law, that God has brought upon them the curses of the law. He hath not dropped, but "poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle;" that is, all the desolations of war, which have "set him on fire round about;" for God surrounds the wicked with his judgments, as he doth the righteous with his favours. See the power of God's anger; no resisting it, no escaping it. See the mischief that sin makes; it provokes God to anger against a people, and so kindles a universal conflagration, sets all on fire. 2nd. These judgments were continued upon them for their senselessness and incorrigibleness under the rod of God. The fire of God's wrath kindled upon him, and he knew it not; was not aware of it, took no notice of the judgments, at least not of the hand of God in them. Nay, it burnt him; and though he could not then but know it, and feel it, yet he laid it not to heart; was not awakened by the fiery rebukes he was under, nor at all affected with them. And those who are not humbled by lesser judgments, must expect greater; for when God judgeth he will overcome.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The contents of this chapter are much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, looking at the release of the Jews out of their captivity; but looking through that, and beyond that, to the great work of man's redemption by Jesus Christ, and the grace of the Gospel, which through him believers partake of. Here are, I. Precious promises made to God's people in their affliction, of his presence with them, for their support under it, and their deliverance out of it, ver. 1—7. II. A challenge to idols, to vie with the omniscience and omnipotence of God, ver. 8—13. III. Encouragement given to the people of God to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, from the consideration of what God did for their fathers, when he brought them out of Egypt, ver. 14—21. IV. A method taken to prepare the people for their deliverance, by putting them in mind of their sins, by which they had provoked God to send them into captivity, and continue them there, that they might repent, and seek to God for pardoning mercy, ver. 22—28.

BUT now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob,
And he that formed thee, O Israel,
Fear not: for I have redeemed thee,
I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine.
2 When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee;
And through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee:
When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be [burned;
Neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.
3 For I *am* the LORD thy God,
The Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour:
I gave Egypt *for* thy ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba for thee.
4 Since thou wast precious in my sight,
Thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee:
Therefore will I give men for thee,
And people for thy life.
5 Fear not: for I *am* with thee:
I will bring thy seed from the east,
And gather thee from the west;
6 I will say to the north, Give up;
And to the south, Keep not back:
Bring my sons from far,
And my daughters from the ends of the earth;
7 *Even* every one that is called by my name:
For I have created him for my glory, I have formed him;
Yea, I have made him.

This chapter has a plain connexion with the close of the foregoing chapter, but a very surprising one. It was there said, that Jacob and Israel would not walk in God's ways, and when he corrected them for their disobedience they were stubborn, and laid it not to heart. And now one would think it should have followed, that therefore God would utterly abandon and destroy them. No; the next words are, "But now fear not, O Jacob, O Israel; I have redeemed thee, and thou art mine." Though many among them were untractable and incorrigible, yet God would continue his love and care for his people, and the body of that nation should still be reserved for mercy. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," *Rom.* v. 20; and "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment," as having prevailed and carried the day, *Jas.* ii. 13. Now the sun breaking out thus of a sudden from behind a thick and dark cloud, shines the brighter, and with a pleasing surprise. The expressions of God's favour and good-will to his people here are very high, and speak abundance of comfort to all the spiritual seed of upright Jacob and praying Israel. For to us is this Gospel preached, as well as unto them that were captives in Babylon, *Heb.* iv. 2. Here is,

First. The ground of God's care and concern for his people, and the interests of his church and kingdom among men. Jacob and Israel, though in a sinful, miserable condition, yet shall be looked after. For, 1. They are God's workmanship, created by him unto good works, *Eph.* ii. 10. He hath created them, and formed them; not only given them a being, but this being, formed them into a people, constituted their government, and incorporated them by the charter of his covenant. The new creature, wherever it is, is of God's forming; and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. 2. They are the people of his purchase; he hath redeemed them. Out of the land of Egypt he first redeemed them, and out of many other bondages, "in his love and in his pity," *ch.* lxiii. 9. Much more will he take care of those who are redeemed with the blood of his Son. 3. They are his peculiar people, whom he hath distinguished from others, and set apart for himself. He has called them by name, as those he has a particular intimacy with, and concern for; and they are his, appropriated to him, and that he has a special interest in. 4. He is their God in covenant; ver. 3, "I am the Lord thy God," worshipped by thee, and engaged by promise to thee, "the holy One of Israel," that is, the God of Israel; for the true God is a holy One, and holiness becomes his house. And upon all these accounts he might justly say, "Fear not," ver. 1, and again, ver. 5, "Fear not." Those that have God for them need not fear who or what can be against them.

Secondly. The former instances of this care. 1. God had purchased them dear; "I gave Egypt for thy ransom," for Egypt was quite laid waste by one plague after another, all their firstborn slain, and all their men of war drowned; and all this to force a way for Israel's deliverance from them. Egypt shall be sacrificed, rather than Israel shall be continued in slavery when the time is come for their release. The Ethiopians had invaded them in Asa's time; but they shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall be disturbed. And if this was reckoned so great a thing, to give "Egypt for their ransom," what reason have we to admire God's love to us in giving his own Son to be a ransom for us! 1 *Jno.* iv. 10. What is Ethiopia and Seba, all their lives and all their treasures, compared with the blood of Christ? 2. He had prized them accordingly, and they were very dear to him; ver. 4, "Since thou hast been precious in my sight thou hast been honourable." Note, True believers are precious in God's sight, they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure, *Ex.* xix. 5, he loves them, his delight is in them above any people; his church is his vineyard. And this makes God's people truly honourable, and their name great; for so men are really, as they are in God's eye. When the forces of Sennacherib, that they might be diverted from falling upon Israel, were directed by Providence to fall upon Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, then God gave those countries for Israel, and shewed how precious his people were in his sight; so some understand it.

Thirdly. The farther instances God would yet give them of this care and kindness.

1. He would be present with them in their greatest difficulties and dangers; ver. 2, "When thou passest through the waters" and the rivers, through the fire and the flame, "I will be with thee," and that shall be thy security. When dangers are very imminent and threatening, thou shalt be delivered out of them. Did they, in their journey, pass through deep waters, they should not perish in them; "The rivers shall not overflow thee." Should they, by their persecutors, be cast into a fiery furnace, for their constant adherence to their God, yet then the flame should not kindle upon them; which was fulfilled in the letter, in the wonderful preservation of the three children, *Dan.* iii. Though they went through fire and water, which would be to them as the valley of the shadow of death, yet while they had God with them they need fear no evil; they should be borne up, and brought out in a wealthy place, *Ps.* lxvi. 12.

2. He would still, when there was occasion, make all the interests of the children of men truckle to the interests of his own children. I will "give men for thee," great men, mighty men, and men of war, and people; men by wholesale, for thy life. Nations shall be sacrificed to thy welfare. All shall be cut off, rather than God's Israel shall; so precious are they in his sight. The affairs of the world shall all be ordered and directed so as to be most for the good of the church, 2 *Chr.* xvi. 9.

3. Those of them that were scattered and dispersed in other nations should all be gathered in, and share in the blessings of the public, ver. 5—7. Some of the seed of Israel were dispersed into all countries, east, west, north, and south, or into all the parts of the country of Babylon; but those whose spirits God stirred up to go to Jerusalem should be fetched in from all parts. The Divine grace should reach those that lay most remote, and at the greatest distance from each other. And when the time was come nothing should prevent their coming together to return in a body; in answer to that prayer, *Ps.* cvi. 47, "Gather us from among the heathen;" and in performance of that promise, *Deu.* xxx. 4, "If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, thence will the Lord thy God gather thee:" which we find pleaded on behalf of the children of the captivity, *Neh.* i. 9. But who are the seed of Israel, that shall be thus carefully gathered in? He tells us, ver. 7, they are such as God has marked for mercy. For, 1st. They are called by his name; they make profession of religion, and are distinguished from the rest of the world by their covenant relation to God, and denomination from him. 2nd. They are created for his glory; the spirit of Israelites is created in them, and they are formed according to the will of God; and these shall be gathered in. Note, Those only are fit to be called by the name of God that are created by his grace for glory. And those whom God hath created and called shall be gathered in now to Christ as their Head, and hereafter to heaven as their home. He shall "gather in his elect from the four winds." This promise points at the gathering in of the "dispersed of the Gentiles," and the strangers scattered, by the Gospel of Christ, who died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. For the promise was to "all that were afar off," even as many as the Lord our God shall call and create. God is with the church, and therefore let her not fear; none that belong to her shall be lost.

8 Bring forth the blind people that have eyes,
And the deaf that have ears.
9 Let all the nations be gathered together,
And let the people be assembled:
Who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? [justified:
Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be
Or let them hear, and say, *It is* truth.
10 Ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD,

And my servant whom I have chosen:
That ye may know and believe me,
And understand that I *am* he:
Before me there was no God formed,
Neither shall there be after me.
11 I, *even* I, *am* the LORD;
And beside me *there is* no saviour.
12 I have declared, and have saved,
And I have shewed, when *there was* no strange *god* among you:
Therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD,
That I *am* God.
13 Yea, before the day *was* I *am* he;
And *there is* none that can deliver out of my hand:
I will work, and who shall let it?

God here challengeth the worshippers of idols to produce such proofs of the divinity of their false gods as even this very instance, to go no farther, of the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon, furnished the people of Israel with, to prove that their God is the true and living God, and he only.

First. The patrons of idolatry are here called to appear, and say what they have to say in defence of their idols, ver. 8, 9. The gods "have eyes, and see not; ears, and hear not;" and "they that make them, and trust in them, are like unto them;" so David had said, *Ps.* cxv. 8; to which the prophet seems here to refer, when he calls idolaters "blind people that have eyes, and deaf people that have ears." They have the shape, and capacities, and faculties of men; but they are, in effect, destitute of reason and common sense, or they would never worship gods of their own making. "Let all the nations" therefore "be gathered together;" let them help one another, and with a combined force plead the cause of their dunghill gods. And if they have nothing to say in their own justification let them hear what the God of Israel hath to say for their conviction and confutation.

Secondly. God's witnesses are subpœnaed, or summoned to appear and give in evidence for him; ver. 10, "Ye," O Israelites, all ye that are called by my name, "ye are all my witnesses, and" so is "my servant whom I have chosen." It was Christ himself that was so described, *ch.* xlii. 1, "My servant, and mine elect." All the prophets that testified of Christ, and Christ himself, the great Prophet, are here appealed to as God's witnesses. 1st. God's people are witnesses for him, and can attest, upon their own knowledge and experience, concerning the power of his grace, the sweetness of his comforts, the tenderness of his providence, and the truth of his promise. They will be forward to witness for him, that he is gracious, and no word of his has fallen to the ground. 2nd. His prophets are in a particular manner witnesses for him, with whom his secret is, and who know more of him than others do. But the Messiah especially is given to be a witness for him to the people; having lain in his bosom from eternity, he has declared him. Now,

1. Let us see what the point is which these witnesses were called to prove; ver. 12, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God." Note, Those who do themselves acknowledge that the Lord is God should be ready to testify what they know of him to others, that they also may be brought to the acknowledgment of it: "I believed, therefore have I spoken." Particularly, since you cannot but know, and believe, and understand, you must be ready to bear record, 1st. "That I am he," the only true God; that I am a Being self-existent and self-sufficient; I am he whom you are to fear, and worship, and trust in. Nay, ver. 13, "Before the day was," before the first day of time, before the creation of the light, and consequently from eternity, "I am he." The idols were but of yesterday, "new gods that came newly up," *Deu.* xxxii. 17, but the God of Israel was from everlasting. 2nd. That "before me there was no God formed, nor shall be after me." The idols were gods formed, *dii facti*, —'made gods;' or, rather, *fictitii*,—'fictitious;' by nature they were no gods, *Gal.* iv. 8. And God had a being from eternity; yea, and a religion in this world, before there were either idols or idolaters. Truth is more ancient than error; and he will have a being to eternity, and will be worshipped and glorified when idols are famished and abolished, and idolatry shall be no more. True religion will keep its ground, and survive all opposition and competition; 'great is the truth, and will prevail.' 3rd. That "I, even I, am the Lord," the great Jehovah, who is, and was, and is to come; and "beside me there is no Saviour," ver. 11. See what it is that the great God glories in; not so much that he is the alone Ruler as that he is the alone Saviour; for he delights to do good, "is the Saviour of all men," 1 *Tim.* iv. 10.

2. Let us see what the proofs are which are produced for the confirmation of this point. It appears, 1st. That the Lord is God by two proofs: *First.* He has an infinite and infallible knowledge, as is evident from the predictions of his word; ver. 12, "I have declared, and I have shewed" that which has without fail come to pass. Nay, I never declared or shewed any thing but it has been accomplished; I shewed "when there was no strange god among you;" that is, when you pretended not to consult any oracles but mine, or to have any prophets but mine. It is said, when they came out of Egypt, that "the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with them." *Secondly.* He has an infinite and irresistible power, as is evident from the performances of his providence. He pleads not only "I have shewed," but "I have saved;" not only foretold what none else could foresee, but done what none else could do; for, ver. 13, none "can deliver out of my hand," those whom I will punish; not only no man can, but none of all the gods of the heathen can protect. It is therefore a "fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," because there is no getting out of them again. "I will work" what I have designed, both in mercy and judgment; and who shall either oppose or retard it? 2nd. That the gods of the heathen who are rivals with him are not only inferior to him, but no gods at all; which is proved, ver. 9, by a challenge, "Who among them can declare this" that I now declare? Who can foretell things to come? Nay, which of them can shew us former things? *ch.* xli. 22. They cannot so much as inspire an historian, much less a prophet; they are challenged to join issue upon this. "Let them bring forth their witnesses" to prove their omniscience and omnipotence; and, *First.* If they do prove them they shall be justified; the idols in demanding homage, and the idolaters in paying it. *Secondly.* If they do not prove them let them say, "It is truth;" that is, let them own the true God, and receive the truth concerning him, that he is God alone. The cause of God is not afraid to stand a fair trial; but it may reasonably be expected that those who cannot justify themselves in their irreligion should submit to the power of the truth and true religion.

14 Thus saith the LORD,
Your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel;
For your sake I have sent to Babylon,
And have brought down all their nobles,
And the Chaldeans, whose cry *is* in the ships.
15 I *am* the LORD, your Holy One,
The creator of Israel, your King.
16 Thus saith the LORD,
Which maketh a way in the sea,
And a path in the mighty waters;
17 Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power;
They shall lie down together, they shall not rise:
They are extinct, they are quenched as tow.
18 Remember ye not the former things,
Neither consider the things of old.
19 Behold, I will do a new thing;
Now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?
I will even make a way in the wilderness,
And rivers in the desert.
20 The beast of the field shall honour me,
The dragons and the owls:
Because I give waters in the wilderness,
And rivers in the desert,
To give drink to my people, my chosen.
21 This people have I formed for myself;
They shall shew forth my praise.

To so low an ebb was the faith and hope of God's people in Babylon brought, that there needed line upon line to assure them that they should be released out of their captivity; and therefore, that they might have strong consolation, the assurances of it are often repeated, and here very expressly and encouragingly.

First. God here takes to himself such titles of his honour as were very encouraging to them. He is the Lord their Redeemer; not only that will redeem them, but will take it upon him as his office, and make it his business. If he be their God, he will be all to them which they need; and therefore, when they are in bondage, he will be their Redeemer. He is "the Holy One of Israel;" and again, ver. 15, their Holy One, and therefore will make good every word he hath spoken to them. He is "the Creator of Israel," that made them a people out of nothing, (for that is creation,) nay, worse than nothing; and he is their King, that owns them as his people, and presides among them.

Secondly. He assures them he would find out a way to break the power of their oppressors that held them captives, and filled up the measure of their own iniquity by their resolution never to let them go, *ch.* xiv. 17. God will take care to send a victorious prince and army to Babylon, that should bring down all their nobles, and lay their honour in the dust, and all their people too, even the Chaldeans, whose "cry is in the ships,"—for seamen use to be noisy,—or, whose cry is to the ships, as their refuge when the city is taken, that they may escape by the benefit of their great river. Note, The destruction of Babylon must make way for the enlargement of God's people; and in the prediction of the fall of the New Testament Babylon we meet with the cries and lamentations of the sailors, *Rev.* xviii. 17. And observe, it is for Israel's sake that Babylon is ruined, to make way for their deliverance.

Thirdly. He reminds them of the great things he did for their fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; for so it may be read, ver. 16, 17, 'Thus saith the Lord, which did make a way in the sea, the Red sea, and did bring forth Pharaoh's chariot and horse that they might lie down together in the bottom of the sea, and never rise, but be extinct.' He that did this can, if he pleaseth, make a way for you in the sea when you return out of Babylon, and will do it, rather than leave you there. Note, For the encouragement of our faith and hope, it is good for us often to remember what God has done formerly for his people against his and their enemies. Think particularly what he did at the Red sea, how he made it, 1. A road to his people, a straight way, a near way; nay, a refuge to them, into which they fled and were safe, the waters being a wall unto them. 2. A grave to his enemies. The chariot and horse were drawn out by him who is Lord of all hosts, on purpose that they might fall together; howbeit, "they meant not so," *Mic.* iv. 11, 12.

Fourthly. He promiseth to do yet greater things for them than he had done in the days of old; so that they should have reason to ask in a way of complaint, as Gideon did, "Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?" For they should see them repeated, nay, they should see them outdone; ver. 18, "Remember not the former things," from them to take occasion, as some do, to undervalue the present things, as if the former days were better than these; no, you may, if you will, comparatively forget them, and yet know enough by the events of your own day to convince you that the Lord is God alone; for, behold, the Lord will do a new thing, no way inferior both for the wonder and the worth of the mercy, to the things of old. The best exposition of this is *Jer.* xvi. 14, 15; xxiii. 7, 8, "It shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;" that is an old thing, the remembrance of which will be in a manner lost in the new thing, the new proof that the Lord liveth; for he "brought up the children of Israel out of the land of the north." Though former mercies must not be forgotten, fresh mercies must in a special manner be improved. Now it springs forth, as it were a surprise upon you; you are like them that dream. "Shall ye not know it?" and will ye not own God's hand in it?

Fifthly. He promiseth not only to deliver them out of Babylon, but to conduct them safely and comfortably to their own land; ver. 19, 20, "I will make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert;" for it seems the way from Babylon to Canaan, as well as from Egypt, lay through a desert land; which, while the returning captives passed through, God would provide for them, that

their camp should be both well victualled, and under a good conduct. The same power that made a "way in the sea," ver. 16, can make a "way in the wilderness," and will force its passage through the greatest difficulties. And he that made dry land in the waters can produce waters in the driest land in such abundance as not only to give drink to his people, his chosen, but the beasts of the field, also the dragons and the ostriches, who are therefore said to honour God for it; that is, it is such a sensible refreshment, and yields them so much satisfaction, that if they were capable of doing it they would praise God for it, and shame man, who is made capable of praising his benefactor, and doth not. Now, 1. This looks back to what God did for Israel when he led them through the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan, and fetched water out of a rock to follow them. What God did for them formerly he would do again, for he is still the same. And though we do not find that the miracle was repeated in their return out of Babylon, yet the mercy was, in the common course of providence, for which they ought to be no less thankful to God. 2. It looks forward, not only to all the instances of God's care of the Jewish church in the latter ages of it, betwixt their return from Babylon and the coming of Christ, but to the grace of the Gospel, especially as it is manifested to the Gentile world, by which "a way is opened in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert;" that is, the world that lay like a desert, in ignorance and unfruitfulness, was blessed with a Divine conduct and Divine comforts, and, in order to both, with a plentiful effusion of the Spirit. The sinners of the Gentiles, that had been as the beasts of the field, running wild, fierce as the dragons, stupid as the owls or ostriches, shall be brought to honour God for the extent of his grace to his chosen among them.

Sixthly. He runs up all these promised blessings to their great original, the purposes and designs of his own glory; ver. 21, "This people have I formed for myself," and therefore I do all this for them, that they may "shew forth my praise." Note, 1. The church is of God's forming, and so are all the living members of it. The new heavens, the new earth, the new man, are the work of God's hand, and are no more, no better, than he makes them; they are fashioned according to his will. 2. He forms it for himself. He that is the first cause is the highest end, both of the first and of the new creation. "The Lord hath made all things for himself," his Israel especially, to be to him for "a people, and for a name, and for a praise;" and no otherwise can they be for him, or serviceable to him, but as his grace is glorified in them, *Jer.* xiii. 11; *Eph.* i. 6, 12, 14. 3. It therefore is our duty to shew forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service. As he formed us, so he feeds us, and keeps us, and leads us, and all for himself. For every instance therefore of his goodness we must praise him, else we answer not the end of the beings and blessings we have.

22 But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob;
But thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.
23 Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings;
Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices.
I have not caused thee to serve with an offering,
Nor wearied thee with incense.
24 Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money,
Neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices:
But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins,
Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.
25 I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake,
And will not remember thy sins.
26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together:
Declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.
27 Thy first father hath sinned,
And thy teachers have transgressed against me.
28 Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary,
And have given Jacob to the curse,
And Israel to reproaches.

This charge, and a high charge it is, which is here exhibited against Jacob and Israel, God's professing people, comes in here, 1. To clear God's justice in bringing them into captivity, and to vindicate that. Were they not in covenant with him? Had they not his sanctuary among them? "Why then did the Lord deal thus with this land?" *Deu.* xxix, 24. Here is a good reason given. They had neglected God, and had cast him off, and therefore he justly rejected them, and gave them to the curse, ver. 28; and they must be brought to own this before they are prepared for deliverance; and they did so, *Dan.* ix. 5; *Neh.* ix. 33. 2. To advance God's mercy in their deliverance, and to make that appear more glorious. Many things are before observed to magnify the power of God in it; but this magnifies his goodness, that he should do such great and kind things for a people that had been so very provoking to him, and were now suffering the punishment of their iniquity. The pardoning of their sin was as great an instance of God's power, (for so Moses reckons it, *Num.* xiv. 17,) as the breaking of the yoke of their captivity. Now observe here,

First. What the sins are they are here charged with.

1. Omissions of the good which God had commanded; and this part of the charge is here much insisted upon. And observe how it comes in with a "but:" compare ver. 21, where God tells them what favours he had bestowed upon them, and what his just expectations were from them. He had formed them for himself, intending they should shew forth his praise; but they had not done so; they had frustrated God's expectations from them, and made very ill returns to him for his favours; for, 1st. They had cast off prayer. "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob." Jacob was a man famous for prayer, *Hos.* xii. 4; his seed bore his name, but did not tread in his steps, and therefore are justly upbraided with it. God takes it ill when children degenerate from the virtue and devotion of their pious ancestors. To boast of the name of Jacob, and yet live without prayer, is to mock God, and deceive ourselves. If Jacob doth not call upon God, who will? 2. They were grown sick of their religion. Thou art Israel, the seed not only of a praying, but of a prevailing father, that was a prince with God; and yet not valuing his experiences any more than his example, "Thou hast been weary of me." They had been in relation to God, employed in his service, and in communion with him; but they began to snuff at it, and to say, "Behold, what a weariness is it!" Note, Those who neglect to call upon God do in effect tell him they are weary of him, and have a mind to change their master. 3rd. They grudged the expense of their devotion, and were niggardly and penurious in it. They were for a cheap religion; and in those acts of devotion that were costly, they desired to be excused. They had not brought, no, not their small cattle, the lambs and kids, which God required for burnt offerings, ver. 23; much less did they bring their greater cattle, pretending they could not spare them, they must have them for the maintenance of their families. So little sense had they of the greatness of God, and their obligations to him, that they could not find in their hearts to part with a lamb out of their flock for his honour, though he called for it, and would graciously accept it. Sweet cane, or calamus, was used for the holy oil, incense, and perfume, but they were not willing to be at the charge of that, ver. 24; what they had must serve, though it was old and good for nothing; they would not buy fresh. Perhaps it was usual for devout, pious persons to bring freewill incense, as well as other freewill offerings, but they were not so generous. Nor did they fill the altar of God, nor moisten it abundantly, as they should have done, with the fat of their sacrifices; what sacrifices they did bring were of the lean and refuse of their cattle, that had no fat in them to regale the altar with. 4th. What sacrifices they did offer, they did not honour God with them, and so they were in effect as no sacrifices; ver. 23, "Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices." Some of them offered their sacrifices to false gods; others, that offered them to the true God, were either careless in the manner of it or hypocritical in their intentions, so that they might be truly said not to honour God with them, but rather to dishonour him. And that which aggravated their neglect of sacrificing was, that, as God had appointed it, it was no burthensome thing; it was not a service that they had any reason at all to complain of. "I have not caused thee to serve with an offering;" that is, I have not made it a task and drudgery to you, whatever you, through the corruption of your natures, have made it yourselves: "I have not wearied thee with incense." None of God's commandments are grievous, no, not those concerning sacrifice and incense. They were not more costly than might be afforded by them that lived in such a plentiful country; nor did their attendance on them require any more time than they could well spare; but that which especially forbade them to call it a wearisome service was, that they were required to be cheerful and pleasant, and to rejoice before God in all their approaches to him, *Deu.* xii. 12. They had many feasts and good days, but only one day in all the year in which they were to afflict their souls. The ordinances of the ceremonial law, though, in comparison with Christ's easy yoke, they are spoken of as heavy, *Acts* xv. 10, yet, in comparison with the service that idolaters did to their false gods, they were light, and not to be called services, or found fault with as wearisome. God did not require them to sacrifice their children, as Moloch did.

2. Commissions of the evil which God had forbidden; and omissions commonly make way for commissions. "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins." When we make God's gifts the food and fuel of our lusts, and his providence to patronise our wicked projects, especially when we encourage ourselves to continue in sin, because grace hath abounded, then we make God to serve with our sins; or it may note what a grief and burthen sin is to God. It doth not only weary men, and make the creation groan, but it wearies my God also, *ch.* vii. 13, and makes the Creator complain that he is grieved, *Ps.* xcv. 10; that he is broken, *Eze.* vi. 9; that he is pressed with sinners, "as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves," *Am.* ii. 13; and to cry out, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries," *ch.* i. 24. The antithesis is observable; God had not made them to serve with their sacrifices, but they had made him to serve with their sins. The master had not tired the servants with his commands, but they had tired him with their disobedience. Those are wicked servants indeed that carry it so ill to so good a master. God is tender of our comfort, but we are careless of his honour. Let this engage us to keep close to our duty, that it is easy, and reasonable, and no disparagement to us, nor too hard for us.

Secondly. What were the aggravations of their sin, ver. 27. 1. That they were children of disobedience; for their "first father," that is, their forefathers, "had sinned;" and they had not only sinned in their loins, but sinned like them. Ezra confesseth this, "Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass," *Ezr.* ix. 7. But their forefathers are called their "first father," to put us in mind of the apostacy and rebellion of our "first father," Adam, to which corrupt fountain we must run up the streams of all our transgressions. 2. That they were scholars of disobedience too, for their teachers had transgressed against God; were guilty of gross, scandalous sins, and the people, no doubt, would learn to do as they did. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and their teachers, that should reform them, corrupt them.

Thirdly. What were the tokens of God's displeasure against them for their sins, ver. 28. He brought ruin both upon church and state. 1. The honour of their church was laid in the dust, and trampled on. "I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary;" that is, the priests and Levites that presided with great dignity and power in the temple service: they profaned themselves, and made themselves vile by their enormities, and then God profaned them, and made them vile by their calamities, and the contempt they fell into, *Mal.* ii. 9. 2. The honour of their state was ruined likewise. "I have given Jacob to the curse;" that is, to be cursed, and hated, and abused by all their neighbours; "and Israel to reproach," to be insulted, ridiculed, and triumphed over by their enemies. They reproached them perhaps for that in them that was good; they mocked at their sabbaths, *Lam.* i. 7; but God gave them up to reproach, to correct them for what was amiss. Note, The dishonour which men at any time do us should humble us for the dishonour we have done to God; and therefore we must bear it patiently, because we suffer it justly, and must acknowledge that to us belongs confusion.

Fourthly. What were the riches of God's mercy towards them notwithstanding; ver. 25, "I, even I, am he who," for all this, "blotteth out thy transgressions." This gracious declaration of God's readiness to pardon sin comes in very strangely; the charge runs very high, "Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities," ver. 24. Now one would think it should follow, 'I, even I, am he that will destroy thee, and burthen myself no longer with care about thee;' no, "I, even I, am he that will forgive thee;" as if the great God would teach us that forgiving injuries is the best way to make ourselves easy, and to keep ourselves from being wearied with them. This comes in here to encourage them to repent, because there is forgiveness with God, and to shew the freeness of Divine mercy. Where sin has been exceeding sinful, grace appears exceeding gracious. Apply this, 1. To the forgiving of the sins of Israel as a people, in their national capacity. When God stopped the course of threatening judgments, and saved them from utter ruin, even then when he had them under severe rebukes, then he might be said to blot out their transgressions; though he corrected them, he was reconciled to them again, and did not cut them off from being a people. This he did many a time, till they rejected Christ and his Gospel, which was a sin against the remedy, and then he would forgive them no more as a nation, but utterly destroy them. 2. To the forgiving of the sins of every particular believing penitent. Transgressions and sins; infirmities, though never so numerous; backslidings, though never so heinous. Observe here, 1st. How the pardon is expressed. He will blot them out, as a

cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun, *ch.* xliv. 22; as a debt is blotted out, not to appear against the debtor; the book is crossed, as if the debt were paid, because it is pardoned upon the payment which the Surety has made: or, as a sentence is blotted out when it is reversed; as the curse was blotted out with the waters of jealousy, which made it of no effect to the innocent, *Num.* v. 23. He will not remember the sin, which intimates not only that he will remit the punishment of what is past, but it shall be no diminution to his love for the future. When God forgives, he forgets. 2nd. What is the ground and reason of the pardon. It is not for the sake of any thing in us, but for his own sake, for his mercy's sake, his promise's sake, and especially for his Son's sake, and that he may himself be glorified in it. 3rd. How God glories in it. "I, even I, am he." He glories in it as his prerogative. None can forgive sin but God only, and he will do it; it is his settled resolution. He will do it willingly, and with delight. It is his pleasure, it is his honour, so he is pleased to reckon it.

Those words, ver. 26, "Put me in remembrance," may be understood either, *First.* As a rebuke to a proud Pharisee, that stands upon his own justification before God, and expects to find favour for his merits, and not to be beholden to free grace. If you have any thing to say in your own justification, any thing to offer, for the sake of which you should be pardoned, and not for my sake, "put me in remembrance of it;" I give you leave to plead your own cause with me; declare what your merits are, "that you may be justified" by them: but those who are thus challenged will be speechless. Or, *Secondly.* As a direction and encouragement to a penitent publican. Is God thus ready to pardon sin, and when he pardons it will he remember it no more? Let us then put him in remembrance, mention before him those sins which he has forgiven; for they must be ever before us to humble us, though they are pardoned, *Ps.* li. 3. Put him in remembrance of the promises he has made to the penitent, and the satisfaction his Son has made for them. Plead these with him in wrestling for pardon, and declare these things, in order "that thou mayest be justified" freely by his grace. This is the only way, and it is a sure way, to peace. "Only acknowledge thy transgression."

CHAPTER XLIV.

God by the prophet goes on in this chapter as before, I. To encourage his people with the assurance of great blessings he had in store for them at their return out of captivity; and those typical of much greater, which the Gospel church, his spiritual Israel, should partake of in the days of the Messiah: and hereby he proves himself to be God alone, against all pretenders, ver. 1—8. II. To expose the sottishness and amazing folly of idol makers, and idol worshippers, ver. 9—20. III. To ratify and confirm the assurances he had given to his people of those great blessings, and to raise their joyful and believing expectations of them, ver. 21—28.

YET now hear, O Jacob my servant;
And Israel, whom I have chosen:
2 Thus saith the LORD that made thee,
And formed thee from the womb, *which* will help thee;
Fear not, O Jacob, my servant;
And thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.
3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty,
And floods upon the dry ground:
I will pour my spirit upon thy seed,
And my blessing upon thine offspring:
4 And they shall spring up *as* among the grass,
As willows by the water courses.
5 One shall say, I *am* the LORD's;
And another shall call *himself* by the name of Jacob;
And another shall subscribe *with* his hand unto the LORD,
And surname *himself* by the name of Israel.
6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel,
And his redeemer the LORD of hosts;
I *am* the first, and I *am* the last;
And beside me *there is* no God.
7 And who, as I, shall call,
And shall declare it, and set it in order for me,
Since I appointed the ancient people?
And the things that are coming, and shall come,
Let them shew unto them.
8 Fear ye not, neither be afraid:
Have not I told thee from that time, and have declared *it?*
Ye *are* even my witnesses.
Is there a God beside me?
Yea, *there is* no God; I know not *any*.

Two great truths are abundantly made out in these verses:

First. That the people of God are a happy people, especially upon account of the covenant that is between them and God. The people of Israel were so, as a figure of the gospel Israel. Three things complete their happiness:

1. The covenant relations wherein they stand to God, ver. 1, 2. Israel is here called "Jesurun," 'the upright one;' for those only, like Nathanael, are Israelites indeed, in whom is no guile; and those only shall have the everlasting benefit of these promises. Jacob and Israel had been represented in the close of the foregoing chapter as very provoking, and obnoxious to God's wrath, and already given to the curse, and to reproaches; but, as if God's bowels yearned towards him, and his repentings were kindled together, mercy steps in with a *non obstante*,—'notwithstanding,' to all these quarrels. "Yet now hear, O Jacob, my servant;" thou and I will be friends again for all this. God had said, *ch.* xliii. 25, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgression," which is the only thing that creates this distance, and when that is taken away the streams of mercy run again in their former channel. The pardon of sin is the inlet of all the other blessings of the covenant; So and so I will do for them, saith God, (*Heb.* viii. 12,) "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness." Therefore "hear, O Jacob," hear these comfortable words; therefore, "fear not, O Jacob," fear not thy sins, for they are pardoned; fear not thy troubles, for by the pardon of sin the property of them too is altered. Now the relations wherein they stand to him are very encouraging: 1st. They are his servants; and those that serve him he will own and stand by, and see that they be not wronged. 2nd. They are his chosen, and he will abide by his choice. He knows them that are his, and whom he has chosen he takes under special protection. 3rd. They are his creatures. He made them, and brought them into being; he formed them, and cast them into shape; he began betimes with them, for he formed them from the womb; and therefore he will help them over their difficulties, and help them in their services.

2. The covenant blessings which he hath secured to them and theirs, ver. 3, 4. 1st. They that are sensible of their spiritual wants, and the insufficiency of the creature to supply them, shall have abundant satisfaction in God; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty," that thirsts after righteousness, he shall be filled. Water shall be poured out to those who truly desire spiritual blessings above all the delights of sense. 2nd. They that are barren as the dry ground shall be watered with the grace of God, with floods of that grace, and God will himself give the increase. If the ground be never so dry, God has floods of grace to water it with. 3rd. The water God will pour out is his Spirit, *Jno.* vii. 39, which God will pour out without measure upon the seed, that is, Christ, *Gal.* iii. 16; and by measure upon all the seed of the faithful, upon all the praying, wrestling seed of Jacob, *Lu.* xi. 13. This is the great New Testament promise, that God having sent his servant Christ, and upheld him, will send his Spirit to uphold us. 4th. This gift of the Holy Ghost is the great blessing God has reserved the plentiful effusion of for the latter days; "I will pour my Spirit," that is, my blessing; for where God gives his Spirit he will give all other blessings. 5th. This is reserved for the seed and offspring of the church; for so the covenant of grace runs, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed;" and to all who are thus made to partake of the privileges of adoption God will give the Spirit of adoption. 6th. Hereby there shall be a great increase of the church; thus it shall be spread to distant places; thus it shall be propagated and perpetuated to after times; they shall spring up, and grow as fast as "willows by the watercourses," and in every thing that is virtuous and praiseworthy shall be eminent, and excel all about them, as the willows overtop the grass among which they grow, ver. 4. Note, It is a great happiness to the church, and a great pleasure to good men, to see the rising generation hopeful and promising. And it will be so if God pour his Spirit upon them, that blessing, that blessing of blessings.

3. The consent they cheerfully give to their part of the covenant, ver. 5. When the Jews returned out of captivity, they renewed their covenant with God, *Jer.* l. 5, particularly that they would have no more to do with idols, *Hos.* xiv. 2, 3, 8. Backsliders must thus repent, and do their first works; many of those that were without did at that time join themselves to them, invited by that glorious appearance of God for them, *Zec.* viii. 23, *Est.* viii. 17; and they say, We are the Lord's, and call themselves by the name of Jacob: for there was one law, one covenant, "for the stranger, and for those that were born in the land." And, doubtless, it looks farther yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the multitudes of them which, upon the effusion of the Spirit after Christ's ascension, should be joined to the Lord, and added to the church. These converts are "one and another," very many, of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God, *Col.* iii. 11. When one doth it, another shall, by his example, be invited to do it, and then another; thus the zeal of one may provoke many. 1st. They shall resign themselves to God. Not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, "I am the Lord's;" he has an incontestable right to rule me, and I submit to him, to all his commands, to all his disposals; I am and will be his only, his wholly, his for ever; will be for his interests, will be for his praise; living and dying I will be his. 2nd. They shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, "call themselves by the name of Jacob," forgetting their own people, and their father's house, and desirous to wear the character and livery of God's family. They shall love all God's people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship, espouse their cause, seek the good of the church in general, and of all the particular members of it, and be willing to take their lot with them in all conditions. 3rd. They shall do this very solemnly. Some of them "shall subscribe with their hand unto the Lord," as, for the confirming of a bargain, a man sets his hand to it, and delivers it as his act and deed. The more express we are in our covenanting with God the better, *Ex.* xxiv. 7; *Jos.* xxiv. 26, 27; *Neh.* ix. 38. Fast bind, fast find.

Secondly. That, as the Israel of God are a happy people, so the God of Israel is a great God, and he is God alone. And this also, as the former, speaks abundant satisfaction to all that trust in him, ver. 6—8. Observe here, to God's glory and our comfort,

1. That the God we trust in is a God of incontestable sovereignty, and irresistible power. He is the Lord Jehovah, self-existent, and self-sufficient; and he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, of angels and men.

2. That he stands in relation to, and hath a particular concern for, his church. He is the "King of Israel, and his Redeemer;" therefore his Redeemer, because his King; and those that take God for their King shall have him for their Redeemer. When God would assert himself God alone, he proclaims himself Israel's God, that his people may be encouraged both to adhere to him and to triumph in him.

3. That he is eternal; the first and the last; that is, he is God from everlasting, before the worlds were, and will be so to everlasting, when the world shall be no more. If there were not a God to create, nothing had ever been; and if there were not a God to uphold, all would soon come to nothing again. He is all in all; is the first cause, from whom are all things; and the last end, to and for whom are all things, *Rom.* xi. 36. The alpha and the omega, *Rev.* i. 11.

4. That he is God alone; ver. 6, "Besides me there is no God;" and, ver. 8, "Is there a God besides me?" We will appeal to the greatest scholars, did they ever, in all their reading, meet with any other? To those that have had the largest acquaintance with the world, did they ever meet with any other? "There are gods many," 1 *Cor.* viii. 5, 6, called gods, and counterfeit gods; but is there any besides our God, that is infinite and eternal? Any besides him that is the creator of the world, and the protector and benefactor of the whole creation? Any besides him that can do that for their worshippers which he can and will do for his? "Ye are my witnesses;" I have been a nonsuch to you. You have tried other gods, have you found any of them all-sufficient to you, or any of them like me? "Yea, there is no God;" no rock, so the word is; none but he that can be a rock for a foundation to build on, a rock for shelter to flee to. God is "the rock," and "their rock is not as ours," *Deu.* xxxii. 4, 31. "I know not any;" as if he had said, I never met with any that offered to stand in competition with me, or that durst bring their pretensions to a fair trial. If I did know any that could befriend you better than I can, I would recommend you to them; but "I know not any." There is no

God besides Jehovah. He is infinite, and therefore there can be no other; he is all-sufficient, and therefore there needs no other. This is designed for the confirming of the hopes of God's people in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, and in order to that for the curing them of their idolatry; when the affliction had done its work, it should be removed. They are minded of the first and great article of their creed, that the Lord their God is one Lord, *Deu.* vi. 4. And therefore, 1st. They needed not to hope in any other God. Those on whom the sun shines, need neither moon nor stars, nor the light of their own fire. 2nd. They needed not to fear any other god. Their own God was more able to do them good than all the false and counterfeit gods of their enemies were to do them hurt.

5. That none but he could foretell these things to come, which God now by his prophet gave notice of to the world, above two hundred years before they came to pass; ver. 7, "Who, as I, shall call," shall call Cyrus to Babylon, shall call Israel out of Babylon? Is there any but God that can call effectually, and has every creature, every heart, at his beck? Who shall declare it, how it shall be, and by whom, as I do. Nay, God goes farther; he not only sees it in order, as having the foreknowledge of it, but sets it in order, as having the sole management and direction of it. Can any other pretend to this? He hath always set things in order, according to the counsel of his own will, ever since he "appointed the ancient people," that is, the people of Israel, who could give a truer and fuller account of the antiquities of their own nation than any kingdom in the world could. Ever since he appointed that people to be his peculiar people, his providence was particularly conversant about them, and he told them before the events that should be concerning them, their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance out, their settlement in Canaan, &c. All was set in order in the Divine predictions, as well as in the Divine purposes. Could any other have done so? Would any other have been so far concerned for them? He challengeth the pretenders to shew the things that shall come hereafter; let them, if they can, tell us the name of the man that shall destroy Babylon, and deliver Israel? Nay, if they cannot pretend to tell us the things that shall come hereafter, let them tell us the things that are coming, that are nigh at hand, and at the door; let them tell us what shall come to pass to-morrow; but they cannot do that. Fear them not, therefore, nor be afraid of them; what harm can they do you? What hindrance can they give to your deliverance, when I have told thee it shall be accomplished in its season, and I have solemnly declared it? Note, Those who have the word of God's promise to depend upon need not to be afraid of any adverse powers or policies whatsoever.

9 They that make a graven image *are* all of them vanity;
And their delectable things shall not profit;
And they *are* their own witnesses;
They see not, nor know;
That they may be ashamed.
10 Who hath formed a god,
Or molten a graven image *that* is profitable for nothing?
11 Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed:
And the workmen, they *are* of men:
Let them all be gathered together, let them stand up;
Yet they shall fear, *and* they shall be ashamed together.
12 The smith with the tongs
Both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers,
And worketh it with the strength of his arms:
Yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth:
He drinketh no water, and is faint.
13 The carpenter stretcheth out *his* rule; he marketh it out with a line;
He fitteth it with planes,
And he marketh it out with the compass,
And maketh it after the figure of a man,
According to the beauty of a man;
That it may remain in the house.
14 He heweth him down cedars,
And taketh the cypress and the oak,
Which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest:
He planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish *it*.
15 Then shall it be for a man to burn:
For he will take thereof, and warm himself;
Yea, he kindleth *it*, and baketh bread;
Yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth *it*;
He maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto.
16 He burneth part thereof in the fire;
With part thereof he eateth flesh;
He roasteth roast, and is satisfied:
Yea, he warmeth *himself*, and saith,
Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire:
17 And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image:
He falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*,
And prayeth unto it, and saith,
Deliver me; for thou *art* my god.
18 They have not known nor understood:
For he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see;
And their hearts, that they cannot understand.
19 And none considereth in his heart,
Neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say,
I have burned part of it in the fire;
Yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof;
I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*:
And shall I make the residue thereof an abomination?
Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree?
20 He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside,
That he cannot deliver his soul, nor say,
Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Often before, God, by the prophet, had mentioned the folly and strange sottishness of idolaters; but here he enlargeth upon that head, and very fully and particularly exposeth it to contempt and ridicule. And this discourse is intended, 1. To arm the people of Israel against the strong temptation they would be in to worship idols, when they were captives in Babylon, in compliance with the custom of the country, they being far from the city of their own solemnities, and to humour those who were now their lords and masters. 2. To cure them of their inclination to idolatry, which was the sin that did most easily beset them, and to reform them from which they were sent into Babylon. As the rod of God is of use to enforce the word, so the word of God is of use to explain the rod, that the voice of both together may be heard and answered. 3. To furnish them with something to say to their Chaldean taskmasters, when they insulted over them. When they asked, "Where is your God?" they might from hence ask them, What are your gods? 4. To take off their fear of the gods of their enemies, and to encourage their hope in their own God, that he would certainly appear against those who set up such scandalous competitors as these with him for the throne. Now here, for the conviction of idolaters, we have,

First. A challenge given to them to clear themselves, if they can, from the imputation of the most shameful folly and senselessness imaginable, ver. 9—11. They set their wits on work to contrive, and their hands on work to frame, graven images, and they call them "their delectable things;" extremely fond they are of them, and mighty things they expect from them. Note, Through the corruption of men's nature, those things that should be detestable to them are desirable and delectable; but those are far gone in a distemper to whom that which is the food and fuel of it is most agreeable. Now, 1. We tell them that they that do so are all vanity, they deceive themselves and one another, and put a great cheat upon those for whom they make these images. 2. We tell them that "their delectable things shall not profit" them, nor make them any return for the pleasure they take in them; they can neither supply them with good nor protect them from evil. The graven images are profitable for nothing at all, nor will they ever get any thing by the devoirs they pay to them. 3. We appeal to themselves, whether it be not a silly, sottish thing to expect any good from gods of their own making. "They are their own witnesses," witnesses against themselves, if they would but give their own consciences leave to deal faithfully with them, that they are blind and ignorant in doing thus; "they see not, nor know," and let them own it, "that they may be ashamed." If men would but be true to their own convictions, ordinarily we might be sure of their conversion, particularly idolaters; for "who hath formed a god?" Who but a madman, or one out of his wits, would think of forming a god? of making that which, if he make it a god, he must suppose to be his maker. 4. We challenge them to plead their own cause, with any confidence or assurance He that has the front to say he hath formed a god, when all his fellows come together, to declare what each of them has done towards the making of this god, they will all be ashamed of the cheat they have put upon themselves, and laugh in their sleeves at those whom they have imposed upon; for the workmen that formed this god, they are of men, weak and impotent, and therefore cannot possibly make a being that shall be omnipotent, nor without blushing pretend to it. "Let them all be gathered together," as Demetrius and the craftsmen were, to support their sinking trade, "let them stand up" to plead their own cause, and make the best they can of it, with hand joined in hand, yet they shall fear to undertake it when it comes to the setting to, as conscious to themselves of the weakness and badness of their cause; and they shall be ashamed of it, not only when they appear singly, but when by appearing together they hope to keep one another in countenance. Note, Idolatry and impiety are things which men may justly both tremble and blush to appear in the defence of.

Secondly. A particular narrative of the whole proceeding in making a god, and there needs no more to expose it but to describe it, and tell the story of it.

1. The persons employed about it are handicraft tradesmen, the meanest of them, the very same that you would employ in making the common utensils of your husbandry, a cart or a plough. You must have a smith, a blacksmith, that with the tongs works in the coals; and it is hard work, for he works with the strength of his arms till he is hungry, and his strength fails, so eager is he, and so hasty are those who set him on work to get it despatched. He cannot allow himself time to eat or drink, for he drinks no water, and therefore is faint, ver. 12. Perhaps it was a piece of superstition among them for the workman not to eat or drink while he was making a god. The plates with which the smith was to cover the image, or whatever iron work was to be done about it, he fashioned it with hammers, and made it all very nice, according to the model given him. Then comes the carpenter, and he takes as much care and pains about the timber-work, ver. 13. He brings his box of tools, for he hath occasion for them all. He "stretcheth out his rule" upon the piece of wood, "marks it with a line," where it must be sawed or cut off; "he fits it," or polisheth it "with planes," the bigger first, and then the lesser. He "marks it out with the compass," what must be the size and shape of it; and it is just what he pleaseth.

2. The form in which it is made is that of a man, a poor, weak, dying creature, but it is the noblest form and figure that he is acquainted with, and, being his own, he hath a peculiar fondness for it, and is willing to put all the reputation he can upon it. He makes it "according to the beauty of a man," in comely proportion, with those limbs and lineaments that are the beauty of a man, but are altogether unfit to represent the beauty of the Lord. God put a great honour upon man, when, in respect of the powers and faculties of his soul, he made him after the image of God; but man doth a great dishonour to God,

when he makes him (in respect of bodily parts and members) after the image of man. Nor will it at all atone for the affront, so far to compliment his god, as to take the fairest of the children of men for his original, from whence to take his copy, and to give him all the beauty of a man that he can think of; for all the beauty of the body of a man, when pretended to be put upon him who is an infinite Spirit, is a deformity and diminution to him. And when the goodly piece is finished, it must "remain in the house," in the temple or shrine prepared for it; or, perhaps in the dwelling house, if it be one of the household gods, the *lares*, or *penates*.

3. The matter of which it is mostly made is even sorry stuff to make a god of; it is the stock of a tree.

1st. The tree itself was fetched out of the forest, where it grew among other trees, of no more virtue or value than its neighbours. It was a cedar, it may be, or a cypress, or an oak, ver. 14. Perhaps he had an eye upon it some time before for this use, and "strengthened it for himself;" used some art or other to make it stronger, and better grown than other trees were; or, as some read it, 'which hath strengthened or lifted up itself among the trees of the forest,' the tallest and strongest he can pick out. Or, it may be, it likes his fancy better to take an ash, which is of a quicker growth, and which was of his own planting, for this use, and which has been nourished with rain from heaven. See what a fallacy he puts upon himself, in making that his refuge which was of his own planting, and which he not only gave the form to, but prepared the matter for; and what an affront he puts upon the God of heaven, in setting up that as a rival with him, which was nourished by his rain, that rain which falls "on the just and unjust?"

2nd. The boughs of this tree were good for nothing but for fuel; to that use were they put, and so were the chips that were cut off from it in the working of it. They are "for a man to burn," ver. 15, 16. And, to shew that that tree has no innate virtue in it for its own protection, it is as capable of being burnt as any other tree; and, to shew that he who chose it had no more antecedent value for it than for any other tree, he makes no difficulty of throwing part of it into the fire as common rubbish, asking no question for conscience sake. *First.* It serves him for his parlour fire. He will "take thereof, and warm himself," ver. 15; and he finds the comfort of it, and is so far from having any regret in his mind for it, that he saith, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire." And certainly that part of the tree which served him for fuel, the use for which God and nature designed it, doth him a much greater kindness, and yields him more satisfaction, than ever that will which he makes a god of. *Secondly.* It serves him for his kitchen fire. He eats flesh with it, that is, he dresseth the flesh with it which he is to eat; "he roasteth roast, and is satisfied" that he has not done amiss to put it to this use. Nay, *Thirdly.* It serves him to heat the oven with, in which we use that fuel which is of least value. He kindleth it, and bakes bread with the heat of it, and none saith, Wrong he doth.

3rd. Yet, after all, the stock or body of the tree shall serve to make a god of, when it might as well have served to make a bench. As one of themselves, even a poet of their own, upbraids them; *Horat. Sat.* i. 8.

Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum,
Quum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum,
Maluit esse deum; deus inde ego,—
'In days of yore our godship stood,
A very worthless log of wood,
The joiner, doubting how to shape us
Into a stool or a Priapus,
At length resolved, for reasons wise,
Into a god to bid me rise.'—*Francis.*

And another of them threatens the idol to whom he had committed the custody of his woods, that if he did not preserve them to be fuel for his fire, he should himself be made use of for that purpose:

Furaces moneo manus repellas,
Et sylvam domini focis reserves,
Si defecerit hæc, et ipse lignum es,—
'Drive the plunderers away, and preserve the wood for thy master's hearth, or thou thyself shalt be converted into fuel.'—*Martial.*

When the besotted idolater hath thus served the meanest purposes with part of his tree, and the rest hath had time to season, he maketh that a god in his imagination, while that is in the doing, and worships it. He "maketh it a graven image, and falls down thereto," ver. 15; that is, ver. 17, "The residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image," according to his fancy and intention. "He falls down to it and worshippeth it;" gives Divine honours to it; prostrates himself before it in the most humble, reverent posture, as a servant, as a supplicant. He "prays unto it," as having a dependence upon it, and great expectations from it; he saith, "Deliver me, for thou art my god." There where he pays his homage and allegiance he justly looks for protection and deliverance. What a strange infatuation is this, to expect help from gods that cannot help themselves! But it is this praying to them that makes them gods, not what the smith or the carpenter did at them. What we place our confidence in for deliverance, that we make a god of:

Qui fingit sacros, auro vel marmore, vultus
Non facit ille deos; qui rogat, ille facit,—
'He who supplicates the figure, whether it be of gold or of marble, makes it a god, and not he who merely constructs it.'—*Martial.*

Thirdly. Here is judgment given upon this whole matter, ver. 18—20. In short, it is the effect and evidence of the greatest stupidity and sottishness that one could ever imagine rational beings to be guilty of, and shews that man is become worse than the beasts that perish; for they act according to the dictates of sense, but man acts not according to the dictates of reason; ver. 18, "They have not known, nor understood," common sense. Men that act rationally in other things in this act most absurdly; though they have some knowledge and understanding, yet they are strangers to, nay, they are rebels against, the great law of consideration; ver. 19, "None considereth in his heart," nor hath so much application of mind as to reason thus with himself, which one would think he might easily do, though there were none to reason with him: "I have burnt part" of this tree "in the fire," for baking and roasting; and now "shall I make the residue thereof an abomination?" that is, an idol; for that is an abomination to God, and to all wise and good men. Shall I ungratefully choose to do, or presumptuously dare to do, what the Lord hates? Shall I be such a fool, as to "fall down to the stock of a tree," a senseless, lifeless, helpless thing? Shall I so far disparage myself, and make myself like that I bow down to? A growing tree may be a beautiful, stately thing; but the stock of a tree has lost its glory; and he has lost his that gives glory to it. Upon the whole matter, the sad character given of these idolaters, ver. 20, is,

1. That they put a cheat upon themselves; "they feed on ashes." They feed themselves with hopes of advantage by worshipping these idols, but they will be disappointed as much as a man that would expect nourishment by feeding on ashes. Feeding on ashes is an evidence of a depraved appetite, and a distempered body; and it is a sign the soul is overpowered by very ill habits, when men in their worships go no farther than the sight of their eyes will carry them. They are wretchedly deluded, and it is their own fault; "A deceived heart" of their own, more than the deceiving tongue of others, "hath turned them aside" from the faith and worship of the living God to dumb idols. "They are drawn away of their own lusts, and enticed." The apostacy of sinners from God is owing purely to themselves, and to the evil heart of unbelief that is in their own bosom. A revolting and rebellious heart is "a deceived heart."

2. That they wilfully persist in their self-delusion, and will not be undeceived. There is none of them that can be persuaded so far to suspect himself as to say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" and so to think of delivering his soul. Note, 1st. Idolaters have a lie in their right hand; for an idol is a lie, is not what it pretends, performs not what it promiseth; and it is a teacher of lies, *Hab.* ii. 18. 2nd. It highly concerns those that are secure in an evil way seriously to consider whether there be not a lie in their right hand. Is not that a lie which, with a complacency, we hold fast as our chief good? Are our hearts set upon the wealth of the world, and the pleasures of sense? They will certainly prove a lie in our right hand. And is not that a lie which, with confidence we hold fast by, as the ground on which we build our hopes for heaven? If we trust to our external professions and performances, as if those would save us, we deceive ourselves with a lie in our right hand, with a house built on the sand. 3rd. Self-suspicion is the first step towards self-deliverance. We cannot be faithful to ourselves unless we are jealous of ourselves. He that would deliver his soul must begin with the putting of this question to his own conscience; "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" 4th. Those that are given up to believe a lie are under the power of strong delusions, which it is hard to get clear of, 2 *Thes.* ii. 11.

21 Remember these, O Jacob and Israel;
For thou *art* my servant:
I have formed thee; thou *art* my servant:
O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.
22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions,
And, as a cloud, thy sins:
Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.
23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done *it:*
Shout, ye lower parts of the earth:
Break forth into singing, ye mountains,
O forest, and every tree therein:
For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob,
And glorified himself in Israel.
24 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer,
And he that formed thee from the womb,
I *am* the LORD that maketh all *things;*
That stretcheth forth the heavens alone;
That spreadeth abroad the earth by myself;
25 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars,
And maketh diviners mad;
That turneth wise *men* backward,
And maketh their knowledge foolish;
26 That confirmeth the word of his servant,
And performeth the counsel of his messengers;
That saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited;
And to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built,
And I will raise up the decayed places thereof:
27 That saith to the deep, Be dry,
And I will dry up thy rivers:
28 That saith of Cyrus, *He is* my shepherd,
And shall perform all my pleasure:
Even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built;
And to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

In these verses we have,

First. The duty which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are called to, that they might be qualified and prepared for the deliverance designed them. Our first care must be to get good by our afflictions, and then we may hope to get out of them. The duty is expressed in two words, Remember and return, as in the counsel to Ephesus, *Rev.* ii. 4, 5. 1. "Remember these, O Jacob;" remember what thou hast been told of the folly of idolatry, and let the convictions thou art now under be ready to thee, whenever thou art tempted to that sin. Remember that "thou art my servant," and therefore must not serve other masters. "Return unto me," ver. 22. It is the great concern of those who have backslidden from God to hasten their return to him; and this is that which he calls them to when they are in affliction, and when he is returning to them in a way of mercy.

Secondly. The favours which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are assured of; and what is here promised to them upon their remembering and returning to God is, in a spiritual sense, promised to all that in like manner return to God. It is a very comfortable word, for more is implied in it than is expressed, ver. 21, "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me," though for the present thou seem to be so. When we begin to remember God, he will begin to remember us; nay, it is he that remembers us first. Now observe here,

1. The grounds upon which God's favourable intentions to his people were built, and on which they might build their expectations from him. He will deliver them out of captivity; for, 1st. They are his servants, and therefore he hath a just quarrel with those that detain them; "Let my people go, that they may serve me." The servants of the King of kings are under special protection. 2nd. He formed them into a people, formed them "from the womb," ver. 24. From the first beginning of their increase into a nation they were under his particular care and government, more than any other people; their national constitution was of his framing, and his covenant with them was the

charter by which they were incorporated. They are his, and he will save them. 3rd. He hath redeemed them formerly, has many a time redeemed them out of great distress; and he is still the same, in the same relation to them, hath the same concern for them; therefore, "Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee," ver. 22. Whither wilt thou go, but to me? Having redeemed them, as well as formed them, he hath acquired a farther title to them, and propriety in them, which is a good reason why they should dutifully return to him, and why he will graciously return to them. "The Lord hath redeemed Jacob," that is, he is about to do it, ver. 23; he hath determined to do it, for he is the Lord their Redeemer, ver. 24. Note, The work of redemption, which God hath by his Son wrought for us, encourageth us to hope for all promised blessings from him. He that hath redeemed us at so vast an expence will not lose his purchase. 4th. He hath glorified himself in them, ver. 23, and therefore will do so still, *Jno.* xii. 28. It is matter of comfort to us to see God's glory interested in the deliverances of the church; for therefore he will certainly redeem Jacob, because thus he will glorify himself. And this assures us that he will perfect the redemption of his saints by Jesus Christ, because there is a day set when he will be glorified and admired in them all. 5th. He hath pardoned their sins, which were the cause of their calamity, and the only obstruction to their deliverance, ver. 22; therefore he will break the yoke of captivity from off their necks, because he hath blotted out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions. Note, *First.* Our transgressions and our sins are as a cloud, a thick cloud. They interpose between heaven and earth, and for a time suspend and intercept the correspondence between the upper and lower world. Sin separates between us and God, *ch.* lix. 2. They threaten a storm, a deluge of wrath, as thick clouds do, which God will rain upon sinners, *Ps.* xi. 6. *Secondly.* When God pardons sin he blots out this cloud, this thick cloud, so that the intercourse with heaven is laid open again. God looks down upon the soul with favour, the soul looks up to him with pleasure. The cloud is scattered by the influence of the Sun of righteousness. It is only through Christ that sin is pardoned. When sin is pardoned, like a cloud that is scattered, it appears no more, it is quite gone; the "iniquity of Jacob shall be sought for, and not found," *Jer.* l. 20. And the comforts that flow into the soul when sin is pardoned are like clear shining after clouds and rain.

2. The universal joy which the deliverance of God's people should bring along with it; ver. 23, "Sing, O ye heavens!" This intimates, 1st. That the whole creation shall have cause for joy and rejoicing in the redemption of God's people. To that it is owing, both that it subsists, that it is rescued from the curse which the sin of man brought upon the ground, and that it is again put into a capacity of answering the ends of its being; and is assured that, though now it groans, being burthened, it shall at last be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The greatest establishment of the world is the kingdom of God in it, *Ps.* xc. 11, 13; xcviii. 7, 9. 2nd. That the angels shall rejoice in it, and the inhabitants of the upper world. The heavens shall sing, for the Lord has done it; and there is joy in heaven when God and man are reconciled, *Lu.* xv. 7; joy when Babylon falls, *Rev.* xviii. 20. 3rd. That those who lay at the greatest distance, even the inhabitants of the Gentile world, should join in these praises, as sharing in these joys. The "lower parts of the earth," the forest and the trees there, shall bring in the tribute of thanksgiving for the redemption of Israel.

3. The encouragement we have to hope that, though great difficulties, and such as have been thought insuperable, lie in the way of the church's deliverance, yet, when the time for it is come, they shall all be got over with ease; for thus saith Israel's Redeemer, "I am the Lord that maketh all things," did make them at first, and am still making them; for providence is a continued creation,—all being, power, life, motion, and perfection are from him. He "stretcheth forth the heavens alone," hath no help, nor needs any; and the earth too he spreads abroad by himself, and by his own power. Man was not by him when he did it, *Job* xxxviii. 4, nor did any creature advise or assist,—only his own eternal Wisdom and Word was by him then, as one brought up with him, *Pr.* viii. 30. His stretching out the heavens by himself speaks the boundless extent of his power. The strongest man, if he be to stretch a thing out, must get somebody or other to lend a hand; but God stretched out the vast expanse, and keeps it still upon the stretch, himself, by his own power. Let not Israel be discouraged then, nothing is too hard for him to do that made the world, *Ps.* cxxiv. 8, and, having made all, he can make what use he pleaseth of all, and has it in his power to serve his own purposes by them.

4. The confusion which this would put upon the oracles of Babylon, by the confutation it would give them, ver. 25. God, by delivering his people out of Babylon, would "frustrate the tokens of the liars," of all the lying prophets, that said the Babylonian monarchy had many ages yet to live, and pretended to ground their predictions upon some token, some sign or other, which, according to the rules of their art, foreboded its prosperity. How will these conjuror grow mad with vexation when they see their skill fails them, and that the contrary happens to that which they so coveted, and were so confident of. Nor would it only baffle their pretended prophets, but their celebrated politicians too; he turns the "wise men backward." Finding they cannot go on with their projects, they are forced to quit them, and so he makes the judges fools, and makes "their knowledge foolish." Those that are brought acquainted with Christ see all the knowledge they had before to be foolishness, in comparison with the knowledge of him. And those that are adversaries to him will find all their counsels, like Ahithophel's, turned into foolishness, and themselves taken in their own craftiness, 1 *Cor.* iii. 19.

5. The confirmation which this would give to the oracles of God, which the Jews had distrusted, and their enemies despised; God "confirmeth the word of his servant," ver. 26. He confirms it, by accomplishing it in its season, and "performeth the counsel of the messengers." He hath many a time sent to his people, to tell them what great blessings he had in store for them. Note, The exact fulfilling of the prophecies of Scripture is a confirmation of the truth of the whole book, and an incontestable evidence of its Divine original and authority.

6. The particular favours God designed for his people that were now in captivity, ver. 26—28. And these were foretold long before they went into captivity, that they might see reason to expect a correction, but no reason to fear a final destruction.

1st. It is here supposed that Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, shall for a time lie in ruins, dispeopled and uninhabited; but it is promised that they shall be rebuilt, and repeopled. When Isaiah lived, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, were full of inhabitants; but they will be emptied, burnt, and destroyed. It was then hard to believe that concerning such strong and populous cities. But the justice of God will do that; and when that is done, it will be hard to believe that ever they will recover themselves again, and yet "the zeal of the Lord of hosts" will do that too. God hath said to Jerusalem, "Thou shalt be inhabited;" for while the world stands God will have a church in it; and therefore he will raise up those who shall say to Jerusalem, "Thou shalt be built;" for if it be not built it cannot be inhabited, *Ps.* lxix. 35, 36. When God's time is come for the building up of his church, let him alone to find both houses for his people, for they shall not lie exposed, and people for his houses, for they shall not stand empty. The cities of Judah too shall again be built. The Assyrian army, under Sennacherib, only took them, and then upon the defeat of that army they returned undamaged to the right owners; but the Chaldean army demolished them, and by carrying away the inhabitants left them to go to decay of themselves; for if lesser judgments prevail not to humble and reform men, God will send greater. Yet these desolations shall not be perpetual: God will raise up the wastes and decayed places thereof; for he will not contend for ever. The city of strangers, when it is ruined, shall never be built, *ch.* xxvi. 2; but the city of God's own children is but discontinued for a time.

2nd. It is here supposed that the temple too shall be destroyed, and lie for a time rased to the foundations; but it is promised, that the foundation of it shall again be laid, and, no doubt, built upon. As the desolation of the sanctuary was to all the pious Jews the most mournful part of the destruction, so the restoration and re-establishment of it would be the most joyful part of the deliverance. What joy can they have in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, if the temple there be not rebuilt? for that is it that makes it a holy city, and truly beautiful. This, therefore, was the chief thing that the Jews had at heart, and had in view in their return; therefore they would go back to Jerusalem, to build the house of the Lord God of Israel there, *Ezr.* i. 3.

3rd. It is here supposed that very great difficulties would lie in the way of this deliverance, which it would be impossible for them to wade through. But it is promised, that by a Divine power they should all be removed; ver. 27, "God saith to the deep, Be dry." So he did when he brought Israel out of Egypt; and so he will again, when he brings them out of Babylon, if there be occasion. "Who art thou, O great mountain?" Dost thou stand in the way? "Before Zerubbabel," the commander-in-chief of the returning captives, "thou shalt become a plain," *Zec.* iv. 7. So, "Who art thou, O great deep?" Dost thou retard their passage, and think to block it up? Thou shalt be dry, and thy rivers (that supply thee) shall be dried up. When Cyrus took Babylon, by draining the river Euphrates into many channels, and so making it passable for his army, this was fulfilled. Note, Whatever obstructions lie in the way of Israel's redemption, God can remove them with a word speaking.

4th. It is here supposed, that none of the Jews themselves would be able, by might and power, to force their way out of Babylon; but it is promised that God will raise up a stranger from afar off that shall fairly open the way for them; and now at length he names the very man, many scores of years before he was born or thought of; ver. 28, "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd." Israel is his people, and the sheep of his pasture. These sheep are now in the midst of wolves, in the hands of the thief and robber; they are impounded for trespass. Now Cyrus shall be his shepherd, employed by him to release these sheep, and to take care of their return to their own green pastures again. And in this "he shall perform all my pleasure;" shall bring about what is purposed by me, and will be highly pleasing to me. Note, *First.* The most contingent things are certain to the Divine prescience. He knew who was the person, and what his name, that should be the deliverer of his people; and when he pleased could let his church know it; that when they heard of such a name beginning to be talked of in the world, they might lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh. *Secondly.* It is the greatest honour of the greatest men to be employed for God, as instruments of his favour to his people. It was more the praise of Cyrus to be God's shepherd than to be emperor of Persia. *Thirdly.* God makes what use he pleaseth of men, of mighty men, of those that act with the greatest freedom; and when they think to do as they please, he can overrule them, and make them do as he pleaseth. Nay, in those very things wherein they are serving themselves, and look no farther than that, God is serving his own purposes by them, and making them to perform all his pleasure. Rich princes shall do what poor prophets have foretold.

CHAPTER XLV.

Cyrus was nominated in the foregoing chapter to be God's shepherd: more is said to him, and more of him, in this chapter; not only because he was to be instrumental in the release of the Jews out of their captivity, but because he was to be therein a type of the grat Redeemer, and that release typical of the great redemption from sin and death; for that was the salvation of which all the prophets witnessed. We have here, I. The great things which God would do for Cyrus, that he might be put into a capacity to discharge God's people, ver. 1—4. II. The proof God would hereby give of his eternal power and godhead, and his universal, incontestable sovereignty, ver. 5—7. III. A prayer for the hastening of this deliverance, ver. 8. IV. A check to the unbelieving Jews, who quarrelled with God for the lengthening out of their captivity. V. Encouragement given to the believing Jews who trusted in God, and continued instant in prayer; assuring them that God would, in due time, accomplish this work by the hand of Cyrus, ver. 11—15. VI. A challenge given to the worshippers of idols, and their doom read; and satisfaction given to the worshippers of the true God, and their comfort secured; with an eye to the Mediator, who is made of God to us both righteousness and sanctification, ver. 16—25. And here, as in other parts of this prophecy, there is much of Christ, and gospel grace.

THUS saith the LORD to his anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden,
To subdue nations before him;
And I will loose the loins of kings,
To open before him the two leaved gates;
And the gates shall not be shut;
2 I will go before thee,
And make the crooked places straight:
I will break in pieces the gates of brass,
And cut in sunder the bars of iron:
3 And I will give thee the treasures of darkness,
And hidden riches of secret places,
That thou mayest know that I, the LORD,
Which call *thee* by thy name,
Am the God of Israel.
4 For Jacob my servant's sake,
And Israel mine elect,
I have even called thee by thy name:
I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

Cyrus was a Mede, descended, as some say, from Astyages, king of Media. The pagan writers are not agreed in their accounts of his original. Some tell us that in his infancy he was an outcast, left exposed, and was saved from perishing by a herdsman's wife. However, it is agreed that, being a man of an active genius, he soon made himself very considerable. Especially when Crœsus, king of Lydia, made a descent upon his country, which he not only repulsed, but revenged; prosecuting the advantages he had gained against Crœsus with such vigour, that in a little time he took Sardis, made himself master of the rich kingdom of Lydia, and the many provinces that then belonged to it. This made him very great, (for Crœsus was rich to a proverb,) and enabled him to pursue his victories in many countries. But it was near ten years after, that, in conjunction with his uncle Darius, and with the forces of Persia, that he made this famous attack upon Babylon, which is here foretold, and which we have the history of, *Dan.* v. Babylon was now grown exorbitantly rich and strong; it was forty-five miles in compass, some say more; the walls thirty-two feet thick, and a hundred cubits high. Some say they were so thick that six chariots might drive abreast upon them; some say they were fifty cubits thick, and two hundred high. Cyrus seems to have had a great ambition to make himself master of this place, and to have projected it long; and at last he performed it. Now here (two hundred and ten years before it came to pass) we are told,

First. What great things God would do for him, that he might put it into his power to release his people. In order to this he shall be a mighty conqueror, and a wealthy monarch, and nations shall become tributaries to him, and help him both with men and money. Now that which God here promised to do for Cyrus he could have done for Zerubbabel, or some of the Jews themselves. But the wealth and power of this world God has seldom seen fit to intrust his own people with much of, so many are the snares and temptations that attend it. But if there has been occasion, for the good of the church, to make use of it, God has been pleased rather to put it into the hands of others to be employed for them, than to venture it into their own hands. Cyrus is here called God's anointed, because he was both designed and qualified for this great service by the counsel of God, and was to be herein a type of the Messiah. God engageth to hold his right hand; not only to strengthen and sustain him, but to direct his motions and intentions; as Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands when he was to shoot his arrow against Syria, 2 *Kin.* xiii. 16. Being under such a conduct,

1. He shall extend his conquests very far, and shall make nothing of the opposition that will be given him. Babylon is too strong a place for a young hero to begin with; and therefore, that he may be able to deal with that, great additions shall be made to his strength by other conquests. 1st. Populous kingdoms shall yield to him. God will "subdue nations before him." When he is in the full career of his successes, he shall make nothing of a nation's being born to him at once; yet it is not he that subdues them, it is God that subdues them for him. The battle is his; and therefore his is the victory. 2nd. Potent kings shall fall before him. "I will loose the loins of kings;" either the girdle of their loins, divest them of their power and dignity; or the strength of their loins. And then it was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar; for when he was struck into a panic fear, by the handwriting on the wall, "the joints of his loins were loosed," *Dan.* v. 6. 3rd. Great cities shall surrender themselves into his hands without giving him or themselves any trouble. God will incline the keepers of the city to "open before him the two-leaved gates;" not treacherously, or timorously, but from a full conviction that it is to no purpose to contend with him. And therefore "the gates shall not be shut," to keep him out as an enemy, but thrown open, to admit him as a friend. 4th. The longest and most dangerous marches shall be made easy and ready to him. I will go before thee, to clear the way, and to conduct thee in it; and then the crooked places shall be made straight; or, as some read it, the hilly places shall be levelled and made even. Those will find a ready road that have God going before them. 5th. No opposition shall stand before him. He that gives him his commission "will break in pieces the gates of brass" that are shut against him, and "cut in sunder the bars of iron" wherewith they are fastened. This was fulfilled in the letter, if it be true which Herodotus reports, that the city of Babylon had a hundred gates, all of brass, with posts and hooks of the same metal.

2. He shall replenish his coffers very much; ver. 3, "I will give thee the treasures of darkness." Treasures of gold and silver, that have been long kept close under lock and key, and had not seen the light many years; or had been buried under ground by the inhabitants, in their fright, upon the taking of the city. The riches of many nations had been brought to Babylon, and Cyrus seized all together. "The hidden riches of secret places," which belonged either to the crown or to private persons, shall all be a prey to Cyrus. Thus God, designing him to do a piece of service to his church, paid him richly for it beforehand. And Cyrus very honestly owned God's goodness to him, and, in consideration of that, released the captives; *Ezr.* i. 2, "God has given me all the kingdoms of the earth," and thereby has obliged "me to build him an house at Jerusalem."

Secondly. We are here told what God designed in doing all this for Cyrus. What Cyrus aimed at in undertaking his wars we may easily guess; but what God aimed at, in giving him such wonderful success in his wars, we are here told:

1. It was that the God of Israel might be glorified; 'That thou mayest know by all this, that I the Lord am the God of Israel; for I have called thee by thy name, long before thou wast born.' When Cyrus should have this prophecy of Isaiah shewed him, and should find there his own name, and his own achievements particularly described, so long before, he should thereby be brought to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the Lord Jehovah, the only living and true God, and continued to own his Israel, though now in captivity. It is well when thus men's prosperity and success brings them to the knowledge of God; for too often it makes them forget him.

2. It was that the Israel of God might be released, ver. 4. Cyrus had not known God as the God of Israel; having been trained up in the worship of idols, the true God was to him an unknown God. But, though he knew not God, God not only knew him when he came into being, but foreknew him, and bespoke him for his shepherd; he called him by his name, Cyrus. Nay, which was yet a greater honour, he surnamed him, and called him his Anointed. And why did God do all this for Cyrus? Not for his own sake, be it known to him. Whether he was a man of virtue or no, is questioned. Xenophon, indeed, when he would describe the heroic virtues of an excellent prince, made use of Cyrus' name, and many of the particulars of his story, in his *Cyropædia;* but other historians represent him as haughty, cruel, and bloodthirsty. The reason therefore why God preferred him was for Jacob his servant's sake. Note, 1st. In all the revolutions of states and kingdoms the sudden falls of the great and strong, and the surprising advancements of the weak and obscure, God is designing the good of his church. 2nd. It is therefore the wisdom of those to whom God has given wealth and power to use it for his glory, by being kind with it to his people. Cyrus is preferred that Israel may be released; he shall have a kingdom only that God's people may have their liberty: for their kingdom is not of this world; that is yet to come. In all this Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and intrusted with unsearchable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants, his elect. "When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive;" took those captives that had taken others captives, and "opened the prison to those that were bound."

5 I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none else,
There is no God beside me:
I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:
6 That they may know from the rising of the sun,
And from the west, that *there is* none beside me.
I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none else.
7 I form the light, and create darkness:
I make peace, and create evil:
I the LORD do all these *things*.
8 Drop down, ye heavens, from above,
And let the skies pour down righteousness:
Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation,
And let righteousness spring up together;
I the LORD have created it.
9 Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!
Let the potsherd *strive* with the potsherds of the earth.
Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest
Or thy work, He hath no hands? [thou?
10 Woe unto him that saith unto *his* father, What begettest
thou?
Or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

God here asserts his sole and sovereign dominion, as that which he designed to prove and manifest to the world, in all the great things he did for Cyrus, and by him. Observe,

First. How this doctrine is here laid down, concerning the sovereignty of the great Jehovah, in two things:

1. That he is God alone, and there is no God besides him. This is here inculcated as a fundamental truth, which, if it were firmly believed, would abolish idolatry out of the world. With what an awful, commanding air of majesty and authority, bidding defiance as it were to all pretenders, doth the great God here proclaim it to the world? "I am the Lord;" 'I the Lord Jehovah;' "and there is none else, there is no God besides me;" no self-existent, self-sufficient being; none infinite and eternal, but I. And again, ver. 6, "There is none besides me." All that are set up in competition with me are counterfeits, they are all vanity and a lie; for "I am the Lord, and there is none else." This is here said to Cyrus, not only to cure him of the sin of his ancestors, which was worshipping idols, but to prevent his falling into the sin of some of his predecessors in victory and universal monarchy, which was, setting up themselves for gods, and being idolized; to which some attribute much of the origin of idolatry. Let Cyrus, when he is become thus rich and great, remember that he is still a man, and there is no God but one.

2. That he is Lord of all, and there is nothing done without him; ver. 7, "I form the light," which is grateful and pleasing; "and I create darkness," which is grievous and unpleasing. "I make peace," put here for all good; "and I create evil;" not the evil of sin, God is not the author of that, but the evil of punishment. "I the Lord" order and direct and "do all these things." Observe, 1st. The very different events that are concerning the children of men. Light and darkness, opposite to each other, and yet in the ocurse of providence sometimes intermixed; like the morning and evening twilights, neither day nor night, *Zec.* xiv. 6; a mixture of joys and sorrows in the same cup, allays to each other. Sometimes they are counterchanged, as noonday light and midnight darkness in the revolution of every day; each takes its turn, and there are short transitions from the one to the other; witness Job's case. 2nd. The self-same cause of both, and that is he that is the first cause of all. I the Lord, the fountain of all being, am the fountain of all power. He that formed the natural light, *Gen.* i. 3, still forms the providential light; that at first made peace among the jarring seeds and principles of nature, makes peace in the affairs of men. He that allowed the natural darkness, which was a mere privation, creates the providential darkness; for concerning troubles and afflictions he gives positive orders. Note, The wise God has the ordering and disposing of all our comforts and all our crosses in this world.

Secondly. How this doctrine is here proved and published: 1. It is proved by that which God did for Cyrus. "There is no God besides me;" for, ver. 5, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." It was not thine own idol, which thou didst know and worship, that girded thee for this expedition, that gave thee authority and ability for it. No; it was I that girded thee; I, whom thou didst not know, nor seek to. By this it appears that the God of Israel is the only true God; that he manageth and maketh what use he pleaseth, even of those that are strangers to him, and pay their homage to other gods. 2. It is published to all the world, both by the word of God, and by his providence, and by the testimony of the suffering Jews in Babylon; that all may know, from the east and from the west, sunrise and sunset, that the Lord is God, and there is none else. The wonderful deliverance of the Israel of God proclaimed to all the world that "there is none like unto the God of Jesurun, that rides on the heavens for their help."

Thirdly. How this doctrine is here improved and applied:

1. For the comfort of those that earnestly longed, and yet quietly waited for, the redemption of Israel; ver. 8, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above." Some take this as the saints' prayer for deliverance; I rather take it as God's precept concerning it; for he is said to command deliverance, *Ps.* xliv. 4. Now the precept is directed to heaven and earth, and all the hosts of both, as royal precepts commonly run, To all officers, civil and military. All the creatures shall be made, in their places, to contribute to the carrying on of this great work, when God will have it done. If men will not be aiding and assisting, God will produce it without them; as he doth the dews of heaven, and the grass of the earth, which tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men, *Mic.* v. 7. Observe, 1st. The method of this great deliverance that is to be wrought for Israel. Righteousness must first be wrought in them; that is, they must be brought to repent of their sins, to renounce their idolatries, to return to God, and reform their lives; and then the salvation shall be wrought for them, and not till then. We must not expect salvation without righteous-

ness; they spring up together, and together the Lord hath created them. What he has joined together let us not therefore put asunder: see *Ps.* lxxxix. 9—11. Christ died to save us from our sins, not in our sins; and is made redemption to us, by being made to us righteousness and sanctification. 2nd. The means of this great deliverance. Rather than it shall fail when the set time for it is come, "the heavens shall drop down righteousness," and the earth shall open to bring forth salvation, and both concur to the reformation, and so to the restoration, of God's Israel. It is from heaven, from above the skies, that righteousness drops down; for every grace and good gift is from above. Nay, since the more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, it is now poured down; and if our hearts be open to receive it, the product will be the fruits of righteousness, and the great salvation.

2. For reproof to those of the church's enemies that opposed this salvation, or those of her friends that despaired of it; ver. 9, "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." God is the maker of all things, and therefore our maker, which is a reason why we should always submit to him, and never contend with him. 1st. Let not the proud oppressors, in the elevation of their spirits, oppose God's designs concerning the deliverance of his people, nor think to detain them any longer, when the time is come for their release. Woe to the insulting Babylonians, that set God at defiance, as Pharaoh did, and will not let his people go. 2nd. Let not the poor oppressed, in the dejection of their spirits, murmur and quarrel with God for the prolonging of their captivity, as if he dealt unjustly or unkindly with them, or think to force their way out before God's time is come. Note, Those will find themselves in a woful condition that strive with their Maker; for none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. Sinful man is indeed a quarrelsome creature; but "let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth." Men are but earthen pots, nay, they are broken potsherds, and are made so very much by their mutual contentions; they are dashed in pieces one against another. And if they are disposed to strive, let them strive with one another, let them meddle with their match; but let them not dare to contend with him that is infinitely above them; which is as senseless and absurd as, *First.* For the clay to find fault with the potter; "Shall the clay say to him that formeth it, What makest thou?" Why dost thou make me of this shape, and not that? Nay, it is as if the clay should be in such a heat and passion with the potter as to tell him he has no hands, or that he works as awkwardly as if he had none. Shall the clay pretend to be wiser than the potter, and therefore to advise him? Or mightier than the potter, and therefore to control him? He that gave us being, that gave us this being, may design concerning us and dispose of us as he pleaseth; and it is impudent presumption for us to prescribe to him. Shall we impeach God's wisdom, or question his power, who are ourselves so curiously, so wonderfully made? Or say, He has no hands, whose hands made us, and in whose hands we are? The doctrine of God's sovereignty has enough in it to silence all our discontents and objections against the methods of his providence and grace, *Rom.* ix. 20, 21. *Secondly.* It is as unnatural as for the child to find fault with the parents; to say to the father, "What begettest thou?" or to the mother, "What hast thou brought forth?" Why was I not begotten and born an angel, exempt from the infirmities of the human nature, and the calamities of human life? Must not those who are children of men expect to share in the common lot, and to fare as others fare? If God is our father, where is the honour we owe to him, by submitting to his will?

11 Thus saith the LORD,
The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker,
Ask me of things to come concerning my sons,
And concerning the work of my hands command ye me.
12 I have made the earth,
And created man upon it:
I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens,
And all their host have I commanded.
13 I have raised him up in righteousness,
And I will direct all his ways:
He shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives,
Not for price nor reward,
Saith the LORD of hosts.
14 Thus saith the LORD,
The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia
And of the Sabeans, men of stature,
Shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine:
They shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over,
And they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee,
Saying, Surely God *is* in thee; and *there is* none else,
There is no God.
15 Verily thou *art* a God that hidest thyself,
O God of Israel, the Saviour.
16 They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them:
They shall go to confusion together
That are maker of idols.
17 *But* Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation:
Ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.
18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens;
God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it,
He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited:
I *am* the LORD; and *there is* none else.
19 I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth:
I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain:
I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

The people of God in captivity, that reconciled themselves to the will of God in their affliction, and were content to wait his time for their deliverance, are here assured that they should not wait in vain.

First. They are invited to inquire concerning the issue of their troubles; ver. 11, "The Holy One of Israel and his Maker," though he doth not allow them to strive with him, yet encourageth them, 1. To consult his word; "Ask me of things to come;" have recourse to the prophets and their prophecies, and see what they say concerning these things. Ask the watchman, "What of the night?" ask them, "How long." "Things to come," as far as they are revealed, belong to us and to our children, and we must not be strangers to them. 2. To seek unto him by prayer; "Concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands," that, as becomes them, submit to the will of their father, the will of their potter, "command ye me;" not by way of prescription, but by way of petition. Be earnest in your requests and confident in your expectations, as far as both are guided by, and grounded upon, the promise. We may not strive with our Maker by passionate complaints, but we may wrestle with him by faithful and fervent prayer; 'My sons and the work of my hands, commend ye to me,' so some read it; bring them to me, and leave them with me. See the power of prayer and its prevalency with God: "Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here am I;" "What would ye that I should do unto you?" Some read it with an interrogation, as carrying on the reproof, ver. 9, 10, 'Do ye question me concerning things to come? and am I bound to give you an account? And concerning my children, even concerning the work of my hands, will you command me?' or prescribe to me? Dare you do so? "Shall any teach God knowledge," or give law to him? Those that complain of God do in effect assume an authority over him.

Secondly. They are encouraged to depend upon the power of God when they were brought very low, and were utterly incapable of helping themselves, ver. 12. Their "help stands in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth;" which he mentions here not only for his own glory, but for their comfort. The heavens and earth shall contribute, if he pleaseth, to the deliverance of the church, ver. 8, for he created both, and therefore hath both at command. 1. He "made the earth, and created man upon it," for it was intended to be a habitation for man, *Ps.* cxv. 16. He hath therefore not only authority, but wisdom and power sufficient to govern man here on this earth, and to make what use he pleaseth of him. 2. His hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts he commanded into being at first, and therefore still governs all their motions and influences. It is good news to God's Israel, that their God is the Creator and governor of the world.

Thirdly. They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious Redeemer and redemption, of whom and of which Cyrus, and their deliverance by him, were types and figures.

1. Liberty shall be proclaimed to them, ver. 13; Cyrus is the man that shall do it. And in order hereunto God will put power into his hands: "I have raised him up in righteousness; that is, in pursuance and performance of my promises, and to plead my people's just but injured cause. He will give him success in all his enterprises, particularly that against Babylon: "I will direct all his ways;" and then it follows he will prosper him, for those must needs speed well that are under a Divine conduct. And whom God designs to employ for him he will make their way plain. Two things Cyrus must do for God: 1st. Jerusalem is God's city, but it is now in ruins, and he must rebuild it; that is, he must give orders for the rebuilding of it, and give wherewithal to do it. 2nd. Israel is God's people, but they are now captives, and he must release them freely and generously, not demanding any ransom, or compounding with them for price or reward. And Christ is anointed to do that for poor captived souls, which Cyrus was to do for the captive Jews, "to proclaim the opening of the prisons to them that are bound," *ch.* lxi. 1, enlargement from a worse bondage than that in Babylon.

2. Provision shall be made for them. They went out poor, and unable to bear the expenses of their return and re-establishment, and therefore it is promised that the labour of Egypt and other nations should come over to them and be theirs, ver. 14. Cyrus, having conquered those countries, out of their spoils provided for the returning Jews, and he ordered his subjects to furnish them with necessaries, *Ezr.* i. 4, so that they did not go out empty from Babylon no more than from Egypt. Those that are redeemed by Christ shall be not only provided for but enriched. Those whose spirits God stirs up to go to the heavenly Zion may depend upon him to bear their charges. The world is theirs as far as is good for them.

3. Proselytes shall be brought over to them; "Men of stature shall come after thee in chains; they shall fall down to thee, saying, Surely God is in thee." This was in part fulfilled when "many of the people of the land became Jews," *Esth.* viii. 17; "and said, We will go with you," humbly begging leave to do so, "for we have heard that God is with you," *Zec.* viii. 23. Their restoration would be a means of the conviction of many, and the conversion of some. Perhaps many of the Chaldeans, who were now themselves conquered by Cyrus, when they saw the Jews going back in triumph, came and begged pardon for the affronts and abuses they had given him, owned that God was among them, and that he was God alone, and therefore desired to join themselves to them. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, when the Gentiles should become obedient, by word and deed, to the faith of Christ, *Rom.* xv. 18, as willing captives to the church, *Ps.* cx. 3, glad to wear her chains; when an infidel, beholding the public worship of Christians, shall own himself convinced that God is with them of a truth, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 24, 25, and shall essay to join himself to them; and when those that had been of the synagogue of Satan shall come and worship before the church's feet, and be made to know that God has loved her, *Rev.* iii. 9; and the kings of the earth and the nations shall bring their glory into the gospel Jerusalem, *Rev.* xxi. 24. Note, It is good to be with those, though it be in chains, that have God with them.

Fourthly. They are taught to trust God farther than they can see him. The prophet puts this word into their mouths, and goes before them in saying it, ver. 15, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself." 1. God hid himself when he brought them into the trouble, hid himself, and was wroth, *ch.* lvii. 17. Note, Though God be his people's God and Saviour, yet sometimes, when they provoke him, he hides himself from them in displeasure, suspends his favours, and lays them under his frowns. But let them wait upon the Lord that hides his face, *ch.* viii. 17. 2. He hid himself when he was bringing them out of the trouble. Note, When God is acting as Israel's God and Saviour, commonly his way is in the sea, *Ps.* lxxvii. 19. The salvation of the church is carried on

in a mysterious way, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working on men's spirits, *Zec.* iv. 6; by weak and unlikely instruments, small and accidental occurrences, and not wrought till the last extremity. But this is our comfort: though God hide himself, we are sure he is the God of Israel, the Saviour, *Job* xxxv. 14.

Fifthly. They are instructed to triumph over idolaters and all the worshippers of other gods; ver. 16, "They that are makers of idols," not only that frame them, but that make gods of them by praying to them, they "shall be ashamed and confounded" when they shall be convinced of their mistakes, and shall be forced to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the only true God, and when they shall be disappointed in their expectations from their idols, under whose protection they had put themselves. "They shall go to confusion" when they shall find that they can neither excuse the sin nor escape the punishment of it, *Ps.* xcvii. 7. It is not here and there one, more timorous than the rest, that shall thus sneak and give up the cause, but all of them; nay, though they appear in a body, though hand join in hand, and they do all they can to keep one another in countenance, yet "they shall go to confusion together;" "Bind them in bundles to burn them."

Sixthly. They are assured that those who trust in God shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, ver. 17. Now God was about to deliver them out of Babylon, he directed them by his prophets, 1. To look up to him as the author of their salvation, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord." Not only their salvation shall be wrought out by his power, but it shall be treasured up for them in his grace and promise, and so secured to them; they shall be saved in him, for his name shall be their strong tower, into which they shall run, and in which they shall be safe. 2. To look beyond this temporal deliverance to that which is spiritual, and has reference to another world; to think of that salvation by the Messiah which is an everlasting salvation, the salvation of the soul, a rescue from everlasting misery, and a restoration to everlasting bliss. Give diligence to make that sure, for it may be made sure, so sure that "ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end." Ye shall not only be delivered from that everlasting shame and contempt which will be the portion of idolaters, *Dan.* xii. 2, but ye shall have everlasting honour and glory. There is a world without end, and it will be well or ill with us according as it will be with us in that world. They that are saved with the everlasting salvation shall never be ashamed of what they did or suffered in the hopes of it, for it will so far outdo their expectations, as to be a more abundant reimbursement. The returning captives owned that to them did belong confusion of face, *Dan.* ix. 7, 8. Yet God tells them they shall not be confounded, but shall have assurance for ever. They that are confounded as penitents for their own sin shall not be confounded as believers in God's providence and power.

Seventhly. They are engaged for ever to cleave to God and never to desert him, never to distrust him. What had been often inculcated before is here again repeated, for the encouragement of his people to continue faithful to him, and to hope that he will be so to them, "I am the Lord, and there is none else." That the Lord we serve and trust in is God alone, appears by the two great lights, that of nature and that of revelation.

1. It appears by the light of nature, for he made the world, and therefore may justly demand its homage; ver. 18, "Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens and formed the earth, I am the Lord," the sovereign Lord of all, "and there is none else." The gods of the heathen did not do this, nay, they did not pretend to do it. He here mentions the creation of the heavens, but enlargeth more upon that of the earth, because that is the part of the creation which we have the nearest view of, and are most conversant with. It is here observed, 1st. That he formed it. It is not a rude and undigested chaos, but cast into the most proper shape and size by Infinite Wisdom. 2nd. That he fixed it. When he had made it he established it, founded it on the seas, *Ps.* xxiv. 2; hung it on nothing, *Job* xxvi. 7, as at first he made it of nothing, and yet made it substantial, and hung it fast; *ponderibus librata suis*,—'poised by its own weight.' 3rd. That he fitted it for use and for the service of man, to whom he designed to give it. "He created it not in vain," merely to be a proof of his power; but "he formed it to be inhabited" by the children of men, and for that end he drew the waters off it with which it was at first covered, and made the dry land appear, *Ps.* civ. 6, 7. Be it observed here to the honour of God's wisdom, that he made nothing in vain, but intended for some end and every way fitted to answer the intention. If any man prove to have been made in vain, it is his own fault; and to the honour of God's goodness and his favour to man, that he reckoned that not made in vain which serves for his use and benefit, to be a habitation and maintenance for him.

2. It appears by the light of revelation. As the works of God abundantly prove that he is God alone, so doth his word, and the discovery he hath made of himself and of his mind and will by it. His oracles far exceed those of the pagan deities, as well as his operations, ver. 19. The preference is here placed in three things; all that God hath said is plain, satisfactory, and just: 1st. In the manner of the delivery of it it is plain and open; "I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth." The pagan deities delivered their oracles out of dens and caverns, with a low and hollow voice and in ambiguous expressions; those that had familiar spirits whispered and muttered, *ch.* viii. 19. But God delivered his law from the top of mount Sinai, before all the thousands of Israel, in distinct, audible, and intelligent sounds; wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse, *Pr.* i. 20, 21; viii. 1—3. The vision is written and made plain, so that he that runs may read it; if it be obscure to any they may thank themselves. Christ pleaded in his own defence what God saith here, "In secret have I said nothing," *Jno.* xviii. 20. 2nd. In the use and benefit of it it was highly satisfactory; "I said not unto the seed of Jacob," who consulted these oracles and governed themselves by them, "Seek ye me in vain," as the false gods did to their worshippers, who sought for the living to the dead, *ch.* viii. 19. This includes all the gracious answers that God gave both to those that consulted him, (his word is to them a faithful guide,) and to those that prayed to him. The seed of Jacob are a praying people; it is the generation of them that seek him, *Ps.* xxiv. 6. And as he has in his word invited them to seek him, so he never denied their believing prayers, nor disappointed their believing expectations; he said not to them, to any of them, "Seek ye me in vain;" for if he did not think fit to give them the particular thing they prayed for, yet he gave them that grace sufficient and that comfort and satisfaction of soul which was equivalent. It is true of prayer what we say of winter, It never rots in the skies. God not only gives a gracious answer to, but will be the bountiful rewarder of, those that diligently seek him. 3rd. In the matter of it it was incontestably just, and there was no iniquity in it; "I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right," and consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The heathen deities dictated those things to their worshippers which were the reproach of the human nature, and tended to the extirpation of virtue. But God speaks righteousness, dictates that which is right in itself, and tends to make men righteous; and therefore he is God, and there is none else.

20 Assemble yourselves and come;
Draw near together, ye *that are* escaped of the nations:
They have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image,
And pray unto a god *that* cannot save.
21 Tell ye, and bring *them* near;
Yea, let them take counsel together:
Who hath declared this from ancient time?
Who hath told it from that time? [me;
Have not I the LORD? and *there is* no God else beside
A just God and a Saviour; *there is* none beside me.
22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:
For *I am* God, and *there is* none else.
23 I have sworn by myself,
The word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness,
And shall not return,
That unto me every knee shall bow,
Every tongue shall swear.
24 Surely, shall *one* say,
In the LORD have I righteousness and strength:
Even to him shall *men* come;
And all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed.
25 In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified,
And shall glory.

What is here said is intended as before,

First. For the conviction of idolaters, to shew them their folly in worshipping gods that cannot help them, and neglecting a God that can. Let all "that are escaped of the nations," not only the people of the Jews, but those of other nations that were by Cyrus released out of captivity in Babylon, let them come and hear what is to be said against their worshipping idols, that they may be cured of it as well as the Jews, that Babylon, which had of old been the womb of idolatry, might now become the grave of it. Let the refugees assemble themselves and come together; God hath something to say to them for their own good, and it is this, That idolatry is a foolish, sottish thing, upon two accounts:

1. It is setting up a refuge of lies for themselves. They "set up the wood of their graven image," for that is the substratum; though they overlay it with gold, deck it with ornaments, and make a god of it, yet still it is but wood. They "pray to a god that cannot save," for he cannot hear, he cannot help, he can do nothing. How do they disparage themselves, that give honour to that as a god which cannot as a god give good to them! How do they deceive themselves, who pray for relief to that which is in no capacity at all to relieve them! Certainly they have no knowledge, or are brutish in their knowledge, who take so much pains, and do so much penance, in seeking the favour of a god that has no power.

2. It is setting up a rival with God, the only living and true God, ver. 21. Summon them all, tell them the great cause shall again be tried, though once adjudged, between God and Baal; "bring them near, and let them take counsel together," what to say in defence of themselves and their idols. It shall, as before, be put upon this issue: let them shew when any of their gods did with any certainty foretell future events, as the God of Israel hath done, and it shall be acknowledged they have some colour for their pretensions; but none of them ever did. Their prophets were lying prophets; but "I the Lord have told it from that time," long before it came to pass; therefore you must own "there is no God else besides me." 1st. There is none but he that is fit to rule; he is a just God, and rules in justice, and will execute justice for those that are oppressed. 2nd. There is none but he that is able to help; as he is a just God, so he is the Saviour, that can save without the assistance of any, but without whom none can save. Those therefore have no sense of truth and falsehood, good and evil, no, nor of their own interest, that set up any in competition with him.

Secondly. For the comfort and encouragement of all God's faithful worshippers, whoever they are, ver. 22. They that worship idols, pray to gods that cannot save; but the God of Israel saith, saith it to all the ends of the earth, to his people, though they are scattered into the utmost corners of the world, and seem to be lost and forgotten in their dispersion, Let them but look to me by faith and prayer, look above instruments and second causes, look off from all pretenders, and look up to me, and they shall be saved. It seems to refer farther, to the conversion of the Gentiles, that live in the ends of the earth, the most distant nations, when the standard of the Gospel is set up; "to it shall the Gentiles seek." When Christ is lifted up from the earth, as the brazen serpent upon the pole, he shall draw the eyes of all men to him, they shall all be invited to look unto him, as the stung Israelites did to the brazen serpent; and so strong is the eye of faith, that by Divine grace it will reach the Saviour, and fetch in salvation by him, even from the ends of the earth; for "he is God, and there is none else." Two things are here promised, for the abundant satisfaction of all that by faith look to the Saviour:

1. That the glory of the God they serve shall be greatly advanced; and this will be good news to all the Lord's people, that how much soever they and their names are depressed, God will be exalted, ver. 23. This is confirmed by an oath that we might have strong consolation; "I have sworn by myself," (and God can swear by no greater, *Heb.* vi. 13,) "the word is gone out of my mouth," and shall neither be recalled nor return empty; it is gone forth in righteousness; for it is the most reasonable, equitable thing in the world, that he that made all should be Lord of all; that, since all beings are derived from him, they should all be devoted to him. He hath said it, and it shall be made good, "I will be exalted," *Ps.* xlvi. 10. He hath here assured us, 1st. That he will be universally submitted to, that the kingdoms of the world shall become his kingdom, they shall do him homage, "Unto me every knee shall bow;" and they shall bind themselves by an oath of allegiance to him, Unto me "every tongue shall swear." This is applied to the dominion of our Lord Jesus, *Rom.* xiv. 10, 11; "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," and give account to him, "for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God;" and it seems to be referred to *Ps.* ii. 9, 10. If the heart be brought into obedience to Christ, and made willing in the day of his power, the knee will bow to him in humble adorations and addresses, in a cheer-

ful obedience to his commands, submission to his disposals, and compliance with his will in both; and the tongue will swear to him, will lay a bond upon the soul to engage it for ever to him; for he that bears an honest mind doth never startle at assurances. 2nd. That he will be universally sought unto, and application made unto him from all parts of the world. Unto him shall men of distant countries come to implore his favour; Unto thee shall all flesh come with their requests, *Ps.* lxiv. 2; and when Christ was lifted up from the earth he drew all men to him. 3rd. That it shall be to no purpose to make opposition to him. "All that are incensed against him," that rage at his bonds and cords, the nations that are angry because he hath taken to himself his great power, and hath reigned, that have been incensed at the strictness of his laws, the success of his Gospel, and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, they "shall be ashamed;" some shall be brought to a penitential shame for it, others to a remediless ruin. One way or other, sooner or later, all that are uneasy at Christ's government and victories will be made ashamed of their folly and obstinacy. Blessed be God for the assurance here given us, that, whatever becomes of us and our interests, "the Lord will reign for ever."

2. That the welfare of the souls they are concerned for shall be effectually secured; "Surely, shall one say," and another shall learn by his example to say the same, so that all the seed of Israel according to the Spirit shall say and stand to it, 1st. That God hath a sufficiency for them, and that in Christ there is enough to supply all their needs. 'In the Lord is all righteousness and strength,' so the margin reads it; he is himself righteous and strong, he can do everything, and yet will do nothing but what is unquestionably just and equitable. He hath also wherewithal to supply the needs of those that seek to him, and depend upon him, upon the equity of his providence, and the treasures of his grace. Nay, we may say, not only he hath it, but in him we have it, because he hath said he will be to us a God. In the Lord, the captive Jews had righteousness, that is, grace, both to sanctify their afflictions to them and to qualify them for deliverance; and strength for their support and escape. In the Lord Jesus we have righteousness to recommend us to the good will of God towards us, and strength to begin and carry on the good work of God in us; he is the fountain of both, and on him we must depend for both, must go forth in his strength, and make mention of his righteousness, *Ps.* lxxi. 16. 2nd. That they shall have an abundant bliss and satisfaction in this. *First.* The people of the Jews shall in the Lord be justified before men, and openly glory in their God. The oppressors reproached them, loaded them with calumny, and boasted even of a right to oppress them, as abandoned of their God; but when God shall work out their deliverance, that shall be their justification from these hard censures, and therefore they shall glory in it. *Secondly.* All true Christians, that depend upon Christ for strength and righteousness, in him shall be justified, and shall glory in that. Observe, 1*st.* All believers are the seed of Israel, an upright, praying seed. 2*nd.* The great privilege they enjoy by Jesus Christ is, that in him, and for his sake, they are justified before God, Christ being made of God to them righteousness. All that are justified will own it is in Christ that they are justified, nor could they be justified by any other; and those who are justified, shall be glorified. And therefore, 3*rd.* The great duty believers owe to Christ is to glory in him, and to make their boast of him. Therefore he is made all in all to us, that whoso glories may glory in the Lord; and let us comply with this intention.

CHAPTER XLVI.

God by the prophet here designing shortly to deliver them out of their captivity, prepares them for that deliverance, by possessing them with a detestation of idols, and with a believing confidence in God, even their own God. I. Let them not be afraid of the idols of Babylon, as if they could any way obstruct their deliverance, for they should be defaced, ver. 1, 2. But let them trust in that God who had often delivered them to do it still, to do it now, ver. 3, 4. II. Let them not think to make idols of their own, images of the God of Israel, by them to worship him, as the Babylonians worshipped their gods, ver. 5—7. Let them not be sottish, ver. 8, but have an eye to God in his word, not in an image; let them depend upon that, and upon the promises and predictions of it, and God's power to accomplish them all, ver. 9—11. And let them know that the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of none effect, ver. 12, 13.

BEL boweth down, Nebo stoopeth,
Their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle:

BABYLONISH IDOLS.

Your carriages *were* heavy loaden;
They are a burden to the weary *beast.*
2 They stoop, they bow down together;
They could not deliver the burden,
But themselves are gone into captivity.
3 Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob,
And all the remnant of the house of Israel,
Which are borne *by me* from the belly,
Which are carried from the womb:
4 And *even* to *your* old age I *am* he;
And *even* to hoar hairs will I carry *you:*
I have made, and I will bear;
Even I will carry, and will deliver *you.*

We are here told,

First. That the false gods will certainly fail their worshippers, then when they have most need of them, ver. 1, 2. Bel and Nebo were two celebrated idols of Babylon; some make Bel to be a contraction of Baal; others rather think not, but that it was Belus, one of their first kings, who after his death was deified. As Bel was a deified prince, so, some think, Nebo was a deified prophet, for so Nebo signifies; so that Bel and Nebo were their Jupiter and their Mercury, or Apollo. Barnabas and Paul passed at Lystra for Jupiter and Mercury. The names of these idols were taken into the names of their princes: Bel into Belshazzar's, Nebo into Nebuchadnezzar's, and Nebuzaradan's, &c. These gods they had long worshipped, and in their revels praised them for their successes, as appears, *Dan.* v. 4, and insulted over Israel as if Bel and Nebo were too hard for Jehovah, and should detain them in captivity in defiance of their God. Now, that this might be no discouragement to the poor captives, God here tells them what shall become of these idols which they threatened them with: when Cyrus takes Babylon, down go the idols. It was usual then with conquerors to destroy the gods of the places and people they conquered, and to put the gods of their own nation in the room of them, *ch.* xxxvii. 19. Cyrus will do so; and then Bel and Nebo, that were set up on high, and looked great, bold, and erect, stoop and bow down at the feet of the soldiers that plunder the temples. And because there is a great deal of gold and silver upon them, which was intended to adorn them, but proves to expose them, they carry them away with the rest of the spoil; the carriers' horses or mules are laden with them and their other idols, to be sent among other lumber, for so it seems they accounted them, rather than treasure, into Persia. So far are they from being able to support their worshippers, that they are themselves a heavy load in the wagons, and a burthen to the weary beast. The idols cannot help one another, ver. 2; "They stoop, they bow down together," they are all alike tottering things, and their day is come to fall. Their worshippers cannot help them; they could not deliver the burthen out of the enemies' hand, but themselves, both the idols and the idolaters, are gone into captivity. Let not therefore God's people be afraid of either. When God's ark was taken prisoner by the Philistines, it proved a burthen, not to the beasts, but to the conquerors, who were forced to return it; but when Bel and Nebo are gone into captivity their worshippers may even give their good word with them, they will never recover themselves.

Secondly. That the true God will never fail his worshippers; You hear what is become of Bel and Nebo, now "hearken to me, O house of Jacob," ver. 3, 4. Am I such a God as these? No; though you are brought low, and the house of Israel is but a remnant, your God hath been, is, and ever will be, your powerful and faithful protector.

1. Let God's Israel do him the justice to own that he hath hitherto been kind to them, careful of them, tender over them, and hath all along done well for them. Let them own, 1st. That he bore them at first; "I have made." Out of what womb came they, but that of his mercy, and grace, and promise? He formed them into a people, and gave them their constitution. Every good man is what God makes him. 2nd. That he bore them up all along; You have been "borne by me from the belly, and carried from the womb." God began betimes to do them good; as soon as ever they were formed into a nation, nay, when as yet they were very few and strangers, God took them under a special protection, and "suffered no man to do them wrong," *Ps.* cv. 12—14. In the infancy of their state, when they were not only foolish and helpless as children, but froward and peevish, God carried them in the arms of his power and love, bore them as upon eagles' wings, *Ex.* xix. 4; *Deut.* xxxii. 11. Moses had not patience to carry them, "as the nursing father doth the sucking child," *Num.* xi. 12. But God bore them, and bore their manners, *Acts* xiii. 18. And as God began early to do them good, "When Israel was a child then I loved him," so he had constantly continued to do them good; he had carried them from the womb to this day. And we may all witness for God, that he hath been thus gracious to us; we have been borne by him from the belly, from the womb, else we had died from the womb, and given up the ghost when we came out of the belly; we have been the constant care of his kind providence, carried in the arms of his power, and in the bosom of his love and pity. The new man is so; all that in us that is born of God is borne up by him, else it would soon fail. Our spiritual life is sustained by his grace, as necessarily and constantly as our natural life by his providence. The saints have acknowledged that God has carried them from the womb, and have encouraged themselves with the consideration of it in their greatest straits, *Ps.* xxii. 9, 10; lxxi. 5, 6, 17.

2. He will then do them the kindness to promise that he will never leave them; he that was their first will be their last, that was the author will be the finisher of their well-being, ver. 4. You have been borne by me from the belly, nursed when you were children, and "even to your old age, I am he," when, by reason of your decays and infirmities, you will need help as much as in your infancy. Israel was now growing old, so was their covenant by which they were incorporated, *Heb.* viii. 13, "grey hairs were here and there upon them," *Hos.* vii. 9, and they had hastened their old age, and the calamities of it, by their irregularities; but God will not cast them off now, will not fail them when their strength fails; he is still their God, will still carry them in the same everlasting arms that were laid under them in Moses's time, *Deut.* xxxiii. 27. He has made them, and owns his interest in them, and therefore he will bear, will bear with their infirmities, and bear them up under their afflictions; "Even I will carry, and will deliver them;" will now bear them upon eagles' wings out of Babylon, as in their infancy I bore them out of Egypt. This promise to aged Israel is applicable to every aged Israelite. God hath graciously engaged to support and comfort his faithful servants, even in their old age. Even to your old age, when you grow unfit for business, when you are compassed with infirmities, and perhaps your relations begin to grow weary of you, yet I am he, he that I am, he that I have been, the very same by whom you have been borne from the belly, and carried from the womb. You change, but I am the same. I am he that I have promised to be, he that you have found me, he that you would have me to be. I will carry you, I will bear, will bear you up, and bear you out, and will carry you on in your way, and carry you home at last.

5 To whom will ye liken me, and make *me* equal,
And compare me, that we may be like?
6 They lavish gold out of the bag,
And weigh silver in the balance,
And hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god:
They fall down, yea, they worship.
7 They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him,

And set him in his place, and he standeth;
From his place shall he not remove:
Yea, *one* shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer,
Nor save him out of his trouble.
8 Remember this, and shew yourselves men:
Bring *it* again to mind, O ye transgressors.
9 Remember the former things of old:
For I *am* God, and *there is* none else;
I am God, and *there is* none like me,
10 Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done,
Saying, My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all my pleasure:
11 Calling a ravenous bird from the east,
The man that executeth my counsel from a far country:
Yea, I have spoken *it*, I will also bring it to pass;
I have purposed *it*, I will also do it.
12 Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted,
That *are* far from righteousness:
13 I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off,
And my salvation shall not tarry:
And I will place salvation in Zion
For Israel my glory.

The deliverance of Israel by the destruction of Babylon (the general subject of all these chapters) is here insisted upon, and again promised, for the conviction both of idolaters, who set up rivals with God, and of oppressors, that were enemies to the people of God.

First. For the conviction of those that made and worshipped idols, especially those of Israel that did so, that would have images of their God, as the Babylonians had of theirs:

1. He challengeth them either to frame an image that should be thought a resemblance of him, or set up any being that should stand in competition with him, ver. 5; "To whom will ye liken me?" It is absurd to think of representing an infinite and eternal Spirit by the figure of any creature whatsoever; it is to change his truth into a lie, and to turn his glory into shame. None ever saw any similitude of him, nor can see his face and live; to whom then can we liken God? *ch.* xl. 18, 25. It is likewise absurd to think of making any creature equal with the Creator, who is infinitely above the noblest creatures; yea, or to make any comparison between the creature and the Creator, since between infinite and finite there is no proportion.

2. He exposeth the folly of those that made idols, and then prayed to them, ver. 6, 7. 1st. They were at great charge upon their idols, and spared no cost to fit them for their purpose; "They lavish gold out of the bag." No little will serve, and they do not care how much goes, though they pinch their families, and weaken their estates by it. How doth the profuseness of idolaters shame the niggardliness of many who call themselves God's servants, but are for a religion that will cost them nothing. Some lavish gold out of the bag to make an idol of it in the house, while others hoard up gold in the bag to make an idol of it in the heart; for covetousness is idolatry, as dangerous, though not so scandalous, as the other. "They weigh silver in the balance," either to be the matter of their idol,—for even they that were most sottish, had so much sense as to think God should be served with the best they had, the best they could possibly afford; they that represented him by a calf made it a golden one;—or to pay the workmen's wages,—the service of sin often proves very expensive. 2nd. They were in great care about their idols, and took no little pains about them, ver. 7. "They bear him upon their own shoulders," and do not hire porters to do it; "they carry him, and set him in his place," more like a dead corpse than a living god. They set him on a pedestal, and he standeth; they take a great deal of pains to fasten him, and from his place he shall not remove, that they may know where to find him, though at the same time they know he can neither move a hand nor stir a step to do them any kindness. 3rd. After all, they paid great respect to their idols, though they were but the works of their own hands, and the creatures of their own fancies. When the goldsmith has made it, that which they please to call "a god, they fall down, yea, they worship it." If they magnified themselves too much in pretending to make a god, as if they would atone for that, they vilified themselves as much in prostrating themselves to a god that they knew the original of. And if they were deceived by the custom of their country in making such gods as those, they did no less deceive themselves when they cried unto them, though they knew they could not answer them, could not understand what they said to them, nor so much as reply, Yea or No, much less could they save them out of their trouble. Now, shall any that have some knowledge of, and interest in, the true and living God, thus make fools of themselves?

3. He puts it to themselves, and their own reason; let that judge in the case, ver. 8, "Remember this" that hath been often told you, what senseless helpless things idols are, "and shew yourselves men;" men, and not brutes; men, and not babes. Act with reason, act with resolution, act for your own interest. Do a wise thing, do a brave thing, and scorn to disparage your own judgment, as you do when you worship idols. Note, Sinners would become saints, if they would but shew themselves men; if they would but support the dignity of their nature, and use aright the powers and capacities of it. Many things you have been minded of; bring them again to mind, recall them into your memories, and revolve them there. "O ye transgressors consider your ways;" "Remember whence ye are fallen, and repent," and so recover yourselves.

4. He again produceth incontestable proofs that he is God; that he, and none but he, is so; ver. 9, "I am God, and there is none else," none beside me; "I am God, and there is none like me." This is that which we have need to be minded of again and again. For proof of it, he refers,

1st. To the sacred history: "Remember the former things of old," what the God of Israel did for his people in their beginnings; whether he did not that for them which no one else could, and which the false gods did not, nor could do for their worshippers. Remember those things, and you will own that "I am God, and there is none else;" and this is a good reason why we should give glory to him as a nonsuch, and why we should not give that glory to any other which is due to him alone, *Ex.* xv. 11.

2nd. To the sacred prophecy. He is God alone; for it is he only that declares "the end from the beginning," ver. 10. From the beginning of time he declared the end of time, the end of all things, in the prophecy of Enoch: "Behold the Lord comes." From the beginning of a nation he declares what the end of it will be. He told Israel what should befall them in the latter days, what their end should be, and wished they were so wise as to consider it, *Deu.* xxxii. 20, 29. From the beginning of an event he declares what the end of it will be, "Known unto God are all his works;" and when he pleaseth he makes them known. Farther than prophecy guides us, it is impossible for us to "find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end," *Eccl.* iii. 11; he "declares from ancient times the things that are not yet done." There are many Scripture prophecies, which were delivered long ago, but are not yet accomplished; but the accomplishing of some in the meantime is an earnest of the accomplishment of the rest in due time; and by this it appears he is God and none else. It is he, and none but he, that can say, and make his words good; "My counsel shall stand," and all the powers of hell and earth cannot control or disannul it, nor all their policies correct or countermine it. As God's operations are all according to his counsels, so his counsels shall all be fulfilled in his operations; and none of his measures shall be broken, none of his designs shall miscarry. This yields abundant satisfaction to those that have bound up all their comforts in God's counsels, that his counsel shall undoubtedly stand; and if we are come to this, that whatever pleaseth God pleaseth us, nothing can contribute more to make us easy than to be assured of this, that God will do all his pleasure, *Ps.* cxxxv. 6.

The accomplishment of this particular prophecy, which relates to the elevation of Cyrus, and his agency in the deliverance of God's people out of their captivity is instanced in, for the confirmation of this truth, that "the Lord is God, and there is none else;" and this is a thing which shall shortly come to pass, ver. 11. God doth by his counsel "call a ravenous bird from the east," a bird of prey, Cyrus; who, they say, had a nose like the beak of a hawk, or eagle, to which some think this alludes; or, as others say, to the eagle which was his standard, as it was afterwards that of the Romans, to which there is supposed to be a reference, *Mat.* xxiv. 28. Cyrus came from the east at God's call; for he is Lord of hosts, and of those that have hosts at command; and if God give him a call he will give him success. He is the man that shall execute God's counsel, though he comes from a far country, and knows nothing of the matter. Note, Even those that know not and mind not God's revealed will, yet are made use of to fulfil the counsels of his secret will, which shall all be punctually accomplished in their season by what hand he pleaseth. That which is here added, to ratify this particular prediction, may abundantly shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel. "I have spoken" by my servants the prophets; and what I have spoken is just the same with what "I have purposed." For though God has many things in his purposes which are not in his prophecies, he has nothing in his prophecies but what are in his purposes; and he will do it, for he will never change his mind; he will bring it to pass, for it is not in the power of any creature to control him. Observe with what a majesty he saith it, as one having authority; "I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass;" *dictum factum*,—'no sooner said than done.' "I have purposed it," and he doth not say, 'I will take care it shall be done,' but "I will do it." Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one tittle of the word of God.

Secondly. For the conviction of those that daringly opposed the counsels of God, assurance is here given, not only that they shall be accomplished, but they shall be accomplished very shortly, ver. 12, 13. This is addressed to the stout-hearted; that is, either, 1. The proud and obstinate Babylonians, that are far from righteousness, far from doing justice, or shewing mercy to those they have power over, that say they will never let the oppressed go free, but will still detain them in spite of their petition, or God's predictions, that are far from any thing of clemency or compassion to the miserable. Or, 2. The unhumbled Jews, that have been long under the hammer, long in the furnace, but are not broken, are not melted; that, like the unbelieving murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, think themselves far from God's righteousness, (that is, from the performance of his promise, and his appearing to judge for them,) and by their distrusts set themselves at yet a farther distance from it, and keep good things from themselves, as their fathers, who could not enter into the land of promise, because of unbelief. This is applicable to the Jewish nation, when they rejected the Gospel of Christ; though they followed after the law of righteousness, yet attained not to righteousness, because they sought it not of faith, *Rom.* ix. 31, 32; they perished far from righteousness, and it was because they were stout-hearted, *Rom.* x. 3.

Now to them God saith that, whatever they think, the one in presumption, the other in despair, 1st. Salvation shall be certainly wrought for God's people. If men will not do them justice, God will; and his righteousness shall effect that for them which men's righteousness would not reach to. He will "place salvation in Zion;" that is, he will make Jerusalem a place of safety and defence to all those that will plant themselves there. Thence shall salvation go forth for Israel his glory. God glories in his Israel; and he will be glorified in the salvation he designs to work out for them, it shall redound greatly to his honour. This salvation shall be in Zion, for thence the Gospel shall take rise, *ch.* ii. 3; thither the Redeemer comes, *Isa.* lix. 20; *Rom.* xi. 26; and it is Zion's king that hath salvation, *Zec.* ix. 9. 2nd. It shall be very shortly wrought. This is especially insisted on to those who thought it at a distance; "I bring near my righteousness," nearer than you think of. Perhaps it is nearest of all when your straits are greatest, and your enemies most injurious. "It shall not be far off," when there is occasion for it, *Ps.* lxxxv. 9. "Behold, the Judge stands before the door." "My salvation shall not tarry" any longer than till it is ripe, and you are ready for it; and therefore, though it tarry, wait for it; wait patiently. For "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

CHAPTER XLVII.

Infinite Wisdom could have ordered things so as that Israel might have been released, and yet Babylon unhurt; but if they will harden their hearts, and will not let the people go, they must thank themselves that their ruin is made to pave the way to Israel's release; and therefore that ruin is here in this chapter largely foretold, not to gratify a spirit of revenge in the people of God, that had been used barbarously by them, but to encourage their faith and hope concerning their own deliverance, and to be a type of the downfal of that great enemy of the New Testament church which in the *Revelation* goes under the name of Babylon. In this chapter we have, I. The greatness of the ruin threatened: that Babylon shall be brought down to the dust, and made completely miserable; should fall from the height of prosperity, into the depth of adversity, ver. 1—5. II. The sins that provoked God to bring this ruin upon them: 1. Their cruelty to the people of God, ver. 6; 2. Their pride and carnal security, ver. 7—9; 3. Their confidence in themselves, and contempt of God, ver. 10; 4. Their use of magic arts, and their dependence upon enchantments and sorceries, which should be so far from standing them in any stead, that they should but hasten their ruin, ver. 11—15.

COME down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon,
Sit on the ground:
There is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans:
For thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate.
2 Take the millstones, and grind meal:
Uncover thy locks, make bare the leg,
Uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers.
3 Thy nakedness shall be uncovered,
Yea, thy shame shall be seen:
I will take vengeance,
And I will not meet *thee as* a man.
4 *As for* our redeemer, the LORD of hosts *is* his name,
The Holy One of Israel.
5 Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans:
For thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.
6 I was wroth with my people,
I have polluted mine inheritance,
And given them into thine hand:
Thou didst shew them no mercy;
Upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

In these verses God by the prophet sends a message even to Babylon, like that of Jonah to Nineveh; the time is at hand when Babylon shall be destroyed. Fair warning is thus given her that she may by repentance prevent the ruin, and there may be a lengthening of her tranquillity. We may observe here,

First. God's controversy with Babylon. We will begin with that, for there all the calamity begins. She hath made God her enemy, and then who can befriend her? Let her know that the righteous Judge to whom vengeance belongs, hath said, ver. 3, "I will take vengeance." She has provoked God, and shall be reckoned with for it, when the measure of her iniquities is full. Woe to those on whom God comes to take vengeance; for "who knows the power of his anger," and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Were it a man like ourselves that would be revenged on us, we might hope to be a match for him, either to make our escape from him or to make our part good with him; but he saith, "I will not meet thee as a man," not with the compassions of a man; but I will be unto thee as a lion, and a young lion, *Hos.* v. 14; or rather, not with the strength of a man, which is easily resisted, but with the power of a God which cannot be resisted. Not with the justice of a man, which may be bribed or biassed, or mollified by a foolish pity, but with the justice of a God, which is strict and severe, and can never be evaded. As in pardoning the penitent, so in punishing the impenitent, he is God and not man, *Hos.* xi. 9.

Secondly. The particular ground of this controversy. We are sure there is cause for it, and it is a just cause; it is the vengeance of his temple, *Jer.* l. 28; it is for violence done to Zion, *Jer.* li. 35. God will plead his people's cause against them. It is acknowledged, ver. 6, that God had in wrath delivered his people into the hands of the Babylonians; had made use of them for the correction of his children, and had by their means polluted his inheritance; had left his peculiar people exposed to suffer in common with the rest of the nations; had suffered the heathen, who should have been kept at a distance, to come into his sanctuary, and defile his temple, *Ps.* lxxix. 1. Herein God was righteous, but the Babylonians carried the matter too far; and when they had them in their hands, triumphing to see a people that had been so much in reputation for wisdom, holiness, and honour, brought thus low, with a base and servile spirit they trampled upon them, and shewed them no mercy; no, not the common instances of humanity, which the miserable are entitled to purely by their misery. They used them barbarously, and with an air of contempt, nay, and of complacency in their calamities. They were brought under the yoke; but, as if that were not enough, they laid the yoke on very heavily, adding affliction to the afflicted. Nay, they laid it on the ancient, the elders in years, who were past their labour, and must sink under a yoke which those in their youthful strength would easily bear. The elders in office, those that had been judges and magistrates, and persons of the first rank, they took a pride in putting them to the meanest, hardest drudgery; Jeremiah laments this, that the faces of elders were not honoured, *Lam.* v. 12. Nothing brings a surer and sorer ruin upon any people than cruelty, especially to God's Israel.

Thirdly. The terror of this controversy. She has reason to tremble, when she is told who it is that has this quarrel with her, ver. 4. As for our Redeemer, our God, that undertakes to plead our cause, as the avenger of our blood, he hath two names which speak not only comfort to us, but terror to our adversaries. 1. He is the Lord of hosts, that has all the creatures at his command, and therefore has all power both in heaven and in earth. Woe to those against whom the Lord fights, for the whole creation is at war with them. 2. He is the Holy One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, who has his residence among us, and will faithfully perform all the promises he hath made to us. God's power and holiness are engaged against Babylon, and for Zion. This may fitly be applied to Christ, our great Redeemer; he is both Lord of hosts and the Holy One of Israel.

Fourthly. The consequences of it to Babylon. She is called a virgin, because so she thought herself, though she was "the mother of harlots;" beautiful as a virgin, and courted by all about her; she had been called "tender and delicate," ver. 1; and "the lady of kingdoms," ver. 5; but now the case is altered.

1. Her honour is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dignity. She that had sat at the upper end of the world, sat in state, and sat at ease, must now "come down, and sit in the dust," as very mean, and a deep mourner; "must sit on the ground," for she shall be so emptied and impoverished that she shall not have a seat left her to sit upon.

2. Her power is gone, and she must bid farewell to all her dominion. She shall rule no more as she has done, nor give law as she has done to her neighbours; "There is no throne," none for thee, "O daughter of the Chaldeans." Note, Those that abuse their honour and power provoke God to deprive them of it, and to make them "come down and sit in the dust."

3. Her ease and pleasure is gone. She shall "no more be called tender and delicate," as she has been, for she shall not only be deprived of all those things with which she pampered herself, but shall be put to hard service, and made to feel both want and pain, which should be more than doubly grievous to her that when time was "would not venture to set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and for delicacy," *Deu.* xxviii. 56. It is our wisdom not to use ourselves to be tender and delicate, because we know not how hardly others may use us before we die, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

4. Her liberty is gone, and she is brought into a state of servitude, and as sore a bondage as she in her prosperity had brought others to. Even the great men of Babylon must now receive the same law from the conquerors that they used to give to the conquered; "take the millstones, and grind meal," ver. 2. Set to work, to hard labour, like beating hemp in Bridewell, which will make thee sweat so as that thou must throw of all thy head dresses, and "uncover thy locks." When they were driven from one place to another, at the capricious humour of their masters, they must be forced to wade up to the middle through the waters; to "make bare the leg and uncover the thigh," that they might "pass over the rivers," which would be a great mortification to them that used to ride in state. But let them not complain, for when time was, just thus they had used their captives; and "with what measure they then meted, it is now measured to them again." Let those that have power use it with temper and moderation, considering that the spoke that is uppermost will be under.

5. All her glory, and all her glorying, is gone. Instead of glory, she has ignominy; ver. 3; "Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, and thy shame shall be seen," according to the base and barbarous usage they commonly gave their captives, to whom, for covetousness of their clothes, they did not leave rags sufficient to cover their nakedness, so void were they of the modesty, as well as of the pity, due to the human nature. Instead of glorying, she sits silent, and gets into darkness, ver. 5; ashamed to shew her face, for she has quite lost her credit, and "shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms." Note, God can make those sit silent that used to make the greatest noise in the world; and send those into darkness that used to make the greatest figure. Let him that glories therefore glory in a God that changeth not, and not in any worldly wealth, pleasure, or honour, which is subject to change.

7 And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever:
So that thou didst not lay these *things* to thy heart,
Neither didst remember the latter end of it.
8 Therefore hear now this, *thou that art* given to pleasures,
That dwellest carelessly,
That sayest in thine heart,
I *am*, and none else beside me;
I shall not sit *as* a widow,
Neither shall I know the loss of children:
9 But these two *things* shall come to thee in a moment in one day,
The loss of children, and widowhood:
They shall come upon thee in their perfection
For the multitude of thy sorceries,
And for the great abundance of thine enchantments.
10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness:
Thou hast said, None seeth me.
Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee;
And thou hast said in thine heart, *I am*, and none else beside me.
11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee;
Thou shalt not know from whence it riseth:
And mischief shall fall upon thee;
Thou shalt not be able to put it off:
And desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, *which* thou shalt not know.
12 Stand now with thine enchantments,
And with the multitude of thy sorceries,
Wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth;
If so be thou shalt be able to profit,
If so be thou mayest prevail.
13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels.
Let now the astrologers, the stargazers,
The monthly prognosticators,
Stand up, and save thee
From *these things* that shall come upon thee.
14 Behold, they shall be as stubble;
The fire shall burn them;
They shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame:
There shall not *be* a coal to warm at,
Nor fire to sit before it.
15 Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured,
Even thy merchants, from thy youth:
They shall wander every one to his quarter;
None shall save thee.

Babylon, now doomed to ruin, is here justly upbraided with her pride, luxury, and security in the day of her prosperity, and the confidence she had in her own wisdom and forecast, and particularly in the prognostications and counsels of

the astrologers. And these things are mentioned both to justify God in bringing these judgments upon her, and to mortify her, and put her to so much the greater shame under these judgments; for when God comes forth to take vengeance, glory belongs to him, but confusion to the sinner.

First. The Babylonians are here upbraided with their pride and haughtiness, and the mighty conceit they had of themselves, because of their wealth and power, and the vast extent of their dominion. It was the language, both of the government and of the body of the people, "Thou sayest in thine heart," and God, who searcheth all hearts, can tell men what they say there, though they never speak it out,) "I am, and none else besides me," ver. 8; and the same again, ver. 10. The repetition of this part of the charge intimates, that they said it often, and that it was very offensive to God. It is the very word that God had often said concerning himself; "I am, and none else besides me;" speaking his self-existence, his infinite and incomparable perfections, and his sole supremacy; and all this Babylon pretends to. And no wonder, if she that assumed a power to make what gods and goddesses she pleased, for the people to worship, made herself one among the rest. It is presumption to say of any creature, It is, and there is not its like, there is none besides it; for creatures stand pretty much upon a level with one another. But it is insufferable arrogance for any to say so of themselves, and an evidence of their self-ignorance.

Secondly. They are upbraided with their luxury and love of ease; ver. 8, "Thou that art given to pleasures," art a slave to them, art in them as in thine element; and that thou mayest enjoy them without disturbance or interruption, "dwellest carelessly," and layest nothing to heart. Great wealth and plenty is a great temptation to sensuality; and where there is fulness of bread there is commonly abundance of idleness. But if those that are given to pleasures, and dwell carelessly, would but hear this, that for all these things God shall bring them into judgment, it would be a damp to their mirth, an allay to their pleasure, and would find them something to be in care about.

Thirdly. They are upbraided with their carnal security, and their vain confidence of the perpetuity of their pomps and pleasures. This is much insisted on here. Observe,

1. The cause of their security. They therefore thought themselves safe and out of danger; not because they were ignorant of the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments, and the inevitable fate that attends states and kingdoms as well as particular persons, but because "they did not lay this to heart," did not apply it to themselves, nor give it a due consideration. They lulled themselves asleep in ease and pleasure, and dreamt of nothing else but that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." They did not remember the latter end of it; not the latter end of their prosperity, that that is a fading flower, and will wither; not the latter end of their iniquity, that it will be bitterness; that the day will come, when their injustice and oppression must be reckoned for and punished. She did not remember her latter end, so some read it; she forgat that her day will come to fall, and what would be in the end hereof. It was the ruin of Jerusalem, *Lam.* i. 9, "She remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully;" and it was Babylon's ruin too. Therefore the children of men are easy, and think themselves safe in their sinful ways, because they never think of death and judgment, and their future state.

2. The ground of their security. They trusted in their wickedness, and in their wisdom, ver. 10. 1st. Their power and wealth, which they had gotten by fraud and oppression, was their confidence. Thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, as Doeg, *Ps.* lii. 7. Many have so debauched their own consciences, and are got to such a pitch of daring wickedness, that they stick at nothing; and this they trust to carry them through those difficulties which embarrass men that make conscience of what they say and do. They doubt not but they shall be too hard for all their enemies, because they dare lie, and kill, and forswear themselves, and do any thing for their interest. Thus they trust in their wickedness to secure them, which is the only thing that will ruin them. 2nd. Their policy and craft, which they called their wisdom, was their confidence. They thought they could outwit all mankind, and therefore might set all their enemies at defiance; but their wisdom and knowledge perverted them, and turned them out of the way; made them forget themselves, and the preparation necessary to be made for hereafter.

3. The expressions of their security. Three things this proud and haughty monarchy said, in her security: 1st. "I shall be a lady for ever." She looked upon the patent of her honour to be, not during the pleasure of the Sovereign Lord, the fountain of honour, or during her own good behaviour, but to be perpetual to the present generation, and their heirs and successors for ever. She is not only proud that she is a lady, but confident she "shall be a lady for ever." Thus the New-Testament Babylon saith, "I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow," *Rev.* xviii. 7. Those ladies mistake themselves, and consider not their latter end, who think they shall be ladies for ever; for death will shortly lay their honour with them in the dust. Saints shall be saints for ever, but lords and ladies will not be so for ever. 2nd. "I shall not sit as a widow," in solitude and sorrow; shall never lose that power and wealth I am thus wedded to. The monarchy shall never want a monarch to espouse and protect it, and be a husband to the state; nor shall I "know the loss of children." She was as confident of the continuance of the numbers of her people, as of the dignity of her prince; and had no fear of being either deposed or depopulated. Those that are in a height of prosperity are apt to fancy themselves out of the reach of adverse fate. 3rd. None seeth me when I do amiss; and therefore there will be none to call me to an account. It is common for sinners to promise themselves impunity, because they promise themselves secrecy in their wicked ways. They trust to their wicked arts and designs to stand them in stead; because they think they have carried them on so plausibly, as that none can discern the wickedness and deceit of them.

4. The punishment of their security. It shall be their ruin; and it will be, 1st. A complete ruin, the ruin of all their comforts and confidences; "These two things shall come upon thee," the very two things that thou didst set at defiance, "loss of children and widowhood." Both thy princes and thy people shall be cut off, so that thou shalt be no more a government, no more a nation. Note, God often brings upon secure sinners those very mischiefs which they least feared, and thought themselves in least danger of. They shall come upon thee in their perfection, with all their aggravating circumstances, and without any thing to allay or mitigate them. Afflictions to God's children are not afflictions in perfection; widowhood is not to them a calamity in perfection, for they have this to comfort themselves with, that their Maker is their husband. Loss of children is not, for he is better to them than ten sons. But on his enemies they come in perfection. Widowhood and loss of children are either of them great griefs, but both together great indeed. Naomi thinks she may well be called Marah, when she is left both of her sons and of her husband, *Ru.* i. 5. And yet on her these evils did not come in perfection, for she had two daughters-in-law left, that were comforts to her. But on Babylon they come in perfection; she has no comfort remaining. 2nd. It shall be a sudden and surprising ruin. The evil shall come in one day, nay, in a moment; which will make it much the more terrible, especially to those that were so very secure. "Evil shall come upon thee," and thou shalt neither have time nor way to provide against it, or to prepare for it; for "thou shalt not know from whence it riseth," and therefore shalt not know where to stand upon thy guard. 'Thou shalt not know the morning thereof,' so the Hebrew phrase is; we know just when and where the day will break, and the sun rise, but we know not what the day when it is come will bring forth, nor when or where trouble will arise. Perhaps the storm may come from that point of the compass which we little thought of. Babylon pretended to great wisdom and knowledge, ver. 10, but with all her knowledge cannot foresee, nor with all her wisdom prevent, the ruin threatened. "Desolation shall come upon thee suddenly" as a thief in the night, "which thou shalt not know;" that is, which thou little thought of. Fair warning was indeed given them by this and other prophets of the Lord, of this desolation; but they slighted that notice, and would give no credit to it; and therefore justly is it so ordered that they should have no other notice of it, but that, partly through their own security, and partly through the swiftness and subtlety of the enemy, when it came, it should be a perfect surprise to them. Those that slight the warnings of the written word let them not expect any other premonitions. 3rd. It shall be an irresistible ruin, and such as they should have no fence against; "Mischief shall come upon thee" so suddenly, that thou shalt have no time to turn thee in; so strongly, that "thou shalt not be able" to make head against it, and "to put it off," and save thyself. There is no opposing the judgments of God, when they come with commission. Babylon herself, with all her wealth, and power, and multitude, is not able to put off the mischief that comes.

Fourthly. They are upbraided with their divinations, their magical and astrological arts and sciences; which the Chaldeans, above any other nation, were notorious for, and from them other nations borrowed all their learning of that kind.

1. This is here spoken of as one of their provoking sins, which would bring the judgments of God upon them, ver. 9. These evils shall come upon thee, to punish thee "for the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments." Witchcraft is a sin in its own nature exceeding heinous; it is giving that honour to the devil, which is due to God only; making God's enemy our guide, and the father of lies our oracle. In Babylon it was a national sin, and had the protection and countenance of the government. Conjurors, for aught appears, were their privy counsellors and prime ministers of state. And shall not God visit for these things? Observe what a multitude, what a great abundance, of sorceries and enchantments there were among them. Such a bewitching sin this was, that when it was once admitted it spread like wildfire, and they never knew any end of it. The deceived and the deceivers both increased strangely.

2. It is here spoken of as one of their vain confidences, which they relied much upon, but should be deceived in, for it would not serve so much as to give them notice of the judgments coming, much less to guard against them.

1st. They are here upbraided with the mighty pains they had taken about their sorceries and enchantments. Thou hast "laboured in them from thy youth." They trained up their young men in these studies; and those that applied themselves to them were indefatigable in their labours about them, reading books, making observations, trying experiments. Well, let them "stand up now with their enchantments," and try their skill in the critical moment. Let them make a stand, if they can, in opposition to the invading enemy. Let them stand to offer their service to their country; but to what purpose? "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsellors" of this kind; hast advised with them all, but hast received no satisfaction from them. The different schemes they have erected, and the different judgments they have given, have but increased thy perplexity, and tired thee out. In multitude of such counsellors there is no safety.

2nd. They are upbraided with the variety they had of such kind of people among them, ver. 13. They had their astrologers, or viewers of the heavens; that did not consider them, as David, to behold the wisdom and power of God in them, but under pretence of foretelling future events by them. They viewed the heavens, and forgot Him that made them and set their dominion on the earth, *Job* xxxviii. 33, and hath himself dominion over them, for he rides on the heavens. They had their stargazers, who, by the motions of the stars, their conjunctions and oppositions, read the doom of states and kingdoms. They had their monthly prognosticators, their almanac makers, that told what weather it should be, or what news they should have each month. The great stock they had of these was what they valued themselves much upon; but they were all cheats, and their art a sham. I confess, I see not how the judicial astrology, which some now pretend to, by the rules of which they undertake to prophesy concerning things to come, can be distinguished from that of the Chaldeans, and therefore how it can escape the censure and contempt which this text lays that under. Yet I fear there are some who study their almanacs, and pay more regard to them and their prognostications, than to their Bibles and the prophecies there.

3rd. They are upbraided with the utter inability and insufficiency of all these pretenders to do them any kindness in the day of their distress. Let them see whether, with the help of their enchantments, they can prevail against their enemies or profit themselves, spirit their own forces or dispirit those that came against them, ver. 12. Let them see what service those can do them who make a trade of divination; let them stand up, and either by their power save thee from these evils that are coming upon thee, or by their foresight make such a discovery of them beforehand, as that thou mayest, by needful precautions, save thyself; as Elisha, by notifying to the king of Israel the motions of the Syrian army, enabled him to save himself, not once, nor twice, 2 *Kin.* vi. 10. This baffling of the diviners was literally fulfilled, when that night that Babylon was taken, and Belshazzar slain, all his astrologers, soothsayers and wise men, were quite nonplussed with the handwriting on the wall that pronounced the fatal sentence, *Dan.* v. 8.

4th. They are upbraided with the fall of the wise men themselves in the common ruin, ver. 14. They are unlikely to stand their friends in any stead who cannot secure themselves. They are as stubble at the best, worthless and useless; and they shall be as stubble before a consuming fire. The Persians, to make room for their own wise men, will cut off those of Babylon; that fire shall burn them, and they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame. They can expect no other but to be devoured, who, by their sins, make themselves fuel to a devouring fire. When God kindles a fire among them, it shall not be a coal to warm at, and a fire to sit before, but a coal to burn them. Or rather it notes, that they shall be utterly consumed by the judgments of God, burnt quite to ashes, and there shall not remain one live coal to do any body any service. For when God judgeth, he will overcome.

5th. They are upbraided with their merchants, and those they dealt with, ver. 15. Such as they dealt with from their youth; either, *First.* In a way of consultation. These astrologers that dealt in the black art they always loved to be dealing with, and they were in effect their merchants. Fortune-telling was one of the best trades in Babylon; and those that followed that trade probably lived as great, and got as much money, as the richest merchants. Yet when some of them were devoured, others run their country, every one to his quarter; and there was none to save Babylon. Miserable comforters are they all. Or, *Secondly.* In a way of commerce. As their astrologers failed them

with whom they had laboured, so did their merchants; they took care to secure their own effects, and then valued not what became of Babylon. They wandered "every one to his own quarter;" each man shifted for his own safety, but none would offer to lend a helping hand, no, not to a city by which they had got so much money. Every one for himself, but few for his friends. The New Testament Babylon is lamented by the merchants that were made rich by her; but they very prudently stand afar off to lament her, *Rev.* xviii. 15; not willing to attempt any thing for her succour. Happy they who, by faith and prayer, deal with One that will be "a very present help in time of trouble."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

God having in the foregoing chapter reckoned with the Babylonians, and shewed them their sins, and the desolation that was coming upon them for their sins, to shew that he hates sin wherever he finds it, and will not connive at it in his own people, comes in this chapter to shew the house of Jacob their sins; but, withal, the mercy God had in store for them notwithstanding; and he therefore sets their sins in order before them, that by their repentance and reformation, they might be prepared for that mercy. I. He chargeth them with hypocrisy in that which is good, and obstinacy in that which is evil; especially in their idolatry, notwithstanding the many convincing proofs God had given them that he is God alone, ver. 1—8. II. He assures them that their deliverance would be wrought purely for the sake of God's own name, and not for any merit of theirs, ver. 9—11. III. He encourageth them to depend purely upon God's power and promise for this deliverance, ver. 12—15. IV. He shews them that, as it was by their own sin that they brought themselves into captivity, so it would be only by the grace of God that they would obtain the necessary preparations for their enlargement, ver. 16—19. V. He proclaims their release; yet with a proviso, that the wicked shall have no benefit by it, ver. 20—22.

HEAR ye this, O house of Jacob,
Which are called by the name of Israel,
And are come forth out of the waters of Judah,
Which swear by the name of the LORD,
And make mention of the God of Israel,
But not in truth, nor in righteousness.
2 For they call themselves of the holy city,
And stay themselves upon the God of Israel;
The LORD of hosts *is* his name.
3 I have declared the former things from the beginning;
And they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them;
I did *them* suddenly, and they came to pass.
4 Because I knew that thou *art* obstinate,
And thy neck *is* an iron sinew,
And thy brow brass;
5 I have even from the beginning declared *it* to thee;
Before it came to pass I shewed *it* thee:
Lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them,
And my graven image, and my molten image, hath com-
6 Thou hast heard, see all this; [manded them.
And will not ye declare *it?*
I have shewed thee new things from this time,
Even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.
7 They are created now, and not from the beginning;
Even before the day when thou heardest them not;
Lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them.
8 Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not;
Yea, from that time *that* thine ear was not opened:
For I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously,
And wast called a transgressor from the womb.

We may observe here,

First. The hypocritical profession which many of the Jews made of religion, and relation to God. To those who made such a profession the prophet is here ordered to apply himself, for their conviction and humiliation; that they might own God's justice in what he had brought upon them. Now observe here,

1. How high their profession of religion soared. What a fair show they made in the flesh, and how far they went towards heaven; what a good livery they wore, and what a good face they put upon a very bad heart. 1st. They were the house of Jacob; they had a place and a name in the visible church; "Jacob have I loved." Jacob is God's chosen; and they are not only retainers to his family, but descendants from him. 2nd. They were "called by the name of Israel," an honourable name. They were of that people "to whom pertained both the giving of the law and the promises." Israel signifies 'a prince with God;' and they prided themselves in being of that princely race. 3rd. "They came forth out of the waters of Judah," and thence were called Jews. They were of the royal tribe, the tribe of which Shiloh was to come; the tribe that adhered to God when the rest revolted. 4th. They "sware by the name of the Lord," and thereby owned him to be the true God, and their God, and gave glory to him as the righteous Judge of all. They 'sware to the name of the Lord,' so it may be read; they took an oath of allegiance to him as their king, and joined themselves to him in covenant. 5th. They made mention of the God of Israel in their prayers and praises; they often spoke of him, observed his memorials, and pretended to be very mindful of him. 6th. They called "themselves of the holy city;" and when they were captives in Babylon, purely from a principle of honour and jealousy for their native country, they valued themselves upon their interest in it. Many that are themselves unholy are proud of their relation to the church, the holy city. 7th. They stayed "themselves upon the God of Israel," and boasted of his promises, and his covenant with them. They "leaned on the Lord," *Mic.* iii. 11. And if they were asked concerning their God, they could say, "The Lord of hosts is his name," the Lord of all. Happy we, therefore, and very great, that have relation to him.

2. How low their profession of religion sunk for all this. It was all in vain, for it was all a jest, it was not in truth and righteousness. Their hearts were not true nor right in these professions. Note, All our religious professions avail nothing farther than they are made in truth and righteousness. If we be not sincere in them we do but take the name of the Lord our God in vain.

Secondly. The means God used, and the method he took, to keep them close to himself, and to prevent their turning aside to idolatry. The many excellent laws he gave them, with their sanctions, and the hedges about them, it seems would not serve to restrain them from that sin which did most easily beset them; and therefore to those God added remarkable prophecies and remarkable providences in pursuance of those prophecies, which were all designed to convince them that their God was the only true God, and that it was therefore both their duty and interest to adhere to him.

1. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable prophecies; ver. 3, "I have declared the former things from the beginning." Nothing material happened to their nation from its original, but it was prophesied of before: their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance thence, the situation of their tribes in Canaan, &c.; all these things went forth out of God's mouth, and he shewed them. Herein they were honoured above any nation, and even their curiosity gratified; their prophecies were such as they could rely upon, and such as concerned themselves and their own nation. And they were all verified by the accomplishment of them. "I did them suddenly," when they were least expected by themselves or others, and therefore could not be foreseen by any but a Divine prescience; "I did them, and they came to pass;" for what God doth he doth effectually. These very calamities they were now groaning under in Babylon God did from the beginning declare to them by Moses, as the certain consequences of their apostacy from God, *Lev.* xxvi. 31, &c., and *Deu.* xxviii. 36, &c.; xxix. 28. He also declared to them their return to God and to their own land again, *Deu.* xxx. 4, &c.; *Lev.* xxvi. 44, 45. Thus he shewed them how he would deal with them long before it came to pass. Let them compare their present state, together with the deliverance they had now in prospect, with what was written in the law, and they would find the Scripture exactly fulfilled.

2. He both dignified and favoured them with remarkable providences; ver. 6, "I have shewed thee new things from this time." Besides the general view given them from the beginning of God's proceedings with them, he shewed them new things by the prophets of their own day, and created them; they were hidden things, which they could not otherwise know, as the prophecy concerning Cyrus, and the exact time of their release out of Babylon; these things God created now. Their restoration was in effect their creation, and they had a promise of it, not from the beginning, but of late; for, to prevent their apostacy from God, or to recover them, prophecy was kept up among them. Yet it was told them when they could not come to the knowledge of it any other way than by Divine revelation. Consider, saith God, how much soever it is talked of now among you and expected, it was told you by the prophets, when it was the farthest thing in your thoughts, when you had not heard it, when you had not known it, nor had any reason to expect it, and when your ear was not opened concerning it, ver. 7, 8; when the thing seemed utterly impossible, and you would scarcely have given any one the hearing that should have told you of it. God had shewed them hidden things which were out of the reach of their knowledge, and done for them great things, out of the reach of their power; Now, saith he, ver. 6, "thou hast heard, see all this." Thou hast heard the prophecy; see the accomplishment of it, and observe whether the word and works of God do not exactly agree. "And will ye not declare it," that, as you have heard, so you have seen? Will you not own that the Lord is the true God, the only true God; that he has that knowledge and power which no creature has, and which none of the gods of the nations can pretend to? Will you not own that your God hath been a good God to you? Declare this to his honour and your own shame, who have dealt so deceitfully with him, and preferred others before him.

Thirdly. The reasons why God would take this method with them:

1. Because he would anticipate their boastings of themselves and their idols. 1st. God, by his prophets, told them beforehand of their deliverance, lest they should attribute the doing of it to their idols. Thus he saw it necessary to secure the glory of it to himself, which otherwise would have been given by some of them to their graven images; I spoke of it, saith God, "lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done it," or hath commanded it to be done, ver. 5. There were those that would be apt to say so, and so would be confirmed in their idolatry by that which was intended to cure them of it. But they would now be for ever precluded from saying this, for if the idols had done it the prophets of the idols would have foretold it; but, the prophets of the Lord having foretold it, no doubt it was the power of the Lord that effected it. 2nd. God foretold it by his prophets, lest they should assume the foresight of it to themselves. Those that were not so profane as to have ascribed the thing itself to an idol, yet were so proud as to have pretended that by their own sagacity they foresaw it, if God had not been beforehand with them and spoken first: "Lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them." Thus, vain men, that would be thought wise, commonly undervalue a thing which is really great and surprising, with this suggestion, that it was no more than they expected, and they knew it would come to this. To anticipate this, and that this boasting might for ever be excluded, God told them of it before the day, when as yet they dreamed not of it. God has said and done enough to prevent men's boastings of themselves, and that no flesh may glory in his presence; which, if it have not the intended effect, it will aggravate the sin and ruin of the proud, and sooner or later "every mouth shall be stopped," and "all flesh shall become silent before God."

2. Because he would leave them inexcusable in their obstinacy. Therefore he took this pains with them, because he knew they were obstinate, ver. 4. He knew they were so obstinate and perverse that, if he had not supported the doctrine of providence by prophecy, they would have had the impudence to deny it, and would have said their idol had done that which God did. He knew very well, 1st. How wilful they would be, and how fully bent they would be upon that which is evil. 'I knew that thou wast hard,' so the word is; there were prophecies as well as precepts which God gave them, because of the hardness of their hearts. "Thy neck is an iron sinew," unapt to yield, and submit to the yoke of God's commandments, unapt to turn and look back upon his dealings with thee, or look up to his displeasure against thee; not flexible to the will of God, not pliable to his intentions, not manageable by his word or providence. "Thy brow is brass," that is, thou art impudent, and canst not blush; insolent, and wilt not fear or give back, but thrust on in the way of thine heart. God useth means to bring sinners to comply with him, though he knows they are obstinate. 2nd. How deceitful they would be, and insincere in that which is good, ver. 8. God sent his prophets to them, but they did not hear, they would not know; and it was no more than was expected, considering what they had been; "Thou wast called," and not miscalled, "a transgressor from the womb." Ever since they were first formed into a people, they were

prone to idolatry; they brought with them out of Egypt a strange addictedness to that sin, and they were murmurers as soon as ever they began their march to Canaan; they were justly upbraided with it then, *Deu.* ix. 7, 24. Therefore "I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously." God foresaw their apostacy, and gave this reason for it, that he had always found them false and fickle, *Deu.* xxxi. 16, 27, 29. This is applicable to particular persons; we are all born children of disobedience, we are called transgressors from the womb, and therefore it is easy to foresee that we will deal treacherously, very treacherously. Where original sin is, actual sin will follow of course. God knows it, and yet deals not with us according to our deserts.

9 For my name's sake will I defer mine anger,
And for my praise will I refrain for thee,
That I cut thee not off.
10 Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver;
I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.
11 For mine own sake, *even* for mine own sake, will I do *it:*
For how should *my name* be polluted?
And I will not give my glory unto another.
12 Hearken unto me, O Jacob
And Israel, my called;
I *am* he; I *am* the first, I also *am* the last.
13 Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth,
And my right hand hath spanned the heavens:
When I call unto them, they stand up together.
14 All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear;
Which among them hath declared these *things?*
The LORD hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on
And his arm *shall be on* the Chaldeans. [Babylon,
15 I, *even* I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: [ous;
I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosper-

The deliverance of God's people out of their captivity in Babylon was a thing upon many accounts so improbable, that there was need of line upon line for the encouragement of the faith and hope of God's people concerning it. Two things were discouraging to them: their own unworthiness that God should do it for them, and the many difficulties in the thing itself. Now in these verses both these discouragements are removed, for here is,

First. A reason why God would do it for them, though they were unworthy; not for their sake be it known to them, but for his name's sake, for his own sake, ver. 9–11.

1. It is true they had been very provoking, and God had been justly angry with them. Their captivity was the punishment of their iniquity; and if when he had them in Babylon he had left them to pine away and perish there, and made the desolations of their country perpetual, he had but dealt with them according to their sins, and it was what such a sinful people might expect from an angry God. But, saith God, "I will defer mine anger," or rather, stifle and suppress it; I will make it to appear I am slow to wrath, and will refrain from thee, not pour upon thee what I justly might, that I should cut thee off from being a people. And why will God thus stay his hand? "For my name's sake," because this people was called by his name, and made profession of his name; and if they were cut off the enemies would blaspheme his name. It is "for my praise," because it would redound to the honour of his mercy to spare and reprieve them; and if he continued them to be to him a people they might be to him for a name and a praise.

2. It is true they were very corrupt and ill-disposed, but God would himself refine them and make them fit for the mercy he intended for them; "I have refined thee," that thou mightest be made a vessel of honour. Though he doth not find them meet for his favour, he will make them so. And this accounts for his bringing them into the trouble and continuing them in it so long as he did; it was not to cut them off, but to do them good It was to refine them, "but not as silver," or, with silver; not so thoroughly as men refine their silver, which they continue in the furnace till all the dross is separated from it. But if God should take that course with them they would be always in the furnace, for they are all dross, and as such might justly be put away, *Ps.* cxix. 119; as reprobate silver, *Jer.* vi. 30. He therefore takes them as they are, refined in part only, and not thoroughly; "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction," that is, made thee a choice one by the good which the affliction has done thee, and then designed thee for great things. Many have been brought home to God as chosen vessels, and a good work of grace been begun in them, in the furnace of affliction. Affliction is no bar to God's choice, but subservient to his purpose.

3. It is true they could not pretend to merit at God's hand so great a favour as their deliverance out of Babylon, which would put such an honour upon them, and bring them so much joy; Therefore, saith God, "for mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it," ver. 11. See how the emphasis is laid upon that, for it is a reason that cannot fail, and therefore the resolution grounded upon it cannot fall to the ground. God will do it, not because he owes them such a favour, but to save the honour of his own name, that that may not be polluted by the insolent triumphs of the heathen, who, in triumphing over Israel, thought they triumphed over the God of Israel, and imagined their gods were too hard for him. This was plainly the language of Belshazzar's revels, when he profaned the holy vessels of God's temple, at the same time when he praised his idols, *Dan.* v. 2; and of the Babylonians' demand, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 3, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." God will therefore deliver his people, because he will not suffer his glory to be thus given to another. Moses pleaded this often with God: Lord, what will the Egyptians say? Note, God is jealous for the honour of his own name, and will not suffer the wrath of man to proceed any farther than he will make it turn to his praise. And it is matter of comfort to God's people that, whatever comes of them, God will secure his own honour, and as far as is necessary to that God will work deliverance for them.

Secondly. Here is a proof that God could do it for them, though they were unable to help themselves, and the thing seemed altogether impracticable. Let Jacob and Israel hearken to this, and believe it, and take the comfort of it. They are God's called, called according to his purpose, called by him out of Egypt, *Hos.* xi. 1, and now out of Babylon; a people whom, with a distinguishing favour, he calleth by name, and calls to; they are his called, for they are called to him, called by his name, and called his. And therefore he will look after them, and they may be assured that, as he will deliver them for his own sake, so he will deliver them by his own strength; they need not fear then, for,

1. He is God alone and the eternal God, ver. 12. I am he that can do what I will, and will do what is best; he whom none can compare with, much less contend with; "I am the first, I also am the last." Who can be too quick for him that is the first, or prevent him? Who can be too hard for him that is the last, and will keep the field against all opposers, and will reign till they are all made his footstool? What room, then, is left to doubt of their deliverance, when he undertakes it, whose designs cannot but be all well laid, for he is the first; and well executed, for he is the last? As for this God his work is perfect.

2. He is the God that made the world, and he that did that can do any thing, ver. 13. Look we down, we see the earth firm under us, and feel it so; it was his hand that laid the foundations of it. Look we up, we see the heavens spread up as a canopy over our heads, and it was his hand that spread them, that spanned them, that stretched them out, and did it by an exact measure, as the workman sometimes metes out his work by spans. This intimates that God hath a vast reach, and can compass designs of the greatest extent. If 'the palm of his right hand' (so the margin reads it) hath gone so far as to stretch out the heavens, what will he do with his outstretched arm? Yet this is not all; he hath not only made the heavens and the earth, and therefore he in whom our hope and help are is omnipotent, *Ps.* cxxiv. 8; but he hath the command of all the hosts of both. When he calls them into his service, to go on his errand, they stand up together, they come at the call, they answer to their names, Here we are, "what wilt thou have us to do?" They stand up not only in reverence to their Creator, but in a readiness to execute his orders; they stand up together unanimously, concurring and helping one another in the service of their Maker. Therefore, if God will deliver his people, he cannot be to seek for instruments to be employed in it.

3. He hath already foretold it; and, having such an infinite knowledge that he could foresee it, no doubt he has an almighty power to effect it. "All ye" of the house of Jacob, "assemble yourselves and hear" this for your comfort, which among them, among the gods of the heathen, or their wise men, hath declared these things, or could declare them? ver. 14. They had no foresight of them at all, but those who consulted them were very confident that Babylon should be a lady for ever, and Israel a perpetual slave, and their oracles did not give them the least hint to the contrary to undeceive them; whereas God, by his prophets, had given notice to the Jews long before of their captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem, as he had now likewise given them notice of their release, ver. 15. "I, even I, have spoken;" and he would not have spoken it if he could not have made it good. None could outsee him, and therefore we may be sure none could outdo him.

4. The person is pitched upon that is to be employed in this service, and the measures concerted in the Divine councils, which are unalterable. Cyrus is the man that must do it; and it tends much to strengthen our assurance that a thing shall be done when we are particularly informed how and by whom. It is not left at an uncertainty who shall do it, but the matter is fixed. 1st. It is one whom God is well pleased in upon this account, because he is designed for this service, "The Lord hath loved him," ver. 14; that is, he has done him this favour, this honour, to make him an instrument of the redemption of his people, and therein a type of the great Redeemer, God's beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. Those God doth a great kindness to, and has a great kindness for, whom he makes serviceable to his church. 2nd. It is one whom God will give authority and commission to; "I have called him," have given him a sufficient warrant, and therefore will bear him out. 3rd. It is one whom God will, by a series of providences, lead to this service; I have brought him from a far country, brought him to engage against Babylon, brought him step by step, quite beyond his own intentions. Whom God calls he will bring, will cause them to come, (so the word is,) to come at the call. 4th. It is one whom God will own and give success to. Cyrus will do God's pleasure on Babylon; that which it is his pleasure should be done, and which he will be pleased with the doing of, though Cyrus has ends of his own to serve, and hath no regard either to the will of God, or to his favour in the doing of it. His arm, that is, Cyrus' army, and in it God's arm, shall come and be upon the Chaldeans, to bring them down, ver. 14; for if God call him and bring him he will certainly make his way prosperous, ver. 15. Then we may hope to prosper in our way when we follow a Divine call and conduct.

16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this;
I have not spoken in secret from the beginning;
From the time that it was, there *am* I:
And now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me.
17 Thus saith the LORD,
Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel;
I *am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit,
Which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.
18 O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments!
Then had thy peace been as a river,
And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:
19 Thy seed also had been as the sand,
And the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof;
His name should not have been cut off nor destroyed
20 Go ye forth of Babylon, [from before me.
Flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing
Declare ye, tell this,
Utter it *even* to the end of the earth;
Say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.
21 And they thirsted not *when* he led them through the deserts:
He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them:
He clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.
22 *There is* no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.

Here, as before, Jacob and Israel are summoned to hearken to the prophet speaking in God's name, or rather to God, speaking in and by the prophet, and that as a type of the great Prophet, by whom God has in these last days spoken unto us, and that is sufficient; Come ye near, therefore, and hear this. Note, Those that would hear and understand what God saith must come near and approach to him. Let them come as near as they can; let those that have hearkened to the tempter now come near and hear this, that they may be confirmed in their resolutions to serve God. Those that draw nigh to God may depend upon this, that his secret shall be with them. Here,

First. God refers them to what he had both said to them and done for them formerly, which, if they would reflect upon, they might from thence fetch great encouragement to trust in God at this time. 1. He had always spoken plainly to them, from the beginning, by Moses and all the prophets. I have not spoken in secret, but publicly, from the top of mount Sinai, and in the chief places of concourse, the solemn assemblies of their tribes. He did not deliver his oracles obscurely and ambiguously, but so as they might be understood, *Hab.* ii. 2. 2. He had always acted wonderfully for them; "From the time that it was," that they were first formed into a people, "there am I," there have I been, resident among them, and presiding in their affairs. He sent them prophets, raised them up judges, and frequently appeared for them; and therefore there I will be still. He that has been with his people hitherto will be to the end.

Secondly. The prophet himself, as a type of the great Prophet, asserts his own commission to deliver this message; "Now the Lord God (the same that spoke from the beginning, and did not speak in secret,) "hath by his Spirit sent me," ver. 16. The Spirit of God is here spoken of as a person, distinct from the Father and the Son, and having a Divine authority to send prophets. Note, Whom God sends the Spirit sends. Those whom God commissions for any service, the Spirit in some measure qualifies for it; and those may speak boldly, and must be heard obediently, whom God and his Spirit send. As that which the prophet saith to the same purpose with this, *ch.* lxi. 1, is applied to Christ, *Lu.* iv. 21, so may this be. The Lord God sent him, and he had the Spirit without measure.

Thirdly. God by the prophet sends them a gracious message for their support and comfort under their affliction. The preface to this message is both awful and encouraging; ver. 17, "Thus saith Jehovah," the eternal God, "thy Redeemer," that hath often been so, that hath engaged to be so, and will be faithful to the engagement, for he is the Holy One, that cannot deceive, the Holy One of Israel, that will not deceive them. The same words that introduce the law, and give authority to that, introduce the promise, and give validity to that; "I am the Lord thy God," whom thou mayest depend upon, as in relation to thee, and in covenant with thee.

1. Here is the good work God undertakes to fulfil in them. He that is their Redeemer, in order to that will be, 1st. Their instructor; "I am thy God that teacheth thee to profit," that is, teacheth thee such things as are profitable for thee, things that belong to thy peace. By this God shews himself to be a God in covenant with us, by his teaching us, *Heb.* viii. 10, 11, and none teacheth like him, for he gives an understanding. Whom God redeems he teacheth; whom he designs to deliver out of their afflictions he first teacheth to profit by their afflictions, makes them partakers of his holiness; for that is the profit for which he chastens us, *Heb.* xii. 10. 2nd. Their guide. He leads them to the way and in the way by which they should go. He not only enlightens their eyes, but directs their steps. By his grace he leads them in the way of duty, by his providence he leads them in the way of deliverance. Happy they that are under such a conduct!

2. Here is the good will God declares he had for them, by his good wishes concerning them, ver. 18, 19. He had indeed brought them into captivity, but it was long of themselves, nor did he afflict them willingly. 1st. As when he gave them his law he earnestly wished they might be obedient, ("O that there were such a heart in them," *Deu.* v. 29; "O that they were wise," *Deu.* xxxii. 29,) so, when he punished them for the breach of his law, he wished they had been obedient; "O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments," as *Ps.* lxxxi. 13, "O that my people had hearkened unto me!" This confirms what God hath said and sworn, that "he hath no pleasure in the death of sinners." 2nd. He assures them that if they had been obedient that would not only have prevented their captivity, but would have advanced and perpetuated their prosperity. He had abundance of good things ready to bestow upon them, if their sins had not turned them away, *ch.* lix. 1, 2. *First.* They should have been carried on in a constant, uninterrupted stream of prosperity; "Thy peace should have been as a river," thou shouldest have enjoyed a series of mercies, one continually following another, as the waters of a river, which always last. *Labitur et labetur in omne volubilis ævum,*—'It flows, and will for ever flow;' not like the waters of a land-flood, which are soon gone. *Secondly.* Their virtue and honour, and the justice of their cause, should in all cases have borne down opposition by their own strength,—as the waves of the sea, such should their righteousness have been, nothing should have stood before it; whereas now, they having been disobedient, the current of their prosperity was interrupted, and their righteousness overpowered. *Thirdly.* The rising generation should have been very numerous, and very prosperous; whereas they were now very few, as appears by the small number of the returning captives, *Ezr.* ii. 64, not so many as of one tribe when they came out of Egypt, they should have been numberless as the sand, according to the promise, *Gen.* xxii. 17, which they had forfeited the benefit of. "The offspring of thy bowels" had been innumerable like the gravel of the sea, if thy righteousness had been irresistible and unconquerable as the waves of the sea. *Fourthly.* The honour of Israel had still been unstained, untouched. His name should not have been cut off, as now it is in the land of Israel, which is either desolate, or inhabited by strangers; nor should it have been destroyed from before God. And we cannot reckon a name either of a family or of a kingdom destroyed till it is destroyed from before God, till it ceaseth to be a name in his holy place. Now God thus tells them what he would have done for them, if they had persevered in their obedience, 1*st.* That they might be the more humbled for their sins, by which they had forfeited such rich mercies. Note, This should engage us, I might say, enrage us, against sin, that it has not only lost us the good things we have enjoyed, but prevented the good things God had in store for us. It will make the misery of the disobedient the more intolerable, to think how happy they might have been. 2*nd.* That his mercy might appear the more illustrious in working deliverance and salvation for them, though they had forfeited and rendered themselves unworthy of it. Nothing but a prerogative of mercy would have saved them.

3. Here is assurance given of the great work which God designed to work for them, even their salvation out of their captivity, when he had accomplished his work in them.

1st. Here is a commission granted them to leave Babylon. God proclaimed it long before Cyrus did, that whoever would might return to his own land, ver. 20. You have a full discharge sent you, "Go ye forth out of Babylon;" the prison doors are thrown open, and the trumpet sounded proclaiming a release. Perhaps with this word, as a means, the Spirit of the Lord stirred up the spirits of those that did take the benefit of Cyrus's proclamation, *Ezr.* i. 5. "Flee ye from the Chaldeans," not with an ignominious, stolen flight, as Jacob fled from Laban, but flee with a holy disdain, as scorning to stay any longer among them. Flee ye, not silently and sorrowfully, but with a voice, with a voice of singing, as they fled of old out of Egypt, *Ex.* xv. 1.

2nd. Here is the news of this sent to all parts. Let it be declared, let it be told, let it be uttered, make it to be heard by the most remote, by the most remiss; send the tidings of it by word of mouth, send it by writing, from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, even to the utmost regions, "to the ends of the earth." This was a figure of the publishing of the Gospel to all the world; but that brings glad tidings which all the world is concerned in, this only that which it is fit all should take notice of, that they may be invited by it to forsake their idols, and come into the service of the God of Israel. Let them all know then, *First.* That those whom God owns for his are such as he has dearly bought and paid for; "The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob;" he has done it formerly, when he brought them out of Egypt, and now he is about to do it again. Jacob was God's servant, and therefore he redeemed him; for what had other masters to do with God's servants? Israel is God's son, therefore Pharaoh must let him go. God redeemed Jacob, and therefore it was fit he should be his servant, *Ps.* cxvi. 16; the bonds God had loosed tied them the faster to him. He that redeemed us has an unquestionable right to us. *Secondly.* That those whom God designs to bring home to himself he will take care of, that they want not for the necessary expenses of their journey. When he brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the deserts, they thirsted not, ver. 21, for in all their removes the water out of the rock followed them. Thence he caused the waters to flow; and, since rock water is the clearest and finest, "God clave the rock, and the waters gushed out;" for he can fetch in necessary supplies for his people that way that they think most unlikely. This refers to what he did for them when he brought them out of Egypt, when all this was literally true. But it should now be in effect done again in their return out of Babylon, so well provided for shall they and theirs be in their return. And God doth his work as effectually by marvellous providences as by miracles, though perhaps they be not so much taken notice of. This is applicable to those treasures of grace laid up for us in Jesus Christ, from which all good flows to us, as the water did to Israel out of the rock, for that rock is Christ.

3rd. Here is a caveat put in against the wicked that go on still in their trespasses. Let not them think to have any benefit among God's people, though in show and profession they herd themselves among them; let not them expect to come in sharers; no, ver. 22, though God's thoughts concerning the body of that people were thoughts of peace, yet those among them that were wicked, and hated to be reformed, to them there is no peace, no peace with God or their own consciences, no, no real good, whatever is pretended to. What have they to do with peace that are enemies to God? Their false prophets cried peace to them to whom it did not belong; but God tells them there shall be no peace, nor nothing like it, to the wicked. The quarrel sinners have commenced with God, if not taken up in time by repentance, will be an everlasting quarrel.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Glorious things had been spoken in the chapters before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon; but, lest any should think when it was accomplished that it looked much greater and brighter in the prophecy than in the performance, and that the return of about forty thousand Jews in a poor condition, out of Babylon to Jerusalem, was not an event sufficiently answering the height and grandeur of the expressions used in the prophecy, he here comes to shew that the prophecy had a farther intention, and was to have its full accomplishment in a redemption that should as far outdo these expressions, as the other seemed to come short of them, even the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ; of whom not only Cyrus, that was God's servant in working the Jews' deliverance, but Isaiah too, that was God's servant in foretelling it, was a type. In this chapter we have, I. The designation of Christ, under the type of Isaiah, to his office as Mediator, ver. 1—3. II. The assurance given him of the success of his undertaking among the Gentiles, ver. 3—8. III. The redemption that should be wrought by him, and the progress of that redemption, ver. 9—12. IV. The encouragement given from hence to the afflicted church, ver. 13—17. V. The addition of many to it, and the setting up of a church among the Gentiles, ver. 18—23. VI. A ratification of the prophecy of the Jews' release out of Babylon, which was to be the figure and type of all these blessings, ver. 24—26. And if this chapter be rightly understood, we shall see ourselves to be more concerned in the prophecies relating to the Jews' deliverance out of Babylon than we thought we were.

LISTEN, O isles, unto me;
And hearken, ye people, from far;
The LORD hath called me from the womb;
From the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.
2 And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword;
In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me,
And made me a polished shaft;
In his quiver hath he hid me;
3 And said unto me, Thou *art* my servant,
O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.
4 Then I said, I have laboured in vain,
I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain:
Yet surely my judgment *is* with the LORD,
And my work with my God.
5 And now, saith the LORD
That formed me from the womb *to be* his servant,
To bring Jacob again to him,
Though Israel be not gathered,
Yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
And my God shall be my strength.
6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be [my servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved of Israel:

I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, [earth.
That thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the

Here, First. An auditory is summoned together, and attention demanded. The sermon in the chapter before was directed to the house of Jacob, and the people of Israel, ver. 1, 12; but this is directed to the isles, that is, the Gentiles, for they are called the isles of the Gentiles, *Gen.* x. 5, and to the people from far, that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and afar off. Let these listen, ver. 1, as to a thing at a distance, which yet they were to hear with desire and attention. Note, The tidings of a Redeemer are sent to the Gentiles, and to those that lay most remote, and they are concerned to listen to them. The Gentiles listened to the Gospel, when the Jews were deaf to it.

Secondly. The great author and publisher of the redemption produced his authority from heaven, for the work he had undertaken. 1. God had appointed him, and set him apart for it; "The Lord hath called me from the womb" to this office, and made mention of my name, nominated me to be the Saviour. By an angel he called him Jesus, a Saviour, who should save his people from their sins, *Mat.* i. 21. Nay, from the womb of the Divine counsels, before all worlds, he was called to this service, and help was laid upon him; and he came at the call, for he said, "Lo, I come," with an eye to what was written of him in the volume of the book. This was said of some of the prophets, as types of him, *Jer.* i. 5. Paul was separated to the apostleship from his mother's womb, *Gal.* i. 15. 2. God had fitted and qualified him for the service to which he designed him. He made his mouth like a sharp sword, and made him like a polished shaft, or a bright arrow; furnished him with every thing necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of darkness, to conquer Satan, and reduce God's revolted subjects to their allegiance, by his word; that is the two-edged sword, *Heb.* iv. 12, which comes out of his mouth, *Rev.* xix. 15. The convictions of the word are the arrows that shall be sharp in the hearts of sinners, *Ps.* xlv. 5. 3. God had preserved him to the service for which he had reserved him; "He hath hid me in the shadow of his hand, and in his quiver;" which notes, 1st. Concealment. The Gospel of Christ, and the calling in of the Gentiles by it, was long hid from ages and generations, hid in God, *Eph.* iii. 5, *Rom.* xvi. 25; hid in the shadow of the ceremonial law, and the Old Testament types. 2nd. Protection. The house of David was the particular care of the Divine providence, because that blessing was in it. Christ in his infancy was sheltered from the rage of Herod. 4. God had owned him; had said unto him, "Thou art my servant," whom I have employed, and will succeed; thou art Israel in effect, the prince with God, that hast wrestled and prevailed, and "in whom I will be glorified." The people of God are Israel, and they are all gathered together, and summed up as it were in Christ, the great representative of all Israel, as the high priest who had the names of all the tribes on his breastplate, and in him God is and will be glorified; so he said by a voice from heaven, *Jno.* xii. 27, 28. Some read the words in two clauses, "Thou art my servant;" so Christ is, *ch.* xlii. 1; 'It is Israel in whom I will be glorified by thee;' it is the spiritual Israel, the elect, in the salvation of whom by Jesus Christ God will be glorified, and his free grace for ever admired.

Thirdly. He is assured of the good success of his undertaking; for whom God calls he will prosper. And as to this,

1. He objects the discouragement he had met with at his first setting out; ver. 4, "Then I said," with a sad heart, "I have laboured in vain." Those that were ignorant, and careless, and strangers to God, are so still. I have called, and they have refused, have stretched out my hands to a gainsaying people. This was Isaiah's complaint, but it was no more than he was told to expect, *ch.* vi. 9. And the same was a temptation to Jeremiah to resolve he would labour no more, *Jer.* xx. 9. It is the complaint of many a faithful minister, that has not loitered, but laboured, not spared, but spent his strength, and himself with it, and yet as to many it is all in vain and for nought, they will not be prevailed with to repent and believe. But here it seems to point at the obstinacy of the Jews, among whom Christ went in person preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, laboured and spent his strength, and yet the rulers and the body of the nation rejected him and his doctrine; so very few were brought in, when one would have thought none should have stood out, that he might well say, "I have laboured in vain," preached so many sermons, wrought so many miracles in vain. Let not the ministers think it strange that they are slighted, when the Master himself was.

2. He comforts himself under this discouragement with this consideration, that it was the cause of God in which he was engaged, and the call of God that engaged him in it; "Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord," who is the Judge of all, "and my work with my God," whose servant I am. His comfort is, and it may be the comfort of all faithful ministers, when they see little success of their labours, 1st. That, however it be, it is a righteous cause that they are pleading, they are with God, and for God, they are on his side, and workers together with him; they like not their judgment, the rule they go by, nor their work, the business they are employed in, ever the worse for this; the unbelief of men gives them no cause to suspect the truth of their doctrine, *Rom.* iii. 3. 2nd. That their management of this cause, and their prosecution of this work, was known to God, and they could appeal to him concerning their sincerity, and that it was not through any neglect of theirs that they laboured in vain; "He knows the way that I take;" "my judgment is with the Lord," to determine whether I have not delivered my soul, and left the blood of them that perish on their own heads. 3rd. Though the labour be in vain as to those that are laboured with, yet not as to the labourer himself, if he be faithful. His judgment is with the Lord, who will justify him, and bear him out, though men condemn him, and run him down; and his work, that is, the reward of his work, is with his God, who will take care he shall be no loser, no, not by his lost labour. 4th. Though the judgment be not yet brought forth unto victory, nor the work to perfection, yet both are with the Lord, to carry them on, and succeed them, according to his purpose, in his own way and time.

3. He receives from God a farther answer to this objection, ver. 5, 6. He knew very well that God had set him on work, had formed him from the womb to be his servant; not only called him so early to it, ver. 1, but began so early to fit him for it, and dispose him to it. Those whom God designs to employ as his servants, he is fashioning and preparing them to be so long before, when perhaps neither themselves nor others are aware of it; it is he that formeth the spirit of man within him. Christ was to be his servant to bring Jacob again to him, that had treacherously departed from him; the seed of Jacob therefore, according to the flesh, must first be dealt with, and means used to bring them back. Christ, and the word of salvation by him, are sent to them first; nay, Christ comes in person to them only, "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But what if Jacob will not be brought back to God, and Israel will not be gathered? So it proved; but this is a satisfaction in that case.

1st. Christ will be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and those are truly glorious that are so in God's eyes. Though few of the Jewish nation were converted by Christ's preaching and miracles, and many of them loaded him with ignominy and disgrace, yet God put honour upon him, and made him glorious, at his baptism, in his transfiguration, spoke to him from heaven, sent angels to minister to him, made even his shameful death glorious by the many prodigies that attended it, much more in his resurrection. In his sufferings God was his strength; so that, though he met with all the discouragement imaginable, by the contempts of a people whom he had done so much to oblige, yet he did not fail, nor was discouraged; an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, *Lu.* xxii. 43. Faithful ministers, though they see not the fruit of their labours, yet they shall be accepted of God, and in that they shall be truly glorious, for his favour is our honour; and they shall be assisted to proceed and persevere in their labours notwithstanding. This weakens their hands, but their God will be their strength.

2nd. The Gospel shall be glorious in the eyes of the world. Though it be not so in the eyes of the Jews, yet it shall be entertained by the nations, ver. 6. The Messiah seemed as if he had been primarily designed to bring Jacob back, ver. 5. But he is here told that that is comparatively but a small matter; a higher orb of honour than that, and a larger sphere of usefulness, are designed him; "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob" to the dignity and dominion they expect by the Messiah, "and to restore the preserved of Israel," and make them a flourishing church and state as formerly. Nay, considering what a little handful of people they are, it would be but a small matter, in comparison, for the Messiah to be the Saviour of them only; and therefore "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles." Many great and mighty nations, by the Gospel of Christ, shall be brought to the knowledge and worship of the true God, "That thou mayest be my salvation," the author of that salvation which I have designed for lost man, and this "to the end of the earth," to nations at the greatest distance. Hence Simeon learned to call Christ a Light to lighten the Gentiles, *Lu.* ii. 32; and St. Paul's exposition of this text is what we ought to abide by, and it serves for a key to the context; *Acts* xiii. 47, "Therefore," saith he, "we turn to the Gentiles," to preach the Gospel to them; "because so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles." In this the Redeemer was truly glorious, though Israel was not gathered; the setting up of his kingdom in the Gentile world was more his honour than if he had raised up all the tribes of Jacob. This promise is in part fulfilled already, and will have a farther accomplishment, if that time be yet to come which the apostle speaks of, when "the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in." Observe, God calls it his salvation; which, some think, intimates how well pleased he was with it, how he gloried in it, and (if I may so say) how much his heart was upon it. And farther observe, that Christ is given for a light to all those to whom he is given for salvation. It is in darkness that men perish; Christ enlightens men's eyes, and so makes them holy and happy.

7 Thus saith the LORD,
The Redeemer of Israel, *and* his Holy One,
To him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation [abhorreth,
To a servant of rulers,
Kings shall see and arise,
Princes also shall worship,
Because of the LORD that is faithful,
And the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.
8 Thus saith the LORD,
In an acceptable time have I heard thee,
And in a day of salvation have I helped thee:
And I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, [heritages;
To establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate
9 That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth;
To them that *are* in darkness, Shew yourselves.
They shall feed in the ways,
And their pastures *shall be* in all high places
10 They shall not hunger nor thirst;
Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them:
For he that hath mercy on them shall lead them,
Even by the springs of water shall he guide them.
11 And I will make all my mountains a way,
And my highways shall be exalted.
12 Behold, these shall come from far:
And, lo, these from the north and from the west,
And these from the land of Sinim.

In these verses we have,

First. The humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah; ver. 7, "The Lord, the Redeemer of Israel," and Israel's Holy One, that had always taken care of the Jewish church, and wrought out for them those deliverances that were typical of the great salvation, speaks here to him who was the undertaker of that salvation. And, 1. He takes notice of his humiliation, the instances of which were uncommon, nay, they were unparalleled. He was one whom man despised; *ch.* liii. 2, "He is despised and rejected of men." To be despised by so mean a creature, man, that is himself a worm, speaks the lowest and most contemptible condition imaginable. Man, whom he came to save, and to put honour upon, yet despised him, and put contempt upon him, so wretchedly ungrateful were his persecutors. The ignominy he underwent was not the least of his sufferings; nay, they not only made him despicable, but odious. He was "one whom the nation abhorred;" they treated him as the worst of men, and cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him." The nation did it, the Gentiles as well as Jews, and the Jews herein worse than Gentiles; for his cross was to the one a stumblingblock, and to the other foolishness. He was "a servant of rulers;" he was trampled upon, abused, scourged, and crucified as a slave. Pilate boasted of his power over him, *Jno.* xix. 10. This he submitted to for our salvation. 2. He promiseth him his exaltation. Honour was done him, even in the depth of his humiliation. Herod the king stood in awe of him, saying, "It is John the Baptist." Noblemen, rulers, centurions, came and kneeled to him. But this was to be more fully accomplished when kings should receive his Gospel, and submit to his yoke, and join in the worship of him, and call

themselves the vassals of Christ. Not that Christ values the rich more than the poor, they stand upon a level with him; but it is for the honour of his kingdom among men, when the great ones of the earth appear for him, and do homage to him. This shall be the accomplishment of God's promise, that he will give him the heathen for his inheritance; and therefore it shall be done, because of the Lord that is faithful and true to his promise. And it shall be an evidence that Christ had a commission for what he did, and that God had chosen him, and would own the choice he had made.

Secondly. The blessings he hath in store for all those to whom he is made salvation.

1. God will own him, and stand by him in his undertaking; ver. 8, "In an acceptable time have I heard thee;" that is, I will hear thee. Christ, "in the days of his flesh, offered up strong cries, and was heard," *Heb.* v. 7. He knew that the Father heard him always, *Jno.* xi. 42; heard him for himself, for though the cup might not pass from him, yet he was enabled to drink it; heard him for all that are his, and therefore he interceded for them as one having authority; "Father, I will," *Jno.* xvii. 24. And all our happiness results from the Son's interest in the Father, and the prevalency of his intercession, that he always heard him. And this makes the gospel time an acceptable time, welcome to us, because we are accepted of God, both reconciled and recommended to him, that God hears the Redeemer for us, *Heb.* vii. 25. Nor will he hear him only, but help him to get through with his undertaking. The Father was always with him at his right hand, and did not leave him when his disciples did. Violent attacks were made upon our Lord Jesus by the powers of darkness, when it was their hour, to have driven him off from his undertakings; but God promised to preserve him, and enable him to persevere in it. On that one stone was seven eyes, *Zec.* iii. 9. God would preserve him; that is, would preserve his interest, his kingdom amongst men, though fought against on all sides. Christ is preserved while Christianity is.

2. God will authorize him to apply to his church the benefits of the redemption he is to work out. God's preserving and helping him was to make the day of his Gospel a day of salvation, and so the apostle understands it: "behold, now is the day of salvation;" now the word of reconciliation by Christ is preached, 2 *Cor.* vi. 2.

1st. He shall be guarantee of the treaty of peace between God and man. "I will give thee for a covenant of the people." This we had before, *ch.* xlii. 6, and it is here repeated, as faithful and well worthy of all acceptation and observation. He is given for a covenant; that is, for a pledge of all the blessings of the covenant. It was in him that God was reconciling the world to himself; and he that spared not his own Son will deny us nothing. He is given for a covenant, not only as he is the Mediator of the covenant, the blessed Daysman that has laid his hand upon us both, but as he is all in all in the covenant. All the duty of the covenant is summed up in our being his; and all the privilege and happiness of the covenant is summed up in his being ours.

2nd. He shall repair the decays of the church, and build it upon a rock. He shall establish the earth, or rather the land, the land of Judah, a type of the church. He shall cause the desolate heritages to be inherited. So the cities of Judah were after the return out of captivity; and so the church, that in the last and degenerate ages of the Jewish nation had been as a country laid waste, but was again replenished by the fruits of the preaching of the Gospel.

3rd. He shall free the souls of men from the bondage of guilt and corruption, and bring them into the glorious liberty of God's children. He shall say to the prisoners, that were bound over to the justice of God, and bound under the power of Satan, "Go forth," ver. 9. Pardoning mercy is a release from the curse of the law, and renewing grace is a release from the dominion of sin; both are from Christ, and are branches of the great salvation. It is he that saith, Go forth; it is the Son that makes us free, and then we are free indeed. He saith to them that are in darkness, "Shew yourselves;" not only see, but be seen, to the glory of God, and your own comfort. When he discharged the lepers from their confinement, he said, "Go, shew yourselves to the priest." When we see the light, let our light shine.

4th. He shall provide for the comfortable passage of those whom he sets at liberty to the place of their rest and happy settlement, ver. 9—11, which refers to the provision made for the Jews returning out of their captivity, who were taken under the particular care of the Divine providence, as favourites of heaven, and now so in a special manner. But it is applicable to that conduct of Divine grace, which all God's spiritual Israel are under, from their release out of bondage, to their settlement in the heavenly Canaan. *First.* They shall have their charges borne, and shall be fed on free cost with food convenient. "They shall feed in the ways," as sheep; for now, as formerly, God leadeth Joseph like a flock. When God pleaseth, even highway ground shall be good ground for the sheep of his pasture to feed in. Their pastures shall not only be in the valleys, but in all high places, which commonly used to be dry and barren. Wherever God brings his people, he will take care they shall want nothing that is good for them, *Ps.* xxxiv. 10. And so well shall they be provided for, that "they shall not hunger nor thirst;" for what they need they shall have seasonably, before their need of it comes to any extremity. *Secondly.* They shall be sheltered and protected from every thing that would incommode them; "neither shall the heat nor sun smite them," for God causeth his flock to rest at noon, *Cant.* i. 7. And no evil thing shall befall those that put themselves under a Divine protection; they shall be enabled to bear the burthen and heat of the day. *Thirdly.* They shall be under God's gracious guidance; "He that hath mercy on them," in bringing them out of their captivity, "shall lead them," as he did their fathers in the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud and fire; even "by springs of water," which will be ready to them in their march, "shall he guide them;" that is, God will furnish them with suitable and seasonable comforts, not like the pools of rain water in the valley of Baca, but like the water out of the rock which followed Israel. Those who are under a Divine conduct, and follow that close, while they do so may, upon good grounds, hope for Divine comforts and cordials. The world leads its followers by broken cisterns, or brooks that fail in summer; but God leads those that are his by springs of water. And those whom God guides shall find a ready road, and all obstacles removed; ver. 11, "I will make all my mountains a way." He that in times past made the sea a way, now with as much ease will make the mountains a way, though they seemed impassable. The highway, or causeway, shall be raised, to make it both the plainer and the fairer. Note, The ways in which God leads his people he himself will be the overseer of, and will take care they be well mended, and kept in repair, as of old the ways that led to the cities of refuge. The levelling of the roads from Babylon, as it was foretold, *ch.* xl. 2, 3, was applied to gospel work, and so may this be. Though there be difficulties in the way to heaven which we cannot by our own strength get over, yet the grace of God shall be sufficient for us to help us over them, and to make even the mountains a way, *ch.* xxxv. 8.

5th. He shall bring them all together from all parts, that they may return in a body, that they may encourage one another, and be the more taken notice of. They were dispersed into several parts of the country of Babylon, as their enemies pleased, to prevent any combination among themselves; but, when God's time is come to bring them home together, one spirit shall animate them; all that lie at the greatest distance from each other, and those also that had taken shelter in other countries, shall meet them in the land of Judah, ver. 12. Here shall a party come from far, some from the north, some from the west, some from the land of Sinim, which probably is some province of Baby on, not elsewhere named in Scripture. But some make it to be a country belonging to one of the chief cities of Egypt, called Sin, of which we read, *Eze.* xxx. 15, 16. Now this promise was to have a farther accomplishment in the great confluence of converts to the gospel church, and its full accomplishment when God's chosen shall come from the east and from the west to sit down with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God, *Mat.* viii. 11.

13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth;
And break forth into singing, O mountains:
For the LORD hath comforted his people,
And will have mercy upon his afflicted.
14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me,
And my Lord hath forgotten me.
15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, [womb?
That she should not have compassion on the son of her
Yea, they may forget,
Yet will I not forget thee.
16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands;
Thy walls *are* continually before me.
17 Thy children shall make haste;
Thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go
forth of thee.

The scope of these verses is to shew that the return of the people of God out of their captivity, and the eternal redemption to be wrought out by Christ, which that was a type of, would be great occasions of joy to the church, and great proofs of the tender care God has of the church.

First. Nothing can furnish us with better matter for songs of praise and thanksgiving, ver. 13. Let the whole creation join with us in songs of joy, for it shares with us in the benefits of the redemption, and all they can contribute to this sacred melody is little enough in return for such inestimable favours, *Ps.* xcvi. 11. Let there be joy in heaven, and let the angels of God celebrate the praises of the great Redeemer; let the earth, and the mountains, particularly the great ones of the earth, be joyful, and break forth into singing, for the earnest expectation of the creatures, that waits for the glorious liberty of the children of God (*Rom.* viii. 19, 21,) shall now be abundantly answered. God's people are the blessings and ornaments of the world, and therefore let there be a universal joy, for God hath comforted his people that were in sorrow, and he will have mercy upon the afflicted, because of his compassion; upon his afflicted, because of his covenant.

Secondly. Nothing can furnish us with more convincing arguments to prove the most tender and affectionate concern God hath for his church, and her interests and comforts.

1. The troubles of the church have given some occasion to question God's care and concern for it; ver. 14, Zion, in distress, said, "The Lord hath forsaken me," and doth look after me no more; "my Lord hath forgotten me," and will look after me no more. See how deplorable the case of God's people may be sometimes, such as that they may seem to be forsaken and forgotten of their God, and how violent and prevalent their temptations may be at such a time. Infidels, in their presumption, say, "God hath forsaken the earth," *Eze.* viii. 12; and hath forgotten their sins, *Ps.* x. 11. Weak believers, in their despondency, are ready to say, God hath forsaken his church, and forgotten the sorrows of his people; but we have no more reason to question his promise and grace than we have to question his providence and justice. He is as sure a rewarder as he is a revenger. Away, therefore, with these distrusts and jealousies which are the bane of friendship.

2. The triumphs of the church, after her troubles, will, in due time, put the matter out of question. What God will do for Zion we are told, ver. 17, 1st. Her friends that had deserted her shall be gathered to her, and shall contribute their utmost to her assistance and comfort; "Thy children shall make haste." Converts to the faith of Christ are the children of the church; they shall join themselves to her with great readiness and cheerfulness, "and flock" into the communion of saints, "as doves to their windows." 'Thy builders shall make haste,' so some read it, that shall build up thy houses, thy walls, especially thy temple; they shall do it with expedition. Church work useth to be slow work; but when God's time is come it shall be done suddenly. 2nd. Her enemies, that had threatened and assaulted her, shall be forced to withdraw from her. "Thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste," that had made themselves masters of the country, and ravaged it, "shall go forth of thee." By Christ, the prince of this world, the great destroyer, is cast out, is dispossessed, his power broken, and his attempts quite baffled. Now by this it will appear that Zion's suggestions were altogether groundless, that God hath not forsaken her, or forgotten her, nor never will. Be assured,

First. That God hath a tender affection for his church and people, ver. 15. In answer to Zion's fears, God speaks as one concerned for his own glory; he takes himself to be reflected upon if Zion say, "The Lord has forsaken me," and he will clear himself; as one concerned also for his people's comfort, he would not have them droop and be discouraged, and give way to any uneasy thoughts. You think I have forgotten you; "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" 1*st.* It is not likely that she should. A woman, whose honour it is to be of the tender sex as well as the fair one, cannot but have compassion for a child, that, being both harmless and helpless, is a proper object of compassion. A mother especially cannot but be concerned for her own child; for it is her own, a piece of herself, and very lately one with her. A nursing mother, most of all, cannot but be tender of her sucking child; her own gorged breasts will soon put her in mind of it, if she should forget it. But, 2*nd.* It is possible "they may forget." A woman may perhaps be so unhappy as not to be able to remember her sucking child; she may be sick, and dying, and going to the land of forgetfulness; or she may be so unnatural as not to "have compassion on the son of her womb;" like those who, to conceal their shame, are the death of their children, as soon as they are their life, *Lam.* iv. 10; *Deu.* xxviii. 58; but saith God, "I will not forget thee." Note, God's compassions to his people infinitely exceed those of the tenderest parents towards their children. What are the affections of nature to those of the God of nature?

Secondly. That he hath a constant care of his church and people; ver. 16, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." This doth not allude to the foolish art of palmistry, which imagines every man's fate to be engraven in

the palms of his hands, and to be legible in the lines there; but to the custom of those who tie a string upon their hands or fingers to put them in mind of things that they are afraid they shall forget, or to the wearing of signet or locket-rings, in remembrance of some dear friend. His setting them thus as a seal upon his arm denotes his setting them as a seal upon his heart, and his being ever mindful of them and their interests, *Cant.* viii. 6. If we bind God's laws as a sign upon our hand, (*Deu.* vi. 8; xi. 18,) he will engrave our interests as a sign on his hand, and will look upon that, and remember the covenant. He adds, "Thy walls shall be continually before me." Thy ruined walls, though no pleasing spectacle, shall be in my thoughts of compassion. Do Zion's friends favour her dust? *Ps.* cii. 14; so doth her God. Or, the plan and model of thy walls, that are to be rebuilt, are before me, and they shall certainly be built according to it. Or, thy walls; that is, thy safety, it is my continual care; so are the watchmen on thy walls. Some apply the graving of his church on the palms of his hands to the wounds in Christ's hands, when he was crucified; he will look on the marks of them, and remember those for whom he suffered and died.

18 Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold:
All these gather themselves together, *and* come to thee.
As I live, saith the LORD, [ornament,
Thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an
And bind them *on thee*, as a bride *doeth*.
19 For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction,
Shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants,
And they that swallowed thee up shall be far away.
20 The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other,
Shall say again in thine ears, The place *is* too strait for
Give place to me that I may dwell. [me:
21 Then shalt thou say in thine heart,
Who hath begotten me these,
Seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate,
A captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these?
Behold, I was left alone; these, where *had* they *been*?
22 Thus saith the Lord GOD,
Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles,
And set up my standard to the people:
And they shall bring thy sons in *their* arms,
And thy daughters shall be carried upon *their* shoulders.
23 And kings shall be thy nursing fathers,
And their queens thy nursing mothers:
They shall bow down to thee with *their* face toward the
And lick up the dust of thy feet; [earth,
And thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD:
For they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Two things are here promised, which were to be in part accomplished in the reviving of the Jewish church after its return out of captivity, but more fully in the planting of the Christian church by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ; and we may take the comfort of these promises.

First. That the church shall be replenished with great numbers added to it. It was promised, ver. 17, that her children should make haste; that promise is here enlarged upon, and is made very encouraging. It is promised,

1. That multitudes shall flock to the church from all parts. Look round, and see how they gather themselves to thee, ver. 18, by a local accession to the Jewish church: they come to Jerusalem from all the adjacent countries, for that was then the centre of their unity. But, under the Gospel, it is by a spiritual accession to the mystical body of Christ, in faith and love. Those that are come to Jesus, as the Mediator of the new covenant, thereby come to mount Zion, the church of the firstborn, *Heb.* xii. 22, 23. Lift up thine eyes, and behold how the fields are white unto the harvest, *Jno.* iv. 35. Note, It is matter of joy to the church, to see a multitude of converts to Christ.

2. That such as are added to the church shall not be a burthen and blemish to her, but her strength and ornament. This part of the promise is confirmed with an oath: "As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all." The addition of such numbers to the church shall complete her clothing; and when all that were chosen are effectually called, then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready, shall be quite dressed, *Rev.* xix. 7. They shall make her to appear comely and considerable, and she shall therefore bind them on with as much care and complacency as a bride doth her ornaments. When those that are added to the church are serious, and holy, and exemplary in their conversation, they are an ornament to it.

3. That thus the country that was waste and desolate, and without an inhabitant, (*ch.* v. 9; vi. 11,) shall be again peopled; nay, it shall be over-peopled, ver. 19. "Thy waste and thy desolate places," that have long lain so, "and the land of thy destruction," that land of thine which was destroyed with thee, and which nobody cared for dwelling in, shall now be so full of people that there shall be no room for the inhabitants. Here is a blessing poured out, till there be not room enough to receive it, *Mal.* iii. 10. Not that they shall be crowded up by their enemies, or straitened for room, as Abraham and Lot were because of the Canaanites in the land; no, "they that swallowed thee up," and took possession of thy land when thy possession of it was discontinued, "shall be far away." Thy people shall be numerous, and there shall be no stranger, no enemy among them. Thus the kingdom of God among men, that had been impoverished and almost depopulated, partly by the corruptions of the Jewish church, and partly by the abominations of the Gentile world, was again peopled and enriched by the setting up of the Christian church, and the graces and glories of that.

4. That the new converts shall strangely increase and multiply. Jerusalem, after she has lost the abundance of her children by the sword, famine, and captivity, shall have a new brood growing up instead of them; children which she shall have after she has lost the other, ver. 20: as Seth, that was appointed another seed instead of Abel, and Job's children which God blessed him with, instead of those that were killed in the ruins of the house. God will repair his church's losses, and secure to himself a seed to serve him in it. It is promised to the Jews after their return, that "Jerusalem shall be full of boys and girls, playing in the streets," *Zec.* viii. 5. The church, after it has lost the Jews, who will be cut off by their own infidelity, yet shall have abundance of children still, more than she had when the Jews belonged to her; see *Gal.* iv. 27. They shall be so numerous, that, 1st. The children shall complain for want of room. They shall say, and it is a good hearing, that their numbers increase so fast, that the place is too strait for them; as the sons of the prophets complained, 2 *Kin.* vi. 1. But, as strait as the place is, still more shall desire to be admitted, and the church shall gladly admit them; and the inconvenient straitness of the place shall be no hindrance to either; for it will be found, whatever we think, that even when the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are brought in, yet still there is room, room enough for those that are in, and room for more, *Lu.* xiv. 21, 22. 2nd. The mother shall stand amazed at the increase of her family, ver. 21; she shall say, "Who hath begotten me these? and who has brought up these?" They come to her with all the duty, affection, and submission of children, and yet she never bore any pain for them, nor took any pains with them, but has them ready reared to her hand. This gives her a pleasing surprise; and she cannot but be astonished at it, considering what her condition had been very lately, and very long. The Jewish nation had lost her children, they were cut off; she had been desolate, without ark, and altar, and temple service, those tokens of God's espousals to them; nay, she had been a captive, and continually moving to and fro in an unsettled condition, and not likely to bring up children, either for God or herself. She was left alone, in obscurity; "This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after," left in all the solitude and sorrow of a widowed state. How then came she to be thus replenished? See here, *First.* That the church is not perpetually visible, but there are times when it is desolate, and left alone, and made few in number. *Secondly.* That yet, on the other hand, its desolations shall not be perpetual, nor will it be found too hard for God to repair them, and out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham. *Thirdly.* That sometimes this is done in a very surprising way, as when a nation is born at once, *ch.* lxvi. 8.

5. That this shall be done with the help of the Gentiles, ver. 22. The Jews were cast off, among whom it was expected that the church should be built up; but God will sow it to himself in the earth, and from thence will reap a plentiful crop, *Hos.* ii. 23. Observe, 1st. How the Gentiles shall be called in. God will lift up his hand to them, to invite or beckon them, having all the day stretched it out in vain to the Jews, *ch.* lxv. 2. Or, it notes the exerting of an almighty power, that of his Spirit and grace, to compel them to come in, that is, to make them willing; and he will set up his standard to them, that is, the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, to which they shall gather, and under which they shall lift themselves. 2nd. How they shall come. "They shall bring thy sons in their arms," that is, either, they shall assist the sons of Zion which are found among them, in their return to their own country, and shall forward them with as much tenderness as ever any parent carried a child that was weak and helpless, (God can raise up friends for returning Israelites, even among Gentiles; "The earth helped the woman," *Rev.* xii. 16,) or, when they come themselves, they shall bring their children, and make them thy children: compare *ch.* lx. 40. Dost thou ask who has begotten and brought up these? Know, that they were begotten and brought up among the Gentiles, but they are now brought into thy family. Let all that are concerned about young converts, and young beginners in religion, learn hence to deal very tenderly and carefully with them, as Christ doth with the lambs, whom he gathers with his arms, and carries in his bosom.

Secondly. That the church shall have a great and prevailing interest in the nations, ver. 23. 1. Some of the princes of the nations shall become patrons and protectors to the church; "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers," to carry thy sons in their arms, ver. 24, as Moses, *Num.* xi. 14; and, because women are the most proper nurses, "their queens shall be thy nursing mothers." This promise was in part fulfilled to the Jews after their return out of captivity: divers of the kings of Persia were very tender of their interests, countenanced and encouraged them, as Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes. Esther, the queen, was a nursing mother to the Jews that remained in their captivity, putting her life in her hand, to snatch the child out of the flames. The Christian church, after a long captivity, was happy in some such kings and queens as Constantine and his mother Helena, and afterwards Theodosius and others, that nursed the church with all possible care and tenderness. Whenever the sceptre of government is put into the hands of religious princes, then this promise is fulfilled. The church, in this world, is in an infant state, and it is in the power of princes and magistrates to do it a great deal of service; it is happy when they do so, when their power is a praise to them that do well. 2. Others of them, that stand it out against the church's interests, will be forced to yield, and to repent of their opposition; they shall bow down to thee, and lick the dust. The promise to the church of Philadelphia seems to be borrowed from this; *Rev.* iii. 9, "I will make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before thy face." Or, it may be meant of the willing subjection which kings and kingdoms shall pay to Christ, the church's king, as he manifests himself in the church; *Ps.* lxxii. 11, "All kings shall fall down before him." And by all this it shall be made to appear, 1st. That God is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, against whom there is no standing out, or rising up. 2nd. That those that wait for him, in a dependence upon his promise, and a resignation to his will, shall not be made ashamed of their hope; for the vision of peace is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie.

24 Shall the prey be taken from the mighty,
Or the lawful captive delivered?
25 But thus saith the LORD,
Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away,
And the prey of the terrible shall be delivered:
For I will contend with him that contendeth with thee,
And I will save thy children. [flesh;
26 And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own
And they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with
And all flesh shall know [sweet wine:
That I the LORD *am* thy Saviour and thy Redeemer,
The mighty One of Jacob.

Here is, First. An objection started against the promise of the Jews' release out of their captivity in Babylon, suggesting that it was a thing not to be expected: for, ver. 14, they were a prey in the hand of the mighty; of such as were then the greatest potentates on earth, and therefore it was not likely they should be rescued by force. Yet that was not all, they were lawful captives; by the law of God, having offended, they were justly delivered into captivity; and by the law of nations, being taken in war, they were justly detained in captivity, till they should be ransomed or exchanged. Now this is spoken, either, 1. By the enemies, as justifying themselves in their refusal to let them go. They plead both might and right. Proud men think all their own they can lay their hands on, and their title good, if they have but the longest sword. 2. Or by their friends: either in a way of distrust, despairing of the deliverance, (for who is able to deal with those that detain us, either by force of arms or a treaty of peace?) or in a way of thankfulness, admiring the deliverance; who would have thought that ever the prey should "be taken from the mighty?" yet it is done. This is applicable to our redemption by Christ: As to Satan, we were a prey in the hand of the mighty, and yet delivered, even from him that had the power of death, by him that had the power of life. As to the justice of God, we were lawful captives, and yet delivered by a price of inestimable value.

Secondly. This objection answered by an express promise, and a farther promise; for God's promises being all yea and amen, they may well serve to corroborate one another. 1. Here is an express promise, with a *non obstante*,—'notwithstanding,' to the strength of the enemy, ver. 25. "Even the captives of the mighty," though they are mighty, "shall be taken away," and it is to no purpose for them to oppose it, "and the prey of the terrible," though they are terrible, "shall be delivered;" and as they cannot with all their strength outforce, so they cannot with all their impudence outface, the deliverance, and the counsels of God concerning it. The Lord saith thus, who, having all power in his hands, and all hearts, is able to make his words good. 2. Here is a farther promise, shewing how and in what way God will bring about the deliverance. He will bring judgments upon the oppressors, and so will work salvation for the oppressed. "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee," will plead thy cause against those that justify themselves in oppressing thee; whoever it be, though but a single person, that contendeth with thee, he shall know that it is at his peril; and thus "I will save thy children." The captives shall be delivered by leading captivity captive, that is, sending those into captivity that had held God's people captive, *Rev.* xiii. 10. Nay, they shall have blood for blood, ver. 26; "I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh," and "they shall be drunken with their own blood;" that is, the proud Babylonians shall become not only an easy but an acceptable prey to one another; God will send a dividing spirit among them, and their ruin, which was begun by a foreign invasion, shall be completed by their intestine divisions. They shall bite and devour one another, till they are consumed one of another. They shall greedily, and with delight, prey upon those that are their own flesh and blood. God can make the oppressors of his church to be their own tormentors, and their own destroyers. The New-Testament Babylon having made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, shall have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy. See how cruel men sometimes are to themselves, to one another; and those that are so to others, are so to themselves, for God's justice and men's revenge will mete to them what they have measured to others; they not only thirst after blood, but drink it so greedily that they are drunken with it, and with as much pleasure as if it were sweet wine. If God had not more mercy on sinners than they would have one upon another were their passions let loose, the world would be soon an Aceldama, nay, a desolation.

Thirdly. See what will be the effect of Babylon's ruin: "All flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour." God will make it to appear to the conviction of all the world that, though Israel seem lost and cast off, they have a Redeemer; and though they are made a prey to the mighty, Jacob hath a mighty One, that is able to deal with all his enemies. God intends, by the deliverances of his church, both to notify and to magnify his own name.

CHAPTER L.

In this chapter, I. Those to whom God sends are justly charged with bringing all the troubles they were in upon themselves, by their own wilfulness and obstinacy; it being made to appear that God was able and ready to help them, if they had been fit for deliverance, ver. 1—3. II. He by whom God sends produceth his commission, ver. 4; allegeth his own readiness to submit to all the services and sufferings he was called to in the execution of it, ver. 5, 6; and assures himself that God who sent him would stand by him, and bear him out against all opposition, ver. 7—9. III. The message that is sent is life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse; comfort to desponding saints, and terror to presuming sinners, ver. 10, 11. Now all this seems to have a double reference: 1. To the unbelieving Jews in Babylon, who quarrelled with God for his dealings with them; and to the prophet Isaiah, who, though dead long before the captivity, yet, prophesying so plainly and fully of it, saw fit to produce his credentials, to justify what he had said. 2. To the unbelieving Jews in our Saviour's time, whose own fault it was that they were rejected; Christ having preached much to them, and suffered much from them, and being herein borne up by a Divine power. The contents of this chapter in our Bibles give this sense of it very concisely, thus: Christ shews, that the dereliction of the Jews is not to be imputed to him, by his ability to save, by his obedience in that work, and by his confidence in Divine assistance; and concludes with an exhortation to trust in God, and not in ourselves.

THUS saith the LORD,
Where *is* the bill of your mother's divorcement,
Whom I have put away?
Or which of my creditors *is it* to whom I have sold you?
Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves,
And for your transgressions is your mother put away.

2 Wherefore, when I came, *was there* no man?
When I called, *was there* none to answer?
Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem?
Or have I no power to deliver?
Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea,
I make the rivers a wilderness:
Their fish stinketh, because *there is* no water,
And dieth for thirst.

3 I clothe the heavens with blackness,
And I make sackcloth their covering.

Those who have professed to be the people of God, and yet seem to be dealt severely with, are apt to complain of God, and to lay the fault upon him, as if he had been hard with them. But in answer to their murmurings, we have here,

First. A challenge given them to prove, or produce any evidence, that the quarrel began on God's side, ver. 1. They could not say that he had done them any wrong, or had acted arbitrarily. 1. He had been a husband to them; and husbands were then allowed a power to put away their wives upon any little disgust; if they found not favour in their eyes, they made nothing of giving them a bill of divorce, *Deu.* xxiv. 1; *Mat.* xix. 7. But they could not say that God had dealt so with them. It is true, they were now separated from him, and had abode many days without ephod, altar, or sacrifice; but whose fault was that? They could not say that God had given their mother a bill of divorce; let them produce it if they can; for a bill of divorce was given into the hand of her that was divorced. 2. He had been a father to them; and fathers had then a power to sell their children for slaves to their creditors, in satisfaction for the debts they were not otherwise able to pay. Now it was true, that the Jews were sold, to the Babylonians then, and afterwards to the Romans; but did God sell them for payment of his debts? No, he was not indebted to any of those to whom they were sold; or, if he had, he did not increase his wealth by their price, *Ps.* xliv. 12. When God chastens his children, it is neither for his pleasure, *Heb.* xii. 10, nor for his profit. All that are saved are saved by a prerogative of grace; but those that perish are cut off by an act of Divine holiness and justice, not of absolute sovereignty.

Secondly. A charge exhibited against them, shewing that they were themselves the authors of their own ruin. "Behold, for your iniquities," for the pleasure of them, and the gratification of your own base lusts, "you have sold yourselves;" for your iniquities you are sold; not as children are sold by their parents, to pay their debts, but as malefactors are sold by the judges, to punish them for their crimes. You sold yourselves to work wickedness, and therefore God justly sold you into the hands of your enemies, 2 *Chr.* xii. 5, 8. It is "for your transgressions that your mother is put away," for her whoredoms and adulteries, which were always allowed to be a just cause of divorce. The Jews were sent into Babylon for their idolatry, a sin which broke the marriage covenant, and were at last rejected for crucifying the Lord of glory; these were the iniquities for which they were sold, and put away.

Thirdly. The confirmation of this challenge and this charge.

1. It is plain it was long of themselves that they were cast off, for God came and offered them his favour, offered them his helping hand, either to prevent their trouble or to deliver them out of it, but they slighted him and all the tenders of his grace. Do you lay it upon me? saith God; tell me, then, wherefore when I came there was no man to meet me, when I called there was none to answer me? ver. 2. God came to them by his servants the prophets, demanding the fruits of his vineyard, *Mat.* xxi. 34; sent them his messengers, rising up betimes and sending them, *Jer.* xxxv. 15; called them to leave their sins, and so prevent their own ruin: but there was no man, or next to none, that had any regard to the warnings which the prophets gave them, none that answered the calls of God, or complied with the messages he sent them; and this was it for which they were sold and put away, because they mocked the messengers of the Lord, therefore God "brought upon them the king of the Chaldees," 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 16, 17. Last of all he sent unto them his Son; he "came to his own, but his own received him not;" he called them to himself, but there were none that answered; he would have gathered Jerusalem's children together, but they would not; they knew not, because they would not know, the things that belonged to their peace, nor the day of their visitation, and for that transgression it was that they were put away, and their house left desolate, *Mat.* xxi. 41; xxiii. 37, 38; *Lu.* xix. 41, 42. When God calls men to happiness, and they will not answer, they are justly left to be miserable.

2. It is plain it was not long of God, for he is almighty, and could have recovered them from so great a death; not long of Christ, for he is able to save to the uttermost. The unbelieving Jews in Babylon thought they were not delivered, because their God was not able to do it; and those in Christ's time were ready to ask in scorn, Can this man save us, for himself he cannot save? But, saith God, "Is my hand shortened at all?" Or is it weakened? Can any limits be set to omnipotence? Cannot he redeem who is the great Redeemer? or hath he no power to deliver whose all power is? To put to silence, and for ever to put to shame, their doubts concerning his power, he here gives unquestionable proofs of it. 1st. He can, when he pleaseth, dry up the seas, and "make the rivers a wilderness;" he did so for Israel, when he redeemed them out of Egypt; he can do so again for their redemption out of Babylon. It is done at his rebuke, as easily as with a word's speaking; he can so dry up the rivers as to leave the fish to die for want of water, and to putrefy. When God turned the waters of Egypt into blood he slew the fish, *Ps.* cv. 24. The expression our Saviour sometimes used concerning the power of faith, that it will remove mountains and plant sycamores in the sea, is not unlike this; if their faith could do that, no doubt their faith would save them, and therefore they were inexcusable if they perished in unbelief. 2nd. He can, when he pleaseth, eclipse the light of heaven, clothe them with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering, by thick and dark clouds interposing, which he balanceth, *Job* xxxvi. 32; xxxvii. 16.

4 The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned,
That I should know how to speak a word in season to *him that is* weary:
He wakeneth morning by morning,
He wakeneth mine ear
To hear as the learned.

5 The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear,
And I was not rebellious,
Neither turned away back.

6 I gave my back to the smiters,
And my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair:
I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

7 For the Lord GOD will help me;
Therefore shall I not be confounded:
Therefore have I set my face like a flint,
And I know that I shall not be ashamed.

8 *He is* near that justifieth me;

Who will contend with me? let us stand together:
Who *is* mine adversary? let him come near to me.
9 Behold, the Lord GOD will help me;
Who *is* he *that* shall condemn me?
Lo, they all shall wax old as a garment;
The moth shall eat them up.

Our Lord Jesus, having proved himself able to save, here shews himself as willing as he is able. We suppose the prophet Isaiah to say something of himself in these verses, engaging and encouraging himself to go on in his work as a prophet, notwithstanding the many hardships he met with, not doubting but that God would stand by him and strengthen him. But, like David, often he speaks of himself as a type of Christ, who is here prophesied of, and promised to be the Saviour.

First. As an acceptable preacher, ver. 4. Isaiah, as a prophet, was qualified for the work to which he was called; so were the rest of God's prophets, and others whom he employed as his messengers; but Christ was anointed with the Spirit above his fellows. To make the man of God perfect he hath, 1. "The tongue of the learned," to know how to give instruction, "how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." God, who made man's mouth, gave Moses the tongue of the learned to speak for the terror and conviction of Pharaoh, *Ex.* iv. 11, 12. He gave to Christ the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season for the comfort of those that are weary and heavy laden under the burthen of sin, *Mat.* xi. 28. Grace was poured into his lips, and they are said to drop sweet-smelling myrrh. See what is the best learning of a minister, to know how to comfort troubled consciences, and to speak pertinently, and properly, and plainly, to the various cases of poor souls. An ability to do this is God's gift, and it is one of the best gifts, which we should covet earnestly. And let us repose ourselves in the many comfortable words which Christ hath spoken to the weary. 2. The ear of the learned to receive instruction. And this prophets have as much need of as of the tongue of the learned; for they must deliver what they are taught, and no other; must hear the word from God's mouth diligently and attentively, that they may speak it exactly, *Eze.* iii. 17. Christ himself received that he might give. None must undertake to be teachers that have not first been learners; Christ's apostles were first disciples, "scribes instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," *Mat.* xiii. 42. Nor is it enough to hear, but we must hear as the learned, hear and understand, hear and remember, hear as those that would learn by what we hear. Those that would hear as the learned must be awake, and wakeful, for we are naturally drowsy and sleepy, and unapt to hear at all, or hear by the halves, hear and do not heed. Our ears need to be awakened; we need to have something said to rouse us, to awaken us out of our spiritual slumbers, that we may hear as for our lives. We need to be awakened "morning by morning," as duly as the day returns, to be awakened to do the work of the day in its day. Our case calls for continual fresh supplies of Divine grace to free us from the dulness we contract daily. The morning, when our spirits are most lively, is a proper time for communion with God; then we are in the best frame both to speak to him,—"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning;" and to hear from him,—the people came early in the morning to hear Christ in the temple, *Lu.* xxi. 38; for it seems his were morning lectures, and it is God that awakens us morning by morning. Those that do any thing to purpose in his service, it is he that, as their Master, calls them up; and we should doze perpetually if he did not awaken us morning by morning.

Secondly. As a patient sufferer, ver. 5, 6. One would think he that was commissioned and qualified to speak comfort to the weary should meet with no difficulty in his work, but a universal acceptance; but it is quite otherwise: he hath both hard work to do and hard usage to undergo; and here he tells us with what undaunted constancy he went through with it. We have no reason to question but that the prophet Isaiah went on resolutely in the work to which God had called him, though we read not of his undergoing any such hardships as are here supposed; but we are sure it was abundantly verified in Jesus Christ. And here we have,

1. His patient obedience in his doing-work. "The Lord God hath" not only awakened my ear to hear what he saith, but hath "opened my ear" to receive it and comply with it; *Ps.* xl. 6, 7, "Mine ears hast thou opened;—then said I, Lo, I come;" for when he adds, "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back," more is implied than expressed: that he was willing; that though he foresaw a great deal of difficulty and discouragement, though he was to take pains and give constant attendance as a servant, though he was to empty himself of that which was very great and humble himself to that which was very mean, yet he did not fly off, did not fail, nor was discouraged. He continued very free and very forward to his work, even when he came to the hardest part of it. Note, As a good understanding in the truths of God, so a good-will and affection to the work and service of God, is from the grace of God.

2. His obedient patience in his suffering-work. I call it obedient patience, because he was patient with an eye to his Father's will, thus pleading with himself, "This commandment have I received of my Father;" and thus submitting to God, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." In this submission he resigned himself, 1. To be scourged; "I gave my back to the smiters;" and that not only by submitting to it when he was smitten, but by permitting it, or admitting it rather, among other the instances of pain and shame he would voluntarily undergo for us. 2. To be buffeted; "I gave my cheeks to them that" not only smote them, but "plucked off the hair" of the beard, which was a greater degree both of pain and ignominy. 3. To be spit upon; "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." He could have hid his face from it, could have avoided it, but he would not, because he was made a reproach of men, and thus he would answer the type of Job, that man of sorrows, of whom it is said that they smote him upon the cheek reproachfully, *Job* xvi. 10, and spared not to spit in his face, *Job* xxx. 10, which is an expression not only of contempt, but of abhorrence and indignation. All this Christ underwent for us, and voluntarily, to convince us of his willingness to save us.

Thirdly. As a courageous champion, ver. 7—9. The Redeemer is as famous for his boldness as for his humility and patience; and, though he yield, yet he is more than a conqueror. Observe,

1. The dependence he hath upon God. What was the prophet Isaiah's support was the support of Christ himself, ver. 7, "The Lord God will help me;" and again, ver. 9. Whom God employs he will assist, and will take care they want not any help that they or their work call for. God, having laid help upon his Son for us, gave help to him, and his hand was all along with the man of his right hand. Nor will he only assist him in his work, but accept of him; ver. 8, "He is near that justifieth me." Isaiah, no doubt, was falsely accused, and loaded with reproach and calumny, as other prophets were; but he despised it, knowing that God would roll away the reproach, and bring forth his righteousness as the light; perhaps in this world, *Ps.* xxxvii. 6; however in the great day, when there will be a resurrection of names as well as bodies, and the righteous shall shine forth as the morning sun. And so it was verified in Christ. By his resurrection he was proved to be not the man that he was represented, not a blasphemer, not a deceiver, not an enemy to Cæsar; the judge that condemned him owned he found no fault in him; the centurion, or sheriff, that had charge of his execution, declared him a righteous man; so near was he that justified him. But it was true of him in a farther and more peculiar sense: the Father justified him when he accepted the satisfaction he made for the sin of man, and constituted him the Lord our righteousness, who was made sin for us; he was "justified in the Spirit," 1 *Tim.* iii. 16. He was near that did it; for his resurrection, by which he was justified, came presently after he was condemned and crucified; he was straightway glorified, *Jno.* xiii. 32.

2. The confidence he thereupon hath of success in his undertaking. If "God will help me," if he will justify me, will stand by me and bear me out, "I shall not be confounded," as those are that come short of the end they aimed at, and the satisfaction they promised themselves; "I know that I shall not be ashamed." Though his enemies did all they could to put him to shame, yet he kept his ground, he kept his countenance, and was not ashamed of the work he had undertaken. Note, Work for God is work that we should not be ashamed of, and hope in God is hope that we shall not be ashamed of. Those that trust in God for help shall not be disappointed; they know whom they have trusted, and therefore know they shall not be ashamed.

3. The defiance which, in this confidence, he bids to all opposers and opposition. God will help me, and "therefore have I set my face like a flint." The prophet did so; he was bold in reproving sin and warning sinners, *Eze.* iii. 8, 9, and in asserting the truth of his predictions. Christ did so; he went on in his work as Mediator with an unshaken constancy and undaunted resolution; he did not fail, nor was discouraged; and here he challengeth all his opposers, 1st. To enter the lists with him; "Who will contend with me," either in law or by the sword? "Let us stand together" as combatants, or as the plaintiff and defendant. "Who is mine adversary?" Who is the master of my cause? so the word is. Who will pretend to enter an action against me? let him appear, and "come near to me," for I will not abscond. Many offered to dispute with Christ, but he put them to silence. The prophet speaks this in the name of all faithful ministers; those who keep close to the pure word of God in delivering their message need not fear the contradiction that may be given them; the Scriptures will bear them out, whoever contends with them. Great is the truth, and will prevail. Christ speaks this in the name of all believers, speaks it as their champion. Who dares be an enemy to those whom he is a friend to, or contend with those for whom he is an advocate? Thus St. Paul applies it, *Rom.* viii. 33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" 2nd. He challengeth them to prove any crime upon him, ver. 9, "Who is he that shall condemn me?" The prophet, perhaps, was condemned to die; Christ, we are sure, was; and yet both could say, Who is he that shall condemn? for there is no condemnation to those whom God justifies. There were those that did condemn them, but what came of them? "They shall all wax old as a garment." The righteous cause of Christ and his prophets shall outlive all opposition. The moth shall eat them up silently and insensibly; a little thing will serve to do their business; but the roaring lion himself shall not prevail against God's witnesses. All believers are enabled to make this challenge, Who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ that died.

10 Who *is* among you that feareth the LORD,
That obeyeth the voice of his servant,
That walketh *in* darkness, and hath no light?
Let him trust in the name of the LORD,
And stay upon his God.
11 Behold, all ye that kindle a fire,
That compass *yourselves* about with sparks:
Walk in the light of your fire,
And in the sparks *that* ye have kindled.
This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.

The prophet having the tongue of the learned given him, that he might give to every one their portion, here makes use of it, rightly dividing the word of truth. It is the summary of the Gospel; "He that believes shall be saved," that trusts in the name of the Lord shall be comforted, though for a while he walk in darkness, and have no light; but "he that believes not shall be damned," though for a while he walk in the light of his own fire, yet he shall lie down in sorrow.

First. Comfort is here spoken to disconsolate saints, and they are encouraged to trust in God's grace, ver. 10. Where observe,

1. What is always the character of a child of God. He is one that fears the Lord with a filial fear, that stands in awe of his majesty, and is afraid of incurring his displeasure. This is a grace that usually appears most in good people then when they walk in darkness, when other graces appear not. They then tremble at his word, *ch.* lxvi. 2, and are afraid of his judgments, *Ps.* cxix. 120. He is one that "obeyeth the voice of his servant," that is, is willing to be ruled by the Lord Jesus, as God's servant, in the great work of man's redemption; one that yields a sincere obedience to the law of Christ, and cheerfully comes up to the terms of his covenant. Those that truly fear God will obey the voice of Christ.

2. What is sometimes the case of a child of God. It is supposed that, though he has in his heart the fear of God and faith in Christ, yet for a time he "walketh in darkness, and hath no light," is disquieted, and hath little or no comfort. Who is there that doth so? which intimates that it is a case that sometimes happens among the professors of religion, yet not very often; but whenever it happens God takes notice of it. It is no new thing for the children and heirs of light sometimes to walk in darkness, and for a time not to have any glimpse or gleam of light. It is not meant so much of the comforts of this life; those that fear God, when they have never so great an abundance of them, do not walk in them as their light; as of their spiritual comforts, which relate to their souls. They walk in darkness when their evidences for heaven are clouded; their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance eclipsed. Serious Christians are apt to be melancholy ones, and those who fear always to fear too much.

3. What is likely to be an effectual cure in this sad case. He that is thus in the dark, 1st. "Let him trust in the name of the Lord," in the goodness of his nature, and that which he has made known of himself and his own wisdom, power, and goodness; the name of the Lord is a strong tower, let him run into that. Let him depend upon it that if he walk before God, which any man may do, though he walk in the dark, he shall find God all-sufficient to him. 2nd. Let him stay himself upon his God, his in covenant; let him keep hold of

his covenant-relation to God, and call God his God for all this; as Christ on the cross, "My God, my God." Let him stay himself upon the promises of the covenant, and build his hopes on them. When a child of God is ready to sink, he will find enough in God to stay himself upon; let him trust in Christ, for God's "name is in him," *Ex.* xxiii. 21; trust in that name of his, "The Lord our righteousness," and stay himself upon God as his God, in and through a Mediator.

Secondly. Conviction is here spoken to presuming sinners, and they are warned not to trust in themselves, ver. 11. Observe, 1. The description given of them. They kindle a fire, and walk in the light of that fire; they depend upon their own righteousness, offer all their sacrifices, and burn all their incense, with that fire, as Nadab and Abihu, and not with the fire from heaven. In their hope of acceptance with God they have no regard to the righteousness of Christ; they refresh and please themselves with a conceit of their own merit and sufficiency, and warm themselves with that; it is both light and heat to them; they compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling. As they trust in their own righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ, so they place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments, and not in the favour of God. Creature comforts are as sparks, shortlived, and soon gone; yet the children of this world, while they last, warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them. 2. The doom passed upon them. They are ironically bidden to walk in the light of their own fire; Make your best of it while it lasts. But what will be in the end thereof? what will it come to at last? "This shall ye have of mine hand," saith Christ, for to him the judgment is committed, "Ye shall lie down in sorrow," shall go to bed in the dark: see *Job* xviii. 5, 6, "His candle shall be put out with him." Those that make the world their comfort, and their own righteousness their confidence, will certainly meet with a fatal disappointment, which will be bitterness in the end. A godly man's way may be melancholy, but his end shall be peace and everlasting light; a wicked man's way may be pleasant, but his end and endless abode will be utter darkness.

CHAPTER LI.

This chapter is designed for the comfort and encouragement of those that fear God and keep his commandments, even then when they walk in darkness and have no light. Whether it was intended primarily for the support of the captives in Babylon, is not certain, probably it was; but comforts thus generally expressed ought not to be so confined. Whenever the church of God is in distress, her friends and well-wishers may comfort themselves and one another with these words here, I. That God, who raised his church at first out of nothing, will take care it shall not perish, ver. 1—3. II. That the righteousness and salvation he designs for his church are sure and near, very near, and very sure, ver. 4—6. III. That the persecutors of the church are weak and dying creatures, ver. 7, 8. IV. That the same power which did wonders for the church formerly is now engaged and employed for her protection and deliverance, ver. 9—11. V. That God himself, the maker of the world, had undertaken both to deliver his people out of their distress and to comfort them under it, and sent his prophet to assure them of it, ver. 12—16. VI. That, as deplorable as the condition of the church now was, ver. 17—20, to the same woful circumstances her persecutors and oppressors should shortly be reduced, and worse, ver. 20—23. The first three paragraphs of this chapter begin with, "Hearken unto me," and they are God's people that are all along called to hearken; for, even when comforts are spoken to them, sometimes they hearken not, through anguish of spirit, *Ex.* vi. 9; therefore they are again and again called to hearken, ver. 1, 4, 7. The two other paragraphs of this chapter begin with, "Awake, awake." In the former, ver. 9, God's people call upon him to awake and help them: in the latter, ver. 17, God calls upon them to awake and help themselves.

HEARKEN to me, ye that follow after righteousness,
Ye that seek the LORD:
Look unto the rock *whence* ye are hewn,
And to the hole of the pit *whence* ye are digged.
2 Look unto Abraham your father,
And unto Sarah *that* bare you:
For I called him alone,
And blessed him, and increased him.
3 For the LORD shall comfort Zion:
He will comfort all her waste places;
And he will make her wilderness like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;
Joy and gladness shall be found therein,
Thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Observe, First. How the people of God are here described, to whom the word of this consolation is sent, and who are called upon to hearken to it, ver. 1. They are such as "follow after righteousness," that are very solicitous and very desirous both to be justified and to be sanctified, are pressing hard after this, to have the favour of God restored to them and the image of God renewed on them. These are they that seek the Lord, for it is only in the way of righteousness that we can seek him with any hopes of finding him.

Secondly. How they are here directed to look back to their original, and the smallness of their beginning. "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn;" the idolatrous family in Ur of the Chaldees, out of which Abraham was taken, the generation of slaves which the heads and fathers of their tribes were in Egypt: "look unto the hole of the pit out of which ye are digged," as clay, when God formed you into a people. Note, It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth to consider what they were by their first birth; how they were conceived in iniquity and shapen in sin. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. How hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unapt to receive impressions; and how dirty the hole of the pit out of which we were digged! The consideration hereof should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves, and high thoughts of Divine grace. Those that are now advanced would do well to remember how low they began; ver. 2, "Look unto Abraham your father," the father of all the faithful, of all that follow after the righteousness of faith, as he did, *Rom.* iv. 11. "And unto Sarah that bare you," and whose daughters you all are as long as you do well; think how Abraham was called alone, and yet was blessed and multiplied; and let that encourage all believers to depend upon the promise of God, even then when a sentence of death seems to be upon all the means that lead to the performance of it. Particularly let it encourage the captives in Babylon, though they are reduced to a small number, and few of them left, to hope that yet they shall increase so as to replenish their own land again. When Jacob is very small, yet he is not so small as Abraham was, who yet became father of many nations. "Look unto Abraham," and see what he got by trusting in the promise of God, and take example by him to follow God with an implicit faith.

Thirdly. How they are here assured that their present seedness of tears should end in a harvest of joys at length, ver. 3. The church of God on earth, even the gospel Zion, hath sometimes had her desert and waste places; many parts of the church, either through corruption or persecution, made like wildernesses, unfruitful to God or uncomfortable to the inhabitants; but God will find out a time and way to comfort Zion; not only by speaking comfortably to her, but by acting graciously for her. God has comforts in store even for the waste places of his church, for those parts of it that seem not regarded or valued. 1. He will make them fruitful, and so give them cause to rejoice; her wildernesses shall put on a new face, and look pleasant as Eden, and abound in all good fruits as the garden of the Lord. Note, It is the greatest comfort of the church to be made serviceable to the glory of God, and to be as his garden in which he delights. 2. He will make them cheerful, and so give them hearts to rejoice. With the fruits of righteousness, "joy and gladness shall be found therein;" for the more holiness men have, and the more good they do, the more gladness they have. And where there is joy and gladness to their satisfaction, it is fit there should be thanksgiving to God's honour; for whatever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and the returns of God's favour ought to be celebrated with the voice of melody; which will be the more melodious when God gives songs in the night, songs in the desert.

4 Hearken unto me, my people;
And give ear unto me, O my nation:
For a law shall proceed from me, [people.
And I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the
5 My righteousness *is* near; my salvation is gone forth,
And mine arms shall judge the people;
The isles shall wait upon me,
And on mine arm shall they trust.
6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
And look upon the earth beneath:
For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke,
And the earth shall wax old like a garment,
And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner:
But my salvation shall be for ever,
And my righteousness shall not be abolished.
7 Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness,
The people in whose heart *is* my law;
Fear ye not the reproach of men,
Neither be ye afraid of their revilings.
8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment,
And the worm shall eat them like wool:
But my righteousness shall be for ever,
And my salvation from generation to generation.

Both these proclamations, as I may call them, end alike with an assurance of the perpetuity of God's righteousness, and his salvation, and therefore we put them together, both being designed for the comfort of God's people. Observe,

First. Who are they to whom this comfort belongs? My people, and my nation, that I have set apart for myself, that own me, and are owned by me. Those are God's people, and his nation, who are subject to him, as their king and their God, pay allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection accordingly. They are a people that know righteousness, not only have the means of knowledge, and to whom righteousness is made known, but improve those means, and are able to form a right judgment of truth and falsehood, good and evil. And as they have good heads so they have good hearts, for they have the law of God in them, written and ruling there. Those God owns for his people, in whose heart his law is. Even those that know righteousness, and have the law of God in their heart, may yet be in great distress and sorrow, and loaded with reproach and contempt; but their God will comfort them with the righteousness they know, and the law they have in their hearts.

Secondly. What the comfort is that belongs to God's people.

1. That the gospel of Christ shall be preached and published to the world. "A law shall proceed from me," an evangelical law, the law of Christ, the law of faith, *ch.* ii. 3. This law is his judgment, for it is that law of liberty by which the world shall be governed and judged. This shall not only go forth, but shall continue and rest; it shall take firm footing, and deep root in the world; it shall rest not only for the benefit of the Jews, that had the first notice of it, but for a light of the people of other nations. It is this law, this judgment, that we are required to hearken and give ear to at our peril; for how shall we escape if we neglect it, and turn a deaf ear to it? When a law proceeds from God, "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

2. That this law and judgment shall bring with it righteousness and salvation, shall open a ready way to the children of men how they may be justified and saved, ver. 5. It is called God's righteousness and his salvation, because of his contriving and bringing about; it is a righteousness that he will accept for us, and accept us for; and a righteousness which he will work in us, and graciously accept of. It is the salvation of the Lord, for it ariseth from him, and terminates in him. Observe, There is no salvation without righteousness; and wherever there is the righteousness of God there shall be his salvation. All those, and those only, that are justified and sanctified shall be glorified.

3. That this righteousness and salvation shall very shortly appear. It is near, it is gone forth; the decree is gone forth concerning it, it shall as certainly be introduced as if it were gone forth already, and the time for it is at hand. It is near in time. Behold all things are now ready; it is near in place, not far to seek, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the word, righteousness in the word, *Rom.* x. 8.

4. That this evangelical righteousness and salvation shall not be confined

to the Jewish nation, but shall be extended to the Gentiles. "Mine arms shall judge the people." Those that will not yield to the judgments of God's mouth shall be crushed by the judgments of his hands. Some shall thus be judged by the Gospel, for for judgment Christ came into this world; but others, and those of the isles, shall wait upon him, and bid his Gospel, and the commands as well as the comforts of it, welcome. It was a comfort to God's people, to his nation, that multitudes should be added to them, and the increase of their number should be the increase of their strength and beauty. It is added, and "on mine arm shall they trust," that arm of the Lord which is revealed in Christ, *ch.* liii. 1. Observe, God's arm shall judge the people that are impenitent, and yet on his arm shall others trust, and be saved by it; for it is to us as we make it, a savour of life or death.

5. That this righteousness and salvation shall be for ever, and shall never be abolished, ver. 6. It is an everlasting righteousness that the Messiah brings in, *Dan.* ix. 24, an eternal redemption that he is the Author of, *Heb.* v. 9. As it shall spread through all the nations of the earth, so it shall last through all the ages of the world. We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace, or rule of righteousness, but what we have in the Gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end, *Mat.* xxviii. 20. It is for ever, for the consequences of it shall be to eternity; and by this law of liberty men's everlasting state will be determined. This perpetuity of the Gospel, and the blessed things it brings in, is illustrated by the fading and perishing of this world and all things in it. Look up to the visible heavens above, which have continued hitherto, and seem likely to continue, but "they shall vanish like smoke," that soon spends itself and disappears; they shall be "rolled together like a scroll," and their lights shall fall like leaves in autumn. Look down to the earth beneath, that abideth too for a short ever, *Eccl.* i. 4; but it shall "wax old like a garment," that will be the worse for wearing; and "they that dwell therein," all the inhabitants of the earth, even those that seem to have the best settlement in it, "shall die in like manner." The soul shall, as to this world, vanish like smoke, and the body be thrown by like a garment waxen old. 'They shall die like a louse,' so some of the critics read it; easily crushed, *Job* vi. 19, and no loss of them. But when heaven and earth pass away, when all flesh and the glory of it wither as grass, the word of the Lord endures for ever, and not one iota or tittle of that shall fall to the ground. Those whose happiness is bound up in Christ's righteousness and salvation will have the comfort of it when time and days shall be no more.

Thirdly, What use they are to make of this comfort. If God's righteousness and salvation are near to them, then let them not fear "the reproach of men," of mortal, miserable men, nor be "afraid of their revilings," or spiteful taunts; theirs that bade you sing them the songs of Zion, or that ask you in scorn, Where is now your God? Let not those who embrace the gospel righteousness be afraid of those who will call them Beelzebub, and will say all manner of evil against them falsely; let them not be afraid of them, let them not be disturbed by these opprobrious speeches, nor made uneasy by them, as if they would be the ruin of their reputation and honour; and they must for ever lie under the load of them. Let them not be afraid of their executing their menaces, nor be deterred thereby from their duty, or frightened into any sinful compliances, or driven to take any indirect courses for their own safety. Those can bear but little for Christ that cannot bear a hard word for him. Let us not fear the reproach of men; for, 1. They will be quickly silenced; ver. 8, "The moth shall eat them up like a garment;" *ch.* l. 9, "the worm shall eat them like wool," or woollen cloth. If we have the approbation of a living God, we may despise the censure of dying men; the matter is not great what they say of us who must be worm's meat shortly. Or it intimates the judgments of God with which they shall be visited, with which they shall be consumed, for their malice against the people of God; they shall be slowly and silently, but effectually destroyed, when God shall come to reckon with them for all their hard speeches, *Jude* 14, 15. 2. The cause we suffer for cannot be run down; the falsehood of their reproaches will be detected, but truth shall triumph, and the righteousness of religion's injured cause shall be for ever plain. Clouds darken the sun, but give no obstruction to its progress.

9 Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD;
Awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.
Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab,
And wounded the dragon?
10 *Art* thou not it which hath dried the sea,
The waters of the great deep;
That hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?
11 Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return,
And come with singing unto Zion;
And everlasting joy *shall be* upon their head:
They shall obtain gladness and joy;
And sorrow and mourning shall flee away.
12 I, *even* I, *am* he that comforteth you:
Who *art* thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man *that* shall die,
And of the son of man *which* shall be made *as* grass;
13 And forgettest the LORD thy maker,
That hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth;
And hast feared continually every day
Because of the fury of the oppressor,
As if he were ready to destroy?
And where *is* the fury of the oppressor?
14 The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed,
And that he should not die in the pit,
Nor that his bread should fail.
15 But I *am* the LORD thy God,
That divided the sea, whose waves roared:
The LORD of hosts *is* his name.
16 And I have put my words in thy mouth,
And I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand,
That I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth,
And say unto Zion, Thou *art* my people.

In these verses we have,

First. A prayer that God would in his providence appear and act for the deliverance of his people, and the mortification of his and their enemies. "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord," ver. 9. The arm of the Lord is Christ, or it is put for God himself, as *Ps.* xliv. 23, "Awake, why sleepest thou?" He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when we pray that he would awake, we mean that he would make it to appear he watcheth over his people, and is always awake to do them good. The arm of the Lord is said to awake when the power of God exerts itself with more than ordinary vigour on his people's behalf. When a hand or arm is benumbed, we say it is asleep; when it is stretched forth for action it awakes. God needs not to be reminded or excited by us; but he gives us leave thus to be humbly earnest with him for such appearances of his power as will be for his own praise. "Put on strength;" that is, put forth strength. Appear in thy strength, as we appear in the clothes we put on, *Ps.* xxi. 13. The church sees her case bad, her enemies many and mighty, her friends few and feeble, and therefore depends purely upon the strength of God's arm for her relief. "Awake, as in the ancient days;" that is, do for us now as thou didst for our fathers formerly, repeat the wonders they told us of, *Jud.* vi. 13.

Secondly. The pleas to enforce this prayer:

1. They plead precedents, the experiences of their ancestors, and the great things God had done for them. Let the arm of the Lord be made bare on our behalf, for it has done great things formerly, in defence of the same cause, and we are sure it is neither shortened nor weakened. It did wonders against the Egyptians, that enslaved and oppressed God's son, his firstborn; it cut Rahab to pieces with one direful plague after another; and wounded Pharaoh, the dragon, the leviathan, as he is called, *Ps.* lxxiv. 13, 14, gave him his death's wound. It did wonders for Israel; it "dried up the sea," even "the waters of the great deep," as far as was requisite to open a way through the sea, for "the ransomed to pass over," ver. 10. God is never at a loss for a way to accomplish his purposes concerning his people, but will either find one or make one. And past experiences, as they are great supports to faith and hope, so they are good pleas in prayer: "Thou hast;" "Wilt thou not?" *Ps.* lxxxv. 1—6.

2. They plead promises, ver. 11. And "the redeemed of the Lord shall return;" that is, (as it may be supplied,) thou hast said they shall; referring to *ch.* xxxv. 10, where we find this promise, that the redeemed of the Lord, when they are released out of their captivity in Babylon, shall "come with singing unto Zion." Sinners, when they are brought out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of God's children, may come singing, as a bird got loose out of the cage. The souls of believers, when they are delivered out of the prison of the body, come to the heavenly Zion with singing. Then this promise will have its full accomplishment, and we may plead it in the mean time. He that designs such joy for us at last will he not work such deliverance for us in the meantime as our case requires? When the saints come to heaven they enter into the joy of their Lord, it crowns their heads with immortal honour, it fills their hearts with complete satisfaction; they shall obtain that joy and gladness which they could never obtain in the vale of tears. In this world of changes it is a short step from joy to sorrow; but in that world "sorrow and mourning shall flee away," never to return, or come in view again.

Thirdly. The answer immediately given to this prayer; ver. 12, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you." They prayed for the operations of his power; he answers them with the consolations of his grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. If God do not wound the dragon, and dry the sea, as formerly, yet if he comfort us in soul under our afflictions, we have no reason to complain. If God do not answer presently with the saving strength of his right hand, we must be thankful if he answers us, as an angel himself was answered, *Zec.* i. 13, "with good words, and comfortable words." See how God resolves to comfort his people; "I, even I" will do it. He had ordered his ministers to do it, *ch.* xl. 1; but, because they cannot reach the heart, he takes the work into his own hands, "I, even I" will do it. See how he glories in it; he takes it among the titles of his honour to be the God that comforteth them that are cast down; he delights in being so. Those whom God comforteth, they are comforted indeed; nay, his undertaking to comfort them is comfort enough to them.

1. He comforts those that were in fear; and fear has torment which calls for comfort, the fear of man hath a snare in it which we have need of comfort to preserve us from. He comforts the timorous by chiding them, and that is no improper way of comforting either others or ourselves; "Why art thou cast down, and why disquieted?" ver. 12, 13. God, that comforts his people, would not have them disquiet themselves with amazing, perplexing fears, either of the reproach of men, (ver. 7,) or of their growing, threatening power and greatness; or of any mischief they may intend against us, or our people. Observe,

1st. The absurdity of those fears. It is a disparagement to us to give way to them; "Who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid?" In the original the pronoun is feminine, Who art thou, O woman; unworthy the name of a man, such a weak and womanish thing is it to give way to perplexing fears. *First.* It is absurd to be in such dread of a dying man; what! "afraid of a man that shall die;" shall certainly and shortly die; of the "son of man which shall be made as grass;" shall wither and be trodden down, or eaten up? The greatest men, and the most formidable, that are the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, yet are but men, *Ps.* ix. 20; and shall die like men, *Ps.* lxxxii. 7; are but grass out of the earth, cleaving to it, and retiring again into it. Note, We ought to look upon every man as a man that shall die. Those we admire and love and trust to, they are men that shall die; let us not therefore delight too much in them, nor depend too much upon them. Those we fear, we must look upon them as frail and mortal; and consider what a foolish thing it is for the servants of the living God to be afraid of dying men, that are here to-day and gone to-morrow. *Secondly.* It is absurd to fear "continually every day," ver. 13; to put ourselves upon a constant rack, so as never to be easy, nor to have any enjoyment of ourselves. Now and then a danger may be imminent and threatening, and it may be prudence to fear it; but to be always in a toss, jealous of dangers at every step, and to tremble at the shaking of every leaf, is to make ourselves all our lifetime subject to bondage, *Heb.* ii. 15; and to bring upon ourselves that sore judgment which is threatened, *Deu.* xxviii. 66, 67, "Thou shalt fear day and night." *Thirdly.* It is absurd to fear beyond what

there is cause for. Thou art afraid "of the fury of the oppressor;" it is true there is an oppressor, and he is furious, and he designs, it may be, when he has an opportunity, to do thee a mischief, and it will be thy wisdom therefore to stand upon thy guard; but thou art afraid of him, "as if he were ready to destroy," as if he were just now going to cut thy throat, and as if there were no possibility of preventing it. A timorous spirit is thus apt to make the worst of every thing, and to apprehend the danger greater and nearer than really it is; and sometimes God is pleased presently to shew us the folly of it, "Where is the fury of the oppressor?" It is gone in an instant, and the danger is over ere thou art aware. His heart is turned, or his hands are tied. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is but a noise; and the king of Babylon no more. What is gone with all the furious oppressors of God's Israel, that hectored them, and threatened them, and were a terror to them? they passed away, and lo, they were not, and so shall these.

2nd. The impiety of those fears. Thou art "afraid of a man that shall die," and "forgettest the Lord thy Maker," who is also the Maker of all the world, who hath "stretched forth the heavens," and "laid the foundations of the earth;" and therefore hath all the hosts and all the powers of both at his command and dispose. Note, Our inordinate fearing of man is an implicit forgetting of God; when we disquiet ourselves with the fear of man, we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which he orders and overrules all events according to the counsel of his own will; we forget the promises he has made to protect his people, and the experiences we have had of his care concerning us; and his seasonable interposal for our relief many a time, when we thought the oppressor ready to destroy; we forget our Jehovah-jirehs, monuments of mercy in the mount of the Lord. Did we remember to make God our fear and our dread, we should not be so much afraid as we are of the frowns of men. *ch.* viii. 12, 13. Happy is the man that fears God always, *Pr.* xxviii. 14; *Lu.* xii. 4, 5.

2. He comforts those that were in bonds, ver. 14, 15. See here, 1st. What they do for themselves. "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed," and may return to his own country, from which he is banished; his care is, that he may not die in the pit, nor die a prisoner, through the inconveniences of his confinement, and that his bread should not fail, either the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison or that which should bear his charges home; his stock is low, and therefore he hasteth to be loosed. Now some understand this as his fault; he is distrustfully impatient of delays, cannot wait God's time, but thinks he is undone, and must die in the pit if he be not released presently. Others take it to be his praise, that when the doors are thrown open he doth not linger, but applies himself with all diligence to procure his discharge. And then it follows, "But I am the Lord thy God," which intimates, 2nd. What God will do for them, even that which they cannot do for themselves. God hath all power in his hand to help the captive exiles; for he hath divided the sea, when the roaring of his waves was more frightful than any of the impotent menaces of proud oppressors. He hath stilled or quieted the sea, so some think it should be read, *Ps.* lxv. 7; lxxxix. 9. This is not only a proof of what God can do, but a resemblance of what he has done, and will do for his people; he will find out a way to still the threatening storm, and bring them safe into the harbour. "The Lord of hosts is his name," his name for ever, the name by which his people have long known him. And, as he is able to help them, so he is willing and engaged to do it; for he is thy God, captive exile, thine in covenant. This is a check to the desponding captives; let them not conclude that they must either be loosed presently or die in the pit; for he that is the Lord of hosts can relieve them when they are brought never so low. It is also an encouragement to the diligent captives who, when liberty is proclaimed, are willing to lose no time; let them know that the Lord is their God, and while they thus strive to help themselves they may be sure he will help them.

3. He comforts all his people who depended upon what the prophets said to them in the name of the Lord, and built their hopes upon it. When the deliverances which the prophets spake of either did not come so soon as they looked for them or did not come up to the height of their expectation, they began to be cast down in their own eyes; but as to this they are encouraged (ver. 16) by what God saith to his prophet, not to this only, but to all his prophets, nor to this or them principally, but to Christ the great Prophet. It is a great satisfaction to those to whom the message is sent, to hear the God of truth and power say to his messenger, as he doth here, "I have put my words in thy mouth," that by them "I may plant the heavens." God undertook to comfort his people, ver. 12; but still he doth it by his prophets, by his Gospel. And that he may do it by these, he here tells us, 1st. That his word in them is very true. He owns what they had said to be what he had directed and enjoined them to say; "I have put my words in thy mouth," and therefore he that receives thee and them receives me. This is a great stay to our faith, that Christ's doctrine was not his, but his that sent him; and that the words of the prophets and apostles were God's words which he put into their mouths. God's Spirit not only revealed to them the things themselves they spoke of, but dictated to them the words they should speak, 2 *Pet.* i. 21; 1 *Cor.* ii. 13; so that these are the true sayings of God, of a God that cannot lie. 2nd. That it is very safe. "I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand," as before, *ch.* xlix. 2; which speaks the special protection not only of the prophets, but of their prophecies; not only of Christ, but of Christianity, of the Gospel of Christ. It is not only the faithful word of God which the prophets deliver to us, but it shall be carefully preserved till it have its accomplishment for the use of the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of the powers of darkness to extinguish this light. They shall prophesy again, *Rev.* x. 11; though not in their persons yet in their writings, which God has always covered in the shadow of his hand, preserved by a special providence, else they had been lost ere this. 3rd. That this word, when it comes to be accomplished, will be very great, and will not at all fall short of the pomp and grandeur of the prophecy; "I have put my words in thy mouth," not that by the performance of them I may plant a nation, or found a city, but "plant the heavens," and "lay the foundations of the earth," may do that for my people which will be a new creation. This must look as far forward as to the great work done by the Gospel of Christ, and the setting up of his holy religion in the world. As God by Christ made the world at first, *Heb.* i. 2, and by him formed the Old Testament church, *Zec.* vi. 12, so by him, and the words put into his mouth, he will set up, *First.* A new world; will again plant the heavens, and found the earth. Sin having put the whole creation into disorder, Christ's taking away the sin of the world put all into order again, old things are passed away, all things are become new. Things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled, and so put into a new posture, *Col.* i. 20. And through him, according to the promise, we "look for new heavens and a new earth," 2 *Pet.* iii. 13; and to this the prophets bear witness. *Secondly.* He will set up a new church, a New Testament church; he will "say unto Zion, Thou art my people." The gospel church is called Zion, *Heb.* xii. 22; and Jerusalem, *Gal.* iv. 26. And when the Gentiles are brought into it it shall be said unto them, Ye are my people. When God works great deliverances for his church, and especially when he shall complete the salvation of it in the great day, he will thereby own that poor, despised handful to be his people, whom he has chosen and loved.

17 Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem,
Which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of his fury;
Thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling,
And wrung *them* out.
18 *There is* none to guide her
Among all the sons *whom* she hath brought forth;
Neither *is there any* that taketh her by the hand
Of all the sons *that* she hath brought up.
19 These two *things* are come unto thee;
Who shall be sorry for thee?
Desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword:
By whom shall I comfort thee?
20 Thy sons have fainted,
They lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net:
They are full of the fury of the LORD,
The rebuke of thy God.
21 Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted,
And drunken, but not with wine:
22 Thus saith thy Lord the LORD,
And thy God *that* pleadeth the cause of his people,
Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling,
Even the dregs of the cup of my fury;
Thou shalt no more drink it again:
23 But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee;
Which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over:
And thou hast laid thy body as the ground,
And as the street, to them that went over.

God having awoke for the comfort of his people, here calls upon them to awake, as afterwards, *ch.* lii. 1. It is a call to awake, not so much out of the sleep of sin, (though that also is necessary, in order to their being ready for deliverance,) as out of the stupor of despair. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in captivity, they, as well as those who remained upon the spot, were so overwhelmed with the sense of their troubles, that they had no heart or spirit to mind any thing that tended to their comfort or relief. They were, as the disciples in the garden, sleeping for sorrow, *Lu.* xxii. 45; and, therefore, when the deliverance came they are said to be like them that dream, *Ps.* cxxvi. 1. Nay, it is a call to awake not only from sleep, but from death; like that to the dry bones to live, *Eze.* xxxvii. 9. Awake, and look about thee, that thou mayest see the day of thy deliverance dawn; and mayest be ready to bid it welcome. Recover thy senses, sink not under thy load; but stand up, and bestir thyself for thy own help. This may be applied to the Jerusalem that was in the apostles' time, which is said to be "in bondage with her children," *Gal.* iv. 25; and to have been under the power of a "spirit of slumber," *Rom.* xi. 8. They are called to awake and mind the things that belonged to their everlasting peace; and then the cup of trembling should be taken out of their hands, and peace should be spoken to them, and they should triumph over Satan, who had blinded their eyes, and lulled them asleep. Now,

First. It is owned that Jerusalem had long been in a very deplorable condition, and sunk into the depths of misery.

1. She had lain under the tokens of God's displeasure. He had put into her hand the "cup of his fury," that is, her share of his displeasure. The dispensations of his providence concerning her had been such as she had reason to think he was angry with her. She had provoked him to anger most bitterly, and was made to taste the bitter fruits of it. The cup of God's fury is, and will be, a "cup of trembling," to all those that have it put into their hands; damned sinners will find it so to eternity. It is said, *Ps.* lxxv. 8, that the "dregs of the cup," the loathsome sediments in the bottom of it, "all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." But here, Jerusalem having made herself as the wicked of the earth, is compelled to wring them out, and drink them; for wherever there has been a cup of fornication, as there had been in Jerusalem's hand when she was idolatrous, sooner or later there will be "a cup of fury," a "cup of trembling;" therefore, "stand in awe, and sin not."

2. Those that should have helped her in her distress failed her, and were either unable or unwilling to help her, as might have been expected, ver. 18. She is intoxicated with the cup of God's fury, and, being so, staggers, and is very unsteady in her counsels and attempts. She knows not what she saith or doth, much less knows she what to say or do. And in this unhappy condition, of all the sons that she hath brought forth, and brought up, that she has borne and educated, (and there were many famous ones, for "of Zion it was said, That this and that man was born there," *Ps.* lxxxvii. 5,) there is none to guide her, none to take her by the hand,—to keep her either from falling or from shaming herself,—either to lend a hand to help her out of her trouble or lend a tongue to comfort her under it. Think it not strange if wise and good men are disappointed in their children, and have not that succour from them which they expected; but those that were arrows in their hand prove arrows in their heart; when Jerusalem herself hath none of all her sons, either prince, priest, or prophet, that hath such a sense either of duty or gratitude, as to help her when she had most need of help. Thus they complain, *Ps.* lxxiv. 9, "There is none to tell us how long." Now that which aggravated this disappointment was,

1st. That her trouble was very great, and yet there was none to pity or help her. "These two things are come unto thee," ver. 19, to complete thy desolation and destruction, even the famine and the sword; two sore judgments, and very terrible. Or the two things were, the desolation and destruction by which the city was wasted, and the famine and sword by which the citizens perished. Or the two things were, the trouble itself, made up of desolation, destruction, famine, and sword, and her being helpless, forlorn, and comfortless under it. Two sad things indeed, to be in this woful case, and to have none to pity thee, to sympathise with thee in thy griefs, or to help to bear the burthen

of thy cares; to have none to comfort thee, by suggesting that to thee which might help to alleviate thy grief, or doing that for thee which might help to redress thy grievances. Or these two things that were come upon Jerusalem are the same with the two things that were afterwards to come upon Babylon, *ch.* xlvii. 9, loss of children and widowhood; a piteous case, and yet, when thou hast brought it upon thyself by thy own sin and folly, "Who shall be sorry for thee?" A case that calls for comfort, and yet, when thou art froward under thy trouble, frettest, and makest thyself uneasy, "By whom shall I comfort thee?" They that will not be counselled cannot be helped.

2nd. That those who should have been her comforters were their own tormentors, ver. 20; they have fainted, as quite dispirited and driven to despair. They have no patience, in which to keep possession of their own souls and the enjoyment of themselves, nor any confidence in God's promise, by which to keep possession of the comfort of that. They throw themselves upon the ground in vexation at their troubles, and there they lie "at the head of all the streets," complaining to all that pass by, *Lam.* i. 12, pining away for want of necessary food. There they lie like "a wild bull in a net," fretting and raging, struggling and pulling in vain to help themselves, but entangling themselves so much the more, and making their condition the worse by their own passions and discontents. They that are of a meek and quiet spirit are, under affliction, like a dove in a net, mourning indeed, but silent and patient. They that are of a froward, peevish spirit, are like a wild bull in a net, uneasy to themselves, vexatious to their friends, and provoking to their God; "They are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of our God." God is angry with them, and contends with them, and they are full of that only, and take no notice of his wise and gracious designs in afflicting them; never inquire wherefore he contends with them, and therefore nothing appears in them but anger at God, and quarrelling with him. They are displeased at God for the dispensations of his providence concerning them, and so they do but make ill worse. This had long been Jerusalem's woful case, and God took cognizance of it. But,

Secondly. It is promised that Jerusalem's troubles shall at length come to an end, and be transferred to her persecutors, ver. 21. Nevertheless, hear this, thou afflicted. It is often the lot of God's church to be afflicted, and God hath always something to say to her then which she will do well to hearken to. Thou art drunken, not, as formerly, with wine, not with the intoxicating cup of Babylon's whoredoms and idolatries, but with the cup of affliction. Know, then, for thy comfort,

1. That the Lord Jehovah is thy Lord and thy God for all this. It is expressed emphatically, ver. 22, "Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God," the Lord that is able to help thee, and hath wherewithal to relieve thee; thy Lord that hath an incontestable right to thee, and will not alienate it; thy God in covenant with thee, and that hath undertaken to make thee happy. Whatever the distresses of God's people may be, he will not disown his relation to them, nor have they lost their interest in him and in his promise.

2. That he is the God "that pleadeth the cause of his people," as their patron and protector, who takes what is done against them as done against himself. The cause of God's people, and of that holy religion which they profess, is a righteous cause, otherwise the righteous God would not appear for it. Yet it may for a time be run down, and seem as if it were lost; but God will plead it, either by convincing the consciences or confounding the mischievous projects of those that fight against it. He will plead it by clearing up the equity and excellency of it to the world, and by giving success to those that act in defence of it. It is his own cause; he hath espoused it, and therefore will plead it with jealousy.

3. That they should shortly take leave of their troubles, and bid a final farewell to them. I will take out of thy hand the cup of trembling, that bitter cup; it shall pass from thee. Throwing away the cup of trembling will not do, nor saying we will not, we cannot drink it. But, if we patiently submit, he that put it into our hands will himself take it out of our hands, Nay, it is promised, "Thou shalt no more drink it again;" God hath let fall his controversy with thee, and will not revive the judgment.

4. That their persecutors and oppressors should be made to drink of the same bitter cup which they had drunk so deep of, ver. 23. See here, 1st. How insolently they had abused and trampled upon the people of God; They have said to thy soul, to thee, to thy life, "Bow down, that we may go over." Nay, they have said it to thy conscience, taking a pride and pleasure in forcing thee to worship idols. Herein the New Testament Babylon treads in the steps of that old oppressor, tyrannizing over men's consciences, giving law to them, and putting them upon the rack, and compelling them to sinful compliances. They that set up an infallible head and judge, requiring an implicit faith in his dictates and obedience to his commands, do in effect say to men's souls, "Bow down, that we may go over," and they say it with delight. 2nd. How sneakingly the people of God, having, by their sin, lost much of their courage and sense of honour, truckled to them, "Thou hast laid thy body as the ground." Observe, The oppressors required the souls to be subjected to them, that every man should believe and worship just as they would have them. But all they could gain by their threats and violence was, that people laid their bodies on the ground. They brought them to an external and hypocritical conformity, but conscience cannot be forced, nor is it mentioned to their praise that they yielded thus far. But, 3rd. Observe how justly God will reckon with those who have carried it so imperiously towards his people; the cup of trembling shall be put into their hand. Babylon's case shall be as bad as ever Jerusalem's was. Daniel's persecutors shall be thrown into Daniel's den; let them see how they like it. And the Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth.

CHAPTER LII.

The most part of this chapter is on the same subject with the chapter before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, which yet is applicable to the great salvation Christ hath wrought out for us; but the last three verses are on the same subject with the following chapter, concerning the person of the Redeemer, his humiliation and exaltation. Observe, I. The encouragement that is given to the Jews in captivity to hope that God would deliver them in his own way and time, ver. 1—6. II. The great joy and rejoicing that shall be both with ministers and people upon that occasion, ver. 7—10. III. The call given to those that remained in captivity, to shift for their own enlargement, when liberty was proclaimed, ver. 11, 12. IV. A short idea given here of the Messiah, which is enlarged upon in the next chapter, ver. 13—15.

AWAKE, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; [city:
Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy
For henceforth there shall no more come into thee
The uncircumcised and the unclean.
2 Shake thyself from the dust;
Arise, *and* sit down, O Jerusalem:
Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck,
O captive daughter of Zion.
3 For thus saith the LORD,
Ye have sold yourselves for nought;
And ye shall be redeemed without money.
4 For thus saith the Lord GOD, [there;
My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn
And the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.
5 Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD,
That my people is taken away for nought? [LORD;
They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the
And my name continually every day *is* blasphemed.
6 Therefore my people shall know my name:
Therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* he that
Behold, *it is* I. [doth speak:

Here, First. God's people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance, ver. 1, 2. They had desired that God would awake, and put on his strength, *ch.* li. 9; here he calls upon them to awake, and put on their strength, to bestir themselves. Let them awaken from their despondency, and pluck up their spirits, encourage themselves, and one another with hope, that all will be well yet, and no longer succumb, and sink under their burthen. Let them awaken from their distrust, look above them, look about them; look into the promises, look into the providences of God that were working for them; and let them raise their expectations of great things from God. Let them awaken from their dulness, and sluggishness, and incogitancy, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular courses for their own relief contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror, and make an interest with him. God here gives them an assurance,

1. That they shall be reformed by their captivity. "There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean;" their idolatrous customs shall be no more introduced, or at least not harboured. For when by the marriage of strange wives, in Ezra's time and Nehemiah's, the unclean crept in, they were soon by the vigilance and zeal of the magistrate expelled again; and care was taken that Jerusalem should be a holy city. Thus the Gospel Jerusalem is purified by the blood of Christ and the grace of God, and made indeed a holy city.

2. That they shall be relieved, and rescued out of their captivity; that the bands of their neck should be loosed, that they should not now be any longer oppressed; nay, that they should not be any more invaded, as they had been; 'There shall no more come against thee,' (so it may be read, ver. 1,) 'the uncircumcised and unclean.' The heathen shall not again enter into God's sanctuary, and profane his temple, *Ps.* lxxix. 1. This must be understood with a condition. If they keep close to God, and keep in with him, God will keep off, will keep out, the enemy; but if they again corrupt themselves, Antiochus will profane their temple, and the Romans destroy it. However, for some time they shall have peace; and to this happy change now approaching, they are here called to accommodate themselves. 1st. Let them prepare for joy: "Put on thy beautiful garments;" no longer to appear in mourning weeds, and the habit of thy widowhood. Put on a new face, a smiling countenance, now a new and pleasant scene begins to open. The beautiful garments were laid up then when the harps were hung on the willow trees; but now there is occasion for both, let both be resumed together. "Put on thy strength;" and, in order to that, put on thy beautiful garments, in token of triumph and rejoicing. Note, The joy of the Lord will be our strength, *Neh.* viii. 10; and our beautiful garments will serve for armour of proof against the darts of temptation and trouble. And observe, Jerusalem must then put on her beautiful garments when she is become a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty; and the more holy we are the more cause we have to rejoice. 2nd. Let them prepare for liberty: "Shake thyself from the dust," in which thou hast lain, and into which thy proud oppressors have trodden thee, *ch.* li. 23, or into which thou hast, in thy extreme sorrow, rolled thyself. 'Arise, and sit up;' so it may be read. O Jerusalem, prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under, and to shift thy quarters; "Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck," be inspired with generous principles and resolutions to assert thine own liberty. The Gospel proclaims liberty to those who were bound with fears, and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those that have been weary and heavy laden under the burthen of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears, and loose themselves from those bands; for if the Son make them free they shall be free indeed.

Secondly. God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He doth here plead their cause with himself, and even stir up himself to come and save them; for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Divers things he here considers:

1. That the Chaldeans, who oppressed them, never acknowledged God in the power they gained over his people: no more than Sennacherib did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, *ch.* x. 6, 7. "Ye have sold yourselves for nought;" you got nothing by it, nor did I. God considers, that when they by sin had sold themselves, he himself, who had the prior, nay, the sole title to them, did not increase his wealth by the price, *Ps.* xliv. 12. They did not so much as pay their debts to him with it. The Babylonians gave him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account; and therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing; you shall be redeemed without price, as was promised, *ch.* xlv. 13. Those that give nothing must expect to get nothing; however, God is a debtor to no man.

2. That they had been often before in the like distress, had often smarted for a time under the tyranny of their taskmasters; and therefore it was pity they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors, ver. 4. "My people went down into Egypt," in an amicable way to settle there; but they enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour; and then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, and power, and policies of Pharaoh: and why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other times the Assyrian oppressed the people of God without cause, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria, soon after Sennacherib, another Assyrian, with a destroying army, oppressed and made himself master of all the defenced cities of Judah. The Babylonians might not unfitly be called Assyrians, their monarchy being a branch of the Assyrian; and they now "oppressed them

without cause." Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them as they did, and could not pretend a dominion over them as their subjects, as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, a part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men, it is some comfort to be able to say, that as to them it is without cause; that we have not given them any provocation, *Ps.* vii. 3—5, &c.

3. That God's glory suffered by the injuries that were done to his people; ver. 5, "What have I here," what do I get by it, "that my people is taken away for nought?" God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone, and his temple in ruins; but if in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives, or by the natives, it were another matter; God might be looked upon as in some respect a gainer in his honour by it. But, alas! it is not so. 1st. The captives are so dispirited that they cannot praise him; but instead of that they are continually howling, which grieves him, and moves his pity. "They that rule over them make them to howl;" as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh, *Ex.* ii. 23. So the Babylonians now using them more hardly extorted from them louder complaints, and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper the captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have been, but brutish rather; they howled, *Hos.* vii. 14. However, God heard it, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, *Ex.* iii. 7. 2nd. The natives are so insolent that they will not praise him; but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him, and moves his anger. They boasted that they were too hard for God, because they were too hard for his people; and set him at defiance, as unable to deliver them; and thus "my name continually every day is blasphemed" among them. When they praised their own idols, they lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven, *Dan.* v. 23. Now, saith God, this is not to be suffered; I will go down to deliver them. For what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise have I from the world, when my people, that should be to me for a name and a praise, are to me for a reproach? For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves nor let them do it. The apostle quotes this with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, *Rom.* ii. 23, 24.

4. That his glory would be greatly manifested by their deliverance; ver. 6, "Therefore," because my name is thus blasphemed, I will arise, and "my people shall know my name," my name Jehovah, by which he had made himself known, in delivering them out of Egypt, *Ex.* vi. 3. God will do something to vindicate his own honour, something for his great name; and his people, that have almost lost the knowledge of it, shall know it to their comfort, and shall find it their strong tower. They shall know that God's providence governs the world, and all the affairs of it; that it is he that doth speak deliverance for them by the word of his power; that it is he only who at first spake, and it was done. They shall know that God's word, which Israel is blessed with above other nations, shall without fail have its accomplishment in due season. That it is he that speaks by the prophets. It is he, and they do not speak of themselves; for not one iota or tittle of what they say shall fall to the ground.

7 How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace;
That bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation;
That saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!
8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice;
With the voice together shall they sing:
For they shall see eye to eye,
When the LORD shall bring again Zion.
9 Break forth into joy, sing together,
Ye waste places of Jerusalem:
For the LORD hath comforted his people,
He hath redeemed Jerusalem.
10 The LORD hath made bare his holy arm
In the eyes of all the nations;
And all the ends of the earth
Shall see the salvation of our God.
11 Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence,
Touch no unclean *thing;*
Go ye out of the midst of her;
Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD.
12 For ye shall not go out with haste,
Nor go by flight:
For the LORD will go before you;
And the God of Israel *will be* your rereward.

The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again is here spoken of both as a mercy and as a duty; and the application of those words, ver. 7, to the preaching of the Gospel by the apostle, *Rom.* x. 15, plainly intimates, that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated.

First. It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness.

1. Those that bring the tidings of their release shall be very acceptable; ver. 7, "How beautiful upon the mountains," the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance; how beautiful are their feet, when it is known what tidings they bring! It is not meant so much of the common posts, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves; who, being at the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and presently went themselves, or sent their own messengers to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there that their brethren would be with them shortly. For it is published, not merely as matter of news, but as a proof that Zion's God reigns; for in that language it is published. They say unto Zion, "Thy God reigneth." Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews; those tidings which were so long expected by them that waited for the consolation of Israel, those good tidings, (so the original reads it, without the tautology of our translation, "good tidings of good,") they put this construction upon it; O Zion, thy God reigns. Note, When bad news is abroad this is good news, and when good news is abroad this is the best news, that Zion's God reigns; that God is Zion's God, in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, *Ps.* cxlvi. 10; *Zec.* ix. 9. "The Lord hath founded Zion," *ch.* xiv. 32. All events have their rise in the disposals of the kingdom of his providence, and their tendency to the advancement of the kingdom of his grace. This must be applied to the preaching of the Gospel, which is a proclamation of peace and salvation. It is Gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings; tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies, and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is, that the Lord Jesus reigns, and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first, *Lu.* iv. 18; *Heb.* ii. 3; and of him the text speaks. How beautiful are his feet! his feet that were nailed to the cross, how beautiful upon mount Calvary; his feet, when he came leaping upon the mountains, *Cant.* ii. 8, how beautiful were they to those who knew his voice, and knew it to be the voice of their beloved! His ministers proclaim these good tidings. They ought to keep their feet clean from the pollutions of the world, and then they ought to be beautiful in the eyes of those to whom they are sent, who sit at their feet, or rather at Christ's in them, to hear his word. They must be esteemed in love for their works' sake, 1 *Thes.* v. 13. For their message sake, which is well worthy of all acceptation.

2. Those to whom the tidings are brought shall be put thereby into a transport of joy.

1st. Zion's watchmen shall then rejoice, because they are surprisingly illuminated, ver. 8. The watchmen on Jerusalem's walls shall lead the chorus in this triumph. Who they were we are told, *ch.* lxii. 6. They were such as God set on the walls of Jerusalem, to make mention of his name, and to continue instant in prayer to him, till he again make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. These watchmen stand upon their watch-tower, waiting for an answer to these prayers, *Hab* ii. 1; and, therefore, when the good news comes, they have it first; and the longer they have continued, and the more importunate they have been in praying for it, the more will they be elevated when it comes. They shall "lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing" in concert, to invite others to join with them in their praises; and that which above all things will transport him with pleasure is, that "they shall see eye to eye," that is, face is face. Whereas God had been a God hiding himself, and they could scarce discern any thing of his favour through the dark cloud of their afflictions, now the cloud is scattered they shall plainly see it. They shall see Zion's king eye to eye; so it was fulfilled when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and there were those that saw his glory, *Jno.* i. 14; and looked upon it, 1 *Jno.* i. 1. They shall see an exact agreement and correspondence between the prophecy and the event, the promise and the performance; they shall see how they look one upon another eye to eye, and be satisfied that the same God spoke the one and did the other. When the Lord shall bring again Zion out of her captivity, the prophets shall from thence receive and give fuller discoveries than ever of God's good-will to his people; and applying this also, as the foregoing verse, to gospel times, it is a promise of the pouring out of the Spirit upon gospel ministers, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, to lead them into all truth, so that they shall see eye to eye; shall see God's grace more clearly than the Old Testament saints could see it; and they shall herein be unanimous. In these great things concerning the common salvation, they shall concur in their sentiments as well as their songs; nay, St. Paul seems to allude to this, when he makes it the privilege of our future state, that we shall see face to face.

2nd. Zion's waste places shall then rejoice, because they shall be surprisingly comforted; ver. 9, "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem," that is, all parts of Jerusalem, for it was all in ruins; and even those parts that seemed to lie most desolate shall share in the joy; and they, having little expected it, shall break forth into joy, as men that dream, *Ps.* cxxvi. 1, 2. Let them sing together. Note, Those that share in mercies ought to join in praises. Here is matter for joy and praise. *First.* God's people will have the comfort of this salvation; and what is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. He hath redeemed Jerusalem; that is, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that were sold into the hands of their enemies; and thereby he hath comforted his people that were in sorrow. The redemption of Jerusalem is the joy of all God's people, whose character it is that they look for that redemption, *Lu.* ii. 38. *Secondly.* God will have the glory of it; ver. 10, He "hath made bare his holy arm," that is, manifested and displayed his power in the eyes of all the nations. God's arm is a holy arm, stretched out in purity and justice, in defence of holiness, and in pursuance of his promise. *Thirdly.* All the world will have the benefit of it. In the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus, the arm of the Lord was revealed, and all the ends of the earth were made to see the great salvation; that is, not as spectators of it only, (as they saw the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon,) but as sharers in it. Some of all nations, the most remote, shall partake of the benefits of the redemption. This is applied to our salvation by Christ; *Lu.* iii. 6, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God," that great salvation.

Secondly. It is here spoken of as a great business, which ought to be managed with abundance of care and circumspection. When the liberty is proclaimed,

1. Let the people of God hasten out of Babylon with all convenient speed. Though they are never so well settled there, let them not think of taking root in Babylon, but "Depart ye, depart ye," (ver. 11,) "Go ye out of the midst of her," not only those that are in the borders, but those that are in the midst, in the heart of the country, let them be gone. Babylon is no place for Israelites; as soon as they have leave to go, let them lose no time; with this word God stirred up the spirits of those that were moved to go up, *Ezr.* i. 5; and it is a call to all those who are yet in the bondage of sin and Satan, to make use of the liberty which Christ hath proclaimed to them. And if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed.

2. Let them take heed of carrying away with them any of the pollutions of Babylon; "Touch no unclean thing." Now God makes bare his holy arm for you, be ye holy as he is, and keep yourselves from every wicked thing. When they came out of Egypt, they brought with them the idolatrous customs of Egypt, *Eze.* xxiii. 3, which were their ruin; let them take heed of doing so now they come out of Babylon. Note, When we are receiving any special mercy from God, we ought more carefully than ever to watch against all impurity; but especially let them be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord, that is, the priests that had the charge of the vessels of the sanctuary, when they were restored by a particular grant, to carry them to Jerusalem, *Ezr.* i. 7; viii. 24. Let them not only avoid touching any unclean thing, but be very careful to cleanse themselves according to the purification of the sanctuary. Christians are made to our God spiritual priests, *Rev.* i. 5; they are to bear the vessels of the Lord, are intrusted to keep the ordinances of God pure and entire. It is a good thing committed to them, and they ought to be

clean, to wash their hands in innocency, and so to compass God's altars, and carry his vessels, and keep themselves pure.

3. Let them depend upon the presence of God with them and his protection in their remove, ver. 12. Ye "shall not go out with haste." They were to go with a diligent haste, not to lose time, nor linger as Lot in Sodom; but they were not to go with a diffident, distrustful haste, as if they were afraid of being pursued, as when they came out of Egypt, or of having the orders for their release recalled and countermanded. No, they shall find, that as for God his work is perfect; and therefore, they need not make more haste than good speed. Cyrus shall give them an honourable discharge, and they shall have an honourable return, and not steal away; for the Lord will go before them as their general and commander-in-chief; and the God of Israel will be their rearward, or he that will gather up them that are left behind. God will both lead their van and bring up their rear; that is, he will secure them from enemies, that either meet them or follow them; for with his favour will he compass them. The pillar of cloud and fire, when they came out of Egypt, sometimes went behind them to secure their rear, *Ex.* xiv. 19, and God's presence with them would now be that to them which that pillar was a visible token of. Those that are in the way of their duty are under God's special protection; and he that believeth this will not make haste.

13 Behold, my servant shall deal prudently,
He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.
14 As many were astonied at thee;
His visage was so marred more than any man,
And his form more than the sons of men:
15 So shall he sprinkle many nations;
The kings shall shut their mouths at him:
For *that* which had not been told them shall they see;
And *that* which they had not heard shall they consider.

Here, as in other places, for the confirming of the faith of God's people, and the encouraging of their hope in the promises of temporal deliverances, the prophet passeth from them to speak of the great salvation which should in the fulness of time be wrought out by the Messiah. As the prophecy of Christ's incarnation was intended for the ratification of the promise of their deliverance from the Assyrian army, so this of Christ's death and resurrection is to confirm the promise of their return out of Babylon; for both these salvations were typical of the great redemption, and the prophecies of them had a reference to that. This prophecy, which begins here, and is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ. The ancient Jews understand it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it; and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who from hence preached Christ to the eunuch, hath put it past dispute, that of him speaketh the prophet this, of him, and of no other man, *Acts* viii. 34, 35. Here,

First. God owns Christ to be both commissioned and qualified for his undertaking. 1. He is appointed to it. He is my servant, whom I employ, and therefore will uphold. In his undertaking he doth his Father's will, seeks his Father's honour, and serves the interests of his Father's kingdom. 2. He is qualified for it. He shall deal prudently; for the Spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon him, *ch.* xi. 2. The word is used concerning David, when he behaved himself wisely, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 14. Christ is wisdom itself, and in the contriving and carrying on of the work of our redemption there appeared much of "the wisdom of God in a mystery," 1 *Cor.* ii. 7. Christ, when he was here upon earth, dealt very prudently, to the admiration of all.

Secondly. He gives a short prospect both of his humiliation and his exaltation. See here,

1. How he humbled himself. Many were astonished at him, as they were at David, when by reason of his sorrows and troubles he became "a wonder unto many," *Ps.* lxxi. 7. Many admired to see what base usage he met with, how inveterate people were against him, how inhuman, and what indignities were done him. "His visage was marred more than any man's," when he was buffeted, smitten on the cheek, and crowned with thorns, and "hid not his face from shame and spitting." His face was foul with weeping, for he was a man of sorrows; he that really was fairer than the children of men had a good face spoiled with the abuses that were done him. Never was man used so barbarously; his form, when he took upon him the form of a servant, was more mean and abject than that of any of the sons of men. They that saw him said, Sure never man looked so miserably; a worm, and no man, *Ps.* xxii. 6. The nation abhorred him, *ch.* xlix. 7; treated him as the offscouring of all things. Never was sorrow like unto his sorrow.

2. How highly God exalted him, and therefore exalted him because he humbled himself. Three words are used for this; ver. 13, "He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high." God shall exalt him, men shall extol him, and with both he shall be very high, higher than the highest, higher than the heavens. He shall prosper in his work, and succeed in it, and that shall raise him very high. 1st. Many nations shall be the better for him, for he shall sprinkle them, and not the Jews only; the blood of sprinkling shall be applied to their consciences to purify them. He suffered, and died, and so sprinkled many nations; for in his death there was a fountain opened, *Zec.* xiii. 1. He shall "sprinkle many nations" by his heavenly doctrine, which shall drop as the dew, and distil as the rain. Moses' did so only on one nation, *Deu.* xxxii. 2, but Christ's on many nations. He shall do it by baptism, which is the washing of the body with pure water, *Heb.* x. 22; so that this promise had its accomplishment when Christ sent his apostles to disciple all nations, by baptizing or sprinkling them. 2nd. The great ones of the nations shall shew him respect; "Kings shall shut their mouths at him," that is, they shall not open their mouths against him as they had done, to contradict and blaspheme his sacred oracles; nay, they shall acquiesce in, and be well pleased with, the methods he takes of setting up his kingdom in the world. They shall with great humility and reverence receive his oracles and laws, as those who, when they heard Job's wisdom, "after his speech spake not again," *Job* xxix. 9, 22. "Kings shall see and arise," *ch.* xlix. 7. 3rd. The mystery, which was kept secret from the beginning of the world, shall by him be "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith," as the apostle speaks, *Rom.* xvi. 25, 26. "That which had not been told them shall they see." The Gospel brings to light things new and unheard of, which will awaken the attention and engage the reverence of kings and kingdoms. This is applied to the preaching of the Gospel in the Gentile world, *Rom.* xv. 21, where these words are quoted according to the Septuagint translation; "To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand." As the things revealed had long been kept secret, so the persons to whom they were revealed had long been kept in the dark, but now they shall see, and consider the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, which before they had not been told of, they had not heard. That shall be discovered to them by the Gospel of Christ which could never be told them by all the learning of their philosophers, or the art of their diviners, or any of their pagan oracles. Much had been said in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, much had been told them, and they had heard it. But, as the queen of Sheba said concerning Solomon, what they shall see in him when he comes shall far exceed what had been told them. Christ disappointed the expectations of those who looked for a Messiah according to their fancies, as the carnal Jews, but outdid theirs who looked for such a Messiah as was promised. According to their faith, nay, and beyond it, it was to them.

CHAPTER LIII.

The two great things which the Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophets testified beforehand, were the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, 1 *Pet.* i. 11. And that which Christ himself, when he expounded Moses and all the prophets, shewed to be the drift and scope of them all was, that Christ ought to suffer, and then to enter into his glory, *Lu.* xxiv. 26, 27. But nowhere, in all the Old Testament, are these two so plainly and fully prophesied of as here in this chapter, out of which divers passages are quoted with application to Christ in the New Testament. This chapter is so replenished with the unsearchable riches of Christ, that it may be called rather the gospel of the evangelist Isaiah, than the prophecy of the prophet Isaiah. We may observe here, I. The reproach of Christ's sufferings; the meanness of his appearance; the greatness of his grief; and the prejudices which many conceived from thence against his doctrine, ver. 1—3. II. The rolling away of this reproach, and the stamping of an immortal honour upon his sufferings, notwithstanding the disgrace and ignominy of them, by four considerations: 1. That therein he did his Father's will, ver. 4, 6, 10; 2. That thereby he made atonement for the sin of man, ver. 4—6, 8, 11, 12; for it was not for any sin of his own that he suffered, ver. 9; 3. That he bore his sufferings with an invincible and exemplary patience, ver. 7; 4. That he should prosper in his undertaking, and his sufferings should end in his immortal honour, ver. 10—12. By mixing faith with the prophecy of this chapter, we may improve our acquaintance with Jesus Christ and him crucified, with Jesus Christ and him glorified; dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification.

WHO hath believed our report?
And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?
2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant,
And as a root out of a dry ground: [him,
He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see
There is no beauty that we should desire him.
3 He is despised and rejected of men;
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:
And we hid as it were *our* faces from him;
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The prophet, in the close of the former chapter, had foreseen and foretold the kind reception which the Gospel of Christ should find among the Gentiles: that nations and their kings should bid it welcome; that they who had not seen him, yet should believe in him; and, though they had not any prophecies among them of gospel grace, which might raise their expectations, and dispose them to entertain it; yet, upon the first notice of it, they should give it its due weight and consideration. Now here he foretells with wonder the unbelief of the Jews, notwithstanding the previous notices they had of the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and the opportunity they had of being personally acquainted with them. Observe here,

First. The contempt they put upon the Gospel of Christ, ver. 1. The unbelief of the Jews in our Saviour's time, is expressly said to be the fulfilling of this word, *Jno.* xii. 38; and it is applied likewise to the little success which the apostles' preaching met with among Jews and Gentiles, *Rom.* x. 16. Note, 1. Of the many that hear the report of the Gospel there are few, very few, that believe it. It is reported openly and publicly, not whispered in a corner, or confined to the schools, but proclaimed to all; and it is so faithful a saying, and so well worthy of all acceptation, that one would think it should be universally received and believed, but it is quite otherwise. Few believed the prophets who spake before of Christ; when he came himself none of the rulers or of the Pharisees followed him; and but here and there one of the common people. When the apostles carried this report all the world over, some in each place believed, but comparatively very few. It is so still of the many that profess to believe this report; there are few that cordially embrace it, and submit to the power of it. 2. Therefore, people believe not the report of the Gospel, because the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them; they do not discern, nor will be brought to acknowledge, that Divine power which goes along with the word. The arm of the Lord is made bare, (as was said *ch.* lii. 10,) in the miracles that were wrought to confirm Christ's doctrine, in the wonderful success of it, and its energy upon the conscience,—though it is a still voice, it is a strong one; but they do not perceive this, nor do they experience in themselves that working of the Spirit which makes the word effectual. They believe not the Gospel, because by rebelling against the light they had they had forfeited the grace of God, which, therefore, he justly denied them, and withheld from them, and for want of that they believed not. 3. This is a thing we ought to be much affected with. It is to be wondered at, and greatly lamented; and ministers may go to God and complain of it to him, as the prophet here. What pity is it that such rich grace should be received in vain; that precious souls should perish at the pool's side, because they will not step in and be healed.

Secondly. The contempt they put upon the person of Christ, because of the meanness of his appearance, ver. 2, 3. And this seems to come in as a reason why they rejected his doctrine, because they were prejudiced against his person. When he was on earth, many that heard him preach, and could not but approve of what they heard, yet would not give it any regard or entertainment, because it came from one that made so small a figure, and had no external advantages to recommend him. Observe here,

1. The low condition he submitted to, and how he abased and emptied himself. The entry he made into the world, and the character he wore in it, were no way agreeable to the ideas which the Jews had formed of the Messiah, and their expectations concerning him, but quite the reverse.

1st. It was expected that his extraction should be very great and noble. He was to be the son of David, of a family that had a "name like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth," 2 *Sam.* vii. 9. But he sprang out of this royal and illustrious family when it was reduced and sunk; and Joseph, that son of David that was his supposed father, was but a poor carpenter, perhaps a ship-carpenter, for most of his relations were fishermen. This is here meant by his being "a root out of a dry ground," his being born of a mean and despicable family in the north, in Galilee; of a family out of which, like a dry and

desert ground, nothing green, nothing great was expected; in a country of such small repute, that it was thought no good thing could come out of it. His mother being a virgin was as dry ground, yet from her he sprung, who is not only fruit, but root; the seed on the stony ground had no root. But, though Christ grew out of a dry ground, he is both the root and the offspring of David, the root of the good olive.

2nd. It was expected that he should make a public entry, and come in pomp, and with observation; but instead of that, he grew up before God, not before men. God had his eye upon him, but men regarded him not; he grew up as a tender plant, silently and insensibly, and without any noise; as the corn, that tender plant, grows up, we know not how, *Mar.* iv. 27. Christ rose as a tender plant, which one would have thought might easily have been crushed, and that one frosty night would have nipped it. The Gospel of Christ, in its beginning, was as a grain of mustard seed, so inconsiderable did it seem, *Mat.* xiii. 31, 32.

3rd. It was expected that he should have some uncommon beauty in his face and person, which should charm the eye, attract the heart, and raise the expectations of all that saw him. But there was nothing of that in him; not that he was in the least deformed or misshapen, but he had "no form nor comeliness," nothing extraordinary, which one might have thought to meet with in the countenance of an incarnate Deity. Those who saw him could not see that there was any beauty in him that they should desire him; nothing in him "more than another beloved," *Cant.* v. 9. Moses, when he was born, was exceeding fair; to that degree, that it was looked upon as a happy presage, *Acts* vii. 20; *Heb.* xi. 23. David, when he was anointed, was of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to, 1 *Sam.* xvi. 12. But our Lord Jesus had nothing of that to recommend him. Or, it may refer not so much to his person as to the manner of his appearing in the world, which had nothing in it of sensible glory. His Gospel is preached, not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but with all plainness, agreeable to the subject.

4th. It was expected that he should live a pleasant life, and have a full enjoyment of all the delights of the sons and daughters of men, which would have invited all sorts to him; but, quite contrary, he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." It was not only his last scene that was tragical, but his whole life was so; not only mean, but miserable,—

'——But one continued chain
Of labour, sorrow, and consuming pain.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

Thus, being made sin for us, he underwent the sentence sin had subjected us to, that we should eat in sorrow all the days of our life, *Gen.* iii. 17, and thereby relaxed much of the rigour and extremity of the sentence as to us. His condition was, upon many accounts, sorrowful; he was unsettled, had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, was opposed and menaced, and "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself." His spirit was tender, and he admitted the impressions of sorrow; we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. Lentulus, in his epistle to the Roman senate concerning Jesus, saith he was never seen to laugh; and so worn and macerated was he with continual grief, that when he was but a little above thirty years of age he was taken to be near fifty, *Jno.* viii. 57. Grief was his intimate acquaintance; for he acquainted himself with others' grievances, and sympathised with them, and he never set his own as at a distance; for in his transfiguration he talked of his own decease, and in his triumph wept over Jerusalem. Let us look unto him and mourn.

2. The low opinion that men had of him upon this account; they being generally apt to judge of persons and things by the sight of the eye, and according to outward appearance, they saw no beauty in him, that they should desire him. There was a great deal of true beauty in him, the beauty of holiness, and the beauty of goodness, enough to render him the desire of all nations; but the far greater part of those among whom he lived and conversed, saw none of his beauty, for it was spiritually discerned. Carnal hearts see no excellency in the Lord Jesus, nothing that should induce them to desire an acquaintance with him, or interest in him. Nay, he is not only not desired, but he is despised and rejected, abandoned and abhorred, a reproach of men, an abject,—one that men were shy of keeping company with, and had not any esteem for; a worm, and no man. He was despised as a mean man, rejected as an ill man; he was "the stone which the builders refused;" they would not have him to reign over them. Men that should have had so much reason as to understand things better, so much tenderness as not to trample upon a man in misery,—men whom he came to seek and save,—they rejected him; "We hid as it were our faces from him," looked another way, and his sufferings were as nothing to us, though never sorrow was like unto his sorrow. Nay, we not only carried it as unconcerned about him, but as loathing him, and having him in detestation. It may be read, He hid as it were his face from us, concealed the glory of his majesty, and drew a veil over it; and therefore "he was despised, and we esteemed him not," because we could not see through that veil. Christ having undertaken to make satisfaction to the justice of God, for the injury man had done him in his honour by sin, (and God cannot otherwise be injured but in his holiness,) he did it not only by divesting himself of the glories due to an incarnate Deity, but by submitting himself to the disgraces due to the worst of men and malefactors; and thus by vilifying himself he glorified his Father. But this is a good reason why we should esteem him highly, and study to do him honour. Let him be received by us whom men rejected.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs,
And carried our sorrows:
Yet we did esteem him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
5 But he *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities:
The chastisement of our peace *was* upon him;
And with his stripes we are healed.
6 All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned every one to his own way;
And the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.
7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
Yet he opened not his mouth:
He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
So he openeth not his mouth.
8 He was taken from prison and from judgment:
And who shall declare his generation?
For he was cut off out of the land of the living:
For the transgression of my people was he stricken.
9 And he made his grave with the wicked,
And with the rich in his death;
Because he had done no violence,
Neither *was any* deceit in his mouth.

In these verses we have,

First. A farther account of the sufferings of Christ. Much was said before, but more is said here, of the very low condition to which he abased and humbled himself, to which he became obedient, even to the death of the cross.

1. He had griefs and sorrows. Being acquainted with them, he kept up the acquaintance, and did not grow shy, no, not of such melancholy acquaintance. Were griefs and sorrows allotted him? He bore them, and blamed not his lot; he carried them, and did neither shrink from them nor sink under them. The load was heavy, and the way long; and yet he did not tire, but persevered to the end, till he said, "It is finished."

2. He had blows and bruises; he was stricken and smitten, and afflicted. His sorrows bruised him, he felt pain and smart from them; they touched him in the most tender part, especially when God was dishonoured, and when he forsook him upon the cross. All along he was smitten with the tongue, when he was cavilled at and contradicted, put under the worst of characters, and had all manner of evil said against him. At last he was smitten with the hand, with blow after blow.

3. He had wounds and stripes. He was scourged, not under the merciful restriction of the Jewish law, which allowed not above forty stripes to be given to the worst of malefactors, but according to the usage of the Romans. And his scourging, doubtless, was the more severe, because Pilate intended it as an equivalent for his crucifixion; and yet it proved a preface to it. He was wounded in his hands, and feet, and side; though it was so ordered that "not a bone of him should be broken," yet he had scarce any where a whole skin, (how fond soever we are to sleep in one, even when we are called out to suffer for him,) but from the crown of the head, which was crowned with thorns, to the soles of his feet, which were nailed to the cross, nothing appeared but wounds and bruises.

4. He was wronged and abused, ver. 7; he was oppressed, injuriously treated, and hardly dealt with. That was laid to his charge which he was perfectly innocent of; that laid upon him which he did not deserve; and in both he was oppressed and injured. He was afflicted both in mind and body; being oppressed, he laid it to heart, and though he was patient was not stupid under it; but he mingled his tears with those of the oppressed, that have no comforter, because on the side of the oppressors there is power, *Eccl.* iv. 1. Oppression is a sore affliction, it has made many a wise man mad, *Eccl.* vii. 7; but our Lord Jesus, though when he was oppressed he was afflicted, yet he kept possession of his own soul.

5. He was judged and imprisoned; that is implied in his being taken from prison and judgment, ver. 8. God having made him sin for us, he was proceeded against as a malefactor, he was apprehended and taken into custody, and made a prisoner; he was judged, accused, tried, and condemned according to the usual forms of law. God filed a process against him, judged him in pursuance of that process, and clapped him up in the prison of the grave, at the door of which a stone was rolled and sealed.

6. He was cut off by an untimely death "from the land of the living," though he lived a most useful life, did so many good works; and they were all such, that one would be apt to think it was for some of them that they stoned him. He was stricken to the death, to the grave, which he made with the wicked; for he was crucified between two thieves, as if he had been the worst of the three; and yet with the rich, for he was buried in a sepulchre that belonged to Joseph, an honourable counsellor. Though he died with the wicked, and, according to the common course of dealing with criminals, should have been buried with them, in the place were he was crucified; yet God here foretold, and providence so ordered it, that he should make his grave with the innocent, with the rich, as a mark of distinction put between him and those that really deserve to die, even in his sufferings.

Secondly. A full account of the meaning of his sufferings. It was a very great mystery that so excellent a person should suffer such hard things; and it is natural to ask with amazement how it came about. What evil has he done? His enemies indeed looked upon him as suffering justly for his crimes; and, though they could lay nothing to his charge, they esteemed him "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," ver. 4. Because they hated him, and run him down, they thought God did; that he was his enemy and fought against him, and therefore they were the more enraged against him, saying, "God hath forsaken him, persecute and take him," *Ps.* lxxi. 11. Those that are justly smitten are smitten of God, for by him princes decree justice; and so they looked upon him to be smitten, justly put to death, as a blasphemer, a deceiver, and an enemy to Cæsar. They that saw him hanging on the cross inquired not into the merits of his cause; but took it for granted that he was guilty of every thing laid to his charge, and that therefore vengeance suffered him not to live. Thus Job's friends esteemed him smitten of God, because there was something uncommon in his sufferings. It was true that he was smitten of God, ver. 10, (or, as some read it, 'he was God smitten and afflicted,' the Son of God, though smitten and afflicted,) but not in the sense that they meant it; for it is true he suffered all these things, but,

1. He never did any thing in the least to deserve this hard usage. Whereas he was charged with perverting the nation, and sowing sedition, it was utterly false, "he had done no violence," but "went about doing good." And whereas he was called "that deceiver," he never deserved that character, for there was no deceit in his mouth, ver. 9, to which the apostle refers, 1 *Pet.* ii. 22, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" he never offended either in word or deed, nor could any of his enemies take up that challenge of his, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" The judge that condemned him owned he found no fault in him; and the centurion that executed him professed that certainly he was a righteous man.

2. He carried himself under his sufferings so as to make it appear that he did not suffer as an evil-doer; for, though he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he "opened not his mouth," ver. 7, no, not so much as to plead his own innocency, but freely offered himself to suffer and die for us, and objected nothing against it. This quite takes away the scandal of the cross, that he voluntarily submitted to it for great and holy ends. By his wisdom he could have evaded the sentence, and by his power have resisted the execution; but thus it was written, and thus it behoved him to suffer; this commandment he received from his Father, and therefore he was led "as a lamb to the slaughter," without any difficulty or reluctancy. He is the Lamb of God, and as a sheep is dumb before the shearers, nay, before the butchers, so he opened not his mouth; which notes

not only his exemplary patience under affliction, *Ps.* xxxix. 9, and his meekness under reproach, *Ps.* xxxviii. 13, but his cheerful compliance with his Father's will; "Not my will, but thine be done: Lo, I come." And by this will we are sanctified; his making his own soul, his own life, an offering for our sin.

3. It was for our good, and in our stead, that Jesus Christ suffered; this is asserted here plainly and fully, and in a very great variety of emphatical expressions.

1st. It is certain we are all guilty before God; we have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ver. 6, "All we like sheep have gone astray," one as well as another. The whole race of mankind lies under the stain of original corruption, and every particular person stands charged with many actual transgressions. We have all gone astray from God our rightful owner, alienated ourselves from him, from the ends he designed us to move towards, and the way he appointed us to move in. We have gone astray like sheep, that are apt to wander, and are unapt, when they are gone astray, to find the way home again. And that is our true character; we are bent to backslide from God, but altogether unable of ourselves to return to him. This is mentioned not only as our infelicity, that we go astray from the green pastures, and expose ourselves to the beasts of prey, but as our iniquity; we affront God in going astray from him, for we turn aside every one to his own way, and thereby set up ourselves and our own will in competition with God and his will; which is the malignity of sin. Instead of walking obediently in God's way, we have turned wilfully and stubbornly to our own way, the way of our own heart, the way that our own corrupt appetites and passions lead us to; we have set up for ourselves, to be our own masters, our own carvers, to do what we will, and have what we will. Some think it intimates our own evil way, in distinction from the evil way of others. Sinners have their own iniquity, their beloved sin, which doth most easily beset them; their own evil way, that they are particularly fond of, and bless themselves in.

2nd. Our sins are our sorrows and our griefs, ver. 4. Or, as it may be read, our sicknesses and our wounds. The Seventy read it, 'our sins;' and so the apostle, 1 *Pet.* ii. 24. Our original corruptions are the sickness and disease of the soul, an habitual indisposition; our actual transgressions are the wounds of the soul, which put conscience to pain, if it be not seared and senseless. Or, our sins are called our griefs and sorrows, because all our griefs and sorrows are owing to our sins; and our sins deserve all griefs and sorrows, even those that are most extreme and everlasting.

3rd. Our Lord Jesus was appointed, and did undertake, to make satisfaction for our sins, and so to save us from the penal consequences of them. *First.* He was appointed to do it, by the will of his Father; for "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." God chose him to be the Saviour of poor sinners, and would have him to save them in this way, by bearing their sins, and the punishment of them; not the *idem*,—'the same' that we should have suffered, but the *tantundem*—that which was more than equivalent for the maintaining of the honour of the holiness and justice of God in the government of the world. Observe here, 1*st.* In what way we are saved from the ruin to which by sin we were become liable. By laying our sins on Christ, as the sins of the offerer were laid upon the sacrifice, and those of all Israel upon the head of the scapegoat. Our sins were made to meet upon him, so the margin reads it; the sins of all that he was to save, from every place and every age, met upon him, and he was met with for them. They were made to fall upon him, so some read it, as those rushed upon him that came with swords and staves to take him. The laying of our sins upon Christ implies the taking of them off from us; we shall not fall under the curse of the law if we submit to the grace of the Gospel. They were laid upon Christ when he was made sin, that is, a sin offering for us; and redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us, and so he put himself into a capacity to make those easy that come to him heavy laden under the burthen of sin: see *Ps.* xl. 6—12. 2*nd.* By whom this was appointed. It was the Lord that laid our iniquities on Christ. He contrived this way of reconciliation and salvation, and he accepted of the vicarious satisfaction Christ was to make. Christ was delivered to death by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." None but God had power to lay our sins upon Christ, both because the sin was committed against him, and to him the satisfaction was to be made, and because Christ, on whom the iniquity was to be laid, was his own Son, the Son of his love, and his holy child Jesus, who himself knew no sin. 3*rd.* For whom this atonement was to be made. It was "the iniquity of us all" that was laid on Christ; for in Christ there is a sufficiency of merit for the salvation of all, and a serious offer made of that salvation to all, which excludes none that do not exclude themselves. It intimates that this is the one only way of salvation. All that are justified are justified by having their sins laid on Jesus Christ; and, though they were never so many, he is able to bear the weight of them all. *Secondly.* He undertook to do it. God laid upon him our iniquity. But did he consent to it? Yes, he did; for so some think is the true reading of the next words, ver. 7, "It was exacted, and he answered." Divine justice demanded satisfaction for our sins, and he engaged to make the satisfaction. He became our surety, not as originally bound with us, but as bail to the action. 'Upon me be the curse, my Father.' And therefore, when he was seized, he indented with those into whose hands he surrendered himself, that that should be his disciples' discharge, "If you seek me, let these go their way," *Jno.* xviii. 8. By his own voluntary susception he made himself responsible for our debt, and it is well for us he was responsible. Thus he restored that which he took not away.

4. Having undertaken our debt, he underwent the penalty. Solomon saith, "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it." Christ being surety for us, did smart for it. 1st. He "bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows," ver. 4. He not only submitted to the common infirmities of the human nature, and the common calamities of human life which sin had introduced, but he underwent the extremities of grief when he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." He made the sorrows of this present time heavy to himself, that he might make them light and easy for us. Sin is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery. Christ bore our sins, and so bore our griefs, bore them off us, that we should never be pressed above measure. This is quoted, *Mat.* viii. 17, with application to the compassion Christ had for the sick that came to him to be cured, and the power he put forth to cure them. 2nd. He did this by suffering for our sins; ver. 5, "He was wounded for our transgressions;" that is, to make atonement for them, and to purchase for us the pardon of them. Our sins were the thorns in his head, the nails in his hands and feet, the spear in his side. Wounds and bruises were the consequences of sin, what we deserved, and what we had brought upon ourselves, *ch.* i. 9. That these wounds and bruises, though they are painful, may not be mortal, Christ was "wounded for our transgressions," was tormented or pained (the word is used for the pains of a woman in travail) for our revolts and rebellions; he was bruised or crushed for our iniquities, they were the procuring cause of his death. To the same purpose, ver. 8, "For the transgression of my people was he stricken," was the stroke upon him that should have been upon us; and so some read it, 'He was cut off for the iniquity of my people, unto whom the stroke belonged, or was due.' He was delivered to death for our offences, *Rom.* iv. 25. Hence it is said to be "according to the Scriptures," according to this scripture, that Christ died for our sins, 1 *Cor.* xv. 3. Some read this, 'by the transgression of my people,' that is, by the wicked hands of the Jews, who were in profession God's people, he was stricken, was crucified and slain, *Acts* ii. 23. But, doubtless, we are to take it in the former sense, which is abundantly confirmed by the angel's prediction of the Messiah's undertaking, solemnly delivered to Daniel, that he shall finish transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, *Dan.* ix. 24.

5. The effect and consequent of this to us is our peace and healing, ver. 5. 1st. Hereby we have peace. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him;" that is, he, by submiting to these chastisements, slew the enmity, and settled an amity between God and man; he made peace by the blood of his cross. Whereas by sin we were become odious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins, and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with himself, and thereby peace, that is, all good, comes unto us, *Eph.* ii. 14. "He is our peace," *Col.* i. 20. Christ was in pain, that we might be at ease; he gave satisfaction to the justice of God, that we might have satisfaction in our own minds; might be of good cheer, knowing that through him our sins are forgiven us. 2nd. Hereby we have healing; for by "his stripes we are healed." Sin is not only a crime for which we were condemned to die, and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it is a disease which tends directly to the death of our souls, and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes, that is, the sufferings he underwent, he purchased for us the Spirit and grace of God to mortify our corruptions, which are the distempers of our souls, and to put our souls in a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God, and prepared to enjoy him. And by the doctrine of Christ's cross, and the powerful arguments it furnisheth us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us, and we are fortified against that which feeds the disease.

6. The effect and consequent of this to Christ was, his resurrection and advancement to perpetual honour. This perfectly makes the offence of the cross to cease; he yielded himself to die as a sacrifice, as a lamb; and, to make it evident that the sacrifice he offered of himself was accepted, we are told here, ver. 8, 1st. That he was discharged. "He was taken from prison and from judgment;" that is, whereas he was imprisoned in the grave, under a judicial process, lay there under an arrest for our debt, and judgment seemed to be given against him, he was, by an express order from heaven, taken out of the prison of the grave; an angel was sent on purpose to roll away the stone, and set him at liberty; by which the judgment given against him was reversed, and taken off; which redounds not only to his honour, but to our comfort, for being delivered for our offences he was raised again for our justification. That discharge of the bail amounted to a release of the debt. 2nd. That he was preferred. "Who shall declare his generation?" his age, or continuance, so the word signifies; the time of his life? he rose to die no more; death had no more dominion over him; he that was dead is alive, and lives for evermore. And who can describe that immortality to which he rose; or number the years and ages of it? And therefore he is advanced to this eternal life, because for the transgression of his people he became obedient to death. We may take it as speaking the time of his usefulness; as David is said to serve his generation, and so to answer the end of living. Who can declare how great a blessing Christ by his death and resurrection will be to the world? And some, by his generation, understand his spiritual seed. Who can count the vast numbers of converts that shall by the Gospel be begotten to him, like the dew of the morning?

> 'When thus exalted, he shall live to see
> A numberless believing progeny;
> Of his adopted sons the godlike race
> Exceed the stars that heaven's high arches grace.'—*Sir R. Blackmore.*

Of which generation of his let us pray as Moses did for Israel, "The Lord God of our fathers make them a thousand times so many more as they are, and bless them as he hath promised them," *Deu.* i. 11.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him;
He hath put *him* to grief:
When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,
He shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.
11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied:
By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;
For he shall bear their iniquities.
12 Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great,
And he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
Because he hath poured out his soul unto death:
And he was numbered with the transgressors;
And he bare the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.

In the foregoing verses the prophet had testified very particularly of the sufferings of Christ, yet mixing some hints of the happy issue of them. Here he again mentions his sufferings, but largely foretells the glory that should follow. We may observe in these verses,

First. The service and sufferings of Christ's estate of humiliation. Come and see how he loved us; see what he did for us.

1. He submitted to the frowns of heaven; ver. 10, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him," to put him to pain, or torment, or grief. The Scripture nowhere saith that Christ in his sufferings underwent the wrath of God; but it saith that the Lord bruised him; not only permitted men to bruise him, here, 1st. That the Lord bruised him; not only permitted men to bruise him, but awakened his own sword against him, *Zec.* xiii. 7. They esteemed him smitten of God for some very great sin of his own, ver. 4. Now it was true that he was smitten of God, but it was for our sin. The Lord bruised him; for he did not spare him, but "delivered him up for us all," *Rom.* viii. 32. He it was that put the bitter cup into his hand, and obliged him to drink it, *Jno.* xviii. 11, having laid upon him our iniquity. He it was that made him sin and a curse for us, and turned to ashes all his burnt offering, in token of the acceptance of it, *Ps.* xx. 3. 2nd. That he bruised him so as to put him to grief. Christ accommodated himself to this dispensation, and received the impressions of grief from his Father's delivering him up; and he was troubled to that degree that it put him into an agony, and he began to be amazed and very heavy. 3rd. It pleased the Lord to do this; that is, he determined to do it, it was the result of an eternal counsel; and he delighted in it, as it was an effectual method for the salvation of man, and the securing and advancing of the honour of God.

2. He substituted himself in the room of sinners as a sacrifice; he made his

soul an offering for sin. He himself explains this, *Mat.* xx. 28, that he came to give his life a ransom for many. When men brought bulls and goats as sacrifices for sin, they made them offerings, for they had an interest in them, God having put them under the feet of man; but Christ made himself an offering: it was his own act and deed. We could not put him in our stead, but he put himself, and said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" in a higher sense than David said, or could say it, Father, I commit my soul to thee: I deposit it in thy hands, as the life of a sacrifice, and the price of pardons. Thus he shall bear the iniquities of the many that he designed to justify, ver. 11; shall take away the sin of the world, by taking it upon himself, *Jno.* i. 29. This is mentioned again, ver. 12, "He bare the sin of many," who, if they had been to bear it themselves, it would have sunk them to the lowest hell. See how this string is harped upon; for whenever we think of the sufferings of Christ, we must see him in them bearing our sin.

3. He subjected himself to that which to us is the wages of sin; ver. 12, "He hath poured out his soul unto death;" poured it out as water; so little account did he make of it, when the laying of it down was the appointed means of our redemption and salvation. He loved not his life unto the death, and his followers the martyrs did likewise, *Rev.* xii. 11. Or, rather, he poured it out as a drink offering, to make his sacrifice complete; poured it out as wine, that his blood might be drink indeed, as his flesh is meat indeed, to all believers. There was not only a colliquation of his body in sufferings, (*Ps.* xxii. 14, "I am poured out like water.) but a surrender of his spirit; he poured out that even unto death, though he is the Lord of life.

4. He suffered himself to be ranked with sinners, and yet offered himself to be an intercessor for sinners, ver. 12. 1st. It was a great aggravation of his sufferings, that he was numbered with the transgressors. He was not only condemned as a malefactor, but was executed in company with two notorious malefactors, and he in the midst, as if he had been the worst of the three; in which circumstance of his suffering the evangelist tells us this prophecy was fulfilled, *Mar.* xv. 27, 28. Nay, the vilest malefactor of all, Barabbas, that was both traitor, thief, and murderer, was put in election with him for the favour of the people, and carried it; for they would not have Jesus released, but Barabbas. In his whole life he was numbered among the transgressors; for he was called and counted a sabbath-breaker, a drunkard, and a friend to publicans and sinners. 2nd. It was a great commendation to his sufferings, and redounded very much to his honour, that in his sufferings he "made intercession for the transgressors," for those that reviled and crucified him, for he prayed, "Father, forgive them;" thereby shewing not only that he forgave them, but that he was now doing that upon which their forgiveness, and the forgiveness of all other transgressors, was to be founded. That prayer was the language of his blood, crying not for vengeance, but for mercy, and therein it speaketh better things than that of Abel, even for those who with wicked hands shed it.

Secondly. The graces and glories of his estate of exaltation, and the graces he confers on us, are not the least of the glories conferred on him; these are secured to him by the covenant of redemption, which these verses give us some idea of. He promiseth to make his soul an offering for sin, consents that the Father shall deliver him up, and undertakes to bear the sin of many; and for and in consideration hereof, the Father promiseth to glorify him, not only with the glory he had as God before the world was, *Jno.* xvii. 5, but with the glories of the Mediator.

1. He shall have the glory of an everlasting Father. Under this title he was brought into the world, *ch.* ix. 6, and he shall not fail to answer the title when he goes out of the world. This was the promise made to Abraham, (who herein was a type of Christ,) that he should be the "father of many nations," and so be "the heir of the world," *Rom.* iv. 13, 17. As he was the root of the Jewish church, and the covenant was made with him and his seed, so is Christ of the universal church, and with him (and his spiritual seed) is the covenant of grace made, which is grounded upon, and grafted in, the covenant of redemption, which here we have some of the glorious promises of. It is promised,

1st. That the Redeemer shall have a seed to serve him, and to bear up his name, *Ps.* xxii. 30. True believers are the seed of Christ; the Father gave them to him to be so, *Jno.* xvii. 6. He died to purchase and purify them to himself; fell to the ground as a corn of wheat, that he might bring forth much fruit, *Jno.* xii. 24. The word, that incorruptible seed of which they are born again, is his word; the Spirit, the great author of their regeneration, is his Spirit; and it is his image that is formed in them, and they are conformed to.

2nd. That he shall live to see his seed. Christ's children have a living Father; and because he lives they shall live also, for he is their life. Though he died, he rose again, and left not his children orphans, but took effectual care to secure to them the Spirit, the blessing, and the inheritance of sons. He shall see a great increase of them. The word is plural; "He shall see his seeds,' multitudes of them, so many that they cannot be numbered.

3rd. That he shall himself continue, to take care of the affairs of this numerous family: "He shall prolong his days." Many, when they see their seed, their seed's seed, have wished to depart in peace; but Christ will not commit the care of his family to any other; no, he shall himself live long, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, for he ever lives. Some refer it to believers; "He shall see a seed that shall prolong his days;" agreeing with *Ps.* lxxxix. 29, 36, "His seed shall endure for ever." Whilst the world stands Christ will have a church in it, which he himself will be the life of.

4th. That his great undertaking shall be successful, and shall answer expectation. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." God's purposes shall take effect, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail. Note, *First.* The work of man's redemption is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, and it is in good hands. It is well for us they are in his, for our own hands are not sufficient for us; but he is able to save to the uttermost. They are in his hands who upholdeth all things. *Secondly.* It is the good pleasure of the Lord, which notes not only his counsel concerning it, but his complacency in it, and therefore God loved him, and was well pleased in him, because he undertook to lay down his life for the sheep. *Thirdly.* It has prospered hitherto, and shall prosper, whatever obstructions or difficulties have been, or may be in the way of it. Whatever is undertaken according to God's pleasure shall prosper, *ch.* xlvi. 10. Cyrus, a type of Christ, shall perform all God's pleasure, *ch.* xliv. 28, and therefore no doubt Christ shall. Christ was so perfectly well qualified for his undertaking, and prosecuted it with so much vigour, and it was (from first to last) so well laid, that it could not fail to prosper, to the honour of his Father, and the salvation of all his seed.

5th. That he shall himself have abundant satisfaction in it; ver. 11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." He shall see it beforehand, (so it may be understood,) he shall, with the prospect of his sufferings, have a prospect of the fruit, and be satisfied in the bargain; he shall see it, when it is accomplished in the conversion and salvation of poor sinners. Note, *First.* Our Lord Jesus was in travail of soul for our redemption and salvation; in great pain, but with longing desire to be delivered; and all the pains and throes he underwent were in order to it, and hastened it on. *Secondly.* Christ doth and will see the blessed fruit of the travail of his soul in the founding and building up of his church, and the eternal salvation of all that were given him. He will not come short of his end in any part of his work, but will himself see that he has not laboured in vain. *Thirdly.* The salvation of souls is a great satisfaction to the Lord Jesus. He will reckon all his pains well bestowed, and himself abundantly recompensed, if the many sons be by him brought through grace to glory. Let him have this, and he has enough. God will be sanctified and glorified; penitent believers shall be justified, and then he is satisfied. Thus, in conformity to Christ, it shall be a satisfaction to us if we can do any thing to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world. Let it always be our meat and drink, as it was Christ's, to do God's will.

2. He shall have the glory of bringing in an everlasting righteousness, for so it was foretold concerning him, *Dan.* ix. 24, and here to the same purpose; "By his knowledge;" that is, the knowledge of him, and faith in him, "shall my righteous servant justify many;" for he shall bear the sins of many, and so lay a foundation for our justification from sin. Note, 1st. The great privilege that flows to us from the death of Christ is justification from sin, our being acquitted from that guilt which alone can ruin us, and accepted into God's favour, which alone can make us happy. 2nd. Christ, that purchased our justification for us, applies it to us by his intercession made for us, his Gospel preached to us, and his Spirit witnessing in us. The Son of man had power, even on earth, to forgive sin. 3rd. There are many whom Christ justifies. Not all, multitudes perish in their sins; yet many, even as many as he gave his life a ransom for, as many as the Lord our God shall call. He shall justify, not here and there one that is eminent and remarkable, but those of the many, the despised multitude. 4th. It is by faith that we are justified, by our consent to Christ and the covenant of grace. In this way we are saved, because thus God is most glorified, free grace most advanced, self most abased, and our happiness most effectually secured. 5th. Faith is the knowledge of Christ, and without knowledge there can be no true faith. Christ's way of gaining the will and affections is by enlightening the understanding, and bringing that unfeignedly to assent to Divine truths. 6th. That knowledge of Christ, and faith in him, by which we are justified, hath reference to him, both as a servant to God, and as a surety for us. *First.* As one that is employed for God to pursue his designs, and secure and advance the interests of his glory. He is my righteous servant, and as such justifies men. God hath authorized and appointed him to do it; it is according to God's will, and for his honour, that he doth it; he is himself righteous, and of his righteousness have all we received. He that is himself righteous, (for he could not have made atonement for our sin, if he had had any sin of his own to answer for,) is made of God to us righteousness; the Lord our righteousness. *Secondly.* As one that hath undertaken for us. We must know him, and believe in him, as one that bore our iniquities—saved us from sinking under the load by taking it upon himself.

3. He shall have the glory of obtaining an incontestable victory and universal dominion; ver. 12, Because he has done all these good services, "therefore will I divide him a portion with the great," and, according to the will of the Father, "he shall divide the spoil with the strong;" as a great general, when he hath driven the enemy out of the field, takes the plunder of it for himself and his army, which is both an unquestionable evidence of the victory, and a recompence for all the toils and perils of the battle. Note, 1st. God the Father has engaged to reward the services and sufferings of Christ with great glory. I will set him among the great, highly exalt him, and give him a name above every name, and with great riches, for he shall divide the spoil, shall have abundance of graces and comforts to bestow upon all his faithful soldiers. 2nd. Christ comes at his glory by conquest. He hath set upon the strong man armed, dispossessed him, and divided the spoil. He hath vanquished principalities and powers, sin and Satan, death and hell, the world and the flesh; these are the strong that he hath disarmed and taken the spoil of. 3rd. Much of the glory with which Christ is recompensed, and the spoil which he hath divided, consists in the vast multitudes of willing, faithful, loyal subjects, that shall be brought in to him; for so some read it, 'I will give many to him, and he shall obtain many for a spoil;' that is, God will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, *Ps.* ii. 8. His dominion shall be from sea to sea. Many shall be wrought upon by the grace of God to give up themselves to him, to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him; and hereby he shall reckon himself honoured, and enriched, and abundantly recompensed for all he did, and all he suffered. 4th. What God designed for the Redeemer he shall certainly gain the possession of; I will divide it to him: and immediately it follows, He shall divide it, notwithstanding the opposition that is given to him; for as Christ finished the work that was given him to do, so God completed the recompence that was promised him for it, for he is both able and faithful. 5th. The spoil which God divided to Christ, he divides, (it is the same word,) he distributes it among his followers; for when he led captivity captive he received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men; for, as he has told us, *Acts* xx. 35, he did himself reckon it more blessed and honourable to give than to receive. Christ conquered for us, and through him we are more than conquerors. He hath divided the spoils, the fruits of his conquest, to all that are his; let us therefore cast in our lot among them.

CHAPTER LIV.

The death of Christ is the life of the church, and of all that truly belong to it; and therefore, very fitly, after the prophet had foretold the sufferings of Christ, he foretells the flourishing of the church, which is a part of his glory, and that exaltation of him which was the reward of his humiliation. It was promised him, that he should see his seed; and this chapter is an explication of that promise. It may easily be granted, that it has a primary reference to the welfare and prosperity of the Jewish church, after their return out of Babylon, which (as other things that happened to them) was typical of the glorious liberty of the children of God, which through Christ we are brought into; yet it cannot be denied but that it has a farther and principal reference to the Gospel church, into which the Gentiles were to be admitted. And the first words being understood by the apostle of the New Testament Jerusalem, *Gal.* iv. 26, 27, may serve as a key to the whole chapter, and that which follows. It is here promised concerning the Christian church, I. That though the beginnings of it were small, yet it should be greatly enlarged by the accession of many to it from among the Gentiles, that had been wholly destitute of church privileges, ver. 1—5. II. That though sometimes God might seem to withdraw from her, and suspend the tokens of his favour, yet he would return in mercy, and would not return to contend with them any more, ver. 6—10. III. That though for a while she was in sorrow, and under oppression, yet she should at length be advanced to greater honour and splendour than ever, ver. 11, 12. IV. That knowledge, righteousness, and peace, should flourish and prevail, ver. 13, 14. V. That all attempts against the church should be baffled, and she should be secured from the malice of her enemies, ver. 14—17.

SING, O barren, thou *that* didst not bear;
Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou *that* didst not travail with child:
For more *are* the children of the desolate
Than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

2 Enlarge the place of thy tent,
And let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations:
Spare not, lengthen thy cords,
And strengthen thy stakes; [left;
3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the
And thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles,
And make the desolate cities to be inhabited.
4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed:
Neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame:
For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth,
And shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood
5 For thy Maker *is* thine husband; [any more.
The LORD of hosts *is* his name;
And thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel;
The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

If we apply this to the state of the Jews after their return out of captivity, it is a prophecy of the increase of their nation after they were settled in their own land. Jerusalem had been in the condition of a wife written childless, or a desolate, solitary widow; but now it is promised that the city should be replenished, and the country peopled again; that not only the ruins of Jerusalem should be repaired, but the suburbs of it extended on all sides, and a great many buildings erected upon new foundations; that those estates which had for many years been wrongfully held by the Babylonian Gentiles should now return to the right owners. God will again be a husband to them, and the reproach of their captivity, and the small number to which they were then reduced shall be forgotten. And it is to be observed, that by virtue of the ancient promise made to Abraham of the increase of his seed, when they were restored to God's favour, they multiplied greatly. Those that first came up out of Babylon were but forty-two thousand, *Ezr.* ii. 64, about a fifteenth part of their number when they came out of Egypt; many came dropping to them afterwards, but we may suppose that to be the greatest number that ever came in a body; and yet about five hundred years after, a little before their destruction by the Romans, a calculation was made by the number of the paschal lambs, and the lowest computation by that rule, (allowing only ten to a lamb, whereas they might be twenty,) made the nation to be near three millions. Josephus saith, seven and twenty hundred thousand and odd.—*De Bel. Jud.*, l. vii., c. 17. But we must apply it to the church of God in general, I mean the kingdom of God among men, God's city in the world, the children of God incorporated. Now observe,

First. The low and languishing estate of religion in the world for a long time before Christianity was brought in. It was like one barren, that did not bear, or "travail with child;" was like one desolate, that had lost husband and children. The church lay in a little compass, and brought forth little fruit. The Jews were indeed by profession married to God, but few proselytes were added to them. The rising generations were unpromising, and serious godliness manifestly lost ground among them. The Gentiles had less religion among them than the Jews; their proselytes were in a dispersion; and the children of God, like the children of a broken, reduced family, were scattered abroad, *Jno.* xi. 52; did not appear, nor make any figure.

Secondly. Its recovery from this low condition by the preaching of the Gospel and the planting of the Christian church.

1. Multitudes were converted from idols to the living God. Those were the church's children that were born again, were partakers of a new and Divine nature by the Word. "More were the children of the desolate than of the married wife;" that is, there were more good people found in the Gentile church, (when that was set up,) that had long been afar off, and without God in the world, than ever were found in the Jewish church. God's sealed ones, out of the tribes of Israel, are numbered, *Rev.* vii. 4, and they were but a remnant compared with the thousands of Israel. But those of other nations were so many, and crowded in so thick, and lay so much scattered in all parts, that no man could number them, ver. 9. Sometimes more of the power of religion is found in those places and families that have made little show of it, and have enjoyed but little of the means of grace, than in others that have distinguished themselves by a flourishing profession; and then more are the children of the desolate, more the fruits of their righteousness than those of the married wife; so the last shall be first. Now this is spoken of as matter of great rejoicing to the church, which is called upon to break forth into singing upon this account. The increase of the church is the joy of all its friends, and strengthens their hands. The longer the church has lain desolate, the greater will the transports of its joy be, when it begins to recover the ground it has lost, and to gain more. Even in heaven, among the angels of God, there is an uncommon joy for a sinner that repenteth, much more for a nation that doth so. If the barren fig-tree at length bring forth fruit, it is well; it shall rejoice, and others with it.

2. The bounds of the church were extended much farther than ever before, ver. 2, 3. 1st. It is here supposed that the present state of the church is a tabernacle state; it dwells in tents, like the heirs of promise of old, *Heb.* xi. 9. Its dwelling is mean, and movable, and of no strength against a storm. The city, the continuing city, is reserved for hereafter. A tent is soon taken down and shifted; so the candlestick of church privileges is soon removed out of its place, *Rev.* ii. 5; and, when God pleaseth, it is as soon fixed elsewhere. 2nd. Though it be a tabernacle state, it is sometimes very remarkably a growing state; and if this family increase, no matter though it be in a tent. Thus it was in the first preaching of the Gospel; it was the business of the apostles to "disciple all nations," to stretch forth the curtains of the church's habitation, to preach the Gospel there where Christ had not yet been named, *Rom.* xv. 20, to leaven those towns and countries with the Gospel that had hitherto been strangers to it, and so to lengthen the cords of this tabernacle, that more might be enclosed; which would make it necessary to strengthen the stakes proportionably, that they might bear the weight of the enlarged curtains. The more numerous the church grows, the more cautious she must be to fortify herself against errors and corruptions, and to support her seven pillars, *Pr.* ix. 1. 3rd. It was a proof of Divine power going along with the Gospel, that in all places it grew and prevailed mightily, *Acts* xix. 20. It broke forth as the breaking forth of waters, on the right hand, and on the left; that is, on all hands: the Gospel spread itself into all parts of the world; there were eastern and western churches. The church's seed inherited the Gentiles, and the cities that had been desolate, that is, destitute of the knowledge and worship of the true God, came to be inhabited; that is, to have religion set up in them, and the name of Christ professed.

3. This was the comfort and honour of the church; ver. 4, "Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed," as formerly, of the straitness of thy borders, and the fewness of thy children, which thine enemies upbraided thee with; but shalt forget the reproach of thy youth, because there shall be no more ground for that reproach. It was the reproach of the Christian religion in its youth, that none of the rulers or princes of this world embraced it, and that it was entertained and professed by a despicable handful of men; but after a while nations were discipled, the empire became Christian, and then this reproach of its youth was forgotten.

4. This was owing to the relation in which God stood to his church, as her husband; ver. 5, "Thy Maker is thine husband." Believers are said to be married to Christ, that they may "bring forth fruit unto God," *Rom.* vii. 4. So the church is married to him, that she may bear and bring up a holy seed to God, that shall be accounted to him for a generation. Jesus Christ is the church's Maker, by whom she is formed into a people; her Redeemer, by whom she is brought out of captivity, the bondage of sin, the worst of slaveries. This is he that hath espoused her to himself. And, 1st. He is "the Lord of hosts," he has an irresistible power, an absolute sovereignty, and a universal dominion! Kings, that are lords of some hosts, find there are others that are lords of other hosts, as many and mighty as theirs; but God is the Lord of all hosts. 2nd. He is "the Holy One of Israel," the same that presided in the affairs of the Old Testament church, and was the Mediator of the covenant made with it. The promises made to the New Testament Israel are as rich and sure as those made to the Old Testament Israel; for he that is our Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel. 3rd. He is, and shall be called, the Lord of the whole earth, as God, and as Mediator; for he is the heir of all things. But then he shall be called so when the ends of the earth shall be made to see his salvation; all the earth shall call him their God, and have an interest in him. Long he had been called in a peculiar manner the God of Israel; but now the partition wall between Jew and Gentile being taken down, he shall be called "The God of the whole earth;" there where he has been, as at Athens itself, an unknown God.

6 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, [God.
And a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy
7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee;
But with great mercies will I gather thee.
8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment;
But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee,
Saith the LORD thy Redeemer.
9 For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me:
For *as* I have sworn
That the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth;
So have I sworn
That I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.
10 For the mountains shall depart,
And the hills be removed;
But my kindness shall not depart from thee,
Neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,
Saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

The seasonable succour and relief which God sent to his captives in Babylon, when they had a discharge from their bondage there, is here foretold, as a type and figure of all those consolations of God, which are treasured up for the church in general, and all believers in particular, in the covenant of grace.

First. Look back to former troubles, and, in comparison with them, God's favours to his people appear very comfortable, ver. 6—8; where observe,

1. How sorrowful the church's condition had been. She had been as a woman forsaken, whose husband was dead or had fallen out with her, though she was a "wife of youth;" upon which account she is grieved in spirit, takes it very ill, frets, and grows melancholy upon it; or, as one refused and rejected, and therefore full of discontent. Note, Even those that are espoused to God may yet seem to be refused and forsaken, and may be grieved in spirit under the apprehensions of it. Those that shall never be forsaken and left in despair may yet for a time be perplexed and in distress. The similitude is explained ver. 7, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee;" and ver. 8, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee." When God continues his people long in trouble he seems to forsake them; so their enemies construe it, *Ps.* lxxi. 11; so they themselves misinterpret it, *ch.* xlix. 14. When they are comfortless under their troubles, because their prayers and expectations are not answered, God hides his face from them, as if he regarded them not, nor designed them any kindness. This God owns he had done, for he keeps an account of the afflictions of his people; and though he never turned his face against them, as against the wicked, *Ps.* xxxiv. 16, he remembers how often he turned his back upon them. This arose indeed from his displeasure; it was in wrath that he forsook them, and hid his face from them, *ch.* lvii. 17. Yet it was but in a little wrath,—not that God's wrath ever is a little thing, or to be made light of, (who knows the power of his anger?)—but little in comparison with what they had deserved, and what others justly suffer, on whom the full vials of his wrath are poured out. He did not stir up all his wrath; but God's people, though they be sensible of never so small a degree of God's displeasure, cannot but be grieved in spirit because of it. And for the continuance of it, it was but for a moment, a small moment; for God doth not keep his anger against his people for ever; no, it is soon over: as he is slow to anger, so he is swift to shew mercy. The afflictions of God's people, as they are light, so they are but for a moment,—a cloud, that presently blows over.

2. How sweet the returns of mercy would be to them, when God shall come and comfort them according to the time that he afflicted them. God called them into covenant with himself, then when they were forsaken and grieved; he called them out of their afflictions, then when they were most pressing, ver. 6. God's anger endures for a moment, but God will gather his people when they think themselves neglected; will gather them out of their dispersions, that they may return in a body to their own land; will gather them into his arms, to protect them, embrace them, and bear them up; and will gather them at last to himself

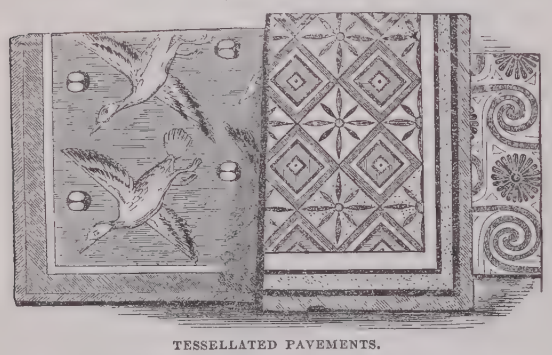
—will gather the wheat into the barn. He will have mercy on them; which supposeth the turning away of his anger, and the admitting of them again into his favour. God's gathering of his people takes rise from his mercy, not any merit of theirs; and it is "with great mercies," ver. 7, "with everlasting kindness," ver. 8. The wrath is little, but the mercies great; the wrath for a moment, but the kindness everlasting. See how one is set over against the other, that we may neither despond under our afflictions nor despair of relief.

Secondly. Look forward to future dangers, and in defiance of them. God's favours to his people appear very constant, and his kindness everlasting; for it is formed into a covenant, here called a covenant of peace, because it is founded in reconciliation, and is inclusive of all good. Now,

1. This is as firm as the covenant of providence. It is "as the waters of Noah," that is, as that promise which was made concerning the deluge, that there should never be the like again to disturb the course of summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, ver. 9. God then contended with the world in great wrath, and for a full year, and yet at length returned in mercy, everlasting mercy; for he gave his word, which was as inviolable as his oath, that Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again: see *Gen.* viii. 21, 22; ix. 11. And God hath ever since kept his word, though the world has been very provoking; and he will keep it to the end, for the world that now is is reserved unto fire. And thus inviolable is the covenant of grace: "I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee," as I have been, and "rebuke thee," as I have done. He will not be so angry with them as to cast them off, and break his covenant with them, *Ps.* lxxxix. 34; nor rebuke them, as he hath rebuked the heathen to destroy them, and "put out their name for ever and ever," *Ps.* ix. 5.

2. It is more firm than the strongest parts of the visible creation; ver. 10, "The mountains shall depart," which are called everlasting mountains, and "the hills be removed," though they are called perpetual hills, *Hab.* iii. 6. Sooner shall they remove than God's covenant with his people be broken. Mountains have sometimes been shaken by earthquakes, and removed; but the promises of God were never broken by the shock of any event. The day will come when all "the mountains shall depart," and all "the hills be removed;" not only the tops of them covered, as they were by the waters of Noah, but the roots of them torn up; for the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. But then the covenant of peace between God and believers shall continue, in the everlasting bliss of all those who are the children of that covenant. Mountains and hills signify great men, men of bulk and figure. Do these mountains seem to support the skies, (as Atlas,) and bear them up? they shall depart and be removed. Creature confidences shall fail us; in vain is salvation hoped for from those hills and mountains; but the firmament is firm, and answers its name, when those who seemed to prop it are gone. When our friends fail us, our God doth not, nor doth his kindness depart. Do these mountains threaten, and seem to top the skies, and bid defiance to them, as Pelion and Ossa? Do the kings of the earth and the rulers set themselves against the Lord? They shall depart and be removed, great mountains that stand in the way of the salvation of the church shall be made plain, *Zec.* iv. 7, but God's kindness shall never depart from his people; for whom he loves he loves to the end, nor shall the covenant of his peace ever be removed, for he is the Lord that hath mercy on his people. Therefore the covenant is immovable and inviolable, because it is built, not on our merit, which is a mutable, uncertain thing, but on God's mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, *and* not comforted,
Behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours,
And lay thy foundations with sapphires.



TESSELLATED PAVEMENTS.

12 And I will make thy windows of agates,
And thy gates of carbuncles,
And all thy borders of pleasant stones.
13 And all thy children *shall be* taught of the LORD;
And great *shall be* the peace of thy children.
14 In righteousness shalt thou be established:
Thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear:
And from terror; for it shall not come near thee.
15 Behold, they shall surely gather together, *but* not by me:
Whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.
16 Behold, I have created the smith
That bloweth the coals in the fire,
And that bringeth forth an instrument for his work;
And I have created the waster to destroy.
17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper;
And every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.
This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD,
And their righteousness *is* of me, saith the LORD.

Very precious promises are here made to the church in her low condition, that God would not only continue his love to his people under their troubles, as before, but that he would restore them to their former prosperity; nay, that he would raise them to greater prosperity than any they had yet enjoyed. In the foregoing chapter we had the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, here we have the humiliation and exaltation of the church; for if we suffer with him we shall reign with him. Observe,

First. The distressed state the church is here reduced to by the providence of God; ver. 11, "O thou afflicted," poor and indigent society, that art "tossed with tempest," like a ship driven from her anchors by a storm, and hurried into the ocean, where she is ready to be swallowed up by the waves, and in this condition not comforted by any compassionate friend that will sympathize with thee, or suggest to thee any encouraging considerations, *Eccl.* iv. 2; not comforted by any allay to thy trouble, or prospect of deliverance out of it. This was the condition of the Jews in Babylon, and afterwards, for a time, under Antiochus. It is often the condition of Christian churches, and of particular believers; without are fightings, within are fears; like the disciples in a storm, ready to perish, and where is their faith?

Secondly. The glorious state the church is here advanced to by the promise of God. God takes notice of the afflicted, distressed state of his church, and comforts her when she is most disconsolate and has no other comforter. Let the people of God, when they are afflicted and tossed, think they hear God speaking comfortably to them by these words, taking notice of their griefs and fears, what afflictions they are under, what tosses they are in, and what comforts their case calls for; when they bemoan themselves, God bemoans them and speaks to them with pity; "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," for in all their afflictions he is afflicted. But this is not all; he engageth to raise her up out of her affliction, and encourageth her with the assurance of great things he would do for her, both for her prosperity and for the securing of that prosperity to her.

1. Whereas now she lay in disgrace, God promiseth that which would be her beauty and honour, which would make her easy to herself, and amiable in the eyes of others.

1st. This is here promised by a similitude taken from a city; and it is an apt similitude, for the church is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; whereas now Jerusalem lay in ruins, a heap of rubbish, it shall not only be rebuilt, but beautified, and appear more splendid than ever; the stones shall not only be laid firm, but fine, laid with fair colours; they shall be glittering stones, 1 *Chr.* xxix. 2. The foundations shall be laid, or garnished, with sapphire, the most precious of all the precious stones here mentioned; for Christ, (the church's foundation,) and the foundation of the apostles and prophets, are precious above any thing else. The windows of this house, city or temple, shall be made of agate; the "gates of carbuncles," and "all the borders," the walls that enclose the courts, or the boundaries, by which her limits are marked, the mere stones, shall be "of pleasant stones," ver. 12. Never was this literally true; but it intimates, *First.* That God having graciously undertaken to build his church, we may expect that to be done for it, that to be wrought in it, which is very great and uncommon. *Secondly.* That the glory of the New Testament church shall far exceed that of the Jewish church, not in external pomp and splendour, but in those gifts and graces of the Spirit, which are infinitely more valuable; that wisdom which is more precious than rubies, *Pr.* iii. 15, than the precious onyx and the sapphire, and which the topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal, *Job* xxviii. 16—19. *Thirdly.* That the wealth of this world, and those things of it that are accounted most precious, shall be despised by all the true living members of the church, as having no value, no glory in comparison with that which far excelleth; that which the children of this world lay up in their treasures, and too often in their hearts, the children of God make pavements of, and put under their feet, the fittest place for it.

2nd. It is here promised in the particular instances of those things that shall be the beauty and honour of the church, which are, knowledge, holiness, and love, the very image of God in which man was created, renewed and restored upon it; and these are the sapphires and carbuncles, the precious and pleasant stones, with which the gospel temple shall be enriched and beautified; and these wrought by the power and efficacy of those doctrines which the apostle compares to gold, silver, and precious stones, that are to be built upon the foundation, 1 *Cor.* iii. 12. Then the church is all glorious, *First.* When it is full of the knowledge of God, and that is promised here; ver. 13, "all thy children shall be taught of the Lord." The church's children, being born of God, shall be taught of God; being his children by adoption, he will take care of their education. It was promised ver. 1, that the church's children shall be many; but, lest we should think that being many, as sometimes it happens in numerous families, they will be neglected, and not have instruction given them so carefully as if they were but few, God here takes that work into his own hands; they shall all be taught of the Lord, and none teacheth like him. 1*st.* It is a promise of the means of instruction, and those means authorized by a Divine institution; they shall be taught of God, that is, they shall be taught by those whom God shall appoint, and whose labours shall be under his direction and blessing. He will ordain the methods of instruction, and, by his word and ordinances, will diffuse a much greater light than the Old Testament church had. Care shall be taken for the teaching of the church's children, that knowledge may be transmitted from generation to generation, and that all may be enriched with it, from the least even to the greatest. 2*nd.* It is a promise of the Spirit of illumination. Our Saviour quotes it with application to gospel grace, and makes it to have its accomplishment in all those that were brought to believe in him, *Jno.* vi. 45; "It is written in the prophets, they shall be all taught of God;" from whence he infers, that those and those only come to him by faith that have "heard and learned of the Father," that are "taught by him as the truth is in Jesus," *Eph.* iv. 21. There shall be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace upon Christians, to teach them all things, *Jno.* xiv. 26. *Secondly.* When the members of it live in love and unity among themselves; "Great shall be the peace of thy children." Peace may be taken here for all good; as where no knowledge of God is no good is to be expected, so those that are taught of God to know him are in a fair way to prosper for both worlds; great peace have they that know and love God's law, *Ps.* cxix. 165. But it is often put for love and unity, and so we may take it. All that are taught of God are taught to love one another, 1 *Thes.* iv. 9, and that will keep peace among the church's children, and prevent their falling out by the way. *Thirdly.* When holiness reigns, for that, above anything, is the beauty of the church, ver. 14; "In righteousness shalt thou be established." The reformation of manners, the reformation of purity, the due administration of public justice, and the prevailing of honesty and fair dealing among men, are the strength and stability of any church or state. The kingdom of God, set up by the Gospel of

Christ, is not meat and drink, but this righteousness and peace, holiness and love.

2. Whereas now she lay in danger, God promiseth that which would be her protection and security. God engageth here that though, in the day of her distress, without were fightings and within were fears, now she should be safe from both.

1st. There shall be no fears within; ver. 14, "Thou shalt be far from oppression;" those that have oppressed thee shall be removed; those that would oppress thee shall be restrained, and therefore thou shalt not fear; but mayest look upon it as a thing at a mighty distance, that thou art now in no danger of. Thou shalt be far from terror; not only from evil, but from the fear of evil, for "it shall not come near thee," so as to do thee any hurt, or to put thee in any fright. Note, Those are far from terror that are far from oppression; for it is as great a terror as any other to a people to have the rod of government turned into the serpent of oppression, because against this there is no fence, nor flight from it.

2nd. There shall be no fightings without. Though attempts should be made upon them to insult them, to invade their country, or besiege their towns, they should all be in vain, and none of them succeed, ver. 15. It is granted, "they shall surely gather together" against thee; thou must expect it; the confederate force of hell and earth will be renewing their assaults. As long as there is a devil in hell, and a persecutor out of it, God's people must expect frequent alarms; but, (1.) God will not own them, will not give them either commission or countenance; They gather together, hand joins in hand, but it is not by me. God gave them no such order as he did to Sennacherib, to take the spoil, and take the prey, *ch.* x. 6; and therefore, (2.) Their attempt will end in their own ruin. "Whosoever shall gather together against thee," be they never so many, and never so mighty, they shall not only be baffled, but they "shall fall for thy sake," or, they shall fall before thee, which shall be the just punishment of their enmity to thee. God will make them to fall for the sake of the love he bears to his church, and the care he hath of it, in answer to the prayers made by his people, and in pursuance of the promises made to them: they shall fall, that thou mayest stand, *Ps.* xxvii. 2.

Now, that we may with the greatest assurance depend upon God for the safety of his church, we have here,

First. The power of God over the church's enemies asserted, ver. 16. The truth is, they have no power but what is given them from above, and he that gave them their power can limit and restrain them; hitherto they shall go, and no farther.

1*st.* They cannot carry on their design without arms and weapons of war; and the smith that makes those weapons is God's creature, and he gave him his skill to work in iron and brass, *Ex.* xxxi. 3, 4, and particularly to make proper instruments for warlike purposes. It is melancholy to think, as if men did not die fast enough of themselves, how ingenious and industrious they are to make instruments of death, and to find out ways and means to kill one another. The smith blows the coals in the fire, to make his iron malleable, to soften it first, that it may be hardened into steel, and so he may bring forth an instrument proper for their work that seek to destroy. It is the iron age that is the age of war. But God has created the smith, and therefore can tie his hands, so that the project of the enemy shall miscarry, as many a project has done, for want of arms and ammunition. Or, the smith that forges the weapons, is perhaps put here for the council of war that forms the design, blows the coals of contention, and brings forth the plan of the war; these can do no more than God will let them.

2*nd.* They cannot carry it on without men, they must have soldiers, and it is God that createth the waster to destroy. Military men value themselves upon their great offices and splendid titles, and even the common soldiers call themselves gentlemen, but God calls them wasters made to destroy, for wasting and destruction is their business. They think their own ingenuity, labour, and experience made them soldiers, but it was God that created them, and gave them strength and spirit for that hazardous employment, and therefore he not only can restrain them, but will serve his own purposes and designs by them.

Secondly. The promise of God concerning the church's safety solemnly laid down, as "the heritage of the servants of the Lord," ver. 17, as that which they may depend upon, and be confident of:—that God will protect them from their adversaries both in camps and courts.

1*st.* From their field adversaries, that think to destroy them by force, and violence, and dint of sword; "No weapon that is formed against thee," though never so artfully formed by the smith that blows the coals, ver. 16, though never so skilfully managed by the waster that seeketh to destroy, "shall prosper;" it shall not prove strong enough to do any harm to the people of God; it shall miss its mark, shall fall out of the hand, or perhaps recoil in the face of him that useth it against thee. It is the happiness of the church that no weapon formed against it shall prosper long, and therefore the folly of its enemies will at length be made manifest to all, for they are but preparing instruments of ruin for themselves.

2*nd.* From their law adversaries, that think to run them down, under colour of right and justice. When the weapons of war do not prosper, there are tongues that rise in judgment; both are included in the gates of hell, that seek to destroy the church, for they had their courts of justice, as well as their magazines and military stores, in their gates. The tongues that rise in judgment against the church are such as either demand a dominion over it, as if God's children were their lawful captives, pretending an authority to oppress their consciences, or such as misrepresent them, and falsely accuse them, and by slanders and calumnies endeavour to make them odious to the people, and obnoxious to the government. This the enemies of the Jews did to incense the kings of Persia against them, *Ezr.* iv. 12; *Est.* iii. 8. But these insulting, threatening tongues thou shalt condemn; thou shalt have wherewith to answer their insolent demands, and to put to silence their malicious reflections. Thou shalt do it by well-doing, 1 *Pet.* ii. 15; by doing that which will make thee manifest in the consciences even of thine adversaries, that thou art not what thou art represented to be. "Thou shalt condemn" them, that is, God shall condemn them for thee; "he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light," *Ps.* xxxvii. 6. Thou shalt condemn them as Noah condemned the old world that reproached him, by building the ark, and so saving his house in contempt of their contempts. The day is coming when God will reckon with wicked men for all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, *Jude* 15.

The last words refer not only to this promise, but to all that go before: "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord." God's servants are his sons, for he has provided an inheritance for them, rich, sure, and indefeasible; God's promises are their heritage for ever, *Ps.* cxix. 111. "And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." God will clear up the righteousness of their cause before men; it is with him, for he knows it; it is with him, for he will plead it. Or, their reward for their righteousness, and for all that which they have suffered unrighteously, is of God, that God who judgeth in the earth, and with whom verily there is a reward for the righteous. Or, their righteousness itself, all that in them that is good and right; it is of God, who works it in them; it is of Christ, who is made righteousness to them. Whoever God designs a heritage for hereafter, in them he will work righteousness now.

CHAPTER LV.

As we had much of Christ in *ch.* liii., and much of the church of Christ in *ch.* liv., so in this chapter we have much of the covenant of grace made with us in Christ. The sure mercies of David which are promised here, ver. 3, are understood by the apostle of the benefits which flow to us from the resurrection of Christ, *Acts* xiii. 34, which may serve as a key to this chapter; not but that it was intended for the comfort of the people of God that lived then, especially of the captives in Babylon, and other the dispersed of Israel; but unto us was this Gospel preached as well as unto them, and much more clearly and fully in the New Testament. Here is, I. A free and gracious invitation to all, to come and take the benefit of Gospel grace, ver. 1. II. Pressing arguments to enforce this invitation, ver. 2—4. III. A promise of the success of this invitation among the Gentiles, ver. 5. IV. An exhortation to repentance and reformation, with great encouragement given to hope for pardon and forgiveness thereupon, ver. 6—9. V. The ratification of all this, with the certain efficacy of the word of God, ver. 10, 11. And a particular instance of the accomplishment of it in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, which was intended for a sign of the accomplishment of all these other promises.

HO, every one that thirsteth,
Come ye to the waters,
And he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat;
Yea, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
2 Wherefore do ye spend money for *that which is* not bread?
And your labour for *that which* satisfieth not?
Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye *that which is* good,
And let your soul delight itself in fatness.
3 Incline your ear, and come unto me:
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
Even the sure mercies of David.
4 Behold, I have given him *for* a witness to the people,
A leader and commander to the people.
5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation *that* thou knowest not,
And nations *that* knew not thee shall run unto thee
Because of the LORD thy God, [thee.
And for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified

Here, First. We are all invited to come and take the benefit of that provision which the grace of God has made for poor souls in the new covenant, of that which is the "heritage of the servants of the Lord," *ch.* liv. 17, and not only their heritage hereafter, but their cup now, ver. 1. Observe,

1. Who are invited; "Ho, every one." Not the Jews only, to whom first the word of salvation was sent, but the Gentiles, the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are called to this marriage supper; whoever can be picked up out of the highways and the hedges. It intimates, that in Christ there is enough for all, and enough for each; that ministers are to make a general offer of life and salvation to all; that in gospel times the invitation should be more largely made than it had been, and should be sent to the Gentiles; and that the gospel covenant excludes none that do not exclude themselves. The invitation is published with an *Oyez*, "Ho," take notice of it; "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

2. What is the qualification required in those that shall be welcome; they must thirst. All shall be welcome to gospel grace, upon those terms only that gospel grace be welcome to them. Those that are satisfied with the world and its enjoyments for a portion, and seek not for a happiness in the favour of God,—those that depend upon the merit of their own works for a righteousness, and see no need they have of Christ and his righteousness,—these do not thirst; they have no sense of their need, are in no pain or uneasiness about their souls, and therefore will not condescend so far as to be beholden to Christ. But those that thirst are invited to the waters, as those that labour and are heavy laden are invited to Christ for rest. Note, Where God gives grace, he first gives to thirst after it; and where he has given to thirst after it, he will give it, *Ps.* lxxxi. 10.

3. Whither they are invited; "Come ye to the waters." Come to the water side, to the ports, and quays, and wharfs on the navigable rivers, into which goods are imported, thither come and buy, for that is the market-place of foreign commodities; and to us they would have been for ever foreign, if Christ had not brought in an everlasting righteousness. Come to Christ, for he is the fountain opened, he is the rock smitten. Come to holy ordinances, to those streams that make glad the city of our God; come to them, and though they may seem to you plain and common things, like waters, yet to those who believe in Christ the things signified will be as wine and milk, abundantly refreshing. Come to the healing waters, come to the living waters; whoever will, let him come and "take the water of life," *Rev.* xxii. 17. And our Saviour referred to it, *Jno.* vii. 37, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

4. What they are invited to do; 1st. Come and buy. Never did any tradesman court customers that he hopes to get by so as Christ courts us to that which we only are to be the gainers by; Come and buy, and we can assure you you shall have a good bargain, which you will never repent of, or lose by. Come and buy, that is, make it your own, by an application of the grace of the Gospel to yourselves; make it your own upon Christ's terms, nay, your own upon any terms, and stand not chaffering about the terms, or deliberating whether you shall agree to them. 2nd. Come and eat; make it still more your own, as that which we eat is more our own than that which we only buy. We must buy the truth; not that we may lay it by to be looked at, but that we may feed and feast upon it, and that the spiritual life may be nourished and strengthened by it. We must buy necessary provisions for our souls; be willing to part with any thing, though never so dear to us, so that we may but have Christ, and his graces and comforts; part with sin, because it is an opposition to Christ; part with all opinion of our own righteousness, as standing in competition with Christ; and part with life itself, and its most necessary supports, rather than quit our interest in Christ. And when we have bought what we need, let us not deny ourselves the comfortable use of it, but enjoy it, and eat the labour of our hands; "Buy, and eat."

5. What is the provision they are invited to; "Come, buy wine and milk,"

which will not only quench the thirst, fair water would do that, but nourish the body, and revive the spirits. The world comes short of our expectations; we promise ourselves at least water in it, but we are disappointed of that, as the troops of Tema, *Job* vi. 19. But Christ outdoes our expectations; we come to the waters, and would be glad of them, but we find there wine and milk, which were the staple commodities of the tribe of Judah, and which the Shiloh of that tribe is furnished with to entertain the gathering of the people to him, *Gen.* xlix. 10, 12. "His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk." We must come to Christ to have milk for babes, to nourish and cherish them that are but lately born again; and with him strong men shall find that which will be a cordial to them, they shall have wine to make glad their hearts. We must part with our puddle water, nay, with our poison, that we may procure this wine and milk.

6. The free communication of this provision; Buy it "without money, and without price." A strange way of buying, not only without ready money, that is common enough, but without any money, or the promise of any; yet it seems not so strange to those who have observed Christ's counsel to Laodicea, that was wretchedly poor, to come and buy, *Rev.* iii. 17, 18. Our buying without money intimates, 1st. That the gifts offered us are invaluable, and such as no price can be set upon: wisdom is that which cannot be gotten for gold. 2nd. That he who offers them has no need of us, or of any returns we can make him; he makes us these proposals, not because he has occasion to sell, but because he has a disposition to give. 3rd. That the things offered are already bought and paid for; Christ purchased them at the full value, with price, not with money, but his own blood, 1 *Pet.* i. 19. 4th. That we shall be welcome to the benefits of the promise, though we are utterly unworthy of them, and cannot make a tender of any thing that looks like a valuable consideration. We ourselves are not of any value, nor any thing we have, or can do; and we must own it, that if Christ and heaven be ours, we may see ourselves for ever indebted to free grace.

Secondly. We are earnestly pressed and persuaded (and O that we would be prevailed with!) to accept this invitation, and make this good bargain for ourselves.

1. That which we are persuaded to is to hearken to God and to his proposals; "Hearken diligently unto me," ver. 2. Not only give me the hearing, but approve of what I say, and apply it to yourselves, ver. 3. "Incline your ear," as we do to that which we find ourselves concerned in, and pleased with; bow the ear, and let the proud heart stoop to the humbling methods of the Gospel; bend the ear this way, that you may hear with attention and remark; hear "and come unto me," not only come and treat with me, but comply with me, come up to my terms. Accept God's offers, as very advantageous; answer his demands, as very fit and reasonable.

2. The arguments used to persuade us to this are taken,

1st. From the unspeakable wrong we do to ourselves if we neglect and refuse this invitation. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread," which will not yield you, no, not beggar's food, dry bread, when with me you may have wine and milk without money; wherefore do you spend your labour and toil for that which will not be so much as dry bread to you, for it "satisfieth not." See here, *First.* The vanity of the things of this world; they are not bread, nor proper food for a soul, they afford no suitable nourishment or refreshment. Bread is the staff of the natural life, but it affords no support at all to the spiritual life. All the wealth and pleasure in the world will not make one meal's meat for a soul. Eternal truth and eternal good are the only food for a rational and immortal soul, the life of which consists in reconciliation and conformity to God, and in union and communion with him, which the things of the world will not at all befriend. They satisfy not, they yield not any solid comfort and content to the soul, nor enable it to say, Now I have what I would have; nay, they do not satisfy even the appetites of the body; the more men have, the more they would have, *Eccl.* i. 8. Haman was unsatisfied in the midst of his abundance. They flatter, but they do not fill; they please for a while, like the dream of a hungry man who wakes and his soul is empty. They soon surfeit, but they never satisfy; cloy a man, but not content him, or make him truly easy. It is all vanity and vexation. *Secondly.* The folly of the children of this world; they spend their money and labour for these uncertain, unsatisfying things. Rich people live by their money, poor people by their labour, but both mistake their true interest; while the one is trading, the other toiling, for the world, both promising themselves satisfaction and happiness in it, but both miserably disappointed, God vouchsafes compassionately to reason with them: Wherefore do you thus act against your own interest? Why do you suffer yourselves to be thus imposed upon? Let us reason thus with ourselves, and let the result of these reasonings be a holy resolution not to labour for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endures to everlasting life, *Jno.* vi. 27. Let all the disappointments we meet with in the world help to drive us to Christ, and to seek for satisfaction in him only. This is the way to make that sure that will be made sure.

2nd. From the unspeakable kindness we do to ourselves if we accept this invitation, and comply with it. *First.* Hereby we secure to ourselves present pleasure and satisfaction. If you hearken to Christ, you eat that which is good, which is both wholesome and pleasant, good in itself and good for you. God's good word and promise, a good conscience, and the comforts of God's good Spirit, are a continual feast to those that hearken diligently and obediently to Christ. Their souls shall delight themselves in fatness, that is, in the richest and most grateful delights. Here the invitation is not, Come and buy, lest that should discourage, but, Come and eat; come and entertain yourselves with that which will be abundantly pleasing: "Eat, O friends." It is sad to think that men should need to be courted thus to their own bliss. *Secondly.* Hereby we secure to ourselves lasting happiness; "Hear, and your soul shall live;" you shall not only be saved from perishing eternally, but you shall be eternally blessed, for less than that cannot be the life of an immortal soul. The words of Christ are spirit and life, life to spirits, *Jno.* vi. 33, 63, the words of this life, *Acts* v. 20. On what easy terms is happiness offered us! it is but, Hear, and you shall live. *Thirdly.* The great God graciously secures all this to us: Come to me, and "I will make an everlasting covenant with you," will put myself into covenant relations, and under covenant engagements to you, and thereby settle upon you the "sure mercies of David." Note, *1st.* If we come to God to serve him, he will covenant with us to do us good, and make us happy; such is his condescension to us and concern for us. *2nd.* God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant, its contrivance from everlasting, its continuance to everlasting. *3rd.* The benefits of this covenant are mercies suited to our case, who being miserable, are the proper objects of mercy; they come from God's mercy, and are ordered every way in kindness to us. *4th.* They are the mercies of David, such mercies as God promised to David, *Ps.* lxxxix. 28, 29, &c., which are called the mercies of David his servant, and are appealed to by Solomon, 2 *Chr.* vi. 42. It shall be a covenant as sure as that with David, *Jer.* xxxiii. 25, 26. The covenant of royalty was a figure of the covenant of grace, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 5. Or, rather, by David here we are to understand the Messiah. Covenant mercies are all his mercies; they are purchased by him, they are promised in him, they are treasured up in his hand, and out of his hand they are dispensed to us; he is the mediator and trustee of the covenant; to him this is applied, *Acts* xiii. 34. They are the τὰ ὅσια, 'the holy things' of David, (the word used there, and by the Seventy here,) for they are confirmed by the holiness of God, *Ps.* lxxxix. 35, and are intended to advance holiness among men. *5th.* They are sure mercies; the covenant being well ordered in all things is sure. It is sure in the general proposal of it; God is real and sincere, serious and in earnest, in the offer of these mercies. It is sure in the particular application of it to believers; God's gifts and callings are without repentance; they are the "mercies of David," and therefore sure, for in Christ the promises are all Yea and Amen.

Thirdly. Jesus Christ is promised for the making good of all the other promises which we are here invited to accept of, ver. 4. He is that David whose sure mercies all the blessings and benefits of the covenant are. And God hath given him in his purpose and promise, hath constituted and appointed him, and in the fulness of time will as surely send him as if he were already come, to be all that to us which is necessary to our having the benefit of these preparations. He has given him freely, for what more free than gift? There was nothing in us to merit such a favour, but Christ is the gift of God. We want one, 1. To attest the truth of the promises which we are invited to take the benefit of; and Christ is given for a witness that God is willing to receive us into his favour upon gospel terms, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, that we may venture our souls upon those promises with an entire satisfaction. Christ is a faithful witness, we may take his word; a competent witness, for he lay in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was perfectly apprised of the whole matter. Christ as a prophet testifies the will of God to the world, and to believe is to receive his testimony. 2. To assist us in closing with the invitation, and coming up to the terms of it. We know not how to find the way to the waters where we are to be supplied, but Christ is given to be a leader; nor what to do that we may be qualified for it, and sharers in it, but he is given for a commander, to shew us what to do, and enable us to do it. Much difficulty and opposition lies in our way to Christ; we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, but to animate us for the conflict we have a good captain, like Joshua; a leader and commander to tread our enemies under our feet, and to put us in possession of the land of promise. Christ is commander by his precept, and a leader by his example; our business is to obey him, and follow him.

Fourthly. The master of the feast being fixed, it is next to be furnished with guests, for the provision shall not be lost, or made in vain, ver. 5. 1. The Gentiles shall be called to this feast, shall be invited out of the highways and the hedges. "Thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not," that is, that was not formerly called and owned as thy nation; that thou didst not send prophets to as to Israel, that people which God knew above all the families of the earth. The Gentiles shall now be favoured so as they never were before; their knowing God is said to be rather their being "known of God," *Gal.* iv. 9. 2. They shall come at the call; "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee." Those that had long been afar off from Christ shall be made nigh; that had been running from him shall run to him with the greatest speed and alacrity imaginable. There shall be a concourse of believing Gentiles to Christ, who, being lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to him. Now see the reason, 1st. Why the Gentiles will thus flock to Christ. It is because of the Lord his God, because he is the Son of God, and is declared to be so with power; because they now see his God is one with whom they have to do, and there is no coming to him as their God but by making an interest in his Son. Those that are brought to be acquainted with God, and understand how the concern lies between them and him, cannot but run to Jesus Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, and there is no coming to God but by him. 2nd. Why God will bring them to him. Because he is the Holy One of Israel, true to his promises, and he hath promised to glorify him, by giving him the heathen for his inheritance. When Greeks began to inquire after Christ, he said, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified," *Jno.* xii. 22, 23. And his being glorified in his resurrection and ascension was the great argument by which multitudes were wrought upon to run to him.

6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found,
Call ye upon him while he is near:
7 Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts:
And let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him;
And to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
8 For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts,
Neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.
9 For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are my ways higher than your ways,
And my thoughts than your thoughts.
10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven,
And returneth not thither,
But watereth the earth,
And maketh it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:
11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:
It shall not return unto me void,
But it shall accomplish that which I please,
And it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.
12 For ye shall go out with joy,
And be led forth with peace: [into singing,
The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you
And all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.
13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree,
And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree:
And it shall be to the LORD for a name,
For an everlasting sign *that* shall not be cut off.

We have here a farther account of that covenant of grace which is made with us in Jesus Christ, both what is required and what is promised in the covenant, and those considerations that are sufficient abundantly to confirm our believing compliance with and reliance on that covenant. And this gracious discovery of God's good will to the children of men is not to be confined either to the Jew or to the Gentile, to the Old Testament or to the New, much less to the captives in Babylon. No, both the precepts and the promises here are given to all, to every one that thirsts after happiness, ver. 1. And who doth not? Hear this and live.

First. Here is a gracious offer made of pardon, and peace, and all happiness, to poor sinners, upon gospel terms, ver. 6, 7.

1. Let them pray, and their prayers shall be heard and answered; ver. 6, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Seek him whom you have left by revolting from your allegiance to him; and whom you have lost by provoking him to withdraw his favour from you. "Call upon him" now "while he is near," and within call. Observe here, 1st. The duties required. *First.* Seek the Lord, seek to him, and inquire of him as your oracle; "ask the law at his mouth." "What wilt thou have me to do?" Seek for him, and inquire after him as your portion and happiness; seek to be reconciled to him, and acquainted with him, and to be happy in his favour. Be sorry that you have lost him, be solicitous to find him; take the appointed method of finding him, making use of Christ as your way, the Spirit as your guide, and the word as your rule. *Secondly.* Call upon him, pray to him to be reconciled, and, being reconciled, pray to him for every thing else you have need of. 2nd. The motives made use of to press these duties upon us; "While he may be found, while he is near." *First.* It is implied that now God is near, and will be found, so that it shall not be in vain to seek him, and to call upon him. Now his patience is waiting on us, his word is calling to us, and his Spirit striving with us; now improve your advantages and opportunities, for "now is the accepted time." But, *Secondly.* There is a day coming when he will be afar off, and will not be found; when the day of his patience is over, and his Spirit will strive no more. There may come such a time in this life, when the heart is incurably hardened; however, at death and judgment the door will be shut, *Lu.* xvi. 26; xiii. 25, 26. Mercy is now offered, but then judgment without mercy will take place.

2. Let them repent and reform, and their sins shall be pardoned, ver. 7. Here is a call to the unconverted, to the wicked, and the unrighteous man; to the wicked that live in known gross sins, to the unrighteous that live in the neglect of plain duties; to them is the word of this salvation sent, and all the assurance given that can be, that penitent sinners shall find God a pardoning God. Observe here, 1st. What it is to repent. There are two things in it: *First.* It is to turn from sin, it is to forsake it; it is to leave it, and to leave it with loathing and abhorrence, never to return to it again. The wicked must forsake his way, his evil way, as one would forsake a false way that will never bring us to the happiness we aim at; and a dangerous way, that leads to destruction. Let him not take one step more in that way. Nay, there must be not only a change of the way, but a change of the mind; the unrighteous must forsake his thoughts; repentance, if it be true, strikes at the root, and washeth the heart from wickedness. We must alter our judgments concerning persons and things, dislodge the corrupt imaginations, and quit the vain pretences which an unsanctified heart shelters itself with. Note, It is not enough to break off from evil practices, but we must enter a caveat against evil thoughts. Yet this is not all. *Secondly.* To repent is to return to the Lord; to return to him as our God; return to him as to our sovereign Lord, against whom we have rebelled, and to whom we are concerned to reconcile ourselves; as to the fountain of life and living waters, which we had forsaken for broken cisterns. 2nd. What encouragement we have thus to repent. If we do so, *First.* God will have mercy; he will not deal with us as our sins have deserved, but will have compassion on us. Misery is the object of mercy. Now, both the consequences of sin, by which we are become truly miserable, *Eze.* xvi. 5, 6, and the nature of repentance, by which we are made sensible of our misery, and are brought to bemoan ourselves, *Jer.* xxxi. 18, both make us objects of pity, and with God there are tender mercies. *Secondly.* "He will abundantly pardon." He will 'multiply to pardon,' so the word is, as we have multiplied to offend. Though our sins have been very great, and very many; and though we have often backslidden, and are still prone to offend, yet God will repeat his pardon, and welcome even backsliding children that return to him in sincerity.

Secondly. Here are encouragements given us to accept this offer, and to venture our souls upon it; for, look which way we will, we find enough to confirm us in our belief of the validity and value of it.

1. If we look up to heaven, we find God's counsels there high and transcendent, his thoughts and ways infinitely above ours, ver. 8, 9. The wicked are told to forsake their evil ways and thoughts, (ver. 7,) and to return to God; that is, to bring their ways and thoughts to concur and comply with his, for, saith he, My thoughts and ways are not as yours; yours are conversant only about things beneath, they are of the earth, earthy; but mine are above, as the heaven is high above the earth; and if you would approve yourselves true penitents, yours must be so too, and your affections be set on things above. Or rather, it is to be understood as an encouragement to us to depend upon God's promise to pardon sin upon repentance. Sinners may be ready to fear that God will not be reconciled to them, because they could not find in their hearts to be reconciled to one that had so basely and so frequently offended them; but, saith God, My thoughts in this matter are not as yours, but as far above them as heaven above the earth. They are so in other things. Men's sentiments concerning sin, and Christ, and holiness, concerning this world and the other, are vastly different from God's; but in nothing more than in the matter of reconciliation. We think God apt to take offence, and backward to forgive; that if he forgives once he will not forgive a second time. Peter thought it a great deal to forgive seven times, *Mat.* xviii. 21. A hundred pence goes far with us, but God meets returning sinners with pardoning mercy; he forgives freely, and as he gives: it is without upbraiding. We forgive, and cannot forget; but when God forgives sin he remembers it no more. Thus God invites sinners to return to him, by possessing them with good thoughts of him, as *Jer.* xxxi. 20.

2. If we look down to this earth, we find God's word there, powerful and effectual, and answering all its great intentions, ver. 10, 11. Observe here,

1st. The efficacy of God's word in the kingdom of nature; "He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth," appoints when it shall come, to what degree, and how long it shall lie there; he saith so to "the small rain and the great rain of his strength," *Job* xxxvii. 6; and, according to his order, they come down from heaven, and do "whatsoever he commandeth them upon the face of the world, whether it be for correction, or for his land, or for mercy," as it follows here, ver. 12, 13. It returneth not *re infecta*,—'without having accomplished its end,' but watereth the earth, which he is therefore said to do from his chambers, *Ps.* civ. 13. And the watering of the earth is in order to its fruitfulness; thus he "maketh it to bring forth and bud," for the products of the earth depend upon the dews of heaven; and thus it gives not only bread to the eater, present maintenance to the owner and his family, but seed likewise to the sower, that he may have food for another year. The husbandman must be a sower as well as an eater, else he will soon see the end of what he has.

2nd. The efficacy of his word in the kingdom of providence and grace, which is as certain as the former; "So shall my word be," as powerful in the mouth of prophets as it is in the hand of Providence; "it shall not return unto me void," as unable to effect what it was sent for, or meeting with an insuperable opposition; no, "it shall accomplish that which I please," for it is the declaration of his will, according to the counsel of which he worketh all things, "and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." This assures us, *First.* That the promises of God shall all have their full accomplishment in due time, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail, 1 *Kin.* viii. 56. These promises of mercy and grace shall have as real an effect upon the souls of believers, for their sanctification and comfort, as ever the rain had upon the earth to make it fruitful. *Secondly.* That, according to the different errands on which the word is sent, it will have its different effects; if it be not a savour of life unto life it will be a savour of death unto death. If it doth not convince the conscience, and soften the heart, it will sear the conscience, and harden the heart; if it do not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell: see *ch.* vi. 9. One way or other it will take effect. *Thirdly.* That Christ's coming into the world, as the dew from heaven, (*Hos.* xiv. 5,) will not be in vain. For if Israel is not gathered, he will be glorious in the conversion of the Gentiles; to them, therefore, the tenders of grace must be made, when the Jews refuse them, that the wedding may be furnished with guests, and the Gospel not return void.

3. If we take a special view of the church, we shall find what great things God hath done and will do for it; ver. 12, 13, "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace." This refers, 1st. To the deliverance and return of the Jews out of Babylon; they shall go out of their captivity, and be led forth towards their own land again. God will go before them as surely, though not as sensibly, as before their fathers in the pillar of cloud and fire. They shall go out, not with trembling, but with triumph; not with any regret to part with Babylon, or any fear of being fetched back, but with joy and peace. Their journey home over the mountains shall be pleasant, and they shall have the good will and good wishes of all the countries they pass through. The hills and their inhabitants shall, as in a transport of joy, break forth into singing; and, if the people should altogether hold their peace, even the trees of the field would attend them with their applauses and acclamations. And when they come to their own land, it shall be ready to bid them welcome; for whereas they expected to find it all overgrown with briars and thorns, it shall be set with fir-trees and myrtle-trees; for, though it lay desolate, yet it enjoyed its sabbaths, *Lev.* xxvi. 34, which when they were over, like the land after the sabbatical year, it was the better for. And this shall redound much to the honour of God, and be to him for a name. But, 2nd. Without doubt it looks farther, this shall be "for an everlasting sign;" that is, *First.* The redemption of the Jews out of Babylon shall be a ratification of those promises that relate to gospel times. The accomplishment of the predictions relating to that great deliverance would be a pledge and earnest of the performance of all the other promises, for thereby it shall appear that "he is faithful who hath promised." *Secondly.* It shall be a representation of the blessings promised, and a type and figure of them. *1st.* Gospel grace will set those at liberty that were in bondage to sin and Satan. They shall go out, and be led forth; Christ shall make them free, and then they shall be free indeed. *2nd.* It will fill those with joy that were melancholy; *Ps.* xiv. 7, "Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad." The earth, and the inferior part of the creation, shall share in the joy of this salvation, *Ps.* xcvi. 11, 12. *3rd.* It will make a great change in men's characters. Those that were as thorns and briars, good for nothing but the fire, nay, hurtful and vexatious, shall become graceful and useful as the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree. Thorns and briars came in with sin, and were the fruits of the curse, *Gen.* iii. 18; the raising of pleasant trees in the room of them, signifies the removal of the curse of the law, and the introduction of gospel blessings. The church's enemies were as thorns and briars, but instead of them God will raise up friends to be her protection and ornament. Or, it may note the world's growing better; instead of a generation of thorns and briars, there shall come up a generation of fir-trees and myrtles; the children shall be wiser and better than the parents. And, lastly, in all this God shall be glorified; "It shall be to him for a name," by which he will be made known and praised, and by it the people of God shall be encouraged. It shall be "for an everlasting sign" of God's favour to them, assuring them that, though it may for a time be clouded, it shall never be cut off. The covenant of grace is an everlasting covenant, for the present blessings of it are signs of everlasting ones.

CHAPTER LVI.

After the exceeding great and precious promises of gospel grace, typified by temporal deliverances, which we had in the foregoing chapter, we have here, I. A solemn charge given to us all to make conscience of our duty, as we hope to have the benefit of those promises, ver. 1, 2. II. Great encouragement given to strangers that were willing to come under the bonds of the covenant, assuring them of the blessings of the covenant, ver. 3—8. III. A high charge drawn up against the watchmen of Israel that were careless and unfaithful in the discharge of their duty, ver. 9—12; which seems to be the beginning of a new sermon, by way of reproof and threatening, which is continued in the following chapters. And the word of God was intended for conviction, as well as for comfort and instruction in righteousness.

THUS saith the LORD,
Keep ye judgment, and do justice:
For my salvation *is* near to come,
And my righteousness to be revealed.
2 Blessed *is* the man *that* doeth this,
And the son of man *that* layeth hold on it;
That keepeth the sabbath from polluting it,
And keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

The scope of these verses is to shew that when God is coming towards us in a way of mercy we must go forth to meet him in a way of duty.

First. God here tells us what are his intentions of mercy to us; ver. 1, "My salvation is near to come." The great salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ, (for that was the salvation of which "the prophets inquired and searched diligently," 1 *Pet.* i. 10,) typified by the salvation of the Jews from Sennacherib, or out of Babylon. Observe, 1. The Gospel salvation is the salvation of the Lord; it was contrived and brought about by him, he glories in it as his. 2. In that salvation God's righteousness is revealed, which is so much the beauty of the Gospel that St. Paul makes this the ground of his glorying in it, *Rom.* i. 17, "Because therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." The law revealed that righteousness of God by which all sinners stand condemned, but the Gospel reveals that by which all believers stand acquitted. 3. The Old Testament saints saw this salvation coming, and drawing near to

them, long before it came; and they had notice by the prophets of its approach. As Daniel understood by Jeremiah's books the approach of the redemption out of Babylon at the end of seventy years, so others understood by Daniel's books the approach of our redemption by Christ at the end of seventy weeks of years.

Secondly. He tells us what are his expectations of duty from us in consideration thereof. Say not, We see the salvation near, and therefore we may live as we list, for there is no danger now of missing it, or coming short of it,—that is turning the grace of God into wantonness; but, on the contrary, when the salvation is near double your guard against sin. Note, The fuller assurances God gives us of the performance of his promises the stronger obligations he lays us under to obedience. Now the salvation here spoken of is come; yet, there being still a farther salvation in view, the apostle presseth duty upon us Christians with the same argument, *Rom.* xiii. 11, "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." That which is here required to qualify and prepare us for the approaching salvation is,

1. That we be honest and just in all our dealings. "Keep ye judgment, and do justice;" walk by rule, make conscience of what ye say and do, that you do no wrong to any; render to all their due exactly, and in exacting what is due to you keep up a court of equity in your own bosom, to moderate the rigours of the law. Be ruled by that golden rule of doing as you would be done by. Magistrates must administer justice wisely and faithfully. This is required to evidence the sincerity of our faith and repentance, and to open the way of mercy. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." God is true to us, let us be so to one another.

2. That we religiously observe the sabbath day, ver. 2. We are not just if we rob God of his time. Sabbath sanctification is here put for all the duties of the first table, the fruit of our love to God, as justice and judgment for all those of the second table, the fruits of our love to our neighbour. Observe, 1st. The duty required, which is to keep the sabbath; to keep it as a talent we are to trade with, as a treasure we are intrusted with; keep it holy, keep it safe, keep it with care and caution, keep it from polluting it; allow neither yourselves nor others either to violate the holy rest nor omit the holy work of that day. If this be intended primarily for the Jews in Babylon, it was fit they should be particularly put in mind of this; because, when by reason of their distance from the temple they could not observe the other institutions of their law, yet they might distinguish themselves from the heathen by putting a difference between God's day and other days; but it being required more generally of man, and the son of man, it intimates that sabbath sanctification should be a duty in gospel times, when the bounds of the church should be enlarged, and other rites and ceremonies abolished. Observe, Those that would keep the sabbath from polluting it must put on resolution; must not only do this, but lay hold on it, for sabbath time is precious; but it is very apt to slip away if we take not great care; and therefore we must lay hold on it, and keep our hold; must do it, and persevere in it. 2nd. The encouragement we have to do this duty; Blessed is he that doeth it. The way to have the blessing of God upon our employments all the week is to make conscience and make a business of sabbath sanctification; and in doing so we shall be the better qualified to do judgment and justice. The more godliness the more honesty, 1 *Tim.* ii. 2.

3. That we have nothing to do with sin. Blessed is the man that keepeth his hand from doing evil; any wrong to his neighbour, in body, goods, or good name; or, more generally, any thing that is displeasing to God, and hurtful to his own soul. Note, The best evidence of our having kept the sabbath well will be a care to keep a good conscience all the week. By this it will appear we have been in the mount with God, if our faces shine in a holy conversation before men.

3 Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, [people:
Saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his
Neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I *am* a dry tree.
4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs
That keep my sabbaths,
And choose *the things* that please me,
And take hold of my covenant;
5 Even unto them will I give in mine house
And within my walls a place and a name
Better than of sons and of daughters:
I will give them an everlasting name,
That shall not be cut off. [LORD,
6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the
To serve him, and to love the name of the LORD,
To be his servants,
Every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it,
And taketh hold of my covenant;
7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain,
And make them joyful in my house of prayer:
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *shall be* accepted
upon mine altar;
For mine house shall be called an house of prayer unto
all people. [saith,
8 The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel
Yet will I gather *others* to him,
Beside those that are gathered unto him.

The prophet is here, in God's name, encouraging those that were hearty in joining themselves to God, and yet laboured under great discouragements.

First. Some were discouraged because they were not of the seed of Abraham. They had joined themselves to the Lord, had bound their souls with a bond to be his for ever. This is the root and life of religion, to break off from the world and the flesh, and devote ourselves entirely to the service and honour of God; but they questioned whether God would accept of them, because they were of the sons of the stranger, ver. 3. They were Gentiles that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenants of promise; and therefore feared they had no part or lot in the matter. They said, "The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people," and will not own me as one of them, nor admit me to their privileges. It was often said that there should "be one law for the stranger and for him that was born in the land," *Ex.* xii. 49, and yet they may make this melancholy conclusion. Note, Unbelief many times suggests things to the discouragement of good people which are directly contrary to what God himself hath said; things which he hath expressly guarded against. Let not the sons of the stranger therefore say thus, for they have no reason to say it. Note, Ministers must have answers ready to the disquieting fears and jealousies of weak Christians; which, how unreasonable soever, they must take notice of.

Secondly. Others were discouraged because they were not fathers in Israel. The eunuch said, "Behold, I am a dry tree;" so he looked upon himself, and it was his grief; so others looked upon him, and it was his reproach. He was thought to be of no use, because he had no children, nor was ever likely to have any. This was then the more grievous, because eunuchs were not admitted to be priests, *Lev.* xxi. 20, nor to enter into the congregation, *Deu.* xxiii. 1; and because the promise of a numerous posterity was the particular blessing of Israel, and the more valuable because from among them the Messiah was to come. Yet God would not have the eunuchs to make the worst of their case, nor to think that they should be excluded from the gospel church, and from being spiritual priests, because they were shut out from the congregation of Israel, and the Levitical priesthood. No; as the taking down of the partition wall (contained in ordinances) admitted the Gentiles, so it let in likewise those that had been kept out by ceremonial pollutions. Yet, by the reply here given to this suggestion it should seem the chief thing which the eunuch laments in his case is his being written childless. Now, suitable encouragements are given to each of these.

1. To those that have no children of their own, that, though they had the honour to be the children of the church and the covenant themselves, yet had none to whom they might transmit that honour; none to receive the sign of circumcision, and the privileges secured by that sign. Now observe, 1st. What a good character they have, though they lie under this ignominy and affliction; and those only are entitled to the following comforts who in some measure answer these characters. *First.* They keep God's sabbaths as he hath appointed them to be kept. In the primitive times, if a Christian were asked, 'Hast thou kept holy the Lord's day?' he would readily answer, 'I am a Christian, and dare not do otherwise.' *Secondly.* In their whole conversation they choose those things that please God. They do that which is good; they do it with a sincere design to please God in it; they do it of choice, and with delight. And if sometimes through infirmity they come short of doing that which pleased God, yet they choose it, they endeavour it, and aim at it. Note, Whatever is God's pleasure should, without dispute, be our choice. *Thirdly.* They take hold of his covenant, and that is a thing that pleaseth God as much as any thing. The covenant of grace is proposed and proffered to us in the Gospel; to take hold on it, is to consent to it, to accept the offer, and come up to the terms, deliberately and sincerely to take God to be to us a God, and to give up ourselves to him, to be to him a people. Taking hold of the covenant notes an entire and resolute consent to it; taking hold, as those that are afraid of coming short; catching at it as a good bargain, and as those that are resolved never to let it go, for it is our life; and we take hold of it as a criminal took hold of the horns of the altar to which he fled for refuge. 2nd. What a great deal of comfort they may have if they answer this character, though they are not built up into families; ver. 5, "Unto them will I give a better place and name." It is supposed that there is a place and a name, which we have from sons and daughters, that is valuable and desirable. It is a pleasing notion we have that we live in our children when we are dead. But there is a better place, and a better name, which those have that are in covenant with God, and it is sufficient to balance the want of that. A place, and a name, rest, and reputation; a place to live comfortably in themselves, and a name to live creditably with among their neighbours; they shall be happy, and may be easy both at home and abroad. Though they have not children to be the music of their house, or arrows in their quiver, to keep them in countenance when they speak with their enemies in the gate, yet they shall have a place and a name more than equivalent. For, *First.* God will give it them, will give it them by promise; he will himself be both their habitation and their glory, their place and their name. *Secondly.* He will give it them in his house, and within his walls; there they shall have a place, shall be planted so as to take root, *Ps.* xcii. 13; shall dwell all the days of their life, *Ps.* xxvii. 4. They shall be at home in communion with God, as Anna, that departed not from the temple night or day. There they shall have a name. A name for good things with God and good people is "a name better than that of sons and daughters." Our relation to God, our interest in Christ, our title to the blessings of the covenant, and our hopes of eternal life, are things that give us in God's house a blessed place and a blessed name. *Thirdly.* It shall be an everlasting name, that shall never be extinct, shall never be cut off; like the place and name of angels, who therefore marry not because they die not. Spiritual blessings are unspeakably better than those of sons and daughters; for children are a certain care, and may prove the greatest grief and shame of a man's life; but the blessings we partake of in God's house are a sure and constant joy and honour, comforts which cannot be embittered.

2. To those that are themselves the children of strangers.

1st. It is here promised that they shall now be welcome to the church, ver. 6, 7. When God's Israel come out of Babylon, let them bring as many of their neighbours along with them as they can persuade to come, and God will find room enough for them all in his house. And here, as before, we may observe,

First. Upon what terms they shall be welcome. Let them know that God's Israel, when they come out of Babylon, will not be plagued as they were when they came out of Egypt with a mixed multitude that went with them, but were not cordially for them; no, the sons of the stranger shall have a place and a name in God's house, provided, 1*st.* That they forsake other gods, all rivals and pretenders whatsoever, and "join themselves to the Lord," so as to become one spirit, 1 *Cor.* vi. 17. 2*nd.* That they join themselves to him, as subjects to their prince, and soldiers to their general, by an oath of fidelity and obedience to serve him, not occasionally, as one would serve a turn, but to be constantly his servant, entirely subject to his command, and devoted to his interest. 3*rd.* That they join themselves to him as friends to his honour, and the interests of his kingdom in the world, "to love the name of the Lord," to be well pleased with all the discoveries he hath made of himself, and all the memorials they make of him. Observe, Serving him and loving him go together; for those that love him truly will serve him faithfully; and that obedience is most acceptable to him which flows from a principle of love, as well as most pleasant to us; for then "his commandments are not grievous," 1 *Jno.* v. 3. 4*th.* That they "keep the sabbath from polluting it;" for "the stranger that is within thy gates" is particularly required to do that. 5*th.* That

"they take hold of the covenant;" that is, that they come under the bonds of it, and put in for the benefits of it.

Secondly. To what privileges they shall be welcome, ver. 7. Three things are here promised them in their coming to God: 1*st.* Assistance. "I will bring them to my holy mountain;" not only bid them welcome when they come, but incline them to come; will shew them the way, and lead them in it. David himself prays that God, by his light and truth, would bring him to his holy hill, *Ps.* xliii. 4. And the sons of the stranger shall be under the same conduct. The church is God's holy hill, on which he hath set his King; and in bringing them to Zion hill he brings them to be subjects to Zion's King, as well as worshippers in Zion's holy temple. 2*nd.* Acceptance. "Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on mine altar;" and be never the less acceptable for being theirs, though they are sons of the stranger. The prayers and praises (these spiritual sacrifices) of devout Gentiles shall be as pleasing to God as those of the pious Jews, and no difference shall be made between them; for though they are Gentiles by birth, yet, through grace, they shall be looked upon as the believing seed of faithful Abraham, and the praying seed of wrestling Jacob; for "in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision." 3*rd.* Comfort. They shall not only be accepted, but they themselves shall have the pleasure of it; "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer." They shall have grace not only to serve God, but to serve him cheerfully and with gladness; and that shall make the service the more acceptable to him; for when we sing in the ways of the Lord, then great is the glory of our God. They shall go away and eat their bread with joy, because God now accepteth their works, *Eccl.* ix. 7. Nay, though they came mourning to the house of prayer, they shall go away rejoicing, for they shall there find such ease by casting their cares and burthens upon God, and referring themselves to him, that, like Hannah, they shall go away, and their countenance shall be no more sad. Many a sorrowful spirit has been made joyful in the house of prayer.

2nd. It is here promised that multitudes of the Gentiles shall come to the church; not only those few that come dropping in shall be bid welcome, but that great numbers shall come in, and the door be thrown open to them; "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people." The temple was then God's house, and to that Christ applies these words, *Mat.* xxi. 13; but with an eye to it as a type of the gospel church, *Heb.* ix. 8, 9; for Christ calls it his house, *Heb.* iii. 6. Now, concerning this house it is promised, *First.* That it shall not be a house of sacrifice, but a house of prayer. The religious meetings of God's people shall be meetings for prayer; in which they shall join together as a token of their united faith and mutual love. *Secondly.* That it shall be a house of prayer, not for the people of the Jews only, but for all people. This was fulfilled when Peter was made, not only to perceive it himself, but to tell it the world, that "in every nation he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him," *Acts* x. 35. It had been declared again and again that "the stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death;" but Gentiles shall now be looked upon no longer as strangers and foreigners, *Eph.* ii. 19. And it appears, by Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, both that it was primarily intended for a house of prayer and that strangers should be welcome to it, 1 *Kin.* viii. 30, 41.

And it is intimated here, ver. 8, that when the Gentiles are called in they shall be incorporated into one body with the Jews, that, as Christ saith, *Jno.* x. 16, "there may be one fold, and one shepherd;" for, 1*st.* God "will gather the outcasts of Israel." Many of the Jews that had by their unbelief cast themselves out shall by faith be brought in again, "a remnant according to the election of grace," *Rom.* xi. 5. Christ came "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," *Mat.* xv. 24, to gather their outcasts, *Ps.* cxlvii. 2, and restore their preserved, *ch.* xlix. 6, and to be their glory, *Lu.* ii. 32. 2*nd.* He will gather others also to him, besides his own outcasts that are gathered to him; or, though some of the Gentiles have come over now and then into the church, that shall not serve, as some may think, to answer the extent of these promises; no, there are still more and more to be brought in; I will gather others to him besides these; these are but the firstfruits, in comparison with the harvest that shall be gathered for Christ in the nations of the earth, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. Note, The church is a growing body; when some are gathered to it, yet still we may hope there shall be more, till the mystical body be completed: "Other sheep I have."

9 All ye beasts of the field, come to devour,
Yea, all ye beasts in the forest.
10 His watchmen *are* blind: they are all ignorant,
They *are* all dumb dogs, they cannot bark;
Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.
11 Yea, *they are* greedy dogs *which* can never have enough,
And they *are* shepherds *that* cannot understand:
They all look to their own way,
Every one for his gain, from his quarter.
12 Come ye, *say they*, I will fetch wine,
And we will fill ourselves with strong drink;
And to morrow shall be as this day,
And much more abundant.

From words of comfort the prophet here, by a very sudden change of his style, passeth to words of reproof and conviction, and goes on in that strain, for the most part, in the three following chapters; and therefore some here begin a new sermon. He had assured the people that in due time God would deliver them out of captivity; which was designed for the comfort of those that should live when God would do this. Now here he shews what their sins and provocations were, for which God would send them into captivity; and this was designed for the conviction of those that lived in his own time, near a hundred years before the captivity, who were now filling up the measure of the nation's sin; and to justify God in what he brought upon them. God will lay them waste by the fierceness of their enemies, for the falseness of their friends.

First. Desolating judgments are here summoned up, ver. 9. The sheep of God's pasture are now to be made the sheep of his slaughter, to fall as victims to his justice; and therefore the beasts of the field and the forest are called to come and devour. They are beasts of prey, and do it from their own ravenous disposition; but God permits them to do it, nay, he employs them as his servants in doing it; the ministers of his justice, though they "mean not so, neither doth their heart think so." If this refers primarily to the descent made upon them by the Babylonians, and their devouring of them, yet it may look farther to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, after these outcasts of them, mentioned ver. 8, were gathered into the Christian church. The Roman armies came upon them as beasts of the forest to devour them, and they quite took away their place and nation. Note, When God has bloody work to do he has beasts of prey within call to be employed in doing it.

Secondly. The reason of these judgments is here given. The shepherds that should have been the watchmen of the flock, to discover the approaches of the beasts of prey, to keep them off and protect the sheep, were treacherous and careless, minded not their business, nor made any conscience of the trust reposed in them, and so they became an easy prey to the wild beasts. Now this may refer to the false prophets that lived in Isaiah's, Jeremiah's, and Ezekiel's time, that flattered the people in their wicked ways, and told them they should have peace, though they went on; and to the priests that bare rule by their means, or to the wicked princes, the sons of Josiah, that did evil in the sight of the Lord, and other wicked magistrates under them that betrayed their trust, were vicious and profane, and instead of making up the breach at which the judgments of God were breaking in upon them, made it wider, and augmented the fierce anger of the Lord, instead of doing any thing to turn it away. They should have kept judgment and justice, ver. 1, but they abandoned both, *Jer.* v. 1. Or it may refer to those who were the nation's watchmen in our Saviour's time, the chief priests and the scribes, who should have discerned the signs of the times, and have given notice to the people of the approach of the Messiah; but instead of that opposed him, and did all they could to keep people from coming to the knowledge of him, and to prejudice them against him. It is a very sad character that is here given of these watchmen. Woe unto thee, O land, when thy guides are such.

1. They had no sense or knowledge of their business; they were wretchedly ignorant of their work, and were very unfit to teach others, who were so ill taught themselves. "His watchmen are blind," and therefore utterly unfit to be watchmen. If the seers see not, who shall see for us? "If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Christ describes the Pharisees to be blind leaders of the blind, *Mat.* xv. 14. The beasts of the field come to devour, and the watchmen are blind, and are not aware of them. They are "all ignorant," ver. 10; "Shepherds that cannot understand," ver. 11; that know not what is to be done about the sheep, nor can feed them with understanding, *Jer.* iii. 15.

2. What little knowledge they had they made no use of it; nobody was the better for it. As they were blind watchmen that could not discern the danger, so they were dumb dogs that would not give warning of it. And why are the dogs set to guard the sheep, if they cannot bark to awaken the shepherd and frighten the wolf? Such were these; they that had the charge of souls never reproved men for their faults, nor told them what would be in the end thereof; never gave them notice of the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. They barked at God's prophets, and bit them too, and worried the sheep, but made no opposition to the wolf or thief.

3. They were very lazy, and would take no pains; they loved their ease, and hated business; were "always sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber." They were not overcome and overpowered by sleep, as the disciples, through grief and fatigue; but they lay down on purpose to invite sleep, and said, "Soul, take thine ease; yet a little sleep." It is bad with a people when their shepherds slumber, *Nah.* iii. 18; and well for God's people that their shepherd, "the keeper of Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps."

4. They were very covetous and eager after the world; "greedy dogs, that can never have enough." If they had never so much, they would think it too little; they so love silver as never to be satisfied with silver, *Eccl.* v. 10. All their inquiry is what they shall get, not what they shall do. Let them have the wages, and they care not whether the work be done or no; they feed not the flock, but fleece it. They are every one "looking to his own way," minding his own private interests, and have no regard at all to the public welfare. It was St. Paul's complaint of the watchmen in his time, *Phil.* ii. 21, "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family, and having every thing to his own mind, while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They "look every one to his gain from his quarter," from his end or part of the work; they are for gain from every quarter; *Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem*,—'Money, money, by fair means or foul, we must have money;' but especially from their own quarter, where they will be sure to take care that they lose nothing, nor miss any thing that is to be got. He that putteth not into their mouths, they not only will do him no service, but they prepare war against him, *Mic.* iii. 5.

5. They were perfect epicures, given to their pleasures, never so much in their element as in their drunken revels; ver. 12, "Come ye," say they, "I will fetch wine." They have that at command; their cellars are better furnished than their closets, "and we will fill ourselves," or be drunk, "with strong drink." They were often drunk, not overseen, as we say, or overtaken in drink, but designedly. The watchmen did thus invite and encourage one another to drink to excess; or, they courted the people to sit and drink with them, and so confirmed them in their wicked ways and hardened their hearts, whom they should have reproved. How could they think it any harm to be drunk, when the watchmen themselves joined with them and led them to it?

6. They were mighty secure and confident of the continuance of their prosperity and ease; they said, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." We shall have as much to spend upon our lusts to-morrow as we have to-day. They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days and hastening their deaths by their excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking him and making themselves liable to his wrath and curse. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using, and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this wicked course, whatever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to-day. But "boast not thyself of to-morrow," when perhaps "this night thy soul shall be required of thee."

CHAPTER LVII.

The prophet, in this chapter, makes his observations, I. Upon the deaths of good men, comforting them that were taken away in their integrity, and reproving those that did not make a due improvement of such providences, ver. 1, 2. II. Upon the gross idolatries, and spiritual whoredoms which the Jews were guilty of, and the destroying judgments they were thereby bringing upon themselves, ver. 3—12. III. Upon the gracious returns of God to his people, to put an end to their captivity, and re-establish their prosperity, ver. 13—21.

THE righteous perisheth, and no man layeth *it* to heart:
And merciful men *are* taken away, none considering
That the righteous is taken away from the evil *to come*.

2 He shall enter into peace:
They shall rest in their beds,
Each one walking *in* his uprightness.

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had condemned the watchmen for their ignorance and sottishness; here he shews the general stupidity and senselessness of the people likewise. No wonder they were inconsiderate, when their watchmen were so, that should have awakened them to consideration. We may observe here,

First. The providence of God removing good men apace out of this world. "The righteous" as to this world "perish;" they are gone, and their place knows them no more. Piety exempts none from the arrests of death; nay, in persecuting times, the most righteous are most exposed to the violences of bloody men; the first that died died a martyr. Righteousness delivereth from the sting of death, but not from the stroke of it. They are said to perish, because they are utterly removed from us, and to express the great loss which this world sustains by the removal of them; not that their death is their undoing, but it often proves an undoing to the places where they lived and were useful. Nay, even "merciful men are taken away;" those good men that are distinguished from the righteous, for whom some would even dare to die, *Rom.* v. 7. Oftentimes those are removed that could be worst spared; the fruitful trees are cut down by death, and the barren left still to cumber the ground. Merciful men are often taken away by the hand of men's malice; many good works they have done, and for some of them they are stoned. Before the captivity in Babylon perhaps there was a more than ordinary mortality of good men, so that there were scarce any left, *Jer.* v. 1. The godly ceased and the faithful failed, *Ps.* xii. 1.

Secondly. The careless world slighting these providences and disregarding them; "No man lays it to heart," none considers it. There are very few that lament it as a public loss, very few that take notice of it as a public warning. The death of good men is a thing to be laid to heart and considered more than common deaths. Serious inquiries ought to be made wherefore God contends with us; what good lessons are to be learned by such providences; what we may do to help to make up the breach, and to fill up the room of those that are removed. God is justly displeased when such events are not laid to heart; when the voice of the rod is not heard, nor the intentions of it answered, much more when it is rejoiced in, as the slaying of the witnesses is, *Rev.* xi. 10. Some of God's choicest blessings to mankind being thus easily parted with, are really undervalued, and it is an evidence of very great incogitancy. Little children, when they are little, least lament the death of their parents, because they know not what a loss it is to them.

Thirdly. The happiness of the righteous in their removal.

1. They are "taken away from the evil to come," then when it is just coming, 1st. In compassion to them that they may not see the evil, 2 *Kin.* xxii. 20, nor share in it, nor be in temptation by it. When the deluge is coming they are called into the ark, and have a hiding-place and rest in heaven, where there was none for them under heaven. 2nd. In wrath to the world, to punish them for all the injuries they have done to the righteous and merciful ones. These are taken away that stood in the gap to turn away the judgments of God; and then what can be expected but a deluge of them? It is a sign God intends war when he calls home his ambassadors.

2. They go to be easy out of the reach of that evil. The righteous man that, while he lived, walked in his uprightness, when he dies enters into peace, and rests in his bed. Note, 1st. Death is gain, and rest, and bliss to those only that walked in their uprightness, and that, when they die, can appeal to God concerning it, as Hezekiah, 2 *Kin.* xx. 3, "Now, Lord, remember it." 2. They that practised uprightness, and persevered in it to the end, shall find it well with them when they die. Their souls then enter into peace, into the world of peace, where peace is in perfection, and where there is no trouble, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Their bodies rest in their beds. Note, The grave is a bed of rest to all the Lord's people; there they rest from all their labours, *Rev.* xiv. 13; and the more weary they were the more welcome will that rest be to them, *Job* iii. 17. This bed is made in the darkness, but that makes it the more quiet. It is a bed out of which they shall rise refreshed in the morning of the resurrection.

3 But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress,
The seed of the adulterer and the whore.
4 Against whom do ye sport yourselves?
Against whom make ye a wide mouth,
And draw out the tongue?
Are ye not children of trangression, a seed of falsehood,
5 Enflaming yourselves with idols
Under every green tree,
Slaying the children in the valleys
Under the clifts of the rocks?
6 Among the smooth *stones* of the stream *is* thy portion;
They, they *are* thy lot:
Even to them hast thou poured a drink offering,
Thou hast offered a meat offering.
Should I receive comfort in these?
7 Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed:
Even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.
8 Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance:
For thou hast discovered *thyself to another* than me,
And art gone up; thou hast enlarged thy bed,
And made thee *a covenant* with them;
Thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest *it*.
9 And thou wentest to the king with ointment,
And didst increase thy perfumes,
And didst send thy messengers far off,
And didst debase *thyself even* unto hell.
10 Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way;
Yet saidst thou not, There is no hope:
Thou hast found the life of thine hand;
Therefore thou wast not grieved.
11 And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared,
That thou hast lied,
And hast not remembered me, nor laid *it* to thy heart?
Have not I held my peace even of old,
And thou fearest me not?
12 I will declare thy righteousness,
And thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

We have here a high charge, but a just one no doubt, drawn up against that wicked generation out of which God's righteous ones were removed, because the world was not worthy of them. Observe,

First. The general character here given of them, or the name and title by which they stand indicted, ver. 3. They are bid to draw near and hear the charge, are set to the bar and arraigned there as sons of the sorceress, or of a witch, the seed of an adulterer and a whore; that is, they were such themselves, they were strongly inclined to be such, and their ancestors were such before them. Sin is sorcery and adultery, for it is departing from God and dealing with the devil, and they were children of disobedience. Come, saith the prophet, draw near hither, and I will read you your doom. To the righteous death will bring peace and rest, but not to you, "You are children of transgressors and a seed of falsehood," ver. 4, that have it by kind, and have it woven into your very nature, to backslide from God and to deal treacherously with him, *ch.* xlviii. 8.

Secondly. The particular crimes laid to their charge:

1. Scoffing at God and his word. They were a generation of scorners, ver. 4, "Against whom do you sport yourselves?" You think it is only against the poor prophets whom you trample upon as contemptible men; but really it is against God himself, who sends them, and whose message they deliver. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, for what was done to them God took as done to himself. When they were reproved for their sins and threatened with the judgments of God, they ridiculed the word of God with all the rude, indecent gestures and expressions of disdain that could be. They sported themselves and made themselves merry with that which should have made them serious, and under which they should have humbled themselves. They made wry mouths at the prophets and drew out the tongue, contrary to all the laws of good breeding. Nor did they treat God's prophets with the common civility with which they would have treated a gentleman's servant that had been sent to them of an errand. Note, Those who mock at God, and bid defiance to his judgments, had best consider who it is towards whom they carry it so insolently.

2. Idolatry. This was that sin which the people of the Jews were most notoriously guilty of before the captivity, but that affliction cured them of it. In Isaiah's time it abounded, witness the abominable idolatries of Ahaz, which some think are particularly referred to here, and of Manasseh. 1st. They were dotingly fond of their idols, were inflamed with them, as those that burn in unlawful, unnatural lusts, *Rom.* i. 27; they were "mad upon their idols," *Jer.* l. 38. They inflamed themselves with them by their violent passions in the worship of them, as those of Baal's prophets, that leaped upon the altar and cut themselves, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 26, 28. Note, Vile corruptions, the more they are gratified the more they are inflamed. They worshipped their "idols under every green tree," in the open air and in the shade; yet that did not cool the heat of their impetuous lusts, but rather, the charming beauty of the green trees made them the more fond of their idols which they worshipped there. Thus that in nature which is pleasing, instead of drawing them to the God of nature, drew them from him. The flame of their zeal in the worship of false gods may shame us for our coldness and indifferency in the worship of the true God. They strove to inflame themselves, but we distract and deaden ourselves. 2nd. They were barbarous and unnaturally cruel in the worship of their idols. They slew their children and offered them in sacrifice to their idols, not only in the valley of the son of Hinnom, the head-quarters of that monstrous idolatry, but in other valleys in imitation of that, and under the clefts of the rocks, in dark and solitary places, the fittest for such works of darkness. 2nd. They were abundant and insatiable in their idolatries; they never thought they could have idols enough, nor could spend enough upon them and do enough in their service. The Syrians had once a notion of the God of Israel that he was a god of the hills, but not a god of the valleys, 1 *Kin.* xx. 28; but these idolaters, to make sure work, had both.

First. They had gods of the valleys, which they worshipped in the low places by the water side; ver. 6, "Among the smooth stones of the valley," or brook, "is thy portion." If they saw a smooth, carved stone, though set up but for a waymark or a mere stone, they were ready to worship it, as the Papists do crosses. Or in stony valleys they set up their gods, which they called their portion, and took for their lot, as God's people take him for their lot and portion. But these gods of stone would really be no better a portion for them, no better a lot, than the smooth stones of the stream, near which they were set up, for sometimes they worshipped their rivers. They, they are thy lot, which thou trustest to and art pleased with; but thou shalt be put off with it for thy lot, and miserable will thy case be. See the folly of sinners, who take the smooth stones of the stream for their portion, when they might have the precious stones of God's Jerusalem and the high priest's ephod to portion themselves with. Having taken these idols for their lot and portion, they stick at no charge in doing honour to them, "To them hast thou poured a drink offering and offered a meat offering," as if they had given thee thy meat and drink. They loved their idols better than their children, for their own tables must be robbed to replenish the altars of their idols. Have we taken the true God for our portion? Is he, even he, our lot? Let us then serve him with our meat and drink, not as they did, by depriving ourselves of the use of it, but by eating and drinking to his glory. Here, in a parenthesis, comes in an expression of God's just resentment of this wickedness of theirs, "Should I receive comfort in these," in such a people as this? Can they expect that God should take any pleasure in them, or accept their devotions at his altar, who thus serve Baal with the gifts of his providence? God takes comfort in his people while they are faithful to him; but what comfort can he take in them, when they that should be his witnesses against the idolatries of the world do themselves fall in with them? 'Should I have compassion on these?' so some; or, 'Should

I repent me concerning these?' so others. How can they expect that I should spare them, and either adjourn or abate their punishment, when they are so very provoking? "Shall I not visit for these things?" *Jer.* v. 7, 9.

Secondly. They had gods of the hills too; ver. 7, "Upon a lofty and high mountain" (as if thou wouldst vie with the High and Lofty One himself, ver. 15) "hast thou set thy bed," thine idol, thine idol's temple and altar, the bed of thine uncleanness, where thou committest spiritual whoredom with all the wantonness of an idolatrous fancy, and in direct violation of the covenant of thy God. "Thither wentest thou up" readily enough, though it was uphill, "to offer sacrifice." Some think this speaks the impudence they arrived to in their idolatries; at first they had some sense of shame, when they worshipped their idols in the valleys, in obscure places, but they soon conquered that, and came to do it upon the lofty high mountains; they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.

Thirdly. As if these were not enough, they had household gods too, their *lares* and *penates;* ver. 8, "Behind the doors and the posts;" where the law of God should be written for a memorandum to them of their duty, there they "set up the remembrance of their idols;" not so much to keep up their own remembrance of them, they were so fond of them they could not forget them, but to shew to others how mindful they were of them, and to put their children in mind of them, and possess them betimes with a veneration for those dunghill deities.

4th. As they were insatiable in their idolatries, so they were inseparable from them. They were hardened in their wickedness; they worshipped their idols openly, and in public view, as being neither ashamed of the sin nor afraid of the punishment; they went as publicly, and in as great crowds, to the idol temples as ever they had gone to God's house. This was like an impudent harlot; "discovering themselves to another than to God,"—making profession of other than the true religion. They took a pride in making proselytes to their idolatries; and not only went up themselves to their high places, but enlarged their bed, that is, their idol temples, and (as the margin reads the following words) 'thou hewedst for thyself larger than theirs,'—than theirs from whom thou copiedst it, and tookest the platform of it, as Ahaz of his altar, from that which he saw at Damascus, 2 *Kin.* xvi. 10; and, being thus involved over head and ears as it were in their idolatries, there is no parting them from them. Ephraim is now joined to idols, both in love and league. *First.* In league. "Thou hast made a covenant with them," with the idols, with the idol-worshippers, to live and die together. This was a complete renunciation of their covenant with God, and an avowed resolution to persist in their apostacy from him. *Secondly.* In love. "Thou lovedst their bed," that is, the temple of an idol, "wherever thou sawest it." Justly, therefore, were they given up to their own hearts' lusts.

3. Another sin charged upon them is their trusting in and seeking to foreign aids and succours, and contracting a communion with the Gentile powers; ver. 9, "Thou wentest to the king," which some understand of the idol they worshipped, particularly Moloch, which signifies a king; thou didst every thing to ingratiate thyself with those idols, didst offer incense and sweet ointments at their altars. Or, it may be meant of the king of Assyria, whom Ahaz made his court to; or of the king of Babylon, whose ambassadors Hezekiah caressed; or of other the kings of the nations, whose idolatrous usages they admired, and were desirous to learn and imitate; and for that end went and sent to cultivate an acquaintance and correspondence with them, that they might be like them, and strengthen themselves by an alliance with them. See here, 1st. What an expence they were at in forming and procuring this grand alliance. They went with ointment and perfumes, either bestowed upon themselves, to beautify their own faces, and so make themselves considerable, and worthy the friendship of the greatest king, or to be presented to those whose favour they were ambitious of, because "a man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men." When the first present of rich perfumes was thought too little, thou didst increase them; and thus "many seek the ruler's favour," forgetting that, after all, "every man's judgment proceedeth from the Lord." So fond were they of those heathen princes, that they not only went themselves, in all their airs, to those that were near them, but sent messengers to those that were afar off, *ch.* xviii. 2. 2nd. How much they hereby disparaged themselves, and laid the honour of their crown and nation in the dust; "Thou didst debase thyself even unto hell;" so they did by their idolatries. It is a dishonour to the children of men, that are endued with the powers of reason, to worship that as their God which is the creature of their own fancy, and the work of their own hands, to "bow down to the stock of a tree." It is much more a dishonour to the children of God, that are blessed with the privilege of Divine revelation, to forsake such a God as they know theirs to be, for a thing of nought; their own mercies for lying vanities. They likewise debase themselves by truckling to their heathen neighbours, and depending upon them, when they had a God to go to that is all-sufficient, and in covenant with them. How did they shame themselves to the highest degree, and sink themselves to the lowest, that forsook the Fountain of life for broken cisterns, and the Rock of ages for broken reeds. Note, Sinners disparage and debase themselves; the service of sin is an ignominious slavery, and they who thus debase themselves to hell will justly have their portion there.

Thirdly. The aggravations of their sin.

1. They had been tired with disappointments in their wicked courses, and yet they would not be convinced of the folly of them; ver. 10, "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way;" thou hast undertaken a mighty task to find out true satisfaction and happiness in that which is vanity and a lie. Those that set up idols instead of God for the object of their worship, and princes instead of God for the object of their hope and confidence, and think thus to better themselves and make themselves easy, go a great way about, and will never come to their journey's end. "Thou art wearied in the multitude," or multiplicity of thy ways, so some read it; those that forsake the only right way wander endlessly in a thousand bypaths, and lose themselves in the many inventions which they have sought out. They weary themselves with fresh chases, and fierce ones, but never gain their point; like the Sodomites, that wearied themselves to find the door, *Gen.* xix. 11, and could not find it at last. The pleasures of sin will soon surfeit, but never satisfy; a man may quickly tire himself in the pursuit of them, but can never repose himself in the enjoyment of them. They found this by experience, the idols they had often worshipped never did them any kindness; the kings they courted distressed them, and helped them not; and yet they were so wretchedly besotted, that they could not say, "There is no hope." It is in vain any longer to expect that satisfaction in creature confidences, and in the worship of idols, which we have so often looked for, and never met with. Note, Despair of happiness in the creature, and of satisfaction in the service of sin, is the first step towards a well grounded hope of happiness in God, and a well fixed resolution to keep to his service. And those are inexcusable who have had sensible conviction of the vanity of the creature, and yet will not be brought to say, There is no hope to be happy short of the Creator.

2. Though they were convinced that the way they were in was a sinful way, yet, because they had found some present sensual pleasure and worldly profit by it, they could not persuade themselves to be sorry for it. "Thou hast found the life of thy hand," or the living of it; thou boastest how fortune smiles upon thee, and therefore thou art not grieved, no more than Ephraim, when he said, (*Hos.* xii. 8,) "I am become rich, I have found me out substance." Note, Prosperity in sin is a great bar to conversion from sin. Those that live at ease in their sinful pleasures, and raise estates by their sinful projects, are tempted to think God favours them, and therefore they have nothing to repent of. Some read it ironically, or by way of question, 'Thou hast found the life of thy hand,' hast found true satisfaction and happiness; no doubt thou hast, hast thou not? And therefore thou art so far from being grieved that thou "blessest thyself in thine own evil way;" but review thy gains once more, and come to a balance of profit and loss, and then say what fruit thou hast of those things whereof thou art ashamed, and for which "God shall bring thee into judgment," *Rom.* vi. 21.

3. They had dealt very unworthily with God by their sin; for, 1st. It should seem they pretended that the reason why they left God was, because he was too terrible a majesty for them to deal with, they must have gods that they could be more free and familiar with; but, saith God, "of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied?" that is, that thou hast dealt falsely and treacherously with me, and dissembled in thy covenants with me, and prayers to me; 'What did I ever do to frighten thee from me?' What occasion have I given thee to think hardly of me, that thou hast gone to seek a kinder master? 2nd. However, it is certain they had no true reverence of God, nor any awful regard to him. So that question is commonly understood, "Of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared?" Of none; for thou hast not feared me, whom thou shouldest fear; for "thou hast lied to me." Those that dissemble with God make it to appear they stand in no awe of him. "Thou hast not remembered me," neither what I have said nor what I have done, neither the promises nor the threatenings, nor the performances of either; thou hast not laid them to thy heart, as thou wouldest have done if thou hadst feared me. Note, Those who lay not the word of God and his providences to their hearts, it is a sign they have not the fear of God before their eyes. And multitudes are ruined by fearlessness, forgetfulness, and mere carelessness; they do not aright, nor to good purpose, fear any thing, remember any thing, nor lay any thing to heart. Nay, 3rd. They were hardened in their sin, by the patience and forbearance of God; "Have not I held my peace of old," and for a long time? "these things thou hast done, and I kept silence." And therefore, as it follows here, "thou fearest me not," as if, because God had spared long, he would never punish, *Eccl.* viii. 11. Because he kept silence, the sinner thought him altogether such a one as himself, and stood in no awe of him.

Lastly. Here is God's resolution to call them to an account, though he had long borne with them; ver. 12, "I will declare," like that, *Ps.* l. 21, "But I will reprove thee." "I will declare thy righteousness," which thou makest thy boast of, and let the world see, and thyself too, to thy confusion, that it is all a sham, all a cheat, it is not what it pretends to be. When thy righteousness comes to be examined it will be found unrighteousness, and that there is no sincerity in all thy pretensions. I will declare thy works, what they have been, and what the gain thou pretendest to have gotten by them; and it will appear, that at long run "they shall not profit thee," nor turn to any account. Note, Sinful works, as they are works of darkness, and there is no reason or righteousness in them, so they are unfruitful works, and there is nothing got by them; and, however they look now, it will be made to appear so another day, Sin doth not profit, nay, it doth ruin and destroy.

13 When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee;
But the wind shall carry them all away;
Vanity shall take *them:*
But he that putteth his trust in me
Shall possess the land,
And shall inherit my holy mountain;
14 And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way,
Take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.
15 For thus saith the high and lofty One
That inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy;
I dwell in the high and holy *place,*
With him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit,
To revive the spirit of the humble,
And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.
16 For I will not contend for ever,
Neither will I be always wroth:
For the spirit should fail before me,
And the souls *which* I have made.

Here, First, God shews how insufficient idols and creatures were to relieve and succour those that worshipped them, and confided in them; ver. 13, "When thou criest" in thy distress and anguish, lamentest thy misery, and callest for help, "let thy companies deliver thee," thy idol gods, which thou hast heaped to thyself companies of, the troops of the confederate forces which thou hast relied so much upon; let them deliver thee if they can; expect no other relief but what they can give. Thus God said to Israel, when in their trouble they called upon him, *Jud.* x. 14, "Go and cry to the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you." But in vain is salvation hoped for from them; "The wind shall carry them all away," the wind of God's wrath, that breath of his mouth, which shall slay the wicked; they have made themselves as chaff, and therefore the wind will of course hurry them away. Vanity they are, and vanity shall take them away; to vanity they shall be reduced, and vanity shall be their recompence. Both the idols and their worshippers shall come to nothing.

Secondly. He shews that there was a sufficiency, an all-sufficiency, in him for the comfort and deliverance of all those that put their confidence in him, and made their application to him. And their safety and satisfaction appears the more comfortable, because their hopes are crowned with fruition, when those that seek to other helpers have their hopes frustrated; "but he that putteth his trust in me," and in me only, he shall be happy, both for soul and body, for this world and the other. 1. They that trust in God's providence take the best course to secure their secular interests; "They shall possess the land," as much of it as is good for them, and what they have they shall have it from a good hand, and hold it by a good title; *Ps.* xxxvii. 3, "They shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed." 2. They that trust in God's grace take the best course to secure their sacred interests; "They shall inherit my holy mountain,"

They shall enjoy the privileges of the church on earth, and be brought at length to the joys of heaven, and no wind shall carry them away. More particularly,

1st. The captives that trust in God shall be released; ver. 14, "They shall say," that is, the messengers of his word, and all the ministers of his providence, in that great event shall say, "Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way." When God's time is come for their deliverance, the way of bringing it about shall be made plain and easy; obstacles shall be removed, difficulties that seemed insuperable shall presently be got over, and all things shall concur both to accelerate and to facilitate their return: see *ch.* xl. 3, 4. This refers to the provision which the Gospel, and the grace of it, hath made for our ready passage through this world to a better. The way of religion is now cast up; it is a highway; ministers' business is to direct people in it, and to help them over the discouragements they meet with, that nothing may offend them.

2nd. The contrite that trust in God shall be revived, ver. 15. They that trusted in idols and creatures for help went with their ointments and perfumes, ver. 9, but here God shews that those who may expect help from him are such as are destitute of, and set themselves at a distance from, the gaieties of the world, and the delights of sense. God's glory appears here very bright,

First. In his greatness and majesty. He is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." Let this possess us with very high and honourable thoughts of the God with whom we have to do. 1*st.* That his being and perfections are exalted infinitely above every creature, not only above what they have themselves, but above what they can conceive concerning him, "far above all" their "blessing and praise," *Neh.* ix. 5. He is "the high and lofty One," and there is no creature like him, nor any to be compared with him. It speaks likewise his sovereign dominion over all, and the incontestable right he has to give both law and judgment to all. He is higher than the highest, *Eccl.* v. 8; than the highest heavens, *Ps.* cxiii. 4. 2*nd.* That with him there is neither beginning of days, nor end of life, nor change of time; he is both immortal and immutable; he only hath immortality, 1 *Tim.* vi. 16; he hath it of himself, and he hath it constantly; he inhabits it, and cannot be dispossessed of it. We must shortly remove into eternity, but God always inhabits it. 3*rd.* That there is an infinite rectitude in his nature, and an exact conformity with himself, and a steady design of his own glory in all that he doth; and this appears in every thing by which he has made himself known; for his name is holy, and all that desire to be acquainted with him must know him as a holy God. 4*th.* That the peculiar residence and discovery of his glory is in the mansions of light and bliss above; "I dwell in the high and holy place," and will have all the world to know it. Whoever have any business with God must direct to him as their Father in heaven, for there he dwells. These great things are here said of God to possess us with a holy reverence of him, to encourage our confidence in him, and to magnify his compassion and condescension to us; that though he is thus high, yet he hath respect unto the lowly. He that rides on the heavens by his name Jah, stoops to concern himself for poor widows and fatherless, *Ps.* lxviii. 4, 5.

Secondly. In his grace and mercy. He hath a tender pity for the humble and contrite; for those that are so in respect to their state, if they be his people, he will not overlook them, though they are poor and low in the world, and despised and trampled upon by men. But it refers to the temper of their mind; he will have a tender regard to those that, being in affliction, accommodate themselves to their affliction, and bring their mind to their condition, be it never so low, and never so sad, and sorely broken; those that are truly penitent for sin, and mourn in secret for it, and have a dread of the wrath of God, which they have made themselves obnoxious to, and are submissive under all his rebukes. Now, 1*st.* With these God will dwell; he will visit them graciously, will converse familiarly with them, by his word and Spirit, as a man doth with those of his own family; he will be always nigh to them, and present with them; he that dwells in the highest heavens dwells in the lowest hearts, and inhabits sincerity as surely as he inhabits eternity; in these he delights. 2*nd.* He will revive their heart and spirit; will speak that to them, and work that in them, by the word and Spirit of his grace, which will be reviving to them, as a cordial to one that is ready to faint. He will give them reviving joys and hopes, sufficient to balance all the griefs and fears that break their spirits. He dwells with them, and his presence is reviving.

3rd. Those he contends with, if they trust in him, shall be relieved, and received into favour, ver. 1. He will "revive the heart of the contrite ones," for he will not contend for ever. Nothing makes a soul contrite so as God's contending, and therefore nothing revives it so as his ceasing his controversy. Here is, *First.* A gracious promise. It is not promised that he will never be angry with his people, for their sins are displeasing to him; or that he will never contend with them, for they must expect the rod; but he "will not contend for ever," nor be always wroth. As he is not soon angry so he is not long angry; "he will not always chide." Though he contend with them by convictions of sin, he will not contend for ever; but, instead of the spirit of bondage they shall receive the spirit of adoption: he hath torn, but he will heal. Though he contend with them by the rebukes of providence, yet the correction shall not last always, shall not last long; no longer than there is need, 1 *Pet.* i. 6; no longer than they can bear, and no longer than till it has done its work. Though their whole life be calamitous, yet their end will be peace, and so will their eternity be. *Secondly.* A very compassionate consideration, upon which this promise is grounded; "If I should contend for ever, the spirit would fail before me, even the souls which I have made." Note, 1*st.* God is the Father of spirits, *Heb.* xii. 9; it is the soul that he has made, that he gave being to by creation, and a new being to by regeneration. 2*nd.* Though the Lord is for the body, yet he concerns himself chiefly for the souls of his people, that the spirit do not fail, and its graces and comforts. 3*rd.* When troubles last long, the spirit, even of good men, is apt to fail. They are tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God, to think it in vain to serve him. They are ready to put comfort away from them, and to despair of relief, and then the spirit fails. 4*th.* It is in consideration of this that God will not contend for ever; for he will not forsake the work of his own hands, nor defeat the purchase of his Son's blood. The reason is taken, not from our merit, but from our weakness and infirmity; for "He remembers that we are flesh," *Ps.* lxxviii. 39, and the flesh is weak.

17 For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth,
And smote him: I hid me, and was wroth,
And he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.
18 I have seen his ways, and will heal him:
I will lead him also, and restore comforts
Unto him and to his mourners.
19 I create the fruit of the lips;
Peace, peace to *him that is* far off, and to *him that is* near,
Saith the LORD; and I will heal him.
20 But the wicked *are* like the troubled sea,
When it cannot rest,
Whose waters cast up mire and dirt.
21 *There is* no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

The body of the people of Israel, in this account of God's dealings with them, is spoken of as a particular person, ver. 17, 18; but divided into two sorts, that were differently dealt with; some that were sons of peace, to whom peace is spoken, ver. 19, and others that were not, who have nothing to do with peace, ver. 20, 21. Observe here,

First. The just rebukes which that people were brought under for their sin; "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him." Covetousness was a sin that abounded very much among that people; *Jer.* vi. 13, "From the least to the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness." Those that did not worship images yet were carried away by this spiritual idolatry, for so covetousness is, it is making money the god, *Col.* iii. 5. No marvel the people were covetous, when their watchmen themselves were notoriously so, *ch.* lvi. 11. Yet, as covetous as they were, in the service of their idols they were prodigal, ver. 6; and it is hard to say whether their profuseness in that, or their covetousness in every thing else, was more provoking. But for this iniquity, among others, God was angry with them, and brought one judgment after another upon them, and their destruction at last by the Chaldeans. 1. God was wroth, he resented it, took it very ill that a people who were devoted to himself, and portioned in himself, should be so entirely given up to the world, and choose that for their portion. Note, Covetousness is an iniquity that is very displeasing to the God of heaven; it is a heart-sin, but he sees it, and therefore hates it, and looks upon it with jealousy, because it sets up a rival with him in the soul. It is a sin which men bless themselves in, *Ps.* xlix. 18, and in which their neighbours bless them, *Ps.* x. 3, but God abhors it. 2. He smote him, reproved him for it by his prophets, corrected him by his providence, punished him in those very things he so doted upon, and was covetous of. Note, Sinners shall be made to feel from the anger of God. Whom he is wroth with he smites; and covetousness particularly lays men under the tokens of God's displeasure. They that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world, either they are disappointed of it or it is embittered to them; it is either clogged with a cross or turned into a curse. 3. God hid himself from him when he was under these rebukes; and continued wroth with him. When we are under the rod, if God manifest himself to us, we may bear it the better; but if he both smite us, and hide himself from us, send us no prophets, speak to us no comfortable word, shew us no token for good, if he tear and go away, *Hos.* v. 14, we are very miserable.

Secondly. Their obstinacy and incorrigibleness under these rebukes. "He went on frowardly in the way of his heart," in his evil way. He was not sensible of the displeasure of God that he was under; he felt the smart of the rod, but had no regard at all to the hand; the more he was crossed in his worldly pursuits the more eager he was in them. He either would not see his error, or, if he saw it, would not amend it. Covetousness was the way of his heart, it was what he was inclined to, and intent upon, and he would not be reclaimed, but in his distress he trespassed yet more, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 22. See the strength of the corruption of men's hearts, and the sinfulness of sin; it will take its course in despite of God himself, and all the flames of his wrath. See also how insufficient afflictions of themselves are to reform men, unless God's grace work with them.

Thirdly. God's wonderful return in mercy to them, notwithstanding the obstinacy of the generality of them. The greater part of them went on frowardly; but there were some among them that were mourners for the obstinacy of the rest, and with an eye to them, or rather, for his own name's sake, God determines not to contend for ever with them. With the froward God may justly shew himself froward, *Ps.* xviii. 26, and walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, *Lev.* xxvi. 24. When this sinner here "went on frowardly in the way of his heart," one would think it should have followed, "I have seen his ways," and will destroy him, will abandon him, will never have any thing more to do with him; no, such are the riches of Divine mercy and grace, and so do they rejoice against judgment, that it follows, "I have seen his ways, and will heal him." See how God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; and "where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound." God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, for in us there appears nothing but what is provoking. "I have seen his ways, and yet I will heal him," for my own name's sake. God knew how bad that people were, and yet would not cast them off. But observe the method; God will first give him grace, and then, and not till then, give him peace. "I have seen his ways," that he will never turn to me of himself, and therefore I will turn him. Those whom God has mercy in store for he has grace in readiness for, to prepare and qualify them for that mercy, which they were as fast as they could running from. 1. God will heal him of his corrupt and vicious disposition, will cure him of his covetousness, though it be never so deeply rooted in him, and his heart has been long exercised to covetous practices. There is no spiritual disease so inveterate, but Almighty grace can conquer it. 2. God will lead him also; not only amend what was amiss in him, that he may cease to do evil, but direct him into the way of duty, that he may learn to do well. He goes on frowardly, as Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter; but God will lead him into a better mind, a better path. And then, 3. He will restore those comforts to him which he had forfeited and lost, and for the return of which he had thus prepared him. There was a wonderful reformation wrought upon the captives in Babylon, and then a wonderful redemption wrought for them; which brought comfort to them, that is, to their mourners; to those among them that mourned for their own sins, and the sins of their people, and the desolations of the sanctuary. To those mourners the mercy would be most comfortable, and to them God had an eye in working it out. "Blessed are they that mourn," for to them comfort belongs, and they shall have it.

Fourthly. Now, as when that people went into captivity, some of them were good figs, very good; others of them bad figs, very bad; and accordingly their captivity was to them for their good, or for their hurt, *Jer.* xxiv. 8, 9, so when they came out of captivity, still some of them were good, others bad, and accordingly the deliverance was to them.

1. To those among them that were good, their return out of captivity was peace, such peace as was a type and earnest of the peace which should be preached by Jesus Christ; ver. 19, "I create the fruit of the lips, peace." 1st. God designed to give them matter for praise and thanksgiving; for that is the fruit of the lips, *Heb.* xiii. 15, the calves of the lips, *Hos.* xiv. 2; I create this. Creation is out of nothing, and this is surely out of worse than nothing, when God creates matter of praise for those that went on frowardly in the way of their heart. 2nd. In order to this, peace shall be published, "Peace, peace," perfect peace, all kinds of peace, "to him that is afar off" from the general rendezvous, or from the head-quarters, as well "to him that is near." Peace with God; though he has contended with them, he will be reconciled, and let

fall his controversy; peace of conscience, a holy security, and serenity of mind, after the many reproaches of conscience, and tosses of spirit they had been under in their captivity. Thus God creates the fruit of the lips, fresh matter for thanksgiving; for when he speaks peace to us we must speak praises to him. This peace is itself of God's creating; he, and he only, can work it; it is the fruit of the lips; of his lips, he commands it; of the ministers' lips, he speaks it by them, *ch.* xl. 1. It is the fruit of preaching lips, and praying lips; it is the fruit of Christ's lips, whose lips drop as a honeycomb; for to him this is applied, *Eph.* ii. 17, "He came and preached peace to you who were afar off," you Gentiles, as well as to the Jews who were nigh; to after ages, who were afar off in time, as well as to those of the present age.

2. To those among them that were wicked, though they might return with the rest, yet to them their return was no peace, ver. 20. The wicked, whereever he is, in Babylon or in Jerusalem, carries about with him the principle of his own uneasiness, and is like the troubled sea. God healed those to whom he spoke peace; ver. 19, "I will heal them," all shall be well again, and set to rights; but the wicked would not be healed by the grace of God, and therefore shall not be healed by his comforts. They are always like the sea in a storm, for they carry about with them, 1st. Unmortified corruptions. Those are not cured and conquered, and their ungoverned lusts and passions make them "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest," vexatious to all about them, and therefore uneasy to themselves; noisy and dangerous. When the intemperate heats of the spirit break out in scurrilous and abusive language, then the troubled sea casts forth mire and dirt. 2nd. Unpacified consciences. They are under a frightful apprehension of guilt and wrath, that they cannot enjoy themselves; when they seem settled they are in a toss; when they seem merry, they are in heaviness; like Cain, that always dwelt in the land of shaking. The terrors of conscience muddy all their enjoyments, and cast forth such mire and dirt as make them a burthen to themselves. Though this doth not appear, it may be, at present, yet it is a certain truth, what this prophet had said before, *ch.* xlviii. 22, and here repeats, ver. 21, "There is no peace to the wicked;" no reconciliation to God, nor can they be upon good terms with him, while they "go on still in their trespasses;" no quietness or satisfaction in their own mind, no real good, no peace in death, because no hope. My God hath said it, and all the world cannot unsay it, that there is no peace to those that allow themselves in any sin; what have they to do with peace?

CHAPTER LVIII.

The prophet in this chapter hath his commission and charge renewed to reprove the sinners in Zion, particularly the hypocrites, to shew them their transgressions, ver. 1; and it is intended for admonition and warning to all hypocrites, and is not to be confined to those of any one age. Some refer it primarily to those at that time when Isaiah prophesied: see *ch.* xxxiii. 14; xxix. 13. Others to the captives in Babylon; the wicked among them, to whom the prophet had declared there was no peace, *ch.* lvii. 21. Against the terror of that word they thought to shelter themselves with their external performances, particularly their fastings, which they kept up in Babylon, and for some time after their return to their own land, *Zec.* vii. 3, &c. The prophet therefore here shews them that their devotions would not entitle them to peace, while their conversations were not all of a piece with them. Others think it is principally intended against the hypocrisy of the Jews, especially the Pharisees, before and in our Saviour's time; they boasted of their fastings, but Christ, as the prophet here, shewed them their transgressions, *Mat.* xxiii.; much the same with those they are here charged with. Observe, I. The plausible profession of religion which they made, ver. 2. II. The boasts they made of that profession, and the blame they laid upon God, for taking no more notice of it, ver. 3. III. The sins they are charged with, which spoiled the acceptableness of their fasts, ver. 4, 5. IV. Instructions given them how to keep fasts aright, ver. 6, 7. V. Precious promises made to those who do so keep fasts, ver. 8—12. VI. The like precious promises made to those that sanctify sabbaths aright, ver. 13, 14.

CRY aloud, spare not,
Lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
And shew my people their transgression,
And the house of Jacob their sins.
2 Yet they seek me daily,
And delight to know my ways,
As a nation that did righteousness,
And forsook not the ordinance of their God:
They ask of me the ordinances of justice;
They take delight in approaching to God.

When our Lord Jesus promised to send the Comforter, he added, "When he is come, he shall convince," *Jno.* xvi. 7, 8; for conviction must prepare for comfort, and must also separate between the precious and the vile, and mark out those to whom comfort doth not belong. God had appointed this prophet to comfort his people, *ch.* xl. 1; here he appoints him to convince them, and shew them their sins.

First. He must tell them how very bad they really were, ver. 1.

1. He must deal faithfully and plainly with them. Though they were called the people of God, and the house of Jacob, though they were an honourable title and character, by which they were interested in many glorious privileges, yet do not flatter them, but "shew them their transgressions and their sins;" be particular in telling them their faults, what sins are committed among them which they do not know of; nay, what sins are committed by them, which they do not acknowledge to be sins. Though in some things they are reformed, let them know that in other things they are still as bad as ever. "Shew them their transgressions and their sins;" that is, 'all their transgressions in their sins;' their sins, and all the aggravations of them, *Lev.* xvi. 21. Note, 1st. God sees sin in his people, in the house of Jacob, and is displeased with it. 2nd. They are oftentimes unapt and unwilling to see their own sins, and need to have them shewed them, and to be told, "Thus and thus thou hast done."

2. He must be vehement and in good earnest herein, must cry aloud, and not spare. Not spare them, not touch them with his reproofs as if he were afraid of hurting them, but search the wound to the bottom; lay it bare to the bone; not spare himself or his own pains, but cry as loud as he can. Though he spend his strength and waste his spirits; though he get their ill-will by it, and get himself into an ill name; yet he must not spare. He must lift up his voice like a trumpet, to make those hear of their faults that were apt to be deaf on that ear. He must give his reproofs in the most powerful and pressing manner possible, as one who desired to be heeded. The trumpet doth not give an uncertain sound, but, though loud and shrill, is intelligible. So must his alarms be, giving them warning of the fatal consequences of sin, *Eze.* xxxiii. 3.

Secondly. He must acknowledge how very good they seemed to be notwithstanding; ver. 2, "Yet they seek me daily." When the prophet went about to shew them their transgressions, they pleaded they could see no transgressions they were guilty of; for they were diligent and constant in attending on God's worship; and what more would he have of them? Now, 1. He owns the matter of fact to be true. As far as hypocrites do that which is good, they shall not be denied the praise of it; let them make their best of it. It is owned that they have a form of godliness. 1st. They go to church, and observe their hours of prayer; "They seek me daily;" they are very constant in their devotions, and never omit them, nor suffer any thing to put them by. 2nd. They love to hear good preaching; They "delight to know my ways," as Herod, who heard John gladly, and the stony ground, that received the seed of the word with joy; it is to them as a lovely song, *Eze.* xxxiii. 32. 3rd. They seem to take a great pleasure in the exercises of religion, and to be in their element when they are at their devotions; "They delight in approaching to God," not for his sake to whom they approach, but for the sake of some pleasing circumstance, the company, or the festival. 4th. They are inquisitive concerning their duty, and seem desirous only to know it, making no question but that then they should do it; "They ask of me the ordinances of justice," the rules of piety in the worship of God, the rules of equity in their dealings with men, both which are ordinances of justice. 5th. They appear to the eye of the world as if they made conscience of doing their duty. They are "as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God." Others took them for such, and they themselves took on them to be such; nothing lay open to view that was a contradiction to their profession, but they seemed to be such as they should be. Note, Men may go a great way towards heaven, and yet come short; nay, may go to hell with a good reputation. But, 2. He intimates that this was so far from being a cover or excuse for their sin, that really it was an aggravation of it. Shew them their sins which they go on in, notwithstanding their knowledge of good and evil, sin and duty, and the convictions of their consciences concerning it.

3 Wherefore have we fasted, *say they,* and thou seest not?
Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?
Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure,
And exact all your labours.
4 Behold, ye fast for strife and debate,
And to smite with the fist of wickedness:
Ye shall not fast as *ye do this* day,
To make your voice to be heard on high.
5 Is it such a fast that I have chosen?
A day for a man to afflict his soul?
Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush,
And to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him?* wilt thou call this a fast,
And an acceptable day to the LORD?
6 *Is* not this the fast that I have chosen?
To loose the bands of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
And to let the oppressed go free,
And that ye break every yoke?
7 *Is it* not to deal thy bread to the hungry, [house?
And that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy
When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him;
And that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Here we have,

First. The displeasure which these hypocrites conceived against God, for not accepting the services which they themselves had a mighty opinion of; ver. 3, "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?" Thus they went in the way of Cain, who was angry at God, and resented it as a mighty affront, that his offering was not accepted. Having gone about to put a cheat upon God by their external services, here they go about to pick a quarrel with God for not being pleased with their services, as if he had not done fairly or justly by them. Observe, 1. How they boast of themselves, and magnify their own performances. "We have fasted and afflicted our souls;" not only sought God daily, ver. 2, but have kept some certain times of more solemn devotion. Some think it refers to the yearly fast, which was called the day of atonement; others to their arbitrary, occasional fasts. Note, It is common for unhumbled hearts to be proud of their professions of humiliation, as the Pharisee, *Lu.* xviii. 12, "I fast twice in the week." 2. What they expected from their performances. They thought God should take great notice of, and own himself a debtor to them for, their services. Note, It is a common thing for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God which he hath promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment. 3. How heinously they take it that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them; that he had not presently delivered them out of their troubles, and advanced them to honour and prosperity. They charge God with injustice and partiality; and seem resolved to throw up their religion, and justify themselves in doing so with this, that they had found no profit in praying to God, *Job* xxi. 14, 15; *Mal.* iii. 14. Note. Reigning hypocrisy often breaks out in daring impiety and an open contempt and reproach of God and religion for that which the hypocrisy itself must bear all the blame of. Sinners reflect upon religion as a hard and melancholy service, and which there is nothing to be got by; when really it is long of themselves that it seems so to them, because they are not sincere in it.

Secondly. The true reason assigned why God did not accept their fastings, nor answer the prayers they made on their fast-days. It was because they did not fast aright; to God, even to him, *Zec.* vii. 5. They fasted indeed, but they persisted in their sins, and did not, as the Ninevites, turn every one from his evil way; but in the day of their fast, and notwithstanding the professed humiliations and covenants of that day, they went on to find pleasure; that

is, to do whatsoever seemed right in their own eyes, lawful or unlawful, *quicquid libet, licet*,—'making their inclinations their law;' though they seemed to afflict their souls, they still gratified their lusts as much as ever. 1. They were as covetous and unmerciful as ever. "Ye exact all your labours" from your servants, and will neither release them according to the law nor relax the rigour of their servitude: see *Jer.* xxxiv. 8, where we find this to be their fault before the captivity; and *Neh.* v. 2, where we find it to be no less their fault after their captivity, notwithstanding all their solemn fasts. 'Ye exact all your dues,' or debts, so some read it; are as rigorous and severe in extorting what you demand from those that are poor as ever you were, though it was at the close of the yearly fast that the release was proclaimed. 2. They were contentious and spiteful; ver. 4, "Behold, ye fast for strife and debate." When they proclaimed a fast to deprecate God's judgments, they pretended to search for those sins which provoked God to threaten them with his judgments; and, under that pretence, perhaps, particular persons were falsely accused, as Naboth in the day of Jezebel's fast, 1 *Kin.* xxi. 12. Or, the contending parties among them, upon those occasions, were bitter and severe in their reflections one upon another; one side crying out, It is long of you; and the other, It is long of you, that our deliverance is not wrought. Thus, instead of judging themselves, which is the proper work of a fast-day, they condemned one another. They fasted for strife; that is, with emulation, which should make the most plausible appearance on a fast-day, and humour the matter best. Nor was it only tongue quarrels that were fomented in the times of their fasting, but they came to blows too. "Ye smite with the fists of wickedness." The cruel taskmasters beat their servants, and the creditors their insolvent debtors, whom they delivered to the tormentors. They abused poor innocents with wicked hands. Now while they thus continued in sin, in those very sins which were directly contrary to the intention of a fasting day, 1st. God would not allow them the use of such solemnities. "Ye shall not fast" at all, if ye fast "as ye do this day, causing your voice to be heard on high," in the heat of your clamours one against another; or, in your devotions, which you perform so as to make them to be taken notice of for ostentation. Bring me no more of these empty, noisy, vain oblations, *ch.* i. 13. Note, Those are justly forbidden the honour of a profession of religion that will not submit to the power of it. 2nd. He would not accept of them in the use of them. "Ye shall not fast;" that is, it shall not be looked upon as a fast, nor shall the voice of your prayers on those days be heard on high in heaven. Note, Those that fast and pray, and yet go on in their wicked ways, do but mock God, and deceive themselves.

Thirdly. Plain instructions given concerning the true nature of a religious fast. In general a fast is intended, 1. For the honouring and pleasing of God. It must be such a performance as he hath chosen, ver. 5. It must be an acceptable day to the Lord, in the duties of which we must study to approve ourselves to him, and obtain his favour; else it is not a fast, else there is nothing done to any purpose. 2. For the humbling and abasing of ourselves. A fast is a day to afflict the soul; if it do not express a genuine sorrow for sin, and do not promote a real mortification of sin, it is not a fast. The law of the day of atonement was, that on that day they should afflict their souls, *Lev.* xvi. 29. That must be done on a fast-day which is a real affliction to the soul, as far as it is yet unregenerate and unsanctified, though a real pleasure and advantage to the soul, as far as it is itself. It concerns us therefore to inquire on a fast-day, what it is that will be acceptable to God, and afflictive to our corrupt nature, and tending to its mortification.

1st. We are here told negatively what is not the fast that God hath chosen, and which doth not amount to the afflicting of the soul. *First.* It is not enough to look demure, to put on a grave and melancholy aspect, "to bow down the head like a bulrush" that is withered and broken; as the hypocrites, that were "of a sad countenance, and disfigured their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast," *Mat.* vi. 16. Hanging down the head did indeed well enough become the publican, whose heart was truly humbled and broken for sin, and therefore, in token of that, "would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven," *Lu.* xviii. 13. But when it was only mimicked, (as here it was justly ridiculed,) it is but hanging down the head like a bulrush, which nobody regards, or takes any notice of. As the hypocrite's humiliations are but like the hanging down of a bulrush, so his elevations in his hopes are but like the flourishing of a bulrush, *Job* viii. 11, 12, which, "while it is yet in its greenness, withers before any other herb." *Secondly.* It is not enough to do penance to mortify the body a little, while the body of sin is untouched. It is not enough for a man "to spread sackcloth and ashes under him," which doth indeed give him some uneasiness for the present, but is soon forgotten when he returns to stretch himself upon his beds of ivory, *Am.* vi. 4. "Wilt thou call this a fast?" No, it is but the shadow and carcase of a fast. Wilt thou call this "an acceptable day to the Lord?" No; so far from being so, that the hypocrisy of it is an abomination to him. Note, The shows of religion, though they shew never so well in the eye of the world, will not be accepted of God without the substance of it.

2nd. We are here told positively what is the fast that God hath chosen; what that is which will recommend a fast day to the Divine acceptance, and what is indeed afflicting the soul; that is, crushing and subduing the corrupt nature. It is not 'afflicting the soul for a day,' (as some read it, ver. 5,) that will serve; no, it must be the business of our whole lives. It is here required,

First. That we be just to those with whom we have dealt hardly. The fast that God hath chosen consists in reforming our lives, and undoing what we have done amiss; ver. 6, "To loose the bands of wickedness," that is, the bands which we have wickedly tied, and by which others are bound out from their right, or bound down under severe usage. Those which perhaps were at first bands of justice, tying men to pay a due debt, yet, when the debt is exacted with rigour from those whom Providence hath reduced and emptied, they become bands of wickedness, and they must be loosed, or they will bring us into bonds of guilt, much more terrible. It is "to undo the heavy burthen," laid on the back of the poor servant, under which he is ready to sink. It is "to let the oppressed go free" from the oppression which makes his life bitter to him; let the prisoner for debt, that has nothing to pay, be discharged; let the vexatious action be let fall; let the servant, that is forcibly detained beyond the time of his servitude, be released; and thus break every yoke. Not only let go those that are wrongfully kept under the yoke, but break the yoke of slavery itself, that it may not serve again another time, nor any be made again to serve under it.

Secondly. That we be charitable to those that stand in need of charity, ver. 7. The particulars in the former verse may be taken as acts of charity; that we not only release those whom we have unjustly oppressed, that is justice, but that we contribute to the rescue and ransom of those that are oppressed by others, to the release of captives, and the payment of the debts of the poor; but those in this verse are plainly acts of charity. This, then, is the fast that God hath chosen, 1*st.* To provide food for those that want it; that is put first as the most necessary, and which the poor can but a little while live without. It is "to break thy bread to the hungry." Observe, It must be thy bread; that which is honestly got, not that which thou hast robbed others of; the bread which thou thyself hast occasion for, the bread of thine allowance. We must deny ourselves that we "may have to give to him that needeth." Thy bread which thou hast spared from thyself and thy family on the fast-day, if that, or the value of it, be not given to the poor, it is the miser's fast, which he makes a hand of; it is fasting for the world, not for God. It is "to break thy bread to the hungry." Not only to give them that which is already broken meat, but break bread on purpose for them; give them loaves, and do not put them off with scraps. 2*nd.* To provide lodging for those that want it. It is to take care of the poor that are cast out, that are forced from their dwellings, turned out of house and harbour; are cast out as rebels, so some critics render it; that are attainted, and whom therefore it is highly penal to protect, yet if they suffer unjustly, make no difficulty of sheltering them; do not only find out quarters for them, and pay for their lodging elsewhere, but, which is a greater act of kindness, bring them to thine own house, make them thine own guests. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers;" for, though thou mayest not (as some have done) thereby entertain angels, thou mayest entertain Christ himself, who will recompense it in the resurrection of the just. "I was a stranger, and ye took me in." 3*rd.* To provide clothing for those that want it; "When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him;" both to shelter him from the injuries of the weather, and to enable him to appear decently among his neighbours. Give him clothes to come to church in; and in these, and other instances, "hide not thyself from thine own flesh." Some understand it more strictly of thine own kindred and relations; if those of thine own house and family fall into decay, thou art worse than an infidel if thou dost not provide for them, 1 *Tim.* v. 8. Others more generally; all that partake of the human nature are to be looked upon as our own flesh; for have we not all one Father? And for this reason we must not hide ourselves from them, not contrive to be out of the way when a poor petitioner inquires for us; not look another way, when a moving object of charity and compassion presents itself. Let us remember they are flesh of our flesh, and therefore we ought to sympathize with them; and in doing good to them we really do good to our own flesh and spirit too at long run; for thus we lay up for ourselves a good foundation, a good bond, for the time to come.

8 Then shall thy light break forth as the morning,
And thine health shall spring forth speedily:
And thy righteousness shall go before thee;
The glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.
9 Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer;
Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I *am*.
If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke,
The putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity;
10 And *if* thou draw out thy soul to the hungry,
And satisfy the afflicted soul;
Then shall thy light rise in obscurity,
And thy darkness *be* as the noon day:
11 And the LORD shall guide thee continually,
And satisfy thy soul in drought,
And make fat thy bones: [of water,
And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring
Whose waters fail not. [places:
12 And *they that shall be* of thee shall build the old waste
Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations;
And thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach,
The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Here are precious promises for those to feast freely and cheerfully upon by faith, who keep the fasts that God has chosen. Let them know that God will make it up to them. Here is,

First. A farther account of the duty to be done, in order to our interest in these promises, ver. 9, 10. And here, as before, it is required that we both do justly and love mercy; that we "cease to do evil, and learn to do well." 1. We must abstain from all acts of violence and fraud. Those must be taken away from the midst of thee, from the midst of thy person; that is, out of thy heart, so some. Thou must not only refrain from the practice of injury, but mortify in thee all inclination and disposition towards it. Or, from the midst of thy people. Those in authority must not only not be oppressive themselves, but must do all they can to prevent and restrain it in all within their jurisdiction. They must not only break the yoke, ver. 6, but take away the yoke, that those who have been oppressed may never be re-enslaved, as they were, *Jer.* xxxiv. 10, 11. They must likewise forbear threatening, *Eph.* vi. 9, and take away the putting forth of the finger; which seems to have been then, as sometimes with us, a sign of displeasure, and the indication of a purpose to correct. Let not the finger be put forth, to point at those that are poor and in misery, and so to expose them to contempt. Such expressions of contumely as are provoking, and the products of ill nature, ought to be banished from all societies; and let them not speak vanity, flattery, or fraud, to one another, but let all conversation be governed by sincerity. And perhaps that dissimulation which is the bane of friendship is meant by the putting forth of the finger, as *Pr.* vi. 13; by touching with the finger; or, it is putting forth the finger with the ring on it, which was the badge of authority, and which therefore they produced when they spake iniquity, that is, gave unrighteous sentences. 2. We must abound in all acts of charity and beneficence. We must not only give alms according as the necessities of the poor require, but, 1st. We must give freely and cheerfully, and from a principle of charity. We must draw out our soul to the hungry, ver. 10. Not only draw out the money, and reach forth the hand, but do this from the heart, heartily, and without grudging; from a principle of compassion, and with a tender affection to such as thou seest to be in misery. Let the heart go along with the gift, for God loves a cheerful giver, and so doth a poor man too. When our Lord Jesus healed and fed the multitude, it was with a compassion on them. 2nd. We must give plentifully and largely, so as not to tantalize, but to satisfy the afflicted soul. Do not only fill the belly of the hungry, but gratify the desire of the afflicted, and, if it lies in your power, make them easy. What are we born for, and what have we our abilities of body, mind, and estate for, but to do all the good we can in this world with them? And the poor we have always with us.

Secondly. Here is a full account of the blessings and benefits which attend the performance of this duty. If a person, a family, a people, be thus disposed

to every thing that is good, let them know for their comfort that they shall find God their bountiful rewarder, and what they lay out in works of charity shall be abundantly made up to them.

1. God will surprise them with the return of mercy after great affliction, which shall be as welcome as the light of the morning after a long and dark night; ver. 8, "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning;" and, ver. 10, "Thy light shall rise in obscurity." Though thou hast been long buried alive, thou shalt recover thine eminency; long overwhelmed with grief, thou shalt again look pleasant as the dawning day. They that are cheerful in doing good, God will make them cheerful in enjoying good; and this also is a special gift of God, *Eccl.* ii. 24. They that have shewed mercy shall find mercy. Job, who in his prosperity had done a great deal of good, though he was reduced, yet God then raised him up friends that helped to set him up again, and his light rose in obscurity. And not only thy light which is sweet, but thy health too, or the healing of the wounds thou hast long complained of, shall spring forth speedily. All thy grievances shall be redressed, and thou shalt renew thy youth, and recover thy vigour. Those that have helped others out of trouble, God will help them when it is their turn.

2. God will put honour upon them. Good works shall be recompensed with a good name. This is included in that light which riseth out of obscurity. Though a man's extraction be mean, his family obscure, and he has no external advantages to gain him honour, yet, if he do good in his place, that will procure him respect and veneration, and his darkness shall by this means become as the noonday, that is, he shall become very eminent, and shine bright in his generation. See here, what is the surest way for a man to make himself illustrious; let him study to do good. He that would be the greatest of all, and best beloved, let him, by humility and industry, make himself a servant of all. "Thy righteousness shall" then "go before thee," that is, it shall introduce thee into the esteem of many, and make thee an interest; "Thy righteousness shall answer for thee," as Jacob saith, *Gen.* xxx. 33; that is, it shall silence reproaches; nay, it shall bespeak thee more praises than thy humility can be pleased with. He that "hath given to the poor, his righteousness endures for ever," that is, the honour of it, *Ps.* cxii. 9.

3. They shall always be safe under the Divine protection. "Thy righteousness shall go before thee," as the vanguard, to secure thee from enemies that charge thee in the front; and "the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward," the gathering host, to bring up those of thee that are weary, and are left behind, and to secure thee from the enemies that, like Amalek, fall upon thy rear. Observe, How good people are safe on all sides; look which way they will, behind them, before them, look back, look forward, they see themselves safe, and find themselves easy, and quiet from the fear of evil. And observe what it is that is their defence. It is their righteousness, and the glory of the Lord, that is, Christ, so some understand it; for it is by him that we are justified, and God is glorified. He it is that goes before us, and is the Captain of our salvation, as he is the Lord our righteousness. He it is that is our rearward, on whom alone we can depend for safety, when our sins pursue us, and are ready to take hold on us. Or, God himself, in his providence and grace, shall both go before thee, as thy guide to conduct thee and attend thee, as thy rearward to protect thee. And this shall be the reward of thy righteousness, and so shall be for the glory of the Lord as the rewarder of it.

4. God will be always nigh unto them to hear their prayers, ver. 9. As on the one hand, "he that shuts his ears to the cry of the poor shall himself cry, and God will not hear him," so, on the other hand, he that is liberal to the poor, his prayers shall come up with his alms for a memorial before God, as Cornelius' did, *Acts* x. 4. "Then shalt thou call" on thy fast-days, (which ought to be days of prayer,) "and the Lord shall answer," shall give thee the things thou callest to him for; "thou shalt cry," when thou art in any distress, or sudden fright, "and he shall say, Here I am," which is a very condescending expression of God's readiness to hear prayer. When God calls to us by his word, it becomes us to say, "Here we are; what saith our Lord unto his servants?" But that God should say to us, "Behold me, here I am," is strange. When we cry to him, as if he were at a distance, he will let us know that he is near, even at our right hand, nearer than we thought he was; "It is I, be not afraid." When danger is near, our Protector is nearer, a very present help; "Here I am," ready to give you what you want, and do for you what you desire. What have you to say to me? God is attentive to the prayers of the upright, *Ps.* cxxx. 2. No sooner do they call to him, but he answers, Ready, ready. Wherever they are praying, God saith, Here I am hearing; I am in the midst of you, nigh unto them in all things, *Deu.* iv. 7.

5. God will direct them in all difficult and doubtful cases; ver. 11, "The Lord shall guide thee continually." Whilst we are here in the wilderness of this world, we have need of continual direction from Heaven; for if at any time we be left to ourselves we shall certainly miss our way; and therefore it is to those who are good in God's sight, he gives that wisdom which in all cases is profitable to direct, and will be to them instead of eyes, *Eccl.* ii. 26. And his providence will make their way plain to them, both what is their duty and what will be most for their comfort.

6. God will give them abundance of satisfaction in their own minds. The world, as it is a wilderness in respect of wanderings, so that they need to be guided continually, so also in respect of wants, which makes it necessary that they have continual supplies; as Israel, in the wilderness, had not only the pillar of cloud to guide them continually, but manna, and water out of the rock, to satisfy their souls in drought, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, *Ps.* lxiii. 1. To a good man God gives not only wisdom and knowledge, but joy; he is satisfied in himself with the testimony of his conscience, and the assurances of God's favour. These will satisfy the soul, will put gladness into the heart, even in the drought of affliction. These will make fat the bones, and fill them with marrow; will give thee that pleasure which will be a support to thee, as the bones to the body, that joy of the Lord which will be thy strength. He shall give thy bones rest, so some read it; rest from pain and sickness, which they have laboured under, and been chastened with. So it agrees with that promise made to the merciful, *Ps.* xli. 1, 2, "The Lord shall make all his bed in his sickness." "Thou shalt be like a watered garden," so flourishing and fruitful in graces and comforts, "and like a spring of water," like a garden that has a spring of water in it, "whose waters fail not" either in droughts or frosts. The principle of holy love in those that are good shall be a well of living water, *Jno.* iv. 14; as a spring of water, though it is continually sending forth its streams, yet is always full, so the charitable man abounds in good, as he abounds in doing good, and is never the poorer for his liberality. "He that watereth shall himself be watered."

7. They and their families shall be public blessings. It is a good reward to those that are fruitful and useful, to be more so; and especially to have those who descend from them to be so too. This is here promised, ver. 12. They that now are of thee, thy princes and nobles, and great men, shall have such authority and influence as they never had. Or, those that hereafter shall be of thee, thy posterity, shall be serviceable to their generation, as thou art to thine; which completes the satisfaction of a good man as to this world, to think that those that come after him shall be doing good when he is gone. 1st. They shall re-edify cities that have been long in ruins; "shall build the old waste places," which had lain so long desolate, that the rebuilding of them was quite despaired of. This was fulfilled when the captives, after their return, repaired the cities of Judah, and dwelt in them, and many of those in Israel too, which had lain waste ever since the carrying away of the ten tribes. 2nd. They shall carry on and finish that good work which was begun long before, and shall be helped over the obstructions that had retarded the progress of it. They shall raise up to the top that building, the foundation of which was laid long since, and has been for many generations in the rearing. This was fulfilled when the building of the temple was revived, after it had stood still for many years, *Ezr.* v. 1. Or, they shall raise up foundations, which shall continue for many generations yet to come; they shall do that good which shall be of lasting consequence. 3rd. They shall have the blessing and praise of all about them; "Thou shalt be called," and celebrated as "the repairer of the breach," the breach made by the enemy in the wall of a besieged city, which whoso has the courage and dexterity to make up, or make good, gains great applause. Happy they who make up the breach at which virtue is running out, and judgments breaking in. Thou shalt be "the restorer of paths," safe and quiet paths, not only to travel in, but "to dwell in;" so safe and quiet, that people shall make no difficulty of building their houses by the roadside. The sum is, that if they keep such fasts as God hath chosen, he will settle them again in their former peace and prosperity, and there shall be none to make them afraid: see *Zec.* vii. 5, 9; viii. 3—5. And it teacheth us that those who do justly, and love mercy, shall have the comfort of it in this world.

13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath,
From doing thy pleasure on my holy day;
And call the sabbath a delight,
The holy of the LORD, honourable;
And shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways,
Nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own*
14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; [words:
And I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth,
And feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father:
For the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

Great stress was always laid upon the due observation of the sabbath day; and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captives in Babylon, because by keeping that day in honour of the Creator they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth: see *ch.* lvi. 1, 2, where keeping the sabbath is joined, as here, with keeping judgment and doing justice. Some indeed understand this of the day of atonement which they think is the fast spoken of in the former part of the chapter, and which is called a sabbath of rest, *Lev.* xxiii. 32; but as the fasts before spoken of seem to be those that were occasional, so this sabbath is doubtless the weekly sabbath, that great sign between God and his professing people; his appointing it, a sign of his favour to them, and their observing it, a sign of their obedience to him. Now observe here,

First. How the sabbath is to be sanctified, ver. 13; and, there remaining still a sabbatism for the people of God, this law of the sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord's day.

1. Nothing must be done that puts contempt upon the sabbath day, or looks like having mean thoughts of it, when God has so highly dignified it. We must turn away our foot from the sabbath, from trampling upon it, as profane atheistical people do, from travelling on that day; so some. Turn away our foot from doing our pleasure on that holy day; that is, from living at large, and taking a liberty to do what we please on sabbath days, without the control and restraint of conscience; or, from indulging ourselves in the pleasures of sense, in which the modern Jews wickedly place the sanctification of the sabbath, though it is as great a profanation of it as any thing. On sabbath days we must not do our own ways, that is, not follow our callings; not find our own pleasure, that is, not follow our sports and recreations. Nay, we must not speak our own words, not words that concern either our callings or our pleasures; we must not allow ourselves a liberty of speech on that day as on other days, for we must then mind God's ways, make religion the business of the day, must choose the things that please him, and speak his words, speak of Divine things as we sit in the house, and walk by the way. In all we say and do, we must put a difference between this day and other days.

2. Every thing must be done that puts an honour on the day, and is expressive of our high thoughts of it. We must call it a delight, not a task and a burthen; must delight ourselves in it, in the restraints it lays upon us, and the services it obligeth us to. We must be in our element when we are worshipping God, and in communion with him: "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" We must not only count it a delight, but call it so; must openly profess the complacency we take in the day and the duties of it; call it so to God in thanksgiving for it, and earnest desire of his grace, to enable us to do the work of the day in its day, because we delight in it; call it so to others, to invite them to come share in the pleasure of it; and we must call it so to ourselves, that we may not entertain the least thought of wishing the sabbath gone, that we may sell corn. We must call it the Lord's holy day, and honourable; call it holy, separated from common use, and devoted to God, and to his service; call it the holy of the Lord, the day which he hath sanctified to himself. Even in the Old Testament times, the sabbath was called the Lord's day, and therefore is fitly called so still; and for a farther reason, it is the Lord Christ's day, *Rev.* i. 10. It is holy, because it is the Lord's day; and upon both accounts it is honourable. It is a beauty of holiness that is upon it: and it is ancient, and its antiquity is its honour; and we must make it appear that we look upon it as honourable, by honouring him, that is, God, on that day. We then put honour upon the day, when we give honour to him that instituted it, and to whose honour it is dedicated.

Secondly. What the reward is of sabbath sanctification, ver. 14. If we thus "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy,"

1. We shall have the comfort it; the work will be its own wages. If we "call the sabbath a delight," then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord; he will more and more manifest himself to us, as the delightful subject of our thoughts and meditations, and the delightful object of our best affections. Note, The more pleasure we take in serving God, the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction, and shall have reason to say, "It is good to be here," good to draw near to God.

2. We shall have the honour of it: "I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth;" which notes not only great security, as that, *ch.* xxxiii. 16, "He shall dwell on high," but great dignity and advancement, Thou shalt

ride in state, shalt appear conspicuous, and the eyes of all thy neighbours shall be upon thee. It was said of Israel, when God led them triumphantly out of Egypt, that he "made them to ride on the high places of the earth," *Deu.* xxxii. 12, 13. Those that honour God and his sabbath, he will thus honour them. If God by his grace enable us to live above the world, and so to manage it, as not only not to be hindered by, but to be furthered and carried on by it, in our journey towards heaven, then he makes us to ride on the high places of the earth.

3. We shall have the profit of it: "I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father;" that is, with all the blessings of the covenant, and all the precious products of Canaan, which was a type of heaven, and which were the heritage of Jacob. Observe, the heritage of believers is what they shall not only be portioned with hereafter, but fed with now; fed with the hopes of it, and not flattered; fed with the earnests and foretastes of it; and they that are so fed have reason to say that they are well fed. And that we may depend upon it, it is added, "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." You may take God's word for it, for he cannot lie nor deceive. What his mouth hath spoken his hand will give, his hand will do; and not one iota or tittle of his good promise shall fall to the ground. Blessed, therefore, thrice blessed, is he that doth this, and lays hold on it, that keeps the sabbath from polluting it.

CHAPTER LIX.

In this chapter we have sin appearing exceeding sinful, and grace appearing exceeding gracious; and as what is here said of the sinner's sin, ver. 7, 8, is applied to the general corruption of mankind, *Rom.* iii. 15, so what is here said of a redeemer, ver. 20, is applied to Christ, *Rom.* xi. 26. I. It is here charged upon this people, that they had themselves stopped the current of God's favours to them, and the particular sins are instanced in, which kept good things from them, ver. 1—8. II. It is here charged upon them, that they had themselves procured the judgments of God upon them; and they are told both what the judgments were which they had brought upon their own heads, ver. 9—11, and what the sins were that provoked God to send those judgments, ver. 12—15. III. It is here promised that, notwithstanding this, God would work deliverance for them, purely for his own name's sake, ver. 16—19; and would reserve mercy in store for them, and entail it upon them, ver. 20, 21.

BEHOLD, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;
Neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: [God,
2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your
And your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will
3 For your hands are defiled with blood, [not hear.
And your fingers with iniquity; [perverseness.
Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered
4 None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth:
They trust in vanity, and speak lies;
They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity,
5 They hatch cockatrice' eggs,

PHRYGIAN BOA AND CERASTES.

And weave the spider's web:
He that eateth of their eggs dieth,
And that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper.
6 Their webs shall not become garments,
Neither shall they cover themselves with their works:
Their works *are* works of iniquity,
And the act of violence *is* in their hands.
7 Their feet run to evil,
And they make haste to shed innocent blood:
Their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity;
Wasting and destruction *are* in their paths.
8 The way of peace they know not;
And *there is* no judgment in their goings:
They have made them crooked paths:
Whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

The prophet here rectifies the mistake of those who had been quarrelling with God because they had not the deliverances wrought for them which they had been often fasting and praying for, *ch.* lviii. 3. Now here he shews,

First. That it was not owing to God. They had no reason to lay the fault upon him, that they were not saved out of the hands of their enemies. For, 1. He was still as able to help as ever; "His hand is not shortened," that is, his power is not at all lessened, straitened, or abridged, whether we consider the extent of his power or the efficacy of it. God can reach as far as ever, and with as strong a hand as ever. Note, The church's salvation comes from the hand of God, and that is not waxed weak, nor at all shortened. "Is the Lord's hand waxen short?" saith God to Moses, *Num.* xii. 23. No, it is not; he will not have it thought so. Neither length of time, nor strength of enemies, nor weakness of instruments, can shorten or straiten the power of God, with which it is "all one to save by many or by few." 2. He was still as ready and willing to help as ever, in answer to prayer. "His ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear." Though he has many prayers to hear and answer, and though he has been long hearing prayer, yet he is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. The prayer of the upright is as much his delight as ever it was; and the promises which are pleaded and put in suit and prayer are still Yea and Amen, inviolably sure. More is implied than is expressed; not only his ear is not heavy, but he is quick of hearing, even before they call he answers, *ch.* lxv. 24. If our prayers be not answered, and the salvation we wait for be not wrought for us, it is not because God is weary of hearing prayer, but because we are weary of praying; not because his ear is heavy when we speak to him, but because our ears are heavy when he speaks to us.

Secondly. That it was owing to themselves; they stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door. God was coming towards them in ways of mercy, and they hindered him; "Your iniquities have kept good things from you," *Jer.* v. 25.

1. See what mischief sin doth. 1st. It hinders God's mercies from coming down upon us; it is a partition wall, that separates between God and us. Notwithstanding the infinite distance that is between God and man by nature, there was a correspondence settled between them, till sin set them at variance, justly provoked God against man, and unjustly alienated man from God. Thus it separates between them and God. He is your God, yours in profession; and therefore there is so much the more malignity and mischievousness in sin, which separates between us and him. It hides his face from us, which notes great displeasure, *Deu.* xxxi. 17. It provokes him in anger to withdraw his gracious presence, to suspend the tokens of his favour, and the instances of his help. He hides his face, as refusing to be seen or spoken with. See here sin in its colours, sin exceeding sinful, withdrawing the creature from his allegiance to his Creator; and see sin in its consequence, sin exceeding hurtful, separating us from God, and so separating us not only from all good, but to all evil, *Deu.* xxix. 13, which is the very quintessence of the curse. 2nd. It hinders our prayers from coming up unto God; it provokes him to hide his face, that he will not hear, as he hath said, *ch.* i. 15. If we regard iniquity in our heart, if we indulge it, and allow ourselves in it, God will not hear our prayers, *Ps.* lxvi. 18. We cannot expect he should countenance us while we go on to affront him.

2. Now, to justify God in hiding his face from them, and proceeding in his controversy with them, the prophet shews very largely, in the following verses, how many and great their iniquities were, according to the charge given him, *ch.* lviii. 1, to shew God's people their transgressions; and it is a black bill of indictment that is here drawn up against them, consisting of many particulars, any one of which was enough to separate between them and a just and holy God. Let us endeavour to reduce these articles of impeachment to proper heads.

1st. We must begin with their thoughts, for there all sin begins, and thence it takes its rise. Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, ver. 7. Their imaginations are so, only evil continually; their projects and designs are so, they are continually contriving some mischief or other, how to compass the gratification of some base lust; ver. 4, "They conceive mischief" in their fancy, purpose, counsel, and resolution; thus the embryo receives its shape and life and then "they bring forth iniquity," put it in execution when it is ripened for it. Though it be in pain, perhaps, that the iniquity is brought forth, through the oppositions of providence, and the checks of their own consciences, yet when they have compassed their wicked purpose, they look upon it with as much pride and pleasure as if it were a man child born into the world. "Thus when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin," *Jas.* i. 15; this is called, ver. 5, "hatching the cockatrice' eggs, and weaving the spider's web." See how the thoughts and contrivances of wicked men are employed, and about what they set their wits on work. *First.* At the best it is about that which is foolish and frivolous. Their thoughts are vain, like weaving the spider's web, which the poor silly animal takes a great deal of pains about, and when all is done it is a weak insignificant thing, a reproach to the place where it is, and which the besom sweeps away in an instant. Such are the thoughts which worldly men entertain themselves with, building castles in the air, and pleasing themselves with imaginary satisfactions; like the spider, that takes hold with her hands very finely, *Pr.* xxx. 28, but cannot keep her hold. *Secondly.* Too often it is about that which is malicious and spiteful; "They hatch the eggs of the cockatrice," or adder, which are poisonous, and produce venomous creatures. Such are the thoughts of the wicked that delight in doing mischief. "He that eats of their eggs," that is, that has any dealing with them, "dieth," that is, he is in danger of having some mischief or other done him; "and that which is crushed" in order to be eaten of, or which begins to be hatched, and you promise yourself some useful fowl from it, it "breaks out into a viper," which it is at your peril if you meddle with it. Happy they that have least to do with such ill men. Even the spider's web they wove was with a spiteful design to catch flies in it, and make a prey of them; for, rather than not be doing mischief, they will play at small game.

2nd. Out of this abundance of wickedness in the heart their mouth speaks; and yet it doth not always speak out the wickedness that is within, but, for the more effectual compassing of the mischievous design, it is dissembled and covered with much fair speech; ver. 3, "Your lips have spoken lies;" and again, ver. 4, they speak lies, pretending kindness, where they intend the greatest mischief. Or, by slanders and false accusations, they blasted the credit and reputation of those they had a spite to, and so did them a real mischief unseen; and perhaps, by suborning witnesses against them, took from them their estates and lives. For a false tongue is sharp arrows and coals of juniper, and every thing that is mischievous. "Your tongue has muttered perverseness." When they could not for shame speak their malice against their neighbours aloud, or durst not, for fear of being disproved and put to confusion, they muttered it secretly. Backbiters are called whisperers.

3rd. Their actions were all of a piece with their thoughts and words. They were guilty of shedding innocent blood, a crime of the most heinous nature; "Your hands are defiled with blood," ver. 3. For blood is defiling, leaves an indelible stain of guilt upon the conscience, which nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it from; and this not by surprise, or when there was something of a force put upon them, ver. 7, their feet run to this evil, naturally and eagerly, and hurried on by the impetus of their malice and revenge; "They make haste to shed innocent blood," as if they were afraid of losing an opportunity to do a barbarous thing, *Pr.* i. 16; *Jer.* xxii. 17. "Wasting and destruction are in their paths." Wherever they go they carry mischief along with them; and the tendency of their way is to lay waste and destroy, nor do they care what

havock they make. Nor do they only thirst after blood; but with other iniquities are their fingers defiled, ver. 3. They wrong people in their estates, and make every thing their own that they can lay their hands on; "They trust in vanity," ver. 4, that is, they depend upon their arts of cozenage to enrich themselves with, which will prove vanity to them, and their deceiving others will but deceive themselves. Their work, which they take so much pains about, and have their hearts so much upon, are all works of iniquity. Their whole business is one continued course of oppressions and vexations, and the act of violence is in their hands, according to the arts of violence that are in their heads, and the thoughts of violence in their hearts.

4th. No methods are taken to redress these grievances, and reform these abuses; ver. 4, "None calleth for justice." None complains of the violation of the sacred laws of justice, nor seeks to right those that suffer wrong, or to get the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness, and those lewd practices which are the shame, and threaten to be the bane, of the nation. Note, When justice is not done, there is blame to be laid, not only upon the magistrates that should administer justice, but upon the people that should call for it. Private persons ought to contribute to the public good, by discovering secret wickedness, and giving those an opportunity to punish it that have it in the power of their hands; but it is ill with a state when princes rule ill, and the people love to have it so. Truth is opposed, and there is not any that pleadeth for it, nor any that has the conscience and courage to appear in defence of an honest cause, and confront a prosperous fraud and wrong. The way of peace is as little regarded as the way of truth. They know it not; that is, they never study the things that make for peace. No care is taken to prevent or punish the breakers of the peace, and to accommodate matters in difference among neighbours; they are utter strangers to every thing that looks quiet and peaceable, and affect that which is blustering and turbulent. "There is no judgment in their goings," that is, they have not any sense of justice in their dealings; it is a thing they make no account of at all, but can easily break through all its fences, if they stand in the way of their malicious covetous designs.

5th. In all this they act foolishly, very foolishly, and as much against their interest as against reason and equity. They that practise iniquity trust in vanity, which will certainly deceive them; ver. 4, "Their webs" which they weave with so much art and industry, "shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves," either for shelter or for ornament, "with their works," ver. 6. They may do hurt to others with their projects, but can never do any real service or kindness to themselves by them. There is nothing to be got by sin; and so it will appear, when profit and loss come to be compared. Those paths of iniquity are crooked paths, ver. 8, which will perplex them, but will never bring them to their journey's end. Whosoever goes therein, though they say they shall have peace, though they go on, deceive themselves; for they shall not know peace, as appears by the following verses.

9 Therefore is judgment far from us,
Neither doth justice overtake us:
We wait for light, but behold obscurity;
For brightness, *but* we walk in darkness.
10 We grope for the wall like the blind,
And we grope as if *we had* no eyes:
We stumble at noon day as in the night;
We are in desolate places as dead *men*.
11 We roar all like bears,
And mourn sore like doves:
We look for judgment, but *there is* none;
For salvation, *but* it is far off from us.
12 For our transgressions are multiplied before thee,
And our sins testify against us:
For our transgressions *are* with us;
And *as for* our iniquities, we know them;
13 In transgressing and lying against the LORD,
And departing away from our God,
Speaking oppression and revolt,
Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.
14 And judgment is turned away backward,
And justice standeth afar off:
For truth is fallen in the street,
And equity cannot enter.
15 Yea, truth faileth;
And he *that* departeth from evil maketh himself a prey:
And the LORD saw *it*,
And it displeased him that *there was* no judgment.

The scope of this paragraph is the same with that of the last, to shew that sin is the great mischief-maker; as it is that that keeps good things from us, so it is that that brings evil things upon us. But, as there it is spoken by the prophet in God's name to the people for their conviction and humiliation, and that God might be justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth, so here it seems to be spoken by the people to God, as an acknowledgment of that which was there told them, and an expression of their humble submission and subscription to the justice and equity of God's proceedings against them. Their uncircumcised hearts here seem to be humbled in some measure, and they are brought to confess,—the confession is at least extorted from them,—that God hath justly walked contrary to them, because they had walked contrary to him.

First. They acknowledge that God had contended with them, and had walked contrary to them. Their case was very deplorable, ver. 9—11. 1. They were in distress, trampled upon, and oppressed by their enemies; unjustly dealt with, and ruled with rigour, and God did not appear for them to plead their just and injured cause. "Judgment is far from us, neither doth justice overtake us." Though, as to our persecutors, we are sure we have right on our side, and they are the wrong-doers, yet we are not relieved, we are not righted, we have not done justice to one another, and therefore God suffers our enemies to deal thus unjustly with us, and we are as far as ever from being restored to our right, and recovering our property again. Oppression is near us, and "judgment is far from us;" our enemies are far from giving our case its due consideration, but still hurry us on with the violence of their oppressions, and "justice does not overtake us," to rescue us out of their hands. 2. Herein their expectations were sadly disappointed, which made their case the more sad. "We wait for light," as they that wait for the morning, "but behold obscurity;" we cannot discern the least dawning of the day of our deliverance; "we look for judgment, but there is none," ver. 11; neither God nor man appears for our succour. "We look for salvation," because God, we think, has promised it, and we have prayed for it with fasting. We looked for it as for brightness, "but it is far off from us," as far off as ever, for aught we can perceive, and still "we walk in darkness;" and the higher our expectations have been raised the sorer is the disappointment. 3. They were quite at a loss what to do to help themselves, and were at their wit's end; ver. 10, "We grope for the wall like the blind;" we see no way open for our relief, nor know which way to expect it, or what to do in order to it. If we shut our eyes against the light of Divine truth, it is just with God to hide from our eyes the things that belong to our peace; and, if we use not our eyes as we should, to let us be as if we had no eyes. They that will not see their duty shall not see their interest. They whom God hath given up to a judicial blindness are strangely infatuated; "they stumble at noonday as in the night;" they see not either those dangers or those advantages which all about them see. *Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat*,—'God infatuates those whom he means to destroy.' Those that love darkness rather than light, so shall their doom be. 4. They sunk into despair, and were quite overwhelmed with grief, the marks of which appeared in every man's countenance; they grew melancholy upon it, shunned conversation, and affected solitude. "We are in desolate places as dead men." The state of the Jews in Babylon is represented by dead and dry bones, *Eze.* xxxvii. 1, and the reddition of the comparison there, ver. 11, explains this text, "Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts." In this despair the sorrow and anguish of some was loud and noisy, "We roar like bears;" the sorrow of others was silent, and preyed more upon their spirits, "We mourn sore like doves," like doves of the valleys; we mourn both for our iniquities, *Eze.* vii. 16, and "for our calamities." Thus they own that "the hand of the Lord was gone out against them."

Secondly. They acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to contend with them; that he had done right, for they had done wickedly, ver. 12—15. 1. They owned that they had sinned, and that to this day they were in a great trespass, as Ezra speaks, *Ezr.* x. 7, "Our transgressions are with us," the guilt of them is upon us, the power of them prevails among us. We are not yet reformed, nor have we parted with our sins, though they have done us so much mischief; nay, "our transgressions are multiplied," they are more numerous, and more heinous than they have been formerly. Look which way we will, we cannot look off them; all places, all orders and degrees of men, are infected. The sense of our transgression is with us, as David said, "My sin is ever before me;" it is too plain to be denied or concealed, too bad to be excused or palliated. God is a witness to them; they are multiplied before thee, in thy sight, under thine eye. We are witnesses against ourselves; "As for our iniquities we know them," though they may have foolishly endeavoured to cover them; nay, they themselves are witnesses; our sins stare us in the face, and testify against us, so many have they been, and so deeply aggravated. 2. They own the great evil and malignity there is in sin, in their sin; it is "transgressing and lying against the Lord," ver. 13. The sins of those that profess themselves God's people, and bear his name, are, upon this account, worse than the sins of others, that, in transgressing, they "lie against the Lord;" that is, they falsely accuse him; they misrepresent and belie him, as if he had dealt hardly and unfairly with them; or they perfidiously break covenant with him, and falsify their most sacred and solemn engagements to him. That is lying against him; it is departing away from our God, to whom we are obliged as ours, and to whom we ought to cleave with purpose of heart. From him we have departed, as the rebellious subject from his allegiance to his rightful prince, and the adulterous wife from the guide of her youth, and the covenant of her God. 3. They own that there was a general decay of moral honesty; and it is not strange that those who were false to their God are never faithful to one another. They spoke oppression, declared openly for that, though it was a revolt from their God, and a revolt from truth, by the sacred bonds of which we should always be tied, and held fast. They "conceived and uttered words of falsehood." Many an ill thing is conceived in the mind, yet is prudently stifled there, and not suffered to go any farther; but these sinners were so impudent, so daring, that whatever wickedness they conceived they gave it an *imprimatur*,—'a sanction,' and made no difficulty of publishing it. To think an ill thing is bad, but to say it is much worse. Many a word of falsehood is uttered in haste, for want of consideration; but these were conceived and uttered, were uttered deliberately, and of *malice prepense*. They were words of falsehood, and yet they are said to be uttered from the heart; because, though they differed from the real sentiments of the heart, and therefore were words of falsehood, yet they agreed with the malice and wickedness of the heart, and were the natural language of that; it was a double heart, *Ps.* xii. 2. Those who by the grace of God kept themselves free from these enormous crimes yet put themselves into the confession of sin, because members of that nation which was generally thus corrupted. 4. They own that that was not done which might have been done to reform the land, and to amend what was amiss; ver. 14, "Judgment," that should go forward, and bear down the opposition that is made to it, that should run its course like a river, like a mighty stream, "is turned away backward" a contrary course. The administration of justice is become but an umbrage to the greatest injustice. "Judgment," that should check the proceedings of fraud and violence, "is driven back," and so they go on triumphantly. "Justice stands afar off," even from our courts of judicature, which are so crowded with the patrons of oppression, that "equity cannot enter," cannot have admission into the court, cannot be heard, or at least shall not be heeded. Equity enters not into the unrighteous decrees which they decree; *ch.* x. 1, "Truth is fallen in the street," and there she may lie, to be trampled upon by every foot of pride, and she has never a friend that will lend a hand to help her up; yea, truth faileth in common conversation, and in dealings between man and man, so that one knows not whom to believe, nor whom to trust. 5. They own that there was a prevailing enmity in men's minds to those that were good. He that doth evil goes unpunished, but "he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey" to those beasts of prey that were before described. It is crime enough with them for a man not to do as they do; and they treat him as an enemy that will not partake with them in their wickedness. 'He that departeth from evil is accounted mad,' so the margin reads it. Sober singularity is branded as folly; and he is thought next door to a madman that swims against the stream that runs so strong. 6. They own that all this could not but be very displeasing to the God of heaven. The evil was done in his sight; they knew very well, though they were not willing to acknowledge it, that "the Lord saw it;" though it was done secretly, and gilded over with specious pretences, yet it could not be concealed from his all-seeing eye. All the wicked-

ness that is in the world is naked and open before the eyes of God; and as he is of quicker eyes than not to see iniquity, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with the least approbation or allowance. He "saw it, and it displeased him;" though it was among his own professing people that he saw it, "it was evil in his eyes;" he saw the sinfulness of all this sin, and that which was most offensive to him was, that "there was no judgment," no reformation. Had he seen any signs of that, though the sin displeased him, he would soon have been reconciled to the sinners, upon their returning from their evil way. Then the sin of a nation becomes national, and brings public judgments, when it is not restrained by public justice.

16 And he saw that *there was* no man,
And wondered that *there was* no intercessor:
Therefore his arm brought salvation unto him;
And his righteousness, it sustained him.
17 For he put on righteousness as a breastplate,
And an helmet of salvation upon his head;
And he put on the garments of vengeance *for* clothing,
And was clad with zeal as a cloke.
18 According to *their* deeds, accordingly he will repay,
Fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies;
To the islands he will repay recompence.
19 So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west,
And his glory from the rising of the sun.
When the enemy shall come in like a flood,
The Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him.
20 And the Redeemer shall come to Zion,
And unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob,
saith the LORD.
21 As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the LORD;
My spirit that *is* upon thee,
And my words which I have put in thy mouth,
Shall not depart out of thy mouth,
Nor out of the mouth of thy seed,
Nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD,
From henceforth and for ever.

How sin abounded, we have read, to our great amazement, in the former part of the chapter; how grace doth much more abound, we read in these verses. And, as sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceeding sinful, so grace took occasion from the transgression of the commandment to appear more exceeding gracious. Observe,

First. Why God wrought salvation for this provoking people, notwithstanding their provocations. It was purely for his own name's sake; because there was nothing in them either to bring it about or to induce him to bring it about for them; no merit to deserve it, no might to effect it; he would do it himself, would be exalted in his own strength, for his own glory. 1. He took notice of their weakness and wickedness; "he saw that there was no man" that would do any thing for the support of the bleeding cause of religion and virtue among them; not a man that would execute judgment, *Jer.* v. 1; that would bestir himself in a work of reformation. Those that complained of the badness of the times yet had not zeal and courage enough to appear and act against it; there was a universal corruption of manners, and nothing done to stem the tide. Most were wicked, and those that were not so, yet were weak, and durst not attempt any thing in opposition to the wickedness of the wicked. "There was no intercessor;" either none to intercede with God, to stand in the gap, by prayer to turn away his wrath, (it would have pleased him to be thus met, and he wondered that he was not,) or rather, none to interpose for the support of justice and truth, that were trampled upon, and run down, ver. 14; no advocate to speak a good word for those that were made a prey of, because they kept their integrity, ver. 15. They complained God did not appear for them, *ch.* lviii. 3; but God, with much more reason, complains that they did nothing for themselves, intimating how ready he would have been to do them good, if he had found among them the least motions towards a reformation. 2. He engaged his own strength and righteousness for them. They shall be saved for all this. And,

1st. Because they have no strength of their own, nor any active men that will set to it in good earnest, to redress the grievances either of their iniquities or of their calamities, therefore his own arm shall bring salvation to him; that is, to his people, or to him whom he would raise up to be the deliverer, Christ the power of God and arm of the Lord, that man of his right hand whom he made strong for himself. The work of reformation,—that is the first and principal article of the salvation,—shall be wrought by the immediate influence of the Divine grace on men's consciences. Since magistrates and societies for reformation fail of doing their part,—one will not do justice, nor the other call for it,—God will let them know he can do it without them, when his time is come thus to prepare his people for mercy. And then the work of deliverance shall be wrought by the immediate operations of the Divine providence on men's affections and affairs. When God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, and brought his people out of Babylon, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, then his own arm, which is never shortened, brought salvation.

2nd. Because they have no righteousness of their own to merit these favours, and to which God might have an eye in working for them, therefore his own "righteousness it sustained him," and bore him out in it. Divine justice, which by their sins they had armed against them, through grace appears for them. Though they can expect no favour as due to them, yet he will be just to himself, to his own purpose, and promise, and covenant with his people; he will in righteousness punish the enemies of his people: see *Deu.* ix. 5, "Not for thy righteousness, but for the wickedness of these nations," they are driven out. In our redemption by Christ, since we had no righteousness of our own to produce, on which God might proceed in favour to us, he brought in a righteousness by the merit and mediation of his own Son; it is called "the righteousness which is of God by faith," *Phil.* iii. 9; and this righteousness sustained him, and bore him out in all his favours to us, notwithstanding our provocations. "He put on righteousness as a breastplate," securing his own honour as a breastplate doth the vitals, in all his proceedings, by the justice and equity of them; and then he put a "helmet of salvation upon his head." So sure is he to effect the salvation he intends, that he takes salvation itself for his helmet, which therefore must needs be impenetrable, and in which he appears very illustrious; formidable in the eyes of his enemies, and amiable in the eyes of his friends. When righteousness is his coat of arms, salvation is his crest. In allusion to this, among the pieces of a Christian's armour, we find "the breastplate of righteousness, and for a helmet the hope of salvation," *Eph.* vi. 14, 17; 1 *Thes.* v. 8; and it is called the armour of God, because he wore it first, and so fitted it for us.

3rd. Because they have no spirit or zeal to do any thing for themselves, God will "put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clad himself with zeal as a cloak;" that is, he will make his justice upon the enemies of his church and people, and his jealousy for his own glory and the honour of religion and virtue among men, to appear evident and conspicuous in the eye of the world; and in these he will shew himself great, as a man shews himself in his rich attire, or in the distinguishing habit of his office. If men be not zealous against sin, God will, and will take vengeance on it for all the injury it has done to his honour, and his people's welfare. And this was the business of Christ in the world, to take away sin, and be revenged on it.

Secondly. What the salvation is that shall be wrought out by the righteousness and strength of God himself.

1. There shall be a present temporal salvation wrought out for the Jews in Babylon, or elsewhere, in distress and captivity. This is promised, ver. 18, 19, as a type of something farther. When God's time is come, he will do his own work, though those fail that should forward it. It is here promised,

1st. That God will reckon with his enemies, and will render to them "according to their deeds;" to the enemies of his people abroad, that have oppressed them; to the enemies of justice and truth at home, that have oppressed them, for they also are God's enemies; and when the day of vengeance comes, he will deal with both as they have deserved; 'according to retributions,' so the word is; the law of retribution, *Rev.* xiii. 10; or, according to former retributions, as he has rendered to his enemies formerly, "accordingly he will" now "repay fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies." His fury shall not exceed the rules of justice, as men's fury commonly doth. Even "to the islands," that lie most remote, if they have appeared against him, "he will repay recompence;" for "his hand shall find out all his enemies," *Ps.* xxi. 8, and his arrows reach them. Though God's people have carried themselves so ill that they do not deserve to be delivered, yet his enemies carry themselves so much worse that they do deserve to be destroyed.

2nd. That whatever attempts the enemies of God's people may afterwards make upon them to disturb their peace, they shall be baffled, and brought to nought. "When the enemy shall come in like a flood," like a high spring-tide, or a land-flood, which threaten to bear down all before them without control, then "the Spirit of the Lord," by some secret, undiscerned power, "shall lift up a standard against him;" and so, as the margin reads it, 'put him to flight.' He that hath delivered will still deliver. When God's people are weak and helpless, and have no standard to lift up against the invading power, God will "give a banner to them that fear him," *Ps.* lx. 4; will, by his Spirit, lift up a standard, which will draw multitudes together to appear on the church's behalf. Some read it, 'He shall come,' (that is, the name of the Lord, and his glory before foreseen of the Messiah promised,) 'like a straight river, the Spirit of the Lord lifting him up for an ensign.' Christ, by the preaching of his Gospel, shall cover the earth with the knowledge of God, as with the waters of a flood; the Spirit of the Lord setting up Christ as a standard to the Gentiles, *ch.* xi. 10.

3rd. That all this should redound to the glory of God, and the advancement of religion in the world; ver. 19, "So shall they fear the name of the Lord and his glory," in all nations that lie eastward or westward. The deliverance of the Jews out of captivity, and the destruction brought on their oppressors, would awaken multitudes to inquire concerning the God of Israel, and induce them to serve and worship him, and enlist themselves under the standard which the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up. God's appearances for his church shall occasion the accession of many to it. This had its full accomplishment in gospel times, when many came from the east and west to fill up the places of the children of the kingdom that shall be cast out, when there were set up eastern and western churches, *Mat.* viii. 11.

2. There shall be a more glorious salvation wrought out by the Messiah in the fulness of time; which salvation all the prophets upon all occasions had in view. We have here the two great promises relating to that salvation:

1st. That the Son of God shall come to us to be our Redeemer; ver. 20, "The Redeemer shall come." It is applied to Christ, *Rom.* xi. 26, "There shall come the Deliverer." The coming of Christ as the Redeemer is the summary of all the promises both of the Old and New Testament; and this was the redemption in Jerusalem which the believing Jews looked for, *Lu.* ii. 38. Christ is our *goel*, our next kinsman, that redeems both the person and the estate of the poor debtor. Observe, *First.* The place where this Redeemer shall appear. He shall come to Zion, for there, on that holy hill, the Lord would set him up as his King, *Ps.* ii. 6. In Zion the chief corner-stone was to be laid, 1 *Pet.* ii. 6. He came to his temple there, *Mal.* iii. 1. There salvation was to be placed, *ch.* xlvi. 13; for thence the law was to go forth, *ch.* ii. 3. Zion was a type of the gospel church, for which the Redeemer acts in all his appearances. The Redeemer shall come for the sake of Zion, so the Seventy read it. *Secondly.* The persons that shall have the comfort of the Redeemer's coming, that shall then lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh. He shall come to those that turn from ungodliness in Jacob, to those that are in Jacob, to the praying seed of Jacob, in answer to their prayers; yet not to all that are in Jacob, that are within the pale of the visible church, but to those only that turn from transgression, that repent and reform, and forsake those sins which Christ came to redeem them from. The sinners in Zion will fare never the better for the Redeemer's coming to Zion if they go on still in their trespasses.

2nd. That the Spirit of God shall come to us to be our Sanctifier, ver. 21. In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us, a covenant of promises; and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant, that God will give and continue his word and Spirit to his church and people throughout all generations. God's giving the Spirit to them that ask him includes the giving them all good things, *Lu.* xi. 13; *Mat.* vii. 11. This covenant is here said to be made with them; that is, with them that turn from transgression; for they that cease to do evil shall be taught to do well. But the promise is made to a single person, "My Spirit that is upon thee;" being directed either, *First.* To Christ, as the head of the church, who received that he might give. The Spirit promised to the church was first upon him, and from his head that precious ointment descended to the skirts of his garments; and the word of the Gospel was first put into his mouth, for it began to be spoken by the Lord. And all believers are his seed, in whom he prolongs his days, *ch.* liii. 10. Or, *Secondly.* To the church; and so it is a promise of the

continuance and perpetuity of the church in the world to the end of time, parallel to those promises that the throne and seed of Christ shall endure for ever, *Ps.* lxxxix. 29, 36; xxii. 30. Observe, 1*st.* How the church shall be kept up. In a succession, as the world of mankind is kept up, by the seed, and the seed's seed; as one generation passeth away another generation shall come; "instead of the fathers shall be the children." 2*nd.* How long it shall be kept up. "From henceforth and for ever," always, "even unto the end of the world;" for, the world being left to stand for the sake of the church, we may be sure that as long as it doth stand, Christ will have a church in it, though not always visible. 3*rd.* By what means it shall be kept up. By the constant residence of the word and Spirit in it. (1.) The Spirit that was upon Christ shall always continue in the hearts of the faithful. There shall be some in every age on whom he shall work, and in whom he shall dwell; and thus the Comforter shall abide with the church for ever, *Jno.* xiv. 16. (2.) The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; that is, there shall be some in every age who, believing with the heart unto righteousness, shall with the tongue make confession unto salvation. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the church, for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language, and profess his holy religion. Observe, The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up; for the word in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding. But the Spirit doth his work by the word, and in concurrence with it; and whatever is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the Scriptures. On these foundations the church is built, stands firm, and shall stand for ever, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.

CHAPTER LX.

This whole chapter is all to the same purpose, all in the same strain. It is a part of God's covenant with his church, which is spoken of in the last verse of the foregoing chapter; and the blessings here promised are the fruits of the word and Spirit there promised. The long continuance of the church, even unto the utmost ages of time, was there promised; and here the large extent of the church, even unto the utmost regions of the earth; and both these tend to the honour of the Redeemer. It is here promised, I. That the church should be enlightened and shined upon, ver. 1, 2. II. That it should be enlarged, and great additions made to it, to join with it in the service of God, ver. 3—8. III. That the new converts should be greatly serviceable to the church, and to the interests of it, ver. 9—13. IV. That the church shall be in great honour and reputation among men, ver. 14—16. V. That it shall enjoy a profound peace and tranquillity, ver. 17, 18. VI. That the members of it being all righteous, the glory and joy of it shall be everlasting, ver. 19—22. Now this has some reference to the peaceable and prosperous condition which the Jews were sometimes in, after their return out of captivity into their own land; but it certainly looks farther, and was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, the enlargement of that kingdom by the bringing in of the Gentiles into it, and the spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ Jesus, with which it should be enriched; and all these earnests of eternal joy and glory.

ARISE, shine; for thy light is come,
And the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.
2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And gross darkness the people:
But the LORD shall arise upon thee,
And his glory shall be seen upon thee.
3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light,
And kings to the brightness of thy rising.
4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see:
All they gather themselves together, they come to thee:
Thy sons shall come from far,
And thy daughters shall be nursed at *thy* side.
5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together,
And thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; [thee,
Because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto
The forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.
6 The multitude of camels shall cover thee,
The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah;
All they from Sheba shall come:
They shall bring gold and incense;
And they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.
7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto
The rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: [thee,
They shall come up with acceptance on mine altar,
And I will glorify the house of my glory.
8 Who *are* these *that* fly as a cloud,
And as the doves to their windows?

It is here promised that the Gospel temple shall be very lightsome, and very large.

First. It shall be very lightsome; "Thy light is come." When the Jews returned out of captivity they had light and gladness, and joy and honour; they were then made to know the Lord, and to rejoice in his great gladness; and upon both accounts their light came. When the Redeemer came to Zion he brought light with him, he himself came to be a light. Now observe, 1. What this light is, and whence it springs. "The Lord shall arise upon thee," ver. 2; that is, the glory of the Lord, ver. 1, that shall be seen upon thee. God is the father and fountain of lights, and it is in his light that we shall see light. As far as we have the knowledge of God in us, and the favour of God towards us, our light is come. When God appears to us, and we have the comfort of his favour, then the glory of the Lord riseth upon us as the morning light. When he appears for us, and we have the credit of his favour, when he shews us some token for good, and proclaims his favour to us, then his glory is seen upon us, as it was upon Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire. When Christ arose as the Sun of righteousness, and in him the dayspring from on high visited us, then the glory of the Lord was seen upon us, the glory as of the firstbegotten of the Father. 2. What a foil there shall be to this light; "Darkness shall cover the earth." But though it be gross darkness, darkness that might be felt, like that of Egypt, that shall overspread the people, yet the church, like Goshen, shall have light at the same time. When the case of the nations that have not the Gospel shall be very melancholy, those dark corners of the earth being full of the habitations of cruelty to poor souls, the state of the church shall be very pleasant. 3. What is the duty which the rising of this light calls for; "Arise, shine." Not only receive this light, and, as the margin reads it, be enlightened by it, but reflect this light; arise and shine with rays borrowed from it. The children of light ought to shine as lights in the world. If God's glory be seen upon us to our honour we ought not only with our lips, but in our lives, to return the praise of it to his honour, *Mat.* v. 16; *Phil.* ii. 15.

Secondly. It shall be very large. When the Jews were settled again in their own land after their captivity, many of the people of the land joined themselves to them; but it doth not appear that there ever was any such numerous accession to them as would answer the fulness of this prophecy; and therefore we must conclude that this looks farther, to the bringing of the Gentiles into the gospel church: not their flocking to one particular place, though under that type it is here described, (there is no place now that is the centre of the church's unity,) but their flocking to Christ, and coming by faith, and hope, and holy love into that society, which is incorporated by the charter of his Gospel, and of the unity of which he only is the centre; that family which is named from him, *Eph.* iii. 15. And the gospel church is expressly called Zion and Jerusalem; and under that notion all believers are said to come to it, *Heb.* xii. 22; "Ye are come unto mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;" which serves for a key to this prophecy, *Eph.* ii. 19. Observe,

1. What shall invite such multitudes to the church. "They shall come to thy light, and to the brightness of thy rising," ver. 3. They shall be allured to join themselves to thee, 1st. By the light that shines upon thee; the light of the glorious Gospel, which the churches hold forth, and therefore are called golden candlesticks. This light, which discovers so much of God, and his good will to man, by which life and immortality are brought to light, this shall invite all the serious, well-affected part of mankind to come and join themselves to the church, that they may have the benefit of this light, to inform them concerning truth and duty. 2nd. By the light with which thou shinest. The purity and love of the primitive Christians, their heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, and patient sufferings, were the brightness of the church's rising, which drew many into it. The beauty of holiness was the powerful attractive by which Christ had a willing people brought to him in the day of his power, *Ps.* cx. 3.

2. What multitudes shall come to the church. Great numbers shall come; Gentiles, or "nations of them which are saved," as it is expressed with allusion to this, *Rev.* xxi. 24. Nations shall be discipled, *Mat.* xxviii. 19, and even kings, men of figure, power, and influence, shall be added to the church. They come from all parts; ver. 4, "Lift up thine eyes round about and see" them coming; "devout men out of every nation under heaven," *Acts* ii. 5. See how white the fields are already to the harvest, *Jno.* iv. 35. See them coming in a body, as one man, and with one consent; "They gather themselves together," that they may strengthen one another's hands, and encourage one another. Come, and let us go, *ch.* ii. 3. They come from the remotest parts; they come to thee from far, having heard the report of thee, as the Queen of Sheba; or seen thy star in the east, as the wise men, and they will not be discouraged by the length of the journey from coming to thee. There shall come some of both sexes; sons and daughters shall come in the most dutiful manner, as thy sons and thy daughters, resolved to be of thy family, to submit to the laws of thy family, and put themselves under the tuition of it. They shall come to be nursed at thy side; that is, to have their education with thee from their cradle. The church's children must be nursed at her side, not sent out to be nursed among strangers. There, where alone the sincere milk of the word is to be had, must the church's new-born babes be nursed, that they may grow thereby, 1 *Pet.* ii. 1, 2. They that would enjoy the dignities and privileges of Christ's family must submit to the discipline of it.

3. What they shall bring with them, and what advantage shall accrue to the church by their accession to it. They that are brought into the church by the grace of God will be sure to bring all they are worth in with them, which, with themselves, they will devote to the honour and service of God, and do good with in their places. 1st. The merchants shall write "holiness to the Lord" upon their merchandise and their hire, as *ch.* xxiii. 18; "The abundance of the sea," either the wealth that is fetched out of the sea, the fish, the pearls, or that which is imported by sea, it shall all be converted to thee, and to thy use. The wealth of the rich merchants shall be laid out in works of piety and charity. 2nd. The mighty men of the nations shall employ their might in the service of the church. "The forces," or troops, "of the Gentiles shall come unto thee," to guard thy coasts, strengthen thine interests, and, if occasion be, to fight thy battles. The forces of the Gentiles had often been against the church, but now they shall be for it; for as God, when he pleaseth, can, and when we please him will, make even our enemies to be at peace with us, *Pr.* xvi. 7, so, when Christ overcomes the strong man armed he divides his spoils, and makes that to serve his interests which had been used against them, *Lu.* xi. 22. 3rd. The wealth imported by land carriage, as well as that by sea, shall be made use of in the service of God and the church; ver. 6, the camels and dromedaries that bring gold and incense; gold, to make the golden altar of, and incense and sweet perfumes to burn upon it. They of Midian and Sheba shall bring the richest commodities of their country; not to trade with, but to honour God with; and not in small quantities, but camel loads of them. This was in part fulfilled when the wise men of the east, (perhaps some of the countries here mentioned,) drawn by the brightness of the star, came to Christ, and presented to him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, *Mat.* ii. 11. 4th. Great number of sacrifices shall be brought to God's altar, acceptable sacrifices; and though brought by Gentiles they shall find acceptance, ver. 7. Kedar was famous for flocks, and it is likely the fattest rams were those of Nebaioth; they shall come up with acceptance on God's altar. God must be served and honoured with what we have, according as he hath blessed us, and with the best we have. This was fulfilled when, by the decree of Darius, the governors beyond the rivers (perhaps of some of these countries) were ordered to furnish the temple at Jerusalem with "bullocks, rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven," *Ezr.* vi. 9. And it had a farther accomplishment, and we trust will have, in the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles to the church, which is called the sacrificing, or offering up of the Gentiles unto God, *Rom.* xv. 16. The flocks and rams are precious souls; for they are said to minister to the church, and to come up as living sacrifices, presenting themselves to God by a reasonable service on his altar, *Rom.* xii. 1.

4. How God shall be honoured by the increase of the church, and the accession of such numbers to it. 1st. They shall intend the honour of God's name

in it. When they bring their gold and incense it shall not be to shew the riches of their country, or to gain applause to themselves for piety and devotion, but to "shew forth the praises of the Lord," ver. 6. Our greatest services and gifts to the church are not acceptable farther than we have an eye to the glory of God in them. And this must be our business in our attendance on public ordinances, to give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; and therefore, as these here, we are called out of darkness into light that we should shew forth the praises of him that called us, 1 *Pet.* ii. 9. 2nd. God will advance the honour of his own name by it. So he hath said, ver. 7, "I will glorify the house of my glory." The church is the house of God's glory, where he manifests his glory to his people, and receives that homage by which they do honour to him; and it is for the glory of this house, and of him that keeps house there, both that the Gentiles shall bring their offerings to it, and that they shall be accepted therein.

5. How the church shall herself be affected with this increase of her numbers, ver. 5. 1st. She shall be in a transport of joy upon this account; Thou shalt see, and flow together, or flow to and fro, as in a pleasing toss about it, surprised at it, but extremely glad of it. 2nd. There shall be a mixture of fear with this joy; "Thine heart shall fear;" doubting whether it be lawful to go in to the uncircumcised, and eat with them. Peter was so possessed with this fear that he needed a vision and voice from heaven to help him over it, *Acts* x. 28. But, 3rd. When this fear is conquered, thy heart shall be enlarged in holy love; so enlarged that thou shalt have room in it for all the Gentile converts. Thou shalt not have such a narrow soul as thou hast had, nor affections so confined within the Jewish pale. When God intends the beauty and prosperity of his church he gives this largeness of heart, and an extensive charity. 4th. These converts flocking to the church shall be mightily admired; ver. 8, Who are these that fly as a cloud? Observe, *First.* How the conversion of souls is here described. It is flying to Christ, and to his church; for thither we are directed. It is flying like a cloud, though in great multitudes, so as to overspread the heavens, yet with great unanimity, all as one cloud. They shall come with speed, as a cloud flying on the wings of the wind; and come openly and in the view of all, their very enemies beholding them, *Rev.* xi. 12, and yet not able to hinder them. They shall fly as "doves to their windows," in great flights, many together; they fly on the wings of the harmless dove, that flies low, noting their innocency and humility. They fly to Christ, to the church, to the word and ordinances, as doves, by instinct, to their own windows, to their own home; thither they fly for refuge and shelter, when they are pursued by the birds of prey; and thither they fly for rest when they have been wandering, and are weary, as Noah's dove to the ark. *Secondly.* How the conversion of souls is here admired; it is spoken of both with wonder and pleasure. "Who are these?" We have reason to admire with wonder that so many flock to Christ; when we see them all together we shall admire whence they all came; and we have reason to admire with pleasure and affection those that flock to him. Who are these? How excellent, how amiable are they! What a pleasant sight is it to see poor souls hastening to Christ, with a full resolution to abide with him!

9 Surely the isles shall wait for me,
And the ships of Tarshish first,
To bring thy sons from far,
Their silver and their gold with them,
Unto the name of the LORD thy God, [thee.
And to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified
10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls,
And their kings shall minister unto thee:
For in my wrath I smote thee,
But in my favour have I had mercy on thee.
11 Therefore thy gates shall be open continually;
They shall not be shut day nor night;
That *men* may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles,
And *that* their kings *may be* brought.
12 For the nation and kingdom
That will not serve thee shall perish;
Yea, *those* nations shall be utterly wasted.
13 The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee,
The fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together,
To beautify the place of my sanctuary;
And I will make the place of my feet glorious.
14 The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come
bending unto thee;
And all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down
at the soles of thy feet;
And they shall call thee, The city of the LORD,
The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

The promises made to the church in the foregoing verses are here repeated, ratified, and enlarged upon; designed still for the comfort and encouragement of the Jews after their return out of captivity; but certainly looking farther to the enlargement and advancement of the gospel church, and the abundance of spiritual blessings with which it shall be enriched.

First. God will be very gracious and propitious to them. We must begin with that promise, because thence all the rest take rise. The sanctuary that was desolate then begins to be repaired, when God causeth his face to shine upon it, *Dan.* ix. 17. All the favour that the people of God find with men is owing to the light of God's countenance, and his favour to them, ver. 10. All shall now make court to thee, for "in my wrath I smote thee," while thou wast in captivity. And the sufferings of the church, especially by its corruptions, decays, and divisions, against which these promises here will be its relief, are sad tokens of God's displeasure; but now "in my favour have I had mercy on thee," and therefore have all this mercy in store for thee.

Secondly. Many shall be brought in to the church, even from far countries; ver. 9, "Surely the isles shall wait for me," shall welcome the Gospel, and shall attend God with their praises for it and their ready subjection to it. The ships of Tarshish, transport-ships, shall lie ready to carry members from far distant regions to the church, or, which is equivalent, to carry the ministers of the church to remote parts to preach the Gospel, and to bring in souls to join themselves to the Lord. Observe, 1. Who are brought; Thy sons, that is, such as are designed to be so, those "children of God that are scattered abroad," *Jno.* xi. 52. 2. What they shall bring with them. They live at such a distance that they cannot bring their flocks and their rams; but like those who lived remote from Jerusalem, when they came up to worship at the feast, because they could not bring their tithes in specie, turned it into money, they shall bring "their silver and their gold with them." Note, When we give up ourselves to God we must, with ourselves, give up all we have to him. If we honour him with our spirits we will honour him with our substance. 3. To whom they shall devote and dedicate themselves and all they are worth. To "the name of the Lord thy God," to God as the Lord of all, and the church's God and King, even to the Holy One of Israel, whom Israel worships as a Holy One, in the beauty of holiness, "because he hath glorified thee." Note, The honour God puts upon his church and people should not only engage us to honour them, but invite us to join ourselves to them; "We will go with you, for God is with you," *Zec.* viii. 23.

Thirdly. Those that come into the church shall be welcome; for so spacious is the holy city, that though, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, yet still there is room. "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually," ver. 11, not only because thou hast no reason to fear thine enemies, but because thou hast reason to expect thy friends. And it is usual with us to leave our doors open, or leave some to be ready to open them all night, if we look for a child or a guest to come in late. Note, Christ is always ready to entertain those that come to him, is never out of the way, nor can they ever come unseasonably. The gate of mercy is always open, night and day, or shall soon be opened to them that knock. Ministers, the door-keepers, must be always ready to admit those that offer themselves to the Lord. God not only keeps a good house in his church, but he keeps open house; that at any time, by the preaching of the word, in season and out of season, the forces of the Gentiles, and the kings or commanders of those forces, may be brought into the church. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates," and let such welcome guests as these come in.

Fourthly. All that are about the church shall be made, some way or other, serviceable to it. Though dominion is far from being founded in men's grace, it is founded in God's; and he that made the inferior creatures useful to man will make the nations of men useful to the church: the earth helped the woman; all things are for your sakes. So here, ver. 10, even the sons of strangers, that have neither knowledge of thee nor kindness for thee, that have always been aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, even they shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall in that and other things minister unto thee, and not think it any disparagement to them. This was fulfilled when the king of Persia and the governors of the provinces, by his order, were aiding and assisting Nehemiah in building the wall about Jerusalem. Rather than Jerusalem's walls shall lie still in ruins, the sons of the stranger shall be raised up to build them. Even those that do not belong to the church yet may be a protection to it. And the greatest of men should not think it below them to minister to the church, but rejoice that they are in a capacity and have a heart to do it any service; nay, it is the duty of all to do what they can in their places to advance the interest of God's kingdom among men. It is at their peril if they do not: for, ver. 12, "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." Not that they must perish by thy sword or thine anathemas, or as if this gave any countenance to the using of external force for the propagating of the Gospel, or as if men might be compelled by penalties and punishments to come into the church; by no means. But those who will not by faith submit to Jesus Christ, the king of the church, and serve him, they shall perish eternally, *Ps.* ii. 12. They that will not be subject to Christ's golden sceptre, to the government of his word and Spirit, that will not be brought under or kept in by the discipline of his family, shall be broken in pieces by his iron rod; "Bring them forth, and slay them before me," *Lu.* xix. 27. Nations of such shall be utterly and eternally wasted when Christ comes to take vengeance on those that obey not his Gospel, 2 *Thes.* i. 8.

Fifthly. There shall be abundance of beauty added to the ordinances of Divine worship, ver. 13. The glory of Lebanon, the strong and stately cedars that grow there, shall come unto thee, as of old to Solomon, when he built the temple, 2 *Chron.* ii. 16, and with them other timber, proper for the carved work thereof, which the enemy had broken down, *Ps.* lxxiv. 5, 6. The temple, the place of God's sanctuary, shall not only be rebuilt, but beautified; it is the place of his feet, where he rests and resides, *Eze.* xliii. 7. The ark is called his footstool, because it was under the mercy-seat, *Ps.* cxxxii. 7. This he will make glorious in the eyes of his people and of all their neighbours. The glory of the latter house, to which this refers, though in many instances inferior, yet was really greater than the glory of the former, because Christ came to that temple, *Mal.* iii. 1. It was likewise "adorned with goodly stones and gifts," *Lu.* xxi. 5, to which this promise may have some reference; yet so slightly did Christ speak of them there that we must suppose it to have its full accomplishment in the beauties of holiness, and the graces and comforts of the Spirit, with which gospel ordinances are adorned and enriched.

Sixthly. The church shall appear truly great and honourable, ver. 14. The people of the Jews, after their return out of captivity, by degrees became more considerable, and made a better figure than one would have expected, after they had been so much reduced, and than any of the other nations recovered that had been in like manner humbled by the Chaldeans. It is probable many of those who had oppressed them in Babylon, when they were themselves driven out by the Persians, made their court to the Jews for shelter and supply, and were willing to scrape acquaintance with them. It is farther fulfilled, when those that have been enemies to the church are wrought upon by the grace of God to see their error, and come and join themselves to it. "The sons of them that afflicted thee," if not they themselves, yet their children, shall truckle to thee, shall beg pardon for their folly, and beg an interest in thy favour, and admission into thy family, 1 *Sam.* ii. 36. A promise like this is made to the church of Philadelphia, *Rev.* iii. 9; and it is intended to be, 1. A mortification to the proud oppressors of the church, that have afflicted her and despised her, and took a pleasure in doing it. They shall be brought down, their spirits shall be broken, and their condition shall be so mean and miserable, that they shall be glad to be obliged to those whom they have most studied to disoblige. Note, Sooner or later God will pour contempt upon those that put contempt upon his people. 2. An exaltation to the poor oppressed ones of the church. And this is the honour that shall be done them,—they shall have an opportunity of doing good to those who have done evil to them, and saving those alive that have afflicted and despised them. It is a pleasure to a good man, and he accounts it an honour, to shew mercy to those with whom he has found no mercy. Yet this is not all; they shall not only become supplicants to thee for their own interest, but they shall give honour to thee, "They shall call thee the city of the Lord;" they shall at length be convinced that thou art a favourite

of heaven, and the particular care of the Divine providence. That city is truly great and honourable, it is strong, it is rich, it is safe, it is beautiful, it is the most desirable place that can be to live in, which is the city of the Lord, which he owns, in which he dwells, in which religion is uppermost. Such a one is Zion; it is the place which God hath chosen to put his name there; it is "the Zion of the Holy One of Israel," therefore we may be sure a holy city, else the Holy One of Israel would never be called the patron of it.

15 Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated,
So that no man went through *thee*,
I will make thee an eternal excellency,
A joy of many generations.
16 Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles,
And shalt suck the breast of kings:
And thou shalt know that I the LORD *am* thy Saviour
And thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.
17 For brass I will bring gold,
And for iron I will bring silver,
And for wood brass,
And for stones iron:
I will also make thy officers peace,
And thine exactors righteousness.
18 Violence shall no more be heard in thy land,
Wasting nor destruction within thy borders;
But thou shalt call thy walls Salvation,
And thy gates Praise.
19 The sun shall be no more thy light by day;
Neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee:
But the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light,
And thy God thy glory.
20 Thy sun shall no more go down;
Neither shall thy moon withdraw itself:
For the LORD shall be thine everlasting light,
And the days of thy mourning shall be ended.
21 Thy people also *shall be* all righteous:
They shall inherit the land for ever,
The branch of my planting,
The work of my hands, that I may be glorified.
22 A little one shall become a thousand,
And a small one a strong nation:
I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

The happy and glorious state of the church is here farther foretold, referring principally and ultimately to the Christian church, and the spiritual peace of that; but under the type of that little gleam of outward peace which the Jews sometimes enjoyed after their return out of captivity. This is here spoken of,

First. As compared with what it had been. This made her peace and honour the more pleasant, that her condition had been much otherwise.

1. She had been despised, but now she should be honoured, ver. 15, 16. Jerusalem had been forsaken and hated, abandoned by her friends, abhorred by her enemies; no man went through that desolate city, but declined it as a rueful spectacle; it was an astonishment and a hissing. But now it shall be made an eternal excellency, being reformed from idolatry, and having recovered the tokens of God's favour, and it shall be the joy of good people for many generations. Yet, considering how short Jerusalem's excellency was, and how short it came of the vast compass of this promise, we must look for the full accomplishment of it in the perpetual excellences of the gospel church, far exceeding those of the Old Testament church, and the glorious privileges and advantages of the Christian religion, which are indeed the joy of many generations. Two things are here spoken of as her excellency and joy, in opposition to her having been forsaken and hated: 1st. She shall find herself countenanced by her neighbours. The nations and their kings that are brought to embrace Christianity shall lay themselves out for the good of the church, and maintain its interests, with the tenderness and affection that the nurse shews to the child at her breast, ver. 16, "Thou shalt suck the milk of the Gentiles," not suck their blood, that is, not the spirit of the Gospel; thou shalt "suck the breast of kings," which shall be to thee as nursing fathers. 2nd. She shall find herself countenanced by her God; "Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer," shall know it by experience; for such a salvation, such a redemption shall be wrought out for thee, as plainly discovers itself to be the work of the Lord, the work of a mighty One, for it is a great salvation; of the Mighty One of Jacob, for it secures the welfare of all those that are Israelites indeed. They before knew the Lord to be their God; now they know him to be their Saviour, their Redeemer. Their Holy One now appears their Mighty One.

2. She had been impoverished, but now she shall be enriched, and every thing shall be changed for the better with her, ver. 17. When those who were raised out of the dust are set among princes, instead of brass money in their purses they have gold, and silver vessels in their houses instead of iron ones, and other improvements agreeable. So much shall the spiritual glory of the New Testament church exceed the external pomp and splendour of the Jewish economy, which had no glory in comparison with that which quite excels it, 2 *Cor.* iii. 10. When we had baptism in the room of circumcision, the Lord's supper in the room of the passover, and the gospel ministry in the room of a Levitical priesthood, we had gold instead of brass. Sin turned gold into brass, when Rehoboam made brazen shields, instead of the golden ones he had pawned; but God's favour, when that returns, will turn brass again into gold.

3. She had been oppressed by her own princes, which was sadly complained of, not only as her sin, but as her misery, *ch.* lix. 14; but now all the grievances of that kind shall be redressed, ver. 17. "I will make thine officers peace;" men of peace shall be made officers, and shall be indeed justices, not patrons of injustice, and justices of peace, not instruments of trouble and vexation. They shall be peace, that is, they shall sincerely seek thy welfare, and by their means thou shalt enjoy good. They shall be peace, for they shall be righteousness; and then the peace is as a river, when the righteousness is as the waves of the sea. Even exactors, whose business it is to demand the public tribute, though they be exact, must not be exacting, but must be just to the subject as well as to the prince; and, according to the instructions John Baptist gave to the publicans, must exact no more than is appointed them, *Lu.* iii. 13.

4. She had been insulted by her neighbours, invaded, spoiled, and plundered; but now it shall be so no more, ver. 18, "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land," neither the threats and triumphs of those that do violence, nor the outcries and complaints of those that suffer violence, shall again be heard, but every man shall peacefully enjoy his own. There shall be no wasting or destruction, either of persons or possessions, any where within thy borders; but thy walls shall be called salvation, they shall be safe and means of safety to thee, and thy gates shall be praise, praise to thee, every one shall commend thee for the good condition they are kept in, and praise to thy God, who strengthens the bars of thy gates, *Ps.* cxlvii. 13. When God's salvation is upon the walls, it is fit his praises should be in the gates, the places of concourse.

Secondly. As completed in what it shall be. It should seem that in the close of this chapter we are directed to look farther yet, as far forward as to the glory and happiness of heaven, under the type and figure of the flourishing state of the church on earth, which yet was never such as to come any thing near to what is here foretold; and divers of the images and expressions here made use of we find in the description of the New Jerusalem, *Rev.* xxi. 23, and xxii. 5. As the prophets sometimes insensibly pass from the blessings of the Jewish church to the spiritual blessings of the Christian church, which are eternal, so sometimes they rise from the church militant to the church triumphant, where, and where only, all the promised peace, and joy, and honour, will be in perfection.

1. God shall be all in all in the happiness here promised; so he is always to true believers, ver. 19. The sun and moon shall be no more thy light, that is, God's people, when they enjoy his favour and walk in the light of his countenance, make little account of sun and moon and other the lights of this world, but could walk comfortably in the light of the Lord, though they should withdraw their shining. In heaven there shall be no occasion for sun or moon, for it is "the inheritance of the saints in light," such light as will swallow up the light of the sun as easily as the sun doth that of a candle. Idolaters worshipped the sun and moon, which some have thought the most ancient and plausible idolatry; but those "shall be no more thy light," shall no more be idolised. But the Lord shall be to thee a constant light, both day and night; in the night of adversity as well as in the day of prosperity. Those that make God their only light shall have him their all-sufficient light, their sun and sield; "Thy God, thy glory." Note, God is the glory of those whose God he is, and will be so to eternity. It is their glory that they have him for their God, and they glory in it; it is to them instead of beauty. God's people are, upon this account, an honourable people, that they have an interest in God as theirs in covenant.

2. The happiness here promised shall know no change, period, or allay; ver. 20, "Thy sun shall no more go down," but it shall be eternal day, eternal sunshine with thee. That shall not be thy sun which is sometimes eclipsed, often clouded; and, let it shine never so bright, never so warm, will certainly set, and leave thee in the dark, in the cold, in a few hours; but he shall be a sun, a fountain of light to thee, who is himself the Father of all lights, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, *Jam.* i. 17. We read of the sun's standing still once, and not hasting to go down for the space of a day, and it was a glorious day, never was the like. But what was that to the day that shall never have a night? Or, if it had, it should be a light night, for "neither shall thy moon withdraw itself;" it shall never wane, shall never change, but be always at the full. The comforts and joy that are in heaven, the glories provided for the soul, as the light of the sun, and those prepared for the glorified body too, as the light of the moon, shall never know the least cessation or interruption; how should they, when the Lord shall himself be thine everlasting light—a light which never wastes, nor can ever be extinguished? "And the days of thy mourning shall be ended," so as never to return; for all tears shall be wiped away, and the fountains of them, sin and affliction, dried up, so that "sorrow and sighing shall flee away" for ever.

3. Those that are entitled to this happiness, being duly prepared and qualified for it, shall never be put out of the possession of it, ver. 21. "Thy people" that shall inhabit this new Jerusalem "shall be all righteous," all justified by the righteousness of the Messiah, all sanctified by his Spirit; all that people, that Jerusalem, must be righteous, must have that "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." They are all righteous; for we know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. There are no people on earth that are all righteous; there is a mixture of some bad in the best societies on this side heaven, but there are no mixtures there. They shall be all righteous, that is, they shall be entirely righteous; as there shall be none corrupt among them, so there shall be no corruption in them; the spirits of just men shall there be made perfect. And there shall be all the righteous together, that shall replenish the new Jerusalem; it is called "the congregation of the righteous," *Ps.* i. 5. And because they are "all righteous," therefore "they shall inherit the land for ever," for nothing but sin can turn them out of it. The perfection of the saints' holiness secures the perpetuity of their happiness.

4. The glory of the church shall redound to the honour of the church's God; They shall appear to be "the branch of my planting, the work of my hands," and I will own them as such. It was by the grace of God that they were designed to this happiness; they are the branch of his planting, or of his plantations. He broke them off from the wild olive, and grafted them into the good olive; transplanted them out of the field, when they were as tender branches, into his nursery; that, being now planted in his garden on earth, they might shortly be removed to his paradise in heaven. It was by his grace likewise, that they were prepared and fitted for this happiness; they are the work of his hands, *Eph.* ii. 10; are wrought to the self-same thing, 2 *Cor.* v. 5. It is a work of time, and, when it shall be finished, will appear a work of wonder; and God will be glorified, who begun it, and carried it on; for the Lord Jesus will then be admired in all them that believe. God will glorify himself in glorifying his chosen.

5. They will appear the more glorious, and God will be the more glorified in them, if we compare what they are with what they were; the happiness they are arrived to with the smallness of their beginnings; ver. 22, "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation." The captives that returned out of Babylon strangely multiplied, and became a strong nation. The Christian church was a little one, a very small one at first; the number of the names was once but one hundred and twenty; yet it became a thousand.

The stone cut out of the mountain without hands swelled so as to fill the earth. The triumphant church, and every glorified saint, will be a thousand out of a little one, a strong nation out of a small one. The grace and peace of the saints was at first like a grain of mustard seed; but it increaseth and multiplieth, and makes a little one to become a thousand, the weak to be as David. When they come to heaven, and look back upon the smallness of their beginning, they will wonder how they got thither; and so wonderful is all this promise that it needed the ratification with which it is closed, "I the Lord will hasten it in his time." All that is here said relating to the Jewish and Christian church, to the militant and triumphant church, and to every particular believer. 1st. It may seem too difficult to be brought about, and therefore may be despaired of; but the God of almighty power hath undertaken it. I the Lord will do it, who can do it, and who have determined to do it. It will be done by him whose power is irresistible and his purposes unalterable. 2nd. It may seem to be delayed and put off so long that we are out of hopes of it; but, as the Lord will do it, so he will hasten it; will do it with all convenient speed. Though much time may be passed before it is done, no time shall be lost; he will hasten it in its time, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful. He will do it in the time appointed by his wisdom, though not in the time prescribed by our folly. And this is really hastening it; for, though it seem to tarry, it doth not tarry, if it come in God's time; for we are sure that that is the best time, which he that believes will patiently wait for.

CHAPTER LXI.

In this chapter, I. We are sure to find the grace of Christ, published by himself to a lost world, in the everlasting Gospel, under the type and figure of Isaiah's prophecy, which was to foretell the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, ver. 1—3. II. We think we find the glories of the church of Christ, its spiritual glories, described under the type and figure of the Jews' prosperity after their return out of their captivity. 1. It is promised that the decays of the church shall be repaired, ver. 4; 2. That those from without shall be made serviceable to the church, ver. 5; 3. That the church shall be a royal priesthood, maintained by the riches of the Gentiles, ver. 6; 4. That she shall have honour and joy, in lieu of all her shame and sorrow, ver. 7; 5. That her affairs shall prosper, ver. 8; 6. That posterity shall enjoy these blessings, ver. 9; 7. That righteousness and salvation shall be the eternal matter of the church's rejoicing and thanksgiving, ver. 10, 11. If the Jewish church was ever thus blessed, much more shall the Christian church be so, and all that belong to it.

THE Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me;
Because the LORD hath anointed me
To preach good tidings unto the meek;
He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound;
2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all that mourn;
3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,
To give unto them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
That they might be called trees of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.

He that is the best expositor of Scripture has, no doubt, given us the best exposition of these verses, even our Lord Jesus himself, who read this in the synagogue at Nazareth, (perhaps it was the lesson for the day,) and applied it entirely to himself, saying, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," *Lu.* iv. 17, 18, 21. And the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth in opening of this text were admired by all that heard them. As Isaiah was authorized and directed to proclaim liberty to the Jews in Babylon, so was Christ God's messenger, to publish a more joyful jubilee to a lost world. And here we are told,

First. How he was fitted and qualified for this work. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," ver. 1. The prophets had the Spirit of God moving them at times, both instructing them what to say and exciting them to say it; but Christ had the Spirit always resting on him without measure; but to the same intent that the prophets had, as a spirit of counsel and a spirit of courage, *ch.* xi. 1—3. When he entered upon the execution of his prophetical office, the Spirit, as a dove, descended upon him, *Mat.* iii. 16. This Spirit which was upon him he communicated to those whom he sent to proclaim the same glad tidings, saying to them, when he gave them their commission, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," thereby ratifying it.

Secondly. How he was appointed and ordained to it. The Spirit of God is upon me, because the Lord God has anointed me. What service God called him to he furnished him for; therefore gave him his Spirit, because he had, by a solemn and sacred unction, set him apart to this great office, as kings and priests were of old destined to their offices by anointing. Hence the Redeemer was called the Messiah, the Christ, because he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. "He hath sent me." Our Lord Jesus did not go unsent, he had a commission from him that is the fountain of power; the Father sent him, and gave him commandment. This is a great satisfaction to us, that whatever Christ said he had a warrant from heaven for. His doctrine was not his, but his that sent him.

Thirdly. What the work was to which he was appointed and ordained.

1. He was to be a preacher, was to execute the office of a prophet. So well pleased was he with the good will God shewed towards men through him, that he would himself be the preacher of it; that an honour might thereby be put upon the ministry of the Gospel, and the faith of the saints might be confirmed and encouraged. He must "preach good tidings" (so Gospel signifies) "to the meek," to the penitent, and humble, and poor in spirit; to them the tidings of a Redeemer will be indeed good tidings, pure Gospel, faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation. The poor are commonly best disposed to receive the Gospel, *Jas.* ii. 5; and then it is likely to profit us when it is received with meekness, as it ought to be. To such Christ preached good tidings, when he said, "Blessed are the meek."

2. He was to be a healer; was sent "to bind up the broken-hearted;" as pained limbs are rolled to give them ease, as broken bones and bleeding wounds are bound up, that they may knit and close again. Those whose hearts are broken for sin, that are truly humbled under the sense of guilt, and dread of wrath, are furnished in the Gospel of Christ with that which will make them easy, and silence their fears. Those only who have experienced the pains of a penitential contrition may expect the pleasure of Divine cordials and consolations.

3. He was to be a deliverer. He was sent as a prophet to preach, as a priest to heal, and as a king to issue out proclamations; and those of two kinds: 1st. Proclamations of peace to his friends. He shall "proclaim liberty to the captives," (as Cyrus did to the Jews in captivity,) "and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Whereas by the guilt of sin we are bound over to the justice of God, are his lawful captives, sold for sin till payment be made of that great debt, Christ lets us know that he has made satisfaction to Divine justice for that debt, that his satisfaction is accepted; and if we will plead that, and depend upon it, and make over ourselves and all we have to him, in a grateful sense of the kindness he hath done us, we may by faith sue out our pardon, and take the comfort of it; there is, and shall be no condemnation to us. And whereas by the dominion of sin in us we are bound under the power of Satan, sold under sin, Christ lets us know that he hath conquered Satan; hath destroyed him that had the power of death, and his works, and provided for us grace sufficient, to enable us to shake off the yoke of sin, and to loose ourselves from those bands of our neck. The Son is ready by his Spirit to make us free, and then shall we be free indeed; not only discharged from the miseries of captivity, but advanced to all the immunities and dignities of citizens. This is the Gospel proclamation, and it is like the blowing of the jubilee trumpet, which proclaimed the great year of release, *Lev.* xxv. 9, 40; in allusion to which it is here called "the acceptable year of the Lord," the time of our acceptance with God, which is the original of our liberties. Or, it is called the year of the Lord, because it publisheth his free grace to his own glory; and an acceptable year, because it brings glad tidings to us, and what cannot but be very acceptable to those who know the capacities and necessities of their own souls. 2nd. Proclamations of war against his enemies. Christ proclaims "the day of vengeance of our God;" the vengeance he takes, *First.* On sin and Satan, death and hell, and all the powers of darkness, that were to be destroyed, in order to our deliverance. These Christ triumphed over in his cross, having spoiled and weakened them, shamed them, and made a show of them openly, and therein took vengeance on them for all the injury they had done, both to God and man, *Col.* ii. 15. *Secondly.* On those of the children of men that stand it out against those fair offers. They shall not only be left as they deserve in their captivity, but be dealt with as enemies. We have the Gospel summed up, *Mar.* xvi. 16, where that part of it, "He that believeth shall be saved," proclaims "the acceptable year of the Lord," to those that will accept of it; but the other part, "He that believes not shall be damned," proclaims "the day of vengeance of our God," that vengeance which he will take of those that "obey not the Gospel of Jesus Christ," 2 *Thes.* i. 8.

4. He was to be a comforter; and so he is a preacher, healer, and deliverer. He is sent "to comfort all that mourn," and, mourning, seek to him, and not to the world for comfort. Christ not only provides comfort for them, and proclaims it, but he applies it to them; he doth by his Spirit comfort them. There is enough in him to comfort all that mourn, whatever their sore or sorrow is; but this comfort is sure to them that mourn in Zion, that is, that sorrow after a godly sort, according to God, for his residence is in Zion; that mourn because of Zion's calamities and desolations, and mingle their tears by a holy sympathy with those of all God's suffering people, though they themselves are not in trouble; such tears God has a bottle for, *Ps.* lvi. 8, such mourners he has comfort in store for. As blessings out of Zion are spiritual blessings, so mourners in Zion are holy mourners; such as carry their sorrows to the throne of grace, (for in Zion was the mercy-seat,) and pour them out, as Hannah did, before the Lord. To such as these Christ hath appointed by his Gospel, and will give by his Spirit, ver. 3, those consolations which will not only support them under their sorrows, but turn them into songs of praise. He will give them, 1st. "Beauty for ashes;" whereas they lay in ashes, as was usual in times of great mourning, they shall not only be raised out of their dust, but made to look pleasant. Note, The holy cheerfulness of Christians is their beauty, and a great ornament to their profession. Here is an elegant paronomasia in the original, he will give them *pheer*,—'beauty,' for *epher*,—'ashes;' he will turn their sorrow into joy as quickly and as easily as you can transpose a letter, for he speaks and it is done. 2nd. The "oil of joy," which makes the face to shine, instead of mourning, which disfigures the countenance, and makes it unlovely. This oil of joy the saints have from that oil of gladness with which Christ himself was anointed above his fellows, *Heb.* i. 9. 3rd. "The garments of praise," such beautiful garments as were worn on thanksgiving days, instead of the spirit of heaviness, dimness, or contraction; open joys for secret mournings; the spirit of heaviness they keep to themselves. Zion's mourners weep in secret; but the joy they are recompensed with, they are clothed with, as with a garment, in the eye of others. Observe, Where God gives the oil of joy, he gives the garment of praise. Those comforts which come from God dispose the heart to, and enlarge the heart in, thanksgivings to God. Whatever we have the joy of, God must have the praise and glory of.

5. He was to be a planter; for the church is God's husbandry. Therefore he will do all this for his people, will cure their wounds, release them out of bondage, and comfort them in their sorrows, "that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord;" that they might be so, and be acknowledged to be so; that they may be ornaments to God's vineyard, and may be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, as the branches of God's planting, *ch.* lx. 21. All that Christ doth for us is to make us God's people, and some way serviceable to him, as living trees, planted in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God. And all this "that he may be glorified;" that is, that we may be brought to glorify him by a sincere devotion, and an exemplary conversation; for "herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit;" and that others also may take occasion from God's favour shining on his people, and his grace shining in them, to praise him; and that he might be for ever glorified in his saints.

4 And they shall build the old wastes,
They shall raise up the former desolations,
And they shall repair the waste cities,
The desolations of many generations.
5 And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks,
And the sons of the alien *shall be* your plowmen and your vinedressers.
6 But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD:
Men shall call you the Ministers of our God:

Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles,
And in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.
7 For your shame *ye shall have* double;
And *for* confusion they shall rejoice in their portion:
Therefore in their land they shall possess the double:
Everlasting joy shall be unto them.
8 For I the LORD love judgment,
I hate robbery for burnt offering;
And I will direct their work in truth,
And I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
9 And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles,
And their offspring among the people;
All that see them shall acknowledge them,
That they *are* the seed *which* the LORD hath blessed.

Promises are here made to the Jews now returned out of captivity, and settled again in their own land, which are to be extended to the gospel church, and all believers, who through grace are delivered out of spiritual thraldom; for they are capable of being spiritually applied.

First. It is promised that their houses shall be rebuilt, ver. 4; that their cities should be raised out of the ruins in which they had long lain, and should be fitted up for their use again. "They shall build the old wastes;" that is, the old wastes shall be built, the waste cities shall be repaired, the former desolations, even "the desolations of many generations," which it was feared would never be repaired, shall be raised up. The setting up of Christianity in the world repaired the decays of natural religion, and raised up those desolations both of piety and honesty which had been for many generations the reproach of mankind. An unsanctified soul is like a city that is broken down, and has no walls, like a house in ruins; but by the power of Christ's Gospel and grace it is repaired, it is put in order again, and fitted to be a habitation of God through the Spirit. And they shall do this, they that are released out of captivity; for we are brought out of the house of bondage, that we may serve God both in building up ourselves to his glory and helping to build up his church on earth.

Secondly. They that were so lately servants themselves, working for their oppressors, and lying at their mercy, shall now have servants to do their work for them, and be at their command; not of their brethren, they are all the Lord's freemen, but of the strangers, and the sons of the alien, who shall keep their sheep, till their ground, and dress their gardens, the ancient employments of Abel, Cain, and Adam. "Strangers shall feed your flocks," ver. 5. When by the grace of God we attain to a holy indifferency as to all the affairs of this world, buying as though we possessed not, when, though our hands are employed about them, our hearts are not entangled with them, but reserved entire for God and his service, then the sons of the alien are our ploughmen and vinedressers.

Thirdly. They shall not only be released out of their captivity, but highly preferred, and honourably employed, ver. 6. While the strangers are keeping your flocks, you shall be keeping the charge of the sanctuary; instead of being slaves to your taskmasters, "you shall be named the priests of the Lord," a high and holy calling. Priests were princes' peers, and in Hebrew were called by the same name. You shall be the ministers of our God, as the Levites were. Note, Those whom God sets at liberty he sets to work. He delivers them out of the hands of their enemies that they may serve him, *Lu.* i. 74, 75; *Ps.* cxvi. 16. But his service is perfect freedom; nay, it is the greatest honour. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he took them to be to him a kingdom of priests, *Ex.* xix. 5. And the gospel church is a royal priesthood, 1 *Pet.* ii. 9. All believers are made to our God kings and priests; and they ought to carry themselves so in their devotions, and in their whole conversation, with Holiness to the Lord written upon their foreheads, that men may call them the priests of the Lord.

Fourthly. The wealth and honour of the Gentile converts shall redound to the benefit and credit of the church, ver. 6. The Gentiles shall be brought into the church, those that were strangers shall become fellow-citizens with the saints; and with themselves they shall bring all they have, to be devoted to the glory of God, and used in his service; and the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall have the advantage of it. It will be a great strengthening and quickening, as well as a comfort and encouragement, to all good Christians, to see the Gentiles serving the interests of God's kingdom. 1. They "shall eat the riches of the Gentiles;" not which they have themselves seized by violence, but which is fairly and honourably presented to them, as gifts brought to the altar, which the priests and their families lived comfortably upon. It is not said, Ye shall hoard the riches of the Gentiles, and treasure it, but eat it; for there is nothing better in riches than to use them, and to do good with them. 2. They shall boast themselves in their glory. Whatever was the honour of the Gentile converts before their conversion, their nobility, estates, learning, virtue, or places of trust and power, it shall all turn to the reputation of the church to which they have joined themselves; and whatever is their glory after their conversion, their holy zeal, and strictness of conversation, their usefulness, their patient suffering, and all the instances of that blessed change which Divine grace hath made in them, shall be very much for the glory of God, and therefore all good men shall glory in it.

Fifthly. They shall have abundance of comfort and satisfaction in their own bosoms, ver. 7. The Jews no doubt had so, after their return. They were in a new world, and now knew how to value liberty and property, the pleasures of which were continually fresh and blooming. And much more do all those rejoice whom Christ hath brought into the glorious liberty of God's children, especially when the privileges of their adoption shall be completed in the resurrection of the body. 1. "They shall rejoice in their portion." They shall not only have their own again, but (which is a farther gift of God) they shall have the comfort of it, and a heart to rejoice in it, *Eccl.* iii. 13. Though the houses of the returned Jews, as well as their temple, be much inferior to what they were before the captivity, yet they shall be well pleased with them, and thankful for them. It is a portion in their land; their own land, the holy land, Immanuel's land; and therefore they shall rejoice in it, having so lately known what it was to be strangers in a strange land. They that have God and heaven for their portion have reason to say they have a worthy portion, and to rejoice in it. 2. "Everlasting joy shall be unto them;" that is, a joyful state of their people, which shall last long, much longer than the captivity had lasted. Yet that joy of the Jewish nation was so much alloyed, so often interrupted, and so soon brought to an end, that we must look for the accomplishment of this promise in the spiritual joy which believers have in God, and the eternal joy they hope for in heaven. 3. This shall be a double recompence to them, and more than double, for all the reproach and vexation they have lain under in the land of their captivity; For your shame you shall have double honour, and in your land you shall possess double wealth to what you lost; the blessing of God upon it, and the comfort you shall have in it, shall make it an abundant reparation for all the damages you have received. You shall not only be owned as God's sons, but as his firstborn, *Ex.* iv. 22, and therefore entitled to a double portion. As the miseries of their captivity were so great, that in them they are said to have received double for all their sins, *ch.* xl. 2, so the joys of their return shall be so great, that in them they shall receive double for all their shame. The former is applicable to the fulness of Christ's satisfaction, in which God received double for all our sins; the latter to the fulness of heaven's joys, in which we shall receive more than double for all our services and sufferings. Job's case illustrates this; when God turned again his captivity, he gave him twice as much as he had before.

Sixthly. God will be their faithful guide, and a God in covenant with them; ver. 8, "I will direct their work in truth." God, by his providence, will order their affairs for the best, according to the word of his truth. He will guide them in the ways of true prosperity, by the rules of true policy; he will by his grace direct the works of good people in the right way, the true way, that leads to happiness; he will direct them to be done in sincerity, and then they are pleasing to him. God desires truth in the inward part; and if we do our works in truth he will make an everlasting covenant with us; for to those that walk before him, and are upright, he will certainly be a God all-sufficient. Now, as a reason both for this and of the foregoing promise, that God will recompense to them double for their shame, those words come in in the former part of the verse, "I the Lord love judgment." He loves that judgment should be done among men, both between magistrates and subjects, and between neighbour and neighbour, and therefore he hates all injustice. And when wrongs are done to his people, by their oppressors and persecutors, he is displeased with them, not only because they are done to his people, but because they are wrongs, and against the eternal rules of equity. But if men do not do justice, he loves to do judgment himself, in righting them that suffer wrong, and punishing them that do it. God pleads his people's injured cause, not only because he is jealous for them, but because he is jealous for justice. To illustrate this it is added, that he hates robbery for burnt offerings. He hates injustice even in his own people, that honour him with what they have in their burnt offerings; much more doth he hate it when it is against his own people. If he hates robbery when it is for burnt offerings to himself, much more when it is for burnt offerings to idols, and when not only his people are robbed of their estates, but he is robbed of his offerings. It is a truth much to the honour of God, that ritual services will never atone for the violation of moral precepts, nor will it justify any man's robbery to say, it was for burnt offerings, or *Corban*, it is a gift. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice;" to do justly and love mercy better than thousands of rams; nay, that robbery is most hateful to God of all other which is covered with this pretence, for it makes the righteous God to be the patron of unrighteousness. Some make this a reason of the rejection of the Jews upon the bringing in of the Gentiles, ver. 6; because they were so corrupt in their morals, and while they tithed mint and cummin made nothing of judgment and mercy, *Mat.* xxiii. 23, whereas God loves judgment, and insists upon that; and he hates both robbery for burnt offerings and burnt offerings for robbery too, as that of the Pharisees, who made long prayers, that they might the more plausibly devour widows' houses. Others read these words thus, 'I hate rapine by iniquity,' that is, the spoil which the enemies of God's people had unjustly made of them; this God hated, and therefore would reckon with them for it.

Seventhly. God will entail a blessing upon their posterity after them, ver. 9. Their seed, that is, the children of these persons themselves, that are now the blessed of the Lord, or their successors in profession, the church's seed, shall be "accounted to the Lord for a generation," *Ps.* xxii. 30. 1. They shall signalize themselves, and make their neighbours to take notice of them. They "shall be known among the Gentiles;" shall distinguish themselves by the gravity, seriousness, humility, and cheerfulness of their conversation, especially by that brotherly love by which all men shall know them to be Christ's disciples; and, they thus distinguishing themselves, God shall dignify them by making them the blessings of their age, and instruments of his glory; and by giving them remarkable tokens of his favour, which shall make them eminent, and gain them respect from all about them. Let the children of godly parents love in such a manner as that they may be known to be so, that all who observe them may see in them the fruits of a good education, and an answer to the prayers that were put up for them; and then they may expect that God will make them known, by the fulfilling of that promise to them, that the generation of the upright shall be blessed. 2. God shall have the glory of this, for every one shall attribute it to the blessing of God. All that see them shall see so much of the grace of God in them, and his favour towards them, that they shall acknowledge them to be the seed which the Lord hath blessed, and doth bless, for it includes both. See what it is to be blessed of God. Whatever good appears in any, it must be taken notice of as the fruit of God's blessing; and he must be glorified in it.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
My soul shall be joyful in my God;
For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation,
He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments,
And as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.
11 For as the earth bringeth forth her bud,
And as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth;
So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
To spring forth before all the nations.

Some make this the song of joy and praise to be sung by the prophet in the name of Jerusalem, congratulating the happy change of her circumstances in the accomplishment of the foregoing promises. Others make it to be spoken by Christ, in the name of the New Testament church, triumphing in gospel grace. We may take in both, the former a type of the latter. We are here taught to rejoice with holy joy, to God's honour,

First. In the beginning of this good work, the clothing of the church with righteousness and salvation, ver. 10. Upon this account, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord." Those that rejoice in God have cause to rejoice greatly; and we need not fear running into an extreme in the greatness of our joy, when we

make God the gladness of our joy. The first gospel song begins like this, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," *Lu.* i. 46, 47. There is just matter for this joy, and all the reason in the world it should terminate in God; for salvation and righteousness are wrought out and brought in, and the church is clothed with it. The salvation God wrought for the Jews, and that righteousness of his in which he appeared for them, and that reformation which appeared among them, made them look as glorious in the eyes of all wise men as if they had been clothed in robes of state, or nuptial garments. Christ hath clothed his church with an eternal salvation, and that is truly great, by clothing it with the righteousness both of justification and sanctification. The clean linen is the righteousness of saints, *Rev.* xix. 8. Observe how these two are put together. Those, and those only, shall be clothed with the garments of salvation hereafter that are covered with the robe of righteousness now. And those garments are rich and splendid clothing, like the priestly garments, (for so the word signifies,) with which the bridegroom decks himself; the brightness of the sun itself is compared to them, *Ps.* xix. 5. He is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber completely dressed. Such is the beauty of God's grace in those that are clothed with the robe of righteousness, that by the righteousness of Christ are recommended to God's favour, and by the sanctification of the Spirit have God's image renewed upon them. They are decked as a bride to be espoused to God, and taken into covenant with him; they are decked as a priest to be employed for God, and taken into communion with him.

Secondly. In the progress and continuance of this good work, ver. 11. It is not like a day of triumph, which is glorious for the present, but is soon over; no, the righteousness and salvation with which the church is clothed are durable clothing; so they are said to be, *ch.* xxiii. 18. The church, when she is pleasing herself with the righteousness and salvation that Jesus Christ has clothed her with, rejoiceth to think that these inestimable blessings shall both spring for future ages and spread to distant regions. 1. They shall spring forth for ages to come, as the fruits of the earth, which are produced every year from generation to generation; as the earth, even that which lies common, brings forth her bud, the tender grass at the return of the year, and as the garden enclosed causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth in their season, so duly, so constantly, so powerfully, and with such advantage to mankind, "will the Lord God cause righteousness and praise to spring forth," by virtue of the covenant of grace, as that by virtue of the covenant of providence. See what the promised blessings are, righteousness and praise; for they that are clothed with righteousness shew forth the praises of him that clothed them. These shall spring forth under the influence of the dew of Divine grace. Though it may sometimes be winter with the church, when those blessings seem to wither, and do not appear, yet the root of them is fixed. A spring-time will come when, through the reviving beams of the approaching Sun of righteousness, they shall flourish again. 2. They shall spread far, and spring forth before all the nations; the great salvation shall be published and proclaimed to all the world, and the ends of the earth shall see it.

CHAPTER LXII.

The business of prophets was both to preach and pray. In this chapter, I. The prophet determines to apply himself closely and constantly to this business, ver. 1. II. God appoints him, and others of his prophets, to continue to do so, for the encouragement of his people during the delays of their deliverance, ver. 6, 7. III. The promises are here repeated and ratified of the great things God would do for his church; for the Jews after their return out of captivity, and for the Christian church when it shall be set up in the world. 1. The church shall be made honourable in the eyes of the world, ver. 2; 2. It shall appear to be very dear to God, precious and honourable in his sight, ver. 3—5; 3. It shall enjoy great plenty, ver. 8, 9; 4. It shall be released out of captivity, and grow up again into a considerable nation, particularly owned and favoured by heaven, ver. 10—12.

FOR Zion's sake will I not hold my peace,
And for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
Until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness,
And the salvation thereof as a lamp *that* burneth.
2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness,
And all kings thy glory:
And thou shalt be called by a new name,
Which the mouth of the LORD shall name. [LORD,
3 Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the
And a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.
4 Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken;
Neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate.
But thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah,
And thy land Beulah: [married.
For the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be
5 For *as* a young man marrieth a virgin,
So shall thy sons marry thee:
And *as* the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride,
So shall thy God rejoice over thee.

The prophet here tells us,

First. What he will do for the church. A prophet, as he is a seer so he is a spokesman. This prophet here resolves to perform that office faithfully, ver. 1. He will not hold his peace, he will not rest; he will mind his business, will take pains, and never desire to take his ease; and herein he was a type of Christ, who was indefatigable in executing the office of a prophet, and made it his meat and drink till he had finished his work. Observe here, 1. What the prophet's resolution is: He will not hold his peace, he will continue instant in preaching; will not only faithfully deliver, but frequently repeat, the messages he hath received from the Lord. If people receive not the precepts and promises at first, he will inculcate them, and give them line upon line; and he will continue instant in prayer; he will never hold his peace at the throne of grace till he has prevailed with God for the mercies promised. He will give himself to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, as Christ's ministers must, *Acts* vi. 4, must labour frequently in both, and never be weary of this well-doing. The business of ministers is to speak from God to his people, and to God for his people; and in neither of these must they be silent. 2. What is the principle of this resolution: For Zion's sake, and for Jerusalem's; not for the sake of any private interest of his own, but for the church's sake, because he has an affection and concern for Zion, and it lies near his heart. Whatever becomes of his own house and family, he desires to see the good of Jerusalem, and resolves to seek it all the days of his life, *Ps.* cxxii. 8, 9; cxxviii. 5. It is God's Zion, and his Jerusalem, and it is therefore dear to him, because it is so to God, and because God's glory is interested in its prosperity. 3. How long he resolves to continue this importunity: Till the promise of the church's righteousness and salvation, which was in the foregoing chapter, be accomplished. Isaiah will not himself live to see the release of the captives out of Babylon, much less the bringing in of the Gospel, in which grace reigns through righteousness unto life and salvation; yet he will not hold his peace till these be accomplished, even the utmost of them, because his prophecies will continue speaking of these things; and there shall, in every age, be a remnant that shall continue to pray for them, as successors to him, till the promises be performed, and so the prayers answered that were grounded upon them. Then the church's righteousness and salvation will go forth as brightness, and as a lamp that burneth, so plainly that it will carry its own evidence along with it. It will bring honour and comfort to the church, which will hereupon both look pleasant and appear illustrious; and it will bring instruction and direction to the world, a light not only to the eyes, but to the feet, and to the paths of those who before sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

Secondly. What God will do for the church. The prophet can but pray and preach, but God will confirm the word, and answer the prayers.

1. The church shall be greatly admired. When that righteousness which is her salvation, her praise, and her glory, shall be brought forth, the Gentiles shall see it. The tidings of it shall be carried to the Gentiles, and a tender of it made them. They may so see this righteousness as to share in it, if it be not their own fault. Even kings shall see, and be in love with the glory of thy righteousness, ver. 2; shall overlook the glory of their own courts and kingdoms, and look at, and look after, the spiritual glory of the church, as that which excelleth.

2. She shall be truly admirable. Great names make men considerable in the world, and great respects are paid them thereupon. Now it is agreed, that *honor est in honorante*,—'the honour is to be valued or not, according as the person is that doth the honour.' God is the fountain of honour, and from him the church's honour comes. "Thou shalt be called by a new name," a pleasant name, such as thou wast never called by before; no, not in the day of thy greatest prosperity, and the reverse of that which thou wast called by in the day of thine affliction; thou shalt have a new character, be advanced to a new dignity, and those about thee shall have new thoughts of thee. This seems to be alluded to in that promise, *Rev.* ii. 17, of the "white stone, and in the stone a new name," and that, *Rev.* iii. 12, of "the name of the city of my God, and my new name." It is a name "which the mouth of the Lord shall name," who we are sure miscalls nothing, and who will oblige others to call her by the name he hath given her; for his judgment is according to truth, and all shall concur with it sooner or later. Two names God shall give her:

1st. He shall call her his crown; ver. 3, "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord;" not on his head, as adding any real honour or power to him, as crowns do to those that are crowned with them, but in his hand. He is pleased to account them, and shew them forth, as a glory and beauty to him. When he took them to be his people, it was that they might be unto him "for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory," *Jer.* xiii. 11. "Thou shalt be a crown of glory, and a royal diadem," through the hand, the good hand, of thy God upon thee; he shall make thee so, for he shall be to thee a crown of glory, *ch.* xxviii. 5. Thou shalt be so in his hand, that is, under his protection. He that shall put glory upon thee shall create a defence upon all that glory, so that the flowers of thy crown shall never be withered, nor its jewels lost.

2nd. He shall call her his spouse, ver. 4, 5. This is a yet greater honour, especially considering what a forlorn condition she had been in. *First.* Her case had been very melancholy. She was called forsaken, and her land desolate during the captivity, like a woman reproachfully divorced, or left a disconsolate widow. Such was the state of religion in the world before the preaching of the Gospel; it was in a manner forsaken, and desolate; a thing that no man looked after, or had any real concern for. *Secondly.* It should now be very pleasant; for God would return in mercy to her. Instead of those two names of reproach, she shall be called by two honourable names. 1*st.* She shall be called Hephzibah, which signifies, 'my delight is in her;' it was the name of Hezekiah's queen, that was Manasseh's mother, 2 *Kin.* xxi. 1; a proper name for a wife, who ought to be her husband's delight, *Pr.* v. 19. And here it is the church's Maker that is her husband; "the Lord delighteth in thee." God, by his grace, hath wrought that in his church which makes her his delight, she being refined and reformed, and brought home to him; and then by his providence he doth that for her which makes it appear that she is his delight, and that he delights to do her good. 2*nd.* She shall be called Beulah, which signifies, 'married;' whereas she had been desolate, a condition opposed to that of the married wife, *ch.* liv. 1. "Thy land shall be married," that is, it shall become fruitful again, and be replenished. Though she has long been barren, she shall again be peopled; shall again be made to keep house, and to be "a joyful mother of children," *Ps.* cxiii. 9. She shall be married; for, (1.) Her sons shall heartily espouse the land of their nativity, and the interests of it, which they had for a long time neglected, as despairing ever to have any comfortable enjoyment of it. Thy sons shall marry thee, that is, they shall live with thee, and take delight in thee. When they were in Babylon, they seemed to have espoused that land, for they were appointed to settle, and to seek the peace of it, *Jer.* xxix. 5—7; but now they shall again marry their own land, "as a young man marrieth a virgin" that he takes great delight in, is extremely fond of, and is likely to have many children by. It bodes well to a land when its own natives and inhabitants are pleased with it, prefer it before other lands; when its princes marry their country, and resolve to take their lot with it. (2.) Which is much better: her God shall betroth her to himself in righteousness, *Hos.* ii. 19, 20. He will take pleasure in his church; "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride," is pleased with his relation to her, and her affection to him, "so shall thy God rejoice over thee," shall rest in his love to thee, *Zeph.* iii. 17; shall take pleasure in thee, *Ps.* cxlvii. 10; and shall delight to do thee good with his whole heart, and his whole soul, *Jer.* xxxii. 41. This is very applicable to the love Christ has for his church, and the complacency he takes in it, which appears so bright in Solomon's Song, and which will be complete in heaven.

6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem,
Which shall never hold their peace day nor night:
Ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,
7 And give him no rest, [the earth
Till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in

8 The LORD hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength,
Surely I will no more give thy corn
To be meat for thine enemies;
And the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine,
For the which thou hast laboured:
9 But they that have gathered it shall eat it,
And praise the LORD;
And they that have brought it together shall drink it
In the courts of my holiness.

Two things are here promised to Jerusalem:

First. Plenty of the means of grace; abundance of good preaching and good praying, ver. 6, 7. And this shews the method God takes when he designs mercy for a people; he first brings them to their duty, and pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and then brings salvation to them. Provision is here made,

1. That ministers may do their duty as watchmen. It is here spoken of as a token for good, as a step towards farther mercy, and an earnest of it, that, in order to what he designed for them, he would set watchmen on their walls, that should never hold their peace. Note, 1st. Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls; for it is as a city besieged, whose concern it is to have sentinels on the walls, to take notice, and give notice, of the motions of the enemy. It is necessary that, as watchmen, they be wakeful and faithful, and willing to endure hardness. 2nd. They are concerned to stand upon their guard day and night. They must never be off their watch as long as those for whose souls they watch are not out of danger. 3rd. They must never hold their peace; they must take all opportunities to give warning to sinners, in season, out of season; and must never betray the cause of Christ by a treacherous or cowardly silence. They must never hold their peace at the throne of grace; must pray and not faint; as Moses lifted up his hands, and kept them steady, till Israel had got the victory over Amalek, *Ex.* xvii. 10, 11.

2. That people may do their duty, as those that make mention of the Lord. Let not them keep silence neither, let not them think it enough that their watchmen pray for them, but let them pray for themselves; and all little enough to meet the approaching mercy with due solemnity. Note, 1st. It is the character of God's professing people that they make mention of the Lord, and continue to do so even in bad times, when the land is termed forsaken and desolate. They 'are the Lord's remembrancers,' so the margin reads it; they remember the Lord themselves, and put one another in mind of him. 2nd. God's professing people must be a praying people, must be public-spirited in prayer, and must wrestle with God in prayer, and continue to do so. "Keep not silence," never grow remiss in the duty, or weary of it: "Give him no rest;" alluding to an importunate beggar, to the widow that with her continual coming wearied the judge into a compliance. God said to Moses, "Let me alone," *Ex.* xxxii. 10; and Jacob to Christ, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," *Gen.* xxxii. 26. 3rd. God is so far from being displeased with our pressing importunity, as men commonly are, that he invites and encourageth it. He bids us to cry after him, not as the disciples that were uneasy at it, *Mat.* xv. 23. He bids us make pressing instances at the throne of grace, and give him no rest, *Lu.* xi. 5, 6. He suffers himself not only to be reasoned with, but to be wrestled with. 4th. The public welfare and prosperity of God's Jerusalem is that which we should be most importunate for at the throne of grace. Pray for the good of the church, *First.* That it may be safe, that he would establish it; that the interests of the church may be firm, may be settled for the present, and secured to posterity. *Secondly.* That it may be great, may be a praise in the earth; that it may be praised, and God may be praised for it. When gospel truths are cleared and vindicated, when gospel ordinances are duly administered in their purity and power, when the church becomes eminent for holiness and love, then Jerusalem is a praise in the earth, then it is in reputation. 5th. We must persevere in our prayers for mercy to the church till the mercy comes; must do as the prophet's servant did, go yet seven times, till the promising cloud appears, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 47. 6th. It is a good sign that God is coming towards a people in ways of mercy when he pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and stirs them up to be fervent and constant in their intercessions.

Secondly. Plenty of all other good things, ver. 8. This follows upon the former; when the people praise God, when all the people praise him, "then shall the earth yield her increase," *Ps.* lxvii. 5, 6, and outward prosperity crowning its piety shall help to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Observe here,

1. The great distress they had been in, and the losses they had sustained. Their corn had been meat for their enemies, which they hoped should have been meat for themselves and their families. Here was a double grievance, that they themselves wanted that which was necessary to the support of life, and were in danger of perishing for want of it; and that their enemies were strengthened by it, had their camp victualled with it, and so were the better able to do them a mischief. God is said to give their corn to their enemies, because he not only permitted it, but ordered it to be the just punishment both of their abuse of plenty and their symbolizing with strangers, *ch.* i. 7. The wine which they had laboured for, and which in their affliction they needed, for the relief of those among them that were of heavy heart, strangers drunk it to gratify their lusts with. This sore judgment was threatened for their sins, *Lev.* xxvi. 16; *Deu.* xxviii. 33. See how uncertain our creature comforts are, and how much it is our wisdom to labour for that meat which we can never be robbed of.

2. The great fulness and satisfaction they should now be restored to; ver. 9, "They that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord." See here, 1st. God's mercy in giving plenty, and peace to enjoy it. That the earth yields her increase, that there are hands to be employed in gathering it in, and that they are not taken off by plague and sickness, or otherwise employed in war; that strangers and enemies do not come and gather it for themselves, or take it from us when we have gathered it; that we eat the labour of our hands, and the bread is not eaten out of our mouth; and especially that we have opportunity and a heart to honour God with it, and that his courts are open to us, and we are not restrained from attending on him in them. 2nd. Our duty in the enjoyment of this mercy. We must gather what God gives with care and industry; we must eat it freely and cheerfully, not bury the gifts of God's bounty, but make use of them. We must, when we have eaten and are full, bless the Lord, and give him thanks for his bounty to us; and we must serve him with our abundance; use it in works of piety and charity; eat it and drink it in the courts of his holiness, where the altar, the priest, and the poor, must all have their share. The greatest comfort that a good man hath in his meat and drink is, that it furnisheth him with a meat offering and a drink offering for the Lord his God, *Joel* ii. 14; that he hath in an estate is, that it gives him an opportunity of honouring God, and doing good. This wine is to be drunk in the courts of God's holiness, and therefore moderately and with sobriety, as before the Lord.

3. The solemn ratification of this promise. "The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength," that he will do this for his people. God confirms it by an oath, that his people that trust in him and his word may have strong consolation, *Heb.* vi. 17, 18. And, since he can swear by no greater, he swears by himself, sometimes by his being, "As I live," *Eze.* xxxiii. 11; sometimes by his holiness, *Ps.* lxxxix. 35; here by his power, his right hand, (which was lifted up in swearing, *Deu.* xxxii. 40,) and his arm of power; for it is a great satisfaction to those who build their hopes on God's promise to be sure that what he hath promised he is able also to perform, *Rom.* iv. 21. To assure us of this he has sworn by his strength, pawning the reputation of his omnipotence upon it. If he do not do it, let it be said it was because he could not, which the Egyptians shall never say, *Num.* xiv. 16, nor any other. It is the comfort of God's people that his power is engaged for them; his right hand, where the Mediator sits.

10 Go through, go through the gates;
Prepare ye the way of the people;
Cast up, cast up the highway;
Gather out the stones;
Lift up a standard for the people. [world,
11 Behold, the LORD hath proclaimed unto the end of the
Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh;
Behold, his reward *is* with him, and his work before him.
12 And they shall call them, The holy people,
The redeemed of the LORD:
And thou shalt be called, Sought out,
A city not forsaken.

This, as many like passages before, refers to the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, and, under the type and figure of that, to the great redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ, and the proclaiming of gospel grace and liberty through him.

First. Way shall be made for this salvation. All difficulties shall be removed, and whatever might obstruct it shall be taken out of the way, ver. 10. The gates of Babylon shall be thrown open, that they may with freedom go through them. The way from Babylon to the land of Israel shall be prepared; causeways shall be made and cast up through wet and miry places, and the stones gathered out from places rough and rocky. In the convenient places appointed for their rendezvous, standards shall be set up for their direction and encouragement, that they may embody for their greater safety. Thus John Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, *Mat.* iii. 3. And before Christ by his graces and comforts comes to any for salvation, preparation is made for him by repentance; that is called the "preparation of the Gospel of peace," *Eph.* vi. 15. Here the way is levelled by it; there the feet are shod with it; which comes all to one, for both are in order to a journey.

Secondly. Notice shall be given of this salvation, ver. 11, 12. It shall be proclaimed to the captives that they are set at liberty, and may go if they please. It shall be proclaimed to their neighbours, to all about them, to the end of the world, that God hath pleaded Zion's just, and injured, and despised cause. Let it be said to Zion, for her comfort, "Behold, thy salvation cometh;" that is, thy Saviour, who brings salvation. He will bring such a work, such a reward, in this salvation as shall be admired by all; a reward of comfort and peace with him, but a work of humiliation and reformation before him, to prepare his people for that recompence of their sufferings. And then, with reference to each, it follows, they shall be called, "The holy people," and "the redeemed of the Lord." The work before him, which shall be wrought in them, and upon them, shall denominate them a holy people, cured of their inclination to idolatry, and consecrated to God only; and the reward with him, the deliverance wrought for them, shall denominate them the redeemed of the Lord, so redeemed, as none but God could redeem them; and redeemed to be his, their bonds loosed, that they might be his servants. Jerusalem shall then be called, "Sought out, a city not forsaken." She had been forsaken for many years; there were neither traders nor worshippers that inquired the way to Jerusalem, as formerly, when it was frequented by both; but now God will again make it considerable, it shall be sought out, visited, resorted to, and court made to it as much as ever. When it is called a holy city, then it is called, Sought out; for holiness puts an honour and beauty upon any place or person, which draws respect, and makes them to be admired and beloved, and inquired after. But this being proclaimed to the end of the world, must have a reference to the Gospel of Christ, which was to be preached to every creature; and it speaks, 1. The glory of Christ. It is published immediately to the church, but is thence echoed to every nation; "Behold, thy salvation cometh." Christ is not only the Saviour, but the salvation itself; for the happiness of believers is not only from him, but in him, *ch.* xii. 21. His salvation consists both in the work and in the reward which he brings with him; for those that are his shall neither be idle nor lose their labour. 2. The beauty of the church. Christians shall be called saints, 1 *Cor.* i. 2, the holy people, for they are chosen and called to salvation through sanctification. They shall be called "the redeemed of the Lord;" to him they owe their liberty, and therefore to him they owe their service, and they shall not be ashamed to own both. None are to be called "the redeemed of the Lord" but those that are the holy people; the people of God's purchase is a holy nation. And they shall be called, Sought out; God shall seek them out, and find them, wherever they are dispersed, eclipsed, or lost in a crowd; men shall seek them out, that they may join themselves to them, and not forsake them. It is good to associate with the holy people, that we may learn their ways; and with the redeemed of the Lord, that we may share in the blessings of the redemption.

CHAPTER LXIII.

In this chapter we have, I. God coming towards his people in ways of mercy and deliverance; and this is to be joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, where it was said to Zion, "Behold, thy salvation cometh;" for here it is shewed how it comes, ver. 1—6. II. God's people meeting him with their devotions, and addressing themselves to him with suitable affections; and this part of the chapter is carried on to the close of the next. In this we have, 1. A thankful acknowledgment of the great favours God had

bestowed upon them, ver. 7; 2. The magnifying of these favours, from the consideration of God's relation to them, ver. 8, his compassionate concern for them, ver. 9, their unworthiness, ver. 10, and the occasion which it gave both him and them to call to mind former mercies, ver. 11—14. 3. A very humble and earnest prayer to God to appear for them in their present distress, pleading God's mercy, ver. 15, their relation to him, ver. 16, their desire towards him, ver. 17, and the insolence of their enemies, ver. 18, 19. So that upon the whole we learn to embrace God's promises with an active faith, and then to improve them, and make use of them both in prayers and praises.

WHO *is* this that cometh from Edom,
With dyed garments from Bozrah?
This *that is* glorious in his apparel,
Travelling in the greatness of his strength?
I that speak in righteousness,
Mighty to save.
2 Wherefore *art thou* red in thine apparel,
And thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?
3 I have trodden the winepress alone;
And of the people *there was* none with me:
For I will tread them in mine anger,
And trample them in my fury;
And their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments,
And I will stain all my raiment.
4 For the day of vengeance *is* in mine heart,
And the year of my redeemed is come.
5 And I looked, and *there was* none to help;
And I wondered that *there was* none to uphold:
Therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me;
And my fury, it upheld me.
6 And I will tread down the people in mine anger,
And make them drunk in my fury,
And I will bring down their strength to the earth.

It is a glorious victory that is here inquired into first, and then accounted for: 1. It is a victory obtained by the providence of God over the enemies of Israel. Over the Babylonians, say some, whom Cyrus conquered, and God by him; and they will have the prophet to make the first discovery of him in his triumphant return, when he is in the country of Edom. But this can by no means be admitted, because the country of Babylon is always spoken of as the land of the north; whereas Edom lay south from Jerusalem, so that the conqueror would not return through that country; the victory therefore is obtained over the Edomites themselves, who had triumphed in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 7, and cut off those who, making their way as far as they could from the enemy, escaped to the Edomites, *Oba.* 12, 13, and were therefore reckoned with when Babylon was; for no doubt that prophecy was accomplished, though we do not meet in history with the accomplishment of it, *Jer.* xlix. 13, "Bozrah shall become a desolation." Yet this victory over Edom is put as an instance, or specimen, of the like victories obtained over other nations that had been enemies to Israel. This over the Edomites is named for the sake of the old enmity of Esau against Jacob, *Gen.* xxvii. 41; and perhaps with an allusion to David's glorious triumph over the Edomites, by which it should seem, more than by any other of his victories, he got him a name, *Ps.* lx. title; 2 *Sam.* viii. 13, 14. But this is not all; 2. It is a victory obtained by the grace of God in Christ, over our spiritual enemies. We find the garments dipped in blood, adorning him whose name is called the Word of God, *Rev.* xix. 13, and who that is, we know very well; by the same token it is through him that we are more than conquerors over those principalities and powers which on the cross he spoiled and triumphed over. In this representation of the victory we have,

First. An admiring question put to the conqueror, ver. 1, 2. It is put by the church, or by the prophet in the name of the church. He sees a mighty hero returning in triumph from a bloody engagement, and makes bold to ask him two questions: 1. Who he is. He observes him to come from the country of Edom, to come in such apparel as was glorious to a soldier; not embroidered or laced, but besmeared with blood and dirt. He observes he doth not come as one either frighted or fatigued, but travels in the greatness of his strength, altogether unbroken.

'Triumphant and victorious he appears,
And honour in his looks and habit wears:
How strong he treads, how stately doth he go!
Pompous and solemn in his pace,
And full of majesty, as is his face;
Who is this mighty hero, who?'—*Mr. Norris.*

The question, "Who is this?" perhaps means the same with that which Joshua put to the same person when he appeared to him with his sword drawn, *Jos.* v. 13, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Or rather, the same with that which Israel put in a way of adoration, *Ex.* xv. 11, "Who is a God like unto thee?" 2. The other question is, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel?" What hard service hast thou been engaged in, that thou carriest with thee these marks of toil and danger? Is it possible that one who has such majesty and terror in his countenance should be employed in the mean and servile work of treading the winepress? Sure it is not. That which is really the glory of the Redeemer, yet *prima facie*,—'at first,' seems a disparagement to him, as it would be to a mighty prince to do the work of the vinedressers and husbandmen; for he took upon him the form of a servant, and carried with him the marks of servitude.

Secondly. An admirable answer returned by him.

1. He tells who he is; "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." He is the Saviour. God was Israel's Saviour out of the hand of their oppressors; the Lord Jesus is ours. His name, Jesus, signifies a saviour, for he saves his people from their sins. In the salvation wrought he will have us to take notice, 1st. Of the truth of his promise, which is therein performed. He speaks in righteousness, and will therefore make good every word that he hath spoken, with which he will have us to compare what he doth; that, setting the word and the work the one over against the other, what he doth may ratify what he hath said; and what he hath said may justify what he doth. 2nd. Of the efficacy of his power, which is therein exerted. He is mighty to save, able to bring about the promised redemption, whatever difficulties and oppositions may lie in the way of it.

''Tis I, who to my promise faithful stand;
I, who the powers of death, hell, and the grave,
Have foil'd with this all-conquering hand;
I, who most ready am, and mighty too to save.'—*Mr. Norris.*

2. He tells how he came to appear in this hue; ver. 3, "I have trodden the winepress alone." Being compared to one that treads in the winefat, such is his condescension in the midst of his triumphs, that he doth not scorn the comparison, but admits it, and carries it on. He doth indeed tread the winepress, but it is "the great winepress of the wrath of God," *Rev.* xiv. 19, in which we sinners deserved to have been cast; but Christ was pleased to cast our enemies into it, and destroy him that had the power of death, that he might deliver us. And of this the bloody work which God sometimes made among the enemies of the Jews, and which is here foretold, was a type and figure. Observe the account the conqueror gives of his victory.

1st. He gains the victory purely by his own strength; "I have trodden the winepress alone," ver. 3. When God delivered his people, and destroyed their enemies, if he made use of instruments, he did not need them; but among his people, for whom the salvation was to be wrought, there was no assistance offered itself, they were weak and helpless, and had no ability to do any thing for their own relief; they were desponding and listless, and had no heart to do any thing; they were not disposed to give the least stroke or struggle for liberty; neither the captives themselves, nor any of their friends for them; ver. 5, "I looked, and there was none to help," as one would have expected, nothing of a bold, active spirit appeared among them; nay, there were not only none to lead, but, which was more strange, there was none to uphold, none that would come in as seconds, that had the courage to join with Cyrus against their oppressors: therefore mine own arm brought about the salvation; not by created might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, that is, his own arm. Note, God can help when all other helpers fail; nay, this is his time to help, and therefore for that very reason he will put forth his own power so much the more gloriously. But this is most fully applicable to Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, which he obtained by single combat. He trod the winepress of his Father's wrath alone, and triumphed over principalities and powers in himself, *Col.* ii. 15. Of the people there was none with him; for when he entered the lists with the powers of darkness all his disciples forsook him and fled. There was none to help, none that could, none that durst; and he might well wonder that among the children of men, whose concern it was, there was not only none to uphold, but so many to oppose and hinder it, if they could.

2nd. He undertakes the war purely out of his own zeal. It is in his anger, it is in his fury, that he treads down his enemies, ver. 3, and that fury upholds him, and carries him on in his enterprise, ver. 5. God wrought salvation for the oppressed Jews, purely because he was very angry with the oppressing Babylonians, angry at their idolatries and sorceries, their pride and cruelty, and the injuries they did to his people; in which, as they increased and grew more insolent and outrageous, his anger increased to fury. Our Lord Jesus wrought out our redemption in a holy zeal for the honour of his Father and the happiness of mankind, and a holy indignation at the daring attempts Satan had made upon both; this zeal and indignation upheld him throughout his whole undertaking. Two branches there were of this zeal that animated him: *First.* He had a zeal against his and his people's enemies; "The day of vengeance is in my heart," ver. 4. The day fixed in the eternal counsels for taking vengeance on them, this was written in his heart, so that he could not forget it, could not let it slip; his heart was full of it, and it lay as a charge, as a weight upon him, which made him push on this holy war with so much vigour. Note, There is a day fixed for Divine vengeance, which may be long deferred, but will come at last; and we may be content to wait for it, for the Redeemer himself doth, though his heart is upon it. *Secondly.* He had a zeal for his people, and all that he designed should share in the intended salvation; "The year of my redeemed is come;" that is, the year appointed for their redemption. The year was fixed for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and God kept time to a day, *Ex.* xii. 41. So there was for their release out of Babylon, *Dan.* ix. 2. So there was for Christ's coming to destroy the works of the devil. So there is for all the deliverances of the church; and the Deliverer has an eye to it. Observe, 1*st.* With what a pleasure he speaks of his people; They are my redeemed. They are his own, dear to him. Though their redemption is not yet wrought out, yet he calls them his redeemed, because it shall as surely be done as if it were done already. 2*nd.* With what a pleasure he speaks of his people's redemption; how glad he is that the time is come, though he is like to meet with a sharp encounter. Now the year of my redeemed is come, "Lo, I come;" delay shall be no longer. Now will I arise, saith the Lord; now thou shalt see what I will do to Pharaoh. Note, The promised salvation must be patiently waited for till the time appointed comes; yet we must attend the promises with our prayers. Doth Christ say, Surely I come quickly; let our hearts reply, Even so, come; let the year of the redeemed come.

3rd. He will obtain a complete victory over them all. *First.* Much is done already; for he now appears red in his apparel; such abundance of blood is shed, that the conqueror's garments are all stained with it. This was long before, by dying Jacob, foretold concerning Shiloh, that is, Christ, that he should wash "his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes," which perhaps this here alludes to, *Gen.* xlix. 11.

'With ornamental drops bedeck'd I stood,
And writ my victory with my enemy's blood.'—*Mr. Norris.*

In the destruction of the antichristian powers, we meet with abundance of bloodshed, *Rev.* xiv. 20; xix. 13, which yet, according to the dialect of prophecy, may be understood spiritually, and doubtless so may this here. *Secondly.* More shall yet be done; ver. 6, "I will tread down the people," that yet stand it out against me "in mine anger;" for the victorious Redeemer, when the year of the redeemed is come, will go on conquering and to conquer, *Rev.* vi. 2. When he begins he will also make an end. Observe how he will complete his victories over the enemies of his church. 1*st.* He will infatuate them. He will make them drunk, so that there shall be neither sense nor steadiness in their counsels; they shall drink of the cup of his fury, and that shall intoxicate them. Or, he will make them drunk with their own blood, *Rev.* xvii. 6. Let those that make themselves drunk with the cup of riot, (and then are in their fury,) repent and reform, lest God make them drunk with the cup of trembling, the cup of his fury. 2*nd.* He will enfeeble them. He will "bring down their strength," and so bring them down to the earth; for what strength can hold against Omnipotence?

7 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD,
And the praises of the LORD,

According to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us,
And the great goodness toward the house of Israel,
Which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies,
And according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses.
8 For he said, Surely they *are* my people,
Children *that* will not lie:
So he was their Saviour.
9 In all their affliction he was afflicted,
And the angel of his presence saved them:
In his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
And he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.
10 But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit;
Therefore he was turned to be their enemy,
And he fought against them.
11 Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, *and* his people, *saying*,
Where *is* he that brought them up out of the sea
With the shepherd of his flock?
Where *is* he that put his holy Spirit within him?
12 That led *them* by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm,
Dividing the water before them,
To make himself an everlasting name?
13 That led them through the deep,
As an horse in the wilderness, *that* they should not stumble?
14 As a beast goeth down into the valley,
The Spirit of the LORD caused him to rest:
So didst thou lead thy people,
To make thyself a glorious name.

The prophet is here, in the name of the church, taking a review, and making a thankful recognition, of God's dealings with his church all along, ever since he founded it, before he comes, in the latter end of this chapter, and in the next, as a watchman upon the walls, earnestly to pray to God for his compassion towards her in her present deplorable state; and it was usual for God's people in their prayers thus to look back.

First. Here is a general acknowledgment of God's goodness to them all along, ver. 7. It was said in general of God's prophets and people, *ch.* lxii. 6, that they "make mention of the Lord;" now here we are told what it is in God that they do especially delight to make mention of, and that is his goodness, which the prophet here so makes mention of, as if he thought he could never say enough of it. He mentions the kindness of God, (which never appeared so evident, so eminent, as in his love to mankind in sending his Son to save us, *Tit.* iii. 4,) his lovingkindness; kindness that shews itself in every thing that is endearing; nay, so plenteous are the springs, and so various the streams, of Divine mercy, that he speaks of it in the plural number, his lovingkindnesses; for if we would count the fruits of his lovingkindnesses, they are more in number than the sand. With his lovingkindnesses he mentions his praises, that is, the thankful acknowledgments which the saints make of his lovingkindness, and the angels too. It must be mentioned to God's honour, what a tribute of praise is paid by all his creatures, in consideration of his lovingkindness. See how copiously he speaks,

1. Of the goodness that is from God, the gifts of his lovingkindness; "All that the Lord has bestowed on us" in particular, relating to life and godliness, in our personal and family capacity. Let every man speak for himself, speak as he has found, and he must own that he has had a great deal bestowed upon him by the Divine bounty. But we must also mention the favours bestowed upon his church; his "great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them." Note, We must bless God for others' mercies as for our own; and reckon that bestowed on ourselves which is bestowed on the house of Israel.

2. Of the goodness that is in God. God doth good, because he is good; what he bestows upon us must be run up to the original, it is "according to his mercies," not according to our merits; and "according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses," which can never be spent. Thus we should magnify God's goodness, and speak honourably of it, not only when we plead it, as David, *Ps.* li. 1, but when we praise it.

Secondly. Here is particular notice taken of the steps of God's mercy to Israel, ever since it was first formed into a nation.

1. The expectations God had concerning them, that they would carry themselves well, ver. 8. When he brought them out of Egypt, and took them into covenant with himself, he said, "Surely they are my people," I take them as such, and am willing to hope they will approve themselves so; "children that will not lie," that is, that will not dissemble with God in their covenantings with him, nor treacherously depart from him, by breaking their covenant, and starting aside like a broken bow. They said more than once, All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient; and thereupon he took them to be his peculiar people, saying, Surely they will not lie. God deals fairly and faithfully with them, and therefore expects they should deal so with him. They are children of the covenant, *Acts* iii. 25; children of those that clave unto the Lord, and therefore it may be hoped they will tread in the steps of their fathers' constancy. Note, God's people are children that will not lie, for those that will are not his children, but the devil's.

2. The favour he shewed them, with an eye to these expectations; "So he was their Saviour" out of the bondage of Egypt, and all the calamities of their wilderness state, and many a time since he had been their Saviour. See particularly, ver. 9, what he did for them as their Saviour. 1st. The principle that moved him to work salvation for them. It was "in his love and in his pity," out of mere compassion to them, and a tender affection for them, not because he either needed them, or could be benefited by them. This is strangely expressed here, "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Not that the Eternal Mind is capable of grieving, or God's infinite blessedness of suffering the least damage or diminution,—God cannot be afflicted; but thus he is pleased to shew forth the love and concern he has for his people in their affliction; thus far he sympathises with them, that he takes what injury is done to them as done to himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. Their cries move him, *Ex.* iii. 7, and he appears for them so vigorously, as if he were pained in their pain; "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" This is matter of great comfort to God's people in their affliction, that God is so far from afflicting willingly, *Lam.* iii. 33, that if they humble themselves under his hand, he is afflicted in their affliction, as the tender parents are in the severe operations which the case of a sick child calls for. There is another reading of these words in the original, 'In all their affliction there was no affliction.' Though they were in great affliction, yet the property of it was so altered by the grace of God sanctifying it to them for their good; the rigour of it was so mitigated, and it was so allayed and balanced with mercies; they were so wonderfully supported and comforted under it, and it proved so short, and ended so well, that it was in effect no affliction. The troubles of the saints are not that to them that they are to others; they are not afflictions, but medicines; they are enabled to call them light, and but for a moment, and, with an eye to heaven as all in all, to make nothing of them. 2nd. The person employed in their salvation; the angel of his face, or presence. Some understand it of a created angel. The highest angel in heaven, even the angel of his presence, that attends next the throne of his glory, is not thought too great, too good, to be sent on this errand. Thus the little ones' angels are said to be those that always behold the face of our Father, *Mat.* xviii. 10. But this is rather to be understood of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, that angel of whom God spake to Moses, *Ex.* xxiii. 10, whose voice Israel was to obey. He is called Jehovah, *Ex.* xiii. 21; xiv. 19, 24. He is the angel of the covenant, God's messenger to the world, *Mal.* iii. 1. He is the angel of God's face, for he is the express image of his person; and the glory of God shines in the face of Christ. He that was to work out the eternal salvation, as an earnest of that, wrought out the temporal salvations that were typical of it. 3rd. The progress and perseverance of this favour. He not only redeemed them out of their bondage, but he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. They were weak, but he supported them by his power, sustained them by his bounty; when they were burthened and ready to sink, he bore them up; in the wars they made upon the nations, he stood by them, and bore them out; though they were peevish, he bore with them, and suffered their manners, *Acts* xiii. 18. He carried them, as the nursing father doth the child, though they would have tired any arms but his; carried them as the eagle her young upon her wings, *Deu.* xxxii. 11. And it was a long time that he was troubled with them, (if we may so speak,) it was all the days of old; his care of them was not at an end even when they were grown up and settled in Canaan. All this was in his love and pity, *ex mero motu*,—'of his mere good-will,' he loved them because he would love them, as he saith, *Deu.* vii. 7, 8.

3. Their disingenuous carriage towards him, and the trouble they thereby brought upon themselves; ver. 10, "But they rebelled." Things looked very hopeful and promising, one would have thought they should have continued dutiful children to God, and then no doubt but he would have continued a gracious Father to them; but here is a sad change on both sides, and on them be the breach. 1st. They revolted from their allegiance to God, and took up arms against him. They "rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit," with their unbelief and murmuring, besides the iniquity of the golden calf; and this had been their way and manner ever since. Though he had so good an opinion of them, that they would not lie, though he had done so much for them, borne them and carried them, yet they thus ill requited him, like "foolish people and unwise," *Deu.* xxxii. 6. This grieved him, *Ps.* xcv. 10. The ungrateful rebellions of God's children against him are a vexation to his holy Spirit. 2nd. Thereupon he justly withdrew his protection, and not only so, but made war upon them, as a prince justly doth upon the rebels. He who had been so much their friend was "turned to be their enemy, and fought against them," by one judgment after another, both in the wilderness and after their settlement in Canaan. See the malignity and mischievousness of sin: it makes God an enemy, even to those for whom he has done the part of a good friend; and makes him angry that was all love and pity. See the folly of sinners: they wilfully lose him for a friend that is the most desirable friend; and make him their enemy that is the most formidable enemy. This refers especially to those calamities that were of late brought upon them, by their captivity in Babylon, for their idolatries and other sins. That which was both the original and the great aggravation of their troubles was, that God was turned to be their enemy.

4. A particular reflection made on this occasion upon what God did for them when he first formed them into a people; "Then he remembered the days of old," ver. 11. This may be understood either,

1st. Of the people. Israel then, spoken of as a single person, "remembered the days of old," looked into their Bibles, read the story of God's bringing their fathers out of Egypt, and considered it more closely than ever they did before, and reasoned upon it, as Gideon did, *Jud.* vi. 13, "Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?" Where is he that brought them up out of Egypt? Is he not as able to bring us up out of Babylon? Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Where is the Lord God of our fathers? This they consider as an inducement and an encouragement to them to repent and return to him: their fathers were a provoking people, and yet found him a pardoning God; and why may not they find him so, if they return to him? They also use it as a plea with God in prayer, for the turning again of their captivity, like that, *ch.* li. 9, 10. Note, When the present days are dark and cloudy it is good to remember the days of old, to recollect our own and others' experiences of the Divine power and goodness, and make use of them; to look back upon "the years of the right hand of the Most High," *Ps.* lxxvii. 5, 10, and remember that he is God, and changeth not. Or,

2nd. We may understand it of God. He put himself in mind of the days of old, of his covenant with Abraham, *Lev.* xxvi. 42. He said, "Where is he that brought Israel up out of the sea?" stirring up himself to come and save them with this consideration, Why should not I appear for them now as I did for their fathers, who were as undeserving, as ill deserving, as they are? See how far off Divine mercy will go, how far back it will look, to find out a reason for doing good to his people, when no present considerations appear but what make against them! Nay, it makes that a reason for relieving them which might have been used as a reason for abandoning them. He might have said, I have delivered them formerly, but they have again brought trouble upon themselves, *Pr.* xix. 19, therefore I will deliver them no more, *Jud.* x. 13. No; mercy rejoiceth against judgment, and turns the argument the other way; I have formerly delivered them, and therefore will now.

Which way soever we take it, whether the people plead it with God or God with himself, let us view the particulars; and they agree very much with that confession and prayer which the children of the captivity made upon a solemn fast-day, *Neh.* ix. 5, &c., which may serve as a comment on these verses here, which call to mind Moses and his people; that is, what God did by Moses for his people, especially in bringing them through the Red sea. For that is it which is here most insisted on; for it was a work which he much gloried in, and which his people therefore may, in a particular manner, encourage them-

selves with the remembrance of. *First.* "God led them by the right hand of Moses," ver. 13, and the wonder-working rod in his hand; *Ps.* lxxvii. 20, "Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses." It was not Moses that led them, no more than it was Moses that fed them, *Jno.* vi. 32, but God by Moses; for it was he that qualified Moses for, called him to, assisted and prospered him in, that great undertaking. Moses is here called "the shepherd of his flock." God was the owner of the flock, and the chief Shepherd of Israel, *Ps.* lxxx. 1; but Moses was a shepherd under him, and he was inured to labour and patience, and so fitted for this pastoral care, by his being trained up to keep the flock of his father Jethro. Herein he was a type of Christ, the good Shepherd, that "lays down his life for the sheep;" which was more than Moses did for Israel, though he did a great deal for them. *Secondly.* He "put his holy Spirit within him." The Spirit of God was among them, and not only his providence, but his grace did work for them; *Neh.* ix. 20, "Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them." The spirit of wisdom and courage, as well as the spirit of prophecy, was put into Moses, to qualify him for that service among them to which he was called; and some of his spirit was put upon the seventy elders, *Num.* xi. 17. This was a great blessing to Israel, that they had not only inspired writings, but inspired men among them. *Thirdly.* He carried them safely through the Red sea, and thereby saved them out of the hands of Pharaoh. *1st.* He "divided the water before them," ver. 12, so that it gave them not only passage but protection; not only opened them a lane, but erected them a wall on either side. *2nd.* He "led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness," or in the plain, ver. 13. They and their wives and children, with all their bag and baggage, went as easily and readily through the bottom of the sea, though we may suppose it muddy, or stony, or both, as a horse goes along upon even ground; so that they did not stumble, though it was an untrodden path, which neither they nor any one else ever went before. If God make us a way, he will make it plain and level. The road he opens to his people he will lead them in. *3rd.* To complete the mercy, he "brought them up out of the sea," ver. 11. Though the ascent, it is likely, was very steep, dirty, and slippery, and unconquerable, (at least by the women and children, and the men, considering how they were loaded, *Ex.* xii. 34, and how fatigued,) yet God, by his power, brought them up from the depths of the earth; and it was a kind of resurrection to them; it was as life from the dead. *Fourthly.* He brought them safe to a place of rest. "As a beast goeth down into the valley," fair and softly, and by leisure steps, so "the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest." Many a time, in their march through the wilderness, they had resting-places provided for them by the direction of the Spirit of the Lord in Moses, ver. 11. And at length they were made to rest for good and all in Canaan, and the Spirit of the Lord gave them that rest, according to the promise. It is by the Spirit of the Lord that God's Israel are caused to return to God, and repose in him as their rest. *Fifthly.* All this he did for them by his own power, for his own praise. *1st.* It was by his own power, as the God of nature, that has all the powers of nature at his command; he did it with his glorious arm, the arm of his gallantry or bravery, so the word signifies. It was not Moses' rod, but God's glorious arm that did it. *2nd.* It was for his own praise; to "make himself an everlasting name," ver. 12; "a glorious name," ver. 14, that he might be glorified, everlastingly glorified upon this account. This is that which God is doing in the world with his glorious arm; he is making to himself a glorious name, and it shall last to endless ages, when the most celebrated names of the great ones of the earth shall be written in the dust.

15 Look down from heaven, [thy glory:
And behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of
Where *is* thy zeal and thy strength,
The sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me?
Are they restrained?
16 Doubtless thou *art* our father,
Though Abraham be ignorant of us,
And Israel acknowledge us not:
Thou, O LORD, *art* our father, our redeemer;
Thy name *is* from everlasting.
17 O LORD, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways,
And hardened our heart from thy fear?
Return for thy servants' sake,
The tribes of thine inheritance. [while:
18 The people of thy holiness have possessed *it* but a little
Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.
19 We are *thine:* thou never barest rule over them;
They were not called by thy name.

The foregoing praises were intended as an introduction to this prayer, which is continued to the end of the next chapter; and it is an affectionate, importunate, pleading prayer; it is calculated for the time of the captivity. As they had promises, so they had prayers prepared for them against that time of need, that they might take with them words in turning to the Lord, and say unto him what he himself taught them to say, in which they might the better hope to prevail, the words being of God's own inditing. Some good interpreters think this prayer looks farther, and that it speaks the complaints of the Jews under their last and final rejection from God, and destruction by the Romans; for there is one passage in it, *ch.* lxiv. 4, which is applied to the grace of the Gospel by the apostle, 1 *Cor.* ii. 9, that grace, for the rejecting of which they were rejected. In these verses we may observe,

First. The petitions they put up to God.

1. That he would take cognizance of their case, and of the desires of their souls towards him; "Look down from heaven, and behold." They knew very well that God sees all, but they pray he would regard them, would condescend to favour them, would look upon them with an eye of compassion and concern, as he looked upon the affliction of his people in Egypt, when he was about to appear for their deliverance. In begging that he would only look down upon them, and behold them, they do in effect appeal to his justice against their enemies, and pray judgment against them, as Jehosnaphat, 2 *Chr.* xx. 11, 12, "Behold, how they reward us! Wilt thou not judge them?" And they refer themselves to his mercy and wisdom, in what way he will relieve them; *Ps.* xxv. 18, "Look upon mine affliction and my pain." Look down "from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory." God's holiness is his glory; heaven is his habitation, the throne of his glory, where he doth most manifest his glory, and from whence he is said to look down upon this earth, *Ps.* xxxiii. 14. His holiness is in a special manner celebrated there by the blessed angels, *ch.* vi. 3; *Rev.* iv. 8. There his holy ones attend him, and are continually about him, so that it is the habitation of his holiness, which is an encouragement to all his praying people, who desire to be holy as he is holy, that he dwells in a holy place.

2. That he would take a course for their relief; ver. 17, "Return," that is, Change thy way towards us, and proceed not in thy controversy with us. Return in mercy, and let us have not only a gracious look towards us, but thy gracious presence with us. God's people dread nothing more than his departures from them, and desire nothing more than his returns to them.

Secondly. The complaints they make to God. Two things they complain of:

1. That they were given up to themselves, and God's grace did not recover them, ver. 17. It is a strange expostulation, "Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways?" that is, many among us, the generality of us; and this complaint we have all of us some cause to make, that thou hast hardened our heart from thy fear. Some make it to be the language of those among them that were impious and profane. When the prophets reproved them for the error of their ways, their hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandments, they, with a daring impudence, charge their sin upon God, and make him the author of it; and why doth he then find fault? Note, Those are wicked indeed that lay the blame of their wickedness upon God. But I rather take it to be the language of those among them that lamented the unbelief and impenitency of their people, not accusing God of being the author of it, but complaining of it to him. They own that they had erred from God's ways, that their hearts had been hardened from his fear, that they had not received the impressions which the fear of God ought to make upon them, and this was the cause of all their errors from his ways, or, from his fear, that is, from the true worship of God; and that is a hard heart indeed that is alienated from the service of a God so incontestably great and good. Now this they complain of as their great misery and burthen, that God had for their sins left them to this, had permitted them to err from his ways, and had justly withheld his grace, so that their hearts were hardened from his fear. When they ask, Why hast thou done this? it is not as charging him with wrong, but lamenting it as a sore judgment. God had made them to err, and hardened their hearts, not only by withdrawing his Spirit from them, because they had grieved, and vexed, and quenched him, ver. 10, but by a judicial sentence upon them, *ch.* vi. 9, 10, "Go, make the heart of this people fat," and by his providences concerning them, which had proved sad occasions of their departure from him. David complains of his banishment, that in it he was, in effect, bidden to go serve other gods, 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 19. Their troubles had alienated many of them from God, and prejudiced them against his service; and because the rod of the wicked had lain long on their lot, they were ready to put forth their hand unto iniquity, *Ps.* cxxv. 3. And this was the thing they complained most of, that their afflictions were their temptations, and to many of them invincible ones. Note, Convinced consciences complain most of spiritual judgments, and dread that most in an affliction which draws them from God and duty.

2. That they were given up to their enemies, and God's providence did not rescue and relieve them; ver. 18, "Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary." As it was a grief to them, that in their captivity the generality of them had lost their affection to God's worship, and had their hearts hardened from it by their afflictions, so it was a farther grief that they were deprived of their opportunities of worshipping God in solemn assemblies. They complain not so much of the adversaries treading down their houses and cities, as of their treading down God's sanctuary, because thereby God was immediately affronted, and they were robbed of the comforts they valued most, and took most pleasure in.

Thirdly. The pleas they urge with God for mercy and deliverance.

1. They plead the tender compassion God used to shew to his people, and his ability and readiness to appear for them, ver. 15. The most prevailing arguments in prayer are those that are taken from God himself; so these are; "Where is thy zeal and thy strength?" God has a zeal for his own glory, and for the comfort of his people; his name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God; and he has a strength proportionable, to secure his own glory, and the interests of his people, in despite of all opposition. Now where are these? Have they not formerly appeared? Why do they not appear now? It cannot be that Divine zeal, which is infinitely wise and just, should be cooled, that Divine strength, which is infinite, should be weakened. Nay, his people had experienced not only his zeal and his strength, but the sounding of his bowels, or rather, the yearning of them, such a degree of compassion to them, as in men causeth a commotion and toss within them; as *Hos.* xi. 8, "Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together;" and *Jer.* xxxi. 20, "My bowels are troubled," or sound, "for him." Thus God useth to be affected towards his people, and to express a multitude of mercies towards them. But where are they now? "Are they restrained?" Hath God, who so often remembered to be gracious, now forgotten it? "Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" *Ps.* lxxvii. 9. It can never be. Note, We may ground good expectations of farther mercy upon our experiences of former mercy.

2. They plead God's relation to them as their Father, ver. 16. Thy tender mercies are not restrained, for they are the tender mercies of a Father, who, though he may be for a time displeased with his child, yet natural affection will soon prevail with him to be reconciled. "Doubtless thou art our Father," and therefore thy bowels will yearn towards us. Such good thoughts of God as these we should always keep up in our hearts. However it be, yet God is good, for he is our Father. They own themselves fatherless if he be not their Father, and so cast themselves upon him with whom "the fatherless find mercy," *Hos.* xiv. 3. It was the honour of their nation that they had Abraham to their father, *Mat.* iii. 9, who was the friend of God, and Israel, who was a prince with God; but what the better were they for that, unless they had God himself for their Father? for Abraham and Israel cannot help them: they have not the power that God hath, they are dead long since, and are ignorant of us, and acknowledge us not, they know not what our case is, nor what our wants are, and therefore know not which way to do us a kindness. If Abraham and Israel were alive with us, they would intercede for us, and advise us; but they are gone to the other world, and we know not that they have any communication at all with this world, and therefore are not capable of doing us any kindness, any farther than that we have the honour of being called their children. When the father is dead, "his sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not," *Job* xiv. 21. But thou, O Lord, art our Father still. The fathers of our flesh may call themselves ever loving, but they are not ever living; it is God only that is the immortal Father, that always knows us, and is never at a distance from us; and therefore, 'our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name,' the name by which we will know and own thee; it is the name by which from of old thou hast been known. Thy people have always looked upon thee as the God to whom they might appeal, to right them, and plead their cause. Nay, (according to the sense some give of this place,) though Abraham and Israel not only cannot, but would not help us, thou wilt; they have not the pity thou

hast. We are so degenerate and corrupt, that Abraham and Israel would not own us for their children, yet we fly to thee as our Father. Abraham cast out his son Ishmael; Jacob disinherited his son Reuben, and cursed Simeon and Levi; but our heavenly Father, in pardoning sin, is God and not man, *Hos.* xi. 9.

3. They plead God's interest in them, that he was their Lord, their owner and proprietor; We are thy servants; what service we can do, thou art entitled to, and therefore we ought not to serve strange kings and strange gods. "Return, for thy servants' sake." As a father finds himself obliged by natural affection to relieve and protect his child, so a master thinks himself obliged in honour to rescue and protect his servant. We are thine by the strongest engagements, as well as the highest endearments. Thou hast borne rule over us, therefore, Lord, assert thine own interest, maintain thine own rights; for we are called by thy name, and therefore whither shall we go but to thee to be righted and protected? We are thine, save us, *Ps.* cxix. 44; thine own, own us. We are "the tribes of thine inheritance," not only thy servants, but thy tenants. We are thine, not only to do work for thee, but to pay rent to thee. The tribes of Israel are God's inheritance, from whence issues that little praise and worship that he receives from this lower world; and wilt thou suffer thine own servants and tenants to be thus abused?

4. They plead that they had had but a short enjoyment of the land of promise, and the privileges of the sanctuary; ver. 18, "The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while." From Abraham to David was but fourteen generations, and from David to the captivity but fourteen more, *Mat.* i. 17; and that was but a little while, in comparison with what might have been expected from the promise of the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, *Gen.* xvii. 8, and from the power that was put forth to bring them into that land, and settle them in it. Though we are "the people of thy holiness," distinguished from other people, and consecrated to thee, yet we are soon dislodged. But this they might thank themselves for; they were in profession the people of God's holiness, but it was their wickedness that turned them out of the possession of that land.

5. They plead, that those who had, and kept possession of their land, were such as were strangers to God, such as he had no service or honour from: "Thou never barest rule over them," nor did they ever yield thee any obedience. "They were not called by thy name," but profess relation to other gods, and were the worshippers of them. Will God suffer those that stand in no relation to him, to trample upon those that do? Some give another reading of this: We are become as those whom thou didst never bear rule over, nor were ever called by thy name. We are rejected and abandoned, despised and trampled upon, as if we never had been in thy service, nor had thy name called upon us. Thus the shield of Saul was vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil. But the covenant, that seems to be forgotten, shall be remembered again.

CHAPTER LXIV.

This chapter goes on with that pathetical, pleading prayer, which the church offered up to God in the latter part of the foregoing chapter. They had argued from their covenant relation to God, and his interest and concern in them; now here, I. They pray that God would appear in some remarkable surprising manner for them, against his and their enemies, ver. 1, 2. II. They plead what God had formerly done, and was always ready to do for his people, ver. 3—5. III. They confess themselves to be sinful, and unworthy of God's favour, and that they had deserved the judgments they were now under, ver. 6, 7. IV. They refer themselves to the mercy of God as a Father, and submit themselves to his sovereignty, ver. 8. V. They represent the very deplorable condition they were in, and earnestly pray for the pardon of sin, and the turning away of God's anger, ver. 9—12. And this was not only intended for the use of the captive Jews, but may serve for direction to the church in other times of distress, what to ask of God, and how to plead with him. Are God's people at any time in affliction, in great affliction? Let them pray, let them thus pray.

OH that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down,
That the mountains might flow down at thy presence,
2 As *when* the melting fire burneth,
The fire causeth the waters to boil,

GREAT GEYSERS OF ICELAND.

To make thy name known to thine adversaries,
That the nations may tremble at thy presence!
3 When thou didst terrible things *which* we looked not for,
Thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence.
4 For since the beginning of the world *men* have not heard,
Nor perceived by the ear,
Neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee,
What he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.
5 Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness,
Those that remember thee in thy ways:
Behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned:
In those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

Here, First. The petition is, that God would appear wonderfully for them now, ver. 1, 2. Their case was represented in the close of the foregoing chapter as very sad, and very hard; and in this case it was time to cry, Help, Lord; O that God would manifest his zeal and his strength. They had prayed, *ch.* lxiii. 15, that God would "look down from heaven;" here they pray that he would "come down" to deliver them, as he had said, *Ex.* iii. 8.

1. They desire that God would in his providence manifest himself both to them and for them. When God works some extraordinary deliverance for his people, he is said to shine forth, to shew himself strong; so here they pray that he would "rend the heavens," "and come down;" as when he delivered David he is said to bow the heavens and come down, *Ps.* xviii. 9; to display his power, and justice, and goodness, in an extraordinary manner, so as that all may take notice of them, and acknowledge them. This God's people desire and pray for, that they themselves having the satisfaction of seeing him, though his way be in the sea, others may be made to see him when his way is in the clouds. This is applicable to the second coming of Christ, when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

2. They desire that he would vanquish all opposition, and that it might be made to give way before him; that "the mountains might flow down at thy presence;" that the fire of thy wrath may burn so hot against thine enemies as even to dissolve the rockiest mountains, and melt them down before it, as metal in the furnace, which is made liquid, and cast into what shape the operator pleaseth; so the melting fire burns, ver. 1. Let things be put into a ferment, in order to a glorious revolution in favour of the church, as "the fire causeth the waters to boil." There is an allusion here, some think, to the volcanoes, or burning mountains, which sometimes send forth such sulphurous streams as make the adjacent rivers and seas to boil; which, perhaps, are left as sensible intimations of the power of God's wrath, and warning pieces of the final conflagration.

3. They desire that this may tend very much to the glory and honour of God; may make his name known, not only to his friends, they knew it before, and trusted in his power; but to his adversaries likewise, that they may know it, and tremble at his presence, and may say with the men of Bethshemesh, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? Who knows the power of his anger?" Note, Sooner or later God will make his name known to his adversaries, and force those to tremble at his presence that would not come and worship in his presence. God's name, if it be not a stronghold for us, into which we may run and be safe, will be a stronghold against us, out of the reach of which we cannot run and be safe. The day is come when nations shall be made to tremble at the presence of God, though they were never so numerous and strong.

Secondly. The plea is, that God had appeared wonderfully for his people formerly; and, Thou hast, therefore thou wilt, is good arguing at the throne of grace, *Ps.* x. 17.

1. They plead what he had done for his people Israel in particular, when he brought them out of Egypt, ver. 3. He then did terrible things in the plagues of Egypt, which they looked not for; they despaired of deliverance, so far were they from any thought of being delivered with such a high hand and outstretched arm. Then he came down upon mount Sinai, in such terror as made that and the adjacent mountains to flow down at his presence, to skip like rams, *Ps.* cxiv. 4; to tremble so that they were scattered, and the perpetual hills were made to bow, *Hab.* iii. 6. In the many great salvations God wrought for that people, he did terrible things which they looked not for; made great men, that seemed as stately and strong as mountains, to fall before him, and great opposition to give way: see *Jud.* v. 4, 5; *Ps.* lxviii. 7, 8. Some refer this to the defeat of Sennacherib's powerful army, which was as surprising an instance of the Divine power as the melting down of rocks and mountains would be.

2. They plead what God had been used to do, and had declared his gracious purpose to do for his people in general. The provision that he has made for the safety and happiness of his people, even of all those that seek him, and serve him, and trust in him, is very rich, and very ready; so that they need not fear being either disappointed of it, for it is sure, or disappointed in it, for it is sufficient.

1st. It is very rich, ver. 4. Men have not heard nor seen what God hath prepared for those that wait for him. Observe the character of God's people: they are such as wait for him in the way of duty; wait for the salvation he hath promised and designed them; and where the happiness of his people is bound up, it is what God has prepared for them; what he hath designed for them in his counsel, and is in his providence and grace preparing for them, and preparing them for; what he hath done, or will do, so it may be read. Some of the Jewish doctors have understood this of the blessings reserved for the days of the Messiah, and to them the apostle applies these words; and others extend them to the glories of the world to come. It is all that goodness which God hath laid up for them that fear him, and wrought for them that trust in him, *Ps.* xxxi. 19. Of this it is here said, that "since the beginning of the world," in the most prying and inquisitive ages of it, men have not either by hearing or seeing, the two learning senses, come to the full knowledge of it. None have seen or heard, or can understand, but God himself, what the provision is that is made for the present and future felicity of holy souls. For, *First.* Much of it was concealed in former ages. They knew it not, because the unsearchable riches of Christ were hid in God; were hid from the wise and prudent; but in latter ages they were revealed by the Gospel; so the apostle applies this, 1 *Cor.* ii. 9; for it follows, ver. 10, "But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit;" compare *Rom.* xvi. 25, 26, with *Eph.* iii. 9. That which men had not heard since the beginning of the world they should hear before the end of it; and at the end of it should see, when the veil shall be rent to introduce the glory that is yet to be revealed. God himself knew what he had in store for believers, but none knew besides him. *Secondly.* It cannot be fully comprehended by human understanding; no, not when it is revealed. It is spiritual, and refined from those ideas which our minds are most apt to receive in this world of sense; it is very great, and will far outdo the utmost of our expectations. Even the present peace of all believers, much more their future bliss, is such as passeth all conception and expression, *Phil.* iv. 7. None can comprehend it but God himself, whose understanding is infinite. Some give another reading of these words, referring the transcendency, not so much to

the work itself, as to the author of it; 'Neither hath the eye seen a God besides thee, which doth so (or hath done, or can do so) for him that waiteth for him.' We must infer from God's works of wondrous grace, as well as from his works of wondrous power, from the kind things as well as from the great things he doth, that there is no God like unto him, nor any among the sons of the mighty to be compared with him.

2nd. It is very ready; ver. 5, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness;" meetest him with that good which thou hast prepared for him, ver. 4, and dost not forget those that remember thee in thy ways. See here what communion there is between a gracious God and a gracious soul. *First.* What God expects from us, in order to our having communion with him. 1*st.* We must make conscience of doing our duty in every thing. We must work righteousness; must do that which is good, and which the Lord our God requires of us, and must do it well. 2*nd.* We must be cheerful in doing our duty. We must rejoice and work righteousness, must delight ourselves in God, and in his law; must be pleasant in his service, and sing at our work. God loves a cheerful giver, a cheerful worshipper; we must "serve the Lord with gladness." 3*rd.* We must conform ourselves to all the methods of his providence concerning us, and be suitably affected with them; must remember him in his ways, in all the ways wherein he walks, whether he walks towards us, or walks contrary to us. We must mind him, and make mention of him with thanksgiving, when his ways are ways of mercy, (in a day of prosperity be joyful,) with patience and submission when he contends with us,—In the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee; and in a day of adversity we must consider. *Secondly.* We are here told what we may expect from God, if we thus attend him in the way of duty; Thou meetest him that doth so. This speaks the friendship, and fellowship, and familiarity to which God admits them; he meets them to converse with them, to manifest himself to them, and to receive their addresses, *Ex.* xx. 24; xxix. 43. It notes likewise his freeness and forwardness in doing them good; he will prevent them with the blessings of his goodness, will rejoice to do good to them that rejoice in working righteousness, and wait to be gracious to those that wait for him. He meets his penitent people with a pardon, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son, *Lu.* xv. 20. He meets his praying people with an answer of peace, while they are yet speaking, *ch.* lxv. 24.

3. They plead the unchangeableness of God's favour, and the stability of his promise, notwithstanding the sins of his people, and his displeasure against them for their sins; Behold, thou hast many a time been wroth with us, because we have sinned, and we have been under the tokens of thy wrath; but in those, those ways of thine, thy ways of mercy in which we have remembered thee, "in those is continuance;" or, in those thou art ever, (his mercy endureth for ever,) and therefore we shall at last be saved, though thou art wroth, and we have sinned. This agrees with the tenor of God's covenant, that if we forsake the law he will chasten our transgression with a rod, but his lovingkindness he will not utterly take away; his covenant he will not break, *Ps.* lxxxix. 30, &c.; and by this his people have been many a time saved from ruin when they were just upon the brink of it: see *Ps.* lxxviii. 38. And by this continuance of the covenant we hope to be saved; for its being an everlasting covenant is all our salvation. Though God has been angry with us for our sins, and justly, yet his anger has endured but for a moment, and has been soon over; but in his favour is life, because in it is continuance; in the ways of his favour he proceeds and perseveres, and on that we depend for salvation: see *ch.* liv. 7, 8. It is well for us that our hopes of salvation are built not upon any merit or sufficiency of our own, for in that there is no certainty, (even Adam in innocency did not abide,) but upon God's mercies and promises; for in those we are sure is continuance.

6 But we are all as an unclean *thing*,
And all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags;
And we all do fade as a leaf;
And our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.
7 And *there is* none that calleth upon thy name,
That stirreth up himself to take hold of thee:
For thou hast hid thy face from us,
And hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.
8 But now, O LORD, thou *art* our father;
We *are* the clay, and thou our potter;
And we all *are* the work of thy hand.
9 Be not wroth very sore, O LORD,
Neither remember iniquity for ever:
Behold, see, we beseech thee, we *are* all thy people.
10 Thy holy cities are a wilderness,
Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.
11 Our holy and our beautiful house,
Where our fathers praised thee,
Is burned up with fire:
And all our pleasant things are laid waste.
12 Wilt thou refrain thyself for these *things*, O LORD?
Wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

As we have the lamentations of Jeremiah, so here we have the lamentations of Isaiah; the subject of both is the same, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and the sin of Israel that brought that destruction, only with this difference—Isaiah sees it at a distance, and laments it by the spirit of prophecy; Jeremiah saw it accomplished. In these verses,

First. The people of God in their affliction confess and bewail their sins, thereby justifying God in their afflictions, owning themselves unworthy of his mercy, and thereby both improving their troubles and preparing for deliverance. Now they were under Divine rebukes for sin, they had nothing to trust to but the mere mercy of God, and the continuance of that; for among themselves there is none to help, none to uphold, none to stand in the gap, and make intercession; for they are all polluted with sin, and therefore unworthy to intercede; all careless and remiss in duty, and therefore unable and unfit to do it.

1. There was a general corruption of manners among them; ver. 6, "We are all as an unclean thing;" or, as an unclean person, as one overspread with a leprosy, that was to be shut out of the camp. The body of the people were like one under a ceremonial pollution, that was not admitted into the courts of the tabernacle, or like one labouring under some loathsome disease, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, nothing but wounds and bruises, *ch.* i. 6. We are all by sin become not only obnoxious to God's justice, but odious to his holiness; for sin is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and cannot endure to look upon. Even "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" that is, 1st. The best of our persons are so. We are all so corrupt and polluted, that even those among us who pass for righteous men, in comparison with what our fathers were, that rejoiced and wrought righteousness, ver. 5, are but as filthy rags, fit to be cast to the dunghill. The best of them is as a briar. 2nd. The best of our performances are so. There is not only a general corruption of manners, but in devotion too; those which pass for the sacrifices of righteousness, when they come to be inquired into, are the torn, and the lame, and the sick; and therefore are provoking to God, as nauseous as filthy rags. Our performances, though they be never so plausible, if we depend upon them as our righteousness, and think to merit by them at God's hand, they are as filthy rags; rags, and will not cover us; filthy rags, and will but defile us. True penitents cast away their idols as filthy rags, *ch.* xxx. 22, odious in their sight; here they acknowledge even their righteousness to be so in God's sight, if he should deal with them in strict justice. Our best duties are so defective, and so far short of the rule, that they are as rags, and so full of sin and corruption cleaving to them, that they are as filthy rags. When we would do good, evil is present with us; and the iniquity of our holy things would be our ruin if we were under the law.

2. There was a general coldness of devotion among them, ver. 7. The measure was filled by the abounding iniquity of the people, and nothing was done to empty it. 1st. Prayer was in a manner neglected. "There is none that calleth upon thy name," none that seeks to thee for grace to reform us, and take away sin; or for mercy to relieve us, and take away the judgments which our sins have brought upon us. Therefore people are so bad, because they do not pray: compare *Ps.* xiv. 3, 4, they are "altogether become filthy," for "they call not upon the Lord." It bodes ill to a people when prayer is restrained among them. 2nd. It was very negligently performed. If there was here and there one that called on God's name, it was with a great deal of indifferency. There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of God. Note, *First.* To pray is to take hold of God, by faith to take hold of the promises, and the declarations God has made of his good-will to us, and to plead them with him; to take hold of him as of one who is about to depart from us, earnestly begging of him not to leave us; or of one that is departed, soliciting his return; to take hold of him as he that wrestles takes hold of him he wrestles with; for the seed of Jacob wrestle with him and so prevail. But when we take hold on God, it is as the boatman with his hook takes hold on the shore, as if he would pull the shore to him, but really it is to pull himself to the shore; so we pray, not to bring God to our mind, but to bring ourselves to his. *Secondly.* Those that would take hold of God in prayer, so as to prevail with him, must stir up themselves to do it. All that is within us must be employed in the duty, and all little enough; our thoughts fixed, and our affections flaming. And in order hereunto, all that is within us must be engaged, and summoned into the service; we must stir up the gift that is in us, by an actual consideration of the importance of the work that is before us, and a close application of mind towards it. But how can we expect God should come to us in ways of mercy, when there are none that do this; when those that profess to be intercessors are mere triflers?

Secondly. They acknowledge their afflictions to be the fruit and product of their own sins and God's wrath.

1. They brought their troubles upon themselves by their own folly. "We are all as an unclean thing," and therefore we do all fade away as a leaf, ver. 6; we not only wither and lose our beauty, but we fall and drop off, so the word signifies, as leaves in autumn. Our profession of religion withers, and we grow dry and sapless; our prosperity withers, and comes to nothing. We fall to the ground, as despicable and contemptible; and then "our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away," and hurried us into captivity, as the winds in autumn blow off, and then blow away, the faded, withered leaves, *Ps.* i. 3, 4. Sinners are blasted, and then carried away by the malignant and violent wind of their own iniquity; it withers them, and then ruins them.

2. God brought their troubles upon them by his wrath; ver. 7, "Thou hast hid thy face from us," that is, been displeased with us, and refused to afford us any succour. When they made themselves as an unclean thing, no wonder that God turned his face away from them as loathing them. Yet this was not all; Thou "hast consumed us, because of our iniquities." This is the same complaint with that, *Ps.* xc. 7, 8, "We are consumed by thine anger." Thou hast melted us, so the word is. God had them in the furnace, not to consume them as dross, but to melt them as gold, that they might be refined and new cast.

Thirdly. They claim relation to God as their God, and humbly plead it with him, and, in consideration of it, cheerfully refer themselves to him; ver. 8, "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father." Though we have carried it very undutifully and ungratefully towards thee, yet still we have owned thee as our Father: and, though thou hast corrected us, yet thou hast not cast us off. Foolish and careless as we are, poor and despised, and trampled upon as we are by our enemies, yet still thou art our Father. To thee, therefore, we return in our repentance, as the prodigal arose and came to his father; to thee we apply ourselves by prayer. From whom should we expect relief and succour but from our Father? It is the wrath of a Father that we are under, who will be reconciled, and not keep his anger for ever. God is their Father, 1. By creation. He gave them their being, formed them into a people, shaped them as he pleased; "We are the clay, and thou our potter;" therefore we will not quarrel with thee, however thou art pleased to deal with us, *Jer.* xviii. 6. Nay, therefore, we will hope that thou wilt deal well with us, that thou who madest us wilt new make us, new form us, though we have unmade and formed ourselves. "We are all as an unclean thing," but "we are all the work of thy hands;" therefore do away our uncleanness, that we may be fit for thy use, the use we were made for. We are the work of thy hands, therefore forsake us not, *Ps.* cxxxviii. 8. 2. By covenant. This is pleaded ver. 9, "Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people," all the people thou hast in the world, that make open profession of thy name. We are all called thy people; so our neighbours look upon us, and therefore what we suffer reflects upon thee, and the relief that our case requires is expected from thee. We are thy people; and "should not a people seek unto their God?" *ch.* viii. 19. We are thine, save us, *Ps.* cxix. 94. Note, When we are under providential rebukes from God, it is good to keep fast hold of our covenant relation to him.

Fourthly. They are importunate with God for the turning away of his anger, and the pardoning of their sins; ver. 9, "Be not wrath very sore, O Lord," though we have deserved thou shouldest, "neither remember iniquity for ever" against us. They do not expressly pray for the removal of the judgment they were under; as to that they refer themselves to God; but, 1. They pray that God would be reconciled to them, and then they can be easy, whether the affliction be continued or removed; Be not wroth to extremity, but let thine anger be mitigated by the clemency and compassion of a father. They do not

say, Lord, rebuke us not, for that may be necessary, but, Not in thine anger, not in thy hot displeasure. It is but in a little wrath that God hides his face. 2. They pray that they may not be dealt with according to the desert of their sin; "Neither remember iniquity for ever." Such is the evil of sin, that it deserves to be remembered for ever; and this is that which they deprecate, that consequence of sin which is for ever. Those make it to appear they are truly humbled under the hand of God that are more afraid of the terror of God's wrath, and the fatal consequences of their own sin, than of any judgment whatsoever, looking upon these as the sting of death.

Fifthly. They lodge in the court of heaven a very melancholy representation or memorial of the lamentable condition they were in, and the ruins they were groaning under.

1. Their own houses were in ruins, ver. 10. The cities of Judah were destroyed by the Chaldeans, and the inhabitants of them were carried away, so that there was none to repair them or take any notice of them, which would in a few years make them look like perfect deserts, "Thy holy cities are a wilderness." The cities of Judah are called holy cities, for the people were unto God a kingdom of priests. The cities had synagogues in them, in which God was served, and therefore they lamented the ruins of them, and insisted upon this in pleading with God for them; not so much that they were stately cities, rich or ancient ones, but they are holy cities, cities in which God's name is known, professed, and called upon. These cities are a wilderness, the beauty of them is sullied, they are neither inhabited nor visited, as formerly; "They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land," *Ps.* lxxiv. 8. Nor was it only the lesser cities that were thus left as a wilderness unfrequented, but even "Zion is a wilderness," the city of David itself lies in ruins. Jerusalem, that was beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth, is now deformed, and is become the scorn and scandal of the whole earth; that noble city is a desolation, a heap of rubbish. See what devastations sin brings upon a people, and an external profession of sanctity will be no fence against them. Holy cities, if they become wicked cities, will be soonest of all turned into a wilderness, *Am.* iii. 2.

2. God's house was in ruins, ver. 11. This they lament most of all, that the temple was burnt with fire; but as soon as it was built they were told what their sin would bring it to, 2 *Chr.* vii. 21, "This house, which is high, shall be an astonishment." Observe how pathetically they bewail the ruins of the temple. 1st. It was their holy and beautiful house. It was a most sumptuous building, but the holiness of it was, in their eye, the greatest beauty of it; and consequently the profanation of it was the saddest part of its desolation, and that which grieved them most, that the sacred services that used to be performed there were discontinued. 2nd. It was the place where their fathers praised God with their sacrifices and songs. What pity is it that that should lie in ashes which had been for so many ages the glory of their nation! It aggravated their present disuse of the songs of Zion that their fathers had so often praised God with them. They interest God in the cause when they plead it was the house where he had been praised, and put him in mind, too, of his covenant with their fathers, by taking notice of their fathers' praising him. 3rd. With it all their pleasant things were laid waste. All their desires, their delights, all those things which were employed by them in the service of God, which they had a great delight in. Not only the furniture of the temple, the altars, and the table, but especially the sabbaths and new moons, and all their religious feasts, which they used to keep with gladness, their ministers and solemn assemblies, these were all a desolation. Note, God's people reckon their sacred things their most delectable things; rob them of holy ordinances and the means of grace, and you lay waste all their pleasant things. What have they more? Observe here how God and his people have their interests twisted and interchanged. When they speak of the cities for their own habitation they call them, "thy holy cities," for to thee we have dedicated them. When they speak of the temple wherein God dwelt they call it, "Our beautiful house," and its furniture, "Our pleasant things," for they had heartily espoused it, and all the interests of it. If thus we interest God in all our concerns by devoting them to his service, and interest ourselves in all his concerns by laying them near our hearts, we may with satisfaction leave both with him, for he will perfect both.

Sixthly. They conclude with an affectionate expostulation, humbly arguing with God concerning their present desolations; ver. 12, "Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things?" Or, Canst thou contain thyself at these things? Canst thou see thy temple ruined, and not resent it, not revenge it? Has the jealous God forgotten to be jealous? *Ps.* lxxiv. 22, "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause." Lord, thou art insulted, thou art blasphemed, and "wilt thou hold thy peace," and take no notice of it? Shall the highest affronts that can be done to heaven pass unrebuked? When we are abused we hold our peace, because vengeance doth not belong to us, and because we have a God to refer our cause to. When God is injured in his honour it may justly be expected he should speak in the vindication of it. His people prescribe not to him what he shall say, but their prayer is, as here, *Ps.* lxxxiii. 1, "Keep not thou silence, O God;" and *Ps.* cix. 1, "Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise." Speak for the conviction of thine enemies, speak for the comfort and relief of thy people; for wilt thou afflict us very sore, or afflict us for ever? as it may be read. It is a sore affliction to good people to see God's sanctuary laid waste, and nothing done towards the raising of it out of its ruins. But God hath said he will not contend for ever, and therefore his people may depend upon it that their afflictions shall be neither to extremity nor to eternity, but light, and for a moment.

CHAPTER LXV.

We are now drawing towards the conclusion of this evangelical prophecy; the two last chapters of which direct us to look as far forwards as the new heavens and the new earth, the new world which the gospel dispensation should bring in; and the separation that should by it be made between the precious and the vile: For judgment, saith Christ, am I come into this world. And why should it seem absurd, that the prophet here should speak of that, to which all the prophets bare witness, 1 *Pet.* i. 10, 11. The rejection of the Jews, and the calling in of the Gentiles, is often mentioned in the New Testament, as that which was foreseen and foretold by the prophets, *Acts* x. 43; xiii. 40; *Rom.* xvi. 26. In this chapter we have, I. The preventing of the Gentiles with the gospel call, ver. 1. II. The rejection of the Jews for their obstinacy and unbelief, ver. 2—7. III. The saving of a remnant of them, by bringing them into the gospel church, ver. 8—10. IV. The judgments of God that should pursue the rejected Jews, ver. 11—16. V. The blessings reserved for the Christian church, which should be its joy and glory, ver. 17—25. But these things are here prophesied of under the type and figure of the difference God would make between some and others of the Jews after their return out of captivity, between those that feared God, and those that did not; with reproofs of the sins then found among them, and promises of the blessings then in reserve for them.

I AM sought of *them that* asked not *for me;*
I am found of *them that* sought me not:
I said, Behold me, behold me,
Unto a nation *that* was not called by my name.
2 I have spread out my hands all the day
Unto a rebellious people,
Which walketh in a way *that was* not good,
After their own thoughts; [face;
3 A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my
That sacrificeth in gardens,
And burneth incense upon altars of brick;
4 Which remain among the graves,

SEPULCHRAL CAVES.

And lodge in the monuments,
Which eat swine's flesh,
And broth of abominable *things is in* their vessels;
5 Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me;
For I am holier than thou.
These *are* a smoke in my nose,
A fire that burneth all the day.
6 Behold, *it is* written before me:
I will not keep silence, but will recompense,
Even recompense into their bosom,
7 Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together,
saith the LORD,
Which have burned incense upon the mountains,
And blasphemed me upon the hills: [bosom.
Therefore will I measure their former work into their

The apostle Paul, an expositor we may depend upon, hath given us the true sense of these verses, and told us what was the event they pointed at and were fulfilled in, namely, the calling in of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews, by the preaching of the Gospel, *Rom.* x. 20, 21; and he observes that herein Esaias is very bold, not only in foretelling a thing so incredible and improbable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a mighty affront to their nation, and therein Moses' words would be made good, *Deu.* xxxii. 21; "I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people."

First. It is here foretold that the Gentiles that had been afar off should be made nigh, ver. 1. Paul reads it thus, "I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." Observe what a wonderful and blessed change was made with them, and how they were surprised into it. 1. Those that had long been without God in the world shall now be set on seeking him, that had not said, Where is God my Maker? shall now begin to inquire after him. Neither they nor their fathers had called upon his name, but either lived without prayer or prayed to stocks and stones, the work of men's hands. But now they shall be baptized, and call on the name of the Lord, *Acts* ii. 21. With what pleasure doth the great God here speak of his being sought unto. And how doth he glory in it, especially by those that in time past had not asked for him! For there is joy in heaven over great sinners that repent. 2. God shall prevent their prayers with his blessings; "I am found of them that sought me not." This happy acquaintance and correspondence between God and the Gentile world began on his side; they came to know God because they were known of him, *Gal.* iv. 9, to seek God and find him, because they were first sought and found of him. Though in after communion God is found of those that seek him, *Pr.* viii. 17, yet in the first conversion he is found of those that seek him not, for therefore we love him, because he first loved us. The design of the bounty of common providence to them was, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, *Acts* xvii. 27. But they sought him not; still he was to them an unknown God, and yet God was found of them. 3. God gave them the advantages of a Divine revelation which had never made a profession of

religion; "I said, Behold me, behold me;" gave them a sight of me, and invited them to take the comfort and benefit of it, who were "not called by my name," as the Jews for many ages had been. When the apostles went about from place to place preaching the Gospel, this was the substance of what they preached, Behold God, behold him! turn towards him, fix the eyes of your minds upon him, acquaint yourselves with him, admire him, adore him; look off your idols that you have made, and look upon the living God that made you. Christ in them said, Behold me, behold me with an eye of faith; look unto me, and be ye saved. And this was said to those that had long been Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah, *Hos.* i. 8, 9, not a people; and that had not obtained mercy, *Rom.* ix. 25, 26.

Secondly. It is here foretold that the Jews, that had long been a people near to God, should be cast off and set at a distance, ver. 2. The apostle applies this to the Jews in his time, as a seed of evil-doers, *Rom.* x. 21, "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Where observe, 1. How the Jews were courted to the Divine grace. God himself, by his prophets, by his Son, by his apostles, stretched forth his hand to them, as Wisdom did, *Pr.* i. 24. God spread out his hands to them, as one reasoning and expostulating with them; not only beckoned to them with the finger, but spread out his hands, as being ready to embrace and entertain them, reaching forth the tokens of his favour to them, and importuning them to accept of them. When Christ was crucified, his hands were spread out and stretched forth, as if he were preparing to receive returning sinners into his bosom. And this all the day, all the gospel day; he waited to be gracious, and was not weary of waiting: even those that came in at the eleventh hour of the day were not rejected. 2. How they contemned the invitation. It was given to a rebellious and gainsaying people; they were bidden to the wedding supper, and would not come, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Now here we have,

1. The bad character of this people. The world shall see it is not for nothing that they are rejected of God; no, it is for their whoredoms that they are put away. Their character in general is such as one would not expect them to deserve that had been so much the favourites of heaven. 1st. They were very wilful. Right or wrong, they would do as they had a mind. They generally walk on in a way that is not good, not the right way, nor a safe way, for they walk after their own thoughts, their own devices and desires. If our guide be our own thoughts, our way is not likely to be good; for every imagination of the thought of our heart is only evil. God had told them his thoughts, what his mind and will was; but they would walk after their own thoughts, would do what they thought best. 2nd. They were very provoking. This was God's complaint of them all along; they grieved him, they vexed his Holy Spirit, as if they would contrive how to make him their enemy; They provoke me "to anger continually to my face." They cared not what affront they gave to God, though it were in his sight and presence, in a downright contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice; and this continually. It had been their way and manner ever since they were a people; witness the day of temptation in the wilderness. The prophet speaks more particularly of their iniquities and the iniquities of their fathers, as the ground of God's casting them off, ver. 7. Now he gives instances of both. *First.* The most provoking iniquity of their fathers was idolatry. This the prophet tells them was provoking to God, to his face; and it is an iniquity which, as appears by the second commandment, God often visits upon the children. This was the sin that brought them into captivity; and though the captivity pretty well cured them of it, yet, when the final ruin of that nation came, that was again brought into the account against them, for in the day when God visits he will visit that, *Ex.* xxxii. 34. Perhaps there were many, long after the captivity, who, though they did not worship other gods, yet were guilty of the disorders here mentioned, for they married strange wives. 1*st.* They forsook God's temple, and sacrificed in gardens or groves, that they might have the satisfaction of doing it in their own way, for they liked not God's institutions. 2*nd.* They forsook God's altar, and burnt incense upon bricks, altars of their own contriving. They burnt incense according to their own inventions, which were of no more value in comparison with God's institution than an altar of bricks in comparison with the golden altar, which God appointed them to burn incense on; or upon tiles, (so some read it,) such as they covered their flat-roofed houses with, and on them sometimes they burnt incense to their idols, as appears, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 12, where we read of altars "on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz;" and, *Jer.* xix. 13, of their burning incense to the host of heaven upon the roofs of their houses. 3*rd.* They use necromancy, or consulting with the dead, and in order to that they "remain among the graves," and "lodge in the monuments," to seek for the living to the dead, *ch.* v. 19, as the witch of Endor. Or, they used to consult the evil spirits that haunted the sepulchres. 4*th.* They violated the laws of God about their meat, and broke through the distinction between clean and unclean, before it was taken away by the Gospel; they "eat swine's flesh." Some, indeed, chose rather to die than to do it, as Eleazar and the seven brethren, in the story of the Maccabees; but it is likely many did, especially when it came to be a test for their lives. In our Saviour's time we read of a vast herd of swine among them, which gives us cause to suspect that there were many then who made so little conscience of the law as to eat swine's flesh, for which they were justly punished in the destruction of the swine. And the broth, or pieces of other forbidden meats, called here abominable things, was in their vessels, and made use of for food. The forbidden meat is called an abomination, and they that meddle with it are said to make themselves abominable, *Lev.* xi. 42, 43. Those that durst not eat the meat yet made bold with the broth, because they would come as near as might be to that which was forbidden, to shew how they coveted the forbidden fruit. Perhaps this is here put figuratively for all forbidden pleasures and profits which are obtained by sin, that abominable thing which the Lord hates; they loved to be dallying with it, to be tasting of its broth. But those who thus take a pride in venturing upon the borders of sin and the brink of it are in danger of falling into the depths of it. But, *Secondly.* The most provoking iniquity of the Jews in our Saviour's time was, their pride and hypocrisy, that sin of the scribes and Pharisees, against which Christ denounced so many woes, ver. 5. They say, "Stand by thyself," keep off; get thee to thine, (so the original is;) keep to thy own companions; but "come not near to me," lest thou pollute me. Touch me not, I will not allow thee any familiarity with me, "for I am holier than thou," and therefore thou art not good enough to converse with me; "I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican." This they were ready to say to every one they met with; so that in saying, "I am holier than thou," they thought themselves holier than any; not only very good, as good as they should be, as good as they needed to be, but better than any of their neighbours. "These are a smoke in my nose," saith God; such a smoke as comes not from a quick fire, which soon becomes glowing and pleasant, but from a fire of wet wood, that burns all the day, and is nothing but smoke. Note, Nothing in men is more odious and offensive to God than a proud conceit of themselves and contempt of others, for commonly those are most unholy of all that think themselves holier than any.

2. The controversy God had with them for this. The proof against them is plain, "Behold, it is written before me," ver. 6. It is written to be remembered against them in time to come, for they may not perhaps be presently reckoned with. The sins of sinners, and particularly the vain-glorious boasts and scorns of hypocrites, are laid up in store with God, *Deu.* xxxii. 34. And what is written shall be read and proceeded upon; "I will not keep silence" always, though I may keep silence long. They shall not think him altogether such a one as themselves, as sometimes they have done, but he "will recompense, even recompense into their bosom." Those basely abuse religion, that honourable and sacred thing, who make their profession of it the matter of their pride; and the jealous God will reckon with them for it; the profession they boast of shall but serve to aggravate their condemnation. 1st. The iniquity of their fathers shall come against them. Not but that their own sin deserved whatever judgments God brought upon them, and much heavier, and they owned it, *Ezr.* ix. 13; but God would not have wrought so great a desolation upon them, if he had not therein had an eye to the sins of their fathers. Therefore in the last destruction of Jerusalem God is said to bring upon them the blood of the Old Testament martyrs, even that of Abel, *Mat.* xxiii. 35. God will reckon with them not only for their fathers' idols, but for their high places, their burning incense upon the mountains and the hills, though perhaps it was to the true God only. This was blaspheming or reproaching God: it was a reflection upon the choice he had made of the place where he would record his name, and the promise he had made, that there he would meet them and bless them. 2nd. Their own, with that, shall bring ruin upon them. "Your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together," the one aggravating the other, is the former work, which, though it may seem to be overlooked and forgotten, shall be measured into their bosom. God will render into the bosom not only of his open enemies, *Ps.* lxxix. 12, but of his false and treacherous friends, the reproach wherewith they have reproached him.

8 Thus saith the LORD,
As the new wine is found in the cluster,
And *one* saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing *is* in it:
So will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.
9 And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob,
And out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains:
And mine elect shall inherit it,
And my servants shall dwell there.
10 And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, [in,
And the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down
For my people that have sought me.

This is expounded by St. Paul, *Rom.* xi. 1—5, where, when upon occasion of the rejection of the Jews, it is asked, "Hath God then cast away his people?" he answers, No; for "at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." This prophecy has reference to that distinguished remnant. When that hypocritical nation is to be destroyed, God will separate and secure to himself some from among them; some of the Jews shall be brought to embrace the Christian faith, shall be added to the church, and so be saved. And our Saviour hath told us, that for the sake of these elect the days of the destruction of the Jews should be shortened, and a stop put to the desolation, which otherwise would have proceeded to that degree that no flesh should be saved, *Mat.* xxiv. 22. Now,

First. This is illustrated here by a comparison, ver. 8. When a vine is so blasted and withered that there seems to be no sap or life in it, and therefore the dresser of the vineyard is in a mind to pluck it up, or cut it down; yet if never so little of the juice of the grape, fit to make new wine, be found, though but in one cluster, a stander-by interposeth, and saith, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it;" there is life in the root, and hopes that yet it may become good for something. Note, Good men are blessings to the places where they live; and sometimes God spares whole cities and nations for the sake of a few such in them. How ambitious should we be of this honour, not only to be distinguished from others, but serviceable to others!

Secondly. Here is a description of those that shall make up this saved, saving remnant. 1. They are such as serve God. It is for "my servants' sake," ver. 8; and they are my servants that shall dwell there, ver. 9. God's faithful servants, however they are looked upon, are the best friends their country hath; and those who serve him therein serve their generation. 2. They are such as seek God; that make it the end of their lives to glorify God, and the business of their lives to call upon him. It is "for my people that have sought me." They that seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful rewarder.

Thirdly. Here is an account of the mercy God hath in store for them. The remnant that shall return out of captivity shall have a happy settlement again in their own land, and that by an hereditary right, as "a seed out of Jacob," in whom the family is kept up, and the entail preserved, and from whom, as from the seed sown, shall spring a numerous increase; and these typify the remnant of Jacob that shall be incorporated into the gospel church by faith. 1. They shall have a good portion for themselves. They shall inherit my mountains, the holy mountains on which Jerusalem and the temple were built; or, the mountains of Canaan, the land of promise, typifying the covenant of grace, which all God's servants, his elect, both inhabit and inherit; they make it their refuge, their rest, and residence; so they dwell in it, are at home in it; and they have taken it to be their heritage for ever, and it shall be to them an inheritance incorruptible. God's chosen, the spiritual seed of praying Jacob, shall be the inheritors of his mountains of bliss and joy, and shall be carried safe to them through the vale of tears. 2. They shall have a green pasture for their flocks; ver. 10, Sharon and the valley of Achor shall again be as well replenished as ever they were with cattle. Sharon lay westward near Joppa, Achor lay eastward near Jordan; which intimates that they shall recover the possession of the whole land, that they shall have wherewith to stock it all, and that they shall peaceably enjoy it, and there shall be none to disturb them or make them afraid. Gospel ordinances are the fields and valleys where the sheep of Christ shall go in and out, and find pasture, *Jno.* x. 9; and where they are made to lie down, *Ps.* xxiii. 2, as Israel's herds in the valley of Achor, *Hos.* ii. 15.

11 But ye *are* they that forsake the LORD,
That forget my holy mountain,
That prepare a table for that troop,
And that furnish the drink offering unto that number.

12 Therefore will I number you to the sword,
And ye shall all bow down to the slaughter:
Because when I called, ye did not answer;
When I spake, ye did not hear;
But did evil before mine eyes,
And did choose *that* wherein I delighted not.
13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD,
Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry:
Behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty:
Behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed:
14 Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart,
But ye shall cry for sorrow of heart,
And shall howl for vexation of spirit.
15 And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen:
For the Lord GOD shall slay thee,
And call his servants by another name:
16 That he who blesseth himself in the earth
Shall bless himself in the God of truth;
And he that sweareth in the earth
Shall swear by the God of truth;
Because the former troubles are forgotten,
And because they are hid from mine eyes.

Here the different states of the wicked and godly, of the Jews that believed, and of those that still persisted in unbelief, are set the one over against the other, as life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse.

First. Here is the fearful doom of those that persisted in their idolatry after their deliverance out of Babylon, and in infidelity after the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. The doom is the same upon both; ver. 12, "I will number you to the sword," as sheep for the slaughter, and there shall be no escaping, no standing out, you shall bow down to it. God's judgments come, 1st. Regularly, and are executed according to the commission. Those fall by the sword that are numbered or counted out to it, and none but they. Though the sword seems to devour promiscuously one as well as another, yet it is made to know its number, and shall not exceed. 2nd. Irresistibly. The strongest and most stout-hearted sinners shall be forced to bow before them; for none ever hardened their hearts against God and prospered. Now observe what the sins are that number them to the sword.

1. Idolatry was the ancient sin; ver. 11, "Ye are they that," instead of seeking me, and serving me as my people, "forsake the Lord," disown him, and cast him off to embrace other gods; "that forget my holy mountain," the privileges of that, and the obligations you lie under to that, to burn incense upon the mountains of your idols, ver. 7; and have deserted the only living and true God. They prepared a table for that troop of deities which the heathen worship, and pour out drink offerings to that numberless number of them; for they that thought one God too little never thought scores and hundreds enough, but were still adding to the number of them, till they had as many gods as cities, and their altars were as thick as "heaps in the furrows of the fields," *Hos.* xii. 11. Some take Gad and Meni, which we translate a troop and a number, to be the proper names of two of their idols, answering to Jupiter and Mercury. Whatever they were, their worshippers spared no cost to do them honour; they prepare a table for them, and filled out mixed wine for drink offerings to them; would pinch their families rather than stint their devotions, which should shame the worshippers of the true God out of their niggardliness.

2. Infidelity was the sin of the latter Jews; ver. 12, "When I called, ye did not answer," which refers to the same that ver. 2 did, "I have stretched out my hands to a rebellious people;" and that is applied to those who rejected the Gospel. Our Lord Jesus himself called; he "stood and cried," *Jno.* vii. 37, but they did not hear, they would not answer; they were not convinced by his reasonings, nor moved by his expostulations. Both the fair warnings he gave them of death and ruin, and the fair offers he made them of life and happiness, were slighted, and made no impression upon them. Yet this was not all; Ye "did evil before mine eyes," not by surprise, or through inadvertency, but with deliberation; ye "did choose that wherein I delighted not;" he means, which he did utterly detest and abhor. It is not strange that those who will not be persuaded to choose that which is good do persist in their choice and pursuit of that which is evil. See the malignity of sin, it is evil in God's eyes, highly offensive to him, and yet it is committed before his eyes, in his sight and presence, and in contempt of him. It is likewise a contradiction to the will of God; it is doing that of choice which we know will displease him.

Secondly. The aggravation of this doom, from the consideration of the happy state of those that were brought to repentance and faith. The blessedness of those that serve God, and the woful condition of those that rebel against him, are here set the one over against the other, that they may serve as a foil to each other, ver. 13—16. 1st. God's servants may well think themselves happy, and for ever indebted to that free grace that made them so, when they see how miserable some of their neighbours are for want of that grace, who are hardened, and likely to perish for ever in unbelief, and what a narrow escape they had of being among them: see *ch.* lxvi. 24. 2nd. It will add to the grief of those that perish to see the happiness of God's servants, whom they had hated and vilified, and looked upon with the utmost disdain; and especially to think that they might have shared in their bliss, if it had not been their own fault. It made the torment of the rich man in hell the more grievous that he saw "Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom," *Lu.* xvi. 23: see *Lu.* xiii. 28. Sometimes the providence of God makes such a difference as this between good and bad in this world; and the prosperity of the righteous becomes a grievous eyesore and vexation of heart to the wicked, *Ps.* cxii. 10; however, it will be so in the great day. "We fools counted his life madness, and his end without honour; but now, how is he numbered with the saints, and his lot is among the chosen!"

Now the difference of their states lies in two things:

1. In point of comfort and satisfaction. 1st. God's servants shall eat and drink. They shall have the bread of life to feed, to feast upon continually; shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, and shall want nothing that is good for them. Heaven's happiness will be to them an everlasting feast, they shall be filled with that which now they hunger and thirst after; but those who set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in that, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving; for it is not bread,—it surfeits, but it satisfieth not. In communion with God, and dependence upon him, there is full satisfaction, but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but disappointment. 2nd. God's servants shall rejoice, and sing for joy of heart. They have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them, but they have an allay sufficient for it; and, as far as faith is in act and exercise, they have a heart to rejoice, and their joy is their strength. They shall rejoice in their hope, because it shall not make them ashamed. Heaven will be a world of everlasting joy to all that are now sowing in tears. But, on the other hand, they that forsake the Lord shut themselves out from all true joy, for they shall be ashamed of their vain confidence in themselves, and their own righteousness, and the hopes they had built thereon. When the expectations of bliss wherewith they had flattered themselves are frustrated, O what confusion will fill their faces! Then shall they "cry for sorrow of heart," and "howl for vexation of spirit," perhaps, in this world, when their laughter shall be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness; however, in that world where the torment will be endless, easeless, and remediless; nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth to eternity. Let these two be compared, "Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented;" and which of the two will we choose to take our lot with?

2. In point of honour and reputation, ver. 15, 16. "The memory of the just is" and shall be "blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot." 1st. The name of the idolaters and unbelievers shall be left for a curse, shall be loaded with ignominy, and made for ever infamous. It shall be used in giving ill characters,—Thou art as cruel as a Jew; and in imprecations,—God make thee as miserable as a Jew. It shall be for a curse to God's chosen; that is, for a warning to them. They shall be afraid of falling under the curse upon the Jewish nation, of perishing by the same example of unbelief. The curse of those whom God rejects should make his chosen stand in awe. "The Lord God shall slay thee;" that is, shall quite extirpate the Jews, and cut them off from being a people; they shall no longer live as a nation, nor ever be incorporated again. 2nd. The name of God's chosen shall become a blessing; he shall "call his servants by another name." The children of the covenant shall no longer be called Jews, but Christians; and to them, under that name, all the promises and privileges of the new covenant shall be secured. This other name shall be an honourable name; it shall not be confined to one nation, but with it men shall bless themselves in the earth, that is, all the world over; God shall have servants out of all nations, that shall all be dignified with this new name. *First.* They shall give honour to God both in their prayers and in their solemn oaths, in their addresses for his favour as their felicity, and their appeals to his justice as their judge. This is a part of the homage we owe to God: we must bless ourselves in him; that is, we must reckon that we have enough to make us happy, that we need no more, and can desire no more, if we have him for our God. It is of great consequence what that is which we bless ourselves in, which we most please ourselves with, and value ourselves by our interest in. Worldly people bless themselves in the abundance they have of this world's goods, *Ps.* xlix. 18; *Lu.* xii. 19; but God's servants bless themselves in him, as a God all-sufficient for them. He is their crown of glory, and diadem of beauty, and their strength and portion; by him also they shall swear, and not by any creature or any false god. To his judgment they shall refer themselves from whom every man's judgment doth proceed. *Secondly.* They shall give honour to him as "the God of truth;" 'the God of the Amen,' so the word is. Some understand it of Christ, who is himself "the Amen, the faithful and true witness," *Rev.* iii. 14, and in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen, 2 *Cor.* i. 20. In him we must bless ourselves, and by him we must swear unto the Lord, and covenant with him. He that is blessed in the earth, (so some read it,) shall be blessed in the true God; for Christ is "the true God, and eternal life," 1 *Jno.* v. 20. And it was promised of old, that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed, *Gen.* xii. 3. Some read it, He shall bless himself in the God of the faithful people; in God, as the God of all believers; desiring no more but to share in the blessings wherewith they are blessed, to be dealt with as he useth to deal with them. *Thirdly.* They shall give him honour, as the author of this blessed change which they have the experience of. They shall think themselves happy in having him for their God, that has made them to forget their former troubles, the remembrance of them being swallowed up in their present comforts, because they are hid from God's eyes; that is, they are quite taken away; for if there were any remainder of their troubles, God would be sure to have his eye upon it, in compassion to them, and concern for them. They shall no longer feel them, for God will no longer see them. He is pleased to speak as if he would make himself easy by making them easy; and therefore they shall, with a great deal of satisfaction, bless themselves in him.

17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth:
And the former shall not be remembered,
Nor come into mind.
18 But be ye glad and rejoice for ever
In that which I create:
For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing,
And her people a joy.
19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
And joy in my people:
And the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her,
Nor the voice of crying.
20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days,
Nor an old man that hath not filled his days:
For the child shall die an hundred years old;
But the sinner *being* an hundred years old shall be accursed.
21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit *them;*
And they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.
22 They shall not build, and another inhabit;

They shall not plant, and another eat:
For as the days of a tree *are* the days of my people,
And mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
23 They shall not labour in vain,
Nor bring forth for trouble;
For they *are* the seed of the blessed of the LORD,
And their offspring with them.
24 And it shall come to pass,
That before they call, I will answer;
And while they are yet speaking, I will hear.
25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
And the lion shall eat straw like the bullock:
And dust *shall be* the serpent's meat.
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain,
Saith the LORD.

MOUNT MORIAH.

These promises, if they were in part fulfilled, when the Jews (after their return out of captivity) were settled in peace in their own land, and brought as it were into a new world, yet they were to have their full accomplishment in the gospel church, militant first, and at length triumphant. The "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ, we are to look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the Gospel that old things are passed away, and all things are become new; and by it, that those that are in Christ are new creatures, 2 *Cor.* v. 17. It was a mighty and happy change that was described, ver. 16, that the former troubles were forgotten; but here it riseth much higher, even the former world shall be forgotten, and shall no more come into mind. They that were converted to the Christian faith were so transported with the comforts of it, that all the comforts they were before acquainted with became as nothing to them. Not only their foregoing griefs, but their foregoing joys, were lost and swallowed up in this. The glorified saints will therefore have forgotten this world, because they will be entirely taken up with the other. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth." See how inexhaustible the Divine power is. The same God that created one heaven and earth can create another. See how entire the happiness of the saints is. It shall be all of a piece; with the new heavens God will create them (if they have occasion for it to make them happy) a new earth too; The world is yours, if you be Christ's, 1 *Cor.* iii. 22. When God is reconciled to us, which gives us a new heaven, the creatures too are reconciled to us, which gives us a new earth. The future glory of the saints will be so entirely different from what they ever knew before, that it may well be called, "new heavens, and a new earth," 2 *Pet.* iii. 13. "Behold, I make all things new," *Rev.* xxi. 5.

First. There shall be new joys. For, 1. All the church's friends, and all that belong to her, shall rejoice, ver. 18. You shall "be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create." The new things which God creates in and by his gospel are and shall be matter of everlasting joy to all believers. "My servants shall rejoice," ver. 13; at last they shall, though now they mourn. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." 2. The church shall be the matter of their joy; so pleasant, so prosperous shall her condition be; "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." The church shall not only rejoice, but be rejoiced in; those that have sorrowed with the church shall rejoice with her. 3. The prosperity of the church shall be a rejoicing to God himself, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, ver. 19. I will rejoice in Jerusalem's joy, and will joy in my people; for in all their afflictions he was afflicted. God will not only rejoice in the church's well-doing, but will himself rejoice to do her good, and rest in his love to her, *Zeph.* iii. 17. What God rejoiceth in it becomes us to rejoice in. 4. There shall be no allay of this joy nor any alteration of this happy condition of the church; "The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her." If this relate to any state of the church in this life, it means no more but that the former occasions of grief shall not return, but God's people shall long enjoy an uninterrupted tranquillity. But in heaven it shall have full accomplishment, in respect both of the perfection and perpetuity of the promised joy; there all tears shall be wiped away.

Secondly. There shall be new life, ver. 20. Untimely deaths by the sword, or sickness shall be no more known as they have been; and by this means there shall be no more crying, ver. 19; when there shall be no more death, there shall be no more sorrow, *Rev.* xxi. 21. As death has reigned by sin, so life shall reign by righteousness, *Rom.* v. 14, 21. 1. Believers through Christ shall be satisfied with life, though it be never so short on earth. If an infant end its days quickly, yet it shall not be reckoned to die untimely; for the shorter its life is, the longer will its rest be. Though death reign over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, yet they, dying in the arms of Christ, the second Adam, and belonging to his kingdom, they are not to be called infants of days: but even the child shall be reckoned to "die a hundred years old," for he shall rise again at full age, shall rise to eternal life. Some understand it of children, that in their childhood are so eminent for wisdom and grace, and by death nipped in the blossom, that they may be said to die a hundred years old; and as for old men, it is promised, that they shall fill their days with the fruits of righteousness, which they still bring forth in old age, to shew that the Lord is upright; and then it is a good old age. An old man that is wise, and good, and useful, may truly be said to have filled his days. Old men that have their hearts upon the world, have never filled their days; never have enough of this world, but would still continue longer in it. But that man dies old, and 'full of days,'—*satur dierum*, that, with Simon, having seen God's salvation, desires now to depart in peace. 2. Unbelievers shall be unsatisfied, and unhappy in life, though it be never so long. "The sinner," though he live to be "a hundred years old, shall be accursed." His living so long shall be no token to him of the Divine favour and blessing; nor shall it be any shelter to him from the Divine wrath and curse. The sentence he lies under will certainly be executed, and his long life is but a long reprieve. Nay, it is itself a curse to him; for the longer he lives the more wrath he treasures up against the day of wrath, and will have the more sins to answer for. So that the matter is not great whether our lives on earth be long or short, but whether we live the lives of saints, or the lives of sinners.

Thirdly. There shall be a new enjoyment of the comforts of life. That, whereas before it was very uncertain and precarious, their enemies inhabited the houses which they built, and eat the fruit of the trees which they planted, now it shall be otherwise; they shall build houses and inhabit them, shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them, ver. 21, 22. This intimates that the labour of their hands shall be blessed, and be made to prosper. They shall gain what they aimed at, and what they have gained shall be preserved and secured to them. They shall enjoy it comfortably, and nothing shall embitter it to them; and they shall live to enjoy it long. Strangers shall not break upon them, to expel them, and plant themselves in their room, as sometimes they have done. "Mine elect shall" wear out, or "long enjoy, the work of their hands;" it is honestly got, and it will wear well. It is the work of their hands, which they themselves have laboured for; and it is most comfortable to enjoy that, and not to eat the bread of idleness, or bread of deceit. If we have a heart to enjoy it, that is the gift of God's grace, *Eccl.* iii. 13; and if we live to enjoy it long, it is the gift of God's providence; for that is here promised, "As the days of a tree are the days of my people;" as the days of an oak, (*ch.* vi. 13,) whose substance is in it, though it cast its leaves. Though it be stripped every winter, it recovers itself again, and lasts many ages. 'As the days of the tree of life;' so the Seventy. Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings, or disturb them in the enjoyment of them.

Fourthly. There shall be a new generation rising up in their stead, to inherit and enjoy these blessings; ver. 23, "They shall not labour in vain," for they shall not only enjoy the work of their hands themselves; but they shall leave it with satisfaction to those that shall come after them, and not with such a melancholy prospect as Solomon did, *Eccl.* ii. 18, 19. "They shall not beget and bring forth children for trouble; for they are themselves the seed of the blessed of the Lord," and there is a blessing entailed upon them by descent from their ancestors, which "their offspring with them" shall partake of, and shall be, as well as they, "the seed of the blessed of the Lord." They shall not bring forth for trouble; for, 1. God will make their children that rise up, comforts to them; they shall have the joy of seeing them walk in the truth. 2. He will make the times that come after comfortable to their children. As they shall be good, so it shall be well with them; they shall not be brought forth to days of trouble, nor shall it ever be said, Blessed is the womb that bore not. In the gospel church Christ's name shall be borne up by a succession; "a seed shall serve him," *Ps.* xxii. 30, "the seed of the blessed of the Lord."

Fifthly. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their God; ver. 34, Even "before they call, I will answer." God will prevent their prayers with the blessings of his goodness. David did but say, "I will confess," and God forgave, *Ps.* xxxii. 5. The father of the prodigal met him in his return. "While they are yet speaking," before they have finished their prayer, I will give them the thing they pray for, or the assurances and earnests of it. These are high expressions of God's readiness to hear prayer; and this appears much more in the grace of the Gospel than it did under the law; and we owe the comfort of it to the mediation of Christ as our Advocate with the Father, and are obliged in gratitude to give a ready ear to God's calls.

Sixthly. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their neighbours; ver. 25, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together," as they did in Noah's ark. God's people, though they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, yet shall be safe and unhurt; for God will not so much break the power, and tie the hands of their enemies, as formerly, but will turn their hearts, will alter their disposition by his grace. When Paul, that had been a persecutor of the disciples, (that being of the tribe of Benjamin, ravened as a wolf, *Gen.* xlix. 27,) joined himself to them, and became one of them, then the wolf and the lamb fed together. So also, when the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was slain, all hostilities ceased, and they fed together as one sheepfold, under Christ the great Shepherd, *Jno.* x. 16. The enemies of the church ceased to do the mischief they had done, and its members ceased to be so quarrelsome with, and injurious to, one another as they had been; so that there was none, either from without or from within, to hurt or destroy,—none to disturb it, much less to ruin it, in all the holy mountain; as was promised, *ch.* xi. 9. For, 1. Men shall be changed. "The lion" shall no more be a beast of prey, (as perhaps he never would have been if sin had not entered,) but "shall eat straw like the bullock;" shall know his owner, and his master's crib, as the ox doth. When those that lived by spoil and rapine, and coveted to enrich themselves, right or wrong, are brought by the grace of God to accommodate themselves to their condition, to live by honest labour, and to be content with such things as they have—when they that stole steal no more, but work with their hands the thing that is good,—then this is fulfilled, that "the lion shall eat straw like the bullock." 2. Satan shall be chained, the dragon bound; "for dust shall be the serpent's meat" again. That great enemy, when he has been let loose, has glutted and regaled himself with the precious blood of saints, who, by his instigation, have been persecuted; and with the precious souls of sinners, who, by his instigation, have been persecutors, and have ruined themselves for ever; but now he shall be confined to dust, according to the sentence; "On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat," *Gen.* iii. 14. All the enemies of God's church, that are subtle and venomous as serpents, shall be conquered and subdued, and be made to lick the dust. Christ shall reign as Zion's King, till all the enemies of his kingdom be made his footstool, and theirs too; and in the holy mountain above, there, and there only, shall this promise have its full accomplishment, that there shall be none to hurt or destroy.

CHAPTER LXVI.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, and many expressions the same; and therefore looks the same way, to the different state of the good and bad among the Jews, at their return out of captivity; but that typifying the rejection of the Jews in the days of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the setting up of the gospel kingdom in the world. The 1st verse of the chapter is applied by Stephen to the dismantling of the temple, by the planting of the Christian church, *Acts* vii. 49, 50, which may serve as a key to the whole chapter. We have here, I. The contempt God puts upon ceremonial services, in comparison with moral duties; and an intimation therein of his purpose shortly to put an end to the temple and sacrifice, and reject those that adhered to them, ver. 1—4. II. The salvation God will in due time work for his people, out of the hands of their oppressors, ver. 5; speaking terror to the persecutors, ver. 6, and comfort to the persecuted, a speedy and complete deliverance, ver. 7—9; a joyful settlement, ver. 10, 11; the accession of the Gentiles to them, and abundance of satisfaction therein, ver. 12—14. III. The terrible vengeance which God will bring upon the enemies of his church and people, ver. 15—18. IV. The happy establishment of the church upon large and sure foundations; its constant attendance on God, and triumph over its enemies, ver. 19—24. And we may well expect that this evangelical prophet, here, in the close of this prophecy, should (as he doth) look as far forward as to the latter days, to the last day, to the days of eternity.

THUS saith the LORD,
The heaven *is* my throne,
And the earth *is* my footstool:
Where *is* the house that ye build unto me?
And where *is* the place of my rest?
2 For all those *things* hath mine hand made,
And all those *things* have been, saith the LORD:
But to this *man* will I look,
Even to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit,
And trembleth at my word.
3 He that killeth an ox *is as if* he slew a man;
He that sacrificeth a lamb, *as if* he cut off a dog's neck;
He that offereth an oblation, *as if he offered* swine's blood;
He that burneth incense, *as if* he blessed an idol.
Yea, they have chosen their own ways,
And their soul delighteth in their abominations.
4 I also will choose their delusions,
And will bring their fears upon them;
Because when I called, none did answer;
When I spake, they did not hear:
But they did evil before mine eyes,
And chose *that* in which I delighted not.

Here, First. The temple is slighted in comparison with a gracious soul, ver. 1, 2. The Jews in the prophet's time, and afterwards in Christ's time, gloried much in the temple, and promised themselves great things from it. To humble them therefore, and to shake their vain confidence, both the prophets and Christ foretold the ruin of the temple, that God would leave it, and then it would soon be desolate. After it was destroyed by the Chaldeans it soon recovered itself, and the ceremonial services were revived with it; but by the Romans it was made a perpetual desolation, and the ceremonial law was abolished with it. That the world might be prepared for this, they were often told, as here, of what little account the temple was with God.

1. That he did not need it. The heaven was the throne of his glory and government, there he sits infinitely exalted in the highest dignity and dominion, above all blessing and praise. The earth is his footstool, on which he stands, overruling all the affairs of it according to his will. If God has so bright a throne, so large a footstool, where then is the house they can build unto God, that can be the residence of his glory; or, where is the place of his rest? What satisfaction can the Eternal Mind take in a house made with men's hands? What occasion has he, as we have, for a house to repose himself in, who fainteth not neither is weary, who neither slumbers nor sleeps? Or, if he had occasion he would not tell us, *Ps.* l. 12; for all these things hath his hands made; heaven, and all its courts; earth, and all its borders, and all the hosts of both. "All those things have been," have had their beginning by the power of God, who was happy from eternity, before they were, and therefore could not be benefited by them. 'All these things are,' so some read it; they still continue, upheld by the same power that made them; so that our goodness extendeth not to him. If he would have had a house for himself to dwell in, he would have made one himself when he made the world; and if he had made one it would have continued to this day, as other creatures do, according to his ordinance; so that he had no need of a temple made with hands.

2. That he would not heed it, so as he would an humble, penitent, gracious heart. He hath a heaven and earth of his own making, and a temple of man's making; but he overlooks them all, that he may look with favour to him that is poor in spirit, humble and serious, self-abasing and self-denying; whose heart is truly contrite for sin, penitent for it, and in pain to get it pardoned, and that trembleth at God's word; not as Felix did, with a transient qualm that was over when the sermon was done, but with an habitual awe of God's majesty and purity, and an habitual dread of his justice and wrath. Such a heart is a living temple for God, he dwells there, and it is the place of his rest; it is like heaven and earth, his throne and his footstool.

Secondly. Sacrifices are slighted when they come from ungracious hands. The sacrifice of the wicked is not only unacceptable, but it is an abomination to the Lord, *Pr.* xv. 8; this is largely shewed here, ver. 3, 4. Observe,

1. How detestable their sacrifices were to God. The carnal Jews, after their return out of captivity, though they relapsed not to idolatry, yet grew very careless and loose in the service of God. They brought the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice, *Mal.* i. 8, 13; and this made their services abominable to God; they had no regard to their sacrifices, and therefore how could they think God should have any regard to them? The unbelieving Jews, after the Gospel was preached, and in it notice given of the offering up of the great sacrifice which put an end to all the ceremonial services, yet continued to offer sacrifices as if the law of Moses had been still in force, and could have made the comers thereunto perfect; and this was an abomination. "He that kills an ox" for his own table is welcome to do it; but he that now kills it, that thus kills it, for God's altar, "is as if he slew a man." It is as great an offence to God as murder itself; he that doth it doth in effect set aside Christ's sacrifice, treads under foot the blood of the covenant, and makes himself accessary to the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord; setting up what Christ died to abolish. "He that sacrificeth a lamb," if it be a corrupt thing, and not the male in his flock, the best he has, if he think to put God off with any thing, he affronts him, instead of pleasing him; it is "as if he cut off a dog's neck;" a creature in the eye of the law so vile that, whereas an ass might be redeemed, the price of a dog was never to be brought into the treasury, *Deu.* xxiii. 18. "He that offers an oblation," a meat offering, or drink offering, is as if he thought to make atonement with swine's blood; a creature that must not be eaten or touched; the broth of it was abominable, *ch.* lxv. 4, much more the blood of it. "He that burns incense" to God, and so puts contempt upon the incense of Christ's intercession, he is "as if he blessed an idol;" it was as great an affront to God as if they had paid their devotions to a false god. Hypocrisy and profaneness are as provoking as idolatry.

2. What their wickedness was which made their sacrifices thus detestable. It is because "they have chosen their own ways," the ways of their own wicked hearts; and not only their hands do but "their soul delighteth in their abominations." They were vicious and immoral in their conversations, chose the way of sin rather than the way of God's commandments, and took pleasure in that which was provoking to God; this made their sacrifices so offensive to God, *ch.* i. 11—15. Those that pretend to honour God by a profession of religion, and yet live wicked lives, put an affront upon him, as if he were the patron of sin. And that which was an aggravation of their wickedness was, that they persisted in it, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to repent and reform. They turned a deaf ear to all the warnings of Divine justice, and all the offers of Divine grace; "When I called, none did answer," as before, *ch.* lxv. 12. And the same follows here that did there, "They did evil before mine eyes;" being deaf to what he said they cared not what he saw, but chose that in which they knew he delighted not. How could they expect to please him in their devotions who took no care to please him in their conversations, but, on the contrary, designed to provoke him?

3. The doom passed upon them for this. They chose their own ways, therefore, saith God, I also will choose their delusions; they have made their choice, (as Mr. Gataker paraphraseth it,) and now I will make mine; they have taken what course they pleased with me, and I will take what course I please with them. I will choose their illusions, or mockeries, so some. As they have mocked God, and dishonoured him by their wickedness, so God will give them up to their enemies to be trampled upon and insulted by them. Or, they shall be deceived by those vain confidences with which they have deceived themselves. God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be beaten with their own rod, and hurried into ruin by their own delusions. God will bring their fears upon them; that is, will bring that upon them which shall be a mighty terror to them; or, that which they themselves have been afraid of, and thought to escape by sinful shifts. Unbelieving hearts, and unpurified, unpacified consciences, need no more to make them miserable than to have their own fears brought upon them.

5 Hear the word of the LORD,
Ye that tremble at his word;
Your brethren that hated you,
That cast you out for my name's sake, said,
Let the LORD be glorified:
But he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be [ashamed.
6 A voice of noise from the city,
A voice from the temple,
A voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his [enemies.
7 Before she travailed, she brought forth;
Before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child.
8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things?
Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day?
Or shall a nation be born at once?
For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.
9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD:
Shall I cause to bring forth, and shut *the womb?* saith [thy God.
10 Rejoice ye with Jerusalem,
And be glad with her, all ye that love her:
Rejoice for joy with her,
All ye that mourn for her:
11 That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations;
That ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.
12 For thus saith the LORD,
Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river,
And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream:
Then shall ye suck,
Ye shall be borne upon *her* sides,
And be dandled upon *her* knees.
13 As one whom his mother comforteth,

So will I comfort you;
And ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
14 And when ye see *this*, your heart shall rejoice,
And your bones shall flourish like an herb:
And the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his [servants,
And *his* indignation toward his enemies.

The prophet, having denounced God's judgments against a hypocritical nation, that made a jest of God's word, and would not answer him when he called to them, here turns his speech to those that trembled at his word, to comfort and encourage them; they shall not be involved in the judgments that are coming upon their unbelieving nation. Ministers must distinguish thus, that when they speak terror to the wicked they may not make the hearts of the righteous sad; *Bone Christiane, hoc nihil ad te*,—'Good Christian, this is nothing to thee.' The prophet, having assured those that tremble at God's word of a gracious look from him, ver. 1, here brings them a gracious message from him. The word of God has comforts in store for those that by true humiliation for sin are prepared to receive them. There were those, ver. 4, that when God spoke would not hear; but if some will not others will. If the heart tremble at the word the ear will be open to it. Now what is here said to them?

First. Let them know that God will plead their just but injured cause against their persecutors; ver. 5, "Your brethren that hated you said, Let the Lord be glorified; but he shall appear to your joy." This, perhaps, might have reference to the case of some of the Jews, at their return out of captivity; but nothing like it appears in the history, and therefore it is rather to be referred to the first preachers and professors of the Gospel among the Jews to whose case it is very applicable. Observe, 1. How the faithful servants of God were persecuted; their brethren hated them. The apostles were Jews by birth, and yet even in the cities of the Gentiles the Jews they met with there were their most bitter and implacable enemies, and stirred up the Gentiles against them. The spouse complains, *Cant.* i. 6, that her mother's children were angry with her. Pilate upbraided our Lord Jesus with this; "Thine own nation have delivered thee unto me," *Jno.* xviii. 35. Their brethren, that should have loved them, and encouraged them for their work's sake, hated them, and cast them out of their synagogues; excommunicated them, as if they had been the greatest blemishes, who really were the greatest blessings, of their church and nation. This was a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. They that hated Christ hated his disciples, because they supported his kingdom and interest, *Jno.* xv. 18; and they cast them out for his name's sake, because they were called by his name, and called upon his name, and laid out themselves to advance his name. Note, It is no new thing for church censures to be misapplied, and for her artillery, that was intended for her defence, to be turned against her best friends, by the treachery of her governors. And they that did this said, "Let the Lord be glorified;" that is, they pretended conscience and a zeal for the honour of God, and the church in it, and did it with all the formalities of devotion. Our Saviour explains this, and seems to have reference to it, *Jno.* xvi. 2, "They shall put you out of the synagogues," and "whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service." *In nomine Domini incipit omne malum*,—'In the name of the Lord commences evil of every kind.' Or, we may understand it as spoken in defiance of God. You say, God will be glorified in your deliverance, let him be glorified then; "Let him make speed and hasten his work," *ch.* v. 19; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. Some take it to be the language of the profane Jews in captivity, bantering their brethren that hoped for deliverance, and ridiculing the expectations they often comforted themselves with, that God would shortly be glorified in it. They thus did what they could to shame the counsel of the poor, *Ps.* xiv. 6. 2. How they were encouraged under these persecutions. Hold out, faith and patience, yet a little while; your enemies hate you and oppress you; your brethren hate you and cast you out; but your Father in heaven loves you, and will appear for you, when no one else will or dare; his providence shall order things so as shall be for comfort to you; he shall appear for your joy, and confusion to those that abuse you and trample on you; they shall be ashamed of their enmity to you. This was fulfilled when, upon the signals given of Jerusalem's approaching ruin, the Jews' hearts failed them for fear; but the disciples of Christ, whom they had hated and persecuted, lifted up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh, *Lu.* xxi. 28. Though God seem to hide himself he will in due time shew himself.

Secondly. Let them know that God's appearances for them will be such as will make a great noise in the world, ver. 6. There shall be "a voice of noise from the city, from the temple." Some make it the joyful and triumphant voice of the church's friends; others the frightful, lamenting voice of her enemies, surprised in the city, and fleeing in vain to the temple for shelter. These voices do but echo to the voice of the Lord, who is now rendering a "recompence to his enemies;" and those that will not hear him speaking this terror shall hear them returning the alarms of it in doleful shrieks. We may well think what a confused noise there was in the city and temple when Jerusalem, after a long siege, was at last taken by the Romans. Some think this prophecy was fulfilled in the prodigies that went before that destruction of Jerusalem, related by Josephus in his History of the Wars of the Jews, lib. vii. cap. 31, that the temple doors flew open suddenly of their own accord, and the priests heard a noise of motion, or shifting, in the most holy place, and presently a voice saying, 'Let us depart hence.' And some time after one Jesus Bar-Annas, at the feast of tabernacles, went up and down the city, continually crying, 'A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds; a voice against Jerusalem, and the temple; a voice against all this people.'

Thirdly. Let them know that God will set up a church for himself in the world, which shall be abundantly replenished in little time; ver. 7, "Before she travailed, she brought forth." This is to be applied in the type to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, which was brought about very easily and silently, without any pain or struggle, such as was when they were brought out of Egypt; that was done by might and power, *Deu.* iv. 34, but this by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, *Zec.* iv. 6. The man-child of the deliverance is rejoiced in, and yet the mother was never in labour for it; "before her pain came, she was delivered." This is altogether surprising, uncommon, and without precedent, unless in the story which the Egyptian midwives told of the Hebrew women, *Ex.* i. 19, that they were lively, and were delivered ere the midwives came unto them. But, "shall the earth be made to bring forth" her fruits "in one day?" no, it is the work of some weeks in the spring to renew the face of the earth, and cover it with its products. Some read it to the same purpose with the next clause, Shall a land be brought forth in one day? or, "Shall a nation be born at once?" Is it to be imagined that a woman at one birth should bring children enough to people a country, and that they should in an instant grow up to maturity? No; something like this was done in the creation; but God hath since rested from all such works, and leaves second causes to produce their effects gradually; *nihil facit per saltum*,—'he does nothing abruptly.' Yet in this case, "as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth." Cyrus' proclamation was no sooner issued out, but the captives were formed into a body presently, and were ready to make the best of their way to their own land. And the reason is given, ver. 9, because it is the Lord's doing; he undertakes it whose work is perfect. If he bring to the birth in preparing his people for deliverance, he will cause to bring forth in the accomplishment of the deliverance. When every thing is ripe and ready for their release, and the number of their months is accomplished, so that the children are brought to the birth, shall not I then give strength to bring forth, but leave mother and babe to perish together in the most miserable case? How will this agree with the Divine pity? Shall I begin a work and not go through with it? How will that agree with the Divine power and perfection? 'Am I he that causes to bring forth,' (so the following clause may be read,) 'and shall I restrain her?' Doth God cause mankind, and all the species of living creatures, to propagate and replenish the earth, and will he restrain Zion? Will he not make her fruitful in a blessed offspring to replenish the church? Or, am I he that begat, and should I restrain from bringing forth? Did God beget the deliverance in his purpose and promise, and will he not bring it forth in the accomplishment and performance of it? But this was a figure of the setting up of the Christian church in the world, and the replenishing of that family with children which was to be named from Jesus Christ. When the Spirit was poured out, and the Gospel went forth from Zion, multitudes were converted in a little time, and with little pains, compared with the vast product. The apostles, even before they travailed, brought forth; and the children born to Christ were so numerous, and so suddenly and easily produced, that they were rather like the dew from the morning's womb than like the son from the mother's womb, *Ps.* cx. 3. The success of the Gospel was astonishing; that light, like the morning, strangely diffused itself, till it took hold even of the ends of the earth. Cities and nations were born at once to Christ. The same day that the Spirit was poured out there were three thousand souls added to the church. And when this glorious work was once begun it was carried on wonderfully, beyond what could be imagined; "so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." He that brought to the birth in conviction of sin caused to bring forth in a thorough conversion to God.

Fourthly. Let them know that their present sorrows shall shortly be turned into abundant joys, ver. 10, 11. Observe,

1. How the church's friends are described. They are such as love her, and mourn with her, and for her. Note, All that love God love Jerusalem; they love the church of God, and lay its interests very near their heart. They admire the beauty of the church, take pleasure in communion with it, and heartily espouse its cause. And they that have a sincere affection for the church have a cordial sympathy with it in all the cares and sorrows of its militant state. They mourn for her; all her grievances are their griefs; and if Jerusalem be in distress their harps are hung on the willow-trees.

2. How they are encouraged. Rejoice with her; and again and again I say, rejoice. This intimates that Jerusalem shall have cause to rejoice; the days of her mourning shall be at an end, and she shall be comforted according to the time that she hath been afflicted. And it is the will of God that all her friends should join with her in her joys, for they shall share with her in those blessings that will be the matter of her joy. If we suffer with Christ, and sorrow with his church, we shall reign with him, and rejoice with it. We are here called, 1st. To bear our part in the church's praises. Come, rejoice with her, rejoice for joy with her; rejoice greatly; rejoice, and know why you rejoice; rejoice on the days appointed for public thanksgiving. You that mourned for her in her sorrows cannot but from the same principle rejoice with her in her joys. 2nd. To take our part in the church's comforts. We must "suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations." The word of God, the covenant of grace, especially the promises of that covenant, the ordinances of God, and all the opportunities of attending on him, and conversing with him, are the breasts, which the church calls and counts the breasts of her consolations, where her comforts are laid up, and whence by faith and prayer they are drawn. With her, therefore, we must suck from these breasts, by an application of the promises of God to ourselves, and a diligent attendance on his ordinances; and with the consolations which are drawn from hence we must be satisfied, and not unsatisfied, though we have never so little of earthly comforts. It is the glory of the church that she hath the Lord for her God, that to her pertains the adoption and the service of God, and with the abundance of this glory we must be delighted. We must take more pleasure in our relation to God, and communion with him, than in all the delights of the sons and daughters of men. Whatever is the glory of the church must be our glory and joy, particularly her purity, unity, and increase.

Fifthly. Let them know that he who gives them this call to rejoice will give them cause to do so, and hearts to do so, ver. 12—14.

1. He will give them cause to do so; for, 1st. They shall enjoy a long, uninterrupted course of prosperity; "I will extend," or am extending, "peace to her," that is, all good to her, "like a river," that runs in a constant stream, still increasing till it be swallowed up in the ocean. The Gospel brings with it, wherever it is received in its power, such peace as this, which shall go on like a river, supplying souls with all good, and making them fruitful, as a river doth the lands it passeth through; such a river of peace as the springs of the world's comforts cannot send forth, and the dams of the world's troubles cannot stop or drive back, or its sands rack up; such a river of peace as will carry us to the ocean of boundless and endless bliss. 2nd. There shall be large and advantageous additions made to them; "The glory of the Gentiles" shall come to them "like a flowing stream." Gentile converts shall come pouring into the church, and swell the river of her peace and prosperity; for they shall bring their glory with them,—their wealth and honour, their power and interest, shall all be devoted to the service of God, and employed for the good of the church. Then shall ye suck from the breasts of her consolations; when you see such crowding for a share in those comforts, you shall be the more solicitous, and the more vigorous, to secure your share; not for fear of having the less for others coming in to partake of Christ,—there is no danger of that, he has enough for all, and enough for each,—but their zeal shall provoke you to a holy jealousy. It is well when it doth so, *Rom.* xi. 14; 2 *Cor.* ix. 2. 3rd. God shall be glorified in all, and that ought to be more the matter of our joy than any thing else; ver. 14, "The hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants,"—the protecting, supporting hand of his almighty power; the supplying, enriching hand of his inexhaustible goodness, the benefit which his servants have by both these, shall be known to his glory, as well as theirs. And, to make this the more illustrious, he will at the same time make known his indignation towards his enemies. God's mercy and justice shall both be manifested and for ever magnified.

2. God will not only give them cause to rejoice, but speak comfort to them; will speak it to their hearts; and it is he only that can do that, and make it fasten there. See what he will do for the comfort of all the sons of Zion. 1st. Their country shall be their tender nurse. Ye shall be carried on her

sides, under her arms, as little children are, and shall be dandled upon her knees, as darlings are, especially when they are weary, and out of humour, and must be got to sleep. Those that are joined to the church, must be treated thus affectionately. The great Shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and so must the under-shepherds, that they may not be discouraged. Proselytes should be favourites. 2nd. God will himself be their powerful comforter; "As one whom his mother comforteth," when he is sick or sore, or upon any account in sorrow, "so will I comfort you," not only with the rational arguments which a prudent father useth, but with the tender affections and compassions of a loving mother, that bemoans her afflicted child, when it has fallen and hurt itself, that she may quiet it, and make it easy; or endeavours to pacify it, after she has chidden, and fallen out with it: see *Jer.* xxxi. 20, "Since I spake against him, my bowels are troubled for him;" he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child; thus the mother comforts. Thus "ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem," in the favours bestowed on the church, which you shall partake of, and in the thanksgivings offered by the church, which you shall concur with. 3rd. They shall feel the blessed effects of this comfort in their own souls; ver. 14, "When ye see this," what a happy state the church is restored to, not only your tongues and your countenances, but "your hearts shall rejoice." This was fulfilled in the wonderful satisfaction which Christ's disciples had in the success of their ministry; Christ, with an eye to that, tells them, *Jno.* xvi. 22, "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Then "your bones," that were dried and withered, the marrow of them quite exhausted, shall recover a youthful strength and vigour, and shall "flourish like an herb." Divine comforts reach the inward man; they are marrow, and moistening to the bones, *Pr.* iii. 8. The bones are the strength of the body; those shall be made to flourish with these comforts. "The joy of the Lord will be your strength," *Neh.* viii. 10.

15 For, behold, the LORD will come with fire,
And with his chariots like a whirlwind,
To render his anger with fury,
And his rebuke with flames of fire.
16 For by fire and by his sword
Will the LORD plead with all flesh:
And the slain of the LORD shall be many.
17 They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens
Behind one *tree* in the midst,
Eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse,
Shall be consumed together, saith the LORD.
18 For I *know* their works and their thoughts:
It shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues;
And they shall come, and see my glory.
19 And I will set a sign among them,
And I will send those that escape of them unto the nations,
To Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow,
To Tubal, and Javan, *to* the isles afar off,
That have not heard my fame,
Neither have seen my glory;
And they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.
20 And they shall bring all your brethren
For an offering unto the LORD out of all nations
Upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters,
And upon mules, and upon swift beasts,
To my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD,
As the children of Israel bring an offering
In a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.
21 And I will also take of them
For priests *and* for Levites, saith the LORD.
22 For as the new heavens
And the new earth, which I will make,
Shall remain before me, saith the LORD,
So shall your seed and your name remain.
23 And it shall come to pass, *that* from one new moon to another,
And from one sabbath to another,
Shall all flesh come to worship before me,
Saith the LORD.
24 And they shall go forth, and look upon
The carcases of the men that have transgressed against me:
For their worm shall not die,
Neither shall their fire be quenched;
And they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

These verses, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a dark side towards the enemies of God's kingdom and all that are rebels against his crown, and a bright side towards his faithful, loyal subjects. Probably it refers to the Jews in captivity in Babylon, of whom some are said to have been sent thither for their hurt; and those are they with whom God here threatens to proceed in his controversy, who hated to be reformed, and therefore should be ruined by the calamity, *Jer.* xxiv. 9. Others were sent thither for their good; and they should have the trouble sanctified to them, should in due time get well through it, and see many a good day after it. Divers of the expressions here used are accommodated to that glorious dispensation. But doubtless it looks farther, to the judgment for which Christ did come once, and will come again, into this world; and to the distinction which his word, in both, makes between the precious and the vile.

First. Christ will appear to the confusion and terror of all those that stand it out against him. Sometimes in temporal judgments. The Jews that persisted in infidelity were cut off by fire, and by his sword. The ruin was very extensive; the Lord then pleaded with all flesh, and, it being his sword with which they are cut off, they are called his slain, sacrificed to his justice. And they shall be many. In the great day, the wrath of God will be his fire and sword, with which he will cut off and consume all the impenitent; and his word, when it takes hold of sinners' consciences, burns like fire, and is sharper than any two-edged sword. Idolaters will especially be contended with in the day of wrath, ver. 17. Perhaps some of those who returned out of Babylon retained such instances of idolatry and superstition as are here mentioned; had their idols in their gardens, (not daring to set them up publicly in the high places,) and there purified themselves, as the worshippers of the true God used to do, when they went about their idolatrous rites, one after another; or, as we read it, "behind one tree in the midst;" behind Ahad, or Ehad, some idol that they worshipped by that name, and in honour of which they ate swine's flesh, which was expressly forbidden by the law of God; and other abominations, as the mouse, or some other like animal. But it may refer to all those judgments which the wrath of God, according to the word of God, will bring upon provoking sinners, that live in contempt of God, and are devoted to the world and the flesh; they shall be consumed together. From the happiness of heaven we find expressly excluded all idolaters, and whosoever worketh abomination, *Rev.* xxi. 27; xxii. 15. In the day of vengeance, secret wickedness will be brought to light, and brought to the account; for, ver. 18, "I know their works, and their thoughts." God knows both what men do, and from what principle and with what design they do it, and therefore is fit to judge the world because he can "judge the secrets of men," *Rom.* ii. 16.

Secondly. He will appear to the comfort and joy of all that are faithful to him, in the setting up of his kingdom in this world, the kingdom of grace, the earnest and firstfruits of the kingdom of glory. The time shall come that he will gather all nations and tongues to himself, that they might come and see his glory, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, ver. 18. This was fulfilled when all nations were to be discipled, and the gift of tongues bestowed in order thereunto. The church had hitherto been confined to one nation, and in one tongue only was God worshipped; but in the days of the Messiah the partition wall shall be taken down, and those that had been strangers to God shall be brought acquainted with him, and shall see his glory in the Gospel, as the Jews had seen it in the sanctuary. As to this, it is here promised,

1. That some of the Jewish nation should, by the grace of God, be distinguished from the rest, and marked for salvation. I will not only set up a gathering ensign among them, to which the Gentiles shall seek, as is promised *ch.* xi. 12; but there shall be those among them on whom I will set a differencing sign, for so the word signifies. Though they are a corrupt, degenerate nation, yet God will set apart a remnant of them, that shall be devoted to him, and employed for him, and a mark shall be set upon them; with such certainty will God own them, *Eze.* ix. 4. The servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads, *Rev.* vii. 3. The Lord knows them that are his. Christ's sheep are marked.

2. That those who are themselves distinguished thus by the grace of God shall be commissioned to invite others to come and take the benefit of that grace. Those that escape the power of those prejudices by which the generality of that nation is kept in unbelief, they shall be sent into the nations to carry the Gospel among them, and preach it to every creature. Note, Those who themselves have escaped the wrath to come should do all they can to snatch others also as brands out of the burning. God chooseth to send those on his errands that can deliver their message feelingly and experimentally, and warn people of their danger by sin, as those who have themselves narrowly escaped the danger. 1st. They shall be sent unto the nations; divers of which are here named, Tarshish, and Pul, and Lud, &c. It is uncertain, nor are interpreters agreed, what countries are here intended. Tarshish signifies in general, the sea, yet some take it for Tarsus in Cilicia. Pul is mentioned sometimes as the name of one of the kings of Assyria; perhaps some part of that country might likewise bear that name. Lud is supposed to be Lydia, a warlike nation, famed for archers. The Lydians are said to handle and bend the bow, *Jer.* xlvi. 9. Tubal, some think, is Italy or Spain; and Javan most agree to be Greece, the Iones; and the isles of the Gentiles, that were peopled by the posterity of Japhet, *Gen.* x. 5, probably are here meant by the "isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory." In Judah only God was known, and there only his name was great for many ages. Other countries sat in darkness; heard not the joyful sound, saw not the joyful light. This deplorable state of theirs seems to be spoken of here with compassion; for it is pity that any of the children of men should be at such a distance from their Maker as not to hear his name, and see his glory. In consideration of this, 2nd. Those that are sent to the nations shall go upon God's errand to declare his glory among the Gentiles. The Jews that shall be dispersed among the nations shall declare the glory of God's providence concerning their nation all along, by which many shall be invited to join with them, as also by the appearances of God's glory among them in his ordinances. Some out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, entreating him to take notice of them, to admit them into his company, and to stay a little while for them, till they are ready: for, "we will go with you," having "heard that God is with you," *Zec.* viii. 23. Thus the glory of God was in part declared among the Gentiles, but more clearly and fully by the apostles and preachers of the Gospel, who were sent into all the world, even to the isles afar off, to publish the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. "They went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them," *Mar.* xvi. 20.

3. That many converts shall hereby be made; ver. 20, "They shall bring all your brethren" (for proselytes ought to be owned and embraced as brethren) "for an offering unto the Lord." God's glory shall not be in vain declared to them, but by it they shall be both invited and directed to join themselves to the Lord. They that are sent to them shall succeed so well in their negociation, that thereupon there shall be great flocking to Jerusalem, as used to be at the time of a solemn feast, when all the males from all parts of the country were to attend there, and not to appear empty. Observe, 1st. The conveniencies that they shall be furnished with for their coming. Some shall come upon horses, because they came from far, and the journey was too long to travel on foot, as the Jews usually did to their feasts. Persons of quality shall come in chariots, and the aged, and sickly, and little children, shall be brought in litters, or covered waggons, and the young men on mules, and swift beasts. This intimates their zeal and forwardness to come. They shall spare no trouble or charge to get to Jerusalem; those that cannot ride on horseback shall come in litters; and in such haste shall they be, and so impatient of delay,

that those that can shall ride upon mules and swift beasts. These expressions are figurative, and those various means of conveyance are heaped up to intimate (saith the learned Mr. Gataker) the plentiful affording of all gracious helps requisite for the bringing of God's elect home to Christ. All shall be welcome, and nothing shall be wanting for their assistance and encouragement. 2nd. The character under which they shall be brought. They shall come, not as formerly they used to come, to Jerusalem, to be offerers, but to be themselves an offering unto the Lord, which must be understood spiritually, of their being presented to God as living sacrifices, *Rom.* xii. 1. The apostle explains this, and perhaps refers to it, *Rom.* xv. 16, where he speaks of his ministering the Gospel to the Gentiles, that the offering up or sacrificing of the Gentiles might be acceptable. They shall offer themselves, and those that are the instruments of their conversion shall offer them, as the spoils they have taken for Christ, and which are devoted to his service and honour. They shall be brought "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel," with great care that they be holy, purified from sin, and sanctified to God. It is said of the converted Gentiles, *Acts* xv. 9, that their hearts were purified by faith. Whatever was brought to God was brought in a clean vessel, a vessel appropriated to religious uses. God will be served and honoured in the way that he has appointed, in the ordinances of his own institution, which are the proper vehicles for these spiritual offerings. And when the soul is offered up to God, the body must be a clean vessel for it, possessed in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness, 1 *Thes.* iv. 4, 5. And converts to Christ are not only purged from an evil conscience, but have their bodies also washed with pure water, *Heb.* x. 22. Now this may refer, *First.* To the Jews, devout men, and proselytes out of every nation under heaven, that flocked together to Jerusalem, expecting the kingdom of the Messiah to appear, *Acts* ii. 5, 6, 10. They came from all parts to the holy mountain of Jerusalem, as an offering to the Lord, and there many of them were brought to the faith of Christ, by the gift of tongues poured out on the apostles. Methinks there is some correspondence between that history and this prophecy. The eunuch some time after came to worship at Jerusalem in his chariot, and took home with him the knowledge of Christ, and his holy religion. *Secondly.* To the Gentiles, some of all nations, that should be converted to Christ, and so added to his church, which, though a spiritual accession, is as often in prophecy represented by a local motion. The apostle saith of all true Christians, that they are come to mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem, *Heb.* xii. 22, which explains this here, and shews that the meaning of all this parade is, only that they shall be brought into the church by the grace of God, and in the use of the means of that grace, as carefully, and safely, and comfortably, as if they were carried in chariots and litters. Thus God shall persuade Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, *Gen.* ix. 27.

4. That a gospel ministry shall be set up in the church, it being thus enlarged by the addition of such a multitude of members to it; ver. 21, "I will take of them," of the proselytes, of the Gentile converts, "for priests, and for Levites," to minister in holy things, and to preside in their religious assemblies, which is very necessary for doctrine, worship, and discipline. Hitherto the priests and Levites were all taken from among the Jews, and were all of one tribe; but in gospel times God will take of the converted Gentiles to minister to him in holy things, to teach the people, and to bless them in the name of the Lord, and to be the stewards of the mysteries of God, as the priests and Levites were under the law; to be pastors and teachers, or bishops, to give themselves to the word and prayer; and deacons to serve tables, and, as the Levites, to take care of the outward business of the house of God, *Phil.* i. 1; *Acts* vi. 2—4. The apostles were all Jews, and so were the seventy disciples; the great apostle of the Gentiles was himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews; but when churches were planted among the Gentiles they had ministers settled that were of themselves, elders in every church, *Acts* xiv. 23, *Tit.* i. 5, which made the ministry to spread the more easily, and to be the more familiar; and if not the more venerable, yet the more acceptable. Gospel grace, it might be hoped, would cure people of those corruptions which kept a prophet from having honour in his own country. God saith, I will take not all of them, (though they are all in a spiritual sense made to our God kings and priests,) but of them, some of them. It is God's work originally to choose ministers, by qualifying them for, and inclining them to, the service, as well as to make ministers, by giving them their commission. I will take them, that is, I will admit them, though Gentiles, and will accept of them and their ministrations. This is a great honour and advantage to the Gentile church, as it was to the Jewish church, that God raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites, *Am.* ii. 11.

5. That the church and ministry, being thus settled, shall continue and be kept up in a succession from one generation to another, ver. 22. The change that will be made by the setting up the kingdom of the Messiah is here described to be, 1st. A very great and universal change. It shall be a new world, the new heavens and the new earth, promised before, *ch.* lxv. 17. "Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new," 2 *Cor.* v. 17; the old covenant of peculiarity set aside, and a new covenant, a covenant of grace, established, *Heb.* viii. 13. We are now to serve "in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," *Rom.* vii 6. New commandments are given relating both to heaven and earth, and new promises relating to both, and both together make a new testament; so that they are new heavens and a new earth that God will create, and these a preparative for the new heavens and new earth designed at the end of time, 2 *Pet.* iii. 13. 2nd. A change of God's own making. He will create the new heavens and the new earth. The change was made by him that had authority to make new ordinances, as well as power to make new worlds. 3rd. It will be an abiding, lasting change; a change never to be changed; a new world, that will be always new, and never wax old, as that which is ready to vanish away doth. It shall remain before me unalterable; for the gospel dispensation is to continue to the end of time, and not to be succeeded by any other. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom that cannot be moved; the laws and privileges of it are things which cannot be shaken, but shall for ever remain, *Heb.* xii. 27, 28. It shall therefore remain, because it is before God; it is under his eye, and care, and special protection. 4th. It will be maintained in a seed that shall serve Christ. Your seed, and in them your name, shall remain. A seed of ministers, a seed of Christians. As one generation of both passeth away, another generation shall come; and thus the name of Christ, with that of Christians, shall continue on earth while the earth remains, and his throne as the days of heaven. The gates of hell, though they fight against the church, shall not prevail, nor wear out the saints of the Most High.

6. That the public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought as an offering to the Lord, ver. 23. This is described in expressions suited to the Old Testament dispensation; to shew that, though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple service at an end, yet God should be still as regularly, and constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Heretofore Jews only went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now "all flesh," Gentiles as well as Jews, women as well as men, shall come and worship before God, in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them record his name; and though but two or three come together, he will be among them, will meet them, and bless them. And they shall have the benefit of these holy convocations frequently, every new moon, and every sabbath; not as formerly, at the three annual feasts only. There is no necessity of one certain place, as the temple was of old. Christ is our temple, in whom by faith all believers meet; and now the church is so far extended, it is impossible that all should meet at one place. But it is fit there should be a certain time appointed, that the service may be done certainly, and done frequently, and a token thereby given of the spiritual communion which all Christian assemblies have with each other, by faith, hope, and holy love. The new moons and the sabbaths are mentioned, because, under the law, though the yearly feasts were to be celebrated at Jerusalem, yet the new moons and the sabbaths were religiously observed all the country over, in the schools of the prophets first, and afterwards in the synagogues, 2 *Kin.* iv. 23, *Am.* viii. 5, *Acts* xv. 21, according to the model of which Christian assemblies seem to be formed. Where the Lord's day is weekly sanctified, and the Lord's supper monthly celebrated, and both duly attended on, there this promise is fulfilled; there the Christian new moons and sabbaths are observed. See here, that God is to be worshipped in solemn assemblies; that it is the duty of all, as they have opportunity, to wait upon God in those assemblies; all flesh must come. Though flesh, weak, and corrupt, and sinful, let them come, that the flesh may be mortified. In worshipping God, we present ourselves before him, and are in a special manner in his presence. For doing this there ought to be stated times, and are so; and we must see that it is our interest, as well as our duty, constantly and conscientiously to observe these times.

7. That their thankful sense of God's distinguishing favour to them should be very much increased by the consideration of the fearful doom and destruction of those that persist and perish in their infidelity and impiety, ver. 24. They that have been worhipping the Lord of hosts, and rejoicing before him in the goodness of his house, to affect themselves the more with their own happiness, shall take a view of the misery of the wicked. Observe, 1st. Who they are whose misery is here described. They are men that have transgressed against God; not only broken his laws, but broken covenant with him, and thought themselves able to contend with him. It may be meant especially of the unbelieving Jews, that rejected the Gospel of Christ. 2nd. What their misery is. It is here represented by the frightful spectacle of a field of battle, covered with the carcases of the slain, that lie rotting above ground, full of worms, crawling about them, and feeding on them; and if you go to burn them, they are so scattered, and it is such a noisome piece of work to get them together, that it would be endless, and the fire would never be quenched; so that they are an "abhorring unto all flesh,"—nobody cares to come near them. Now this is sometimes accomplished in temporal judgments, and, perhaps, never nearer the letter than in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans; in which destruction it is computed that above two millions, first and last, were cut off by the sword, besides what perished by famine and pestilence. It may refer likewise to the spiritual judgments that came upon the unbelieving Jews, which St. Paul looks upon, and shews us, *Rom.* xi. 8, &c. They become dead in sins, twice dead; the church of the Jews was a carcase of a church; all its members were putrid carcases, their worm died not, their own consciences made them continually uneasy; and the fire of their rage against the Gospel was not quenched, which was their punishment as well their sin; and they became, more than ever any nation under the sun, an abhorring to all flesh. But our Saviour applies it to the everlasting misery and torment of impenitent sinners in the future state, where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched, *Mar.* ix. 44; for the soul, whose conscience is its constant tormentor, is immortal; and the God, whose wrath is its constant terror, is eternal. 3rd. What notice shall be taken of it. They that worship God shall go forth and look upon them, to affect their own hearts with the love of their Redeemer, when they see what misery they are redeemed from. As it will aggravate the miseries of the damned, to see others in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves thrust out, *Lu.* xiii. 38, so it will illustrate the joys and glories of the blessed, to see what comes of them that died in their transgression; and it will elevate their praises to think that they were themselves as brands plucked out of that burning. To the honour of that free grace which thus distinguished them, let the redeemed of the Lord with all humility, and not without a holy trembling, sing their triumphant songs.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES*
TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.

THE natural and obvious division of *Isaiah* is into two parts, the first of which closes with the 39th chapter, and the latter of which comprises the remainder of the book, (xl.—lxvi.) In this division the latter portion is regarded as substantially a continuous prophecy, or an unbroken oracle or vision, relating to far distant events, and having little reference to existing things at the time when Isaiah lived, except the implied censures which are passed on the idolatry of the Jews in the time of Manasseh. The main design and scope, however, is to pourtray events to come,—the certain deliverance of the Jews from the bondage in Babylon, and the higher deliverance of the world under the Messiah, of which the former was the suggestor and the emblem. This former part (*ch.* i.—xxxix.)

* Selected chiefly from the works on *Isaiah*, of Albert Barnes, and Joseph Addison Alexander. The letter *A.* refers to Mr. Alexander's work. The remaining extracts, except where other names are given, are generally from Barnes.

comprises a collection of independent prophecies and writings composed at various periods during the public ministry of the prophet, and designed to produce an immediate effect on the morals, the piety, the faith, and the welfare of the nation. The general drift is, that Jerusalem and the people of God were secure; that the kingdom of God on earth could not be destroyed; that however much his people might be subjected to punishment for their sins, and however long and grievous might be their calamities, and however mighty their foes; yet that the kingdom of God could not be overturned, and all his promises set at nought. Hence in all the predictions of judgment and calamity, in all the reproofs for crime, idolatry, and sin, there is usually found a saving clause,—an assurance that the people of God should finally triumph, and be secure. And hence so large a portion of this division of the book is occupied with a prophetic statement of the entire and utter overthrow of the formidable states, nations, and cities with which they had been so often engaged in war, and which were so decidedly hostile to the Jews. The prophet, therefore, goes over in detail these cities and nations, and depicts successively the destruction of the Assyrians, of Babylon, Tyre, Moab, Damascus, Edom, &c., until he comes to the triumphant conclusion in *ch.* xxxv., that all the enemies of the people of God should be destroyed, and his kingdom be established on an imperishable basis under the Messiah.—*Barnes' Introduction.*

CHAP. I.—8. *Zion,* or Sion, was the name of one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem was built. On this hill formerly stood the city of the Jebusites, and when David took it from them he transferred to it his court, and it was called the city of David, or the holy hill. It was in the southern part of the city. *Daughter of Zion.* The extent of the desolation is expressed by comparing the church or nation to a watch-shed in a field or vineyard, far from other habitations, and forsaken after the ingathering. "And the daughter of Zion," that is, the people of Zion or Jerusalem, considered as the capital of Judah, and therefore representing the whole nation, "is left," not forsaken, but left over or behind as a survivor, "like a booth," a temporary covert of leaves and branches, "in a vineyard, like a lodge in a melon field, like a watched city;" that is, watched by friends and foes, besieged and garrisoned, and therefore insulated, cut off from all communication with the country.—*A.* 18. *Scarlet.* This colour was a fast, or fixed colour. Neither dew, nor rain, nor washing, nor long usage, would remove it. Hence it is used to represent the fixedness and permanency of sins in the heart. No human means will wash them out. No effort of man, no external rites, no tears, nor sacrifices, nor prayers, are of themselves sufficient to take them away. They are deep-fixed in the heart, as the scarlet colour was in the web of cloth, and an almighty power is needful to remove them.

> 'Jesus, my Lord, thy blood alone
> Hath power sufficient to atone;
> Thy blood can make me white as snow,
> No Jewish types could cleanse me so.'—*Watts.*

The prophet means to say that, though they were thus fixed, and immovable by any human means, yet that the mercy of God can take away all the stain. 30. *Garden that hath no water.* In Eastern countries this image would be more striking than with us. In those hot regions, a constant supply of water is necessary for the cultivation, and even for the very existence and preservation, of a garden. Should it want water for a few days, every thing in it would be burnt up with heat, and totally destroyed. In all gardens, therefore, in those regions, there must be a constant supply of water, either from some neighbouring river or from some fountain or reservoir within it.

CHAP. II.—2. *Mountain.* The temple was built on mount Moriah, which was hence called the mountain of the Lord's house. The temple to a Jew was the usual place of worship. And hence, to say that that should be elevated higher than all other hills or mountains, means, that the worship of the true God should become an object so conspicuous as to be seen by all nations; and so conspicuous that all nations should forsake other objects and places of worship, being attracted by the devotion and glory of the worship of the true God. 4. *Swords into ploughshares.* The ploughshare is a piece of iron, broad but not large, which tips the end of the shaft. So much does it resemble the short sword used by the ancient warriors, that it may, with very little trouble, be converted into that deadly weapon, and, when the work of destruction is over, reduced again to its former shape, and applied to the purposes of agriculture. In allusion to the first operation, the prophet Joel summons the nations to leave their employments in the cultivated fields, and buckle on their armour: "Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears." This beautiful image the prophet Isaiah has reversed, and applied to the establishment of that profound and lasting peace which is to bless the church of Christ in the latter days.—*Paxton.* 6. *Therefore.* The exhortation in ver. 5 implied that the Jews were not actually walking in God's light, but were alienated from him, a fact which is now explicitly asserted and the reason of it given, namely, illicit intercourse with foreign nations, as evinced by the adoption of their superstitious practices, reliance on their martial and pecuniary aid, and last, but worst of all, the worship of their idols. In this verse, the first of these effects is ascribed to intercourse with eastern countries, which are always represented by the ancients as the cradle of the occult arts and sciences. As if he had said, I thus exhort, O Lord, thy chosen people, 'because thou hast forsaken thy people, because they are replenished from the East and (full of) soothsayers like the Philistines, and with the children of strangers they abound.' The various renderings of the Hebrew word by 'therefore,' 'verily,' 'surely,' 'but,' &c., all arise from misconception or neglect of the connexion, which requires the common meaning 'for,' 'because.'—*A.* 13. *Cedars of Lebanon.* This is a beautiful specimen of the poetic manner of writing so common among the Hebrews, where spiritual and moral subjects are represented by the grand or beautiful imagery taken from objects of nature. Mount Lebanon bounded Palestine on the north. It was formerly much celebrated for its large and lofty cedars. These cedars were said to have been from thirty-five to forty feet in girth, and very high. They were magnificent trees, and were very valuable for ceiling, statues, or roofs, that required durable and beautiful timber. A few lofty trees of this description are still remaining on mount Lebanon. 20. *And to the bats.* The East may be termed the country of bats; they hang by hundreds and thousands in caves, ruins, and under the roofs of large buildings. To enter such places, especially after rain, is most offensive. No wonder, then, that its name is used by the Hindoos (as by the prophet) for an epithet of contempt. When a house ceases to please the inhabitants, on account of being haunted, they say, (and also do,) give it to the bats. 'Alas, alas! my wife and children are dead; my houses, my buildings, are all given to the bats.' 'The bats are now the possessors of the once splendid mansions of royalty.'—*Roberts.*

CHAP. III.—16-21. *Ornaments, &c.* Besides ornamental rings in the nose and the ears, they (Oriental females) wore others round the legs, which made a tinkling as they went. This custom has also descended to the present times, for Rauwolf met with a number of Arabian women on the Euphrates, whose ankles and wrists were adorned with rings, sometimes a good many together, which, moving up and down as they walked, made a great noise. Chardin attests the existence of the same custom in Persia, in Arabia, and in very hot countries, where they commonly go without stockings, but ascribes the tinkling sound to little bells fastened to those rings. In the East Indies, golden bells adorned the feet and ankles of the ladies from the earliest times; they placed them in the flowing tresses of their hair; they suspended them round their necks, and to the golden rings which they wore on their fingers, to announce their superior rank, and extort the homage which they had a right to expect from the lower orders; and from the banks of the Indus it is probable the custom was introduced into the other countries of Asia.—*Paxton.* 26. *Shall sit upon the ground.* It is a remarkable coincidence that, in the medals which were made by the Romans to commemorate the captivity of Judæa and Jerusalem, Judæa is represented under the figure of a female sitting in a posture of grief under a palm-tree, with this inscription, *Judæa capta,*—'Judæa is taken.' The passage here, however, refers not to the captivity by the Romans, but to the first destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. It is a tender and most affecting image of desolation; and a representation which was fulfilled to an extent of sorrow and calamity which was never suffered by those who heard Isaiah.

CHAP. IV.—2. *The branch of the Lord.* The word 'branch' is derived from the verb *tzamahh,* signifying to sprout, to spring up, spoken of plants. Hence the word branch means properly that which shoots up, or sprouts from the root of a tree, or from a decayed tree: compare *Job* xiv. 7—9; *Jer.* xxxiii. 15; *Zec.* iii. 8; vi. 12. In all these places there can be no doubt that there is reference to him who was to be raised up as the successor of David; who was to spring up from him as a sprout does from a decayed and fallen tree; and who is therefore called a root, a branch of the royal stock. (See Supplementary Note on *ch.* xi. 1.) 6. *From the heat.* The heat in those regions was often very intense, particularly in the vast plains of sand. *For a place of refuge.* A place to which to flee in the midst of a storm, as a tent would be. There are few images more beautiful than this. Soon the storms of Divine vengeance will beat on the sinner. God will summon him to judgment. He will pour out his fury. But then, he who has fled to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus, as the refuge of his soul, shall be safe. He shall have nothing to fear, and in his arms shall find defence and salvation.

CHAP. V.—22. *Mighty.* Strong. Perhaps those who prided themselves on their ability to drink much without becoming intoxicated; who had been so accustomed to it, that they defied its effects, and boasted of their power to resist its usual influence. A similar idea is expressed in *ch.* lvi. 12. 23. *For reward.* For bribes. It is remarkable that this is introduced in immediate connection with their being mighty to mingle strong drink. One effect of intemperance is to make a man ready to be bribed.

CHAP. VI.—8. *Who will go for us?* Jerome's explanation of the plural, as implying a plurality of persons in the speaker, is approved by Calvin, who was doubtful with respect to the τριαγιον in ver. 3. This explanation is the only one that accounts for the difference of number in the verb and pronoun, 'whom *shall I send,* and who will go *for us?*' Jerome compares it with the words of Christ, *Jno.* x. 30, "I and my Father are one;" *one* referring to the nature, *are* to the plurality of persons.—*A.* 10. *Make the heart of this people fat.* Make them insensible, not by an immediate act of power, nor by any direct influence whatever, but by doing your duty, which their wickedness and God's righteous judgments will allow to have no other effect. In this sense the prophet might be said to preach them callous. In other cases, where his personal agency no longer needed to be set forth or alluded to, the verse is quoted, not as a command, but a description of the people, or as a declaration of God's agency in making them insensible. Thus in *Mat.* xiii. 15, and in *Acts* xxviii. 26, the Septuagint version is retained, in which the people's own guilt is the prominent idea, 'for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest,' &c. In *Jno.* xii. 40, on the other hand, the sentence takes a new form, in order to bring out distinctly the idea of judicial blindness, "he hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart," lest, &c. Both these ideas are in fact included in the meaning of the passage, though its form is different, in order to suit the occasion upon which it was originally uttered.—*A.* 13. *And shall be eaten.* This is an unhappy translation. It has arisen from the difficulty of making sense of the passage, by not taking into consideration the circumstances just adverted to. The word translated 'eaten' means to feed, to graze, to consume by grazing, to consume by fire, to consume or destroy in any way, to remove. Here it means that this remnant shall be for destruction; that judgments and punishments shall follow them after their return from Egypt, Moab, &c. Even this remnant shall be the object of Divine displeasure, and shall feel the weight of his indignation: see *Jer.* xliii., xliv.

No prophecy, perhaps, has been more remarkably fulfilled than that in this verse. 'Though the cities be waste and the land be desolate, it is not from the poverty of the soil that the fields are abandoned by the plough, nor from any diminution of its ancient and natural fertility, that the land has rested for so many generations. Judæa was not forced only by artificial means, or from local and temporary causes, into a luxuriant cultivation, such as a barren country might have been, concerning which it would not have needed a prophet to tell that, if once devastated and abandoned, it would ultimately revert to its original sterility. Phœnicia at all times held a far different rank among the richest countries of the world; and it was not a bleak and sterile portion of the earth, nor a land which even many ages of desolation and neglect could impoverish, that God gave in possession and by covenant to the seed of Abraham. No longer cultivated as a garden, but left like a wilderness, Judæa is indeed greatly changed from what it was; all that human ingenuity and labour did devise, erect, or cultivate, men have laid waste and desolate; all the "plenteous goods" with which it was enriched, adorned, and blessed, have fallen like seared and withered leaves when their greenness is gone; and, stripped of its "ancient splendour," it is left "as an oak whose leaf fadeth;" but its inherent sources of fertility are not dried up; the natural richness of the soil is unblighted; "the substance is in it," strong as that of the teil-tree or the solid oak, which retain their substance when they cast their leaves. And as the leafless oak waits throughout winter for the genial warmth of returning spring, to be clothed with renewed foliage, so the once glorious land of Judæa is yet full of latent vigour, or of vegetative power, strong as ever, ready to shoot forth, even "better than at the beginning," whenever the sun of heaven shall shine on it again, and "the holy seed" be prepared for being finally "the substance thereof." "The substance that is in it"—which alone has here to be proved—is, in few words, thus described by an enemy: "The land in the plains is fat and loamy, and exhibits every sign of the greatest fecundity. Were nature assisted by art, the fruits of the most distant countries might be produced within the distance of twenty leagues." "Galilee," says Malte Brun, "would be a paradise, were it inhabited by an industrious people, under an enlightened government. Vine stocks are to be seen here a foot and a half in diameter."'—*Keith.*

CHAP. VII.—3. *Conduit of the upper pool.* The mention of these now obscure localities, although it detracts nothing from the general clearness of the passage, is an incidental proof of authenticity, which no later writer would or

could have forged. The upper pool, which has been placed by different writers upon almost every side of Jerusalem, is identified by Robinson and Smith with a large tank at the head of the valley of Hinnom, about seven hundred yards west-north-west from the Jaffa gate. It is full in the rainy season, and its waters are then conducted by a small rude aqueduct to the vicinity of the gate just mentioned, and so to the pool of Hezekiah within the walls. This aqueduct is probably the conduit mentioned in the text, and the end of this conduit the point where it enters the city, as appears from the fact that, when Rabshakeh afterwards conferred with the ministers of Hezekiah at this same spot, he was heard by the people on the city wall, *ch.* xxxvi. 2, 12. 14. *Therefore the Lord himself.* The king having refused to ask a sign, the prophet gives him one, by renewing the promise of deliverance, (ver. 8, 9,) and connecting it with the birth of a child, whose significant name is made a symbol of the Divine interposition, and his progress a measure of the subsequent events. Instead of saying that God would be present to deliver them, he says the child shall be called Immanuel (God with us); instead of mentioning a term of years, he says, before the child is able to distinguish good from evil; instead of saying that until that time the land shall lie waste, he represents the child as eating curds and honey, spontaneous products, here put in opposition to the fruits of cultivation. At the same time, the form of expression is descriptive. Instead of saying simply that the child shall experience all this, he represents its birth and infancy as actually passing in his sight; he sees the child brought forth and named Immanuel; he sees the child eating curds and honey till a certain age. 'Therefore,' because you have refused to choose, 'the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold! the virgin pregnant and bringing forth a son, and she calls his name Immanuel,' God with us, 'curds and honey shall he eat,' because the land lies waste, 'until he shall know (how) to reject the evil and to choose the good,' but no longer; 'for before the child shall know (how) to reject the evil and to choose the good, the land, of whose two kings thou art afraid,' that is, Syria and Israel, 'shall be forsaken,' that is, desolate, which of course implies the previous deliverance of Judah. All interpreters appear to be agreed that these three verses contain a threatening of destruction to the enemies of Judah, if not a direct promise of deliverance, and that this event is connected in some way with the birth of a child, as the sign or pledge of its certain occurrence. ——Either the prophet, while he foretells the birth of Christ, foretells that of another child, during whose infancy the promised deliverance shall be experienced; or else he makes the infancy of Christ himself, whether foreseen as still remote or not, the sign and measure of that same deliverance. While some diversity of judgment ought to be expected and allowed, in relation to this secondary question, there is no ground, grammatical, historical, or logical, for doubt as to the main point, that the church in all ages has been right in regarding this passage as a signal and explicit prediction of the miraculous conception and nativity of Jesus Christ. 17. *The Lord will bring upon thee—days that have not come—even the king of Assyria.* Let it be observed that the days here threatened were to be worse, not simply with respect to individual suffering or temporary difficulties of the state itself, but to the loss of its independence, its transition to a servile state, from which it was never permanently freed, the domination of Assyria being soon succeeded by that of Egypt, and this by that of Babylon, Persia, Syria, and Rome, the last ending only in the downfal of the state, and that general dispersion of the people which continues to this day.——It is implied, of course, in this interpretation, that Sennacherib's invasion was not the beginning of the days here threatened, which is rather to be sought in the alliance between Ahaz and Tiglath-pileser, "who came unto him, and distressed him, and strengthened him not,"(2 *Chr.* xxviii. 19, 20,) but exacted repeated contributions from him as a vassal; which degrading and oppressive intercourse continued till his death, as appears from the statement, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 7, that "Hezekiah rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not," clearly implying that he did at first, as he offered to do afterwards, on Sennacherib's approach, with confession of his fault, a renewal of his tribute, and a repetition of his father's sacrilege, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 13—16. That during the whole term of this foreign ascendancy, Judah was infested by Assyrian intruders, and by frequent visitations for the purpose of extorting their unwilling tribute, till at last the revolt of Hezekiah, no longer able to endure the burthen, led to a formal occupation of the country, is not only probable in itself, but seems to be implied in the subsequent context, ver. 18—20.—*A.* See wood engraving taken from one of the sculptures recently found on a mound at Nimroud, on the left bank of the Tigris, and now in the British Museum. Without affirming that it represents one or other of the events referred to in this note, the engraving may serve to illustrate them. The relievo whence the above is taken is a representation of 'the league or treaty of peace.' A king is supposed to have arrived at the frontier of his dominions. He has descended from his chariot to meet another king. The conqueror still retains the implements of war, and holds in his right hand two arrows perpendicularly, apparently a mystical sign of friendship. His adversary at the same time holds up his right hand, supposed by some to signify supplication; but may it not be expressive of swearing fealty as a tributary king? There is a common prisoner bowing in the dust, and thought to be kissing the feet of the clement conqueror. Immediately behind the great king are two eunuchs, each holding bows and quivers of arrows. 25. *And on all hills.* Not only the fields, not only the vineyards, shall be overrun with thorns and briers, but the very hills, now laboriously cultivated with the hand, shall be given up to like desolation. 'And all the hills;' that is, even all the hills 'which are digged with the hoe,' because inaccessible to the plough; 'thou shalt not go' even 'there, for fear of briers and thorns, and' being thus uncultivated, 'they shall be for a sending-place of cattle and a trampling-place of sheep;' that is, a place where cattle may be sent to pasture, and which may be trodden down by sheep. The reference is probably to the hills of Judæa, anciently cultivated to the very top, by means of terraces that still exist, for an account of which by eyewitnesses see Keith's *Land of Israel*, ch. xii., and Robinson's *Palestine*, vol. ii. p. 187. Thus understood, the verse merely strengthens the foregoing description, by declaring that even the most carefully cultivated portions of the land should not escape the threatened desolation. It is equally gratuitous, and therefore inadmissible, to take thorns and briers in a different sense from that which they have in the preceding verses, for example, in that of a thorn hedge, implying that the vineyard should no longer be enclosed, (Grotius, Cocceius, Vitringa,) an arbitrary change which cannot be justified by Matthew Henry's epigrammatic observation, that the thorns, instead of growing where they would be useful, should spring up in abundance where they were not wanted.—*A.*

CHAP. VIII.—7. *The waters of the river;* that is, the Euphrates, as an emblem of Assyrian power. *As the king of Assyria*, and all his glory; having particular reference to military strength and display. See wood engraving, *in loc.* 14. *For a sanctuary*, (a holy thing, an object to be sanctified.) The quotations, *Lu.* i. 35; 1 *Pet.* ii. 7; *Rom.* ix. 33, seem to shew that the prophet's words have an extensive import, and are not to be restricted either to his own times or the time of Christ. The doctrine of the text is, that even the most glorious exhibitions of God's holiness; that is, of his infinite perfection, may occasion the destruction of the unbeliever. The most signal illustration of this general truth was that afforded in the advent of the Saviour. It was frequently exemplified, however, in the interval, and one of these exemplifications was afforded by the conduct of the unbelieving Jews in the reign of Ahaz, to whom the only power that could save them was converted by their own unbelief into a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The same idea is then expressed by another simple and familiar figure, that of a snare or trap. Both figures naturally suggest the idea of inadvertence and unforeseen ruin.—*A.*

CHAP. IX. The division of the chapters is in this part of the book peculiarly unfortunate; the first part of the ninth (ver. 1—6) containing the conclusion of the eighth, and the first part of the tenth (ver. 1—4) the conclusion of the ninth. 6. *A child is born.* Emphatically 'born for us' and 'given to us,' as the 'Son' of God and the 'Son' of man, as being 'wonderful' in his person, works, and sufferings,—a 'counsellor,' prophet, or authoritative teacher of the truth, a wise administrator of the church, and confidential adviser of the individual believer, —a real man, and yet the 'mighty God,—eternal' in his own existence, and the 'giver of eternal life' to others,—the great peace-maker between God and man, between Jew and Gentile, the umpire between nations, the abolisher of war, and the giver of internal peace to all who "being justified by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," *Rom.* v. 1.—*A.* The ancient Jews incontestably referred it to the Messiah. Thus the Targum of Jonathan renders it, 'His name shall be called God of wonderful counsel, man abiding for ever, the Messiah, whose peace shall be multiplied upon us in his days.' The older interpreters unanimously suppose that this refers to the Messiah; and this view was entertained by the Jews in ancient times. Thus Rabbi Jose, of Galilee, says, 'The name of the Messiah is *Shalom*,' as it is said in *Isa.* ix. 6, "Father of eternity, Prince of peace." Ben Sira (fol. 40, of the Amsterdam edition, 1679,) numbers among the eight names of the Messiah those also taken from this passage, Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace. The latter Jews, however, have rejected this interpretation, because the Messiah is here described as God, contrary to their system of doctrines. 7. *Throne of David.* The endless increase of power and prosperity on the throne of David means of course that the Prince whose reign was to be thus powerful and prosperous, would be a descendant of David. This is indeed a repetition and explanation of a promise given to David, 2 *Sam.* vii. 11—16; 1 *Kin.* viii. 25, and repeatedly referred to by him, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 1—5; *Ps.* ii., xlv., lxxii., lxxxix., cxxxii. Hence the Messiah is not only called the Branch or Son of David, 2 *Sam.* vii. 12, 13; *Jer.* xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 15, but David himself, *Jer.* xxx. 9; *Eze.* xxxiv. 23, 24; xxxvii. 24; *Hos.* iii. 5. The two reigns are identified, not merely on account of an external resemblance or a typical relation, but because the one was really a restoration or continuation of the other. Both kings were heads of the same body, the one a temporal head, the other spiritual; the one temporary, the other eternal. The Jewish nation, as a spiritual body, is really continued in the Christian church. The subject of the prophecy is the reign of the Messiah; the effect predicted, its stability and increase; the means to be employed, judgment and justice; the efficient cause, the zeal of Jehovah.—*A. The zeal.* The word here used denotes ardour, intense desire in accomplishing an object, and means here that the establishment of this kingdom was an object of intense and ardent desire on the part of Jehovah, and that he would accomplish it. It is also implied that nothing else than that zeal of Jehovah could do it. We may remark here, 1. That if Jehovah feels so intense a desire for this, then the subjects of the Messiah's reign should also feel this. 2. If Jehovah feels this zeal, and if he will certainly accomplish this, then Christians should be encouraged in their efforts to spread the Gospel. His purpose to do this is their only encouragement,—and a sufficient encouragement,—to excite their zeal in this great and glorious work.

CHAP. X.—28. *He is come to Aiath.* The places here enumerated seem to have belonged chiefly or wholly to the tribes of Benjamin and Judah. Some of them are still in existence, and the site of several has been recently determined by the personal observations and inquiries of Robinson and Smith. The catalogue begins at the frontier of the kingdom of Judah, and, as J. D. Michaelis suggests, at the first place conquered by the Israelites on taking possession of the land. The language is precisely that of an eyewitness describing at the moment what he actually sees. 'He is come to Aiath—he is passed to Migron —to Michmash he intrusts his baggage.' For the best illustration of the geographical details in verses 28, 32, see Robinson's *Palestine*, vol. ii., pp. 104, 151. —*A.* 33. *Shall lop the bough.* In ver. 18, 19, the prophet had described the army of the Assyrians as a magnificent forest. Here he says that the glory of that army should be destroyed, as the vitality and beauty of the waving bough of a tree is quickly destroyed when it is lopped with an axe. There can scarcely be conceived a description that would more beautifully represent the fading of the strength of the army of the Assyrian than this. *With terror.* With tremendous violence.

CHAP. XI.—1. *Come forth a rod.* A twig or shoot. Between the Assyrian and the person who is the subject of this chapter there is a most striking and beautiful contrast. The one was at first magnificent like a vast spreading forest, yet should soon fall and decay; the other was the little sprout of a decayed tree, which should yet rise, expand, and flourish. *Of Jesse.* The father of David. It means, that he who is here spoken of should be of the family of Jesse or David. Though Jesse had died, and though the ancient family of David should fall into decay, yet there should arise from that family a descendant. The beauty of this description is apparent if we bear in recollection that, when the Messiah was born, the ancient and much honoured family of David had fallen into decay; that the mother of Jesus, though appertaining to that family, was poor, obscure, and unknown; and that, to all appearance, the glory of the family had departed. Yet from that, as from a long decayed root in the ground, he should spring who would restore the family to more than its ancient glory, and shed additional lustre on the honoured name of Jesse. 6. *The wolf also.* Calvin and Hengstenberg suppose the passage to include a promise of a future change in the material creation, restoring it to its original condition, (*Rom.* viii. 19—22,) while they agree with other writers in regarding the pacific effects of true religion as the primary subject of the prophecy. 7. *The lion.* The lion's eating straw denotes a total change of habit, and indeed of nature, and is therefore a fit emblem for the revolution which the Gospel, in proportion to its influence, effects in the condition of society, with some allusion, possibly, as before suggested, to the ultimate deliverance of the κτίσις or irrational creation from that bondage of corruption, to which, for man's sake, it is now subjected.—*A.* 8. *And the sucking child.* An emblem here of harmlessness and innocence. The change in the world under the Messiah shall be as great as if a sucking infant should be able to play unharmed with a venomous serpent.

> 'The lambs with wolves shall graze the verdant mead,
> And boys in flowery bands the tigers lead,
> The steer and lion at one crib shall meet,
> And harmless serpents lick the pilgrim's feet.
> The smiling infant in his hand shall take
> The crested basilisk and speckled snake;
> Pleased, the green lustre of the scales survey,
> And with the forked tongue shall innocently play.'
>
> Pope's *Messiah.*

9. *As the waters cover the sea.* 'They,' indefinitely, men in general, 'shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, because the land is full of the knowledge of Jehovah,' literally, of knowing him, 'like the waters covering the sea.' The strict sense of the words is, 'covering with respect to the sea.' The point of comparison is not the mere extent of surface (Vatablus) nor the depth (Vitringa), but the fulness of the land to the extent of its capacity. This passage is descriptive of the reign of the Messiah, not at any one period, but as a whole. A historian, as Vitringa well observes, in giving a general description of the reign of David, would not use language applicable only to its beginning. The prophecy is therefore one of gradual fulfilment. So far as the cause operates, the effect follows, and when the cause shall operate without restraint the effect will be complete and universal. The use of the future in the first clause, and the preterite in the second, may imply, that the prevalence of the knowledge of Jehovah must precede that of universal peace. It is not till the land 'has been filled' with that knowledge, that men 'will cease' to injure and destroy.—*A.* 11. *Remnant of his people. Deu.* xxviii. 62, 64; *Jer.* xxiv. 9, 10; xv. 7; xlvi. 27, 28; *Eze.* v. 10; xii. 15; *Am.* ix. 9. From all these, and from numerous other passages in the Old Testament, it is evident that it was designed that the Jewish nation should never be wholly destroyed; that they should be scattered among the nations, but should still be a distinct people; that while other nations should be utterly wasted and ruined, and should wholly cease to exist, yet that a remnant of the Jewish people, with the national peculiarities and customs, should still survive. How entirely this has been fulfilled, the remarkable history of the Jewish people everywhere testifies. Their present condition on the earth as a people scattered in all nations, yet surviving, without a king and a temple, yet preserving their national prejudices and peculiarities, is a most striking fulfilment of the prophecy. See Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, and Keith's Evidence of the Fulfilment of Prophecy, pp. 64—82. *Recover the remnant.* A prophecy of the recovery of the Israelites. *Pathros.* One of the three ancient divisions of Egypt. *Cush.* Cush, among the Hebrews, usually denoted the southern parts of Arabia. *Elam.* The southern part of Persia. *Shinar.* A part of Babylonia. *Hamath.* A celebrated city of Syria. The Assyrians became masters of this city about 753 years B.C., 2 *Ki.* xvii. 24. *Islands of the sea.* These meant, among the Hebrews, distant regions of the sea, whether coasts or islands. 12. *An ensign.* The Messiah, ver. 10. 13. *Ephraim shall not envy Judah, &c.* There shall be no strife like tike that subsisting between Israel and Judah. 14. *But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines;* that is, invade their borders. The conversion of all the enemies of God should speedily follow that of the Jews, and thus they should be conquered to the Messiah. 15. *Shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, &c.* It should be dried up, to present no obstruction. The idea is, that God would remove the obstruction to the rapid and complete deliverance and conversion of men. 16. *There shall be an highway, &c.* The same idea is conveyed; all obstructions shall be removed, just as formerly at the Red sea. It is obvious from such prophecies that God yet intends to make great use of the Jews in spreading Messiah's kingdom.—*Cobbin's Domestic Bible.*

CHAP. XIII.—1. *The burden,* a threatening prophecy, *of Babylon.* Babylon (derived from Babel, and probably built on the same spot as the tower of Babel,) was the capital of Babylonia, or Chaldea, and was probably built by Nimrod; but it was a long period before it obtained its subsequent size and splendour. It stood in the midst of a large plain, and on a very deep and fertile soil. It was on both sides of the river Euphrates, and of course was divided by that river into two parts. The two parts were connected by a bridge sixty feet in width near the centre of the city; and there is also said to have been a tunnel or subterranean passage, made from the palace on the east of the river to the palace on the west under the river. The old city was on the east, and the new city, built by Nebuchadnezzar, was on the west. According to the lowest estimates, it could not have been less than twelve miles square, or forty-eight miles in circumference; and was at least eight times as large in extent as London and its appendages. The walls of Babylon are said by Herodotus to have been eighty-seven feet thick, and three hundred and fifty high. There were a hundred gates of solid brass, between every two of which were three towers, raised ten feet above the wall. The whole city was surrounded by an immense ditch. See Edin. Ency.; Calmet; Bishop Newton, and Keith on the Prophecies. It is to be borne in mind, however, in order to a just view of this prophecy, that Babylon did not attain its highest splendour and magnificence until after the time of Isaiah. It was under Nebuchadnezzar, who ascended the throne of Babylon about one hundred years after Isaiah died, that it rose to its highest degree of splendour and power. Babylon was the natural seat of empire in the East, and was early distinguished for its commercial advantages. A simple glance at the map of Asia will convince any one that somewhere in the vicinity of Babylon is the natural seat of power in the East, and that few places on the globe are more eligibly situated for a vast trade, as it was conducted before the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope. Thus by the fertility of the soil, by its size and strength, by its strong and lofty walls, by its commercial advantages, and by every thing that could contribute to the defence of an ancient city, Babylon seemed to be safe; and if there was any ancient city that appeared to bid defiance to the attacks of enemies, or to the ravages of time, it was Babylon. Yet Isaiah said that it should be destroyed; and in the course of our exposition we shall be greatly struck, not only with the certain fulfilment of the prediction, but with the wonderful accuracy and minuteness of the entire prophetic statement. 4. *The noise.* By a beautiful poetic image, the prophet represents himself as immediately, on the issuing of this command, listening to the tumult and noise caused by those who were assembling for war; by the gathering together of nations; by their assembling from a far country to destroy the whole land. 17. *I will stir up the Medes against them.* At the time when this prophecy was uttered, Media was a dependent province of the kingdom of Assyria. Six years they passed in a sort of anarchy, until, about seven hundred years before Christ, they found in Dejoces an upright statesman, who was proclaimed king by universal consent. His son and successor, Phraortes, subdued the Persians and all upper Asia, and united them to his kingdom. He also attacked Assyria, and laid siege to Nineveh, the capital, but was defeated. Nineveh was finally taken by his successor, Cyaxares, with the aid of his ally, the king of Babylon; and Assyria became a province of Media. This widely extended empire was delivered by him to his son Astyages, the father of Cyrus. Astyages reigned about thirty-five years, and then delivered the vast kingdom to Cyrus, about five hundred and fifty-six years before Christ, under whom the prediction of Isaiah respecting Babylon was fulfilled. 19. *As when God overthrew Sodom.* It does not mean that it shall be overthrown in the same manner as Sodom was, but that it should be as completely and entirely ruined. 20. *It shall never be inhabited.* This has been completely fulfilled; for centuries it has remained a scene of wide desolation, and a heap of ruins. *Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there.* The wandering tribes of Arabs should even shun it as a resting-place for a single night. *Neither shall the shepherds, &c.* This was a fertile spot, and, though in a desolate state, might yet have furnished pasturage; but the whole region, after Babylon was taken, was laid under water by the Euphrates, and became a stagnant pool. It is said that the Arabs cannot be persuaded to stay there a night. 21. *But wild beasts.* Dens of these are in various parts, and travellers have seen lions, hyenas, and jackals about the ruins; bats, owls, porcupines, &c., are also found there. *Satyrs.* Some uncommon creatures of the goat kind.—*Domestic Bible.* For striking proofs of the fulfilment of the various parts of this prediction, see Keith on the Prophecies. On this whole prophecy, we may observe, 1. That it was uttered at least a hundred and seventy years before it was fulfilled. 2. When uttered, there was the strongest improbability that it would be fulfilled. This improbability arose from the following circumstances: (*a*) The Jews were safe and secure in their own land, and they had no alliance with Babylon, nor any reason to dread the Babylonians. (*b*) The great strength and security of Babylon rendered it improbable. (*c*) It was improbable that it would be overthrown by the Medes. Media was, at the time when the prophecy was uttered, a dependent province of Assyria, (Note, ver. 17;) and it was wholly improbable that the Medes would revolt; that they would capture Nineveh; that they would subdue their masters; that they would be united to the Persians, and that thus a new kingdom would arise, that should overthrow the most mighty capital of the world. (*d*) It was improbable that Babylon would become uninhabitable. How could mere human sagacity have foreseen that there would not be a house in it in the sixteenth century; or that now (in 1839) it would be a wide and dreary waste? Can human foresight tell distinctly what will take place two thousand three hundred years beforehand? Can any man now tell what London, or Paris, or New York, or Philadelphia will be two thousand years hence? Yet a prediction that those cities shall be the residence of 'wild beasts of the desert,' of 'satyrs,' and 'dragons,' and that they should never be inhabited, would be as probable now as was the prediction respecting Babylon at the time when Isaiah uttered these remarkable prophecies. 3. The prophecy is not vague conjecture. It is not a general statement. It is not the result of political sagacity. It is a minute, and definite, and particular statement; and those statements have been as definitely, and minutely, and particularly, fulfilled. 4. This is one of the evidences of the Divine origin of the Bible. How will the infidel account for this prophecy and its fulfilment? It will not do to say that it is accident. It is too minute, and too particular. It is not human sagacity. No human sagacity could have foretold it. It is not fancied fulfilment. It is real, in the most minute particulars. And, if so, then Isaiah was commissioned by Jehovah, as he claimed to be,—for none but the omniscient Jehovah can foresee and describe future events as the destruction of Babylon was foreseen and described. And, if this prophecy was inspired by God, by the same train of reasoning it can be proved that the whole Bible is a revelation from heaven.

CHAP. XIV. This chapter is a continuation of the prophecy respecting Babylon which was commenced in the previous chapter. The prophecy is concluded at ver. 27 of this chapter. A considerable portion of this chapter is a poem of unequalled beauty and sublimity. 'I believe it may be affirmed,' says Lowth, 'that there is no poem of its kind extant in any language in which the subject is so well laid out, and so happily conducted, with such a richness of invention, with such a variety of images, persons, and distinct actions, with such rapidity and ease of transition in so small a compass, as in this ode of Isaiah. For beauty of disposition, strength of colouring, greatness of sentiment, brevity, perspicuity and force of expression, it stands among all the monuments of antiquity unrivalled.'

CHAP. XVI. This chapter is a continuance of the former, and the scope of it is to give advice to the Moabites, and to threaten them with punishment in case, as the prophet foresaw, they should neglect or refuse to follow it. 1. *Sela.* The word Sela means a rock; and by it here there can be no doubt that there is intended the city of that name which was the capital of Arabia Petrea. The city was situated within the bounds of Arabia, or Idumæa, but was probably at this time in the possession of the Moabites. It was, therefore, the remotest part of their territory, and the sense may be, 'Send tribute even from the remotest part of your land.' See Supplementary Note, 2 *Kin.* xiv. 14. *And the remnant.* What is left in the land. There shall be few cities, few men, and very little wealth that shall escape the desolation. On the present state of Moab, and the complete fulfilment of the prophecies respecting it, the following works may be consulted:—Newton on the Prophecies, Keith on the Prophecies, Burckhardt's Travels in Syria, Captains Irby and Mangles' Travels, and Dr. Wilson's Lands of the Bible. In regard to the fulfilment of these predictions respecting the destruction of Moab, it may be sufficient to remark, that all travellers concur in the general desolation of that country which was once so thickly studded with towns, and that abounded so richly in flocks, and produced so luxuriantly the grape. It is now a country strewed with ruins. All the cities of Moab have disappeared. Their place is characterised, in the map of Volney's Travels, by the ruins of towns. Burckhardt, who encountered many difficulties in so desolate and dangerous a land, thus records the brief history of a few of them: 'The ruins of Eleale, Hesebon, Meon, Medaba, Dibon, Arver, all situated on the north side of the Arnon, still subsist to illustrate the history of the Beni Israel.'—*Life and Travels,* prefixed to the Travels in Nubia, pp. 48, 49. 'And it might be added,' says Keith, 'that they still subsist to confirm the inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, for the desolation of each of these cities was the theme of a distinct prediction.'—*Prophecies,* p. 129. Within the boundaries of Moab, Burckhardt enumerates about fifty ruined cities, many of them extensive. In general they are a broken down and undistinguishable mass of ruins. But, in some instances, there are remains of temples, sepulchral monuments, traces of hanging gardens, entire columns lying on the ground, and dilapidated walls made of stones of large dimensions.—See *Travels in Syria,* pp. 311—456, and illustrative heading of the Book. In view of the 15th and 16th chapters, constituting one prophecy, and the facts in regard to the present state of the country of Moab, we may observe that we have here an evidence of the genuineness and truth of the sacred records. That evidence is found in the particularity with which places are mentioned; and in the fact that impostors would not specify times or places any farther than was unavoidable. Mistakes, we all know, are liable to be made by those who attempt to describe the geography of places which they have not seen. Yet here is a description of a land and its numerous towns, made nearly three thousand years ago, and in its particulars it is sustained by all the travellers in modern times. In the language of Prof. Stuart (*Bib. Repos.,* vol. vii., pp. 108, 109,) we may say, 'How happens it, now, that the authors of the Old Testament Scriptures should have possessed such a wonderful tact in geography, as it would seem they did, unless they lived at the time and in the countries of which they have spoken? This happens not elsewhere. It is but yesterday since one of the first scientific writers on geology in Great Britain published to the world the declaration that our Mississippi and Missouri rivers belong to the tropics. Respectable writers, even in Germany, the land of classical attainments, have sometimes placed Cœle-Syria on the east of the Anti-Libanus ridge, or even seemed to transfer Damascus over the mountains, and place it between the two Lebanon ridges in the valley.' No such mistakes occur in the sacred writers. They write as men who were familiar with the geography of places named, they mention places with the utmost familiarity; and, after a lapse of almost three thousand years, every successive traveller who visits Moab, Idumæa, or Palestine, does something to

confirm the accuracy of Isaiah. Towns, bearing the same name, or the ruins of towns, are located in the same relative position in which he said they were; and the ruins of once splendid cities, broken columns, dilapidated walls, trodden down vineyards, half-demolished temples, and fragments broken and consumed by time, proclaim to the world that those cites are what he said they would be, and that he was under the inspiration of God.

CHAP. XVIII. The two great powers of Western Asia, in the days of Isaiah, were Assyria and Egypt or Ethiopia, the last two being wholly or partially united under Tirhakah, whose name and exploits are recorded in Egyptian monuments still extant, (see Supplementary Note, 2 *Chr.* xxxvi.,) and who is expressly said in Scripture (2 *Kin.* xix. 9) to have come out against Sennacherib. With one or other of these great contending powers Judah was commonly confederate, and of course at war with the other. Hezekiah is explicitly reproached by Rabshakeh (*ch.* xxxvi. 9) with relying upon Egypt, that is, the Ethiopico-Egyptian empire. These historical facts, together with the mention of Cush in ver. 1, and the appropriateness of the figures in ver. 4, 5, to the destruction of Sennacherib's army, give great probability to the hypothesis now commonly adopted, that the prophet here announces that event to Ethiopia, as about to be effected by a direct interposition of Jehovah, and without human aid. At the same time, some of the expressions here employed admit of so many interpretations, that it is best to give the whole as wide an application as the language will admit, on the ground before suggested, that it constitutes a part of a generic prophecy or picture of God's dealings with the foes of his people, including illustrations drawn from particular events, such as the downfal of Syria and Israel, and the slaughter of Sennacherib's army.—*A.* 1. *Woe.* Rather signifies, 'Ho!' it does not mean a threatening, but a call. *Land shadowing with wings.* This is supposed by some to denote the protection which the people's god extended over the land. (See wood engraving.) Some have made the prophecy relate to Egypt and Israel; but Dr. Henderson adopts the opinion maintained by several modern critics, that Ethiopia is intended. He says, 'To no country could the words at the time more aptly apply than to Ethiopia. Its armies were exceedingly numerous. If, as there is reason to believe, Zerah, mentioned 2 *Chr.* xiv. 9, was king of the African Ethiopians, that people was able to bring into the field, in the reign of Asa, not fewer than a million of men, "a huge host with very many chariots and horsemen," *ch.* xvi. 8; and Tirhakah was so celebrated as a mighty conqueror, that Megasthenes mentions his having advanced as far as the pillars of Hercules, and classes him along with Sesostris and Nebuchadnezzar.' *Beyond the rivers of Ethiopia.* 'Cush,' now known by the name of Abyssinia. It was at times subject to the Pharaohs; at other times, Upper Egypt was subject to its monarchs: the latter was the case when Isaiah wrote. 2. *That sendeth ambassadors by the sea.* From their bordering upon the Red sea, the Ethiopians must have carried on a maritime intercourse with the opposite coast of Arabia, and eastwards in the direction of India, if they did not trade with that country itself, in vessels of bulrushes, 'of papyrus,' that is, the Egyptian reed. Of this material the vessel was constructed to which Moses was committed, *Ex.* ii. 2. *Go, ye swift messengers.* The vast power and extensive influence of Tirhakah would require an incessant transmission of despatches to foreign parts, the facilities of which by water were great. There is here evidently a reference to the swiftness with which they proceeded on their embassies in the papyrus boats. *To a nation.* The prophet calls upon the messengers to go with all celerity to Ethiopia, to announce the wonderful interposition of Jehovah for the deliverance of the Jews. Information would first of all be conveyed to Tirhakah and his army in Egypt, and then to the Thebaid and Ethiopia; so that the whole nation would become acquainted with the way in which their formidable enemy, Sennacherib, had been overthrown. *Scattered and peeled.* Henderson reads, 'drawn out and plucked,' which he considers as expressing the state of the Ethiopian nation during the extensive wars of Tirhakah, when the mass of the people were 'drawn out,' or taken away from their occupations and homes.—*Domestic Bible.*

CHAP. XIX. This chapter admits of a well defined division into two parts, one of which contains threatenings, ver. 1—17, and the other promises, ver. 18—25. The first part may again be subdivided. In ver. 1—4, the Egyptians are threatened with a penal visitation from Jehovah, with the downfal of their idols, with intestine commotions, with the disappointment of their superstitious hopes. and with subjection to hard masters. In ver. 5—10, they are threatened with physical calamities, the drying up of their streams, the decay of vegetation, the loss of their fisheries, and the destruction of their manufactures. In ver. 11—17, the wisdom of their wise men is converted into folly, the courage of their brave men into cowardice, industry universally suspended, and the people filled with dread of the anger of Jehovah. The second part may be also subdivided. In ver. 18—21, the Egyptians are described as acknowledging the true God, in consequence of what they had suffered at his hand, and the deliverance which he had granted them. In ver. 22—25, the same cause is described as leading to an intimate union between Egypt, Assyria, and Israel, in the service of Jehovah, and the enjoyment of his favour. 25. *Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless.* 'Which Jehovah of hosts has blessed,' or 'with which Jehovah of hosts has blessed it,' saying, 'Blessed be my people Egypt, and the work of my hands Assyria, and my heritage' or peculiar people 'Israel.' The perfect union of the three great powers in the service of God, and the enjoyment of his favour, is now expressed by a solemn benediction on the three, in which language commonly applied to Israel exclusively is extended to Egypt and Assyria. The force of the expressions would be much enhanced by the habitual associations of a Jewish reader. It arises very much from the surprise excited by the unexpected termination of the clauses. Instead of 'Blessed be my people Israel,' the formula is 'blessed be my people Egypt.' That 'the work of my hands' does not mean merely 'my creature,' or a creature perfectly at my disposal, but my creature in a special and a spiritual sense, the same in which God is said to be the maker or founder of Israel, (*Deu.* xxxii. 6; *ch.* xliii. 6, 7,) is evident from this consideration, that the clause would otherwise say nothing peculiar or distinctive of Assyria, as those before and after it do of Egypt and Israel. As to the application of the prophecy there are three distinct opinions. One is that the prophet here anticipates a state of peace and international communion between Egypt, Israel, and Assyria in his own times, which may or may not have been actually realised. Another is that he predicts what actually did take place under the reign of Alexander and the two great powers that succeeded him, namely, the Græco-Syrian and Egyptian monarchies, by which the true religion was protected and diffused, and the way prepared for the preaching of the Gospel. A third is that Egypt and Assyria are here named as the two great heathen powers known to the Jews, whose country lay between them, and was often the scene if not the subject of their contests, so that for ages they were commonly in league with the one against the other. To describe these two great belligerent powers as at peace with Israel and one another, was not only to foretell a most surprising revolution in the state of the world, but to intimate at least a future change in the relation of the Jews and Gentiles. When he goes still further, and describes these representatives of heathenism as received into the covenant and sharing with the church of God its most distinctive titles, we have one of the clearest and most striking predictions of the calling of the Gentiles that the word of God contains. One advantage of this exposition is, that while it thus extends and elevates the scope of the prediction, it retains unaltered whatever there may be of more specific prophecy or of coincidence with history. If Alexander is referred to, and the spread of Judaism under him and his successors, and the general pacification of the world and progress of refinement, these are so many masterly strokes added to the great prophetic picture; but they cannot be extracted from it and made to constitute a picture by themselves.—*A.*

CHAP. XXI.—11. *Dumah.* It is evident from the prophecy itself, that Idumæa is particularly referred to, for the prophet immediately adds, that the voice came to him from mount 'Seir,' which was the principal mountain of Idumæa. Idumæa, or the country of Edom, is frequently referred to by the prophets: see *Jer.* xlix. 7—10, 12—18; *Eze.* xxxv. 1—4, 7, 9, 14, 15; *Joel* iii. 19; *Am.* i. 11; *Oba.* ver. 1—18; *Mal.* i. 3, 4. For a description of Idumæa, and of the prophecies respecting it, see Supplementary Notes on *ch.* xxxiv.

CHAP. XXII.—16. *Sepulchre on high.* The labour and expense bestowed on ancient sepulchres (of far later date however than Isaiah's time) is still attested by the tombs remaining at Jerusalem, Petrea, and Persepolis, where some are excavated near the tops of lofty rocks in order to be less accessible, to which practice there may be allusion in the verse before us, as well as in the words of 2 *Chr.* xxxii. 33, as explained by most interpreters, namely, that Hezekiah was buried in the highest of the tombs of the sons of David.—See Robinson's *Palestine*, i., 516—539; ii. 525, and wood engraving *in loc.*

CHAP. XXIII. *Tyre.* Tyre, the subject of the prophecies, particularly of Isaiah and Ezekiel, who both predicted its overthrow, (*ch.* xxiii., *Eze.* xxvi. —xxix.,) was a celebrated city of Phœnicia, and is usually mentioned in connexion with Sidon: *Mat.* xi. 21, 22; *Lu.* x. 13, 14; *Mat.* xv. 21; *Mar.* iii. 8; vii. 24, 31. Tyre was distinguished for its enterprise, its commercial importance, its luxury, and its magnificence. Few, perhaps none, of the cities of antiquity were more favourably situated for commerce. It was also a place of great strength. Old Tyre was defended by a wall which was regarded as impregnable. Nebuchadnezzar took the city after a siege of thirteen years, during the time of the Jewish captivity, about five hundred and seventy-three years before Christ. This was in accordance with the prophecy in this chapter, (ver. 13,) and according to the predictions also in *Ezekiel.* The desolation was entire. The city was destroyed, and the inhabitants driven into foreign lands, (ver. 7, 12.) The city lay desolate for seventy years, (ver. 15, 17,) and Old Tyre was in ruins in the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great. A new city had risen, however, on the island, called New Tyre, and this city was taken by Alexander after a siege of eight months, and after he had made a causeway from Old Tyre to the new city out of the ruins of the former. Near the shore the water is said to have been shallow, but near the new city it was three fathoms or nineteen feet in depth. The city of Tyre was taken by Alexander three hundred and thirty-two years before Christ, and two hundred and forty-one years after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, and consequently about one hundred and seventy years after it had been rebuilt. It was not, however, entirely destroyed by Alexander. It became an object of contention to the successors of Alexander. It was successively invested by Antigonus and Ptolemy, and fell into the hands of the latter. In the apostolic age, it seems to have regained somewhat of its ancient splendour. There were some Christians here, *Acts* xxi. 3, 4. In the time when it was visited by Volney and Maundrell, it was a miserable village, where the inhabitants subsisted chiefly by fishing, and the rock of Tyre was a place on which they spread their nets. Its exports consist only of a few sacks of corn and cotton, and the only merchant of which it could boast in the time when Volney was there, was a solitary Greek, who could hardly gain a livelihood. See Calmet; Edin. Ency.; Newton on the Prophecies; Keith on the Prophecies; and the Travels of Volney and Maundrell.

CHAP. XXIV.—20. *Like a cottage.* Or, rather, shall move or vacillate like a cottage. The word cottage means, properly, a temporary shed or lodge for the watchman of a garden or vineyard, while the fruit was ripening. 21. *That day, &c.* The sense may simply be, that God will judge the high or lofty host, namely, the kings of the land upon the land. But even if there be an antithesis, and even if the host of heaven in the usual sense of the expression be alluded to, the analogy of this whole context would seem to indicate that this is merely a strong figure for different ranks or degrees of dignity on earth. 22. *And they.* The persons meant are of course the principalities and powers of the verse preceding. 23. *The moon shall be confounded.* The simple meaning of the verse appears to be that Jehovah's reign over his people shall be more august than that of any created sovereign. This is true of the church in various periods of history, but more especially in those when the presence and power of God are peculiarly manifested.—*A.* It may be added, that when Jehovah, by the Messiah, shall reign over all the earth, all the glory of the wisest and greatest princes and monarchs shall be dimmed; the celebrity of their wisdom, and power, and plans shall be obscured in the superior splendour of the wisdom, power, and plans of God, in reigning through the laws of his Son over the human race. Come that blessed day; and speedily let the glory of the moon be confounded, and the sun be ashamed, and all inferior magnificence fade away before the splendour of the Sun of Righteousness!

CHAP. XXV.—8. *Will wipe away tears from off all faces.* This is quoted in *Rev.* xxi. 4, as applicable to the power of the Gospel. The sense is, that Jehovah would devise a plan that would be fitted to furnish entire consolation to the afflicted; to comfort the broken-hearted; and that would, in its final triumphs, remove calamity and sorrow from men for ever. The fulness of this plan will be seen only in heaven. In anticipation of heaven, however, the Gospel now does much to alleviate human woes, and to wipe away tears from the mourner's eyes. This passage is exquisitely beautiful. The poet Burns once said that he could never read it without being affected to tears. It may be added, that nothing but the Gospel will do this. No other religion can furnish such consolations; and no other religion is, therefore, adapted to man.

CHAP. XXVIII.—9. *Whom shall he teach.* The true sense of the passage has undoubtedly been suggested by Lowth. 'What!' say they, 'does God treat us as children? Does he deal with us as we deal with infants just weaned, perpetually repeating and inculcating the same elementary lesson, and teaching the mere rudiments of knowledge?' The expression, therefore, "Whom shall he teach knowledge?" or, 'whom does he teach,' is an expression of contempt supposed to be spoken by the intemperate priests and prophets—the leaders of the people. 'Whom does God take us to be? Does he regard us as mere children? Why are we treated as children with the mere rudiments of knowledge, and with endless repetition of the same elementary instruction?'

CHAP. XXIX.—8. *A thirsty man dreameth.* As the simile of the prophet is drawn from nature, an extract which describes the actual occurrence of such a circumstance will be agreeable. 'The scarcity of water,' says Park, 'was greater here at Bubaker than at Benown. Day and night the wells were crowded with cattle lowing and fighting with each other to come at the trough.

Excessive thirst made many of them furious: others being too weak to contend for the water, endeavoured to quench their thirst by devouring the black mud from the gutters near the wells, which they did with great avidity, though it was commonly fatal to them. This great scarcity of water was felt by all the people of the camp, and by none more than myself. I begged water from the negro slaves that attended the camp, but with very indifferent success; for, though I let no opportunity slip, and was very urgent in my solicitations both to the Moors and to the negroes, I was but ill supplied, and frequently passed the night in the situation of Tantalus. No sooner had I shut my eyes, than fancy would convey me to the streams and rivers of my native land; there, as I wandered along the verdant bank, I surveyed the clear stream with transport, and hastened to swallow the delightful draught; but alas! disappointment awakened me, and I found myself a lonely captive, perishing of thirst amid the wilds of Africa.'—*Travels in Africa.* 23. *But when he seeth his children.* 'For in his seeing' (that is, when he sees) 'his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify (or, yes they shall sanctify) the Holy One of Jacob, and the God of Israel they shall fear.' We have reason, wholly independent of this verse, to believe that the immediately preceding context has respect to the excision of the Jews and the vocation of the Gentiles. Now the latter are described in the New Testament as Abraham's (and consequently Jacob's) spiritual progeny, as such distinguished from his natural descendants. May not these adventitious or adopted children of the patriarch, constituted such by the electing grace of God, be here intended by the phrase, 'the work of my hands?' If so, the whole may thus be paraphrased: when he (the patriarch, supposed to be again alive and gazing at his offspring) shall behold his children (not by nature, but) created such by me, in the midst of him (that is, in the midst, or in the place, of his natural descendants,) they, (that is, he and his descendants jointly) shall unite in glorifying God as the author of this great revolution.—*A.* 24. *They also that erred.* 'Then shall the erring in spirit know wisdom, and the murmurers (or rebels) shall receive instruction.' These words would be perfectly appropriate as a general description of the reclaiming and converting influence to be exerted upon men in general. But under this more vague and comprehensive sense, the context, and especially the verse immediately preceding, seems to shew that there is one more specific and significant included. If the foregoing verse predicts the reception of the Gentiles into the family of Israel, and if this reception, as we learn from the New Testament, was connected with the disinheriting of most of the natural descendants, who are nevertheless to be restored hereafter, then the promise of this final restoration is a stroke still wanting to complete the fine prophetic picture now before us. That finishing stroke is given in this closing verse, which adds to the promise that the Gentiles shall become the heirs of Israel, another that the heirs of Israel according to the flesh shall themselves be restored to their long lost heritage, not by excluding their successors in their turn, but by peaceful and brotherly participation with them.—*A.*

Chap. XXXIV. The thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth chapters make one distinct and beautiful prophecy, consisting of two parts, the first containing a denunciation of judgment on the enemies of the Jews and of Jehovah—particularly Edom, (*ch.* xxxiv.,) and the second a most beautiful description of the flourishing state of the people of God that should follow these judgments, *ch.* xxxv. Idumæa was the name given by the Greeks to the land of Edom, the country which was settled by Esau. The country which they occupied extended originally from the Dead sea to the Elanitic gulf of the Red sea. Their territory, however, they extended considerably by conquest, and carried their arms to the east and north-east of Moab, and obtained possession of the country of which Bozrah was the chief city. To this city they had had access through the intervening desert, without crossing the country of the Moabites, or Ammonites. The capital of East Idumæa was Bozrah; the capital of South Edom was Petra, or Sela, called in 2 *Kin.* xiv. 7, Joktheel. See Supplementary Note, *ch.* xvi. 1. This country received its name from Esau, the son of Isaac, and the twin brother of Jacob, and the elder of the two. He was called Edom, which signifies red, from the colour of the red pottage which he obtained from Jacob by the sale of his birthright, *Gen.* xxv. 30. After his marriage he removed to mount Seir, and made that his permanent abode, and the country adjacent to it received the name of Edom.——In the reign of Amaziah, king of Judah, the Edomites were attacked, and ten thousand of them fell in battle in the valley of Salt, and many were made prisoners; their capital, Selah, was taken by storm, and the two thousand captives were, by Amaziah's orders, thrown down the ragged precipices near the city, and dashed in pieces, 2 *Kin.* xiv. 7; 2 *Chr.* xxv. 12; *Universal History*, vol. i., p. 380, Ed. Lond. 1779, 8vo. When the Jews were subdued by the Babylonians, and carried captive, when their city and temple were destroyed and the land laid waste, they seem to have regarded it as a favourable opportunity to avenge all the injustices which they had suffered from the hands of the Jews. They joined the Babylonians in their attempts to subdue Jerusalem, and exulted in the fall and ruin of the city.

> "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom
> In the day of Jerusalem; who said,
> Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof."—*Ps.* cxxxvii. 7.

See particularly *Oba.* 10—12, 18; *Eze.* xxv. 12—14; xxxv. 3—15. It was for this especially that they were denounced and threatened by the prophets with heavy judgment, and with the utter destruction of the nation, *ch.* xxxiv. 5, 10—17; *Jer.* xlix. 7—10, 12—18; *Eze.* xxv. 12—15; xxxv. 1—15; *Joel* iii. 19; *Am.* i. 11; *Oba.* 2, 3, 8, 17, 18; *Mal.* i. 3, 4. This refusing to aid their brethren the Jews, and joining with the enemies of the people of God, and exulting in their success, was the great crime in their history which was to call down the Divine vengeance, and terminate in their complete and utter ruin. Their exultation did not long continue; and their cruelty to the Jews did not long remain unpunished. Five years after the taking of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar humbled all the states around Judæa, and particularly Idumæa, *Jer.* xxv. 15—26; *Mal.* i. 3, 4. John Hircanus afterwards entirely conquered them, and compelled them to receive circumcision and the law. They continued subject to the later kings of Judæa until Jerusalem was taken by the Romans. A part of them left their own land and settled in the southern part of Judæa, within the boundaries of the tribes of Simeon and Judah. The name Idumæa was transferred to this part of the land of Judæa which they occupied, and this is the Idumæa which is mentioned by Pliny, Ptolemy, Strabo, and other ancient writers. The people who remained in the vicinity of mount Seir, and who occupied the ancient territory of Idumæa, became mingled with the children of Nebaioth, a son of Ishmael, and were called ever afterwards by the name of Nabatheans. Their own kingdom was thus blotted out, and their name was lost. In their own land they ceased to be a separate people, and mingled with the other descendants of Ishmael; in Judæa they became, under John Hircanus, converts to the Jewish faith, received the rite of circumcision, and were incorporated with the Jews. Very interesting remains of cities and towns of Idumæa, and particularly Petra, have been recently discovered by the travellers Burckhardt and Seetzen. See *Universal History*, vol. i. 370—383; and the Travels of Burckhardt, Legh, Laborde, and Stephens; Keith on the Evidences of Prophecy, pp. 135—168.; and Dr. Wilson's *Lands of the Bible*, vol. i. 289, 336, and vol. ii. 723, 741. 6. *And the streams thereof.* This verse as Calvin well observes, announces nothing new, but repeats the same prediction under other figures, borrowed from the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, which throughout the Bible "are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," *Jude* 7.—*A.* 10. *Day and night it shall not be quenched; for ever shall its smoke go up; from generation to generation shall it lie waste, for ever and ever, there shall be no one passing through it.* These sublime and fearful images are copied in the book of *Rev.* xiv. 10, 11, but it does not follow that the copy, though inspired and prophetic, was intended to determine the sense of the original. Rosenmuller and Knobel understand the last words as meaning that no one shall 'go to it,' or 'pass into it,' but Gesenius and Ewald with the older writers, that no one shall pass 'through' or 'over it,' implying that it shall not be a thoroughfare for caravans or single travellers. Keith, in his Evidences of Prophecy, has collected some remarkable illustrations of this passage from the incidental statements of modern travellers with respect to what was once the land of Edom. Thus Volney speaks of thirty deserted towns within three days' journey; Seetzen, of a wide tract utterly without a place of habitation, and of his own route through it as one never before attempted; Burckhardt, of the passage as declared by the people of the nearest inhabited districts to be impossible, in accordance with which notion he was unable to procure guides at any price. These are striking coincidences, and, as illustrations of the prophecy, important, but are not to be insisted on as constituting its direct fulfilment, for in that case the passage of these very travellers through the country would falsify the prediction which they are cited to confirm. The truth of the prophecy in this clause is really no more suspended on such facts, than that of the first clause and of the preceding verse upon the actual existence of bituminous streams and a sulphureous soil throughout the ancient Idumæa. The whole is a magnificent prophetic picture, the fidelity of which, so far as it relates to ancient Edom, is notoriously attested by its desolation for a course of ages.—*A.* 'I would,' says Stephens, when standing amidst the ruins of Petra, the capital of Idumæa, and with this passage of Isaiah in his eye, 'I would that the sceptic could stand as I did, among the ruins of this city among the rocks, and there open the sacred book, and read the words of the inspired penman, written when this desolate place was one of the greatest cities in the world.'—*Incidents of Travel*, vol. ii. p. 76.

Chap. XXXV.—7. *Parched ground.* The Hebrew word, *Sharab*, properly denotes the heat of the sun, (*ch.* xlix. 10,) and then the phenomenon which is produced by the refraction of the rays of the sun on the glowing sands of a desert, and which gives the appearance of a sea or lake of water, so that the most experienced travellers are often deceived. This phenomenon is witnessed in the deserts of Arabia and Egypt, and has been also seen occasionally in the south of France, and in Russia. We have no word in English to express it. The French word by which it is commonly designated is *mirage*. The idea of the prophet, if he refers, as I suppose he does, to this phenomenon, is exceedingly beautiful. The hopes and promises which this world can furnish are as delusive as is the *mirage* to the exhausted and thirsty traveller. But the blessings of religion, the promises of God through the Messiah, are like real lakes of water and running streams to the thirsty traveller.

Chap. XXXVII.—36. *Then the angel of the Lord.* The terms used can naturally signify nothing but a single instantaneous stroke of Divine vengeance, and the parallel passage (2 *Kin.* xix. 35) says expressly that the angel smote this number 'in that night.' Sceptical critics would be glad to have it in their power to plead the silence of profane tradition as an objection to the narrative before us. But although such an inference would be wholly inconclusive, even if the fact were so, it happens in this case that the fact is not so. The account which Herodotus received from the Egyptian priests, as to Sennacherib's retreat from Pelusium, occasioned by an irruption of field mice, which Vulcan sent to rescue Sethos, who was priest to that divinity as well as king of Egypt, is admitted by the latest German writers, notwithstanding the denial of Gesenius, to be an evident variation of this history, not more corrupt than in many other cases where the identity of origin has never been disputed. The transfer of the scene of the event to Egypt, and the substitution of Sethos and Vulcan for Hezekiah and Jehovah, are in strict accordance with the common practice of the ancient nations, to connect the most remarkable events, by their traditions, with their own early history. Even the figment of the mice may be regarded as a change of no unusual character or magnitude, unless we choose to assume, with J. D. Michaelis, that it was founded on a misconception of the mouse as the hieroglyphical emblem of destruction.—*A.* 38. *Esar-haddon.* The wood engraving *in loc.* is from the Assyrian marbles, and considered to be authentic.

Chap. XXXVIII.—8. *The shadow of degrees.* It is most probable that it was an inclination of the rays of the sun, or a miraculous causing of the shadow itself to recede. This is the whole statement of the sacred writer; and this is all that is necessary to be supposed. What Hezekiah desired was a miracle; a sign that he should recover. That was granted. The retrocession of the shadow in this sudden manner was not a natural event. It could be caused only by God; and this was all that was needed. A simple exertion of Divine power on the rays of the sun which rested on the dial deflecting those rays, would accomplish the whole result. It may be added that it is not recorded, nor is it necessary to an understanding of the subject to suppose, that the bending of the rays was permanent, or that so much time was lost. The miracle was instantaneous, and was satisfactory to Hezekiah, though the rays of the sun casting the shadow may have again been soon returned to their regular position, and the shadow restored to the place in which it would have been had it not been interrupted. No infidel, therefore, can object to this statement, unless he can prove that this could not be done by Him who made the sun, and who is himself the fountain of power. *By which degrees it was gone down.* By the same steps, or degrees on which the shadow had descended. So the Seventy express it; "so the sun reascended the ten steps by which the shadow had gone down." It was the shadow on the dial which had gone down. The sun was ascending, and the consequence was, of course, that the shadow on a vertical dial would descend. The 'sun' here means, evidently, the sun as it appeared; the rays, or the shining of the sun. A return of the shadow was effected such as would be produced by the recession of the sun itself.

Chap. XL. It is admitted, on all hands, that the second part of Isaiah, comprising the prophecies which commence at the fortieth chapter, and which continue to the end of the book, is to be regarded as the most sublime, and to us the most important, part of the Old Testament. In the previous portions of his prophecies there was much that was local and temporary. Indeed, all, or nearly all, that occurs from *ch.* i. to *ch.* xxxix. had direct and immediate reference to the times in which the prophet lived, or was suggested by the events which occurred in those times. For though the mind of the prophet is carried forward by the laws of prophetic suggestion, and he describes the times of the Messiah, yet the immediate and primary reference of those prophecies is to events which were then occurring, or soon to occur; and to Judæa, or to the kingdoms and countries in the vicinity of Judæa, with which the Jews were in various ways connected. In this portion of the prophecy,

however, there is little that is local and temporary. It is wholly occupied with a description of events which were to occur long after the time of the prophet, and which should be of interest, not only to the Jewish nation, but to the whole human family. It is a beautiful and glowing description of occurrences in which men of these times and of all subsequent times will have as deep an interest as they who have lived at any former period. Indeed, it is not improbable that, as the world advances in age, the interest in this portion of Isaiah will increase; and that as the Gospel is carried around the globe, and the earth comes under its influence, the beauty and accuracy of these descriptions will be more clearly seen, and more highly appreciated; and that nations will yet derive their highest consolations, and see the clearest proof of the inspiration of the sacred volume, from the entire correspondence between this portion of Isaiah and the future events which are yet to gladden the world.—— 9. *Lift it up.* Barnes thinks it necessary to prevent abuse of this text by affirming, that it 'will not justify boisterous preaching, or a loud and unnatural tone of voice, alike offensive to good taste, injurious to health, and destructive of the life of the preacher.' He also infers from it that 'the glad tidings of salvation should be delivered in an animated and ardent manner; the future punishment of the wicked in a tone serious, solemn, subdued, awful.'—*A.*

CHAP. XLI. Until the ends of Israel's national existence are accomplished, that existence must continue, in spite of hostile nations and their gods, who shall all perish sooner than the chosen people, ver. 1—16. However feeble Israel may be in himself, Jehovah will protect him, and raise up the necessary instruments for his deliverance and triumph, ver. 17—29. 8. *Thou, Israel, art.* 'And thou, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend.' The insertion of the substantive verb in the first clause, 'thou Israel art my servant,' is unnecessary. This whole verse, with the next, may be understood as a description of the object of address, or of the person to whom the exhortation in ver. 10 is directed. 10. *Fear thou not.* This may be regarded as the conclusion of the sentence beginning in ver. 8, as the address to which the two preceding verses are an introduction. 15. *Threshing instrument.* The oriental threshing machine is sometimes a sledge of thick planks armed with iron or sharp stones, sometimes a system of rough rollers joined together like a sledge or dray. Both kinds are dragged over the grain by oxen.—*A.*

CHAP. XLII.—3. *A bruised reed.* The verse continues the description of the mode in which the Messiah and his people were to 'bring forth judgment to the nations,' or, in other words, to spread the true religion. It was not to be by clamour or by violence. The first of these ideas is expressed in the preceding verse, the last in this. That such is the true import of the words is clear from the addition of the last clause, which would be unmeaning if the verse related merely to a compassionate and sympathetic temper. That this verse is included in Matthew's quotation (*Mat.* xii. 10) shews that he did not quote the one before it as descriptive of a modest and retiring disposition. For, although such a temper might be proved by Christ's prohibiting the publication of his miracles, this prohibition could not have been cited as an evidence of tenderness and mildness. The only way in which the whole quotation can be made appropriate to the case in hand, is by supposing that it was meant to be descriptive, not of our Saviour's human virtues, but of the nature of his kingdom, and of the means by which it was to be established. That he was both lowly and compassionate is true, but it is not the truth which he established by his conduct upon this occasion, nor the truth which the evangelist intended to illustrate by the citation of these words. As well in their original connection as in Matthew's application of them, they describe that kingdom which was not of this world; which came not with observation, *Lu.* xvii. 20; which was neither meat nor drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, *Rom.* xiv. 17; which was founded and promoted not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord, and of which its founder said, *Jno.* xviii. 36, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews, but now is my kingdom not from hence." And again, *Jno.* xviii. 27, when Pilate said unto him, "Art thou a king then?" Jesus answered, "Thou sayest," rightly, "that I am a king; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth; every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." How perfectly does this august description tally with the great prophetic picture of the Servant of Jehovah, who was to bring forth judgment to the nations, and in doing so was not to cry or raise his voice, or let men hear it in the streets, not by brutal force to break the crushed reed, or quench the dim wick, but to conquer by healing and imparting strength.—*A.* 11. *The wilderness—the cities, &c.* The only consistent supposition is that sea, islands, deserts, mountains, towns, and camps, are put together as poetical ingredients of the general conception, that the earth in all its parts shall have occasion to rejoice.—*A.*

> 'The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks,
> Shout to each other, and the mountain tops,
> From distant mountains catch the flying joy;
> Till nation after nation taught the strain,
> Earth rolls the rapturous hosannas round.'—*Cowper.*

15. *I will make waste.* 16. *Bring the blind.* Some writers understand the first clause as specifically meaning, that the exiles in Babylon should be delivered at a time and in a manner which they had not expected; while another class apply the words exclusively to spiritual exercise or religious experience. To both these objects the description admits of an easy application; but neither of them is to be considered its specific subject. It is impossible, without the utmost violence, to separate this one link from the chain of which it forms a part, that is to say, from the series of strong and varied metaphors, by which the prophet is expressing the idea of abrupt and total change. The same thing that is meant by the wasting of cultivated hills, the withering of herbage, and the drying up of streams and lakes, is also meant by the leading of blind men in a new path, that is, causing them to witness things of which they had had no previous experience.—*A.*

CHAP. XLIII. Israel is the peculiar people of Jehovah, cherished and favoured at the expence of other nations, ver. 1—4. But these are one day to become partakers of the same advantages, ver. 5—9. The proofs of the Divine protection are afforded by the history of Israel, ver. 10—13. One of the most remarkable, yet future, is the downfal of Babylon and the liberation of the exiles, ver. 14, 15. An analogous example in more ancient times was the deliverance from Egypt, ver. 16, 17. But both these instances shall be forgotten in comparison with the great change which awaits the church hereafter, ver. 18—21. Of all these distinguishing favours none was owing to the merit of the people, but all to the sovereign grace of God, ver. 22—25. The people were not only destitute of merit, but deserving of punishment, which they had experienced, and must experience again, ver. 26—28. 1. *And now.* The prophet is accounting for the sufferings of Israel, and his preservation from destruction on the same ground, namely, Jehovah had chosen them, and therefore would preserve them, but that they were unfaithful, and must therefore suffer. The intermingling of the promises and threatenings is not to be explained by supposing a reference to different periods or different subjects; nor is it to be set down as capricious and unmeaning, but as necessary to the prophet's purpose. The 'now' will then have a logical rather than a temporal meaning, as introductory to an explanation of the strange fact, that the bush was burned but not consumed. 4. *Since thou wast precious.* The first clause, as the whole context clearly shews, does not refer to intrinsic qualities, but to an arbitrary sovereign choice. Since I began to treat thee as a thing of value, thou hast been distinguished among the nations. The verse, so far from ascribing any merit to the people, refers all to God.—*A. Therefore will I give men for thee.* He would cause other nations to be destroyed, if it were necessary, in order to effect their deliverance, and to restore them to their own land. As his people, they were of more value than other nations; and he would suffer Cyrus to overturn the Babylonish empire, suffer armies to be discomfited and fall, in order that they might be delivered. We learn here, 1. That nations and armies are in the hand of God, and at his disposal; 2. That his people are dear to his heart, and that it is his purpose to defend them; 3. That the revolutions among nations, the rise of one empire and the fall of another, are often in order to promote the welfare of his church, to defend it in danger, and deliver it in time of calamity; and, 4. That his people should put the utmost confidence in God, as being able to defend them, and as having formed a purpose to preserve and save them. 10. *No god before me.* Instead of saying, in a bald prosaic form, all other gods are the work of men's hands, but I am uncreated and exist from all eternity, he condenses all into the pregnant declaration, there was no god manufactured before me, that is, all other gods were made, but none of them was made before I had a being. The sarcasm is rendered still more pungent by the use of the Divine name, thus bringing into the most revolting contrast the pretended divinity of idols and their impotence; as if he had said, none of these almighty gods were made before I had a being.—*A.*

CHAP. XLIV.—3, 4. *I will pour water—and they shall spring up.* These two verses teach us, 1. That God will pour his blessing on the children of his people—a promise which, in all ages, when parents are faithful, is abundantly fulfilled. 2. That one of the richest blessings which can be imparted to a people is, that God's Spirit should descend on their children. Nothing can be better fitted to comfort them in calamity and trial. 3. That the Spirit of God alone is the source of true happiness and prosperity to our children. All else, property, learning, accomplishment, beauty, vigour, will be vain. It is by his blessing only—by the influence of piety—that they will spring forth as among the grass, and like willows by the streams of water. 4. Parents should seek this blessing as the richest inheritance which they can have for their children. Parents may leave the world in peace, if they see the Divine blessing—the Spirit of God, descend on their children like waters on the thirsty land, and like torrents upon the dry ground. 5. Parents should pray earnestly for a revival of religion. No better description can be given of a revival than that given here, of the Spirit of God descending like streams and floods, on the children and the young; and their springing forth, in the graces of piety, as among the grass, and growing in love to God and love to men, like willows by the water-courses. Who would not pray for such a work of grace? What family, what congregation, what people, can be happy or blessed without it? 5. *I am the Lord's.* I belong to Jehovah; I devote myself to him. This expresses the true nature of a profession of religion, a feeling that we are not our own, but that we belong to God. It is, that we not only feel that we are bound to worship him, but that we actually belong to him; that our bodies and spirits, and all that we have and are, are his, and are to be sacredly employed in his service, and his service alone: see 1 *Cor.* vi. 20; 2 *Cor.* viii. 5; v. 14, 15. 22. *As a thick cloud—and as a cloud.* 'I have blotted out, like a cloud, thy transgressions, and, like a vapour, thy sins.' Many think they improve the verse by putting the 'thick cloud' last. They overlook the true force of the words. The Lord declares his full forgiveness; forgiveness that leaves not a stain remaining. I have blotted out thy transgressions as the sun would break through and scatter a thick cloud; nay, more, it is like the sun dissolving and dissipating even the thin cloud or vapour that might still be lingering in the sky, so that not even the vestige remains of what formed a veil between you and God. It is thus the prophet describes complete forgiveness, the entire pardon of sin, and the delivering of the soul from the slightest stain. Not a thread of the veil is left, not a breath of the vapour. The thick cloud melts into vapour, and the vapour is dissolved—a clear blue sky remains, and a cloudless sun.—*Presbyterian Review, Edin.*, No. 79.

CHAP. XLV.—1. *To subdue nations before him.* Besides his native subjects, the nations which Cyrus subdued, and over which he reigned, were the Cilicians, Syrians, Paphlagonians, Cappadocians, Phrygians, Lydians, Carians, Phœnicians, Arabians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Bactrians, Sacæ, and Maryandines. Xenophon describes his empire as extending from the Mediterranean and Egypt to the Indian Ocean, and from Ethiopia to the Euxine sea, and conveys a physical idea of its extent by observing that the extremities were difficult to inhabit from opposite causes,—some from excess of heat, and others from excess of cold; some from a scarcity of water, and others too great abundance. *To open the two leaved gates.* In the scene of revelry which prevailed in Babylon when Cyrus took the city, the gates within the city which led from the streets to the river were left open, or the city could not have been taken, even after Cyrus had got within the walls; for the city was not only enclosed with walls, but there were walls within the city, on each side of the river Euphrates, with gates, by which the inhabitants had access to the water of the river. Had not these gates been left open on that occasion, contrary to the usual custom, the Persians would have been shut up in the bed of the river, and could all have been destroyed. *And the gates shall not be shut.* This is a most remarkable prophecy, and its fulfilment was remarkable. It was usual to close the gates of a city at night, and on the approach of an enemy. But in regard to Babylon, the inner gates leading to the river were left open in the revelry which prevailed in the city, and Cyrus had unarrested and unopposed access even to the palace itself. None but an omniscient Being could have predicted, a hundred and fifty years before it occurred, that such an event would take place; and this is one of the many prophecies which demonstrate in the most particular manner, that Isaiah was inspired. 3. *Treasures of darkness.* The treasures of the kings of the east were usually hidden in some obscure and strong place, and were not to be touched, except in cases of pressing necessity. Alexander found vast quantities of treasure thus hidden among the Persians; and it was by taking such treasures that the rapacity of the soldiers who followed a conqueror was satisfied, and in fact by a division of the spoils thus taken that they were paid. There can be no doubt that large quantities of treasure in this manner would be found in Babylon. 14. *They shall fall down unto thee.* Instead of saying, 'they shall worship God who dwells in thee,' the prophet makes his language more expressive by saying, 'they shall worship thee;' and then immediately explains his own language by adding their acknowledgment, 'only in thee is God,' or, to give the Hebrew word its full force, 'an almighty God,' implying that the gods of other nations were but gods in name. This exclusive recognition of the God of Israel is

then repeated in a way which may to some seem tautological, but which is really emphatic in a high degree.—*A.*——One of the most remarkable characteristics of the present time is, that a state of religious inquiry extensively exists; that heathen nations are becoming increasingly sensible of their ignorance, and comparative degradation; that they welcome the ministers and teachers sent out from Christian lands; and the increased commerce of the world is thus diffusing a spirit of universal inquiry, and preparing the world for the final spread of the Gospel.

CHAP. XLVIII.—22. *There is no peace with the wicked.* This verse was intended to restrict the operation of the foregoing promises to true believers, or the genuine Israel, as if he had said, All this will God accomplish for his people, but not for the wicked among them. The grand conclusion to which all tends is, that God is all, and man nothing; that even the chosen people must be sufferers, because they are sinners; that peculiar favour confers no immunity to sin or exemption from responsibility, but that even in the Israel of God, and the enjoyment of the most extraordinary privileges, it still remains for ever true, that "there is no peace to the wicked."—*A.*

CHAP. XLIX.—12. *The land of Sinim.* See a work under the title of "The Land of Sinim, or an exposition of Isaiah xlix. 12, together with a brief account of the Jews and Christians in China." (Philadelphia, 1845.) It is well said by this writer, that the verse before us is the central point of the prophetical discourse of which it forms a part, inasmuch as it embodies the great promise, which in various forms is exhibited before and afterwards. This relation of the text to the context is important, because it creates a presumption in favour of the widest meaning which can be put upon the terms of the prediction, and against a restricted local application. If the land of Sinim meant the wilderness of Sin, or even Egypt, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to give a satisfactory solution of its singular position here as one of the great quarters or divisions of the world. But if it mean China, that extreme limit of the eastern world, that hive of nations, supposed to comprehend a third part of the human race, the enigma explains itself. Even to us there would be nothing unintelligible or absurd, however strange or novel, in the combination, north, west, south, and China. On the whole then, a hypothesis which solves all difficulties, satisfies the claims of philology and history, unites the suffrages of the most independent schools and parties, fully meets the requisitions of the text and context, and opens a glorious field of expectation and of effort to the church, may be safely regarded as the true one. 22. *Daughters upon the shoulders.* Children of both sexes are carried on the shoulders. Thus may be seen the father carrying his son, the little fellow being astride on the shoulder, having with his hand, hold of his father's head. Girls, however, sit on their shoulder, as if on a chair, their legs hanging in front, while they also, with their hands, lay hold of the head. In going to or returning from heathen festivals, thousands of parents and their children may be thus seen marching along with joy.—*Roberts.* It is no forced interpretation of this passage which regards it as teaching, that the parents who should be converted among the Gentiles should bring their offspring to the Redeemer, and present them publicly to God.

CHAP. LI.—16. *My words in thy mouth.* The Messiah is the object of address, and that his work or mission is here described, namely, to plant the heavens, that is, to establish them, perhaps with allusion to the erection of a tent by the insertion of its stakes in the ground. The new creation thus announced can only mean the reproduction of the church in a new form, by what we usually call the change of dispensations. The outward economy should all be new, and yet the identity of the chosen people should remain unbroken; for he whom God had called to plant new heavens and to found a new earth was likewise commissioned to say to Zion, Thou art still my people.

CHAP. LIII.—3. *Grief.* The word rendered 'grief,' means usually sickness, disease, *Deu.* vii. 15; xxviii. 61; *Isa.* i. 5; but it also means anxiety, affliction, grief, *Eccl.* v. 16; and then any evil or calamity, *Eccl.* vi. 2. 7. *He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.* 'As a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so was he.' He made no resistance; he uttered no complaint. He suffered himself to be led quietly along to be put to death. What a striking and beautiful description! How tender and how true! We can almost see here the meek and patient Redeemer led along without resistance; and amidst the multitude that were assembled with various feelings to conduct him to death, himself perfectly silent and composed. With all power at his disposal, yet as quiet and gentle as though he had no power; and with a perfect consciousness that he was going to die, as calm and as gentle as though he were ignorant of the design for which they were leading him forth. 8. *He was taken from prison.* 'From distress and from judgment he was taken; and in his generation who will think that he was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people,' as 'a curse for them?' In (or among) his generation (that is, his contemporaries,) who considered that he was cut off from the land of the living? &c. 9. *Because.* This word here has probably the signification of, although. Thus it is used in *Job* xvi. 17, "Not for any injustice in my hands," Heb., 'Although there is no injustice in my hands.' The sense here demands this interpretation. According to our common version, the meaning is, that he was buried with the rich man because he had done no violence, and was guilty of no deceit; whereas it is rather to be taken in connection with the entire strain of the passage, and to be regarded as meaning, that he was wounded, rejected, put to death, and buried by the hands of men, although he had done no violence. Assuming now (see the Analysis in Barnes' Commentary, on *ch.* lii. 13, *seq.*) that this was written more than seven hundred years before the Lord Jesus was born, there are some remarks of great importance, to which we may just refer in the conclusion of this exposition. 1. The first is, the minute accuracy of the statements here as applicable to the Lord Jesus. It describes, as minutely as could have been done after the events occurred, the manner of his trial, of his rejection, the fact of his being taken from detention, and by a judicial sentence, and the manner in which it was designed that he should be buried, and yet the remarkable fact that this was prevented, and that he was interred in the manner in which the rich were buried. 2. We are then prepared to ask an infidel how he will dispose of this prophecy. That it existed seven hundred years before Christ, is as certain as that the poems of Homer or Hesiod had an existence before the Christian era; as certain as the existence of any ancient document whatever. It will not do to say that it was forged, for this is not only without proof, but would destroy the credibility of all ancient writings. It will not do to say that it was the result of natural sagacity in the prophet—for whatever may be said of conjectures about empires and kingdoms, no natural sagacity can tell what will be the character of an individual man, or whether such a man as here referred to would exist at all. It will not do to say that the Lord Jesus was a cunning impostor, and resolved to fulfil this ancient writing, and thus establish his claims; for such an attempt would have belied human nature; and, if attempted, could not have been accomplished. It remains then to ask, what solution the infidel will give of these remarkable facts. We present him the prophecy, not a rhapsody, not conjecture, not a general statement, but minute, full, clear, unequivocal, relating to points which could not have been the result of conjecture, and over which the individual had no control. And then we present him with the record of the life of Jesus,—minutely accurate in all the details of the fulfilment, a coincidence as clear as that between a biography and the original, and ask him to explain it. And we demand a definite and consistent answer to this. To turn away from it does not answer it. To laugh does not answer it. To say that it is not worth inquiry is not true, for it pertains to the great question of human redemption. But if he cannot explain it, then he should admit that it is such a prediction as only God could give, and that Christianity is true. 3. This chapter proves that the Redeemer died as an atoning sacrifice for men. It would be impossible to state in more explicit language the truth that he died as a sacrifice for the sins of men,—that he suffered to make proper expiation for the guilty. No confession of faith on earth, no creed, no symbol, no standard of doctrine, contains more explicit statements on the subject. And if the language here used does not demonstrate that the Redeemer was an atoning sacrifice, it is impossible to conceive how such a doctrine could be taught or conveyed to men. 4. This whole chapter is exceedingly important to Christians. It contains the most full, continuous statement in the Bible of the design of the Redeemer's sufferings and death. And after all the light which is shed on the subject in the New Testament, after all the full and clear statements made by the Redeemer and the apostles, still, if we wish to see a full and continuous statement on the great doctrine of the atonement, we naturally recur to this portion of *Isaiah.* If we wish our faith to be strengthened, and our hearts warmed, by the contemplation of his sufferings, we shall find no portion of the Bible better adapted to it than this. It is a portion that should not only be the subject of contemplation, but of much fervent prayer. No man can study it too profoundly. No one can feel too much anxiety to understand it. Every verse, every phrase, every word, should be studied and pondered, until it fixes itself deep in the memory, and makes an eternal impression on the heart. If a man understands this portion of the Bible, he will have a correct view of the plan of salvation. And it should be the subject of profound and prayerful contemplation, till the heart glows with love to that merciful God who was willing to give the Redeemer to such sorrow, and to the gracious Saviour who for our sins was willing to pour out his soul unto death.

CHAP. LIV.—11, 12. *Sapphires—agates.* Lowth says that, 'these seem to be general images to express beauty, magnificence, purity, strength, and solidity agreeably to the ideas of the eastern nations, and to have never been intended to be strictly scrutinized, or minutely and particularly explained, as if they had each of them some precise moral or spiritual meaning.'—*A.*

CHAP. LVII.—20. *The wicked are like the troubled sea.* The agitation and commotion of the sinner here referred to relates to such things as the following: 1. There is no permanent happiness or enjoyment. There is no reconciliation with God. 2. Raging passions. The sinner is under their influence, and they may be compared to the wild and tumultuous waves of the ocean. 3. Conscience. Nothing more resembles an agitated ocean casting up mire and dirt than a soul agitated by the recollections of past guilt. 4. The fear of judgment and of hell. Many a sinner has no rest day or night, from the fear of future wrath. His troubled mind looks onward, and he sees nothing to anticipate but the wrath of God, and the horrors of an eternal hell. How invaluable is religion! All these commotions are stilled by the voice of pardoning mercy, as the billows of the deep were hushed by the voice of Jesus. —We all must soon lie down on beds of death; and in all these scenes there is nothing that can give permanent and solid peace but the religion of the Redeemer. Oh, that stills all the agitation of a troubled soul; lays every billow of tumultuous passion to rest; calms all the conflicts of a guilty bosom; reveals God, reconciled through a Redeemer, to our souls; and removes all the anticipated terrors of a bed of death, and of the approach to the judgment bar. Peacefully the Christian can die, not like the troubled sinner, when he leaves the world with a bosom agitated like the stormy ocean, but as peacefully as the gentle ripple dies away on the beach.

CHAP. LVIII.—3. *And exact all your labours.* There was no kindness shewn to the poor, to the labouring classes, to those who were in their employ, to those who were indebted to them, to those who had injured or offended them. Alas, how often is this still true! 14. *For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.* This formula often occurs when an important promise is made, and it is regarded as ample security for the fulfilment that Jehovah has promised it. What more ample security can be required, or conceived, than the promise of the eternal God? From the closing portion of this chapter we may derive the following important inferences respecting the sabbath: 1. It is to be of perpetual obligation. The whole chapter occurs in the midst of statements that relate to the times of the Messiah. But there is no intimation that the sabbath was to be abolished; but it is fairly implied, that its observance was to be attended with most happy results in those future times. At all events, Isaiah regarded it as of binding obligation, and felt that its proper observance was identified with the national welfare. 2. We may see the manner in which the sabbath is to be observed. In no place in the Bible is there a more full account of the proper mode of keeping that holy day. We are to refrain from ordinary travelling and employments; we are not to engage in doing our own pleasure; we are to regard it with delight, and to esteem it a day worthy to be honoured; and we are to shew honour to it by not performing our own ordinary works, or pursuing pleasure, or engaging in the common topics of conversation. 3. Important benefits result from the right observance of the sabbath. In the passage before us these are said to be, that they who thus observed it should find pleasure in Jehovah, and should be signally prospered and be safe. But those benefits are by no means confined to the Jewish people. It is as true now as it was then, that they who observe the sabbath in a proper manner find a pleasure and happiness in the Lord—in his existence, perfections, promises, law, and in communion with him—which is to be found nowhere else. Of this fact there are abundant witnesses now in every Christian church, and they will continue to be multiplied, in every coming age. 4. Society will have seasons of cessation from labour, and when they are not made occasions for the promotion of virtue, they will be for the promotion of vice. It is vain to attempt to blot out wholly the observance of the Christian sabbath; and since it will and must be observed as a day of cessation from toil, all that remains is, for society to avail itself of the advantages which may be derived from its proper observance, and to make it the handmaid of temperance, intelligence, and pure religion. It is deeply, therefore, to be regretted that this sacred institution has been, and is, so widely abused in Christain lands. As it is, it is extensively a day of feasting, amusement, dissipation, and revelry. And while its observance is more decidedly than any thing else the means of perpetuating virtue and religion on earth, it is, perhaps, not too much to say, that it is the occasion of more intemperance, vice, and crime, than all the other days of the week put together. This is particularly the case in our large cities and towns. 6. While the friends of religion, therefore, mourn over the desecration of the Christian sabbath, let them remember that their example may contribute more to secure a proper observance of that day. On the friends of the Redeemer it devolves to rescue the

day from desecration; and by the Divine blessing it may be done. The happiness of every Christian is indissolubly connected with the proper observance of the sabbath. The perpetuity of the true religion, and its extension throughout the earth, is identified with the observance of the sabbath. And every true friend of God the Saviour, as he values his own peace, and as he prizes the religion which he professes to love, is bound to restrain his foot on the sabbath; to cease to find his own pleasure, and to speak his own words on that holy day; and to shew that the sabbath is to him a delight, and that he esteems the holy day of Jehovah a day to be honoured and to be loved.

CHAP. LIX.—21. *From henceforth and for ever.* This is in accordance with the promises which everywhere occur in the Scriptures, that God would bless the posterity of his people, and that the children of the pious should partake of his favour: see *Ex.* xx. 6, "shewing mercy unto thousands" (that is, thousands of generations) "of them that love me, and keep my commandments:" compare *Deu.* vii. 9; iv. 37; v. 29; *Ps.* lxxxix. 24—36; *Jer.* xxxii. 39, 40. There is no promise of the Bible that is more full of consolation to the pious, or that has been more strikingly fulfilled than this. And though it is true that not all the children of holy parents become truly pious; though there are instances where they are signally wicked and abandoned, yet it is also true that rich spiritual blessings are imparted to the posterity of those who serve God, and who keep his commandments. The following facts are well known to all who have ever made any observation on this subject. 1. The great majority of those who become religious are the descendants of those who were themselves the friends of God. Those who now compose the Christian churches the world over, are not those generally who have been taken from the ways of open vice and profligacy; from the ranks of infidelity; or from the immediate descendants of scoffers, drunkards, and blasphemers. Such men usually tread, for a few generations at least, in the footsteps of their fathers. The church is composed mainly of the descendants of those who have been true Christians, and who trained their children to walk in the ways of pure religion. 2. It is a fact that comparatively a large proportion of the descendants of the pious themselves, for many generations, become true Christians. I know that it is often thought to be otherwise, and especially that it is often said that the children of clergymen are less virtuous and religious than others. But it should be remembered that such cases are more prominent than others; that they attract attention; and especially that the profane and the wicked have a malicious pleasure in making them the subject of remark. The son of a drunkard will be intemperate without attracting notice; for such a result is expected; the son of an infidel will be an infidel; the son of a scoffer will be a scoffer; of a thief a thief; of a licentious man licentious, without being the subject of special remark. It is expected, and is regarded as a matter of course. But when the son of an eminent Christian is profane, licentious, or an infidel,—when he treads the path of open profligacy, it at once excites remark, because such is not the usual course, and is not usually expected; and because a wicked world has pleasure in marking the case, and calumniating religion through the prominent instances of imperfection and sin. But such is not the common result of religious training. Some of the most devotedly pious people of the United States are the descendants of the Hugonots who were expelled from France. A very large proportion of all the piety in this country has been derived from the "Pilgrims," who landed on the rock of Plymouth, and God has blessed their descendants in New England, and elsewhere, with numerous revivals of religion. I am acquainted with the descendants of John Rogers, the first martyr in Queen Mary's reign, of the tenth and eleventh generations. With a single exception, the oldest son in the family has been a clergyman; some of them eminently distinguished for learning and piety; and there are few families now in this land a greater proportion of whom are pious than of that family. The secretary of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society made a limited investigation this year (1838) for the purpose of ascertaining the facts about the religious character of the families of ministers and deacons, with reference to the charge so often urged that the "sons and daughters of ministers and deacons were worse than common children." The following is the result. In 268 families which he canvassed, he found 1,290 children over fifteen years of age; of these children, 884, almost three-fourths, are hopefully pious; 794 have united with the churches; sixty-one entered the ministry; only seventeen are dissipated, and about half only of these became so while with their parents. In eleven of these families there are 123 children, and all but seven pious. In fifty-six of these families there are 249 children over fifteen, and all hopefully pious. When and where can any such result be found in the families of infidels, of the vicious, or of irreligious men? Indeed, it is the great law by which religion and virtue are spread and perpetuated in the world, that God is faithful to this covenant, and that he blesses the efforts of his friends in endeavouring to train up generations for his service. 3. All pious parents should repose on this promise of a faithful God. They may and should believe that it is his design to perpetuate religion in the families of those who truly serve and obey him. They should be faithful in imparting religious truth; faithful in prayer; faithful in a meek, holy, pure and benevolent example; they should so live, that their children may safely tread in their footsteps; they should look to God for his blessing on their efforts, and their efforts will not be in vain. They shall see their children walk in the ways of virtue; and when they die they may leave the world with unwavering confidence that God will not suffer his faithfulness to fail; that he will not break his covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips, *Ps.* lxxxix. 33, 34.

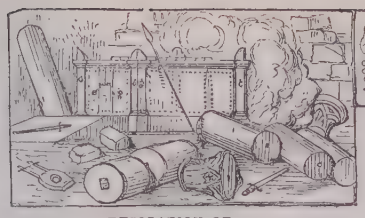
CHAP. LX. Having repeatedly and fully shewn that the national pre-eminence of Israel was not to be perpetual, that the loss of it was the natural consequence, and righteous retribution, of iniquity, and that their loss did not involve the destruction of the true church or spiritual Israel, the prophet now proceeds to shew, that to the latter the approaching change would be a glorious and blessed one. 11. *Therefore thy gates shall be open continually.* The sense is, 1. That there will be immense multitudes that shall enter the true church from the heathen world. 2. That the Gospel will be constantly and unceasingly offered to men. The doors of the church shall at no time be closed. 3. It will be a time of safety, when the world shall be brought under the influence and the dominion of the Prince of peace. Should the principles of Christianity be every where diffused, the walls of all cities might be suffered to fall down, their gates to stand open till they should decay, ships of war to lie in the dock till they should sink to the bottom, forts and fleets to be dismantled, and the whole business of making locks, and shackles, and of building prisons, and manufacturing instruments of war, would come to an end. 12. *For the nation.* The "For" at the beginning of the verse is commonly explained as introducing a reason for the confluence of strangers just before predicted, namely, the desire of escaping this destruction; but it may as well be understood to give a reason for the promise of increase in general. The gates of Zion shall be crowded, because all shall enter into them but those who are to perish.—*A.*

CHAP. LXI.—6. *Ye shall eat the riches.* 'And ye,' or more emphatically, as for you, 'the priests of Jehovah shall ye be called, the ministers of our God shall be said to you,' (or of you,) 'the strength of nations shall ye eat, and in their glory shall ye substitute yourselves,' or into their glory shall ye enter by exchange. The true antithesis is, 'ye shall be their priests, and they shall be your purveyors; you shall supply their spiritual wants, and they shall supply your temporal wants.' This explanation of the verse, to which we have been naturally led by philological induction, and the context, coincides, in a manner too remarkable to be considered accidental, with the words of Paul in writing to the Romans of the contribution made by the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, for the poor saints at Jerusalem. "It hath pleased them verily, and their debtors they are," that is, they have chosen to do it, and indeed were bound to do it, "for if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things," *Rom.* xv. 27. This may seem, however, to determine the object of address to be the Jews; but no such inference can fairly be deduced from the words of the apostle, who is only making one specific application of the general truth taught by the prophet. What was true of the Gentile converts then, in relation to the Jewish Christians as their mother church, is no less true of the heathen now, or even of converted Jews, in reference to the Christians who impart the Gospel to them. The essential idea in both places is, that the church, the chosen people, or the Israel of God, is charged with the duty of communicating spiritual things to those without, and entitled in return to an increase of outward strength from those who thus become incorporated with it.—But it is not merely in this lower sense that the people of God are in the law (*Ex.* xix. 20) and the Gospel, (1 *Pet.* i. 3,) as well as in the prophets, represented as the ministers and priests of God. Not only as instructors and reclaimers of the unbelieving world do they enjoy this sacred dignity, but also as the only representatives of their great High Priest, in him and through him possessing free access to the fountain of salvation and the throne of grace, *Heb.* iv. 14—16. In this respect, as in every other, which concerns the method of salvation and access to God, there is no distinction of Jew and Gentile, any more than of Greek and barbarian, male and female, bond and free, but all are Christ's, and Christ is God's, and all alike are priests and ministers of God.—*A.* To the system of more literally interpreting this and other chapters in Isaiah, reference is made in the Supplementary Notes to Jeremiah. *ch.* xxiii.

CHAP. LXIII. The influx of the Gentiles into Zion having been described in the preceding verses, the destruction of her enemies is now sublimely represented as a sanguinary triumph of Jehovah or the Messiah, ver. 1—6. The prophet then supposes the catastrophe already past, and takes a retrospective view of God's compassions towards his people, and of their unfaithfulness during the old economy, ver. 7—14. He then assumes the tone of earnest supplication, such as might have been offered by the believing Jews when all seemed lost in the destruction of their commonwealth and temple, ver. 15—19. 1. *From Edom.* With some exceptions, most interpreters, even of the modern German school, suppose Edom to be here, as in *ch.* xxxiv., the representative of Israel's most inveterate enemies. 3. *I have trodden the winepress alone.* The most satisfactory solution seems to be, that these words are added to convey the idea that all the nations were on the adverse side, none on that of the conqueror. The sense will then be, not that they refuse to join in trampling others, but simply that they were among the trampled; as if he had said, I trod the press alone, and all the nations, without exception, were trodden in it. By all the nations we are of course to understand all but God's people. The treading of the winepress alone is an expression often applied in sermons, and in religious books and conversation, to our Saviour's sufferings. This application is described as customary in his own time by Vitringa, who considers it as having led to the forced exposition of the whole passage by the fathers and Cocceius as a description of Christ's passion. While the impossibility of such a sense in the original passage cannot be too strongly stated, there is no need of denying that the figure may be happily accommodated in the way suggested; as many expressions of the Old Testament may be applied to different objects with good effect, provided we are careful to avoid confounding such accommodations with the strict and primary import of the passage. 16. *Though Abraham be ignorant of us.* The true sense of the verse, as it appears to me, is that the church or chosen people, although once, for temporary reasons, coextensive and coincident with a single race, is not essentially a national organization, but a spiritual body. Its father is not Abraham or Israel, but Jehovah, who is, and always has been, its Redeemer, who has borne that name from everlasting.—*A.*

CHAP. LXIV.—4. *Thou meetest him.* There is perhaps no sentence in Isaiah or indeed in the Old Testament, which has more divided and perplexed interpreters, or on which the ingenuity and learning of the modern writers have thrown less light. To enumerate the various interpretations would be endless and of no avail. I shall not attempt to define what is correct and what erroneous in these various constructions, but simply to justify the one assumed in my own version. The general meaning of the sentence may be thus expressed in paraphrase: 'Although thou hast cast off Israel as a nation, thou hast nevertheless met, or favourably answered, every one rejoicing to do righteousness, and in thy ways or future dispensations such shall still remember and acknowledge thee; thou hast been angry, and with cause, for we have sinned, but in them, thy purposed dispensations, there is perpetuity, and we shall be saved.' The abrogation of the old economy, though fatal to the national pre-eminence of Israel, was so far from destroying the true church or the hopes of true believers, that it revealed the way of life more clearly than ever, and substituted for an insufficient, temporary system, a complete and everlasting one.—*A.*

CHAP. LXVI.—24. *Their worm shall not die.* The Saviour (*Mar.* ix. 44, 64,) applied the language to the future punishment of the wicked, and no one, I think, can doubt that in Isaiah it includes that consummation of worldly affairs. The radical and essential idea in the prophet is, as it seems to me, that all the foes of God would be destroyed; that his people and cause would be firmly established, and would be delivered from all their foes; and that such would be the entire overthrow and punishment of the enemies of God; so condign their punishment, so deep their sufferings, so loathsome and hateful when visited with the Divine vengeance for their sins, that they would be an object of loathing and abhorrence. They would be swept off as unworthy to live with God, and they would be consigned to punishment—loathsome, like that of ever-gnawing worms on the carcases of the slain, and interminable and dreadful like ever-consuming and inextinguishable fires. This is the consummation of the series of bright visions that passed before the mind of Isaiah. This is an appropriate termination of this succession of wonderful revelations. Where could it more appropriately terminate than in the consummation of all things,—in the final triumph of the true religion, and in the complete and final destruction of all the enemies of God? The vision stretches on to the judgment, and is closed by a contemplation of those scenes which commence there, but which never end. The church is triumphant; its conflicts cease; its foes are slain; its Redeemer is revealed; and its everlasting happiness is founded on a basis which can never be shaken.



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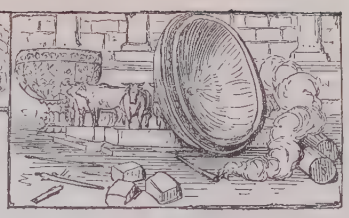


THE TEMPLE.

OF THE BOOK OF

THE PROPHET JEREMIAH,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE prophecies of the Old Testament, as the epistles of the New, are placed rather according to their bulk than their seniority,—the longest first, not the oldest. There were divers prophets, and writing ones, that were contemporaries with Isaiah, as Micah; or a little before him, as Hosea, and Joel, and Amos; or soon after him, as Habakkuk and Nahum are supposed to be; and yet the prophecy of Jeremiah, who began many years after Isaiah finished, is placed next to his, because there is so much in it. Where we meet with most of God's word, there let the preference be given; and yet those of lesser gifts are not to be despised or excluded. Nothing now occurs to be observed farther concerning prophecy in general, but concerning this prophet Jeremiah we may observe, I. That he was betimes a prophet; he began young, and therefore could say from his own experience that it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth, the yoke both of service and of affliction, *Lam.* iii. 27. Jerome observes, that Isaiah, who had more years over his head, had his tongue touched with a coal of fire, to purge away his iniquity, *ch.* vi. 7; but when God touched Jeremiah's mouth, who was yet but young, nothing was said of the purging of his iniquity, *ch.* i. 9, because, by reason of his tender years, he had not so much sin to answer for. II. That he continued long a prophet; some reckon fifty years, others above forty. He began in the thirteenth year of Josiah, when things went well under that good king; but he continued through all the wicked reigns that followed: for when we set out for the service of God, though the wind may then be fair and favourable, we know not how soon it may turn and be tempestuous. III. That he was a reproving prophet; was sent in God's name to tell Jacob of their sins, and to warn them of the judgments of God that were coming upon them. And the critics observe, that therefore his style and manner of speaking is more plain and rough, and less polite, than that of Isaiah and some other of the prophets. Those that are sent to discover sin ought to lay aside the enticing words of man's wisdom; plain dealing is best when we are dealing with sinners to bring them to repentance. IV. That he was a weeping prophet. So he is commonly called, not only because he penned the *Lamentations*, but because he was all along a mournful spectator of the sins of his people, and of the desolating judgments that were coming upon them; and for this reason, perhaps, those who imagined our Saviour to be one of the prophets thought him of any of them to be most like to Jeremiah, *Mat.* xvi. 14, because he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. V. That he was a suffering prophet. He was persecuted by his own people more than any of them, as we shall find in the story of this book,—for he lived and preached just before the Jews' destruction by the Chaldeans, when their character seems to have been the same as it was just before their destruction by the Romans, when they killed the Lord Jesus, and persecuted his disciples, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men,—for wrath was come upon them to the uttermost, 1 *Thes.* ii. 15, 16. The last account we have of him in his history is, that the remaining Jews forced him to go down with them into Egypt, where, as the current tradition is among Jews and Christians, he suffered martyrdom. Hottinger, out of Elmakin, an Arabic historian, relates that, he continuing to prophesy in Egypt, against the Egyptians and other nations, he was stoned to death; and that long after, when Alexander entered Egypt, he took up the bones of Jeremiah, where they were buried in obscurity, and carried them to Alexandria, and buried them there. The prophecies of this book, which we have in the first nineteen chapters, seem to be the heads of the sermons he preached in a way of general reproof for sin, and denunciation of judgment; afterwards they are more particular and occasional, and mixed with the history of his day, but not placed in due order of time. With the threatenings many gracious promises are intermixed of mercy to the penitent, of the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity, and some that have a plain reference to the kingdom of the Messiah. Among the Apocryphal writings there is extant an epistle, said to be written by Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, warning them against the worship of idols, by exposing the vanity of idols, and the folly of idolaters; it is in *Baruch, ch.* vi. But it is supposed not to be authentic; nor has it, methinks, any thing like the life and spirit of Jeremiah's writings. It is also related concerning Jeremiah, 2 *Mac.* ii. 4, that when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans, he, by direction from God, took the ark and the altar of incense, and carried them to mount Nebo, lodged them in a hollow cave there, and stopped the door; but some that followed him, and thought they had marked the place, could not find it: he blamed them for seeking it, telling them the place should be unknown till the time that God should gather his people together again. But I know not what credit is to be given to that story, though it is there said to be found in the records. We cannot but be concerned, in the reading of Jeremiah's prophecies, to find that they were so little regarded by the men of that generation; but let us make use of that as a reason why we should regard them the more, for they are written for our learning too, and for warning to us and to our land.

A.M. 3375. B.C. 629.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have, I. The general inscription or title of this book; with the time of the continuance of Jeremiah's public ministry, ver. 1—3. II. The call of Jeremiah to the prophetical office, his modest objection against it answered, and an ample commission given him for the execution of it, ver. 4—10. III. The visions of an almond-rod and a seething-pot, signifying the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, ver. 11—16. IV. Encouragement given to the prophet to go on undauntedly in his work, in an assurance of God's presence with him, ver. 17—19. Thus is he set to work by One that will be sure to bear him out.

THE words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that *were* in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin: 2 To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3 It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

We have here as much as it was thought fit we should know of the genealogy of this prophet, and the chronology of his prophecy.

First. We are told what family the prophet was of. He was the son of Hilkiah. It is supposed not that Hilkiah that was high priest in Josiah's time, for then he would have been called so, and not, as here, one "of the priests that were in Anathoth," but another of the same name. Jeremiah signifies 'one raised up by the Lord.' It is said of Christ, that he is a prophet whom the Lord our God raiseth up unto us, *Deu.* xviii. 15, 18. He was of the priests, and, as a priest, was authorized and appointed to teach the people; but to that authority and appointment God added the extraordinary commission of a prophet. Ezekiel also was a priest. Thus God would support the honour of the priesthood at a time when, by their sins and God's judgments upon them, it was sadly eclipsed. He was of the priests in Anathoth, a city of priests, which lay but three miles from Jerusalem. Abiathar had his country house there, 1 *Kin.* ii. 26.

Secondly. We have the general date of his prophecies, the knowledge of which is requisite to the understanding of them. 1. He began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, ver. 2. Josiah, in the twelfth year of his reign, began a work of reformation; applied himself, with all sincerity, to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the images, 2 *Chr.* xxxiv. 3. And very seasonably then was this young prophet

raised up to assist and encourage the young king in that good work. Then the word of the Lord came to him; not only a charge and commission to him to prophesy, but a revelation of the things themselves which he was to deliver. As it is an encouragement to ministers to be countenanced and protected by such pious magistrates as Josiah was, so it is a great help to magistrates, in any good work of reformation, to be advised and animated, and to have a great deal of their work done for them by such faithful, zealous, ministers as Jeremiah was. Now one would have expected when these two joined forces, such a prince and such a prophet, (as in a like case, *Ezr.* v. 1, 2,) and both young, such a complete reformation should have been brought about and settled, as would have prevented the ruin of the church and state; but it proved quite otherwise. In the eighteenth year of Josiah we find there were a great many of the relics of idolatry that were not purged out; for what can the best princes and prophets do to prevent the ruin of a people that hate to be reformed? And therefore, though it was a time of reformation, Jeremiah continued to foretell the destroying judgments that were coming upon them. For there is no symptom more threatening to any people than fruitless attempts of reformation. Josiah and Jeremiah would have healed them, but they would not be healed. 2. He continued to prophesy through the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who each reigned eleven years. He prophesied to "the carrying away of Jerusalem captive," ver. 3, that great event which he had so often prophesied of. He continued to prophesy after that, *ch.* xl. 1, but the computation here is made to end with that, because it was the accomplishment of many of his predictions; and from the thirteenth of Josiah to the captivity was just forty years. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that as Moses was so long with the people a teacher in the wilderness, till they entered into their own land, Jeremiah was so long in their own land a teacher before they went into the wilderness of the heathen; and he thinks that therefore a special mark is set upon the last forty years of the iniquity of Judah, which Ezekiel bore forty days, a day for a year; because during all that time they had Jeremiah prophesying among them, which was a great aggravation of their impenitency. God, in this prophet, suffered their manners, their ill manners, forty years, and at length sware in his wrath that they should not continue in his rest.

4 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
5 Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee;
And before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee,
And I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.
6 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I *am* a child. 7 But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I *am* a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. 8 Be not afraid of their faces: for I *am* with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. 9 Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.
10 See, I have this day set thee over the nations
And over the kingdoms,
To root out, and to pull down,
And to destroy, and to throw down,
To build, and to plant.

Here is, First. Jeremiah's early designation to the work and office of a prophet, which God gives him notice of as a reason for his early application to that business, ver. 4, 5. The word of the Lord came to him with a satisfying assurance to himself that it was the word of the Lord, and not a delusion; and God told him, 1. That he had "ordained him a prophet to the nations," or against the nations. The nation of the Jews in the first place, who are therefore now reckoned among the nations, because they had learned their works, and mingled themselves with them in their idolatries, which otherwise they should not have been, *Num.* xxiii. 9. Yet he was given to be a prophet, not to the Jews only, but to the neighbour nations, to whom he was to send yokes, *ch.* xxvii. 3, and whom he must make to drink of the cup of the Lord's anger, *ch.* xxv. 17. He is still in his writings a prophet to the nations, (to our nation among the rest,) to tell them what the national judgments are which may be expected from national sins. It would be well for the nations, would they take Jeremiah for their prophet, and attend to the warnings he gives them. 2. That before he was born, even in his eternal counsel, he had designed him to be so. Let him know that he who gave him this commission is the same that gave him his being; that formed him in the belly, and brought him forth out of the womb, and therefore was his rightful owner, and might employ him and make use of him as he pleased; and that this commission was given him in pursuance of the purpose God had purposed in himself concerning him, before he was born: "I knew thee, and I sanctified thee;" that is, I determined that thou shouldest be a prophet, and set thee apart for the office. Thus St. Paul saith of himself, that God had separated him from his mother's womb, to be a Christian and an apostle, *Gal.* i. 15. Observe, 1st. The great Creator knows what use to make of every man before he makes him. He has made all for himself, and of the same lump of clay designs a vessel of honour or dishonour, as he pleaseth, *Rom.* ix. 21. 2nd. What God has designed men for he will call them to; for his purposes cannot be frustrated. Known unto God are all his own works beforehand, and his knowledge is infallible, and his purpose unchangeable. 3rd. There is a particular purpose and providence of God conversant about his prophets and ministers. They are by special counsel designed for their work; and what they are designed for they are fitted for. I that knew thee, sanctified thee. God destines them to it, and forms them for it, then when he first forms the spirit of man within him. *Propheta nascitur, non fit,*—'Original endowment, not education, makes a prophet.'

Secondly. His modest declining of this honourable employment, ver. 6. Though God had predestinated him to it, yet it was news to him, and a mighty surprise to hear that he should be "a prophet unto the nations." We know not what God intends us for, but he knows. One would have thought he should have catched at it as a piece of preferment, for so it was; but he objects against it, disables himself; "Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak" to great men and multitudes as prophets must. I cannot speak fine nor fluently, cannot word things well, as a message from God should be worded; I cannot speak with any authority, nor can expect to be heeded; for "I am a child," and my youth will be despised. Note, It becomes us, when we have any service to do for God, to be afraid lest we mismanage it, and lest it suffer through our weakness and unfitness for it. It becomes us likewise to have low thoughts of ourselves, and to be diffident of our own sufficiency. Those that are young should consider that they are so; should be afraid, as Elihu was, and not venture beyond their length.

Thirdly. The assurance God graciously gave him, that he would stand by him, and carry him on in his work.

1. Let him not object that he is a child, he shall be a prophet for all that; ver. 7, "Say not" any more "I am a child." It is true thou art; but, 1st. Thou hast God's precept, and let not that hinder thee from obeying it: go to all to whom I shall send thee, and speak whatsoever I command thee. Note, Though a sense of our own weakness and insufficiency should make us go humbly about our work, yet it should not make us draw back from it when God calls us to it. God was angry with Moses even for his modest excuses, *Ex.* iv. 14. 2nd. Thou hast God's presence, and let not thy being young discourage thee from depending upon it. Though thou art a child, thou shalt be enabled to go to all to whom I shall send thee, though they are never so great, and never so many. And whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt have judgment, memory, and language wherewith to speak it as it should be spoken. Samuel delivered a message from God to Eli when he was a little child. Note, God can when he pleaseth make children prophets, and ordain strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

2. Let him not object that he shall meet with many enemies, and much opposition; God will be his protector, ver. 8; "Be not afraid of their faces." Though they look big, and so think to outface thee, and put thee out of countenance, yet be not afraid to speak to them, no, not to speak that to them which is most unpleasing; thou speakest in the name of the King of kings, and, by authority from him, and with that thou mayest face them down. Though they look angry, be not afraid of their displeasure, nor disturbed with apprehensions of the consequences of it. Those that have messages to deliver from God must not be afraid of the face of man, *Eze.* iii. 9. And thou hast cause to be both bold and easy, for I am with thee, not only to assist thee in thy work, but to deliver thee out of the hands of thy persecutors; and if God be for thee who can be against thee? If God do not deliver his ministers from trouble, it comes much to one, if he deliver them from sinking under their trouble. Mr. Gataker well observes here, that earthly princes are not wont to go along with their ambassadors, but God goes along with those whom he sends, and is, by his powerful protection, at all times and in all places present with them, and with this they ought to animate themselves, *Acts* xviii. 10.

3. Let him not object that he cannot speak as becomes him; God will enable him to speak. 1st. To speak intelligently, and as one that had acquaintance with God, ver. 9. He having now a vision of the Divine glory, "the Lord put forth his hand," and, by a sensible sign, conferred upon him so much of the gift of the tongue as was necessary for him. He touched his mouth, and with that touch opened his lips, that his mouth should shew forth God's praise; with that touch sweetly conveyed his words into his mouth, to be ready to him upon all occasions, so that he could never want words, who was thus furnished by him that made man's mouth. God not only put knowledge into his head, but words into his mouth; for there are words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, 1 *Cor.* ii. 13. It is fit God's message should be delivered in his own words, that it may be delivered punctually; *Eze.* iii. 4, "Speak with my words;" and those that faithfully do so, shall not want instructions as the case requires. God will give them a mouth and wisdom in that same hour, *Mat.* x. 19. 2nd. To speak powerfully, and as one that had authority from God, ver. 10. It is a strange commission that is here given him: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms," which sounds very great, and yet Jeremiah is a poor, despicable priest still. He is not set over the kingdoms as a prince, to rule them by the sword, but as a prophet, by the power of the word of God. Those that would from hence prove the Pope's supremacy over kings, and his authority to depose them, and dispose of their kingdoms at his pleasure, must prove that he has the same extraordinary spirit of prophecy that Jeremiah had; else how can he have the power that Jeremiah had by virtue of that spirit? And yet the power that Jeremiah had, (who, notwithstanding his power, lived in meanness and contempt, and under oppression,) would not content those proud men. Jeremiah was set over the nations, the Jewish nation in the first place, and other nations (some great ones) besides, against whom he prophesied,—was set over them, not to demand tribute from them, or enrich himself with their spoils, but to root out, and pull down and destroy, and yet withal to build and plant. *First.* He must attempt to reform the nations, to root out, and pull down, and destroy idolatry and other wickednesses among them, to extirpate those vicious habits and customs which had long taken root, to throw down the kingdom of sin, that religion and virtue might be planted and built among them. And to the introducing and establishing of that which is good, it is necessary that that which is evil be removed. *Secondly.* He must tell them, that it would be well or ill with them, according as they were or were not reformed. He must set before them life and death, good and evil, according to God's declaration of the method he takes with kingdoms and nations, *ch.* xviii. 7—10. He must assure those who persisted in their wickedness, that they should be rooted out and destroyed, and those who repented, that they should be built and planted. He was authorized to read the doom of nations, and God would ratify and fulfil it, *Isa.* xliv. 26, would do it according to his word, and therefore is said to do it by his word. It is thus expressed, partly to shew how sure the word of prophecy is, it will as certainly be accomplished as if it were done already; and partly to put an honour upon the prophetical office, and make it look truly great, that others may not despise prophets, nor they disparage themselves. And yet more honourable doth the gospel ministry look, in that declarative power Christ gave his apostles to remit and retain sin, *Jno.* xx. 23; to bind and loose, *Mat.* xviii. 18.

11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree. 12 Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it. 13 And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot; and the face thereof *is* toward the north. 14 Then the LORD said unto me,

Out of the north an evil shall break forth
Upon all the inhabitants of the land. [north,
15 For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the
Saith the LORD;
And they shall come,
And they shall set every one his throne
At the entering of the gates of Jerusalem,
And against all the walls thereof round about,
And against all the cities of Judah.
16 And I will utter my judgments against them touching
all their wickedness,
Who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto
other gods,
And worshipped the works of their own hands.
17 Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise,
And speak unto them all that I command thee:
Be not dismayed at their faces,
Lest I confound thee before them.
18 For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city,
and an iron pillar,
And brasen walls against the whole land,
Against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof,
Against the priests thereof, and against the people of the
land.
19 And they shall fight against thee;
But they shall not prevail against thee;
For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Here, First. God gives Jeremiah, in vision, a view of the principal errand he was to go upon, which was to foretell the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for their sins, especially their idolatry. This was at first represented to him in a way proper to make an impression upon him, that he might have it upon his heart in all his dealings with this people.

1. He intimates to him that the people were ripening apace for ruin, and ruin was hastening apace towards them. God having answered his objection, that he was a child, goes on to initiate him in the prophetical learning and language; and, having promised to enable him to speak intelligibly to the people, he here teaches him to understand what God saith to him; for prophets must have eyes in their heads as well as tongues, must be seers as well as speakers: he therefore asks him, "Jeremiah, what seest thou?" Look about thee, and observe now. And he was soon aware what was presented to him; "I see a rod," noting affliction and chastisement, a correcting rod hanging over us; and it is "a rod of an almond tree," which is one of the forwardest trees in the spring, is in the bud and blossom presently, when other trees are scarce broken out. It flourisheth, saith Pliny, in the month of January, and by March hath ripe fruits; hence it is called in the Hebrew, *Shakedh*, 'the hasty tree.' Whether this rod that Jeremiah saw had already budded, as some think, or whether it was stripped and dry, as others think, and yet Jeremiah knew it to be of an almond tree, as Aaron's rod was, is uncertain; but God explained it in the next words, ver. 12, "Thou hast well seen." God commended him that he was so observant, and so quick of apprehension, as to be aware, though it was the first vision he ever saw, that it was "a rod of an almond tree," that his mind was so composed as to be able to distinguish. Prophets have need of good eyes; and those that see well shall be commended, and not those only that speak well. Thou hast seen a hasty tree, that signifies that "I will hasten my word to perform it." Jeremiah shall prophesy that which he himself shall live to see accomplished. We have the explication of this, *Eze.* vii. 10, 11, "The rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded, violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness." The measure of Jerusalem's iniquity fills very fast; and, as if their destruction slumbered too long, they waken it, they hasten it, and I will hasten to perform what I have spoken against them.

2. He intimates to him whence the intended ruin should arise. Jeremiah is a second time asked, "What seest thou?" And he sees a seething pot upon the fire, ver. 13, representing Jerusalem and Judah in a mighty toss and commotion, like boiling water, by reason of the descent which the Chaldean army made upon them; made like a fiery oven, *Ps.* xxi. 9, all in a heat, wasting away as boiling water doth, and sensibly evaporating and growing less and less; ready to boil over, to be thrown out of their own city and land, as out of the pan into the fire, from bad to worse. Some think those scoffers referred to this who said, *Eze.* xi. 3, "This city is the caldron, and we be the flesh." Now the mouth or face of the furnace or hearth, over which this pot boiled, was towards the north, for thence the fire and fuel was to come that must make the pot boil thus. So the vision is explained, ver. 14, "Out of the north an evil shall break," or shall be opened. It had been long designed by the justice of God, and long deserved by the sin of the people, and yet hitherto the Divine patience had restrained it, and held it in as it were. The enemies had intended it, and God had checked them; but now all restraints shall be taken off, and the "evil shall break forth;" the direful scene shall open, and the enemy shall come in like a flood. It shall be an universal calamity; it shall come "upon all the inhabitants of the land," from the highest to the lowest, for they have all corrupted their way. Look for this storm to arise out of the north, whence fair weather used to come, *Job* xxxvii. 22. When there was friendship between Hezekiah and the king of Babylon, they promised themselves many advantages out of the north, but it proved quite otherwise, out of the north their trouble arose. Thence, sometimes, the fiercest tempests come, whence we expected fair weather. This is farther explained, ver. 15, where we may observe, 1st. The raising of the army that shall invade Judah, and lay it waste; "I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord." All the northern crowns shall unite under Nebuchadnezzar, and join with him in this expedition. They lie dispersed, but God, that has all men's hearts in his hand, will bring them together; they lie at a distance from Judah, but God, that directs all men's steps, will call them, and they shall come, though they be never so far off. God's summons shall be obeyed; they whom he calls shall come. When he has work to do of any kind, he will find instruments to do it, though he send to the utmost parts of the earth for them. And, that the armies brought into the field may be sufficiently numerous and strong, he will call, not only the kingdoms of the north, but all the families of those kingdoms into the service; not one able-bodied man shall be left behind. 2nd. The advance of this army. The commanders of the troops of the several nations shall take their post in carrying on the siege of Jerusalem, and other the cities of Judah. "They shall set every one his throne," or seat. When a city is besieged, we say, the enemy sits down before it. They shall encamp, some at the entering of the gates, others against the walls round about, to cut off both the going out of the mouths and the coming in of the meat, and so to starve them.

3. He tells him plainly what was the procuring cause of all these judgments: it was the sin of Jerusalem, and of the cities of Judah, ver. 16. 'I will pass sentence upon them,' so it may be read, or, give judgment against them, this sentence, this judgment, because of all their wickedness; that is it that plucks up the flood-gates, and lets in this inundation of calamities. They have forsaken God, and revolted from their allegiance to him, and have burnt incense to other gods, new gods, strange gods, and all false gods, pretenders, usurpers, the creatures of their own fancy, and they have "worshipped the works of their own hands." Jeremiah was young, had looked but little abroad into the world, and perhaps did not know, nor could have believed, what abominable idolatries the children of his people were guilty of; but God tells him, that he might know what to level his reproofs against, and what to ground his threatenings upon, and that he might himself be satisfied in the equity of the sentence which in God's name he was to pass upon them.

Secondly. God excites and encourageth Jeremiah to apply himself with all diligence and seriousness to his business. A great trust is committed to him; he is sent in God's name as a herald at arms, to proclaim war against his rebellious subjects; for God is pleased to give warning of his judgments beforehand, that sinners may be awakened to meet him by repentance, and so turn away his wrath, and that if they do not they may be left inexcusable. With this trust Jeremiah has a charge given him, ver. 17, "Thou therefore gird up thy loins;" free thyself from all those things that would disfit thee for, or hinder thee in, this service; buckle to it with readiness and resolution, and be not entangled with doubts about it. He must be quick, Arise, and lose no time; he must be busy, "Arise, and speak unto them," in season, out of season; he must be bold, "Be not dismayed at their faces," as before, ver. 8. In a word, he must be faithful; it is required of ambassadors that they be so.

1. In two things he must be faithful: 1st. He must speak all that he is charged with; "Speak all that I command thee." He must forget nothing, as minute, or foreign, or not worth mentioning; every word of God is weighty. He must conceal nothing for fear of offending; he must alter nothing under pretence of making it more fashionable or more palatable, but without addition or diminution declare the whole counsel of God. 2nd. He must speak to all that he is charged against. He must not whisper it in a corner to a few particular friends, that will take it well, but he must appear "against the kings of Judah," if they be wicked kings, and bear his testimony against the sins even of "the princes thereof;" for the greatest of men are not exempt from the judgments, either of God's hand or of his mouth. Nay, he must not spare "the priests thereof;" though he himself was a priest, and was concerned to maintain the dignity of his order, yet he must not therefore flatter them in their sins. He must appear "against the people of the land," though they were his own people, as far as they were against the Lord.

2. And two reasons are here given why he should do thus: 1st. Because he had reason to fear the wrath of God, if he should be false; "Be not dismayed at their faces," so as to desert thine office, or balk the duty of it, "lest I confound" and dismay "thee before them," lest I give thee up to thy faintheartedness. Those that consult their own credit, ease, and safety, more than their work and duty, it is just with God to leave them to themselves, and to bring upon them the shame of their own cowardliness. Nay, lest I reckon with thee for thy faint-heartedness, and break thee to pieces, so some read it. Therefore, this prophet says, *ch.* xvii. 17, Lord, "be not a terror to me." Note, The fear of God is the best antidote against the fear of man. Let us always be afraid of offending God, who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell, and then we shall be in little danger of fearing the faces of men, that can but kill the body, *Lu.* xii. 4, 5; see *Neh.* iv. 14. It is better to have all the men in the world our enemies than God our enemy. 2nd. Because he had no reason to fear the wrath of man, if he were faithful, for the God whom he served would protect him, and bear him out, so that they should neither sink his spirits nor drive him off from his work, should neither stop his mouth nor take away his life, till he had finished his testimony, ver. 18. This young stripling of a prophet is made, by the power of God, as an impregnable city, fortified with iron pillars, and surrounded with walls of brass; he sallies out upon them in reproofs and threatenings, and keeps them in awe. They set upon him on every side; the kings and princes batter him with their power, the priests thunder against him with their church censures, and the people of the land shoot their arrows at him, even slanderous and bitter words; but he shall keep his ground, and make his part good with them; he shall still be a curb upon them, ver. 19. "They shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail" to destroy thee, "for I am with thee to deliver thee" out of their hands; nor shall they prevail to defeat the word that God sends them by Jeremiah, nor to deliver themselves; it shall take hold of them, for God is against them to destroy them. Note, Those who are sure they have God with them, as he is if they be with him, they need not, they ought not, to be afraid, whoever is against them.

CHAPTER II.

It is probable this chapter was Jeremiah's first sermon that he preached after his ordination; and a most lively pathetical sermon it is, as any we have in all the books of the Prophets. Let him not say, I cannot speak, for I am child; for God having touched his mouth, and put his words into it, none can speak better. The scope of the chapter is to shew God's people their transgression, even the house of Jacob their sins; it is all by way of reproof and conviction, that they might be brought to repent of their sins, and so prevent the ruin that was coming upon them. The charge drawn up against them is very high, the aggravations black, the arguments used for their conviction very close and pressing, and the expostulations very pungent and affecting. The sin which they are most particularly charged with here is idolatry, forsaking the true God, their own God, for other false gods. Now they are told, I. That this was ungrateful to God, who had been so kind to them, ver. 1—8. II. That it was without precedent, that a nation should change their gods, ver. 9—13. III. That hereby they had disparaged and ruined themselves, ver. 14—19. IV. That they had broken their covenants, and degenerated from their good beginnings, ver. 20, 21. V. That their wickedness was too plain to be concealed, and too bad to be excused, ver. 22, 23, 35. VI. That they persisted wilfully and obstinately in it, and were irreclaimable and indefatigable in their idolatries, ver. 24, 25, 33, 36. VII. That they shamed themselves by their idolatry, and should shortly be made ashamed of it, when they should find their idols unable to help them,

ver. 26—29, 37. VIII. That they had not been convinced and reformed by the rebukes of providence they had been under, ver. 30. IX. That they had put a great contempt upon God, ver. 31, 32. X. That with their idolatries they had mixed the most unnatural murders, shedding the blood of the poor innocents, ver. 34. And those hearts were hard indeed that were untouched and unhumbled when their sins were thus set in order before them. O that by meditating on this chapter we might be brought to repent of our spiritual idolatries; giving that place in our souls to the world and the flesh which should have been reserved for God only!

MOREOVER the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
2 Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying,
Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee,
The kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals,
When thou wentest after me in the wilderness,
In a land *that was* not sown.
3 Israel *was* holiness unto the LORD,
And the firstfruits of his increase:
All that devour him shall offend;
Evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.
4 Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob,
And all the families of the house of Israel:
5 Thus saith the LORD,
What iniquity have your fathers found in me,
That they are gone far from me,
And have walked after vanity, and are become vain?
6 Neither said they, Where *is* the LORD
That brought us up out of the land of Egypt,
That led us through the wilderness,
Through a land of deserts and of pits,
Through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death,
Through a land that no man passed through,
And where no man dwelt?
7 And I brought you into a plentiful country,
To eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof;
But when ye entered, ye defiled my land,
And made mine heritage an abomination.
8 The priests said not, Where *is* the LORD?
And they that handle the law knew me not:
The pastors also transgressed against me,
And the prophets prophesied by Baal,
And walked after *things that* do not profit.

Here is, First. A command given to Jeremiah to go and carry a message from God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He was charged in general, *ch.* i. 17, to go and speak to them; here he is particularly charged to go and speak this to them. Note, It is good for ministers, by faith and prayer, to take out a fresh commission, when they address themselves solemnly to any part of their work. Let a minister carefully compare what he has to deliver with the word of God, and see that it agrees with it; that he may be able to say not only, The Lord sent me, but, He sent me to speak this. He must go from Anathoth, where he lived in a pleasant retirement, spending his time, it is likely, in diversion and the study of the law, and must make his appearance at Jerusalem, that noisy, tumultuous city, and cry in their ears, as a man in earnest, and that would be heard. Cry aloud, that all may hear, and none may plead ignorance. Go close to them, and cry in the ears of those that have stopped their ears.

Secondly. The message he was commanded to deliver. He must upbraid them with their horrid ingratitude in forsaking a God who had been of old so kind to them, that this might either make them ashamed, and bring them to repentance, or might justify God in turning his hand against them.

1. God here puts them in mind of the favours he had of old bestowed upon them, when they were first formed into a people; ver. 2, "I remember" for thy sake, and would have thee to remember it, and improve the remembrance of it for thy good; I cannot forget "the kindness of thy youth," and "the love of thine espousals." This may be understood,

1st. Of the kindness they had for God. It was not such indeed as they had any reason to boast of, or to plead with God for favour to be shewn them, for many of them were very unkind and provoking; and when they did return and inquire early after God they did but flatter him. Yet God is pleased to mention it and plead it with them; for though it was but little love they shewed him he took it kindly. When they believed the Lord and his servant Moses, when they sang God's praise at the Red sea, when, at the foot of mount Sinai, they promised, "All that the Lord shall say unto us, we will do, and will be obedient," then was "the kindness of their youth," and "the love of their espousals." When they seemed so forward for God he said, "Surely they are my people," and will be faithful to me, "children that will not lie." Note, Those that begin well and promise fair, but do not perform and persevere, will justly be upbraided with their hopeful and promising beginnings. God remembers the kindness of our youth and love of our espousals, the zeal we then seemed to have for him, and the affection wherewith we made our covenants with him, the buds and blossoms that never came to perfection; and it is good for us to remember them, that we may remember whence we are fallen, and return to our first love, *Rev.* ii. 4, 5; *Gal.* iv. 15. In two things appeared the kindness of their youth: *First.* That they followed the conduct of the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, and though sometimes they spoke of returning into Egypt or pushing forward into Canaan, yet they did neither, but for forty years together went after God in the wilderness, and trusted him to provide for them, though it was a land that was not sown. This God took kindly, and took notice of it to their praise long after, that, though much was amiss among them, yet they never forsook the conduct they were under. Thus, though Christ often chid his disciples, yet he commended them at parting for continuing with him, *Lu.* xxii. 28. It must be the strong affection of the youth and the espousals that will carry us on to follow God in a wilderness with an implicit faith and an entire resignation; and it is pity those that have so followed him should ever leave him. *Secondly.* That they entertained Divine institutions, set up the tabernacle among them, and attended the service of it. Israel was then holiness to the Lord; they joined themselves to him in covenant as a peculiar people. Thus they began in the spirit; and God puts them in mind of it, that for shame they might not end in the flesh. Or it may be understood,

2nd. Of God's kindness to them; and of that he afterwards speaks largely, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him," *Hos.* ii. 1. He then espoused that people to himself, with all the affection with which a young man marries a virgin, *Isa.* lxii. 5, for the time was a time of love, *Eze.* xvi. 8. *First.* God appropriated them to himself. Though they were a sinful people, yet, by virtue of the covenant made with them and the church set up among them, they were "holiness to the Lord," dedicated to his honour, and taken under his special tuition. They were the "firstfruits of his increase," the first constituted church he had in the world; they were the firstfruits, but the full harvest was to be gathered from among the Gentiles. The firstfruits of the increase were God's part of it, were offered to him, and he was honoured with them. So were the people of the Jews; what little tribute, rent, and homage God had from the world, he had it chiefly from them; and it was their honour to be thus set apart for God. This honour have all the saints; they are the firstfruits of his creatures, *Jas.* i. 18. *Secondly.* Having espoused them he espoused their cause, and became an enemy to their enemies, *Ex.* xxiii. 22. Being the firstfruits of his increase, all that devoured him (so it should be read) did offend, they trespassed, they contracted guilt, and evil befell them; as those were reckoned offenders that devoured the firstfruits, or anything else that was holy to the Lord, that embezzled them, or converted them to their own use, *Lev.* v. 15. Whoever offered any injury to the people of God, it was at their peril; their God was ready to avenge their quarrel, and said to the proudest of kings, "Touch not mine anointed," *Ps.* cv. 14, 15; *Ex.* xvii. 14. He had in a special manner a controversy with those that attempted to debauch them, and draw them off from being holiness to the Lord; witness his quarrel with the Midianites, about the matter of Peor, *Num.* xxv. 17, 18. *Thirdly.* He brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and great terror, *Deu.* iv. 34, and yet with a kind hand and great tenderness led them through a vast howling wilderness, ver. 6, "a land of deserts and of pits," or of graves; *terram sepulchralem*,—'a sepulchral land;' where there was ground, not to feed them, but to bury them; where there was no good to be expected, for it was "a land of drought," but all manner of evil to be feared, for it was "the shadow of death." In that darksome valley they walked forty years, but God was with them; his rod, in Moses' hand, and his staff comforted them, and even there God prepared a table for them, *Ps.* xxiii. 4, 5, gave them bread out of the clouds and drink out of the rocks. It was a land abandoned by all mankind, as yielding neither road nor rest; it was no thoroughfare, for no man passed through it; no settlement, for no man dwelt there; for God will teach his people to tread untrodden paths, to dwell alone, and to be singular. The difficulties of the journey are thus insisted upon, to magnify the power and goodness of God, in bringing them through all safe to their journey's end at last. All God's spiritual Israel must own their obligations to him for a safe conduct through the wilderness of this world no less dangerous to the soul than that was to the body. *Fourthly.* At length he settled them in Canaan; ver. 7, "I brought you into a plentiful country," which would be the more acceptable, after they had been for so many years in a land of drought. They did "eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof," and were allowed so to do. 'I brought you into a land of Carmel,' so the word is. Carmel was a place of extraordinary fruitfulness; Canaan was as one great fruitful field, *Deu.* viii. 7. *Fifthly.* God gave them the means of knowledge, and grace, and communion with him. That is implied, ver. 8; they had priests that handled the law, read it, and expounded it to them; that was part of their business, *Deu.* xxxiii. 8. They had pastors to guide them and take care of their affairs, magistrates, and judges; they had prophets to consult God for them, and to make known his mind to them.

2. He upbraids them with their horrid ingratitude, and the ill returns they had made him for these favours; let them all come and answer to this charge, ver. 4. It is exhibited in the name of God against all the families of the house of Israel, for they can none of them plead not guilty.

1st. He challenges them to produce any instance of his being unjust and unkind to them. Though he had conferred favours upon them in some things, yet if in other things he had dealt hardly with them, they had not been altogether without excuse. He therefore puts it fairly to them, to shew cause for their deserting him, ver. 5, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me," or you either? Have you, upon trial, found God a hard master? Have his commands put any hardship upon you, or obliged you to any thing unfit, unfair, or unbecoming you? Have his promises put any cheats upon you, or raised your expectations of things, which you were afterwards disappointed of? You that renounce your covenant with God, can you say it was a hard bargain and that which you could not live upon? You that forsake the ordinances of God, can you say it was because they were a wearisome service, or work that there was nothing to be got by? No, what disappointments you have met with, it was long of yourselves, not long of God. The yoke of his commandments is easy, and in keeping of them there is great reward. Note, Those that forsake God cannot say that he has ever given them any provocation to do so. And for this we may safely appeal to the consciences of sinners; the slothful servant, that offered such a plea as this, had it overruled out of his own mouth, *Lu.* xix. 22. Though he afflicts us we cannot say there is iniquity in him; he doth us no wrong. The ways of the Lord are undoubtedly equal; all the iniquity is in our ways.

2nd. He chargeth them with being very unjust and unkind to him notwithstanding. *First.* They had quitted his service; They are gone from me; nay, they are gone far from me. They studied how to estrange themselves from God and their duty, and got as far as they could out of the reach of his commandments and their own convictions. Those that have deserted religion commonly set themselves at a greater distance from it, and in greater opposition to it, than those that never knew it. *Secondly.* They had quitted it for the service of idols, which was so much the greater reproach to God and his service. They went from him, not to mend themselves, but to cheat themselves; "They have walked after vanity," that is, idolatry, for an idol is a vain thing; it is nothing in the world, 1 *Cor.* viii. 4; *Deu.* xxxii. 21; *ch.* xiv. 22. Idolatrous worships are vanities, *Acts* xiv. 15; idolaters are vain, for they that make idols are like unto them, *Ps.* cxv. 8; as much stocks and stones as the images they worship, and good for as little. *Thirdly.* They had with idolatry introduced all manner of wickedness. When they entered into the good land which God gave them, they defiled it, ver. 7, by defiling themselves, and disfitting themselves for the service of God. It was God's land; they were but tenants to him, sojourners in it, *Lev.* xxv. 23. It was his heritage, for it was a holy land, Immanuel's land; but they made it an abomination, even to God himself, who was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel. *Fourthly.* Having forsaken God, though they

soon found they had changed for the worse, yet they had no thoughts of returning to him again, nor took any steps towards it. Neither the people nor the priests made any inquiry after him, took no thought about their duty to him, nor expressed any desire to recover his favour. 1*st*. The people said not, "Where is the Lord?" ver. 6. Though they were trained up in observance of him as their God, and had been often told that he brought them out of the land of Egypt, to be a people peculiar to himself, yet they never asked after him, nor desired the knowledge of his ways. 2*nd*. "The priests said not, Where is the Lord?" ver. 8. They whose office it was to attend immediately upon him were in no concern to acquaint themselves with him, or approve themselves to him. They who should have instructed the people in the knowledge of God took no care to get the knowledge of him themselves. The scribes, that handled the law, did not know God nor his will; either could not expound the Scriptures at all or not aright. The pastors, that should have kept the flock from transgressing, were themselves ringleaders in transgression; They have transgressed against me. The pretenders to prophecy prophesied by Baal, in his name, to his honour, being backed and supported by the wicked kings to confront the Lord's prophets. Baal's prophets joined with Baal's priests, and walked after the things that do not profit, that is, after the idols which can be no way helpful to their worshippers. See how the best characters are usurped, and the best offices liable to corruption; and wonder not at the sin and ruin of a people when the blind are leaders of the blind.

9 Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD,
And with your children's children will I plead.
10 For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see;
And send unto Kedar, and consider diligently,
And see if there be such a thing.
11 Hath a nation changed *their* gods, which *are* yet no gods?
But my people have changed their glory for *that which*
doth not profit.
12 Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this,
And be horribly afraid,
Be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.
13 For my people have committed two evils;
They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters,
And hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns,
That can hold no water.

The prophet, having shewed their base ingratitude in forsaking God, here shews their unparalleled fickleness and folly; ver. 9, "I will yet plead with you." Note, Before God punisheth sinners he pleads with them, to bring them to repentance. And when much hath been said of the evil of sin, yet still there is more to be said. When one article of the charge is made good, there is another to be urged; when we have said a great deal, still we "have yet to speak on God's behalf," *Job* xxxvi. 2. And those that deal with sinners for their conviction must urge a variety of arguments, and follow their blow. God had before pleaded with their fathers, and asked why they walked after vanity and became vain, ver. 5; now he pleads with them who persisted in that vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers, and with their children's children, that is, with all that in every age tread in their steps. Let those that forsake God know that he is willing to argue the case fairly with them, that he may be justified when he speaks; he pleads that with us which we should plead with ourselves.

First. He shews that they acted contrary to the usage of all nations. Their neighbours were more firm and faithful to their false gods than they were to the true God. They were ambitious of being like the nations, and yet in this they were unlike them; he challengeth them to produce an instance of any nation that had changed their gods, ver. 10, 11, or were apt to change them. Let them survey either the old records or the present state of the isles of Chittim, Greece, and the European islands, the countries that were more polite and learned; and of Kedar, that lay south-east, (as the other north-west from them,) which were more rude and barbarous; and they should not find an instance of a nation that had changed their gods, though they had never done them any kindness, nor could do, for they were no gods. Such a veneration had they for their gods, and so good an opinion of them, and such a respect for the choice their fathers had made, that though they were gods of wood and stone they would not change them for gods of silver and gold,—no, not for the living and true God. Shall we praise them for this? we praise them not. But it may well be urged to the reproach of Israel that they, who were the only people that had no cause to change their God, were yet the only people that had changed him. Note, Men are hardly brought off that religion which they have been brought up in, though never so absurd and grossly false. The zeal and constancy of idolaters should shame Christians out of their coldness and inconstancy.

Secondly. He shews that they acted contrary to the dictates of common sense, in that they not only changed,—it may sometimes be our duty and wisdom to do so,—but they changed for the worse, and made an ill bargain for themselves. 1. They parted from a God that was their glory, that made them truly glorious, and every way put honour upon them; one whom they might with an humble confidence glory in as theirs, who is himself a glorious God, and the glory of those whose God he is. He was particularly the glory of his people Israel, for his glory had often appeared on their tabernacle. 2. They closed with gods that could do them no good, gods that do not profit their worshippers. Idolaters change God's glory into shame, *Rom*. i. 23, and so they do their own. In dishonouring him they disgrace and disparage themselves, and are enemies to their own interest. Note, Whatever they turn to that forsake God it will never do them any good; it will flatter them and please them, but it cannot profit them, Heaven itself is here called upon to stand amazed at the sin and folly of these apostates from God; ver. 12, 13, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this." The earth is so universally corrupt that it will take no notice of it, but let the heavens and heavenly bodies be astonished at it. Let the sun blush to see such ingratitude, and be afraid to shine upon such ungrateful wretches. They that forsook God worshipped the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; but these, instead of being pleased with the adorations that were paid to them, were astonished and horribly afraid, and would rather have been very desolate, utterly exhausted, (as the word is,) and deprived of their light, than that it should have given occasion to any to worship them. Some refer it to the angels of heaven. If they rejoice at the return of souls to God we may suppose they are astonished and horribly afraid at the revolt of souls from him. The meaning is, that the carriage of this people towards God was such as, 1st. We may well admire and wonder at, that ever men that pretend to reason should do a thing so very absurd. 2nd. Such as we ought to have a holy indignation at, as impious, and a high affront to our Maker, whose honour every good man is jealous for. 3rd. Such as we may tremble to think of the consequences of; what will be in the end hereof? Be horribly afraid to think of that wrath and curse which will be the portion of those that thus throw themselves out of God's grace and favour. Now what is it that is to be thought of with all this horror? It is this: My people, whom I have taught and should have ruled, have committed two great evils, ingratitude and folly; they have acted contrary both to their duty and to their interest. *First*. They have affronted their God by turning their back upon him, as if he were not worthy their notice; "They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters," in whom they have an abundant and constant supply of all that comfort and relief they stand in need of, and they have it freely; God is their fountain of life, *Ps*. xxxvi. 9. There is in him an all-sufficiency of grace and strength; all our springs are in him, and our streams from him; to forsake him is in effect to deny this. He has been to us a bountiful benefactor, "a fountain of living waters," overflowing, everflowing in the gifts of his favour; to forsake him is to refuse to acknowledge his kindness, and to withhold that tribute of love and praise which his kindness calls for. *Secondly*. They have cheated themselves; they forsook their own mercies, but it was for lying vanities. They took a great deal of pains to hew them out cisterns, to dig pits or pools in the earth or rock, which they would carry water to, or which should receive the rain; but they proved broken cisterns, false at the bottom, so that they could hold no water. When they came to quench their thirst there, they found nothing but mud and mire, and the filthy sediments of a standing lake. Such idols were to their worshippers; and such a change did they experience who turned from God to them. If we make an idol of any creature, wealth, or pleasure, or honour, if we place our happiness in it, and promise ourselves that comfort and satisfaction in it which is to be had in God only,—if we make it our joy and love, our hope and confidence,—we shall find it a cistern, which we take a great deal of pains to hew out and fill, and at the best it will hold but a little water, and that dead and flat, and soon corrupting, and become nauseous. Nay, it is a broken cistern, that cracks and cleaves in hot weather, so that the water is gone when we have most need of it, *Job* vi. 15. Let us therefore, with purpose of heart, cleave to the Lord only; for whither else shall we go? He hath the words of eternal life.

14 *Is* Israel a servant? *is* he a homeborn *slave?*
Why is he spoiled?
15 The young lions roared upon him, *and* yelled,
And they made his land waste:
His cities are burned without inhabitant.
16 Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken
the crown of thy head.
17 Hast thou not procured this unto thyself,
In that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God,
When he led thee by the way?
18 And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt,
To drink the waters of Sihor?
Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria,
To drink the waters of the river?
19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee,
And thy backslidings shall reprove thee:
Know therefore and see
That *it is* an evil *thing* and bitter,
That thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, [hosts.
And that my fear *is* not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of

The prophet, farther to evince the folly of their forsaking God, shews them what mischiefs they had already brought upon themselves by it; it had already cost them dear, for to this was owing all the calamities their country was now groaning under; which were but an earnest of more and greater, if they repented not. See how they smarted for their folly!

First. Their neighbours, that were their professed enemies, prevailed against them; and that was long of their sin.

1. They were enslaved, and lost their liberty; ver. 14, "Is Israel a servant?" No; "Israel is my son, my firstborn," *Ex*. iv. 22. They are children, they are heirs; nay, their extraction is noble, they are the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen. "Is he a home-born slave?" No, he is not the son of the bondwoman, but of the free. Every thing in their constitution carried on it the marks of freedom and honour. "Why then is he spoiled" of his liberty? Why is he used as a servant, as a home-born slave? Why doth he make himself a slave to his lusts, to his idols, to that which doth not profit? ver. 11. What a thing is this, that such a birthright should be sold for a mess of pottage? Such a crown profaned, and laid in the dust? Why is he made a slave to the oppressor? God provided that a Hebrew servant should be free the seventh year, and that their slaves should be of the heathen, not of their brethren, *Lev*. xxv. 44, 46. But, notwithstanding this, the princes made slaves of their subjects, and masters of their servants, *ch*. xxxiv. 11, and so made their country mean and miserable, which God had made happy and honourable. The neighbouring princes and powers broke in upon them, and made some of them slaves even in their own country, and perhaps sold others for slaves into foreign countries. And how came they thus to lose their liberties? Why, for their iniquities they sold themselves, *Isa*. l. 1. We may apply this spiritually: Is the soul of man a servant? Is it a home-born slave? No, it is not. Why then is it spoiled? It is because it has sold its own liberty, and enslaved itself to divers lusts and passions, which is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation.

2. They were impoverished, and had lost their wealth. God brought them into a plentiful country, ver. 7, but all their neighbours made a prey of it; ver. 15, Young lions roar alond over him, and yell; they are a continual terror to him; sometimes one potent enemy, and sometimes another, and sometimes many in confederacy, fall upon him, and triumph over him. They carry off the fruits of his land, and make that waste; burn his cities, when first they have plundered them; so that they remain without inhabitant, either because there

are no houses to dwell in or because those that should dwell in them are carried into captivity.

3. They were abused and insulted over, and beaten by every body; ver. 16, even "the children of Noph and Tahapanes," despicable people, not famed for military courage or strength, "have broken the crown of thy head," or fed upon it. In all their struggles with thee they have been too hard for thee, and thou hast always come off with a broken head. The principal part of thy country, that which lay next Jerusalem, has been, and is, a prey to them. How calamitous the condition of Judah had been of late in the reign of Manasseh, we find, 2 *Chr.* xxxiii. 11; and perhaps it had not now much recovered itself.

4. All this was owing to their sin; ver. 17, "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?" By their sinful confederacies with the nations, and especially their conformity to them in their idolatrous customs and usages, they had made themselves very mean and contemptible; as all those do that have made a profession of religion and afterwards throw it off. Nothing now appeared of that which, by their constitution, made them both honourable and formidable; and therefore nobody either respected them, or feared them. But this was not all; they had provoked God to give them up into the hands of their enemies, and to make them a scourge to them, and give them success against them. And thus "thou hast procured it to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God," revolted from thine allegiance to him, and so thrown thyself out of his protection; for protection and allegiance go together. Whatever trouble we are in at any time we may thank ourselves for it, for we bring it upon our own head by our forsaking God: 'Thou hast forsaken thy God at the time that he was leading thee by the way;' so it should be read. Then when he was leading thee on to a happy peace and settlement, and thou wast within a step of it; then thou forsookest him, and so didst put a bar in thine own door.

Secondly. Their neighbours, that were their pretended friends, deceived them, distressed them, and helped them not; and this also was owing to their sin.

1. They did in vain seek to Egypt and Assyria for help; ver. 18, "What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt?" When thou art under apprehensions of danger, thou art running to Egypt for help, *Isa.* xxx. 1; xxxi. 1. Thou art for drinking the waters of Sihor, that is, Nilus. Thou reliest upon their multitude, and refreshest thyself with the fair promises they make thee. At other times thou art in the way of Assyria, sending or going with all speed to fetch recruits from thence, and thinkest to satisfy thyself with the waters of the river Euphrates. But what hast thou to do there? What wilt thou get by applying thyself to them? They shall help in vain, shall be broken reeds to thee; and what thou thoughtest would be to thee as a river will be but a broken cistern.

2. This also was because of their sin. The judgment shall unavoidably come upon them which their sin has deserved; and then to what purpose is it to call for help against it? ver. 19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee," and then it is impossible for them to save thee. "Know and see" therefore, upon the whole matter, "that it is an evil thing that thou hast forsaken God," for that is it that makes thine enemies enemies indeed, and thy friends friends in vain. Observe here, 1st. The nature of sin. It is forsaking the Lord as our God; it is the soul's alienation from him, and aversion to him. Cleaving to sin is leaving God. 2nd. The cause of sin. It is because his fear is not in us. It is for want of a good principle in us, particularly for want of the fear of God, that is at the bottom of our apostacy from him. Therefore men forsake their duty to God, because they stand in no awe of him, nor have any dread of his displeasure. 3rd. The malignity of sin. "It is an evil thing, and bitter." Sin is an evil thing, an only evil; an evil that has no good in it; an evil that is the root and cause of all other evil. It is an evil indeed, for it is not only the greatest contrariety to the Divine nature, but the greatest corruption of the human nature. It is bitter. A state of sin is the gall of bitterness; and every sinful way will be bitterness in the latter end. The wages of it is death, and death is bitter. 4th. The fatal consequences of sin. As it is in itself evil and bitter, so it has a direct tendency to make us miserable. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee;" not only destroy and ruin thee hereafter, but correct and reprove thee now; that is, it will certainly bring trouble upon thee. The punishment will so inevitably follow the sin, that the sin shall itself be said to punish thee. Nay, the punishment, in the kind and circumstances of it, shall so directly answer the sin, that thou mayest read the sin in the punishment; and the justice of the punishment shall be so plain, that thou shalt not have a word to say for thyself; thy own wickedness shall convince thee, and stop thy mouth for ever, and thou shalt be forced to own that the Lord is righteous. 5th. The use and application of all this. "Know, therefore, and see" it, and repent of thy sin, that so the iniquity, that is thy correction, may not be thy ruin.

20 For of old time I have broken thy yoke,
And burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress;
When upon every high hill
And under every green tree
Thou wanderest, playing the harlot.
21 Yet I had planted thee a noble vine,
Wholly a right seed:
How then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?
22 For though thou wash thee with nitre,
And take thee much sope,
Yet thine iniquity is marked before me,
Saith the Lord GOD.
23 How canst thou say, I am not polluted,
I have not gone after Baalim?
See thy way in the valley,
Know what thou hast done:
Thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways;
24 A wild ass used to the wilderness,
That snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure;
In her occasion who can turn her away?
All they that seek her will not weary themselves;
In her month they shall find her.
25 Withhold thy foot from being unshod,
And thy throat from thirst:
But thou saidst,
There is no hope:
No; for I have loved strangers,
And after them will I go.
26 As the thief is ashamed when he is found,
So is the house of Israel ashamed;
They, their kings, their princes,
And their priests, and their prophets,
27 Saying to a stock, Thou *art* my father;
And to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: [face:
For they have turned *their* back unto me, and not *their*
But in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us
28 But where *are* thy gods that thou hast made thee?
Let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy [trouble:
For *according to* the number of thy cities
Are thy gods, O Judah.

In these verses the prophet goes on with his charge against this backsliding people. Observe here,

First. The sin itself that he charges them with, and that is idolatry, that great provocation which they were so notoriously guilty of. 1. They frequented the places of idol worship; ver. 20, "upon every high hill, and under every green tree;" in the high places and the groves, such as the heathen had a foolish fondness and veneration for. Thou wanderest first to one, and then to another, like one unsettled, and still uneasy and unsatisfied; but in all playing the harlot, worshipping false gods, which is spiritual whoredom, and was commonly accompanied with corporal whoredom too. Note, They that leave God wander endlessly, and a vagrant lust is insatiable. 2. They made images for themselves, and gave Divine honour to them, ver. 26, 27. Not only the common people, but even the kings and princes, that should have restrained the people from doing ill, and the priests and prophets, that should have taught them to do well, were themselves so wretchedly sottish and stupid, and under the power of such a strong delusion, as to say to a stock, "Thou art my father," that is, thou art my god, the author of my being, to whom I owe duty, and on whom I have a dependence; saying to a stone, to an idol made of stone, "Thou hast begotten me," or "brought me forth," therefore protect me, provide for me, and bring me up. What greater affront could men put upon God, who is our Father that has made us? It was a downright disowning of their obligations to him. What greater affront could men put upon themselves and their own reason, to acknowledge that which is in itself absurd and impossible; and, by making stocks and stones their parents, to make themselves no better than stocks and stones? When these were first made the objects of worship, they were supposed to be animated by some celestial power or spirit; but by degrees the thought of this was lost, and so vain did idolaters become in their imagination, even the princes and priests themselves, that the very idol, though made of wood and stone, was supposed to be their father, and adored accordingly. 3. They multiplied their dunghill deities endlessly; ver. 28, "According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah." When they had forsaken that God, who is one, and all-sufficient for all, 1st. They were not satisfied with any gods they had, but still desired more. That idolatry being in this respect of the same nature with covetousness, which is spiritual idolatry, that the more men have the more they would have; which is a plain evidence that what men make an idol of, they find to be insufficient and unsatisfying, and that it cannot make the comers thereunto perfect. 2nd. They could not agree in the same god. Having left the centre of unity, they fell into endless discord; one city fancied one deity, and another another, and each was fond to have one of its own, to be near them, and to take special care of them. Thus did they in vain seek that in many gods which is to be found in one God only.

Secondly. The proof of this upon them. No witnesses need be called, it is proved by the notorious evidence of the facts.

1. They went about to deny it, and were ready to plead not guilty. They pretended they would acquit themselves from this guilt, washed themselves with nitre, and took much soap; offered many things in excuse and extenuation of it, ver. 22. They pretended they did not worship these as gods, but as demons, and mediators between the immortal God and mortal men; or that it was not Divine honour that they gave them, but civil respect; thus they sought to evade the convictions of God's word, and to screen themselves from the dread of his wrath. Nay, some of them had the impudence to deny the thing itself; they said, "I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim," ver. 23. Because it was done secretly, and industriously concealed, *Eze.* viii. 12, they thought it could never be proved upon them, and they had front enough to deny it. In this, as in other things, their way was like that of the adulterous woman, that saith, "I have done no wickedness," *Pr.* xxx. 20.

2. Notwithstanding all their evasions, they are convicted of it, and found guilty. How canst thou deny the fact, and say, "I have not gone after Baalim?" How canst thou deny the fault, and say, "I am not polluted?" The prophet speaks with wonder at their impudence. How canst thou put on a face to say so, when it is certain: 1st. God's omniscience is a witness against thee? "Thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God." It is laid up, and hidden, to be produced against thee in the day of judgment; sealed up among his treasures, *Deu.* xxxii. 34; *Job* xxi. 9; *Hos.* xiii. 12. It is imprinted deep, and stained before me, so some read it. Though thou endeavour to wash it out, as murderers to get the stain of the blood of the person slain out of their clothes, yet it will never be got out; God's eye is upon it, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. 2nd. Thine own conscience is a witness against thee. "See thy way in the valley." They had worshipped idols not only on the high hills, but in the valleys, *Isa.* lvii. 5, 6. In the valley over against Beth-peor, so some, where they worshipped Baal-peor, *Deu.* xxiv. 6; *Num.* xxv. 3; as if the prophet looked as far back as the iniquity of Peor. But if it mean any particular valley, surely it is the valley of the son of Hinnom; for that was the place where they sacrificed their children to Moloch, and which therefore witnessed against them more than

any other. Look into that valley, and thou canst not but know what thou hast done.

Thirdly. The aggravations of this sin with which they are charged, which speak it exceeding sinful.

1. God had done great things for them, and yet they revolted from him, and rebelled against him; ver. 20, "Of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bonds." This refers to the bringing of them out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, which they would not remember, *ch.* ii. 6, but God did; for when he told them they should have no other gods before him, he prefixed this as a reason, "I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt;" and these bonds of theirs, which God had loosed, should have bound them for ever to him; but they had ungratefully broken the bonds of duty to that God who had broken the bonds of their slavery.

2. They had promised fair, but had not made good their promise; "Thou saidst, I will not transgress." Then, when the mercy of thy deliverance was fresh, thou wast so sensible of it that thou wast willing to lay thyself under the most sacred ties to continue faithful to thy God, and never to forsake him. Then they said, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord," *Jos.* xxiv. 21. How often have we said we would not transgress, we would not offend any more, and yet we have started aside like a deceitful bow, and repeated and multiplied our transgressions.

3. They had wretchedly degenerated from what they were when God first formed them into a people; ver. 21, "I had planted thee a noble vine." The constitution of their government, both in church and state, was excellent, their laws righteous, and all the ordinances instructive and very significant; and a generation of good men there was amongst them when they first settled in Canaan; "Israel served the Lord," and kept close to him, "all the days of Joshua, and the elders that outlived Joshua," *Jos.* xxiv. 31; they were then wholly a right seed, likely to replenish the vineyard they were planted in with choice vines. But it proved otherwise; the very next generation "knew not the Lord, nor the works which he had done," *Jud.* ii. 10; and so they were worse and worse, till they became "the degenerate plants of a strange vine." They were now the reverse of what they were at first; their constitution was quite broken, and there was nothing in them of that good which one might have expected from a people so happily formed; nothing of the purity and piety of their ancestors. "Their vine is as the vine of Sodom," *Deu.* xxxii. 32. This may fitly be applied to the nature of man; it was planted by its great Author a noble vine, a right seed. God made man upright; but it is so universally corrupt, that it is become "the degenerate plant of a strange vine," that bears gall and wormwood; and it is so to God, it is highly distasteful and offensive to him.

4. They were violent and eager in the pursuit of their idolatries, doated on their idols, and were fond of new ones; and they would not be restrained from them either by the word of God or by his providences, so strong was the impetus with which they were carried out after this sin. They are here compared to "a swift dromedary traversing her ways;" a female of that species of creature hunting about for a male, ver. 23; and to the same purpose, "a wild ass used to the wilderness," ver. 24, not tamed by labour, and therefore very wanton; "snuffing up the wind at her pleasure," when she comes near the he ass, and on such an "occasion who can turn her away?" who can hinder her from that which she lusteth after? "They that seek her then will not weary themselves for her," for they know it is to no purpose; but will have a little patience until she is big with young, until that month comes which is the last of the months which she fulfils, *Job* xxxix. 2; when she is heavy and unwieldy, and then they shall find her, and she cannot outrun them. Note, 1st. Eager lust is a brutish thing, and those that will not be turned away from the gratifying and indulging of it by reason, and conscience, and honour, are to be reckoned as brute beasts, and no better; such as were born, and still are, like the wild ass's colt. Let them not be looked upon as rational creatures. 2nd. Idolatry is strangely intoxicating, and those that are addicted to it will very hardly be cured of it. That lust is as headstrong as any other. 3rd. There are some so violently set upon the prosecution of their lusts, that it is to no purpose to attempt to give check to them. They that do it weary themselves in vain. "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." 4th. The time will come when the most fierce will be tamed, and the most wanton will be manageable; when distress and anguish comes upon them, then their ears will be open to discipline; that is the month in which you may find them, *Ps.* cxli. 5, 6.

5. They were obstinate in their sin, and, as they could not be restrained, so they would not be reformed, ver. 25. Here is, 1st. Fair warning given them of the ruin that this wicked course of life would certainly bring them to at last, with a caution therefore not to persist in it, but to break off from it. He would certainly bring them into a miserable captivity when their feet should be unshod, and they should be forced to travel barefoot; and when they would be denied fair water by their oppressors, so that their throat should be dried up with thirst; this will be in the end hereof. They that affect strange gods, and strange ways of worship, will justly be made prisoners to a strange king in a strange land. Take up in time therefore; thy running after thy idols will run the shoes off thy feet, and thy panting after them will bring thy throat to thirst; and therefore withhold thy foot from these violent pursuits, and thy throat from these violent desires. One would think it should effectually check us in the career, to consider what it will bring us to at last. 2nd. Their rejecting this fair warning. They said to those that would have persuaded them to repent and reform, "There is no hope;" no, never expect to work upon us, or prevail with us to cast away our idols, for "we have loved strangers, and after them we will go;" we are resolved we will, and therefore trouble not yourselves or us any more with your admonitions; it is to no purpose. There is no hope that we should ever break this corrupt habit and disposition we have got, and therefore we had as good yield to it as go about to get the mastery of it. Note, Their case is very miserable who have brought themselves to such a pass that their corruptions triumph over their convictions; they know they should reform, but own they cannot, and therefore resolve they will not. But, as we must not despair of the mercy of God, but believe that sufficient for the pardon of our sins, though never so heinous, if we repent and sue for that mercy; so neither must we despair of the grace of God, but believe that able to subdue our corruption, though never so strong, if we pray for and improve that grace. A man must never say there is no hope as long as he is on this side hell.

6. They had shamed themselves by their sin, in putting confidence in that which would certainly deceive them in the day of their distress, and putting him away that would have helped them; ver. 26—28, "As the thief is ashamed when," notwithstanding all his arts and tricks to conceal his theft, "he is found," and brought to punishment, "so is the house of Israel ashamed," not with a penitent shame for the sin they had been guilty of, but with a penal shame for the disappointment they met with in that sin. They will be ashamed when they find,

1st. That they are forced to cry to the God whom they had put contempt upon. In their prosperity they had turned the back to God, and not the face; they had slighted him; took on them they had forgotten him, or did what they could to forget him; would not look towards him, but looked another way. They went from him as fast and as far as they could; but in the time of their trouble they will find no satisfaction but in applying themselves to him; then they will say, "Arise, and save us." Their fathers had many a time taken this shame to themselves, *Jud.* iii. 9; iv. 3; x. 10, yet they would not be persuaded to cleave to God, that they might have come to him in their trouble with the more confidence.

2nd. That they have no relief from the gods they have made their court to. They will be ashamed when they perceive that the gods they have made cannot serve them, and the God that made them will not serve them. To bring them to this shame, if so be they might hereby be brought to repentance, they are here sent to the gods whom they served, as *Jud.* x. 14. They cried to God, "Arise, and save us." God saith of the idols, "Let them arise and save thee," for thou hast no reason to expect that I should. Let them arise if they can from the places where they are fixed; let them try whether they can save thee. But thou wilt be ashamed when thou findest that they can do thee no good; for though thou hadst a god for every city, yet thy cities are burnt without inhabitant, ver. 15. Thus it is the folly of sinners to please themselves with that which will certainly be their grief, and pride themselves in that which will certainly be their shame.

29 Wherefore will ye plead with me?
Ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.
30 In vain have I smitten your children;
They received no correction:
Your own sword hath devoured your prophets,
Like a destroying lion.
31 O generation, see ye the word of the LORD.
Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?
A land of darkness?
Wherefore say my people,
We are lords;
We will come no more unto thee?
32 Can a maid forget her ornaments, *or* a bride her attire?
Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.
33 Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?
Therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways.
34 Also in thy skirts is found the blood
Of the souls of the poor innocents:
I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.
35 Yet thou sayest,
Because I am innocent,
Surely his anger shall turn from me.
Behold, I will plead with thee,
Because thou sayest, I have not sinned.
36 Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?
Thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt,
As thou wast ashamed of Assyria.
37 Yea, thou shalt go forth from him,
And thine hands upon thine head:
For the LORD hath rejected thy confidences,
And thou shalt not prosper in them.

The prophet here goes on in the same strain, aiming to bring a sinful people to repentance, that their destruction might be prevented.

First. He avers the truth of the charge. It was evident beyond contradiction, it was the greatest absurdity imaginable in them to think of denying it; ver. 29, "Wherefore will ye plead with me," and put me upon the proof of it? Or wherefore will ye go about to plead any thing in excuse of the crime, or to obtain a mitigation of the sentence? Your plea will certainly be overruled, and judgment given against you. You know you have all transgressed, one as well as another; why then do you quarrel with me for contending with you?

Secondly. He aggravates it, from the consideration both of their incorrigibleness and of their ingratitude.

1. They had not been wrought upon by the judgments of God which they had been under; ver. 30, "In vain have I smitten your children;" that is, the children, or people, of Judah. They had been under Divine rebukes of many kinds. God therein designed to bring them to repentance, but it was in vain; they did not answer God's end in afflicting them. Their consciences were not awakened, nor their hearts softened and humbled, nor were they driven to seek unto God; they received no instruction by the correction, were not made the better by it. And it is a great loss thus to lose an affliction. They did not receive, that is, they did not submit to, or comply with, the correction; but their hearts fretted against the Lord, and so they were smitten in vain. Even the children, the young people among them, (so it may be taken,) were smitten in vain; they were so soon prejudiced against repentance, that they were as untractable as the old ones, that had been long accustomed to do evil.

2. They had not been wrought upon by the word of God which he had sent them in the mouth of his servants the prophets; nay, they had killed the messengers for the sake of the message. "Your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion;" you have put them to death for their faithfulness with as much rage and fury, and with as much greediness and pleasure, as a lion devours his prey. Their prophets, who were their greatest blessings, were treated by them as if they had been the plagues of their generation; and this was their measure-filling sin, 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 16. They killed their own prophets, 1 *Thes.* ii. 15.

3. They had not been wrought upon by the favours God had bestowed upon them; ver. 31, "O generation." He doth not call them, as he might, "O faithless and perverse generation, O generation of vipers;" but speaks them fair; O ye men of this generation, "see the word of the Lord;" do not only hear it,

but consider it diligently; apply your minds closely to it. As we are bid to hear the rod, *Mic.* vi. 9, for that has its voice, so we are bid to see the word, for that has its visions, its views. It intimates that what is here said is plain and undeniable. You may see it very evident; it is written as with a sunbeam, so that he that runs may read it; "Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness?" Note, Those that have had any dealings with God never had reason to complain of him as a wilderness, or a land of darkness. He has blessed us with the fruits of the earth, and therefore we cannot say that he hath been a wilderness to us, a dry and barren land; that (as Mr. Gataker expresses it,) he hath held us to hard meat, as cattle fed upon the common. No, his sheep have been led into green pastures. He has also blessed us with the lights of heaven, and has not withheld them; so that we cannot say he hath been to us a land of darkness. He hath caused his sun to shine, as well as his rain to fall, upon the evil and unthankful. Or, the meaning is in general, that the service of God hath not been to any either an unpleasant or an unprofitable service. God sometimes hath led his people through a wilderness, and a land of darkness; but he himself was then to them all that which they needed. He so fed them with manna, and led them by a pillar of fire, that it was to them a fruitful field and a land of light. The world is to those who make it their home and portion, a wilderness, and a land of darkness, vanity, and vexation of spirit; but those that dwell in God have their lines fallen to them in pleasant places.

4. Instead of being wrought upon by these, they were grown intolerably insolent and imperious. They say, "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." Now they were become a potent kingdom, or thought themselves such they set up for themselves, and shook off their dependence upon God. This is the language of presumptuous sinners; and it is not only very impious and profane, but very unreasonable and foolish. 1st. It is absurd for us, that are subjects, to say, "We are lords;" that is, rulers, and we will come no more to God to receive commands from him; for, as he is King of old, so he is King for ever, and we can never pretend to be from under his authority. 2nd. It is absurd for us, that are beggars, to say, "We are lords," that is, we are rich; and we will come no more to God, to receive favours from him, as if we could live without him, and need not be beholden to him. God justly takes it ill of those to whom he has been a bountiful benefactor, and yet they care not either for hearing from him, or speaking to him.

Thirdly. He lays the blame of all their wickedness upon their forgetting God; ver. 22, "They have forgotten me;" they have industriously banished the thoughts of God out of their minds, jostled those thoughts out with thoughts of their idols, and avoided all those things that would put them in mind of God. 1. Though they were his own people, in covenant with him, and professing relation to him, and had the tokens of his presence in the midst of them, and his favour to them; yet they forgot him. 2nd. They had long neglected him, days without number, time out of mind, as we say. They had not for a great while entertained any serious thoughts of him, so that they seem quite to have forgotten him, and resolved never to remember him again. How many days of our lives have passed without suitable remembrance of God? Who can number those empty days? 3. They had not had such a regard and affection to him as young ladies generally have to their fine clothes. "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" No, their hearts are upon them; they value them so much, and themselves by them, that they are ever and anon thinking and speaking of them. When they are to appear in public, they do not forget any of their ornaments, but put every one in its place, as they are described, *Isa.* iii. 18. And yet "my people have forgotten me." It is sad that any should be more in love with their fine clothes than with their God, and should rather leave their religion behind them, or part with that, than leave any of their ornaments behind them, or part with them. Is not God our ornament? Is he not a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty to his people? Did we look upon him to be so, and upon our religion as an ornament of grace to our head, and chains about our neck, *Pr.* i. 9, we should be as mindful of them as ever any maid was of her ornaments, or a bride of her attire; should be as careful to preserve them, and as fond to appear in them.

Fourthly. He shews them what an ill influence their sins had upon others. The sins of God's professing people harden and encourage those about them in their evil ways, especially when they appear forward and ringleaders in sin; ver. 33, "Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love?" alluding to the practice of lewd women, that strive to recommend themselves by their ogling looks and garish dress, as Jezebel, that painted her face, and tired her head. Thus had they courted their neighbours into sinful confederacies with them, and communion in their idolatries; and had taught the wicked ones their ways, their ways of mixing God's institutions with their idolatrous customs and usages, which was a great profanation of that which was sacred, and made the ways of their idolatry worse than that of others. Those have a great deal to answer for, that, by their fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, make wicked ones more wicked than otherwise they would be.

Fifthly. He chargeth them with the guilt of murder, added to the guilt of their idolatry; ver. 34, "Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls;" that is, the life-blood of the poor innocents, which cried to heaven, and for which God was now making inquisition. Either the children that were offered in sacrifice to Moloch; or, it may be taken more generally, for all the innocent blood which Manasseh shed, and with which he had filled Jerusalem, 2 *Kin.* xxi. 16: the righteous blood, especially the blood of prophets and others that witnessed against their impieties. This blood was found, "not by secret search," not 'by digging,' so the word is, "but upon all these;" it was above ground. This intimates that the guilt of this kind they had contracted was certain and evident, not doubtful, or which would bear a dispute; and that it was avowed and barefaced, and which they had not so much sense either of shame or fear as to endeavour to conceal, which was a great aggravation of it.

Sixthly. He overrules their plea of not guilty. Though this matter be so plain, yet thou sayest, "Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me;" and again, "Thou sayest, I have not sinned," ver. 35; therefore "I will plead with thee," and will convince thee of thy mistake. Because they deny the charge, and stand upon their own justification, therefore God will join issue with them and plead with them, both by his word and by his rod. Those shall be made to know how much they deceive themselves, 1. That say they have not offended God, that they are innocent, though they have been guilty of the grossest enormities. 2. That expect God will be reconciled to them though they do not repent and reform. They own they had been under the tokens of God's anger, but they think it was causeless; and that they, by pleading innocency, had proved it to be so; and therefore conclude God will immediately let fall his action, and his anger shall be turned from them. This is very provoking; and God will plead with them, and convince them that his anger is just, for they have sinned, and he will never cease his controversy till they, instead of justifying themselves thus, humble, and judge, and condemn themselves.

Seventhly. He upbraids them with the shameful disappointments they met with in making creatures their confidence, while they made God their enemy, ver. 36, 37. It was a piece of spiritual idolatry they were often guilty of, that they trusted in an arm of flesh, and their hearts therein departed from the Lord; now here he shews them the folly of it. 1. They were restless and unsatisfied in the choice of their confidences. "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?" Doubtless it is because thou meetest not with that in those thou didst confide in which thou promisedst thyself. Those that make God their hope, and walk in a continual dependence upon him, need not gad about to change their way; for their souls may return to him, and repose in him as their rest. But they that trust in creatures will be perpetually uneasy, like Noah's dove, that found no rest for the sole of her foot. Every thing they trust to fails them, and then they think to change for the better, but will be still disappointed. They first trusted to Assyria, and, when that proved a broken reed, they depended upon Egypt, and that proved no better. Creatures being vanity, they will be vexation of spirit to all those that put their confidence in them; they gad about, seeking rest and finding none. 3. They were quite disappointed in the confidences they made choice of; so the prophet tells them they should be. "Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt," which thou now trustest in, "as" formerly "thou wast of Assyria," who distressed them, and helped them not, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 20. The Jews were a peculiar people in their profession of religion, and for that reason none of the neighbour nations cared for them, or could heartily love them; and yet they were still courting them, and confiding in them, and were well enough served when they deceived them. See what will come of it; ver. 37, "Thou shalt go forth from him," thine ambassadors, or envoys, shall return from Egypt 'disappointed,'—*re infecta;* and therefore, "with their hands upon their heads," condoling the desperate condition of their people. Or, "Thou shalt go forth from hence," namely, into captivity in a strange land, "with thine hands upon thine head," holding it because it aches, (*ubi dolor ibi digitus*,—'where the pain is, the finger will be applied,') or as a people ashamed; for Tamar, in the height of her confusion, laid her hand on her head, 2 *Sam.* xiii. 19. And Egypt, that thou reliedst on, shall not be able to prevent it, or to rescue thee out of captivity. They that will not lay their hand on their heart in godly sorrow, which worketh life, shall be made to lay their hand on their head in the sorrow of the world, which worketh death. And no wonder that Egypt cannot help them, when God will not. If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I? The Egyptians are broken reeds, for "the Lord hath rejected thy confidences;" he will not make use of them for thy relief; will neither so far honour them nor so far give countenance to thy confidence in them as to appoint them to be the instruments of any good to thee, and therefore "thou shalt not prosper in them;" they shall not stand thee in any stead, nor give thee any satisfcation. As there is no counsel or wisdom that can prevail against the Lord, so there is none that can prevail without him. Some read it, 'The Lord hath rejected thee for thy confidences,' because thou hast dealt so unfaithfully with him as to trust in his creatures, nay, in his enemies, when thou shouldest have trusted in him only; he has abandoned thee to that destruction from which thou thoughtest thus to have sheltered thyself: and then thou canst not prosper, for none ever either hardened himself against God or estranged himself from God, and prospered.

CHAPTER III.

The foregoing chapter was wholly taken up with reproofs and threatenings against the people of God for their apostacies from him; but in this chapter gracious invitations and encouragements are given them to return and repent, notwithstanding the multitude and greatness of their provocations, which are here aggravated, to magnify the mercy of God, and to shew, that as sin abounded grace did much more abound. Here, I. It is farther shewed how bad they had been, and how well they had deserved to be quite abandoned, and yet how ready God was to receive them into his favour upon their repentance, ver. 1—5. II. The impenitency of Judah, and their persisting in sin, is aggravated from the judgments of God upon Israel, which they should have taken warning by, ver. 6—11. III. Great encouragements are given to these backsliders to return and repent; and promises made of great mercy which God had in store for them, and which he should prepare them for by bringing them home to himself, ver. 12—19. IV. The charge renewed against them for their apostacy from God, and the invitation repeated to return and repent, to which are here added the words that are put in their mouth which they should make use of in their return to God, ver. 20—25.

THEY say, If a man put away his wife,
And she go from him, and become another man's,
Shall he return unto her again?
Shall not that land be greatly polluted?
But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers;
Yet return again to me, saith the LORD.

2 Lift up thine eyes unto the high places,
And see where thou hast not been lien with.
In the ways hast thou sat for them,
As the Arabian in the wilderness;
And thou hast polluted the land
With thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness.

3 Therefore the showers have been withholden,
And there hath been no latter rain;
And thou hadst a whore's forehead,
Thou refusedst to be ashamed.

4 Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me,
My father, thou *art* the guide of my youth?

5 Will he reserve *his anger* for ever?
Will he keep *it* to the end?
Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

These verses some make to belong to the sermon in the foregoing chapter, and they open a door of hope to those who receive the conviction of the reproofs we had there; God wounds that he may heal. Now observe here,

First. How basely this people had forsaken God, and gone a whoring from him. The charge runs very high here. 1. They had multiplied their idols, and their idolatries. To have admitted one strange god among them had been bad enough, but they were insatiable in their lustings after false worships; "Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers," ver. 1. She was become a common

prostitute to idols; not a foolish deity was set up in all the neighbourhood, but the Jews would have it presently. Where was a high place in the country, but they had had an idol in it? ver. 2. Note, In repentance it is good to make sorrowful reflections upon the particular acts of sin we have been guilty of, and the several places and companies where it has been committed, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves, by a particular confession of it. 2. They had sought opportunity for their idolatries, and had sent about to inquire for new gods. "In the highways hast thou sat for them," as Tamar, when she put on the disguise of a harlot, *Gen.* xxxviii. 14; and as the foolish woman, that sits to call passengers, who go right on their way, *Pr.* ix. 14, 15. "As the Arabian in the wilderness." The Arabian huckster, so some, that courts customers, or waits for the merchants, to get a good bargain, or forestall the market. Or, the Arabian thief, so others, that watches for his prey; so had they waited either to court new gods to come among them, the newer the better, and the more fond they were of them; or to court others to join with them in their idolatries. They were not only sinners, but Satans; not only traitors themselves, but tempters to others. 3. They were grown very impudent in sin. They not only polluted themselves, but their land, with their whoredoms, and with their wickedness, ver. 2; for it was universal and unpunished, and so became a national sin. And yet, ver. 3, "Thou hadst a whore's forehead," a brazen face of thy own; "Thou refusedest to be ashamed;" thou didst enough to shame thee for ever, and yet wouldest not take shame to thyself. Blushing is the colour of virtue, or at least a relic of it; but those that are past shame, we say, are past hope. Those that have an adulterous heart, if they indulge that, will come at length to have a whore's forehead, void of all shame and modesty. 4. They abounded in all manner of sin. They polluted the land not only with their whoredoms, that is, their idolatries, but with their wickedness, or malice, ver. 2. Sins against the second table; for how can we think those should be true to their neighbour that are false to their God? Nay, ver. 5, "Thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest;" and wouldest have spoken and done worse, if thou hadst known how; thy will was to do it, but thou lackedst opportunity. Note, Those are wicked indeed that sin to the utmost of their power; that never refuse to comply with a temptation because they should not, but because they cannot.

Secondly. How gently God had corrected them for their sins. Instead of raining fire and brimstone upon them, because like Sodom they had avowed their sin, and had gone after strange gods, as Sodom after strange flesh, he only withheld the showers from them, and that only one part of the year. "There has been no latter rain;" which might serve as an intimation to them of their continual dependence upon God; when they had the former rain, that was no security to them for the latter, but they must still look up to God. But it had not this effect.

Thirdly. How justly God might have abandoned them utterly, and refused ever to receive them again, though they should return. This would have been but according to the known rule of divorces; ver. 1, "They say," that is, it is an adjudged case, nay, it is a case in which the law is very express, and it is what every body knows and speaks of, *Deu.* xxiv. 4, that if a woman be once put away for whoredom, and be joined to another man, her first husband shall never, upon any pretence whatsoever, take her again to be his wife; such playing fast and loose with the marriage-bond would be a horrid profanation of that ordinance, and would greatly pollute that land. Observe, What the law saith in this case. "They say." Every one will say, and subscribe to the equity of the law in it; for every man finds something in himself that forbids him to entertain one that is another man's. And, in like manner, they had reason to expect, that God should refuse ever to take them to be his people again who had not only been joined to one strange god, but had played the harlot with many lovers. If we had to do with a man like ourselves, after such provocations as we have been guilty of, he would have been implacable, and we might have despaired of his being reconciled to us.

Fourthly. How graciously he not only invites them, but directs them to return to him.

1. He encourageth them to hope that they shall find favour with him upon their repentance. Though thou hast been bad, yet "return again to me," ver. 1; which implies a promise that he will receive them: return, and thou shalt be welcome. God has not tied himself by the laws which he made to us, nor has he the peevish resentments that men have. He will be more kind to Israel, for the sake of his covenant with them, than ever any injured husband was to an adulterous wife; for in receiving penitents, as much as in any thing, he is God and not man.

2. He therefore kindly expects they will repent, and return to him, and directs them what to say to him; ver. 4, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me?" Wilt not thou, who hast been in such relation to me, and on whom I have laid such obligations, "wilt not thou cry to me?" Though thou hast gone a whoring from me, yet when thou findest the folly of it sure thou wilt think of returning to me; now at least, now at last in this thy day. "Wilt thou not at this time," nay, wilt thou not from this time and forward "cry unto me?" Whatever thou hast said or done hitherto, wilt thou not from this time apply thyself to me? from this time of conviction and correction; now thou hast been made to see thy sins, ver. 2, and to smart for them, ver. 3, wilt thou not now forsake them, and return to me, saying, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now?" *Hos.* ii. 7. Or, from this time that thou hast had so kind an invitation to return, and assurance that thou shalt be well received, will not this grace of God overcome thee? Now pardon is proclaimed wilt thou not come in and take the benefit of it? Sure thou wilt.

1st. He expects they will claim relation to God, as theirs. "Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" *First.* They will surely come towards him as a father, to beg his pardon for their undutiful carriage to him, ("Father, I have sinned,") and will hope to find in him the tender compassions of a father towards a returning prodigal. They will come to him as a father, to whom they will make their complaints, and in whom they will put their confidence for relief and succour. They will now own him as their father, and themselves fatherless without him; and therefore hoping to find mercy with him, as those penitents, *Hos.* xiv. 3. *Secondly.* They will come to him as the guide of their youth; that is, as their husband, for so that relation is described, *Mal.* ii. 14. Though thou hast gone after many lovers, surely thou wilt at length remember the love of thine espousals, and return to the husband of thy youth. Or, it may be taken more generally; as, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth." Youth needs a guide. In our return to God we must thankfully remember that he was the guide of our youth, in the way of comfort; and we must faithfully covenant that he shall be our guide from henceforward in the way of duty; and that we will follow his guidance, and give up ourselves entirely to his conduct; that in all doubtful cases we will be determined by our religion.

2nd. He expects they will appeal to the mercy of God, and crave the benefit of that mercy, ver. 5, that they will reason thus with themselves, for their encouragement to return to him: "Will he reserve his anger for ever?" Sure he will not; for he hath proclaimed his name gracious and merciful. Repenting sinners may encourage themselves with this, that though God chide, he will not always chide; though he be angry, he will not keep his anger to the end; but, "though he cause grief, he will have compassion;" and may thus plead for reconciliation. Some understand this as describing their hypocrisy, and the impudence of that. Though thou hast a whore's forehead, ver. 3, and art still doing evil as thou canst, ver. 5, yet art thou not ever and anon crying to me, My Father? Even when they were most addicted to idols they pretended a regard to God and his service, and kept up the forms of godliness and devotion. It is a shameful thing for men thus to call God Father, and yet do the works of the devil, as the Jews, *Jno.* viii. 44; to call him the guide of their youth, and yet give up themselves to walk after the flesh; and to flatter themselves with expectations that his anger shall have an end, while they are continually treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

6 The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen *that* which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. 7 And I said after she had done all these *things*, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*. 8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. 9 And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. 10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. 11 And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

The date of this sermon must be observed, in order to the right understanding of it. It was "in the days of Josiah," who set on foot a blessed work of reformation; in which he was hearty, but the people were not sincere in their compliance with it. To reprove them for that, and warn them of the consequences of their hypocrisy, is the scope of that which God here said to the prophet, and which he delivered to them. The case of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah is here compared; the ten tribes that revolted from the throne of David and the temple at Jerusalem, and the two tribes that adhered to both. The distinct history of those two kingdoms we have in the two books of the *Kings;* and here we have an abstract of both, as far as relates to this matter.

First. Here is a short account of Israel, the ten tribes. Perhaps the prophet had been just reading the history of that kingdom when God came to him, and said, "Hast thou seen what backsliding Israel has done?" ver. 9. For he could not see it otherwise than in history, they having been carried into captivity long before he was born. But what we read in the histories of Scripture should instruct us and affect us as if we ourselves had been eyewitnesses of it. She is called backsliding Israel, because that kingdom was first founded in an apostacy from the Divine institutions, both in church and state. Now he had seen concerning them,

1. That they were wretchedly addicted to idolatry. They had "played the harlot upon every high mountain, and under every green tree," ver. 6; that is, they had worshipped other gods in their high places and groves; and no marvel, when from the first they had worshipped God by the images of the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. The way of idolatry is downhill. They that are in love with images, and will have them, soon become in love with other gods, and will have them too. For how should they stick at the breach of the first commandment who make no conscience of the second?

2. That God, by his prophets, had invited and encouraged them to repent and reform; ver. 7, "After she had done all these things," (for which she might justly have been abandoned) "yet I said unto her, Turn thou unto me," and I will receive thee. Though they had forsaken both the house of David and the house of Aaron, who both had their authority *jure divino*,—'from God,' without dispute, yet God sent his prophets among them, to call them to return to him, to the worship of him only; not insisting so much as one would have expected upon their return to the house of David as that of Aaron. We read not that Elijah, that great reformer, ever mentioned that; but, return to the faithful service of the true God, according as they had it among them. It is serious piety that God stands upon more than even his own rituals.

3. That notwithstanding this they had persisted in their idolatries. "But she returned not," and God saw it. He took notice of it, and was much displeased with it, ver. 7, 8. Note, God keeps account, whether we do or no, how often he has called to us to turn to him, and we have refused.

4. That he had therefore cast them off, and given them up into the hands of their enemies; ver. 8, 'When I saw it' (so it may be read) 'that for all the actions wherein she had committed adultery, I must dismiss her, I gave her a bill of divorce.' God divorced them when he threw them out of his protection, and left them an easy prey to any that would lay hands on them; when he scattered all their synagogues and schools of the prophets, and excluded them from laying any farther claim to the covenant made with their fathers. Note, Those will justly be divorced from God that join themselves to such as are rivals with him. For proof of this, go and see what God did to Israel

Secondly. Let us now see what was the case of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes. She is called, treacherous sister Judah; a sister, because descended from the same common stock, Abraham and Jacob. But as Israel had the character of a backslider, so Judah is called treacherous, because, though she professed to keep close to God, when Israel was backslidden, (she adhered to the kings and priests that were of God's own appointing, and did not withdraw

from her allegiance, so that it was expected she should deal faithfully,) yet she proved treacherous, and false, and unfaithful to her professions and promises. Note, The treachery of those who pretend to cleave to God will be reckoned for, as well as the apostacy of those that openly revolt from him. Judah saw what Israel did, and what came of it, and should have taken warning. Israel's captivity was intended for Judah's admonition, but it had not the designed effect. Judah feared not, but thought herself safe, because she had Levites to be her priests, and sons of David to be her kings. Note, It is an argument of great stupidity and security, when we are not awakened to a holy fear by the judgments of God upon others. It is here charged on Judah,

1. That when they had a wicked king that debauched them, they heartily concurred with him in his debaucheries. Judah was forward enough to play the harlot, to worship any idol that was introduced among them, and to join in any idolatrous usage, so that "through the lightness" (or, as some read it, the vileness and baseness) "of her whoredom," or (as the margin reads it) by the fame and report of her whoredom, that is, her notorious whoredom, for which she was become infamous, "she defiled the land," and made it an abomination to God; for she "committed adultery with stones and stocks," that is, with the most scoundrel idols, those made of wood and stone. In the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, when they were disposed to idolatry, the people were so too; and all the country was corrupted with it, and none feared the ruin which Israel by this means had brought upon themselves.

2. That when they had a good king that reformed them, they did not heartily concur with him in the reformation. And that was the present case. God tried whether they would be good in a good reign, but the evil disposition was still the same. They "returned not to me with their whole heart, but feignedly," ver. 10. Josiah went farther in destroying idolatry than the best of his predecessors had done; and, for his own part, he "turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul," so it is said of him, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 25. The people were forced to an external compliance with him, and joined with him in keeping a very solemn passover, and in renewing their covenants with God, 2 *Chr.* xxxiv. 32; xxxv. 17. But they were not sincere in it, nor were their hearts right with God; for which reason God at that very time said, "I will remove Judah out of my sight, as I removed Israel," 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 27, because Judah was not removed from their sin by the sight of Israel's removal from their land. Hypocritical reformations, and ineffectual ones, bode ill to a people. We deceive ourselves if we think to deceive God by a feigned return to him. I know no religion without sincerity.

Thirdly. The case of these sister kingdoms is compared, and judgment given upon the comparison, that of the two Judah was the worse; ver. 11, "Israel hath justified herself more than Judah," that is, is not so bad as Judah is. This comparative justification will stand Israel in little stead. What will it avail us to say, we are not so bad as others, when yet we are not really good ourselves? But it will serve as an aggravation of the sin of Judah, which was in two respects worse than that of Israel: 1. That more was expected from Judah than from Israel, so that Judah dealt treacherously; they vilified a more sacred profession, and falsified a more solemn promise than Israel did. 2. That Judah might have taken warning by the ruin of Israel for their idolatry, and would not. God's judgments upon others, if they be not the means of our reformation, will help to aggravate our destruction. The prophet Ezekiel, *ch.* xxiii. 11, makes the same comparison between Jerusalem and Samaria that this prophet here makes between Judah and Israel; nay, and between Jerusalem and Sodom, and Jerusalem is made the worst of the three, *Eze.* xvi. 48.

12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say,
Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD;
And I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you:
For I *am* merciful, saith the LORD,
And I will not keep *anger* for ever.
13 Only acknowledge thine iniquity,
That thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God,
And hast scattered thy ways to the strangers
Under every green tree,
And ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.
14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD;
For I am married unto you:
And I will take you one of a city, and two of a family,
And I will bring you to Zion:
15 And I will give you pastors according to mine heart,
Which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.
16 And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land,
In those days, saith the LORD, [LORD:
They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the
Neither shall it come to mind:
Neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit *it;*
Neither shall *that* be done any more. [LORD;
17 At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the
And all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem:
Neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.
18 In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel,
And they shall come together out of the land of the north
To the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.
19 But I said, How shall I put thee among the children,
And give thee a pleasant land,
A goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?
And I said, Thou shalt call me, My father;
And shalt not turn away from me.

Here is a great deal of Gospel in these verses, both that which was always Gospel, God's readiness to pardon sin, and to receive and entertain returning, repenting sinners; and those blessings which were in a special manner reserved for gospel times, the forming and founding of the gospel church, by the bringing of the children of God into it that were scattered abroad; the superseding of the ceremonial law, and the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, typified by the uniting of Israel and Judah in their return out of captivity. The prophet is directed to "proclaim these words towards the north," for they are a call to backsliding Israel, the ten tribes that were carried captive into Assyria, which lay north from Jerusalem. That way he must look, to shew that God had not forgotten them, though their brethren had; and to upbraid the men of Judah with their obstinacy, and refusing to answer the calls given them. As good call to them who lay many hundred miles off in the land of the north; they will as soon hear as these unbelieving and disobedient people. Backsliding Israel will sooner accept of mercy, and have the benefit of it, than treacherous Judah. And perhaps the proclaiming of these words towards the north looks as far forward as the preaching of repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, *Lu.* xxiv. 47. A call to Israel in the land of the north is a call to others in that land, even as many as belong to the election of grace. When it was suspected that Christ would go to the dispersed Jews among the Gentiles, it was concluded he would teach the Gentiles, *Jno.* vii. 35; so here,

First. Here is an invitation given to backsliding Israel, and in them to the backsliding Gentiles, to return unto God, the God from whom they had revolted; ver. 12, "Return, thou backsliding Israel." And again, ver. 14, "Turn, O backsliding children," repent of your backslidings, return to your allegiance; come back to that good way which you have missed, and out of which you have turned aside. Pursuant to this invitation, 1. They are encouraged to return; "Repent, and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out," *Acts* iii. 19. You have incurred God's displeasure, but return to me, and "I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you." God's anger is ready to fall upon sinners, as a lion falls on his prey, and there is none to deliver; as a mountain of lead falling on them, to sink them past recovery into the lowest hell. But if they repent, it shall be turned away; *Isa.* xii. 1, "I will not keep mine anger for ever," but will be reconciled, "for I am merciful." We that are sinful were for ever undone if God were not merciful; but the goodness of his nature encourageth us to hope that, if we by repentance undo what we have done against him, he will by a pardon unsay what he has said against us. 2. They are directed how to return; ver. 13, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity;" own thyself in a fault, and thereby take shame to thyself, and give glory to God. "I will not keep my anger for ever;" that is a previous promise. You shall be delivered from that anger of God which is everlasting, from the wrath to come. But upon what terms? Very easy and reasonable ones; "Only acknowledge thy sins." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them." This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, that the terms of pardon and peace were brought so low, and yet they would not come up to them. "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing wouldest thou not have done it? How much more when he saith," "Only acknowledge thine iniquity," 2 *Kin.* v. 13. In confessing sin, 1st. We must own the corruption of our nature; "acknowledge thine iniquity," the perverseness and irregularity of thy nature. 2nd. We must own our actual sins; "that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God," hast affronted him, and offended him. 3rd. We must own the multitude of our transgressions, that "thou hast scattered thy ways to the strangers;" run hither and thither in pursuit of thine idols, "under every green tree." Wherever thou hast rambled, thou hast left behind thee the marks of thy folly. 4th. We must aggravate our sin from the disobedience that there is in it to the Divine law. The sinfulness of sin is the worst thing in it. "Ye have not obeyed my voice;" acknowledge that, and let that humble you more than any thing else.

Secondly. Here are precious promises made to these backsliding children, if they do return, which were in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of their captivity; many that belonged to the ten tribes having perhaps joined themselves to those of the two tribes, in the prospect of their deliverance and returning with them. But it is to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, and the gathering together of the children of God, that were scattered abroad, to that; "Return," for though you are backsliders, yet you are children; nay, though a treacherous wife, yet a wife; "for I am married to you," ver. 14, and will not disown the relation. Thus God remembers his covenant with their fathers, that marriage covenant; and, in consideration of that, he remembers their land, *Lev.* xxvi. 42.

1. He promises to gather them together from all places whither they are dispersed and scattered abroad, *Jno.* xi. 52. "I will take you one of a city, and two of a family," or clan, "and I will bring you to Zion." All those that by repentance return to their duty shall return to their former comfort. Observe, 1st. God will graciously receive those that return to him; nay, it is he that by his distinguishing grace takes them out from among the rest that persist in their backslidings; and if he had left them they had been undone. 2nd. Of the many that have backslidden from God there are but few, very few in comparison, that return to him, like the gleanings of the vintage, one of a city, and two of a country. Christ's flock is a little flock; and few there be that find the strait gate. 3rd. Of those few, though dispersed, yet not one shall be lost. Though there be but one in a city, God will find out that one; he shall not be overlooked in a crowd, but shall be brought safe to Zion, safe to heaven. The scattered Jews shall be brought to Jerusalem, and those of the ten tribes shall be as welcome there as those of the two. God's chosen, scattered all the world over, shall be brought to the gospel church, that mount Zion, that heavenly Jerusalem, that holy hill on which Christ reigns.

2. He promiseth to set those over them that shall be every way blessings to them; ver. 15, "I will give you pastors after my heart;" alluding to the character given of David when God pitched upon him to be king; 1 *Sam.* xiii. 14, "The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart." Observe, 1st. When a church is gathered, it must be governed. "I will bring them to Zion;" not to live as they list, but to be under discipline; not as wild beasts, that range at pleasure, but as sheep that are under the direction of a shepherd. "I will give them pastors," that is, both magistrates and ministers; both are God's ordinance, for the support of his kingdom. 2nd. It is well with a people when their pastors are after God's own heart; such as they should be, such as we would have them be; that shall make his will their rule in all their administrations, and such as endeavour in some measure to conform to his example; that rule for him, and, as they are capable, rule like him. 3rd. Those are pastors

after God's own heart, that make it their business to feed the flock, not to feed themselves, and fleece the flocks, but to do all they can for the good of those that are under their charge; that feed them with wisdom and understanding; that is, wisely and understandingly, as David fed them, in the integrity of his heart, and by the skilfulness of his hands, *Ps.* lxxviii. 72. Those that are not only pastors but teachers must feed them with the word of God, which is wisdom and understanding, which is able to make us wise unto salvation.

3. He promiseth that there should be no more occasion for the ark of the covenant, which had been so much the glory of the tabernacle first, and afterwards of the temple, and was the token of God's presence with them; that shall be set aside, and there shall be no more inquiry after, nor inquiring of it; ver. 16, "When ye be multiplied and increased in the land," that is, when the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, which, by the accession of the Gentiles, will bring into the church a vast increase, (and the days of the Messiah the Jewish masters themselves acknowledge to be here intended,) then "they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord." They shall have it no more among them to value, or value themselves by, because they shall have a pure spiritual way of worship set up, in which there shall be no occasion for any of those external ordinances. With the ark of the covenant, the whole ceremonial law shall be set aside, and all the institutions of it; for Christ, the truth of all those types, exhibited to us in the word and sacraments of the New Testament, will be to us instead of all. It is very likely, whatever the Jews suggest to the contrary, that the ark of the covenant was in the second temple; being restored by Cyrus, with other "the vessels of the house of the Lord," *Ezr.* i. 7; but in the gospel temple Christ is the ark; he is the propitiatory, or mercy-seat. And it is the spiritual presence of God in his ordinances that we are now to expect. Many expressions are here used concerning the setting aside of the ark,—that it shall not come to mind, that they shall not remember it, they shall not visit it, that none of these things shall be any more done; for the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, *Jno.* iv. 24. But this variety of expression is used to shew, that the ceremonies of the law of Moses should be totally and finally abolished, never to be used any more; but that it would be with difficulty that those who had been so long wedded to them should be weaned from them; and that they would not quite let them go till their holy city and holy house should both be levelled with the ground.

4. He promiseth that the gospel church, here called Jerusalem, shall become eminent and conspicuous, ver. 17. Two things shall make it famous: 1st. God's special residence and dominion in it. It shall be called "the throne of the Lord," the throne of his glory, for that shines forth in the church; the throne of his government, for that also is erected there; there he rules his willing people by his word and Spirit, and brings every thought into obedience to himself. As the Gospel got ground, this throne of the Lord was set up there where Satan's seat had been. It is especially the throne of his grace; for they that by faith come to this Jerusalem come "to God the judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant," *Heb.* xii. 22, 23. 2nd. The accession of the Gentiles to it. All the nations shall be discipled, and so gathered to the church, and shall become subjects to that throne of the Lord which is there set up, and devoted to the honour of that name of the Lord which is there both manifested and called upon.

5. He promiseth that there shall be a wonderful reformation wrought in those that are gathered to the church; "They shall not walk any more after the imagination of their evil hearts." They shall not live as they list, but live by rules; not do according to their own corrupt appetites, but according to the will of God. See what leads in sin, "the imagination of our own evil hearts;" and what sin is,—it is walking after that imagination, being governed by fancy and humour; and what converting grace doth,—it takes us off from walking after our own inventions, and brings us to be governed by religion and right reason.

6. That Judah and Israel shall be happily united in one body, ver. 18. They were so in their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in Canaan; "The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel," as being perfectly agreed, and become one stick in the hand of the Lord, as Ezekiel also foretold, *ch.* xxxvii. 16. Both Assyria and Chaldea fell into the hands of Cyrus, and his proclamation extended to all the Jews in all his dominions; and therefore we have reason to think that many of the house of Israel came with those of Judah out of the land of the north; though at first there returned but forty-two thousand, whom we have an account of *Ezr.* ii., yet Josephus saith, *Antiq.* lib. ii. cap. 4, that some few years after, under Darius, Zerubbabel went and fetched up above four millions of souls, "to the land that was given for an inheritance to their fathers." And we never read of such animosities and enmities between Israel and Judah as had been formerly. And this happy coalescence between Israel and Judah in Canaan was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, when, all enmities being slain, they should become one sheepfold, under one shepherd.

Thirdly. Here is some difficulty started, that lies in the way of all this mercy, but an expedient is found to get over it.

1. God asks, How shall I do this for thee? not as if God shewed favour with reluctancy, as he punisheth with a "How shall I give thee up?" *Hos.* xi. 8, 9. No, though he is slow to anger, he is swift to shew mercy. But it intimates, that we are utterly unworthy of his favours, that we have no reason to expect them, that there is nothing in us to deserve them, and we can lay no claim to them. And that he contrives how to do it in such a way as may save the honour of his justice and holiness in the government of the world. Means must be devised "that his banished be not for ever expelled from him," 2 *Sam.* xiv. 14. How shall I do it? 1st. Even backsliders, if they return and repent, shall be put among the children. And who could ever have expected that? "Behold, what manner of love is this!" 1 *Jno.* iii. 1. How should we that are so mean and weak, so worthless and unworthy, and so provoking, ever be put among the children? 2nd. Those whom God puts among the children, to them he will give the pleasant land, the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands, that goodly heritage of the hosts of nations, which nations and their hosts wish for, and prefer before their own country; or which the hosts of the nations have now got possession of. It was a type of heaven, where there are pleasures for evermore. Now who could expect a place in that pleasant land, that has so often despised it, *Ps.* cvi. 24, and is so unworthy of it, and unfit for it? Is this the manner of men?

2. He doth himself return answer to this question; "But I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father." God doth himself answer all the objections that are taken from our unworthiness, or they would never be got over. 1st. That he may put returning penitents among the children, he will give them the spirit of adoption, teaching them to cry, Abba, Father, *Gal.* iv. 6. "Thou shalt call me my Father," shalt return to me, and resign thyself to me, as a father, and that shall recommend thee to my favour. 2nd. That he may give them the pleasant land, he will put his fear in their hearts, that they may never turn from him, but may persevere to the end.

20 Surely *as* a wife treacherously departeth from her husband,
So have ye dealt treacherously with me,
O house of Israel, saith the LORD.
21 A voice was heard upon the high places,
Weeping *and* supplications of the children of Israel:
For they have perverted their way,
And they have forgotten the LORD their God.
22 Return, ye backsliding children,
And I will heal your backslidings.
Behold, we come unto thee;
For thou *art* the LORD our God.
23 Truly in vain *is salvation hoped for* from the hills,
And from the multitude of mountains:
Truly in the LORD our God *is* the salvation of Israel.
24 For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth;
Their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters.
25 We lie down in our shame,
And our confusion covereth us:
For we have sinned against the LORD our God,
We and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day,
And have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.

Here is, First. The charge God exhibits against Israel for their treacherous departures from him, ver. 20. As an adulterous wife elopes from her husband, so have they gone a whoring from God. They were joined to God by a marriage covenant; but they broke that covenant; they dealt treacherously with God, who had always dealt kindly and faithfully with them. Treacherous dealing with men like ourselves is bad enough; but to deal treacherously with God is to deal treasonably.

Secondly. Their conviction and confession of the truth of this charge, ver. 21. When God reproved them for their apostacy, there were some among them, even such as God would take and bring to Zion whose "voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and" praying, humbling themselves before the God of their fathers, lamenting their calamities, and their sins, the procuring cause of them; for this is that which they lament; for this they bemoan themselves, that "they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God." Note, 1. Sin is the perverting of our way, it is turning aside to crooked ways, and perverting that which is right. 2. Forgetting the Lord our God is at the bottom of all sin. If men would remember God, his eye upon them, and their obligation to him, they would not transgress as they do. 3. By sin we embarrass ourselves, and bring ourselves into trouble, for that also is the perverting of our way, *Lam.* iii. 9. 4. Prayers and tears well become those whose consciences tell them that they have perverted their way, and forgotten their God. When the foolishness of man perverteth his way, his heart is apt to fret against the Lord, *Pr.* xix. 3, whereas it should be melted and poured out before him.

Thirdly. The invitation God gives them to return to him; ver. 22, "Return, ye backsliding children." He calls them children in tenderness and compassion to them; foolish and froward as children, yet his sons; whom, though he corrects, he will not disinherit; for though they are refractory children, (so some render it,) yet they are children. God bears with such children, and so must parents. When they are convinced of sin, ver. 21, and humbled for that, then they are prepared, and then they are invited to return; as Christ invites those to him that are weary and heavy laden. The promise to those that return is, "I will heal your backslidings;" I will comfort you under the grief you are in for your backslidings; deliver you out of the troubles you have brought yourselves into by your backslidings, and cure you of your refractoriness and bent to backslide. God will heal our backslidings by his pardoning mercy, his quieting peace, and his renewing grace.

Fourthly. The ready consent they give to this invitation, and their cheerful compliance with it: "Behold we come unto thee." This is an echo to God's call; as a voice returned from broken walls, so this from broken hearts. God saith, "Return;" they answer, "Behold, we come." It is an immediate speedy answer, without delay; not, We will come hereafter, but, We do come now; we need not take time to consider of it. Not, We come towards thee, but, We come to thee; we will make a thorough turn of it. Observe how unanimous they are, We come; one and all.

1. They come devoting themselves to God as theirs; "Thou art the Lord our God," we take thee to be ours, we give up ourselves to thee to be thine; whither shall we go but to thee? for it is our sin and folly that we have gone from thee. It is very comfortable in our returns to God, after our backslidings, to look up to him as ours in covenant.

2. They come, disclaiming all expectations of relief and succour but from God only; "In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and from the multitude of the mountains;" we now see our folly in relying upon creature confidences, and will never so deceive ourselves any more. They worshipped their idols upon hills and mountains, ver. 6, and they had a multitude of idols upon their mountains, which they had sought unto, and put a confidence in, but now they will have no more to do with them. In vain do we look for any thing that is good from them; while from God we may look for every thing that is good; even salvation itself. Therefore,

3. They come depending upon God only as their God: "In the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel." He is the Lord, and he only can save; he can save when all other succours and saviours fail. And he is our God, and will in his own way and time work salvation for us. It is very applicable to the great salvation from sin which Jesus Christ wrought out for us; that is the salvation of the Lord, his great salvation.

4. They come justifying God in their troubles, and judging themselves for their sins, ver. 24, 25.

1st. They impute all the calamities they had been under to their idols. They had not only done them no good, but done them abundance of mischief, all the mischief that had been done them. "Shame" (that is, the idol, that shameful thing,) "has devoured the labour of our fathers." Note, *First.* True penitents have learned to call sin shame, even the beloved sin that has been as an idol to them, which they have been most pleased with, and proud of, even that they shall call a scandalous thing, shall put contempt upon, and be ashamed of. *Secondly.* True penitents have learned to call sin, death and ruin, and to charge upon it all the mischiefs they suffer. It has devoured all those good things

which our fathers laboured for, and left to us; we have found from our youth that our idolatry hath been the destruction of our prosperity. Children often throw away upon their lusts that which their fathers took a great deal of pains for; and it is well if at length they are brought (as these here) to see the folly of it, and to call those vices their shame which have wasted their estates, and devoured the labour of their fathers. They instance in the labour of their fathers, which their idols had "devoured, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters." 1*st*. Their idolatries had provoked God to bring these desolating judgments upon them, which had ruined their country and families, and made their estates a prey, and their children captives to the conquering enemy. They had procured these things to themselves. Or rather, 2*nd*. These had been sacrificed to their idols, had been separated unto that shame, *Hos.* ix. 10; and they had devoured them without mercy, did "eat the fat of their sacrifices," *Deu.* xxxii. 38, even their human sacrifices.

2nd. They take to themselves the shame of their sin and folly; ver. 25, "We lie down in our shame," being unable to bear up under it; "our confusion covereth us," that is, both our penal and our penitential shame. Sin has laid us under such rebukes of God's providence, and such reproaches of our own consciences, as surround us and fill us with shame. "For we have sinned," and shame came in with sin, and still attends upon it. We are sinners by descent; guilt and corruption are entailed upon us: "We and our fathers have sinned;" we were sinners betimes; we began early in a course of sin; we have sinned "from our youth;" we have continued in it, have sinned "even unto this day," though often called to repent and forsake our sins. And that which is the malignity of sin, the worst thing in it, is the affront we have put upon God by it; "We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God," forbidding us to sin, and commanding us, when we have sinned, to repent. Now all this seems to be the language of the penitents of the house of Israel, ver. 20, of the ten tribes; either of those that were in captivity or those of them that remained in their own land. And the prophet takes notice of their repentance, to provoke the men of Judah to a holy emulation. David used it as an argument with the elders of Judah, that it would be a shame for them, that were his bone and his flesh, to be the last in bringing the king back, when the men of Israel appeared forward in it, 2 *Sam.* xix. 11, 12. So the prophet excites Judah to repent, because Israel did. And well it were if the zeal of others, less likely, would provoke us to strive to get before them, and go beyond them in that which is good.

CHAPTER IV.

It should seem that the first two verses of this chapter might better have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, for they are directed to Israel, the ten tribes, by way of reply to their compliance with God's call, directing and encouraging them to hold their resolution, ver. 1, 2. The rest of the chapter concerns Judah and Jerusalem. I. They are called to repent and reform, ver. 3, 4. II. They are warned of the advance of Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against them, and are told it is for their sins, from which they are again exhorted to wash themselves, ver. 5—18. III. To affect them the more with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, the prophet doth himself bitterly lament it, and sympathize with his people in the calamities it brought upon them, and the plunge it brought them to, representing it as a reduction of the world to its first chaos, ver. 19—31.

IF thou wilt return, O Israel,
Saith the LORD, return unto me:
And if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight,
Then shalt thou not remove.
2 And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth,
In truth, in judgment, and in righteousness;
And the nations shall bless themselves in him,
And in him shall they glory.

When God called to backsliding Israel to return, *ch.* iii. 22, they presently answered, Lord, we return; now God here takes notice of their answer, and by way of reply to it,

First. He directs them how to pursue their good resolutions. Dost thou say thou wilt return? 1. Then thou must return unto me; make a thorough work of it. Do not only turn from thine idolatries, but return to the instituted worship of the God of Israel. Or, Thou must return speedily, and not delay; as *Isa.* xxi. 12, "If ye will enquire, enquire ye;" so, if you will return unto me, return ye; do not talk of it, but do it. 2. Thou must utterly abandon all sin, and not retain any of the relics of idolatry; "Put away thine abominations out of my sight," that is, out of all places, for every place is under the eye of God; especially out of the temple, the house which he had in a particular manner his eye upon, to see that it was kept clean. It intimates that their idolatries were not only obvious, but offensive to the eye of God; they were abominations which he could not endure the sight of: therefore, Put them away out of my sight; that is, put them away for this reason, because they are a provocation to the pure eyes of God's glory. Sin must be put away out of the heart, else it is not put away out of God's sight, for the heart, and all that is in it, lies open before his eye. 3. They must not return to sin again, so some understand that, "Thou shalt not remove," reading it, Thou shalt not, or must not wander. "If thou wilt put away thine abominations, and wilt not wander" after them again, as thou hast done, all shall be well. 4. They must give unto God the glory due unto his name; ver. 2, "Thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth." His being shall be with thee the most sacred truth, than which nothing can be more sure; and his judgment the supreme court to which thou shalt appeal, and than which nothing can be more awful. Swearing is an act of religious worship, in which we are to give honour to God three ways: 1st. We must swear by the true God only, and not by creatures, or any false gods; by the God that liveth, not by the gods that are deaf, and dumb, and dead; by him only, and not by the Lord and by Malcham, as *Zeph.* i. 5. 2nd. We must swear that only which is true, "in truth and in righteousness;" not daring to assert that which is false, or which we do not know to be true, or to assert that as certain which is doubtful, or to promise that which we mean not to perform, or to violate the promise we have made. To say that which is untrue, or to do that which is unrighteous, is bad; but to back either with an oath is much worse. 3rd. We must do it solemnly, swear in judgment, that is, when thou art judicially called to it, and not in common conversation. Rash swearing is as great a profanation of God's name as solemn swearing is an honour to it: see *Deu.* x. 20; *Mat.* v. 34, 37.

Secondly. He encourageth them to keep in this good mind, and adhere to their resolutions. If the scattered Israelites will thus return to God, 1. They shall be blessed themselves; for to that sense the first words may be read: 'If thou wilt return to me, then thou shalt return,' that is, thou shalt be brought back out of thy captivity into thy own land again, as was of old promised, *Deu.* iv. 29; xxx. 2. Or, then thou shalt rest in me, shalt return to me as thy rest, even while thou art in the land of thy captivity. 2. They shall be blessings to others; for their returning to God again will be a means of others turning to him that never knew him. If thou wilt own the living Lord thou wilt thereby influence the nations among whom thou art, to bless themselves in him, to place their happiness in his favour, and to think themselves happy in being brought to the fear of him: see *Isa.* lxv. 16, "They shall bless themselves in the God of truth," and not in false gods; shall do themselves the honour, and give themselves the satisfaction, to join themselves to him, and then "in him shall they glory;" they shall make him their glory; and shall please, nay, shall pride themselves in the blessed change they have made. Those that part with their sins to return to God, however they scrupled the bargain at first, when they go away, then they boast.

3 For thus saith the LORD
To the men of Judah and Jerusalem,
Break up your fallow ground,
And sow not among thorns.
4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,
And take away the foreskins of your heart,
Ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem:
Lest my fury come forth like fire,
And burn that none can quench *it*,
Because of the evil of your doings.

The prophet here turns his speech in God's name to the men of the place where he lived. We have heard what words he proclaimed towards the north, *ch.* iii. 12, for the comfort of those that were now in captivity, and were humbled under the hand of God. Let us now see what he saith "to the men of Judah and Jerusalem," who were now in prosperity, for their conviction and awakening. In these two verses he exhorts them to repentance and reformation, as the only way left them to prevent the desolating judgments that were ready to break in upon them. Observe,

First. The duties required of them, which they are concerned to do.

1. They must do by their hearts as they do by their ground, that they expect any good of, they must plough it up; ver. 3, "Break up your fallow-ground." 'Plough to yourselves a ploughing,' or 'plough up your plough land,' that you sow not among thorns; that is, that you may not labour in vain for your own safety and welfare, as those do that sow good seed among thorns, and as you have been doing a great while. Put yourselves into a frame fit to receive mercy from God, and put away all that which keeps it from you, and then you may expect to receive mercy, and to prosper in your endeavours to help yourselves. Note, 1st. An unconvinced, unhumbled heart, is like fallow ground, ground untilled, unoccupied. It is ground capable of improvement; it is our ground, let out to us, and we must be accountable for it; but it is fallow, it is unfenced, and lies common; it is unfruitful, and of no advantage to the owner, and (which is principally intended) it is overgrown with thorns and weeds, which are the natural product of the corrupt heart, if it be not renewed with grace. Rain and sunshine are lost upon it, *Heb.* vi. 7, 8. 2nd. We are concerned to get this fallow ground ploughed up; we must search into our hearts, let the word of God divide (as the plough doth) between the joints and the marrow, *Heb.* iv. 12. We must rend our hearts, *Joel* ii. 13. We must pluck up those corruptions by the root that, as thorns, choke both our endeavours and our expectations, *Hos.* x. 11.

2. They must do that to their souls which was done to their bodies, when they were taken into covenant with God; ver. 4, "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart." Mortify the flesh and the lusts of it. Pare off that superfluity of naughtiness, which hinders your receiving with meekness the engrafted word, *Jas.* i. 21. Boast not of, and rest not in, the circumcision of the body; for that is but a sign, and will not serve without the thing signified. It was a dedicating sign. Do that in sincerity which was done in profession by your circumcision; devote and consecrate yourselves unto the Lord, to be to him a peculiar people. Circumcision was an obligation to keep the law; lay yourselves afresh under that obligation. It was a seal of the righteousness of faith; lay hold then of that righteousness, and so circumcise yourselves to the Lord.

Secondly. The danger they are threatened with, which they are concerned to avoid. Repent and reform, "lest my fury come forth like fire," which it is now ready to do, as that fire which came forth from the Lord, and consumed the sacrifices, and which was always kept burning upon the altar, and none might quench it; such is God's wrath against impenitent sinners, "because of the evil of their doings." Note, 1. That which is to be dreaded by us more than any thing else is the wrath of God; for that is the spring and bitterness of all present miseries, and will be the quintessence and perfection of everlasting misery. 2. It is the evil of our doings that kindles the fire of God's wrath against us. 3. The consideration of the imminent danger we are in, of falling and perishing under this wrath, should awaken us with all possible care to sanctify ourselves to God's glory, and to see to it that we be sanctified by his grace.

5 Declare ye in Judah,
And publish in Jerusalem; and say,
Blow ye the trumpet in the land:
Cry, gather together, and say,
Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities.
6 Set up the standard toward Zion:
Retire, stay not:
For I will bring evil from the north,
And a great destruction.
7 The lion is come up from his thicket,
And the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way;
He is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate;
And thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.
8 For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl:

For the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.

9 And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD,
That the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes;
And the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

10 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD!
Surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem,
Saying, Ye shall have peace; [*Jerusalem,*
Whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.

11 At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem,
A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness
Toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse,

12 *Even* a full wind from those *places* shall come unto me:
Now also will I give sentence against them.

13 Behold, he shall come up as clouds,
And his chariots *shall be* as a whirlwind:
His horses are swifter than eagles.
Woe unto us! for we are spoiled.

14 O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness,
That thou mayest be saved.
How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

15 For a voice declareth from Dan,
And publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim.

16 Make ye mention to the nations; behold,
Publish against Jerusalem,
That watchers come from a far country,
And give out their voice against the cities of Judah.

17 As keepers of a field, are they against her round about;
Because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD. [*thee;*

18 Thy way and thy doings have procured these *things* unto
This *is* thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart.

God's usual method is to warn before he wounds. In these verses, accordingly, God gives notice to the Jews of the general desolation that would shortly be brought upon them by a foreign invasion. This must be declared and published in all the cities of Judah and streets of Jerusalem, that all might hear and fear; and, by this loud alarm, be either brought to repentance, or left inexcusable. The prediction of this calamity is here given very largely, and in lively expressions, which one would think should have awakened and affected the most stupid. Observe,

First. The war proclaimed, and general notice given of the advance of the enemy. It is published now, some years before, by the prophet; but, since this will be slighted, it shall be published after another manner, when the judgment is actually breaking in, ver. 5, 6. The trumpet must be blown, the standard must be set up. Summons must be issued out to the people to gather together, and to draw towards Zion, either to guard that, or expecting to be guarded by it. There must be a general rendezvous; the militia must be raised, and all the forces mustered. Those that are able men, and fit for service, must go into the defenced cities, to garrison them. Those that are weak, and would lessen their provisions but not increase their strength, must retire, and away, and not stay.

Secondly. An express arrived with intelligence of the approach of the king of Babylon and his army. It is an evil that God will bring from the north, as he had said, *ch.* i. 15, "even a great destruction," beyond all that had yet come upon the nation of the Jews. The enemy is here compared,

1. To a lion that comes up from his thicket, when he is hungry, to seek his prey, ver. 7. The helpless beasts are so terrified with his roaring, (as some report,) that they cannot flee from him, and so become an easy prey to him. Nebuchadnezzar is this roaring, tearing lion, "the destroyer of the nations," that has laid many countries waste, and now "is on his way," on full speed towards the land of Judah. The destroyer of the Gentiles shall be the destroyer of the Jews too, when they have by their idolatry made themselves like the Gentiles. He is gone forth from his place, from Babylon, or the place of the rendezvous of his army, on purpose against this land; that is the prey he has now his eye upon, not to plunder it only, but to make it desolate; and herein he shall succeed to that degree, that the cities shall be laid waste without inhabitants, shall be overgrown with grass as a field, so some read it.

2. To a drying, blasting wind, (ver. 11,) a parching, scorching wind, which spoils the fruits of the earth, and withers them. Not a wind that brings rain, but such as useth to come out of the north, which drives away rain, *Pr.* xxv. 23, but brings something worse instead of it; such shall this evil out of the north be to this people. A black, freezing wind, which they can neither fence against nor flee from; but wherever they go it shall surround and pursue them; and they cannot see it before it comes, but when it comes they shall feel it. It is a "wind of the high places in the wilderness," or plain, or that beats upon the tops of the hills, or that carries all before it in the plain, where there is no shelter, but the ground is all champaign. It shall come in its full force "towards the daughter of my people," that have been brought up so tenderly and delicately that they could not endure to have the wind blow upon them. Now this fierce wind shall come against them, not to fan or cleanse them; not such a gentle wind, as is used in winnowing corn; but a full wind, ver. 12, a strong and violent wind, blowing full upon them. This shall come to me, or rather for me; it shall come with commission from God, and shall accomplish that for which he sends it. For this, as other stormy winds, fulfils his word.

3. To clouds and whirlwinds for swiftness, ver. 13. The Chaldean army shall come up as clouds driven with the wind; so thick shall they stand, so fast shall they march, and it shall be to no purpose to offer to stop them, or to make head against them, no more than to arrest a cloud, or give check to a whirlwind. The horses are swifter than eagles, when they fly upon their prey; it is vain to think either of opposing them or of outrunning them.

4. To watchers, and the keepers of a field; ver. 15—17, "The voice declares from Dan," a city which lay farthest north of all the cities of Canaan, and therefore received the first tidings of this evil from the north, and hastened it to mount Ephraim, that part of the land of Israel which lay next to Judea. They received the news of the affliction, and transmitted it to Jerusalem. Ill news flies apace; and an impenitent people, that hates to be reformed, can expect no other but ill news. Now, what is the news? tell the nations, those mixed nations that now inhabit the cities of the ten tribes; mention it to them, that they may provide for their own safety; but publish it against Jerusalem, that is the place aimed at, the game shot at. Let them know that "watchers are come from a far country," that is, soldiers, that will watch all opportunities to do mischief. Private soldiers we call private sentinels, or watchmen. They are coming on a full career, and "give out their voice against the cities of Judah;" they design to invest them, and make themselves masters of them, and then to attack them with loud shouts, as sure of victory. As keepers of a field surround it, to keep all out from it, so shall they surround the cities of Judah, to keep all in them, till they be constrained to surrender at discretion; they "are against her round about, compassing her in on every side:" see *Lu.* xix. 43. As formerly the good angels, those watchers and holy ones, were like keepers of a field to Jerusalem watching about it, that nothing might go in to its prejudice, so now their enemies were as watchers and keepers of a field, surrounding it, that nothing might go in to its relief and succour.

Thirdly. The lamentable cause of this judgment. How is it that Judah and Jerusalem come to be thus abandoned to ruin? See how it came to this. 1. They sinned against God. It was all long of themselves; "She has been rebellious against me, saith the Lord," ver. 17. Their enemies surrounded them as keepers of a field, because they had taken up arms against their rightful lord and sovereign, and were to be seized as rebels. The Chaldeans are breaking in upon them, and it was sin that opened the gap at which they entered; "Thy ways and thy doings have procured these things unto thee," ver. 18; thy evil way, and thy doings that have not been good. It was not a false step or two that did them this mischief, but their way and course of living was bad. Note, Sin is the procuring cause of all our troubles. Those that go on in sin, while they are endeavouring to ward off mischiefs with one hand, are at the same time pulling them upon their own heads with the other. 2. God was angry with them for their sin. It is the fierce anger of the Lord that makes the army of the Chaldeans thus fierce, thus furious; that is kindled against us, and is not turned back from us, ver. 8. Note, In men's anger against us, and the violence of that, we must see and own God's anger, and the power of that. If that were turned back from us, our enemies should not come forward against us. 3. In his just and holy anger he condemned them to this dreadful punishment; "Now also will I give sentence against them," ver. 12. The execution was done, not in a heat, but in pursuance of a sentence solemnly passed, according to equity, and upon mature deliberation. Some read it, 'Now will I do execution upon them,' according to the doom formerly passed; and "we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth," and the execution of that judgment.

Fourthly. The lamentable effects of this judgment, upon the first alarm given of it. 1. The people that should fight shall quite despair, and shall not have a heart to make the least stand against the enemy; ver. 8, "For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl;" that is, you will do so when the cry is made through the kingdom, "Arm, arm." All will be seized with a consternation, and all put into confusion. Instead of girding on the sword, they will gird on the sackcloth; instead of animating one another to a vigorous resistance, they will lament and howl, and so dishearten one another. While the enemy is yet at a distance, they will give up all for gone, and cry, "Woe unto us! for we are spoiled," ver. 13. We are all undone; the spoilers will certainly carry the day, and it is in vain to make head against them. Judah and Jerusalem had been famed for valiant men; but see what is the effect of sin: by depriving men of their confidence towards God, it deprives them of their courage towards men. 2. Their great men, that should contrive for the public safety, shall be at their wit's end; ver. 9, "At that day the heart of the king shall perish;" both his wisdom and his courage. Despairing of success, he shall have no spirit to do any thing; and if he had he will not know what to do. His princes and privy-counsellors, that should animate and advise him, shall be as much at a loss and as much in despair as he. See how easily, how effectually God can bring ruin upon a people that are doomed to it, purely by dispiriting them, "taking away the heart of the chief" of them, *Job* xii. 20, 24; "cutting off the spirit of princes," *Ps.* lxvi. 12. The business of the priests was to encourage the people in time of war. They were to say to the people, "Fear not, and let not your hearts faint," *Deu.* xx. 2, 3. They were to blow the trumpets, for an assurance to them that in the day of battle they should be "remembered before the Lord their God," *Num.* x. 9. But now the priests themselves shall be astonished, and shall have no heart themselves to do their office, and therefore not likely to put spirit into the people. The prophets too, the false prophets that had cried peace to them, shall be put into the greatest amazement imaginable; seeing their own guilty blood ready to be shed by that sword which they had many a time told the people there was no danger of. Note, God's judgments come with the greatest terror upon those that have been most secure. Our Saviour foretells that, at the last destruction of Jerusalem, men's hearts should fail them for fear, *Lu.* xxi. 26; and it is common for those who have cheated and flattered people into a carnal security, not only to fail them, but to discourage them, when the trouble comes.

Fifthly. The prophet's complaint of the people's being deceived, ver. 10. It is expressed strangely, as we read it: "Ah, Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people, saying, Ye shall have peace." We are sure God deceives none. "Let no man say, when he is tempted," or deluded, that God has tempted or deluded him. But, 1. The people deceived themselves with the promises that God had made in general of his favour to that nation, and the many peculiar privileges with which they were dignified, building upon them, though they took no care to perform the conditions on which the accomplishment of those promises, and the continuance of those privileges did depend; and had no regard to the threatenings which in the law were set over against those promises. Thus they cheated themselves, and then wickedly complained that God had cheated them. 2. The false prophets deceived them with promises of peace, which they made them in God's name, *ch.* xxiii. 17; xxvii. 9. If God had sent them, he had indeed greatly deceived the people; but he did not. It was the people's fault that they gave them credit; and here also they deceived themselves. 3. God had permitted the false prophets to deceive, and the

people to be deceived by them; giving both up to strong delusions, to punish them for not receiving the truth in the love of it. Herein the Lord was righteous; but the prophet complains of it as the sorest judgment of all, for by this means they had been hardened in their sins. 4. It may be read with an interrogation, 'Hast thou indeed thus deceived this people?' It is plain they are greatly deceived, for they expect peace, whereas "the sword reacheth unto the soul;" that is, it is a killing sword, abundance of lives are lost, and more like to be. Now, was it God that deceived them? No; he had often given them warning of judgments in general, and of this in particular; but their own prophets deceive them, and cry peace to them to whom the God of heaven doth not speak peace. It is a piteous thing, and that which every good man greatly laments, to see people flattered into their own ruin, and promising themselves peace when war is at the door; and this we should complain of to God, who alone can prevent such a fatal delusion.

Secondly. The prophet's endeavour to undeceive them. When the prophets they loved and caressed dealt falsely with them, he whom they hated and persecuted dealt faithfully.

1. He shews them their wound. They were loath to see it, very loath to have it searched into; but if they will allow themselves the liberty of a free thought they might discover their punishment in their sin; ver. 18, "This is thy wickedness, because it is bitter." Now thou seest that it is a bitter thing to depart from God, and will certainly be bitterness in the latter end, *ch.* ii. 19. It produceth bitter effects, and grief that reacheth unto the heart, toucheth to the quick, and in the most tender part; The sword reacheth to the soul, ver. 10. God can make trouble reach the heart, even of those that would lay nothing to heart; and by this thou mayest see what is thy wickedness; that it is a bitter thing, "a root of bitterness, that bears gall and wormwood;" and that it has reached to the heart,—it is the corruption of the soul, of the imagination of the thought of the heart. If the heart were not polluted with sin, it would not be disturbed and disquieted as it is with trouble.

2. He shews them the cure, ver. 14. Since "thy wickedness reacheth to the heart," there the application must be made; "O Jerusalem, wash thine hands from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved." By Jerusalem, he means each one of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for every man has a heart of his own to take care of; and it is personal reformation that must help the public. Every one must return from his own evil way, and, in order to that, cleanse his own evil heart; and let the heart of the city too be purified, not the suburbs only, as the outskirts of it. The vitals of a state must be amended, by the reformation of those that have the commanding influence upon it. Note, 1st. Reformation is absolutely necessary to salvation. There is no other way of preventing judgments, or turning them away when we are threatened with them, but taking away the sin by which we have procured them to ourselves. 2nd. No reformation is saving but that which reacheth the heart. There is heart-wickedness, that is defiling to the soul, from which we must wash ourselves. By repentance and faith we must wash our hearts from the guilt we have contracted by spiritual wickedness, by those sins which begin and end in the heart, and go no farther; and by mortification and watchfulness we must suppress and prevent this heart-wickedness for the future. The tree must be made good, else the fruit will not. Jerusalem was all overspread with the leprosy of sin. Now, as it is with the body in such a case, (the physicians agree that external applications will do no good, unless a great deal of purging physic be taken inwardly, to change the mass of the humours that lurk there, and to change the mass of the blood,) so it is with the soul, so it is with the state; there will be no effectual reformation of the manners without a reformation of the mind. The mistakes must be rectified; the corruptions there must be mortified, and the evil dispositions there changed. Though thou art Jerusalem, called a holy city; that will not save thee, unless thou wash thine heart from wickedness. In the latter part of the verse he reasons with them, "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Where he complains, *First.* Of the delays of their reformation; How long shall that filthy heart of thine continue unwashed? When shall it once be? Note, The God of heaven thinks the time long that his room is usurped, and his interest opposed in our souls, *ch.* xiii. 27. *Secondly.* Of the root of their corruption, the vain thoughts that lodged within them, and defiled their hearts, from which they must wash their hearts. Thoughts of iniquity, or mischief; these are the evil thoughts that are the spawn of the evil heart, from which all other wickedness is produced, *Mat.* xv. 19; these are our own, the conceptions of our own lusts, *Jas.* i. 15; and they are most dangerous, when they lodge within us, when they are admitted and entertained as guests, and are suffered to continue. Some read it, thoughts of afflictions; such thoughts as will bring nothing but affliction and misery upon thee. Some, by the vain thoughts here understand all those frivolous pleas and excuses with which they turned off the reproofs and calls of the word, and rendered them ineffectual, and bolstered themselves up in their wickedness. "Wash thy heart from wickedness;" and think not to say, "We are not polluted," *ch.* ii. 23; or, We are Jerusalem; "We have Abraham to our father," *Mat.* iii. 8, 9.

19 My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart;
My heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace,
Because thou hast heard, O my soul,
The sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.
20 Destruction upon destruction is cried;
For the whole land is spoiled:
Suddenly are my tents spoiled,
And my curtains in a moment.
21 How long shall I see the standard,
And hear the sound of the trumpet?
22 For my people *is* foolish,
They have not known me;
They *are* sottish children,
And they have none understanding:
They *are* wise to do evil,
But to do good they have no knowledge.
23 I beheld the earth, and, lo, *it was* without form, and void;
And the heavens, and they *had* no light.
24 I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled,
And all the hills moved lightly.
25 I beheld, and, lo, *there was* no man,
And all the birds of the heavens were fled.
26 I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place *was* a wilderness,
And all the cities thereof were broken down
At the presence of the LORD,
And by his fierce anger.
27 For thus hath the LORD said,
The whole land shall be desolate;
Yet will I not make a full end.
28 For this shall the earth mourn,
And the heavens above be black:
Because I have spoken *it*, I have purposed *it*,
And will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.
29 The whole city shall flee
For the noise of the horsemen and bowmen;
They shall go into thickets,
And climb up upon the rocks:
Every city *shall be* forsaken,
And not a man dwell therein.
30 And *when* thou *art* spoiled, what wilt thou do?
Though thou clothest thyself with crimson,
Though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold,
Though thou rentest thy face with painting,

WOMAN WITH PAINTED EYES.

In vain shalt thou make thyself fair;
Thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.
31 For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail,
And the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child,
The voice of the daughter of Zion,
That bewaileth herself, *that* spreadeth her hands,
Saying, Woe *is* me now!
For my soul is wearied because of murderers.

The prophet is here in a mighty agony, and cries out like one upon the rack of pain, with the colic or gripes, or some such acute distemper, or as a woman in travail. The expressions are very pathetical and moving, enough to melt a heart of stone into compassion; "My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart;" and yet well and in health himself, and nothing ails him. Note, A good man, in such a bad world as this is, cannot but be a man of sorrows. "My heart makes a noise in me," through the tumult of my spirits, and "I cannot hold my peace." Note, The grievance and the grief sometimes may be such as that the most prudent, patient man cannot forbear complaining. Now what is the matter? What is it that puts this good man into such a toss? It is not for himself, or any affliction in his family, that he grieves thus; but it is purely upon the public account, it is his people's case that he lays to heart thus.

First. They are very sinful, and will not be reformed, ver. 22. These are the words of God himself, for so the prophet chose to give this character of the people, rather than in his own words, or as from himself. "My people is foolish." God calls them his people though they are foolish. They have cast him off, but he has not cast them off, *Rom.* xi. 1. They are my people whom I have been in covenant with, and still have mercy in store for. They are foolish, for "they have not known me." Note, Those are foolish indeed that have not known God, especially that call themselves his people, and have the advantages of coming into acquaintance with him and yet have not known him. They are sottish children, stupid and senseless, and have no understanding. They cannot distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; they cannot discern the mind of God, either in his word or in his providence; they do not understand what their true interest is, nor on which side it lies. They are wise to do evil, to plot mischief against the quiet in the land; wise to contrive the gratification of their lust, and then to conceal and palliate it. But "to do good they have no knowledge," no contrivance, no application of mind; they know not how to make a good use either of the ordinances or of the providences of God, nor how to bring about any design for the good of their country. Contrary to this should be our character, *Rom.* xvi. 19, "I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."

Secondly. They are very miserable, and cannot be relieved. He cries out thus, "Because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet," and

seen the standard, both giving the alarm of war, ver. 19, 21. He doth not say, Thou hast heard, O my ear, but O my soul, because the event was yet future; and it is by the spirit of prophecy that he sees it, and receives the impression of it. His soul heard it from the words of God, and therefore he was as well assured of it, and as much affected with it, as if he had heard it with his bodily ears. He expresseth this exceeding concern, 1. To shew that, though he foretold this calamity, yet he was far from desiring the woful day; for a woful day it would be to him. It becomes us to tremble at the thoughts of the misery that sinners are running themselves into, though we have good hopes, through grace, that we ourselves are delivered from the wrath to come. 2. To awaken them to a holy fear, and so to a care to prevent so great judgment, by a true and timely repentance. Note, Those that would affect others with the word of God should evidence that they are themselves affected with it. Now let us see what there is in the destruction here foreseen and foretold that is so very affecting.

1st. It is a swift and sudden destruction. It comes upon Judah and Jerusalem ere they are aware, and pours in so fast upon them that they have not the least breathing time. They have no time to recollect their thoughts, much less to recruit or recover their strength, "destruction upon destruction is cried," ver. 20, "breach upon breach," one sad calamity, like Job's messengers, treading upon the heels of another. The death of Josiah breaks the ice, and plucks up the floodgates; within three months after that his son and successor Jehoahaz is deposed by the king of Egypt; within two or three years after, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took it, and from thenceforward he was continually making descents upon the land of Judah with his armies during the reigns of Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, till about nineteen years after he completed their ruin in the destruction of Jerusalem. But "suddenly were their tents spoiled, and their curtains in a moment." Though the cities held out for some time, yet the country was laid waste at the very first. The shepherds, and all that lived in tents, were plundered presently, they and their effects fell into the enemies' hands; therefore we find the Rechabites that used to dwell in tents, upon the first coming of the army of the Chaldees into the land, retiring into Jerusalem, *ch.* xxxv. 11. The inhabitants of the villages soon ceased; "suddenly were the tents spoiled." The plain men that dwelt in tents were first made a prey of.

2nd. This dreadful war continued a great while, not in the borders, but in the bowels of the country; for the people were very obstinate, and would not submit to, but took all opportunity to rebel against, the king of Babylon, which did but lengthen out the calamity; they might as good have yielded at first as at last. This is complained of, ver. 21, "How long shall I see the standard?" Shall the sword devour for ever? Good men are none of those that delight in war, for they know not how to fish in troubled waters; they are for peace, *Ps.* cxx. 7, and will heartily say Amen to that prayer, 'Give peace in our time, O Lord.' "O thou sword of the Lord, when wilt thou be quiet?"

3rd. The desolations made by it in the land were general and universal. "The whole land is spoiled" or plundered, ver. 20, so it was at first, and at length it became a perfect chaos. It was such a desolation as amounted in a manner to a dissolution; not only the superstructure, but even the foundations, were all out of course. The prophet in vision saw the extent and extremity of this destruction, and he here gives a most lively description of it; which, one would think, might have made those uneasy in their sins who dwelt in a land doomed to such a ruin, which might yet have been prevented by their repentance. *First.* The earth is without form, and void, as it was, *Gen.* i. 2; it is *Tohu* and *Bohu*, the words there used, as far as the land of Judea goes. It is confusion and emptiness, stripped of all its beauty, void of all its wealth; and, compared with what it was, every thing out of place, and out of shape. To a worse chaos than this will the earth be reduced at the end of time, when it and "all the works that are therein shall be burnt up." *Secondly.* The heavens too are without light, as the earth without fruits. This alludes to the darkness that was upon the face of the deep, *Gen.* i. 2, and represents God's displeasure against them, as the eclipse of the sun did at our Saviour's death. It was not only the earth that failed them, but heaven also frowned upon them; and with their trouble they had darkness, for they could not see through their troubles. The smoke of their houses and cities which the enemy burned, and the dust which their army raised in its march, even darkened the sun, so that the heavens had no light. Or, it may be taken figuratively: the earth, that is the common people, were impoverished, and in confusion; and the heavens, that is the princes and rulers, had no light, no wisdom in themselves, nor were any comfort to the people, nor a guide to them: compare *Mat.* xxiv. 29. *Thirdly.* The mountains trembled, and the hills moved lightly, ver. 24, so formidable were the appearances of God against his people, as in the days of old they had been for them, that "the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs," *Ps.* cxiv. 4. The everlasting mountains seemed to be scattered, *Hab.* iii. 6. The mountains on which they had worshipped their idols, the mountains over which they had looked for succours, all trembled as if they had been conscious of the people's guilt. The mountains, those among them that seemed to be highest and strongest, and of the firmest resolution, yet trembled at the approach of the Chaldean army. The hills moved lightly, as being eased of the burthen of a sinful nation, *Isa.* i. 24. *Fourthly.* Not the earth only, but the air was dispeopled and left uninhabited, ver. 25. I beheld the cities, the countries that used to be populous, and lo, there was no man to be seen; all the inhabitants were either killed or fled, or taken captives, such a ruining, depopulating thing is sin. Nay, even "the birds of the heavens," that used to fly about, and "sing among the branches," were now fled away, and no more to be seen or heard. The land of Judah is now become like the lake of Sodom, over which, they say, no bird flies: see *Deu.* xxix. 23. The enemies shall make such havoc of the country that they shall not so much as leave a bird alive in it. *Fifthly.* Both the ground and the houses shall be laid waste; ver. 26, "Lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness," being deserted by the inhabitants that should cultivate it, and then soon overgrown with thorns and briars. Or, being trodden down by the destroying army of the enemy. The cities also and their gates and walls are broken down, and levelled with the ground. Those that look no farther than second causes impute it to the policy and fury of the invaders; but the prophet, who looked to the first cause, saith it is "at the presence of the Lord," at his face, that is, the anger of his countenance, even "by his fierce anger," that this was done. Even angry men cannot do us any real hurt, unless God be angry with us. If our ways please him all is well. *Sixthly.* The meaning of all this is that the nation shall be entirely ruined, and every part of it shall share in the destruction; neither town nor country shall escape. 1*st.* Not the country, for "the whole land shall be desolate;" corn land, and pasture land, both common and enclosed, it shall all be laid waste, ver. 27; the conquerors will have occasion for it all. 2*nd.* Not the men; for, ver. 29, "the whole city shall flee," all the inhabitants of the towns shall quit their habitations by consent, "for fear of the horsemen and bowmen." Rather than lie exposed to their fury they shall "go into the thickets," where they are in danger to be torn by briars, nay, to be torn in pieces by wild beasts; and they shall "climb up upon the rocks," where their lodging will be hard and cold, and the precipice dangerous. Let us not be over fond of our houses and cities, for the time may come when rocks and thickets may be preferable, and chosen rather. This shall be the common case, for "every city shall be forsaken," and not a man shall be left that dares dwell therein. Both government and trade shall be at an end, and all civil societies and incorporations dissolved. It is a very dismal idea which this gives of the approaching desolation; but in the midst of all these threatenings comes in one comfortable word, ver. 27, "Yet will not I make a full end;" not a total consumption, for God will reserve a remnant to himself, that shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger; not a final consumption, for Jerusalem shall again be built, and the land inhabited. This comes in here in the midst of the threatenings, for the comfort of those that trembled at God's word; and it speaks to us the changeableness of God's providence, as it breaks down so it raiseth up again. Every end of our comforts is not a full end, however we may be ready to think it so. And it speaks the unchangeableness of God's covenant, which stands so firm that though he may correct his people very severely, yet he will not cast them off, *ch.* xxx. 11.

4. Their case was helpless, and without remedy. 1. God would not help them; so he tells them plainly, ver. 28. And if the Lord do not help them, who can? This is that which makes their case deplorable; for this "the earth mourns, and the heavens above are black." There are no prospects but what are very dismal, "because I have spoken it," I have given the word, which shall not be called back; "I have purposed it," it is a consumption decreed, determined, and I will not repent," not change this way, but proceed in it, and will not turn back from it. They would not repent and turn back from the way of their sins, *ch.* ii. 25, and therefore God will not repent and turn back from the way of his judgments. 2. They could not help themselves, ver. 30, 31. When the thing appeared at a distance they flattered themselves with hopes that, though God should not appear for them as he had done for Hezekiah against the Assyrian army, yet they should find some means or other to secure themselves, and give check to the forces of the enemy. But the prophet tells them that when it comes to the setting to they will be quite at a loss. "When thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do?" What course wilt thou take? Sit down now, and consider this in time. He assures them that, whatever were now their contrivances and confidences,

1st. They will then be despised by their allies whom they depended upon for assistance. He had often compared the sin of Jerusalem to whoredom, not only her idolatry, but her trust in creatures, in the neighbouring powers. Now here he compares her to a harlot, abandoned by all the lewd ones that used to make court to her. She is supposed to do all she can to keep up her interest in their affections; she doth what she can to make herself appear considerable among the nations, and a valuable ally; compliments them by her ambassadors to the highest degree, to engage them to stand by her now in her distress. She clothes herself with crimson, as if she were rich; and decks herself with ornaments of gold, as if her treasures were still as full as ever they had been. She rents her face with painting, puts the best colours she can upon her present distresses, and doth her utmost to palliate and extenuate her losses; sets a good face upon it. But this painting, though it beautifies the face for the present, really rents it; the frequent use of paint spoils the skin, cracks it, and makes it rough; so the case, which by false colours has been made to appear better than really it was, when truth comes to light will look so much the worse. And, after all, "in vain shalt thou make thyself fair;" all thy neighbours are sensible how low thou art brought; the Chaldeans will strip thee of thy crimson and ornaments, and then thy confederates will not only slight thee, and refuse to give thee any succour, but they will join with those that seek thy life, that they may come in for a share in the prey of so rich a country. Here seems to be an allusion to the story of Jezebel, who thought, by making herself look fair and fine, to have outfaced her doom; but in vain, 2 *Kin.* ix. 33. See what creatures prove when we confide in them, how treacherous they are; instead of saving the life they seek the life; they often change so as that they will sooner do us an ill turn than any service. And see to how little purpose it is for those that have by sin deformed themselves in God's eyes to think by any arts they can use to beautify themselves in the eye of the world.

2nd. They will then be themselves in despair; will find their troubles to be like the pains of a woman in travail, which she cannot escape. "I have heard the voice of the daughter of Zion," her groans echoing to the triumphant shouts of the Chaldean army which he heard, ver. 15; it is "like the voice of a woman in travail," whose pain is exquisite, and the fruit of sin, and the curse too, *Gen.* iii. 16; and extorts lamentable outcries, especially of a woman in travail of her first child, who, having never known before what that pain is, is the more terrified by it. Troubles are most grievous to those that have not been used to them. Zion, in this distress, since her neighbours refuse to pity her, bewaileth herself, fetching deep sighs, so the word signifies; and she spreads her hands, either wringing them for grief or reaching them forth for succour; and all the cry is, "Woe is me now," now the decree is gone forth against her, and is past recall, for "my soul is wearied because of murderers." The Chaldean soldiers put all to the sword that gave them any opposition, so that the land was full of murders. Zion was weary of hearing tragical stories from all parts of the country, and cried out, Woe is me. It was well if their sufferings put them in mind of their sins, the murders committed upon them, of the murders committed by them; for God was now making inquisition for the innocent blood shed in Jerusalem, which the Lord would not pardon, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 4. Note, As sin will find out the sinner, so sorrow will sooner or later find out the secure.

CHAPTER V.

Reproofs for sin and threatenings of judgment are intermixed in this chapter, and are set the one over against the other; judgments are threatened, that the reproofs of sin might be the more effectual to bring them to repentance; sin is discovered, that God might be justified in the judgments threatened. I. The sins they are charged with are, very great injustice, ver. 1; hypocrisy in religion, ver. 2; incorrigibleness, ver. 3; both poor and rich, corrupt and debauched, ver. 4, 5; idolatry and adultery, ver. 7, 8; treacherous departures from God, ver. 11; and an impudent defiance of him, ver. 12, 13; and that which is at the bottom of all this, want of the fear of God, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to fear him, ver. 20—24; and in the close of the chapter they are charged with violence and oppression, ver. 26—28; and a combination of those to debauch the nation that should have been active to reform it, ver. 30, 31. II. The judgments they are threatened with are very terrible: in general they shall be reckoned with, ver. 9, 29; a foreign enemy shall be brought in upon them, ver. 15—17; shall set guards upon them, ver. 6; shall destroy their fortifications, ver. 10; shall carry them away into captivity, ver. 19; and keep all good things from them, ver. 25; and herein the words of God's prophets shall be fulfilled, ver. 14. But, III. Here is an intimation, twice given, that God would in the midst of wrath remember mercy, and not utterly destroy them, ver. 10, 18. This was the scope and purport of Jeremiah's preaching in the latter end of Josiah's reign, and the beginning of Jehoiakim's, but the success did not answer expectation.

RUN ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,
And see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof,
If ye can find a man,
If there be *any* that executeth judgment,
That seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it.
2 And though they say, The LORD liveth;
Surely they swear falsely.
3 O LORD, *are* not thine eyes upon the truth?
Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved;
Thou hast consumed them, *but* they have refused to receive correction:
They have made their faces harder than a rock;
They have refused to return.
4 Therefore I said,
Surely these *are* poor; they are foolish:
For they know not the way of the LORD,
Nor the judgment of their God.
5 I will get me unto the great men,
And will speak unto them;
For they have known the way of the LORD,
And the judgment of their God:
But these have altogether broken the yoke, *and* burst the bonds.
6 Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them,
And a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them,
A leopard shall watch over their cities:
Every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces:
Because their transgressions are many,
And their backslidings are increased.
7 How shall I pardon thee for this?
Thy children have forsaken me,
And sworn by *them that are* no gods:
When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery,
And assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.
8 They were *as* fed horses in the morning:
Every one neighed after his neighbour's wife.
9 Shall I not visit for these *things?* saith the LORD:
And shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Here is, First. A challenge to produce any one right honest man, or at least any considerable number of such, in Jerusalem, ver. 1. Jerusalem was become like the old world, in which all flesh had corrupted their way. There were some, perhaps, who flattered themselves with hopes that there were yet many good men in Jerusalem that would stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God; and others that boasted of its being the holy city, and thought that would save it; but God bids them search the town, and they should scarce find a man in it that executes judgment, that makes conscience of what he saith and doth. Look in the streets, where they made their appearance, and conversed together, and in the broad places where they kept their markets; see if you can find a man, that is, a magistrate, (so some,) that executes judgment, and administers justice impartially; that will put the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. When the faithful thus cease and fail, it is time to cry, "Woe is me," *Mic.* vii. 1, 2, high time to cry, "Help, Lord," *Ps.* xii. 1. Or if there be here and there a man that is truly conscientious, and doth at least seek the truth, yet you shall not find him in the streets and broad places; he dares not appear publicly, for he shall be abused and run down; "Truth is fallen in the street," *Isa.* lix. 14, and is forced to seek for corners. So pleasing would it be to God to find any such, that for their sake he would pardon the city, if there were but ten righteous men in Sodom; if but one of a thousand, of ten thousand, in Jerusalem, it should be spared. See how ready God is to forgive, how swift to shew mercy. But it might be said, What do you make of those in Jerusalem that continue to make profession of religion, and relation to God? Are not those men for whose sakes Jerusalem may be spared? No, for they are not sincere in their profession; ver. 2, "They say the Lord liveth," and will swear by his name only, but they swear falsely; that is, 1. They are not sincere in the profession of respect they make to God, but are false to him; they honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. 2. Though they appeal to God only, they make no conscience of calling him to witness to a lie; though they do not swear by idols, they forswear themselves, which is no less an affront to God, as the God of truth, than the other is as the only true God.

Secondly. A complaint which the prophet makes to God of the obstinacy and wilfulness of these people. God had appealed to their eyes, ver. 1, but here the prophet appeals to his eyes; ver. 3, "Are not thine eyes upon the truth?" Dost thou not see every man's true character? And is not this the truth of their character, that "they have made their faces harder than a rock?" Or, "Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward part;" but where is it to be found among the men of this generation? for though they say, "The Lord liveth," yet they never regard him. Thou hast stricken them with one affliction after another, but they have not grieved for the affliction; they have been as stocks and stones under it, much less have they grieved for the sin by which they have brought it upon themselves. Thou hast gone farther yet, hast consumed them, hast corrected them yet more severely; but they have refused to receive correction, to accommodate themselves to thy design in correcting them, and to answer it. They would not receive instruction by the correction; they have set themselves to outface the Divine sentence, and to outbrave the execution of it; for "they have made their faces harder than a rock." They cannot change countenance, neither blush for shame, nor look pale for fear; cannot be beaten back from the pursuit of their lusts, whatever check is given them; for though often called to it, they have refused to return, and would go forward, right or wrong, as the horse into the battle.

Thirdly. The trial made both of rich and poor, and the ill character given of both.

1. The poor were ignorant, and therefore they were wicked. He found many that refused to return, for whom he was willing to make the best excuse their case would bear, and it was this; ver. 4, "Surely, these are poor, they are foolish," they never had the advantage of a good education, nor have they wherewithal to help themselves now with the means of instruction; they are forced to work hard for their living, and have no time or capacity for reading or hearing, so that they "know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgments of their God;" they understand neither the way in which God by his precept will have them walk towards him nor the way in which he by his providence is walking towards them. Note, 1st. Prevailing ignorance is the lamentable cause of abounding impiety and iniquity. What can one expect but works of darkness from brutish, sottish people, that know nothing of God and religion, but choose to sit in darkness. 2nd. This is commonly a reigning sin among poor people. There are the devil's poor, as well as God's, who, notwithstanding their poverty, might know the way of the Lord so as to walk in it, and do their duty, without being book-learned; but they are willingly ignorant, and therefore their ignorance will not be their excuse.

2. The rich were insolent and haughty, and therefore they were wicked; ver. 5, "I will get me to the great men," and see if I can find them more pliable to the word and providence of God. I will speak to them, preach at court, in hopes to make some impression upon men of polite literature, but all in vain; for though they "know the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God," yet they are too stiff to stoop to his government; "These have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds;" they know their Master's will, but are resolved to have their own will, "to walk in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes." They think themselves too goodly to be controlled, too big to be corrected, even by the sovereign Lord of all himself. They are for breaking even his bands in sunder, *Ps.* ii. 3. The poor are weak, the rich are wilful, and so neither do their duty.

Fourthly. Some particular sins instanced which they were most notoriously guilty of, and which cried most loudly to Heaven for vengeance. "Their transgressions," indeed, "were many," of many kinds, and oft repeated, "and their backslidings were increased;" they added to the number of them, and grew more and more impudent in them, ver. 6. But two sins especially were justly to be looked upon as unpardonable crimes: 1. Their spiritual whoredom; giving that honour to idols which is due to God only; "Thy children have forsaken me," to whom they were born and dedicated, and under whom they have been brought up, and they have "sworn by them that are no gods;" have made their appeals to them, as if they had been omniscient, and their proper judges. This is here put for all acts of religious worship due to God only, but with which they had honoured their idols. They have sworn to them, so it may be read; have joined themselves to them, and covenanted with them. They that forsake God make an ill change for those that are no gods. 2. Their corporal whoredom. Because they had forsaken God, and served idols, he gave them up to vile affections; and they that dishonoured him were left to dishonour themselves and their own families. They committed adultery most scandalously, without sense of shame or fear of punishment; for they "assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses," and did not blush to be seen by one another in the most scandalous places. So impudent and violent was their lust, so impatient of check, and so eager to be gratified, that they became perfect beasts, ver. 8, like high-fed horses, they "neighed every one after his neighbour's wife," ver. 8. Unbridled lusts make men like natural brute beasts, such monstrous, odious things are they. And that which aggravated their sin was, that it was the abuse of God's favours to them; when they were fed to the full, then their lusts grew thus furious. Fulness of bread was fuel to the fire of Sodom's lusts. *Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus*,—'Luxurious living feeds the flame of lust.' Fasting would help to tame the unruly evil that is so full of deadly poison, and bring the body into subjection.

Fifthly. A threatening of God's wrath against them for their wickedness, and the universal debauchery of their land.

1. The particular judgment that is threatened, ver. 6. A foreign enemy shall break in upon them, and get dominion over them, and shall lay all waste. Their country shall be as if it were overrun and perfectly mastered by wild beasts. This enemy shall be, 1st. Like a lion of the forest, so strong, so furious, so irresistible; and he shall slay them. 2nd. Like a wolf of the evening, that comes out at night when he is hungry to seek his prey, and is very fierce and ravenous. And the noise both of the lions' roaring and the wolves' howling is very hideous. 3rd. Like a leopard, that is very swift and very cruel, and withal careful not to miss his prey. The army of the enemy shall watch over their cities so strictly as to put the inhabitants to this sad dilemma: if they stay in, they are starved; if they stir out, they are stabbed; "Every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces;" which intimates, that in many places the enemy gave no quarter. And all this bloody work is owing to the multitude of their transgressions. It is sin that makes the great slaughter.

2. An appeal to themselves concerning the equity of it; ver. 9, "Shall I not visit for these things?" Can you yourselves think that the God whose name is Jealous will let such idolatries go unpunished? or that a God of infinite purity will connive at such abominable uncleanness? These are things that must be reckoned for, else the honour of God's government cannot be maintained, nor his laws saved from contempt; but sinners will be tempted to think him altogether such a one as themselves, contrary to that conviction of their own consciences concerning the judgment of God which it is necessary should be supported, that they which do such things are worthy of death, *Rom.* i. 32. Observe, When God punisheth sin, he is said to visit for it, or inquire into it; for he weighs the cause before he passeth sentence. Sinners have reason to expect punishment upon the account of God's holiness, to which sin is highly offensive, as well as upon the account of his justice, to which it renders us obnoxious; which is intimated in that, "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" It is not only the word of God, but his soul, that takes vengeance; and he has national judgments wherewith to take vengeance for national sins. Such nations as this was cannot long go unpunished; "How shall I pardon thee for this?" ver. 7. Not but that those who have been guilty of these sins have found mercy with God as to their eternal state—Manasseh himself did, though so much accessory to the iniquity of those times; but nations, as such, being only rewardable and punishable in this life, it would not be for the glory of God to let a nation so very wicked as this pass without some manifest tokens of his displeasure.

10 Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy;
But make not a full end:
Take away her battlements;
For they *are* not the LORD's.
11 For the house of Israel and the house of Judah
Have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD.
12 They have belied the LORD,
And said, *It is* not he;
Neither shall evil come upon us;
Neither shall we see sword nor famine:
13 And the prophets shall become wind,
And the word *is* not in them:
Thus shall it be done unto them.
14 Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts,
Because ye speak this word,
Behold, I will made my words in thy mouth fire,
And this people wood, and it shall devour them.
15 Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far,
O house of Israel, saith the LORD:
It *is* a mighty nation, it *is* an ancient nation,
A nation whose language thou knowest not,
Neither understandest what they say.
16 Their quiver *is* as an open sepulchre,
They *are* all mighty men.
17 And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread,
Which thy sons and thy daughters should eat:
They shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds:
They shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees:
They shall impoverish thy fenced cities,
Wherein thou trustedst, with the sword.
18 Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD,
I will not make a full end with you.
19 And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, [us?
Wherefore doeth the LORD our God all these *things* unto
Then shalt thou answer them,
Like as ye have forsaken me,
And served strange gods in your land,
So shall ye serve strangers in a land *that is* not your's.

We may observe in these verses, as before,

First. The sin of this people, upon which the commission signed against them is grounded. God disowns them, and dooms them to destruction, ver. 10. But is there not a cause? Yes; for, 1. They have deserted the law of God; ver. 11, "The house of Israel, and the house of Judah," though at variance with one another, yet both agreed to deal very treacherously against God. They forsook the worship of him, and therein violated their covenants with him; they revolted from him, and played the hypocrites with him. 2. They have defied the judgments of God, and given the lie to his threatenings in the mouth of his prophets, ver. 12, 13. They were often told that evil would certainly come upon them; they must expect some desolating judgments, sword or famine; but they were secure, and said, "We shall have peace, though we go on." For, 1st. They did not fear what God is. They belied him, and confronted the dictates even of natural light concerning him; for they said, It is not he; that is, he is not such a one as we have been made to believe he is; he doth not see, or not regard, or will not requite it; and therefore no evil shall come upon us. Multitudes are ruined by this; they are made to believe that God will not be so strict with them as his word saith he will. Nay, by this artifice Satan undid us all; "Ye shall not surely die;" ye shall not see sword or famine. Vain hopes of impunity are the deceitful support of all impiety. 2nd. They did not fear what God said. The prophets gave them fair warning, but they turned it off with a jest; they do but talk so because it is their trade. They are words of course, and words are but wind. It is not the word of the Lord that is in them, it is only the language of their melancholy fancy, or their ill-will to their country, because they are not preferred. Note, Impenitent sinners are not willing to own any thing to be the word of God that makes against them; that tends either to part them from or disquiet them in their sins. They threaten the prophets, "They shall become wind," shall pass away unregarded. And thus shall it be done unto them; what they threatened against us we will inflict upon them. Do they frighten us with famine? Let them be fed with the bread of affliction; so Micaiah was, 1 *Kin.* xxii. 27. Do they tell us of the sword? Let them perish by the sword, *ch.* ii. 30. Thus their mocking and misusing God's messengers filled the measure of their iniquity.

Secondly. The punishment of this people for their sin.

1. The threatenings they laughed at shall be executed; ver. 14, "Because ye speak this word" of contempt concerning the prophets, and the word in their mouths, therefore God will put honour upon them and their words; for not one iota or tittle of them shall fall to the ground, 1 *Sam.* iii. 19. Here God turns to the prophet Jeremiah, who had been thus bantered, and perhaps had been a little uneasy at it; "Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire." God owns them for his words, though men denied them; and will as surely make them to take effect as the fire consumes combustible matter that is in its way; "The word shall be fire, and the people wood." Sinners, by sin, make themselves fuel to that wrath of God which is "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," in the Scripture. The word of God will certainly be too hard for those that contend with it; they shall break that will not bow before it.

2. The enemy they thought themselves in no danger of shall be brought upon them. God gives them their commission; ver. 10, "Go ye up upon her walls;" mount them, trample upon them, tread them down. Walls of stone, before the Divine commission, shall be but mud walls. Having made yourselves masters of the walls, you may destroy at pleasure; you may "take away her battlements," and leave the fenced, fortified cities to lie open; for her battlements are not the Lord's; he doth not own them, and therefore will not protect and fortify them. They were not erected in his fear, nor with a dependence upon him. The people have trusted to them more than to God, and therefore they are not his. When the city is filled with sin, God will not patronize the fortifications of it, and then they are paper walls. What can defend us, when he who is our defence, and the defender of all our defences, is departed from us? *Num.* xiv. 9. What is not of God cannot stand, not stand long, not stand us in any stead.

3. What dreadful work these invaders should make is here described; ver. 15, "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you, O house of Israel." Note, God has all nations at his command, doth what he pleaseth with them, and makes what use he pleaseth of them. And sometimes he is pleased to make the nations of the earth, the heathen nations, a scourge to the house of Israel, when that is become a hypocritical nation. This nation of the Chaldeans is here said to be a remote nation; it is brought upon them from afar, and therefore will make the greater spoil, and the longer stay, that they may pay themselves well for so long a march. A nation that thou hast had no commerce with by reason of their distance, and therefore canst not expect to find favour with. God can bring trouble upon us from places and causes very remote. It is a mighty nation, that there is no making head against; an ancient nation, that value themselves upon their antiquity, and will therefore be the more haughty and imperious; it is "a nation whose language thou knowest not." They spoke the Syriac tongue, which the Jews at that time were not acquainted with; as appears, 2 *Kin.* xviii. 26. The difference of language would make it the more difficult to treat with them of peace: compare this with the threatening, *Deu.* xxviii. 49, which it seems to have a reference to; for the law and the prophets exactly agree. They are well armed; "Their quiver is as an open sepulchre;" that is, their arrows shall fly so thick, hit so sure, and wound so deep, that they shall be reckoned to breathe nothing but death and slaughter. They are able-bodied, all effective, mighty men, ver. 16; and when they have made themselves masters of the country they shall devour all before them, and reckon all their own that they can lay their hands on, ver. 17. 1st. They shall strip the country, shall not only sustain, but surfeit their soldiers with the rich products of this fruitful land. "They shall" not store up, (then it might possibly have been retrieved,) but "eat up thine harvest" in the field, "and thy bread" in the house, "which thy sons and thy daughters should eat." Note, What we have we have for our families, and it is a comfort to see our sons and daughters eating that which we have taken care and pains for; but a grievous vexation to see it devoured by strangers and enemies; to see their camps victualled with our stores, while those that are dear to us are perishing for want of it. This also is according to the curse of the law; *Deu.* xxviii. 33, "They shall eat up thy flocks and thy herds," out of which thou hast taken sacrifices for thine idols. They shall not leave thee the fruit of "thy vines and thy fig-trees." 2nd. They shall starve the towns; "They shall impoverish thy fenced cities," (and what fence against poverty when it comes like an armed man?) those cities wherein thou trustedst to be a protection to the country. Note, It is just with you to impoverish that which we make our confidence. They shall impoverish them with the sword, cutting off all provisions from coming to them, and intercepting trade and commerce, which will impoverish even fenced cities.

Thirdly. An intimation of the tender compassion God has yet for them. The enemy is commissioned to destroy and lay waste, but must not make a full end, ver. 10. Though they make a great slaughter, yet some must be left to live; and a great spoil, yet something must be left to live upon, for God hath said it, ver. 18, with a *non obstante*,—'a nevertheless,' to the present desolation; even in those days, as dismal as they are, "I will not make a full end with you;" and if God will not, the enemy shall not. God has mercy in store for this people, and therefore sets bounds to this desolating judgment; "Hitherto it shall come, and no farther."

Fourthly. The justification of God in these proceedings against them. As he will appear to be gracious in not making a full end with them, so he will appear to be righteous in coming so near it, and will have it acknowledged that he has done them no wrong, ver. 19. Observe, 1. A reason demanded, insolently demanded, by the people for these judgments. They will say, "Wherefore doth the Lord our God do all this unto us?" What provocation have we given him, or what quarrel has he with us? As if against such a sinful nation there did not appear cause enough of action. Note, Unhumbled hearts are ready to charge God with injustice in their afflictions, and pretend they are to seek for the cause of them, when it is written in the forehead of them. But, 2. Here is a reason presently assigned. The prophet is instructed what answer to give them, for God will be justified when he speaks, though he speaks with never so much terror. He must tell them that God doth this against them for what they have done against him, and they may, if they please, read their sin in their punishment. Do not they know very well that they have forsaken God, and therefore can they think it strange if he has forsaken them? Have they forgot how often they served strange gods in their own land, that good land, in the abundance of the fruits of which they ought to have served God with gladness of heart? and therefore is it not just with God to make them serve strangers in a strange land, where they can call nothing their own, as he had threatened to do? *Deu.* xxviii. 47, 48. They that are fond of strangers, to strangers let them go.

20 Declare this in the house of Jacob,
And publish it in Judah, saying, [ing;
21 Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understand-
Which have eyes, and see not;
Which have ears, and hear not:
22 Fear ye not me? saith the LORD:
Will ye not tremble at my presence,
Which have placed the sand *for* the bound of the sea
By a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it:
And though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can
they not prevail;
Though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?
23 But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart;

They are revolted and gone.
24 Neither say they in their heart,
Let us now fear the LORD our God, [season:
That giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his
He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

The prophet, having reproved them for sin, and threatened the judgments of God against them, is here sent to them again upon another errand, which he must publish in Judah. The purport of it is to persuade them to fear God, which would be an effectual principle of their reformation, as the want of that fear had been at the bottom of their apostacy.

First. He complains of the shameful stupidity of this people, and their bent to backslide from God, speaking as if he knew not what course to take with them. For,

1. Their understandings were darkened, and unapt to admit the rays of the Divine light. They are a "foolish people, and without understanding," they apprehend not the mind of God, though never so plainly discovered to them by the written word, by his prophets, and by his providence, ver. 21, "They have eyes but they see not, ears but they hear not," like the idols which they made and worshipped, *Ps.* cxv. 5, 6, 8. One would have thought they took notice of things, but really they did not; they had intellectual faculties and capacities, but they did not employ and improve them as they ought. Herein they disappointed the expectations of all their neighbours, who, observing what excellent means of knowledge they had, concluded, "Surely they are a wise and an understanding people," *Deu.* iv. 6, and yet really they are a "foolish people, and without understanding." Note, We cannot judge of men by the advantages and opportunities they enjoy. There are those that sit in darkness in a land of light, and live in sin even in a holy land; that are bad in the best places.

2. Their wills were stubborn and unapt to submit to the rules of the Divine law; ver. 23, "This people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart;" and no wonder, when they were "foolish and without understanding," *Ps.* lxxxii. 5. Nay, it is the corrupt bias of the will that bribes and besots the understanding; none so blind as those that will not see. The character of this people is the true character of all people by nature, till the grace of God has wrought a change: we are foolish, slow of understanding, and apt to mistake and forget; yet that is not the worst, we have "a revolting and a rebellious heart," a carnal mind, that is enmity against God, and is not in subjection to his law; not only revolting from him by a rooted aversion to that which is good, but rebellious against him by a strong inclination to that which is evil. Observe, The revolting heart is a rebellious one; they that withdraw from their allegiance to God stick not there, but, by siding in with sin and Satan, take up arms against him. "They are revolted and gone." The revolting heart will produce a revolting life; they are gone, and they will go, (so it may be read,) now nothing will be restrained from them, *Gen.* xi. 6.

Secondly. He ascribes this to the want of the fear of God. When he observes them to be without understanding, he asks, "Fear ye not me, saith the Lord, and will ye not tremble at my presence?" ver. 22. If you would but keep up an awe of God, you would be more observant of what he saith to you; and did you but understand yourselves better you would be more under the commanding rule of God's fear. When he observes that "they are revolted and gone," he adds this as the root and cause of their apostacy, ver. 24, "Neither say they in their hearts, Let us now fear the Lord our God." Therefore so many bad thoughts come into their minds, and hurry them to that which is evil, because they will not admit and entertain good thoughts, and particularly not this good thought, "Let us now fear the Lord our God." It is true it is God's work to put his fear into our hearts, but it is our work to stir up ourselves to fear him, and to fasten upon those considerations which are proper to affect us with a holy awe of him; and it is because we do not do this that our hearts are so destitute of his fear as they are, and so apt to revolt and rebel.

Thirdly. He suggests some of those things which are proper to possess us with a holy fear of God.

1. We must fear the Lord and his greatness, ver. 22. Upon this account he demands our fear: shall we not tremble at his presence, and be afraid of affronting him, or trifling with him, who in the kingdom of nature and providence gives such incontestable proofs of his almighty power and sovereign dominion. Here is one instance given of very many that might be given: he keeps the sea within compass; though the tides flow with a mighty strength twice every day, and if they should flow on a while would drown the world; though in a storm the billows rise high and dash to the shore with incredible force and fury, yet they are under check; they return, they retire, and no harm is done. "This is the Lord's doing," and it would be marvellous if it were not common in our eyes. He has "placed the sand for the bound of the sea," not only for a mere-stone to mark out how far it may come and where it must stop, but as a bound or fence to put a stop to it. A wall of sand shall be as effectual as a wall of brass to check the flowing waves, when God is pleased to make it so; nay, that is chosen rather to teach us that a soft answer, like the soft sand, turns away wrath, and quiets the foaming rage, when grievous words, like hard rocks, do but exasperate and make the waters cast forth so much the more mire and dirt. This bound is placed "by a perpetual decree," 'by an ordinance of antiquity,' so some read it; and then it sends us as far back as the creation of the world, when God divided between the sea and the dry land, and fixed marches between them, *Gen.* i. 9, 10; which is elegantly described, *Ps.* civ. 6, &c., and *Job* xxxviii. 8, &c.; or to the period of Noah's flood, when God promised that he would never drown the world again, *Gen.* ix. 11; an ordinance of perpetuity, so our translation takes it. It is a perpetual decree; it has had its effect all along to this day, and shall still continue, till day and night come to an end. This perpetual decree the waters of the sea cannot pass over or break through. "Though the waves thereof toss themselves," as the troubled sea doth when it cannot rest, "yet can they not prevail;" "though they roar" and rage as if they were vexed at the check given them, "yet can they not pass over it." Now this is a good reason why we should fear God; for, 1st. By this we see that he is a God of almighty power and universal sovereignty, and therefore to be feared and had in reverence. 2nd. This shews us how easily he could drown the world again, and how much we continually lie at his mercy, and therefore we should be afraid of making him our enemy. 3rd. Even the unruly waves of the sea observe his decree, and retreat at his check; and shall not we then? Why are our hearts revolting and rebellious, when the sea neither revolts nor rebels?

2. We must fear the Lord and his goodness, *Hos.* iii. 5. The instances of this, as of the former, are fetched from God's common providence, ver. 24; we must fear the Lord our God, that is, we must worship him and give him glory, and be always in care to keep ourselves in his love, because he is continually doing us good. He gives us "both the former and the latter" rain; the former a little after seedness, the latter a little before harvest, and both in their season; and by this means "he reserves to us the appointed weeks of harvest." Harvest is reckoned by weeks, because in a few weeks enough is gathered to serve for sustenance the year round. The weeks of harvest are appointed us by the promise of God, that seedtime and harvest shall not fail; and in performance of that promise they are reserved to us by the Divine providence, otherwise we should come short of them. In harvest mercies, therefore, God is to be acknowledged, his power, and goodness, and faithfulness, for they all come from him. And it is a good reason why we should fear him, that we may keep ourselves in his love, because we have such a necessary dependence upon him. The fruitful seasons were witnesses for God, even to the heathen world, sufficient to leave them inexcusable in their contempt of him, *Acts* xiv. 17; and yet the Jews, who had the written word to explain their testimony by, were not wrought upon to fear the Lord, though it appears how much it is our interest to do so.

25 Your iniquities have turned away these *things*,
And your sins have withholden good *things* from you.
26 For among my people are found wicked *men:*
They lay wait, as he that setteth snares;
They set a trap, they catch men.
27 As a cage is full of birds,
So *are* their houses full of deceit:
Therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.
28 They are waxen fat, they shine:
Yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked:
They judge not the cause,
The cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper;
And the right of the needy do they not judge.
29 Shall I not visit for these *things?* saith the LORD:
Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?
30 A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land;
31 The prophets prophesy falsely,
And the priests bear rule by their means;
And my people love *to have it* so:
And what will ye do in the end thereof?

Here, First. The prophet shews them what mischief their sins had done them; they "have turned away these things," ver. 25, namely, the former and the latter rain, which they used to have in due season, ver. 24, but had of late been withheld, *ch.* iii. 3, by reason of which the appointed weeks of harvest had sometimes disappointed them. It is your sin that has withholden good from you, when God was ready to bestow it upon you. Note, It is sin that stops the current of God's favour to us, and deprives us of the blessings we used to receive. It is that that makes the heavens as brass, and the earth as iron.

Secondly. He shews them how great their sins were, how heinous and very provoking. When they had forsaken the worship of the true God, even moral honesty was lost among them; "Among my people are found wicked men," ver. 26; some of the worst of men, and so much the worse they were, in that they were found among God's people.

1. They were spiteful and malicious. Such are properly wicked men, men that delight in doing mischief; they were found, that is, caught in the very act of their wickedness. As hunters or fowlers lay snares for their game, so did they lie in wait to catch men, and made a sport of it, and took as much pleasure in it as if they had been entrapping beasts or birds. They contrived ways of doing mischief to good people, whom they hated for their goodness, especially to those that faithfully reproved them, *Isa.* xxix. 21; or to those that stood in the way of their preferment, or that they apprehended had affronted them, or done them a diskindness, or to those whose estates they coveted; so Jezebel ensnared Naboth for his vineyard; nay, they did mischief for mischief sake.

2. They were false and treacherous; ver. 27, "As a cage" or coop "is full of birds," and of food for them, to fatten them for the table, "so are their houses full of deceit," that is, of wealth gotten by fraudulent practices, or of arts and methods of defrauding. All the business of their families is done with deceit; whoever deals with them they will cheat them if they can, which is easily done by those who make no conscience of what they say and do. Herein "they overpass the deeds of the wicked," ver. 28. Those that act by deceit, with a colour of law and justice, do more mischief perhaps than those wicked men, ver. 26, that carried all before them by open force and violence; or, they are worse than the heathen themselves, yea, the worst of them. And, would you think it, they prosper in these wicked courses? and therefore their hearts are hardened in them. They are greedy of the world, because they find it flows in upon them, and they stick not at any wickedness in pursuit of it, because they find it is so far from hindering their prosperity, that it furthers it. "They are become great" in the world, "they are waxen rich," and thrive upon it. They have wherewithal to make provision for the flesh, to fulfil all the lusts of it, to which they are very indulgent, so that they are waxen fat with living at ease, and bathing themselves in all the delights of sense; they are sleek and smooth, and shine; they look fair and gay, and every body admires them. And they pass by matters of evil, (so some read the following words,) that is, they escape the evils which one would expect their sins should bring upon them, "They are not in trouble as other men," much less as ill men, *Ps.* lxxiii. 5, &c.

3. When they were grown great, and had got power in their hands, they did not do that good with it which they ought to have done, "They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, and the right of the needy." The fatherless are often needy, always need assistance and advice, and advantage is taken of their helpless condition to do them an injury. Who should succour them then but the great and rich? What have men wealth for but to do good with it? But these would take no cognizance of any such distressed cases; they had not so much sense of justice or compassion for the injured. Or if they did concern themselves in the cause, it was not to do right, but to protect them that did wrong. And "yet they prosper" still; God layeth not folly to them. Certainly, then, the things of this world are not the best things, for oftentimes the worst men have the most of them; yet we are not to think that because they prosper God allows of their practices. No; though sentence against their evil works be not executed speedily, it will be executed.

4. There was a general corruption of all orders and degrees of men among them; ver. 30, 31, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land." The degeneracy of such a people, so privileged and advanced, was a wonderful thing, and to be admired. How could they ever break through so many obli-

gations? It was a horrible thing, and to be detested, and the consequences of it dreaded. To frighten ourselves from sin, let us call it a horrible thing. Why what was the matter? In short this: 1st. The leaders misled the people, the prophets prophesy falsely, counterfeited a commission from heaven, when they were factors for hell. Religion is never more dangerously attacked than under colour and pretence of Divine revelation. But why did not the priests, who had power in their hands for that purpose, restrain these false prophets? Alas! instead of doing that they made use of them as the tools of their ambition and tyranny; they "bear rule by their means," they supported themselves in their grandeur and wealth, their laziness and luxury, their impositions and oppressions, by the help of the false prophets and their interest in the people. Thus they were in a combination against every thing that was good, and strengthened one another's hands in evil. 2nd. The people were well enough pleased to be so misled; They are my people, saith God, and should have stood up for me, and borne their testimony against the wickedness of their priests and prophets, but they love to have it so. If the priests and prophets will let them alone in their sins, they will give them no disturbance in theirs. They love to be ridden with a loose rein, and like those rulers very well that will not restrain their lusts, and those teachers that will not reprove them.

Thirdly. He shews them how fatal the consequences of this would certainly be. Let them consider,

1. What the reckoning would be for their wickedness; ver. 29, "Shall not I visit for these things," as before, ver. 9. Sometimes mercy rejoiceth against judgment; "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" Here judgment is reasoning against mercy, "Shall I not visit?" We are sure Infinite Wisdom knows how to accommodate the matter between them. The manner of the expression is very emphatical, and speaks, 1st. The certainty and necessity of God's judgments; "Shall not my soul be avenged?" Yes, without doubt vengeance will come, it must come, if the sinner repents not. 2nd. The justice and equity of God's judgments. He appeals to the sinner's own conscience. Do not they deserve to be punished that have been guilty of such abominations? Shall he not be avenged on such a nation, such a wicked, provoking nation as this?

2. What the direct tendency of their wickedness was; "What will ye do in the end thereof?" That is, 1st. What a pitch of wickedness will you come to at last! "What will you do?" What will ye not do that is base and wicked? What will this grow to? You will certainly grow worse and worse, till you have filled up the measure of your iniquity. 2nd. What a pit of destruction will you come to at last! When things are brought to such a pass as this, as nothing can be expected from you but a deluge of sin, so nothing can be expected from God but a deluge of wrath, and what will ye do when that comes? Note, Those that walk in ill ways would do well to consider the tendency of them both to greater sin and utter ruin. An end will come, the end of a wicked life will come, when it will be all called over again, and without doubt will be bitterness in the latter end.

CHAPTER VI.

In this chapter, as before, we have, I. A prophecy of the invading of the land of Judah and the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, ver. 1—6; with the spoils they should make of the country, ver. 9; and the terror which all should be seized with on that occasion, ver. 22—26. II. An account of those sins of Judah and Jerusalem which provoked God to bring this desolating judgment upon them. Their oppression, ver. 7; their contempt of the word of God, ver. 10—12; their worldliness, ver. 13; the treachery of their prophets, ver. 14; their impudence in sin, ver. 15; their obstinacy against reproofs, ver. 18, 19; which made their sacrifices unacceptable to him, ver. 20; and for which he gave them up to ruin, ver. 21; but tried them first, ver. 27; and then rejected them as irreclaimable, ver. 28—30. III. Good counsel given them in the midst of all this, but in vain, ver. 8, 16, 17.

O YE children of Benjamin, gather yourselves
To flee out of the midst of Jerusalem,
And blow the trumpet in Tekoa,
And set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem:
For evil appeareth out of the north,
And great destruction.
2 I have likened the daughter of Zion
To a comely and delicate *woman*.
3 The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her;
They shall pitch *their* tents against her round about;
They shall feed every one in his place.
4 Prepare ye war against her;
Arise, and let us go up at noon.
Woe unto us! for the day goeth away,
For the shadows of the evening are stretched out.
5 Arise, and let us go by night,
And let us destroy her palaces.
6 For thus hath the LORD of hosts said,
Hew ye down trees,
And cast a mount against Jerusalem:
This *is* the city to be visited;
She *is* wholly oppression in the midst of her
7 As a fountain casteth out her waters,
So she casteth out her wickedness:
Violence and spoil is heard in her;
Before me continually *is* grief and wounds
8 Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem,
Lest my soul depart from thee;
Lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.

Here is, First. Judgment threatened against Judah and Jerusalem. That city, that country, were at this time secure, and under no apprehension of danger; they saw no cloud gathering, but every thing looked safe and serene. But the prophet tells them they should shortly be invaded by a foreign power; an army should be brought against them from the north, which should lay all waste, and should cause not only a general consternation, but a general desolation. It is here foretold,

1. That the alarm of this should be loud and terrible. This is represented, ver. 1. The children of Benjamin, in which tribe part of Jerusalem lay, are here called to shift for their own safety in the country; for the city, to which it was first thought advisable for them to flee, *ch.* iv. 5, 6, would soon be made too hot for them, and they would find it the wisest course to flee out of the midst of it. It is common in public frights for people to think any place safer than that where they are; and therefore those in the city are for shifting into the country, in hopes there to escape out of danger; and those in the country are for shifting into the city, in hopes there to make head against the danger; but it is all in vain when evil pursueth sinners with commission. They are told to send the alarm into the country, and to do what they could for their own safety. "Blow the trumpet in Tekoa," a city which lay twelve miles north from Jerusalem. Let them be stirred up to stand upon their guard. "Set up a sign of fire," that is, kindle the beacons, "in Beth-haccerem," the 'house of the vineyard,' which lay on a hill between Jerusalem and Tekoa. Prepare to make a vigorous resistance, for the "evil appeareth out of the north." This may be taken ironically. Betake yourselves to the best methods you can think of for your own preservation, but all shall be in vain; for when you have done your best it will be a great destruction, for it is in vain to contend with God's judgments.

2. That the attempt upon them should be bold and formidable, and such as they should be a very unequal match for. 1st. See what the daughter of Zion is, on whom the assault is made. She is likened to a comely and delicate woman, ver. 2, bred up in everything that is nice and soft, that will not set so much as the "sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy," *Deu.* xxviii. 56, nor suffer the winds to blow upon her; and being not accustomed to hardship, she will be the less able either to resist the enemy,—for those that make war must endure hardness,—or to bear the destruction with that patience that is necessary to make it any thing tolerable. The more we indulge ourselves in the pleasures of this life the more we disfit ourselves for the troubles of this life. 2nd. See what the daughter of Babylon is, by whom the assault is made. The generals and their armies are compared to shepherds and their flocks, ver. 3; in such numbers and in such order did they come; the soldiers following their leaders as the sheep their shepherds. The daughter of Zion dwelt at home, so some read it, expecting to be courted with love, but was invaded with fury. This comparing of the enemies to shepherds inclines me to embrace another reading which some give of ver. 2. The daughter of Zion is like a comely pasture-ground, and a delicate land, which invites the

ASSYRIANS BESIEGING A CITY.—ver. 6.

shepherds to bring their flocks thither to graze; and as the shepherds easily make themselves masters of an open field that—as was usual then in some parts—lies common, owned by none, pitch their tents in it, and their flocks presently eat it bare, so shall the Chaldean army easily break in upon the land of Judah, force for themselves a free quarter where they please, and in a little time devour all. For the farther illustration of this he shews,

First. How God shall commission them to make this destruction even of the holy land and the holy city, that were his peculiar. It is he that saith, ver. 4, "Prepare ye war against her;" for he is the Lord of hosts, that hath all hosts at his command, and he hath said, ver. 6, "Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem," in order to the attacking of it. The Chaldeans have great power against Judah and Jerusalem, and yet they have no power but what is given them from above. God has marked out Jerusalem for destruction: he hath said, "This is the city to be visited," visited in wrath, visited by the Divine justice, and this is the time of her visitation. Those that are careless and secure in sinful ways, the day is coming when they will be visited.

Secondly. How they shall animate themselves and one another to execute that commission. God's counsels being against Jerusalem, which cannot be altered or disannulled, the councils of war which the enemies held are made to agree with his counsels. God having said, "Prepare war against her," their determinations are made subservient to his; and notwithstanding the distance of place, and the many difficulties that lie in the way, it is soon resolved, *nemine contradicente*,—'unanimously,' "Arise, and let us go." Note, It is good to see how the counsel and decree of God is pursued and executed in the devices and designs of men, even theirs that know him not, *Isa.* x. 6, 7. In this campaign, 1*st*. They resolve to be very expeditious. They have no sooner resolved upon it, but they address themselves to it. It shall never be said they left any thing to be done towards it to morrow which they could do to day. "Arise, let us go up at noon," though it be in the heat of the day; nay, ver. 5, "Arise, let us go by night," though it be in the dark; nothing shall hinder them, they are resolved to lose no time. They are described as men in care to make dispatch; ver. 4, "Woe unto us, for the day goes away," and we are not going on with our work. "The shadows of the evening are stretched out," and we sit still, and slip the opportunity. O that we were thus eager in our spiritual work and warfare! thus afraid of losing time, or an opportunity in taking the kingdom of heaven by violence. It is folly to trifle when we have an eternal salvation to work out, and the enemies of that salvation to fight against. 2*nd*. They doubt not but to be very successful. "Let us go up" and let us destroy her palaces, and make ourselves masters of the wealth that is in them. It was not that they might fulfil God's counsels, but that they might fill their own treasures, that they were thus eager, yet God thereby served his own purposes.

Secondly. The cause of this judgment assigned. It is all for their wickedness, they have brought it upon themselves; they must bear it, for they must bear the blame of it. They are thus oppressed, because they have been oppressors; they have dealt hardly with one another, each in their turns, as they have had power and advantage, and now the enemy shall come and deal hardly with them all. This sin of oppression, and violence, and wrong doing, is here charged upon them, 1. As a national sin, ver. 6; therefore this city is to be visited. It is time to make inquisition, for "she is wholly oppression in the midst of her." All orders and degrees of men, from the prince on the throne to the meanest master of a shop, were oppressive to those that were under them. Look which way you will, and there were causes for complaints of this kind. 2. As a sin that was become in a manner natural to them, ver. 7. She casts out wickedness, in all the instances of malice and mischievousness, "as a fountain casteth out her waters." so plentifully and constantly; the streams are bitter and poisonous like the fountain. The waters out of the fountain will not be restrained, but will find or force their way; nor will they be checked by laws or conscience in their violent proceedings. This is fitly applied to the corrupt heart of man in his natural state; that casts out wickedness, one evil imagination or other, as a fountain casts out her waters, naturally and easily; it is always flowing and yet always full. 3. As that which was become a constant practice with them; "violence and spoil is heard in her." The cry of it is come up before God as that of Sodom: "Before me continually is grief and wounds." The complaint of those that find themselves aggrieved, being unjustly wounded in their bodies or spirits, in their estates or reputation. Note, He that is the common Parent of mankind regards and resents, and sooner or later will revenge, the mischiefs and wrongs that men do to one another.

Thirdly. The counsel given them how to prevent this judgment. Fair warning is given now upon the whole matter; "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem," ver. 8; receive the instruction given thee both by the law of God and by his prophets; be wise at length for thyself. They knew very well what they had been instructed to do, nothing remained but to do it; for till then they cannot be said to be instructed. The reason for this counsel is taken from the inevitable ruin they run upon, if they refused to comply with the instructions given them. "Lest my soul depart," or be disjointed from thee. This intimates what a tender affection and concern God had had for them; his very soul had been joined to them, and nothing but sin could disjoin it. Note, 1. The God of mercy is loath to depart even from a provoking people, and is earnest with them, by true repentance and reformation, to prevent things coming to that extremity. 2. Their case is very miserable from whom God's soul is disjoined. It intimates the loss, not only of their outward blessings, but of those comforts and favours which are the more immediate and peculiar tokens of his love and presence. Compare this with that dreadful word, *Heb.* x. 38, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." 3. Those whom God forsakes are certainly undone. When God's soul departs from Jerusalem, she soon becomes desolate and uninhabited, *Mat.* xxiii. 38.

9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts,
They shall throughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine:
Turn back thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets.
10 To whom shall I speak,
And give warning, that they may hear?
Behold, their ear *is* uncircumcised,
And they cannot hearken:
Behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach;
They have no delight in it.
11 Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD;
I am weary with holding in:
I will pour it out upon the children abroad,
And upon the assembly of young men together:
For even the husband with the wife shall be taken,
The aged with *him that is* full of days.
12 And their houses shall be turned unto others,
With their fields and wives together:
For I will stretch out my hand
Upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD.
13 For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them
Every one *is* given to covetousness;
And from the prophet even unto the priest
Every one dealeth falsely.
14 They have healed also the hurt *of the daughter* of my people slightly,
Saying, Peace, peace;
When *there is* no peace.
15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination?
Nay, they were not at all ashamed,
Neither could they blush:
Therefore they shall fall among them that fall:
At the time *that* I visit them they shall be cast down,
saith the LORD.
16 Thus saith the LORD,
Stand ye in the ways, and see,
And ask for the old paths,
Where *is* the good way, and walk therein,
And ye shall find rest for your souls.
But they said, We will not walk *therein*
17 Also I set watchmen over you,
Saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet
But they said, We will not hearken.

GRAPE-GATHERERS AND BASKETS.

The heads of this paragraph are the very same with those of the last; for precept must be upon precept, and line upon line.

First. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here threatened. We had before the haste which the Chaldean army made to the war, ver. 4, 5. Now here we have the havoc made by the war. How lamentable are the desolations here described! The enemy shall so long quarter among them, and be so insatiable in their thirst after blood and treasure, that they shall seize all they can meet with, and what escapes them one time shall fall into their hands another; ver. 9, "They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine." As the grapegatherer, that is resolved to leave none behind, still turns back his hand into the baskets to put more in, till he has gathered all, so shall they be picked up by the enemy, though dispersed, though hid, and none of them shall escape their eye and hand. Perhaps this people, being given to covetousness, ver. 13, had not observed the law of God, which forbade them to "glean all their grapes," *Lev.* x. 19, and now they themselves shall be in like manner thoroughly gleaned, and shall either fall by the sword, or go into captivity. This is explained, ver. 11, 12, where God's fury and his hand are said to be poured out and stretched out, in the fury and by the hand of the Chaldeans; for even wicked men are often made use of as God's hand, *Ps.* xvii. 14; and in their anger we may see God angry. Now see on whom the fury is poured out in full vials. Upon the children abroad or in the streets where they are playing, *Zec.* viii. 5, or whither they run out innocently to look about them; the sword of the merciless Chaldeans shall not spare them, *ch.* ix. 21. The children perish in the calamity which the fathers' sins have procured. The execution shall likewise reach the assembly of young men, their merry meetings, their clubs which they keep up to strengthen one another's hands in wickedness, they shall be cut off together. Nor shall those only fall into the enemies' hands that meet for lewdness, *ch.* v. 7, but "even the husband with the wife shall be taken," these two in bed together, and neither left, but both taken prisoners. And as they have no compassion for the weak but fair sex, so they have none for the decrepid but venerable age. The old with the full of days, whose deaths can contribute no more to their safety than their lives to their service, that are not in a capacity to do them either good or harm, yet they shall be either cut off or carried off. Their houses shall then be turned to others, ver. 12, the conquerors shall dwell in their habitations, use their goods, and live upon their

stores. Their fields and wives shall fall together into their hands, as was threatened, *Deu.* xxviii. 28, 30, &c. For God "stretcheth out his hand upon the inhabitants of the land," and none can go out of the reach of it. Now as to this denunciation of God's wrath, 1. The prophet justifies himself in preaching thus terribly, for herein he dealt faithfully; ver. 11, "And I am full of the fury of the Lord," full of the thoughts and apprehensions of it, and am carried out with a powerful impulse, by the spirit of prophecy, to speak of it thus vehemently. He took no delight in threatening, nor was it any pleasure to him with such sermons as these to make those about him uneasy; but he could not contain himself, he was "weary with holding in." He suppressed it as long as he could, as long as he durst, but he was so "full of power by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts," that he must speak, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Note, When ministers preach the terrors of the Lord according to the Scripture, we have no reason to be displeased at them; for they are but messengers, and must deliver their message, pleasing or unpleasing. 2. He condemns the false prophets, who preached plausibly, for therein they flattered people and dealt unfaithfully; ver. 13, 14, "The priest and the prophet," that should be their watchmen and monitors, have dealt falsely, have not been true to their trust, nor told the people their faults, and the dangers they were in. They should have been their physicians, but murdered their patients by letting them have their wills, and giving them every thing they had a mind to, and flattering them into an opinion that they were in no danger; ver. 14, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly," or 'according to the cure of some slight hurt;' skinning over the wound, and never searching it to the bottom; applying lenitives only when there was need of corrosives; soothing people in their sins, and giving them opiates to make them easy for the present, while the disease was preying upon the vitals. They said, "Peace, peace," all shall be well; if there were some thinking people among them, that were awake, and apprehensive of danger, they soon stopped their mouths with their priestly and prophetical authority, boldly averring that neither church nor state was in any danger, when there is no peace, because they go on in their idolatries and daring impieties. Note, Those are to be reckoned our false friends, that is, our worst and most dangerous enemies, that flatter us in a sinful way.

Secondly, The sin of Judah and Jerusalem is here discovered which provoked God to bring this ruin upon them, and justified him in it

1. They would by no means bear to be told of their faults, nor of the danger they were in. God bids the prophet give them warning of the judgment coming, ver. 9; but, saith he, "To whom shall I speak and give warning?" I cannot find out any that will so much as give me a patient hearing; I may give warning long enough, but here is nobody that will take warning. I cannot speak that they may hear, cannot speak to any purpose, or with any hope of success; for their ear is uncircumcised, it is carnal and fleshly, indisposed to receive the voice of God, so that they cannot hearken. They have, as it were, a thick skin grown over the organs of hearing, so that Divine things might to as much purpose be spoken to a stone as to them. Nay, they are not only deaf to it, but prejudiced against it; therefore they cannot hear, because they are resolved they will not. "The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach." Both the reproofs and the threatenings of the word are so; they reckon themselves wronged and affronted by both, and resent the prophet's plain dealing with them as they would the most causeless slander and calumny. This was kicking against the pricks, *Acts* ix. 5, as the lawyers against the word of Christ, *Lu.* xi. 45, "Thus saying thou reproachest us also." Note, Those reproofs that are counted reproaches, and hated as such, will certainly be turned into the heaviest woes. When it is here said, "They have no delight in the word," more is implied than is expressed; they have an antipathy to it, their hearts rise at it; it exasperates them, and enrages their corruptions, and they are ready to fly in the face, and pull out the eyes of their reprovers. And how can those expect that the word of the Lord should speak any comfort to them who have no delight in it, but would rather be anywhere than within hearing of it?

2. They were inordinately set upon the world, and wholly carried away by the love of it; ver. 13, "From the least of them even to the greatest," old and young, rich and poor, high and low, those of all ranks, professions, and employments, every one is given to covetousness, greedy of filthy lucre, all for what they can get, *per fas per nefas*,—'right or wrong,' and this made them oppressive and violent, ver. 6, 7; for of that evil, as well as others, the love of money is the bitter root. Nay, and this hardened their hearts against the word of God and his prophets; they were the covetous Pharisees that derided Christ, *Lu.* xvi. 14.

3. They were become impudent in sin, and past shame. After such a high charge of flagrant crimes proved upon them, it was very proper to ask, ver. 15, "Were they ashamed when they had committed" all these "abominations," which are such a reproach to their reason and religion? Did they blush at the conviction, and acknowledge that confusion of face belonged to them? If so, there is some hopes of them yet. But, alas! there did not appear so much as this colour of virtue among them; their hearts were so hardened, that "they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush," they had so brazened their faces. They even gloried in their wickedness, and openly confronted the convictions that should have humbled them, and brought them to repentance. They resolved to face it out against God himself, and not to own their guilt. Some refer it to the priests and prophets, that had healed the people slightly, and told them they should have peace, and yet were not ashamed of their treachery and falsehood, no, not when the event disproved them, and gave them the lie. Those that are shameless are graceless, and their case hopeless. But they that will not submit to a penitential shame, nor take that to themselves as their due, shall not escape an utter ruin; for so it follows, "therefore they shall fall among them that fall," they shall have their portion with those that are quite undone; and when God visits the nation in wrath they shall be sure to be cast down, and be made to tremble, because they would not blush. Note, Those that sin, and cannot blush for it, it is ill with them now, and will be worse with them shortly. At first they hardened themselves and would not blush, afterwards they were so hardened that they could not. *Quod unum habebant in malis bonum perdant, peccandi verecundiam*,—'They have lost the only good property which once blended itself with many bad ones, that is, shame for having done amiss.'—*Senec. de Vit. Beat.*

Thirdly. They are put in mind of the good counsel which had been often given them, but in vain. They had a great deal said to them to little purpose,

1. By way of advice concerning their duty, ver. 16. God had been used to say to them, "Stand in the ways, and see." That is, 1st. He would have them to consider, not to proceed rashly, but do as travellers in the road, who are in care to find the right way, which will bring them to their journey's end, and therefore pause, and inquire for it. If they have any reason to think they have missed their way they are not easy till they have got satisfaction. O that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would ponder the path of their feet, as those that believe lawful and unlawful are of no less consequence to us than the right way and the wrong is to a traveller. 2nd. He would have them to consult antiquity, the observations and experiences of those that went before them; "Ask for the old paths;" "Enquire of the former age," *Job* viii. 8; "Ask thy father, thy elders," *Deu.* xxxii. 7, and thou wilt find that the way of godliness and righteousness hath always been the way that God hath owned and blessed, and in which men have prospered. "Ask for the old paths," that is, the paths prescribed by the law of God, the written word, that true standard of antiquity. Ask for the paths that the patriarchs travelled in before you, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and, as you hope to inherit the promises made to them, tread in their steps. "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way?" We must not be guided purely by antiquity, as if the plea of prescription and long usage were alone sufficient to justify our path; no, there is an "old way, which wicked men have trodden," *Job* xxii. 15. But when we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the good way, the highway of the upright. Note, The way of religion and godliness is a good old way, the way that all the saints in all ages have walked in. 3rd. He would have them to resolve to act according to the result of these inquiries; When you have found out which is the good way, walk therein; practise accordingly, keep close to that way, proceed and persevere in it. Some make this counsel to be given them with reference to the struggles that were between the true and false prophets, between those that said they should have peace and those that told them trouble was at the door. They pretended they knew not which to believe; "Stand in the way," saith God, and see, and inquire which of these two agrees with the written word, and the usual methods of God's providence, which of these directs you to the good way, and do accordingly. 4th. He assures them that if they do thus it will secure the welfare and satisfaction of their own souls; "Walk in the good old way," and you will find that your walking in that way will be easy and pleasant; you will enjoy both your God and yourselves; and the way will lead you to true rest. Though it cost you some pains to walk in that way, you will find an abundant recompence at your journey's end. 5th. He laments it, that this good counsel, which was so rational in itself, and so proper for them, could not find acceptance; "But they said, We will not walk therein." Not only we will not be at the pains to inquire which is the good way, the good old way; but when it is told us, and we have nothing to say to the contrary, but that it is the right way, yet we will not deny ourselves and our own humours so far as to walk in it. Thus multitudes are ruined for ever by downright wilfulness.

2. By way of admonition concerning their danger. Because they would not be ruled by fair reasoning, God takes another method with them; by lesser judgments he threatens greater, and sends his prophets to give them this explication of them, and to frighten them with an apprehension of the danger they were in; ver. 17, "Also I set watchmen over you." God's ministers are watchmen, and it is a great mercy to have them set over us in the Lord. Now observe here, 1st. The fair warning given by these watchmen. This was the burden of their song, they cried again and again, "Hearken to the sound of the trumpet." God in his providence sounds the trumpet, *Zec.* viii. 14. The watchmen hear it themselves, and are affected with it, *ch.* iv. 19; and they are to call upon others to hearken to it too, to hear the Lord's controversy, to observe the voice of providence, to improve it, and answer the intentions of it. 2nd. This fair warning slighted. "But they said, We will not hearken;" we will not hear, we will not heed, we will not believe; the prophets may as well save themselves and us the trouble. The reason why sinners perish is because they "do not hearken to the sound of the trumpet;" and the reason why they do not is because they will not; and they have no reason to give why they will not but because they will not, that is, they are herein most unreasonable. One may easier deal with ten men's reasons than one man's will.

18 Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation,
What *is* among them.
19 Hear, O earth:
Behold, I will bring evil upon this people,
Even the fruit of their thoughts,
Because they have not hearkened unto my words,
Nor to my law, but rejected it.
20 To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba,
And the sweet cane from a far country?
Your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable,
Nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.
21 Therefore thus saith the LORD,
Behold, I will lay stumblingblocks before this people,
And the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them;
The neighbour and his friend shall perish.
22 Thus saith the LORD,
Behold, a people cometh from the north country,
And a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth.
23 They shall lay hold on bow and spear;
They *are* cruel, and have no mercy;
Their voice roareth like the sea;
And they ride upon horses,
Set in array as men for war
Against thee, O daughter of Zion.
24 We have heard the fame thereof:
Our hands wax feeble:
Anguish hath taken hold of us,
And pain, as of a woman in travail.
25 Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way;
For the sword of the enemy *and* fear *is* on every side.
26 O daughter of my people, gird *thee* with sackcloth,
And wallow thyself in ashes:
Make thee mourning, *as for* an only son,

Most bitter lamentation:
For the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.
27 I have set thee *for* a tower *and* a fortress among my people,
That thou mayest know and try their way.
28 They *are* all grievous revolters, walking with slanders:
They are brass and iron; they *are* all corrupters.
29 The bellows are burned,
The lead is consumed of the fire;
The founder melteth in vain:
For the wicked are not plucked away.
30 Reprobate silver shall *men* call them,
Because the LORD hath rejected them.

Here, First. God appeals to all the neighbours, nay, to the whole world, concerning the equity of his proceedings against Judah and Jerusalem; ver. 18, 19, "Hear, ye nations, and know," particularly, "O congregation" of the mighty, the great men of the nations, that take cognizance of the affairs of the states about you, and make remarks upon them. Observe now what is doing among them of Judah and Jerusalem; you hear of the desolations brought upon them, the earth rings of it, trembles under it; you all wonder that I should "bring evil upon this people," that are in covenant with me, that profess relation to me, that have worshipped me, and been highly favoured by me; you are ready to ask, "Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land?" *Deu.* xxix. 24. Know then, 1. That it is the natural product of their devices. The evil brought upon them is the fruit of their thoughts. They thought to strengthen themselves by their alliance with foreigners, and by that very thing they weakened and diminished themselves; they betrayed and exposed themselves. 2. That it is the just punishment of their disobedience and rebellion. God doth but execute upon them the curse of the law for their violation of the commands of it. It is because "they have not hearkened to my words, nor to my law," nor regarded a word I have said to them, but rejected it all. They should never have been ruined thus by the judgments of God's hand, but that they refused to be ruled by the judgments of his mouth. Therefore you cannot say they have any wrong done them.

Secondly. God rejects their plea, by which they insisted upon their external services as sufficient to atone for all their sins. Alas, it is a frivolous plea; ver. 20, "To what purpose comes there to me incense, and sweet cane," to be burnt for a perfume on the golden altar, though it was the best of the kind, and far-fetched? What care I for your burnt offerings and your sacrifices? They not only cannot profit God, so no sacrifice doth, *Ps.* l. 9, but they do not please him, for so none doth but the sacrifice of the upright; that of the wicked is an abomination to him. Sacrifice and incense were appointed to excite their repentance, and to direct them to a Mediator, and assist their faith in him; and where this good use was made of them they were acceptable, God had respect to them, and to those that offered them. But when they were offered with an opinion that thereby they made God their debtor, and purchased a license to go on in sin, they were so far from being pleasing to God, that they were a provocation to him.

Thirdly. He foretells the desolation that was now coming upon them. 1. God designs their ruin, because they hate to be reformed; ver. 21, "I will lay stumblingblocks before this people;" occasions of falling, not into sin, but into trouble. Those whom God has marked for destruction he perplexeth and embarrasseth their counsels, and obstructs and retards all the methods they take for their own safety. The parties of the enemy which they met with, wherever they went, were stumblingblocks to them, in every corner they stumbled upon them, and were dashed to pieces by them. "The fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them;" neither the fathers with their wisdom, nor the sons with their strength and courage, shall escape them, or get over them. The sons that sinned with their fathers fall with them. Even "the neighbour and his friend shall perish," and not be able to help either themselves or one another. 2. He will make use of the Chaldeans as instruments of it; for whatever work God has to do he will find out proper instruments for the doing of it. This is a people fetched "from the north, from the sides of the earth." Babylon itself lay a great way off, northwards; and some of the countries that were subject to the king of Babylon, out of which his army was levied, lay much farther. These must be employed in this service, ver. 22, 23. For, 1st. It is a people very numerous, a great nation, which will make their invasion the more formidable. 2nd. It is a warlike people. "They lay hold on bow and spear;" and at this time know how to use them, for they are used to them; "they ride upon horses," and therefore they march the more swiftly, and in battle press the harder. No nation had yet brought into the field a better cavalry than the Chaldeans. 3rd. It is a barbarous people. They "are cruel, and have no mercy," being greedy of prey and flushed with victory. They take a pride in frightening all about them, "their voice roars like the sea." And lastly, they have a particular design upon Judah and Jerusalem, in hopes greatly to enrich themselves with the spoil of that famous country. They are "set in array against thee, O daughter of Zion." The sins of God's professing people make them an easy prey to those that are God's enemies as well as theirs.

Fourthly. He describes the very great consternation which Judah and Jerusalem should be in upon the approach of this formidable enemy, ver. 24—26. 1. They own themselves in a fright upon the first intelligence brought them of the approach of the enemy. When "we have but heard the fame thereof, our hands wax feeble," and we have no heart to make any resistance; "anguish has taken hold of us," and we are in an extremity of pain presently, like that of "a woman in travail." Note, Sense of guilt quite dispirits men upon the approach of any threatening trouble. What can they hope to do for themselves that have made God their enemy? 2. They confine themselves by consent to their houses, not daring to shew their heads abroad; for, though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and sneakingly there than run any venture either by fight or flight to help themselves. Thus they say one to another, "Go not forth into the field," no, not to fetch in your provision thence; "nor walk by the way," dare not to go to church or market, it is at your peril if you do, for the sword of the enemy and the fear of it is on every side; the highways are unoccupied, as in Jael's time, *Jud.* v. 7. Let this mind us when we travel the roads in safety, and there is none to make us afraid, to bless God for our share in the public tranquillity. 3. The prophet calls upon them sadly to lament the desolations that were coming upon them. He was himself the lamenting prophet, and calls upon his people to join with him in his lamentations. "O daughter of my people," hear thy God calling thee to weeping and mourning, and answer his call. Do not only put on sackcloth for a day, but gird it on for thy constant wear. Do not only put ashes on thy head, but "wallow thyself in ashes." Put thyself into close mourning, and use all the tokens of bitter lamentation, not forced, and for show only, but with the greatest sincerity, as parents mourn for an only son, and think themselves comfortless because they are childless. Thus do thou lament for "the spoiler that shall suddenly come upon us." Though he is not come yet, he is coming; the decree is gone forth, let us therefore meet the execution of it with an agreeable sadness. As saints may rejoice in hope of God's mercies, though they see them only in the promise, so sinners must mourn for fear of God's judgments, though they see them only in the threatenings.

Fifthly. He constitutes the prophet a judge over this people that now stand upon their trial; as *ch.* i. 10, "I have set thee over the nations," so here, "I have set thee for a tower," or as a sentinel or a watchman upon a tower, among my people, as an inspector of their actions, "that thou mayest know and try their way," ver. 27. Not that God needed any to inform him concerning them; on the contrary, the prophet knew little of them in comparison, but by the spirit of prophecy. But thus God appeals to the prophet himself, and his own observation concerning their character, that he might be fully satisfied in the equity of God's proceedings against them, and with the more assurance give them warning of the judgments coming. God set him for a tower conspicuous to all, and attacked by many, but made him a fortress, a strong tower, gave him courage to stem the tide, and bear the shock of their displeasure. They that will be faithful reprovers have need to be firm as fortresses. Now in trying their way he will find two things:

1. That they are wretchedly debauched; ver. 28, "They are all grievous revolters," 'revolters of revolters,' so the word is, the worst of revolters, as a servant of servants is the meanest servant. They have a revolting heart, have deeply revolted, and revolt more and more. They have seemed to start fair, but they revolt and start back. They walk with slanders, they make nothing of belying and backbiting one another; nay, they make a perfect trade of it, it is their constant course. And they govern themselves by the slanders they hear, hating those that they hear ill spoken of, though never so unjustly. They are brass and iron, base metals, and there is nothing in them that is valuable. They were as silver and gold, but they are degenerated. Nay, as they are all revolters, so "they are all corrupters," not only debauched themselves, but industrious to debauch others; to corrupt them as they themselves are corrupt; nay, to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. It is often so, sinners soon become tempters.

2. That they would never be reclaimed and reformed. It was in vain to think of reducing them, for various methods had been tried with them, and all to no purpose, ver. 29, 30. He compares them to ore that was supposed to have some good metal in it, and was therefore put into the furnace by the refiner, who used all his art, and took abundance of pains about it, but it proved all dross, nothing of any value could be extracted out of it. God by his prophets and by his providences had used the most proper means to refine this people, and to purify them from their wickedness; but it was all in vain. By the continual preaching of the word, and a series of afflictions, they had been kept in a constant fire, but all to no purpose. "The bellows" have been still kept so near the fire to blow it, that they "are burnt" with the heat of it, or they are quite worn out with long use, and thrown into the fire as good for nothing. The prophets have preached their throats sore with crying aloud against the sins of Israel, and yet they are not convinced and humbled. "The lead," which was then used in refining silver, as quicksilver is now, "is consumed of the fire," and has not done its work; for "the founder melteth in vain," his labour is lost, for "the wicked are not plucked away." No care is taken to separate between the precious and the vile, to purge out the old leaven, to cast out of communion those who, being corrupt themselves, are in danger of infecting others. Or, 'their wickednesses are removed,' so some read it; they are still as bad as ever, and nothing will prevail to part between them and their sins; they will not be brought off from their idolatries and immoralities by all they have heard, and all they have felt, of the wrath of God against them. And therefore that doom is passed upon them; ver. 30, "Reprobate silver shall they be called," useless and worthless. They glitter as if they had some silver in them, but there is nothing of real virtue or goodness to be found among them; and for this reason "the Lord has rejected them." He will no more own them as his people, nor look for any good from them; he will "take them away like dross," *Ps.* cxix. 119, and prepare a consuming fire for those that would not be purified by a refining fire. By this it appears, 1st. That God hath no pleasure in the death and ruin of sinners, for he tries all ways and methods with them to prevent their destruction, and qualify them for salvation. Both his ordinances and his providences have a tendency this way, to part between them and their sins, and yet with many it is all lost labour: "We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not wept." Therefore, 2nd. God will be justified in the death of sinners, and all the blame will lie upon themselves. He did not reject them till he had used all proper means to reduce them; did not cast them off so long as there was any hopes of them, nor abandon them as dross till it appeared they were reprobate silver.

CHAPTER VII.

The prophet having in God's name reproved the people for their sins, and given them warning of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, in this chapter prosecutes the same intention for their humiliation and awakening. I. He shews them the invalidity of the plea they so much relied on, that they had the temple of God among them, and constantly attended the service of it, and endeavours to take them off from their confidence in their external privileges and performances, ver. 1—11. II. He minds them of the desolations of Shiloh; and foretells that such should be the desolations of Jerusalem, ver. 12—16. III. He represents to the prophet their abominable idolatries, for which he was thus incensed against them, ver. 17—20. IV. He sets before the people that fundamental maxim of religion, that to obey is better than sacrifice, 1 *Sam.* xv. 22, and that God would not accept the sacrifices of those that obstinately persisted in disobedience, ver. 21—28. V. He threatens to lay the land utterly waste for their idolatry and impiety, and to multiply their slain as they had multiplied their sin, ver. 29—34.

THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say,
Hear the word of the LORD, all *ye* of Judah,
That enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.
3 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,

Amend your ways and your doings,
And I will cause you to dwell in this place.
4 Trust ye not in lying words, saying,
The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD,
The temple of the LORD, *are* these.
5 For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings;
If ye throughly exécute judgment between a man and
his neighbour;
6 *If* ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the
And shed not innocent blood in this place, [widow,
Neither walk after other gods to your hurt:
7 Then will I cause you to dwell in this place,
In the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.
8 Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit.
9 Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery,
And swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal,
And walk after other gods whom ye know not;
10 And come and stand before me in this house,
Which is called by my name,
And say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?
11 Is this house, which is called by my name,
Become a den of robbers in your eyes?
Behold, even I have seen *it*, saith the LORD.
12 But go ye now unto my place which *was* in Shiloh,

VILLAGE OF SHILOAH.

Where I set my name at the first, [Israel.
And see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people
13 And now, because ye have done all these works, saith
the LORD,
And I spake unto you,
Rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not;
And I called you, but ye answered not;
14 Therefore will I do unto *this* house, which is called by my
Wherein ye trust, [name,
And unto the place which I gave to you and to your
As I have done to Shiloh. [fathers,
15 And I will cast you out of my sight,
As I have cast out all your brethren,
Even the whole seed of Ephraim.

These verses begin another sermon, which is continued in this and the two following chapters, much to the same effect with those before,—to reason them to repentance. Observe,

First. The orders given to the prophet to preach this sermon; for he had not only a general commission, but particular directions and instructions for every message he delivered. This was "a word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord," ver. 1. We are not told when this sermon was to be preached, but we are told, 1. Where it must be preached, "in the gate of the Lord's house," through which they entered into the outer court, or the court of the people. It would affront the priests, and expose the prophet to their rage, to have such a message as this delivered under their noses, and within their precincts, but the prophet must not fear the face of man, he cannot be faithful to his God if he do. 2. To whom it must be preached, to the men "of Judah that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord." Probably it was at one of the three feasts, when all the males from all parts of the country were to appear before the Lord in the courts of his house, and not to appear empty; then he had many together to preach to, and that was the most seasonable time to admonish them not to trust to their privileges. Note, 1st. Even those that do profess religion have need to be preached to, as well as those that are without. 2nd. It is desirable to have opportunity of preaching to many together. Wisdom chooseth to cry in the chief place of concourse, and, as Jeremiah here, in the opening of the gates, the temple gates. 3rd. When we are going to worship God, we have need to be admonished to worship him in the spirit, and to have no confidence in the flesh, *Phil.* iii. 3.

Secondly. The contents and scope of the sermon itself. It is delivered in the name of "the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel," who commands the world, but covenants with his people. As creatures, we are bound to regard the Lord of hosts; as Christians, the God of Israel. What he said to them he saith to us, and it is much the same with that which John Baptist said to those whom he baptized, *Mat.* iii. 8, 9, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." The prophet here tells them,

1. What were the true words of God which they might trust to. In short, they might depend upon it, that if they would repent and reform their lives, and return to God in a way of duty, he would restore and confirm their peace, would redress their grievances, and return to them in a way of mercy; ver. 3, "Amend your ways and your doings." This implies that there had been much amiss in their ways and doings, many faults and errors. But it is a great instance of the favour of God to them, that he gives them liberty to amend, shews them where and how they must mend, and promiseth to accept them upon their amendment; "I will cause you to dwell" quietly and peaceably "in this place," and a stop shall be put to that which threatens your expulsion. Reformation is the only way, and a sure way, to prevent ruin. He explains himself, ver. 5—7, and tells them particularly,

1st. What the amendment was which he expected from them. They must thoroughly amend; in making good they must make good their ways and doings; they must reform with resolution, and it must be a universal, constant, persevering reformation, not partial but entire, not hypocritical but sincere, not wavering but constant. They must make the tree good, and so make the fruit good; must amend their hearts and thoughts, and so amend their ways and doings. In particular, *First.* They must be honest and just in all their dealings. They that had power in their hands must "throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour," without partiality, and according as the merits of the cause appeared. They must not either in judgment or in contract oppress the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor countenance or protect those that did oppress, nor refuse to do them right when they sought for it. They must not shed innocent blood, and with it defile this place, and the land wherein they dwelt. *Secondly.* They must keep close to the worship of the true God only; "Neither walk after other gods." Do not hanker after them, nor hearken to those that would draw you into communion with idolaters, for it is and will be to your own hurt. Be not only so just to your God, but so wise for yourselves, as not to throw away your adorations upon those that are not able to help you, and thereby provoke him who is able to destroy you. Well, this is all that God insists upon.

2nd. He tells them what the establishment is which upon this amendment they may expect from him, ver. 7. Set about such a work of reformation as this with all speed, go through with it, and abide by it, "and I will cause you to dwell in this place," this temple; it shall continue your place of resort and refuge, the place of your comfortable meeting with God and one another, and you shall dwell "in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever," and shall never be turned out either from God's house or your own. It is promised that they shall still enjoy their civil and sacred privileges, that they shall have a comfortable enjoyment of them; "I will cause you to dwell here," and those dwell at ease whom God gives a settlement to; they shall enjoy it by covenant, by virtue of the grant made of it to their fathers, not by providence but promise. They shall continue in the enjoyment of it without eviction or molestation; they shall not be disturbed, much less dispossessed for ever and ever. Nothing but sin could throw them out. An everlasting inheritance in the heavenly Canaan is hereby secured to all that live in godliness and honesty. And the vulgar Latin reads a farther privilege here, ver. 3, 7; *Habitabo vobiscum*, —'I will dwell with you in this place;' and we should find Canaan itself but an uncomfortable place to dwell in, if God did not dwell with us there.

2. What were the lying words of their own hearts which they must not trust to. He cautions them against this self-deceit, ver. 4, "Trust ye not in lying words;" you are told in what way, and upon what terms, you may be easy, safe, and happy; now do not flatter yourselves with an opinion that you may be so on any other terms, or in any other way. Yet he chargeth them with this self-deceit, arising from a self-conceit, ver. 8; Behold, it is plain you do trust in lying words, notwithstanding what is said to you; you trust in words that cannot profit, you rely upon a plea that will stand you in no stead. They that slight the words of truth which would profit them take shelter in words of falsehood that cannot profit them. Now these lying words were, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." These buildings, the courts, the holy place, and the holy of holies, are the temple of the Lord, built by his appointment, to his glory; here he resides, here he is worshipped, here we meet three times a year to pay our homage to him as our King, in his palace. This they thought was security enough to them to keep God and his favours from leaving them, God and his judgments from breaking in upon them. When the prophets told them how sinful they were, and how miserable they were likely to be still, they appealed to the temple; How can we be either so or so, as long as we have that holy, happy place among us? The prophet repeats it because they repeated it upon all occasions. It was the cant of the times, it was in their mouths upon all occasions. If they heard any awakening sermon, if any startling piece of news was brought upon them, they lulled themselves asleep again with this, We cannot but do well, for we have the temple of the Lord among us. Note, The privileges of a form of godliness are oftentimes the pride and confidence of those that are strangers and enemies to the power of it. It is common for those that are farthest from God to boast themselves most of their being near to the church. They are "haughty because of the holy mountain," *Zep.* iii. 11, as if God's mercy were so tied to them that they might defy his justice. Now, to convince them what a frivolous plea this was, and what little stead it would stand them in,

1st. He shews them the gross absurdity of it in itself. If they knew anything either of the temple of the Lord or of the Lord of the temple, they must think that to plead that, either in excuse of their sin against God, or in arrest of God's judgment against them, was the most ridiculous, unreasonable thing that could be.

First. God is a holy God, but this plea made him the patron of sin, of the worst of sins, which even the light of nature condemns, ver. 9, 10. What, saith he, "will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery," be guilty of the vilest

immoralities, and which the common interest, as well as the common sense of mankind witness against? "will you swear falsely," a crime which all nations who, with the belief of a God, have had a veneration for an oath, have always had a horror of? Will "you burn incense to Baal," a dunghill deity, that sets up as rival with the great Jehovah, and, not content with that, "will you walk after other gods" too, "whom ye know not," and by all these crimes put a daring affront upon God, both as the Lord of hosts, and the God of Israel? will you exchange a God, whose power and goodness you have had such a long experience of for gods whose ability and willingness to help you you know nothing of? And when you have thus done the worst you can against God, will you brazen your faces so far as to come and "stand before him in this house which is called by his name," and in which his name is called upon; stand before him as servants waiting his commands, as supplicants expecting his favour; will you act in open rebellion against him, and yet herd yourself among his subjects, among the best of them? By this it should seem, you think, that either he doth not discover or doth not dislike your wicked practices, either of which to imagine is to put the highest indignity possible upon him. It is as if you should say, "We are delivered to do all these abominations." If they had not the front to say this, *totidem verbis*,—'in so many words,' yet their actions spoke it aloud. They could not but own that God, even their own God, had many a time delivered them, and been a present help to them, when otherwise they must have perished. He, in delivering them, designed to reduce them to himself, and by his goodness to lead them to repentance, but they resolved to persist in their abominations notwithstanding; as soon as they were delivered, (as of old in the days of the judges,) "they did evil again in the sight of the Lord," which was in effect to say, in direct contradiction to the true intent and meaning of the providences which had been concerning them, that God had delivered them to put them again into a capacity of rebelling against him, by sacrificing the more profusely to their idols. Note, Those who continue in sin, because grace has abounded, or that grace may abound, do in effect make Christ the minister of sin. Some take it thus: You present yourselves before God with your sacrifices and sin offerings, and then say, "We are delivered," that is, we are discharged from our guilt, now it shall do us no hurt; when all this is but to blind the world, and stop the mouth of conscience, that you may the more easily to yourselves, and the more plausibly before others, "do all these abominations."

Secondly. His temple was a holy place, but this plea made it a protection to the most unholy persons. "Is this house which is called by my name," and is a standing sign of God's kingdom, set up among men in opposition to the kingdom of sin and Satan,—is this "become a den of robbers in your eyes?" Do you think it was built to be not only a rendezvous of, but a refuge and shelter to, the vilest of malefactors? No, though the horns of the altar were a sanctuary to him that slew a man at unawares, yet not to a wilful murderer, not to one that doth aught presumptuously, *Ex.* xxi. 14; 1 *Kin.* ii. 29. Those that think to excuse themselves in unchristian practices with the Christian name, and sin the more boldly and securely because there is a sin offering provided, do, in effect, make God's house of prayer a den of thieves; as the priests in Christ's time, *Mat.* xxi. 13. But could they thus impose upon God? No, "Behold, I have seen it, saith the Lord," have seen the real iniquity through the counterfeit and dissembled piety. Note, Though men may deceive one another with the shows of devotion, yet they cannot deceive God.

2nd. He shews them the insufficiency of this plea, adjudged long since in the case of Shiloh.

First. It is certain Shiloh was ruined, though it had God's sanctuary in it, when by its wickedness it profaned that sanctuary; ver. 12, "Go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh." It is probable the ruins of that once flourishing city were yet remaining; however, they might read the history of it, which ought to affect them as if they saw the place. There God set his name at the first; there the tabernacle was set up when Israel first took possession of Canaan, *Jos.* xviii. 1, and thither the tribes went up. But those that attended the service of the tabernacle there corrupted both themselves and others, and from them arose the wickedness of his people Israel. That fountain was poisoned, and sent forth malignant streams. And what came of it? Go, "see what God did to it." Was it protected by its having the tabernacle in it? No, God forsook it, *Ps.* lxxviii. 60, sent his ark into captivity, cut off the house of Eli that presided there; and it is very probable the city was quite destroyed, for we never read any more of it but as a monument of Divine vengeance upon holy places, when they harbour wicked people. Note, God's judgments upon others that have really revolted from God, while they have kept up a profession of nearness to him, should be a warning to us not to trust in lying words. It is good to consult precedents, and make use of them: Remember Lot's wife; remember Shiloh and the seven churches of Asia, and know that the ark and candlestick are movable things, *Rev.* ii. 5; *Mat.* xxi. 43.

Secondly. It is as certain that Shiloh's fate will be Jerusalem's doom if a speedy and sincere repentance prevent it not. 1*st.* Jerusalem was now as sinful as ever Shiloh was; that is proved by the unerring testimony of God himself against them, ver. 13, "Ye have done all these works," you cannot deny it. And they continued obstinate in their sin; that is proved by the testimony of God's messengers, by whom he spake unto them to return and repent, "rising up early and speaking," as one in care, as one in earnest, as one that would lose no time in dealing with them, nay, that should take the fittest opportunity for speaking to them early in the morning, when, if ever, they were sober, and had their thoughts free and clear. But it was all in vain: God spake, but they heard not, that is, they heeded not, they never minded; he called them, but they answered not; they would not come at his call. Note, What God hath spoken to us greatly aggravates what we have done against him. 2*nd.* Jerusalem shall shortly be as miserable as ever Shiloh was; "Therefore I will do unto this house as I did to Shiloh," ruin it and lay it waste, ver. 14. Those that tread in the steps of the wickedness of those that went before them must expect to fall by the like judgments, for all these things "happened to them for ensamples." The temple at Jerusalem, though never so strongly built, if wickedness was found in it, would be as unable to keep its ground, and as easily conquered as even the tabernacle in Shiloh was, when God's day of vengeance was come. This house, saith God, is called by my name, and therefore you may think I should protect it; it is the house in which you trust, and you think it will protect you. This land is the place, this city the place, which I gave to you and your fathers, and therefore you are secure of the continuance of it, and think nothing can turn you out of it. But the men of Shiloh thus flattered themselves, and did but deceive themselves. He quotes another precedent, ver. 15, namely, the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were the seed of Abraham, and had the covenant of circumcision, and possessed the land which God gave to them and their fathers, and yet their idolatries threw them out, and extirpated them; and can you think but that the same evil courses should be as fatal to you? Doubtless they will be so, for God is uniform, and of a piece with himself in his judicial proceedings. It is a rule of justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*,—'in similar cases the same judgment should proceed.' 'You have corrupted yourselves as your brethren the seed of Ephraim did, and are become their brethren in iniquity, and therefore I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast them.' The interpretation here given of the judgment makes it a terrible one indeed; the casting of them out of their land signified God's casting them out of his sight, as if he would never look upon them, never look after them, more. Wherever we are cast, it is well enough if we be kept in the love of God; but if we are thrown out of his favour our case is miserable, though we dwell in our own land. This threatening that God would make this house like Shiloh we shall meet with again, and find Jeremiah indicted for it, *ch.* xxvi. 6.

16 Therefore pray not thou for this people,
Neither lift up cry nor prayer for them,
Neither make intercession to me:
For I will not hear thee.
17 Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah
And in the streets of Jerusalem?
18 The children gather wood,
And the fathers kindle the fire,
And the women knead *their* dough,
To make cakes to the queen of heaven,
And to pour out drink offerings unto other gods,
That they may provoke me to anger.
19 Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD:
Do they not *provoke* themselves to the confusion of their own faces?
20 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place,
Upon man, and upon beast,
And upon the trees of the field,
And upon the fruit of the ground;
And it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

God had shewed them in the foregoing verses, that the temple, and the service of it, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted, should not avail to prevent the judgment threatened. But there was another thing which might stand them in some stead, and which yet they had no value for, and that was the prophet's intercession for them. His prayers would do them more good than their own pleas. Now here that support is taken from them; and their case is sad indeed that have lost their interest in the prayers of God's ministers and people.

First. God here forbids the prophet to pray for them, ver. 16. The decree is gone forth, their ruin is resolved on, therefore, "pray not thou for this people," that is, pray not for the preventing of this judgment threatened; they have sinned unto death, and therefore pray not for their life, but for the life of their souls, 1 *Jno.* v. 16. See here, 1. That God's prophets are praying men. Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, and yet prayed for their preservation; not knowing that the decree was absolute, and it is the will of God that we "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Even when we threaten sinners with damnation, we must pray for their salvation, that they may turn and live. Jeremiah was hated, and persecuted, and reproached by the children of his people, and yet he prayed for them; for it becomes us to render good for evil. 2. That God's praying prophets have a great interest in heaven, how little soever they have on earth. When God was determined to destroy this people, he bespeaks the prophet not to pray for them, because he would not have his prayers to lie, as prophet's prayers seldom did, unanswered. God said to Moses, "Let me alone," *Ex.* xxxii. 10. 3. It is an ill omen to a people when God restrains the spirits of his ministers and people from praying for them, and gives them to see their case so desperate, that they have no heart to speak a good word for them. 4. Those that will not regard good ministers' preaching cannot expect any benefit by their praying. If you will not hear us when we speak from God to you, God will not hear us when we speak to him for you.

Secondly. He gives him a reason for this prohibition. Praying breath is too precious a thing to be lost and thrown away upon a people hardened in sin, and marked for ruin.

1. They are resolved to persist in their rebellion against God, and will not be turned back by the prophet's preaching. For this he appeals to the prophet himself, and his own inspection and observation; ver. 17, "Seest thou not what they do" openly and publicly, without either shame or fear, "in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?" This intimates, both that the sin was evident, and could not be denied, and that the sinners were impudent, and would not be reclaimed. They committed their wickedness even in the prophet's presence, and under his eye; he saw what they did, and yet they did it, which was an affront to his office, and to him whose officer he was, and bade defiance to both. Now observe,

1st. What the sin is with which they are here charged. It is idolatry, ver. 18. Their idolatrous respects are paid to the queen of heaven, the moon, either in an image, or in the original, or both. They worshipped it probably under the name of Ashtaroth, or some other of their goddesses; being in love with the brightness in which they saw the moon walk, and thinking themselves indebted to her for her benign influences, or fearing her malignant ones, *Job* xxxi. 26. The worshipping of the moon was much in use among the heathen nations, *ch.* xliv. 17, 19. Some read it, the frame or workmanship of heaven; the whole celestial globe, with all its ornaments and powers, was the object of their adoration. They worshipped the host of heaven, *Acts* vii. 42. The homage they should have paid to their Prince, they paid to the statues that beautified the frontispiece of his palace; worshipped the creatures instead of him that made them, the servants instead of him that commands them, and the gifts instead of him that gave them. With the queen of heaven they worshipped other gods, images of things not only in heaven above, but in earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth; for those that forsake the true God wander endlessly after false ones. To these deities of their own making they offer cakes for meat-offerings, and pour out drink-offerings, as if they had their meat and drink from them, and were obliged to make to them their acknowledgments. And see how busy they are, and how every hand is employed in the service of these idols, according as they used to be employed in their domestic

services. "The children" were sent to "gather wood, the fathers kindled the fire" to heat the oven, being of the poorer sort, that could not afford to keep servants to do it, yet they would rather do it themselves than it should be undone; "the women kneaded the dough" with their own hands, for perhaps, though they had servants to do it, yet they took a pride in shewing their zeal for their idols by doing it themselves. Let us be instructed, even by this bad example, in the service of our God. *First.* Let us honour him with our substance, as those that have our subsistence from him, and eat and drink to the glory of him from whom we have our meat and drink. *Secondly.* Let us not decline the hardest services, nor disdain to stoop to the meanest, by which God may be honoured; for none shall kindle a fire on God's altar for nought. Let us think it an honour to be employed in any work for God. *Thirdly.* Let us bring up our children in the acts of devotion; let them, as they are capable, be employed in doing something towards the keeping up of religious exercises.

2nd. What is the direct tendency of this sin: it is "that they may provoke me to anger;" they cannot design any thing else in it. But, (ver. 19,) "Do they provoke me to anger?" Is it because I am hard to be pleased, or easily provoked? or am I to bear the blame of the resentment? No; it is their own doing; they may thank themselves, and they alone shall bear it. 'Is it against God that they provoke him to wrath?' Is he the worse for it? Doth it do him any real damage? No; "Is it not against themselves, to the confusion of their own faces?" It is malice against God, but it is impotent malice, it cannot hurt him; nay, it is foolish malice, it will hurt themselves. They shew their spite against God, but they do the spite to themselves. Now, canst thou think any other but that such a people should be abandoned as are thus desperately set upon their own ruin?

2. God is resolved to proceed in his judgments against them, and will not be turned back by the prophet's prayer; ver. 20, "Thus saith the Lord God," and what he saith he will not unsay, nor can all the world gainsay; hear it therefore, and tremble; "Behold, my anger and fury shall be poured out upon this place," as the flood of waters was upon the old world, or the shower of fire and brimstone upon Sodom; since they will anger me, let them see what comes of it. They shall soon find, 1st. That there is no escaping this deluge of fire, either by flying from it or fencing against it; it should be poured out on this place, though it be a holy place, the Lord's house. It shall reach both man and beast, like the plagues of Egypt; and, like some of them, shall destroy "the trees of the field, and the fruit of the ground," which they had designed and prepared for Baal, and of which they had made cakes to the queen of heaven. 2nd. There is no extinguishing it; "It shall burn, and shall not be quenched." Prayers and tears shall then avail nothing, "when his wrath is kindled but a little;" much more when it is kindled to such a degree that there shall be no quenching of it. God's wrath is that fire unquenchable which eternity itself will not see the period of; "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!"

21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices,
And eat flesh.
22 For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them
In the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt,
Concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:
23 But this thing commanded I them, saying,
Obey my voice,
And I will be your God,
And ye shall be my people:
And walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you,
That it may be well unto you.
24 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear,
But walked in the counsels *and* in the imagination of their evil heart,
And went backward, and not forward.
25 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt
Unto this day
I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets,
Daily rising up early and sending *them:*
26 Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear,
But hardened their neck:
They did worse than their fathers.
27 Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them;
But they will not hearken to thee:
Thou shalt also call unto them;
But they will not answer thee.
28 But thou shalt say unto them,
This *is* a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God,
Nor receiveth correction:
Truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

God, having shewed the people that the temple would not protect them while they polluted it with their wickedness, here shews them that their sacrifices would not atone for them, nor be accepted, while they went on in disobedience. See with what contempt he here speaks of their ceremonial services; ver. 21, "Put your burnt offerings to your sacrifices;" go on in them as long as you please; add one sort of sacrifice to another; turn your burnt offerings, which were to be wholly burnt, to the honour of God, into peace offerings, which the offerer himself had a considerable share of, that you may eat flesh, for that is all the good you are likely to have from your sacrifices,—a good meal's meat or two,—but expect not any other benefit by them while you live at this loose rate. 'Keep your sacrifices to yourselves,' so some understand it; let them be served up at your own tables, for they are no way acceptable at God's altars. For the opening of this,

First. He shews them that obedience was the only thing he required of them, ver. 22, 23. He appeals to the original contract, by which they were first formed into a people, when they were brought out of Egypt. God made them a kingdom of priests to himself, not that he might be regaled with their sacrifices, as the devils, whom the heathen worshipped, which are represented as eating with pleasure the fat of their sacrifices, and drinking the wine of their drink offerings, *Deu.* xxxii. 38. No, "Will God eat the flesh of bulls?" *Ps.* l. 13. "I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices," not of them at first. The precepts of the moral law were given before the ceremonial institutions; and those came afterwards as trials of their obedience, and assistances to their repentance and faith. The Levitical law begins thus, "If any man of you will bring an offering," he must do so and so, *Lev.* i. 2; ii. 1, as if it were intended rather to regulate sacrifice than to require it. But that which God commanded, which he bound them to by his supreme authority, and which he insisted upon as the condition of the covenant, was, "Obey my voice:" see *Ex.* xv. 26, where this was the statute and the ordinance by which God proved them; "Hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God." And upon these terms they shall be God's peculiar people; *Ex.* xiv. 5, "If ye will obey my voice indeed." Make conscience of the duties of natural religion, observe positive institutions from a principle of obedience. And then, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people," which speaks the greatest honour, happiness, and satisfaction that any of the children of men are capable of. Let your conversation be regular, and in every thing study to comply with the will and word of God; walk within the bounds that I have set you, and "in all the ways that I have commanded you," and then you may assure yourselves "it shall be well with you." The demand here is very reasonable, that we should be directed by Infinite Wisdom to that which is fit; that he that made us should command us, and that he should give us law who gives us our being, and all the supports of it. And the promise is very encouraging; let God's will be your rule, and his favour shall be your felicity.

Secondly. He shews them that disobedience was the only thing for which he had a quarrel with them. "He would not reprove them for their sacrifices," for the omission of them, they had been continually before him, *Ps.* l. 8; with them they hoped to bribe God, and purchase a license to go on in sin. That, therefore, which God had all along laid to their charge was, breaking his commandments in the course of their conversation, while they observed them in some instances in the course of their devotion, ver. 24, 25, &c.

1. They set up their own will in competition with the will of God. "They hearkened not" to God, and to his law, they never heeded that; it was to them as if it had never been given, or were of no force; they "inclined not their ear" to attend to it, much less their hearts to comply with it. But they would have their own way,—would do as they had a mind, and not as they were bidden. Their own counsels were their guide, and not the dictates of Divine wisdom. That shall be lawful and good with them which they think so, though the word of God saith quite contrary. "The imagination of their evil heart," the appetites and passions of it, shall be a law to them, and they will walk in the way of it, and in the sight of their eyes.

2. If they began well, yet they did not proceed, but soon flew off. "They went backward," when they talked of making a captain, and returning to Egypt again, and would not go forward under God's conduct. They promised fair; "All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do;" and if they would but have kept in that good mind all had been well; but, instead of going on in the way of duty, they drew back into the way of sin, and were worse than ever.

3. When God sent to them, by word of mouth, to put them in mind of the written word, which was the business of the prophets, it was all one; still they were disobedient. God had servants of his among them in every age, since they came out of Egypt unto this day,—some or other to tell them of their faults, and put them in mind of their duty, whom he rose up early to send, as before, ver. 13, as men rise up early to call their servants to their work; but they were as deaf to the prophets as they were to the law; ver. 26, "Yet they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear." This had been their way and manner all along; they were of the same stubborn, refractory disposition with those that went before them. It had all along been the genius of the nation (and an evil genius it was) that continually haunted them till it ruined them at last.

4. Their practice and character was still the same; they are worse, and no better than their fathers. 1st. Jeremiah can himself witness against them, that they were disobedient, or he shall soon find it so; ver. 27, "Thou shalt speak all these words to them," shalt particularly charge them with disobedience and obstinacy. But even that will not work upon them; "They will not hearken to thee," nor heed thee; thou shalt go and "call to them" with all the plainness and earnestness imaginable, "but they will not answer thee;" they will either give thee no answer at all or not an obedient answer; they will not come at thy call. 2nd. He must therefore own that they deserved the character of a disobedient people, that were ripe for destruction, and must go to them and tell them so to their faces; ver. 28, "Say unto them, This is a nation that obeys not the voice of the Lord their God." They are notorious for their obstinacy; they sacrifice to the Lord as their God, but they will not be ruled by him as their God. They will not receive either the instruction of his word or the correction of his rod; they will not be reclaimed or reformed by either. Truth is perished among them; they cannot receive it; they will not submit to it, nor be governed by it; they will not speak truth; there is no believing a word they say, for it is cut off from their mouth, and lying comes in the room of it; they are false both to God and man.

29 Cut off thine hair, *O Jerusalem,* and cast *it* away,
And take up a lamentation on high places;
For the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.
30 For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD:
They have set their abominations in the house
Which is called by my name, to pollute it.
31 And they have built the high places of Tophet,
Which *is* in the valley of the son of Hinnom,
To burn their sons and their daughters in the fire;
Which I commanded *them* not, neither came it into my heart.

32 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That it shall no more be called Tophet,
Nor the valley of the son of Hinnom,
But the valley of slaughter:
For they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.
33 And the carcases of this people shall be meat
For the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth;
And none shall fray *them* away.
34 Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah,
And from the streets of Jerusalem,
The voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness,
The voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride:
For the land shall be desolate.

Here is, First. A loud call to weeping and mourning. Jerusalem, that had been a joyous city, the joy of the whole earth, must now take up a lamentation on high places, ver. 29, the high places where they had served their idols, there must they now bemoan their misery. In token both of sorrow and slavery Jerusalem must now cut off her hair, and cast it away; the word is peculiar to the hair of the Nazarites, which was the badge and token of their dedication to God, and is called their crown. Jerusalem had been a city that was a Nazarite to God, but now must cut off her hair, must be profaned, degraded, and separated from God, as she had been separated to him. And it is time for those that have lost their holiness to lay aside their joy.

Secondly. Just cause given for this great lamentation.

1. The sin of Jerusalem appears here very heinous, nowhere worse, or more exceeding sinful. "The children of Judah," God's professing people, that "came forth out of the waters of Judah," *Isa.* xlviii. 1, have "done evil in my sight," under my eye, in my presence, they have affronted me to my face, which very much aggravates the affront. Or, they have done that which they know to be "evil in my sight," and in the highest degree offensive to me. Idolatry was the sin which was above all other sins evil in God's sight. Now here are two things charged upon them in their idolatry, which were very provoking:

1st. That they were very impudent in it towards God, and set him at defiance; ver. 30, "They have set their abominations," that is, their abominable idols, and the altars erected to them, in the house that is called by my name, in the very courts of the temple, to pollute it. Manasseh did so, 2 *Kin.* xxi. 1; xxiii. 12, as if they thought God would connive at it, or cared not though he was never so much displeased with it; or as if they would reconcile heaven and hell, God and Baal. The heart is the place which God has chosen to put his name there; if sin have the innermost and uppermost place there, we pollute the temple of the Lord, and therefore he resents nothing more than "setting up idols in the heart," *Eze.* xiv. 4.

2nd. That they were very barbarous in it towards their own children, ver. 31. They have particularly "built the high places of Tophet," where the image of Moloch was set up, "in the valley of the son of Hinnom," near adjoining to Jerusalem, and there "they burned their sons and their daughters in the fire," burned them alive, killed them, and killed them in the most cruel manner imaginable, to honour or appease those idols that were devils and not gods. This was sure the greatest instance that ever was of the power of Satan in the children of disobedience, and of the degeneracy and corruption of the human nature. One would willingly hope there were not many instances of such a barbarous idolatry, but it is amazing there should be any. That men could be so perfectly void of natural affection as to do a thing so inhuman as to burn little innocent children, and their own too; that they should be so perfectly void of natural religion as to think it lawful to do this; nay, to think it acceptable; surely it was in a way of righteous judgment, because they had changed the glory of God into the similitude of a beast, that God gave them up to such vile affections as changed them into worse than beasts. God saith of this it was "what he commanded them not, neither came it into his heart," which is not meant of his not commanding them thus to worship Moloch, (this he had expressly forbidden them,) but he had never commanded that his worshippers should be at such an expense, nor put such a force upon their natural affection, in honouring him. It never came into his heart to have children offered to him, yet they had forsaken his service for the service of such gods as; by commanding this, shewed themselves to be indeed enemies to mankind.

2. The destruction of Jerusalem appears here very terrible. That speaks misery enough in general, ver. 29, "The Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath." Sin makes those the generation of God's wrath that had been the generation of his love. And God will reject and quite forsake them who have thus by their impenitency made themselves "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." He will disown them for his; Verily, I say unto you, I know you not; and he will give them up to the terrors of their own guilt, and leave them in those hands.

1st. Death shall triumph over them, ver. 32, 33. Sin reigns unto death, for that is the wages of it, the end of those things. Tophet, the valley adjoining to Jerusalem, "shall be called the valley of slaughter," for there multitudes shall be slain when, in their sallies out of the city, and their attempts to escape, they fall into the hands of the besiegers. Or, the valley of slaughtered ones, because thither the corpses of those that are slain shall be brought to be buried, all other places being full; and there they shall bury till there be no more place to make a grave. This speaks the multitude of those that shall die by the sword, pestilence, and famine. Death shall ride on prosperously with a dreadful pomp and power, conquering and to conquer. "The slain of the Lord shall be many." This valley of Tophet was a place where the citizens of Jerusalem walked to take the air; but it shall now be spoiled for that use, for it shall be so full of graves that there shall be no walking there, because of the danger of contracting a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a grave. There it was that they sacrificed some of their children, and dedicated others to Moloch, and there they should fall as victims to Divine justice. Tophet had formerly been the burying-place, or burning-place, of the dead bodies of the besiegers, when the Assyrian army was routed by an angel; and for this it was ordained of old, *Isa.* xxx. 33. But they having forgot this mercy, and made it the place of their sin, God will now turn it into a burying-place for the besieged. In allusion to this valley, hell is in the New Testament called Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom, for there were buried both the invading Assyrians and the revolting Jews; so hell is a receptacle after death both for infidels and hypocrites, the open enemies of God's church, and its treacherous friends. It is "the congregation of the dead;" it is prepared for the "generation of God's wrath." But so great shall that slaughter be that even the spacious valley of Tophet shall not be able to contain the slain; and at length there shall not be enough left alive to bury the dead, so that "the carcases of this people shall be meat" for the birds and beasts of prey, that shall feed upon them like carrion, and none shall have the concern or courage to frighten them away, as Rizpah did from the dead bodies of Saul's sons, 2 *Sam.* xxi. 10. This was according to the threatening in the law, and a branch of the curse, *Deu.* xxviii. 26, "Thy carcase shall be meat to the fowls and beasts, and no man shall fray them away." Thus do the law and the prophets agree, and the execution with both. The decent burying of the dead is a piece of humanity, in remembrance of what the dead body hath been, the tabernacle of a reasonable soul. Nay, it is a piece of divinity, in expectation of what the dead body shall be at the resurrection. The want of it has sometimes been an instance of the rage of men against God's witnesses, *Rev.* xi. 9. Here it is threatened as an instance of the wrath of God against his enemies, and it is an intimation that evil pursues sinners even after death.

2nd. Joy shall depart from them; ver. 34, "Then will I cause to cease the voice of mirth." God had called by his prophets, and by lesser judgments, to weeping and mourning, but they walked contrary to him, and would hear of nothing but joy and gladness, *Isa.* xxii. 12, 13. And what came of it? Now God called to lamentation, ver. 29, and he made his call effectual, leaving them neither cause nor heart for joy and gladness. They that will not weep shall weep; that will not, by the grace of God, be cured of their vain mirth shall, by the justice of God, be deprived of all mirth; for "when God judgeth, he will overcome." It is threatened here that there shall be nothing to rejoice in; there shall be none of the joy of weddings; no mirth, for there shall be no marriages. The comforts of life shall be abandoned, and all care to keep up mankind upon earth cast off; there shall be none of the voice of the bridegroom and the bride; no music, no nuptial songs; nor shall there be any more of the joy of harvest, for "the land shall be desolate," uncultivated, and unimproved. Both the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem shall look thus melancholy; and when they thus look about them and see no cause to rejoice, no marvel if they retire into themselves, and find no heart to rejoice. Note, God can soon mar the mirth of the most jovial, and make it to cease, which is a reason why we should always rejoice with trembling; be merry and wise.

CHAPTER VIII.

The prophet proceeds in this chapter both to magnify and to justify the destruction that God was bringing upon this people; to shew how grievous it would be, and yet how righteous. I. He represents the judgments coming so very terrible, that death should appear so as most to be dreaded, and yet should be desired, ver. 1—3. II. He aggravates the wretched stupidity and wilfulness of this people, as that which brought this ruin upon them, ver. 4—12. III. He describes the great confusion and consternation that the whole land should be in upon the alarm of it, ver. 13—17. IV. The prophet is himself deeply affected with it, and lays it very much to heart, ver. 18—22.

AT that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out
The bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes,
And the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets,
And the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves:
2 And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon,
And all the host of heaven, whom they have loved,
And whom they have served, and after whom they have walked,
And whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped:
They shall not be gathered, nor be buried;
They shall be for dung upon the face of the earth.
3 And death shall be chosen rather than life
By all the residue of them that remain of this evil family,
Which remain in all the places whither I have driven them,
Saith the LORD of hosts.

These verses might fitly have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, as giving a farther description of the dreadful desolation which the army of the Chaldeans should make in the land. It shall strangely alter the property of death itself, and for the worse too.

First. Death shall not now be, as it always used to be, the repose of the dead. When Job makes his court to the grave it is in hope of this, that "there he shall rest with kings and counsellors of the earth;" but now the ashes of the dead, even of kings and princes, shall be disturbed, and their bones scattered at the grave's mouth, *Ps.* cxli. 7. It was threatened in the close of the former chapter, that the slain should be unburied. That might be through neglect, and was not so strange; but here we find the graves of those that were buried industriously and maliciously opened by the victorious enemy; who, either for covetousness, in hopes to find treasure in the graves, or for spite to the nation, and in a rage against it, "brought out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the princes." The dignity of their sepulchres could not secure them; nay, did the more expose them to be rifled; but it was base and barbarous thus to trample upon royal dust. We will hope the bones of good Josiah were not disturbed, because he piously protected the bones of the man of God, when he burnt the bones of the idolatrous priests, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 18. The bones of the priests and prophets too were digged up, and thrown about. Some think the false prophets, and the idol priests, God put this mark of ignominy upon them. But if they were God's prophets and his priests it is what the psalmist complains of, as the fruit of the outrage of the enemies, *Ps.* lxxix. 1, 2. Nay, those of the spiteful Chaldeans, that could not reach to violate the sepulchres of princes and priests, would rather play at small game than sit out; and therefore pulled the bones of the ordinary inhabitants of Jerusalem out of their graves. The barbarous nations were sometimes guilty of these absurd and inhuman triumphs over those they had conquered, and God permitted it here for a mark of his displeasure against the generation of his wrath, and for terror to those that survived. The bones being digged out of the graves were spread abroad upon the face of the earth in contempt, and to make the reproach the more spreading and lasting. They spread them to be dried, that they might carry them about in triumph, or might make fuel of them, or make

some superstitious use of them. They shall be spread before the sun; for they shall not be ashamed openly to avow the fact at noon-day; and before the moon and stars, even all the host of heaven, whom they have made idols of, ver. 2. From the mention of the sun, moon, and stars, which should be the unconcerned spectators of this tragedy, the prophet takes occasion to shew how they had idolised them, and paid those respects to them which they should have paid to God only; that it might be observed how little they got by worshipping the creature, for the creatures they worshipped, when they were in distress saw it but regarded it not, nor gave them any relief, but were rather pleased to see those abused in being vilified by whom tney had been abused in being deified.

See how their respects to their idols are instanced in and enumerated, to shew how we ought to carry it towards our God. 1. They loved them; as amiable beings and bountiful benefactors they esteemed them, and delighted in them, and therefore did all that follows to them. 2. They served them, did all they could in honour of them, and thought nothing too much they could do; they conformed to all the laws of their superstition without disputing. 3. They walked after them, strove to imitate and resemble them, according to the characters and accounts of them they had received, which gave rise and countenance to much of the abominable wickedness of the heathen. 4. They sought them, and consulted them as oracles, appealed to them as judges, implored their favour, and prayed to them as their benefactors. 5. They worshipped them, gave them Divine honour, as having a sovereign dominion over them. Before these lights of heaven, whom they had courted, shall their dead bodies be cast, and left to putrefy, and to be as dung upon the face of the earth; and the sun's shining upon them will but make them the more noisome and offensive. Whatever we make a god of but the true God only it will stand us in no stead on the other side death and the grave, not for the body, much less for the soul.

Secondly. Death shall now be what it never used to be, the choice of the living. Not because there appears in it anything delightsome; on the contrary, death never appeared in more horrid frightful shapes than now, when they cannot promise themselves either a comfortable death or a human burial; and yet every thing in this world shall become so irksome, and all the prospects so black and dismal, that "death shall be chosen rather than life," ver. 3, not in a believing hope of happiness in the other life, but in an utter despair of any ease in this life. The nation is now reduced to a family, so small is the residue of those that remain in it; and it is an evil family, still as bad as ever, their hearts unhumbled, and their lusts unmortified. These remain alive, and that is all, in the many places whither they were driven by the judgments of God; some prisoners in the country of their enemies, others beggars in their neighbour's country, and others fugitives and vagabonds there, and in their own country. And though those that died died very miserably, yet those that survived, and were thus driven out, should live yet more miserably; so that they should choose death rather than life, and wish a thousand times they had fallen with them that fell by the sword. Let this cure us of the inordinate love of life, that the case may be such that it may become a burthen and terror, and we may be strongly tempted to choose strangling and death rather.

4 Moreover thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD;
Shall they fall, and not arise?
Shall he turn away, and not return?
5 Why *then* is this people of Jerusalem slidden back
By a perpetual backsliding?
They hold fast deceit,
They refuse to return.
6 I hearkened and heard,
But they spake not aright:
No man repented him of his wickedness,
Saying, What have I done?
Every one turned to his course,
As the horse rusheth into the battle. [times;
7 Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed
And the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe
the time of their coming;
But my people know not the judgment of the LORD.
8 How do ye say, We *are* wise,
And the law of the LORD *is* with us?
Lo, certainly in vain made he *it;*
The pen of the scribes *is* in vain.
9 The wise *men* are ashamed,
They are dismayed and taken:
Lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD;
And what wisdom *is* in them?
10 Therefore will I give their wives unto others,
And their fields to them that shall inherit *them:*
For every one from the least even unto the greatest
Is given to covetousness,
From the prophet even unto the priest
Every one dealeth falsely.
11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my
people slightly,
Saying, Peace, peace;
When *there is* no peace. [nation?
12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomi-
Nay, they were not at all ashamed,
Neither could they blush:
Therefore shall they fall among them that fall:
In the time of their visitation they shall be cast down,
Saith the LORD.

The prophet here is instructed to set before this people the folly of their impenitency, which was it that brought this ruin upon them. They are here represented as the most stupid, senseless people in the world, that would not be made wise by all the methods that Infinite Wisdom took to bring them to themselves and their right mind, and so to prevent the ruin that was coming upon them.

First. They would not attend to the dictates of reason; they would not act in the affairs of their souls with the same common prudence with which they acted in other things. Sinners would become saints if they would but shew themselves men; and religion would soon rule them, if right reason might. Observe it here; "Come, and let us reason together," saith the Lord; ver. 4, 5, "Shall men fall, and not arise?" If men happen to fall to the ground, to fall into the dirt, will they not get up again as fast as they can? They are not such fools as to lie still when they are down. Shall a man turn aside out of the right way? Yes, it is possible the most careful traveller may miss his way; but then as soon as he is aware of it will he not return? Yes, certainly, he will with all speed, and will thank him that shewed him his mistake. Thus men do in other things; "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?" Why do not they, when they are fallen into sin, hasten to get up again by repentance? Why do not they, when they see they have missed their way, correct their error and reform? No man in his wits will go on in a way that he knows will never bring him to his journey's end; "Why then is this people slidden back by a perpetual backsliding?" See the nature of sin: it is a backsliding, it is going back from the right way; not only into a bypath, but into a contrary path; back from the way that leads to life, to that which leads to utter destruction. And this backsliding, if Almighty grace do not interpose to prevent it, will be a perpetual backsliding; the sinner not only wanders endlessly, but proceeds endways towards ruin. The same subtlety of the tempter that brings men to sin holds them fast in it; and they contribute to their own captivity, "they hold fast deceit." Sin is a great cheat, and they hold it fast, they love it dearly, and resolve to stick to it, and baffle all the methods God takes to part between them and their sins. The excuses they make for their sins are deceits, and so are all their hopes of impunity, yet they hold fast these, and will not be undeceived, and therefore they refuse to return. Note, There is some deceit or other which those hold fast that go on wilfully in sinful ways; some lie in their right hand, by which they keep hold of their sins.

Secondly. They would not attend to the dictates of conscience, which is our reason reflecting upon ourselves and our own actions, ver. 6. Observe, 1. What expectations there were from them that they would bethink themselves; "I hearkened and heard." The prophet listened to see what effect his preaching had upon them; God himself listened, as one that desires not the death of sinners, that would have been glad to hear any thing that promised repentance, that would certainly have heard it, if there had been any thing said of that tendency, and would soon have answered it with comfort, as he did David when he said, "I will confess," *Ps.* xxxii. 5. God looks upon men, when they have done amiss, *Job* xxxiii. 27, to see what they will do next; he hearkens and hears. 2. How these expectations were disappointed; "They spake not aright," as I thought they would have done. They did not only not do right, but not so much as speak right; God could not get a good word from them, nothing on which to ground any favour to them, or hopes concerning them. There was none of them that spake aright, none that "repented him of his wickedness." Those that have sinned, then, and then only, speak aright when they speak of repenting, and it is sad when those that have made so much work for repentance do not say a word of repenting. God did not only not find any repenting of the national wickedness, and so helping to empty the measure of public guilt; but none repented of that particular wickedness which he knew himself guilty of. 1st. They did not so much as take the first step towards repentance; they did not so much as say, "What have I done?" There was no motion towards it, not the least sign or token of it. Note, True repentance begins in a serious and impartial inquiry into ourselves; what we have done, arising from a conviction that we have done amiss. 2nd. They were so far from repenting of their sins that they went on resolutely in their sins; "every one turned to his course," his wicked course, that course of sin which he had chosen and accustomed himself to, "as the horse rusheth into the battle," eager upon action, and scorning to be curbed. How the horse rusheth into the battle is elegantly described, *Job* xxxix. 21, &c., "He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted." Thus the daring sinner laughs at the threatenings of the word as bugbears, and runs violently upon the instruments of death and slaughter, and nothing will be restrained from him.

Thirdly. They would not attend to the dictates of providence, nor understand the voice of God in them, ver. 7. 1. It is an instance of their sottishness, that though they are God's people, and therefore should readily understand his mind upon every intimation of it, yet they "know not the judgment of the Lord," they apprehend not the meaning either of a mercy or of an affliction, not how to accommodate themselves to either, or answer God's intention in either. They know not how to improve the seasons of grace that God affords them when he sends them his prophets, nor how to make use of the rebukes they are under when his voice cries in the city. They discern not the signs of the times, *Mat.* xvi. 3, nor are aware how God is dealing with them. They know not that way of duty which God hath prescribed them, though it be written both in their hearts and in their books. 2. It is an aggravation of their sottishness, that there is so much sagacity in the inferior creatures. "The stork in the heaven knows her appointed times" of coming and continuing; so do other season-birds, the turtle and the swallow. These, by a natural instinct, change their quarters as the temper of the air alters; they come when the spring comes, and are gone we know not whither when the winter approacheth; probably into warmer climates, as some birds come with winter, and are gone when that is over.

Fourthly. They would not attend to the dictates of the written word. They say, "We are wise," but how can they say so? With what face can they pretend to any thing of wisdom, when they do not understand themselves so well as the brute creatures? Why, truly, they think they are wise, because the law of the Lord is with them, the book of the law, and the interpreters of it; and their neighbours, for the same reason, conclude they are wise, *Deu.* iv. 6. But their pretensions are groundless for all this; "Lo, certainly in vain made he it." Sure never any people had Bibles to so little purpose as they have. They had as good have been without the law, unless they had made a better use of it. God has indeed made it able to make men wise to salvation, but as to them it is

made so in vain, for they are never the wiser for it; "The pen of the scribes," of those that first wrote the law, and of those that now write expositions of it, they are in vain. Both the favour of their God and the labour of their scribes is lost upon them; they receive the grace of God therein in vain. Note, There are many that enjoy abundance of the means of grace, that have great plenty of Bibles and ministers, but they have them in vain; they do not answer the end of their having them. But it might be said, They have some wise men among them, to whom the law and the pen of the scribes is not in vain. To this it is answered; ver. 9, "The wise men are ashamed," that is, they have reason to be so, that these have not made a better use of their wisdom, and lived more up to it. They are confounded and taken; all their wisdom has not served to keep them from those courses that tend to their ruin; they are taken in the same snares that others of their neighbours, who have not pretended to so much wisdom, are taken in, and filled with the same confusion. Those that have more knowledge than others, and yet do no better than others for their own souls, have reason to be ashamed. They talk of their wisdom, but "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord;" they would not be governed by it, would not follow the conduct of it, would not do what they knew, and then "what wisdom is in them?" None to any purpose; none that will be found to their praise at the great day, how much soever it is found to their pride now. The pretenders to wisdom, that said, "We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us," were the priests and the false prophets; with them the prophet here deals plainly.

1. He threatens the judgments of God against them. Their families and estates shall be ruined, ver. 10. Their wives shall be given to others, when they are taken captives, and their fields shall be taken from them by the victorious enemy, and shall be given to those that shall inherit them; not only strip them for once, but take possession of them as their own, and acquire a property in them, which they shall transmit to their posterity. And, ver. 12, notwithstanding all their pretensions to wisdom and sanctity, "they shall fall among them that fall;" for if the blind lead the blind both shall fall together into the ditch. "In the time of their visitation," when the wickedness of the land comes to be inquired into, it will be found that they have contributed to it more than any, and therefore they shall be sure to be cast down, and cast out.

2. He gives a reason for these judgments, ver. 10—12, even the same account of their badness which we met with before, *ch.* vi. 13—15, where it was opened at large. 1st. They were greedy of the wealth of this world; which is bad enough in any, but worst in prophets and priests, who should be best acquainted with another world, and therefore should be most dead to this. But these, from the least to the greatest, were given to covetousness; the priests teach for hire, and the prophets divine for money, *Mic.* iii. 11. 2nd. They made no conscience of speaking truth, no, not when they spake as priests and prophets. Every one deals falsely, looks one way and rows another. There is no such thing as sincerity among them. 3rd. They flattered people in their sins, and so flattered them into destruction. They pretended to be the physicians of the state, but knew not how to apply proper remedies to its growing maladies; they healed them slightly, killed the patients with palliative cures; silencing their fears and complaints with, Peace, peace, all is well, and there is no danger, when the God of heaven was proceeding in his controversy with them, so that there could be no peace to them. 4th. When it was made to appear how basely they prevaricated, they were not at all ashamed of it, but rather gloried in it, ver. 12. They could not blush, so perfectly lost were they to all sense of virtue and honour; when they were convicted of the grossest forgeries, they would justify what they had done, and laugh at those whom they had imposed upon. Such as these were ripe for ruin.

13 I will surely consume them, saith the LORD:
There shall be no grapes on the vine,
Nor figs on the fig tree,
And the leaf shall fade; [from them.
And *the things that* I have given them shall pass away
14 Why do we sit still? [cities,
Assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defenced
And let us be silent there:
For the LORD our God hath put us to silence,
And given us water of gall to drink,
Because we have sinned against the LORD.
15 We looked for peace, but no good *came;*
And for a time of health, and behold trouble!
16 The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan:
The whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones;
For they are come, and have devoured the land, and all that is in it;
The city, and those that dwell therein.
17 For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you,
Which *will* not *be* charmed,
And they shall bite you, saith the LORD.
18 *When* I would comfort myself against sorrow,
My heart *is* faint in me.
19 Behold the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people
Because of them that dwell in a far country:
Is not the LORD in Zion?
Is not her king in her?
Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven
And with strange vanities? [images,
20 The harvest is past, the summer is ended,
And we are not saved.
21 For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt;
I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me.
22 *Is there* no balm in Gilead;
Is there no physician there?
Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

BALM OF GILEAD.

In these verses we have,

First. God threatening the destruction of a sinful people. He hath borne long with them, but they are still more and more provoking, and therefore now their ruin is resolved on; "I will surely consume them," ver. 13. Consuming I will consume them, not only surely, but utterly consume them; will follow them with one judgment after another, till they are quite consumed. It is a consumption determined, *Isa.* x. 23.

1. They shall be quite stripped of all their comforts; ver. 13, "There shall be no grapes on the vine." Some understand it as speaking their sin. God came looking for grapes from this vineyard, seeking fruit upon this fig-tree, but he found none, as *Isa.* v. 2; *Lu.* xiii. 6; nay, they had not so much as leaves, *Mat.* xxi. 19. But it is rather to be understood of God's judgments upon them, and may be meant literally; the enemy shall seize the fruits of the earth, shall pluck the grapes and figs for themselves, and beat down the very leaves with them. Or, rather, figuratively; they shall be deprived of all their comforts, and shall have nothing left them wherewith to make glad their hearts. It is expounded in the last clause; "The things that I have given them shall pass away from them." Note, God's gifts are upon condition, and revokable upon the nonperformance of the condition. Mercies abused are forfeited, and it is just with God to take the forfeiture.

2. They shall be set upon by all manner of grievances, and surrounded with calamities; ver. 17, "I will send serpents among you," the Chaldean army, fiery serpents, flying serpents, cockatrices; these shall bite them with their venomous teeth, give them wounds that shall be mortal; and they shall not be charmed, as some serpents used to be, with music. These are serpents of another nature, that are not so wrought upon; or they are as the deaf adder, that stops her ear, and will not hear the voice of the charmer. The enemies are so intent upon making slaughter, that it will be to no purpose to speak them fair, or offer any thing to pacify them, or mollify them, or bring them to a better temper. No peace with God, therefore none with them.

Secondly. The people sinking into despair under the pressure of those calamities. They that were void of fear, when the trouble was at a distance, and set it at defiance, are void of hope now it breaks in upon them; and have no heart either to make head against it or bear up under it, ver. 14. They cannot think themselves safe in the open villages; "Why do we sit still" here? Let us assemble, and go in a body "into the defenced cities." Though they could expect no other but to be surely cut off there at last, yet not so soon as in the country, and therefore let us go "and be silent there;" let us attempt nothing, nor so much as make a complaint, for to what purpose? It is not a submissive, but a sullen silence that they here condemn themselves to. Those that are most jovial in their prosperity, commonly despond most and are most melancholy in trouble. Now observe what it is that sinks them.

1. They are sensible that God is angry with them. "The Lord our God has put us to silence," hath struck us with astonishment, and given us water of gall to drink, which is both bitter and stupifying, or intoxicating; *Ps.* lx. 3, "Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment." We had better sit still than rise up and fall; better say nothing than say nothing to the purpose. To what purpose is it to contend with our fate, when God himself is become our enemy, and fights against us? Because we have sinned against the Lord, therefore we are brought to this plunge. This may be taken as the language, 1st. Of their indignation. They seem to quarrel with God, as if he had dealt hardly with them, in putting them to silence, not permitting them to speak for themselves, and then telling them it was because they had sinned against him. Thus men's foolishness perverts their way, and then their hearts fret against the Lord. Or, rather, 2nd. Of their convictions. At length they begin to see the hand of God lifted up against them, and stretched out in the calamities under which they are now groaning, and to own that they have provoked him to contend with them. Note, Sooner or later God will bring the most obstinate to acknowledge both his providence and his justice in all the troubles they are brought into; to see and say, both that it is his hand and that he is righteous.

2. They are sensible that the enemy is likely to be too hard for them, ver. 16. They are soon apprehensive that it is to no purpose to make head against such a mighty force; they and their people are quite dispirited; and when the courage of a nation is gone, their numbers will stand them in little stead. "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan;" that is, the report of the

formidable strength of their cavalry was soon carried all the nation over, and everybody trembled at the sound of the neighing of his steeds: "for they are come," and there is no opposing them; they "have devoured the land, and all that is in the city;" both town and country is laid waste before them; not only the wealth, but the inhabitants of both, "those that dwell therein." Note, When God appears against us, every thing else that is against us appears very formidable; whereas, if he be for us, every thing appears very despicable, *Rom.* viii. 31.

3. They are disappointed in their expectations of deliverance out of their troubles, as well as when their troubles came they were a surprise to them; and this double disappointment very much aggravated their calamity. 1st. The trouble came when they little expected it; ver. 15, "We looked for peace," the continuance of our peace, "but no good came," no good news from abroad; we looked for a time of health and prosperity to our nation, but behold trouble, the alarms of war; for, as it follows, ver. 16, the noise of the enemies' horses was heard from Dan. Their false prophets had cried, Peace, peace, to them, which made it the more terrible when the scene of war opened on a sudden. This complaint will occur again, *ch.* xiv. 19. 2nd. The deliverance did not come when they had long expected it; ver. 20, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended;" that is, there is a great deal of time gone. Harvest and summer are parts of the year, and when they are gone the year draws towards a conclusion, so the meaning is. One year passeth after another, one campaign after another, and yet our affairs are in as ill a posture as ever they were; no relief comes, nor is any thing done towards it; "We are not saved." Nay, there is a great deal of opportunity lost; the season of action is over and slipped, the summer and harvest are gone, and a cold and melancholy winter succeeds. Note, The salvation of God's church and people oftentimes goes on very slowly, and God keeps his people long in the expectation of it, for wise and holy ends. Nay, they stand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, and are not saved, because they are not ready for salvation.

4. They are deceived in those things that were their confidence, and which they thought would have secured their peace to them; ver. 19, "The daughter of my people" cries, cries aloud, "because of them that dwell in a far country," because of the foreign enemy that invades them, that comes from a far country to take possession of ours; this occasions the cry. And what is the cry? It is this; "Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?" These were the two things that they had all along buoyed up themselves with, and depended upon. 1st. That they had among them the temple of God, and the tokens of his special presence with them. The common cant was, "Is not the Lord in Zion?" What danger then need we fear? And they held by this when the trouble was breaking in upon them, Surely we shall do well enough, for have we not God among us? But when it grew to an extremity, it was an aggravation of their misery that they had thus flattered themselves. 2nd. That they had the throne of the house of David. As they had a temple, so they had a monarchy *jure divino*,—'by Divine right.' Is not Zion's king in her? And will not Zion's God protect Zion's king and his kingdom? Surely he will; but why does he not? What, say they, hath Zion neither a god nor a king to stand by her, and help her, that she is thus run down, and likely to be ruined? This outcry of theirs reflects upon God, as if his power and promise were broken or weakened; and therefore he returns an answer to it immediately; "Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images?" They quarrel with God, as if he had dealt unkindly by them in forsaking them, whereas they, by their idolatry, had driven him from them; they have withdrawn from their allegiance to him, and so have thrown themselves out of his protection. They "fret themselves, and curse their king and their God," *Isa.* viii. 21, when it is their own sin that separates between them and God, *Isa.* lix. 2. They feared not the Lord, and then what can a king do for them? *Hos.* x. 3.

Thirdly. We have here the prophet himself bewailing the calamity and ruin of his people; for there were more of the lamentations of Jeremiah than those we find in the book that bears that title. Observe here,

1. How great his griefs were. He was an eyewitness of the desolations of his country, and saw those things which by the spirit of prophecy he had foreseen. In the foresight, much more in the sight of them, he cries out, "My heart is faint in me," I sink, I die away at the consideration of it; ver. 18, "When I would comfort myself against my sorrow," I do but labour in vain; nay, every attempt to alleviate the grief doth but aggravate it. It is our wisdom and duty, under mournful events, to do what we can to comfort ourselves against our sorrow, by suggesting to ourselves such considerations as are proper to allay the grief, and balance the grievance. But sometimes the sorrow is such, that the more it is repressed the more strongly it recoils. It may sometimes be the case of very good men, as of the prophet here, whose soul refused to be comforted, and fainted at the cordial, *Ps.* lxxvii. 2, 3. He tells, ver. 21, what was the matter; it is "for the hurt of the daughter of my people," that I am thus hurt; it is for their sin, and the miseries they have brought upon themselves by it; it is for this that "I am black," that I look black, that I go in black as mourners do, and that "astonishment hath taken hold on me," so that I know not what to do, nor which way to turn. Note, The miseries of our country ought to be very much the grief of our souls. A gracious spirit will be a public spirit, a tender spirit, a mourning spirit. It becomes us to lament the miseries of our fellow-creatures, much more to lay to heart the calamities of our country, and especially of the church of God, to grieve for the affliction of Joseph. Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, and though the truth of his prophecy was questioned, yet he did not rejoice in the proof of the truth of it, by the accomplishment of it, preferring the welfare of his country before his own reputation. If Jerusalem had repented and been spared, he would have been far from fretting as Jonah did. Jeremiah had many enemies in Judah and Jerusalem, that hated, and reproached, and persecuted him,—and in the judgments brought upon them, God reckoned with them for it, and pleaded his prophet's cause,—yet he was far from rejoicing in it; so truly did he forgive his enemies, and desire that God would forgive them.

2. How small his hopes were; ver. 22, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" No medicine proper for a sick and dying kingdom? "Is there no physician there?" No skilful, faithful hand to apply the medicine? He looks upon the case to be deplorable, and past relief. There is no balm in Gilead that can cure the disease of sin; no physician there that can restore the health of a nation quite overrun by such a foreign army as that of the Chaldeans. The desolations made are irreparable, and the disease is presently come to such a height, that there is no checking it. Or this verse may be understood as laying all the blame of the incurableness of their disease upon themselves; and so the question must be answered affirmatively; "Is there no balm in Gilead?" "No physician there?" Yes, certainly there is, God is able to help and heal them; there is a sufficiency in him to redress all their grievances. Gilead was a place in their own land, not far off. They had among themselves God's law and his prophets, with the help of which they might have been brought to repentance, and their ruin might have been prevented; they have princes and priests, whose business it was to reform the nation, and redress their grievances. What could have been done more than has been done for their recovery? Why then is not their health restored? Certainly it was not long of God, but of themselves; it was not for want of balm and a physician, but because they would not admit the application, nor submit to the methods of cure. The physician and physic were both ready, but the patient was wilful and irregular, would not be tied to rules, but must be humoured. Note, If sinners die of their wounds, their blood is upon their own heads. The blood of Christ is balm in Gilead, his Spirit is the physician there, both sufficient, all-sufficient, so that they might have been healed, but would not.

CHAPTER IX.

In this chapter the prophet goes on faithfully to reprove sin, and to threaten God's judgments for it, and yet bitterly to lament both, as one that neither rejoiced at iniquity, nor was glad at calamities. I. He here expresseth his great grief for the miseries of Judah and Jerusalem, and his detestation of their sins, which brought those miseries upon them, ver. 1—11. II. He justifies God in the greatness of the destruction brought upon them, ver. 9, 12—16. III. He calls upon others to bewail the woful case of Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 17—22. He shews them the folly and vanity of trusting in their own strength, or wisdom, or the privileges of their circumcision, or any thing but God only, ver. 23—26.

OH that my head were waters,
And mine eyes a fountain of tears,
That I might weep day and night
For the slain of the daughter of my people!
2 Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men;
That I might leave my people, and go from them!
For they *be* all adulterers,
An assembly of treacherous men.
3 And they bend their tongues *like* their bow *for* lies:
But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth;
For they proceed from evil to evil,
And they know not me, saith the LORD.
4 Take ye heed every one of his neighbour,
And trust ye not in any brother:
For every brother will utterly supplant,
And every neighbour will walk with slanders.
5 And they will deceive every one his neighbour,
And will not speak the truth:
They have taught their tongue to speak lies,
And weary themselves to commit iniquity.
6 Thine habitation *is* in the midst of deceit;
Through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.
7 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts,
Behold, I will melt them, and try them;
For how shall I do for the daughter of my people?
8 Their tongue *is as* an arrow shot out;
It speaketh deceit:
One speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth,
But in heart he layeth his wait.
9 Shall I not visit them for these *things?* saith the LORD:
Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?
10 For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing,
And for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation,
Because they are burned up, so that none can pass through *them;*
Neither can *men* hear the voice of the cattle;
Both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled;
They are gone.
11 And I will make Jerusalem heaps, *and* a den of dragons;
And I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

The prophet, being commissioned both to foretell the destruction coming upon Judah and Jerusalem and to point out the sin for which that destruction was brought upon them, here, as elsewhere, speaks of both very feelingly. What he said of both came from the heart, and therefore one would have thought it should have reached to the heart.

First. He abandons himself to sorrow, in consideration of the calamitous condition of his people, which he sadly laments, as one that preferred Jerusalem before his chief joy, and her grievances before his chief sorrows.

1. He laments the slaughter of the persons; the blood shed, and the lives lost; ver. 1, "Oh that my head were waters," quite melted and dissolved with grief, that so mine eyes might be "a fountain of tears," weeping abundance continually, and without intermission, still sending forth fresh floods of tears, as there still occur fresh occasions for them. The same word in Hebrew signifies both the eye and a fountain; as if in this land of sorrows our eyes were designed rather for weeping than seeing. Jeremiah wept much, and yet wished he could weep more, that he might affect a stupid people, and rouse them to a due sense of the hand of God gone out against them. Note, It becomes us, while we are here in this vale of tears, to conform to the temper

of the climate, and to sow in tears; "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted" hereafter; but let them expect that, while they are here, the clouds will still return after the rain. While we find our hearts such fountains of sin, it is fit our eyes should be fountains of tears. But Jeremiah's grief here is upon the public account. He would "weep day and night," not so much for the death of his own near relations, but for "the slain of the daughter of his people;" the multitudes of his countrymen that fell by the sword of war. Note, When we hear of the numbers of the slain in great battles and sieges, we ought to be much affected with it, and not to make a light matter of it; yea, though they be not of the daughter of our people; for, whatever people they are of, they are of the same human nature with us; and there are so many precious lives lost, as dear to them as ours to us, and so many precious souls gone into eternity.

2. He laments the desolations of the country. This he brings in, ver. 10, (for passionate mourners do not use to be very methodical in their discourses,) Not only for the towns and cities, but "for the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing;" not barren mountains, but the fruitful hills with which Judea abounded; "and for the habitations of the wilderness," or, rather the pastures of the plain, that used to be clothed with flocks, or covered over with corn; and a goodly sight it was. But now they are burnt up by the Chaldean army, which, according to the custom of war, destroyed the forage, and carried off all the cattle; so that none dares to pass through them, for fear of meeting with some parties of the enemy; none cares to pass through them, every thing looks so melancholy and frightful. None have any business to pass through them, for they hear not "the voice of the cattle" there as usual, the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen, that grateful music to the owners. Nay, "both the fowl of the heavens and the beasts are fled;" either frightened away by the rude noises and terrible fires which the enemies make, or forced away because there is no subsistence for them. Note, God has many ways of turning a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein; and the havoc war makes in a country cannot but be for a lamentation to all tender spirits; for it is a tragedy which destroys the stage it is acted on.

Secondly. He abandons himself to solitude, in consideration of the scandalous character and carriage of his people. Though he dwells in Judah, where God is known, in Salem, where his tabernacle is, yet he is ready to cry out, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech," *Ps.* cxx. 5. While all his neighbours are fleeing to the defenced cities, and Jerusalem especially, in dread of the enemies' rage, *ch.* iv. 5, 6, he is contriving to retire into some desert, in detestation of his people's sin; ver. 2, "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men;" such a lonely cottage to dwell in as they have in the deserts of Arabia, which are uninhabited, for travellers to repose themselves in, "that I might leave my people, and go from them;" not only because of the ill usage they gave him, he would rather venture himself among the wild beasts of the desert than among such treacherous people; but rather because his righteous soul was vexed from day to day, as Lot's was in Sodom, with the wickedness of their conversation, 2 *Pet.* ii. 7, 8. This doth not speak any intention or resolution he had thus to retire. God had cut him out work among them, which he must not quit for his own ease; we must not go out of the world, as bad as it is, before our time. If he could not reform them, he could bear a testimony against them; if he could not do good to many, yet he might to some; but it speaks a temptation he was in to leave them, and a threatening that they should be deprived of his ministry, and especially the holy indignation he had against their abominable wickedness, notwithstanding all the pains he had taken with them to reclaim them. It made him even weary of his life to see them dishonouring God as they did, and destroying themselves. Time was, when the place which God had chosen to put his name there was the desire and delight of good men. David in a wilderness longed to be again in the courts of God's house; but now Jeremiah, in the courts of God's house, (for there he was when he said this,) wisheth himself in a wilderness. Those have made themselves very miserable that have made God's people and ministers weary of them, and willing to get from them. Now, to justify his willingness to leave them, he shews,

1. What he himself had observed among them. He would not think of leaving them because they were poor and in distress, but because they were wicked.

1st. They were filthy; "They be all adulterers," that is, the generality of them, *ch.* v. 8. They all either practised this sin or connived at those that did. Lewdness and uncleanness was that crying sin of Sodom, at which righteous Lot was vexed in soul; and it is a sin that renders men loathsome in the eyes of God and all good men; it makes men an abomination.

2nd. They were false. This is the sin that is most enlarged upon here; they that had been unfaithful to their God were so to one another, and it was a part of their punishment, as well as their sin; for even those that love to cheat yet hate to be cheated. *First.* Go into their solemn meetings, either for the exercises of religion or the administration of justice, or for commerce, either to church, court, or exchange, and they are an "assembly of treacherous men;" they are so by consent, they strengthen one another's hands in doing any thing that is perfidious. There they will cheat deliberately and industriously, with design, with a malicious design, for "they bend their tongues like their bow for lies," with a great deal of craft; their tongues are fitted for lying, as a bow that is bent is for shooting, and are as constantly used for that purpose. Their tongue turns as naturally to a lie as the bow to the string; "but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth." Their tongues are like a bow strung, with which they might do good service, if they would use that art and resolution which they are so much masters of in the cause of truth; but they will not do so. They appear not in defence of the truth of God, which were delivered to them by the prophets; but even those that could not deny them to be truths yet were content to see them run down. In the administration of justice they have not courage to stand by an honest cause, that has truth on its side, if greatness and power be on the other side. Those that will be faithful to the truth must be valiant for it, and not be daunted by the opposition given to it, nor fear the face of man. "They are not valiant for the truth in the land," the land which has truth for the glory of it. Truth is fallen in the land, and they dare not lend a hand to help it up, *Isa.* lix. 14, 15. We must answer another day not only for our enmity in opposing truth, but our cowardice in defending it. *Secondly.* Go into their families, and you will find they will cheat their own brethren; "every brother will utterly supplant," they will trip up one another's heels if they can, for they lie at catch to seek all advantages against those they hope to make a hand of. Jacob had his name from supplanting; it is the word here used, they followed him in his name, but not in his true character, without guile. So very false are they, that you cannot trust in a brother, but must stand as much upon your guard as if you were dealing with a stranger, with a Canaanite, that has balances of deceit in his hand. Things are come to an ill pass indeed, when a man cannot put confidence in his own brother. *Thirdly.* Go into company, and observe both their commerce and their conversation, and you will find there is nothing of sincerity or common honesty among them; *Nec hospes ab hospite tutus,*—'The host and the guest are in danger from each other.' The best advice a wise man can give you is, "to take heed every one of his neighbour;" nay, of his friend, so some read it, of him whom he has befriended, and who pretends friendship to him. No man thinks himself bound either to be grateful or to be sincere. Take them in their converse, "and every neighbour will walk with slanders," they care not what ill they say one of another, though never so false. That way that the slander goes they will go; they will walk with it. They will walk about from house to house, carrying slanders along with them, all the ill-natured stories they can pick up or invent to make mischief. Take them in their trading and bargaining, "and they will deceive every one his neighbour," will say any thing, though they know it to be false, for their own advantage. Nay, they will lie for lying sake, to keep their tongues in use to it, for they "will not speak the truth," but will tell a deliberate lie, and laugh at it when they have done.

And that which aggravates the sin of this false and lying generation is, 1*st.* That they are ingenious to sin. "They have taught their tongues to speak lies;" implying that, through the reluctancies of natural conscience, they found it difficult to bring themselves to it. Their tongues would have spoken truth, but they taught them to speak lies, and by degrees have made themselves masters of the art of lying, and have got such a habit of it, that use has made it a second nature to them. They learned it when they were young, for "the wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies," *Ps.* lviii. 3; and now they are grown dexterous at it. 2*nd.* That they are industrious to sin; they "weary themselves to commit iniquity." They put a force upon their conscience to bring themselves to it, and tire out their convictions by offering them a continual violence; and they take a great deal of pains till they have even spent themselves in bringing about their malicious designs; they are wearied with their sinful pursuits, and yet not weary of them. The service of sin is a perfect drudgery; men run themselves out of breath in it, and put themselves to a great deal of toil to damn their own souls. 3*rd.* That they grow worse and worse; ver. 3, "They proceed from evil to evil," from one sin to another, from one degree of sin to another. They began with lesser sins, *nemo repente fit turpissimus,*—'no one reaches the height of vice at once;' they began with equivocating and bantering, but at last come to downright lying; and they are now proceeding to greater sins yet, for "they know not me, saith the Lord." And where men have no knowledge of God, or no consideration of what they have known of him, what good can be expected from them? Men's ignorance of God is the cause of all their ill carriage one towards another.

2. The prophet shews what God had informed him of their wickedness, and what he had determined against them.

1st. God had marked their sin. He could tell the prophet, (and he speaks of it with compassion,) what sort of people they were that he had to deal with; "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest," *Rev.* ii. 13. So here, ver. 6, "Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit," that is, All about thee are addicted to it, therefore stand upon thy guard. If all men are liars, it concerns us to beware of men, and be wise as serpents. They are deceitful men, therefore there is little hopes of thy doing any good among them; for, make things never so plain, they have some trick or other wherewith to shuffle off their convictions. This charge is enlarged upon, ver. 8: their tongue was a bow bent, ver. 3, plotting and preparing mischief; here it is "an arrow shot out," putting in execution what they had projected. It is as 'a slaying arrow,' so some readings of the original have it. Their tongue has been to many an instrument of death. They speak peaceably to their neighbours, against whom they are at the same time lying in wait; as Joab kissed Abner when he was about to kill him; and Cain, that he might not be suspected of any ill design, talked with his brother freely and familiarly. Note, Fair words, when they are not attended with good intentions, are despicable; but when they are intended as a cloak and cover for wicked intentions they are abominable; and while they did all this injury to one another they put a great contempt upon God; Not only they know not me, but, ver. 6, through deceit, through the delusions of the false prophets, they refuse to know me; they are so cheated into a good opinion of their own ways, the ways of their own heart, that they desire not the knowledge of God's ways. Or, they are so wedded to this sinful course they are in, and so betwitched with that, and the gains of that, that they will by no means admit the knowledge of God, because that would be a check upon them in their sins. This is the ruin of sinners, they might be taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and they will not learn it; and where no knowledge of God is what good can be expected? *Hos.* iv. 1.

2nd. He had marked them for ruin, ver. 7, 9, 11. Those that will not know God as their lawgiver, shall be made to know him as their judge. God determines here to bring his judgments upon them, for the refining of some, and the ruining of the rest. *First.* Some shall be refined, ver. 7, because they are thus corrupt; "Behold, I will melt them, and try them," will bring them into trouble, and see what that will do to bring them to repentance; whether the furnace of affliction will purify them from their dross, and whether when they are melted, they will be new cast into a better mould. He will make trial of lesser afflictions, before he brings upon them utter destruction, for he desires not the death of sinners. They shall not be rejected as reprobate silver, till the founder has melted in vain, *ch.* vi. 29, 30. "For how shall I do for the daughter of my people?" He speaks as one consulting with himself what to do with them that might be for the best; and as one that could not find in his heart to cast them off, and give them up to ruin, till he had first tried all means likely to bring them to repentance. Or, how else shall I do for them? They are grown so very corrupt, that there is no other way with them but to put them into the furnace; what other course can I take with them? *Isa.* v. 4, 5. It is "the daughter of my people," and I must do something to vindicate my own honour, which will be reflected upon if I connive at their wickedness. I must do something to reduce and reform them. A parent corrects his own children because they are his own. Note, When God afflicts his people, it is with a gracious design to mollify and reduce them; it is but when need is, and when he knows it is the best method he can use. *Secondly.* The rest shall be ruined; ver. 9, "Shall I not visit for these things?" Fraud and falsehood are sins which God hates, and which he will reckon for; "Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this," that is so universally corrupt, and by their impudence in sin even dares and defies Divine vengeance? The sentence is passed, the decree is gone forth; ver. 11, "I will make Jerusalem heaps" of rubbish, and lay it in such ruins that it shall be fit for nothing but to be "a den of dragons;" and the cities of Judah shall be a desolation. God makes them so, for he gives the enemy warrant and power to do it; but why is the holy city made a heap? The answer is ready, because it was become an unholy one.

12 Who *is* the wise man, that may understand this?
And *who is he* to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it,
For what the land perisheth
And is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through?

13 And the LORD saith,
Because they have forsaken my law
Which I set before them,
And have not obeyed my voice,
Neither walked therein;
14 But have walked after the imagination of their own heart,
And after Baalim, which their fathers taught them:
15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
Behold, I will feed them, *even* this people, with worm-
And give them water of gall to drink. [wood,
16 I will scatter them also among the heathen,
Whom neither they nor their fathers have known:
And I will send a sword after them,
Till I have consumed them.
17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts,
Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that
they may come;
And send for cunning *women*, that they may come:

MOURNING WOMEN.

18 And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us,
That our eyes may run down with tears,
And our eyelids gush out with waters.
19 For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion,
How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded,
Because we have forsaken the land,
Because our dwellings have cast *us* out.
20 Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women,
And let your ear receive the word of his mouth,
And teach your daughters wailing,
And every one her neighbour lamentation.
21 For death is come up into our windows,
And is entered into our palaces,
To cut off the children from without,
And the young men from the streets.
22 Speak, Thus saith the LORD, [open field,
Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung upon the
And as the handful after the harvestman, and none shall
gather *them*.

Two things the prophet designs in these verses, with reference to the approaching destruction of Judah and Jerusalem: 1. To convince people of the justice of God in it; that they had by sin brought it upon themselves, and that therefore they had no reason to quarrel with God, who did them no wrong at all, but a great deal of reason to fall out with their sins, which did them all this mischief. 2. To affect people with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, and the miserable effects of it; that by a terrible prospect of it they might be awakened to repentance and reformation, which was the only way to prevent it, or at least mitigate their own share in it. This being designed,

First. He calls for the thinking men, by them to shew people the equity of God's proceedings, though they seemed harsh and severe; ver. 12, Who, where is the wise man or the prophet, "to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken?" You boast of your wisdom, and of the prophets you have among you; produce me any one that has but the free use of human reason, or any acquaintance with Divine revelation, and he will soon understand this himself, and it will be so clear to him that he will be ready to declare it to others, that there is a just ground of God's controversy with this people. Do these wise men inquire "for what the land perisheth?" What is the matter, that such a change is made with this land? It used to be a land that God cared for, and he had his eyes upon it for good, *Deu.* xi. 12. But it is now a land that he has forsaken, and that his face is against. It used to flourish as the garden of the Lord, and to be replenished with inhabitants, but now it is burnt up like a wilderness, that none passeth through it, much less cares to settle in it. It was supposed long ago that it would be asked, when it came to this, "Wherefore has the Lord done thus unto this land? What means the heat of this great anger?" *Deu.* xxix. 24. To which question God here gives a full answer, before which all flesh must be silent. He produceth out of the record,

1. The indictment preferred and proved against them, upon which they had been found guilty, ver. 13, 14. It is charged upon them, and it cannot be denied, 1st. That they have revolted from their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign; therefore God has forsaken their land, and justly, because they have forsaken his law, which he had so plainly, so fully, so frequently, set before them, and had not observed his orders, nor obeyed his voice, nor walked in the ways that he had appointed. Here their wickedness began, in the omission of their duty to their God and a contempt of his authority. But it did not end there. It is farther charged upon them, 2nd. That they have entered themselves into the service of pretenders and usurpers; have not only withdrawn themselves from their obedience to their prince, but have taken up arms against him. For, *First.* They have acted according to the dictates of their own lusts; have set up their own will, the wills of the flesh, and the carnal mind, in competition with, and contradiction to, the will of God; they "have walked after the imagination of their own heart;" they would do as they pleased, whatever God and conscience said to the contrary. *Secondly.* They have worshipped the creatures of their own fancy, the work of their own hands, according to the tradition received from their fathers. "They have walked after Baalim;" the word is plural. They had many Baals, Baal-peor, and Baal-berith, the Baal of this place, and the Baal of the other place; for they had lords many, "which their fathers taught them" to worship, but which the God of their fathers had again and again forbidden. This was it for which the land perished. The King of kings never makes war thus upon his own subjects but when they treacherously depart from him, and rebel against him, and it is become necessary, by this means, to chastise their rebellion and reduce them to their allegiance; and they themselves shall at length acknowledge that he is just in all that is brought upon them.

2. The judgment given upon this indictment, the sentence upon the convicted rebels, which must now be executed; for it was righteous, and nothing could be moved in arrest of it. The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, hath said it, ver. 15, 16, and who can reverse it? 1st. That all their comforts at home shall be poisoned and embittered to them; "I will feed this people with wormwood," or, rather, with wolf's-bane, for it signifies an herb that is not wholesome, as wormwood is, though it be bitter; but some herb that is both nauseous and noxious. And I will give them water of gall, or juice of hemlock, or some other herb that is poisonous, to drink. Every thing about them, till it comes to their very meat and drink, shall be a terror and torment to them; God will curse their blessings, *Mal.* ii. 2. 2nd. That their dispersion abroad shall be their destruction; ver. 16, "I will scatter them among the heathen." They were corrupted and debauched by their intimacy with the heathen, with whom they mingled themselves, and learned their works; and now they shall lose themselves there where they lost their virtue, among the heathen; that is, they had violated the laws of that truth which is the bond and cement of society and commerce, and addicted themselves to deceit and lying, and therefore are justly crumbled to dust, and scattered "among the heathen." They set up gods which "neither they nor their fathers had known," strange gods, new gods, *Deu.* xxxii. 17, and now God will put them among neighbours which "neither they nor their fathers have known," that they can claim no acquaintance with, and therefore can expect no favour from. And yet, though they are scattered so as that they will not know where to find one another, God will know where to find them all out, *Ps.* xxi. 8, with that evil which still pursues impenitent sinners; "I will send a sword after them," some killing judgment or other, "till I have consumed them;" for when God judgeth he will overcome, when he pursues he will overtake. And now we see for what the land perisheth; all this desolation is the desert of their deeds, and the performance of God's words.

Secondly. He calls for the mourning women, and engageth them, with the arts they have to affect people, and move their passion, to lament these sad calamities, that were come or coming upon them, that the nation might be alarmed to prepare for them. The Lords of hosts himself saith, "Call for the mourning women, that they may come," ver. 17. The scope of this is to shew how very woful and lamentable the condition of this people was likely to be.

1. Here is work for the counterfeit mourners; "Send for cunning women," that know how to compose mournful ditties, or at least to sing them in mournful tunes and accents, and therefore are made use of at funerals, to supply the want of true mourners. Let these "take up a wailing for us," ver. 18. The deaths and funerals were so many, that people have wept for them till they have no more power to weep; as those, 1 *Sam.* xxx. 4. Let them, therefore, do it now whose trade it is; or, rather, it intimates the extreme sottishness and stupidity of the people, that laid not to heart the judgments they were under, nor, even when there was so much blood shed, could find in their hearts to shed a tear; "They cry not when God bindeth them," *Job* xxxvi. 13. God sent in his mourning prophets to them to call them to weeping and mourning, but his word in their mouths did not work upon their faith; rather, therefore, than they shall go laughing to their ruin, let the mourning women come, and by humouring the thing try to work upon their fancy, that their eyes may at length run down with tears, and their eyelids gush out with waters. First or last, sinners must be weepers.

2. Here is work for the real mourners.

1st. There is that which is a lamentation. The present scene is very tragical; ver. 19, "A voice of wailing is heard out of Zion." Some make this to be the song of the mourning women; it is rather an echo to it, returned by those whose affections were moved by their wailings. In Zion the voice of joy and praise used to be heard, while the people kept close to God; but sin has altered the note, it is now the voice of lamentation. It should seem to be the voice of those who fled from all parts of the country to the castle of Zion for protection. Instead of rejoicing that they were got safe thither, they lamented

that they were forced to seek for shelter there; "How are we spoiled!" How are we stripped of all our possessions. "We are greatly confounded," ashamed of ourselves and our poverty; for that is it they complain of; that is it they blush at the thoughts of, rather than of their sin; "We are confounded, because we have forsaken the land," forced so to do by the enemy; not because we have forsaken the Lord, drawn aside of our own lust and enticed; "because our dwellings have cast us out," not because our God hath cast us off. Thus unhumbled hearts lament their calamity, but not their iniquity, the procuring cause of it.

2nd. There is more still to come that shall be for a lamentation. Things are bad, but they are likely to be worse. They whose land had spewed them out, as it did their predecessors, the Canaanites, and justly, because they trod in their steps, *Lev.* xviii. 28, complain that they are driven into the city, but after a while those of the city, and they with them, shall be forced thence too. "Yet hear the word of the Lord," he hath something more to say to you, ver. 20; et the women hear it, whose tender spirits are apt to receive the impressions of grief and fear, for the men will not heed it, will not give it a patient hearing. The prophets will be glad to preach to a congregation of women that tremble at God's word. Let your ear receive the word of God's mouth, and bid it welcome, though it be a word of terror. Let the women teach their daughters wailing, which intimates that the trouble shall last long. Grief shall be entailed upon the generation to come. Young people are apt to love mirth, and expect mirth, and are disposed to be gay and airy, but let the elder women teach the younger to be serious; tell them what a vale of tears they must expect to find this world, and train them up among the mourners in Zion, *Tit.* ii. 4, 5. Let every one teach her neighbour lamentation, which intimates that the trouble shall spread far, shall go from house to house. People shall not need to sympathize with their friends, they shall all have cause enough to mourn for themselves. Note, Those that are themselves affected with the terrors of the Lord should endeavour to affect others with them. The judgment here threatened is made to look terrible.

First. Multitudes shall be slain, ver. 21. Death shall ride in triumph, and there shall be no escaping his arrests, when he comes with commission, neither within doors nor without. Not within doors, for let the doors be shut never so fast, let them be never so firmly locked and bolted, "Death comes up into our windows," like a thief in the night; it steals upon us ere we are aware. Nor doth it thus boldly attack the cottages only, but it is entered into our palaces, the palaces of our princes and great men, though never so stately, never so strongly built and guarded. Note, No palaces can keep out death. Nor are those more safe that are abroad; death "cuts off even the children from without, and the young men from the streets." The children who might have been spared by the enemy in pity, because they had never been hurtful to them, and the young men, who might have been spared in policy, because capable of being serviceable to them, yet shall fall together by the sword. It is usual now, even in the severest military executions, to put none to the sword but those that are found in arms; but then even the boys and girls playing in the streets were sacrificed to the fury of the conqueror.

Secondly. Those that are slain shall be left unburied; ver. 22, "Speak, Thus saith the Lord," for the confirmation and aggravation of what was before said, "Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung," neglected, and left to be offensive to the smell, as dung is. Common humanity obligeth the survivors to bury the dead, even for their own sake; but here such numbers shall be slain, and those so dispersed all the country over, that it shall be an endless thing to bury them at all; nor shall there be hands enough to do it, nor shall the conquerors permit it; and those that should do it shall be overwhelmed with grief, so that they shall have no heart to do it. The dead bodies even of the fairest and strongest, when they have lain awhile, become as dung, such vile bodies have we. And here such multitudes shall fall that their bodies shall lie as thick as heaps of dung in the furrows of the field, and no more notice taken of them than of the handfuls which the harvestman drops for the gleaners, for none shall gather them, but they shall remain in sight, monuments of Divine vengeance, that the eye of the impenitent survivors may affect their heart. "Slay them not," bury them not, "lest my people forget," *Ps.* lix. 11.

23 Thus saith the LORD,
Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom,
Neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might,
Let not the rich *man* glory in his riches:
24 But let him that glorieth glory in this,
That he understandeth and knoweth me,
That I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness,
Judgment, and righteousness, in the earth:
For in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD.
25 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That I will punish all *them which are* circumcised with the uncircumcised;
26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom,
And the children of Ammon, and Moab,
And all *that are* in the utmost corners,
That dwell in the wilderness:
For all *these* nations *are* uncircumcised,
And all the house of Israel *are* uncircumcised in the heart.

The prophet had been endeavouring to possess this people with a holy fear of God and his judgments, to convince them both of sin and wrath, but still they had recourse to some sorry subterfuge or other, under which to shelter themselves from the conviction, and with which to excuse themselves in their obstinacy and carelessness; he therefore sets himself here to drive them from these refuges of lies, and to shew them the insufficiency of them.

First. When they were told how inevitable the judgment would be, they pleaded the defence of their politics and powers, which, with the help of their wealth and treasure, they thought made their city impregnable. In answer to this he shews them the folly of trusting to, and boasting of, all these stays, while they have not a God in covenant to stay themselves upon, ver. 23, 24. Here he shews,

1. What we may not depend upon in a day of distress; "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom," as if with the help of that he could outwit or countermine the enemy, or in the greatest extremity find out some evasion or other, for a man's wisdom may fail him then when he needs it most, and he may be taken in his own craftiness. Ahithophel was befooled, and counsellors are oft led away spoiled. But if a man's policies fail him, yet sure he may gain his point by might and dint of courage. No, "Let not the strong man glory in his strength," for the battle is not always to the strong; David the stripling proves too hard for Goliath the giant. All human force is nothing without God, worse than nothing against him. But may not the rich man's wealth be his strong city? money answers all things. No, "Let not the rich man glory in his riches;" for they may prove so far from sheltering him, that they may expose him and make him the fairer mark. Let not the people boast of the wise men, and mighty men, and rich men that they have among them, as if they could make their part good against the Chaldeans, because they have wise men to advise concerning the war, mighty men to fight their battles, and rich men to bear the charges of the war. Let not particular persons think to escape the common calamity by their wisdom, might, or money, for all these will prove but vain things for safety.

2. He shews what we may depend upon in a day of distress. 1st. Our only comfort in trouble will be that we have done our duty. They that refused to know God, ver. 6, will boast in vain of their wisdom and wealth, but they that know God intelligently, that understand aright that he is the Lord, that have not only right apprehensions concerning his nature, and attributes, and relations to man, but receive and retain the impressions of them, may glory in this, it will be their rejoicing in the day of evil. 2nd. Our only confidence in trouble will be, that having through grace, in some measure, done our duty, we shall find God a God all-sufficient to us. We may glory in this, that, wherever we are, we have an acquaintance with, and an interest in, a God that "exerciseth lovingkindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth;" that is not only just to all his creatures, and will do no wrong to any of them, but kind to all his children, and will protect them and provide for them. "For in these things I delight;" God delights to shew kindness and to execute judgment himself, and is pleased with those who herein are "followers of him as dear children." Those that have such knowledge of the glory of God as to be changed into the same image, and to partake of his holiness, it is their perfection and glory; and the God they thus faithfully conform to they may cheerfully confide in in their greatest straits. But the prophet intimates that the generality of this people took no care about this. Their wisdom, and might, and riches, were their joy and hope, which would end in grief and despair. But those few among them that had the knowledge of God might please themselves with it, and boast themselves of it; it would stand them in better stead than thousands of gold and silver.

Secondly. When they were told how provoking their sins were to God, they vainly pleaded the covenant of their circumcision. No doubt but they were the people of God; as they had the temple of the Lord in their city, so they had the mark of his children in their flesh. It is true the Chaldean army has laid such and such nations waste because they were uncircumcised, and therefore not under the protection of the Divine providence, as we are. To this the prophet answers, that the days of visitation were now at hand, in which God would punish all wicked people, without making any distinction between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, ver. 25, 26. They had by sin profaned the crown of their peculiarity, and lived in common with the uncircumcised nations, and so had forfeited the benefit of it, and must expect to fare never the better for it. God will punish the circumcised with the uncircumcised. As the ignorance of the uncircumcised shall not excuse their wickedness, so neither shall the privileges of the circumcised excuse theirs, but they shall be punished together. Note, The Judge of all the earth is impartial, and none shall fare the better at his bar for any external advantages, but he will render to every man, circumcised or uncircumcised, according to his works. The condemnation of impenitent sinners, that are baptized, will be as sure, nay, and more severe, than that of impenitent sinners that are unbaptized. It would affect one to find here Judah industriously put between Egypt and Edom, as standing upon a level with them, and under the same doom, ver. 26. These nations were forbidden a share in the Jews' privileges, *Deu.* xxiii. 3; but the Jews are here told that they shall share in their punishments. Those "in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness," are supposed to be the Kedarens, and those of the kingdoms of Hazor, as appears, by comparing *ch.* xlix. 28, 32. Some think they are so called because they dwelt, as it were, in a corner of the world; others, because they had the hair of their head polled into corners. However that was, they were of those nations that were uncircumcised in flesh, and the Jews are ranked with them, and are as near to ruin for their sins as they; for "all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart." They have the sign, but not the thing signified, *ch.* iv. 4. They are heathens in their heart, strangers to God, and enemies in their minds by wicked words. Their hearts are disposed to idols, as the hearts of the uncircumcised Gentiles are. Note, The seals of the covenant, though they dignify and oblige us, yet they will not save us, unless the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives, agree with the covenant. That only is circumcision, and that baptism, which is of the heart, *Rom.* ii. 28, 29.

CHAPTER X.

We may conjecture that the prophecy of this chapter was delivered after the first captivity, in the time of Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin, when many were carried away to Babylon; for it has a double reference. I. To those that were carried away into the land of the Chaldeans, a country notorious above any other for idolatry and superstition; and they are here cautioned against the infection of the place, not to learn the way of the heathen, ver. 1,.2, for their astrology and idolatry are both foolish things, ver. 3—5, the worshippers of idols brutish, ver. 8, 9, and so it will appear in the day of their visitation, ver. 14, 15. They are likewise exhorted to adhere firmly to the God of Israel, for there is none like him, ver. 6, 7; he is the true God, lives for ever, and has the government of the world, ver. 10—13; and his people are happy in him, ver. 16. II. To those that yet remained in their own land; and they are cautioned against security, and bidden to expect distress, ver. 17, 18; and that by a foreign enemy which God would bring upon them for their sin, ver. 20—22. This calamity the prophet laments, ver. 19, and prays for the mitigation of it, ver. 23—25.

HEAR ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: 2 Thus saith the LORD,
Learn not the way of the heathen,
And be not dismayed at the signs of heaven;
For the heathen are dismayed at them.
3 For the customs of the people *are* vain:

For *one* cutteth a tree out of the forest,
The work of the hands of the workman, with the ax.

GODS OF THE SANDWICH ISLANDS.

4 They deck it with silver and with gold;
They fasten it with nails and with hammers,
That it move not.
5 They *are* upright as the palm tree,
But speak not:
They must needs be borne,
Because they cannot go.
Be not afraid of them; for they cannot do evil,
Neither also *is it* in them to do good.
6 Forasmuch as *there is* none like unto thee, O LORD;
Thou *art* great, and thy name *is* great in might.
7 Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?
For to thee doth it appertain:
Forasmuch as among all the wise *men* of the nations,
And in all their kingdoms, *there is* none like unto thee.
8 But they are altogether brutish and foolish:
The stock *is* a doctrine of vanities.
9 Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish,
And gold from Uphaz,
The work of the workman,
And of the hands of the founder:
Blue and purple *is* their clothing:
They *are* all the work of cunning *men*

DRESSED IMAGES.

10 But the LORD *is* the true God,
He *is* the living God, and an everlasting king:
At his wrath the earth shall tremble,
And the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation.
11 Thus shall ye say unto them,
The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth,
Even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.
12 He hath made the earth by his power,
He hath established the world by his wisdom,
And hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.
13 When he uttereth his voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, [of the earth;
And he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends
He maketh lightnings with rain,
And bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.
14 Every man is brutish in *his* knowledge:
Every founder is confounded by the graven image:
For his molten image *is* falsehood,
And *there is* no breath in them.
15 They *are* vanity, *and* the work of errors:
In the time of their visitation they shall perish.
16 The portion of Jacob *is* not like them:
For he *is* the former of all *things;*
And Israel *is* the rod of his inheritance:
The LORD of hosts *is* his name.

The prophet Isaiah, when he prophesied of the captivity in Babylon, added warnings against idolatry, and largely exposed the sottishness of idolaters; not only because the temptations in Babylon would be in danger of drawing the Jews there to idolatry, but because the afflictions in Babylon were designed to cure them of their idolatry. Thus the prophet Jeremiah here arms people against the idolatrous usages and customs of the heathen; not only for the use of those that were gone to Babylon, but of those also that stayed behind; that, being convinced and reclaimed by the word of God, the rod might be prevented, and it is written for our learning. Observe here,

First. A solemn charge given to the people of God not to conform themselves to the ways and customs of the heathen. Let the house of Israel hear and receive this word from the God of Israel, "Learn not the way of the heathen;" do not approve of it, no, nor think indifferently concerning it, much less imitate it, or accustom yourselves to it. Let not any of their customs steal in among you, as they are apt to do insensibly, nor mingle themselves with your religion. Note, It ill becomes those that are taught of God, to learn the way of the heathen, and to think of worshipping the true God with such rites and ceremonies as they used in the worship of their false gods: see *Deu.* xii. 29—31. It was the way of the heathen to worship the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; to whom they gave Divine honours, and from them they expected Divine favours, and therefore according as the signs of heaven were, whether they were auspicious or ominous, they thought themselves countenanced or discountenanced by their deities; which made them observe those signs, the eclipses of the sun and moon, the conjunctions and oppositions of the planets, and all the unusual phenomena of the celestial globe, with a great deal of anxiety and trembling. Business was stopped, if any thing occurred that was thought to bode ill; if it did but thunder on their left hand they were almost as if they had been thunderstruck. Now God would not have his people to be "dismayed at the signs of heaven;" to reverence the stars as deities, or to frighten themselves with any prognostications grounded upon them. Let them fear the God of heaven, and keep up a reverence of his providence, and then they need not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the stars in their courses fight not against any that are at peace with God. The heathen are dismayed at these signs, for they know no better; but let not the house of Israel, that are taught of God, be so.

Secondly. Divers good reasons given to enforce this charge.

1. The way of the heathen is very ridiculous and absurd, and is condemned even by the dictates of right reason, ver. 3. The statutes and ordinances of the heathen are vanity itself, they cannot stand the test of a rational disquisition. This is again and again insisted upon here, as it was by Isaiah. The Chaldeans valued themselves by their wisdom, in which they thought they excelled all their neighbours; but the prophet here shews that they and all others that worshipped idols, and expected help and relief from them, were brutish and sottish, and had not common sense.

1st. Consider what the idol is that is worshipped. It was a tree cut out of the forest originally, it was fitted up by the hands of the workman, squared and sawed, and worked into shape: see *Isa.* xliv. 12, &c. But after all it was but the stock of a tree, fitter to make a gate-post of than any thing else. But to hide the wood they deck it with silver and gold, they gild or lacker it, or they deck it with gold and silver lace, or cloth of tissue. They fasten it to its place, which they themselves have assigned it, with nails and hammers, that it fall not, or be thrown down, or stolen away, ver. 14. The image is made straight enough, and it cannot be denied but that the workman did his part, for it is upright as the palm-tree, ver. 5. It looks stately, and stands up as if it were going to speak to you, but it cannot speak, it is a poor dumb creature; nor can it take one step towards your relief. If there be any occasion for it to shift its place, it must be carried in procession, for it cannot go. Very fitly doth it come in here, "Be not afraid of them," no more than of the signs of heaven. "Be not afraid" of incurring their displeasure, "for they can do no evil;" be not afraid of forfeiting their favour, for "neither is it in them to do good." If you think to mend the matter by mending the materials of which the idol is made, you deceive yourselves. Idols of gold and silver are as unworthy to be worshipped as wooden gods, "The stock is a doctrine of vanities," ver. 8; it teacheth lies, teacheth lies concerning God. It is an instruction of vanities; wood it is. It is likely the idols of gold and silver had wood underneath for the substratum; and then "silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish," imported from beyond sea, "and gold from Uphaz," or Phaz, which is sometimes rendered, the fine gold, *Ps.* xxi. 3. A great deal of art is used, and pains taken about it. They are

not such ordinary mechanics that are employed about these as about the wooden gods, ver. 3. These are cunning men; it is "the work of the workman," the graver must do his part when it has past through "the hands of the founder." Those were but decked here and there with silver and gold, these are gold and silver all over. And that these gods might be reverenced as kings, "blue and purple is their clothing," the colour of royal robes, ver. 9, which amuseth ignorant worshippers, but makes the matter no better. For what is the idol when it is made, and when they have made the best they can of it? He tells us, ver. 14, "They are falsehood," they are not what they pretend to be, but a great cheat put upon the world. They are worshipped as the gods that give us breath, and life, and sense, whereas they are lifeless, senseless things themselves, "and there is no breath in them;" 'no spirit in them,' so the word is; they are not animated or inhabited, as they are supposed to be, by any Divine spirit, or Numen; they are so far from being gods, that they have not so much as "the spirit of a beast that goes downward." "They are vanity, and the work of errors," ver. 15. Inquire into the use of them, and you will find they are vanity; they are good for nothing, no help is to be expected from them, nor any confidence put in them. They are a deceitful work, works of illusions, or mere mockeries; so some read the following clause. They delude those that put their trust in them, make fools of them, or rather, they make fools of themselves. Inquire into the rise of them, and they are the work of errors, grounded upon the grossest mistakes that ever men that pretended to reason were guilty of. They are the creatures of a deluded fancy; and the errors by which they were produced they propagate among their worshippers.

2nd. Infer from hence what the idolaters are that worship these idols; ver. 8, "They are altogether brutish and foolish;" they that make them are like unto them, senseless and stupid, and there is no spirit in them; no use of reason, else they would never believe in such gods; no sense of honour, else they would never stoop to them; ver. 14, "Every man" that makes or worships idols, is become "brutish in his knowledge;" that is, brutish for want of knowledge; or brutish in that very thing which one would think they should be fully acquainted with: compare *Jude* 10, "What they know naturally," what they cannot but know by the light of nature, "in those things as brute beasts they corrupt themselves." Though in the works of creation they cannot but see the eternal power and godhead of the Creator, yet they "are become vain in their imaginations, not liking to retain God in their knowledge:" see *Rom.* i. 21, 28. Nay, whereas they thought it a piece of wisdom thus to multiply gods, it really was the greatest folly they could be guilty of. "The world by wisdom knew not God," 1 *Cor.* i. 21; *Rom.* i. 22. "Every founder is" himself "confounded by the graven image;" when he has made it by a mistake, he is more and more confirmed in his mistake by it; he is bewildered, bewitched, and cannot disentangle himself from the snare. Or, it is what he will one time or other be ashamed of.

2. The God of Israel is the one only living and true God, and those that have him for their God need not make their application to any other; nay, to set up any other in competition with him is the greatest affront and injury that can be done him. Let the house of Israel cleave to the God of Israel, and serve and worship him only; for,

1st. He is a nonsuch. Whatever men may set in competition with him, there is none to be compared with him. The prophet turns from speaking with the utmost disdain of the idols of the heathen, as well he might, to speak with the most profound and awful reverence of the God of Israel, ver. 6, 7, "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord," none of all the heroes which the heathen have deified, and make such ado about; the dead men of whom they made dead images, and worshipped them. Some were deified and adored for their wisdom; but among all the wise men of the nations, the greatest philosophers, or statesmen, as Apollo or Hermes, there is none like thee. Others were deified and adored for their dominion; but in all their royalty, so it may be read, among all their kings, as Saturn and Jupiter, there is none like unto thee. What is the glory of a man that invented a useful art, or founded a flourishing kingdom, (and these were grounds sufficient among the heathen to entitle men to an apotheosis,) compared with the glory of Him that is the Creator of the world, and that "formeth the spirit of man within him?" What is the glory of the greatest prince or potentate compared with the glory of Him whose "kingdom ruleth over all?" He acknowledgeth, ver. 6, "O Lord, thou art great," infinite and immense, and "thy name is great in might," thou hast all power, and art known to have it. Men's name is often beyond their might; they are thought to be greater than they are; but God's name is great, and no greater than he really is. And, therefore, "Who would not fear thee, O King of nations?" Who would not choose to worship such a God as this, that can do every thing, rather than such dead idols as the heathen worship, that can do nothing? Who would not be afraid of offending or forsaking a God whose name is so great in might? Which of all the nations, if they understand themselves aright, would not fear him who is the King of nations? Note, It is not only the house of Israel that is bound to worship the great Jehovah as the God of Israel, the King of saints, *Rev.* xv. 4. 5, but all the families of the earth are bound to worship him as King of nations; for to him it doth appertain, to him it suits and agrees. Note, There is an admirable decency and congruity in the worshipping of God only. It is fit that he that is God alone should alone be served; that he that is Lord of all should be served by all; that he that is great should be greatly feared and greatly praised.

2nd. His verity is as evident as the idols' vanity, ver. 10. They are the work of men's hands; and therefore nothing is more plain than that it is a jest to worship them, if that may be called a jest which is so great an indignity to him that made us. "But the Lord is the true God," the God of truth, he is God in truth; God Jehovah is truth; he is not a counterfeit and pretender as they are, but is really what he has revealed himself to be; he is one we may depend upon, in whom and by whom we cannot be deceived. *First.* Look upon him as he is in himself, and he is the living God; he is life itself, has life in himself, and is the Fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are dead things, worthless and useless; but ours is a living God, and hath immortality. *Secondly.* Look upon him with relation to his creatures, and he is a king, and absolute monarch over them all; is their owner and ruler, has an incontestable right both to command them and dispose of them. As a king he protects the creatures, provides for their welfare, and preserves peace among them. He is an everlasting king. The counsels of his kingdom were from everlasting, and the continuance of it will be to everlasting. He is a king of eternity. The idols whom they call their kings are but of yesterday, and will soon be abolished; and the kings of the earth that set them up to be worshipped will themselves be in the dust shortly; but "the Lord shall reign for ever, thy God, O Zion, unto all generations."

3rd. None knows the power of his anger. Let us stand in awe, and not dare to provoke him by giving that glory to another which is due to him alone; for at his wrath the earth shall tremble, even the strongest and stoutest of the kings of the earth; nay, the earth, as firmly as it is fixed, when he pleaseth, is made to quake, and the rocks to tremble, *Ps.* civ. 32; *Hab.* iii. 6, 10. Though the nations should join together to contend with him, and unite their force, yet they would be found utterly unable not only to resist, but even to abide his indignation. They cannot only not make head against it, for it would overcome them, but they cannot bear up under it, for it would overload them, *Ps.* lxxvi, 7, 8; *Nah.* i. 6.

4th. He is the God of nature, the Fountain of all being; and all the powers of nature are at his command and dispose, ver. 12, 13. The God we worship is he that made the heavens and the earth, and has a sovereign dominion over both. So that his invisible things are manifested and proved in the things that are seen.

First. If we look back we find that the whole world owed its original to him, as its first cause. It was a common saying, even among the Greeks, 'He that sets up to be another god ought first to make another world.' While the heathen worship gods that they made, we worship the God that made us and all things. *1st.* The earth is a body of vast bulk, has valuable treasures in its bowels, and more valuable fruit on its surface. It and them he hath made by his power; and it is by no less than an infinite power that it hangs upon nothing, as it doth, *Job* xxvi. 7; *ponderibus librata suis*,—'poised by its own weight.' *2nd.* The world, the habitable part of the earth, is admirably fitted for the use and service of man, and he hath established it so by his wisdom, so that it continues serviceable in constant changes and yet a continual stability from one generation to another. Therefore both the earth and the world are his, *Ps.* xxiv. 1. *3rd.* The heavens are wonderfully stretched out to an incredible extent, and it is by his discretion that they are so, and that the motions of the heavenly bodies are directed for the benefit of this lower world. These declare his glory, *Ps.* xix. 1, and oblige us to declare it; and not give that glory to the heavens which is due to him that made them.

Secondly. If we look up, we see his providence to be a continued creation; ver. 13, "When he uttereth his voice," gives the word of command, "there is a multitude of waters in the heavens," which are poured out on the earth, whether for judgment or mercy, as he intends them. When he uttereth his voice in the thunder, presently there follow thunder showers, in which there are a multitude of waters; and those come with a noise, as the margin reads it; and we read of the noise of abundance of rain, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 41. Nay, there are wonders done daily in the kingdom of nature without noise; "He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth," from all parts of the earth, even the most remote, and chiefly those that lie next the sea. All the earth pays the tribute of vapours, because all the earth receives the blessing of rain. And thus the moisture in the universe, like the money in a kingdom, and the blood in the body, is continually circulating for the good of the whole. Those vapours produce wonders, for of them are formed lightnings for the rain, and the winds, which God from time to time brings forth out of his treasures, as there is occasion for them, directing them all in such measure, and for such use, as he thinks fit, as payments are made out of the treasury. All the meteors are so ready to serve God's purposes, that he seems to have treasures of them that cannot be exhausted, and may at any time be drawn from, *Ps.* cxxxv. 7. God glories in the treasures he has of these, *Job* xxxviii. 22, 23. This God can do; but which of the idols of the heathen can do the like? Note, There is no sort of weather but furnisheth us with a proof and instance of the wisdom and power of the great Creator.

5th. This God is Israel's God in covenant, and the felicity of every Israelite indeed. Therefore let the house of Israel cleave to him, and not forsake him to embrace idols; for if they do they certainly change for the worse; for, ver. 16, "The portion of Jacob is not like them." Their rock is not as our rock, *Deu.* xxxii. 31, nor ours like their mole-hills. Note, *First.* They that have the Lord for their God have a full and complete happiness in him. The God of Jacob is the portion of Jacob; he is his all, and in him he hath enough, and needs no more in this world or the other. In him we have a worthy portion, *Ps.* xvi. 5. *Secondly.* If we have an entire satisfaction and complacency in God as our portion, he will have a gracious delight in us as his people, whom he owns as the rod of his inheritance, his possession and treasure, with whom he dwells, and by whom he is served and honoured. *Thirdly.* It is the unspeakable comfort of all the Lord's people, that he that is their God is the former of all things, and therefore is able to do all that for them, and give all that to them, which they stand in need of. Their help stands in his name who made heaven and earth; and he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts in heaven and earth; hath them all at his command, and will command them into the service of his people, when there is occasion. This is the name by which they know him, which they first give him the glory of, and then take to themselves the comfort of. *Fourthly.* Herein God's people are happy above all other people,—happy indeed, *bona si sua norint*,—'did they but know their blessedness.' The gods which the heathen pride, and please, and so portion themselves in, are vanity and a lie; but "the portion of Jacob is not like them."

Thirdly. The prophet having thus compared the gods of the heathen with the God of Israel, (between whom there is no comparison,) reads the doom, the certain doom, of all those pretenders, and directs the Jews in God's name to read it to the worshippers of idols, though they were their lords and masters; ver. 11. "Thus shall ye say unto them," and the God ye serve will bear you out in saying it, "The gods which have not made the heavens and the earth," and therefore are no gods, but usurpers of the honour due to him only who did make heaven and earth, "those shall perish," perish of course, because they are vanity; perish by his righteous sentence, because they are rivals with him. As gods they shall perish "from off the earth," even all those things on earth beneath which they make gods of, "and from under these heavens," even all those things in the firmament of heaven, under the highest heavens, which are deified, according to the distribution in the second commandment. These words in the original are not in the Hebrew, like all the rest, but in the Chaldee dialect, that the Jews in captivity might have this ready to say to the Chaldeans in their own language, when they tempted them to idolatry, Do you press us to worship your gods? We will never do that; for, *1st.* They are counterfeit deities. They are no gods; for they "have not made the heavens and the earth," and therefore are not entitled to our homage, nor are we indebted to them either for the products of the earth or the influences of heaven, as we are to the God of Israel. The primitive Christians would say, when they were urged to worship such a god, 'Let him make me a world, and he shall be my god.' While we have him to worship who made heaven and earth, it is very absurd to worship any other. *2nd.* They are condemned deities. They shall perish; the time shall come when they shall be no more respected as they are now, but shall be buried in oblivion, and they and their worshippers shall sink together; the earth shall no longer bear them, the heavens shall no longer cover them, but both shall abandon them. It is repeated, ver. 15, "In the time of their visitation," when God comes to reckon with idolaters, he shall make them sick of their idols, and glad to be rid of them; they shall "cast them to the moles and to the bats," *Isa.* ii. 20. Whatever runs against God and religion will be run down at last.

17 Gather up thy wares out of the land,
O inhabitant of the fortress.
18 For thus saith the LORD, [this once,
Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at

And will distress them, that they may find *it so*.
19 Woe is me for my hurt!
My wound is grievous; but I said,
Truly this *is* a grief, and I must bear it.
20 My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken:
My children are gone forth of me, and they *are* not:
There is none to stretch forth my tent any more,
And to set up my curtains.
21 For the pastors are become brutish,
And have not sought the LORD:
Therefore they shall not prosper,
And all their flocks shall be scattered.
22 Behold, the noise of the bruit is come,
And a great commotion out of the north country,
To make the cities of Judah desolate,
And a den of dragons.
23 O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself:
It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.
24 O LORD, correct me, but with judgment;
Not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.
25 Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not,
And upon the families that call not on thy name:
For they have eaten up Jacob,
And devoured him, and consumed him,
And have made his habitation desolate.

In these verses,

First. The prophet threatens in God's name the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 17, 18. The Jews that continued in their own land, after some were carried into captivity, were very secure. They thought themselves inhabitants of a fortress, their country was their stronghold, and in their own conceit impregnable, but they are here bidden to think of leaving it; they must prepare to go after their brethren, and pack up their effects in expectation of it. "Gather up thy wares out of the land," contract your affairs, and bring them into as little a compass as you can. "Arise, depart, this is not your rest," *Mic.* ii. 10. Let not what you have lie scattered, for the Chaldeans will be upon you again, to be the executioners of the sentence God has passed upon you; ver. 18, "Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once." They have hitherto dropped out, by a few at a time, but one captivity more shall make a thorough riddance, and they shall be slung out as a stone out of a sling, so easily, so thoroughly, shall they be cast out; nothing of them shall remain; they shall be thrown out with violence, and driven to a place at a great distance off in a little time: see this comparison used to signify an utter destruction, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 29. Yet once more God will shake their land, and shake the wicked out of it, *Heb.* xii. 26. He adds, "And I will distress them, that they may find it so." He will not only throw them out hence, (that he may do, and yet they may be easy elsewhere,) but wherever they shall go trouble shall follow them; they shall be perplexed and straitened, and at a loss within themselves; and who or what can make those easy whom God will distress? Whom he will distress, that they may find it so; that is, that they may feel that which they would not believe. They were told many a time of the weight of God's wrath, and their utter inability to make head against it, or bear up under it; were told that their sin would be their ruin, and they would not regard or credit what was told them, but now they shall find it so; and therefore God will pursue them with his judgments, that they may find it so, and be forced to acknowledge it. Note, Sooner or later sinners will find it just so as the word of God has represented things to them, and no better, and that the threatenings were not bugbears.

Secondly. He brings in the people sadly lamenting their calamities; ver. 19, "Woe is me for my hurt!" Some make this the prophet's own lamentation, not for himself, but for the calamities and desolations of his country. He mourned for those that would not be persuaded to mourn for themselves; and since there were none that had so much sense as to join with him, he weeps in secret, and cries out, "Woe is me!" In mournful times it becomes us to be of a mournful spirit. But it may be taken as the language of the people, considered as a body, and therefore speaking as a single person. It is what they should say. The prophet puts these words into their mouths; whether they would say them or no, they should have cause to say them. Some among them would thus bemoan themselves, and all of them at last would be forced to do it. They lament it,

1. That the affliction is very great, and it is very hard to them to bear it; the more hard, because they had not been used to trouble, and now did not expect it. "Woe is me for my hurt!" not for what I fear, but for what I feel; for they are not, as some are, worse frightened than hurt. Nor is it a slight hurt, but a wound, a wound that is grievous, very painful, and very threatening.

2. That there is no remedy but patience. They cannot help themselves, but must sit still, and abide it. "But I said," when I was about to complain of my wound, To what purpose is it to complain? "This is a grief, and I must bear it" as well as I can. This is the language rather of a sullen than of a gracious submission; of a patience perforce, not a patience by principle. When I am in affliction, I should say, This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it is the will of God I should; because his wisdom has appointed this for me, and his grace will make it work for good to me. This is receiving evil at the hand of God, *Job* ii. 10; but to say, This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it, is but a brutal patience, and argues a want of those good thoughts of God which we should always have, even under our afflictions, saying, not only, God can and will do what he pleaseth, but, Let him do what he pleaseth.

3. That the country was quite ruined and wasted; ver. 10, "My tabernacle is spoiled." Jerusalem, though a strong city, now proves as weak and movable as a tabernacle. Their government is dissolved, and their state fallen to pieces, like a tabernacle or tent, when it is taken down, and all its cords, that should keep it together, are broken. Or, by the tabernacle here may be meant the temple, the sanctuary, which at first was but a tabernacle, and is now called so, as then it was sometimes called a temple. Their church is ruined, and all the supports of it fail. It was a general destruction of church and state, city and country; and there were none to repair these desolations; "My children are gone forth of me," some are fled, others slain, others carried into captivity, so that as to me they are not. I am like to be an outcast, and to perish for want of shelter; for "there is none to stretch forth my tent any more," none of my children that used to do it for me, "none to set up my curtains," none to do me any service. "Jerusalem has none to guide her of all her sons," *ch.* li. 18.

4. That the rulers took no care, nor any proper measures, for the redress of their grievances, and the re-establishing of their ruined state; ver. 21, "The pastors are become brutish." When the tents, the shepherds' tents, were spoiled, ver. 20, it concerned the shepherds to look after them, but they were foolish shepherds. Their kings and princes had no regard at all to the public welfare, seemed to have no sense of the desolations of the land, but were quite besotted and infatuated. The priests, the pastors of God's tabernacle, did a great deal towards the ruin of religion, but nothing towards the repair of it. They are brutish indeed; for "they have not sought the Lord;" they have neither made their peace with him nor their prayer to him; they had no eye to him and his providence, in their management of their affairs; they neither acknowledged the judgment nor expected the deliverance to come from his hand. Note, Those are brutish people that do not seek the Lord, that live without prayer, and live without God in the world. Every man is either a saint or a brute; but it is sad indeed with a people when their pastors, that should feed them with knowledge and understanding, are themselves thus brutish. And what comes of it? "Therefore they shall not prosper;" none of their attempts for the public safety shall succeed. Note, Those cannot expect to prosper who do not by faith and prayer take God along with them in all their ways. And when the pastors are brutish, what else can be expected but that all their flocks should be scattered; for "if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch." The ruin of a people is often owing to the brutishness of their pastors.

5. That the report of the enemy's approach was very dreadful; ver. 22, "The noise of the bruit is come," that is, of the report which at first was but whispered and bruited abroad, as wanting confirmation. It now proves too true; there is a great commotion ariseth out of the north country, which threatens to make all the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons; for they must all expect to be sacrificed to the avarice and fury of the Chaldean army. And what else can that place expect but to be made a den of dragons, which has by sin made itself a den of thieves.

Thirdly. He turns to God, and addresseth himself to him, finding it to little purpose to speak to the people. It is some comfort to poor ministers, that if men will not hear them God will; and to him they have liberty of access at all times. Let them close their preaching with prayer, as the prophet, and then they shall have no reason to say they have laboured in vain.

1. The prophet here acknowledgeth the sovereignty and dominion of the Divine providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs both of nations and particular persons are directed and determined, ver. 23. This is an article of our faith, which is very proper for us to make confession of at the throne of grace, when we are complaining of an affliction, or suing for a mercy. "O Lord, I know," and believe, "that the way of man is not in himself." Nebuchadnezzar did not come of himself against our land, but by the direction of a Divine providence. We cannot of ourselves do any thing for our own relief, unless God work with us, and command deliverance for us; for, "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," though he seem in his walking to be perfectly at liberty, and to choose his own way. Those that had promised themselves a long enjoyment of their estates and possessions, when they were thrown out by the Chaldeans were made to know, by sad experience, that "the way of man is not in himself." The designs which men lay deep, and think well formed, are dashed to pieces in a moment. We must all apply this to ourselves, and mix faith with it, that we are not at our own dispose, but under a Divine direction; the event is often overruled quite contrary to our intention and expectation. We are not masters of our own way, nor can we think that every thing should be according to our mind; we must therefore refer ourselves to God, and acquiesce in his will. Some think the prophet mentions this here with design to make this comfortable use of it, that the way of the Chaldean army being not in themselves, they can do no more than God permits them; he can set bounds to these proud waves, and say, "Hitherto they shall come, and no farther." And a quieting consideration it is, that the most formidable enemies have no power against us, but what is given them from above.

2. He deprecates the Divine wrath, that it might not fall upon God's Israel, ver. 24. He speaks not for himself only, but on the behalf of his people; "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment," that is, in measure and with moderation, and in wisdom, no more than is necessary for the driving out of the foolishness that is bound up in our hearts. "Not in thine anger." How severe soever the correction be, let it come from thy love, and be designed for our good, and made to work for good; not to bring us to nothing, but to bring us home to thyself. Let it not be according to the desert of our sins, but according to the designs of thy grace. Note, 1st. We cannot pray in faith that we may never be corrected, while we are conscious to ourselves that we need it and deserve it, and know that as many as God loves he chastens. 2nd. The great thing we should dread in affliction is the wrath of God. Say not, Lord, do not correct me, but Lord, do not correct me in anger; for that will infuse wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery; that will "bring us to nothing." We may bear the smart of his rod, but we cannot bear the weight of his wrath.

3. He imprecates the Divine wrath against the oppressors and persecutors of Israel; ver. 25, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not." This prayer doth not come from a spirit of malice or revenge, nor is it intended to prescribe to God whom he should execute his judgments upon, or in what order; but, 1st. It is an appeal to his justice; as if he had said, 'Lord, we are a provoking people, but are there not other nations that are more so? And shall we only be punished? We are thy children, and may expect a fatherly correction; but they are thine enemies, and against them we have reason to think thine indignation should be, not against us.' This is God's usual method. The cup put into the hands of God's people is full of mixture, mixture of mercy; but the dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked of the earth; let them wring them out, *Ps.* lxxv. 8. 2nd. It is a prediction of God's judgments upon all the impenitent enemies of his church and kingdom. If judgment begin thus at the house of God, what shall be the end of those that obey not his Gospel? 1 *Pet.* iv. 17. See how the heathen are described, on whom God's fury shall be poured out. *First.* They are strangers to God, and are content to be so. They know him not, nor desire to know him. They are families that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they call not on God's name. And those that restrain prayer, it is an evidence they know not God; for they that know him will seek to him, and intreat his favour. *Secondly.* They are persecutors of the people of God, and are resolved to be so. They have eaten up Jacob, with as much greediness as those that are hungry eat their necessary food; nay, with more, for they never know when they have enough. They have devoured him, and consumed him, and made his habitation desolate, that is, the land in which he lives; or the temple of God

which is his habitation among them. Note, What the heathen, in their rage and malice, do against the people of God, though therein he makes use of them as the instruments of his correction, yet he will for that make them the objects of his indignation. This prayer is taken from *Ps.* lxxix. 6, 7.

CHAPTER XI.

In this chapter, I. God by the prophet puts the people in mind of the covenant he had made with their fathers; and how much he had insisted upon it, as the condition of the covenant, that they should be obedient to him, ver. 1—7. II. He chargeth it upon them, that they in succession to their fathers, and in confederacy among themselves, had obstinately refused to obey him, ver. 8—10. III. He threatens to punish them with utter ruin for their disobedience, especially for their idolatry, ver. 11, 13, and tells them, that their idols should not save them, ver. 12, that their prophets should not pray for them, ver. 14, and justifies his proceedings herein. they having brought all this mischief upon themselves by their own folly and wilfulness, ver. 15—17. IV. Here is an account of a conspiracy formed against Jeremiah by his fellow-citizens, the men of Anathoth; God's discovery of it to him, ver. 18, 19; his prayer against them, ver. 20; and a prediction of God's judgments upon them for it, ver. 21—23.

THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; 3 And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Cursed *be* the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, 4 Which I commanded your fathers in the day *that* I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God: 5 That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as *it is* this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD. 6 Then the LORD said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. 7 For I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day *that* I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. 8 Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded *them* to do; but they did *them* not. 9 And the LORD said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10 They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

The prophet here, as prosecutor in God's name, draws up an indictment against the Jews, for wilful disobedience to the commands of their rightful sovereign. And for the more solemn management of this charge,

First. He produceth the commission he had to draw up the charge against them. He did not take pleasure in accusing the children of his people, but God commanded him to speak it to the men of Judah, ver. 1, 2. In the original it is plural, 'Speak ye this,' for what he said to Jeremiah was the same that he gave in charge to all his servants the prophets. They none of them said any other but what Moses in the law had said; to that therefore they must refer themselves, and direct the people, "Hear the words of this covenant;" turn to your Bibles, be judged by them. Jeremiah must now proclaim this "in the cities of Judah, and the streets of Jerusalem," that all may hear, for all are concerned. All the words of reproof and conviction which the prophets spake were grounded upon the words of the covenant, and agreed with that; and therefore hear these words, and understand by them upon what terms you stood with God at first, and then, by comparing yourselves with the covenant, you will soon be aware upon what terms you now stand with him.

Secondly. He opens the charter upon which their state was founded, and by which they held their privileges. They had forgotten the tenor of it, and lived as if they thought the grant was absolute, and that they might do what they pleased, and yet have what God had promised; or, as if they thought the keeping up the ceremonial observances was all that God required of them. He therefore shews them, with all possible plainness, that the thing God insisted upon was obedience, that was better than sacrifice. He said, "Obey my voice," ver. 4, and again, ver. 7, "Obey my voice." Own God for your master, give up yourselves to him as his subjects and servants; attend to all the declarations of his mind and will, and make conscience of complying with them. "Do my commandments, not only in some things, but "according to all which I command you;" make conscience of moral duties especially, and rest not in those that are merely ritual. "Hear the words of the covenant, and do them."

1. This was the original contract between God and them, when he first formed them into a people. It was what he commanded their fathers, when he first brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, ver. 4, and again, ver. 7. He never intended to take them under his conduct and protection upon any other terms. This was it that he required from them, in gratitude for the great things he did for them, when he brought them from the iron furnace. Therefore he redeemed them out of the service of the Egyptians, which was perfect slavery, that he might take them into his own service, which is perfect freedom, *Lu.* i. 74, 75.

2. This was not only laid before them then, but it was with the greatest importunity imaginable pressed upon them, ver. 7. God not only commanded, but earnestly protested, it to their fathers, when he brought them into covenant with himself. Moses inculcated it again and again, by precept upon precept, and line upon line.

3. This was made the condition of the relation between them and God which was so much their honour and privilege; "So shall ye be my people, and I will be your God;" I will own you for mine, and you may call upon me as yours; which intimates, that if they refused to obey they could no longer claim the benefit of the relation.

4. It was upon these terms that the land of Canaan was given them for a possession; "Obey my voice, that I may perform the oath sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey," ver. 5. God was ready to fulfil the promise, but then they must fulfil the condition; if not, the promise is void, and it is just with God to turn them out of possession. Being brought in upon their good behaviour, they had no wrong done them if they were turned out upon their ill behaviour. Obedience was the rent reserved by the lease, with a power to re-enter for nonpayment.

5. This obedience was not only made a condition of the blessing, but was required under the penalty of a curse. This is mentioned first here, ver. 3, that they might if possible be awakened by the terrors of the Lord; "Cursed be the man," though it were but a single person, "that obeys not the words of this covenant," much more when it is the body of the nation that rebels. There are curses of the covenant as well as blessings; and Moses set before them not only life and good, but death and evil, *Deut.* xxx. 15; so that they had fair warning given them of the fatal consequences of disobedience.

6. Lest this covenant should be forgotten, and, because out of mind, should be thought out of date, God had from time to time called to them to remember it, and by his servants the prophets had made a continual claim of this rent, so that they could not plead in excuse of their nonpayment, that it had never been demanded. From the day he brought them out of Egypt to this day, and that was near a thousand years, he had been, in one way or other, at sundry times, and in divers manners, protesting to them the necessity of obedience. God keeps an account how long we have enjoyed the means of grace, and how powerful those means have been; how often we have been not only spoken to, but protested to, concerning our duty.

7. This covenant was consented to; ver. 5, "Then answered I, and said, Amen, so be it, O Lord." These are the words of the prophet, expressing either, 1st. His own consent to the covenant for himself, and his desire to have the benefit of it. God promised Canaan to the obedient; Lord, saith he, I take thee at thy word, I will be obedient; let me have mine inheritance in the land of promise, of which Canaan is a type. Or, 2nd. His good will and good wish that his people might have the benefit of it; Amen. Lord, let them still be kept in possession of this good land, and not turned out of it; make good the promise to them. Or, 3rd. His people's consent to the covenant; "Then answered I," in the name of the people, "So be it." Taking it in this sense, it refers to the declared consent which the people gave to the covenant, not only to the precepts of it, when they said, "All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient," but to the penalties, when they said Amen to all the curses upon mount Ebal. The more solemnly we have engaged ourselves to God, the more reason we have to hope that it will be perpetual, and yet here it did not prove so.

Thirdly. He chargeth them with breach of covenant, such a breach as amounted to a forfeiture of their charter, ver. 8. God had said again and again, by his law and by his prophets, "Obey my voice," do as you are bidden, and all shall be well; "yet they obeyed not;" and because they were resolved not to submit their souls to God's commandments they would not so much as incline their ears to them, but got as far as they could out of call. "They walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart," followed their own inventions; every man did as his fancy and humour led him, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, both in their devotions and in their conversations: see *ch.* vii. 24. And what then can they expect, but to fall under the curse of the covenant, since they would not comply with the commands and conditions of it? "Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant," that is, all the threatenings contained in it, because they did not what they were commanded. Note, The words of the covenant shall not fall to the ground. If we do not by our obedience qualify ourselves for the blessings of it, we shall by our disobedience bring ourselves under the curses of it.

And that which aggravated their defection from God, and their rebellion against him, was, that it was general, and, as it were, by consent, ver. 9, 10. Jeremiah himself saw that many lived in open disobedience to God, but the Lord told him the matter was worse than he thought of: "A conspiracy is found among them," by him whose eye is upon the hidden works of darkness. There is a combination against God and religion, a dangerous design formed to overthrow God's government, and bring in the pretenders, the counterfeit deities. This intimates, that they were wilful and deliberate in wickedness: they rebelled against God, not through incogitancy, but presumptuously, and with a high hand; that they were subtle and ingenious in wickedness, and carried on their plot against religion with a great deal of art and management; that they were linked together in the designs, and, as is usual among conspirators, engaged to stand by one another in it, and to live and die together; they were resolved to go through with it. A cursed conspiracy! O that there were not the like in our day! Observe, 1. What the conspiracy was. They designed to overthrow Divine revelation, and set that aside, and persuade people not to hear, not to heed the words of God. They did all they could to derogate from the authority of the Scriptures, and to lessen the value of them. They designed to draw people after other gods, to serve them, to consult them as their oracles, and make court to them as their benefactors. Human reason shall be their god; a light within their god; an infallible judge their god; saints and angels their gods; the god of this or the other nation shall be theirs: thus under several disguises they are in the same confederacy "against the Lord and against his anointed." 2. Who were in the conspiracy. One would have expected to find some foreigners ringleaders in it. No; 1st. The inhabitants of Jerusalem are in

conspiracy with the men of Judah. City and country agree in this, however they may differ in other things. 2nd. Those of this generation seem to be in conspiracy with those of the foregoing generation, to carry on the war from age to age against religion. "They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers," and are risen up in their stead, a seed of evil doers, an increase of sinful men, *Num.* xxxii. 14. In Josiah's time there had been a reformation, but after his death they returned to the idolatries which then they had renounced. 3rd. Judah and Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes and the two, that were often at daggers' drawing one with another, yet were in a conspiracy to break the covenant God had made with their fathers, even with the heads of all the twelve tribes. The house of Israel began the revolt, but the house of Judah soon came into the conspiracy. Now what else could be expected, but that God should take severe methods, both for the chastising of these conspirators and the crushing of this conspiracy? for none ever hardened his heart thus against God and prospered. He that rolleth this stone, it will return upon him.

11 Therefore thus saith the LORD,
Behold, I will bring evil upon them,
Which they shall not be able to escape;
And though they shall cry unto me,
I will not hearken unto them. [salem go,
12 Then shall the cities of Judah and inhabitants of Jeru-
And cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense:
But they shall not save them at all
In the time of their trouble.
13 For *according to* the number of thy cities
Were thy gods, O Judah;
And *according to* the number of the streets of Jerusalem
Have ye set up altars to *that* shameful thing,
Even altars to burn incense unto Baal.
14 Therefore pray not thou for this people,
Neither lift up a cry or prayer for them:
For I will not hear *them* in the time that they cry unto me
For their trouble.
15 What hath my beloved to do in mine house,
Seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many,
And the holy flesh is passed from thee?
When thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest.
16 The LORD called thy name,
A green olive tree, fair, *and* of goodly fruit:
With the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire
And the branches of it are broken. [upon it,
17 For the LORD of hosts, that planted thee,
Hath pronounced evil against thee,
For the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of
Which they have done against themselves [Judah,
To provoke me to anger in offering incense unto Baal.

This paragraph, which contains so much of God's wrath, might very well be expected to follow upon that which goes next before, which contained so much of his people's sin. When God found so much evil among them, we cannot think it strange if it follows, "Therefore I will bring evil upon them," ver. 11; the evil of punishment for the evil of sin, and there is no remedy, no relief; the decree is gone forth, and the sentence will be executed.

First. They cannot help themselves, but will be found too weak to contest with God's judgments. It is evil "which they shall not be able to escape," or to go forth out of, by any evasion whatsoever. Note, Those that will not submit to God's government shall not be able to escape his wrath; there is no fleeing from his justice, no avoiding his cognizance. Evil pursues sinners, and entangles them in snares, out of which they cannot extricate themselves.

Secondly. Their God will not help them. His providence shall no way favour them; "Though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them." In their affliction they will seek the God whom before they slighted, and cry to him whom before they would not vouchsafe to speak to. But how can they expect to speed? For he has plainly told us, that he that "turns away his ears from hearing the law," as they did, ver. 8, for they inclined not their ear, even their prayer shall be an abomination to him, as the word of the Lord was now to them a reproach.

Thirdly. Their idols shall not help them, ver. 12. They shall "go and cry to the gods to whom they" now "offer incense, and put them in mind of the costly services wherewith they had honoured them, expecting they should now have relief from them, but in vain. They shall be sent to the gods whom they served, *Jud.* x. 4; *Deu.* xxxii. 37, 38; and what the better? "They shall not save them at all;" shall do nothing towards their salvation, nor give them any prospect of it; they shall not afford them the least comfort, or relief, or mitigation of their trouble. It is God only that is a friend at need, a present powerful help in time of trouble. The idols cannot help themselves, how then should they help their worshippers? Those that make idols of the world and the flesh will in vain have recourse to them in a day of distress. If the idols could have done any real kindness to their worshippers, they would have done it for this people, who had renounced the true God to embrace them, had multiplied them "according to the number of their cities," ver. 13, nay, in Jerusalem, "according to the number of their streets;" suspecting both their sufficiency and their readiness to help them, they must have many, lest a few would not serve; they must have them dispersed in every corner, lest they should be out of the way when they had occasion for them. In Jerusalem, the city which God had chosen to put his name there, publicly in the streets of Jerusalem, in every street, they had "altars to that shameful thing," that shame, even to Baal, which they ought to have been ashamed of, with which they did reproach the Lord, and bring confusion upon themselves. But now in their distress their many gods, and many altars, should stand them in no stead. Note, Those that will not be ashamed of their commission of sin as a wicked thing will be ashamed of their expectations from sin as a fruitless thing.

Fourthly. Jeremiah's prayers shall not help them, ver. 14. What God had said to him before, *ch.* vii. 16, he here saith again, "Pray not thou for this people." This is not designed for a command to the prophet so much as for a threatening to the people, that they should have no benefit by the prayers of their friends for them. God would give no encouragement to the prophets to pray for them, would not stir up the spirit of prayer, but cast a damp upon it; would put into their hearts to pray, not for the body of the people, but for the remnant among them; to pray for their eternal salvation, not for their deliverance from the temporal judgments that were coming upon them; and what other prayers were put up for them should not be heard. Those are in a sad case indeed that are cut off from the benefit of prayer. "I will not hear them when they cry," and therefore do not thou pray for them. Note, Those that have so far thrown themselves out of God's favour that he will not hear their prayers, cannot expect benefit by the prayers of others for them.

Fifthly. The profession they make of religion shall stand them in no stead, ver. 15. They were originally God's beloved, his spouse, he was married to them by the covenant of peculiarity; even the unbelieving Jews are said to be "beloved for the fathers' sakes," *Rom.* xi. 28. As such they had a place in God's house, they were admitted to worship in the courts of his temple, they did partake of God's altar, did eat of the flesh of their peace offerings, here called the holy flesh, which God had the honour of, and they had the comfort of. This they gloried in, and trusted to. What harm could come to those who were God's beloved, who were under the protection of his house! Even when they did evil, yet they rejoiced and gloried in this, made a mighty noise of this. And when their evil was, so the margin reads it, when trouble came upon them, they rejoiced in this, and made this their confidence. But their confidence would deceive them, for God has rejected it, they themselves having forfeited the privileges they so much boasted of. They have "wrought lewdness with many," have been guilty of spiritual whoredom, have worshipped many idols. And therefore, 1. God's temple will yield them no protection. It is fit the adulteress, especially when she has so often repeated her whoredoms, and is grown so impudent in them, and irreclaimable, should be put away, and turned out of doors. "What has my beloved to do in my house?" She is a scandal to it, and therefore it shall be no longer a shelter to her. 2. God's altar will yield them no satisfaction, nor can they expect any comfort from that; "The holy flesh is passed from thee," that is, an end will soon be put to thy sacrifices, when the temple shall be laid in ruins; and where then will the holy flesh be thou art so proud of? A holy heart will be a comfort to us when the holy flesh is passed from us; an inward principle of grace will make up the want of the outward means of grace. But woe unto us if the departure of the holy flesh be accompanied with the departure of the Holy Spirit.

Sixthly. God's former favours to them shall stand them in no stead, ver. 16, 17. Their remembrance of them shall be no comfort to them under their troubles, and God's remembrance of them shall be no argument for their relief. 1. It is true God had done great things for them; that people had been favourites above any people under the sun, they had been the darlings of heaven. God had called Israel's name a green olive-tree, and had made them so, for he miscalls nothing; he had planted them, ver. 17, had formed them into a people, with all the advantages they could have to make them a fruitful and flourishing people, so good was their law, and so good was their land. One would think no other but that a people so planted, so watered, so cultivated, should be, as the olive-tree is, ever green, in respect both of piety and prosperity, *Ps.* lii. 8. God called them fair, and of goodly fruit; both good for food and pleasant to the eye; both amiable and serviceable to God and man; for with the greenness and fatness of the olive both are honoured, *Jud.* ix. 9. 2. It is as true that they have done ill things against God. He had planted them a green olive, a good olive, but they were degenerated into a wild olive, *Rom.* xi. 17. Both the house of Israel and the house of Judah had done evil, had provoked God to anger in burning incense unto Baal, setting up other mediators between them and the supreme God beside the promised Messiah; nay, setting up other gods in competition with the true and living God, for they had gods many as well as lords many. 3. When they have carried themselves so ill, they can expect no other but that, notwithstanding what good he hath both done to them and designed for them, he should now bring upon them the evil he hath pronounced against them. He that made them will not save them. He that planted this green olive-tree, and expected fruit from it, finding it barren and grown wild, hath kindled fire upon it, to burn it as it stands, for being without fruit; it is twice dead, plucked up by the roots, *Jude* 12; it is cut down, and cast into the fire, the fittest place for trees that cumber the ground, *Mat.* iii. 10; the branches of it, the high and lofty boughs, (so the word signifies,) are broken, are broken down, both princes and priests cut off. And thus it proves that the evil done against God to provoke him to anger is really done against themselves, they wrong their own souls: God is out of their reach, but they ruin themselves: see *ch.* vii. 19. Note, Every sin against God is a sin against ourselves, and so it will be found sooner or later.

18 And the LORD hath given me knowledge *of it*, and I
Then thou shewedst me their doings. [know *it:*
19 But I *was* like a lamb *or* an ox *that* is brought to the
slaughter;
And I knew not that they had devised devices against
me, *saying*,
Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof,
And let us cut him off from the land of the living,
That his name may be no more remembered.
20 But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously,
That triest the reins and the heart,
Let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have
I revealed my cause.
21 Therefore thus saith the LORD
Of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying,
Prophesy not in the name of the LORD,
That thou die not by our hand:

22 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts,
Behold, I will punish them:
The young men shall die by the sword;
Their sons and their daughters shall die by famine:
23 And there shall be no remnant of them:
For I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth,
Even the year of their visitation.

The prophet Jeremiah hath much in his writings concerning himself, much more than Isaiah had, the times he lived in being very troublesome. Here we have (as it should seem) the beginning of his sorrows, which arose from those of his own city, Anathoth, a priests' city, and yet a malignant one. Observe here,

First. Their plot against him, ver. 19. They devised devices against him, laid their heads together to contrive how they might be in the most plausible and effectual manner the death of him. Malice is ingenious in its devices, as well as industrious in its prosecutions. They said concerning Jeremiah, "Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof," a proverbial expression; let us utterly destroy him, root and branch; let us destroy both the father and the family, as, when Naboth was put to death for treason, his sons were put to death with him. Or, rather, both the prophet and the prophecy; let us kill the one, and defeat the other; "Let us cut him off from the land of the living," as a false prophet, and load him with ignominy and disgrace, "that his name may no more be remembered" with respect. Let us sink his reputation, and so spoil the credit of his predictions. This was their plot; and, 1. It was a barbarous one; but so cruel have the persecutors of God's prophets been: they hunt for no less than the precious life, and very precious the lives are that they hunt for. But, 2. It was a baffled one. They thought to put an end to his days, but he survived most of his enemies; they thought to blast his memory, but it lives to this day, and will be blessed while time lasts.

Secondly. The information which God gave him of this conspiracy against him. He knew nothing of it himself, so artfully had they concealed it. He came to Anathoth, meaning no harm to them, and therefore fearing no harm from them, like a lamb or an ox, that thinks he is driven as usual to the field, when he is brought to the slaughter; so little did poor Jeremiah dream of the design his citizens that hated him had upon him. None of his friends could, and none of his enemies would, give him any notice of his danger, that he might shift for his own safety; as Paul's sister's son gave him intelligence of the Jews that were lying in wait for him. There is but a step between Jeremiah and death, but then "the Lord has given me knowledge of it," by dream, or vision, or impression upon his spirit, that he might save himself; as the king of Israel did upon the notice Elisha gave him, 2 *Kin.* vi. 10. Thus he came to know it: God shews him their doings; and such were their devices, that the discovering of them was the defeating of them. If God had not let him know his own danger, it would have been improved by unreasonable men against the reputation of his predictions, that he who foretold the ruin of his country could not foresee his own peril, and avoid it. See what care God takes of his prophets; he suffers no man to do them wrong; all the rage of their enemies cannot prevail to take them off, till they have finished their testimony. God knows all the secret designs of his and his people's enemies, and can, when he pleaseth, make them known; "A bird of the air shall carry the voice."

Thirdly. His appeal to God hereupon, ver. 20. His eye is to God as the Lord of hosts, that judgeth righteously. It is matter of comfort to us, when men deal unjustly with us, that we have a God to go to, who doth and will plead the cause of injured innocency, and appear against the injurious. God's justice, which is a terror to the wicked, is a comfort to the godly. His eye is to him, as the God that tries the reins and the heart; that perfectly sees what is in man, what are his thoughts and intents. He knew the integrity that was in Jeremiah's heart, and that he was not the man they represented him to be; he knew the wickedness that was in their hearts, though never so cunningly concealed and disguised. Now, 1. He prays judgment against them; "Let me see thy vengeance on them;" that is, do justice between me and them in such a way as thou pleasest. Some think there was something of human frailty in this prayer of his; at least Christ has taught us another lesson, both by his precept and pattern, which is, to pray for our persecutors. Others think it comes from a pure zeal for the glory of God, and a pious, prophetic indignation against men that were by profession priests, the Lord's ministers, and yet were so desperately wicked, as to fly out against one that did them no harm, purely for the service he did to God. This petition was a prediction that he should see God's vengeance on them. 2. He refers himself entirely to the judgment of God; "Unto thee have I revealed my cause;" that is, to thee I have committed it, not desiring or expecting to interest any other in it. Note, It is our comfort when we are wronged, that we have a God to commit our cause to; and our duty to commit it to him, with a resolution to acquiesce in his definitive sentence; to subscribe, and not prescribe, to him.

Fourthly. Judgment given against his persecutors, the men of Anathoth. It was to no purpose for him to appeal to the courts at Jerusalem, he could not have right done him there, the priests there would stand by the priests at Anathoth, and rather second them than discountenance them; but God will therefore take cognizance of the cause himself, and we are sure his judgment is according to truth. Here is,

1. Their crime recited on which the sentence is grounded, ver. 21. They sought the prophet's life, for they forbade him to prophesy upon pain of death; they were resolved either to silence him or slay him. The provocation he gave them was his prophesying in the name of the Lord, without license from them that were the governors of the city which he was a member of; and not prophesying such smooth things as they always bespoke. Their forbidding him to prophesy was in effect seeking his life; for it was seeking to defeat the end and business of his life, and to rob him of the comfort of it. It is as bad to God's faithful ministers to have their mouth stopped as to have their breath stopped. But especially when it was resolved that if he did prophesy, as certainly he would, notwithstanding their inhibition, he should die by their hand; they would be accusers, judges, executioners, and all. It used to be said that a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem, for there the great council sat; but so bitter were the men of Anathoth against Jeremiah, that they would undertake to be the death of him themselves. A prophet then shall find not only no honour, but no favour in his own country.

2. The sentence passed upon them for this crime, ver. 22, 23. God saith, "I will punish them;" let me alone to deal with them. 'I will visit this upon them,' so the word is; God will inquire into it, and reckon for it. Two of God's four sore judgments shall serve to ruin their town; the sword shall devour their young men, though they were young priests, not men of war; their character shall not be their protection. And famine shall destroy the children, sons and daughters, that tarry at home; which is a more grievous death than that by the sword, *Lam.* iv. 9. The destruction shall be final; ver. 23, "There shall be no remnant of them left," none to be the seed of another generation; they sought Jeremiah's life, and therefore they shall die; they would destroy him root and branch, that his name might be no more remembered, and therefore there shall be no remnant of them; and herein the Lord is righteous. Thus evil is brought upon them, even the year of their visitation; and that is evil enough, a recompence according to their deserts. Then shall Jeremiah see his desire upon his enemies. Note, Their condition is sad, that have the prayers of good ministers and good people against them.

CHAPTER XII.

In this chapter we have, I. The prophet's humble complaint to God of the success that wicked people had in their wicked practices, ver. 1, 2. and his appeal to God concerning his own integrity, ver. 3, with a prayer that God would for the sake of the public bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end, ver. 3, 4. II. God's rebuke to the prophet for his uneasiness at his present troubles, bidding him prepare for greater, ver. 5, 6. III. A sad lamentation of the present deplorable state of the Israel of God, ver. 7—13. IV. An intimation of mercy to God's people in a denunciation of wrath against their neighbours that helped forward their affliction, that they should be plucked out; but with a promise, that if they would at last join themselves with the people of God, they should come in shares with them in their privileges, ver. 14—17.

RIGHTEOUS *art* thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee:
Yet let me talk with thee of *thy* judgments:
Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?
Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?
2 Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root:
They grow, yea, they bring forth fruit:
Thou *art* near in their mouth,
And far from their reins.
3 But thou, O LORD, knowest me:
Thou hast seen me, and tried mine heart toward thee:
Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter,
And prepare them for the day of slaughter.
4 How long shall the land mourn,
And the herbs of every field wither,
For the wickedness of them that dwell therein?
The beasts are consumed, and the birds;
Because they said, He shall not see our last end.
5 If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee,
Then how canst thou contend with horses?

RUNNING FOOTMEN OF INDIA.

And *if* in the land of peace, *wherein* thou trustedst, *they wearied thee*,
Then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?
6 For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father,
Even they have dealt treacherously with thee;
Yea, they have called a multitude after thee:
Believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

The prophet doubts not but it would be of use to others to know what had passed between God and his soul; what temptations he had been assaulted with, and how he had got over them. And therefore he here tell us,

First. What liberty he humbly took, and was graciously allowed him, to reason with God concerning his judgments, ver. 1. He is about to plead with God, not to quarrel with him, or find fault with his proceedings, but to inquire into the meaning of them, that he might more and more see reason to be satisfied in them, and might have wherewith to answer both his own and others' objections against them. The works of the Lord, and the reasons of them, are sought out even of those that have pleasure therein, *Ps.* cxi. 2. We may not strive with our Maker, but we may reason with him. Now, the prophet lays down a truth of unquestionable certainty, which he resolves to abide by, in managing this argument, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee." Thus he arms himself against the temptation wherewith he was assaulted, to envy the prosperity of the wicked, before he entered into a parley with it. Note, When we are most in the dark concerning the meaning of God's dispensations, yet still we must resolve to keep up right thoughts of God, and must be confident of this, that he never did, nor ever will do, the least wrong to any of his creatures; even when his judgments are unsearchable as a great deep, and altogether unaccountable, yet his righteousness is as conspicuous and

immovable as the great mountains, *Ps.* xxxvi. 6. Though sometimes "clouds and darkness are round about him," yet "justice and judgment are" always "the habitation of his throne," *Ps.* xcvii. 2. When we find it hard to understand particular providences, we must have recourse to general truths as our first principles, and abide by them; however it be, "the Lord is righteous," see *Ps.* lxxiii. 1. And we must acknowledge it to him, as the prophet here, even when we plead with him, as those that have no thoughts of contending, but of learning; being fully assured that he will be justified when he speaks. Note, However we may see cause for our own information to plead with God, yet it becomes us to own that, whatever he saith or doth, he is in the right.

Secondly. What it was in the dispensations of Divine providence that he stumbled at, and that he thought would bear a debate. It was that which has been a temptation to many wise and good men, and such a one as they have hardly got over. 1. They see the designs and projects of wicked people successful; "The way of the wicked prospers;" they compass their malicious designs, and gain their point. 2. They see their affairs and concerns in a good posture; "They are happy," happy as the world can make them, though "they deal treacherously, very treacherously," both with God and man. They are hypocrites who are chiefly meant, as appears, ver. 2, who dissemble in their good professions, and depart from their good beginnings and good promises, and in both they deal treacherously, very treacherously. It has been said that men cannot expect to prosper who are unjust and dishonest in their dealings; but these deal treacherously, and yet they are happy. He shews, ver. 2, both their prosperity and their abuse of their prosperity. 1st. God had been very indulgent to them, and they were got beforehand in the world. They are planted in a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and thou hast planted them; nay, thou didst cast out the heathen to plant them, *Ps.* xliv. 2; lxxx. 8. Many a tree is planted that yet never grows or comes to any thing; but they have taken root, their prosperity seems to be confirmed and settled; they take root in the earth, for there they fix themselves, and thence they draw the sap of all their satisfaction. Yet many trees take root which yet never come on; but these grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; their families are built up, they live high, and spend at a great rate; and all this was owing to the benignity of the Divine providence, which smiled upon them, *Ps.* lxxiii. 7. 2nd. Thus God had favoured them, though they had dealt treacherously with him; "Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins." This was no uncharitable censure, for he spoke by the spirit of prophecy, without which it is not safe to charge men with hypocrisy, whose appearances are plausible. Observe, *First.* Though they cared not for thinking of God, nor had any sincere affection to him, yet they could easily persuade themselves to speak of him frequently, and with an air of seriousness. Piety from the teeth outward is no difficult thing. Many speak the language of Israel that are not Israelites indeed. *Secondly.* Though they had on all occasions the name of God ready in their mouth, and accustomed themselves to those forms of speech that savoured of piety, yet they could not persuade themselves to keep up the fear of God in their hearts. The form of godliness should engage us to keep up the power of it; but with them it did not do so.

Thirdly. What comfort he had in appealing to God concerning his own integrity; ver. 3, "But thou, O Lord, knowest me." Probably the wicked men he complains of were forward to reproach and censure him, *ch.* xviii. 18, in reference to which, this was his comfort, that God was a witness to his integrity. God knew he was not such a one as they were, who had God ever in their mouths, but far from their reins; nor such a one as they took him to be, and represented him, a deceiver and a false prophet. They that thus abused him, did not know him; 1 *Cor.* ii. 8, "But thou, O Lord, knowest me," though they think me not worth their notice. 1. Observe what the matter is concerning which he appeals to God; Thou knowest my heart towards thee. Note, We are as our hearts are, and our hearts are good or bad according as they are or are not towards God; and this is that therefore concerning which we should examine ourselves, that we may approve ourselves to God. 2. The cognizance to which he appeals. Thou knowest me better than I know myself; not by hearsay or report, for thou hast seen me; not with a transient glance, but thou hast tried my heart. God's knowing of us is as clear, and exact, and certain, as if he had made the most strict scrutiny. Note, The God with whom we have to do perfectly knows how our hearts are towards him. He knows both the guile of the hypocrite, and the sincerity of the upright.

Fourthly. He prays that God would turn his hand against these wicked people, and not suffer them to prosper always, though they had prospered long. Let some judgment come to pull them out of this fat pasture, as sheep for the slaughter, that it may appear their long prosperity was but like the feeding of the lambs in a large place, to "prepare them for the day of slaughter," *Hos.* iv. 16. God suffered them to prosper, that by their pride and luxury they might fill up the measure of their iniquity, and so be ripened for destruction. And therefore he thinks it a piece of necessary justice that they should fall into mischief themselves, because they had done so much mischief to others; that they should be pulled out of their land, because they had brought ruin upon the land; and the longer they continued in it the more hurt they did, as the plagues of their generation; ver. 4, "How long shall the land mourn," as it doth under the judgments of God inflicted upon it, "for the wickedness of them that dwell therein?" Lord, shall they prosper themselves that ruin all about them? 1. See here what the judgment was which the land was now groaning under. "The herbs of every field wither," the grass is burned up, and all the products of the earth fail; and then it follows of course, the beasts are consumed, and the birds, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 5. This was the effect of a long drought, or want of rain, which happened, as it should seem, at the latter end of Josiah's reign, and the beginning of Jehoiakim's; it is mentioned, *ch.* iii. 3; viii. 13; ix. 10, 12; and more fully afterwards, *ch.* xiv. If they would have been brought to repentance by this lesser judgment, the greater had been prevented. Now, why was it that this fruitful land was turned into barrenness, but for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein? *Ps.* cvii. 34. Therefore the prophet prays that these wicked people might die for their own sin; and that the whole nation might not suffer for it. 2. See here what was the language of their wickedness; "They said, He shall not see our last end." Either God himself shall not,—atheism is the root of hypocrisy, therefore God is far from their reins, though near in their mouth, because they say, "How doth God know?" *Ps.* lxxiii. 11; *Job* xxii. 13; he knows not what way we take, nor what it will end in,—or, 'Jeremiah shall not see our last end;' whatever he pretends when he asks us what shall be in the end hereof, he cannot himself foresee it. They look upon him as a false prophet. Or, whatever it is, he shall not live to see it, for we will be the death of him, *ch.* xi. 21. Note, 1st. Men's setting their latter end at a great distance, or looking upon it as uncertain, is at the bottom of all their wickedness, *Lam.* i. 9. 2nd. The whole creation groans under the burthen of the sin of man, *Rom.* viii. 22; it is for this that the earth mourns, so it may be read, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake."

Fifthly. He acquaints us with the answer God gave to those complaints of his, ver. 5, 6. We often find the prophets admonish others, as *Isa.* viii. 11. Ministers have lessons to learn, as well as lessons to teach, and must themselves hear God's voice, and preach to themselves. Jeremiah complained much of the wickedness of the men of Anathoth; and that, notwithstanding that, they prospered. Now this seems to be an answer to that complaint. 1. It is allowed that he had cause to complain; ver. 6, "Thy brethren," the priests of Anathoth, that are of "the house of thy father," who ought to have protected thee, and pretended to do so, "even they have dealt treacherously with thee," have been false to thee, and under colour of friendship, have designedly done thee all the mischief they could. "They have called a multitude after thee," raised the mob upon thee, and incensed the common people against thee, to whom they have endeavoured by all arts possible to render thee despicable or odious, while at the same time they pretended they had no design to persecute thee, or deprive thee of thy liberty. They are indeed such as thou canst not believe, though they speak fair words to thee. They seem to be thy friends but are really thine enemies. Note, God's faithful servants must not think it at all strange if their foes be those of their own house, *Mat.* x. 36; and if those they expect kindness from prove such as they can put no confidence in, *Mic.* vii. 5. 2. Yet he is told that he carried the matter too far. 1st. He laid the unkindness of his countrymen too much to heart. They wearied him, because it was "in a land of peace wherein he trusted," ver. 5. It was very grievous to him to be thus hated and abused by his own kindred. He was disturbed in his mind by it, his spirit was sunk and overwhelmed with it, so that he was in a mighty toss and uneasiness about it. Nay, he was discouraged in his work by it, began to be weary of prophesying, and to think of giving it up. 2nd. He did not consider that this was but the beginning of his sorrow, and he had sorer trials yet before him; and, whereas he should endeavour by a patient bearing of this trouble to prepare himself for greater, by his uneasiness under this he did but unfit himself for what farther lay before him. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee," and run thee quite out of breath, then "how wilt thou contend with horses?" If the injuries done him by the men of Anathoth made such an impression upon him, what would he do when the princes and chief priests at Jerusalem should set upon him with their power, as they did afterwards? *ch.* xx. 2; xxxii. 2. If he was so soon tired in a land of peace, where there was little noise or peril, "What would he do in the swellings of Jordan," when that overflows all its banks, and frightens even lions out of their thickets? *ch.* xlix. 19. Note, *First.* While we are in this world we must expect troubles and difficulties. Our life is a race, a warfare; we are in danger of being run down. *Secondly.* God's usual method being to begin with lesser trials, it is our wisdom to expect greater than any we have yet met with. We may be called out to contend with horsemen, and the sons of Anak may perhaps be reserved for the last encounter. *Thirdly.* It highly concerns us to prepare for such trials, and to consider what we should do in them. How shall we preserve our integrity and peace when we come to the swellings of Jordan? *Fourthly.* In order to our preparation for farther and greater trials, we are concerned to approve ourselves well in present lesser trials, to keep up our spirits, keep hold of the promise, keep in our way, with our eye upon the prize; so run that we may obtain it.

Some good interpreters understand this as spoken to the people, who were very secure, and fearless of the threatened judgments. If they have been so humbled and impoverished by lesser calamities, so wasted by the Assyrians; if the Ammonites and Moabites, that were their brethren, and with whom they were in league, if these proved false to them, as undoubtedly they would, then how would they be able to deal with such a powerful adversary as the Chaldeans would be? How would they bear up their head against that invasion, which should come like the swelling of Jordan?

7 I have forsaken mine house,
I have left mine heritage;
I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies.
8 Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest;
It crieth out against me:
Therefore have I hated it.
9 Mine heritage *is* unto me *as* a speckled bird,
The birds round about *are* against her;
Come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field,
Come to devour.
10 Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard,
They have trodden my portion under foot,
They have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilder-
11 They have made it desolate, [ness.
And being desolate it mourneth unto me;
The whole land is made desolate,
Because no man layeth *it* to heart. [wilderness:
12 The spoilers are come upon all high places through the
For the sword of the LORD shall devour
From the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of
No flesh shall have peace. [the land:
13 They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns:
They have put themselves to pain, *but* shall not profit:
And they shall be ashamed of your revenues
Because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

The people of the Jews are here marked for ruin.

First. God is here brought in falling out with them, and leaving them desolate; and they could never have been undone if they had not provoked God to desert them. It is a terrible word that God here saith, ver. 7, "I have forsaken my house;" the temple, which had been his palace, they had polluted it, and so forced him out of it; "I have left mine heritage," and will look after it no more. His people, that he had taken such delight in, and care of, are now thrown out of his protection. They had been the dearly beloved of his soul, precious in his sight, and honourable above any people, which is mentioned to aggravate their sin in returning him hatred for his love, and their misery in throwing themselves out of the favour of one that had such a kindness for them, and to justify God in his dealings with them. He sought not occasion

against them, but, if they would have carried themselves anything tolerably, he would have made the best of them, for they were the beloved of his soul, but they had carried themselves so that they had provoked him to give them into the hand of their enemies, to leave them unguarded, an easy prey to those that bore them ill-will. But what was the quarrel God had with a people that had been so long dear to him? Why, truly, they were degenerated. 1. They were become like beasts of prey, which nobody loves, but every body avoids and gets as far off from as they can; ver. 8, "Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest." Their sins cry to heaven for vengeance as loud as a lion roars. Nay, they cry out against God in the threatenings and slaughter which they breathe against his prophets, that speak to them in his name; and what is said and done against them God takes as said and done against himself. They blaspheme his name, oppose his authority, and bid defiance to his justice, and so cry out against him, "as a lion in the forest." They that were the sheep of God's pasture are become barbarous and ravenous, and as ungovernable as lions in the forest; "Therefore I hated them;" for what delight could the God of love take in a people that had now become as roaring lions and raging beasts, fit to be taken and shot at, as a vexation and torment to all about them? 2. They were become like birds of prey, and therefore also unworthy a place in God's house, where neither beasts nor birds of prey were admitted to be offered in sacrifice; ver. 9, 'Mine heritage is unto me as a bird with talons,' so some read it, and so the margin; they are continually pulling and pecking at one another, they have, by their unnatural contentions, made their country a cockpit. Or, as a speckled bird, dyed, or sprinkled, or bedewed with the blood of her prey. The shedding of innocent blood was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, and hastened their ruin, not only as it provoked God against them, but as it provoked their neighbours likewise; for those that have their hand against every man shall have every man's hand against them, *Gen.* xvi. 12; and so it follows here, the birds round about are against her. Some make her a speckled, pied, or motley bird, upon the account of their mixing the superstitious customs and usages of the heathen with Divine institutions in the worship of God; they were fond of a particoloured religion, and thought it made them fine, when really it made them odious. God's turtle-dove is no speckled bird.

Secondly. The enemies are here brought in falling upon them, and laying them desolate. And some think it is upon this account that they are compared to a speckled bird, because the fowl use to make a noise about a bird of an odd, unusual colour. God's people are among the children of this world as men wondered at, as a speckled bird. But this people had by their own folly made themselves so; and the beasts and birds are called and commissioned to prey upon them. Let all "the birds round be against her," for God has forsaken her, and with them let "all the beasts of the field come to devour." Those that have made a prey of others shall themselves be preyed upon. It did not lessen the sin of the nations, but very much greatened the misery of Judah and Jerusalem, that the desolation brought upon them was by order from heaven. The birds and beasts are perhaps called to feast upon the bodies of the slain, as in St. John's vision, *Rev.* xix. 17. The utter desolation of the land by the Chaldean army is here spoken of as a thing done, so sure, so near, was it. God speaks of it as a thing which he had appointed to be done, and yet which he had no pleasure in, no more than in the death of other sinners.

1. See with what a tender affection he speaks of this land, notwithstanding the sinfulness of it, in remembrance of his covenant, and the tribute of honour and glory he had formerly had from it. It is "my vineyard, my portion, my pleasant portion," ver. 10. Note, God has a kindness and concern for his church, though there be much amiss in it; and his correcting of it will very much consist with his complacency in it.

2. See with what a tender compassion he speaks of the desolations of this land. "Many pastors," the Chaldean generals that made themselves masters of the country, and ate it up with their armies, as easily as the Arabian shepherds with their flocks ate up the fruits of a piece of ground that lies common, they "have destroyed my vineyard," without any consideration had either of the value of it, or my interest in it. They have with the greatest insolence and indignation trodden it under foot; and that which was a pleasant land they have made a desolate wilderness. The destruction was universal; the whole land is made desolate, ver. 11. It is made so by the sword of war; the spoilers, the Chaldean soldiers, are come through the plain, upon all high places; they have made themselves masters of all the natural fastnesses, and artificial fortresses; ver. 12, "The sword devours from one end of the land to the other," all places lie exposed, and the numerous army of the invaders disperse themselves into every corner of that fruitful country, so that "no flesh shall have peace," none shall be exempt from the calamity, nor be able to enjoy any tranquillity. When all flesh have corrupted their way, no flesh shall have peace; those only have peace that walk after the Spirit.

3. See whence all this misery comes. 1st. It comes from the displeasure of God. It is the sword of the Lord that devours, ver. 12. While God's people keep close to him, the sword of their protectors and deliverers is the sword of the Lord, witness that of Gideon; but when they have forsaken him, so that he is become their enemy, and fights against them, then the sword of their invaders and destroyers is become the sword of the Lord, witness this of the Chaldeans. It is "because of the fierce anger of the Lord," ver. 13; that was it which kindled this fire among them, and made their enemies so furious. And "who may stand before him when he is angry?" 2nd. It is their sin that has made God their enemy, particularly their incorrigibleness under former rebukes; ver. 11, "The land mourns unto me." The country that lies desolate doth, as it were, pour out its complaint before God, and humble itself under his hand, but the inhabitants are so senseless and stupid that none of them lays it to heart. They do not mourn to God, but are unaffected with his displeasure, while the very ground they go upon shames them. Note, When God's hand is lifted up, and men will not see, it shall be laid on, and they shall be made to feel, *Isa.* xxvi. 11.

4. See how unable they should be to fence against it; ver. 13, "They have sown wheat," they have taken a deal of pains for their own security, and promised themselves great matters from their endeavours, but it is all in vain, "they shall reap thorns," that is, that which shall prove very grievous and vexatious to them; instead of helping themselves, they shall but make themselves more uneasy. They have "put themselves to pain," both with their labour and with their expectation, but "it shall not profit;" they shall not prevail to extricate themselves out of the difficulties into which they have plunged themselves. "They shall be ashamed of your revenues," that they have depended so much upon their preparations for war, and particularly upon their ability to bear the charges of it. Money is the sinews of war; they thought they had enough of that, but shall be ashamed of it; for their silver and gold shall not profit them in the day of the Lord's anger.

14 Thus saith the LORD
Against all mine evil neighbours,
That touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit;
Behold, I will pluck them out of their land,
And pluck out the house of Judah from among them.
15 And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out
I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again,
Every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.
16 And it shall come to pass,
If they will diligently learn the ways of my people,
To swear by my name, The LORD liveth;
As they taught my people to swear by Baal;
Then shall they be built in the midst of my people.
17 But if they will not obey,
I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation,
Saith the LORD.

The prophets sometimes, in God's name, delivered messages both of judgment and mercy to the nations that bordered on the land of Israel; but here is a message to them all in general, who had in their turns been one way or other injurious to God's people, had either oppressed them or triumphed in their being oppressed. Observe,

First. What the quarrel was that God had with them. They were his evil neighbours, ver. 14, that is, evil neighbours to his church; and what they did against it he took as done against himself, and therefore called them his evil neighbours, that should have been neighbourly to Israel, but were quite otherwise. Note, It is often the lot of good people to live among bad neighbours, that are unkind and provoking to them; and it is bad indeed when they are all so. These evil neighbours were the Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, Edomites, Egyptians, that had been ill neighbours to Israel in helping to debauch them, and draw them from God; therefore God calls them his ill neighbours, and now they helped to make them desolate, and joined with the Chaldeans against them. It is just with God to make those the instruments of trouble to us whom we have made instruments of sin. That which God lays to their charge is, They have meddled with "the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit," they unjustly seized that which was none of their own; nay, they sacrilegiously turned that to their own use which was given to God's peculiar people. He that said, "Touch not my anointed;" said also, Touch not their inheritance; it is at your peril if you do. Not only the persons, but the estates of God's people are taken under his protection.

Secondly. What course he would take with them. 1. He would break the power they had got over his people, and force them to make restitution. I will "pluck out the house of Judah from among them," which would be a great favour to God's people, who had either been taken captive by them, or, when they fled to them for shelter, had been detained and made prisoners; but a great mortification to their enemies, who would be like a lion disappointed of his prey. The house of Judah either cannot or will not make any bold struggles towards their own liberty; but God will, with a gracious violence, pluck them out; will, by his Spirit, compel them to come out; and, by his power, compel their taskmasters to let them go, as he plucked Israel out of Egypt. 2. He would bring upon them the same calamities that they had been instrumental to bring upon his people; "I will pluck them out of their land." Judgment began at the house of God, but it did not end there. Nebuchadnezzar, when he had wasted the land of Israel, turned his hand against their evil neighbours, and was a scourge to them.

Thirdly. What mercy God had in store for such of them as would join themselves to him and become his people, ver. 15, 16. They had drawn in God's backsliding people to join with them in the service of idols. If now they would be drawn by a returning people to join with them in the service of the true and living God, they should not only have their enmity to the people of God forgiven them, but the distance which they had been kept at before should be removed, and they should be received to stand upon the same level with the Israel of God, which had its accomplishment in part when, after the return out of captivity, many of the people of the lands that had been ill neighbours to Israel became Jews, and was to have its accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. Let not Israel, though injured by them, be implacable towards them, for God is not. "After that I have plucked them out," in justice for their sins, and in jealousy for the honour of Israel, "I will return," will change my way, "and have compassion on them." Though, being heathen, they can lay no claim to the mercies of the covenant, yet they shall have benefit by the compassions of the Creator, who will look upon them as the work of his hands however. Note, God's controversies with his creatures, though they cannot be disputed, yet may be accommodated. Those who, as these here, have been not only strangers, but enemies in their minds by wicked works, may be reconciled, *Col.* i. 21. Observe here,

1. What were the terms on which God would shew favour to them. It is always provided, "that they will diligently learn the ways of my people." That is in general, the ways which they walk in when they carry it as my people, not the crooked ways into which they have turned aside; the ways which my people are directed to take. Note, 1st. There are good ways that are peculiarly the ways of God's people, which, however they may differ in the choice of their paths, they are all agreed to walk in. The ways of holiness and heavenly-mindedness, of love and peaceableness, the ways of prayer and sabbath sanctification, and diligent attendance on instituted ordinances, these and the like are the ways of God's people. 2nd. Those that would have their lot with God's people, and their last end like theirs, must learn their ways and walk in them; must observe the rule they walk by and conform to that rule, and the steps they take by that rule, and go forth by those footsteps. By an intimate conversation with God's people they must learn to do as they do. 3rd. It is impossible to learn the ways of God's people as they should be learned without a great deal of care and pains. We must diligently observe these ways, and diligently oblige ourselves to walk in them; look diligently, *Heb.* xii. 15, and work diligently, *Lu.* xiii. 25. In particular they must learn to give honour to God's name, by making all their solemn appeals to him. They must "learn to say, The Lord liveth," to own him, and to adore him, and to abide by his judgment, "as they taught my people to swear by Baal." It was bad enough that they did themselves swear by Baal, worse that they taught others, and worst of all that they taught God's own people, who had been better taught; and yet if they will at length reform they shall be accepted. Observe, *First.* We must not despair of the conversion of the worst; no, not of those who have

been instrumental to pervert and debauch others; even they may be brought to repentance, and, if they be, shall find mercy. *Secondly.* Those whom we have been industrious to draw to that which is evil, when God opens their eyes and ours we should be as industrious to follow in that which is good. It will be a holy revenge upon ourselves to become pupils to those in the way of duty to whom we have been tutors in the way of sin. *Thirdly.* The conversion of the deceived may prove a happy occasion of the conversion even of the deceivers. Thus they who fell together into the ditch are sometimes plucked together out of it.

2. What should be the tokens and fruits of this favour when they return to God and God to them. 1st. They shall be restored to, and re-established in, their own land; ver. 15, "I will bring them again every man to his heritage." The same hand that plucked them up shall plant them again. 2nd. They shall become entitled to the spiritual privileges of God's Israel. If they will be towardly, and "learn the ways of my people," will conform themselves to the rules, and confine themselves to the restraints of God's family, "then shall they be built in the midst of my people." They shall not only be brought among them to have a name and a place in the house of the Lord, where there was a court for the Gentiles, but they shall be built among them, they shall unite with them, the former enmities shall be slain; they shall be both edified and settled among them: see *Isa.* lvi. 5—7. Note, They that diligently learn the ways of God s people shall enjoy the privileges and comforts of his people.

Fourthly. What should become of those that were still wedded to their own evil ways, yea, though many of those about them turned to the Lord; ver. 17, "If they will not obey," if any of them continue to stand it out, "I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation," that family, that particular person, "saith the Lord." Those that will not be ruled by the grace of God shall be ruined by the justice of God. And if disobedient nations shall be destroyed, much more disobedient churches, from whom better things are expected.

CHAPTER XIII.

Still the prophet is attempting to awaken this secure and stubborn people to repentance, by the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them. He is to tell them, I. By the sign of a girdle spoiled, that their pride should be stained, ver. 1—11. II. By the sign of bottles filled with wine, that their counsels should be blasted, ver. 12—14. III. In consideration hereof he is to call them to repent, and humble themselves, ver. 15—21. IV. He is to convince them that it is for their obstinacy and incorrigibleness that the judgments of God are so prolonged and brought to extremity, ver. 22—27.

THUS saith the LORD unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water. 2 So I got a girdle according to the word of the LORD, and put *it* on my loins. 3 And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, 4 Take the girdle that thou hast got, which *is* upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock. 5 So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. 6 And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there. 7 Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it: and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing. 8 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

9 Thus saith the LORD,
After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah,
And the great pride of Jerusalem.
10 This evil people, which refuse to hear my words,
Which walk in the imagination of their heart,
And walk after other gods,
To serve them, and to worship them,
Shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing.
11 For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man,
So have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel
And the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD;
That they might be unto me for a people,
And for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory:
But they would not hear.

Here is, First. A sign, the marring of a girdle, which the prophet had worn for some time, by hiding it in a hole of a rock, near the river Euphrates. It was usual with the prophets to teach by signs, that a stupid unthinking people might be brought to consider and believe, and be affected with what was thus set before them. 1. He was to wear a linen girdle for some time, ver. 1, 2. Some think he wore it under his clothes, because it was linen, and is said to cleave to his loins, ver. 11. It should rather seem to be worn upon his clothes, for it was worn for a name and a praise, and probably was a fine sash, such as officers wear, and such as are commonly worn at this day in the eastern nations. He must not put it in water, but wear it as it was, that it might be the stronger, and less likely to rot; linen wastes almost as much with washing as with wearing. Being not wet it was the more stiff, and less apt to ply, yet he must make a shift to wear it. Probably it was very fine linen, which will wear long without washing. The prophet, like John Baptist, was none of those that wore soft clothing, and therefore it would be the more strange to see him with a linen girdle on, who probably used to wear a leather one. 2. After he had worn this linen girdle for some time, he must go and hide it in a hole of a rock, ver. 4, by the waterside, where, when the water was high, it would be wet, and when it fell, would grow dry again, and by that means would soon rot, sooner than if it were always wet or always dry. 3. After many days he must go and look for it, and should find it quite spoiled, gone all to rags, and good for nothing, ver. 7. It has been of old a question among interpreters, whether this was really done so as to be seen and observed by the people, or only in a dream or vision, so as to go no farther than the prophet's own mind. It seems hard to imagine that the prophet should be sent on two such long journeys, as to the river Euphrates, each of which would take him up some weeks' time, when he could so ill be spared at home; and for that reason most incline to think the journey at least was only in vision, like that of Ezekiel, from the captivity in Chaldea to Jerusalem, *Eze.* viii. 3, and from thence back to Chaldea, *Eze.* xi. 24; and the explanation of this sign is only given to the prophet himself, ver. 8, not to the people, the sign not being public. But there being, it is probable, at that time great conveniences of travelling between Jerusalem and Babylon, and some part of Euphrates being not so far off, but that it was made the utmost border of the land of promise, *Jos.* i. 4, I see no inconvenience in supposing the prophet to have made two journeys thither; for it is expressly said, "he did as the Lord commanded him;" and thus gave a signal proof of his obsequiousness to his God, to shame the stubbornness of a disobedient people. And the toil of his journey would be very proper to signify both the pains they took to corrupt themselves with their idolatries and the sad fatigue of their captivity; and Euphrates, being the river of Babylon which was to be the place of their bondage, was a material circumstance in this sign.

Secondly. The thing signified by this sign. The prophet was willing to be at any cost and pains to affect this people with the word of the Lord. Ministers must spend and be spent for the good of souls. We have the reddition of this sign, ver. 9—11.

1. The people of Israel had been to God as this girdle in two respects: 1st. He had taken them into covenant and communion with himself; "As the girdle cleaveth" very close "to the loins of a man," and surrounds him, "so have I caused to cleave to me the houses of Israel and Judah." They were a people near to God, *Ps.* cxlviii. 14; they were his own, a peculiar people to him; a kingdom of priests that had access to him above other nations. He caused them to cleave to him by the law he gave them, the prophets he sent among them, and the favours which in his providence he shewed them. He required their stated attendance in the courts of his house, and the frequent ratification of their covenant with him by sacrifices. Thus they were made so to cleave to him that one would think they could never have been parted. 2nd. He had herein designed his own honour. When he took them to be to him for a people, it was that they might be to him "for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory," as a girdle is an ornament to a man, and particularly the curious girdle of the ephod was to the high priest for glory and for beauty. Note, Those whom God takes to be to him for a people he intends to be to him for a praise. *First.* It is their duty to honour him by observing his institutions, and aiming therein at his glory, and thus adorning their profession. *Secondly.* It is their happiness that he reckons himself honoured in them and by them. He is pleased with them, and glories in his relation to them, while they behave themselves as becomes his people. He was pleased to take it among the titles of his honour to be the God of Israel, even a God to Israel, 1 *Chr.* xvii. 24. In vain do we pretend to be to God for a people if we be not to him for a praise.

2. They had by their idolatries and other iniquities loosed themselves from him, thrown themselves at a distance, robbed him of the honour they owed him, buried themselves in the earth, and foreign earth too, mingling themselves among the nations, and were so spoiled and corrupted that they were good for nothing. They could no more be to God as they were designed, "for a name and a praise," for "they would not hear," neither their duty to do it nor their privilege to value it; "they refused to hear the words of God," by which they might have been kept still cleaving close to him; they "walked in the imagination of their heart," wherever their fancy led them, and denied themselves no gratification they had a mind to, particularly in their worship; they would not cleave to God, but "walked after other gods to serve them and to worship them;" they doated upon the gods of the heathen nations that lay towards Euphrates, so that they were quite spoiled for the service of their own God, and were as this girdle, this rotten girdle, a disgrace to their profession, and not an ornament. And a thousand pities it was that such a girdle should be so spoiled, that such a people should so wretchedly degenerate.

3. God would, by his judgments, separate them from him, send them into captivity, deface all their beauty and ruin their excellency, so that they should be like a fine girdle gone to rags, a worthless, useless, despicable people. God will after this manner "mar the pride of Judah and the great pride of Jerusalem." He would strip them of all that which was the matter of their pride, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted; it should not only be sullied and stained, but quite destroyed, like this linen girdle. Observe, He speaks of the pride of Judah; the country people were proud of their holy land, their good land, but it is the great pride of Jerusalem; there the temple was, and the royal palace, and therefore those citizens were more proud than the inhabitants of other cities. God takes notice of the degrees of men's pride, the pride of some and the great pride of others, and he will mar it, he will stain it. Pride will have a fall, for God resists the proud. He will either mar the pride that is in us, that is, mortify it by his grace, make us ashamed of it, and, like Hezekiah, humble us for the pride of our hearts, the great pride, and cure us of it, as great as it is, (and this marring of the pride will be the making of the soul; happy it is for us if, by humbling providences, our hearts be humbled,) or else he will mar the thing we are proud of. Parts, gifts, learning, power, external privileges, if we are proud of these, it is just with God to blast them; even the temple, when it became Jerusalem's pride, was marred and laid in ashes. It is the honour of God to look upon every one that is proud and abase him.

12 Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word;
Thus saith the LORD God of Israel,
Every bottle shall be filled with wine:
And they shall say unto thee, [with wine?
Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled
13 Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD,

Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land,
Even the kings that sit upon David's throne,
And the priests, and the prophets,
And all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness.
14 And I will dash them one against another,
Even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD:
I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy,
But destroy them.
15 Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud:
For the LORD hath spoken.
16 Give glory to the LORD your God,
Before he cause darkness,
And before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains,
And, while ye look for light,
He turn it into the shadow of death, *and* make *it* gross
17 But if ye will not hear it, [darkness.
My soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride;
And mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears,
Because the LORD's flock is carried away captive.
18 Say unto the king and to the queen,
Humble yourselves, sit down:
For your principalities shall come down,
Even the crown of your glory.
19 The cities of the south shall be shut up,
And none shall open *them:*
Judah shall be carried away captive all of it,
It shall be wholly carried away captive. [north:
20 Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the
Where *is* the flock *that* was given thee, thy beautiful flock?
21 What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?
For thou hast taught them *to be* captains, *and* as chief over thee:
Shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail?

Here is, First. A judgment threatened against this people that would quite intoxicate them. This doom is pronounced against them in a figure, to make it the more taken notice of and the more affecting; ver. 12, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine;" that is, Those that by their sins have made themselves "vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction," shall be filled with the wrath of God, as a bottle is with wine, and as every vessel of mercy, prepared for glory, shall be filled with mercy and glory, so "they shall be full of the fury of the Lord," *Isa.* li. 20, and they shall be brittle as bottles, and as old bottles into which new wine is put, they shall burst and be broken to pieces, *Mat.* ix. 17; or, they shall have their heads as full of wine as bottles are, for so it is explained, ver. 13, "They shall be filled with drunkenness:" compare *Isa.* li. 17. It is likely this was a common proverb among them, applied divers ways; but they, not being aware of the prophet's meaning in it, ridiculed him for it, "Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine?" What strange thing is there in that? Tell us something that we did not know before. Perhaps they were thus tetchy with the prophet because they apprehended this to be a reflection upon them for their drunkenness, and probably it was in part so intended; they love flagons of wine, *Hos.* iii. 1; they made their king sick with bottles of wine; *Hos.* vii. 5; their watchmen were all for wine, *Isa.* lvi. 12; they love their false prophets to prophesy to them of wine, *Mic.* ii. 11, that bid them be merry, for they should never want their bottle to make them so. Well, saith the prophet, you shall have your bottles full of wine, but not such wine as you desire. They suspected he had some mystical meaning in it, which prophesied no good concerning them, but evil, and he owns that so he had. What he meant was this,

1. That they should be as giddy as men in drink. And a drunken man is fitly compared to a bottle or cask full of wine; for when the wine is in the wit, and wisdom, and virtue, and all that is good for any thing, is out. Now God threatens, ver. 13, that they shall all be filled with drunkenness; they shall be full of confusion in their counsels, shall falter in all their talk, and stagger in all their motions; they shall not know what they say or do, much less what they should say or do. They shall be sick of all their enjoyments, and throw them up as drunken men do, *Job* xx. 15. They shall fall into a slumber, and be utterly unable to help themselves, and, like men that have drunk away their reason, shall lie at the mercy, and expose themselves to the contempt, of all about them. And this shall be the condition not of some among them, (if any had been sober they might have helped the rest,) but even "the kings that sit upon the throne of David," that should have been like their father David, who was wise as an angel of God, shall be thus intoxicated. Their priests and prophets too, their false prophets, that pretended to guide them, were as indulgent of their lusts, and therefore were justly as much deprived of their senses, as any other. Nay, and all the inhabitants both of the land and of Jerusalem were as far gone as they. Whom God will destroy he infatuates.

2. That being giddy they should run ahead upon one another. The cup of the wine of the Lord's fury shall throw them not only into a lethargy, so that they shall not be able to help themselves or one another, but into a perfect frenzy, so that they shall do mischief to themselves and one another; ver. 14, "I will dash a man against his brother." Not only their drunken follies but their drunken frays shall help to ruin them. Drunken men are often quarrelsome, and upon that account they have woe and sorrow, *Pr.* xxiii. 29, 30. So their sin is their punishment; it was so here. God sent an evil spirit into families and neighbourhoods, as *Jud.* ix. 23, which made them jealous of, and spiteful towards, one another; so that the fathers and sons went together by the ears, and were ready to pull one another to pieces, which made them all an easy prey to the common enemy. This decree against them being gone forth, God saith, "I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them;" for they will not pity, nor have mercy, but destroy one another: see *Hab.* ii. 15, 16.

Secondly. Here is good counsel given, which if it were taken this desolation would be prevented. It is, in short, to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. If they will hearken and give ear, this is that which God has to say to them, "Be not proud," ver. 15. This was one of the sins for which God had a controversy with them, ver. 9; let them mortify and forsake this sin, and God will let fall his controversy. "Be not proud;" that is, when God speaks to you by his prophets do not think yourselves too good to be taught; be not scornful, be not wilful; let not your hearts rise against the word, nor slight the messengers that bring it you. When God is coming forth against you in his providences, and by them he speaks, be not secure when he threatens, be not impatient when he strikes; for pride is at the bottom of both. It is the great God that has spoken, whose authority is incontestable, whose power is irresistible; therefore bow to what he saith, and be not proud, as you have been. They must not be proud; for,

1. They must advance God, and study how to do him honour; "Give glory to the Lord your God," and not to your idols; not to other gods. Give him glory by confessing your sins, owning yourselves guilty before him, and accepting the punishment of your iniquity, ver. 16. Give him glory by a sincere repentance and reformation. Then, and not till then, we begin to live as we should, and to some good purpose, when we begin to "give glory to the Lord our God;" to make his honour our chief end, and to seek it accordingly. Do this quickly, while your space to repent is continued to you; "before he cause darkness," before he bring his judgments upon you, which you will see no way of escaping. Note, Darkness will be the portion of those that will not repent, to give glory to God. When those that by the fourth vial were scorched with heat repented not to give glory to God, the next vial filled them with darkness, *Rev.* xvi. 9, 10. The aggravation of the darkness here threatened is, 1st. That their attempts to escape shall hasten their ruin; "Their feet shall stumble;" when they are making all the haste they can over "the dark mountains," and they shall fall, and be unable to get up again. Note, Those that think to outrun the judgments of God will find their road impassable; let them make the best of their way, they can make nothing of it; the judgments that pursue them will overtake them; their way is dark and slippery, *Ps.* xxxv. 6. And therefore before it comes to that extremity it is our wisdom to give glory to him, and so make our peace with him; to fly to his mercy, and then there will be no occasion to fly from his justice. 2nd. That their hopes of a better state of things will be disappointed; "While you look for light," for comfort and relief, he will "turn it into the shadow of death," which is very dismal and terrible; and make it gross darkness, like that of Egypt, when Pharaoh continued to harden his heart, which was darkness that might be felt. The expectation of impenitent sinners perisheth when they die, and think to have it satisfied.

2. They must abase themselves, and take shame to themselves. The prerogative of the king and queen will not exempt them from this, ver. 18, "Say to the king and queen," that, as great as they are, they must humble themselves by true repentance, and so give both glory to God and a good example to their subjects. Note, Those that are exalted above others in the world must humble themselves before God, who is higher than the highest, and to whom kings and queens are accountable. They must humble themselves and sit down; sit down and consider what is coming; sit down in the dust, and lament themselves. Let them humble themselves, for God will otherwise take an effectual course to humble them. "Your principalities shall come down," the honour and power by which you value yourselves, and in which you confide, "even the crown of your glory," your goodly or glorious crown. When you are led away captives, where will your principality, and all the badges of it, be then? Blessed be God there is a crown of glory, which those shall inherit who do humble themselves, that shall never come down.

Thirdly. This counsel is enforced by some arguments if they continue proud and unhumbled.

1. It will be the prophet's unspeakable grief; ver. 17, "If you will not hear it," will not submit to the word, but continue refractory, not only mine eye, but "my soul shall weep in secret places." Note, The obstinacy of people in refusing to hear the word of God will be a heart-breaking to their poor ministers, who know something of the terrors of the Lord, and the worth of souls; and are so far from desiring that they tremble at the thoughts of the death of sinners. His grief for it was undissembled, his soul wept; and void of affectation, for he chose to weep in secret places, where no eye saw him but his who is all eye. He would not only mingle his tears with his public preaching, but with his private devotions; nay, thoughts of their case would make him melancholy, and he would become a perfect recluse. It would grieve him, 1st. To see their sins unrepented of; "My soul shall weep for your pride," your haughtiness, and stubbornness, and vain confidence. Note, The sins of others should be matter of sorrow to us; we must mourn for that which we cannot mend, and mourn the more for it because we cannot mend it. 2nd. To see their calamity past redress and remedy; "Mine eyes shall weep sore," not so much because my relations, friends, and neighbours are in distress, but "because the Lord's flock," his people, and the sheep of his pasture, "are carried away captive." That should always grieve us most by which God's honour suffers, and the interest of his kingdom is weakened.

2. It will be their own inevitable ruin, ver. 19—21.

1st. The land shall be laid waste; "The cities of the south shall be shut up." The cities of Judah lay in the southern part of the land of Canaan; these shall be straitly besieged by the enemy, so that there shall be no going in and out; or, deserted by the inhabitants that there shall be none to go in and out. Some understand it of the cities of Egypt which was south from Judah; the places there, whence they expected succours, shall fail them, and they shall find no access to them.

2nd. The inhabitants shall be hurried away into a foreign country, there to live in slavery; "Judah shall be carried away captive." Some were already carried off, which they hoped might serve to answer the prediction, and that the residue should still be left. No, "it shall be carried away all of it;" God will make a full end with them, "it shall be wholly carried away." So it was in the last captivity under Zedekiah, because they repented not.

3rd. The enemy was now at hand that should do this; ver. 20, "Lift up your eyes." I see them upon their march, and you may if you will "behold them that come from the north," from the land of the Chaldeans; see how fast they advance, how fierce they appear. Upon this he addresseth himself to the king, or rather (because the pronouns are feminine) to the city or state. *First.* What will you do now with the people which is committed to your charge, and which you ought to protect? "Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" Whither canst thou take them now for shelter? How can they escape

these ravening wolves? Magistrates must look upon themselves as shepherds, and those that are under their charge as their flock, which they are intrusted with the care of, and must give an account of; they must take delight in them as their beautiful flock, and consider what to do for their safety in times of public danger. Masters of families that neglect their children, and suffer them to perish for want of a good education, and ministers that neglect their people, should think they hear God putting this question to them, "Where is the flock that was given thee to feed, that beauteous flock?" It is starved, it is left exposed to the beasts of prey. What account wilt thou give of them when the chief Shepherd shall appear? *Secondly.* What have you to object against the equity of God's proceedings? "What wilt thou say when he shall visit upon thee" the former days? Thou canst say nothing, but that "God is just in all that is brought upon thee." They that flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, what will they say? What a confusion will cover their faces when they shall find themselves deceived, and that God doth punish them? *Thirdly.* What thoughts will they now have of their own folly, in giving the Chaldeans such power over them, by seeking to them for assistance, and joining in league with them? Thus "thou hast taught them against thyself to be captains, and to become the head." Hezekiah began, when he shewed his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, tempting him thereby to come and plunder him. Those that, having a God to trust to, court foreign alliances, and confide in them, do but make rods for themselves, and teach their neighbours how to become their masters. *Fourthly.* How will they bear the trouble that is at the door? "Shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail?" Sorrows which thou canst not escape or put off, extremity of sorrows; and in these respects more grievous than those of a woman in travail, that they were not expected before, and that there is no man-child to be born, the joy of which shall make them afterwards to be forgotten.

22 And if thou say in thine heart,
Wherefore come these things upon me? [vered,
For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts disco-
And thy heels made bare. [spots?
23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his
Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do
24 Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble [evil.
That passeth away by the wind of the wilderness.
25 This *is* thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me,
saith the LORD; [hood.
Because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in false-
26 Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face,
That thy shame may appear.
27 I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings,
The lewdness of thy whoredom,
And thine abominations on the hills in the fields.
Woe unto thee, O Jerusalem!
Wilt thou not be made clean? when *shall it* once *be?*

Here is, First. Ruin threatened, as before, that the Jews shall go into captivity, and fall under all the miseries of beggary and bondage; shall be stripped of their clothes, their skirts discovered, for want of upper garments to cover them; and their heels made bare, for want of shoes, ver. 22. Thus they used to deal with prisoners taken in war, when they drove them into captivity, naked and barefooted, *Isa.* xx. 4. Being thus carried off into a strange country, they shall be scattered there, as the stubble that is blown away by the wind of the wilderness, and nobody is concerned to bring it together again, ver. 24. If the stubble escape the fire it shall be carried away by the wind. If one judgment do not the work, another shall, with those that by sin have made themselves as stubble. They shall be stripped of all their ornaments, and exposed to shame, as whores that are carted, ver. 26. They made their pride appear, but God will make their shame appear; so that those who have doated on them shall be ashamed of them.

Secondly. An inquiry made by the people into the cause of this ruin, ver. 22. Thou wilt say in thine heart, (and God knows how to give a proper answer to what men say in their hearts, though they do not speak it out; Jesus knowing their thoughts replied to them, *Mat.* ix. 4,) "Wherefore come these things upon me?" The question is supposed to come into the heart, 1. Of a sinner quarrelling with God, and refusing to receive correction. They could not see that they had done any thing which might justly provoke God to be thus angry with them. They durst not speak it out; but in their hearts they thus charged God with unrighteousness, as if he had laid upon them more than was meet. They seek for the cause of their calamities, when, if they had not been wilfully blind, they might easily have seen it. Or, 2. Of a sinner returning to God. If there come but a penitent thought into the heart at any time, saying, "What have I done?" (*ch.* viii. 6) wherefore am I in affliction? why doth God contend with me? God takes notice of it, and is ready by his Spirit to impress the conviction, that sin being discovered it may be repented of.

Thirdly. An answer to this inquiry. God will be justified when he speaks, and will oblige us to justify him; and therefore will set the sin of sinners in order before them. Do they ask, "Wherefore these things came upon them?" Let them know it is all long of themselves.

1. It is for the greatness of their iniquities, ver. 22. God doth not take advantage against them for small faults. No, the sins for which he now punisheth them are of the first rate, very heinous in their own nature, and highly aggravated. For 'the multitude of thine iniquity,' so it may be read. Sins of every kind, and often repeated and relapsed into. And some think we are more in danger from the multitude of our lesser sins than from the heinousness of our greater sins; of both we may say, "Who can understand his errors?"

2. It is for their obstinacy in sin. Their being so long accustomed to it that there is little hopes left of their being reclaimed from it; ver. 23, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin," that is by nature black, "or the leopard his spots," that are even woven into the skin? Dirt contracted may be washed off; but we cannot alter the natural colour of a hair, *Mat.* v. 36, much less of the skin; and so impossible is it, morally impossible, to reclaim and reform these people. 1st. They had been long accustomed to do evil; they were taught to do evil; they had been educated and brought up in sin; they had served an apprenticeship to it, and had all their days made a trade of it. It was so much their constant practice that it was become a second nature to them. 2nd. Their prophets therefore despaired of ever bringing them to do good. That was it they aimed at; they persuaded them to cease to do evil, and learn to do well, but could not prevail. They had been so long used to do evil, that it was next to impossible for them to repent, and amend, and begin to do good. Note, Custom in sin is a very great hindrance to conversion from sin. The disease that is inveterate is generally thought incurable. Those that have been long accustomed to sin have shaken off the restraints of fear and shame; their consciences are seared, the habits of sin are confirmed; it pleads prescription, and it is just with God to give those up to their own hearts' lusts that have long refused to give up themselves to his grace. Sin is the blackness of the soul, the deformity of it; it is its spot, the discolouring of it; it is natural to us, we were shapen in it, so that we cannot get clear of it by any power of our own; but there is an Almighty grace that is able to change the Ethiopian's skin, and that grace shall not be wanting to those that, in a sense of their need of it, seek it earnestly, and improve it faithfully.

3. It is for their treacherous departures from the God of truth, and dependences on lying vanities; ver. 25, "This is thy lot," to be scattered and driven away; this is "the portion of thy measures from me," the punishment assigned thee as by line and measure; this shall be thy share of the miseries of this world; expect it, and think not to escape it. It is "because thou hast forgotten me," the favours I have bestowed upon thee, and the obligations thou art under to me; thou hast no sense, no remembrance of these. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all sin, as the remembrance of our Creator betimes is the happy and hopeful beginning of a holy life. And, having forgotten me, thou hast trusted in falsehood; in idols, in an arm of flesh, in Egypt and Assyria, in the self-flatteries of a deceitful heart. Whatever those trust to that forsake God they will find it a broken reed, a broken cistern.

4. It is for their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, that sin which is of all other most provoking to the jealous God. Therefore they are exposed to a shameful calamity, ver. 26, because they have been guilty of a shameful iniquity, and yet are shameless in it; ver. 27, "I have seen thine adulteries;" thine inordinate fancy for strange gods, which thou hast been impatient for the gratification of, and hast even neighed after it; even "the lewdness of thy whoredoms," thine impudence and insatiableness in them; that is, thy eager worshipping of idols on the hills in the fields, upon the high places. This is that for which a woe is denounced against thee, "O Jerusalem;" nay, and many woes.

Fourthly. Here is an affectionate expostulation with them in the close upon the whole matter. Though it was adjudged next to impossible for them to be brought to do good, ver. 23, yet while there is life there is hope; and therefore still he reasons with them to bring them to repentance, ver. 27. 1. He reasons with them concerning the thing itself; "Wilt thou not be made clean?" Note, It is the great concern of those who are polluted by sin to be made clean by repentance and faith, and an universal reformation. The reason why sinners are not made clean is because they will not be made clean; and herein they act most unreasonably. "Wilt thou not be made clean?" Surely thou wilt at length be persuaded to "wash thee, and make thee clean," and so be wise for thyself. 2. Concerning the time of it; "When shall it once be?" Note, It is an instance of the wonderful grace of God that he desires the repentance and conversion of sinners, and thinks the time long till they are brought to it. But it is an instance of the wonderful folly of sinners that they put that off from time to time which is of absolute necessity, and which, if it be not done some time, they are certainly undone for ever. They do not say they will never be cleansed, but not yet; they will defer it to a more convenient season, but cannot tell us "when it shall once be."

CHAPTER XIV.

This chapter was penned upon occasion of a great drought, for want of rain. This judgment began in the latter end of Josiah's reign, but, as it should seem, continued in the beginning of Jehoiakim's; for lesser judgments are sent to give warning of greater coming, if not prevented by repentance. This calamity was mentioned several times before, but here in this chapter more fully. Here is, I. A melancholy description of it, ver. 1—6. II. A prayer to God to put an end to this calamity, and to return in mercy to their land, ver. 7—9. III. A severe threatening, that God would proceed in his controversy, because they proceeded in their iniquity, ver. 10—12. IV. The prophet's excusing the people, by laying the blame on their false prophets; and the doom passed both on the deceivers and the deceived, ver. 13—16. V. Directions given to the prophet, instead of interceding for them, to lament them; but his continuing notwithstanding to intercede for them, ver. 17—22.

THE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth.

2 Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish;
They are black unto the ground;
And the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.
3 And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters;
They came to the pits, *and* found no water;
They returned with their vessels empty;
They were ashamed and confounded,
And covered their heads.
4 Because the ground is chapt,
For there was no rain in the earth,
The plowmen were ashamed,
They covered their heads.
5 Yea, the hind also calved in the field,
And forsook *it*, because there was no grass.
6 And the wild asses did stand in the high places,
They snuffed up the wind like dragons;
Their eyes did fail, because *there was* no grass.
7 O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us,
Do thou *it* for thy name's sake:
For our backslidings are many;

We have sinned against thee.

8 O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble,
Why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land,
And as a wayfaring man *that* turneth aside to tarry for a
9 Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, [night?
As a mighty man *that* cannot save?
Yet thou, O LORD, *art* in the midst of us,
And we are called by thy name: leave us not.

EASTERN WATER CARRIERS.—ver. 3.

The first verse is the title of the whole chapter. It doth indeed all concern the dearth; but much of it is the prophet's prayers concerning it; yet these are not unfitly said to be the word of the Lord which came to him concerning it; for every acceptable prayer is that which God puts into our hearts. Nothing is our word that comes to him but what is first his word that comes from him. In these verses we have,

First. The language of nature lamenting the calamity. When the heavens were as brass, and distilled no dews, the earth was as iron, and produced no fruits; and then what an universal grief and confusion was there!

1. The people of the land were all in tears. "Destroy all their vines and their fig-trees, and you cause all their mirth to cease," *Hos.* ii. 11, 12. All their joy fails with the joy of harvest, with that of their corn and wine; ver. 2, "Judah mourneth," not for the sin but for the trouble; for the withholding of the rain, not for the withdrawing of God's favour. "The gates thereof;" that is, all that go in and out at their gates, "languish," look pale, and grow feeble, for want of the necessary supports of life, and for fear of the farther fatal consequences of this judgment. The gates, through which supplies of corn formerly used to be brought into their cities, now look melancholy, when, instead of that, the inhabitants are departing through them to seek for bread in other countries. Even those that sit in the gates languish, "they are black unto the ground;" they go in black as mourners, and sit on the ground; as the poor beggars at the gates are black in the face for want of food, blacker than a coal, *Lam* iv. 8. Famine is represented by a black horse, *Rev.* vi. 5. They fall to the ground through weakness, not being able to go along the streets. "The cry of Jerusalem is gone up," that is, of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for the city is served by the field; or, of people from all parts of the country met at Jerusalem to pray for rain, so some. But I think it was rather the cry of their trouble, and the cry of their sin, than the cry of their prayer.

2. The great men of the land felt from this judgment; ver. 3, "The nobles sent their little ones to the water," perhaps their own children, having been forced to part with their servants, because they had not wherewithal to keep them, and being willing to train up their children, when they were little, to labour, especially in a case of necessity, as this was. We find Ahab and Obadiah, the king and the lord chamberlain of his household, in their own persons seeking for water in such a time of distress as this was, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 5, 6. Or rather, 'Their meaner ones,' their servants and small officers; these they sent to seek for water, which there is no living without, but there was none to be found; "they returned with their vessels empty," the springs were dried up when there was no rain to feed them; and then they, that is, their masters that sent them, "were ashamed and confounded" at the disappointment. They would not be ashamed of their sins, nor confounded at the sense of them, but were unhumbled under the reproofs of the word, thinking their wealth and dignity set them above repentance; but God took a course to make them ashamed of that which they were so proud of, when they found that even on this side hell their nobility would not purchase them a drop of water to cool their tongue. Let our reading the account of this calamity make us thankful for the mercy of water, that we may not by the feeling of the calamity be taught to value it. What is most needful is most plentiful.

3. The husbandmen felt most sensibly and immediately from it; ver. 4, "The ploughmen were ashamed," for the ground was so parched and hard that it would not admit the plough; even then when it was so chapped and cleft that it seemed as if it did not need the plough. They were ashamed to be idle, for there was nothing to be done, and therefore nothing to be expected. The sluggard that will not plough by reason of cold is not ashamed of his own folly; but the diligent husbandman, that cannot plough by reason of heat, is ashamed of his own affliction: see what an immediate dependence husbandmen have upon the Divine providence, which therefore they should always have an eye to, for they cannot plough or sow in hope, unless God water their furrows, *Ps.* lxv. 10.

4. The case even of the wild beasts was very piteous, ver. 5, 6. Man's sin brings those judgments upon the earth which make even the inferior creatures groan; and the prophet takes notice of this as a plea with God for mercy. Judah and Jerusalem have sinned; but the hinds and the wild asses, what have they done? The hinds are pleasant creatures, lovely and loving, and particularly tender of their young; and yet such is the extremity of the case, that, contrary to the instinct of their nature, they leave their young, even when they are newly calved, and most need them, to go seek for grass elsewhere; and if they can find none they abandon them, because not able to suckle them. It grieved not the hind so much that she had no grass for herself as that she had none for her young; which will shame those who spend that upon their lusts which they should preserve for their families. The hind, when she has brought forth her young, is said to have cast forth her sorrows, *Job* xxxix. 3, and yet she continues her cares; but, as it follows there, soon sees the good effect of them, for her young ones in a little while grow up, and trouble her no more, ver. 4. But here the great trouble of all is, that she has nothing for them. Nay, one would be sorry even for the wild asses, (though they are creatures that none have any great affection for,) for though the barren land is made their dwelling at the best, *Job* xxxix. 5, 6, yet even that is now made too hot for them, so hot, that they cannot breathe in it: but they get to the highest places they can, where the air is coolest, and snuff up the wind like dragons, like those creatures that, being naturally exceeding hot, are continually panting for breath. Their eyes fail, and so doth their strength, because there is no grass to support them. The tame ass that serves her owner is welcome to his crib, *Isa.* i. 3, and has her keeping for her labour; when the wild ass, that scorns the crying of the driver, is forced to live upon air, and is well enough served for not serving. He that will not labour let him not eat.

Secondly. Here is the language of grace, lamenting the iniquity, and complaining to God of the calamity. The people are not forward to pray, but the prophet here prays for them, and so excites them to pray for themselves, and puts words into their mouths, which they may make use of in hopes to speed, ver. 7—9. In this prayer,

1. Sin is humbly confessed. When we come to pray for the preventing or removing of any judgment, we must always acknowledge that we deserve it, and a thousand times worse. We cannot hope by extenuating the crime to obtain a mitigation of the punishment, but must acknowledge that "our iniquities testify against us." Our sins are witnesses against us, and true penitents see them to be so. They testify, for they are plain and evident, we cannot deny the charge; they testify against us, for our conviction; which tends to our present shame and confusion, and our future condemnation. They disprove and overthrow all our pleas for ourselves; and so not only accuse us, but answer against us. If we boast of our own excellences, and trust to our own righteousness, our iniquities testify against us, and prove us perverse. If we quarrel with God as dealing unjustly or unkindly with us in afflicting us, our iniquities testify against us that we do him wrong; "Our backslidings are many," and our revolts are great, whereby "we have sinned against thee;" too numerous to be concealed, for they are many; too heinous to be excused, for they are against thee.

2. Mercy is earnestly begged; "Though our iniquities testify against us," and against the granting of the favour which the necessity of our case calls for, yet "Do thou it." They do not say particularly what they would have done; but, as becomes penitents and beggars, they refer themselves to God; Do with us as thou thinkest fit, *Jud.* x. 15. Not, Do thou it in this way, or at this time, but "Do thou it for thy name's sake;" that is, Do that which will be most for the glory of thy name. Note, Our best pleas in prayer are those that are fetched from the glory of God's own name. Lord, do it that thy mercy may be magnified, thy promise fulfilled, and thine interest in the world kept up; we have nothing to plead in ourselves, but every thing in thee. There is another petition in this prayer, and it is a very modest one; ver. 9, "Leave us not," withdraw not thy favour and presence. Note, We should dread and deprecate God's departures from us more than the removal of any of all our creature comforts.

3. Their relation to God, their interest in him, and their expectations from him grounded thereupon, are most pathetically pleaded with him, ver. 8, 9.

1st. They look upon him as one they have reason to think should deliver them when they are in distress, yea, though their iniquities testify against them; for in him mercy hath often rejoiced against judgment. The prophet, like Moses of old, is willing to make the best he can of the case of his people; and therefore, though he must own that they have sinned many a great sin, *Ex.* xxxii. 31, yet he pleads, "Thou art the hope of Israel." God has encouraged his people to hope in him, in calling himself so often the God of Israel, and the Rock of Israel, and the Holy One of Israel, he hath made himself the Hope of Israel. He has given Israel his word to hope in, and caused them to hope in it; and there are those yet in Israel that make God alone their hope, and expect he will be their Saviour in time of trouble, and they look not for salvation in any other. Thou hast many a time been so, in the time of their extremity. Note, Since God is his people's all-sufficient Saviour, they ought to hope in him in their greatest straits; and since he is their alone Saviour, they ought to hope in him only. They plead likewise, "Thou art in the midst of us," we have the special tokens of thy presence with us, thy temple, thine ark, thine oracles; and "we are called by thy name," the Israel of God, and therefore we have reason to hope thou wilt not leave us; "We are thine, save us." Thy name is called upon by us, and therefore what evils we are under reflect dishonour upon thee, as if thou wast not able to relieve thine own. The prophet had often told the people that their profession of religion would not protect them from the judgments of God; yet here he pleads it with God, as Moses, *Ex.* xxxii. 11; even this may go far as to temporal punishments with a God of mercy; *valeat quantum valere potest*, —'let the plea avail as far as is proper.'

2nd. It therefore grieves them to think that he doth not appear for their deliverance; and, though they do not charge it upon him as unrighteous, they humbly plead it with him why he should be gracious,—for the glory of his own name. For otherwise he will seem, *First.* Unconcerned for his own people. What will the Egyptians say? They will say, Israel's hope and Saviour never minds them; he is become as a stranger in the land, that doth not at all interest himself in its interests; that his temple, which he called his rest for ever, is no more so, but he is in it "as a wayfaring man, that turns aside to tarry but for a night" in an inn, which he never inquires into the affairs of, nor is in any care about. Though God never is, yet he sometimes seems to be, as if he cared not what became of his church. Christ slept when his disciples were in a storm. *Secondly.* Incapable of giving them any relief. The enemies will say, Because the Lord was not able to bring his people to Canaan, he let them perish in the wilderness, *Num.* xiv. 16; so now they will say, that either his wisdom or his power fail him; that either he is as a man astonished, who, though he has the reason of a man, yet, being astonished, is quite at a loss, and at his wit's end; or, as a mighty man, that is overpowered by such as are more mighty, and therefore cannot save; though mighty, yet a man, and therefore his power limited. Either of these would be a most insufferable reproach to the Divine perfections. And therefore why is the God, that we are sure is in the midst of us, become as a stranger? Why doth the almighty God seem as if he were no more than a mighty man, who, when he is astonished, though he would, yet cannot save? It becomes us in prayer to shew ourselves concerned more for God's glory than for our own comfort. "Lord, what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

10 Thus saith the LORD unto this people,
Thus have they loved to wander,
They have not refrained their feet,

Therefore the LORD doth not accept them;
He will now remember their iniquity,
And visit their sins.
11 Then said the LORD unto me,
Pray not for this people for *their* good.
12 When they fast, I will not hear their cry;
And when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them:
But I will consume them by the sword,
And by the famine, and by the pestilence.
13 Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD!
Behold, the prophets say unto them,
Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine;
But I will give you assured peace in this place.
14 Then the LORD said unto me,
The prophets prophesy lies in my name:
I sent them not, neither have I commanded them,
Neither spake unto them:
They prophesy unto you a false vision and divination,
And a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.
15 Therefore thus saith the LORD
Concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not,
Yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land;
By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed,
16 And the people to whom they prophesy
Shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem
Because of the famine and the sword;
And they shall have none to bury them,
Them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters:
For I will pour their wickedness upon them.

The dispute between God and his prophet in this chapter seems to be like that between the owner and the dresser of the vineyard, concerning the barren fig-tree, *Lu.* xiii. 7. The justice of the owner condemns it to be cut down, the clemency of the dresser intercedes for a reprieve. Jeremiah had been earnest with God in prayer to return in mercy to this people. Now here,

First. God overrules the plea which he had offered in their favours, and shews him that it would not hold. In answer to it thus he saith, "Concerning this people," ver. 10. He doth not say, Concerning my people, for he disowns them, because they had broken covenant with him. It is true they were called by his name, and had the tokens of his presence among them; but they had sinned, and provoked God to withdraw. This the prophet had owned, and hoped to obtain mercy for them, notwithstanding this, through intercession and sacrifice; therefore God here tells him,

1. That they were not duly qualified for a pardon. The prophet had owned their backslidings were many; and, though they were so, yet there was hopes for them if they returned; but this people shews no disposition at all to return. They have wandered, and they have loved to wander; their backslidings have been their choice and their pleasure, which should have been their shame and pain, and therefore they will be their ruin. They cannot expect God should take up his rest with them when they take such delight in going astray from him after their idols. It is not through necessity or inadvertency that they wander, but they love it. Sinners are wanderers from God; their wanderings forfeit God's favour; but it is their loving to wander that quite cuts them off from it. They were told what their wanderings would come to, that one sin would hurry them on to another, and all to ruin; and yet they have not taken warning, and refrained their feet. So far were they from returning to their God, that neither his prophets nor his judgments could prevail with them to give themselves the least check in a sinful pursuit. This is that for which God is now reckoning with them. When he denies them rain from heaven he is remembering their iniquity and visiting their sin; that is it for which their fruitful land is thus turned into barrenness.

2. That they had no reason to expect that the God they had rejected should accept them; no, not though they betook themselves to fasting and prayer, and put themselves to the expence of burnt offerings and sacrifice. "The Lord doth not accept them," ver. 10. "He takes no pleasure in them," so the word is; for what pleasure can the holy God take in those that take pleasure in his rivals, in any service, in any society rather than his. "When they fast," ver. 12, which is a proper expression of repentance and reformation; "when they offer a burnt offering and an oblation," which was designed to be an expression of faith in a Mediator, though their prayers be thus enforced, and offered up in those vehicles that used to be acceptable, yet, because they do not proceed from humble, penitent, and renewed hearts, but still they love to wander, therefore I will not hear their cry, be it never so loud; nor will I accept them; neither their persons nor their performances. It had been long since declared, that "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," and those only are accepted that do well, *Gen.* iv. 7.

3. That they had forfeited all benefit by the prophet's prayers for them, because they had not regarded his preaching to them. This is the meaning of that repeated prohibition given to the prophet; ver. 11, "Pray not thou for this people for their good," as before, *ch.* xi. 14; vii. 16. This did not forbid him thus to express his good-will to them. Moses continued to intercede for Israel, after God had said, "Let me alone," *Ex.* xxxii. 10; but it forbade them to expect any good effect from it, as long as they turned away their ear from hearing the law. Thus was the doom of the impentitent ratified, as that of Saul's rejection was by that word to Samuel, "When wilt thou cease to mourn for Saul?" It therefore follows, ver. 12, "I will consume them," not only by this famine, but by the farther sore judgments of sword and pestilence; for God has many arrows in his quiver, and those that will not be convinced and reclaimed by one shall be consumed by another.

Secondly. The prophet offers another plea in excuse of the people's obstinacy; and it is but an excuse, but he was willing to say whatever their case would bear. It is this, that the prophets, who pretended a commission from heaven, imposed upon them, and flattered them with assurances of peace, though they went on in their sinful way, ver. 13. He speaks of it with lamentation; "Ah, Lord God," the poor people seem willing to take notice of what comes in thy name; and there are those who in thy name tell them that they shall not see the sword or famine, and they say it as from thee, with all the gravity and confidence of prophets; 'I will continue you in this place, and will give you assured peace here, peace of truth.' I tell them the contrary, but I am one against many, and every one is apt to credit that which makes for them; therefore, Lord, pity and spare them, for their leaders cause them to err. This excuse had been of some weight if they had not had warning given them before of false prophets, and rules by which to discover them; so that if they were deceived it was purely their own fault. But this teacheth us, as far as we can with truth, to make the best of bad, and judge as charitably of others as their case will bear.

Thirdly. God not only overrules this plea, but condemns both the blind leaders and the blind followers to fall together into the ditch.

1. God disowns the flatteries; ver. 14, "They prophesy lies in my name." They had no commission from God to prophesy at all, "I neither sent them, nor commanded them, nor spake unto them." They never were employed to go on any errand at all from God, he never made himself known to them, much less by them to the people; never any word of the Lord came to them, no call, no warrant, no instructions, much less did he send them on this errand, to rock them asleep in security. No; men may flatter themselves, and Satan may flatter them, but God never doth. It is a false vision, and a thing of nought. Note, What is false and groundless is vain and worthless. The vision that is not true, be it never so pleasing, is good for nothing; it is the deceit of their heart, a spider's web spun out of their own bowels, and in it they think to shelter themselves; but it will be swept away in a moment, and prove a great cheat. They that oppose their own thoughts to God's word (God indeed saith so, but they think otherwise) walk in the deceit of their heart, and it will be their ruin.

2. He passeth sentence upon the flatterers, ver. 15. As for the prophets, who put this abuse upon the people, by telling them they shall have peace; and this affront upon God by telling them so in God's name, let them know that they shall have no peace themselves. They shall fall first by those very judgments, which they have flattered others with the hopes of an exemption from. They undertook to warrant people, that sword and famine should not be in the land; but it shall soon appear how little their warrants are good for, when they themselves shall be cut off by sword and famine. How should they secure others, or foretell peace to them, when they cannot secure themselves, nor have such a foresight of their own calamities as to get out of the way of them. Note, The sorest punishments await those who promise sinners impunity in their sinful ways.

3. He lays the flattered under the same doom, ver. 16. The people to whom they prophesy lies, and who willingly suffer themselves to be thus imposed upon, they shall die by sword and famine. Note, The unbelief of the deceived, with all the falsehood of the deceivers, shall not make the Divine threatenings of none effect. Sword and famine will come, whatever they say to the contrary; and those will be least safe that are most secure. Impenitent sinners will not escape the damnation of hell by saying they can never believe there is such a thing; but will feel what they will not fear. It is threatened that this people shall not only fall by sword and famine, but they shall be as it were hanged up in chains, as monuments of that Divine justice which they set at defiance; their bodies shall be cast out, even in the streets of Jerusalem, which of all places, one would think should be kept clear from such nuisances. There they shall lie unburied; their nearest relations, who should do them that last office of love, being either so poor that they cannot afford it, or so weakened with hunger that they are not able to attend it, or so overwhelmed with grief that they have no heart to it, or so destitute of natural affection that they will not pay them so much respect. Thus will God pour their wickedness upon them, that is, the punishment of their wickedness; the full vials of God's wrath shall be poured on them, to which they have made themselves obnoxious. Note, When sinners are overwhelmed with trouble, they must in it see their own wickedness poured upon them. This refers to the wickedness, both of the false prophets and of the people; the blind lead the blind, and both fall together into the ditch, where they will be miserable comforters one to another.

17 Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them;
Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day,
And let them not cease:
For the virgin daughter of my people is broken
With a great breach, with a very grievous blow.
18 If I go forth into the field,
Then behold the slain with the sword!
And if I enter into the city,
Then behold them that are sick with famine!
Yea, both the prophet and the priest
Go about into a land that they know not.
19 Hast thou utterly rejected Judah?
Hath thy soul lothed Zion?
Why hast thou smitten us, and *there is* no healing for us?
We looked for peace, and *there is* no good;
And for the time of healing, and behold trouble!
20 We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness,
And the iniquity of our fathers:
For we have sinned against thee.
21 Do not abhor *us*, for thy name's sake,
Do not disgrace the throne of thy glory:
Remember, break not thy covenant with us.

22 Are there *any* among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?
Or can the heavens give showers?
Art not thou he, O LORD our God?
Therefore we will wait upon thee:
For thou hast made all these *things*.

The present deplorable state of Judah and Jerusalem is here made the matter of the prophet's lamentation, ver. 17, 18; and the occasion of his prayer and intercession for them, ver. 19; and I am willing to hope that the latter as well as the former is by Divine direction, and that these words, ver. 17, "Thus shalt thou say unto them," or concerning them, or in their hearing, refer to the intercession as well as to the lamentation, and then it amounts to a revocation of the directions given to the prophet not to pray for them, ver. 11. However, it is plain, by the prayers we find in these verses, that the prophet did not understand it as a prohibition, but only as a discouragement, like that, 1 *Jno.* v. 16, "I do not say he shall pray for that." Here,

First. The prophet stands weeping over the ruins of his country. God directs him to do so, that, shewing himself affected, he might if possible affect them with the foresight of the calamities that were coming upon them. Jeremiah must not only say it to himself, but to them too, "Let mine eyes run down with tears," ver. 17. Thus he must signify to them, that he certainly foresaw the sword coming, and another sort of famine, more grievous even than this which they were now groaning under; this was in the country for want of rain, that in the city through the straitness of the siege. The prophet speaks as if he already saw the miseries attending the descent which the Chaldeans made upon them; "The virgin daughter of my people," that is as dear to me as a daughter to her father, she "is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow," much greater and more grievous than any she has yet sustained; for, ver. 18, in the field multitudes lie dead that were slain by the sword, and in the city multitudes lie dying for want of food. Doleful spectacles! The prophets and the priests, the false prophets that flattered them with their lies, and the wicked priests that persecuted the true prophets, these are now expelled their country, and go about, either as prisoners and captives, whithersoever their conquerors lead them; or as fugitives and vagabonds, wherever they can find shelter and relief, in a land that they know not. Some understand it of the true prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, that were carried to Babylon with the rest. The prophet's eyes must run down with tears day and night in the prospect of this, that the people might be convinced, not only that this woful day would infallibly come, and would be a very woful day indeed, but that he was far from desiring it, and would as gladly have brought them messages of peace as their false prophets, if he might but have had warrant from heaven to do it. Note, Because God, though he inflicts death on sinners, yet delights not in it, it becomes his ministers, though in his name they pronounce the death of sinners, yet sadly to lament it.

Secondly. He stands up to make intercession for them; for who knows but God will yet return and repent? While there is life there is hope and room for prayer. And though there were many among them who neither prayed themselves nor valued the prophet's prayers, yet there were some who were better affected, would join with him in his devotions, and set the seal of their Amen to them.

1. He humbly expostulates with God concerning the present deplorableness of their case, ver. 19. It was very sad, for, 1st. Their expectations from their God failed them. They thought he had avouched Judah to be his; but now it seems he hath utterly rejected it, and cast it off; will not own any relation to it, or concern for it. However, they thought Zion was the beloved of his soul, was his rest for ever; but now his soul even loathes Zion, loathes even the services there performed, for the sake of the sins there committed. 2nd. Then no marvel that all their other expectations failed them. They were smitten, and their wounds were multiplied, but there was no healing for them; they looked for peace, because there uses to come after a storm a calm, and fair weather after a long fit of wet, but there was no good; things went still worse and worse. They looked for a healing time, but could not gain so much as a breathing time. Behold trouble at the door, by which we hoped peace would enter. And is it so then? "Hast thou" indeed "rejected Judah?" Justly thou mightest. "Hath thy soul loathed Zion?" We deserve it should. But wilt thou not at length in wrath remember mercy?

2. He makes a penitent confession of sin, speaking that language which they all should have spoken, though but few did; ver. 20, We acknowledge our wickedness, the abounding wickedness of our land, and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but because we confess our sins we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins.

3. He deprecates God's displeasure, and by faith appeals to his honour and promise, ver. 21. His petition is, "Do not abhor us;" though thou afflict us, "do not abhor us;" though thy hand be turned against us, let not thy heart be so, nor let thy mind be alienated from us. They own God might justly abhor them, they had rendered themselves odious in his eyes; yet, when they pray, "Do not abhor us," they mean, receive us into favour again. "Let not thy soul loathe Zion," ver. 19. Let not our incense be an abomination. They appeal, 1st. To the honour of God, the honour of his Scriptures, by which he hath made himself known; his word, which he hath magnified above all his name. "Do not abhor us for thy name's sake," that name of thine by which we are called, and which we call upon. The honour of his sanctuary. Lord, do not abhor us, for that will disgrace the throne of thy glory; that is, the temple, which is called "a glorious high throne from the beginning," *ch.* xvii. 12. Let not that which has been the joy of the whole earth be made a hissing and an astonishment; we deserve to have disgrace put upon us, but let it not be so as to reflect upon thyself; let not the desolations of the temple give occasion to the heathen to reproach Him that used to be worshipped there, as if he could not or would not protect it, or as if the gods of the Chaldeans had been too hard for him. Note, Good men lay the credit of religion, and its profession in the world, nearer their hearts than any private interest or concern of their own; and those are powerful pleas in prayer which are fetched from thence, and great supports to faith. We may be sure God will not disgrace the throne of his glory on earth, nor eclipse the glory of his throne by one providence, but he will soon make it shine forth, and more brightly than before, by another. God will be no loser in his honour at the long run. 2nd. To the promise of God. Of this they are humbly bold to put him in mind; Remember thy covenant with us, and break not that covenant. Not that they had any distrust of his fidelity, or that they thought he needed to be put in mind of his promise to them, but what he had said he would plead with himself; they take the liberty to plead with him: "Then will I remember my covenant," *Lev.* xxvi. 42.

4. He professeth a dependence upon God for the mercy of rain, which they were now in the want of, ver. 22. If they have forfeited their interest in him as their God in covenant, yet they will not let go their hold as the God of nature. 1st. They will never make their application to the idols of the heathen, for that would be foolish and fruitless. "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain?" No; in a time of great drought in Israel, Baal, though all Israel was at his devotion in the days of Ahab, yet he could not relieve them; it was that God only who answered by fire that could answer by water too. 2nd. They will not terminate their regards in second causes, nor expect supply from nature only. "Can the heavens give showers?" No, not without orders from the God of heaven; for it is he that has the key of the clouds, that "opens the bottles of heaven, and waters the earth from his chambers." But, 3rd. All their expectation therefore is from him, and their confidence in him. "Art not thou he, O Lord our God," from whom we may expect succour, and to whom we must apply ourselves? And art not thou he that causeth rain and giveth showers? for thou hast made all these things; thou gavest them being, and therefore thou givest them law, and hast them all at thy command; thou madest that moisture in nature, which is in a continual circulation, to serve the intentions of providence, and thou directest it, and makest what use thou pleasest of it; "Therefore we will wait upon thee," and upon thee only; we will "ask of the Lord rain," *Zec.* x. 1. We will trust in him to give it us in due time, and be willing to tarry his time; it is fit we should, and it will not be in vain to do so. Note, The sovereignty of God should engage, and his all-sufficiency encourage, our attendance on him, and our expectations from him at all times.

CHAPTER XV.

When we left the prophet in the close of the foregoing chapter, so pathetically pouring out his prayer before God, we had reason to hope, that in this chapter we should find God reconciled to the land, and the prophet brought into a quiet composed frame; but to our great surprise we find it much otherwise as to both. I. Notwithstanding the prophet's prayers, God here ratifies the sentence given against the people, and abandons them to ruin, turning a deaf ear to all the intercessions made for them, ver. 1—9. II. The prophet himself, notwithstanding the satisfaction he had in communion with God, still finds himself uneasy and out of temper: 1. He complains to God of his continual struggle with his persecutors, ver. 10; 2. God assures him that he shall be taken under special protection, though there was a general desolation coming upon the land, ver. 11—14; 3. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity in the discharge of his prophetical office, and thinks it hard he should not have more of the comfort of it, ver. 15—18; 4. Fresh security is given him that, upon condition he continue faithful, God will continue his care of him, and his favour to him, ver. 19—21. And thus, at length, we hope he regained the possession of his own soul.

THEN said the LORD unto me,
Though Moses and Samuel stood before me,
Yet my mind *could* not *be* toward this people:
Cast *them* out of my sight, and let them go forth.
2 And it shall come to pass,
If they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth?
Then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the LORD;
Such as *are* for death, to death;
And such as *are* for the sword, to the sword;
And such as *are* for the famine, to the famine;
And such as *are* for the captivity, to the captivity.
3 And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD:
The sword to slay, and the dogs to tear,
And the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth,
To devour and destroy.
4 And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth,
Because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah,
For *that* which he did in Jerusalem.
5 For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem?
Or who shall bemoan thee?
Or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest?
6 Thou hast forsaken me, saith the LORD,
Thou art gone backward: [destroy thee;
Therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and
I am weary with repenting.
7 And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land;
I will bereave *them* of children, I will destroy my people,
Since they return not from their ways. [seas:
8 Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the
I have brought upon them against the mother of the young man a spoiler at noonday:
I have caused *him* to fall upon it suddenly, and terrors upon the city.
9 She that hath borne seven languisheth:
She hath given up the ghost;
Her sun is gone down while *it was* yet day:
She hath been ashamed and confounded:
And the residue of them will I deliver to the sword
Before their enemies, saith the LORD.

We scarce find anywhere more pathetical expressions of Divine wrath against a provoking people than we have here in these verses. The prophet had prayed earnestly for them, and found some among them to join with him; and yet not so much as a reprieve was gained, or the least mitigation of the judgment; but this answer is given to the prophet's prayers, that the decree was gone forth, was irreversible, and would shortly be executed. Observe here,

First. What the sin was upon which this severe sentence was grounded. 1. It is in remembrance of a former iniquity; it is because of Manasseh, for that which he did in Jerusalem, ver. 4. What that was we are told, and that it was for that that Jerusalem was destroyed, 1 *Kin.* xxiv. 3, 4. It was for his idolatry, and "the innocent blood which he shed, which the Lord would not pardon." He is called the son of Hezekiah, because his relation to so good a father was a great aggravation of his sin, so far was it from being an excuse of it. The greatest part of a generation was worn off since Manasseh's time, yet his sin is brought into that account; as in Jerusalem's last ruin God brought upon it all the righteous blood shed on the earth, to shew how heavy the guilt of blood will light and lie somewhere, sooner or later, and that reprieves are not pardons. 2. It is in consideration of their present impenitency. See how their sin is described; ver. 6, "Thou hast forsaken me," my service, and thy duty to me; "Thou art gone backward," into the ways of contradiction, art become the reverse of what thou shouldest have been, and of what God by his law would have led thee forward to; and see how the impenitency is described, ver. 7, "They return not from their ways," the ways of their own hearts, into the ways of God's commandments again. There is mercy for those who have turned aside, if they will return. But what favour can they expect that persist in their apostacy?

Secondly. What the sentence is. It is such as speaks no less than an utter ruin.

1. God himself abandons and abhors them; "My mind cannot be towards them." How can it be thought that the holy God should have any remaining complacency in those that have such a rooted antipathy to him. It is not in a passion, but with a just and holy indignation, that he saith, "Cast them out of my sight," as that which is in the highest degree odious and offensive; "and let them go forth," for I will be troubled with them no more.

2. He will not admit any intercession to be made for them, ver. 1. "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me," by prayer or sacrifice to reconcile me to them, yet I could not be prevailed with to admit them into favour. Moses and Samuel were two as great favourites of Heaven as ever were the blessings of this earth, and were particularly famed for the success of their mediation between God and his offending people. Many a time they had been destroyed if Moses had not stood before him in the breach; and to Samuel's prayers they owe their lives, 1 *Sam.* xii. 19; yet even their intercessions should not prevail, no, not though they were now in a state of perfection, much less Jeremiah's, who was a man now subject to like passions as others. The putting of this as a case, Though they should stand before me, supposeth that they do not, and is an intimation that saints in heaven are not intercessors for saints on earth. It is the prerogative of the eternal Word to be the only mediator in the other world, whatever Moses, and Samuel, and others, were in this.

3. He condemns them all to one destroying judgment or other. When God casts them out of his presence, "Whither shall they go forth?" ver. 2. Certainly no whither to be safe or easy; but to be met by one judgment while they are pursued by another, till they find themselves surrounded with mischiefs on all hands, so that they cannot escape. "Such as are for death, to death;" by death here is meant the pestilence, *Rev.* vi. 8, for it is death without visible means. Those that "are for death to death," or "for the sword to the sword," that is, every man shall perish in that way that God hath appointed. The law that appoints the malefactor's death determines what death he shall die; or, he that is by his own choice for this judgment, let him take it, or for that, let him take it, but by the one or the other they shall all fall, and none shall escape. It is a choice like that which David was put to, and was thereby put into a great strait, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 14. Captivity is mentioned last, some think because the sorest judgment of all; it being both a complication and continuance of miseries. That of the sword is again repeated, ver. 3, and is made the first of another four frightful set of destroyers, which God will appoint over them; as officers over the soldiers, to do what they please with them. As those that escape the sword, yet shall be cut off by pestilence, famine, or captivity, so those that fall by the sword, yet Divine vengeance has not done with them, that pursues sinners on the other side of death. There shall be dogs to tear in the city, and fowls of the air, and wild beasts in the field to devour. And if there be any that think to outrun justice they shall be made the most public monuments of it: "They shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth," ver. 1, like Cain, who, that he might be made a spectacle of horror to all, became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.

4. They shall fall without being relieved. Who can do any thing to help them when, 1st. God, even their own God, (so he had been,) appears against them? "I will stretch out my hand against thee," which notes a deliberate, determined stroke, which will reach far, and wound deep; ver. 6, "I am weary with repenting." It is a strange expression. They had carried themselves so provokingly, especially by their treacherous professions of repentance, that they had put even infinite patience itself to the stretch. God had oftentimes turned away his wrath, when it was ready to break forth against them, but now he will grant no more reprieves. Miserable is the case of those who have sinned so long against God's mercy, that at length they have sinned it away. 2nd. Their own country expels them, and is ready to spew them out, as it had done the Canaanites that were before them; for so it was threatened, *Lev.* xviii. 28, "I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land," in their own gates, through which they shall be scattered; or "into the gates of the earth," that is, into the cities of all the nations about them. 3rd. Their own children, that should assist them when they speak with the enemy in the gate, shall be cut off from them, ver. 7, "I will bereave them of children," so that they shall have little hopes that the next generation will retrieve their affairs, for "I will destroy my people," and when the inhabitants are slain the land will soon be desolate. This melancholy article is enlarged upon, ver. 8, 9, where we have,

First. The destroyer brought upon them. When God has bloody work to do, he will find out bloody instruments to do it with. Nebuchadnezzar is here called, "a spoiler at noonday," not a thief in the night, that is afraid of being discovered, but one that without fear shall break through and destroy all the fences of rights and properties, and this in the face of the sun, and defiance of its light. 'I have brought against the mother a young man, a spoiler,' so some read it; for Nebuchadnezzar, when he first invaded Judah, was but a young man, in the first year of his reign. We read it, "I have brought upon them, even against the mother of the young men, a spoiler," that is, against Jerusalem, a mother city, that had a very numerous family of young men. Or, that invasion was in a particular manner terrible to those mothers who had many sons fit for war, who must now jeopard their lives in the high places of the field; and, being an unequal match for the enemy, would be likely to fall there, to the inexpressible grief of their poor mothers that had nursed them up with a deal of tenderness. And the same God that brought the spoiler upon them caused him to fall upon it, that is, upon the spoil delivered to him, suddenly, and by surprise, and then terrors come upon the city. The original is very abrupt, 'The city and terrors; O the city,' what a consternation will it then be in! O the terrors that shall then seize it! Then the city and terrors shall be brought together, that seemed at a distance from each other. 'I will cause to fall suddenly upon her' (that is, upon Jerusalem,) 'a watcher and terrors,' so Mr. Gataker reads it, for the word is used for a watcher, *Dan.* iv. 13, 23, and the Chaldean soldiers were called watchers, *ch.* iv. 16.

Secondly. The destruction made by this destroyer. A dreadful slaughter is here described. 1*st.* The wives are deprived of their husbands; "their widows are increased above the sand of the seas," so numerous are they now grown. It was promised that the men of Israel (for those only were numbered) should be as the sand of the sea for multitude, but now they shall be all cut off, and their widows shall be so. But observe, God saith, "They are increased to me." Though the husbands were cut off by the sword of his justice, their poor widows were gathered in the arms of his mercy, who has taken it among the titles of his honour to be the God of the widows. Widows are said to be taken into the number, the number of those whom God has a particular compassion and concern for. *2nd.* The parents are deprived of their children. "She that has borne seven" sons, whom she expected to be the support and joy of her age now "languisheth" when she hath seen them all cut off by the sword in one day who had been many years her burthen and care. "She that had many children is waxen feeble," 1 *Sam.* ii. 5. See what uncertain comforts children are, and let us therefore rejoice in them, as though we rejoiced not. When the children are slain, the mother gives up the ghost, for her life was bound up in theirs; "Her sun is gone down while it was yet day;" she is bereaved of all her comforts then when she thought herself in the midst of the enjoyment of them. She is now ashamed and confounded to think how proud she had been of her sons, how fond of them, and how much she promised herself from them. Some understand by this languishing mother, Jerusalem lamenting the death of her inhabitants, as passionately as ever poor mother bewailed her children. Many are cut off already, and the residue of them, who have yet escaped, and it was hoped were reserved to be the seed of another generation, even them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, as the condemned malefactor is delivered to the sheriff to be executed, saith the Lord, the judge of heaven and earth, who we are sure herein judgeth right, though the judgment seem severe.

5. They shall fall without being pitied; ver. 5, "For who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem?" When thy God hath cast thee out of his sight, and his compassions fail and are shut up from thee, neither thine enemies nor thy friends shall have any compassion for thee. They shall have no sympathy with thee, they shall not bemoan thee, or be sorry for thee, shall have no concern for thee, shall not go a step out of their way to ask how thou dost. For, 1st. Their friends who were expected to do these friendly offices, were all involved with them in the calamities, and had enough to do to bemoan themselves. 2nd. It was plain to all their neighbours that they had brought all this misery upon themselves by their obstinacy in sin, and they might easily have prevented it by repentance and reformation, which they were often in vain called to; and therefore "who can pity them? O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself." Those will perish for ever unpitied, that might have been saved upon such easy terms, and would not. 3rd. God will thus complete their misery; he will set their acquaintance, as he did Job's, at a distance from them. And his hand, his righteous hand, is to be acknowledged in all the unkindnesses of our friends, as well as in all the injuries done us by our foes.

10 Woe is me, my mother,
That thou hast borne me a man of strife
And a man of contention to the whole earth!
I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me
Yet every one of them doth curse me. [on usury;
11 The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant;
Verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee *well*
In the time of evil and in the time of affliction.
12 Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?
13 Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil
Without price, and *that* for all thy sins, even in all thy borders.
14 And I will make *thee* to pass with thine enemies
Into a land *which* thou knowest not: [upon you.
For a fire is kindled in mine anger, *which* shall burn

Jeremiah is now returned from his public work, and is retired into his closet. What passed between him and his God there we have an account of in these and the following verses, which he published afterwards to affect the people with the weight and importance of his messages to them. Here is,

First. The complaint which the prophet makes to God of the many discouragements he met with in his work, ver. 10.

1. He met with a great deal of contradiction and opposition. He was "a man of strife and contention to the whole land," so it might be read, rather than to "the whole earth," for his business lay only in that land; both city and country quarrelled with him, and set themselves against him, and said and did all they could to thwart him. He was a peaceable man, gave no provocation to any, nor was apt to resent the provocations given him, and yet a man of strife, that is, not a man striving, but a man striven with; he was for peace, but when he spake they were for war. And, whatever they pretended, that which was the real cause of their quarrels with them was his faithfulness to God and to their souls. He shewed them their sins that were working their ruin, and put them into a way to prevent that ruin, which was the greatest kindness he could do them; and yet this was it for which they were incensed against him, and looked upon him as their enemy. Even the Prince of Peace himself was thus a man of strife, a sign spoken against, continually enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself; and the Gospel of peace brings division, even to fire and sword, *Mat.* x. 34, 35; *Lu.* xii. 49, 51. Now this made Jeremiah very uneasy, even to a degree of impatience. He cried out, "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me;" as if it were his mother's fault that she bore him, and he had better never have been born, than be born to such an uncomfortable life; nay, he is angry that she had born him a man of strife, as if he had been fatally determined to this by the stars that were in the ascendant at his birth. If he had any meaning of this kind, doubtless it was very much his infirmity; we rather hope it was intended for no more but a pathetical lamentation of his own case.

Note, 1st. Even those who are most quiet and peaceable, yet, if they serve God faithfully, are often made men of strife. We can but follow peace, have the making only of one side of the bargain, and therefore can but, as much as in us lies, live peaceably. 2nd. It is very uncomfortable to those who are of a peaceable disposition to live among those that are continually picking quarrels with them. 3rd. Yet, if we cannot live so peaceably as we desire with our neighbours, we must not be so disturbed at it as thereby to lose the repose of our own minds, and put ourselves upon the fret.

2. He met with a great deal of contempt, contumely, and reproach. They every one of them cursed him; they branded him as a turbulent, factious man, as an incendiary, and a sower of discord and sedition. They ought to have blessed him, and to have blessed God for him; but they were arrived to such a pitch of enmity against God and his word, that for his sake they cursed his messenger, spoke ill of him, wished ill to him, did all they could to make him odious: they all did so; he had scarce one friend in Judah or Jerusalem that would give him a good word. Note, It is often the lot of the best of men to be put under the worst of characters; "So persecuted they the prophets." But one would be apt to suspect, that surely Jeremiah had given them some provocation, else he could not have lost himself thus; No, not the least, I have neither lent money nor borrowed money, have been neither creditor nor debtor, for so general is the signification of the words here. 1st. It is implied here, that those who deal much in the business of this world, are often involved thereby in strife and contention; *meum et tuum*,—'mine and thine,' are the great makebates; lenders and borrowers sue and are sued, and great dealers often get a deal of ill will. 2nd. It was an instance of Jeremiah's great prudence, and is written for our learning, that being called to be a prophet, he entangled not himself in the affairs of this life, but kept clear from them, that he might apply himself the more closely to the business of his profession, and might not give the least umbrage of suspicion that he aimed at secular advantages in it, nor any occasion to his neighbours to contend with him. He put out no money, for he was no usurer, nor, indeed, had any money to lend; he took up no money, for he was no purchaser, nor merchant, no spendthrift. He was perfectly dead to this world, and the things of it; a very little served to keep him; and we find, *ch.* xvi. 2, he had neither wife nor children to keep. And yet, 3rd. Though he carried himself thus discreetly, and so as one would have thought should have gained him a universal esteem, yet he lay under a general odium, through the iniquity of the times. Blessed be God, as bad as things are with us, they are not so bad but there are those with whom virtue has its praise; yet let not those who carry themselves most prudently think it strange if they have not the respect and esteem they deserve. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."

Secondly. The answer which God gave to this complaint. Though there was in it a mixture of passion and infirmity, yet God graciously took cognizance of it, because it was for his sake that the prophet suffered reproach. In this answer,

1. God assures him that he should weather the storm, and be made easy at last, ver. 11. Though his neighbours quarrelled with him for what he did in the discharge of his office, yet God accepted him, and promised to stand by him. And it is in the original expressed in the form of an oath, If I take not care of thee, let me never be counted faithful; "Verily, it shall go well with thy remnant," that is, with the remainder of thy life, for so the word signifies. The residue of thy days shall be more comfortable to thee than those hitherto have been. 'Thy end shall be good,' so the Chaldee reads it. Note, It is a great and sufficient support to the people of God, that, how troublesome soever their way may be, it shall be well with them in their latter end, *Ps.* xxxvii. 37. They have still a remnant, a residue, something behind, and left in reserve, which will be sufficient to balance all their grievances, and the hope of it to make them easy. It should seem Jeremiah, besides the vexation that his people gave him, was uneasy at the apprehension he had of sharing largely in the public judgments which he foresaw coming; and though he mentioned not this, God replied to his thought of it, as to Moses, *Ex.* iv. 19. Jeremiah thought, if his friends were thus abusive to him, what would his enemies be? And God had thought fit to awaken in him an expectation of this kind, *ch.* xii. 5; but here he quiets his mind with this promise, "Verily, I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil," when all about thee shall be laid waste. Note, God has all men's hearts in his hands, and can turn those to favour his servants whom they were most afraid of. And the prophets of the Lord have often met with fairer and better treatment among open enemies than among those that call themselves his people. When we see trouble coming, and it looks very threatening, yet let us not despair, but hope in God, because it may prove better than likely. This promise was accomplished, when Nebuchadnezzar having taken the city charged the captain of the guard to be kind to Jeremiah, and let him have every thing he had a mind to, *ch.* xxxix. 11, 12. The following words, ver. 12, "Shall common iron break the northern iron and the steel?" or brass, being compared with the promise God made to Jeremiah, *ch.* i. 18, that he would make him an iron-pillar and brazen walls, seem intended for his comfort. They were continually clashing with him, and were rough and hard as iron, but Jeremiah, being armed with power and courage from on high, is as northern iron, which is naturally stronger, and as steel, which is hardened by art, and therefore they shall not prevail against him; compare this with *Eze.* ii. 6, and iii. 8, 9. And he might the better bear their quarrelling with him when he was sure of the victory.

2. God assures him that his enemies and persecutors should be lost in the storm, should be ruined at last; and therein the word of God in his mouth should be accomplished, and he should be proved a true prophet, ver. 13, 14. God here turns his speech from the prophet to the people; and to them also ver. 12 may be applied, "Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel?" Shall their courage and strength, and the most hardy and vigorous of their efforts, be able to contest either with the counsel of God or with the army of the Chaldeans, which are as inflexible, as invincible, as the northern iron and the steel? Let them therefore hear their doom: "Thy substance and thy treasure will I give to the spoil," and that "without price;" the spoilers shall have it gratis, it shall be to them a cheap and easy prey. Observe, The prophet was poor, he neither lent nor borrowed, he had nothing to lose, neither substance nor treasure, and therefore the enemy will treat him well; *cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator*,—'the traveller that has no property about him, will congratulate himself when accosted by a robber.' But the people that had great estates in money and land would be slain for what they had, or the enemy, finding they had much, would use them hardly to make them confess more. And it is their own iniquity that herein corrects them; It is "for all thy sins, even in all thy borders;" all parts of the country, even those which lay most remote, had contributed to the national guilt, and all shall now be brought to account. Let not one tribe lay the blame upon another, but each take shame to themselves; It is "for all thy sins in all thy borders." Thus shall they stay at home till they see their estates ruined, and then they shall be carried into captivity, to spend the sad remains of a miserable life in slavery: "I will make thee to pass with thine enemies," that shall lead thee in triumph, "into a land that thou knowest not," and therefore canst expect to find no comfort in it. And all this is the fruit of God's wrath; It is "a fire kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you," and if not extinguished in time will burn eternally.

15 O LORD, thou knowest: remember me,
And visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors;
Take me not away in thy longsuffering:
Know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.
16 Thy words were found, and I did eat them; [heart:
And thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine
For I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.
17 I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced;
I sat alone because of thy hand:
For thou hast filled me with indignation.
18 Why is my pain perpetual,
And my wound incurable, *which* refuseth to be healed?
Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar,
And as waters *that* fail?
19 Therefore thus saith the LORD,
If thou return, then will I bring thee again,
And thou shalt stand before me:
And if thou take forth the precious from the vile,
Thou shalt be as my mouth:
Let them return unto thee;
But return not thou unto them. [wall:
20 And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen
And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee:
For I *am* with thee to save thee
And to deliver thee, saith the LORD.
21 And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked,
And I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Here, as before, we have,

First. The prophet's humble address to God, containing a remonstrance both of his integrity and of the hardships he underwent notwithstanding. It is matter of comfort to us that, whatever ails us, we have a God to go to, before whom we may spread our case, and to whose omniscience we may appeal, as the prophet here, "O Lord, thou knowest." Thou dost know my sincerity, which men are resolved they will not acknowledge; thou dost know my distress, which men disdain to take notice of. Observe here,

1. What is it that the prophet prays for, ver. 15. 1st. That God would consider his case, and be mindful of him. "O Lord, remember me." Think upon me for good, 2nd. That God would communicate strength and comfort to him; Visit me, not only remember me, but let me know that thou rememberest me, that thou art nigh unto me. 3rd. That he would appear for him, against those that did him wrong, "Revenge me of my persecutors;" or rather, 'vindicate me from my persecutors.' Give judgment against them, and let thy judgment be executed so far as is necessary for my vindication, and to compel them to acknowledge that they have done me wrong; and farther a good man will not desire that God would revenge him. Let something be done to convince the world, that (whatever blasphemers say to the contrary) Jeremiah is a righteous man, and the God whom he serves is a righteous God. 4th. That he would yet spare him and continue him in the land of the living; Take me not away by a sudden stroke, but in thy longsuffering lengthen out my days. The best men will own themselves so obnoxious to God's wrath, that they are indebted to his patience for the continuance of their lives. Or, while thou exercisest long suffering towards my persecutors, let not them prevail to take me away. Though in a passion he complained of his birth, ver. 10; yet he desires here that his death might not be hastened; for life is sweet to nature; the life of a useful man is so to grace, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world."

2. What it is that he pleads with God for mercy and relief against his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers.

1st. That God's honour was interested in his case. "Know," and make it known, "that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke." Those that lay themselves open to reproach by their own fault and folly have great reason to bear it patiently, but no reason to expect that God should appear for them; but if it is for doing well that we suffer ill, and for righteousness' sake that we have all manner of evil said against us, we may hope that God will vindicate our honour with his own. To the same purpose, ver. 16, "I am called by thy name, O Lord of hosts;" it was for that reason that his enemies hated him, and therefore for that reason he promised himself that God would own him, and stand by him.

2nd. That the word of God which he was employed to preach to others he had experienced the power and pleasure of in his own soul, and therefore had the graces of the Spirit to qualify him for the Divine favour, as well as his gifts. We find some rejected of God, who yet could say, "Lord, we have prophesied in thy name." But Jeremiah could say more, ver. 16, "Thy words were found" by me. He searched the Scriptures, diligently studied the law, and found that in it which was reviving to him; if we seek we shall find. Found for me; the words which he was to deliver to others were laid ready to his hand, were brought to him by inspiration; "and I did," not only taste them, but "eat them," received them entirely, conversed with them intimately, they were welcome to me, as food to one that is hungry. I entertained them, digested them, turned them *in succum et sanguinem*,—'into blood and spirits,' and was myself delivered into the mould of those truths which I was to deliver to others. The prophet was bidden to eat the roll, *Eze.* ii. 8; *Rev.* x. 9. "I did eat it," that is, as it follows, "it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart," nothing could be more agreeable. Understand it, *First.* Of the message itself he was to deliver. Though he was to foretell the ruin of his country, which was dear to him, and in the ruin of which he could not but have a deep share, yet all

natural affections were swallowed up in zeal for God's glory; and even these messages of wrath, being Divine messages, were a satisfaction to him. He also rejoiced at first in hope that the people would take warning, and prevent the judgment. Or, *Secondly*. Of the commission he received to deliver this message. Though the work he was called to was not attended with any secular advantages, but, on the contrary, exposed him to contempt and persecution, yet, because it put him in a way to serve God, and do good, he took pleasure in it, was glad to be so employed; and it was his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him, *Jno.* iv. 34. Or, *Thirdly*. Of the promise God gave him, that he would assist and own him in his work, *ch.* i. 8; he was satisfied in that, and depended upon it, and therefore hoped it should not fail him.

3rd. That he had applied himself to the discharge of his office with all possible gravity, and seriousness, and self-denial, though he had had of late but little satisfaction in it, ver. 17. *First*. It is his comfort that he had given up himself wholly to the business of his office, and had done nothing disagreeable to it; nothing either to divert himself from it, or disfit himself for it. He kept no unsuitable company; denied himself the use even of lawful recreations, abstained from every thing that looked like levity, lest thereby he should make himself mean, and less regarded. He sat alone, spent a deal of time in his closet, because of the hand of the Lord that was strong upon him to carry him on in his work; *Eze.* iii. 14, "For thou hast filled me with indignation," with such messages of wrath against this people as have made me always pensive. Note, It will be a comfort to God's ministers, when men despise them, if they have the testimonies of their consciences for them, that they have not by any vain foolish carriage made themselves despicable; that they have been dead not only to the wealth of the world, as this prophet was, ver. 10, but to the pleasures of it too, as here. But, *Secondly*. It is his complaint that he had had but little pleasure in his work. It was at first the rejoicing of his heart, but of late it had made him melancholy; so that he had no heart to sit in the meeting of those that make merry. He cared not for company, for indeed no company cared for him; he sat alone, fretting at the people's obstinacy, and the little success of his labours among them; this filled him with a holy indignation. Note, It is the folly and infirmity of some good people, that they lose much of the pleasantness of their religion by the fretfulness and uneasiness of their natural temper, which they humour and indulge, instead of mortifying it.

4th. He throws himself upon God's pity and promise in a very passionate expostulation; ver. 18, "Why is my pain perpetual," and nothing done to ease it? the wounds which my enemies are continually giving, both to my peace and to my reputation, incurable, and nothing done to retrieve either my comfort or my credit? I once little thought I should have been thus neglected; will the God that has promised me his presence "be to me as a liar?" The God on whom I depend, be to me "as waters that fail?" We are willing to make the best we can of it, and to take it as an appeal, *First*. To the mercy of God; I know he will not let the pain of his servant be perpetual, but he will ease it, will not let his wound be incurable, but he will heal it; and therefore I will not despair. *Secondly*. To his faithfulness, "Wilt thou be to me as a liar?" No, I know thou wilt not; God is not a man that he should lie. The fountain of life will never be to his people "as waters that fail."

Secondly. God's gracious answer to this address, ver. 19—21. Though the prophet betrayed much human frailty in his address, yet God vouchsafed to answer him with good words and comfortable words, for he knows our frame. Observe,

1. What God here requires of him as the condition of the farther favours he designed him. Jeremiah had done and suffered much for God, yet God is no debtor to him, but he is still upon his good behaviour. God will own him, But,

1st. He must recover his temper, and be reconciled to his work, and friends with it again, and not quarrel with it any more as he had done. He must return; must shake off these distrustful discontented thoughts and passions, and not give way to them; must regain the peaceable possession and enjoyment of himself, and resolve to be easy. Note, When we have stepped aside into any disagreeable frame or way, our care must be to return, and compose ourselves into a right temper of mind again; and then we may expect God will help us, if thus we endeavour to help ourselves.

2nd. He must resolve to be faithful in his work; for he could not any longer expect the Divine protection than he did approve himself so. Though there was no cause at all to charge Jeremiah with unfaithfulness, and God knew his heart to be sincere, yet God saw fit to give him this caution. Those that do their duty must not take it ill to be told their duty. In two things he must be faithful: *First*. He must distinguish between some and others of those he preached to. Thou must "take forth the precious from the vile." The righteous are the precious, be they never so mean and poor; the wicked are the vile, be they never so rich and great. In our congregations these are mixed, wheat and chaff in the same floor. We cannot distinguish them by name, but we must by character, and must give to each their portion, speaking comfort to precious saints, and terror to vile sinners; neither making the heart of the righteous sad, nor strengthening the hands of the wicked, *Eze.* xiii. 27, but rightly dividing the word of truth. Ministers must take those whom they see to be precious into their bosoms, and not sit alone as Jeremiah did; but keep up conversation with those they may do good to, and get good by. *Secondly*. He must closely adhere to his instructions, and not in the least vary from them, "Let them return to thee, but return not thou to them." That is, he must do the utmost he can in his preaching to bring people up to the mind of God; tell them they must at their peril comply with that. They that had flown off from him, that did not like the terms upon which God's favour was offered to them, "let them return to thee," and, upon second thoughts, come up to the terms, and strike the bargain. But "do not thou return to them," do not compliment them, or comply with them, nor think to make the matter easier to them than the word of God has made it. Men's hearts and lives must come up to God's law, and comply with that, for God's law will never come down to them, or comply with them.

2. What he here promiseth him upon the performance of these conditions. If he approve himself well,

1st. God will quiet his mind, and pacify the present tumult of his spirits. "If thou return, I will bring thee again;" will restore thy soul, as *Ps.* xxiii. 3. The best and strongest saints, if at any time they have gone aside out of the right way, and are determined to return, yet need the grace of God to bring them again.

2nd. God will employ him in his service as a prophet; work, which even in those bad times, had comfort and honour enough in it to be its own wages; "Thou shalt stand before me," to receive instructions from me, as a servant from his master, "and thou shalt be as my mouth," to deliver my messages to the people; as an ambassador is the mouth of the prince that sends him. Note, Faithful ministers are God's mouth to us; they are so to look upon themselves, and to speak God's mind, and as becomes the oracles of God; and we are so to look upon them, and to hear God speaking to us by them. Observe, If thou keep close to thine instructions, "thou shall be as my mouth," not otherwise. So far, and no farther, God will stand by ministers, as they go by the written word; "Thou shalt be as my mouth," that is, what thou sayest shall be made good, as if I myself had said it: see *Isa.* xliv. 26; 1 *Sam.* iii. 19.

3rd. He shall have strength and courage to face the many difficulties he meets with in his work, and his spirit shall not fail again as now it doth; ver. 20, "I will make thee unto this people as a fenced brazen wall," which the storm batters, and beats violently upon, but cannot shake; "Return not thou to them," by any sinful compliances, and then trust thy God to arm thee by his grace with holy resolutions. Be not sneaking, and God will make thee daring. He had complained that he was made a man of strife; Expect that, saith God; "they shall fight against thee," they will still continue their opposition, "but they shall not prevail against thee," to drive thee off from thy work, or to cut thee off from the land of the living.

4th. He shall have God for his protector and mighty deliverer; "I am with thee to save thee." Those that have God with them have a Saviour with them, who hath wisdom and strength enough to deal with the most formidable enemy; and those that are with God, and faithful to him, he will deliver them, ver. 21, either from trouble or through it. They may perhaps fall into the hand of the wicked, and they may appear terrible to them; but God will rescue them out of their hands. They shall not be able to kill them, till they have finished their testimony; they shall not prevent their happiness. God will so deliver them, as to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, 2 *Tim.* iv. 18; and that is deliverance enough. There are many things that appear very frightful that yet do not prove at all hurtful to a good man.

CHAPTER XVI.

In this chapter, I. The greatness of the calamity that was coming upon the Jewish nation is illustrated by prohibitions given to the prophet, neither to set up a house of his own, ver. 1—4, nor to go into the house of mourning, ver. 5—7, nor into the house of feasting, ver. 8, 9. II. God is justified in these severe proceedings against them, by an account of their great wickedness, ver. 10—13. III. An intimation is given of mercy in reserve, ver. 14, 15. IV. Some hopes are given that the punishment of the sin should prove the reformation of the sinners, and that they should return to God at length in a way of duty, and so be qualified for his returns to them in a way of favour, ver. 14—21.

THE word of the LORD came also unto me, saying,
2 Thou shalt not take thee a wife,
Neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place.
3 For thus saith the LORD
Concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place,
And concerning their mothers that bare them,
And concerning their fathers that begat them in this land;
4 They shall die of grievous deaths;
They shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried;
But they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth:
And they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine;
And their carcases shall be meat
For the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.
5 For thus saith the LORD,
Enter not into the house of mourning,
Neither go to lament nor bemoan them:
For I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD,
Even lovingkindness and mercies.
6 Both the great and the small shall die in this land:
They shall not be buried, neither shall *men* lament for them,
Nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them:
7 Neither shall *men* tear *themselves* for them in mourning,
To comfort them for the dead;
Neither shall *men* give them the cup of consolation to drink
For their father or for their mother.

CUP OF CONSOLATION AT A FUNERAL FEAST.

8 Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting,
To sit with them to eat and to drink.
9 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place
In your eyes, and in your days,

The voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness,
The voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.

The prophet is here for a sign to the people; they would not regard what he said, let it be tried whether they will regard what he doth. In general, he must carry himself so in every thing as became one that expected to see his country in ruins very shortly. This he foretold, but few regarded the prediction; therefore he is to shew that he is himself fully satisfied in the truth of it. Others go on in their usual course; but he, in the prospect of these sad times is forbidden, and therefore forbears, marriage, mourning for the dead, and mirth. Note, Those that would convince others of, and affect them with, the word of God, must make it appear, even in the most self-denying instances, that they do believe it themselves, and are affected with it. Would we rouse others out of their security, and persuade them to sit loose to the world, we must ourselves be mortified to present things, and shew that we expect the dissolution of them.

First. Jeremiah must not marry, nor think of having a family, and being a housekeeper; ver. 2, "Thou shalt not take thee a wife," nor think of having "sons and daughters in this place;" not in the land of Judah, not in Jerusalem, not in Anathoth. The Jews, more than any people, valued themselves by their early marrying and their numerous offspring; but Jeremiah must live a bachelor, not so much in honour of virginity, as in diminution of it; by this it appears, that it was advisable and seasonable only in calamitous times, and times of present distress, 1 *Cor.* vii. 26; that it is so, is a part of the calamity. There may be a time when it will be said, "Blessed is the womb that bare not," *Lu.* xxiii. 29; and when we see such times at hand it is wisdom for all, especially for prophets, to keep themselves as much as may be from being "entangled with the affairs of this life," and encumbered with that which, the dearer it is to them, the more it will be the matter of their care, and fear, and grief at such a time. The reason here given is, because the fathers and mothers, the sons and the daughters, shall die of grievous deaths, ver. 3, 4; and those that have wives and children, 1. They will have such a clog upon them, that they cannot flee from those deaths. A single man may make his escape, and shift for his own safety, when he that has a wife and children can neither find means to convey them with him nor find in his heart to go and leave them behind him. 2. They will be in continual terror for fear of those deaths, and the more they have to lose by them the greater will the terror and consternation be, when death appears every where in its triumphant pomp and power. 3. The death of every child, and the aggravating circumstances of it, will be a new death to the patient. Better have no children, than have them brought forth and bred up for the murderer, *Hos.* ix. 13, 14, than see them live and die in misery. Death is grievous, but some deaths are more grievous than others, both to them that die, and to their relations that survive them; hence we read of "so great a death," 2 *Cor.* i. 10. Two things are used a little to palliate and alleviate the terror of death, as to this world, and to sugar the bitter pill, bewailing the dead, and burying them; but to make those deaths grievous indeed, these are denied; "They shall not be lamented," but shall be carried off, as if all the world were weary of them; nay, they shall "not be buried," but left exposed, as if they were designed to be monuments of justice. "They shall be as dung upon the face of the earth," not only despicable but detestable, as if they were good for nothing but to muck the ground; and being consumed, some by the sword, and some by famine, "their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and the beasts of the earth." Will not any one say, better be without children than live to see them come to this. What reason have we to say, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, when those creatures that we expect should be our greatest comforts may prove not only our heaviest cares, but our sorest crosses!

Secondly. Jeremiah must not go to the house of mourning upon occasion of the death of any of his neighbours or relations; ver. 5, "Enter thou not into the house of mourning." It was usual to condole those whose relations were dead, to bemoan them, to cut themselves, and make themselves bald, which it seems was commonly practised as an expression of mourning, though forbidden by the law, *Deu.* xiv. 1; nay, sometimes they did in a passion of grief tear themselves for them, ver. 6, 7, partly in honour of the deceased, (thus signifying that they thought there was a great loss of them,) and partly in compassion to the surviving relations, to whom the burthen will be made the lighter by their having sharers with them in their grief. They used to mourn with them, and so to comfort them for the dead, as Job's friends with him, and the Jews with Martha and Mary; and it was a friendly office to give them a cup of consolation to drink, to provide cordials for them, and press them earnestly to drink of them, for the support of their spirits, give wine to them that are of heavy heart, for their father or mother, that it may be some comfort to them to find that, though they have lost their parents, yet they have some friends left that have a concern for them. Thus the usage stood, and it was a laudable usage; it is a good work to others, as well as of good use to ourselves, to go to the house of mourning. It seems the prophet Jeremiah had been wont to abound in good offices of this kind, and it well became his character, both as a pious man and as a prophet; and one would think it should have made him better beloved among his people than it should seem he was. But now God bids him not lament the death of his friends as usual, for, 1. His sorrow for the destruction of his country in general must swallow up his sorrow for particular deaths. His tears must now be turned into another channel, and there is occasion enough for them all. 2. He had little reason to lament those who died now just before the judgments entered, which he saw at the door, but rather to think them happy who were seasonably taken away from the evil to come. 3. This was to be a type of what was coming, when there should be such an universal confusion, that all neighbourly, friendly offices should be neglected. Men shall be in deaths so often, and even dying daily, that they shall have no time, no room, no heart for the ceremonies that used to attend deaths; the sorrows shall be so ponderous as not to admit relief; and every one so full of grief for his own troubles that he shall have no thoughts of his neighbour's. All shall be mourners then, and no comforters; every one will find it enough to bear his own burthen; for, ver. 5, "I have taken away my peace from this people," that is, put a full period to their prosperity, deprived them of health, and wealth, and quiet, and friends, and every thing wherewith they might comfort themselves and one another. Whatever peace we enjoy, it is God's peace, it is his gift, and if he give quietness who then can make trouble? But if we make not a good use of his peace, he can and will take it away, and where are we then? *Job* xxxiv. 29. I will take "away my peace, even my lovingkindness and mercies," these shall be shut up and restrained, which are the fresh springs from which all their fresh streams flow, and then farewell all good. Note, Those have cut themselves off from all true peace that have thrown themselves out of the favour of God. All is gone when God takes away from us his lovingkindness and his mercies. Then it follows, ver. 6, "Both the great and the small shall die," even "in this land," the land of Canaan, that used to be called the land of the living. God's favour is our life; take away that, and we die, we perish, we all perish.

Thirdly. Jeremiah must not go to the house of mirth, no more than to the house of mourning, ver. 8. It had been his custom, and it was innocent enough, when any of his friends made entertainments at their houses, and invited him to them, to go and sit with them, not merely to drink, but to eat and to drink, soberly and cheerfully. But now he must not take that liberty, 1. Because it was unseasonable and disagreeable to the providences of God that were concerning the land and nation; God called loud to weeping, and mourning, and fasting, he was coming forth against them in his judgments, and it was time for them to humble themselves. And it well became the prophet who gave them the warning to give them an example of taking the warning and complying with it, and so to make it appear he did himself believe it. Ministers ought to be examples of self-denial and mortification, and to shew themselves affected with those terrors of the Lord with which they desire to affect others; and it becomes all the sons of Zion to sympathise with her in her afflictions, and not to be merry when she is perplexed, *Am.* vi. 6. 2. Because he must thus shew the people what sad times were coming upon them. His friends wondered he would not meet them, as he used to do, in the house of feasting; but he lets them know it was to intimate to them that all their feasting would be at an end shortly; ver. 9, "I will cause to cease the voice of mirth." You shall have nothing to feast on, nothing to rejoice in, but be surrounded with calamities that shall mar your mirth, and cast a damp upon it. God can find ways to tame the most jovial. This shall be done in this place, in Jerusalem, that used to be the joyous city, and thought her joys were all secure to her; it shall be done in your eyes, in your sight, to be a vexation to you, who now look so haughty, look so merry; it shall be done in your day, you yourselves shall live to see it. The voice of praise they had made to cease by their iniquities and idolatries, and therefore justly God made to cease among them the voice of mirth and gladness. The voice of God's prophets was not heard, was not heeded among them, and therefore no longer shall the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride, of the songs that used to grace the nuptials, be heard among them: see *ch.* vii. 34.

10 And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what *is* our iniquity? or what *is* our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God? 11 Then shalt thou say unto them,

Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD,
And have walked after other gods,
And have served them, and have worshipped them,
And have forsaken me, and have not kept my law;
12 And ye have done worse than your fathers;
For, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart,
That they may not hearken unto me:
13 Therefore will I cast you out of this land [fathers;
Into a land that ye know not, *neither* ye nor your
And there shall ye serve other gods day and night;
Where I will not shew you favour.

Here is, First. An inquiry made into the reasons why God would bring those judgments upon them; ver. 10, "When thou shalt shew this people all these words," the words of this curse, they will say unto thee, "Wherefore has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us?" One would hope there were some among them that asked this question with an humble, penitent heart, desiring to know what was the sin for which God contended with them, that they might cast it away, and prevent the judgment; Shew us the Jonah that raiseth the storm, and we will throw it overboard. But it seems here to be the language of those who quarrelled at the word of God, and challenged him to shew what they had done which might deserve so severe a punishment. "What is our iniquity? and what is our sin?" What crime have we ever been guilty of proportionable to such a sentence? Instead of humbling and condemning themselves, they stand upon their own justification; and insinuate that God did them wrong in pronouncing this evil against them, and that he laid upon them more than was right, and they had reason to enter into judgment with God, *Job* xxxiv. 23. Note, It is amazing to see how hardly sinners are brought to justify God, and judge themselves when they are in trouble, and to own the iniquity and the sin that has procured them the trouble.

Secondly. A plain and full answer given to this inquiry. Do they ask the prophet why and for what reason God is thus angry with them? He shall not stop their mouths by telling them they may be sure there is a sufficient reason, the righteous God is never angry without cause, without good cause; but he must tell them particularly what is the cause, that they may be convinced and humbled, or at least that God may be justified. Let them know, then,

1. That God visited upon them the iniquities of their fathers; ver. 11, "Your fathers have forsaken me, and have not kept my law;" they shook off Divine institutions, and grew weary of them, they thought them too plain, too mean, and then they walked after other gods, whose worship was more gay and pompous; and, being fond of variety and novelty, they served them and worshipped them; and this was the sin which God had said, in the second commandment, he would visit upon their children, who kept up these idolatrous usages, because they received them by tradition from their fathers, 1 *Pet.* i. 18.

2. That God reckoned with them for their own iniquities, ver. 12. You have made your fathers' sin your own, and are become obnoxious to the punishment which in their days was deferred, for "you have done worse than your fathers." If they had made a good use of their fathers' reprieve, and had been led by the patience of God to repentance, they should have fared the better for it, and the judgment should have been prevented, the reprieve turned into a national pardon; but making an ill use of it, and being hardened by it in their sins, they fared the worse for it, and, the reprieve being expired, an addition was made to the sentence, and it was executed with the more severity. They were more impudent and obstinate in sin than their fathers, "walked every one after the imagination of his heart," made that their guide and rule, and were resolved to follow that, on purpose that they might not hearken to God and his prophets. They designedly suffer their own lusts and passions to be noisy, that they might

drown the voice of their consciences. No wonder, then, that God has taken up this resolution concerning them, ver. 13, "I will cast you out of this land," this land of light, this valley of vision; since you will not hearken to me, you shall not hear me, you shall be hurried away, not into a neighbouring country, which you have formerly had some acquaintance and correspondence with, but into a far country, "a land that ye know not, neither you nor your fathers," in which you have no interest, nor can expect to meet with any comfortable society to be an allay to your misery. Justly were they banished into a strange land who doated upon strange gods, which neither they nor their fathers knew, *Deu.* xxxii. 17. Two things would make their case there very miserable, and both of them relate to the soul, the better part; the greatest calamities of their captivity were those which affected that and debarred that from its bliss: 1st. It is the happiness of the soul to be employed in the service of God, but "there shall ye serve other gods day and night," that is, you shall be in continual temptation to serve them, and perhaps compelled to do it by your cruel taskmasters; and when you are forced to worship idols you will be as sick of it as ever you were fond of it when it was forbidden you by your godly kings. See how God often makes men's sin their punishment, and fills the backslider in heart with his own ways. You shall have no public worship at all but the worship of idols, and then you will think with regret how you slighted the worship of the true God. 2nd. It is the happiness of the soul to have some tokens of the lovingkindness of God, but you shall go to a strange land, "where I will not shew you favour." If they had had God's favour, that would have made even the land of their captivity a pleasant land; but if they lie under his wrath the yoke of their oppression will be intolerable to them.

14 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth,
That brought up the children of Israel out of the land of
15 But, The LORD liveth, [Egypt;
That brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north,
And from all the lands whither he had driven them:
And I will bring them again into their land
That I gave unto their fathers.
16 Behold, I will send for many fishers,
Saith the LORD, and they shall fish them;
And after will I send for many hunters,
And they shall hunt them from every mountain,
And from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.
17 For mine eyes *are* upon all their ways:
They are not hid from my face,
Neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes.
18 And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin
Because they have defiled my land, [double;
They have filled mine inheritance with the carcases
Of their detestable and abominable things.
19 O LORD, my strength, and my fortress,
And my refuge in the day of affliction, [earth,
The Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the
And shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies,
And *things* wherein *there is* no profit. [vanity,
20 Shall a man make gods unto himself,
And they *are* no gods?
21 Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know,
I will cause them to know mine hand and my might;
And they shall know that my name *is* The LORD.

There is a mixture of mercy and judgment in these verses, and it is hard to know to which to apply some of the passages here, they are so interwoven, and some seem to look as far forward as the times of the Gospel.

First. God will certainly execute judgment upon them for their idolatries; let them expect it, for the decree is gone forth.

1. God sees all their sins, though they commit them never so secretly, and palliate them never so artfully; ver. 17, "Mine eyes are upon all their ways." They have not their eye upon God, have no regard to him, stand in no awe of him, but he has his eye upon them, neither they nor their sins are hid from his face, from his eyes. Note, None of the sins of sinners either can be concealed from God or shall be overlooked by him, *Pr.* v. 21; *Job* xxxiv. 21; *Ps.* xc. 8.

2. God is highly displeased, particularly at their idolatries, ver. 18. As his omniscience convicts them, so his justice condemns them: "I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double;" not double to what it deserves, but double to what they expect, and to what I have done formerly. Or, I will recompense it abundantly; they shall now pay for their long reprieve, and the Divine patience they have abused. The sin for which God has a controversy with them is, their having defiled God's land with their idolatries, and not only alienated that which he was entitled to as his inheritance, but polluted that which he dwelt in with delight as his inheritance, and made it offensive to him, "with the carcases of their detestable things;" that is, the gods themselves which they worshipped, the images of which, though they were of gold and silver, were as loathsome to God as the stinking carcases of men or beasts are to us. Idols are carcases of detestable things; God hates them, and so should we. Or, the sacrifices which they offered to these idols, with which the land was filled, for they had high places in all the coasts and corners of it. This was the sin which above any other incensed God against them.

3. He will find out and raise up instruments of his wrath, that shall cast them out of their land, according to the sentence passed upon them; ver. 16, "I will send for many fishers and many hunters"—the Chaldean army, that shall have many ways of ensnaring and destroying them, by fraud as fishers, by force as hunters; they shall find them out wherever they are, and shall chase and closely pursue them to their ruin, shall discover them wherever they are hid in hills, or mountains, or holes of the rocks, and shall drive them out. God has various ways of prosecuting a people with his judgments, that avoid the convictions of his word. He has men at command fit for his purpose; he has them within call, and can send for them when he pleaseth.

4. Their bondage in Babylon shall be sorer and much more grievous than that in Egypt, their taskmasters more cruel, and their lives made more bitter; this is implied in the promise, ver. 14, 15, that their deliverance out of Babylon shall be more illustrious in itself, and more welcome to them, than that out of Egypt. Their slavery in Egypt came upon them gradually, and almost insensibly; that in Babylon came upon them at once, and with all the aggravating circumstances of terror. In Egypt they had a Goshen of their own, but none such in Babylon. In Egypt they were used as servants that were useful; in Babylon as captives that had been hateful.

5. They shall be warned, and God shall be glorified by these judgments brought upon them. These judgments have a voice, and speak aloud, 1st, Instruction to them. When God chastens them he teaches them. By this rod God expostulates with them; ver. 20, "Shall a man make gods to himself?" Will any man be so perfectly void of all reason and consideration as to think that a God of his own making can stand him in any stead? Will you ever again be such fools as you have been, to make to yourselves gods which are no gods, when you have a God whom you may call your own, who made you, and is himself the true and living God? 2nd. Honour to God, for he will be known by the judgments which he executeth. He will first recompense their iniquity, ver. 18, and then he will this once, ver. 21, this once for all; not by many interruptions of their peace, but this one desolation and destruction of it. Or, this once and no more "I will cause them to know my hand," the length and weight of my punishing hand, how far it can reach, and how deep it can wound. And "they shall know that my name is Jehovah," a God with whom there is no contending; that gives being to threatenings, and puts life into them as well as promises.

Secondly. Yet he hath mercy in store for them, intimations of which come in here for the encouragement of the prophet himself, and of those few among them that tremble at God's word. It was said with an air of severity, ver. 13, that God would banish them into a strange land; but, that thereby they might not be driven to despair, presently there follow words of comfort.

1. The days will come, the joyful days, when the same hand that dispersed them shall gather them again, ver. 14, 15. They are cast out, but they are not cast off, they are not cast away; they shall be brought up from the land of the north, the land of their captivity, where they are held with a strong hand, and from all the lands whither they are driven, and seemed to be lost and buried in the crowd. Nay, I will bring them again into their own land, and settle them there. As the foregoing threatenings agreed with what was written in the law, so doth this promise, *Lev.* xxvi. 44, "Yet will I not cast them away;" *Deu.* xxx. 4, "Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee." And the following words, ver. 16, may be understood as a promise; God will send for fishers and hunters, the Medes and Persians, that shall find them out in the countries where they are scattered, and send them back to their own land; or Zerubbabel and others of their own nation, who should fish them out and hunt after them, to persuade them to return, or whatever instruments the Spirit of God made use of to stir up their spirits to go up, which at first they were backward to. They began to nestle in Babylon, but, "as an eagle stirs up her nest and flutters over her young," so God did by them, *Zec.* ii. 7.

2. Their deliverance out of Babylon should upon some accounts be more illustrious and memorable than their deliverance out of Egypt was. Both were the Lord's doing, and marvellous in their eyes; both were proofs that the Lord liveth, and were to be kept in everlasting remembrance to his honour, as the living God, but the fresh mercy shall be so surprising, so welcome, that it shall even abolish the memory of the former. Not but that new mercies should put us in mind of old ones, and give us occasion to renew our thanksgivings for them, yet because we are tempted to think that the former days were better than these, and to ask, "Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?" as if God's arm were waxen short, and to cry up the age of miracles above the latter ages, when mercies are wrought in a way of common providence; therefore we are allowed here comparatively to forget the bringing of Israel out of Egypt, as a deliverance outdone by that out of Babylon; that was done by might and power, this by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, *Zec.* iv. 6. In this there was more of pardoning mercy appearing than that, which is the most glorious branch of Divine mercy; for their captivity in Babylon had more in it of the punishment of sin than their bondage in Egypt; and therefore that which comforts Zion in her deliverance out of Babylon is this, that her iniquity is pardoned, *Isa.* xl. 2. Note, God glorifies himself, and we must glorify him, in those mercies that have no miracles in them as well as in those that have; and, though the favours of God to our fathers must not be forgotten, yet those to ourselves in our own day we must especially give thanks for.

3. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be accompanied with a blessed reformation, and they shall return effectually cured of their inclination to idolatry, which will complete their deliverance, and make it a mercy indeed. They had defiled their own land with their detestable things, ver. 18; but when they have smarted for so doing they shall come and humble themselves before God, ver. 19—21.

1st. They shall be brought to acknowledge that their God only is God indeed, for he is a God at need. My strength to support and comfort me, my fortress to protect and shelter me, and my refuge to whom I may flee in the day of affliction. Note, Need drives many to God who had set themselves at a distance from him. Those that slighted him in the day of their prosperity will be glad to flee to him in the day of their affliction.

2nd. They shall be quickened to return to him by the conversion of the Gentiles; "The Gentiles shall come to thee from the ends of the earth," and therefore shall not we come? Or, the Jews, who had by their idolatries made themselves as Gentiles, (so I rather understand it,) shall come to thee, by repentance and reformation, shall return to their duty and allegiance, even from the ends of the earth, from all the countries whither they were driven. The prophet comforts himself with the hope of this, and in a transport of joy returns to God the notice he had given him of it; "O Lord, my strength and my fortress," I am now easy, since thou hast given me a prospect of multitudes that "shall come to thee from the ends of the earth," both of Jewish converts and of Gentile proselytes. Note, Those that are brought to God themselves cannot but rejoice greatly to see others coming to him, coming back to him.

3rd. They shall acknowledge the folly of their ancestors, which it becomes them to do, when they were smarting for the sins of their ancestors; "Surely our fathers have inherited," not the satisfaction they promised themselves and their children, but "lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit;" we are now sensible that our fathers were cheated in their idolatrous worship, it did not prove what it promised, and therefore what have we to do any more with it? Note, It were well if the disappointment which some have met with in the

service of sin, and the pernicious consequences of it to them, might prevail to deter others from treading in their steps.

4th. They shall reason themselves out of their idolatry, and that reformation is likely to be sincere and durable which results from a rational conviction of the gross absurdity there is in sin. They shall argue thus with themselves, (and it is well argued,) ver. 20, "Should a man" be such a fool, be so perfectly void of the reason of a man, as to "make gods to himself," the creatures of his own fancy, the work of his own hands, when they are really no gods? Can a man be so besotted, so perfectly lost to human understanding, as to expect any Divine blessing or favour from that which pretends to no divinity, but what it first received from him?

5th. They shall herein give honour to God, and make it to appear that they know both his hand in his providence and his name in his word, and they are brought to know his name by what they are made to know of his hand, ver. 21. This once now at length they shall be made to know that which they would not be brought to know by all the pains the prophets took with them. Note, So stupid are we, that nothing less than the mighty hand of Divine grace, known experimentally, can make us know aright the name of God, as it is revealed to us.

4. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be a type and figure of the great salvation to be wrought out by the Messiah, who shall "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." And this is that which so far outshines the deliverance out of Egypt, as even to eclipse the lustre of it, and make it even to be forgotten. To this some apply that of the many fishers and hunters, the preachers of the Gospel, who were fishers of men, to inclose souls with the gospel net; to find them out in every mountain and hill, and secure them for Christ. Then the Gentiles came to God, some from the ends of the earth, and turned to the worship of him from the service of dumb idols.

CHAPTER XVII.

In this chapter, I. God convicts the Jews of the sin of idolatry, by the notorious evidence of the fact, and condemns them to captivity for it, ver. 1—4. II. He shews them the folly of all their carnal confidences, which should stand them in no stead, when God's time was to contend with them, and that this was one of the sins upon which his controversy with them was grounded, ver. 5—11. III. The prophet makes his appeal and address to God, upon occasion of the malice of his enemies against them, committing himself to the Divine protection, and begging of God to appear for him, ver. 12—18. IV. God by the prophet warns the people to keep holy the sabbath day, assuring them that if they did it should be the lengthening out of their tranquillity; but if not, God would, by some desolating judgment, assert the honour of his sabbaths, ver. 19—27.

THE sin of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron,
And with the point of a diamond:
It is graven upon the table of their heart,
And upon the horns of your altars; [groves
2 Whilst their children remember their altars and their
By the green trees upon the high hills.
3 O my mountain in the field, [spoil,
I will give thy substance *and* all thy treasures to the
And thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders.
4 And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue
From thine heritage that I gave thee;
And I will cause thee to serve thine enemies
In the land which thou knowest not:
For ye have kindled a fire in mine anger,
Which shall burn for ever.

The people had asked, *ch.* xvi. 10, "What is our iniquity, and what is our sin?" as if they could not be charged with any thing worth speaking of, for which God should enter into judgment with them; their challenge was answered there, but here we have a farther reply to it, in which,

First. The indictment is fully proved upon the prisoners, both the fact and the fault; their sin is too plain to be denied, and too bad to be excused, and they have nothing to plead either in extenuation of the crime or in arrest and mitigation of the judgment.

1. They cannot plead, Not guilty, for their sins are upon record in the book of God's omniscience, and their own consciences; nay, and they are obvious to the eye and observation of the world, ver. 1, 2. It is written before God in the most legible and indelible characters, and sealed among his treasures, never to be forgotten, *Deu.* xxxii. 34. It is written there "with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond;" what is so written will not be worn out by time, but is, as Job speaks, "graven in the rock for ever." Note, The sin of sinners is never forgotten till it is forgiven. It is ever before God, till by repentance it comes to be ever before us. "It is graven upon the table of their heart," their own consciences witness against them, and are instead of a thousand witnesses. What is graven on the heart, though it may be covered and closed up for a time, yet, being graven, it cannot be razed out, but will be produced in evidence when the books shall be opened. Nay, we need not appeal to the tables of the heart, perhaps they will not own the convictions of their consciences. We need go no farther for proof of the charge, than the horns of their altars, on which the blood of their idolatrous sacrifices was sprinkled, and perhaps the names of the idols to whose honour they were erected were inscribed. Their neighbours will witness against them, and all the creatures they have abused, by using them in the service of their lusts. To complete the evidence, their own children shall be witnesses against them; they will tell truth, when their fathers dissemble and prevaricate; they remember the altars and the groves to which their parents took them when they were little, ver. 2. It appears they were full of them, and acquainted with them betimes, they talk of them so frequently, so familiarly, and with so much delight.

2. They cannot plead that they repent, or are come to a better mind; no, as the guilt of their sin is undeniable, so their inclination to sin is invincible and incurable. In this sense many understand ver. 1, 2. Their sin is deeply engraven as with a pen of iron in the tables of their hearts; they have a rooted affection to it, it is woven into their very nature: their sin is dear to them, as that is of which we say it is engraven on our hearts. The bias of their minds is still as strong as ever towards their idols, and they are not wrought upon either by the word or rod of God to forget them, and abate their affection to them. It is written upon the horns of their altars, for they have given up their names to their idols, and resolve to abide by what they have done; they have bound themselves as with cords to the horns of their altars; and ver. 2 may be read fully to this sense: 'As they remember their children, so remember they their altars and their groves;' they are as fond of them, and take as much pleasure in them, as men do in their own children, and are as loath to part with them; they will live and die with their idols, and can no more forget them than a woman can forget her sucking child.

Secondly. The indictment being thus fully proved, the judgment is affirmed, and the sentence ratified, ver. 3, 4; forasmuch as they are thus wedded to their sins, and will not part with them,

1. They shall be made to part with their treasures, and those shall be given into the hands of strangers. Jerusalem is God's mountain in the field, it was built on a hill in the midst of a plain; all the treasures of that wealthy city will God give to the spoil. Or, 'My mountains with the fields, thy wealth and all thy treasures will I expose to spoil;' both the products of the country and the stores of the city shall be seized by the Chaldeans. Justly are men stripped of that which they have served their idols with, and have made the food and fuel of their lusts. My mountain, (so the whole land was, *Ps.* lxxviii. 54, *Deu.* xi. 11,) you have turned into your high places for sin, have worshipped your idols upon the high hills, ver. 2, and now they shall be given for a spoil in all your borders. What we make for a sin God will make for a spoil; for what comfort can we expect in that wherewith God is dishonoured?

2. They shall be made to part with their inheritance, with their real estates as well as personal, and shall be carried captives into a strange land; ver. 4, "Thou, even thyself," or, thou thyself, and those that are in thee, all the inhabitants, "shall discontinue from thy heritage that I gave thee." God owns it was their heritage, and he gave it them, they had an unquestionable title to it, which was an aggravation of their folly in throwing themselves out of the possession of it. It is through thyself, (so some read it,) through thine own default, that thou art disseized. Thou shalt discontinue or intermit the occupation of thy land. The law appointed them to let their land rest (it is the word here used) one year in seven, *Ex.* xxiii. 11. They did not observe that law, and now God would compel them to let it rest. The land shall enjoy her sabbaths, *Lev.* xxvi. 34, and yet it shall be no rest to them, they shall serve their enemies in a land they know not. Observe, 1st. Sin works a discontinuance of our comforts, and deprives us of the enjoyment of that which God has given us. Yet, 2nd. A discontinuance of the possession is not a defeasance of the right, but it is intimated that upon their repentance they shall recover possession again. For the present "ye have kindled a fire in mine anger," which burns so hot, that it seems as if it would burn for ever; and so it will unless you repent, for it is the anger of an everlasting God fastening upon immortal souls; and who knows the power of that anger?

5 Thus saith the LORD;
Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man,
And maketh flesh his arm,
And whose heart departeth from the LORD.
6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert,
And shall not see when good cometh;
But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness,
In a salt land and not inhabited.
7 Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in the LORD,
And whose hope the LORD is.
8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters,
And *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river,
And shall not see when heat cometh,
But her leaf shall be green;
And shall not be careful in the year of drought,
Neither shall cease from yielding fruit.
9 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*,
And desperately wicked: who can know it?
10 I the LORD search the heart,
I try the reins,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
And according to the fruit of his doings.
11 *As* the partridge sitteth *on eggs*, and hatcheth *them* not;
So he that getteth riches, and not by right,
Shall leave them in the midst of his days,
And at his end shall be a fool.

It is excellent doctrine that is preached in these verses, and of general concern and use to us all, and it doth not appear to have any particular reference to the present state of Judah and Jerusalem. The prophet's sermons were not all prophetical, but some of them practical; yet this discourse, which probably we have here only the heads of, would be of singular use to them by way of caution, not to misplace their confidence in the day of their distress. Let us all learn what we are taught here.

First. Concerning the disappointment and vexation they will certainly meet with that depend upon creatures for success and relief when they are in trouble; ver. 5, 6, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man." God pronounceth him cursed for the affront he thereby puts upon him; or, cursed, that is, miserable, is the man that doth so, for he leans upon a broken reed, which will not only fail him, but will run into his hand and pierce it. Observe, 1. The sin here condemned. It is trusting in man; putting that confidence in the wisdom and power, the kindness and faithfulness of men, which should be placed in those attributes of God only; making our applications to men, and raising our expectations from them as principal agents, whereas they are but instruments in the hand of Providence. It is making flesh the arm we stay upon, the arm we work with, and with which we hope to work our point; the arm under which we shelter ourselves, and on which we depend for protection. God is his people's arm, *Isa.* xxxiii. 2. We must not think to make any creature to be that to us which God has undertaken to be. Man is called flesh, to shew the folly of those that make him their confidence. He is flesh, that is, weak and

feeble, as flesh without bones or sinews, that has no strength at all in it; he is inactive as flesh without spirit, which is a dead thing; he is mortal and dying as flesh, which soon putrefies and corrupts, and is continually wasting. Nay, he is false and sinful, and has lost his integrity, so his being flesh signifies, *Gen.* vi. 3. 2. The great malignity there is in this sin. It is the departure of the evil heart of unbelief from the living God. They that trust in man perhaps draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, they call him their hope, and say they trust in him; but really their heart departeth from him; they distrust him, despise him, and decline a correspondence with him. Cleaving to the cistern is leaving the fountain, and is resented accordingly. 3. The fatal consequences of this sin. He that puts a confidence in man puts a cheat upon himself; for, ver. 6, "He shall be like the heath in the desert," a sorry shrub, the product of barren ground, sapless, and useless, and worthless; his comforts shall all fail him, and his hopes be blasted; he shall wither, be dejected in himself, and trampled on by all about him. When good comes he shall not see it, he shall not share in it; when the times mend, they shall not mend with him, but he "shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness;" that is, his expectations shall be continually frustrated; when others have a harvest, he shall have none. They that trust to their own righteousness and strength, and think they can do well enough without the merit and grace of Christ, thus make flesh their arm, and their souls cannot prosper in graces or comforts; they can neither produce the fruits of acceptable services to God nor reap the fruits of saving blessings from him; they dwell in a dry land.

Secondly. Concerning the abundant satisfaction which they have, and will have, that make God their confidence, that live by faith in his providence and promise, that refer themselves to him and his conduct at all times, and repose themselves in him and his love in the most unquiet times, ver. 7, 8. Observe, 1. The duty required of us. To trust in the Lord, to do our duty to him, and then depend upon him to bear us out in doing it; when creatures and second causes either deceive or threaten us, either are false to us or fierce against us, to commit ourselves to God as all-sufficient, both to make up the want of those that fail us and to protect us from those that set upon us. It is to make the Lord our hope, his favour the good we hope for, and his power the strength we hope in. 2. The comfort that attends the doing of this duty. He that doth so "shall be as a tree planted by the waters," a choice tree, about which great care has been taken to set it in the best soil, so far from being like the heath in the wilderness; like a tree that spreads out her roots, and thereby is firmly fixed, spreads them out by the rivers, whence it draws abundance of sap; which notes both the establishment and the comfort which they have that make God their hope; they are easy, they are pleasant, and enjoy a continual security and serenity of mind. A tree thus planted, thus watered, shall not see when heat comes, that is, shall not sustain any damage by the most scorching heats of summer; it is so well moistened from its roots, that it shall be sufficiently guarded against drought. Those that make God their hope, 1st. They shall flourish in credit and comfort, like a tree that is always green, whose leaf doth not wither; they shall be cheerful to themselves, and beautiful in the eyes of others. Those who thus give honour to God by giving him credit, God will put honour upon them, and make them the ornament and delight of the places where they live, as green trees are. 2nd. They shall be fixed in an inward peace and satisfaction; "shall not be careful in a year of drought," when there is want of rain, for, as it has seed in itself, so it has its moisture. Those that make God their hope have enough in him to make up the want of all creature comforts. We need not be solicitous about the breaking of a cistern, as long as we have the fountain. 3rd. They shall be fruitful in holiness, and in all good works. They that trust in God, and by faith derive strength and grace from him, shall not cease from yielding fruit, they shall still be enabled to do that which will redound to the glory of God, the benefit of others, and their own account.

Thirdly. Concerning the sinfulness of man's heart, and the Divine inspection it is always under, ver. 9, 10. It is folly to trust in man, for he is not only frail, but false and deceitful. We are apt to think we trust in God, and are entitled to the blessings here promised to them that do so. But this is a thing about which our own hearts deceive us as much as any thing. We think we trust in God when really we do not, as appears by this, that our hopes and fears rise or fall according as second causes smile or frown. But it is true in general,

1. There is that wickedness in our hearts which we ourselves are not aware of, and do not suspect to be there; nay, it is a common mistake among the children of men to think themselves, their own hearts at least, a great deal better than really they are. "The heart," that is, the conscience of man in his corrupt and fallen state, "is deceitful above all things;" it is subtle and false, it is apt to supplant, (so the word properly signifies,) it is that from which Jacob had his name, a supplanter. It calls evil good, and good evil; puts false colours upon things, and cries peace to those to whom peace doth not belong. When men say in their hearts, that is, suffer their hearts to whisper to them, that either there is no God, or he doth not see, or he will not require, or they shall have peace,—though they go on; in these and a thousand the like suggestions the heart is deceitful; it cheats men into their own ruin, and this will be the aggravation of it, that they are self-deceivers, self-destroyers. Herein "the heart is desperately wicked," it is deadly, it is desperate. The case is bad indeed, and in a manner deplorable and past relief, if the conscience, which should rectify the errors of the other faculties, is itself a mother of falsehood and a ringleader in the delusion. What will become of a man if that in him which should be the candle of the Lord give a false light, if God's deputy in the soul, that is intrusted to support his interests, betrays them? Such is the deceitfulness of the heart, that we may truly say, "Who can know it?" Who can describe how bad the heart is? We cannot know our own hearts, not what they will do in an hour of temptation, (Hezekiah did not, Peter did not;) not what corrupt dispositions there are in them, nor in how many things they have turned aside; who can understand his errors? Much less can we know the hearts of others, or have any dependence upon them. But,

2. Whatever wickedness there is in the heart, God sees it and knows it, is perfectly acquainted with it, and apprised of it; "I the Lord search the heart." This is true of all that is in the heart, all the thoughts of it, the quickest, and those that are most carelessly overlooked by ourselves; all the intents of it, the closest, and those that are most artfully disguised and industriously concealed from others. Men may be imposed upon, but God cannot. He not only searcheth the heart with a piercing eye, but he tries the reins, to pass a judgment upon what he discovers, to give every thing its true character and due weight. He tries as the gold is tried, whether it be standard or no; as the prisoner is tried, whether he be guilty or no. And this judgment he makes of the heart is in order to his passing judgment upon the man; it is "to give to every man according to his ways," according to the desert and the tendency of them; life to those that walked in the ways of life, and death to those that persisted in the paths of the destroyer; "and according to the fruit of his doings," the effect and influence his doings have had upon others; or according to what is settled by the word of God to be the fruit of men's doings, blessings to the obedient and curses to the disobedient. Note, Therefore God is judge himself, and he alone, because he and none but he knows the hearts of the children of men. It is true especially of all the deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart, all its corrupt devices, desires, and designs: God observes and discerns them; and, which is more than any man can do, he judgeth of the overt act by the heart. Note, God knows more evil by us than we do by ourselves, which is a good reason why we should not flatter ourselves, but always stand in awe of the judgment of God.

Fourthly. Concerning the curse that attends wealth unjustly gotten. Fraud and violence had been reigning crying sins in Judah and Jerusalem; now the prophet would have those who had been guilty of these sins, and were now stripped of all they had, to read their sin in their punishment, ver. 11, "He that gets riches, and not by right," though he may make them his hope, he shall never have joy of them. Observe, It is possible that those who use unlawful means to get wealth may succeed therein, and prosper for a time; and it is a temptation to many to defraud and oppress their neighbours, when there is money to be got by it. He that has got treasures by vanity and a lying tongue may hug himself in his success, and say, I am rich, nay, and I am innocent too, *Hos.* xii. 8, but he "shall leave them in the midst of his days," they shall be taken from him or he from them; God shall cut him off with some surprising stroke then when he said, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years," *Lu.* xii. 19, 20. He shall leave them to he knows not whom, and not be able to take any of his riches away with him. It intimates what a great vexation it is to a worldly man at death that he must leave his riches behind him, and justly may it be a terror to those that got them unjustly; for, though the wealth will not follow them to another world, the guilt will, and the torment of an everlasting, "Son, remember," *Lu.* xvi. 25. Thus, "at his end he shall be a fool," a Nabal, whose wealth did him no good, which he had so sordidly hoarded, when his heart became dead as a stone. He was a fool all along; sometimes perhaps his own conscience told him so, but at his end he will appear to be so. Those are fools indeed that are fools in their latter end; and so multitudes will prove who were cried up as wise men, that did well for themselves, *Ps.* xlix. 13, 18. They that get grace will be wise in their latter end, will have the comfort of it in death, and the benefit of it to eternity, *Pr.* xix. 20; but they that place their happiness in the wealth of the world, and right or wrong will be rich, will rue the folly of it when it is too late to rectify the fatal mistake. This is like "the partridge that sits on eggs and hatcheth them not," but either they are broken, as *Job* xxxix. 15, or stolen, as *Isa.* x. 4, or they become addled; some sort of fowl there was well known among the Jews whose case this commonly was. The rich man takes a great deal of pains to get an estate together, and sits brooding upon it, but never has any comfort or satisfaction in it. His projects to enrich himself by sinful courses miscarry, and come to nothing. Let us, therefore, be wise in time; what we get, to get it honestly; and what we have, to use it charitably; that we may lay up in store a good foundation, and be wise for eternity.

12 A glorious high throne from the beginning
Is the place of our sanctuary.
13 O LORD, the hope of Israel,
All that forsake thee shall be ashamed, [earth,
And they that depart from me shall be written in the
Because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of
living waters.
14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed;
Save me, and I shall be saved:
For thou *art* my praise.
15 Behold, they say unto me,
Where *is* the word of the LORD? let it come now.
16 As for me, I have not hastened from *being* a pastor to
follow thee:
Neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest:
That which came out of my lips was *right* before thee.
17 Be not a terror unto me:
Thou *art* my hope in the day of evil.
18 Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not
me be confounded:
Let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed:
Bring upon them the day of evil,
And destroy them with double destruction

Here, as often before, we have the prophet retired for private meditation, and alone with God. Those ministers that would have comfort in their work must be much so. In his converse here with God and his own heart he takes the liberty which devout souls sometimes use in their soliloquies, to pass from one thing to another, without tying themselves too strictly to the laws of method and coherence.

First. He acknowledgeth the great favour of God to his people in setting up a revealed religion among them, and dignifying them with Divine institutions; ver. 12, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." The temple at Jerusalem, where God manifested his special presence, where the lively oracles were lodged, where the people paid their homage to their sovereign, and whither they fled for refuge in distress, was the place of their sanctuary. That was a glorious high throne: it was a throne of holiness, that made it truly glorious; it was God's throne, that made it truly high. Jerusalem is called the city of the great king, not only Israel's king, but the king of the whole earth, so that it might be justly deemed the metropolis, or royal city, of the world. It was from the beginning so, from the first projecting of it by David and building of it by Solomon, 2 *Chr.* ii. 9. It was the honour of Israel that God set up such a glorious throne among them. 'As the glorious and high throne,' namely, that is heaven, 'is the place of our sanctuary,' so some read it. Note, All good men have a high value and veneration for the ordinances of God, and reckon the place of the sanctuary a glorious high throne. Jeremiah mentions this here, either as a plea with God for mercy to their land, in honour of the throne of his glory, *ch.* xiv. 21, or as an aggravation of the sin of his people in forsaking God, though his throne was among them, and so profaning his crown and the place of his sanctuary.

Secondly. He acknowledgeth the righteousness of God in abandoning those to ruin that forsook him, and revolted from their allegiance to him, ver. 13.

He speaks it to God, as subscribing both to the certainty and equity of it; "O Lord, the hope of" those in "Israel" that adhere to thee, "all that forsake thee shall be ashamed." They must of necessity be so, for they forsake thee for lying vanities, which will deceive them and make them ashamed; they will be ashamed, for they shame themselves; they will justly be put to shame, for they have forsaken him who alone can keep them in countenance when troubles come. 'Let them be ashamed,' so some read it; and so it is a pious imprecation of the wrath of God upon them, or of petition for his grace to make them penitently ashamed. "They that depart from me," that is, from the word of God which I have preached, they do in effect depart from God, as those that return to God are said to return to the prophet, *ch.* xv. 19. 'They that depart from thee,' (so some read it,) they "shall be written in the earth;" they shall soon be blotted out, as that is which is written in the dust; they shall be trampled upon and exposed to contempt; they belong to the earth, and shall be numbered among earthly people, that lay up their treasure on earth, and whose names are not written in heaven. And they deserve to be thus written with the fools in Israel, that their folly may be made manifest unto all, because they have "forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters," that is, spring waters, and that for broken cisterns. Note, God is to all that are his a fountain of living waters. There is a fulness of comfort in him, an overflowing, everflowing fulness, like that of a fountain; it is always fresh, and clear, and clean, like spring water, while the pleasures of sin are puddle waters. They are free to it; it is not a fountain sealed; they deserve, therefore, to be condemned, as Adam, to red earth, to which by the corruption of their nature they are allied, because they have forsaken the garden of the Lord, which is so well watered. They that depart from God are written in the earth.

Thirdly. He prays to God for healing saving mercy for himself. If the case of those be so miserable that depart from God, let me always draw nigh to him, *Ps.* lxxiii. 27, 28; and in order to that, "Lord, heal me and save me," ver. 14. Heal my backslidings, my bent to backslide, and save me from being carried away by the strength of the stream, to forsake thee. He was wounded in spirit with grief upon many accounts; Lord, heal me with thy comforts, and make me easy. He was continually exposed to the malice of unreasonable men; Lord, save me from them, and let me not fall into their wicked hands. Heal me, that is, sanctify me by thy grace; save me, that is, bring me to thy glory. All that shall be saved hereafter are sanctified now; unless the disease of sin be purged out, the soul cannot live. To enforce this petition he pleads, 1. The firm belief he had of God's power; "Heal thou me, and then I shall be healed;" the cure will certainly be wrought if thou undertake it; it will be a thorough cure, and not a palliative one. Those that come to God to be healed ought to be abundantly satisfied in the all-sufficiency of their physician. Save me, and then I shall certainly be saved, be my dangers and enemies never so threatening. If God holds us up we shall live; if he protect us we shall be safe. 2. The sincere regard he had to God's glory; "For thou art my praise," and for that reason I desire to be healed and saved, "that I may live and praise thee," *Ps.* cxix. 175. Thou art he whom I praise, and the praise due to thee I never gave to another. Thou art he whom I glory in and boast of, for on thee do I depend. Thou art he that furnisheth me with continual matter for praise, and I have given thee the praise of the favours already bestowed upon me. 'Thou shalt be my praise,' so some read it; heal me and save me, and thou shalt have the glory of it; "My praise shall be continually of thee," *Ps.* lxxi. 6, and lxxix. 13.

Fourthly. He complains of the infidelity and daring impiety of the people to whom he preached. It greatly troubled him, and he shews before God this trouble, as the servant that had slights put upon him by the guests he was sent to invite, "came and shewed his Lord these things." He had faithfully delivered God's message to them, and what answer has he to return to him that sent him? Why, ver. 15, "Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now," *Isa.* v. 19. They bantered the prophet, and made a jest of that which he delivered with the greatest seriousness. 1. They denied the truth of what he said; If that be the word of the Lord which thou speakest to us, where is it? why is it not fulfilled? Thus the patience of God was impudently abused, as a ground to question his veracity. 2. They defied the terror of what he said; Let God Almighty do his worst, let all he has said come to pass, we shall do well enough, the lion is not so fierce as he is painted, *Am.* v. 18. Lord, to what purpose is it to speak to men that will neither believe nor fear?

Fifthly. He appeals to God concerning his faithful discharge of the office to which he was called, ver. 16. The people did all they could to make him weary of his work, to exasperate him and make him uneasy, and to tempt him to prevaricate and alter his message, for fear of displeasing them; but, Lord, saith he, thou knowest I have not yielded to them. 1. He kept constant to his work. His office, instead of being his credit and protection, exposed him to reproach, contempt, and injury; and yet, saith he, "I have not hastened from being a pastor after thee;" I have not overrun my work, nor sued for a discharge or a quietus. Prophets were pastors to the people, to feed them with the good word of God; but they were to be pastors after God, and all ministers must be so, according to his heart, *ch.* iii. 15, to follow him, and the directions and instructions he gives. Such a pastor Jeremiah was; and, though he met with as much difficulty and discouragement as ever any man did, yet he did not fly off as Jonah did, nor desire to be excused from going any more on God's errands. Note, Those that are employed for God, though their success answer not their expectation, yet they must not therefore throw up their commission, but continue to follow God, though the storm be in their faces. 2. He kept up his affection to the people. Though they were very abusive to him, he was compassionate to them: "I have not desired the woful day." The day of the accomplishment of his prophecies would be a woful day indeed to Jerusalem, and therefore he deprecated it and wished it might never come; though as to himself it would be the avenging of him upon his persecutors and the proving of him a true prophet, which they had questioned, ver. 15, and upon those accounts he might be tempted to desire it. Note, God doth not, and therefore ministers must not, desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn and live. Though we warn of the woful day, we must not wish for it, but rather weep because of it, as Jeremiah did. 3. He kept close to his instructions. Though he might have curried favour with the people, or at least have avoided their displeasure, if he had not been so sharp in his reproofs and severe in his threatenings, yet he would deliver his message faithfully; and that he had done so was a comfort to him; Lord, "thou knowest that which came out of my lips was right before thee," that is, it exactly agreed with what I had received from thee, and therefore thou art reflected upon in their quarrelling with me. Note, If what we say and do be right before God, we may easily despise the reproaches and censures of men; it is a small thing to be judged of their judgment.

Sixthly. He humbly begs of God that he would own him and protect him, and carry him on cheerfully in that work to which God had so plainly called him, and he had so sincerely devoted himself. Two things he here desires:

1. That he might have comfort in serving the God that sent him; ver. 17, "Be not thou a terror to me." Surely more is implied than is expressed; Be thou a comfort to me, and let thy favour rejoice my heart and encourage me, when my enemies do all they can to terrify me and either to drive me from my work or make me drive on heavily in it. Note, The best have that in them which might justly make God a terror to them, as he was for some time to Job, *ch.* vi. 4; to Asaph, *Ps.* lxxvii. 3; to Heman, *Ps.* lxxxviii. 15. And this is that which good men, "knowing the terrors of the Lord," dread and deprecate more than any thing; nay, whatever frightful accidents might befal them, or how formidable soever their enemies may appear to them, they can do well enough, so long as God is not a terror to them. He pleads, "Thou art my hope," and then nothing else is my fear, no, not "in the day of evil," when it is most threatening, most pressing. My dependence is upon thee, and therefore be not a terror to me. Note, Those that by faith make God their confidence shall have him for their comfort in the worst of times, if it be not their own fault. If we make him our trust we shall not find him our terror.

2. That he might have courage in dealing with the people to whom he was sent, ver. 18. They persecuted him, who should have entertained and encouraged him; Lord, saith he, let them be confounded, that is, let them be overpowered by the convictions of the word, and made ashamed of their obstinacy, or else let the judgments threatened be at length executed upon them; but let not me be confounded, let not me be terrified by their menaces, so as to betray my trust. Note, God's ministers have work to do which they need not to be either ashamed or afraid to go on in, but they do need be helped by the Divine grace to go on in it without shame or fear. Jeremiah had not desired the woful day upon his country in general, but as to his persecutors, in a just and holy indignation at their malice he prays, "Bring upon them the day of evil," in hopes the bringing it upon them might prevent the bringing of it upon the country; if they were taken away the people would be better, therefore "destroy them with a double destruction," that is, let them be utterly destroyed, root and branch, and let the prospect of that destruction be their present confusion. This the prophet prays, not at all that he might be avenged, nor so much that he might be eased, but that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executeth.

19 Thus said the LORD unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; 20 And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: 21 Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22 Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. 23 But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction.

24 And it shall come to pass,
If ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the LORD,
To bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day,
But hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein;
25 Then shall there enter into the gates of this city
Kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David,
Riding in chariots and on horses,
They, and their princes,
The men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem:
And this city shall remain for ever.
26 And they shall come from the cities of Judah,
And from the places about Jerusalem,
And from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain,
And from the mountains, and from the south,
Bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices,
And meat offerings, and incense,
And bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the
27 But if ye will not hearken unto me [LORD.
To hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden,
Even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day;
Then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof,
And it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem,
And it shall not be quenched.

These verses are a sermon concerning sabbath sanctification; it is a word which the prophet received from the Lord, and was ordered to deliver in the most solemn, public manner to the people; for they were sent not only to reprove sin, and to press obedience in general, but they must descend to particulars. This message concerning the sabbath probably was sent in the days of Josiah, for the furtherance of that work of reformation which he set on foot;

for the promises here, ver. 25, 26, are such as I think we scarce find, when things came nearer to the extremity. This message must be proclaimed in all the places of concourse, and therefore in the gates, not only because through them people were continually passing and repassing, but because in them they kept their courts, and laid up their stores. It must be proclaimed (as the king or queen is usually proclaimed) at the court gate first, the gate by which the kings of Judah use to come in and go out, ver. 19. Let them be told their duty first, particularly this duty; for, if sabbaths be not sanctified as they should be, the rulers of Judah are to be contended with; so they were, *Neh.* xiii. 17, for they are certainly wanting in their duty. He must also preach it in all the gates of Jerusalem. It is a matter of great and general concern, therefore let all take notice of it. Let the kings of Judah hear the word of the Lord, for, as high as they are, he is above them; and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for, as mean as they are, he takes notice of them, and of what they say and do on sabbath days. Observe,

First. How the sabbath is to be sanctified, and what is the law concerning it, ver. 21, 22. 1. They must rest from their worldly employments on the sabbath day, must do no servile work. They must bear no burthen into the city, or out of it; into their houses, or out of them; neither husbandmen's burthens of corn carried in, nor muck carried out; nor tradesmen's burthens of wares or merchandizes imported or exported. There must not a loaded horse, or cart, or waggon, be seen on the sabbath day, either in the streets or in the roads. The porters must not ply on that day, nor must the servants be suffered to fetch in provisions or fuel. It is a day of rest, and must not be made a day of labour, unless in case of necessity. 2. They must apply themselves to that which is the proper work and business of the day; "Hallow ye the sabbath;" that is, consecrate it to the honour of God, and spend it in his service and worship; and it is in order to this that worldly business must be laid aside, that we may be entire for, and intent upon, that work, which requires and deserves the whole man. 3. They must herein be very circumspect; "Take heed to yourselves," watch against every thing that borders upon the profanation of the sabbath. Where God is jealous, we must be cautious. "Take heed to yourselves," for it is at your peril if you rob God of that part of your time which he has reserved to himself. 'Take heed to your souls,' so the word is. In order to the right sanctifying of sabbaths, we must look well to the frame of our spirits, and have a watchful eye upon all the motions of the inward man. Let not the soul be burthened with the cares of this world on sabbath days, but let that be employed, even all that is within us, in the work of the day. And, 4. He refers them to the law, the statute in this case made and provided. This is no new imposition upon you, but is what "I commanded your fathers;" it is an ancient law, it was an article of the orignal contract; nay, it was a command to the patriarchs.

Secondly. How the sabbath had been profaned, ver. 23. Your fathers were required to keep holy the sabbath day, "but they obeyed not;" they "hardened their necks" against this as well as other commands that were given them. This is mentioned to shew that there needed a reformation in this matter, and that God had a just controversy with them for the long transgression of this law which they had been guilty of. They hardened their necks against this command, that they might not hear and receive instruction concerning other commands. Where sabbaths are neglected, all religion sensibly goes to decay.

Thirdly. What blessings God had in store for them, if they would make conscience of sabbath sanctification. Though their fathers had been guilty of the profanation of the sabbath, they should not only not smart for it, but their city and nation should recover its ancient glory, if they would keep sabbaths better, ver. 24—26. Let them take care to hallow the sabbath, and do no work therein; and then, 1. The court shall flourish. Kings in succession, or the many branches of the royal family at the same time, all as great as kings, with other the princes that sit upon the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, *Ps.* cxxii. 5, shall ride in great pomp through the gates of Jerusalem, some in chariots, and some on horses, attended with a numerous retinue of the men of Judah. Note, The honour of the government is the joy of the kingdom, and the support of religion would contribute greatly to both. 2. The city shall flourish. Let there be a face of religion kept up upon Jerusalem, by sabbath sanctification, that it may answer its title, the holy city, and then it shall remain for ever, shall for ever be inhabited, so the word may be rendered; it shall not be destroyed and dispeopled, as it is threatened to be. Wh. tever supports religion tends to establish the civil interests of a land. 3. The country shall flourish. The cities of Judah, and the land of Benjamin, shall be replenished with vast numbers of inhabitants, and those abounding in plenty, and living in peace, which will appear by the multitude and value of their offerings which they shall present to God. And by this the flourishing of a country may be judged of, what doth it do for the honour of God? Those that starve their religion, either they are poor, or are in a fair way to be so. 4. The church shall flourish. Meat offerings and incense, and sacrifices of praise, shall be brought to the house of the Lord, for the maintenance of the service of that house, and the servants that attend it. God's institutions shall be conscientiously observed; no sacrifices and incense shall be offered to idols, and alienated from God, but every thing shall go in the right channel. They shall have both occasion and hearts to bring sacrifices of praise to God. This is made an instance of their prosperity. Then a people truly flourish, when religion flourisheth among them. And this is the effect of sabbath sanctification. When that branch of religion is kept up, other instances of it are kept up likewise; but when that is lost, devotion is lost either in superstition or profaneness. It is a true observation which some have made, that the streams of all religion run either deep or shallow, according as the banks of the sabbath are kept up or neglected.

Fourthly. What judgments they must expect would come upon them, if they persisted in the profanation of the sabbath; ver. 27, "If ye will not hearken to me" in this matter, to keep the gates shut on sabbath days, so that there may be no unnecessary entering in, or going out on that day,—if you will break through the inclosure of the Divine law, and lay that day in common with other days,—know that God will kindle a fire in the gates of your city; intimating, that it shall be kindled by an enemy besieging the city, and assaulting the gates, and who shall take this course to force their entrance. Justly will those gates be fired that are not used, as they ought to be, to shut out sin, and to keep people in to an attendance on their duty. This fire shall devour even the palaces of Jerusalem, where the princes and nobles dwell, who did not use their power and interest as they ought to have done, to keep up the honour of God's sabbaths; but it shall not be quenched till it has laid the whole city in ruins. This was fulfilled by the army of the Chaldeans, *ch.* lii. 13. The profanation of the sabbath is a sin for which God has often contended with a people by fire.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In this chapter we have, I. A general declaration of God's ways in dealing with nations and kingdoms; that he can easily do what he will with them, as easily as the potter can with the clay, ver. 1—6. But that he certainly will do what is just and fair with them; if he threaten their ruin, yet, upon their repentance, he will return in mercy to them; and when he is coming towards them in mercy nothing but their sin will stop the progress of his favours, ver. 7—10. II. A particular demonstration of the folly of the men of Judah and Jerusalem, in departing from their God to idols, and so bringing ruin upon themselves, notwithstanding the fair warnings given them, and God's kind intentions towards them, ver. 11—17. III. The prophet's complaint to God of the base ingratitude, and unreasonable malice of his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and his prayers against them, ver. 18—23.

THE word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. 3 Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. 4 And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another

POTTER AT WORK.

vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it*. 5 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

6 O house of Israel, cannot I do with you
As this potter? saith the LORD.
Behold, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand,
So *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.
7 *At what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom,
To pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy *it;*
8 If that nation, against whom I have pronounced,
Turn from their evil,
I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.
9 And *at what* instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom,
To build and to plant *it;*
10 If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice,
Then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.

The prophet is here sent to the potter's house, (he knew where to find it,) not to preach a sermon, as before, to the gates of Jerusalem, but to prepare a sermon, or rather, to receive it ready prepared. Those needed not to study their sermons that had them, as he had this, by immediate inspiration. "Go to the potter's house," and observe how he manageth his work, "and there I will cause thee," by silent whispers, "to hear my words." There thou shalt receive a message to be delivered to the people. Note, Those that would know God's mind must observe his appointments, and attend there where they may hear his word. The prophet was never disobedient to the heavenly vision, and therefore went to the potter's house, ver. 3, and took notice how "he wrought his work upon the wheels," just as he pleased, with a great deal of ease, and in a little time. And, ver. 4, when a lump of clay, that he designed to form into one shape, either proved too stiff, or had a stone in it, or some way or other came to be "marred in his hand," he presently turned it into another shape; if it will not serve for a vessel of honour, it will serve for a vessel of dishonour, just as seems good to the potter. It is probable Jeremiah knew well enough how the potter wrought his work, and how easily he threw it into what form he pleased; but he must go and observe it now, that, having the idea of it fresh in his mind, he might the more readily and distinctly apprehend that truth which God designed thereby to represent to him, and might the more intelligently explain it to the people. God used similitudes by his servants the prophets, *Hos.* xii. 10, and it was requisite they should themselves understand the similitudes they used. Ministers will make a good use of their converse with the business and affairs of this life, if they learn thereby to speak more plainly and familiarly to people about the things of God, and to expound Scripture comparisons. For they ought to make all their knowledge some way or other serviceable to their profession. Now let us see what the message is which Jeremiah receives, and is intrusted with the delivery of, at the potter's house. While he looks carefully upon the potter's work, God darts into his mind these two great truths, which he must preach to the house of Israel:

First. That God hath both an incontestable authority and an irresistible ability to form and fashion kingdoms and nations as he pleaseth, so as to serve his own purposes. "Cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord,"

ver. 6. Have not I as absolute a power over you in respect both of might and right? Nay, God has a clearer title to a dominion over us than the potter has over the clay, for he only gives it its form, whereas we have both matter and form from God. "As the clay is in the potter's hand" to be moulded and shaped as he pleases, "so are ye in my hand." This intimates, 1. That God has an incontestable sovereignty over us, is not debtor to us, may dispose of us as he thinks fit, and is not accountable to us: and it would be as absurd for us to dispute this as for the clay to quarrel with the potter. 2. That it is a very easy thing with God to make what use he pleaseth of us, and what changes he pleaseth with us, and we cannot resist him. One turn of the hand, one turn of the wheel, quite alters the shape of the clay, makes it a vessel, unmakes it, new makes it. Thus are our times in God's hand, and not in our own, and it is in vain for us to strive with him. It is spoken here of nations; the most politic, the most potent, are what God is pleased to make them, and no other: see this explained by Job, *ch.* xii. 23, "He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them; he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again;" *Ps.* cvii. 33, &c.; and compare *Job* xxxiv. 29, "All nations before God are as the drop of the bucket," soon wiped away; "or the small dust of the balance," soon blown away, *Isa.* xl. 15, and therefore no doubt as easily managed as the clay by the potter. 3. That God will not be a loser by any, in his glory, at long run; but if he be not glorified by them he will be glorified upon them. If the potter's vessel be marred for one use, it shall serve for another. Those that will not be monuments of mercy shall be monuments of justice; "The Lord has made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," *Pr.* xvi. 4. God formed us out of the clay, *Job* xxxiii. 6. Nay, and we are still as clay in his hands, *Isa.* lxiv. 8. And has not he the same power over us that the potter has over the clay? *Rom.* ix. 21. And are not we bound to submit, as the clay, to the potter's wisdom and will? *Isa.* xxix. 15, 16; xiv. 9.

Secondly. That in the exercise of this authority and ability he always goes by fixed rules of equity and goodness. He dispenseth favours indeed in a way of sovereignty, but never punisheth by arbitrary power. "High is his right hand," yet he rules not with a high hand, but as it follows there, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne," *Ps.* lxxxix. 13, 14. God asserts his despotic power, and tells us what he might do, but at the same time assures us he will act as a righteous and merciful judge.

1. When God is coming against us in ways of judgment, we may be sure it is for our sins, which shall appear by this, that national repentance will stop the progress of the judgments; ver. 7, 8, "If God speak concerning a nation, to pluck up" its fences that secure it, and so lay it open; its fruit-trees that adorn and enrich it, and so leave it desolate; to pull down its fortifications, that the enemy may have liberty to enter in; its habitations, that the inhabitants may be under a necessity of going out, and so destroy it as either a vineyard or a city is destroyed;—in this case, if that nation take the alarm, and repent of their sins, and reform their lives, turn every one from his evil way, and return to God, God will graciously accept them, will not proceed in his controversy, will return in mercy to them, and, though he cannot change his mind, he will change his way, so that it may be said, he "repents him of the evil he said he would do to them." Thus often, in the time of the judges, when the oppressed people were penitent people, still God raised them up saviours; and when they turned to God their affairs presently took a new turn. It was Nineveh's case, and we wish it had oftener been Jerusalem's: see 2 *Chr.* vii. 14. It is an undoubted truth, that a sincere conversion from the evil of sin, will be an effectual prevention of the evil of punishment; and God can as easily raise up a penitent people from their ruins, as the potter can make anew the vessel of clay, when it was marred in his hand.

2. When God is coming towards us in ways of mercy, if any stop be given to the progress of that mercy, it is nothing but sin that gives it; ver. 9, 10, "If God speak concerning a nation, to build and to plant it," that is, to advance and establish all the true interests of it, it is his husbandry, and his building, 1 *Cor.* iii. 9; and if he speak in favour of it, it is done, it is increased, it is enriched, it is enlarged, its trade flourisheth, its government is settled in good hands, and all its affairs prosper, and its enterprises succeed. But if this nation, which God is thus loading with benefits, "do evil in his sight, and obey not his voice;" if it lose its virtue, and become debauched and profane; if religion grow into contempt, and vice get to be fashionable, and so be kept in countenance and reputation, and there be a general decay of serious godliness among them; then God will turn his hand against them, will pluck up what he was planting, and pull down what he was building, *ch.* xlv. 4. The good work that was in the doing shall stand still, and be let fall; and what favours were farther designed shall be withheld, and this is called his "repenting of the good wherewith he said he would benefit them," as he changed his purpose concerning Eli's house, 1 *Sam.* ii. 30, and hurried Israel back into the wilderness, when he had brought them within sight of Canaan. Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker between God and a people. It forfeits the benefit of his promises, and spoils the success of their prayers. It defeats his kind intentions concerning them, *Hos.* vii. 1, and baffles their pleasing expectations from him. It ruins their comforts, prolongs their grievances, brings them into straits, and retards their deliverances, *Isa.* lix. 1, 2.

11 Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah,
And to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,
Thus saith the LORD;
Behold, I frame evil against you,
And devise a device against you:
Return ye now every one from his evil way,
And make your ways and your doings good.
12 And they said, There is no hope:
But we will walk after our own devices,
And we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.
13 Therefore thus saith the LORD;
Ask ye now among the heathen,
Who hath heard such things:
The virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing.
14 Will *a man* leave the snow of Lebanon *which cometh* from the rock of the field?
Or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken?
15 Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity,
And they have caused them to stumble in their ways *from* the ancient paths,
To walk in paths, *in* a way not cast up;
16 To make their land desolate, *and* a perpetual hissing;
Every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head.
17 I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy;
I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

These verses seem to be the application of the general truths laid down in the foregoing part of the chapter to the nation of the Jews and their present state.

First. God was now speaking concerning them, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy; for it is that part of the rule of judgment that their case agrees with, ver. 11. Go and tell them, saith God, "Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you." Providence, in all its operations, is plainly working towards your ruin. Look upon your carriage towards God, and you cannot but see that you deserve it; look upon his dealings with you, and you cannot but see that he designs it. He frames evil, as the potter frames the vessel, so as to answer the end.

Secondly. He invites them by repentance and reformation to meet him in the way of his judgments, and so to prevent his farther proceedings against them; "Return ye now every one from his evil ways," that so, according to the rule before laid down, God may turn from the evil he had purposed to do unto you, and that providence, which seemed to have been framed like a vessel on the wheel against you, shall presently be thrown into a new shape, and the issue shall be in favour of you. Note, The warnings of God's word, and the threatenings of his providence, should be improved by us as strong inducements to us to reform our lives; in which it is not enough to turn from our evil ways, but we must make our ways and our doings good, conformable to the rule, to the law.

Thirdly. He foresees their obstinacy, and their perverse refusal to comply with this invitation, though it tended so much to their own benefit; ver. 12, "They said, There is no hope." If we must not be delivered unless we return from our evil ways, we may even despair of ever being delivered, for we are resolved "we will walk after our own devices." It is to no purpose for the prophets to say any more to us, to use any more arguments, or press the matter any farther, we will have our way whatever it costs us; "we will do every one the imagination of his own evil heart," and will not be under the restraint of the Divine law. Note, That which ruins sinners is affecting to live as they list. They call it liberty to live at large, whereas for a man to be a slave to his lusts is the worst of slaveries. See how strangely some men's hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, that they will not so much as promise amendment; nay, they set the judgments of God at defiance; We will go on with our own devices, and let God go on with his, and we will venture the issue.

Fourthly. He upbraids them with the monstrous folly of their obstinacy, and their hating to be reformed. Surely never were people guilty of such an absurdity, never any that pretended to reason acted so unreasonably; ver. 13, "Ask ye among the heathen," even those that had not the benefit of Divine revelation, no oracles, no prophets, as Judah and Jerusalem had, yet even among them, "Who hath heard such a thing?" The Ninevites, when thus warned, turned from their evil ways. Some of the worst of men, when they are told of their faults, especially when they begin to smart for them, will at least promise reformation, and say they will endeavour to mend. But "the virgin of Israel" bids defiance to repentance, is resolved to go on frowardly, whatever conscience and providence say to the contrary, and thus "hath done a very horrible thing." She should have preserved herself pure and chaste for God, who had espoused her to himself; but she has alienated herself from him, and refuseth to return to him. Note, It is a horrible thing, enough to make one tremble to think of it, that those who have made their condition sad by sinning should make it desperate by refusing to reform. Wilful impenitency is the grossest self-murder, and that is a horrible thing, which we should abhor the thought of. He shews their folly in two things:

1. In the nature of the sin itself that they were guilty of. They forsook God for idols, which was the most horrible thing that could be, for they perfectly put a cheat upon themselves, ver. 14, 15. Will a thirsty traveller leave the snow, that being melted runs down from the mountains of Lebanon, and, passing over the rock of the field, flows in clear, clean, crystal streams; will he leave these, pass these by, and think to mend himself with some dirty puddle water? Or, "shall the cold flowing waters that come from any other place be forsaken" in the heat of summer? No; when men are parched with heat and drought, and meet with cooling, refreshing streams, they will make use of them, and not turn their backs upon them. The margin reads it, 'Will a man that is travelling the road leave my fields, which are plain and level, for a rock that is rough and hard, or for the snow of Lebanon, which, lying in great drifts, makes the road impassable?' 'Or shall the running waters be forsaken for the strange cold water?' No; in these things men know when they are well, and will keep so; they will not leave a certainty for an uncertainty. But "my people hath forgotten me," ver. 15, hath quitted a fountain of living waters for broken cisterns; they have burned incense to idols that are as vain as vanity itself, that are not what they pretend to be, nor can perform what is expected from them. They had not the common wit of travellers, but even their leaders caused them to err, and they were content to be misled. 1st. They left the ancient paths, which were appointed by the Divine law, which had been walked in by all the saints, which was therefore the right way to their journey's end, a safe way, and being well tracked was both easy to hit and easy to walk in. But when they were advised to keep to the good old way they positively said they would not, *ch.* vi. 16. 2nd. They chose bypaths. They walked in a way not cast up, not in the highway, the king's highway, in which they might travel safely, and which would certainly lead them to their right end, but in a dirty way, a rough way, a way in which they could not but stumble. Such was the way of idolatry, such is the way of all iniquity; it is a false way, it is a way of stumblingblocks, and yet this way they chose to walk in, and lead others in.

2. In the mischievous consequences of it. Though the thing itself had been ill they might have had some excuse for it if they could have promised themselves any good out of it; but the direct tendency of it was "to make their land desolate," and consequently themselves miserable, (for so the inhabitants

must needs be if their country be laid waste,) and both themselves and their land "a perpetual hissing." Those deserve to be hissed that have fair warning given them and will not take it. "Every one that passeth by" their land shall make his remarks upon it, and "shall be astonished and wag his head," some admiring, others commiserating, others triumphing in the desolations of a country that had been the glory of all lands. They shall wag their heads in derision, upbraiding them with their folly in forsaking God and their duty, and so pulling this misery upon their own heads. Note, Those that revolt from God will justly be made the scorn of all about them; and having reproached the Lord will themselves be a reproach. Their land being made desolate in pursuance of their destruction, it is threatened, ver. 17, "I will scatter them as with an east wind," which is fierce and violent, by it they shall be hurried to and fro before the enemy, and find no way open to escape. They shall not only flee before the enemy,—that they may do, and yet make an orderly retreat,—but they shall be scattered, some one way and some another. And that which completes their misery is, "I will shew them the back, and not the face in the day of their calamity." Our calamities may be easily borne if God look towards us, and smile upon us when we are under them, if he countenance us and shew us favour. But if he turn the back upon us, if he shew himself displeased, if he be deaf to our prayers, and refuse us his help, if he forsake us, leave us to ourselves, and stand at a distance from us, we are quite undone. "If he hide his face, who then can behold him?" *Job* xxxiv. 29. Herein God would deal with them as they had dealt with him, *ch.* ii. 27; "They have turned their back unto me, and not their face." It is a righteous thing with God to shew himself strange to those in the day of their trouble who have shewed themselves rude and undutiful to him in their prosperity. This will have its full accomplishment in that day, when God will say to those that, though they have been professors of piety, yet were workers of iniquity, "Depart from me, I know you not, nay, I never knew you."

18 Then said they,
Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah;
For the law shall not perish from the priest,
Nor counsel from the wise,
Nor the word from the prophet.
Come, and let us smite him with the tongue,
And let us not give heed to any of his words.
19 Give heed to me, O LORD,
And hearken to the voice of them that contend with me.
20 Shall evil be recompensed for good?
For they have digged a pit for my soul.
Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them,
And to turn away thy wrath from them.
21 Therefore deliver up their children to the famine,
And pour out their *blood* by the force of the sword;
And let their wives be bereaved of their children, and *be*
And let their men be put to death; [widows;
Let their young men *be* slain by the sword in battle.
22 Let a cry be heard from their houses,
When thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them:
For they have digged a pit to take me,
And hid snares for my feet.
23 Yet, LORD, thou knowest all their counsel against me to
Forgive not their iniquity, [slay *me:*
Neither blot out their sin from thy sight,
But let them be overthrown before thee;
Deal *thus* with them in the time of thine anger.

The prophet here, as sometimes before, brings in his own affairs, but very much for instruction to us.

First. See here what are the common methods of the persecutors. We may see this in Jeremiah's enemies, ver. 18.

1. They laid their heads together, to consult what they should do against him, both to be revenged on him for what he had said and to stop his mouth for the future. "They said, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah." The enemies of God's people and ministers have been often very crafty themselves, and confederate with one another to do them mischief. What they cannot act to the prejudice of religion separately they will try to do in concert. "The wicked plotteth against the just." Caiaphas, and the chief priests and elders, did so against our blessed Saviour himself. The opposition which the gates of hell give to the kingdom of heaven is carried on with a great deal of cursed policy. God had said, ver. 11, "I devise a device against you;" and now, as if they resolved to be quits with him, and to outwit Infinite Wisdom itself, they resolve to devise devices against God's prophet, not only against his person, but against the word he delivered to them, which they thought, by their subtle management, to defeat. O the prodigious madness of those that hope to disannul God's counsel!

2. Herein they pretended a mighty zeal for the church, which they suggested was in danger if Jeremiah was tolerated to preach as he did. "Come," say they, let us silence and crush him, for "the law shall not perish from the priest;" the law of truth is in their mouths, *Mal.* ii. 6, and there we will seek it; the administration of ordinances according to the law is in their hands, and neither the one nor the other shall be wrested from them. "Counsel shall not perish from the wise;" the administration of public affairs shall always be lodged with the privy counsellors, and ministers of state, to whom it belongs. Nor shall the word perish from the prophets; they mean those of their own choosing, that prophesied to them smooth things, and flattered them with visions of peace. Two things they insinuated: 1st. That Jeremiah could not be himself a true prophet, but was a pretender, and an usurper; because he was neither commissioned by the priests nor concurred with the other prophets, whose authority therefore will be despised if he be suffered to go on. If Jeremiah be regarded as an oracle, farewell the reputation of our priests, our wise men, and prophets; but that must be supported, which is reason enough why he must be suppressed. 2nd. That the matter of his prophecies could not be from God, because it reflected sometimes upon the prophets and priests. He charged them with being the ringleaders of all the mischief, *ch.* v. 31; and deceiving the people, *ch.* xiv. 14; he had foretold that their heart should perish, and be astonished, *ch.* iv. 9; that "the wise men should be dismayed," *ch.* viii. 9, 10; that the priests and prophets should be intoxicated, *ch.* xiii. 13. Now this galled them more than anything else. Presuming upon the promise of God's presence with their priests and prophets, they could not believe he would ever leave them. The guides of the church must needs be infallible, and therefore he who foretold their being infatuated must be condemned as a false prophet. Thus, under colour of zeal for the church, have its best friends been run down.

3. They agreed to do all they could do to blast his reputation; "Come, let us smite him with the tongue," put him into an ill name, fasten an ill character upon him, represent him to some as despicable, and fit to be slighted; to others as dangerous, and fit to be prosecuted; to all as odious, and not fit to be tolerated. This was their device, *fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit,*—'to throw the vilest calumnies at him, in hopes that some would stick;' to dress him up in bears' skins, otherwise they could not bait him. They who projected this, it is likely, were men of figure, whose tongue was no small slander, whose representations, though never so false, would be credited both by princes and people, to make him obnoxious to the justice of the one, and fury of the other. The scourge of such tongues will give not only smart lashes, but deep wounds; it is a great mercy therefore to be hid from it, *Job* v. 21.

4. To set others an example, they resolved they would not themselves regard any thing he said, though it appeared never so weighty, and never so well confirmed as a message from God; "Let us not give heed to any of his words;" for, right or wrong, they will look upon them to be his words, and not the words of God. What good can be done with those who hear the word of God with a resolution not to heed it or believe it? Nay,

5. That they may effectually silence him, they resolve to be the death of him; ver. 23, "All their counsel against me is to slay me." They hunt for the precious life; and a precious life indeed it was that they hunted for. Long was this Jerusalem's wretched character, Thou that killedst many of the prophets, and wouldest have killed them all.

Secondly. See here what is the common relief of the persecuted. This we may see in the course that Jeremiah took when he met with this hard usage; he presently applied himself to his God by prayer, and so gave himself ease.

1. He referred himself and his cause to God's cognizance, ver. 19. They would not regard a word he said, would not admit his complaints, or take any notice of his grievances, but "Lord," saith he, "do thou give heed to me." It is matter of comfort to faithful ministers that, if men will not give heed to their preaching, yet God will give heed to their praying. He appeals to God as an impartial judge that will hear both sides, as every judge ought to do. Do not only give heed to me, but "hearken to the voice of them that contend with me," hear what they have to say against me, and for themselves, and then make it to appear that thou sittest in the throne judging right. "Hear the voice of my contenders," how noisy and clamorous they are, how false and malicious all they say is, and let them be "judged out of their own mouth; cause their own tongues to fall upon them."

2. He complains of their base ingratitude to him; ver. 20, "Shall evil be recompensed for good?" And shall it go unpunished? Wilt not thou recompense me good for that evil? 2 *Sam.* xvi. 12. To render good for good is human, evil for evil is brutish, good for evil is Christian, but evil for good is devilish. It is so very absurd and wicked a thing that we cannot think but God will avenge it. See how great the evil was they did against him; they digged a pit for his soul; they aimed to take away his life, no less would satisfy them, and that not in a generous way, by an open assault, against which he might have an opportunity of defending himself, but in a base cowardly clandestine way they digged pits for him, which there was no fence against, *Ps.* cxix. 85. But see how great the good was which he had done for them; "Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them." He had been an intercessor with God for them, had used his interest in heaven on their behalf, which was the greatest kindness they could expect from one of his character; *Gen.* xx. 7, "He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee." This Moses often did for Israel, and yet they quarrelled with him, and sometimes spoke of stoning him. He did them this kindness when they were in imminent danger of destruction, and most needed it. They had themselves provoked God's wrath against them, and it was ready to break in upon them, but he stood in the gap, as Moses, *Ps.* cvi. 23, and turned away that wrath. Now, 1st. This was very base in them. Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse. But it was not strange that they who had forgotten their God did not know their best friends. 2nd. It was very grievous to him, as the like was to David, *Ps.* xxxv. 13; cix. 4, "For my love they are my adversaries." And thus disingenuously do sinners deal with the great Intercessor, crucifying him afresh, and speaking against him on earth, while his blood is speaking for them in heaven: see *Jno.* x. 32. But, 3rd. It was a comfort to the prophet that, when they were so spiteful against him, he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had done his duty to them; and the same will be our rejoicing in such a day of evil. "The bloodthirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul," *Pr.* xxix. 10.

3. He imprecates the judgments of God upon them, not from a revengeful disposition, but in a prophetical indignation against their horrid wickedness, ver. 21—23. He prays, 1st. That their families might be starved for want of bread; "Deliver up the children to the famine," to the famine in the country for want of rain, and that in the city through the straitness of the siege. Thus let this iniquity of the fathers be visited upon the children. 2nd. That they might be cut off by the sword of war, which, whatever it was in the enemies' hand, would be in God's hand a sword of justice. 'Pour them out,' so the word is, 'by the hands of the sword,' let their blood be shed as profusely as water, "that their wives may be left childless and widows, their husbands being taken away by death," or, as some understand it, by the pestilence. Let "their young men," that are the strength of this generation, and the hopes of the next, "be slain by the sword in battle." 3rd. That the terrors and desolations of war might seize them suddenly, and by surprise, that thus their punishment might answer their sin; ver. 22, "Let a cry be heard from their houses," loud shrieks, "when thou shalt bring a troop of the Chaldeans suddenly upon them," to seize them and all they have, to make them prisoners, and their estates a prey; for thus they would have done by Jeremiah. They aimed to ruin him at once, ere he was aware; "They have digged a pit for me," as for a wild beast, and have hid snares for me as for some ravenous, noxious fowl. Note, They that think to ensnare others will justly be themselves ensnared in an evil time. 4th. That they may be dealt with according to the desert of this sin, which was without excuse; "Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight;" that is, let them not escape the just punishment of it. Let them lie under all the miseries of those whose sins are unpardoned. 5th. That God's wrath against them might be their ruin; "Let

them be overthrown before thee." This intimates that justice is in pursuit of them, that they endeavour to make escape from it, but in vain; they shall be made to stumble in their flight, and being overthrown they will certainly be overtaken. And then, Lord, in the time of thine anger do to them, (he doth not say what he would have done to them, but) do to them as thou thinkest fit, as thou usest to do with those whom thou art angry with; "Deal thus with them."

Now this is not written for our imitation. Jeremiah was a prophet, and by the impulse of the spirit of prophecy, in the foresight of the ruin certainly coming upon his persecutors, might pray such prayers as we may not; and if we think by his example to justify ourselves in such imprecations we know not what manner of spirit we are of. Our Master has taught us by his precept and pattern to bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us; yet it is written for our instruction, and is of use to teach us, 1. That those who have forfeited the benefit of the prayers of God's prophets for them, may justly expect to have their prayers against them. 2. That persecution is a sin that fills the measure of a people's iniquity very fast, and will bring as sure and sore a destruction upon them as any other. 3. Those that will not be won upon by the kindness of God and his prophets will certainly at length feel the just resentments of both.

CHAPTER XIX.

The same melancholy theme is the subject of this chapter that was of those foregoing; the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins: this Jeremiah had often foretold; here he has particularly full orders to do it again. I. He must set their sins in order before them, as he had often done, especially their idolatry, ver. 4, 5. II. He must describe the particular judgments which were now coming apace upon them for these sins, ver. 6—9. III. He must do this in the valley of Tophet, with great solemnity, and for some particular reasons, ver. 2, 3. IV. He must summon a company of the elders together to be witnesses of this, ver. 1. V. He must confirm this, and endeavour to affect his hearers with it, by a sign, which was the breaking of an earthen bottle, signifying that they should be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel, ver. 10—13. VI. When he had done this in the valley of Tophet, he ratified it in the court of the temple, ver. 14, 15. Thus were all likely means tried to awaken this stupid senseless people to repentance, that their ruin might be prevented, but all in vain.

THUS saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle, and *take* of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests; 2 And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which *is* by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee, 3 And say, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. 4 Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; 5 They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire *for* burnt offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake *it*, neither came *it* into my mind: 6 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor The valley of the son of Hinnom, but The valley of slaughter. 7 And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 8 And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof. 9 And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness, wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

HUMAN SACRIFICE—FROM AN ETRUSCAN TOMB.—ver. 5.

The corruption of man having made it necessary that precept should be upon precept, and line upon line, so unapt are we to receive, and so very apt to let slip, the things of God, the grace of God has provided that there shall be accordingly precept upon precept, and line upon line; that those who are irreclaimable may be inexcusable. For this reason the prophet here is sent with a message to the same purpose with what he had often delivered, but with some circumstances that might make it the more taken notice of, a thing which ministers should study, for a little circumstance may sometimes be a great advantage, and they that would win souls must be wise.

First. He must take of the elders and chief men, both in church and state, to be his auditors and witnesses to what he said. "The ancients of the people, and the ancients of the priests," the most eminent men, both in the magistracy and in the ministry, that they might be faithful witnesses to record, as those, *Isa.* viii. 2. It is strange that these great men would be at the beck of a poor prophet, and obey his summons to attend him out of the city, they knew not whither, and they knew not why. But though the generality of the elders were disaffected to him, yet it is likely there were some few among them who looked upon him as a prophet of the Lord, and would pay this respect to the heavenly vision. Note, Persons of rank and figure have an opportunity of honouring God, by a diligent attendance on the ministry of the word and other Divine institutions, and they ought to think it an honour, and no disparagement to themselves, yea, though the circumstances be mean and despicable. It is certain the greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of God.

Secondly. He must go to the valley of the son of Hinnom, and deliver this message there; for the word of the Lord is not bound to any one place. As good a sermon may be preached in the valley of Tophet, as in the gate of the temple. Christ preached on a mountain, and out of a ship. This valley lay partly on the south side of Jerusalem; but the prophet's way to it was "by the entry of the east gate," ver. 2. The sun gate, so some render it, and suppose it to look not towards the sunrising, but the noon sun; the potter's gate, so some. This sermon must be preached in that place, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, 1. Because there they had been guilty of the vilest of their idolatries, the sacrificing of their children to Moloch, a horrid piece of impiety, which the sight of the place might serve to mind them of, and upbraid them with. 2. Because there they should feel the sorest of their calamities. There the greatest slaughter should be made among them; and, it being the common sink of the city, let them look upon it, and see what a miserable spectacle this magnificent city should be, when it should be all like the valley of Tophet. God bids him go thither, "and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee" when thou comest thither; whereby it appears (as Mr. Gataker well observes) that God's messages many times were not revealed to the prophets before the very instant of time wherein they were to deliver them.

Thirdly. He must give general notice of a general ruin now shortly coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 3. He must, as those that make proclamation, begin with an 'Oyez,' "Hear ye the word of the Lord," though it be a terrible word, for you may thank yourselves if it be so. Both rulers and ruled must attend to it at their peril. The kings of Judah, that is, the king and his sons, the king and his princes and privy counsellors, they must hear the word of the King of kings, for, as high as they are, he is above them. The inhabitants of Jerusalem also must hear what God hath to say to them. Both princes and people have contributed to the national guilt, and must concur in the national repentance, or they will both share in the national ruin. Let them all know that the Lord of hosts, who is therefore able to do what he threatens, though he is the God of Israel; nay, because he is so, will therefore punish them in the first place for their iniquities, *Am.* iii. 2; he "will bring evil upon this place," that is, upon Judah and Jerusalem, so surprising and so dreadful, that whosoever hears it his ears shall tingle, hears the prediction of it, hears the report and representation of it; it shall make such an impression of terror upon him, that he shall still think he hears it sounding in his ears, and shall not be able to get it out of his mind. The ruin of Eli's house is thus described, 1 *Sam.* iii. 11; and of Jerusalem, 2 *Kin.* xxi. 12.

Fourthly. He must plainly tell them what their sins were for which God had this controversy with them, ver. 4, 5. Apostacy from God; "They have forsaken me." Abuse of the privileges of the visible church with which they had been dignified; they "have estranged this place." Jerusalem the holy city, the temple, the holy house, which were designed for the honour of God, and the support of his kingdom among men, they had alienated from those purposes, and (as some render the word) they had strangely abused. They had so polluted both with their wickedness that God had disowned both, and abandoned them to ruin. He chargeth them with an affection for, and the adoration of, false gods, such as "neither they nor their fathers have known," such as never had recommended themselves to their belief and esteem, by

any acts of power or goodness done for them or their ancestors, as that God had abundantly done whom they forsook, yet they took them at a venture for their gods. Nay, being fond of change and novelty, they liked them the better for their being upstarts; and new fashions in religion were as graceful to their fancies as in other things. They also stand charged with murder, wilful murder, from malice prepense; They "have filled this place with the blood of innocents." It was Manasseh's sin, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 4, "which the Lord would not pardon;" nay, as if idolatry and murder committed separately were not bad enough, and affront enough to God and man, they have put them together, have consolidated them into one complicated crime, that of burning their children in the fire to Baal, ver. 5; which was the most insolent defiance to all the laws both of natural and revealed religion that ever mankind was guilty of; and by it they openly declared, they loved their new gods better than ever they loved the true God, though they were such cruel taskmasters, that they required human sacrifices, inhuman I should call them, which the Lord Jehovah, whose all lives and souls are, never demanded from his worshippers, never spake of such a thing, nor came it into his mind: see *ch.* vii. 31.

Fifthly. He must endeavour to affect them with the greatness of the desolation that was coming upon them. He must tell them, as he had done before, *ch.* vii. 32, that this "valley of the son of Hinnom" shall acquire a new name, "the valley of slaughter," ver. 6; for, ver. 7, multitudes shall fall there by the sword, when either they sally out upon the besiegers and are repulsed, or attempt to make their escape and are seized. They shall fall before their enemies, who not only endeavour to make themselves masters of their houses and estates, but have such an implacable enmity to them that they seek their lives. They thirst after their blood, and when they are dead will not allow a cartel for the burying of the slain; but their carcases shall "be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth." What a dismal place will the valley of Tophet be then! and as for those that remain within the city, and will not capitulate with the besiegers, they shall perish for want of food, when first they have eaten the flesh of their sons and daughters, and dearest friends, through the straitness wherewith their enemies shall straiten them, ver. 9. This was threatened in the law, as an instance of the extremity to which the judgments of God should reduce them, *Lev.* xxvi. 29; *Deu.* xxviii. 23; and was accomplished, *Lam.* iv. 10. And lastly, the whole city shall be desolate, the houses laid in ashes, the inhabitants slain, or taken prisoners; there shall be no resort to it, nor any thing in it but what looks rueful and horrid; so "that every one that passeth by shall be astonished," ver. 8; as he had said before, *ch.* xviii. 16. That place which holiness had made the joy of the whole earth, sin had made the reproach and shame of the whole earth.

Sixthly. He must assure them, that all their attempts to prevent and avoid this ruin, so long as they continued impenitent and unreformed, would be fruitless and vain; ver. 7, "I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem," that is, of the princes and senators of Judah and Jerusalem, "in this place," in the royal palace which lay on the south side of the city, not far from the place where the prophet now stood. Note, There is no fleeing from God's justice but by fleeing to his mercy. They that will not make good God's counsel, by humbling themselves under his mighty hand, God will make void their counsel, and blast their projects, which they think never so well concerted for their own preservation. There is no counsel or strength against the Lord.

10 Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, 11 And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as *one* breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they shall bury *them* in Tophet, till *there be* no place to bury. 12 Thus will I do unto this place, saith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and *even* make this city as Tophet: 13 And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink offerings unto other gods. 14 Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the LORD had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the LORD'S house; and said to all the people, 15 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

The message of wrath delivered in the foregoing verses is here enforced, that it might gain credit two ways:

First. By a visible sign. The prophet was to take along with him an earthen bottle, ver. 1; and when he had delivered his message, he was to break the bottle to pieces, ver. 10; and the same that were auditors of the sermon must be spectators of the sign. He compared this people in the chapter before to the potter's clay, which is easily marred in the making; but some might say, It is passed that with us, we have been made and hardened long since. And what though you be, saith he; the potter's vessel is as soon broken in the hand of any man as the vessel while it is soft clay is marred in the potter's hand; and its case in this respect much worse, that the vessel while it is soft clay, though it be marred, may be moulded again; but, after it is hardened, when it is broken, it can never be pieced again. Perhaps what they see will affect them more than what they only hear talk of; that is the intention of sacramental signs, and teaching by symbols was anciently used. In the explication of this sign, he must inculcate what he had before said, with a farther reference to the place where this was done, in the valley of Tophet.

1. As the bottle was easily, irresistibly, and irrecoverably broken, so shall Judah and Jerusalem be broken by the Chaldean army, ver. 11. They depended much upon the firmness of their constitution, and fixedness of their courage, which they thought hardened them like a vessel of brass; but the prophet shews all that did but harden them like a vessel of earth, which, though hard, is brittle, and sooner broken than that which is not so hard. Though they were made vessels of honour, still they were vessels of earth; and so they shall be made to know, if they dishonour God and themselves, and serve not the purposes for which they were made. It is God himself, who made them, that resolves to unmake them; "I will break this people, and this city," dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, the doom of the heathen, *Ps.* ii. 9; *Rev.* ii. 27; but now Jerusalem's doom, *Isa.* xxx. 14. A potter's vessel, when once broken, "cannot be made whole again," cannot be cured, so the word is. The ruin of Jerusalem shall be an utter ruin; no hand can repair it but his that broke it; and if they return to him, though he has torn, he will heal.

2. This was done in Tophet, to signify two things: 1st. That Tophet should be the receptacle of the slain; 'They shall bury in Tophet, for want of room to bury elsewhere;' so some read it; and if they had had conveniences any where else, they would not have buried there, where all the filth of the city was carried. Or, as we read it, "They shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place to bury" any more there. They shall jostle for room to lay their dead; and a very little room will then serve those who, while they lived, laid house to house, and field to field. They that would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, while they were above ground, and obliged all about them to keep their distance, must lie with the multitude when they are under ground, for there are innumerable before them. 2nd. That Tophet should be a resemblance of the whole city; ver. 12, "I will make this city as Tophet." As they had filled the valley of Tophet with the slain, which they sacrificed to their idols; so God will fill the whole city with the slain, that shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God. We read, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 19, of Josiah's defiling Tophet, because it had been abused to idolatry; which he did, as should seem, ver. 14, by filling it with the bones of men; and, whatever it was before, from thenceforward it was looked upon as a detestable place. Dead carcases and other filth of the city was carried thither, and a fire continually kept there for the burning of it. This was the posture of that valley, when Jeremiah was sent thither to prophesy; and so execrable a place was it looked upon to be that, in the language of our Saviour's time, hell was called in allusion to it, Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom. Now, saith God, since that blessed reformation, when Tophet was defiled, did not proceed as it ought to have done, nor prove a thorough reformation; but, though the idols in Tophet were abolished and made odious, those in Jerusalem remained; therefore will I do with the city as Josiah did by Tophet, fill it with the bodies of men, and make it a heap of rubbish. Even the houses of Jerusalem, and those of the kings of Judah, the royal palaces not excepted, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, ver. 13; and for the same reason, because of the idolatries that have been committed there. Since they will not defile them by a reformation, God will defile them by a destruction, because upon "the roofs of their houses they have burnt incense unto the host of heaven." The flat roofs of their houses were sometimes used by devout people as convenient places for prayer, *Acts* x. 9; and by idolaters they were used as high places, on which they sacrificed to strange gods, especially to the host of heaven,—the sun, moon, and stars, that there they might be so much nearer to them, and have a clearer and fuller view of them. We read of those that "worshipped the host of heaven upon the housetops," *Zep.* i. 5; and of "altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz," 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 12. This sin upon the housetops brought a curse into the house, which consumed it, and made it a dunghill like Tophet.

Secondly. By a solemn recognition and ratification of what he had said, "in the court of the Lord's house," ver. 14, 15. The prophet returned from Tophet to the temple, which stood upon the hill over that valley, and there confirmed, and probably repeated, what he had said in the valley of Tophet, for the benefit of those who had heard it. What he had said he would stand to. Here, as often before, he both assures them of judgments coming upon them, and assigns the cause of them, which was their sin. Both these are here put together in a little compass, with a reference to all that had gone before. 1. The accomplishment of the prophecies is here the judgment threatened. The people flattered themselves with a conceit, that God would be better than his word, the threatening was but to frighten them, and keep them in awe a little; but the prophet tells them, they deceive themselves if they think so; for "thus saith the Lord of hosts," that is able to make his words good, "I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns," all the lesser cities that belong to Jerusalem the metropolis, "all the evil that I have pronounced against it." Note, Whatever men may think to the contrary, the executions of providence will fully answer the predictions of the word; and God will appear as terrible against sin and sinners, as the Scripture makes him; nor shall the unbelief of men make either his promise or his threatening of none effect, or of less effect than it was thought to be of. 2. The contempt of the prophecies is here the sin charged upon them, as the procuring cause of this judgment. It is "because they have hardened their necks," and would not bow and bend them to the yoke of God's commands, would "not hear my words," that he would not heed them, and yield obedience to them. Note, The obstinacy of sinners in their sinful ways is altogether long of themselves. If their necks are hardened, it is their own act and deed, they have hardened them; if they are deaf to the word of God, it is because they have stopped their own ear. We have need therefore to pray, that God by his grace would deliver us 'from hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandment.'

CHAPTER XX.

Such plain dealing as Jeremiah used in the foregoing chapter, one might easily foresee, if it did not convince and humble men, it would provoke and exasperate them; and so it did, for here we find, I. Jeremiah persecuted by Pashur, for preaching that sermon, ver. 1, 2. II. Pashur threatened for so doing, and the word which Jeremiah had preached confirmed, ver. 3—6. III. Jeremiah complaining to God concerning it, and the other instances of hard measure that he had since he began to be a prophet; and the grievous temptations he had struggled with, ver. 7—10; encouraging himself in God, lodging his appeal with him, not doubting but that he shall yet praise him, by which it appears he had much grace, ver. 11—13; and yet peevishly cursing the day of his birth, ver. 14—18; by which it appears he had sad remainders of corruption in him too, and was a man subject to like passions as we are.

NOW Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who *was* also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. 2 Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and

put him in the stocks that *were* in the high gate of Benjamin, which *was* by the house of the LORD. 3 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib. 4 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold *it:* and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. 5 Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. 6 And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

Here is, First. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah, and the fruits of that displeasure, ver. 1, 2. This Pashur was a priest, and therefore one would think should have protected Jeremiah, who was of his own order, a priest too, and the more because he was a prophet of the Lord, whose interests the priests his ministers ought to consult. But this priest was a persecutor of him whom he should have patronised. He was the son of Immer; that is, he was of the sixteenth course of the priests, of which Immer, when these courses were first settled by David, was father, 1 *Chr.* xxiv. 14; as Zechariah was of the order of Abiah, *Lu.* i. 5. Thus this Pashur is distinguished from another of the same name, mentioned *ch.* xxi. 4, that was of the fifth course. This Pashur was chief governor in the temple; perhaps he was only so *pro tempore*,—'for a short period,' the course he was head of being now in waiting; or, he was suffragan to the high priest; or, perhaps captain of the temple, or of the guards about it, *Acts* iv. 1. This was Jeremiah's great enemy. The greatest malignity to God's prophets was found among those that professed sanctity, and concern for God and the church.

We cannot suppose that Pashur was any of those ancients of the priests that went with Jeremiah to the valley of Tophet, to hear him prophesy, unless it were with a malicious design to take advantage against him. But when he came into the courts of the Lord's house, it is probable he was himself a witness of what he said; and so it may be read, ver. 1, 'He heard Jeremiah prophesying these things.' As we read it, the information was brought him by others, whose examinations he took; he "heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things," and could not bear it; especially that he should dare to preach in the courts of the Lord's house, where he was chief governor, without his leave. When power in the church is abused, it is the most dangerous power of all other against it. Being incensed at Jeremiah, 1. He smote him, struck him with his hand, or staff of authority. Perhaps it was a blow intended only to disgrace him, like that which the high priest ordered to be given Paul, *Acts* xxiii. 2. He struck him on the mouth, and bade him hold his prating. Or, perhaps he gave him many blows, intended to hurt him; he beat him soundly, as a malefactor. It is charged upon the husbandmen, *Mat.* xxi. 35, that they beat the servants. The method of proceeding here was illegal. The high priest and the rest of the priests ought to have been consulted, Jeremiah's credentials examined, and the matter inquired into, whether he had an authority to say what he said. But these rules of justice are set aside, and despised as mere formalities; right or wrong Jeremiah must be run down. The enemies of piety would never suffer themselves to be bound by the laws of equity. 2. He "put him in the stocks." Some make it only a place of confinement; he imprisoned him. It rather seems to be an instrument of closer restraint than so, and intended to put him both to pain and shame. Some think it was a pillory for his neck and arms; others, as we, a pair of stocks for his legs. Whatever engine it was, he continued in it all night, and in a public place too, 'in the high gate of Benjamin, which was' in or 'by the house of the Lord;' probably a gate through which they passed between the city and the temple. Pashur intended thus to chastise him, that he might deter him from prophesying; and thus to expose him to contempt, and render him odious, that he might not be regarded if he did prophesy. Thus have the best men met with the worst treatment from this ungracious, ungrateful world; and the greatest blessings of their age have been counted as the offscouring of all things. Would it not raise a pious indignation to see such a man as Pashur upon the bench, and such a man as Jeremiah in the stocks? It is well there is another life after this, when persons and things will appear with another face.

Secondly. God's just displeasure against Pashur, and the tokens of that. On the morrow Pashur gave Jeremiah his discharge, brought him out of the stocks, ver. 3; it is likely he continued him there, in little-ease, as long as was usual to continue any in that punishment; and now Jeremiah has a message from God to him. We do not find that when he put him into the stocks he gave him any check for what he did, but quietly and silently submitted to the abuse; "when he suffered, he threatened not;" but when he brought him out of the stocks, then God put a word into the prophet's mouth, which would awaken his conscience, if he had any. For when the prophet of the Lord was bound the word of the Lord was not. What can we think Pashur aimed at in smiting and abusing Jeremiah? Whatever it is, we shall see, by what God saith to him, he is disappointed.

1. Did he aim to establish himself, and make himself easy, by silencing one that told him of his faults, and would be likely to lessen his reputation with the people? He shall not gain this point; for, 1st. Though the prophet should be silent, his own conscience shall fly in his face, and make him always uneasy. To confirm this he shall have a name given him, "Magor-missabib,"—'Terror round about,' or 'Fear on every side.' God himself shall give him this name, whose calling him so will make him so. It seems to be a proverbial expression, bespeaking a man not only in distress but in despair; not only in danger on every side, (that a man may be, and yet by faith may be in no terror, as David, *Ps.* iii. 6, xxvii. 3,) but in fear on every side; and that a man may be when there appears no danger. "The wicked flee when no man pursues," are in great fear where no fear is. This shall be Pashur's case; ver. 4, "Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself;" that is, thou shalt be subject to continual frights, and thy own fancy and imagination shall create thee a constant uneasiness. Note, God can make the most daring sinner a terror to himself; and will find out a way to frighten those that frighten his people from doing their duty. And those that will not hear of their faults from God's prophets, that are reprovers in the gate, shall be made to hear of them from conscience, which is a reprover in their own bosoms that will not be daunted or silenced. And miserable is the man that is thus made a terror to himself. Yet this is not all; some are very much a terror to themselves, but they conceal it, and seem to others to be pleasant; but I will make thee a terror "to all thy friends;" thou shalt upon all occasions express thyself with so much horror and amazement that all thy friends shall be afraid of conversing with thee, and shall choose to stand aloof from thy torment. Persons in deep melancholy and distraction are a terror to themselves and all about them; which is a good reason why we should be very thankful so long as God continues to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences. 2nd. His friends whom he put a confidence in, and perhaps studied to oblige in what he did against Jeremiah, shall all fail him. God doth not presently strike him dead for what he did against Jeremiah, but lets him live miserably, like Cain in the land of shaking; in such a continual consternation as that wherever he goes he shall be a monument of Divine justice; and when it is asked, What makes this man in such a continual terror? it shall be answered, It is God's hand upon him for putting Jeremiah in the stocks. His friends, that should encourage him, shall all be cut off; they shall fall by the sword of the enemy, and his eyes shall behold it; which dreadful sight will increase his terror. 3rd. He shall find in the issue his terror is not causeless, but that Divine vengeance is waiting for him, ver. 6. He and his family shall go into captivity, even to Babylon; he shall neither die before the evil comes, as Josiah, nor live to survive it, as some did, but he shall die a captive, and shall in effect be buried in his chains, he and all his friends. Thus far is the doom of Pashur. Let persecutors read it and tremble; tremble to repentance before they be made to tremble to their ruin.

2. Did he aim to keep the people easy, to prevent the destruction that Jeremiah prophesied of, and by sinking his reputation to make his words fall to the ground? It is probable he did; for it appears by ver. 6 he did himself set up for a prophet, and told the people they should have peace; he prophesied lies to them, and because Jeremiah's prophecy contradicted his, and tended to awaken those whom he endeavoured to rock asleep in their sins, therefore he set himself against him. But could he gain this point? No; Jeremiah stands to what he hath said against Judah and Jerusalem, and God by his mouth repeats it. Men get nothing by silencing those who reprove and warn them, for the word will have its course; so it had here. 1st. The country shall be ruined; ver. 4, "I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon." It had long been God's own land; but he will now transfer his title to it to Nebuchadnezzar, he shall be master of the country, and dispose of the inhabitants; some to the sword, and some to captivity, as he pleaseth; but none shall escape him. 2nd. The city shall be ruined too, ver. 5. The king of Babylon shall spoil that, and carry all that is valuable in it to Babylon. *First.* He shall seize their magazines and military stores, here called the strength of this city, and turn those against them. These they trusted to as their strength; but what stead could they stand them in when they had thrown themselves out of God's protection, and he who was indeed their strength was departed from them? *Secondly.* He shall carry off all their stock in trade, their wares and merchandises, here called their labours, because it was what they laboured about, and got by their labour. *Thirdly.* He shall plunder their fine houses, and take away their rich furniture, here called their precious things, because they valued them, and set their hearts upon them so much. Happy they who have secured to themselves precious things in God's precious promises, which are out of the reach of soldiers. *Fourthly.* He shall rifle the exchequer, and take away the jewels of the crown, "and all the treasures of the kings of Judah." This was that instance of the calamity which was first of all threatened to Hezekiah long ago, as his punishment for shewing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, *Isa.* xxxix. 6. The treasury they thought was their defence; but that betrayed them, and became an easy prey to the enemy.

7 O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived:
Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed:
I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.
8 For since I spake,
I cried out, I cried violence and spoil;
Because the word of the LORD was made
A reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.
9 Then I said, I will not make mention of him,
Nor speak any more in his name.
But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones,
And I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *stay*.
10 For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side.
Report, *say they*, and we will report it.
All my familiars watched for my halting, *saying*,
Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him,
And we shall take our revenge on him.
11 But the LORD *is* with me as a mighty terrible one:
Therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail:

They shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper:
Their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.
12 But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous,
and seest the reins and the heart,
Let me see thy vengeance on them:
For unto thee have I opened my cause.
13 Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD:
For he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers.

Pashur's doom was to be a terror to himself. Jeremiah, even now, in this hour of temptation, is far from being so; and yet it cannot be denied but that he is here, through the infirmity of the flesh, at a mighty toss within himself. Good men are but men at the best; God is not extreme to mark what they say and do amiss, and therefore we must not be so, but make the best of it. In these verses it appears that upon occasion of the great indignity and injury that Pashur did to Jeremiah, there was a struggle in his breast between his graces and his corruptions. His discourse with himself and with his God upon this occasion was somewhat perplexed; let us try to methodize it.

First. Here is a sad representation of the wrong that was done him, and the affronts that were put upon him; and this representation no doubt was according to truth, and deserves no blame, but was very justly and very fitly made to him that sent him, and no doubt would bear him out. He complains,

1. That he was ridiculed and laughed at. They made a jest of every thing he said and did: and this cannot but be a great grievance to an ingenuous mind; ver. 7, 8, "I am in derision, I am mocked." They played upon him, and made themselves and one another merry with him, as if he had been a fool, good for nothing but to make sport. Thus he was continually, "I was in derision daily;" thus he was universally, "Every one mocks me;" the greatest so far forget their own gravity, and the meanest so far forget mine. Thus our Lord Jesus on the cross was reviled both by priests and people, and the revilings of each had their peculiar aggravation. And what was it that thus exposed him to contempt and scorn? It was nothing but his faithful and zealous discharge of his office, ver. 8. They could find nothing for which to deride him but his preaching; it was "the word of the Lord" that "was made a reproach." That for which they should have honoured and respected him, that he was intrusted to deliver the word of the Lord to them, was the very thing for which they reproached and reviled him. He never preached a sermon but, though he kept as close as possible to his instructions, they found something or other in it for which to banter and abuse him. Note, It is sad to think that, though Divine revelation be one of the greatest blessings and honours that ever was bestowed upon the world, yet it has been turned very much to the reproach of the most zealous preachers and believers of it. Two things they derided him for: 1st. The manner of his preaching. Since he spake he cried out. He had always been a lively, affectionate preacher, and since he began to speak in God's name he always spake as a man in earnest; he cried aloud, and did not spare, neither spared himself nor spared them to whom he preached; and this was enough for them to laugh at who hated to be serious. It is common for these that are unaffected with, and disaffected to, the things of God themselves, to ridicule those that are much affected with them. Lively preachers are the scorn of careless, unbelieving hearers. 2nd. The matter of his preaching. He cried, Violence and spoil. He reproved them for the violence and spoil which they were guilty of towards one another; and he prophesied of the violence and spoil which should be brought upon them as the punishment of that sin; for the former they ridiculed him as over precise, for the latter as over credulous; in both he was provoking to them, and therefore they resolved to run him down. This was bad enough, yet he complains farther,

2. That he was plotted against, and his ruin contrived. He was not only ridiculed as a weak man, but reproached and misrepresented as an ill man, and dangerous to the government. This he laments as his grievance, ver. 10. Being laughed at, though it touches a man in a point of honour, yet it is a thing that may be easily laughed at again; for, as it has been well observed, it is no shame to be laughed at, but to deserve to be so. But there were those that acted a more spiteful part, and with more subtlety. 1st. They spoke ill of him behind his back, when he had no opportunity of clearing himself, and were industrious to spread false reports concerning him. "I heard" at second hand "the defaming of many, fear on every side," 'of many Magor-missabibs,' so some read it, of many such men as Pashur was, and who may therefore expect his doom. Or, this was the matter of their defamation, they represented Jeremiah as a man that instilled fears and jealousies on every side into the minds of the people, and so made them uneasy under the government, and disposed them to a rebellion. Or, he perceived them so malicious against him, that he could not but be afraid on every side,—wherever he was he had reason to fear informers; so that they made him almost a Magor-missabib. These words are found in the original, *verbatim*,—'the same,' *Ps.* xxxi. 13, "I have heard the slander," or defaming, "of many; fear on every side." Jeremiah in his complaint chooseth to make use of the same words that David had made use of before him; that it might be a comfort to him to think that other good men had suffered the like abuses before him, and to teach us to make use of David's psalms with application to ourselves as there is occasion. Whatever we have to say we may from thence take with us words. See how Jeremiah's enemies contrived the matter; "Report, say they, and we will report it." They resolve to cast an odium upon him, and this is the method they take: let some very ill thing be said of him, which may render him obnoxious to the government, and though it be never so false we will second it, and spread it, and add to it; for the reproaches of good men lose nothing by the carriage. Do you that frame a story plausibly, or you that can pretend to some acquaintance with him, report it once, and we will all report it from you, in all companies that we come into. Do you say it, and we will swear it; do you set it a going, and we will follow it. And thus both are equally guilty, they that raise and they that propagate the false report. The receiver is as bad as the thief. 2nd. They flattered him to his face, that they might get something from him on which to ground an accusation; as the spies that came to Christ, feigning themselves to be just men, *Lu.* xx. 20; xi. 53, 54. His familiars, that he conversed freely with, and put a confidence in, watched for his halting, observed what he said,—which they could by any strained innuendo put an ill construction upon,—and carried it to his enemies. His case was very sad when those betrayed him whom he took to be his friends. They said among themselves, If we speak him fair and insinuate ourselves into his acquaintance, "peradventure he will be enticed" to own that he is in confederacy with the enemy, and a pensioner to the king of Babylon; or we shall wheedle him to speak some treasonable words, and then "we shall prevail against him, and take our revenge on him," for telling us of our faults, and threatening us with the judgments of God. Note, Neither the innocence of the dove, no, nor the prudence of the serpent to help it, can secure men from unjust censure and false accusation.

Secondly. Here is an account of the temptation he was in under this affliction; his feet were almost gone, as the psalmist's, *Ps.* lxxiii. 2. And this is that which is most to be dreaded in affliction, being driven by it to sin, *Neh.* vi. 13.

1. He was tempted to quarrel with God for making him a prophet. This he begins with, ver. 7, "O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived;" this, as we read it, sounds very harsh. God's servants have always been ready to own that he is a faithful Master, and never cheated them; and therefore this is the language of Jeremiah's folly and corruption. If when God called him to be a prophet, and told him he would set him over the kingdoms, *ch.* i. 10, and make him a defenced city, he flattered himself with an expectation of having universal respect paid him as a messenger from heaven, and living safe and easy, and afterwards it proved otherwise, he must not say God had deceived him, but he had deceived himself, for he knew how the prophets before him had been persecuted, and had no reason to expect any better treatment. Nay, God had expressly told him, that all the princes, priests, and people of the land would fight against him, *ch.* i. 19; which he had forgot, else he would not have laid the blame on God thus. Christ thus told his disciples what opposition they should meet with, that they might not be offended, *Jno.* xvi. 1, 2. But the words may very well be read thus, 'Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded;' it is the same word that is used, *Gen.* ix. 27, marg., 'God shall persuade Japheth;' and *Pr.* xxv. 15, "By much forbearance is a prince persuaded;" and *Hos.* ii. 14, "I will allure her." And this agrees best with what follows, "Thou art stronger than I," didst overpersuade me with argument; nay, didst overpower me by the influence of thy Spirit upon me, "and hast prevailed." Jeremiah was very backward to undertake the prophetical office; he pleaded that he was under age, and unfit for the service; but God overruled his pleas, and told him he must go, *ch.* i. 6, 7. Now, Lord, saith he, since thou didst put this office upon me, why dost thou not stand by me in it? Had I thrust myself upon it, I might justly have been in derision; but why am I so, when thou didst thrust me into it? It was Jeremiah's infirmity to complain thus of God, as putting a hardship upon him in calling him to be a prophet; which he would not have done had he considered the lasting honour thereby done him sufficient to balance the present contempt he was under. Note, As long as we see ourselves in the way of God and duty, it is weakness and folly, when we meet with difficulties and discouragements in it, to wish we had never set out in it.

2. He was tempted to quit his work, and give it over, partly because he himself met with so much hardship in it; and partly because those to whom he was sent, instead of being edified and made better, were exasperated and made worse; ver. 9, "Then I said," since by prophesying in the name of the Lord, I gain nothing to him or myself but dishonour and disgrace, "I will not make mention of him;" as my author for any thing I say, "nor speak any more in his name;" since my enemies do all they can to silence me, I will even silence myself, and speak no more, since I had as good speak to the stones as to them. Note, It is a strong temptation to poor ministers, to resolve they will preach no more, when they see their preaching slighted, and wholly ineffectual. But let people dread putting their ministers into this temptation. Let not their labour be in vain with us, lest we provoke them to say, They will take no more pains with us; and provoke God to say, They shall take no more. Yet let not ministers hearken to this temptation, but go on in their duty notwithstanding their discouragements, for this is the more thankworthy; and though Israel be not gathered, yet they shall be glorious.

Thirdly. Here is an account of his faithful adherence to his work, and cheerful dependence on his God notwithstanding.

1. He found the grace of God mighty in him to keep him to his business, notwithstanding the temptation he was in to throw it up. "I said" in my haste "I will speak no more in his name;" what I have in my heart to deliver I will stifle and suppress. But I soon found it "was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones," which glowed inwardly, and must have vent; it was impossible to smother it. I was like a man in a burning fever, uneasy, and in a continual toss; "while I kept silence from good, my heart was hot within me;" it was pain and grief to me, and "I must speak that I may be refreshed," *Job* xxxii. 20; *Ps.* xxxix. 2, 3. "While I kept silence my bones waxed old," *Ps.* xxxii. 3. See the power of the spirit of prophecy in those that were acted by it; and thus will a holy zeal for God even eat men up, and make them forget themselves; "I believed, therefore have I spoken." Jeremiah was soon weary with forbearing to preach, and could not contain himself; nothing puts faithful ministers to so much pain as being silenced, nor to so much terror as silencing themselves. Their convictions will soon triumph over temptations of that kind; for "woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel" whatever it cost me, 1 *Cor.* ix. 16. And it is really a mercy to have the word of God thus mighty in us to overpower our corruptions.

2. He was assured of God's presence with him; which would be sufficient to baffle all the attempts of his enemies against him, ver. 11. They say, "We shall prevail against him," the day will undoubtedly be our own; but I am sure "they shall not prevail, they shall not prosper," I can safely set them all at defiance, for "the Lord is with me," is on my side, to take my part against them, (*Rom.* viii. 31,) to protect me from all their malicious designs upon me; he is with me to support me, and bear me up under the burthen which now presseth me down; he is with me to make the word I preach answer the end he designs, though not the end I desire; he "is with me as a mighty terrible one," to strike a terror upon them, and so overcome them. Note, Even that in God which is terrible is really comfortable to his servants that trust in him, for it shall be turned against those that seek to terrify his people. God's being a mighty God speaks him a terrible God to all those that take up arms against him, or any that like Jeremiah was commissioned by him. How terrible will the wrath of God be to those that think to daunt all about them, and will themselves be daunted by nothing! The most formidable enemies that act against us appear despicable when we see the Lord for us as a mighty terrible one, *Neh.* iv. 14. Jeremiah speaks now with a good assurance; If the Lord be with me, my persecutors shall stumble, so that when they pursue me they shall not overtake me, *Ps.* xxvii. 2; and then they shall be greatly ashamed of their impotent malice, and fruitless attempts. Nay, their everlasting confusion and infamy shall never be forgotten; they shall not forget it themselves, but it shall be to them a constant and lasting vexation, whenever they think of it; others shall not forget it, but it shall leave upon them an indelible reproach.

3. He appeals to God against them as a righteous Judge, and prays judgment upon his cause, ver. 12. He looks upon God as the God that tries the righteous, takes cognizance of them, and of every cause that they are interested in. He doth not judge in favour of them with partiality, but tries them; and finding they have right on their side, and their persecutors wrong them, and are injurious to them, he gives sentence for them. He that tries the righteous tries the unrighteous too, and he is very well qualified to do both; for he sees the reins and the heart, he certainly knows men's thoughts and affections, their aims and intentions, and therefore can pass an unerring judgment on their words and actions. Now this is the God, 1st. To whom the prophet here refers himself, and in whose court he lodgeth his appeal; "Unto thee have I opened my cause." Not but that God perfectly knew his cause, and all the

merits of it without his opening; but the cause we commit to God we must spread before him: he knows it, but he will know it from us; and allows us to be particular in the opening of it, not to affect him, but to affect ourselves. Note, It will be an ease to our spirits, when we are oppressed and burthened, to open our cause to God, and pour out our complaint before him. 2nd. By whom he expects to be righted. "Let me see thy vengeance on them," such vengeance as thou thinkest fit to take for their conviction and my vindication; the vengeance thou usest to take on persecutors. Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we must not study to avenge ourselves, but must leave it to that God to do it to whom vengeance belongs, and who hath said, I will repay.

4. He greatly rejoiceth and praiseth God, in a full confidence that God would appear for his deliverance, ver. 13; so full is he of the comfort of God's presence with him, and the Divine protection he is under, and the Divine promise he has to depend upon, that in a transport of joy he stirs up himself and others to give God the glory of it; "Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord." Here appears a great change with him, since he began this discourse; the clouds are blown over, his complaints all silenced, and turned into thanksgivings. He has now an entire confidence in that God whom, ver. 7, he was distrusting; stirs up himself to praise that name which, ver. 9, he was resolving no more to make mention of. It was the lively exercise of faith that made this happy change, that turned his sighs into songs, and his tremblings into triumphs. It is proper to express our hope in God by our praising him, and our praising of God by our singing to him. That which is the matter of the praise is, "He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hands of the evil-doers;" he means especially himself, his own poor soul. He hath delivered me formerly, when I was in distress, and now of late out of the hand of Pashur, and he will continue to deliver me, 2 *Cor.* i. 10. He will deliver my soul from the sin that I am in danger of falling into, when I am thus persecuted; he hath delivered me from the hand of evil-doers, so that they have not gained their point, nor had their will. Note, Those that are faithful in well-doing need not fear those that are spiteful in evil-doing, for they have a God to trust to, who has well-doers under the hand of his protection, and evil-doers under the hand of his restraint.

14 Cursed *be* the day wherein I was born:
Let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.
15 Cursed *be* the man who brought tidings to my father,
Saying, A man child is born unto thee;
Making him very glad.
16 And let that man be as the cities
Which the LORD overthrew, and repented not:
And let him hear the cry in the morning,
And the shouting at noontide;
17 Because he slew me not from the womb;
Or that my mother might have been my grave,
And her womb *to be* always great *with me.*
18 Wherefore came I forth out of the womb
To see labour and sorrow,
That my days should be consumed with shame?

What is the meaning of this? Doth there proceed out of the same mouth blessing and cursing? Could he that said so cheerfully, ver. 13, "Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord," say so passionately, ver. 14, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born?" How shall we reconcile these? What we have in these verses, I suppose the prophet records to his own shame, as he had recorded that in the foregoing verses to God's glory. It seems to be a relation of the toss he had been in while he was in the stocks, out of which by faith and hope he had recovered himself, rather than a new temptation which he afterwards fell into; and it should come in like that of David, *Ps.* xxxi. 22, "I said in my haste, I am cut off;" which is also implied, *Ps.* lxxvii. 7. When grace has got the victory, it is good to remember the struggles of corruption, that we may be ashamed of ourselves and our own folly; may admire the goodness of God in not taking us at our word, and may be warned by it to double our guard upon our spirits another time. See here how strong the temptation was which the prophet by Divine assistance got the victory over, and how far he yielded to it, that we may not despair, if we through the weakness of the flesh be at any time thus tempted. Let us see here,

First. What the prophet's language was in this temptation. 1. He fastened a brand of infamy upon his birthday, as Job did in a heat; *ch.* iii. 1, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born." It was an ill day to me, ver. 14, because it was the beginning of sorrows, and an inlet to all this misery. It is a wish that he had never been born; Judas in hell has reason to wish so, *Mat.* xxvi. 24. But no man on earth has reason to wish so, because he knows not but he may yet become a vessel of mercy, much less has any good man reason to wish so. Whereas some keep their birthday in the return of the year with gladness, he will look upon his birthday as a melancholy day, and will solemnize it with sorrow, and will have it looked upon as an ominous day. 2. He wished ill to the messenger that brought his father the news of his birth, ver. 15. It made his father very glad to hear that he had a child born, (perhaps it was his first-born,) especially that it was a manchild, for then, being of the family of the priests, he might live to have the honour of serving God's altar; and yet he is ready to curse the man that brought the tidings, when perhaps the father to whom they were brought gave him a gratuity for it. Here Mr. Gataker well observes, 'That parents are often much rejoiced at the birth of their children, when, if they did foresee what misery they are born to, they would rather lament over them than rejoice in them.' He is very free and very fierce in the curses he pronounces upon the messenger of his birth; ver. 16, "Let him be as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord utterly overthrew, and repented not;" that is, did not in the least mitigate or alleviate their misery. "Let him hear the cry" of the invading, besieging enemy "in the morning," as soon as he is stirring; then let him take the alarm, and by noon let him hear their shouting for victory; and thus let him live in constant terror. 3. He is angry that the fate of the Hebrews' children in Egypt was not his, that he was not slain from the womb, that his first breath was not made his last, and that he was not strangled as soon as he came into the world, ver. 17. He wisheth the messenger of his birth had been better employed, and had been his murderer; nay, that his mother of whom he was born, had been to her great misery always with child of him; and so the womb in which he was conceived would have served without more ado as a grave for him to be buried in; and Job intimates a near alliance and resemblance between the womb and the grave, *Job* i. 21, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither." 4. He thinks his present calamities sufficient to justify these passionate wishes; ver. 18, "Wherefore came I forth out of the womb" where I lay hid, was not seen, was not hated, where I lay safe and knew no evil, "to see" all this "labour and sorrow;" nay, to have my days consumed with shame, to be continually vexed and abused; not only to have my life spent in trouble, but wasted and worn away by trouble?

Secondly. What use we may make of this. It is not recorded for our imitation, and yet we may learn good lessons from it. 1. See the vanity of human life, and the vexation of spirit that attends it; if there were not another life after this, we should be tempted many a time to wish we had never known this, for our few days here are full of trouble. 2. See the folly and absurdity of sinful passion, how unreasonably it talks when it is suffered to ramble. What nonsense is it to curse a day—to curse a messenger for the sake of his message! What a brutish, barbarous thing for a child to wish his own mother had never been delivered of him! see *Isa.* xlv. 10. We can easily see the folly of it in others, and should take warning from thence to suppress all such intemperate heats and passions in ourselves, to stifle them at first, and not suffer these evil spirits to speak. When the heart is hot, let the tongue be bridled, *Ps.* xxxix. 1, 2. 3. See the weakness even of good men, who are but men at the best; see how much those who think they stand are concerned to take heed lest they fall; and to pray daily, Father in heaven, "lead us not into temptation."

CHAPTER XXI.

It is plain the prophecies of this book are not placed here in the same order that they were preached; for there are chapters after this which concern Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jeconiah, who all reigned before Zedekiah, in whose reign the prophecy of this chapter bears date. Here is, I. The message which Zedekiah sent to the prophet, to desire him to inquire of the Lord for them, ver. 1, 2. II. The answer which Jeremiah in God's name sent to that message, in which he, 1. Foretells the certain and inevitable ruin of the city, and the fruitlessness of their attempts for its preservation, ver. 3—7; 2. He adviseth the people to make the best of bad, by going over to the king of Babylon, ver. 8—10; 3. He adviseth the king and his family to repent and reform, ver. 11, 12, and not to trust to the strength of their city, and grow secure, ver. 13, 14.

THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying, 2 Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us. 3 Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah: 4 Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that *are* in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and *against* the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city. 5 And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. 6 And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence. 7 And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Here is, First. A very humble decent message which king Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah the prophet when he was in distress. It is indeed charged upon this Zedekiah that he "humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord," 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 12; he did not always humble himself as he did sometimes, never humbled himself till necessity forced him to it; he humbled himself so far as to desire the prophet's assistance, but not so far as to take his advice or be ruled by him. Observe,

1. The distress which king Zedekiah was now in. Nebuchadrezzar made war upon him, not only invaded the land, but besieged the city, and had now actually invested it. Note, Those that put the evil day far from them, will be the more terrified when it comes upon them. And they who before slighted God's ministers may then perhaps be glad to court an acquaintance with them.

2. The messengers he sent, Pashur and Zephaniah, one of the fifth course of the priests, the other of the twenty-fourth, 1 *Chr.* xxiv. 9, 18. It was well that he sent persons of rank, but it had been better if he had desired a personal conference with the prophet, which no doubt he might easily have had if he would so far have humbled himself. Perhaps these priests were no

better than the rest, and yet, when they were commanded by the king, they must carry a respectful message to the prophet, which was both a mortification to them, and an honour to Jeremiah. He had rashly said, *ch.* xx. 18, "My days are consumed with shame," and yet here we find that he lived to see better days than those were when he made that complaint; now he appears in reputation. Note, It is folly to say when things are bad with us, they will be always so. It is possible that those that are despised may come to be respected, and it is promised that those who honour God he will honour, and those who have afflicted his people shall bow to them, *Isa.* lx. 14.

3. The message itself; "Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us," ver. 2. Now the Chaldean army was got into their borders, into their bowels, they were at length convinced that Jeremiah was a true prophet, though loath to own it, and brought too late to it; under this conviction they desire him to stand their friend with God, believing him to have that interest in heaven which none of their other prophets had, that had flattered them with hopes of peace. They now employ Jeremiah, 1st. To consult the mind of God for them; "Inquire of the Lord for us," ask him what course we shall take in our present strait; for the measures we have hitherto taken are all broken. Note, Those that will not take the direction of God's grace how to get clear of their sins, would yet be glad of the directions of his providence, how to get clear of their troubles. 2nd. To seek the favour of God for them. So some read it, Entreat the Lord for us; be an intercessor for us with God. Note, Those that slight the prayers of God's people and ministers when they are in prosperity may perhaps be glad of an interest in them when they come to be in distress: "Give us of your oil." The benefit they promise themselves is, "It may be the Lord will deal with us now according to the wondrous works he wrought for our fathers, that the enemy may raise the siege, and go up from us." Observe, *First.* All their care is to get rid of their trouble, not to make their peace with God, and be reconciled to him; that our enemy may go up from us, not that our God may return to us. Thus Pharaoh, *Ex.* x. 17, "Entreat the Lord that he may take away this death." *Secondly.* All their hope is that God hath done wondrous works formerly, in the deliverance of Jerusalem, when Sennacherib besieged it, at the prayer of Isaiah, so we are told, 2 *Chr.* xxxii. 20, 21. And who can tell but he may destroy these besiegers (as he did those) at the prayer of Jeremiah? But they did not consider how different the character of Zedekiah and his people was from that of Hezekiah and his people. Those were days of general reformation and piety; these, of general corruption and apostacy. Jerusalem is now the reverse of what it was then. Note, It is folly to think that God should do for us while we hold fast our iniquity as he did for those that held fast their integrity.

Secondly. A very startling, cutting reply, which God, by the prophet, sent to that message. If Jeremiah had been to have answered the message of himself, we have reason to think he would have returned a comfortable answer, in hopes their sending such a message was an indication of some good purposes in them, which he would be glad to make the best of, for he did not desire the woful day. But God knows their hearts better than Jeremiah doth, and sends them an answer which hath scarce one word of comfort in it. He sends it them in the name of "the Lord God of Israel," ver. 4, to intimate to them that, though God allowed himself to be called the God of Israel, and had done great things for Israel formerly, and had still great things in store for Israel, pursuant to his covenants with them, yet this should stand the present generation in no stead, who were Israelites in name only, and not indeed, any more than God's dealings with them should cut off his relation to Israel as their God. It is here foretold,

1. That God will render all their endeavours for their own security fruitless and ineffectual, ver. 4. I will be so far from teaching your hands to war, and putting an edge upon your swords, that I will "turn back the weapons of war that are in your hand," when you sally out upon the besiegers to beat them off, so that they shall not give the stroke you design; nay, they shall recoil into your own faces, and be turned upon yourselves. Nothing can make for those who have God against them.

2. That the besiegers shall in a little time make themselves masters of Jerusalem, and of all its wealth and strength. "I will assemble them in the midst of this city," that are now surrounding it. Note, If that place which should have been a centre of devotion be made a centre of wickedness, it is not strange if God make it a rendezvous of destroyers.

3. That God himself will be their enemy, and then I know not who can befriend them, no, not Jeremiah himself; ver. 5, I will be so far from protecting you, as I have done formerly in a like case, that "I myself will fight against you." Note, Those who rebel against God may justly expect that he will make war upon them. And that, 1st. With the power of a God, which is irresistibly victorious. I will fight against you "with an outstretched hand," which will reach far, and "with a strong arm," which will strike home, and wound deep. 2nd. With the displeasure of a God, which is indisputably righteous. It is not a correction in love, but an execution in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath; it is upon a sentence sworn in wrath, against which there will lie no exception. And it will soon be found what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

4. That those who for their own safety decline sallying out upon the besiegers, and so avoid their sword, yet shall not escape the sword of God's justice; ver. 6, I will smite those that abide in the city, (so it may be read,) both man and beast; both the beasts that are for food and those that are for service in war, foot and horse, they shall die of a great pestilence, which shall rage within the walls, while the enemies are encamped about them. Though Jerusalem's gates and walls may for a time keep out the Chaldeans, they cannot keep out God's judgments. His arrows of pestilence can reach those that think themselves safe from other arrows.

5. That the king himself, and all the people that escape the sword, famine and pestilence, shall fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, who shall cut them off in cold blood, ver. 7. They shall not spare them, nor have pity on them. Let not them expect to find mercy with men that have forfeited God's compassions, and shut themselves out from his mercy. Thus was the decree gone forth, and then to what purpose was it for Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord for them?

8 And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death. 9 He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey. 10 For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. 11 And touching the house of the king of Judah, *say*, Hear ye the word of the LORD; 12 O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver *him that is* spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings. 13 Behold, I *am* against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, *and* rock of the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations? 14 But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

FIRE IN THE PRAIRIES.

By the civil message which the king sent to Jeremiah, it appeared that both he and the people began to have a respect for him, which it had been Jeremiah's policy to make some advantage of for himself; but the reply which God obligeth him to make is enough to crush that little respect they begin to have for him, and to exasperate them against him more than ever. Not only the predictions in the foregoing verses were provoking, but the prescriptions in these verses. For here,

First. He adviseth the people to surrender, and desert to the Chaldeans, as the only means left them to save their lives, ver. 8—10. This counsel was very displeasing to those who were flattered by their false prophets into a desperate resolution to hold out to the last extremity, trusting to the strength of their walls and courage of their soldiery to keep out the enemy, or to their foreign aids to raise the siege. The prophet assures them the city "shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon," and he shall not only plunder it, but "burn it with fire,"—for God himself hath "set his face against this city for evil, and not for good;" to lay it waste, and not to protect it; for evil which shall have no good mixed with it, no mitigation or merciful alloy,—and therefore, if you would make the best of bad, you must beg quarter of the Chaldeans, and surrender prisoners of war. In vain did Rabshakeh persuade the Jews to do this while they had God for them, *Isa.* xxxvi. 16; but it was the best course they could take now God was against them. Both the law and the prophets had often set before them life and death in another sense; life, if they obey the voice of God; death, if they persist in disobedience, *Deu.* xxx. 19. But they had slighted that life which would have made them truly happy, to upbraid them with which the prophet here useth the same expression, ver. 8. "Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death," which speaks not as that, a fair proposal, but a melancholy dilemma, advising them of two evils to choose the least; and that lesser evil, a shameful and wretched captivity, is all

the life now left for them to propose to themselves. He that abides in the city, and trusts to that to secure him, shall certainly die either by the sword without the walls or famine or pestilence within. But he that can so far bring down his spirit, and quit his vain hopes, as to go out and fall to the Chaldeans, his "life shall be given him for a prey," that is, he shall save his life, but with much difficulty and hazard, as a prey is taken from the mighty. It is an expression like that, "He shall be saved, yet so as by fire." He shall escape but very narrowly. Or, he shall have such a surprising joy and satisfaction, in escaping with his life from such a universal destruction, as shall equal theirs that divide the spoil. They thought to have made a prey of the camp of the Chaldeans, as their ancestors did of that of the Assyrians, *Isa.* xxxiii. 23, but they will be sadly disappointed; if by yielding at discretion they can but save their lives, that is all the prey they must promise themselves. Now one would think this advice from a prophet in God's name should have gained some credit with them, and been universally followed; but, for aught appears, there were few or none that took it: so wretchedly were their hearts hardened to their destruction.

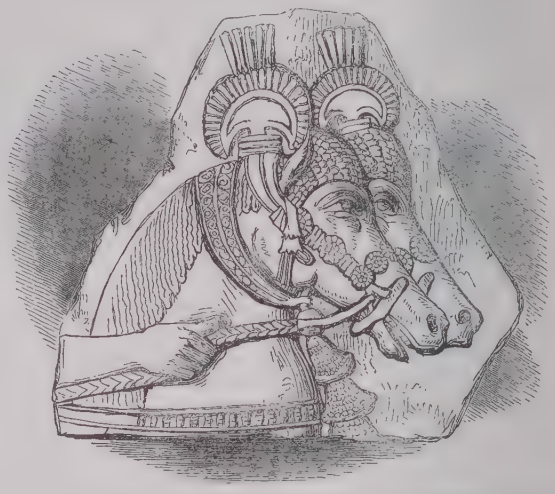
Secondly. He adviseth the king and princes to reform and make conscience of the duty of their place. Because it was the king that sent the message to him, in the reply there shall be a particular word for the house of the king, not to compliment or court them, that was no part of a prophet's business, no, not when they did him the honour to send to him, but to give them wholesome counsel; ver. 11, 12, "Execute judgment in the morning," do it carefully and diligently. Those magistrates that would fill up their place with duty had need rise betimes. Do it quickly, and do not delay to do justice upon appeals made to you, and tire out poor petitioners, as you have done. Do not lie in your beds in a morning, to sleep away the debauch of the night before; nor spend the morning in pampering the body, as those princes, *Eccl.* x. 16, but spend it in the despatch of business. You would be delivered out of the hand of those that distress you, and expect that therein God should do you justice; see then that you do justice to those that apply themselves to you, and "deliver them out of the hand of their oppressors, lest my fury go out like fire" against you in a particular manner, and you fare worst, who think to escape best, because of the evil of your doings. Now, 1. This intimates that it was their neglect to do their duty that brought all this desolation upon the people. It was the evil of their doings that kindled the fire of God's wrath. Thus plainly doth he deal even with the house of the king; for those that would have the benefit of a prophet's prayers must thankfully take a prophet's reproofs. 2. This directs them to take the right method for a national reformation. The princes must begin and set a good example, and then the people will be invited to reform. They must use their power for the punishment of wrong, and then the people will be obliged to reform. He minds them that they are the house of David, and therefore should tread in his steps, who executed judgment and justice to his people. 3. This gives them some encouragement to hope that there may yet be a lengthening of their tranquillity, *Dan.* iv. 27. If any thing will recover their state from the brink of ruin this will.

Thirdly. He shews them the vanity of all their hopes, so long as they continued unreformed, ver. 13, 14. Jerusalem is an inhabitant of the valley, guarded with mountains on all sides, which were their natural fortifications, making it difficult for an army to approach them; it is a rock of the plain, which made it difficult for an enemy to undermine them. These advantages of their situation they trusted to more than to the power and promise of God. And thinking their city by these means to be impregnable, they set the judgments of God at defiance, saying, "Who shall come down against us?" None of our neighbours dare make a descent upon us; or, if they do, "Who shall enter into our habitations?" They had some colour for this confidence, for it appears to have been the sense of all their neighbours that no enemy could force his way into Jerusalem, *Lam.* iv. 12. But those are least safe that are most secure. God soon shews the vanity of that challenge, "Who shall come down against us?" when he saith, ver. 13, "Behold, I am against thee." They had indeed by their wickedness driven God out of their city, when he would have tarried with them as a friend; but they could not by their bulwarks keep him out of their city when he came against them as an enemy. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" but if he be against us, who can be for us to stand us in any stead? Nay, he comes against them not as an enemy, that may lawfully, and with some hope of success, be resisted; but as a judge, that cannot be resisted, for he saith, ver. 14, "I will punish you," by due course of law, "according to the fruit of your doings," that is, according to the merit of them, and the direct tendency of them. That shall be brought upon you which is the natural product of sin. Nay, he will not only come with the anger of an enemy, and the justice of a judge, but with the force of a consuming fire, which has no compassion, as a judge sometimes has, nor spares any thing combustible that comes in its way. Jerusalem is become a forest, in which God will kindle a fire that shall consume all before it; for our God is himself a consuming fire, and who is able to stand in his sight when once he is angry?

CHAPTER XXII.

Upon occasion of the message sent in the foregoing chapter to the house of the king, we have here recorded some sermons which Jeremiah preached at court, in some preceding reigns, that it might appear they had had fair warning long before that fatal sentence was pronounced upon them, and were yet in a way to have prevented it. Here is, I. A message sent to the royal family, as it should seem in the reign of Jehoiakim, relating partly to Jehoahaz, who was carried away captive into Egypt, and partly to Jehoiakim, who succeeded him, and was now upon the throne. The king and princes are exhorted to execute judgment, and are assured that if they did so, the royal family should flourish, but otherwise it should be ruined, ver. 1—10; Jehoahaz, called here Shallum, is lamented, ver. 10—12; Jehoiakim is reproved and threatened, ver. 13—19. II. Another message sent them in the reign of Jehoiakim, *alias* Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim; he is charged with an obstinate refusal to hear, threatened with destruction, and it is foretold that in him Solomon's house should fail, ver. 20—30.

THUS saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,
2 And say,
Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah,
That sittest upon the throne of David,
Thou, and thy servants, and thy people
That enter in by these gates:
3 Thus saith the LORD;
Execute ye judgment and righteousness,
And deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor:
And do no wrong, do no violence
To the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow,
Neither shed innocent blood in this place.
4 For if ye do this thing indeed,
Then shall there enter in by the gates of this house
Kings sitting upon the throne of David,
Riding in chariots and on horses,
He, and his servants, and his people



HEADS AND TRAPPINGS OF ROYAL HORSES—FROM THE ASSYRIAN MARBLES.

5 But if ye will not hear these words,
I swear by myself, saith the LORD,
That this house shall become a desolation.
6 For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah;
Thou *art* Gilead unto me, *and* the head of Lebanon:
Yet surely I will make thee a wilderness,
And cities *which* are not inhabited.
7 And I will prepare destroyers against thee,
Every one with his weapons:
And they shall cut down thy choice cedars,
And cast *them* into the fire.
8 And many nations shall pass by this city,
And they shall say every man to his neighbour,
Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?
9 Then they shall answer,
Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God,
And worshipped other gods, and served them.

Here is, First. Orders given to Jeremiah to go preach before the king. In the chapter before, Zedekiah sent messengers to the prophet, but here the prophet is bidden to go in his own proper person to the house of the king, and demand his attention to the word of the King of kings; ver. 2, "Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah." Subjects must own that where the word of a king is there is power over them; but kings must own that where the word of the Lord is there is power over them. The king of Judah is here spoken to as sitting upon the throne of David, who was a man after God's own heart, as holding their dignity and power by the covenant made with him; let them, therefore, conform to his example, that they may have the benefit of the promises made to him. With the king his servants are spoken to, because a good government depends upon a good ministry as well as a good king.

Secondly. Instructions given him what to preach.

1. He must tell them what was their duty, what was the good which the Lord their God required of them, ver. 3. They must take care, 1st. That they do all the good they can with the power they have. They must do justice in defence of those that were injured, and must "deliver the spoiled out of the hand of their oppressors;" this was the duty of their place, *Ps.* lxxxii. 3. Herein they must be ministers of God for good. 2nd. That they do no hurt with it, no wrong, no violence. That is the greatest wrong and violence which is done under colour of law and justice, and by those whose business it is to punish and protect from wrong and violence. They must do no wrong to the stranger, fatherless, and widow, for these God doth in a particular manner patronise and take under his tuition, *Ex.* xxii. 21, 22.

2. He must assure them that the faithful discharge of their duty would advance and secure their prosperity, ver. 4. There shall then be a succession of kings, an uninterrupted succession upon the throne of David and of his line; these enjoying a perfect tranquillity, and living in great state and dignity, riding on chariots and horses, as before, *ch.* xvii. 25. Note, The most effectual way to preserve the dignity of the government is to do the duty of it.

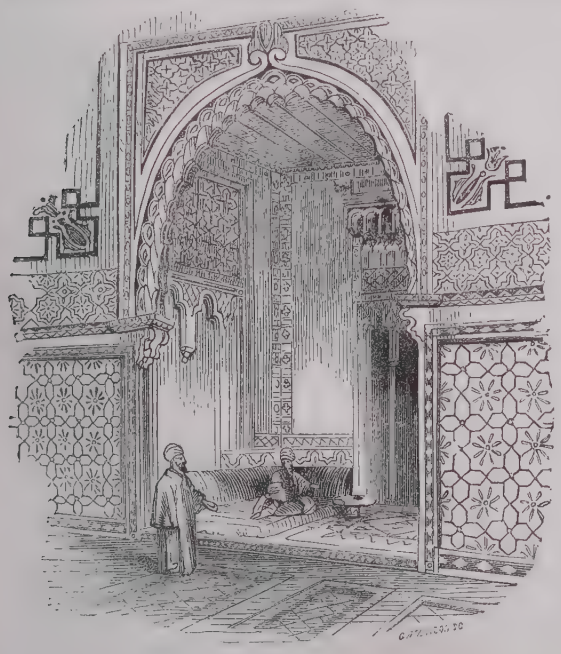
3. He must likewise assure them that the iniquity of their family, if they persisted in it, would be the ruin of their family, though it was a royal family;

ver. 5, "If ye will not hear," will not obey, "this house shall become a desolation," the palace of the kings of Judah shall fare no better than other habitations in Jerusalem. Sin has often been the ruin of royal palaces, though never so stately, never so strong. This sentence is ratified by an oath; "I swear by myself,"—and God can swear by no greater, *Heb.* vi. 12,—that this house shall be laid in ruins. Note, Sin will be the ruin of the houses of princes as well as of mean men.

4. He must shew how fatal their wickedness would be to their kingdom as well as to themselves, to Jerusalem especially, the royal city, ver. 6—9. 1st. It is confessed that Judah and Jerusalem had been valuable in God's eyes, and considerable in their own; "Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon." Their lot was cast in a place that was rich and pleasant as Gilead; Zion was a stronghold, as stately as Lebanon; this they trusted to as their security. But, 2nd. This shall not protect them. The country that is now fruitful as Gilead shall be made a wilderness; the cities that are now strong as Lebanon shall be cities not inhabited; and when the country is laid waste the cities must be dispeopled. See how easily God's judgments can ruin a nation, and how certainly sin will do it.

When this desolating work is to be done, *First.* There shall be those that shall do it effectually; ver. 7, "I will prepare destroyers against thee," I will 'sanctify' them, (so the word is,) I will appoint them to this service, and use them in it. Note, When destruction is designed, destroyers are prepared, and perhaps are in the preparing, and things are working towards the designed destruction, and are getting ready for it long before. And who can contend with destroyers of God's preparing? They shall destroy cities as easily as men fell trees in a forest. "They shall cut down thy choice cedars," and yet when they are down shall value them no more than thorns and briars, they shall "cast them into the fire," for their choicest cedars are become rotten ones, and good for nothing else. *Secondly.* There shall be those who shall be ready to justify God in the doing of it, ver. 8, 9. Persons of many nations, when they pass by the ruins of this city in their travels will ask, "Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this city?" How came so strong a city to be overpowered? so rich a city to be impoverished? so populous a city to be depopulated? so holy a city to be profaned? and a city that had been so dear to God to be abandoned by him? And the reason is so obvious that it shall be ready in every man's mouth; "Ask them that go by the way," *Job* xxi. 29; ask the next man you meet, and he will tell you it was because they changed their gods, which other nations never used to do; they forsook the covenant of Jehovah, their own God, revolted from their allegiance to him, and from the duty which their covenant with him bound them to, and they worshipped other gods, and served them in contempt of him, and therefore he gave them up to this destruction. Note, God never casts any off till they first cast him off. Go, saith God to the prophet, and preach this to the royal family.

10 Weep ye not for the dead,
Neither bemoan him:
But weep sore for him that goeth away·
For he shall return no more,
Nor see his native country.
11 For thus saith the LORD
Touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah,
Which reigned instead of Josiah his father,
Which went forth out of this place;
He shall not return thither any more:
12 But he shall die in the place whither they have led him
And shall see this land no more. [captive,
13 Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness,
And his chambers by wrong;
That useth his neighbour's service without wages,
And giveth him not for his work;
14 That saith,
I will build me a wide house and large chambers,
And cutteth him out windows;
And *it is* cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.
15 Shalt thou reign, because thou closest *thyself* in cedar?
Did not thy father eat and drink,
And do judgment and justice,
And then *it was* well with him?
16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
Then *it was* well *with him:*
Was not this to know me? saith the LORD.
17 But thine eyes and thine heart *are* not
But for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood,
And for oppression, and for violence, to do *it.*
18 Therefore thus saith the LORD
Concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah;
They shall not lament for him, *saying,*
Ah my brother! or, Ah sister!
They shall not lament for him, *saying,*
Ah lord! or, Ah his glory!
19 He shall be buried with the burial of an ass,
Drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.



PAINTED ARABESQUE HALL.—ver. 14.

Kings, though they are gods to us, they are men to God, and shall die like men; so it appears in those verses, where we have a sentence of death passed upon two kings that reigned successively in Jerusalem, two brothers, and both the ungracious sons of a very pious father.

First. Here is the doom of Shallum, who doubtless is the same with Jehoahaz, for he is that "son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned in the stead of Josiah his father," ver. 11, which Jehoahaz did by the act of the people, who made him king though he was not the eldest son, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 30; 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 1. Among the sons of Josiah, 1 *Chr.* iii. 15, there is one Shallum mentioned, and not Jehoahaz. Perhaps the people preferred him before his elder brother because they thought him a more active, daring young man, and fitter to rule; but God soon shewed them the folly of their injustice, and that it could not prosper, for within three months the king of Egypt came upon him, deposed him, and carried him away prisoner into Egypt, as God had threatened, *Deu.* xxviii. 68. It doth not appear that any of the people were taken into captivity with him, but himself only. We have the story, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 34; 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 4. Now here,

1. The people are directed to lament him rather than his father Josiah; "Weep not for the dead," weep not any more for Josiah. Jeremiah had been himself a true mourner for him, and had stirred up the people to mourn for him, 2 *Chr.* xxxv. 25; yet now he will have them to go out of mourning for him, though it was but three months after his death, and to turn their tears into another channel: they must weep sore for Jehoahaz that is gone into Egypt; not that there was any great loss of him to the public, as there was of his father, but that his case was much more deplorable. Josiah went to the grave in peace and honour, was prevented from seeing the evil to come in this world, and removed to see the good to come in the other world; and therefore weep not for him, but for his unhappy son, that is likely to live and die in disgrace and misery, a wretched captive. Note, Dying saints may be justly envied, whilst living sinners are justly pitied. And so dismal perhaps the prospects of the times may be, that tears even for a Josiah, even for a Jesus, must be restrained, that they may be reserved for ourselves and for our children, *Lu.* xxiii. 28.

2. The reason given is, because he shall never return out of captivity, as he and his people expected, but shall die there. They were loath to believe this, therefore it is here repeated again and again, he shall return no more, ver. 10. He shall never have the pleasure of seeing his native country, but shall have the continual grief of hearing of the desolations of it. He is gone forth out of this place, and shall never return, ver. 11; "He shall die in the place whither they have led him captive," ver. 12. This came of his forsaking the good example of his father, and usurping the right of his elder brother. In Ezekiel's lamentation for the princes of Israel this Jehoahaz is represented as a young lion, that soon learned to catch the prey, but was taken and brought in chains to Egypt, and was long expected to return, but in vain: see *Eze.* xix. 3—5.

Secondly. Here is the doom of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him. Whether he had any better right to the crown than Shallum we know not, for, though he was elder than his predecessor, there seems to be another son of Josiah elder than he, called Johanan, 1 *Chr.* iii. 15; but this we know, he ruled no better, and fared no better at last. Here is,

1. His sins faithfully reproved. It is not fit for a private person to say to a king, Thou art wicked; but a prophet, that has a message from God, betrays his trust if he do not deliver it, be it never so unpleasing, even to kings themselves. Jehoiakim is not here charged with idolatry, and probably he had not yet put Urijah the prophet to death, as we find afterwards he did, *ch.* xxvi. 22, 23, for then he would have been told of it here; but the crimes for which he is here reproved are,

1st. Pride and affectation of pomp and splendour, as if all the business of a king were to look great, and to do good were to be the least of his care. He must build him a stately palace, a wide house, and large chambers, ver. 14. He must have windows cut out after the newest fashion, perhaps like sash windows with us; the rooms must be ceiled with cedar, the richest sort of wood. His house must be as well-roofed and wainscoted as the temple itself, or else it will not please him, 1 *Kin.* vi. 15, 16; nay, it must exceed that, for it must be painted with minium, or vermilion, which dyes red, or, as some read it, with indigo, which dyes blue. No doubt it is lawful for princes and great men to build, and beautify, and furnish their houses, so as is agreeable to

their dignity; but he that knows what is in man knew that Jehoiakim did this in the pride of his heart, which makes that to be sinful, exceeding sinful, which is in itself lawful. Those, therefore, that are enlarging their houses, and making them more sumptuous, have need to look well to the frame of their own spirits in the doing of it, and carefully to watch against all the workings of vainglory. But that which was particularly amiss in Jehoiakim's case was, that he did this when he could not but perceive, both by the word of God and by his providence, that Divine judgments were breaking in upon him. He reigned his first three years by the permission and allowance of the king of Egypt, and all the rest by the permission and allowance of the king of Babylon; and yet he that was no better than a viceroy will covet to vie with the greatest monarch in buildings and furniture. Observe how peremptory he is in this resolution, "I will build me a wide house," I am resolved I will, whoever advises me to the contrary. Note, It is the common folly of those that are sinking in their estates to covet to make a fair show. Many have unhumbled hearts under humbling providences, and look most haughty then when God is bringing them down. This is striving with our Maker.

2nd. Carnal security and confidence in his wealth, depending upon the continuance of his prosperity, as if his mountain now stood so strong that it could never be moved. He thought he must reign without any disturbance or interruption, because he had closed himself in cedar, ver. 15, as if that were too fine to be assaulted, and too strong to be broken through, and as if God himself could not for pity give up such a stately house as that to be burned. Thus, when Christ spoke of the destruction of the temple, his disciples came to him to shew him what a magnificent structure it was, *Mat.* xxiii. 38; xxiv. 1. Note, Those wretchedly deceive themselves that think their present prosperity is a lasting security, and dream of reigning, because they are enclosed in cedar. It is but in his own conceit that the rich man's wealth is his strong city.

3rd. Some think he is here charged with sacrilege, and robbing the house of God to beautify and adorn his own house. He 'cuts him out my windows,' so it is in the margin, which some understand as if he had taken windows out of the temple, to put into his own palace, and then painted them (as it follows) with vermilion, that it might not be discovered, but might look of a piece with his own building. Note, Those cheat themselves and ruin themselves at last, that think to enrich themselves by robbing God and his house; and, however they may disguise it, God discovers it.

4th. He is here charged with extortion and oppression, violence and injustice. He built his house by unrighteousness, that is, with money unjustly got, and materials which were not honestly come by, and perhaps upon ground obtained, as Ahab obtained Naboth's vineyard. And, because he went beyond what he could afford, he defrauded his workmen of their wages, which is one of the sins that cries in the ears of the Lord of hosts, *Jas.* v. 4. God takes notice of the wrong done by the greatest of men to their poor servants and labourers, and will repay them in justice that will not in justice pay those whom they employ, but use their neighbours' service without wages. Observe, The greatest of men must look upon the meanest as their neighbours, and be just to them accordingly, and love them as themselves. Jehoiakim was oppressive not only in his buildings, but in the administration of his government; he did not do justice, made no conscience of shedding innocent blood, when it was to serve the purposes of his ambition, avarice, and revenge. He was all for oppression and violence,—not to threaten it only, but to do it,—and when he was set upon any act of injustice, nothing should stop him, but he would go through with it; and that which was at the bottom of all was covetousness, that love of money which is the root of all evil. "Thine eyes and thine heart are not but for covetousness;" they were for that and for nothing else. Observe, In covetousness the heart walks after the eyes; it is therefore called the lust of the eye, 1 *Jno.* ii. 15; *Job* xxxi. 7; it is setting the eyes upon that which is not, *Pr.* xxiii. 5. The eyes and the heart are then for covetousness, when the aims and affections are wholly set upon the wealth of this world, and where they are so the temptation is strong to murder, oppression, and all manner of violence and villany.

5th. That which aggravated all his sins was, that he was the son of a good father, that had left him a good example, if he would but have followed it, ver. 15, 16, "Did not thy father eat and drink?" When Jehoiakim enlarged and enlightened his house it is probable he spoke scornfully of his father, for contenting himself with such a mean and inconvenient dwelling, below the grandeur of a sovereign prince, and ridiculed him as one that had a dull fancy, a low spirit, and could not find in his heart to lay out his money, nor cared for what was fashionable; that should not serve him which served his father. But God, by the prophet, tells him that his father, though he had not the spirit of building, was a man of an excellent spirit, a better man than he, and did better for himself and his family. Those children that despise their parents' old fashions commonly come short of their real excellences. Jeremiah tells him, *First.* That he was directed to do his duty by his father's practice. He did judgment and justice, he never did wrong to any of his subjects, never oppressed them or put any hardship upon them, but was careful to preserve all their just rights and properties. Nay, he not only did not abuse his power for the support of wrong, but he used it for the maintaining of right; he judged the cause of the poor and needy, was ready to hear the cause of the meanest of his subjects, and do them justice. Notice, The care of magistrates must be not to support their grandeur and take their ease, but to do good; not only not to oppress the poor themselves, but to defend those that are oppressed. *Secondly.* That he was encouraged to do his duty by his father's prosperity. *1st.* God accepted him; "Was not this to know me? saith the Lord." Did he not hereby make it to appear that he rightly knew his God and worshipped him, and consequently was known and owned of him? Note, The right knowledge of God consists in doing our duty, particularly that which is the duty of our place and station in the world. *2nd.* He himself had the comfort of it; "Did he not eat and drink" soberly and cheerfully, so as to fit himself for his business, "for strength, and not for drunkenness?" *Eccl.* x. 17; he did eat, and drink, and do judgment, not as perhaps Jehoiakim and his princes did, "drink and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of the afflicted," *Pr.* xxxi. 5. He did eat and drink, that is, God blessed him with great plenty, and he had the comfortable enjoyment of it himself, and gave handsome entertainments to his friends, was very hospitable and very charitable. It was Jehoiakim's pride that he had built a fine house, but Josiah's true praise that he kept a good house. Many times those have least in them of true generosity that have the greatest affection for pomp and grandeur, for, to support the extravagant expense of that, hospitality, bounty to the poor, yea, and justice itself, will be pinched. It is better to live with Josiah in an old-fashioned house and do good, than live with Jehoiakim in a stately house and leave debts unpaid. Josiah did justice and judgment, and then it was well with him, ver. 15, and it is repeated again, ver. 16. He lived very comfortably, his own subjects and all his neighbours respected him, and whatever he put his hand to prospered. Note, While we do well we may expect it will be well with us. This Jehoiakim knew, that his father found the way of duty to be the way of comfort, and yet would not tread in his steps. Note, It should engage us to keep up religion in our day that our godly parents kept it up in theirs, and recommended it to us from their own experience of the benefit of it. They told us that they had found the promises which godliness has of the life that now is made good to them, and that religion and piety is a friend to outward prosperity; so that we are inexcusable if we turn aside from that good way.

2. Here we have Jehoiakim's doom faithfully read, ver. 18, 19. We may suppose it was in the utmost peril of his own life that Jeremiah here foretold the shameful death of Jehoiakim, but, Thus saith the Lord concerning him, and therefore thus saith he. 1st. He shall die unlamented. He shall make himself so odious by his oppression and cruelty, that all about him shall be glad to part with him, and none shall do him the honour of dropping one tear for him, whereas his father, who did judgment and justice, was universally lamented; and it is promised to Zedekiah, that he should be lamented at his death, for he carried himself better than Jehoiakim had done, *ch.* xxxiv. 5. His relations shall not lament him, no, not with the common expressions of grief used at the funeral of the meanest, where they cried, "Ah, my brother! or, Ah, sister!" His subjects shall not lament him, nor cry out as they used to do at the graves of their princes, "Ah, Lord! or, Ah, his glory!" It is sad for any to live so that when they die none will be sorry to part with them. Nay, 2nd. He shall lie unburied. This is worse than the former. Even those that have no tears to grace the funerals of the dead with would willingly have them buried out of their sight; but Jehoiakim shall be "buried with the burial of an ass," that is, he shall have no burial at all, but his dead body shall be cast into a ditch, or upon a dunghill; it shall be drawn or dragged ignominiously, and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. It is said in the story of Jehoiakim, 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 6, that "Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon;" and *Eze.* xix. 9, that he was brought in chains to the king of Babylon. But it is very probable that he died a prisoner before he was carried away to Babylon as was intended; perhaps, died for grief, or in the pride of his heart hastened his own end, and for that reason was denied a decent burial, as self-murderers usually are with us. Josephus saith, that Nebuchadnezzar slew him at Jerusalem, and left his body thus exposed, somewhere at a great distance from the gates of Jerusalem. And it is said, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 6, he slept with his fathers. When he built himself a stately house, no doubt he designed himself a stately sepulchre, but see how he was disappointed. Note, Those that are lifted up with great pride are commonly reserved for some great disgrace, in life or death.

20 Go up to Lebanon, and cry; [sages:
And lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the pas-
For all thy lovers are destroyed.
21 I spake unto thee in thy prosperity;
But thou saidst, I will not hear.
This *hath been* thy manner from thy youth,
That thou obeyedst not my voice.
22 The wind shall eat up all thy pastors,
And thy lovers shall go into captivity:
Surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded
For all thy wickedness. [cedars,
23 O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the
How gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee,
The pain as of a woman in travail!
24 *As* I live, saith the LORD,
Though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah
Were the signet upon my right hand,
Yet would I pluck thee thence; [life,
25 And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy
And into the hand *of them* whose face thou fearest,
Even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon,
And into the hand of the Chaldeans.
26 And I will cast thee out,
And thy mother that bare thee,
Into another country, where ye were not born;
And there shall ye die.
27 But to the land whereunto they desire to return,
Thither shall they not return.
28 *Is* this man Coniah a despised broken idol?
Is he a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure?
Wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed,
And are cast into a land which they know not?
29 O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.
30 Thus saith the LORD,
Write ye this man childless,
A man *that* shall not prosper in his days:
For no man of his seed shall prosper,
Sitting upon the throne of David,
And ruling any more in Judah.

This prophecy seems to have been calculated for the ungracious, inglorious reign of Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him in the government, reigned but three months, and was then carried captive to Babylon, where he lived many years, *ch.* lii. 31. We have in these verses a prophecy,

First. Of the desolations of the kingdom, which were now hastening on apace, ver. 20—23. Jerusalem and Judah are here spoken to, or the Jewish state, as a single person; and we have it here under a threefold character:

1. Very haughty in a day of peace and safety, ver. 21; "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity," spake by my servants the prophets, reproofs, admonitions, counsels, "but thou saidst, I will not hear," I will not heed; "Thou obeyedst not my voice," and wast resolved thou wouldst not, and hadst the front to tell me so. It is common for those that live at ease to live in contempt of the word of God. "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked." This was so much the worse, that they had it by kind; "This has been thy manner from thy youth." They were called transgressors from the womb, *Isa.* xlix. 8.

2. Very timorous upon the alarms of trouble; ver. 20, When thou seest all thy lovers destroyed, when thou findest thine idols unable to help thee, and thy foreign alliances failing thee, thou wilt then go up to Lebanon, and cry, as one undone, and giving up all for lost, cry with a bitter cry; thou wilt cry, Help, help, or we are lost; thou wilt lift up thy voice in fearful shrieks upon Lebanon and Bashan, two high hills, in hope to be heard from thence by the advantage of the rising ground. Thou wilt cry from the passages, from the roads, where thou wilt ever and anon be in distress. Thou wilt cry from Abarim, so some read it, as a proper name, a famous mountain in the border of Moab. Thou wilt cry as those that are in great consternation use to do, to all about thee; but in vain, for, ver. 22, "The wind shall eat up all thy pastors or rulers," that should protect and lead thee, and provide for thy safety. They shall be blasted, and withered, and brought to nothing, as buds and blossoms are by a bleak or freezing wind. They shall be devoured suddenly, insensibly, and irresistibly, as fruits by the wind. "Thy lovers," that thou dependest upon, and hast an affection for, "shall go into captivity," and shall be so far from saving thee, that they shall not be able to save themselves.

3. Very tame under the heavy and lasting pressures of trouble. When there appears no relief from any of thy confederates, and thy own priests are at a loss, "then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness," ver. 22. Note, Many will never be ashamed of their sins, till they are brought by them to the last extremity: and it is well if we get this good by our straits, by them to be brought to confusion for our sins. The Jewish state is here called an inhabitant of Lebanon, because that famous forest was within their border, ver. 23, and all their country was wealthy and well guarded, as with Lebanon's natural fastnesses; but so proud and haughty were they, that they are said to make their nest in the cedars, where they thought themselves out of the reach of all danger, and whence they looked with contempt upon all about them. But "how gracious wilt thou be when pangs come upon thee!" Then thou wilt humble thyself before God, and promise amendment. When thou art overthrown in stony places, thou wilt be glad to hear those words which in thy prosperity thou wouldst not hear, *Ps.* cxli. 6. Then thou wilt endeavour to make thyself acceptable with that God whom before thou madest light of. Note, Many have their pangs of piety, who, when the pangs are over, shew they have no true piety. Some give another sense of it: What will all thy pomp, and state, and wealth avail thee? What will become of it all, or what comfort shalt thou have of it, when thou shalt be in these distresses? No more than a woman in travail, full of pains and fears, can take comfort in her ornaments, while she is in that condition; so Mr. Gataker. Note, Those that are proud of their worldly advantages would do well to consider how they will look when pangs come upon them, and how they will then have lost all their beauty.

Secondly. Here is a prophecy of the disgrace of the king. His name was Jeconiah, but he is here once again called Coniah, in contempt; the prophet shortens, or nicks his name, and gives him, as we say, a nick-name, perhaps to note that he should be despoiled of his dignity, that his reign should be shortened, and the number of his months cut off in the midst. Two instances of dishonour are here put upon him:

1. He shall be carried away into captivity, and shall spend and end his days in bondage. He was born to a crown, but it should quickly fall from his head, and he should exchange it for fetters. Observe the steps of this judgment.

1st God will abandon him, ver. 24. The God of truth saith it, and confirms it with an oath; "Though he were the signet upon my right hand," his predecessors have been so, and he might have been so, if he had carried himself well, but he being degenerated, "I will pluck him thence." The godly kings of Judah had been as signets on God's right hand, near and dear to him,—he had gloried in them, and made use of them as instruments of his government, as the prince doth of his signet ring, or sign manual; but Coniah has made himself utterly unworthy of the honour, and therefore the privilege of his birth shall be no security to him; notwithstanding that he shall be thrown off. Answering to this threatening against Jeconiah is God's promise to Zerubbabel, when he made him his people's guide in their return out of captivity, *Hag.* ii. 23, "I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and make thee as a signet." Those that think themselves as signets on God's right hand must not be secure, but fear lest they be plucked thence.

2nd. The king of Babylon shall seize him. Those know not what enemies and mischiefs they lie exposed to, who have thrown themselves out of God's protection, ver. 25. The Chaldeans are here said to be such as had a spite to Coniah, they sought his life, no less than that they thought would satisfy their rage; and such as he had a dread of, they are those whose face thou fearest; which would make it the more terrible to him to fall into their hands, especially when it was God himself that gave him into their hands. And if God deliver him to them, who can deliver him from them?

3rd. He and his family shall be carried to Babylon, where they shall wear out the many tedious years of their lives in a miserable captivity; "He and his mother," ver. 26; "He and his seed," ver. 28; that is, he and all the royal family, for he had no children of his own when he went into captivity; or, he and the children in his loins; they shall all be cast out to another country, to a strange country, "a country where they were not born," nor such a country as that where they were born, "a land which they know not," in which they have no acquaintance, with whom to converse, or from whom to expect any kindness; thither they shall be carried, from a land where they were entitled to dominion, into a land where they shall be compelled to servitude. But have they no hopes of seeing their own country again? No, "to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return," ver. 27. They carried themselves ill in it when they were in it, and therefore they shall never see it more. Jehoahaz was carried to Egypt, the land of the south, ver. 10, Jeconiah to Babylon, the land of the north, both far remote, the quite contrary way, and must never expect to meet again, nor either of them to breathe their native air again. Those that had abused the dominion they had over others were justly brought thus under the dominion of others. Those that had indulged and gratified their sinful desires by their oppression, luxury, and cruelty, were justly denied the gratification of their innocent desire to see their own native country again. We may observe something very emphatical in that part of this threatening, ver. 26; "In the country where ye were not born, there shall ye die." As there is a time to be born, and a time to die, so there is a place to be born in, and a place to die in. We know where we were born, but where we shall die we know not; it is enough that our God knows. Let it be our care that we die in Christ, and then it will be well with us wherever we die, though it should be in a far country.

4th. This shall render him very mean and despicable in the eyes of all his neighbours. They shall be ready to say, ver. 28, "Is this Coniah a despised, broken idol?" Yes, certainly he is, and much debased from what he was. *First.* Time was when he was dignified, nay, when he was almost deified. The people, who had seen his father lately deposed, were ready to adore him, when they saw him upon the throne; but now he is a despised, broken idol; that when it was whole was worshipped, but when it is rotten and broken is thrown by, and despised, and nobody regards it, or remembers what it has been. Note, What is idolized will first or last be despised and broken; what is unjustly honoured will be justly condemned, and rivals with God will be the scorn of man. Whatever we idolize we shall be disappointed in, and then shall despise. *Secondly.* Time was when he was delighted in, but now he is "a vessel in which is no pleasure," or to which there is no desire, either because grown out of fashion, or because cracked or dirtied, and so rendered unserviceable. Those whom God has no pleasure in will some time or other be so mortified, that men will have no pleasure in them.

2. He shall leave no posterity to inherit his honour. The prediction of this is ushered in with a solemn preface, ver. 29, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Let all the inhabitants of the world take notice of these judgments of God upon a nation and a family that had been near and dear to him, and from thence infer, that God is impartial in the administration of justice. Or, it is an appeal to the earth itself on which we tread, since those that dwell on earth are so deaf and careless, like that, *Isa.* i. 2, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth." God's word, however slighted, will be heard: the earth itself will be made to hear it, and yield to it, when it and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Or, it is a call to men that mind earthly things, that are swallowed up in those things, and are inordinate in the pursuit of them; such have need to be called upon again and again, and a third time, to hear the word of the Lord. Or, it is a call to men considered as mortal, of the earth, and hastening to the earth again; we all are so, earth we are, dust we are, and in consideration of that are concerned to hear and regard the word of the Lord, that, though we are earth, we may be found among those whose names are written in heaven. Now that which is here to be taken notice of is, that Jeconiah is written childless, ver. 30; that is, as it follows, "No man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David." In him the line of David was extinct as a royal line. Some think he had children born in Babylon, because mention is made of his seed being cast out there, ver. 28, and that they died before him. We read in the genealogy, 1 *Chr.* iii. 17, of seven sons of Jeconiah Assir, that is, Jeconiah the captive, of which Salathiel is the first. Some think they were only his adopted sons, and that when it is said, *Mat.* i. 12, "Jeconiah begat Salathiel," no more is meant but that he bequeathed to him what claims and pretensions he had to the government; the rather, because Salathiel is called the son of Neri, *Lu.* iii. 27, of the house of Nathan, ver. 31. Whether he had children begotten, or only adopted, thus far he was childless, that none of his seed ruled as kings in Judah. He was the Augustulus of that empire, in whom it determined. Whoever are childless, it is God that writes them so; and those who take no care to do good in their days cannot expect to prosper in their days.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In this chapter the prophet, in God's name, is dealing his reproofs and threatenings. I. Among the careless princes, or pastors of the people, ver. 1, 2, yet promising to take care of the flock, which they had been wanting in their duty to, ver. 3—8. II. Among the wicked prophets and priests, whose ill character is here given at large in divers instances, especially their imposing upon the people with their pretended inspirations, at which the prophet is astonished, and for which they must expect to be punished, ver. 9—32. III. Among the profane people, who ridiculed God's prophets, and bantered them, ver. 33—40. When all have thus corrupted their way, they must all expect to be told faithfully of it.

WOE be unto the pastors
That destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!
Saith the LORD.
2 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel
Against the pastors that feed my people;
Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away,
And have not visited them:
Behold, I will visit upon you
The evil of your doings, saith the LORD.
3 And I will gather the remnant of my flock
Out of all countries whither I have driven them,
And will bring them again to their folds;
And they shall be fruitful and increase. [them:
4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed
And they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed,
Neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.
5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That I will raise unto David a righteous Branch,
And a King shall reign and prosper,
And shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.
6 In his days Judah shall be saved,
And Israel shall dwell safely:
And this *is* his name whereby he shall be called,
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.
7 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That they shall no more say, The LORD liveth,
Which brought up the children of Israel out of the land
8 But, the LORD liveth, [of Egypt;
Which brought up and which led the seed of the house
of Israel

Out of the north country, and from all countries whither
I had driven them;
And they shall dwell in their own land.

Here is, First. A word of terror to the negligent shepherds. The day is at hand when God will reckon with them concerning the trust and charge committed to them; "Woe be to the pastors," that is, to the rulers, both in church and state, who should be to those they are set over as pastors, to lead them, feed them, protect them, and take care of them. They are not owners of the sheep; God here calls them, "The sheep of my pasture," whom I am interested in, and have provided good pasture for; woe be to those therefore that are commanded to feed God's people, and pretend to do it, but instead of that they scatter the flock, and drive them away by their violence and oppression, and have not visited them, nor taken any care for their welfare, nor concerned themselves at all to do them good. In not visiting them, and doing their duty to them, they did in effect scatter them, and drive them away; the beasts of prey scattered them, and the shepherds are in the fault that should have kept them together. Woe be to them, when God will visit upon them the evil of their doings, and deal with them as they deserve. They would not visit the flock in a way of duty, and therefore God will visit them in a way of vengeance.

Secondly. Here is a word of comfort to the neglected sheep. Though the under shepherds take no care of them, no pains with them, but betray them, the chief Shepherd will look after them; "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up." Though the interests of God's church in the world are neglected by those who should take care of them, and postponed to their own private secular interests, yet they shall not therefore sink. God will perform his promise, though those he employs do not perform their duty.

1. The dispersed Jews shall at length return to their own land, and be happily settled there under a good government, ver. 3, 4. Though there be but a remnant of God's flock left, a little remnant, that has narrowly escaped destruction, he will gather that remnant; will find them out wherever they are, and find out ways and means to bring them back "out of all countries whither I have driven them." It was the justice of God, for the sin of their shepherds, that dispersed them; but the mercy of God shall gather in the sheep, when the shepherds that betrayed them are cut off. They shall be brought to their former habitations, as sheep to their folds, and there they shall be fruitful, and increase in numbers. And though their former shepherds took no care of them, it doth not therefore follow that they shall have no more; if some have abused a sacred office, that is no good reason why it should be deposed; they destroyed the sheep, but "I will set shepherds over them which shall make it their business to feed them." Formerly they were continually exposed, and disturbed with some alarm or other; but now "they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed;" they shall be in no danger from without, in no fright from within. Formerly some or other of them were ever and anon picked up by the beasts of prey; but now none of them shall be lacking, none of them missing. Though the times may have been long bad with the church, it doth not follow that they will be ever so. Such pastors as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were, though they lived not in the pomp that Jehoiakim and Jeconiah did, nor made such a figure, were as great blessings to the people as the other were plagues to them. The church's peace is not bound up in the pomp of her rulers.

2. Messiah the prince, that great and good Shepherd of the sheep, shall in the latter days be raised up to bless his church, and to be the glory of his people Israel, ver. 5, 6. The house of David seemed to be quite sunk and ruined by that threatening against Jeconiah, *ch.* xxii. 30, that none of his seed should ever sit upon the throne of David. But here is a promise which effectually secures the honour of the covenant made with David, notwithstanding; for by it the house will be raised out of its ruins to a greater lustre than ever, and shine brighter far than it did in Solomon himself. We have not so many prophecies of Christ in this book as we had in that of the prophet Isaiah; but here we have one, and a very illustrious one; of him doubtless the prophet here speaks, of him and of no other man. The first words intimate that it would be long ere this promise should have its accomplishment: "The days come," but they are not yet. "I shall see him, but not now;" but all the rest intimate that the accomplishment of it will be glorious.

1st. Christ is here spoken of as a branch from David, the Man, the Branch, *Zec.* iii. 8; his appearance mean, his beginnings small, like those of a bud or sprout, and his rise seemingly out of the earth, but growing to be green, to be great, to be loaded with fruits. A Branch from David's family, when it seemed to be a root in a dry ground, buried, and not likely to revive. Christ is the root and offspring of David, *Rev.* xxii. 16. In him doth the horn of David bud, *Ps.* cxxxii. 17, 18. He is a Branch of God's raising up, he sanctified him, and sent him into the world, gave him his commission and qualifications. He is a righteous Branch, for he is righteous himself, and through him many, even all that are his, are made righteous; as an Advocate, he is Jesus Christ the righteous.

2nd. He is here spoken of as his church's King. This Branch shall be raised as high as the throne of his father David, and there he shall reign and prosper, not as the kings that now were of the house of David, that went backward in all their affairs; no, he shall set up a kingdom in the world, that shall be victorious over all opposition. In the chariot of the everlasting Gospel he shall go forth, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. If God raise him up, he will prosper him, for he will own the work of his own hands; what is the good pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in the hands of those to whom it is committed. He shall prosper, for "he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth," all the world over, *Ps.* xcvi. 13. The present kings of the house of David were unjust and oppressive, and therefore no wonder they did not prosper; but Christ shall, by his Gospel, break the usurped power of Satan, institute a perfect rule of holy living, and, as far as it prevails, make all the world righteous. The effect of this shall be a holy security and serenity of mind in all his faithful, loyal subjects. "In his days," under his dominion, "Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely," that is, all the spiritual seed of believing Abraham, and praying Jacob, shall be protected from the curse of Heaven and the malice of hell; shall be privileged from the arrests of God's law, and delivered from the attempts of Satan's power; shall be saved from sin, the guilt and dominion of it, and then shall dwell safely, and be quiet from the fear of all evil: see *Lu.* i. 74, 75. Those that shall be saved hereafter from the wrath to come may dwell safely now, for "if God be for us, who can be against us?" In the days of Christ's government in the soul, when he is uppermost there, the soul dwells at ease.

3rd. He is here spoken of as "the Lord our Righteousness." Observe, *First.* Who and what he is. As God, he is Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God, speaking his eternity and self-existence; as Mediator, he is our righteousness; by making satisfaction to the justice of God for the sin of man, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness, and so made it over to us in the covenant of grace, that upon our believing consent to that covenant it becomes ours. His being Jehovah, our righteousness, implies that he is so our righteousness as no creature could be; he is a sovereign, all-sufficient, eternal righteousness. All our righteousness has its being from him, and by him it subsists, and we are made the righteousness of God in him. *Secondly.* The profession and declaration of this; "This is the name whereby he shall be called;" not only he shall be so, but he shall be known to be so. God shall call him by this name, for he shall appoint him to be our righteousness. By this name Israel shall call him, every true believer shall call him, and call upon him. That is our righteousness by which, as an allowed plea, we are justified before God, acquitted from guilt, and accepted into favour; and nothing else have we to plead but this, "Christ has died, yea, rather is risen again," and we have taken him for our Lord.

3. This great salvation, which will come to the Jews in the latter days of their state, after their return out of Babylon, shall be so illustrious as far to outshine the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt; ver. 7, 8, "They shall no more say, The Lord liveth that brought up Israel out of Egypt, but, The Lord liveth that brought them up out of the north." This we had before, *ch.* xvi. 14, 15; but here it seems to point more plainly than it did there to the days of the Messiah, and to compare not so much the two deliverances themselves, giving the preference to the latter, as the two states to which the church by degrees grew after those deliverances. Observe the proportions: just four hundred and eighty years after they were come out of Egypt Solomon's temple was built, 1 *Kin.* vi. 1, and at that time that nation, which was so wonderfully brought out of Egypt, was gradually arrived to its height, to its zenith; just four hundred and ninety years (seventy weeks) after they came out of Babylon, Messiah the prince set up the gospel temple, which was the greatest glory of that nation, that was so wonderfully brought out of Babylon: see *Dan.* ix. 24, 25. Now the spiritual glory of the second part of that nation, especially as transferred to the gospel church, is much more admirable and illustrious than all the temporal glory of the first part of it in the days of Solomon; for that was no glory compared with the glory which excelleth.

9 Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets;
All my bones shake;
I am like a drunken man,
And like a man whom wine hath overcome,
Because of the LORD,
And because of the words of his holiness.
10 For the land is full of adulterers;
For because of swearing the land mourneth;
The pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up,
And their course is evil,
And their force *is* not right.
11 For both prophet and priest are profane;
Yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.
12 Wherefore their way shall be unto them
As slippery *ways* in the darkness:
They shall be driven on, and fall therein:
For I will bring evil upon them,
Even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.
13 And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria;
They prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.
14 I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible [thing:
They commit adultery, and walk in lies:
They strengthen also the hands of evildoers,
That none doth return from his wickedness:
They are all of them unto me as Sodom,
And the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.
15 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets;
Behold, I will feed them with wormwood,
And make them drink the water of gall:
For from the prophets of Jerusalem
Is profaneness gone forth into all the land.
16 Thus saith the LORD of hosts,
Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you:
They make you vain:
They speak a vision of their own heart,
And not out of the mouth of the LORD.
17 They say still unto them that despise me,
The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace;
And they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart,
No evil shall come upon you.
18 For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD,
And hath perceived and heard his word?
Who hath marked his word, and heard *it*?

19 Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury,
Even a grievous whirlwind:
It shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.
20 The anger of the LORD shall not return,
Until he have executed, and till he have performed.
The thoughts of his heart:
In the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.
21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran:
I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.
22 But if they had stood in my counsel,
And had caused my people to hear my words,
Then they should have turned them from their evil way,
And from the evil of their doings.
23 *Am* I a God at hand, saith the LORD,
And not a God afar off?
24 Can any hide himself in secret places
That I shall not see him? saith the LORD.
Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.
25 I have heard what the prophets said,
That prophesy lies in my name,
Saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.
26 How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies?
Yea, *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart;
27 Which think to cause my people
To forget my name by their dreams
Which they tell every man to his neighbour,
As their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.
28 The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream;
And he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully.
What *is* the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.
29 *Is* not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD;
And like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces?
30 Therefore, behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD,
That steal my words every one from his neighbour.
31 Behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD,
That use their tongues, and say, He saith.
32 Behold, I *am* against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD,
And do tell them, and cause my people to err
By their lies, and by their lightness;
Yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: [LORD.
Therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the

Here is a long lesson for the false prophets. As none were more bitter and spiteful against God's true prophets than they, so there were none on whom the true prophets were more severe, and justly. The prophet had complained to God of those false prophets, *ch.* xiv. 13, and had often foretold that they should be involved in the common ruin, but here they have woes of their own.

First. He expresseth the deep concern that he was under upon this account, and what a trouble it was to him to see men, that pretended to a Divine commission and inspiration, ruining themselves, and the people among whom they dwelt, by their falsehood and treachery; ver. 9, "My heart within me is broken, I am like a drunken man." His head was in confusion with wonder and astonishment, his heart was under oppression with grief and vexation. Jeremiah was a man that laid things much to heart, and what was any way threatening to his country made a deep impression upon his spirits. He is here in trouble, 1. "Because of the prophets," and their sin, the false doctrine they preached, the wicked lives they lived; especially it filled him with horror, to hear them making use of God's name, and pretending to have their instructions from him. Never was the Lord so abused, and "the words of his holiness," as by these men. Note, The dishonour done to God's name, and the profanation of his holy word, is the greatest grief imaginable to a gracious soul. 2. "Because of the Lord," and his judgments, that by this means are brought in upon us like a deluge. He trembled to think of that ruin and desolation which was coming 'from the face of the Lord,' (so the word is,) 'and from the face of the word of his holiness,' which will be inflicted by the power of God's wrath, according to the threatenings of his word, confirmed by his holiness. Note, Those that have God for them yet cannot but tremble to think of the misery of those that have God against them.

Secondly. He laments the abounding abominable wickedness of the land, and the present tokens of God's displeasure they were under for it; ver. 10, "The land is full of adulterers," it is full both of spiritual and corporal whoredom; they go a whoring from God, and, having cast off the fear of him, no marvel that they abandon themselves to all manner of lewdness. And having dishonoured themselves and their own bodies, they dishonour God and his name by rash and false swearing, because of which "the land mourns." Both perjury and common swearing are sins for which a land must mourn in true repentance, or it will be made to mourn under the judgments of God. Their land mourned now under the judgment of famine; the pleasant places, or rather the pastures, or, as some read it, the habitations of the wilderness, are dried up for want of rain, and yet we see no signs of repentance; they answer not the end of the correction. The tenor and tendency of men's conversations is sinful, their course continues evil, as bad as ever, and they will not be diverted from it. They have a great deal of resolution, but it is turned the wrong way, are zealously affected, but not in a good thing; "their force is not right;" their heart is "fully set in them to do evil," and they are not "valiant for the truth," have not courage enough to break off their evil courses, though they see God thus contending with them.

Thirdly. He chargeth it all upon the prophets and priests, especially the prophets. They are both profane, ver. 11. The priests profane the ordinances of God they pretend to administer, the prophets profane the word of God they pretend to deliver; their converse and all their conversation are profane, and then it is not strange that the people are so debauched. They both play the hypocrite, so some read it; under sacred pretensions they carry on the vilest designs; yea, not only in their own houses, and the ill houses they frequent, but "in my house have I found their wickedness;" in the temple, where the priests ministered, where the prophets prophesied, there were they guilty both of idolatry and immorality. See a woful instance in Hophni and Phinehas, 1 *Sam.* ii. 21. God searcheth his house, and what wickedness is there he will find it out; and the nearer it is to him the more offensive it is. Two things are charged upon them:

1. That they taught people to sin by their examples. He compares them with the prophets of Samaria, the head city of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which had been long since laid waste. It was the folly of the prophets of Samaria, that "they prophesied in Baal," in Baal's name, so Ahab's prophets did, and so they "caused my people Israel to err," to forsake the service of the true God, and to worship Baal, ver. 13. Now the prophets of Jerusalem did not do so, they prophesied in the name of the true God, and valued themselves upon that, that they were not like the prophets of Samaria, who prophesied in Baal; but what the better, when they debauched the nation as much by their immoralities as the other had done by their idolatries? It is a "horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem," that they make use of the name of the holy God, and yet wallow in all manner of impurity; they make nothing of committing adultery, they make use of the name of the God of truth, and yet walk in lies; they not only prophesy lies, but in their common conversation one cannot believe a word they say. It is all either jest and banter or fraud and design. Thus they encourage sinners to go on in their wicked ways; for every one will say, Surely we may do as the prophets do; who can expect that we should be better than our teachers? By this means it is that none doth return from his wickedness; but they all say they shall have peace, though they go on, for their prophets tell them so. By this means Judah and Jerusalem are become as Sodom and Gomorrah, that were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and God looked upon them accordingly as fit for nothing but to be destroyed, as they were, by fire and brimstone.

2. That they encouraged people in sin, by their false prophecies. They made themselves believe there was no harm, no danger in sin, and practised accordingly, and then no marvel they made others believe so too; ver. 16, "They speak a vision of their own heart;" it is the product of their own invention, and agrees with their own inclination, but it is "not out of the mouth of the Lord;" he never dictated it to them, nor doth it agree either with the law of Moses or with what God has spoken by other prophets. They tell sinners it shall be well with them, though they persist in their sins, ver. 18. See here who they are that they encourage—those that despise God, that slight his authority, and have low and mean thoughts of his institutions, and those that "walk after the imagination of their own heart," that are worshippers of idols, and slaves to their own lusts. Those that are devoted to their pleasures put contempt upon their God. Yet see how these prophets caressed and flattered them. They should have been still saying, There is no peace to them that go on in their evil ways; those that despise God shall be lightly esteemed; woe, and a thousand woes to them; but they still said, "Ye shall have peace, no evil shall come upon you." And, which was worst of all, they told them God had said so, so making him to patronise sin, and to contradict himself. Note, Those that are resolved to go on in their evil ways will justly be given up to believe the strong delusions of those that tell them they shall have peace, though they go on.

Fourthly. God disowns all that these false prophets said to soothe people up in their sins; ver. 21, "I have not sent these prophets." They never had any mission from God, they were not only not sent by him on this errand, but they were never sent by him on any errand, he never had employed them in any service or business for him; and as to this matter, whereas they pretended to have instructions from him to assure this people of peace, he declares he never gave them any such instructions; yet they were very forward, they ran; they were very bold, they prophesied without any of that difficulty with which the true prophets sometimes struggled. They said to sinners, "You shall have peace;" but, ver. 18, "Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord?" that is, who of you hath, that are so confident of this? You deliver this message with a great deal of assurance; but have you consulted God about it? No, you never considered whether it be agreeable to the discoveries God has made of himself, whether it will consist with the honour of his holiness and justice, to let sinners go unpunished? You have not perceived and heard his word, nor marked that, you have not compared this with the Scripture; if you had taken notice of that, and of the constant tenor of it, you would never have delivered such a message. The prophets themselves must try the spirits by the touchstone of the law and of the testimony, as well as those to whom they prophesy. But which of those did so that prophesied of peace? That they did not stand in God's counsel, nor hear his word, is proved afterwards; ver. 22, "If they had stood in my counsel," as they pretend, 1. They would have made the Scriptures their standard; "They would have caused my people to hear my words," and would have conscientiously kept close to them. But not speaking according to that rule, it is a plain evidence there is no light in them. 2. They would have made the conversion of souls their business, and would have aimed at that in all their preaching. They would have done all they could to turn people from their evil way in general, and from all the particular evil of their doings. They would have encouraged and assisted the reformation of manners, would have made this their scope in all their preaching, to part between men and their sins; but it appeared this was a thing they never aimed at, but on the contrary to encourage sinners in their sins. 3. They would have had some seals of their ministry. This sense our translation gives it, "If they had stood in my counsel," and the words they preached had been my words, "then they should have turned them from their evil way." A Divine power should have gone along with the word, for the conviction of sinners. God will own his own institutions. Yet this is no certain rule; Jeremiah himself, though God sent him, prevailed with but few to turn from their evil way.

Fifthly. God threatens to punish these prophets for their wickedness. They promised the people peace, and, to shew them the folly of that, God tells them they should have no peace themselves. They were very unfit to warrant the

people, and pass their word to them that no evil shall come upon them, when all evil is coming upon themselves, and they are not aware of it, ver. 12. Because the prophets and priests are profane, "therefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness." They that undertake to lead others, because they mislead them, and know they do so, they shall themselves have no comfort in their way. 1. They pretend to shew others the way, but they shall themselves be in the dark, or in a mist, their light or sight shall fail, so that they shall not be able to look before them, shall have no forecast for themselves. 2. They pretend to give assurance to others, but they themselves shall find no firm footing, their ways shall be to them as slippery ways, in which they shall not go with any steadiness, safety, or satisfaction. 3. They pretend to make the people easy with their flatteries, but they shall themselves be uneasy. They shall be driven, forced forward as captives, or making their escape as those that are pursued; and they shall fall in the way by which they hoped to escape, and so fall into the enemies' hand. 4. They pretend to prevent the evil that threatens others, but God will "bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation," the time fixed for calling them to an account; and such a time is fixed concerning all that do not judge themselves; and it will be an evil time. The year of visitation is the year of recompences. It is farther threatened, ver. 15, "I will feed them with wormwood," or poison, with that which is not only nauseous but noxious, and "make them drink waters of gall," or, as some read it, 'juice of hemlock:' see *ch.* ix. 15. And justly is the cup of trembling put into their hand first; for from the prophets of Jerusalem, that should have been patterns of piety, and every thing that is praiseworthy, even from them, is profaneness gone forth into all the lands. Nothing more effectually debaucheth a nation than the debauchery of ministers.

Sixthly. The people are here warned not to give any credit to these false prophets, for, though they flattered them with hopes of impunity, the judgments of God would certainly break out against them unless they repented, ver. 16. Take notice what God saith, and "hearken not to the words of these prophets;" for you will find in the issue God's word shall stand, and not theirs. God's word will make you serious, but they make you vain, feed you with vain hopes, which will fail you at last. They tell you, no evil shall come upon you; but hear what God saith, ver. 19, "Behold a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury;" they tell you, all shall be calm and serene; but God tells you, there is a storm coming, a whirlwind of the Lord, of his sending, and therefore there is no standing before it; it is a whirlwind raised by Divine wrath, it is gone forth in fury, a wind that is brought forth out of the treasuries of Divine vengeance, and therefore it is a grievous whirlwind, and shall light heavy, with rain and hail upon the head of the wicked, which they cannot avoid, nor find any shelter from. It shall fall upon the wicked prophets themselves that deceived the people, and the wicked people that suffered themselves to be deceived. A horrible temple shall be the portion of their cup, *Ps.* xi. 6. This sentence is bound on as irreversible; ver. 20, "The anger of the Lord shall not return," for the decree is gone forth, God will not alter his mind, nor suffer his anger to be turned away till he have executed the sentence and performed the thoughts of his heart. God's whirlwind, when it comes down from heaven, returneth not thither, but accomplisheth that for which he sent it, *Isa.* lv. 11. This they will not consider now, but "in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly;" 'consider it with understanding,' so the word is, or with consideration. Note, Those that will not fear the threatenings shall feel the execution of them, and will then perfectly understand, what they will not now admit the evidence of, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a just and jealous God. They that will not consider in time will be made to consider when it is too late. "Son, remember."

Seventhly. Divers things are here offered to the consideration of these false prophets for their conviction, that if possible they might be brought to recant their error, and acknowledge the cheat they had put upon God's people.

1. Let them consider that, though they may impose upon men, God is too wise to be imposed upon. Men cannot see through their fallacies, but God can and doth. Here,

1st. God asserts his own omnipresence and omniscience in general, ver. 23, 24. When they told the people that no evil should befall them, though they went on in their evil ways, they went upon atheistical principles,—That the Lord doth not see their sin, that he cannot judge through the dark cloud, that he will not require it; and therefore they must be taught the first principles of their religion, and confronted with the most incontestable self-evident truths. *First.* That though God's throne is prepared in the heavens, and this earth seems to be at a distance from him, yet he is a God here in this lower world which seems to be afar off, as well as in the upper world which seems to be at hand, ver. 23. The eye of God is the same on earth that it is in heaven; here it runs to and fro as well as there, 2 *Chr.* xvi. 9. And what is in the minds of men, whose spirits are veiled in flesh, is as clearly seen by him as what is in the mind of angels, those unveiled spirits above that surround his throne. The power of God is the same on earth among the inhabitants of that that it is in heaven among the armies of that; with us nearness and distance make a great difference both in our observations and our operations: but it is not so with God; to him darkness and light, at hand and afar off, are both alike. *Secondly.* That how ingenious and industrious soever men are to disguise themselves, and their own characters and counsels, they cannot possibly be concealed from God's all-seeing eye; ver. 24, "Can any hide himself in the secret places" of the earth, "that I shall not see him?" Can any hide his projects and intentions in the secret places of the heart, that I shall not see them? No arts of concealment can hide men from the eye of God, nor deceive his judgment of them. *Thirdly.* That he is everywhere present. He doth not only rule heaven and earth, and uphold both by his universal providence, but he fills heaven and earth by his essential presence, *Ps.* cxxxix. 7, &c. No place can either include him or exclude him.

2nd. He applies this to these prophets, that had a notable art of disguising themselves; ver. 25, 26, "I have heard what the prophets said that prophesy lies in my name." They thought he was so wholly taken up with the other world, that he had no leisure to take cognizance of what passed in this; but God will make them know that he knows all their impostures, all the shams they have put upon the world under colour of Divine revelation. What they intended to humour the people with, they pretended to have had from God in a dream, when there was no such thing; this they could not discover. If a man tell me he dreamed so and so, I cannot contradict him, he knows I cannot; but God discovered the fraud. Perhaps the false prophets whispered what they had to say in the ears of such as were their confidants, saying, So and so I have dreamed; but God overheard them. The heart-searching eye of God traced them in all the methods they took to deceive the people, and he cries out, How long? Shall I always bear with them? 'Is it in the heart of these prophets' (so some read it) 'to be ever prophesying lies, and prophesying the deceit of their own heart?' Will they never see what an affront they put upon God, what an abuse they put upon the people, and what judgments they are preparing for themselves?

2. Let them consider that their palming upon people counterfeit revelations, and fathering their own fancies upon Divine inspiration, was the ready way to bring all religion into contempt, and make men turn atheists and infidels; and this was the thing they really intended, though they frequently made mention of the name of God, and prefaced all they said with, "Thus saith the Lord." Yet, saith God, "They think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams;" they designed to draw people off from the worship of God, from all regard to God's laws and ordinances and the true prophets, as their fathers forgot God's name for Baal. Note, The great thing Satan aims at is to make people forget God, and all that whereby he has made himself known; and he has many subtle methods to bring them to this: sometimes he doth it by setting up false gods, (bring men in love with Baal, and they soon forget the name of God;) sometimes by misrepresenting the true God, as if he were altogether such a one as ourselves. Pretences to new revelation may prove as dangerous to religion as the denying of all revelation; and false prophets in God's name, may perhaps do more mischief to the power of godliness than false prophets in Baal's name, as being less guarded against.

3. Let them consider what a vast difference there was between their prophecies and those that were delivered by the true prophets of the Lord; ver. 28, "The prophet that has a dream," which was that way of inspiration that the false prophets most pretended to, if he has a dream, 'let him tell it as a dream,' so Mr. Gataker reads it; let him lay no more stress upon it than men men do upon their dreams, nor expect any more regard to be had to it; let them not say it is from God, nor call their foolish dreams Divine oracles; but let the true prophet that has my word speak my word faithfully, speak it as a truth, so some read it; let him keep close to his instructions, and you will soon perceive a vast difference between the dreams that the false prophets tell and the Divine dictates which the true prophets deliver. He that pretends to have a message from God, whether by dream or voice, let him declare it, and it will easily appear which is of God and which is not. Those that have spiritual senses exercised will be able to distinguish; for "what is the chaff to the wheat?" The promises of peace which these prophets make to you are no more to be compared to God's promises than chaff to wheat. Men's fancies are light, and vain, and worthless, as the chaff which the wind drives away. But the word of God hath substance in it, it is of value, is food for the soul, the bread of life. Wheat was the staple commodity of Canaan, that valley of vision, *Deu.* viii. 8; *Eze.* xxvii. 16. There is as much difference between the vain fancies of men and the pure word of God as between the chaff and the wheat. It follows, ver. 29, "Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord?" Is their word so? Has it the power and efficacy that the word of God has? No, nothing like it; there is no more comparison than between painted fire and real fire. Theirs is like an *ignis fatuus*,—'a deceiving meteor,' leading men into bypaths and upon dangerous precipices. Note, The word of God is like fire. The law was a fiery law, *Deu.* xxxiii. 2; and of the Gospel, Christ saith, "I am come to send fire on the earth," *Lu.* xii. 49. Fire has different effects, according as the matter is on which it works; it hardens clay, but softens wax; it consumes the dross, but purifies the gold: so the word of God is to some "a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death." God appeals here to the consciences of those to whom the word was sent, "Is not my word like fire?" Has it not been so to you? *Zec.* i. 6; speak as you have found. It is compared likewise to "a hammer, breaking the rock in pieces." The unhumbled heart of man is like a rock; if it will not be melted by the word of God as the fire, it will be broken to pieces by it as the hammer. Whatever opposition is given to the word, it will be borne down and broken to pieces.

4. Let them consider, that while they went on in this course God was against them. Three times they are told this; ver. 30—32, "Behold, I am against the prophets." They pretended to be for God, and make use of his name, but were really against him; he looks upon them as they were really, and is against them. How can they be long safe, or at all easy, that have a God of almighty power against them? While these prophets were promising peace to the people, God was proclaiming war against them. They stand indicted here,

1st. For robbery. They "steal my word every one from his neighbour." Some understand it of that word of God which the good prophets preached; they stole their sermons, their expressions, and mingled them with their own, as hucksters mingle bad wares with some good to make them vendible. Those that were strangers to the spirit of the true prophets mimicked their language, picked up some good sayings of theirs, and delivered them to the people as if they had been their own, but with an ill grace; it was not of a piece with the rest of their discourses. "The legs of the lame are not equal; so is a parable in the mouth of fools," *Pr.* xxvi. 7. Others understand it of the word of God, as it was received and entertained by some of the people; they stole it out of their hearts, as the wicked one in the parable is said to steal the good seed of the word, *Mat.* xiii. 19. By their insinuations they diminished the authority, and so weakened the efficacy, of the word of God upon the minds of those that seemed to be under convictions by it.

2nd. They stand indicted for counterfeiting the broad seal. Therefore God is against them, ver. 31, because they use their tongues at their pleasure; in their discourses to the people they say what they themselves think fit, and then father it upon God, pretend they had it from him, and say, He saith it. Some read it, 'They smooth their tongues,' they are very complaisant to the people, and say nothing but what is pleasing and plausible; they never reprove them, or threaten them, but their words are smoother than butter. Thus they ingratiate themselves with them, and get money by them; and they have the impudence and impiety to make God the patron of their lies, they say, He saith so. What greater indignity can be done to the God of truth than to lay the brats of the father of lies at his door?

3rd. They stand indicted as common cheats, ver. 32. "I am against them, for they prophesy false dreams," pretending that to be a Divine inspiration which is but an invention of their own. This is a horrid fraud; nor will it excuse them to say, *Caveat emptor*,—'Let the buyer take care of himself;' and *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur*,—'If people will be deceived let them.' No; it is the people's fault that they err, that they take things upon trust, and do not try the spirits; but it is much more the prophets' fault that they cause God's people to err by their lies, and by their lightness, by the flatteries of their preaching, soothing them up in their sins, and by the looseness and lewdness of their conversation encouraging them to persist in them. *First.* God disowns their having any commission from him; "I sent them not, nor commanded them." They are not God's messengers, nor is what they say his message. *Secondly.* He therefore justly denies his blessing with them. "Therefore they shall not profit this people at all." All the profit they aim at is to make them easy; but they shall not so much as do that, for God's providences will at the same time be making them uneasy. They do not profit this people, so some read it; and more is implied than is expressed: they not only do them no good, but do them a great deal of hurt. Note, Those that corrupt the word of God, while they pretend to preach it, are so far from edifying the church that they do it the greatest mischief imaginable.

33 And when this people,
Or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying,
What *is* the burden of the LORD?

Thou shalt then say unto them, What burden?
I will even forsake you, saith the LORD.
34 And *as for* the prophet, and the priest, and the people,
That shall say, The burden of the LORD,
I will even punish that man and his house.
35 Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour,
And every one to his brother,
What hath the LORD answered?
And, What hath the LORD spoken?
36 And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more:
For every man's word shall be his burden;
For ye have perverted the words of the living God,
Of the LORD of hosts our God.
37 Thus shalt thou say to the prophet,
What hath the LORD answered thee?
And, What hath the LORD spoken?
38 But since ye say, The burden of the LORD;
Therefore thus saith the LORD;
Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD,
And I have sent unto you, saying,
Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD;
39 Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you,
And I will forsake you,
And the city that I gave you and your fathers,
And cast you out of my presence:
40 And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you,
And a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

The profaneness of the people, with that of the priests and prophets, is here reproved in a particular instance, which may seem of small moment in comparison with their greater crimes; but profaneness in a common discourse, and the debauching of the language of a nation, being a notorious evidence of the prevalency of wickedness in it, we are not to think it strange that this matter was so largely and warmly insisted upon here. Observe,

First. The sin here charged upon them is bantering God's prophets, and the dialect they used, and jesting with sacred things. They asked, "What is the burthen of the Lord?" ver. 33, and ver. 34, and they say, "The burthen of the Lord," ver. 38. This was the word that gave great offence to God, that whenever they spake of "the word of the Lord," they called it in scorn and derision, "the burthen of the Lord." Now, 1. This was a word that the prophets much used, and used it seriously, to shew what a weight the word of God was upon their spirits, of what importance it was, and how pressingly it should come upon those that heard it. The words of the false prophets had nothing ponderous in them; but God's words had: those were as chaff, these as wheat. Now the profane scoffers took this word and made a jest and a byword of it; they made people merry with it, that so, when the prophets used it, they might not make people serious with it. Note, It has been the artifice of Satan in all ages to obstruct the efficacy of sacred things by turning them into matter of sport and ridicule. The mocking of God's messengers was the baffling of his messages. 2. Perhaps this word was caught at and reproached by the scoffers as an improper word, newly coined by the prophets, and not used in that sense by any classic author. It was only in this and the last age that "the word of the Lord" was called "the burthen of the Lord," and it could not be found in their lexicons to have that signification. But if men take a liberty, as we see they do, to form new phrases, which they think more expressive and significant in other parts of learning, why not in divinity? But especially we must observe it as a rule, that the Spirit of God is not tied to our rules of speaking. 3. Some think that, because when the word of the Lord is called a "burthen" it signifies some word of reproof and threatening, which would lay load upon the hearers, (yet I know not whether that observation will always hold,) therefore in using this word, "the burthen of the Lord," in a canting way, they reflected upon God as always bearing hard upon them, always teazing them, always frightening them, and so making the word a perpetual uneasiness to them. They make the word of God a burthen to themselves, and then quarrel with the ministers for making it a burthen to them. Thus the scoffers of the latter days, while they slight heaven and salvation, reproach faithful ministers for preaching hell and damnation. Upon the whole we may observe that, how light soever men may make of it, the great God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, those that burlesque sacred things, and, that they may make a jest of Scripture truth and laws, put jests upon Scripture language. In such wit as this I am sure there is no wisdom, and so it will appear at last. "Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." Those that were here guilty of this sin were some of the false prophets, who perhaps came to steal the word of God from the true prophets; some of the priests, who perhaps came to seek occasions against them on which to ground an information; and some of the people who had learned of the profane priests and prophets to play with the things of God. The people would not have affronted the prophet and his God thus, if the priests and the prophets—those ringleaders of mischief—had not shewn them the way.

Secondly. When they are reproved for this profane way of speaking, they are directed how to express themselves more decently. We do not find that the prophets are directed to make no more use of this word; we find it used long after this, *Zec.* ix. 1; *Mal.* i. 1; *Nah.* i. 1; *Hab.* i. 1; and we do not find it once used in this sense by Jeremiah, either before or after. It is true indeed that in many cases it is advisable to make no use of such words and things as some have made an ill use of, and it may be prudence to avoid such phrases, as, though innocent enough, are in danger of being perverted and made stumblingblocks. But here God will have the prophet stick to his rule, *ch.* xv. 19, "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." Do not thou leave off using this word, but let them leave off abusing it. Ye "shall not mention the burthen of the Lord any more" in this profane, careless manner, ver. 36, for it is "perverting the words of the living God," and making an ill use of them, which is an impious, dangerous thing, for consider he is "the Lord of hosts our God." Note, If we will but look upon God as we ought to do in his greatness and goodness, and be but duly sensible of our relation and obligation to him, it may be hoped, we will not dare to affront him by making a jest of his words. It is an impudent thing to abuse him that is the living God, the Lord of hosts, and our God. How then must they express themselves? He tells them, ver. 37, Thus "shalt thou say to the prophet," when thou art inquiring of him, "What hath the Lord answered thee? And what hath the Lord spoken?" And, ver. 35, they must say thus when they inquire of their neighbours. Note, We must always speak of the things of God reverently and seriously, and as becomes the oracles of God. It is a commendable practice to inquire after the mind of God, to inquire of our brethren what they have heard, to inquire of our prophets what they have to say from God; but then, to shew that we do it for a right end, we must do it after a right manner. Ministers may learn here, when they reprove people for what they say and do amiss, to teach them how to say and do better.

Thirdly. Because they would not leave off this ill way of speaking, though they were admonished of it, God threatens them here with utter ruin. They would still say, "The burthen of the Lord," though God had sent to them to forbid them, ver. 38. What little regard have those to the Divine authority that will not be persuaded by it to leave an idle word. But see what will come of it:

1. Those shall be severely reckoned with that thus pervert the words of God, that put a wrong construction on them, and make an ill use of them; and it shall be made to appear what a great provocation it is to God to mock his messengers. "I will even punish that man and his house;" whether he be prophet or priest, or one of the common people, it shall be visited upon him, ver. 34. Perverting God's word, and ridiculing the preachers of it, is a sin that brings ruining judgments upon families, and entails a curse upon a house. Another threatening we have, ver. 36, "Every man's word shall be his own burthen," that is, the guilt of this sin shall be so heavy upon him as to sink him into the pit of destruction. "God shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves," *Ps.* lxiv. 8. God will give them enough of their jest, so that "the burthen of the Lord" they shall have no heart to mention any more, it will be too heavy to make a jest of. They are as the madman that casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, while they pretend to be in sport.

2. The words of God, though thus perverted, shall be accomplished. Do they ask, "What is the burthen of the Lord?" Let the prophet ask them what burthen they mean. Is it this, "I will even forsake you?" ver. 33. This is the burthen that shall be laid and bound upon them, ver. 39, 40, "Behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you." I will leave you, and have no thoughts of returning to you. Those are miserable indeed that are forsaken and forgotten of God, and men's bantering God's judgments will not baffle them. Jerusalem was the city God had taken to himself as a holy city, and then given to them and their fathers; but that shall now be forsaken and forgotten. God had taken them to be a people near to him, but they shall now be cast out of his presence. They had been great and honourable among the nations, but now God will bring upon them an everlasting reproach, and a perpetual shame; both their sin and their punishment shall be their lasting disgrace. It is here upon record to their infamy, and will remain so to the world's end. Note, God's word will be magnified and made honourable when those that mock at it shall be vilified and made contemptible. They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had a general prediction of the utter ruin of Jerusalem, that it should be forsaken and forgotten; which, whatever effects it had upon others, we have reason to think made the prophet himself very melancholy; now in this chapter God encourageth him, by shewing him that, though the desolation seemed to be universal, yet all were not equally involved in it, but God knew how to distinguish, how to separate between the precious and the vile. Some were gone into captivity already with Jeconiah,—over them Jeremiah lamented, but God tells him it should turn to their good; others yet remained hardened in their sins, against whom Jeremiah had a just indignation, but those God tells him should go into captivity, and it should prove to their hurt. To inform the prophet of this, and affect him with it, here is, I. A vision of two baskets of figs, one very good and the other very bad, ver. 1—3. II. The explication of this vision, applying the good figs to those that were already sent into captivity for their good, ver. 4—7; the bad figs to those that should hereafter be sent into captivity for their hurt, ver. 8—10.

THE LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs *were* set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. 2 One basket *had* very good figs, *even* like the figs *that are* first ripe: and the other basket *had* very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. 3 Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. 4 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

5 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel;
Like these good figs, [of Judah,
So will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive
Whom I have sent out of this place
Into the land of the Chaldeans for *their* good.
6 For I will set mine eyes upon them for good,
And I will bring them again to this land:

And I will build them, and not pull *them* down;
And I will plant them, and not pluck *them* up. [LORD:
7 And I will give them an heart to know me, that I *am* the
And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:
For they shall return unto me with their whole heart.
8 And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil;
Surely thus saith the LORD,
So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes,
And the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land,
And them that dwell in the land of Egypt:
9 And I will deliver them to be removed
Into all the kingdoms of the earth for *their* hurt,
To be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse,
In all places whither I shall drive them.
10 And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence,
among them,
Till they be consumed from off the land
That I gave unto them and to their fathers.

This short chapter helps us to put a very comfortable construction upon a great many long ones, by shewing us that the same providence which to some is a savour of death unto death may, by the grace and blessing of God, be made to others a savour of life unto life; and that, though God's people share with others in the same calamity, yet it is not the same to them that it is to others, but is designed for their good, and shall issue in their good; to them it is a correcting rod in the hand of a tender father, while to others it is an avenging sword in the hand of a righteous judge. Observe,

First. The date of this sermon. It was after, a little after, Jeconiah's captivity, ver. 1. Jeconiah was himself a despised, broken vessel, but with him were carried away some very valuable persons, Ezekiel for one, *Eze.* i. 3; many of the princes of Judah then went into captivity, Daniel and his fellows were carried off a little before. Of the people, only the carpenters and the smiths were forced away, either because the Chaldeans needed some ingenious men of those trades, (they had a great plenty of astrologers and stargazers, but a great scarcity of smiths and carpenters,) or because the Jews would have a great loss of them, and would for want of them be unable to fortify their cities, and furnish themselves with weapons of war. Now it should seem there were many good people carried away in that captivity, which the pious prophet laid much to heart, while there were those that triumphed in it, and insulted over those to whose lot it fell to go into captivity. Note, We must not conclude concerning the first and greatest sufferers that they were the worst and greatest sinners; for perhaps it may appear quite otherwise, as it did here.

Secondly. The vision by which this distinction of the captives was represented to the prophet's mind. He saw "two baskets of figs set before the temple," there ready to be offered as first fruits, to the honour of God. Perhaps the priests, being remiss in their duty, were not ready to receive them, and dispose of them according to the law, and therefore Jeremiah sees them standing before the temple. But that which was the significancy of the vision was, that the figs in one basket were extraordinarily good, those in the other basket extremely bad. The children of men are all as the fruits of the fig-tree, capable of being made serviceable to God and man, *Jud.* ix. 11. But some are as good figs, than which nothing more pleasant; others as damaged, rotten figs, than which nothing more nauseous. What creature viler than a wicked man, and what more valuable than a godly man? The good figs were like those that are first ripe, which are most acceptable (*Mic.* vii. 1) and most prized when newly come into season. The bad figs are such as could not be eaten, they were so evil; they could not answer the end of their creation, were neither pleasant nor good for food, and what then were they good for? If God has no honour from men, nor their generation any service, they are even like the bad figs, that cannot be eaten, that will not answer any good purpose. If the salt have lost its savour, it is thenceforth fit for nothing but the dunghill. Of the persons that are presented to the Lord at the door of his tabernacle, some are sincere, and they are very good; others dissemble with God, and they are very bad. Sinners are the worst of men, hypocrites the worst of sinners. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*,—'That which is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst.'

Thirdly. The exposition and application of this vision. God intended by it to raise the dejected spirits of those that were gone into captivity, by assuring them of a happy return, and to humble and awaken the proud and secure spirits of those who continued yet in Jerusalem, by assuring them of a miserable captivity.

1. Here is the moral of the good figs, that were very good, the first ripe. Those represented the pious captives, that seemed first ripe for ruin, for they went first into captivity, but should prove first ripe for mercy, and their captivity should help to ripen them; these are pleasing to God, as good figs are to us, and shall be carefully preserved for use. Now observe here,

1st. Those that were already carried into captivity were the good figs, that God would own. This shews, *First.* That we cannot determine of God's love or hatred by all that is before us. When God's judgments are abroad, they are not always the worst that are first seized by them. *Secondly.* That early suffering sometimes proves for the best to us. The sooner the child is corrected the better effect the correction is likely to have. Those that went first into captivity were as the son whom the father loves and chastens betimes, chastens while there is hope, and it did well; but those that staid behind were like a child long left to himself, who, when afterwards corrected, is stubborn and made worse by it, *Lam* iii. 27.

2nd. God owns their captivity to be his doing. Whoever were the instruments of it, he ordered and directed it; ver. 5, "I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans." It is God that puts his gold into the furnace to be tried; his hand is in a special manner to be eyed in the afflictions of good people. The judge orders the malefactor into the hand of an executioner, but the father corrects the child with his own hand.

3rd. Even this disgraceful, uncomfortable captivity God intended for their benefit, and we are sure his intentions are never frustrated; "I have sent them into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." It seemed to be every way for their hurt, not only as it was the ruin of their estates, honours, and liberties, parted them from their relations and friends, and put them under the power of their enemies and oppressors, but as it sunk their spirits, discouraged their faith, deprived them of the benefit of God's oracles and ordinances; and exposed them to temptations, and yet it was designed for their good, and proved so in the issue as to many of them: "Out of the eater came forth meat." By their afflictions they were convinced of sin, humbled under the hand of God, weaned from the world, made serious, taught to pray, and turned from their iniquity, particularly they were cured of their inclination to idolatry; and thus it was good for them that they were afflicted, *Ps.* cxix. 67, 71.

4th. God promiseth them that he will own them in their captivity. Though they seem abandoned they shall be acknowledged; their scornful relations they left behind will scarce own them, or their kindred to them, but God saith, "I will acknowledge them." Note, The Lord knows them that are his, and will own them in all conditions; nakedness and sword shall not separate them from his love.

5th. God assures them of his protection in their trouble, and a glorious deliverance out of it in due time, ver. 6. Being sent into captivity for their good, they shall not be lost there; but, as when the refiner puts his gold into the furnace, *First.* He has his eye upon it while it is there, and it is a careful eye, to see that it sustain no damage; so "I will set mine eyes upon them for good," to order every thing for the best, that all the circumstances of the affliction may concur to the answering of the great intention of it. *Secondly.* He will be sure to take it out of the furnace again, as soon as the work designed upon it is done; "I will bring them again to this land." They were sent abroad for improvement a while, under a severe discipline; but they shall be fetched back, when they have gone through their trial there, to their father's house. *Thirdly.* He will fashion his gold when he has refined it, will make it a vessel of honour fit for his use; so, when God has brought them back from their trial, he will build them, and make them a habitation for himself; will plant them, and make them a vineyard for himself. Their captivity was to square the rough stones, and make them fit for his building; to prune up the young trees, and make them fit for his planting.

6th. He engageth to prepare them for those temporal mercies he designed for them, by bestowing spiritual mercies upon them, ver. 7. It is this that will make their captivity be for their good; this shall be both the improvement of their affliction and their qualification for deliverance. When our troubles are sanctified to us, then we may be sure they will end well. Now that which is promised is, *First.* That they should be better acquainted with God; they should learn more of God by his providences in Babylon than they had learned by all his oracles and ordinances in Jerusalem; thanks to Divine grace, for, if that had not wrought mightily upon them in Babylon, they would for ever have forgotten God. It is here promised, "I will give them" not so much a head to know me, but "a heart to know me;" for the right knowledge of God consists not in notion and speculation, but in the convictions of the practical judgment, directing and governing the will and affections. "A good understanding have all they that do his commandments," *Ps.* cxi. 10. Where God gives a sincere desire and inclination to know him, he will give that knowledge. It is God himself that gives a heart to know him, else we should perish for ever in our ignorance. *Secondly.* That they should be entirely converted to God; to his will as their rule, his service as their business, and his glory as their end; "They shall return to me with their whole heart." God himself undertakes for them that they shall; and if he turn us we shall be turned. This follows upon the former; for those that have a heart to know God aright will not only turn to him, but turn with their whole heart; for those that are either obstinate in their rebellion or hypocritical in their religion may truly be said to be ignorant of God. *Thirdly.* That thus they should be again taken into covenant with God, as much to their comfort as ever. "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." God will own them as formerly for his people, both in the discoveries of himself to them, his acceptance of their services, and his gracious appearances on their behalf; and they shall have liberty to own him for their God, in their prayers to him, and their expectations from him. Note, Those that have backslidden from God, if they do in sincerity return to him, are admitted as freely as any to all the privileges and comforts of the everlasting covenant, which is herein well ordered, that every transgression in the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant, and that afflictions are not only consistent with, but flowing from, covenant love.

2. Here is the moral of the bad figs. Zedekiah and his princes and partizans yet remain in the land, proud and secure enough, *Eze.* xi. 3. Many were fled into Egypt for shelter, and they thought they had shifted well for themselves and their own safety, and boasted that, though therein they had gone contrary to the command of God, yet they had acted prudently for themselves. Now, as to both these, that looked so scornfully upon those that were gone into captivity, it is here threatened, 1st. That, whereas those that were already carried away were settled in one country, where they had the comfort of one another's society, though in captivity, these should be dispersed, and "removed into all the kingdoms of the earth," where they should have no joy one of another. 2nd. That, whereas those were carried captives for their good, these should be removed into all countries for their hurt. Their afflictions should be so far from humbling them that they should harden them; not bring them nearer to God, but set them at a greater distance from him. 3rd. That, whereas those should have the honour of being owned of God in their troubles, these should have the shame of being abandoned by all mankind; "In all places whither I shall drive them, they shall be a reproach and a proverb;" Such a one is as false and proud as a Jew; Such a one is poor and miserable as a Jew. All their neighbours shall make a jest of them, and of the calamities brought upon them. 4th. That, whereas those should return to their own land, these shall be consumed from that land, never to see it more, and it shall be of no avail to them to plead it was "the land God gave to their fathers," for they had it from God, and he gave it them upon condition of obedience. 5th. That, whereas those were reserved for better times, these were reserved for worse; wherever they are removed, "the sword, and famine, and pestilence," shall be sent after them, shall soon overtake them, and, coming with commission so to do, shall overcome them. God has variety of judgments wherewith to prosecute those that fly from justice, and those that have escaped one may expect another, till they are brought to repent and reform.

Doubtless this prophecy had its accomplishment in the men of that generation; yet, because we read not of any such remarkable difference between those of Jeconiah's captivity and those of Zedekiah's, it is probable this has a typical reference to the last destruction of the Jews by the Romans, in which those of them that believed were taken care of; but those that continued obstinate in unbelief were driven into all countries for "a taunt and a curse," and so they remain to this day.

CHAPTER XXV.

The prophecy of this chapter bears date some time before those prophecies in the chapters next foregoing, for they are not placed in the exact order of time in which they were delivered. This is dated in the first year of Nebuchadrezzar, that remarkable year, when the sword of the Lord began to be drawn and furbished. Here is, I. A

review of the prophecies that had been delivered to Judah and Jerusalem for many years last past, by Jeremiah himself and other prophets, with the little regard given to them, and the little success of them, ver. 1—7. II. A very express threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, by the king of Babylon, for their contempt of God, and their continuance in sin, ver. 8—11. To which is annexed a promise of the deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, after seventy years, ver. 12—14. III. A prediction of the devastation of divers other nations about, by Nebuchadrezzar, represented by a cup of fury put into their hands, ver. 15—28; by a sword sent among them, ver. 29—33; and a desolation made among the shepherds, and their flocks and pastures, ver. 34—38; so that we have here judgment beginning at the house of God, but not ending there.

THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that *was* the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; 2 The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 3 From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that *is* the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. 4 And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them;* but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. 5 They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: 6 And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. 7 Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

We have here a message from God concerning all the people of Judah, ver. 1, which Jeremiah delivered in his name unto all the people of Judah, ver. 2. Note, That which is of universal concern ought to be of universal cognizance; it is fit the word that is concerning all the people, as the word of God is, the word of the Gospel particularly, should be divulged to all in general, and, as far as may be, addressed to each in particular. Jeremiah had been sent to the house of the king, *ch.* xxii. 1, and he took the courage to deliver his message there; here he is sent to all the people, and he takes the pains to deliver his message to them, probably when they were all come up to Jerusalem to worship at some of the solemn fasts; then he had them together, and it was to be hoped then, if ever, they would be well disposed to hear counsel, and receive instruction. This prophecy is dated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and first of Nebuchadnezzar. It was in the latter end of Jehoiakim's third year that Nebuchadnezzar began to reign himself alone, (having reigned some time before in conjunction with his father,) as appears *Dan.* i. 1; but Jehoiakim's fourth year was began before Nebuchadnezzar's first was completed. Now that active, daring, martial prince began to set up for the world's master, God by his prophet gives notice that he is his servant, and what work he intends to employ him in, that his growing greatness, which was so formidable to the nations, might not be construed as any reflection upon the power and providence of God in the government of the world. Nebuchadnezzar should not bid so fair for a universal monarchy, (I should have said, a universal tyranny,) but that God had purposes of his own to serve by him; in the execution of which the world shall see the meaning of God's permitting and ordering a thing that seemed such a reflection on his sovereignty and goodness. Now in this message we may observe,

First. The great pains that had been taken with this people to bring them to repentance, which they are here put in mind of, as an aggravation of their sin, and justification of God in his proceedings against them.

1. Jeremiah for his part had been a constant preacher among them twenty-three years. He began in the thirteenth year of Josiah, who reigned thirty-one years, so that he prophesied about eighteen or nineteen years in his reign, then in the reign of Jehoahaz, and now four years of Jehoiakim's reign. Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, how long we have enjoyed the means of grace; and the longer we have enjoyed them the heavier will our account be, if we have not improved them. "These three years" (these three-and-twenty years) "have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree." All this while, 1st. God had been constant in sending messages to them, as there was occasion for them. From that time to this very day "the word of the Lord has come unto me," for your use. Though they had the substance of the warning sent them already in the books of Moses, yet, because those were not duly regarded as applied, God sent to enforce them, and to make them more particular, that they might be without excuse. Thus God's Spirit was striving with them, as with the old world, *Gen.* vi. 3. 2nd. Jeremiah had been faithful and industrious in delivering those messages. He could appeal to themselves as well as to God and his own conscience concerning this; "I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking." He had declared to them the whole counsel of God; he had taken a great deal of care and pains to discharge his trust in such a manner as might be most likely to win and work upon them. What men are solicitous about, and intent upon, they rise up early to prosecute. It intimates that his head was so full of thoughts about it, and his heart so intent upon doing good, that it broke his sleep, and made him get up betimes to project which way he might take that would be most likely to do them good. He rose early both because he would lose no time and because he would lay hold on and improve the best time to work upon them, when, if ever, they were sober and sedate. Christ came early in the morning to preach in the temple, and the people as early to hear him, *Lu.* xxi. 38. Morning lectures have their advantages. "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning."

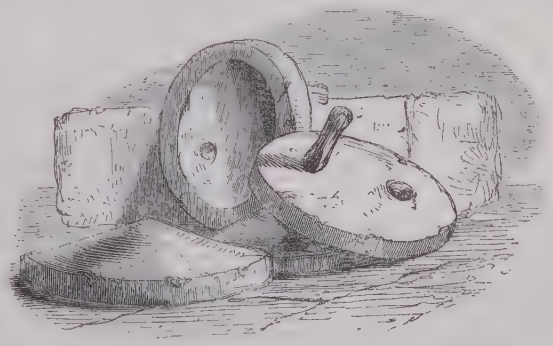
2. Besides him God had sent them other prophets on the same errand, ver. 4. Of the writing prophets, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk were a little before him, and Zephaniah contemporary with him. But, besides those, there were many other of God's servants the prophets that preached awakening sermons which were never published. And here God himself is said to rise early and send them; intimating how much his heart also was upon it, that his people should turn and live, and not to go on and die, *Eze.* xxxiii. 11.

3. All the messages sent them were to the purpose, and much to the same purpose, ver. 5, 6. 1st. They all told them of their faults, their evil way, and the evil of their doings. Those were not of God's sending who flattered them as if there were nothing amiss among them. 2nd. They all reproved them particularly for their idolatry, as a sin that was in a special manner provoking to God; their going after other gods to serve them, and worship them; gods that were the work of their own hands. 3rd. They all called to them to repent of their sins, and reform their lives. This was the burthen of every song, "Turn ye now every one from his evil way." Note, Personal and particular reformation must be insisted on as necessary to a national deliverance. Every one must turn from his own evil way. The street will not be clean unless every one sweep before his own door. 4th. They all assured them that if they did so it would certainly be the lengthening out of their tranquillity. The mercies they enjoyed should be continued to them; "You shall dwell in the land," dwell at ease, dwell in peace in this good land which "the Lord has given you and your fathers." Nothing but sin will turn you out of it, and that shall not if you turn from it. The judgments they feared should be prevented; "Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt." Note, We should never receive from God the evil of punishment if we did not provoke him by the evil of sin. God deals fairly with us, never corrects his children without cause, nor causeth grief to us unless we give offence to him.

Secondly. Yet all was to no purpose. They were not wrought upon to take the right and only method to turn away the wrath of God. Jeremiah was a lively, affectionate preacher, yet they hearkened not to him, ver. 3. The other prophets dealt faithfully with them, but neither did they hearken to them nor incline their ear, ver. 4. That very particular sin which they were told of all other was most offensive to God, and made them obnoxious to his justice, they wilfully persisted in. You "provoke me with the works of your hands to your own hurt." Note, What is a provocation to God will prove in the end hurt to ourselves, and we must bear the blame of it. "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself."

8 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, 9 Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

10 Moreover I will take from them
The voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness,
The voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride,
The sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.



EASTERN MILLSTONES.

11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, *and* an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, *that* I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. 13 And I will bring upon that land all

my words which I have pronounced against it, *even* all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. 14 For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

Here is the sentence grounded upon the foregoing charge; "Because you have not heard my words" I must take another course with you, ver. 8. Note, When men will not regard the judgments of God's mouth they may expect to feel the judgments of his hands; to hear the rod, since they would not hear the word; for the sinner must either be parted from his sin or perish in it. Wrath comes without remedy against those only that sin without repentance. It is not so much men's turning aside that ruins them, as their not returning.

First. The ruin of the land of Judah, by the king of Babylon's armies, is here decreed, ver. 9. God sent his servants the prophets, and they were not heeded, and therefore God will send for his servant the king of Babylon, whom they cannot mock, and despise, and persecute, as they did his servants the prophets. Note, The messengers of God's wrath will be sent against those that would not receive the messengers of his mercy. One way or other God will be heeded, and will make men know that he is the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar, though a stranger to the true God, the God of Israel, nay, and an enemy to him, and afterwards a rival with him, yet in the descent he made upon this country was God's servant, accomplished his purpose, was employed by him, and was an instrument in his hand for the correction of his people. He was really serving God's designs when he thought he was serving his own ends. Justly therefore doth God here call himself the Lord of hosts, ver. 8; for here is an instance of his sovereign dominion not only over the inhabitants, but over the armies of this earth, of which he makes what use he pleaseth. He hath them all at his command: the most potent and absolute monarchs are his servants; Nebuchadnezzar, that is an instrument of his wrath, is as truly his servant as Cyrus that is an instrument of his mercy. The land of Judah being to be made desolate, God here musters his army that is to do it, gathers them together, takes "all the families of the north," if there be occasion for them, leads them on as their commander-in-chief, "brings them against this land," gives them success, not only against Judah and Jerusalem, but "against all the nations round about," that there might be no dependence upon them as allies or assistants against that threatening force. The utter destruction of this and all the neighbouring lands is here described, ver. 9—11. It shall be total; "The whole land shall be a desolation;" not only desolate, but a desolation itself, both city and country shall be laid waste, and all the wealth of both made a prey of. It shall be lasting, even perpetual desolations; they shall continue so long in ruins, and after long waiting there shall appear so little prospect of relief, that every one shall call it perpetual. This desolation shall be the ruin of all their credit among their neighbours; it shall bury their honour in the dust, shall "make them an astonishment and an hissing." Every one will be amazed at them, and hiss them off the stage of action with a just disgrace, for deserting a God that would have been their protection, for impostors that would certainly be their destruction. It will likewise be the ruin of all their comfort among themselves; it shall be a final period of all their joy; "I will take from them the voice of mirth," hang their harps on the willow-trees, and put them out of tune for songs; "I will take from them the voice of mirth," they shall neither have cause for it nor hearts for it. They would not hear the voice of God's word, and therefore "the voice of mirth" shall no more be heard among them. They shall be deprived of food; "the sound of the millstones" shall not be heard, for when the enemy hath seized their stores the sound of the grinding must needs be low, *Eccl.* xii. 4. An end shall be put to all business; there shall not be seen "the light of a candle," for there shall be no work to be done worth candlelight. And, lastly, they shall be deprived of their liberty; "Those nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." The fixing of the time how long the captivity shall last would be of great use not only for the confirmation of the prophecy, when the event (which in this particular could by no human sagacity be foreseen) should exactly answer the prediction, but for the comfort of the people of God in their calamity, and the encouragement of faith and prayer. Daniel, who was himself a prophet, had an eye to it, *Dan.* ix. 2. Nay, God himself had an eye to it, 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 22; for therefore he stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, that the word spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished. "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world," which appears by this, that, when he has thought fit, some of them have been made known to his servants the prophets, and by them to his church.

Secondly. The ruin of Babylon at last is here likewise foretold, as it had been long before by Isaiah, ver. 12—14. The destroyers must themselves be destroyed, and the rod thrown into the fire when the correcting work is done with it. This shall be done when seventy years are accomplished, for the destruction of Babylon must make way for the deliverance of the captives. It is a great doubt when these seventy years commence: some date them from the captivity in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and first of Nebuchadnezzar; others from the captivity of Jehoiakim eight years after. I rather incline to the former, because then these nations began to serve the king of Babylon, and because usually God has taken the earliest time from which to reckon the accomplishment of a promise of mercy, as will appear in computing the four hundred years' servitude in Egypt. And if so, eighteen or nineteen years of the seventy were run out before Jerusalem and the temple were quite destroyed in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. However that be, when the time, the set time to favour Zion, is come, the king of Babylon must be visited, and all the instances of his tyranny reckoned for. Then that nation shall be punished for their iniquity, as the other nations have been punished for theirs. That land must then be a perpetual desolation, such as they had made other lands; for the Judge of all the earth will both do right and avenge wrong, as king of nations, and king of saints. Let proud conquerors and oppressors be moderate in the use of their power and success; for it will come at last to their own turn to suffer; their day will come to fall. In this destruction of Babylon, which was to be brought about by the Medes and Persians, reference shall be had, 1. To what God had said; "I will bring upon that land all my words:" for all the wealth and honour of Babylon shall be sacrificed to the truth of the Divine predictions, and all its power broken, rather than one iota or tittle of God's word shall fall to the ground. The same Jeremiah that prophesied the destruction of other nations by the Chaldeans foretold also the destruction of the Chaldeans themselves; and this must be brought upon them, ver. 13. It is with reference to this very event that God saith, ver. 26, He will "confirm the word of his servant, and perform the counsel of his messengers," *Isa.* xliv. 26. 2. To what they had done; ver. 14, "I will recompense them according to their deeds," by which they transgressed the law of God, even then when they were made to serve his purposes. They had made many nations to serve them, and trampled upon them with the greatest insolence imaginable; but, now the measure of their iniquity is full, many nations and great kings that are in alliance with, and come in to the assistance of, Cyrus king of Persia shall serve themselves of them also; shall make themselves masters of their country, and enrich themselves with their spoils, and make them the footstool by which to mount the throne of a universal monarchy. They shall make use of them for servants and soldiers; "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity."

15 For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. 16 And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. 17 Then took I the cup at the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to drink,

TAKING THE CUP—FROM THE ASSYRIAN MARBLES.

unto whom the LORD had sent me: 18 *To wit,* Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as *it is* this day; 19 Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; 20 And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod, 21 Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, 22 And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which *are* beyond the sea, 23 Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all *that are* in the utmost corners, 24 And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert, 25 And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes, 26 And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which *are* upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. 27 Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you. 28 And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ye shall certainly drink. 29 For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

Under the similitude of a cup going round, which all the company must drink of, is here represented the universal desolation that was now coming upon that part of the world, which Nebuchadnezzar, who had just now began to reign and act, was to be the instrument of, and which should at length recoil upon his own country. The cup in the vision is to be a sword in the accomplishment of it. So it is explained, ver. 16, It is "the sword that I will send among them," the sword of war, that should be irresistibly strong, and implacably cruel. Observe,

First. Whence this destroying sword should come. From the hand of God; it is the sword of Lord, *ch.* xlvii. 6; bathed in heaven, *Isa.* xxxiv. 5; wicked men are made use of as his sword, *Ps.* xvii. 13. It is the wine cup of his fury. It is the just anger of God that sends this judgment. The nations have provoked him by their sins, and they must fall under the tokens of his wrath. These are compared to some intoxicating liquor, which they shall be forced to drink of; as formerly condemned malefactors were sometimes executed by being compelled to drink poison. The wicked are said to drink the wrath of the Almighty, *Job* xxi. 20; *Rev.* xiv. 10. Their share of troubles in this world is represented by the dregs of a cup of red wine full of mixture, *Ps.* lxxv. 8: see *Ps.* xi. 6. The wrath of God in this world is but as a cup, in comparison with the full streams of it in the other world.

Secondly. By whose hand it should be sent them. By the hand of Jeremiah, as the judge set over the nations, (*ch.* i. 10,) to pass this sentence upon them; and by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, as the executioner. What a much greater figure then doth the poor prophet make than what the potent prince makes, if we look upon their relation to God, though in the eye of the world it was the reverse of it. Jeremiah must take the cup at God's hand, and compel the nations to drink it. He foretells no hurt to them, but what God appoints him to foretell; and what is foretold by a Divine authority will certainly be fulfilled by a Divine power.

Thirdly. On whom it should be sent. On all the nations within the verge of Israel's acquaintance, and the lines of their communication. Jeremiah took the cup, and made all the nations to drink of it; that is, he prophesied concerning each of the nations here mentioned, that they should share in this great desolation that was coming. "Jerusalem and the cities of Judah" are put first, ver. 18; for "judgment begins at the house of God," 1 *Pet.* iv. 17; at the sanctuary, *Eze.* ix. 6. Whether Nebuchadnezzar had his eye principally upon Jerusalem and Judah in his expedition or no, doth not appear; probably he had, for it was as considerable as any of the nations here mentioned; however, God had his eye principally to them. And this part of the prophecy was already begun to be accomplished, which that melancholy parenthesis speaks, ("as it is this day,") for in the fourth year of Jehoiakim things were come into a very ill posture, and all the foundations were out of course. "Pharaoh king of Egypt," comes next; because the Jews trusted to that broken reed, ver. 9. The remains of them fled to Egypt; and there Jeremiah particularly foretold the destruction of that country, *ch.* xliii. 10, 11. All the other nations that bordered on Canaan must pledge Jerusalem in this bitter cup, this cup of trembling. The "mingled people," the Arabians, so some; some rovers of divers nations that lived by rapine, so others; "the kings of the land of Uz," joined to the country of the Edomites. The Philistines had been vexatious to Israel; but now their cities and their lords become a prey to this mighty conqueror. "Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Zidon," are places well known to border upon Israel. "The isles beyond or beside the sea," are supposed to be those parts of Phœnicia and Syria that lay on the coast of the Mediterranean sea. Dedan, and the other countries mentioned, ver. 23, 24, seem to have lain upon the confines of Idumea and Arabia the desert. Those of Elam are the Persians, with whom the Medes are joined; now looked upon as inconsiderable, and yet afterwards able to make reprisals upon Babylon for themselves and all their neighbours. "The kings of the north," that lay nearer to Babylon, and others that lay at some distance, will be sure to be seized on, and made a prey of by the victorious sword of Nebuchadnezzar. Nay, He shall push on his victories with such incredible fury and success, that "all the kingdoms of the world" that were then and there known, should become sacrifices to his ambition. Thus Alexander is said to have conquered the world; and the Roman empire is called the world, *Lu.* ii. 1. Or, it may be taken as reading the doom of all the kingdoms of this earth; one time or other they shall feel the direful effects of war. The world has been, and will be, a great cockpit, while men's lusts war as they do in their members, *Jas.* iv. 1; but, that the conquerors may see their fate with the conquered, it concludes, "The king of Sheshach shall drink after them," that is, the king of Babylon, himself, that has given his neighbours all this trouble and vexation, shall at length have it return upon own head. That by Sheshach is meant Babylon is plain from *ch.* li. 41; but whether it was another name of the same city, or the name of another city of the same kingdom, is uncertain. Babylon's ruin was foretold, ver. 12, 13; and upon this prophecy of its being the author of the ruin of so many nations it is very fitly repeated here again.

Fourthly. What should be the effect of it. The desolations which the sword should make in all these kingdoms are represented by the consequences of excessive drinking; ver. 16, "They shall drink, and be moved, and be mad;" and, ver. 27, "They shall be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more." Now this may serve, 1. To make us loath the sin of drunkenness, that the consequences of it are made use of to set forth a most woful and miserable condition. Drunkenness deprives men for the present of the use of their reason, makes them mad. It takes from them, likewise, that which next to reason is the most valuable blessing, and that is health; it makes them sick, and endangers the bones and the life. Men in drink often fall and rise no more. It is a sin that is its own punishment. How wretchedly are they intoxicated and besotted that suffer themselves at any time to be intoxicated, especially to be by the frequent commission of this sin besotted with wine or strong drink! 2. To make us dread the judgment of war. When God sends the sword upon a nation, with warrant to make it desolate, it soon becomes like a drunken man; filled with confusion at the alarms of war; put into a hurry; its counsellors mad, and at their wits' end, staggering in all the measures they take, all the motions they make; sick at heart with continual vexation; vomiting up the riches they have greedily swallowed down, *Job* xx. 15; falling down before the enemy, and as unable to get up again, or do any thing to help themselves, as a man dead drunk is, *Hab.* ii. 16.

Fifthly. The undoubted certainty of it, with the reason given for it; ver. 28, 29, They will refuse to take the cup at thy hand; not only they will be loath that the judgment shall come, but they will be loath to believe that ever it will come. They will not give credit to the prediction of so despicable a man as Jeremiah; but tell them, it is the word of the Lord of hosts: he hath said it, and it is in vain for them to struggle with Omnipotence, "Ye shall certainly drink;" and give them this reason,—it is a time of visitation, it is a reckoning day, and Jerusalem has been called to an account already, "I begin to bring evil on the city that is called by my name;" its relation to me will not exempt it from punishment, "and should ye be utterly unpunished?" No, "If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If they that have some good in them smart so severely for the evil that is found in them, can they expect to escape that have worse evils, and no good found among them? If Jerusalem be punished for learning idolatry of the nations, shall not the nations be punished of whom they learned it? No doubt they shall; "I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth," for they have helped to debauch the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Upon this whole matter we may observe, 1. That there is a God that judgeth in the earth, to whom all the nations of the earth are accountable, and by whose judgment they must abide. 2. That God can easily bring to ruin the greatest nations, the most numerous and powerful, and such as have been most secure. 3. That those who have been vexatious and mischievous to the people of God will be reckoned with for it at last. Many of these nations had, in their turns, given disturbance to Israel, but now comes destruction on them. The year of the Redeemer will come, even the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. 4. That "the burthen of the word of the Lord" will at last become the burthen of his judgments. Isaiah had prophesied long since against most of these nations, *ch.* xiii., &c.; and now at length all his prophecies will have their complete fulfilling. 5. That those who are ambitious of power and dominion commonly become the troublers of the earth, and the plagues of their generation; so Nebuchadnezzar was, so proud of his might that he had no sense of right. These are the men that turn the world upside down, and yet expect to be admired and adored. Alexander thought himself a great prince, when others thought him no better than a great pirate. 6. That the greatest pomp and power in this world is of very uncertain continuance. Before Nebuchadnezzar's greater force kings themselves must yield, and become captives.

30 Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words,
and say unto them,
The LORD shall roar from on high,
And utter his voice from his holy habitation;
He shall mightily roar upon his habitation;
He shall give a shout, as they that tread *the grapes*,
Against all the inhabitants of the earth.
31 A noise shall come *even* to the ends of the earth;
For the LORD hath a controversy with the nations,
He will plead with all flesh; [LORD.
He will give them *that are* wicked to the sword, saith the
32 Thus saith the LORD of hosts,
Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation,
And a great whirlwind shall be raised up
From the coasts of the earth.
33 And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day [earth:
From *one* end of the earth even unto the *other* end of the
They shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried;
They shall be dung upon the ground.
34 Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; [flock:
And wallow yourselves *in the ashes*, ye principal of the
For the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions
are accomplished;
And ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.
35 And the shepherds shall have no way to flee,
Nor the principal of the flock to escape.
36 A voice of the cry of the shepherds, [*heard:*
And an howling of the principal of the flock, *shall be*
For the LORD hath spoiled their pasture.
37 And the peaceable habitations are cut down
Because of the fierce anger of the LORD.
38 He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion:
For their land is desolate
Because of the fierceness of the oppressor,
And because of his fierce anger.

We have in these verses a farther description of those terrible desolations which the king of Babylon, with his armies, should make in all the countries and nations round about Jerusalem. In Jerusalem God hath erected his temple, there were his oracles and ordinances, which the neighbouring nations should have attended to, and might have received benefit by; thither they should have applied themselves for knowledge of God and their duty, and then they might have had reason to bless God for their neighbourhood to Jerusalem; but they, instead of that, taking all opportunities either to debauch or to disturb that holy city, when God came to reckon with Jerusalem, because it learned so much of the way of the nations, he reckoned with the nations, because they learned so little of the way of Jerusalem. They will soon be aware of Nebuchadnezzar's making war upon them; but the prophet is here bidden to tell them that it is God himself that makes war upon them, a God with whom there is no contending.

First. The war is here proclaimed; ver. 30, "The Lord shall war from on high;" not from mount Zion and Jerusalem, (as *Joel* iii. 16, *Am.* i. 2,) but from heaven, from his holy habitation there; for now Jerusalem is one of the places against which he roars, "He shall mightily roar upon his habitation" on earth from that above. He has been long silent, and seemed not to take notice of the wickedness of the nations. The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now "he shall give a shout" as the assailants in battle do "against all the inhabitants of the earth," to whom it shall be a shout of terror, and yet a shout of joy in heaven, as theirs that treads the grapes; for, when God is reckoning with the proud enemies of his kingdom among men, there is a "great voice of much people heard in heaven, saying, Hallelujah," *Rev.* ix. 1; "He roars as a lion," *Am.* iii. 4, 8; as a lion that has "forsaken his covert,

ver. 38; and is going abroad to seek his prey, upon which he roars, that he may the more easily seize it.

Secondly. The manifesto is here published, shewing the causes and reasons why God proclaims this war; ver. 31, "The Lord hath a controversy with the nations," he has just cause to contend with them, and he will take this way of pleading with them. His quarrel with them is, in one word, for their wickedness, their contempt of him, and his authority over them, and kindness to them, "He will give them that are wicked to the sword." They have provoked God to anger, and thence comes all this destruction; it is "because of the fierce anger of the Lord," ver. 37; and again, ver. 38, the "fierceness of the oppressor," or, as it might better be read, 'the fierceness of the oppressing sword,' (for the word is feminine,) is "because of his fierce anger;" and we are sure he is never angry without cause; but who knows the power of his anger?

Thirdly. The alarm is here given and taken. "A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth," so loud shall it roar, so far shall it reach, ver. 31. The alarm is not given by sound of trumpet, or beat of drum, but by a whirlwind, a great whirlwind, storm, or tempest, which shall be raised up from the coasts, the remote coasts of the earth, ver. 32. The Chaldean army shall be like a hurricane, raised in the north, but thence carried on with incredible fierceness and swiftness, bearing down all before it. It is like the whirlwind out of which God answered Job, which was exceeding terrible, *Job* xxxvii. 1; xxxviii. 1; and when the wrath of God thus roars like a lion from heaven, no marvel if it be echoed with shrieks from earth; for who can choose but tremble, when God thus speaks in displeasure: see *Hos.* xi. 10. Now the shepherds shall howl and cry, the kings and princes, and great ones of the earth, the principal of the flock; though they used to be the most courageous and secure, yet now their hearts shall fail them, "They shall wallow themselves in the ashes," ver. 34. Seeing themselves utterly unable to make head against the enemy, and seeing their country, which they have the charge of, and a concern for, inevitably ruined, they shall abandon themselves to sorrow. There shall be "a voice of the cry of the shepherds," and a "howling of the principal of the flock shall be heard," ver. 36. Those are great calamities indeed, that strike such a terror upon the great men, and put them into this mighty consternation. "The Lord hath spoiled their pasture," in which they fed their flock, and out of which they fed themselves; the spoiling of that makes them cry out thus. Perhaps, carrying on the metaphor of a lion roaring, it alludes to the great fright that shepherds are in, when they hear a roaring lion coming towards their flocks, and they have no way to flee, (ver. 35,) for their own security, neither can the principal of their flock escape. The enemy will be so numerous, so furious, so sedulous, and the extent of their armies so vast, that it will be impossible to avoid falling into their hands. Note, As we cannot outface, so we cannot outrun, the judgments of God. This is that for which the shepherds howl and cry.

Fourthly. The progress of this war is here described; ver. 32, "Behold evil shall go forth from nation to nation." As the cup goes round, every nation shall have its share and take its turn, because one doth not take warning by the calamities of another, to repent and reform. Nay, as if this were to be a little representation of the last and general judgment, it shall reach "from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth," ver. 33. The day of vengeance is in his heart, and now his hand shall find out all his enemies, wherever they are, *Ps.* xxi. 8. Note, When our neighbour's house is on fire it is time to be concerned for our own; when one nation is a seat of war every neighbour nation should hear, and fear, and make its peace with God.

Fifthly. The dismal consequences of this war are here foretold. The days of slaughter and dispersions are accomplished; that is, they are fully come, ver. 34, the time fixed in the Divine counsel for the slaughter of some and the dispersion of the rest, which will make the nations completely desolate. Multitudes shall fall by the sword of the merciless Chaldeans, so that the slain of the Lord shall be everywhere found; they are slain by commission from him, and are sacrificed to his justice. The slain for sin are the slain of the Lord; and, to complete the misery of their slaughter, they shall not be lamented in particular, so general shall the matter of lamentation be. Nay, they shall not be gathered up nor buried, for they shall have no friends left to do it, and the enemies shall not have so much humanity in them as to do it; and then they shall be as dung upon the earth, so vile and noisome. And it is well if, as dung manures the earth and makes it fruitful, so these horrid spectacles, which lie as monuments of Divine justice, might be a means to awaken the inhabitants of the earth to learn righteousness. The effect of this war will be the desolation of the whole land that is the seat of it, ver. 38, one land after another. But here are two expressions more that seem to make the case in a particular manner piteous: 1. "Ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel, ver. 34. The most desirable persons among them, that most valued themselves and were most valued, that were looked upon as vessels of honour, shall fall by the sword. Ye shall fall as a Venice glass or a China dish, which is soon broken all to pieces. Even the tender and delicate shall share in the common calamity. The sword devours one as well as another. 2. Even the peaceable habitations are cut down. Those that used to be quiet and not molested, the habitations in which ye have long dwelt in peace shall now be no longer such, but cut down by the war. Or, those that used to be quiet and not molesting any of their neighbours, those that lived in peace, easily, and gave no provocation to any, yet shall not escape. This is one of the direful effects of war, that even those who were most harmless and inoffensive yet suffer hard things. Blessed be God, there is a peaceable habitation above for all the sons of peace, which is out of the reach of fire and sword.

CHAPTER XXVI.

As in the history of the Acts of the Apostles that of their preaching and that of their suffering is interwoven, so it is in the account we have of the prophet Jeremiah; witness this chapter, where we are told, I. How faithfully he preached, ver. 1—6. II. How spitefully he was persecuted for so doing by the priests and the prophets, ver. 7—11. III. How bravely he stood to his doctrine in the face of his persecutors, ver. 12—15. IV. How wonderfully he was protected and delivered by the prudence of the princes and elders, ver. 16—19. Though Urijah, another prophet, was about the same time put to death by Jehoiakim, ver. 20—23, yet Jeremiah met with those that sheltered him, ver. 24.

IN the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the LORD, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word: 3 If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. 4 And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you, 5 To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending *them*, but ye have not hearkened; 6 Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

We have here the sermon that Jeremiah preached, which gave such offence that he was in danger of losing his life for it. It is here left upon record, as it were by way of appeal to the judgment of impartial men in all ages, whether Jeremiah was worthy to die for delivering such a message as this from God, and whether his persecutors were not very wicked and unreasonable men.

First. God directed him where to preach this sermon, and when, and to what auditory, ver. 2. Let not any censure Jeremiah as indiscreet in the choice of place and time, nor say he might have delivered his message more privately, in a corner, among his friends that he could confide in, and that he deserved to smart for not acting more cautiously; for God gave him orders to preach "in the court of the Lord's house," which was within the peculiar jurisdiction of his sworn enemies, the priests, and who would therefore take themselves to be in a particular manner affronted. He must preach this, as it should seem, at the time of one of the most solemn festivals, when persons were come from all the cities of Judah to worship in the Lord's house. These worshippers, we may suppose, had a great veneration for their priests, would credit the character they gave of men, and be exasperated against those whom they put into an ill name, and consequently side with them, and strengthen their hands against Jeremiah. But none of these things must move him or daunt him; in the face of all this danger he must preach this sermon, which, if it were not convincing, would be very provoking. And because the prophet might be in some temptation to palliate the matter, and make it better to his hearers than God had made it to him, to exchange an offensive expression for one more plausible, therefore God chargeth him particularly not to diminish a word, but to speak all the things, nay, and all the words, that he had commanded him. Note, God's ambassadors must keep close to their instructions, and not in the least vary from them, either to please men or to save themselves harmless; they must neither add nor diminish, *Deu.* iv. 2.

Secondly. God directed him what to preach, and it is that which could not give offence to any but such as were resolved to go on still in their trespasses.

1. He must assure them that if they would repent of their sins, and turn from them, though they were in imminent danger of ruin, and desolating judgments were just at the door, yet a stop should be put to them, and God would proceed no farther in his controversy with them, ver. 3. This was the main thing God intended in sending him to them, to try if they would return from their sins, that so God might turn from his anger, and turn away the judgments that threatened them, which he was not only willing but very desirous to do, as soon as he could do it without prejudice to the honour of his justice and holiness. See how God waits to be gracious, waits till we are duly qualified, till we are fit for him to be gracious to, and in the meantime tries a variety of methods to bring us to be so.

2. He must on the other hand assure them that, if they continue obstinate to all the calls God gave them, and would persist in their disobedience, it would certainly end in the ruin of their city and temple, ver. 4—6. 1st. That which God required of them was that they should be observant of what he had said to them, both by the written word and by his ministers; that they should walk in all his law which he set before them, the law of Moses and the ordinances and commandments of it; and that they should hearken to the words of his servants the prophets, who pressed nothing upon them but what was agreeable to the law of Moses that was set before them, as a touchstone to try the spirits by, and by this they were distinguished from the false prophets, who drew them from the law, instead of drawing them to it. The law was what God himself set before them. The prophets were his own servants, and were immediately sent by him to them, and sent with a great deal of care and concern, rising early to send them, lest they should come too late, when their prejudices had got possession and were become invincible. They had hitherto been deaf both to the law and to the prophets, "Ye have not hearkened;" all he expects now is, that at length they should heed what he said, and make his word their rule,—a reasonable demand. 2nd. That which is threatened in case of refusal is, that this city, and the temple in it, shall fare as their predecessors did, Shiloh, and the tabernacle there, for a like refusal to walk in God's laws and hearken to his prophets, then when the present dispensation of prophecy just began in Samuel. Now could a sentence be expressed more unexceptionably? Is not a rule of justice, *ut parium par sit ratio*,—'that those whose causes are the same be dealt with alike?' If Jerusalem be like Shiloh in respect of sin, why should it not be like Shiloh in respect of punishment? Can any other be expected? This was not the first time he had given them warning to this purpose: see *ch.* vii. 12—14. When the temple, which was the glory of Jerusalem, was destroyed, the city was thereby made a curse, for the temple was that which made it a blessing. If the salt lose that savour it is thenceforth good for nothing; it shall be a curse, that is, it shall be the pattern of a curse; if a man would curse any city, he would say, God make it like Jerusalem. Note, Those that will not be subject to the commands of God make themselves subject to the curse of God.

7 So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD. 8 Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded *him* to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the

people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. 9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD. 10 When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD's *house*. 11 Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man *is* worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears. 12 Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. 13 Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you. 14 As for me, behold, I *am* in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. 15 But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

One would have hoped that such a sermon as that in the foregoing verses, so plain and practical, so rational and pathetical, and delivered in God's name, should have wrought upon even this people, especially meeting them now at their devotions, and should have prevailed with them to repent and reform; but, instead of awakening their convictions, it did but exasperate their corruptions, as appears by this account of the effect of it.

First. Jeremiah is charged with it as a crime that he had preached such a sermon, and is apprehended for it as a criminal. The priests, and false prophets, and people heard him speak these words, ver. 7. And it seems they had patience to hear him out, did not disturb him when he was preaching, nor give him any interruption till he had "made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak;" so far they were fairer with him than some of the persecutors of God's ministers have been. They let him say all he had to say, and yet perhaps with an ill design, in hopes to have something worse yet to lay to his charge; but, having no worse, this shall suffice to ground an indictment upon, he hath said, "This house shall be like Shiloh." See how unfair they are in representing his words; he had said in God's name, If ye will not hearken to me, then will I make this house like Shiloh; but they leave out God's hand in the desolation, ("I will make it so,") and their own hand in it, in not hearkening to the voice of God, and charge it upon him that he blasphemed this holy place, (the crime charged both on our Lord Jesus and on Stephen,) that he said, "This house shall be like Shiloh." Well might he complain, as David doth, *Ps.* lvi. 5, "Every day they wrest my words;" and we must not think it strange if we, and what we say and do, be thus misrepresented. And when the accusation was so weakly grounded, no marvel that the sentence passed upon it was unjust, "Thou shalt surely die." What he had said agreed with what God had said, when he took possession of the temple, 1 *Kin.* ix. 6–8, If you shall at all turn from following after me, then this house shall be abandoned; and yet he is condemned to die for saying it. It is not out of any concern for the honour of the people that they appear thus warm, but because they are resolved not to part with their sins, in which they flatter themselves with a conceit that the temple of the Lord will protect them; therefore, right or wrong, "Thou shalt surely die." This outcry of the priests and prophets raised the mob, and all the people were gathered together against Jeremiah in a popular tumult, ready to pull him to pieces; were gathered about him, so some read it; they flocked together, some crying one thing and some another. The people that were at first present were hot against him, ver. 8, but their clamours drew more together, only to see what the matter was.

Secondly. He is arraigned and indicted for it before the highest court of judicature they had. Here, 1. The princes of Judah were his judges, ver. 10; those that filled the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, the elders of Israel. They, hearing of this tumult in the temple, came up from the king's house, where they usually sat near the court, to the house of the Lord, to inquire into this matter, and to see that nothing was done disorderly. They "sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house," and held a court, as it were, by a special commission of *Oyer* and *Terminer*. 2. The priests and prophets were his persecutors and accusers, and were violently set against him; they appealed to the princes and to all the people, to the court and the jury, whether this man be not worthy to die, ver. 11. The corrupt priests and counterfeit prophets have always been the most bitter enemies to the prophets of the Lord; they had ends of their own to serve, which they thought such preaching as this would be an obstruction to. When Jeremiah prophesied in the house of the king concerning the fall of the royal family, (*ch.* xxii. 1,) the court, though very corrupt, bore it patiently, and we do not find they persecuted him for it; but when he comes into the house of the Lord, and toucheth the copyhold of the priests, and contradicts the lies and flatteries of the false prophets, then he is adjudged worthy to die. For the prophets prophesied falsely, and the priests bore rule by their means, *ch.* v. 31. Observe, When Jeremiah is indicted before the princes, the stress of his accusation is laid upon what he had said concerning the city, because they thought the princes would be most concerned about that. But concerning the words spoken, they appeal to the people, Ye have heard what he hath said, let it be given in evidence.

Thirdly. Jeremiah makes his defence before the princes and the people. He doth not go about to deny the words, or to diminish aught from them,—what he hath said he will stand to, though it cost him his life. He owns he had prophesied against this house and this city; but,

1. He asserts that he did this by a good authority, not maliciously or seditiously, not out of any ill will to his country or any disaffection to the government in church or state, but "The Lord sent me" to prophesy thus. So he begins his apology, ver. 12, and so he concludes it, for this is that he resolves to abide by as sufficient to bear him out, ver. 15, "Of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words." As long as ministers keep close to the instructions they have from heaven, they need not fear the opposition they meet with from hell or earth. He pleads he is but a messenger, and if he faithfully deliver his message he must bear no blame; but he is a messenger from the Lord, to whom they were accountable as well as he, and therefore might demand regard. If he speak but what God appointed him to speak he is under the Divine protection, and whatever affront they offer to the ambassador will be resented by the prince that sent him.

2. He shews them that he did it with a good design, and that it was their fault if they did not make a good use of it. It was said not by way of fatal sentence, but of fair warning; if they would take the warning, they might prevent the execution of the sentence, ver. 13. Shall I take it ill of a man that tells me of my danger, while I have an opportunity of avoiding it, and not rather return him thanks for it as the greatest kindness he could do me? I have indeed, saith Jeremiah, prophesied against this city, but if you will now amend your ways and your doings, the threatened ruin shall be prevented, which was the thing I aimed at in giving you the warning. Those are very unjust who complain of ministers for preaching hell and damnation when it is only to keep them from that place of torment, and bring them to heaven and salvation.

3. He therefore warns them of their danger if they proceed against him; ver. 14, As for me, the matter is not great what becomes of me, "behold, I am in your hand;" you know I am, I neither have any power, nor can make any interest, to oppose you, neither is it so much my concern to save my own life; do with me as seemeth meet unto you, if I be led to the slaughter it shall be as a lamb. Note, It becomes God's ministers that are warm in preaching to be calm in suffering, and to carry it submissively to the powers that are over them, though they be persecuting powers. But for themselves, he tells them, it is at their peril if they put him death, "Ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves," ver. 15. They might think that killing the prophet would help to defeat the prophecy, but they would prove wretchedly deceived; it would but add to their guilt and aggravate their ruin. Their own consciences could not but tell them, that if Jeremiah was, as certainly he was, sent of God to bring them this message, it was at their utmost peril if they treated him for it as a malefactor. Those that persecute God's ministers hurt not them so much as themselves.

16 Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man *is* not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God. 17 Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, 18 Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed *like* a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. 19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. 20 And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah: 21 And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt; 22 And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, *namely*, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and *certain* men with him into Egypt. 23 And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his

dead body into the graves of the common people. 24 Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

Here is, First. The acquitting of Jeremiah from the charge exhibited against him. He had, indeed, spoken the words as they were laid in the indictment, but they are not looked upon to be seditious, or treasonable, ill intended, or of any ill tendency, and therefore the court and country agree to find him, Not guilty. The priests and prophets, notwithstanding his rational plea for himself, continued to demand judgment against him; but the princes and all the people are clear in it, that "this man is not worthy to die," ver. 16. For, say they, "he hath spoken to us," not of himself, but "in the name of the Lord our God." And are they willing to own that he did, indeed, speak to them in the name of the Lord, and that that Lord is their God? Why then did they not amend their ways and doings, and take the method he prescribed to prevent the ruin of their country? If they say, his prophecy is from heaven, it may justly be asked, "Why did ye not then believe him?" *Mat.* xxi. 25. Note, It is pity that those who are so far convinced of the Divine original of gospel preaching as to protect it from the malice of others do not submit to the power and influence of it themselves.

Secondly. A precedent quoted to justify them in acquitting Jeremiah. Some of the elders of the land, either the princes before mentioned or the more intelligent men of the people, stood up, and put the assembly in mind of a former case, as is usual with us in giving judgment; for the wisdom of our predecessors is a direction to us. The case referred to is that of Micah; we have extant the book of his prophecy among the minor prophets.

1. Was it thought strange, that Jeremiah prophesied against this city and the temple? Micah did so before him, even in the reign of Hezekiah, that reign of reformation, ver. 18. Micah said it as publicly as Jeremiah had now spoken to the same purpose, "Zion shall be ploughed like a field," the building shall be all destroyed, so that nothing shall hinder but it may be ploughed; "Jerusalem shall become heaps" of ruins, and "the mountain of the house," on which the temple is built, shall be "as the high places of the forest," overrun with briars and thorns. That prophet not only spoke this, but wrote it, and left it upon record; we find it *Mic.* iii. 12. By this it appears, that a man may be, as Micah was, a true prophet of the Lord, and yet may prophesy the destruction of Zion and Jerusalem. When we threaten secure sinners with the taking away of the Spirit of God and the kingdom of God from them, and declining churches with the removal of the candlestick, we say no more than what has been said many a time, and what we have warrant from the word of God to say.

2. Was it thought fit by the princes to justify Jeremiah in what he had done? It was what Hezekiah did before him in a like case. Did Hezekiah, and the people of Judah, that is, the representatives of the people, the commons in parliament, did they complain of Micah the prophet? Did they impeach him, or make an act to silence him, and put him to death? No, on the contrary, they took the warning he gave them. Hezekiah, that renowned prince, of blessed memory, set a good example before his successors; for he feared the Lord, as Noah, who, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, was moved with fear. Micah's preaching drove him to his knees; he besought the Lord to turn away the judgment threatened, and to be reconciled to them. And he found it was not in vain to do so; for the Lord repented him of the evil, and returned in mercy to them, sent an angel, who routed the army of the Assyrians that threatened to have ploughed Zion like a field, ver. 19. Hezekiah got good by the preaching, and then, you may be sure, he would do no harm to the preacher. These elders conclude, that it would be of dangerous consequence to the state, if they should gratify the importunity of the priests and prophets in putting Jeremiah to death: "Thus might we procure great evil against our souls." Note, It is good to frighten ourselves from sin with the consideration of the mischief we shall certainly do to ourselves by it, and the irreparable damage it will be to our own souls.

Thirdly. Here is an instance of another prophet that was put to death by Jehoiakim, for prophesying as Jeremiah had done, ver. 20, &c. Some make this to be urged by the persecutors as a case that favoured the prosecution, a modern case, in which speaking such words as Jeremiah had spoken was adjudged treason. Others think the elders that were advocates for Jeremiah alleged this, to shew that thus they might procure great evil against their souls; for it would be adding sin to sin. Jehoiakim, the present king, had slain one prophet already, let not them fill up the measure by slaying another. Hezekiah that protected Micah, prospered; but did Jehoiakim prosper that slew Urijah? No, they all saw the contrary. As good examples, and the good consequences of them, should encourage us in that which is good, so the examples of bad men, and the bad consequences of them, should deter us from that which is evil. But some good interpreters take this narrative from the historian that penned the book, Jeremiah himself, or Baruch, who, to make Jeremiah's deliverance by means of the princes the more wonderful, takes notice of this passage that happened about the same time; for both were in the reign of Jehoiakim, and this in the beginning of his reign, ver. 1. Observe,

1. Urijah's prophecy. It was "against this city, and this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah." The prophets of the Lord agreed in their testimony; and one would have thought that out of the mouth of so many witnesses the word should have been regarded.

2. The prosecution of him for it, ver. 21. Jehoiakim and his courtiers were exasperated against him, and "sought to put him to death." In this wicked design the king was himself principally concerned.

3. His absconding thereupon. When he heard that the king was become his enemy, and sought his life, "he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt." This was certainly his fault, and an effect of the weakness of his faith, and it sped accordingly. He distrusted God, and his power to protect him, and bear him out; he was too much under the power of that fear of man which brings a snare. It looked as if he durst not stand to what he had said, or was ashamed of his Master. It was especially unbecoming him to flee into Egypt, and so in effect to abandon the land of Israel, and to throw himself quite out of the way of being useful. Note, There are many that have much grace, but they have little courage; that are very honest, but withal very timorous.

4. His execution notwithstanding. Jehoiakim's malice, one would have thought, might have contented himself with his banishment, and it might suffice to have driven him the country; but they are bloodthirsty that hate the upright, *Pr.* xxix. 10; it was the life, that precious life, that he hunted after, and nothing less would satisfy him. So implacable is his revenge, that he sends a party of soldiers into Egypt, some hundreds of miles, and they bring him back by force of arms. It would not sufficiently gratify him to have him slain in Egypt, but he must feed his eyes with the bloody spectacle; they brought him to Jehoiakim, and he "slew him with the sword;" for aught I know, with his own hands. Yet neither did this satisfy his insatiable malice; but he loads the dead body of the good man with infamy, would not allow it the decent respects usually and justly paid to the remains of men of distinction; but cast it into "the graves of the common people," as if he had not been a prophet of the Lord. Thus was the shield of Saul vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Thus Jehoiakim hoped both to ruin his reputation with the people, that no heed might be given to his predictions, and to deter others from prophesying in like manner; but in vain: Jeremiah saith the same. There is no contending with the word of God. Herod thought he had gained his point when he had cut off John Baptist's head, but he found himself deceived, when soon after he heard of Jesus Christ, and said in a fright, "This is John the Baptist."

Fourthly. Here is Jeremiah's deliverance. Though Urijah was lately put to death, and persecutors, when they have tasted the blood of saints, are apt to thirst after more, as Herod, *Acts* xii. 2, 3 yet God wonderfully preserved Jeremiah, though he did not flee as Urijah did, but stood his ground. Ordinary ministers may use ordinary means, provided they be lawful ones, for their own preservation; but they that had an extraordinary mission might expect an extraordinary protection. God raised up a friend for Jeremiah, whose hand was with him; he took him by the hand in a friendly way, encouraged him, assisted him, appeared for him; it was Ahikam the son of Shaphan, one that was minister of state in Josiah's time. We read of him, 2 *Kin.* xxii. 12. Some think Gedaliah was the son of this Ahikam. He had a great interest, it should seem, among the princes, and he used it in favour of Jeremiah, to prevent the farther designs of the priests and prophets against him, who would have had him turned over into the hand of the people; not those people, ver. 16, that had adjudged him innocent, but the rude and insolent mob, whom they could persuade by their cursed insinuations, not only to cry, Crucify him, crucify him, but to stone him to death in a popular tumult; for perhaps Jehoiakim had been so reproached by his own conscience for slaying Urijah, that they despaired of making him the tool of their malice. Note, God can, when he pleaseth, raise up great men to patronise good men; and it is an encouragement to us to trust him in the way of duty, that he has all men's hearts in his hands.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Jeremiah the prophet, since he cannot persuade people to submit to God's precept, and so to prevent the destruction of their country by the king of Babylon, is here persuading them to submit to God's providence, by yielding tamely to the king of Babylon, and becoming tributaries to him, which was the wisest course they could now take, and would be a mitigation of the calamity, and prevent the laying of their country waste by fire and sword; the sacrificing of their liberties would be the saving of their lives. I. He gives this counsel in God's name to the kings of the neighbour nations, that they might make the best of bad; assuring them that there was no remedy, but they must serve the king of Babylon; and yet in time there should be relief, for his dominion should last but seventy years, ver. 1—11. II. He gives this counsel to Zedekiah king of Judah particularly, ver. 12—14; and to his priests and people, assuring them, that the king of Babylon should still proceed against them, till things were brought to the last extremity, and a patient submission would be the only way to mitigate the calamity, and make it easy, ver. 12—22. Thus the prophet, if they would have hearkened to him, would have directed them in the paths of true policy, as well as true piety.

IN the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck, 3 And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; 4 And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; 5 I have made the earth, the man and the beast that *are* upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. 6 And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. 7 And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. 8 And it shall come to pass, *that* the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. 9 There-

fore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: 10 For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. 11 But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

Some difficulty occurs in the date of this prophecy. This word is said to come to Jeremiah, "in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim," ver. 1, and yet the messengers, to whom he is to deliver the badges of servitude, are said, ver. 3, to come to Zedekiah, king of Judah, who reigned not till eleven years after the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign. Some make it an error of the copy, and that it should be read, ver. 1, 'In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah,' for which some negligent scribe, having his eye on the title of the foregoing chapter, wrote Jehoiakim. And if one would admit a mistake anywhere, it should be here; for Zedekiah is mentioned again, ver. 12, and the next prophecy is dated the same year, and said to be in the "beginning of the reign of Zedekiah," *ch.* xxviii. 1. Dr. Lightfoot solves it thus: in the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah is to make these bonds and yokes, and to put them upon his own neck, in token of Judah's subjection to the king of Babylon, which began at that time; but he is to send them to the neighbouring kings afterwards in the reign of Zedekiah; of whose succession to Jehoiakim, and the ambassadors sent to him, mention is made by way of prediction.

First. Jeremiah is to prepare a sign of the general reduction of all these countries into subjection to the king of Babylon, ver. 2. "Make thee bonds and yokes;" yokes, with bonds to fasten them, that the beast may not slip his neck out of the yoke. Into these the prophet must put his own neck, to make them taken notice of as a prophetical representation; for every one would inquire what was the meaning of Jeremiah's yokes. We find him with one on, *ch.* xxviii. 10. Hereby he intimated, that he advised them to nothing but what he was resolved to do himself, for he was none of those that bind heavy burthens on others, which they themselves will not touch with one of their fingers. Ministers must thus lay themselves under the weight and obligation of what they preach to others.

Secondly. He is to send this, with a sermon annexed to it, to all the neighbouring princes. Those are mentioned, ver. 3, that lay next to the land of Canaan. It should seem, there was a treaty of alliance on foot between the king of Judah and all those other kings. Jerusalem was the place appointed for the treaty, thither they all send their plenipotentiaries; and it was agreed that they should bind themselves in a league, offensive and defensive, to stand by one another, in opposition to the growing threatening greatness of the king of Babylon, and to reduce his exorbitant power. A mighty confidence they had in their strength thus united, and were ready to call themselves, the high allies. But when the envoys were returning to their respective masters, with the ratification of this treaty, Jeremiah gives each of them a yoke to carry his master, to signify to him that he must either by consent or compulsion become a servant to the king of Babylon; let him choose what he will. In the sermon upon this sign,

1. God asserts his own indisputable right to dispose of kingdoms as he pleaseth, ver. 5. He is the Creator of all things; he made the earth at first, established it, and it abideth; it is still the same, though one generation passeth away, and another comes; he still, by a continued creation, produceth man and beast upon the ground, and it is by his great power and outstretched arm: his arm has an infinite strength, though it be stretched out. Upon this account he may give and convey a property and dominion to whomsoever he pleaseth. As he hath graciously given the earth to the children of men in general, *Ps.* cxv. 16, so he gives to each their share of it, be it more or less. Note, Whatever any have of the good things of this world it is what God sees fit to give them. We ourselves should therefore be content though we have never so little, and not envy any their share, though they have never so much.

2. He publisheth a grant of all these countries to Nebuchadnezzar. Know all men by these presents, *sciant præsentes et futuri*,—'let those of the present and those of the future age know,'—this is to certify to all whom it may concern, that I have "given all these lands," with all the wealth of them, into the hands of the king of Babylon, even the beasts of the field, whether tame or wild, have I given to him; parks and pastures, they are all his own. Nebuchadnezzar was a proud wicked man, an idolater, and God in his providence gives him this large dominion, these vast possessions. Note, The things of this world are not the best things; for God often gives the largest share of them to bad men, that are rivals with him, and rebels against him. He was a wicked man, and yet what he had he had by Divine grant. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have not any colourable title to eternal happiness may yet have a justifiable title to their temporal good things. Nebuchadnezzar is a very ill man, and yet God calls him his servant, because he employed him as an instrument of his providence for the chastising of the nations, and particularly his own people, and for his service herein he thus liberally repaid him. Those whom God makes use of shall not lose by him, much more will he be found the bountiful rewarder of all those that designedly serve him.

3. He assures them that they should all be unavoidably brought under the dominion of the king of Babylon for a time; ver. 7, "All nations," all these nations, and many others, "shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son." His son was Evil-merodach, and his son's son, Belshazzar, in whom his kingdom ceased; then the time of reckoning with his land came, when the tables should be turned, and many nations and great kings incorporated in the empire of the Medes and Persians shall serve themselves of him, as before. *ch.* xxv. 14. Thus Adonibezek was trampled upon himself, as he had trampled on other kings.

4. He threatens those with military execution that stood out, and would not submit to the king of Babylon, ver. 8. That nation that will not put their neck under his yoke, I will punish with sword and famine, with one judgment after another, till it is consumed by his hand. Nebuchadnezzar was very unjust and barbarous in invading the rights and liberties of his neighbours thus, and forcing them into a subjection to him; yet God had just and holy ends in permitting it, to punish these nations for their idolatry and gross immoralities. They that would not serve the God that made them were justly made to serve their enemies that sought to ruin them.

5. He shews them the vanity of all the hopes they fed themselves with, that they should preserve their liberties, ver. 9, 10. These nations had their prophets too, that pretended to foretell future events by the stars, or by dreams, or enchantments; and they, to please their patrons, and because they would themselves have it so, flattered them with assurances that they should not serve the king of Babylon. Thus they designed to animate them to a vigorous resistance; and, though they had no ground for it, they hoped hereby to do them service. But he tells them it would prove to their destruction; for by resisting they would provoke the conqueror to deal severely with them, to remove them, and drive them out into a miserable captivity, in which they should all be lost, and buried in oblivion. Particular prophecies against these nations that bordered on Israel severally, the ruin of which is here foretold in the general, we shall meet with, *ch.* xlviii.; xlix.; *Eze.* xxv.; which had the same accomplishment with this here. Note, When God judgeth, he will overcome.

6. He puts them in a fair way to prevent their destruction, by a quiet and easy submission, ver. 11. The nations that will be content to serve the king of Babylon, and pay him tribute for seventy years, (ten apprenticeships,) "those will I let remain still in their own land." They that will bend shall not break. Perhaps the dominion of the king of Babylon may bear no harder upon them than that of their own kings had done. It is many times more a point of honour than true wisdom to prefer liberty before life. It is not mentioned to the disgrace of Issachar, that because he saw rest was good, and the land pleasant, that he might peaceably enjoy it, he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute, *Gen.* xlix. 14, 15, as these here are advised to do; Serve the king of Babylon, and you shall till the land, and dwell therein. Some would condemn this as the evidence of a mean spirit, but the prophet recommends it as that of a meek spirit that yields to necessity, and by a quiet submission to the hardest turns of providence makes the best of bad. It is better to do so than by struggling make it worse.

———*Levius fit patientia*
Quicquid corrigere est nefas.—Hor.

———'When we need must bear,
Enduring patience makes the burthen light.'—*Creech.*

Many might have prevented destroying providences, by humbling themselves under humbling providences. It is better take up a lighter cross in our way than pull a heavier on our own head.

12 I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. 13 Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 14 Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. 15 For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you. 16 Also I spake to the priests and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORD's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. 17 Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste? 18 But if they *be* prophets, and if the word of the LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and *in* the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon. 19 For thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city, 20 Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; 21 Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that

remain *in* the house of the LORD, and *in* the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem; 22 They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

What was said to all the nations is here with a particular tenderness applied to the nation of the Jews, for whom Jeremiah was sensibly concerned. The case at present stood thus: Judah and Jerusalem had often contested with the king of Babylon, and still were worsted; many both of their valuable persons and their valuable goods were carried to Babylon already, and some of the vessels of the Lord's house particularly. Now how this struggle would issue, was the question. They had those among them at Jerusalem, who pretended to be prophets, that bade them hold out, and they should in a little time be too hard for the king of Babylon, and recover all they had lost. Now Jeremiah is sent to bid them yield, and knock under, for, instead of recovering what they had lost, they should otherwise lose all that remained; and to press them to this is the scope of these verses.

First. Jeremiah humbly addresseth the king of Judah, to persuade him to surrender to the king of Babylon. His act would be the people's, and would determine them; and therefore he speaks to him as to them all, ver. 12, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and live." Is it their wisdom to submit to the heavy iron yoke of a cruel tyrant, that they may secure the lives of their bodies? And is it not much more our wisdom to submit to the sweet and easy yoke of our rightful Lord and Master Jesus Christ, that we may secure the lives of our souls? Bring down your spirits to repentance and faith, and that is the way to bring up your spirits to heaven and glory. And with much more cogency and compassion may we expostulate with perishing souls than Jeremiah here expostulates with a perishing people, "Why will ye die by the sword and the famine?" miserable deaths, which you inevitably run yourselves upon, under pretence of avoiding miserable lives. What God had spoken in general, of all those that would not submit to the king of Babylon, he would have them to apply to themselves, and be afraid of. It were well if sinners would in like manner be afraid of the destruction threatened against all those that will not have Christ to reign over them, and reason thus with themselves, Why should we die the second death, which is a thousand times worse than that by sword and famine, when we might submit and live?

Secondly. He addresseth himself likewise to the priests and the people, ver. 16; to persuade them to serve the king of Babylon, that they might live, and might prevent the desolation of the city, ver. 17. Wherefore should it be laid waste, as certainly it will be, if you stand it out? The priests had been Jeremiah's enemies, and had sought his life to destroy it, yet he approves himself their friend, and seeks their lives to preserve and secure them; which is an example to us to render good for evil; when the bloodthirsty hate the upright, yet the just seek his soul, and the welfare of it, *Pr.* xxix. 10. The matter was far gone here; they were upon the brink of ruin, which they had not been brought to if they would have taken Jeremiah's counsel, yet he continues his friendly admonitions to them, to save the last stake, and manage that wisely, and now at length in this their day to understand the things that belonged to their peace, when they had but one day to turn them in.

Thirdly. In both these addresses he warns them against giving credit to the false prophets, that rocked them asleep in their security, because they saw they loved to slumber. "Hearken not to the words of the prophets," ver. 14; "your prophets," ver. 16. They are not God's prophets, he never sent them; they do not serve him, nor seek to please him; they are yours, for they say what you would have them to say, and aim at nothing but to please you. Two things their prophets flattered them into the belief of:

1. That the power which the king of Babylon had gained over them should now shortly be broken. They said, ver. 14, "Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon." You need not submit voluntarily, for you shall not be compelled to submit. This they prophesied in the name of the Lord, ver. 15; as if God had sent them to the people on this errand, in kindness to them, that they might not disparage themselves by an inglorious surrender; but it was a lie. They said God sent them, but that was false, he disowns it; "I have not sent them, saith the Lord." They said they should never be brought into subjection to the king of Babylon; but that was false too, the event proved it so. They said, to hold out to the last would be the way to secure themselves and their city; but that was false, for it would certainly end in their being driven out, and perishing. So that it was all a lie from first to last; and the prophets that deceived the people with these lies did in the issue but deceive themselves, the blind leaders and the blind followers fell together into the ditch; That "ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you;" who will be so far from warranting your security, that they cannot secure themselves. Note, They that encourage sinners to go on in their sinful ways will in the end perish with them.

2. They prophesied that the vessels of the temple, which the king of Babylon had already carried away, should now shortly be brought back, ver. 16. This they fed the priests with the hopes of, knowing how acceptable it would be to them, who loved the gold of the temple better than the temple that sanctified the gold. The vessels were taken away when Jeconiah was carried captive into Babylon, ver. 20. We have the story, and it is a melancholy one, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 13—15; 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 10. All the goodly vessels, that is, all the vessels of gold, that were in the house of the Lord, with all the treasures, were taken as prey, and brought to Babylon. This was grievous to them above any thing, for the temple was their pride and confidence, and the stripping of that was too plain an indication of that which the true prophet told them, that their God was departed from them. Their false prophets therefore had no other way to make them easy but by telling them that the king of Babylon should be forced to restore them in a little while. Now here,

1st. Jeremiah bids them think of preserving the vessels that remained, by their prayers, rather than of bringing back those that were gone, by their prophecies; ver. 18, "If they be prophets," as they pretend, and "if the word of the Lord be with them," if they have any intercourse with heaven, and any interest there, let them improve it, by stopping the progress of the judgment. Let them step into the gap, and stand with the censer between the living and the dead, between that which is carried away and that which remains, that the plague may be stayed. Let them make intercession with the Lord of hosts, that the vessels that are left go not after the rest. *First.* Instead of prophesying, let them pray. Note, Prophets must be praying men; by being much in prayer, they must make it to appear that they keep up a correspondence with heaven. We cannot think that those do as prophets ever hear thence who do not frequently by prayer send thither. By praying for the safety and prosperity of the sanctuary, they must make it appear that, as becomes prophets, they are of a public spirit; and by the success of their prayers it will appear that God favours them. *Secondly.* Instead of being concerned for the retrieving of what they had lost, they must bestir themselves for the securing of what was left, and take it as a great favour if they can gain that point. When God's judgments are abroad, we must not seek great things, but be thankful for a little.

2nd. He assures them that even this point should not be gained, but the brazen vessels should go after the golden ones, ver. 19—22. Nebuchadnezzar had found so good a booty once, that he would be sure to come again, and take all he could find, not only in the house of the Lord, but in the king's house. They shall all be carried to Babylon in triumph, and there shall they be. But he concludes with a gracious promise, that the time should come when they should all be returned; "Until the day that I visit them" in mercy, according to appointment, and then I will bring those vessels up again, "and restore them to this place," to their place. Surely they were under the protection of a special providence, else they had been melted down, and put to some other use; but there was to be a second temple, for which they were to be reserved. We read particularly of the return of them, *Ezr.* i. 8. Note, Though the return of the church's prosperity do not come in our time, we must not, therefore, despair of it, for it will come in God's time. Though they that said the vessels of the Lord's house shall shortly be brought again prophesied a lie, ver. 16, he that said, they shall at length be brought again, prophesied the truth. We are apt to set our clock before God's dial, and then to quarrel because they do not agree; but the Lord is a God of judgment, and it is fit we should wait for him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In the foregoing chapter Jeremiah had charged those prophets with lies, who foretold the speedy breaking of the yoke of the king of Babylon, and the speedy return of the vessels of the sanctuary; now here we have his contest with a particular prophet upon those heads. I. Hananiah, a pretender to prophecy, in contradiction to Jeremiah, foretold the sinking of Nebuchadnezzar's power, and the return both of the persons and of the vessels that were carried away, ver. 1—4; and as a sign of this he broke the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah, ver. 10, 11. II. Jeremiah wished his words might prove true; but appealed to the event, whether they were so or no, not doubting but that would disprove them, ver. 5—9. III. The doom both of the deceived and of the deceiver is here read. The people that were deceived should have their yoke of wood turned into a yoke of iron, ver. 12—14. And the prophet that was the deceiver should be shortly cut off by death, and he was so accordingly within two months, ver. 15—17.

AND it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, *and* in the fifth month, *that* Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which *was* of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests and of all the people, saying, 2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3 Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD's house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: 4 And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the LORD: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. 5 Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD, 6 Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place. 7 Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people; 8 The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. 9 The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, *then* shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him.

This struggle between a true prophet and a false one is said here to have happened "in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah," and yet in the fourth year, for the first four years of his reign might well be called the beginning or former part of it, because during those years he reigned under the dominion of the king of Babylon, and as a tributary to him; whereas the rest of his reign, which might well be called the latter part of it, in distinction from that

former part, he reigned in rebellion against the king of Babylon. In this fourth year of his reign he went in person to Babylon, as we find, *ch.* li. 59; and, it is probable, that gave the people some hope that his negotiation in person would put a good end to the war, in which hope the false prophets encouraged them, this Hananiah particularly, who was of Gibeon, a priests' city, and therefore probably himself a priest, as well as Jeremiah. Now here we have,

First. The prediction which Hananiah delivered publicly, solemnly, "in the house of the Lord," and in the name of the Lord, in an august assembly, "in the presence of the priests, and of all the people," who probably were expecting to have some message from heaven. In delivering this prophecy he faced Jeremiah, he spoke it to him, ver. 1; designing to confront and contradict him, as much as to say, Jeremiah, thou liest. Now his prediction is, that the king of Babylon's power, at least his power over Judah and Jerusalem, should be speedily broken. That within two full years the vessels of the temple should be brought back, and Jeconiah and all the captives that were carried away with him should return; whereas Jeremiah had foretold that the yoke of the king of Babylon should be bound on yet faster, and that the vessels and captives should not return for seventy years, ver. 2—4. Now upon the reading of this sham prophecy, and comparing it with the messages that God sent by the true prophets, we may observe what a vast difference there is between them. Here is nothing of that spirit and life, that majesty of style, and sublimeness of expression, that appears in the discourses of God's prophets, nothing of that Divine flame and *flatus*. But that which is especially wanting here, is an air of piety; he speaks with a great deal of confidence of the return of their prosperity, but here is not a word of good counsel given them to repent and reform, and return to God, to pray and seek his face, that they might be prepared for those favours God had in reserve for them. He promiseth them temporal mercies in God's name, but makes no mention of those spiritual mercies which God always promised should go along with them, as *ch.* xxiv. 7, "I will give them a heart to know me." By all which it appears that, whatever he pretended, he had only the spirit of the world, not the Spirit of God, 1 *Cor.* xii.; that he aimed to please, not to profit.

Secondly. Jeremiah's reply to this pretended prophecy.

1. He heartily wisheth it might prove true. Such an affection has he for his country, and so truly desirous is he of the welfare of it, that he would be content to lie under the imputation of a false prophet, so that their ruin might be prevented. He said, "Amen, the Lord do so, the Lord perform thy words," ver. 5, 6. This was not the first time that Jeremiah had prayed for his people, though he had prophesied against them, and deprecated the judgments which yet he certainly knew would come; as Christ prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let the cup pass from me," when yet he knew it must not pass from him. Though as a faithful prophet he foresaw and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, yet as a faithful Israelite he prayed earnestly for the preservation of it, in obedience to that command, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." Though the will of God's purpose is the rule of prophecy and patience, the will of his precept is the rule of prayer and practice. God himself, though he has determined, yet doth not desire, the death of sinners, but would have all men to be saved. Jeremiah often interceded for his people, *ch.* xviii. 20. The false prophets thought to ingratiate themselves with the people by promising them peace; now the prophet shews that he bore them as great a good-will as their prophets did that they were so fond of; and, though he had no warrant from God to promise them peace, yet he earnestly desired it, and prayed for it. How strangely were they besotted who caressed those who did them the greatest wrong imaginable by flattering them; and persecuted him who did them the greatest service imaginable by interceding for them! see *ch.* xxvii. 18.

2. He appeals to the event to prove it false, ver. 7—9. The false prophets reflected upon Jeremiah, as Ahab upon Micaiah, because he never prophesied good concerning them, but evil; now he pleads that this had been the purport of the prophecies that other prophets had delivered, so that it ought not to be looked upon as a strange thing, or as rendering his mission doubtful; for prophets of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms, so bold were they in delivering the messages which God sent by them; and so far from fearing men, or seeking to please them, as Hananiah did, they made no difficulty, no more than Jeremiah did, of threatening war, famine, and pestilence, and what they said was regarded as coming from God. Why then should Jeremiah be run down as a pestilent fellow, and a sower of sedition, who preached no otherwise than God's prophets had always done before him? Other prophets had foretold destruction, and sometimes the destruction did not come, which yet did not disprove their Divine mission, as in the case of Jonah; for God is gracious, and ready to turn away his wrath from those that turn away from their sins. But the prophet that prophesied of peace and prosperity, especially as Hananiah did, absolutely and unconditionally, without adding that necessary proviso, that they do not by wilful sin put a bar in their own door, and stop the current of God's favours, will be proved a true prophet only by the accomplishment of his prediction; if it come to pass, then it shall be known that the Lord hath sent him; but if not, he will appear to be a cheat and an impostor.

10 Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. 11 And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. 12 Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah *the prophet*, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 13 Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. 14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him; and I have given him the beasts of the field also. 15 Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. 16 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD. 17 So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

We have here an instance,

First. Of the insolence of the false prophet. To complete the affront he designed Jeremiah, he took the yoke from off his neck, which he carried as a memorial of what he had prophesied concerning the enslaving of the nations to Nebuchadnezzar, and he broke it, that he might give a sign of the accomplishment of his prophecy, as Jeremiah had given of his, and might seem to have conquered him, and to have defeated the intention of his prophecy. See how the lying spirit in the mouth of this false prophet mimics the language of the Spirit of truth; "Thus saith the Lord, so will I break the yoke of the king of Babylon, not only from the neck of this nation, but from the neck of all nations, within two full years." Whether by the force of a heated imagination Hananiah had persuaded himself to believe this, or whether he knew it to be false, and only persuaded them to believe it, doth not appear. But it is plain he speaks with abundance of assurance. It is no new thing for lies to be fathered upon the God of truth.

Secondly. Of the patience of the true prophet. Jeremiah quietly went his way, and when he was reviled he reviled not again, and would not contend with one that was in the height of his fury, and in the midst of the priests and people that were violently set against him. The reason why he went his way was not because he had nothing to answer; but because he was willing to stay till God was pleased to furnish him a direct and immediate answer, which as yet he had not received. He expected God would send a special message to Hananiah, and he would say nothing till he had received that. "I, as a deaf man, heard not, for thou wilt hear." And thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. It may sometimes be our wisdom rather to retreat than to contend. *Currenti cede furori*, —'Give place unto wrath.'

Thirdly. Of the justice of God in giving judgment between Jeremiah and his adversary. Jeremiah went his way as a man in whose mouth there was no rebuke; but God soon put a word into his mouth, for he will appear for those who silently commit their cause to him.

1. The word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah is ratified and confirmed. Let not Jeremiah himself distrust the truth of what he had delivered in God's name, because it met with such a daring opposition and contradiction. If what we have spoken be the truth of God, we must not unsay it, because men gainsay it; for great is the truth, and will prevail. It will stand; let us therefore stand to it, and not fear that men's unbelief or blasphemy will make it of no effect. Hananiah hath broken the yokes of wood, but Jeremiah must make for them yokes of iron that cannot be broken, ver. 13; for, saith God, "I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations," which shall lie heavier and bind harder upon them, ver. 14, that they may serve the king of Babylon, and not be able to shake off the yoke, however they may struggle, for they shall serve him whether they will or no; and who is he that can contend with God's counsel? What was said before is repeated again, "I have given him the beasts of the field also," as if there were something significant in that. Men had by their wickedness made themselves like the beasts that perish, and therefore deserved to be ruled by an arbitrary power, as beasts are ruled, and such a power Nebuchadnezzar ruled with; for whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive.

2. Hananiah is sentenced to die for contradicting it, and Jeremiah, when he has received commission from God, boldly tells him so to his face; though before he received that commission he went away and said nothing. 1st. The crimes of which Hananiah stands convicted are, cheating the people and affronting God. "Thou makest this people to trust in a lie," encouraging them to hope they shall have peace, which will make their destruction the more terrible to them when it comes; yet this was not the worst, "thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord," that is, thou hast taught them to despise all the good counsel given them in God's name by the true prophets, and rendered it ineffectual. Those have a great deal to answer for who, by telling sinners they shall have peace, though they go on, harden their hearts in a contempt of the reproofs and admonitions of the word, and the means and methods God takes to bring them to repentance. 2nd. The judgment given against him is, "I will cast thee off from the face of the earth," as unworthy to live upon it; thou shalt be buried in it. "This year thou shalt die," and die as a rebel against the Lord, to whom death would come with a sting and a curse. This sentence was executed, ver. 17. Hananiah died the same year, within two months; for his prophecy is dated the fifth month, ver. 1, and his death the seventh. Good men may perhaps be suddenly taken off by death, in the midst of their days, and in mercy to them, as Josiah was; but this being foretold, as the punishment of his sin, and coming to pass accordingly, it may safely be construed as a testimony from heaven against him, and a confirmation of Jeremiah's mission. And if the people's hearts had not been wretchedly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, it would have prevented their being farther hardened by the deceitfulness of their prophets.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The contests between Jeremiah and the false prophets were carried on before by preaching, here by writing: there we had sermon against sermon, here we have letter against letter; for some of the false prophets are now carried away into captivity in Babylon, while Jeremiah remains in his own country. Now here is, I. A letter which Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, against their prophets that they had there, ver. 1—3. In which letter, 1. He endeavours to reconcile them to their captivity, to be easy under it, and make the best of it, ver. 4—7; 2. He cautions them not to give any credit to their false prophets, that fed them with the hopes of a speedy release, ver. 8, 9; 3. He assures them that God would restore them in mercy to their own land again at the end of seventy years, ver. 10—14; 4. He foretells the destruction of those who yet continued, and that they should be persecuted with one judgment after another, and sent at last into captivity, ver. 15—19; 5. He prophesies the destruction of two of their false prophets that they had in Babylon, that both soothed them up in their sins and set

them ill examples, ver. 20—23; and this is the purport of Jeremiah's letter. II. Here is a letter which Shemaiah a false prophet in Babylon wrote to the priests at Jerusalem, to stir them up to persecute Jeremiah, ver. 24—29; and a denunciation of God's wrath against him for writing such a letter, ver. 30—32; such struggles as these have there always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

NOW these *are* the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon; 2 (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;) 3 By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying, 4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

5 Build ye houses, and dwell *in them;*
And plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;
6 Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters;
And take wives for your sons,
And give your daughters to husbands,
That they may bear sons and daughters;
That ye may be increased there, and not diminished.
7 And seek the peace of the city
Whither I have caused you to be carried away captives,
And pray unto the LORD for it;
For in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

We are here told,

First. That Jeremiah did write to the captives in Babylon in the name of the Lord. Jeconiah had surrendered himself a prisoner, with the queen his mother, the chamberlains of his household, called here the eunuchs, many of "the princes of Judah and Jerusalem," that were at that time the most active men; the carpenters and smiths likewise being demanded, were yielded up, that those which remained might not have any proper hands to fortify their city, or furnish themselves with weapons of war. By this tame submission it was hoped Nebuchadnezzar would be pacified; *Satis est prostrasse leoni*,—'It suffices the lion to have laid his antagonist prostrate.' But the imperious conqueror grows upon their concessions, like Benhadad upon Ahab's, 1 *Kin.* x. 5, 6. And not content with this, when these were departed from Jerusalem, he comes again and fetcheth away many more of the elders, the priests, the prophets, and people, ver. 1, such as he thought fit, or such as his soldiers could lay hands on, and carries them to Babylon. The case of these captives was very melancholy, the rather, because they being thus distinguished from the rest of their brethren who continued in their own land, looked as if they were greater sinners than all men that dwelt at Jerusalem. Jeremiah therefore writes a letter to them to comfort them, assuring them that they had no reason either to despair of succour themselves or to envy their brethren that were left behind. Note, 1. The word of God written is as truly given by inspiration of God as his word spoken was; and this was the proper way of spreading the knowledge of God's will among his children scattered abroad. 2. We may serve God and do good by writing to our friends at a distance pious letters of seasonable comforts and wholesome counsel. Whom we cannot speak to we may write to; that which is written remains. This letter of Jeremiah's was sent to the captives in Babylon by the hands of the ambassadors whom king Zedekiah sent to Nebuchadnezzar, probably to pay him his tribute and renew his submission to him, or to treat of peace with him, in which treaty the captives might perhaps hope that they should be included, ver. 3. By such messengers Jeremiah chose to send this message, to put an honour upon it, because it was a message from God. Or perhaps, because there was no settled way of sending letters to Babylon, but as such an occasion as this offered. And then it made the condition of the captives there the more melancholy, that they could rarely hear from their friends and relations they had left behind, which is some reviving and satisfaction to those that are separated from one another.

Secondly. We are here told what he wrote. A copy of the letter at large follows, ver. 24. In these verses,

1. He assures them that he wrote in the name of the "Lord of hosts, the God of Israel," who indited the letter. Jeremiah was but the scribe, or amanuensis. It would be comfortable to them in their captivity to hear that God is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, and is therefore able to help and deliver them; and that he is the God of Israel, still a God in covenant with his people, though he contend with them, and their enemies for the present are too hard for them. This would likewise be an admonition to them to stand upon their guard against all temptations to the idolatry of Babylon, because the God of Israel, the God whom they served, is Lord of hosts. God's sending to them in this letter might be an encouragement to them in their captivity, as it was an evidence that he had not cast them off, had not abandoned them and disinherited them, though he was displeased with them and corrected them; for if the Lord had been pleased to kill them he would not have written to them.

2. God, by him, owns the hand he had in their captivity; I have caused you to be carried away, ver. 4; and again, ver. 7. All the force of the king of Babylon could not have done it, if God had not ordered it; nor could he have any power against them, but what was given him from above. If God caused them to be carried captives, they might be sure he neither did them any wrong nor meant them any hurt. Note, It will help very much to reconcile us to our troubles, and to make us patient under them, to consider that they are what God has appointed us to: "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."

3. He bids them to think of no other but of settling there, and therefore let them resolve to make the best of it; ver. 5, 6, "Build ye houses, and dwell in them," &c. By all this it is intimated to them, 1st. That they must not feed themselves with hopes of a speedy return out of their captivity, for that would keep them still unsettled, and consequently uneasy. They would apply themselves to no business, take no comfort, but be always tiring themselves and provoking their conquerors with the expectations of relief, and their disappointment at last would sink them into despair, and make their condition much more miserable than otherwise it would be; let them, therefore, count upon a continuance there, and accommodate themselves to it as well as they can. Let them build, and plant, and marry, and dispose of their children there, as if they were at home in their own land; let them take a pleasure in seeing their families built up and multiplied; for, though they must expect themselves to die in captivity, yet their children may live to see better days. If they live in the fear of God, what should hinder them but they may live comfortably in Babylon? They cannot but weep sometimes when they remember Zion; but let not weeping hinder sowing, let them not sorrow as those that have no hope, no joy, for they have both. Note, In all conditions of life it is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, and not to throw away the comfort of what we may have, because we have not all we would have. We have a natural affection for our native country, it strangely draws our mind; but it is with a *nescio qua dulcedine*,—'we can give no good account of the sweet attraction,' and therefore if Providence remove us to some other country, we must resolve to live easy there, to bring our mind to our condition, when our condition is not in every thing to our mind; if the earth be the Lord's, then, wherever a child of God goes, he doth not go off his Father's ground. *Patria est ubicunque bene est*,—'That place is our country in which we are well off.' If things be not as they have been, instead of fretting at that, we must live in hopes that they will be better than they are. *Non si male nunc, et olim sic erit*,—'Though we suffer now we shall not always.' 2nd. That they must not disquiet themselves with fears of intolerable hardships in their captivity. They might be ready to suggest—as persons in trouble are always apt to make the worst of things—that it would be in vain to build houses, for their lords and masters would not suffer them to dwell in them when they had built them, nor to eat the fruit of the vineyards they planted. Never fear, saith God, if you live peaceable with them, you shall find them civil to you. Meek and quiet people, that work and mind their own business, have often found much better treatment, even with strangers and enemies, than they expected; and God has made his people to be pitied of those that carried them captives, *Ps.* cvi. 46, and pity it is but that those who have built houses should dwell in them. Nay,

4. He directs them to seek the good of the country where they were captives, ver. 7, to pray for it, to endeavour it. This forbids them to attempt any thing against the public peace, while they were subjects to the king of Babylon. Though he was a heathen, an idolater, an oppressor, and an enemy to God and his church, yet while he gave them protection they must pay him allegiance, and live quiet and peaceable lives under him, in all godliness and honesty; not plotting to shake off his yoke, but patiently leaving it to God in due time to work deliverance for them. Nay, they must pray to God for the peace of the places where they were, that they might oblige them to continue their kindness to them, and disprove the character that had been given their nation, that they were hurtful to kings and provinces, and moved sedition, *Ezr.* iv. 15. Both the wisdom of the serpent and the innocency of the dove required them to be true to the government they lived under; for, "In the peace thereof shall ye have peace." Should the country be embroiled in war, they would have the greatest share in the calamitous effects of it. Thus the primitive Christians, according to the temper of their holy religion, prayed for the powers that were, though they were persecuting powers. And if they were to pray for, and seek the peace of, the land of their captivity, much more reason have we to pray for the welfare of the land of our nativity, where we are a free people under a good government, that in the peace thereof we and ours may have peace. Every passenger is concerned in the safety of the ship.

8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
Let not your prophets and your diviners,
That *be* in the midst of you, deceive you,
Neither hearken to your dreams
Which ye cause to be dreamed.
9 For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name:
I have not sent them, saith the LORD.
10 For thus saith the LORD,
That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon
I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you,
In causing you to return to this place.
11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD,
Thoughts of peace, and not of evil,
To give you an expected end.
12 Then shall ye call upon me,
And ye shall go and pray unto me,
And I will hearken unto you.
13 And ye shall seek me, and find *me*,
When ye shall search for me with all your heart.
14 And I will be found of you, saith the LORD:
And I will turn away your captivity,
And I will gather you from all the nations,
And from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD;

And I will bring you again into the place
Whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

To make the people quiet and easy in their captivity,

First. God takes them off from building upon the false bottom which their pretended prophets laid, ver. 8, 9. They told them their captivity should be short, and therefore they must not think of taking root in Babylon, but be upon the wing to go back. Now herein they deceive you, saith God; they prophesy a lie to you, though they prophesy in my name. But let them not deceive you, suffer not yourselves to be deluded by them. As long as we have the word of truth to try the spirits by, it is our own fault if we be deceived, for by it we may be undeceived. "Hearken not to your dreams, which ye cause to be dreamed." He means either the dreams or fancies which the people pleased themselves with, and with which they filled their own heads, (by thinking and speaking of nothing else but a speedy enlargement when they were awake, they caused themselves to dream of it when they were asleep; and then took that for a good omen, and with it strengthened themselves in their vain expectations,) or the dreams which the prophets dreamed, and grounded their prophecies upon. God tells the people, They are your dreams, because they pleased them, were the dreams that they desired and wished for; they caused them to be dreamed, for they hearkened to them, and encouraged the prophets to put such shams upon them, desiring them to prophesy nothing but smooth things, *Isa.* xxx. 10. They were dreams of their own bespeaking. False prophets would not flatter people in their sins, but that they love to be flattered, and speak their prophets fair to speak them fair.

Secondly. He gives them a good bottom to build their hopes upon. We would not persuade people to pull down the house they have built upon the sand, but that there is a rock ready for them to rebuild upon. God here promiseth them that, though they should not return quickly, they should return at length; "after seventy years be accomplished." By this it appears, that the seventy years of the captivity are not to be reckoned from the last captivity, but the first. Note, Though the deliverance of the church do not come in our time, it is sufficient that it will come in God's time, and we are sure that is the time. The promise is, that God will visit them in mercy; though he had long seemed to be strange to them he will come among them, and appear for them, and put honour upon them, as great men do upon their inferiors, by coming to visit them. He will put an end to their captivity, and turn away all the calamities of it. Though they are dispersed, some in one country and some in another, he will gather them from all the places whither they are driven, will set up a standard for them all to resort to, and incorporate them again in one body. And though they are at a great distance, they shall be brought again to their own land, to the place whence they were carried captive, ver. 14. Now,

1. This shall be the performance of God's promise to them; ver. 10, "I will perform my good words toward you." Let not the failing of those predictions, which are delivered as from God, lessen the reputation of those that really are from him. That which is indeed God's word is a good word, and therefore it will be made good, and not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? This will make their return out of captivity very comfortable, that it will be the performance of God's good word to them, the product of a gracious promise.

2. This shall be in pursuance of God's purposes concerning them; ver. 11, "I know the thoughts that I think towards you." Known unto God are all his works, for known unto him are all his thoughts, *Acts* xv. 18; and his works agree exactly with his thoughts; he doth all according to the counsel of his will. We often do not know our own thoughts, not know our mind, but God is never at any uncertainty within himself. We are sometimes ready to fear that God's designs concerning us are all against us. But he knows the contrary concerning his own people, that they are thoughts of good and not of evil; even that which seems evil is designed for good. His thoughts are all working towards the expected end, which he will give in due time. The end they expect will come, though perhaps not when they expect it. Let them have patience till the fruit is ripe, and then they shall have it. He will give them an end, and expectation; so it is in the original. 1st. He will give them to see the end, that is, the comfortable period of their trouble. Though it last long it shall not last always; the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, will come; when things are at the worst they will begin to mend. And he will give them to see the glorious perfection of their deliverance; for, as for God, his work is perfect. He that in the beginning finished the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of both, will finish all the blessings of both to his people. When he begins in ways of mercy, he will make an end; God doth nothing by the halves. 2nd. He will give them to see the expectation, that end which they desire and hope for, and have been long waiting for. He will give them not the expectations of their fears, or the expectations of their fancies, but the expectations of their faith; the end which he has promised, and which will turn for the best to them.

3. This shall be an answer to their prayers and supplications to God, ver. 12—14. 1st. God stirs them up to pray; "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me." Note, When God is about to give his people the expected good, he pours out a spirit of prayer, and it is a good sign he is coming towards them in mercy. Then when you see the expected end approaching, then ye shall call upon me. Note, Promises are given not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer; and when deliverance is coming we must by prayer go forth to meet it. When Daniel understood that the seventy years were near expiring, then he set his face with more fervency than ever to seek the Lord, *Dan.* ix. 2, 3. 2nd. He will then stir up himself to come and save them, *Ps.* lxxx. 2, "I will hearken unto you, and I will be found of you." God hath said it, and we may depend upon it, Seek, and ye shall find. We have a general rule laid down; ver. 13, "Ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." In seeking God, we must search for him, accomplish a diligent search, search for directions in seeking him, and encouragements to our faith and hope; we must continue seeking, and take pains in seeking, as those that search, and this we must do with our heart; that is, in sincerity and uprightness, and with our whole hearts; that is, with vigour and fervency, putting forth all that is within us in prayer; and those who thus seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful rewarder, *Heb.* xi. 6. He never said to such, Seek ye me in vain.

15 Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;
16 *Know* that thus saith the LORD
Of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David,
And of all the people that dwelleth in this city,
And of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity;
17 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence,
And will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.
18 And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence,
And will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, [a reproach,
To be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and
Among all the nations whither I have driven them:
19 Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD,
Which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets,
Rising up early and sending *them;*
But ye would not hear, saith the LORD.
20 Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: 21 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes; 22 And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which *are* in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; 23 Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and *am* a witness, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah, having given great encouragement to those among the captives whom he knew to be serious and well-affected, assuring them that God had very kind and favourable intentions concerning them, here turns to those among them who slighted the counsels and comforts that Jeremiah ministered to them, and depended upon what the false prophets flattered them with. When this letter came from Jeremiah, they would be ready to say, What needs he make himself so busy, and take upon him to advise us; "the Lord hath raised us up prophets in Babylon," ver. 15. We are satisfied with those prophets, and can depend upon them, and have no occasion to hear from any prophets in Jerusalem. See the impudent wickedness of this people; as the prophets, when they prophesied lies, said they had them from God, so the people when they invited those prophets thus to flatter them, fathered it upon God, and said it was the Lord that raised them up those prophets. Whereas those that harden people in their sins, and deceive them with false and groundless hopes of God's mercy, we may be sure are no prophets of God's raising up. These prophets of their own told them, that no more should be carried captive, but those that were in captivity should shortly return. Now in answer to this,

First. The prophet here foretells the utter destruction of those who remained still at Jerusalem, notwithstanding what those false prophets said to the contrary. As for the king and people that dwell in the city, who, you think, will be ready to bid you welcome when you return, you are deceived; they shall be followed with one judgment after another,—sword, famine, and pestilence, which shall cut off multitudes; and the poor and miserable remains shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, ver. 16—18. And thus God will make them, or rather deal with them, like vile figs. They have made themselves so by their wickedness, and God will use them accordingly, as the salt that has lost its savour, which being good for nothing is cast to the dunghill; and so are rotten figs. This refers to the vision, and the prophecy upon it, which we had *ch.* xxiv. And the reason given for these proceedings against them is the same that has often been given, and will justify God in the eternal ruin of impenitent sinners; ver. 19, "Because they have not hearkened to my words." "I called, but they refused."

Secondly. He foretells the judgment of God upon the false prophets in Babylon, who deceived the people of God there. He calls upon all the children of the captivity, who boasted of them as prophets of God's raising up, ver. 20, Stand still, and hear the doom of the prophets you are so fond of. The two prophets are named here, Ahab and Zedekiah, ver. 21. Observe,

1. The crimes charged upon them, impiety and immorality. They prophesied lies in God's name, ver. 21; and again, ver. 23, They have spoken lying words in my name. Lying was bad, lying to the people of God, to delude them into a false hope, was worse, but fathering their lies upon the God of truth was worst of all. As they had the face to do that, no marvel if they could allow themselves in the gratification of those vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gave them up. They have done villany in Israel, for "they have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives." Adultery is villany, and it is an aggravation of it, if it be villany in Israel, and in such as pretend to be prophets, who by such wickednesses manifestly disprove their own pretensions. God never sent such profligate wretches on his errands; he is the Lord God of the holy prophets, not of such impure ones. Here it appears why they flatter others in their sin, because they could not reprove them with-

out condemning themselves. These lewd practices of theirs they knew how to conceal from the eye of the world, that they might preserve their credit; but, I know it, "and am a witness, saith the Lord." The most secret sins are known to God; he can see the villany that is covered with the thickest cloak of hypocrisy; and there is a day coming when he will bring to light all these hidden works of darkness, and every man will appear in his own colours.

2. The judgments threatened against them. The king of Babylon shall "slay them before your eyes," nay, he shall put to a miserable death, roast them in the fire, ver. 22. We may suppose it was not for their impiety and immorality that Nebuchadnezzar punished them thus severely; but sedition, and some attempts of their turbulent spirits upon the public peace, and stirring up the people to revolt and rebel. So much of their wickedness shall then be detected, and in such a wretched manner they shall end their days, that their names shall be a curse among the captives in Babylon, ver. 22. When men would imprecate the greatest evil upon one they hated, they would think they could not load them with a heavier curse in fewer words than to say, "The Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab!" Thus were they made ashamed of the prophets they had been proud of, and convinced at last of their folly in hearkening to them. God's faithful prophets were sometimes charged with being the troublers of the land, and such were tortured and slain. But their names were a blessing when they were gone, and their memory sweet, not as these here. As malefactors are attended with infamy and disgrace, so martyrs with glory and honour.

24 *Thus* shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying, 25 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that *are* at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying, 26 The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man *that is* mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks. 27 Now therefore why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you? 28 For therefore he sent unto us *in* Babylon, saying, This *captivity is* long: build ye houses, and dwell *in them;* and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 29 And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. 30 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 31 Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie: 32 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD.

We have perused the contents of Jeremiah's letter to the captives in Babylon, who had reason, with a great deal of thanks to God and him, to acknowledge the receipt of it, and lay it up among their treasures. But we cannot wonder if the false prophets they had among them were enraged at it; for it gave them their true character. Now here we are told concerning one of them,

First. How he discovered his malice against Jeremiah. This busy fellow is called Shemaiah the Nehelamite, the dreamer, so the margin reads it; because all his prophecies he pretended to have received from God in a dream. He had got a copy of Jeremiah's letter to the captives, or had heard it read, or information was given to him concerning it, and it nettled him exceedingly; and he will take pen in hand and answer it, yea, that he will; but how? He doth not write to Jeremiah in justification of his own mission, nor offer any rational arguments for the support of his prophecies concerning the speedy return of the captives; but he writes to the priests, those faithful patrons of the false prophets, and instigates them to persecute Jeremiah. He writes in his own name, not so much as pretending to have the people's consent to it; but, as if he must be dictator to all mankind, he sends a circular letter (as should seem) among the priests at Jerusalem, and the rest of the people, probably by the same messengers that brought the letter from Jeremiah. But it is chiefly directed to Zephaniah, who was either the immediate son of Maaseiah, or of the twenty-fourth course of the priests, of which Maaseiah was the father and the head. He was not the high priest, but sagan or suffragan to the high priest, or in some other considerable post of command in the temple, as Pashur, *ch.* xx. 1. Perhaps he was chairman of that committee of priests that was appointed in a particular manner to take cognizance of those that pretended to be prophets, of which there were very many at this time, and to give judgment concerning them. Now,

1. He puts him and the other priests in mind of the duty of their place; ver. 26, "The Lord hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest." Some think he refers to the famous Jehoiada, that great reformer in the days of Joash; and (saith Mr. Gataker) he would insinuate that this Zephaniah is, for spirit and zeal, such another as he, and raised up as he was, for the glory of God, and the good of the church, and therefore it was expected from him that he should proceed against Jeremiah. Thus (saith he) there is no act so injurious or impious but that wicked wretches and false prophets will not only attempt it, but colour it also with some specious pretence of piety, and zeal of God's glory, *Isa.* lxvi. 5; *Jno.* xvi. 2. Or, rather, it was some other Jehoiada, his immediate predecessor in this office, who perhaps was carried to Babylon among the priests, ver. 1. Zephaniah is advanced sooner than he expected, to this place of trust and power; and Shemaiah would have him think Providence had preferred him, that he might persecute God's prophets; that he was come to this government for such a time as this, and he was unjust and ungrateful if he did not thus improve his power, or rather abuse it. Their hearts are wretchedly hardened who can justify the doing of mischief, by having a power to do it. These priests' business was to examine "every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet." God's faithful prophets are here represented as prophets of their own making, usurpers of the office, and lay intruders; and as men that were mad, acted by some demon, and not divinely inspired; or, as distracted men, and men in a frenzy. Thus the characters of the false prophets are thrown upon the true ones; and if this had been indeed their character, they ought to be bound as madmen, and punished as pretenders; and therefore he concludes Jeremiah must be so done to. He doth not bid them examine whether Jeremiah could produce any proofs of his mission, and could make it appear he was not mad; no, that is taken for granted, and when once he is put into an ill name, he must be run down, of course.

2. He informs them of the letter which Jeremiah had written to the captives, ver. 28. He sent unto us in Babylon with the authority of a prophet, saying, "This captivity is long," and therefore resolve to make the best of it. And what harm was there in this, that it should be objected to him as a crime? The false prophets had formerly said, the captivity would never come, *ch.* xiv. 13. Jeremiah had said it would come, and the event had already proved him in the right, which obliged them to give credit to him who now said it would be long, rather than to those who said it would be short, but had once before been found liars.

3. He demands judgment against him, taking it for granted that he is "mad, and maketh himself a prophet." He expects they should order him to be put in prison, and in the stocks, ver. 26; that they should thus punish him, and by putting him to disgrace possess the people with prejudices against him, ruin his reputation, and so prevent the giving of any credit to his prophecies at Jerusalem, hoping, if they could gain that point, neither would the captives of Babylon be influenced by him. Nay, he takes upon him to chide Zephaniah for his neglect, ver. 27. Why hast thou not rebuked and restrained Jeremiah of Anathoth? See how insolent and imperious these false prophets were grown, that, though they were in captivity, they would give law to the priests that were not only at liberty, but in power. It is common for those that pretend to more knowledge than their neighbours to be so. Now here is a remarkable instance of the hardness of the hearts of sinners, and it is enough to make us all fear, lest our hearts be at any time hardened. For here we find, 1st. That these sinners would not be convinced by the clearest evidence. God had confirmed his word in the mouth of Jeremiah, it had taken hold of them, *Zec.* i. 6; and yet, because he doth not prophesy to them the smooth things they desired, they are resolved to look upon him as not duly called to the office of a prophet. None so blind as those that will not see. 2nd. That they would not be reclaimed and reformed by the most severe chastisment. They were now sent into a miserable thraldom for mocking the messengers of the Lord, and misusing his prophets; this was the sin for which God now contended with them, and yet in their distress they trespass yet more against the Lord, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 22. This very sin they are notoriously guilty of in their captivity; which shews that afflictions will not of themselves cure men of their sins, unless the grace of God work with them; but will rather exasperate the corruptions they are intended to mortify. So true is that of Solomon, *Pr.* xxvii. 22, "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him."

Secondly. How Jeremiah came to the knowledge of this; ver. 29, "Zephaniah read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah." He did not design to do as Shemaiah would have him, but, as it should seem, had a respect for Jeremiah; for we find him employed in messages to him as a prophet, *ch.* xxi. 1, xxxvii. 3, and therefore protected him. He that continued in his dignity and power stood more in awe of God and his judgments than he that was now a captive. Nay, he made Jeremiah acquainted with the contents of the letter, that he might see what enemies he had even among the captives. Note, It is kindness to our friends to let them know their foes.

Thirdly. What was the sentence passed upon Shemaiah for writing this letter. God sent him an answer; for to him Jeremiah committed his cause. It was ordered to be sent not to him, but to them of the captivity, who encouraged and countenanced him as if he had been a prophet of God's raising up, ver. 31, 32. Let them know,

1. That Shemaiah has made fools of them. He promised them peace in God's name, but God did not send him. He forged a commission, and counterfeited the broad seal of heaven to it, and made the people to trust in a lie, and, by preaching false comfort to them, deprived them of true comfort. Nay, he had not only made fools of them, but, which was worse, he had made traitors of them, he had "taught rebellion against the Lord," as Hananiah had done, *ch.* xxviii. 16. And if vengeance shall be taken on them that rebel, much more on them that teach rebellion, by their doctrine or example.

2. That at his end he also shall be a fool, as the expression is, *ch.* xvii. 11. His name and family shall be extinct, and shall be buried in oblivion. He shall leave no issue behind him to bear up his name, his pedigree shall end in him; "He shall not have a man to dwell among this people," and neither he nor any that come from him shall "behold the good that I will do for my people." Note, Those are unworthy to share in God's favours to his church, that are not willing to stay his time for them. Shemaiah was angry at Jeremiah's advice to the captives, to see to the building up of their families in Babylon, that they might be increased and not diminished; and therefore justly is he written childless there. Those that slight the blessings of God's word deserve to lose the benefit of them: see *Am.* vii. 16, 17.

CHAPTER XXX.

The sermon which we have in this and the following chapter, is of a very different complexion from all those before: the prophet doth indeed, by direction from God, change his voice. Most he had said hitherto was by way of reproof and threatening: but these two chapters are wholly taken up with precious promises of a return out of captivity, and that typical of the glorious things reserved for the church in the days of the Messiah. The prophet is bidden not only to preach this, but to write it; because it is intended for the comfort of the generations to come, ver. 1—3. It is here promised, 1. That they should hereafter have a joyful restoration; 1. Though they were now in a great deal of pain and terror, ver. 4—7; 2. Though their oppressors were very strong,

ver. 8—10; 3. Though a full end was made of other nations, and they were not restored, ver. 11; 4. Though all means of their deliverance seemed to fail, and be cut off, ver. 12—14; 5. Though God himself had sent them into captivity, and justly, for their sins, ver. 15, 16; 6. Though all about them looked upon their case as desperate, ver. 17. II. That after their joyful restoration they should have a happy settlement; that their city should be rebuilt, ver. 18, their numbers increased, ver. 19, 20, their government established, ver. 21, God's covenant with them renewed, ver. 22, and their enemies destroyed and cut off, ver. 23, 24.

THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. 3 For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. 4 And these *are* the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.

5 For thus saith the LORD;
We have heard a voice of trembling,
Of fear, and not of peace.
6 Ask ye now, and see
Whether a man doth travail with child?
Wherefore do I see every man
With his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail,
And all faces are turned into paleness?
7 Alas! for that day *is* great,
So that none *is* like it:
It *is* even the time of Jacob's trouble;
But he shall be saved out of it. [hosts,
8 For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of
That I will break his yoke from off thy neck,
And will burst thy bonds,
And strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:
9 But they shall serve the LORD their God,
And David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

Here, First. Jeremiah is directed to write what God had spoken to him; which perhaps refers to all the foregoing prophecies. He must write them, and publish them, in hopes that they who had not profited by it upon once hearing it, might take more notice of it when in reading it they had leisure for a more considerate review. Or, rather, it refers to the promises of their enlargement, which had been often mixed with his other discourses. He must collect them and put them together, and God will now add unto them many like words. He must write them for the generations to come, who should see them accomplished, and thereby have their faith in the prophecy confirmed. He must write it not in a letter, as that in the chapter before to the captives, but in a book, to be carefully preserved in the archives, or among the public rolls or registers of the state. Daniel understood by these books when the captivity was about coming to an end, *Dan.* ix. 2. He must write it in a book, not in loose papers; for the days come, and are yet at a great distance, when I will bring again the captivity of Israel and Judah, great numbers of the ten tribes, with those of the two, ver. 3. And it must be written that it may be read then also, that so it may appear how exactly the accomplishment answers the prediction, which is one end of the writing of prophecies. It is intimated that they shall be beloved for their fathers' sake, *Rom.* xi. 28, for therefore God will bring them again to Canaan, because it was the land that he gave to their fathers, which therefore they shall possess.

Secondly. He is directed what to write. The very words are such as the Holy Ghost teacheth, ver. 4. These are the words which God ordered to be written; and those promises which are written by his order are as truly his word as the ten commandments which were written with his finger.

1. He must write a description of the fright and consternation which the people were now in, and were likely to be still in, upon every attack that the Chaldeans made upon them, which will much magnify both the wonder and the welcomeness of their deliverance; ver. 5, "We have heard a voice of trembling," the shrieks of terror echoing to the alarms of danger. The false prophets told them they should have peace; but there is fear, and not peace, so the margin reads it. And no marvel that, when "without are fightings, within are fears." The men, even the men of war, shall be quite overwhelmed with the calamities of their nation, shall sink under them, and yield to them, and shall look like women in labour, whose pains come upon them in great extremity, and they know they cannot escape them, ver. 6. You never heard of a man travailing with child, and yet here you find not here and there a timorous man, but "every man with his hands on his loins," in the utmost anguish and agony, as a woman in travail, when they see their cities burnt, and their countries laid waste. But this pain is compared to that of a woman in travail, not to that of a death-bed; because it shall end in joy at last, and the pain, like that of a travailing woman, shall be forgotten. All faces shall be turned into paleness. The word signifies not only such paleness as arises from a sudden fright, but that which is the effect of an ill habit of body, the jaundice, or green-sickness. The prophet laments the calamity upon the foresight of it; ver. 7, "Alas! for that day is great," a day of judgment, which is called the great day, the "great and terrible day of the Lord," *Joel* ii. 31; *Jude* 6. Great, so that there has been none like it. The last destruction of Jerusalem is thus spoken of by our Saviour, as unparalleled, *Mat.* xxiv. 21. "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble," a sad time, when God's professing people shall be in distress above other people. The whole time of the captivity was a time of Jacob's trouble, and such times ought to be greatly lamented by all that are concerned for the welfare of Jacob, and the honour of the God of Jacob.

2. He must write the assurances which God had given that a happy end should at length be put to these calamities. 1st. Jacob's troubles shall cease, "he shall be saved out of them." Though the afflictions of the church may last long, they shall not last always. Salvation belongs to the Lord, and shall be wrought for his church. 2nd. Jacob's troublers shall be disabled to do him any farther mischief, and shall be reckoned with for the mischief they have done him; ver. 8, the Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hand, undertakes to do it, "I will break his yoke from off thy neck," which has long lain so heavy, and hath so sorely galled thee; "I will burst thy bonds," and restore thee to liberty and ease, and thou shalt no more be at the beck and command of strangers, shalt no more serve them, nor shall they any more serve themselves of thee, shall no more enrich themselves either by thy possessions or by thy labours. And, 3rd. That which crowns and completes the mercy is, that they shall be restored to the free exercise of their religion again, ver. 9. They shall be delivered from serving their enemies, not that they may live at large, and do what they please, but that they may "serve the Lord their God, and David their king," that they may come again into order under the established government both in church and state. Therefore they were brought into trouble, and made to serve their enemies, because they had not served the Lord their God as they ought to have done, "with joyfulness and gladness of heart," *Deu.* xxviii. 47. But when the time is come that they should be saved out of their trouble, God will prepare and qualify them for it, by giving them a heart to serve him; and will make it doubly comfortable, by giving them opportunity to serve him. Therefore we are delivered out of the hands of our enemies, that we may serve God, *Lu.* i. 74, 75. And then deliverances out of temporal calamities are mercies indeed to us, when by them we find ourselves engaged to, and enlarged in, the service of God. They shall serve their own God, and neither be inclined, as they had been of old in the day of their apostacy, nor compelled as they had been of late in the day of their captivity, to serve other gods. They shall serve David their king, such governors as God should from time to time set over them, of the line of David, as Zerubbabel; or at least sitting on the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, as Nehemiah. But certainly this has a farther meaning. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, 'They shall obey or hearken to the Messiah, or Christ, the Son of David, their king.' To him the Jewish interpreters apply it. That dispensation which commenced at their return out of captivity brought them to the Messiah. He is called David their king, because he was the Son of David, *Mat.* xxii. 42; and he answered to the name, *Mat.* xx. 31, 32. David was an illustrious type of him, both in his humiliation and his exaltation. The covenant of royalty made with David had principal reference to him, and in him the promises of that covenant had their full accomplishment. God gave him the throne of his father David, he raised him up unto them, set him upon the holy hill of Zion. God is often in the New Testament said to have raised up Jesus, raised him up as a king, *Acts* iii. 26; xiii. 23, 33. Observe, *First.* Those that serve the Lord as their God must also serve David their king, must give up themselves to Jesus Christ, to be ruled by him; for all men must honour the Son as they honour the Father, and come into the service and worship of God by him as Mediator. *Secondly.* Those that are delivered out of spiritual bondage must make it to appear that they are so by giving up themselves to the service of Christ. They to whom he gives rest must take his yoke upon them.

10 Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the
Neither be dismayed, O Israel: [LORD;
For, lo, I will save thee from afar,
And thy seed from the land of their captivity;
And Jacob shall return,
And shall be in rest, and be quiet,
And none shall make *him* afraid.
11 For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee:
Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee,
Yet will I not make a full end of thee:
But I will correct thee in measure,
And will not leave thee altogether unpunished.
12 For thus saith the LORD,
Thy bruise *is* incurable,
And thy wound *is* grievous. [bound up:
13 *There is* none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be
Thou hast no healing medicines.
14 All thy lovers have forgotten thee;
They seek thee not;
For I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy,
With the chastisement of a cruel one,
For the multitude of thine iniquity;
Because thy sins were increased.
15 Why criest thou for thine affliction?
Thy sorrow *is* incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity:
Because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee.
16 Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured;
And all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity;
And they that spoil thee shall be a spoil,
And all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey.

17 For I will restore health unto thee,
And I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD;
Because they called thee an Outcast, *saying*,
This *is* Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

In these verses, as in the foregoing, the deplorable case of the Jews in captivity is set forth; but many precious promises given them, that in due time they should be relieved, and a glorious salvation should be wrought for them.

First. God himself appeared against them; he scattered them, ver. 11; he did all these things unto them, ver. 15. All their calamities came from his hands; whoever were the instruments, he was the principal agent. And this made their case very sad, that God, even their own God, spoke concerning them, to pull down and to destroy. Now, 1. This was intended by him as a fatherly chastisement, and no other; ver. 11, "I will correct thee in measure," or, according to judgment; with discretion, no more than thou deservest, nay, no more than thou canst well bear. What God does against his people is in a way of correction; and that correction is always moderated, and always proceeds from love. "I will not leave thee altogether unpunished," as thou art ready to think I should, because of thy relation to me. Note, A profession of religion, though never so plausible, will be far from securing to us impunity in sin. God is no respecter of persons, but will shew his hatred of sin wherever he finds it; and that he hates it most in those that are nearest to him. God here corrects his people for the multitude of their iniquity, and because their sins were increased, ver. 14, 15. Are our sorrows multiplied at any time, and do they increase? We must acknowledge it is because our sins have been multiplied, and they have increased. Iniquities grow in us, and therefore troubles grow upon us. But, 2. What God intended as a fatherly chastisement they and others interpreted as an act of hostility. They looked upon him as having "wounded him with the wound of an enemy," and "with the chastisement of a cruel one," ver. 14, as if he had designed their ruin, and neither mitigated the correction nor had any mercy in reserve for them. It did indeed seem as if God had dealt thus severely with them, as if he had turned to be their enemy, and had fought against them, *Isa.* lxiii. 10. Job complains that God was become cruel to him, and multiplied his wounds. When troubles are great and long we have need carefully to watch over our own hearts, that we entertain not such hard thoughts as these of God, and his providence. His are the chastisements of a merciful one, not of a cruel one, however they may appear.

Secondly. Their friends forsook them, and were shy of them. None of those who had courted them in their prosperity would take notice of them now in their distress, ver. 13. It is commonly thus when families go to decay; those hang off from them that had been their hangers-on. In two cases we are glad of the assistance of our friends, and need their service. 1. If we be impeached, accused, or reproached, our friends we expect should appear in vindication of us, should speak a good word for us when we cannot put on a face to speak for ourselves. But here there is none to plead thy cause, none to stand up in thy defence, none to intercede for thee with thine oppressors. Therefore God will plead their cause; for he might well wonder there was none to uphold a people that had been so much the favourites of heaven, *Isa.* lxiii. 5. 2. If we be sick, or sore, or wounded, we expect our friends should attend us, advise us, sympathize with us, and if occasion be, lend a hand for the applying of healing medicines. But here there is none to do that, none to bind up thy wounds, and by counsels and comforts to make proper applications to thy case. Nay, ver. 14, "All thy lovers have forgotten thee;" out of sight out of mind; instead of seeking thee, they forsake thee. Such as this has often been the case of religion, and serious godliness in the world. Those that from their education, profession, and hopeful beginnings, one might have expected should have been its friends and lovers, its patrons and protectors, desert it, forget it, and have nothing to say in its defence; nor will do any thing towards the healing of its wounds. Observe, "thy lovers have forgotten thee, for I have wounded thee." When God is against a people, who will be for them? Who can be for them so as to do them any kindness? see *Job* xxx. 11. Now upon this account their case seemed desperate, and past relief; ver. 12, "Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous;" and ver. 15, "Thy sorrow is incurable," that is, the condition of the Jews in captivity was such as no human power could redress the grievance of. There they were like a valley full of dead and dry bones, which nothing less than Omnipotence can put life into. Who could imagine that a people so diminished, so impoverished, should ever be restored to their own land, and re-established there? So many were the aggravations of their calamity, that their sorrow would not admit of any alleviation; but they seemed to be hardened in it, and their souls refused to be comforted, till Divine consolations proved strong ones, too strong to be borne down, even by the floods of grief that overwhelmed them. "Thy sorrow is incurable;" because thy sins, instead of being repented of, and forsaken, were increased. Note, Incurable griefs are owing to incurable lusts. Now, in this deplorable condition they were looked upon with disdain; ver. 17, "They called thee an outcast," abandoned by all, abandoned to ruin; they said, "This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after." When they looked on the place where the city and temple had been built, they called that an outcast; now all was in ruins, there was no resort to it, no residence in it, none asked the way to Zion, as formerly, no man seeketh after it. When they looked on the people that formerly dwelt in Zion, but were now in captivity, (and we read of Zion dwelling with the daughter of Babylon, *Zec.* ii. 7,) they called them outcasts; these are they who belong to Zion, and use to talk much of it, and weep at the remembrance of it, but no man seeketh after them, or inquires concerning them. Note, It is often the lot of Zion to be deserted and despised by those about her.

Thirdly. For all this God will work deliverance and salvation for them in due time. Though no other hand, nay, because no other hand, can cure their wound, his will and shall. 1. Though he seemed to stand at a distance from them, yet he assures them of his presence with them, his powerful and gracious presence. "I will save thee," ver. 10; "I am with thee to save thee," ver. 11. When they are in their troubles he is with them to save them from sinking under them. When the time is come for their deliverance he is with them, to be ready upon the first opportunity to save them out of their trouble. 2. Though they were at a distance, remote from their own land, afar off in the land of their captivity, yet there shall salvation find them out, thence shall it fetch them, them and their seed; for they also shall be known among the Gentiles, and distinguished from them, that they may return, ver. 10. 3. Though they were now full of fears, and continually alarmed, yet the time shall come when they shall be in rest and quiet, safe and easy, and none shall make them afraid, ver. 10. 4. Though the nations into which they were dispersed should be brought to ruin, yet they should be preserved from that ruin; ver. 11, "Though I make a full end of the nations whither I have scattered thee," and there might be danger of thy being lost among them, yet "I will not make a full end of thee." It was promised that in the peace of these nations they should have peace, *ch.* xxix. 7; and yet in the destruction of these nations they should escape destruction. God's church may sometimes be brought very low, but he will not make a full end of it, *ch.* v. 10, 18. 5. Though God correct them, and justly, for their sins, their manifold transgressions, and mighty sins, yet he will return in mercy to them, and even their sin shall not prevent their deliverance, when God's time is come. 6. Though their adversaries were mighty, God will bring them down, and break their power; ver. 16, "All that devour thee shall be devoured;" and thus Zion's cause will be pleaded, and will be made to appear to all the world a righteous cause. Thus Zion's deliverance will be brought about by the destruction of her oppressors. And thus her enemies will be recompensed for all the injury they have done her. For there is a God that judgeth in the earth, a God to whom vengeance belongs; they shall every one of them, without exception, go into captivity, and they that now spoil thee, the day will come when they shall be a spoil. They that lead into captivity shall go into captivity, *Rev.* xiii. 10. This might serve to oblige the present conquerors to use their captives well; because the wheel would turn round, and the day would come when they also should be captives; and let them do now as they would be done by. 7. Though the wound seem incurable, God will make a cure of it; ver. 17, "I will restore health unto thee." Be the disease never so dangerous, the patient is safe if God undertake the cure.

Fourthly. Upon the whole matter they are cautioned against inordinate fear and grief; for in these precious promises there is enough to silence both. 1. They must not tremble, as those that have no hope, in the apprehension of future farther troubles that might threaten them; ver. 10, "Fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, neither be dismayed." Note, Those that are God's servants must not give way to disquieting fears, whatever difficulties and dangers may be before them. 2. They must not sorrow as those that have no hope, for the troubles which at present they lie under; ver. 15, "Why criest thou for thine affliction?" It is true thy carnal confidences fail thee; creatures are physicians of no value, but I will heal thy wound, and therefore, Why criest thou? Why dost thou fret and complain thus? It is for thy sin, ver. 14, 15; and therefore instead of repining thou shouldest be repenting: Wherefore should a man complain for the punishment of his sin? The issue will be good at last, and therefore rejoice in hope.

18 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents,
And have mercy on his dwellingplaces;
And the city shall be builded upon her own heap,
And the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.
19 And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving
And the voice of them that make merry:
And I will multiply them, and they shall not be few;
I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.
20 Their children also shall be as aforetime,
And their congregation shall be established before me,
And I will punish all that oppress them.
21 And their nobles shall be of themselves,
And their governor shall proceed from the midst of them;
And I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me:
For who *is* this that engaged his heart to approach unto me?
Saith the LORD.
22 And ye shall be my people,
And I will be your God.
23 Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury,
A continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked.
24 The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done *it*,
And until he have performed the intents of his heart:
In the latter days ye shall consider it.

We have here farther intimations of the favour God had in reserve for them, after the days of their calamity were over. It is promised,

First. That the city and temple should be rebuilt, ver. 18. Jacob's tents and his dwelling-place felt the effects of the captivity; for they lay in ruins when the inhabitants were carried away captives. But when they are returned the habitations shall be repaired, and raised up out of their ruins; and therein God will have mercy upon their dwelling-places that had been monuments of his justice. "Then the city" of Jerusalem "shall be built upon her own heap," her own hill, though it be no better than a ruinous heap. The situation was unexceptionable, and therefore it shall be rebuilt upon the same spot of ground. He that can make of a city a heap, *Isa.* xxv. 1, can when he pleaseth make of a heap a city again. The palace, that is, the temple, God's palace, "shall remain after the manner thereof;" it shall be built after the old model; and the service of God shall be constantly kept up there, and attended as formerly.

Secondly. That the sacred feasts should again be solemnized, ver. 19. Out of the city, and the temple, and all the dwelling-places of Jacob, "shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry." They shall go with expressions of joy to the temple service, and with the like shall return from it. Observe, The voice of thanksgiving is the same with the voice of them that make merry; for whatever is the matter of our joy should be the matter of our praise. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." What makes us cheerful, let it make us thankful; serve the Lord with gladness.

Thirdly. That the people should be multiplied and increased, and made considerable; "They shall not be few—they shall not be small," but shall become numerous and illustrious, and make a figure among the nations, for I will multiply them, and I will glorify them; it is for the honour of the church to have many added to it that shall be saved. This would make them to be of some weight among their neighbours. Let a people be never so much diminished and despised, God can multiply and glorify them. They shall be restored to

their former honour; their children shall be as aforetime, playing in the streets, *Zec.* viii. 5; they shall inherit their parents' estates and honour, as formerly. And their congregation shall, both in civil and sacred things, be established before me. There shall be a constant succession of faithful magistrates in the congregation of the elders to establish that, and of faithful worshippers in the congregation of the saints. As one generation passeth away another shall be raised up, and so the congregation shall be established before God.

Fourthly. That they shall be blessed with a good government, ver. 21. Their nobles and judges shall be of themselves, of their own nation, and they shall no longer be ruled by strangers and enemies; "Their governor shall proceed from the midst of them," shall be one that has been a sharer with them in the afflictions of their captive state. And this has reference to Christ our governor, David our king, ver. 9. He is of ourselves, in all things made like unto his brethren; "and I will cause him to draw near." This may be understood either, 1. Of the people, Jacob and Israel. I will cause them to draw near to me in the temple service, as formerly; to come into covenant with me, as my people, ver. 22; to approach to me in communion; for who hath engaged his heart, made a covenant with it, and brought it into bonds, to approach unto me? How few are there that do so! None can do it but by the special grace of God, causing them to draw near. Note, Whenever we approach to God in any holy ordinance we must engage our hearts to do it; the heart must be prepared for the duty, employed in it, and kept close to it. The heart is the main thing that God looks at and requires; but it is deceitful, and will start aside, if a great deal of care and pains be not taken to engage it, to bind this sacrifice with cords. Or, 2. It may be understood of the governor; for it is a single person that is spoken of. Their governor shall be duly called to his office, shall draw near to God, to consult him upon all occasions. God will cause him to approach to him, for otherwise who would engage to take care of so weak a people, and let this ruin come under their hand? But when God has work to do, though attended with many discouragements, he will raise up instruments to do it. But it looks farther to Christ; to him as Mediator. Note, 1st. The proper work and office of Christ, as Mediator, is to draw near and approach unto God; not for himself only, but for us, and in our name and stead, as the high priest of our profession. The priests are said to draw nigh to God, *Lev.* x. 3; xxi. 17. Moses drew near, *Ex.* xx. 21. 2nd. God the Father did cause Jesus Christ thus to draw near and approach to him as Mediator. He commanded and appointed him to do it; he sanctified and sealed him, anointed him for this purpose, and accepted of him, and declared himself well pleased in him. 3rd. Jesus Christ, being caused by the Father to approach unto him as Mediator, did engage his heart to do it, that is, he bound and obliged himself to it, undertook for his heart, so some read it, for his soul, that in the fulness of time it should be made an offering for sin. His own voluntary susception in compliance with his Father's will, and in compassion to fallen man, engaged him, and then his own honour kept him to it. It also intimates that he was hearty and resolute, free and cheerful in it, and made nothing of the difficulties that lay in his way, *Isa.* lxiii. 3—5. 4th. Jesus Christ was in all this truly wonderful. We may well ask with admiration, Who is this that thus engageth his heart to such an undertaking?

Fifthly. That they shall be taken again into covenant with God, according to the covenant made with their fathers; ver. 22, "Ye shall be my people;" and it is God's good work in us that makes us to him a people, a people for his name, *Acts* xv. 14; "And I will be your God," and it is his good will to us that is the summary of that part of the covenant.

Sixthly. That their enemies shall be reckoned with and brought down; ver. 20, "I will punish all that oppress them;" so that it shall appear to all a dangerous thing to touch God's anointed, *Ps.* cv. 15. The last two verses come under this head, "The whirlwind of the Lord shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked." These two verses we had before, *ch.* xxiii. 19, 20; there they were a denunciation of God's wrath against the wicked hypocrites in Israel; here, against the wicked oppressors of Israel. The expressions exactly agreeing speak the same with that, *Isa.* li. 22, 23, "I will take the cup of trembling out of thy hand, and put it into the hand of them that afflict thee." The wrath of God against the wicked is here represented to be, 1. Very terrible, like a whirlwind, surprising, and irresistible. 2. Very grievous; it shall fall with pain upon their heads, they shall be as ill hurt as frightened. 3. It shall pursue them. Whirlwinds use to be short, but this shall be a continuing whirlwind. 4. It shall accomplish that for which it is sent; "the anger of the Lord shall not return till he have done it." The purposes of his wrath, as well as the purposes of his love, will all be fulfilled. He will perform the intents of his heart. And, 5. Those that will not lay this to heart now will then be unable to put off the thoughts of it; "In the latter days ye shall consider it," when it will be too late to prevent it.

CHAPTER XXXI.

This chapter goes on with the good words and comfortable words which we had in the chapter before, for the encouragement of the captives, assuring them that God would in due time return them or their children to their own land, and make them a great and happy nation again; especially by sending them the Messiah, in whose kingdom and grace many of these promises were to have their full accomplishment. I. They shall be restored to peace, and honour, and joy, and great plenty, ver. 1—14. II. Their sorrow for the loss of their children shall be at an end, ver. 15—17. III. They shall repent of their sins, and God will graciously accept them in their repentance, ver. 18—20. IV. They shall be multiplied and increased, both their children and their cattle, and not be cut off and diminished as they had been, ver. 21—30. V. God will renew his covenant with them, and enrich it with spiritual blessings, ver. 31—34. VI. These blessings shall be secured to theirs after them, even to the spiritual seed of Israel for ever, ver. 35—37. VII. As an earnest of this, the city of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, ver. 38—40. These exceeding great and precious promises were firm foundations of hope, and full fountains of joy, to the poor captives; and we also may apply them to ourselves, and mix faith with them.

AT the same time, saith the LORD,
Will I be the God of all the families of Israel,
And they shall be my people.
2 Thus saith the LORD,
The people *which were* left of the sword found grace in the wilderness;
Even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.
3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*,
Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love:
Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.
4 Again I will build thee,
And thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel:
Thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets,
And shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.
5 Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria:
The planters shall plant, and shall eat *them* as common things.
6 For there shall be a day,
That the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry,
Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion
Unto the LORD our God.
7 For thus saith the LORD;
Sing with gladness for Jacob,
And shout among the chief of the nations:
Publish ye, praise ye, and say,
O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.
8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country,
And gather them from the coasts of the earth,
And with them the blind and the lame,
The woman with child and her that travaileth with child together:
A great company shall return hither.
9 They shall come with weeping,
And with supplications will I lead them:
I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters
In a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble:
For I am a father to Israel,
And Ephraim *is* my firstborn.

God here assures his people,

First. That he will again take them into a covenant relation to himself, from which they seemed to have been cut off. At the same time when God's anger breaks out against the wicked, *ch.* xxx. 24, his own people shall be owned by him as the children of his love; "I will be the God," that is, I will shew myself to be "the God of all the families of Israel," ver. 1, not of the two tribes only, but of all the tribes; not of the house of Aaron only, and the families of Levi, but of all their families. Not only their state in general, but their particular families, and the interests of them, shall have the benefit of a special relation to God. Note, The families of good people, in their family capacity, may apply themselves to God, and stay themselves upon him as their God. If we and our houses serve the Lord, we and our houses shall be protected and blessed by him, *Pr.* iii. 33.

Secondly. That he will do for them in bringing them out of Babylon, as he had done for their fathers when he delivered them out of Egypt, and as he had purposed to do when he first took them to be his people. 1. He puts them in mind what he did for their fathers when he brought them out of Egypt, ver. 2. They were then, as these were, a people left of the sword, that sword of Pharaoh with which he cut off all the male children as soon as they were born, a bloody sword indeed they had narrowly escaped, and that sword with which he threatened to cut them off when he pursued them to the Red sea. They were then in the wilderness, where they seemed to be lost and forgotten, as these were now in a strange land, and yet they found grace in God's sight, were owned and highly honoured by him, and blessed with wonderful instances of his peculiar favour, and he was at this time going to cause them to rest in Canaan. Note, When we are brought very low, and insuperable difficulties appear in the way of our deliverance, it is good to remember that it has been so with the church formerly, and yet it has been raised up from its low estate, and has got to Canaan through all the hardships of a wilderness; and God is still the same. 2. They put him in mind of what God had done for their fathers, intimating that they now saw not such signs, and were ready to ask, as Gideon did, Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? ver. 3. It is true "the Lord hath appeared of old unto me," in Egypt, in the wilderness, hath appeared with me and for me, hath been seen in his glory as my God. The years of ancient times were glorious years, but now it is otherwise; what good will it do us that he appeared of old to us, when now he is a God that hides himself from us? *Isa.* xlv. 15. Note, It is hard to take comfort from former smiles, under present frowns. 3. To this he answers with assurance of the constancy of his love; "Yea, I have loved thee," not only with an ancient love, but with an everlasting love, a love that shall never fail, however the comforts of it may for a time be suspended. It is an everlasting love, therefore have I extended or drawn out lovingkindness unto thee also, as well as to thine ancestors. Or, With lovingkindness have I drawn thee to myself as thy God, from all the idols to which thou hadst turned aside. Note, It is the happiness of those who are through grace interested in the love of God, that it is an everlasting love; from everlasting in the counsels of it to everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it; and that nothing can separate them from that love; and those whom God loves with this love he will draw them into covenant and communion with himself by the influences of his Spirit upon their souls; he will draw them with lovingkindness, with the cords of men and bands of love, than which no attraction can be more powerful.

Thirdly. That he will again form them into a people, and give them a very joyful settlement in their own land, ver. 4, 5. Is the church of God his house, his temple? Is it now in ruins? It is so; but, "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built." Are the parts of this building dispersed? They shall be collected and put together again, each in its place. If God undertake to build them they shall be built, whatever opposition may be given to it. Is Israel a beautiful virgin? Is she now stripped of her ornaments, and reduced to a melancholy state? She is so; but "thou shalt again be adorned" and made fine,

adorned with thy tabrets or timbrels; the ornaments of thy chamber, and made merry. They shall resume their harps, which had been hung upon the willow-trees, shall tune them, and shall themselves be in tune to make use of them. They shall be adorned with their tabrets, for now their mirth and music shall be seasonable; it shall be a proper time for it. God in his providence shall call them to it, and then it shall be an ornament to them; whereas tabrets, at a time of common calamity, when God called to mourning, were a shame to them. Or it may refer to their use of tabrets in the solemnizing of their religious feasts, and their going forth in dances then, as the daughters of Shiloh, *Jud.* xxi. 19, 21. And then our mirth is indeed an ornament to us, when we serve God and honour him with it. Is the joy of the city maintained by the products of the country? It is so, and therefore it is promised, ver. 5, "Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria;" which had been the head city of the kingdom of Israel, in opposition to that of Judah; but they shall now be united, *Eze.* xxxvii. 22. And there shall be such a perfect peace and security, that men shall apply themselves wholly to the improvement of their ground; the planters shall plant, not fearing the soldiers coming to eat the fruits of what they had planted, or to pluck it up; but they themselves shall eat them freely, as common things, not forbidden fruits, not forbidden by the law of God, as they were till the fifth year, *Lev.* xix. 13—15; not forbidden by the owners, because there shall be such plenty as to yield enough for all, for each.

Fourthly. That they shall have liberty and opportunity to worship God in the ordinances of his own appointment, and shall have both invitations and inclinations to do so; ver. 6, "There shall be a day," and a glorious day it will be, "when the watchmen upon mount Ephraim," that are sent to stand sentinel there to give notice of the approach of the enemy, finding that all is very quiet, and there is no appearance of danger, shall desire for a time to be discharged from their post, that they may go up to Zion, to praise God for the public peace. Or the watchmen that tend the vineyards, spoken of ver. 5, shall stir up themselves, and one another, and all their neighbours, to go and keep the solemn feasts at Jerusalem. Now this implies that the service of God shall be again set up in Zion, that there shall be a general resort to it, with much affection and mutual excitement, as in David's time, *Ps.* cxxii. 1. But that which is most observable here is that the watchmen of Ephraim are forward to promote the worship of God at Jerusalem, whereas, when time was, the watchman of Ephraim was hatred against the house of his God, *Hos.* ix. 8; and, instead of inviting people to Zion, laid snares for those that set their faces thitherward, *Hos.* v. 1. Note, God can make those who have been enemies to religion, and the true worship of God, to become encouragers of it, and leaders in it. This promise was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when the Gospel should be preached to all these countries, and a general invitation thereby given unto the church of Christ, of which Zion was a type.

Fifthly. That God shall have the glory, and the church both the honour and comfort, of this blessed change; ver. 7, "Sing with gladness for Jacob;" that is, let all her friends and well-wishers rejoice with her, *Deu.* xxxii. 43; "Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people," *Rom.* xv. 10. The restoration of Jacob will be taken notice of by all the neighbours, it will be matter of joy to them all, and they shall all join with Jacob in his joys, and thereby pay him respect, and put a reputation upon him. Even the chief of the nations, that make the greatest figure, shall think it an honour to them to congratulate the restoration of Jacob, and shall do themselves the honour to send their ambassadors on that errand. "Publish ye, praise ye;" in publishing these tidings, praise the God of Israel, praise the Israel of God, speak honourably of both. The publishers of the Gospel must do it with praise; and therefore it is often spoken of in the *Psalms* as mingled with praises, *Ps.* lxvii. 2, 3; xcvi. 2, 3. What we either bring to others or take to ourselves the comfort of, we must be sure to give God the praise of; "Praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people;" that is, perfect their salvation, go on to save the remnant of Israel that are yet in bondage, as *Ps.* cxxvi. 3, 4. Note, When we are praising God for what he has done we must call upon him for the future favours which his church is in need and expectation of. And in praying to him we really praise him, and give him glory; he takes it so.

Sixthly. That in order to a happy settlement in their own land they shall have a joyful return out of the land of their captivity, and a very comfortable passage homeward, ver. 8, 9. And this beginning of mercy should be to them a pledge of all the other blessings here promised. 1. Though they are scattered to places far remote, yet they shall be brought together from the north country, and from the coasts of the earth; wherever they are God will find them out. 2. Though many of them are very unfit for travel, yet that shall be no hindrance to them. The blind and the lame shall come; such a good-will shall they have to their journey, and such a good heart upon it, that they shall not make their blindness and lameness an excuse for staying where they are. Their companions will be ready to help them, will be eyes to the blind and legs to the lame, as good Christians ought to be to one another in their travels heavenward, *Job* xxix. 15. But, above all, their God will help them; and let none plead he is blind that has God for his guide; or lame that has God for his strength. The women with child are heavy, and it is not fit they should undertake such a journey, much less those that travail with child; and yet, when it is to return to Zion, neither the one nor the other shall make any difficulty of it. Note, When God calls we must not plead any inability to come; for he that calls us will help us, will strengthen us. 3. Though they seem to be diminished, and to become few in numbers, yet when they come all together they shall be a great company; and so will God's spiritual Israel be, when there shall be a general rendezvous of them, though now they are but a little flock. 4. Though their return will be matter of joy to them, yet prayers and tears will be both their stores and their artillery; ver. 9, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplication," weeping for sin, supplication for pardon; for the goodness of God shall lead them to repentance, and they shall weep with more bitterness, and more tenderness for sin, when they are delivered out of their captivity than ever they did when they were groaning under it. Weeping and praying do well together; tears put life into prayers, and express the liveliness of them, and prayers help to wipe away tears. 'With favours will I lead them,' so the margin reads it; in their journey they shall be compassed with God's favours, the fruits of his favour. 5. Though they have a perilous journey, yet they shall be safe under a Divine conduct and convoy. Is the country they pass through dry and thirsty? "I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters," not the waters of a landflood, which fail in summer. Is it a wilderness where there is no road, no track? I will cause them to walk in a straight way, which they shall not miss. Is it a rough and rocky country? Yet they shall not stumble. Note, Whithersoever God gives his people a clear call, he will either find them or make them a ready way; and while we are following providence we may be sure providence will not be wanting to us. And, 6. Here is a reason given why God will take all this care of his people; "for I am a father to Israel," a father that begat him, and therefore will maintain him, that have the care and compassion of a father for him, *Ps.* ciii. 13. "And Ephraim is my first-born," even Ephraim, that, having gone astray from God, was no more worthy to be called a son, yet shall be owned as a first-born, particularly dear, and heir of a double portion of blessings. The same reason that was given for their release out of Egypt is given for their release out of Babylon; they are freeborn, and therefore must not be enslaved; are born to God, and therefore must not be the servants of men; *Ex.* iv. 22, 23, "Israel is my son, my first-born, let my son go, that he may serve me." If we take God for our father, and join ourselves to the church of the first-born, we may be assured that we shall want nothing that is good for us.

10 Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations,
And declare *it* in the isles afar off, and say,
He that scattered Israel will gather him,
And keep him, as a shepherd *doth* his flock.
11 For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob,
And ransomed him from the hand of *him that was* stronger than he.
12 Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion,
And shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD,
For wheat, and for wine, and for oil,
And for the young of the flock, and of the herd:
And their soul shall be as a watered garden;
And they shall not sorrow any more at all.

WATERED GARDEN.

13 Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance,
Both young men and old together:
For I will turn their mourning into joy,
And will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.
14 And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness,
And my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.
15 Thus saith the LORD;
A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, *and* bitter weeping;
Rahel weeping for her children [*were* not.
Refused to be comforted for her children, because they
16 Thus saith the LORD;
Refrain thy voice from weeping,
And thine eyes from tears:
For thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD;
And they shall come again from the land of the enemy.
17 And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD,
That thy children shall come again to their own border.

This paragraph is much to the same purpose with the last, publishing to the world, as well as to the church, the purposes of God's love concerning his people. This is a "word of the Lord," which the nations must hear, for it is a prophecy of a work of the Lord, which the nations cannot but take notice of; let them hear the prophecy that they may the better understand and improve the performance. And let them that hear it themselves declare it to others, "declare it in the isles afar off;" it will be a piece of news that will spread all the world over. It will look very great in history, let us see how it looks in prophecy. It is foretold,

First. That those that are dispersed shall be brought together again from their dispersions. He that scattered Israel will gather him, for he knows whither he scattered them, and therefore where to find them, ver. 10. *Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit*—'The hand that inflicted the wound shall heal it.' And when he has gathered him into one body, one fold, he will keep him as a shepherd doth his flock from being scattered again.

Secondly. That those that are sold and alienated shall be redeemed and brought back, ver. 11. Though the enemy that had got possession of him was stronger than he, yet the Lord, who is stronger than all, hath redeemed and ransomed him, not by price, but by power, as of old out of the Egyptian's hands.

Thirdly. That with their liberty they shall have plenty and joy, and God shall be honoured and served with it, ver. 12, 13. When they are returned to their own land, "they shall come and sing in the high place of Zion;" on the top of that holy mountain they shall sing to the praise and glory of God. We read they did so when the foundation of the temple was laid there; they "sang together, praising and giving thanks to the Lord," *Ezr.* iii. 11. They shall "flow together to the goodness of the Lord;" that is, they shall flock in great numbers, and with great forwardness and cheerfulness, as streams of water, "to the goodness of the Lord;" that is, to the temple, where he causeth his goodness to pass before his people. They shall come together in solemn assemblies, to praise him for his goodness, and to pray for the fruits of it, and the continuance of it; they shall come to bless him for his goodness, in giving them wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock, and of the herd, which, now they have obtained their freedom, they have an incontested property in, and the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of; and which therefore they honour God with the firstfruits of, and out of which they bring offerings to his altar. Note, It is comfortable to observe the goodness of the Lord in the gifts of common providence, and even in them to taste covenant-love. And having plenty, plenty out of want and scarcity, they shall greatly rejoice; "their soul shall be as a watered garden," flourishing and fruitful, *Isa.* lviii. 11, pleasant and fragrant, and abounding in all good things. Note, Our souls are never valuable as gardens but when they are watered with the dews of God's Spirit and grace. It is a precious promise that follows, and which will not have its full accomplishment any where on this side the height of the heavenly Zion, that they "shall not sorrow any more at all;" for it is only in that New Jerusalem that "all tears shall be wiped away," *Rev.* xxi. 4. However, so far it was fulfilled to the returned captives, that they had not any more those causes for sorrow that they had had; and therefore, ver. 13, young men and old shall rejoice together; so grave shall the young men be in their joys as to keep company with the old men, and so transported shall the old men be as to associate with the young. *Salva res est, saltat senex,*—'The state prospers, and the aged dance.' God will "turn their mourning into joy," their fasts into solemn feasts, *Zec.* viii. 19. It was in the return out of Babylon that they who sowed in tears were made to reap in joy, *Ps.* cxxvi. 5, 6. Those are comforted indeed whom God comforts, and may forget their troubles when he makes them to rejoice from their sorrow; not only rejoice after it, but rejoice from it. Their joy shall borrow lustre from their sorrow, which shall serve as a foil to it; and the more they think of their troubles the more shall they rejoice in their deliverance.

Fourthly. That both the ministers and those they minister to shall have abundant satisfaction in what God gives them; ver. 14, "I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness," that is, There shall be such plenty of sacrifices brought to the altar, that they who live upon the altar shall live very comfortably. They and their families shall be satiated with fatness, they shall have enough, and that of the best; and "my people shall be satisfied with my goodness," and shall think there is enough in that to make them happy; and so there is. God's people have an abundant satisfaction in God's goodness, though they have but little of this world. Let them be satisfied of God's lovingkindness and they will be satisfied with it, and desire no more to make them happy. All this is applicable to the spiritual blessings which the redeemed of the Lord enjoy by Jesus Christ, infinitely more valuable than corn, and wine, and oil, and the satisfaction of soul which they have in the enjoyment of them.

Fifthly. That those particularly who had been in sorrow for the loss of their children that were carried into captivity, should have that sorrow turned into joy upon their return, ver. 15—17. Here we have,

1. The sad lamentation which the mothers made for the loss of their children, ver. 15. "In Ramah was there a voice heard" at the time when the general captivity was, nothing but "lamentation and bitter weeping," more there than in other places, because there Nebuzaradan had the general rendezvous of his captives, as appears *ch.* xl. 1, where we find him sending Jeremiah back from Ramah. Rachel is there said to weep for her children. The sepulchre of Rachel was between Ramah and Bethlehem. Benjamin, one of the two tribes, and Ephraim, head of the ten tribes, were both descendants from Rachel. She had but two sons, the elder of which was one for whom his father grieved, and "refused to be comforted," *Gen.* xxxvii. 35; the other she herself called Benoni, the 'son of my sorrow.' Now the inhabitants of Ramah did in like manner grieve for their sons and their daughters that were carried away, as 1 *Sam.* xxx. 6, and such a voice of lamentation was there as, to speak poetically, might even have raised Rachel out of her grave, to mourn with them. The tender parents even "refused to be comforted for their children, because they were not," were not with them, but were in the hands of their enemies; they were never likely to see them more. This is applied by the evangelists to the great mourning that was at Bethlehem, for the murder of the infants there by Herod, *Mat.* ii. 17, 18; and this scripture is said to be then fulfilled. They wept for them and would not be comforted, supposing the case would not admit any ground of comfort, because they were not. Note, Sorrow for the loss of children cannot but be great sorrow, especially if we so far mistake as to think they are not.

2. Seasonable comfort administered to them in reference hereunto, ver. 16, 17. They are advised to moderate that sorrow, and to set bounds to it; "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears." We are not forbidden to mourn in such a case. Allowances are made for natural affection, but we must not suffer our sorrow to run into an extreme, to hinder our joy in God, or take us off from our duty to him. Though we mourn we must not murmur, nor must we resolve, as Jacob did, to go to the grave in mourning: and to repress inordinate grief we must consider that there is hope in our end; hope that there will be an end, the trouble will not last always; that it will be a happy end, the end will be peace. Note, It ought to support us under our troubles that we have reason to hope they will end well. The righteous has hope in his death; that will be the blessed period of his griefs and the blessed passage to his joys. There is hope for thy posterity, so some read it; though thou mayest not live to see these glorious days thyself, there is hopes that thy posterity shall. Though one generation falls in the wilderness, the next shall enter Canaan. Two things thou mayest comfort thyself with the hope of: 1st. The reward of thy work; Thy suffering work shall be rewarded. The comforts of the deliverance shall be sufficient to balance all the grievances of the captivity. God makes his people glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted them, and so there is a proportion between the joys and the sorrows, as between the reward and the work. The glory to be revealed, which the saints hope for in their end, will abundantly countervail the sufferings of this present time, *Rom.* viii. 18. 2nd. The restoration of thy children; "They shall come again from the land of the enemy," ver. 16; they "shall come again to their own border," ver. 17. There is hope that children at a distance may be brought home; Jacob had a comfortable meeting with Joseph, after he had despaired of ever seeing him. There is hope concerning children removed by death, that they shall return to their own border, to the happy lot assigned them in the resurrection; a lot in the heavenly Canaan, that border of his sanctuary. We shall see reason to repress our grief for the death of our children, that are taken into covenant with God, when we consider the hopes we have of their resurrection to eternal life; they are not lost, but gone before.

18 I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself *thus;*
Thou hast chastised me, [*yoke:*
And I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed *to the*
Turn thou me, and I shall be turned;
For thou *art* the LORD my God.
19 Surely, after that I was turned, I repented;
And after that I was instructed, I smote upon *my* thigh:
I was ashamed, yea, even confounded,
Because I did bear the reproach of my youth.
20 *Is* Ephraim my dear son?
Is he a pleasant child?
For since I spake against him,
I do earnestly remember him still:
Therefore my bowels are troubled for him;
I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.
21 Set thee up waymarks,
Make thee high heaps:
Set thine heart toward the highway,
Even the way *which* thou wentest:
Turn again, O virgin of Israel,
Turn again to these thy cities. [ter?
22 How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daugh-
For the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth,
A woman shall compass a man.
23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah
And in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity;
The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, *and* mountain of holiness.
24 And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together,
Husbandmen, and they *that* go forth with flocks.
25 For I have satiated the weary soul,
And I have replenished every sorrowful soul.
26 Upon this I awaked, and beheld;
And my sleep was sweet unto me.

We have here,

First. Ephraim's repentance, and return to God. Not only Judah, but Ephraim, the ten tribes, shall be restored, and therefore shall thus be prepared and qualified for it; *Hos.* xiv. 8, "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" Ephraim the people is here spoken of as a single person, to denote their unanimity; they shall be as one man in their repentance, and shall glorify God in it with one mind and one mouth, one and all. It is likewise thus expressed that it might be the better accommodated to particular penitents, for whose direction and encouragement this passage is intended. Ephraim is here brought in weeping for sin, perhaps because Ephraim, the person from whom that tribe had its denomination, was a man of a tender spirit, mourned for his children many days, 1 *Chr.* vii. 21, 22, and sorrow for sin is compared to that for an only son. This penitent is here brought in, 1. Bemoaning himself and the miseries of his present case. True penitents do thus bemoan themselves. 2. Accusing himself, laying a load upon himself, as a sinner, a great sinner. He chargeth upon himself in the first place that sin which his conscience told him he was more especially guilty of at this time, and that was impatience under correction. "Thou hast chastised me;" I have been under the rod, and I needed it, I deserved it. I was justly chastised, chastised as a bullock who had never felt the goad, if he had not first rebelled against the yoke. True penitents look upon their afflictions as fatherly chastisements; "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised;" that is, it was well I was chastised, otherwise I had been undone; it did me good, or at least was intended to do me good, and yet I have been impatient under it. Or it may speak his unaffectedness under the affliction; "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised," that was all; not, I was awakened by it and quickened by it: I looked no farther than the chastisement. I have been under the chastisement "as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," unruly and unmanageable, kicking against the pricks, "like a wild bull in a net," *Isa.* li. 20. This is the sin he finds himself guilty of now; but, ver. 19, he reflects upon his former sins, and looks as far back as the days of his youth. The discovery of one sin should put us upon searching out more. Now he remembers the reproach of his youth; Ephraim as a people reflects upon the miscarriages of their ancestors, when they were first formed into a people. It is applicable to particular persons. Note, The sin of our youth was the reproach of our youth, and we ought often to remember it against ourselves, and to bear it in a penitential sorrow and shame. 3. He is here brought in angry at himself, having a holy indignation at himself for his sin and folly. He smote upon his thigh, as the publican upon his breast; he was even amazed at himself and at his own stupidity and forwardness; he was ashamed, yea, even confounded, could not with any confidence look up to God, nor with any comfort reflect upon himself. 4. He is here recommending himself to the mercy and grace of God. He finds he is bent to backslide from God, and cannot by any power of his own keep himself close

with God, much less when he is revolted bring himself back to God; and therefore he prays, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned," which implies that unless God do turn him by his grace he shall never be turned, but wander endlessly; that therefore he is very desirous of converting grace, has a dependence upon it, and doubts not but that that grace will be sufficient for him, to help him over all the difficulties that were in the way of his return to God: see *ch.* xvii. 14, "Heal me, and I shall be healed." God works with power, can make the unwilling willing; if he undertake the conversion of a soul it will be converted. 5. He is here pleasing himself with the experience he had had of the blessed effect of Divine grace; "Surely after that I was turned I repented." Note, All the pious workings of our hearts towards God are the fruit and consequence of the powerful working of his grace in us. And observe, he was turned, he was instructed, his will was bowed to the will of God, by the right informing of his judgment concerning the truths of God. Note, The way God takes of converting souls to himself is by opening the eyes of their understandings, and all good follows thereupon; "After that I was instructed," I yielded, "I smote upon my thigh." When sinners come to a right knowledge, they will come to a right way. Ephraim was chastised, and that did not produce the desired effect, it went no farther; I was chastised, and that was all. But when the instructions of God's Spirit accompanied the corrections of his providence, then the work was done, then he smote upon his thigh; was so humbled for sin as to have no more to do with it.

Secondly. God's compassion on Ephraim, and the kind reception he finds with God, ver. 20. 1. He owns him for a child, though he has been an undutiful child and a prodigal; "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?" Thus, when Ephraim bemoans himself, God bemoans him, as one whom his mother comforts, though she had chidden him, *Isa.* lxvi. 13. Is this Ephraim my dear son? Is this that pleasant child? Is it he that is thus sad in spirit, and that complains so bitterly? So it is like that of Saul, 1 *Sam.* 16, 17, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" Or, as it is sometimes supplied, Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child? Yes, now he is, now he repents and returns. Note, Those that have been undutiful backsliding children, if they sincerely return and repent, however they have been under the chastisement of the rod, shall be accepted of God as dear and pleasant children. Ephraim had afflicted himself, but God thus heals him; had abased himself, but God thus honours him; as the returning prodigal, who thought himself no more worthy to be called a son, yet by his father had the best robe put upon him, and a ring on his hand. 2. He relents towards him, and speaks of him with a great deal of tender compassion; "Since I spake against him," by the threatening of the word and the rebukes of providence, "I do earnestly remember him still," my thoughts towards him are thoughts of peace. Note, When God afflicts his people, yet he doth not forget them; when he casts them out of their land yet he doth not cast them out of sight nor out of mind. Even then when God is speaking against us, yet he is acting for us, and designing our good in all; and this is our comfort in our affliction, that the Lord thinketh upon us, though we have forgotten him. "I remember him still," and therefore "my bowels are troubled for him," as Joseph's yearned towards his brethren, even then when he spake roughly to them. When Israel's afflictions extorted a penitent confession and submission, it is said his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, *Jud.* x. 16, for he always afflicts with the greatest tenderness. It was God's compassion that mitigated Ephraim's punishment, "My heart is turned within me," *Hos.* xi. 8, 9; and now the same compassion accepted Ephraim's repentance. Ephraim had pleaded, ver. 18, "Thou art the Lord my God," therefore to thee will I return, therefore on thy mercy and grace will I depend; and God shews it was a valid plea, and prevailing, for he makes it appear both that he is God, and not man, and that he is his God. 3. He resolves to do him good; "I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Note, God hath mercy in store, rich mercy, sure mercy, suitable mercy, for all that in sincerity seek him and submit to him. And the more we are afflicted for sin the better prepared we are for the comforts of that mercy.

Thirdly. Gracious excitements and encouragements given to the people of God in Babylon to prepare for their return to their own land. Let them not tremble and lose their spirit, let them not trifle and lose their time; but with a firm resolution and a close application address themselves to their journey, ver. 21, 22. 1. They must think of nothing but of coming back to their own country, out of which they had been driven; "Turn again, O virgin of Israel," a virgin to be again espoused to my God, "turn again to these thy cities;" though they are laid waste in the ruins, they are thy cities, which thy God gave thee, and therefore turn again to them. They must be content in Babylon no longer than till they had liberty to return to Zion. 2. They must return the same way that they went, that the remembrance of the sorrows that attended them, or which their fathers had told them of in such and such places on the road, the sight of which would, by a local memory, put them in mind of them, might make them the more thankful for their deliverance. Those that have departed from God into the bondage of sin must return by the same way in which they went astray, to the same duties they neglected; must do their first works. 3. They must engage themselves, and all that is within them, in this affair; "Set thine heart towards the highway," bring thy mind to it, consider thy duty, thine interest, and go about it with a goodwill. Note, The way from Babylon to Zion, from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of God's children, is a highway, it is right, it is plain, it is safe, it is well-tracked, *Isa.* xxxv. 8, yet none are likely to walk in it, unless they set their hearts toward it. 4. They must furnish themselves with all needful accommodations for the journey; "Set thee up waymarks, and make thee high heaps," or pillars; send before to have such set up in all places where there is any danger of missing the road. Let those that go first, and are best acquainted with the way, set up such directions for those that follow. 5. They must compose themselves for their journey; "How long wilt thou go about, O backsliding daughter?" Let not their minds fluctuate or be uncertain about it, but resolve upon it; let them not put themselves into a toss with care and fear; let them not seek about to creatures for assistance, nor hurry here and there in courting them, which has often been an instance of their backsliding from God, but let them cast themselves upon God, and then let their minds be fixed. 6. They are encouraged to do this by an assurance God gives them that he would create a new thing, strange and surprising, in the earth; in that land, "A woman shall compass a man." The church of God is weak and feeble as a woman, altogether unapt for military employments, and of a timorous spirit, yet shall surround, besiege, and prevail against a mighty man, *Isa.* liv. 6; the church is compared to a woman, *Rev.* xii. 1. And whereas we find armies compassing the camp of the saints, *Rev.* xx. 9, now the camp of the saints shall compass them. Many good interpreters understand this new thing created in that land, to be the incarnation of Christ, which God had an eye to in bringing them back to that land, and which had sometimes been given them for a sign, *Isa.* vii. 14; ix. 6. A woman, the Virgin Mary, inclosed in her womb the Mighty One, for so *Geber*, the word here used, signifies; and God is called *Gibbor*, the mighty God, *Jer.* xxxii. 18, and so is Christ there, where his incarnation is spoken of, as it is supposed to be here, *Isa.* ix. 6. He is *El-Gibbor*, the Mighty God. Let this assure them that God would not cast off this people, for that blessing was to be among them, *Isa.* lxv. 8.

Fourthly. A comfortable prospect given them of a happy settlement in their own land again. 1. They shall have an interest in the esteem and goodwill of all their neighbours, who will give them a good word and put up a good prayer for them; ver. 23, As yet, or rather, Yet again, (though Judah and Jerusalem have long been an astonishment and a hissing,) this speech shall be used as it was formerly, concerning the land of Judah and the cities thereof, "The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice and mountain of holiness." This intimates that they shall return much reformed and every way better; and this reformation shall be so conspicuous that all about them shall take notice of it. The cities that used to be nests of pirates shall be habitations of justice; the mountain of Israel, (so the whole land is called, *Ps.* lxxviii. 54,) and especially mount Zion, shall be a mountain of holiness. Observe, Justice towards men and holiness towards God must go together. Godliness and honesty are what God has joined, and let no man think to put them asunder, or to make one atone for the want of the other. It is well with a people when they come out of trouble thus refined, and it is a sure presage of farther happiness. And we may with great comfort pray for the blessing of God upon those houses that are habitations of justice, those cities and countries that are mountains of holiness; there the Lord will undoubtedly command the blessing. 2. There shall be great plenty of all good things among them; ver. 24, 25, "There shall dwell in Judah itself, even in it, though it has now long lain waste, both husbandmen and shepherds, the two ancient and honourable employments of Cain and Abel, *Gen.* iv. 2. It is a comfortable dwelling, an "habitation of justice," and a "mountain of holiness." And the husbandmen and shepherds shall eat of the fruit of their labours, for I have satiated the weary and sorrowful soul; that is, they that came weary from their journey, and have been long sorrowful in their captivity, shall now enjoy great plenty. This is applicable to the spiritual blessings God has in store for all true penitents, for all that are just and holy; they shall be abundantly satisfied with Divine graces and comforts. In the love and favour of God the weary soul shall find rest, and the sorrowful soul joy.

Fifthly. The prophet tells us what pleasure the discovery of this brought to his mind, ver. 26. The foresights God had given him sometimes of the calamities of Judah and Jerusalem were an exceeding pain to him, as *ch.* iv. 19; but these views were pleasing ones, though at a distance. "Upon this I awaked," overcome with joy, which burst the fetters of sleep, and I reflected upon my dream, and it was such as had made my sleep sweet to me; I was refreshed, as men use to be with quiet sleep. Those may sleep sweetly that lie down and rise up in the favour of God, and in communion with him. Nor is any prospect in this world more pleasing to good men and good ministers than that of the flourishing state of the church of God. What can we see with more satisfaction than "the good of Jerusalem all the days of our life and peace upon Israel?"

27 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That I will sow the house of Israel and the house of [Judah
With the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.
28 And it shall come to pass, *that* like as I have watched over them,
To pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down,
And to destroy, and to afflict;
So will I watch over them,
To build, and to plant, saith the LORD.
29 In those days they shall say no more,
The fathers have eaten a sour grape,
And the children's teeth are set on edge.
30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity:
Every man that eateth the sour grape,
His teeth shall be set on edge.
31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That I will make a new covenant
With the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:
32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their
In the day *that* I took them by the hand [fathers
To bring them out of the land of Egypt;
Which my covenant they brake,
Although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:
33 But this *shall be* the covenant
That I will make with the house of Israel;
After those days saith the LORD,
I will put my law in their inward parts,
And write it in their hearts;
And will be their God,
And they shall be my people.
34 And they shall teach no more
Every man his neighbour, and every man his brother,
Saying, Know the LORD:
For they shall all know me, [LORD:
From the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the
For I will forgive their iniquity,
And I will remember their sin no more.

The prophet having found his sleep sweet, made so by the revelations of Divine grace, sets himself to sleep again, in hopes of farther discoveries, and is not disappointed; for it is here farther promised,

First. That the people of God shall become both numerous and prosperous,

Both Israel and Judah shall be replenished both with men and cattle, as if they were sown with the seed of both, ver. 27. They shall increase and multiply like a field sown with corn; and this is the product of God's blessing, ver. 23; for whom God blessed, to them he said, Be fruitful. This should be a type of the wonderful increase of the Gospel church. God will build them, and plant them, ver. 28; he will watch over them to do them good, that is, no opportunity shall be lost that may further their prosperity. Every thing for a long time had turned so much against them, and all occurrences did so conspire to ruin them, that it seemed as if God had "watched over them to pluck up and to throw down;" but now every thing that falls out shall happily fall in to strengthen and advance their interests. God will be as ready to comfort those that repent of their sins, and are humbled for them, as he is to punish those that continue in love with their sins, and are hardened in them.

Secondly. That they shall be reckoned with no farther for the sins of their fathers; ver. 29, 30, "They shall say no more," that is, they shall have no more occasion to say, that God "visits the iniquity of the parents upon the children," which God had done in the captivity; for the sins of their ancestors came into the account against them, particularly those of Manasseh: this they had complained of as a hardship. Other scriptures justify God in this method of proceeding; and our Saviour tells the wicked Jews in his days, that they should smart for their fathers' sins, because they persisted in them, *Mat.* xxiii. 35, 39; but it is here promised that this severe dispensation with them should now be brought to an end, that God would proceed no farther in his controversy with them for their fathers' sins, but remember for them his covenant with their fathers, and do them good according to that covenant. They shall no more complain as they have done, that "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge; "which speaks something of an absurdity, and is an invidious reflection upon God's proceedings, but "every one shall die for his own iniquity" still. Though God will cease to punish them in their national capacity, yet he will still reckon with particular persons that provoke him. Note, Public salvations will give no impunity, no security to private sinners; still "every man that eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge." Note, Those that eat forbidden fruit, how temptingly soever it looks, will find it a sour grape, and it will set their teeth on edge; sooner or later they will feel from it, and reflect upon it with bitterness. There is as direct a tendency in sin to make a man uneasy as there is in sour grapes to set the teeth on edge.

Thirdly. That God will renew his covenant with them, so that all these blessings they shall have not by providence only, but by promise, and thereby they shall be both sweetened and secured; but this covenant refers to gospel times, the latter days that shall come; for of gospel grace the apostle understands it, *Heb.* viii. 8, &c., where this whole passage is quoted, as a summary of the covenant of grace made with believers in Jesus Christ. Observe,

1. Who the persons are with whom this covenant is made. "With the house of Israel and Judah," that is, with the gospel church, the Israel of God on which peace shall be, *Gal.* vi. 16; with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham, and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them; so Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church and covenant.

2. What is the nature of this covenant in general. It is "a new covenant," and "not according to the covenant made with them, when they came out of Egypt;" not as if that made with them at mount Sinai were a covenant of nature and innocency, such as was made with Adam in the day he was created. No, that was for substance a covenant of grace, but it was a dark dispensation of that covenant, in comparison with this in gospel times; sinners were saved by that covenant upon their repentance, and faith in a Messiah to come, whose blood confirming that covenant was typified by that of the legal sacrifices, *Ex.* xxiv. 7, 8. Yet this may upon many accounts be called new in comparison with that; the ordinances and promises are more spiritual and heavenly, and the discoveries much more clear. That covenant God made with them, when he took them by the hand, as if they had been blind, or lame, or weak, to lead them out of the land of Egypt; "which covenant they brake." Observe, It was God that made this covenant, but it was the people that brake it; for our salvation is of God, but our sin and ruin is of ourselves. It was an aggravation of their breach of it, that God "was a husband to them," that he had espoused them to himself; it was a marriage covenant that was between him and them, which they broke by idolatry, that spiritual adultery. It is a great aggravation of our treacherous departure from God, that he has been a husband to us, a loving, tender, careful husband; faithful to us, and yet we false to him.

3. What are the particular articles of this covenant. They all contain spiritual blessings; not, I will give them the land of Canaan, and a numerous issue; but, I will give them pardon, and peace, and grace; good heads and good hearts. He promiseth,

1st. That he will incline them to their duty; "I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their heart." Not, I will give them a new law, (as Mr. Gataker well observes,) for Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit, as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is written in the heart, *Pr.* iii. 3. He makes them in care to observe it; for that which we are solicitous about is said to lie near our heart. He works in them a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of Divine law, as that of the copy the original. This is here promised, and ought to be prayed for; that our duty may be done conscientiously, and with delight.

2nd. That he will take them into relation to himself; "I will be their God," a God all-sufficient to them, "and they shall be my people," a loyal obedient people to me. God's being to us a God is the summary of all happiness, heaven itself is no more, *Heb.* xi. 16; *Rev.* xxi. 3. Our being to him a people, may be taken either as the condition on our part, (those and those only shall have God to be to them a God, that are truly willing to engage themselves to be to him a people,) or as a farther branch of the promise, that God will by his grace make us his people, a willing people in the day of his power; and whoever are his people it is his grace that makes them so.

3rd. That there shall be an abundance of the knowledge of God among all sorts of people; and this will have an influence upon all good, for they that rightly know God's name will seek him, and serve him, and put their trust in him; ver. 34, "All shall know me." All shall be welcome to the knowledge of God, and shall have the means of that knowledge; his "way shall be known upon earth," whereas for many ages "in Judah only was God known." Many more shall know God than did in the Old Testament times, which among the Gentiles were times of ignorance, the true God being to them an unknown God. The things of God shall in gospel times be made more plain and intelligible, and level to the capacities of the meanest, than they had been, while Moses had a veil upon his face. There shall be such a general knowledge of God, that there shall not be so much need as had formerly been of teaching. Some take it as an hyperbolical expression (and the dulness of the Jews needed such expressions to awake them) designed only to shew that the knowledge of God in gospel times should vastly exceed that knowledge of him, which they had under the law. Or perhaps it intimates, that in gospel times there shall be such great plenty of public preaching, statedly and constantly, by men authorized and appointed to preach the word in season, and out of season, much beyond what was under the law, that there shall be less need than there was then of fraternal teaching, by a neighbour and a brother. The priests preached but now and then, and in the temple to a few in comparison; but now all shall or may know God by frequenting the assemblies of Christians, wherein through all parts of the church the good knowledge of God shall be taught. Some give this sense of it, (Mr. Gataker mentions it,) that many shall have such clearness of understanding in the things of God that they may seem rather to have been taught by some immediate irradiation than by any means of instruction. In short, the things of God shall by the Gospel of Christ be brought to a clearer light than ever, 2 *Tim.* i. 10; and the people of God shall by the grace of Christ be brought to a clearer sight of those things than ever, *Eph.* i. 17, 18.

4th. That, in order to all these blessings, sin shall be pardoned. This is made the reason of all the rest, "For I will forgive their iniquity," will not impute that to them, nor deal with them according to the desert of that, will forgive and forget; "I will remember their sin no more." It is sin that keeps good things from us, that stops the current of God's favours; let sin be taken away by pardoning mercy, and the obstruction is removed, and Divine grace runs down like a river, like a mighty stream.

35 Thus saith the LORD,
Which giveth the sun for a light by day,
And the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night,
Which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar;
The LORD of hosts *is* his name:
36 If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD,
Then the seed of Israel also shall cease
From being a nation before me for ever.
37 Thus saith the LORD;
If heaven above can be measured,
And the foundations of the earth searched out beneath,
I will also cast off all the seed of Israel
For all that they have done, saith the LORD.
38 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That the city shall be built to the LORD
From the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.
39 And the measuring line shall yet go forth
Over against it upon the hill Gareb,
And shall compass about to Goath.
40 And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes,
And all the fields unto the brook of Kidron,
Unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east,
Shall be holy unto the LORD;
It shall not be plucked up,
Nor thrown down any more for ever.

Glorious things have been spoken in the foregoing verses concerning the gospel church, which that epocha of the Jewish church that was to commence at the return from captivity would at length terminate in, and which all those promises were to have their full accomplishments in; but may we depend upon these promises? Yes, we have here a ratification of them, and the utmost assurance imaginable given of the perpetuity of the blessings contained in them. The great thing here secured to us is, that while the world stands God will have a church in it, which, though sometimes it may be brought very low, yet shall be raised again, and its interests re-established: "It is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Now here are two things offered, for the confirmation of our faith in this matter: the building of the world, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

First. The building of the world, and the firmness and lastingness of that building, is an evidence of the power and faithfulness of that God who has undertaken the establishment of his church. He that built all things at first is God, *Heb.* iii. 4; and the same is he that makes all things now. The constancy of the glories of the kingdom of nature may encourage us to depend upon the Divine promise for the continuance of the glories of the kingdom of grace; for "this is as the waters of Noah," *Isa.* liv. 9. Let us observe here,

1. The glories of the kingdom of nature, and infer from thence how happy they are that have this God, the God of nature, to be their God for ever and ever. Take notice, 1st. Of the steady and regular motion of the heavenly bodies, which God is the first mover and supreme director of. "He giveth the sun for a light by day," ver. 35; not only made it at first to be so, but still gives it to be so; for the light, and heat, and all the influences of the sun, continually depend upon its great Creator. He gives "the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night," their motions are called ordinances, both because they are regular, and by rule, and because they are determined, and under rule: see *Job* xxxviii. 31—33. 2nd. Take notice of the government of the sea, and the check that is given to its proud billows. The Lord of hosts divideth the sea; or, as some read it, 'settles the sea, when the waves thereof roar,' (*divide et impera*,—'divide and rule;') when it is most tossed God keeps it within compass, *Jer.* v. 22; and soon quiets it, and makes it calm again. The power of God is to be magnified by us, not only in maintaining the regular motions of the heavens, but in controlling the irregular motions of the seas. 3rd. Take notice of the vastness of the heavens, and the immeasurable extent of the firmament, (he must needs be a great God who manageth such a great world as this is;) "the heavens above cannot be measured," ver. 37, and yet God fills them. 4th. Take notice of the mysteriousness, even of that part of the creation in which our lot is cast, and which we are most conversant with. "The foundations of the earth cannot be searched out beneath," for the Creator "hangeth the earth upon nothing," *Job* xxvi. 7; and we "know not how the foundations thereof are fastened," *Job* xxxviii. 6.

5th. Take notice of the immovable steadfastness of all these; ver. 36, "These ordinances cannot depart from before God." He hath all the hosts of heaven and earth continually under his eye, and all the motions of both; he has established them, and they abide, abide "according to his ordinance, for all are his servants," *Ps.* cix. 90, 91. The heavens are often clouded, and the sun and moon often eclipsed, the earth may quake, and the sea be tossed; but they all keep their place,—are moved, but not removed. Herein we must acknowledge the power, and goodness, and faithfulness of the Creator.

2. The securities of the kingdom of grace inferred from hence. We may be confident of this very thing, that the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation; for the spiritual Israel, the gospel church, shall be a holy nation, a peculiar people, 1 *Pet.* ii. 9. When Israel according to the flesh is no longer a nation, "the children of the promise are counted for the seed," *Rom.* ix. 8; and God will not "cast off all the seed of Israel," no not "for all that they have done," though they have done very wickedly, ver. 37; he justly might cast them off, but he will not. Though he cast them but from their land, and cast them down for a time, yet he will not cast them off. Some of them he casts off, but not all. To this the apostle seems to refer, *Rom.* xi. 5, "Hath God cast away his people?" God forbid that we should think so! for, ver. 5, "At this time there is a remmant," enough to save the credit of the promise, that God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, though many among them throw away themselves by unbelief. Now we may be assisted in the belief of this by considering, 1st. That the God that has undertaken the preservation of the church is a God of almighty power, that upholds all things by his almighty word. Our help stands in his name, who made heaven and earth, and therefore can do any thing. 2nd. That God would not take all this care of the world, but that he designs to have some glory to himself out of it; and how shall he have it but by securing to himself a church in it, a people that shall be to him for a name and a praise? 3rd. That if the order of the creation therefore continues firm because it was well fixed at first, and is not altered because it needs no alteration, the method of grace shall for the same reason continue invariable, as it was at first well settled. 4th. That he who hath promised to preserve a church for himself has approved himself faithful to the word which he has spoken, concerning the stability of the world. He that is true to his covenant with Noah and his sons, because he established it for an everlasting covenant, *Gen.* ix. 9, 16, we may be sure will not be false to his covenant with Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, for that also is an everlasting covenant. Even that which they have done, though they have done much amiss, shall not prevail to defeat the gracious intentions of the covenant: see *Ps.* lxxxix. 30, &c.

Secondly. The rebuilding of Jerusalem, which was now in ruins; and the enlargement and establishment of that shall be an earnest of these great things that God will do for the gospel church, the heavenly Jerusalem, ver. 30—32. The days will come, though they may be long in coming, 1. When Jerusalem shall be entirely built again, as large as ever it was. The dimensions are here exactly described, by the places through which the circumference passed; and no doubt the wall which Nehemiah built, and which, the more punctually to fulfil the prophecy, began about the tower of Hananeel here mentioned, *Neh.* iii. 1, inclosed as much ground as is here intended, though we cannot certainly determine the places here called the gate of the corner, the hill Gareb, &c. 2. When, being built, it shall be consecrated to God and to his service. It shall be built to the Lord, ver. 38; and even the suburbs and fields adjacent shall be holy unto the Lord. It shall not be polluted with idols, as formerly; but God shall be praised and honoured there. The whole city shall be as it were one temple, one holy place, as the New Jerusalem is, which therefore has no temple, because it is all temple. 3rd. Being thus built by virtue of the promise of God, and then devoted to praise of God, "it shall not be plucked up, or thrown down any more for ever;" that is, it shall continue very long; the time of the new city, from the return to its last destruction, being full as long as that of the old from David to the captivity. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, which, as it is the spiritual Israel, and therefore God will not cast it off, so it is the holy city, and therefore all the powers of men shall not pluck it up, or throw it down. It may lie waste for a time as Jerusalem did, but shall recover itself, shall weather the storm and gain its point, and "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

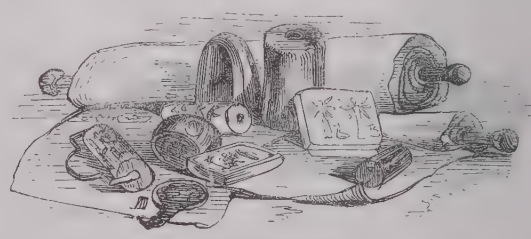
CHAPTER XXXII.

In this chapter we have, I. Jeremiah imprisoned for foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of king Zedekiah, ver. 1—5. II. We have him buying land, by Divine appointment, as an assurance that in due time a happy end should be put to the present troubles, ver. 6—15. III. We have his prayer, which he offered up to God upon that occasion, ver. 16—25. IV. We have a message, which God thereupon intrusted him to deliver to the people. 1. He must foretell the utter destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, ver. 26—35; but, 2. At the same time he must assure them that, though the destruction was total, it should not be final; but at length their posterity should recover the peaceable possession of their own land, ver. 36—44. The predictions of this chapter, both threatenings and promises, are much the same with what we have already met with again and again; but here are some circumstances that are very particular and remarkable.

THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which *was* the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. 2 For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which *was* in the king of Judah's house. 3 For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; 4 And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; 5 And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper. 6 And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 7 Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that *is* in Anathoth: for the right of redemption *is* thine to buy *it*. 8 So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that *is* in Anathoth, which *is* in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance *is* thine, and the redemption *is* thine; buy *it* for thyself. Then I knew that this *was* the word of the LORD. 9 And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that *was* in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, *even* seventeen shekels of silver. 10 And I subscribed the evidence,

SILVER SHEKELS.

and sealed *it*, and took witnesses, and weighed *him* the money in the balances. 11 So I took the evidence of the purchase, *both* that which was sealed *according* to the law and custom, and that which was



BABYLONISH SEALS.

open: 12 And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's *son*, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. 13 And I charged Baruch before them, saying, 14 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. 15 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of

Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.

It appears by the date of this chapter, that we are now coming very nigh to the fatal year which completed the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, by the Chaldeans. God's judgments came gradually upon them, but, they not meeting him by repentance in the way of his judgments, he proceeded in his controversy till all was laid waste, which was in the eleventh year of Zedekiah; now what is here recorded happened in the tenth. The king of Babylon's army had now invested Jerusalem, and was carrying on the siege with vigour, not doubting but in a little time to make themselves masters of it; while the besieged had taken up a desperate resolution not to surrender, but to hold it out to the last extremity. Now,

First. Jeremiah prophesieth that both the city and the court shall fall into the hands of the king of Babylon. He tells them expressly that the besiegers should take the city as prize; for God, whose city it was in a peculiar manner, will give it into their hands, and put it out of his protection, ver. 3;—that, though Zedekiah attempt to make his escape, he shall be overtaken, and shall be delivered a prisoner into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar; shall be brought into his presence to his great confusion and terror, he having made himself so obnoxious by breaking his faith with him; he shall hear the king of Babylon pronounce his doom, and see with what fury and indignation he will look upon him, "his eyes shall behold his eyes," ver. 4;—that Zedekiah shall be carried to Babylon, and continue a miserable captive there, until God visit him, that is, till God put an end to his life by a natural death, as Nebuchadnezzar had long before put an end to his days by putting out his eyes. Note, Those that live in misery may be truly said to be visited in mercy, when God by death takes them home to himself. And, lastly, he foretells that all their attempts to force the besiegers from their trenches should be ineffectual; "Though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper." How should they, when God did not fight for them? ver. 5: see *ch.* xxxiv. 2, 3.

Secondly. For prophesying thus he is imprisoned, not in the common gaol, but in the more creditable prison, that was within the verge of the palace, "in the king of Judah's house," and there not closely confined, but in *custodia libera*, in the 'court of the prison,' where he might have good company, good air, and good intelligence brought him, and would be sheltered from the abuses of the mob; but, however, it was a prison, and Zedekiah shut him up in it for prophesying as he did, ver. 2, 3. So far was he from humbling himself before Jeremiah, as he ought to have done, (2 *Chr.* xxvi. 12,) that he hardened himself against him. Though he had formerly so far owned him to be a prophet as to desire him to inquire of the Lord for them, (*ch.* xxi. 2,) yet now he chides him for prophesying, ver. 3, and shuts him up in prison; perhaps not with design to punish him any farther, but only to restrain him from prophesying any farther, which was crime bad enough. Silencing God's prophets, though it is not so ill as mocking and killing them, yet is a great affront to the God of heaven. See how wretchedly the hearts of sinners are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; persecution was one of the sins for which God was now contending with them, and yet Zedekiah persists in it, even now he was in the depth of distress. No providences, no afflictions, will of themselves part between men and their sins, unless the grace of God work with them. Nay, some are made worse by those very judgments that should make them better.

Thirdly. Being in prison, he purchaseth a piece of ground from a near relation of his, that lay in Anathoth, ver. 6, &c. One would not have expected, 1. That a prophet should concern himself so far in the business of this world; but why not? Though ministers must not entangle themselves, yet they may concern themselves in the affairs of this life. 2. That one who had neither wife nor children should buy land. We find (*ch.* xvi. 2) that he had no family of his own, yet he may purchase for his own use while he lives, and leave it to the children of his relations when he dies. 3. One would little have thought that a prisoner should be a purchaser; how should he get money beforehand to buy land with? It is probable he lived frugally, and saved something out of what belonged to him as a priest, which is no blemish at all to his character; but we have no reason to think that the people were kind, or that his being beforehand was owing to their generosity. Nay, 4. It was most strange of all that he should buy a piece of land, when he himself knew that the whole land was now to be laid waste, and fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, and then what good would this do him? But it was the will of God he should buy it, and he submitted, though the money seemed to be thrown away. His kinsman came to offer it him; it was not of his own seeking, he coveted not to lay house to house, and field to field, but providence brought it to him, and it is likely it was a good bargain. Besides, the right of redemption belonged to him, ver. 8, and if he refused, he did not do the kinsman's part. It is true he might lawfully refuse; but, being a prophet, in a thing of this nature he must do that which would be for the honour of his profession; it became him to fulfil all righteousness. It was land that lay within the suburbs of a priests' city, and if he should refuse it there was danger lest in these times of disorder it might be sold to one of another tribe, which was contrary to law; to prevent which it was convenient for him to buy it. It would likewise be a kindness to his kinsman, who probably was at this time in great want of money. Jeremiah had but a little, but what he had he was willing to lay out in such a manner as might tend most to the honour of God, and the good of his friends and country, which he preferred before his own private interests. Observe,

1st. How fairly the bargain was made. When Jeremiah knew, by Hanameel's coming to him, as God had foretold he would, that "it was the word of the Lord," that it was his mind he should make this purchase, he made no more difficulty of it, but bought the field. And, *First.* He was very honest and exact in paying the money. He "weighed him the money," did not press him to take it upon content, though he was his near kinsman, but weighed it to him, current money; it was "seventeen shekels of silver," amounting to about forty shillings of our money. It is likely it was but a little field, and of small yearly value, when the purchase was so low. Besides, the right of inheritance was in Jeremiah, so that he was only to buy out his kinsman's life, the reversion was his already. Some think this was only the earnest of a greater sum; but we shall not wonder at the smallness of the price, if we consider what scarcity there was of money at this time, and how little lands were counted upon. *Secondly.* He was very prudent and discreet in preserving the writings. They were subscribed before witnesses; one copy was sealed up, the other was open; one was the original, and the other the counterpart; or perhaps that which was sealed up was for his own private use, the other that was open was to be laid up in the public register of conveyances for any person concerned to consult. Due care and caution in things of this nature might prevent a great deal of injustice and contention. The deeds of purchase were lodged in the hands of Baruch, before witnesses, and he was ordered to lay them up in an earthen vessel, (an emblem of the nature of all the securities this world can pretend to give us, brittle things, and soon broken,) that they might continue many days, for the use of Jeremiah's heirs, after the return out of captivity; for they might then have the benefit of this purchase. Purchasing reversions may be a kindness to those that come after us; and a good man thus lays up an inheritance for his children's children.

2nd. What was the design of having this bargain made. It was to signify that, though Jerusalem was now besieged, and the whole country was likely to be laid waste, yet the time should come when "houses, and fields, and vineyards should again be possessed in this land," ver. 15. As God appointed Jeremiah to confirm his predictions of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, by his own practice in living unmarried, so he now appointed him to confirm his predictions of the future restoration of Jerusalem, by his own practice in purchasing this field. Note, It concerns ministers to make it to appear in their whole conversation that they do themselves believe that which they preach to others; and that they may do so, and impress it the deeper upon their hearers, they must many a time deny themselves, as Jeremiah did in both these instances. God having promised that this land should again come into the possession of his people, Jeremiah will, on the behalf of his heirs, put in for a share. Note, It is good to manage even our worldly affairs in faith, and to do common business with an eye to the providence and promise of God. Lucius Florus relates it as a great instance of the bravery of the Roman citizens, that in the time of the second Punic war, when Hannibal besieged Rome, and was very near making himself master of it, a field on which part of his army lay, being offered to sale at that time, was presently purchased, in a firm belief that the Roman valour would raise the siege, lib. 2, cap. 6. And have not we much more reason to venture our all upon the word of God, and to embark in Zion's interests, which will undoubtedly be the prevailing interests at last. *Non si male nunc et olim sic erit,*—'Though now we suffer, we shall not suffer always.'

16 Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying, 17 Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, *and* there is nothing too hard for thee: 18 Thou shewest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, *is* his name, 19 Great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes *are* open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings: 20 Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, and in Israel, and among *other* men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day; 21 And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror; 22 And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; 23 And they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them: 24 Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest *it.* 25 And thou hast said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

We have here Jeremiah's prayer to God, upon occasion of the discoveries God had made to him of his purposes concerning this nation, to pull it down, and in process of time to build it up again, which puzzled the prophet himself, who, though he delivered his messages faithfully, yet in reflecting upon them was mightily at a loss within himself how to reconcile them; and in that perplexity he poured out his soul before God in prayer, and so gave himself ease. That which disturbed him was not the ill bargain he seemed to have made for himself, in purchasing a field that he was likely to have no good of, but the case of his people, for whom he was still a kind and faithful intercessor; and he was willing to hope that if God had so much mercy in store for them hereafter as he had promised, he would not proceed with so much severity against them now as he had threatened. Before Jeremiah went to prayer, he delivered the deeds that concerned his new purchase to Baruch, which may intimate to us, that

when we are going to worship God we should get our minds as clear as may be from the cares and encumbrances of this world. Jeremiah was in prison, in distress, in the dark about the meaning of God's providences, and then he prays. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore. Whatever is a burthen to us, we may by prayer cast it upon the Lord, and then be easy. In this prayer or meditation,

First. Jeremiah adores God and his infinite perfections, and gives him the glory due to his name as the Creator, upholder, and benefactor of the whole creation; thereby owning his irresistible power, that he can do what he will; and his incontestable sovereignty, that he may do what he will, ver. 17—19. Note, When at any time we are perplexed about the particular methods and dispensations of Providence, it is good for us to have recourse to our first principles, and to satisfy ourselves with the general doctrines of God's wisdom, power, and goodness. Let us consider as Jeremiah doth here, 1. That God is the fountain of all being, power, life, motion and perfection; he "made the heaven and the earth with his outstretched arm," and therefore who can control him? Who dares contend with him? 2. That with him nothing is impossible, no difficulty insuperable; "Nothing is too hard for thee," when human skill and power are quite nonplussed. "With God is strength and wisdom" sufficient to master all the opposition. 3. That he is a God of boundless, bottomless mercy. That is his darling attribute; it is his goodness that is his glory. Thou not only art kind, but shewest lovingkindness, not to a few, to here and there one, but to thousands, thousands of persons, thousands of generations. 4. That he is a God of impartial and inflexible justice. His reprieves are not pardons; but if in mercy he spares the parents that they may be led to repentance, yet such a hatred has he to sin, and such a displeasure against sinners, that he "recompenseth their iniquity into the bosom of their children," and yet doth them no wrong. So hateful is the unrighteousness of man, and so jealous of its own honour is the righteousness of God. 5. That he is a God of universal dominion and command. He is the great God, for he is the mighty God; and might among men makes them great. He is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; that is his name, and he answers his name, for all the hosts of heaven and earth, of men and angels, are at his beck. 6. That he contrives every thing for the best, and effects every thing as he contrived it. He is great in counsel, so vast are the reaches, and so deep are the designs of his wisdom; and he is mighty in doing, according to the counsel of his will. Now, such a God as this is not to be quarrelled with. His service is to be constantly adhered to, and all his disposals cheerfully acquiesced in.

Secondly. He acknowledgeth the universal cognizance God takes of all the actions of the children of men, and the unerring judgment he passeth upon them; ver. 19, "Thine eyes are open upon all the sons of men," wherever they are, beholding the evil and the good; and upon all their ways, both the course they take and every step they take, not as an unconcerned spectator, but as an observing judge, "to give every one according to his ways, and according to" his deserts, which are "the fruit of his doings;" for men shall find God as they are found of him.

Thirdly. He recounts the great things God had done for his people Israel formerly. 1. He brought them out of Egypt, that house of bondage, with signs and wonders, which remain, if not in the marks of them, yet in the memorials of them, even unto this day; for it would never be forgotten, not only in Israel, who were minded of it every year by the ordinance of the passover, but among other men. All the neighbour nations spake of it, as that which redounded exceedingly to the glory of the God of Israel, and made him a name "as at this day." This is repeated again, ver. 21, that God brought them forth, not only with comforts and joys to them, but with glory to himself, with signs and wonders, (witness the ten plagues,) with a strong hand, too strong for the Egyptians themselves, and with a stretched-out arm, that reached Pharaoh, as proud as he was, and with great terror to them and all about them. This seems to refer to *Deu.* iv. 34. 2. He brought them into Canaan, that good land, that land flowing with milk and honey. He sware to their fathers to give it them; and, because he would perform his oath, he did give it to the children, ver. 22, and they came in and possessed it Jeremiah mentions this both as an aggravation of their sin and disobedience, and also as a plea with God to work deliverance for them. Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon the great things that God did for his church formerly, especially the first erecting of it, that work of wonder.

Fourthly. He bewails the rebellions they had been guilty of against God, and the judgments God had brought upon them for these rebellions. It is a sad account he here gives of the ungrateful carriage of that people towards God. He had done every thing that he had promised them to do, (they had acknowledged it, 1 *Kin.* viii. 56,) but they had "done nothing of all that he commanded them to do," ver. 23. They made no conscience of any of his laws, they walked not in them, paid no respect to any of his calls by his prophets, for they obeyed not his voice; and therefore he owns that God was righteous in causing "all this evil to come upon them." The city is besieged, is attacked by the sword without, is weakened and wasted by the famine and pestilence within, so that it is ready to fall "into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it," ver. 24; it is given into their hands, ver. 25. Now, 1. He compares the present state of Jerusalem with the Divine predictions, and finds that what God hath spoken is come to pass. God had given them fair warning of it before, which if they had regarded the ruin had been prevented; but if they will not do what God has commanded they can expect no other but that he should do what he has threatened. 2. He commits the present state of Jerusalem to the Divine consideration and compassion; ver. 24, "Behold the mounts," or ramparts, or the engines which they make use of to batter the city, and beat down the wall of it. And again, "Behold, thou seest it," and takest cognizance of it. Is this the city that thou hast chosen to put thy name there? and shall it be thus abandoned? He neither complains of God for what he had done nor prescribes to God what he should do, but desires he would behold their case, and is pleased to think that he doth behold it. Whatever trouble we are in upon a personal or public account, we may comfort ourselves with this, that God sees it, and sees how to remedy it.

Fifthly. He seems desirous to be let farther into the meaning of this order God had now given him to purchase his kinsman's field; ver. 25, Though "the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans," and no man is likely to enjoy what he has, yet "thou hast said unto me, Buy thee the field." As soon as he understood that it was the mind of God, he did it, and made no objections, was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but when he had done it, he desired better to understand why God had ordered him to do it because the thing looked odd and unaccountable. Note, Though we are bound to follow God with an implicit obedience, yet we should endeavour that it may be more and more an intelligent obedience. We must never dispute God's statutes and judgments, but we may and must inquire, "What mean these statutes and judgments?" *Deu.* vi. 20.

26 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 27 Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? 28 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it: 29 And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger.

POURING OUT A DRINK OFFERING.

30 For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD. 31 For this city hath been to me *as* a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face, 32 Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33 And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching *them,* yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. 34 But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. 35 And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through *the fire* unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. 36 And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; 37 Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have

driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: 38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: 39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: 40 And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. 41 Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. 42 For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. 43 And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, *It is* desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. 44 Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal *them*, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD.

We have here God's return to Jeremiah's prayer, designed to quiet his mind and make him easy, and it is a full discovery of the purposes of God's wrath against the present generation, and the purposes of his grace concerning the future generations. Jeremiah knew not how to sing both of mercy and judgment; but God here teacheth him, and to sing unto him of both. When we know not how to reconcile one word of God with another, yet we may be sure that both are true, both are pure, both shall be made good, and not one iota or tittle of either shall fall to the ground. When Jeremiah was ordered to buy the field in Anathoth, he was willing to hope that God was about to revoke the sentence of his wrath, and to order the Chaldeans to raise the siege; No, saith God, the execution of the sentence shall go on, Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins. Note, Assurances of future mercy must not be interpreted as securities from present troubles. But, lest Jeremiah should think that his being ordered to buy this field intimated that all the mercy God had in store for his people after their return was only that they should have the possession of their own land again, he farther acquaints him that that was but a type and figure of those spiritual blessings which should then be abundantly bestowed upon them, unspeakably more valuable than fields and vineyards. So that in this word of the Lord which came here to Jeremiah we have first as dreadful threatenings, and then as precious promises, as perhaps any we have in all the Old Testament. Life and death, good and evil, are here set before us; let us consider and choose wisely.

First. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here pronounced; the decree is gone forth, and shall not be recalled.

1. God here asserts his own sovereignty and power; ver. 27, "Behold, I am Jehovah," a self-existent, self-sufficient being; "I am that I am, I am the God of all flesh;" that is, of all mankind, here called flesh, because weak and unable to contend with God, *Ps.* lvi. 4, and because wicked and corrupt, and unapt to comply with God. God is the Creator of all, and makes what use he pleaseth of all. He that is the God of Israel is the God of all flesh, and of the spirits of all flesh; and, if Israel were cast off, could raise up a people to his name out of some other nation. If he be the God of all flesh, he may well ask, "Is any thing too hard for me?" What cannot he do from whom all the powers of men are derived, and on whom they depend, and by whom all their actions are directed and governed? Whatever he designs to do, whether in wrath or in mercy, nothing can hinder him, or defeat his designs.

2. He abides by what he had often said of the destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon; ver. 28, "I will give this city into his hand," now he is grasping at it, "and he shall take it," and make a prey of it; ver. 29, "The Chaldeans shall come and set fire to it," shall burn it and all the houses in it, God's house not excepted, nor the king's neither.

3. He assigns the reason for these severe proceedings against the city that had been so much in his favour. It is sin, it is that and nothing else, that ruins it. 1st. They were impudent and daring in sin. They offered incense to Baal, not in corners, as men ashamed or afraid of being discovered, but upon the tops of their houses, ver. 29, in defiance of God's justice. 2nd. They designed an affront to God herein. They did it "to provoke me to anger," ver. 29. "They have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands," ver. 30; they could not promise themselves any pleasure, profit, or honour out of it, but did it on purpose to offend God. And again, ver. 32, "All the evil which they have done was to provoke me to anger." They knew he was a jealous God in the matters of his worship, and there they resolved to try his jealousy, and dare him to his face. Jerusalem has been "to me a provocation of my anger and fury," ver. 31. Their carriage in every thing was provoking. 3rd. They began by times, and had continued all along provoking to God. They have "done evil before me from their youth," ever since they were first formed into a people, ver. 30; witness their murmurings and rebellions in the wilderness. And as for Jerusalem, though it was the holy city, it has been a provocation to the holy God "from the day that they built it, even to this day," ver. 32. O what reason have we to lament the little honour God has from this world, and the great dishonour that is done him, when even in Judah, where he is known, and his name is great, and in Salem where his tabernacle is, there was always that found that was a provocation to him. 4th. All orders and degrees of men contributed to the common guilt, and therefore were justly involved in the common ruin; not only the children of Israel that had revolted from the temple, but the children of Judah too, that still adhered to it. Not only the common people, the men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, but those that should have reproved and restrained sin in others, were themselves ringleaders in it,—their kings and princes, their priests and prophets. 5th. God had again and again called them to repentance, but they turned a deaf ear to his calls, and rudely turned their back on him that called them, though he was their master to whom they were bound in duty, and their benefactor to whom they were bound in gratitude and interest; ver. 33, "I taught them" better manners, with as much care as ever any tender parent taught a child, "rising up early, and teaching them," studying to adapt the teaching to their capacities, taking them betimes, when they might have been most pliable, but all in vain; they "turned not the face to me," would not so much as look upon me; nay, they "turned the back upon me," an expression of the highest contempt. "As he called them," like froward children, "so they went from him," *Hos.* xi. 2. "They have not hearkened to receive instruction;" they regarded not a word that was said to them, though it was designed for their own good. 6th. There was in their idolatries an impious contempt of God; for, ver. 34, "They set their abominations," their idols, which they knew to be in the highest degree abominable to God, they set them "in the house which is called by my name, to defile it." They had their idols not only in their high places and groves, but even in God's temple. 7th. They were guilty of the most unnatural cruelty to their children, for they "sacrificed them to Moloch," ver. 35. Thus, because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but changed his glory into shame, they were justly given up to vile affections, and stripped of natural ones, and their glory was turned into shame. 8th. What was the consequence of all this? *First.* They "caused Judah to sin," ver. 35. The whole country was infected with the contagious idolatries and iniquities of Jerusalem. *Secondly.* They brought ruin upon themselves. It was as if they had done it on purpose that God "should remove them from before his face," ver. 31; they would throw themselves out of his favour.

Secondly. The restoration of Judah and Jerusalem is here promised, ver. 36, &c. God will in judgment remember mercy, and there will a time come, a set time to favour Zion. Observe, 1st. The despair to which this people were now at length brought. When the judgment was threatened at a distance, they had no fear; when it attacked them, they had no hope. They said concerning the city, ver. 36, "It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon," not by any cowardice or ill conduct of ours, but by "the sword, famine, and pestilence." Concerning the country, they said with vexation, ver. 43, "It is desolate without man or beast;" there is no relief, there is no remedy; "it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans." Note, Deep security commonly ends in deep despair; whereas those that keep up a holy fear at all times have a good hope to support themselves in the worst of times. 2nd. The hope that God gives them of mercy he had in store for them hereafter. Though their carcases must fall in captivity, yet their children after them should again see this good land, and the goodness of God in it.

1. They shall be brought up from their captivity, and shall come and settle again in this land, ver. 37. They had been under God's anger, and fury, and great wrath, but now they shall partake of his grace, and love, and great favour. He had dispersed them, and driven them into all countries: those that fled dispersed themselves, those that fell into the enemies' hands were dispersed by them in policy, to prevent combinations among them. God's hand was in both. But now God will find them out, and gather them out of all the "countries whither they were driven," as he promised in the law, *Deu.* xxx. 3, 4; and the saints had prayed, *Ps.* cvi. 47; *Neh.* i. 9. He had banished them, but he will bring them again to this place, which they could not but have an affection for. For many years past, while they were in their own land, they were continually exposed, and terrified with the alarms of war; but now "I will cause them to dwell safely." Being reformed and returned to God, neither their own consciences within nor their enemies without shall be a terror to them. He promiseth, ver. 41, "I will plant them in this land assuredly;" not only I will certainly do it, but they shall here enjoy a holy security and repose, and they shall take root here, shall be planted in stability, and not again be unfixed and shaken.

2. God will renew his covenant with them, a covenant of grace, the blessings of which are spiritual, and such as will work good things in them, to qualify them for the great things God intended to do for them. It is called an everlasting covenant, ver. 40, not only because God will be for ever faithful to it, but because the consequences of it will be everlasting: for, doubtless, here the promises look farther than to Israel according to the flesh, and are sure to all believers, to every Israelite indeed. Good Christians may apply them to themselves, and plead them with God, may claim the benefit, and take the comfort of them.

1st. God will own them for his, and make over himself to them to be theirs; ver. 38, "They shall be my people." He will make them his, by working in them all the characters and dispositions of his people, and then he will protect, and guide, and govern them as his people. And to make them truly, completely, and eternally happy, "I will be their God." They shall serve and worship God as theirs, and cleave to him only; and he will approve himself theirs. All he is, all he has, shall be engaged and employed for their good.

2nd. God will give them a heart to fear him, ver. 39. That which he requires of those whom he takes into covenant with him as his people is, that they fear him, that they reverence his majesty, dread his wrath, stand in awe of his authority, pay homage to him, and give him the glory due unto his name. Now what God requires of them he here promiseth to work in them, pursuant to his choice of them as his people. Note, As it is God's prerogative to fashion men's hearts, so it is his promise to his people to fashion theirs aright. And a heart to fear God is indeed a good heart and well fashioned. It is repeated again, ver. 40, "I will put my fear in their hearts;" that is, work in them gracious principles and dispositions, that shall influence and govern their whole conversation. Teachers may put good things into our heads, but it is God only that can put them into our hearts; that can work in us both to will and to do.

3rd. He "will give them one heart and one way." In order to their walking in one way, he will give them one heart. As the heart is so will the way be, and both shall be one; that is, *First.* They shall be each of them one with themselves. One heart is the same with a new heart, *Eze.* xi. 19. The heart is then one when it is fully determined for God, and entirely devoted to God; when the eye is single, and God's glory is alone aimed at. When our hearts are fixed, trusting in God, and we are uniform and universal in our obedience to him, then the heart is one, and the way one; and unless the heart be thus steady the goings will not be stedfast. From this promise we may take direction and encouragement to pray with David, *Ps.* lxxxvi. 11, "Unite my heart to

fear thy name;" for God saith, "I will give them one heart, that they may fear me." *Secondly.* They shall be all of them one with each other. All good Christians shall be incorporated into one body, Jews and Gentiles shall become one sheepfold; and they shall all, as far as they are sanctified, have a disposition to love one another; the Gospel they profess having in it the strongest inducements to mutual love, and the Spirit that dwells in them being the Spirit of love. Though they may have different apprehensions about lesser things, they shall be all one in the great things of God, being renewed after the same image. Though they may have many paths, they have but one way, that of serious godliness.

4th. He will effectually provide for their perseverance in grace, and the perpetuating of the covenant between him and them. They had been happy when they were first planted in Canaan, like Adam in Paradise, if they had not departed from God; and therefore, now they are restored to their happiness, they shall be confirmed in it, by the preventing of their departures from God. And this will complete their bliss, *First.* God will never leave nor forsake them, "I will not turn away from them to do them good." Earthly princes are fickle, and their greatest favourites have fallen under their frowns; but God's mercy endureth for ever; whom he loves, he loves to the end. God may seem to turn from his people, (*Isa.* liv. 8,) but even then he doth not turn from doing and designing them good. *Secondly.* They shall never leave nor forsake him. That is the thing we are in danger of; we have no reason to distrust God's fidelity and constancy, but our own. And therefore it is here promised, that God will give them a heart to fear him for ever,—all days; to be in his fear every day, and all the day long, (*Pr.* xxiii. 17,) and to continue so to the end of their days. He will put such a principle into their hearts as that they shall not depart from him. Even those who have given up their names to God, if they be left to themselves, will depart from him; but the fear of God ruling in the heart will prevent their departure; that and nothing else will do it. If we continue close and faithful to God, it is owing purely to his almighty grace, and not to any strength or resolution of our own.

5th. He will entail a blessing upon their seed, will give them grace to fear him, "for the good of them, and of their children after them." As their departures from God had been to the prejudice of their children, so their adherence to God should be to the advantage of their children. We cannot better consult the good of posterity, than by setting up, and keeping up, the fear and worship of God in our families.

6th. He will take a pleasure in their prosperity, and will do everything to advance it; ver. 41, "I will rejoice over them to do them good." God will therefore do them good because he rejoiceth over them; they are dear to him, he makes his boast of them, and therefore will not only do them good, but will delight in doing them good. When he punisheth them it is with reluctancy: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" But when he restores them it is with satisfaction: he rejoiceth in doing them good. We ought therefore to serve him with pleasure, and to rejoice in all opportunities of serving him. He is himself a cheerful giver, and therefore loves a cheerful servant, "I will plant them," saith God, "with my whole heart, and with my whole soul." He will be intent upon it, and take delight in it; he will make it the business of his providence to settle them in Canaan, and the various dispensations of providence shall concur to it. All things shall appear at last so to have been working for the good of the church, that it will be said, the Governor of the world was entirely taken up with the care of his church.

7th. These promises shall as surely be performed as the foregoing threatenings were; and the accomplishment of those, notwithstanding the security of the people, might confirm their expectation of the performance of these, notwithstanding their present despair; ver. 42, "As I have brought all this great evil upon them," pursuant to the threatenings, and for the glory of Divine justice, "so I will bring upon them all this good," pursuant to the promise, and for the glory of Divine mercy. He that is faithful to his threatening will much more be so to his promises; and he will comfort his people "according to the time that he has afflicted them." The churches shall have rest after the days of adversity.

8th. As an earnest of all this, houses and lands shall again take a good price in Judah and Jerusalem; and, though now they are a drug, there shall again be purchasers enough for them; ver. 43, 44, "Fields shall be bought in this land," and people will covet to have lands here rather than anywhere else. Lands wherever they lie will go off, not only in the places about Jerusalem, but in the cities of Judah and of Israel too, whether they lie on mountains, or in valleys, or in the south; in all parts of the country men shall buy fields and subscribe evidences. Trade shall revive, for they shall have money enough to buy land with; husbandry shall revive, for those that have money shall covet to lay it out upon lands; laws shall again have their due course, for they shall subscribe evidences and seal them. This is mentioned to reconcile Jeremiah to his new purchase; though he had bought a piece of ground, and could not go see it, yet he must believe that was the pledge of many a purchase, and those but faint resemblances of the purchased possessions in the heavenly Canaan reserved for all those who have God's fear in their hearts, and do not depart from him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, to confirm the promise of the restoration of the Jews, notwithstanding the present desolations of their country, and dispersions of their people. And these promises have both in type and tendency a reference as far forward as to the gospel church, to which this second edition of the Jewish church was at length to resign its dignities and privileges. It is here promised, I. That the city shall be rebuilt, and re-established *in statu quo*—'in its former state,' ver. 1—6. II. That the captives, having their sins pardoned, shall be restored, ver. 7, 8. III. That this shall redound very much to the glory of God, ver. 9. IV. That the country shall have both joy and plenty, ver. 10—14. V. That way shall be made for the coming of the Messiah, ver. 15, 16. VI. That the house of David, the house of Levi, and the house of Israel shall flourish again, and be established, and all three in the kingdom of Christ, a gospel ministry; and the gospel church shall continue while the world stands, ver. 17—26.

MOREOVER the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

2 Thus saith the LORD the maker thereof,
The LORD that formed it, to establish it;
The LORD *is* his name;
3 Call unto me, and I will answer thee,
And shew thee great and mighty things,
Which thou knowest not.
4 For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel,
Concerning the houses of this city,
And concerning the houses of the kings of Judah,
Which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword;
5 They come to fight with the Chaldeans,
But *it is* to fill them with the dead bodies of men,
Whom I have slain in mine anger and in my fury,
And for all whose wickedness
I have hid my face from this city. [them,
6 Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure
And will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.
7 And I will cause the captivity of Judah
And the captivity of Israel to return,
And will build them, as at the first.
8 And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity,
Whereby they have sinned against me;
And I will pardon all their iniquities,
Whereby they have sinned,
And whereby they have transgressed against me.
9 And it shall be to me a name of joy,
A praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth,
Which shall hear all the good that I do unto them:
And they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness
And for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

Observe here, First. The date of this comfortable prophecy which God intrusted Jeremiah with. It is not exact in the time, only that it was after that in the foregoing chapter, when things were still growing worse and worse; it was the second time. God speaketh once, yea, twice, for the encouragement of his people. We are not only so disobedient that we have need of precept upon precept to bring us to our duty, but so distrustful that we have need of promise upon promise to bring us to our comfort. This word, as the former, came to Jeremiah when he was in prison. Note, No confinement can deprive God's people of his presence, no locks or bars can shut out his gracious visits. Nay, oftentimes "as their afflictions abound, their consolations much more abound," and they have the most reviving communications of his favour then when the world frowns upon them. Paul's sweetest epistles were those that bare date out of a prison.

Secondly. The prophecy itself. A great deal of comfort is wrapped up in it, for the relief of the captives, to keep them from sinking into despair. Observe,

1. Who it is that secures this comfort to them, ver. 2. It is "the Lord the maker thereof, the Lord that framed it." He is the maker and former of heaven and earth, and therefore has all power in his hands: so it refers to Jeremiah's prayer, *ch.* xxxii. 17. He is the maker and former of Jerusalem, of Zion; built them at first, and therefore can rebuild them; built them for his own praise, and therefore will. He formed it to establish it, and therefore it shall be established till those things be introduced which cannot be shaken, but shall remain for ever. He is the maker and former of this promise; he has laid the scheme for Jerusalem's restoration, and he that has formed it will establish it, that has made the promise will make it good, for Jehovah is his name,—a God giving being to his promises by the performance of them, which when he doth he is known by that name, *Ex.* vi. 3; a perfecting God. When the heavens and the earth were finished, then and not till then, the Creator is called Jehovah, *Gen.* ii. 1.

2. How this comfort must be obtained and fetched in. By prayer; ver. 3, "Call upon me, and I will answer thee." The prophet having received some intimations of this kind, must be humbly earnest with God for farther discoveries of his kind intentions. He had prayed, *ch.* xxxii. 16, but he must pray again. Note, Those that expect to receive comforts from God must "continue instant in prayer;" we must call upon him, and then he will answer us. Christ himself must ask, and it shall be given him, *Ps.* ii. 8. "I will shew thee great and mighty things," that is, give thee a clear and full prospect of them; hidden things, which, though in part discovered already, yet thou knowest not, thou canst not understand or give credit to. Or, this may refer not only to the prediction of these things which Jeremiah, if he desire it, shall be favoured with, but to the performance of the things themselves, which the people of God, encouraged by this prediction, must pray for. Note, Promises are given not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer: see *Eze.* xxxvi. 37.

3. How deplorable the condition of Jerusalem was, which made it necessary that such comforts as these should be provided for it; and notwithstanding which its restoration should be brought about in due time, ver. 4, 5. "The houses of this city," not excepting those of "the kings of Judah, are thrown down by the mounts," or engines of battery, and by the sword, or axes, or hammers. It is the same word that is used *Eze.* xxvi. 9, "With his axes he shall break down thy towers." The strongest, stateliest houses, and those that were best furnished, were levelled with the ground. The fifth verse comes in in a parenthesis, giving a farther instance of the present calamitous state of Jerusalem. They that came to fight with the Chaldeans, to beat them off from the siege, did more hurt than good, provoked the enemy to be more fierce and furious in their assaults, so that the houses in Jerusalem were filled with the dead bodies of men that died of the wounds they received in sallying out upon the besiegers. God saith, they were such as he had slain in his anger, for the enemies' sword was his sword, and their anger his anger. But it seems the men that were slain were generally such as had distinguished themselves by their wickedness, for they were the very men for whose wickedness God did now hide himself from this city, so that he was just in all he brought upon them.

4. What the blessings are which God has in store for Judah and Jerusalem; such as will redress all their grievances.

1st. Is their state diseased? is it wounded? God will provide effectually for the healing of it, though the disease was thought mortal and incurable, *ch.* viii. 22. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" but, ver. 6, I

will bring it health and cure, I will prevent the death, remove the sickness, and set all to rights again, *ch.* xxx. 17. Note, Be the case never so desperate, if God undertake the cure he will effect it. The sin of Jerusalem was the sickness of it, *Isa.* i. 6; its reformation therefore will be its recovery. And the following words tell us how that is wrought: "I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth," that is, I will give it them in due time, and give them an encouraging prospect of it in the meantime. Peace stands here for all good; peace and truth is peace according to the promise, and in pursuance of that. Or, peace and truth is peace and the true religion; peace and the true worship of God, in opposition to the many falsehoods and deceits by which they had been led away from God. We may apply it more generally, and observe, *First.* That peace and truth are the great subject matter of Divine revelation. These promises here lead us to the Gospel of Christ, and in that God has revealed to us peace and truth, the method of true peace; truth to direct us, peace to make us easy. Grace and truth, and abundance of both, come by Jesus Christ. Peace and truth are the life of the soul, and Christ came that we might have that life, and might have it more abundantly. Christ rules by the power of truth, *Jno.* xviii. 37, and by it he gives abundance of peace, *Ps.* lxxii. 7, and lxxxv. 10. *Secondly.* That the Divine revelation of peace and truth brings health and cure to all those that by faith receive it. It heals the soul of the diseases it has contracted, as it is a means of sanctification, *Jno.* xvii. 17, ("He sent his word and healed them," *Ps.* cvii. 20;) and it puts the soul into good order, and keeps it in frame, and fit for the employments and enjoyments of the spiritual and Divine life.

2nd. Are they scattered and enslaved, and is their nation laid in ruins? "I will cause their captivity to return," ver. 7, both that of Israel and that of Judah; for, though those who returned under Zerubbabel were chiefly of Judah, and Benjamin, and Levi, yet afterwards many of all the other tribes returned. And I will rebuild them, as I built them at first. When they by repentance do their first works, God will by their restoration do his first works.

3rd. Is sin the procuring cause of all their troubles? That shall be pardoned and subdued, and so the root of the judgments shall be killed, ver. 8. *First.* By sin they are become filthy, and odious to God's holiness; but God will cleanse them, and purify them from their iniquity. As those that were ceremonially unclean, and were therefore shut out from the tabernacle, when they were sprinkled with the water of purification, had liberty of access to it again, so had they to their own land and the privileges of it, when God had cleansed them from their iniquities. In allusion to that sprinkling, David prays, "Purge me with hyssop." *Secondly.* By sin they are become guilty, and obnoxious to his justice; but he "will pardon all their iniquities," will remove the punishment to which for sin they were bound over. All that by sanctifying grace are cleansed from the filth of sin, by pardoning mercy are freed from the guilt of it.

4th. Have both their sins and their sufferings turned to the dishonour of God? Their reformation and restoration shall redound as much to his praise, ver. 9. Jerusalem thus rebuilt, Judah thus repeopled, shall be to me a name of joy, as pleasing to God as ever they had been provoking, and "a praise and an honour before all the nations." They, being thus restored, shall glorify God by their services of him, and he shall glorify himself by his favours to them. This renewed nation shall be as much a reputation to religion as formerly it has been a reproach to it. The nations shall hear of all the good that God has wrought in them by his grace, and of all the good he has wrought for them by his providence. The wonders of their return out of Babylon shall make as great a noise in the world as ever the wonders of their deliverance out of Egypt did. And "they shall fear and tremble for all this goodness." *First.* The people of God themselves shall fear and tremble; they shall be much surprised at it, shall be afraid of offending so good a God, and of forfeiting his favour; *Hos.* iii. 5, "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness." *Secondly.* The neighbour nations shall fear because of the prosperity of Jerusalem; shall look upon the growing greatness of the Jewish nation as really formidable, and shall be afraid of making them their enemies. When the church is "fair as the moon, and clear as the sun," she is "terrible as an army with banners."

10 Thus saith the LORD;
Again there shall be heard in this place, [beast,
Which ye say *shall be* desolate without man and without
Even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusa-
That are desolate, without man, [lem,
And without inhabitant, and without beast,
11 The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness,
The voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride,
The voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts:
For the LORD *is* good;
For his mercy *endureth* for ever:
And of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into
the house of the LORD.
For I will cause to return the captivity of the land,
As at the first, saith the LORD.
12 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Again in this place, which is desolate
Without man and without beast,
And in all the cities thereof,
Shall be an habitation of shepherds
Causing *their* flocks to lie down.
13 In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale,
And in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin,
And in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of
Shall the flocks pass again [Judah,
Under the hands of him that telleth *them*, saith the
LORD.

14 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, [mised
That I will perform that good thing which I have pro-
Unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah,
15 In those days, and at that time,
Will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up
unto David; [land.
And he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the
16 In those days shall Judah be saved,
And Jerusalem shall dwell safely:
And this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called,
The LORD our righteousness.

STEWARD NUMBERING THE HERDS.—ver. 13.

Here is a farther prediction of the happy state of Judah and Jerusalem after their glorious return out of captivity, issuing gloriously at length in the kingdom of the Messiah.

First. It is promised that the people that were long in sorrow shall again be filled with joy. Every one concluded now that the country would lie for ever desolate, that no beasts should be found in the land of Judah, no inhabitants in the streets of Jerusalem; and, consequently, there would be nothing but an universal and perpetual melancholy, ver. 10. But though weeping may endure for a time, joy will return. It was threatened, *ch.* vii. 34, and xvi. 9, that the voice of joy and gladness should cease there; but here it is promised that they shall revive again, that the voice of joy and gladness shall be heard there, because the captivity shall be returned, for then was their mouth filled with laughter, *Ps.* cxxvi. 1, 2. 1. There shall be common joy there, "the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride." Marriages shall again be celebrated as formerly with songs, which in Babylon they had laid aside; for their harps were hung on the willow trees. 2. There shall be religious joy there; temple songs shall be revived, the Lord's songs, which they could not sing in a strange land. There shall be heard in their private houses, and in the cities of Judah, as well as in the temple, "the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts." Note, Nothing is more the praise and honour of a people than to have God praised and honoured amongst them. This shall complete the mercy of their return and restoration, that with it they shall have hearts to be thankful for it, and give God the glory of it, the glory both of the power and of the goodness by which it is effected; they shall praise him, both as the Lord of hosts and as the God who is good, and whose "mercy endureth for ever." This, though a song of old, yet, being sung upon this fresh occasion, will be a new song. We find this literally fulfilled at their return out of Babylon, *Ezr.* iii. 11. They sung together in praising the Lord, "because he is good, for his mercy endures for ever." The public worship of God shall be diligently and constantly attended upon: they "shall bring the sacrifice of praise to the house of the Lord." All the sacrifices were intended for the praise of God; but this seems to be meant of the spiritual sacrifices of humble adorations, and joyful thanksgivings, "the calves of our lips," *Hos.* xiv. 2; which shall "please the Lord better than an ox or bullock." The Jews say, that in the days of the Messiah all sacrifices shall cease, but the sacrifice of praise; and to those days this promise has a farther reference.

Secondly. It is promised that the country, which had lain long depopulated, should be replenished and stocked again. It was now desolate, without man, and without beast; but after their return the pastures shall again be clothed with flocks, *Ps.* lxv. 13. In "all the cities of Judah and Benjamin there shall be an habitation of shepherds," ver. 12, 13. This speaks, 1. The wealth of the country after their return. It shall not be a habitation of beggars, that have nothing; but of shepherds and husbandmen, men of substance, with good stocks upon the ground they are returned to. 2. The peace of the country. It shall not be a habitation of soldiers, nor shall there be tents and barracks set up to lodge them, but they shall be shepherds' tents; for they shall hear no more the alarms of war, nor shall there be any to make even the shepherds afraid: see *Ps.* cxliv. 13, 14. 3. The industry of the country, and their return to their original plainness and simplicity, from which in the corrupt ages they had sadly degenerated. The seed of Jacob in their beginning gloried in this, that they were shepherds, *Gen.* xlvii. 3; and so they shall now be again, giving themselves wholly to that innocent employment; "causing their flocks to lie down," ver. 12, and to "pass under the hands of him that telleth them," ver. 13. For, though their flocks are numerous, they are not numberless, nor shall they omit to number them, that they may know if any be missing, and may seek after it. Note, It is the prudence of those who have never so much of the world to keep an account of what they have. Some think they "pass under the hand of him that telleth them," that they may be tithed, *Lev.* xxvii. 32. Then we may take the comfort of what we have when God has had his due out of it. Now, because it seemed incredible that a people reduced as they now were should ever recover such a degree of peace and plenty as this, here is subjoined a general ratification of these promises; ver. 14, "I will perform that good thing which I have promised." Though the promise may sometimes work slowly towards an accomplishment, it works surely. "The days will come," though they are long in coming.

Thirdly. To crown all these blessings which God has in store for them, here is a promise of the Messiah, and of that everlasting righteousness which he should bring in, ver. 15, 16. And probably this is that good thing, that great good thing, which in the latter days, days that were yet to come, God would perform, as he had promised, to Judah and Israel, and which their return out

of captivity, and their settlement again in their own land, was in order to. From the captivity to Christ is one of the famous periods, *Mat.* i. 17. This promise of the Messiah we had before, *ch.* xxiii. 5, 6; and there it came in as a confirmation of the promise of the shepherds which God would set over them; which would make one think that the promise here concerning the shepherds and their flocks, which introduceth it, is to be understood figuratively. Christ is here prophesied of, 1. As a rightful King. He is a "Branch of righteousness," not an usurper; for he grows up unto David, descends from his loins, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and is that seed with whom that covenant should be established, so that his title is unexceptionable. 2. As a righteous King. Righteous in enacting laws, waging wars, and giving judgment, righteous in vindicating those that suffer wrong, and punishing those that do wrong; "He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land." This may point at Zerubbabel in the type, who governed with equity, not as Jehoiakim had done, *ch.* xxii. 17; but it has a farther reference to him to whom all judgment is committed, and who shall judge the world in righteousness. 3. As a King that shall protect his subjects from all injury. By him Judah shall be saved from wrath and the curse; and, being so saved, Jerusalem shall dwell safely, quiet from the fear of evil, and enjoying a holy security and serenity of mind, in a dependence upon the conduct of this Prince of peace, this Prince of their peace. 4. As a King that shall be praised by his subjects. "This is the name whereby they shall call him," so the Chaldee reads it, the Syriac, and vulgar Latin; this name of his they shall celebrate, and triumph in, and by this name they shall call upon him. It may be read, more agreeably to the original, 'This is he who shall call her, the Lord our righteousness;' as Moses' altar is called Jehovah Nisse, *Ex.* xvii. 15; and Jerusalem, Jehovah Shammah, *Eze.* xlviii. 35; intimating that they glory in Jehovah, as present with them, and their banner. So here the city is called, "The Lord our righteousness," because they glory in Jehovah as their righteousness. That which was before said to be the name of Christ (saith Mr. Gataker) is here made the name of Jerusalem, the city of the Messias, the church of Christ. He it is that imparts righteousness to her, for he is made of God to us righteousness; and she by bearing that name professeth to have her whole righteousness, not from herself, but from him; "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," *Isa.* xlv. 24; and we are "made the righteousness of God in him." The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall have this name of the Messias so much in their mouths that they shall themselves be called by it.

17 For thus saith the LORD;
David shall never want a man
To sit upon the throne of the house of Israel;
18 Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me
To offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings,
And to do sacrifice continually.
19 And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying,
20 Thus saith the LORD;
If ye can break my covenant of the day,
And my covenant of the night, [season;
And that there should not be day and night in their
21 *Then* may also my covenant be broken with David my servant,
That he should not have a son to reign upon his throne;
And with the Levites the priests, my ministers.
22 As the host of heaven cannot be numbered,
Neither the sand of the sea measured:
So will I multiply the seed of David my servant,
And the Levites that minister unto me.
23 Moreover the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,
24 Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying,
The two families which the LORD hath chosen, [ing,
He hath even cast them off?
Thus they have despised my people,
That they should be no more a nation before them.
25 Thus saith the LORD;
If my covenant *be* not with day and night,
And if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; [servant,
26 Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my
So that I will not take *any* of his seed *to be* rulers
Over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob:
For I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

Three of God's covenants, that of royalty with David and his seed, that of the priesthood with Aaron and his seed, and that of peculiarity with Abraham and his seed, seemed to have been all broken and lost while the captivity lasted; but it is here promised that, notwithstanding that interruption and discontinuance for a time, they shall all three take place again; and the true intents and meaning of them all shall be abundantly answered in the New Testament blessings, typified by those conferred on the Jews after their return out of captivity.

First. The covenant of royalty shall be secured, and the promises of it shall have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, ver. 17. The throne of Israel was overturned in the captivity, the crown was fallen from their head, there was not a man to sit on the throne of Israel,—Jeconiah was written childless. After their return the house of David made a figure again. But it is in the Messiah that this promise is performed, that "David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel;" and that David shall have always a son to reign upon his throne. For as long as the man Christ Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God, rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church, to which he is a quickening Head, and glorified Head over all things; as long as he is King upon the holy hill of Zion, David doth not want a successor, nor is the covenant with him broken. When the first-begotten was brought into the world, it was declared concerning him, that "the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever," *Lu.* i. 32, 33.

For the confirmation of this it is promised, 1. That the covenant with David shall be as firm as the ordinances of heaven, to the stability of which that of God's promise is compared, *ch.* xxxi. 35, 36. There is a covenant of nature, by which the common course of providence is settled, and on which it is founded, here called a covenant of the day and the night, ver. 20, 25; because that is one of the articles of it, that there shall be day and night in their season, according to the distinction put between them in the creation, when God divided between the light and the darkness, and established their mutual succession, and a government to each, that the sun should rule by day, and the moon and the stars by night, *Gen.* i. 4, 5, 16; which establishment was renewed after the flood, *Gen.* viii. 22, and has continued ever since, *Ps.* xix. 2; the morning and the evening have both of them their regular outgoings, *Ps.* lxv. 8. The day-spring knows its place, knows its time, and keeps both; so do the shadows of the evening; and while the world stands, this course shall not be altered, this covenant shall not be broken. The ordinances of heaven and earth, (of this communication between heaven and earth, the dominion of these ordinances of heaven upon the earth,) which God has appointed, ver. 25, (compare *Job* xxxviii. 33,) shall never be disappointed. Thus firm shall the covenant of redemption be with the Redeemer, God's servant, but David our king, ver. 21. This intimates that Christ shall have a church on earth to the world's end; he shall see a seed in which he shall prolong his days, till time and days shall be no more. Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and when the end cometh, and not until then, it shall be delivered up to God, even the Father. But it intimates that the condition of it in this world shall be intermixed, and counterchanged; prosperity and adversity succeeding each other, as light and darkness, day and night. But this is plainly taught us, that as sure as we may be that, though the sun will set to-night, it will rise again to-morrow morning, whether we live to see it or no, so sure we may be that, though the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world may for a time be clouded and eclipsed by corruptions and persecutions, yet it will shine forth again, and recover its lustre in the time appointed. 2. That the seed of David shall be as numerous as the host of heaven; that is, the spiritual seed of the Messiah, that shall be born to him by the efficacy of his Gospel, and his Spirit working with it. From the womb of the morning he shall have the dew of their youth, to be his willing people, *Ps.* cx. 3. Christ's seed are not, as David's were, his successors, but his subjects; yet the day is coming when they also shall reign with him; ver. 22, "As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, so will I multiply the seed of David," so that there shall be no danger of the kingdoms being extinct, or extirpated, for want of heirs. The children are numerous; and if children than heirs.

Secondly. The covenant of priesthood shall be secured, and the promises of that also shall have their full accomplishment. This seemed likewise to be forgotten during the captivity, when there was no altar, no temple service for the priests to attend upon; but this also shall revive. It did so immediately upon their coming back to Jerusalem; there were priests and Levites ready to offer burnt offerings, and to do sacrifice continually, *Ezr.* iii. 2, 3; as is here promised, ver. 18. But that priesthood soon grew corrupt, the covenant of Levi was profaned, as appears, *Mal.* ii. 8, and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans it came to a final period; we must, therefore, look elsewhere for the performance of this word, that the covenant with the Levites, the priests, God's ministers, shall be as firm and last as long as the covenant with the day and the night. And we find it abundantly performed, 1. In the priesthood of Christ, which supersedes that of Aaron, and is the substance of that shadow. While that great High Priest of our profession is always appearing in the presence of God for us, representing the virtue of his blood by which he made atonement in the incense of his intercession, it may truly be said, that the Levites do not want a man before God to offer continually, *Heb.* viii. 3; he is a priest for ever. The covenant of the priesthood is called a covenant of peace, *Num.* xxv. 12; of life and peace, *Mal.* ii. 5. Now we are sure this covenant is not broken, nor in the least weakened, while Jesus Christ is himself our life and our peace. This covenant of priesthood is here again and again joined with that of royalty, for Christ is a priest upon his throne, as Melchizedek. 2. In a settled Gospel ministry. While there are faithful ministers to preside in religious assemblies, and to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, the priests, the Levites, do not want successors, and such as have obtained a more excellent ministry. The apostle makes those that preach the Gospel to come in the room of those that served at the altar, 1 *Cor.* ix. 13, 14. 3. In all true believers; who are a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, 1 *Pet.* ii. 5, 9; who are made to our God kings and priests, *Rev.* i. 6. They offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God; and themselves in the first place, living sacrifices. Of these Levites this promise here must be understood, ver. 22, that they shall be as numerous as the sand of the sea; the same that is promised concerning Israel in general, *Gen.* xxii. 17, for all God's spiritual Israel are spiritual priests, *Rev.* v. 9, 10; vii. 9, 15.

Thirdly. The covenant of peculiarity likewise shall be secured, and the promises of that covenant shall have their full accomplishment in the Gospel Israel. Observe, 1. How this covenant was looked upon as broken during the captivity, ver. 24. God asks the prophet, Hast thou not heard, and dost thou not consider, what this people have spoken, (either the enemies of Israel who triumph in the extirpation of a people that had made such a noise in the world, or the unbelieving Israelites themselves,) this people among whom thou dwellest? they have broken covenant with God, and then quarrel with him, as if he had not dealt faithfully with them. "The two families which the Lord hath chosen," Israel and Judah, (whereas they were but one when he chose them,) "he hath even cast them off." "Thus have they despised my people;" that is, despised the privilege of being my people, as if it were a privilege of no value at all. The neighbour nations despised them as now no more a nation, but the ruins of a nation; and looked upon all their honour as laid in the dust. But, 2. See how firm the covenant stands notwithstanding; as firm as that with day and night. Sooner will God suffer day and night to cease than he will cast away the seed of Jacob. This cannot refer to the seed of Jacob according to the flesh, for they are cast away; but to the Christian church, in which all these promises were to be lodged, as appears by the apostle's discourse, *Rom.* xi. 1, &c. Christ is that seed of David that is to be perpetual dictator to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and, as this people shall never want such a king, so this king shall never want such a people. Christianity shall continue in the dominion of Christ, and the subjection of Christians to him, until day and night come to an end. And, as a pledge of this, that promise is again repeated, "I will cause their captivity to return," and, having brought them back, "I will have mercy on them." Whom this promise refers to, appears, *Gal.* vi. 16; where all that walk according to the Gospel rule are made to be the Israel of God, on whom peace and mercy shall be.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

In this chapter we have two messages which God sent by Jeremiah: I. One to foretell the fate of Zedekiah king of Judah, that he should fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, that he should live a captive, but should at last die in peace in his captivity, ver. 1—7. II. Another to read the doom both of prince and people for their treacherous dealing with God, in bringing back their servants into bondage, whom they had released according to the law, and so playing fast and loose with God. They had walked at all adventures with God, ver. 8—11; and therefore God would walk at all adventures with them, in bringing the Chaldean army upon them again, then when they began to hope they were got clear of them, ver. 12—22.

THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire: 3 And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. 4 Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword: 5 *But* thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn *odours* for thee; and they will lament thee, *saying*, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD. 6 Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem, 7 When the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defenced cities remained of the cities of Judah.

This prophecy concerning Zedekiah was delivered to Jeremiah, and by him to the parties concerned, before he was shut up in the prison; for we find this prediction here made the ground of his commitment, as appears by the recital of some passages out of it, *ch.* xxxii. 4. Observe,

First. The time when this message was sent to Zedekiah. It was when the king of Babylon, with all his forces, some out of all the kingdoms of the earth that were within his jurisdiction, fought against Jerusalem, and the cities thereof, ver. 1, designing to destroy them, having often plundered them. The cities that now remained, and yet held out, are named, ver. 7, Lachish and Azekah. This intimates that things were now brought to the last extremity, and yet Zedekiah obstinately stood it out, his heart being hardened to his destruction.

Secondly. The message itself that was sent him.

1. Here is a threatening of wrath. He is told that again which he had been often told before, that the city shall be taken by the Chaldeans, and burnt with fire, ver. 2. That he shall himself fall into the enemy's hands, shall be made a prisoner, shall be brought before that furious prince Nebuchadnezzar, and be carried away captive into Babylon, ver. 3; yet Ezekiel prophesied that he should not see Babylon; nor did he, for his eyes were put out, *Eze.* xii. 13. This Zedekiah brought upon himself from God by his other sins, and from Nebuchadnezzar by his breaking of his faith with him.

2. Here is a mixture of mercy. He shall die a captive, but he shall not die by the sword; he shall die a natural death, ver. 4. He shall end his days with some comfort, shall die in peace, ver. 5. He never had been one of the worst of the kings, but we are willing to hope that what evil he had done in the sight of the Lord he repented of it in his captivity, as Manasseh had done, and it was forgiven to him, and God being reconciled to him he might truly be said to die in peace. A man may die in a prison, and yet die in peace. Nay, he shall end his days with some reputation, more than one would expect, all things considered. He shall be buried with the burnings of his fathers; that is, with the respects usually shewed to their kings, especially those that had done good in Israel. It seems in his captivity he had carried himself so well towards his own people, that they were willing to do him this honour, and towards Nebuchadnezzar, that he suffered it to be done. If Zedekiah had continued in his prosperity, perhaps he would have grown worse, and would have departed at last without being desired; but his afflictions wrought such a change in him that his death was looked upon as a great loss. It is better live and die penitent in a prison, than live and die impenitent in a palace. "They will lament thee, saying, Ah, lord!" an honour which his brother Jehoiakim had not, *ch.* xxii. 18. The Jews say, they lamented thus over him, 'Alas, Zedekiah is dead, who drunk the dregs of all the ages that went before him;' that is, who suffered for the sins of his ancestors, the measure of iniquity being filled up in his days. They shall thus lament him, "saith the Lord; for I have pronounced the word;" and what God hath spoken, shall, without fail, be made good.

Thirdly. Jeremiah's faithfulness in delivering this message. Though he knew it would be ungrateful to the king, and might prove, as indeed it did, dangerous to himself, for he was clapped up for it, yet he "spake all these words to Zedekiah," ver. 6. It is a mercy to great men to have those about them that will deal faithfully with them, and tell them the evil consequences of their evil courses, that they may reform and live.

8 *This is* the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which *were* at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them; 9 That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, *being* an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, *to wit*, of a Jew his brother. 10 Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let *them* go. 11 But afterward they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids. 12 Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 13 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, 14 At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. 15 And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: 16 But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. 17 Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. 18 And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof. 19 The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; 20 I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the hea-

ven, and to the beasts of the earth. 21 And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you. 22 Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

We have here another prophecy upon a particular occasion, the history of which we must take notice of, as necessary to give light to the prophecy.

First. When Jerusalem was closely besieged by the Chaldean army, the princes and people agreed upon a reformation in one instance, and that was concerning their servants.

1. The law of God was very express, that those of their own nation should not be held in servitude above seven years, but after they had served one apprenticeship they should be discharged, and have their liberty; yea, though they had sold themselves into servitude for the payment of their debts, or though they were sold by the judges for the punishment of their crimes. This difference was put between their brethren and strangers, that those of other nations taken in war, or bought with money, might be held in perpetual slavery, they and theirs; but their brethren must serve but for seven years at the longest. This God calls the covenant that he had made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, ver. 12, 14. This was the first of the judicial laws which God gave them, *Ex.* xxi. 2, and there was good reason for that law. 1st. God had put honour upon that nation, and he would have them thus to preserve the honour of it themselves, and to put a difference between it and other nations. 2nd. God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt, and he would have them thus to express their grateful sense of that favour by letting those go to whom their houses were houses of bondage, as Egypt had been to their forefathers. That deliverance is therefore mentioned here, ver. 13, as the ground of that law. Note, God's compassions towards us should engage our compassions towards our brethren; we must release as we are released, forgive as we are forgiven, and relieve as we are relieved. And this is called a covenant; for our performance of the duty required is the condition of the continuance of the favours God hath bestowed.

2. This law they and their fathers had broken. Their worldly profit swayed more with them than God's command or covenant. When their servants had lived seven years with them, they understood their business, and how to apply themselves to it better than they did when they first came to them, and therefore they would then by no means part with them, though God himself by his law had made them free. "Your fathers hearkened not to me" in this matter, ver. 14; so that "from the days of their fathers" they had been "in this trespass;" and they thought they might do it because their fathers did it, and their servants had by disuse lost the benefit of the provision God made for them; whereas, against an express law, especially against an express law of God, no custom, usage, or prescription, is to be admitted in plea. For this sin of theirs and their fathers God now brought them into servitude, and justly.

3. When they were besieged, and closely shut in by the army of the Chaldeans, they, being told of their fault in this matter, presently reformed, and let go all their servants that were entitled to their freedom by the law of God; as Pharaoh, who, when the plague was upon him, consented to let the people go, and bound themselves in a covenant to do so. 1st. The prophets faithfully admonished them concerning their sin. From them they heard that they should let their Hebrew servants go free, ver. 2. They might have read it themselves in the book of the law, but did not, or did not heed it; therefore the prophets told them what the law was. See what need there is of the preaching of the word. People must hear the word preached, because they will not make the use they ought to make of the word written. 2nd. All orders and degrees of men concurred in this reformation. The king, and the princes, and all the people agree to let go their servants, whatever loss or damage they might sustain by so doing. When the king and princes led in this good work, the people could not for shame but follow. The example and influence of great men would go very far towards the extirpating of the most inveterate corruption. 3rd. They bound themselves by a solemn oath and covenant that they would do this, whereby they engaged themselves to God and one another. Note, What God hath bound us to by his precept it is good for us to bind ourselves to by our promise. This covenant was very solemn; it was made in a sacred place, "made before me, in the house which is called by my name," ver. 15, in the special presence of God; the tokens of which in the temple ought to strike an awe upon them, and make them very sincere in their appeals to him. It was ratified by a significant sign; they "cut a calf in two, and passed between the parts thereof," ver. 18, 19, with this dreadful imprecation, Let us be in like manner cut in sunder if we do not perform what we now promise. And this calf was probably offered up in sacrifice to God, who was thereby made a party to the covenant. When God covenanted with Abram, for the ratification of it, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces of the sacrifice, in allusion to this federal rite, *Gen.* xv. 17. Note, That we may effectually oblige ourselves to our duty, it is good to frighten ourselves with the apprehensions of the terror of that wrath and curse to which we expose ourselves if we live in the contempt of it, that wrath which will cut sinners asunder, *Mat.* xxiv. 15; and sensible signs may be of use to make the impressions of it deep and durable, as here. 4th. They conformed themselves herein to the command of God, and their covenant with him; they did let their servants go, though at this time, when the city was besieged, they could very ill spare them. Thus they did right in God's sight, ver. 15. Though it was their trouble that drove them to it, yet he was well pleased with it; and if they had persevered in this act of mercy to the poor, to their poor servants, it might have been a lengthening of their tranquillity, *Dan.* iv. 27.

Secondly. When there was some hope that the siege was raised and the danger over, they repented of their repentance, undid the good they had done, and forced the servants they had released into their respective services again. 1. The king of Babylon's army was now gone up from them, ver. 21. Pharaoh was bringing an army of Egyptians to oppose the progress of the king of Babylon's victories; upon the tidings of which the Chaldeans raised the siege for a time, as we find, *ch.* xxxvii. 5, "they departed from Jerusalem." See how ready God was to put a stop to his judgments upon the first instance of reformation; so slow is he to anger, and so swift to shew mercy. As soon as ever they let their servants go free, God let them go free. 2. When they began to think themselves safe from the besiegers, they made their servants come back into subjection to them, ver. 11; and again ver. 16. This was a great abuse to their servants, to whom servitude would be more irksome after they had had some taste of the pleasures of liberty. It was a great shame to themselves that they could not keep in a good mind when they were in it. But it was especially an affront to God; in doing this they polluted his name, ver. 16. It was a contempt of the command he had given them, as if that were of no force at all, but they might either keep it or break it as they thought fit. It was a contempt of the covenant they had made with him, and of that wrath which they imprecated upon themselves, in case they should break that covenant. It was jesting with God Almighty, as if he could be imposed upon by fallacious promises; which, when they had gained their point, they would look upon themselves no longer obliged by. It was lying to God with their mouths, and flattering him with their tongues. It was likewise a contempt of the judgments of God, and setting them at defiance; as if when once the course of them was stopped a little, and interrupted, they would never proceed again, and the judgment would never be revived. Whereas reprieves are so far from being pardons, that if they be abused thus, and sinners take encouragement from them to return to sin, they are but preparatives for heavier strokes of Divine vengeance.

Thirdly. For this treacherous dealing with God they are here severely threatened. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Those that think to put a cheat upon God by a dissembling repentance, a fallacious covenant, and a partial temporary reformation, will prove in the end to put the greatest cheat upon their own souls; for "the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God." It is here threatened, with an observable air of displeasure against them, 1. That, since they had not given liberty to their servants to go where they pleased, God would give all his judgments liberty to take their course against them without control; ver. 17, "You have not proclaimed liberty to your servants." Though they had done it, ver. 10, yet they might truly be said not to have done it, because they did not stand to it, but undid it again; and *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat*,—'that is not said to be done which does not last.' The righteousness that is forsaken and turned away from shall be forgotten, and not mentioned, no more than if it had never been, *Eze.* xviii. 14. Therefore "I will proclaim a liberty for you;" that is, I will discharge you from my service, and put you out of my protection, which those forfeit that withdraw from their allegiance. You shall have liberty to choose which of these judgments you will be cut off by, sword, famine, or pestilence; such a liberty as was offered to David, which put him into a great strait, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 14. Note, Those that will not be in subjection to the law of God put themselves into subjection to the wrath and curse of God. But this shews what liberty to sin really is; it is but a liberty to the sorest judgments. 2. That, since they had brought their servants back into confinement in their houses, God would "make them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth," where they should live in servitude, and, being strangers, could not expect the privileges of freeborn subjects. 3. That, since they had broken the covenant which they ratified by a solemn imprecation, God would bring on them the evil which they imprecated upon themselves in case they should break it. Out of their own mouth will he judge them, and so shall their doom be; the penalty of their bond shall be recovered, because they have not performed the condition; for so some read ver. 18, "I will make the men which have transgressed my covenant as the calf which they cut in twain;" I will divide them in sunder as they divided it in sunder. 4. That, since they would not let go their servants out of their hands, God would deliver them into the hands of those that hated them. Even the princes and nobles, both of Judah and Jerusalem, of the country and of the city; the eunuchs, chamberlains, or great officers of the court, the priests, and all the people, they had all dealt treacherously with God, and therefore shall all be involved in the common ruin without exception, ver. 19. They shall all be given into the hand of their enemies, that seek, not their wealth only, or their service, but their life. And they shall have what they seek; but neither shall that content them. When they have their lives, they shall leave their dead bodies unburied, a loathsome spectacle to all mankind, and an easy prey to the fowls and beasts, a lasting mark of ignominy being hereby fastened on them. 5. That, since they had emboldened themselves in returning to their sin, contrary to their covenant, by the retreat of the Chaldean army from them, God would therefore bring it upon them again. They are now gone up from you, and your fright is over for the present; but I will command them to face about, as they were; they shall return to this city, and take it, and burn it. Note, 1st. As confidence in God is a hopeful presage of approaching deliverance, so security in sin is a sad omen of approaching destruction. 2nd. When judgments are removed from a people before they have done their work, leave them, but leave them unhumbled and unreformed, it is *cum animo revertendi*,—'with a design to return;' they do but retreat to come on again with so much the greater force; for when God judgeth he will overcome. 3rd. It is just with God to disappoint those expectations of mercy which his providence had given cause for, when we disappoint those expectations of duty which our professions, pretensions, and fair promises had given cause for. If we repent of the good we had purposed, God will repent of the good he had purposed. "With the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward."

CHAPTER XXXV.

A variety of methods is tried, and every stone turned, to awaken the Jews to a sense of their sin, and to bring them to repentance and reformation. The scope and tendency of many of the prophet's sermons was to frighten them out of their disobedience, by setting before them what would be the end thereof, if they persisted in it. The scope of this sermon in this chapter is to shame them out of their disobedience, if they had any sense of honour left in them, for a discourse of this nature to fasten upon. I. He sets before them the obedience of the family of the Rechabites to the commands which were left them by Jonadab their ancestor, and how they persevered in that obedience, and would not be tempted from it, ver. 1—11. II. With this he aggravates the disobedience of the Jews to God, and their contempt of his precepts, ver. 12—15. III. He foretells the judgments of God upon the Jews for their impious disobedience to God, ver. 16, 17. IV. He assures the Rechabites of the blessing of God upon them, for their pious obedience to their father, ver. 18, 19.

THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2 Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. 3 Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of

Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; 4 And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which *was* by the chamber of the princes, which *was* above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door: 5 And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them,

WINE VESSELS, STRAINERS, ETC.

Drink ye wine. 6 But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, *neither* ye, nor your sons for ever: 7 Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have *any:* but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye *be* strangers. 8 Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; 9 Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: 10 But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11 But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

This chapter is of an earlier date than many of those before; for what is contained in it was said and done in the days of Jehoiakim, ver. 1, but then it must be in the latter part of his reign, for it was after the king of Babylon with his army came up into the land, ver. 11, which seems to refer to the invasion mentioned, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 2, which was upon occasion of Jehoiakim's rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar. After the judgments of God had broken in upon this rebellious people, he continued to deal with them by his prophets, to turn them from sin, that his wrath might turn away from them. He endeavours it by the example of the Rechabites, a family that kept distinct by themselves, and were no more numbered with the families of Israel, than they with the nations. They were originally Kenites, as appears, 1 *Chr.* ii. 55, "These are the Kenites, that came of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab." The Kenites, at least those of them that gained a settlement in the land of Israel, were of the posterity of Hobab, Moses' father-in-law, *Jud.* i. 16. We find them separated from the Amalekites, 1 *Sam.* xv. 6: see *Jud.* iv. 17. One family of these Kenites had their denomination from Rechab; his son, or a lineal descendant from him, was Jonadab, a man famous in his time for wisdom and piety; he flourished in the days of Jehu, king of Israel, near three hundred years before this; for there we find him courted by that rising prince, when he affected to appear zealous for God, 2 *Kin.* x. 15, 16, which he thought nothing more likely to confirm people in the opinion of than to have so good a man as Jonadab ride in the chariot with him. Now here we are told,

First. What the rules of living were which Jonadab, probably by his last will and testament in writing, and duly executed, charged his children and his posterity after him, throughout all generations, religiously to observe; and we have reason to think they were such as he himself had all his days observed. 1. He forbade them to drink wine, according to the law of the Nazarites. Wine is indeed given to make glad the heart of man, and we are allowed the sober and moderate use of it; but we are so apt to abuse it, and get hurt by it, and a good man that has his heart made continually glad with the light of God's countenance, hath so little need of it for that purpose, (*Ps.* iv. 6, 7,) that it is a commendable piece of self-denial, either not to use it at all, or very sparingly and medicinally, as Timothy used it, 1 *Tim.* v. 23. 2. He appointed them to dwell in tents, and not to build houses, or purchase lands, or rent or occupy either, ver. 7. This was an instance of strictness and mortification beyond what the Nazarites were obliged to. Tents were mean dwellings, so that this would teach them to be humble; they were cold dwellings, so that this would teach them to be hardy, and not to indulge the body; they were movable dwellings, so that this would teach them not to think of settling or taking root anywhere in this world. They must dwell in tents all their days, not for a few days, as Israel at the feast of tabernacles; not only in summer days, as soldiers and shepherds, but all their days; they must from the beginning thus accustom themselves to endure hardness, and then it would be no difficulty to them, no, not under the decays of old age.

Now why did Jonadab prescribe these rules of living to his posterity? It was not merely to shew his authority, and to exercise a dominion over them, by imposing upon them what he thought fit; but it was to shew his wisdom, and the real concern he had for their welfare, by recommending to them what he knew would be beneficial to them; yet not tying them by any oath or vow, or under any penalty, to observe these rules, but only advising them to conform to this discipline, as far as they found it for edification, yet to be dispensed with in any case of necessity, as here, ver. 11. He prescribed these rules to them, 1. That they might preserve the ancient character of their family, which, however looked upon by some with contempt, he thought its real reputation. His ancestors had addicted themselves to a pastoral life, *Ex.* ii. 16, and he would have his posterity keep to it, and not degenerate from it, as Israel had done, who originally were shepherds, and dwelt in tents, *Gen.* xlvi. 34. Note, We ought not to be ashamed of the honest employments of our ancestors, though they were but mean. 2. That they might comport with their lot, and bring their mind to their condition. Moses had put them in hopes that they should be naturalized, *Num.* x. 32, but it seems they were not. They were still strangers in the land, ver. 7, had no inheritance in it, and therefore must live by their employments, which was a good reason why they should accustom themselves to hard fare and hard lodging; for strangers such as they were must not expect to live as the landed men, so plentifully and delicately. Note, It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our place and rank, and not aim to live above it. What has been the lot of our fathers why may we not be content that it should be our lot, and live according to it? "Mind not high things." 3. That they might not be envied and disturbed by their neighbours among whom they lived. If they that were strangers should live great, raise estates, and fare sumptuously, the natives would grudge them their abundance, and have a jealous eye upon them, as the Philistines had upon Isaac, *Gen.* xxvi. 14, and would seek occasions to quarrel with them, and do them a mischief. Therefore he thought it would be their prudence to keep low, for that would be the way to continue long; to live meanly, that they might "live many days in the land where they were strangers." Note, Humility and contentment in obscurity is oftentimes the best policy, and men's surest protection. 4. That they might be armed against temptations to luxury and sensuality, the prevailing sin of the age and place they lived in. Jonadab saw a general corruption of manners; the drunkards of Ephraim abounded, and he was afraid lest his children should be debauched and ruined by them, and therefore obliged them to live by themselves, retired in the country; and, that they might not run into any unlawful pleasures, to deny themselves the use even of lawful delights. They must be very sober, and temperate, and abstemious, which would contribute to the health both of mind and body, and to their living many days, and easy ones, and such as they might reflect upon with comfort in the land where they were strangers. Note, The consideration of this, that we are strangers and pilgrims, should oblige us to abstain from all fleshly lusts, to live above the things of sense, and look upon them with a generous and gracious contempt. 5. That they might be prepared for times of trouble and calamity. Jonadab might, without a spirit of prophecy, foresee the destruction of a people so wretchedly degenerated; and he would have his family provide, that if they could not in the peace thereof, yet even in the midst of the troubles thereof, they might have peace. Let them therefore have little to lose, and then losing times would be less dreadful to them; let them sit loose to what they had, and then they might the easier be stripped of it. Note, Those are in the best frame to meet sufferings that are mortified to the world, and live a life of self-denial. 6. That in general they might learn to live by rule, and under discipline. It is good for us all to do so, and teach our children to do so. Those that have lived long, as it is likely Jonadab had done, when he left this charge to his posterity, can speak by experience of the vanity of the world, and the dangerous snares that are in the abundance of its wealth and pleasures, and therefore ought to be regarded, when they warn those that come after them to stand upon their guard.

Secondly. We are here told how strictly his posterity observed these rules, ver. 8—10. They had in their respective generations all of them "obeyed the voice of Jonadab" their father, had done "according to all that he had commanded them." They drank no wine, though they dwelt in a country where there was plenty of it; their wives and children drank no wine, for they that are temperate themselves should take care that all under their charge should be so too. They built no houses, tilled no ground, but lived upon the products

of their cattle. This they did partly in obedience to their ancestor, and out of a veneration they had for his name and authority, and partly from the experience they themselves had of the benefit of living such a mortified life. See the force of tradition, and the influence that antiquity, example, and great names, have upon men; and how that which seems very difficult will, by long usage and custom, become easy, and in a manner natural.

Now, 1. As to one of the particulars he had given them in charge, we are here told how in a case of necessity they dispensed with the violation of it; ver. 11, "When the king of Babylon came into the land," with his army, though they had hitherto dwelt in tents, they now quitted their tents, and came and dwelt in Jerusalem, and in such houses as they could furnish themselves with there. Note, The rules of a strict discipline must not be made too strict, but so as to admit of a dispensation when the necessity of the case calls for it; which therefore, in making vows of that nature, it is wisdom to provide expressly for, that the way may be made the more clear, and we may not afterwards be forced to say, It was an error, *Eccl.* v. 6; and commands of that nature are to be understood with such limitations. These Rechabites had tempted God, and not trusted him, if they had not used proper means for their own safety in a time of common calamity, notwithstanding the law and custom of their family. 2. As to the other particular, we are here told how, notwithstanding the greatest urgency, they religiously adhered to it. Jeremiah took them into the temple, ver. 2, into a prophet's chamber there, rather than into the chamber of the princes, that joined to it, because he had a message from God, which would look more like itself when it was delivered in the chambers of a man of God. There he not only asked the Rechabites, Would they drink any wine, but he set pots full of wine before them, and cups to drink out of; made the temptation as strong as possible, and said, "Drink ye wine," you shall have it on free cost; you have broken one of the rules of your order, in coming to live at Jerusalem, why may you not break this too, and when you are in the city, do as they there do? But they peremptorily refused; they all agreed in the refusal: No, "we will drink no wine," for with us it is against the law. The prophet knew very well they would deny it, and when they did urged it no farther, for he saw that they were stedfastly resolved. Note, Those temptations are of no force with men of confirmed sobriety which yet daily overcome such as, notwithstanding their convictions, are of no resolution in the paths of virtue.

12 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, 13 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD. 14 The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. 15 I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. 16 Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: 17 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. 18 And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you: 19 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

The trial of the Rechabites' constancy was intended but for a sign. Now here we have the application of it.

First. The Rechabites' observance of their father's charge to them is made use of as an aggravation of the disobedience of the Jews to God. Let them see it, and be ashamed. The prophet asks them in God's name, Will ye not at length receive instruction? ver. 13. Will nothing affect you? Will nothing fasten upon you? Will nothing prevail to discover sin and duty to you? You see how obedient the Rechabites are to their father's commandment; ver. 14, but "you have not inclined your ear to me," ver. 15, though one might much more reasonably expect that the people of God should have obeyed him, than that the sons of Jonadab should have obeyed him; and the aggravation is very high; for, 1. The Rechabites were obedient to one that was but a man like themselves, that had but the wisdom and power of a man, and was only the father of their flesh; but the Jews were disobedient to an infinite and eternal God, that had an absolute authority over them as the Father of their spirits. 2. Jonadab was long since dead, and was ignorant of them, and could neither take cognizance of their disobedience to his orders nor give correction for it. But God lives for ever, to see how his laws are observed, and is in a readiness to revenge all disobedience. 3. The Rechabites were never put in mind of their obligations to their father; but God often sent his prophets to his people, to put them in mind of their duty to him, and yet they would not do it. This is insisted on here as a great aggravation of their disobedience; "I have myself spoken to you, rising early, and speaking," by the written word, and the dictates and admonitions of conscience, ver. 14. Nay, "I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets," men like yourselves, whose terrors shall not make you afraid, rising up early, and sending them, ver. 15, and yet all in vain. 4. Jonadab never did that for his seed that God had done for this people. He left them a charge, but left them no estate to bear the charge; but God had given his people a good land, and promised them, if they would be obedient, they should still dwell in it. So that they were bound both in gratitude and interest to be obedient, and yet they would not hear, they would not hearken. 5. God did not tie up his people to so much hardship, and to such instances of mortification as Jonadab obliged his seed to; and yet Jonadab's orders were obeyed, and God's were not.

Secondly. Judgments are threatened, as often before, against Judah and Jerusalem, for their disobedience thus aggravated. The Rechabites shall rise up in judgment against them, and shall condemn them, for they very punctually "performed the commandment of their father," and continued and persevered in their obedience to it, ver. 16; but "this people," this rebellious and gainsaying people, "has not hearkened to me;" and therefore, ver. 17, because they have not obeyed the precepts of the word, God will perform the threatenings of it: "I will bring upon them," by the Chaldean army, "all the evil pronounced against them," both in the law and the prophets; for "I have spoken to them, I have called to them;" spoken in a still small voice to them that were near, and called aloud to them that were at a distance; tried all ways and means to convince and reduce them, spoke by his word, called by his providence, both to the same purpose, and yet all to no purpose; they have not heard nor answered.

Thirdly. Mercy is here promised to the family of the Rechabites, for their steady and unanimous adherence to the laws of their house. Though it was only for the shaming of Israel that their constancy was tried, yet, being unshaken, it was found unto praise, and honour, and glory. And God takes occasion from it to tell them that he had favours in reserve for them, ver. 18, 19, and they should have the comfort of them. It is promised, 1. That the family shall continue as long as any of the families of Israel, among whom they were strangers and sojourners. It shall never want a man to inherit what they had, though they had no inheritance to leave them. Note, Sometimes those that have the smallest estates have the most numerous progeny; but he that sends mouths will be sure to send meat. 2. That religion shall continue in the family; "He shall not want a man to stand before me" to serve me. Though they are neither priests nor Levites, nor appear to have had any post in the temple service, yet, in a constant course of regular devotion, they stand before God to minister to him. Note, 1st. The greatest blessing that can be entailed upon a family is, to have the worship of God kept up in it, from generation to generation. 2nd. Temperance, and self-denial, and mortification to the world, do very much befriend the exercises of piety, and help to transmit the observance of them to posterity. The more dead we are to the delights of sense, the better disposed we are for the service of God; but nothing is more fatal to the entail of religion in a family than pride and luxury.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Here is another expedient tried to work upon this heedless and untoward people, but it is tried in vain. A roll of a book is provided, containing an abstract or abridgment of all the sermons that Jeremiah had preached to them, that they might be put in mind of what they had heard, and might the better understand it, when they had it all before them at one view. Now here we have, I. The writing of the roll by Baruch, as Jeremiah dictated it, ver. 1—4. II. The reading of the roll by Baruch to all the people publicly on a fast day, ver. 5—10; afterwards by Baruch to the princes privately, ver. 11—19; and lastly, by Jehudi to the king, ver. 20, 21. III. The burning of the roll by the king, with orders to prosecute Jeremiah and Baruch, ver. 22—26. IV. The writing of another roll, with large additions, particularly of Jehoiakim's doom for burning the former, ver. 27—32.

AND it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, *that* this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. 3 It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. 4 Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had

spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. 5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I *am* shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD: 6 Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD's house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities. 7 It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great *is* the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people. 8 And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

In the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy we meet with a roll written in vision, for discovery of the things therein contained to the prophet himself, who was to receive and digest them, *Eze.* ii. 10, and iii. 1. Here in the latter end of Jeremiah's prophecy we meet with a roll, written, in fact, for discovery of the things contained therein to the people, who were to hear and give heed to them, for the written word and other good books are of great use both to ministers and people. We have here,

First. The command which God gave to Jeremiah to write a summary of his sermons, of all the reproofs and all the warnings he had given in God's name to his people, ever since he first began to be a preacher, in the thirteenth year of Josiah to this day, which was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, ver. 2, 3. What had been spoken only must now be written, that it might be reviewed, and that it might spread the farther and last the longer. What had been spoken at large, with frequent repetitions of the same things, perhaps in the same words, which has its advantage one way, must now be contracted and put into less compass, that the several parts of it might be better compared together, which has its advantage another way. What they had heard once must be recapitulated and rehearsed to them again; that what was forgotten might be called to mind again, and what made no impression upon them at the first hearing might take hold of them when they heard it the second time. And what was perhaps already written and published in single sermons must be collected into one volume, that none might be lost. Note, The writing of the Scripture is by Divine appointment. And observe, The reason here given for the writing of this roll; ver. 3, "It may be the house of Judah will hear." Not that the Divine prescience was at any uncertainty concerning the event, with that there is no peradventure, (God knew certainly that they would deal very treacherously, *Isa.* xlviii. 8,) but the Divine wisdom directed to this as a proper means for attaining the desired end, which, if it did not, they would be the more inexcusable. And though God foresaw they would not hear, he did not tell the prophet so, but prescribes this method to him as a probable one, to be used in hopes they will hear; will hear, that is, will heed and regard what they hear, will take notice of it and mix faith with it, for otherwise our hearing of the word, though an angel from heaven were to read or preach it to us, would stand us in no stead. Now observe here, 1. What it is hoped they will thus hear; "All that evil which I purpose to do unto them." Note, The serious consideration of the certain fatal consequences of sin will be of great use to us to bring us to God. 2. What it is hoped will be produced thereby; "They will hear, that they may return every man from his evil way." Note, The conversion of sinners from their sinful courses is that which ministers should aim at in preaching; and people hear the word in vain if that point be not gained with them. To what purpose do we hear of the evil God will bring upon us for sin if we continue notwithstanding to do evil against him? 3. Of what vast advantage their consideration and conversion will be to them; "That I may forgive their iniquity." This plainly implies the honour of God's justice, with which it is not consistent that he should forgive the sin unless the sinner repent of it, and turn from it; but it plainly expresseth the honour of his mercy, that he is very ready to forgive sin, and only waits till the sinner be qualified to receive forgiveness, and therefore useth various means to bring us to repentance, that he may forgive.

Secondly. The instructions which Jeremiah gave to Baruch his scribe, pursuant to this command he had received from God, and the writing of the roll accordingly, ver. 4. God bade Jeremiah write, but it should seem he had not the pen of a ready writer: he could not write fast, or not fair, so as Baruch could, and therefore he made use of him as his amanuensis. St. Paul wrote few of his epistles with his own hand, *Gal.* vi. 11; *Rom.* xvi. 22. God dispenseth his gifts variously; some have a good faculty at speaking, others at writing, and neither can say to the other, We have no need of you, 1 *Cor.* xii. 21. The Spirit of God dictated to Jeremiah, and he to Baruch, who had been employed by Jeremiah as trustee for him in his purchase of the field, *ch.* xxxii. 12, and now was advanced to be his scribe and substitute in his prophetical office; and, if we may credit the apocryphal book that bears his name, he was afterwards himself a prophet to the captives in Babylon. Those that begin low are likely to rise high; and it is good for those that are designed for prophets to have their education under prophets, and be serviceable to them. Baruch wrote what Jeremiah dictated in a roll of a book, on pieces of parchment or vellum, which were joined together, the top of one to the bottom of the other, so making one long scroll, which was rolled perhaps upon a staff.

Thirdly. The orders which Jeremiah gave to Baruch, to read what he had written to the people. Jeremiah, it seems, was shut up, and could not go to the house of the Lord himself, ver. 5. Though he was not a close prisoner, for then there had been no occasion to send officers to seize him, ver. 36, yet he was forbidden by the king to appear in the temple, was shut out thence, where he might be serving God and doing good, which was as bad to him as if he had been shut up in a dungeon. Jehoiakim was ripening apace for ruin when he thus silenced God's faithful messengers. But when Jeremiah could not go to the temple himself, he sent one that was deputed by him to read to the people what he would himself have said. Thus St. Paul wrote epistles to the churches which he could not visit in person; nay, it was what he himself had often said to them. Note, The writing and repeating of the sermons that have been preached may contribute very much towards the answering of the great ends of preaching. What we have heard and known it is good for us to hear again, that we may know it better. To preach and write the same thing is safe and profitable, and many times very necessary, *Phil.* iii. 1; and we must be glad to hear a good word from God, though we have it as here at second hand. Both ministers and people must do what they can when they cannot do what they would. Observe, When God ordered the reading of the roll he said, "It may be they will hear, and return from their evil ways," ver. 3. When Jeremiah orders it he saith, "It may be they will pray," (they will "present their supplication before the Lord,") "and will return from their evil way." Note, Prayer to God for grace to turn us is necessary in order to our turning; and those that are convinced by the word of God of the necessity of returning to him will present their supplications to him for that grace; and the consideration of this, that "great is the anger which God has pronounced against us" for sin, should quicken both our prayers and our endeavours. Now according to these orders Baruch did read "out of the book the words of the Lord," whenever there was a holy convocation, ver. 8.

9 And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, *that* they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem. 10 Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house, in the ears of all the people. 11 When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD, 12 Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, *even* Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. 13 Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people. 14 Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. 15 And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read *it* in their ears. 16 Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words. 17 And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? 18 Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote *them* with ink in the book. 19 Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

It should seem that Baruch had been frequently reading out of the book to all companies that would give him the hearing, before the most solemn reading of it altogether, which is here spoken of; for the directions were given about it in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, whereas this was done in the fifth year, ver. 9. But some think that the writing of the book fair over took up so much time that it was another year ere it was perfected; and yet perhaps it might not be past a month or two; he might begin it in the latter end of the fourth year and finish it in the beginning of the fifth, for the ninth month refers to the computation of the year in general, not to the year of that reign. Now observe here,

First. The government appointed a public fast to be religiously observed, ver. 9, either upon the account of the distress they were brought into by the army of the Chaldeans, or of the want of rain, *ch.* xiv. 1; "They proclaimed a fast to the people." Whether the king and princes or the priests ordered this fast, is not certain, but it was plain God, by his providence, called them aloud to it. Note, Great shows of piety and devotion may be found even among those who, though they keep up these forms of godliness, are strangers

and enemies to the power of it. But what will such hypocritical services avail? Fasting without reforming and turning away from sin will never turn away the judgments of God, *Jonah* iii. 10. Notwithstanding this fast God proceeded in his controversy with this people.

Secondly. Baruch repeated Jeremiah's sermons publicly in the house of the Lord on the fast-day. He stood in a chamber that belonged to Gemariah, and out of a window or balcony read to the people that were in the court, ver. 10. Note, When we are speaking to God we must be willing to hear from him, and therefore on days of fasting and prayer it is requisite that the word be read and preached; "Hearken unto me, that God may hearken unto you," *Jud.* ix. 7. For our help in suing out mercy and grace it is proper we should be told of sin and duty.

Thirdly. An account was brought of this to the princes that attended the court, and were now together in the secretary's office, here called the scribe's chamber, ver. 12. It should seem, though the princes had called the people to meet in the house of God to fast, and pray, and hear the word, they did not think fit to attend there themselves, which was a sign that it was not from a principle of true devotion, but merely for fashion sake, that they proclaimed this fast. We are willing to hope that it was not with an ill design to bring Jeremiah into trouble for his preaching, but with a good design, to bring the princes into trouble for their sins, that Michaiah informed the princes of what Baruch had read; for his father Gemariah so far countenanced Baruch as to lend him his chamber to read out of. Michaiah finds the princes sitting in the scribe's chamber, and tells them they had better have been where he had been, hearing a good sermon in the temple, which he gives them the heads of. Note, When we have heard some good word that has affected and edified us we should be ready to communicate it to others that did not hear it, for their edification; "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."

Fourthly. Baruch is sent for, and is ordered to sit down among them, and read it all over again to them, ver. 14, 15, which he readily did, not complaining that he was weary with his public work, and therefore desiring to be excused, nor upbraiding the princes with their being absent from the temple, where they might have heard it when he read it there. Note, God's ministers must become all things to all men, if by any means they may gain some; must comply with them in circumstances that they may secure the substance. St. Paul preached privately to them of reputation, *Gal.* ii. 2.

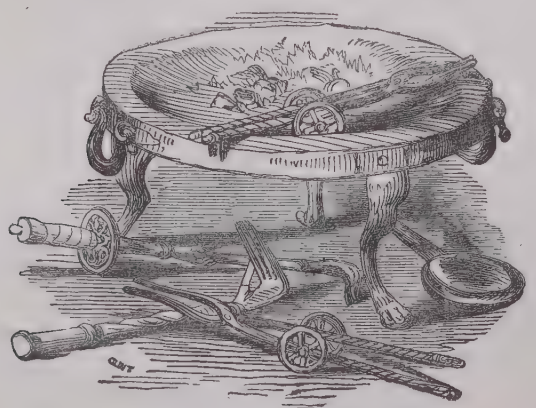
Fifthly. The princes were for the present much affected with the word that was read to them, ver. 16. Observe, They heard all the words, they did not interrupt him, but very patiently attended to the reading of the whole book, for otherwise how could they make a competent judgment of it? And when they had heard all they were afraid, were all afraid, one as well as another; like Felix, who trembled at Paul's reasonings. The reproofs were just and the threatenings terrible, and the predictions now in a fair way to be fulfilled, so that, laying all together, they were in a great consternation. We are not told what impressions this reading of the roll made upon the people, ver. 12, but the princes were put into a fright by it, and (as some read it) looked one upon another, not knowing what to say. They were all convinced it was worthy to be regarded, but none of them had courage to second it, only they agreed to tell the king of all these words, and if he think fit to give credit to them they will; otherwise not, no, though it were to prevent the ruin of the nation. And yet at the same time they knew the king's mind so far that they advised Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themselves, ver. 19, and to shift as they could for their own safety, expecting no other but that the king, instead of being convinced, would be exasperated. Note, It is common for sinners under convictions to endeavour to shake them off, by shifting off the prosecution of them to other persons, as these princes here, or to another more convenient season, as Felix.

Sixthly. They asked Baruch a trifling question, "How he wrote all these words?" ver. 17, as if they suspected there was something extraordinary in it; but Baruch gives them a plain answer, that there was nothing but what was common in the manner of the writing; Jeremiah dictated, and he wrote, ver. 18. But thus it is common for those who would avoid the convictions of the word of God to start needless questions about the way and manner of the inspiration of it.

20 And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. 21 So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. 22 Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and *there was a fire* on the hearth burning before him. 23 And it came to pass, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast *it* into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth. 24 Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, *neither* the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. 25 Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them. 26 But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them. 27 Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, 28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. 29 And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? 30 Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah;

He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David:
And his dead body shall be cast out
In the day to the heat,
And in the night to the frost.
31 And I will punish him and his seed and his servants
For their iniquity;
And I will bring upon them,
And upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah,
All the evil that I have pronounced against them;
But they hearkened not.

32 Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.



BRAZIERS, OR FIREPANS.
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We have traced the roll to the people and to the princes, and here we are to follow it to the king; and we find,

First. That upon notice given him concerning it, he sent for it, and ordered it to be read to him, ver. 20, 21. He did not desire that Baruch would come and read it himself, who could read it more intelligently, and with more authority and affection than any one else; nor did he order one of his princes to do it, though it had been no disparagement to the greatest of them, much less would he vouchsafe to read it himself; but Jehudi, one of his pages now in waiting, that was sent to fetch it, is bidden to read it, who perhaps scarce knew how to make sense of it. But those who thus despise the word of God will soon make it appear, as this king here did, that they hate it too, and have not only low, but ill thoughts of it.

Secondly. That he had not patience to hear it read through, as the princes had; but when he had heard three or four leaves read, in a rage cut it with his penknife, and threw it piece by piece into the fire, that he might be sure to see it all consumed, ver. 22, 23. This was a piece of as daring impiety as a man could lightly be guilty of, and a most impudent affront to the God of heaven, whose message this was. 1. Thus he shewed his impatience of reproof; being resolved to persist in sin, he would by no means bear to be told of his faults. 2. Thus he shewed his indignation at Baruch and Jeremiah; he would have cut them in pieces and burnt them, if he had had them in his reach when he was in this passion. 3. Thus he expressed an obstinate resolution never to comply with the designs and intentions of the warnings given him; he will do what he will, whatsoever God, by his prophets, saith to the contrary. 4. Thus he foolishly hoped to defeat the threatenings denounced against him; as if God knew not how to execute the sentence when the roll was gone in which it

was written. 5. Thus he thought he had effectually provided that the things contained in the roll should spread no farther, which was the care of the chief priests concerning the Gospel, *Acts* iv. 17. They had told him how this roll had been read to the people and to the princes. But, saith he, I will take care it shall never be read more. See what an enmity against God there is in the carnal mind, and wonder at the patience of God, that he bears with such indignities done to him.

Thirdly. That neither the king himself nor any of his princes were at all affected with the word; "They were not afraid," ver. 24; no, not those princes that trembled at the word when they heard it the first time, ver. 16. So soon, so easily, do good impressions wear off. They shewed some concern till they saw how light the king made of it, and then they shook off all that concern. They rent not their garments, as Josiah did, this Jehoiakim's own father did, when he had the book of the law read to him, though it was not so particular as the contents of this roll were, nor so immediately adapted to the present posture of affairs.

Fourthly. That there were three of the princes who had so much sense and grace left as to interpose for the preventing of the burning of the roll, but in vain, ver. 25. If they had from the first shewed themselves, as they ought to have done, affected with the word, perhaps they might have brought the king to a better mind, and have persuaded him to hear it patiently; but many times they that will not do the good they should put it out of their own power to do the good they would.

Fifthly. That Jehoiakim, when he had thus in effect burned God's warrant, by which he was arrested, as it were, in a way of revenge, now he thought he had got the better, signed a warrant for the apprehending of Jeremiah and Baruch, God's ministers; ver. 26, "But the Lord hid them." The princes bade them abscond, ver. 19. But it was neither the princes' care for them, nor theirs for themselves, that secured them, it was under the Divine protection that they were safe. Note, God will find out a shelter for his people, though their persecutors be never so industrious to get them into their power, till their hour is come; nay, and then he will himself be their hiding place.

Sixthly. That Jeremiah had orders and instructions to write the same words in another roll that were written in the roll which Jehoiakim had burned, ver. 27, 28. Note, Though the attempts of hell against the word of God are very daring, yet not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground, nor shall the unbelief of man make the word of God of none effect. Enemies may prevail to burn many a Bible, but they cannot abolish the word of God, can neither extirpate it nor defeat the accomplishment of it. Though the tables of the law were broken, they were renewed again; and so out of the ashes of the roll that was burned arose another phœnix. "The word of the Lord endures for ever."

Seventhly. That the king of Judah, though he be a king, shall be severely reckoned with by the King of kings for this indignity done to the written word. God took notice what it was in the roll that Jehoiakim took so much offence at. He was angry because "it was written therein, saying, Surely the king of Babylon shall come and destroy this land," ver. 29. And did not the king of Babylon come two years before this, and go far towards the destroying of this land? He did so, 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 6, 7; in his third year, *Dan.* i. 1. So that God and his prophets were therefore become his enemies, because they told him the truth, told him of the desolation that was coming, but at the same time putting him into a fair way to prevent it. But if this be the thing he takes so heinously, let him know, 1. That the wrath of God shall come upon him and his family, in the first place by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. He shall be cut off, and in a few weeks his son shall be dethroned, and exchange his royal robes for prison garments, so that he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; the glory of that illustrious house shall be eclipsed, and die in him. His dead body shall lie unburied, or, which comes all to one, he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, that is, thrown into the next ditch; it shall lie exposed to all weathers, heat and frost, which will occasion its putrefying and becoming loathsome the sooner. 'Not that his body,' saith Mr. Gataker, 'could be sensible of such usage, or himself, being deceased, of aught that could befall his body; but that the sight of a king's body in such a condition should be a hideous spectacle, and a horrid monument of God's heavy wrath and indignation against him, unto all that should behold it.' Even his seed and his servants shall fare the worse for their relation to him, ver. 31; for they shall be punished not for his iniquity, but so much the sooner for their own. 2. That all the evil pronounced against Judah and Jerusalem in that roll shall be brought upon them. Though the copy be burned, the original remains in the Divine counsel, which shall again be copied out after another manner, in bloody characters. Note, There is no escaping God's judgments by struggling with them; who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered?

Lastly. That when the roll was written anew, "there were added" to the former "many like words," ver. 32, many more threatenings of wrath and vengeance; for, since they will yet walk contrary to God, he will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Note, As God is in one mind, and none can turn him, so he hath still more arrows in his quiver; and those who contend with God's woes do but prepare for themselves heavier of the same kind.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

This chapter brings us very near the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; for the story of it lies in the latter end of Zedekiah's reign. We have in it, I. A general idea of the ill character of this reign, ver. 1, 2. II. The message which Zedekiah notwithstanding sent to Jeremiah, to desire his prayers, ver. 3. III. The flattering hopes which the people had conceived, that the Chaldeans would quit the siege of Jerusalem, ver. 4. IV. The assurance God gave them by Jeremiah, (who was now at liberty, ver. 4,) that the Chaldean army should renew the siege, and take the city, ver. 6—10. V. The imprisonment of Jeremiah, under pretence that he was a deserter, ver. 11—17. VI. The kindness which Zedekiah shewed him when he was a prisoner, ver. 16—21.

AND king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. 2 But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah. 3 And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us. 4 Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison. 5 Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem. 6 Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. 8 And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. 9 Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. 10 For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained *but* wounded men among them, *yet* should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

Here is, First. Jeremiah's preaching slighted, ver. 1, 2. Zedekiah succeeded Coniah, or Jeconiah; and, though he saw in his predecessor the fatal consequences of contemning the word of God, yet he did not take warning, nor give any more regard to it than others had done before him. "Neither he, nor his courtiers, nor the people of the land, hearkened unto the words of the Lord," though they already began to be fulfilled. Note, Those have hearts wretchedly hard indeed, that see God's judgments on others, and feel them on themselves, and yet will not be humbled and brought to heed what he saith. These here had proof sufficient that it was the Lord that spake by Jeremiah the prophet, and yet they would not hearken to him.

Secondly. Jeremiah's prayers desired. Zedekiah sent messengers to him, saying, "Pray now unto the Lord our God for us." So he did, *ch.* xxi. 1, 2; and one of the messengers, Zephaniah, is the same there and here. Zedekiah is to be commended for this, and it shews he had some good in him, some sense of his need of God's favour, and of his own unworthiness to ask it for himself, and some value for good people and good ministers, that had an interest in heaven. Note, When we are in distress we ought to desire the prayers of our ministers and Christian friends; for thereby we put an honour upon prayer, and an esteem upon our brethren. Kings themselves should look upon their praying people as the strength of the nation, *Zec.* xii. 5, 10. And yet this doth but help to condemn Zedekiah out of his own mouth. If indeed he looked upon Jeremiah as a prophet, whose prayers might avail much both for him and his people, why did he not then believe him, and hearken to the words of the Lord, which he spake by him? He desired his good prayers, but would not take his good counsel, nor be ruled by him, though he spake in God's name, and it appears by this he knew he did. Note, It is common for those to desire to be prayed for that yet will not be advised. But herein they put a cheat upon themselves; for how can we expect that God should hear others speaking to him for us, if we will not hear them speaking to us from him, and for him. Many that despise prayer when they are in prosperity will be glad of it when they are in adversity; Now give us of your oil. When Zedekiah sent to the prophet to pray for him, he had better have sent for the prophet to pray with him; but he thought that below him; and how can they expect the comforts of religion that will not stoop to the services of it?

Thirdly. Jerusalem flattered by the retreat of the Chaldean army from it. Jeremiah was now at liberty; ver. 4, he went in and out among the people, might freely speak to them, and be spoken to by them. Jerusalem also for the present was at liberty, ver. 5. Zedekiah, though a tributary to the king of Babylon, had entered into a private league with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, *Eze.* xvii. 15; pursuant to which, when the king of Babylon came to chastise him for his treachery, the king of Egypt, though he came no more in person after that great defeat which Nebuchadnezzar gave him in the reign of Jehoiakim, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 7, yet sent some forces to relieve Jerusalem when it was besieged; upon notice of the approach of which the Chaldeans raised the siege, probably not for fear of them, but in policy, to fight them at a distance, before any of the Jewish forces could join them. From this they encouraged themselves to hope that Jerusalem was delivered, for good and all, out of the hands of its enemies, and that the storm was quite blown over. Note, Sinners are commonly hardened in their security by the intermissions of judgments, and the slow proceedings of them; and those who will not be awakened by the word of God may justly be lulled asleep by the providence of God.

Fourthly. Jerusalem threatened with the return of the Chaldean army, and with ruin by it. Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to desire him to pray for them, that the Chaldean army might not return; but Jeremiah sends them word back that the decree was gone forth, and it was but a folly for them to expect peace; for God had begun a controversy with them, which he would make an end of. "Thus saith the Lord, Deceive not yourselves," ver. 9. Note, Satan himself, though he is the great deceiver, could not deceive us, if we did not deceive ourselves; and thus sinners are their own destroyers by being their own deceivers: which this is an aggravation of, that they are so frequently warned of it, and cautioned not to deceive themselves, and they have the word of God, the great design of which is to undeceive them. Jeremiah used no dark metaphors; but tells them plainly,

1. That the Egyptians shall retreat, and either give back or be forced back into their own land, (*Eze.* xvii. 17,) which was said of old, (*Isa.* xxx. 7,) and is here said again, ver. 7; that "the Egyptians shall help in vain;" they shall not dare to face the Chaldean army, but shall retire with precipitation. Note, If God

help us not no creature can. As no power can prevail against God, so none can avail without God, nor countervail his departures from us.

2. That the Chaldeans shall return, and shall renew the siege, and prosecute it with more vigour than ever. "They shall not depart" for good and all, ver. 9; "they shall come again," ver. 8; they shall "fight against the city." Note, God has the sovereign command of all the hosts of men, even of those that know him not, that own him not, and they are all made to serve his purposes. He directs their marches, their counter-marches, their retreats, their returns, as pleaseth him; and furious armies, like stormy winds, are fulfilling his word.

3. That Jerusalem shall certainly be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans; they shall take it and burn it with fire, ver. 8. The sentence passed upon it shall be executed, and they shall be the executioners. O but, (they say,) the Chaldeans are withdrawn, they have quitted the enterprise as impracticable; and though they have, (saith the prophet,) nay, though you had smitten their army, so that many were slain, and all the rest wounded, yet those wounded men should rise up and burn this city, ver. 10. This is designed to speak the doom passed upon Jerusalem irrevocable, and its destruction inevitable; it must be laid in ruins, and these Chaldeans are the men that must do it, and it is now in vain to think of evading the stroke, or contending with it. Note, Whatever instruments God has determined to make use of in any service for him, whether of mercy or judgment, they shall accomplish that for which they are designed, whatever incapacity or disability they may lie under to be reduced to. Those by whom God has resolved to save or to destroy, saviours they shall be, and destroyers they shall be, yea, though they were all wounded. For, as when God has work to do he will not want instruments to do it with, though they may seem far to seek, so, when he has chosen his instruments, they shall do the work, though they may seem very unlikely to accomplish it.

11 And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army, 12 Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people. 13 And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward *was* there, whose name *was* Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. 14 Then said Jeremiah, *It is* false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. 15 Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison. 16 When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; 17 Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there *any* word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. 18 Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? 19 Where *are* now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? 20 Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. 21 Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

EASTERN BAKER.—ver. 21.
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We have here a farther account concerning Jeremiah, who relates more passages concerning himself than any other of the prophets; for the histories of the lives and sufferings of God's ministers have been very serviceable to the church, as well as their preaching and writing.

First. We are told that Jeremiah, when he had an opportunity for it, attempted to retire out of Jerusalem into the country, ver. 11, 12. When the Chaldeans had broken up from Jerusalem, because of Pharaoh's army, upon the notice of their advancing towards them, Jeremiah determined to go into the country, and, as the margin reads it, to 'slip away from Jerusalem in the midst of the people,' who in that interval of the siege went out into the country to look after their affairs there. He endeavoured to steal away in the crowd; for, though he was a man of great eminency, he could well reconcile himself to obscurity; though he was one of a thousand he was content to be lost in the multitude, and buried alive in a corner, in a cottage. Whether he designed for Anathoth or no doth not appear; his concerns might call him thither, but his neighbours there were such as, unless they were well mended since, *ch.* xi. 21, might discourage him from coming among them. Or, whether he did not intend to hide himself somewhere where he was not known, and fulfil his own wish, *ch.* ix. 2, "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place!" Jeremiah found he could do no good in Jerusalem, he laboured in vain among them, and therefore determined to leave them. Note, There are times when it is the wisdom of good men to retire into privacy, to "enter into the chamber, and shut the door about them," *Isa.* xxvi. 20.

Secondly. That in this attempt he was seized as a deserter and committed to prison, ver. 13—15. He was in the gate of Benjamin, so far had he gained his point, when a captain of the ward, who probably had the charge of that gate, discovered him, and took him into custody. He was the grandson of Hananiah, who, the Jews say, was Hananiah the false prophet, that contested with Jeremiah, *ch.* xxviii. 16; and that this young captain had a spite to Jeremiah upon that account. He could not arrest him without some pretence; and that which he chargeth upon him is, "Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans;" an unlikely story, for the Chaldeans were now gone off. Jeremiah could not reach them; or, if he could, who would go over to a baffled army? Jeremiah therefore, with good reason, and with both the confidence and mildness of an innocent man, denies the charge, "It is false, I fall not away to the Chaldeans," I am going upon my own lawful occasions. Note, It is no new thing for the church's best friends to be represented as in the interest of her worst enemies; thus have the blackest characters been put upon the fairest, purest minds; and in such a malicious world as this is, innocency, nay excellency itself, is no fence against the basest calumny. When at any time we are thus falsly accused we may do as Jeremiah did, boldly deny the charge, and then commit our cause to him that judgeth righteously. Jeremiah's protestation of his integrity, though he be a prophet, a man of God, a man of honour and sincerity, though he be a priest, and is ready to say it *in verbo sacerdotis*,—'on the word of a priest,'—yet he is not regarded; but he is brought before the privy council, who, without examining him, and the proofs against him, but upon the base, malicious insinuation of the captain, fell into a passion with him. They were wroth; and what justice could be expected from men who, being in anger, would hear no reason? They beat him, without any regard had to his coat and character, and then put him in prison, in the worst prison they had, that in the house of Jonathan the scribe. Either it had been his house, and he had quitted it for the inconveniences of it, but it was thought good enough for a prison, or it was now his house, and perhaps he was a rigid severe man, that made it a house of cruel bondage to his prisoners. Into this prison Jeremiah was thrust, into the dungeon, which was dark and cold, damp and dirty, the most uncomfortable, unhealthful place in it. In the cells or cabins there he must lodge; among which there are no choice, for they are all alike miserable lodging places; there Jeremiah remained many days, and, for aught appears, nobody came near him or inquired after him. See what a world this is; the wicked princes that are in rebellion against God lie at ease, lie in state in their palaces, while godly Jeremiah, that is in the service of God, lies in pain in a loathsome dungeon. It is well there is a world to come.

Thirdly. That Zedekiah at length sent for him, and shewed him some favour; but probably not till the Chaldean army was returned, and had laid fresh siege to the city. When their vain hopes with which they fed themselves, and in confidence of which they had re-enslaved their servants, *ch.* xxxiv. 11, were all vanished, then they were in a greater confusion and consternation than ever. O then, saith Zedekiah, send in all haste for the prophet; let me have some talk with him. When the Chaldeans were withdrawn, he only sent to the prophet to pray for him; but now they had again invested the city, he sent for him to consult him. Thus gracious will men be when pangs come upon them.

1. The king sent for him to give him private audience as an ambassador from God. He asked him secretly in his house, being ashamed to be seen in his company, "Is there any word from the Lord?" ver. 17; any word of comfort? Canst thou give us any hopes that the Chaldeans shall again retire? Note, Those that will not hearken to God's admonitions when they are in prosperity would be glad of his consolations when they are in adversity, and expect that his ministers should then speak words of peace to them; but how can they expect it? what have they to do with peace? Jeremiah's life and comfort is in Zedekiah's hand, and he has now a petition to present to him for his favour; and yet, having this opportunity, he tells him plainly that there is a word from the Lord, but no word of comfort for him or his people; "Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon." If Jeremiah had consulted with flesh and blood he would have given him a plausible answer; and, though he would not tell him a lie, yet he might have chosen whether he would tell him the worst at this time; what needed it, when he had so often told it him before? But Jeremiah was one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful, and would not, to obtain mercy of man, be unfaithful either to God

or to his prince; he therefore tells him the truth, the whole truth. And since there was no remedy it would be a kindness to the king to know his doom, that being no surprise to him it might be the less a terror, and he might provide to make the best of bad. Jeremiah takes this occasion to upbraid him and his people with the credit they gave to the false prophets, that told them the king of Babylon should not come at all, or when he was withdrawn should not come again against them; ver. 19, Where are now your prophets that told you you should have peace? Note, Those that deceive themselves with groundless hopes of mercy will justly be twitted with it when the event hath undeceived them.

2. He improved this opportunity for the presenting of a private petition as a poor prisoner, ver. 18, 20. It was not in Jeremiah's power to reverse this sentence God had passed upon Zedekiah; but it was in Zedekiah's power to reverse the sentence which the princes had given against him; and therefore, since he thought him fit to be used as a prophet, he would not think him fit to be abused as the worst of malefactors. He humbly expostulates with the king, "What have I offended against thee, or thy servants, or this people?" what law have I broke, what injury have I done to the common welfare, "that ye have put me in prison?" And many a one that has been very hardly dealt with has been able to make the same appeal, and to make it good. He likewise earnestly begs, and very pathetically, ver. 20, "Cause me not to return to" yonder noisome gaol, to "the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there." This was the language of innocent nature, sensible of its own grievances, and solicitous of its own preservation. Though he was not at all unwilling to die God's martyr, yet having so fair an opportunity to get relief he would not let it slip, lest he should die his own murderer. When Jeremiah delivered God's message he spake as one having authority, with the greatest boldness; but when he presented his own request he spake as one under authority, with the greatest submissiveness; "Hear me, I pray thee, O my Lord the king; let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee." Here is not a word of complaint of the princes that unjustly committed him, no offering to bring an action of false imprisonment against them, but all in a way of modest supplication to the king; to teach us that, even when we act with the courage that becomes the faithful servants of God, yet we must carry ourselves with the humility and modesty that becomes dutiful subjects to the government God hath set over us. A lion in God's cause must be a lamb in his own. And we find that God gave Jeremiah favour in the eyes of the king. 1st. He gave him his request; took care that he should not die in the dungeon, but ordered he should have the liberty of the court of the prison, where he might have a pleasant walk, and breathe a free air. 2nd. He gave him more than his request; took care he should not die for want, as many did that had their heels at liberty, by reason of the straitness of the siege; he ordered him his daily bread out of the public stock, for the prison was within the verge of the court, till all the bread was spent. Zedekiah ought to have released him, nay, to have preferred him, to have made him a privy counsellor, as Joseph was taken from prison to be the second man in the kingdom; but he had not courage to do that. It was well he did as he did; and it is an instance of the care God takes of his suffering servants that are faithful to him. He can make even their confinement turn to their advantage, and the court of their prison to become as green pastures to them; and raise up such friends to provide for them as that in the days of famine they shall be satisfied; "At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

In this chapter, just as the former, we have Jeremiah greatly debased under the frowns of the princes, and yet greatly honoured by the favour of the king; they used him as a criminal, he used him as a privy counsellor. Here, I. Jeremiah for his faithfulness is put into the dungeon by the princes, ver. 1—6. II. At the intercession of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, by special order from the king, he is taken up out of the dungeon, and confined only to the court of the prison, ver. 7—12. III. He has a private conference with the king upon the present conjuncture of affairs, ver. 14—23. IV. Care is taken to keep that conference private, ver. 24—28.

THEN Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. 3 Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it. 4 Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. 5 Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he *is* in your hand: for the king *is* not *he that* can do *any* thing against you. 6 Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that *was* in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire. 7 Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin; 8 Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, 9 My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for *there is* no more bread in the city. 10 Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. 11 So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. 12 And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now *these* old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. 13 So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

AN EASTERN PRISON.

Here, First. Jeremiah persists in his plain preaching. What he had many a time said he still saith, ver. 3, "This city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon," though it hold out long it will be taken at last; nor would he have so often repeated this unwelcome message, but that he could put them in a certain way, though not to save the city, yet to save themselves; so that every man might have his own life given him for a prey, if he would be advised, ver. 2. Let him not stay in the city in hopes to defend that, for it will be to no purpose; but let him go forth to the Chaldeans, and throw himself upon their mercy, before things come to extremity, and then he shall live; they will not put him to the sword, but give him quarter, (*satis est prostrasse leoni*,—'it suffices the lion to lay his antagonist prostrate,') and he shall escape the famine and pestilence, which will be the death of multitudes within the city. Note, Those do better for themselves who patiently submit to the rebukes of providence than those who contend with them; and if we cannot have our liberty we must reckon it a mercy to have our lives, and not foolishly throw them away upon a point of honour; they may be reserved for better times.

Secondly. The princes persist in their malice against Jeremiah. He was faithful to his country and to his trust as a prophet; though he had suffered many a time for his faithfulness, and though at this time he ate the king's bread, yet that did not stop his mouth. But his persecutors were still bitter against him; and complained that he abused the liberty he had of walking in the court of the prison; for, though he could not go to the temple to preach, yet he vented the same things in private conversation to those that came to visit him; and therefore, ver. 4, they represent him to the king as a dangerous man, disaffected to his country, and to the government he lived under; "He seeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt." An unjust insinuation; for no man had laid out himself more for the good of Jerusalem than he had done. They represent his preaching as having an ill tendency. The design of it was plainly to bring men to repent, and turn to God, which would have been as much as anything a strengthening to the hands both of the soldiery and of the burghers; and yet they represent it as weakening their hands, and discouraging them, which if it did it was their own fault. Note, It is common for wicked people to look upon God's faithful ministers as their enemies, only

because they shew them what enemies they are to themselves while they continue impenitent.

Thirdly. Jeremiah hereupon, by the king's permission, is put into a dungeon, with design he shall perish there. Zedekiah, though he was under conviction that Jeremiah was a prophet sent of God, yet he had not courage to own his convictions, but yielded to the violence of his persecutors; ver. 5, "He is in your hand," and a worse sentence he could not have passed upon him. We found in Jehoiakim's reign that the princes were better affected to the prophet than the king was, *ch.* xxxvi. 25, but now they were more violent against him, a sign they were ripening apace for ruin. Had it been in a cause that concerned his own honour or profit he would have let them know that the king is he who can do what he pleaseth, whethey they will or no; but in the cause of God and his prophet, which he was very cool in, he basely sneaks and truckles to them: "The king is not he that can do any thing against you." Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for who, though they have a secret kindness for good people, dare not own it in a time of need, nor will do what they might do to prevent mischief designed them. The princes having this general warrant from the king presently put poor Jeremiah "into the dungeon of Malchiah, that was in the court of the prison," ver. 6; a deep dungeon, for they let him down into it with cords; and a dirty one, for there was no water in it but mire, stinking mire; and he "sunk in the mire," up to the neck, saith Josephus. They that put him here doubtless designed he should die here, die for hunger, die for cold, and so die miserably, die obscurely, fearing if they should put him to death openly the people might be affected with what he would say, and be incensed against them. Many of God's faithful witnesses have thus been privately made away, and starved to death in prisons, whose blood will be brought to account in the day of discovery. We are not here told what Jeremiah did in this distress; but he tells us himself, *Lam.* iii. 55, "I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon;" and ver. 57, "Thou drewest near, saying, Fear not."

Fourthly. Application is made to the king by an honest courtier, Ebed-melech, one of the gentlemen of the bedchamber, in behalf of the poor sufferer. Though the princes carried on the matter as privately as they could, yet it came to the ear of this good man, who probably sought opportunities to do good. It may be he came to the knowledge of it by hearing Jeremiah's moans out of the dungeon, for it was in the king's house, ver. 7. Ebed-melech was an Ethiopian, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet had in him more humanity, and more divinity too, than native Israelites had. Christ found more faith among Gentiles than among Jews. Ebed-melech lived in a wicked court, and in a very corrupt degenerate age, and yet had a great sense both of equity and piety. God has his remnant in all places, among all sorts. There were saints even in Cæsar's household. The king was now sitting in the gate of Benjamin to try causes, and receive appeals and petitions, or perhaps holding a council of war there. Thither Ebed-melech went immediately to him, for the case would not admit delay; the prophet might have perished if he had trifled or put it off till he had an opportunity of speaking to the king in private. No time must be lost when life is in danger, especially so valuable a life. He boldly asserts that Jeremiah had a great deal of wrong done him, and is not afraid to tell the king so, though they were princes that did it, though they were now present in court, and though they had the king's warrant for what they did. Whither should oppressed innocency flee for protection but to the throne, especially when great men are its oppressors? Ebed-melech appears truly brave in this matter. He doth not mince the matter; though he had a place at court which he would be in danger of losing for his plain dealing, yet he tells the king faithfully, let him take it as he will, "These men have done ill in all that they have done to Jeremiah;" they deal unjustly with him, for he had not deserved any punishment at all; and they have dealt barbarously with him, so as they used not to deal with the vilest malefactors. And they needed not to have put him to this miserable death; for if they had let him alone where he was, "he was likely to die for hunger in the place where he was," in the court of the prison to which he was confined, "for there was no more bread in the city." The stores, out of which he was to have his allowance, *ch.* xxxvii. 21, were in a manner spent. See how God can raise up friends for his people in distress where they little thought of them; and spirit men for his service, even beyond expectation.

Fifthly. Orders are immediately given for his release, and Ebed-melech takes care to see them executed. The king, who but now durst do nothing against the princes, has his heart wonderfully changed on a sudden, and will now have Jeremiah released in defiance of the princes; for therefore he orders no less than thirty men, and those of the lifeguards, to be employed in fetching him out of the dungeon, lest the princes should raise a party to oppose it, ver. 10. Let this encourage us to appear boldly for God; we may succeed better than we could have thought, for "the hearts of kings are in the hand of God." Ebed-melech gained his point, and soon brought Jeremiah the good news. And it is observable how particularly the manner of his drawing him out of the dungeon is related; for "God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love" which is shewed to his people or ministers; no, nor any circumstance of it, *Heb.* vi. 10. Special notice is taken of his great tenderness in providing old soft rags for Jeremiah to put under his arm-holes, to keep the cords from hurting him, wherewith he was to be drawn up; his arm-holes being probably galled by the cords wherewith he was let down. Nor did he throw the rags down to him lest they should be lost in the mire, but carefully let them down, ver. 11, 12. Note, Those that are in distress should be not only relieved, but relieved with compassion and marks of respect; all which shall be placed to account, and abound to a good account in the day of recompence. See what a good use even old rotten rags may be put to, which therefore should not be made waste of, no more than broken meat. Even in the king's house, and under the treasury too, these were carefully preserved for the use of the poor or sick. Jeremiah is brought up out of the dungeon, and is now where he was, "in the court of the prison," ver. 13. Perhaps Ebed-melech could have made interest with the king to have got him his discharge from thence also, now he had the king's ear; but he thought him safer and better provided for there than he would be anywhere else. God can, when he pleaseth, make a prison to become a refuge and hiding-place to his people in distress and danger.

14 Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that *is* in the house of the LORD: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me. 15 Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare *it* unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me? 16 So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, *As* the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life. 17 Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house: 18 But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand. 19 And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me. 20 But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver *thee.* Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live. 21 But if thou refuse to go forth, this *is* the word that the LORD hath shewed me: 22 And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house *shall be* brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those *women* shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, *and* they are turned away back. 23 So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire. 24 Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. 25 But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee; 26 Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. 27 Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived. 28 So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was *there* when Jerusalem was taken.

In the foregoing chapter we had the king in close conference with Jeremiah, and here again, though, ver. 5, he had given him up into the hands of his enemies; such a struggle there was in the breast of this unhappy prince, between his convictions and corruptions. Observe,

First. The honour that Zedekiah did to the prophet. When he was newly fetched out of the dungeon he sent for him to advise with him privately. He met him in the third entry, or, as the margin reads it, the principal entry that is in, or leads towards, or adjoins to, the house of the Lord, ver. 14. In appointing this place of interview with the prophet, perhaps he intended to shew a respect and reverence for the house of God, which was proper enough now he was desiring to hear the word of God. Zedekiah would ask Jeremiah a thing, (it should rather be rendered a word,) 'I am here, asking thee for a word of prediction, of counsel, of comfort; a word from the Lord,' *ch.* xxxvii. 17. 'Whatever word thou hast for me, hide it not from me; let me know the worst. He

had been told plainly what things would come to in the foregoing chapter, but, like Balaam, asks again, in hopes to get a more pleasing answer, as if God, who is in one mind, were altogether such a one as himself, who was in many minds.

Secondly. The bargain that Jeremiah made with him before he would give him his advice, ver. 15. He would indent, 1. For his own safety. Zedekiah would have him deal faithfully with him; and if I do, (saith Jeremiah,) "wilt thou not put me to death?" I am afraid thou wilt, (so some take it;) what else can I expect when thou art led blindfold by the princes? Or, wilt thou promise that thou wilt not? Not that Jeremiah was backward to seal the doctrine he preached with his blood when he was called to it; but in doing our duty we ought to use all lawful means for our own preservation; even the apostles of Christ did so. 2. He would indent for the success of his advice, being no less concerned for Zedekiah's welfare than for his own. He is willing to give him wholesome advice, and doth not upbraid him with his unkindness in suffering him to be put into the dungeon; nor bid him go and consult with his princes, whose judgment he had such a value for. Ministers must with meekness instruct even those that oppose themselves, and render good for evil. He is desirous he should hear counsel, and receive instruction. "Wilt thou not hearken to me?" Surely thou wilt. I am in hopes to find thee pliable at last; and now in this thy day willing to "know the things that belong to thy peace." Note, Then, and then only, there is hope of sinners when they are willing to hearken to good counsel. Some read it as spoken despairingly: 'If I give thee counsel, thou wilt not hearken unto me;' I have reason to fear thou wilt not, and then I had as good keep my counsel to myself. Note, Ministers have little heart to speak to those that have long and often turned a deaf ear to them. Now as to this latter concern of Jeremiah's, Zedekiah makes him no answer, will not promise to hearken to his advice. Though he desires to know what is the mind of God, yet he will reserve himself a liberty when he doth know it, to do as he thinks fit; as if it were the prerogative of a prince not to have his ruin prevented by good counsel. But as to the prophet's safety, he promiseth him, upon the word of a king, and confirms his promise with an oath, that, whatever he should say to him, no advantage should be taken against him for it; "I will neither put thee to death," nor deliver thee into the hands of those that will, ver. 16. This he thought was a mighty favour; and yet Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, when Daniel read their doom, not only protected him, but preferred and rewarded him, *Dan.* ii. 48; v. 29. Zedekiah's oath on this occasion is solemn and very observable; "As the Lord liveth, who made us this soul," who gave me my life, and thee thine; therefore I dare not take away thy life unjustly, knowing that then I should forfeit my own to him that is the Lord of life. Note, God is the father of spirits; souls are his workmanship, and they are more fearfully and wonderfully made than bodies are. The soul both of the greatest prince and of the poorest prisoner is of God's making; he fashioneth their hearts alike easily. In all our appeals to God, and in all our dealings both with ourselves and others, we ought to consider this, that the living God made us these souls.

Thirdly. The good advice that Jeremiah gave him, with good reasons why he should take it, not from any prudence or politics of his own, but in the name of the Lord, the God of hosts, and God of Israel; not as a statesman, but as a prophet. He adviseth him by all means to surrender himself and his city "to the king of Babylon's princes;" Go forth to them, and make the best terms thou canst with them, ver. 17. This was the same advice he had given to the people, ver. 2, and before, *ch.* xxi. 9, to submit to Divine judgments, and not think of contending with them. Note, In dealing with God, that which is good counsel to the meanest is so to the greatest; for there is no respect of persons with him. To persuade him to take this counsel, he sets before him good and evil, life and death. 1. If he will tamely yield, he shall save his children from the sword, and Jerusalem from the flames. The white flag is yet hung out. If he will but acknowledge God's justice, he shall experience his mercy; "The city shall not be burnt, and thou shalt live, and thy house." But, 2. If he will obstinately stand it out, it will be the ruin both of his house and Jerusalem, ver. 18. For when God judgeth, he will overcome. This is the case of sinners with God; let them humbly submit to his grace and government, and they shall live; let them "take hold on his strength, that they may make peace, and they shall make peace;" but if they harden their hearts against his proposals, it will certainly be to their destruction. They must either bend or break.

Fourthly. The objection which Zedekiah made against the prophet's advice, ver. 19. Jeremiah spoke to him by prophecy, in the name of God; and therefore, if he had had a due regard to the Divine authority, wisdom, and goodness, as soon as he understood what the mind of God was, he should immediately have acquiesced in it, and resolved to observe it without disputing. But, as if it had been the dictate only of Jeremiah's prudence, he advanceth against it some prudential considerations of his own. But human wisdom is folly when it contradicts the Divine counsels. All he suggests is, "I am afraid," not of the Chaldeans,—their princes are men of honour,—but "of the Jews," that are already gone over to the Chaldeans; when they see me follow them, who had so much opposed their going, they will laugh at me, and say, "Art thou also become weak as water?" *Isa.* xiv. 10. Now, 1. It was not at all likely that he should be thus exposed and ridiculed, that the Chaldeans should so far gratify the Jews, or trample upon him, as to deliver him into their hands; nor that the Jews, who were themselves captives, should be in such a gay humour as to make a jest of the misery of their prince. Note, We often frighten ourselves from our duty by foolish, causeless, groundless fears, that are merely the creatures of our own fancy and imagination. 2. If he should be taunted a little by the Jews, could he not despise it and make light of it? What harm would it do him? Note, Those have very weak and fretful spirits indeed that cannot be laughed at, for that which is both their duty and their interest. 3. Though it had been really the greatest personal mischief that he could have imagined it to be, yet he ought to have ventured it in obedience to God, and for the preservation of his family and city. He thought it would be looked upon as a piece of cowardice to surrender; whereas it would be really an instance of true courage cheerfully to bear a lesser evil, the mocking of the Jews, for the avoiding of a greater, the ruin of his family and kingdom.

Fifthly. The pressing importunity with which Jeremiah followed the advice he had given the king. He assures him that, if he would comply with the will of God herein, the thing he feared should not come upon him; ver. 29, "They shall not deliver thee up," but treat thee as becomes thy character. He begs of him, after all the foolish games he had played, to manage wisely the last stake, and now at length do well for himself. "Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord," because it is his voice, "so it shall be well unto thee." But he tells him what would be the consequence if he would not obey: 1. He himself would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, as implacable enemies, whom he might now make his friends by throwing himself into their hands. If he must fall, he should contrive how to fall easily. "Thou shalt not escape," as thou hopest to do, ver. 23. 2. He would himself be chargeable with the destruction of Jerusalem, which he pretended a concern for the preservation of; "Thou shalt cause this city to be burnt with fire;" for by a little submission and self-denial thou mightest have prevented it. Thus subjects often suffer for the pride and wilfulness of their rulers, who should be their protectors, but prove their destroyers. 3. Whereas he causelessly feared an unjust reproach for surrendering, he should certainly fall under a just reproach for standing it out, and that from women too, ver. 22. The court ladies that were left when Jehoiakim and Jeconiah were carried away, will now at length fall into the hands of the enemy, and they shall say, 'The men of thy peace,' whom thou didst consult with, and confide in, and who promised thee peace if thou wouldst be ruled by them, they have set thee on, have encouraged thee to be bold and brave, and hold out to the last extremity, and see what comes of it? They, by prevailing upon thee, have prevailed against thee, and thou findest those thy real enemies that would be thought thine only friends. Now "thy feet are sunk in the mire," thou art embarrassed, and hast no way to help thyself; thy feet cannot get forward, but are turned away back. Thus will Zedekiah be bantered by the women, when all his wives and children shall be made a prey to the conquerors, ver. 23. Note, That what we seek to avoid by sin will be justly brought upon us by the righteousness of God. And those that decline the way of duty, for fear of reproach, will certainly meet with much greater reproach in the way of disobedience. "The fear of the wicked it shall come upon him," *Pr.* x. 24.

Sixthly. The care which Zedekiah took to keep this conference private; ver. 24, "Let no man know of these words." He doth not at all incline to take God's counsel, nor so much as promise to consider of it; for so obstinate has he been to the calls of God, and so wilful in the ways of sin, that, though he has good counsel given him, he seems to be given up to walk in his own counsels. He hath nothing to object against Jeremiah's advice, and yet he will not follow it. Many hear God's words, but will not do them.

1. Jeremiah is charged to let no man know of what had passed between the king and him. Zedekiah is concerned to keep it private, not so much for Jeremiah's safety, (for he knew the princes could do him no hurt without his permission,) but for his own reputation. Note, Many have really a better affection to good men and good things than they are willing to own. God's prophets are manifest in their consciences, 2 *Cor.* v. 11, but they care not for manifesting that to the world; they would rather do them a kindness than have it known that they do. Such, it is to be feared, "love the praise of man more than the praise of God."

2. He is instructed what to say to the princes if they should examine him about it. He must tell them that he was petitioning the king not to remand him to "the house of Jonathan the scribe," ver. 25, 26; and he did tell them so, ver. 27; and, no doubt, it was true. He would not let slip so fair an opportunity of engaging the king's favour; so that this was no lie or equivocation, but a part of the truth, which it was lawful for him to put them off with when he was under no obligation at all to tell them the whole truth. Note, Though we must be so harmless as doves as never to tell a lie, yet we must be so wise as serpents as not needlessly to expose ourselves to danger by telling all we know.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

As the prophet Isaiah, after he had largely foretold the deliverance of Jerusalem out of the hands of the king of Assyria, gave a particular narrative of the story, that it might appear how exactly the event answered the prediction, so the prophet Jeremiah, after he had largely foretold the delivering of Jerusalem into the hands of the king of Babylon, gives a particular account of that sad event, for the same reason. That melancholy story we have in this chapter, which serves to disprove the false flattering prophets, and to confirm the word of God's messengers. We are here told, I. That Jerusalem, after eighteen months' siege, was taken by the Chaldean army, ver. 1—3. II. That king Zedekiah, attempting to make his escape, was seized, and made a miserable captive to the king of Babylon, ver. 4—7. III. That Jerusalem was burnt to the ground, and the people carried captive, except the poor, ver. 8—10. IV. That the Chaldeans were very kind to Jeremiah, and took particular care of him, ver. 11—14. V. That Ebed-melech too, for his kindness, had a protection from God himself in this day of desolation, ver. 15—18.

IN the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. 2 *And* in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, the city was broken up. 3 And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, *even* Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon. 4 And it came to pass, *that* when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain. 5 But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. 6 Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. 7 Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to

Babylon. 8 And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. 9 Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained. 10 But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

We are told in the close of the foregoing chapter, that Jeremiah abode patiently "in the court of the prison till the day that Jerusalem was taken." He gave the princes no farther disturbance by his prophesying, nor they him by their persecutions; for he had no more to say than what he had said, and the siege being carried on briskly God found them other work to do. And see here what it came to.

First. The city is at length taken by storm, for how could it hold out when God himself fought against it? Nebuchadnezzar's army sat down before it in the ninth year of Zedekiah, in the tenth month, ver. 1, in the depth of winter. Nebuchadnezzar himself soon after retired to take his pleasure, and left his generals to carry on the siege; they intermitted it a while, but soon renewed it with redoubled force and vigour. At length, in the eleventh year, in the fourth month, about midsummer, they entered the city, the soldiers being so weakened with famine, and all their provisions being now spent, that they were not able to make any resistance, ver. 2. Jerusalem was so strong a place, that nobody would have believed the enemy could ever have entered its gates, *Lam.* iv. 12. But sin had provoked God to withdraw his protection, and then, like Samson when his hair is cut, it is weak as other cities.

Secondly. The princes of the king of Babylon take possession of the middle gate, ver. 3. Some think it was the same with that which is called the second gate, *Zep.* i. 10, which is supposed to be in the middle wall that divided between one part of the city and the other. Here they cautiously made a halt, and durst not go forward into so large a city, among men that perhaps would sell their lives as dear as they could, till they had given directions for the searching of all places, that they might not be surprised by any ambush. They sat in the middle gate, from thence to take a view of the city, and give orders, The princes are here named; rough and uncouth names they are, to intimate what a sad change sin had made. There where Eliakim and Hilkiah, who bare the name of the God of Israel, used to sit, now sit Nergal-sharezer and Samgar-nebo, &c., who bear the names of the heathen gods. Rab-saris and Rab-mag are supposed to be, not the names of distinct persons, but the titles of those whose names go before; Sarsechim was Rab-saris, that is, captain of the guard; and Nergal-sharezer, to distinguish him from the other of the same name that is put first, is called Rab-mag, camp-master, either muster-master or quarter-master. These and other the great generals sat in the gate. And now was fulfilled what Jeremiah prophesied long since, *ch.* i. 15, that the families of the kingdoms of the north should set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem. Justly do the princes of the heathen set up themselves there where the gods of the heathen had been so often set up.

Thirdly. Zedekiah having, in disguise perhaps, seen the princes of the king of Babylon take possession of one of the gates of the city, thought it high time to shift for his own safety; and, loaded with guilt and fear, he went out of the city, under no other protection but that of the night, ver. 4, which soon failed him, for he was discovered, pursued, overtaken. Though he made the best of his way, he could make nothing of it, could not get forward, but in the plains of Jericho fell into the hands of the pursuers, ver. 5; thence he was brought prisoner to Riblah, where the king of Babylon passed sentence upon him as a rebel, not sentence of death, but, one may almost say, a worse thing. For, 1. He slew his sons before his eyes, and they must all be little, some of them infants, for Zedekiah himself was now but thirty-two years of age. The deaths of these sweet babes must needs be so many deaths to himself, especially when he considered that his own obstinacy was the cause of it; for he was particularly told of this thing, *ch.*-xxxviii. 23, "They shall bring forth thy wives and children to the Chaldeans." 2. He slew all the nobles of Judah, ver. 6; probably not those princes of Jerusalem who had advised him to this desperate course, (it would be a satisfaction to him to see them cut off,) but the great men of the country who were innocent of the matter. 3. He ordered Zedekiah to have his eyes put out, ver. 7; so condemning him to darkness for life who had shut his eyes against the clear light of God's word, and was of those princes who will not understand, but walk in darkness, *Ps.* viii. 5. 4. He bound him with two 'brazen chains or fetters,' so the margin reads it, to carry him to Babylon, there to spend the rest of his days in misery. All this sad story we had before, 2 *Kin.* xxv. 4, &c.

Fourthly. Some time after, the city was burnt, temple, and palace, and all, and the wall of it broken down, ver. 8. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, this comes of killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent to thee! O Zedekiah, Zedekiah, this thou mightest have prevented, if thou wouldest but have taken God's counsel, and yielded in time!

Fifthly. The people that were left were all carried captives to Babylon, ver. 9. Now they must bid a final farewell to the land of their nativity, that pleasant land, and to all their possessions and enjoyments in it; must be driven some hundreds of miles like beasts before their conquerors, that were now their cruel masters; must lie at their mercy in a strange land, and be servants to them who would be sure to rule them with rigour. The word tyrant is originally a Chaldee word, and is often used for lords by the Chaldee paraphrast, as if the Chaldeans, when they were lords, tyrannized more than any other. We have reason to think the poor Jews had reason to say so. Some few were left behind, but they were the poor of the people, that had nothing to lose, and therefore never made any resistance. And they not only had their liberty, and were left to tarry at home, but "the captain of the guard gave them vineyards and fields at the same time," such as they never were masters of before, ver. 10. Observe here, 1. The wonderful changes of providence. Some are abased, others advanced, 1 *Sam.* ii. 5; "the hungry filled with good things, and the rich sent empty away." The ruin of some proves the rise of others. Let us therefore rejoice as though we rejoiced not in our abundance, and weep as though we wept not in our distresses. 2. The just retributions of providence. The rich had been proud oppressors, and now they are justly punished for their injustice; the poor had been patient sufferers, and now they are graciously rewarded for their patience, and amends made them for all their losses; for "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth," even in this world, much more in the other.

11 Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, 12 Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee. 13 So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rab-saris, and Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon's princes; 14 Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people. 15 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 16 Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying,

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
Behold, I will bring my words upon this city
For evil, and not for good;
And they shall be *accomplished* in that day before thee.
17 But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD:
And thou shalt not be given into the hand
Of the men of whom thou *art* afraid.
18 For I will surely deliver thee,
And thou shalt not fall by the sword,
But thy life shall be for a prey unto thee:
Because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

Here we must sing of mercy, as in the former part of the chapter we sung of judgment, and must sing unto God of both. We may observe here,

First. A gracious providence concerning Jeremiah. When Jerusalem was laid in ruins, and all men's hearts failed them for fear, then might he lift up his head with comfort, knowing that his redemption drew nigh; as Christ's followers, when the second destruction of Jerusalem was hastening on, *Lu.* xxi. 28. Nebuchadnezzar had given particular orders that care should be taken of him, and he should be in all respects well used, ver. 11, 12. Nebuzar-adan, and the rest of the king of Babylon's princes observed these orders, discharged him out of prison, and did every thing to make him easy. Now we may look upon this,

1. As a very generous act in Nebuchadnezzar, who, though he was a haughty potentate, yet took cognizance of this poor prophet. Doubtless he had received information concerning him from the deserters, that he had foretold the king of Babylon's successes against Judah and other countries, that he had pressed his prince and people to submit to him, and that he had suffered very hard things for so doing; and in consideration of all this (though perhaps he might have heard also that he had foretold the destruction of Babylon at length) he gave him these extraordinary marks of his favour. Note, It is the character of a great soul to take notice of the services and sufferings of the meanest. It was honourably done of the king to give this charge, even before the city was taken, and of the captains to observe it, even in the heat of action, and it is recorded for imitation.

2. As a reproach to Zedekiah and the princes of Israel; they put him into prison, and the king of Babylon and his princes took him out. God's people and ministers have often found fairer and kinder usage among strangers and infidels, than among those that call themselves of the holy city. St. Paul found more favour and justice with king Agrippa than with Ananias the high priest.

3. As the performance of God's promise to Jeremiah, in recompence for his services; *ch.* xv. 11, "I will cause the enemy to treat thee well in the day of evil." Jeremiah had been faithful to his trust as a prophet, and now God approves himself faithful to him, and the promise he had made him. Now he is comforted according to the time wherein he had been afflicted, and sees thousands fall on each hand, and himself safe. The false prophets fell by those judgments which they said should never come, *ch.* xiv. 15; which made their misery the more terrible to them. The true prophet escaped those judgments which he said would come, and that made his escape the more comfortable to him. The same that were the instruments of punishing the persecutors were the instruments of relieving the persecuted; and Jeremiah thought never the worse of his deliverance for its coming by the hand of the king of Babylon, but saw the more of the hand of God in it. A fuller account of this matter we shall meet with in the next chapter.

Secondly. A gracious message to Ebed-melech, to assure him of a recompence for his kindness to Jeremiah. This message was sent him by Jeremiah himself, who, when he returned him thanks for his kindness to him, thus turned him over to God to be his paymaster. He relieved a prophet in the name of a prophet, and thus he had a prophet's reward. This message was delivered to him immediately after he had done that kindness to Jeremiah; but it is mentioned here after the taking of the city, to shew that, as God was kind to Jeremiah at that time, so he was to Ebed-melech for his sake, and it was a token of special favour to both; and they ought so to account it, that they were not involved in any of the common calamities. Jeremiah is bid to tell him, 1. That God would certainly bring upon Jerusalem the ruin that had been long and often threatened; and for his farther satisfaction in having been kind to Jere-

miah, he should see him abundantly proved a true prophet, ver. 16. 2. That God took notice of the fear he had of the judgments coming. Though he was bravely bold in the service of God, yet he was afraid of the rod of God. The enemies were men of whom he was afraid. Note, God knows how to adapt and accommodate his comforts to the fears and griefs of his people, for he knows their souls in adversity. 3. That he shall be delivered from having a share in the common calamity; "I will deliver thee, I will surely deliver thee." He had been instrumental to deliver God's prophet out of the dungeon, and now God promised to deliver him, for he will be behindhand with none for any service they do, directly or indirectly, for his name. Thou hast saved Jeremiah's life, that was precious to thee, and therefore thy life shall be given thee for a prey. 4. The reason given for this distinguishing favour God had in store for him is, "Because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord." God, in recompensing men's services, has an eye to the principle they go upon in those services, and rewards according to those principles. And there is no principle of obedience that will be more acceptable to God, nor have a greater influence upon us, than a believing confidence in God. Ebed-melech trusted in God, that he would own him and stand by him, and then he was not afraid of the face of man. And those who trust God as this good man did in the way of duty will find that their hope shall not make them ashamed in times of the greatest danger.

CHAPTER XL.

We have attended Jerusalem's funeral pile, and have taken our leave of the captives that were carried to Babylon, not expecting to hear any more of them in this book, (perhaps we may in Ezekiel,) and must in this and the following chapters observe the story of the few Jews that were left to remain in the land, after their brethren were carried away; and it is a very melancholy story. For, though at first there were some hopeful prospects of their well-doing, they soon appeared as obstinate in sin as ever, unhumbled, unreformed, till all the rest of the judgments threatened in *Deu.* xxviii. being brought upon them, that which in the last verse of that dreadful chapter completes the threatenings was accomplished, "The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again." In this chapter we have, I. A more particular account of Jeremiah's discharge, and his settlement with Gedaliah, ver. 1—6. II. The great resort of the Jews that remained scattered in the neighbouring countries to Gedaliah, who was made their governor, under the king of Babylon; and the good posture they were in for a while under him, ver. 7—12. III. A treacherous design formed against Gedaliah by Ishmael, which we shall find executed in the next chapter, ver. 13—16.

THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon. 2 And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place. 3 Now the LORD hath brought *it*, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you. 4 And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which *were* upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land *is* before thee; whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go. 5 Now while he was not yet gone back, *he said*, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. 6 Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

The title of this part of the book, which begins the chapter, seems misapplied, "The word which came to Jeremiah;" for here is nothing of prophecy in this chapter, but it is to be referred to *ch.* xlii. 7, where we have a message that God sent by Jeremiah to the captains and the people that remained, and the story betwixt, and that is only to introduce that prophecy and shew the occasion of it, that it may be the better understood; and Jeremiah, being himself concerned in the story, was the better able to give an account of it. In these verses we have Jeremiah's adhering, by the advice of Nebuzar-adan, to Gedaliah. It should seem that Jeremiah was very honourably fetched out of the court of the prison by the king of Babylon's princes, *ch.* xxxix. 15; but afterwards, being found among the people in the city, when orders were given to the inferior officers to bind all they found that were of any fashion, in order to their being carried captives to Babylon, he through ignorance and mistake was bound among the rest and hurried away. Poor man! he seems to have been born to hardship and abuse, a man of sorrows indeed. But when the captives were brought manacled to Ramah, not far off, where a counsel of war or court-martial was held, for giving orders concerning them, Jeremiah was soon distinguished from the rest, and by special order of the court was discharged.

First. The captain of the guard solemnly owns him to be a true prophet; ver. 2, 3, "The Lord thy God," whose messenger thou hast been, and in whose name thou hast spoken, "has" by thee "pronounced this evil upon this place;" they had fair warning given them of it, but they would not take the warning, and now "the Lord hath brought it," and as by thy mouth he said it so by my hand "he hath done what he said." He seems thus to justify what he had done, and to glory in it that he had been God's instrument to fulfil that which Jeremiah had been his messenger to foretell; and upon that account it was indeed the most glorious action he had ever done. He tells all the people that were now in chains before him, it was "because ye have sinned against the Lord that this thing is come upon you." The princes of Israel would never be brought to acknowledge this, though it was as evident as if it had been written with a sunbeam. But this heathen prince plainly sees it, that a people that had been so favoured as they had been by the Divine goodness would never have been abandoned thus had they not been very provoking. The people of Israel had been often told this from the pulpit by their prophets, and they would not regard it; now they are told it from the bench by their conqueror, whom they dare not contradict, and who will make them regard it. Note, Sooner or later men shall be made sensible that their sin is the cause of all their miseries.

Secondly. He gives him free leave to dispose of himself as he thought fit. He "loosed him from his chains," a second time, ver. 4, invited him to come along with him to Babylon, not as a captive, but as a friend, as a companion, and 'I will set my eye upon thee,' (so the word is,) not only "I will look well to thee," but I will shew thee respect, will countenance thee, and will see that thou be safe and well provided for. But if he were not disposed to go to Babylon he might dwell where he pleased in his own country, for it was all now at the dispose of the conquerors; he may go to Anathoth if he please, and enjoy the field he had purchased there. A great change with this good man! He that but lately was tossed from one prison to another may now walk at liberty from one possession to another.

Thirdly. He adviseth him to go to Gedaliah, and settle with him. This Gedaliah was made governor of the land under the king of Babylon, an honest Jew, who, it is probable, betimes went over with his friends to the Chaldeans, and approved himself so well that he had this great trust put into his hands, ver. 5, while Jeremiah was not yet gone back, but stood considering what he should do. Nebuzar-adan, perceiving him neither inclined to go to Babylon nor determined whither to go, turned the scale for him, and bade him by all means go to Gedaliah. Sudden thoughts sometimes prove wise ones; but when he gave this counsel he did not design to oblige him by it, nor will he take it ill if he do not follow it, "Go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee." It is friendly in such cases to give advice, but unfriendly to prescribe, and to be angry if our advice be not taken. Let Jeremiah steer what course he pleaseth, Nebuzar-adan will agree to it, and believe he doth for the best. Nor doth he only give him his liberty, and an approbation of the measures he shall take, but provides for his support, "he gave him victuals, and a present," either in clothes or money, and so let him go. See how considerate the captain of the guard was in his kindness to Jeremiah; he set him at liberty, but it was in a country that was laid waste, and in which, as the posture of it now was, he might have perished, though it was his own country, if he had not thus kindly furnished him with necessaries. Jeremiah not only accepted his kindness, but took his advice, and went to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him, ver. 6. Whether we may herein commend his prudence I know not, the event doth not commend it, for it did not prove at all to his comfort. However, we may commend his pious affection to the land of Israel, that unless he were forced out of it as Ezekiel, and Daniel, and other good men were, he would not forsake it, but chose rather to dwell with the poor in the holy land than with princes in an unholy one.

7 Now when all the captains of the forces which *were* in the fields, *even* they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon; 8 Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. 9 And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 10 As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put *them* in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. 11 Likewise when all the Jews that *were* in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and

in Edom, and that *were* in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan; 12 Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much. 13 Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, 14 And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. 15 Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know *it:* wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish? 16 But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

We have in these verses,

First. A bright sky opening upon the remnant of the Jews that were left in their own land, and a comfortable prospect given them of some peace and quietness after the many years of trouble and terror with which they had been afflicted. Jeremiah indeed had never, in his prophecies, spoken of any such good days reserved for the Jews immediately after the captivity. But Providence seemed to raise and encourage such an expectation, and it would be to that miserable people as life from the dead. Observe the particulars:

1. Gedaliah, one of themselves, is made governor in the land by the king of Babylon, ver. 7. To shew that he designed to make and keep them easy, he did not give this commission to one of the princes of Babylon, but to one of their brethren, who they might be sure would seek their peace. He was the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, one of the princes. We read of his father, *ch.* xxvi. 24, that he took Jeremiah's part against the people. He seems to be a man of great wisdom and a mild temper, and under whose government the few that were left might be very happy. The king of Babylon had a good opinion of him, and reposed a confidence in him, for to him he committed all that were left behind.

2. There is a great resort to him from all parts, and all those that were now the Jews of the dispersion came and put themselves under his government and protection. 1st. The great men that had escaped the Chaldeans by force came and quietly submitted to Gedaliah, for their own safety and common preservation. Divers are here named, ver. 8; they came with their men, their servants, their soldiers, and so strengthened one another; and the king of Babylon had such a good opinion of Gedaliah, his delegate, that he was not at all jealous of the increase of their numbers, but rather pleased with it. 2nd. The poor men that had escaped by flight into the neighbouring countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, were induced, by the love they bare to their own land, to return to it again, as soon as they heard that Gedaliah was in authority there, ver. 11, 12. Canaan itself would be an unsafe, unpleasant country, if there was no government or governors there, and those that loved it dearly would not come back to it till they had heard there was. It would be a great reviving to them that were dispersed, to come together again; that were dispersed into foreign countries, to come together in their own country; that were under strange kings, to be under a governor of their own nation. See here, in wrath God remembered mercy, and admitted some of them upon a farther trial of their obedience.

3. The model of this new government is drawn up and settled by an original contract, which Gedaliah confirmed with an oath, a solemn oath; ver. 9, "He sware to them and to their men;" it is probable according to the warrant and instructions he had received from the king of Babylon, who empowered him to give them these assurances. 1st. They must own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans. Come, saith Gedaliah, "Fear not to serve the Chaldeans:" fear not the sin of it. Though the Divine law had forbidden them to make leagues with the heathen, yet the Divine sentence had obliged them to yield to the king of Babylon. Fear not the reproach of it and the disparagement it will be to your nation; it is what God has brought you to, has bound you to, and it is no disgrace to any to comply with him. Fear not the consequences of it, as if it would certainly make you and yours miserable; no, you will find the king of Babylon not so hard a landlord as you apprehend him to be. If you will but live peaceably, peaceably you shall live; disturb not the government, and it will not disturb you; "Serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you." If they should make any difficulty of doing personal homage, or should be apprehensive of danger when the Chaldeans should come among them, Gedaliah, probably by instruction from the king of Babylon, undertakes upon all occasions to act for them, and make their applications acceptable to the king; ver. 10, "As for me, behold I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans," to do homage to them in the name of the whole body, if there be occasion; to receive orders, and to pay them their tribute when they come to us. All that passed between them and the Chaldeans shall pass through his hand; and if the Chaldeans put such a confidence in him, surely his own countrymen may venture to do it. Gedaliah is willing thus to give them the assurance of an oath that he will do his part in protecting them; but being apt to err, as many men are, on the charitable side, he did not require an oath from them that they would be faithful to him, else the following mischief might have been prevented. However, protection draws allegiance, though it be not sworn; and by joining in with Gedaliah they did in effect consent to the terms of government, that they should serve the king of Babylon. But, 2nd. Though they own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans, yet upon that condition they shall have the free enjoyment of them, and all the profits of them; ver. 10, "Gather ye wine and summer fruits," and take them for your own use, "put them into your vessels," to be laid up for winter store, as those do that live in a land of peace, and hope to eat the labour of your hand; nay, the labour of other people's hands, for you reap what they sowed; nay, perhaps they were the spontaneous products of that fertile soil, for which none had laboured. And accordingly we find, ver. 12, that they gathered wine and summer fruits very much, such as were at present upon the ground, for their corn harvest was over some time before Jerusalem was taken. While Gedaliah was in care for the public safety, he left them to enjoy the advantages of the public plenty, and, for aught appears, demanded no tribute from them, for he sought not his own profit, but the profit of many.

Secondly. Here is a dark cloud gathering over this infant state, and threatening a dreadful storm. How soon is this hopeful prospect blasted! For when God begins in judgment he will make an end. It is here intimated to us,

1. That Baalis, the king of the Ammonites, had a particular spite at Gedaliah, and was contriving to take him off, either out of malice to the nation of the Jews, whose welfare he hated the thought of, or a personal pique against Gedaliah, ver. 14. Some make Baalis to signify the queen mother of the king of the Ammonites, or queen dowager, as if she were the first mover of this bloody and treacherous design. One would have thought this little remnant might have been safe when the great king of Babylon protected it, and yet it is ruined by the artifices of this petty prince or princess. Happy they that have the King of kings on their side, who can take the wise in their own craftiness; for the greatest earthly king cannot, with all his power, secure us against fraud and treachery.

2. That he employed Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, as the instrument of his malice, instigated him to murder Gedaliah, and, that he might have a fair opportunity to do it, directed him to go and enrol himself among his subjects and promise him fealty. Nothing could be more barbarous than the design itself, nor more base than the method of compassing it. How wretchedly is the human nature corrupted and degenerated, even in those that pretend to the best blood, when it is capable of admitting the thought of such abominable wickedness! Ishmael was of the seed-royal, and would therefore be easily tempted to envy and hate one that set up for a governor in Judah that was not, as he was, of David's line, though he were never so much of David's spirit.

3. That Johanan, a brisk and active man, having got scent of this plot, informed Gedaliah of it, yet taking it for granted he could not but know of it before, the proofs of the matter being so very plain: "Dost thou certainly know?" that is, sure thou dost, ver. 14. He gave him private intelligence of it, ver. 15, hoping he would then take the more notice of it. He proffered his service to prevent it by taking off Ishmael, whose very name was ominous to all the seed of Isaac; "I will slay him. Wherefore should he slay thee?" Herein he shewed more courage and zeal than sense of justice, for if it be lawful to kill for prevention who then can be safe, since malice always suspects the worst?

4. That Gedaliah, being a man of sincerity himself, would by no means give credit to the information given him of Ishmael's treachery; he said, "Thou speakest falsely of Ishmael." Herein he discovered more good humour than discretion, more of the innocency of the dove than the wisdom of the serpent. Princes become uneasy to themselves and all about them when they are jealous. Queen Elizabeth said she would believe no more evil by her people than a mother would believe by her own children; yet many have been ruined by being over confident of the fidelity of those about them.

CHAPTER XLI.

It is a very tragical story that is related in this chapter, and shews that evil pursues sinners. The black cloud that was gathering in the foregoing chapter here bursts in a dreadful storm. Those few Jews that escaped the captivity were proud to think that they were still in their own land, when their brethren were gone they knew not whither; were fond of the wine and summer fruits they had gathered, and were very secure under Gedaliah's protectorship, when on a sudden even these remains prove ruins too. I. Gedaliah is barbarously slain by Ishmael, ver. 1, 2. II. All the Jews that were with him were slain likewise, ver. 3, and a pit filled with their dead bodies, ver. 9. III. Some devout men, to the number of fourscore, that were going towards Jerusalem, were drawn in by Ishmael, and murdered likewise, ver. 4—7; only ten of them escaped, ver. 8. IV. Those that escaped the sword were taken prisoners by Ishmael, and carried off towards the country of the Ammonites, ver. 10. V. By the conduct and courage of Johanan, though the death of the slain is not revenged, yet the prisoners are recovered, and he now becomes their commander-in-chief, ver. 11—16. VI. His project is to carry them into the land of Egypt, ver. 17, 18; which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.

NOW it came to pass in the seventh month, *that* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah. 2 Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. 3 Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, *even* with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, *and* the men of war. 4 And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew *it,*

5 That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, *even* fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring *them* to the house of the LORD. 6 And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. 7 And it was *so,* when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, *and cast them* into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that *were* with him. 8 But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbare, and slew them not among their brethren. 9 Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men, whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, *was* it which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: *and* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with *them that were* slain. 10 Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that *were* in Mizpah, *even* the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

It is hard to say which is more astonishing, God's permitting, or men's perpetrating, such villanies as here we find committed. Such base, barbarous, bloody work is here done by men who by their birth should have been men of honour, by their religion just men; and this done upon those of their own nature, their own nation, their own religion, and now their brethren in affliction, when they were all brought under the power of the victorious Chaldeans, and smarting under the judgments of God, upon no provocation, nor with any prospect of advantage; all done, not only in cold blood, but with art and management. We have scarce such an instance of perfidious cruelty in all the Scripture; so that, with John, when he saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, we may well wonder with great admiration. But God permitted it for the completing of the ruin of an unhumbled people, and the filling up of the measure of their judgments who had filled up the measures of their iniquities. Let it possess us with an indignation at the wickedness of men, and an awe of God's righteousness.

First. Ishmael and his party treacherously killed Gedaliah himself in the first place. Though the king of Babylon had made him a great man, had given him a commission to be governor of the land which he had conquered, though God had made him a good man, and a great blessing to his country, and his agency for its welfare was as life from the dead, yet neither could secure him. Ishmael was of the seed-royal, ver. 1, and therefore jealous of Gedaliah's growing greatness, and enraged that he should merit and accept a commission under the king of Babylon. He had ten men with him, that were princes of the king too, guided by the same peevish resentments that he was. These had been with Gedaliah before, to put themselves under his protection, *ch.* xl. 8, and now again to make him a visit; and "they did eat bread together in Mizpah." He entertained them generously, and entertained no jealousy of them notwithstanding the information given him by Johanan. They pretended friendship to him, and gave him no warning to stand on his guard; he was in sincerity friendly to them, and did all he could to oblige them; but they that did eat bread with him lift up the heel against him. They did not pick a quarrel with him, but watched an opportunity, when they had him alone, and assassinated him, ver. 2.

Secondly. They likewise put all to the sword that they found in arms there, both Jews and Chaldeans, all that were employed under Gedaliah, or were in any capacity to revenge his death, ver. 3. As if enough of the blood of Israelites had not been shed by the Chaldeans, their own princes here mingle it with the blood of the Chaldeans. The vinedressers and the husbandmen were busy in the fields and knew nothing of this bloody massacre, so artfully was it carried on and concealed.

Thirdly. Some good, honest men, that were going all in tears to lament the desolations of Jerusalem, were drawn in by Ishmael, and murdered with the rest. Observe, 1. From whence they came, ver. 5. From Shechem, Samaria, and Shiloh, places that had been famous, but were now reduced; they belonged to the ten tribes, but there were some in those countries that retained an affection for the worship of the God of Israel. 2. Whither they were going. To the house of the Lord, the temple at Jerusalem, which no doubt they had heard of the destruction of, and were going to pay their repects to its ashes, to see its ruins, that their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for them. They favour the dust thereof, *Ps.* cii. 14. They took offerings and incense in their hand, that if they should find any altar there, though it were but an altar of earth, and any priest ready to officiate, they might not be without something to offer; if not, yet they shewed their good-will, as Abraham when he came to the place of the altar, though the altar was gone. The people of God used to go rejoicing to the house of the Lord; but these went in the habit of mourners, with "their beards shaven, and their clothes rent;" for the providence of God loudly "called to weeping and mourning," because it was not with the faithful worshippers of God as in months past. 2. How they were decoyed into a fatal snare by Ishmael's malice. Hearing of their approach, he resolved to be the death of them too. So bloodthirsty was he, he seemed as if he hated every one that had the name of an Israelite, or the face of an honest man; these pilgrims towards Jerusalem he had a spite to, for the sake of their errand. Ishmael went out to meet them with crocodile's tears, pretending to bewail the desolations of Jerusalem as much as they; and, to try how they stood affected to Gedaliah and his government, he courted them into the town, and found them to have a respect for him, which confirmed him in his resolution to murder them. "He said, Come to Gedaliah," pretending he would have them come and live with him, when really he intended they should come and die with him, ver. 6. They had heard such a character of Gedaliah, that they were willing enough to be acquainted with him; but Ishmael, when he had them in the midst of the town, fell upon them and slew them, ver. 7, and no doubt took the offerings they had, and converted them to his own use; for he that would not stick at such a murder would not stick at sacrilege. Notice is taken of his disposing of the dead bodies of these and the rest that he had slain; he tumbled them all into a great pit, ver. 7, the same pit that Asa king of Judah had digged long before, either in the city or adjoining to it, when he built or fortified Mizpah, 1 *Kin.* xi. 22, to be a frontier garrison against Baasha king of Israel, and for fear of him, ver. 9. Note, Those that dig pits with a good intention, yet know not what ill use they may be put to one time or other. He slew so many, that he could not afford them each a grave, or would not do them so much honour, but threw them all promiscuously into one pit.

Among these last that were doomed to the slaughter there were ten that obtained a pardon by working, not on the compassion, but the covetousness of those that had them at their mercy, ver. 8. They said to Ishmael, when he was about to suck their blood like an insatiable horse-leech, after that of their companions, "Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field;" that is, country treasures, large stocks upon the ground, abundance of such commodities as the country affords, "wheat and barley, and oil and honey;" intimating that they would discover it to him, and put him in possession of it all, if he would spare them. "Skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life." This bait prevailed; Ishmael saved them, not for the love of mercy, but the love of money. Here were riches kept for the owners thereof, not to their hurt, *Eccl.* v. 13, and to cause them to lose their lives, *Job* xxxi. 39, but to their good, and the preserving of their lives. Solomon observes, that sometimes "the ransom of a man's life is his riches." But those who think thus to bribe death when it comes with commission, and plead with it, saying, "Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field," will find death inexorable, and themselves wretchedly deceived.

Fourthly. He carried off the people prisoners. "The king's daughters," whom the Chaldeans cared not for troubling themselves with when they had the king's sons, and the poor of the land, "the vinedressers and husbandmen," that were committed to Gedaliah's charge, were all led away prisoners, towards "the country of the Ammonites," ver. 10; Ishmael probably intending to make a present of them, as the trophies of his barbarous victory, to the king of that country, that set him on. This melancholy story is a warning to us never to be secure in this world. Worse may be yet to come then when we think the worst is over; and that end of one trouble, which we fancy to be the end of all trouble, may prove to be the beginning of another, of a greater. These here thought, "Surely the bitterness of death," and of captivity, "is past;" and yet some died by the sword, and others went into captivity. When we think ourselves safe, and begin to be easy, destruction may come that way that we little expected it. There is many a ship wrecked in the harbour. We can never be sure of peace on this side heaven.

11 But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, 12 Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that *are* in Gibeon. 13 Now it came to pass, *that* when all the people which *were* with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, then they were glad. 14 So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah. 15 But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. 16 Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after *that* he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, *even* mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon: 17 And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham,

which is by Beth-lehem, to go to enter into Egypt, 18 Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

It had been well if Johanan, when he gave information to Gedaliah of Ishmael's treasonable design, though he could not obtain leave to go kill Ishmael, and so prevent it that way, yet had stayed with Gedaliah; for he and his captains and their forces might have been a life-guard to Gedaliah, and a terror to Ishmael, and so have prevented the mischief without the effusion of blood. But it seems they were out upon some expedition, perhaps no good one, and so were out of the way when they should have been upon the best service. Those that affect to ramble are many times out of their place when they are most needed. However, at length they hear of "all the evil that Ishmael had done," ver. 11, and are resolved to try an after-game, which we have an account of in these verses.

First. We heartily wish Johanan could have taken revenge upon the murderers; but he prevailed only to rescue the captives. They that had shed so much blood, it was pity but their blood should have been shed, and it is strange that vengeance suffered them to live; yet it did. Johanan gathered what forces he could, and went to fight with Ishmael, ver. 12, upon the notice of the murders he had committed,—for though he concealed it for a time, (ver. 4,) yet murder will out,—and which way he was gone; he pursued him, and overtook him by the pool of Gibeon, which we read of, 2 *Sam.* ii. 13. And upon his appearing with such a force Ishmael's heart failed him, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he durst not stand his ground against an enemy that was something like a match for him. The most cruel are often the most cowardly. The poor captives were glad when they saw Johanan, and the captains that were with him, looking upon them as their deliverers, ver. 13; and they presently found a way to wheel about, and come over to them, ver. 14, Ishmael not offering to detain them when he saw Johanan. Note, Those that would be helped must help themselves. These captives stayed not till their conquerors were beaten, but took the first opportunity to make their escape as soon as they saw their friends appear and their enemies thereby disheartened. Ishmael quitted his prey to save his life, and escaped with eight men, ver. 15. It seems two of his ten men, that were his banditti, or assassins, spoken of ver. 1, either overrun him or were killed in the engagement; but he made the best of his way to the Ammonites, as a perfect renegado, that had quite abandoned all relation to the commonwealth of Israel, though he was of the seed-royal, and we hear no more of him.

Secondly. We heartily wish that Johanan, when he had rescued the captives, would have sitten down quietly with them, and governed them peaceably as Gedaliah did; but, instead of that, he is for leading them such a trace into the land of Egypt as Ishmael would have led them into the land of the Ammonites; so that, though he got the command over them in a better way than Ishmael did, and honestly enough, yet he did not use it much better. Gedaliah, who was of a meek and quiet spirit, was a great blessing to them; but Johanan, who was of a fierce and restless spirit, was set over them for their hurt; and to complete their ruin, even after they were as they thought redeemed. Thus did God still walk contrary to them. 1. The resolution of Johanan and the captains was very rash; nothing would serve them but they would go to enter into Egypt, ver. 17, and in order to that they encamped for a time in the habitation of Chimham, by Bethlehem, David's city. Probably it was some land which David gave to Chimham, the son of Barzillai, which, though it returned to David's family at the year of jubilee, yet still bore the name of Chimham. Here Johanan made his head-quarters, steering his course towards Egypt; either from a personal affection to that country, or ancient national confidence in the Egyptians for help in distress. Some of the mighty men of war, it seems, had escaped; those he took with him, and the women and children, whom he had recovered from Ishmael, who were thus emptied from vessel to vessel, because they were yet unchanged. 2. The reason for this resolution was very frivolous. They pretended they were afraid of the Chaldeans, that they would come and do I know not what with them, because Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, ver. 18. I cannot think they really had any apprehensions of danger upon this account; for though it is true the Chaldeans had cause enough to resent the murder of their viceroy, yet they were not so unreasonable or unjust as to revenge it upon those who appeared so vigorously against the murderers. But they only make use of this as a sham to cover that corrupt inclination of their unbelieving ancestors, which was so strong in them to return into Egypt. Those will justly lose their comfort in real fears that excuse themselves in sin with pretended fears.

CHAPTER XLII.

Johanan and the captains, being strongly bent upon going into Egypt, either their affections or politics advising them to take that course, they had a great desire that God should direct them to do so too; like Balaam, who, when he was determined to go curse Israel, asked God leave. Here is, I. The fair bargain that was made between Jeremiah and them, about consulting God in this matter, ver. 1—6. II. The message at large which God sent them, in answer to their inquiry; in which, 1. They are commanded and encouraged to continue in the land of Judah, and assured that if they did so it should be well with them, ver. 7—12. 2. They are forbidden to go to Egypt, and are plainly told that if they did it would be their ruin, ver. 13—18. 3. They are charged with dissimulation, in their asking what God's will was in this matter, and disobedience when they were told what it was; and sentence is passed upon them for it, ver. 19—22.

THEN all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, 2 And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, *even* for all this remnant; (for we are left *but* a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:) 3 That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we walk, and the thing that we may do. 4 Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard *you;* behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, *that* whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare *it* unto you; I will keep nothing back from you. 5 Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us. 6 Whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.

We have reason to wonder how Jeremiah the prophet escaped the sword of Ishmael; it seems he did, and it was not the first time that the Lord hid him. It is strange also that in these violent turns he was not consulted before now, and his advice asked and taken. But it should seem as if they knew not that a prophet was among them; though this people were as brands plucked out of the fire, yet they have not returned to the Lord. This people has a revolting and a rebellious heart; and contempt of God and his providence, God and his prophets, is still the sin that most easily besets them. But now, at length, to serve a turn, Jeremiah is sought out, and all the captains, Johanan himself not excepted, with all the people, from the least to the greatest, make him a visit. They came near, ver. 1; which intimates that hitherto they had kept at a distance from the prophet, and had been shy of him. Now here,

First. They desire him, by prayer, to ask direction from God what they should do in the present critical juncture, ver. 2, 3. They express themselves wonderful well. 1. With great respect to the prophet. Though he was poor and low, and under their command, yet they apply themselves to him with humility and submissiveness, as petitioners for his assistance, which yet they intimate their own unworthiness of; "Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee." They compliment him thus, in hopes to persuade him to say as they would have him say. 2. With a great opinion of his interest in heaven. "Pray for us," who know not how to pray for ourselves. Pray to the Lord thy God, for we are unworthy to call him ours, nor have we reason to expect any favour from him. 3. With a great sense of their need of Divine direction. They speak of themselves as objects of compassion; We are but a remnant, but a few of many; how easily will such a remnant be swallowed up, and yet it is pity they should. Thine eyes see what distress we are in, what a plunge we are at; if thou canst do any thing, help us. 4. With desire of a Divine conduct. Let the Lord thy God take this ruin into his thoughts, and under his hand, and shew us the way wherein we may walk, and may expect to have his presence with us, and the thing that we may do, the course we may take for our own safety. Note, In every difficult, doubtful case, our eye must be up to God for direction. They then might expect to be directed by a spirit of prophecy, which is now ceased; but we may still in faith pray to be guided by a spirit of wisdom in our hearts, and the hints of providence.

Secondly. Jeremiah faithfully promiseth them to pray for direction for them, and whatever message God should send to them by him he would deliver it to them just as he received it, without adding, altering, or diminishing, ver. 4. Ministers may hence learn, 1. Conscientiously to pray for those who desire their prayers; "I will pray for you, according to your words." Though they had slighted him, yet, like Samuel when he was slighted, he will not sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for them, 1 *Sam.* xii. 23. 2. Conscientiously to advise those who desire their advice, as near as they can to the mind of God; not keeping back any thing that is profitable for them, whether it be pleasing or no, but to declare to them the whole counsel of God, that they may approve themselves true to their trust.

Thirdly. They fairly promise that they will be governed by the will of God, as soon as they know what it is, ver. 5, 6, and they had the impudence to appeal to God concerning their sincerity herein, though at the same time they dissembled. "The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us;" that is, Do thou in the fear of God tell us truly what his mind is, and then we will in the fear of God comply with it; and for this the Lord the Judge be judge between us. Note, Those that expect to have the benefit of good ministers' prayers must conscientiously hearken to their preaching, and be governed by it, as far as it agrees with the mind of God. Nothing could be better said than this here, "Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, that it may be well with us." 1. They now call God their God, for Jeremiah had encouraged them to call him so, ver. 5, "I will pray to the Lord your God." He is ours, and therefore we will obey his voice. Our relation to God strongly obligeth us to obedience. 2. They promise to obey his voice, because they sent the prophet to him to consult him. Note, We do not truly desire to know the mind of God, if we do not fully resolve to comply with it when we do know it. 3. It is an implicit, universal obedience that they here promise. They will do what God appoints them to do, "whether it be good, or whether it be evil;" though it may seem evil to us, yet we will believe that if God commands it, it is certainly good, and we must not dispute it, but do it. Whatever God commands, whether it be easy or difficult, agreeable to our inclinations or contrary to them, whether it be cheap or costly, fashionable or unfashionable, whether we get or lose by it in our worldly interest, if it be our duty, we will do it. 4. It is upon a very good consideration that they promise this, a reasonable and powerful one, "that it may be well with us;" which intimates a conviction that they could not expect it should be well with them upon any other terms.

7 And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah. 8 Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which *were* with him, and all

the people from the least even to the greatest, 9 And said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him;

10 If ye will still abide in this land,
Then will I build you, and not pull *you* down,
And I will plant you, and not pluck *you* up:
For I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.
11 Be not afraid of the king of Babylon,
Of whom ye are afraid;
Be not afraid of him, saith the LORD:
For I *am* with you to save you,
And to deliver you from his hand.
12 And I will shew mercies unto you,
That he may have mercy upon you,
And cause you to return to your own land.
13 But if ye say,
We will not dwell in this land,
Neither obey the voice of the LORD your God,
14 Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt,
Where we shall see no war,
Nor hear the sound of the trumpet,
Nor have hunger of bread;
And there will we dwell: [of Judah;
15 And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant
Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt,
And go to sojourn there;
16 Then it shall come to pass,
That the sword, which ye feared,
Shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt,
And the famine, whereof ye were afraid,
Shall follow close after you there in Egypt;
And there ye shall die.
17 So shall it be with all the men
That set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there;
They shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence:
And none of them shall remain or escape
From the evil that I will bring upon them.
18 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth
Upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem;
So shall my fury be poured forth upon you,
When ye shall enter into Egypt:
And ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment,
And a curse, and a reproach;
And ye shall see this place no more.

19 The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day. 20 For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do *it*. 21 And *now* I have this day declared *it* to you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, nor any *thing* for the which he hath sent me unto you. 22 Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go *and* to sojourn.

We have here the answer which Jeremiah was sent to deliver to those who employed him to ask counsel of God.

First. It did not come presently, nor till ten days after, ver. 7. They were thus long held in suspense, perhaps to punish them for their hypocrisy, or to shew that Jeremiah did not speak of himself, not what he would, for he could not speak when he would, but must wait for instructions. However, it teacheth us to continue waiting upon God for direction in our way. "The vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak."

Secondly. When it did come he delivered it publicly, both to the captains and to all the people, from the meanest to those in the highest station. He delivered it fully and faithfully, as he received it, as he had promised that he would keep nothing back from them. If Jeremiah had been to direct them by his own prudence, perhaps he could not have told what to advise them to, the case was so difficult; but what he has to advise is, what "the Lord the God of Israel saith, to whom they had sent him," and therefore they were bound in honour and duty to observe it. And this he tells them,

1. That it is the will of God that they should stay where they were; and his promise, that if they do so it shall undoubtedly be well with them; he would have them still to abide in this land, ver. 10. Their brethren were forced out of it into captivity, and it was their affliction; let them therefore count it a mercy that they may stay in it, and a duty to stay in it. Let those whose lot is in Canaan never quit it while they can keep it. It had been enough to oblige them, if God had only said, I charge you upon your allegiance to abide still in this land; but he rather persuades them to it as a friend than commands it as a prince. 1st. He expresseth a very tender concern for them in their present calamitous condition; "It repenteth me of the evil that I have done unto you." Though they had shewn small sign of their repenting of their sins, yet God, as one grieved for the misery of Israel, *Jud.* x. 16, begins to repent of the judgments he had brought upon them for their sins. Not that he changed his mind, but he was very ready to change his way, and to return in mercy to them. God's time to repent himself concerning his servants is, when he sees that, as here, their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left, *Deu.* xxxii. 36. 2nd. He answers the argument they had against abiding in this land. They feared the king of Babylon, *ch.* xli. 18, lest he should come and avenge the death of Gedaliah upon them, though they were no way accessary to it, nay, had witnessed against it. The surmise was foreign and unreasonable; but if there had been any ground for it enough is here said to remove it; ver. 11, "Be not afraid of the king of Babylon," though he is a man of great might and little mercy, and a very arbitrary prince, whose will is a law; and therefore you are afraid he will, upon this pretence, though without colour of reason, take advantage against you. "Be not afraid of him," for that fear will bring a snare; fear not him, "for I am with you;" and if God be for you to save you, who can be against you to hurt you? Thus has God provided to obviate and silence even the causeless fears of his people, which discourage them in the way of their duty; there is enough in the promises to do it. 3rd. He assures them that, if they will still abide in this land, they shall not only be safe from the king of Babylon, but be made happy by the King of kings. "I will build you and plant you;" you shall take root again, and be the new foundation of another state; a phœnix kingdom rising out of the ashes of the last. It is added, ver. 12, "I will shew mercies unto you." Note, In all our comforts we may read God's mercies. God will shew them mercy in this, that not only the king of Babylon shall not destroy them, but he shall have mercy upon them, and help to settle them. Note, Whatever kindness men do us, we must attribute it to God's kindness. He makes those whom he pities to be pitied, even by those that carried them captives, *Ps.* cvi. 46. The king of Babylon having now the disposal of the country, shall "cause you to return to your own land," that is, shall settle you again in your habitations, and put you in possession of the lands that formerly belonged to you. Note, God has made that our duty which is really our privilege, and our obedience will be its own recompence. "Abide in this land," and it shall be your own land again, and you shall continue in it. Do not outrun it, now you stand so fair for the enjoyment of it again. Be not so unwise as to forsake your own mercies for lying vanities.

2. That, as they tender the favour of God and their own happiness, they must by no means think of going into Egypt; not thither of any place; not to that land out of which God had delivered their fathers, and which he had so often warned them not to make alliance with, nor to put confidence in. Observe here,

1st. The sin they are supposed to be guilty of; and to him that knew their hearts it was more than a supposition. You begin to say, "We will not dwell in this land," ver. 13. We will never think that we can be safe in it, no, not though God himself undertake our protection; we will not continue in it, no, not in obedience to the voice of the Lord our God. He may say what he pleaseth, but we will do what we please; 'We will go into the land of Egypt, and there will we dwell, whether God give us leave and go along with us or no,' ver. 14. It is supposed that their hearts were upon it; "If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt," are obstinately resolved that you will go and sojourn there, though God oppose you in it, both by his word and by his providence, then take what follows. Now the reason they go upon in this resolution is, that "in Egypt we shall see no war, nor have hunger of bread," as we have had for a long time in this land, ver. 14. Note, It is folly to quit our place, especially to quit the holy land, because we meet with trouble in it; but greater folly to think, by changing our place to outrun the judgments of God, and that evil which pursues sinners in every way of disobedience, and which there is no escaping but by returning to our allegiance.

2nd. The sentence passed upon them for this sin, if they will persist in it. It is pronounced in God's name; ver. 15, "Hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah," that think, because you are a remnant, you must be spared of course, ver. 2, and indulged in your own humour. *First.* Did the sword and famine frighten them? Those very judgments shall pursue them into Egypt, shall overtake them, and overcome them there, ver. 16, 17. Ye think, because war and famine have long been raging in this land, they are entailed upon it; whereas, if you trust in God, he can make even this land a land of peace to you. You think they are confined to it, and if you can get clear of this land you shall get out of the reach of them; but God will send them after you wherever you go. Note, The evils we think to escape by sin we certainly and inevitably run ourselves upon. The men that go to Egypt in contradiction to God's will, to escape the sword and famine, shall die in Egypt by sword and famine. We may apply it to the common calamities of human life. Those that are impatient of them, and think to avoid them by changing their place, will find they are deceived, and they do not at all mend themselves. The grievances common to men will meet them wherever they go. All our removes in this world are but from one wilderness to another; still we are where we were. *Secondly.* Did the desolations of Jerusalem frighten them? Were they willing to get as far as they could from them? They shall meet with the second part of them too in Egypt; ver. 18, "As mine anger and fury have been poured out here upon Jerusalem, so it shall be poured out upon you in Egypt." Note, Those that have by sin made God their enemy will find him a consuming fire wherever they go. And then "shall ye be an execration and an astonishment." The Hebrews were of old an abomination to the Egyptians, *Gen.* xliii. 32, and now

they shall be made more so than ever. When God's professing people mingle themselves with infidels, and make their court to them, they lose their dignity, and make themselves a reproach.

3rd. That God knew their hypocrisy in their inquiries of him, and that when they asked what he would have them do, they were resolved to take their own way; and therefore the sentence, which was before pronounced conditionally, is made absolute. Having set before them good and evil, the blessing and the curse, in the close he makes the application of what he said. And here, *First.* He solemnly protests that he had faithfully delivered his message, ver. 19. The conclusion of the whole matter is, "Go not down into Egypt;" you disobey the command of God if you do, and what I have said to you will be a witness against you. For know certainly that, whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, I have plainly admonished you, you cannot now plead ignorance of the mind of God. *Secondly.* He chargeth them with base dissimulation in the application they made to him for Divine direction; ver. 20, "Ye dissembled in your hearts," you pretended one thing and intended another, and promised what you never meant to perform. 'You have used deceit against your souls,' so the margin reads it; for those that think to put a cheat upon God will prove in the end to have put a damning cheat upon themselves. *Thirdly.* He is already aware that they are determined to go contrary to the command of God. Probably they discovered it in their countenance and secret mutterings already, before he had finished his discourse. However, he spake from him who knew their hearts; "Ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God;" that is, ye have not a disposition to obey it. Thus Moses, in the close of his farewell sermon, had told them, *Deu.* xxxi. 2, "I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck, and that ye will corrupt yourselves." Admire the patience of God, that he is pleased to speak to those whom he knows will not regard him, and deal with those whom he knows will deal treacherously, *Isa.* xlviii. 8. *Fourthly.* He therefore reads them their doom, ratifying what he had said before, "Know certainly that ye shall die by the sword," ver. 22. God's threatenings may be vilified, but cannot be nullified, by the unbelief of man. Famine and pestilence shall pursue these sinners; for there is no place privileged from Divine arrests, nor can any malefactors go out of God's jurisdiction; "Ye shall die in the place whither ye desire to go." Note, We know not what is good for ourselves; and that often proves afflictive, and sometimes fatal, which we are most fond of, and have our hearts most set upon.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Jeremiah had faithfully delivered his message from God in the foregoing chapter, and the case was made so very plain by it, that one would have thought there needed no more words about it; but we find it quite otherwise. Here is, I. The people's contempt of this message. They denied it to be the word of God, ver. 1—3, and then made no difficulty of going directly contrary to it; into Egypt they went, and took Jeremiah himself along with them, ver. 4—7. II. God's pursuit of them with another message, foretelling the king of Babylon's pursuit of them into Egypt, ver. 8—13.

AND it came to pass, *that* when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to them, *even* all these words, 2 Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: 3 But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon. 4 So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah. 5 But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; 6 *Even* men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah. 7 So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: thus came they *even* to Tahpanhes.

What God saith of the builders of Babel may truly be said of this people that Jeremiah is now dealing with, "Now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do," *Gen.* xi. 6. They have a fancy for Egypt, and to Egypt they will go, whatever God himself saith to the contrary. Jeremiah made them hear all he had to say, though he saw them uneasy at it. It was what the Lord their God had sent him to speak to them, and they shall have it all; and now let us see what they have to say to it.

First. They deny it to be a message from God. "Johanan, and all the proud men, said to Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely," ver. 2. See here, 1. What was the cause of their disobedience. It was pride; only by that comes contention both with God and man. They were proud men that gave the lie to the prophet. They could not bear the contradiction of their sentiments, and the control of their designs; no, not by the Divine wisdom, by the Divine will itself. Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" *Ex.* v. 2. The proud unhumbled heart of man is one of the most daring enemies God has on this side hell. 2. What was the colour for their disobedience? They would not acknowledge it to be the word of God. "The Lord hath not sent thee" on this errand to us. Either they were not convinced that was said came from God, or (which I rather think) though they were convinced of it they would not own it. The light shone strong in their face, but either they shut their eyes against it or would not confess that they saw it. Note, The reason why men deny the Scriptures to be the word of God is, because they are resolved not to conform themselves to Scripture rules, and so an obstinate infidelity is made the sorry subterfuge of a wilful disobedience. If God had spoken to them by an angel, or as he did from mount Sinai, they would have said it was a delusion. Had they not consulted Jeremiah as a prophet? Had not he waited to receive instructions from God what to say to them? Had not what he said all the usual marks of prophecy upon it? Was not the prophet himself embarked in the same bottom with them? What interests could he have separate from theirs? Had he not always approved himself an Israelite indeed? and had not God proved him a prophet indeed? Had any of his words ever fallen to the ground? Why truly, they had some good thoughts of Jeremiah; but they suggest, ver. 3, "Baruch sets thee on against us." A likely thing, that Baruch should be in a plot "to deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans," and what would he get by that? If Jeremiah and he had been so well affected to the Chaldeans as they would represent them, they would have gone away at first, with Nebuzar-adan, when he courted them, to Babylon, and not have staid to take their lot with this despised ungrateful remnant; but the best services are no fences against malice and slander. Or if Baruch had been so ill disposed, could they think Jeremiah would be so influenced by him as to make God's name and authority to patronize so villanous a purpose? Note, Those that are resolved to contradict the great ends of the ministry are industrious to put it into an ill name. When men will persist in sin, they represent those who would turn them from it as designing men for themselves; nay, as ill designing men against their neighbours. It is well for them that their witness is in heaven, and their record on high.

Secondly. They determine to go to Egypt however. They resolve not to "dwell in the land of Judah," as God had ordered them, ver. 4; but to go themselves, with one consent, and to take all that they had under their power along with them to Egypt. Those that came "from all the nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah," out of a sincere affection to that land, they would not leave them to their liberty, but forced them to go with them into Egypt, ver. 5; "men, women, and children," ver. 6; a long journey into a strange country, an idolatrous country, a country that had never been kind or faithful to Israel; yet thither they would go, though they deserted their own land, and threw themselves out of God's protection. It is the folly of men that they know not when they are well, and often ruin themselves by endeavouring to mend themselves; and it is the pride of great men to force those they have under their power to follow them, though never so much against their duty and interest. These proud men compelled even Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch his scribe, to go along with them to Egypt. They carried them away as prisoners, partly to punish them, and a greater punishment they could not inflict upon them than to force them against their consciences. Theirs is the worst of tyranny who say to men's souls, even to good men's souls, "Bow down, that we may go over;" partly to put some reputation upon themselves and their own way. Though the prophets were under a force, they would make the world believe they were voluntary in going along with them; and who can blame them for acting contrary to the word of the Lord, when the prophets themselves did? They came to Tahpanhes a famous city of Egypt, so called from a queen of that name, 1 *Kin.* xi. 19; the same with Hanes, *Isa.* xxx. 4; it was now the metropolis, for Pharaoh's house was there, ver. 9. No place could serve these proud men to settle in but the royal city, and near the court; so little mindful were they of Joseph's wisdom, who would have his brethren settle in Goshen. If they had had the spirit of Israelites, they would have chosen rather to dwell in the wilderness of Judah, than in the most pompous populous cities of Egypt.

8 Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, 9 Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which *is* at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah; 10 And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. 11 And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, *and deliver* such *as are* for death to death; and such *as are* for captivity to captivity; and such *as are* for the sword to the sword. 12 And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. 13 He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh,

that *is* in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

EGYPTIAN GODS.

We have here Jeremiah prophesying in Egypt, and so we have in the next chapter. Jeremiah was now in Tahpanhes, for there his lords and masters were. He was there among idolatrous Egyptians and treacherous Israelites; but there, 1. He received the word of the Lord; it came to him. God can find his people with the visits of his grace wherever they are; and when his ministers are bound, yet "the word of the Lord is not bound." The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel. When Jeremiah went into Egypt, not out of choice, but by constraint, God withdrew not his wonted favour from him. 2. What he received of the Lord he delivered to the people. Wherever we are, we must endeavour to do good, for that is our business in this world. Now we find two messages which Jeremiah was appointed and intrusted to deliver, when he was in Egypt. We may suppose he did what services he could to his countrymen in Egypt, at least as far as they would be acceptable, in performing the ordinary duties of a prophet, praying for them, and instructing and comforting them, but only two messages of his which he received immediately from God are recorded. One in this chapter relating to Egypt itself, and foretelling the destruction of that; the other in the next chapter, relating to the Jews in Egypt. God had told them before, that if they went into Egypt the sword they feared should follow them; here he tells them farther, that the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, which they were in a particular manner afraid of, should follow them.

First. This is foretold by a sign. Jeremiah must take great stones, such as are used for foundations, and lay them in the clay of the furnace or brick kiln, which is in the open way, or beside the way, that leads to Pharaoh's house, ver. 9; some remarkable place in view of the royal palace. Egypt was famous for brick kilns, witness the slavery of the Israelites there, whom they forced to make bricks, *Ex.* v. 7, which perhaps was now remembered against them. The foundation of Egypt's desolations was laid in those brick kilns in that clay. This he must do, not in the sight of the Egyptians, they knew not Jeremiah's character, but in the sight of the men of Judah to whom he was sent, that, since he could not prevent their going into Egypt, he might bring them to repent of their going.

Secondly. It is foretold in express words, as express as can be,

1. That the king, the present king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, the very same that had been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem, should come in person against the land of Egypt, should make himself master even of this royal city, by the same token that he should set his throne in that very place where these stones were laid, ver. 10. This minute circumstance is particularly foretold, that when it was accomplished they might be put in mind of the prophecy, and confirmed in their belief of the extent and certainty of the Divine prescience, to which the smallest and most contingent events are evident. God calls Nebuchadnezzar his servant, because herein he executed God's will, accomplished his purposes, and was instrumental to carry on his designs. Note, The world's princes are God's servants, and he makes what use he pleaseth of them, and even those that know him not, nor aim at his honour, yet are the tools which his providence makes use of.

2. That he shall destroy many of the Egyptians, and have them all at his mercy; ver. 11, "He shall smite the land of Egypt;" and though it has been always a warlike nation, yet none shall be able to make head against him, but whom he will he shall slay, and by what sort of death he will; whether pestilence, for that is here meant by death, as *ch.* xv. 2, by shutting them up in places infected, or by the sword of war or justice, in cold blood or hot; and whom he will he shall save alive, and carry into captivity. The Jews, by going into Egypt, brought the Chaldeans thither, and so made but ill payment to those that entertained them. They who promised to protect Israel from the king of Babylon exposed themselves to him.

3. That he shall destroy the idols of Egypt, both the temples and the images of their gods; ver. 12, "He shall burn the houses of the gods of Egypt;" but it shall be with a fire of God's kindling. The fire of God's wrath fastens upon them, and then he burns some of them, and carries others captives, *Isa.* xlvi. 1. Beth-shemesh, or, the house of the sun, was so called from a temple there built to the sun, where at certain times there was a general meeting of the worshippers of the sun. The statues, or standing images, there he shall break in pieces, ver. 13; and carry away the rich materials of them. It intimates that he shall lay all waste, when even the temple and the images shall not escape the fury of the victorious army. The king of Babylon was himself a great idolater, and a patron of idolatry; he had his temples and images in honour of the sun, as well as the Egyptians, and yet he is employed to destroy the idols of Egypt. Thus God sometimes makes one wicked man or wicked nation a scourge and plague to another.

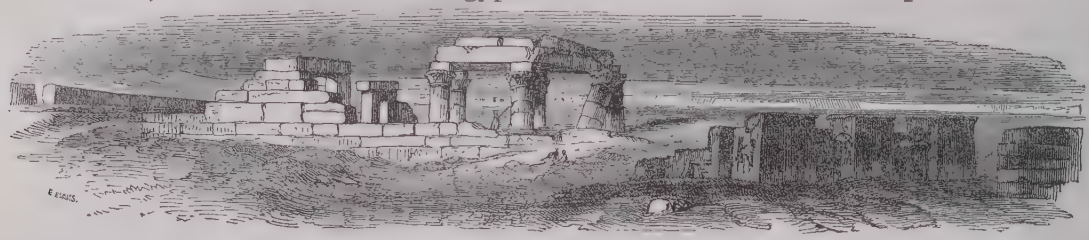
4. That he shall make himself master of the land of Egypt, and none shall be able to plead its cause, or avenge its quarrel, ver. 13; "He shall array himself with the rich spoils of the land of Egypt," both beautify and fortify himself with them; shall array himself with them, as ornaments, and as armour; and this though it shall be a rich and heavy booty, yet, being expert in war, and expeditious, he will slip on with as much ease, and in as little time (in comparison) "as a shepherd slips on his garment," when he goes to turn out his sheep in a morning. And being loaded with the wealth of many nations, the fruits of his conquests, he shall make no more of the spoils of the land of Egypt than of a shepherd's coat; and when he has taken what he pleaseth, as Benhadad threatened to do, 1 *Kin.* xx. 6, he shall go forth in peace, without any molestation given him, or any precipitation for fear of it, so effectually reduced shall the land of Egypt be. This destruction of Egypt by the king of Babylon is foretold, *Eze.* xxix. 19; xxx. 10. Babylon lay at a great distance from Egypt, and yet from thence the destruction of Egypt comes; for God can make those judgments strike home which are far-fetched.

CHAPTER XLIV.

In this chapter we have, I. An awakening sermon, which Jeremiah preached to the Jews in Egypt, to reprove them for their idolatry, notwithstanding the warnings given them both by the word and rod of God, and to threaten the judgments of God against them for it, ver. 1—14. II. The impudent and impious contempt which the people put upon this admonition, and their declared resolution to persist in their idolatries notwithstanding, in despite of God and Jeremiah, ver. 15—19. III. The sentence passed upon them for their obstinacy, that they should all be cut off, and perish in Egypt, except a very small number, and as a sign or earnest of it the king of Egypt should shortly fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, and be unable any longer to protect them, ver. 20—30.

THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they *are* a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein, 3 Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, *and* to serve other gods, whom they knew not, *neither* they, ye, nor your fathers. 4 Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. 5 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods. 6 Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted *and* desolate, as at this day. 7 Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye *this* great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain; 8 In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? 9 Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of

the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? 10 They are not humbled *even* unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers. 11 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. 12 And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, *and* fall in the land of Egypt; they shall *even* be consumed by the sword *and* by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, *and* an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. 13 For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: 14 So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.



PATHROS—RUINS OF CHNUBIS, NUBIA.—ver. 1.

The Jews in Egypt were now dispersed into divers parts of the country, into Migdol and Noph, and other places, and Jeremiah is sent of an errand from God to them, which he delivered either when he had the most of them together in Pathros, ver. 15, or going about from place to place, preaching to this purpose. He delivered his message in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, and in it,

First. God puts them in mind of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, which, though the captives by the rivers of Babylon were daily mindful of, (*Ps.* cxxxiv. 1,) the fugitives in the cities of Egypt seem to have forgotten, and needed to be put in mind of, though they had not been so long out of sight as to become out of mind; ver. 2, Ye have seen what a deplorable condition Judah and Jerusalem are brought into. Now, will you consider whence those desolations came? From the wrath of God; it was his fury and his anger that kindled the fire which made Jerusalem and the cities of Judah waste and desolate, ver. 6; whoever were the instruments of the destruction, they were but instruments. It was a destruction from the Almighty.

Secondly. He puts them in mind of the sins that brought these desolations upon Judah and Jerusalem. It was for their wickedness, (that was it that provoked God to anger,) and especially their idolatry; their serving other gods, ver. 3; and giving that honour to counterfeit deities, the creatures of their own fancy, and the work of their own hands, which should have been given to the true God only. They forsook the God that was known among them, and his name great, for gods that they knew not, upstart deities, whose original was obscure, and not worth taking notice of. Neither they, nor you, nor your fathers, could give any rational account why the God of Israel was exchanged for such impostors; they knew not that they were gods, nay, they could not but know that they were no gods.

Thirdly. He puts them in mind of the frequent fair warnings he had given them by his word not to serve other gods, the contempt of which warnings was a great aggravation of their idolatry, ver. 4. The prophets were sent with a great deal of care to call to them, saying, "O do not this abominable thing that I hate." It becomes us to speak of sin with the utmost dread and detestation, as an abominable thing; it is certainly so, for it is that which God hates, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth; call it odious, call it grievous, that we may by all means possible put ourselves and others out of love with it. It becomes us to give warning of the danger of sin, and the fatal consequences of it, with all seriousness and earnestness; O do not do it! If you love God do not, for it is provoking to him; if you love your own souls do not, for it is destructive to them. Let conscience do this for us in an hour of temptation, when we are ready to yield: O take heed, "do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates;" for if God hates it thou shouldest hate it. But did they regard what God said to them? No, they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, ver. 5. They still persisted in their idolatries, and you see what came of it; therefore God's anger was poured out upon them, as at this day. Now this was intended for warning to you, who have not only heard the judgments of God's mouth, as they did, but have likewise seen the judgments of his hand, by which you should be startled and awakened, for they were inflicted *in terrorem*, that others might hear and fear, and do no more as they did, lest they fare as they did.

Fourthly. He reproves them for, and upbraids them with, their continued idolatries, now they were come into Egypt; ver. 8, "Ye burn incense to other gods in the land of Egypt," therefore God forbade them to go into Egypt, because he knew it would be a snare to them. Those whom God sent into the land of the Chaldeans, though that was an idolatrous country, were there by the power of God's grace weaned from idolatry, but those who went against God's mind into the land of the Egyptians were there by the power of their own corruptions more wedded than ever to their idolatries; for when we thrust ourselves without cause or call into places of temptation it is just with God to leave us to ourselves. In doing this, 1. They did a great deal of injury to themselves and their families. You commit this great evil against your souls, ver. 7; you wrong them, you deceive them with that which is false, you destroy them, for it will be fatal to them. Note, In sinning against God we sin against our own souls. It is the ready way to cut ourselves off from all comfort and hopes, ver. 8, to cut off your name and honour. So that you will, both by your sin and by your misery, become a curse and reproach among all nations; it will become a proverb, As wretched as a Jew. It is the ready way to cut off from you all your relations, all that you should have joy of, and have your families built up in, man and woman, child and suckling, so that Judah shall be a land lost for want of heirs. 2. They filled up the measure of the iniquity of their fathers; and, as if that had been too little for them, added to it; ver. 9, "Have ye forgotten the wickedness" of those that are gone before you, that you are not humbled for it, as you ought to be, and afraid of the consequences of it? 'Have you forgotten the punishments of your fathers?' so some read it; do you not know how dear their idolatry cost them, and yet dare you continue in that "vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers," though you received the curse with it? He minds them of the sins and punishments of the kings of Judah, who, as great as they were, escaped not the judgments of God for their idolatry; yea, and they should have taken warning by the wickedness of their wives, who had seduced them to idolatry. In the original it is, 'and of his wives,' which Dr. Lightfoot thinks doth tacitly reflect upon Solomon's wives, particularly his Egyptian wives, to whom the idolatry of the kings of Judah owed its original. Have you forgotten this, and what came of it, that you dare venture upon the same wicked courses? see *Neh.* xiii. 18, 26. Nay, to come to your own times, "Have you forgotten your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives," when you lived in prosperity in Jerusalem, and what ruin it brought upon you? But, alas, to what purpose do I speak to them, saith God to the prophet; ver. 10, "They are not humbled unto this day," by all the humbling providences that they have been under. "They have not feared, nor walked in my law." Note, Those that walk not in the law of God thereby shew that they are destitute of the fear of God.

Fifthly. He threatens their utter ruin for their persisting in their idolatry, now they were in Egypt. Judgment is given against them, as before *ch.* xlii. 22, that they shall perish in Egypt. The decree is gone forth, and shall not be called back. They "set their faces to go into the land of Egypt," ver. 12, were resolute in their purpose against God, and now God is resolute in his purpose against them; "I will set my face to cut off all Judah," ver. 11. They that think not only to affront but to confront God Almighty will find themselves outfaced; for "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil," *Ps.* xxxiv. 16. It is here threatened concerning these idolatrous Jews in Egypt, 1. That they shall all be consumed, without exception; no degree or order among them shall escape. they shall fall, from the least to the greatest, ver. 12, high and low, rich and poor. 2. That they shall be consumed by the very same judgments which God made use of for the punishment of Jerusalem, the sword, famine, and pestilence, ver. 12, 13. They shall not be wasted by natural deaths, as Israel in the wilderness, but by these sore judgments which by flying into Egypt they thought to get out of the reach of. 3. That none, except a very few that shall narrowly escape, shall ever return to the land of Judah again, ver. 14. They thought, being nearer, they stood fairer for a return to their own land than those that were carried to Babylon, yet those shall return, and these shall not; for the much surer way to any comfort is that in which God has promised it to us than that in which we have projected it for ourselves. Observe, how those that are fretful and discontented will be uneasy and fond of change wherever they are; this people, when they were in the land of Judah, desired to go into Egypt, *ch.* xlii. 22, but when they were in Egypt they "desired to return to the land of Judah again;" they 'lift up their soul' to it, so it is in the margin, which notes an earnest desire. But, because they would not dwell there when God commanded it, they shall not dwell there when they desire it. If we walk contrary to God he will walk contrary to us. How can those expect to be well that would not know when they were well, though God himself told them?

15 Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, 16 *As for* the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. 17 But

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we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. 18 But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all *things*, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. 19 And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?

We have here the people's obstinate refusal to submit to the power of the word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah. We have scarce such an instance of downright daring contradiction to God himself as this here, or such an avowed rebellion of the carnal mind. Observe,

First. The persons that did thus set God and his judgments at defiance. It was not some one that was thus obstinate, but the generality of the Jews; and they were such as knew either themselves or their wives to be guilty of the idolatry Jeremiah had reproved, ver. 15; where we find, 1. That the women had been more guilty of idolatry and superstition than the men; not because the men stuck closer to the true God and the true religion than the women, but I fear because they were generally atheists, and were for no God, and no religion at all, and therefore could easily allow their wives to be of a false religion, and to worship false gods. 2. That it was consciousness of guilt that made them impatient of reproof. "They knew that their wives had burnt incense to other gods," and that they had countenanced them in it, and "the women that stood by" knew that they had joined with them in their idolatrous usages, so that what Jeremiah said touched them in a sore place, which made them kick against the pricks, as children of Belial, that will not bear the yoke.

Secondly. The reply which these persons made to Jeremiah, and in him to God himself; and it is in effect the same with theirs who had the impudence to say to the Almighty, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

1. They declare their resolution not to do as God commanded them, but what they themselves had a mind to do, that is, they would go on to worship the moon, here called the queen of heaven; yet some understand it of the sun, which was much worshipped in Egypt, *ch.* xliii. 13, and had been so at Jerusalem, 2 *Kin.* xxxiii. 11, and they say that, the Hebrew word for the sun being feminine, it may not unfitly be called the queen of heaven. And others understand it of all the host of heaven, or the frame of heaven, the whole machine, *ch.* vii. 18. These daring sinners do not now go about to make excuses for their refusal to obey, nor suggest that Jeremiah spoke from himself and not from God, as before, *ch.* xliii. 2. But they own he spake to them in the name of the Lord, and yet tell him flat and plain, in so many words, "We will not hearken unto thee," we will do that which is forbidden, and run the venture of that which is threatened. Note, Those that live in disobedience to God commonly grow worse and worse, and the heart is more and more hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Here is the genuine language of the rebellious heart: "We will certainly do whatsoever thing goes forth out of our own mouth," let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary. What they said many think, that yet have not arrived to such a degree of impudence as to speak it out. It is that which the young man would be at in the days of his youth; he would walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and would have and do every thing he has a mind to, *Eccl.* xi. 9.

2. They give some sort of reasons for their resolutions. For the most absurd and unreasonably wicked men will have something to say for themselves, till the day comes when every mouth shall be stopped.

1st. They plead many of those things which the advocates for Rome make the marks of a true church, and not only justify but magnify themselves with; and these here have as much right to them as they have. *First.* They plead antiquity: We are resolved to burn incense to the queen of heaven, for our fathers did so; it is a practice that pleads prescription, and why should we pretend to be wiser than our fathers? *Secondly.* They plead authority. They that had power practised it themselves, and prescribed it to others; our kings and our princes did it, whom God set over us, and who were of the seed of David. *Thirdly.* They plead unity. It was not here and there one that did it, but we,—we all with one consent, we that are a great multitude, ver. 15, we did it. *Fourthly.* They plead universality. It was not done here and there, but in the cities of Judah. *Fifthly.* They plead visibility. It was done not in a corner, in dark and shady groves only, but in the streets, openly and publicly. *Sixthly.* They plead that it was the practice of the mother church, the holy see; it was not now learned first in Egypt, but it had been done in Jerusalem. *Seventhly.* They plead prosperity; Then had we plenty of bread, and of all good things; we were well, and saw no evil. All the rest I fear were too true in fact, (God's witnesses against their idolatry were few and hid; Elijah thought he was left alone,) and this last might perhaps be true as to some particular persons; but as to their nation, they were still under rebukes for their rebellions, and there was no peace to them that went out or came in, 2 *Chr.* xv. 5. But supposing all to be true, yet this doth not at all excuse them from idolatry; it is the law of God that we must be ruled and judged by, not the practice of men.

2nd. They suggest, that the judgments they had of late been under were brought upon them for leaving off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, ver. 18. So perversely did they misconstrue providence, though God by his prophets had so often explained it to them, and the thing itself spoke the direct contrary. Since we forsook our idolatries "we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword;" the true reason of which was because they still retained their idols in their hearts, and an affection to their old sins. But they would have it thought it was because they had forsaken the acts of sin. Thus the afflictions which should have been for their welfare, to part between them and their sins, being misinterpreted, did but confirm them in their sins. Thus in the first ages of Christianity, when God chastised the nations by any public calamities for opposing the Christians and persecuting them, they put a contrary sense upon the calamities, as if they were sent to punish them for conniving at the Christians, and tolerating them, and cried, *Christianos ad leones*,—'Throw the Christians to the lions.' Yet if it had been true as they said here, that since they returned to the service of the true God, the God of Israel, they had been in want and trouble, was that a reason why they should revolt from him again? That was as much as to say, they served not him, but their own bellies. Those that know God, and put their trust in him will serve him, though he starve them, though he slay them, though they never see a good day with him in this world, being well assured that they shall not lose by him in the end.

3rd. They plead that, though the women were most forward and active in their idolatries, yet they did it with the consent and approbation of their husbands. The women were busy to make cakes for meat offerings to the queen of heaven, and to prepare and pour out the drink offerings, ver. 19. We found before it was their work, *ch.* vii. 18; but, did we do it without our husbands, privately and unknown to them, so as to give them occasion to be jealous of us? No, the fathers kindled the fire, while the women kneaded the dough. The men that were our heads, whom we were bound to learn of, and to be obedient to, taught us to do it by their example. Note, It is sad when those that are in the nearest relation to each other, that should quicken each other to that which is good, and so help one another to heaven, harden each other in sin, and so ripen one another for hell. Some understand this as spoken by the husbands, ver. 15, who plead they did not do it without their men, that is, without their elders and rulers, their great men, and men in authority; but, because the making of the cakes and the pouring out of the drink offerings is expressly spoken of as the women's work, *ch.* vii. 18, it seems rather to be understood as their plea. But it was a frivolous plea; what would it avail them to be able to say that it was according to their husband's mind, when they knew it was contrary to their God's mind?

20 Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him *that* answer, saying, 21 The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it *not* into his mind? 22 So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, *and* because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. 23 Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. 24 Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt: 25 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying; Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows. 26 Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, the

LORD God liveth. 27 Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. 28 Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or their's. 29 And this *shall be* a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: 30 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.

Daring sinners may speak many a bold word, and many a big word, but, after all, God will have the last word; for he will be justified when he speaks, and all flesh, even the proudest, shall be silent before him. Prophets may be run down, but God cannot; nay, here the prophet would not.

First. Jeremiah hath something to say to them from himself, which he could say without a spirit of prophecy, and that was to rectify their mistake, (a wilful mistake it was,) concerning the calamities they had been under, and the true intent and meaning of them. They said, these miseries came upon them, because they had now left off burning incense to the queen of heaven; No, saith he, it was because you had formerly done it, not because you had now left it off. When they gave him that answer, he presently replied upon them, ver. 20, that the incense which they and their fathers had burnt to other gods did indeed go unpunished a great while, for God was long-suffering towards them; and during the day of his patience it was perhaps, as they said, well with them, and they saw no evil. But at length they grew so provoking, that "the Lord could no longer bear," ver. 22, but began a controversy with them, whereupon some of them did a little reform; their sins left them, for so it might be said, rather than that they left their sins. But their old guilt being still upon the score, and their corrupt inclinations still the same, God remembered against them the idolatries of their fathers, their kings and their princes, in the streets of Jerusalem, which they, instead of being ashamed of, gloried in, as a justification of them in their idolatries; they all came into his mind, ver. 21, all the abominations which they had committed, ver. 22, and all their disobedience to the voice of the Lord, ver. 23. All was brought to account; and therefore, to punish them for these, is their land a desolation and a curse, as at this day, ver. 22; therefore, not for their late reformation, but for their old transgressions, is all this evil happened to them, as at this day, ver. 23. Note, The right understanding of the cause of our troubles, one would think, should go far towards the cure of our sins. Whatever evil comes upon us, it is because we have sinned against the Lord, and should therefore stand in awe, and not sin.

Secondly. Jeremiah hath something to say to them, to the women particularly, from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; they have given their answer, now let them hear God's reply, ver. 24. Judah, that dwells in the land of Egypt, hath God speaking to them even there, that is their privilege. Let them observe what he saith, that is their duty, ver. 26. Now God in his reply tells them plainly,

1. That, since they were fully determined to persist in their idolatry, God was fully determined to proceed in his controversy with them; if they would go on to provoke him he would go on to punish them, and see which would get the better at last. God repeats what they had said; ver. 25, You and your wives are agreed in this obstinacy, "you have spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hands;" you have said it, and you stand to it; have said it, and go on to do accordingly: "We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven;" as if, though it were a sin, yet their having vowed to do it were sufficient to justify them in the doing of it; whereas no man can by his vow make that lawful to himself, much less duty, which God has already made sin. Well, saith God, you will accomplish, you will perform your wicked vows; now hear what is my vow, what I have sworn, by my great name; and if the Lord hath sworn he will not repent. Since they have sworn and will not repent, with the froward he will shew himself froward, *Ps.* xviii. 26. He hath sworn, 1st. That what little remains of religion there were among them should be lost, ver. 26. Though they joined with the Egyptians in their idolatries, yet they continued upon many occasions to make mention of the name of Jehovah, particularly in their solemn oaths; they said, Jehovah liveth, he is the living God, so they owned him to be, though they worshipped dead idols. They swear, "The Lord liveth," *ch.* v. 2, but I fear they retained this form of swearing more in honour of their nation than of their God; but God saith, his name shall no more be thus named by any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt; that is, there shall be no Jews remaining to use this dialect of their country; or, if there be, they shall have forgotten it, and shall learn to swear as the Egyptians do, by the life of Pharaoh, not of Jehovah. Note, Those are very miserable whom God hath so far left to themselves as that they have quite forgot their religion, and lost all the remains of their good education. Or, this may intimate that God would take it as an affront to him, and would resent it accordingly, if they did make mention of his name, and profess any relation to him. 2nd. He hath sworn that what little remnant of his people there was there should all be consumed, ver. 27. I will watch over them for evil, no opportunity shall be let slip to bring some judgment upon them, until there be an end of them, and they be quite rooted out. Note, To those whom God finds impenitent sinners he will be found an implacable judge. And when it comes to this they shall know, ver. 29, "Whose word shall stand, mine or theirs." They said they should recover themselves when they returned to worship the queen of heaven; God saith they should ruin themselves, and now the event will shew which was in the right. The contest between God and sinners is, whose word shall stand, whose will shall be done, who shall get the better. Sinners say they shall have peace, though they go on. God saith they shall have no peace; but when God judgeth he will overcome. God's word shall stand, and not the sinners'.

2. He tells them that a very few of them should escape the sword, and in process of time return into the land of Judah a small number, ver. 28. Next none, in comparison with the great numbers that should return out of the land of the Chaldeans. This seems designed to upbraid those who boasted of their numbers that concurred in sin; there were none to speak of that did not join in idolatry. Well, saith God, and there shall be as few that shall escape the sword and famine.

3. He gives them a sign that all these threatenings shall be accomplished in their season; that they shall be consumed here in Egypt, and shall quite perish. Pharaoh Hophra, the present king of Egypt, shall be delivered into the hand of his enemies that seek his life; of his own rebellious subjects, so some, under Amasis, who usurped his throne; of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, so others, who invaded his kingdom. The former is related by Herodotus, the latter by Josephus. It is likely this Pharaoh had tempted the Jews to idolatry by promises of his favour; however, they depended upon him for his protection; and it would be more than a presage of their ruin, it would be a step towards it, if he were gone. They expected more from him than from Zedekiah king of Judah, he was a more potent and politic prince; but, saith God, I will give him into the hand of his enemies, as I gave Zedekiah. Note, Those creature comforts and confidences that we promise ourselves most from may fail us as soon as those that we promise ourselves least from, for they are all what God makes them, not what we fancy them.

The sacred history records not the accomplishment of this prophecy; but its silence is sufficient. We hear no more of these Jews in Egypt, and therefore conclude them, according to this prediction, lost there; for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

CHAPTER XLV.

The prophecy we have in this chapter concerns Baruch only, yet is intended for the support and encouragement of all the Lord's people that serve him faithfully, and keep close to him in difficult trying times. It is laid here after the story of the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, but was delivered long before, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, as was the prophecy in the next chapter, and probably those that follow. We here find, I. How Baruch was frightened when he was brought into trouble for writing and reading Jeremiah's roll, ver. 1—3. II. How his fears were checked with a reproof for his great expectations, and silenced with a promise of special preservation, ver. 4, 5. Though Baruch was only Jeremiah's scribe, yet this notice is taken of his frights, and this provision made for his comfort; for God despiseth not any of his servants, but graciously concerns himself for the meanest and weakest, for Baruch the scribe as well as for Jeremiah the prophet.

THE word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch;

3 Thou didst say, Woe is me now!
For the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow;
I fainted in my sighing,
And I find no rest.

4 Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus;
Behold, *that* which I have built will I break down,
And that which I have planted I will pluck up,
Even this whole land.

5 And seekest thou great things for thyself?
Seek *them* not: [LORD:
For, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the
But thy life will I give unto thee for a prey
In all places whither thou goest.

How Baruch was employed in writing Jeremiah's prophecies, and reading them, we had an account, *ch.* xxxvi., and how he was threatened for it by the king, warrants being out for him, and he forced to abscond, and how narrowly he escaped under a Divine protection, to which story this chapter should have been subjoined; but that, it having reference to a private person, it is here thrown into the latter end of the book, as St. Paul's epistle to *Philemon* is put after his other epistles. Observe,

First. The consternation that poor Baruch was in when he was sought for by the king's messengers, and obliged to hide his head, and the notice which God took of it. He cried out, "Woe is me now," ver. 3. He was a young man, setting out in the world, he was well affected to the things of God, and was willing to serve God and his prophet; but when it came to suffering he was desirous to be excused. Being an ingenious man and a scholar, he stood fair for preferment; and now to be driven into a corner, and in danger of a prison, or worse, was a great baulk to him. When he read the roll publicly, he hoped to gain reputation by it, that it would have made him to be taken notice of and employed; but when he found that instead of that it exposed him to contempt, and brought him into disgrace, he cried out, I am undone, I shall fall into the pursuivant's hands, and be imprisoned and put to death, or banished; "The Lord has added grief to my sorrow;" that is, has loaded me with one trouble after another. After the grief of writing and reading the prophecies of my country's ruin, I have the sorrow of being treated as a criminal for so doing; and though another might make nothing of this, yet for my part I cannot bear it, it is a burthen too heavy for me. "I fainted in my sighing," or, I am faint with my sighing, it just kills me, and "I find no rest," no satisfaction in my own mind; I cannot compose myself as I should and would to bear it, nor have I any prospect of relief or comfort. Baruch was a good man; but we must say, this was his infirmity. Note, 1. Young beginners in religion, like fresh-water soldiers, are apt to be discouraged with the little difficulties which they commonly meet with at first in the service of God. They do but run with the

footmen, and it wearieth them; they faint upon the very dawning of the day of adversity, and it is an evidence that their strength is small, *Pr.* xxiv. 10; that their faith is weak, and they are yet but babes that cry for every hurt, and every fright. 2. Some of the best and dearest of God's saints and servants, when they have seen storms rising, have been in frights, and apt to make the worst of things, and to disquiet themselves with melancholy apprehensions more than there is cause for. 3. God takes notice of the frets and discontents of his people, and is displeased with them. Baruch should have rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer in such a good cause, and with such good company; but instead of that he vexeth at it, and blames his lot; nay, and reflects upon his God, as if he had dealt hardly with him. What he said was spoken in a heat and passion, but God was offended at it; as Moses himself did, and paid dear for it too, when, his spirit being provoked, he spake unadvisedly with his lips. Thou didst say so and so, and it was not well said. God keeps account what we say, even when we speak in haste.

Secondly. The reproof that God gave him for talking at this rate. Jeremiah was troubled to see him in such a toss, and knew not well what to say to him; he was loath to chide him, and yet thought he deserved it; was willing to comfort him, and yet knew not which way to go about it; but God tells him what he shall say unto him, ver. 3. Jeremiah could not be certain what was at the bottom of the complaints and fears, but God sees it. They came from his corruptions; and therefore the hurt might not be healed slightly. He searcheth the wound, and shews him that he had raised his expectations too high in this world, and had promised himself too much from it, and that made this distress and trouble he was in so very grievous to him, and so hard to be borne. Note, The frowns of the world would not disquiet us as they do if we did not foolishly flatter ourselves with the hopes of its smiles, and court and covet them too much. It is our over-fondness for the good things of this present time that makes us impatient under its evil things. Now God shews him that it was his fault and folly, at this time of day especially, either to desire or to look for an abundance of the wealth and honour of this world; for, 1. The ship was sinking; ruin was coming upon the Jewish nation, an utter and universal ruin. That which I have built to be a house for myself I am breaking down, and that which I have planted to be a vineyard for myself I am plucking up, even this whole land, the Jewish church and state, and dost thou now seek great things for thyself? Dost thou expect to be rich and honourable, and to make a figure now? No, 2. It is absurd for thee to be now painting thine own cabin. Canst thou expect to be high when all are brought low? to be full, when all about thee are empty? To seek ourselves more than the public welfare, especially to seek great things to ourselves, when the public is in danger, is very unbecoming Israelites. We may apply it to this world, and our state in it; God in his providence is breaking down and pulling up; everything is uncertain and perishing; we cannot expect any continuing city here. What folly is it then to seek great things for ourselves here, where every thing is little, and nothing certain!

Thirdly. The encouragement that God gave him to hope that, though he should not be great, yet he should be safe; "I will bring evil upon all flesh," all nations of men, all orders and degrees of men; "but thy life will I give to thee for a prey," (thy soul, so the word is,) in all places whither thou goest. Thou must expect to be hurried from place to place, and wherever thou goest to be in danger; but thou shalt escape, though often very narrowly; shalt have thy life, but it shall be as a prey which is got with much difficulty and danger; thou shalt be saved as by fire. Note, The preservation and continuance of life is a very great mercy, and we are bound to account it so, as it is the prolonging of our opportunity to glorify God in this world, and to get ready for a better; and at some times especially, when the arrows of death fly thick about us, it is a signal favour, and what we ought to be very thankful for, and while we have it must not complain though we be disappointed of the great things we expected. Is not the life more than meat?

CHAPTER XLVI.

How judgment began at the house of God we have found in the foregoing prophecy and history, but now we shall find that it did not end there. In this and the following chapters we have predictions of the desolations of the neighbour nations, and those brought upon them too mostly by the king of Babylon, till at length Babylon itself comes to be reckoned with. The prophecy against Egypt is here put first, and takes up this whole chapter, in which we have, I. A prophecy of the defeat of Pharaoh-necho's army by the Chaldean forces at Carchemish, which was accomplished presently in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, ver. 1—12. II. A prophecy of the descent which Nebuchadnezzar should make upon the land of Egypt, and his success in it, which was accomplished some years after the destruction of Jerusalem, ver. 13—26. III. A word of comfort to the Israel of God in the midst of these calamities, ver. 27, 28.

THE word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles; 2 Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.

3 Order ye the buckler and shield,
And draw near to battle.
4 Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen,
And stand forth with *your* helmets;
Furbish the spears, *and* put on the brigandines.
5 Wherefore have I seen them dismayed *and* turned away back?
And their mighty ones are beaten down,
And are fled apace, and look not back:
For fear *was* round about, saith the LORD.
6 Let not the swift flee away,
Nor the mighty man escape;
They shall stumble, and fall
Toward the north by the river Euphrates.
7 Who *is* this *that* cometh up as a flood,
Whose waters are moved as the rivers?
8 Egypt riseth up like a flood,
And *his* waters are moved like the rivers;
And he saith, I will go up, *and* will cover the earth;
I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof.
9 Come up, ye horses;
And rage, ye chariots;
And let the mighty men come forth;
The Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield;
And the Lydians, that handle *and* bend the bow.
10 For this *is* the day of the Lord GOD of hosts,
A day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries:
And the sword shall devour,
And it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood:
For the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice
In the north country by the river Euphrates.
11 Go up into Gilead, and take balm,
O virgin, the daughter of Egypt:
In vain shalt thou use many medicines;
For thou shalt not be cured.
12 The nations have heard of thy shame,
And thy cry hath filled the land:
For the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty.
And they are fallen both together.

The first verse is the title of that part of this book which relates to the neighbour nations, and follows here. It is the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah against the Gentiles; for God is king and judge of nations, knows them, and will call them to an account that know him not, nor take any notice of him. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied against these nations, that Jeremiah here has a several saying to, and with reference to the same events. In the Old Testament we have the word of the Lord against the Gentiles. In the New Testament we have the word of the Lord for the Gentiles; that they who are far off are made nigh.

He begins with Egypt, because they were of old Israel's oppressors, and of late their deceivers, when they put confidence in them. In these verses he foretells the overthrow of the army of Pharaoh-necho by Nebuchadnezzar, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was so complete a victory to the king of Babylon that thereby he recovered from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt, and so weakened him that he "came not again any more out of his land," as we find, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 7; and so made him pay dear for his expedition against the king of Assyria four years before, in which he slew Josiah, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 29. This is the event that is here foretold in lofty expressions of triumph over Egypt, thus foiled; which Jeremiah would speak of with a particular pleasure, because the death of Josiah which he had lamented was now avenged on Pharaoh-necho. Now here,

First. The Egyptians are upbraided with the mighty preparations they made for this expedition, in which the prophet calls to them to do their utmost, for so they would. Come then, order the buckler, let the weapons of war be got ready, ver. 3. Egypt was famous for horses, let them be harnessed, and the cavalry well mounted; "Get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth," &c., ver. 4. See what preparations the children of men make with abundance of care and trouble, and at a vast expense, to kill one another, as if they did not die fast enough of themselves. He compares their marching out upon this expedition to the rising of their river Nile, ver. 7, 8. Egypt now riseth up like a flood, scorning to keep within its own banks, and threatening to overflow all the neighbouring lands. It is a very formidable army that the Egyptians bring into the field upon this occasion; the prophet summons them, ver. 9, "Come up, ye horses; rage, ye chariots." He challengeth them to bring all their confederate troops together, the Ethiopians, that descended from the same stock with the Egyptians, *Gen.* x. 6, and were their neighbours and allies; the Lybians and Lydians both seated in Africa, to the west of Egypt, and from them the Egyptians fetched their auxiliary forces. Let them strengthen themselves with all the art and interest they have, yet it shall be all in vain, they shall be shamefully defeated notwithstanding; for God will fight against them, and against him there is no wisdom, nor counsel, *Pr.* xxi. 30, 31. It concerns them that go forth to war, not only to order the buckler and harness the horses, but to repent of their sins, and pray to God for his presence with them, and that they may have it to keep themselves from every wicked thing.

Secondly. They are upbraided with the great expectations they had from this expedition, which were quite contrary to what God intended in bringing them together. They knew their own thoughts, and God knew them, and sate in heaven and laughed at them, but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathers them as sheaves into the floor, *Mic.* iv. 11, 12. Egypt saith, ver. 8, "I will go up, I will cover the earth," and none shall hinder me, "I will destroy the city," whatever city it is that stands in my way; like Pharaoh of old, I will pursue, I will overtake. Egypt saith they shall have a day of it, but God saith it shall be his day; "This is the day of the Lord of hosts," ver. 10, the day in which he will be exalted in the overthrow of the Egyptians. They meant one thing, but God meant another; they designed it for the advancement of their dignity and the enlargement of their dominion; but God designed it for a great abasement and weakening of their kingdom. It is a day of vengeance for Josiah's death; it is a day of sacrifice to Divine justice, to which multitudes of the sinners of Egypt shall fall as victims. Note, When men think to magnify themselves by pushing on unrighteous enterprises, let them expect that God will glorify himself by blasting them and cutting them off.

Thirdly. They are upbraided with their cowardice and inglorious flight when they come to an engagement, ver. 5, 6. Wherefore have I seen them, notwithstanding these mighty and vast preparations, and all these expressions of bravery and resolution, when the Chaldean army faceth them, dismayed, turned back quite disheartened, and no spirit left in them. 1. They make a

shameful retreat. Even their mighty ones, that one would think should have stood their ground, flee a flight, flee by consent, make the best of their way, flee in confusion and with the utmost precipitation; they have neither time nor heart to look back, but fear is round about them, for they apprehend it so. And yet, 2. They cannot make their escape. They have the shame of flying, and yet not the satisfaction of saving themselves by flight; they might as well have stood their ground and died upon the spot, for even the swift shall not flee away. The lightness of their heels shall fail them when it comes to the trial, as well as the stoutness of their hearts; the mighty shall not escape, nay, they are beaten down and broken to pieces. They shall stumble in their flight, and fall towards the north, towards their enemies' country; for such confusion were they in when they took to their feet, that instead of making homewards, as men usually do in that case, they made forwards. Note, The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. Valiant men are not always victorious.

Fourthly. They are upbraided with their utter inability ever to recover this blow, which should be fatal to their nation, ver. 11, 12. The damsel, the daughter of Egypt, that lived in great pomp and state, is sorely wounded by this defeat. Let her now seek for balm in Gilead, and physicians there; let her use all the medicines her wise men can prescribe for the healing of this hurt and the repairing of the loss sustained by this defeat, but all in vain, no cure shall be to them; they shall never be able to bring such a powerful army as this into the field again. The nations that rang of thy glory and strength have now heard of thy shame, how shamefully thou wast routed, and how thou art weakened by it; it needs not be spread by the triumphs of the conquerors, the shrieks and outcries of the conquered will proclaim it; thy cry filled the country about. For when they fled several ways, one mighty man stumbled upon another and dashed against another, such confusion were they in, so that both together became a prey to the pursuers, an easy prey. A thousand such dreadful accidents there should be, which should fill the country with the cry of them that were overcome. Let not the mighty man, therefore, glory in his might, for the time may come when it will stand him in no stead.

13 The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come *and* smite the land of Egypt.

14 Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol,
And publish in Noph and in Tahpanhes:
Say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee;
For the sword shall devour round about thee.
15 Why are thy valiant *men* swept away?
They stood not, because the LORD did drive them.
16 He made many to fall,
Yea, one fell upon another: [people,
And they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own
And to the land of our nativity,
From the oppressing sword.
17 They did cry there,
Pharaoh king of Egypt *is but* a noise;
He hath passed the time appointed.
18 *As* I live, saith the King,
Whose name *is* the LORD of hosts,
Surely as Tabor *is* among the mountains,
And as Carmel by the sea, *so* shall he come.
19 O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt,
Furnish thyself to go into captivity:
For Noph shall be waste
And desolate without an inhabitant.
20 Egypt *is like* a very fair heifer,
But destruction cometh;
It cometh out of the north. [bullocks;
21 Also her hired men *are* in the midst of her like fatted
For they also are turned back,
And are fled away together: they did not stand,
Because the day of their calamity was come upon them,
And the time of their visitation.
22 The voice thereof shall go like a serpent;
For they shall march with an army,
And come against her with axes,
As hewers of wood.
23 They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD,
Though it cannot be searched;
Because they are more than the grasshoppers,
And *are* innumerable.
24 The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; [north.
She shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the
25 The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith;
Behold, I will punish the multitude of No,
And Pharaoh, and Egypt,
With their gods, and their kings;
Even Pharaoh, and *all* them that trust in him:
26 And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives,
And into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon,
And into the hand of his servants:
And afterward it shall be inhabited,
As in the days of old, saith the LORD.
27 But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob,
And be not dismayed, O Israel:
For, behold, I will save thee from afar off,
And thy seed from the land of their captivity;
And Jacob shall return, and be in rest
And at ease, and none shall make *him* afraid.
28 Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant,
Saith the LORD: for I *am* with thee;
For I will make a full end of all the nations
Whither I have driven thee:
But I will not make a full end of thee,
But correct thee in measure;
Yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

NO—THEBES.—ver. 25.

In these verses we have,

First. Confusion and terror spoken to Egypt. The accomplishment of the prediction in the former part of the chapter disabled the Egyptians to make any attempts upon other nations; for what could they do when their army was routed? But still they remained strong at home, and none of their neighbours durst make any attempts upon them. Though the kings of Egypt came no more out of their land, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 7, yet they kept safe and easy in their land; and what would they desire more than peaceably to enjoy their own? which, one would think, all men should be content to do, and not covet to invade their neighbours. But the measure of Egypt's iniquity is full, and now they shall not long enjoy their own; they that encroached on others shall now be themselves encroached on. The scope of the prophecy here is to shew how the king of Babylon should shortly come, and smite the land of Egypt, and bring the war into their own bosoms, which they had formerly carried into his borders, ver. 13. This was fulfilled by the same hand with the former, even Nebuchadnezzar's, but many years after, twenty at least, and probably the prediction of it was long after the former prediction, and perhaps much about the same time with that other prediction of the same event which we had *ch.* xliii. 10.

1. Here is the alarm of war sounded in Egypt, to their great amazement, ver. 14. Notice given to the country that the enemy is approaching, the sword is devouring round about in the neighbouring countries, and therefore it is time for the Egyptians to put themselves in a posture of defence, to prepare for war, that they may give the enemy a warm reception. This must be proclaimed in all parts of Egypt, particularly in Migdol, Noph, and Tahpanhes, because in these places especially the Jewish refugees, or fugitives rather, had planted themselves in contempt of God's command, *ch.* xliv. 1, and let them hear what a sorry shelter Egypt is like to be to them.

2. The retreat of the forces of other nations, which the Egyptians had in their pay, hereupon, is here foretold. Some considerable number of those troops, it is probable, were posted upon the frontiers, to guard them, where they were beaten off by the invaders and put to flight. Then were the "valiant men swept away," ver. 15, as with a sweeping rain; it is the word that is used, *Pr.* xxviii. 3. They can none of them stand their ground, because the Lord driveth them from their respective posts; he drives them by his terrors, he drives them by enabling the Chaldeans to drive them. It is not possible those should fix whom the wrath of God chaseth. He it was, ver. 16, that "made

many to fall." Yea, when their day is come to fall, the enemy needs not throw them down, they shall fall one upon another, every man shall be a stumbling-block to his fellow, to his follower; nay, if God pleaseth they shall be made to fall one upon another, every man's sword shall be against his fellow. Her hired men, the troops Egypt has in her service, are indeed in the midst of her like fatted bullocks, lusty men, able-bodied, and great spirited, that were likely for action, and to have made their part good against the enemy, but they are turned back. Their hearts failed them, and instead of fighting they are fled away together; how could they withstand their fate, when the day of their calamity was come, the day in which God will visit them in wrath? Some think they are compared to fatted bullocks for their luxury; they had wantoned in pleasures, so that they were very unfit for hardships, and therefore turned back, and could not stand. In this consternation, 1st. They all made homewards, towards their own country, ver. 16. They said, "Arise, and let us go again to our own people," where we may be safe from the oppressing sword of the Chaldeans, that bears down all before it. In times of exigence little confidence is to be put in mercenary troops, that fight purely for pay, and have no interest in them whom they fight for. 2nd. They exclaimed mightily against Pharaoh, to whose cowardice or ill conduct it is probable their defeat was owing. When he posted them there upon the borders of his country it is likely he told them he would, within such a time, come himself, with a gallant army of his own subjects, to support them; but he failed them, and when the enemy advanced they found they had none to back them, so that they were perfectly abandoned to the fury of the invaders. No marvel, then, that they quitted their post and deserted the service, crying out, "Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise," ver. 17. He can hector, and bounce, and talk big, what mighty things he would do, but that is all, he brings nothing to pass. All his promises to those in alliance with him, or that are employed for him, vanish into smoke; he brings not the succours he engaged to bring, or not till it is too late. He hath passed the time appointed, did not keep his word, nor keep his day, and therefore they bid him farewell, they will never serve under him any more. Note, Many times those that make most noise in any business are but a noise; great talkers are little doers.

3. The formidable power of the Chaldean army is here described bearing down all before it. The King of kings, whose name is the Lord of hosts, and before whom the mightiest kings on earth, though gods to us, are but grasshoppers; he hath said it, he hath sworn it, As I live, saith this king, as Tabor overtops the mountains, and Carmel overlooks the sea, so shall the king of Babylon overpower all the force of Egypt, such a command shall he have, such a sway shall he bear, ver. 18. He and his army shall come against Egypt "with axes, as hewers of wood," ver. 22, and the Egyptians shall be no more able to resist them than the tree is to resist the man that comes with an axe to cut it down. So that Egypt shall be felled as a forest is by the hewers of wood, which, if they be many of them, and those well provided with instruments for the purpose, will be done in a little time. Egypt is very populous, full of towns and cities, like a forest, the trees of which cannot be searched or numbered, and very rich; full of hid treasures, many of which will escape the searching eye of the Chaldean soldiers. But they shall make a great spoil in the country, for they are more than the locusts, that come in vast swarms, and overrun a country, devouring every green thing, *Joel* i. 6, 7; so shall the Chaldeans do, for they are innumerable. Note, The Lord of hosts hath numberless hosts at his command.

4. The desolation of Egypt hereby is foretold, and the waste that should be made of that rich country. Egypt is now like a very fair heifer or calf, ver. 20, fat and shining, and not accustomed to the yoke of subjection; wanton as a heifer that is well fed and very sportful. Some think here is an allusion to Apis, the bull or calf which the Egyptians worshipped, from whom the children of Israel learned to worship the golden calf. Egypt is as fair as a goddess, and adores herself; but destruction cometh, cutting up comes, (so some read it;) it comes out of the north. Thence the Chaldean soldiers shall come as so many butchers, or sacrificers, to kill and cut up this fair heifer. 1st. The Egyptians shall be brought down, shall be tamed, and their tune changed. "The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded," ver. 24, shall be filled with astonishment. Their voice shall go like a serpent, that is, it shall be very low and submissive; they shall not low like a fair heifer that makes a great noise, but hiss out of their holes like serpents. They shall not dare to make loud complaints of the cruelty of their conquerors, but vent their griefs in silent murmurs. They shall not now, as they used to do, answer roughly, but with the poor use entreaties and beg for their lives. 2nd. They shall be carried away prisoners into their enemies' land; ver. 19, "O thou daughter," dwelling securely and delicately in Egypt, that fruitful pleasant country, do not think this world will last always, but "furnish thyself to go into captivity;" instead of rich clothes, which will but tempt the enemy to strip thee, get plain and warm clothes; instead of fine shoes provide strong ones, and inure thyself to hardship, that thou mayest bear it the better. Note, It concerns us, among all our preparations, to prepare for trouble; we provide for the entertainment of our friends, let us not neglect to provide for the entertainment of our enemies, nor among all our furniture omit furniture for captivity. The Egyptians must prepare to flee, for their cities shall be evacuated; Noph particularly shall be "desolate, without an inhabitant," so general shall the slaughter and the captivity be. There are some penalties which we say the king and the multitude are exempted from, but here even these are obnoxious. The multitude of No shall be punished; it is called "populous No," *Nah.* iii. 8. Though hand join in hand, yet they shall not escape; nor can any think to go off in the crowd. Be they never so many, they shall find God will be too many for them. Their kings and all their petty princes shall fall, and their gods too, *ch.* xliii. 12, 13, their idols and their great men. Those which they call tutelar deities shall be no protection to them. Pharaoh shall be brought down, and all those that trust in him, ver. 25, particularly the Jews that came to sojourn in his country, trusting in him rather than in God. All these shall be delivered into the hand of the northern nations, ver. 24; into the hand not only of Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty potentate, but into the hand of his servants, according to the curse on Ham's posterity, of which the Egyptians were, that they should be the servant of servants. These seek their lives, and into their hands they shall be delivered.

5. An intimation is given that in process of time Egypt shall recover itself again; ver. 26, "Afterwards it shall be inhabited," shall be peopled again, whereas by this destruction it was almost dispeopled. Ezekiel foretells that this should be at the end of forty years, *Eze.* xxix. 13. See what changes the nations of the earth are subject to, how they are emptied and increased again; and let not nations that prosper be secure, nor those that for the present are under hatches despair.

Secondly. Here is comfort and peace spoken to the Israel of God, ver. 27, 28. Some understand it of those whom the king of Egypt had carried into captivity with Jehoahaz, but we read not of any that were carried captives with him; it may therefore refer rather to the captives in Babylon whom God had mercy in store for, or, more generally to all the people of God, designed for their encouragement in the most difficult times, when the judgments of God are abroad among the nations. We had these words of comfort before, *ch.* xxx. 10, 11. 1. Let the wicked of the earth tremble, they have cause for it; "But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob; and be not dismayed, O Israel." And again, "Fear thou not, O Jacob." God would not have his people be a timorous people. 2. The wicked of the earth shall be put away like dross, not to be looked after any more; but God's people, in order to their being saved, shall be found out and gathered, though they be afar off; shall be redeemed, though they be held fast in captivity, and shall return. 3. The wicked is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, flee when none pursues; but Jacob being at home in God, shall be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid; for what time he is afraid, he has a God to trust to. 4. The wicked, God beholds afar off; But wherever thou art, O Jacob, I am with thee, a very present help. 5. A full end shall be made of the nations that oppress God's Israel, as Egypt and Babylon; but mercy shall be kept in store for the Israel of God. They shall be corrected, but not cast off, the correction shall be in measure, in respect of degree and continuance. Nations have their periods; the Jewish nation itself is come to an end as a nation; but the gospel church, God's spiritual Israel, still continues, and will to the end of time. In that this promise is to have its full accomplishment, that though God correct it he will never make an end of it.

CHAPTER XLVII.

This chapter reads the Philistines their doom, as the former read the Egyptians theirs; and by the same hand, that of Nebuchadnezzar. It is short, but terrible; and Tyre and Sidon, though they lay at some distance from them, come in sharers with them in the destruction here threatened. I. It is foretold that the forces of the northern crowns should come upon them, to their great terror, ver. 1—5. II. That the war should continue long, and their endeavours to put an end to it should be in vain, ver. 6, 7.

THE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza. 2 Thus saith the LORD;

Behold, waters rise up out of the north,
And shall be an overflowing flood,
And shall overflow the land, and all that is therein;
The city, and them that dwell therein:
Then the men shall cry,
And all the inhabitants of the land shall howl. [*horses,*
3 At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong
At the rushing of his chariots,
And at the rumbling of his wheels,
The fathers shall not look back to *their* children
For feebleness of hands;
4 Because of the day that cometh
To spoil all the Philistines,
And to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon
Every helper that remaineth:
For the LORD will spoil the Philistines,
The remnant of the country of Caphtor.
5 Baldness is come upon Gaza;
Ashkelon is cut off *with* the remnant of their valley:
How long wilt thou cut thyself?
6 O thou sword of the LORD,
How long *will it be* ere thou be quiet? put up thyself
into thy scabbard,
Rest, and be still.
7 How can it be quiet,
Seeing the LORD hath given it a charge
Against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore?
There hath he appointed it.

ASHKELON.

As the Egyptians had often proved false friends, so the Philistines had always been sworn enemies, to the Israel of God, and the more dangerous and vexatious for their being such near neighbours to them. They were pretty well humbled in David's time, but it seems they had got head again, and were a considerable people till Nebuchadnezzar cut them off with other their neighbours, which is the event here foretold. The date of this prophecy is observable; it was before Pharaoh smote Gaza. When this blow was given to Gaza by the king of Egypt is not certain; whether in his expedition against Carchemish, or in his return from thence, after he had slain Josiah, or when he afterwards came with design to relieve Jerusalem; but this is mentioned here to shew that this word of the Lord came to Jeremiah against the Philistines, when they were in their full strength and lustre, themselves and their cities in good condition, in no peril from any adversity, or evil occurrent, when no disturbance of their repose was foreseen by any human probabilities; yet then Jeremiah foretold their ruin, which Pharaoh's smiting Gaza soon after would be but an earnest of, and, as it were, the beginning of sorrows to that country. It is here foretold,

First. That a foreign enemy, and a very formidable one, shall be brought upon them; "Waters rise up out of the north," ver. 2. Waters sometimes signify multitudes of people and nations, *Rev.* xvii. 15; sometimes great and threatening calamities, *Ps.* lxix. 1; these here signify both. They rise out of the north, whence fair weather used to come, and the wind that drives away rain; but now a terrible storm comes out of that cold climate. The Chaldean army shall overflow the land like a deluge. Probably this happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, for it should seem that in Gedaliah's time, which was just after, the army of the Chaldeans was quite withdrawn out of those parts. The country of the Philistines was but of small extent, so that it would soon be overwhelmed by so vast an army.

Secondly. That they shall all be in a mighty fright and consternation upon it. The men shall have no heart to fight, but shall sit down and cry like children; "All the inhabitants of the land shall howl," so that nothing but lamentation shall be heard in all places. The occasion of the fright is elegantly described, ver. 3; before it comes to killing and slaying, the very stamping of the horses, and rattling of the chariots, when the enemy makes his approach, shall strike a terror upon the people, to that degree that parents in their fright shall seem void of natural affection, for they "shall not look back to their children," to provide for their safety, or so much as to see what becomes of them. Their hands shall be so feeble, that they shall despair of carrying them off with them, and therefore they shall not care for seeing them, but leave them to take their lot; or they shall be in such a consternation that they shall quite forget even those pieces of themselves. Let none be over fond of their children, nor doat upon them, since such distress may come as that they may either wish they had none or forget that they have, and have no heart to look upon them.

Thirdly. That the country of the Philistines shall be spoiled and laid waste, and the other countries adjoining to them, and in alliance with them. It is a day to spoil the Philistines, for the Lord will spoil them, ver. 4. Note, Those whom God will spoil must needs be spoiled, for if God be against them who can be for them? Tyre and Sidon were strong and wealthy cities, and they used to help the Philistines in a strait, but now they shall themselves be involved in the common ruin, and God will cut off from them every helper that remains. Note, Those that trust to help from creatures will find it cut off when they most need it, and will thereby be put into the utmost confusion. Who the "remnant of the country of Caphtor" were is uncertain, but we find that the Caphtorim were near akin to the Philistines, *Gen.* x. 14, and probably, when their own country was destroyed, such of them as remained came and settled with their kinsmen the Philistines, and were now spoiled with them. Some particular places are here named, Gaza and Askelon, ver. 5. Baldness is come upon them, the invaders have stripped them of all their ornaments, or, they have made themselves bald in token of extreme grief; and they are cut off, with the other cities that were in the plain or valley about them. The products of their fruitful valleys shall be spoiled, and made a prey of by the conquerors.

Fourthly. That these calamities shall continue long. The prophet in the foresight of this, with his usual tenderness, asks them first, ver. 5, How long will you cut yourselves? as men in extreme sorrow and anguish do. O how tedious will the calamity be! not only cutting, but long cutting. But he turns from the effect to the cause; they cut themselves, for the sword of the Lord cuts them. And therefore, 1. He bespeaks that to be still; ver. 6, "O thou sword of the Lord, how long wilt it be ere thou be quiet?" He begs it would put up itself into the scabbard, would devour no more flesh, drink no more blood. This expresseth the prophet's earnest desire to see an end of the war, looking with compassion as became a man, even upon the Philistines themselves, when their country was made desolate by the sword. Note, War is the sword of the Lord, with it he punisheth the crimes of his enemies, and pleads the cause of his own people. When war is once begun, it often lasts long; the sword once drawn doth not quickly find the way into the scabbard again; nay, some when they draw the sword throw away the scabbard, for they delight in war. So deplorable are the desolations of war, that the blessing of peace cannot but be very desirable. O that swords might be beaten into ploughshares! 2. Yet he gives a satisfactory account of the continuance of the war, and stops the mouth of his own complaint; ver. 7, "How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge" against such and such places, particularly specified in its commission? "there hath he appointed it." Note, 1st. That the sword of war hath its charge from the Lord of hosts. Every bullet hath so; you call them blind bullets, but they are directed by an all-seeing God. The war itself is so: he saith to it, Go, and it goes; Come, and it comes; Do this, and it doth it; for he is commander-in-chief. 2nd. When the sword is drawn, we cannot expect it should be sheathed till it has fulfilled its charge. As the word of God, so his rod and his sword, shall accomplish that for which he sends them.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Moab is next set to the bar before Jeremiah the prophet, whom God had constituted judge over the nations and kingdoms, from his mouth to receive its doom. Isaiah's predictions concerning Moab had had their accomplishment; we had the predictions, *Isa.* xv. and xvi., and the like, *Am.* ii. 1; and they were fulfilled when the Assyrians under Salmanasser invaded and distressed Moab. But this is a prophecy of the desolations of Moab by the Chaldeans, which were accomplished under Nebuzar-adan, about five years after he had destroyed Jerusalem. Here is, I. The destruction foretold, that it should be great and general, should extend itself to all parts of the country, ver. 1—6, 8; and again, ver. 21—25, 34; that spoilers should come upon them, and force some to flee, ver. 9; should carry many into captivity, ver. 12, 46; that the enemy should come shortly, ver. 16; come swiftly and surprise them, ver. 40, 41; that he should make thorough work, ver. 10; and lay the country quite waste, though it was very strong, ver. 14, 15; that there should be no escaping, ver. 42, 45; that that should force them to quit their idols, ver. 13, 35; and put an end to all their joy, ver. 33, 34; their neighbours shall lament them, ver. 17—19; and the prophet himself doth, ver. 31, 36, &c. II. The causes of this destruction assigned; it was sin that brought this ruin upon them, their pride and security, and carnal confidence, ver. 7, 11, 14, 29; and contempt of, and enmity to, God and his people, ver. 26, 27, 30. III. A promise of the restoration of Moab, ver. 47.

AGAINST Moab thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
Woe unto Nebo! for it is spoiled:
Kiriathaim is confounded *and* taken:
Misgab is confounded and dismayed.
2 *There shall be* no more praise of Moab:
In Heshbon they have devised evil against it;
Come, and let us cut it off from *being* a nation.
Also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen;
The sword shall pursue thee.
3 A voice of crying *shall be* from Horonaim,
Spoiling and great destruction.
4 Moab is destroyed;
Her little ones have caused a cry to be heard.
5 For in the going up of Luhith
Continual weeping shall go up;
For in the going down of Horonaim
The enemies have heard a cry of destruction.
6 Flee, save your lives,
And be like the heath in the wilderness.
7 For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures,
Thou shalt also be taken:
And Chemosh shall go forth into captivity
With his priests and his princes together.
8 And the spoiler shall come upon every city,
And no city shall escape:
The valley also shall perish,
And the plain shall be destroyed,
As the LORD hath spoken.
9 Give wings unto Moab,
That it may flee and get away:
For the cities thereof shall be desolate,
Without any to dwell therein.
10 Cursed *be* he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully,
And cursed *be* he that keepeth back his sword from blood.
11 Moab hath been at ease from his youth,
And he hath settled on his lees,
And hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel,
Neither hath he gone into captivity:
Therefore his taste remained in him,
And his scent is not changed.
12 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander,
And shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.
13 And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh,
As the house of Israel was ashamed of Beth-el their confidence.

We may observe in these verses,

First. The author of Moab's destruction. It is the Lord of hosts, that has armies, all armies at his command, and the God of Israel, ver. 1, who will herein plead the cause of his Israel against a people that has always been vexatious to them, and will punish them now for the injuries done to Israel of old, though Israel was forbidden to meddle with them, *Deu.* ii. 9; therefore the destruction of Moab is called the work of the Lord, ver. 10, for it is he that pleads for Israel, and his work will exactly agree with his word, ver. 8.

Secondly. The instruments of it. Spoilers shall come, ver. 8, shall come with a sword, a sword that shall pursue them, ver. 2; "I will send unto him wanderers," (ver. 12,) such as come from afar, as if they were vagrants, or had missed their way, but they shall "cause him to wander." They seem as wanderers themselves, but they shall make the Moabites to be really wanderers, some to flee, and others to be carried into captivity. These destroyers stir up themselves to do execution; they have devised evil against Heshbon, one of the principal cities of Moab, and they aim at no less than the ruin of the kingdom; "Come, and let us cut it off from being a nation," ver. 2. Nothing less will serve the turn of the invaders; they come not to plunder it, but to ruin it. The prophet in God's name engageth them to make thorough work of it; ver. 10, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully." This bloody work, this destroying work, though it goes against the grain with men of compassion, yet it is the work of the Lord, and must not be done by the halves. The Chaldeans have it in charge, by a secret instinct, (saith Mr. Gataker,) to destroy the Moabites, and therefore they must not spare, must not out of foolish pity keep back their sword from blood. They would thereby bring a sword, and a curse with it, upon themselves, as Saul did by sparing the Amalekites, and Ahab by letting Benhadad go. Thy life shall go for his life. To this work is applied that general rule, given to all that are employed in any service for God; "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully," or negligently, that pretends to do it, but doth it not to purpose; makes a show of serving God's glory, but is really serving his own ends, and carries on the work of the Lord no farther than will suit his own purposes; or that is slothful in business for

God, and takes neither care nor pains to do it as it should be done, *Mal.* i. 14. Let not such deceive themselves, for God will not thus be mocked.

Thirdly. The woful instances and effects of this destruction. The cities shall be laid in ruins, they shall be spoiled, ver. 1, and cut down, ver. 2; they shall be desolate, ver. 9, "without any to dwell therein." There shall be no houses to dwell in, or no people to dwell in them, or no safety and ease to those that would dwell in them. Every city shall be spoiled, and no city escape. The strongest city shall not be able to secure itself against the enemies' power, nor shall the finest city be able to recommend itself to the enemies' pity and favour. The country also shall be wasted, the valley shall perish, and the plain be destroyed, ver. 8. The corn and the flocks that used to cover the plains, and make the valleys rejoice, shall all be destroyed, eaten up, trodden down, or carried off. The most sacred persons shall not escape; the priests and people shall go together into captivity. Nay, Chemosh, the god they worship, who they expect should protect them, shall share with them in the ruin, his temple shall be laid in ashes, and his image carried away with the rest of the spoil. Now the consequence of all this will be, 1. Great shame and confusion. Kiriathaim is confounded, and Misgab is so. They shall be ashamed of the mighty boasts they have sometimes made of their cities. There shall be no more vaunting in Moab concerning Heshbon, so it might be read, ver. 2; they shall no more brag of the strength of that city, when the evil which is designed against it is brought upon it. Nor shall they any more boast of their gods, ver. 13, they shall be ashamed of Chemosh, ashamed of all the prayers they made, and all the confidence they put in the dunghill deity; as Israel was ashamed of Bethel, of the golden calf they had at Bethel, which they confided in as their protector, but were deceived in, for it was not able to save them from the Assyrians: nor shall Chemosh be able to save the Moabites from the Chaldeans. Note, Those that will not be convinced and made ashamed of the folly of their idolatry by the word of God, shall be convinced and made ashamed of it by the judgments of God, when they shall find by woful experience the utter inability of the gods they have served to do them any service. 2. There will be great sorrow. There is a "voice of crying" heard, ver. 3, and the cry of nothing but "spoiling and great destruction." Alas! alas! "Moab is destroyed," ver. 4. The great ones having quitted the cities to shift for their own safety, even the "little ones have caused a cry to be heard," the meaner sort of people, or the little children, the innocent, harmless ones, whose cries at such a time are the most piteous. Go up to the hills, go down to the valleys, and you meet with continual weeping, weeping with weeping, all are in tears, you light on none with dry eyes. Even the enemies have heard the cry, from whom it had been policy to conceal it, for they will be animated and encouraged by it; but it is so great it cannot be hid. 3. There will be great hurry. They will cry to one another, Away, away, "flee, save your lives," ver. 6, shift for your own safety, with all imaginable speed, though you escape as bare and naked as the heath, or grig, or dry shrub in the wilderness; think not of carrying away any thing you have, for it may cost you your life to attempt it, *Mat.* xxiv. 16—18. Take shelter, though it be in a barren wilderness, that you may have your lives for a prey. The danger will come suddenly and swiftly, and therefore "give wings unto Moab," ver. 9, that would be the greatest kindness you could do them; that is that they will call for; O that we had wings like a dove! For unless they had wings, and could fly, there will be no escaping.

Fourthly. The sins for which God will now reckon with Moab, and which justify God in these severe proceedings against them. 1. It is because they have been secure, and have trusted to their wealth and strength, in their works, and in their treasures, ver. 7. They had taken a great deal of pains to fortify their cities, and make large works about them, and to fill their exchequer, and private coffers; so that they thought themselves in as good a posture for war as any people could be, and that none durst invade them, and therefore set danger at defiance; they trusted in the abundance of their riches, and strengthened themselves in their wickedness, *Ps.* lii. 7. Now for this reason, that they may have a sensible conviction of the vanity and folly of their carnal confidences, God will send an enemy that shall master their works, and rifle their treasures. Note, We forfeit the comfort of that creature which we repose that confidence in that should be reposed in God only. The reed will break that is leaned upon. 2. It is because they have not made a right improvement of the days of their peace and prosperity, ver. 11. 1st. They had been long undisturbed; "Moab hath been at ease from his youth." It was an ancient kingdom before Israel was, and had enjoyed great tranquillity, though a small country, and surrounded with potent neighbours. God's Israel was afflicted from their youth, *Ps.* cxxix. 1, 2; but Moab at ease from his youth. He "hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel," has not known any troublesome, weakening changes, but is as wine kept on the lees, and not racked or drawn off, by which it retains its strength and body. He has not been unsettled, nor any way made uneasy; he has not gone into captivity, as Israel hath often done, and yet Moab is a wicked, idolatrous nation, and one of the confederates against God's hidden ones, *Ps.* lxxxiii. 6. Note, There are many that persist in unrepented of iniquity, and yet enjoy uninterrupted prosperity. 2nd. They had been as long corrupt and unreformed. "He hath settled on his lees," he hath been secure and sensual in his prosperity, hath rested in it, and fetched all the strength and life of the soul from it, as the wine from the lees; "his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed." He is still the same, as bad as ever he was. Note, While bad people are as happy as they used to be in the world, it is no marvel if they are as bad as they used to be. They have no changes of their peace and prosperity, therefore fear not God; their hearts and lives are unchanged, *Ps.* lv. 19.

14 How say ye, We *are* mighty
And strong men for the war?
15 Moab is spoiled, and gone up *out of* her cities,
And his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter,
Saith the King, whose name *is* the LORD of hosts.
16 The calamity of Moab *is* near to come,
And his affliction hasteth fast.
17 All ye that are about him, bemoan him;
And all ye that know his name, say,
How is the strong staff broken,
And the beautiful rod!
18 Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon,
Come down from *thy* glory, and sit in thirst;
For the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee,
And he shall destroy thy strong holds.
19 O inhabitant of Aroer,
Stand by the way, and espy;
Ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth,
And say, What is done?
20 Moab is confounded; for it is broken down:
Howl and cry;
Tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled,
21 And judgment is come upon the plain country;
Upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath,
22 And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim,
[Beth-meon,
23 And upon Kiriathaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon
24 And upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah,
And upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near.
25 The horn of Moab is cut off,
And his arm is broken, saith the LORD.
26 Make ye him drunken:
For he magnified *himself* against the LORD:
Moab also shall wallow in his vomit,
And he also shall be in derision.
27 For was not Israel a derision unto thee?
Was he found among thieves?
For since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy.
28 O ye that dwell in Moab,
Leave the cities, and dwell in the rock,
And be like the dove
That maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth.
29 We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud)
His loftiness, and his arrogancy,
And his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.
30 I know his wrath, saith the LORD;
But *it shall* not *be* so;
His lies shall not so effect *it*.
31 Therefore will I howl for Moab,
And I will cry out for all Moab;
Mine heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres.
32 O vine of Sibmah,
I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer:
Thy plants are gone over the sea,
They reach *even* to the sea of Jazer:
[thy vintage.
The spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits and upon
33 And joy and gladness is taken
From the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab;
And I have caused wine to fail from the winepresses:
None shall tread with shouting;
Their shouting *shall be* no shouting.
34 From the cry of Heshbon *even* unto Elealeh,
And even unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice,
From Zoar *even* unto Horonaim,
As an heifer of three years old:
For the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate.
35 Moreover I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the LORD,
Him that offereth in the high places,
And him that burneth incense to his gods.
36 Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes,
And mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres:
Because the riches *that* he hath gotten are perished.
37 For every head *shall be* bald,
And every beard clipped:
Upon all the hands *shall be* cuttings,
And upon the loins sackcloth.
[tops of Moab,
38 *There shall be* lamentation generally upon all the house-
And in the streets thereof:

For I have broken Moab
Like a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure, saith the LORD.
39 They shall howl, *saying,* How is it broken down!
How hath Moab turned the back with shame!
So shall Moab be a derision
And a dismaying to all them about him.
40 For thus saith the LORD;
Behold, he shall fly as an eagle,
And shall spread his wings over Moab.
41 Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised,
And the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be
As the heart of a woman in her pangs.
42 And Moab shall be destroyed from *being* a people,
Because he hath magnified *himself* against the LORD.
43 Fear, and the pit, and the snare, *shall be* upon thee,
O inhabitant of Moab, saith the LORD.
44 He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit;
And he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in
For I will bring upon it, *even* upon Moab, [the snare:
The year of their visitation, saith the LORD.
45 They that fled
Stood under the shadow of Heshbon because of the force:
But a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon,
And a flame from the midst of Sihon,
And shall devour the corner of Moab,
And the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones.
46 Woe be unto thee, O Moab!
The people of Chemosh perisheth:
For thy sons are taken captives,
And thy daughters captives.
47 Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab
In the latter days, saith the LORD.
Thus far *is* the judgment of Moab.

The destruction is here farther prophesied of very largely, and with a great copiousness and variety of expression; and very pathetically and in moving language, designed not only to awaken them by a national repentance and reformation to prevent the trouble, or by a personal repentance and reformation to prepare for it, but to affect us with the calamitous state of human life, which is liable to such lamentable occurrences; and with the power of God's anger, and the terror of his judgments, when he comes forth to contend with a provoking people. In reading this long roll of threatenings, and meditating the terror of them, it will be of more use to us to keep this in our eye, and to get our hearts thereby possessed with a holy awe of God, and of his wrath, than to inquire critically into all the lively figures and metaphors here used.

First. It is a surprising destruction, and very sudden that is here threatened. They were very secure, thought themselves strong for war, and able to deal with the most powerful enemy, ver. 14; and yet the calamity is near, and he is not able to keep it off, nor so much as to keep the enemy long in parley, for the affliction hastens fast, ver. 16, and will soon come to a crisis. The enemy shall fly as an eagle, so swiftly, so strongly shall he come, ver. 40, as an eagle flies upon his prey; and he shall spread his wings, the wings of his army, over Moab; he shall surround it that none may escape. The strongholds of Moab are taken by surprise, ver. 41, so that all their strength stood them in no stead; and this made the hearts even of their mighty men to fail, for they had not time to recollect the considerations that might have animated them. It requires a more than ordinary degree of courage not to be afraid of sudden fear.

Secondly. It is an utter destruction, and such as lays Moab all in ruins. "Moab is spoiled," ver. 15; quite spoiled, is confounded and broken down, ver. 20. Their cities are laid in ashes, or seized by the enemy, so that they are forced to quit them, ver. 15. Divers cities are here named, upon which judgment is come, and the list concludes with an *et cætera*,—'and such like;' what need he mention more particulars, when it comes upon all the cities of Moab in general, far and near? ver. 21—24. Note, When iniquity is universal, we have reason to expect that calamity should be so too. The kingdom is deprived of its dignity and authority, "the horn of Moab is cut off;" of its strength and power, both offensive and defensive: "his arm is broken," that he can neither give a blow, nor save a blow, ver. 25. Is the youth of the kingdom the strength and beauty of it? "His chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter," ver. 15; They went down to the battle, promising themselves that they should return victorious, but God told them they went down to the slaughter; so sure are they to fall against whom God fights. In a word, "Moab shall be destroyed from being a people," ver. 42. Those that are enemies to God's people will soon be made no people.

Thirdly. It is a lamentable destruction; it will be just matter of mourning, and will turn joy into heaviness.

1. The prophet that foretells it doth himself lament it; and mourns at the very foresight of it, from a principle of compassion to his fellow-creatures, and concern for the human nature. The prophet will himself "howl for Moab," his very heart shall mourn for them, ver. 31; he will weep for the vine of Sibmah, ver. 32; his heart shall "sound like pipes" for Moab, ver. 36. Though the destruction of Moab would prove him a true prophet, yet he could not think of it without trouble. The ruin of sinners is no pleasure to God; and, therefore, should be a pain to us; even those that give warning of it should lay it to heart. These passages, and many others in this chapter, are much the same with what Isaiah had used in his prophecies against Moab, *Isa.* xv. and xvi.; for though there was a long distance of time between that prophecy and this, yet they were both dictated by one and the same Spirit; and it becomes God's prophets to speak the language of those that went before them. It is no plagiarism sometimes to make use of old expressions, provided it be with new affections and applications.

2. The Moabites themselves shall lament; it will be the greatest mortification and grief imaginable to them. Those that sat in glory, in the midst of wealth, and mirth, and all manner of pleasure, shall sit in thirst, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water, no comfort is, ver. 18. It is time to sit in thirst, and inure themselves to hardship, when the spoiler is come, that will strip them of all, and empty them. The Moabites in the remote corners of the country, that are farthest from the danger, will be inquisitive how the matter goes, what news from the army, will ask every one that escapeth, "What is done?" ver. 19. And when they are told that all is gone, that the invader is the conqueror, they will howl and cry in bitterness and anguish of spirit, ver. 20. They will abandon themselves to solitude to lament the desolations of their country, they will leave the cities that used to be full of mirth, and dwell in the rock, where they may have their fill of melancholy. They shall no more be singing birds, but mourning birds, like the dove, ver. 28; the doves of the valleys, *Eze.* vii. 16. Those that give up themselves to mirth, let them know that God can soon change their note. Their sorrow shall be so very extreme, that they shall make themselves bald, and cut themselves, ver. 37; which were expressions of a desperate grief, such as tempted men to be even their own destroyers. Job indeed rent his mantle, and shaved his head, but he did not cut himself. When the flood of passion riseth never so high, wisdom and grace must set bounds to it, set banks to it, to restrain it from such barbarities. The sorrow shall be universal; ver. 38, "there shall be a general lamentation upon all the housetops of Moab," where they worshipped their idols, to whom they shall in vain bemoan themselves; and in all the streets where they conversed with one another, for they shall be free in communicating their griefs and fears, and in propagating them, for they see all lost: "I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure," which shall not be regarded, and cannot be pieced again. That which Moab used to rejoice in was their pleasant fruits, and the abundance of their rich wines. The delights of sense were all the matter of their joy. Take away these, destroy their gardens and vineyards, and you make all their mirth to cease, *Hos.* ii. 11, 12. There is great weeping when their plants are transplanted, are "gone over the sea," ver. 32; are carried into other countries to be planted there: "The spoiler is fallen upon thy summer fruits, and upon thy vintage;" and that is it that makes the cry of Heshbon to reach even to Elealeh, ver. 34. Take joy and gladness from the plentiful field, and you take it from the land of Moab, ver. 33. If the wine fail from the winepresses, that used to be trodden with acclamations of joy, all their gladness is cut off. Take away that shouting, and there shall be no shouting. Note, Those who make the delights of sense their chief joy, their exceeding joy, since those are things they may easily be deprived of in a little time, subject themselves to the tyranny of the greatest grief; whereas they that rejoice in God may do that even when the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine. These Moabites lost not only their wine, but their water too, even "the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate," ver. 34; and, therefore, their grief grew extravagantly loud and noisy, and their lamentations were heard in all places like the lowing of a heifer of three years old. The expressions here are borrowed from *Isa.* xv. 5, 6.

3. All their neighbours are called to mourn with them, and to condole their ruin; ver. 17, "All ye that are about him, bemoan him." Let him have that allay to his grief, let him see himself pitied by the adjoining countries. Nay, let those at a distance, that do but know his name, and have heard of his fame, take notice of his fall, and say, "How is the strong staff broken," whose strength was the terror of its enemies; "and the beautiful rod," whose beauty was the pride of its friends. Let the nations take notice of this, and receive instruction. Let none be puffed up with, or put confidence in, their strength or beauty, for neither will be a security against the judgments of God.

Fourthly. It is a shameful destruction, and such as shall expose them to contempt. Moab is made drunk, ver. 26; and he that is made drunk is made vile. He shall wallow in his vomit, and become an odious spectacle, and shall justly be in derision. Let the Moabites be intoxicated with the cup of God's wrath, until they stagger and fall, and be brought to their wits' end, and make themselves ridiculous by the wildness not only of their passions, but of their counsels. And again, ver. 39, Moab shall be a derision, and a dismaying to all about him; they shall laugh at the fall of the pomp and power he was so proud of. Note, They that are haughty are preparing reproach and ignominy for themselves.

Fifthly. It is the destruction of that which is dear to them, not only of their summer fruits and their vintage, but of their wealth; ver. 36, "The riches that he hath gotten are perished;" though he thought he had laid them up very safe, and promised himself a long enjoyment of them, yet they are gone. Note, The money that is hoarded in the chest is as liable to perish as the summer fruits that lie exposed in the open fields. Riches are shedding things, and, like dust as they are, slip through our fingers then when we are in most care to hold them fast, and gripe them hard. Yet this is not the worst neither: even those whose religion was false and foolish, were fond of it above any thing, and such as it was, would not part with it; and, therefore, though it was really a promise, yet to them it was a threatening, (ver. 35,) that God will "cause to cease him that offereth in the high places," for the high places shall be destroyed, and the fields of offerings shall be laid waste; and the priests themselves, that burnt incense to their gods, shall be slain or carried into captivity, ver. 7. Note, It is only the true religion, and the worship and service of the true God, that will stand us in stead in a day of trouble.

Sixthly. It is a just and righteous destruction, and that which they have deserved and brought upon themselves by sin.

1. The sin which they had been most notoriously guilty of, and for which God now reckoned with them, was pride. It is mentioned six times, ver. 29. We have all heard of the pride of Moab; his neighbours took notice of it, it has testified to his face, as Israel's did; he is exceedingly proud, and grows worse and worse. Observe his loftiness, his arrogancy, his pride, his haughtiness; the multiplying of words to the same purpose intimates in how many instances he discovered his pride, and how offensive it was both to God and man. It was charged upon them, *Isa.* xvi. 6; but here it is expressed more largely than there. Since then they had been under humbling providences, and yet were unhumbled; nay, they grew more arrogant and haughty, which plainly marked them for that utter destruction which pride is the forerunner of. Two instances are here given of the pride of Moab: 1st. He had carried it insolently towards God. He must be brought down with shame, ver. 26; for he hath "magnified himself against the Lord;" and again, ver. 42, he shall be "destroyed from being a people," for this very reason. The Moabites preferred Chemosh before Jehovah, and thought themselves a match for the God of Israel, whom they set at defiance. 2nd. He had carried it scornfully towards Israel, particularly in their late troubles; therefore Moab shall fall into the same troubles, into the same hands, and be a derision, for Israel was a derision to him, ver. 26, 27. The generality of the Moabites, when they heard of the calamities and desolations of their neighbours the Jews, instead of lamenting them, rejoiced in them, as if

they had been thieves taken in the act of robbing. As often as they spoke of them they skipped for joy. Many in such a case entertain in their minds a secret pleasure at the fall of those they had a dislike to, who yet have so much discretion as to conceal it, it is so invidious a thing; but the Moabites industriously proclaimed their joy, and avowed the enmity they had to Israel, triumphing over every Israelite they met with in distress, and laughing at him; which was as inhuman as it was impious, and an impudent affront both to men, whose nature they were of, and to God whose name they were called by. Note, Those that deride others in distress, will justly and certainly, sooner or later, come into distress themselves, and be had in derision. Those that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of God's church, shall not long go unpunished.

2. Besides this, they had been guilty of malice against God's people, and treachery in their dealings with them, ver. 30. They made a jest of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and pretended when they laughed at them, it was but in sport, and to make themselves merry; but, saith God, "I know his wrath," I know it comes from the old enmity he hath to the seed of Abraham, and the worshippers of the true God. I know he thinks these calamities of the Jewish nation will end in their utter extirpation. He now tells the Chaldeans what ill people the Jews are, and irritates them against them; but it shall not be so as he expects, "his lies shall not so effect it." The nation, whose fall they triumph in, shall recover itself. Some read it, 'I know his rage, is it not so?' (is he not very furious against the people of God?) 'and his lies I know also, do they not do so? Do they not belie them?' Note, All the fury and all the falsehood of the church's enemies is perfectly known to God, whatever the pretences are with which they think to cover it, *Isa.* xxxvii. 28.

Seventhly. It is a complicated destruction, and by one instance after another will at length be completed; for those that make their escape from one judgment shall perish by another; "Fear, and the pit, and the snare shall be upon them," ver. 43. There shall be fear to drive them into the pit, and a snare to hold them fast in it when they are in it; so that they shall neither escape from the destruction nor escape out of it. What was said of sinners in general, *Isa.* xxiv. 17, 18, that they who flee from the fear shall fall into the pit, and they who come up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare, is here particularly foretold concerning the sinners of Moab, ver. 44; for it is the year of their visitation, when God comes to reckon with them, and will be known by the judgments which he executeth, for he is "the King whose name is the Lord of hosts," ver. 15; he is not only the King that has authority to give judgment, but he is the Lord of hosts, that is able to do what he has determined. The figurative expressions used, ver. 44, are explained in one instance, ver. 45. Those that fled out of the villages for fear of the enemy's forces, put themselves "under the shadow of Heshbon," stood there, and supposed they stood safe, as now armies sometimes retire under the cannon of a fortified city, and it is their protection; but here they should be disappointed, for when they flee out of the pit they fall into the snare. Heshbon, which they thought would have sheltered them, devours them, as Moses had foretold long since, *Num.* xxi. 28. "A fire is gone out of Heshbon, and a flame from the city of Sihon," and devours those that come from all the corners of Moab, and fastens upon the crown of the head of the tumultuous, noisy ones; or of the revellers, or children of noise; not meant of the rude, clamorous multitude, but of the great men that bluster, and hector, and make a noise. The judgments of God shall light on them. Shall we hear the conclusion of this whole matter? We have it, ver. 46, "Woe be unto thee, O Moab," thou art undone; the people that worship Chemosh perisheth, and is gone; farewell Moab. The sons and daughters, the hopes of the next generation, are gone into captivity after the Jews, whose calamities they rejoiced in.

Eighthly. Yet it is not a perpetual destruction. The chapter concludes with a short promise of their return out of captivity in the latter days. God, that brings them into captivity, will bring again their captivity, ver. 47. Thus tenderly does God deal with Moabites, much more with his own people; even with Moabites he will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth. When Israel returned, Moab did; and perhaps the prophecy was intended chiefly for the encouragement of God's people, to hope for that salvation which even Moabites shall share in. Yet it looks farther to gospel times, (the Jews themselves refer it to the days of the Messias,) then the captivity of the Gentiles, under the yoke of sin and Satan, shall be brought back by Divine grace, which shall make them free, free indeed. This prophecy concerning Moab is long, but here it ends; it ends comfortably, "Thus far is the judgment of Moab."

CHAPTER XLIX.

The cup of trembling still goes round, and the nations must all drink of it according to the instruction given to Jeremiah, *ch.* xxv. 15. This chapter puts it into the hands, I. Of the Ammonites, ver. 1—6. II. Of the Edomites, ver. 7—22. III. Of the Syrians, ver. 23—27. IV. Of the Kedarenes, and the kingdoms of Hazor, ver. 28—33. V. Of the Elamites, ver. 34—39. When Israel was scarcely saved, where shall all these appear?

CONCERNING the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD;
Hath Israel no sons?
Hath he no heir?
When *then* doth their king inherit Gad,
And his people dwell in his cities?
2 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That I will cause an alarm of war to be heard
In Rabbah of the Ammonites;
And it shall be a desolate heap,
And her daughters shall be burned with fire:
Then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs,
saith the LORD.
3 Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled:
Cry, ye daughters of Rabbah,
Gird you with sackcloth;
Lament, and run to and fro by the hedges;
For their king shall go into captivity,
And his priests and his princes together.
4 Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys,
Thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter?
That trusted in her treasures, *saying*,
Who shall come unto me?
5 Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee,
Saith the Lord GOD of hosts,
From all those that be about thee;
And ye shall be driven out every man right forth;
And none shall gather up him that wandereth.
6 And afterward I will bring again the captivity
Of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.

The Ammonites were next both in kindred and in neighbourhood to the Moabites, and therefore are next set to the bar. Their country joined to that of the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan, and was but an ill neighbour; however, being a neighbour, they shall have a share in these circular predictions.

First. An action is here brought in God's name against the Ammonites for an illegal encroachment upon the rightful possessions of the tribe of Gad, that lay next them, ver. 1. A writ of inquiry is brought to discover what title they had to those territories which, upon the carrying away of the Gileadites by the king of Assyria, (2 *Kin.* xv. 29; 1 *Chr.* v. 26,) were left almost dispeopled, at least unguarded, and an easy prey to the next invader. What! doth it escheat *ob defectum sanguinis?*—'for want of an heir?' "Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir?" Are there no Gadites left to whom the right of inheritance belongs? Or if there were not, are there no Israelites, none left of Judah that is nearer akin to them than you are? Why then doth their king, as if he were entitled to the forfeited estates, or Milcom their idol, as if he had the disposal of it to his worshippers, "inherit Gad, and his people dwell in the cities" which fell by lot to that tribe of God's people? Nay, there were sons and heirs of their own body, *en ventre de sa mere*,—'in their mothers' wombs,' and the Ammonites, to prevent their claim, most barbarously murdered them; *Am.* i. 13, "They ripped up the women with child, of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border;" that having seized it, none might rise up hereafter to recover it from them. Thus they "magnified themselves against their border," and boasted it was their own, *Zeph.* ii. 8. Note, Though among men might often prevails against right, yet that might shall be controlled by the Almighty, who sits in the throne judging right; and those will find themselves mistaken who think every thing their own that they can lay their hands on, or which none yet appears to lay claim to. As there is justice owing to owners, so also to their heirs, when they are dead, whom it is a great sin to defraud, though they either know not their right or know not how to come at it. This shall be reckoned for particularly when injuries of this kind are done to God's people.

Secondly. Judgment is here given against them for this violence.

1. Terrors shall come upon them. God will "cause an alarm of war to be heard," even in Rabbah, their capital city, and a very strong one, ver. 2. The Lord God of hosts, that has all armies at his command, will bring a fear upon them from all that be about them, ver. 5. Note, God has many ways to terrify those that have been a terror to his people.

2. Their cities shall be laid in ruins. Rabbah, the mother city, shall be a desolate heap; and her daughters, the other cities that have a dependence upon her, and receive law from her as daughters, shall be burnt with fire; so that the inhabitants shall be forced to quit them, and they shall cry, and gird themselves with sackcloth, as having lost all they have, and not knowing whither to betake themselves.

3. Their country, which they were so proud of, shall be wasted; ver. 4, "Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys," and trustest in thy treasures, "O backsliding daughter?" They are charged with backsliding, or turning away from God and from his worship, for they were the posterity of righteous Lot. It is true they had never been so in covenant with God as Israel was; yet all idolaters may be called backsliders, for the worship of the true God was prior to that of false gods. They were untoward and refractory, so some read it; and when they had forsaken their God they gloried in their valleys, particularly one that was called the flowing valley, because it flowed with all good things. These they had violently taken away from Israel, and gloried in it when they had done so. They gloried in the strength of their valleys, so surrounded with mountains, that they were inaccessible; gloried in the products of them, gloried in the treasures they got together out of them, saying, "Who shall come unto me?" While they bathed themselves in the pleasures of their country, they flattered themselves with a conceit that they should never be disturbed in the enjoyment of them. To-morrow shall be as this day; therefore they set God and his judgments at defiance. They are proud, voluptuous, and secure; but wherefore dost thou do so? Note, Those who backslide, and turn away from God, have little reason either to take a complacency or to put a confidence in any worldly enjoyments whatsoever, *Hos.* ix. 1.

4. Their people, from the least to the greatest, shall be forced out of the country. Some shall flee to seek for shelter, others shall be carried into captivity, so that their land shall be quite evacuated. Their king and his princes, nay, and Milcom their god, and his priests, shall go into captivity, ver. 3, and every man shall be driven out right forth, shall take the next way, and make the best of it in his flight, ver. 5, forgetting the valleys, the flowing valleys, which now fail them. And, to complete their misery, none shall gather up him that wandereth, none shall open their doors to them, as Jael to Sisera, to entertain them; and those that flee shall be so much in care to secure themselves, that they shall not take notice of others, no, not of those that are nearest to them, that wander, and are at a loss which way to go, as *ch.* xlvii. 3.

5. Then the country of the Ammonites shall fall into the hands of the remaining Israelites; ver. 2, "Then shall Israel be heir to them that were his heirs," shall possess himself of their land who had possessed themselves of his, by way of reprisal. Note, The equity of Divine providence is to be acknowledged when the losses of the injured are recompensed out of the unjust gains of the injurious. Though the enemies of God's Israel may make a prey of them for a while, the tables will shortly be turned.

Thirdly. Yet there is a prospect given them of mercy hereafter, ver. 6, as before to Moab. The day will come when the captivity of the children of Ammon will be brought again; for so it is in human affairs, the wheel goes round.

7 Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Is wisdom no more in Teman?
Is counsel perished from the prudent?

Is their wisdom vanished?
8 Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan;
For I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him,
The time *that* I will visit him.
9 If grapegatherers come to thee,
Would they not leave *some* gleaning grapes?
If thieves by night, they will destroy till they have
10 But I have made Esau bare, [enough.
I have uncovered his secret places,
And he shall not be able to hide himself:
His seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours,
And he *is* not.
11 Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve *them* alive;
And let thy widows trust in me.
12 For thus saith the LORD; [cup
Behold, they whose judgment *was* not to drink of the
Have assuredly drunken;
And *art* thou he *that* shall altogether go unpunished?
Thou shalt not go unpunished,
But thou shalt surely drink *of it*.
13 For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD,
That Bozrah shall become a desolation,

BOZRAH.

A reproach, a waste, and a curse;
And all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.
14 I have heard a rumour from the LORD,
And an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, *saying*,
Gather ye together, and come against her,
And rise up to the battle.
15 For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen,
And despised among men.
16 Thy terribleness hath deceived thee,
And the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock,
That holdest the height of the hill: [eagle,
Though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the
I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.
17 Also Edom shall be a desolation:
Every one that goeth by it shall be astonished,
And shall hiss at all the plagues thereof.
18 As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah
And the neighbour *cities* thereof, saith the LORD,
No man shall abide there,
Neither shall a son of man dwell in it.
19 Behold, he shall come up
Like a lion from the swelling of Jordan
Against the habitation of the strong:
But I will suddenly make him run away from her:
And who *is* a chosen *man, that* I may appoint over her?
For who *is* like me? and who will appoint me the time?
And who *is* that shepherd that will stand before me?
20 Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD,
That he hath taken against Edom;
And his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman:
Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out:
Surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them.
21 The earth is moved at the noise of their fall,
At the cry the noise thereof was heard in the Red sea.
22 Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle,
And spread his wings over Bozrah: [Edom be
And at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of
As the heart of a woman in her pangs.

The Edomites come next to receive their doom from God by the mouth of Jeremiah. They also were old enemies to the Israel of God, but their day will come to be reckoned with, and it is now at hand; and is foretold, not only for warning to them, but for comfort to the Israel of God, whose afflictions were very much aggravated by their triumphs over them, and joy in their calamity, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 7. Many of the expressions used in this prophecy concerning Edom are borrowed from the prophecy of *Obadiah*, which is concerning Edom; for, all the prophets being inspired by one and the same Spirit, there must needs be a wonderful harmony and agreement in their predictions. Now here it is foretold,

First. That the country of Edom shall be wasted and made desolate; that the calamity of Esau should be brought upon him, the calamity he has deserved, and God has long designed him, for his old sins, ver. 8. The time is at hand when God will visit him, and call him to an account; and then they shall flee from the sword, turn back from the battle, and dwell deep in some close caverns where they shall hide themselves. All they have shall be carried off by the conqueror. Whereas grape-gatherers will leave some gleanings, and even thieves know when they have enough, and will destroy no farther, they that destroy them shall never be satiated; ver. 9, 10, they shall make Esau quite bare, shall strip the Edomites of all they have, shall find out ways and means to come at their most hidden treasure, shall discover even the secret places where they thought to secure their wealth, and rifle them; so that they shall none of them save their wealth, no, nor save themselves or their children, that might be concealed in a little room; "He shall not be able to hide himself," and his seed, too, is spoiled. His brethren the Moabites, and his neighbours the Philistines, whom he might have expected succours from, or at least shelter with, are spoiled as well as he, and disabled to do him any service. And he is not, or, there is not he, there is none to him, none left him that may say what follows, ver. 11, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive." When they are flying or dying, there shall be none left; no relation, no friend, no, not so much as any parish officers, to take care of their wives and children that they leave behind. Edom is not, he is cut off and gone; nor is there any to say, Leave me thine orphans. If the master of a family be cut off, or forced away, it is some comfort if he have a friend to leave his family with whom he can confide in; but they shall have none such, for they shall all be involved in the same calamity. The Chaldee makes these to be the words of God to his people, distinguishing them from the Edomites in this calamity; and they read it, 'But you, O house of Israel, you shall not leave your orphans; I will secure them, and let your widows rest on my word;' whatever becomes of the widows and fatherless of the Edomites, I will take care of yours. Note, It is unspeakable comfort to the people of God when they are dying, that they may leave their surviving relations with God, may in faith commit them to him, and encourage them to trust in him; and, though they cannot promise themselves great things in the world for them, yet they may hope that he will preserve them alive, always provided that they trust in him. Let the Edomites, for their part, count upon no other but to be made a desolation and a reproach, for the decree is gone forth, God hath sworn it by himself, ver. 13, that their city shall be wasted; nay, they shall be perpetual wastes, they shall be made mean and despicable. They had made a mighty figure, but God will make them "small among the heathen;" and they that despised God's people shall themselves be "despised among men," ver. 15; *Obad.* 2. Nay, they shall be made monstrous, and even a prodigy, ver. 17; Edom shall be such a desolation, that every one that goes by shall be astonished; nay, worse yet, they shall be made a terror. Edom shall be made like Sodom and Gomorrah, none shall care for coming near the ruins of it; "no man shall abide there," ver. 18, such a frightful place shall it be made.

Secondly. That the instruments of this destruction should be very resolute and formidable. They have their commission from God, he summons them into this service; ver. 14, "I have heard a rumour," or report from the Lord, heard it by the prophecy of Obadiah, heard it by a whisper to myself, that an ambassador, or herald, or messenger, is sent to the Gentiles, that are to lay Edom waste, saying, "Gather ye together," muster all the forces ye can, and come against her; for, ver. 20, this is the counsel that he hath taken against Edom. The matter is settled, the decree is gone forth, and there is no resisting it. God has determined that Edom shall be laid waste, and then he that is to be employed in it shall come swiftly and strongly. Nebuchadnezzar is he of whom it is here foretold, 1. That he shall "come up like a lion," with fierceness and fury; like a lion enraged by the swelling of Jordan overflowing his banks, which force him out of his covert by the water side into the higher grounds, ver. 19. He shall come roaring, come to devour all that come in his way; he shall come "against the habitation of the strong," the forts and castles; and I will cause him to come suddenly into the land, (so the next words might well be read,) so as to find them unprovided with necessaries for a defence: for I will look out a chosen man to appoint over her, to do this execution, a man fit for the purpose, one chosen out of the people; for when God has work to do he will find out the fittest instruments to be employed in it. And in this who is like me for choosing the instruments, and spiriting them for the work? and "who will appoint me the time?" that is, who will challenge me, and fix a time and place to meet? who will join issue with me in battle? And when I send a lion into the flock, "who is that shepherd," that can dare stand before me, or against me, to oppose that lion, and think to rescue any of the flock? Note, When God has work of any kind, he will soon find those that are able to engage in it; and all the world cannot find those that are able to engage against it. Nay, if God will have Edom destroyed, and their people dislodged, there needs not a lion, a fierce lion to do it, even "the least of the flock shall draw them out,"

ver. 20; the meanest servant in Nebuchadnezzar's retinue, the weakest of all that follow his camp, shall draw them out for the slaughter, shall force them to flee or to surrender, and "make their habitations desolate with them." God can bring to pass the greatest works by instruments least likely. When the Chaldean army comes against the Edomites, all hands shall be employed, and the poorest soldier in it shall have a pluck at them. 2. Nebuchadnezzar shall come, not only like a lion, the king of beasts, but like an eagle, the king of birds; ver. 22, He shall fly as the eagle upon his prey, so swiftly, so strongly; shall clap his wings upon Bozrah, to secure it for himself, as before, *ch.* xlviii. 40; and immediately the hearts of the mighty men shall fail them, for they shall see he is an enemy that it is in vain to struggle with.

Thirdly. That the Edomites' confidences should all fail them in the day of their distress. 1. They trusted to their wisdom, but that shall stand them in no stead; this is the first thing fastened upon in this prophecy against Edom, ver. 7. That nation used to be famous for wisdom, and their statesmen were thought to excel in politics, and yet now they shall take such wrong measures in all their counsels, and be so baffled in all their designs that people shall ask with wonder, What is the matter with the Edomites? "Is wisdom no more in Teman?" Are the wise men of the east country, 1 *Kin.* iv. 30, become fools? Are those at their wits' end that were thought to have the monopoly of prudence? Is counsel perished from the understanding of men? It is so, when God is designing the ruin of a people; for whom he will destroy he infatuates: see *Job* xii. 20, "Is their wisdom vanished?" Is it tired? so some; is it worn out? so others; is it become useless? so others. Yes, it will do them no service, when God comes forth to contend with them. 2. They trusted to their strength, but neither shall that avail them, ver. 16. They had been a terror to all their neighbours, every body feared them and truckled to them, and this made them proud and conceited of themselves and their own strength, and very secure; because no neighbour nation durst meddle with them, they thought no nation in the world durst. Their country was much of it mountainous, having many passes which they thought themselves able to make good against any invader; but this terribleness of theirs deceived them, and so did their imaginary inaccessibleness; they did not prove so strong as they were formidable, nor so safe as they were secure. As high as they are God will bring them down; for as there is no wisdom, so there is no might against the Lord: see these expressions, *Obad.* 3, 4, 8.

Fourthly. That their destruction should be inevitable, and very remarkable. 1. God hath determined it, ver. 12; he hath said it; nay, ver. 13, he hath sworn it, that the Edomites shall not go unpunished, but they shall drink the cup of trembling, which is put into the hands of all their neighbours. Even they whose judgment or doom was not to drink of the cup, that is, that had not so well deserved it as they had done, nations that had not been such enemies to Israel as they had been,—or, Israel itself, that was God's peculiar people, and among whom there were many, very many, that kept his ordinances, upon which account they might have expected an exemption,—and yet they had been made to drink of the bitter cup; and shall the Edomites think to pass it? No, they shall surely drink of it. Note, When God punisheth the less guilty, it is folly for the more guilty to promise themselves impunity; and when judgment begins at God's house, it will reach the strangers. 2. All the world shall take notice of it; ver. 21, "The earth is moved," and all the nations put into a concern, "at the noise of their fall;" the news of it shall make them tremble. The noise of the outcry is heard to the Red sea, which flowed upon the coasts of Edom; so loud shall be the shouts of the conquerors and the shrieks of the conquered, and such a mighty noise shall the news of this destruction of Idumea make in the nations, that it shall be heard among the ships that lie in the Red sea, to take in lading, 1 *Kin.* ix. 26, and they shall carry the news of it to the remotest shores. Note, Those that have affected to make a noise with their pomp and power, their fall, when it comes, will make so much the greater noise.

23 Concerning Damascus.
Hamath is confounded, and Arpad:
For they have heard evil tidings:
They are fainthearted:
There is sorrow on the sea;
It cannot be quiet.
24 Damascus is waxed feeble,
And turneth herself to flee,
And fear hath seized on *her:*
Anguish and sorrows have taken her,

ANCIENT WALL AND GATE OF DAMASCUS.

As a woman in travail.
25 How is the city of praise not left,
The city of my joy!
26 Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets,
And all the men of war shall be cut off in that day,
Saith the LORD of hosts.
27 And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus,
And it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

The kingdom of Syria lay north of Canaan, as that of Edom lay south, and thither we must now remove, and take a view of the approaching fate of that kingdom, which had been often vexatious to the Israel of God. Damascus was the metropolis of that kingdom, and the ruin of the whole is supposed in the ruin of that; yet Hamath and Arpad, two other considerable cities, are named, ver. 23. And the palaces of Benhadad, which he built, are particularly marked for ruin, ver. 27, as also *Am.* i. 9. Some think Benhadad, the son of Hadad, either their idol, or one of their ancient kings whence the rest descended, was a common name of the kings of Syria, as Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. Now observe concerning the judgment of Damascus,

First. It begins with a terrible fright and faintheartedness. They hear evil tidings, that the king of Babylon, with all his force, is coming against them, and they are confounded, they know not what measures to take for their own safety, their souls are melted, they are fainthearted, they have no spirit left them, they are like the troubled sea, that cannot be quiet, *Isa.* lvii. 20, or like men in a storm at sea, *Ps.* cvii. 26; or the sorrow that begins in the city shall go to the sea coast, ver. 23. See how easily God can dispirit those nations that have been most celebrated for valour; Damascus now waxeth feeble, ver. 24. A city that thought she could have looked the most formidable enemy in the face, now turns herself to flee, and owns it is to no more purpose to think of contending with her fate than for a woman in labour to contend with her pains, which she cannot escape, but must yield to. It was a "city of praise," ver. 25; not praise to God, but to herself, a city much commended and admired by all strangers that visited it. It was a city of joy, where there was an affluence and confluence of all the delights of the sons of men, and abundance of mirth in the enjoyment of them. We read it, though it needs not, "the city of my joy," which the prophet himself had sometimes visited with pleasure; or, it may be the speech of the king, lamenting the ruin of the city of his joy. But now it is all overwhelmed with fear and grief. Note, Those deceive themselves who place their happiness in carnal joys; for God, in his providence, can soon cast a damp upon them and put an end to them. He can soon make a city of praise to be a reproach, and a city of joy to be a terror to itself.

Secondly. It ends with a terrible fall and fire. 1. The inhabitants are slain, ver. 26. The young men, that should fight the enemy and defend the city, shall fall by the sword in the street; and all the men of war, mighty men, expert in war, and engaged in the service of their country, shall be cut off. 2. The city is laid in ashes, ver. 27. The fire is kindled by the besiegers in the wall, but it shall devour all before it, the palaces of Benhadad particularly, where so much mischief had formerly been hatched against God's Israel, for which it is now thus visited.

28 Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the LORD;
Arise ye, go up to Kedar,
And spoil the men of the east.
29 Their tents and their flocks shall they take away:
They shall take to themselves their curtains,
And all their vessels, and their camels;
And they shall cry unto them, Fear *is* on every side.
30 Flee, get you far off,
Dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD;
For Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you,
And hath conceived a purpose against you.
31 Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation,
That dwelleth without care, saith the LORD,
Which have neither gates nor bars,
Which dwell alone.
32 And their camels shall be a booty,
And the multitude of their cattle a spoil:
And I will scatter into all winds them *that are* in the utmost corners;
And I will bring their calamity
From all sides thereof, saith the LORD.
33 And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons,
And a desolation for ever: [dwell in it.
There shall no man abide there, nor *any* son of man

These verses foretell the desolation that Nebuchadnezzar and his forces should make among the people of Kedar, (who descended from Kedar the son of Ishmael, and inhabited a part of Arabia the Stony,) and of the kingdoms, the petty principalities of Hazor, that joined to them, who perhaps were originally Canaanites of the kingdom of Hazor, in the north of Canaan, which had Jabin for its king, but, being driven thence, settled in the deserts of Arabia, and associated themselves with the Kedarenes. Concerning this people we may here observe,

First. What was their present state and posture. They dwelt in tents, and had no walls but curtains, ver. 29, no fortified cities; they had "neither gates nor bars," ver. 31; they were shepherds, and had no treasures but stock upon land, no money but flocks and camels; they had no soldiers among them, for they were in no fear of invaders; no merchants, for they dwelt alone, ver. 31. Those of other nations neither came among them nor traded with them, but they lived within themselves, content with the products and pleasures of their own country. This was their manner of living, very different from that of the nations that were round about them. And, 1. They were very rich; though they had no trade, no treasures, yet they are here said to be a wealthy nation, ver. 31, because they had a sufficiency to answer all the occasions of human life, and they were content with it. Note, Those are truly rich that have enough to supply their necessities, and know when they have enough. We need not go to the treasures of kings and provinces, or the cash of merchants, to look for wealthy people; they may be found among shepherds that dwell in tents. 2. They were very easy; they dwelt without care, their wealth was such as nobody envied them, or, if any did, they might come peaceably and enjoy the like, and therefore they fear nobody. Note, Those that live innocently and honestly may live very securely, though they have neither gates nor bars.

Secondly. The design of the king of Babylon against them, and the descent he made upon them; "He hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you," ver. 30. That proud man resolves it shall never be said that he who had conquered so many strong cities will leave those unconquered that dwell in tents. It was strange that eagle would stoop to catch these flies; that so great a prince should play at such small game; but all is fish that comes to the ambitious, covetous man's net. Note, It will not always secure men from suffering wrong to be able to say they have done no wrong; not to have given offence will not be a defence against such men as Nebuchadnezzar. Yet, how unrighteous soever he was in doing it, God was righteous in directing it. These people have lived inoffensively among their neighbours, as many do, who yet like them are guilty before God; and it was to punish them for their offences against him that God said, ver. 28, "Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east." They will do it to gratify their own covetousness and ambition, but God orders it for the correcting of an unthankful people, and for warning to a careless world to expect trouble when they seem to be most safe. God saith to the Chaldeans, ver. 31, "Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation that dwell without care;" go, and give them an alarm, that none may imagine their mountain stands so strong that it cannot be moved.

Thirdly. The great amazement that this put them into, and the great desolation hereby made among them; "They shall cry unto them," that is, those on the borders shall send the alarm into all parts of the country, which shall be put into the utmost confusion by it; they shall cry, "Fear is on every side," we are surrounded by the enemy, the very terror of which shall drive them all to their feet, and they shall none of them have any heart to make resistance. The enemy shall proclaim fear upon them or against them on every side; they need not strike a stroke, they shall shout them out of their tents, ver. 29. Upon the first alarm they shall flee, get far off, and dwell deep, ver. 30, as the Edomites, ver. 8. And it will be found that this fear on every side is not groundless, for their calamity shall be brought from all sides thereof, ver. 32. No marvel there are fears on every side, when there are foes on every side. The issue will be, 1. What they have will be a prey to the Chaldeans. They shall take to themselves their curtains and vessels; though they are but plain and coarse, and they have better of their own, yet they shall take them for spite and spoil, for spoiling sake; they shall carry away their tents and their flocks, ver. 29. Their camels shall be a booty to those that came for nothing else, ver. 32. 2. It is not said that any of them shall be slain, for they attempt not to make any resistance, and their tents and flocks are accepted as a ransom of their lives; but they shall be dislodged and dispersed, though now they dwell in the utmost corners, out of the way, and therefore they think out of the reach of danger. By this character those people were distinguished, *ch.* ix. 26, xxv. 23; yet they shall from thence be scattered into all winds, into all parts of the world. Note, Privacy and obscurity are not always a protection and security. Many that affect to be strangers to the world may yet, by unthought of providences, be forced into it; and those that live most retired may have the same lot with those that thrust themselves forth and lie most exposed. 3. Their country shall lie uninhabited; for, lying remote and out of all high roads, and having neither cities nor lands inviting to strangers, none shall care to succeed them, so that Hazor shall be "a desolation for ever," ver. 33. If busy men be displaced, many strive to get into their places, because they lived great; but here are easy, quiet men displaced, and no man cares to abide where they did, because they lived mean.

34 The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying,

35 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Behold, I will break the bow of Elam,
The chief of their might.

36 And upon Elam will I bring the four winds
From the four quarters of heaven,
And will scatter them toward all those winds;
And there shall be no nation
Whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come.

37 For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies,
And before them that seek their life:
And I will bring evil upon them,
Even my fierce anger, saith the LORD;
And I will send the sword after them,
Till I have consumed them:

38 And I will set my throne in Elam,
And will destroy from thence
The king and the princes, saith the LORD.

39 But it shall come to pass in the latter days, [LORD.
That I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the

This prophecy is dated in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign; it is probable the other prophecies against the Gentiles going before, were at the same time. The Elamites were the Persians, descended from Elam the son of Shem, *Gen.* x. 22; yet some think it was only that part of Persia which lay nearest to the Jews, which was called Elymais, and adjoined to Media-Elam, had acted against God's Israel, bare the quiver in an expedition against them, *Isa.* xxii. 6, and therefore must be reckoned with among the rest. It is here foretold in general that God will "bring evil upon them" even his fierce anger, and that is evil enough, it has all evil in it, ver. 37. In particular,

First. Their forces shall be disabled, and rendered incapable to do them any service. The Elamites were famous archers, but, "Behold, I will break the bow of Elam," ver. 35, will ruin their artillery, and then the chief of their might is gone. God often orders it so that that which we most trust to first fails us, and that which was the chief of our might proves the least of our help.

Secondly. Their people shall be dispersed. There shall come enemies against them from all parts of the world, and they shall all carry some of them away captives into their respective countries, while others shall flee, some one way and some another, to shift for themselves, so that "There shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come," ver. 36. The four winds shall be brought upon them, the storm shall come, sometimes from one point and sometimes from another, to toss and hurry them several ways. And we know not from what point the wind of trouble may blow; but if God compass us with his favour we are safe, and may be easy, which way soever the storm comes. Fear shall drive them into other countries, they shall be dismayed before their enemies; but, as if that were not enough, "I will send the sword after them," ver. 37. Note, God can make his judgments follow those that think by flight to escape them, and to get out of the reach of them; evil pursues sinners.

Thirdly. Their princes shall be destroyed, and the government quite changed; ver. 38, "I will set my throne in Elam." The throne of Nebuchadnezzar shall be set there, or the throne of Cyrus, who began his conquests with Elymais; or it may be meant of the throne on which God sits for judgment. He will make them know that he reigns, that he judgeth in the earth, and that kings and princes are accountable to him, and that, as high as they are, he is above them. The king of Elam was famous of old, *Gen.* xiv. 1. Chedorlaomer was king of Elam, and a mighty man he was in his day; the nations about him served him; his successors, we may suppose, made a great figure; but the king of Elam is no more to God than another man. When God sets his throne in Elam he will "destroy from thence the king and the princes" that are, and set up whom he pleaseth.

Fourthly. Yet the destruction of Elam shall not be perpetual; ver. 39, "In the latter days I will bring again the captivity of Elam." When Cyrus had destroyed Babylon, brought the empire into the hands of the Persians, the Elamites, no doubt, returned in triumph, out of all the countries whither they were scattered, and settled again in their own country. But this promise was to have its full and principal accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when we find Elamites particularly among those who, when the Holy Ghost was given, heard spoken in their own tongues the wonderful works of God, *Acts* ii. 11, and that is the most desirable return of the captivity. If the Son make you free, then you shall be free indeed.

CHAPTER L.

In this chapter, and that which follows, we have the judgment of Babylon, which is put last of Jeremiah's prophecies against the Gentiles, because it was last accomplished; and when the cup of God's fury went round, *ch.* xxv. 17, the king of Sheshach, that is, Babylon, drunk last. Babylon was employed as the rod in God's hand for the chastising of all the other nations, and now at length that rod shall be thrown into the fire. The destruction of Babylon by Cyrus was foretold, long before it came to its height, by Isaiah, and now again, when it is come to its height, by Jeremiah; for, though at this time he saw that kingdom flourishing like a green bay-tree, yet at the same time he foresaw it withered and cut down. And, as Isaiah's prophecies of the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of Israel out of it, seem designed to typify the evangelical triumphs of all believers over the powers of darkness, and in the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ, so Jeremiah's prophecies of the same events seem designed to point at the Apocalyptic triumphs of the Gospel church in the latter days over the New Testament Babylon, many passages in the *Revelation* being borrowed from hence. The kingdom of Babylon being much larger and stronger than any other of the kingdoms here prophesied against, its fall was the more considerable in itself; and it having been more oppressive to the people of God than any of the other, therefore the prophet is very large upon this subject, for the comfort of the captives; and what was foretold in general often before, *ch.* xxv. 12, xxvii. 7, is here more particularly described, and with a great deal of prophetic heat as well as light. The terrible judgments God had in store for Babylon, and the glorious blessings he had in store for his people that were captives there, are intermixed and counterchanged in the prophecy of this chapter; for therefore Babylon was destroyed to make way for the turning again of the captivity of God's people. Here is, I. The ruin of Babylon, ver. 1—3; and again, ver. 9—16; and again, ver. 21—32; and again, ver. 35—46. II. The redemption of God's people, ver. 4—8; and again, ver. 17—20; and again, ver. 33, 34. And these being set the one over against the other it is easy to say which one would choose to take one's lot with, the persecuting Babylonians, who, though now in pomp, are reserved for so great a ruin, or the persecuted Israelites, who, though now in thraldom, are reserved for so great a glory.

THE word that the LORD spake against Babylon *and* against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

2 Declare ye among the nations,
And publish, and set up a standard;
Publish, *and* conceal not:
Say, Babylon is taken,
Bel is confounded,
Merodach is broken in pieces;
Her idols are confounded,
Her images are broken in pieces.

3 For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her,
Which shall make her land desolate,
And none shall dwell therein:

They shall remove, they shall depart,
Both man and beast.
4 In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD,
The children of Israel shall come,
They and the children of Judah together,
Going and weeping:
They shall go, and seek the LORD their God.
5 They shall ask the way to Zion
With their faces thitherward, *saying*,
Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD
In a perpetual covenant *that* shall not be forgotten.
6 My people hath been lost sheep:
Their shepherds have caused them to go astray,
They have turned them away *on* the mountains:
They have gone from mountain to hill,
They have forgotten their restingplace.
7 All that found them have devoured them:
And their adversaries said, We offend not,
Because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice,
Even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.
8 Remove out of the midst of Babylon,
And go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans,
And be as the he goats before the flocks.

BIRS NIMROUD—THE SUPPOSED SITE OF BABYLON.

Here is, First. A word spoken against Babylon, by him whose works all agree with his word, and none of whose words fall to the ground. The king of Babylon had been very kind to Jeremiah, and yet he must foretell the ruin of that kingdom; for God's prophets must not be governed by favour or affection. Whoever are your friends, if, notwithstanding, they be God's enemies, we dare not speak peace to them.

1. The destruction of Babylon is here spoken of as a thing done, ver. 2. Let it be published to the nations as a piece of news, true news, and great news, and news they are all concerned in; let him hang out the flag, as is usual, on days of triumph, to give notice of it, let all the world take notice of it,—Babylon is taken; let God have the honour of it, let his people have the comfort of it, and therefore do not conceal it. Take care that it be known, that the Lord may be known by those judgments which he executeth, *Ps.* ix. 16.

2. It is spoken of as a thing done thoroughly; for, 1st. The very idols of Babylon, which the people would protect with all possible care, and from which they expected protection, shall be destroyed. Bel and Merodach were their two principal deities; they shall be confounded, and the images of them broken to pieces. 2nd. The country shall be laid waste, ver. 3, out of the north, from Media, which lay north of Babylon, and from Assyria, through which Cyrus made his descent upon Babylon; from thence the nation shall come that shall make her land desolate. Their land was north to the countries that they destroyed, who were therefore threatened with evil from the north; *omne malum ab aquilone*,—'every evil comes from the north.' But God will find out nations yet farther north to come upon them. The pomp and power of old Rome was brought down by northern nations, the Goths and Vandals.

Secondly. Here is a word spoken for the people of God, and for their comfort, both the children of Israel and Judah; for many there were of the ten tribes associated with those of the two tribes in their return out of Babylon. Now here,

1. It is promised, that they shall return to their God first, and then to their own land; and the promise of their conversion and reformation is that which makes way for all the other promises, ver. 4, 5. 1st. They shall lament after the Lord, as the whole house of Israel did in Samuel's time, 1 *Sam.* vii. 2. They shall go weeping. These tears flow not from the sorrow of the world, as those when they went into captivity, but from godly sorrow; they are tears of repentance for sin, tears of joy for the goodness of God, in the dawning of the day of their deliverance, which, for aught appears, doth more towards the bringing of them to mourn for sin than all the calamities of their captivity; that prevails to lead them to repentance when the other did not prevail to drive them to it. Note, It is a good sign God is coming towards a people in ways of mercy when they begin to be tenderly affected under his hand. 2nd. They shall inquire after the Lord; they shall not sink under their sorrows, but bestir themselves to find out comfort where it is to be had; they shall go weeping to seek the Lord their God. Those that seek the Lord must seek him sorrowing, as Christ's parents sought him, *Lu.* ii. 48. And those that sorrow must seek the Lord, and then their sorrow shall soon be turned into joy, for he will be found of those that seek him. They shall seek the Lord as their God, and shall now have no more to do with idols. When they shall hear that the idols of Babylon are confounded and broken, it will be seasonable for them to inquire after their own God, and return to him who lives for ever. Therefore men are deceived in false gods, that they may depend on the true God only. 3rd. They shall think of returning to their own country again, shall think of it not only as a mercy, but as a duty, because there only is the holy hill of Zion, on which once stood the house of the Lord their God; ver. 5, "They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward." Zion was the city of their solemnities; they often thought of it in the depth of their captivity, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 1, but now the ruin of Babylon gave them some hopes of a release; they talk of nothing else but of going back to Zion. Their hearts were upon it before, and now they set their faces thitherwards; they long to be there; they set out for Zion, and resolve not to take up short. The journey is long; they know not the road, but they shall ask the way; for they will press forward till they come to Zion; and, as they are determined not to turn back, so they are in care not to miss the way. This represents the return of poor souls to God; heaven is the Zion they aim at as their end, on this they have set their hearts, towards this they have set their faces, and therefore ask the way thither. Not ask the way to heaven, and set their faces towards the world; nor set their faces towards heaven, and go on at a venture without asking the way. But in all true converts there is both a sincere desire to attain the end and a constant care to keep in the way; and a blessed sight it is to see people thus asking their way to heaven with their faces thitherwards. 4th. They shall renew their covenants with God of closer walking for the future; "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant." They had broken covenant with God, had in effect separated themselves from him, but now they resolve to join themselves to him again, by engaging themselves afresh to be his. Thus, when backsliders return, they must do their first works, must renew the covenant they first made, and it must be a perpetual covenant, that must never be broken, and in order to that must never be forgotten; for a due remembrance of it will be the means of a due observance of it.

2. Their present case lamented as very sad, and as having been long so; "My people," (for he owns them as his now they are returning to him) "hath been lost sheep," ver. 6. "They have gone from mountain to hill," have been hurried from place to place, and could find no pasture; "they have forgotten their resting place" in their own country, and cannot find a way to it. And that which aggravated their misery was, 1st. That they were led astray by their own shepherds, their own princes and priests; they turned them from their duty, and so provoked God to turn them out of their own land. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, when those that should direct and reform them seduce and debauch them, and when those that should secure and advance their interests are the betrayers of them. 2nd. That in their wanderings they lay exposed to the beasts of prey, who thought they were entitled to them, as waifs and strays that had no owner, ver. 7. It is with with them as with wandering sheep, "All that found them have devoured them," and made a prey of them; and when they did them the greatest injuries they laughed at them, telling them it was what their own prophets had many a time told them they deserved. That was far from justifying those who did them wrong, yet they bantered them with this excuse, "We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord," but they could not pretend they had sinned against them. And see what notion they had of the Lord they had sinned against, not as the only true and living God, but only as "the habitation of justice," and "the hope of their fathers." They had put a contempt upon the temple, and upon the tradition of their ancestors, and therefore deserved to suffer these hard things. And yet it was indeed an aggravation of their sin, and justified God, though it did not justify their adversaries in what was done to them, that they had forsaken "the habitation of justice," and him that was "the hope of their fathers."

3. They are called upon to hasten away as soon as ever the door of liberty was opened to them, ver. 8. Remove not only out of the borders, but "out of the midst of Babylon;" though you be never so well seated there, think not to settle there, but hasten to Zion, and "be as the he-goats before the flocks," that is, strive which shall be foremost, which shall lead in so good a work. A he-goat is therefore comely in going, (*Pr.* xxx. 31,) because he goes first. It is a graceful thing to be forward in a good work, and to set others a good example.

9 For, lo, I will raise
And cause to come up against Babylon
An assembly of great nations from the north country:
And they shall set themselves in array against her;
From thence she shall be taken:
Their arrows *shall be* as of a mighty expert man;
None shall return in vain.
10 And Chaldea shall be a spoil:
All that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD.
11 Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced,
O ye destroyers of mine heritage,
Because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass,
And bellow as bulls;
12 Your mother shall be sore confounded;
She that bare you shall be ashamed:
Behold, the hindermost of the nations *shall be*
A wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.
13 Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited,
But it shall be wholly desolate:
Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished,
And hiss at all her plagues.
14 Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about:

All ye that bend the bow,
Shoot at her, spare no arrows:
For she hath sinned against the LORD.
15 Shout against her round about:
She hath given her hand:
Her foundations are fallen,
Her walls are thrown down:
For it *is* the vengeance of the LORD:
Take vengeance upon her;
As she hath done, do unto her.
16 Cut off the sower from Babylon,
And him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest:
For fear of the oppressing sword
They shall turn every one to his people,
And they shall flee every one to his own land.
17 Israel *is* a scattered sheep;
The lions have driven *him* away:
First the king of Assyria hath devoured him;
And last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones.
18 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land,
As I have punished the king of Assyria.
19 And I will bring Israel again to his habitation,
And he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan,
And his soul shall be satisfied
Upon mount Ephraim and Gilead.
20 In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, [none;
The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and *there shall be*
And the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found:
For I will pardon them whom I reserve.

God is here, by his prophet, as afterwards in his providence, proceeding in his controversy with Babylon. Observe,

First. The commission and charge given to the instruments that were employed in destroying Babylon. The army that is to do it is called "an assembly of great nations," ver. 9, the Medes and Persians, and all their allies and auxiliaries; it is called an assembly, because regularly formed by the Divine will and counsel to do this execution. God will raise them up to do it,—will incline them to, and fit them for, this service, and then he will cause them to come up, for all their motions are under his conduct and direction. He shall give the word of command, shall order them to put themselves in array against Babylon, ver. 14, and then they shall put themselves in array, ver. 9, for what God appoints to be done shall be done; and from thence presently she shall be taken,—from their first sitting down before it they shall be still gaining ground against it till it be taken. God shall bid them "shoot at her, and spare no arrows," ver. 14; and then "their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man," that has both skill and strength, a good eye and a good hand; ver. 9, "None shall return in vain." When God gives commission he will give success. Nay, they are bidden not only to "shoot at her," ver. 14, but to "shout against her," ver. 15, with a triumphant shout, as those that are already sure of victory. Those whom God directs to shoot may do it with shouting, for they are sure not to miss the mark.

Secondly. The desolation and destruction itself that shall be brought upon Babylon. This is set forth here in a great variety of expressions. 1. The wealth of Babylon shall be a rich and easy prey to the conquerors; ver. 10, "Chaldea shall be a spoil" to all her destroyers, who shall enrich themselves by plundering her, and, which is strange, "all that spoil her shall be satisfied." They shall have so much, that even they themselves shall say they have enough. 2. The country of Babylon shall be dispeopled, and lie uninhabited; "It shall be wholly desolate," ver. 13, to that degree, that every one that goes by shall triumph in their fall, and, instead of condoling them, shall "hiss at all her plagues," ver. 13. 3. Their ancestors shall be ashamed of their cowardice, in fleeing from the first onset, ver. 12. Or, your mother, that is, Babylon itself, the mother city, shall be confounded, when she sees herself deserted by those that should have been her guards. Thus the first ages of Christians may justly be confounded and ashamed, to see how unlike them the latter ages are, and how wretchedly they have degenerated; and no sin brings a surer and sorer ruin upon persons or people than apostacy. 4. The great admirers of Babylon shall see it rendered very despicable. The last of kingdoms, the very tail of the nations, shall it be, "a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert," ver. 12. The country that was populous shall be dispeopled, that was enriched with a fertile soil shall become barren. 5. The great city, the head of it, shall be quite ruined; "her foundations are fallen," and therefore "her walls are thrown down;" for how can the walls stand when Divine vengeance is at the door, and shakes the very foundations? It is the vengeance of the Lord, which nothing can contend with either in law or battle. 6. There shall not be left in Babylon so much as the poor of the land for vinedressers and husbandmen, as there was in Israel, ver. 16. The sower shall be cut off from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle; the country shall be so emptied of people that there shall be none to till the ground, and gather in the fruits of it. Harvest shall come, and there shall be no reapers; seedness shall come, but there shall be no sowers; God will do his part, but there shall be no men to do theirs. 7. All their auxiliary forces, which they have hired into their service, shall desert them, as mercenary men often do, upon the approach of danger; ver. 16, "for fear of the oppressing sword, they shall turn every one to his people." This was threatened before concerning Egypt, *ch.* xlvi. 16.

Thirdly. The procuring provoking cause of this destruction. It comes from God's displeasure: it is "because of the wrath of the Lord," that Babylon is wholly desolate, ver. 13, and his wrath is righteous; for, ver. 14, "She hath sinned against the Lord," therefore "spare no arrows." Note, It is sin that makes men a mark for the arrows of God's judgments. A great deal of idolatry and immorality were to be found in Babylon, yet those are not mentioned as the reason of God's displeasure against them, but the injuries they had done to the people of God, from a principle of enmity to them as his people. They have been the destroyers of God's heritage, ver. 11. Herein indeed God made use of them for the necessary correction of his people; and yet it is laid to their charge as a heinous crime, because they designed nothing but their utter destruction. 1. What they did against Jerusalem they did with pleasure; ver. 11, "Ye were glad, ye rejoiced." God doth not afflict his people willingly, and therefore takes it very ill if the instruments he employs afflict them willingly. When Titus Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem, he wept over it, but these Chaldeans triumphed over it. 2. The spoils of Jerusalem they made use of to feed their own luxury; "Ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls." Your having conquered Jerusalem has made you very wanton and proud, easy to yourselves, and formidable to all about you, and therefore you must be a spoil. They that have thus swallowed down riches must vomit them up again. Therefore they have given their hand, ver. 15; that is, they have surrendered themselves to the conqueror, have tamely yielded, so that now you may take vengeance on her, now you may make reprisals, and do unto her as she hath done. 3. They aimed at nothing less than the utter ruin of God's Israel. "Israel is a scattered sheep," as before, ver. 6, that is, not only barked at and worried by dogs, but even lions, the most potent adversaries, have roared upon him, and driven him away, ver. 17. One king of Assyria carried the ten tribes quite away, and devoured them; another invaded Judah, and plundered and impoverished it; tore the fleece and flesh of this poor sheep, and now at last, this Nebuchadnezzar, that is the terror and plague of all his neighbours, has taken advantage of the low condition to which he is reduced, and he has fallen upon him, and broken his bones, has quite ruined him, has unboned him; and therefore this king of Babylon must be punished as the king of Assyria was, ver. 18. Note, Those who pursue and prosecute the sins of their predecessors must expect to be pursued and prosecuted by their plagues; if they do as they did, let them fare as they fared.

Fourthly. The mercy promised to the Israel of God, which shall not only accompany but accrue from the destruction of Babylon. 1. God will return their captivity; they shall be released out of their bondage, and brought again to their own habitation, as sheep that were scattered to their own fold, ver. 19. They still retained a title to the land of Canaan, it is their habitation still, the discontinuance of their possession was not the destruction of their right; but now they shall recover the enjoyment of it again. 2. He will restore their prosperity. They shall not only live, but live comfortably in their own land again; they shall feed upon Carmel and Bashan, the richest and most fruitful parts of the country. These sheep shall be gathered from the deserts to which they were dispersed, and put again into good pasture, which their soul shall be satisfied with; though they shall come hungry to it, having been so long stinted and straitened, and kept short, yet they shall find enough to satiate them, and shall have hearts to be satiated with it. They inquired the way to Zion, ver. 5, where God was to be served and worshipped, that was it which they chiefly aimed at in their return; but God will not only bring them thither, but bring them also to Carmel and Bashan, where they shall abundantly feed themselves. Note, They that return to God and their duty shall find true satisfaction of soul in so doing; and they that seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, that aim to make their habitation in Zion, the holy hill, other things shall be added to them, even all the comforts of Ephraim and Gilead, the fruitful hills. 3. God will pardon their iniquity. This is the root of all the rest; ver. 20, "In those days the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." Not only the punishments of their iniquity shall be taken off, but the offence which it gave to God shall be forgotten, and he will be reconciled to them. Their sin shall be before him as if it had never been; it shall be blotted out as a cloud, crossed out as a debt, shall be cast behind his back, nay, it shall be cast into the depth of the sea, shall be no longer sealed up among God's treasures, nor in any danger of appearing again, or rising up against them. This notes how fully God forgives sin, he remembers it no more. Note, Deliverances out of trouble are then comforts indeed, when they are the fruits of the forgiveness of sin, *Isa.* xxxviii. 17. Judah and Israel were so fully forgiven when they were brought back out of Babylon, that they are said to have "received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins," *Isa.* xl. 2. This may include also a thorough reformation of their hearts and lives, as well as a full remission of their sins. If any seek for idols, or any idolatrous customs among them, after their return, there shall be none, they shall not find them; their dross shall be purely purged away, and by that it shall appear that their guilt is so; "for I will pardon them whom I reserve." I will be propitious to them, so the word is: and that must be through him who is the great propitiation. Note, Those whose sins God pardons he reserves for something very great; for whom he justifies them he glorifies.

21 Go up against the land of Merathaim,
Even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod:
Waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD,
And do according to all that I have commanded thee.
22 A sound of battle *is* in the land,
And of great destruction. [broken!
23 How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and
How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!
24 I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken,
O Babylon, and thou wast not aware:
Thou art found, and also caught,
Because thou hast striven against the LORD.
25 The LORD hath opened his armoury,
And hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation:
For this *is* the work of the Lord GOD of hosts
In the land of the Chaldeans.
26 Come against her from the utmost border,
Open her storehouses:
Cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly:

Let nothing of her be left.
27 Slay all her bullocks;
Let them go down to the slaughter:
Woe unto them! for their day is come,
The time of their visitation. [Babylon,
28 The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of
To declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God,
The vengeance of his temple.
29 Call together the archers against Babylon:
All ye that bend the bow,
Camp against it round about;
Let none thereof escape:
Recompense her according to her work;
According to all that she hath done, do unto her:
For she hath been proud against the LORD,
Against the Holy One of Israel.
30 Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets,
And all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD.
31 Behold, I *am* against thee, *O thou* most proud,
Saith the Lord GOD of hosts:
For thy day is come, the time *that* I will visit thee.
32 And the most proud shall stumble and fall,
And none shall raise him up:
And I will kindle a fire in his cities,
And it shall devour all round about him.

Here, First. The forces are mustered and commissioned to destroy Babylon, and every thing got ready for a descent upon that potent kingdom. Go up against that land by Merathaim, that is, the country of the Mardi, that lay part in Assyria and part in Armenia, and go among the inhabitants of Pekod, another country mentioned, *Eze.* xxiii. 23, which Cyrus took in his way to Babylon. The forces of Cyrus are called to go up against Babylon, ver. 21, to "come against her from the utmost border;" let all come together, for there will be both work and pay enough for them all, ver. 26. Distance of place must not be their hindrance from engaging in this work; the archers particularly must be called together against Babylon, ver. 29. Thus "the Lord hath opened his armoury," ver. 25, his treasury, so the word is, and hath "brought forth the weapons of his indignation," as great princes fetch out of their magazines and stores all necessary provisions for their armies, when they undertake any great expedition. Media and Persia are now God's armoury; thence he fetcheth the weapons of his wrath, Cyrus and his great officers and armies, whom he will make use of for the destruction of Babylon. Note, Great men are but instruments which the great God makes use of to serve his own purposes. He hath variety of instruments, hath them at command, hath armouries ready to be opened according as the occasion is. "This is the work of the Lord God of hosts." Note, When God hath work to do, he will make it appear that he is God of hosts, and will not want instruments to do it with.

Secondly. Instructions are given them what to do. In general, "Do according to all that I have commanded thee," ver. 21. It was said of Cyrus, *Isa.* xliv. 28, He shall perform all my pleasure in his expedition against Babylon. They must "waste and utterly destroy after them;" when they have destroyed once, they must go over them again; or, destroy their posterity that should come after them. They must "open her storehouses," ver. 26, rifle her treasures, and turn her artillery against herself; they must "cast her up as heaps;" let all the wealth and pomp of Babylon be shovelled up in a heap of ruins and rubbish. 'Tread her down as heaps,' so the margin reads it, and destroy her utterly. See how little account the great God makes of those things which men so much value, and value themselves by. Their princes and great men, that are fat and bulky, shall fall by the sword, not as men of war in the field of battle, which we call a bed of honour, but as beasts by the butcher's hand; ver. 27, "Slay all her bullocks," all her mighty men, let them go down sottishly and insensibly, as an ox to the slaughter. "Woe unto them," their cause is the more sad for the little sense they have of it; their day is come to fall, the time when they must be reckoned with, and they are not aware of it.

Thirdly. Assurances are given them of success. Let them do what God commands, and they shall accomplish what he threatens. A great destruction shall be made, ver. 22. Babylon shall become a desolation, ver. 23; her young men, and all her men of war, shall be cut off in that day, that should have been her defence, ver. 30. God is against her, ver. 31; he hath laid a snare for her, ver. 24; he hath formed this enterprise against her, that she should be surprised as a bird taken in a snare. Cyrus shall no doubt prevail, for he fights under God. God will kindle a fire in the cities of Babylon, ver. 32, and who can stand before him when he is angry, or quench the fire he has kindled?

Fourthly. Reasons are given for these severe dealings with Babylon. They that are employed in this war may, if they please, know the grounds of it, and be satisfied in the justice of it, which it is fit all should be that are called to such work. 1. Babylon has been very troublesome, vexatious, and injurious to all its neighbours. It has been "the hammer of the whole earth," ver. 23, beating, beating down and beating to pieces, all the nations far and near. It has done so long enough, it is time now that it be cut asunder and broken. Note, He that is the God of nations will, sooner or later, assert the injured rights of nations against those that unjustly and violently invade them. The God of the whole earth will break the hammer of the whole earth. 2. Babylon has bid defiance to God himself; "Thou hast striven against the Lord," ver. 24, hast joined issue with him, (so the word signifies,) as in law or battle, hast openly opposed him, set up rivals with him, raised rebellion against him, therefore thou art now found and caught, as in a snare. Note, Those that strive against the Lord will soon find themselves overmatched. 3. Babylon ruined Jerusalem, the holy city, and the holy house there, and must now be called to an account for that. This is the manifesto published in Zion, in the day of Babylon's visitation; it is "the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his temple," ver. 28. The burning of the temple, and carrying away the vessels of that, was an article in the charge against Babylon, on which greater stress was laid than upon its being the hammer of the whole earth, for Zion was the joy and glory of the whole earth. Note, Whatever wrong is done to God's church, his temple in the world, it will certainly be reckoned for; and no vengeance will be sorer and heavier than the vengeance of the temple. 4. Babylon had been very haughty and insolent, and therefore must have a fall, for it is the glory of God to look upon those that are proud, and to abase them, *Job* xl. 12. "I am against thee, O thou most proud," ver. 31. 'Thou pride,' so the word is; and again, ver. 32, as proud as pride itself. Note, The pride of men's hearts sets God against them, and ripens them apace for ruin; for God resists the proud, and will bring them down. The most proud shall stumble and fall; they shall fall not so much by others thrusting them down as by their own stumbling; for they hold their heads so high that they never look under their feet, to choose their way, and avoid stumblingblocks, but walk at all adventures. Babylon's pride must unavoidably be her ruin, for "she has been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel," ver. 29; has insulted him in insulting over his people; she has made him her enemy, and therefore, when she is fallen none shall raise her up, ver. 32. Who can help those up whom God will throw down?

33 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
The children of Israel and the children of Judah *were* oppressed together:
And all that took them captives held them fast;
They refused to let them go.
34 Their Redeemer *is* strong;
The LORD of hosts *is* his name:
He shall throughly plead their cause,
That he may give rest to the land,
And disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.
35 A sword *is* upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD,
And upon the inhabitants of Babylon,
And upon her princes, and upon her wise *men*.
36 A sword *is* upon the liars; and they shall dote: [mayed.
A sword *is* upon her mighty men; and they shall be dis-
37 A sword *is* upon their horses, and upon their chariots,
And upon all the mingled people that *are* in the midst
And they shall become as women: [of her;
A sword *is* upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.
38 A drought *is* upon her waters;
and they shall be dried up:
For it *is* the land of graven images,
And they are mad upon *their* idols.
39 Therefore the wild beasts of the desert
With the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell *there*,
And the owls shall dwell therein:
And it shall be no more inhabited for ever;
Neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.
40 As God overthrow Sodom and Gomorrah
And the neighbour *cities* thereof, saith the LORD;
So shall no man abide there,
Neither shall any son of man dwell therein.
41 Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation,
And many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

ASSYRIAN GOD.

42 They shall hold the bow and the lance:
They *are* cruel, and will not shew mercy:
Their voice shall roar like the sea,
And they shall ride upon horses,
Every one put in array, like a man to the battle,
Against thee, O daughter of Babylon.
43 The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them,
And his hands waxed feeble:
Anguish took hold of him,
And pangs as of a woman in travail.

44 Behold, he shall come up
Like a lion from the swelling of Jordan
Unto the habitation of the strong:
But I will make them suddenly run away from her;
And who *is* a chosen *man, that* I may appoint over her?
For who *is* like me? and who will appoint me the time?
And who *is* that shepherd that will stand before me?
45 Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD,
That he hath taken against Babylon;
And his purposes, that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans:
Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out:
Surely he shall make *their* habitation desolate with them.
46 At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved,
And the cry is heard among the nations.

We have in these verses,

First. Israel's sufferings, and their deliverance out of those sufferings. God takes notice of the bondage of his people in Babylon, as he did of their bondage in Egypt; he hath surely seen it, and has heard their cry. Israel and Judah were "oppressed together," ver. 33. Those that remained of the captives of the ten tribes, upon the uniting of the kingdoms of Assyria and Chaldea, seemed to have come and mingled themselves with those of the two tribes, and to have mingled tears with them, so that they were oppressed together. They were humble supplicants for their liberty, and that was all; they could not attempt any thing towards it, for all that took them captives held them fast, and were quite too hard for them. But this is their comfort in distress, that, though they are weak, "their Redeemer is strong," ver. 34; their avenger, so the word signifies, that has a right to them, and will claim his right, and make good his claim: he is stronger than their enemies, that hold them fast; he can overpower all the force that is against them, and put strength into his own people, though they are very weak. "The Lord of hosts is his name," and he will answer his name, and make it to appear that he is what his people call him, and will be that to them for which they depend upon him. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of the people of God that, though they have hosts against them, they have the Lord of hosts for them. And "he shall thoroughly plead their cause;" pleading he shall plead it, plead it with jealousy, plead it effectually, plead it and carry it, "that he may give rest to the land," to his people's land, rest from all their enemies round about. This is applicable to all believers that complain of the dominion of sin, and corruption, and of their own weakness and manifold infirmities, let them know that "their Redeemer is strong," he is able to keep what they commit to him, and he will plead their cause; sin shall not have dominion over them, he will make them free, and they shall be free indeed; he will give them rest, that rest which remains for the people of God.

Secondly. Babylon's sin, and their punishment for that sin.

1. The sins they are here charged with are idolatry and persecution. 1st. They oppressed the people of God, they held them fast, and would not let them go; they "opened not the house of his prisoners," *Isa.* xiv. 17. This was God's quarrel with them, as of old with Pharaoh; it cost him dear, and yet they would not take warning. Therefore the inhabitants of Babylon must be disquieted, ver. 34, because they have disquieted God's people, whose honour and comfort he is jealous for, and therefore will recompense tribulation to those that trouble them, as well as rest to them that are troubled, 2 *Thes.* i. 6, 7. 2nd. They wronged God himself, and robbed him, giving that glory to others which is due to him alone; for, ver. 38, it is the land of graven images. All parts of the country abounded with idols, and they were mad upon them, were in love with them, and doated on them, cared not what cost and pains they were at in the worship of them, were unwearied in paying their respects to them; and in all this they were wretchedly infatuated, and acted like men out of their wits. They were carried on in their idolatry without reason or discretion, like men in a perfect fury. The word here used for idols properly signifies terrors, Enim, the name given to giants that were formidable, because they made the images of their gods to look frightful, to strike a terror upon fools and children. Their idols were scarecrows, yet they doated on them. Babylon was the mother of harlots, *Rev.* xvii. 5, the source of idolatry. Note, It is the maddest thing in the world to make a god of any creature; and those who are proud against the Lord, the true God, are justly given up to strong delusions, to be mad upon idols, that cannot profit. But this madness is wickedness, for which sinners will be certainly and severely reckoned with.

2. The judgments of God upon them for these sins are such as will quite lay them waste, and ruin them.

1st. All that should be their defence and support shall be cut off by the sword. The Chaldeans had long been God's sword, wherewith he had done execution upon the sinful nations round about; but now, they being as bad as any of them, or worse, a sword is brought upon them, even upon the inhabitants of Babylon, ver. 35, a sword of war; and as it is in God's hand, sent and directed by him, it is a sword of justice. It shall be, *First.* Upon their princes. They shall fall by it, and their dignity, wealth, and power shall not secure them. *Secondly* Upon their wise men, their philosophers, their statesmen, and privy counsellors. Their learning and policy shall neither secure themselves nor stand the public in any stead. *Thirdly.* Upon their soothsayers and astrologers, here called the liars, ver. 36, for they cheated with their prognostications of peace and prosperity. The sword upon them shall make them doat, so that they shall talk like fools, and be as men that had lost all their wits. Note, God has a sword that can reach the soul, and affect the mind, and bring men under spiritual plagues. *Fourthly.* Upon their mighty men. A sword shall be upon their spirits; if they are not slain, yet they shall be dismayed, and shall be no longer mighty men; for what stead will their hands stand them in when their hearts fail them. *Fifthly.* Upon their militia, ver. 37. The sword shall be upon their horses and chariots; the invaders shall make themselves masters of all their warlike stores, shall seize their horses and chariots for themselves, or destroy them. The troops of other nations, that were in their service, shall be quite disheartened, the mingled people shall become as weak and timorous as women. *Sixthly.* Upon their exchequer. The sword shall be upon her treasures, which are the sinews of war, and they shall be robbed and made use of by the enemy against them. See what universal destruction the sword makes when it comes with commission.

2nd. The country shall be made desolate, ver. 38, the waters shall be dried up; the water that secures the city. Cyrus drew the river Euphrates into so many channels as made it passable for his army, so that they got with ease to the walls of Babylon, which were thought to be by that river inaccessible. The water likewise that makes the country fruitful should be dried up, so that it shall be turned into barrenness, and shall be no more inhabited by the children of men, but by the "wild beasts of the desert," ver. 39. This was foretold concerning Babylon, *Isa.* xiii. 19—22. It shall become like Sodom and Gomorrah, ver. 40. The same was foretold concerning Edom, *ch.* xlix. 18. As the Chaldeans had laid Edom waste, so they shall themselves be laid waste.

3rd. The king and kingdom shall be put into the utmost confusion and consternation by the enemies' invading of them, ver. 41—43. All the expressions here used, speaking the formidable power of the invaders, the terrors wherewith they should array themselves, and the mighty fright which both court and country should be put into thereby, we met with before, *ch.* vi. 22—24, concerning the Chaldeans' invading the land of Judah. The battle which is there said to be against thee, O daughter of Zion, is here said to be against thee, O daughter of Babylon, to intimate that they should be paid in their own coin. Those that are for terror and destruction to others, God can find out such as shall be for terror and destruction to them; and those who have dealt cruelly, and have shewed no mercy, may expect to be cruelly dealt with, and to find no mercy. Only there is one difference between these passages: there it is said, "We have heard the fame thereof, and our hands wax feeble," &c.; here it is said, "The king of Babylon has heard the report," and "his hands waxed feeble," which intimates, that that proud and daring prince shall in the day of his distress be as weak and dispirited as the meanest Israelites were in the day of their distress.

4th. That they shall be as ill hurt as frightened; for the invader shall come up as a lion, to tear and destroy, ver. 44; and shall make them and their habitation desolate, ver. 45; and the desolation shall be so astonishing, that all the nations about shall be terrified by it, ver. 46. These three verses we had before, *ch.* xlix. 19—21, in the prophecy of the destruction of Edom, which was accomplished by the Chaldeans, and they are here repeated *mutatis mutandis*,—with a few necessary alterations,' in the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was to be accomplished upon the Chaldeans, to shew that, though the distributions of providence may appear unequal for a time, its retributions will be equal at last; When thou shalt make an end to spoil thou shalt be spoiled, *Isa.* xxxiii. 1; *Rev.* xiii. 10.

CHAPTER LI.

The prophet in this chapter goes on with the prediction of Babylon's fall, to which other prophets also bare witness. He is very large and lively in describing the foresight God had given him of it, for the encouragement of the pious captives whose deliverance depended upon it, and was to be the result of it. Here is, I. The record of Babylon's doom with the particulars of it, intermixed with the grounds of God's controversy with her, many aggravations of her fall, and great encouragements given from thence to the Israel of God that suffered such hard things by her, ver. 1—58. II. The representation and ratification of this, by the throwing of a copy of this prophecy into the river Euphrates, ver. 59—64.

THUS saith the LORD;
Behold, I will raise up against Babylon,
And against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me,
A destroying wind;
2 And will send unto Babylon fanners,
That shall fan her, and shall empty her land; [about.
For in the day of trouble they shall be against her round
3 Against *him that* bendeth let the archer bend his bow,
And against *him that* lifteth himself up in his brigan-
And spare ye not her young men; [dine:
Destroy ye utterly all her host.
4 Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans,
And *they that are* thrust through in her streets.
5 For Israel *hath* not *been* forsaken,
Nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts;
Though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.
6 Flee out of the midst of Babylon,
And deliver every man his soul:
Be not cut off in her iniquity;
For this *is* the time of the LORD's vengeance;
He will render unto her a recompence.
7 Babylon *hath been* a golden cup in the LORD's hand,
That made all the earth drunken:
The nations have drunken of her wine;
Therefore the nations are mad.
8 Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed:
Howl for her;
Take balm for her pain,
If so be she may be healed.
9 We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed.
Forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country:
For her judgment reacheth unto heaven,
And is lifted up *even* to the skies.
10 The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness:

Come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD
11 Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: [our God.
The LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the
For his device *is* against Babylon, to destroy it; [Medes:
Because it *is* the vengeance of the LORD,
The vengeance of his temple.
12 Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon,
Make the watch strong, set up the watchmen,
Prepare the ambushes:
For the LORD hath both devised and done
That which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon.
13 O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures,
Thine end is come, *and* the measure of thy covetousness.
14 The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, *saying*,
Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillers;
And they shall lift up a shout against thee.
15 He hath made the earth by his power,
He hath established the world by his wisdom,
And hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.
16 When he uttereth *his* voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens;
And he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of
He maketh lightnings with rain, [the earth:
And bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.
17 Every man is brutish by *his* knowledge;
Every founder is confounded by the graven image:
For his molten image *is* falsehood,
And *there is* no breath in them.
18 They *are* vanity, the work of errors:
In the time of their visitation they shall perish.
19 The portion of Jacob *is* not like them;
For he *is* the former of all things:
And *Israel is* the rod of his inheritance:
The LORD of hosts *is* his name.
20 Thou *art* my battle ax *and* weapons of war:
For with thee will I break in pieces the nations,
And with thee will I destroy kingdoms; [rider;
21 And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his
And with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider;
22 With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman;
And with thee will I break in pieces old and young;
And with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid; [flock;
23 I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his
And with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen;
And with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers.
24 And I will render unto Babylon
And to all the inhabitants of Chaldea
All their evil that they have done in Zion
In your sight, saith the LORD.
25 Behold, I *am* against thee, O destroying mountain, saith
Which destroyest all the earth: [the LORD,
And I will stretch out mine hand upon thee,
And roll thee down from the rocks,
And will make thee a burnt mountain.
26 And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner,
Nor a stone for foundations;
But thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.
27 Set ye up a standard in the land,
Blow the trumpet among the nations,
Prepare the nations against her,
Call together against her the kingdoms
Of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz;
Appoint a captain against her;
Cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillers.
28 Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the
The captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, [Medes,
And all the land of his dominion.
29 And the land shall tremble and sorrow: [Babylon,
For every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against
To make the land of Babylon a desolation
Without an inhabitant.
30 The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight,
They have remained in *their* holds:
Their might hath failed;
They became as women:
They have burned her dwellingplaces;
Her bars are broken.
31 One post shall run to meet another,
And one messenger to meet another,
To shew the king of Babylon
That his city is taken at *one* end,
32 And that the passages are stopped,
And the reeds they have burned with fire,
And the men of war are affrighted.
33 For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel;
The daughter of Babylon *is* like a threshingfloor,
It is time to thresh her:
Yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.
34 Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me,
He hath crushed me,
He hath made me an empty vessel,
He hath swallowed me up like a dragon,
He hath filled his belly with my delicates,
He hath cast me out. [Babylon,
35 The violence done to me and to my flesh *be* upon
Shall the inhabitant of Zion say;
And my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea,
Shall Jerusalem say
36 Therefore thus saith the LORD; [thee;
Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for
And I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.
37 And Babylon shall become heaps,
A dwellingplace for dragons,
An astonishment, and an hissing,
Without an inhabitant.
38 They shall roar together like lions:
They shall yell as lions' whelps.
39 In their heat I will make their feasts,
And I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice,
And sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake,
Saith the LORD.
40 I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter,
Like rams with he goats.
41 How is Sheshach taken!
And how is the praise of the whole earth surprised!
How is Babylon become an astonishment among the
42 The sea is come up upon Babylon: [nations!
She is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof.
43 Her cities are a desolation,
A dry land, and a wilderness,
A land wherein no man dwelleth,
Neither doth *any* son of man pass thereby.
44 And I will punish Bel in Babylon,
And I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: [him:
And the nations shall not flow together any more unto

Yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.
45 My people, go ye out of the midst of her,
And deliver ye every man his soul
From the fierce anger of the LORD.
46 And lest your heart faint, [land;
And ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the
A rumour shall both come *one* year,
And after that in *another* year *shall come* a rumour,
And violence in the land, ruler against ruler.
47 Therefore, behold, the days come, [Babylon:
That I will do judgment upon the graven images of
And her whole land shall be confounded,
And all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.
48 Then the heaven and the earth, and all that *is* therein,
shall sing for Babylon:
For the spoilers shall come unto her from the north,
saith the LORD.
49 As Babylon *hath caused* the slain of Israel to fall,
So at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.
50 Ye that have escaped the sword, go away,
Stand not still:
Remember the LORD afar off,
And let Jerusalem come into your mind.
51 We are confounded, because we have heard reproach:
Shame hath covered our faces: [house.
For strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's
52 Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That I will do judgment upon her graven images:
And through all her land the wounded shall groan.
53 Though Babylon should mount up to heaven,
And though she should fortify the height of her strength,
Yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the
54 A sound of a cry *cometh* from Babylon, [LORD.
And great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans:
55 Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon,
And destroyed out of her the great voice;
When her waves do roar like great waters,
A noise of their voice is uttered:
56 Because the spoiler is come upon her,
Even upon Babylon,
And her mighty men are taken,
Every one of their bows is broken:
For the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite.
57 And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise *men*,
Her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men:
And they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake,
Saith the King, whose name *is* the LORD of hosts.
58 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken,
And her high gates shall be burned with fire;
And the people shall labour in vain,
And the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

OVERFLOW OF THE EUPHRATES ON BABYLON.—ver. 42.

The particulars of this copious prophecy are dispersed and interwoven, and the same things left and returned to so often, that it could not well be divided into parts, but we must endeavour to collect them under their proper heads. Let us then observe here,

First. An acknowledgment of the great pomp and power that Babylon had been in, and the use that God in his providence had made of it; ver. 7, "Babylon hath been a golden cup," a rich and glorious empire, a golden city, *Isa.* xiv. 4; a head of gold, *Dan.* ii. 38; filled with all good things as a cup with wine; nay, she had been "a golden cup in the Lord's hand;" he had in a particular manner filled and favoured her with blessings; he had made the earth drunk with this cup; some were intoxicated with her pleasures, and debauched by her, others intoxicated with her terrors, and destroyed by her. And in both senses the New Testament Babylon is said to have made the kings of the earth drunk, *Rev.* xvii. 4; xviii. 3. Babylon had also been God's battle-axe; it was so at this time when Jeremiah prophesied, and was likely to be yet more so, ver. 20. The forces of Babylon were God's weapons of war, tools in his hand with which he broke in pieces and knocked down nations and kingdoms, horses and chariots, which are so much the strength of kingdoms, ver. 21; man and woman, young and old, with which kingdoms are replenished, ver. 22; the shepherd and his flock, the husbandman and his oxen, with which kingdoms are maintained and supplied, ver. 24. Such havoc as this the Chaldeans had made, when God employed them as instruments of his wrath for the chastising of the nations; and yet now Babylon herself must fall. Note, Those that have carried all before them a great while, yet will at length meet with their match, and their day also will come to fall; the rod will itself be thrown into the fire at last; nor can any think it will exempt them from God's judgments, that they have been instrumental in executing his judgments on others.

Secondly. A just complaint made of Babylon, and a charge drawn up against her by the Israel of God. 1. They are complained of for their incorrigible wickedness; ver. 9, "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed." The people of God, that were captives among them, endeavoured according to the instructions given them, *ch.* x. 11, to convince them of the folly of their idolatry, but they could not do it; still they doated as much as ever upon their graven images, and therefore they resolve to quit them, and go to their own country. Yet some understand this as spoken by the forces they had hired for their assistance, declaring they had done their best to save her from ruin; but it was all to no purpose, and therefore they had as good go home to their respective countries; "for her judgment reacheth unto heaven," and it is in vain to withstand it, or think to avert it. 2. They are complained of for their inveterate malice against Israel. Other nations had been hardly used by the Chaldeans, but Israel only complains to God of it, and with confidence appeals to him, ver. 34, 35. "The king of Babylon has devoured me, and crushed me," and never thought he could do enough to ruin me; he has emptied me of all that was valuable, "hath swallowed me up" as a dragon or whale swallows up the little fish by shoals; "he hath filled his belly," filled his treasures, "with my delicates," with all my pleasant things, and "hath cast me out," cast me away as a vessel in which there is no pleasure; and now let them be accountable for all this. Zion and Jerusalem shall say, Let the violence done to me and my children, that are my own flesh, and pieces of myself, and all the blood of my people which they have shed like water, be upon them; let the guilt of it lie upon them, and let it be required at their hands. Note, Ruin is not far off from those that lie under the guilt of wrong done to God's people.

Thirdly. Judgment given upon this appeal by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, on behalf of Israel against Babylon. He sits in the throne judging right, is ready to receive complaints, and answers, ver. 36, "I will plead thy cause, leave it with me;" I will in due time plead it effectually, and take vengeance for thee; and every drop of Jerusalem's blood shall be accounted for with interest. Israel and Judah seem to have been neglected and forgotten, but God has an eye to them, ver. 5. It is true, "their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel." They were a provoking people, and their sins were a great offence to God as a holy God, and as their God,—their Holy One; and therefore he justly delivered them up into the hands of their enemies,—might justly have abandoned them, and left them to perish in their hands; but God deals better with them than they deserve; and, notwithstanding their iniquities, and his severities, Israel is not forsaken, is not cast off, though he be cast out, but is owned and looked after by his God, by the Lord of hosts. God is his God still, and will act for him as the Lord of hosts, a God of power. Note, Though God's people may have broken his laws, and fallen under his rebukes, yet it doth not therefore follow that they are thrown out of covenant, but God's care of them and love to them will flourish again, *Ps.* lxxxix. 30, 33. The Chaldeans thought they should never be called to an account for what they had done against God's Israel, but there is a time fixed for vengeance, ver. 6. We cannot expect it should come sooner than the time fixed; but then it will come. He will render unto Babylon a recompence; for the avenging of Israel is the vengeance of the Lord, who espouseth their cause; it is the vengeance of his temple, ver. 11, as before, *ch.* l. 28. The Lord God of recompences, the God to whom vengeance belongs, will surely requite, ver. 56, will pay them home; he will render unto Babylon all the evil they have done in Zion, ver. 24. He will return it in the sight of his people; they shall have the satisfaction to see their cause pleaded with jealousy; they shall not only live to see those judgments brought upon Babylon, but they shall plainly see them to be the punishment of the wrong they have done to Zion. Any man may see it, and say, Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth; for, just as Babylon "hath caused the slain of Israel to fall," has not only slain those that were found in arms, but all without distinction, even all the land, almost all were put to the sword; so at Babylon shall fall, not only the slain of the city, but of all the country, ver. 49. Cyrus shall measure to the Chaldeans the same that they measured to the Jews, so that every observer may discern that God is recompensing them for what they did against his people. Zion's children shall in a particular manner triumph in it; ver. 10, "The Lord hath brought forth our

righteousness." He has appeared in our behalf against those that dealt unjustly with us, and has righted us; he has also made it to appear that he is reconciled to us, and that we are yet in his eyes a righteous nation. Let it therefore be spoken to his praise, "Come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God," that others may be invited to join with us in praising him.

Fourthly. A declaration of the greatness and sovereignty of that God who espouseth Zion's cause, and undertakes to reckon with this proud and potent enemy, ver. 14. It is the Lord of hosts that hath said it, that hath sworn it, hath sworn it by himself; for he could swear by no greater, that he will fill Babylon with vast and incredible numbers of the enemies' forces; will "fill it with men as with caterpillars," that shall overpower it with multitudes, and need only to lift up a shout against it, for that shall be so terrible as to dispirit all the inhabitants, and make them an easy prey to this numerous army. But who and where is he that can break so powerful a kingdom as Babylon? The prophet gives an account of him from the description he had formerly given of him, and of his sovereignty and victory over all pretenders, *ch.* x. 12—16, which was there intended for the conviction of the Babylonian idolaters, and the confirmation of God's Israel in the faith and worship of the God of Israel; and it is here repeated to shew that God will convince those by his judgments who would not be convinced by his word, that he is God over all. Let not any doubt but that he who has determined to destroy Babylon is able to make his words good; for, 1. He is the God that made the world, ver. 15, and therefore nothing is too hard for him to do. It is in his name that our help stands, and on him our hope is built. 2. He has the command of all the creatures that he has made, ver. 16. His providence is a continued creation; he hath wind and rain at his dispose; if he speak the word, "there is a multitude of waters in the heavens," and it is a wonder how they hang there; fed by vapours out of the earth, and it is a wonder how they ascend thence. Lightnings and rains seem contraries, as fire and water, and yet they are produced together; and the wind which seems arbitrary in its motions, and we know not whence it comes, yet we are sure is brought out of his treasuries. 3. The idols that oppose the accomplishment of his word are a mere sham, and their worshippers brutish people, ver. 17, 18. The idols are falsehood, they are vanity, they are the work of errors; when they come to be visited, that is, to be examined and inquired into, they perish, that is their reputation sinks, and they appear to be nothing, and those that make them are like unto them. But between the God of Israel and these gods of the heathen there is no comparison; ver. 19, "The portion of Jacob is not like them." God, who speaks this, and will do it, is the former of all things, and the Lord of all hosts, and therefore can do what he will, and there is a near relation between him and his people; for he is their portion, and they are his; they put a confidence in him as their portion, and he is pleased to take complacency in them, and a particular care of them, as the lot of his inheritance; and therefore he will do what is best for them. The repetition of these things here which were said before, intimates both the certainty and importance of them, and obligeth us to take special notice of them. "God hath spoken once, yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongs to God;" power to destroy the most formidable enemies of his church. And if God thus speak once, yea, twice, we are inexcusable if we do not perceive it, and receive it.

Fifthly. A description of the instruments that are to be employed in this service. God hath "raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes," ver. 11, Darius and Cyrus, who came against Babylon by a Divine instinct; for God's device is against Babylon, to destroy it. They do it, but God devised it; he designed it, they are but accomplishing his purpose, and acting as he directed. Note, God's counsel shall stand, and according to it all hearts shall move. Those whom God employs against Babylon are compared, ver. 1, to a destroying wind, which either by its coldness blasts the fruits of the earth or by its fierceness blows down all before it. This wind is brought out of God's treasuries, ver. 16, and it is here said to be raised up against them that dwell in the midst of the Chaldeans,—those of other nations that inhabit among them, and are incorporated with them. The Chaldeans rise up against God, by falling down before idols, and against them God will raise up destroyers, for he will be too hard for them that contest with him. These enemies are compared to fanners, ver. 2, who shall drive them away as chaff is driven away by the fan. The Chaldeans had been fanners to winnow God's people, *ch.* xv. 7, and to empty them; and now they shall themselves be in like manner despoiled and dispersed.

Sixthly. An ample commission given them to destroy and lay all waste. Let them bend their bow against the archers of the Chaldeans, ver. 3, and not spare her young men, but utterly destroy them; "for the Lord hath both devised and done what he spake against Babylon," ver. 12. This may animate the instruments he employs, by assuring them of success. The methods they take are such as God has devised, and therefore they shall surely prosper; what he hath spoken shall be done, for he himself will do it. And therefore let all necessary preparations be made; this they are called to, ver. 27, 28. Let a standard be set up, under which to list soldiers for this expedition; let a trumpet be blown to call men together to it, and animate them in it; let the nations out of which Cyrus' army is to be raised prepare their recruits; let the kingdoms of Ararat and Minni, and Ashkenaz, of Armenia, both the higher and the lower, and of Ascania, about Phrygia and Bithynia, send in their quota of men for this service. Let general officers be appointed, and the cavalry advance; let the horses come up in great numbers, as the caterpillars, and come like them leaping and pawing in the valley. Let them lay the country waste as caterpillars do, *Joel* ii. 4, especially rough caterpillars. Let the kings and captains prepare nations against Babylon, for the service is great, and there is occasion for many hands to be employed in it.

Seventhly. The weakness of the Chaldeans, and their inability to make head against this threatening, destroying force. When God employed them against other nations, they had spirit and strength to act offensively, and went on with admirable resolution, conquering and to conquer. But, now it comes to their turn to be reckoned with, all their might and courage is gone, their hearts fail them, and none of all their men of might and mettle have found their hands to act so much as defensively. They are called upon here to prepare for action, but it is ironically, and in an upbraiding way; ver. 11, "Make bright the arrows," which are grown rusty through disuse; "gather the shields," that in a time of long peace and security have been scattered and thrown out of the way; ver. 12, "Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon," upon the towers on those walls, to summon all that owed suit and service to that mother city, now to come in to her assistance. Let them make the watch as strong as they can, and appoint the sentinels to their respective posts, and prepare ambushes for the reception of the enemy. This intimates that they would be found very secure and remiss, and would need to be thus quickened,—and they were so to that degree, that they were in the midst of their revels when the city was taken,—but that all their preparations should be to no purpose; who will may call them to it, but they shall have no heart to come at the call, ver. 29. The whole "land shall tremble and sorrow," a universal consternation shall seize upon them; for they shall see both the irresistible arm and the irreversible counsel and decree of God against them; they shall see that God is making Babylon a desolation, and therein is performing what he hath purposed; and then the mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, ver. 30. God having taken away their strength and spirit, so that they have remained in their holds, not daring so much as to peep forth, the might both of their hearts and of their hands fails. They became as timorous as women, so that the enemy has, without any resistance, burnt her dwelling-places, and broken her bars. It is to the same purpose, ver. 56—58. When the spoiler comes upon Babylon, her mighty men, that should make head against him, are presently taken, their weapons of war fail them; "every one of their bows is broken," and stands them in no stead. Their politics fail them; they call councils of war, but their princes and captains that sit in council to concert measures for the common safety are made drunk; they are as men intoxicated through stupidity or despair; they can form no right notions of things, stagger, and are unsteady in their counsels and resolves, and dash one against another, and like drunken men fall out among themselves; and at length "sleep a perpetual sleep," and never awake from their wine, the wine of God's wrath, for it is to them an opiate that lays them into a fatal lethargy. The walls of their city fail them, ver. 58. When the enemy had found ways to ford Euphrates, which was thought impassable, yet sure, think they, the walls are impregnable; they are the broad walls of Babylon, or, as the margin reads it, the walls of broad Babylon. The compass of the city within the walls was 385 furlongs, some say 408, that is about sixty miles; the walls were 200 cubits high, and fifty cubits broad, so that two chariots might easily pass by one another upon them. Some say there was a threefold wall about the inner city, and the like about the outer; and the stones of the wall being laid in pitch instead of mortar, *Gen.* xi. 3, were scarce separable. And yet they shall be utterly broken, and the high gates and towers shall be burnt, and the people that are employed in defence of the city shall labour in vain, in the fire; they shall quite tire themselves, but shall do no good.

Eighthly. The destruction that shall be made of Babylon by these invaders.

1. It is a certain destruction. The doom is past, and it cannot be reversed; a Divine power is engaged against it, which cannot be resisted; ver. 8, "Babylon is fallen and destroyed," is as sure to fall, to fall into destruction, as if it were fallen and destroyed already; though when Jeremiah prophesied this, and many a year after, it was in the height of its power and greatness. God declares, God appears against Babylon; ver. 25, "Behold, I am against thee," and those cannot stand long whom God is against; he will stretch out his hand upon it, a hand which no creature can bear the weight of, or withstand the force of. It is his purpose, which shall be performed, that Babylon must be a desolation, ver. 29.

2. It is a righteous destruction. Babylon has made herself meet for it, and therefore cannot fail to meet with it; for, ver. 25, Babylon has been a destroying mountain, very lofty and bulky as a mountain, and destroying all the earth, as the stones that are tumbled from high mountains spoil the grounds about them. But now it shall itself be rolled down from its rocks, which were as the foundations on which it stood; it shall be levelled, its pomp and power broken. It is now a burning mountain, like Etna and the other volcanos, that throw out fire, to the terror of all about them. But it shall be a burnt mountain; it shall at length have consumed itself, and shall remain a heap of ashes; so will this world be at the end of time. Again; ver. 33, "Babylon is like a threshing-floor," in which the people of God have been long threshed, as sheaves in the floor. But now the time is come that she shall herself be threshed, and her sheaves in her. Her princes and great men, and all her inhabitants, shall be beaten in their own land, as in the threshing-floor. The threshing-floor is prepared, Babylon is by sin made meet to be a seat of war, and her people, like corn at harvest, are ripe for destruction, *Rev.* xiv. 16; *Mic.* iv. 12.

3. It is an unavoidable destruction. Babylon seems to be well fenced and fortified against it; "She dwells upon many waters," ver. 13. The situation of her country is such as that it seems inaccessible, it is so surrounded, and the march of an enemy into it so embarrassed by rivers. In allusion to this, the New Testament Babylon is said to sit upon many waters, that is, to rule over many nations, as the other Babylon did, *Rev.* xvii. 15. Babylon is abundant in treasures, and yet "thine end is come," and neither thy waters nor thy wealth shall secure thee. This end that comes shall be "the measure of thy covetousness," that is, it shall be the stint of thy gettings; it shall set bounds to thine ambition and avarice, which otherwise had been boundless. God, by the destruction of Babylon, said to its proud waves, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no farther." Note, If men will not set a measure to their covetousness by wisdom and grace, God will set a measure to it by his judgments. Babylon, thinking herself very safe, and very great, was very proud; but she will be deceived, ver. 53. Though Babylon should mount her walls and palaces up to heaven, and though (because what is high is apt to totter) she should take care to "fortify the height of her strength," yet all will not do, God will send spoilers against her, that shall break through her strength, and bring down her height.

4. It is a gradual destruction, which, if they had pleased, they might have foreseen, and had warning of; for, ver. 46, a rumour will come one year, that Cyrus is making vast preparations for war, and after that, in another year, shall come a rumour, that his design is upon Babylon, and he is steering his course that way; so that when he was a great way off they might have sent and desired conditions of peace; but they were too proud, too secure, to do that, and their hearts were hardened to their destruction.

5. Yet when it comes it is a surprising destruction. Babylon is suddenly fallen, ver. 15; the destruction comes upon them when they did not think of it, and is perfected in a little time, as that of the New Testament Babylon in one hour, *Rev.* xviii. 17. The king of Babylon, who should have been observing the approaches of the enemy, was himself at such a distance from the place where the attack was made, that it was a great while ere he had notice that the city was taken, so that they who were posted near the place sent one messenger, one courier, after another with advice of it, ver. 31. The foot-posts shall meet at the court from several quarters with this intelligence to the king of Babylon, that his city is taken at one end, and there is nothing to obstruct the progress of the conquerors, but they will be at the other end quickly. They are to tell him that the enemy hath seized the passes, ver. 32, the forts, or blockades upon the river; and, having got over the river, they set fire to the reeds, on the river side, to alarm and terrify the city, so that all the men of war are affrighted and have thrown down their arms, and surrendered at discretion. The messengers come like Job's, one upon the heels of another, with these tidings, which are immediately confirmed with a witness, by the enemies being in the palace, and slaying the king himself, *Dan.* v. 30. And that profane feast which they were celebrating at the very time when the city was taken, which was both an evidence of their strange security and a great advantage to the enemy, seems here to be referred to; ver. 38, 39, "They shall roar together like lions," as men in their revels use to do, when the wine is got into their heads. They call it singing, but in Scripture language, and in the language of sober men, it is called yelling like lions' whelps. It is likely they were drinking confusion to Cyrus and his army, with loud huzzas. Well, saith God, in their heat, when they are inflamed (*Isa.* v. 11) and their heads are hot with hard drinking, I will make their feasts, I will give them their potion; they have passed their cup

round, now "the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto them," *Hab.* ii. 15, 16; a cup of fury, which shall make them drunk, that they may rejoice, or rather that they may revel it, and sleep a perpetual sleep. Let them be as merry as they can with that bitter cup, but it shall lay them to sleep never to wake more, as ver. 57; for on that night, in the midst of the jollity, was Belshazzar slain.

6. It is to be a universal destruction. God will make thorough work of it; for, as he will perform what he hath purposed, so he will perfect what he has begun. The slain shall fall in great abundance throughout the land of the Chaldeans; multitudes shall be "thrust through in her streets," ver. 4. They are brought "down like lambs to the slaughter," ver. 40, in such great numbers, so easily, and the enemies make no more of killing them than the butcher doth of killing lambs. The strength of the enemy, and their invading of them, is here compared to an irruption and inundation of waters; ver. 42, "The sea is come up upon Babylon," which, when it has once broke through its bounds, there is no fence against, so that she is covered with the multitude of its waves, —overpowered by a numerous army. Her cities then become a desolation, an uninhabited, uncultivated desert, ver. 43.

7. It is a destruction that shall reach the gods of Babylon, the idols and images, and fall with a particular weight upon them. In token that the whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall, and that throughout all the country the wounded shall groan, "I will do judgment upon her graven images," ver. 47; and again, ver. 52. All must needs perish, if their gods perish from whom they expect protection. Though the invaders are themselves idolaters, yet they shall destroy the images and temples of the gods of Babylon, as an earnest of the abolishing of all counterfeit deities. Bel was the principal idol that the Babylonians worshipped, and therefore that is by name here marked for destruction; ver. 44, "I will punish Bel," that great devourer, that image to which such abundance of sacrifices are offered, and such rich spoils dedicated, and to whose temple there is such vast resort, he shall disgorge what he has so greedily regaled himself with; God will bring forth out of his temple all the wealth laid up there, *Job* xx. 15. His altars shall be forsaken, none shall regard him any more, and so that idol, which was thought to be a wall to Babylon, shall fall, and fail them.

8. It shall be a final destruction. You may "take balm for her pain," but in vain; she that would not be healed by the word of God shall not be healed by his providence, ver. 8, 9. Babylon shall become heaps, ver. 37; and, to complete its infamy, no use shall be made even of the ruins of Babylon, so execrable shall they be, and attended with ill omens; ver. 26, "They shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations." People shall not care for having any thing to do with Babylon, or whatever belonged to it. Or it notes, that there shall be nothing left in Babylon on which to ground any hopes or attempts of raising it into a kingdom again; for, as it follows here, it shall be desolate for ever. St. Jerome saith, that in his time, though the ruins of Babylon's wall were to be seen, yet the ground inclosed by them was a forest of wild beasts.

Ninthly. Here is a call to God's people to go out of Babylon. It is their wisdom when the ruin is approaching to quit the city, and retire into the country; ver. 6, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon," and get into some remote corner, that you may save your lives, and may not be cut off in her iniquity. When God's judgments are abroad it is good to get as far as we can from those against whom they are levelled, as Israel from the tents of Korah. This agrees with the advice Christ gave his disciples, with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem: "Let them which be in Judæa flee to the mountains," *Mat.* xxiv. 16. It is their wisdom to get out of the midst of Babylon, lest they be involved, if not in her ruins, yet in her fears; ver. 45, 46, "Lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land." Though God told them that Cyrus should be their deliverer, and Babylon's destruction their deliverance, yet they had been told also that in the peace thereof they should have peace, and therefore the alarms given to Babylon would put them into a fright, and perhaps they might not have faith and consideration enough to suppress those fears, for which reason they are here advised to get out of the hearing of the alarms. Note, Those who have not grace enough to keep their temper in temptation should have wisdom enough to keep out of the way of temptation. But this is not all: it is not only their wisdom to quit the city when the ruin is approaching, but it is their duty to quit the country too when the ruin is accomplished, and they are set at liberty by the pulling down of the prison over their heads. This they are told, ver. 50, 51: Ye Israelites that have escaped the sword of the Chaldeans your oppressors, and of the Persians their destroyers, now the year of release is come, "go away, stand not still," hasten to your own country again, however you may be comfortably seated in Babylon; for this is not your rest, but Canaan is.

1. He puts them in mind of the inducements they had to return. "Remember the Lord afar off," his presence with you now, though you are here afar off from your native soil; his presence with your fathers formerly in the temple, though you are now afar off from the ruins of it. Note, Wherever we are, in the greatest depths, at the greatest distances, we may and must remember the Lord our God; and in the time of the greatest fears and hopes it is seasonable to remember the Lord. And "let Jerusalem come into your mind;" though it be now in ruins, yet favour its dust, *Ps.* cii. 14; though few of you ever saw it, yet believe the report you have had concerning it from those that wept when they remembered Zion; and think of Jerusalem until you come to a resolution to make the best of your way thither. Note, When the city of our solemnities is out of sight, yet it must not be out of mind; and it will be of great use to us, in our journey through this world, to let the heavenly Jerusalem come often into our mind.

2. He takes notice of the discouragement which the returning captives labour under, ver. 51. Being minded of Jerusalem, they cry out, "We are confounded," we cannot bear the thought of it, shame covers our faces at the mention of it, for we have heard of the reproach of the sanctuary, that it is profaned and ruined by strangers; how can we think of it with any pleasure? To which he answers, ver. 52, that the God of Israel will now triumph over the gods of Babylon, and so that reproach will be for ever rolled away. Note, The believing prospect of Jerusalem's recovery will keep us from being ashamed of Jerusalem's ruins.

Tenthly. Here is the different resentment of Babylon's fall, and it is the same we have of the New Testament Babylon, *Rev.* xviii. 9, 19. 1. Some shall lament the destruction of Babylon. There is the "sound of a cry," a great outcry coming from Babylon, ver. 54, lamenting this great destruction, the voice of mourning, because the Lord hath destroyed the voice of the multitude, that great voice of mirth which used to be heard in Babylon, ver. 55. We are told what they shall say in their lamentation, ver. 41. "How is Sheshach taken!" and how are we mistaken concerning her! How is that city surprised and become an astonishment among the nations, that was the praise, and glory, and admiration of the whole earth! See how that may fall into a general contempt which has been universally cried up. 2. Yet some shall rejoice in Babylon's fall, not as it is the misery of their fellow creatures, but as it is the manifestation of the righteous judgments of God, and as it opens the way for the release of God's captives; upon these accounts the heaven and earth, and all that is in both, "shall sing for Babylon," ver. 48; the church in heaven, and the church on earth, shall give to God the glory of his righteousness, and take notice of it with thankfulness to his praise. Babylon's ruin is Zion's praise.

59 The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And *this* Seraiah *was* a quiet prince. 60 So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, *even* all these words that are written against Babylon. 61 And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; 62 Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. 63 And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, *that* thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: 64 And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far *are* the words of Jeremiah.

We have been long attending the judgment of Babylon in this and the foregoing chapter, now here we have the conclusion of the whole matter.

1. A copy is taken of this prophecy, it should seem by Jeremiah himself, for Baruch his scribe is not mentioned here; ver. 60, Jeremiah wrote in a book all these words that are here written against Babylon. He received this notice that he might give it to all whom it might concern. It is of great advantage both to the propagating and to the perpetuating of the word of God to have it written, and to have copies taken of the law, prophets, and epistles.

2. It is sent to Babylon, to the captives there, by the hand of Seraiah, who went thither attendant on, or ambassador for, king Zedekiah, in the fourth year of his reign; ver. 59, He went with Zedekiah, or, as the margin reads it, on the behalf of Zedekiah, into Babylon. The character given of him is observable, that this Seraiah was a quiet prince, a prince of rest; he was in honour and power, but not as most of the princes then were, hot and heady, making parties and heading factions, and driving things furiously, but was of a calm temper, studied the things that made for peace, endeavoured to preserve a good understanding between the king his master and the king of Babylon, and to keep his master from rebelling. He was no persecutor of God's prophets, but a moderate man. Zedekiah was happy in the choice of such a man to be his envoy to the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah might safely intrust such a man with his errand too. Note, It is the real honour of great men to be quiet men; it is the wisdom of princes to put such men into places of trust.

3. Seraiah is desired to read it to his countrymen that were already gone into captivity. When thou shalt come to Babylon, and shalt see what a magnificent place it is, how large a city, how strong, how rich, and how well fortified, and shalt therefore be tempted to think, Sure it will stand for ever, as the disciples, when they observed the buildings of the temple, concluded nothing would throw them down but the end of the world, *Mat.* xxiv. 23, then thou shalt read all these words, to thyself, and thy particular friends, for their encouragement in their captivity; let them with an eye of faith see to the end of these threatening powers, and comfort themselves and one another herewith.

4. He is directed to make a solemn protestation of the Divine authority and unquestionable certainty of that which he had read; ver. 62, Then shalt thou look up to God and say, O Lord, it is thou that hast spoken against this place to cut it off. This is like the angel's protestation (*Rev.* xix. 9) concerning the destruction of the New Testament Babylon: "These are the true sayings of God." And, *Rev.* xxi. 6, "These words are true and faithful." Though Seraiah sees Babylon flourishing, having read this prophecy, he must foresee Babylon falling; and by virtue of it must curse its habitation, though it be taking root, *Job* v. 3. "O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place," and I believe what thou hast spoken, that as thou knowest every thing, so thou canst do every thing. Thou hast passed sentence upon Babylon, and it shall be executed. Thou hast spoken against this place to cut it off, and therefore we will neither envy its pomp nor fear its power. When we see what this world is, how glittering its shows are, and how flattering its proposals, let us read in the book of the Lord that its fashion passeth away, and it shall shortly be cut off, and be desolate for ever, and we shall learn to look upon it with a holy contempt. Observe here, When we have been reading the word of God, it becomes us to direct to him, whose word it is, an humble believing acknowledgment of the truth, equity, and goodness of what we have read.

5. He must then tie a stone to the book, and throw it into the midst of the river Euphrates, as a confirming sign of the things contained in it, saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink, and not rise, for they shall be weary;" they shall perfectly succumb, as men tired with a burthen, under the load of the evil that I will bring upon them, which they shall never shake off, or get from under, ver. 63, 64. In the sign, it was the stone that sank the book, which otherwise would have swam, but in the thing signified, it was rather the book that sank the stone; it was the Divine sentence passed upon Babylon in this prophecy that sank that city, which seemed as firm as a stone. The fall of the New Testament Babylon is represented by something like this, but much more magnificent; *Rev.* xviii. 21, A mighty angel cast a great millstone into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon fall. Those that sink under the weight of God's wrath and curse sink irrecoverably. The last words of the chapter seal up the vision and prophecy of this book, "Thus far are the words of Jeremiah;" not that this prophecy against Babylon was the last of his prophecies, for it was dated in the fourth year of Zedekiah, ver. 59, long before he finished his testimony, but this is recorded last of his prophecies, because it was to be the last accomplished of all his prophecies against the Gentiles, *ch.* xlvi. 1; and the chapter which remains is purely historical, and, as some think, was added by some other hand.

CHAPTER LII.

History is the best expositor of prophecy; and therefore, for the better understanding of the prophecies of this book, which relate to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the kingdom of Judah, we are here furnished with an account of that sad event. It is much the same with the history we had, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. and xxv., and many of the particulars we had before in that book; but the matter is here repeated and put together to give light to the book of the *Lamentations*, which follows next, and to serve as a key to it. That article in the close concerning the advancement of Jehoiachin in his captivity, which happened after Jeremiah's time, gives colour to their conjecture who suppose that this chapter was not written by Jeremiah himself, but by some men Divinely inspired among those in captivity, for a constant memorandum to those who in Babylon preferred Jerusalem above their chief joy. In this chapter we have, I. The ill reign of Zedekiah, very ill in regard both of sin and punishment, ver. 1—3. II. The besieging and taking of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, ver. 4—7. III. The severe usage which Zedekiah and the princes met with, ver. 8—11. IV. The destruction of the temple and the city, ver. 12—14. V. The captivity of the people, ver. 15, 16; and the numbers of those that were carried away into captivity, ver. 28—30. VI. The carrying off of the plunder of the temple, ver. 17—23. VII. The slaughter of the priests, and some other great men in cold blood, ver. 24—27. VIII. The better days which king Jehoiachin lived to see in the latter end of his time, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 31—34.

ZEDEKIAH *was* one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 2 And he did *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. 3 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. 4 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. 5 So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 6 And in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. 7 Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which *was* by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans *were* by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain. 8 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army were scattered from him. 9 Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. 10 And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. 11 Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

This narrative begins no higher than the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, though there were two captivities before, one in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the other in the first of Jeconiah; but probably it was drawn up by some of those that were carried away with Zedekiah, as a reproach to themselves for imagining that they should not go into captivity after their brethren, with which hopes they had long flattered themselves. We have here,

First. God's just displeasure against Judah and Jerusalem for their sin, ver. 3. His anger was against them to that degree that he determined to cast them out from his presence, his favourable, gracious presence, as a father when he is extremely angry with an undutiful son, bids him get out of his presence. He expelled them from that good land that had such tokens of his presence in providential bounty, and that holy city and temple that had such tokens of his presence in covenant grace and love. Note, Those that are banished from God's ordinances have reason to complain that they are in some degree cast out of his presence; yet none are cast out from God's gracious presence but those that by sin have first thrown themselves out of it. This fruit of sin we should therefore deprecate above any thing, as David, *Ps.* li. 11, "Cast me not away from thy presence."

Secondly. Zedekiah's ill conduct and management, to which God left him in displeasure against the people, and for which God punished him in displeasure against him. Zedekiah was arrived to years of discretion; when he came to the throne he was twenty-one years old, ver. 1. He was none of the worst of the kings; we never read of his idolatries, yet his character is, that he "did evil in the eyes of the Lord," for he did not do the good he should have done. But that ill deed of his which did in a special manner hasten this destruction was his rebelling against the king of Babylon, which was both his sin and his folly, and brought ruin upon his people, not only meritoriously, but efficiently. God was greatly displeased with him for his perfidious dealing with the king of Babylon, as we find, *Eze.* xvii. 15, &c.; and, because he was angry at Judah and Jerusalem, he put him into the hand of his own counsels to do that foolish thing which proved fatal to him and to his kingdom.

Thirdly. The possession which the Chaldeans at length gained of Jerusalem after eighteen months' siege. They sat down before it and blocked it up in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, in the tenth month, ver. 4, and made themselves masters of it in the eleventh year, in the fourth month, ver. 6. In remembrance of these two steps toward their ruin, while they were in captivity, they kept a fast in the fourth month, and a fast in the tenth, *Zec.* viii. 19. That in the fifth month was in remembrance of the burning of the temple, and that in the seventh of the murder of Gedaliah. We may easily imagine, or rather cannot imagine, what a sad time it was with Jerusalem, during this year and half that it was besieged, when all provisions were cut off from coming to them, and they were ever and anon alarmed by the attacks of the enemy; and being obstinately resolved to hold out to the last extremity, nothing remained but a certain fearful looking for of judgment. That which disabled them to hold out, and yet could not prevail with them to capitulate, was the famine in the city; ver. 6, "there was no bread for the people of the land," so that the soldiers could not make good their posts, but were rendered wholly unserviceable. And then no wonder that the city was broken up, ver. 7. Walls in such a case will not hold out long without men, no more than men without walls; nor will both together stand people in any stead without God and his protection.

Fourthly. The inglorious retreat of the king and his mighty men. They got out of the city by night, ver. 7, and made the best of their way, I know not whither, nor perhaps they themselves. But the king was overtaken by the pursuers in the plains of Jericho, and his guards dispersed, and all his army scattered from him, ver. 8. His fright was not causeless, for where there is guilt there will be fear in time of danger. But his flight was fruitless, for there is no escaping the judgments of God; they will come upon the sinner, and will overtake him, let him flee where he will, *Deu.* xxviii. 15; and these judgments particularly that are here executed were there threatened, ver. 52, 53, &c.

Fifthly. The sad doom passed upon Zedekiah by the king of Babylon, and immediately put in execution. He treated him as a rebel, "gave judgment upon him," ver. 9. One cannot think of it without the utmost vexation and regret, that a king, a king of Judah, a king of the house of David, should be arraigned as a criminal at the bar of this heathen king. But he "humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet," therefore God thus humbled him. Pursuant to the sentence passed upon him by the haughty conqueror, his sons were slain before his eyes, and all the princes of Judah, ver. 10; then his eyes were put out, and he was bound in chains, carried in triumph to Babylon. Perhaps they made sport with him, as they did with Samson, when his eyes were put out; however, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, wearing out the remainder of his life (I cannot say his days, for he saw day no more,) in darkness and misery; he was kept in prison until the day of his death, but had some honour done him at his funeral, *ch.* xxxiv. 5. Jeremiah had often told him what it would come to, but he would not take warning when he might have prevented it.

12 Now in the fifth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, which *was* the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, *which* served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem, 13 And burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great *men*, burned he with fire: 14 And all the army of the Chaldeans, that *were* with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about. 15 Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive *certain* of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude. 16 But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left *certain* of the poor of the land for vinedressers and for husbandmen. 17 Also the pillars of brass that *were* in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that *was* in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon. 18 The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. 19 And the basons, and the fire-

pans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; *that* which *was* of gold *in* gold, and *that* which *was* of silver *in* silver, took the captain of the guard away. 20 The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brasen bulls that *were* under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the LORD: the brass of all these vessels was without weight. 21 And *concerning* the pillars, the height of one pillar *was* eighteen cubits; and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof *was* four fingers: *it was* hollow. 22 And a chapiter of brass *was* upon it; and the height of one chapiter *was* five cubits, with network and pomegranates upon the chapiters round about, all *of* brass. The second pillar also and the pomegranates *were* like unto these. 23 And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; *and* all the pomegranates upon the network *were* an hundred round about.

We have here an account of the woful havoc that was made by the Chaldean army, a month after the city was taken, under the command of Nebuzar-adan, who was "captain of the guard," or general of the army in this action. In the margin he is called the 'chief of the slaughtermen,' or executioners; for soldiers are but slaughtermen, and God employs them as executioners of his sentence against a sinful people. Nebuzar-adan was chief of those soldiers; but in the execution he did we have reason to fear he had no eye to God, but he served the king of Babylon and his own designs. Now he came into Jerusalem, into the very bowels of it, as captain of the slaughtermen there. And, 1. He laid the temple in ashes, having first plundered it of every thing that was valuable; he "burnt the house of the Lord," that holy and beautiful house, where their fathers praised him, *Isa.* lxiv. 10. 2. He burnt the royal palace, probably that which Solomon built, after he had built the temple, which was ever since the king's house. 3. He burnt "all the houses of Jerusalem," that is, all the houses of the great men, or, those particularly; if any escaped, it was only some sorry cottages, for the poor of the land. 4. "He brake down all the walls of Jerusalem," to be revenged upon them for standing in the way of his army so long; thus of a defenced city was made a ruin, *Isa.* xxv. 2. 5. He carried away many into captivity, ver. 15. He took away "certain of the poor of the people," that is, of the people in the city; for the poor of the land, that is, the poor of the country, he left for vinedressers and husbandmen. He also carried off "the residue of the people that remained in the city," that had escaped the sword and famine; and the deserters, such as he thought fit, or rather such as God thought fit, for he had already determined some for the pestilence, some for the sword, some for the famine, and some for captivity, *ch.* xv. 2.

But nothing is more particularly and largely related here, than the carrying away of the appurtenances of the temple. All that were of great value were carried away before, the vessels of silver and gold; yet some of that sort remained, which were now carried away, ver. 19. But most of the temple prey that was now seized was of brass, which, being of less value, was carried off last. When the gold was gone, the brass soon went after, because the people repented not, according to Jeremiah's prediction, *ch.* xxvii. 19, &c. When the walls of the city were demolished, the pillars of the temple were pulled down too, and both in token that God, who was the strength and stay both of their civil and their ecclesiastical government, was departed from them. No walls can protect those, nor pillars sustain those from whom God withdraws. These pillars of the temple were not for support, (for there was nothing built upon them,) but for ornament and significancy. They were called Jachin, 'he will establish;' and Boaz, 'in him is strength;' so that the breaking of these signified that God would no longer establish his house, nor be the strength of it. These pillars are here very particularly described, ver. 21—23, from 1 *Kin.* vii. 15, that the extraordinary beauty and stateliness of them may affect us the more with the demolishing of them. All the vessels that belonged to the brazen altar were carried away; for the iniquity of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was not to be purged by sacrifice or offering, 1 *Sam.* iii. 14. It is said, ver. 20, "The brass of all these vessels was without weight;" so it was in the making of them, 1 *Kin.* vii. 47; the weight of the brass was not then found out, 2 *Chr.* iv. 18. And so it was in the destroying of them; those that made spoil of them did not stand to weigh them as purchasers do, for, whatever they weighed, it was all their own.

24 And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door: 25 He took also out of the city an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city. 26 So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. 27 And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land. 28 This *is* the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty: 29 In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons: 30 In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons *were* four thousand and six hundred.

We have here a very melancholy account,

First. Of the slaughter of some great men in cold blood at Riblah, seventy-two in number, according to the number of the elders of Israel, *Num.* xi. 26, 27, so they are computed, 2 *Kin.* xxv. 18, 19, five out of the temple, two out of the city, five out of the court, and sixty out of the country. The account here agrees with that, except in one article: there it is said there were five, here there were seven, of those that were near the king; which Dr. Lightfoot reconciles thus, that he took away seven of those that were near the king, but two of them were Jeremiah himself and Ebed-melech, but they were both discharged, as we have read before; so that there were only five of them put to death, and so the number was reduced to seventy-two; some of all ranks, for they had all corrupted their way. And it is probable such were made examples of as had been most forward to excite and promote the rebellion against the king of Babylon. Seraiah the chief priest is put first, whose sacred character could not exempt him from this stroke; how should it, when he himself had profaned it by sin? Seraiah the prince was a quiet prince, *ch.* li. 59, but perhaps Seraiah the priest was not so, but unquiet and turbulent, by which he had made himself obnoxious to the king of Babylon. The leaders of this people had caused them to err, and now they are in a particular manner made monuments of Divine justice.

Secondly. Of the captivity of the rest. Come and see how "Judah was carried away captive out of his own land;" ver. 27, and how it spewed them out, as it spewed out the Canaanites that went before them, which God had told them it would certainly do, if they trod in their steps, and copied out their abominations, *Lev.* xviii. 28. Now here is an account,

1. Of two captivities, which we had an account of before, one in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, the same with that which is said to be in his eighth year, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 12, another in his eighteenth year, the same with that which is said, ver. 12, to be in his nineteenth year. But the sums here are very small, in comparison with what we find expressed concerning the former, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 14, 16, when there were eighteen thousand carried captive, whereas here they are said to be three thousand and twenty-three; and with what we may reasonably suppose concerning the latter: for when all the residue of the people were carried away, ver. 15, one would think there should be more than eight hundred and thirty-two souls. Therefore Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that, these accounts being joined to the story of the putting to death of the great men at Riblah, all that were here said to be carried away were put to death as rebels.

2. Of a third captivity not mentioned before, which was in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, four years after the destruction of Jerusalem, ver. 30. Then Nebuzar-adan came and carried away seven hundred and forty-five Jews. It is probable this was done in revenge of the murder of Gedaliah, which was another rebellion against the king of Babylon, and that these who were now taken were aiders and abetters of Ishmael in that murder, and were not only carried away, but put to death for it; yet this is uncertain. If this be the sum total of the captives which we have, ver. 30, "All the persons were four thousand and six hundred," we may see how strangely they were reduced from what they had been, and may wonder as much how they came to be so numerous again as afterwards we find them; for, it should seem that, as at first in Egypt, so again in Babylon, the Lord made them fruitful in the land of their affliction; and the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied. And the truth is, these people were often miracles both of judgment and mercy.

31 And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth *day* of the month, *that* Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the *first* year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, 32 And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that *were* with him in Babylon, 33 And changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. 34 And *for* his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

This passage of story concerning the reviving which king Jehoiachin had in his bondage, we had likewise before, 2 *Kin.* xxv. 27—30, only there it is said to

be done on the twenty-fifth day of the twelfth month, here on the twenty-seventh; but in a thing of this nature two days breaks no squares in the account. It is probable the orders were given for his release on the twenty-fifth day, but he was not presented to the king till the twenty-seventh. We may observe in this story,

First. That new lords make new laws. Nebuchadnezzar had long kept this unhappy prince in prison; and his son, though well affected to the prisoner, could not procure him any favour, nor one smile from his father, any more than Jonathan could for David from his father; but when the old peevish man was dead his son countenanced Jehoiachin, and made him a favourite. It is common for children to undo what their fathers have done; it were well if it were always as much for the better as this here.

Secondly. That the world we live in is a changing world. Jehoiachin in his beginning fell from a throne to a prison; but here he is advanced again to a throne of state, ver. 32, though not to a throne of power. As before the robes were changed into prison garments, so now they were converted into robes again. Such chequer-work is this world; prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other, that we may learn to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.

Thirdly. That though the night of affliction be very long, yet we must not despair but that the day may dawn at last. Jehoiachin was thirty-seven years a prisoner, in confinement, in contempt, ever since he was eighteen years old; in which time we may suppose him so inured to captivity that he had forgotten the sweets of liberty; or, rather, that after so long an imprisonment it would be doubly welcome to him. Let those whose afflictions have been lengthened out encourage themselves with this instance; the vision will at the end speak comfortably, and therefore wait for it. *Dum spiro spero,*—'while there is life there is hope;' *non si male nunc, et olim sic erit,*—'though now we suffer, we shall not always suffer.'

Fourthly. That God can make his people to find favour in the eyes of those that are their oppressors, and unaccountably turn their hearts to pity them, according to that word; *Ps.* cvi. 46, "He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives." He can bring those that have spoken roughly to speak kindly, and those to feed his people that have fed upon them. Those, therefore, that are under oppression will find that it is not in vain to hope, and quietly to wait, for the salvation of the Lord. Therefore our times are in God's hand, because the hearts of all we deal with are so.

And now upon the whole matter, comparing the prophecy and the history of this book together, we may learn in general, 1. That it is no new thing for churches and persons highly dignified to degenerate and become very corrupt. 2. That iniquity tends to the ruin of those that harbour it; and if it be not repented of and forsaken, will certainly end in their ruin. 3. That external professions and privileges will not only not amount to an excuse for sin, and an exemption from ruin, but will be a very great aggravation of both. 4. That no word of God shall fall to the ground, but the event will fully answer the prediction; and the unbelief of man shall not make God's threatenings, any more than his promises, of none effect. The justice and truth of God are here written in bloody characters, for the conviction or the confusion of all those that make a jest of his threatenings. Let them not be deceived, God is not mocked.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH.

CHAP. I.—4. *The word of the Lord came.* This seems to have been a visible appearance of the Divine majesty,—by the Son of God or the second person of the blessed Trinity, *Gen.* viii. 2; *Jos.* v. 13; *Eze.* i. 26; *Dan.* viii. 15, 18; x. 6, 10. —*Lowth.*

CHAP. II.—22. *Nitre.* See Supplementary Note on *Pr.* xxv. 20.

CHAP. III.—12. *Mine anger to fall.* 'I will not look down upon you with a lowering brow.' Literally, 'I will not let my countenance fall upon you.' So when Cain was wroth, it is said, that "his countenance fell," *Gen.* iv. 5. On the contrary, the lifting up of the countenance upon any person denotes favour and goodwill towards him, *Num.* vi. 26.—*Blaney.*

CHAP. IV.—17. *As keepers of a field.* Returning in the evening through the fields of melons, we disturbed 'the keepers of a field,' the same as those mentioned by the prophet. A rude shed made of four upright poles, that supported a covering of twined branches, protected from the weather an old decrepid Arab, who sat watching against any intrusion that might be made by man or beast upon his field.—*Bonar & M'Cheyne's Narrative.* (See wood engraving, *Job* xxvii. 18.)

CHAP. VI.—6. *Cast a mount,* rendered in the margin, *engine of shot,* and probably resembling those spoken of 2 *Kin.* xxv. and 2 *Chr.* xxvi., (where see wood engravings,) as the balistæ and catapultæ of the Romans. 20. *Sweet cane.* The sweet cane, or *calamus aromaticus,* is a reed of a very fragrant smell, which, when dried and powdered, is mixed in the richest perfumes. 27. *A tower—a fortress.* 'I have appointed thee to make an essay among my people as to the gold thereof.'—*Blayney.* This agrees with the context, and he considers that the images of a tower and fortress are wrongly introduced by the translators.—*Religious Tract Society's Bible.* 28. *Grievous revolters.* 'They are all of them the dross of revolters, passing with a fraudulent currency. Brass and iron all of them; instruments of adulteration are they.'—*Blayney.*

CHAP. VII.—12. *Shiloh—see what I did to it.* The words of the prophet are still full of meaning. It was visited by Dr. Wilson in 1843, who describes it as a heap of ruins.—*Lands of the Bible,* vol. ii. 294. 18. *Queen of heaven.* See Supplementary Note on *ch.* xliv. 19.

CHAP. IX.—17. *Mourning women.* Near sunset, we had the opportunity of witnessing the funeral of an old Jewess at Lemberg.—Arriving at a small portico or covered walk in the grave-yard, they set down the bier, and uncovered the face of the dead. All the relations gathered round, and bending over the corpse till their lips almost touched the lips of the deceased, entreated her to forgive them, if they had injured her in any way. After this they proceeded to the grave, and the body alone was lowered down into it with the face uncovered. Several of the women now joined in a loud and bitter wail, but their tears and lamentations were only feigned, for at one time they appeared very lugubrious, then, all of a sudden, they stopped and began to scold, or appeared utterly careless. They were specimens of "the mourning women" mentioned in the Scriptures: see *Jer.* ix. 17; *Mat.* xi. 17.—*Bonar and M'Cheyne's Narrative.*

CHAP. X.—9, 10. *But the Lord is the true God.* The contrast is very expressive and instructive between the most expensive and most richly ornamented dead images and "the living and true God, the everlasting King, or King of eternity; at whose wrath the earth doth tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation." They (the idols) are 'indebted to the art and labour of man for all their costly ornaments, their splendid outward show. Upon what ground, then, could the thing formed pretend to a nature more excellent than its former!'—*Blayney.* Where, but in the Scriptures, do we meet with such sublime and rational thoughts concerning the great Creator and Lord of all? The very circumstance that the Bible, and the Bible alone, has established the doctrine of one God of infinite perfection, to the exclusion of all others, who have been or are called God, or have been or are worshipped, is a very convincing argument to a considerate mind, that it is the word of the one living and true God himself.—*T. Scott.*

CHAP. XIII.—22. *Thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare.* 'I have often been struck with the manner in which a great man sits; for example, when I visited the bashaw, I never saw his feet: they were entirely drawn up under him and covered by his dress. This was dignified. To see his feet his skirts must have been discovered: still more so in order to see the heels, which often serve as the actual seat of an oriental.'—*Jowett's Christian Researches.*

CHAP. XVI.—7. *Neither shall men tear themselves.* Commentators prefer the marginal reading, 'break bread for them,' which may refer to the practice of carrying provisions to the house of mourning, probably because the survivors might neglect to prepare food for themselves: see *Job* xlii. 11; *Eze.* xxiv. 17. *The cup of consolation.* Sir J. Chardin says, the custom is still preserved among the oriental Christians, who drink the health of the survivors.—*Domestic Bible, by the Rev. Ingram Cobbin.* (See wood engraving.) 19, 21. *The Gentiles.* The prophet, hearing intimations of mercy, addressed the Lord as his Strength, and Fortress, and Refuge. He had revealed to his other prophets, and to him, that he would assuredly call the Gentiles from all the ends of the earth; when they would renounce the idolatry of their fathers, as unprofitable lies and vanity, to worship the God of Israel. The fact now undeniable, that the Gentiles, through so large a part of the world, have actually renounced their idols, to worship, in profession at least, the God of Israel, (that despised nation,) is most wonderful, when compared with the state of things at the time when Jeremiah wrote this remarkable prediction.—*T. Scott.*

CHAP. XVII.—13-27. *O Lord, the hope of Israel—sabbath day.* God is the hope of Israel, the hope of believers, and called in *Rom.* xv. 13, the "God of hope." The fountain of living waters is an expression peculiar to Jeremiah, who is fertile both in terms and sayings of most important significancy. The Lord was the object of his praise; but he was held in great discredit and disrepute by his countrymen. He pleads the matter with God: he had not hasted beyond the pace of a mere follower; he had not outrun God's message. It was not any desire of mine that these tidings of evil should take effect. Be not thou therefore a terror to me, as the offended Jews are. Be thou my refuge from them, and let them be confounded. He utters against them the maledictions of a prophet, but still even then they were not conclusively given over. They are bidden to observe the sabbath, or perhaps were bidden some time before, and with the encouragement of a promise would they but obey. But they did not, and the promise was made void by themselves, and thus they brought on their own destruction. What testimonies for the sabbath from both Isaiah and Jeremiah—and *that by prophets who spake of the comparative worthlessness of rites!*—Dr. Chalmers' posthumous work, *Horæ Biblicæ.*

CHAP. XXII.—20. *From the passages;* in the original, *from Abarim.* The sight of this mountain scene (a view from the summit of mount Olivet) reminded us of a passage in *Jeremiah,* the force of which is lost in our version, but which had peculiar meaning when uttered in Jerusalem. It is in reference to the death of Jehoiakim, the son of pious Josiah, and the desolation that followed, "Go up to Lebanon and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from Abarim; for all thy lovers are destroyed." The cry of woe is first uttered from the heights of Lebanon, the northern boundary of the land; it is echoed back from Bashan the eastern range; and then it resounds from Abarim, the mountains of Moab, seen so distinctly from Jerusalem. In this way the tidings of distress are carried from Lebanon to Bashan, from Bashan to Abarim, and from the Abarim hills to the capital itself.—*Bonar & M'Cheyne's Narrative.*

CHAP. XXIII.—8. *They shall dwell in their own land.* This and many passages in the prophecies of *Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel,* and in other parts of Scripture, have been considered by not a few authors as pointing out the national restoration of the Jews from their present dispersion to their own land. Mr. Scott, the commentator, thus summed up his own views on the subject, in his work on the *Restoration of Israel.* He says,—'It is now becoming more and more the opinion of serious Christians, that when Israel shall be converted to their long-rejected Messiah, they will be gathered from their dispersions, and reinstated in their own land; which being rendered as fertile as in times past, (perhaps much more so,) and extended to the utmost limits of the grants made to the patriarchs, will yield them in rich abundance all things needful and comfortable for this present life. It is also thought that they will live in this land under rulers of their own nation, as the vicegerents of the

Messiah, of David, or the Son of David, in entire peace and security, free from invader or oppressor, and from the fear of any; and that, along with all spiritual blessings in rich abundance, they will be voluntarily regarded by all other nations, then truly converted, with peculiar love, and gratitude, and honour, as the source of all their spiritual blessings, and especially as most nearly related to their common Messiah and Saviour, who is the light of the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.'

'A general idea,' says the Rev. E. Bickersteth, in his *Practical Guide to the Prophecies*, 'of the expectations of many students of prophecy which have been entertained for a lengthened period, may be gathered from a collection of promises concerning the calling of the Jews and the glory which shall be in the latter days, taken from Powel's Concordance, published in 1673. It is referred to by Doddridge in his Lectures on Divinity.'

I. The Jews shall be gathered from all parts of the earth where they are now scattered, and brought into their own land.

For this see *Isa.* xi. 11; xxvii. 12, 13; xliii. 5, 6; xlix. 11, 12; lx. 4. Compare *Jer.* iii. 18; xvi. 14, 15; xxiii. 3; xxx. 10; xxxi. 7, 8, 10; xxxii. 37. So *Hos.* xi. 10, 11; *Zeph.* iii. 10; *Zec.* viii. 7, 8; x. 8, 9, 10.

II. They shall be carried by the Gentiles to their place, who shall join themselves with the Jews, and become the Lord's people.

Isa. xlix. 22; xiv. 2; lx. 9; lxvi. 18, 20; and ii. 2, 3, 4. Compare *Jer.* iii. 17; xvi. 19; *Eze.* xlvii. 22, 23; *Mic.* v. 3; *Zec.* ii. 11; viii. 20.

III. Great miracles shall be wrought when Israel is restored, as formerly when they were brought out of Egypt, viz.

1. Drying up the river Euphrates. *Isa.* xi. 15, 16; *Zec.* x. 11; *Rev.* xvi. 12; *Hos.* xi. 15; *Mic.* vii. 15.

2. Causing rivers to flow in desert places. *Isa.* xli. 17, 18, 19; xliii. 19, 20; xlviii. 20, 21.

3. Giving them prophets. *Isa.* lxvi. 18, 19, 20, 21; *Hos.* xii. 9, 10.

4. The Lord Christ himself shall appear at the head of them. *Isa.* xxxv. 8; lii. 12; lviii. 8; *Hos.* i. 10, 11; *Mic.* ii. 12, 13.

IV. The Jews, being restored, and converted to the faith of Christ, shall be formed into a state, and have judges and counsellors over them as formerly; the Lord Christ himself being their king, who shall then also be acknowledged King over all the earth.

Isa. i. 26; lx. 17. Compare *Jer.* xxiii. 4; xxx. 8, 9, 21; *Hos.* iii. 5; *Eze.* xxxiv. 23, 24; xxxvii. 24, 25; *Isa.* liv. 5; *Oba.* 21; *Zec.* xiv. 5, 9; *Ps.* xxii. 27, 28.

V. They shall have the victory over all their enemies, and all kings and nations of the earth shall submit unto them.

For which see *Isa.* xi. 13, 14; xiv. 1, 2; xli. 14, 15, 16; xlix. 23; lx. 12; xxv. 10, 11, 12; *Joel* iii. 7, 8, 19, 20; *Oba.* 17, 18; *Mic.* iv. 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13; v. 5, 6, 7; vii. 16, 17; *Zec.* ii. 13; ix. 13, 14, 15, 16; ix. 5, 6; xii. 6; *Num.* xxiv. 17; *Isa.* xlix. 23; lx. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; lxvi. 19, 20.

VI. The Jews, restored, shall live peaceably, without being divided into two nations, or contending with one another any more.

Isa. xi. 13, 14; xiv. 1, 2; *Jer.* iii. 18; l. 4; *Eze.* xxxvii. 21, 22; *Hos.* i. 11.

1. They shall be very numerous, and multiply greatly. *Isa.* xxvii. 6; xliv. 3, 4; xlix. 18, 19, 20, 21; liv. 1, 2, 3; lxi. 9; *Jer.* xxiii. 3; xxx. 18, 19, 20; xxxi. 27; *Eze.* xxxiv. 11; xxxvi. 38, 39.

2. They shall have great peace, safety, and outward temporal prosperity. *Isa.* xxxii. 16, 17, 18; xxxiii. 24; liv. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17; lx. 18, 21; *Jer.* xxiii. 3, 4, 5, 6; xxx. 10; xxxii. 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40; xxxiii. 6, 7, 8, 9; l. 19, 20; *Joel* iii. 17, 18; *Mic.* vii. 18, 19, 20; *Zeph.* iii. 13; *Zec.* iii. 9, 10.

3. They shall be very glorious, and a blessing in the whole earth. *Isa.* xix. 24, 25; lxi. 9; *Jer.* xxxiii. 9; *Ex.* xxxiv. 26; *Zeph.* iii. 19; *Zec.* viii. 13.

VII. The land of Judæa shall be made eminently fruitful, like a paradise, or the garden of God.

Isa. xxix. 17; xxxv. 1, 2, 7, 9; li. 3, 16; liv. 11, 12, 13; lv. 12, 13; lx. 17; lxv. 17, 25; *Eze.* xxxiv. 26, 27; xxxvi. 36, 37; *Joel* iii. 18; *Am.* ix. 13, 14.

VIII. Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, and after the full restoration of the Jews shall never be destroyed, nor infested with enemies any more.

Isa. iii. 1; xxvi. 1; lx. 18; xxxiii. 6; *Joel* iii. 17; *Oba.* 17; *Zec.* xiv. 10, 11; *Jer.* xxxi. 38, 39, 40; *Eze.* xxxviii. 11.

IX. A little before the time of the Jews' call and conversion, there shall be great wars, confusion, and desolation throughout all the earth.

Isa. xxxiv. throughout; *Joel* iii. 1, 10; *Zeph.* iii. 8, 9; *Eze.* xxviii. 25, 26; *Hag.* ii. 21, 22, 23; *Jer.* xxx. 7, 8, 9, 10; 2 *Chr.* xv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

So that we may say, as Balaam did, prophesying of that very time, "Alas, who shall live when God doth this!" *Num.* xxiv. 23.

Such an interpretation of these passages is disputed by other writers, and among them by Professor Alexander, who in his recent work on the *Prophecies of Isaiah*, (quoted so largely in our Supplementary Notes to that book,) says, 'As to the question in dispute, the ground which I have taken and endeavoured to maintain is the negative position, that the truth of these "exceeding great and precious promises" is not suspended on the future restoration of the Jews to Palestine, without denying such a revelation to be possible or promised elsewhere.' 9. *Because of the prophets.* Whilst we rejoice in our privileges, if we be zealous for the glory of God, and full of compassion for our fellow sinners, we cannot but be deeply concerned when we consider the present state of mankind, and even that of the visible church. It might well fill us with consternation and amazement, and prompt us to such earnestness in endeavouring to convince men of their guilt and misery, as would be despised by carnal men, and mistaken for inebriation or insanity, to compare the words of God's holiness in the sacred Scriptures with the doctrine and example of a very large majority of rulers and teachers in the church, and with the lives of most professed Christians. For it is evident, that they are awfully deceived, and deceiving each other into a false peace, when the heavy wrath of God is ready to fall upon them. Perhaps God more abhors those who profess to preach his truth, but pervert it by their lies, and disgrace it by their vices, than those who openly abet the cause of infidelity and irreligion. Yet, those who will hearken to such teachers as "speak from their own hearts, and not out of the mouth of the Lord," and whose doctrine tends to render them vain and ungodly, must be answerable for it; for it is easy to distinguish them from those who "stand in the counsel of the Lord" and hear his word; especially as he has promised to give wisdom to those who lack it and pray for it, *Pr.* ii. 1—6; *Jas.* i. 5—8.—*T. Scott.* See Supplementary Note on *Pr.* xix. 27.

CHAP. XXV.—10. *The sound of the millstones.* The Easterns bake every day. The millstones are in motion the first thing in the morning, and indicate that the family have survived the night. On going out in the morning its silence is broken by the noise of the mill, and the voices and song of the women grinding. The absence of these are strongly descriptive of a desolate condition. *The light of the candle.* The houses of Egypt at this time are never without lights. They burn lamps not only all the night long, but in all inhabited apartments in a house, and even the poor would rather retrench a part of their food than neglect it.—*Domestic Bible.*

CHAP. XXVI.—18. *Zion shall be ploughed like a field.* From this place, says Dr. Wilson, the steep ascent of mount Zion commences along the wall of the city. A great part of this hill has been long under culture, and Zion, according to prophecy, is thus literally ploughed like a field. How great are the changes which it has seen from the time when its sacred glory and imperial greatness were then the subjects of inspired song. "God is known in her palaces for a refuge. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following," *Ps.* xlviii.

> 'Where now the pomp which kings with envy viewed?
> Where now the might which all those kings subdued?
> No martial myriads muster in thy gate;
> No suppliant nations in thy temple wait;
> No prophet bards, thy glittering courts among,
> Wake the full lyre, and swell the tide of song;
> But lawless Force and meagre Want are there,
> And the quick darting eye of restless Fear.
> While cold Oblivion 'mid thy ruins laid,
> Folds his dank wing beneath the ivy shade.'—*Heber.*

CHAP. XXIX.—22. *Roasted.* Chardin, in his *Travels*, after speaking of the most common mode of punishing with death, says, 'But there is still a particular way of putting to death such as have transgressed in civil affairs, either by causing a death, or by selling above the tax by a false weight, or who have committed themselves in any other manner. The cooks are put upon a spit and roasted over a slow fire, bakers are thrown into a hot oven. During the dearth in 1688, I saw such ovens heated on the royal square in Ispahan, to terrify the bakers, and deter them from deriving advantage from the general distress.'—*Burder's Oriental Literature*, vol. ii. 204.

CHAP. XXX.—1-11. *The word that came to Jeremiah, &c.* Now comes a most remarkable prophecy not adequately fulfilled by the restoration of Judah from Babylon, and pointing therefore to a future and more general restoration, comprehensive both of Judah and Israel,—a prophecy therefore which it is well to have been recorded in a book, that we, on whom the latter ends of the world have come, may be taught what the things are to which we should look forward. The day of trouble that is associated with this great consummation seems to be the period when there shall be shaking among the nations, prefigured by the overthrow of Nebuchadnezzar's image, at the time when the ten kingdoms shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour. The Jews will somehow be implicated in the universal commotion, as if to be assailed by the potentates of the world,—an event not obscurely intimated in other places of Scripture. But they shall be saved out of it, and the happiness of the millennium shall at length be ushered in, as if the fruit of a laborious and sore travail. Their return to the secure possession of their own land, and under David their king, as well as the full end of all the nations among whom they had been scattered, are events that still lie in the womb of futurity. 11. *Yet will I not make a full end of thee.* God hath made a full end of the Egyptians, Syrians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Medes and Persians, and Macedonians, and of the pagan Roman empire, which successively scattered or oppressed Israel; so that each of them has been inseparably united with the conquering nations; yet the Jews, by an unprecedented interposition of Providence, after all their oppressions and dispersions, are preserved a distinct people to this present day! How wonderfully do undeniable facts demonstrate the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures! No doubt the future restoration of that people from their present dispersions, and their quiet settlement in Canaan, will, in a still more astonishing manner, attest the same most important truth, to the conviction and conversion of the nations of the earth.—*T. Scott.* 12—24. *Thy bruise is incurable, &c.* The bruise of Israel was incurable by man, but all things are possible to God. They had been delivered up by him to the power of their enemies, and from whom none but himself could rescue them. And he will at length interpose and vindicate before the whole earth his own special relationship with the people whom he had chosen. They should be healed of their wounds, and recalled from the outcast places among which they had been scattered. The goodly temple should be reared on its old foundations, which was typically fulfilled in the first restoration, and will be substantially fulfilled in the second, when the true religion is set up in Jerusalem as the ecclesiastical capital of the world. Among other blessings which are promised, it is said that their nobles shall be of themselves, or they shall have rulers from among their own people. May not the governor be Jesus Christ, a Jew according to the flesh, but who engaged his heart to approach for the people whom he redeemed as their surety and intercessor before God? It is through him that we became God's people, and that he became our God. But this blessed consummation is not unaccompanied with mighty calamities and commotions on the earth; and well, may we repeat, is all this written in a book, that we of the latter days might consider it.

CHAP. XXXI.—1-11. *At the same time, saith the Lord, &c.* The prophecy of the last chapter continues, and with a heightening evidence. It is the time of the general restoration which, I believe, is here referred to. The grace which Israel is to find in the wilderness is that by which they are recalled from the places of their dispersion, and conducted to their ultimate settlement in their own land. Israel may here be saying, through the prophet, that the love of God to her in old times was again to be manifested. Their prosperity after their restoration is illustrated by a variety of images, and, among others, that they should eat of the produce of their own industry with perfect security and freedom, and under no such restraint as was laid upon them by the distinction between the common and the clean. The return in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah forms no adequate counterpart to the foretellings of this magnificent chapter. They shall yet come from a more wide-spread and general captivity; and come with weeping, too, because they will then look to him whom they have pierced, and weep in bitterness as for a firstborn. 31—40. *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel.* Surely the days are yet to come when this covenant shall be entered upon. It is not yet that all men know the Lord, from the least unto the greatest. Hasten this universal shower of grace, O thou most High! What a valuable passage is this, and how mightily to be prayed over! Put thy law, O God, into my inward parts, write it in my heart; and may I at once be one of thy regenerated and reconciled children. And what an assurance we here have for the restoration and perpetuity of Israel as a nation. Here we have one of those fine instances in which the constancy of nature is appealed to as a guarantee for the faithfulness of God's word. The nation of Israel, and as a nation, will last as long as the present economy. And it is as impossible for God to cast them off as for man to explore all the amplitudes and profundities of the universe. These noble declarations in regard to the antitypical are followed by a prophecy respecting the typical, and which had its literal fulfilment. An illustrious chapter.—These Notes on *ch.* xxx. and xxxi., with the exception marked, are from Dr. Chalmers' posthumous work, *Horæ Biblicæ.*

CHAP. XXXV.—2. *Rechabites.* The Rechabites, as may be collected from ver. 7, were not of the children of Israel, but strangers of another race, who dwelt among them. From 1 *Chr.* ii. 55, they appear to have been Kenites, a

people originally settled in that part of Arabia Petræa which was called the land of Midian; and most probably the descendants of Jethro, who is called a Kenite, and said to have severed himself from the rest of his countrymen, and to have dwelt amongst the people of Israel: compare *Num.* x. 29—32, with *Jud.* i. 16; iv. 11. 4. *Into the chamber of the sons of Hanan.* Several chambers belonged to the temple for the residence of the priests and Levites during the time of their ministration, and for other sacred purposes. *Chamber of the princes.* Where the Sanhedrim assembled: see *ch.* xxvi. 10. The Sanhedrim always sat in some great room adjoining the temple. 6. *Jonadab.* The person to whom Jehu shewed so much respect, 2 *Kin.* x. 15. *Ye shall drink no wine, &c.* That the people may be the less liable to be corrupted, and lose their original patriarchal simplicity, the laws here enjoined were given. 7. *Ye shall dwell in tents.* A tribe of Arabs to this day live without fixed habitations, and far from cities, feeding their flocks, and living on their produce, and abstaining from wine. They have neither vineyard, field, nor seed, and are called the Beni-Kheiber.—*Domestic Bible.*

CHAP. XXXVII.—16. *The dungeon.* Dr. Blayney thinks that this dungeon was probably a deep pit, like a well, sunk in the court yard, and open to the sky at top; in the sides of which were niches, called in the text cabins, and in the margin cells, where the prisoners were placed, hence the allusion *Isa.* xiv. 15. 21. *Court of the prison.* In the king's house, mentioned *ch.* xxxii. 2. *The bakers' street.* Some understand by this, the place containing the king's provisions; it however more probably means, a street for bakers, according to the ancient Eastern custom of appropriating different streets for different businesses. Though the Easterns in general bake their own bread, yet small families find it cheaper to purchase of the baker than to have daily grinding and baking at home.

CHAP. XLVI.—19. *Noph shall be waste.* To the south-west of us, on the other side of the Nile, were the mounds near Metrahenny, indicating the site of Memphis,—the Moph of Hosea, (*Hos.* ix. 6,) and the Noph of Isaiah, (*Isa.* xix. 13,) Jeremiah, (*Jer.* ii. 16; xlvi. 19,) and Ezekiel, (*Eze.* xxx. 13, 16.) It is a city of the very highest antiquity. Its site, which is said by Diodorus to have formed a circuit of one hundred and fifty stadia, or about fifteen miles, has now nothing to mark it out but a few mounds, and a colossal statue of Rameses the Great, a small figure of red granite greatly mutilated, and a few foundations.—*Lands of the Bible,* vol. i. 115.

CHAP. XLVII.—5. *Baldness is come upon Gaza.* Each of us had found minute fragments of polished marble in the flat hollows between the sandhills, the remains no doubt of the palaces of Gaza; and also masses of fused stones, proving that God had "sent a fire on the wall of Gaza," *Am.* i. 7. We now saw, in a manner we had never done before, that God had fulfilled his own word, "Baldness is come upon Gaza." We saw that not merely mourning, such as 'baldness' indicated in ancient times, but literally and most remarkably the appearance of baldness has come upon Gaza. No spot of verdure, not a single blade of grass, did we see upon these sandhills. One solitary tree there was, which only served to make the bareness more remarkable. This barren, bare hill of sand is the bald head of Gaza. How awfully true and faithful are the words of God.—*Bonar & M'Cheyne's Narrative.*

CHAP. XLVIII.—9. *The cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein.* The most populous and fertile province in Europe (especially any situated in the interior of a country like Moab) is not covered so thickly with towns as Moab is plentiful in ruins, deserted and desolate though now it be. Burckhardt enumerates about fifty ruined sites within its boundaries, many of them extensive. In general they are a "broken down" (ver. 39) and undistinguishable mass of ruins; and many of them have not been closely inspected. But in some instances there are the remains of temples, sepulchral monuments, the ruins of edifices constructed of very large stones, and many cisterns cut out of the rock. Not one of the ancient cities of Moab now exists, as tenanted by man. 28. *O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities and dwell in the rock.* In a general description of the condition of the inhabitants of that extensive desert which now occupies the place of these ancient flourishing states, Volney, in plain but unmeant illustration of this prediction, remarks, that 'the wretched peasants live in perpetual dread of losing the fruits of their labours; and no sooner have they gathered in their harvest than they hasten to secrete it in private places, and retire among the rocks which border on the Dead Sea.' Towards the opposite extremity of the land of Moab, and at a little distance from its borders, Seetzen relates that there are many families living in caverns; and he actually designates them 'the inhabitants of the rocks.' And, at the distance of a few miles from the ruined site of Heshbon, 'there are artificial caves in a large range of perpendicular cliffs, in some of which are chambers and small sleeping apartments.' While the cities are desolate without any to dwell therein, the rocks are tenanted.—*Keith on the Prophecies,* which the reader may consult for additional proofs of the accomplishment of the predictions respecting Moab. See also Supplementary Note on *Isa.* xvi. 14.

CHAP. XLIX.—2. *Ammon shall be a desolate heap.* See Supplementary Note on *Eze.* xxv. 5. 13. *All the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.* Referring to the ruins of Petræa, the metropolis of Edom, Dr. Wilson says, (*Lands of the Bible,* vol. i. 309,) Both in the interior of the palace, and in what must have been its adjoining enclosures, there are many bushes and shrubs growing, such as we should expect to find in any similar body of ruins, (*Isa.* xxxiv. 13.) Though they are formed in connexion with a fabric which appears to have been erected either by the Greeks or Romans, they are not to be overlooked as the indices of the continued desolations of Idumæa which are set forth in the several places of holy writ, in which it is said that all its cities shall be perpetual wastes. Of the remains of ancient cities still exposed to view in different places throughout Idumæa, Burckhardt (*Travels,* 418—441) describes 'the ruins of a large town, of which nothing remains but broken walls and heaps of stones; the ruins of several villages in its vicinity; the ruins of an ancient city, consisting of large heaps of hewn blocks of silicious stone; the extensive ruins of Gherandel Arindela, an ancient town of Palæstina Tertia.' 'The following ruined places are situated in Djebal Shera (mount Seir) to the south and south-west of Wady Mousa, Kalaat, Djerba, Basta, Eyl, Ferdakh, Anyk, Bir el Beytar, Shemakh, and Syk. Of the towns laid down in D'Anville's map, Thoana excepted, no traces remain.' Laborde passed the ruins of Elana, a town in Wady (valley) Pambouchebe, of another in Wady Sabra, where there are the ruins of a theatre and several temples—and of Ameime, where there are the ruins of numerous cisterns excavated from the rock, into which the water flowed by an aqueduct nine miles in length.—*Keith.*

CHAP. LI.—1. *Babylon.* See Supplementary Note on *Isaiah.* 37. *Shall become heaps.* Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, is now the greatest of ruins. 'Immense tumuli of temples, palaces, and human habitations of every description,' are everywhere seen, and form 'long and varied lines of ruins,' which, in some places, 'rather resemble natural hills than mounds which cover the remains of great and splendid edifices.' Those buildings which were once the labour of slaves and the pride of kings, are now misshapen heaps of rubbish. 'The whole face of the country is covered with vestiges of building, in some places consisting of brick walls surprisingly fresh, in others, merely a vast succession of mounds of rubbish, of such indeterminate figures, variety, and extent, as to involve the person who should have formed any theory in inextricable confusion.' 'Long mounds running from north to south are crossed by others from east to west,' and are only distinguished by their form, direction, and number, from the decayed banks of canals. 'The greater part of the mounds are certainly the remains of buildings, originally disposed in streets, and crossing each other at right angles.' The more distinct and prominent of these heaps are double, or lie in parallel lines, each exceeding twenty feet, and 'are intersected by cross passages, in such a manner as to place beyond a doubt the fact of their being rows of houses or streets fallen to decay.' Such was the form of the streets of Babylon, leading towards the gates; and such are now the lines of its heaps. Such is the multiplicity of prophecies and the accumulation of facts, that the very abundance of evidence increases the difficulty of arranging, in a condensed form, and thus appropriating its specific fulfilment to each precise and separate prediction, and many of them may be viewed connectedly. All who have visited Babylon concur in acknowledging or testifying that the desolation is exactly such as was foretold. They, in general, apply the more prominent predictions; and, in minute details, they sometimes unconsciously adopt, without any allusion or reference, the very words of inspiration. Babylon is wholly desolate. It has become heaps—it is cut down to the ground—brought down to the grave—trodden on—uninhabited—its foundations fallen—its walls thrown down, and utterly broken—its loftiest edifices rolled down from the rocks—the golden city has ceased—the worms are spread under it, and the worms cover it, &c. There the Arabian pitches not his tent; there the shepherds make not their folds; but wild beasts of the desert lie there, and their houses are full of doleful creatures, and owls dwell there, &c. It is a possession for the bittern, and a dwelling-place for dragons—a wilderness, a dry land and a desert—a burnt mountain—pools of water—spoiled—empty—nothing left—utterly destroyed—every one that goeth by it is astonished, &c.—*Keith on Prophecy,* where see the authors quoted. (See also wood engraving, *Ps.* cxxxvii.) 58. *The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken.* A chapter of sixty pages in length, of Mr. Buckingham's *Travels in Mesopotamia,* vol. ii. p. 206—307, is entitled, 'Search after the walls of Babylon.' After a long and fruitless search, he discovered on the eastern boundary of the ruins, on the summit of an oval mound from seventy to eighty feet in height, and from three to four hundred feet in circumference, 'a mass of solid wall, about thirty feet in length, by twelve or fifteen in thickness, yet evidently once of much greater dimensions each way, the work being, in its present state, broken and incomplete in every part;' and this heap of ruin and fragment of wall he conjectured to be a part,—the only part, if such it be, that can be discovered,—of the walls of Babylon, so utterly are they broken. Beyond this there is not even a pretension to the discovery of any part of them. It is impossible to think on what Babylon was, and to be an eye-witness of what it is, without astonishment. (ver. 41. "How is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!") On first entering its ruins, Sir Robert Ker Porter, (*Travels,* vol. ii. 294,) thus expresses his feelings; 'I could not but feel an indescribable awe in thus passing, as it were, into the gates of fallen Babylon.' 'I cannot pourtray,' says Captain Mignan, (*Travels,* p. 11,) 'the overpowering sensation of reverential awe that possessed my mind while contemplating the extent and magnitude of ruin and devastation on every side.' How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder! How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! The following interesting description has lately been given from the spot. After speaking of the ruined embankment, divided and subdivided again and again, like a sort of tangled network, over the apparently interminable ground—of large and wide-spreading morasses—of ancient foundations—and of chains of undulating heaps,—Sir R. K. Porter emphatically adds,—'The whole view was particularly solemn. The majestic stream of the Euphrates, wandering in solitude, like a pilgrim monarch through the silent ruins of his devastated kingdom, still appeared a noble river under all the disadvantages of its desert-tracked course. Its banks were hoary with reeds; and the grey osier willows were yet there on which the captives of Israel hung up their harps, and, while Jerusalem was not, refused to be comforted. But how has the rest of the scene changed since then! At that time those broken hills were palaces—those long undulating mounds streets—this vast solitude filled with the busy subjects of the proud daughter of the East. Now wasted with misery, her *habitations are not to be found,* and for herself, *the worm is spread over her.*—*Keith. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon.* It would exceed the limit assigned to these Notes were we to attempt more fully to shew how all the evil here and elsewhere in Scripture denounced against Babylon has come to pass. For farther details we must refer to Supplementary Notes on *Isa.* xiii. and xiv., and to Dr. Keith's work on the Prophecies, to which we have been so largely indebted. In the words of that excellent author, we may conclude by asking, Has not every purpose of the Lord been performed against Babylon? And having so clear illustrations of the facts before us, what mortal shall give a negative answer to the question subjoined by their omniscient Author to these very prophecies? "Who hath declared this from ancient time? Who hath told it from that time? Have not I the Lord? and there is no God beside me;—declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Is it possible that there can be any attestation of the truth of prophecy, if it be not witnessed here? Is there any spot on earth which has undergone a more complete transformation? 'The records of the human race,' it has been said with truth, 'do not present a contrast more striking than that between the primeval magnificence of Babylon and its long desolation.'—*Edin. Review,* No. 1, p. 439. Its ruins have of late been carefully and scrupulously examined by different natives of Britain, of unimpeached veracity, and the result of every research is a more striking demonstration of the literal accomplishment of every prediction. How few spots are there on earth of which we have so clear and faithful a picture as prophecy gave of fallen Babylon at a time when no spot on earth resembled it less than its present desolate solitary site! Or could any prophecies respecting any single place have been more precise and wonderful, or numerous, or true,—or more gradually accomplished throughout many generations? And when they look at what Babylon was, and what it is, and perceive the minute realization of them all—may not nations learn wisdom—may not tyrants tremble—and may not sceptics think?

AN

EXPOSITION

EMBLEMS OF DESOLATION.

OF THE

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

SINCE it is certainly true what Solomon saith, contrary to the common opinion of the world, that "sorrow is better than laughter, and it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting," we should come to the reading and consideration of the melancholy chapters of this book, not only willingly, but with an expectation to edify ourselves by them; which that we may do, we must compose ourselves to a holy sadness, and resolve to weep with the weeping Prophet. Let us consider, I. The title of this book. In the Hebrew it has none, but is called (as the books of Moses are) from the first word, *Ecah*, 'how;' but the Jewish commentators call it as the Greeks do, and we from them, *Kinoth*, 'Lamentations.' As we have sacred odes, or songs of joy, so we have sacred elegies, or songs of lamentation; such variety of methods has Infinite Wisdom taken to work upon us, and move our affections, and so soften our hearts, and make them susceptible of the impressions of Divine truths, as the wax of the seal. We have not only piped unto you, but have mourned likewise, *Mat.* xi. 17. II. The penman of this book. It was Jeremiah the prophet, who is here Jeremiah the poet, and *vates* signifies both; therefore this book is fitly adjoined to the book of his prophecy, and is as an appendix to it. We had there at large the predictions of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and then the history of them, to shew how punctually the predictions were accomplished for the confirming of our faith. Now here we have the expressions of his sorrow upon occasion of them, to shew that he was very sincere in the protestations he had often made, that he did not desire the woful day; but, on the contrary, the prospect of it filled him with bitterness; when he saw these calamities at a distance, he wished his head waters, and his eyes fountains of tears; and when they came, he made it to appear he did not dissemble in that wish, and that he was far from being disaffected to his country, which was the crime his enemies charged him with. Though his country had been very unkind to him, and the ruin of it was both a proof that he was a true prophet and a punishment of them for prosecuting him as a false prophet, which would have tempted him to rejoice in it, yet he sadly lamented it, and herein shewed a better temper than that which Jonah was of with respect to Nineveh. III. The occasion of these lamentations was the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, and the dissolution of the Jewish state, both civil and ecclesiastical, thereby. Some of the rabbins will have these to be the lamentations which Jeremiah penned upon occasion of the death of Josiah, which are mentioned 2 *Chr.* xxxv. 25. But though it is true, that that opened the door to all the following calamities, yet these lamentations seemed to be penned in the sight, not in the foresight, of those calamities,—when they were already come, not when they were at a distance; and there is nothing of Josiah in them, and his praise, as was, no question, in the lamentations for him. No, it is Jerusalem's funeral that this is an elegy upon. Others of them will have these lamentations to be contained in the roll which Baruch wrote from Jeremiah's mouth, and which Jehoiakim burnt; and they suggest, that at first there were in it only the 1st, 2nd, and 4th chapters; but the 3rd and 5th were the many like words that were afterwards added. But this is a groundless fancy; that roll is expressly said to be a repetition and summary of the Prophet's sermons, *Jer.* xxxvi. 2. IV. The composure of it. It is not only poetical, but alphabetical, all except the 5th chapter, as some of David's psalms are; each verse beginning with a several letter in the order of the Hebrew alphabet, the first *aleph*, the second *beth*, &c.; but the 3rd chapter is a triple alphabet, the three first beginning with *aleph*, the three next with *beth*, &c., which was a help to the memory, it being designed that these mournful ditties should be got by heart, and was an elegance of writing then valued, and therefore not now to be despised. They observe, that in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th chapters the letter *pe* is put before *ajin*, which in all the Hebrew alphabets follows it; for a reason of which Dr. Lightfoot offers this conjecture, that the letter *ajin*, which is the numeral letter for seventy, was thus, by being displaced, made remarkable, to put them in mind of the seventy years, at the end of which God would turn again their captivity. V. The use of it. Of great use, no doubt, it was to the pious Jews in their sufferings, furnishing them with spiritual language to express their natural grief by; helping to preserve the lively remembrance of Zion among them and their children that never saw it, when they were in Babylon; directing their tears into the right channel; for they are here taught to mourn for sin, and mourn to God, and withal encouraging their hopes that God would yet return, and have mercy upon them. And it is of use to us, to affect us with godly sorrow for the calamities of the church of God, as becomes those that are living members of it, and are resolved to take our lot with it.

A.M. 3416. B.C. 588.

CHAPTER I.

We have here the first alphabet of this lamentation; twenty-two stanzas, in which the miseries of Jerusalem are bitterly bewailed, and her present deplorable condition aggravated, by comparing it with her former prosperous state: and all along sin is acknowledged and complained of as the procuring cause of all these miseries, and God is appealed to for justice against their enemies, and applied to for compassion towards them. The chapter is all of a piece, and the several remonstrances are interwoven: but here is, I. A complaint made to God, of their calamities, and his compassionate consideration desired, ver. 1—11. II. The same complaint made to their friends, and their compassionate consideration desired, ver. 12—17. III. An appeal to God, and his righteousness concerning it, ver. 18—22; in which he is justified in their affliction, and is humbly solicited to justify himself in their deliverance.

HOW doth the city sit solitary,
that was full of people!
How is she become as a widow!
she *that was* great among the nations,
And princess among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary!
2 She weepeth sore in the night,
and her tears *are* on her cheeks:
Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort *her:*
All her friends have dwelt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.
3 Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude:
She dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest:
All her persecutors overtook her between the straits.
4 The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts:
All her gates are desolate: her priests sigh,
Her virgins are afflicted, and she *is* in bitterness.
5 Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper;
For the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions:
Her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.
6 And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed:
Her princes are become like harts *that* find no pasture,
And they are gone without strength before the pursuer.
7 Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries
All her pleasant things that she had in the days of old,

When her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her:
The adversaries saw her, *and* did mock at her sabbaths.
8 Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed:
All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness:
Yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.
9 Her filthiness *is* in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; [forter.
Therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no com-
O LORD, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified *himself*.
10 The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: [sanctuary,
For she hath seen *that* the heathen entered into her
Whom thou didst command *that* they should not enter into thy congregation.
11 All her people sigh, they seek bread; [the soul:
They have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve
See, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile.

Those that have any disposition to weep with them that weep, one would think, should scarce be able to refrain from tears at the reading of these verses, so very pathetical are the lamentations here.

First. The miseries of Jerusalem are here complained of as very pressing, and by many circumstances very much aggravated. Let us take a view of these miseries.

1. As to their civil state.

1st. A city that was populous is now depopulated, ver. 1. It is spoken of by way of admiration, Who would have thought that ever it should come to this? Or, by way of inquiry, What is it that hath brought it to this? Or, by way of lamentation, "Alas, alas," (as *Rev.* xviii. 10, 16, 19,) "how doth the city sit solitary that was full of people!" She was full of her own people, that replenished her, and full of the people of other nations, that resorted to her; with whom she had both profitable commerce and pleasant converse. But now her own people are carried into captivity, and strangers make no court to her; she sits solitary. The chief places of the city are not now as they used to be, places of concourse, where wisdom cried, *Pr.* i. 20, 21; and justly are they left unfrequented, because wisdom's cry there was not heard. Note, Those that are never so much increased God can soon diminish. "How is she become as a widow?" Her king that was, or should have been, as a husband to her, is cut off and gone; her God is departed from her, and hath given her a bill of divorce; she is emptied of her children; is solitary and sorrowful as a widow. Let no family, no state, not Jerusalem, no, nor Babylon herself, be secure, and say, "I sit as a queen," and shall never sit as a widow, *Isa.* xlvii. 8; *Rev.* xviii. 7.

2nd. A city that had dominion is now in subjection. She had been great among the nations, greatly loved by some, and greatly feared by others, and greatly observed and obeyed by both; some made her presents, and others paid her taxes; so that she was really princess among the provinces, and every sheaf bowed to hers, even the princes of the people intreated her favour: but now the tables are turned; she has not only lost her friends and sits solitary, but has lost her freedom too, and sits tributary; she paid tribute to Egypt first, and then to Babylon. Note, Sin brings a people not only into solitude, but into slavery.

3rd. A city that used to be full of mirth is now become melancholy, and upon all accounts full of grief. Jerusalem had been a joyous city, whither the tribes went up on purpose to rejoice before the Lord; she was the joy of the whole earth, but now she weepeth sore, her laughter is turned into mourning, her solemn feasts are all gone. She weeps in the night as true mourners do that weep in secret, in silence, and solitude; in the night, when others compose themselves to rest, her thoughts are most intent upon her troubles, and grief then plays the tyrant. What the prophet's head was for her, when she regarded it not, now her head is—as waters, and her eyes fountains of tears; so that she weeps day and night, *Jer.* ix. 1; her tears are continually on her cheeks. Though nothing dries away sooner than a tear, yet fresh griefs extort fresh tears, so that her cheeks are never free from them. Note, There is nothing more commonly seen under the sun than the tears of the oppressed, with whom the clouds return after the rain, *Eccl.* iv. 1.

4th. Those that were separated from the heathen now dwell among the heathen, that were a peculiar people are now a mingled people; ver. 3, "Judah is gone into captivity," out of their own land into the land of their enemies, and there she abides, and is likely to abide among those that are aliens to God, and the covenants of promise, with whom "she findeth no rest," no satisfaction of mind, nor any settlement of abode, but is continually hurried from place to place at the will of the victorious, imperious tyrants. And again, ver. 5, "Her children are gone into captivity before the enemy;" they that were to have been the seed of the next generation are carried off, so that the land that is now desolate is likely to be still desolate, and lost for want of heirs. Those that dwell among their own people, and that a free people, and in their own land, would be more thankful for the mercies they thereby enjoy if they would but consider the miseries of those that are forced into strange countries.

5th. Those that used in their wars to conquer are now conquered and triumphed over. "All her persecutors overtook her between the straits," ver. 3; they gained all possible advantages against her, so that her people unavoidably fall into the hand of the enemy; for there was no way to escape, ver. 7, they were hemmed in on every side, and, which way soever they attempted to flee they found themselves embarrassed, and when they made the best of their way they could make nothing of it, but were overtaken and overcome; so that every where "her adversaries are the chief, and her enemies prosper," ver. 5; which way soever their sword turns, they get the better. Such straits do men bring themselves into by sin. If we allow that which is our greatest adversary and enemy to have dominion over us, and to be chief in us, justly will our other enemies be suffered to have dominion over us.

6th. Those that had been not only a distinguished but a dignified people, on whom God had put honour, and to whom all their neighbours had paid respect, are now brought into contempt; ver. 8, "all that honoured her" before "despise her;" those that courted an alliance with her now value it not; that caressed her when she was in pomp and prosperity, slight her now she is in distress, "because they have seen her nakedness." By the prevalency of the enemies against her they perceive her weakness; and that she is not so strong a people as they thought she had been; and by the prevalency of God's judgments against her they perceive her wickedness, which now comes to light, and is everywhere talked of. Now it appears how they have vilified themselves by their sins, the enemies magnify themselves against them, ver. 9; they trample upon them, and insult over them, and in their eyes they are become vile, the tail of the nations that were the head. Note, Sin is the reproach of any people.

7th. Those that lived in a fruitful land were ready to perish, and many of them did perish, for want of necessary food, ver. 11. All her people sigh in despondency and despair, they are ready to faint away, their spirits fail, and therefore they sigh, for they seek bread, and seek it in vain. They were brought at last to that extremity that there was no bread for the people of the land, *Jer.* lii. 6; and in their captivity they had much ado to get bread; *ch.* v. 6, "They have given their pleasant things," their jewels and pictures, and all the furniture of their closets and cabinets, which they used to please themselves with looking upon, they have sold these to buy bread for themselves and their families, have parted with them "for meat to relieve the soul," or, as the margin is, 'to make the soul come again" when they were ready to faint away. They desired no other cordial but meat. All that a man hath will he give for life, and for bread which is the staff of life. Let those that abound in pleasant things not be proud of them, or fond of them, for the time may come when they may be glad to let them go for necessary things. And let those who have competent food to relieve their soul, be content with it, and thankful for it, though they have not pleasant things.

2. We have here an account of their miseries in their ecclesiastical state; the ruin of their sacred interest, which was much more to be lamented than that of their secular concerns.

1st. Their religious feasts were no more observed, no more frequented; ver. 4, "The ways of Zion do mourn," they look melancholy, overgrown with grass and weeds. It used to be a pleasant diversion to see people continually passing and repassing in the highway that led to the temple; but now you may stand there long enough and see nobody stir, for "none come to the solemn feasts," a full end is put to them by the destruction of that which was the city of our solemnities, *Isa.* xxxiii. 20. The solemn feasts had been neglected and profaned, *Isa.* i. 11, 12; and therefore justly is an end now put to them. But when thus the ways of Zion are made to mourn, all the sons of Zion cannot but mourn with them. It is very grievous to good men to see religious assemblies broken up and scattered, and those restrained from them that would gladly attend them. And, as the ways of Zion mourned, so the gates of Zion, in which the faithful worshippers used to meet, are desolate, for there is none to meet in them. Time was when "the Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob;" but now he hath forsaken them, and is provoked to withdraw from them, and therefore it cannot but fare with him as it did with the temple when Christ quitted it; "Behold your house is left unto you desolate," *Mat.* xxiii. 38.

2nd. Their religious persons were quite disabled to perform their wonted services, were quite dispirited; "Her priests sigh," for the desolations of the temple, their songs are turned into sighs. They sigh, for they have nothing to do, and therefore there is nothing to be had; they sigh as the people, ver. 11, "for want of bread," because the offerings of the Lord, which were their livelihood, failed. It is time to sigh when the priests, the Lord's ministers, sigh. Her virgins also, that used with their music and dancing to grace the solemnities of their feasts, are afflicted, and in heaviness. Notice is taken of their service in the day of Zion's prosperity, *Ps.* lxviii. 25, "among them were the damsels playing with timbrels," and therefore notice is taken of the failing of it now. "Her virgins are afflicted," and therefore "she is in bitterness," that is, all the inhabitants of Zion are so, whose character it is that they are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and that to them the reproach of it is a burthen, *Zeph.* iii. 18.

3rd. Their religious places were profaned; ver. 10, "The heathen entered into her sanctuary," into the temple itself, into which no Israelite was permitted to enter, though never so reverently and devoutly, but the priests only; "The stranger that comes nigh," even to worship there, "shall be put to death," thither the heathen now crowd rudely in, not to worship, but to plunder. God had commanded that the heathen should not so much as enter into the congregation, nor be incorporated with the people of the Jews, *Deu.* xxiii. 3; yet now they enter into the sanctuary without control. Note, Nothing is more grievous to those who have a true concern for the glory of God, nor is more lamented, than the violation of God's laws, and the contempt they see put upon sacred things. What the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary was complained of, *Ps.* lxxiv. 3, 4.

4th. Their religious utensils, and all the rich things with which the temple was adorned and beautified, and which were made use of in the worship of God, were made a prey to the enemy, ver. 10, "The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things," hath grasped them all, seized them all for himself. What these pleasant things are we may learn from *Isa.* lxiv. 11, where, to the complaint of the burning of the temple, it is added, "all our pleasant things are laid waste;" the ark and the altar, and all the other tokens of God's presence with them, these were their pleasant things above any other things, and these were now broken to pieces and carried away. Thus "from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed," ver. 6. The beauty of holiness was the beauty of the daughter of Zion. The temple, that holy and beautiful house, when that was destroyed, her beauty was gone; that was the breaking of the staff of beauty, the taking away of the pledges and seals of the covenant, *Zec.* xi. 10.

5th. Their religious days were made a jest of; ver. 7, "The adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths." They laughed at them for their observing of one day in seven as a day of rest from worldly business. Juvenal, a heathen poet, ridicules the Jews in his time for it,—

Cui septima quæque fuit lux,
Ignava et vitæ partem non attigit ullam,—
'They keep their sabbaths to their cost,
And thus one day in seven is lost.'

Whereas sabbaths, if they be sanctified as they ought to be, will turn to a better account than all the days of the week beside. And whereas the Jews professed they did it in obedience to their God, and to his honour, they asked them what they got by it now, what profit had they in keeping the ordinances of their God, who now deserted them in their distress? Note, It is a very great trouble to all that love God to hear his ordinances mocked at, and particularly his sabbaths. Zion calls them her sabbaths, for the sabbath was made for men; they are his institutions, but they are her privileges; and the

contempt put upon sabbaths all the sons of Zion take to themselves, and lay to heart accordingly; and will not look upon sabbaths, or any other Divine ordinances, as less honourable, nor value them less, for being mocked at.

6th. That which greatly aggravated all these grievances was, that her present state was just the reverse of what it had been when time was; ver. 7, now "in the days of affliction and misery," when every thing was black and dismal, "she remembers all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old," and now knows how to value them better than formerly, when she had the full enjoyment of them. God often makes us know the worth of mercies by the want of them; and adversity is most hardly borne by those that are fallen into it from the height of prosperity. This cut David to the heart when he was banished from God's ordinances, that he could remember when he "went with the multitude to the house of God," *Ps.* xlii. 4.

Secondly. The sins of Jerusalem are here complained of as the procuring, provoking cause of all these calamities. Whoever are the instruments, God is the author of all these troubles; it is the Lord that has afflicted her, ver. 5, and he has done it as a righteous judge, for she has sinned.

1. Her sins are for number numberless. Are her troubles many? her sins are many more; it is for the multitude of her transgressions that the Lord has afflicted her: see *Jer.* xxx. 14. When the transgressions of a people are multiplied, we cannot say, as Job doth, it is without cause that their wounds are multiplied, *Job* ix. 17.

2. They are for nature exceeding heinous; ver. 8, "Jerusalem hath grievously sinned;" hath sinned sin, so the word is; sinned wilfully, deliberately, hath sinned that sin which of all others is the abominable thing that the Lord hates, the sin of idolatry. The sins of Jerusalem, that makes such a profession, and enjoys such privileges, are of all other the most grievous sins. She hath sinned grievously, ver. 8, and therefore, ver. 9, she came down wonderfully. Note, Grievous sins bring wondrous ruin; there are some workers of iniquity to whom there is a strange punishment, *Job* xxxi. 3.

3. They are such sins as may plainly be read in the punishment. 1st. They have been very oppressive, and therefore are justly oppressed; ver. 3, "Judah is gone into captivity," and it is "because of affliction and great servitude," that is, because the rich among them afflicted the poor, and made them serve with rigour, and particularly (as the Chaldee paraphraseth it) because they had oppressed their Hebrew servants, which is charged upon them, *Jer.* xxxiv. 11. Oppression was one of their crying sins, *Jer.* vi. 6, 7; and it is a sin that cries loud. 2nd. They have made themselves vile, and therefore are justly vilified. They all despise her, ver. 8, for her filthiness is in her skirts; it appears upon her garments that she hath rolled them in the mire of sin. None can stain our glory if we did not stain it ourselves. 3rd. They have been very secure, and therefore are justly surprised with the ruin; ver. 9, "She remembereth not her last end," she did not take the warning that was given her to consider her latter end, to consider what would be the end of such wicked courses as she took, and therefore she came down wonderfully, in an astonishing manner, that she might be made to feel what she would not fear; therefore God shall make their plagues wonderful.

Thirdly. Jerusalem's friends are here complained of as false and faint-hearted, and very unkind; they "have all dealt treacherously with her," ver. 2; so that in effect "they are become her enemies." Her deceivers have created her as much vexation as her destroyers. The staff that breaks under us may do us as great a mischief as the staff that beats us, *Eze.* xxix. 6, 7. Her princes, that should have protected her, have not courage enough to make head against the enemy for their own preservation; they are like harts, that upon the first alarm betake themselves to flight, and make no resistance; nay, they are like harts that are famished for want of pasture, and therefore are gone without strength before the pursuer, and, having no strength for flight, are soon run down and made a prey of. Her neighbours are unneighbourly; for, 1. There is none to help her, ver. 7; either they could not or would not; nay, 2. She has no comforter, none to sympathize with her, or suggest any thing to alleviate her griefs, ver. 7, 9; like Job's friends, they saw it was to no purpose, her grief was so great, and miserable comforters were they all in such a case.

Fourthly. Jerusalem's God is here complained to concerning all these things, and all is referred to his compassionate consideration; ver. 9, "O Lord, behold my affliction," and take cognizance of it; and ver. 11, "See, O Lord, and consider," take order about it. Note, The only way to make ourselves easy under our burthens is to cast them upon God first, and leave it to him to do with us as seemeth him good.

12 *Is it* nothing to you, all ye that pass by?
Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, [fierce anger.
Wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me* in the day of his
13 From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaileth against them: [back:
He hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me
He hath made me desolate *and* faint all the day.
14 The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand:
they are wreathed, [to fall,
And come up upon my neck: he hath made my strength
The Lord hath delivered me into *their* hands, *from whom*
I am not able to rise up.
15 The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty *men* in the midst of me: [young men:
He hath called an assembly against me to crush my
The Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, *as* in a winepress.
16 For these *things* I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, [from me:
Because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far
My children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.
17 Zion spreadeth forth her hands, *and there is* none to comfort her:
The LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, *that* his adversaries *should be* round about him:
Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them.
18 The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment:
Hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow:
My virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.
19 I called for my lovers, *but* they deceived me:
My priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city,
While they sought their meat to relieve their souls.
20 Behold, O LORD; for I *am* in distress: my bowels are troubled;
Mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled:
Abroad the sword bereaveth, at home *there is* as death.
21 They have heard that I sigh: *there is* none to comfort me:
All mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done *it:*
Thou wilt bring the day *that* thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me.
22 Let all their wickedness come before thee;
And do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions:
For my sighs *are* many, and my heart *is* faint.

The complaints here are, for substance, the same with those in the foregoing part of the chapter; but in these verses the prophet, in the name of the lamenting church, doth more particularly acknowledge the hand of God in these calamities, and the righteousness of his hand.

First. The church in distress doth here magnify her affliction; and yet no more than there was cause for. Her groaning was not heavier than her strokes. She appeals to all spectators, "See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow," ver. 12. This might perhaps be truly said of Jerusalem's griefs; but we are apt to apply it too sensibly to ourselves when we are in trouble, and more than there is cause for. Because we feel most from our own burthen, and cannot be persuaded to reconcile ourselves to it, we are ready to cry out, Surely, never was sorrow like unto our sorrow; whereas, if our troubles were to be thrown into a common stock with those of others, and then an equal dividend made, share and share alike, rather than stand to that, we would each of us say, 'Pray, give me my own again.'

Secondly. She doth here look beyond the instruments to the Author of her troubles, and own them all to be directed, determined, and disposed of by him. It is the Lord that has afflicted me, and he has afflicted me because he is angry with me; the greatness of his displeasure may be measured by the greatness of my distress, it is "in the day of his fierce anger," ver. 12. Afflictions cannot but be very much our griefs, when we see them arising from God's wrath; so the church doth here. 1. She is as one in a fever, and the fever is of God's sending. He hath sent fire into my bones, ver. 13; a preternatural heat, which prevails against them, so that they are burnt like a hearth, *Ps.* cii. 3, pained, and wasted, and dried away. 2. She is as one in a net, which the more he struggles to get out of, the more he is entangled in; and this net is of God's spreading. The enemies could not have succeeded in their stratagems but that God hath "spread a net for my feet." 3. She is as one in a wilderness, whose way is embarrassed, solitary, and tiresome; He hath turned me back, that I cannot go on; hath made me desolate, that I have nothing to support me with, but am faint all the day. 4. She is as one in a yoke, not yoked for service, but for penance, tied neck and heels together; ver. 14, "The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand." Observe, We never are entangled in any yoke but it is framed out of our own transgressions; "The sinner is holden with the cords of his own sins," *Pr.* v. 22. The yoke of Christ's commands is an easy yoke, *Mat.* xi. 30; but that of our own transgressions is a heavy one. God is said to bind this yoke when he chargeth guilt upon us, and brings us into those inward and outward troubles which our sins have deserved; when conscience, as his deputy, binds us over to his judgment, then the yoke is bound and wreathed by the hand of his justice, and nothing but the hand of his pardoning mercy will unbind it. 5. She is as one in the dirt, and he it is that has "trodden under foot all her mighty men," that has disabled them to stand, and overthrown them by one judgment after another, and so left them to be trampled upon by their proud conquerors, ver. 15. Nay, she is as one in a winepress, not only trodden down, but trodden to pieces, crushed as grapes in the winepress of God's wrath, and her blood pressed out as wine; and it is God that has thus trodden "the virgin, the daughter of Judah." 6. She is in "the hand of her enemies," and it is the Lord that has delivered her into their hands; ver. 14, "He has made my strength to fall," so that I am not able to make head against them; nay, not only not able to rise up against them, but not able to rise up from them. And then he hath delivered me into their hands; nay, ver. 15, he hath called "an assembly against me to crush my young men," and such an assembly as it is in vain to think of opposing. And again, ver. 17, "The Lord has commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him." He that had many a time commanded deliverance for Jacob, *Ps.* xliv. 4, now commands an invasion against Jacob, because Jacob had disobeyed the commands of his law.

Thirdly. She justly demands a share in the pity and compassion of those that were the spectators of her misery; ver. 12, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?" Can you look upon me without concern! What, are your hearts as adamants, and your eyes as marbles, that you cannot bestow upon me one compassionate thought, or look, or tear? Are not you also in the body? Is it nothing to you that your neighbour's house is on fire? There are those to whom Zion's sorrows and ruins are nothing; they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. How pathetically doth she beg their compassion; ver. 18, "Hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow;" hear my complaints, and see what cause I had for them. This is a request like that of Job, *Job* xix. 21,

"Have pity, have pity upon me, O ye my friends." It helps to make a burthen sit lighter if our friends sympathize with us, and mingle their tears with ours; for that is an evidence that though we are in affliction we are not in contempt, which is commonly as much dreaded in an affliction as any thing.

Fourthly. She justifies her own grief, though it was very extreme, for these calamities; ver. 16, "For these things I weep," I weep in the night, ver. 2, when none sees; "mine eye, mine eye runs down with water." Note, This world is a vale of tears to the people of God; Zion's sons are often Zion's mourners. "Zion spreads forth her hands," ver. 17; which is here an expression rather of despair than of desire; she flings out her hands as giving all for gone. Let us see how she accounts for this passionate grief. 1. Her God is withdrawn from her; and Micah, that had but gods of gold, when they were stolen from him, cried out, "What have I more? And what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?" The church here grieves excessively: For, saith she, "the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me." God is the comforter, he used to be so to her; he only can administer effectual comforts, it is his word that speaks them, it is his Spirit that speaks them to us. His are strong consolations, able to relieve the soul, to bring it back when it is gone, and we cannot of ourselves fetch it again. But now he is departed in displeasure, he is far from me, and beholds me afar off. Note, It is no marvel that the souls of the saints faint away, when God, who is the only comforter that can relieve them, keeps at a distance. 2. Her children are removed from her, and are in no capacity to help her. It is for them she weeps, as Rachel for hers, because they were not, and therefore she refuseth to be comforted. "Her children were desolate, because the enemy prevailed" against them; there is "none of all her sons to take her by the hand," *Isa.* li. 18. They cannot help themselves, and how should they help her? Both the damsels and the youths, that were her joy and hope, are gone into captivity, ver. 18. It is said of the Chaldeans that they had no compassion upon young men or maidens; not on the fair sex, not on the blooming age, 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 17. 3. Her friends failed her; some would not, and others could not, give her any relief. She spread forth her hands, as begging relief, but there is none to comfort her, ver. 17; none that can do it, none that cares to do it. She called for her lovers, and, to engage them to help her, called them her lovers; but they deceived her, ver. 19; they proved like the brooks in summer to the thirsty traveller, *Job* vi. 15. Note, Those creatures that we set our hearts upon, and raise our expectations from, we are commonly deceived and disappointed in. Her idols were her lovers, Egypt and Assyria were her confidants, but they deceived her. Those that made court to her in her prosperity were shy of her, and strange to her in her adversity. Happy they that have made God their friend, and keep themselves in his love; for he will not deceive them. 4. Those whose office it was to guide her were disabled to do her any service. The priests and the elders, that should have appeared at the head of affairs, die for hunger; ver. 19, they "gave up the ghost," or were ready to expire, "while they sought their meat," went a begging for bread to keep them alive. The famine is sore indeed in the land when there is no bread to the wise, when priests and elders are starved. The priests and elders should have been her comforters, but how should they comfort others when they themselves were comfortless? "They have heard that I sigh," which should have summoned them to mine assistance, but "there is none to comfort me." Lover and friend hast thou put far from me. 5. Her enemies were too hard for her, and then insulted over her. They have prevailed; ver. 16, "Abroad the sword bereaveth," and slays all that come in its way; and "at home" all provisions are cut off by the besiegers, so that "there is as death," that is, famine, which is as bad as the pestilence, or worse. The sword without, and terror within, *Deu.* xxxii. 35. And as the enemies were very barbarous that were the instrument of the calamity, so were they that were the standers by, the Edomites and Ammonites, that bore ill-will to Israel. They "have heard of my trouble, and are glad that thou hast done it," ver. 21; they rejoice in the trouble itself, they rejoice that it is God's doing, it pleaseth them to find that God and his Israel are fallen out; and they carry it accordingly with a great deal of strangeness towards them. "Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them," that they are afraid of touching, and are shy of, ver. 17. Upon all these accounts it cannot be wondered at, nor can she be blamed that her sighs are many, in grieving for what is; and her heart is faint, ver. 22, in fear of what is yet farther likely to be.

Fifthly. She justifies God in all that is brought upon her, acknowledging that her sins had deserved these severe chastenings. The yoke that lies so heavy and binds so hard is the yoke of her transgressions, ver. 14. The fetters we are held in are of our own making, and it is with our own rod that we are beaten. When the church had spoken here as if she thought the Lord severe, she doth well to correct herself, at least to explain herself, by acknowledging, ver. 18, "The Lord is righteous." He doth us no wrong in dealing thus with us, nor can we charge him with any injustice in it; how unrighteous soever men are, we are sure the Lord is righteous, and manifests his justice, though they contradict all the laws of theirs. Note, Whatever our troubles are which God is pleased to inflict upon us, we must own that therein he is righteous; we understand neither him nor ourselves if we do not own it, 2 *Chr.* xii. 6. She owns the equity of God's actions by owning the iniquity of her own: "I have rebelled against his commandments," ver. 18; and again, ver. 20, "I have grievously rebelled." We cannot speak bad enough of sin, and we must always speak worst of our own sin, must call it rebellion, grievous rebellion; and very grievous sin is to all true penitents. It is this that lies heavier upon her than the afflictions she was under; "My bowels are troubled," they work within me as the troubled sea; "My heart is turned within me," is restless, is turned upside down, "for I have grievously rebelled." Note, Sorrow for sin must be great sorrow, and must affect the soul.

Sixthly. She appeals both to the mercy and to the justice of God in her present case. 1. She appeals to the mercy of God concerning her own sorrows, which had made her the proper object of his compassion; ver. 20, "Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress," take cognizance of my case, and take such order for my relief as thou pleasest. Note, It is matter of comfort to us that the troubles that oppress the spirits are open before God's eye. 2. She appeals to the justice of God concerning the injuries that her enemies had done her, ver. 21, 22, "Thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called," the day that is fixed in the counsels of God and published in the prophecies, when mine enemies that now prosecute me shall be like unto me, when the cup of trembling now put into my hands shall be put into theirs. It may be read as a prayer, Let the day appointed come; and so it goes on, "Let their wickedness come before thee," let it come to be remembered, let it come to be reckoned for, take vengeance on them for all the wrong they have done to me, *Ps.* cix. 14, 15; hasten the time when thou wilt do to them for their transgressions as thou hast done to me for mine. This prayer amounts to a protestation against all thoughts of a coalition with them, and to a prediction of their ruin, subscribing to that which God had in his word spoken of it. Note, Our prayers may and must agree with God's word, and what day God has there called we are to call for, and no other. And though we are bound in charity to forgive our enemies, and to pray for them, yet we may in faith pray for the accomplishment of that which God has spoken against his and his church's enemies, that will not repent to give him glory.

CHAPTER II.

This second alphabetical elegy is set to the same mournful tune with the former, and the substance of it is much the same: it begins with *Ecah*, as that did, How sad is our case! alas for us. I. Here is the anger of Zion's God taken notice of as the cause of her calamities, ver. 1—9. II. Here is the sorrow of Zion's children taken notice as the effect of her calamities, ver. 10—19. III. The complaint is made to God, and the matter referred to his compassionate consideration, ver. 20—22; the hand that wounded must make whole.

HOW hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, [Israel,
And cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of
And remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!

2 The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied:
He hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah;
He hath brought *them* down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.

3 He hath cut off in *his* fierce anger all the horn of Israel:
He hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy,
And he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, *which* devoureth round about.

4 He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary,
And slew all *that were* pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion:
He poured out his fury like fire.

5 The Lord was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel,
He hath swallowed up all her palaces: he hath destroyed his strong holds,
And hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

6 And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as *if it were of* a garden: he hath destroyed his places of the assembly:
The LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion,
And hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest. [sanctuary,

7 The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his
He hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces;
They have made a noise in the house of the LORD, as in the day of a solemn feast.

8 The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion:
He hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying:
Therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together.

9 Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars:
Her king and her princes *are* among the Gentiles:
The law *is* no *more;* her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.

It is a very sad representation which is here made of the state of God's church, of Jacob and Israel, of Zion and Jerusalem; but the emphasis in these verses seems to be laid all along upon the hand of God in the calamities which they were groaning under. The grief is not so much that such and such things are done, as that God has done them; that he appears angry with them. It is he that chastens them, and chastens them in wrath, and in his hot displeasure; he is become their enemy, and fights against them; and this, this is the wormwood and the gall in their affliction and their misery.

First. Time was when God's delight was in his church, and he appeared to her and appeared for her as a friend; but now his displeasure is against her; he is angry with her, and appears and acts against her as an enemy. This is frequently repeated here, and sadly lamented. What he has done he has done in his anger; this makes the present day a melancholy day indeed with us, that it is the day of his anger, ver. 1. And again, ver. 2, it is in his wrath; and ver. 3, it is in his fierce anger that he has thrown down and cut off; and ver. 6, "in the indignation of his anger." Note, To those who know how to value God's favour nothing appears more dreadful than his anger. Corrections in love are easily borne, but rebukes in wrath wound deep. It is God's wrath that burns against Jacob as a flaming fire, ver. 3; and it is a consuming fire;

it devours round about, devours all her honours, all her comforts. This is the fury that is poured out like fire, ver. 4; like fire and brimstone which was rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah. But it was their sin that kindled this fire. God is such a tender Father to his children, that we may be sure he is never angry with them but when they provoke him and give him cause to be angry; nor is he ever angry more than there is cause for. God's covenant with them was, that if they would obey his voice he would be an enemy to their enemies, *Ex.* xxiii. 22; and he had been so as long as they had kept close to him; but now he is an enemy to them, at least he is as an enemy, ver. 5; "He hath bent his bow like an enemy," ver. 4. "He stood with his right hand" stretched out against them, and a sword drawn in it "as an adversary." God is not really an enemy to his people; no, not when he is angry with them, and corrects them in anger. We may be sorely displeased against our dearest friends and relations, whom yet we are far from having an enmity to; but sometimes he is an enemy to them, when all his providences concerning them seem, in outward appearance, to have a tendency to their ruin; when every thing makes against them, and nothing for them. But, blessed be God, Christ is our peace, is our peace-maker, who hath slain the enmity, and in him we may agree with our adversary, which it is our wisdom to do, since it is in vain to contend with him, and he offers us advantageous conditions of peace.

Secondly. Time was when God's church appeared very bright and illustrious and considerable among the nations; but now "the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud," ver. 1; a dark cloud, which is very terrible to herself, and through which she cannot see his face; a thick cloud, (so the word signifies;) a black cloud, which eclipses all her glory, and conceals her excellency. Not such a cloud as that under which God conducted them through the wilderness, or that in which God took possession of the temple, and filled it with his glory; no, that side of the cloud is now turned towards them which was turned towards the Egyptians in the Red sea. The beauty of Israel is now cast down from heaven to the earth; their princes, 2 *Sam.* i. 19, their religious worship, their beauty of holiness, all that which recommended them to the affection and esteem of their neighbours, and rendered them amiable, which had lifted them up to heaven, was now withered and gone, because God had covered it with a cloud. "He hath cut off all the horn of Israel," ver. 3; all her beauty and majesty, *Ps.* cxxxii. 17; all her plenty and fulness, and all her power and authority. They had in their pride lifted up their horn against God, and therefore justly will God cut off their horn. He disabled them to resist and oppose their enemies, he turned back their right hand, so that they were not able to follow the blow which they gave, nor to ward off the blow which was given them. What can their right hand do against the enemy when God draws it back and withers it, as he did Jeroboam's? Thus was the beauty of Israel cast down, when a people famed for courage were not able to stand their ground, or make good their post.

Thirdly. Time was when Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were strong and well fortified, were trusted to by the inhabitants, and let alone by the enemy as impregnable; but now the Lord has in anger swallowed them up, they are quite gone, the forts and barriers are taken away, and the invaders meet with no opposition. The stately structures that were their strength and beauty are pulled down and laid waste. 1. "The Lord hath," in anger, "swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob," ver. 2, both the cities and the country houses; they are burnt or otherwise destroyed, so totally ruined that they seem to have been swallowed up, and no remains left of them. "He hath swallowed up and has not pitied;" one would have thought it pity that such sumptuous houses, so well built, so well furnished, should be quite destroyed, and that some pity should have been had for the poor inhabitants that were thus dislodged and driven to wander; but God's wonted compassions seemed to fail; "He hath swallowed up Israel" as a lion swallows his prey, ver. 5. 2. He hath swallowed up not only her common habitations, but her palaces, all her palaces, the habitations of her princes and great men, ver. 5, though those were most stately and strong, and rich and well guarded. God's judgments, when they come with commission, level palaces with cottages, and as easily swallow them up. If palaces be polluted with sin, as theirs were, let them expect to be visited with a curse, which shall consume them, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, *Zec.* v. 4. 3. He hath destroyed not only their dwelling-places, but their strongholds, their castles, citadels, and places of defence; these "he hath thrown down in his wrath, and brought them to the ground," for shall they stand in the way of his judgments, and give check to the progress of them? No, let them droop like leaves in autumn; let them be razed to the foundations, and made to touch the ground, ver. 2. And again, ver. 5, "He hath destroyed his strongholds;" for what strength could they have against God? And thus "he hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation," for they could not but be in a mighty consternation when they saw all their defence departed from them. This is again insisted upon, ver. 7—9. In order to the swallowing up of her palaces, "he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces," which were their security, and when they are broken down the palaces themselves are soon broken into. The walls of palaces cannot protect them, unless God himself be a wall of fire round about them. This God did in his anger, and yet he hath done it deliberately; it is the result of a previous purpose, and is done by a wise and steady providence; for "the Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion:" he brought the Chaldean army in on purpose to do this execution. Note, Whatever desolations God makes in his church they are all according to his counsels; "He performeth the thing that is appointed for us," even that which makes most against us. But when it is done, "he hath stretched out a line," a measuring line, to do it exactly and by measure: hitherto the destruction shall go and no farther; no more shall be cut off than what is marked to be so. Or, it is meant of the line of confusion, *Isa.* xxxiv. 11, a levelling line; for he will go on with his work: "he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying," that right hand which he stretched out against his people as an adversary, ver. 4. As far as the purpose went the performance shall go, and his hand shall accomplish his counsel to the utmost, and not be withdrawn. "Therefore he made the rampart and the wall," which the people had rejoiced in, and upon which, perhaps, they had made merry, "to lament, and they languished together." The walls and the ramparts or bulwarks upon them fell together, and were left to condole one another's fall. "Her gates are" gone in an instant, so that one would think they were "sunk into the ground" with their own weight, and "he hath destroyed and broken her bars," those bars of Jerusalem's gates which formerly he had strengthened, *Ps.* cxlvii. 13. Gates and bars will stand us in no stead when God hath withdrawn his protection.

Thirdly. Time was when their government flourished, their princes made a figure, and their kingdom was great among the nations, and the balance of power was on their side, but now it is quite otherwise; "He hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof," ver. 2. They had first polluted themselves with their idolatries, and then God dealt with them as with polluted things; he threw them to the dunghill, the fittest place for them. He hath given up their glory, which was looked upon as sacred, (that is a character we give to majesty,) to be trampled upon and profaned; and no marvel that the king and the priest, whose characters were always deemed venerable and inviolable, are despised by everybody, when God has "in the indignation of his anger despised the king and the priest," ver. 6. He hath abandoned them, looked upon them as no longer worthy of the honours conveyed to them by the covenants of royalty and priesthood, but as having forfeited both; and then Zedekiah the king was used despitefully, and Seraiah the chief priest put to death as a malefactor. The crown is fallen from their head; "her king and her princes are among the Gentiles," prisoners among them, insulted over by them, ver. 9, and treated not only as common persons, but as the basest, without any regard had to their character. Note, It is but just with God to debase those by his judgments who have by sin debased themselves.

Fifthly. Time was when the ordinances of God were administered among them in their power and purity, and they had those tokens of God's presence with them; but, now those were taken from them, that part of the beauty of Israel was gone which was indeed their greatest beauty.

1. The ark was God's footstool, under the mercy seat, between the cherubims. This was of all other the most sacred symbol of God's presence; it is called his footstool, 1 *Chr.* xxviii. 2; *Ps.* xcix. 5; cxxxii. 7. There the Shechinah rested, and with an eye to this Israel was protected and saved many a time; but now he "remembered not his footstool." The ark itself was suffered, as it should seem, to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans. God, being angry, threw that away, for it shall be no longer his footstool; the earth shall be so, as it had been before the ark was, *Isa.* lxvi. 1. Of what little value are the tokens of his presence when his presence is gone; nor was this the first time God gave his ark into captivity, *Ps.* lxxviii. 61. God and his kingdom can stand without that footstool.

2. They that ministered in holy things had been "pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion," ver. 4. They had been "purer than snow, whiter than milk," *ch.* iv. 7; none more pleasant in the eyes of all good people than those that did the service of the tabernacle; but now these are slain, and their blood mingled with their sacrifices. Thus is the priest despised as well as the king. Note, When those that were pleasant to the eye in Zion's tabernacle are slain, God must be acknowledged in it; he has done it; and the "burning which the Lord hath kindled must be bewailed" by the whole house of Israel, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, *Lev.* x. 6.

3. The temple was God's tabernacle, as the tabernacle, while that was in being, is called his temple, *Ps.* xxvii. 4; and this "he has violently taken away," ver. 6. He has plucked up the stakes of it, and cut the cords, it shall be no more a tabernacle, much less his; he has taken it away, as the keeper of a garden takes away his hovel or shade when he has done with it, and has no more occasion for it; he takes it down as easily, as speedily, and with as little regret and reluctancy, as if it were but a "cottage in a vineyard and a lodge in a garden of cucumbers," *Isa.* i. 8, but a "booth which the keeper makes," *Job* xxvii. 18. When men profane God's tabernacle, it is just with him to take it from them. God had justly refused to smell in their solemn assemblies, *Am.* v. 21; they had provoked him to withdraw from them, and then no marvel that he has "destroyed his places of the assembly;" what should they do with the places when the services were become an abomination? "He hath" now "abhorred his sanctuary," ver. 7. It has been defiled with sin, that only thing which he hates; and for the sake of that he abhors even his sanctuary, which he had delighted in, and called his rest for ever, *Ps.* cxxxii. 14. Thus he had done to Shiloh. Now the enemies have made as great a noise of revelling and blaspheming in the house of the Lord as ever had been made with the temple songs and music in the day of a solemn feast, *Ps.* lxxiv. 4. Some, by the places of the assembly, ver. 6, understand not only the temple, but the synagogues and the schools of the prophets, which the enemy had burnt up, *Ps.* lxxiv. 8.

4. The solemn feasts and the sabbaths had been carefully remembered, and the people carefully put in mind of them; but now "the Lord hath caused those to be forgotten," not only in the country among those that lived at a distance, but even in Zion itself; for there were none left to remember them, nor were there the places left where they used to be observed. Now Zion was in ruins, no difference was made between sabbath time and other times, every day was a day of mourning, so that all the solemn feasts were forgotten. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the benefit and comfort of sabbaths and solemn feasts who have not duly valued them, nor conscientiously observed them; but have profaned them, which was one of the sins that the Jews were often charged with. They that have seen the days of the Son of man, and slighted them, may desire to see one of those days, and not have them, *Lu.* xvii. 22.

5. The altar that had sanctified their gifts is now cast off; for God will no more accept their gifts, nor be honoured by their sacrifices, ver. 7. The altar was the table of the Lord; but God will no longer keep house among them, neither feast them nor feast with them.

6. They had been blessed with prophets and teachers of the law; but now "the law is no more," ver. 9. It is no more read by the people, no more expounded by the scribes; the tables of the law are gone with the ark, the book of the law is taken from them, and the people are forbidden to have it. What should they do with Bibles that had made no better improvement of them when they had them? "Her prophets also find no vision from the Lord;" God answers them no more by prophets and dreams, which was the melancholy case of Saul, 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 15. They had persecuted God's prophets, and despised the visions they had from the Lord; and, therefore, it is just with God to say they shall have no more prophets, no more visions. Let them go to the prophets that had flattered and deceived them with visions of their own hearts, for they shall have none from God to comfort them, or tell them how long. They that misuse God's prophets justly lose them.

10 The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, *and* keep silence:
They have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: [ground.
The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the
11 Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth,
For the destruction of the daughter of my people;
Because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.
12 They say to their mothers, Where *is* corn and wine?
When they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city,
When their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom

13 What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing
shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem?
What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O
virgin daughter of Zion?
For thy breach *is* great like the sea: who can heal thee?
14 Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee:
And they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn
away thy captivity; [nishment.
But have seen for thee false burdens and causes of ba-
15 All that pass by clap *their* hands at thee;
They hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jeru-
salem, *saying*,
Is this the city that *men* call The perfection of beauty,
The joy of the whole earth?
16 All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee:
They hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swal-
lowed *her* up:
Certainly this *is* the day we looked for; we have found,
we have seen *it*.
17 The LORD hath done *that* which he had devised; he
hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the
days of old:
He hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath
caused *thine* enemy to rejoice over thee,
He hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.
18 Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter
of Zion,
Let tears run down like a river day and night:
Give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease.
19 Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the
watches
Pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord:
Lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young
children,
That faint for hunger in the top of every street.
20 Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done
this. [long?
Shall the women eat their fruit, *and* children of a span
Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary
of the Lord?
21 The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets:
My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword;
Thou hast slain *them* in the day of thine anger; thou
hast killed, *and* not pitied. [about.
22 Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round
So that in the day of the LORD'S anger none escaped
nor remained:
Those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine
enemy consumed.

CASTING DUST ON THE HEAD.—ver. 10.

Justly are these called Lamentations, and they are very pathetical ones; the expressions of grief in perfection, mourning and woe, and nothing else, like the contents of Ezekiel's roll, *Eze.* ii. 10.

First. Copies of lamentation are here presented, and they are painted to the life. 1. The judges and magistrates that used to appear in robes of state have laid them aside, or rather, are stripped of them, and put on the habit of mourners, ver. 10. The elders now sit no longer in the judgment-seats, "the thrones of the house of David;" but they sit upon the ground, having no seat to repose themselves in, or in token of great grief, as Job's friends sat with him upon the ground, *Job* ii. 13. They open not their mouth in the gate, as usual, to give their opinion, but they keep silence; overwhelmed with grief, and not knowing what to say. They have "cast dust upon their heads, and girded themselves with sackcloth," as deep mourners used to do. They had lost their power and wealth, and that made them take on thus. *Ploratur lachrymis amissa pecunia veris*,—'Genuine are the tears which we shed over lost property.' 2. The young ladies, that used to dress themselves so richly, and walk with stretched forth necks, *Isa.* iii. 16, now are humbled; "The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground," they are made to know sorrow that seemed to bid defiance to it, and were always disposed to be merry. 3. The prophet himself is a pattern to the mourners, ver. 11, "His eyes do fail with tears," that is, he hath wept till he can weep no more; hath almost wept his eyes out, wept himself blind. Nor are the inward impressions of grief short of the outward expressions; his bowels are troubled, as they were when he saw these calamities coming, *Jer.* iv. 19, 20, which one would think might have excused him now; but even he, to whom they were no surprise, yet felt them an insupportable grief, to that degree, that his liver is poured out on the earth; that is, he felt himself a perfect colliquation. All his entrails were melted and dissolved, as *Ps.* xxii. 14; Jeremiah himself had better treatment than his neighbours, better than he had had before from his own countrymen; nay, their destruction was his deliverance, their captivity his enlargement, the same that made them prisoners made him a favourite, and yet his private interests are swallowed up in a concern for the public, and he bewails the destruction of the daughter of his people as sensibly as if he himself had been the greatest sufferer in that common calamity. Note, The judgments of God upon the land and nation are to be lamented by us, though we for our parts may escape pretty well.

Secondly. Calls to lamentation are here given. "The heart of the people cried unto the Lord," ver. 18. Some fear it was not a cry of true repentance, but of bitter complaint; their heart was as full of grief as it could hold, and they gave vent to it in doleful shrieks and outcries, in which they made use of God's name; yet we will charitably suppose that many of them did in sincerity cry unto God for mercy in their distress; and the prophet bids them go on to do so. "O wall of the daughter of Zion," either ye that stand upon the wall, ye watchmen on the walls, (*Isa.* lxii. 6,) when ye see the enemies encamped about the walls, and making their approaches towards them, or "because of the wall," (that is the subject of the lamentation,) because of the "breaking down of the wall," which was not done till about a month after the city was taken; because of this farther calamity let the daughter of Zion lament still. This was a thing which Nehemiah lamented long after, *Neh.* i. 3, 4, "Let tears run down like a river, day and night;" weep without intermission, "give thyself no rest" from weeping, "let not the apple of thine eyes cease." This intimates, 1. That the calamities would be continuing, and the causes of grief would frequently recur, and fresh occasion would be given them every day and every night to bemoan themselves. 2. That they would be apt by degrees to grow insensible and stupid under the hand of God, and would need to be still called upon to afflict their souls yet more and more, till their proud and hard hearts were thoroughly humbled and softened.

Thirdly. Causes for lamentation are here assigned, and the calamities that are to be bewailed are very particularly and pathetically described.

1. Multitudes perish by famine, a very sore judgment; and piteous is the case of those that fall under it God had corrected them by scarcity of provisions through want of rain some time before, *Jer.* xiv. 1, and they were not brought to repentance by that lower degree of this judgment; and therefore now, by the straitness of the siege, God brought it upon them in extremity; for, 1st. The children died for hunger in their mothers' arms; "The children and sucklings" whose innocent and helpless state entitle them to relief as soon as any, yet they "swoon in the streets," ver. 11; "as the wounded," ver. 12. There being no food to be had for them, they that are starved die as surely as they that are stabbed. They lie a great while crying to their poor mothers for corn to feed them, and wine to refresh them; for they are such as had been bred up to the use of wine, and wanted it now, but there is none for them; so that at length "their souls are poured out into their mothers' bosom," and there they breathe their last. This is mentioned again, ver. 19, they "faint for hunger in the top of every street." Yet this is not the worst. 2nd. There were some little children that were slain by their mothers' hands, and eaten, ver. 20. Such was the scarcity of provision, that the women ate the fruit of their own bodies, even their children, when they were but of five span long, according to the threatening, *Deu.* xxviii. 53. The like was done in the siege of Samaria, 2 *Kin.* vi. 29; such extremities, nay, such barbarities, were they brought to by the famine. Let us in our abundance thank God that we have food convenient not only for ourselves, but for our children.

2. Multitudes fall by the sword, which devours one as well as another, especially when it is in the hand of such cruel enemies as the Chaldeans were. 1st. They spared no character, no, not the most distinguished; even the priest and the prophet, who of all men, one would think, might expect protection from Heaven, and veneration on earth, yet are slain, not abroad in the field of battle where they are out of their place, as Hophni and Phinehas, but in the sanctuary of the Lord, the place of their business, and which they hoped would have been a refuge to them. 2nd. They spared no age, not those that by reason of their tender or their decrepit age were exempted from taking up the sword, for even they perished by the sword; the young that were not yet come to bear arms, and the old that had their quietus, yet lie on the ground slain in the streets, till some kind hand is found that will bury them. 3rd. They spared no sex; "My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword." In the most barbarous military executions that ever we read of, the virgins are spared and made part of the spoil, *Num.* xxxi. 28; *Jud.* v. 30; but here the virgins were put to the sword, as well as the young men. 4th. This was the Lord's doing, he suffered the sword of the Chaldeans to devour thus without distinction; "Thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger," for it is God that kills and makes them alive, and saves alive as he pleaseth. But that which follows is very harsh; "Thou hast killed and not pitied," for his soul is grieved for the misery of Israel. The enemies that used them thus cruelly were such as he had both mustered and summoned; ver. 22, "Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about;" that is, the Chaldeans, that are such a terror to me. Enemies crowded into Jerusalem now as thick as ever worshippers used to do on a solemn festival, so that we were quite overpowered with numbers, and "none escaped nor remained;" Jerusalem was made a perfect slaughter-house. Mothers are cut to the heart to see those whom they have taken such care of, and pains with, and whom they have been so tender of, thus inhumanly used; suddenly cut off that were not so soon reared. "Those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed," as if they were brought forth for the murderer, like lambs for the butcher, *Hos.* ix. 13. Zion, that was a mother to them all, lamented to see those who were brought up in her courts, and under the tuition of her oracles, thus made a prey.

3. Their false prophets cheated them, ver. 14. This was a thing which Jeremiah had lamented long before, and had observed with a great concern,

Jer. xiv. 13, "Ah, Lord God, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword." And here he inserts it among his lamentations, "Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee;" they pretended to discover for thee, and then to discover to thee, the mind and will of God, to see the visions of the Almighty, and then to speak his words: but they were all vain and foolish things, their visions were all their own fancies, and if they thought they had any it was only the product of a crazed head, or a heated imagination, as appeared by what they delivered, which was all idle and impertinent. Nay, it is most likely they themselves knew the visions they pretended were counterfeit, and all a sham, and made use of only to colour that which they designedly imposed upon the people with, that they might make an interest in them for themselves. They are thy prophets, not God's prophets; he never sent them, nor were they pastors after his heart, but the people set them up, told them what they should say, so that they were prophets after their hearts. 1st. Prophets should tell people of their faults; should shew them their sins, that they may bring them to repentance, and so prevent their ruin. But these prophets knew that would lose them the people's affections and contributions, and knew they could not reprove their hearers without reproaching themselves at the same time; and therefore, "They have not discovered thine iniquity;" they saw it not themselves, or, if they did, saw so little evil in it or danger by it, that they would not tell them of it, though that might have been a means by taking away their iniquity to turn away their captivity. 2nd. Prophets should warn people of the judgments of God coming upon them; but these saw for them false burthens. The messages they pretended to deliver to them from God they knew to be false and falsely ascribed to God, so that by soothing them up in carnal security they caused that banishment which by plain dealing they might have prevented.

4. Their neighbours laughed at them; ver. 15, "All that pass by thee clap their hands at thee." Jerusalem had made a great figure, got a great name, and borne a great sway among the nations; it was the envy and terror of all about, and when that city was thus reduced they all (as men are apt to do in such a case) triumphed in its fall; "They hissed and wagged the head," pleasing themselves to see how much it was fallen from its former pretension. "Is this the city," said they, "that men called The perfection of beauty?" *Ps.* l. 2. How is it now the perfection of deformity! Where is all its beauty now? "Is this the city that was" called "the joy of the whole earth," *Ps.* xlviii. 2; which rejoiced in the gifts of God's bounty and grace more than any other place, and which all the earth rejoiced in? where is all its joy now, and all its glorying? It is a great sin thus to make a jest of others' miseries, and adds very much affliction to the afflicted.

5. Their enemies triumphed over them, ver. 16. Those that wished ill to Jerusalem and her peace now vent their spite and malice, which before they concealed; they now open their mouths, nay, they widen them, they hiss and gnash their teeth in scorn and indignation; they triumph in their own success against her, and the rich prey they have got in making themselves masters of Jerusalem. We have swallowed her up, it is our doing, and it is our gain, it is all our own now; Jerusalem shall never be either courted or feared as she has been; certainly "this is the day that we have long looked for, we have found it, we have seen it; aha! so would we have it." Note, The enemies of the church are apt to take its shocks for its ruins, and to triumph in them accordingly. But they will find themselves deceived, for "the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church."

6. Their God in all this appeared against them; ver. 17, "The Lord hath done that which he had devised." The destroyers of Jerusalem could have no power against her unless it were given them from above. They are but the sword in God's hand, it is he that has thrown down, and has not pitied; that is, in this controversy of his with us we have not had the usual instances of his compassion towards us; "He hath caused the enemy to rejoice over thee:" see *Job* xxx. 11. "He hath set up the horn of thine adversaries;" hath given them power, and matter for pride. This is indeed the highest aggravation of the trouble, that God is become their enemy, and yet it is the strongest argument for patience under it. We are bound to submit to what God doth, for, 1st. It is the performance of his purpose; "The Lord has done that which he had devised." It is done with counsel and deliberation, not rashly or upon a sudden resolve; it is the evil that he has framed, *Jer.* xviii. 11; and we may be sure it is framed so as exactly to answer the intention. What God deviseth against his people is designed for them, and so it will be found in the issue. 2nd. It is the accomplishment of his predictions; it is the fulfilling of the Scripture. He has now put in execution "his word that he had commanded in the days of old." When he gave them his law by Moses, he told them what judgments he would certainly inflict upon them if they transgressed that law; and now they had been guilty of the transgression of this law he had executed the sentence of it, according to *Lev.* xxvi. 16, &c.; *Deu.* xxviii. 15. Note, In all the providences of God concerning his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of his word; for there is an exact agreement between the judgments of God's hand and the judgments of his mouth, and when they are compared they will mutually explain and illustrate each other.

Fourthly. Comforts for the cure of these lamentations are here sought for and prescribed. 1. They are sought for and inquired after, ver. 13. The prophet seeks to find out some suitable, acceptable words to say to her in this case; Wherewith shall I "comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion?" Note, We should endeavour to comfort those whose calamities we lament; and when our passions have made the worst of them, our wisdom should correct them, and labour to make the best of them. We should study to make our sympathies with our afflicted friends turn to their consolation. Now the two most common topics of comfort in case of affliction are here tried, but are laid by because they would not hold. We commonly endeavour to comfort our friends by telling them, 1st. That their case is not singular, nor without precedent; there are many whose trouble is greater, and lies heavier upon them than theirs doth. But Jerusalem's will not admit this argument; "What thing shall I liken to thee, or what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee?" What city, what country is there whose case is parallel to thine? What witness shall I produce to prove an example that will reach thy present calamitous event? Alas, there is none; no sorrow like thine, because there is none whose honour was like thine. 2nd. We tell them that their case is not desperate, but it may easily be remedied; but neither will that be admitted here upon a view of human probabilities, for "thy breach is great like the sea," like the breach which the sea sometimes makes upon the land, which cannot be repaired, but still grows wider and wider. Thou art wounded, and "who shall heal thee?" No wisdom or power of man can repair the desolations of such a broken, shattered state; it is to no purpose, therefore, to administer any of these common cordials; therefore, 2. The method of cure prescribed is, to address themselves to God, and by a penitent prayer to commit their case to him, and to be instant and constant in such prayers; ver. 19, "Arise," out of thy dust, out of thy despondency, "cry out in the night," watch unto prayer; when others are asleep, be thou upon thy knees, importunate with God for mercy; "in the beginning of the watches," of each of the four watches of the night, let thine eyes prevent them, (*Ps.* cxix. 148,) then "pour out thine heart like water before the Lord:" be free and full in prayer, be sincere and serious in prayer, open thy mind, spread thy case before the Lord: "Lift up thine hands towards him" in holy desire and expectation; beg "for the life of thy young children," these poor lambs, what have they done? 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 17. Take with you words, take with you these words, ver. 20, "Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this;" with whom thou hast dealt thus. Are they not thine own; the seed of Abraham thy friend, and of Jacob thy chosen? Lord, take their case into thy compassionate consideration. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore, even the sorest, a remedy for every malady, even the most grievous. And our business in prayer is not to prescribe, but to subscribe to the wisdom and will of God; to refer our case to him, and then leave it with him. "Lord," behold and consider," and "thy will be done."

CHAPTER III.

The scope of this chapter is the same with that of the two foregoing chapters, but the composure is somewhat different; that was in long verse, this in short, another kind of metre; that was in single alphabets, this in a treble one. Here is, I. A sad complaint of God's displeasure, and the fruits of it, ver. 1—20. II. Words of comfort to God's people when they are in trouble and distress, ver. 21—36. III. Duty prescribed in this afflicted state, ver. 37—41. IV. The complaint renewed, ver. 42—54. V. Encouragement taken to hope in God, and continue waiting for his salvation; with an appeal to his justice against the persecutors of the church, ver. 55—63. Some make all this to be spoken by the prophet himself when he was imprisoned and persecuted, but it seems rather to be spoken in the person of the church now in captivity, and in a manner desolate; and in the desolations of which the prophet did in a particular manner interest himself. But the complaints here are somewhat more general than those in the foregoing chapter, being accommodated to the case as well of particular persons as of the public; and intended for the use of the closet rather than of the solemn assembly. Some think Jeremiah makes these complaints not only as an intercessor for Israel, but as a type of Christ, who was thought by some to be Jeremias the weeping prophet, because he was much in tears, *Mat.* xvi. 14, and to him many of the passages here may be applied.

I *AM* the man *that* hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. [*into* light.
2 He hath led me, and brought *me into* darkness, but not
3 Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand *against me* all the day.
4 My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. [and travel.
5 He hath builded against me, and compassed *me* with gall
6 He hath set me in dark places, as *they that be* dead of old.
7 He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.
8 Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.
9 He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked.
10 He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, *and as* a lion in secret places.
11 He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. [arrow.
12 He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the
13 He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. [the day.
14 I was a derision to all my people; *and* their song all
15 He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.
16 He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes.
17 And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgat prosperity. [the LORD:
18 And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from
19 Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. [in me.
20 My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled

The title of the 102nd psalm might very fitly be prefixed to this chapter, "The prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord;" for it is very feelingly and fluently that the complaint is here poured out. Let us observe the particulars of it.

First. The prophet complains that God is angry. This gives both birth and bitterness to the affliction; ver. 1, "I am the man," the remarkable man, "that hath seen affliction," and has felt it sensibly "by the rod of his wrath." Note, God is sometimes angry with his own people; yet it is to be complained of, not as a sword to cut off, but only as a rod to correct; it is to them the rod of his wrath, a chastening which, though grievous for the present, will in the issue be advantageous. By this rod we must expect to see affliction; and, if we be made to see more than ordinary affliction by that rod, we must not quarrel, for we are sure the anger is just, and the affliction mild, and mixed with mercy.

Secondly. That he is at a loss, and altogether in the dark. Darkness is put for great trouble and perplexity; that want both of comfort and of direction. This was the case of the complainant; ver. 2, "He hath led me" by his providence, and an unaccountable chain of events, "into darkness but not into light," the darkness I feared, and not into the light I hoped for. And, ver. 6, "He hath set me in dark places," dark as the grave, "like those that be dead of old," that are quite forgotten, nobody knows who or what they were. Note, The Israel of God, though children of light, sometimes walk in darkness.

Thirdly. That God appears against him as an enemy, as a professed enemy. God had been for him, but now "sorely against me is he turned," ver. 3, as far as I can discern, for "his hand is turned against me all the day, I am chastened every morning," *Ps.* lxxiii. 14. And when God's hand is continually turned against us we are tempted to think that his heart is turned against us too. God had said once, *Hos.* v. 14, "I will be as a lion to the house of Judah," and now he has made his word good; ver. 10, "He was unto me as a bear lying in wait," surprising me with his judgments, "and as a lion in secret places," so that which way soever I went, I was in continual fear of being set upon, and could never think myself safe. Do men shoot at those they are enemies to? "He hath bent his bow," the bow that was ordained against the church's persecutors, that is bent against her sons; ver. 12, "He hath set me as a mark for his arrow," which he aims at, and will be sure to hit, and then "the arrows of his quiver enter into my reins," give me a mortal wound, an inward wound, ver. 13. Note, God has many arrows in his quiver, and they fly swift, and pierce deep.

Fourthly. That he is as one sorely afflicted both in body and mind. The Jewish state may now be fitly compared to a man wrinkled with age, for which there is no remedy; ver. 4, "My flesh and my skin has he made old," they are wasted and withered, and I look like one that is ready to drop into the grave. Nay, he has broken my bones, and so disabled me to help myself; ver. 15, "He has filled me with bitterness," a bitter sense of these calamities. God has access to the spirit, and can so embitter that, as thereby to embitter all the enjoyments, as, when the stomach is foul, whatever is eaten sours in it. "He hath made me drunk with wormwood;" that is, so intoxicated me with the sense of my afflictions, that I know not what to say or do. He hath mingled gravel with my bread, so that my teeth are broken with it, ver. 16, and what I eat is neither pleasant nor nourishing. "He hath covered me with ashes," as mourners used to be; or, as some read it, He hath fed me with ashes; "I have eaten ashes like bread," *Ps.* cii. 9.

Fifthly. That he is not able to discern any way of escape or deliverance; ver. 5, "He hath builded against me," as forts and batteries are built against a besieged city,—where there was a way open it is now quite made up; "he hath compassed me" on every side "with gall and travel;" that is, I vex, and fret, and tire myself, to find a way of escape, but can find none; ver. 7, "He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out." When Jerusalem was besieged, it is said to be compassed in on every side, *Lu.* xix. 43. I am chained, and, as some notorious malefactors are double fettered and loaded with irons, so "he hath made my chain heavy." And so, ver. 9, "He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone;" not only hedged up my way with thorns, *Hos.* ii. 6, but stopped it up with a stone wall, which cannot be broken through, so that "my paths are made crooked;" that is, I traverse to and fro, to the right hand, to the left, to try to get forward, but am still turned back. Those that walk in the crooked paths of sin, crossing God's laws, it is just with God to make them walk in the crooked paths of affliction, crossing their designs, and breaking their measures. So ver. 11, "He hath turned aside my ways;" that is, hath blasted all my counsels, ruined my projects, so that I am necessitated to yield to my own ruin; he hath "pulled me in pieces," he hath torn and gone away, *Hos.* v. 14, "and hath made me desolate," has deprived me of all society and all comfort in my own soul.

Sixthly. That God turns a deaf ear to his prayers; ver. 8, "When I cry and shout," as one in earnest, as one that would make him hear, yet "he shuts out my prayer," and will not suffer it to have access to him. God's ear useth to be open to the prayers of his people, and his door of mercy to them that knock at it; but now both are shut, even to one that cries and shouts. Thus sometimes God seems to be angry, even against the prayers of his people, *Ps.* lxxx. 4, and their case is deplorable indeed, when they are denied not only the benefit of an answer, but the comfort of acceptance.

Seventhly. That his neighbours make a laughing matter of his troubles; ver. 14, "I was a derision to all my people," to all the wicked among them, that made themselves and one another merry with the public judgments; and particularly the prophet Jeremiah's griefs. "I am their song," their neginoth, or hand instrument of music, their tabret, *Job* xvii. 6, that they play upon, as Nero on his harp when Rome was on fire.

Eighthly. That he was ready to despair of relief and deliverance. Thou hast not only taken peace from me, but hast "removed my soul far off from peace," ver. 17, so that it is not only not within reach, but not within ken. "I forgat prosperity;" it is so long since I had it, and so unlikely that I should ever recover it, that I have lost the idea of it; have been so inured to sorrow and servitude, that I know not what joy and liberty mean. I have even given up all for gone, concluding, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord," ver. 18; that is, I can no longer stay myself upon God as my support, for I do not find he gives me encouragement to do so; nor can I look for his appearing in my behalf, so as to put an end to my troubles, for the case seems remediless, and even my God inexorable. Without doubt it was his infirmity to say thus, *Ps.* lxxvii. 10; for with God there is everlasting strength, and he is his people's never-failing hope, whatever they may think.

Ninthly. That grief returned upon every remembrance of his troubles; and his reflections were as melancholy as his prospects, ver. 19, 20. Did he endeavour, as Job did, to forget his complaint, *Job* ix. 27, alas, it was to no purpose; he remembers upon all occasions "the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall." Thus emphatically doth he speak of his affliction, for thus did he think of it, thus heavy did it lie when he reviewed it. It was an affliction that was misery itself; 'My affliction and my transgression,' so some read it, my trouble, and my sin that brought it upon me; that was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; it is sin that makes the cup of affliction a bitter cup. "My soul hath them still in remembrance." The captives in Babylon had all the miseries of the siege in their mind continually, and the flames and ruins of Jerusalem still before their eyes, and wept when they remembered Zion; nay, they could never forget Jerusalem, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 1, 5. My soul having them in remembrance, is humbled in me; not only oppressed with a sense of the trouble, but in bitterness for sin. Note, It becomes us to have humble hearts under humbling providences, and to renew our penitent humiliations for sin upon every remembrance of our afflictions and miseries. Thus we may get good by former corrections, and prevent farther.

21 This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.
22 *It is of* the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.
23 *They are* new every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness.
24 The LORD *is* my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.
25 The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him.
26 *It is* good that *a man* should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.
27 *It is* good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.
28 He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne *it* upon him.
29 He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.
30 He giveth *his* cheek to him that smiteth him; he is filled full with reproach.
31 For the Lord will not cast off for ever:
32 But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.
33 For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.
34 To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth,
35 To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High,
36 To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.

Here the clouds begin to scatter, and the sky to clear up. The complaint was very melancholy in the former part of the chapter, and yet here the tune is altered, and the mourners in Zion begin to look a little pleasant. But for hope the heart would break. To save the heart from being quite broken, here is something called to mind, which gives ground for hope, ver. 21, which refers to what comes after, not to what goes before,—this that follows, 'I make to return to my heart,' so the margin words it. What we have had in our hearts, and have laid to our hearts, is sometimes as if it were quite lost and forgotten, till God by his grace make it return to our hearts, that it may be ready to us when we have occasion to use it. "I recall it to mind, therefore have I hope," and am kept from downright despair. Let us see what these things are which he calls to mind.

First. *That, as bad as things are, it is owing to the mercy of God that they are not worse.* We are afflicted by the rod of his wrath, but "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed," ver. 22. When we are in distress, we should, for the encouragement of our faith and hope, observe what makes for us, as well as what makes against us. Things are bad, but they might have been worse, and therefore there is hope they may be better. Observe here, 1. The streams of mercy acknowledged: "We are not consumed." Note, The church of God is like Moses' bush, burning, yet not consumed; whatever hardships it has met with, or may meet with, it shall have a being in the world to the end of time. It is persecuted of men, but not forsaken of God; and therefore, though it is cast down, it is not destroyed, 2 *Cor.* iv. 9; corrected, yet not consumed; refined in the furnace as silver, yet not consumed as dross. 2. These streams followed up to the fountain: "It is of the Lord's mercies." Here are mercies in the plural number, noting the abundance and variety of those mercies God is an inexhaustible fountain of mercy, the Father of mercies. Note, We all owe it to the sparing mercy of God that we are not consumed. Others have been consumed round about us, and we ourselves have been in the consuming, and yet we are not consumed; we are out of the grave, we are out of hell. Had we been dealt with according to our sin, we had been consumed long ago; but we have been dealt with according to God's mercies, and we are bound to acknowledge it to his praise.

Secondly. *That even in the depth of their affliction they still have experience of the tenderness of the Divine pity, and the truth of the Divine promise.* They had several times complained that God had not pitied, *ch.* ii. 17, 21; but here they correct themselves, and own, 1. That God's "compassions fail not." They do not really fail, no, not then when in anger he seems to have shut up his tender mercies. These rivers of mercy run fully and constantly, but never run dry. No, "they are new every morning;" that is, every morning we have fresh instances of God's compassion towards us; he visits us with them every morning, *Job* vii. 18; "Every morning doth he bring his judgment to light," *Zeph.* iii. 5. When our comforts fail, yet God's compassions do not. 2. That great is his faithfulness. Though the covenant seemed to be broken, they own that it still continues in full force; and though Jerusalem be in ruins, "the truth of the Lord endures for ever." Note, Whatever hard things we suffer, we must never entertain any hard thoughts of God, but must still be ready to own that he is both kind and faithful.

Thirdly. *That God is and ever will be the all-sufficient happiness of his people, and they have chosen him, and depend upon him to be so;* ver. 24, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul." That is, 1. When I have lost all I have in the world, liberty, and livelihood, and almost life itself, yet I have not lost my interest in God. Portions on earth are perishing things, but God is a portion for ever. 2. While I have an interest in God, therein I have enough. I have that which is sufficient to balance all my troubles, and make up all my losses. Whatever we are robbed of, our portion is safe. 3. This is that which I depend upon, and rest satisfied with; "therefore will I hope in him." I will stay myself upon him, and encourage myself in him, when all other supports and encouragements fail me. Note, It is our duty to make God the portion of our souls, and then to make use of him as our portion, and to take the comfort of it in the midst of our lamentations.

Fourthly. *That those who deal with God will find it is not in vain to trust in him;* for, 1. He is good to those that do so, ver. 25. He is good to all, his tender mercies are over all his works, all his creatures taste of his goodness; but he is in a particular manner "good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him." Note, While trouble is prolonged, and deliverance is deferred, we must patiently wait for God and his gracious returns to us; while we wait for him by faith we must seek him by prayer; our souls must seek him, else we do not seek so as to find. Our seeking will help to keep up our waiting; and to those who thus wait and seek God will be gracious; he will shew them his marvellous lovingkindness. 2. They that do so will find it good for them; ver. 26, "It is good," it is our duty, and will be our unspeakable comfort and satisfaction "to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord." To hope that it will come, though the difficulties that lie in the way of it seem insupportable; to wait till it doth come, though it be long delayed; and while we wait to be quiet and silent, not quarrelling with God, or making ourselves uneasy, but acquiescing in the Divine disposals; "Father, thy will be done." If we call this to mind, we may have hope that all will end well at last.

Fifthly. *That afflictions are really good for us; and if we bear them aright will work very much for our good.* It is not only good to hope and wait for the salvation, but it is good to be under the trouble in the mean time; ver. 27, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." Many of the young men were carried into captivity, and, to make them easy in it, he tells them it

was good for them to bear the yoke of that captivity; and they would find it so if they would but accommodate themselves to their condition, and labour to answer God's ends in laying that heavy yoke upon them. It is very applicable to the yoke of God's commands; it is good for young people to take that yoke upon them in their youth. We cannot begin too soon to be religious; it will make our duty the more acceptable to God, and easy to ourselves, if we engage in it when we are young. But here it seems to be meant of the yoke of affliction; many have found it good to bear this in youth; it has made them humble and serious, and hath weaned them from this world, who otherwise would have been proud and unruly, and as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. But when do we bear the yoke so as that it is really good for us to bear it in youth? He answers in the following verses:

1. When we are sedate and quiet under our afflictions; when we sit alone, and keep silence, do not run to and fro into all companies with our complaints, aggravating our calamities, and quarrelling with the disposals of Providence concerning us, but retire into privacy that we may in a day of adversity consider; sit alone that we may converse with God, and commune with our own hearts, silencing all discontented, distrustful thoughts, and laying our hand upon our mouth, as Aaron, who under a very severe trial held his peace. We must keep silence under the yoke, as those that have borne it upon us; not wilfully pulled it upon our own necks, but patiently submitted to it when God laid it upon us. When those that are afflicted in their youth accommodate themselves to their afflictions, fit their necks to the yoke, and study to answer God's end in afflicting them, then they will find it good for them to bear it, for "it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are" thus "exercised thereby."

2. When we are humble and patient under our affliction. He gets good by the yoke that puts his mouth in the dust; not only lays his hand upon his mouth, in token of submission to the will of God in the affliction, but puts it in the dust, in token of sorrow, and shame, and self-loathing, at the remembrance of sin, and as one perfectly reduced and reclaimed, and brought as those that are vanquished to lick the dust, *Ps.* lxxii. 9. And we must thus humble ourselves, "if so be there may be hope," or, as it is in the original, 'peradventure there is hope.' If there be any way to acquire and secure a good hope under our afflictions, it is this way, and yet we must be very modest in our expectation of it, must look for it with an 'it may be,' as those that own ourselves utterly unworthy of it. Note, Those that are truly humbled for sin will be glad to obtain a good hope through grace upon any terms, though they put their mouth in the dust for it; and those that would have hope must do so, and ascribe it to free grace if they have any encouragements which may keep their hearts from sinking into the dust when they put their mouth there.

3. When we are meek and mild towards those that are the instruments of our trouble, and are of a forgiving spirit, ver. 30. He gets good by the yoke that giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him, and rather turns the other cheek (*Mat.* v. 39) than returns the second blow. Our Lord Jesus has left us an example of this, for "he gave his back to the smiters," *Isa.* l. 6. He that can bear contempt and reproach, and not render railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness, that when he is filled full with reproach keeps it to himself, and doth not retort it, and empty it again upon those that filled him with it, but pours it out before the Lord, (as those did, *Ps.* cxxiii. 4, whose souls were exceedingly filled with the contempt of the proud,) he shall find it good to bear the yoke, and that it shall turn to his spiritual advantage. The sum is, If tribulation work patience, that patience will work experience, and that experience a hope that maketh not ashamed.

Sixthly. *That God will graciously return to his people with seasonable comforts according to the time that he has afflicted them*, ver. 31, 32. Therefore the sufferer is thus penitent, thus patient, because he believes that God is gracious and merciful, which is the great inducement both to evangelical repentance and to Christian patience. We may bear up ourselves with this, 1. That when we are cast down, yet we are not cast off. The father's correcting his son is not a disinheriting of him. 2. That though we may seem to be cast off for a time, while sensible comforts are suspended, and desired salvations deferred, yet we are not really cast off, because not cast off for ever; the controversy with us shall not be perpetual. 3. That, whatever sorrow we are in, it is what God has allotted us, and his hand is in it. It is he that causeth grief, and therefore we may be sure it is ordered wisely and graciously; and it is but for a season and when need is, that we are in heaviness, 1 *Pet.* i. 6. 4. That God hath compassions and comforts in store, even for those whom he hath himself grieved. We must be far from thinking that, though God cause grief, the world will relieve and help us; no, the very same that caused the grief must bring in the favour, or we are undone; *una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit*,—'the same hand inflicts the wound that heals it.' He hath torn, and he will heal us, *Hos.* vi. 1. 5. That when God returns to deal graciously with us it will not be according to our merits, but according to his mercies, according to the multitude, the abundance of his mercies. So unworthy we are, that nothing but an abundant mercy will relieve us, and from that what may we not expect? And God's causing our grief ought to be no discouragement at all to those expectations.

Seventhly. *That when God doth cause grief it is for wise and holy ends; and he takes not delight in our calamities*, ver. 33. He doth indeed afflict and grieve the children of men, all their grievances and afflictions are from him; but he doth not do it willingly, not from the heart, so the word is; that is, 1. He never afflicts us but when we give him cause to do it. He doth not dispense his frowns as he doth his favours, *ex mero motu*,—'from his mere good pleasure;' if he shew us kindness it is because so it seemeth good unto him; but if he write bitter things against us, it is because we both deserve it and need it. 2. He doth not afflict with pleasure. He delights not in the death of sinners, or the disquiet of saints, but punisheth with a kind of reluctancy; he comes out of his place to punish, for his place is the mercy seat. He delights not in the misery of any of his creatures; but for his own people he is so far from it, that in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and his soul is grieved for the misery of Israel. 3. He retains his kindness for his people even when he afflicts them. If he doth not willingly grieve the children of men, much less his own children. However it be, yet God is good to them, *Ps.* lxxiii. 1; and they may by faith see love in his heart, even then when they see frowns in his face, and a rod in his hand.

Eighthly. *That though he makes use of men as his hand, or rather instruments in his hand, for the correcting of his people, yet he is far from being pleased with the injustice of their proceedings and the wrong they do them*, ver. 34—36. Though God serve his own purposes by the violence of wicked and unreasonable men, yet it doth not therefore follow that he countenanceth that violence, as his oppressed people are sometimes tempted to think; *Hab.* i. 13, "Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously?" Two ways the people of God are injured and oppressed by their enemies, and the prophet here assures us that God doth not approve of either of them. 1. If men injure them by force of arms, God doth not approve of that. He doth not himself crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth, but he regards the cry of the prisoners; nor doth he approve of men's doing it, nay, he is much displeased with it. It is barbarous to trample on them that are down, and to crush those that are bound, and cannot help themselves. 2. If men injure them under colour of law, and in the pretended administration of justice, if they turn aside the right of a man so that he cannot discover what his rights are, or cannot come at them, they are out of his reach—if they subvert a man in his cause, and bring in a wrong verdict, or give a false judgment—let them know, 1st. That God sees them. It is before the face of the Most High, ver. 53, it is in his sight, under his eye, and is very displeasing to him; they cannot but know it is so, and therefore it is in defiance of him that they do it. He is the Most High, whose authority over them they contemn, by abusing their authority over their subjects; not considering that He that is higher than the highest regardeth, *Eccl.* v. 8. 2nd. That God doth not approve of them. More is implied than is expressed. The perverting of justice, and the subverting of the just, is a great affront to God; and though he may make use of this for the correction of his people, yet he will sooner or later severely reckon with those that do thus. Note, However God may for a time suffer evil doers to prosper, and serve his own purposes by them, yet he doth not therefore approve of their evil doings. Far be it from God that he should do iniquity, or countenance those that do it.

37 Who *is* he *that* saith, and it cometh to pass, *when* the Lord commandeth *it* not? [and good?
38 Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil
39 Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? [LORD.
40 Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the
41 Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.

That we may be entitled to the comforts administered to the afflicted in the foregoing verses, and may taste the sweetness of them, we have here the duties of an afflicted state prescribed to us, in the performance of which we may expect those comforts.

First. We must see and acknowledge the hand of God in all the calamities that befall us at any time, whether personal or public, ver. 37, 38. This is here laid down as a great truth, which will help to quiet our spirits under our afflictions, and to sanctify them to us. 1. That, whatever men's actions are, it is God that overrules them; "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass," that is, that designs a thing, and brings his designs to effect, "if the Lord commandeth it not?" Men can do nothing but according to the counsel of God, nor have any power or success but what is given them from above. "A man's heart deviseth his way," he projects and purposeth, he saith he will do so and so, *Jas.* iv. 13; but the Lord directeth his steps far otherwise than he designed them, and what he contrived and expected doth not come to pass unless it be what God's hand and his counsel had determined before to be done, *Pr.* xvi. 9; *Jer.* x. 23. The Chaldeans said they would destroy Jerusalem, and it came to pass, not because they said it, but because God commanded it, and commissioned them to do it. Note, Men are but tools which the great God makes use of, and manageth as he pleaseth in the government of this lower world, and they cannot accomplish any of their designs without him. 2. That, whatever men's lot is, it is God that orders it; "Out of the mouth of the Most High doth not evil and good proceed?" Yes, certainly it doth; and it is more emphatically expressed in the original: 'Doth not this evil, and this good, proceed out of the mouth of the Most High?' Is it not what he has ordained and appointed for us? Yes, certainly it is; and for the reconciling of us to our own afflictions, whatever they be, this general truth must thus be particularly applied. This comfort I receive from the hand of God, and shall I not receive that evil also? as Job argues, *ch.* ii. 10. Are we healthful or sickly, rich or poor? do we succeed in our designs or are we crossed in them? It is all what God ordereth; "every man's judgment proceedeth from him." "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;" he forms "the light and creates the darkness," as he did at first. Note, All the events of Divine providence are the products of a Divine counsel; whatever is done God has the directing of it, and the works of his hands agree with the words of his mouth,—he speaks and it is done; so easily, so effectually, are all his purposes fulfilled.

Secondly. We must not quarrel with God for any affliction that he lays upon us at any time; ver. 29, "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" The prophet here seems to check himself for the complaints he had made in the former part of the chapter, wherein he seemed to reflect upon God as unkind and severe. Do I well to be angry? Why do I fret thus? Those who in their haste have chidden with God must in the reflection chide themselves for it. From the doctrine of God's sovereign and universal providence which he had asserted in the verses before, he draws this inference, "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" What God doth we must not open our mouths against, *Ps.* xxxix. 9. They that blame their lot reproach him that allotted it to them. The sufferers in the captivity must submit to the will of God in all their sufferings. Note, Though we may pour out our complaints before God, we must never exhibit any complaints against God. What, "shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins!" The reasons here urged are very cogent. 1. We are men; let us herein shew ourselves men. Shall "a man complain?" and again, "a man!" We are men, and not brutes, reasonable creatures, that should act with reason, that should look upwards, and look forwards, and both ways may fetch considerations enough to silence our complaints. We are men, and not children that cry for every thing that hurts them; we are men, and not gods, subjects, not lords, are not our own masters, nor our own carvers, we are bound and must obey, must submit. We are men, and not angels, and therefore cannot expect to be free from troubles as they are; we are not inhabitants of that world where there is no sorrow, but this, where there is nothing but sorrow. We are men, and not devils, are not in that deplorable, helpless, hopeless state that they are in, but have something to comfort ourselves with which they have not. 2. We are living men; through the good hand of our God upon us we are alive yet, though dying daily; and shall "a living man complain?" No, he has more reason to be thankful for life than to complain of any of the burthens and calamities of life. Our lives are frail, and forfeited, and yet we are alive; now the living, the living they should praise, and not complain, *Isa.* xxxviii. 19. While there is life there is hope, and therefore, instead of complaining that things are bad, we should encourage ourselves with hopes that they will be better. 3. We are sinful men, and that which we complain of is the just punishment of our sins, nay, it is far less than our iniquities have deserved. We have little reason to complain of our trouble, for it is our own doing, we may thank ourselves, our own wickedness corrects us, *Pr.* xix. 3; no reason to quarrel with God, for he is righteous in it: he is the governor of the world, and it is necessary he should maintain the honour of his government by chastising the disobedient. Are we suffering for our sins, then let us not complain, for we have other work to do,—instead of repining, we must be repenting; and, as an evidence that God is reconciled to us, we must be endeavouring to reconcile ourselves to his holy will. Are we punished for our sins? It is our wisdom

then to submit, and to kiss the rod; for, if we still walk contrary to God, he will punish us yet seven times more, for when he judgeth he will overcome; but if we accommodate ourselves to him, though we be chastened of the Lord, we shall not be condemned with the world.

Thirdly. We must set ourselves to answer God's intention in afflicting us, which is to bring sin to our remembrance, and to bring us home to himself, ver. 40. These are the two things which our afflictions should put us upon: 1. A serious consideration of ourselves, and a reflection upon our lives past. "Let us search and try our ways," search what they have been, and then try whether they have been right and good, or no. Search as for a malefactor in disguise that flies and hides himself, and then try whether guilty or not guilty. Let conscience be employed both to search and to try, and let it have leave to deal faithfully, to accomplish a diligent search, and to make an impartial trial. Let us try our ways, that by them we may try ourselves; for we are to judge of our state, not by our faint wishes, but by our steps; not by one particular step, but by our ways; the ends we aim at, the rules we go by, and the agreeableness of the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives to those ends and those rules. When we are in affliction it is seasonable to consider our ways, *Hag.* i. 5, that what is amiss may be repented of and amended for the future, and so we may answer the intention of the affliction. We are apt in times of public calamity to reflect upon other people's ways, and lay blame upon them, whereas our business is to search and try our own ways. We have work enough to do at home; we must each of us say, What have I done? What have I contributed to the public flames? that we may each of us mend one, and then we should all be mended. 2. A sincere conversion to God. Let us turn again to the Lord, to him who is turned against us, and whom we have turned from; to him let us turn by repentance and reformation, as to our owner and ruler. We have been with him, and it has never been well with us since we forsook him; let us therefore now turn again to him. This must accompany the former, and be the fruit of it; therefore we must search and try our ways, that we may turn from the evil of them to God. This was the method David took, *Ps.* cxix. 59, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."

Fourthly. We must offer up ourselves to God, and our best affections and services in the flames of devotion, ver. 41. When we are in affliction, 1. We must look up to God as a God in the heavens, infinitely above us, and that has an incontestable dominion over us, for the heavens do rule, and are therefore not to be quarrelled with, but submitted to. 2. We must pray to him with a believing expectation to receive mercy from him; for that is implied in our lifting up our hands to him,—a gesture commonly used in prayer, and sometimes put for it, as *Ps.* cxli. 2, "Let the lifting up of my hands be acceptable in thy sight;" it signifies our requesting mercy from him, and our readiness to receive that mercy. 3. Our hearts must go along with our prayers. We must "lift up our hearts with our hands," as we must pour out our souls with our words. It is the heart that God looks at in that and every other service; for what will a sacrifice without a heart avail? If inward impressions be not in some measure answerable to outward expressions, we do but mock God and deceive ourselves. Praying is lifting up the soul to God, *Ps.* xxv. 1, as to our Father in heaven; and the soul that hopes to be with God in heaven for ever will thus, by frequent acts of devotion, be still learning the way thither, and pressing forward in that way.

42 We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned.
43 Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied.
44 Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that *our* prayer should not pass through.
45 Thou hast made us *as* the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people.
46 All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.
47 Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.
48 Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.
49 Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission,
50 Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven.
51 Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of my city.
52 Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause.
53 They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me.
54 Waters flowed over mine head; *then* I said, I am cut off.

It is easier to chide ourselves for complaining than to chide ourselves out of it. The prophet had owned that a living man should not complain, as if he checked himself for his complaints in the former part of the chapter; and yet here "the clouds return after the rain," and the wound bleeds afresh; for great pains must be taken with a troubled spirit to bring it into temper.

First. They confess the righteousness of God in afflicting them; ver. 42, "We have transgressed and have rebelled." Note, It becomes us when we are in trouble, to justify God by owning our sins, and laying the load upon ourselves for them. Call sin a transgression, call it a rebellion, and we do not miscall it. This is the result of their searching and trying their ways; the more they inquired into them, the worse they found them.

Secondly. Yet they complain of the afflictions they are under, not without some reflections upon God, which we are not to imitate, but under the sharpest trials must always think and speak highly and kindly of him.

1. They complain of his frowns, and the tokens of his displeasure against them. Their sins were repented of, and yet, ver. 42, "Thou hast not pardoned;" they had not the assurance and comfort of the pardon. The judgments brought upon them for their sins were not removed, and therefore they thought they could not say the sin was pardoned, which was a mistake; but a common mistake with the people of God, when their souls are cast down and disquieted within them. Their case was really piteous, yet they complain, "Thou hast not pitied," ver. 43. Their enemies persecuted and slew them, but that was not the worst of it, they were but the instruments in God's hand; "Thou hast persecuted us, and thou hast slain us," though we expected thou shouldest have protected and delivered us. They complain, that there was a wall of partition between them and God, and, 1st. This hindered God's favours from coming down upon them. The reflected beams of God's kindness to them used to be the beauty of Israel, but now thou hast covered us with anger, so that our glory is concealed and gone; now God is angry with us, and we do not appear that illustrious people that we have formerly been thought to be. Or, thou hast covered us up as men that are buried, are covered up and forgotten. 2nd. It hindered their prayers from coming up unto God; ver. 44, "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud," not like that bright cloud in which he took possession of the temple, which enabled the worshippers to draw near to him, but like that in which he came down upon mount Sinai, which obliged the people to stand at a distance. This cloud is so thick that our prayers seem as if they were lost in it; they cannot pass through, we cannot obtain an audience. Note, The prolonging of troubles is sometimes a temptation, even to praying people, to question whether God be what they have always believed him to be, a prayer-hearing God.

2. They complain of the contempt of their neighbours, and the reproach and ignominy they were under; ver. 45, "Thou hast made us as the offscouring," or scrapings of the first floor, which are thrown to the dunghill. This St. Paul refers to in his account of the sufferings of the apostles; 1 *Cor.* iv. 13, "We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things." We are the refuse or dross in the midst of the people, trodden upon by everybody, and looked upon as the vilest of the nations, and good for nothing but to be cast out as salt which has lost its savour. And, ver. 46, "Our enemies have opened their mouths against us," have gaped upon us as roaring lions to swallow us up, or made mouths at us, or have taken liberty to say what they please of us. These complaints we had before, *ch.* ii. 15, 16. Note, It is common for base and ill-natured men to run upon, and run down, those that are fallen into the depths of distress, from the height of honour. But this they brought upon themselves by sin; if they had not made themselves vile, their enemies could not have made them so; but therefore "men call them reprobate silver because the Lord has rejected them," for rejecting him.

3. They complain of the lamentable destruction that their enemies made of them; ver. 47, "Fear and a snare is come upon us;" the enemies have not only terrified us with those alarms, but prevailed against us by their stratagems, and surprised us with the ambushes they laid for us. And then follows nothing but desolation and destruction; "the destruction of the daughter of my people," ver. 48, of all the daughters of my city, ver. 51. The enemies have taken some of them, like a bird in a snare; chased others, as a harmless bird is chased by a bird of prey; ver. 52, "Mine enemies chased me sore like a bird," which is chased from bush to bush, as Saul hunted David, like a partridge. Thus restless was the enmity of their persecutors, and yet causeless; they have done it without cause, without any provocation given them. Though God was righteous, they were unrighteous. David often complains of those that hated him without cause, and such are the enemies of Christ and his church, *Jno.* xv. 25. Their enemies chased them till they had quite prevailed over them; ver. 53, "They have cut off my life in the dungeon;" they have shut up their captives in close and dark prisons, where they are as it were cut off from the land of the living, ver. 6; or the state and kingdom is sunk and ruined, the life and being of it is gone, and it is as it were thrown into the dungeon or grave, and a stone cast upon it, such as used to be rolled to the door of the sepulchres. They look upon the Jewish nation as dead and buried, and that there is no possibility of its resurrection. Thus Ezekiel saw it in vision, a valley full of dead and dry bones. Their destruction is compared, not only to the burying of a dead man, but to the sinking of a living man into the water, who cannot long be a living man there; ver. 54, "Waters" of affliction "flowed over mine head;" the deluge prevailed, and quite overwhelmed them; the Chaldean forces broke in upon them, as the breaking forth of waters, which rose so high as to flow over their heads. They could not wade, they could not swim, and therefore must unavoidably sink. Note, The distresses of God's people sometimes prevail to that degree, that they cannot find any footing for their faith, nor keep their head above water, with any comfortable expectation.

4. They complain of their own excessive grief and fear upon this account. 1st. The afflicted church is drowned in tears, and the prophet for her; ver. 48, 49, "Mine eye runs down with rivers of water," so abundant was their weeping; "it trickleth down, and ceaseth not," so constant was their weeping; "without any intermission," there being no relaxation of their miseries. The distemper was in continual extremity, and they had no better day. It is added, ver. 51, "Mine eye affecteth mine heart," my seeing eye affects my heart; the more I look upon the desolations of the city and country, the more I am grieved; which way soever I cast mine eye I see that which renews my sorrow, even "because of all the daughters of my city;" that is, all the neighbouring towns which were as daughters to Jerusalem, the mother city. Or, my weeping eye affects my heart; the venting of the grief, instead of easing it, did but increase and exasperate it. Or, mine eye melteth my soul, that is, I have quite wept away my spirit; not only mine eye is consumed with grief, but my soul and my life is spent with it, *Ps.* xxxi. 9, 10. Great and long grief exhausts the spirits, and brings not only many a gray head, but many a green head too, to the grave. I weep, saith the prophet, 'more than all the daughters of my city,' so the margin reads it; he outdid even those of the tender sex in the expressions of grief. And it is no diminution to any to be much in tears for the sins of sinners, and the sufferings of saints. Our Lord Jesus was so; for when he came near he beheld this same city, and wept over it, which the daughters of Jerusalem did not. 2nd. She is overwhelmed with fears; not only grieves for what is, but fears worse, and gives up all for gone, ver. 54. Then I said, I am cut off, ruined, and see no hope of recovery; I am as one dead. Note, Those that are cast down are commonly tempted to think themselves cast off, *Ps.* xxxi. 22; *Jonah* ii. 4.

5. In the midst of these sad complaints here is one word of comfort, by which it appears that their case was not altogether so bad as they made it, ver. 50. We continue thus weeping "till the Lord look down and behold from heaven." This intimates, 1st. That they were satisfied God's gracious regard to them in their miseries would be an effectual redress of all their grievances. If God, who now covers himself with a cloud, as if he took no notice of our troubles, (*Job* xxii. 13,) would but shine forth, all would be well. If he look upon us we shall be saved, *Ps.* lxxx. 19; *Dan.* ix. 17. As bad as the case is, one favourable look from heaven will set all to rights. 2nd. That they had hopes he would at length look graciously upon them, and relieve them; nay, they take it for granted that he will. Though he contend long, he will not contend for ever, though we deserve he should. 3rd. That while they continued weeping, they continued waiting; and neither did nor would expect relief and succour from any hand but his. Nothing shall comfort them but his gracious returns, nor shall any thing wipe tears from their eyes till he look down. Their eyes, which now run down with water, shall still wait upon the Lord their God until that he have mercy upon them, *Ps.* cxxiii. 2.

55 I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.
56 Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.
57 Thou drewest near in the day *that* I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.
58 O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.
59 O LORD, thou hast seen my wrong: judge thou my cause.
60 Thou hast seen all their vengeance *and* all their imaginations against me.
61 Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, *and* all their imaginations against me;
62 The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day. [their musick.
63 Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; I *am*
64 Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands.
65 Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them.
66 Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the LORD.

We may observe throughout this chapter a struggle in the prophet's breast between sense and faith, fear and hope. He complains, and then comforts himself, yet drops his comforts, and returns again to his complaints, as *Ps.* xlii. But as there, so here, faith gets the last word, and comes off a conqueror, for in these verses he concludes with some comfort; and here are two things with which he comforts himself:

First His experience of God's goodness, even in his affliction. This may refer to the prophet's personal experience, with which he encourageth himself in reference to the public troubles. He that has seasonably succoured particular saints will not fail the church in general. Or, it may include the remnant of good people that were among the Jews, who had found it was not in vain to wait upon God. In three things the prophet and his pious friends had found God good to them: 1. He had heard their prayers. Though they had been ready to fear that the cloud of wrath was such as their prayers could not pass through, ver. 44; yet upon second thoughts, or at least upon farther trial, they find it otherwise, and that God had not said unto them, Seek ye me in vain. When they were in the low dungeon, as free among the dead, they called upon God's name, ver. 55; their weeping did not hinder praying. Note, Though we are cast into never so low a dungeon, we may from thence find a way of access to God in the highest heavens; "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee," *Ps.* cxxx. 1; as Jonah out of the whale's belly. And could God hear them out of the low dungeon, and would he? Yes, he did. "Thou hast heard my voice;" and some read the following words as carrying on the same thankful acknowledgment, "Thou didst not hide thine ear at my breathing, at my cry;" and the original will bear that reading. We read it as a petition for farther audience; "Hide not thine ear." God's having heard our voice when we cried unto him, even out of the low dungeon, is an encouragement to us to hope that he will not at any time hide his ear. Observe how he calls prayer his breathing; for in prayer we breathe towards God,—we breathe after him. Though we be but weak in prayer, cannot cry aloud, but only breathe in "groanings that cannot be uttered," yet we shall not be neglected, if we be sincere. Prayer is the breath of the new man, sucking in the air of mercy in petitions, and returning it in praises; it is both the evidence and the maintenance of the spiritual life. Some read it, at my gasping; when I lay gasping for life, and ready to expire, and thought I was breathing my last, then thou tookest cognizance of my distressed case. 2nd. He had silenced their fears, and quieted their spirits; ver. 57, "Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee;" that is, thou didst graciously assure me of thy presence with me, and give me to see thee nigh unto me, whereas I had thought thee to be at a distance from me. Note, When we draw nigh to God in a way of duty, we may by faith see him drawing nigh to us in a way of mercy. But this was not all, "Thou saidst, Fear not." This was the language of God's prophets, preaching to them not to fear, *Isa.* xli. 10, 13. Of his providence preventing those things which they were afraid of, and of his grace quieting their minds, and making them easy, by the witness of his Spirit with their spirits, that they were his people still, though in distress, and therefore ought not to fear. 3rd. He had already begun to appear for them; ver. 58, "O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul;" that is, as it follows, "Thou hast redeemed my life," hast rescued that out of the hands of those which would have taken it away, hast saved that when it was ready to be swallowed up, hast given me that for a prey. And this is an encouragement to them to hope that he would yet farther appear for them; "Thou hast delivered my soul from death," and therefore wilt deliver my feet from falling; hast pleaded the causes of my life, and therefore wilt plead my other causes.

Secondly. He comforts himself with an appeal to God's justice, and, in order to the sentence of that, to his omniscience.

1. He appeals to God's knowledge of the matter of fact, how very spiteful and malicious his enemies were; ver. 59, "O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong," that I have done no wrong at all, but suffer a great deal. He that knows all things knew, 1st. The malice they had against him; "Thou hast seen all their vengeance;" how they desire to do me a mischief, as if it were by way of reprisal for some great injury I had done them. Note, We should consider to our terror and caution, that God knows all the revengeful thoughts we have in our minds against others, and therefore not allow of those thoughts, nor harbour them. And that he knows all the revengeful thoughts others have causelessly in their minds against us, and therefore not be afraid of them, but leave it to him to protect us from them. 2nd. The designs and projects they had laid to do him a mischief; "Thou hast seen all their imagination against me," ver. 60; and again, ver. 61, "Thou hast heard all their imaginations against me," both the desire and the device they have to ruin me: whether it shew itself in word or deed it is known to thee; nay, though the products of it are not to be seen or heard, yet their device against me all the day is perceived and understood by him to whom all things are naked and open. Note, The most secret contrivances of the church's enemies are perfectly known to the church's God, from whom they can hide nothing. 3rd. The contempt and calumny wherewith they loaded him; all that they spoke slightly of him, and all that they spoke reproachfully. "Thou hast heard their reproach," ver. 61; all the ill characters they give me, laying to my charge things that I know not, all the methods they use to make me odious and contemptible, even "the lips of those that rose up against me," ver. 62, the contumelious language they use whenever they speak of me; and that at "their sitting down and rising up," when they lie down at night and get up in the morning, when they sit down to their meat, and with their company, and when they rise from both, still "I am their music;" they make themselves and one another merry with my miseries, as the Philistines made sport with Samson; Jerusalem was the tabret they played upon. Perhaps they had some tune, or play, some opera or interlude, that was called, The destruction of Jerusalem, which, though in the nature of a tragedy, was very entertaining to those who wished ill to the holy city. Note, God will one day call sinners to an account for all the hard speeches which they have spoken against him and his people, *Jude* 15.

2. He appeals to God's judgment upon this fact; "Lord, thou hast seen my wrong;" there is no need of any evidence to prove it, or any prosecutor to enforce or aggravate it, thou seest it in its true colours, and now I leave it with thee, "Judge thou my cause," ver. 59. Let them be dealt with, 1st. As they deserve; ver. 64, "Render to them a recompence according to the work of their hands," that is, let them be dealt with as they have dealt with others; let thy hand be against them as their hand hath been against us. They have created us a great deal of vexation; now, Lord, "give them sorrow of heart," ver. 65. 'Perplexity of heart,' so some read it; let them be surrounded with threatening mischiefs on all sides, and not able to see their way out. 'Despondency of heart,' so others read it; let them be driven to despair, and give themselves up for gone. God can entangle the head that thinks itself clearest, and sink the heart that thinks itself stoutest. 2nd. Let them be dealt with according to the threatenings; "Thy curse unto them," that is, let thy curse come upon them, all the evils that are pronounced in thy word against the enemies of thy people. ver. 65. They have loaded us with curses; "As they loved cursing, so let it come unto them," thy curse, which will make them truly miserable. Theirs is causeless, and therefore fruitless, it shall not come; but thine is just, and shall take effect. Those whom thou cursest are cursed indeed. Let the curse be executed; ver. 66, "Persecute and destroy them in anger," as they persecute and destroy us in their anger. "Destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord;" let them have no benefit of the light and influence of the heavens. Destroy them in such a manner as that all that see it may say, It is a destruction from the Almighty, who sits in the heavens and laughs at them, *Ps.* ii. 4, and may own that the heavens do rule, *Dan.* iv. 26. What is said of the idols is here said of their worshippers, who in this also shall be like unto them; "They shall perish from under these heavens," *Jer.* x. 11. They shall not only be excluded from the happiness of the invisible heavens, but cut off from the comfort even of these visible ones, which are the heavens of the Lord, *Ps.* cxv. 16, and which they therefore are unworthy to be taken under the protection of that rebel against him.

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter is another single alphabet of lamentations for the destruction of Jerusalem, like those in the first two chapters. I. The prophet here laments the injuries and indignities done to those that respect used to be shewed to, ver. 1, 2. II. He laments the direful effects of the famine, which they were reduced to by the siege, ver. 8—10. III. He laments the taking and sacking of Jerusalem, and its amazing desolations, ver. 11, 12. IV. He acknowledgeth that the sins of their leaders were the cause of all these calamities, ver. 14—16. V. He gives up all as doomed to utter ruin, for their enemies were quite too hard for them, ver. 17—20. VI. He foretells the destruction of the Edomites, who triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, ver. 21. V. He foretells the return of the captivity of Zion at last, ver. 22.

HOW is the gold become dim! *how* is the most fine gold changed!
The stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.
2 The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold,
How are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!
3 Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones:
The daughter of my people *is become* cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.
4 The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst:
The young children ask bread, *and* no man breaketh *it* unto them.
5 They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets:
They that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.
6 For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom,
That was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her. [than milk,
7 Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter
They were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing *was* of sapphire:
8 Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets:
Their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.

9 *They that be* slain with the sword are better than *they that be* slain with hunger:
For these pine away, stricken through for *want of* the fruits of the field. [children:
10 The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own
They were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.
11 The LORD hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger,
And hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devou ed the foundations thereof.
12 The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed
That the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem

FAQUIRS OF INDIA, OR NAZARITES.—ver. 7.

The elegy of this chapter begins with a lamentation of the very sad and doleful change which the judgments of God had made in Jerusalem. The city that had been as gold, as the most fine gold, so rich and splendid, the perfection of beauty, and joy of the whole earth, is become dim, and is changed; has lost its lustre, lost its value, is not what it was, it is become dross. Alas, what an alteration is here!

First. The temple is laid waste, which was the glory of Jerusalem, and its protection, that is given up into the hands of the enemy. And some understand that gold spoken of, ver. 1, to be the gold of the temple, the fine gold with which it was overlaid, 1 *Kin.* vi. 22. When the temple was burnt, the gold of it was smoked and sullied, as if it had been of little value; it was thrown among the rubbish, it was changed, that is, converted to common uses, and made nothing of. The stones of the sanctuary, which were curiously wrought, were thrown down by the Chaldeans when they demolished it, or were brought down by the force of the fire, and were poured out, and thrown about in the top of every street; they lay mingled, without distinction, among the common ruins. When the God of the sanctuary was by sin provoked to withdraw, no wonder that the stones of the sanctuary were thus profaned.

Secondly. The princes and priests, that were in a special manner "the precious sons of Zion," were trampled upon and abused, ver. 2. Both the house of God and the house of David were in Zion; the sons of both those houses were upon that account precious, that they were heirs to the privileges of those two covenants, of priesthood and royalty. They were "comparable to fine gold." Israel was more rich in them than in treasures of gold and silver; but now they are "esteemed as earthen pitchers," they are broken as earthen pitchers, thrown by as vessels in which there is no pleasure. They are grown poor, and brought into captivity, and thereby are rendered mean and despicable, and every one treads upon them, and insults over them. Note, The contempt put upon God's people ought to be matter of lamentation to us.

Thirdly. Little children were starved for want of bread and water, ver. 3, 4. The nursing mothers, having no meat for themselves, had no milk for the babes at their breast; so that, though in disposition they were really compassionate, yet in fact they seemed to be cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness, that leave their eggs in the dust, *Job* xxxix. 14, 15. Having no food for their children they were forced to neglect them, and do what they could to forget them, because it was a pain to them to think of them when they had nothing for them. In this they were worse than the seals or sea monsters, or whales, as some render it, for they "draw out the breast, and give suck to their young," which the daughter of my people will not do. Children cannot shift for themselves as grown people can, and therefore it was the more piteous to see "the tongue of the sucking child cleave to the roof of his mouth for thirst," because there was not a drop of water to moisten it, and to hear the young children, that could but just speak, ask bread of their parents who had none to give them, no, nor any friend that could supply them. As doleful as our thoughts are of this case, so thankful should our thoughts be of the great plenty we enjoy, and the food convenient we have for ourselves, and for our children, and for those of our own house.

Fourthly. Persons of good rank were reduced to extreme poverty, ver. 5. They that were well born, and well bred, and had been accustomed to the best, both for food and clothing, that had fed delicately, had every thing that was curious and nice, (they call it eating well, whereas those only eat well that eat to the glory of God,) and fared sumptuously every day; they had not only been advanced to the scarlet, but from their beginning were brought up in scarlet, and were never acquainted with anything mean or ordinary. They were 'brought up upon scarlet,' so the word is,—their foot-cloths and the carpets they walked on were scarlet; yet these, being stripped of all by the war, "are desolate in the street," have not a house to put their head in, not a bed to lie on, nor clothes to cover them, nor fire to warm them. They embrace dunghills, on them they are glad to lie to get a little rest, and, perhaps, raked in the dunghill for something to eat, as the prodigal son that would have filled his belly with the husks. Note, Those who live in the greatest pomp and plenty know not what straits they may be reduced to before they die; as sometimes the needy are raised out of the dunghill, *Ps.* cxiii. 7, so there are instances of the wealthy being brought to the dunghill. "They that were full have hired out themselves for bread," 1 *Sam.* ii. 5. It is therefore the wisdom of those that have abundance not to use themselves too nicely, for then hardships, when they come, will be doubly hard, *Deu.* xxviii. 56.

Fifthly. Persons that were eminent for dignity, nay, perhaps, for sanctity, shared with others in the common calamity, ver. 7, 8. "Her Nazarites" are extremely changed. Some understand it only of her honourable ones, the young gentlemen, that were very clean, and neat, and well dressed, washed and perfumed; but I see not why we may not understand it of those devout people among them that separated themselves to the Lord by the Nazarites' vow, *Num.* vi. 2. That there were such among them in the most degenerate times, appears, *Am.* ii. 11, "I raised up of your young men for Nazarites." These Nazarites, though they were not to cut their hair, yet by reason of their temperate diet, their frequent washings, and especially the pleasure they had in devoting themselves to God, and conversing with him, which made their faces to shine as Moses', "were purer than snow, and whiter than milk." Drinking no wine, nor strong drink, they had a more healthful complexion and cheerful countenance than those that regaled themselves daily with the blood of the grape, as Daniel and his fellows with pulse and water. Or, it may note the great respect and veneration which all good people had for them; though, perhaps, to the eye they had no form or comeliness, yet being separated to the Lord, they were valued as if they had been "more ruddy than rubies, and their polishing had been of sapphire." But now "their visage is" marred, (as is said of Christ, *Isa.* lii. 14,) it is "blacker than a coal;" they look miserably, partly through hunger, and partly through grief and perplexity. "They are not known in the streets;" they that respected them now take no notice of them, and they that had been intimately acquainted with them now scarce knew them, their countenance was so altered by the miseries that attended the long siege. "Their skin cleaves to their bones," their flesh being quite consumed and wasted away; "it is withered, it is become like a stick," as dry and hard as a piece of wood. Note, It is a thing to be much lamented, that even those who are separated to God, yet, when desolating judgments are abroad, are many times involved with others in the common calamity.

Sixthly. Jerusalem comes down slowly, and dies a lingering death, for the famine contributes more to her destruction than any other judgment whatsoever. Upon this account the destruction of Jerusalem was greater than that of Sodom, ver. 6, for that was overthrown in a moment; one shower of fire and brimstone despatched it, "no hand stayed on her," she did not endure any long siege as Jerusalem has done; she fell immediately into the hands of the Lord, who strikes home at a blow, and did not fall into the hands of man, who, being weak, is long in doing execution, *Jud.* viii. 21. Jerusalem is kept many months upon the rack in pain and misery, and dies by inches, dies so as to feel herself die. And when the iniquity of Jerusalem is more aggravated than that of Sodom, no wonder that the punishment of it is so. Sodom never had the means of grace that Jerusalem had, the oracles of God and his prophets, and therefore the condemnation of Jerusalem will be more intolerable than that of Sodom, *Mat.* xi. 23, 24.

The extremity of the famine is here set forth by two frightful instances of it. 1. The tedious death that it was the cause of, ver. 9. Many were slain with hunger, were famished to death, their stores being spent, and the public stores so near spent that they could not have any relief out of them. They were "stricken through for want of the fruits of the field;" they that were starved were as sure to die as if they had been stabbed and stricken through, only their case was much more miserable. "They that are slain with the sword" are soon rid out of their pain, "in a moment they go down to the grave," *Job* xxi. 13; they have not the terror of seeing death make its advances towards them, and scarce feel it when the blow is given, it is but one sharp struggle and the work is done; and if we be ready for another world we need not be afraid of a short passage to it, the quicker the better. But they that die by famine pine away; hunger preys upon their spirits, and wastes them gradually; nay, and it frets their spirits, and fills them with vexation, and is as great a torture to the mind as to the body. There are bands in their death, *Ps.* lxxiii. 4. 2. The barbarous murders that it was the occasion of, ver. 10, "The hands of the pitiful women have" first slain, and then "sodden their own children." This was lamented before, *ch.* ii. 20; and it was a thing to be greatly lamented, that any should be so wicked as to do it, and that they should be brought to such extremities as to be tempted to it. But this horrid effect of long sieges had been threatened in general, *Lev.* xxv. 24; *Deu.* xxviii. 13; and particularly against Jerusalem in the siege by the Chaldeans, *Jer.* xix. 9; *Eze.* v. 10. The case was sad enough, that they had not wherewithal to feed their children and make meat for them, ver. 4, but much worse, that they could find in their hearts to feed upon their children and make meat of them. I know not whether to make it an instance of the power of necessity, or of the power of iniquity; but, as the Gentile idolaters were justly given up to vile affections, *Rom.* i. 26, so these Jewish idolaters, and the women particularly, who had made cakes to the queen of heaven, and taught their children to do so too, were stript of natural affection, and that to their own children. Being thus left to dishonour their own nature was a righteous judgment upon them for the dishonour they had done to God.

Seventhly. Jerusalem comes down utterly and wonderfully. 1. The destruction of Jerusalem is a complete destruction; ver. 11, "The Lord has accomplished his fury," that is, he has made thorough work of it, has executed all that he purposed in wrath against Jerusalem, and hath remitted no part of the sentence. "He hath poured out" the full vials of "his fierce anger," poured them out to the bottom, even the dregs of them. He "hath kindled a fire in Zion," which has not only consumed the houses, and levelled them with the ground, but, beyond what other fires do, "hath devoured the foundations thereof," as if they were to be no more built upon. 2. It is an amazing destruction, ver. 12. It was a "surprise to the kings of the earth" who are acquainted with, and inquisitive about, the state of their neighbours; nay, it was so to "all the inhabitants of the world" that knew Jerusalem, or had

ever heard or read of it. They could "not have believed that the adversary and enemy should ever have entered into the gates of Jerusalem;" for, 1st. They knew Jerusalem was strongly fortified, not only by walls and bulwarks, but by the numbers and strength of its inhabitants. "The stronghold of Zion" was thought to be impregnable. 2nd. They knew it was "the city of the great King," where the Lord of the whole earth had in a more peculiar manner his residence; it was the holy city, and therefore they thought it was so much under the Divine protection that it would be in vain for any of its enemies to make an attack upon it. 3rd. They knew that many an attempt made upon it had been baffled,—witness that of Sennacherib,—they were therefore amazed when they heard of the Chaldeans making themselves masters of it, and concluded it was certainly by an immediate hand of God that Jerusalem was given up to them; it was by a commission from him that the enemy broke through and entered the gates of Jerusalem.

13 For the sins of her prophets, *and* the iniquities of her priests,
That have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her,
14 They have wandered *as* blind *men* in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood,
So that men could not touch their garments.
15 They cried unto them, Depart ye; *it is* unclean; depart, depart, touch not:
When they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn *there*.
16 The anger of the LORD hath divided them; he will no more regard them:
They respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders.
17 As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help:
In our watching we have watched for a nation *that* could not save *us*.
18 They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets:
Our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.
19 Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven:
They pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.
20 The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits,
Of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

Here is, First. The sins they are charged with, for which God brought this destruction upon them, and which serve to justify God in it, ver. 13, 14. It is for "the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests;" not that the people were innocent, no, they loved to have it so, *Jer.* v. 31, and it was to please them that the prophets and priests did as they did; but the fault is chiefly laid upon them, who should have taught them better, should have reproved and admonished them, and told them what would be in the end hereof; of the hands of those watchmen who did not give them warning will their blood be required. Note, Nothing ripens a people more for ruin, nor fills the measure faster, than the sins of their priests and prophets. The particular sin charged upon them is persecution. The false prophets and corrupt priests joined their power and interest to "shed the blood of the just in the midst of her," that is, the blood of God's prophets, and of those that adhered to them. They not only shed the blood of their innocent children, whom they sacrificed to Moloch, but the blood of the righteous men that were among them, whom they sacrificed to that more cruel idol of enmity to the truth and true religion. This was that sin which "the Lord would not pardon," 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 4, and which brought the last destruction upon Jerusalem, *Jas.* v. 6, "Ye have condemned and killed the just." And the priests and prophets were the ringleaders in persecution, as, in Christ's time, the chief priests and scribes were the men that incensed the people against him, who otherwise would have persisted in their Hosannas. Now, these are they that "wandered as blind men in the streets," ver. 14; they strayed from the paths of justice, were blind to every thing that is good, but to do evil they were quicksighted. God saith of corrupt judges, that "they know not, neither do they understand, they walk in darkness," *Ps.* lxxxii. 5; and Christ saith of the corrupt teachers, that they are blind leaders of the blind, *Mat.* xv. 14. They have so polluted themselves with innocent blood, the blood of the saints, that men could not touch their garments; that is, they made themselves odious to all about them, so that good men were as shy of touching them as of touching a dead body, which contracted a ceremonial pollution, or of touching the bloody clothes of one slain, which tender spirits care not to do. There is nothing that will make prophets and priests to be abhorred so much as a spirit of persecution.

Secondly. The testimony of their neighbours produced in evidence against them, both to convict them of sin and to shew the equity of God's proceedings against them. Some that are grown very impudent in sin boast that they care not what people say of them, but God by the prophet would have the Jews to take notice what the people said of them, and what was the opinion of the standers by concerning them, ver. 15, 16; what they said, nay, what they cried unto them, especially to the corrupt priests and prophets, among the heathen. 1. They upbraided them with their pretended purity, while they lived in all manner of real iniquity. They cried to them, "Depart ye, it is unclean." You were so precise you would not touch a Gentile, but cried, "Depart, depart, stand by thyself, I am holier than thou," *Isa.* lxv. 5, (thus the prosecutors of Christ would not go "into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled,") but can you now keep the Gentiles from touching you, when God has delivered you into their hands? When you fly away and wander, you will bid them stand off, and not touch you, because you are unclean, but in vain; these serpents will not be charmed or enchanted thus, no, they will not respect the person of the priests, nor favour the elders; the most venerable persons will to them be despicable. 2. They upbraided them with their sins, and the anger of God against them for their sins, and the direful effects of that anger. "They cried to them, Depart ye, it is unclean;" they all cried out shame on them, and could easily foresee that God would not long suffer such a provoking people to continue in so good a land. They knew their statutes and judgments were righteous, and expected they should be a wise and understanding people, *Deu.* iv. 6; but when they saw them quite otherwise, they cried, Depart, depart. They soon read their doom, that the land would spew them out as it had done their predecessors, and when they saw the dispersed of Jacob fleeing and wandering, they told them of it. They said, Now "the anger of the Lord hath divided them," has dispersed them into all countries, because "they respected not the persons of the priests," the pious priests that were among them, such as Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, Jeremiah, and others; neither did they favour the elders, but despised them and their authority, when they went about to check them for their vicious courses. The very heathen foresaw this would ruin them. 3. They triumphed in their ruin as irrecoverable. They said, when they saw them expelled out of their own land, Now "they shall no more sojourn there;" they have bidden it a final farewell, never more to return to it, for "God will no more regard them," and how then can they help themselves? Herein they were mistaken, God had not cast them off for all this; yet thus much is intimated, that all about them observed them to be so very provoking to their God, that there was no reason to expect any other but that they should be quite abandoned.

Thirdly. The despair which they themselves were almost brought to under their calamities. Having heard what they said concerning them among the heathen, let us now hear what they say concerning themselves; ver. 17, "As for us," we look upon our case to be in a manner helpless. "Our end is near," ver. 18; the end both of our church and of our state, we are just at the brink of the ruin of both; nay, "our end is come;" we are utterly undone; a fatal, final period is put to all our comforts; the days of our prosperity are fulfilled, they are numbered and finished. Thus their fears concurred with the hopes of their enemies, that the Lord would no more regard them. For, 1. The refuges they fled to disappointed them. They looked for help from this and the other powerful ally, but to no purpose; it proved vain help. The succours they expected did not come in, or at least they had not the success they expected; and their eyes failed with looking for that which never came, ver. 17. They watched in watching; they watched long and with a great deal of earnestness and impatience for a nation that promised them assistance, but failed them, and frustrated their expectations. They could not save them; they were too weak to contend with the Chaldean army, and therefore retired. Help from creatures is vain help, *Ps.* lx. 11; and we may look for it till our eyes fail, till our hearts fail, and come short of it at last. 2. The persecutors they fled from overtook them, and overcame them; ver. 18, "They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets." When the Chaldeans besieged the city, they raised the batteries so high above the walls that they could command the town, and shoot at people as they went along the streets; they hunted them with arrows from place to place. When the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, their "persecutors were swifter than the eagles of heaven," when they fly upon their prey, ver. 19. There was no escaping them; they "pursued them upon the mountains," and when they thought they had got clear of them they fell into the hands of those that "laid wait for them in the wilderness," to cut off our retreat, and to pick up stragglers. Nay, the king himself, though he may be supposed to have had all the advantages the exigence of the case would admit to favour his flight, yet he cannot escape, for Divine vengeance pursues him with them, and then, ver. 20, "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits." Some apply it to Josiah, who was killed in battle by the king of Egypt; but it is rather to be understood of Zedekiah, who was the last king of the house of David, and who was pursued by the Chaldeans, and seized in the plains of Jericho, *Jer.* xxxix. 5. He was the anointed of the Lord, heir of that family which God had appointed to the government; he was very much confided in by the Jewish state; "they said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen." They promised themselves that the remnant which were left after Jeconiah's captivity should, under the protection of his government, "yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward." They thought, though they were so reduced that they could not think of reigning over the heathen as they had done, yet they might make a shift to live among them, and not be insulted and pulled in pieces by them. Thus apt are sinking interests not only to catch at every twig, but to think it will recover them. Jerusalem died of a consumption, a flattering distemper. Even when she was ready to expire, she formed some hopeful symptoms to herself, and on them grounded a hope that she should recover: but what came of it? The shadow under which they thought they should live proved like that of Jonah's gourd, which withered in a night. He that was "the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits," as if he had been but a beast of prey, so little account did they make of a person deemed sacred, and not to be violated. Note, When we make any creature the breath of our nostrils, and promise ourselves that we shall live by it, it is just with God to stop that breath, and deprive us of the life we expected by it; for God will have the honour of being himself alone our life, and the length of our days.

21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz;
The cup also shall pass through unto thee: thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.
22 The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity:
He will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins.

David's psalms of lamentation commonly conclude with some word of comfort, which is as life from the dead, and light shining out of darkness; so doth this lamentation here in this chapter. The people of God are now in great distress, their aspects all doleful, their prospects all frightful, and their ill-natured neighbours, the Edomites, insult over them, and do all they can to exasperate destroyers against them. Such was their violence against their brother Jacob, (*Obad.* 10,) such their spleen at Jerusalem, of which they cried, "Rase it, rase it," *Ps.* cxxxvii. 7. Now it is foretold, for the encouragement of God's people,

First. That an end shall be put to Zion's troubles; ver. 22, "The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion;" not the full of that punishment that it deserves, but of that which God has designed and determined to inflict, and which was necessary to answer the end, the glorifying of

God's justice, and the taking away of their sin. The captivity, which is the punishment of thine iniquity, is accomplished, *Isa.* xl. 2. And he will 'no longer keep thee in captivity,' so it may be read, as well as "he will no more carry thee into captivity;" he will turn again thy captivity, and work a glorious release for thee. Note, The troubles of God's people shall be continued no longer than till they have done their work for which they were sent.

Secondly. That an end shall be put to Edom's triumphs. It is spoken ironically, ver. 21, "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom." Go on to insult over Zion in distress, till thou hast filled up the measure of thine iniquity. Do so; rejoice in thy own present exemption from the common fate of thy neighbours. This is like Solomon's upbraiding the young man with his ungoverned mirth, *Eccl.* xi. 9, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth." Rejoice, if thou canst, when God comes to reckon with thee, and that he will do ere long. "The cup" of trembling which it is now Jerusalem's turn to drink deep of, "shall pass through unto thee;" it shall go round till it comes to be thy lot to pledge it. Note, This is a good reason why we should not insult over any that are in misery, because we ourselves also are in the body, and we know not how soon their case may be ours. But those who please themselves in the calamities of God's church must expect to have their doom, as aiders and abetters, with them that are instrumental in those calamities. The destruction of the Edomites was foretold by this prophet, *Jer.* xlix. 7, &c., and the people of God must encourage themselves against their present rudeness and insolence with the prospect of it. 1. It will be a shameful destruction. "The cup" that "shall pass unto thee" shall intoxicate thee, and that is shame enough to any man; "thou shalt be drunken," quite infatuated, and at thy wit's end; shalt stagger in all thy counsels, and stumble in all thy enterprises; and then, as Noah, when he was drunk, "thou shalt make thyself naked," and expose thyself to contempt. Note, Those who ridicule God's people will justly be left to themselves to do that some time or other by which they will be made ridiculous. 2. It will be a righteous destruction. God will herein "visit thine iniquity, and discover thy sins." He will punish them; and, to justify himself therein, he will discover them, and make it to appear he has just cause thus to proceed against them. Nay, the punishment of the sin shall so exactly answer the sin, that it shall itself plainly discover it. Sometimes God doth so visit the iniquity, as that he that runs may read the sin in the punishment. But sooner or later sin will be visited and discovered, and all the hidden works of darkness brought to light.

CHAPTER V.

This chapter, though it has the same number of verses with the first, second and fourth, yet is not alphabetical as they were; but the scope of it is the same with that of all the foregoing elegies. We have in it, I. A remonstrance of the present calamitous state of God's people in their captivity, ver. 1—16. II. A protestation of their concern for God's sanctuary, as that which lay nearer their heart than any secular interest of their own, ver. 17, 18. III. An humble supplication to God, and expostulation with him for the returns of mercy, ver. 19—22; for they that lament, and do not pray, sin in their lamentations. Some ancient versions call this chapter, 'The prayer of Jeremiah.'

REMEMBER, O LORD, what is come upon us:
Consider, and behold our reproach.
2 Our inheritance is turned to strangers,
Our houses to aliens.
3 We are orphans and fatherless,
Our mothers *are* as widows.
4 We have drunken our water for money;
Our wood is sold unto us.

EASTERN WATER CARRIERS.

5 Our necks *are* under persecution:
We labour, *and* have no rest.
6 We have given the hand *to* the Egyptians,
And to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.
7 Our fathers have sinned, *and are* not;
And we have borne their iniquities.
8 Servants have ruled over us:
There is none that doth deliver *us* out of their hand.
9 We gat our bread with *the peril of* our lives
Because of the sword of the wilderness.
10 Our skin was black like an oven
Because of the terrible famine.
11 They ravished the women in Zion,
And the maids in the cities of Judah.
12 Princes are hanged up by their hand:
The faces of elders were not honoured.
13 They took the young men to grind,
And the children fell under the wood.
14 The elders have ceased from the gate,
The young men from their musick.
15 The joy of our heart is ceased;
Our dance is turned into mourning.
16 The crown is fallen *from* our head:
Woe unto us, that we have sinned!

"Is any afflicted? let him pray;" and let him in prayer pour out his complaint to God, and make known before him his trouble. The people of God do so here. Being overwhelmed with grief, they give vent to their sorrows at the footstool of the throne of grace, and so give themselves ease. They complain not of evils feared, but of evils felt. "Remember what is come upon us," ver. 1. What was of old threatened against us, and was long in the coming, is now at length come upon us, and we are ready to sink under it. Remember what is past, consider and behold what is present, and let not all the trouble we are in seem little to thee, and not worth taking notice of, *Neh.* ix. 32. Note, As it is a great comfort to us, so it ought to be a sufficient one in our troubles, that God sees, and considers, and remembers all that is come upon us; and in our prayers we need only to recommend our case to his gracious and compassionate consideration. The one word in which all their grievances are summed up is reproach. "Consider, and behold our reproach." The troubles they were in, compared with their former dignity and plenty, were a greater reproach to them than they would have been to any other people, especially considering their relation to God, and dependence upon him, and his former appearances for them; and therefore this they complain of very sensibly, because as it was a reproach, it reflected upon the name and honour of that God who had owned them for his people; "And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

First. They acknowledge the reproach of sin which they bear, the reproach of their youth, which Ephraim bemoans himself for, *Jer.* xxxi. 19, of the early days of their nation. This comes in in the midst of their complaints, ver. 7, but may well be put in the front of them, "Our fathers have sinned, and are not;" they are dead and gone, but "we have borne their iniquities." This is not here a peevish complaint, or an imputation of unrighteousness to God, like that which we have, *Jer.* xxxi. 29; *Eze.* xviii. 2, "The fathers did eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," and therefore, "the ways of the Lord are not equal;" but it is a penitent confession of the sin of their ancestors, which they themselves also had persisted in, for which they now justly suffered; that is, the judgments God brought upon them were so very great, that it appeared God had in them an eye to the sins of their ancestors (because they had not been remarkably punished in this world) as well as to their own sins; and thus God was justified both in his connivance at their ancestors, (he "laid up their iniquity for their children,") and in his severity with them, on whom he visited that iniquity, *Mat.* xxiii. 35, 36. Thus they do here, 1. Submit themselves to the Divine justice; Lord, thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for we are a seed of evildoers, children of wrath, and heirs to the curse; we are sinful, and we have it by kind. Note, The sins which God looks back upon in punishing we must look back upon in repenting, and must take notice of all that which will help to justify God in correcting us. 2. They refer themselves to the Divine pity. Lord, our fathers have sinned, and we justly smart for their sins; but they are not; they were taken away from the evil to come, they lived not to see and share in these miseries that are come upon us, and we are left to bear their iniquities; now, though herein God is righteous, yet it must be owned our case is piteous, and worthy of compassion. Note, If we be penitent and patient under what we suffer for the sins of our fathers, we may expect that he that punisheth will pity, and will soon return in mercy to us.

Secondly. They represent the reproach of trouble which they bear in divers particulars, which tend much to their disgrace.

1. They are disseized of that good land which God gave them, and their enemies have got possession of it, ver. 2. Canaan was their inheritance; it was theirs by promise; God gave it to them and their seed, and they held it by grant from his crown, *Ps.* cxxxvi. 21, 22. But now it is turned to strangers; they possess it that have no right to it, who are "strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenants of promise," they dwell in the houses that we built; and this is our reproach. It is the happiness of all God's spiritual Israel, that the heavenly Canaan is an inheritance that they cannot be disseized of, that shall never be turned to strangers.

2. Their state and nation is brought into a condition like that of widows and orphans; ver. 3, "We are fatherless," that is, helpless; we have none to protect us, to provide for us, to take any care of us. Our king, who is the father of the country, is cut off; nay, God our Father seems to have forsaken us, and cast us off. "Our mothers," our cities that were as fruitful mothers in Israel, "are now as widows," are as wives whose husbands are dead, destitute of comfort, and exposed to wrong and injury, and this is our reproach; for we who made a figure are now looked on with contempt.

3. They are put hard to it to provide necessaries for themselves and their families, whereas when time was they lived in abundance, and had plenty of every thing. Water used to be free and easily come by, but now, ver. 4, "We have drunk our water for money," and the saying is no longer true, *Usus communis aquarum,*—'Water is free to all.' So hardly did their oppressors use them, that they could not have a draught of fair water but they must purchase it either with money or work. Formerly they had fuel too for the fetching, but now "our wood is sold to us," and we pay dear for every faggot. Now were they punished for employing their children to gather wood for fire with which to bake cakes for the queen of heaven, *Jer.* vii. 18. They were perfectly proscribed by their oppressors, were forbidden the use both of fire and water, according to the ancient form, *Interdico tibi aqua et igni,*—'I forbid thee the use of water and fire.' But what must they do for bread? Truly that was as hard to come by as any thing, for, 1st. Some of them sold their liberty for it; ver. 6, "We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians," have made the best bargain we could with them to serve them, that we might "be

satisfied with bread." We were glad to submit to the meanest employment upon the hardest terms to get a sorry livelihood; we have yielded ourselves to be their vassals, have parted with all to them, as the Egyptians did to Pharaoh in the years of famine, that we might have something for ourselves and families to subsist on. The neighbour nations used to trade with Judah for wheat, *Eze.* xxvii. 17, for it was a fruitful land, but now it eats up the inhabitants, and they are glad to make court to the Egyptians and Assyrians. 2nd. Others of them ventured their lives for it; ver. 9, "We got our bread with the peril of our lives." When being straitened by the siege, and all provisions cut off, they either sallied or stole out of the city to fetch in some supply, they were in danger of falling into the hands of the besiegers, and being put to the sword; the sword of the wilderness it is called, or of the plain, for so the word signifies, the besiegers lying dispersed everywhere in the plains that were about the city. Let us take occasion from hence to bless God for the plenty we enjoy, that we get our bread so easily, scarce with the sweat of our face, much less with the peril of our lives; and for the peace we enjoy, that we can go out and enjoy, not only the necessary products, but the pleasures of the country, without any fear of the sword of the wilderness.

4. They are brought into slavery who were a free people, and not only their own masters, but masters of all about them, and this is, as much as any thing, their reproach; ver. 5, "Our necks are under" the grievous and intolerable yoke of "persecution," the iron yoke which Jeremiah foretold should be laid upon them, *Jer.* xxviii. 14; we are used like beasts in the yoke that wholly serve their owners, and are at the command of their drivers. That which aggravated the servitude was, 1st. That their labours were incessant, like those of Israel in Egypt, that were daily tasked, nay, overtasked; "We labour and have no rest," neither leave nor leisure to rest. The oxen in the yoke are unyoked at night and have rest, so they have by a particular provision on the sabbath day; but the poor captives in Babylon that were compelled to work for their living laboured and had no rest, no nights, no sabbath rest; they were quite tired out with continual toil. 2nd. That their masters were insufferable; ver. 8, "Servants have ruled over us," and nothing more vexatious than a servant when he reigneth, *Pr.* xxx. 22. They were not only the great men of the Chaldeans that commanded them, but even the meanest of their servants abused them at pleasure, and insulted over them; and they must be at their beck too. The curse of Canaan is now become the doom of Judah, a servant of servants shall he be. They would not be ruled by their God, and by his servants the prophets, whose rule was gentle and gracious, and therefore justly are they ruled with rigour by their enemies and their servants. 3rd. That they saw no probable way for the redress of their grievances. "There is none that doth deliver us out of their hand," not only none to rescue us out of our captivity, but none to check and restrain the insolence of the servants that abuse us and trample upon us, which one would think their masters should have done, because it was an usurpation of their authority; but it should seem they connived at it, and encouraged it; and, as if they were not worthy of the correction of gentlemen, they are turned over to the footmen to be kicked. Well might they pray, Lord, "consider, and behold our reproach."

5. They that used to be feasted are now famished; ver. 10, "Our skin was black like an oven," dried and parched too, "because of the terrible famine;" the 'storms of famine,' so the word is; for though famine comes gradually upon a people, yet it comes violently, and bears down all before it, and there is no resisting it. And this also is their disgrace; hence we read of the reproach of famine, which in captivity they received among the heathen, *Eze.* xxvi. 30.

6. All sorts of people, even they whose persons and characters were most inviolable, were abused and dishonoured. 1st. The women were ravished, even the women in Zion, that holy mountain, ver. 11. The committing of such abominable wickedness there is very sadly and justly complained of. 2nd. The great men were not only put to death, but put to ignominious deaths. "Princes were hanged," as if they had been slaves, "by the hands" of the Chaldeans, ver. 12; they took a pride in doing this barbarous execution with their own hands. Some think the dead bodies of the princes, after they were slain with the sword, were hung up, as the bodies of Saul's sons, in disgrace to them, and as it were to expiate the nation's guilt. 3rd. No respect was shewed to magistrates and those in authority. "The faces of elders," elders in age, elders in office, "were not honoured." This will be particularly remembered against the Chaldeans another day; *Isa.* xlvii. 6, "Upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke." 4th. The tenderness of youth was no more considered than the gravity of old age; ver. 13, they "took the young men to grind" at the handmills, nay perhaps at the horsemills. 'The young men have carried the grist,' so some; have 'carried the mill, or millstones,' so others; they loaded them as if they had been beasts of burthen, and so broke their backs when they were young, and made the rest of their lives the more miserable. Nay, they made the little children carry their wood home for fuel, and laid such burthens upon them that they fell down under them. So very inhuman were these cruel taskmasters.

7. An end was put to all their gladness, and their joy quite extinguished; ver. 14, "The young men," that used to be disposed to mirth, have "ceased from their music," have hung their harps upon the willow-trees. It doth indeed well become old men to cease from their music, it is time to lay it by with a gracious contempt, when "all the daughters of music are brought low;" but it speaks some great calamity upon a people when their young men are made to cease from it. It was so with the body of the people; ver. 15, "The joy of their heart was ceased;" they never knew what joy was since the enemy came upon them like a flood, for ever since deep has called unto deep, and one wave has flowed in upon the neck of another, so that we are quite overwhelmed, "our dance is turned into mourning;" instead of leaping for joy as formerly, we sink and lie down in sorrow. This may refer especially to the joy of their solemn feasts, and the dancing used in them, *Jud.* xxi. 21, which was not only modest but sacred dancing; this was turned into mourning, which was doubled on their festival days, in remembrance of their former pleasant things.

8. An end was put to all their glory. 1st. The public administration of justice was their glory, but that was gone; "The elders have ceased from the gate," ver. 14. The course of justice, which used to run down like a river, is now stopped; the courts of justice that used to be kept with so much solemnity are put down, for the judges are slain or carried captives. 2nd. The royal dignity was their glory, but that also was gone; "The crown is fallen from our head." Not only the king himself fallen into disgrace, but the crown; he has no successor; the regalia are all lost. Note, Earthly crowns are fading, falling things; but, blessed be God, there is a crown of glory that fades not away, that never falls, a kingdom that cannot be moved. Upon this complaint, but with reference to all the foregoing complaints, they make that penitent acknowledgment, "Woe unto us that we have sinned." Alas for us, our cause is very deplorable, and it is all long of ourselves; we are undone, and, which aggravates the matter, we are undone by our own hands. God is righteous, for we have sinned. Note, All our woes are owing to our own sin and folly. If "the crown of our head be fallen," for so the words run, if we lose our excellency, and become mean, we may thank ourselves; we have by our own iniquity profaned our crown and laid our honour in the dust.

17 For this our heart is faint;
For these *things* our eyes are dim.
18 Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate,
The foxes walk upon it.
19 Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever;
Thy throne from generation to generation.
20 Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever,
And forsake us so long time?
21 Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD,
And we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.
22 But thou hast utterly rejected us;
Thou art very wroth against us.

Here, First. The people of God express the deep concern they had for the ruins of the temple more than for any other of their calamities; the interests of God's house lay nearer their hearts than those of their own; ver. 17, 18, "For this our heart is faint," and sinks under the load of its own heaviness; "for these things our eyes are dim," and our sight is gone, as is usual in a deliquium, or fainting fit. It is "because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate," the mountains, and the temple built upon that mountain. For other desolations our hearts grieve, and our eyes weep, but for this our hearts faint, and our eyes are dim. Note, Nothing lies so heavy upon the spirits of good people as that which threatens the ruin of religion, or weakens the interest of that; and it is a comfort if we can appeal to God that that afflicts us more than any temporal affliction to ourselves. The people had polluted the mountain of Zion with their sins, and therefore God has justly made it desolate to that degree that the foxes walk upon it as freely and commonly as they do in the woods. It is sad indeed when the mountain of Zion is become a portion for foxes, *Ps.* lxiii. 10; but sin had first made it so, *Eze.* xiii. 4.

Secondly. They comfort themselves with the doctrine of God's eternity, and the perpetuity of his government; ver. 19, But "thou, O Lord, remainest for ever." This they are taught to do by that Psalm which is entitled, "A prayer of the afflicted," *Ps.* cii. 27, 28. When all our creature comforts are removed from us, and our hearts fail us, we may then encourage ourselves with the belief, 1. Of God's eternity; "Thou remainest for ever." What shakes the world gives no disturbance to him that made it; whatever revolutions there are on earth there is no change in the eternal mind; God is still the same, and remains for ever infinitely wise and holy, just and good; "with him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning." 2. Of the never failing continuance of his dominion; "Thy throne is from generation to generation." The throne of glory, the throne of grace, and the throne of government, are all unchangeable, immovable, and this is matter of comfort to us when "the crown is fallen from our heads." When the thrones of princes, that should be our protectors, are brought to the dust, and buried in it, God's throne continues still; he still rules the world, and rules it for the good of his church. The Lord reigns, reigns for ever, even thy God, O Zion.

Thirdly. They humbly expostulate with God concerning the low condition they were now in, and the frowns of Heaven they were now under; ver. 20, "Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever," as if we were quite cast out of mind? "Wherefore dost thou forsake us so long time," as if we were quite deprived of the tokens of thy presence? Wherefore dost thou defer our deliverance, as if thou hadst utterly abandoned us? Thou art the same, and though the throne of thy sanctuary is demolished thy throne in heaven is unshaken. But wilt thou not be the same to us? Not as if they thought God had forgotten and forsaken them, much less feared his forgetting and forsaking them for ever; but thus they express the value they had for his favour and presence, which they thought it long that they were deprived of the evidence and comfort of. The last verse may be read as such an expostulation, and so the margin reads it, 'For wilt thou utterly reject us? wilt thou be perpetually wroth with us?' Not only not smile upon us, and remember us in mercy, but frown upon us, and lay us under the tokens of thy wrath; not only not draw nigh to us, but cast us out of thy presence, and forbid us to draw nigh to thee. How will this be reconciled with thy goodness and faithfulness, and the stability of thy covenant? We read it, "But thou hast rejected us;" that is, thou hast given us cause to fear that thou hast. Lord, how long shall we be in this temptation? Note, Though we may not quarrel with God, yet we may plead with him; and though we may not conclude that he has cast us off, yet we may with the prophet, *Jer.* xii. 1, humbly reason with him concerning his judgments, especially the continuance of the desolations of his sanctuary.

Fourthly. They earnestly pray to God for mercy and grace; Lord, do not reject us for ever, but "Turn thou us unto thee, renew our days," ver. 21. These words, though they be not put last, yet the rabbins, because they would not have the book to conclude with those melancholy words, ver. 22, repeat this prayer again, that the sun may not set under a cloud, and so make these the last words both in writing and reading this chapter. They here pray, 1. For converting grace, to prepare and qualify them for mercy; "Turn us to thee, O Lord." They had complained that God had forsaken and forgotten them, and then their prayer is not 'Turn thou to us,' but "Turn us to thee;" which implies an acknowledgment that the cause of the distance was in themselves. God never leaves any till they first leave him, nor stands afar off from them any longer than while they stand afar off from him; if, therefore, he turn them to him, in a way of duty, no doubt but he would presently return to them in a way of mercy. This agrees with that repeated prayer, *Ps.* lxxx. 3, 7, 19, "Turn us again, and then cause thy face to shine. "Turn us from our idols to thyself by a sincere repentance and reformation, "and then we shall be turned." This implies a farther acknowledgment of their own weakness and inability to turn themselves. There is in our nature a bent to backslide from God, but no disposition to return to him till his grace works in us both to will and to do. So necessary is that grace that we may truly say, 'Turn us, or we shall not be turned,' but shall wander endlessly; and so powerful and effectual is that grace that we may as truly say, "Turn us and we shall be turned," for it is a day of power, almighty power, in which God's people are made a willing people, *Ps.* cx. 3. 2. For restoring mercy. "Turn us to thee," and then "renew our days as of old;" that is, put us into the same happy state that our ancestors were in long ago, and that they continued long in; let it be with us as it was at the first, and at the beginning, *Isa.* i. 26. Note, If God by his grace renew our hearts, he will by his favour renew our days, so that we shall renew our youth as the eagle, *Ps.* ciii. 5. They that repent, and do their first works, shall rejoice, and recover their first comforts. God's mercies to his people have been ever of old, *Ps.* xxv. 6; and therefore they may hope, even then when he seems to have forsaken and forgotten them, that the mercy which was from everlasting will be to everlasting.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
TO THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

THIS poem affords the most elegant variety of affecting images that ever probably were collected into so small a compass. The scenes of affliction, the circumstances of distress, are painted with such beautiful combination, that we contemplate everywhere the most affecting picture of desolation and misery. The prophet reiterates his complaints in the most pathetic style; and aggravates his sorrow with a boldness and force of description that correspond with the magnitude and religious importance of the calamities displayed to view. In the instructive strains of an inspired writer he reminds his countrymen of the grievous rebellions which had provoked the Lord to "abhor his sanctuary;" confesses that "it was of God's mercies that they were not utterly consumed;" and points out the sources of evil in the iniquities of their false prophets and priests. He then, with indignant irony, threatens Edom with destruction for rejoicing over the miseries of Judæa; opens a consolatory prospect to Zion; and concludes with an affecting address to God, to consider the reproach of his people, and to renew their prosperity.—*Gray's Key.* Never was there a more rich and elegant variety of beautiful images and adjuncts arranged within so small a compass, nor more elegantly chosen and applied.—*Bp. Lowth.*

CHAP. I.—1. *How doth the city sit solitary!* There are extant numerous medals of Judæa vanquished, struck by order of the Roman general Titus, (who was afterwards emperor,) in order to commemorate the conquest of Judæa, and the subversion of the Jewish state and polity. On the representation of the reverse of one of these, (preserved in the cabinet of the British Museum,) the conquered country appears as a desolate female sitting under a tree; on another, as having her arms chained. They afford an extraordinary fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction, delivered at least eight hundred years before, "She being desolate shall SIT upon the ground," *Isa.* iii. 26; as well as a striking illustration of the *Lamentations of Jeremiah.* "*How doth the city* SIT *solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!*"—*Horne's Introduction,* vol. i. 199. See representation of these medals in *Lu.* xix. See also Supplementary Note on *Deu.* xxviii. 6. *All her beauty is departed.* No "streets of palaces, and walks of state;" no high raised order of triumph; no fountains to cool the air, or porticoes; not a single vestige meets the traveller to announce its former military greatness, or commercial opulence; but in the place of these he finds himself encompassed by walls of rude masonry, the dull uniformity of which is only broken by the occasional protrusion of a small grated window; all the streets are wretchedness, and the homes of the Jews more especially are as dunghills.—*Horne's Introduction,* vol. iii. 29. The beauty of its situation is all that we can hope to discern, and that beauty of situation—in the eminence and slopes of the platform on which it stands, and in its natural defences on two of its sides—still remains.—*Lands of the Bible,* vol. i. 402.

CHAP. II.—1. *How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger.* We then ascended to the wall of the city, and, entering by the Zion gate, once more passed through the Jewish quarters, and looked upon the miseries of Israel in the city where David dwelt. They are by far the most miserable and squalid of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and, if we could have looked upon their precious souls, their temporal misery would have appeared but a faint emblem of the spiritual death that reigns within. "Ah sinful nation! a people laden with iniquity! The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint," *Isa.* i. 4. May we never lose the feelings of intense compassion toward Israel which these few days spent in Jerusalem awakened; and never rest till all the faithful of the church of our fathers have the same flame kindled in their hearts! 9. *Her gates are sunk into the ground.* In seeking a solid foundation, (for the site of a proposed Hebrew church,) the builders had already dug down about forty feet, and had not yet come to the rock. They laid bare heap after heap of rubbish and ancient stones. It is a remarkable fact, which cannot but strike the traveller, that not only on mount Zion but in many parts of the city, the modern town is really built on the rubbish of the old. The heaps of ancient Jerusalem are still remaining; indurated masses of stones and rubbish forty and fifty feet deep in many places. Truly the prophets spoke with a Divine accuracy when they said, "Jerusalem shall become heaps," *Mic.* iii. 12; "I will make Jerusalem heaps," *Jer.* ix. 11. The fact that these heaps of ruins are of so great depth suggested to us a literal interpretation of the words of Jeremiah, "Her gates are sunk into the ground," *ch.* ii. 9. The ancient gates mentioned by Nehemiah, *Neh.* iii., are no longer to be found, and it is quite possible that several of them may be literally buried below the feet of the inquiring traveller.—*Bonar & M'Cheyne's Narrative.* It is added in a note: They have since reached the old foundations, (*Isa.* lviii. 12,) after digging fifty feet. See Mr. Nicolayson's letter in the *Jewish Intelligencer* for April, 1840. It is a striking fact that the foundations of Jerusalem should be thus hid in the ground, when you contrast it with the case of Samaria, of which it was foretold, "I will discover the foundations thereof," *Mic.* i. 6. Here is the accurate minuteness and distinguishing definiteness of the God of truth, who can point his finger to one spot and say, "It shall be thus with thee;" and turn to another spot and say in equal sovereignty, "It shall be otherwise with thee."

CHAP. III.—1. *I am the man that hath seen affliction.* It is worthy to be observed that Jeremiah, in endeavouring to promote resignation in his countrymen, represents his own deportment under afflictions in terms which have a prophetic cast; so strikingly are they descriptive of the patience and conduct of our Saviour under his sufferings. The prophet, indeed, in the meek endurance of unmerited persecution was an illustrious type of Christ.—*Gray's Key.* 56. *hide not thine ear at my breathing.* Our own troubles, and those of the church and world around us, continually suggest causes of sorrow; and whereever we look 'our eyes may affect our hearts,' and cause our tears to flow afresh. Yet we may still hope and rejoice in the Lord; no dark dungeon or deep pit can exclude us from his throne of grace. If we cannot speak, he will hear our breathings and our sighs. He will draw near to encourage, to defend, and to plead the cause of his afflicted servants, and to redeem their souls. But what are all our sorrows compared with those of the Redeemer? 'He,' indeed, 'was the man who saw affliction, by the rod of the Lord's wrath against our sins, and exclaimed, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' He gave his cheek to the smiters, and was filled with reproach;' he was cut off, and laid in the grave, and the stone covered him; yet his prayer was answered, his cause was pleaded, he rose triumphant, and his enemies have, many of them, perished miserably from 'under the heavens of the Lord.' Thus he will deliver his people out of every trouble, and revive his church from every overwhelming persecution; thus will he raise our bodies from the grave, and save us with an everlasting salvation; whilst all his enemies will perish with an "everlasting destruction from his presence."—*T. Scott.*

CHAP. IV.—12. *The kings of the earth—would not have believed that the adversary—should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.* Observing from the mount of Olives the various undulations and slopes of ground, it is not difficult to conceive that when mount Zion, Acra, and mount Moriah constituted the bulk of the city, with a deep and steep valley surrounding the greater part of it, it must have been considered, by the people of that age, as nearly impregnable. These words were said nearly two thousand five hundred years ago. And when, six hundred and fifty years after, Titus besieged and took this devoted city, he exclaimed, on viewing the vast strength of the place, "It was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications; for what could the hands of men or any machines do towards overthrowing these towns?"—*Jowett's Christian Researches.*

CHAP. V.—5. *Our necks are under persecution.* 'In Media, on the perpendicular surface of a smooth mountain, on the road between Babylon and Hamadan, which is supposed to be the same as Ecbatana, the ancient capital of Media, there appears a remarkable sculpture, a copy of which, after Sir R. Ker Porter, is given below. Having visited the spot a few years since, we can vouch,' continues Dr. Kitto, (*Pictorial Bible, 2 Kin.* xvii.,) 'for the minute accuracy with which the sculpture is represented;' the principal figure in which, distinguished as a king by his regal dress and colossal stature, Sir Robert conceives to be Shalmaneser, attended by the generals of his Assyrian and Median forces; and the captives to be representations of the ten tribes, subdued and removed into this very country by himself and his father. 'Those who hesitate to accept this very beautiful sculpture as an illustration of that history will nevertheless value it as a most authentic representation of the mode frequently alluded to in the Scriptures, in which captive enemies were wont to be presented to, and treated by, the ancient Oriental conquerors.' 12. *Hanged up by the hand.* Suspending by the hand is a punishment very common in the East, especially for slaves and refractory children.—*Roberts's Oriental Illustrations.* Though we have cause to mourn, over the low estate of the church, yet the true Zion, to which believers are come, cannot be desolated, but remaineth for ever. Nor can our relation, as adopted into God's family, be abrogated, nor the freeness of our salvation disannulled, nor our joy and glorying in Christ be made void. Tribulations may cause our hearts to be faint, and our eyes dim, but our way to the mercy-seat of our reconciled God is open. We may beseech him not to forsake or forget us, and that he would turn and renew us more and more by his grace, that our hopes may revive, and our consolations abound, as in the days of old. Let us, in all our troubles, put our whole trust and confidence in his mercy; let us confess our sins, and pour out our hearts before him. Let us watch against repinings and despondency, whatever we suffer, or witness of the troubles of our brethren; for we surely know that it shall be well in the end with all that trust in, fear, love, and serve the Lord. Are not, as in Jeremiah's days, the Lord's judgments in the earth? And may we not trace the cause of the Lord's jealousy for his Zion? Did Christ purchase the church with his blood, and can he be indifferent to its best interests? Let Zion then be remembered by us in our warmest prayers, and her welfare be preferred above our chief joy. O that every heart's affection was on the stretch, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, to plead with our God for Zion! Spare, Lord, spare thy people, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them.—*R. T. Society's Bible.*

THE JEWS MOURNING

AN

EXPOSITION

IN THEIR CAPTIVITY.

OF THE BOOK OF

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

When we entered upon the writings of the prophets which speak of "the things that should be hereafter," methought we had the same call given us that St. John had, *Rev.* iv. 1, to "Come up hither;" but when we enter upon the prophecy of this book methinks we are called to "come up higher." As we go forward in time (for Ezekiel prophesied in the captivity, as Jeremiah prophesied just before it) so we soar upward in discoveries yet more sublime of the Divine glory. These waters of the sanctuary still grow deeper, so far from being fordable, that in some places they are scarce fathomable; yet, as deep as they are, out of them flow streams which "make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." As to this prophecy now before us, we may inquire,

I. Concerning the penman of it. It was Ezekiel: his name signifies, 'the strength of God;' or, 'one girt or strengthened of God.' He girded up the loins of his mind to the service, and God put strength into him. Whom God calls to any service, he will himself enable for it; if he gives commission, he will give power to execute it. Ezekiel's name was answered when God said, (and no doubt he said it,) "I have made thy face strong against their faces."—The learned Selden in his book *De Diis Syris*, saith, it was the opinion of some of the ancients, that the prophet Ezekiel was the same with that Nazaratus Assyrius whom Pythagoras, as himself relates, had for his tutor for some time, and whose lectures he attended; and it is agreed that they lived much about the same time. And we have reason to think, that many of the Greek philosophers were acquainted with the sacred writings, and borrowed some of the best of their notions from them. If we may credit the tradition of the Jews, he was put to death by the captives in Babylon, for his faithfulness and boldness in reproving them; that they dragged him upon the stones till his brains were dashed out. An Arabic historian saith, he was put to death, and was buried in the sepulchre of Shem, the son of Noah: so Hottinger relates, *Thesaur. Philol.* lib. ii. cap. 1.

II. Concerning the date of it; the place whence it is dated, and the time when. The scene is laid in Babylon, when it was a house of bondage to the Israel of God; there the prophecies of this book were preached, there they were written, when the prophet himself and the people to whom he prophesied were captives there. Ezekiel and Daniel are the only writing prophets of the Old Testament, that lived and prophesied any where but in the land of Israel, except we add Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh to prophesy. Ezekiel prophesied in the beginning of the captivity, Daniel in the latter end of it. It was an indication of God's good will to them, and his gracious designs concerning them in their affliction, that he raised up prophets among them, both to convince them, when in the beginning of their troubles they were secure and unhumbled, which was Ezekiel's business, and to comfort them, when in the latter end of their troubles they were dejected and discouraged. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have used such apt and proper means to cure them.

III. Concerning the matter and scope of it. 1. There is much in it that is very mysterious, dark, and hard to be understood, especially in the beginning and latter end of it; which, therefore, the Jewish rabbins forbade the reading of to their young men till they came to be thirty years of age, lest, by the difficulties they met with there, they should be prejudiced against the Scriptures. But if we read these difficult parts of Scripture with humility and reverence, and search them diligently, though we may not be able to untie all the knots we meet with, no more than we can solve all the phenomena in the book of nature, yet we may from them, as from the book of nature, gather a great deal for the confirming of our faith, and the encouraging of our hope in the God we worship. 2. Though the visions here be intricate, such as an elephant may swim in, yet the sermons are most plain, such as a lamb may wade in; and the chief design of them is, to shew God's people their transgressions, that in their captivity they may be repenting, and not repining. It should seem he was constantly attended; for we read of their sitting before him, as God's people sat, to hear his words, *ch.* xxxiii. 31, and that he was occasionally consulted; for we read of the elders of Israel that came to inquire of the Lord by him, *ch.* xiv. 1—3. And as it was of great use to the oppressed captives themselves to have a prophet with them, so it was a testimony to their holy religion against their oppressors, that ridiculed it and them. 3. Though the reproofs here, and the threatenings, be very sharp and bold, yet towards the close of the book very comfortable assurances are given of great mercy God had in store for them; and there, at length, we shall meet with something that has reference to gospel times, and which was to have its accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, of whom, indeed, this Prophet speaks less than almost any of the prophets. But by opening the terrors of the Lord he prepares Christ's way. By the law is the knowledge of sin, and so it becomes our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The visions, which were the Prophet's credentials, we have *ch.* i.—iii.; the reproofs and threatenings, *ch.* iv.—xxiv. Betwixt which and the comforts we have in the latter part of the book, we have messages sent to the nations that bordered upon the land of Israel, whose destruction is foretold, *ch.* xxv.—xxxv., to make way for the restoration of God's Israel, and the re-establishment of their city and temple, which are foretold, *ch.* xxxvi.—xlviii. And those who would apply the comforts to themselves must apply the convictions to themselves.

A.M. 3409. B.C. 595.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have, I. The common circumstances of the prophecy now to be delivered: the time when it was delivered, ver. 1; the place where, ver. 2; and the person by whom, ver. 3. II. The uncommon introduction to it by a vision of the glory of God; 1. In his attendance and retinue in the upper world, where his throne is surrounded with angels, here called living creatures, ver. 4—14; 2. In his providences concerning the lower world, represented by the wheels, and their motions, ver. 15—26; 3. In the face of Jesus Christ sitting upon the throne, ver. 26—28. And the more we are acquainted, and the more intimately we converse with the glory of God in these three branches of it, the more commanding influence will Divine revelation have upon us, and the more ready shall we be to submit to it, which is the thing aimed at in prefacing the prophecies of this book with these visions. When such a God of glory speaks, it concerns us to hear with attention and reverence; it is at our peril if we do not.

NOW it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2 In the fifth *day* of the month, which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity, 3 The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

The circumstances of the vision which Ezekiel saw, and in which he received his commission and instructions, are here very particularly set down, that the narrative may appear to be authentic, and not romantic. It may be of use to keep an account when and where God has been pleased to manifest himself to our souls in a peculiar manner, that the return of the day, and our return to the place of the altar, (*Gen.* xiii. 4,) may receive the pleasing, grateful remembrance of God's favour to us. Remember, O my soul, and never forget what communications of Divine love thou didst receive at such a time, at such a place. Tell others what God did for thee.

First. The time when Ezekiel had this vision is here recorded. It was "in the thirtieth year," ver. 1. Some make it the thirtieth year of the prophet's age. Being a priest, he was at that age to enter upon the full execution of the priestly office; but being debarred from that, by the iniquity and calamity of the times, now they had neither temple nor altar, God at that age called him to the dignity of a prophet. Others make it to be the thirtieth year from the beginning of the reign of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, from which the Chaldeans began a new computation of times, as they had done from Nabonassar, one hundred and twenty-three years before. Nabopolassar reigned eighty-nine years, and this was the eleventh of his son, which makes the thirty; and it was proper enough for Ezekiel, when he was in Babylon, to use the computation they there used; as we in foreign countries date by the new style.

And he afterwards useth the melancholy computation of his own country; observe, ver. 2, that it was the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. But the Chaldee paraphrase fixes upon another era, and saith, this was 'the thirtieth year after Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law in the house of the sanctuary, at midnight, after the setting of the moon, in the days of Josiah the king.' And it is true that this was just thirty years from thence; and that was an event so remarkable, as it put the Jewish state upon a new trial, that it was proper enough to date from it; and perhaps therefore the prophet speaks indefinitely of thirty years, as having an eye both to that event and to the Chaldean computation, which were coincident. It was in the fourth month, answering to our June, and in the fifth day of the month, that Ezekiel had this vision, ver. 2. It is probable it was on the sabbath day; because we read, *ch.* iii. 19, that "at the end of seven days," which we may well suppose to be the next sabbath, the word of the Lord came to him again. Thus John "was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," when he saw the visions of the Almighty, *Rev.* i. 10. God would hereby put an honour upon his sabbaths, then when "the enemies mocked at them," *Lam.* i. 7; and would thus encourage his people to keep up their attendance on the ministry of his prophets every sabbath day, by the extraordinary manifestations of himself on some sabbath days.

Secondly. The melancholy circumstances he was in when God honoured him, and thereby favoured his people with his vision. He was "in the land of the Chaldeans, among the captives, by the river of Chebar, and it was in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity." Observe,

1. The people of God were now, some of them, "captives in the land of the Chaldeans." The body of the Jewish nation yet remained in their own land, but these were the firstfruits of the captivity, and they were some of the best; for in Jeremiah's vision these were the good figs whom God had sent into the land of the Chaldeans for their good, *Jer.* xxiv. 5; and that it might be for their good, God raised up a prophet among them, to teach them out of the law then when he chastened them, *Ps.* xciv. 12. Note, It is a great mercy to have the word of God brought us, and a great duty to attend to it diligently when we are in affliction. The word of instruction, and the rod of correction, may be of great service to us in concert and concurrence with each other; the word to explain the rod, and the rod to enforce the word; both together give wisdom. It is happy for a man when he is sick, and in pain, to have "a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand," if he had but his ear open to discipline, *Job* xxxiii. 23. One of the quarrels God had with the Jews when he sent them into captivity was, for mocking his messengers, and misusing his prophets; and yet, when they were suffering for this sin, he favoured them with this forfeited mercy. It were ill with us if God did not sometimes graciously thrust upon us those means of grace and salvation which we have foolishly thrust from us. In their captivity they wanted ordinary helps for their souls, and therefore God raised them up these extraordinary ones. For God's children, if they be baulked in their education one way, shall have it made up another way. But observe, "It was in the fifth year of the captivity" that Ezekiel was raised up among them, and not before; so long God left them without any prophet, till they began to lament after the Lord, and to complain, that they saw not their signs, and there was none to tell them how long, *Ps.* lxxiv. 9, and then they would know how to value a prophet, and God's discoveries of himself to them by him, would be the more acceptable and comfortable. The Jews that remained in their own land had Jeremiah with them, those that were gone into captivity had Ezekiel with them; for, wherever the children of God are scattered abroad, he will find out tutors for them.

2. The prophet was himself among the captives, those of them that were posted by the river Chebar; for it "was by the rivers of Babylon" that they sat down, and on the willow-trees, by the river side, they hung their harps, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 2. The planters in America keep along by the sides of the rivers, and perhaps those captives were employed by their masters in improving some parts of the country, by the river sides, that were uncultivated, the natives being generally employed in war; or they employed them in manufactures, and therefore chose to fix them by the sides of rivers, that the goods they made might the more easily be conveyed by water-carriage. Interpreters agree not what river this of Chebar was, but among the captives by that river Ezekiel was, and himself a captive.

Observe here, 1st. That the best men, and those that are dearest to God, often share, not only in the common calamities of this life, but in the public and national judgments that are inflicted for sin. They feel the smart who contributed nothing to the guilt; by which it appears that the difference between good and bad ariseth not from the events that are concerning them, but from the temper and disposition of their spirits under them. And since not only righteous men but prophets share with the worst in present punishments, we may infer from thence, with the greatest assurance, that there are rewards reserved for them in the future state. 2nd. Words of conviction, counsel, and comfort, come best to those that are in affliction from their fellow-sufferers. The captives will be best instructed by one that is a captive among them, and experimentally knows their sorrows. 3rd. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel, but some of the brightest of Divine revelations were revealed "in the land of the Chaldeans," which was a happy presage of the carrying of the church, with that Divine revelation upon which it is built, into the Gentile world; and as now, so afterwards, when the gospel kingdom was to be set up, the dispersion of the Jews contributed to the spreading of the knowledge of God. 4th. Wherever we are, we may keep up our communion with God; for 'from the remotest corners of the earth we may find a way open heavenward,'—*undique ad cœlos tantundem est viæ.* 5th. When God's ministers are bound, yet the word of the Lord is not bound, 2 *Tim.* ii. 9. When St. Paul was a prisoner, yet the Gospel had a free course. When St. John was banished into the isle of Patmos, Christ visited him there. Nay, God's suffering servants have generally been treated as favourites, and their consolations have much more abounded, then when affliction has abounded, 2 *Cor.* i. 5.

Thirdly. The discovery which God was pleased to make of himself to the prophet then when he was in these circumstances, to be by him communicated to his people. He here tells us what he saw, what he heard, and what he felt.

1. He saw visions of God, ver. 1. "No man can see God and live;" but many have seen visions of God, such displays of the Divine glory as have both instructed and affected them. And commonly, when God first revealed himself to any prophet, he did it by an extraordinary vision, as to Isaiah, *ch.* vi., to Jeremiah, *ch.* i., to Abraham, *Acts* vii. 2, to settle a correspondence, and a satisfactory way of intercourse, so as that there needed not afterwards a vision upon every revelation. Ezekiel was employed in turning the hearts of the people to the Lord their God, and therefore he must himself see the visions of God. Note, It concerns those to be well acquainted with God themselves, and much affected with what they know of him, whose business it is to bring others to the knowledge and love of him. That he might see the visions of God, the heavens were opened; the darkness and distance which hindered his visions were conquered, and he was let into the light of the glories of the upper world as near and clear as if heaven had been opened to him.

2. He heard the voice of God; ver. 3, "The word of the Lord came expressly" to him; and what he saw was designed to prepare him for what he was to hear. The expression is emphatical; *Essendo fuit verbum Dei,*—'The word of the Lord was as really it was to him.' There was no mistake in it; it came to him in the fulness of its light and power, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit; it came close to him; nay, it came into him, took possession of him, and dwelt in him richly. It came expressly or accurately to him; he did himself clearly understand what he said, and was abundantly satisfied of the truth of it. The essential Word, (so we may take it,) the Word, who is, who is what he is, came to Ezekiel, to send him on his errand.

3. He felt the power of God opening his eyes to see the visions, opening his ear to hear the voice, and opening his heart to receive both. "The hand of the Lord was there upon him." Note, The hand of the Lord goes along with the word of the Lord; and so it becomes effectual. Those only understand and believe the report to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed. The hand of God was upon him, as upon Moses, to cover him, that he should not be overcome by the dazzling light and lustre of the visions he saw, *Ex.* xxxiii. 22. It was upon him as upon St. John, *Rev.* i. 17, to revive and support him, that he might bear up and not faint under these discoveries; that he might neither be lifted up nor cast down with the abundance of the revelations. God's grace is sufficient for him, and in token of that his hand is upon him.

4 And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness *was* about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. 5 Also out of the midst thereof *came* the likeness of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. 6 And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. 7 And their feet *were* straight feet; and the sole of their feet *was* like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. 8 And *they had* the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. 9 Their wings *were* joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. 10 As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. 11 Thus *were* their faces: and their wings *were* stretched upward; two *wings* of every one *were* joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. 12 And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; *and* they turned not when they went. 13 As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance *was* like burning coals of fire, *and* like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14 And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.

The visions of God, which Ezekiel here saw, were very glorious, and had more particulars than those which other prophets saw. The scope and intention of these visions is, 1. To possess the prophet's mind with very great, and high, and honourable thoughts of that God by whom he was commissioned, and for whom he was employed. It is the likeness of the glory of the Lord that he sees, ver. 28, and from hence we may infer, it is his honour to serve him, for he is one whom angels serve. He may serve him with safety, for he hath power sufficient to bear him out in his work. It is at his peril to draw back from his service, for he hath power to pursue him, as he did Jonah. So great a God as this must be served with reverence and godly fear; and with assurance may Ezekiel foretell what this God will do, for he is able to make his words good. 2. To strike a terror upon the sinners that remained in Zion, and those that were already come to Babylon, who were secure, and bid defiance to the threatenings of Jerusalem's ruin, as we have found in Jeremiah's prophecy, and shall find in this, many did. Let those who said, "We shall have peace, though we go on," know, that our God is a consuming fire, whom they cannot stand before. That this vision had a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, seems plain from *ch.* xiii. 3, where he saith, it was "the vision which he saw when he came to destroy the city," that is, to prophesy the destruction of it. 3. To speak comfort to those that feared God and trembled at his word, and humbled themselves under his mighty hand. Let them know, that though they are captives in Babylon yet they have God nigh unto them; though they have not the place of the sanctuary to be their glorious high throne, they have the God of the sanctuary. Dr. Lightfoot observes, 'That now the church is to be planted for a long time in another country, the Lord shews a glory in the midst of them, as he had done at their

first constituting into a church in the wilderness; and out of a cloud and fire, as he had done there, he shewed himself, and from between living creatures, as from between the cherubims, he gives his oracles.' This put an honour upon them, by which they might value themselves when the Chaldeans insulted over them; and this might encourage their hopes of deliverance in due time.

Now, to answer these ends, we have in these verses the first part of the vision, which represents God as attended and served by an innumerable company of angels, who are all his messengers, his ministers, doing his commandments, and hearkening to the voice of his word, which speaks him great, as it magnifies an earthly prince to have a splendid retinue, and numerous armies at his command, which engageth his allies to trust him, and his enemies to fear him.

First. The introduction to this vision of the angels is very magnificent and awakening, ver. 4. The prophet, observing the heavens to open, looked, looked up, as it was time, to see what discoveries God would make to him. Note, When the heavens are opened it concerns us to have our eyes open. And to clear the way, "Behold a whirlwind came out of the north," which would drive away the interposing mists of this lower region. Fair weather uses to come out of the north, and thence the wind comes that drive away rain. God can by a whirlwind clear the sky and air, and produce that serenity of mind which is necessary to our communion with heaven. Yet this whirlwind was attended with a great cloud. When we think the clouds that arise from this earth are dispelled, and we can see beyond them, yet still there is a cloud which heavenly things are wrapped in, a cloud from above, so that we cannot order our speech concerning them by reason of darkness. Christ here descended as he ascended, in a cloud. Some by this whirlwind and cloud understand the Chaldean army coming out of the north against the land of Judah, bearing down all before them, as a tempest; and so it agrees with that which was signified by one of the first of Jeremiah's visions; *Jer.* i. 14, "Out of the north an evil shall break forth;" but I take it here as an introduction rather to the vision than to the sermons. This whirlwind came to Ezekiel, as that to Elijah, 1 *Kin.* xix. 11, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to demand attention. He that has eyes, that has ears, let him see, let him hear.

Secondly. The vision itself. "A great cloud" was the vehicle of this vision, in which it was conveyed to the prophet; for God's pavilion in which he rests, his chariot in which he rides, is darkness and thick clouds, *Ps.* xviii. 11; civ. 3. Thus he holds back the face of his throne, lest its dazzling light and lustre should overpower us, by spreading a cloud upon it. Now,

1. The cloud is accompanied with a fire, as upon mount Sinai, where God resided in a thick cloud; but "the sight of his glory was like devouring fire," *Ex.* xxiv. 16, 17; and his first appearance to Moses was in a flame of fire in the bush; "for our God is a consuming fire." This was "a fire infolding itself," a globe, or orb, or wheel of fire. God being his own cause, his own rule, and his own end, if he be as a fire, he is as a fire infolding itself, or as some read it, 'kindled by itself.' The fire of God's glory shines forth, but it presently catcheth itself, for he lets us know but part of his ways. The fire of God's wrath breaks forth, but presently catcheth itself; and the Divine patience suffers not all his wrath to be stirred up. If it were not a fire thus infolding itself, "O Lord, who shall stand?"

2. The fire is surrounded with a glory; "a brightness was about it," in which it infolded itself, yet it made some discovery of itself. Though we cannot see into the fire, cannot by searching find out God to perfection, yet we see the brightness that is round about it, the reflection of this fire from the thick cloud. Moses might see God's back parts, but not his face; we have some light concerning the nature of God from the brightness which encompasseth it, though we have not an insight into it, by reason of the cloud spread upon it. Nothing more easy than to determine that God is; nothing more difficult than to describe what he is. When God displays his wrath as fire, yet there is a brightness about it; for his holiness and justice appear very illustrious in the punishment of sin and sinners. Even about the devouring fire there is a brightness, which glorified saints will for ever admire.

3. Out of this fire shines the colour of amber. We are not told who or what it was that had this colour of amber, and therefore I take it to be the whole frame of the following vision, which came into Ezekiel's view out of the midst of the fire and brightness, and the first thing he took notice of, before he viewed the particulars, was, that it was of the colour of amber, or the eye of amber, that is, it looked as amber doth to the eye, of a bright flaming fiery colour; the colour of a burning coal, so some think it should be read. The living creatures which he saw coming out of the midst of the fire were seraphims, 'burners;' for "he maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire."

4. That which comes out of the fire, of a fiery amber colour, when it comes to be distinctly viewed, is "the likeness of four living creatures," not the living creatures themselves. Angels are spirits, and cannot be seen, but the likeness of them, such a hieroglyphic or representation as God saw fit to make use of, for the leading of the prophet, and us with him, into some acquaintance with the world of angels, (a matter purely of Divine revelation,) so far as is requisite to possess us with an awful sense of the greatness of that God who hath angels for his attendants, and the goodness of that God who hath appointed them to be attendants on his people. The "likeness of these living creatures came out of the midst of the fire;" for angels derive their being and power from God. They are in themselves, and are to us, what he is pleased to make them; their glory is a ray of his. The prophet himself explains this vision; *ch.* x. 20, "I know that the living creatures were the cherubims," which is one of the names by which the angels are known in Scripture. To Daniel was made known their numbers; "ten thousand times ten thousand," *Dan.* vii. 10. But though they are many, yet they are one; and that is made known to Ezekiel here. They are one in nature and operation, as an army consisting of thousands is yet called a body of men. We have here an account of,

1st. Their nature. They are living creatures, they are the creatures of God, the work of his hands; their being is derived, they have not life in and of themselves, but receive it from him, who is the fountain of life. As much as the living creatures of this lower world excel the vegetables that are the ornaments of the earth, so much do the angels, the living creatures of the upper world, excel the sun, moon, and stars, the ornaments of the heavens. The sun, say some, is a flame of fire infolding itself, but it is not a living creature, as angels, those flames of fire, are. Angels are living lights, living beings, emphatically so; men on earth are dying creatures, dying daily; "In the midst of life we are in death;" but angels in heaven are living creatures, they live indeed, live to good purpose; and when saints come to be equal unto the angels they shall not die any more, *Lu.* xx. 36.

2nd. Their number. They are four, so they appear here, though they are innumerable. Not as if these were four particular angels, set up above the rest, as some have fondly imagined, Michael and Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel; but for the sake of the four faces they put on, and to insinuate their being sent forth towards the four winds of heaven, *Mat.* xxiv. 31; and Zechariah sees them as four chariots going forth, east, west, north and south, *Zec.* vi. 1. God has messengers to send each way, for his kingdom is universal, and reacheth to all parts of the world.

3rd. Their qualifications, by which they are fitted for the service of their Maker and Master. These are set forth figuratively, and by similitude, as is proper in visions, which are parables to the eye. Their description here is such, and so expressed, as that I think it is not possible by it to form an exact idea of them in our fancies, or with the pencil, for that would be a temptation to worship them; but the several instances of their fitness for the work they are employed in are intended in the several parts of this description. Note, It is the greatest honour of God's creatures to be in a capacity of answering the end of their creation; and the more ready we are to every good work the nearer we approach to the dignity of angels.

These living creatures are described here,

First. By their general appearance: "They had the likeness of a man," they appeared for the main in a human shape. 1*st.* To signify that these living creatures are reasonable creatures, intelligent beings, who have that spirit of a man, which is the candle of the Lord. 2*nd.* To put an honour upon the nature of man, who is made lower, yet but a little lower than the angels, in the very next rank of beings below them; when the invisible intelligences of the upper world would make themselves visible, it is in the likeness of man. 3*rd.* To intimate, that their delights are with the sons of men, as their Master's are, *Pr.* viii. 31, that they do service to men, and men may have a spiritual communion with them by faith, hope, and holy love. 4*th.* The angels of God appear in the likeness of man, because, in the fulness of time, the Son of God was not only to appear in that likeness, but to assume that nature; they therefore shew this love to it.

Secondly. By their faces: "Every one had four faces," looking four several ways. In St. John's vision, which has a near affinity with this, each of the four living creatures has one of these faces here mentioned, *Rev.* iv. 7. Here each of them has all four, to intimate that they have all the same qualifications for service; though perhaps, among the angels of heaven, as among the angels of the churches, some excel in one gift and others in another, but all for the common service. Let us contemplate their faces till we be, in some measure, changed into the same image, that we may do the will of God, as the angels do it in heaven. They all four had the face of a man, for in that likeness they appeared, ver. 5; but, besides that, they had the face of a lion, an ox, and an eagle; each masterly in their kind: the lion among wild beasts, the ox among tame ones, and the eagle among fowls, ver. 10. Doth God make use of them for the executing of judgments upon his enemies? they are fierce and strong as the lion and the eagle, in tearing their prey. Doth he make use of them for the good of his people? they are as oxen, strong for labour, and inclined to serve. And in both they have the understanding of a man. The scattered perfections of the living creatures on earth meet in the angels of heaven. They have the likeness of a man, but because there are some things in which man is excelled, even by the inferior creatures, they are therefore compared to some of them. They have the understanding of a man, and such as far exceeds it. They also resemble man in tenderness and humanity. But, 1*st.* A lion excels a man in strength and boldness, and is much more formidable; therefore, the angels, who do so too, put on the face of a lion. 2*nd.* An ox excels man in diligence and patience, and painstaking, and an unwearied discharge of the work he has to do; therefore, the angels, who are constantly employed in the service of God and the church, put on the face of an ox. 3*rd.* An eagle excels man in quickness and piercingness of sight, and in soaring high; and therefore, the angels, who seek things above, and see far into Divine mysteries, put on the face of a flying eagle.

Thirdly. By their wings: "Every one had four wings," ver. 6. In the vision Isaiah had of them they appeared with six, now with four; for they appeared above the throne, and had occasion for two to cover their faces with. The angels are fitted with wings to fly swiftly on God's errands; whatever business God sends them upon they lose no time. Faith and hope are the soul's wings, upon which it soars upwards; pious and devout affections are its wings, on which it is carried forward with vigour and alacrity. The prophet observes here concerning their wings, 1*st.* That they were joined one to another, ver. 9; and again, ver. 11. They did not make use of their wings for fighting, as some birds do; there is no contest among the angels; God maketh peace, perfect peace, in his high places. But their wings were joined in token of their perfect unity and unanimity, and the universal agreement there is among them. 2*nd.* That they were stretched upward, extended, and ready for use, not folded up, or flagging. Let an angel receive the least intimation of the Divine will, and he has nothing to seek, but is upon the wing presently; while our poor dull souls are like the ostrich, that with much difficulty lifteth up herself on high. 3*rd.* That two of their wings were made use of in covering their bodies, the spiritual bodies they assumed. The clothes that cover us are our hindrance in work; angels need no other covering but their own wings, which are their furtherance. They cover their bodies from us, so forbidding us needless inquiries concerning them; ask not after them, for they are wonderful, *Jud.* xiii. 18. They cover them before God, so directing us, when we approach to God, to see that we be so clothed with Christ's righteousness as that the shame of our nakedness may not appear.

Fourthly. By their feet, including their legs and thighs: They "were straight feet," ver. 7; they stood straight, and firm, and steady, no burthen of service could make their legs to bend under them. The spouse makes this part of the description of her Beloved, that his legs were "as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold," *Cant.* v. 15; such are the angels' legs. 'The sole of their feet was like that of a calf's foot,' which divideth the hoof, and is therefore clean; 'as it were the sole of a round foot,' as the Chaldee words it; they were ready for motion any way. Their feet were winged, so the Seventy; they went so swiftly that it was as if they flew; and their very feet "sparkled like the colour of burnished brass." Not only the faces, but the very feet of those are beautiful whom God sends on his errands, *Isa.* lii. 7; every step the angels take is glorious. In the vision John had of Christ it is said, "his feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," *Rev.* i. 15.

Fifthly. By their hands: ver. 8, "They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides;" an arm and hand under every wing. They had not only wings for motion, but hands for action. Many are quick that are not active; they hurry about a great deal, but do nothing to purpose, bring nothing to pass; they have wings, but no hands: whereas God's servants, the angels, not only go when he sends them, and come when he calls them, but do what he bids them. They are the hands of a man, which are wonderfully made, and fitted for service, which are guided by reason and understanding; for what angels do they do intelligently, and with judgment. They have calves' feet, which speaks the swiftness of their motion; the cedars of Lebanon are said to skip like a calf, *Ps.* xxix. 6. But they have a man's hand, which speaks the niceness and exactness of their performances, as the heavens are said to be the work of God's fingers. Their hands were under their wings, which concealed them, as they did the rest of their bodies. Note, The agency of angels is a secret thing, and their work is carried on in an invisible way. In working for God, though we must not with the sluggard hide our hand in our bosom, yet we must with the humble not let our left hand know what our right hand doth. We may observe, that where these wings were their hands were under their wings; wherever their wings carried them they carried hands along with them, to be still doing something suitable, something that the duty of the place requires.

4th. Their motions: The living creatures are moving. Angels are active beings; it is not their happiness to sit still and do nothing, but to be always well employed; and we must reckon ourselves then best when we are doing good, doing it as the angels do it, of whom it is here observed,

First. That whatever service they went about, "they went every one straight forward," ver. 9; and again, ver. 12, which intimates, 1*st.* That they sincerely aimed at the glory of God and had a single eye to that in all they did. Their going straight forward supposeth that they looked straight forward, and never had any sinister intentions in what they did. And if thus our eye be single, our whole body will be full of light; the singleness of the eye is the sincerity of the heart. 2*nd.* That they were intent upon the service they were employed in, and did it with a close application of mind. They went forward with their work, for what their hand found to do they did it with all their might, and did not loiter in it. 3*rd.* That they were unanimous in it. They went straight forward, every one about his own work, and did not thwart or jostle one another; did not stand in one another's light, in one another's way. 4*th.* That they perfectly understood their business, and were thoroughly apprised of it; so that they needed not to stand still, to pause, or hesitate, but work their work before them with readiness, as those that knew what they had to do, and how to do it. 5*th.* They were steady and constant in their work. They did not fluctuate, did not tire, did not vary, but were of a piece with themselves; they moved in a direct line, and so went the next way to work in all they did, and lost no time. When we go straight, we go forward; when we serve God with one heart, we rid ground, we rid work.

Secondly. They turned not when they went, ver. 9; and again, ver. 12. 1*st.* They made no blunders or mistakes, which would give them occasion to turn back to rectify them. Their work needed no correction, and therefore needed not to be gone over again. 2*nd.* They minded no diversions. As they turned not back, so they turned not aside, to trifle with any thing that was foreign to their business.

Thirdly. "Whither the Spirit was to go" they went, ver. 12; either, 1*st.* Whither their own spirit was disposed to go, thither they went, having no bodies, as we have, to clog or hinder them. It is our infelicity and daily burthen, that when the spirit is willing yet the flesh is weak, and cannot keep pace with it, so that the good which we would do we do it not; but angels and glorified saints labour under no such impotency, but whatever they incline or intend to do they do it, and never come short of it. Or, rather, 2*nd.* Wheresoever the Spirit of God would have them go, thither they went. Though they had so much wisdom of their own, yet in all their motions and actions they subjected themselves to the conduct and government of the Divine will; whithersoever the Divine providence was to go they went to serve its purposes, and to execute its orders. The Spirit of God, saith Mr. Greenhill, is the great agent that sets angels to work, and it is their honour that they are led, they are easily led by the Spirit. See how tractable and obsequious these noble creatures are; whithersoever the Spirit is to go, they go immediately, with all possible alacrity. Note, Those that walk after the Spirit do the will of God as the angels do it.

Fourthly. They ran and returned like a flash of lightning, ver. 14. This intimates, 1*st.* That they made haste. They were quick in their motions, as quick as lightning; whatever business they went about, they despatched it presently, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Happy they that have no bodies to retard their motion in holy exercises, and happy shall we be when we come to have spiritual bodies for spiritual work. Satan falls like lightning into his own ruin, *Lu.* x. 18; angels fly like lightning in their Master's work; the angel Gabriel flew swiftly. 2*nd.* That they made haste back. They ran and returned, ran to do their work and execute their orders, and then returned to give an account of what they had done, and receive new instructions, that they may be always doing. They ran into the lower world, to do what was to be done there; but when they had done it they returned like a flash of lightning to the upper world again, to the beatific vision of their God, which they could not with any patience be longer from than their service did require. Thus we should be in the affairs of this world as out of our element; though we run into them we must not repose in them, but our souls must presently return like lightning to God, their rest and centre.

5. We have an account of the light by which the prophet saw these living creatures, or the looking-glass in which he saw them, ver. 13. 1st. He saw them by their own light, for "their appearance was like burning coals of fire." They are seraphims, 'burners,' noting the ardour of their love to God, their fervent zeal in his service, their splendour and brightness, and their terror against God's enemies. When God employs them to fight his battles, they are as coals of fire, *Ps.* xviii. 12, to devour the adversaries, as lightnings shot out to discomfit them. 2nd. He saw them by the light of some lamps which "went up and down among" them, the shining whereof was very bright. Satan's works are works of darkness, he is "the ruler of the darkness of this world;" but the angels of light are in the light, and, though they conceal their working, they shew their work, for it will bear the light. But we see them and their works only by candle-light, by the dim light of lamps that go up and down among them; when the day breaks and the shadows flee away, we shall see them clearly. Some make the appearance of these burning coals, and of the lightning that issues out of the fire, to signify the wrath of God and his judgments that were now to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, in which angels were to be employed. And accordingly we find afterwards "coals of fire scattered upon the city," to consume it, which were "fetched from between the cherubims," *ch.* x. 2. But by the appearance of the lamps then, we may understand the light of comfort which shone forth to the people of God in the darkness of this present trouble. If the ministry of the angels is as a consuming fire to God's enemies, it is a rejoicing light to his own children. To the one this fire is bright, it is very reviving and refreshing; to the other, out of the fire comes forth lightning to destroy them. Note, Good angels are our friends or enemies according as God is.

15 Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. 16 The appearance of the wheels and their work *was* like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work *was* as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. 17 When they went, they went upon their four sides; *and* they turned not when they went. 18 As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings *were* full of eyes round about them four. 19 And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. 20 Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither *was their* spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels. 21 When those went, *these* went; and when those stood, *these* stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels. 22 And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature *was* as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. 23 And under the firmament *were* their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies. 24 And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings. 25 And there was a voice from the firmament that *was* over their heads, when they stood, *and* had let down their wings.

The prophet is very exact in making and recording his observations concerning this vision. And here we have,

First. The notice he took of the wheels, ver. 15—21. The glory of God appears not only in the splendour of his retinue in the upper world, but in the steadiness of his government here in this lower world. Having seen how "God doth according to his will in the armies of heaven," let us now see how he doth, according to it, "among the inhabitants of the earth;" for there, on the earth, the prophet saw the wheels, ver. 15. As he "beheld the living creatures," and was contemplating the glory of that vision, and receiving instruction from it, this other vision presented itself to his view. Note, Those who make a good use of the discoveries God has favoured them with may expect farther discoveries, for to him that hath shall be given. We are sometimes tempted to think there is nothing glorious but what is in the upper world, whereas, could we with an eye of faith discern the beauty of providence, and the wisdom, power, and goodness which shine in the administration of that kingdom, we would see and say, "Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth," and acts like himself. There are many things in this vision which give us some light concerning the Divine providence.

1. The dispensations of providence are compared to wheels, either the wheels of a chariot, in which the conqueror rides in triumph; or, rather, the wheels of a clock or watch, which all contribute to the regular motion of the machine. We read of the course or wheel of nature, *Jas.* iii. 6, which is here set before us as under the direction of the God of nature. Wheels, though they move not of themselves, as the living creatures do, yet they are made movable, and are almost continually kept in action. Providence, represented by these wheels, orders changes; sometimes one spoke of the wheel is uppermost, and sometimes another; but the motion of the wheel on its own axletree, like that of the orbs above, is very regular and steady. The motion of the wheels is circular. By the revolutions of providence things are brought to the same posture and pass which they were in formerly; for "the thing that is is that which has been, and there is no new thing under the sun," *Eccl.* i. 9, 10.

2. The wheel is said to be "by the living creatures" who attended it to direct its motion; for the angels are employed as the ministers of God's providence, and have a greater hand in directing the motions of second causes to serve the Divine purpose than we think they have. Such a close connexion is there between the living creatures and the wheels, that they moved and rested together. Were angels busily employed, men were busily employed as instruments in their hand, whether of mercy or judgment, though they themselves were not aware of it; or are men active to compass their designs, angels at the same time are acting to control and overrule them. This is much insisted on here; ver. 19, "When the living creatures went" to bring about any business, "the wheels went by them;" when God has work to do by the ministry of angels, second causes are all found or made ready to concur in it; and, ver. 21, "when those stood these stood;" when the angels had done their work, the second causes had done theirs. If the "living creatures were lifted up from the earth," were elevated to any service above the common course of nature, and out of the ordinary road, as suppose in the working of miracles, the dividing of the water, the standing still of the sun, the wheels, contrary to their own natural tendency, which is towards the earth, move in concert with them, and are lifted up over against them; this is thrice mentioned, ver. 19—21. Note, All inferior creatures are, and move, and act, as the Creator, by the ministration of angels, directs and influences them. Visible effects are managed and governed by invisible causes. The reason given of this is, because "the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels," that is, the same wisdom, power, and holiness of God, the same will and counsel of his that guides and governs the angels and all their performances, doth by

them order and dispose of all the motions of the creatures in this lower world, and the events and issues of them. God is the soul of the world, and animates the whole, both that above and that beneath; so that they move in perfect harmony, as the upper and lower parts of the natural body do. So that "whithersoever the Spirit is to go," that is, whatever it is God's will and purpose should be done and brought to pass, "thither their spirit is to go," that is, the angels, knowingly and designedly, set themselves to bring it about; and "their spirit is in the wheels," which are therefore "lifted up over against them," that is, both the powers of nature and the wills of men are all made to serve the intention, which they infallibly and irresistibly effect, though perhaps "they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so," *Isa.* x. 7; *Mic.* iv. 11, 12. Thus, though the will of God's precept be not done on earth as it is done in heaven, yet the will of his purpose and counsel is and shall be.

3. The wheel is said to have four faces, looking four several ways, ver. 15, noting that the providence of God exerts itself in all parts of the world, east, west, north, and south, and extends itself to the remotest corners of it. Look which way you will upon the wheel of providence, and it has a face towards you, a beautiful one, which you may admire the features and complexion of; it looks upon you as ready to speak to you, if you be but ready to hear the voice of it. Like a well-drawn picture, it has an eye upon all that has an eye upon it. The wheel had so four faces, that it had in it four wheels, which went upon their four sides, ver. 17. At first Ezekiel saw it as one wheel, ver. 15, one sphere; but afterwards he saw it was four, but they four had one likeness, ver. 16, not only that they were like one another, but they were as if they had been one. This intimates, 1st. That one event of providence is like another; what happens to us is that which is common to men, and what we are not to think strange. 2nd. That various events have a tendency to the same issue, and concur to answer the same intention.

4. Their appearance and their work is said to be like the colour of a beryl, ver. 16. 'The colour of Tarshish,' so the word is, that is, of the sea; the beryl is of that colour, sea green, blue Neptune, we call it. The nature of things in this world is like that of the sea, which is in a continual flux, and yet there is a constant coherence and succession of its parts. There is a chain of events which is always in the drawing one way or other. The sea ebbs and flows, so doth providence in its disposals, but always in the stated and appointed times and measures. The sea looks blue, as the air doth, because of the shortness and feebleness of our sight, which can see but a little way of either; to that colour, therefore, is the appearance and work of providence fitly compared, because we cannot find out that which God doth from the beginning to the end, *Eccl.* iii. 11. We see but part of his ways, *Job* xxvi. 14; and all beyond looks blue, which gives us to understand no more concerning it but that in truth we ken it not; it is far above out of our sight.

5. Their appearance and their work is likewise said to be "as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel." Observe, Here again their appearance to the prophet is designed to set forth what their work really is. Men's appearance and their work often differ, but the appearance of God's providence and its work agree; if they seem to differ, it is through our ignorance and mistake. Now both were as a wheel in a wheel, a lesser wheel moved by a greater. We pretend not to give a mathematical description of it; the meaning is, that the disposals of providence seem to us intricate, and perplexed, and unaccountable, and yet they will appear in the issue to have been all wisely ordered for the best, so that, though what God doth we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter, *Jno.* xiii. 7.

6. The motion of these wheels, like that of the living creatures, was steady, and regular, and constant; "They returned not when they went," ver. 17, because they never went amiss, nor otherwise than they should do. God in his providence takes his work before him, and he will have it go forward; and it is going on even then when it seems to us to be going backward. They went as the Spirit directed them, and therefore returned not. We should not have occasion to return back as we have, and to undo that by repentance which we have done amiss, and to do it over again, if we were but led by the Spirit, and followed his conduct. 'The spirit of life' (so some read it) 'was in the wheels,' which carried them on with ease and evenness, and then they returned not when they went.

7. "The rings" or rims "of the wheels were so high that they were dreadful," ver. 18. They were of a vast circumference, so that when they were reared and put in motion the prophet was even afraid to look upon them. Note, The vast compass of God's thought, and the vast reach of his design, is really astonishing; when we go about to describe the circle of providence, we are struck with amazement, and are even swallowed up. O the height and depth of God's counsels, the consideration whereof should strike an awe upon us!

8. They were "full of eyes round about." This circumstance of the vision is most surprising of all, and yet most significant, plainly speaking that the motions of providence are all directed by infinite wisdom. The issues of things are not determined by a blind fortune, but by those "eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the earth, and are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Note, It is a great satisfaction to us, and ought to be so, that, though we cannot account for the springs and tendencies of events, yet they are all under the cognizance and conduct of an all-wise, all-seeing God.

Secondly. The notice he took of the firmament above, over the heads of the living creatures. When he saw the living creatures moving, and the wheels by them, he looked up, as it is proper for us to do when we observe the various motions of providence in this lower world; looking up he saw "the firmament stretched forth over the heads of the living creatures," ver. 22. What is done on earth is done under the heaven, as the Scripture often speaks, under its inspection and influence. Observe,

1. What he saw. "The firmament was as the colour of the terrible crystal," truly glorious, but terribly so; the vastness and brightness of it put the prophet into an amazement, and struck him with an awful reverence. The terrible ice or frost, (so it may be read,) the colour of snow congealed, or as mountains of ice in the northern seas, which are very frightful. Daring sinners ask, "Can God judge through the dark cloud?" *Job* xxii. 13; but that which we take to be a dark cloud is to him transparent as crystal, through which "from the place of his habitation he looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth," *Ps.* xxxiii. 14. Under the firmament he saw the wings of the living creatures erect, ver. 23; when they pleased they used them either for flight or for covering, or two for flight and two for covering. God is on high above the firmament, the angels are under the firmament, which notes their subjection to God's dominion, and their readiness to fly on his errands "in the open firmament of heaven," and to serve him unanimously.

2. What he heard. 1st. He heard "the noise of angels' wings," ver. 24. Bees and other insects make a great noise with the vibration of their wings; here the angels do so, to awaken the attention of the prophet to that which God was about to say to him from the firmament, ver. 25. Angels, by the providences they are employed in, sound God's alarms to the children of men, and stir them up to hear his voice; for that is it that cries in the city, and is heard and understood by the men of wisdom. The noise of their wings was loud and terrible, "as the noise of great waters;" like the rout or roaring of the sea, "and as the noise of an host," the noise of war; but it was articulate and intelligible, and did not give an uncertain sound, for it was "the voice of speech;" nay it was "as the voice of the Almighty," for God, by his providences, speaks once, yea twice, if we could but perceive it, *Job* xxxiii. 14; the Lord's voice cries, *Mic.* vi. 9. 2nd. He heard "a voice from the firmament," from him that sits upon the throne there, ver. 25. When the angels moved they made a noise with their wings, but when with that they had roused a careless world, they stood still, and "let down their wings," that there might be a profound silence, and so God's voice might be the better heard. The voice of providence is designed to open men's ears to the voice of the word, to do the office of the crier, that with a loud voice charges silence while the judge passeth sentence; "He that has ears to hear let him hear." Note, Noises on earth should awaken our attention to the voice from the firmament; for "how shall we escape if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven?"

26 And above the firmament that *was* over their heads *was* the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne *was* the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. 27 And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. 28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so *was* the appearance of the brightness round about. This *was* the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw *it*, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

All the other parts of this vision were but a preface and introduction to this. God in them had made himself known as Lord of angels, and supreme director of all the affairs of this lower world; from whence it is easy to infer, that, whatever God by his prophets either promiseth or threateneth to do, he is able to effect it. Angels are his servants, men are his tools. But now a Divine revelation is to be given to a prophet, and by him to the church, we must look higher than the living creatures or the wheels; and must expect that from the eternal Word, of whom we have an account in these verses. Ezekiel hearing a voice from the firmament, looked up, as John did, to see the voice that spake with him, and he saw one like unto the Son of man, *Rev.* i. 12, 13. The second Person sometimes tried the fashion of a man occasionally, before he clothed himself with it for good and all; and the spirit of prophecy is called the Spirit of Christ, 1 *Pet.* i. 11; and the testimony of Jesus, *Rev.* xix. 10.

First. This glory of Christ that the prophet saw was above the firmament, that was over the heads of the living creatures, ver. 26. Note, The heads of angels themselves are under the feet of the Lord Jesus; for the firmament that is over their heads is under his feet. Angels, principalities, and powers are made subject to him, 1 *Pet.* iii. 22. This dignity and dominion of the Redeemer before his incarnation magnifies his condescension in his incarnation, when he was made a little lower than the angels, *Heb.* ii. 9.

Secondly. The first thing he observed was a throne, for Divine revelation comes backed and supported with a royal authority; we must have an eye of faith to God and Christ as upon a throne. The first thing John discovered in his visions was a throne set in heaven, *Rev.* iv. 2; which commands reverence and subjection. It is a throne of glory, a throne of grace, a throne of triumph, a throne of government, a throne of judgment. "The Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens," has prepared it for his Son, whom he hath set King on his holy hill of Zion.

Thirdly. On the throne he saw the appearance of a man. This is good news to the children of men, that the throne above the firmament is filled with one that is not ashamed to appear even there in the likeness of man. Daniel in vision saw the kingdom and dominion given to one like the Son of man, who therefore hath "authority given him to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man," *Jno.* v. 27; so appearing in these visions.

Fourthly. The prince and judge upon this throne, though he appear in fashion as a man, yet he appears in more than human glory, ver. 27. 1. Is God a shining light? So is he. When the prophet saw him, he saw as the colour of amber; that is, a brightness round about, for God dwells in light, and covers himself with light as with a garment. How low did the Redeemer stoop for us, when, to bring about our salvation, he suffered this glory to be eclipsed by the veil of his humanity! 2. Is God a consuming fire? So is he. From his loins, both upward and downward, there was the appearance of fire. The fire above the loins was round about within the amber, it was inward and involved, that below the loins was more outward and open, and yet that also had brightness round about. Some make the former to signify Christ's Divine nature, the glory and virtue of which is hid within the colour of amber; it is what no man has seen, or can see. The latter, his human nature, the glory of which there were those that saw, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," *Jno.* i. 14. He had rays coming out of his hand, and yet there was the hiding of his power, *Hab.* iii. 4. The fire in which the Son of man appeared here might be intended to signify the judgments that were ready to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem, coming from that fiery indignation of the Almighty which devours the adversaries. Nothing more dreadful to the most daring sinners, than "the wrath of him that sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb," *Rev.* vi. 16. The day is coming "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire," 2 *Thes.* i. 7, 8. It concerns us, therefore, to "kiss the Son, lest he be angry."

Fifthly. The throne is surrounded with a rainbow, ver. 28; it is so in St. John's vision, *Rev.* iv. 3. The brightness about it was of divers colours, as "the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain;" which, as it is a display of majesty, and looks very great, so it is a pledge of mercy, and looks very kind; for it is a confirmation of the gracious promise God has made, that he will not drown the world again; and he hath said, he will look upon the bow, and remember the covenant, *Gen.* ix. 16. This intimates that he who sits upon the throne is the Mediator of the covenant; that his dominion is for our protection, not our destruction; that he interposeth between us and the judgments our

sins have deserved; and that all the promises of God are in him Yea and Amen. Now the fire of God's wrath was breaking out against Jerusalem, bounds should be set to it; and he would not make an utter destruction of it, for he would look upon the bow, and remember the covenant, as he promised in such a case, *Lev.* xxvi. 42.

Sixthly. We have the conclusion of this vision.

1. What notion the prophet himself had of it; "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." Here, as all along, he is careful to guard against all gross, corporeal thoughts of God, which might derogate from the transcendent purity of his nature. He doth not say, "This was the Lord," for he is invisible, but this was "the glory of the Lord;" in which he was pleased to manifest himself a glorious Being. Yet it is not the glory of the Lord, but the likeness of that glory, some faint resemblance of it; nor is it any adequate likeness of that glory, but only the appearance of that likeness, a shadow of it, and not the very image of the thing, *Heb.* x. 1.

2. What impressions it made upon him; "When I saw it I fell upon my face." 1st. He was overpowered by it, the dazzling lustre of it conquered him, and threw him upon his face; for "who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?" Or rather, 2nd. He prostrated himself, in an humble sense of his own unworthiness of the honour now done him, and of the infinite distance which he now more than ever perceived to be between him and God. He fell upon his face, in token of that holy awe and reverence of God, which his mind was possessed and filled with. Note, The more God is pleased to make known of himself to us, the more low we should be before him. He fell upon his face to adore the majesty of God, and to implore his mercy; and to deprecate the wrath he saw ready to break out against the children of his people.

3. What instructions he had from it. All he saw was only to prepare him for that which he was to hear, for "faith comes by hearing;" he, therefore, "heard a voice of one that spake," for we are taught by words, not merely by hieroglyphics. When he fell on his face ready to receive the word, then he heard the voice of one that spake; for God delights to teach the humble.

CHAPTER II.

What our Lord Jesus said to St. Paul, *Acts* xxvi. 16, may fitly be applied to the prophet Ezekiel, to whom the same Jesus is here speaking, "Rise, and stand on thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister." We have here Ezekiel's ordination to his office, which the vision was designed to fit him for; not to entertain his curiosity with uncommon speculations, but to put him into business. Now here, I. He is commissioned to go as a prophet to the house of Israel, now captives in Babylon, and to deliver God's messages to them from time to time, ver. 1—5. II. He is cautioned not to be afraid of them, ver. 6. III. He is instructed what to say to them, and has words put into his mouth, which is signified by the vision of a roll, which he was ordered to eat, ver. 7—10, and which in the next chapter we find he did eat.

AND he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. 2 And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, *even* unto this very day. 4 For *they are* impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. 5 And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they *are* a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

The title here given to Ezekiel, as often afterwards, is very observable. God, when he speaks to him, calls him, Son of man, ver. 1, 3; son of Adam, son of the earth. Daniel is once called so, *Dan.* viii. 17, and but once. The compellation is used to no other of the prophets, but to Ezekiel all along. We may take it, 1. As an humbling, diminishing title. Lest Ezekiel should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, he is put in mind of this that still he is a son of man, a mean, weak, mortal creature. Among other things made known to him, it was necessary he should be made to know this, that he was a son of man; and therefore it was wonderful condescension in God that he was pleased thus to manifest himself to him. Now he is among the living creatures the angels, yet he must remember that he is himself a man, a dying creature. What is man, or the son of man, that he should be thus visited, thus dignified? Though God had here a splendid retinue of holy angels about his throne, that were ready to go on his errands, yet he passeth them all by, and pitches upon Ezekiel, a son of man, to be his messenger to the house of Israel; for "we have this treasure in earthen vessels," and God's messages sent us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, nor their hand be heavy upon us. Ezekiel was a priest, but the priesthood was brought low, and the honour of it laid in the dust; it therefore became him, and all of his order, to humble themselves and to lie low, as sons of men, common men. He was now to be employed as a prophet, God's ambassador, and a ruler over the kingdoms, *Jer.* i. 10, a post of great honour; but he must remember that he is a son of man, and whatever good he did it was not by any might of his own, for he was a son of man; but in the strength of Divine grace, which therefore must have all the glory. Or, 2. We may take it as an honourable, dignifying title; for it is one of the titles of the Messiah in the Old Testament, *Dan.* vii. 13, "I saw one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven;" from whence Christ borrows the title he often calls himself by, the Son of man. The prophets were types of him, as they had near access to God, and great authority among men; and, therefore, as David the king is called the Lord's anointed, or Christ, so Ezekiel the prophet, is called, Son of man.

First. Ezekiel is here set up, and made to stand, that he might receive his commission, ver. 1, 2. He is set up

1. By a Divine command; "Son of man, stand upon thy feet." His lying prostrate was a posture of greater reverence, but his standing up would be a posture of greater readiness, and fitness for business. Our adorings of God must not hinder, but rather quicken and excite, our actings for God. He fell on his face in a holy fear and awe of God, but he was quickly raised up again; for they that humble themselves shall be exalted. God delights not in the dejections of his servants, but the same that brings them low will raise them up; the same that is a spirit of bondage will be a spirit of adoption. "Stand, and I will speak to thee." Note, We may then expect that God will speak to us, when we stand ready to do what he commands us.

2. By a Divine power going along with that command, ver. 2. God bade him stand up; but, because he had not strength of his own to recover his feet, nor courage to face the vision, the Spirit entered into him, and set him upon his feet. Note, God is graciously pleased to work that in us which he requires of us, and raiseth those whom he bids rise. We must stir up ourselves, and then God will put strength into us; must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us. He observed that the Spirit entered into him then when Christ spake to him; for Christ conveys his Spirit by his word, as the ordinary means, and makes the word effectual by the Spirit. The Spirit set the prophet upon his feet, to raise him up from his dejections, for he is the Comforter. Thus in the like case Daniel was strengthened by a Divine touch, *Dan.* x. 18; and John was raised by the right hand of Christ laid upon him, *Rev.* i. 17. The Spirit set him upon his feet, made him willing and forward to do as he was bidden, and then he heard him that spake to him. He heard the voice before, *ch.* i. 28; but now he heard it more distinctly and clearly, heard it, and submitted to it. The Spirit sets us upon our feet, by inclining our will to our duty, and thereby disposeth the understanding to receive the knowledge of it.

Secondly. Ezekiel is here sent, and made to go with a message to the children of Israel; ver. 3, "I send thee to the children of Israel." God had for many ages been sending to them his servants the prophets, rising up betimes and sending them, but to little purpose. They were now sent into captivity for abusing God's messengers; and yet even there God sends this prophet among them, to try if their ears were open to discipline, now they were held in the cords of affliction. As the supports of life, so the means of grace, are continued to us after they have been a thousand times forfeited. Now observe,

1. The rebellion of the people to whom this ambassador is sent; and he is sent to reduce them to their allegiance, to bring back the children of Israel to the Lord their God. Let the prophet know that there is occasion for his going on this errand, for they are a rebellious nation, ver. 3; a rebellious house, ver. 5. They are called children of Israel; they retain the name of their pious ancestors, but they are wretchedly degenerated, they are become *Goim*,—'nations,' the word commonly used for the Gentiles; the children of Israel are become as the children of the Ethiopian, (*Am.* ix. 7,) for they are rebellious; and rebels at home are much more provoking to a prince than enemies abroad. Their idolatries and false worships were the sins which more than any other denominated them a rebellious nation; for thereby they set up another prince in opposition to their rightful sovereign, and did homage, and pay tribute to the usurper, which is the highest degree of rebellion that can be.

1st. They had been all along a rebellious generation, and had persisted in their rebellion; "they and their fathers have transgressed against me." Note, Those are not always in the right that have antiquity and the fathers on their side, for there are errors and corruptions of long standing; and it is so far from being an excuse for walking in an ill way, that our fathers walked in it, that it is really an aggravation, for it is justifying the sin of those that have gone before us. They have continued in their rebellion "even unto this very day," notwithstanding the various means and methods that have been made use of to reclaim them; to this day, when they are under Divine rebukes for their rebellion, yet they continue rebellious, many among them, like Ahaz, even in their distress, trespass yet more. They are not the better for all the changes that have been concerning them, but still remain unchanged.

2nd. They were now hardened in their rebellion. They are impudent children, brazen-faced, and cannot blush; they are stiff-hearted, self-willed, and cannot bend, cannot stoop; neither ashamed nor afraid to sin; that will not be wrought upon by the sense either of honour or duty. We are willing to hope this was not the character of all, but of many, and those perhaps the leading men. Observe, *First.* God knew this concerning them, how inflexible, how incorrigible they were. Note, God is perfectly acquainted with every man's true character, whatever his pretensions and professions may be. *Secondly.* He told the prophet this that he might know the better how to deal with them, and what handle to take them by. He must rebuke such men as those sharply, cuttingly; must deal plainly with them, though they call it dealing roughly. God tells him this, that it might be no surprise or stumblingblock to him, if he found that his preaching should not make that impression upon them which he had reason to think it would.

2. The dominion of the prince by whom this ambassador is sent. 1st. He has authority to command him whom he sends; "I do send thee unto them," and therefore thou shalt say so and so to them, ver. 4. Note, It is the prerogative of Christ to send prophets and ministers, and to enjoin them their work. St. Paul thanked Christ Jesus, who put him into the ministry, 1 *Tim.* i. 12; for as he was sent of the Father, ministers are sent by him; and as he received the Spirit without measure, he gives the Spirit by measure, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." They are impudent and rebellious, and yet "I send thee unto them." Note, Christ gives the means of grace to many that he knows will not make a good use of those means; puts many a prize into the hands of fools, that not only have no heart to it, but have their hearts turned against it. Thus he will magnify his own grace, justify his own judgment, leave them inexcusable, and make their condemnation more intolerable. 2nd. He has authority by him to command those to whom he sends him; "Thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God." All he said to them must be spoken in God's name, enforced by his authority, and delivered as from him. Christ delivered his doctrines as a Son, "Verily, verily, I say unto you;" the prophets as servants, "Thus saith the Lord God," our Master and yours. Note, The writings of the prophets are the word of God, and are so to be regarded by every one of us. 3rd. He has authority to call those to an account to whom he sends his ambassadors. "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear;" whether they will attend to the word, or turn their back upon it, "they shall know that there has been a prophet among them," shall know by experience. *First.* If they hear and obey, they will know by comfortable experience that the word which did them good was brought them by one that had a commission from God, and a Divine power going along with him in the execution of it. Thus they who were converted by St. Paul's preaching are said to be the seals of his apostleship, 1 *Cor.* ix. 2. When men's hearts are made to burn under the word, and their wills to bow to it, then they know and bear the witness in themselves, that it is not the word of man, but of God. *Secondly.* If they forbear, if they turn a deaf ear to the word, as it is to be feared they will, "for they are a rebellious house," yet they shall be made to know, that he whom they slighted was indeed a prophet, by the reproaches of their own consciences, and the just judgments of God upon them for refusing him. They shall know it to their cost, know it to their confusion, know it by sad experience, what a pernicious, dangerous

thing it is to despise God's messengers. They shall know by the accomplishment of the threatenings, that the prophet who denounced them was sent of God; thus the word will take hold of men, *Zec.* i. 6. Note, 1*st*. Those to whom the word of God is sent are upon their trial, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, and accordingly will their doom be. 2*nd*. Whether we be edified by the word or no, it is certain God will be glorified, and his word magnified, and made honourable. Whether it be a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death, either way it will appear to be of Divine original.

6 And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns *be* with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house. 7 And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they *are* most rebellious. 8 But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. 9 And when I looked, behold, an hand *was* sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book *was* therein; 10 And he spread it before me; and it *was* written within and without: and *there was* written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

The prophet, having received his commission, here receives a charge with it. It is a post of honour to which he is advanced, but withal it is a post of service and work; and it is here required of him,

First. That he be bold. He must act in the discharge of this trust with an undaunted courage and resolution, and not be either driven off from his work or made to drive on heavily by the difficulties and oppositions that he would be likely to meet with in it: "Son of man, be not afraid of them," ver. 6. Note, Those that will do any thing to purpose in the service of God must not be afraid of the face of man; for the fear of men will bring a snare, which will be very entangling to us in the work of God. 1. God tells the prophet what was the character of those to whom he sent him, as before, ver. 3, 4. They are briars and thorns, scratching and tearing, and vexing a man which way soever he turns. They are continually teasing God's prophets, and entangling them in their talk, *Mat.* xxii. 15. They are pricking briers, and grieving thorns. The best of them is as a brier, and "the most upright sharper than a thorn hedge," *Mic.* vii. 4. Thorns and briers are the fruit of sin and the curse, and of equal date with the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Note, Wicked men, especially the persecutors of God's prophets and people, are as briers and thorns, which are hurtful to the ground, choke the good seed, hinder God's husbandry, are vexatious to his husbandmen; but they are nigh unto cursing, and their end is to be burned; yet God makes use of them sometimes for the correction and instruction of his people, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns and briers, *Jud.* viii. 16. Yet this is not the worst of their character,—they are scorpions, venomous and malignant; the sting of a scorpion is a thousand times more hurtful than the scratch of a brier. Persecutors are a generation of vipers; are of the serpent's seed, and the poison of asps is under their tongue; and they are more subtle than any beast of the field. And, which makes the prophet's case the more grievous, he dwells among these scorpions, they are continually about him, so that he cannot be safe or quiet in his own house. These ill men are his ill neighbours, who thereby have many opportunities, and will let slip none to do him a mischief. God takes notice of this to the prophet, as Christ to the angel of one of the churches, *Rev.* ii. 13, "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." Ezekiel had been, in vision, conversing with angels, but when he comes down from this mount he finds he dwells with scorpions. 2. He tells him what would be their carriage towards him, that they would do what they could to frighten him with their looks and their words; they would hector him and threaten him, would look scornfully and spitefully at him, and do their utmost to face him down, and put him out of countenance, that they might drive him off from being a prophet, or at least from telling them of their faults, and threatening them with the judgments of God; or, if they could not prevail in this, that they might vex and perplex him, and disturb the repose of his mind. They were now themselves in subjection, divested of all power, so that they had no other way of persecuting the prophet but with their looks and their words, and so they did persecute him. "Behold, thou hast spoken, and done evil things as thou couldst," *Jer.* iii. 5. If they had had more power they would have done more mischief. They were now in captivity, smarting for their rebellion, and particularly their misusing God's prophets, and yet they are as bad as ever. "Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." No providences will of themselves humble and reform men, unless the grace of God work with them. But, how malicious soever they were, Ezekiel must not be afraid of them, nor dismayed; he must not be deterred from his work, or any part of it, nor be disheartened or dispirited in it by all their menaces, but go on in it with resolution and cheerfulness, assuring himself of safety under the Divine protection.

Secondly. It is required that he be faithful, ver. 7. 1. He must be faithful to Christ who sent him; "Thou shalt speak my words unto them." Note, As it is the honour of prophets that they are intrusted to speak God's words, so it is their duty to cleave close to them, and to speak nothing but what is agreeable to the words of God; ministers must always speak according to that rule. 2. He must be faithful to the souls of those to whom he was sent; "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear," he must deliver his message to them as he received it. He must bring them to comply with the word, and not study to accommodate the word to their humours. It is true, "they are most rebellious," they are rebellion itself; but however, speak my words to them, whether they are pleasing or unpleasing. Note, The untractableness and unprofitableness of people under the word is no good reason why ministers should leave off preaching to them; nor must we decline an opportunity by which good may be done, though we have a great deal of reason to think no good will be done.

Thirdly. It is required that he be observant of his instructions.

1. Here is a general intimation what the instructions were that were given him in the contents of the book which was spread before him, ver. 10. 1st. His instructions were large, for the roll was written within and without, on the inside and on the backside of the roll; it was as a sheet of paper written on all the four sides. One side contained their sins, the other side contained the judgments of God coming upon them for those sins. Note, God hath a great deal to say to his people when they are degenerated and become rebellious. 2nd. His instructions were melancholy, he was sent on a sad errand: the matter contained in the book was "lamentations, and mourning, and woe." The idea of his message is taken from the impression it would make upon the minds of those that carefully attended to it; it would set them a weeping, and crying out, Woe and alas! Both the discoveries of sin, and the denunciations of wrath, would be matter of lamentations. What could be more lamentable, more mournful, more woful, than to see a holy, happy people, sunk into such a state of sin and misery, as it appears by the prophecy of this book the Jews were at this time? Ezekiel echoes to Jeremiah's lamentations. Note, Though God is rich in mercy, yet impenitent sinners will find there are, even among his words, lamentations and woe.

2. Here is an express charge given the prophet to observe his instructions, both in receiving his message and delivering it. He is now to receive it, and is here commanded,

1st. To attend diligently to it; "Son of man, hear what I say unto thee," ver. 8. Note, Those that speak from God to others must be sure to hear from God themselves, and be obedient to his voice. "Be not thou rebellious," that is, Do not refuse to go on this errand, or to deliver it; do not fly off, as Jonah did, for fear of disobliging thy countrymen. They are a rebellious house among whom thou livest; but be not thou like them, do not comply with them in any thing that is evil. If ministers, that are reprovers by office, connive at sin, and indulge sinners, either shew them not their wickedness, or shew them not the fatal consequences of it, for fear of displeasing them, and getting their ill-will, they hereby make themselves partakers of their guilt, and are rebellious like them. If people will not do their duty in reforming, yet let ministers do theirs in reproving; and they will have the comfort of it in the reflection, whatever the success be, as that prophet had, *Isa.* l. 5, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious." Even the best men, when their lot is cast in bad times and places, have need to be cautioned against the worst crimes.

2nd. To digest it in his own mind by an experience of the savour and power of it. Do not only hear what I say unto thee, but "open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee." Prepare to eat it, and eat it willingly, and with an appetite. All God's children are content to be at their heavenly Father's finding, and to eat whatever he gives them. That which God's hand reached out to Ezekiel was a roll of a book, or, the volume of a book; a book, or scroll of paper or parchment full written, and rolled up. Divine revelation comes to us from the hand of Christ; he gave it to the prophets, *Rev.* i. 1. When we look at the roll of the book we must have an eye to the hand by which it is sent to us. He that brought it to the prophet spread it before him, that he might not swallow it with an implicit faith, but might fully understand the contents of it, and then receive it and make it his own. "Be not rebellious," saith Christ, "but eat what I give thee." If we receive not what Christ in his ordinances and providences allots for us, if we submit not to his word and rod, and reconcile not ourselves to both, we shall be accounted rebellious.

CHAPTER III.

In this chapter we have the farther preparation of the prophet for the work to which God called him. I. His eating of the roll that was presented to him in the close of the foregoing chapter, ver. 1—3. II. Farther instructions and encouragements given him to the same purpose with those in the foregoing chapter, ver. 4—11. III. The mighty impulse he was under, with which he was carried to those that were to be his hearers, ver. 12—15. IV. A farther explication of his office and business as a prophet, under the similitude of a watchman, ver. 16—21. V. The restraining and restoring of the prophet's liberty of speech, as God pleased, ver. 22—27.

MOREOVER he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. 2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it;* and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. 4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. 5 For thou *art* not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, *but* to the house of Israel; 6 Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. 7 But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel *are* impudent and hardhearted. 8 Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. 9 As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not,

neither be dismayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious house. 10 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. 11 And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. 12 Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed *be* the glory of the LORD from his place. 13 *I heard* also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. 14 So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me. 15 Then I came to them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

CHEBAR.

These verses are fitly joined by some translators to the foregoing chapter, as being of a piece with it, and a continuation of the same vision. The prophets received the word from God that they might deliver it to the people of God; furnished themselves, that they might furnish them with the knowledge of the mind and will of God. Now here the prophet is taught,

First. How he must receive Divine revelation himself, ver. 1. Christ (whom he saw upon the throne, *ch.* i. 26,) said to him, "Son of man, eat this roll." Admit this revelation into thine understanding, take it, take the meaning of it, understand it aright; admit it into thy heart, apply it, and be affected with it; imprint it in thy mind, ruminate and chew the cud upon it; take it as it is, entire, and make no difficulty of it; nay, take a pleasure in it, as thou dost in thy meat, and let thy soul be nourished and strengthened by it; let it be meat and drink to thee, and as thy necessary food; be full of it, as thou art of the meat thou hast eaten. Thus ministers should in their studies and meditations take in that word of God which they are to preach to others. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them," *Jer.* xv. 16. They must be both well acquainted and much affected with the things of God, that they may speak of them both clearly and warmly, with a great deal of Divine light and heat. Now observe,

1. How this command is inculcated upon the prophet. In the chapter before, "Eat what I give thee;" and here, ver. 1, "Eat that thou findest," that is, that which is presented to thee by the hand of Christ. Note, Whatever we find to be the word of God, whatever is brought to us by him who is the Word of God, we must receive it without disputing. What we find set before us in the Scripture, that we must eat. And again, ver. 3, "Cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll." Do not eat it and bring it up again, as that which is nauseous, but eat it and retain it, as that which is nourishing, and grateful to the stomach. Feast upon this vision till thou be full of matter, as Elihu was, *Job* xxxii. 17. Let the word have a place in thee, the innermost place. We must take pains with our own hearts, that we may cause them duly to receive and entertain the word of God, that every faculty may do its office in order to the due digesting of the word of God, that it may be turned *in succum et sanguinem*,—'into blood and spirits.' We must empty ourselves of worldly things, that we may fill our bowels with this roll.

2. How this command is explained; ver. 10, "All my words that I shall speak unto thee," to be spoken unto the people, "thou must receive in thine heart," as well as hear with thine ears; receive them in the love of them. "Let these sayings sink down into your ears," *Lu.* ix. 44. Christ demands the prophet's attention, not only to what he now saith, but to all that he shall at any time hereafter speak; receive it all in thine heart, meditate on these things, and give thyself wholly to them, 1 *Tim.* iv. 15.

3. How this command was obeyed, in vision. He opened his mouth and Christ caused him to eat the roll, ver. 2. If we be truly willing to receive the word into our hearts, Christ will by his Spirit bring it into them, and cause it to dwell in us richly. If he that opens the roll, and by his Spirit, as a Spirit of revelation, spreads it before us, did not also open our understandings, and by his Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom, give us the knowledge of it, and cause us to eat it, we should be for ever strangers to it. The prophet had reason to fear that the roll would be an unpleasant morsel, and a sorry dish to make a meal of, but it proved it was in his mouth as honey for sweetness. Note, If we readily obey even the most difficult commands, we shall find that comfort in the reflection which will make us abundant amends for all the hardships we meet with in the way of our duty. Though the roll was filled with lamentations, mournings, and woe, yet it was to the prophet as honey for sweetness. Note, Gracious souls can receive those truths of God with great delight, which speak most terror to wicked people. We find St. John let into some part of the revelation by such a sign as this, *Rev.* x. 9, 10. He took the book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up, and it was as this here, in his mouth sweet as honey, but it was bitter in the belly; and we shall find that this here was so too, for, ver. 14, the prophet went in bitterness.

Secondly. How he must deliver that Divine revelation to others which he himself had received; ver. 1, "Eat this roll, and" then "go speak to the house of Israel." 1. He must not undertake to preach the things of God to others till he did himself fully understand them. Let him not go without his errand, or take it by the halves. 2. When he doth himself fully understand them, he must be both busy and bold to preach them for the good of others. We must not conceal the words of the Holy One, *Job* vi. 10, for that is burying a talent which was given us to trade with. He must go and speak to the house of Israel, for it is their privilege to have God's statutes and judgments made known to them; as the giving of the law, the lively oracles, so prophecy, the living oracle, pertains to them. He is not sent to the Chaldeans, to reprove them for their sins, but to the house of Israel, to reprove them for theirs; for the father corrects his own child if he do amiss, not the child of a stranger. The instructions given him in speaking to them are much the same with those in the foregoing chapter.

1. He must speak to them all that, and that only, which God spake to him. He had said before, *ch.* ii. 7, "Thou shalt speak my words to them;" here he saith, ver. 4, "Thou shalt speak with my words unto them;" or in my words. He must not only say that which for substance is the same that God had said to him, but as near as may be in the same language and expressions. Blessed Paul, though a man of very happy invention, yet speaks of the things of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, 1 *Cor.* ii. 13. Scripture truths look best in Scripture language, their native dress; and how can we better speak God's mind than with his words?

2. He must remember that they are the house of Israel whom he is sent to speak to; God's house, and his own, and therefore such as he ought to have a particular concern for, and to deal faithfully and tenderly with. They were such as he had an intimate acquaintance with, being not only their countryman, but their companion in tribulation. They and he were fellow-sufferers, and had lately been fellow-travellers in very melancholy circumstances from Judea to Babylon, and had often mingled their tears, which could not but knit their affections to each other. It was well for the people that they had a prophet who knew experimentally how to symphathize with them, and could not but be touched with the feeling of their infirmities. It was well for the prophet that he had to do with those of his own nation, not with "a people of strange speech and a hard language;" 'deep of lip,' so that thou canst not fathom their meaning; and 'heavy of tongue,' whom it is intolerable and impossible to converse with. Every strange language seems to us to be deep and heavy. Thou art not sent to many such people, whom thou couldest neither speak to nor hear from, neither understand nor be understood among, but by an interpreter. The apostles indeed were sent to many people of a strange speech, but they could not have done any good among them if they had not had the gift of tongues; but Ezekiel was sent only to one people, those but a few, and his own, who having acquaintance with he might hope to find acceptance with.

3. He must remember what God had already told him of the ill character of those to whom he was sent, that if he met with discouragement and disappointment in them, he might not be offended. They are impudent and hard-hearted, ver. 7. No convictions of sin would make them blush, no denunciations of wrath would make them tremble. Two things aggravated their obstinacy: 1st. That they were more obstinate than their neighbours would have been, if the prophet had been sent to them. Had God sent him to any other people, though of a strange speech, surely they would hearkened to him; they would at least have given him a patient hearing, and shewed him that respect which he could not obtain of his own countrymen. The Ninevites were wrought upon by Jonah's preaching, when the house of Israel, that was compassed about with so great a cloud of prophets, was unhumbled and unreformed; but what shall we say to these things? The means of grace are given to those that will not improve them, and withheld from those that would have improved them. We must resolve this into the Divine sovereignty, and say, Lord, "thy judgments are a great deep." 2nd. That they were obstinate against God himself; "They will not hearken unto thee," and no marvel, "for they will not hearken unto me;" they will not regard the word of the prophet, for they will not regard the rod of God, by which the Lord's voice cries in the city. If they believe not God speaking to them by a minister, neither would they believe though he should speak to them by a voice from heaven. Nay, therefore they reject what the prophet saith, because it comes from God, whom the carnal mind is enmity to. They are prejudiced against the law of God, and for that reason turn a deaf ear to his prophets, whose business it is to enforce his law.

4. He must resolve to put on courage, and Christ promiseth to steel him with it, ver. 8, 9. He is sent to such as are impudent and hard-hearted, that will receive no impressions, nor be wrought upon either by fair means or foul, that will take a pride in affronting God's messenger, and confronting the message; it will be a hard task to know how to deal with them. But, 1st. God will enable him to put a good face on it; "I have made thy face strong against their faces," that is, endued thee with all the firmness and boldness that the case calls for. Perhaps Ezekiel was naturally bashful and timorous; but if God did not find him fit, yet by his grace he made him fit, to encounter the greatest difficulties. Note, The more impudent wicked people are in their opposition to religion, the more openly and resolutely should God's people appear in the practice and defence of it; let the innocent stir up himself against the hypocrite, *Job* xvii. 8. When vice is daring, let not virtue be sneaking; and when God has work to do, he will spirit men for it, and give them strength according to the day. If there be occasion, God can and will by his grace make the foreheads of faithful ministers as an adamant, so that the most threatening powers shall not dash them out of countenance; "The Lord God will help me, therefore have I set my face like a flint," *Isa.* l. 7. 2nd. He is therefore commanded to have a good heart on it; and to go on in his work with a holy security, not valuing either the censures or the threats of his enemies. "Fear not, neither be dismayed at their looks;" let not the menaces of their impotent malice cast either a damp upon thee or a stumblingblock before thee.

Bold sinners must have bold reprovers; evil beasts must be rebuked cuttingly, *Tit.* i. 12, 13; must be saved with fear, *Jude* 23. Those that keep close to the service of God may be sure of the favour of God, and then they need not be dismayed at the proud looks of men. Let not the angry countenance, that drives away a backbiting tongue, give any check to a reproving tongue.

5. He must continue instant with them in his preaching, whatever the success was, ver. 11. He must go to them of the captivity, who being in affliction it was to be hoped would receive instruction; must look upon them as the children of his people, to whom he was nearly allied, and for whom he therefore ought to have a very tender concern, as Paul for his kinsmen, *Rom.* ix. 3; and he must tell them, not only what the Lord said, but that the Lord said it. Let him speak in God's name, and back what he said with his authority, "Thus saith the Lord God;" tell them so, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." Not that it may be indifferent to us what success our ministry has; but whatever it be, we must go on with our work, and leave the issue to God. We must not say, here are some so good that we do not need to speak to them; or, here are others so bad that it is to no purpose to speak to them; but, however it be, deliver thy message faithfully; tell them the Lord God saith so and so, let them reject it at their peril.

Full instructions being thus given to the prophet, pursuant to his commission, we are here told,

1st. With what satisfaction this mission of his was applauded by the holy angels, who were very well pleased to see one of a nature inferior to their own thus honourably employed and intrusted. He heard "a voice of a great rushing," ver. 12; as if the angels thronged and crowded to see the inauguration of a prophet; for to them is known by the church, that is, by reflection from the church, the manifold wisdom of God, *Eph.* iii. 10. They seemed to strive who should get nearest to this great sight. He heard "the noise of their wings that touched;" or, as the word is, 'kissed one another;' noting the mutual affections and assistances of the angels. He heard also the noise of the wheels of providence, moving over against the angels, and in concert with them. All this was to engage his attention, and to convince him that the God that sent him, having such a glorious train of attendants, no doubt had power sufficient to bear him out in his work. But all this noise ended in the voice of praise; he heard them saying, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place," that is, *First.* From heaven, his place above, whence his glory was now in vision descending, or whither perhaps it was now returning. Let the innumerable company of angels above join with those employed in this vision, in saying, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens. Praise him all his angels," *Ps.* cxlviii. 1, 2. *Secondly.* From the temple, his place on earth, whence his glory was now departing. They lament the departure of the glory, but adore the righteousness of God in it; however it be, yet God is blessed and glorious, and ever will be so. The prophet Isaiah heard God thus praised, when he received his commission, *Isa.* vi. 4; and a comfort it is to all the faithful servants of God, when they see how much God is dishonoured in this lower world, to think how much he is admired and glorified in the upper world. The glory of the Lord hath many slights from our place, but many praises from his place.

2nd. With what reluctancy of his own spirit, and yet with what a mighty efficacy of the Spirit of God, the prophet was himself brought to the execution of his office. The grace given to him was not in vain; for,

First. The Spirit led him with a strong hand. God bade him go, but he stirred not till the Spirit took him up. "The Spirit of the living creatures," that was in the wheels, now was in the prophet too, and took him up, first, to hear more distinctly the acclamations of the angels, ver. 12; but afterwards, ver. 14, lifted him up, and took him away to his work, which he was backward to, being very loath either to bring trouble upon himself or foretell it to his people. He would gladly have been excused, but must own, as another prophet doth, *Jer.* xx. 7, "Thou wast stronger than I, and hast prevailed." Ezekiel would willingly have kept all he heard and saw to himself, that it might go no farther; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon him, and overpowered him; he was carried on contrary to his own inclinations by the prophetical impulse, so that he could not but speak the things which he had heard and seen, as the apostles, *Acts* iv. 20. Note, Those whom God calls to the ministry, as he furnisheth their heads for it, so he bows their hearts to it.

Secondly. He followed with a sad heart. "The Spirit took me away," saith he, "and then I went," but it was "in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit." He had perhaps seen what a hard task Jeremiah had at Jerusalem, when he appeared as a prophet, what pains he took, what opposition he met with, how he was abused by hand and tongue, and what ill treatment he met with, and all to no purpose; and must I be set up for a mark like him? thinks Ezekiel. The life of a captive was bad enough, but what would the life of a prophet in captivity be? therefore he went in this fret, and under this discomposure. Note, There may in some cases be a great reluctancy of corruption, even there where there is a manifest predominancy of grace. "I went," not disobedient to the heavenly vision, or outrunning the work, as Jonah; but I went "in bitterness," not at all pleased with it. When he received the Divine revelation himself, it was to him sweet as honey, ver. 3, he could with abundance of pleasure have spent all his days in meditating upon it; but when he is to preach it to others, who he foresees will be hardened and exasperated by it, and have their condemnation aggravated, then he goes in bitterness. Note, It is a great grief to faithful ministers, and makes them go on in their work with a heavy heart, when they find people untractable, and hating to be reformed. He went in the heat of his spirit, because of the discouragements he foresaw he should meet with; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon him, not only to compel him to his work, but to fit him for it, and carry him through it, and animate him against the difficulties he would meet with, (so we may understand it,) and when he found it so he was better reconciled to his business, and applied himself to do it. Then he "came to them of the captivity," ver. 15, to some place where there were many of them together, "and sat where they sat," either working, or reading, or talking; and continued "among them seven days," to hear what they said, and observe what they did, and all that time he was waiting for the word of the Lord to come to him. Note, Those that would speak suitably and profitably to people about their souls must acquaint themselves with them and with their case; must do as Ezekiel did here, must sit where they sit, and speak familiarly to them of the things of God, and put themselves into their condition; yea, though they sit by the rivers of Babylon: but observe, he was there astonished, overwhelmed with grief for the sins and miseries of his people, and overpowered by the pomp of the vision he had seen. He was there desolate, so some read it. God shewed him no visions, men made him no visits; thus was he left to digest his grief, and come to a better temper, before the word of the Lord should come to him. Note, Those whom God designs to exalt and enlarge he first humbles and straitens for a time.

16 And it came to pass at the end of seven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 17 Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18 When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 19 Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. 20 Again, When a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumblingblock before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 21 Nevertheless if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned; also thou hast delivered thy soul.

These farther instructions God gave to the prophet "at the end of seven days," that is, on the seventh day after the vision he had; and it is very probable that both that and this were on the sabbath day, which the house of Israel, even in their captivity, observed as well as they could in those circumstances. We do not find that their conquerors and oppressors tied them to any constant service, as their Egyptian taskmasters had formerly done, but that they might observe the sabbath rest, for a sign to distinguish between them and their neighbours; but for the sabbath work they had not the convenience of temple or synagogue, only it should seem they had a place by the river side where prayer was wont to be made, as *Acts* xvi. 13. There they met on the sabbath days, there their enemies upbraided them with the songs of Zion, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 1—3, there Ezekiel met them, and the word of the Lord then and there came to him. He that had been musing and meditating on the things of God all the week was fit to speak to the people in God's name on the sabbath day, and disposed to hear God speak to him. This sabbath day Ezekiel was not so honoured with visions of the glory of God as he had been the sabbath before; but is plainly, and by a very vulgar similitude, told his duty, which he is to communicate to the people. Note, Raptures and transports of joy are not the daily bread of God's children, however they may upon special occasions be feasted with them. We must not deny but that we have truly communion with God, (1 *Jno.* i. 3,) though we have it not always so sensibly as at some times; and, though the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven may sometimes be looked into, yet ordinarily it is plain preaching that is most for edification. God here tells the prophet what his office was, and what the duty of that office; and this (we may suppose) he was to tell the people, that they might attend to what he said, and improve it accordingly. Note, It is good for people to know and consider what a charge their ministers have of them, and what an account they must shortly give of that charge. Observe,

First. What the office is to which the prophet is called; "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel," ver. 17. The vision he saw astonished him; he knew not what to make of that, and therefore God used this plain comparison, which served better to lead him into the understanding of his work, and so to reconcile him to it. He sat among the captives, and said little; but God comes to him, and tells him that will not do. He is a watchman, and hath something to say to them; he is appointed to be as a watchman in the city, to guard against fire, robbers, and disturbers of the peace; as a watchman over the flock, to guard against thieves, and beasts of prey; but especially as a watchman in the camp, in an invaded country, or a besieged town, that is to watch the motions of the enemy, and to sound an alarm upon the approach, nay, upon the first appearance of danger. This supposeth the house of Israel to be in a military state, and exposed to enemies, who are subtle and restless in their attempts upon it; yea, and each of the particular members of that house to be in danger, and concerned to stand upon their guard. Note, Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls, *Isa.* lxii. 6; watchmen that go about the city, *Cant.* iii. 3. It is a toilsome office. Watchmen must keep awake be they never so sleepy, and keep abroad be it never so cold; they must stand all weathers upon the watch-tower, *Isa.* xxi. 8; *Gen.* xxxi. 40. It is a dangerous office. Sometimes they cannot keep their post, but in peril of death from the enemy, who gain their point if they kill the sentinel, and yet they dare not quit their post upon pain of death from their general; such a dilemma are the church's watchmen in. Men will curse them if they be faithful, and God will curse them if they be false; but it is a needful office, the house of Israel cannot be safe without watchmen, and yet except the Lord keep it the watchman waketh but in vain, *Ps.* cxxvii. 1, 2.

Secondly. What is the duty of this office. The work of a watchman is to take notice, and to give notice.

1. The prophet, as a watchman, must take notice of what God said concerning this people; not only concerning the body of the people, which the prophecies of Jeremiah, and other prophets had most commonly reference to, but concerning particular persons according as their character was. He must not, as other watchmen, look round to spy danger, and gain intelligence; but he must look up to God, and farther he need not look; "hear the word at my mouth," ver. 17. Note, Those that are to preach must first hear; for how can they teach others who have not first learned themselves?

2. He must give notice of what he heard. As a watchman must have eyes in his head, so he must have a tongue in his head; if he be dumb, it is as bad as if he were blind, *Isa.* lvi. 10. Thou shalt "give them warning from me," sound an alarm in the holy mountain; not in his own name, or as from himself, but in God's name, and from him. Ministers are God's mouth to the children of men. The Scriptures are written for our admonition; "By

them is thy servant warned," *Ps.* xix. 11; but, because that which is delivered *viva voce* commonly makes the deepest impression, God is pleased by men like ourselves, who are equally concerned, to enforce upon us the warnings of the written word. Now the prophet in his preaching must distinguish between the wicked and the righteous, the precious and the vile; and in his applications must suit his alarms to each, giving every one his portion, which if he did, he should have the comfort of it, whatever the success was; but if not, he was accountable.

1st. Some of those he had to do with were wicked, and he must warn them not to go on in their wickedness, but to turn from it, ver. 18, 19. We may observe here, *First.* That the God of heaven hath said, and doth say, to every wicked man, that if he go on still in his trespasses, he shall surely die. His iniquity shall undoubtedly be his ruin; it tends to ruin, and will end in ruin. Dying thou shalt die, thou shalt die so great a death; shalt die eternally, be ever dying, but never dead. "The wicked man shall die in his iniquity," shall die under the guilt of it, die under the dominion of it. *Secondly.* That if a wicked man turn from his wickedness, and from his wicked way, he shall live, and the ruin he is threatened with shall be prevented; and, that he may do so, he is warned of the danger he is in, The wicked man shall die if he go on, but shall live if he repent. Observe, he is to turn from his wickedness, and from his wicked way. It is not enough for a man to turn from his wicked way by an outward reformation, which may be the effect of his sins leaving him, rather than of his leaving his sins; but he must turn from his wickedness, from the love of it, and the inclination to it, by an inward regeneration; if he do not so much as turn from his wicked way, there is little hopes that he will turn from his wickedness. *Thirdly.* That it is the duty of ministers both to warn sinners of the danger of sin and to assure them of the benefit of repentance; to set before them how miserable they are if they go on in sin, and how happy they may be if they will but repent and reform. Note, The ministry of the word is concerning matters of life and death, for those are the things it sets before us; the blessing and the curse, that we may escape the curse, and inherit the blessing. *Fourthly.* That though ministers do not warn wicked people as they ought, of their misery and danger, yet that shall not be admitted as an excuse for those that go on still in their trespasses; for, though the watchman did not give them warning, yet they shall die in their iniquity; for they had sufficient warning given them by the providence of God and their own consciences, which if they would have taken they might have saved their lives. *Fifthly.* That if ministers be not faithful to their trust, if they do not warn sinners, of the fatal consequences of sin, but suffer them to go on unreproved, the blood of those that perish through their carelessness, will be required at their hand; that is, it shall be charged upon them in the day of account, that it was owing to their unfaithfulness that such and such precious souls perished in sin; for who knows but, if they had had fair warning given them, they might have fled in time from the wrath to come? and if it contract so heinous a guilt as it doth to be accessary to the murder of a dying body, what is it to be accessary to the ruin of an immortal soul? *Sixthly.* That if ministers do their duty, in giving warning to sinners, though the warning be not yet taken, they may have this satisfaction, that they are clear from their blood, and have delivered their own souls, though they cannot prevail to deliver theirs; those that are faithful shall have their reward, though they be not successful.

2nd. Some of those he had to deal with were righteous; at least he had reason to think, in a judgment of charity, that they were so, and he must warn them not to apostatize and turn away from their righteousness, ver. 20, 21. We may observe here, *First.* That the best men in the world have need to be warned against apostacy, and to be told of the danger they are in of it, and the danger they are in by it. God's servants must be warned, (*Ps.* xix. 11,) that they do not neglect his work, and quit his service. One good means to keep us from falling is, to keep up a holy fear of falling; *Heb.* iv. 1, "Let us therefore fear;" and *Rom.* xi. 20, even those that stand by faith must not be highminded but fear, and must therefore be warned. *Secondly.* There is a righteousness which a man may turn from, a seeming righteousness, from which, if men turn, thereby it appears that it was never sincere, how passable, nay, how plausible soever it was; for "if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us," 1 *Jno.* ii. 19. There are many that begin in the spirit, but end in the flesh; that set their faces heavenwards, but look back; that had a first love, but have lost it, and turned from the holy commandment. *Thirdly.* When men turn from their righteousness, they soon learn to commit iniquity. When they grow careless and remiss in the duties of God's worship, neglect them, or are negligent in them, they become an easy prey to the tempter. Omissions make way for commissions. *Fourthly.* When men turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity, it is just with God to lay stumblingblocks before them, that they may grow worse and worse till they are ripened for destruction. When Pharaoh hardened his heart, God hardened it. When sinners turn their back upon God, desert his service, and so cast a reproach upon it, he doth in a way of righteous judgment not only withdraw his restraining grace, and give them up to their own hearts' lusts, but order them, by his providence, into such circumstances as occasion their sin and hasten their ruin. There are those to whom Christ himself is "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence," 1 *Pet.* ii. 8. *Fifthly.* The righteousness which men relinquish shall never be remembered to their honour or comfort; it will stand them in no stead in this world or the other. Apostates lose all that they have wrought; their services and sufferings are all in vain, and shall never be brought to account, because not continued in. It is a rule in the law, *Factum non dicitur quod non perseverat,*—'We are said to do that only which we do perseveringly;' *Gal.* iii. 3, 4. *Sixthly.* If ministers do not give fair warning as they ought, of the weakness of the best, their aptness to stumble and fall, the particular temptations they are in, and the fatal consequences of apostacy, the ruin of those that do apostatise will be laid at their door, and they shall answer for it. Not but that there are those who are warned against it, and yet turn from their righteousness; but that case is not put here as was concerning the wicked man; but on the contrary, that a righteous man being warned, takes the warning, and doth not sin, ver. 21, for if you give instruction to a wise man, he will be yet wiser. We must not only not flatter the wicked, but not flatter even the righteous, as if they were perfectly safe anywhere on this side heaven. *Seventhly.* If ministers give warning, and people take it, it is well for both; nothing more beautiful than "a wise reprover upon an obedient ear;" the one shall live because he is warned, and the other has delivered his soul. What can a good minister desire more, than to save himself and those that hear him? 1 *Tim.* iv. 16.

22 And the hand of the LORD was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. 23 Then I arose, and went forth into the plain: and, behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar: and I fell on my face. 24 Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thine house. 25 But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: 26 And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover: for they *are* a rebellious house. 27 But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they *are* a rebellious house.

After all this large and magnificent discovery which God had made of himself to the prophet, and the full instructions he had given him how to deal with those to whom he sent him with an ample commission, we would have expected presently to see him preaching the word of God to a great congregation of Israel; but here we find it quite otherwise. His work here at first seems not at all proportionable to the pomp of his call.

First. We have him here retired for farther learning. By his unwillingness to go, it should seem as if he were not so thoroughly convinced as he might have been of the ability of him that sent him to bear him out; and therefore to hearten him against the difficulties he foresaw, God will favour him with another vision of his glory, which, if any thing, would put life into him, and animate him for his work. In order to this God calls him to the plain, (ver. 22,) and there he will have some talk with him. See and admire the condescension of God in conversing thus familiarly with a man, a son of man, a poor captive; nay, with a sinful man, that when God sent him went in bitterness of spirit, and was at this time out of humour with his work; and let us own ourselves for ever indebted to the mediation of Christ for this blessed intercourse and communion between God and man, between heaven and earth. See here the benefit of solitude, and how much it befriends contemplation. It is very comfortable to be alone with God, withdrawn from the world for converse with him; to hear from him, to speak to him: and a good man will say he is never less alone than when thus alone. Ezekiel went forth into the plain more willingly than he went among them of the captivity, ver. 15, for they that know what it is to have communion with God cannot but prefer that before any converse with this world, especially such as is commonly met with. He went out into the plain, and there he saw the same vision that he had seen by the river of Chebar; for God is not tied to places. Note, Those who follow God shall meet with his consolations wherever they go. God called him out to talk with him, but did more than that, he shewed him his glory, ver. 23. We are not to expect such visions, but we must own we have a favour done us no way inferior, if we so by faith behold the glory of the Lord as to be changed into the same image by the Spirit of the Lord; and this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord, 2 *Cor.* iii. 18.

Secondly. We have him here restrained from farther teaching for the present. When he saw the glory of the Lord, he fell on his face, being struck with an awe of God's majesty, and a dread of his displeasure; but the Spirit entered into him to raise him up, and then he recovered himself, and got upon his feet, and heard what the Spirit whispered to him; which is very surprising. One would have expected now that God should send him directly to the chief place of concourse, should give him favour in the eyes of his brethren, and make him and his message acceptable to them; that he should have a wider door of opportunity opened to him, and that God should give him a door of utterance to open his mouth boldly; but what is here said to him is the reverse of all this.

1. Instead of sending him to a public assembly, he orders him to confine himself to his own lodgings; "Go, shut thyself within thy house," ver. 24. He was not willing to appear in public, and when he did the people did not regard him, nor shew him the respect he deserved; and, as a just rebuke both to him and them, to him for his shyness of them, and to them for their coldness towards him, God forbids him to appear in public. Note, Our choice is often made our punishment, and it is a righteous thing with God to remove teachers into corners, when they, or their people, or both, grow indifferent to solemn assemblies. Ezekiel must shut up himself, some think, to give a sign of the besieging of Jerusalem, in which the people should be closely shut up as he was in his house, and which he speaks of in the next chapter. He must shut himself within his house, that he might receive farther discoveries of the mind of God, and might abundantly furnish himself with something to say to the people when he went abroad. We find that the elders of Judah visited him, and sat before him, sometimes in his house, *ch.* viii. 1, to be witnesses of his ecstasies; but it was not till *ch.* xi. 25, that he spake to them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had shewed him. Note, Those that are called to preach must find time to study, and a great deal of time too; must often shut themselves up in their houses, that they may give attendance to reading and meditation, and so their profiting may appear to all.

2. Instead of securing him an interest in the esteem and affections of those to whom he sent him, he tells him that they shall put bands upon him, and bind him, ver. 25, either, 1st. As a criminal. They shall bind him in order to the farther punishing of him as a disturber of the peace. Though they were themselves sent into bondage in Babylon for persecuting the prophets, yet there they continue to persecute them. Or rather, 2nd. As a distracted man. They would go about to bind him as one beside himself; for to that they imputed his violent motions in his raptures. The captains asked Jehu, "Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?" Festus said to Paul, "Thou art beside thyself;" and so they said of our Lord Jesus, *Mar.* iii. 21. Perhaps this was the reason why he must keep within doors, because otherwise they would bind him, under pretence of his being mad, and therefore he must not go out among them. Justly are prophets forbidden to go to those that will abuse them.

3. Instead of opening his lips, that his mouth might shew forth God's praise, God silenced him, made his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, so that he was dumb for a considerable time, ver. 26. The pious captives in Babylon used this imprecation upon themselves, That if they did forget Jerusalem, their

tongue might cleave to the roof of their mouth, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 6. Ezekiel remembers Jerusalem more than any of them, and yet his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth; and he that can speak best is forbidden to speak at all, and the reason given is, because they are a rebellious house to whom he is sent, and they are not worthy to have him for a reprover. He shall not give them instructions and admonitions, for they are lost and thrown away upon them. He is before commanded to speak boldly to them, because they are most rebellious, *ch.* ii. 7. But, since that proves to no purpose, he is now for that reason enjoined silence, and shall not speak at all to them. Note, Those whose hearts are hardened against conviction are justly deprived of the means of conviction. Why should not the reprovers be dumb, if, after long trials, it be found that the reproved resolve to be deaf? If Ephraim be joined to idols, let him alone. "Thou shalt be dumb, and not be a reprover;" implying that, unless he were dumb, he would be reproving; if he could speak at all, he would witness against the wickedness of the wicked. But when God speaks with him, and designs to speak by him, he will open his mouth, ver. 27. Note, Though God's prophets may be silenced awhile, there will come a time when God will give them the opening of the mouth again. And when God speaks to his ministers, he not only opens their ears to hear what he saith, but opens their mouth to return an answer. Moses, that had a veil on his face when he went down to the people, took it off when he went up again to God, *Ex.* xxxiv. 34.

4. Instead of giving him assurance of success when he should at any time speak to the people, he here leaves the matter very doubtful, and Ezekiel must not perplex and disquiet himself about it, but let it be as it will. "He that heareth let him hear," and he is welcome to the comfort of it; let him hear and his soul shall live; but "he that forbeareth let him forbear" at his peril, and take what comes. "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it;" neither God nor his prophet shall be any loser by it; but the prophet shall be rewarded for his faithfulness in reproving the sinner, and God will have the glory of his justice in condemning him for not taking the reproof.

CHAPTER IV.

Ezekiel was now among the captives in Babylon, but they there had Jerusalem still upon their hearts. The pious captives looked towards it with an eye of faith, as Daniel, *Dan.* vi. 10; the presumptuous ones looked towards it with an eye of pride, and flattered themselves with a conceit that they should shortly return thither again. They that remained corresponded with the captives, and it is likely buoyed them up with hopes that all would be well yet, as long as Jerusalem was standing in its strength, and perhaps upbraided those with their folly who had surrendered at first; therefore to take down this presumption God gives the prophet, in this chapter, a very clear and affecting foresight of the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, and the calamities which would attend that siege. Two things are here represented to him in vision: I. The fortifications that should be raised against the city. This is signified by the prophet's laying siege to the portraiture of Jerusalem, ver. 1—3; and lying first on one side and then on the other side before it, ver. 4—8. II. The famine that should rage within the city. This is signified by his eating very coarse fare, and confining himself to a little of it, so long as this typical representation lasted, ver. 9—17.

THOU also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city,

ENGRAVED BRICKS FROM BABYLON.

even Jerusalem: 2 And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set *battering* rams against it round about. 3 Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it *for* a wall of iron between thee and the city: and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This *shall be* a sign to the house of Israel. 4 Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: *according* to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. 5 For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. 6 And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. 7 Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thine arm *shall be* uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it. 8 And, behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou shalt not turn thee from one side to another, till thou hast ended the days of thy siege.

The prophet is here ordered to represent to himself and others, by signs which would be proper and powerful to strike the fancy, and to affect the mind, the siege of Jerusalem; and this amounted to a prediction.

First. He was ordered to engrave a draught of Jerusalem upon a tile, ver. 1. It was Jerusalem's honour, that while she kept her integrity God had graven her upon the palms of his hands, *Isa.* xlix. 15, and the names of the tribes were engraven in precious stones on the breastplate of the high priest; but now the faithful city is become a harlot, a worthless brittle tile, or brick, is thought good enough to pourtray it upon. This the prophet must lay before him, that the eye may affect the heart.

Secondly. He was ordered to build little forts against this portraiture of the city, resembling the batteries raised by the besiegers, ver. 2. Between the city that was besieged and himself that was the besieger he was to set up an iron pan, as an iron wall, ver. 3. This represented the inflexible resolution of both sides: the Chaldeans resolved, whatever it cost them, they would make themselves masters of the city, and would never quit it till they had conquered it; on the other side, the Jews resolved never to capitulate, but to hold out to the last extremity.

Thirdly. He was ordered to lie upon his side before it, as it were to surround it; representing the Chaldean army lying before it, to block it up, to keep the meat from going in, and the mouths from going out. He was to lie on his left side three hundred and ninety days, ver. 5, about thirteen months. The siege of Jerusalem is computed to last eighteen months, *Jer.* lii. 4—6; but if we deduct from that five months' interval, when the besiegers withdrew upon the approach of Pharaoh's army, *Jer.* xxxvii. 5—8, the number of the days of the close siege will be three hundred and ninety. Yet that also had another signification; the three hundred and ninety days, according to the prophetic dialect, signified three hundred and ninety years. And when the prophet lies so many days on his side he bears the guilt of that iniquity which the "house of Israel," that is, the ten tribes, had borne three hundred and ninety years, reckoning from their first apostacy under Jeroboam to the destruction of Jerusalem, which completed the ruin of those small remains of them that had incorporated with Judah. He is then to lie forty days upon his right side, and so long to "bear the iniquity of the house of Judah," the kingdom of the two tribes, because the measure-filling sins of that people were those which they were guilty of during the last forty years before their captivity, since the thirteenth year of Josiah, when Jeremiah began to prophesy, *Jer.* i. 1. Or, as some reckon it, since the eighteenth, when the book of the law was found, and the people renewed their covenant with God. When they persisted in their impieties and idolatries, notwithstanding they had such a prophet, and such a prince, and were brought into the bond of such a covenant, what could be expected but ruin without remedy? Judah, that hath such helps and advantages for reformation, fills the measure of their iniquity in less time than Israel doth. Now we are not to think that the prophet lay constantly, night and day, upon his side, but every day, for so many days together, at a certain time of the day when he received visits, and company came in, he was found lying three hundred and ninety days on his left side, and forty days on his right side before his portraiture of Jerusalem, which all that saw might easily understand to mean the close besieging of that city; and people would be flocking in daily, some for curiosity, and some for conscience, at the hour appointed, to see it and make their different remarks upon it.

His being found constantly on the same side, as if bands were laid upon him, (as indeed they were by the Divine command,) so that he could not turn him from one side to another till he had ended the days of the siege, did plainly represent the close and constant continuance of the besiegers about the city, during that number of days, till they had gained their point.

Fourthly. He was ordered to prosecute the siege with vigour; ver. 7, "Thou shalt set thy face towards the siege of Jerusalem," as wholly intent upon it, and resolved to carry it; so the Chaldeans would be, and neither bribed nor forced to withdraw from it. Nebuchadnezzar's resentment of Zedekiah's treachery, in breaking his league with him, made him very furious in pushing on this siege, that he might chastise the insolence of that faithless prince and people; and his army promised themselves a rich booty of that pompous city, so that both set their faces against it, for they were very resolute. Nor were they less active and industrious, exerting themselves to the utmost in all the operations of the siege, which the prophet was to represent by the uncovering of his arm; or, as some read it, the stretching out of his arm, as it were to deal blows about without mercy. When God is about to do some great work he is said to make bare his arm, *Isa.* lii. 10. In short, the Chaldeans will go about their business, and go on in it as men in earnest, that resolve to go through with it. Now,

1. This is intended to be "a sign to the house of Israel," ver. 3; both to them in Babylon that were eyewitnesses of what the prophet did, and to them also who remained in their own land, who would hear the report of it. The prophet was dumb, and could not speak, *ch.* iii. 26; but, as his silence had a voice, and upbraided the people with their deafness, so even then God left not himself without witness, but ordered him to make signs, as dumb men use to do, and as Zecharias did when he was dumb, and by them to make known his mind, that is, the mind of God, to the people. And thus likewise the people were upbraided with their stupidity and dulness, that they were not capable of being taught as men of sense are by words, but must be taught as children are by pictures, or as deaf men are by signs. Or, perhaps they are hereby upbraided with their malice against the prophet; had he spoken in words at length what was signified by these figures, they would have entangled him in his talk, would have indicted him for treasonable expressions, for they knew how to "make a man an offender for a word," *Isa.* xxix. 21; to avoid which he is ordered to make use of signs. Or, the prophet made use of signs for the same reason that Christ made use of parables, that hearing they might hear, and not understand; and seeing they might see, and not perceive, *Mat.* xxiii. 14, 15. They would not understand what was plain, and therefore shall be taught by that which is difficult, and herein the Lord was righteous.

2. Thus the prophet prophesies against Jerusalem, ver. 7; and there were those who not only understood it so, but were the more affected with it by its

being so represented; for images to the eye commonly make deeper impressions upon the mind than words can; and for this reason sacraments are instituted to represent Divine things, that we might see and believe, might see and be affected with those things; and we may expect this benefit by them, and a blessing to go along with them, whilst, as the prophet here, we make use only of such signs as God has himself expressly appointed, which we must conclude are the fittest. Note, The power of imagination, if it be rightly used, and kept under the direction and correction of reason and faith, may be of good use to kindle and excite pious and devout affections, as it was here to Ezekiel and his attendants. Methinks I see so and so, myself dying, time expiring, the world on fire, the dead rising, the great tribunal sit, and the like, may have a mighty good influence upon us; for fancy is like fire, a good servant, but a bad master.

3. This whole transaction hath that in it which the prophet might, with a good colour of reason, have boggled at and excepted against, and yet in obedience to God's command, and in execution of his office, he did it according to order. 1st. It seemed childish, and ludicrous, and beneath his gravity, and there were those that would ridicule him for it; but he knew the Divine appointment put honour enough upon that which otherwise seemed mean to save his reputation in the doing of it. 2nd. It was toilsome and tiresome to do as he did; but our ease, as well as our credit, must be sacrificed to our duty; and we must never call God's service, in any instance of it, a hard service. 3rd. It could not but be very much 'against the grain' with him to appear thus against Jerusalem, the city of God, the holy city, to act as an enemy against a place to which he was so good a friend; but he is a prophet, and must follow his instructions, not his affections, and must plainly preach the ruin of a sinful place, though its welfare is what he passionately desires and earnestly prays for.

4. All this that the prophet sets before the children of his people concerning the destruction of Jerusalem is designed to bring them to repentance, by shewing them sin is the provoking cause of this destruction; sin the ruin of that once flourishing city, than which sure nothing could be more effectual to make them hate sin, and turn from it. While he thus in lively colours describes the calamity with a great deal of pain and uneasiness to himself, he is bearing the iniquity of Israel and Judah. Look here, said he, and see what work sin makes; what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God; this comes of sin, your sin, and the sin of your fathers. Let that therefore be the daily matter of your sorrow and shame now in your captivity, that you may make your peace with God, and he may return in mercy to you. But observe, it is a day of punishment for a year of sin; "I have appointed thee each day for a year." The siege is a calamity of three hundred and ninety days, in which God reckons for the iniquity of three hundred and ninety years; justly therefore do they acknowledge that God had punished them less than their iniquity deserved, *Ezr.* ix. 13. But let impenitent sinners know that though now God is longsuffering towards them, in the other world there is an everlasting punishment. When God laid bands upon the prophet it was to shew them how they were bound with the cords of their own transgression, *Lam.* i. 14, and therefore they were now "holden in the cords of affliction." But we may well think of the prophet's case with compassion, when God laid upon him the bands of duty, as he doth on all his ministers, 1 *Cor.* ix. 16, "Necessity is upon me, and woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel;" and yet men laid upon him bonds of restraint, *ch.* iii. 25. But under both it is satisfaction enough that they are serving the interests of God's kingdom among men.

9 Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof, *according* to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, three hundred and ninety days shalt thou eat thereof. 10 And thy meat which thou shalt eat *shall be* by weight, twenty shekels a day: from time to time shalt thou eat it. 11 Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of an hin: from time to time shalt thou drink. 12 And thou shalt eat it *as* barley cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. 13 And the LORD said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them. 14 Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! behold, my soul hath not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. 15 Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith. 16 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: 17 That they may want bread and water, and be astonied one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.

COLLECTING DUNG FOR FUEL.—ver. 15.

The best exposition of this part of Ezekiel's prediction of Jerusalem's desolation is Jeremiah's lamentation of it, *Lam.* iv. 3, &c., and *ch.* v. 10; where he pathetically describes the terrible famine that was in Jerusalem during the siege, and the sad effects of it. The prophet here, to affect the people with the foresight of it, must confine himself for three hundred and ninety days to coarse fare, and short commons, and that ill dressed; for they should want both food and fuel.

First. His meat, for the quality of it, was to be of the worst bread, made of but a little wheat and barley, and the rest of "beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches," such as we feed horses or fatted hogs with; and this mixed as millcorn, or as that in the beggar's bag, that has a dish full of one sort of corn at one house, and of another at another house. Of such corn as this must the prophet's bread be made, while he underwent the fatigue of lying on his side, and needed something better to support him, ver. 9. Note, It is our wisdom not to be too fond of dainties, and pleasant bread, because we know not what hard meat we may be tied to, nay, and may be glad of, before we die. The meanest sort of food is better than we deserve, and therefore must not be despised or wasted; nor must those that use it be looked upon with disdain, because we know not what may be our own lot.

Secondly. For the quantity of it, it was to be of the least that a man could be kept alive with, to signify that the besieged should be reduced to short allowance, and should hold out till "all the bread in the city was spent," *Jer.* xxxvii. 21. The prophet must eat but twenty shekels weight of bread a day, ver. 10. That was about ten ounces; and he must drink but the "sixth part of a hin" of water, that was half a pint, about eight ounces, ver. 11. The stint of the Lessian diet is fourteen ounces of meat, and sixteen of drink. The prophet in Babylon had bread enough and to spare, and was by the river side, where there was plenty of water; and yet, that he might confirm his own prediction, and be a sign to the children of Israel, God obligeth him to live thus sparingly, and he submits to it. Note, God's servants must learn to endure hardness, and to deny themselves the use of lawful delights, when they may thereby serve the glory of God, evidence the sincerity of their faith, and express their sympathy with their brethren in affliction. The body must be kept under, and brought into subjection. Nature is content with a little, and grace with less; but lust with nothing. It is good to stint ourselves of choice, that we may the better bear it if ever we should come to be stinted by necessity. And in times of public distress and calamity it ill becomes us to make much of ourselves, as those that "drank wine in bowls," and "were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph," *Am.* vi. 4—6.

Thirdly. For the dressing of it, he must bake it with man's dung, ver. 12; that must be dried and serve for fuel to heat his oven with. The thought of it would almost turn one's stomach; yet the coarse bread thus baked he must "eat as barley cakes;" that is, as freely as if it were the same bread he had been used to. This nauseous piece of cookery he must exercise publicly in their sight, that they might be the more affected with the calamity approaching, which was signified by it; that in the extremity of the famine they should not only have nothing that was dainty, but nothing that was cleanly about them; but must take up with what they could get: "To the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

This circumstance of the sign, the baking of his bread with man's dung, the prophet, with submission, humbly desired might be dispensed with, ver. 14. It seemed to have in it something of a ceremonial pollution; for there was a law that man's dung should be "covered with earth," that God might "see no unclean thing in their camp," *Deu.* xxiii. 13, 14. And must he go and gather a thing so offensive, and use it in dressing his meat in the sight of the people? "Ah, Lord God," saith he, "behold my soul has not been polluted," and I am afraid lest by this it be polluted. Note, The pollution of the soul by sin is what good people dread more than any thing; and yet sometimes tender consciences fear it without cause, and perplex themselves with scruples about lawful things, as the prophet here, who had not yet learned that it is not that which goes into the mouth that defiles the man, *Mat.* xv. 11. But observe, he doth not plead, Lord, from my youth I have been brought up delicately, and never used to any thing but what was clean and nice; and there were those who were so brought up that in the siege of Jerusalem did embrace dunghills, *Lam.* iv. 5; but that he had been brought up conscientiously, and had never eaten any thing that was forbidden by the law, that died of itself, or was torn in pieces. And therefore, Lord, do not put this upon me now. Thus Peter pleaded, *Acts* x. 14, "Lord, I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean." Note, It will be comfortable to us when we are reduced to hardships if our hearts can witness for us that we have always been careful to abstain from sin, even from little sins, and the appearances of evil. Whatever God commands us we may be sure is good; but if we be put upon any thing that we apprehend to be evil, we should argue against it from this consideration, that hitherto we have preserved our purity, and shall we lose it now? Now because Ezekiel, with a manifest tenderness of conscience, made this scruple, God dispensed with him in this matter. Note, Those who have power in their hands should not be rigorous in pressing their commands upon those that are dissatisfied concerning them, yea, though their dissatisfactions be groundless, or

arising from education and long usage; but should recede from them rather than grieve or offend the weak, or put a stumblingblock before them, in conformity to the example of God's condescension to Ezekiel, though we are sure his authority is incontestable, and all his commands wise and good. God allowed Ezekiel to use cow's dung instead of man's dung, ver. 15. This is an implicit reflection upon man, as intimating that, he being polluted with sin, his filthiness is more nauseous and odious than that of any other creature. "How much more abominable and filthy is man!" *Job* xv. 16.

Now this sign is particularly explained here. It signified,

1. That those who remained in Jerusalem should be brought to extreme misery for want of necessary food. All supplies being cut off by the besiegers, the city would soon find a want of the country, for "the king himself is served of the field," and thus the "staff of bread" would be "broken in Jerusalem," ver. 16. God would not only take away from the bread its power to nourish, so that "they shall eat and not be satisfied," *Lev.* xxvi. 26, but take away the bread itself, *Isa.* iii. 1; so that what little remained should be "eaten by weight," so much a day, so much a head; that they might have an equal share, and might make it last as long as possible. But to what purpose, when they could not make it last always; and the besieged must be tired out before the besiegers? They shall eat and drink with care, to make it go as far as might be, and with astonishment when they saw it almost spent, and know not which way to look for a recruit. They shall be "astonied one with another;" whereas it used to be some alleviation of a calamity to have others share with us in it, (*Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris,*) and some ease to the spirit to complain of the burthen, it should be an aggravation of the misery that it was universal, and their complaining to one another should but make them all the more uneasy, and increase the astonishment; and the event shall be as ill as their fears: they cannot make it worse than it is, for "they shall consume away for their iniquity;" multitudes of them shall die of famine, a lingering death, worse than that by the sword, *Lam.* iv. 9. They shall die so as to feel themselves die; and it is sin that brings all this misery upon them. They shall 'consume away in their iniquity;' so it may be read. They shall continue hardened and impenitent, and shall die in their sins, which is more miserable than to die on a dunghill.

Now, 1st. Let us see here what woful work sin makes with a people, and acknowledge the righteousness of God herein. Time was when Jerusalem was filled with the finest of the wheat, *Ps.* cxlvii. 14, but now it would be glad of the coarsest, and cannot have it. Fulness of bread, as it was one of Jerusalem's mercies, so it was become one of her sins, *ch.* xvi. 49. The plenty was abused to luxury and excess, which was therefore thus justly punished with famine. It is a righteous thing with God to deprive us of those enjoyments which we have made the food and fuel of our lusts. 2nd. Let us see what reason we have to bless God for plenty; not only for the fruits of the earth, but for the freedom of commerce, that the husbandman can have money for his bread, and the tradesman bread for his money; that there is not only abundance in the field, but in the market, that those who live in cities and great towns, though they sow not, neither do they reap, yet are fed from day to day with food convenient,

2. It signified that those who were carried into captivity should be forced to "eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles," ver. 13; that is, to eat meat made up by Gentile hands, otherwise than according to the law of the Jewish church, which they were always taught to call defiled, and which they would have as great an aversion to as a man would have to bread prepared with dung; that is, as perhaps it may be understood, kneaded and moulded with dung. Daniel and his fellows confined themselves to "pulse and water," rather than they would "eat the portion of the king's meat" assigned them, because they apprehended it would defile them, *Dan.* i. 8. Or they should be forced to eat nasty, stinking meat, such as their oppressors would allow them in their slavery, and such as formerly they would have scorned to touch. Because they "served not God" with cheerfulness, "in the abundance of all things," God will make them "serve their enemies in the want of all things."

CHAPTER V.

In this chapter we have a farther and no less terrible denunciation of the judgments of God that were coming with all speed and force upon the Jewish nation, which would utterly ruin it, for when God judgeth he will overcome. This destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here, I. Represented by a sign, the cutting and burning and scattering of hair, ver. 1—4. II. That sign is expounded, and applied to Jerusalem. 1. Sin is charged upon Jerusalem as the cause of this desolation: contempt of God's law, ver. 5—7, and profanation of his sanctuary, ver. 11; 2. Wrath is threatened, great wrath, ver. 8—10, a variety of miseries, ver. 12, 16, 17, such as should be their reproach and ruin, ver. 13—15.

AND thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause *it* to pass upon thine head and upon thy beard: then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the *hair*. 2 Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, *and* smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them. 3 Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. 4 Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire; *for* thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

We have here the sign by which the utter destruction of Jerusalem is set forth; and here, as before, the prophet is himself the sign, that the people might see how much he affected himself with, and interested himself in, the case of Jerusalem, and how near it lay to his heart. Even then when he foretold the desolations of it, he was himself so much concerned about it as to take what was done to it as done to himself, so far was he from desiring the woful day

First. He must "shave off the hair of his head and beard," ver. 1; which signified God's utter rejecting and abandoning that people as a useless, worthless generation, such as could well be spared, nay, such as it would be his honour to part with. His judgments, and all the instruments he made use of in cutting them off, were this sharp knife, and this razor, that were proper to be made use of, and would do execution. Jerusalem had been the head, but being degenerated was become as the hair, which, when it grows thick and long, is but a burthen, which a man wishes to get clear of, as God of the sinners in Zion; Ah, "I will ease me of mine adversaries," *Isa.* i. 24. Ezekiel must not cut off that hair only that was superfluous, but cut it all off, noting the full end that God would make of Jerusalem. The hair that would not be trimmed, and kept neat and clean by the admonitions of the prophets, must be all shaved off by an utter destruction. Those will be ruined that will not be reformed.

Secondly. He must weigh the hair, and divide it into three parts. This intimates the very exact directing of God's judgments, according to equity, (by him men and their actions are weighed in the unerring balance of truth and righteousness,) and the proportion which Divine justice observes in punishing some by one judgment and others by another; but one way or other they shall be met with. Some make the shaving of the hair to note the loss of their liberty and of their honour; it was looked upon as a mark of ignominy, as in the disgrace Hanun put on David's ambassadors. It notes also the loss of their joy; for they shaved their heads upon occasion of great mourning. I may add the loss of their Nazariteship; for the shaving the head was a period to that vow, *Num.* vi. 18, and Jerusalem was now no longer looked upon as a holy city.

Thirdly. He must dispose of the hair, so as that it might all be destroyed or dispersed, ver. 2. 1. One "third part" must be burnt "in the midst of the city;" noting the multitudes that should perish by famine and pestilence, and perhaps many in the conflagration of the city, "when the days of the siege were fulfilled;" or the laying of that glorious city in ashes might well be looked upon as a third part of the destruction threatened. 2. Another third part was to be cut in pieces with a knife, representing the many that during the siege were slain by the sword in their sallies out upon the besiegers, and especially when the city was taken by storm, the Chaldeans being then most furious, and the Jews most feeble. 3. Another third part was to be "scattered in the wind;" noting the carrying away of some into the land of the conqueror, and the flight of others into the neighbouring countries for shelter, so that they were hurried some one way and some another, like loose hairs in the wind. But, lest they should think that this dispersion would be their escape, God adds, "And I will draw out a sword after them," so that wherever they go evil shall pursue them. Note, God has variety of judgments wherewith to accomplish the destruction of a sinful people, and to make an end when he begins.

Fourthly. He must preserve a small quantity of the third sort that were to be "scattered in the wind," and "bind them in his skirts," as one would bind that which he is very mindful and careful of, ver. 3. This signified perhaps that little handful of people which were left under the government of Gedaliah, who it was hoped would keep possession of the land when the body of the people were carried into captivity. Thus God would have done well for them, if they would have done well for themselves. But these few that were reserved must be taken and "cast into the fire," ver. 4. When Gedaliah and his friends were slain, the people that put themselves under his protection were scattered, some gone into Egypt, others carried off by the Chaldeans, and, in short, the land totally cleared of them; then this was fulfilled, for out of those combustions "a fire came forth into all the house of Israel;" who, as fuel upon the fire, kindled, and consumed one another. Note, It is ill with a people when those are taken away in wrath that seemed to be marked for monuments of mercy; for then there is no remnant or escaping, none shut up or left.

SHAVING THE HEAD.—ver. 1.

5 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
This *is* Jerusalem:
I have set it in the midst of the nations
And countries *that are* round about her.
6 And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations,
And my statutes more than the countries that *are* round about her:
For they have refused my judgments and my statutes,
They have not walked in them.
7 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;

Because ye multiplied more than the nations that *are* round about you,
And have not walked in my statutes,
Neither have kept my judgments,
Neither have done according to the judgments
Of the nations that *are* round about you;
8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I, even I, *am* against thee,
And will execute judgments in the midst of thee
In the sight of the nations.
9 And I will do in thee that which I have not done,
And whereunto I will not do any more the like,
Because of all thine abominations. [thee,
10 Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of
And the sons shall eat their fathers;
And I will execute judgments in thee,
And the whole remnant of thee will I scatter
Into all the winds.
11 Wherefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD;
Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things,
And with all thine abominations,
Therefore will I also diminish *thee;*
Neither shall mine eye spare,
Neither will I have any pity.
12 A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence,
And with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee:
And a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee;
And I will scatter a third part into all the winds,
And I will draw out a sword after them.
13 Thus shall mine anger be accomplished,
And I will cause my fury to rest upon them,
And I will be comforted: [my zeal,
And they shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it* in
When I have accomplished my fury in them
14 Moreover I will make thee waste, [thee,
And a reproach among the nations that *are* round about
In the sight of all that pass by.
15 So it shall be a reproach and a taunt,
An instruction and an astonishment
Unto the nations that *are* round about thee,
When I shall execute judgments in thee
In anger and in fury and in furious rebukes.
I the LORD have spoken *it*.
16 When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine,
Which shall be for *their* destruction,
And which I will send to destroy you:
And I will increase the famine upon you,
And will break your staff of bread:
17 So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts,
And they shall bereave thee;
And pestilence and blood shall pass through thee;
And I will bring the sword upon thee.
I the LORD have spoken *it*.

We have here the reddition of the foregoing similitude. "This is Jerusalem;" thus it is usual in Scripture language to give the name of the thing signified to the sign; as when Christ said, "This is my body." The prophet's head that was to be shaved signified Jerusalem, that by the judgments of God was now to be stripped of all its ornaments, to be emptied of all its inhabitants, and to be "set naked and bare," to be "shaved with a razor that is hired," *Isa.* vii. 20. The head of one that was a priest, a prophet, a holy person, was fittest to represent Jerusalem the holy city. Now the contents of these verses are much the same with what we have often met with, and still shall, in the writings of the prophets. Here is,

First. The privileges Jerusalem was honoured with; ver. 5, "I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her," and those famous nations, and very considerable. Jerusalem was not situated in a remote, obscure corner of the world, far from neighbours, but in the midst of kingdoms that were populous, polite, and civilised, famed for learning, arts, and sciences, and which then made the greatest figure in the world. But there seems to be more in it than so.

1. Jerusalem was dignified and preferred above the neighbour nations and their cities; it was set in the midst of them, as excelling them all. This holy mountain was exalted above all the hills, *Isa.* ii. 2. "Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in," *Ps.* lxviii. 16. Jerusalem was a city upon a hill, conspicuous and illustrious, and which all the neighbour nations had an eye upon, some for good-will, some for ill-will.

2. Jerusalem was designed to have a good influence upon the nations and countries round about; was set in the midst of them as a candle upon a candlestick, to spread the light of Divine revelation which she was blessed with, to all the dark corners of the neighbour nations, that from them it might diffuse itself farther, even to the ends of the earth. Jerusalem was set in the midst of the nations, to be as the heart in the body, to invigorate this dead world with a Divine life, as well as to enlighten this dark world with a Divine light, to be an example of every thing that was good. The nations that observed what excellent statutes and judgments they had concluded them to be a wise and understanding people, *Deu.* iv. 6; fit to be consulted as an oracle, as they were in Solomon's time, 1 *Kin.* iv. 34. And had they preserved this reputation, and made a right use of it, what a blessing had Jerusalem been to all the nations about. But failing to be so, the accomplishment of this intention was reserved for its latter days, when out of Zion went forth the gospel law, and the word of the Lord Jesus from Jerusalem, and there repentanee and remission began to be preached, and thence the preachers of them "went forth into all nations." And when that was done Jerusalem was levelled with the ground. Note, When places and persons are made great, it is with design that they may do good, and that those about them may be the better for them, that their light might shine before men.

Secondly. The provocations Jerusalem was guilty of. A very high charge is here drawn up against that city, and proved beyond contradiction, sufficient to justify God in seizing its privileges and putting it under military execution.

1. She had not walked in God's statutes, nor kept his judgments, ver. 7; nay, they had refused his judgments and his statutes, ver. 6; they did not do their duty, nay, they would not, they said they would not. Those statutes and judgments which their neighbours admired they despised; which they should have set before their face, they cast behind their back. Note, A contempt of the word and law of God opens a door to all manner of iniquity. God's statutes are the terms on which he deals with men; they that refuse his terms cannot expect his favours.

2. She had changed God's judgments into wickedness, ver. 6; a very high expression of their profaneness; that they had not only broken God's laws, but had so perverted and abused them that they had made them the excuse and colour of their wickedness; they introduced the abominable customs and usages of the heathen, instead of God's institutions. This was changing the "truth of God into a lie," *Rom.* i. 25; and the glory of God into shame, *Ps.* iv. 2. Note, Those that have been well educated, if they live ill, put the highest affront imaginable upon God, as if he were the patron of sin, and his judgments were "turned into wickedness."

3. She had been worse than the neighbour nations, to whom she should have set a good example. She "hath changed my judgments," by idolatries and false worship, "more than the nations," ver. 6, and "multiplied," (that is, multiplied idols and altars, gods and temples, multiplied those things the unity of which was their praise,) "more than the nations that were round about." Israel's God is one, and his name one, his altar one; but they, not content with this one God, multiplied their gods to that degree, that "according to the numbers of their cities, so were their gods," and their altars "as heaps in the furrows of the field;" so that they exceeded all their neighbours in having gods many and lords many. They corrupted revealed religion more than the Gentiles had corrupted natural religion. Note, If those that have made a profession of religion, and have had a pious education, apostatize from it, they are commonly more profane and vicious than those who never made any profession; they have the "seven other spirits more wicked."

4. She had "not done according to the judgments of the nations," ver. 7; that is, they had not carried it towards their God, though he is the only true God, as the nations had carried it towards their gods, though they were false gods; had not been so observant of him, nor so constant to him. Hath a nation changed their gods, or slighted them so as they have? *Jer.* ii. 11. Or, it may refer to their morals; instead of reforming their neighbours, they came short of them, and many that were of "the uncircumcision kept the righteousness of the law," better than those that were of the circumcision, *Rom.* ii. 26, 27. Those that had the light of Scripture did not "according to the judgments" of many that had the light of nature. Note, There are those who are called Christians that will in the great day be condemned by the better tempers and better lives of sober heathens.

5. The particular crime charged upon Jerusalem is "profaning the holy things," which she had been both intrusted and honoured with; ver. 11, "Thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things;" that is, with thine idols and idolatries. The images of their pretended deities, and the groves erected in honour of them were brought into the temple, and the ceremonies used by idolaters were brought into the worship of God; thus every thing that is sacred was polluted. Note, Idols are detestable things anywhere, but more especially so in the sanctuary.

Thirdly. The punishment that Jerusalem should fall under for these provocations. "Shall not God visit for these things?" No doubt he shall. The matter of the sentence here passed upon Jerusalem is very dreadful, and the manner of expression makes it yet more so. The judgments are various, and the threatenings of them varied, iterated, inculcated, that one may well say, "Who is able to stand in God's sight when once he is angry?"

1. God will take this work of punishing Jerusalem into his own hands. And "who knows the power of his anger?" and what a fearful thing it is to "fall into his hands." Observe what a mighty emphasis is laid upon it; ver. 8, "I, even I, am against thee." God had been for Jerusalem to defend and save it; but miserable is its case when he is "turned to be its enemy, and fight against it." If God be against us the whole creation is at war with us, and nothing can be for us so as to stand us in any stead. You think it is only the Chaldean army that is against you; but they are God's hand, or rather the staff in his hand. It is "I, even I," that "am against thee;" not only to speak against thee by prophets, but to act against thee by providence; "I will execute judgments in thee," ver. 10; "in the midst of thee," ver. 8; not only in the suburbs, but in the heart of the city; not only in the borders, but in the bowels of the country. Note, Those that will not observe the judgments of God's mouth shall not escape the judgments of his hand; and God's judgments, when they come with commission, will penetrate into the midst of a people, will enter into the soul; "into the bowels like water," and "like oil into the bones." "I will execute judgments." Note, God himself undertakes to execute his own judgments according to the true and full intent of them; whatever are the instruments, he is the principal agent.

2. These punishments shall come from his displeasure. As to the body of the people it shall not be a correction in love, but he will "execute judgments in anger, and in fury, and in furious rebukes," ver. 15; strange expressions to come from a God who hath said, "Fury is not in me;" and who hath declared

himself "gracious, and merciful, and slow to anger." But they are designed to shew the malignity of sin, and the offence it gives to the just and holy God. That must needs be a very evil thing which provokes him to such resentments, and against his own people too that had been so high in his favour; and expressed with so much satisfaction: ver. 13, "Mine anger," which has long been withheld, "shall now be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them;" it shall not only light upon them, but lie upon them, and fill them as vessels of wrath, fitted by their own wickedness to destruction. And justice being hereby glorified, "I will be comforted," that is, will be entirely satisfied in what I have done. As when God is dishonoured by the sins of men he is said to be grieved, *Ps.* xcv. 10, so when he is honoured by their destruction he is said to be comforted. The struggle between mercy and judgment is over, and in this case judgment triumphs; triumphs indeed, for mercy that has been so long abused is now silent, and gives up the cause, has not a word more to say on the behalf of such an ungrateful, incorrigible people; "Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have any pity," ver. 11. Divine compassion defers the punishment, or mitigates it, or supports under it, or shortens it; but here is "judgment without mercy," wrath without any mixture or allay of pity. These expressions are thus sharpened and heightened perhaps with design to look farther to "the vengeance of eternal fire," which some of the destructions we read of in the Old Testament were typical of, and particularly that of Jerusalem; for surely it is nowhere on this side hell that this word has its full accomplishment, "Mine eye shall not spare," but "I will cause my fury to rest." Note, Those that live and die impenitent will perish for ever unpitied. There is a day coming when "the Lord will not spare."

3. Punishment shall be public and open. I will execute these judgments "in the sight of the nations," ver. 8. The judgments themselves shall be so remarkable, as that all the nations far and near shall take notice of them, they shall be all the talk of that part of the world, and the more for the conspicuousness of the place and people on which they are inflicted. Note, Public sins, as they call for public reproofs, ("them that sin rebuke before all,") so, if those prevail not, they call for public judgments. "He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others," *Job* xxxiv. 26, that he may maintain and vindicate the honour of his government; for, as Grotius descants upon it here, 'Why should he suffer it to be said, See what wicked lives they lead that profess to be the worshippers of the only true God?' And as the publicness of the judgments will redound to the honour of God, so it will serve, 1st. To aggravate the punishment, and to make it lie the more heavy. Jerusalem being made waste, becomes "a reproach among the nations, in the sight of all that pass by," ver. 14. The more conspicuous, and the more peculiar any have been in the day of their prosperity, the greater disgrace attends their fall, and that was Jerusalem's case. The more Jerusalem had been a praise in the earth, the more it is now a reproach and a taunt, ver. 15. This she was warned of as much as any thing when her glory commenced, 1 *Kin.* ix. 8; and this was lamented as much as any thing when it was laid in the dust, *Lam.* ii. 15. 2nd. To teach the nations to fear before the God of Israel, when they saw what a jealous God he is, and how severely he punished sin, even in those that are nearest to him. "It shall be an instruction to the nations," ver. 15. Jerusalem should have taught her neighbours the fear of God by her piety and virtue; but, she not doing that, God will teach it them by her ruin; for they have reason to say, "If this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? If they be thus punished that only had some idolaters among them, what will become of us that are all idolaters? Note, The destruction of some is designed for the instruction of others. Malefactors are publicly punished, *in terrorem*, that others may take warning.

4. These punishments, in the kind of them, shall be very severe and grievous. 1st. They shall be such as have no precedent or parallel. Their sins being more provoking than those of others, the judgments executed upon them should be uncommon; ver. 9, "I will do in thee that which I have not done" in thee before, though thou hast long since deserved it, nay, that which I have not done in any other city; this punishment of Jerusalem is said to be "greater than that of Sodom," *Lam.* iv. 6, which was the sorest of all that went before it. Nay, it is such as "I will not do any more the like," all the circumstances taken in, to any other city, till the like comes to be done again to this city, in its final overthrow by the Romans. This is a rhetorical expression of the most grievous judgments, like that character of Hezekiah, that there was "none like him, before or after him." 2nd. They shall be such as will force them to break the strongest bonds of natural affection to one another, which will be a just punishment of them for their wilful breaking of the bonds of their duty to God; ver. 10, "The fathers shall eat the sons, and the sons shall eat the fathers," through the extremity of the famine, or compelled to do it by their barbarous conquerors. 3rd. There shall be a complication of judgments, any one of them terrible enough, and desolating; but what then would they be when they came all together and in perfection? Some shall be taken away by the plague, ver. 12; The pestilence shall pass through thee, ver. 17, sweeping all before it, as the destroying angel. Others shall be consumed with famine, shall gradually waste away as men in a consumption, ver. 13. This is again insisted on, ver. 16, "I will send upon them the evil arrows of famine," hunger shall pine and pierce them, and wound them to the heart, as if arrows, evil arrows, poisoned darts, were shot into them. God has many arrows, evil arrows, in his quiver; when some are discharged he hath still more in reserve; "I will increase the famine upon you." A famine in a bereaved country may decrease, as fruits spring forth, but a famine in a besieged city will increase of course; yet God speaks of it as his act, "I will increase it, and will break your staff of bread," will take away the necessary supports of life, will disappoint you of all that which you depend upon, so that there is no remedy but you must fall to the ground. Life is frail, is weak, is burthened; so that, if it have not daily bread for its staff to lean upon, it cannot but sink, and is soon gone if that staff be broken. Others shall fall by the sword round about Jerusalem, when they sally out upon the besiegers. It is a sword which God will bring, ver. 17. The sword of the Lord, that used to be drawn for Jerusalem's defence, is now drawn for its destruction. Others are devoured by evil beasts, which will make a prey of those that fly for shelter to the deserts and mountains; they shall meet their ruin where they expected refuge, for there is no outrunning the judgments of God, ver. 17. And lastly, Those that escape shall be scattered into all parts of the world; into all the winds, so it is expressed, ver. 10, 12, intimating that they should not only be dispersed, but hurried and tossed, and driven to and fro, as chaff before the wind. Nay, and Cain's curse, to be fugitives and vagabonds, is not the worst of it neither; the restless life shall be cut off by a bloody death, "I will draw out a sword after them," which shall follow them wherever they go. "Evil pursues sinners," and the curse shall come upon them and overtake them.

5. These punishments will prove their ruin by degrees; they shall be diminished, ver. 11; their strength and glory shall grow less and less; they shall be bereaved, ver. 17, emptied of all that which was their joy and confidence. God sends these judgments on purpose to destroy them, ver. 16. The arrows are not sent (as those which Jonathan shot) for their direction, but for their destruction; for God will accomplish his fury upon them, ver. 13. The day of God's patience is over, and the ruin is remediless. Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment now presently in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, yet, the executioners not being named here, but the criminal only, This is Jerusalem, we may well suppose that it looks farther to the final destruction of that great city by the Romans, when God made a full end of the Jewish nation, and caused his fury to rest upon them.

6. All this is ratified by the Divine authority and veracity, "I the Lord have spoken it," ver. 15; and again, ver. 17. The sentence is passed by him that is judge of heaven and earth, whose judgment is according to truth, and the judgments of his hand according to the judgments of his mouth. He hath spoken it who can do it, for with him nothing is impossible. He hath spoken it who will do it, "for he is not a man that he should lie." He hath spoken it whom we are bound to hear and heed, whose *ipse dixit* commands the most serious attention and submissive assent. And "they shall know that I the Lord have spoken it," ver. 13. There were those who thought it was only the prophet that spake it in his delirium; but God will make them know by the accomplishment of it that he has spoken it in his zeal. Note, Sooner or later God's word will prove itself.

CHAPTER VI.

In this chapter we have, I. A threatening of the destruction of Israel for their idolatry, and the destruction of their idols with them, ver. 1—7. II. A promise of the gracious return of a remnant of them to God, by true repentance and reformation, ver. 8—10. III. Directions given to the prophet and other the Lord's servants, to lament both the iniquities and the calamities of Israel, ver. 11—14.

AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, 3 And say,
Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD;
Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills,
To the rivers, and to the valleys;
Behold, I, *even* I, will bring a sword upon you,
And I will destroy your high places.
4 And your altars shall be desolate,
And your images shall be broken:
And I will cast down your slain *men* before your idols.
5 And I will lay the dead carcases of the children of Israel
Before their idols;
And I will scatter your bones
Round about your altars.
6 In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste,
And the high places shall be desolate;
That your altars may be laid waste and made desolate,
And your idols may be broken and cease,
And your images may be cut down,
And your works may be abolished.
7 And the slain shall fall in the midst of you,
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Here, First. The prophecy is directed to the mountains of Israel, ver. 1, 2. The prophet must set his face towards them. If he could see so far off as the land of Israel, the mountains of that land would be first and farthest seen; towards them therefore he must look, and look boldly and stedfastly, as the judge looks at the prisoner, and directs his speech to him, when he passeth sentence upon him. Though the mountains of Israel be never so high, and never so strong, he must set his face against them, as having judgments to denounce that should shake their foundation. The mountains of Israel had been holy mountains, but now they had polluted them with their high places, God sets his face against them, and therefore the prophet must. Israel is here put, not as sometimes for the ten tribes, but for the whole land. The mountains are called upon to hear the word of the Lord, to shame the inhabitants that would not hear. The prophets might as soon gain attention from the mountains as from that rebellious and gainsaying people, to whom they all day long stretched out their hands in vain. "Hear, O mountains, the Lord's controversy," *Mic.* vi. 1, 2; for God's cause will have a hearing, whether we hear it or no. But from the mountains the word of the Lord echoes to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; for to them also the Lord God speaks, intimating that the whole land is concerned in what is now to be delivered, and shall be witnesses against his people, that they had fair warning given them of the judgments coming; but they would not take it. Nay, they contradicted the message, and persecuted the messengers; so that God's prophets might more safely and comfortably speak to the hills and mountains than to them.

Secondly. That which is threatened in this prophecy is the utter destruction of the idols and the idolaters, and both by the sword of war. God himself is commander-in-chief of this expedition against the mountains of Israel, it is he that saith, "Behold, I, even I, will bring a sword upon you," ver. 3; the sword of the Chaldeans is at God's command, goes where he sends it, comes where he brings it, and lights as he directs it. In the desolations of that war,

1. The idols and all their appurtenances should be destroyed. The high places which were on the tops of mountains, ver. 3, these shall be levelled and made desolate, ver. 6; they shall not be beautified, shall not be frequented as they had been. The altars on which they offered sacrifice and burnt incense to strange gods shall be broken to pieces, and laid waste. The images and idols shall be defaced, shall be broken and cease, and be cut down, and all the fine costly works about them shall be abolished, ver. 4, 6. Observe here, 1st. That war makes woful desolations, which those persons, places, and things that were esteemed most sacred, cannot escape, for the sword devours one as well as another. 2nd. That God sometimes ruins idolaters even by the hands of idolaters, for such the Chaldeans themselves were. But, as if the deity were a local thing, the greatest admirers of the gods of their own country were the greatest despisers of the gods of other countries. 3rd. It is just with God to make that a desolation which we make an idol of; for he is a jealous God, and

will not bear a rival. 4th. If men do not, as they ought, destroy idolatry, God will, first or last, find out a way to do it. When Josiah had destroyed the high places, altars, and images with the sword of justice, they set them up again; but God will now destroy them with the sword of war, and let us see who dares re-establish them.

2. The worshippers of idols, and all their adherents, should be destroyed likewise. As all their high places shall be laid waste, so shall all their dwelling places too, even all their cities, ver. 6. They that profane God's dwelling place, as they had done, can expect no other but that he should abandon theirs, *ch.* v. 11. "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy," 1 *Cor.* iii. 17. It is here threatened that "their slain shall fall in the midst of them," ver. 7; there shall be abundance slain, even in those places which were thought most safe; but it is added as a remarkable circumstance, that they shall fall before their idols, ver. 4, that their dead carcases should be laid, and their bones scattered about their altars, ver. 5. 1st. Thus their idols should be polluted, and those places profaned by the dead bodies which they had had in veneration. If they will not "defile the covering of their graven images," God will, *Isa.* xxx. 22. The throwing of the carcases among them, as upon the dunghill, intimates that they were but dunghill deities. 2nd. Thus it was intimated that they were but dead things, unfit to be rivals with the living God; for the carcases of dead men, that, like them, have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, were the fittest company for them. 3rd. Thus the idols were upbraided with their inability to help their worshippers, and idolaters upbraided with the folly of trusting in them; for it should seem they fell by the sword of the enemy then when they were actually before their idols imploring their aid, and putting themselves under their protection; Sennacherib was slain by his sons then when he was worshipping in the house of his god. 4th. The sin might be read in this circumstance of the punishment; the slain men are cast before the idols, to shew that therefore they are slain, because they worshipped those idols: see *Jer.* viii. 2. Let the survivors observe it, and take warning not to worship images. Let them see it, and know that God is the Lord, that is, that the Lord he is God, and he alone.

8 Yet will I leave a remnant,
That ye may have *some* that shall escape the sword among the nations,
When ye shall be scattered through the countries.
9 And they that escape of you shall remember me
Among the nations whither they shall be carried captives,
Because I am broken
With their whorish heart, which hath departed from me,
And with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols:
And they shall lothe themselves for the evils which they have committed
In all their abominations.
10 And they shall know that I *am* the LORD,
And that I have not said in vain
That I would do this evil unto them.

Judgment had hitherto triumphed, but in these verses "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." A sad end is made of this provoking people, but not a full end. The ruin seems to be universal, and "yet will I leave a remnant," a little remnant, distinguished from the body of the people, a few of many, such as are left when the rest perish; and it is God that leaves them. This intimates that they deserved to have been cut off with the rest, and had been cut off, if God had not left them: see *Isa.* i. 9. And it is God who by his grace works that in them which he has an eye to in sparing them. Now,

First. It is a preserved remnant, saved from the ruin which the body of the nation is involved in, ver. 8, "That ye may have some that shall escape the sword." God said, *ch.* v. 12, that he would draw a sword after them that were scattered, that destruction should pursue them in their dispersions. But here is mercy remembered in the midst of that wrath, and a promise that some of the Jews of the dispersion, as they were afterwards called, should escape the sword. None of those that were to fall by the sword about Jerusalem shall escape, for they trusted to Jerusalem's walls for security, and shall be made ashamed of that vain confidence; but some of them shall escape the sword among the nations, where, being deprived of all other stays, they stay themselves upon God only. They are said to have those that do escape; for they shall be the seed of another generation, out of which Jerusalem shall flourish again.

Secondly. It is a penitent remnant; ver. 9, "They that escape of you shall remember me." Note, To those whom God designs for life he will give repentance unto life. They are reprieved and escape the sword that they may have time to return to God. Note, God's patience both leaves room for repentance and is an encouragement to sinners to repent. Where God designs grace to repent he allows space to repent, yet many that have the space want the grace; many that escape the sword do not forsake the sin, as it is promised these here shall do. This remnant here marked for salvation is a type of the remnant reserved out of the body of mankind, to be monuments of mercy, which are made safe in the same way that these were, by being brought to repentance. Now observe here,

1. The occasion of their repentance, and that is a mixture of judgment and mercy: judgment that they were carried captives, but mercy that they escaped the sword in the land of their captivity. They were driven out of their own land, but not out of the land of the living, not chased out of the world, as others were, and they deserved to be. Note, The consideration of the just rebukes of providence we are under, and yet of the mercy mixed with them, should engage us to repent, that we may answer God's end in both. And true repentance shall be accepted of God, though we are brought to it by our troubles; nay, sanctified afflictions often prove means of conversion, as to Manasseh.

2. The root and principle of their repentance. "They shall remember me among the nations." They that forgat God in the land of their peace and prosperity, waxed fat and kicked, were brought to remember him in the land of their captivity. The prodigal son never bethought himself of his father's house till he was ready to perish for hunger in the far country. Their remembering God was the first step they took in returning to him. Note, Then there begins to be some hopes of sinners when they begin to think of him whom they have sinned against, and to inquire, "Where is God my maker?" Sin takes rise in forgetting God, *Jer.* iii. 21. Repentance takes rise from the remembrance of him, and of our obligations to him. God saith, "They shall remember me," that is, I will give them grace to do so, for otherwise they would for ever forget him; that grace shall find them out wherever they are, and by bringing God to their mind shall bring them to their right mind. The prodigal, when he remembered his father, remembered how he had sinned against heaven, and before him; so do these penitents.

1st. They remember the base affront they had put upon God by their idolatries; and this is that which an ingenuous repentance fastens upon and most sadly laments. They had departed from God to idols, had given that honour to pretended deities, the creatures of men's fancies, and the work of men's hands, which they should have given to the God of Israel. They departed from God; from his word, which they should have made their rule, from his work which they should have made their business; their hearts departed from him. The heart which he requires and insists upon, and without which bodily exercise profits nothing,—the heart which should be set upon him, and carried out towards him,—when that departs from him, it is as the treacherous elopement of a wife from her husband, or the rebellious revolt of a subject from his sovereign. "Their eyes also go after their idols;" they doated on them, and had great expectations from them. Their hearts followed their eyes in the choice of their gods, they must have gods that they could see: and then their eyes followed their hearts in the adoration of them. Now the malignity of this sin is that it is spiritual whoredom; it is a whorish heart that departs from God; and they are eyes that go a whoring after their idols. Note, Idolatry is spiritual whoredom; it is the breach of a marriage covenant with God; it is the setting of the affections upon that which is a rival with him, and the indulgence of a base lust which deceives and defiles the soul, and is a great wrong to God in his honour.

2nd. They remember what a grief this was to him, and how he resented it. They shall remember "that I am broken with their whorish heart," and their eyes that are full of this spiritual adultery. Not only angry at it, but grieved, as a husband is at the lewdness of a wife whom he dearly loved, grieved to that degree that he is broken with it; it breaks his heart to think that he should be so disingenuously dealt with. He is broken as an aged father is with the undutiful carriage of a rebellious and disobedient son, which sinks his spirits, and makes him to stoop. "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," *Ps.* xcv. 10. God's measures were broken, so some; a stop was put to the current of his favours towards them; and he was even compelled to punish them. This they shall remember in the day of their repentance, and it shall affect and humble them more than any thing; not so much that their peace was broken, and their country broken, as that God was broken by their sin. Thus "they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn," *Zec.* xii. 10. Note, Nothing grieves a true penitent so much as to think that his sin hath been a grief to God and to the Spirit of his grace.

3. The product and evidence of their repentance; "They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations." Thus God gave them grace to qualify them for pardon and deliverance. Though he had been broken by their whorish heart, yet he would not quite cast them off: see *Isa.* lvii. 17, 18; *Hos.* ii. 13, 14. His goodness took occasion from their badness to appear the more illustrious. Note, 1st. True penitents see sin to be an abominable thing, that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which makes sinners and even their services odious to him, *Jer.* xliv. 4; *Isa.* i. 11. It defiles the sinner's own conscience, and makes him, unless he be past feeling, an abomination to himself. An idol is particularly called an abomination, *Isa.* xliv. 19. Those gratifications, which the hearts of sinners were set upon as delectable things, the hearts of penitents are turned against as detestable things. 2nd. There are many evils committed in these abominations, many included in them, attendant on them, and flowing from them, many transgressions in one sin, *Lev.* xvi. 21. In their idolatries they were sometimes guilty of whoredom, as in the worship of Peor; sometimes of murder, as in the worship of Moloch: these were evils committed in their abominations. Or, it notes the great malignity there is in sin; it is an abomination that has abundance of evil in it. 3rd. Those that truly loathe sin cannot but loathe themselves because of sin; self-loathing is evermore the companion of true repentance. Penitents quarrel with themselves, and can never be reconciled to themselves till they have some ground to hope that God is reconciled to them; nay, then they shall lie down in their shame, when he is pacified towards them, *Eze.* xvi. 1.

4. The glory that will redound to God by their repentance; ver. 10, "They shall know that I am the Lord," that is, they shall be convinced of it by experience, and shall be ready to own it, "and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them," finding that what I have said is made good, and made to work for good, and to answer a good intention, and that it was not without just provocation that they were thus threatened and thus punished. Note, 1st. One way or other God will make sinners to know and own that he is the Lord, either by their repentance or by their ruin. 2nd. All true penitents are brought to acknowledge both the equity and the efficacy of the word of God, particularly the threatenings of the word, and to justify God in them and in the accomplishment of them.

11 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Smite with thine hand,
And stamp with thy foot, and say,
Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel!
For they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence.
12 He that is far off shall die of the pestilence;
And he that is near shall fall by the sword;
And he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine:
Thus will I accomplish my fury upon them.
13 Then shall ye know that I *am* the LORD,
When their slain *men* shall be among their idols round about their altars,
Upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains,
And under every green tree, and under every thick oak,
The place where they did offer sweet savour to all their
14 So will I stretch out my hand upon them, [idols

And make the land desolate,
Yea, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblath,
In all their habitations:
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

The same threatenings which we had before in the foregoing chapter, and in the former part of this, are here repeated, with a direction to the prophet to lament them, that those he prophesied to might be the more affected with the foresight of them.

First. He must, by his gestures in preaching, express the deep sense he had both of the iniquities and of the calamities of the house of Israel; ver. 11, "Smite with thy hand, and stamp with thy foot." Thus he must make it to appear that he was in earnest in what he said to them, that he firmly believed it, and laid it to heart; thus he must signify the just displeasure he had conceived at their sins, and the just dread he was under of the judgments coming upon them. Some would reject the use of these gestures, and call them antic and ridiculous. But God bids him use them, because they might help to enforce the word upon some, and give it the setting on. And those that know the worth of souls will be content to be laughed at by the wits, so they may but edify the weak. Two things the prophet must thus lament: 1. National sins; "Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel!" Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of God's faithful servants, especially "the evil abominations of the house of Israel," whose sins are more abominable, and have more evil in them, than the sins of others. Alas, what will be in the end hereof? 2. National judgments. To punish them for these abominations, "They shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence." Note, It is our duty to be affected not only with our own sins and sufferings, but with the sins and sufferings of others, and to look with compassion upon the miseries that wicked people bring upon themselves, as Christ beheld Jerusalem and wept over it.

Secondly. He must inculcate what he had said before concerning the destruction that was coming upon them.

1. They shall be run down and ruined by a variety of judgments, which shall find them out and follow them wherever they are; ver. 12, "He that is far off," and thinks himself out of danger, because out of the reach of the Chaldeans' arrows, yet shall find himself not out of the reach of God's arrows, which fly day and night, *Ps.* xci. 5, "he shall die of the pestilence." "He that is near" a place of strength, which he hopes will be to him a place of safety, yet "shall fall by the sword" before he can retreat. He that is so cautious as not to venture out, but remains in the city, there he shall die by the famine, the saddest death of all. Thus will God accomplish his fury, that is, do all that against them which he had purposed to do.

2. They shall read their sin in their punishment; for their "slain men shall be among their idols, round about their altars," as was threatened before, ver. 5—7. There, where they had prostrated themselves in honour of their idols, God will lay them dead to their own reproach, and the reproach of their idols. They lived among them, and shall die among them. They had offered sweet odours to their idols, but there shall their dead carcases send forth a stinking smell, as it were to atone for that misplaced incense.

3. The country shall be all laid waste, as before the cities; ver. 6, "I will make the land desolate." That fruitful, pleasant, populous country, that had been as the garden of the Lord, the glory of all lands, shall be desolate, "more desolate than the wilderness towards Diblath," ver. 14; Diblathaim, it is called, *Num.* xxxiii. 46; *Jer.* xlviii. 22; that great and terrible wilderness which is described *Deu.* viii. 15, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions. The land of Canaan is at this day one of the most barren, desolate countries in the world. City and country are thus depopulated, "that the altars may be laid waste, and made desolate," ver. 6. Rather than their idolatrous altars shall be left standing, both town and country shall be laid in ruins. Sin is a desolating thing; therefore stand in awe, and sin not.

CHAPTER VII.

In this chapter the approaching ruin of the land of Israel is most particularly foretold, in affecting expressions often repeated, that if possible they might be awakened by repentance to prevent it. The prophet must tell them, I. That it will be a final ruin, a complete, utter destruction, which would make an end of them, a miserable end, ver. 1—6. II. That it is an approaching ruin, just at the door, ver. 7—10. III. That it is an unavoidable ruin, because they had by sin brought it upon themselves, ver. 10—15. IV. That their strength and wealth should be no fence against it, ver. 16—19. V. That the temple which they trusted in should itself be ruined, ver. 20—22. VI. That it should be an universal ruin, the sin that brought it having been universal, ver. 23—27.

MOREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the land of Israel;

An end, the end is come
Upon the four corners of the land.
3 Now *is* the end *come* upon thee,
And I will send mine anger upon thee,
And will judge thee according to thy ways,
And will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.
4 And mine eye shall not spare thee,
Neither will I have pity:
But I will recompense thy ways upon thee,
And thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee:
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.
5 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
An evil, an only evil, behold, is come.
6 An end is come, the end is come:
It watcheth for thee; behold, it is come.
7 The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land:
The time is come, the day of trouble *is* near,
And not the sounding again of the mountains.
8 Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee,
And accomplish mine anger upon thee:
And I will judge thee according to thy ways,
And will recompense thee for all thine abominations.
9 And mine eye shall not spare,
Neither will I have pity:
I will recompense thee according to thy ways
And thine abominations *that* are in the midst of thee;
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD that smiteth.
10 Behold the day, behold, it is come:
The morning is gone forth;
The rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded.
11 Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness:
None of them *shall remain,* nor of their multitude, nor of any of their's:
Neither *shall there be* wailing for them.
12 The time is come, the day draweth near:
Let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn:
For wrath *is* upon all the multitude thereof.
13 For the seller shall not return to that which is sold,
Although they were yet alive:
For the vision *is* touching the whole multitude thereof,
Which shall not return; [his life.
Neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of
14 They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready;
But none goeth to the battle:
For my wrath *is* upon all the multitude thereof.
15 The sword *is* without, and the pestilence and the famine within:
He that *is* in the field shall die with the sword;
And he that *is* in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

We have here fair warning given of the destruction of the land of Israel, which was now hastening on apace. God, by the prophet, not only sends notice of it, but will have it inculcated in the same expressions, to shew that the thing is certain, that it is near, that the prophet is himself affected with it, and desires they should be so too, but finds them deaf, and stupid, and unaffected. When the town is on fire men do not seek for fine words and quaint expressions in which to give an account of it, but cry about the streets with a loud and lamentable voice, Fire, fire! so the prophet here exclaims, "An end, an end; it is come, it is come; behold, it is come!" He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

First. "An end is come, the end is come," ver. 2; and again, ver. 6; and ver. 3, "Now is the end come upon thee." The end which all their wickedness had a tendency to, and which God had often told them it would come to at last, when by his prophet he asked them, "What will ye do in the end hereof?" The end which all the foregoing judgments had been working towards, as means to bring it about; (their ruin shall now be completed;) or, the end, that is, the period of their state, the final destruction of their nation; as the deluge was the end of all flesh, *Gen.* vi. 13. They had flattered themselves with hopes that they should shortly see an end of their troubles; Yea, saith God, an end is come, but a miserable one, not the expected end which is promised to the pious remnant among them, *Jer.* xxix. 11. It is the end, that end which you have been so often warned of, that last end which Moses wished you to consider, *Deu.* xxxii. 29, and which, because "Jerusalem remembered not, therefore she came down wonderfully," *Lam.* i. 9; this end was long in coming, but now it is come. Though the ruin of sinners comes slowly, it comes surely; "It is come, it watcheth for thee," ready to receive thee. This perhaps looks farther to the last destruction of that nation by the Romans, which that by the Chaldeans was an earnest of; and still farther to the final destruction of the world of the ungodly. "The end of all things is at hand," and Jerusalem's last end was a type of the end of the world, *Mat.* xxiv. 3. O that we could all see that end of time and days very near, and the end of our own time and days much nearer, that we may secure a happy lot in the end of the days, *Dan.* xii. 13. This end comes upon the four corners of the land. The ruin, as it shall be final, so it shall be total; no part of the land shall escape, no, not that which lies most remote. Such will the destruction of the world be. All these things shall be dissolved; such will the destruction of sinners be, none can avoid it. Oh, that the wickedness of the wicked might come to an end before it bring them to an end.

Secondly. "An evil, an only evil, behold, is come," ver. 5. Sin is an evil, an only evil, an evil that has no good in it; it is the worst of evils. But this is spoken of the evil of trouble; it is an evil, one evil, and that one shall suffice to effect and complete the ruin of the nation; there needs no more to do its business. This one shall make an utter end; affliction needs not rise up a second time, *Nah.* i. 9. It is an evil without precedent or parallel, an evil that stands alone; you cannot produce such another instance. It is to the impenitent an evil, an only evil; it hardens their hearts and irritates their corruptions; whereas there were those to whom it was sanctified by the grace of God, and made a means of much good: they were sent into Babylon for their good, *Jer.* xxiv. 5. The wicked have the dregs of that cup to drink, which to the righteous is full of mixtures of mercy, *Ps.* lxxv. 8; the same affliction is to us either a half evil or an only evil, according as we carry ourselves under it and make use of it. But when an end, the end, is come upon the wicked world,

then an evil, an only evil, comes upon it, and not till then. The sorest of temporal judgments have their allays, but the torments of the damned are an evil, an only evil.

Thirdly. "The time is come," the set time, for the inflicting of this only evil, and the making of this full end; for to all God's purposes there is a time, a proper time, and that prefixed, in which the purpose shall have its accomplishment. Particularly the time of reckoning with wicked people, and rendering to them according to their deserts, is fixed; the "day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" and he sees, whether we see it or no, that his day is coming. This they are here told of again and again, ver. 10. Behold the day that has lingered so long is come at last; "Behold, it is come: the time is come, the day draws near, the day of trouble is near," ver. 7, 12. Though threatened judgments may be long deferred, yet they shall not be dropped; the time for executing them will come. Though God's patience may put them off, nothing but man's sincere repentance and reformation will put them by. "The morning is come upon thee," ver. 7; and again, ver. 10, "the morning is gone forth." The day of trouble dawns, the day of destruction is already begun. The morning discovers that which was hidden; they thought their secret sins should never come to light, but now they will be brought to light. They used to try and execute malefactors in the morning; and such a morning of judgment and execution is now coming upon them, a day of trouble to sinners, "the year of their visitation." See how stupid these people were, that, though the day of their destruction was already begun, yet they were not aware of it, but must be thus told of it again and again. "The day of trouble," real trouble, is near, "and not the sounding again of the mountains;" that is, not a mere echo or report of troubles, as they were willing to think it was, nothing but a groundless surmise, as if the men that came against them were but the shadow of the mountains, as Zebul suggested to Gaal, *Jud.* ix. 36, and the intelligence they received were but an empty sound, reverberated from the mountains. No, the trouble is not a fancy, and so you will soon find.

Fourthly. All this comes from God's wrath, not allayed, as sometimes it has been with mixtures of mercy. This is the fountain from which all these calamities flow, and this is the wormwood and the gall, in the affliction and the misery, which makes it bitter indeed; ver. 3, "I will send mine anger upon thee." Observe, God is Lord of his anger; it doth not break out but when he pleaseth, nor fasten upon any but as he directs it and gives it commission. The expression riseth higher, ver. 8, "Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee" in full vials, "and accomplish mine anger," all the purposes and all the products of it upon thee. This wrath doth not single out here and there one to be made examples, but it is upon all the multitude thereof, ver. 12, 14; the whole body of the nation is become a vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction. God doth sometimes in wrath remember mercy, but now he saith, "Mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity," ver. 4; and again, ver. 9. They shall have judgment without mercy that made light of mercy when it was offered them.

Fifthly. All this is the just punishment of their sins, and it is what they have by their own folly brought upon themselves. This is much insisted on here, that they might be brought to justify God in all he had brought upon them. God never sends his anger but in wisdom and justice; and therefore it follows, "I will judge thee according to thy ways," ver. 3. I will examine what thy ways have been, compare them with the law, and then deal with thee according to the merit of them, and recompense them to thee, ver. 4. Note, In the heaviest judgments God inflicts upon sinners he doth but recompense their own ways upon them; they are beaten with their own rod. And when God comes to reckon with a sinful people, he will bring every provocation to account; "I will recompense upon thee all thine abominations," ver. 3; and now "thine iniquity shall be found to be hateful," *Ps.* xxxvi. 2; and "thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee," ver. 4; that is, thy secret wickedness shall now be brought to light, and that shall appear to have been in the midst of thee which before was not suspected, and thy sin shall now become an abomination to thyself. So the abomination of iniquity will be when it comes to be an abomination of desolation, *Mat.* xxiv. 15. Or, Thine abominations, that is, the punishments of them, shall be in the midst of thee; that is, they shall reach to thy heart: see *Jer.* iv. 18. Or, Therefore, God will not spare, nor have pity, because even then when he is recompensing their ways upon them, yet in their distress they trespass yet more; their abominations are still in the midst of them, indulged and harboured in their hearts. It is repeated again, ver 8, 9, "I will judge thee, I will recompense thee."

Two sins are particularly instanced in as provoking God to bring these judgments upon them,—pride and oppression. 1. God will humble them by his judgments, for they have magnified themselves. The rod of affliction hath blossomed, but it was pride that budded, ver. 10. What buds in sin will blossom in some judgment or other. The pride of Judah and Jerusalem appeared among all orders and degrees of men, as buds upon the tree in spring. 2. Their enemies shall deal hardly with them, for they have dealt hardly with one another; ver. 11, "Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness," that is, their injuriousness to one another is protected and patronised by the power of the magistrate. The rod of government was become a rod of wickedness, to such a degree of impudence was violence risen up: "I saw the place of judgment that wickedness was there," *Eccl.* iii. 16; *Isa.* v. 7. Whatever are the fruits of God's judgments, it is certain our sin is the root of them.

Sixthly. There is no escape from these judgments, nor fence against them; for they shall be universal, and shall bear down all before them without remedy.

1. Death in its various shapes shall ride triumphantly both in town and country, both within the city and without it, ver. 15. Men shall be safe no where, for "he that is in the field shall die by the sword;" every field shall be to them a field of battle; and "he that is in the city," though it be a holy city, yet it shall not be his protection, but "famine and pestilence shall devour him." Sin had abounded both in city and country; *Iliacos intra muros peccatur et extra*,—'Trojans and Greeks offend alike;' and therefore in both desolations are made.

2. None of those that are marked for death shall escape. There shall none of them remain,—none of those proud oppressors that did violence to their poor neighbours with the rod of wickedness; none of them shall be left, but they shall be all swept away by the desolation that is coming, ver. 11. None of their multitude, that is, of the rabble whom they set on to do mischief, and to countenance them in doing it,—to cry, Crucify, crucify, such as they were resolved to run down; "None of them shall remain, nor of any of theirs." Their families shall all be destroyed, and neither root nor branch left them. This multitude, this mob, Divine vengeance will in a particular manner fasten upon, for "wrath is upon all the multitude thereof," ver. 12, 14; and "the vision was touching the whole multitude thereof," ver. 3, the bulk of the common people. The judgments coming shall carry them away by wholesale, and they shall neither secure themselves nor their masters, whose creatures and tools they were. God's judgments, when they come with commission, cannot be overpowered by multitudes. "Though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished."

3. Those that fall shall not be lamented; ver. 11, "There shall be no wailing for them," for there shall be none left to bewail them, but such as are hastening apace after them. And the times shall be so bad that men shall rather congratulate than condole the death of their friends, as reckoning those happy that are taken away from seeing these desolations, and sharing in them, *Jer.* xvi. 4, 5.

4. They shall not be able to make any resistance. The decree is gone forth, and the vision concerning them shall not return, ver. 13. God will not recall it, and they cannot defeat it; and therefore it shall not return *re infecta*,—'without having accomplished any thing,' but shall accomplish that for which he sends it. God's word will take place, and then, 1st. Particular persons cannot make their part good against God. No man shall "strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life," that is, it will be to no purpose for sinners to set God and his judgments at defiance, as they used to do; none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. Those that strengthen themselves in their wickedness will be found not only to weaken but to ruin themselves, *Ps.* lii. 7. 2. The multitude cannot resist the torrent of these judgments, nor make head against them; ver. 14, "They have blown the trumpet" to call their soldiers together, and to animate and encourage those whom they have got together; and thus they think "to make all ready," but all in vain; none list themselves, and those that do have not courage to face the enemy. Note, If God be against us, none can be for us to do us any service.

5. They shall have no hope of the return of their prosperity, with which to support themselves in their adversity. They shall have given up all for gone, and therefore "let not the buyer rejoice" that he is increasing his estate, and is become a purchaser; neither "let the seller mourn" that he is lessening his estate, and is become a bankrupt, ver. 11. See the vanity of the things of this world, and how worthless they are, that in a time of trouble, when we have most need of them, we may, perhaps, make least account of them. They that have sold are the more easy, having the less to lose, and they that have bought have but increased their own cares and fears. Because "The fashion of this world passeth away, let those that buy be as though they possessed not," because they know not how soon they may be dispossessed, 1 *Cor.* vii. 29. It is added, ver. 12, "The seller shall not return" at the year of jubilee "to that which is sold," according to the law, though he should escape the sword and pestilence, and live till that year comes; for no inheritances shall be enjoyed here till the seventy years be accomplished, and then men shall return to their possessions, shall claim and have their own again, in the belief of which Jeremiah about this time bought his uncle's field; yet, according to the charge, the buyer did not rejoice, but complain, *Jer.* xxxii. 25.

6. God will be glorified in all. "Ye shall know that I am the Lord," ver. 4; that "I am the Lord that smiteth," ver. 9. You look at second causes, and think it is Nebuchadnezzar that smites you, but you shall be made to know he is but the staff; it is the hand of the Lord that smiteth you, and who knows the weight of his hand? Those who would not know it was the Lord that did them good shall be made to know it is the Lord that smiteth them; for, one way or other, he will be owned.

16 But they that escape of them shall escape,
And shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys,
All of them mourning, every one for his iniquity.
17 All hands shall be feeble,
And all knees shall be weak *as* water.
18 They shall also gird *themselves* with sackcloth,
And horror shall cover them;
And shame *shall be* upon all faces,
And baldness upon all their heads.
19 They shall cast their silver in the streets,
And their gold shall be removed:
Their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them
In the day of the wrath of the LORD:
They shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels:
Because it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity.
20 As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty:
But they made the images of their abominations
And of their detestable things therein:
Therefore have I set it far from them.
21 And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey,
And to the wicked of the earth for a spoil;
And they shall pollute it.
22 My face will I turn also from them,
And they shall pollute my secret *place*;
For the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.

We have attended the fate of those that are cut off, and are now to attend the flight of those that have an opportunity of outrunning the danger. Some of them shall escape, ver. 16; but what the better? as good die once as in a miserable life die a thousand deaths, and escape only like Cain to be fugitives and vagabonds, and afraid of being slain by every one they meet; so shall these here be.

First. They shall have no comfort or satisfaction in their own minds, but be in continual anguish and terror; for wherever they go they carry about with them guilty consciences, which make them a burthen to themselves.

1. They shall be always solitary, and under prevailing melancholy. They shall not be in the cities, or places of concourse, but all alone upon the mountains, not caring for society, but shy of it, as being ashamed of the low circumstances to which they are reduced.

2. They shall be always sorrowful. Those have reason to be so that are under the tokens of God's displeasure; and God can make those so that have been most jovial, and have set sorrow at defiance. They that, when time was, thought themselves as the lions of the mountains, so daring were they, now become as the doves of the valleys, so sneaking are they, and so dispirited; ready to flee when none pursues, and to tremble at the shaking of a leaf. They

are all of them mourning, not with a godly sorrow, but with the sorrow of the world, which worketh death, every one for his iniquity; that is, for those calamities which they now see their iniquity has brought upon them; not only the iniquity of the land, but their own; they shall then be brought to acknowledge what they have each of them contributed to the national guilt. Note, Sooner or later sin will have sorrow, of one kind or other; and those that will not repent of their iniquity may justly be left to pine away in it; that will not mourn for it as it is an offence to God, shall be made to mourn for it as it is a shame and ruin to themselves; to "mourn at the last when the flesh and the body are consumed, and to say, How have I hated instruction," *Pr.* v. 11.

3. They shall be deprived of all their strength of body and mind; ver. 17, "All hands shall be feeble," so that they shall not be able to fight, or defend themselves; and "all knees shall be weak as water," so that they shall be able neither to flee nor to stand their ground. They shall feel a universal colliquation; their knees shall flow as water, so that they must fall of course. Note, It is folly for the strong man to glory in his strength, for God can soon weaken it.

4. They shall be deprived of all their hopes, and shall abandon themselves to despair, ver. 18. They shall have nothing to hold up their spirits with, their aspects shall shew what are their prospects,—all dreadful; for "They shall gird themselves with sackcloth," as having no expectation ever to wear better clothing. "Horror shall cover them, and shame, and baldness," all the expressions of a desperate sorrow, *Isa.* xvii. 11. Note, Those who will not be kept from sin by fear and shame shall by fear and shame be punished for it; such is the confusion that sin will end in.

Secondly. They shall have no benefit by their wealth and riches, but shall be perfectly sick of them, ver. 19. They that were reduced to this distress were such as had had abundance of silver and gold, money, and plate, and jewels, and other valuable goods, from which they promised themselves a great deal of advantage in times of public trouble. They thought it would be their strong city, that with it they could bribe enemies, and buy friends; that it would be the ransom of their lives, and that they could never want bread as long as they had money, and that money would answer all things. But see how it proved:

1. It had been a great temptation to them in the day of their prosperity; they set their affections upon it, and put their confidence in it. By their eager pursuit of it they were drawn into sin, and by their plentiful enjoyment of it they were hardened in sin, and thus it was the stumblingblock of their iniquity, it occasioned their falling into sin, and obstructed their return to God. Note, There are many whose wealth is their snare and ruin. The gaining of the world is the losing of their souls; it makes them proud, secure, covetous, oppressive, voluptuous; and that which, if well used, might have been the servant of their piety, being abused, becomes the stumblingblock of their iniquity.

2. It was no relief to them now in the day of their adversity; for, 1st. Their gold and silver could not protect them from the judgments of God; they "shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord." They shall not serve to atone his justice, or turn away his wrath, nor to screen them from the judgments he is bringing upon them. Note, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath," *Pr.* xi. 4. They neither set them so high as that God's judgments cannot reach them, nor make them so strong as that they cannot conquer them. There is a day of wrath coming, when it will appear that men's wealth is utterly unable to deliver them, or do them any service. What the better was the rich man for his full barns, when his soul was required of him? Or that other rich man for his purple, and scarlet, and sumptuous fare, when in hell he could not procure a drop of water to cool his tongue? Money is no defence against the arrests of death, nor any alleviation to the miseries of the damned. 2nd. Their gold and silver could not give them any content under their calamities. *First.* They could not fill their bowels. When there was no bread left in the city, none to be had for love or money, their silver and gold could not satisfy their hunger, nor serve to make one meal's meat for them. Note, We could better be without mines of gold than fields of corn. The products of the earth, which may easily be gathered from the surface of it, are much greater blessings to mankind than its treasures, which are with so much difficulty and hazard digged out of its bowels. If God give us daily bread we have reason to be thankful, and no reason to complain, though silver and gold we have none. *Secondly.* Much less could they satisfy their souls, or yield them any inward comfort. Note, The wealth of this world has not that in it that will answer the desires of the soul, or be any satisfaction to it in a day of distress. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver," much less he that loseth it. 3rd. Their gold and silver shall be thrown into the streets; either by the hands of the enemy, who shall have more spoil than they care for, or can carry away. Silver shall be nothing accounted of, they shall cast that in the streets; but the gold, which is more valuable, shall be removed and brought to Babylon. Or, they themselves shall throw away their silver and gold, either because it would be an incumbrance to them, and retard their flight, or because it would expose them, and be a temptation to the enemy to cut their throats for their money; or in indignation at it, because they found that, after all the care and pains they had taken to scrape it together, and hoard it up, it would stand them in no stead, but do them a mischief rather. Note, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof," 1 *Jno.* ii. 17. The time may come when worldly men will be as weary of their wealth as now they are wedded to it, when those will fare best that have least.

Thirdly. God's temple shall stand them in no stead, ver. 20—22. This they had prided themselves in, and promised themselves security from, *Jer.* vii. 4; *Mic.* iii. 11; but this confidence of theirs shall fail them. Observe, 1. The great honour God had done to that people in setting up his sanctuary among them; ver. 20, "As for the beauty of his ornament," that holy and beautiful house where they and their fathers praised God, *Isa.* lxiv. 11, which was therefore beautiful, because holy, (it was called the beauty of holiness, and that is the beauty of his ornament; it was also adorned with gold and gifts;) as for this, he set it in majesty; every thing was contrived to make it magnificent, that it might help to make the people of Israel the more illustrious among their neighbours. "He built his sanctuary like high palaces," *Ps.* lxxviii. 69. It was a glorious high throne from the beginning, *Jer.* xvii. 12. But, 2. Here is the great dishonour they had done to God in profaning his sanctuary. They made the images of their counterfeit deities, which they set up in a rivalship with God, and which are here called their abominations and their detestable things; for so they were to God, and so they should have been to them; and these they set up in God's temple, than which a greater affront could not be put upon him. And, therefore, 3. It is here threatened that they shall be deprived of the temple, and it shall be no succour to them; "Therefore have I set it far from them," that is, sent them far from it, so that it is out of the reach of their services, and they out of the reach of its influences. Note, God's ordinances, and the privileges of a profession of religion, will justly be taken away from those that despise and profane them. Nay, they shall not only be kept at a distance from the temple, but the temple shall itself be involved in the common desolation, ver. 21. The Chaldeans that are strangers, and therefore have no veneration for it, that are the wicked of the earth, and therefore have an antipathy to it, shall have it for a prey, and for a spoil; all the ornaments and treasures of it shall fall into their hands, who will make no difference between that and other plunder. This was a grief to the saints in Zion, who complained of nothing so much as of that which "the enemies did wickedly in the sanctuary," *Ps.* lxxiv. 3. But it was the punishment of the sinners in Zion, who, by profaning the temple with strange gods, provoked God to suffer it to be profaned by strange nations, and to turn his face from them that did it, as if he had not seen them and their crimes; and from them that deprecated it, as not regarding them and their prayers. Let the soldiers do as they will,—let them enter into the secret place, into the holy of holies, as robbers,—let them strip it, let them pollute it, its defence is departed, and then farewell all its glory. Note, Those are unworthy to be honoured with the form of godliness that will not be governed by the power of godliness.

23 Make a chain:
For the land is full of bloody crimes,
And the city is full of violence.
24 Wherefore I will bring the worst of the heathen,
And they shall possess their houses:
I will also make the pomp of the strong to cease;
And their holy places shall be defiled.
25 Destruction cometh;
And they shall seek peace, and *there shall be* none.
26 Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour shall be upon rumour;
Then shall they seek a vision of the prophet;
But the law shall perish from the priest,
And counsel from the ancients.
27 The king shall mourn,
And the prince shall be clothed with desolation,
And the hands of the people of the land shall be troubled:
I will do unto them after their way,
And according to their deserts will I judge them;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Here is, First. The prisoner arraigned. "Make a chain," in which to drag the criminal to the bar, and set him before the tribunal of Divine justice: let him stand in fetters,—as a notorious malefactor,—stand pinioned to receive his doom. Note, Those that break the bands of God's law asunder, and cast away those cords from them, will find themselves bound, and held by the chains of his judgments, which they cannot break or cast from them. The chain signified the siege of Jerusalem, or the slavery of those that were carried into captivity, or that they were all bound over to the righteous judgment of God,—reserved in chains.

Secondly. The indictment drawn up against the prisoner. "The land is full of bloody crimes," full of 'the judgments of blood,' so the word is; that is, of the guilt of blood which they had shed under colour of justice, and by forms of law, with the solemnity of a judgment. The innocent blood which Manasseh shed, it is probable thus shed by the judgment of blood, was the measure-filling sin of Jerusalem, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 4; or it is full of such crimes as by the law were to be punished with death, the judgment of blood. Idolatry, blasphemy, witchcraft, sodomy, and the like, were bloody crimes, for which particular sinners were to die; and therefore, when they were become national, there was no remedy, but the nation must be cut off. Note, Bloody crimes will be punished with bloody judgments. The city, the city of David, the holy city, that should have been the pattern of righteousness, the protector of it, and the punisher of wrong, is now full of violence. The rulers of that city having greater power and reputation, are greater oppressors than any other. This was sadly to be lamented. "How is the faithful city become a harlot!"

Thirdly. Judgment given upon this indictment. God will reckon with them not only for the profaning of his sanctuary, but for the perverting of justice between man and man; for, as "holiness becomes his house," so the "righteous Lord loveth righteousness," and is the avenger of unrighteousness. Now the judgment given is,

1. That since they had walked in the way of the heathen, and done worse than they, God would "bring the worst of the heathen upon them," to destroy them and lay them waste, the most barbarous and outrageous, that have the least compassion to mankind, and the greatest antipathy to the Jews. Note, Of the heathen some are worse than other, and God sometimes picks out the worst to be a scourge to his own people, because he intends them for the fire when the work is done.

2. That since they had filled their houses with goods unjustly got, and used their pomp and power for the crushing and oppressing of the weak, God would give their houses to be possessed, and all the furniture of them to be enjoyed, by strangers, and "make the pomp of the strong to cease," so that their great men should not dazzle the eyes of the weak-sighted with their pomp, nor with their might at any time prevail against right, as they had done.

3. That since they had "defiled the holy places" with their idolatries, God would defile them with his judgments; since they had set up the images of other gods in the temple, God would remove thence the tokens of the presence of their own God. When the holy places are deserted by their God, they will soon be defiled by their enemies.

4. Since they had followed one sin with another, God would pursue them with one judgment upon another. "Destruction cometh," utter destruction, ver. 25, for there shall come mischief upon mischief to ruin you, and rumour upon rumour to frighten you, like the waves in a storm, one upon the neck of another. Note, Sinners that are marked for ruin shall be prosecuted to it, for God will overcome when he judgeth.

5. Since they had disappointed God's expectations from them, he would disappoint their expectations from him. For, 1st. They shall not have the "deliverance out of the troubles" that they expect. They shall "see peace," that is, they shall desire it and pray for it, they shall endeavour it and expect it, but "there shall be none;" their attempts both to court their enemies and to conquer them shall be in vain, and their troubles shall grow worse and worse. 2nd. They shall not have the direction in the trouble that they expect; ver. 26, "They shall seek a vision of the prophets," shall desire, for their support under their troubles, to be assured of a happy issue out of them. They did not

desire a vision to reprove them for their sin, or to warn them of danger, but to promise them deliverance,—such messages they longed to hear; but "the law shall perish from the priest," he shall have no words either of counsel or comfort to say to them. They would not hear what God had to say to them by way of conviction, and therefore he has nothing to say to them by way of encouragement. Counsel shall "perish from the ancients;" the elders of the people, that should advise them what to do in this difficult juncture, shall be infatuated, and at their wit's end. It is bad with a people when those that should be their counsellors know not how to consider within themselves, consult with one another, or counsel them.

6. Since they had animated and encouraged one another to sin, God would dispirit and dishearten them all, so that they should not be able to make head against the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. All orders and degrees of men shall lie down by consent under the load, ver. 27. The king that should inspire life into them, and the prince that should lead them on to attack the enemy, they shall mourn, and be clothed with desolation; their heads and hearts shall fail, their politics and their courage, and then no wonder if the hands of the people of the land that should fight for them be troubled, none of the men of might shall find their hands. What can men contrive or do for themselves when God is departed from them, and appears against them? All must needs be in tears, all in trouble, when God comes to "judge them according to their deserts," and so make them know, to their cost, that he is the Lord, the God to whom vengeance belongs.

CHAPTER VIII.

God, having given the prophet a clear foresight of the people's miseries that were hastening on, here gives him a clear insight into the people's wickedness, by which God was provoked to bring those miseries upon them; that he might justify God in all his judgments, might the more particularly reprove the sins of the people, and with the more satisfaction foretell their ruin. Here God in vision brings him to Jerusalem, to shew him the sins that were committed there, though God had begun to contend with them, ver. 1—4, and there he sees, I. The image of jealousy set up at the gate of the altar, ver. 5, 6. II. The elders of Israel worshipping all manner of images in a secret chamber, ver. 7—12. III. The women weeping for Tammuz, ver. 13, 14. IV. The men worshipping the sun, ver. 15, 16. And then appeals to him, whether such a provoking people should have any pity shewed them, ver. 17, 18.

AND it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, *as* I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord GOD fell there upon me. 2 Then I beheld, and lo a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire; and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. 3 And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where *was* the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. 4 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel *was* there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. 5 Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes the way toward the north, and behold northward at the gate of the altar this image of jealousy in the entry. 6 He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? *even* the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary? but turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations.

Ezekiel was now in Babylon, but the messages of wrath he had delivered in the foregoing chapters concerned Jerusalem, for in the peace or trouble thereof the captives looked upon themselves to have peace or trouble; and therefore here he has a vision of what was done at Jerusalem, and this vision is continued to the close of the eleventh chapter.

First. Here is the date of this vision. The first vision he had was in the fifth year of the captivity, in the fourth month, and the fifth day of the month, *ch.* i. 1. This was just fourteen months after. Perhaps it was after he had lain three hundred and ninety days on his left side to bear the iniquity of Israel, and before he began the forty days on his right side to bear that of Judah, for now he was sitting in his house, not lying. Note, God keeps a particular account of the messages he sends to us, because he will shortly call us to account about them.

Secondly. The opportunity is taken notice of as well as the time.

1. The prophet was himself sitting in his house, in a sedate, composed frame, deep, perhaps, in contemplation. Note, The more we retreat from the world, and retire into our own hearts, the better frame we are in for communion with God; they that sit down to consider what they have learned shall be taught more. Or, he sat in his house ready to preach to the company that resorted to him, but waiting for instructions what to say. God will communicate more knowledge to those who are communicative of what they do know.

2. The elders of Judah, that were now in captivity with him, sat before him. It is probable it was on the sabbath day, and that it was usual for them to attend on the prophet every sabbath day, both to hear the word from him and to join with him in prayer and praise; and how could they spend the sabbath better, now they had neither temple nor synagogue, priest nor altar? It was a great mercy that they had opportunity to spend it so well, as the good people in Elisha's time, 2 *Kin.* iv. 23. But some think it was on some extraordinary occasion that they attended him to inquire of the Lord, and sat down at his feet to hear his word. Observe here, 1st. When the law was perished from the priests at Jerusalem, whose lips should keep knowledge, *ch.* vii. 26, they in Babylon had a prophet to consult. God is not tied to places or persons. 2nd. Now the elders of Judah were in captivity, they paid more respect to God's prophets, and his word in their mouth, than they did when they lived in peace in their own land. When God brings men into the cords of affliction, then he opens their ear to discipline, *Job* xxxvi. 8, 10; *Ps.* cxli. 6. Those that despised vision in the valley of vision prized it now the word of the Lord was precious, and there was no open vision. 3rd. When our teachers are driven into corners, and are forced to preach in private houses, we must diligently attend them there. A minister's house should be a church for all his neighbours. St. Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome, and God owned him there, and no man forbade him.

Thirdly. The Divine influence and impression that the prophet was now under: "The hand of the Lord fell there upon me." God's hand took hold of him, and arrested him, as it were, to employ him in this vision, but at the same time supported him to bear it.

Fourthly. The vision that the prophet saw, ver. 2. He beheld a likeness, of a man we may suppose, for that was the likeness he saw before; but it was all brightness above the girdle, and all fire below, fire and flame. This agrees with the description we had before of the apparition he saw, *ch.* i. 27, and it is likely it was the same person, the man Christ Jesus. It is likely the elders that sat with him, as the men that journeyed with Paul, saw a light and were afraid, and this happy sight they gained by attending the prophet in a private meeting; but they had no distinct view of him that spake to him, *Acts* xxii. 9.

Fifthly. The prophet's remove in vision to Jerusalem. The apparition he saw "put forth the form of a hand," which took him by a lock of his head; and the Spirit was that hand which was put forth, for the Spirit of God is called the finger of God. Or, the Spirit within him lifted him up, so that he was borne up and carried on by an internal principle, not an external violence. A faithful, ready servant of God will be drawn by a hair, by the least intimation of the Divine will, to his duty, for he has that within him which inclines him to a compliance with it, *Ps.* xxvii. 8. He was miraculously lifted up between heaven and earth, as if he were to fly away upon eagles' wings. This, it is probable, so Grotius thinks, the elders that sat with him saw; they were witnesses of the hand taking him by the lock of hair and lifting him up, and then, perhaps, laying him down again in a trance or extacy, while he had the following visions; whether in the body or out of the body, we may suppose he could not tell, no more than Paul in a like case; much less can we. Note, Those are best prepared for communion with God, and the communications of Divine light, that by Divine grace are raised up above the earth and the things of it, to be out of their attractive force.

But, being lifted up towards heaven, he was carried in vision to Jerusalem, and to God's sanctuary there; for those that would go to heaven must take that in their way. The Spirit represented to his mind the city and temple as plainly as if he had been there in person. O that by faith we could thus enter into the Jerusalem, the holy city above, and see the things that are invisible!

Sixthly. The discoveries that were made to him there.

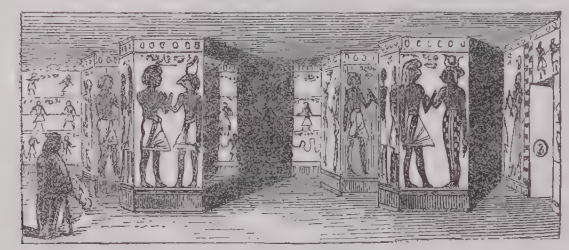
1. There he saw the glory of God; ver. 4, "Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there," the same appearance of the living creatures, and the wheels, and the throne he had seen *ch.* i. Note, God's servants, wherever they are and whithersoever they go, ought to carry about with them a believing regard to the glory of God, and to set that always before them; and those that have seen "God's power and glory in the sanctuary" should desire to see it again as they have seen it, *Ps.* lxiii. 2. Ezekiel has this repeated vision of the glory of God, both to give credit to and to put honour upon the following discoveries. But it seems to have a farther intention here; it was to aggravate this sin of Israel in changing their own God, the God of Israel, who is a God of so much glory as here he appears to be, for dunghill gods, scandalous gods, false gods, and indeed no gods. Note, The more glorious we see God to be, the more odious we shall see sin to be, especially idolatry, which turns his truth into a lie, his glory into shame. It was also to aggravate their approaching misery, when this glory of the Lord shall remove from them, *ch.* xi. 23, and leave the house and city desolate.

2. There he saw the reproach of Israel, and that was the image of jealousy, set northward, at the gate of the altar, ver. 3, 5. What image this was is uncertain; probably, an image of Baal, or of the grove, which Manasseh made and set in the temple, 2 *Kin.* xxi. 7; 2 *Chr.* xxxiii. 3; which Josiah removed, but his successors it seems replaced there, as probably they did the chariots of the sun, which he found "at the entering in of the house of the Lord," 2 *Kin.* xxxiii. 11, and this is here said to be in the entry. But the prophet, instead of telling us what image it was, which might gratify our curiosity, tells us it was "the image of jealousy," to convince our consciences that, whatever image it was, it was in the highest degree offensive to God, and provoked him to jealousy. He resented it as a husband would resent the whoredoms of his wife, and would certainly revenge it, for "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth," *Na.* i. 2. The very setting up of this image in the house of the Lord was enough to provoke him to jealousy, for it is in the matters of his worship that we are particularly told, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." They that placed this image at "the door of the inner gate," where the people assembled, called the "gate of the altar," ver. 5, thereby plainly intended, 1st. To affront God, to provoke him to his face, by advancing an idol to be a rival with him for the adorations of his people, in contempt of his law, and in defiance of his justice. 2nd. To debauch the people, and pick them up as they were entering into the courts of the Lord's house to bring their offerings to him, and to tempt them to offer them to this image. Like the adulteress Solomon describes, that "sitteth at the door of her house, to call passengers who go right on their ways, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither," *Pr.* ix. 14—16. With good reason therefore is this called the "image of jealousy."

We may well imagine what a surprise and what a grief it was to Ezekiel to see this image in the house of God, when he was in hopes that the judgments they were under had by this time wrought some reformation among them; but there is more wickedness in the world, in the church, than good men think there is. And now, 1st. God appeals to him whether this was not bad enough, and a sufficient ground for God to go upon in casting off this people, and abandoning them to ruin? Could he, or any one else, expect any other, but "that

God should go far from his sanctuary," when there were such abominations committed there, in that very place; nay, was he not perfectly driven thence? They did these things designedly, and on purpose that he should leave his sanctuary, and "so shall their doom be." They have hereby, in effect, like the Gadarenes, desired him "to depart out of their coasts," and therefore he will depart; he will no more dignify and protect his sanctuary as he has done, but will give it up to reproach and ruin. But, 2nd. Though this is bad enough, and serves abundantly to justify God in all that he brings upon them, yet the matter will appear to be much worse. "But turn thee yet again," and thou wilt be amazed to "see greater abominations" than these. Where there is one abomination, it will be found there are many more. Sins do not go alone.

7 And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. 8 Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. 9 And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. 10 So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about. 11 And there stood before them



IDOLS PAINTED ON THE WALL.

seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. 12 Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth.

We have here a farther discovery of the abominations that were committed at Jerusalem, and within the confines of the temple too. Now observe,

First. How this discovery is made. God in vision brought him to "the door of the court," the outer court, along the sides of which the priests' lodgings were. God could have introduced him at first into "the chambers of imagery," but he brings him to them by degrees, partly to employ his own industry in searching out these mysteries of iniquity, and partly to make him sensible with what care and caution those idolaters concealed their idolatries. Before the priests' apartments they had run up a wall to make them the more private, that they might not lie open to the observation of those who passed by, a shrewd sign they did something that they had reason to be ashamed of. "He that doth evil hates the light." They were not willing that those who saw them in God's house should see them in their own, lest they should see them contradict themselves, and undo in private what they did in public. But behold "a hole in the wall," ver. 7, a spy-hole, by which you might see that which would give cause to suspect them. When hypocrites screen themselves behind the wall of an external profession, and with it think to conceal their wickedness from the eye of the world, and carry on their designs the more successfully, it is hard for them to manage it with so much art, but that there is some hole or other left in the wall, something that betrays them to those who look diligently not to be what they pretend to be. The ass's ears, in the fable, appeared from under the lion's skin. This hole in the wall Ezekiel made wider, and "Behold, a door," ver. 8. This door he goes in by into the treasury, or some of the apartments of the priests, and sees "the wicked abominations that they do there," ver. 9. Note, Those that would discover the mystery of iniquity in others, or in themselves, must accomplish a diligent search; for Satan hath his wiles, and depths, and devices, which we should not be ignorant of, and "the heart is deceitful above all things;" in the examining of it therefore we are concerned to be very strict.

Secondly. What the discovery is. It is a very melancholy one.

1. He sees a chamber set round with idolatrous pictures; ver. 10, "All the idols of the house of Israel," which they had borrowed from the neighbour nations, were "pourtrayed upon the wall round about," even the vilest of them; the forms of creeping things which they worshipped, and beasts, even abominable ones, that are poisonous and venomous; at least they were abominable when they were worshipped. This was a sort of a pantheon, a collection of all the idols together, which they paid their devotions to. Though the second commandment, in the letter of it, forbids only graven images, yet painted ones are as bad, and as dangerous.

2. He sees this chamber filled with idolatrous worshippers, ver. 14. There were seventy men of the elders of Israel offering incense to these painted idols. Here was a great number of idolaters, strengthening one another's hands in this wickedness; though it was in a private chamber, and the meeting industriously concealed, yet here were seventy men engaged in it. I doubt these elders were many more than those in Babylon, that sat before the prophet in his house, ver. 1. They were seventy men, the number of the great Sanhedrim, or chief council of the nation, and, we have reason to fear, the same men; for they were the ancients of the house of Israel, not only in age, but in office, who were bound by the duty of their place to restrain and punish idolatry, and to destroy and abolish all superstitious images wherever they found them. Yet these were they that did themselves worship them in private; so undermining that religion which in public they professed to own and promote, only because by it they held their preferments. They had "every man his censer in his hand;" so fond were they of the idolatrous service, that they would all be their own priests. And very prodigal they were of their perfumes in honour of these images, for "a thick cloud of incense went up," that filled the room. O that the zeal of these idolaters might shame the worshippers of the true God out of their indifferency to his service! The prophet took particular notice of one that he knew, who stood in the midst of these idolaters, as chief among them: being, perhaps, president of the great council at this time, or most forward in this wickedness. No wonder the people were corrupt, when the elders were so. The sins of leaders are leading sins.

Thirdly. What the remark is that is made upon it; ver. 12, "Son of man, hast thou seen this?" Couldst thou have imagined that there was such wickedness committed? It is here observed concerning it, 1. That it was done in the dark, for sinful works are works of darkness. They concealed it, lest they should lose their places, or at least their credit. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the world, which the day will declare; the "day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." 2. That this one idolatrous chapel was but a specimen of many the like. Here they met together to worship their images in concert, but it should seem they had every man the chamber of his imagery besides, a room in his own house for this purpose, in which every man gratified his own fancy with such pictures as he liked best. Idolaters had their household gods, and their family worship of them in private; which is a shame to those who call themselves Christians, and yet have no church in their house, no worship of God in their family. Had they chambers of imagery, and shall not we have chambers of devotion? 3. That atheism was at the bottom of their idolatry. They worship images in the dark, the images of the gods of other nations; and they say, Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom we should serve, "seeth us not, Jehovah hath forsaken the earth," and we may worship what god we will, he regards us not. 1st. They think themselves out of God's sight; "They say, The Lord seeth us not." They imagined, because the matter was carried on so closely, that men could not discover it, nor did any of their neighbours suspect them to be idolaters, that therefore it was hid from the eye of God; as if there were any "darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of our treacherous departure from him. But the church argues right as to this very sin of idolatry; *Ps.* xliv. 20, "If we have forgotten the name of our God, and stretched forth our hand to a strange god, shall not God search this out?" No doubt he shall. 2nd. They think themselves out of God's care. "The Lord hath forsaken the earth," and looks not after the affairs of it, and then we had as good worship any other god as him. Or, he hath forsaken our land, and left it to be a prey to its enemies: and therefore it is time for us to look out for some other god, to whom to commit the protection of it; our one God cannot or will not deliver us, and therefore let us have many. This was a blasphemous reflection upon God, as if he had forsaken them first, else they would not have forsaken him. Note, Those are ripe indeed for ruin, who are arrived to such a pitch of impudence as to lay the blame of their sins upon God himself.

13 He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. 14 Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORD's house which *was* toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. 15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? turn thee yet again, *and* thou shalt see greater abominations than these. 16 And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. 17 Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. 18 Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall

TAMMUZ [PHENICIAN ADONIS].

not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, *yet* will I not hear them.

Here we have,

First. More and greater abominations discovered to the prophet. He thought what he had seen was bad enough, and yet, ver. 13, "Turn thee again, and thou shalt see greater abominations," and greater still, ver. 15, as before, ver. 6. There are those who live in retirement, that do not think what wickedness there is in this world; and the more we converse with it, and the farther we go abroad into it, the more corrupt we see it. When we have seen that which is bad, we may have our wonder at it made to cease, by the discovery of that which upon some account or other is a great deal worse. We shall find it so in examining our own hearts, and searching into them; there is a world of iniquity in them, a great abundance, and variety of abominations; and when we have found out much amiss, still we shall find more; for the heart is desperately wicked, who can know it perfectly? Now the abominations here discovered were,

1. "Women weeping for Tammuz," ver. 14. An abominable thing indeed, that any should choose rather to serve an idol in tears than to serve the true God "with joyfulness and gladness of heart;" yet such absurdities as these are they guilty of who "follow after lying vanities," and "forsake their own mercies." Some think it was for Adonis, an idol among the Greeks; others for Osiris, an idol of the Egyptians, that they shed these tears. The image, they say, was made to weep, and then the worshippers wept with it. They bewailed the death of this Tammuz, and anon rejoiced in its returning to life again. These mourning women sat at the door of the gate of the Lord's house, and there shed their idolatrous tears, as it were in defiance of God, and the sacred rites of his worship; and some think, with their idolatry, prostrating themselves also to corporeal whoredom; for these two commonly went together, and they that dishonoured the Divine nature by the one were justly "given up to vile affections," and a reprobate sense, to dishonour the human nature, which nowhere ever sunk so far below itself as in these idolatrous rites.

2. Men worshipping the sun," ver. 16. And this was so much the greater an abomination, that it was practised "in the inner court of the Lord's house, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar;" there, where the most sacred rites of their holy religion used to be performed, was this abominable wickedness committed. Justly might God in jealousy say to those who thus affronted him at his own door, as the king to Haman, "Will he force the queen also before me in the house?" Here were about twenty-five men giving that honour to the sun which is due to God only. Some think they were the king and his princes. It should rather seem that they were priests, for this was the court of the priests, and the proper place to find them in. They that were intrusted with the true religion had it committed to their care, and were charged with the custody of it, they were the men that betrayed it. 1st. They "turned their backs towards the temple of the Lord," resolvedly forgetting it, and designedly slighting it, and putting contempt upon it. Note, When men turn their backs upon God's institutions, and despise them, it is no marvel if they wander endlessly after their own inventions. Impiety is the beginning of idolatry and all iniquity. 2nd. They turned "their faces towards the east, and worshipped the sun," the rising sun. This was an ancient instance of idolatry. It is mentioned in Job's time, *Job* xxxi. 26, and had been generally practised among the nations, some worshipping the sun under one name, and others under another. These priests finding it had antiquity, and general consent and usage on its side, (the two pleas which the papists use at this day, in defence of their superstitious rites, and particularly this of worshipping towards the east,) practised it in the court of the temple, thinking it an omission that it was not inserted in their ritual. See the folly of idolaters, in worshipping that as a god, and calling it Baal, 'a lord,' which God made to be a servant to the universe, (for so the sun is, and so his name Shemesh signifies, *Deu.* iv. 19;) and in adoring the borrowed light, and despising the Father of lights.

Secondly. The inference drawn from these discoveries; ver. 17, "Hast thou seen this, O son of man?" And couldst thou have thought ever to see such things done in the temple of the Lord? Now,

1. He appeals to the prophet himself concerning the heinousness of the crime. Can he think it is a "light thing to the house of Judah," who know and profess better things, and are dignified with so many privileges above other nations? Is it an excusable thing in them that have God's oracles and ordinances, "that they commit the abominations which they commit here?" Do not they deserve to suffer that thus sin? Should not such abominations as these make desolate? *Dan.* ix. 27.

2. He aggravates it from the fraud and oppression that were to be found in all parts of the nation; "They have filled the land with violence." It is not strange if they that wrong God thus make no conscience of wronging one another, and with all that is sacred trample likewise upon all that is just. And their wickedness in their conversations made even the worship they paid to their own God an abomination, *Isa.* i. 11, &c.: "They fill the land with violence," and then they return to the temple "to provoke me to anger" there; for even their sacrifices, instead of making an atonement, do but add to their guilt. They "return to provoke me;" that is, they repeat the provocation; do it, and do it again. And "lo, they put the branch to their nose," a proverbial expression, noting perhaps their scoffing at God, and having him in derision; they snuffed at his service, as men do when they put a branch to their nose. Or, it was some custom used by idolaters in honour of the idols they served. We read of garlands used in their idolatrous worship, *Acts* xiv. 13, out of which every zealot took a branch, which they smelled to as a nosegay. Dr. Lightfoot, *Hor. Heb.* in *Jno.* xv. 6, gives another sense of this place: 'They put the branch to their wrath,' or to 'his wrath,' as the Masorites read it; that is, they are still bringing more fuel (such as the withered branches of the vine) to the fire of Divine wrath, which they have already kindled, as if that wrath did not burn hot enough already. Or, 'putting the branch to the nose,' may signify the giving of a very great affront and provocation either to God or man; they are an abusive generation of men.

3. He passeth sentence upon them, that they shall be utterly cut off. Therefore, because they are thus furiously bent upon sin, I will also deal in fury with them, ver. 18. They filled the land with their violence, and God will fill it with the violence of their enemies; and he will not lend a favourable ear to the suggestions either, 1st. Of his own pity; "Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity." Repentance shall be hid from his eyes. Or, 2nd. Of their prayers; "Though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them," for still their sins cry louder for vengeance than their prayers cry for mercy. God will now be as deaf to their prayers as their own idols were, on whom they cried aloud, but in vain, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 26. Time was when God was ready to have heard, even "before they cried," and to "answer while they were yet speaking;" but now "they shall seek me early, and not find me," *Pr.* i. 28. It is not the loud voice, but the upright heart, that God will regard.

CHAPTER IX.

The prophet had, in vision, seen the wickedness that was committed at Jerusalem, in the foregoing chapter, and we may be sure it was not represented to him worse than really it was. Now here follows, of course, a representation of their ruin approaching; for when sin goes before judgments come next. Here is, I. Preparation made of instruments that were to be employed in the destruction of the city, ver. 1, 2. II. The removal of the Shechinah from the cherubim to the threshold of the temple, ver. 3. III. Orders given to one of the persons employed, who is distinguished from the rest, for the marking of a remnant to be preserved from the common destruction, ver. 3, 4. IV. The warrant signed for the execution of those that were not marked, and the execution begun accordingly, ver. 5—7. V. The prophet's intercession for the mitigation of the sentence, and the denial of any mitigation, the decree being now gone forth, ver. 8—10. VI. The report made by him that was to mark the pious remnant of what he had done in that matter, ver. 11. And this shews an usual method of providence in the government of the world.

HE cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man *with* his destroying weapon in his hand. 2 And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them *was* clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar. 3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which *had* the writer's inkhorn by his side; 4 And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

In these verses we have,

First. The summons given to Jerusalem's destroyers to come forth and give their attendance. He that appeared to the prophet, *ch.* viii. 2, that had brought him to Jerusalem, and had shewed the wickedness that was done there, "he cried, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near," ver. 1. Or, as it might better be read, and nearer the original, 'They that have charge over the city are drawing near.' He had said, *ch.* viii. 18, I will deal in fury; now, saith he to the prophet, thou shalt see who are to be employed as the instruments of my wrath. *Appropinquaverunt visitationes civitatis*,—'The visitations,' or 'visitors, of the city are at hand.' They would not know the day of their visitation in mercy, and now they are to be visited in wrath. Observe,

1. How the notice of this is given to the prophet. "He cried it in mine ear with a loud voice," which intimates the vehemency of him that spoke. When men are highly provoked, and threaten in anger, they speak loud. They that regard not the counsels God gives them in a still small voice shall be made to hear the threatenings, to hear and tremble. It notes also the prophet's unwillingness to be told this; he was deaf on that ear, but there is no remedy, their sin will not admit an excuse, and therefore their judgment will not admit a delay. "He cried in mine ears with a loud voice," he made me hear it, and I heard it with a sad heart.

2. What this notice is. There are those that "have charge over the city" to destroy it; not the Chaldean armies,—they are to be indeed employed in this work, but they are not the visitors, they are only the servants, or tools rather. God's angels have received a charge now to lay that city waste which they had long had a charge to protect and watch over. They are at hand as destroying angels, as ministers of wrath; for "every man hath his destroying weapon in his hand," as the angel that kept the way of the tree of life with a flaming sword. Note, Those that have by sin made God their enemy have made the good angels their enemies too. These visitors are called, and caused to draw near. Note, God has ministers of wrath always within call, always at command; invisible powers, by whom he accomplisheth his purposes. The prophet is made to see this in vision, that he might with the greater assurance in his preaching denounce these judgments. God told it him with a loud voice, "taught it him with a strong hand," *Isa.* viii. 11, that it might make the deeper impression upon him, and that he might thus proclaim it in the people's ears.

Secondly. Their appearance upon these summons is recorded. Presently "six men came," ver. 2, one for each of the principal gates of Jerusalem. Two destroying angels were sent against Sodom, but six against Jerusalem; for Jerusalem's doom in the judgment will be thrice as heavy as that of Sodom. There is an angel watching at every gate to destroy, to bring in judgments from every quarter, and to take heed that none escape. One angel served to destroy the firstborn of Egypt, and the camp of the Assyrians; but here are six. In the *Revelation* we find seven that were to pour out the vials of God's wrath, *Rev.* xv. 6. They came with every one a slaughter weapon in his hand, prepared for the work to which they were called. The nations of which the king of Babylon's army was composed, which some reckon to be six, and the commanders of his army, of whom six are named as principal, *Jer.* xxxix. 3, may be called the slaughter weapons in the hands of the angels. The angels are thoroughly furnished for every service. Observe,

1. From whence they came. "From the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north," ver. 2, either because the Chaldeans came from the north; (*Jer.* i. 14, "Out of the north an evil shall break forth,") or because the image of jealousy was set up "at the door of the inner gate that looks towards the north," *ch.* viii. 3, 5. At that gate of the temple the destroying angels entered, to shew what it was that opened the door to them. Note, That way that sin lies judgments may be expected to come.

2. Observe where they placed themselves. "They went in and stood beside the brazen altar," on which sacrifices were wont to be offered, and atonement

made. When they acted as destroyers, they acted as sacrificers, not from any personal revenge or ill-will, but with a pure and sincere regard to the glory of God; for to his justice all they slew were offered up as victims. They "stood by the altar," as it were to protect and vindicate that, and plead its righteous cause, and avenge the horrid profanation of it. At the altar they were to receive their commission to destroy, to intimate that the iniquity of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was "not to be purged by sacrifice."

Thirdly. The notice taken of one among the destroying angels, distinguished in his habit from the rest, from whom some favour might be expected. It should seem he was not one of the six, but "among them," to see that mercy be mixed with judgment, ver. 2. This man was "clothed with linen," as the priests were, and he had a writer's inkhorn hanging at his side, as anciently attorneys and lawyers' clerks had, which he was to make use of, as the other six were to make use of their destroying weapons. Here the honours of the pen exceeded those of the sword; they were angels that bore the sword, but he was the Lord of angels that made use of the writer's inkhorn; for it is generally agreed among the best interpreters that this man represented Christ as Mediator, saving those that are his from the flaming sword of Divine justice. He is our high priest clothed with holiness; for that was signified by the fine linen, *Rev.* xix. 8. As prophet he wears the writer's inkhorn; the Book of Life is the Lamb's book. The great things of the law and Gospel which God has written to us are of his writing; for it is the Spirit of Christ in the writers of the Scripture that testifies to us, and the Bible is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Note, It is matter of great comfort to all good Christians, that in the midst of the destroyers and the destructions that are abroad there is a Mediator, a great High Priest, who has an interest in heaven and whom saints on earth have an interest in.

Fourthly. The removal of the appearance of the Divine glory from over the cherubim. Some think this was that usual display of the Divine glory which was between the cherubim over the mercy-seat, in the most holy place, that took leave of them now, and never returned; for it is supposed it was not in the second temple. Others think it was that display of the Divine glory which the prophet now saw over the cherub in vision; and this is more probable, because this is called the glory of the God of Israel, *ch.* viii. 4; and this is it which he had now his eye upon. This was gone to the threshold of the house, as it were to call to the servants that attended without the door to send them on their errand and give them their instructions. And the removal of this as well as the former might be significant of God's departure from them, and leaving them their house desolate. And when God goes all good goes; but he goes from none till they first drive him from them. He went at first no farther than the threshold, that he might shew how loath he was to depart, and might give them both time and encouragement to invite his return to them, and his stay with them. Note, God's departures from a people are gradual; but gracious souls are soon aware of the first step he takes towards a remove. Ezekiel presently observed that "the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub;" and what is a vision of angels if God be gone?

Fifthly. The charge given to the man clothed in linen to secure the pious remnant from the general desolation. We do not read that this Saviour was summoned and sent for, as the destroyers were; for he is always ready, appearing in the presence of God for us; and to him, as the most proper person, the care of those that are marked for salvation is committed, ver. 4. Now observe,

1. The distinguishing character of this remnant that is to be saved. "They are such as sigh and cry;" sigh in themselves as men in pain and distress, cry to God in prayer, as men in earnest, "because of all the abominations that are committed in Jerusalem." It was not only the idolatries they were guilty of, but all their other enormities that were abominations to God. These pious few had witnessed against those abominations, and had done what they could in their places to suppress them; but, finding all their attempts for the reformation of manners fruitless, they sat down and sighed and cried, wept in secret, and complained to God because of the dishonour done to his name by their wickedness, and the ruin it was bringing upon their church and nation. Note, It is not enough that we do not delight in the sins of others, and that we have not fellowship with them, but we must mourn for them, and lay them to heart; must grieve for that which we cannot help, as those that hate sin for its own sake, and have a tender concern for the souls of others; as David, *Ps.* cxix. 136, and Lot, who vexed his righteous soul with the wicked conversation of his neighbours. The abominations committed in Jerusalem are to be in a special manner lamented, because they are in a particular manner offensive to God.

2. The distinguishing care taken of them. Orders are given to find them all out that are of such a pious, public spirit; "Go through the midst of the city" in quest of them; and, though they are never so much dispersed, and never so closely hid from the fury of their persecutors, yet see that you discover them, and "set a mark upon their foreheads." 1st. To signify that God owns them for his, and he will confess them another day. A work of grace in the soul is to God "a mark upon the forehead," which he will acknowledge as his mark, and by which he knows them that are his. 2nd. To give to them who are thus marked an assurance of God's favour, that they may know it themselves; and the comfort of knowing it will be the most powerful support and cordial in calamitous times. What need we perplex ourselves about this temporal life, if we know by the mark that we have eternal life? 3rd. To be a direction to the destroyers whom to pass by; as the blood upon the door-posts was an indication that that was an Israelite's house, and the firstborn there must not be slain. Note, Those who keep themselves pure in times of common iniquity, God will keep them safe in times of common calamity. They that distinguish themselves shall be distinguished; that cry for other men's sins shall not need to cry for their own afflictions; for they shall be either delivered from them or comforted under them. God will set a mark upon his mourners; will book their sighs, and bottle their tears. The "sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads," *Rev.* vii. 3, was the same token of the care God has of his own people with this here; only this was to secure them from being destroyed, that from being seduced, which is equivalent.

5 And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 6 Slay utterly old *and* young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom *is* the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which *were* before the house. 7 And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city. 8 And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem? 9 Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah *is* exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not. 10 And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, *but* I will recompense their way upon their head. 11 And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which *had* the inkhorn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

In these verses we have,

First. A command given to the destroyers to do execution according to their commission. They "stood by the brazen altar" waiting for orders, and orders are here given them to cut off and destroy all that were either guilty of, or accessary to, the abominations of Jerusalem, and that did not sigh and cry for them. Note, When God has gathered his wheat into his garner, nothing remains but to burn up the chaff, *Mat.* iii. 12.

1. They are ordered to destroy all, 1st. Without exception. They must "go through the city and smite;" they must slay utterly, slay to destruction, give them their death's wound, they must make no distinction of age or sex, but cut off old and young; neither the beauty of the virgins nor the innocency of the babes shall secure them. This was fulfilled in the death of multitudes by famine and pestilence, especially by the sword of the Chaldeans, as far as the military execution went. Sometimes even such bloody work as this has been God's work. But what an evil thing is sin then, which provokes the God of infinite mercy to such severity! 2nd. Without compassion. "Let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity," ver. 5; you must not save any whom God has doomed to destruction, as Saul did Agag and the Amalekites; that is doing the work of God deceitfully, *Jer.* xlviii. 10. None needs to be more merciful than God is, and he had said, *ch.* viii. 18, "Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity." Note, Those that live in sin, and hate to be reformed, will perish in sin, and deserve not to be pitied; for they might easily have prevented the ruin, and would not.

2. They are warned not to do the least hurt to them that were marked for salvation. "Come not near any man upon whom is the mark;" do not so much as threaten or frighten any of them. It is promised them that there shall no evil come nigh them, and therefore you must keep at a distance from them. The king of Babylon gave particular orders that Jeremiah should be protected; Baruch and Ebed-melech were secured, and it is likely others of Jeremiah's friends for his sake. God had promised that it should "go well with his remnant," and they should be well treated, *Jer.* xv. 11. And we have reason to think none of the mourning, praying remnant fell by the sword of the Chaldeans, but God found out some way or other to secure them all; as in the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Christians were all secured in a city called Pella, and none of them perished with the unbelieving Jews. Note, None of those shall be lost whom God has marked for life and salvation, for the foundation of God stands sure.

3. They are directed to "begin at the sanctuary," ver. 6; that sanctuary which in the chapter before he had seen the horrid profanation of. They must begin there, because there the wickedness began which provoked God to send these judgments. The debaucheries of the priests were the poisoning of the springs, to which all the corruption of the streams was owing. The wickedness of the sanctuary was of all other most offensive to God, and therefore there the slaughter must begin. Begin there, to try if the people will take warning by the judgments of God upon their priests, and will repent and reform. Begin there, that all the world may see and know that the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, and hates sin most in those that are nearest to him. Note, When judgments are abroad they commonly begin at the house of God, 1 *Pet.* ii. 17. "You only have I known, and therefore I will punish you." *Am.* iii. 2. God's temple is a sanctuary, a refuge and protection for penitent sinners; but not for any that "go on still in their trespasses;" neither the sacredness of the place nor the eminency of their place in it will be their security.

It should seem the destroyers made some difficulty of putting men to death in the temple; but God bids them not boggle at that, but, ver. 7, "Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain." They will not be "taken from the altar," as was appointed by the law, *Ex.* xxi. 14, but think to secure themselves by keeping hold of the horns of it, like Joab; and therefore, like him, let them die there, 1 *Kin.* ii. 30, 31. There the blood of one of God's prophets had been shed, *Mat.* xxiii. 35, and therefore there let their blood be shed. Note, If the servants of God's house defile it with their idolatries, God will justly suffer the enemies of it to defile it with their violences, *Ps.* lxxix. 1. But these acts of necessary justice were really, whatever they were ceremonially, rather a purification than a pollution of the sanctuary; it was putting away evil from among them.

4. They are appointed to go forth into the city, ver. 6, 7. Note, Wherever sin has gone before, judgment will follow after; and though judgment begins at the house of God, yet it shall not end there. The holy city shall be no more a protection to the wicked people than the holy house was to the wicked priests.

Secondly. Here is execution done accordingly. They observed their orders, and, 1. They began at the elders, "the ancient men that were before the house," and slew them first; either those seventy ancients that worshipped idols in their chambers, *ch.* viii. 12, or those twenty-five that worshipped the sun "between the porch and the altar," who might more properly be said to be before the house. Note, Ringleaders in sin may expect to be first met with by the judgments of God; and the sins of those who are in the most eminent and public stations call for the most exemplary punishments. 2. They pro-

ceeded to the common people; they "went forth and slew in the city," for when the decree is gone forth there shall be no delay. If God begin, he will make an end.

Thirdly. Here is the prophet's intercession for a mitigation of the judgment, and a reprieve for some; ver. 8, "While they were slaying them, and I was left, I fell upon my face." Observe here,

1. How sensible the prophet was of God's mercy to him, in that he was spared when so many round about him were cut off. Thousands fell on his right hand and on his left, and yet the destruction did not "come nigh him, only with his eyes did he behold the just reward of the wicked," *Ps.* xci. 7, 8. He speaks as one that narrowly escaped the destruction, attributing it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our "lives given us for a prey," for we might justly have perished with them that perish.

2. Observe how he improved this mercy. He looked upon it that therefore he was left that he might stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God. Note, We must look upon it that for this reason we are spared, that we may do good in our places, may do good by our prayers. Ezekiel did not triumph in the slaughter made, but "his flesh trembled for fear of God," as David's, *Ps.* cxix. 120, "He fell on his face and cried," not in fear for himself, he was one of them that were marked, but in compassion to his fellow-creatures. They that sigh and cry for the sins of sinners cannot but sigh and cry for their miseries too; yet the day is coming when all this concern will be entirely swallowed up in a full satisfaction in this, that God is glorified; and they that now fall on their faces, and cry, "Ah, Lord God," will lift up their heads and sing Hallelujah, *Rev.* xix. 1, 3. The prophet humbly expostulates with God, "Wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel," and shall there be none left but the few that are marked? Shall the Israel of God be destroyed, utterly destroyed? When there are but a few left shall those few be cut off who might have been the seed of another generation? And will the God of Israel be himself their destroyer? Wilt thou now destroy Israel, who wast wont to protect and deliver Israel? Wilt thou so "pour out thy fury upon Jerusalem," as by the total destruction of the city to ruin the whole country too? surely thou wilt not. Note, Though we acknowledge that God is righteous, yet we have leave to "plead with him concerning his judgments," *Jer.* xii. 1.

Fourthly. Here is God's denial of the prophet's request for a mitigation of the judgment, and his justification of himself in that denial, ver. 9, 10.

1. Nothing could be said in extenuation of this sin. God was as willing to shew mercy as the prophet could desire; he always is so, but here the case will not admit it. It is such as that mercy cannot be granted without wrong to justice; and it is not fit that one attribute of God should be glorified at the expense of another. Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that he should destroy, especially that he should destroy Israel? By no means; but the truth is, their crimes are so flagrant that the reprieve of the sinners would be a connivance at the sin. "The iniquity of the house of Judah and Israel is exceeding great," there is no suffering them to go on at this rate; "the land is filled with" innocent "blood," and when the city courts are appealed to for the defence of injured innocency, the remedy is as bad as the disease, for the city is full of perverseness, or wresting of judgment; and that which they support themselves with in this iniquity is the same atheistical, profane principle with which they flattered themselves in their idolatry; *ch.* viii. 12, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth," and left it to us to do what we will in it; he will not intermeddle in the affairs of it, and whatever wrong we do he sees not, either knows it not or will not take cognizance of it. Now, how can these expect benefit by the mercy of God, who thus bid defiance to his justice? No, nothing can be offered by an advocate in excuse for the crimes while the criminal puts in such a plea as this in his own vindication; and therefore,

2. Nothing can be done to mitigate the sentence, ver. 10. Whatever thou thinkest of it, as for me, "mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity." I have borne with them as long as it was fit such impudent sinners should be borne with, and therefore now "I will recompense their way on their head." Note, Sinners sink and perish under the weight of their own sins. It is their own way, which they deliberately chose rather than the way of God, and which they obstinately persisted in, in contempt of the word of God, that is recompensed on them. And great iniquities justify God in great severities; nay, he is ready to justify himself as he doth here to the prophet, for he will be clear when he judgeth.

Fifthly. Here is a return made of the writ of protection, which was issued out for the securing of them that mourned in Zion; ver. 11, "The man clothed with linen reported the matter," gave an account of what he had done in pursuance of his commission. He had found out all that mourned in secret for the sins of the land, and cried out against them by a public testimony, and had marked them all in the forehead: Lord, "I have done as thou hast commanded me." We do not find that those who were commissioned to destroy reported what destruction they had made; but he who was appointed to protect reported his matter, for it would be more pleasing both to God and to the prophet to hear of those that were saved than of those that perished. Or, this report was made now because the thing was finished, whereas the destroying work would be a work of time, and when it was brought to an end then the report should be made. See how faithful Christ is to the trust reposed in him. Is he commanded to secure eternal life to the chosen remnant? He has done as was commanded him: "Of all that thou hast given me I have lost none."

CHAPTER X.

The prophet had observed to us, *ch.* viii. 5, that when he was in vision at Jerusalem he saw the same appearance of the glory of God there that he had seen by the river Chebar. Now in this chapter he gives us some account of the appearance there, as far as was requisite for the clearing up of two farther indications of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, which God here gave the prophet. I. The scattering of the coals of fire upon the city, which were taken from between the cherubims, ver. 1—7. II. The removal of the glory of God from the temple, and its being upon the wing to be gone, ver. 8—22. When God goes out from a people all judgments break in upon them.

THEN I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne. 2 And he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, *even* under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter *them* over the city. And he went in in my sight. 3 Now the cherubims stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in; and the cloud filled the inner court. 4 Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, *and stood* over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the LORD's glory. 5 And the sound of the cherubims' wings was heard *even* to the outer court, as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh. 6 And it came to pass, *that* when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and stood beside the wheels. 7 And *one* cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that *was* between the cherubims, and took *thereof*, and put *it* into the hands of *him that was* clothed with linen: who took *it*, and went out.

To possess us with a holy awe and dread of God, and to fill us with his fear, we may observe in this part of the vision which the prophet had,

First. The glorious appearance of his majesty. Something of the invisible world is here made visible; some faint representations of its brightness and beauty, some shadows, but such as are no more to be compared with the truth and substance than a picture with the life; yet here is enough to oblige us all to the utmost reverence in our thoughts of God, and approaches to him, if we will but admit the impressions this discovery of him will make.

1. He is here "in the firmament above the head of the cherubims," ver. 1. He manifests his glory in the upper world, where purity and brightness are both in perfection; and the vast expanse of the firmament aims to speak the God that dwells there infinite. It is the firmament of his power, and of his prospect too, for from thence he beholds all the children of men. The Divine nature infinitely transcends the angelical nature, and God is "above the head of the cherubims," in respect not only of his dignity above them, but his dominion over them. Cherubims have great power, and wisdom, and influence, but they are all subject to God and Christ.

2. He is here upon the throne; or, that which had "the appearance of the likeness of a throne," (for God's glory and government infinitely transcends all the brightest ideas our minds can either form or receive concerning them,) and it was "as it were a sapphire-stone," pure and sparkling; such a throne hath God prepared in the heavens, far exceeding the thrones of any earthly potentates.

3. He is here attended with a glorious train of holy angels. When God came into his temple, the "cherubims stood on the right side of the house," ver. 3, as the prince's lifeguard attending the gate of his palace. Christ has angels at command: the orders given to all the angels of God are to worship him. Some observe that they "stood on the right side of the house," that is, the south side, because on the north side the image of jealousy was, and other instances of idolatry, from which they would place themselves at as great a distance as might be.

4. The appearance of his glory is veiled with a cloud, and yet out of that cloud darts forth a dazzling lustre. In the house and inner court there was a cloud and darkness which filled them; and yet either the outer court or the same court, after some time was "full of the brightness of the Lord's glory," ver. 3, 4. There was a darting forth of light and brightness; but if any over-curious eye pried into it, it would find itself lost in a cloud. His righteousness is conspicuous as the great mountains, and the brightness of it fills the court; but his judgments are a great deep which we cannot fathom, a cloud which we cannot see through. The brightness discovers enough to awe and direct our consciences, but the cloud forbids us to expect the gratifying of our curiosity; for we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. Thus, *Hab.* iii. 4, "He had beams coming out of his hand, and" yet "there was the hiding of his power." Nothing more clear than that God is, nothing more dark than what he is; God covers himself with light, and yet as to us makes darkness his pavilion. God took possession of the tabernacle and temple in a cloud, which was always the symbol of his presence. In the temple above there will be no cloud, but we shall see face to face.

5. The cherubims made a dreadful sound with their wings, ver. 5. The vibration of them, as of the strings of musical instruments, made a curious melody. Bees, and other winged insects, make a noise with their wings. Probably this intimated their preparing to remove, by stretching forth, and lifting up their wings, which made this noise as it were to give warning of it. This noise is said to be "as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaks;" that is, as the thunder, which is called "the voice of the Lord," *Ps.* xxix. 3. Or, as the voice of the Lord when he spake to Israel on mount Sinai; and, therefore, he then gave the law with abundance of terror, to signify with what terror he would reckon for the violation of it, which he was now about to do. This noise of their wings was heard even "to the outer court," the court of the people; for the Lord's voice in his judgments cries in the city, which those may hear that do not, as Ezekiel, see the visions of them.

Secondly. The terrible directions of his wrath. This vision has a farther tendency than merely to set forth the Divine grandeur; farther orders are to be given for the destruction of Jerusalem. The greatest devastations are made by fire and sword. For a general slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, orders were given in the foregoing chapter; now here we have a command to lay the city in ashes, by scattering coals of fire upon it, which in the vision were fetched from between the cherubims.

1. For the issuing out of orders to do this, "the glory of the Lord was lifted up from the cherub," (as in the chapter before, for the giving of orders there, ver. 3,) and "stood upon the threshold of the house in imitation of the courts of judgment, which they kept in the gates of their cities. The people would not hear the oracles which God delivered to them from his holy temple, and therefore from thence they shall be made to hear their doom.

2. The man clothed in linen, who had marked those that were to be preserved, is to be employed in this service; for the same Jesus that is the Protector and Saviour of them who believe, having "all judgment committed to him," that of condemnation as well as that of absolution, will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on those that obey not his Gospel. He that sits on the throne, calls to the man clothed in linen to "go in between the wheels, and fill his hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city." This intimates, 1st. That the burning of the city and temple by the Chaldeans was a consumption determined; and therein they executed God's counsel. They did what he designed before should be done. 2nd. That the fire of Divine wrath, which kindles judgment upon a people, is just and holy; for it is fire fetched "from between the cherubims." The fire on God's altar, where atonement was made, had been slighted; to avenge which, fire is here fetched from heaven, like that by which Nadab and Abihu were killed for offering strange fire. If a city, or town, or house be burned, whether by design or accident, if we trace it in its original, we shall find the coals that kindled the fire came from between the wheels; for there is not any evil of that kind in the city but the Lord has done it. 3rd. That Jesus Christ acts by commission from the Father, for from him he "receives authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man." Christ came to "send fire on the earth," *Lu.* xii. 49; and in the great day will speak this world into ashes. By fire from his hand, the earth and all the works that are therein will be burnt up.

3. This man clothed with linen readily attended to this service. Though being clothed with linen he was very unfit to go among the burning coals, yet being called, he said, "Lo, I come." This commandment he had received of his Father, and he complied with it. The prophet saw him go in; ver. 2, "He went in and stood beside the wheels;" expecting to be furnished there with the coals he was to scatter, for what Christ was to give he first received, whether for mercy or judgment. He was directed to take fire, but he stayed till he had it given to him, to shew how slow he is to execute judgment, and how long-suffering to usward.

4. One of the cherubims reached him a handful of fire from the midst of the living creatures. The prophet, when he first saw this vision, observed that there were "burning coals of fire," and "lamps that went up and down among the living creatures," *ch.* i. 13; from thence this fire was taken, ver. 7. The spirit of burning, the refiner's fire, by which Christ purifies his church, is of a Divine original. It is by a celestial fire, fire from between the cherubims, that wonders are wrought. The cherubim "put it into his hand," for the angels are ready to be employed by the Lord Jesus, and to serve all his purposes.

5. When he had taken the fire he went out, no doubt to scatter it up and down upon the city, as he was directed. "And who can abide the day of his coming?" Who can stand before him when he goes out in anger?

8 And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings. 9 And when I looked, behold the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels *was* as the colour of a beryl stone. 10 And *as for* their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel. 11 When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went. 12 And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels, *were* full of eyes round about, *even* the wheels that they four had. 13 As for the weeels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel. 14 And every one had four faces: the first face *was* the face of a cherub, and the second face *was* the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. 15 And the cherubims were lifted up. This *is* the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar. 16 And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them. 17 When they stood, *these* stood; and when they were lifted up, *these* lifted up themselves *also:* for the spirit of the living creature *was* in them. 18 Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. 19 And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also *were* beside them, and *every one* stood at the door of the east gate of the LORD's house; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above. 20 This *is* the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they *were* the cherubims. 21 Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man *was* under their wings. 22 And the likeness of their faces *was* the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

We have here a farther account of the vision of God's glory which Ezekiel saw, here intended to introduce that direful omen of the departure of that glory from them which would open the door for ruin to break in.

First. Ezekiel sees the glory of God shining in the sanctuary, so as he had seen it by the river of Chebar; and gives an account of it, that they who had by their wickedness provoked God to depart from them might know what they had lost, and might lament after the Lord, groaning out their Ichabod, "Where is the glory?" Ezekiel here sees the operations of Divine providence in the government of the lower world, and the affairs of it, represented by the four wheels; and the perfections of the holy angels, the inhabitants of the upper world; and their ministrations, represented by the four living creatures, every one of which had four faces. The agency of the angels in directing the affairs of this world is represented by the close communication that was between the living creatures and the wheels; the wheels being guided by them in all their motions, as the chariot is by him that drives it, but the same spirit being both in the living creatures and in the wheels, speaks that Infinite Wisdom which serves its own purposes by the ministration of angels, and all the occurrences of this lower world. So that this vision gives our faith a view of that throne which the Lord has prepared in the heavens, and that kingdom of his which ruleth over all, *Ps.* ciii. 19. The prophet observes that this was the same vision with that he saw by the river of Chebar, ver. 15, 22; and yet in one thing there seems to be a material difference, that that which was there the face of an ox, and was on the left side, *ch.* i. 10, is here the face of a cherub, and is the first face, ver. 14; whence some have concluded, that the peculiar face of a cherub was that of an ox, which the Israelites had an eye to when they made the golden calf. I rather think that in this latter vision the first face was the proper appearance or figure of a cherub, which Ezekiel knew very well, being a priest, by what he had seen in the temple of the Lord, 1 *Kin.* vi. 29; but which we now have no certainty of at all; and by this Ezekiel knew assuredly, whereas before he only conjectured it, that they were all cherubims, though putting on different faces, ver. 20. And this first appearing in the proper figure of a cherub, and yet it being needful to retain the number of four, that of the ox is left out and dropped, because that face of the cherubim had been most abused by the worship of an ox. As sometimes when God appeared to deliver his people, so now, when he appeared to depart from them, "he rode upon a cherub, and did fly." Now observe here,

1. That this world is subject to turns and changes, and various revolutions. The course of affairs in it is represented by wheels, ver. 9; sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and sometimes another; they are still ebbing and flowing like the sea, waxing and waning like the moon, 1 *Sam.* ii. 4, &c. Nay, their appearance is as if there were "a wheel in the midst of a wheel," ver. 10; which intimates the mutual references of providences to each other, and their dependencies on each other; and the joint tendency of all to one common end, while their motions as to us are intricate and perplexed, and seemingly contrary.

2. That there is an admirable harmony and uniformity in the various occurrences of providence, ver. 13. As for the wheels, though they moved several ways, yet it was cried to them, "O wheel;" they were all as one, being guided by one Spirit to one end, for God works all according to the counsel of his own will, which is one; for his own glory, which is one. And this makes the disposals of providence truly admirable, and to be looked upon with wonder. As the works of his creation considered separately were good, but all together very good, so the wheels of providence considered by themselves are wonderful, but put them together and they are very wonderful: "O wheel."

3. That the motions of providence are steady and regular, and whatever the Lord pleaseth that he doth, and is never put upon new counsels. "The wheels turned not as they went," ver. 11; and the living creatures "went every one straight forward," ver. 22. Whatever difficulties lay in their way, they were sure to get over them, and were never obliged to stand still, turn aside, or go back. So perfectly known to God are all his works, that he is never put upon new counsels.

4. That God makes more use of the ministration of angels in the government of this lower world than we are aware of. "The four wheels were by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub," ver. 9. What has been imagined by some concerning the spheres above, that every orb has its intelligence to guide it, is here intimated concerning the wheels below, that every wheel has its cherub to guide it. We think it a satisfaction to us, if under the wise God there are wise men employed in managing the affairs of kingdoms and churches; whether there be so or no, it appears by this, there are wise angels employed, "a cherub to every wheel."

5. That all the motions of providence, and all the ministrations of angels, are under the government of the great God. They were all full of eyes; those eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the earth, and which the angels have always an eye to, ver. 12. The living creatures and the wheels concur in their motions and rests, ver. 17; for the Spirit of life, as it may be read, or, the spirit of the living creatures, is in the wheels. The Spirit of God directs all the creatures, both upper and lower, so as to make them serve the Divine purpose. Events are not determined by the wheel of fortune, which is blind, but by the wheels of providence, which are full of eyes.

Secondly. Ezekiel sees the glory of God removing out of the sanctuary, the place where God's honour had long dwelt; and this sight is as sad as the other was grateful. It was pleasant to see that God had not forsaken the earth, as the idolaters suggested, *ch.* ix. 9; but sad to see that he was forsaking his

sanctuary. The glory of the Lord "stood over the threshold," ver. 4. But now it departed from off the threshold, having thence given the necessary orders for the destruction of the city, and it stood over the cherubims; not those in the most holy place, but those that Ezekiel now saw in vision, ver. 18. It ascended that stately chariot, as the judge, when he comes off the bench, goes into his coach and is gone. And immediately "the cherubims lift up their wings," (ver. 19,) as they were directed; and they "mounted up from the earth," as birds upon the wing. And when they went out, the wheels of this chariot were not drawn, but went by instinct beside them, by which it appeared that the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. Thus, when God is leaving a people in displeasure, angels above and all events here below shall concur to further his departure. But observe here, in the courts of the temple where the people of Israel had dishonoured their God, had cast off his yoke, and withdrawn the shoulder from it, blessed angels appear very ready to serve him, to draw in his chariot, and to mount upwards with it. God had shewn the prophet how the will of God was disobeyed by men on earth, *ch.* viii.; here he shews him how readily it is obeyed by angels and inferior creatures. And it is a comfort to us, when we grieve for the wickedness of the wicked, to think how his angels "do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word," *Ps.* ciii. 20.

Let us now, 1. Take a view of this chariot, in which the glory of the God of Israel rides triumphantly. He that is the God of Israel is the God of heaven and earth, and has the command of all the powers of both. Let the faithful Israelites comfort themselves with this, that he that is their God is above the cherubims, (their Redeemer is so, 1 *Pet.* iii. 22,) and has the sole and sovereign disposal of all events; the living creatures and the wheels agree to serve him, so that he is "head over all things to the church." The rabbins call this vision that Ezekiel had, *Mercabah*,—'the vision of the chariot;' and from thence they call the more abstruse part of divinity, which treats concerning God and spirits, *Opus currus*,—'the work of the chariot,' as they do the other part that is more plain and familiar, *Opus bereshith*,—'the work of the creation.' 2. Let us attend the motion of this chariot. The cherubim, and the glory of God above them, "stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house," ready to depart and leave the house, ver. 19. But observe with how many stops and pauses God departs, as loath to go, and seeing if there be any that will intercede with him to return. None of the priests in the inner court, between the temple and the altar, would court his stay; therefore he leaves their court, and stands at the east gate, which led into the court of the people, to see if any of them would yet at length stand in the gap. Note, God removes by degrees from a provoking people; and, when he is ready to depart, would return to them if they were but a repenting, praying people.

CHAPTER XI.

This chapter concludes the vision which Ezekiel saw, and this part of it furnisheth him with two messages: I. A message of wrath against those who continued still at Jerusalem, and were there in the height of presumption, thinking they should never fall, ver. 1—13. II. A message of comfort to those who were carried captives into Babylon, and were there in the depth of despondency, thinking they should never rise. And, as the former are assured that God has judgments in store for them notwithstanding their present security, so the latter are assured that God has mercy in store for them notwithstanding their present distress, ver. 14—21. And so the glory of God removes farther, ver. 22, 23; the vision disappears, ver. 24; and Ezekiel faithfully gives his hearers an account of it, ver. 25.

MOREOVER the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the LORD's house, which looketh eastward: and behold at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jaazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2 Then said he unto me, Son of man, these *are* the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel in this city: 3 Which say, *It is* not near; let us build houses: this *city is* the caldron, and we *be* the flesh. 4 Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man. 5 And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak;

Thus saith the LORD;
Thus have ye said, O house of Israel:
For I know the things that come into your mind, *every one of* them.
6 Ye have multiplied your slain in this city,
And ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain.
7 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it,
They *are* the flesh, and this *city is* the caldron:
But I will bring you forth out of the midst of it.
8 Ye have feared the sword;
And I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord GOD.
9 And I will bring you out of the midst thereof,
And deliver you into the hands of strangers,
And will execute judgments among you.
10 Ye shall fall by the sword;
I will judge you in the border of Israel;
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.
11 This *city* shall not be your caldron,
Neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof;
But I will judge you in the border of Israel:
12 And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD:
For ye have not walked in my statutes,
Neither executed my judgments,
But have done after the manners of the heathen that *are* round about you.

13 And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died. Then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

We have here,

First. The great security of the princes at Jerusalem, notwithstanding the judgments of God that were upon them. The prophet was brought in vision to the gate of the temple where these princes sat in council, upon the present arduous affairs of the city; "The spirit lift me up, and brought me to the east gate of the Lord's house, and behold," twenty-five men were there. See how obsequious the prophet was to the Spirit's orders, and how observant of all the discoveries that were made to him. It should seem these twenty-five men were not the same with those twenty-five whom he saw at the door of the temple worshipping towards the east, *ch.* viii. 16. Those seem to have been priests or Levites, for they were between the porch and the altar; but these were princes, sitting in the gate of the Lord's house to try causes, *Jer.* xxvi. 10; and these here are charged, not with corruptions in worship, but maladministration of the government. Two of them are named, because they were the most leading active men, and perhaps because the prophet knew them, though he had been some years absent; Jaazaniah, not that mentioned *ch.* viii. 11; for he was the son of Shaphan, this the son of Azur. Some tell us, that Jerusalem was divided into twenty-four wards, and that these were the governors or aldermen of those wards, with their mayor, or president. Now observe,

1. The general character which God gives of these men to the prophet; ver. 2, "These are the men that devise mischief." Under pretence of concerting measures for the public safety, they harden the people in their sins, and take off their fear of God's judgments which they are threatened with by the prophets; they "give wicked counsel in this city," counselling them to restrain and silence the prophets to rebel against the king of Babylon, and to resolve upon holding the city out to the last extremity. Note, It is bad with a people when the things that belong to their peace are hid from the eyes of those who are intrusted with their counsels; and when mischief is done God knows at whose door to lay it, and in the discovery and recompence will be sure to lay it at the right door, and will say, These are the men that devised it, though they are great men, and pass for wise men, and must not now be contradicted or controlled.

2. The particular charge exhibited against them in proof of this character. They are indicted for words spoken at their council-board, which he that stands in the congregation of the mighty would take cognizance of, ver. 3. They said to this effect, "It is not near;" the destruction of our city that has been so often threatened by the prophets is not near; not so near as they talk of. They are conscious to themselves of such an enmity to reformation, that they cannot but conclude it will come at last; but they have such an opinion of God's patience, (though they have long abused it,) that they are willing to hope it will not come this great while. Note, Where Satan cannot persuade men to look upon the judgment to come as a thing doubtful and uncertain, yet he gains his point by persuading them to look upon it as a thing at a distance, so that it loses its force. If it be sure, yet "it is not near;" whereas in truth, "the Judge stands before the door."

Now, if the destruction is not near, they conclude, "let us build houses;" let us count upon a continuance, for "this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh." This seems to be a proverbial expression, signifying no more but this, We are as safe in this city as flesh in the boiling pot. The walls of the city shall be to us as walls of brass, and shall receive no more damage by the besiegers about it than the caldron doth by the fire under it. Those that think to force us out of our city into captivity, it will be as much at their peril as it would be to take the flesh out of a boiling pot with their hands. This appears to be the meaning of it, by the answer God gives to it; ver. 9, "I will bring you out of the midst of the city," where you think yourselves safe; and then it will appear, ver. 11, that "this is not your caldron, neither are ye the flesh." Perhaps it has a particular reference to the flesh of the peace offering, which it was so great an offence for the priests themselves to take out of the caldron while it was in seething, as we find, 1 *Sam.* ii. 13, 14; and then it intimates, that they were the more secure, because Jerusalem was the holy city, and they thought themselves a holy people in it, not to be meddled with. Some think this was a banter upon Jeremiah, who in one of his first visions saw Jerusalem represented by a seething-pot, *Jer.* i. 13; Now, say they in a way of jest and ridicule, if it be a seething-pot, we are as the flesh in it, and who dares meddle with us? Thus they continued mocking the messengers of the Lord, even while they suffered for so doing; but "be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." Those hearts are hard indeed, which are made more secure by those words of God which were designed for warning to them.

Secondly. The method taken to awaken them out of their security. One would think the providences of God that were concerning them, were enough to startle them; but, to help them to understand and improve those, the word of God is sent them, to give warning; ver. 4, "Therefore prophesy against them," and try to undeceive them; "Prophesy, O son of man," upon these dead and dry bones. Note, The greatest kindness ministers can do to secure sinners is to preach against them, and to shew them their misery and danger, though they are never so unwilling to see it. We then act most for them when we appear most against them; but the prophet, being at a loss what to say to men that were hardened in sin, and bade defiance to the judgments of God, the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him, to make him full of power and courage, and said to him, Speak. Note, When sinners are flattering themselves into their own ruin, it is time to speak, and to tell them they shall not have peace if they go on. Ministers are sometimes so bashful and timorous, and so much at a loss, that they must be put on to speak, and to speak boldly. But he that commands the prophet to speak gives him instructions what to say; and he must address himself to them as the house of Israel, ver. 5; for not the princes only, but all

the people are concerned to know the truth of their case, to know the worst of it. They are the house of Israel, and therefore the God of Israel is concerned in kindness to them to give them warning, and they are concerned in duty to him to take the warning. And what is it he must say to them in God's name?

1. Let them know that the God of heaven takes notice of their vain confidences, with which they support themselves; ver. 5, "I know the things that come into your mind every one of them;" what secret reasons you have for these resolutions, and what you aim at in putting so good a face upon a matter you know to be bad. Note, God perfectly knows, not only the things that come out of our mouths, but the things that come into our minds; not only all we say, but all we think; even those thoughts that are most suddenly darted into our minds, and as suddenly slip out of them again, so that we ourselves are scarcely aware of them; yet God knows them. He knows us better than we know ourselves; "he understands our thought afar off;" the consideration whereof should oblige us to keep our hearts with all diligence, that no vain thoughts come into them, or lodge within them.

2. Let them know that all that had fallen and should yet fall in Jerusalem by the sword of the Chaldeans, they that advised them to stand it out should be accounted before God the murderers of them; and those slain were the only ones that should remain in the city as the flesh in the caldron; ver. 6, "You have multiplied your slain in this city," not only those whom you have by the sword of justice unjustly put to death, under colour of law; but those whom you have by your wilfulness and pride unwisely exposed to the sword of war, though you were told by the prophets you should certainly go by the worst. Thus you with your stubborn humour have filled the streets of Jerusalem with the slain. Note, Those who are either unrighteous or imprudent in beginning or carrying on a war bring upon themselves a great deal of the guilt of blood; and those who are slain in the battles or sieges which they, by such a reasonable peace as the war aimed at, might have prevented, will be called their slain. Now these slain are the only flesh that shall be left in this caldron, ver. 7. There shall none remain to keep possession of the city but those that are buried in it. There shall be no inhabitants of Jerusalem but the inhabitants of the graves there; no freemen of the city but the free among the dead.

3. Let them know that, how impregnable soever they thought their city to be, they should be forced out of it, either driven to flight or dragged into captivity. "I will bring you forth out of the midst of it," whether you will or no, ver. 7; and again, ver. 9. They had provoked God to forsake the city, and thought they should do well enough by their own policy and strength when he was gone; but God will make them know that there is no peace to them that have left their God. If they have by their sins driven God from his house, he will soon by his judgments drive them from theirs; and it will be found that those are least safe that are most secure. "This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh;" you shall not soak away in it, as you promise yourselves, and die in your nest; you think yourselves safe in the midst thereof, but you shall not be long there.

4. Let them know that, when God has got them out of the midst of Jerusalem, he will pursue them with his judgments wherever he finds them; the judgments which they thought to shelter themselves from by keeping close in Jerusalem. They feared the sword if they should go out to the Chaldeans, and therefore would abide in their caldron; but, saith God, "I will bring a sword upon you," ver. 8; "and you shall fall by the sword," ver. 10. Note, The fear of the wicked it shall come upon him; and there is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission, no, not in walls of brass. They were afraid of trusting to the mercy of strangers; but, saith God, "I will deliver you into the hands of strangers," whose resentments you shall feel, since you were not willing to lie at their mercy: see *Jer.* xxxviii. 17, 18. They thought to escape the judgments of God; but God saith he will execute judgments upon them; and whereas they resolved, if they must be judged, it should be in Jerusalem, God tells them, ver. 10, and again, ver. 11, he will judge them in the borders of Israel, which was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar slew all the nobles of Judah at Riblah in the land of Hamath, on the utmost border of the land of Canaan. Note, Those who have taken never so deep root in the place where they live, yet cannot be sure that in that place they shall die.

5. Let them know, that all this is the due punishment of their sin, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God against them. "Ye shall know that I am the Lord," ver. 10, and again, ver. 12. Those shall be made to know by the sword of the Lord that would not be taught by his word, what a hatred he has to sin, and what a fearful thing it is for impenitent sinners to fall into his hands. I will execute judgments, and then you shall know that I am the Lord; for the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth upon those that have not walked in his statutes. Hereby it is known that he made the law, because he punisheth the breach of it. "I will execute judgments among you," saith God, "because you have not executed my judgments," ver. 12. Note, The executing of the judgments of God's mouth by us, in an uniform, steady course of obedience to his law, is the only way to prevent the executing of the judgments of his hand upon us in our ruin and confusion. One way or other God's judgments will be executed; the law will take place either in its precept or in its penalty. If we do not give honour to God by executing his judgments as he has commanded, he will get him honour upon us by executing his judgments as he has threatened; and thus we shall know that he is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, that will not be mocked. And observe, when they cast off God's statutes, and walked not in them, they did "after the manners of the heathens that were round about them," and introduced into their worship all their impure, ridiculous, and barbarous usages. When men leave the settled rule of Divine institutions, they wander endlessly; justly therefore was this made the reason why they should keep God's ordinances, that they might not commit the abominable customs of the heathen, *Lev.* xviii. 30.

Thirdly. This awakening word is here immediately followed by an awakening providence, ver. 13; where we may observe,

1. With what power Ezekiel prophesied, or rather, what a Divine power went along with it. "It came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died," who was mentioned, ver. 1, as a principal man among the twenty-five princes that made all the mischief in Jerusalem. It should seem this was done in vision now, as the slaying of the ancient men, *ch.* ix. 6, upon occasion of which Ezekiel prayed, ver. 8, as he did here; but it was an assurance, that when this prophecy should be published it should be done in fact. The death of Pelatiah was an earnest of the complete accomplishment of this prophecy. Note, God is pleased oftentimes to single out some sinners, and to make them monuments of his justice, for warning to others of what is coming; and some that thought themselves very safe are snatched away suddenly, and drop down dead in an instant, as Ananias and Sapphira at Peter's feet when he prophesied.

2. With what pity Ezekiel prayed. Though the sudden death of Pelatiah was a confirmation of Ezekiel's prophecy, and really an honour to him, yet he was in a mighty concern about it, and laid it to heart as if he had been his relation or friend. "He fell upon his face, and cried with a loud voice," as one in earnest, "Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" Many are swept away by the judgments we have been under, and shall the remnant which have escaped the sword die thus by the immediate hand of heaven? Then thou wilt indeed make a full end. Perhaps it was Ezekiel's infirmity to bewail the death of this wicked prince thus, as it was Samuel's to mourn so long for Saul; but thus he shewed how far he was from desiring the woful day he foretold. David lamented the sickness of those that hated and persecuted him; and we ought to be much affected with the sudden death of others, yea, though they are wicked.

14 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 15 Son of man, thy brethren, *even* thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, *are* they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in possession.

16 Therefore say,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Although I have cast them far off among the heathen,
And although I have scattered them among the countries,
Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary
In the countries where they shall come.

17 Therefore say,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
I will even gather you from the people,
And assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered,
And I will give you the land of Israel.

18 And they shall come thither,
And they shall take away all the detestable things thereof
And all the abominations thereof from thence.

19 And I will give them one heart,
And I will put a new spirit within you;
And I will take the stony heart out of their flesh,
And will give them an heart of flesh:

20 That they may walk in my statutes,
And keep mine ordinances, and do them:
And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

21 But *as for them* whose heart walketh after [tions,
The heart of their detestable things and their abomina-
I will recompense their way upon their own heads,
Saith the Lord GOD.

Prophecy was designed that by it every valley might be exalted, as well as every mountain and hill brought low, *Isa.* xl. 4; and prophets were to speak not only conviction to the presumptuous and secure, but comfort to the despised and desponding that trembled at God's word. The prophet having in the former part of this chapter received instructions for the awakening of those that were at ease in Zion, is in these verses furnished with comfortable words for those that mourned in Babylon, and by the rivers there sat weeping when they remembered Zion. Observe,

First. How the pious captives were trampled upon and insulted over by those who continued in Jerusalem, ver. 15. God tells the prophet what the inhabitants of Jerusalem said of him and the rest of them that were already carried away to Babylon. God had owned them as good figs, and declared it was for their good that he had sent them into Babylon; but the inhabitants of Jerusalem abandoned them, supposing them that were really the best saints to be the greatest sinners of all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. Observe, 1. How they are described. They are thy brethren, saith God to the prophet, whom thou hast a concern and affection for; they are the men of thy kindred, the men of thy redemption, (so the word is,) thy next of kin, to whom the right of redeeming the alienated possession doth belong, but who are so far from being able to do it, that they are themselves gone into captivity; they are the whole house of Israel. God so accounts of them because they only have retained their integrity, and are bettered by their captivity. They are not only of the same family and nation with Ezekiel, but of the same spirit; they were his hearers, and he had communion with them in holy ordinances, and perhaps upon that account they are called his brethren, and the men of his kindred. 2. How they were disowned by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They said of them, "Get ye far from the Lord." They that were at ease and proud themselves scorned their brethren that were humbled under humbling providences. 1st. They cut them off from being members of their church, because they had separated themselves from their rulers, and in compliance with the will of God had surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon. They excommunicated them, and said, "Get ye far from the Lord," we will have nothing to do with you. Those that were superstitious were very willing to shake off those that were conscientious, and were severe in their censures of them and sentences against them, as if they were forsaken and forgotten of the Lord, and were cut off from the communion of the faithful. 2nd. They cut them off from being members of the commonwealth too, as if they had no longer any part or lot in the matter; "Unto us is the land given in possession," and you have forfeited your estates by surrendering to the king of Babylon, and we are thereby become entitled to them. God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the contempt which those that are in prosperity put upon their brethren that are in affliction.

Secondly. The gracious promises which God made to them in consideration of the insolent carriage of their brethren towards them. They that hated them and cast them out said, "Let the Lord be glorified," but he shall appear to their joy, *Isa.* lxvi. 5. God owns that his hand was gone out against them, which had given occasion to their brethren to triumph over them, ver. 16. It

is true, "I have cast them far off among the heathen, and scattered them among the countries;" they look as if they were an abandoned people, and so mingled with the nations as that they would be lost among them; but I have mercy in store for them. Note, God takes occasion, from the contempts which are put upon his people, to speak comfort to them, as David hoped God would reward him good for Shimei's cursing. His time to support his people's hopes is when their enemies are endeavouring to drive them to despair. Now God promiseth,

1. That he will make up to them the want of the temple and the privileges of it; ver. 16, "I will be to them as a little sanctuary, in the countries where they shall come." They at Jerusalem have the temple, but without God; they in Babylon have God, though without the temple. 1st. God will be a sanctuary to them, that is, a place of refuge; to him they shall flee, and in him they shall be safe, as he was that took hold on the horns of the altar. Or, rather, They shall have such communion with God in the land of their captivity as it was thought could be had nowhere but in the temple. They shall there see God's power and his glory, so as they used to see it in the sanctuary; they shall have the tokens of God's presence with them, and his grace in their hearts shall sanctify their prayers and praises as well as ever the altar sanctified the gift, so that they shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. 2nd. He will be a little sanctuary, not seen or observed by their enemies, who looked with an envious and evil eye upon that house at Jerusalem which was high and great, 1 *Kin.* ix. 8. They were but few and mean, and a little sanctuary was fittest for them; God regards the low estate of his people, and suits his favours to their circumstances. Observe the condescensions of Divine grace; the great God will be to his people a little sanctuary. Note, They that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, if it be not their own fault, may have the want of them abundantly made up in the immediate communications of Divine grace and comforts.

2. That God would in due time put an end to their afflictions, bring them out of the land of their captivity, and settle them again, them or their children, in their own land, ver. 17. I will gather even you that are thus dispersed, thus despised and given over for lost by your own countrymen; "I will gather you from the people," distinguish you from those with whom you are mingled, deliver you from those by whom you are held captives, "and assemble you," in a body, "out of the countries where you have been scattered;" you shall not come back one by one, but all together, which will make your return more honourable, safe, and comfortable; and then "I will give you the land of Israel," which now your brethren look upon you as for ever shut out from. Note, It is well for us that men's severe censures cannot cut us off from God's gracious promises. There are many that will be found to have a place in the holy land whom uncharitable men, by their monopolies of it to themselves, had secluded from it. "I will give you the land of Israel," give it you again by a new grant, "and they shall come thither." If there be any thing in the change of the person from "you" to "them," it may signify the posterity of those to whom the promise is made. You shall have the title, as the patriarchs had; and they that come after shall have the possession.

3. That God, by his grace, would part between them and their sins, ver. 18. Their captivity shall effectually cure them of their idolatry; when they come thither to their own land again they shall take away all the detestable things thereof. Their idols, that had been their delectable things, should now be looked upon with detestation, (not only the idols of Babylon, where they were captives, but the idols of Canaan, where they were natives;) they should not only not worship them as they had done, but they should not suffer any monuments of them to remain; "they shall take all the abominations thereof from thence." Note, Then it is in mercy that we return to a prosperous state, when we return not to the sins and follies of that state. "What have I to do any more with idols?"

4. That God would powerfully dispose them to their duty. They shall not only cease to do evil, but they shall learn to do well, because there shall be not only an end of their troubles, but a return to their peace.

1st. God will plant good principles in them. He will make the tree good, ver. 19. This is a Gospel promise, and is made good to all those whom God designs for the heavenly Canaan; for God prepares all for heaven whom he has prepared heaven for. It is promised, *First.* That God will give them one heart, that is, a heart entire for the true God, and not divided, as it had been, among many gods; a heart firmly fixed and resolved for God, and not wavering; steady and uniform, and not inconstant with itself. One heart is a sincere and upright heart, its intentions of a piece with its professions. *Secondly.* That he will "put a new spirit within them," a temper of mind agreeable to the new circumstances which God in his providence would bring them into. All that are sanctified have a new spirit, quite different from what it was; they act from new principles, walk by new rules, and aim at new ends. A new name or a new face will not serve without a new spirit; "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." *Thirdly.* That he will "take away the stony heart out of their flesh," out of their corrupt nature. Their hearts shall no longer be as they have been, dead, and dry, and hard, and heavy as a stone; no longer incapable of bearing good fruit, so that the good seed is lost upon it, as it was on the stony ground. *Fourthly.* That he will give them a heart of flesh; not dead or proud flesh, but living flesh. He will make their hearts sensible of spiritual pains and spiritual pleasures, will make them tender, and apt to receive impressions. This is God's work; it is his gift, his gift by promise; and a wonderful and happy change it is that is wrought by it, from death to life. This is promised to those whom God would bring back to their own land, for then such a change of the condition is for the better indeed, when it is accompanied with such a change of the heart; and such a change must be wrought in all those that shall be brought to the better country, that is, the heavenly.

2nd. Their practices shall be consonant to those principles. "I will give them a new spirit," not that they may be able to discourse well on religion, and to dispute for it, but that "they may walk in my statutes" in their whole conversation, "and keep mine ordinances" in all acts of religious worship, ver. 20. These two must go together, and those to whom God has given a new heart and a new spirit will make conscience of both; and then "they shall be my people, and I will be their God." The ancient covenant, which seemed to have been broken and forgotten, shall be renewed. By their idolatry, it should seem, they had cast God off; by their captivity, it should seem, God had cast them off: but when they were cured of their idolatry and delivered out of their captivity, God and his Israel own one another again. God, by his good work in them, will make them his people, and then by the tokens of his good-will towards them, he will shew that he is their God.

Thirdly. Here is a threatening of wrath against those who hated to be reformed. As, when judgments are threatened, the righteous are distinguished so as not to share in the evil of those judgments, so, when favours are promised, the wicked are distinguished so as not to share in the comfort of those favours; they have no part or lot in the matter, ver. 21. But as for them that have no grace, what have they to do with peace? Observe, 1. Their description. Their "heart walks after the heart of their detestable things." They have as great a mind to worship devils as devils have to be worshipped. Or, in opposition to the new heart which God gives his people, which is a heart after his own heart, they have a heart after the heart of their idols; that is, in their temper and practice they conformed themselves to the characters and accounts given them of their idols, and the ideas they have of them; and of them they learned lewdness and cruelty. Here lies the root of all their wickedness, the corruption of the heart; as the root of their reformation is laid in the renovation of the heart. The heart has its walks, and according as those are the man is. 2. Their doom. It carries both justice and terror in it; "I will recompense their way upon their own heads," that is, I will deal with them as they deserve. There needs no more than this to speak God righteous, that he doth but render to men according to their deserts; and yet, such are the deserts of sin, that there needs no more than this to speak the sinner miserable.

22 Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel *was* over them above. 23 And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which *is* on the east side of the city. 24 Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity. So the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25 Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the LORD had shewed me.

Here is, First. The departure of God's presence from the city and temple. When the message was committed to the prophet, and he was fully apprised of it, fully instructed how to separate between the precious and the vile, then "the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them," ver. 22, as before *ch.* x. 19. Angels, when they have done their errands in this lower world, are upon the wing to be gone, for they lose no time. We left the glory of the Lord last at the east gate of the temple, *ch.* x. 19, which is here said to be in the midst of the city; now here we are told that, finding and wondering that there was none to intercede, none to uphold, none to invite its return, it removed next to the mountain which is on the east side of the city, ver. 23. That was the mount of Olives. On that mountain they had set up their idols to confront God in his temple when he dwelt there, 1 *Kin.* xi. 7, and thence it was called the mount of corruption, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 13; therefore there God doth, as it were, set up his standard, his tribunal, as it were to confront them who thought to keep possession of the temple for themselves now God had left it. From that mountain there was a full prospect of the city; thither God removed, to make good what he had said, *Deu.* xxxii. 20, "I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be." It was from this mountain that Christ beheld the city and wept over it, in the foresight of its last destruction by the Romans. The glory of the Lord removed thither, to be, as it were, yet within call, and ready to return, if now at length, in this their day, they would have understood the things that belonged to their peace. Loath to depart bids oft farewell. God, by going away thus slowly, thus gradually, intimated that he left them with reluctancy, and would not have gone if they had not perfectly forced him from them. He did now in effect say, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" But though he bear long he will not bear always, but will at length forsake those, and cast them off for ever, who have forsaken him and cast him off.

Secondly. The departure of this vision from the prophet. At length it went up from him, ver. 24. He saw it mount upwards till it went out of sight, which would be a confirmation to his faith that it was a heavenly vision, that it descended from above, for thitherwards it returned. Note, The visions which the saints have of the glory of God will not be constant till they come to heaven. They have glimpses of that glory which they soon lose again, visions which go up from them; tastes of Divine pleasures, but not a continual feast. It was from the mount of Olives that the vision went up, typifying the ascension of Christ to heaven from that very mountain, when those that had seen him manifested in the flesh saw him no more; it was foretold, *Zec.* xiv. 4, that his feet should stand upon the mount of Olives, stand last there.

Thirdly. The prophet's return to them of the captivity. The same spirit that had carried him in a trance or ecstacy to Jerusalem brought him back to Chaldea, for there the bounds of his habitation are at present appointed, and that is the place of his service. The Spirit came to him, not to deliver him out of captivity, but, which was equivalent, to support and comfort him in his captivity.

Fourthly. The account which he gave to his hearers of all he had seen and heard, ver. 25. He received that he might give, and he was faithful to him that appointed him. He delivered his message very honestly; he spake all that and that only which God had shewed him. He told them of the great wickedness he had seen at Jerusalem, and the ruin that was hastening towards that city, that they might not repent of their surrendering themselves to the king of Babylon, as Jeremiah advised them, and blame themselves for it, nor envy those that stayed behind and laughed at them for going when they did, nor wish themselves there again, but be content in their captivity. Who would covet to be in a city so full of sin, and so near to ruin? It is better to be in Babylon under the favour of God than in Jerusalem under his wrath and curse. But, though this was delivered immediately to them of the captivity, yet we may suppose they sent the contents of it to them at Jerusalem, with whom they kept up a correspondence. And well had it been for Jerusalem if she had taken the warning hereby given.

CHAPTER XII.

Though the vision of God's glory be gone up from the prophet, yet his word comes to him still, and is by him sent to the people, and to the same purpose with that which was discovered to him in the vision, namely, to set forth the terrible judgments that were coming upon Jerusalem, by which the city and temple should be entirely laid waste. In this chapter, I. The prophet, by removing his stuff, and quitting his lodgings, must be a sign to set forth Zedekiah's flight out of Jerusalem in the utmost confusion, when the Chaldeans took the city, ver. 1—16. II. The prophet, by eating his meat with trembling, must be a sign to set forth the famine in the city during the siege, and the consternation that the inhabitants should be in, ver. 17—20. III. A message is sent from God to the people to assure them that all these predictions should have their accomplishment very shortly, and not be deferred, as they flattered themselves with hopes they would, ver. 21—28.

THE word of the LORD also came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they *are* a rebellious house. 3 Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they *be* a rebellious house. 4 Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity. 5 Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby. 6 In their sight shalt thou bear *it* upon *thy* shoulders, *and* carry *it* forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground: for I have set thee *for* a sign unto the house of Israel. 7 And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand; I brought *it* forth in the twilight, *and* I bare *it* upon *my* shoulder in their sight. 8 And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, 9 Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou? 10 Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; This burden *concerneth* the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that *are* among them.

11 Say, I *am* your sign:
Like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them:
They shall remove *and* go into captivity.
12 And the prince that *is* among them shall bear upon *his* shoulder
In the twilight, and shall go forth:
They shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby:
He shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with *his* eyes.
13 My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare:
And I will bring him to Babylon *to* the land of the Chaldeans;
Yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.
14 And I will scatter toward every wind
All that *are* about him to help him, and all his bands;
And I will draw out the sword after them.
15 And they shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I shall scatter them among the nations,
And disperse them in the countries.
16 But I will leave a few men of them
From the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence;
That they may declare all their abominations
Among the heathen whither they come;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Perhaps Ezekiel reflected with so much pleasure upon the vision he had had of the glory of God, that often, since it went up from him, he was wishing it might come down to him again; and he having seen it once, and a second time, was willing to hope he might be a third time so favoured; but we do not find that ever he saw it any more. And yet the word of the Lord comes to him, for God did in divers manners speak to the fathers, *Heb.* i. 1; and they often heard the words of God, when they did not see the visions of the Almighty. Faith comes by hearing, that word of prophecy which is more sure than vision. We may keep up our communion with God without raptures and ecstasies. In these verses the prophet is directed,

First. By what signs and actions to express the approaching captivity of Zedekiah king of Judah. That was the thing to be foretold; and it is foretold to them that are already in captivity, because as long as Zedekiah was upon the throne they flattered themselves with hopes that he would make his part good with the king of Babylon, whose yoke he was now projecting to shake off; from which it is probable these poor captives promised themselves mighty matters. And it may be, when he was forming that design, he privately sent encouragement to them to hope that he would rescue them shortly, or procure their liberty by exchange of prisoners; and while they were fed with these vain hopes they could not set themselves either to submit to their affliction or to get good by their affliction. It was therefore necessary, but very difficult, to convince them, that Zedekiah, instead of being their deliverer, should very shortly be their fellow-sufferer. Now one would have thought it might have been sufficient if the prophet had only told them this in God's name, as he doth afterwards, ver. 10; but to prepare them for the prophecy of it he must first give them a sign of it, must speak it to their eyes first and then their ears. And here we have,

1. The reason why he must take this method; ver. 2, it is because they are a stupid, dull, unthinking people, that will not heed, or will soon forget, or at least will not be at all affected with what they only hear of, it will make no impression at all upon them; "Thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house," whom it is next to impossible to work any good upon. They have eyes and ears, they have intellectual powers and faculties, but they see not, they hear not; they were idolaters, whose character it was that they were like the idols they worshipped, which have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, *Ps.* cxv. 5, 8. Note, Those are to be reckoned rebellious that shut their eyes against the Divine light, and stop their ears to the Divine law. They that are wilfully ignorant, that have faculties and means and will not use them, their ignorance is so far from being their excuse, that it adds rebellion to their sin. None so blind, so deaf, as those that will not hear, that will not see; they see not, they hear not, for they are a rebellious house. The cause is all from themselves; the darkness of the understanding is owing to the stubbornness of the will. Now this is the reason why he must speak to them by signs, as deaf people are taught, that they might be either instructed or ashamed. Note, Ministers must accommodate themselves, not only to the weakness, but to the wilfulness of those they deal with, and deal with them accordingly. If they dwell among those that are rebellious, they must speak to them the more plainly and pressingly, and take that course that is most likely to work upon them, that they may be left inexcusable.

2. The method he must take to awaken and affect them. He must furnish himself with all necessaries for removing, ver. 3; provide for a journey, clothes and money; he must remove from one place to another, as one unsettled and forced to shift. This he must do by day in the sight of the people. He must bring out all his household goods, to be packed up and sent away, ver. 4; and, because all the doors and gates were either locked up that they could not pass through them, or so guarded by the enemy that they durst not, he must therefore dig through the wall, and convey his goods away clandestinely through that breach in the wall, ver. 5. He must carry his goods away himself upon his own shoulders, for want of a servant to attend him. He must do this in the twilight, that he might not be discovered; and when he has made what shift he can to secure some of the best of his effects, he must himself steal away at even in their sight, with fear and trembling, and must go as they that go forth into captivity, ver. 4; that is, he must cover his face, ver. 6, as being ashamed to be seen, and afraid to be known, or in token of very great sorrow and concern. He must go away as a poor broken tradesman, that, when he is forced to shut shop, hides his head, or runs his country.

Thus Ezekiel must be himself a sign to them. And when, perhaps, he seemed somewhat backward to put himself to all this trouble, and to expose himself to be bantered and ridiculed for it, to reconcile him to it, God saith, ver. 3, "It may be they will consider," and will by it be taken off from their vain confidences, "though they be a rebellious house." Note, We must not despair even of the worst, but that yet they may be brought to bethink themselves and repent; and, therefore, must continue the use of proper means for their conviction and conversion, because while there is life there is hope. And ministers must be willing to go through the most difficult and inconvenient offices, (for such was this of Ezekiel's removing,) though there be but the "it may be" of success. If but one soul be awakened to consider, our care and pains will be well bestowed.

3. Ezekiel's ready and punctual obedience to the orders God gave him; ver. 7, "I did so as I was commanded." Hereby he teaches us all, and ministers especially, 1st. To obey with cheerfulness every command of God, even the most difficult. Christ himself learned obedience; and so we must all. 2nd. To do all we can for the good of the souls of others, to put ourselves to any trouble or pains for the conviction of those that are unconvinced. "We do all things," that is, we are willing to do any thing, "dearly beloved, for your edifying." 3rd. To be ourselves affected with those things wherewith we desire to affect others. When Ezekiel would give his hearers a melancholy prospect, he doth himself put on a melancholy aspect. 4th. To sit loose to this world, and prepare to leave it; to carry out our stuff for removing, because we have here no continuing city. "Arise, depart, this is not your rest, for it is polluted;" "Thou dwellest in a rebellious house," therefore prepare for removing. For who would not be willing to leave such a house, such a wicked world, as this is?

Secondly. He is directed by what words to explain those signs and actions; as Agabus, when he bound his own hands and feet, told whose binding was thereby signified. But observe, it was not till morning that God gave him an exposition of the sign,—till the next morning, to keep up in him a continual dependence upon God for instruction. As what God doth, so what he directs us to do, perhaps we know not now, but shall know hereafter.

1. It was supposed that the people would ask the meaning of this sign, or at least they should; ver. 9, "Hath not the house of Israel said unto thee, What dost thou?" Yes, I know they have; though they are a rebellious house, yet they are inquisitive concerning the mind of God, as those, *Isa.* lviii. 2, who sought God daily. Therefore the prophet must do such an odd, uncouth thing, that they might inquire what it meant; and then it may be hoped people will take notice of what is told them, and profit by it when it comes to them in answer to their inquiries. But some understand it as an intimation that they had not made any such inquiries; Hath not this rebellious house so much as asked thee, What dost thou? No; they take no notice of it, but tell them the meaning of it though they do not ask. Note, When God sends to us by his ministers, he observes what entertainment we give to the messages he sends us; he hearkens and hears what we say to them, and what inquiries we make upon them, and is much displeased if we pass them by without taking any notice of them. When we have heard the word, we should apply ourselves to our ministers for farther instruction, and then we shall know, if we thus follow on to know.

2. The prophet is to tell them the meaning of it. In general, ver. 10, "This burthen concerns the prince in Jerusalem;" they knew who that was, and gloried in it now they were in captivity, that they had a prince of their own in Jerusalem; and that the house of Israel was yet entire there, and therefore doubted not but in time to do well enough. But tell them, saith God, that in what thou hast done, they may read the doom of their friends at Jerusalem; "Say, I am your sign," ver. 11. As the conversation of ministers should teach

the people what they should do, so the providences of God concerning them are sometimes intended to tell them what they must expect. The unsettlements and removes of ministers give warning to people what they must expect in this world; no continuance, but constant changes. When times of trouble are coming on, Christ tells his disciples, "they shall first lay their hands on you," *Lu.* xxi. 12.

1st. The people shall be led away into captivity; ver. 11, "As I have done, so shall it be done unto them." They shall be forced away from their own houses, no more to return to them, neither shall their place know them any more. We cannot say concerning our dwelling-place that it is our resting-place, for how far we may be tossed from it before we die we cannot foresee.

2nd. The prince shall in vain attempt to make his escape, for he also shall go into captivity. Jeremiah had told Zedekiah the same to his face, *Jer.* xxxiv. 3, "Thou shalt not escape, but shalt surely be taken." Ezekiel here foretells it to those who made him their confidence, and promised themselves relief from him.

First. That he shall himself carry away his own goods; "He shall bear upon his shoulder" some of his most valuable effects. Note, The judgments of God can turn a prince into a porter. He that was wont to have the regalia carried before him, and to march through the city at noonday, shall now himself carry his goods on his back, and steal away out of the city in the twilight. See what a change sin makes with men. All the avenues to the palace being carefully watched by the enemy, they shall dig through the wall, to carry out thereby. Men shall be their own housebreakers, and steal away their own goods; so it is when the sword of war has cancelled all right and property.

Secondly. That he shall attempt to escape in a disguise; with a mask or vizor on, which shall cover his face, so that he shall be able only to look before him, and shall not see the ground with his eyes. He that when he was in pomp affected to be seen now he is in his flight is afraid to be seen. Let none, therefore, either be proud of being looked at or overmuch pleased with looking about them, when they see a king with his face covered that he cannot see the ground.

Thirdly. That he shall be made a prisoner, and carried captive into Babylon; ver. 13, "My net will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare." It seemed to be the Chaldeans' net, and their snare, but God owns it for his. Those that think to outrun the sword of the Lord will find themselves taken in his net. Jeremiah had said that king Zedekiah should see the king of Babylon, and that he should go to Babylon. Ezekiel saith he shall be brought to Babylon, yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there. Those that were disposed to cavil would perhaps object, that these two prophets contradicted one another, for one said he should see the king of Babylon, the other said he should not see Babylon; and yet both proved true. He did see the king of Babylon at Riblah, where he passed sentence upon him for his rebellion, but there he had his eyes put out, so that he did not see Babylon when he was brought thither. These captives expected to see their prince come to Babylon a conqueror, to bring them out of their troubles; but he shall come thither a prisoner, and his disgrace will be a great addition to their troubles. Little joy could they have in seeing him, when he could not see them.

Fourthly. That all his guards should be dispersed and utterly disabled to do him any service; ver. 14, "I will scatter all that are about him to help him," so that he shall be left helpless; I "will scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries," ver. 15; to be monuments of Divine justice wherever they go. But is there not hopes that they may rally again? He that flies one time may fight another time. No; "I will draw out the sword after them," which shall cut them off wherever it finds them. For the sword that God draws out will be sure to do the execution designed. Yet of Zedekiah's scattered troops some shall escape; ver. 16, "I will leave a few men of them." Though they shall all be scattered, yet they shall not all be cut off; some shall have their lives given them for a prey. And it is very observable for what end they are thus remarkably spared; "That they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come." The troubles they are brought into will bring them to themselves, and to their right mind, and then they will acknowledge the justice of God in all that is brought upon them; and will make an ingenuous confession of their sins, which provoked God thus to contend with them; and as by this it shall appear that they were spared in mercy, so hereby they will make a suitable, grateful return to God for his favours to them in sparing them. Note, When God has remarkably delivered us from the deaths wherewith we were surrounded, we must look upon it that for this end, among others, we were spared, that we might glorify God, and edify others by making a penitent acknowledgment of our sins. And those that by their afflictions are brought to this are then made to know that God is the Lord, and may help to bring others to the knowledge of him. See how God brings good out of evil. The dispersion of sinners that had done God much dishonour and disservice in their own country proves the dispersion of penitents that shall do him much honour and service in other countries. The Levites are by a curse divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel, yet it is turned into a blessing, for thereby they have the fairest opportunity to teach Jacob God's laws.

17 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
18 Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking,
And drink thy water with trembling and with carefulness;
19 And say unto the people of the land,
Thus saith the Lord GOD
Of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *and* of the land of Israel;
They shall eat their bread with carefulness,
And drink their water with astonishment,
That her land may be desolate from all that is therein,
Because of the violence of all them that dwell therein.
20 And the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste,
And the land shall be desolate;
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Here again the prophet is made a sign to them of the desolations that were coming on Judah and Jerusalem.

First. He must himself eat and drink in care and fear, especially when he was in company, ver. 17, 18. Though he was under no apprehension of danger to himself, but lived in safety and plenty, yet he must "eat his bread with quaking," the bread of sorrows, *Ps.* cxxvii. 2, "and drink his water with trembling, and with carefulness," that he might express the calamitous condition of those that should be in Jerusalem during the siege. Not that he must dissemble, and pretend to be in fear and care when really he was not; but, being to foretell this judgment, to shew that he firmly believed it himself, and yet was far from desiring it, in the prospect of it he was himself affected with grief and fear. Note, When ministers speak of the ruin coming upon impenitent sinners, they must endeavour to speak feelingly, as those that know the terrors of the Lord. And they must be content to endure hardness, so they may but do good.

Secondly. He must tell them that the inhabitants of Jerusalem should in like manner eat and drink with care and fear, ver. 19, 20. Both those that have their home in Jerusalem and those of the land of Israel that come to shelter themselves there, "They shall eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their water with astonishment;" either because they are afraid it will not hold out, but they shall want shortly, or because they are continually expecting the alarms of the enemy, "their life hanging in doubt before them," *Deu.* xxviii. 66; so that what they have they shall have no enjoyment of, nor will it do them any good. Note, Care and fear, if they prevail, are enough to embitter all our comforts, and are themselves very sore judgments. They shall be reduced to these straits that thus, by degrees, and by the hand of those that do thus straiten them, both city and country may be laid in ruins; for it is no less than an utter destruction of both that is aimed at in these judgments; "that her land may be desolate from all the fulness thereof," may be stript of all its ornaments, and robbed of all its fruits; and then of course "the cities that are inhabited shall be laid waste," for they are served by the field. This universal desolation was coming upon them, and then no wonder that they ate their bread with care and fear. Now we are here told, 1. How bad the cause of this judgment was. It is "because of the violence of all them that dwell therein;" their injustice and oppression, and the mischief they did one another, for which God would reckon with them, as well as for the affronts put upon him in his worship. Note, The decay of virtue in a nation brings on a decay of every thing else; and when neighbours devour one another it is just with God to bring enemies upon them to devour them all. 2. How good the effect of this judgment should be; "Ye shall know that I am the Lord." And, if by these judgments they learn to know him aright, that will make up the loss of all they are deprived of by these desolations. Those are happy afflictions, how grievous soever to flesh and blood, that help to introduce us into, and improve us in, an acquaintance with God.

21 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 22 Son of man, what *is* that proverb *that* ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? 23 Tell them therefore,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
I will make this proverb to cease,
And they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel;
But say unto them, The days are at hand,
And the effect of every vision.
24 For there shall be no more any vain vision
Nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.
25 For I *am* the LORD: I will speak,
And the word that I shall speak shall come to pass;
It shall be no more prolonged:
For in your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word,
And will perform it, saith the Lord GOD.
26 Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying,
27 Son of man, behold, *they of* the house of Israel say,
The vision that he seeth *is* for many days *to come*,
And he prophesieth of the times *that are* far off.
28 Therefore say unto them,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
There shall none of my words be prolonged any more,
But the word which I have spoken shall be done,
Saith the Lord GOD.

Various methods have been used to awaken this secure and careless people to an expectation of the judgments coming, that they might be stirred up by repentance and reformation to prevent them. The prophecies of their ruin were confirmed by visions, and illustrated by signs, and all with such evidence and power that one would think they must needs be wrought upon. But here we are told how they evaded the conviction, and guarded against it, namely, by telling themselves and one another that, though these judgments threatened should come at last, yet they would not come of a long time. This suggestion with which they bolstered themselves up in their security is here answered, and shewed to be vain and groundless, in two several messages which God sent to them by the prophet at several times, both to the same purpose; such care, such pains, must the prophet take to undeceive them, ver. 21, 26. Observe,

First. How they flattered themselves with hopes that the judgments should be delayed. One saying they had, which was become proverbial in the land of Israel; ver. 22, they said, "The days are prolonged," the judgments are not come when they were expected to come, but seem to be still put off *de die in diem*,—'from day to day,' and therefore we may conclude that every vision fails, because it should seem that some do; that because the destruction is not come yet, it will never come; we will never trust prophet again, for we have been worse frighted than hurt. And another saying they had, which, if it would not conquer their convictions, yet would cool their affections and abate their concern, and that was, that "the vision was for a great while to come;" it refers to events at a mighty distance, and he prophesies of things which, though they may be true, yet are very far off, so that we need not trouble our heads about them, ver. 27; we may die in honour and peace before these troubles come. And if, indeed, the troubles had been thus adjourned, they might have made themselves easy, as Hezekiah did, "Is it not well if peace and truth shall be in my days?" But it was a great mistake, and they did but deceive themselves into their own ruin. And God is here much displeased at it; for, 1. It was a

wretched abuse of the patience of God, who, because for a time he kept silence, was thought to be altogether such a one as themselves, *Ps.* l. 21. That forbearance of God which should have led them to repentance hardened them in sin. They were willing to think their works were not evil, because sentence against them was not executed speedily, and therefore concluded the vision itself failed because the days were prolonged. 2. It received countenance from the false prophets that were among them, as should seem from the notice God takes (ver. 24) of the vain visions and flattering divinations, even within the house of Israel, to whom were committed the oracles of God. They that deceived themselves by worshipping pretended deities, no marvel if they deceived themselves by crediting pretended prophecies, to which strong delusions God justly gave them up for their idolatries. 3. These sayings were become proverbial, they were industriously spread among the people, so that they were got into every one's mouth; and not only so, but were generally assented to, as proverbs used to be, not only the proverbs of the ancients, but those of the moderns too. Note, It is a token of universal degeneracy in a nation when corrupt and wicked sayings are grown proverbial; and it is an artifice of Satan by them to confirm men in their prejudices against the word and ways of God, and a great offence to the God of heaven. It will not serve for an excuse in saying ill, to plead that it is a common saying.

Secondly. How they are assured that they do but deceive themselves, for the judgments shall be hastened. These profane proverbs shall be confronted; "Tell them, therefore, the days are at hand," ver. 23; and again, ver. 28, "There shall none of my words be prolonged any more." Their putting the evil day far from them doth but provoke God to bring it the sooner upon them; and it will be so much the sorer, so much the heavier, so much the more a surprise and terror to them when it doth come. He must tell them,

1. That God will certainly silence the lying proverbs, and the lying prophecies with which they buoyed up their vain hopes, and make them ashamed of both. 1st. "I will make this proverb to cease;" for when they find the days of vengeance are come, and not one iota or tittle of the prediction falls to the ground, they will be ashamed to use it as a proverb in Israel, "The days are prolonged," and the vision fails. Note, Those that will not have their eyes opened and their mistakes rectified by the word of God shall be undeceived by his judgments; for every mouth that speaks perverse things shall be stopped. 2. "There shall be no more any vain vision," ver. 24. The false prophets, who told the people they should have peace, and should soon see an end of their troubles, shall be disproved by the event, and then shall be ashamed of their pretensions, and shall hide their heads, and impose silence upon themselves. Note, As truth was elder than error, so it will survive it; it got the start, and it will get the race. The true prophets' visions and predictions stand, and be in full force, power, and virtue; they give law and receive credit, when the vain visions and the flattering divinations are lost and forgotten, and shall be no more in the house of Israel; for great is the truth, and will prevail.

2. That God will certainly and very shortly accomplish every word that he has spoken. With what majesty doth he say it, ver. 25, "I am the Lord, I am Jehovah!" That glorious name of his speaks him a God giving being to his word by the performance of it; and, therefore, to the patriarchs, who lived by faith in a promise not yet performed, he was not known by his name Jehovah, *Ex.* vi. 3. But as he is Jehovah in making good his promise, so he is in making good his threatenings. Let them know then that God, with whom they have to do, is the great Jehovah; and therefore,

1st. He will speak, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear; "I am the Lord, I will speak." God will have his saying whoever gainsays it. God's oracles are called lively ones, for they still speak when the pagan oracles are long ago struck dumb. There has been and shall be a succession of God's ministers to the end of the world, by whom he will speak; and, though contempt may be put upon them, that shall not put a period to their ministration. "In your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word." Even in the worst ages of the church God left not himself without witness, but raised up men that spoke for him, that spoke from him. I will say the word, the word that shall stand.

2nd. The word that he speaks shall come to pass; it shall infallibly be accomplished, according to the true intent and meaning of it, and according to the full extent and compass of it. "I will say the word, and will perform it," ver. 25; for his mind is never changed, nor his arm shortened, nor his infinite wisdom ever nonplussed. With men, saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God; with him it is *dictum, factum*,—'said, and done.' In the works of providence, as in that of creation, he speaks and it is done, for he said, Let there be light, and there was light; let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament, *Num.* xiii. 19; 1 *Sam.* xv. 29. Whereas they had said, "Every vision fails," ver. 22, God saith, No, there shall be the effect of every vision, ver. 23. It shall not return void, but every sign shall be answered by the thing signified. They that see the visions of the Almighty do not see vain visions. God confirmeth the word of his servants by performing it.

3rd. It shall be accomplished very shortly. "The days are at hand" when you shall see "the effect of every vision," ver. 23. It is said, it is sworn, that delay shall be no longer, *Rev.* x. 6. The year of God's patience is now just expired, and he will no longer defer the execution of the sentence. "It shall be no more prolonged," ver. 25. He hath borne with you a great while, but he will not bear always. "In your days, O rebellious house," shall the word that is said be performed, and you shall see the threatened judgments and share them. "Behold, the Judge standeth at the door." The righteous are taken away from the evil to come, but this rebellious house shall not be so quietly taken away; no, they shall live to be hurried away, to be chased out of the world. This is repeated again, ver. 28, "There shall none of my words be prolonged any more," but judgment shall now hasten on apace; and the longer the bow has been in the drawing the deeper shall the arrow pierce. When we tell sinners of death and judgment, heaven and hell, and think by them to persuade them to a holy life, though we do not find them downright infidels, they will own that they do believe there is a state of rewards and punishments in the other world, yet they put by the force of those great truths, and avoid the impressions of them, by looking upon the things of the other world as very remote. They tell us, "The vision we see is for many days to come, and we prophesy of the times that are very far off;" it will be time enough to think of them when they come nearer; whereas really there is but a step between us and death, between us and an awful eternity,—yet a little while and the vision shall speak, and not lie. And therefore it concerns us to redeem time, and get ready with all speed for a future state; for though it is future it is very near, and while impenitent sinners slumber their damnation slumbers not.

CHAPTER XIII.

Mention had been made in the chapter before of the vain visions and flattering divinations with which the people of Israel suffered themselves to be imposed upon, ver. 24. Now this whole chapter is levelled against them. God's faithful prophets are nowhere so sharp upon any sort of sinners as upon the false prophets; not because they were the most spiteful enemies to them, but because they put the highest affront upon God, and did the greatest mischief to his people. The prophet here shews the sin and punishment, I. Of the false prophets, ver. 1—16. II. Of the false prophetesses, ver. 17—23. Both agreed to soothe men up in their sins, and, under pretence of comforting God's people, to flatter them with hopes that they should yet have peace; but the prophets shall be proved liars, their prophecies mere shams, and the expectations of the people illusion; for God will let them know that "the deceived and deceiver are his," are both accountable to him, *Job* xii. 16.

AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts,

Hear ye the word of the LORD;

3 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Woe unto the foolish prophets,
That follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps,
Neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel
To stand in the battle in the day of the LORD.

6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying,
The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them:
And they have made *others* to hope
That they would confirm the word.

7 Have ye not seen a vain vision,
And have ye not spoken a lying divination,
Whereas ye say, The LORD saith *it;*
Albeit I have not spoken?

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies,
Therefore, behold, I *am* against you,
Saith the Lord GOD.

9 And mine hand shall be upon the prophets
That see vanity, and that divine lies:
They shall not be in the assembly of my people,
Neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel,
Neither shall they enter into the land of Israel;
And ye shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.

The false prophets, which are here prophesied against, were some of them at Jerusalem; *Jer.* xxiii. 14, "I have seen in the prophets at Jerusalem a horrible thing;" some of them among the captives in Babylon, for to them Jeremiah writes, *Jer.* xxix. 8, "Let not your diviners that be in the midst of you deceive you." And as God's prophets, though at a distance from each other in place or time, yet preached the same truths, which was an evidence that they were guided by one and the same good Spirit; so the false prophets prophesied the same lies, being actuated by one and the same spirit of error. There was little hopes of bringing them to repentance, they were so hardened in their sin, yet Ezekiel must prophesy against them, in hopes the people might be cautioned not to hearken to them; and thus a testimony will be left upon record against them, and they thereby left inexcusable. Ezekiel had express orders to "prophesy against the prophets of Israel," so they called themselves, as if none but they had been worthy of the name of Israel's prophets, who were indeed Israel's deceivers. But it is observable that Israel was never imposed upon by pretenders to prophecy till after they had rejected and abused the true prophets, as afterwards they were never deluded by counterfeit Messiahs, till after they had refused the true Messiah, and rejected him. These false prophets must be required to hear the word of the Lord. They took upon them to speak what concerned others, as from God; let them now hear what concerned themselves as from him. And two things the prophet is directed to do.

First. To discover their sin to them, and to convince them of that if possible, or thereby to prevent their proceeding any farther, by making manifest their folly unto all men, 2 *Tim.* iii. 9. They are here called foolish prophets, ver. 3; men that did not at all understand the business they pretended to. To make fools of the people they made fools of themselves, and put the greatest cheat upon their own souls. Let us see what is here laid to their charge.

1. They pretend to have a commission from God, whereas he never sent them. They thrust themselves into the prophetical office without warrant from him who is the Lord God of the holy prophets, which was a foolish thing; for how could they expect God should own them in a work to which he never called them? They are prophets out of their own hearts, so the margin reads it, ver. 2, prophets of their own making; ver. 6, "They say, The Lord saith," they pretend to be his messengers, "but the Lord hath not sent them," has not given them any orders. They counterfeit the broad seal of heaven, than which they cannot do a greater indignity to mankind, for hereby they put a reproach upon Divine revelation, lessen its credit, and weaken its credibility. When these pretenders are found to be deceivers, atheists and infidels will thence infer they are all so. "The Lord has not sent them," for, though crafty enough in other things, like the foxes, and very wise for the world, yet they are foolish prophets, and have no experimental acquaintance with the things of God. Note, Foolish prophets are not of God's sending; for whom he sends he either finds fit or makes fit. Where he gives warrant, he gives wisdom.

2. They pretend to have instructions from God, whereas he never made himself and his mind known to them. "They follow their own spirit," ver. 3. They deliver that as a message from God which is the product either of their subtle invention, to serve a turn for themselves, or of their own crazed and heated imagination, to give vent to a fancy, for they have seen nothing; that is, they

have not really had any heavenly vision. They pretend that what they say, "the Lord saith it;" but God disowns it. "I have not spoken it," I never said, never meant any such thing. What they delivered was not what they had seen or heard, as that is which the ministers of Christ deliver, 1 *Jno.* i. 1; but either what they had dreamed or what they thought would please those they coveted to make an interest in. This is called their seeing "vanity and lying divination," ver. 6. They pretend to have seen that which they did not see, and produced that as a Divine truth which they knew to be false. To the same purpose, ver. 7, "Ye have seen a vain vision, and spoken a lying divination," which had no Divine original, and would have no effect, but would certainly be disproved by the event. And, ver. 8, the words are changed, "Ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies." What they saw and what they said was all alike, a mere sham. They saw nothing, they said nothing to the purpose, nothing that could be relied on, or deserved regard. Again, ver. 9, "They see vanity, and divine lies." They pretend to have had visions, as the true prophets had, whereas really they had none; but either it was the creature of their own fancy, they thought they had a vision, as men in a delirium do, (that was seeing vanity,) or it was a fiction of their own politics, and they knew they had none, and then they saw lies, and divined lies: see *Jer.* xxiii. 16, &c. Note, Since the devil is universally known to be the father of lies, those put the highest affront imaginable upon God who tell lies, and then father them upon him. But they that had put God's character upon Satan, in worshipping devils, arrived at length to that pitch of impiety as to put Satan's character upon God.

3. They took no care to prevent the judgments of God that were breaking in upon the kingdom. They were "like the foxes in the deserts," running to and fro, and seeming to be in a mighty hurry; but it was to get away and shift for their own safety, not to do any good. "The hireling flees and leaves the sheep." They are like foxes that are greedy of prey for themselves, crafty and cruel to feed themselves. But, ver. 5, "Ye have not gone up into the gaps, nor made up the hedge for the house of Israel." A breach is made in their fences at which judgments are ready to pour in upon them, and then, if ever, is a time to do them service; but ye have done nothing to help them. They should have made intercession for them to turn away the wrath of God; but they were not praying prophets, had no interest in heaven, nor intercourse with heaven, as prophets used to have, *Gen.* xx. 7, and so could do them no service that way. They should have made it their business, by preaching and advice, to bring people to repentance and reformation, and so have made up a hedge, and put a stop to the judgments of God; but this was none of their care,—they contrived how to please people, not how to profit them. They saw a deluge of profaneness and impiety breaking in upon the land, waging war with virtue and holiness, and threatening to crush them and bear them down; and then they should have come in "to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty," by witnessing against the wickedness of the time and place they lived in; but they thought that would be as dangerous a piece of service as standing in a breach to make it good against the besiegers, and therefore they declined it, did nothing to stem the tide, stood not in the battle against vice and immorality, but basely deserted the cause of religion and reformation in the day of the Lord, when it was proclaimed, "Who is on the Lord's side? Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers?" *Ps.* xciv. 16. Those were unworthy the name of prophets that could think so favourably of sin, and had so little zeal for God and the public welfare.

4. They flattered people into a vain hope that the judgments God had threatened should never come, whereby they hardened those in sin whom they should have endeavoured to turn from sin; ver. 6, They have made others to hope that all should be well, and they should have peace though they went on still in their trespasses, and that the event would confirm the word. They were still ready to say, We will warrant you these troubles will be at an end presently, and we shall be in prosperity again, as if their warrants would confirm false prophecies in defiance of God himself.

Secondly. He is directed to denounce the judgments of God against them for these sins, from which their pretending to the character of prophets would not exempt them.

1. In general, here is a woe against them, ver. 3; and what that woe is we are told, ver. 8, "Behold I am against you, saith the Lord God." Note, Those are in a woful condition that have God against them. Woe, and a thousand woes, to them that have made him their enemy.

2. In particular, they are sentenced to be excluded from all the privileges of the commonwealth of Israel, for they are adjudged to have forfeited them all; ver. 9, God's hand shall be upon them, to seize them and bring them to his bar, to shut them out from his presence; and they will find it a fearful thing to fall into his hands. They pretend to be prophets, particular favourites of heaven, and authorised to preside in the congregation of his church on earth; but, by pretending to the honours they were not entitled to, they lost those that otherwise they might have enjoyed, *Mat.* v. 19. Their doom is, 1st. To be expelled out of the communion of saints, and not to be looked upon as belonging to it. "They shall not be in the secret of my people;" their folly shall be so clearly manifested that they shall never be consulted, nor their advice asked; they shall not be present at any debates about public affairs. Or, rather, they shall not be in the assembly of God's people for religious worship, for they shall be ashamed to shew their heads there, when they are proved by the events to be false prophets, and, like Cain, shall go out from the presence of the Lord. The people that are deceived by them shall abandon them, and resolve to have no more to do with them. They that usurped Moses' chair shall not be allowed so much as a doorkeeper's place. In the great day they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, *Ps.* i. 5, when God gathers his saints together to him, *Ps.* l. 5, 16, to be for ever with him. 2nd. To be expunged out of the book of the living. They shall die in their captivity, and shall die childless, shall leave no posterity to take their denomination from them, and so their names shall not be found among those who either themselves or their posterity returned out of Babylon; of whom a particular account was kept in a public register, which was called the writing of the house of Israel, such as we have *Ezr.* ii. They shall not be found among the living in Jerusalem, *Isa.* iv. 3. Or, they shall not be found written among those whom God has from eternity chosen to be vessels of his mercy to eternity. We read of those who prophesied in Christ's name, and yet he will tell them he never knew them, *Mat.* vii. 22, 23, because they were not among those that were given to him. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, 'They shall not be written in the writing of eternal life, which is written for the righteous of the house of Israel;' see *Ps.* lxix. 28. 3rd. To be for ever excluded out of the land of Israel. God hath sworn in his wrath concerning them that they shall never enter with the returning captives into the land of Canaan, which a second time remains a rest for them. Note, Those who oppose the design of God's threatenings, and will not be awed and influenced by them, forfeit the benefit of his promises, and cannot expect to be comforted and encouraged by them.

10 Because, even because they have seduced my people,
Saying, Peace; and *there was* no peace;
And one built up a wall,
And, lo, others daubed it with untempered *morter:*
11 Say unto them which daub *it* with untempered *morter,*
that it shall fall:

HOUSES BUILT WITH UNTEMPERED MORTAR.

There shall be an overflowing shower;
And ye, O great hailstones, shall fall;
And a stormy wind shall rend *it.*
12 Lo, when the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you,
Where *is* the daubing wherewith ye have daubed *it?*
13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
I will even rend *it* with a stormy wind in my fury;
And there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger,
And great hailstones in *my* fury to consume *it.*
14 So will I break down the wall
That ye have daubed with untempered *morter,*
And bring it down to the ground,
So that the foundation thereof shall be discovered,
And it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst [thereof:
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.
15 Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall,
And upon them that have daubed it with untempered *morter,*
And will say unto you, The wall *is* no *more,*
Neither they that daubed it;
16 *To wit,* the prophets of Israel which prophesy concerning Jerusalem,
And which see visions of peace for her,
And *there is* no peace, saith the Lord GOD.

We have here more plain dealing with the false prophets, and some farther articles of their doom. We have seen the people made ashamed of the false prophets, (though sometimes they had been fond of them,) and casting them away, as they shall do their false gods with indignation. Now here we find them as much ashamed of their false prophecies, which they had sometimes depended upon with much assurance. Observe,

First. How the people are deceived by the false prophets. Those flatterers seduce them, saying, "Peace, and there was no peace," ver. 10. They pretended to have seen "visions of peace," ver. 16; but that could not be, for "there was no peace, saith the Lord God." There was no prosperity designed for them, and therefore there could be no ground for their security: yet they told them God was at peace with them, and had mercy in reserve for them; and the war they were engaged in with the Chaldeans should soon end in an honourable peace, and their land should enjoy a happy repose and tranquillity. They told the idolaters, and other sinners, there was neither harm nor danger in the way they were in. Thus they seduced God's people, they put a cheat upon them, led them into mistakes, and drew them aside out of that way of repentance and reformation which the other prophets were endeavouring to bring them into. Note, Those are the most dangerous seducers who suggest to sinners that which tends to lessen their dread of sin, and their fear of God. Now this is compared to the building of a slight rotten wall, or, according to our Saviour's similitude, which is to the same purpose with this, (*Mat.* vii. 26,) the building of a house upon the sand, which seems to be a shelter and protection for a while, but will fall when a storm comes. One false prophet built the wall, set up the notion that God was not at all displeased with Jerusalem, but the city should be confirmed in its flourishing estate, and be victorious over the powers that now threatened it. This notion was very pleasing, and he that started it made himself very acceptable by it, and was caressed by every body; which invited others to say the same. They made the matter look yet more plausible and promising, they daubed the wall which the first had built, but it was with untempered mortar, sorry stuff that will not bind nor hold the bricks together; they had no ground for what they said, nor had it any consistency with itself,

but was like ropes of sand. They did not strengthen the wall, were in no care to make it firm, to see that they went upon sure grounds; they only daubed it, to hide the cracks and make it look well to the eye. And the wall thus built, when it comes to any stress, much more to any distress, will bulge and totter, and come down by degrees. Note, Doctrines that are groundless, though never so grateful, that are not built upon a Scripture foundation, nor fastened with a Scripture cement, though never so plausible, never so pleasing, are not of any worth, nor will stand men in any stead. And those hopes of peace and happiness which are not warranted by the word of God will but cheat men, like a wall that is well daubed indeed, but ill built.

Secondly. How they will be soon undeceived by the judgment of God, which we are sure is according to truth.

1. God will in anger bring a terrible storm, that shall beat fiercely and furiously upon the wall. The descent which the Chaldean army shall make upon Judah, and the siege they shall lay to Jerusalem, will be as "an overflowing shower," or inundation, such as Solomon calls "a sweeping rain that leaves no food," *Pr.* xxviii. 3; will bear down all before it as the deluge did in Noah's time; "Ye, O great hailstones, shall fall," the artillery of heaven, every hailstone like a cannon ball battering this wall; and with these a stormy wind, which is sometimes so strong as to rend the rocks, 1 *Kin.* xix. 11, much more an ill-built wall, ver. 11. But that which makes this rain, and hail, and wind most terrible is that they arise from the wrath of God, and are enforced by that; that is it that sends them, that is it that gives them the setting on; ver. 13, it is "a stormy wind in my fury, and an overflowing shower in my anger, and great hailstones in my fury." The fury of Nebuchadnezzar and his princes, who highly resented Zedekiah's treachery, made the invasion very formidable, but that was nothing in comparison with God's displeasure. "The staff in their hand is mine indignation," *Isa.* x. 5. Note, An angry God has winds and storms at command wherewith to alarm secure sinners; and his wrath makes them frightful and forcible indeed; for who can stand before him when he is angry?

2. This storm shall overturn the wall; "It shall fall," and the wind shall rent it, ver. 11. "The hailstones shall consume it," ver. 13. "I will break it down," ver. 14, "and bring it to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered;" it will appear how false, how rotten it was, to the prophetical reproach of the builders. When the Chaldean army has made Judah and Jerusalem desolate, then this credit of the prophets and the hopes of the people will both sink together; the former will be found false in flattering the people, and the latter foolish in suffering themselves to be imposed upon by them, and so exposed to so much the greater confusion, when the judgment should surprise them in their security. Note, Whatever men think to shelter themselves with against the judgments of God, while they continue unreformed, will prove but a refuge of lies, and will not profit them in the day of wrath: see *Isa.* xxviii. 17. Men's anger cannot shake that which God has built, for the blast of the terrible ones is but as a storm against the wall, which makes a great noise but never stirs the wall, (see *Isa.* xxv. 4;) but God's anger will overthrow that which men have built in opposition to him. They and all their attempts, they and all the securities wherein they entrench themselves, shall be "as a bowing wall, and as a tottering fence," *Ps.* lxii. 10. And when their vain predictions are disproved, and their vain expectations disappointed, then it will be discovered that there was no ground for either, *Hab.* iii. 13. The day will declare what every man's work is, and the fire will try it, 1 *Cor.* iii. 13.

3. The builders of the wall, and those that daubed it, will themselves be buried in the ruins of it. "It shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof," ver. 14. And thus the threatenings of God's wrath, and all the just intentions of it, shall be accomplished to the uttermost, both upon the wall and upon them that have daubed it, ver. 15. The same judgments that will prove the false prophets to be false will punish them for their falsehood; and they themselves shall be involved in the calamity which they made the people believe there was no danger of, and become monuments of that justice which they bid defiance to. Thus, if the blind lead the blind, both the blind leaders and the blind followers will fall together into the ditch. Note, Those that deceive others will in the end prove to have deceived themselves; and no doom will be more fearful than that of unfaithful ministers, that flattered sinners in their sins.

4. Both the deceivers and the deceived, when they thus perish together, will justly be ridiculed and triumphed over; ver. 12, "When the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you," by those that gave credit to the true prophets, and feared the word of the Lord, Now, "where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed the wall?" What is gone with all the fine soft words and fair promises wherewith you flattered your wicked neighbours, and all the assurances you gave them, that the troubles of the nation should soon be at an end. "The righteous shall laugh at them;" the righteous God shall, righteous men shall, saying, "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength," *Ps.* lii. 6, 7; "I also will laugh at your calamity," *Pr.* i. 26. They will say unto you, ver. 15, "The wall is no more, neither he that daubed it;" your hopes are vanished, and them that supported them, even the prophets of Israel, ver. 16. Note, Those that usurp the honours that do not belong to them will shortly be filled with the shame that doth.

17 Likewise, thou son of man,
Set thy face against the daughters of thy people,
Which prophesy out of their own heart;
And prophesy thou against them,
18 And say,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Woe to the *women* that sew pillows to all armholes,
And make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to
Will ye hunt the souls of my people, [hunt souls!
And will ye save the souls alive *that come* unto you?
19 And will ye pollute me among my people
For handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread,
To slay the souls that should not die,
And to save the souls alive that should not live,
By your lying to my people that hear *your* lies?
20 Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I *am* against your pillows,
Wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly,
And I will tear them from your arms,
And will let the souls go,
Even the souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly.
21 Your kerchiefs also will I tear,
And deliver my people out of your hand,
And they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted;
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. [sad,
22 Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous
Whom I have not made sad;
And strengthened the hands of the wicked,
That he should not return from his wicked way,
By promising him life: [tions:
23 Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divina-
For I will deliver my people out of your hand:
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

EASTERN WOMEN EMBROIDERING WITH THE NEEDLE.—ver. 18.

As God has promised that, when he pours out his Spirit upon his people, both their sons and their daughters shall prophesy, so the devil, when he acts as a spirit of lies and falsehood, is so not only in the mouth of false prophets, but of false prophetesses too; and those are the deceivers whom the prophet is here directed to prophesy against: for they are not such despicable enemies to God's truths as deserve not to be taken notice of, nor yet will either the weakness of their sex excuse their sin nor the tenderness and respect that is owing to it exempt them from the reproaches and threatenings of the word of God. No; "Son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people," ver. 17. God takes no pleasure in owning them for his people: They are "thy people," as *Ex.* xxxii. 7; and the women pretend to a spirit of prophecy, and are in the same song with the men, as Ahab's prophets were: Go on and prosper. They prophesy out of their own heart too; they say what comes uppermost, and what they know nothing of; therefore prophesy against them from God's own mouth. The prophet must set his face against them, and try if they can look him in the face, and stand to what they say. Note, When sinners grow very impudent, it is time for reprovers to be very bold. Now observe,

First. How the sin of these false prophetesses is described, and what are the particulars of it.

1. They told deliberate lies to those who consulted them, and came to them to be advised, and to be told their fortune. You do mischief "by your lying to my people that hear your lies," ver. 19. They come to be told the truth, but you tell them lies; and because you humour them in their sins they are willing to hear you. Note, It is ill with those people that can better hear pleasing lies than unpleasing truths; and it is a temptation to them who lie in wait to deceive, to tell lies, when they find people willing to hear them, and to excuse themselves with this, *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur*,—'If the people will be deceived, let them be deceived.'

2. They profaned the name of God, by pretending to have received those lies from him; ver. 19, "Ye pollute my name among my people," and make use of that for the patronising of your lies, and the gaining of credit to them. Note, Those greatly pollute God's holy name that make use of it to give countenance to falsehood and wickedness. Yet this they did "for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread." They did it for gain; they cared not what dishonour they did to God's name by their lying, so they could but make a hand of it for themselves. There is nothing so sacred which men of mercenary spirits, in whom the love of this world reigns, will not profane and prostitute, if they can out get money by the bargain. But they did it for poor gain. If they could get no more for it, rather than break, they would sell you a false prophecy that should please you to a nicety, for the beggar's dole, a piece of bread, or a handful of barley, and yet that was more than it was worth. Had they asked it as an alms for God's sake, sure they might have had it, and God would have been honoured; but, taking it as a fee for a false prophecy, God's name is polluted, and the smallness of the reward greatens the offence; "for a piece of bread that man will transgress," *Pr.* xxviii. 21. Had their poverty been

their temptation to steal, "and so take the name of the Lord in vain," it had been nothing so bad as when it tempted them to prophesy lies in his name, and so to profane it.

3. They perfectly kept people in awe, and terrified them with their pretensions. "Ye hunt the souls of my people," ver. 18; "hunt them to make them flee," ver. 20; 'hunt them into gardens,' so the margin reads it. You use all the arts you have to court or compel them into those places where you deliver your pretended predictions. Or, you have got such an influence upon them that you make them do just as you would have them do, and tyrannise over them. It was indeed the people's fault that they did regard them, but it was their fault by lies and falsehoods to command that regard. They pretended to save the souls alive that came to them, ver. 18. If they would but be hearers of them, and contributors to them, they might be sure of salvation. Thus they beguiled unstable souls that had a concern about salvation as their end, but did not rightly understand the way, and therefore hearkened to those who were most confident in promising it them; but will you pretend to save souls, or secure salvation to your party? Those are justly suspected that make such pretensions.

4. They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane. You "slay the souls that should not die, and save those alive that should not live," ver. 19, which is explained, ver. 22, "You have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad." Because they would not, they durst not, countenance your pretensions, you thundered out the judgments of God against them, to their great grief and trouble; you put them under invidious characters, to make them either despicable or odious to the people; and pretended to do it in God's name, which made them go many a time with a sad heart; whereas it was the will of God that they should be comforted, and by having respect put upon them should have encouragement given them. But on the other side, which is still worse, you have "strengthened the hands of the wicked," and emboldened them to go on in their wicked ways, and not to return from them, which was the thing the true prophets with earnestness called them to. You have promised sinners life in their sinful ways, have told them they shall have peace though they go on, by which their hands have been strengthened and their hearts hardened. Some think this here refers to the severe censures they passed upon those that were already gone into captivity, who were humbled under their affliction, by which their hearts were made sad; and the commendations they gave to those that rebelled against the king of Babylon, who were hardened in their impieties, by which their hands were strengthened. Or, by their polluting of the name of God they saddened the hearts of good people, who have a value and veneration for the word of God, and confirmed atheists and infidels in their contempt of Divine revelation, and furnished them with arguments against it. Note, Those have a great deal to answer for that grieve the spirits and weaken the hands of good people, and that gratify the lusts of sinners, and animate them in their opposition to God and religion. Nor can any thing strengthen the hands of sinners more than to tell them that they may be saved in their sins without repentance; or that there may be repentance though they do not return from their wicked ways.

6. They mimicked the true prophets by giving signs for the illustrating of their false predictions, as Hananiah did, *Jer.* xxviii. 10. And they were signs agreeable to their sex. They sewed little pillows to people's armholes, to signify that they might be easy and repose themselves, and needed not be disquieted with the apprehensions of trouble approaching. And they "made kerchiefs upon the head of every stature;" that is, of persons of every age, young and old, distinguishable by their stature, ver. 18. These kerchiefs were badges of liberty or triumph, intimating that they should not only be delivered from the Chaldeans, but be victorious over them. Some think these were some superstitious rites which they used with those to whom they delivered their divinations; preparing them for the reception of them by putting enchanted pillows under their arms, and handkerchiefs on their heads, to raise their fancies and their expectations of something great. Or, perhaps the expressions are figurative: they did all they could to make people secure, which is signified by laying them easy; and to make people proud, which is signified by dressing them fine with handkerchiefs, perhaps laid, or embroidered on their heads.

Secondly. How the wrath of God against them is expressed. Here is a woe to them, ver. 8; and God declares himself against the methods they took to delude and deceive, ver. 20; but what course will God take with them?

1. They shall be confounded in their attempts, and shall proceed no farther; ver. 23, "Ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations;" not that they shall themselves lay down their pretensions in a way of repentance, but when the event gives them the lie they shall be silent for shame. Or, their fancies and imaginations shall not be disposed to receive impressions which assist them in their divinations as they have been. Or, they themselves shall be cut off.

2. God's people shall be delivered out of their hands when they see themselves deluded by them into a false peace and a fool's paradise; and that, though they would not leave their sin, their sin has left them, and they "see no more vanity, nor divine divinations." They shall turn their back upon them, shall slight their predictions; the righteous shall no more be saddened by them, no, nor the wicked strengthened. The pillows shall be torn from their arms, and the kerchiefs from their heads; the fallacies shall be discovered, their frauds detected, and the people of God shall no more be in their hand, to be hunted as they have been. Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from a servile regard to, and fear of, those that, under colour of a Divine authority, impose upon and tyrannize over the consciences of men, and say to their souls, "Bow down that we may go over." But it is a sore grief to those who delight in such usurpations to have their power broken and the prey delivered; such was the reformation to the church of Rome. And when God doth this he makes it to appear that he is the Lord, that it is his prerogative to give law to souls.

CHAPTER XIV.

Hearing the word and prayer are two great ordinances of God in which we are to give honour to him, and may hope to find favour and acceptance with him. And yet in this chapter, to our great surprise, we find some waiting upon God in the one and some in the other, and yet not meeting with success, as they expected. I. The elders of Israel come to hear the word and inquire of the prophet; but because they are not duly qualified they meet with a rebuke instead of acceptance, ver. 1—5, and are called upon to repent of their sins, and reform their lives, else it is at their peril to inquire of God, ver. 6—11. II. Noah, Daniel, and Job are supposed to pray for this people, and yet, because the decree is gone forth, and the destruction of them is determined by a variety of judgments, their prayers shall not be answered, ver. 12—21. And yet it is promised in the close, that a remnant shall escape, ver. 22, 23.

THEN came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. 2 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 3 Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? 4 Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; 5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. 6 Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn *yourselves* from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7 For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself: 8 And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 9 And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10 And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity: the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh *unto him;* 11 That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord GOD.

Here is, First. The address which some of the elders of Israel made to the prophet, as an oracle, to inquire of the Lord by him. They came and sat before him, ver. 1. It is probable they were not of those that were now his fellow-captives, and constantly attended his ministry, such as those we read of, *ch.* viii. 1, but some occasional hearers; some of the grandees of Jerusalem that were come upon business to Babylon, perhaps public business, or an embassy from the king, and in their way called on the prophet, having heard much of him, and being desirous to know if he had any message from God, which might be some guide to them in their negotiation. By the severe answer given them, one would suspect they had an ill design to ensnare the prophet, or to try if they could catch hold of any thing that might look like a contradiction to Jeremiah's prophecies, and so they might have occasion to reproach them both. However, they feigned themselves just men, complimenting the prophet, and sat before him gravely enough, as God's people used to sit. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to be found employed in the external performances of religion.

Secondly. The account which God gave the prophet privately concerning them. They were strangers to him, he only knew that they were elders of Israel,—that was the character they wore, and as such he received them with respect, and it is likely was glad to see them so well disposed; but God gives him their real character, ver. 3. They were idolaters, and did only consult Ezekiel as they would any oracle of a pretended deity, to gratify their curiosity; and therefore he appeals to the prophet himself whether they deserve to have any countenance or encouragement given them. "Should I be inquired of at all by them?" Should I accept their inquiries as an honour to myself, or answer them for satisfaction to them? No, they have no reason to expect it. For, 1. They have "set up their idols in their heart." They not only have idols, but they are in love with them; they doat upon them, are wedded to them, and have laid them so near their hearts, and have given them so great a room in their affections, that there is no parting them. The idols they have set up in their houses, though they are now at a distance from the chambers of their imagery, yet they have them in their hearts, and they are ever and anon worshipping them in their fancies and imaginations. 'They have made their idols to ascend upon their hearts,' so the word is; that is, they have subjected their hearts to their idols, they are upon the throne there. Or, when they came to inquire of the prophet, they pretended to put away their idols, but it was in pretence only; they still had a secret reserve for them. They kept

them up in their hearts; and, if they left them for awhile, it was *cum animo revertendi*,—with an intention to return to them,' not a final farewell. Or, it may be understood of spiritual idolatry, those whose affections are placed upon the wealth of the world and the pleasures of sense, whose god is their money, whose god is their belly; "They set up their idols in their hearts." Many that have no idols in their sanctuary yet have idols in their hearts, which is no less an usurpation of God's throne, and a profanation of his name. Little children keep yourselves from those idols. 2. "They put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face." Their silver and gold was called "the stumblingblock of their iniquity," *ch.* vii. 19; their idols of silver and gold, by the beauty of which they were allured to idolatry, and so it was the block at which they stumbled and fell into that sin. Or, their iniquity is their stumbling-block which throws them down, so that they fall into ruin. Note, Sinners are their own tempters. Every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust; and so they are their own destroyers. "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." And thus they put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their own faces, and stumble upon it, though they see it before their eyes. It intimates that they are resolved to go on in sin, whatever comes of it. "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;" that is the language of their hearts. And should God be inquired of by such wretches? Do they not hereby rather put an affront upon him than do him any honour, as those did that bowed the knee to Christ in mockery? Can they expect an answer of peace from God who thus continue their acts of hostility against him? Ezekiel, what thinkest thou of it?

Thirdly. The answer which God in just displeasure orders Ezekiel to give them, ver. 4. Let them know, that it is not out of any disrespect to their persons that God refuseth to give them an answer; but it is laid down as a rule for every man of the house of Israel, whoever he be, that if he continue in love and league with his idols, and come to inquire of God, God will resent it as an indignity done to him, and will answer him according to his real iniquity, not according to his pretended piety. He comes to the prophet, who he expects will be civil to him; but God will give him his answer by punishing him for his impudence. "I the Lord," who speak and it is done, "I will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols." Observe, Those that set up idols in their hearts, and set their hearts upon their idols, commonly have a multitude of them. Humble worshippers God uses to answer according to the multitude of his mercies; but bold intruders he answers according to the multitude of their idols; that is, 1. According to the desire of their idols. He will give them up to their own heart's lusts, and leave them to themselves to be as bad as they have a mind to be, till they have filled up the measure of their iniquity. Men's corruptions are idols in their hearts, and they are of their own setting up. Their temptations are the "stumblingblock of their iniquity," and they are of their own putting, and God will answer them accordingly; let them take their course. 2. According to the desert of their idols. They shall have such an answer as it is just such idolaters should have. God will punish them as he useth to punish idolaters; that is, when they stand in need of his help, he will send them to the gods whom they have chosen, *Jud.* x. 13, 14. Note, The judgment of God will deal with men according to what they are really, that is, according to what their hearts are, not according to what they are in shew and profession. And what will be the end of this? What will this threatened answer amount to? He tells them, ver. 5, "That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart," may lay them open to the world, that they may be ashamed; nay, lay them open to the curse, that they may be ruined. Note, The sin and shame, and pain and ruin of sinners, is all from themselves, and their own hearts are the snares in which they are taken; they seduce them, they betray them; their own consciences witness against them, condemn them, and are a terror to them. If God take them, if he discover them, if he convict them, if he bind them over to his judgment, it is all by their own hearts. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." The house of Israel is ruined by its own hands, "because they are all estranged from me through their idols." Note, 1st. The ruin of sinners is owing to their estrangement from God. 2nd. It is through some idol or other that the hearts of men are estranged from God; some creature has gained that place and dominion in the heart that God should have.

Fourthly. The extent of this answer God had given them. To all the house of Israel, ver. 7, 8. The same thing is repeated, which intimates God's just displeasure against hypocrites, who mock him with the shows and forms of devotion, while their hearts are estranged from him, and at war with him. Observe, 1. To whom this declaration belongs. It concerns not only "every one of the house of Israel," as before, ver. 4, but "the stranger that sojourns in Israel." Let him not think it will be an excuse for him in his idolatries that he is but a stranger and a sojourner in Israel, and doth but worship the gods that his father served, and that he himself was bred up in the service of; no, let him not expect any benefit by Israel's oracles or prophets unless he thoroughly renounce his idolatry. Note, Even proselytes shall not be countenanced if they be not sincere. A dissembled conversion is no conversion. 2. The description here given of hypocrites. They separate themselves from God. By their fellowship with idols they cut themselves off from their relation to God, and their interest in him; they break off their acquaintance and intercourse with him, and set themselves at a distance from him. Note, Those that join themselves to idols separate themselves from God. Nor shall any be for ever separated from the vision and fruition of God but such as now separate themselves from his service, and wilfully withdraw their allegiance from him. But there are those who thus separate themselves from God, and yet come to his prophets with a seeming respect and deference to their office, to inquire of them concerning God; either to satisfy a vain curiosity, or stop the mouth of a clamorous conscience, or to get or save a reputation among men, but without any desire to be acquainted with God, or any design to be ruled by him. 3. The doom of those that thus trifle with God and think to impose upon him. "I the Lord will answer him by myself." Let me alone to deal with him, I will give him an answer that shall fill him with confusion, that shall make him repent of his daring impiety. He shall have his answer, not by the words of the prophet, but by the judgments of God. "And I will set my face against that man;" which notes great displeasure against him, and a fixed resolution to ruin him. God can outface the most impenitent sinner. The hypocrite thought to save his credit, nay, and to gain applause; but, on the contrary, God will make him a sign and a proverb, that is, will inflict such judgments upon him as shall make him remarkable and contemptible in the eyes of all about him. His misery shall be made use of to express the greatest misery; as when the worst of sinners are said to have their portion appointed them with hypocrites, *Mat.* xxiv. 51. God will make him an example; his judgments upon him shall be for a warning to others to take heed of mocking God; for thus shall it be done to the man that separates himself from God, and yet pretends to inquire concerning him. The hypocrite thought to have passed for one of God's people, and to have crowded into heaven among them; but God will "cut him off from the midst of his people," will discover him, and pluck him out from the thickest of them. And by this, saith God, "ye shall know that I am the Lord." By the discovery of hypocrites it appears that God is omniscient. Ministers know not how people stand affected when they come to hear the word, but God doth. And by the punishment of hypocrites it appears he is a jealous God, and one that cannot, that will not, be imposed upon.

Fifthly. The doom of those pretenders to prophecy, who give countenance to those pretenders to piety, ver. 9, 10. These hypocritical inquirers—though Ezekiel will give them no comfortable answer—yet hope to meet with some other prophets that will; and if they do, as perhaps they may, let them know that God permits those lying prophets to deceive them in part of punishment. "If the prophet" that flatters them "be deceived," and gives them hopes which there is no ground for, "I the Lord have deceived that prophet," have suffered the temptation to be laid before him, and suffered him to yield to it, and overruled it for the hardening those in their wicked courses that were resolved to go on in them. We are sure that God is not the author of sin; but we are as sure that he is the Lord of all, and the Judge of sinners, and often makes use of one wicked man to destroy another, and so of one wicked man to deceive another. Both are sins in him who doth them, and so they are not from God. Both are punishments to him to whom they are done, and so they are from God. We have a full instance of this in the story of Ahab's prophets, who were deceived by a lying spirit which God put into their mouths, 1 *Kin.* xxii. 23; and another in those whom God gives "up to strong delusions to believe a lie, because they receive not the love of the truth," 2 *Thes.* ii. 11. But read the fearful doom of the lying prophet: "I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him." When God hath served his own righteous purposes by him he shall be reckoned with for his unrighteous purposes; as when God had made use of the Chaldeans for the wasting of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their rage, so when he had made use of false prophets, and afterwards of false Christs, for the deceiving of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their falsehood. But herein we must acknowledge—as Calvin upon this place minds us—that God's judgments are a great deep, that we are incompetent judges of them; and though we cannot account for the equity of God's proceedings in the satisfying and silencing of every caviller, yet there is a day coming when he will be justified before all the world; and particularly in this instance, when the punishment of the prophet that flattered the hypocrite in his evil way shall be as the punishment of the hypocrite that seeketh to him, and bespeaks smooth things only, *Isa.* xxx. 10. The ditch shall be the same to the blind leader and the blind followers.

Sixthly. The good counsel that is given them for the preventing of this fearful doom; ver. 6, "Therefore repent, and turn yourselves from your idols." Let this separate between you and them, that they separate between you and God. Because they set God's face against you, do you turn away your faces from them? which notes not only forsaking them, but forsaking them with loathing and detestation. Turn from them as from abominations that you are sick of! And then you will be welcome to inquire of the Lord: "Come now, and let us reason together."

Seventhly. The good issue of all this, as to the house of Israel. Therefore the pretending prophets and the pretending saints shall perish together by the judgments of God, that, some being made examples, the body of the people may be reformed. "That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me," ver. 11. Note, The punishments of some are designed for the prevention of sin, that others may hear, and fear, and take warning. When we see what comes of those that go astray from God, we should thereby be engaged to keep close to him; and if the house of Israel go not astray, they will not be polluted any more. Note, Sin is a polluting thing; it renders the sinner odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and in his own eyes too whenever conscience is awakened. And therefore they shall "no more be polluted, that they may be my people, and I may be their God." Note, Those whom God takes into covenant with himself, must first be cleansed from the pollutions of sin; and those who are so cleansed shall not only be saved from ruin, but be entitled to all the privileges of God's people.

12 The word of the LORD came again to me, saying, 13 Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: 14 Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver *but* their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD. 15 If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: 16 *Though* these three men *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. 17 Or *if* I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: 18 Though these three men *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves. 19 Or *if* I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: 20 Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, *were* in it, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall *but* deliver their own souls by their

righteousness. 21 For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? 22 Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, *both* sons and daughters: behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, *even* concerning all that I have brought upon it. 23 And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings: and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD.

The scope of these verses is to shew,

First. That *national sins bring national judgments.* When virtue is ruined and laid waste, every thing else will soon be ruined and laid waste too; ver. 13, "When the land sinneth against me," when vice and wickedness become epidemical,—when the land sinneth by trespassing grievously, when the sinners are become very numerous, and their sins very heinous, when gross impieties and immoralities universally prevail,—then will I stretch forth mine hand upon it, for the punishment of it. The Divine power shall be vigorously and openly exerted; the judgments shall be extended and stretched forth to all the corners of the land, to all the concerns and interests of the nation: grievous sins bring grievous plagues.

Secondly. That *God has variety of sore judgments wherewith to punish sinful nations,* and he has them all at command, and inflicts which he pleaseth. He did indeed refer it to David what judgment he would be punished with for his sin in numbering the people; for any of them would serve to answer the end, which was to lessen the numbers he was proud of. But David in effect referred it to God again: "Let us fall into the hands of the Lord;" let him choose with what rod we shall be beaten. But he useth a variety of judgments, that it may appear he hath a universal dominion, and that in all our concerns we may see our dependence on him. Four sore judgments are here instanced in: 1. Famine. The denying and withholding of common mercies is itself judgment enough; there needs no more to make a people miserable. God needs not bring the staff of oppression; it is but breaking the staff of bread, and the work is soon done. He cuts off man and beast by cutting off the provisions which nature makes for both in the annual products of the earth. God breaks the staff of bread when, though we have bread, yet we are not nourished and strengthened by it; *Hag.* i. 6, "Ye eat, but ye have not enough." 2. Hurtful beasts, noisome and noxious, either as poisonous or as ravenous. God can make these to pass through the land, to increase in all parts of it, and to bereave it, not only of the tame cattle, preying upon their flocks and herds, but of their people, devouring men, women, and children, so that "no man may pass through because of the beasts;" none dare travel, even in the high-roads, for fear of being pulled in pieces by lions, or other beasts of prey, as the children of Bethel by two bears. Note, When men revolt from their allegiance to God, and rebel against him, it is just with God that the inferior creatures should rise up in arms against man, *Lev.* xxvi. 22. 3. War. God often chastiseth sinful nations by bringing a sword upon them, the sword of a foreign enemy, and he gives it its commission, and orders what execution it shall do; ver. 17, "He saith, Sword, go through the land." It is bad enough if the sword do but enter into the borders of a land, but much worse when it goes through the bowels of a land; then by it God cuts off man and beast, horse and foot. What execution the sword doth God doth by it; for it is his sword, and it acts as he directs. 4. Pestilence. A dreadful disease which hath sometimes depopulated cities; by it God "pours out his fury in blood," that is, in death. The pestilence kills as effectually as if the blood were shed by the sword; for it is poisoned by the disease,—the sickness we call it. See how miserable the case of mankind is, that lies thus exposed to deaths in various shapes; see how dangerous the case of sinners is, against whom God hath so many ways of fighting, so that, though they escape one judgment, God has another waiting for them.

Thirdly. That *when God's professing people revolt from him, and rebel against him, they may justly expect a complication of judgments to fall upon them.* God has various ways of contending with a sinful nation; but if Jerusalem, the holy city, become a harlot, God will send upon her all his four sore judgments, ver. 21; for the nearer any are to God in name and profession the more severely will he reckon with them if they reproach that worthy name by which they are called, and give the lie to that profession they shall be punished seven times more.

Fourthly. That *it is possible there may be, and commonly there are, some few very good men, even in those places that by sin are ripened for ruin.* It is no foreign supposition, that even in a land that has trespassed grievously there may be three such men as Noah, Daniel, and Job. Daniel was now living, and at this time scarce arrived to the prime of his eminency, but he was already famous, at least this word of God concerning him would, without fail, make him so; but he was carried away into captivity with the first of all, *Dan.* i. 1. Some of the better sort of people in Jerusalem might perhaps think, if Daniel, of whose fame, in the king of Babylon's court, they had heard much, had but continued in Jerusalem, it had been spared for his sake, as the magicians in Babylon were. No, saith God, though you had him who was so eminently good in bad times and places, as Noah in the old world, and Job in the land of Uz, yet a reprieve should not be obtained. In the places that are most corrupt, and in the ages that are most degenerate, yet there is a remnant which God reserves for himself, and which still hold fast their integrity, and stand fair for the honour of delivering the land, as the innocent are said to do, *Job* xxii. 30.

Fifthly. That *God oftentimes spares very wicked places for the sake of a few godly people in them.* This is implied here as the expectation of Jerusalem's friends in the day of its distress. Surely God will stay his controversy with us; for are there not some among us that are emptying the measure of national guilt by their prayers, as others are filling it by their sins? And, rather than God will destroy the righteous with the wicked, he will preserve the wicked with the righteous. If Sodom might have been spared for the sake of ten good men, sure Jerusalem may.

Sixthly. That *such men as Noah, Daniel, and Job will prevail, if any can, to turn away the wrath of God from a sinful people.* Noah was a perfect man, and kept his integrity, when all flesh had corrupted their way; and for his sake his family, though one of them was wicked Ham, was saved in the ark. Job was a great example of piety, and mighty in prayer for his children, for his friends; and God turned his captivity when he prayed. Those were very ancient examples, before Moses that great intercessor; and therefore God mentions them, to intimate that he had some very peculiar favourites long before the Jewish nation was formed and founded, and would have such when it was ruined; for which reason, it should seem, those names were made use of rather than Moses, Aaron, or Samuel. And yet, lest any should think that God was partial in his respects to the ancient days, here is a modern instance, a living one, placed between those two that were the glories of antiquity, and he now a captive, and that is Daniel, to teach us not to lessen the useful good men of our own day, by over magnifying the ancients. Let the children of the captivity know that Daniel their neighbour and companion in tribulation, being a man of great humility, piety, and zeal for God, and instant and constant in prayer, had as good an interest in heaven as Noah or Job had. Why may not God raise up as great and good men now as he did formerly, and do as much for them?

Seventhly. That *when the sin of a people is come to its height, and the decree is gone forth for their ruin, the piety and prayers of the best men shall not prevail to make up the controversy.* This is here asserted again and again, that though these three men were in Jerusalem at this time, yet "they should deliver neither son nor daughter;" not so much as the little ones should be spared for their sakes, as the little ones of Israel were upon the prayer of Moses, *Num.* xiv. 31. No, "the land shall be desolate," and God will not hear their prayers for it, "though Moses and Samuel stood before him," *Jer.* xv. 1. Note, Abused patience will turn at last into inexorable wrath. And it should seem as if God would be more inexorable in Jerusalem's case than in another, ver. 6, because, besides the Divine patience, they had enjoyed greater privileges than any people beside, which were the aggravations of their sin.

Eighthly. That *though pious praying men may not prevail to deliver others, yet they shall deliver their own souls by their righteousness;* so that, though they may suffer in the common calamity, yet to them the property of it is altered. It is not that to them that it is to the wicked; it is unstung, and doth them no hurt; it is sanctified, and doth them good. Sometimes their souls, that is, their lives, are remarkably delivered, and given them for a prey. However their souls, that is, their spiritual interests, are secured; if their bodies be not delivered, yet their souls are. "Riches" indeed "profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death," from so great a death, so many deaths, as are here threatened. This should encourage us to keep our integrity in times of common apostacy; that if we do so, we shall be "hid in the day of the Lord's anger."

Ninthly. That, *even then when God makes the greatest desolations by his judgments, he reserves some to be the monuments of his mercy,* ver. 22, 23. In Jerusalem itself, though marked for utter ruin, yet "there shall be left a remnant," that shall not be cut off by any of those sore judgments before mentioned, but shall be carried into captivity, both sons and daughters, that shall be the seed of a new generation; the young ones that were not grown up to such an obstinacy in sin as their fathers were, who were therefore cut off as incurable. These shall be brought forth out of the ruins of Jerusalem by the victorious enemy. And, behold, "They shall come forth to you that are in captivity;" they shall make a virtue of necessity, and shall come the more willingly into Babylon, because so many of their friends are gone thither before them, and are there ready to receive them. And when they come, "ye shall see their ways and their doings;" that is, you shall hear them make a free and ingenuous confession of the sins they had formerly been guilty of, and an humble profession of repentance for them, with promises of reformation; and you shall see instances of their reformation, shall see what good their affliction hath done them, and how prudently and patiently they carry themselves under it. The good effect their narrow escape shall have upon them; it shall change their temper and conversation, and make them new men. And this will redound, 1. To the satisfaction of their brethren; "They shall comfort you when ye see their ways." Note, It is a very comfortable sight to see people when they are under the rod, repenting and humbling themselves, justifying God, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity. When we sorrow, as we ought to do, for the afflictions of others, it is a great comfort to us in our sorrow to see them improving their afflictions, and making a good use of them. When those captives told their friends how bad they had been, and how righteous God was in bringing these judgments upon them, it made them very easy, and helped to reconcile them to the calamities of Jerusalem, to the justice of God, in punishing his own people so, and to the goodness of God, which now appeared to have had kind intentions in all. And thus "ye shall be comforted concerning all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem;" and, when you better understand the thing, shall not have such direful apprehensions concerning it as you have had. Note, It is a debt we owe to our brethren, if we have got good by our affliction, to comfort them by letting them know it. 2. It will redound to the honour of God. "Ye shall know that I have not done it without cause," not without a just provocation, and yet not without a gracious design, "all that I have done in it." Note, When afflictions have done their work, and have accomplished that for which they were sent, then will appear the wisdom and goodness of God in sending them; and God will not only be justified, but glorified in them.

CHAPTER XV.

Ezekiel has again and again, in God's name, foretold the utter ruin of Jerusalem; but it should seem he finds it hard to reconcile himself to it, and to acquiesce in the will of God in this severe dispensation; and therefore God takes various methods to satisfy him not only that it shall be so, but that there is no remedy: it must be so, it is fit it should be so. Here, in this short chapter, he shews him (probably with design that he should tell the people) that it was as requisite Jerusalem should be destroyed as that the dead and withered branches of a vine should be cut off and thrown into the fire. I. The similitude is very elegant, ver. 1—5. But, II. The reddition of the similitude is very dreadful, ver. 6—8.

AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree,
Or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest?
3 Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work?
Or will *men* take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?
4 Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel;

The fire devoureth both the ends of it,
And the midst of it is burned.
Is it meet for *any* work?
5 Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work:
How much less shall it be meet yet for *any* work,
When the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned?
6 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
As the vine tree among the trees of the forest,
Which I have given to the fire for fuel,
So will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
7 And I will set my face against them;
They shall go out from *one* fire,
And *another* fire shall devour them;
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I set my face against them.
8 And I will make the land desolate, [GOD.
Because they have committed a trespass, saith the Lord

The prophet, we may suppose, was thinking what a glorious city Jerusalem was above any city in the world. It was the crown and joy of the whole earth and therefore what pity it was that it should be destroyed. It was a noble structure, the city of God, and the city of Israel's solemnities. But if these were the thoughts of his heart, God here returns answer to them, by comparing Jerusalem to a vine.

First. It is true, if a vine be fruitful, it is a most valuable tree, none more so. It was one of those that were courted to have dominion over the trees, and the fruit of it is such as cheers God and man, *Jud.* ix. 12, 13; it "makes glad the heart," *Ps.* civ. 15. So "Jerusalem was planted a choice and noble vine, wholly a right seed," *Jer.* ii. 21; and, if it had brought forth fruit suitable to its character as a holy city, it would have been the glory both of God and Israel. It was a vine which God's right hand had planted, a branch out of a dry ground, which, though its original was mean and despicable, God had made strong for himself, *Ps.* lxxx. 15, to be to him for a name, and for a praise.

Secondly. But if it be not fruitful it is good for nothing; it is as worthless and useless a product of the earth as even thorns and briars are. "What is the vine-tree," if you take the tree by itself, without consideration of the fruit? "What is it more than any tree," that it should have so much care taken of it, and so much cost laid out upon it? What is a branch of the vine, though it spread more "than a branch which is among the trees of the forest," where it grows neglected and exposed? Or, as some read it, 'What is the vine more than any tree, if the branch of it be as the trees of the forest?' that is, if it bear no fruit, as forest trees seldom do; being designed for timber trees, not fruit trees. Now there are some fruit trees which, if they do not bear, yet the wood of them is of good use, and may be made to turn to a good account. But the vine is none of those; if that do not answer its end, as a fruit tree, it is worth nothing for a timber tree. Observe,

1. How this similitude is expressed here. The wild vine, that is among the trees of the forest, or the empty vine, (which Israel is compared to, *Hos.* x. 1,) that bears no more fruit than a forest tree, is good for nothing, it is as useless as a briar, and more so, for that will add some sharpness to the thorny hedge, which the vine branch will not. He shews, 1st. That it is fit for no use. The wood of it is not taken to do any work; one cannot so much as "make a pin of it to hang a vessel upon," ver. 2. See how variously the gifts of nature are dispensed for the service of man: among plants, the roots of some, the seeds or fruits of others, the leaves of others, and of some the stalks, are most serviceable to us: so among trees, some are strong, and not fruitful, as the oaks and cedars; others weak, but very fruitful, as the vine, which is unsightly, low, and depending, yet of great use. Rachel is comely, but barren; Leah homely, but fruitful. 2nd. That therefore it is made use of for fuel; it will serve to heat the oven with. Because it is not meet for any work, it is cast into the fire, ver. 4. When it is good for nothing else, it is useful this way, and answers a very needful intention, for fuel is a thing we must have; and to burn any thing for fuel which is good for other work is ill husbandry; "To what purpose is this waste?" The unfruitful vine is disposed of the same way with the briars and thorns, which are rejected, and whose end is to be burned, *Heb.* vi. 8; and what care is taken of it then? If a piece of solid timber be kindled, somebody perhaps may snatch it as a brand out of the burning, and say, it is pity to burn it, for it may be put to some better use. But if the branch of a vine be on fire, and, as usual, both the ends of it and the middle are kindled together, nobody goes about to save it. "When it was whole it was meet for no work, much less when the fire has devoured it," ver. 5; even the ashes of it are not worth saving.

2. How this similitude is applied to Jerusalem.

1st. That holy city was become unprofitable, and good for nothing. It had been as the vine-tree among the trees of the vineyard, abounding in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. When religion flourished there, and the pure worship of God was kept up, many a joyful vintage was then gathered in from it. And while it continued so God made a hedge about it; it was his "pleasant plant," *Isa.* v. 7, he watered it every moment, and kept it night and day, *Isa.* xxvii. 3. But it was now become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, of a wild vine, such as we read of, 2 *Kin.* iv. 39, "a vine-tree among the trees of the forest," which, being wild, "bringeth forth wild grapes," *Isa.* v. 4, which are not only of no use, but are nauseous and noxious, *Deu.* xxxii. 32, "their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter." It is explained, ver. 8, "They have trespassed a trespass;" that is, they have treacherously prevaricated with God, and perfidiously apostatized from him, for so the word signifies. Note, Professors of religion, if they do not live up to their profession, but contradict it, if they degenerate and depart from it, are the most unprofitable creatures in the world, like the salt that has lost its savour, and is thenceforth good for nothing, *Mar.* ix. 50. Other nations were famed for valour or politics, some for war, others for trade, and retained their credit; but the Jewish nation being famous for a holy people, when they lost their holiness, and became wicked, were thenceforth good for nothing: with that they lost all their credit and usefulness, and became the most base and despicable people under the sun, "trodden under foot of the Gentiles." Daniel and other pious Jews were of great use to their generation; but the idolatrous Jews then, and the unbelieving Jews now, since the preaching of the Gospel, have been, and are, of no common service, not fit for any work.

2nd. Being so, it is given to the fire for fuel, ver. 6. Note, Those that are not fruitful to the glory of God's grace shall be fuel to the fire of his wrath; and thus, if they give not honour to him, he will get him honour upon them, honour that will shine bright in that flaming fire by which impenitent sinners will be for ever consumed. He will not be a loser at last by any of his creatures; "The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea even the wicked," that would not otherwise be for him, "for the day of evil," *Pr.* xvi. 4. And they who would not glorify him as the God to whom duty belongs, in them he will be glorified as the God to whom vengeance belongs. The fire of God's wrath had before devoured both the ends of the Jewish nation, ver. 4. Samaria, and the cities of Judah, and now Jerusalem, that was the midst of it, was thrown into the fire to be burnt too; for it is meet for no work, it will not be wrought upon by any of the methods God has taken to be serviceable to him. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were like a vine-branch, rotten and awkward; and therefore; ver. 7, "I will set my face against them" to thwart all their counsels, as they set their faces against God to contradict his word, and defeat all his designs. It is decreed, the consumption is determined, "I will make the land quite desolate;" and therefore, "when they go out from one fire, another fire shall devour them," ver. 7. The end of one judgment shall be the beginning of another, and their escape from one only a reprieve till another comes. They shall go from misery in their own country to misery in Babylon. They that kept out of the way of the sword perished by famine or pestilence. When one descent of the Chaldean forces upon them was over, and they thought surely the bitterness of death is past, yet soon after they returned again with double violence, till they had made a full end. Thus "they shall know that I am the Lord," a God of almighty power, "when I set my face against them." Note, God shews himself to be the Lord by perfecting the destruction of his implacable enemies, as well as the deliverances of his obedient people. Those against whom God sets his face, though they may come out of one trouble little hurt, will fall into another; though they come out of the pit, will be taken in the snare, *Isa.* xxiv. 18; though they escape the sword of Hazael, will fall by that of Jehu, 1 *Kin.* xix. 17; for evil pursues sinners. Nay, though they go out from the fire of temporal judgments, and seem to die in peace, yet there is an everlasting fire that will devour them; for when God judgeth, first or last, he will overcome, and will be known by the judgments which he executeth: see *Mat.* iii. 10; *Jno.* xv. 6.

CHAPTER XVI.

Still God is justifying himself in the desolations he is about to bring upon Jerusalem; and very largely in this chapter he shews the prophet, and orders him to shew the people, that he did but punish them as their sins deserved. In the foregoing chapter he had compared Jerusalem to an unfruitful vine, that was fit for nothing but the fire. In this chapter he compares it to an adulteress, that, in justice, ought to be abandoned and exposed. And he must therefore shew the people their abominations, that they might see how little reason they had to complain of the judgments they were under. In this long discourse are set forth, I. The despicable and deplorable beginnings of that church and nation, ver. 3—5. II. The many honours and favours God had bestowed upon them, ver. 6—14. III. Their treacherous and ungrateful departures from him to the services and worship of idols, here represented by the most impudent whoredom, ver. 15—34. IV. A threatening of terrible destroying judgments which God would bring upon them for this sin, ver. 35—43. V. An aggravation both of their sin and of their punishment, by comparison with Sodom and Samaria, ver. 44—59. VI. A promise of mercy, in the close, which God would shew to a penitent remnant, ver. 60—63. And this is designed for admonition to us.

AGAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, 3 And say,

Thus saith the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem;
Thy birth and thy nativity *is* of the land of Canaan;
Thy father *was* an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.
4 And *as for* thy nativity, [cut,
In the day thou wast born thy navel was not
Neither wast thou washed in water to supple *thee;* [all.
Thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at
5 None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee,
To have compassion upon thee;
But thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person,
In the day that thou wast born.

CHILD SWADDLED.

Ezekiel is now among the captives in Babylon; but, as Jeremiah at Jerusalem wrote for the use of the captives, though they had Ezekiel upon the spot with them, *Jer.* xxix., so Ezekiel wrote for the use of Jerusalem, though Jeremiah himself was resident there; and yet they were far from looking upon it as an affront to one another, or interfering with one another's business, for ministers have need of one another's help, both by preaching and writing. Jeremiah wrote to the captives for their consolation, which was the thing they needed; Ezekiel here is directed to write to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their conviction and humiliation, which was the thing they needed. This is his commission; ver. 2, "Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations," that is, her sins; set them in order before her. Note, 1. Sins are not only provocations which God is angry at, but abominations which he hates, as contrary to his nature, and which we ought to hate, *Jer.* xliv. 4. 2. The sins of Jerusalem are in a special manner so. The practice of profaneness appears most odious in those that make a profession of religion. 3. Though Jerusalem is a place of great knowledge, yet she is loath to know her abominations. So partial are men in their own favour, that they are hardly made to see and own their own badness, but deny it, palliate or extenuate it. 4. It is requisite that we should know our sins, that we may confess them, and may justify God in what he brings upon us for them. 5. It is the work of ministers to cause

sinners, sinners in Jerusalem, to know their abominations; to set before them the glass of the law, that in it they may see their own deformities and defilements; to tell them plainly of their faults: "Thou art the man." Now, that Jerusalem may be made to know her abominations, and particularly the abominable ingratitude she had been guilty of, it was requisite she should be put in mind of the great things God had done for her, as the aggravations of her ill carriage towards him. And, to magnify those favours, she is in these verses made to know the meanness and baseness of her original; from what poor beginnings God raised her, and how unworthy she was of his favour, and of the honour he had put upon her. Jerusalem is here put for the Jewish church and nation, which is here compared to an outcast child, baseborn and abandoned, which the mother herself has no affection or concern for.

First. The extraction of the Jewish nation was mean. "Thy birth is of the land of Canaan," ver. 3; that is, thou hadst from the very first the spirit and disposition of a Canaanite. The patriarchs dwelt in Canaan, and they were there but strangers and sojourners, had no possession, no power, not one foot of ground of their own, but a burying-place. Abraham and Sarah were indeed their father and mother, but they were only inmates with the Amorites and Hittites, who, having the dominion, seemed to be as parents to the seed of Abraham. Witness the court Abraham made to the children of Heth, *Gen.* xxiii. 4, 8, and the dependence they had upon their neighbours the Canaanites, and the fear they were in of them, *Gen.* xiii. 7; xxxiv. 30. If the patriarchs at their first coming to Canaan had conquered it, and made themselves masters of it, it had put an honour upon their family, and had looked great in history; but instead of that they went "from one nation to another," *Ps.* cv. 13, as tenants from one farm to another, almost as beggars from one door to another, when they were but few in number, yea very few. And yet this was not the worst: their fathers had served other gods in Ur of the Chaldees, *Jos.* xxiv. 2; even in Jacob's family there were strange gods, *Gen.* xxxv. 2. Thus early had they a genius leading them to idolatry, and upon this account their ancestors were Amorites and Hittites.

Secondly. When they first began to multiply, their condition was really very deplorable, like that of a new-born child, which must of necessity die from the womb, if the knees prevent it not, *Job* iii. 11, 12. The children of Israel, when they began to increase into a people, and became considerable, were thrown out from the country that was intended for them, a famine drove them thence. Egypt was the open field into which they were cast; there they had no protection or countenance from the government they were under; but, on the contrary, were ruled with rigour; and their lives embittered. They had no encouragement given them to build up their families, no help to build up their estates, no friends or allies to strengthen their interests. Joseph, that had been the shepherd and stone of Israel, was dead. The king of Egypt, that should have been kind to them for Joseph's sake, set himself to destroy this man-child "as soon as it was born," *Rev.* xii. 4; ordered all the males to be slain, which, it is likely, occasioned the exposing of many, as well as Moses, to which perhaps the similitude here has reference. The founders of nations and cities had occasion for all the arts and arms they were masters of, set their heads on work by policies and stratagems to preserve and nurse up their infant states; *tantæ molis erat Romanam condre gentem*,—'so vast were the efforts requisite to the establishment of the Roman name,'—*Virg.* But the nation of Israel had no such care taken of it, no such pains taken with it, as Athens, Sparta, Rome, and other commonwealths had when they were first founded; but, on the contrary, was doomed to destruction, like an infant new born, exposed to wind and weather, the navel string not cut, the poor babe not washed, not clothed, not swaddled, because not pitied, ver. 4, 5. Note, We owe the preservation of our infant lives to that natural pity and compassion which the God of nature has put into the hearts of parents and nurses towards new-born children. This infant is said to be cast out to the loathing of her person. It was a sign she was loathed by those that bare her; and she appeared loathsome to all that looked upon her. The Israelites were an abomination to the Egyptians, as we find, *Gen.* xliii. 32; xlvi. 34. Some think this refers to the corrupt and vicious disposition of that people from their beginning. They were not only "the weakest and fewest of all people," *Deu.* vii. 7, but the worst and most ill-humoured of all people. "God giveth thee this good land, not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people," *Deu.* ix. 6. And Moses tells them there; ver. 24, "You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you." They were not suppled, nor washed, nor swaddled; they were not at all tractable or manageable, nor cast into any good shape. God took them to be his people, not because he saw any thing in them inviting or promising, but so it seemed good in his sight; and it is a very apt illustration of the miserable condition of all the children of men by nature. "As for our nativity, in the day that we were born" we were shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin; our understandings darkened, our minds alienated from the life of God, polluted with sin, which rendered us loathsome in the eyes of God. "Marvel not" then that we are told "we must be born again."

6 And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood,
I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live;
Yea, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live.
7 I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field,
And thou hast increased and waxen great,
And thou art come to excellent ornaments:
Thy breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown,
Whereas thou *wast* naked and bare.
8 Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee,
Behold, thy time *was* the time of love; [ness:
And I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedYea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with
Saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine. [thee,
9 Then washed I thee with water;
Yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee,
And I anointed thee with oil.
10 I clothed thee also with broidered work,
And shod thee with badgers' skin,
And I girded thee about with fine linen,
And I covered thee with silk.
11 I decked thee also with ornaments,
And I put bracelets upon thy hands,
And a chain on thy neck.
12 And I put a jewel on thy forehead,
And earrings in thine ears,
And a beautiful crown upon thine head.

EGYPTIAN QUEEN IN FULL DRESS.

13 Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver;
And thy raiment *was of* fine linen, and silk, and broidered work;
Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil:
And thou wast exceeding beautiful,
And thou didst prosper into a kingdom. [beauty:
14 And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy
For it *was* perfect through my comeliness,
Which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.

In these verses we have an account of the great things which God did for the Jewish nation, in raising them up by degrees to be very considerable.

First. God saved them from the ruin they were upon the brink of in Egypt; ver. 6, "When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood," loathed, and abandoned, and appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, "then I said unto thee, Live." I designed thee for life when thou wast doomed to destruction, and resolved to save thee from death. Those shall live to whom God commands life. God looked upon the world of mankind as thus cast off, thus cast out, thus polluted, thus weltering in blood, and his thoughts towards it were thoughts of good, designing it life, and that more abundantly. By converting grace he saith to the soul, "Live."

Secondly. He looked upon them with kindness and a tender affection. Not only pitied them, but set his love upon them; which was unaccountable, for there was nothing lovely in them; but "I looked upon thee, and behold thy time was the time of love," ver. 8. It was the kindness and love of God our Saviour that sent Christ to redeem us, that sends the Spirit to sanctify us, that brought us out of a state of nature into a state of grace. That was a time of love indeed, distinguishing love, when God manifested his love to us, and courted our love to him; "Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour," *Cant.* viii. 10.

Thirdly. He took them under his protection. "I spread my skirt over thee," to shelter thee from wind and weather, and "to cover thy nakedness, that the shame of it might not appear." Boaz spread his skirt over Ruth in token of the special favour he designed her, *Ru.* iii. 9. God took them in his care, as an eagle bears her young ones upon her wings, *Deu.* xxxii. 11, 12. When God owned them for his people, and sent Moses to Egypt to deliver them, which was an expression of the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush, then he spread his skirt over them.

Fourthly. He cleared them from the reproachful character which their bondage in Egypt laid them under; ver. 9, "Then washed I thee with water," to make thee clean, "and anointed thee with oil," to make thee sweet, and supple thee. All the disgrace of their slavery was rolled away when they were brought with a high hand, and a stretched-out arm, "into the glorious liberty of the children of God;" when God saith, "Israel is my son, my firstborn, let my people go, that they may serve me." That word, backed as it was with so many works of wonder, "thoroughly washed away their blood;" and, when God led them under the convoy of the pillar of cloud and fire, he "spread his skirt over them."

Fifthly. He multiplied them, and built them up into a people. This is here mentioned, ver. 7, before his spreading his skirt over them, because their numbers increased exceedingly, while they were yet bond slaves in Egypt. They "multiplied as the bud of the field" in spring time; they "waxed great, exceeding mighty," *Ex.* i. 7, 20; their "breasts were fashioned" when they were formed into distinct tribes, and had officers of their own, *Ex.* v. 19. Their hair grew when they grew numerous, whereas they had been naked and bare, very few, and therefore contemptible.

Sixthly. He admitted them into covenant with himself. See what glorious nuptials this poor, forlorn infant is preferred to at last; how she is dignified, who at first had scarce her life given her for a prey. "I sware unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee." This was done at mount Sinai, when the covenant between God and Israel was ratified and sealed; then "Thou becamest mine." God called them his people, and himself the God of Israel. Note, Those to whom God gives spiritual life he takes into covenant with himself; by that covenant they become his: his subjects and servants, that speaks their duty; his portion, his treasure, that speaks their privilege. And it is confirmed with an oath, that we might have strong consolation.

Seventhly. He beautified and adorned them. This maid cannot forget her ornaments, and she is gratified with abundance of them, ver. 10—13. We need not be particular in the application of these. Her wardrobe was well furnished with rich apparel; they had embroidered work to wear, shoes of fine badgers' skins, linen girdles, and silk veils, bracelets and necklaces, jewels and earrings, and even a beautiful crown, or coronet. Perhaps this may refer to the jewels and other rich goods which they took from the Egyptians; which might well be spoken of thus long after as a merciful circumstance of their deliverance, when it was spoken of long before, *Gen.* xv. 14, "They shall come out with great substance." Or, it may be taken figuratively, for all those blessings of heaven which adorned both their church and state. In a little time they came to excellent ornaments, ver. 7. The laws and ordinances which God gave them were to them as ornaments of grace to the head, and chains about the neck, *Pr.* i. 9. God's sanctuary which he set up among them was a beautiful crown upon their head, it was the beauty of holiness.

Eighthly. He fed them with abundance, with plenty, with dainty. "Thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil;" manna, angels' food; "honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock." In Canaan they did eat bread to the full, the finest of the wheat, *Deu.* xxxii. 13, 14. Those whom God takes into covenant with himself are fed with the bread of life, clothed with the robe of righteousness, adorned with the graces and comforts of the Spirit; "the hidden man of the heart is that which is incorruptible."

Ninthly. He gave them a great reputation among their neighbours, and made them considerable; acceptable to their friends and allies, and formidable to their adversaries. "Thou didst prosper into a kingdom," ver. 13; which speaks both dignity and dominion; and, ver. 14, "Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty." The nations about had their eye upon them, and admired them for the excellent laws by which they were governed, the privilege they had of access to God, *Deu.* iv. 7, 8. Solomon's wisdom and Solomon's temple were very much the renown of that nation; and, if we put all the privileges of the Jewish church and kingdom together, we must own it was the most accomplished beauty of all the nations of the earth. The beauty of it was perfect, you could not name the thing that would be the honour of a people, but it was to be found in Israel, in David's and Solomon's time, when that kingdom was in its zenith: piety, learning, wisdom, justice, victory, peace, wealth; and all sure to continue if they had kept close to God. "It was perfect," saith God, "through my comeliness which I had put upon thee;" that is, through the beauty of their holiness, as they were a people set apart for God, and devoted to him, to be to him "for a name, for a praise, and for a glory." This was it that put a lustre upon all their other honours, and was indeed the perfection of their beauty. We may apply this spiritually: sanctified souls are truly beautiful; they are so in God's sight, and they themselves may take the comfort of it. But God must have all the glory, for they were by nature deformed and polluted; and whatever comeliness they have it is that which God has put upon them, and beautified them with, and he will be well pleased with the work of his own hands.

15 But thou didst trust in thine own beauty,
And playedst the harlot because of thy renown,
And pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was.
16 And of thy garments thou didst take,
And deckedst thy high places with divers colours,
And playedst the harlot thereupon:
The like things shall not come, neither shall it be *so*.
17 Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels
Of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee,
And madest to thyself images of men,
And didst commit whoredom with them,
18 And tookest thy broidered garments, and coveredst them:
And thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them.
19 My meat also which I gave thee,
Fine flour, and oil, and honey, *wherewith* I fed thee,
Thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour:
And *thus* it was, saith the Lord GOD.
20 Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters,
Whom thou hast borne unto me,
And these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured.
Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter,
21 That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them
To cause them to pass through *the fire* for them?
22 And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms
Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth,
When thou wast naked and bare, *and* wast polluted in thy blood.
23 And it came to pass after all thy wickedness,
(Woe, woe unto thee! saith the Lord GOD;)
24 *That* thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place,
And hast made thee an high place in every street.
25 Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way,
And hast made thy beauty to be abhorred,
And hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by,
And multiplied thy whoredoms.
26 Thou hast also committed fornication
With the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh;
And hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. [thee,
27 Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over
And have diminished thine ordinary *food*,
And delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee,
The daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way.
28 Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians,
Because thou wast unsatiable;
Yea, thou hast played the harlot with them,
And yet couldest not be satisfied.
29 Thou hast moreover multiplied thy fornication
In the land of Canaan unto Chaldea;
And yet thou wast not satisfied herewith.
30 How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord GOD,
Seeing thou doest all these *things*,
The work of an imperious whorish woman;
31 In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way,
And makest thine high place in every street;
And hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire;
32 *But as* a wife that committeth adultery,
Which taketh strangers instead of her husband!
33 They give gifts to all whores:
But thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, [side
And hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every
For thy whoredom. [whoredoms,
34 And the contrary is in thee from *other* women in thy
Whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms:
And in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given
Therefore thou art contrary. [unto thee,

In these verses we have an account of the great wickedness of the people of Israel, especially in worshipping idols, notwithstanding the great favours that God had conferred upon them, by which one would think they should have been for ever engaged to him. This wickedness of theirs is here represented by the lewd and scandalous conversation of that beautiful maid which was rescued from ruin, brought up and well provided for by a kind friend and benefactor, that had been in all respects as a father and a husband to her.

First. Their idolatry was the great provoking sin that they were guilty of. It began in the latter end of Solomon's time, (for from Samuel's till then I do not remember that we read any thing of it,) and from thence continued more or less the crying sin of that nation till the captivity. And though it now and then met with some check from the reforming kings, yet it was never totally suppressed, and for the most part appeared to a high degree impudent and bare-faced. They not only worshipped the true God by images, as the ten tribes by the calves at Dan and Bethel, but they worshipped false gods, Baal and Moloch, and all the senseless rabble of the pagan deities.

Secondly. This is that which is here all along represented (as often elsewhere) under the similitude of whoredom and adultery. 1. Because it is the violation of a marriage covenant with God, forsaking him, and embracing the bosom of a stranger; it is giving that affection and service to his rivals which are due to him alone. 2. Because it is the corrupting and defiling of the mind, and the enslaving of the spiritual part of the man, and subjecting it to the power and dominion of sense, as whoredom is. 3. Because it debaucheth the conscience, sears and hardens it; and those who by their idolatries dishonour the Divine nature, and change the truth of God into a lie, and his glory into shame, God justly punisheth by giving them over to a reprobate mind, to dishonour the human nature with vile affections, *Rom.* i. 23, &c. It is a besotting, bewitching sin; and when men are given up to it they seldom recover themselves out of the snare. 4. Because it is a shameful, scandalous sin, for those that have joined themselves to the Lord to join themselves to an idol. Now here observe,

1st. What were the causes of this sin. How came the people of God to be drawn away to the service of idols? How came a virgin so well taught, so well educated, to be debauched? Who would have thought it? But, *First*. They grew proud; ver. 15, "Thou trustedst to thy beauty," and didst expect that that should make thee an interest, and didst "play the harlot because of thy renown." They thought, because they were so complimented and admired by their neighbours, that, farther to ingratiate themselves with them, and return their compliments, they must join with them in their worship, and conform themselves to their usages. Solomon admitted idolatry to gratify his wives and their relations. Note, Abundance of young people are ruined by pride, and particularly pride in their beauty; *rara est concordia formæ atque pudicitiæ*,—'beauty and chastity are seldom associated.' *Secondly*. They forgot their beginning; ver. 22, "Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth;" how poor, and mean and despicable thou wast, and what great things

God did for thee, and what lasting obligations he laid upon thee thereby. Note, It would be an effectual check to our pride and sensuality to consider what we are, and how much we are beholden to the free grace of God. *Thirdly.* They were weak in understanding and in resolution; ver. 30, "How weak is thy heart, seeing thou dost all these things?" Note, The strength of men's lusts is an evidence of the weakness of their hearts; they have no acquaintance with themselves, nor government of themselves. She is weak, and yet an imperious, whorish woman. Note, Those that are most foolish are commonly most imperious, and think themselves fit to manage others, when they are far from being able to manage themselves.

2nd. What were the particulars of it.

First. They worshipped all the idols that came in their way, all that they were ever courted to the worship of; they were at the beck of all their neighbours; ver. 15, "Thou pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by, his it was." They were ready to close with every temptation of this kind, though never so absurd. No foreign idol should be imported, no new god invented, but they were ready to catch at it, as a common strumpet, that prostitutes herself to all comers, and multiplies her whoredoms, ver. 25. Thus some common drunkards will be company for every one that puts up the finger to them. How weak are the hearts of such!

Secondly. They adorned their idol temples, and groves, and high places with the fine rich clothing that God had given them; ver. 16, 18, "Thou deckedst thy high places with divers colours;" with the coats of divers colours, like Joseph's, which God had given them as particular marks of his favour; and hast played the harlot," that is, worshipped idols thereupon. Of this he saith, "The like things shall not come, neither shall it be so;" that is, this is a thing by no means to be suffered; I will never endure such practices as these, without shewing my resentments.

Thirdly. They made images for worship of the jewels which God had given them; ver. 17, "The jewels of my gold and my silver which I had given thee." Note, It is God that gives us our gold and silver. The products of trade, of art and industry, are the gifts of God's providence to us, as well as the fruits of the earth. And what God gives us the use of he still retains a property in; it is my silver and my gold, though I have given it thee. It is his still, so as that we ought to serve and honour him with it, and are accountable to him for the disposal of it. Every penny has God's image upon it as well as Cæsar's. Would we make our silver and gold, our plate, money, jewels, the matter of our pride and contention, our covetousness and prodigality, if we duly considered that it is God's silver, and his gold? The Israelites began betimes to turn their jewels into idols, when Aaron made the golden calf of their earrings.

Fourthly. They served their idols with the good things which God gave them for their own use, and to serve him with; ver. 18, "Thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them," upon their altars, as perfumes to these dunghill deities. "My meat, and fine flour, and oil," and that honey which Canaan flowed with, and "wherewith I fed thee," thou hast regaled them and their hungry priests with; hast made an offering of it to them, for a sweet savour, to purify them, and procure acceptance with them. "And thus it was, saith the Lord God;" it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused. "These things thou hast done;" he that knows all things knows it. See how fond they were of their idols, that they would part with that which was given them for the necessary subsistence of themselves and their families to honour them with; which may shame our niggardliness and strait-handedness in the service of the true and living God.

Fifthly. They had sacrificed their children to their idols. This is insisted upon here, and often elsewhere, as one of the worst instances of their idolatry; as indeed there was none in which the devil triumphed so much over the children of men, both their natural reason and their natural affection, as in this: see *Jer.* vii. 31; xix. 5; xxxii. 35. "Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters," and not only made them to pass through the fire, or between two fires, in token of their being dedicated to Moloch, but thou hast "sacrificed them to be devoured," ver. 20. Never was there such an instance of the degenerating of the paternal authority into the most barbarous tyranny as this was. Yet that was not the worst of it: it was an irreparable wrong to God himself, who challenged a special property in their children, more than in their gold and silver, and their meat; They are "my children," ver. 21; "the sons and daughters which thou hast borne unto me," ver. 20. He is the Father of spirits, and rational souls are in a particular manner his; and, therefore, the taking away of life, human life, unjustly, is a mighty affront to the God of life. But the children of the Israelites were his by a farther right; they were the children of the covenant, born in God's house: he had said to Abraham, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed." They had the seal of the covenant in their flesh from eight days old, they were to bear God's name, and keep up his church; to murder them was in the highest degree inhuman, but to murder them in honour of an idol was in the highest degree impious. One cannot think of it without the utmost indignation, to see the pitiless hands of the parents shedding the guiltless blood of their own children; and, by offering those pieces of themselves to the devil for dying sacrifices, openly avowing the offering up of themselves to him for living sacrifices. How absurd was this, that the children which were born to God should be sacrificed to devils? Note, The children of parents that are members of the visible church are to be looked upon as born unto God, and his children; as such, and under that character, we are to love them, and pray for them, bring them up for him, and, if he calls for them, cheerfully part with them to him; for may he not do what he will with his own? Upon this instance of their idolatry, which indeed ought not to pass without a particular brand, this remark is made; ver. 20, "Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter?" which intimates there were those that made a small matter of it, and turned it into a jest. Note, There is no sin so heinous, so apparently heinous, which men of profligate consciences will not make a mock at. But is whoredom, is spiritual whoredom, a small matter? Is it a small matter for men to make their children brutes, and the devil their God? It will be a great matter shortly.

Sixthly. They built temples in honour of their idols, that others might be invited to resort thither, and join with them in the worship of their idols. "After all thy wickedness" of this kind committed in private, (for which, "woe, woe unto thee,"—that comes in a sad parenthesis, speaking those in a woful condition that are going on in sin, and giving them warning in time, if they would but take it,) thou hast at length arrived to such a pitch of impudence as to proclaim it. Thou hast long had a whore's heart, but now thou art come to have a whore's forehead, and canst not blush; ver. 23—25, "Thou hast built there an eminent place," 'a brothel house,' so the margin reads it, and such their idol temples were. "Thou hast made thee a high place" for one idol or other, "in every street, and at every head of the way;" and again, ver. 31. They did all they could to seduce and debauch others, and to spread the contagion by making the temptations to idolatry as strong as possibly they could; and hereby the ringleaders in idolatry did but make themselves vile. And even those that had courted them to it, finding themselves outdone by them, began to be surfeited with the abundance and violence of their idolatries; "Thou hast made thy beauty to be abhorred," even by those that had admired it. The Jewish nation, by leaving their own God, and doting on the gods of the nations round about them, had made themselves mean and despicable in the eyes even of their heathen neighbours. Much more was their beauty abhorred by all that were wise and good, and had any concern for the honour of God and religion. Note, Those shame themselves that bring a reproach on their profession; and justly will that beauty, that excellency, at length be made the object of others' loathing, which men have made the matter of their own pride?

3rd. What were the aggravations of this sin.

First. They were fond of the idols of those nations which had been their oppressors and persecutors. As, 1*st.* The Egyptians. They were a people notorious for idolatry, and for the most sottish, senseless idolatries. They had of old abused them by their barbarous dealings, and of late by their treacherous dealing, were always either cruel or false to them; and yet so infatuated were they, that "they committed fornication with the Egyptians their neighbours," not only by joining with them in their idolatries, but entering into leagues and alliances with them; and depending upon them for help in their straits, which was an adulterous departure from God. *2nd.* The Assyrians. They had also been vexatious to Israel, and yet "thou hast played the whore with them," ver. 28. Though they lived at a greater distance, yet thou hast entertained their idols, and their superstitious usages, and so "hast multiplied thy fornications unto Chaldea;" hast borrowed images of gods, patterns of altars, rites of sacrificing, and one foolery or another of that kind, from that remote country, that enemy's country; and hast imported them into the land of Canaan, enfranchised and established them there. Thus Mr. George Herbert long since foretold, or feared at least,

> That Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames
> By letting in them both pollute her streams.

Secondly. They had been under the rebukes of Providence for their sins, and yet they persisted in them; ver. 27, "I have stretched out my hand over thee," to threaten and frighten thee; so God did before he laid his hand upon them to ruin and destroy them. And that is his usual method, to try to bring men to repentance, first by lesser judgments; he did so here. Before he brought such a famine upon them as broke the staff of bread, he diminished their ordinary food; cut them short, before he cut them off. When the overplus is abused, it is just with God to diminish that which is for necessity. Before he delivered them to the Chaldeans to be destroyed he delivered them to the daughters of the Philistines to be ridiculed for their idolatries; for they hated them, and, though they were idolaters themselves, yet were ashamed of the lewd way of the Israelites, who were grown more profane in their idolatries than any of their neighbours, who changed their God, whereas other nations did not change theirs, *Jer.* ii. 10, 11; for this they were justly chastised by the Philistines. Or it may refer to the inroads which the Philistines made upon the south of Judah in the reign of Ahaz, by which it was weakened and impoverished, and which was the beginning of sorrows to them, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 18; but they did not take warning by these judgments, and therefore were justly abandoned to ruin at last. Note, In the account which impenitent sinners shall be called to, they will be told not only of the mercies for which they have been ungrateful, but of the afflictions under which they have been incorrigible, *Am.* iv. 11.

Thirdly. They were insatiable in their spiritual whoredom; Thou "couldest not be satisfied," ver. 28, and again ver. 29. When they had multiplied their idols and superstitious usages beyond measure, yet still they were inquiring after new gods, and new fashions in worship. They that in sincerity join themselves to the true God find enough in him for their satisfaction; and, though they still desire more of God, yet they never desire more than God. But they that forsake this living fountain for broken cisterns will find themselves soon surfeited, but never satisfied; have soon enough of the gods they have, and are still inquiring after more.

Fourthly. They were at a great expence upon their idolatry, and laid out a great deal of wealth in purchasing patterns of images and altars, and hiring priests to attend upon them from other countries. Harlots generally had their hires, but this impudent adulteress, instead of being hired to serve idols, hired idols to protect her, and accept her homage. This is much insisted on, ver. 31—34. In this respect, "The contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms;" others are courted, but thou makest court to those that do not follow thee; art fond of making leagues and alliances with those heathen nations that despise thee. Others have gifts given them, but thou givest thy gifts, that is, the gifts which God has graciously given thee, to thine idols; herein like a wife that commits adultery, not for gain, as harlots do, but purely for the sin's sake. Note, Spiritual lusts, those of the mind, such as theirs after idols were, are oftentimes as strong and impetuous as any carnal lusts are. And it is a great aggravation of sin when men are their own tempters, and, instead of proposing to themselves any worldly advantage by it, are at great expence upon it. Such are transgressors without cause, *Ps.* xxv. 3; wicked transgressors indeed.

And now is not Jerusalem in all this made to know her abominations? for what greater abominations could she be guilty of than these? Here we may see with wonder and horror what the corrupt nature of men is when God leaves them to themselves; yea, though they have the greatest advantages to be better, and do better. And the way of sin is downhill. *Nitimur in vetitum,*—'We incline to what is forbidden.'

35 Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD:
36 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because thy filthiness was poured out,
And thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers,
And with all the idols of thy abominations,
And by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them;
37 Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers,
With whom thou hast taken pleasure,
And all *them* that thou hast loved,
With all *them* that thou hast hated;
I will even gather them round about against thee,
And will discover thy nakedness unto them,
That they may see all thy nakedness.
38 And I will judge thee,

As women that break wedlock and shed blood are judged;
And I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy.
39 And I will also give thee into their hand,
And they shall throw down thine eminent place,
And shall break down thy high places:
They shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels,
And leave thee naked and bare.
40 They shall also bring up a company against thee,
And they shall stone thee with stones,
And thrust thee through with their swords.
41 And they shall burn thine houses with fire, [women:
And execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many
And I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot,
And thou also shalt give no hire any more.
42 So will I make my fury toward thee to rest,
And my jealousy shall depart from thee,
And I will be quiet, and will be no more angry.
43 Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth,
But hast fretted me in all these *things;* [*thine* head,
Behold, therefore I also will recompense thy way upon
Saith the Lord GOD: [abominations.
And thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine

Adultery was by the law of Moses made a capital crime. This notorious adulteress, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here hath sentence passed upon her. It is ushered in with solemnity, ver. 35: the prophet, as the judge, in God's name calls to her, "O harlot, hear the word of the Lord!" Our Saviour preached to harlots, for their conversion, to bring them into the kingdom of God, not as the prophet here, to expel them out of it. Note, An apostate church is a harlot; Jerusalem is so if she become idolatrous. "How is the faithful city become a harlot!" Rome is so represented in the *Revelation*, then when it is marked for ruin, as Jerusalem here; *Rev.* xvii. 1, "Come, and I will shew thee the judgments of the great whore." And those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord, and obey it, shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord, and shall tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given.

First. The crime is repeated, and the articles of the charge summed up, ver. 36, and, as is usual, aggravated, ver. 43; for when God speaks in wrath he will be justified, and clear when he judgeth, clear when he is judged; and sinners when they are condemned shall have their sins so set in order before them that their mouth shall be stopped, and they shall not have a word to object against the equity of the sentence. The crimes which this harlot stands convicted of, and is now to be condemned for, are, 1. The violation of the two first commandments of the first table by idolatry, which is here called her whoredoms with her lovers; so she called them, *Hos.* ii. 12, because she loved them as if they had been indeed her benefactors; that is, with "all the idols of her abominations," the abominable idols which she served and worshipped. This was the sin which provoked God to jealousy. 2. The violation of the two first commandments of the second table, by the murder of their own innocent infants; "The blood of thy children which thou didst give unto them." It is not strange if those that have cast off God, and his fear, break through the strongest and most sacred bonds of natural affection.

The sins are aggravated from the consideration, 1st. Of the dishonour they had thereby done to themselves. Hereby "thy filthiness was poured out," that is, the uncleanness that was in thy heart was hereby discovered and brought to light, and thy nakedness was exposed to view, and thou thereby exposed to contempt. God is displeased with his professing people for shaming themselves by their sins. 2nd. Their base ingratitude is another aggravation of their sins; "Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth," and the kindness that was done thee then, when otherwise thou hadst perished, ver. 43. And, 3rd. The vexation which their sins gave to God, whom they ought to have pleased; "Thou hast fretted me in all these things," not only angered me, but grieved me. It is a strange expression, and one would think enough to melt a heart of stone, that the great God, who cannot admit any uneasiness, is pleased to speak of the sins and follies of his professing people as fretting to him; "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation."

Secondly. The sentence is passed. In general, "I will judge thee as women that break wedlock, and shed blood, are judged," ver. 38; and those two crimes were punished with death, with an ignominious death. Thou hast shed blood, and therefore I will give thee blood; thou hast broken wedlock, and therefore I will give it thee not only in justice, but in jealousy,—not only as a righteous judge, but as an injured and incensed husband, who "will not spare in the day of vengeance." *Pr.* vi. 34, 35. He will "recompense their way upon their head," ver. 43. In all the judgments God executeth upon sinners we must see "their own way recompensed upon their own head." They are dealt with not only as they deserved, but as they procured; it is the end which their sin as a way had a direct tendency to. More particularly,

1. This criminal must be (as is usually done with criminals) exposed to public shame, ver. 37. Malefactors are not executed privately, but are made a spectacle to the world. Care is here taken to bring spectators together. "All them that thou hast loved, with whom thou hast taken pleasure," they shall come to be witnesses of the execution, that they may take warning, and prevent their own like ruin; and those also whom thou hast hated, who will insult over thee, and triumph in thy fall. Both ways the calamities of Jerusalem will be aggravated, that they will be the grief of her friends, and the joy of her foes. These shall not only be gathered around her, but gathered against her; even those with whom she took unlawful pleasure, with whom she contracted unlawful leagues, the Egyptians and Assyrians, shall now contribute to her ruin. As, "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him," so, when a man's ways displease the Lord, he maketh even his friends to be at war with him; and justly makes those a scourge and a plague to sinners, and instruments of their destruction, who were their tempters, and with whom they were partakers in wickedness. Those whom they have suffered to strip them of their virtue shall see them stripped, and perhaps help to strip them, of all their other ornaments; to see the nakedness of the land will they come. It is added to the same purpose, ver. 41, "I will execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women;" thou shalt be made an example of, *in terrorem*, 'that others may see and fear,' and do no more presumptuously.

2. The criminal is condemned to die, for her sins are such as death is the wages of; ver. 40, "They shall bring up a company," that is, a company shall be brought up against thee, and "they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords;" so great a death, so many deaths in one, is this adulteress adjudged to. When the walls of Jerusalem were battered down with stones shot against them, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were put to the sword, then this sentence was executed in the letter of it.

3. The estate of the criminal is confiscated, and all that belonged to her destroyed with her; ver. 39, "They shall throw down thine eminent place;" and, ver. 41, they "shall burn thine houses," as the habitations of ill women are destroyed in detestation of their lewdness. Their high places, erected in honour of their idols, by which they thought to ingratiate themselves with their neighbours, shall be an offence to them; and even they shall break them down. It was long the complaint, even in some of the best reigns of the kings of Judah, that the high places were not taken away; but now the army of the Chaldeans, when they lay all waste, shall break them down. If iniquity be not taken away by the justice of the nation, it shall be taken away by the judgments of God upon the nation.

4. Thus both the sin and the sinner shall be abolished together, and an end put to both. "Thou shalt cease from playing the harlot;" that is, there shall be no remainders of idolatry in the land, because the inhabitants shall be wholly extirpated; and they shall give no more hire because they have no more to give. Some that will not leave their sins live till their sins leave them. When all that with which they honoured their idols is taken from them, they shall "not give hire any more," ver. 41. Then "thou shalt not commit this lewdness" of sacrificing thy children, which was a crime provoking "above all thine abominations;" for thy children shall all be cut off by the sword, or carried into captivity, so that thou shalt have none to sacrifice, ver. 43. Or it may be meant of the reformation of those of them that escape and survive the punishment; they shall take warning, and shall do no more presumptuously. The captivity in Babylon made the people of Israel to cease for ever from playing the harlot; it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry. And then all shall be well when this is the fruit, even the taking away of sin. Then, ver. 42, "My jealousy shall depart, I will be quiet, and no more angry." When we begin to be at war with sin, God will be at peace with us; for he continues the affliction no longer than till it has done its work. When sin departs, God's jealousy will soon depart; for he is never jealous but when we give him just cause to be so. Yet some understand this as a threatening of utter ruin, that God will make a full end, and the fire of his anger shall burn as long as there is any fuel for it. "His fury shall rest upon them," and not remove: compare this with that doom of unbelievers, *Jno.* iii. 36, "The wrath of God abideth on them." They shall drink the dregs of the cup, and then God will be no more angry, for he is eased of his adversaries, *Isa.* i. 24; is satisfied in the abandoning of them, and therefore will be no more angry, because there are no more for his anger to fasten upon. They had fretted him when judgment and mercy were contesting; but now he is quiet, as he will be in the eternal damnation of sinners, wherein he will be glorified, and therefore he will be satisfied.

44 Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use *this* proverb against thee,
Saying, As *is* the mother, *so is* her daughter.
45 Thou *art* thy mother's daughter,
That lotheth her husband and her children;
And thou *art* the sister of thy sisters,
Which lothed their husbands and their children:
Your mother *was* an Hittite, and your father an Amorite.
46 And thine elder sister *is* Samaria,
She and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand:
And thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand,
Is Sodom and her daughters.
47 Yet hast thou not walked after their ways,
Nor done after their abominations:
But, as *if that were* a very little *thing*,
Thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways.
48 *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD,
Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters,
As thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.
49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom,
Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was
And in her daughters, [in her
Neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. [fore me:
50 And they were haughty, and committed abomination be-
Therefore I took them away as I saw *good*.
51 Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins;
But thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they,
And hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done.
52 Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins

That thou hast committed more abominable than they:
They are more righteous than thou:
Yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame,
In that thou hast justified thy sisters.
53 When I shall bring again their captivity,
The captivity of Sodom and her daughters,
And the captivity of Samaria and her daughters,
Then *will I bring again* the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them:
54 That thou mayest bear thine own shame,
And mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done,
In that thou art a comfort unto them.
55 When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate,
And Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate,
Then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate.
56 For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth
In the day of thy pride,
57 Before thy wickedness was discovered,
As at the time of *thy* reproach of the daughters of Syria,
And all *that are* round about her, the daughters of the Philistines,
Which despise thee round about.
58 Thou hast borne thy lewdness
And thine abominations, saith the LORD.
59 For thus saith the Lord GOD;
I will even deal with thee as thou hast done,
Which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

The prophet here farther shews Jerusalem her abominations, by comparing her with those places that had gone before her, and shewing that she was worse than any of them, and therefore should, like them, be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are all apt to judge of ourselves by comparison, and to imagine that we are sufficiently good, if we are but as good as such and such that were thought passable; or that we are not dangerously bad, if we be not worse than such and such, who, though bad, were not of the worst. Now God, by the prophet, shews Jerusalem,

First. That she was as bad as her mother; that is, as the accursed devoted Canaanites that were the possessors of this land before her. They that use proverbs, as most people do, shall apply that proverb to Jerusalem, "As is the mother, so is her daughter," ver. 44. She is even mother's own child; the Jews are as like the Canaanites in temper and inclinations as if they had been their own children. The character of the mother was, that she "loathed her husband and her children." She had all the marks of an adulteress, and that is the character of the daughter; she forsakes the guide of her youth, and is barbarous to the children of her own bowels. When God brought Israel into Canaan he particularly warned them not to do according to the abominations of the men of that land, who went before them, for which it had spewed them out, *Lev.* xviii. 27, 28; the monuments of whose idolatry, with the remains of the idolaters themselves, would be a continual temptation to them. But they learned their way, and trod in their steps, and were as well affected to the idols of Canaan as ever they were, *Ps.* cvi. 38; and thus in respect of imitation it might truly be said, that their mother was a Hittite, and their father an Amorite, ver. 45, for they resembled them more than Abraham and Sarah.

Secondly. That she was worse than her sisters, Sodom and Samaria, that were adulteresses too, that "loathed their husbands and their children," that were weary of the gods of their fathers, and were for introducing new gods, *a la mode*,—'quite in style,' that came newly up, and new fashions in religion, and were given to change. On this comparison between Jerusalem and her sisters the prophet here enlargeth, that he might either shame them into repentance or justify God in their ruin. Observe,

1. Who Jerusalem's sisters were; ver. 45, Samaria and Sodom. Samaria is called the elder, or, rather, the greater sister, because it was a much larger city and kingdom, richer and more considerable, and more nearly allied to Israel; if Jerusalem look northward, this is partly on her left hand. This city of Samaria, and the towns and villages that were as daughters to that mother city, these had been lately destroyed for their spiritual whoredom. Sodom, and the adjacent towns and villages that were her daughters, dwelt at Jerusalem's right hand, and was her lesser sister, less than Jerusalem, less than Samaria; and these were of old destroyed for their corporal whoredom, *Jude* 7.

2. Wherein Jerusalem's sins resembled her sister's, particularly Sodom's; ver. 49, "This was the iniquity of Sodom," (it is implied, And this is thine iniquity too,) "pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness." Their going after strange flesh, which was Sodom's most flagrant wickedness, is not mentioned, because notoriously known; but those sins which did not look so black, but opened the door and led the way to these more enormous crimes, and began to fill that measure of her sins which was filled up at length by their unnatural filthiness. Now these initiating sins were, 1st. Pride; in which the heart lifts up itself above and against both God and man. Pride was the first sin that turned angels into devils, and the garden of the Lord into a hell upon earth. It was the pride of the Sodomites that they despised righteous Lot, and would not bear to be reproved by him; and this ripened them for ruin. 2nd. Gluttony; here called fulness of bread. It was God's great mercy that they had plenty, but their great sin that they abused it, glutted themselves with it, ate to excess and drank to excess, and made that the gratification of their lusts which was given them to be the support of their lives. 3rd. Idleness; abundance of idleness, a dread of labour, and a love of ease. Their country was fruitful, and the abundance they had they came easily by, which was a temptation to them to indulge themselves in sloth, which disposed them to all that abominable filthiness which kindled their flames. Note, Idleness is an inlet to much sin. The men of Sodom that were idle were wicked, and sinners before the Lord, *Gen.* xiii. 13. The standing waters gather filth, and the sitting bird is the fowler's mark. When "David rose from off his bed at evening," he saw Bathsheba. *Quæritur Ægistheus quare sit factus adulter? In promptu causa est, desidiosus erat*,—'What made Ægistheus an adulterer? Indolence.' 4th, Oppression; Neither did she "strengthen the hands of the poor and needy." Probably it is implied that she weakened their hands, and broke their arms; however, it was bad enough, that when she had so much wealth, and consequently power, and interest, and leisure, she did nothing for the relief of the poor; in providing for whose wants those that themselves are full of bread may employ their time well,—they need not be so abundantly idle, as too often they are. These were the sins of the Sodomites, and these were Jerusalem's sins; their pride, the cause of their sins, is mentioned again ver. 50; they were haughty, with the horrid effects of their sins, their abominations which they committed before God. Men arrive gradually to the height of impiety and wickedness; *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*,—'No man reaches the height of vice at once.' But where pride has gotten the ascendant in a man he is in the high road to all abominations.

3. How much the sins of Jerusalem exceeded those of Sodom and Samaria; were more heinous in the sight of God, either in themselves or by reason of several aggravations. "Thou hast not only walked after their ways," and trod in their steps, but hast quite outdone them in wickedness, ver. 47. Thou thoughtest it as a very little thing to do as they did, didst laugh at them as sneaking sinners and silly ones; thou wouldst be more cunning, more daring in wickedness; wouldst triumph more boldly over thy convictions, and bid more open defiance to God and religion: if a man will break, let him break for something. Thus "thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways." Jerusalem was more polite, and therefore sinned with more wit, more art and ingenuity, than Sodom and Samaria could. Jerusalem had more wealth and power, and its government was more absolute and arbitrary, and therefore had the more opportunity of oppressing the poor, and shedding malignant influences around her, than Sodom and Samaria had. Jerusalem had the temple and the ark, and the priesthood, and kings of the house of David; and therefore the wickedness of that holy city, that was so dignified, so near, so dear to God, was more provoking to him than the wickedness of Sodom and Samaria, that had not Jerusalem's privileges and means of grace. "Sodom has not done as thou hast done," ver. 48. This agrees with what Christ saith, *Mat.* xi. 24, "It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." The kingdom of the ten tribes had been very wicked, and yet "Samaria has not committed half of thy sins," ver. 51; has not worshipped half so many idols, nor slain half so many prophets. It was bad enough that they of Jerusalem were guilty of Sodom's sins, sodomy itself not excepted, 1 *Kin.* xiv. 24; 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 7. And though the Dead sea, the standing monument of Sodom's sin and ruin, bordered upon their country, (*Num.* xxxiv. 12,) and that sulphureous lake was always under their nose, God having taken away Sodom and her daughters in such way and manner as he saw good, as he saith here, ver. 50, so as one thing should effectually make their "overthrow an ensample to those that after should live ungodly," (2 *Pet.* ii. 6,) yet they did not take warning, but "multiplied their abominations more than they." And,

1st. By this they justified Sodom and Samaria, ver. 51. They pretended, in their haughtiness and superciliousness, to judge them, and in the days of old, when they retained their integrity, they did judge them, ver. 52. But now they justify them comparatively; Sodom and Samaria are more righteous than thou, that is, less wicked. It will look like some extenuation of their sins, that, as bad as they were, Jerusalem was worse, though it was God's own city; not that it will serve as a plea to justify Sodom, but to condemn Jerusalem, against which Sodom and Samaria will rise up in judgment.

2nd. For this they ought themselves to be greatly ashamed. Thou who hast judged thy sisters, and cried out shame on them, now "bear thine own shame, for thy sins which thou hast committed," which, though of the same kind with theirs, yet being committed by thee are more abominable than theirs, ver. 52. This may be taken either as foretelling their ruin, "Thou shalt bear thy shame," or as inviting them to repentance, "Be thou confounded, and bear thy shame;" take the shame to thyself that is due to thee; and then it may be hoped sinners will forsake their sins, when they begin to be heartily ashamed of them. And therefore they shall go into captivity, and there they shall lie, that they may be "confounded in all that they have done;" because they had been a comfort and encouragement to Sodom and Samaria, ver. 54. Note, There is nothing in sin which we have more reason to be ashamed of than this, that by our sin we have encouraged others in sin, and comforted them in that for which they must be grieved, or they are undone. Another reason why they must now be ashamed is, because in the day of their prosperity they had looked with so much disdain upon their neighbours; "Thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thee in the day of thy pride," ver. 56; they thought Sodom not worthy to be named the same day with Jerusalem, little dreaming that Jerusalem would at length lie under a worse and more scandalous character than Sodom herself. Those that are high may perhaps come to stand upon a level with those they contemn. Or, "Sodom was not mentioned," that is, the warning designed to be given to thee by Sodom's ruin was not regarded. If the Jews had but talked more frequently and seriously to one another and to their children concerning "the wrath of God revealed from heaven against Sodom's ungodliness and unrighteousness," it might have kept them in awe, and prevented their treading in their steps. But they kept the thought of it at a distance, would not bear the mention of it, and, as the ancients say, put Isaiah to death for putting them in mind of it, when he called them "rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah," *Isa.* i. 10. Note, Those are but preparing judgments for themselves that will not take notice of God's judgments upon others.

4. What desolations God had brought and was bringing upon Jerusalem for these wickednesses, wherein they had exceeded Sodom and Samaria. 1st. She hath already long ago been disgraced, and fallen into contempt among her neighbours; ver. 57, "Before her wickedness was discovered," before she came to be so grossly and openly flagitious, yet she bore the just punishment of her secret and more concealed lewdness, when she fell under "the reproach of the daughters of Syria; of the Philistines," who were said to despise her, and be ashamed of her," ver. 27; and of "all that were round about her;" which seems to refer to the descent made upon Judah by the Syrians in the days of Ahaz, and soon after another by the Philistines, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 5, 18. Note, Those that disgrace themselves by yielding to their lusts will justly be brought into disgrace by being made to yield to their enemies. And it is observable that, before God brought potent enemies upon them for their destruction, he brought enemies upon them that were less formidable, for their reproach; and if lesser judgments would do the work God would not send greater. In this thou hast borne thy lewdness, ver. 58. Those that will not cast off their sins by repentance and reformation shall be made to bear their sins to their confusion. 2nd. She is now in captivity, or hastening into captivity, and therein is reckoned with, not only for her lewdness, ver. 58, but for her perfidiousness and covenant-breaking, ver. 59, "I will deal with thee as thou hast done;" that is, I will forsake thee as thou hast forsaken me, and cast thee off as thou hast cast me off; for thou hast "despised the oath, in breaking the covenant," which seems to be

meant of the covenant God made with their fathers at mount Sinai, whereby he took them and theirs to be a peculiar people to himself. They flatter themselves with a conceit that because God had hitherto continued his favour to them, notwithstanding their provocations, he would do so still. No, saith God, you have broken covenant with me, have despised both the promises of the covenant and the obligations of it, and therefore I will deal with thee as thou hast done. Note, Those that will not adhere to God as their God have no reason to expect that he should continue to own them as his people. 3rd. The captivity of the wicked Jews, and their ruin, shall be as irrecoverable as that of Sodom and Samaria. In this sense, as a threatening, most interpreters take ver. 53, 55, "When I shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, and when they shall return to their former estate, then I will bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them," and as it were for their sakes, and under their shadow and protection, because they are "more righteous than thou, and then thou shalt return to thy former estate." But Sodom and Samaria were never brought back, nor ever returned to their former estate, and therefore let not Jerusalem expect it; that is, those who now remained there, whom God would "deliver to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt," *Jer.* xxiv. 9, 10. Sooner shall the Sodomites arise out of the Salt sea, and the Samaritans return out of the land of Assyria, than they enjoy their peace and prosperity again; for, to their shame be it spoken, it is a comfort to those of the ten tribes who were dispersed and in captivity to see those of the two tribes who had been as bad or worse than they in like manner dispersed and in captivity. And therefore they shall live and die, shall stand and fall together; the bad ones of both shall perish together, the good ones of both shall return together. Note, Those who do as the worst of sinners do must expect to fare as they fare: "Let mine enemy be as the wicked."

60 Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee
In the days of thy youth,
And I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.
61 Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed,
When thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger:
And I will give them unto thee for daughters,
But not by thy covenant.
62 And I will establish my covenant with thee;
And thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD:
63 That thou mayest remember, and be confounded,
And never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame,
When I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done,
Saith the Lord GOD.

Here in the close of the chapter, after a most shameful conviction of sin, and a most dreadful denunciation of judgments, mercy is remembered, mercy is reserved for those that shall come after; as was when God sware in his wrath concerning those who came out of Egypt that they should not enter into Canaan, "Yet," saith God, "your little ones shall;" so here. And some think that what is said of the return of Sodom and Samaria, ver. 53, 55, and of Jerusalem with them, is a promise; and it may be understood so, if by Sodom we understand, as Grotius and some of the Jewish writers do, the Moabites and Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, who once dwelt in Sodom; their captivity was returned, *Jer.* xlviii. 47, xlix. 6, as was that of many of the ten tribes, and Judah's with them. But these closing verses are without doubt a precious promise, which was in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but was to have its full accomplishment in gospel times, and in "that repentance and remission of sins" which should then "be preached" with success "to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Now observe here,

First. From whence this mercy should take rise. From God himself, and his remembering his covenant with them, ver. 60. Nevertheless, though they have been so provoking, and God hast been so provoked, to that degree that one would think they could never be reconciled again, yet "I will remember my covenant with thee," that covenant which I made with thee "in the days of thy youth," and will revive it again. Though thou hast broken the covenant, ver. 59, I will remember it, and it shall flourish again. See how much it is our comfort and advantage that God is pleased to deal with us in a covenant way, for thus the mercies of it come to be sure mercies and everlasting, *Isa.* lv. 3; and while this root stands firm in the ground there is hope of the tree, though it be cut down, that through the scent of water it will bud again. We do not find that they put him in mind of the covenant, but *ex mero motu*,—'from his own mere good pleasure,' he remembers it as he had promised, *Lev.* xxvi. 42, "Then will I remember my covenant, and will remember the land." He that bids us to be ever mindful of the covenant no doubt will himself be ever mindful of it, "the word which he commanded;" and what he commands stands fast for ever, "to a thousand generations."

Secondly. How they should be prepared and qualified for this mercy; ver. 61, "Thou shalt remember thy ways," thine evil ways; God will put thee in mind of them, will set them in order before thee, that thou mayest be ashamed of them. Note, God's good work in us commenceth and keepeth pace with his good-will towards us. When he remembers his covenant for us, that he may not remember our sins against us, he puts us upon remembering our sins against ourselves; and if we will but be brought to remember our ways, how crooked and perverse they have been, and how we have walked contrary to God in them, we cannot but be ashamed; and when we are so we are best prepared to receive the honour and comfort of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

Thirdly. What the mercy is that God has in reserve for them. 1. He will take them into covenant with himself; ver. 60, "I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant; and again, ver. 62, "I will establish," re-establish, and establish more firmly than ever, "my covenant with thee." Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to all true penitents, that the covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things, that every transgression in the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant, for that is inviolable. 2. He will bring the Gentiles into church communion with them; ver. 61, "Thou shalt receive thy sisters," the Gentile nations that are round about thee, "thine elder and thy younger," greater than thou art and lesser, ancient nations and modern; and "I will give them unto thee for daughters," that is, they shall be founded, nursed, taught, and educated by that Gospel, that "word of the Lord which shall go forth from Zion and from Jerusalem;" so that all the neighbours shall call Jerusalem mother, while the church continues there, and shall acknowledge "the Jerusalem which is from above, and which is free, to be the mother of us all," *Gal.* iv. 26. They shall be thy daughters, "but not by thy covenant," that is, not by the covenant of peculiarity; not as being proselytes to the Jewish religion, and subjects to the yoke of the ceremonial law, but as being converts with thee to the Christian religion. Or, "not by thy covenant," that is, not upon such terms as thou shalt think fit to impose upon them as conquered nations, as captives and homagers, to whom thou mayest give law at pleasure, such a dominion as that the carnal Jews hope to have over the nations; no, they shall be the daughters by my covenant, the covenant of grace made with thee and them in concert, as an indenture tripartite. I will be a Father, a common Father, both to Jews and Gentiles, and so they shall become sisters to one another. And when thou shalt receive them thou shalt be ashamed of thine own evil ways wherein thou wast conformed to them. Thou shalt blush to look a Gentile in the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou wast in the day of thine apostacy.

Fourthly. What the fruit and effect of this will be.

1. God will hereby be glorified; ver. 62, "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord." It shall hereby be known that the God of Israel is Jehovah, a God of power, and faithful to his covenant. And thou shalt know it who hast hitherto lived as if thou didst not know or believe it. It had often been said in wrath, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord," shall know it to your cost; here it is said in mercy, Ye shall know it to your comfort. And it is one of the most precious promises of the new covenant which God has made with us, that "all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest."

2. They shall be hereby more humbled and abased for sin; ver. 63, That thou mayest be the more confounded at the remembrance of all that thou hast done amiss, mayest reproach thyself for it, and call thyself a thousand times unwise, undutiful, ungrateful, and unlike what thou wast; and mayest never open thy mouth any more in contradiction to God, reflection on him, or complaints of him, but mayest be for ever silent and submissive because of thy shame. Note, Those that rightly remember their sins will be truly ashamed of them; and those that are truly ashamed of their sins will see great reason to be patient under their afflictions, to be dumb, and not open their mouths against what God doth. But that which is most observable is, that all this shall be "when I am pacified toward thee, saith the Lord God." Note, It is the gracious ingenuity of true penitents that, the clearer evidences and the fuller instances they have of God's being reconciled to them, the more grieved and ashamed they are that ever they have offended. God is in Jesus Christ pacified towards us. He is our peace, and it is by his cross that we are reconciled, and in his Gospel that God is reconciling the world to himself. Now the consideration of this should be powerful to melt our hearts into a godly sorrow for sin. This is repenting because "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The prodigal, after he had received the kiss, which assured him that his Father was pacified towards him, was ashamed and confounded, and said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee." And the more our shame for sin is increased by the sense of pardoning mercy, the more will our comfort in God be increased.

CHAPTER XVII.

God was in the foregoing chapter reckoning with the people of Judah, and bringing ruin upon them for their treachery in breaking covenant with him: in this chapter he is reckoning with the king of Judah for his treachery in breaking covenant with the king of Babylon; for when God came to contend with them he found many grounds of his controversy. The thing was now in doing, Zedekiah was practising with the king of Egypt underhand for assistance in a treacherous project he had formed to shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and violate the homage and fealty he had sworn to him. For this God by the prophet here, I. Threatens the ruin of him and his kingdom, by a parable of two eagles and a vine, ver. 1—10, and the reddition of that parable, ver. 11—21; but in the close, II. He promiseth hereafter to raise the royal family of Judah again, the house of David, in the Messiah and his kingdom, ver. 22—24.

AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel; 3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD;

A great eagle with great wings,
Longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colours,
Came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar:
4 He cropped off the top of his young twigs,
And carried it into a land of traffick;
He set it in a city of merchants.
5 He took also of the seed of the land,
And planted it in a fruitful field;
He placed *it* by great waters, *and* set it *as* a willow tree.
6 And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature,
Whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him:
So it became a vine,
And brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs.
7 There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers:
And, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him,
And shot forth her branches toward him,
That he might water it by the furrows of her plantation.
8 It was planted in a good soil by great waters,
That it might bring forth branches,
And that it might bear fruit,
That it might be a goodly vine

9 Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper?
Shall he not pull up the roots thereof,
And cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither?
It shall wither in all the leaves of her spring,
Even without great power or many people to pluck it up
by the roots thereof.
10 Yea, behold, *being* planted, shall it prosper? [it?
Shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth
It shall wither in the furrows where it grew.
11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
12 Say now to the rebellious house,
Know ye not what these *things mean?* [salem,
Tell *them,* Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jeru-
And hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof,
And led them with him to Babylon;
13 And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant
And hath taken an oath of him: [with him,
He hath also taken the mighty of the land:
14 That the kingdom might be base,
That it might not lift itself up,
But that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.
15 But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors
into Egypt,
That they might give him horses and much people.
Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such *things?*
Or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered?
16 *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, [him king,
Surely in the place *where* the king *dwelleth* that made
Whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake,
Even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.
17 Neither shall Pharaoh with *his* mighty army and great
Make for him in the war, [company
By casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many
persons:
18 Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant,
When, lo, he had given his hand,
And hath done all these *things,* he shall not escape.
19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised,
And my covenant that he hath broken,
Even it will I recompense upon his own head.
20 And I will spread my net upon him,
And he shall be taken in my snare,
And I will bring him to Babylon,
And will plead with him there for his trespass
That he hath trespassed against me.
21 And all his fugitives with all his bands shall fall by the
sword,
And they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds:
And ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it.*

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We must take all these verses together, that we may have the parable and the reddition of it at one view before us, because they will illustrate one another.

First. The prophet is appointed to put forth a riddle to the house of Israel, ver. 2; not to puzzle them, as Samson's riddle was put forth to the Philistines, not to hide the mind of God from them in obscurity, or to leave them in uncertainty about it, one advancing one conjecture, and another another, as is usual in expounding riddles; no, he is presently to tell them the meaning of it: "Let him that speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret," *1 Cor.* xiv. 13. But he must deliver this message in a riddle or parable, that they might take the more notice of it, might be the more affected with it themselves, and might the better remember it and tell it to others. For these reasons God often used similitudes by his servants the prophets, and Christ himself opened his mouth in parables. Riddles and parables are used for an amusement to ourselves, and an entertainment to our friends. The prophet must make use of these to see if in this dress the things of God might find acceptance, and insinuate themselves into the minds of a careless people. Note, Ministers should study to find out acceptable words, and try various methods to do good; and, as far as they have reason to think will be for edification, should both bring that which is familiar into their preaching and their preaching too into their familiar discourse; that there may not be so vast a dissimilitude as with some there is between what they say in the pulpit and what they say out.

Secondly. He is appointed to expound this riddle to the rebellious house, ver. 12; though being rebellious they might justly have been left in ignorance, to see and hear and not perceive, yet the thing shall be explained to them. "Know ye not what these things mean?" They that knew the story, and what was now in agitation, might make a shrewd guess at the meaning of this riddle; but, that they might be left without excuse, he is to give it them in plain terms, stripped of the metaphor. But the enigma was first propounded for them to study on awhile, and to send to their friends at Jerusalem, that they might inquire after and expect the solution of it some time after. Let us now see what the matter of this message is.

1. Nebuchadnezzar had some time ago carried off Jehoiachin, the same that was called Jeconiah, when he was but eighteen years of age, and had reigned in Jerusalem but three months, him and his princes and great men, and had brought them captives to Babylon, *2 Kin.* xxiv. 12. This in the parable is represented by an eagle's cropping the top and tender branch of a cedar, and carrying it into a land of traffic, a city of merchants, ver. 3, 4, which is explained, ver. 12. The king of Babylon took the king of Jerusalem, who was no more able to resist him than a young twig of a tree is to contend with the strongest bird of prey, that easily crops it off, perhaps towards the making of her nest. Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel's vision is a lion, the king of beasts, *Dan.* vii. 4; there he has eagles' wings, so swift were his motions, so speedy were his conquests. Here in this parable he is an eagle, the king of birds; a great eagle, that lives upon spoil and rapine, whose young ones suck up blood, *Job* xxxix. 30. His dominion extends itself far and wide, like the great and long wings of an eagle. The people are numerous, for it is full of feathers; the court splendid, for it has divers colours, which look like embroidering, as the word is. Jerusalem is Lebanon, a forest of houses, and very pleasant; the royal family is the cedar, Jehoiachin is the top branch, the top of the young twigs, which he crops off; Babylon is the land of traffic and city of merchants, where it is set. And the king of Judah, being of the house of David, will think himself much degraded and disgraced to be lodged among tradesmen; but he must make the best of it.

2. When he carried him to Babylon he made his uncle Zedekiah king in his room, ver. 5, 6. His name was Mattaniah, the 'gift of the Lord,' which Nebuchadnezzar changed into Zedekiah, the 'justice of the Lord,' to mind him to be just, like the God he called his, for fear of his justice. This was "one of the seed of the land," a native, not a foreigner, not one of his Babylonian princes. He was "planted in a fruitful field," for so Jerusalem as yet was; he "placed it by great waters," where it would be likely to grow like a willow tree, which grows quick, and grows best in moist ground, but is never designed or expected to be a stately tree. He set it with care and circumspection, so some read it; he wisely provided that it might grow, but that it might not grow too big. "He took of the king's seed," so it is explained, ver. 14, and "made a covenant with him," that he should have the kingdom, and enjoy the regal power and dignity, provided he held it as his vassal, dependent on him, and accountable to him. He "took an oath of him," made him swear allegiance to him, swear by his own God, the God of Israel, that he would be a faithful tributary to him, *2 Chr.* xxxvi. 13. He also "took away the mighty of the land," the chief of the men of war, partly as hostages for the performance of the covenant, and partly that, the land being thereby weakened, the king might be the less able, and therefore the less in temptation, to break his league. What he designed we are told, ver. 14, "That the kingdom might be base," in respect both of honour and strength; might neither be a rival with its powerful neighbours nor a terror to its feeble ones as it had been; that "it might not lift up itself" to vie with the kingdom of Babylon, or to bear down any of the petty states that were in subjection to it. But yet he designed that "by keeping of this covenant it may stand," and continue a kingdom. Hereby the pride and ambition of that haughty potentate would be gratified, who aimed to be like the Most High, *Isa.* xiv. 14; to have all about him subject to him. Now see here, 1st. How sad a change sin made with the royal family of Judah. Time was when all the nations about were tributaries to that; now that has not only lost its dominion over other nations, but is itself become a tributary. "How is the gold become dim!" Nations by sin sell their liberty, and princes their dignity, and "profane their crowns by casting them to the ground." 2nd. How wisely Zedekiah did for himself in accepting these terms, though they were dishonourable, when necessity brought him to it. A man may live very comfortably, and contentedly, though he cannot bear a part, and make a figure as formely. A kingdom may stand firm and safe, though it do not stand so high as it hath sometimes done, and so may a family.

3. Zedekiah, while he continued faithful to the king of Babylon, did very well; and if he would but have reformed his kingdom, and returned to God and his duty, he had done better, and by that means might soon have recovered his former dignity, ver. 6. This plant grew, and though it was "set as a willow tree," and little account was made of it, yet it became "a spreading vine of low stature," a great blessing to his own country, and his fruits making glad their hearts. And it is better to be a spreading vine of low stature than a lofty cedar of no use. Nebuchadnezzar was pleased, for "the branches turned

towards him," and rested on him as the vine on the wall, and he had his share of this vine. "The roots thereof" too were "under him," and at his disposal. The Jews had reason to be pleased, for they sat under their own vine, which "brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs," and looked pleasant and promising. See how gradually the judgments of God came upon this provoking people; how God gave them respite, and so gave them space to repent. He made their kingdom base, to try if that would humble them, before he made it no kingdom; yet left it easy for them, to try if that would win upon them to return to him, that the troubles threatened might be prevented.

4. Zedekiah knew not when he was well, but grew impatient of the disgrace of being a tributary to the king of Babylon, and to get clear of it entered into a private league with the king of Egypt. He had no reason to complain that the king of Babylon put any new hardships upon him, or improved his advantages against him, that he oppressed or impoverished his country; for, as the prophet had said before, ver. 6, to aggravate his treachery, he shews again, ver. 8, what a fair way he was in to be considerable; "He was planted in a good soil, by great waters;" his family was likely enough to be built up, and his exchequer to be filled in a little time, so that if he had dealt faithfully he might have been a goodly vine. But there was "another great eagle" that he had an affection for, and put a confidence in, and that was the king of Egypt, ver. 7. Those two great potentates, the kings of Babylon and Egypt, were but two great eagles, birds of prey. This great eagle of Egypt is said to have great wings, but not to be long-winged, as the king of Babylon, because, though the kingdom of Egypt was strong, yet it was not of such a vast extent as that of Babylon was. The great eagle is said to have many feathers, much wealth, and many soldiers, which he depended upon as a substantial defence, but really were no more than as many feathers. Zedekiah, promising himself liberty, made himself a vassal to the king of Egypt, foolishly expecting ease by changing his master. Now, this vine did secretly and underhand "bend her roots" towards the king of Egypt, that great eagle, and after awhile did openly "shoot forth her branches towards him," give him an intimation how much she coveted an alliance with him, "that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation," whereas it was "planted by great waters," and did not need any assistance from him. This is expounded, ver. 15. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon in "sending his ambassadors into Egypt," that they might "give him horses and much people," to enable him to contend with the king of Babylon. See what a change sin had made with the people of God. God promised they should be a numerous people, as the sand of the sea; yet now, if their king has occasion for much people, he must send to Egypt for them, they being for sin diminished and brought low, *Ps.* cvii. 39. See also the folly of fretful, discontented spirits, that ruin themselves by striving to mend themselves; whereas they might be easy and happy enough if they would but make the best of that which is.

5. God here threatens Zedekiah with the utter destruction of him and his kingdom, and in displeasure against him passeth that doom upon him, for his treacherous revolt from the king of Babylon. This is represented in the parable, ver. 9, 19, by the "plucking up of this vine by the roots, the cutting off the fruit, and the withering of the leaves," the leaves of her spring, when they are in their greenness, *Job* viii. 12, before they begin in autumn to wither of themselves. The project shall be blasted, it shall utterly wither, the affairs of this perfidious prince shall be ruined past retrieve, as a vine when the east wind blasts it, so that it shall be fit for nothing but the fire, as we had it in that parable, *ch.* xv. 4; it shall wither even "in the furrows where it grew," though they were never so well watered. It shall be destroyed "without great power or many people to pluck it up;" for what need is there of raising the militia to pluck up a vine? Note, God can bring great things to pass without much ado. He needs not great power and many people to effect his purposes, a handful will serve if he pleaseth. He without any difficulty ruined a sinful king and kingdom, and made no more of it than we do of rooting up a tree that cumbers the ground.

In the reddition of the parable the sentence is very largely recorded; "Shall he prosper?" ver. 15; can he expect to do ill and fare well? Nay, shall he that doth such wicked things escape? Shall he break the covenant and be delivered from that vengeance which is the just punishment of his treachery? No; can he expect to do ill, and not suffer ill? Let him hear his doom.

1st. It is ratified by the oath of God; ver. 16, "As I live, saith the Lord God, he shall die" for it. This intimates how highly God resented the crime, and how sure and severe the punishment of it would be. God swears in his wrath, as he did *Ps.* xcv. 11. Note, As God's promises are confirmed with an oath of comfort to the saints, so are his threatenings for terror to the wicked. As sure as God lives and is happy, I may add, and as long, so sure, so long, shall impenitent sinners die, and be miserable.

2nd. It is justified by the heinousness of the crime he had been guilty of. *First.* He had been very ungrateful to his benefactor, who had made him king, and undertook to protect him; had made him a prince when he might as easily have made him a prisoner. Note, It is a sin against God to be unkind to our friends, and to lift up the heel against those that have helped to raise us. *Secondly.* He had been very false to him whom he had covenanted with. This is mostly insisted on. He despised the oath; when his conscience or friends minded him of it, he made a jest of it, put on a daring resolution, and broke it, ver. 15, 16, 18, 19. He broke through it, and took a pride in making nothing of it, as a great tyrant in our own day, whose maxim (they say) it is, 'that princes ought not to be slaves to their word any farther than is for their interest.' That which aggravates Zedekiah's perfidiousness was that the oath by which he had bound himself to the king of Babylon, was, 1*st.* A solemn oath. An emphasis is laid upon this, ver. 18, "When, lo, he had given his hand," as a confederate with the king of Babylon, not only as his subject but as his friend, the joining of hands being a token of the joining of hearts. 2*nd.* A sacred oath. God saith, ver. 19, It is mine oath that he has despised, and "my covenant that he has broken." In every solemn oath God is appealed to as a witness of the sincerity of him that swears, and invocated as a judge and revenger of his treachery if he now swear falsely, or at any time hereafter break his oath. But the oath of allegiance to a prince is particularly called the oath of God, *Eccl.* viii. 2, as if that had something in it more sacred than another oath; for princes are ministers of God to us for good, *Rom.* xiii. 4. Now Zedekiah's breaking this oath and covenant is the sin which God will "recompense upon his own head," ver. 19; the "trespass which he hath trespassed against God," for which God will plead with him, ver. 20. Note, Perjury is a heinous sin, and highly provoking to the God of heaven. It would not serve for an excuse, (1.) That he who took this oath was a king, a king of the house of David, whose liberty and dignity might surely set him above the obligation of oaths. No, though kings are gods to us, they are men to God, and not exempt from his law and judgment. The prince is doubtless as firmly bound, before God, to the people by his coronation oath, as the people to the prince by the oath of allegiance. (2.) Nor that this oath was sworn to the king of Babylon, a heathen prince, worse than a heretic, with whom the church of Rome saith no faith is to be kept. No, though Nebuchadnezzar was a worshipper of false gods, yet the true God will avenge his quarrel when one of his worshippers breaks his league with him. For truth is a debt owing to all men; and if the professors of the true religion deal perfidiously with those of a false religion, their profession will be so far from excusing, much less justifying them, that it aggravates their sin; and God will the more surely and severely punish it, because by it they give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; as that Mahometan prince who, when the Christians broke the league with him, cried out, 'O Jesus, are these thy Christians?' (3.) Nor would it justify him that the oath was extorted from him by a conqueror; for the covenant was made upon a valuable consideration. He held his life and crown upon this condition, that he should be faithful and bear true allegiance to the king of Babylon; and if he enjoy the benefit of his bargain, it is very unjust if he do not observe the terms. Let him know then that, having "despised the oath and broken the covenant, he shall not escape." And if the contempt and violation of such an oath, such a covenant as this, would be so punished, of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy who break covenant with God, when, lo, they had given their hand upon it that they would be faithful; who tread under foot the blood of that covenant as an unholy thing? Betwixt the covenants there is no comparison.

3rd. It is particularized in divers instances, wherein the punishment is made to answer the sin. *First.* He had rebelled against the king of Babylon, and the king of Babylon should be his effectual conqueror. In the place where that king dwells whose covenant he broke, even "with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die," ver. 16. He thinks to get out of his hands, but he shall fall more than before into his hands; God himself will now take part with the king of Babylon against him: "I will spread my net upon him," ver. 20. God has a net for those that deal perfidiously, and think to escape his righteous judgments, in which they shall be taken and held that would not be held by the bond of an oath and covenant. Zedekiah dreaded Babylon; Thither I will bring him, saith God, and plead with him there. Men will justly be forced upon that calamity which they endeavour by sin to flee from. *Secondly.* He had relied upon the king of Egypt, and the king of Egypt should be his ineffectual helper. "Pharaoh with his mighty army shall not make for him in the war," ver. 17, shall do him no service, nor give any check to the progress of the Chaldean forces. He shall not assist him in the siege by casting up mounts and building forts, nor in battle by cutting off many persons. Note, Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and he commonly weakens and withers that arm of flesh which we trust in and stay ourselves upon. Now was again fulfilled what was spoken on a former like occasion, *Isa.* xxx. 7, "The Egyptians shall help in vain." They did so; for, though upon the approach of the Egyptian army the Chaldeans withdrew from the siege of Jerusalem, upon their retreat they returned to it again and took it. It should seem the Egyptians were not hearty, had strength enough but no goodwill to help Zedekiah. Note, Those who deal treacherously with those that put a confidence in them will justly be dealt treacherously with by those they put a confidence in. Yet, the Egyptians were not the only states Zedekiah stayed himself upon. He had bands of his own to stand by him. But those bands, though we may suppose they were veteran troops, and the best soldiers his kingdom afforded, yet they shall become fugitives, shall quit their posts and make the best of their way, and shall fall by the sword of the enemy; and the remains of them shall be scattered, ver. 21. This was fulfilled when "the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled," *Jer.* lii. 7. Then "ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it." Note, Sooner or later God's word will prove itself; and those who will not believe shall find by experience the reality and weight of it.

22 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar,
and will set *it;*
I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one,
And will plant *it* upon an high mountain and eminent:
23 In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it:
And it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar:
And under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing;
In the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell.
24 And all the trees of the field shall know
That I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree,
Have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish:
I the LORD have spoken and have done *it.*

When the royal family of Judah was brought to desolation by the captivity of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, it might be asked, What is now become of the covenant of royalty made with David, that "his children should sit upon his throne for evermore?" Do the sure mercies of David prove thus unsure? To which it is sufficient for the silencing of the objectors to answer, that the promise was conditional: If they will keep my covenant, then they shall continue, *Ps.* cxxxii. 12. But David's posterity broke the condition, and so forfeited the promise. But the unbelief of man shall not invalidate the promise of God. He will find out another seed of David in which it shall be accomplished; and that is promised in these verses.

First. The house of David shall again be magnified, and out of its ashes another phœnix shall arise. The metaphor of a tree which was made use of in the threatening is here presented in the promise, ver. 22, 23. This promise had its accomplishment in part when Zerubbabel, a branch of the house of David, was raised up to head the Jews in their return out of captivity, and to rebuild the city and temple, and re-establish their church and state. But it was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, who was a root out of a dry ground, and to whom God according to promise gave the throne of his father David, *Lu.* i. 32.

1. God himself undertakes the reviving and restoring of the house of David. Nebuchadnezzar was the great eagle that had attempted the re-establishing of the house of David in a dependence upon him, ver. 5. But the attempt miscarried; his plantation withered, and was plucked up. Well, saith God, the next shall be of my planting, "I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and I will set it." Note, As men have their designs, God also hath his designs; but his will prosper when theirs are blasted. Nebuchadnezzar prided himself in setting up kingdoms at his pleasure, *Dan.* v. 19; but those kingdoms soon had an end: whereas "the God of heaven sets up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed," *Dan.* ii. 44.

2. The house of David is revived in "a tender one cropped from the top of his young twigs." Zerubbabel was so; what was in him that was hopeful was but the day of small things, *Zec.* iv. 10, yet before him great mountains were made plain. Our Lord Jesus was "the highest branch of the high cedar," the farthest of all from the root, for soon after he appeared the house of David was all cut off and extinguished; but the nearest of all to heaven, for his kingdom was not of this world. He was "taken from the top of the young twigs," for he is "the man, the branch, a tender plant, and a root out of a dry ground," *Isa.* liii. 2, but "a branch of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he may be glorified."

3. This branch is planted in a high mountain, ver. 22, "in the mountain of the height of Israel," ver. 23. Thither he brought Zerubbabel in triumph, there he raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel that were scattered upon the mountains: set him his king upon his holy hill of Zion, sent forth the Gospel from mount Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; there in the height of Israel, a nation which all its neighbours had an eye upon as conspicuous and illustrious, was the Christian church first planted. The churches of Judæa were the most primitive churches. The unbelieving Jews did what they could to prevent its being planted there; but who can pluck up what God will plant?

4. From thence it spreads far and wide. The Jewish state, though it began very low in Zerubbabel's time, was set as a tender branch which might easily be plucked up, yet took root, spread strangely, and after some time became very considerable. Those of other nations, "fowl of every wing," put themselves under the protection of it. The Christian church was at first like a grain of mustard-seed, but became, like this tender branch here, a great tree; its beginning small, but its latter end increasing to admiration. When the Gentiles flocked into the church then did the fowl of every wing (even the birds of prey, with those preyed upon, as the wolf and the lamb feeding together, *Isa.* xi. 6,) come and "dwell under the shadow of this goodly cedar:" see *Dan.* iv. 21.

Secondly. God himself will herein be glorified, ver. 24. The setting up of the Messiah's kingdom in the world shall discover more clearly than ever to the children of men that "God is the king of all the earth," *Ps.* xlvii. 7. Never was there a more full conviction given of this truth, that all things are governed by an infinitely wise and mighty Providence, than that which was given by the exaltation of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom among men; for by that it appeared that God has all hearts in his hand, and the sovereign disposal of all affairs. "All the trees of the field shall know," 1. That the tree which God will have to be brought down and dried up shall be so, though it be never so high and stately, never so green and flourishing. Neither honour nor wealth, neither external advancements nor internal endowments, will secure men from humbling, withering providences. 2. That the trees which God will have to be exalted, and to flourish, shall so be, shall so do, though never so low, and never so dry. The house of Nebuchadnezzar that now makes so great a figure shall be extirpated; and the house of David that now makes so mean a figure shall become famous again, and the Jewish nation that is now despicable shall be considerable. The kingdom of Satan that has borne so long, so large a sway, shall be broken, and the kingdom of Christ, that was looked upon with contempt, shall be established. The Jews, that in respect of church privileges had been high and green, shall be thrown out, and the Gentiles, that had been low and dry trees, shall be taken in their room, *Isa.* liv. 1. All the enemies of Christ shall be abased and made his footstool, and his interests shall be confirmed and advanced. "I the Lord have spoken," it is the decree, the declared decree, that Christ must be exalted, must be the head-stone of the corner; "and I have done it," that is, I will do it in due time, but it is as sure to be done as if it were done already. With men saying and doing are two things; but they are not so with God. What he hath spoken we may be sure he will do, nor shall one iota or tittle of his word fall to the ground: "for he is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent," either of his threatenings or of his promises.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Perhaps, in the reading of some of the chapters foregoing, we may have been tempted to think ourselves not much concerned in them, (though they also were written for our learning), but this chapter at first view appears highly and nearly to concern us all very highly, very nearly; for, without particular reference to Judah and Jerusalem, it lays down the rule of judgment according to which God will deal with the children of men, in determining them to their everlasting state; and it agrees with that very ancient rule laid down, *Gen.* iv. 7; "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" but, "if not, sin," the punishment of sin, "lies at the door." Here is, I. The corrupt proverb used by the profane Jews, which gave occasion to this message here sent them, and made it necessary for the justifying of God in his dealings with them, ver. 1—3. II. The reply given to this proverb, in which God asserts in general his own sovereignty and justice, ver. 4; Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with them, ver. 4, 20; but say to the righteous, it shall be well with them, ver. 5—9. In particular, as to the case complained of, he assures us, 1. That it shall be ill with a wicked man, though he had a good father, ver. 10—13; 2. That it shall be well with a good man, though he had a wicked father, ver. 14—18, and therefore in this God is righteous, ver. 19, 20; 3. That it shall be well with penitents, though they began never so ill, ver. 21—23, and again, ver. 27, 28; 4. That it shall be ill with apostates, though they began never so well, ver. 24, 26. III. And the use of all this is: 1. To justify God, and clear the equity of all his proceedings, ver. 25, 29; 2. To engage and encourage us to repent of our sins and turn to God, ver. 30—32, and these are things which belong to our everlasting peace. O that we may understand and regard them, before they be hid from our eyes!

THE word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, 2 What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

3 *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD,
Ye shall not have *occasion* any more
To use this proverb in Israel.
4 Behold, all souls are mine; [mine:
As the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is
The soul that sinneth, it shall die.
5 But if a man be just,
And do that which is lawful and right,
6 *And* hath not eaten upon the mountains,
Neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house [of Israel,
Neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife,
Neither hath come near to a menstruous woman,
7 And hath not oppressed any,
But hath restored to the debtor his pledge,
Hath spoiled none by violence,
Hath given his bread to the hungry,
And hath covered the naked with a garment;
8 He *that* hath not given forth upon usury,
Neither hath taken any increase,
That hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity,
Hath executed true judgment between man and man,
9 Hath walked in my statutes,
And hath kept my judgments, to deal truly;
He *is* just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; and, in like manner, sometimes unjust reflections occasion just vindications; evil proverbs beget good prophecies. Here is,

First. An evil proverb commonly used by the Jews in their captivity. We had one before, *ch.* xii. 22, and a reply to it; here we have another, that sets God's justice at defiance; "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth;" the threatenings are a jest. This chargeth him with injustice, as if the judgments executed were a wrong; "You use this proverb concerning the land of Israel," now it is laid waste by the judgments of God, "saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" that is, we are punished for the sins of our ancestors; which is as great an absurdity in the Divine regimen as if the children should have their teeth set on edge, or stupified, by the fathers' eating sour grapes; whereas, in the order of natural causes, if men eat or drink any thing amiss, they only themselves shall suffer by it. Now,

1. It must be owned that there was some occasion given for this proverb. God had often said that he would "visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," especially the sin of idolatry, intending thereby to express the evil of sin, of that sin, his detestation of it, and just indignation against it, and the heavy punishments he would bring upon idolaters; and that parents might be restrained from sin by their affection to their children, and that children might not be drawn to sin by their reverence for their parent. He had likewise often declared by his prophets, that in bringing the present ruin upon Judah and Jerusalem he had an eye to the sins of Manasseh, and other preceding kings; for, looking upon the nation as a body politic, and punishing them with national judgments for national sins, and admitting the maxim in our law, that a corporation never dies, reckoning with them now for the iniquities of former ages was but like making a man when he is old to possess the iniquities of his youth, *Job* xiii. 26; and there is no unrighteousness with God in doing so. But,

2. They intended it as a reflection upon God, and an impeachment of his equity, in his proceedings against them. Thus far that is right which is implied in this proverbial saying, that they who are guilty of wilful sin eat sour grapes, they do that which they will feel from, sooner or later. The grapes may look well enough in the temptation, but they will be bitter as bitterness itself in the reflection. They will set the sinner's teeth on edge; when conscience is awake and sets the sin in order before them, it will spoil the relish of their comforts as when the teeth are set on edge. But they suggest it as unreasonable that the children should smart for the fathers' folly, and feel the pain of that which they never tasted the pleasure of; and that God was unrighteous in thus taking vengeance, and could not justify it. See how wicked the reflection is, how daring the impudence! yet see how witty it is, and how sly the comparison. Many that are impious in their jeers are ingenious in their jests; and thus the malice of hell against God and religion is insinuated and propagated. It is here put into a proverb, and that proverb used, commonly used; they had it up ever and anon. And though it had plainly a blasphemous meaning, yet they sheltered themselves under the similitude from the imputation of downright blasphemy. Now, by this it appears they were unhumbled under the rod; for, instead of condemning themselves and justifying God, they condemned him and justified themselves. But woe to him that thus strives with his Maker.

Secondly. A just reproof of, and reply to, this proverb; "What mean ye" to use it? that is the reproof; do you intend hereby to try it out with God? Or, can you think any other but that you will hereby provoke him to be angry with you till he has consumed you? Is this the way to reconcile yourselves to him, and make your peace with him? The reply follows, in which God tells them,

1. That the use of the proverb should be taken away. This is said, it is sworn; ver. 3, "Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb." Or, as it may be read, 'Ye shall not have the use of this parable.' The taking away of this parable is made the matter of a promise, *Jer.* xxxi. 29, here it is made the matter of a threatening; there it intimates that God will return to them in ways of mercy, here it intimates that God would proceed against them in ways of judgment. He will so punish them for this impudent saying that they shall not dare to use it any more: as in another case, *Jer.* xxiii. 34, 36. God will find out effectual ways to silence those cavillers; or, God will so manifest, both to themselves and others, that they have wickedness of their own enough to bring all these desolating judgments upon them, that they shall no longer for shame lay it upon the sins of their fathers that they were thus dealt with. Your own consciences shall tell you, and all your neighbours shall confirm it, that you yourselves have eaten the same sour grapes that your fathers did eat before you, or else your teeth had not been set on edge.

2. That really the saying itself was unjust, and a causeless reflection upon God's government. For, 1st. God doth not punish the children for the fathers' sins, unless they tread in their steps, and fill up the measure of their iniquity," *Mat.* xxiii. 32, and then they have no reason to complain; for whatsoever they suffer it is less than their own sin has deserved. And when God speaks of "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," that is so far from putting any hardship upon the children, to whom he only renders according to their works, that it accounts for God's patience with the parents, whom he therefore does not punish presently, because he "lays up their iniquity for their children," *Job* xxix. 19. 2nd. It is not only in temporal calamities that children (and sometimes innocent ones) fare the worse for their parents' wickedness; and

God can alter the property of those calamities, and make them work for good to those that are visited with them. But as to spiritual and eternal misery, (and that is the death here spoken of,) the children shall by no means smart for the parents' sins. This is here shewed at large, and it is a wonderful piece of condescension, that the great God is pleased to reason the case with such wicked and unreasonable men, that he did not immediately strike them dumb and dead, but vouchsafed to state the matter before them, that he may be clear when he is judged. Now in his reply,

First. He asserts and maintains his own absolute and incontestable sovereignty; "Behold, all souls are mine," ver. 4. God here claims a property in all the souls of the children of men, one as well as another. *1st.* Souls are his. He that is the Maker of all things is in a peculiar manner the Father of spirits, for his image is stamped on the souls of men. It was so in their creation, it is so in their renovation. He "formeth the spirit of man within him," and is therefore called "the God of the spirits of all flesh," and embodied spirits. *2nd.* "All souls are his," all created by him, and for him, and accountable to him. "As the soul of the father, so the soul of the son is mine." Our earthly parents are only the fathers of our flesh, our souls are not theirs, God challengeth them. Now, from hence it follows for the clearing of this matter, (1.) That it is certain God may do what he pleaseth, both with fathers and children, and none may say unto him, What doest thou? He that gave us our being doth us no wrong if he take it away again, much less when he only takes away some of the supports and comforts of it. It is as absurd to quarrel with him as for "the thing formed to say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" (2.) That it is as certain God bears a good will both to father and son, and will put no hardship upon either. We are sure God hateth nothing that he has made, and therefore (speaking of the adult who are capable of acting for themselves) he has such a kindness for all souls, that none die but through their own default. "All souls are his," and therefore he is not partial in his judgment with them; let us subscribe to his interest in us, and dominion over us. He saith, "All souls are mine;" let us answer, Lord, my soul is thine, I devote it to thee, to be employed for thee, and made happy in thee. It is with good reason that God saith, "My son, give me thy heart," for it is my own; to which we must yield, Father, take my heart, it is thy own.

Secondly. Though God might justify himself by insisting upon his sovereignty, yet he waives that, and lays down the equitable and unexceptionable rule of judgment by which he will proceed as to particular persons, and it is this:

1st. The sinner that persists in sin shall certainly die; his iniquity shall be his ruin. "The soul that sinneth it shall die," shall die as a soul can die, shall be excluded from the favour of God, which is the life and bliss of the soul, and shall lie for ever under his wrath, which is its death and misery. Sin is the act of the soul, the body is but the instrument of unrighteousness. It is called the sin of the soul, *Mic.* vi. 7; and therefore the punishment of sin is the tribulation and anguish of the soul, *Rom.* ii. 9.

2nd. The righteous man that perseveres in his righteousness shall certainly live. "If a man be just," have a good principle, a good spirit and disposition, and, as an evidence of that, "do judgment and justice," ver. 5, "he shall surely live, saith the Lord God," ver. 9. He that makes conscience of conforming himself in every thing to the will of God, that makes it his business to serve God, and his aim to glorify God, he shall, without fail, be happy here and for ever, in the love and favour of God; and wherein he comes short of his duty, it shall be forgiven him through a Mediator.

Now here is part of the character of this just man.

1. He is careful to keep himself clear from the pollutions of sin, and at a distance from all the appearances of evil.

(1.) From sins against the second commandment. In the matters of God's worship he is jealous, for he knows God is so. He hath not only not sacrificed in the high places to the images there set up, but he has not so much as eaten upon the mountains, that is, not had any communion with idolaters by eating things sacrificed to idols, 1 *Cor.* x. 20. He would not only not kneel with them at their altars, but not sit with them at their tables in their high places. He detests not only the idols of the heathen, but the idols of the house of Israel, which were not only allowed of, but generally applauded and adored by, those that were accounted the professing people of God. He has not only not worshipped those idols, but he hath not so much as lift up his eyes to them, he has not given them a favourable look; has had no regard at all to them, neither desired their favour nor dreaded their frowns. He has observed so many bewitched by them, that he has not dared so much as to look at them, lest he should be taken in the snare. The eyes of idolaters are said to go a whoring, *Eze.* vi. 9: see *Deu.* iv. 19.

(2.) From sins against the seventh commandment. He is careful to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness; and therefore he has not dared to defile his neighbour's wife, nor said nor done any thing which had the least tendency to corrupt or debauch her; no, nor will he make any undue approaches to his own wife when she is put apart for her uncleanness, for it was forbidden by the law, *Lev.* xviii. 19; xx. 18. Note, It is an essential branch of wisdom and justice to keep the appetites of the body in subjection to reason and virtue.

(3.) From sins against the eighth commandment. He is a just man that hath not by fraud, and, under colour of law and right, oppressed any, and that hath not with force and arms spoiled any by violence, nor spoiled them of their goods or estates, much less of their liberties and lives, ver. 7. Oppression and violence were the sins of the old world, that brought the deluge, and are sins which still God is and will be the avenger of. Nay, he is one that has not lent his money upon usury, nor taken increase, ver. 8. Though being done by contract it may seem free from injustice, (*volenti non fit injuria*,—'what is done to a person with his own consent is no injury to him,') yet as far as it is forbidden by law he dares not do it. A moderate usury they were allowed to receive from strangers, but not from their brethren. A just man will not take advantage of his neighbour's necessity to make a prey of him, nor indulge himself in ease and idleness, to live upon the sweat and toil of others; and therefore will not take increase from those who cannot make increase of what he lends them, nor be rigorous in exacting what was agreed for from those that by the act of God are disabled to pay it, but is willing to share in loss as well as profit. *Qui sentit commodum, sentire nebet et onus*,—'He who enjoys the benefit should bear the burthen.'

2. He makes conscience of doing the duties of his place. He hath restored the pledge to the poor debtor, according to the law; *Ex.* xxii. 26, "If thou take thy neighbour's raiment" for a pawn, the raiment that is for necessary use, "thou shalt deliver it to him again," that he may sleep in his own bedclothes. Nay, he has not only restored to the poor that which was their own, but has given his bread to the hungry. Observe, it is called his bread, because it is honestly come by. That which is given to some is not unjustly taken from others; for God hath said, "I hate robbery for burnt offerings." Worldly men insist upon it that their bread is their own, as Nabal, who therefore would not give of it to David, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 17; yet let them know it is not so their own, but that they are bound to do good to others with it. Clothes are necessary as well as food, and therefore this just man is so charitable as to cover the naked also with a garment, ver. 7. The coats which Dorcas had made for the poor were produced as witnesses of her charity, *Acts* ix. 39. This just man has "withdrawn his hand from iniquity," ver. 8; if at any time he has been drawn in through inadvertency to that which afterwards has appeared to him to be an ill thing, he doth not persist in it, because he has begun it, but withdraws his hand from that which he now perceives to be iniquity; for he "executes true judgment between man and man," according as his opportunity is of doing it; as a judge, as a witness, as a juryman, as referee; and in all commerce is concerned that justice be done, that no man be wronged, that he that is wronged be righted, and that every man have his own; and is ready to interpose himself, and do any good office in order hereunto: this is his character towards his neighbour. Yet it will not suffice that he be just and true to his brother; to complete his character he must be so to his God likewise; ver. 9, "He hath walked in my statutes," those which relate to the duties of his immediate worship; he hath kept those and all other his judgments, has had respect to them all, has made it his constant care and endeavour to conform and come up to them all; to deal truly, that is, that so he may approve himself faithful to his covenant with God, that having joined himself to God, doth not treacherously depart from him, or dissemble with him. This is a just man, and living he shall live; he shall certainly live, shall have life, and shall have it more abundantly; shall live truly, live comfortably, live eternally. Keep the commandments, and thou shalt enter into life, *Mat.* xix. 17.

10 If he beget a son *that is* a robber, a shedder of blood,
And *that* doeth the like to *any* one of these *things*,
11 And that doeth not any of those *duties*,
But even hath eaten upon the mountains,
And defiled his neighbour's wife,
12 Hath oppressed the poor and needy,
Hath spoiled by violence,
Hath not restored the pledge,
And hath lifted up his eyes to the idols,
Hath committed abomination,
13 Hath given forth upon usury,
And hath taken increase:
Shall he then live? he shall not live:
He hath done all these abominations; he shall surely die;
His blood shall be upon him.
14 Now, lo, *if* he beget a son,
That seeth all his father's sins which he hath done,
And considereth, and doeth not such like,
15 *That* hath not eaten upon the mountains,
Neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house
Hath not defiled his neighbour's wife, [of Israel,
16 Neither hath oppressed any,
Hath not withholden the pledge,
Neither hath spoiled by violence,
But hath given his bread to the hungry,
And hath covered the naked with a garment,
17 *That* hath taken off his hand from the poor,
That hath not received usury nor increase,
Hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes;
He shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall
18 *As for* his father, [surely live.
Because he cruelly oppressed,
Spoiled his brother by violence,
And did *that* which *is* not good among his people,
Lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. [the father?
19 Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of
When the son hath done that which is lawful and right,
And hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them,
He shall surely live.
20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die.
The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father,
Neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son:
The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him,
And the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

God by the prophet having laid down the general rule of judgment, that he will render eternal life to them that patiently continue in well-doing, but indignation and wrath to them that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, *Rom.* ii. 7, 8, comes in these verses to shew that men's parentage and relation shall not alter the case either one way or other.

First. He applies it largely and particularly both ways. As it was in the royal line of the kings of Judah, so it often happens in private families, that godly parents have wicked children, and wicked parents have godly children. Now here he shews,

1. That a wicked man shall certainly perish in his iniquity, though he was the son of a pious father. If that righteous man before described beget a son, whose character is the reverse of his father's, his condition will certainly be so too. 1st. It is supposed as no uncommon case, but a very melancholy one, that the

child of a very godly father, notwithstanding all the instructions given him, the good education he has had, and the needful rebukes that have been given him, and the restraints he has been laid under, after all the pains taken with him, the prayers put up for him, may yet prove notoriously wicked and vile, the grief of his father, the shame of his family, and the curse and plague of his generation. He is here supposed to allow himself in all those enormities which his good father dreaded, and carefully avoided; and to shake off all those good duties which his father made conscience of, and took satisfaction in; undoes all that his father did, and goes counter to his example in every thing. He is here described to be a highwayman, "a robber and a shedder of blood;" an idolater, he hath eaten upon the mountains, ver. 11, and has lifted up his eyes to the idols, which his good father never did, and has come at length not only to feast with the idolaters, but to sacrifice with them, which is here called committing abomination, for the way of sin is down-hill. He is an adulterer, hath defiled his neighbour's wife; an oppressor, even of the poor and needy; he robs the spital, and squeezeth those who he knows cannot right themselves, and takes a pride and pleasure in trampling upon the weak, and impoverishing those that are poor already. He takes away from those to whom he should give. He hath spoiled by violence and open force; he hath given forth upon usury, and so spoiled by contract; and hath not restored the pledge, but unjustly detained it, even when the debt was paid. Let those good parents that have wicked children not look upon their case as singular; it is a case put here, and by it we see that grace doth not run in a blood, nor always attend the means of grace; nor is the race always to the swift or the battle to the strong, for then the children that are well taught would do well: but God will let us know that his grace is his own, and his Spirit a free agent; and that, though we are tied to give our children a good education, he is not tied to bless it. In this, as much as any thing, appears the power of original sin, and the necessity of special grace. 2nd. We are here assured that this wicked man shall perish for ever in his iniquity, notwithstanding his being the son of a good father. He may perhaps prosper awhile in the world for the sake of the piety of his ancestors; but, having committed all these abominations, and never repented of them, "he shall not live," he shall not be happy in the favour of God. Though he may escape the sword of men, he shall not escape the curse of God; "he shall surely die." He shall be for ever miserable; "his blood shall be upon him." He may thank himself; he is his own destroyer, and his relation to a good father will be so far from standing him in stead, that it will aggravate his sin and his condemnation. It made his sin the more heinous, nay, it made him really the more vile and profligate; and consequently will make his misery hereafter the more intolerable.

2. That a righteous man shall be certainly happy, though he is the son of a wicked father. Though the father did eat the sour grapes, if the children do not meddle with them, they shall fare never the worse for that. Here,

1st. It is supposed, and, blessed be God, it is sometimes a case in fact, that the son of an ungodly father may be godly; that, observing how fatal his father's errors were, he may be so wise as to take warning, and not tread in his father's steps, ver. 14. Ordinarily children partake of the parent's temper, and are drawn in to imitate their example; but here the son, instead of seeing his father's sins, and, as is usual, doing the like, sees them, and dreads doing the like. Men indeed do not gather grapes of thorns, but God sometimes doth; takes a branch from a wild olive, and grafts it into a good one. Wicked Ahaz begets a good Hezekiah, who "sees all his father's sins which he has done;" and though he will not, like Ham, proclaim his father's shame, or make the worst of it, yet he loathes it, and blushes at it, and thinks the worse of sin, because it was the reproach and ruin of his own father. "He considereth, and doth not such like." Considers how ill it became his father to do such things, what an offence it was to God and all good men, what a wound and dishonour he got by it, and what calamities he brought into his family; and therefore he doth not such like. Note, If we did but duly consider the ways of wicked men, we would all dread being associates with them, and followers of them. The particulars are here again enumerated, almost in the same words with that character given of the just man, ver. 6, &c., to shew how good men walk in the same spirit, and in the same steps. This just man here, when he took care to avoid his father's sins, took care to imitate his grandfather's virtues. And if we look back we shall find some examples for our imitation, as well as others for our admonition. This just man cannot only say as the Pharisee, "I am no adulterer, no extortioner," no oppressor, no usurer, no idolater; but he hath given his bread to the hungry, and covered the naked; he hath taken off his hand from the poor. Where he found his father had put hardships upon poor servants, tenants, neighbours, he eased their burthen; did not say, What my father has done I will abide by; and if it was a fault, it was his, and not mine; as Rehoboam, who contemned the taxes his father had imposed. No, he takes his hand off from the poor, and restores them to their rights and liberties again, ver. 15—17. Thus he hath "executed God's judgments, and walked in his statutes." Not only done his duty for once, but gone on in a course and way of obedience.

2nd. We are assured that the graceless father alone shall die in his iniquity, but his gracious son shall fare never the worse for it. As for his father, ver. 18, because he was a cruel oppressor, and did hurt; nay, because though he had wealth and power, he did not with it do good among his people; lo, "even he," as great as he is, "shall die in his iniquity," and be undone for ever. But he that kept his integrity "shall surely live," shall be easy and happy, and he shall not "die for the iniquity of his father." Perhaps his father's wickedness has lessened his estate, and weakened his interest, but it shall be no prejudice at all to his acceptance with God, and his eternal welfare.

Secondly. He appeals to themselves then, whether they did not wrong God with their proverb. Thus plain the case is, and yet ye say, "Doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?" No; he doth not, he shall not, if he will himself "do that which is lawful and right," ver. 19. But this people, that bear the iniquity of their fathers, had not done that which is lawful and right, and therefore justly suffered for their own sin, and had no reason to complain of God's proceedings against them as at all unjust, though they had reason to complain of the ill example their fathers had left them as very unkind; "Our fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have borne their iniquity," *Lam.* v. 7. It is true that there is a curse entailed upon wicked families; but it is as true that the entail may be cut off by repentance and reformation. Let the impenitent and unreformed, therefore, thank themselves if they fall under it. The settled rule of judgment is therefore repeated, ver. 20, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," and not another for it. What direction God hath given to earthly judges, (*Deu.* xxiv. 16,) he will himself pursue; "The son shall not die," not die eternally, "for the iniquity of the father," if he do not tread in the steps of it; "nor the father for the iniquity of the son," if he endeavour to do his duty for the preventing of it. In "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," which is now clouded and eclipsed, "the righteousness of the righteous shall" appear before all the world to "be upon him," to his everlasting comfort and honour, upon him as a robe, upon him as a crown; and "the wickedness of the wicked upon him," to his everlasting confusion, upon him as a chain, upon him as a load, as a mountain of lead to sink him to the bottomless pit.

21 But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, [and right,
And keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful
He shall surely live, he shall not die.
22 All his transgressions that he hath committed,
They shall not be mentioned unto him:
In his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.
23 Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?
Saith the Lord GOD:
And not that he should return from his ways, and live?
24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteous-
And committeth iniquity, [ness,
And doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth,
Shall he live? [tioned:
All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be men-
In his trespass that he hath trespassed,
And in his sin that he hath sinned,
In them shall he die.
25 Yet ye say,
The way of the Lord is not equal.
Hear now, O house of Israel;
Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?
26 When a righteous *man* turneth away from his righteous-
And committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; [ness,
For his iniquity that he hath done shall he die.
27 Again, when the wicked *man* turneth away
From his wickedness that he hath committed,
And doeth that which is lawful and right,
He shall save his soul alive.
28 Because he considereth,
And turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed,
He shall surely live, he shall not die.
29 Yet saith the house of Israel,
The way of the Lord is not equal.
O house of Israel, are not my ways equal?
Are not your ways unequal?

We have here another rule of judgment which God will go by in dealing with us, by which is farther demonstrated the equity of his government. The former shewed that God will reward or punish, according to the change made in the family or succession, for the better or for the worse. Here he shews that he will reward or punish according to the change made in the person himself, whether for the better or the worse. While we are in this world we are in a state of probation; the time and trial lasts as long as the time of life; and according as we are found at last it will be with us to eternity. Now see here,

First. The case fairly stated much as it had been before, *ch.* iii. 18, &c., and here it is laid down once, ver. 21—24, and again, ver. 26—28, because it is a matter of vast importance, a matter of life and death, of life and death eternal. Here we have,

1. A fair invitation given to wicked people to turn from their wickedness. Assurance is here given us, that if the wicked will turn he shall surely live, ver. 21, 27. Observe,

1st. What is required to denominate a man a true convert; how he must be qualified that he may be entitled to this act of indemnity. *First.* The first step towards conversion is consideration; ver. 28, "Because he considereth and turneth." The reason why sinners go on in their evil ways is, because they do not consider what will be in the end thereof; but if the prodigal once come to himself, if he sit down and consider a little how bad his state is, and how easily it may be bettered, he will soon return to his father, *Lu.* xv. 17; and the adulteress to her first husband, when she considers that "then it was better with her than now," *Hos.* ii. 7. *Secondly.* This consideration must produce an aversion to sin. When he considereth he must turn away from his wickedness, that notes a change in the heart, and in the disposition of that. He must turn from his sins and his transgressions, that notes a change in the life; he must break off from all his evil courses, and wherein he has done iniquity must resolve to do so no more, and this from a principle of hatred to sin. "What have I to do any more with idols?" *Thirdly.* This aversion to sin must be universal. He must turn from all his sins, and all his transgressions, without a reserve for any Dalilah, any house of Rimmon. We do not rightly turn from sin unless we truly hate it; and we do not truly hate sin as sin, if we do not hate all sin. *Fourthly.* This must be accompanied with a conversion to God and duty. He must keep all God's statutes, (for the obedience, if it be sincere, will be universal,) and must "do that which is lawful and right," which agrees with the word and will of God, which he must take for his rule, and not the will of the flesh and the way of the world.

2nd. What is promised to those that do thus turn from sin to God. *First.* They shall save their souls alive, ver. 27. They shall surely live, they shall not die, ver. 21, and again, ver. 28; whereas it was said, "The soul that sins, it shall die," yet let not those that have sinned despair but that the threatened death may be prevented, if they will but turn and repent in time. When David penitently acknowledgeth, "I have sinned," he is immediately assured of his pardon;

"The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die," 2 *Sam.* xii. 13; thou shalt not die eternally. He shall surely live; that is, he shall be restored to the favour of God, which is the life of the soul, and shall not lie under his wrath, which is as messengers of death to the soul. *Secondly.* The sins they have repented of and forsaken shall not rise up in judgment against them, nor shall they be so much as upbraided with them. "All his transgressions that he has committed," though numerous, though heinous, though very provoking to God, and redounding very much to his dishonour, yet they "shall not be mentioned unto him," ver. 22, not mentioned against him. Not only they shall not be imputed to him to ruin him, but in the great day they shall not be remembered against him to grieve or shame him; they shall be covered, shall be sought for and not found. This speaks the fulness of pardoning mercy; when sin is forgiven, it is blotted out, it is remembered no more. *Thirdly.* In their righteousness they shall live; not for their righteousness, as if that were the purchase of their pardon and bliss, and an atonement for their sins, but in their righteousness, which qualifies them for all the blessings purchased by the Mediator, and is itself one of those blessings.

3rd. What encouragement a repenting, returning sinner hath to hope for pardon and life according to this promise. He is conscious to himself that his obedience for the future can never be a valuable compensation for his former disobedience; but he has this to support himself with, that God's nature, property, and delight is to have mercy, and to forgive; for he hath said, ver. 23, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" No, by no means; you never had any cause given you to think so. It is true that God has determined to punish sinners, his justice calls for it; and, pursuant to that, impenitent sinners will lie for ever under his wrath and curse; that is the will of his decree, his consequent will, but not his antecedent will, the will of his delight. Though the righteousness of his government requires that sinners die, yet the goodness of his nature objects against it. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" It is spoken here comparatively. He hath not pleasure in the ruin of sinners, for he would rather they should turn from their ways and live. He is better pleased when his mercy is glorified in their salvation than when his justice is glorified in their damnation.

2. A fair warning given to righteous people not to turn from their righteousness, ver. 24, 26. Here is, 1st. The character of an apostate, that turns away from his righteousness. He never was in sincerity a righteous man, as appears by that of the apostle, 1 *Jno.* ii. 19, "If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us;" but he passed for a righteous man, had the denomination and all the external marks of a righteous man, he thought himself one, and others thought him one; but he throws off his profession, leaves his first love, disowns and forsakes the truth and ways of God, and so "turns away from his righteousness," as one sick of it, and now shews what he always had, a secret aversion to it. And having "turned away from his righteousness, he commits iniquity," grows loose, and profane, and sensual, intemperate, unjust, and, in short, "doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth;" for when the unclean spirit recovers his possession of the heart, he "brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there," *Lu.* xi. 26. 2nd. The doom of an apostate. Shall he live because he was once a righteous man?" No; *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat*,—'that which does not abide is not said to be done.' In his trespass, ver. 24, and for his iniquity, (that is the meritorious cause of his ruin,) for the iniquity "that he has done he shall die," shall die eternally; ver. 26, "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways." But will not his former professions and performances stand him in some stead? will they not avail at least to mitigate his punishment? No, "all his righteousness that he has done," though never so much applauded by men, "shall not be mentioned," so as to be either a credit or a comfort to him. The righteousness of an apostate is forgotten, as the wickedness of a penitent is. Under the law, if a Nazarite was polluted, he lost all his foregoing days of his separation, *Num.* vi. 12; so those that have begun in the Spirit, and end in the flesh, may reckon all their past services and sufferings in vain, *Gal.* iii. 3, 4. Unless we persevere, we lose what we have gained, 2 *Jno.* 8.

Secondly. An appeal to the consciences even of the house of Israel, though very corrupt, concerning God's equity in all these proceedings; for he will be justified, as well as sinners judged, out of their own mouths. 1. The charge they drew up against God is blasphemous; ver. 25, 29, the house of Israel has the impudence to say, "The way of the Lord is not equal," than which nothing could be more absurd, as well as impious. "He that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Can his ways be unequal whose will is the eternal rule of good and evil, right and wrong? "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" No doubt he shall, he cannot do otherwise. 2. God's reasonings with them are very gracious and condescending, for even these blasphemers God would rather have convinced and saved than condemned. One would have expected that God should have immediately vindicated the honour of his justice by making those that impeached it eternal monuments of it. Must these be suffered to draw another breath that have once breathed out such wickedness as this? Shall that tongue ever speak again anywhere but in hell that has once said, "The ways of the Lord are not equal?" Yes, because this is the day of God's patience, he vouchsafes to argue with them, and he requires them to own, for it is so plain that they cannot deny, 1st. The equity of his ways; "Are not my ways equal?" No doubt they are; he never lays upon man more than is right. In the present punishments of sinners, and the afflictions of his own people, yea, and in the eternal damnation of the impenitent, "the ways of the Lord are equal." 2nd. The iniquity of their ways; "Are not your ways unequal?" It is plain they are, and the troubles you are in you have brought upon your own heads. God doth you no wrong, but you have wronged yourselves. "The foolishness of man perverts his ways," makes them unequal, and then "his heart frets against the Lord," as if his ways were unequal, *Pr.* xix. 3. In all our disputes with God, and in all his controversies with us, it will be found that his ways are equal, but ours are unequal; that he is in the right and we are in the wrong.

30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel,
Every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD.
Repent, and turn *yourselves* from all your transgressions;
So iniquity shall not be your ruin.
31 Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed;
And make you a new heart and a new spirit:
For why will ye die, O house of Israel?
32 For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth,
Saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *yourselves*, and live ye.

We have here the conclusion and application of this whole matter. After a fair trial at the bar of right reason, the verdict is brought in on God's side, it appears that his ways are equal; judgment therefore is next to be given, and one would think it should be a judgment of condemnation, nothing short of "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." But behold a miracle of mercy; the day of grace and Divine patience is yet lengthened out; and therefore, though God will at last judge every one according to his ways, yet he waits to be gracious, and closes all with a call to repentance, and a promise of pardon upon repentance.

First. Here are four necessary duties that we are called to, all amounting to the same. 1. We must repent. We must change our mind and change our ways; we must be sorry for what we have done amiss, and ashamed of it, and go as far as we can towards the undoing of it again. 2. We must "turn ourselves from all our transgressions," ver. 30. And again, ver. 32, "Turn yourselves," face about; turn from sin, nay, turn against it as the enemy you loathe, turn to God as the friend you love. 3. We must "cast away from us all our transgressions;" we must abandon and forsake them with a resolution never to return to them again. Give sin a bill of divorce; break all the leagues we have made with it; throw it overboard, as the mariners did Jonah, for it has raised the storm; cast it out of the soul, and crucify it as a malefactor. 4. We must "make us a new heart, and a new spirit." This was the matter of a promise, *ch.* xi. 19; here it is the matter of a precept. We must do our endeavour, and then God will not be wanting to us to give us his grace. St. Austin well explains this precept, *Deus non jubet impossibilia, sed jubendo monet et facere quod possis, et petere quod non possis*,—'God does not enjoin impossibilities, but by his commands admonishes us to do what is in our power, and to pray for what is not.' He hereby admonishes us to do what is in our power, and to pray for what is not.

Secondly. Here are four good arguments to enforce these calls to repentance. 1. It is the only way, and it is a sure way, to prevent the ruin which our sins have a direct tendency to. "So iniquity shall not be your ruin;" which implies, that if we do not repent iniquity will be our ruin here and for ever; but if we do, we are safe, we are snatched as brands out of the burning. 2. If we repent not, we certainly perish, and our blood will be upon our own heads. "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" What an absurd thing is it for you to choose death and damnation rather than life and salvation. Note, The reason why sinners die is, because they will die, they will go down the way that leads to death, and not come up to the terms on which life is offered. Herein sinners, especially sinners of the house of Israel, are most unreasonable, and act most unaccountably. 3. The God of heaven has no delight in our ruin, but desires our welfare; ver. 32, "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth;" which implies, that he has pleasure in the recovery of those that repent, which is both an engagement and an encouragement to us to repent. 4. We are made for ever if we repent. "Turn yourselves, and live ye." He that saith to us, Repent, thereby saith to us, Live; yea, he saith to us, Live; so that life and death are here set before us.

CHAPTER XIX.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the seventh, to foretell and lament the ruin of the house of David, the royal family of Judah, in the calamitous exit of the four sons and grandsons of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, in whom that illustrious line of kings was cut off, which the prophet is here ordered to lament, ver. 1; and he doth it by similitudes. I. The kingdom of Judah and house of David is here compared to a lioness, and those princes to lions that were fierce and ravenous, but were hunted down and taken in nets, ver. 2—9. II. That kingdom and house are here compared to a vine, and these princes to branches, that had been strong and flourishing, but were now broken off and burnt, ver. 10—14. This ruin of that monarchy was now in the doing, and this lamentation of it was intended to affect the people with it, that they might not flatter themselves with vain hopes of the lengthening out of their tranquillity.

MOREOVER take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Israel, 2 And say,
What *is* thy mother? A lioness:
She lay down among lions,
She nourished her whelps among young lions.
3 And she brought up one of her whelps:
It became a young lion,

LION HUNT.

And it learned to catch the prey; it devoured men.
4 The nations also heard of him;
He was taken in their pit, [Egypt.
And they brought him with chains unto the land of
5 Now when she saw that she had waited,
And her hope was lost,
Then she took another of her whelps,
And made him a young lion.
6 And he went up and down among the lions,
He became a young lion,
And learned to catch the prey, *and* devoured men.
7 And he knew their desolate palaces,
And he laid waste their cities;
And the land was desolate, and the fulness thereof,
By the noise of his roaring. [provinces,
8 Then the nations set against him on every side from the
And spread their net over him:
He was taken in their pit.
9 And they put him in ward in chains,
And brought him to the king of Babylon:
They brought him into holds,
That his voice should no more be heard
Upon the mountains of Israel.

Here is, First. Orders given to the prophet to bewail the fall of the royal family, which had long made so great a figure by virtue of a covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, that the eclipsing and extinguishing of it is justly lamented by all that know what value to put upon the covenant of our God; as we find, after a very large account of that covenant with David, *Ps.* lxxxix. 3, 20, &c., a sad lamentation for the decays and desolation of his family; ver. 38, 39, "But thou hast cast off and abhorred, hast made void the covenant of thy servant, and profaned his crown," &c. The kings of Judah are here called princes of Israel; for their glory was diminished, and they were become as princes; and their purity was lost, they were become corrupt and idolatrous as the kings of Israel, whose ways they had learned. The prophet must take up a lamentation for them; that is, he must describe their lamentable fall, as one that did himself lay it to heart, and desired those he preached to and wrote to might do so too. And how can we expect others should be affected with that which we ourselves are not affected with? And ministers, when they boldly foretell, yet must bitterly lament, the destruction of sinners, as those that have not desired the woful day. He is not directed to give advice to the princes of Israel, (that had been long and often done in vain,) but the decree being gone forth he must take up a lamentation for them.

Secondly. Instructions given him what to say.

1. He must compare the kingdom of Judah to a lioness; so wretchedly degenerated was it from what it had been formerly, when it sat as a queen among the nations; ver. 2, "What is thy mother?" Thine, O king. We read of Solomon's crown wherewith his mother crowned him; that is, his people, *Cant.* iii. 11. Thine, O Judah; the royal family is as a mother to the kingdom, a nursing mother; she is a lioness, fierce and cruel, and ravenous. When they had left their divinity, they soon lost their humanity too; and when they feared not God, neither did they regard man. She lay down among lions. God had said the people shall dwell alone, but they mingled themselves with the nations, and learned their works. "She nourished her whelps among young lions;" taught the young princes the way of tyrants, which was then used by the arbitrary kings of the East; filled their heads betimes with notions of their absolute despotic power, and possessed them with a belief that they had a right to enslave their subjects, that their liberty and property lay at their mercy. Thus "she nourished her whelps among young lions."

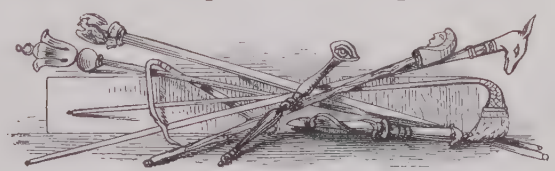
2. He must compare the kings of Judah to lions' whelps, ver. 3. Jacob had compared Judah, and especially the house of David, to a lion's whelp, for its being strong and formidable to its enemies abroad; *Gen.* xlix. 9, "He is an old lion, who shall stir him up?" And if they had adhered to the Divine law and promise God had preserved to them the might, and majesty, and dominion of a lion; and doth it in Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah. But these lions' whelps were so to their own subjects, were cruel and oppressive to them, preyed upon their estates and liberties; and when they thus by their tyranny made themselves a terror to those whom they ought to have protected, it was just with God to make those a terror to them whom otherwise they might have subdued. Here is lamented,

1st. The sin and fall of Jehoahaz, one of the whelps of this lioness. He became a young lion, ver. 3; he was made king, and thought he was made so that he might do what he pleased, and gratify his own ambition, covetousness, and revenge, as he had a mind; and so he was soon master of all the arts of tyranny: he "learned to catch the prey, and devoured men." When he had got power in his hand, all that had before in any thing disobliged him were made to feel his resentments, and become a sacrifice to his rage. But what came of it? He did not prosper long in his tyranny. The "nations heard of him," ver. 4, heard how furiously he drove at his first coming to the crown, how he trampled upon all that is just and sacred, and violated all his engagements, so that they looked upon him as a dangerous neighbour, and prosecuted him accordingly, "as a multitude of shepherds is called forth against a lion roaring on his prey," *Isa.* xxxi. 4; and he was taken as a beast of prey in their pit. His own subjects durst not stand up in defence of their own liberties; but God raised up a foreign power that soon put an end to his tyranny, and "brought him in chains to the land of Egypt." Thither Jehoahaz was carried captive, and never heard of more.

2nd. The like sin and fall of his successor, Jehoiakim. The kingdom of Judah for some time expected the return of Jehoahaz out of Egypt, but at length despaired of it, and then took another of the lion's whelps, and made him a young lion, ver. 5. And he, instead of taking warning by his brother's fate, to use his power with equity and moderation, and to seek the good of his people, trod in his brother's steps; "He went up and down among the lions," ver. 6; he consulted and conversed with those that were fierce and furious like himself, and took his measures from them, as Rehoboam took the advice of the rash and hotheaded young men; and he soon learned to catch the prey, and he devoured men, ver. 6. He seized his subjects' estates, fined and imprisoned them, filled his treasury by rapine and injustice, sequestrations and confiscations, fines and forfeitures, and swallowed up all that stood in his way. He had got the art of discovering what effects men had that lay concealed, and where the treasures were which they had hoarded up; he knew their desolate places, ver. 7, where they hid their money, and sometimes hid themselves; he knew where to find both out; and by his oppression he laid waste their cities, depopulated them, by forcing the inhabitants to remove their families to some place of safety. "The land was desolate," and the country villages were deserted; and though there was great plenty, and a fulness of all good things, yet people quitted it all for fear of the noise of his roaring. He took a pride in making all his subjects afraid of him, as the lion makes all the beasts of the forest to tremble, *Am.* iii. 8; and by his terrible roaring so astonished them that they fell down for fear; and, having not spirit to make their escape, became an easy prey to him, as they say the lions do. He hectored, and threatened, and talked big, and bullied people out of what they had. Thus he thought to have established his own power, but it had a contrary effect, it did but hasten his own ruin; ver. 8, "The nations set against him on every side," to restrain and reduce his exorbitant power, which they joined in confederacy to do for their common safety; and they spread their net over him, formed designs against him. God brought against Jehoiakim bands of the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, with the Chaldees, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 2, and he was taken in their pit. "Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon," 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 6. They put this lion within grates, bound him in chains, and "brought him to the king of Babylon," ver. 9. What became of him we know not, but "his voice was no more heard" roaring "upon the mountains of Israel." There was an end of his tyranny. He was "buried with the burial of an ass," *Jer.* xxii. 19, though he had been as a lion, "the terror of the mighty in the land of the living." Note, The righteousness of God is to be acknowledged when those that have terrified and enslaved others are themselves terrified and enslaved; when those that by the abuse of their power to destruction, which was given them for edification, make themselves as wild beasts, as roaring lions, and raging bears, for such, Solomon saith, wicked rulers are over the poor people, *Pr.* xxviii. 15, are treated as such; when those who, like Ishmael, have their hand against every man, come at last to have every man's hand against them. It was long since observed that bloody tyrants seldom die in peace, but have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

Ad generum Cereris sine cæde et sanguine pauci
Descendunt reges et sicca morte tyranni,—
'How few of all the boastful men that reign
Descend in peace to Pluto's dark domain.'—*Juvenal.*

10 Thy mother *is* like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters:
She was fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters. [bare rule,
11 And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that



EASTERN SCEPTRES.

And her stature was exalted among the thick branches,
And she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches.
12 But she was plucked up in fury,
She was cast down to the ground,
And the east wind dried up her fruit:
Her strong rods were broken and withered;
The fire consumed them.
13 And now she *is* planted in the wilderness,
In a dry and thirsty ground.
14 And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches,
Which hath devoured her fruit,
So that she hath no strong rod *to be* a sceptre to rule.
This *is* a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

Jerusalem, the mother city, is here represented by another similitude; she is a vine, and the princes are her branches. This comparison we had before, *ch.* xv.

First. Jerusalem is as a vine; the Jewish nation is so; "Like a vine in thy blood," ver. 10, the blood royal; like a vine set in blood, and watered with blood, which contributes very much to the flourishing and fruitfulness of vines. As if the blood which thou hast shed had been designed for the fattening and improving of the soil, in such plenty was it shed; and for a time it seemed to have that effect; for "she was fruitful and full of branches, by reason of" the waters, the "many waters," near which she was planted. Places of great wickedness may prosper for awhile; and a vine set in blood may be full of branches. Jerusalem was full of able magistrates, men of sense, men of learning and experience, that were strong rods, branches of this vine, of uncommon bulk and strength; or, poles for the support of this vine, for so magistrates are. The boughs of this vine were grown to such maturity that they were fit to make white staves of, "for the sceptres of them that bear rule," ver. 11. And they are strong rods only that are fit for sceptres; men of strong judgments, and strong resolutions, that are fit for magistrates. When the royal family of Judah was numerous, and the courts of justice filled with men of sense and probity, then Jerusalem's "stature was exalted among the thick

branches;" when the government is in good able hands, a nation is thereby made considerable. Then she was not taken for a weak and lowly vine, but "she appeared in her height," a topping city, "with the multitude of her branches;" *tanquam lenta solent inter viburna cupressus*,—'In thy quietness,' so some read that, ver. 10, which we translate, "in thy blood," thou wast such a vine as this. When Zedekiah was quiet and easy under the king of Babylon's yoke, his kingdom flourished thus. See how slow God is to anger, how he defers his judgments, and waits to be gracious.

Secondly. This vine is now quite destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar, being highly provoked by Zedekiah's treachery, plucked it up in fury, ver. 12, ruined the city and kingdom, and cut off all the branches of the royal family that fell in his way. The vine was cut off close to the ground, though not plucked up by the roots; the east wind dried up the fruit that was blasted; the young people fell by the sword, or were carried into captivity. The aspect of it had nothing that was pleasing, the prospect nothing that was promising; "her strong rods were broken and withered;" her great men were cut off, judges and magistrates deposed. "The vine itself is planted in the wilderness," ver. 13. Babylon was as a wilderness to those of the people that were carried captives thither. The land of Judah was as a wilderness to Jerusalem. Now the whole country was ravaged and laid waste by the Chaldean army, a fruitful land turned into barrenness; it is burnt with fire, *Ps.* lxxx. 16, and that "fire is gone out of a rod of her branches," ver. 14; that is, the king himself, by rebelling against the king of Babylon, has given occasion to all this mischief. She may thank herself for the fire that consumes her; she has by her wickedness made herself like tinder to the sparks of God's wrath, so that her own branches serve as fuel for her own consumption; in them the fire is kindled which devoured the fruits, the sins of the elder being the judgments which destroy the younger. Her fruit is burned with her own branches, "so that she has no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule;" none to be found now that are fit for the government, or dare take this ruin under their hand, as the complaint is, *Isa.* iii. 6, 7; none of the house of David left that have right to rule; no wise men, or men of sense, that are able to rule. It goes ill with any state, and is like to go worse, when it is thus deprived of the blessings of government, and has no strong rods for sceptres. "Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child;" for as good have no rod as not a strong rod. Those strong rods, we have reason to fear, had been instruments of oppression, assistant to the king in catching the prey, and devouring men, and now they are destroyed with him. Tyranny is the inlet to anarchy; and when the rod of government is turned into the serpent of oppression it is just with God to say, There shall be no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule; but let men be as the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the lesser. Note, "This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation." The prophet was bidden, ver. 1, to take up a lamentation; and, having done so, he leaves it to be made use of by others. "It is a lamentation" to us of this age; and, the desolations continuing long, it "shall be for a lamentation" to those that shall come after us; the child unborn will rue the destruction made of Judah and Jerusalem by the present judgments. They were a great while in coming, the bow was long in the drawing; but now they are come they will continue, and the sad effects of them will be entailed upon posterity. Note, Those who fill up the measure of their fathers' sins are laying up in store for their children's sorrows, and furnishing them with matter for lamentation; and nothing is more so than the overthrow of government.

CHAPTER XX.

In this chapter, I. The prophet is consulted by some of the elders of Israel, ver. 1. II. He is instructed by his God what answer to give them. He must, 1. Signify God's displeasure against them, ver. 2, 3. And, 2. He must shew them what just cause he had for that displeasure, by giving them a history of God's gracious dealings with their fathers, and their treacherous dealings with God; 1st. In Egypt, ver. 1—9; 2nd. In the wilderness, ver. 10—26; 3rd. In Canaan, ver. 27—32. 3. He must denounce the judgments of God against them, ver. 33—36. 4. He must tell them likewise what mercy God had in store for them, when he would bring a remnant of them to repentance, re-establish them in their own land, and set up his sanctuary among them again, ver. 37—44. 5. Here is another word dropped towards Jerusalem, which is explained and enlarged upon in the next chapter, ver. 45—49.

AND it came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth *month*, the tenth *day* of the month, *that* certain of the elders of Israel came to enquire of the LORD, and sat before me. 2 Then came the word of the LORD unto me, saying, 3 Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Are ye come to enquire of me? *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you. 4 Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge *them?* cause them to know the abominations of their fathers:

Here is, First. The occasion of this message which we have in this chapter. That sermon which we had, *ch.* xviii., was occasioned by their presumptuous reflections upon God; this was occasioned by their hypocritical inquiries after him. Each shall have their own. This prophecy is exactly dated in the seventh year of the captivity, about two years after Ezekiel began to prophesy. God would have them keep count how long their captivity lasted, that they might see how the years went on towards their deliverance, though very slowly. "Certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord," not statedly, as those *ch.* viii. 1, but, as it should seem, occasionally, and upon a particular emergency. Whether they were of those that were now in captivity, or elders lately come from Jerusalem upon business to Babylon, is not certain; but by what the prophet saith of them, ver. 32, it should seem their inquiry was, whether, now they were captives in Babylon, at a distance from their own country, where they had not only no temple, but no synagogue for the worship of God, it was not lawful for them, that they might ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters, to join with them in their worship, and do as the families of these countries do that serve wood and stone. This matter was palliated as well as it would bear, like Naaman's indenting with Elisha for leave to bow in the house of Rimmon, in compliment to the king; but we have reason to suspect that their inquiry drove at this. Note, Those hearts are wretchedly hardened that ask God leave to go on in sin, and that when they are suffering for it. They came and sat very demurely, and with a show of devotion before the prophet, *ch.* xxxiii. 31.

Secondly. The purport of this message.

1. They must be made to know that God is angry with them. He takes it as an affront that they are come to inquire of him, when they are resolved to go on still in their trespasses. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you," ver. 3. Their shows of devotion shall neither be acceptable to God nor advantageous to themselves. God will not take notice of their inquiries, nor give them any satisfactory answers. Note, A hypocritical attendance on God and his ordinances is so far from being pleasing to him, that it is provoking.

2. They must be made to know that God is justly angry with them, ver. 4; "Wilt thou judge them, Son of man, wilt thou judge them?" Thou art a prophet, surely thou wilt not plead for them, as an intercessor with God, but surely thou wilt pass sentence on them, as a judge for God. "See, I have set thee over the nation," wilt thou not declare to them the judgments of the Lord? "Cause them," therefore, "to know the abominations of their fathers;" so the orders run now, as before, *ch.* xvi. 2, he must cause them to know their abominations. Though their own abominations were sufficient to justify God in the severest of his proceedings against them, yet it would be of use for them to know the abominations of their fathers, that they might see what a righteous thing it was with God now at last to cut them off from being a people, who from the first were such a provoking people.

5 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD;
In the day when I chose Israel, [Jacob,
And lifted up mine hand unto the seed of the house of
And made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt,
When I lifted up mine hand unto them, saying,
I *am* the LORD your God;
6 In the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them,
To bring them forth of the land of Egypt
Into a land that I had espied for them,
Flowing with milk and honey,
Which *is* the glory of all lands:
7 Then said I unto them,
Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes,
And defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt:
I *am* the LORD your God.
8 But they rebelled against me,
And would not hearken unto me: [their eyes,
They did not every man cast away the abominations of
Neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt:
Then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them,
To accomplish my anger against them
In the midst of the land of Egypt.
9 But I wrought for my name's sake,
That it should not be polluted before the heathen,
Among whom they *were*,
In whose sight I made myself known unto them,
In bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

The history of the ingratitude and rebellion of the people of Israel here begins as early as their beginning; so doth the history of man's apostacy from his Maker. No sooner have we read the story of our first parents' creation, but immediately we meet with that of their rebellion; so we see here it was with Israel, a people designed to represent the body of mankind, both in their dealings with God and his with them. Here is,

First. The gracious purposes of God's law concerning Israel in Egypt, where they were bondslaves to Pharaoh. Be it spoken, be it written, to the immortal honour of free grace, that then and there, 1. He chose Israel to be a peculiar people to himself, though their condition was bad, and their character worse, that he might have the honour of mending both. He therefore chose them because they were the seed of the house of Jacob, the posterity of that prince with God, "that he might keep the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers," *Deu.* vii. 7, 8. 2. He made himself known to them by his name Jehovah, a new name, *Ex.* vi. 3, when by reason of their servitude they had almost lost the knowledge of that name by which he was known to their fathers, God Almighty. Note, As the foundation of our blessedness is laid in God's choosing us, so the first step towards it is God's making himself known to us. And, whatever distance we are at, whatever distress we are in, he that made himself known to Israel, even in the land of Egypt, can find us out, and follow us with the gracious discoveries and manifestations of his favour. 3. He made over himself to them, as their God in covenant. "I lift up my hand unto them," saying it, and confirming it with an oath, "I am the Lord your God," to whom you are to pay your homage, and from whom and in whom you are to expect your bliss. 4. He promised to bring them out of Egypt, and made good what he promised. He lifted up his hand, that is, he sware unto them that he would deliver them; and they being very unworthy, and their deliverance very unlikely, it was requisite the promise of it should be confirmed by an oath. Or, he lifted up his hand, that is, he put forth his almighty power to do it; he did it with an outstretched arm, *Ps.* cxxxvi. 12. 5. He assured them that he would put them in possession of the land of Canaan. He therefore brought them out of Egypt, "that he might bring them into a land he had spied out for them:" a second garden of Eden, which was "the glory of all lands," so he found it, the climate temperate, the soil, the situation pleasant, and every thing agreeable, *Deu.* viii. 7; xi. 12; however, so he made it, by setting up his sanctuary in it.

Secondly. The reasonable commands he gave them, and the easy conditions of his covenant with them at that time. Having told them what they might expect from him, he next tells them what was all he expected from them; it was no more than this, ver. 7, "Cast ye away every man" his images that he useth for worship,

that are the adorations, but should be "the abominations of his eyes." Let him abominate them, and put them out of his sight, "and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt," which it seems many of them were fond of,—the golden calf was one of them. It was just, and what might reasonably be expected, that, being delivered from the Egyptian slavery, they should quit the Egyptian idolatry, especially when God, at bringing them out, executed judgments upon the gods of Egypt, *Num.* xxxiii. 4, and thereby shewed himself above them. And whatever other idols they might have an inclination to, one would think they should have a rooted aversion to the gods of Egypt, for Egypt's sake, which had been to them a house of bondage. Yet it seems they needed this caution, and it is backed with a good reason, I am the Lord your God, who neither need an assistant nor will admit a rival.

Thirdly. Their unreasonable disobedience to these commands, for which God might justly have cut them off as soon as ever they were formed into a people; ver. 8, "They rebelled against God;" not only refused to comply with his particular precepts, but shook off their allegiance, and in effect told him they would be at liberty to worship what God they pleased; and even then when God came down to deliver them, and sent Moses for that purpose, yet they would not forsake the idols of Egypt, which perhaps made them speak so affectionately of the onions of Egypt, *Num.* xi. 5, for among other things the Egyptians worshipped an onion. It was strange that all the plagues of Egypt would not prevail to cure them of their affection to the idols of Egypt. For this, God said he would pour out his fury upon them, even while they were yet in the midst of the land of Egypt. Justly might he have said, Let them die with the Egyptians. This magnifies the riches of God's goodness, that he was pleased to work so great a salvation for them, even then when he saw them ripe for ruin; well might Moses tell them, It is "not for your righteousness," *Deu.* ix. 5.

Fourthly. The wonderful deliverance which God wrought for them notwithstanding. Though they forfeited the favour while it was in the bestowing, and when God would have healed them then their iniquity was discovered, *Hos.* vii. 1, yet "mercy rejoiced against judgment," and God did what he designed purely for his own name's sake, ver. 9. When nothing in us will furnish him with a reason for his favours, he furnisheth himself with one. God made himself known to them in the sight of the heathen, when he ordered Moses publicly to say to Pharaoh, "Israel is my son, my firstborn, let them go, that they may serve me." Now, if he should have left them to perish for their wickedness as they deserved, the Egyptians would have reflected upon him for it, and his name would have been polluted, which ought to be sanctified, and shall be so. Note, The church is secured, even when it is corrupt, because God will secure his own honour.

10 Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of [Egypt,
And brought them into the wilderness.
11 And I gave them my statutes,
And shewed them my judgments,
Which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them.
12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths,
To be a sign between me and them, [them.
That they might know that I *am* the LORD that sanctify
13 But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilder-
They walked not in my statutes, [ness:
And they despised my judgments,
Which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them;
And my sabbaths they greatly polluted:
Then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the
To consume them. [wilderness,
14 But I wrought for my name's sake,
That it should not be polluted before the heathen,
In whose sight I brought them out.
15 Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness,
That I would not bring them into the land which I had
given *them*,
Flowing with milk and honey,
Which *is* the glory of all lands;
16 Because they despised my judgments,
And walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sab-
For their heart went after their idols. [baths:
17 Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them,
Neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness.
18 But I said unto their children in the wilderness,
Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers,
Neither observe their judgments,
Nor defile yourselves with their idols:
19 I *am* the Lord your God;
Walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments,
And do them;
20 And hallow my sabbaths;
And they shall be a sign between me and you,
That ye may know that I *am* the LORD your God.
21 Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me:
They walked not in my statutes,
Neither kept my judgments to do them,
Which *if* a man do, he shall even live in them;
They polluted my sabbaths:
Then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them,
To accomplish my anger against them in the wilderness
22 Nevertheless I withdrew mine hand,
And wrought for my name's sake,
That it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen,
In whose sight I brought them forth.
23 I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness,
That I would scatter them among the heathen,
And disperse them through the countries;
24 Because they had not executed my judgments,
But had despised my statutes,
And had polluted my sabbaths,
And their eyes were after their fathers' idols.
25 Wherefore I gave them also statutes *that were* not good,
And judgments whereby they should not live;
26 And I polluted them in their own gifts,
In that they caused to pass through *the fire* all that
openeth the womb,
That I might make them desolate,
To the end that they might know that I *am* the LORD.

The history of the struggles between the sins of Israel, by which they endeavoured to ruin themselves, and the mercies of God, by which he endeavoured to save them and make them happy, is here continued; and the instances of that struggle in these verses have reference to what passed between God and them in the wilderness, in which God honoured himself and they shamed themselves. The story of Israel in the wilderness is referred to in the New Testament, (1 *Cor.* x., *Heb.* iii.,) as well as often in the Old, for warning to us Christians, and therefore we are particularly concerned in these verses. Observe,

First. The great things God did for them, which he puts them in mind of, not as grudging them his favours, but to shew how ungrateful they had been. And we say, if you call a man ungrateful, you can call him no worse. It was a great favour, 1. That God "brought them forth out of Egypt," ver. 10, though, as it follows, he "brought them into the wilderness," and not into Canaan presently. It is better to be at liberty in a wilderness than bond-slaves in a land of plenty; to enjoy God and ourselves in solitude, than to lose both in a crowd; yet there were many of them who had such base, servile spirits as not to understand this, but when they met with the difficulties of a desert, wished themselves in Egypt again. 2. That he gave them the law upon mount Sinai, ver. 11; not only instructed them concerning good and evil, but by his authority bound them from the evil and to the good. He "gave them his statute," and a valuable gift it was: "Moses commanded them a law that was the inheritance of the congregation of Israel," *Deu.* xxxiii. 4. God made them to know his judgments; not only enacted laws for them, but shewed them the reasonableness and equity of those laws, with what judgment they were formed. The laws he gave them they were encouraged to observe and obey, for "if a man do them, he shall even live in them;" that is, in keeping of God's commandments there is abundance of comfort, and a great reward. Christ saith, "If thou wilt enter into life," and enjoy it, "keep the commandments." Though they who are most strict in their obedience are thus far unprofitable servants that they do no more than is their duty to do, yet it is thus richly recompensed, "This do, and thou shalt live." The Chaldee saith, "he shall live an eternal life in them." St. Paul quotes this, *Gal.* iii. 12, to shew that the law is not of faith, but proposeth life upon condition of perfect obedience, which we are not capable of performing, and therefore must have recourse to the grace of the Gospel, without which we are all undone. 3. That he revived the ancient institution of the sabbath day, which was lost and forgotten while they were bond-slaves in Egypt, for their task-masters there would by no means allow them to rest one day in seven. In the wilderness indeed every day was a day of rest, for what need had they to labour who lived upon manna, and whose raiment waxed not old? But one day in seven must be a holy rest; ver. 12, "I gave them my sabbath to be a sign between me and them." The institution of the sabbath was a sign of God's goodwill to them, and their observance of it a sign of their regard to him: "that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." By this, God made it to appear he had distinguished them from the rest of the world, and designed to model them for a peculiar people to himself; and by their attendance on God in solemn assemblies on sabbath days they were made to increase in the knowledge of God, in an experimental knowledge of the powers and pleasures of his sanctifying grace. Note, 1st. Sabbaths are privileges, and are so to be accounted. The church acknowledgeth it as a great favour, in that chapter which is parallel to this, and seems to have a reference to this, *Neh.* ix. 14, "Thou madest known to them thy holy sabbaths." 2nd. Sabbaths are signs. It is a sign men have a sense of religion, and there is some good correspondence between them and God, while they make conscience of keeping holy the sabbath day. 3rd. Sabbaths, if duly sanctified, are the means of our sanctification. If we do the duty of the day, we shall find, to our comfort, it is the Lord that sanctifies us, makes us holy, that is, truly happy here, and prepares us to be happy, that is, perfectly holy, hereafter.

Secondly. The disobedient, undutiful carriage towards God, for which he might justly have thrown them out of covenant, as soon as he had taken them into covenant; ver. 13, "They rebelled in the wilderness." There where they received so much mercy from God, and had such a dependence upon him, and were in their way to Canaan, yet there they broke out in many open rebellions against the God that led them and fed them. They did not only not walk in God's statutes, but they despised his judgments as not worth observing; instead of sanctifying the sabbaths, they polluted them, greatly polluted them; one gathered sticks, many went out to gather manna on this day. Hereupon God was ready sometimes to cut them off; he said more than once he would "consume them in the wilderness," but Moses interceded, so did God's own mercy more powerfully, and most of all a concern for his own glory, that "his name might not be polluted and profaned among the heathen," ver. 14; that the

Egyptians might not say, either for mischief he brought them thus far, or he was not able to bring them any farther, or he had no such good land as was talked of to bring them to, *Ex.* xxxii. 12; *Num.* xiv. 13. Note, God's strongest reasons for his sparing mercy are those which are fetched from his own glory.

Thirdly. God's determination to cut off that generation of them in the wilderness. He that lifted up his hand for them, ver. 6, now lifts up his hand against them; that then by an oath confirmed his promise to bring them out of Egypt, now by an oath confirmed his threatening that he would not bring them into Canaan; ver. 15, 16, "I lifted up my hand unto them, saying, As truly as I live, these men who have tempted me these ten times shall never see the land which I sware unto their fathers," *Num.* xiv. 22, 23; *Ps.* xcv. 11. By their contempt of God's laws, and particularly of his sabbaths, they put a bar in their own door; and that which was at the bottom of their disobedience to God, and their neglect of his institutions, was a secret affection to the gods of Egypt; "Their heart went after their idols." Note, The bias of the mind towards the world and the flesh, the money and the belly, those two great objects of spiritual idolatry, is the root of bitterness, from which springs all disobedience to the Divine law. The heart that goes after those idols despiseth God's judgments.

Fourthly. The reservation of a seed that should be admitted upon a new trial, and instructions given to that seed, ver. 17. Though they thus deserved ruin, and were doomed to it, yet "mine eye spared them." When he looked upon them he had a compassion for them, and did not make an end of them, but reprieved them till a new generation was reared. Note, It is owing purely to the mercy of God that he has not long ago made an end of us. This new generation was well educated; Moses in *Deuteronomy* reported and enforced the laws which had been given to those that came out of Egypt, that their children might have them as it were sounding in their ears afresh, when they entered Canaan; ver. 18, "I said unto their children in the wilderness," in the plains of Moab; walk in the statutes of your God, and "walk not in the statutes of your fathers." Do not imitate their superstitious usages, nor retain their foolish, wicked customs; away with their vain conversation, which has nothing else to say for itself but that it was received by the tradition of your fathers; 1 *Pet.* i. 18, "Defile not yourselves with their idols," for you see how odious they rendered themselves to God by them, but "keep my judgments, and hallow my sabbaths," ver. 19, 20. Note, If parents be careless and do not give their children good instructions as they ought, the children ought to make up the want by studying the word of God so much the more carefully and diligently themselves, when they grow up. And the bad examples of parents must be made use of by their children for admonition, and not for imitation.

Fifthly. The revolt of the next generation from God, by which they also made themselves obnoxious to the wrath of God; ver. 21, "The children rebelled against me" too. And the same that was said of the fathers' rebellion is here said of the children's, for they were a seed of evil-doers; Moses told them he knew their rebellion and their stiff neck, *Deu.* xxxi. 27, and *Deu.* ix. 24, "You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you;" "They walked not in my statutes," ver. 21; nay, "they despised my statutes," ver. 25. They who disobey God's statutes despise them; they shew that they have a mean opinion of them, and of him whose statutes they are. They polluted God's sabbaths, as their fathers. Note, The profanation of the sabbath day is an inlet to all impiety; those who pollute holy time will keep nothing pure. It was said of the fathers, ver. 16, that "their heart went after their idols;" they worshipped idols because they had an affection for them. It is said of the children, ver. 24, that "their eyes went after their fathers' idols;" they were grown atheistical, and had no affection for any gods at all, but they worshipped their fathers' idols because they were their fathers', and they had them before their eyes; they were used to them. And if they must have gods, they would have such as they could see, such as they could manage; and that which aggravated their disobedience to God's statutes was, that if they had done them they might have lived in them, ver. 21; might have been a happy, thriving people. Note, They that go contrary to their duty go contrary to their interest; they will not obey, will not come to Christ that they may have life, *Jno.* v. 40; and it is therefore just that they who will not live and flourish as they might in their obedience should die and perish in their disobedience. Now the great instance of that generation's rebellion, and inclination to idolatry, was the iniquity of Peor, as that of their fathers was the golden calf; then the "anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel," *Num.* xxv. 3. Then there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, which if it had not been seasonably stayed by Phinehas's zeal, had cut them all off; and yet they owned in Joshua's time, We are not "cleansed from that iniquity unto this day," *Jos.* xxii. 15; *Ps.* cvi. 29. Then it was that God said he would pour out his fury upon them, ver. 21; that he lifted up his hand unto them in the wilderness, when they were a second time just ready to enter Canaan, "that he would scatter them among the heathen." This very thing he said to them by Moses in his parting song, *Deu.* xxxii. 20; because they provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, he said, "I will hide my face from them;" and ver. 26, 27, he said, "I will scatter them into corners, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy," which explains this here, ver. 21, 22, "I said I would pour out my fury upon them, but I withdrew my hand for my name's sake." Note, When the corruptions of the visible church are such, and so provoking, that we have reason to fear its total extirpation, yet then we may be confident of this to our comfort, that God will secure his own honour by making good his purpose, that while the world stands he will have a church in it.

Sixthly. The judgments of God upon them for their rebellion. They would not regard the statutes and judgments by which God prescribed them their duty, but despised them; and therefore God gave them statutes and judgments that were not good, and by which they should not live, ver. 25. By which seems to be meant the several ways by which God punished them while they were in the wilderness, the plague that broke in upon them, the fiery serpent, and the like; which, in allusion to the law they had broken, are called judgments, because inflicted by the justice of God; and statutes, because he gave orders concerning them, and commanded desolations, as sometimes he had commanded deliverances, and appointed Israel's plagues as he had done the plagues of Egypt. When God said, "I will consume them in a moment," *Num.* xvi. 25; when he said, "Take the heads of the people, and hang them up," *Num.* xxv. 4; when he threatened them with the curse, and obliged them to say Amen to every curse, *Deu.* xxvii., xxviii.; then he gave them judgments by which they should not live: more is implied than is expressed,—they are judgments by which they should die. Those that will not be bound by the precepts of the law shall be bound by the sentence of it; for one way or other the word of God will take hold of men, *Zec.* i. 6.

Spiritual judgments are the most dreadful, and these God punished them with; the statutes and judgments which the heathen observed in the worship of their idols were not good, and in practising them they could not live. And God gave them up to those: he made their sin to be their punishment; gave them up to a reprobate mind, as he did the Gentile idolaters, *Rom.* i. 24, 26; gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, *Ps.* lxxxi. 12; punished them for their superstitious customs which were against the written law, by giving them up to those that were against the very light and law of nature. He left them to themselves, to be guilty of the most impure idolatries, as in the worship of Baal-peor he polluted them; that is, he permitted them to pollute themselves in their own gifts, ver. 26; and of the most barbarous idolatries, as in the worship of Moloch, when they caused their children, especially their firstborn, (which God challenged a particular property in, "The firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me,") "to pass through the fire," that is, to be sacrificed to their idols; that thus he might make them desolate. Not only that he might justly do it, but that he might do it by their own hands; for this must needs be a great weakening to their families, and a diminution of the honour and strength of their country. Note, God sometimes makes sin to be its own punishment, and yet is not the author of sin; and there needs no more to make men miserable than to give them up to their own vile appetites and passions. Let them be put into the hand of their own counsels, and they will ruin themselves, and make themselves desolate. And thus God makes them know that he is the Lord, and that he is a righteous God, which they themselves will be compelled to own when they see how much their wilful transgressions contribute to their own desolations. Note, Those who will not acknowledge God as the Lord their Ruler, shall be made to acknowledge him as the Lord their Judge, when it is too late.

27 Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel,
and say unto them,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me,
In that they have committed a trespass against me.
28 *For* when I had brought them into the land,
For the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them,
Then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees,
And they offered there their sacrifices, [ing:
And there they presented the provocation of their offer-
There also they made their sweet savour,
And poured out there their drink offerings.
29 Then I said unto them,
What *is* the high place whereunto ye go?
And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day.
30 Wherefore say unto the house of Israel,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers?
And commit ye whoredom after their abominations?
31 For when ye offer your gifts,
When ye make your sons to pass through the fire,
Ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this
day:

MOLOCH.

And shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel?
As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of
by you.
32 And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all,
That ye say, We will be as the heathen,
As the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

Here the prophet goes on with the story of their rebellions, for their farther humiliation; and shews,

First. That they had persisted in them after they were settled in the land of Canaan. Though God had so many times testified his displeasure against their wicked courses, yet in this, that is, in the very same thing, "your fathers have blasphemed me;" that is, continued to affront me, that they "also have trespassed a trespass against me," ver. 27. Note, It is a great aggravation of sin when men will not take warning by the mischievous consequences of sin in those that have gone before them. This is blaspheming God, it is speaking reproachfully of his judgments, as if they were of no significancy, and were not worth regarding.

1. God had made good his promise. I brought them into the land that I had sworn to give them; though their unbelief and disobedience had made the performance slow, and much retarded it, yet it did not make the promise of none effect. They were often very near being cut off in the wilderness, but a step between them and ruin; and yet they came to Canaan at last. Note, Even God's Israel gets to heaven by hell gates; so many are their transgressions, and so strong their corruptions, that it is a miracle of mercy they are happy at last; as hypocrites go to hell by heaven gates. The righteous scarcely are saved; *per tot discrimina rerum tendimus ad cœlum*,—'ten thousand dangers fill the road to heaven.'

2. They had broken his precept by their abominable idolatries. God had appointed them to destroy all the monuments of idolatry, that they might not be tempted to desert his sanctuary; but instead of defacing them they fell in love with them, and when they "saw every high hill," whence they had the most delightful prospects, and all the "thick trees," where they had the most delightful shades,—the former to shew forth their pompous idolatries, the latter to conceal their shameful ones,—"there they offered their sacrifices, and made their sweet savour," which should have been presented upon God's altar only. "There they presented the provocation of their offering," ver. 28; that is, their offerings, which, instead of pacifying God or pleasing him, were highly provoking; sacrifices which, though costly, yet being misplaced, were an abomination to the Lord.

3. They obstinately persisted herein, notwithstanding all the admonitions that were given them; ver. 29, "Then I told them" by my servants the prophets, told them where the high place was to which they went, nay, I put them upon considering it, and asking their own consciences concerning it, by putting this question to them, "Which is the high place whereunto you go?" What do you find there that is so inviting, that you will leave God's altars, where he requires your attendance, to frequent such places as he has forbidden to worship in? Do you not know that those high places are of a heathenish extraction, and that the things which the Gentiles sacrificed they sacrificed to devils, and not to God? Did not Moses tell you so? *Deu.* xxxii. 17, "And will you have fellowship with devils? What is that high place to which you go" when you turn your back on God's altars? O foolish Israelites, who or what has bewitched you, that you will forsake the fountain of life for broken cisterns? that worship which God appoints and will accept, for that which he forbids, which he abhors, and which he will avenge? And yet the name is called Bamah unto this day; that is, they will have their way, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary. They are wedded to their high places, even in the best reigns those were not taken away. You could not prevail to take away the name of Bamah, the high place, out of their mouths; but still they would have that in the place of their worship. The sin and the sinner are hardly parted.

Secondly. That this generation after they were unsettled continued under the dominion of the same corrupt inclination to idolatry, ver. 30. He must say to the present house of Israel, some of whose elders were now sitting before him, "Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers?" After all that God hath said against you by a succession of prophets, and done against you by a series of judgments, yet will you take no warning? will you still be as bad as your fathers were, and commit the same abominations that they committed? I see you will, you have a mind to be at the old trade again; you offer your gifts in the high places, and you make your sons to pass through the fire; either you actually do it, or do it in purpose and imagination, and so you continue idolaters to this day. These elders seem now to have been projecting a coalition with the heathen; their hearts they will reserve for the God of Israel, but their knees they will be at liberty to bow to the gods of the nations among whom they live, that they may have the more respect, and the fairer quarter among them. Now the prophet is here ordered to tell those who are forming this scheme, and were for compounding the matter between God and Baal, that they should have no comfort or benefit by either. 1. They should have no benefit by their consulting in private with the prophets of the Lord; for, because they were hearkening after idols, God would have nothing to do with them; ver. 31, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you." What he had said before, (ver. 3,) having largely shewed how just it was, he here repeats as that which he would abide by. Let them not think that they honoured him by their inquiries, nor expect an answer of peace from him, as long as they continued in love and league with their idols. Note, Those reap no benefit by their religion that are not entire and sincere in it; nor can we have any comfortable communion with God in ordinances of worship unless we be inward, and upright with him therein. We make nothing of our profession if it be but a profession. Nay, 2. They should have no benefit by their conforming in public to the practice of their neighbours; ver. 32, "That which comes into your mind" as a piece of refined politics in the present difficult juncture, and which you would be advised to for your own preservation, and that you may not by being singular expose yourselves to abuses; it "shall not be at all," it shall turn to no account to you. You say, "We will be as the heathen;" we will join with them in worshipping their gods, though at the same time we do not believe them to be gods, but wood and stone; and then we should be taken as the families of the countries. They will not know, or in a little while will have forgotten, that we are Jews, and will allow us the same privileges with their own countrymen. Tell them, saith God, that this project shall never prosper. Either their neighbours will not admit them to join with them in their worship, or, if they do, will think never the better, but the worse of them for it; and will look upon them as dissemblers, and not fit to be trusted, who are thus false to their God, and put a cheat upon their neighbours. Note, There is nothing got by sinful compliances; and the carnal projects of hypocrites will stand them in no stead. It is only integrity and uprightness that will preserve men, and recommend them to God and man.

33 *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD,
Surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm,
And with fury poured out, will I rule over you:
34 And I will bring you out from the people, [scattered,
And will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are
With a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm,
And with fury poured out.
35 And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people,
And there will I plead with you face to face.
36 Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt,
So will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD.
37 And I will cause you to pass under the rod,
And I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:
38 And I will purge out from among you the rebels,
And them that transgress against me: [sojourn,
I will bring them forth out of the country where they
And they shall not enter into the land of Israel:
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.
39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD;
Go ye, serve ye every one his idols,
And hereafter *also*, if ye will not hearken unto me:
But pollute ye my holy name no more
With your gifts, and with your idols.
40 For in mine holy mountain, [GOD,
In the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord
There shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me:
There will I accept them,
And there will I require your offerings, [things.
And the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy
41 I will accept you with your sweet savour,
When I bring you out from the people,
And gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered;
And I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.
42 And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I shall bring you into the land of Israel,
Into the country *for* the which I lifted up mine hand
To give it to your fathers.
43 And there shall ye remember your ways,
And all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled;
And ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight
For all your evils that ye have committed.
44 And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I have wrought with you for my name's sake,
Not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings,
O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

The design which was now on foot among the elders of Israel was, that the people of Israel, being scattered among the nations, should lay aside all their peculiarities, and conform to those among whom they lived; but God had told them the design should not take effect, ver. 32. Now in these verses he shews particularly how it should be frustrated. They aimed at the mingling of the families of Israel with the families of the countries. But it will prove in the issue, that the wicked Israelites, notwithstanding their compliances, shall not mingle with them in their prosperity, but shall be distinguished from them for destruction; for idolatrous Israelites, that are apostates from God, shall be sooner and sorer punished than idolatrous Babylonians, that never knew the way of righteousness. Read and tremble at the doom here passed upon them; it is backed with an oath not to be reversed. "As I live, saith the Lord God," thus and thus will I deal with you. They think to make both Jerusalem and Babylon their friends by halting between two. But God threatens that neither of them shall serve for a rest or refuge for them.

First. Babylon shall not protect them, nor any of the countries of the heathen; for God will cast them out of his protection, and then what prince, what people, what place, can serve to be a sanctuary to them? God was Israel's king of old, and had they continued his loyal subjects he would have ruled over them with care and tenderness, for their good; but now "with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over them," ver. 33. That power which should have been exerted for their protection shall be exerted for their destruction. Note, There is no shaking off God's dominion; rule he will, either with the golden sceptre or with the iron rod; and they that will not yield to the power of his grace shall be made to sink under the power of his wrath. Now when God is angry with them, though they may think they shall be lost in the crowd of the heathen, among whom they are scattered, they will be disappointed; for, ver. 34, "I will gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered," as when the rebels are dispersed in battle, those that have escaped the sword of war are pursued and brought together out of all the places whither they were scattered, to be punished by the sword of justice. They shall be brought into the wilderness of the people, ver. 35, either into Babylon, which is called a wilderness, *ch.* xix. 13, and the desert of the sea, *Isa.* xxi. 1, or into some place, which, though full of people, should be to them as the

wilderness was to Israel, after they came out of Egypt, a place where God will plead with them face to face, as he pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt, ver. 36; where their carcases shall fall, and where he will swear concerning them, that they shall never return to Canaan; as he sware concerning their fathers, that they should never come into Canaan, where he will avenge the breach of his law with as much terror as he gave it in the wilderness of Sinai. Note, God has a good action against apostates, and will not only find time, but find a proper place too, to plead with them in upon that action, a wilderness even in the midst of the people for that purpose.

Secondly. Israel shall be no more able to protect them than Babylon could; nor shall their relation to God's people stand them in any more stead for the other world than their compliance with idolaters shall for this world; nor shall they stand "in the congregation of the righteous," any more than in the congregation of evil-doers; for there will come a distinguishing day, when God will separate between the precious and the vile. He will cause them, as the shepherd causeth his sheep, to pass under the rod, when he tithes them, *Lev.* xxvii. 32, that he may mark which is for God. God will take particular notice of each of them, one by one, as sheep are counted, and "He will bring them into the bond of the covenant," ver. 37; that is, he will try them and judge of them according to the tenor of the covenant, and the difference made between some and others by the blessings and curses of the covenant. Or, it may refer to those among them that repented and reformed; he will cause them to pass under the rod of affliction, and, having done them good by it, he will bring them again into the bond of the covenant,—will be to them a God in covenant, and use them again as heirs of promise.

1. He will separate the wicked men from among them; ver. 38, "I will purge out from among you the rebels," that have been a grief and scandal to you, and who have by their rebellions brought all these calamities upon you. The judgments of God shall find them out, and their naming the name of Israel shall be no shelter to them. They shall be "brought out of the countries where they sojourn," and shall not have that rest in them which they promised themselves; but they "shall not enter into the land of Israel," nor enjoy the benefit of that rest which God has promised to his people. Note, Though godly people may share with the wicked in the calamities of the world, yet wicked people shall have no share with the godly in the heavenly Canaan; but it shall be part of the blessedness of that world that they shall be purged out from among them, the tares from the wheat, the chaff from the corn, *ch.* xiii. 9. But wherever these idolaters of the house of Israel were contriving to worship both God and their idols, thinking to please both, God here protests against it, ver. 39, as Elijah had done in his name; "If the Lord be God, then follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." If you will serve your idols, do, and take what comes of it; but then do not pretend relation to God and a religious observance of him, nor pollute his holy name with your gifts at his altar. Spiritual judgments are the sorest judgments. Two of that kind of judgments are threatened in this verse against those that were for dividing between the God of Israel and the gods of the nations. 1st. That they should be given up to the service of their idols. To them he saith ironically, "Since you will not hearken unto me, go ye, serve every one his idols," now you think it will be for your interest, and hereafter also. You shall go on in it; Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone, let him take his course, and see what he will get by it at last. Note, They who think to serve themselves by sin will find in the end that they have but enslaved themselves to sin. 2nd. That they shall be cut off from the service of God, and communion with God; You shall not pollute my holy name with your vain oblations, *Isa.* i. 11. You bring your gifts in your hands, wherewith you pretend to honour me, but at the same time you bring your idols in your hearts, and therefore you do but pollute me, which I will not suffer any more, *Am.* v. 21, 22. Note, Those are justly forbidden God's house that profane his house.

2. He will separate them to himself again. 1st. He will "gather them" in mercy "out of the countries whither they were scattered," to be monuments of mercy, as the incorrigible were gathered to be vessels of wrath, ver. 41. Not one of God's jewels shall be lost in the lumber of this world. 2nd. He will "bring them to the land of Israel," which he had promised to give to their fathers. And the discontinuance of their possession shall be no defeasance of their right; it is the land of Israel still, and thither God will bring them safe again, ver. 42. 3rd. He will re-establish his ordinances among them,—will set up his sanctuary in his holy mountain, which is here called "the mountain of the height of Israel;" for the mount Sion was none of the highest mountains, yet the temple there was one of the highest honours of Israel. It is promised that they who preserved their integrity, and would not serve idols in other lands, shall return to their prosperity, and shall serve the true God in their own land; "All of them in the land shall serve me." Note, It is the true happiness of a people, and a sure token for good to them, when there is a prevailing disposition in them to serve God. Whereas God had forbidden the idolaters to bring their gifts to his altar, of these he will require offerings and first-fruits, and will accept them, ver. 42. What he doth not require he will not accept, but what is done with a regard to his precepts he will be well pleased with. He will "accept them with their sweet savour," or 'savour of rest,' ver. 41, as being very grateful to him, and what he takes a complacency in; whereas to hypocritical worshippers he saith, "I will not smell in your solemn assemblies." 4th. He will give them true repentance for their sins, ver. 43. When they find how gracious God is to them they shall be overcome with his kindness, and blush to think of their ill carriage towards so good a God. There, in my holy mountain, when you come to enjoy the privileges of that again, there shall ye remember your doings, wherein ye have been defiled. Note, The more conversant we are with God's holiness, the more we shall see of the odious nature of sin. There "ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." Note, Ingenuous evangelical repentance makes people loathe themselves for their sins, as *Job* xlii. 5, 6. 5th. He will give them the knowledge of himself. They shall know by experience that he is the Lord; that he is a God of almighty power and inexhaustible goodness; kind to his people, and faithful to his covenant with them. Note, All the favours we receive from God should lead us into a more intimate acquaintance with him. 6th. He will do all this for his own name's sake, notwithstanding their undeservings, and ill deservings, ver. 44. He has wrought with them, that is, wrought for them, wrought in favour of them, wrought in concurrence with them, they doing their endeavour; he has wrought with them purely for his name's sake. His reasons were all fetched from himself. Had he dealt with them "according to their wicked ways, and their corrupt doings," though they were the better and sounder part of the house of Israel, he had left them to be scattered and lost with the rest; but he recovered and restored them for the sake of his own name, not only that it might not be polluted, ver. 14, but that he might be sanctified in them before the heathen, ver. 41; that he might sanctify himself, so the word is; for it is God's work to glorify his own name. He will do well for his people, that he may have the glory of it; that he may manifest himself to be a God pardoning sin, and so keeping promise; that his people may praise him, and that their neighbours may likewise take notice of him as they did when God "turned again their captivity," *Ps.* cxxvi. 1. "Then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them."

45 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
46 Son of man, set thy face toward the south,
And drop *thy word* toward the south,
And prophesy against the forest of the south field;
47 And say to the forest of the south,
Hear the word of the LORD;
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee,
And it shall devour every green tree in thee,
And every dry tree:
The flaming flame shall not be quenched, [therein.
And all faces from the south to the north shall be burned
48 And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it:
It shall not be quenched.
49 Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?

We have here a prophecy of wrath against Judah and Jerusalem, which should more fitly have begun the next chapter than have concluded this; for it has no dependence on what goes before, but that which follows in the beginning of the next chapter is the reddition or explication of it, when the people complained that this was a parable which they understood not. In this parable,

First. It is a forest that is prophesied against; "the forest of the south field," that is, Judah and Jerusalem. These lay south from Babylon, where Ezekiel now was; and therefore he is directed to set his face towards the south, ver. 46, to intimate to them, that God had set his face against them, was displeased with them, and determined to destroy them. But though it be a message of wrath he has to deliver, he must deliver it with mildness and tenderness; he must drop his word towards the south. His doctrine must distil as the rain, *Deu.* xxxii. 2, that people's hearts might be softened by it, as the earth by the river of God, which drops upon the pastures of the wilderness, *Ps.* lxv. 12, and which a south land more especially calls for, *Jos.* xv. 19. Judah and Jerusalem are called forests, not only because they had been full of people, as a wood of trees, but because they had been empty of fruit, for fruit trees grow not in a forest, and a forest is put in opposition to a fruitful field, *Isa.* xxxii. 15. They that should have been as the garden of the Lord, and his vineyard, were become like a forest, all overgrown with briers and thorns. And those that are so, that bring not forth the fruits of righteousness, God's word prophesies against.

Secondly. It is a fire kindled in his forest that is prophesied of, ver. 47. All those judgments, which wasted and consumed both the city and the country, sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity, are signified by this fire. 1. It is a fire of God's own kindling; "I will kindle a fire in thee." The breath of the Lord is not as a drop, but as a stream of brimstone to set it on fire, *Isa.* xl. 33. He that had been himself a protecting fire about Jerusalem is now a consuming fire in it. "All flesh shall see," by the fury of this fire, and the desolations it shall make, especially when they compare it with the sins which had made them fuel for this fire, that it is "the Lord that has kindled it," ver. 48, as a just avenger of his own injured honour. 2. This conflagration shall be general. All orders and degrees of men shall be devoured by it, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, even green trees, which the fire doth not easily fasten upon, shall be devoured by this fire; even good people shall some of them be involved in these calamities. And if this be done in the green tree what shall be done in the dry? The dry trees shall be as tinder and touchwood to this fire. All faces, that is, all that covers the face of the earth, from the south of Canaan to the north, from Beersheba to Dan, shall be burnt therein. 3. The fire shall not be quenched; no attempts to give check to the dissolution shall prevail. When God will ruin a nation, who or what can save it?

Now observe, 1st. The people's reflection upon the prophet, on occasion of this discourse. They said, "Doth he not speak parables?" which was the language either of their ignorance or infidelity,—the plainest truths were as parables to them,—or of their malice and ill-will to the prophet. Note, It is common for those who will not be wrought upon by the word to pick quarrels with it. It is either too plain or too obscure, too fine or too homely, too common or too singular; something or other is amiss in it. 2nd. The prophet's complaint to God; "Ah, Lord God, they say" so and so of me. Note, It is a comfort to us, when people speak ill of us unjustly, that we have a God to complain to.

CHAPTER XXI.

In this chapter we have, I. An explanation of the prophecy in the close of the foregoing chapter concerning the fire in the forest, which the people complained they could not understand, ver. 1—5, with directions to the prophet to shew himself deeply affected with it, ver. 6, 7. II. A farther prediction of the sword that was coming upon the land, by which all should be laid waste; and this expressed very emphatically, ver. 8—17. III. A prospect given of the king of Babylon's approach to Jerusalem, to which he was determined by divination, ver. 18—24. IV. Sentence passed upon Zedekiah, king of Judah, ver. 25—27. V. The destruction of the Ammonites by the sword foretold, ver. 28—32. Thus is this chapter all threatening.

AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem,
And drop *thy word* toward the holy places,
And prophesy against the land of Israel,
3 And say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD;
Behold, I *am* against thee,
And will draw forth my sword out of his sheath,
And will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked.
4 Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous
and the wicked,

Therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath
Against all flesh from the south to the north:
5 That all flesh may know [sheath:
That I the LORD have drawn forth my sword out of his
It shall not return any more.
6 Sigh therefore, thou son of man,
With the breaking of *thy* loins;
And with bitterness sigh before their eyes.
7 And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Wherefore
sighest thou? [eth:
That thou shalt answer, For the tidings; because it com-
And every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble,
And every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak
as water:
Behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith
the Lord GOD.

The prophet had faithfully delivered the message he was instructed with in the close of the foregoing chapter, in the terms wherein he received it; not daring to add his own comment upon it. But when he complained that the people found fault with him for speaking parables, the word of the Lord came to him again, and gave him a key to that figurative discourse, that with it he might let the people into the meaning of it, and so silence that objection; for all men shall be rendered inexcusable at God's bar, and every mouth shall be stopped. Note, He that speaks with tongues should pray that he may interpret, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 13. When we speak to people about their souls we would study plainness, and express ourselves as we may be best understood. Christ expounded his parables to his disciples, *Mar.* iv. 34.

First. The prophet is here more plainly directed against whom to level the arrow of this prophecy. He must drop his word toward the holy places, ver. 2, toward Canaan the holy land, Jerusalem the holy city, the temple the holy house. These were highly dignified above other places, but when they polluted them that word which used to drop in the holy places shall now drop against them,—"Prophesy against the land of Israel." It was the honour of Israel that it had prophets and prophecy; but these, being despised by them, are turned against them. And justly is Zion battered with her own artillery, which used to be employed against her adversaries, seeing she knew not how to value it.

Secondly. He is instructed, and is to instruct the people, in the meaning of the fire that was threatened to consume the forest of the south. It signified, 'a sword drawn,' the sword of war, which should make the land desolate; ver. 3, "Behold, I am against thee, O land of Israel!" There needs no more to make a people miserable than to have God against them; for as, if he be for us, we need not fear whoever are against us, so if he be against us we cannot hope whoever are for us. And God's professing people, when they revolt from him, set him against them who used to be for them. Was the fire there of God's kindling? The sword here is his sword, which he hath prepared, and which he will give commission to; it is he that will draw it out of its sheath, where it had lain quiet, and threatened no harm. Note, When the sword is unsheathed among the nations God's hand must be eyed and owned in it. Did the fire devour every green tree, and every dry tree? The sword in like manner shall cut off the righteous and the wicked. Good and bad were involved in the common calamities of the nation. The righteous were cut off from the land of Israel, when they were sent captives to Babylon, though perhaps few or none of them were cut off from the land of the living; and it was a threatening omen to the land of Israel that in the beginning of its troubles such excellent men as Daniel and his fellows, and Ezekiel, were cut off from it, and conveyed to Babylon. But though the sword cut off the righteous and the wicked, for it devours one as well as another, 2 *Sam.* xi. 25; yet far be it from us to think that the righteous are as the wicked, *Gen.* xviii. 25. No; God's graces and comforts make a great difference when his providence seems to make none. The good figs are sent into Babylon for their good, *Jer.* xxiv. 5, 6. It is only in outward appearance that "there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked," *Eccl.* ix. 2. But it speaks the greatness of God's displeasure against the land of Israel. Well might it be said "his eye shall not spare," when it shall not spare, no, not the righteous in it. Since there are not righteous men enough to save the land, to make the justice of God the more illustrious, the few that are shall suffer with it, and God's mercy shall make it up to them some other way. Did the fire "burn up all faces from the south to the north?" The sword shall go "forth against all flesh from the south to the north;" shall go forth as God's sword, with a commission that cannot be contested, with a force that cannot be resisted. Were all flesh made to know that God kindled the fire? They shall be made to know that he hath drawn forth the sword, ver. 5. And lastly, Shall the fire that is kindled never be quenched? So when this sword of the Lord is drawn against Judah and Jerusalem, the scabbard is thrown away, and it shall never be sheathed, it shall not return any more till it has made a full end.

Thirdly. The prophet is ordered, by expressions of his own grief and concern for these calamities that were coming on, to try to make impressions of the like upon the people. When he has delivered his message he must sigh, ver. 6, must fetch many deep sighs, with the breaking of his loins; he must sigh as if his heart would burst, sigh with bitterness, with other expressions of bitter sorrow; and this publicly in the sight of those to whom he delivered the foregoing message, that this might be a sermon to their eyes as that was to their ears, and it was well if both would work upon them. The prophet must sigh, though it was painful to himself and made his breast sore; and though it is probable the profane among the people would ridicule him for it, and call him a whining, canting preacher. But if we be beside ourselves, it is to God, and if this be to be vile, we will be yet more so. Note, Ministers, if they would affect others with the things they speak of, must shew that they are themselves in the greatest sincerity affected with them; and must submit to that which may create uneasiness to themselves, so that it will promote the ends of their ministry. The people observing the prophet to sigh so much, and seeing no visible occasion for it, would ask, "Wherefore sighest thou?" These sighs have some mystical meaning, let us know what it is; and he must answer them, ver. 7, It is "for the tidings," the heavy tidings that we shall hear shortly. The tidings come, the judgments come which we hear tidings of, it cometh apace, and then you will all sigh: nay, that will not serve, "every heart shall melt, and every spirit fail;" your courage will all be gone, and you will have no encouraging considerations to support yourselves with; and when heart and spirit fail, it will follow of course, that "all hands will be feeble" and unable to fight, "and all knees will be weak as water," and unable to flee or to stand their ground. Those who have God for them, when flesh and heart fail, have him to be the strength of their heart; but those who have God against them have no cordial for a fainting spirit, but are as Belshazzar when his thoughts troubled him, *Dan.* v. 6. But some people are worse frightened than hurt. May not the case be so here, and the event prove better than likely? No, "behold it cometh and shall be brought to pass." It is not a bugbear that they are frightened with, but according to the fear so is the wrath, and more grievous than is feared.

8 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
9 Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD;
Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished:
10 It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter;
It is furbished that it may glitter:
Should we then make mirth?
It contemneth the rod of my son, *as* every tree.
11 And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be
handled:
This sword is sharpened, and it is furbished,
To give it into the hand of the slayer.
12 Cry and howl, son of man:
For it shall be upon my people,
It *shall be* upon all the princes of Israel:
Terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon my people:
Smite therefore upon *thy* thigh.
13 Because *it is* a trial,
And what if *the sword* contemn even the rod?
It shall be no *more*, saith the Lord GOD.
14 Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy,
And smite *thine* hands together,
And let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword
of the slain:
It *is* the sword of the great *men that are* slain,
Which entereth into their privy chambers.
15 I have set the point of the sword against all their gates,
That *their* heart may faint, and *their* ruins be multiplied:
Ah! *it is* made bright,
It is wrapped up for the slaughter.
16 Go thee one way or other,
Either on the right hand, *or* on the left,
Whithersoever thy face *is* set.
17 I will also smite mine hands together,
And I will cause my fury to rest:
I the LORD have said *it*.

Here is another prophecy of the sword, which is delivered in a very affecting manner. The expressions here used are somewhat intricate, and perplex interpreters. The sword was unsheathed in the foregoing verses, here it is fitted up to do execution, which the prophet is commanded to lament. Observe,

First. How the sword is here described, 1. It is sharpened that it may cut and wound, and make a sore slaughter. The wrath of God will put an edge upon it; and, whatever instruments God shall please to make use of in executing his judgments, he will fill them with strength, courage, and fury, according to the service they are employed in. Out of the mouth of Christ goes a sharp sword, *Rev.* xix. 15. 2. It is furbished that it may glitter, to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It shall be a kind of flaming sword. If it have rusted in the scabbard for want of use, it shall be rubbed and brightened; for, though the glory of God's justice may seem to have been eclipsed for awhile, during the day of his patience, and the delay of his judgments, yet it will shine out again, and be made to glitter. 3. It is a victorious sword, nothing shall stand before it; ver. 10, "It contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree." "Israel," said God once, "is my son, my firstborn." The government of that people was called a rod, a strong rod, (we read, *ch.* xix. 11, of the strong rods they had for sceptres,) but when the sword of God's justice is drawn, it contemns this rod, makes nothing of it, though it be a strong rod, and the rod of his son; it is no more than any other tree. When God's professing people are revolted from him, and in rebellion against him, his sword despiseth them. What are they to him more than another people? The marginal reading gives another notion of this sword: 'It is the rod of my son;' and we know of whom God hath said, *Ps.* ii. 7, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," and ver. 9, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron." This sword is that rod of iron which contemns every tree, and will bear it down. Or, this sword is the rod of my son, a correcting rod, for the chastening of the transgression of God's people, 2 *Sam.* vii. 14, not to cut them off from being a people. It is a sword to others, a rod to my son.

Secondly. How the sword is here put into the hand of the executioners. It is the rod of my son, and he has given it that it may be handled, ver. 11, that it may be made use of, for the end for which it was drawn. It is given into the hand, not of the fencer, to be played with, but of the slayer, to do execution with. The sword of war my son makes use of is a sword of justice, and to him all judgment is committed. It is made bright, ver. 15; it is wrapped up, that it may be kept safe, and clean, and sharp for the slaughter, not as Goliah's sword was wrapped up in a cloth, only for a memorial, 1 *Sam.* xxi. 9.

Thirdly. How the sword is directed, and against whom it is sent; ver. 12, "It shall be upon my people;" they shall fall by this sword. It is repeated again, as that which is scarce credible, that the sword of the heathen shall be upon

God's own people. Nay, "It shall be upon all the princes of Israel," their dignity and power as princes shall be no more their security than their profession of religion as princes of Israel. But if the sword be at any time upon God's people, have they not comfort within sufficient to arm them against every thing in it that is frightful? Yes, they have while they carry themselves as becomes his people. But these had not done so, and therefore terrors by reason of the sword shall be upon those that call themselves my people. Note, While good men are quiet, not only from evil but from the fear of it, wicked men are disturbed not only with the sword but with the terrors of it, arising from a consciousness of their own guilt. The sword is directed particularly against the great men, for they had been the greatest sinners among them; they had altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds, *Jer.* v. 5; and therefore with them in a special manner God's controversy is, who had been the ringleaders in sin. "The sword of the slain is the sword of the great men that are slain," ver. 14. Though they have furnished themselves with places of retirement, places of concealment, where they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall be safe, they will find that the sword will "enter into their privy chambers," and find them out there, as the frogs, when they were one of Egypt's plagues, found admission into the chambers of their kings. The sword, the point of this sword, is directed against their gates, against all their gates, ver. 5, against all those things with which they thought to keep it out, and fortify themselves against it. Note, The strongest gates, though they be gates of brass, never so well barred, never so well guarded, are no fence against the point of the sword of God's judgments. But, when that is pointed against sinners, 1. They are ready to fear the worst; their hearts faint, so that they are not able to make any resistance. 2. The worst comes; whatever resistance they make it is to no purpose; but they are ruined, and their ruins are multiplied. But what need we observe the particular directions of this sword, when it has a general commission, is sent with a running warrant; ver. 16, "Go thee, one way or other," which way thou wilt, turn "to the right hand or to the left," thou wilt find those that are obnoxious, for there are none free from guilt; and thou hast authority against them, for there are none exempt from punishment; and therefore, "whithersoever thy face is set," that way do thou proceed, and, like Jonathan's sword, "from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, thou shalt never return empty," 2 *Sam.* i. 22. Note, So full is the world of wicked people, that which way soever God's judgments go forth, they will find work, will find matter to work upon. That fire will never go out on this earth for want of fuel. And such various methods God has of meeting with sinners, that the sword of his justice is still as it was at first when it flamed in the hand of the cherubims,—it turneth every way, *Gen.* iii. 24.

Fourthly. What is the nature of this sword, and what the intentions and limitations of it as to the people of God, ver. 13. It is a correction, it is designed to be so; the sword to others is a rod to them. This is a comfortable word which comes in in the midst of these terrible ones, though it be expressed somewhat obscurely. 1. The people of God begin to be afraid that "the sword will contemn even the rod;" that the sword will go on with such fury that it will despise its commission to be a rod only, will forget its bounds, and become a sword indeed even to God's own people. They fear lest the Chaldean's sword, which is the rod of God's anger, contemn its being called a rod, and become as the axe that "boasts itself against him that heweth therewith;" or, "the staff that lifts up itself as if it were no wood," *Isa.* x. 15. Or, "what if the sword contemn even the rod;" that is, what if this sword make the former rod, as that of Sennacharib, to be contemned as nothing to this? What if this should prove not a correcting rod, but a destroying sword, to make a full end of our church and nation. This is that which the thinking but timorous few are apprehensive of. Note, When threatening judgments are abroad it is good to suppose the worst that may be the consequences of them, that we may provide accordingly. "What if the sword contemn the tribe or sceptre," namely, that of Judah, and the house of David? so some think *Shebet* here signifies. What if it should aim at the ruin of our government? If it do, the Lord is righteous and will be gracious notwithstanding. But, 1. These fears are silenced with an assurance that it is not so; the sword shall not forget itself, nor the errand on which it is sent. "It is a trial," and it is no more than a trial. He that sends it makes what use of it, and sets what bounds to it, he pleaseth. Here shall its proud waves be stayed. Note, It is matter of comfort to the people of God when his judgments are abroad, and they are ready to tremble for fear of them, that, whatever they are to others, to them they are but trials; and when they are tried they shall come forth as gold, and the proving of their faith shall be the improving of it.

Fifthly. Here the prophet and the people must shew themselves affected with these judgments threatened.

1. The prophet must be very serious in denouncing these judgments. He must say, "A sword, a sword," ver. 9. Let him not study for fine words, and a variety of quaint expressions. When the town is on fire, people do not so give notice of it, but cry with a frightful, doleful voice, Fire, fire. So must the prophet cry, "A sword, a sword;" and ver. 14, "Let the sword be doubled the third time," in thy preaching. God speaketh once, yea twice, yea thrice. It were well if men after all would perceive and regard it. It shall be doubled the third time in God's providence; for it was Nebuchadnezzar's third descent upon Jerusalem that made a full end of it. Ruin comes gradually, but at last comes effectually, upon a provoking people. Yet this is not all; the prophet is not only as a herald at arms to proclaim war, and to cry, "A sword, a sword," once and again, and a third time, but as a person nearly concerned he must cry and howl, ver. 12; must sadly lament the desolations that the sword would make, as one that did himself not only sympathize with the sufferers but feel from the sufferings. Again, ver. 14, "Prophesy and smite thy hands together," wring thy hands, as lamenting the desolation; or, clap thy hands, as by thy prophesy instigating and encouraging those that were to be the instruments of it; or, as one standing amazed at the suddenness and severity of the judgment. The prophet must smite his hands together; for, saith God, "I will also smite mine hands together." God is in earnest in pronouncing this sentence upon them, and therefore the prophet must shew himself in earnest in publishing it. God's smiting his hands together, as well as the prophet's, is in token of a holy indignation at their wickedness, which was really very astonishing. When Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, he smote his hands together, *Num.* xxiv. 10. Note, God and his ministers are justly angry at those who might be saved, and yet will be ruined. Some make it an expression of triumph and exultation, agreeing with that, *Isa.* i. 24, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries;" and that *Pr.* i. 26, "I also will laugh at their calamity." And so it follows here. "I will cause my fury to rest," not only it shall be perfected, but shall be pleased. And observe with what solemnity, with what authority, this sentence is ratified; "I the Lord have said it," who can and will make good what I have said. "I have said it," and will never unsay it. "I have said it," and who can gainsay it?

2. The people must be very serious in the prospect of these judgments. An intimation of this comes in in a parenthesis; ver. 10, "Should we then make mirth?" seeing God hath drawn the sword, and the prophet sighs and cries, "Should we then make mirth?" The prophet seems to give this as a reason why he sighs, as *Neh.* ii. 3, "Why should not my countenance be sad," when Jerusalem lies waste? Note, Before we allow ourselves to be merry we ought to consider whether we should be merry or no. Should we make mirth, we that are sentenced to the sword, that lie under the wrath and curse of God? Shall we "make mirth as other people," who have "gone a whoring from our God?" *Hos.* ix. 1. Should we now make mirth, when the hand of God is gone out against us, when God's judgments are abroad in the land, and he by them calls to weeping and mourning? *Isa.* xxii. 11, 13. Shall we now make mirth, as the king and Haman, when the church is in perplexity? *Est.* iii. 15; when we should be grieving for the affliction of Joseph, *Amos* vi. 6.

18 The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying,
19 Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways,
That the sword of the king of Babylon may come:
Both twain shall come forth out of one land:
And choose thou a place,
Choose *it* at the head of the way to the city.
20 Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites,
And to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced.
21 For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way,
At the head of the two ways, to use divination:
He made *his* arrows bright,
He consulted with images,
He looked in the liver.
22 At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem,
To appoint captains,
To open the mouth in the slaughter,
To lift up the voice with shouting,
To appoint *battering* rams against the gates,
To cast a mount, *and* to build a fort.
23 And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight,
To them that have sworn oaths:
But he will call to remembrance the iniquity,
That they may be taken.
24 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered,
In that your transgressions are discovered,
So that in all your doings your sins do appear;
Because, *I say*, that ye are come to remembrance,
Ye shall be taken with the hand.
25 And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come,
When iniquity *shall have* an end,
26 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Remove the diadem, and take off the crown:
This *shall* not *be* the same:
Exalt *him that is* low, and abase *him that is* high.
27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it:
And it shall be no *more*, until he come whose right it is;
And I will give it *him*.

The prophet in the verses before had shewed them the sword coming; he here shews them that sword coming against them, that they might not flatter themselves that by some means or other it should be diverted a contrary way.

First. He must see and shew the Chaldean army coming against Jerusalem, and determined by a supreme power to do so. The prophet must appoint him two ways, that is, he must upon a paper draw out two roads, ver. 19, as sometimes is done in maps; and he must bring the king of Babylon's army to the place where the roads part, for there they will make a stand. They both came out of the same land, but when they come to the place where one road leads to Rabbah, the head city of the Ammonites, and the other to Jerusalem, he makes a pause: for though he is resolved to be the ruin of both, yet he is not determined which to attack first. Here his politics and his politicians leave him at a loss; the sword must go either to Rabbah, or to Judah in Jerusalem. Many of the inhabitants of Judah had now taken shelter in Jerusalem, and all the interests of the country were bound up in the safety of the city, and therefore it is called Judah in Jerusalem the defenced; so strongly fortified was it, both by nature and art, that it was thought impregnable, *Lam.* iv. 12. The prophet must describe this dilemma that the king of Babylon is in, ver. 20; for "the king of Babylon stood," that is, he shall stand, considering what course to take, "at the head of the two ways." Though he was a prince of great foresight and great resolution, yet it seems he knew neither his own interest nor his own mind. Let not the wise man, then, glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man in his arbitrary power, for even those that may do what they will yet seldom know what to do for the best. Now observe, 1. The method he took to come to a resolution. He used divination, applied himself to a higher and invisible power, either to the determination of providence by a lot, in order to which he made his arrows bright that were to be drawn for the lots, in honour of the solemnity, (perhaps Jerusalem was written on one arrow and Rabbah on the other, and that which was first drawn out of the quiver he determined to attack first); or to the direction of some pretended oracle, he consulted with images, or teraphim, expecting to receive audible answers from them; or to the observations which the augurs made upon the entrails of the sacrifices, he looked in the liver, whether the position of that portended good or ill luck. Note, It is a mortification to the pride of the wise men of

the earth, that in difficult cases they have been glad to make their court to heaven for direction; as it is an instance of their folly that they have taken such ridiculous ways of doing it, when, in cases proper for an appeal to providence, it is sufficient that the lot be cast into the lap, with that prayer, Give a perfect lot, and a firm belief that the disposal thereof is not fortuitous, but of the Lord, *Pr.* xvi. 33. 2. The resolution he was hereby brought to. Even by these ill practices God served his own purposes, and directed him to go to Jerusalem, ver. 22. The divination for Jerusalem happened to be at his right hand, which, according to the rules of divination, determined him that way. Note, What services God designs men for he will be sure, in his providence, to lead them to, though perhaps they themselves are not aware what conduct they are under. Well, Jerusalem being the mark set up, the campaign is presently opened with the siege of that important place. Captains are appointed for the command of the forces to be employed in the siege, who must open the mouth in the slaughter, must give directions to the soldiers what to do, and make speeches to animate them. Orders are given to provide every thing necessary for carrying on the siege with vigour; battering rams must be prepared and forts built. O what pains, what cost, are men at to destroy one another!

Secondly. He must shew both the people and the prince that they bring this destruction upon themselves by their own sin.

1. The people do so, ver. 23, 24. They slight the notices that are given them of the judgments coming; Ezekiel's prophecy is to them a false divination; they are not moved or awakened to repentance by it. When they hear that Nebuchadnezzar, by his divinations, is directed to Jerusalem, and assured of success in that enterprize, they laugh at it, and continue secure, calling it a false divination, because they have sworn oaths, that is, they have joined in a solemn league with the Egyptians, and they depend upon the promise they have made them to raise the siege, or upon the assurances which the false prophets have given them that it shall be raised. Or, it may refer to the oaths of allegiance they had sworn to the king of Babylon, but had violated; for which treachery of theirs God had given them up to a judicial blindness, so that the fairest warnings given them were slighted by them as false divinations. Note, Those who make a jest of the most sacred oaths, it is not strange if they can make a jest likewise of the most sacred oracles; for where will a profane mind stop? But shall their unbelief invalidate the council of God? Are they safe because they are secure? By no means. Nay, the contempt they put upon Divine warnings is a sin that brings to remembrance their other sins, and they may thank themselves if they be now remembered against them. 1st. Their present wickedness is discovered. Now God is contending with them, so perverse and obstinate are they, that whatever they offer in their own defence doth but add to their offence. They never carried themselves so ill as they did now they have the loudest call given them to repent and reform; "So that in all your doings your sins do appear;" turn you which way you will, and you shew a black side. This is too true of every one of us; for not only there is none that lives and sins not, but "there is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not." Our best services have such alloys of weakness, and folly, and imperfection, and so much evil is present with us, even when we would do good, that we may say with sorrow and shame, in all our doings, and in all our sayings too, our sins do appear and witness against us, so that if we were under the law we were undone. 2nd. This brings to mind their former wickedness; "You have made your iniquity to be remembered," not by yourselves, that it might be repented of, but by the justice of God, that it might be reckoned for. Your own sins make the sins of your fathers to be remembered against you, which otherwise you should never have smarted for. Note, God remembers former iniquities against those only that by the present discoveries of their wickedness shew that they do not repent of them. 3rd. That they may suffer for all together, they are turned over to the destroyer, that they may be taken, ver. 23; and ye shall be taken with the hand that God had appointed to seize you and to hold you, and out of which you cannot escape. Men are said to be God's hand, when they are made use of as the ministers of his justice, *Ps.* xvii. 14. Note, Those who will not be taken with the word of God's grace shall at last be taken by the hand of his wrath.

2. The prince likewise brings his ruin upon himself. Zedekiah is the prince of Israel, to whom the prophet here, in God's name, addresseth himself; and if he had not spoken in God's name he would not have spoken so boldly, so bluntly; for is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked?

1st. He gives him his character; ver. 25, "Thou profane and wicked prince of Israel." He was not so bad as some of his predecessors, and yet bad enough to merit this character. He was himself profane, lost to every thing that is virtuous and sacred. And he was wicked, as he promoted sin among his people; he sinned, and made Israel to sin. Note, Profaneness and wickedness is bad in any, but worst of all in a prince, a prince of Israel; that as an Israelite should know better himself, and as a prince give a better example, and have a better influence on those about him.

2nd. He reads him his doom. His iniquity has an end, the measure of it is full, and therefore his day is come, the day of his punishment, the day of Divine vengeance. Note, Though they who are wicked and profane may flourish awhile, yet their day will come to fall. The sentence here passed is, *First.* That Zedekiah shall be deposed. He has forfeited his crown, and he shall no longer wear it; he has, by his profaneness, profaned his crown, and it shall be cast to the ground; ver. 26, "Remove the diadem." Crowns and diadems are loseable things; it is only in the other world that there is a crown of glory that fadeth not away, "a kingdom that cannot be moved." The Chaldee paraphrase expounds it thus, 'Take away the diadem from Serajah the chief priest, and I will take away the crown from Zedekiah the king, neither this nor that shall abide in his place, but shall be removed. This shall not be the same,' not the same he has been; 'This, not this,' so the word is. Profane and wicked, perhaps, he is as he has been, but not prince of Israel, as he has been. Note, Men lose their dignity by their iniquity. Their profaneness and wickedness removes their diadem and takes off their crown, and makes them the reverse of what they were. *Secondly.* That great confusion and disorder in the state shall follow hereupon; everything shall be turned upside down. The conqueror shall take a pride in exalting him that is low, and abasing him that is high, preferring some, and degrading others at his pleasure, without any regard either to right or merit. *Thirdly.* Attempts to re-establish the government shall be blasted and come to nothing. Gedaliah's particularly, and Ishmael's, who was of the seed royal, to which the Chaldee paraphrase refers this; neither of them shall be able to make any thing of it. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn," first one project and then another; for who can build up what God will throw down? *Fourthly.* This monarchy shall never be restored till it is fixed for perpetuity in the hands of the Messiah. There shall be no more kings of the house of David after Zedekiah, till Christ comes, whose right the kingdom is, who is that seed of David in whom the promise was to have its full accomplishment, "and I will give it him." He shall have the throne of his father David, *Lu.* i. 32. Immediately before the coming of Christ there was a long eclipse of the royal dignity, as there was also a failing of the spirit of prophecy, that his shining forth in the fulness of time, both as king and prophet, might appear the more illustrious. Note, Christ has an incontestable title to the dominion and sovereignty both in the church and in the world; the kingdom is his right. And, having the right, he shall in due time have the possession,—I will give it him; and there shall be a general overturning of all, rather than he shall come short of his right; and a certain overturning of all the opposition that stands in his way, to make room for him, *Dan.* ii. 45; 1 *Cor.* xv. 25. This is mentioned here for the comfort of those who feared the promise made in David would fail for evermore. No, saith God, that promise is sure, for the Messiah's kingdom shall last for ever.

28 And thou, son of man, prophesy and say,
Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites,
And concerning their reproach; even say thou,
The sword, the sword *is* drawn:
For the slaughter *it is* furbished,
To consume because of the glittering:

RUINS OF AMMON.

29 Whiles they see vanity unto thee,
Whiles they divine a lie unto thee,
To bring thee upon the necks of *them that are* slain,
Of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity
shall have an end.
30 Shall I cause *it* to return into his sheath?
I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created,
In the land of thy nativity.
31 And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee,
I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath,
And deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, *and*
skilful to destroy.
32 Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire;
Thy blood shall be in the midst of the land;
Thou shalt be no *more* remembered:
For I the LORD have spoken *it*.

The prediction of the destruction of the Ammonites, which was effected by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, seems to come in here upon occasion of the king of Babylon's diverting his design against Rabbah, when he turned it upon Jerusalem. Upon this the Ammonites grew very insolent, and triumphed over Jerusalem; but the prophet must let them know that forbearance is no acquittance, the reprieve is not a pardon. Their day also is at hand, their turn comes next; and it will be but a poor satisfaction to them that they are to be devoured last, to be last executed.

First. The sin of the Ammonites is here intimated; it is their reproach, ver. 28. The reproach they put upon themselves when they hearkened to their false prophets, (for such, it seems, there were among them as well as among the Jews,) that pretended to foretell their perpetual safety in the midst of the desolations that were made of the countries round about them. "They see vanity unto thee, and divine a lie," ver. 29. They flatter thee with promises of peace, and thou art such a fool as to suffer thyself to be imposed upon by them, and to encourage them therein by giving credit to them. Note, Those that feed themselves with a self-conceit in the day of their prosperity prepare matter for a self-reproach in the day of their calamity. 2. The reproach they put upon the Israel of God, when they triumphed in their afflictions, and thereby added affliction to them, which was very barbarous and inhuman. Their divines, by puffing them up with a conceit that they were a better people than Israel, being spared when they were cut off, and with a confidence that their prosperity should always continue, made them so very haughty and insolent that they did even tread on the necks of the Israelites that were slain, slain by the wicked Chaldeans, who had commission to execute God's judgments upon them when their iniquity had an end, that is, when the measure of it was full: we shall meet with this again, *ch.* xxv. 3, &c. Note, Those are ripening apace for misery who trample upon the people of God in their distress, whereas they ought to tremble when judgment begins at the house of God.

Secondly. The utter destruction of the Ammonites is threatened. For the reproach cast on the church by her neighbours will be returned into their own bosom, *Ps.* lxxix. 12. Let us see how terrible the threatening is and the destruction will be. 1. It shall come from the wrath of God, who resents the indignities and injuries done to his people as done to himself; ver. 31, "I will pour out my indignation" as a shower of fire and brimstone upon thee. The least drop of Divine indignation and wrath will create tribulation and anguish

enough to the soul of man that doth evil; what, then, would a full stream of that indignation and wrath do? "I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath," that is, I will blow up the fire of my wrath against thee; it shall burn with the utmost vehemence. And ver. 32, "Thou shalt be for fuel to this fire." Note, Wicked men make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath; they are consumed by it, and it is inflamed by them. 2. It shall be effected by the sword of war. To them he must cry, as before to Israel, because they had triumphed in Israel's overthrow, "The sword, the sword is drawn," ver. 28, (compare ver. 9, 10); it is drawn to consume, because of the glittering, that is, because it is brandished and glitters, and is fit to be made use of. God's executions will answer his preparations. This sword, when it is drawn, shall not return into its sheath (ver. 30) till it has done the work for which it was drawn. When the sword is drawn it doth not return till God causeth it to return; and he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Who can change his purpose? 3. The persons employed in it are "brutish men and skilful to destroy." Men of such a bad character as this, that have the wit of men to do the work of wild beasts,—human reason, which makes them skilful, but no human compassion, which makes them skilful only to destroy,—though they are the scandal of mankind, yet sometimes are made use of to serve God's purposes. God delivers the Ammonites into the hands of such, and justly, for they themselves were brutish, and delighted in the destruction of God's Israel. We have reason to pray as Paul desired to be prayed for, that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, 2 *Thes.* iii. 2; men that seem made for doing mischief. 4. The place where they should thus be reckoned with. I will judge thee there where thou wast created, where thou wast first formed into a people, and where thou hast been settled ever since, and therefore where thou seemest to have taken root; the land of thy nativity shall be the land of thy destruction. Note, God can bring ruin upon us there where we are most secure, and turn us out of the land which we thought we had a title to not to be disputed, and a possession of not to be disturbed. "Thy blood shall be shed," not only in thy borders, but "in the midst of thy land." Lastly. It shall be an irreparable ruin; though thou mayest think to recover thyself, it is in vain to think of it, "thou shalt be no more remembered" with any respect, *Ps.* ix. 6. Justly is their name blotted out who would have Israel's name for ever lost.

CHAPTER XXII.

Here are three several messages which God intrusts the prophet to deliver concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and all to the same purpose, to shew them their sins, and the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins. I. Here is a catalogue of their sins, by which they had exposed themselves to shame, and for which God would bring them to ruin, ver. 1—16. II. They are here compared to dross, and are condemned as dross to the fire, ver. 17—22. III. All orders and degrees of men among them are here found guilty of the neglect of the duty of their place, and of having contributed to the national guilt, which therefore, since none appeared as intercessors, they must all expect to share in the punishment of, ver. 23—31.

MOREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
2 Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city?
Yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations.
3 Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD,
The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come,
And maketh idols against herself to defile herself.
4 Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed;
And hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made;
And thou hast caused thy days to draw near,
And art come *even* unto thy years:
Therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen,
And a mocking to all countries.
5 *Those that be* near, and *those that be* far from thee, shall mock thee,
Which art infamous *and* much vexed.
6 Behold, the princes of Israel,
Every one were in thee to their power to shed blood.
7 In thee have they set light by father and mother:
In the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger:
In thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow.
8 Thou hast despised mine holy things,
And hast profaned my sabbaths.
9 In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood:
And in thee they eat upon the mountains:
In the midst of thee they commit lewdness.
10 In thee have they discovered their fathers' nakedness:
In thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution.
11 And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour's wife;
And another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law;
And another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father's daughter.
12 In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood;
Thou hast taken usury and increase,
And thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion,
And hast forgotten me, saith the Lord GOD.
13 Behold, therefore I have smitten mine hand
At thy dishonest gain which thou hast made,
And at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee.
14 Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong,
In the days that I shall deal with thee?
I the LORD have spoken *it*, and will do *it*.
15 And I will scatter thee among the heathen,
And disperse thee in the countries,
And will consume thy filthiness out of thee.
16 And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen,
And thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

In these verses the prophet, by a commission from heaven, is set as a judge upon the bench, and Jerusalem is made to hold up her hand as a prisoner at the bar. And if prophets were set over other nations, much more over God's nation, *Jer.* i. 10. This prophet is authorised to judge the bloody city, the city of bloods. Jerusalem is so called, not only because she has been guilty of the particular sin of bloodshed, but because her crimes in general were bloody crimes, *ch.* vii. 23, such as polluted her in her blood, and for which she deserved to have blood given her to drink. Now, the business of a judge with a malefactor is, to convict him of his crimes, and then to pass sentence upon him for them. These two things Ezekiel is to do here.

First. He is to find Jerusalem guilty of many heinous crimes here enumerated in a long bill of indictment; and it is *billa vera*,—'a true bill;' so he writes upon it, whose judgment we are sure is according to truth. He must "shew her all her abominations," ver. 2, that God may be justified in all the desolations brought upon her. Let us take a view of all the particular sins which Jerusalem here stands charged with, and they are all exceeding sinful.

1. Murder. "The city sheds blood," not only in the suburbs, where the strangers dwell, but "in the midst of it," where one would think the magistrates would, if anywhere, be vigilant; even there people were murdered, either in duels, or by secret assassinations and poisonings, or in the courts of justice, under colour of law; and there was no care taken to discover and punish the murderers according to the law, *Gen.* ix. 6; no, nor so much as the ceremony used to expiate an uncertain murder, *Deu.* xxi. 1, and so the guilt and pollution remains upon the city. Thus "thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed," ver. 4. This crime is insisted most upon, for it was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin more than any other: it is said to be that which the Lord would not pardon, 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 4. 1st. The princes of Israel that should have been the protectors of injured innocence, "every one were to their power to shed blood," ver. 6. They thirsted for it, and delighted in it, and whoever came within their power were sure to feel it; whoever lay at their mercy were sure to find none. 2nd. There were those who "carried tales to shed blood," ver. 9. They told lies of men to the princes, to whom they knew it would be pleasing, to incense them against them; or betrayed what passed in private conversation, to make mischief among neighbours, and set them together by the ears, to bite and devour, and worry one another even to death. Note, Those who, by giving invidious characters, and telling ill-natured stories of their neighbours, sow discord among brethren, will be accountable for all the mischief that follows upon it, as he that kindles a fire will be for all the hurt it doth. 3rd. There were those who took "gifts to shed blood," ver. 12, that would be hired with money to swear a man out of his life; or, if they were upon a jury, would be bribed to find an innocent man guilty. When so much barbarous, bloody work of this kind was done in Jerusalem, we may well conclude, *First.* That men's consciences were become wretchedly profligate and seared, and their hearts hardened; for they would stick at no wickedness that would not stick at this. *Secondly.* That abundance of quiet, harmless, good people were made away with; whereby, as the guilt of the city was increased, so the number of those that should have stood in the gap to turn away the wrath of God was diminished.

2. Idolatry. "She maketh idols against herself to destroy herself," ver. 3. And again, ver. 4, "Thou hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made." Note, Those who make idols for themselves will be found to have made them against themselves, for idolaters put a cheat upon themselves, and purpose destruction for themselves. Besides that thereby they pollute themselves, they render themselves odious in the eyes of the just and jealous God, and even their mind and conscience is defiled, so that to them nothing is pure. Those that did not make idols themselves, yet were found guilty of eating upon the mountains or high places, ver. 9, in honour of the idols, and in communion with idolaters.

3. Disobedience to parents; ver. 7, "In thee have the children set light by their father and mother," mocked them, cursed them, and despised to obey them; which was a sign of a more than ordinary corruption of nature as well as manners, and a disposition to all manner of disorder, *Isa.* iii. 5. They that set light by their parents are in the highway to all wickedness. God had made many wholesome laws for the support of the paternal authority, but no care was taken to put them in execution; nay, the Pharisees in their day taught children, under shew of respect to the Corban, to set light by their parents, and refuse to maintain them, *Mat.* xv. 5.

4. Oppression and extortion. To enrich themselves they wronged the poor; ver. 7, "They dealt by oppression and deceit with the stranger," taking advantage of his necessities, and his ignorance of the laws and customs of the country. In Jerusalem, that should have been a sanctuary to the oppressed, "they vexed the fatherless and widows" by unreasonable demands and inquisitions, or troublesome lawsuits, in which might prevails against right. "Thou hast taken usury and increase," ver. 12; not only there are those in thee that do it, but thou hast done it. It was an act of the city or community; the public money that should have been employed in public charity is put out to usury and extortion. "Thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by violence and wrong." For neighbours to gain by one another in a fair way of trading is well; but those who are greedy of gain will not be held within the rules of equity.

5. Profanation of the sabbath, and other holy things. This commonly goes along with the other sins for which they here stand indicted; ver. 8, "Thou hast despised mine holy things," holy oracles, holy ordinances. The rites which God appointed were thought too plain, too ordinary; they despised them, and therefore were fond of the customs of the heathen. Note, Immorality and

dishonesty is commonly attended with a contempt of religion and the worship of God. "Thou hast profaned my sabbaths." There was not in Jerusalem that face of sabbath sanctification that one would have expected in the holy city. Sabbath breaking is an iniquity that is an inlet to all iniquity. Many have owned it to contribute as much to their ruin as any thing.

6. Uncleanness, and all manner of seventh commandment sins, fruits of those vile affections to which God, in a way of righteous judgment, gives men up, to punish them for their idolatry, and profanation of holy things. Jerusalem had been famous for its purity, but now "in the midst of thee they commit lewdness," ver. 9; it goes barefaced, though in the most scandalous instances, as that of a man's having his father's wife, which is the discovery of the father's nakedness, ver. 10, and is a sin not to be named among Christians, without the utmost detestation, 1 *Cor.* v. 1, and was made a capital crime by the law of Moses, *Lev.* xx. 11. The time to refrain from embracing has not been observed; *Eccl.* iii. 6, "For they have humbled her which was set apart for her pollution." They made nothing of committing lewdness with a neighbour's wife, with a daughter-in-law, or a sister, ver. 11. And shall not God visit for these things?

7. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness; ver. 12, "Thou hast forgotten me," else thou wouldest not have done thus. Note, Sinners do that which provokes God, because they forget him; they forget their descent from him, dependence on him, and obligations to him. They forget how valuable his favour is, which they make themselves unfit for; and how formidable his wrath, which they make themselves obnoxious to. They that pervert their ways forget the Lord their God, *Jer.* iii. 21.

Secondly. He is to pass sentence upon Jerusalem for these crimes.

1. Let her know that she has filled up the measure of her iniquity, and her sins are such as forbid delays, and call for speedy vengeance. She has made her time to come, ver. 3, her days to draw near, and she is come to years of maturity for punishment, ver. 4, as an heir that is come to age, and is ready for his inheritance. God would have been longer with them, but they were arrived at such a pitch of impudence in sin, that God could not in honour give them a farther day. Note, Abused patience will at last be weary of forbearing; and when sinners (as Solomon speaks) grow overmuch wicked, they die before their time, *Eccl.* vii. 17, and shorten their reprieves.

2. Let her know that she hath exposed herself, and therefore God has justly exposed her, to the contempt and scorn of all her neighbours; ver. 4, "I have made thee a reproach to the heathen;" both those that are near, who are eye-witnesses of Jerusalem's apostacy and degeneracy, and those afar off, who, though at a distance, will think it worth taking notice of, ver. 5; they shall all mock thee. While they were reproached by their neighbours for their adherence to God, it was their honour, and they might be sure that God would roll away their reproach; but, now they are laughed at for their revolt from God, they must lie down in their shame, and must say, "The Lord is righteous." They make a mock at Jerusalem, both because her sins had been very scandalous, (she is infamous, polluted in name, and has quite lost her credit,) and because her punishment is very grievous; she is much vexed, and frets without measure at her troubles. Note, Those that vex most at their troubles have commonly those about them that will be so much the more apt to make a jest of them.

3. Let her know that God is displeased, highly displeased, at her wickedness, and doth and will witness against it; ver. 13, "I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain." God, both by his prophets and by his providence, revealed his wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness; the oppressions they were guilty of, though they got by them, and their murders, "the blood which has been in the midst of thee," and all their other sins. Note, God hath sufficiently discovered how angry he is at the wicked courses of his people; and, that they may not say but they have had fair warning, he smites his hand against the sin before he lays his hand upon the sinner. And this is a good reason why we should despise dishonest gain, even the gain of oppressions, and shake our hands from holding of bribes, because these are sins against which God shakes his hands, *Isa.* xxxiii. 15.

4. Let her know that, as proud and secure as she is, she is no match for God's judgments, ver. 14. 1st. She is assured that the destruction she has deserved will come; "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it." He that is true to his promises will be true to his threatenings too; for he is not a man that he should repent. 2nd. It is supposed that she thinks herself able to contend with God, and to stand a siege against his judgments; she bids defiance to the day of the Lord, *Isa.* v. 19. But, 3rd. She is convinced of her utter inability to make her part good with him. "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hand be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee?" Thou thinkest thou hast to do only with men like thyself, but shalt be made to know thou fallest into the hands of a living God. Observe here. *First.* There is a day coming when God will deal with sinners, a day of visitation. He deals with some to bring them to repentance, and there is no resisting the force of convictions, when he sets them on; he deals with others to bring them to ruin. He deals with sinners in this life, when he brings upon them his sore judgments. But the days of eternity are especially the days in which God will deal with them, when the full vials of God's wrath will be poured out without mixture. *Secondly.* The wrath of God against sinners, when he comes to deal with them, will be found both intolerable and irresistible. There is no heart stout enough to endure it; it is none of the infirmities which the spirit of a man will sustain. Damned sinners can neither forget nor despise their torments, nor have they any thing wherewith to support themselves under their torments. There are no hands strong enough either to ward off the strokes of God's wrath, or to break the chains with which sinners are bound over to the day of wrath. Who knows the power of God's anger?

5. Let her know that since she has walked in the way of the heathen, and learned their works, she shall have enough of them, ver. 15. I will not only send thee among the heathen, out of thine own land, but I will scatter thee among them, and disperse thee in the countries, to be abused and insulted over by strangers. And since her filthiness and filthy ones continued in her, notwithstanding all the methods God had taken to refine her, (she would not be made clean, *Jer.* xiii. 27,) he will by his judgments consume her filthiness out of her; he will destroy those that were incurably bad, and reform those that were inclined to be good.

6. Let her know that God has disowned her, and cast her off. He had been her heritage and portion, but now, ver. 16, "Thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself," shift for thyself, make the best hand thou canst for thyself, for God will no longer undertake for thee. Note, Those that give up themselves to be ruled by their lusts will justly be given up to be portioned by them. They that resolve to be their own masters let them expect no other comfort and happiness but what their own hands can furnish them with; and a miserable portion it will prove. "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." These are the same with this here, "Thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself," and then, when it is too late, shalt own "in the sight of the heathen that I am the Lord," who alone am a portion sufficient for my people. Note, Those that have lost their interest in God will know how to value it.

17 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
18 Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross:
All they *are* brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace;
They are *even* the dross of silver.
19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because ye are all become dross, [Jerusalem.
Behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of
20 *As* they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and
Into the midst of the furnace, [tin,
To blow the fire upon it, to melt *it;*
So will I gather *you* in mine anger and in my fury,
And I will leave *you there,* and melt you. [my wrath,
21 Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of
And ye shall be melted in the midst thereof.
22 As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace,
So shall ye be melted in the midst thereof;
And ye shall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

The same melancholy string is harped upon, and various turns given it to make it affecting, that it may be influencing. The prophet must here shew, or at least it is here shewn him, that the whole house of Israel is become as dross, and as dross they shall be consumed. What David has said concerning the wicked ones of the world is here said concerning the wicked ones of the church, now it is corrupt and degenerate; *Ps.* cxix. 119, "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross."

First. See here how the wretched degeneracy of the house of Israel is described. That state in David's and Solomon's time had been a head of gold; when the kingdoms were divided it was as the arms of silver. But now, 1. It is degenerated into baser metal, of no value in comparison with what it formerly was. "They are all brass, and tin, and iron, and lead;" which some make to signify divers sorts of sinners among them. Their being brass notes the impudence of some in their wickedness, they are brazen-faced, and cannot blush. Their shoes had been iron and brass, *Deu.* xxxiii. 25, but now their brow is so, *Isa.* xlviii. 4. Their being tin notes the hypocritical profession of piety with which many of them cover their iniquity. They have a specious shew, but no intrinsic worth. Their being iron notes the cruel disposition of some, and their delight in war, according to the character of the iron age. Their being lead notes their dulness, sottishness, and stupidity; though soft and pliable to evil, yet heavy and not moveable to good. "How is the gold become dross, how is the most fine gold changed!" So is Jerusalem's degeneracy bewailed, *Lam.* iv. 1. Yet this is not the worst; these metals, though of less value, yet are of good use: but, 2. "The house of Israel is become dross to me." So she is in God's account, whatever she is in her own and her neighbour's account. They were silver, but now they are "even the dross of silver." The word signifies all the dirt and rubbish and worthless stuff that is separated from the silver in the washing, melting, and refining of it. Note, Sinners, and especially degenerate professors, are in God's account as dross, vile and contemptible, and of no account, as the evil figs which could not be eaten, they were so evil. They are useless and fit for nothing; of no consistency with themselves, and no service to man.

Secondly. How the woful destruction of this degenerate house of Israel is foretold. They are all gathered together in Jerusalem; thither people fled from all parts of the country, as to a city of refuge, not only because it was a strong city, but because it was the holy city. Now God tells them that their flocking into Jerusalem, which they intended for their security, should be as the gathering of various sorts of metal into the furnace, or crucible, to be melted down, and to have the dross separated from them. They are in the midst of Jerusalem, surrounded by the forces of the enemy; and, being thus inclosed, 1. The fire of God's wrath shall be kindled upon this furnace, and it shall be blown to make it burn fiercely and strongly, ver. 20, 21. God will gather them in his anger and fury. The blowing of the fire makes a great noise, so will the judgments of God upon Jerusalem. When God stirs up himself to execute judgments upon a provoking people from the consideration of his own glory, and the necessity of making some examples, then he may be said to blow the fire of his wrath against sin and sinners, to heat the furnace seven times hotter. 2. The several sorts of metal gathered in it shall be melted. By a complication of judgments, as by a raging fire, their constitution shall be dissolved, they shall lose all their former shape and strength, and shall be utterly unable to stand before the wrath of God. The various sorts of sinners shall be melted down together, and united in a common overthrow, as brass and lead in the same furnace, as trees are bound in bundles for the fire. They came together into Jerusalem as a place of defence, but God brought them together there as unto a place of execution. 3. God will leave them in the furnace, ver. 20. I will gather you into the furnace, and will leave you there. When God brings his own people into the furnace, he sits by them as the refiner by his gold, to see that they be not continued there any longer than is fitting and needful; but he will bring these people into the furnace, as men throw dross into it, which they design shall be consumed, and therefore are in no care about it, but leave it there: compare with this, *Hos.* v. 14, "I will tear and go away." 4. Hereby the dross shall be wholly separated, and the good metal purified, the impenitent shall be destroyed, and the penitent reformed and fitted for deliverance. "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer," *Pr.* xxv. 4. This judgment shall do that in the house of Israel, for the doing of which other methods had been tried in vain; and "reprobate silver shall they no more be called," *Jer.* vi. 30.

23 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
24 Son of man, say unto her,
Thou *art* the land that is not cleansed,
Nor rained upon in the day of indignation. [thereof,
25 *There is* a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst

Like a roaring lion ravening the prey;
They have devoured souls;
They have taken the treasure and precious things;
They have made her many widows in the midst thereof.
26 Her priests have violated my law,
And have profaned mine holy things:
They have put no difference between the holy and profane,
Neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean,
And have hid their eyes from my sabbaths,
And I am profaned among them. [the prey,
27 Her princes in the midst thereof *are* like wolves ravening
To shed blood, *and* to destroy souls,
To get dishonest gain. [*morter*,
28 And her prophets have daubed them with untempered
Seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying,
Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken. [cised robbery,
29 The people of the land have used oppression, and exer-
And have vexed the poor and needy:
Yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.
30 And I sought for a man among them,
That should make up the hedge,
And stand in the gap before me
For the land, that I should not destroy it:
But I found none.
31 Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them;
I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath:
Their own way have I recompensed upon their heads,
Saith the Lord GOD.

Here is, First. A general idea given of the land of Israel, how well it deserved the judgments coming to destroy it, and how much it needed these judgments to refine it. Let the prophet tell her plainly, "Thou art the land that is not cleansed," not refined as metal is, and therefore needest to be again put into the furnace. Means and methods of reformation have been ineffectual; Thou art "not rained upon in the day of indignation." This was one of the judgments which God brought upon them in the day of his wrath, he withheld the rain from them, *Jer.* xiv. 4. Or, when thou art under the tokens of God's displeasure, even in the day of indignation thou art not rained upon; that is, thou hast not received instruction by the prophets, whose doctrine is said to descend as the rain. Or, when thou art corrected, thou art not cleansed, thy filth is not carried away as that in the streets is by a sweeping rain. Nay, though it be a day of indignation with thee, yet thy filthiness, which should be done away, is become more offensive, as that of a city is in dry weather when it is not rained upon. Or, thou hast nothing to refresh and comfort thyself with in the day of indignation; thou art not rained upon by Divine consolations, as the rich man in torment had not a drop of water, or rain, to cool his tongue.

Secondly. A particular charge drawn up against the several orders and degrees of men among them, which shews that they had all helped to fill the measure of the nation's guilt, but none had done anything towards the emptying of it, they are therefore all alike.

1. They have every one corrupted his way, and those who should have been the brightest examples of virtue were ringleaders in iniquity, and patterns of vice.

1st. The prophets that pretended to make known the mind of God to them were not only deceivers, but devourers, ver. 25, and hardened them in their wickedness, both by their preaching, wherein they promised them impunity and prosperity, and by their conversation, wherein they were as profligate as any. "There is a conspiracy of her prophets" against God and religion, against the true prophets and all good men; they conspired together to be all in one song, as Ahab's prophets were, to assure them of peace in their sinful ways. The unity that is among pretenders to infallibility, and which they so much boast of, is only the result of a secret conspiracy against the truth. Satan is not divided against himself. The prophets are in conspiracy with the murderers and oppressors, to patronise and protect them in their wickedness, and justify what they did with their false prophecies, provided they may come in shares with them in the profits of it. They are like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they thunder out threats against them whose ruin is aimed at, terrify them, or make them odious to the people, and so make themselves masters, *First.* Of their lives. They have devoured souls, have been accessary to the shedding of the blood of many an innocent person, and so have made many to become sorrowful widows that were comfortable wives. They have persecuted those to death who witnessed against their pretensions to prophecy, and would not be imposed upon by their counterfeit commission. Or, they devoured souls by flattering sinners into a false peace and a vain hope, and seducing them into the paths of sin, which would be their eternal ruin. Note, Those who draw men to wickedness, and encourage them in it, are the devourers and murderers of their souls. *Secondly.* Of their estates. When Naboth is slain they take possession of his vineyard; "They have seized the treasure and precious things," as forfeited. Some way or other they had of devouring the widows' houses, as the Pharisees, *Mat.* xxiii. 14. Or, they got his treasure, and all these precious things, as fees for false and flattering prophecies; for "he that puts not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him," *Mic.* iii. 5. It was sad with Jerusalem when such men as these passed for prophets.

2nd. The priests, who were teachers by office, and had the custody of the sacred things, and should have called the false prophets to account, were as bad as they, ver. 26. *First.* They violated the law of God which they should have observed, and taught others to observe; they made no conscience of the law of the priesthood, but openly broke it, and with contempt, as Hophni and Phinehas. They did what they had a mind, with an express *non obstante* to the command of God. And how should they teach the people their duty who lived in contradiction to their own? *Secondly.* They profaned God's holy things, about which they were to minister, and which they ought to have restrained others from the profanation of. They suffered those to eat of the holy things that were unqualified by the law. The table of the Lord was contemptible with them; by dealing in holy things with such unhallowed hands they did themselves profane them. *Thirdly.* They did not themselves put a difference, nor did they shew the people how to "put a difference, between the holy and profane, the clean and the unclean," according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts that were excluded by the law; nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common, but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. *Fourthly.* They "hid their eyes from God's sabbaths;" that is, they took no care about them; it was all one to them whether God's sabbaths were kept holy or no. They neither gave countenance to those who observed them nor check to those that profaned them, nor did they themselves shew any regard to them, or veneration for them. They winked at those who did servile works on that day, and looked another way when they should have inspected the behaviour of the people on sabbath days. God's sabbaths have such a beauty and glory put upon them by the Divine institution as may command respect; but they hid their eyes from them, and would not see that excellency in them. *Fifthly.* By all this God himself was profaned among them; his authority was slighted, his goodness made light of, and the highest affront and contempt imaginable put upon his holiness. Note, The profanation of the honour of the Scriptures, of sabbaths, and sacred things, is a profanation of the honour of God himself, who is interested in them.

3rd. The princes, who should have interposed with their authority to redress these grievances, were as daring transgressors of the law as any other; ver. 17, "They are like wolves ravening the prey;" for such is power without justice and goodness to direct it. All their business was to gratify, *First.* Their own pride and ambition, by making themselves arbitrary and formidable. *Secondly.* Their own malice and revenge, by shedding blood, and destroying souls, sacrificing to their cruelty all those that stood in their way, or had in anything disobliged them. *Thirdly.* Their own avarice. All they aim at is to get dishonest gain, by crushing and oppressing their subjects. *Lucri bonus est odor ex re qualibet. Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem,*—'Sweet is the odour of gain, from whatever substance it ascends. Money, money, by fairness or by fraud get money.' But, though they had not power sufficient to carry them on in their oppressive courses, yet how could they answer it both to their credit and to their consciences? We are told how (ver. 28) the prophets daubed them with untempered mortar; told them in God's name, (horrid wickedness!) that there was no harm in what they did, they might dispose of the lives and estates of their subjects as they pleased, and could do no wrong; nay, that in prosecuting such and such, whom they had marked out, they did God service; and thus they stopped the mouth of their consciences. They also justified what they did to the people, nay, and magnified it, as if it were all for the public good, and so saved their reputation, and kept their oppressed subjects from murmuring. Note, Daubing prophets are the great supporters of ravening princes, but will prove at last their great deceivers; for they daub with untempered mortar, which will not hold, nor will the wall stand long that is built up with it. They pretend to be seers, but they see vanity; they pretend to be diviners, but they divine lies; they pretend a warrant from heaven for what they say, and that it is all as true as Gospel. They say, "Thus saith the Lord God," but it is all a sham, for "the Lord hath not spoken any such thing."

4th. The people that had any power in their hands learned of their princes to abuse it, ver. 29. They that should have complained of the oppression of the subject, and have put in a claim of rights on behalf of the injured, that should have stood up for liberty and property, were themselves invaders of it; "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery." The rich oppress the poor, masters their servants, landlords their tenants, and even parents their own children; nay, the buyers and sellers will find some way to oppress one another. This is such a sin as, when it is national, is indeed a national judgment, and is threatened as such; *Isa.* iii. 5, "The people shall be oppressed every one by his neighbour." It is an aggravation of the sin that they have vexed the poor and needy, whom they should have relieved, and have oppressed the stranger, and deprived him of his right, to whom they ought to have been not only just, but kind. Thus was the apostacy universal, and the disease epidemical.

2. There is none that appears as an intercessor for them; ver. 30, "I sought for a man among them that should stand in the gap, but I found none." Note, 1st. Sin makes a gap in the hedge of protection that is about a people, at which good things run out from them, and evil things pour in upon them; a gap by which God enters to destroy them. 2nd. There is a way of standing in the gap, and making up the breach against the judgments of God, by repentance, and prayer, and reformation. Moses stood in the gap when he made intercession for Israel, to turn away the wrath of God, *Ps.* cvi. 23. 3rd. When God is coming forth against a sinful people to destroy them he expects some to intercede for them, and inquires if there be but one that doth; so much is it his desire and delight to shew mercy. If there be but a man that stands in the gap, as Abraham for Sodom, he will discover him, and be well pleased with him. 4th. It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the spirit of prayer is restrained, so that not one is found that will either give them a good word or speak a good word for them. 5th. When it is so what can be expected but utter ruin? ver. 31, "Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them," have given it full scope that it may come upon them in a full stream; yet, whatever God's wrath inflicts upon a people, it is their own way that is therein recompensed upon their heads, and God deals with them no worse,—look how much better,—than their iniquity deserves.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This long chapter, as before, *ch.* xvi., xx., is a history of the apostacies of God's people from him, and the aggravations of those apostacies, under the similitude of corporal whoredom and adultery. Here the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the ten tribes and the two, with their capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, are considered distinctly. Here is, I. The apostacy of Israel and Samaria from God, ver. 1—8; and their ruin for it, ver. 9, 10. II. The apostacy of Judah and Jerusalem from God, ver. 11—21; and sentence passed upon them, that they shall in like manner be destroyed for it, ver. 22—35. III. The joint wickedness of them both together, ver. 36—44; and the joint ruin of them both, ver. 45—49. And all that is written for warning against the sins of idolatry, and confidence in an arm of flesh, and sinful leagues and confederacies with wicked people, which are the sins here meant by committing whoredom, is, that others may hear and fear, and not sin after the similitude of the transgressions of Israel and Judah.

THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, there were two women,
The daughters of one mother:
3 And they committed whoredoms in Egypt;
They committed whoredoms in their youth:
There were their breasts pressed,
And there they bruised the teats of their virginity.
4 And the names of them *were* Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister:
And they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters.
Thus *were* their names; Samaria *is* Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah.
5 And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine;
And she doted on her lovers, on the Assyrians *her* neighbours,
6 *Which were* clothed with blue, captains and rulers,
All of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses.
7 Thus she committed her whoredoms with them,
With all them *that were* the chosen men of Assyria,
And with all on whom she doted:
With all their idols she defiled herself.
8 Neither left she her whoredoms *brought* from Egypt:
For in her youth they lay with her,
And they bruised the breasts of her virginity,
And poured their whoredom upon her.
9 Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers,
Into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted.

ASSYRIAN.—FROM A ROCK.

10 These discovered her nakedness:
They took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword:
And she became famous among women;
For they had executed judgment upon her.

God had often spoken to Ezekiel, and by him to the people, to this effect, but now his word comes again; for God speaketh the same thing once, yea twice, yea many a time, and all little enough, and too little, for man perceiveth it not. Note, To convince sinners of the evil of sin, and of their misery and danger by reason of it, there is need of line upon line; so loth we are to know the worst by ourselves. The sinners that are here to be exposed are two women, two kingdoms, sister kingdoms, Israel and Judah, daughters of one mother, having been for a long time but one people. Solomon's kingdom was so large, so populous, that immediately after his death it divided into two. Observe,

First. Their character when they were one; ver. 3, "They committed whoredoms in Egypt," for there they were guilty of idolatry, as we read before, *ch.* xx. 8. The representing of these sins which are most provoking to God, and most ruining to a people, by the sin of whoredom plainly intimates what an exceeding sinful sin uncleanness is, how offensive, how destructive. Doubtless it is itself one of the worst of sins; for other the worst of sins are compared to it here, and often elsewhere, which should increase our detestation and dread of all manner of fleshly lusts, all appearances of them, and approaches to them, as warring against the soul, infatuating sinners, bewitching them, alienating their minds from God and all that is good, debauching conscience, rendering them odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and drowning them at last in destruction and perdition.

Secondly. Their names when they became two, ver. 4. The kingdom of Israel is called the elder sister, because that first made the breach, and separated from the family both of kings and priests that God had appointed; the greater sister, so the word is, for ten tribes belonged to that kingdom, and only two to the other. God saith of them both, "They were mine," for they were the seed of Abraham his friend, and of Jacob his chosen; they were in covenant with God, and carried about with them the sign of their circumcision, the seal of the covenant. "They were mine," and therefore their apostacy was the highest injustice; it was alienating God's property, it was the basest ingratitude to the best of benefactors, and a perfidious treacherous violation of the most sacred engagements. Note, Those who have been in profession the people of God, but revolted from him, have a great deal to answer for more than those who never made any such profession. "They were mine;" that is, they were espoused to me, and to me they bare sons and daughters. There were many among them that were devoted to God's honour, and employed in his service, and were the strength and beauty of these kingdoms, as children are of the families they are born in. In this parable Samaria and the kingdom of Israel shall bear the name of Aholah, her own tabernacle; because the places of worship which that kingdom had were of their own devising, their own choosing, and the worship itself their own invention; God never owned it. 'Her tabernacle to herself,' so some render it; let her take it to herself, and make her best of it. Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah bear the name of Aholibah, 'my tabernacle is in her;' because their temple was the place which God himself had chosen to put his name there. He acknowledged it to be his, and honoured them with the tokens of his presence in it. Note, Of those that stand in relation to God, and make profession of his name, some have greater privileges and advantages than others; and, as those who have greater are rendered the more inexcusable if they revolt from God, so those that have lesser yet will not thereby be rendered excusable.

Thirdly. The treacherous departure of the kingdom of Israel from God; ver. 5, "Aholah played the harlot when she was mine." Though the ten tribes had deserted the house of David, yet God owned them for his still. Though Jeroboam, in setting up the golden calves, sinned and made Israel to sin, yet as long as they worshipped the God of Israel only, though by images, he did not quite cast them off. But the way of sin is down-hill. Aholah played the harlot, brought in the worship of Baal, 1 *Kin.* xvi. 31; set up that other god, that dunghill god, in competition with Jehovah, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 21; as a vile adulteress dotes on her lovers, because they are well dressed, and make a figure, because they are young and handsome; ver. 6, "clothed with blue, captains and rulers, desirable young men," genteel, and that pass for men of honour. So she doted upon her neighbours, particularly the Assyrians, who had extended their conquests near them. She admired their idols, and worshipped them, admired the pomp of their courts, and their military strength, and courted alliances with them upon any terms, as if their own God were not sufficient to be depended upon. We find one of the kings of Israel giving a thousand talents to the king of Assyria, to engage him in his interests, 2 *Kin.* xv. 19. She doted on the chosen men of Assyria, as worthy to be trusted and employed in the service of the state; ver. 7, and "on all their idols with which she defiled herself." Note, Whatever creature we dote upon, pay homage to, and put a confidence in, we make an idol of that creature; and whatever we make an idol of we defile ourselves with. And now again, the conviction looks back as far as the original of their nation; "Neither left she her whoredoms which she brought from Egypt," ver. 9. Their being idolaters in Egypt was a thing never to be forgotten, that they should be in love with Egypt's idols, even when they were continually in fear of Egypt's tyrants and taskmasters; but (as some have observed) therefore at that time, when Satan boasted of his having walked through the earth as all his own, to disprove his pretensions God did not say, Hast thou considered my people Israel in Egypt? for they were become idolaters and were not bragged of; but, "Hast thou considered my servant Job in the land of Uz?" And this corrupt disposition in them, when they were first formed into a people, is an emblem of that original corruption which is born with us, and is woven into our constitution, a strong bias towards the world and the flesh, like that of the Israelites towards idolatry. It was bred in the bone with them, and was charged upon them long after, that they left not their whoredoms brought from Egypt; it would never out of the flesh, though Egypt had been a house of bondage to them. Thus the corrupt affections and inclinations which we brought into the world with us we have not lost nor got clear of, but still retain them, though the iniquity we were born in is the source of all the calamities which human life is liable to.

Fourthly. The destruction of the kingdom of Israel for their apostacy from God, ver. 9, 10, "I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers." God first justly gave her up to her lust, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone;" and then gave her up to "her lovers." The neighbour nations, whose idolatries she had conformed to, and whose friendship she had confided in, and in both had affronted God, are now made use of as the instruments of her destruction. The Assyrians, on whom she doted, soon spied out the nakedness of the land, discovered her blind side on which to attack her, stripped her of all her ornaments, and all her defences, and so uncovered her, and made her naked and bare; carried her sons and daughters into captivity; slew her with the sword, and quite destroyed that kingdom, and put an end to it. We have the story at large, 2 *Kin.* xvii. 6, &c., where the cause of the ruin of that once flourishing kingdom by the Assyrians is shewed to be their forsaking the God of Israel, "fearing other gods, and walking in the statutes of the heathens." It was for this that God was "very angry with them, and removed them out of his sight," ver. 18; and that the Assyrians, whom they had been so fond of, should be employed in executing judgments upon them, was very remarkable, and shews how God doth often, in a way of righteous judgment, make that a scourge to sinners which they have inordinately set their hearts upon. The devil will for ever be a tormentor to those impenitent sinners who now hearken to him, and comply with him as a tempter.

Thus Samaria became "famous among women," or infamous rather. She 'became a name,' so the word is; not only she came to be the subject of discourse, and much talked of, as the desolations of cities and kingdoms fill the newspapers; but she was thus ruined for her idolatries *in terrorem*, for warning to all people to take heed of doing likewise; as the public execution of notorious malefactors make them such a name, such an ill name, as may serve to frighten others from those wicked courses which have brought them to a miserable and shameful end; *Deu.* xxi. 21, "All Israel shall hear and fear."

11 And when her sister Aholibah saw *this*,
She was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she,
And in her whoredoms more than her sister in *her* whoredoms.
12 She doted upon the Assyrians *her* neighbours,

Captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously,
Horsemen riding upon horses,
All of them desirable young men.
13 Then I saw that she was defiled,
That they *took* both one way,
14 And *that* she increased her whoredoms:
For when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall,
The images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion,
15 Girded with girdles upon their loins,
Exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads,
All of them princes to look to,
After the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: [upon them,
16 And as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted
And sent messengers unto them into Chaldea.
17 And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love,
And they defiled her with their whoredom,
And she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them.
18 So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness:
Then my mind was alienated from her,
Like as my mind was alienated from her sister.
19 Yet she multiplied her whoredoms,
In calling to remembrance the days of her youth,
Wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.
20 For she doted upon their paramours,
Whose flesh *is as* the flesh of asses,
And whose issue *is like* the issue of horses.
21 Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth,
In bruising thy teats by the Egyptians [for the paps of thy youth.

ASSYRIANS.—FROM THE ASSYRIAN MARBLES.

The prophet Hosea in his time observed, that the two tribes retained their integrity in a great measure, when the ten tribes had apostatized; *Hos.* xi. 12, "Ephraim indeed compasseth me about with lies, but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints;" and this was justly expected from them, *Hos.* iv. 15, "Though thou Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend." But this lasted not long; by some unhappy matches made between the house of David and the house of Ahab the worship of Baal had been brought into the kingdom of Judah, but had been by the reforming kings worked out again; and at the time of the captivity of the ten tribes, which was in the reign of Hezekiah, things were in a good posture. But it lasted not long; in the reign of Manasseh, soon after the kingdom of Judah had seen the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, they became more corrupt than Israel had been in their inordinate love of idols, ver. 11. Instead of being made better by the warning which that destruction gave them, they were made worse by it, as if they were displeased "because the Lord had made that breach upon Israel," and for that reason became disaffected to him and to his service. Instead of being made to stand in awe of him as a jealous God, they therefore grew strange to him, and liked those gods better that would admit of partners with him. Note, Those may justly expect God's judgments upon themselves who do not take warning by his judgments upon others, who see in others what is the end of sin, and yet continue to make a light matter of it; but it is bad indeed with those who are made worse by that which should make them better; and have their lusts irritated and exasperated by that which was designed to suppress and subdue them. Jerusalem grew worse in her whoredoms than her sister Samaria had been in her whoredoms. This was observed before, *ch.* xvi. 51, "Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins."

First. Jerusalem, that had been a faithful city, became a harlot, *Isa.* i. 21. She also doted upon the Assyrians, ver. 12; joined in league with them, joined in worship with them, grew to be in love with their captains and rulers, and cried them up as finer and more accomplished gentlemen than any that ever the land of Israel produced. See how richly, how neatly they are dressed, "clothed most gorgeously;" how well they sit a horse, they are "horsemen riding upon horses;" how charmingly they look, "all of them desirable young men." And thus they grew to affect every thing that was foreign, and to despise their own nation; and even the religion of it was mean and homely, and not to be compared with the curiosity and gaiety that was in the heathen temples. Thus she increased her whoredoms. She fell in love, fell in league, with the Chaldeans. Hezekiah himself was faulty this way when he was proud of the court which the kings of Babylon made to him, and complimented his ambassadors with the sight of all his treasures, *Isa.* xxxix. 2; and the humour increased, ver. 14. She doted upon the pictures of the Babylonian captains, ver. 15, 16; joined in alliance with that kingdom, invited them to come and settle in Jerusalem, that they might refine the genius of the Jewish nation, and make it more polite; nay, they sent for patterns of their images, altars, and temples, and made use of them in their worship. Thus was she polluted with their whoredoms, ver. 17; and thereby she discovered her own whoredom, ver. 18; that is, her own strong inclination to idolatry. And when she had had enough of the Chaldeans, and grew sick of them, and disposed to break her league with them, as Jehoiakim and Zedekiah did, her mind being alienated from them, she courted the Egyptians, doted upon their paramours, ver. 20; would come into an alliance with them; and, to strengthen their alliance, would join with them in their idolatries, and then depend upon them to be their protectors from all other nations: for so wise, so rich, so strong was the Egyptian nation, and came to such perfection in idolatry, that there is no nation now they can take such satisfaction in as in Egypt. Thus they "called to remembrance the days of their youth," ver. 19; the "lewdness of their youth," ver. 21; that is, 1. They pleased themselves with the remembrance of it. When they began to set their affections upon Egypt, they encouraged themselves to put a confidence in that kingdom, because of the old acquaintance they had with it, as if they still retained the gust and relish of the leeks and onions they ate there; or rather of the idolatrous worship they learned there, and brought up with them from thence. When they began an acquaintance with Egypt they remembered how merrily their fathers worshipped the golden calf, what music and dancing they had at that sport, which they learned in Egypt; and hoped they should now have a fair pretence to come to that again. Thus she multiplied her whoredoms, repeated her former whoredoms, and encouraged herself to close with present temptations, by calling to remembrance the days of her youth. Note, Those who, instead of reflecting upon their former sins with sorrow and shame, reflect upon them with pleasure and pride, contract new guilt, thereby strengthen their own corruptions, and in effect bid defiance to repentance. This is returning with the dog to his vomit. 2. They called it God's remembrance, and provoked him to remember it against them. God had said indeed that he would reckon with them for the golden calf, that idol of Egypt, *Ex.* xxxii. 34; but such was his patience, that he seemed to have forgotten it, till they, by their league now with the Egyptians against the Chaldeans, did as it were put him in mind of it; and in the day when he visits he will now, as he hath said, visit for that. It is very observable how this adulteress changed her lovers. She dotes first on the Assyrians, then she thought the Chaldeans finer, and courted them. After awhile her mind was alienated from them, and she thought the Egyptians more powerful, ver. 20, and she must contract an intimacy with them, which shews the folly, 1st. Of fleshly lusts. When they are indulged they grow humoursome and fickle, are soon surfeited, but never satisfied; they must have variety, and what is loved one day, is loathed the next; *unius adulterium matrimonium vocant*,—'one adultery is called marriage,' saith Seneca. 2nd. Of idolatry. Those who think one god too little will not think a hundred enough, but will still be for trying more, as finding all insufficient. 3rd. Of seeking to creatures for help. We go from one to another, but are disappointed in them all, and can never rest till we have made the God of Israel our help.

Secondly. The faithful God justly gives a bill of divorce to this now faithless city that is become a harlot. His jealousy soon discovered her lewdness; ver. 13, "I saw that she was defiled," that she was debauched, saw which way her inclination was, that the two sisters both took one way, and that Jerusalem grew worse than Samaria; for "if we stretch out our hand to a strange god, shall not God search this out?" No doubt he shall; and when he has found it can he be pleased with it? No, ver. 18, "Then my mind was alienated from her, as it was from her sister." How could the pure and holy God any longer take delight in such a lewd generation? Note, Sin alienates God's mind from the sinner, and justly, for it is the alienation of the sinner's mind from God; but woe, and a thousand woes, to those from whom God's mind is alienated; for whom he turns from he will turn against.

22 Therefore, O Aholibah, thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee,
From whom thy mind is alienated,
And I will bring them against thee on every side;
23 The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans,
Pekod, and Shoa, *and* Koa, *and* all the Assyrians with them;
All of them desirable young men, [

Captains and rulers, great lords and renowned,
All of them riding upon horses.
24 And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons,
And with an assembly of people, [and wheels,
Which shall set against thee buckler and shield and helmet round about:
And I will set judgment before them,
And they shall judge thee according to their judgments.
25 And I will set my jealousy against thee,
And they shall deal furiously with thee:
They shall take away thy nose and thine ears;
And thy remnant shall fall by the sword:
They shall take thy sons and thy daughters;
And thy residue shall be devoured by the fire.
26 They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes,
And take away thy fair jewels.
27 Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee,
And thy whoredom *brought* from the land of Egypt:
So that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them,
Nor remember Egypt any more.
28 For thus saith the Lord GOD; [thou hatest,
Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand *of them* whom
Into the hand *of them* from whom thy mind is alienated:
29 And they shall deal with thee hatefully,
And shall take away all thy labour,
And shall leave thee naked and bare:
And the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered,
Both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.
30 I will do these *things* unto thee,
Because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen,
And because thou art polluted with their idols.
31 Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister;
Therefore will I give her cup into thine hand.
32 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large:
Thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containeth much.
33 Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow,
With the cup of astonishment and desolation,
With the cup of thy sister Samaria.
34 Thou shalt even drink it and suck *it* out,
And thou shalt break the sherds thereof,
And pluck off thine own breasts:
For I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.
35 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; [back,
Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy
Therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

Jerusalem stands indicted by the name of Aholibah, for that she was a false traitor to her sovereign Lord the God of heaven, not having his fear before her eyes, but, moved by the instigation of the devil, had revolted from her allegiance to him, and compassed and imagined to shake off his government, had kept up a correspondence, and joined in confederacy with his enemies, and the pretenders to a deity, in contempt of his crown and dignity. To this indictment she has pleaded, Not guilty: "I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim." But it is found against her by the notorious evidence of the fact, and she stands convicted of it, nor has any thing material to offer why judgment should not be given, and execution awarded by law. In these verses therefore we have the sentence.

First. Her old confederates must be her executioners; and those whom she had courted to be her leaders in sin are now to be employed as instruments of her punishment; ver. 22, "I will raise up thy lovers against thee," the Chaldeans, whom formerly thou didst so much admire and covet an acquaintance with, but from whom thy mind is since alienated, and with whom thou hast perfidiously broken covenant. They are called "thy lovers," ver. 22; and yet, ver. 20, "them whom thou hatest." Note, It is common for sinful love soon to turn into hatred, as Amnon's to Tamar. Those of headstrong and unreasonable passions are often very hot against those persons and things that a little before they were as hot for. Fools run into extremes; nay, and wise men may see cause to change their sentiments; and therefore, as we should rejoice and weep as if we rejoiced not and wept not, so we should love and hate as if we loved not and hated not; *ita ama tanquam osurus*,—'love as one who may have cause to feel aversion.'

Secondly. The execution to be done upon her is very terrible; her enemies shall come against her on every side, ver. 22. Those of the several nations that constituted the Chaldean army, ver. 23, all of them great lords and renowned, whose pomp, and grandeur, and splendid appearance, made them look the more amiable, when they came as friends to protect and patronise Jerusalem, but the more formidable when they came to chastise its treachery, and aimed at no less than its ruin. 1. They shall come with a great deal of military forces, ver. 24, with chariots and wagons, furnished with all necessary provisions for a camp, with arms and ammunition, bag and baggage, with a vast army, and well armed. 2. They shall have justice on their side; "I will set judgment before them." They shall have right with them as well as might, for the king of Babylon had just cause to make war upon the king of Judah, because he had broken his league with him; and therefore they shall judge thee, not only according to God's judgments, as the instruments of his justice, to punish thee for the indignities done to him, but according to their judgments, according to the law of nations, to punish thee for thy perfidious dealings with them. 3. They shall prosecute the war with a great deal of fury and resentment. Being a war of revenge, "they shall deal with thee hatefully," ver. 29. This will make the execution the more severe, that their swords will be dipped in poison. Thou hatest them, and they shall deal hatefully with thee; those that hate will be hated, and hatefully dealt with. 4. God himself will lead them on, and his anger shall be mingled with theirs; ver. 25, "I will set my jealousy against thee," that shall kindle this fire, and then "they shall deal furiously with thee." If men never so hatefully, never so furiously deal with us, if we have God on our side we need not fear them, they can do us no real hurt; but if men deal furiously with us, and God sets his jealousy against us too, what will become of us?

The particulars of the sentence here passed upon this notorious adulteress are, 1st. That all she has shall be seized on. The clothes and the fair jewels with which she had endeavoured to recommend herself to her lovers, these shall she be stripped of, ver. 26; all those things that were the ornaments of their state shall be taken away. "They shall take away all thy labour," all that thou hast gotten by thy labour, "and shall leave thee naked and bare," ver. 29. Both city and country shall be impoverished, and all the wealth of both swept away. 2nd. That her children shall go into captivity. "They shall take thy sons and thy daughters" and make slaves of them, ver. 25, for they are children of whoredoms, unworthy the dignities and privileges of the Israelites, *Hos.* ii. 4. 3rd. That she shall be stigmatised and deformed. "They shall take away thy nose and thy ears," shall mark thee for a whore, and render thee for ever odious, ver. 25. This intimates the many cruelties of the Chaldean soldiers towards the Jews that fall into their hands, whom, it is probable, they used barbarously. Some will have this to be used figuratively; and by the nose they think is meant the kingly dignity, and by the ears that of the priesthood. 4th. That she shall be exposed to shame. "Thy lewdness and thy whoredoms shall be discovered," ver. 29, as, when a malefactor is punished, all his crimes are ripped up, and repeated to his disgrace; what was secret then comes to light, and what was done long since is then called to mind. 5th. That she shall be quite cut off and ruined. "The remnant" of thy people that have escaped the famine and pestilence "shall fall by the sword;" "and the residue" of thy houses, that have not been battered down about thy ears, "shall be devoured by fire," ver. 25. And this shall be the end of Jerusalem.

Thirdly. Because she has trod in the steps of Samaria's sins, she must expect no other but Samaria's fate. It is common in giving judgment to have an eye to precedents, so has God in passing this sentence on Jerusalem; ver. 31, &c., "Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister," notwithstanding the warning thou hast had given thee by the fatal consequences of her wickedness; and therefore "I will give her cup," her portion of miseries, "into thy hand." The cup of the Lord's fury, which will be to thee a cup of trembling. Now, 1. This cup is said to be deep and large, and to contain much, ver. 32; abundance of God's wrath, and abundance of miseries, the fruits of that wrath. It is such a cup as that which we read of, *Jer.* xxv. 15, 16. The cup of Divine vengeance holds a great deal, and so they will find into whose hand it shall be put. 2. They shall be made to drink the very dregs of this cup, as the wicked are said to do, *Ps.* lxxv. 8, "Thou shalt drink it, and suck it out," not because it is pleasant, but because it is forced upon thee; ver. 34, "Thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts," for indignation at the extreme bitterness of this cup, being full of the fury of the Lord, *Isa.* li. 20; as men in great anguish tear their hair, and throw every thing from them. Finding there is no remedy but it must be drank, "For I have spoken it, saith the Lord God," thou shalt have no manner of patience in the drinking of it. 3. They shall be intoxicated by it, made sick, and be at their wits' end, as men in drink are, staggering and stumbling, and ready to fall; ver. 33, "Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow." Note, Drunkenness hath sorrow attending it to such a degree, that the utmost confusion and astonishment is here represented by it. Who would think that that which is such a force upon nature, such a scandal to it, which deprives men of their reason, disorders them to the last degree, and is therefore expressive of the greatest misery, should yet be with many a beloved sin; that they should damn their own souls to distemper their own bodies? Who has woe and sorrow like them? *Pr.* xxiii. 29. 4. Being intoxicated they shall become as drunkards deserve to be, a laughing-stock to all about them, "Thou shalt be laughed to scorn, and had in derision," ver. 32, as acting ridiculously in every thing thou goest about. When God is about to ruin a people he makes their judges fools, and pours contempt on their princes, *Job* xii. 17, 21.

Fourthly. In all this God will be justified, and by all this they will be reformed, and so the issue even of this will be God's glory and their good. 1. They have been bad, very bad, and that justifies God in all that is brought upon them; ver. 30, "I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen;" and, ver. 35, "Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back." Note, Forgetfulness of God, and a contempt of him, of his eye upon us, and authority over us, is at the bottom of all our treacherous and adulterous departures from him. Therefore men wander after idols, because they forget God, and their obligations to him; nor could they look with so much desire and delight upon the baits of sin, if they did not first cast God behind their back, as not worthy to be regarded. And those who put such an affront upon God, how can they think but that it should turn upon themselves at last? "Therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms;" that is, thou shalt suffer the punishment of it, and thou alone must bear the blame. Men need no more to sink them than the weight of their own sins; and they who will not part with their lewdness and their whoredoms must bear them. 2. They shall be better, much better, and this fire, though consuming to many, shall be refining to a remnant; ver. 27, "Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee." The judgments which were brought upon them by their sins parted between them and their sins, and taught them at length to say, "What have we to do any more with idols?" Observe, 1st. How inveterate the disease was. "Thy whoredoms were brought from the land of Egypt." Their disposition to idolatry was early and innate, their practice of it was ancient, and had gained a sort of prescription by long usage. 2nd. How complete the cure was notwithstanding. Though it has taken root, yet it shall be made to cease, so that thou shalt not so much as lift up thine eyes to the idols again, nor remember Egypt with pleasure any more. They shall avoid the occasions of this sin, for they shall not so much as look upon an idol, lest their hearts should unawares walk after their eyes. And they shall abandon all inclinations to it; they shall not remember Egypt; that is, they shall not retain any of that affection for idols which they had from the very infancy of their

nation. They got it through the corruption of nature in their bondage in Egypt, and lost it through the grace of God in their captivity in Babylon, which this was the blessed fruit of, even the taking away of sin, of that sin; so that, whereas before the captivity no nation (all things considered) was more impetuously bent upon idols and idolatry than they were, after that captivity no nation was more vehemently set against idols and idolatry than they were; insomuch that at this day the image-worship which is practised in the church of Rome confirms the Jews as much as any thing in their prejudices against the Christian religion.

36 The LORD said moreover unto me;
Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah?
Yea, declare unto them their abominations;
37 That they have committed adultery, and blood *is* in their hands,
And with their idols have they committed adultery,
And have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me,
To pass for them through *the fire,* to devour *them.*
38 Moreover this they have done unto me:
They have defiled my sanctuary in the same day,
And have profaned my sabbaths.
39 For when they had slain their children to their idols,
Then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it;
And, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house.
40 And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far,
Unto whom a messenger *was* sent; and, lo, they came:
For whom thou didst wash thyself,
Paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments,
41 And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it,
Whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil.
42 And a voice of a multitude being at ease *was* with her:
And with the men of the common sort
Were brought Sabeans from the wilderness,
Which put bracelets upon their hands,
And beautiful crowns upon their heads.
43 Then said I unto *her that was* old in adulteries,
Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she *with*
44 Yet they went in unto her, [*them?*
As they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot:
So went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the lewd women.
45 And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses,
And after the manner of women that shed blood;
Because they *are* adulteresses, and blood *is* in their
46 For thus saith the Lord GOD; [hands.
I will bring up a company upon them,
And will give them to be removed and spoiled.
47 And the company shall stone them with stones,
And dispatch them with their swords;
They shall slay their sons and their daughters,
And burn up their houses with fire.
48 Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land,
That all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness.
49 And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you,
And ye shall bear the sins of your idols:
And ye shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.

After the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and that kingdom was made quite desolate, the remains of it by degrees incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and gained a settlement (many of them) in Jerusalem, so that the two sisters were in effect become one again; and therefore in these verses the prophet takes those to task jointly who were thus conjoined. "Wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah" together? ver. 36. Wilt thou go about to excuse for them? Thou seest the matter is so bad as not to bear an excuse. Or rather, thou shalt now be employed in God's name to judge them, *ch.* xx. 4. The matter is rather worse than better since the union.

First. Let them be made to see the sins they are guilty of. Declare unto them openly and boldly their abominations.

1. They have been guilty of gross idolatry, here called adultery. "With their idols they have committed adultery," ver. 37; have broken their marriage covenant with God, have lusted after the gratifications of a carnal, sensual mind in the worship of God. This is the first and worst of the abominations he is to charge them with.

2. They have committed the most barbarous murders in sacrificing their children to Moloch, a sin so unnatural that they deserve to hear of it on all occasions. "Blood is in their hands;" innocent blood, the blood of their own children, which they have caused to pass through the fire, ver. 37; not that they might be dedicated to the idols, but that they might be devoured; a sign they loved their idols better than that which was dearest to them in the world.

3. They have profaned the sacred things with which God had dignified and distinguished them. "This they have done unto me," this indignity, this injury, ver. 38. Every contempt put upon that which is holy reflects upon him who is the fountain of holiness, and from a relation to whom whatever is called holy has its denomination. God hath set up his sanctuary among them, but they defiled it by making it a house of merchandise, a den of thieves; nay, and much worse, there they set up their idols and worshipped them, and there they shed the blood of God's prophets. God had revealed to them his holy sabbaths, but they profaned them by doing all manner of servile work therein, or perhaps by sports and recreations on that day, not only practised, but allowed and encouraged by authority. They defiled the sanctuary on the same day that they profaned the sabbath. To defile the sanctuary was bad enough on any day, but to do it on the sabbath day was an aggravation. We used to say, 'The better day the better deed;' but here, the better day the worse deed. God takes notice of the circumstances of sin which add to the guilt. He shews (ver. 39) what was their profanation, both of the sanctuary and of the sabbath. They slew their children, and sacrificed them to their idols, to the great dishonour both of God and of human nature; and then came the same day, their hands imbrued with the blood of their children, and their clothes stained with it, to attend in God's sanctuary, not to ask pardon for what they had done, but to present themselves before him, as other Israelites did, expecting acceptance with him, notwithstanding these villanies they were guilty of, as if God either did not know their wickedness or did not hate it. Thus they profaned the sanctuary, as if that were a protection to the worst of malefactors, for thus they did in the midst of his house. Note, It is a profanation of God's solemn ordinances, when those that are grossly and openly profane and vicious impudently and impenitently so intrude upon the services and privileges of them. "Give not that which is holy unto dogs." "Friend, how camest thou in hither?"

4. They have courted foreign alliances, been proud of them, and reposed a confidence in them. This is also represented by the sin of adultery, for it was a departure from God, not only to whom alone they ought to pay their homage, and not to idols, but in whom alone they ought to put their trust, and not in creatures. Israel was a peculiar people, must dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations; and they profane their crown, and lay their honour in the dust, when they covet to be like them, or in league with them. But this they have now done; they have entered into strait alliances with the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians, the most renowned and potent kingdoms at that time; but they scorned alliances with the petty kingdoms and states that lay near them, which yet might have been of more real service to them. Note, Affecting an acquaintance and correspondence with great people has often been a snare to good people. Let us see how Jerusalem courts her high allies, thinking thereby to make herself considerable.

1st. She privately requested that a public embassy might be sent to her; ver. 40, You sent a messenger "for men to come from far." It seems then the neighbours had no desire to come into a confederacy with Jerusalem, but she thrust herself upon them, and sent underhand to desire them to court her; and, lo, they came. The wisest and best may be drawn unavoidably into company and conversation with profane and wicked people; but it is no sign either of wisdom or goodness to covet an intimacy with such, and to court it.

2nd. Great preparation was made for the reception of these foreign ministers, for their public entry and public audience, which is compared to the pains that an adulteress takes to make herself look handsome. Jezebel-like, thou paintedst thy face, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, ver. 40. The kings and princes made themselves new clothes, fitted up the rooms of state, beautified the furniture, and made it look fresh. Thou "satest upon a stately bed," ver. 41, a stately throne; "a table was prepared whereon thou hast set mine oil and mine incense." That was either, *First.* A feast for the ambassadors, a noble treat, agreeable to the other preparations. There was incense to perfume the room, and oil to anoint their heads. Or, *Secondly.* An altar ready furnished for the ambassadors' use in the worship of their idols, to let them know that the Israelites were not so straitlaced but that they could allow foreigners the free exercise of their religion among them, and furnish them with chapels, yea, and compliment them so far as to join with them in their devotions. Though the law of their God was against it, yet they could easily dispense with it themselves to oblige a friend. The oil and incense God calls his, not only because it was the gift of his providence, but because it should have been offered at his altar, which was an aggravation of their sin in serving idols and idolaters with it: see *Hos.* ii. 8.

3rd. There was great joy at their coming, as if it were such a blessing as never happened to Jerusalem before; ver. 42, "A voice of a multitude being at ease was with her." The people were very easy, for they thought themselves very safe and happy now that they had such powerful allies, and therefore attended the ambassadors with loud huzzas and acclamations of joy. A great confluence of people there was to the court upon this occasion. The men of the common sort were there to grace the solemnity, and to increase the crowd; and "with them were brought Sabeans from the wilderness." The margin reads it, 'Drunkards from the wilderness,' that would drink healths to the prosperity of this grand alliance, and force them upon others, and be most noisy in shouting upon this occasion. Whoever they were, in honour of the ambassadors they put "bracelets on their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads," which made the cavalcade appear very splendid.

4th. God, by his prophets, warned them against making these dangerous leagues with foreigners; ver. 43, "Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries," that from the first was fond of leagues with the heathen, of matching with their families, *Jud.* iii. 6, and afterwards of making alliances with their kingdoms; and though often disappointed herein would never be dissuaded from it. This was the adultery she was old in. I said, "Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them?" Surely experience and observation will by this time have convinced both them and her that an alliance between the nation of the Jews and a heathen nation can never be for the advantage of either. They are iron and clay, that will not mix, nor will God bless it or smile upon it. But it seems her being old in these adulteries, instead of weaning her from them, as one would expect, doth but make her the more impudent and insatiable in them; for, though she was thus admonished of the folly of it, "yet they went in unto her," ver. 44. A bargain was soon clapped up, and a league made first with this and then with the other foreign state. Samaria did so, Jerusalem did so, like lewd women. They could not rest satisfied in the embraces of God's laws and care, and the assurances of protection he gave them; they could not think his covenant with them security enough; but there must be treaties and leagues, politic ones, they thought, and well concerted,—throw themselves into the arms of foreign princes, and put their

interests under their protection. Note, Those hearts go a whoring from God that take a complacency in the pomp of the world, and put a confidence in its wealth, and in an arm of flesh, *Jer.* xvii. 5.

Secondly. Let them be made to foresee the judgments that are coming upon them for these sins; ver. 45, "The righteous men, they shall judge them." Some make the instruments of their destruction to be the righteous men that shall judge them; the Assyrians that destroyed Samaria, the Chaldeans that destroyed Jerusalem. Those were comparatively righteous, had a sense of justice between man and man, and justly resented the treachery of the Jewish nation; however, they executed God's judgments, which we are sure are all righteous. Others understand it of the prophets, whose office it was, in God's name, to judge them, and to pass sentence upon them. Or we may take it as an appeal to all righteous men, to all that have a sense of equity; they shall all judge concerning these cities, and agree in their verdict, that forasmuch as they have been notoriously guilty of adultery and murder, and the guilt is national, that therefore they ought to suffer the pains and penalties which by law are inflicted upon women in their personal capacity that shed blood and are adulteresses. Righteous men will say, Why should bloody, filthy cities escape any better than bloody, filthy persons? "Judge, I pray thee," *Isa.* v. 3.

This judgment being given by the righteous men, the righteous God will award execution. See here, 1. What the execution will be, ver. 46, 47. The same as before, ver. 23, &c., and ver. 28, &c. God will bring a company of enemies upon them who shall be made to serve his holy purposes even then, when they are serving their own sinful appetites and passions. These enemies shall easily prevail, for God will give them into their hands to be removed and spoiled. This company shall stone them with stones as malefactors, shall single them out, and dispatch them with their swords; and, as was sometimes done in severe executions,—witness that of Achan,—they shall "slay their children, and burn their houses." 2. What will be the effects of it. 1st. Thus they shall suffer for their sins. Their "lewdness shall be recompensed upon them," ver. 49, and they shall "bear the sins of their idols," as before, ver. 35. Thus God will assert the honour of his broken law and injured government, and let the world know what a just and jealous God he is. 2nd. Thus they shall be broken off from their sins. "I will cause lewdness to cease out of the land," ver. 48, as before, ver. 27. The destruction of God's city, like the death of God's saints, shall do that for them which ordinances and providences before could not do, it shall quite take away their sin; so that Jerusalem shall rise out of its ashes a new lump, as gold comes out of the furnace purified from its dross. 3rd. Thus other cities and nations will have fair warning given them to keep themselves from idols; that "all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness." This is the end of the punishment of malefactors, that they may be made examples to others, who will see and fear. "Smite the scorner, and the simple will beware." The judgments of God upon some are designed to teach others; and happy they who receive instruction from them not to tread in the steps of sinners, lest they be taken in their snares. And those who would be taught this must know God is the Lord, ver. 49; that he is the governor of the world, a God that judgeth in the earth, and with whom there is no respect of persons.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Here are two sermons in this chapter preached on a particular occasion, and they are both from mount Sinai, the mount of terror; both from mount Ebal, the mount of curses; both speak the approaching fate of Jerusalem. The occasion of them was the king of Babylon's laying siege to Jerusalem; and the design of them is to shew that, in the issue of that siege, he should be not only master of the place, but destroyer of it. I. By the sign of flesh boiling in a pot over the fire is shewed the miseries that Jerusalem should suffer during the siege, and justly, for her filthiness, ver. 1—14. II. By the sign of Ezekiel's not mourning for the death of his wife is shewed that the calamities coming upon Jerusalem were too great to be lamented; so great that they should sink down under them into a silent despair, ver. 15—27.

AGAIN in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, write thee the name of the day, *even* of this same day: the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day. 3 And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them,

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Set on a pot,
Set *it* on, and also pour water into it:
4 Gather the pieces thereof into it,
Even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder;
Fill *it* with the choice bones.
5 Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones [under it,
And make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of [it therein.
6 Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Woe to the bloody city,
To the pot whose scum *is* therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it!
Bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it.
7 For her blood is in the midst of her;
She set it upon the top of a rock;
She poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust;
8 That it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance;
I have set her blood upon the top of a rock,
That it should not be covered.
9 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; [great.
Woe to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire
10 Heap on wood, kindle the fire,
Consume the flesh, and spice it well, and let the bones [be burned.
11 Then set it empty upon the coals thereof,
That the brass of it may be hot, and may burn,
And *that* the filthiness of it may be molten in it,
That the scum of it may be consumed.

SACRIFICIAL SEETHING POTS.

12 She hath wearied *herself* with lies,
And her great scum went not forth out of her:
Her scum *shall be* in the fire.
13 In thy filthiness *is* lewdness:
Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged,
Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more,
Till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee.
14 I the LORD have spoken *it:*
It shall come to pass, and I will do *it;* [pent;
I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I re-
According to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee,
Saith the Lord GOD.

SEETHING THE SHOULDER.—ver. 4.

We have here,

First. The notice God gives to Ezekiel in Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's laying siege to Jerusalem, just at the time when he was doing it; ver. 2, Son of man take notice, "the king of Babylon," that is now abroad with his army, thou knowest where, "sets himself against Jerusalem this same day." It was many miles, it was many days' journey, from Jerusalem to Babylon; perhaps the last intelligence they had from the army was, that the design was upon Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and that the campaign was to be opened with the siege of that city. But God knew, and could tell the prophet, This day, at this time, Jerusalem is invested, and the Chaldean army is set down before it. Note, As all times, so all places, even the most remote, are present with God, and under his view. He tells it the prophet, that the prophet might tell it the people, that so when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the public intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and they might infer that, since he was right in his news, he was so in his predictions, for he owed both to the same correspondence he had with heaven.

Secondly. The notice which he orders him to take of it. He must enter it in his book, Memorandum, that in the ninth year of Jehoiakim's captivity, (for thence Ezekiel dated *ch.* i. 2, which was also the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, for he began to reign when Jehoiakim was carried off,) in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem; and the date here agrees exactly with the date in the history, 2 *Kin.* xxv. 1. See how God revealed things to his servants the prophets, especially those things which serve to confirm their word, and so to confirm their own faith. Note, It is good to keep an exact account of the date of remarkable occurrences, which may sometimes contribute to the manifesting of God's glory so much the more in them, and the explaining and confirming of Scripture prophecies. "Known unto God are all his works."

Thirdly. The notice which he orders him to give to the people thereupon, the purport of which is, that this siege of Jerusalem now begun will infallibly end in the ruin of it. This he must say to the rebellious house, to those of them that were in Babylon, to be by them communicated to those who were yet in their own land. A rebellious house will soon be a ruinous house.

1. He must shew them this by a sign, for that stupid people needed to be taught as children are. The comparison made use of is that of a boiling pot. This agrees with Jeremiah's vision many years before, when he first began to be a prophet, and probably was designed to put them in mind of that, *Jer.* i. 13, "I see a seething pot, with the face towards the north;" and the explanation of it, ver. 15, makes it to signify the besieging of Jerusalem by the northern nations. And, as this comparison is intended to confirm Jeremiah's vision, so also to confront the vain confidence of the princes of Jerusalem, who had said, *ch.* xi. 3, "This city is the caldron, and we are the flesh," meaning, We are as safe here as if we were surrounded with walls of brass. Well, saith God, it shall be so, you shall be boiled in Jerusalem as the flesh in the caldron, boiled to pieces; let the pot be set on with water in it, ver. 4; let it be filled with the flesh of the choice of the flock, ver. 5, with the choice pieces, ver. 6, and the marrow bones; and let the other bones serve for fuel, that one way or other, either in the pot or under it, the whole beast may be made use of. A fire of bones, though it be a slow fire, for the siege was to be long, yet it is a sure and lasting fire; such was God's wrath against them, and not like the crackling of thorns under a pot, which has noise and blaze, but no intense heat. They that from all parts of the country fled into Jerusalem for safety would be sadly disappointed, when the siege laid to it would soon make the place too hot for them; and yet there was no getting out of it, but they must be forced to abide by it, as the flesh in a boiling pot.

2. He must give them a comment upon this sign. It is to be construed as a "woe to the bloody city," ver. 6, and again, ver. 9; being bloody, let it go to pot to be boiled, it is the fittest place for it. Let us here see,

1st. What is the course God takes with it. Jerusalem during the siege is like a pot boiling over the fire, all in a heat, all in a hurry. *First.* Care is taken to keep a good fire under the pot, which signifies the closeness of the siege, and the many vigorous attacks made upon the city by the besiegers, and especially the continued wrath of God burning against them; ver. 9, "I will make the pile for fire great." Commission is given to the Chaldeans, ver. 10, to "heap on wood, and kindle the fire," make Jerusalem more and more hot to the inhabitants. Note, The fire which God kindles for the consuming of impenitent sinners shall never abate, much less go out for want of fuel. "Tophet has fire and much wood," *Isa.* xxx. 33. *Secondly.* The meat as it is boiled is taken out, and given to the Chaldeans for them to feast upon. "Consume the flesh," that is, let it be thoroughly boiled, boiled to rags; spice it well, and make it savoury, for those that will feed sweetly upon it. "Let the bones be burnt," either the bones under the pot, let them be consumed with the other fuel, or, as some think, the bones in the pot; let it boil so furiously as that not only the flesh may be sodden, but even the bones softened. Let all the inhabitants of Jerusalem be, by sickness, sword, and famine, reduced to the extremity of misery; and then, ver. 6, "Bring it out piece by piece," let every man be delivered into the enemy's hand, to be either put to the sword or made a prisoner; let them be an easy prey to them, and let the Chaldeans fall upon them as eagerly as a hungry man doth upon a good dish of meat when it is set before him. "Let no lot fall upon it;" every piece in the pot shall be fetched out and devoured first or last, and therefore it is no matter for casting lots which shall be fetched out first. It was a very severe military execution, when David measured Moab with "two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive," 2 *Sam.* viii. 2; but here is no line, no lot of mercy made use of, all goes one way, and that is to destruction. *Thirdly.* When all the broth is boiled away, the pot is set empty upon the coals that it may burn too, which signifies the setting the city on fire, ver. 11. The scum of the meat, or, as some translate it, the rust of the metal, is so got into the pot, that there is no making it clean by washing or scouring it, and therefore it must be done by fire; so let the filthiness be burnt out of it, or rather, molten in it, and burnt with it. Let the vipers and their nest be consumed together.

2nd. What is the quarrel God has with it. He would not take these severe methods with Jerusalem but that he is provoked to it; she deserves to be thus dealt with, for,

First. It is a bloody city; ver. 7, 8, "Her blood is in the midst of her." Many a barbarous murder has been committed in the very heart of the city, nay, they have a disposition to cruelty in their hearts; they inwardly delight in bloodshed, and so it is in the midst of them. Nay, they commit their murders in the face of the sun, and openly and impudently avow them, in defiance of the justice both of God and man. She did not pour out the blood she shed upon the ground to cover it with dust, as being ashamed of the sin or afraid of the punishment. She did not look upon it as a filthy thing, fit to be concealed, *Deu.* xxiii. 13, much less dangerous; nay, she poured out the innocent blood she shed upon a rock where it would not sink in, upon the top of a rock, in despite of Divine views and vengeance. They shed innocent blood under colour of justice, so that they gloried in it, as if they had done God and the country good service; so put it, as it were, on the top of a rock. Or it may refer to the sacrificing of their children on their high places, perhaps on the top of rocks. Now thus they "caused fury to come up and take vengeance," ver. 8. It could not be avoided but that God must in anger visit for these things; his soul must be avenged on such a nation as this. If such impudent murders as these, that even dare Divine vengeance, go unpunished, it will be said that God has forsaken the earth. It is absolutely necessary that such a bloody city as this should have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, for the vindicating of the honour of Divine justice. And, the crime having been public and notorious, it is fit their punishment should be so too; "I have set their blood on the top of a rock." Jerusalem was to be made an example, and therefore was made a spectacle to the world; God dealt with her according to the law of retaliation. Those that sin before all, it is fit they should be rebuked before all; and that their reputation should not be consulted by the concealment of their punishment, who were so impudent as not to desire the concealment of their sin.

Secondly. It is a filthy city. Great notice is taken of this reddition of the comparison of the scum of this pot, which signifies the sin of Jerusalem working up and appearing when the judgments of God were upon her. It is "the pot whose scum is therein, and is not gone out of it," ver. 6; "the great scum that went not forth out of her," ver. 12; that stuck to the pot when all was boiled away, and was molten in it, ver. 11; some of this runs over into the fire, ver. 12, inflames that, and makes it burn the more furiously, but "it shall all be consumed at last," ver. 11. When the hand of God was gone out against them, instead of humbling themselves under it, repenting and reforming, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity, they grew more impudent and outrageous in sin, quarrelled with God, persecuted his prophets, were fierce to one another, enraged to the last degree against the Chaldeans, snarled at the stone, gnawed their chain, and were like a wild bull in a net. This was their scum; in their distress they trespassed yet more against the Lord, like that king Ahaz, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 22. There is little hope of those who are made worse by that which should make them better, whose corruptions are excited and exasperated by those rebukes, both of the word and of the providence of God, which were designed for the suppressing and subduing of them; nor of those whose scum boiled up once in convictions and confessions of sin, as if it would be taken off by reformation, but afterwards returned again in a revolt from their good overtures, and the heart that seemed softened is hardened again.

This was Jerusalem's case; "She was wearied with lies," wearied her God with purposes and promises of amendment which she never stood to, wearied herself with her carnal confidences, which have all deceived her, ver. 12. Note, Those that follow after lying vanities weary themselves with the pursuit. Now see her doom, ver. 13, 14: because she is incurably wicked, she is abandoned to ruin without remedy. 1. Methods and means of reformation had been tried in vain; ver. 13, "In thy filthiness is lewdness," that is, thou art become obstinate and impudent in it; thou hast got a habit of it, which is confirmed by frequent acts. "In thy filthiness" there is a rooted lewdness, as appears by this, "I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged;" I have given thee purging physic, but it has not worked; I have used the means of cleansing thee, but they have been ineffectual, the intention of them has not been answered. Note, It is sad to think how many there are on whom ordinances and providences are all lost. 2. It is therefore resolved that no more such methods shall be used; "Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more." The fire shall no longer be a refining fire, but a consuming fire, and therefore shall not be mitigated and shortened as it has been, but it shall be continued in extremity, till it has done its destroying work. Note, Those that will not be healed are justly given up, and their case adjudged desperate. There is a day coming when it will be said, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." 3. Nothing remains then but to bring them to utter ruin; "I will cause my fury to rest upon thee." This is the same with what is said of the latter Jews, that "wrath is come upon them to the uttermost," 1 *Thes.* ii. 16. They deserve it: "According to thy doings they shall judge thee," ver. 14; and God will do it. The sentence is bound on with repeated ratifications, that they might be awakened to see how certain their ruin was; "I the Lord have spoken it," who am able to make good what I have spoken; it shall come to pass, nothing shall prevent it, for I will do it myself, I will not go back upon any entreaties; the decree is gone forth, and I will not spare in compassion to them, neither will I repent. He will neither change his mind nor change his way. Hereby the prophet was forbidden to intercede for them, and they were forbidden to flatter themselves with hopes of an escape. God hath said it, and he will do it. Note, The declarations of God's wrath against sinners are as inviolable as the assurances he hath given of favour to his people; and the case of such is sad indeed who have brought it to this issue, that either God must be false or they must be damned.

15 Also the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
16 Son of man, behold, I take away from thee
The desire of thine eyes with a stroke:
Yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep,
Neither shall thy tears run down.
17 Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead,
Bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet,
And cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men.
18 So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. 19 And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these *things are* to us, that thou doest *so?* 20 Then I answered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
21 Speak unto the house of Israel,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength,
The desire of your eyes,
And that which your soul pitieth;

And your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword.
22 And ye shall do as I have done:
Ye shall not cover *your* lips, nor eat the bread of men.
23 And your tires *shall be* upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet:
Ye shall not mourn nor weep;
But ye shall pine away for your iniquities,
And mourn one toward another.
24 Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign:
According to all that he hath done shall ye do:
And when this cometh, ye shall know that I *am* the Lord
25 Also, thou son of man, *shall it* not *be* [GOD.
In the day when I take from them their strength,
The joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes,
And that whereupon they set their minds,
Their sons and their daughters,
26 *That* he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee,
To cause *thee* to hear *it* with *thine* ears? [escaped,
27 In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is
And thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb:
And thou shalt be a sign unto them;
And they shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

These verses conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem; for after this, though he prophesied much concerning other nations, yet he said no more concerning Jerusalem, till he heard of the destruction of it, almost three years after, *ch.* xxxiii. 21. He had assured them in the former part of this chapter that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble; here he assures them that they should not have the ease of weeping for it. Observe here,

First. The sign by which this was represented to them, and it was a sign that cost the prophet very dear; the more shame for them that, when he by a Divine appointment was at such an expense to affect them with what he had to deliver, yet they were not affected by it.

1. He must lose a good wife, that should suddenly be taken from him by death. God gave him notice of it before, that it might be the less surprise to him; ver. 16, "Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." Note, 1st. A married state may very well agree with the prophetical office; it is honourable in all, and therefore not sinful in ministers. 2nd. Much of the comfort of human life lies in agreeable relations; no doubt Ezekiel found a prudent, tender yoke-fellow, that shared with him in his griefs and cares, to be a happy companion in his captivity. 3rd. Those in the conjugal relation must be to each other not only a covering of the eyes, (*Gen.* xx. 16,) to restrain wandering looks after others, but a desire of the eyes, to engage pleasing looks on one another. A beloved wife is the desire of the eyes, which find not any object more grateful. 4th. That is least safe which is most dear; we know not how soon the desire of our eyes may be removed from us, and may become the sorrow of our hearts; which is a good reason why those that have wives should be as though they had none, and those who rejoice in them as though they rejoiced not, 1 *Cor.* vii. 29, 30. Death is a stroke which the most pious, the most useful, the most amiable, are not exempted from. 5th. When the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke, we must see and own the hand of God in it. "I take away the desire of thine eyes." He takes our creature comforts from us when and how he pleaseth; he gave them to us, but reserved to himself a property in them, and may he not do what he will with his own? 6th. Under afflictions of this kind it is good for us to remember that we are sons of men; for so God calls the prophet here. If thou art a son of Adam, thy wife is a daughter of Eve, and therefore a dying creature. It is an affliction which the children of men are liable to, and shall the earth be forsaken for us? According to this prediction he tells us, ver. 18, "I spake unto the people in the morning;" for God sent his prophets rising up early, and sending them then, he thought, if ever, they would be disposed to hearken to him. Observe, *First.* Though God had given Ezekiel a certain prospect of this affliction coming upon him, yet it did not take him off from his work, but he resolved to go on in that. *Secondly.* We may the easier bear an affliction if it find us in the way of our duty; for nothing can hurt us, nothing come amiss to us, while we keep ourselves in the love of God.

2. He must deny himself the satisfaction of mourning for his wife, which would have been both an honour to her and an ease to the oppression of his own spirit. He must not use the natural expressions of sorrow, ver. 16; he must not give vent to his passion by weeping, or letting his tears run down; though tears are a tribute due to the dead, and when the body is sown it is fit it should thus be watered. But Ezekiel is not allowed to do this, though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man, and would perhaps be evil thought of by the people if he did not. Much less might he use the customary formalities of manners; he must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban on him, here called the tire of his head; must put on his shoes, and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases; he must not cover his lips, nor throw a veil over his face, as mourners were wont to do, *Lev.* xiii. 45; must not be of a sorrowful countenance, appearing unto men to fast, *Mat.* vi. 18. He must not eat the bread of men, nor expect that his neighbours and friends should send him in provisions, as usually they did in such cases, presuming the mourners had no heart to provide meat for themselves; but if it were sent he must not eat of it, but go on in his business as at other times. It could not but be sore against the grain to flesh and blood not to lament the death of one he loved so dearly; but so God commands, and "I did in the morning as I was commanded." He appeared in public in his usual habit, and looked as he used to do, without any signs of mourning. 1st. Here there was something peculiar, and Ezekiel, to make himself a sign to the people, must put a force upon himself, and exercise an extraordinary piece of self-denial. Note, Our dispositions must always submit to God's directions, and his command must be obeyed even in that which is most difficult and displeasing to us. 2nd. Though mourning for the dead be a duty, yet it must always be kept under the government of religion and right reason; and we must not sorrow as those that have no hope, nor lament the loss of any creature, even the most valuable, and that which we could worst spare, as if we had lost our God, or as if all our happiness were gone with it; and of this moderation in mourning, ministers, when it is their case, ought to be examples. We must at such a time study to improve the affliction, to accommodate ourselves to it, and to get our acquaintance with the other world increased by the removal of our dear relations, and learn with holy Job to bless the name of the Lord, even when he takes, as well as when he gives.

Secondly. The explication and application of this sign. The people inquired the meaning of it; ver. 19, "Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so?" They knew Ezekiel was a loving husband, that the death of his wife was a great affliction to him, and that he would not appear so unconcerned at it but for some good reason, and for instruction to them; and perhaps were in hopes that it had a favourable signification, and gave them an intimation that God would now comfort them again according to the time he had afflicted them, and make them look pleasant again. Note, When we are inquiring concerning the things of God, our inquiry must be what those things are to us. What are we concerned in them? What conviction, what counsel, what comfort do they speak to us? Wherein do they reach our case? Ezekiel gives them an answer *verbatim*, as he had received it from the Lord, who had told him what he must speak to the house of Israel.

1. Let them know that, as Ezekiel's wife was taken from him by a stroke, so would God take from them all that which was dearest to them, ver. 21. If this were "done to a green tree, what shall be done to the dry?" If a faithful servant of God was thus afflicted only for his trial, shall such a generation of rebels against God go unpunished? By this awakening providence God shewed that he was in earnest in his threatenings, and inexorable. We may suppose Ezekiel prayed that, if it were the will of God, his wife might be spared to him, but God would not hear him; and should he be heard then in his intercessions for this provoking people? No, it is determined; "God will take away the desire of your eyes." Note, The removal of others' comforts should awaken us to think of parting with ours too, for "are we better than they?" We know not how soon the same cup, or a more bitter one, may be put into our hands, and should therefore weep with them that weep, as being ourselves also in the body. God will "take away that which their soul pitieth;" that is, of which they say, what pity is it that it should be cut off and destroyed. That 'for which your souls are afraid,' so some read it; you shall lose that which you most dread the loss of. And what is that? 1st. That which was their public pride, the temple; "I will profane my sanctuary," by giving that into the enemy's hand to be plundered and burnt. This was signified by the death of a wife, a dear wife, to teach us that God's sanctuary should be dearer to us, and more the desire of our eyes, than any creature comfort whatsoever. Christ's church, that is, his spouse, should be ours too. Though this people were very corrupt, and had themselves profaned the sanctuary, yet it is called the desire of their eyes. Note, Many that are destitute of the power of godliness yet are very fond of the form of it; and it is just with God to punish them for their hypocrisy by depriving them of that too. The sanctuary is here called the excellency of their strength; they had many strongholds, and places of defence, but the temple excelled them all. It was the pride of their strength; that is, they prided in it as their strength, that they were the temple of the Lord, *Jer.* vii. 4. Note, The church privileges that men are proud of are profaned by their sins; and it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. And with these God will take away, 2nd. That which was their family pleasure, which they looked upon with delight; "Your sons and your daughters" (which are the dearer to you because they are but a few left of many, the rest having perished by famine and pestilence,) "shall fall by the sword of the Chaldeans." What a dreadful spectacle would it be to see their own children, pieces, pictures of themselves, whom they had taken such care and pains to bring up, and whom they loved as their souls, sacrificed to the rage of the merciless conquerors! This, this was the punishment of sin.

2. Let them know that, as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction, so neither should they weep for theirs. He must say, "Ye shall do as I have done," ver. 22; "You shall not mourn or weep," ver. 23. Jeremiah had told them the same, that men "shall not lament for the dead, nor cut themselves," *Jer.* xvi. 6. Not that there shall be any such merciful circumstances without, or any such degrees of wisdom and grace within, as shall mitigate and moderate the sorrow; but they shall not mourn; for, 1st. Their grief shall be so great that they shall be quite overwhelmed with it; their passions shall stifle them, and they shall have no power to ease themselves by giving vent to it. 2nd. Their calamities shall come so fast upon them, one upon the neck of another, that by long custom they shall be hardened in their sorrows, *Job* vi. 10, and perfectly stupified, and moped, as we say, with them. 3rd. They shall not dare to express their grief, for fear of being deemed disaffected to the conquerors, who would take their lamentations as an affront and disturbance to their triumphs. 4th. They shall neither have hearts, nor time, nor money, wherewith to put themselves in mourning, and accommodate themselves with the ceremonies of grief. You will be so entirely taken up with solid, substantial grief, that you will have no room for the shadow of it. 5th. Particular mourners shall not need to distinguish themselves by covering their lips, and laying aside their ornaments, and going barefoot; for it is well known every body is a mourner. 6th. There shall be none of that sense of their affliction and sorrow for it which would help to bring them to repentance, but that only which shall drive them to despair; so it follows, "Ye shall pine away for your iniquities," with seared consciences, and reprobate minds. And you shall mourn, not to God in prayer and confession of sin, but one towards another, murmuring and fretting, and complaining of God; thus making their burthen heavier, and their wound more grievous, as impatient people use to do under their afflictions, by mingling their own passions with them.

3. An appeal to the event for the confirmation of all this; ver. 24, "When this cometh," as it is foretold, when Jerusalem, which is this day besieged, is quite destroyed and laid waste, which now you cannot believe will ever be, "then ye shall know that I am the Lord God," who have given you this fair warning of it; then you will remember that Ezekiel was to you a sign. Note, Those who regard not the threatenings of the word when they are preached will be made to remember them when they are executed. Observe,

1st. The great desolation which the siege of Jerusalem should end in; ver. 25, "In that day," that terrible day when the city shall be broken up, "I will take from them," *First.* That which they depended on; their strength, their walls, their treasures, their fortifications, their men of war,—none shall stand them in stead. *Secondly.* That which they boasted of; the joy of their glory, that which they looked upon as most their glory, and which they most rejoiced in, the temple of their God, and the palaces of their princes. *Thirdly.* That which they delighted in; which was the desire of their eyes, and on which they set their minds. Note, Carnal people set their minds upon that on which they can set their eyes; they look at, and dote upon, the things that are seen; and it is their folly to set their minds upon that which they have no assurance of, and which may be taken from them in a moment, *Pr.* xxiii. 5. Their sons and their daughters were all this, their strength, and joy, and glory, and these shall go into captivity.

2nd. The notice that should be brought to the prophet, not by revelation, as the notice of the siege was brought him, ver. 2, but in an ordinary way; ver. 26, "He that escapes in that day shall," by a special direction of providence, "come to thee" to bring thee intelligence of it; which we find now done, *ch.* xxxix. 21. The ill news came slowly, and yet to Ezekiel and his fellow-captives it came too soon.

3rd. The Divine impression which he should be under upon the receiving of that notice, ver. 27. Whereas from this time to that Ezekiel was thus far dumb, that he prophesied no more against the land of Israel, but against the neighbouring nations, as we shall find in the following chapters, then he shall have orders given him to speak again to the children of his people, *ch.* xxxiii. 23, 24; then his mouth shall be opened. He was suspended from prophesying against them in the meantime, because, Jerusalem being besieged, his prophecies could not be sent into the city; because, when God was speaking so loud by the rod, there was the less need of speaking by the word; and because then the accomplishments of his prophecies would be the full confirmation of his mission, and would the more effectually clear the way for him to begin again. It being referred to that issue, that issue must be waited for. Thus Christ forbade his disciples to preach openly that he was Christ till after his resurrection, because that was to be the full proof of it. But then thou shalt speak with the greater assurance, and the more effectually, either to their conviction or to their confusion. Note, God's prophets are never silenced but for wise and holy ends. And when God gives them the opening of the mouth again, (as he will in due time, for even the witnesses that are slain shall arise,) it shall appear to have been for his glory that they were for awhile silent, that the people may the more certainly and fully know that God is the Lord.

CHAPTER XXV.

Judgment began at the house of God, and therefore with them the prophets began, who were the judges; but it must not end there, and therefore they must not. Ezekiel had finished his testimony which related to the destruction of Jerusalem. As to that, he was ordered to say no more, but stand upon his watch-tower and wait the issue; and yet he must not be silent. There are divers nations bordering upon the land of Israel which he must prophesy against, as Isaiah and Jeremiah had done before; and must proclaim God's controversy with them, chiefly for the injuries and indignities which they had done to the people of God in the day of their calamity. In this chapter we have his prophecy, I. Against the Ammonites, ver. 1—7. II. Against the Moabites, ver. 8—11. III. Against the Edomites, ver. 12—14. IV. Against the Philistines, ver. 15—17. That which is laid to the charge of each of them is their barbarous and insolent carriage towards God's Israel, for which God threatens to put the same cup of trembling into their hand. God's resenting it thus would be an encouragement to Israel to believe that, though he had dealt thus severely with them, yet he had not cast them off, but would still own them, and plead their cause.

THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them; 3 And say unto the Ammonites,

Hear the word of the Lord GOD;
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because thou saidst, Aha,
Against my sanctuary, when it was profaned;
And against the land of Israel, when it was desolate;
And against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity;
4 Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession,
And they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee:
They shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk.
5 And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels,
And the Ammonites a couchingplace for flocks:
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.
6 For thus saith the Lord GOD; [the feet,
Because thou hast clapped *thine* hands, and stamped with
And rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel;
7 Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee,
And will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen;
And I will cut thee off from the people,
And I will cause thee to perish out of the countries:
I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.

Here, First. The prophet is ordered to address himself to the Ammonites in the name of the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel, who is also the God of the whole earth. But what can Chemosh, the god of the children of Ammon, say in answer to it? He is bidden to set his face against the Ammonites, for he is God's representative as a prophet, and thus he must signify that God set his face against them; for "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil," *Ps.* xxxiv. 16. He must speak with boldness and assurance, as one that knew whose errand he went upon, and that he should be borne out in delivering it. He must therefore set his face as a flint, *Isa.* l. 7. He must shew his displeasure against these proud enemies of Israel, and face them down, though they were very impudent; and thus must shew that, though he had prophesied so much and so long against Israel, yet still he was for Israel; and while he witnessed against their corruptions yet adhered to, and gloried in, God's covenant with them. Note, Those are miserable that have the preaching and praying of God's prophets against them,—against whom their faces are set.

Secondly. He is directed what to say to them. Ezekiel is now a captive in Babylon, and has been so many years, and knows little of the state of his own nation, much less of the nations that were about it; but God tells him both what they were doing and what he was about to do with them. And thus by the spirit of prophecy he is enabled to speak as pertinently to their case as if he had been among them.

1. He must upbraid the Ammonites with their insolent and barbarous triumphs over the people of Israel in their calamities, ver. 3. The Ammonites said, when all went against the Jews, "Aha, so would we have it." They were glad to see, 1st. The temple burned, the sanctuary profaned by the victorious Chaldeans. This is put first to intimate what was the cause of the controversy; they had an enmity to the Jews for the sake of their religion, though it was only some poor remains of the profession of it that were to be found among them. 2nd. The nation ruined. They rejoiced when "the land of Israel was made desolate," the cities burnt, and the country wasted, and both depopulated, and when the house of Judah went into captivity. When they had not power to oppress God's Israel themselves, they were pleased to see the Chaldeans oppress them; partly because they envied their wealth and the good land they enjoyed, partly because they feared their growing power, and partly because they hated their religion, and the Divine oracles they were favoured with. It is repeated again; ver. 6, "They clapped with their hands," to irritate the rage of the Chaldeans, and to set them on as dogs upon the game; or, they clapped their hands in triumph, attended this tragedy with their plaudits, thinking it well acted; never was there any thing more diverting or entertaining to them. They stamped with their feet, ready to leap and dance for joy upon this occasion. They not only rejoiced in heart, but they could not forbear shewing it, though every one that had any sense of honour and humanity would cry shame upon them for it; especially considering that they rejoiced thus, not for any thing they got by Israel's fall; if so, they had been the more excusable. Most people are for themselves. But this was purely from a principle of malice and enmity; "Thou hast rejoiced in heart with all thy despite," which signifies both scorn and hatred, "against the land of Israel." Note, The people of God have always had a great deal of ill-will borne them by this wicked world; and their calamities have been their neighbours' entertainments. See to what unnatural instances of malice the enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman will carry them. The Ammonites, of all people, should not have rejoiced at Jerusalem's ruin, but should rather have trembled, because they themselves had such a narrow escape at the same time; it was but cross or pile which should be besieged first, Rabbah or Jerusalem, *ch.* xxi. 20; and they had reason to think that the king of Babylon would set upon them next. But thus were their hearts hardened to their ruin, and their insolence against Jerusalem was to them an evident token of perdition, *Phil.* i. 28. It is a very wicked thing to be glad at the calamities of any, especially of God's people, and a sin that God will surely reckon for; such delight has God in shewing mercy, and so backward is he to punish, that nothing is more pleasing to him than to be stopped in the way of his judgments by intercessions, nor any thing more provoking than to help forward the affliction when he is but a little displeased, *Zec.* i. 25.

2. He must threaten the Ammonites with utter ruin for this insolence which they were guilty of. God turns away his wrath from Israel against them, as is said, *Pr.* xxiv. 17, 18. God is jealous for his people's honour, because his own is so nearly interested in it; and therefore they that touch that shall be made to know they touch the apple of his eye. He had before predicted the destruction of the Ammonites, *ch.* xxi. 28. Had they repented, that had been revoked, but now it is ratified. 1st. A destroying enemy is brought against them. "I will deliver thee to the men of the East; that is, first to the Chaldeans, who came from the north-east, and whose army, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the country of the Ammonites, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, (as Josephus relates, *Antiq.* lib. 10, cap. 11;) and then to the Arabians, who were properly the children of the East, who, when the Chaldeans had made the country desolate, and quitted it, came and took possession of it for themselves, probably with the consent of the conquerors. Shepherds' tents were their palaces; these they set up in the country of the Ammonites, where they made their dwellings, ver. 4. They enjoyed the products of the country; "They shall eat thy fruit and drink thy milk," and the milk from the cattle is the fruit of the ground at second-hand. They made use even of the royal city for their cattle; ver. 5, "I will make Rabbah," that was a nice and splendid city, to be "a stable for camels;" for its new masters, whose wealth lies all in cattle, will not think they can put the palaces of Rabbah to a better use. Rabbah had been a habitation of brutish men; justly, therefore, is it now made a stable for camels, and the country "a couchingplace for flocks," more innocent beasts than those with which it had been before replenished. 2nd. God himself acts as an enemy to them; ver. 7, "I will stretch out mine hand upon thee," a hand that will reach far, and strike home; which there is no resisting the blow of, for it is a mighty hand, nor bearing the weight of, for it is a heavy hand. God's hand stretched out against the Ammonites will not only deliver them "for a spoil to the heathen," so that all their neighbours shall prey upon them, but will "cut them off from the people, and make them perish out of the countries," so that there shall be no remains of them in that place: compare with this *Jer.* xlix. 1, &c. What can sound more terrible than that resolution, ver. 7, "I will destroy thee?" for the almighty God is able both "to save and to destroy," and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Both the threatenings here, ver. 5 and ver. 7, conclude with this, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord;" for, *First*. Thus God will maintain his own honour, and will make it to appear that he is the God of Israel, though he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon. *Secondly*. Thus he will bring those that were strangers to him into an acquaintance with him, and it will be a blessed effect of their calamities. Better know God and be poor, than be rich and ignorant of him.

8 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because that Moab and Seir do say,
Behold, the house of Judah *is* like unto all the heathen;
9 Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities,
From his cities *which are* on his frontiers, the glory of the country,
Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim,
10 Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites,
And will give them in possession, [nations.
That the Ammonites may not be remembered among the

11 And I will execute judgments upon Moab;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.
12 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance,
And hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them;
13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom,
And will cut off man and beast from it;
And I will make it desolate from Teman;
And they of Dedan shall fall by the sword.
14 And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel:
And they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury;
And they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD.
15 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge,
And have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart,
To destroy *it* for the old hatred;
16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines,
And I will cut off the Cherethims,
And destroy the remnant of the sea coast.
17 And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

Three more of Israel's ill-natured neighbours are here arraigned, convicted, and condemned to destruction, for contributing to, and triumphing in, Jerusalem's fall.

First. The Moabites. Seir, which was the seat of the Edomites, is joined with them, ver. 5, because they said the same as the Moabites, but they were afterwards reckoned with by themselves, ver. 12. Now observe,

1. What was the sin of the Moabites. They said, "Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen." They triumphed, 1st. In the apostacies of Israel; were pleased to see them forsake their God, and worship idols, and hoped in awhile their religion would be quite lost and forgotten, and the house of Judah would be like all the heathen, perfect idolaters. When those that profess religion walk unworthy of their profession, they encourage the enemies of religion to hope that it will in time sink and be run down and quite abandoned; but let the Moabites know that, though there are those of the house of Judah who have made themselves like the heathen, yet there is a remnant that retain their integrity: the religion of the house of Judah shall recover itself, its peculiarities shall be preserved, it shall not lose itself among the heathen, but distinguish itself from them, till it deliver itself honourably into a better institution. 2nd. They triumphed in the calamities of Israel. They said, "The house of Judah is like all the heathen," in as ill a state as they; their God is no more able to deliver them from this overflowing scourge of these parts of the world than the gods of the heathen are to deliver them. Where are the promises they gloried in, and all the wonders which they and their fathers told us of? What the better are they for the covenant of peculiarity, upon which they so much valued themselves? They that looked with so much scorn upon all the heathen are now set upon a level with them, or rather sunk below them. Note, Those who judge only by outward appearance are ready to conclude that the people of God have lost all their privileges when they have lost their worldly prosperity; which doth not follow, for good men, even in affliction, in captivity among the heathen, yet have graces and comforts within sufficient to distinguish them from all the heathen. Though the event seem one to the righteous and wicked, yet, indeed, it is vastly different.

2. What should be the punishment of Moab for this sin. Because they triumphed in the overthrow of Judah, their country shall be in like manner overthrown with that of the Ammonites, who were guilty of the same sin; ver. 9, 10, "I will open the side of Moab," will uncover its shoulder, will take away all its defences, that it may become an easy prey to any that will make a prey of it. 1st. See here how it shall be exposed. The frontier towns, that were its strength and guard, shall be demolished by the Chaldean forces, and laid open. Some of the cities are here named, which are said to be "the glory of the country," which they trusted in, and boasted of as impregnable; these shall decay, be deserted, or betrayed, or fall into the enemy's hands, so that Moab shall lie exposed, and whoever will may penetrate into the heart of the country. Note, Those who glory in any other defence and protection but that of the Divine power, providence, and promise, will, sooner or later, see cause to be ashamed of their glorying. 2nd. See here to whom it shall be exposed. "The men of the East," when they come to take possession of the country of the Ammonites, shall seize that of the Moabites too. God, the Lord of all lands, will give them that land; for the kingdoms of men he giveth to whomsoever he will. The Arabians, that are shepherds, and live quietly, plain men dwelling in tents, shall, by an overruling providence, be put in possession of the land of the Moabites, who are soldiers, men of war, and cunning hunters, that live turbulently. The Chaldeans shall get it by war, and the Arabians shall enjoy it in peace. Concerning the Ammonites it is said, "They shall no more be remembered among the nations," ver. 10, for they had been accessary to the murder of Gedaliah, *Jer.* xl. 14. But of the Moabites it is said, "I will execute judgments upon Moab." They shall feel the weight of God's displeasure, but perhaps not to that degree that the Ammonites shall; however, so far as that "they shall know that I am the Lord;" that the God of Israel is a God of power, and that his covenant with his people is not broken

Secondly. The Edomites. The posterity of Esau, betwixt whom and Jacob there had been an old enmity. And here is,

1. The sin of the Edomites, ver. 12. They not only triumphed in the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, as the Moabites and Ammonites had done, but they took advantage from the present distressed state to which the Jews were reduced to do them some real mischiefs; probably made inroads upon their frontiers, and plundered their country; "Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance." The Edomites had of old been tributary to the Jews, according to the sentence, that the elder should serve the younger. In Jehoram's time they revolted. Amaziah severely chastised them, 2 *Kin.* xiv. 7, and for this they took vengeance. Now they would pay off all the old scores; and not only incensed the Babylonians against Jerusalem, crying "Rase it, rase it," *Ps.* cxxxvii. 7, but cut off those that escaped; as we find in the prophecy of Obadiah, which is wholly directed against Edom, ver. 11, 12, &c. It is called here revenging a revenge, which intimated that they were not only eager upon it, but very cruel in it, and recompensed to the Jews more than double. Herein he was greatly offended. Note, It is a great offence to God for us to revenge ourselves upon our brother; for God has said, "Vengeance is mine." We are forbidden to revenge, or to bear a grudge. Suppose Judah had been hard upon Edom formerly, it was a base thing for the Edomites now in revenge for it to smite them secretly. But the Jews had a Divine warrant to reign over the Edomites, for that therefore they ought not to have made reprisals; and it was the more disingenuous for them to retain the old core, when God had particularly commanded his people to forget it; *Deu.* xxiii. 7, "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite."

2. The judgments threatened against them for this sin. God will take them to task for it; ver. 13, "I will stretch out my hand upon Edom." Their country shall be desolate from Teman, which lay in the south part of it; and "they shall fall by the sword unto Dedan," which lay north; the desolations of war should go through the nation. 1st. They had taken vengeance, and therefore God will lay his vengeance upon them; ver. 14, "And they shall know my vengeance." They that will not leave it to God to take vengeance for them may expect that he will take vengeance on them; and they that will not believe and fear his vengeance shall be made to know and feel his vengeance; they shall be dealt with according to God's anger, and according to his fury; not according to the weakness of the instruments that are employed in it, but according to the strength of the arm that employs them. 2nd. They had taken vengeance on Israel, and God will lay his vengeance on them by the hand of his people Israel. They suffered much by the Chaldeans, which seems to be referred to, *Jer.* xlix. 8. But besides that there were saviours to come upon mount Sion, who should judge the mount of Esau, *Oba.* 21; and Israel's Redeemer comes with dyed garments from Bozrah, *Isa.* lxiii. 1. This implies a promise that Israel should recover itself again to that degree as to be in a capacity of curbing the insolence of its neighbours. And we find, 1 *Mac.* v. 3, that "Judas Maccabeus fought against the children of Esau in Idumea, gave them a great overthrow, abated their courage, and took their spoil." And Josephus saith, (*Antiq.* l. 13, c. 17,) that Hircanus made the Edomites tributaries to Israel. Note, The equity of God's judgments is to be observed when he not only avenges injuries upon those that did them, but by those against whom they were done.

Thirdly. The Philistines. And, 1. Their sin is much the same with that of the Edomites. They have dealt by revenge with the people of Israel, and have "taken vengeance with a despiteful heart;" not to disturb them only, but to destroy them, for "the old hatred," ver. 15, the old grudge they bore them, or, as the margin reads it, 'with perpetual hatred,' a hatred that began long since, and which they resolved to continue. Their anger was implacable; they dealt by revenge, traded in the acts of malice; it was their constant practice, and their heart, their spiteful heart, was upon it. 2. Their punishment likewise is much the same, ver. 16. They that were for destroying God's people shall themselves be cut off and destroyed; and, ver. 17, they that were for avenging themselves God will execute great vengeance upon them. This was fulfilled when that country was wasted by the Chaldean army, not long after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is foretold *Jer.* xlvii. It was strange that these nations, which bordered upon the land of Israel, were not alarmed by the success of the Chaldean army, and made to tremble in the apprehension of their own danger,—when their neighbour's house was on fire it was time to look to their own; but their impiety and malice made them forget their politics, till God by his judgments convinced them that the cup was going round; and they were the less safe for their being secure.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The prophet had soon done with those four nations that he set his face against in the foregoing chapters; for they were not at that time very considerable in the world, nor would their fall make any great noise among the nations, nor any figure in history. But the city of Tyre is next set to the bar, which, being a place of vast trade, was known all the world over; and therefore here are three whole chapters, this and the two that follow, spent in the prediction of the destruction of Tyre. We have the burden of Tyre, *Isa.* xxiii. It is but just mentioned in Jeremiah, as sharing with the natives in the common calamity, *ch.* xxv. 22; xxvii. 3; xlvii. 4; but Ezekiel is ordered to be large upon that head. In this chapter we have, I. The sin charged upon Tyre, which was triumphing in the destruction of Jerusalem, ver. 2. II. The destruction of Tyrus itself foretold. 1. The extremity of this destruction: it shall be utterly ruined, ver. 4—6: and again, ver. 12—14. 2. The instruments of this destruction, many nations, ver. 3: and the king of Babylon by name, with his vast victorious army, ver. 7—11. 3. The great surprise that this should give to the neighbour nations, who would all admire the fall of so great a city, and be alarmed at it, ver. 15—21.

AND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem,
Aha, she is broken *that was* the gates of the people:
She is turned unto me:
I shall be replenished, *now* she is laid waste:
3 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I *am* against thee, O Tyrus,
And will cause many nations to come up against thee,
As the sea causeth his waves to come up.

4 And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus,
And break down her towers:

ANCIENT WALLS OF TYRUS.

I will also scrape her dust from her,
And make her like the top of a rock.
5 It shall be *a place for* the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea:
For I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD:
And it shall become a spoil to the nations.
6 And her daughters which *are* in the field shall be slain by the sword;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.
7 For thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus
Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon,
A king of kings, from the north,
With horses, and with chariots,
And with horsemen, and companies, and much people.
8 He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field:
And he shall make a fort against thee,
And cast a mount against thee,
And lift up the buckler against thee.
9 And he shall set engines of war against thy walls,
And with his axes he shall break down thy towers.
10 By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee:
Thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen,
And of the wheels, and of the chariots,
When he shall enter into thy gates,
As men enter into a city wherein is made a breach.
11 With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy [streets:
He shall slay thy people by the sword,
And thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground.
12 And they shall make a spoil of thy riches,
And make a prey of thy merchandise:
And they shall break down thy walls,
And destroy thy pleasant houses:
And they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy [dust
In the midst of the water.
13 And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease;
And the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard.
14 And I will make thee like the top of a rock:
Thou shalt be *a place* to spread nets upon;
Thou shalt be built no more:
For I the LORD have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.

This prophecy is dated in the eleventh year, which was the year that Jerusalem was taken, and "in the first day of the month;" but it is not said what month. Some think the month in which Jerusalem was taken, which was the fourth month, others the month after; or perhaps it was the first month, and so it was the first day of the year. Observe here,

First. The pleasure with which the Tyrians looked upon the ruins of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was a great way off, in Babylon, but God told him what Tyrus said against Jerusalem; ver. 2, "Aha, she is broken," broken to pieces, "that was the gates of the people," to whom there was a great resort, and where there was a general rendezvous of all nations, some upon one account, and some upon another; and I shall get by it. All the wealth, power, and interest which Jerusalem had, it is hoped, shall be turned to Tyre, and so "now she is laid waste I shall be replenished." We do not find that the Tyrians had such a hatred and enmity to Jerusalem, and the sanctuary, as the Ammonites and Edomites had, nor were so spiteful and mischievous to the Jews; they were men of business, and of large acquaintance and free conversation, and therefore were not so bigoted, and of such a persecuting spirit, as the narrow souls that lived retired and knew not the world. All their care was to get estates and enlarge their trade, and they looked upon Jerusalem not as an enemy, but as a rival. Hiram, king of Tyre, was a good friend to David and Solomon, and we do not read of any quarrels the Jews had with the Tyrians; but Tyre promiseth herself that the fall of Jerusalem will be an advantage to her, in respect of trade and commerce; that now she shall have Jerusalem's customers, and the great men from all parts, that used to come to Jerusalem for the accomplishing of themselves, and to spend their estates there, will now come to Tyre and spend them there; and whereas many, since the Chaldean army became so formidable in those parts, had retired into Jerusalem, and brought their estates thither for safety, as the Rechabites did, now they will come to Tyre, which, being in a manner surrounded by the sea, will be thought a place of greater strength than Jerusalem; and thus the prosperity of Tyre will rise out of the ruins of Jerusalem. Note, To be secretly pleased with the death or decay of others when we are likely to get by it, with their fall when we may thrive upon it, is a sin that doth most easily beset us, but is not thought to be such an ill thing, and so provoking to God, as really it is. We are apt to say, when those who stand in our light, in our way, are removed, when they break or fall into disgrace, we shall be replenished now they are laid waste. But this comes from a selfish, covetous principle, and a desire to be "placed alone in the midst of the earth," as if we grudged that any should live by us. This comes from a want of that love to our neighbour as to ourselves which the law of God so expressly requires, and from that inordinate love of the world as our happiness which the love of God so expressly forbids. And it is just with God to blast the designs and projects of those who thus contrive to raise themselves upon the ruins of others; and we see they are often disappointed.

Secondly. The displeasure of God against them for it. The providence of God had done well for Tyrus; it was a pleasant and wealthy city, and might have continued so, if she had, as she ought to have done, sympathised with Jerusalem in her calamities, and sent her an address of condolence; but when, instead of that, she shewed herself pleased with her neighbour's fall, and perhaps sent an address of congratulation to the conquerors, then God saith, "Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus," ver. 3. And let her not expect to prosper long if God be against her.

1. God will bring formidable enemies upon her; "Many nations shall come against thee;" that is, an army made up of many nations, or one nation that shall be as strong as many. Those that have God against them may expect all the creatures against them; for what peace can they have with whom God is at war? They shall come pouring in as the waves of the sea, one upon the neck of another with an irresistible force. The person is named that shall bring this army upon them, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, that had many kings tributaries to him, and dependents on him, besides those that were his captives, *Dan.* ii. 37, 38. He is that head of gold. He shall come with a vast army, horses and chariots, &c., all land forces. We do not find he had any naval force, or any thing wherewith he might attack it by sea, which made the attempt the more difficult, as we find *ch.* xxix. 18, where it is called a "great service which he served against Tyrus." He shall besiege it in form, ver. 8, "make a fort, and cast a mount," and, ver. 9, shall "set engines of war against the walls." His troops shall be so numerous as to raise a dust that shall cover the city, ver. 10. They shall make a noise that shall even shake the walls; and they shall shout at every attack, as soldiers do when they enter a city that is broken up. The horses shall prance with so much fury and violence that they shall even tread down the streets, though never so well paved.

2. They shall do terrible execution. 1st. The enemy shall make themselves masters of all their fortifications, "shall destroy the walls, and break down the towers," ver. 4. For what walls are so strong built as to be fence against the judgment of God? Her "strong garrisons shall go down to the ground," ver. 11; and the walls shall be broken down, ver. 12. The city held out a long siege, but it was taken at last. 2nd. A great deal of blood shall be shed; "Her daughters which are in the field," the cities upon the continent, which were subject to Tyre as the mother city, the inhabitants of them "shall be slain by the sword," ver. 6. The invaders begin with them that come first in their way. And ver. 11, "He shall slay thy people with the sword," not only the soldiers that are found in arms, but the burghers; they shall be put to the sword, the king of Babylon being highly incensed against them for holding out so long. 3rd. The wealth of the city shall all become a spoil to the conqueror; ver. 12, they "shall make a prey of the merchandise." It was in hope of the plunder that the city was set upon with so much vigour. See the vanity of riches, that they are kept for the owners to their hurt; and not only cease to benefit those who took pains for them, and were duly entitled to them, but are made to serve their enemies, who are thereby put into a capacity of doing them so much the more mischief. 4th. The city itself shall be laid in ruins. All the pleasant houses shall be destroyed, ver. 12, that were pleasantly situated, beautified, and furnished; they shall become a heap of rubbish. Let none please themselves too much in their pleasant houses, for they know not how soon they may see the desolation of them. Tyre shall be utterly ruined; the enemy shall not only pull down the houses, but shall carry away "the stones and the timber," which might serve for the rebuilding of it, and shall "lay them in the midst of the water," not to be recovered or ever made use of again. Nay, ver. 4, "I will scrape her dust from her." Not only shall the loose dust be blown away, but the very ground it stands upon shall be torn up by the enraged enemy, carried off and laid "in the midst of the water," ver. 12. The foundation is in the dust; that dust shall be all taken away, then the city must fall of course. When Jerusalem was destroyed it was ploughed like a field, *Mic.* iii. 12. But the destruction of Tyre is carried farther than so; the very soil of it shall be scraped away, and it shall be made like the top of a rock, ver. 4; and again, ver. 14, pure rock that hath no earth to cover it. It shall only be a place for the spreading of nets, ver. 5; and again, ver. 14, it shall serve fishermen to dry their nets upon, and mend them. 5th. There shall be a full period to all its mirth and joy; ver. 13, "I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease." Tyre had been a joyous city, *Isa.* xxiii. 7; with her songs she had courted customers to deal with her in a way of trade, but now farewell

all her profitable commerce and pleasant conversation; Tyre is no more a place either of business or of sport. Lastly, It shall be built no more, ver. 14; not built any more as it had been, with such state and magnificence; nor built any more in the same place within the sea, nor built for a long time; the present inhabitants shall be destroyed or dispersed, so that this Tyre shall be no more; for God hath spoken it, ver. 5, 14; and when what he hath said is accomplished "they shall know" thereby that "he is the Lord, and not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent."

15 Thus saith the Lord GOD to Tyrus;
Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall,
When the wounded cry,
When the slaughter is made in the midst of thee?
16 Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, [garments:
And lay away their robes, and put off their broidered
They shall clothe themselves with trembling;
They shall sit upon the ground,
And shall tremble at *every* moment,
And be astonished at thee. [to thee,
17 And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say
How art thou destroyed, *that wast* inhabited of seafaring
The renowned city, which wast strong in the sea, [men,
She and her inhabitants,
Which cause their terror *to be* on all that haunt it!
18 Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall;
Yea, the isles that *are* in the sea shall be troubled at thy
19 For thus saith the Lord GOD; [departure.
When I shall make thee a desolate city,
Like the cities that are not inhabited;
When I shall bring up the deep upon thee,
And great waters shall cover thee;
20 When I shall bring thee down
With them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time,
And shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, [habited;
With them that go down to the pit, that thou be not in-
And I shall set glory in the land of the living;
21 I will make thee a terror, and thou *shalt be* no *more:*
Though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be
Saith the Lord GOD. [found again,

The utter ruin of Tyre is here represented in very strong and lively figures, which are mighty affecting.

First. See how high, how great, Tyre had been, how little likely ever to have come to this. The remembrance of men's former grandeur and plenty is a great aggravation of their present disgrace and poverty. Tyre was a renowned city, ver. 17, famous among the nations; the crowned city, so she is called, *Isa.* xxiii. 8; a city that had crowns in her gift, honoured all she smiled upon, crowned herself, and all about her. She was inhabited of seas; that is, of those that trade at sea, of those who from all parts came thither by sea, bringing with them the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hid in the sand. She was strong on the sea, easy of access to her friends, but to her enemies inaccessible; fortified by a wall of water which made her impregnable. So that she with her pomp, and her inhabitants with their pride, caused their terror to be on all that haunted that city, and upon any account frequented it. It was well fortified, and formidable in the eyes of all that acquainted themselves with it. Everybody stood in awe of the Tyrians, and was afraid of disobliging them. Note, Those who know their strength are too apt to cause terror, to pride themselves in frightening those they are an overmatch for.

Secondly. See how low, how little, Tyre is made, ver. 19, 20. This renowned city is made a desolate city, is no more frequented as it has been; there is no more resort of merchants to it; it is like the cities not inhabited, which are no cities, and having none to keep them in repair will go to decay of themselves. Tyre shall be like a city overflowed by an inundation of waters which cover it, and upon which the deep is brought up. As the waves had formerly been its defence, so now they shall be its destruction. She shall "be brought down with them that descend into the pit," with the cities of the old world that were under water, and with Sodom and Gomorrah, that lie in the bottom of the Dead Sea. Or, she shall be in the condition of those that have been long buried, of the people of old time, that are old inhabitants of the silent grave, who are quite rotted away under ground, and quite forgotten above ground. Such shall Tyre be, "free among the dead, set in the lower parts of the earth," humbled, mortified, reduced. It shall be "like the places desolate of old," as well as like persons dead of old; it shall be like other cities that have formerly been in like manner deserted and destroyed. It shall not be inhabited again; none shall have the courage to attempt the rebuilding of it upon that spot, so that it shall be no more; the Tyrians shall be lost among the nations, so that people will look in vain for Tyre in Tyre; "Thou shalt be sought for, and never found again." New persons may build a new city, upon a new spot of ground hard by, which they may call Tyre, but Tyre, as it is, shall never be any more. Note, The strongest cities in the world, the best fortified and best furnished, are subject to decay, and may in a little time be brought to nothing. In the history of our own island many cities are spoken of as in being when the Romans were here, which now our antiquaries scarce know where to look for, and of which there remains no more evidence but Roman urns and coins digged up there sometimes accidentally. But in the other world we look for a city that shall stand for ever, and flourish in perfection through all the ages of eternity.

Thirdly. See what a distress the inhabitants of Tyre are in; ver. 15, "There is a great slaughter made in the midst of thee," many slain, and great men. It is probable when the city was taken the generality of the inhabitants were put to the sword; then did the wounded cry, and cried in vain, to the pitiless conquerors; they cried quarter, but it would not be given them. The wounded are slain without mercy; or, rather, that is the only mercy that is shewn them, that the second blow shall rid them of their pain.

Fourthly. See what a consternation all the neighbours are in upon the fall of Tyre. This is elegantly expressed here, to shew how astonishing it should be: 1. "The islands shall shake at the sound of thy fall," ver. 15. As, if a great merchant breaks, all that he deals with are shocked by it, and begin to look about them; perhaps they had effects in his hands which they are afraid they shall lose; or, when they see one fail and become bankrupt of a sudden, in debt a great deal more than he is worth, it makes them afraid for themselves, lest they should do so too. Thus the isles, who thought themselves safe in the embraces of the sea, when they see Tyrus fall, shall tremble, and be troubled, saying, What will become of us? And it is well if they make this good use of it, to take warning by it not to be secure, but to stand in awe of God and his judgments. The sudden fall of a great tower shakes the ground round about it. Thus all the islands in the Mediterranean Sea shall feel themselves sensibly touched by the destruction of Tyre, it being a place they had so much knowledge of, such interests in, and such a constant correspondence with. 2. The princes of the sea shall be affected with it, who ruled in those islands; or the rich merchants who live like princes, *Isa.* xxiii. 8, and the masters of ships who command like princes, these shall condole the fall of Tyre in a most compassionate and pathetical manner; ver. 16, "They shall come down from their thrones," as neglecting the business of their thrones, and despising the pomp of them; they shall lay away their robes of state, their broidered garments, and shall clothe themselves all over with tremblings, with sackcloth that will make them shiver. Or, they shall by their own act and deed make themselves to tremble upon this occasion. They shall sit upon the ground in shame and sorrow; they shall tremble every moment at the thought of what is happened to Tyre, and for fear of what may happen to themselves; for what island is safe if Tyre be not? "They shall take up a lamentation for thee," shall have elegies and mournful poems penned upon the fall of Tyre; ver. 17, "How art thou destroyed!" 1st. It shall be a great surprise to them, and they shall be affected with wonder, that a place so well fortified by nature and art, so famed for politics, and so full of money, which is the sinews of war, and that held out so long and with so much bravery, should be taken at last; ver. 21, "I made thee a terror." Note, Those who make themselves a terror to their neighbours by the abuse of their power, it is just with God to make them a terror to their neighbours by the suddenness and strangeness of their punishment. Tyre had caused her terror, ver. 17, and now is made a terrible example. 2nd. It shall be a great affliction to them, and they shall be affected with sorrow; ver. 17, "They shall take up a lamentation for Tyre," as thinking it a thousand pities that such a rich and splendid city should be thus laid in ruins. When Jerusalem, the holy city, was destroyed, there was no such lamentation for it, it was nothing to them that passed by, *Lam.* i. 12; but when Tyre the trading city fell it was universally bemoaned. Note, Those who have the world in their hearts lament the loss of great men more than the loss of good men. 3rd. It shall be a loud alarm to them. "They shall tremble in the day of thy fall," because they shall have reason to think that their own turn will be next. If Tyre fall, who can stand? "Howl, fir-trees, if such a cedar be shaken." Note, The fall of others should awaken us out of our security. Others' death and decay in the world is a check to us when we dream that our mountain stands strong, and shall not be moved.

Fifthly. See how the irreparable ruin of Tyre is aggravated by the prospect of the restoration of Israel. Thus shall Tyre sink, "when I shall set glory in the land of the living," ver. 20. Note, 1. The holy land is the land of the living, for none but holy souls are properly living souls. Where living sacrifices are offered to the living God, and where the lively oracles are, there the land of the living is; there David hoped to see the goodness of the Lord, *Ps.* xxvii. 13. That was a type of heaven, which is indeed the land of the living. 2. Though this land of the living may for a time lie under disgrace, yet God will again set glory in it; the glory that is departed shall return, and the restoration of what they have been deprived of shall be so much the more their glory. God will himself be the glory of the lands that are the lands of the living. 3. It will aggravate the misery of those that have their portion in the land of the dying, of those that are for ever dying, to behold the happiness of those, at the same time, that shall have their everlasting portion in the land of the living. When the rich man was himself in torment, he saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, and glory set for him in the land of the living.

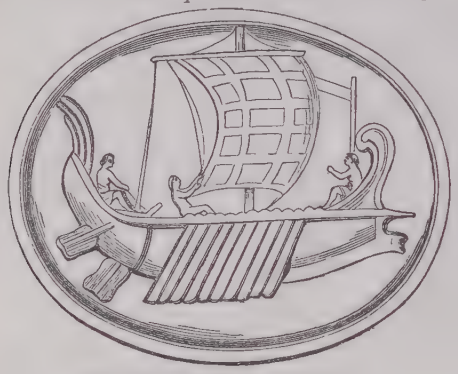
CHAPTER XXVII.

Still we are attending the funeral of Tyre, and the lamentations made for the fall of that renowned city. In this chapter we have, I. A large account of the dignity, wealth and splendour of Tyre, while it was in its strength, the vast trade it drove, and the interest it had among the nations, ver. 1—25, which is designed to make its ruin the more lamentable. II. A prediction of its fall and ruin, and the confusion and consternation which all its neighbours shall thereby be put into, ver. 26—36. And this is intended to stain the pride of all worldly glory; and, by setting the one over against the other, to let us see the vanity and uncertainty of the riches, honours and pleasures of the world, and what little reason we have to place our happiness in them, or to be confident of the continuance of them; so that all this is written for our learning.

THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus;

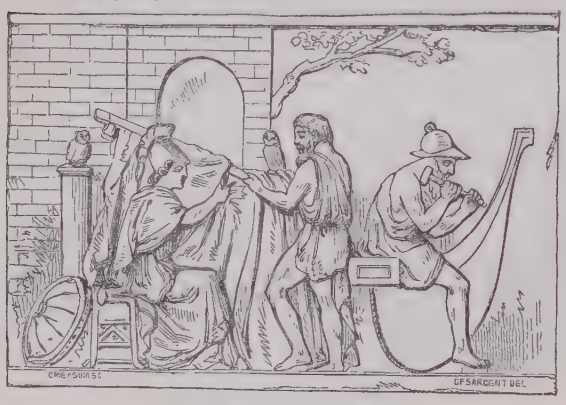
3 And say unto Tyrus,
O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea,
Which art a merchant of the people for many isles,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
O Tyrus, thou hast said, I *am* of perfect beauty.
4 Thy borders *are* in the midst of the seas,
Thy builders have perfected thy beauty.
5 They have made all thy *ship* boards of fir trees of Senir:

They have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee.
6 *Of* the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars;
The company of the Ashurites have made thy benches *of Brought* out of the isles of Chittim. [ivory,
7 Fine linen with broidered work from Egypt
Was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail;



SHIP WITH EMBROIDERED SAILS.

Blue and purple from the isles of Elishah
Was that which covered thee.
8 The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners:
Thy wise *men*, O Tyrus, *that* were in thee, were thy pilots.
9 The ancients of Gebal and the wise *men* thereof were in thee thy calkers:
All the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise.



ANCIENT SHIP-BUILDING.

10 They of Persia and of Lud
And of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war:
They hanged the shield and helmet in thee;
They set forth thy comeliness. [round about,
11 The men of Arvad with thine army *were* upon thy walls
And the Gammadims were in thy towers:
They hanged their shields upon thy walls round about;
They have made thy beauty perfect.
12 Tarshish *was* thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all *kind of* riches;
With silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs.
13 Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they *were* thy merchants:
They traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market.
14 They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs
With horses and horsemen and mules.
15 The men of Dedan *were* thy merchants;
Many isles *were* the merchandise of thine hand:
They brought thee *for* a present horns of ivory and ebony.
16 Syria *was* thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making:
They occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work,
And fine linen, and coral, and agate.
17 Judah, and the land of Israel, they *were* thy merchants:
They traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag,
And honey, and oil, and balm.
18 Damascus *was* thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making,
For the multitude of all riches;
In the wine of Helbon, and white wool.
19 Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs:
Bright iron, cassia, and calamus, were in thy market.
20 Dedan *was* thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots.
21 Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with
In lambs, and rams, and goats: [thee
In these *were they* thy merchants. [merchants:
22 The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they *were* thy
They occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices,
And with all precious stones, and gold.
23 Haran, and Canneh, and Eden,
The merchants of Sheba, Asshur, *and* Chilmad, *were* thy merchants.
24 These *were* thy merchants in all sorts *of things*,
In blue clothes, and broidered work,
And in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar,
Among thy merchandise.
25 The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market:
And thou wast replenished,
And made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

Here, First. The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Tyrus, ver. 2. It was yet in the height of its prosperity, and there appeared not the least symptom of its decay, yet the prophet must lament it, because its prosperity is its snare, is the cause of its pride and security, which will make its fall the more grievous. Even those that live at ease are to be lamented if they were not preparing for trouble. He must lament it, because its ruin is hastening on apace; it is sure, it is near; and though the prophet foretell it, and justify God in it, yet he must lament it. Note, We ought to mourn for the miseries of other nations as well as for our own, out of an affection for mankind in general. It is a part of the honour we owe to all men to bewail their calamities, even those which they have brought upon themselves by their own folly.

Secondly. He is directed what to say, and to say it in the name of the Lord Jehovah, a name not unknown in Tyre, and which shall be better known, *ch.* xxvi. 6.

1. He must upbraid Tyre with her pride. "O Tyrus, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty," ver. 3, of universal beauty, so the word is; every way accom-

HELBON—ALEPPO.

plished, and therefore every where admired. Zion, that had the beauty of holiness, is called indeed the perfection of beauty, *Ps.* l. 2; that is, the beauty of the Lord. But Tyre, because well built, and well filled with money and trade, will set up for a perfect beauty. Note, It is the folly of the children of this world to value themselves by the pomp and pleasure they live in, and to call themselves beauties for the sake of them; and if in these they excel others to think themselves perfect. But God takes notice of the vain conceits men have of themselves in their prosperity, when the mind is lifted up with the condition, and often, for the humbling of the spirit, finds ways to bring down the estate. Let none reckon themselves beautified any farther than they are sanctified, nor say they are of perfect beauty till they come to heaven.

2. He must upbraid Tyre with her prosperity, which was the matter of her pride. In elegies it is usual to insert encomiums of those whose fall we lament. The prophet accordingly praiseth Tyre for that she had that was praiseworthy. He has nothing to say for her religion, her piety, her charity, her being a refuge to the distressed, or using her interest to do good offices among her neighbours; but she lived great, and had a great trade, and all the trading part of mankind made court to her. The prophet must describe her height and magnificence, that God may be the more glorified in her fall, as the God who "looks upon every one that is proud, and abaseth them; hides them in the dust together, and binds their faces in secret," *Job* xl. 12.

1st. The city of Tyre was advantageously situated "at the entry of the sea," ver. 3, having many commodious harbours each way; not as cities seated on rivers, which the shipping can come but one way to. It stood at the east end of the Mediterranean, very convenient for trade by land into all the Levant parts, so that she became a "merchant of the people for many isles." Lying between Greece and Asia, it became the great emporium or mart town, the rendezvous of merchants from all parts. "Thy borders are in the heart of the seas," ver. 4. It was surrounded by water, which was a great advantage to its trade. The darling of the sea laid in its bosom, in its heart. Note, It is a great convenience upon many accounts to live in an island. Seas are the most ancient landmark, not which our fathers have set us, but the God of our fathers, and which cannot be removed as other landmarks may, nor so easily got over. The people so situated may the easier dwell alone, if they please, as not reckoned among the nations; and yet, if they please, may the easier traffic abroad, and keep a correspondence with the nations. We, therefore, of this island must own that he who determines the bounds of men's habitations has determined well for us.

2nd. It was curiously built, according as the fashion then was; and being a city on a hill it made a glorious show, and tempted the ships that sailed by into her ports; ver. 4, "Thy builders have perfected thy beauty." They have so improved in architecture that nothing appears in the buildings of Tyre that can be found fault with; and yet it wants that perfection of beauty into which the Lord doth and will build up his Jerusalem.

3rd. It had its haven replenished with abundance of gallant ships, *Isa.* xxxiii. 21. The ship carpenters did their part, as well as the house carpenters theirs. The Tyrians are thought to be the first that invented the art of navigation; however, they improved it, and brought it to as great perfection perhaps as it could be without the loadstone. *First.* They made the boards, or planks, for the hulk of the ship, of fir-trees fetched from Senir, a mount in the land of Israel, joined with Hermon. *Cant.* iv. 8. Planks of fir were smooth and light, but not so lasting as our English oak. *Secondly.* They had cedars from Lebanon, another mountain of Israel, for their masts, ver. 5. *Thirdly.* They had oaks from Bashan, *Isa.* ii. 13, to make oars of; for it is probable their ships were mostly galleys, that go with oars. The people of Israel built few ships for themselves, but they furnished the Tyrians with timber for shipping. Thus one country useth what another produceth, and so they are serviceable one to another, and cannot say to each other, "I have no need of thee." *Fourthly.* Such magnificence did they affect in building their ships, that they made the very benches of ivory, which they fetched from the isles of Chittim, from Italy, or Greece, and had workmen from the Ashurites, or Assyrians, to make them,—so rich would they have their state-rooms in their ships to be. *Fifthly.* So very prodigal were they, that they made their sails of fine linen fetched from Egypt, and that embroidered too, ver. 7. Or it may be meant of their flags, which they hoisted to notify what city they belonged to, which were very costly. The word signifies a banner as well as a sail. *Sixthly.* They hung those rooms on shipboard with blue and purple, the richest cloths and richest colours they could get from the isles they traded with; for, though Tyre was itself famous for purple, which is therefore called the Tyrian dye, yet they must have that which was far fetched.

4th. These gallant ships were well manned by men of great ingenuity and industry. The pilots and masters of the ships that had command in their fleets were of their own city, such as they could put a confidence in; ver. 8, "Thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee, were thy pilots." But, for common sailors, they had them from other countries; "The inhabitants of Arvad and Sidon were their mariners." These came from cities near them. Sidon was sister of Tyre, not two leagues off, to the northward; there they bred able seamen, which it is the interest of the maritime powers to support and give all the countenance they can to. They sent to Gebal in Syria for calkers or strengtheners of the clefts or chinks, to stop them when the ships came home after long voyages to be repaired. To do this they had the ancients and wise men, ver. 9; for there is more need of wisdom and prudence to repair what is gone to decay than to build anew. In public matters there is occasion for the ancients and wise men to be "the repairers of the breaches, and the restorers of paths to dwell in." Nay, all the countries they traded with were at their service, and were willing to send men into their pay, or to set their youth apprentices in Tyre, or put them on board their fleets; so that "all the ships in the sea with their mariners were" ready "to occupy thy merchandise." Those that give good wages shall have hands at command.

5th. Their city was guarded by a military force that was very considerable, ver. 10, 11. The Tyrians were themselves wholly given to trade; but it was necessary they should have a good army on foot, and therefore they took those of other states into their pay, such as were fittest for service, though they had them from afar, (which perhaps was their policy,) from Persia, Lud, and Phut. These bore their arms when there was occasion, and in time of peace "hanged up the shield and buckler" in the armoury, as it were to proclaim peace, and let the world know that they had at present no need of them, but that they were ready to be taken down whenever there was occasion for them. Their walls were guarded by the men of Arvad, their towers were garrisoned by the Gammadims, robust men that had a great deal of strength in their arms; yet the Vulgar Latin renders it, pigmies, ten no longer than one's arm. They "hung their shields upon the walls," in their magazines, or places of arms; or hung them out upon the walls of the city, that none might dare to approach them, seeing how well provided they were with all things necessary for their own defence. Thus "they set forth thy comeliness," ver. 10, and "made thy beauty perfect," ver. 11. It contributed as much as any thing to the glory of Tyre that it had those of all nations about in its service, except of the land of Israel, though it lay next them, which furnished them with timber, but we do not find it furnished them with men; that would have trenched upon the liberty and dignity of the Jewish nation, 2 *Chr.* ii. 17, 18. Also that it had such a militia, so fit for service, and in constant pay; and such an armoury, like that in the tower of David, where hung the shields of mighty men, *Cant.* iv. 4. It is observable that there and here the armouries are said to be furnished with shields and helmets, defensive arms, not with swords and spears, offensive, though it is probable there were such, to intimate that the military force of a people must be intended only for their own protection, and not to invade and annoy their neighbours; to secure their own right, not to encroach upon the rights of others.

6th. They had a vast trade, and a correspondence with all parts of the known world. Some nations they dealt with in one commodity, and some in another, according as either its products or manufactures were, and the fruits of nature or art were with which it was blessed. This is very much enlarged upon here, as that which was the principal glory of Tyre, and that which supported all the rest. We do not find anywhere in Scripture so many nations named together as are here; so that this chapter, some think, gives much light to the first account we have of the settlement of the nations after the flood, *Gen.* x. The critics have abundance of work here to find out the several places and nations spoken of; and concerning many of them their conjectures are different, and they leave us in the dark, and at much uncertainty. It is well it is not material; modern surveys come short of explaining the ancient geography, and therefore we will not amuse ourselves here with a particular inquiry, either concerning the traders or the goods they traded in; we leave it to the critical expositor, and observe that only which is improvable.

First. We have reason to think that Ezekiel knew little of his own knowledge concerning the trade of Tyre. He was a priest, carried away captive far enough from the neighbourhood of Tyre, we may suppose when he was young, (there he had been eleven years;) and yet he speaks of the particular merchandises of Tyre as nicely as if he had been comptroller of the custom-house there, by which it appears that he was Divinely inspired in what he spoke and wrote. It is God that saith this, ver. 3.

Secondly. This account of the trade of Tyre intimates to us that God's eye is upon men, and he takes cognizance of what they do when they are employed in their worldly business; not only when they are at church praying and hearing, but when they are in the markets and fairs, and upon the exchange, buying and selling, which is a good reason why we should in all our dealings keep a conscience void of offence, and have our eye always upon him whose eye is always upon us.

Thirdly. We may here observe the wisdom of God, and his goodness, as the common Father of mankind, in making one country to abound in one commodity and another in another, and all more or less serviceable either to the necessity or to the comfort and ornament of human life; *non omnis fert omnia tellus,*—'one land does not supply all the varieties of produce.' Providence dispenseth its gifts variously, some to each, and all to none, that there may be a mutual commerce among those whom God has made of one blood, though they are made to dwell on all the face of the earth, *Acts* xvii. 21. Let every nation therefore thank God for the product of its country; though they be not so rich as those of others, yet there is use for them in the public service of the world.

Fourthly. See what a blessing trade and merchandise is to mankind, especially when it followed in the fear of God, and with a regard not only to private advantage but to a common benefit. "The earth is full of God's riches," *Ps.* civ. 24. There is a "multitude of all kind of riches" in it, as it is here, ver. 12, gathered off its surface, and digged out of its bowels. The earth is also full of the fruits of men's ingenuity and industry, according as their genius leads them. Now by exchange and barter these are made more extensively useful. Thus what can be spared is helped off, and what is wanted is fetched in in lieu of it from the most distant countries. Those that are not tradesmen themselves yet have reason to thank God for tradesmen and merchants, by whom the products of other countries are brought to our hands, as those of our own are by our husbandmen.

Fifthly. Besides the necessaries that are here traded in, see what abundance of things are here mentioned that only serve to please fancy, and are valuable only by men's humour and custom; and yet God allows us to use them, and trade in them, and part with those things for them which we can spare that are of an intrinsic worth much beyond them Here are "horns of ivory and ebony," ver. 15, that are "brought for a present," that is, exposed to sale, and offered in exchange; or, as some think, presented to the city, or the great men of it, to obtain their favour. Here are "emeralds, coral, and agate," ver. 16; "all precious stones and gold," ver. 22; which the world could better be without than iron and common stones. Here are, to please the taste and smell, the "chief of all spices," ver. 22; "cassia and calamus," ver. 19; and for ornament, "purple, broidered work, and fine linen," ver. 16; "precious clothes for chariots," ver. 20; "blue clothes," (which Tyre was famous for,) broidered work, and "chests of rich apparel, bound with rich cords, and made of cedar," a sweet wood, to perfume the garments kept in them, ver. 24. Upon the review of this invoice, or bill of parcels, we may justly say, What a great many things are here that we have no need of, and can live very comfortably without!

Sixthly. It is observable that Judah and the land of Israel were merchants in Tyre too. In a way of trade they were allowed converse with the heathen; but they traded mostly in wheat, a substantial commodity, and necessary, "wheat of Minnith and Pannag," two countries in Canaan famous for the best wheat, as some think. The whole land indeed was a land of wheat, *Deu.* viii. 8; it had "the fat of kidneys of wheat," *Deu.* xxxiv. 14. Tyre was maintained by corn fetched from the land of Israel. They traded likewise in honey, and oil, and balm, or resin, all useful things, and not serving to pride or luxury; and the land which these were the staple commodities of was that which was "the glory of all lands," which God reserved for his peculiar people, not those that traded in "spices and precious stones;" and the Israel of God must reckon themselves well provided for if they have food convenient, for they that are acquainted with the delights of the children of God will not set their hearts on "the delights of the sons and daughters of men, or the treasures of kings and princes." We find indeed in the New Testament that Babylon trades in such things as Tyre traded in, *Rev.* xviii. 12, 13; for, notwithstanding its pretensions to sanctity, it is a mere worldly interest.

Seventhly. Though Tyre was a city of great merchandise, and they got abundance by buying and selling, importing commodities from one place, and exporting them to another, yet manufacture-trades were not neglected. The "wares of their own making," and a multitude of such wares, are here spoken of, ver. 16; and again, ver. 18. It is the wisdom of a nation to encourage art and industry, and not to bear hard upon the handicraft tradesmen; for it contributes much to the wealth and honour of a nation to send abroad wares of their own making, which may bring them in the multitude of all riches.

Eighthly. All this made Tyrus very great, and very proud. "The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market," ver. 25; that is, thou wast admired and cried up by all the nations that had dealings with thee; for "thou wast replenished" in wealth and number of people, wast beautified "and made very glorious in the midst of the seas." Those that grow very rich are cried up as very glorious, for riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, *Gen.* xxxi. 1.

26 Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters:
The east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.
27 Thy riches, and thy fairs,
Thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots,
Thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise,
And all thy men of war, that *are* in thee,
And in all thy company which *is* in the midst of thee,
Shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy [ruin.
28 The suburbs shall shake
At the sound of the cry of thy pilots.
29 And all that handle the oar,
The mariners, *and* all the pilots of the sea,
Shall come down from their ships,
They shall stand upon the land;
30 And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee,
And shall cry bitterly,
And shall cast up dust upon their heads,
They shall wallow themselves in the ashes:
31 And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee,
And gird them with sackcloth,
And they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart *and* bitter wailing.
32 And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for [thee,
And lament over thee, *saying*,
What *city is* like Tyrus,
Like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?
33 When thy wares went forth out of the seas,
Thou filledst many people;
Thou didst enrich the kings of the earth
With the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise.
34 In the time *when* thou shalt be broken
By the seas in the depths of the waters
Thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall.
35 All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at [thee,
And their kings shall be sore afraid,
They shall be troubled in *their* countenance.
36 The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee;
Thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt be* any more.

We have seen Tyre flourishing, here we have Tyre falling, and great is the fall of it; so much the greater for its having made such a figure in the world. Note, The most mighty and magnificent kingdoms and states, sooner or later, have their day to come down; they have their period, and when they are in their zenith they will begin to decline; but the destruction of Tyre was sudden. Her sun went down at noon; and all her wealth and grandeur, pomp and power, did but aggravate her ruin, and make it the more grievous to herself, and astonishing to all about her. Now observe here,

First. How the ruin of Tyrus will be brought about, ver. 26. She is as a great ship richly laden, that is split or sunk by the indiscretion of her steersmen. "Thy rowers have" themselves "brought thee into great" and dangerous "waters." The governors of the city, and those that had the management of their public affairs, by some mismanagement or other involved them in that war with the Chaldeans which was the ruin of their state. By their insolence, by some affront given to the Chaldeans, or some attempt made upon them in confidence of their own ability to contend with them, they provoked Nebuchadnezzar to make a descent upon them; and by their obstinacy in standing out to the last enraged him to that degree, that he determined the ruin of their state, and "like an east wind broke them in the midst of the seas." Note, It is ill with a people when those that sit at the stern, instead of putting them into the harbour, run them aground.

Secondly. How great and general the ruin will be. All her wealth shall be buried with her, "her riches, her fairs and her merchandise," ver. 27; all that had any dependence upon her, and dealings with her, in trade, in war, in conversation, they shall all "fall with her into the midst of the seas in the day of her ruin." Note, Those who make creatures their confidence, place their happiness in their interest in them, and rest their hopes upon them, will of course fall with them. "Happy" therefore "are they that have the God of Jacob for their help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God," who lives for ever.

Thirdly. What sad lamentation would be made for the destruction of Tyre. The pilots, her princes and governors, when they see how ill they have played their cards, and how much they have contributed to their ruin, shall cry out so loud as to make even the suburbs shake, ver. 28; such a vexation shall it be to them to reflect upon their own ill conduct. The inferior officers, that were as the mariners of the state, shall be forced to come down from their respective posts, ver. 29; and they shall "cry out against thee," as having deceived them, in not proving so well able to hold out as they thought thou hadst been; they shall "cry bitterly" for the common ruin, and their own share in it. They shall use all the most solemn expressions of grief; they shall "cast dust on their heads," in indignation of themselves, shall "wallow themselves in ashes," as having bid a final farewell to all ease and pleasure; they shall 'make themselves bald," ver. 31, with "tearing their hair;" and, according to the custom of great mourners, they shall "gird themselves with sackcloth" who used to wear fine linen, and instead of merry songs they shall "weep with bitterness of heart." Note, Losses and crosses are very grievous and hard to be borne to those that have long been wallowing in pleasure and sleeping in carnal security.

Fourthly. How Tyre should be upbraided with her former honour and prosperity, ver. 32, 33. She that was Tyrus the renowned shall now be called Tyrus the destroyed in the midst of the sea. "What city is like Tyre?" Did ever any city come down from such a height of prosperity to such a depth of adversity? Time was when "thy wares," those of thine own making, and those that passed through thy hands, "went forth out of the seas," and were exported to all parts of the world; then "thou filledst many people, and didst enrich the kings of the earth," and their kingdoms. The Tyrians, though they bare such a sway in trade, yet it seems were fair merchants, and let their neighbours not only live, but thrive by them. All that dealt with them were gainers, they did not cheat or oppress the people, but did enrich them with "the multitude of their merchandise;" but now they that used to be enriched by thee shall be ruined with thee, as is usual in trade; ver. 34, "When thou shalt be broken," and all thou hast is seized on, "all thy company shall fall too." There is an end of Tyre, that made such a noise and bustle in the world; this great blaze goes out in a snuff.

Fifthly. How the fall of Tyre should be a matter of terror to some, and laughter to others, according as they were differently interested and affected. Some shall be sore afraid, and shall be troubled, ver. 35, concluding it will be their own turn to fall next; others shall hiss at her, ver. 36, shall ridicule her pride and vanity, and ill conduct, and think her ruin just. She triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, and there are those that will triumph in hers. When God casts his judgments on the sinner, "men also shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place," *Job* xxvii. 22, 23; "Is this the city which men call the perfection of beauty."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In this chapter we have, I. A prediction of the fall and ruin of the king of Tyre, who in the destruction of that city is particularly set up as a mark for God's arrows, ver. 1—10. II. A lamentation for the king of Tyre, when he is thus fallen, though he falls by his own iniquity, ver. 11—19. III. A prophecy of the destruction of Zidon, which was in the neighbourhood of Tyre, and had a dependence upon it, ver. 20—23. IV. A promise of the restoration of the Israel of God, though in the day of their calamity they were insulted over by their neighbours, ver. 24—26.

THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because thine heart *is* lifted up, and thou hast said,
I *am* a God,
I sit *in* the seat of God, in the midst of the seas;
Yet thou *art* a man, and not God,
Though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:
3 Behold, thou *art* wiser than Daniel;
There is no secret that they can hide from thee:
4 With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches,
And hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures:
5 By thy great wisdom *and* by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches,
And thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches:
6 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God;
7 Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee,
The terrible of the nations:
And they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom,
And they shall defile thy brightness.
8 They shall bring thee down to the pit,
And thou shalt die the deaths of *them*
That are slain in the midst of the seas.
9 Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I *am* [God?
But thou *shalt be* a man, and no God,
In the hand of him that slayeth thee.
10 Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers:
For I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.

We have done with Tyrus in the foregoing chapter, but now the prince of Tyrus is to be singled out from the rest. Here is something to be said to him by himself, a message to him from God, which the prophet must send him, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear.

First. He must tell him of his pride. His people were proud, *ch.* xxvii. 3, and so is he; and they shall both be made to know that God resists the proud. Let us see,

1. What were the expressions of his pride. "His heart was lifted up," ver. 2. He had a great conceit of himself, was blown up with an opinion of his own sufficiency, and looked with disdain upon all about him; and out of the abundance of the pride of his heart he said, "I am a god." He did not only say it in his heart, but had the impudence to speak it out. God has said of princes,

They are gods, *Ps.* lxxxii. 7. But it doth not become them to say so of themselves; it is a high affront to him who is God alone, and will not give his glory to another. He thought the city of Tyre had as necessary a dependence upon him as the world has upon the God that made it, and that he was himself independent as God, and unaccountable to any. He thought himself to have as much wisdom and strength as God himself, and as incontestable authority, and that his prerogatives were as absolute, and his word as much a law as the word of God. He challenged Divine honours, and expected to be praised and admired as a god, and doubted not to be deified among other heroes after his death, as a great benefactor to the world. Thus the king of Babylon said, "I will be like the Most High," *Isa.* xiv. 14, not like the Most Holy. "I am the strong God," and therefore will not be contradicted, because I cannot be controlled. "I sit in the seat of God." I sit as high as God, my throne equal with his; *divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet*,—'Cæsar divides dominion with Jove.' I sit as safe as God, as safe in the heart of the seas, and as far out of the reach of danger, as he in the height of heaven. He thinks his guards of men of war about his throne as pompous and potent as the hosts of angels that are about the throne of God. He is put in mind of his meanness and mortality; and since he needs to be told, he shall be told that self-evident truth, "Thou art a man, and not God," a depending creature, a dying creature; thou art flesh, and not spirit, *Isa.* xxxi. 3. Note, Men must be made to know they are but men, *Ps.* ix. 20. The greatest wits, the greatest potentates, the greatest saints, are men and not gods; Jesus Christ was both God and man. The king of Tyre, though he has such a mighty influence upon all about him, and with the help of his riches bears a mighty sway, though he has tribute and presents brought to his court with as much devotion as if they were sacrifices to his altar, though he is flattered by his courtiers, and made a god of by his poets, yet after all he is but a man; he knows it, he fears it. But "he sets his heart as the heart of God," hast conceited thyself to be a god, hast compared thyself with God, thinking thyself as wise and strong, and as fit to govern the world as he. It was the ruin of our first parents, and ours in them, that they would be as gods, *Gen.* iii. 5; and still that corrupt nature which inclines men to set up themselves as their own masters to do what they will, and their own carvers to have what they will, their own end to live to themselves, and their own felicity to enjoy themselves, "sets their hearts as the heart of God," invades his prerogatives, and catches at the flowers of his crown—a presumption that cannot go unpunished.

2. We are told what it was that he was proud of.

1st. His wisdom. It is likely this prince of Tyre was a man of very good natural parts, a philosopher, and well read in all the parts of learning that were then in vogue; however, a politician, and had a great dexterity in managing the affairs of the state; and then he thought himself "wiser than Daniel," ver. 3. We found before, that Daniel, though now but a young man, was celebrated for his prevalency in prayer, *ch.* xiv. 14; here we find he was famous for his prudence in the management of the affairs of this world, a great scholar and statesman, and withal a great saint; and yet not a prince, but a poor captive. It was strange that under such external disadvantages his lustre should shine forth, so as that he was become wise to a proverb. When the king of Tyre dreams himself to be a god he saith he is "wiser than Daniel." "There is no secret that they can hide from thee." Probably he challenged all about him to prove him with questions, as Solomon was proved, and he had unriddled all their enigmas, had solved all their problems, and none of them all could puzzle him. He had perhaps been successful in discovering plots, and diving into the counsels of the neighbouring princes, and therefore thought himself omniscient, and that no thought could be withholden from him; therefore he said, "I am a god." Note, Knowledge puffeth up; it is hard to know much, and not to know it too well, and to be elevated with it. He that was wiser than Daniel was prouder than Lucifer. Those therefore that are knowing must study to be humble, and to evidence that they are so.

2nd. His wealth. That way his wisdom led him; it is not said that by his wisdom he searched into the arcana, either of nature or government, modelled the state better than it was, or made better laws, or had advanced the interests of the commonwealth of learning; but his wisdom and understanding were of use to him in traffic. As some of the kings of Judah loved husbandry, 2 *Chr.* xxvi. 10; so the king of Tyre loved merchandise, and by it he got riches, increased his riches, and filled his treasures with gold and silver, ver. 4, 5. See what the wisdom of this world is; those are cried up as the wisest men that know how to get money, and by right or wrong to raise estates, and yet really this their way is their folly, *Ps.* xlix. 13. It was the folly of the king of Tyre, *First.* That he attributed the increase of his wealth to himself, and not to the providence of God, forgetting him who gave him power to get wealth, *Deu.* viii. 17, 18. *Secondly.* That he therefore thought himself a wise man, because he was a rich man; whereas a fool may have an estate, *Eccl.* ii. 19; yea, and a fool may get an estate, for the world has often been observed to favour such, when bread is not to the wise, *Eccl.* ix. 11. *Thirdly.* That his heart was lifted up because of his riches, for the increase of his wealth, that made him so haughty and secure, so insolent and imperious, and that set his heart as the heart of God. The man of sin, when he had a great deal of worldly pomp and power, shewed himself as a god, 2 *Thess.* ii. 4. Those who are rich in this world have, therefore, need to charge that upon themselves which the word of God charges upon them, "That they be not high-minded," 1 *Tim.* vi. 17.

Secondly. Since pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall, he must tell him of that destruction, of that fall, which was now hastening on, as the just punishment of his presumption in setting up himself a rival with God; Because thou hast pretended to be a god, ver. 6, therefore thou shalt not be long a man, ver. 7. Observe here,

1. The instruments of his destruction. "I will bring strangers upon thee," the Chaldeans, whom we do not find mentioned among the many nations and countries that traded with Tyre, *ch.* xxvii. If any of those nations had been brought against it they would have had some compassion upon it, for old acquaintance sake; but these strangers will have none; they are people of a strange language, which the king of Tyre himself, as wise as he is, perhaps understands not. They are "the terrible of the nations." It was an army made up of many nations, and it was at this day the most formidable, both for strength and fury. These God has at command, and these he will bring upon the king of Tyre.

2. The extremity of the destruction. "They shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom," ver. 7, that is, against all those things which thou gloriest in as thy beauty and the product of thy wisdom. Note, It is just with God that our enemies should make that their prey which we have made our pride. The king of Tyre's palace, his treasury, his city, his navy, his army, these he glories in as his brightness, these he thinks make him illustrious and glorious as a god on earth. But all these the victorious enemy shall defile, shall deface, shall deform; he thought them sacred, things that none durst touch; but the conquerors shall seize them as common things, and spoil the brightness of them. But whatever comes of what he has, surely his person is sacred. No; ver. 8, "They shall bring thee down to the pit," to the grave; thou shalt die the death. And, 1st. It shall not be an honourable death, but an ignominious one; he shall be so vilified in his death that he may despair of being deified after his death. He shall die "the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas," that have no honour done them at their death, but their dead bodies are immediately thrown overboard, without any ceremony as marks of distinction, to be a feast for the fish. Tyre is like to be destroyed in the midst of the sea, *ch.* xxvii. 32, and the prince of Tyre shall fare no better than the people. 2nd. It shall not be a happy death, but a miserable one. He shall "die the death of the uncircumcised," ver. 10, of those that are strangers to God and not in covenant with him, and therefore die under his wrath and curse. It is deaths, a double death, temporal and eternal, the death both of the body and soul; he shall die the second death—that is dying miserably indeed. The sentence of death here passed upon the king of Tyre is ratified by a Divine authority; "I have spoken it, saith the Lord God." And what he hath said, he will do; none can gainsay it, nor will he unsay it.

3. The effectual disproof that this will be of all his pretensions to deity; ver. 9, When the conqueror sets his sword to thy breast, and thou seest no way of escape, Wilt thou then say, I am God? Wilt thou then have such a conceit of thyself, and such a confidence in thyself, as thou now hast? No, thy being overpowered by death, and by the fear of it, will force thee to own that thou art not a god, but a weak, timorous, trembling, dying man. "In the hand of him that slayeth thee," in the hand of God, and of the instruments he employed, "thou shalt be a man, and not a god," utterly unable to resist and help thyself. "I have said ye are gods, but ye shall die like men," *Ps.* lxxxii. 6, 7. Note, Those who pretend to be rivals with God shall be forced one way or other to let fall their claims. Death at farthest, when we come into his hand, will make us know that we are men.

11 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of [Tyrus,
And say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Thou sealest up the sum,
Full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God;
Every precious stone *was* thy covering,
The sardius, topaz, and the diamond,
The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper,
The sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold:
The workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee
In the day that thou wast created.

14 Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth;
And I have set thee *so:* thou wast upon the holy mountain of God;
Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. [wast created,

15 Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou
Till iniquity was found in thee.

16 By the multitude of thy merchandise
They have filled the midst of thee with violence, and [of God:
thou hast sinned:
Therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain
And I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty,
Thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy bright- [ness:
I will cast thee to the ground,
I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of [thine iniquities,
By the iniquity of thy traffick;
Therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee,
It shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon [the earth
In the sight of all them that behold thee.

19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee:
Thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt* thou *be* any more.

As, after the prediction of the ruin of Tyre, *ch.* xxvi., followed a pathetical lamentation for it, *ch.* xxvii., so, after the ruin of the king of Tyre is foretold, it is bewailed. 1. This is commonly understood of the present prince of Tyre spoken to, ver. 2. His name was Ethbaal, or Ithobalus, as Diodorus Siculus calls him that was king of Tyre when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. He was, it seems, upon all external accounts, an accomplished man, very great and famous, but his iniquity was his ruin. Many expositors have suggested that besides the literal sense of this lamentation there is an allegory in it, and that it is an allusion to the fall of angels that sinned, who undid themselves by their pride. And, as is usual in texts that have a mystical meaning, some passages here refer primarily to the king of Tyre, as that of his merchandises, others to the angels, as that of being in "the holy mountain of God." But if there be any thing mystical in it, as perhaps there may, I shall rather refer it to the fall of Adam, which seems to be glanced at; ver. 13, "Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God," and that "in the day thou wast created." 2. Some think by the king of Tyre is meant the whole royal family, this including also the foregoing kings, and looking as far back as Hiram, king of Tyre. The present governor is called prince, ver. 2, but he that is here lamented is called king. The court of Tyre and its kings had for many ages been famous, but sin ruins it. Now we may observe two things here:

First. What was the renown of the king of Tyre. He is here spoken of as having lived in great splendour, ver. 12—15. He was a man, but it is here owned that he was a very considerable man, and one that made a mighty figure in his day.

1. He far exceeded other men. Hiram and other kings of Tyre had done so in their time; and the present king, perhaps, had not come short of any of them. "Thou sealest up the sum full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty;" both the powers of human nature and the prosperity of human life seemed in him to have been at the highest pitch. He was looked upon to be as wise as the reason of men could make him, and as happy as the wealth of this world and the enjoyment of it could make him; in him you might see the utmost that both could do; and therefore seal up the sum, for nothing can be added. He is a complete man, perfect in *suo genere*,—'in his kind.'

2. He seemed to be as wise and happy as Adam in innocency; ver. 13, "Thou hast been in Eden," even "in the garden of God." Thou hast lived, as it were, in Paradise all thy days, hast had a full enjoyment of every thing that is good for food or pleasant to the eyes, and an uncontroverted dominion over all about thee, as Adam had. One instance of the magnificence of the king of Tyre is that he outdid all other princes in jewels, which those have the most plenty of that trade most abroad, as he did. Every precious stone was his covering. There is a great variety of precious stones, but he had of every sort and in such plenty, that besides what were treasured up in his cabinet, and were the ornaments of his crown, he had his clothes trimmed with them; they were his covering. Nay, ver. 14, he "walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire," that is, these precious stones, which glittered and sparkled like fire. His rooms were in a manner set round with jewels, so that he walked in the midst of them, and then fancied himself as glorious as if, like God, he had been surrounded by so many angels, who are compared to a flame of fire. And if he be such an admirer of precious stones as to think them as bright as angels, no wonder he is such an admirer of himself as to think himself as great as God. Nine several sorts of precious stones are here named which were all in the high priest's ephod. Perhaps they are particularly named because he in his pride used to speak particularly of them, and tell those about him, with a great deal of foolish pleasure, This is such a precious stone, of such a value, and so and so are its virtues. Thus he is upbraided with his vanity. Gold is mentioned last, as far inferior in value to those precious stones; and he used to speak of it accordingly. Another thing that made him think his palace a paradise was the curious music he had, the tabrets and pipes, hand instruments and wind instruments; the workmanship of these was extraordinary, and they were prepared for him on purpose; prepared in thee—the pronoun is feminine—in thee, O Tyre; or it notes that the king was effeminate, in doting on such things. They were prepared in the day he was created, that is, either born or created king; they were made on purpose to celebrate the joys either of his birthday or his coronation day. These he prided himself much in, and would have all that came to see his palace take notice of them.

3. He looked like an incarnate angel; ver. 14, "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth" or protecteth, that is, he looked upon himself as a guardian angel to his people, so bright, so strong, so faithful; appointed to that office, and qualified for it. Anointed kings should be to their subjects as anointed cherubims that cover them with the wings of their power, and when they are such God will own them; their advancement was from him, "I have set thee so." Some think, because mention was made of Eden, that it refers to the cherub set on the east of Eden to cover it, *Gen.* iii. 24. He thought himself as able to guard his city from all invaders as that angel was for his charge. Or, it may refer to the cherubim in the most holy place, whose wings covered the ark; he thought himself as bright as one of them.

4. He appeared in as much splendour as the high priest, when he was clothed with his garments for glory and beauty; "Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God," as president of the temple built on that holy mountain. Thou didst look as great, and with as much majesty and authority, as ever the high priest did when he walked in the temple, which was garnished with precious stones, 2 *Chr.* iii. 6, and had his habit on, which had precious stones both in the breast and on the shoulder—in that he seemed to walk in "the midst of the stones of fire." Thus glorious is the king of Tyre—at least he thinks himself so.

Secondly. Let us now see what was the ruin of the king of Tyre, what it was that stained his glory, and laid all this honour in the dust; ver. 15, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways," that is, thou didst prosper in all thy affairs, and every thing went well with thee; thou hadst not only a clear but a bright reputation "from the day thou wast created," the day of thine accession to the throne, "till iniquity was found in thee," and that spoiled all. This may perhaps allude to the deplorable case of the angels that fell, and of our first parents, both which were perfect in their ways till iniquity was found in them. And when iniquity was once found in him, it increased, and he grew worse and worse, as appears ver. 18, "Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries," that is, thou hast lost the benefit of all that which thou thoughtest sacred, and in which, as in a sanctuary, thou thoughtest to take refuge. These thou hast defiled, and so exposed thyself by the multitude of thine iniquities. Now observe,

1. What the iniquity was that was the ruin of the king of Tyre. 1st. The iniquity of his traffic, so it is called ver. 18, both his and his people's; for their sin is charged upon him because he connived at it, and set them an ill example, ver. 16. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thus thou hast sinned. The king had so much to do with his merchandise, and was so wholly intent upon the gains of that, that he took no care to do justice, to right those that suffered wrong, and to protect them from violence. Nay, in the multiplicity of business wrong was done to many by oversight, and in his dealings he made use of his power to invade the rights of those he dealt with. Note, Those that have much to do in the world are in great danger of doing much amiss, and it is hard to deal with many without violence to some. Trades are called mysteries, but too many make them mysteries of iniquity. 2nd. His pride and vainglory; ver. 17, "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty," thou wast in love with thyself and thy own shadow; and thus "thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of the brightness," and the pomp and splendour wherein thou livedst. He gazed so much upon this that he dazzled his eyes, and made him that he could not see his way. He appeared so puffed up with his greatness, that it both lost him his wisdom and lost him the reputation of it. He really became a fool in glorying. Those make a bad bargain for themselves that part with their wisdom for the gratifying of their gaiety, and to please a vain humour lose a real excellency.

2. What the ruin was that this iniquity brought him to. 1st. He was thrown out of his dignity and dislodged from his palace, which he took to be his paradise and temple; ver. 16, "I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God." His kingly power was high as a mountain, setting him above others; it was a mountain of God, for the powers that be are ordained of God, and have something in them that is sacred. But having abused his power he is reckoned profane, and is therefore deposed and expelled. He disgraceth the crown he wears, and so hath forfeited it, and shall be destroyed "from the midst of the stones of fire," the precious stones with which his palace was garnished, as the temple was, and they shall be no protection to him. 2nd. He was exposed to contempt and disgrace, and trampled upon by his neighbours. "I will cast thee to the ground," ver. 17, will cast thee among the pavement stones, from the midst of the precious stones, and will lay thee a rueful spectacle "before kings, that they may behold thee," and take warning by thee not to be proud and oppressive. 3rd. He is quite consumed, his city, and he in it. "I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee." The conquerors, when they have plundered the city, will kindle a fire in the heart of it, which shall lay it, and the palace particularly, in ashes. Or, it may be taken more generally for the fire of God's judgments, which will devour both prince and people, and bring all the glory of both "to ashes upon the earth;" and this fire shall be "brought forth from the midst of thee." All God's judgments upon sinners take rise from themselves; they are devoured by a fire of their own kindling. 4th. He was hereby made a terrible example of Divine vengeance. Thus he is reduced in the sight of all them that behold him, ver. 18; they that know him shall be astonished at him, and shall admire how one that stood so high could be brought so low. The king of Tyre's palace, like the temple at Jerusalem, when it is destroyed shall be an astonishment and a hissing, 2 *Chr.* vii. 20, 21. So fell the king of Tyre.

20 Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 21 Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it, 22 And say,

Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I *am* against thee, O Zidon;
And I will be glorified in the midst of thee:
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I shall have executed judgments in her,
And shall be sanctified in her. [streets;

23 For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her
And the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her
By the sword upon her on every side;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

24 And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel,
Nor *any* grieving thorn of all *that are* round about them, that despised them;
And they shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.

25 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
When I shall have gathered the house of Israel
From the people among whom they are scattered,
And shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen,
Then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob.

26 And they shall dwell safely therein,
And shall build houses, and plant vineyards;
Yea, they shall dwell with confidence,
When I have executed judgments
Upon all those that despise them round about them;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD their GOD.

God's glory is his great end, both in all the good and in all the evil which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Most High; so we find in these verses.

First. God will be glorified in the destruction of Zidon, a city that lay near to Tyre; was more ancient, but not so considerable, had a dependence upon it, and stood and fell with it. God saith here, "I am against thee, O Zidon, and I will be glorified in the midst of thee," ver. 22. And again, they that would not know by gentler methods shall be made to know that I am the Lord, and I alone, and that I am a just and jealous God, when "I shall have executed judgments in her," destroying judgments; when I shall have done execution according to justice, and according to the sentence passed, and so shall be sanctified in her. The Zidonians, it should seem, were more addicted to idolatry than the Tyrians were, who being men of business, and large conversation, were less under the power of bigotry and superstition. The Zidonians were noted for the worship of Ashtaroth; Solomon introduced it, 1 *Kin.* xi. 5. Jezebel was daughter to the king of Zidon, who brought the worship of Baal into Israel, 1 *Kin.* xvi. 31; so that God had been much dishonoured by the Zidonians. Now, saith he, I will be glorified, I will be sanctified. The Zidonians were borderers upon the land of Israel, where God was known, and where they might have got the knowledge of him, and have learned to glorify him; but, instead of that, they seduced Israel to the worship of their idols. Note, When God is sanctified, he is glorified, for his holiness is his glory. And those whom he is not sanctified and glorified by he will be sanctified and glorified upon, by executing judgments upon them, which speak him a just avenger of his own and his people's injured honour.

The judgments that shall be executed upon Zidon are, war and pestilence, two wasting, depopulating judgments, ver. 23. They are God's messengers which he sends on his errands, and they shall accomplish that for which he sends them. Pestilence and blood shall be sent into her streets; there the dead bodies of those shall lie who perished, some by the plague, occasioned perhaps through ill diet when the city was besieged, and some by the sword of the enemy, most likely the Chaldean armies, when the city is taken and all put to the sword. Thus the wounded shall be judged; when they are dying of their wounds they shall judge themselves, and others shall say they justly fall. Or, as some read it, 'they shall be punished by the sword,' that sword which has commission to destroy on every side. It is God which judgeth, and he will overcome.

Nor is it Tyre and Zidon only on which God would execute judgments, but on all those that despised his people Israel, and triumphed in their calamities, ver. 26; for this was now God's controversy with the nations that were round about them, ver. 26. Note, When God's people are under his correcting hand

for their faults he takes care, as he did concerning malefactors that were scourged, that they shall not seem vile to those that are about them, and therefore takes it ill of those who despise them, and so help forward the affliction when he is but a little displeased, *Zec.* i. 15. God regards them even in their low estate, and therefore let not men despise them.

Secondly. God will be glorified in the restoration of his people to their former safety and prosperity. God had been dishonoured by the sins of his people, and their sufferings too had given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme, *Isa.* lii. 5; but God will now both cure them of their sins and ease them of their troubles, and so will be "sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen;" will recover the honour of his holiness, to the satisfaction of all the world, ver. 25. For,

1. They shall return to the possession of their own land again. I will gather the house of Israel out of their dispersions, in answer to that prayer; *Ps.* cvi. 47, "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen." And in pursuance of that promise, *Deu.* xxx. 4, "Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee;" being gathered, they shall be brought in a body to "dwell in the land that I have given to my servant Jacob." God had an eye to the ancient grant, in bringing them back; for that remained in force, and the discontinuance of the possession was not a defeasance of the right. He that gave it will again give it.

2. They shall enjoy great tranquillity there. When those that had been vexatious to them are taken off they shall live in quietness, there shall be no more "a pricking brier or a grieving thorn," ver. 24. They shall have a happy settlement, for they shall build houses and plant vineyards, and they shall enjoy a happy security and serenity there. They shall dwell safely, shall dwell with confidence, and there shall be none to disquiet them, or make them afraid, ver. 26. This never had a full accomplishment in the body of that people, for after their return out of captivity they were ever and anon molested by some ill neighbour or other. Nor has the gospel church been ever quite free from pricking briers and grieving thorns; yet sometimes the church has rest. Believers always dwell safely under the Divine protection, and may be quiet from the fear of evil. But the full accomplishment of this promise is reserved for the heavenly Canaan, when all the saints shall be gathered together, and every thing that offends shall be removed, and all griefs and fears for ever banished.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Three chapters we had concerning Tyre and its king; next follows four chapters concerning Egypt and its king; this is the first of them. Egypt had formerly been a house of bondage to God's people; of late they had had but too friendly a correspondence with it, and had depended too much upon it; and therefore, whether the prediction reached Egypt or no, it would be of use to Israel, to take them off of their confidence in their alliance with it. The prophesies against Egypt, which are all laid together in these four chapters, were of five several dates: the first in the tenth year of the captivity, ver. 1; the second in the twenty-seventh, ver. 17; the third in the eleventh year and the first month, *ch.* xxx. 20; the fourth in the eleventh year and third month, *ch.* xxxi. 1; the fifth in the twelfth year, *ch.* xxxii. 1, and another the same year, ver. 17. In this chapter we have, I. The destruction of Pharaoh foretold, for his dealing deceitfully with Israel, ver. 1—7. II. The desolation of the land of Egypt foretold, ver. 8—12. III. A promise of the restoration thereof in part after forty years, ver. 13—16. IV. The possession that should be given to Nebuchadnezzar of the land of Egypt, ver. 17—20. V. A promise of mercy to Israel, ver. 21.

IN the tenth year, in the tenth *month*, in the twelfth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt: 3 Speak, and say,

Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I *am* against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt,
The great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers,
Which hath said, My river *is* mine own, and I have made *it* for myself.

4 But I will put hooks in thy jaws, [scales,
And I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy
And I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers,
And all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.

5 And I will leave thee *thrown* into the wilderness,
Thee and all the fish of thy rivers:
Thou shalt fall upon the open fields;
Thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered:
I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field
And to the fowls of the heaven. [the LORD,

6 And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I *am*
Because they have been a staff of reed to the house of

7 When they took hold of thee by thy hand, [Israel.
Thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder:
And when they leaned upon thee,
Thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

Here is, First. The date of this prophecy against Egypt. It was in the tenth year of the captivity, and yet it is placed after the prophecy against Tyre, which was delivered in the eleventh year; because, in the accomplishment of the prophecies, the destruction of Tyre happened before the destruction of Egypt; and Nebuchadnezzar's gaining Egypt was the reward of his service against Tyre, and therefore the prophecy against Tyre is put first, that we may the better observe that. But particular notice must be taken of this, that the first prophecy against Egypt was just at the time when the king of Egypt was coming to relieve Jerusalem, and raise the siege, *Jer.* xxxvii. 5, but did not answer the expectations of the Jews from them. Note, It is good to foresee the failing of all our creature confidences, then when we are most in temptation to depend upon them, that we may cease from man.

Secondly. The scope of this prophecy. It is directed against "Pharaoh king of Egypt, and against all Egypt," ver. 2. The prophecy against Tyre began with the people, and then proceeded against the prince. But this begins with the prince, because it began to have its accomplishment in the insurrections and rebellions of the people against the prince, not long after this.

Thirdly. The prophecy itself. Pharaoh Hophrah (for so was the present Pharaoh surnamed) is here represented by a great dragon, or crocodile that lies "in the midst of his rivers," as leviathan in the waters, to play therein, ver. 3. Nilus, the river of Egypt, was famed for crocodiles. And what is the king of Egypt in God's account but a great dragon, venomous and mischievous. Therefore, saith God, "I am against thee," I am above thee; so it may be read. How high soever the princes and potentates of the earth are, there is a higher than they, *Eccl.* v. 8; a God above them that can control them. And if they be tyrannical and oppressive, a God is against them that will be free to reckon with them. Observe here,

1. The pride and security of Pharaoh. He "lieth in the midst of his rivers," rolls himself with a great deal of satisfaction in his wealth and pleasures; and he saith, "My river is mine own." He boasts that he is an absolute prince, his subjects are his vassals, Joseph brought them long ago, *Gen.* xlvii. 23; that he is a sole prince, and has neither partner in the government nor competition for it; that he is out of debt, what he has is his own, and none of his neighbours has any demands upon him; that he is independent, neither tributary nor accountable to any. Note, Worldly, carnal minds please themselves with, and pride themselves in, their property, forgetting that whatever we have we have only the use of it, the property is in God; we ourselves are not our own, but his; our tongues are not our own, *Ps.* xii. 4. Our river is not our own, for its springs are in God. The most potent prince cannot call what he has his own, for though it be so against all the world, it is not so against God. But Pharaoh's reason for his pretensions is yet more absurd; "My river is mine own," for "I have made it for myself." Here he usurps two of the Divine prerogatives—to be the author and end of his own being and felicity; he only that is the great Creator can say of this world, and of every thing in it, "I have made it for myself." He calls his river his own because he looks not unto the Maker thereof, nor has respect unto him that fashioned it long ago, *Isa.* xxii. 11. What we have we have received from God, and must use for God; so that we cannot say we made it, much less that we made it for ourselves; and why then do we boast? Note, Self is the great idol that all the world worships, in contempt of God and his sovereignty.

2. The course God will take with this proud man to humble him. He is a great dragon in the waters, and God will accordingly deal with him, ver. 4, 5. 1st. He will draw him out of his rivers; for he has a hook and a cord for this leviathan, with which he can manage him, though none on earth can; *Job* xli. 1, "I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers," will cast thee out of thy palace, out of thy kingdom, out of all those things in which thou takest such a complacency, and placest such a confidence. Herodotus relates of this Pharaoh, who was now king of Egypt, that he had reigned in great prosperity for twenty-five years, and was so elevated with his successes that he said God himself could not cast him out of his kingdom. But he shall soon be convinced of his mistake, and what he depended on shall be no defence; God can force men out of that in which they are most secure and easy. 2nd. All his fish shall be drawn out with him; his servants, his soldiers, and all that had a dependence on him, as he thought, but really such as he had dependence upon; these shall stick to his scales, adhere to their king, resolving to live and die with him. But, 3rd. The king and his army, the dragon and all the fish that stick to his scales, shall perish together as fish cast upon dry ground, and shall be meat to the beasts and fowls, ver. 5. Now this is supposed to have its accomplishment soon after, when this Pharaoh, in defence of Aricius, king of Libya, who had been expelled his kingdom by the Cyrenians, levied a great army, and went out against the Cyrenians, to re-establish his friend, but was defeated in battle, and all his forces put to flight, which gave such disgust to his kingdom that they rose in rebellion against him. Thus was he left "thrown into the wilderness," he and all the fish of the river with him. Thus issue men's pride, and presumption, and carnal security. Thus men justly lose what they might call their own under God, when they call it their own against him.

3. The ground of the controversy God has with the Egyptians. It is because they have cheated his people; they encouraged them to expect relief and assistance from them when they were in distress, but failed them; ver. 6, 7, "Because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel." They pretended to be a staff to them to lean upon, but when any stress was laid upon them they were either weak and could not, or treacherous and would not, do that for them that was expected. They broke under them, to their great disappointment and amazement; so that they rent their shoulder, and "madest all their loins to be at a stand." The king of Egypt, it is probable, had encouraged Zedekiah to break his league with the king of Babylon, with a promise that he would stand by him, which, when he failed to do to any purpose, it could not but put them into a great consternation. God had told them long since that the Egyptians were broken reeds, *Isa.* xx. 6, 7. Rabshakeh had told them so, *Isa.* xxxvi. 6; and now they found it so. It was indeed the folly of Israel to trust them, and they were well enough served when they were deceived in them; God was righteous in suffering them to be so. But that is no excuse at all for the Egyptians' falsehood and treachery; nor shall it secure them from the judgments of that God who is and will be the avenger of all such wrongs. It is a great sin, and very provoking to God, as well as unjust, ungrateful, and very dishonourable and unkind, to put a cheat upon those that put a confidence in us.

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee,
And cut off man and beast out of thee.

9 And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD: [*it.*
Because he hath said, The river *is* mine, and I have made

10 Behold, therefore I *am* against thee, and against thy rivers, [desolate,
And I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste *and*
From the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia.

11 No foot of man shall pass through it,
Nor foot of beast shall pass through it,
Neither shall it be inhabited forty years.

12 And I will make the land of Egypt desolate
In the midst of the countries *that are* desolate,
And her cities among the cities *that are* laid waste shall be desolate forty years:
And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations,
And will disperse them through the countries.
13 Yet thus saith the Lord GOD;
At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians
From the people whither they were scattered:
14 And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt,
And will cause them to return *into* the land of Pathros,
Into the land of their habitation;
And they shall be there a base kingdom.
15 It shall be the basest of the kingdoms;
Neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations:
For I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. [Israel,
16 And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of
Which bringeth *their* iniquity to remembrance,
When they shall look after them:
But they shall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.

CATARACTS OF THE NILE—THE BOUNDARY OF EGYPT.—ver. 10.

This explains the foregoing prediction, which was figurative, and looks something farther. Here is a prophecy,

First. Of the ruin of Egypt. The threatening of this is very full and particular, and the sin for which this ruin shall be brought upon them is their pride; ver. 9, they said, "The river is mine, and I have made it," therefore their land shall spew them out. 1. God is against them, both against the king and against the people; "against thee, and against thy rivers." Waters signify people and multitude, *Rev.* xvii. 15. 2. Multitudes of them shall be cut off by the sword of war—a sword which God will bring upon them, to destroy both man and beast, the sword of a civil war. 3. The country shall be depopulated. "The land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste," ver. 9; the country not cultivated, the cities not inhabited; the wealth of both was their pride, and that God will take away. It shall be "utterly waste;" 'wastes of waste,' so the margin reads it, "and desolate," ver. 10; neither men nor beasts shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited, ver. 11; it shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are so, ver. 12. This was the effect not so much of those wars spoken of before, which were made by them, but of the war which the king of Babylon made upon them. It shall be desolate from one end of the land to the other, "from the tower of Syene even to the borders of Ethiopia." The sin of pride is enough to ruin a whole nation. 4. The people shall be dispersed and scattered among the nations, ver. 12; so that they who thought the balance of power was in their hand shall now become a contemptible people. Such a fall doth a haughty spirit go before.

Secondly. Of the restoration of Egypt after awhile, ver. 13. Egypt shall lie desolate forty years, ver. 12, and then "I will bring again the captivity of Egypt," ver. 14. Some date the forty years from Nebuchadnezzar's destroying Egypt, others from the desolation of Egypt some time before; however, they end about the first year of Cyrus, when the seventy years' captivity of Judah ended, or soon after; then this prediction was accomplished. 1. That God will gather the Egyptians out of all the countries into which they were dispersed, and make them to return to "the land of their habitation," and give them a settlement there again, ver. 14. Note, Though God will find out a way to humble the proud, yet he will not contend for ever; no, not with them in this world. 2. That yet they shall not make a figure again as they have done. Egypt shall be a kingdom again, but it shall be the "basest of the kingdoms," ver. 15; it shall have but little wealth and power, and shall not extend its conquests as formerly; shall be the tail of the nations, and not the head. It is a mercy that it shall become a kingdom again, but to humble it, it shall be a despicable kingdom; it shall be a long time before it recover any thing like its ancient lustre. For two reasons it shall be thus mortified. 1st. That it may not domineer over its neighbours, that it may not "exalt itself above the nations," nor "rule over the nations," as it has done, but that it may know what it is to be low and despised. Note, Those who abuse their power will justly be stripped of it, and God, as King of nations, will find out a way to maintain the injured rights and liberties, not only of his own, but other nations. 2nd. That it may not deceive the people of God; ver. 16, "It shall no more be the confidence of the house of Israel." They shall no more be in temptation to trust in it, as they have done, which is a sin that brings their iniquity to remembrance; that is, provokes God to punish them, not for that only, but for all their other sins. Or, it puts them in mind of their idolatries to return to them, when they look to the idolaters, to repose a confidence in them. Note, The creatures we confide in are oftentimes therefore ruined, because there is no other way effectually to cure us of our confidence in them. Rather than Israel shall be ensnared again, the whole land of Egypt shall be laid waste. He that once gave Egypt for their ransom, *Isa.* xliii. 3, will now give Egypt for their cure; and it shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall not in this particular be reformed. God doth not only in justice, but in wisdom and goodness to us, break those creature stays we stay too much upon, and makes them to be no more, that they may be no more our confidence.

17 And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

18 Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army
To serve a great service against Tyrus:
Every head *was* made bald, and every shoulder *was* peeled:
Yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus,
For the service that he had served against it:
19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I will give the land of Egypt
Unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon;
And he shall take her multitude,
And take her spoil, and take her prey;
And it shall be the wages for his army.
20 I have given him the land of Egypt
For his labour wherewith he served against it,
Because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD.
21 In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth,
And I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

The date of this prophecy is observable; it was in the twenty-seventh year of Ezekiel's captivity, sixteen years after the prophecy in the former part of the chapter, and almost as long after those which follow in the next chapters; but it comes in here for the explication of all that was said against Egypt. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar spent two or three campaigns in the conquest of the Ammonites and Moabites, and making himself master of their countries. Then he spent thirteen years in the siege of Tyre; during all that time the Egyptians were embroiled in war with the Cyreneans, and one with another, by which they were very much weakened and impoverished; and just at the end of the siege of Tyre God delivers this prophecy to Ezekiel, to signify to him that that utter destruction of Egypt, which he had foretold fifteen or sixteen years before, which had been but in part accomplished hitherto, should now be completed by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophecy which begins here, it should seem, is continued to the twentieth verse of the next chapter. And Dr. Lightfoot observes that it is the last prophecy we have of this prophet, and should have been last in the book; but it is laid here, that all the prophecies against Egypt might come together. The particular destruction of Pharaoh Hophrah, foretold in the former part of this chapter, was likewise foretold, *Jer.* xliv. 30. This general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was foretold, *Jer.* xliii. 10. Observe,

First. What success God would give to Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against Egypt. God gave him that land, that he might take the spoil and prey of it, ver, 19, 20. It was a cheap and easy prey, he subdued it with very little difficulty. The blood and treasure expended upon the conquest of it was inconsiderable; but it was a rich prey, and he carried off a great deal from it that was of value. Their having been divided among themselves, no doubt, gave a common enemy great advantage against them, who, when they had been so long preying upon one another, soon made a prey of them all. *En! quo discordia cives perduxit miseros!*—'What wretchedness does civil discord bring!' Jeremiah foretold that Nebuchadnezzar should array himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd puts on his coat, which intimates what a rich and cheap prey it should be.

Secondly. Upon what considerations God would give Nebuchadnezzar this

success against Egypt. It was to be a recompense to him for the hard service with which he had caused his army to serve against Tyre, ver. 18—20. 1. The taking of Tyre was a tedious piece of work, it cost Nebuchadnezzar abundance of blood and treasure; it held out thirteen years. All that time the Chaldean army was hard at it to make themselves masters of it. A large current of the sea, between Tyre and the continent, was filled up with earth, and many other difficulties, which were thought insuperable, they had to struggle with; but so great a prince, having begun such an undertaking, thought himself bound in honour to push it on, whatever it cost him. How many thousand lives have been sacrificed to such points of honour as this was! In prosecuting this siege "every head was made bald, and every shoulder peeled," with carrying burthens, and labouring in the water when they had a strong tide, and a strong town to contend with. Egypt, a large kingdom, being divided within itself, is easily conquered. Tyre, a single city, being unanimous, is hardly subdued. Those that have much to do in the world find some affairs go on a great deal more readily and easily than others. But, 2. In this service God owns that they wrought for him, ver. 20; he set them at work for the humbling of a proud city and its king, though they meant not so, neither did their heart think so, who were employed in it. Note, Even great men and ill men are tools that God makes use of, and are working for him even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully doth God overrule all to his own glory. Yet, 3. For this service he had no wages, nor his army. He was at a vast expense to take Tyre, and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappointed. The Tyrians sent away by ship their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in the highest expectations from it. Therefore, 4. He shall have the spoil of Egypt to recompense him for his service against Tyre. Note, God will be behindhand with none for any service they did for him, but, one way or other, will recompense them for it; none shall kindle a fire on his altar for nought. The service done for him by worldly men, with worldly designs, shall be recompensed with a mere worldly reward, which his faithful servants, that have a sincere regard to his will and glory, would not be put off with. This accounts for the prosperity of wicked men in this world. God is in it paying them for some service or other in which he has made use of them. Verily they have their reward—let none envy it them. The conquest of Egypt is spoken of as Nebuchadnezzar's full reward; for that completed his dominion over the then known world, in a manner; that was the last of the kingdoms he subdued. When he was master of that he became the head of gold.

Thirdly. The mercy God had in store for the house of Israel soon after. When the tide is at the highest it will turn, and so it will when it is at the lowest. Nebuchadnezzar was in the zenith of his glory when he had conquered Egypt, but within a year after he ran mad, *Dan.* iv., was so seven years, and within a year or two after he recovered his senses he resigned his life. When he was at the highest, Israel was at the lowest; then were they at the depth of their captivity, their bones dead and dry; but in that day the horn of the house of Israel shall bud forth, ver. 21. The day of their deliverance shall begin to dawn, and they shall have some little reviving in their bondage, in the honour that shall be done, 1. To their princes. They are the horns of the house of Israel, the seat of their glory and power. These began to bud forth when Daniel and his fellows were highly preferred in Babylon. Daniel sat in the gate of the city, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were set over the affairs of the province, *Dan.* ii. 49; these were all of the king's seed and of the princes, *Dan.* i. 3. And it was within a year after the conquest of Egypt that they were thus preferred, and soon after three of them were made famous by the honour God put upon them in bringing them alive out of the burning fiery furnace. This might very well be called the budding forth of the horn of the house of Israel. And some years after this promise had a farther accomplishment in the enlargement and elevation of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, *Jer.* lii. 31, 32. They were both tokens of God's favour to Israel, and happy omens, 2. To their prophets; And "I will give thee the opening of the mouth." Though none of Ezekiel's prophecies after this are recorded, yet we have reason to think he went on prophesying, and with more liberty and boldness when Daniel and his followers were in power, and would be ready to protect him, not only from the Babylonians, but from the wicked ones of his own people. Note, It bodes well to a people when God enlargeth the liberties of his ministers, and they are countenanced and encouraged in their work.

CHAPTER XXX.

In this chapter we have, I. A continuation of the prophecy against Egypt, which we had in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, just before the desolation of that once flourishing kingdom was completed by Nebuchadnezzar; in which is foretold the destruction of all her allies and confederates, all her interests and concerns, and the several steps which the king of Babylon should take in pushing on this destruction, ver. 1—19. II. A repetition of a former prophecy against Egypt just before the desolation of it began by their own ill conduct, which gradually weakened them, and prepared the way for the king of Babylon, ver. 20—26. It is all much to the same purpose with what we had before.

THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, prophesy and say,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Howl ye, Woe worth the day!
3 For the day *is* near,
Even the day of the LORD *is* near, a cloudy day
It shall be the time of the heathen.
4 And the sword shall come upon Egypt,
And great pain shall be in Ethiopia,
When the slain shall fall in Egypt,
And they shall take away her multitude,
And her foundations shall be broken down.
5 Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia,
And all the mingled people, and Chub,
And the men of the land that is in league,
Shall fall with them by the sword.
6 Thus saith the LORD;
They also that uphold Egypt shall fall;
And the pride of her power shall come down:
From the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword,
Saith the Lord GOD.

SYENE.

7 And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries *that are* desolate,
And her cities shall be in the midst of the cities *that are* wasted.
8 And they shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I have set a fire in Egypt,
And *when* all her helpers shall be destroyed.
9 In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships
To make the careless Ethiopians afraid,
And great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt:
For, lo, it cometh.
10 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease
By the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon.
11 He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations,
Shall be brought to destroy the land:
And they shall draw their swords against Egypt,
And fill the land with the slain.
12 And I will make the rivers dry,
And sell the land into the hand of the wicked:
And I will make the land waste, and all that is therein,

RUINS AT KARNACK.—ver. 7.

By the hand of strangers:
I the LORD have spoken *it*.
13 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
I will also destroy the idols,
And I will cause *their* images to cease out of Noph;
And there shall be no more a prince of the land of [Egypt:
And I will put a fear in the land of Egypt.
14 And I will make Pathros desolate,
And will set fire in Zoan,
And will execute judgments in No.
15 And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of [Egypt;
And I will cut off the multitude of No.
16 And I will set fire in Egypt:
Sin shall have great pain,
And No shall be rent asunder,
And Noph *shall have* distresses daily.
17 The young men of Aven and of Pi-beseth shall fall by the [sword:
And these *cities* shall go into captivity.

AVEN—HELIOPOLIS.

18 At Tehaphnehes also the day shall be darkened,
When I shall break there the yokes of Egypt:
And the pomp of her strength shall cease in her:
As for her, a cloud shall cover her,
And her daughters shall go into captivity
19 Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt:
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

The prophecy of the destruction of Egypt is here very full and particular, as well as in the general very frightful. What can protect a provoking people when a righteous God comes forth to contend with them?

First. It shall be a very lamentable destruction, and such as shall occasion great sorrow; ver. 2, 3, "Howl ye," you may justly shriek now it is coming, for you will be made to shriek and make hideous outcries when it comes. Cry out, "Woe worth the day!" Or, 'Oh the day! alas, because of the day!' the terrible day, woe and alas! "for the day is near;" the day we have so long dreaded, so long deserved; it is the "day of the Lord," the day in which he will manifest himself as a God of vengeance. You have your day now, when you carry all before you, and trample on all about you; but God will have his day now shortly, the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment, *Ps.* xxxvii. 13. It will be a cloudy day, that is, dark and dismal, without the shining forth of any comfort; and it shall threaten a storm, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. It shall be the time of the heathen, that is, of reckoning with the heathen for all their heathenish practices; that time which David spoke of when God would pour out his fury upon the heathen, *Ps.* lxxix. 6; when they should sink, *Ps.* ix. 15.

Secondly. It shall be the destruction of Egypt, and of all the states and countries in confederacy with her, and in her neighbourhood. 1. Egypt herself shall fall; ver. 4, "The sword shall come upon Egypt," the sword of the Chaldeans, and it shall be a victorious sword, for the slain shall fall in Egypt, fall by it, fall before it. Is the country populous? they shall take away her multitude. Is it strong and well fixed? "Her foundations shall be broken down," and then the fabric, though built never so fine, never so high, will fall of course. 2. Her neighbours and inmates shall fall with her. When the slain fall so thick in Egypt "great pain shall be in Ethiopia," both that in Africa, which is on the neighbourhood of Egypt on one side, and that in Asia, which is near to it on the other side. When their neighbour's house was on fire they could not but apprehend their own in danger. Nor were their fears groundless, for they shall all "fall with them by the sword," ver. 5. Ethiopia and Libya, Chush and Phut, so the Hebrew names are, two of the sons of Ham who are mentioned, and Mizraim, that is, Egypt, between them, *Gen.* x. 6. The Lydians, that were famous archers, are spoken of as confederates with Egypt, *Jer.* xlvi. 9. These shall fall with Egypt and Chub—the Chaldeans, the inhabitants of the inner Libya. These and others were the mingled people; there were those of all these and other countries that, upon some account or other, resided in Egypt, as did also the men of the land that is in league,—some of the remains of the people of Israel and Judah, the children of the covenant, or league, as they are called, *Acts* iii. 25; the children of the promise, *Gal.* iv. 28. These sojourned in Egypt, contrary to God's command, and these shall fall with them. Note, Those that will take their lot with God's enemies shall have their lot with them; yea, though they be in profession the men of the land that is in league with God.

Thirdly. All that pretend to support the sinking interests of Egypt shall come down under her, shall come down with her, ver. 6. They that uphold Egypt shall fall, and then Egypt must fall of course. See the justice of God; Egypt pretended to uphold Jerusalem when that was tottering, but proved a deceitful reed, and now they that pretended to uphold Egypt shall prove no better. Those that deceive others are commonly paid in their own coin, they are themselves deceived. 1. Doth Egypt think herself upheld by the absolute authority and dominion of her king? the pride of her power shall come down, ver. 6. The power of the king of Egypt was his pride; but that shall be broken and humbled. 2. Is the multitude of her people her support? these shall fall by the sword, even from the tower of Syene, which is in the utmost corner of the land, from that side of it by which the enemy shall enter. Both the countries and the cities, the husbandmen and the merchants, shall be desolate, ver. 7, as before, *ch.* xxix. 12. Even "the multitude of Egypt" shall be made to cease, ver. 10; that populous country shall be depopulated. The land shall be even "filled with the slain," ver. 11. 3. Is the river Nile her support, and the several channels of it a defence to her? I will make the rivers dry, ver. 12, so that those natural fortifications which were thought impregnable, because impassable, shall stand them in no stead. 4. Are her idols a support to her? Those shall be destroyed, those imaginary upholders shall appear more than ever to be imaginary, for so images are when they pretend to be deliverers and strongholds; ver. 13, "I will cause their images to cease out of Noph." 5. Is her royal family her support? "There shall be no more a prince in the land of Egypt." The royal family shall be extirpated and extinguished, which had continued so long. 6. Is her courage her support? and doth she think to uphold herself by the bravery of her men of war, who have now of late been inured to service? That shall fail; "I will put a fear in the land of Egypt." 7. Is the rising generation her support? Is she upheld by her children? And doth she think herself happy because she hath her quiver full of them? Alas! "the young men shall fall by the sword," ver. 17, and "the daughters shall go into captivity," ver. 18, and so she shall be robbed of all her hopes.

Fourthly. God shall inflict these desolating judgments on Egypt; ver. 8, "They shall know that I am the Lord," and greater than all gods, than all their gods, when I have "set a fire in Egypt." The fire that consumes nations is of God's kindling, and when he sets fire to a people "all their helpers shall be destroyed;" those that go about to quench the fire shall themselves be devoured by it, for who can stand before him when he is angry? When he pours out his fury upon a place, when he sets fire to it, ver. 15, 16, neither its strength nor its multitude can stand it in any stead.

Fifthly. The king of Babylon and his army shall be employed as instruments of this destruction. "The multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease," and be quite cut off, "by the hand of the king of Babylon," ver. 10. They that undertook to protect Israel from the king of Babylon shall not be able to protect themselves. It is said of the Chaldeans who should destroy Egypt, 1. That they are strangers, ver. 12, who therefore shall shew no compassion for old acquaintance sake, but shall carry it strangely towards them. 2. That they are "the terrible of the nations," ver. 11, both in respect of force and in respect of fierceness; and being terrible, they shall make terrible work. 3. That they are the wicked, who will not be restrained by reason and conscience, the laws of nature or the laws of nations, for they are without law. "I will sell the land into the hand of the wicked." They do violence unjustly,—wicked as they are, yet, as far as they are instruments in God's hand of executing his judgments, it is on his part justly done. Note, God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another, and even wicked men acquire a title to prey, *jure belli*,—'by the laws of war,' for God "sells it into their hands."

Sixthly. No place in the land of Egypt shall be exempted from the fury of the Chaldean army, not the strongest, not the remotest; "The sword shall go through the land." Divers places are here named—Pathros, Zoan, and No, ver. 14; Sin and Noph, ver. 15, 16; Aven and Pi-beseth, ver. 17; Tehaphnehes, ver. 18. These shall be made desolate, shall be fired, and God's judgments shall be executed upon them, and his fury poured out upon them. Their strength and multitude shall be cut off; they shall have great pain, shall be rent asunder with fear, and shall have distresses daily; their day shall be darkened, their honours, comforts, and hopes shall be extinguished; their yokes shall be broken, so that they shall no more oppress and tyrannize as they have done; the "pomp of their strength shall cease," and "a cloud shall cover them," a cloud so thick that through it they shall not see any hopes, nor shall their glory be seen or shine farther. And, lastly, the Ethiopians that are at a distance from them, as well as those that are mingled with them, shall share in their pain and terror; God will by his providence spread the rumour, and the careless Ethiopians shall be made afraid, ver. 9. Note, God can strike a terror upon those that are most secure. Fearfulness shall, when he pleases, surprise the most presumptuous hypocrites.

The close of this prediction leaves, 1. The land of Egypt mortified. "Thus will I execute judgment on Egypt," ver. 19. The destruction of Egypt is the executing of judgments, which intimates not only that it is done justly for its sins, but that it is done regularly and legally, by a judicial sentence. All the executions God doth are according to his judgments. 2. The God of Israel herein glorified; "They shall know that I am the Lord." The Egyptians shall be made to know it, and the people of God shall be made to know it better. "The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth."

20 And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first *month*, in the seventh *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
21 Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt;
And, lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed,
To put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the [sword.
22 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I *am* against Pharaoh king of Egypt,
And will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken;
And I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand

23 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations,
And will disperse them through the countries.
24 And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon,
And put my sword in his hand:
But I will break Pharaoh's arms,
And he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded *man*.
25 But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon,
And the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon,
And he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt.
26 And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations,
And disperse them among the countries;
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

This short prophecy of the weakening the power of Egypt was delivered about the time that the army of the Egyptians which attempted to raise the siege of Jerusalem were frustrated in their enterprise, and returned *re infecta*, —'without accomplishing their purpose;' whereupon the king of Babylon renewed the siege, and carried his point. The kingdom of Egypt was very ancient, and had been many ages considerable; that of Babylon was but lately arrived to its great pomp and power, being built upon the ruins of the kingdom of Assyria. Now it is with them as it is with families and states, some are growing up, others are declining and going back; one must increase, and the other must of course decrease.

First. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Egypt shall grow weaker and weaker. The extent of his territories shall be abridged, his wealth and power shall be diminished, and he shall become less able than ever to help either himself or his friend. 1. This was in part done already; ver. 21, "I have broken the arm of Pharaoh" some time ago. One arm of that kingdom might well be reckoned broken when the king of Babylon routed the forces of Pharaoh-necho at Carchemish, *Jer.* xlvi. 2, and made himself master of "all that pertained to Egypt from the river of Egypt to Euphrates," 2 *Kin.* xxiv. 7. Egypt had been long in gathering strength and extending its dominions; and, therefore, that there may be a proportion observed in providence, it loseth its strength slowly and by degrees. It was soon after the king of Egypt slew good king Josiah, and in the same reign, that its arm was thus broken, and it received that fatal blow which it never recovered. Before Egypt's heart and neck were broken its arm was. God's judgments come upon a people by steps, that they may meet him repenting. When the arm of Egypt is broken, "it shall not be bound up to be healed," for none can heal the wounds that God gives but he himself. Those whom he disarms, whom he disables, cannot again hold the sword. 2. This was to be done again. One arm was broken before, and something was done towards the setting of it, towards the healing of the deadly wound that was given to the beast. But now, ver. 22, "I am against Pharaoh, and will break" both "his arms;" both the strong, and that which was broken and set again. Note, If lesser judgments do not prevail to humble and reform sinners, God will send greater. Now God will "cause the sword to fall out of his hand," which he caught hold of, as thinking himself strong enough to hold it. It is repeated, ver. 24, "I will break Pharaoh's arms." He had been a cruel oppressor to the people of God formerly, and of late the staff of a broken rod to them; and now God, by breaking his arms, reckons with him for both. God justly breaks that power which is abused, either to put wrongs upon people or to put cheats upon them. But this is not all. 1st. The king of Egypt shall be dispirited when he finds himself in danger of the king of Babylon's forces, he "shall groan before him with the groaning of a deadly wounded man." Note, It is common for those that are most elevated in their prosperity to be most dejected and disheartened in their adversity. Pharoah, even before the sword toucheth him, shall groan as if he had received his death wound. 2nd. The people of Egypt shall be dispersed, ver. 23; and again, ver. 26, "I will scatter them among the nations." Other nations had mingled with them, ver. 5; now they shall be mingled with other nations, and seek shelter in them, and so be made to know that the Lord is righteous.

Secondly. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Babylon shall grow stronger and stronger, ver. 24, 25. It is said, and repeated, that God will, 1. Put strength into the king of Babylon's arms, that he may be able to go through the service he is designed for. 2. That he will put a sword, his sword, into the king of Babylon's hand, which signified his giving him a commission, and furnishing him with arms for carrying on a war, particularly against Egypt. Note, As judges on the bench, like Pilate, *Jno.* xix. 11, so generals in the field, like Nebuchadnezzar, have no power but what is given them from above.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The prophecy of this chapter, as the two chapters before, is against Egypt, and designed for the humbling and mortifying of Pharaoh. In passing sentence upon great criminals it is usual to consult precedents, and to see what has been done to others in the like case, which serves both to direct and justify the proceedings. Pharaoh stands indicted at the bar of Divine justice for his pride and haughtiness, and the injuries he had done to God's people; but he thinks himself so high, so great, as not to be accountable to any authority; so strong, and so well guarded, as not to be conquerable by any force. The prophet is therefore directed to make a report to him of the case of the king of Assyria, whose head city was Nineveh. I. He must shew him how great a monarch the king of Assyria had been, what a vast empire he had, what a mighty sway he bore; the king of Egypt, as great as he was, could not go beyond him, ver. 3—9. II. He must then shew him how like he was to the king of Assyria, in pride and carnal security, ver. 10. III. He must next read him the history of the fall and ruin of the king of Assyria, what a noise it made among the nations, and what a warning it gave to all potent princes to take heed of pride, ver. 11—17. IV. He must leave the king of Egypt to apply all this to himself, to see his own face in the looking-glass of the king of Assyria's sin, and to foresee his own fall through the perspective glass of his ruin, ver. 18.

AND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third *month*, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
2 Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude;
Whom art thou like in thy greatness? [branches,
3 Behold, the Assyrian *was* a cedar in Lebanon with fair
And with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature;
And his top was among the thick boughs.
4 The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high
With her rivers running round about his plants, [field.
And sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the
5 Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, [long
And his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became
Because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth.
6 All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs,
And under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young,
And under his shadow dwelt all great nations.
7 Thus was he fair in his greatness,
In the length of his branches:
For his root was by great waters.
8 The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him:
The fir trees were not like his boughs,
And the chesnut trees were not like his branches;
Nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty.
9 I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches:
So that all the trees of Eden, that *were* in the garden of God, envied him.

This prophecy bears date the month before Jerusalem was taken, as that in the close of the foregoing chapter about four months before. When God's people were in the depth of their distress it would be some comfort to them, as it would serve likewise for a check to the pride and malice of their neighbours that insulted over them, to be told from heaven that the cup was going round, even the cup of trembling; that it would shortly be taken out of the hands of God's people and put into the hands of those that hated them, *Isa.* li. 22, 23. In this prophecy,

First. The prophet is directed to put Pharaoh upon searching the records for a case parallel to his own; ver. 2, Speak to Pharaoh, and to his multitude, to the multitude of his attendants, that contributed so much to his magnificence, and the multitude of his armies, that contributed so much to his strength. These he was proud of, these he put a confidence in, and they were as proud of him, and trusted as much in him. Now ask him, "Whom art thou like in thy greatness?" We are apt to judge of ourselves by comparison. Those that think highly of themselves fancy themselves as great and as good as such and such that have been mightily celebrated. The flatterers of princes tell them whom they equal in pomp and grandeur. Well, saith God, let him pitch upon the most famous potentate that ever was, and it shall be allowed that he is like him in greatness, and no way inferior to him; but, let him pitch upon whom he will, he will find that his day came to fall; he will see there was an end of all his perfection, and must therefore expect the end of his own in like manner. Note, The falls of others both into sin and ruin are intended as admonitions to us not to be secure or high-minded, nor to think we stand out of danger.

Secondly. He is directed to shew him an instance of one whom he resembled in greatness, and that was the Assyrian, ver. 3, whose monarchy had continued from Nimrod. Sennacherib was one of the mighty princes of that monarchy, but it sunk down soon after him, and the monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar was built upon its ruins, or rather grafted upon its stock. Let us now see what a flourishing prince the king of Assyria was. He is here compared to a stately cedar, ver. 3. The glory of the house of David is illustrated by the same similitude, *ch.* xvii. 3. The olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, which were all fruit-trees, had refused to be promoted over the trees because they would not leave their fruitfulness, *Jud.* ix. 8. And therefore the choice falls upon the cedar, that is stately and strong, and casts a great shadow, but bears no fruit.

1. The Assyrian monarch was a tall cedar, such as the cedars in Lebanon generally were, of a high stature, and "his top among the thick boughs;" he was attended by other princes that were tributaries to him, and was surrounded by a life-guard of brave men. He surpassed all the princes in his neighbourhood, they were all shrubs to him; ver. 5, "His height was exalted above all the trees of the field," they were many of them very high, but he overtopped them all, ver. 8. The cedars, even those in the garden of Eden, which we may suppose were the best of the kind, "would not hide him," but his top branches outshot theirs.

2. He was a spreading cedar. His branches did not only run up in height, but run out in breadth, noting that this mighty prince was not only exalted to dignity and honour, and had a name above the names of the great men of the earth but that he obtained great dominion and power; his territories were large, and he extended his conquests far, and his influence much farther. This cedar, like a vine, sent forth "his branches to the sea, to the river," *Ps.* lxxx. 11; "His boughs were multiplied, his branches became long," ver. 5, so that "he had a shadowing shroud," ver. 3. This contributed very much to his beauty, that he grew proportionably large as well as high. He was "fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches," ver. 7, very comely as well as very stately, "fair by the multitude of his branches," ver. 9. His large dominions were well managed, like a spreading tree that is kept in shape and good order by the skill of the gardener, so as to be very beautiful to the eye. His government was as amiable in the eyes of the wise men as it was admirable in the eyes of all men. The fir-trees were not like his boughs, so straight, so green, so regular, nor

were the branches of chesnut-trees like his branches, so thick, so spreading; in short, "no tree in the garden of God," in Eden, in Babylon, for that stood where Paradise was planted. There where there was every tree that was pleasant to the sight, *Gen.* ii. 9, there was none like "to this cedar in beauty;" that is, in all the nations about there was no prince so much admired, so much courted, and whom everybody was so much in love with, as the king of Assyria. Many of them did virtuously, but he excelled them all, outshone them all. "All the trees of Eden envied him," ver. 9. When they found they could not compare with him they were angry and grieved that he so far outdid them, and secretly grudged him the praise due to him. Note, It is the unhappiness of those who in any thing excel others that thereby they make themselves the objects of envy; and "who can stand before envy?"

3. He was serviceable, as far as a standing, growing cedar could be, and that was only by his shadow; ver. 6, "All the fowls of heaven," some of all sorts, "made their nests in his boughs," where they were sheltered from the injuries of the weather. The beasts of the field put themselves under the protection of his branches; there they were levant and couchant, there they brought forth their young, for they had there a natural covert from the heat and from the storm. The meaning of all is, "Under his shadow dwelt all great nations;" they all fled to him for safety, and were willing to swear allegiance to him if he would undertake to protect them, as travellers in a shower come under thick trees for shelter. Note, Those who have power ought to use it for the protection and comfort of those whom they have power over, for to that end they are intrusted with power. Even the bramble, if he be anointed king, invites the trees to come and trust in his shadow, *Jud.* ix. 15. But the utmost security that any creature, even the king of Assyria himself, can give, is but like the shadow of a tree, which is but a scanty and slender protection, and leaves a man many ways exposed. Let us, therefore, flee to God for protection, and he will take us under the shadow of his wings, where we shall be warmer and safer than under the shadow of the strongest and stateliest cedar. *Ps.* xvii. 8; xci. 4.

4. He seemed to be settled and established in his greatness and power. For, 1st. It was God that made him fair, ver. 9; for by him kings reign. He was comely with the comeliness that God put upon him. Note, God's hand must be eyed and owned in the advancement of the great men of the earth, and therefore we must not envy them; yet will not that secure the continuance of their prosperity, for he that gave them their beauty, if they be deprived of it, knows how to turn it into deformity. 2nd. He seemed to have a good bottom. This cedar was not like the "heath in the desert, made to inhabit the parched places," *Jer.* xvii. 6; it was not a "root in a dry ground," *Isa.* liii. 2. No, he had abundance of wealth to support his power and grandeur; ver. 4, "The waters made him great;" he had vast treasures, large stores and magazines, which were as "the deep that set him up on high;" constant revenues coming in by taxes, customs, and crown rents, which were "as rivers running round about his plants." These enabled him to strengthen and secure his interests everywhere; for he "sent out his little rivers," or conduits, "to all the trees of the field" to water them; and when they had "maintenance from the king's palace," *Ezr.* iv. 14, and "their country was nourished by the king's country," *Acts* xii. 20, they would be serviceable and faithful to him. Those that have wealth flowing upon them in great riches find themselves obliged to send it out again in little rivers; for, "as goods are increased they are increased that eat them," and the more men have the more occasion they have for it; yea, and still the more they have occasion for. The branches of this cedar became long, because of the multitude of waters which fed them, ver. 5; and ver. 7, "his root was by great waters," which seems to secure it that its "leaf should never wither," *Ps.* i. 3; that it should not "see when heat comes," *Jer.* xvii. 8. Note, Worldly people may seem to have an established prosperity, yet it only seems so, *Job* v. 7; *Ps.* xxxvii. 35.

10 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height,
And he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs,
And his heart is lifted up in his height;
11 I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen;
He shall surely deal with him:
I have driven him out for his wickedness.
12 And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off,
And have left him:
Upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen,
And his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land;
And all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow,
And have left him.
13 Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain,
And all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches:
14 To the end
That none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height,
Neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs,
Neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water:
For they are all delivered unto death,
To the nether parts of the earth,
In the midst of the children of men,
With them that go down to the pit.
15 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning:
I covered the deep for him,
And I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed:
And I caused Lebanon to mourn for him,
And all the trees of the field fainted for him.
16 I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall,
When I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit:
And all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water,
Shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.
17 They also went down into hell with him
Unto *them that be* slain with the sword;
And *they that were* his arm, *that* dwelt under his shadow
In the midst of the heathen.
18 To whom art thou thus like in glory
And in greatness among the trees of Eden?
Yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden
Unto the nether parts of the earth:
Thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised
With *them that be* slain by the sword. [GOD.
This *is* Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord

We have seen the king of Egypt resembling the king of Assyria in pomp, and power, and prosperity, how like he was to him in his greatness. Now here we see,

First. How he doth likewise resemble him in his pride, ver. 10; for as face answers to face in a glass so doth one corrupt carnal heart to another, and the same temptations of a prosperous state by which some are overcome are fatal to many others too. "Thou," O king of Egypt, "hast lifted up thyself in height," hast been proud of thy wealth and power, *ch.* xxix. 3. And just so "he," that is, the king of Assyria, when he had "shot up his top among the thick boughs," his heart was presently "lifted up in his height," and he grew insolent and imperious, set God himself at defiance, and trampled upon his people. Witness the messages and letter which the great king, the king of Assyria, sent to Hezekiah, *Isa.* xxxvi. 4. How haughtily doth he speak of himself and his own achievements, how scornfully of that great and good man! There were other sins in which the Egyptians and the Assyrians did concur, particularly that of oppressing God's people. It is charged upon them both together, *Isa.* lii. 4; but here that sin is run up to its cause, and that was pride, for it is the contempt of the proud that they are filled with. Note, When men's outward condition riseth their minds commonly rise with it; and it is very rare to find an humble spirit in the midst of great advancements.

Secondly. How he shall therefore resemble him in his fall. And for the opening of this part of the comparison,

1. Here is a history of the fall of the king of Assyria. For his part, saith God, ver. 11, "I have therefore," because he was thus lifted up, "delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen." Cyaxares, king of the Medes, in the twenty-sixth year of his reign, in conjunction with Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, destroyed Nineveh, and with it the Assyrian empire. Nebuchadnezzar, though he was not then, yet afterwards became, very emphatically the mighty one of the heathen; most mighty among them, and most mighty over them to prevail against them. 1st. It is God himself that orders his ruin. "I have delivered him into the hand" of the executioner, "I have driven him out." Note, God is the judge who puts down one and sets up another, *Ps.* lxxvi. 7; and, when he pleaseth, he can extirpate and expel those who think themselves, and seem to others, to have taken deepest root. And the mightiest ones of the heathen could not gain their point against those they contended with, if the Almighty himself did not deliver them into their hands. 2nd. It is his own sin that procures his ruin. "I have driven him out for his wickedness." None are driven out from their honour, power, and possessions, but it is "for their wickedness." None of our comforts are ever lost but what have been a thousand times forfeited. If the wicked are driven away, it is in their wickedness. 3rd. It is a "mighty one of the heathen" that shall be the instrument of his ruin; for God often employs one wicked man in punishing another. "He shall surely deal with him," shall know how to manage him, as great as he is. Note, Proud imperious men will, sooner or later, meet with their match. Now, in this history of the fall of the Assyrian, observe,

First. A continuation of the similitude of the cedar. He grew very high, and extended his boughs very far; but his day comes to fall. 1*st.* This stately cedar was cropped; "The terrible of the nations cut him off." Soldiers who, being both armed and commissioned to kill and slay, and to destroy, may well be reckoned among "the terrible of the nations," they have lopped off his branches first, have seized upon some parts of his dominion and forced them out of his hands; so that in all mountains and valleys of the nations about, in the highlands and lowlands, and by all the rivers, there were cities or countries that were broken off from the Assyrian monarchy, that had been subjected to it, but were either revolted or recovered from it. Its feathers were borrowed, and when every bird had fetched back its own it was naked like the stump of a tree. 2*nd.* It was deserted. "All the people of the earth," that had fled to him for shelter, are "gone down from his shadow, and have left him." When he was disabled to give them protection they thought they no longer owed him allegiance. Let not great men be proud of the number of those that attend them, and have a dependence upon them; it is only for what they can get. When providence frowns upon them their retinue is soon dispersed and scattered from them. 3*rd.* It was insulted over, and its fall triumphed in; ver. 13, "Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain," to tread upon the broken branches of this cedar. Its fall is triumphed in by the other trees, who were angry to see themselves overtopped so much; "all the trees of Eden" that were cut down and fallen before him, all that drank water of the rain of heaven, as the stump of the tree that is left in the south is said to be "wet with the dew of heaven," *Dan.* iv. 23, and to bud "through the scent of water," *Job.* xiv. 9. They shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth, when they see this proud cedar brought as low as themselves. *Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris,*—'To have companions in woe is a solace to those who suffer.' But, on the contrary, the trees of Lebanon, that are yet standing in their height and strength, "mourned for him," and "the trees of the field fainted for him," because they could not but read their own destiny in his fall. "Howl, fir-trees, if the cedar be shaken," for they cannot expect to stand long, *Zec.* xi. 2.

Secondly. A reddition of the similitude of the cedar. By the cutting down of this cedar is signified the slaughter of this mighty monarch, and all his adherents and supporters, they are all "delivered to death," to fall by the sword, as the cedar by the axe. He and his princes, who, he said, were altogether kings, go down to the grave, "to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men," as common persons of no quality or distinction; they "die like men," *Ps.* lxxxii. 7; they were carried away with "them that go down to the pit," and their pomp did neither protect them nor "descend after them." Again, ver. 16, he was "cast down to hell with them that descend into the pit." He went into the state of the dead, and was buried as others are, in obscurity and oblivion. Again, ver. 17, "They all that were his arm," on whom he stayed, by whom he acted and exerted his power, all "that dwelt under his shadow," his subjects and allies, and all that had any dependence on him, they all went down into ruin, down into the grave "with him, unto them that were slain with the sword," to those that were cut off by untimely deaths before them, under the load of guilt and shame. When great men fall, a great many fall with them, as a great many in like manner have fallen before them.

Thirdly. What God designed and aimed at in bringing down this mighty monarch and his monarchy. He designed thereby, 1*st.* To give an alarm to the nations about; to put them all to a stand, to put them all to a gaze; ver. 16, "I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall." They were all struck with astonishment to see so mighty a prince brought down thus; it gave a shock to all their confidences, every one thinking his turn would be next, "when he went down to the grave;" ver. 15, "I caused a mourning," a general lamentation, as the whole kingdom goes into mourning at the death of the king. In token of this general grief "I covered the deep for him," put that into black, gave a stop to business in complaisance to this universal mourning: "I restrained the floods, and the great waters were stayed," that they might run in another channel, that of lamentation. Lebanon particularly, the kingdom of Syria, that was sometimes in confederacy with the Assyrian, mourned for him, as the ally of Babylon, *Rev.* xviii. 9. 2*nd.* To give an admonition to the nations about, and to their kings; ver. 14, "to the end that none of all the trees by the waters," though never so advantageously situated, "may exalt themselves for their height," may be proud and conceited of themselves, and "shoot up their top among the thick boughs," looking disdainfully upon others, nor "stand upon themselves for their height," confiding in their own policies and powers, as if they could never be brought down. Let them all take warning by the Assyrian, for he once held up his head as high, and thought he kept his footing as firm, as any of them; but his pride went before his destruction, and his confidence failed him. Note, The fall of proud, presumptuous men is intended for a warning to others to keep humble. It had been well for Nebuchadnezzar, who was himself active in bringing down the Assyrian, if he had taken the admonition.

2. Here is a prophecy of the fall of the king of Egypt in like manner, ver. 18. He thought himself like the "Assyrian in glory and greatness," overtopping "all the trees of Eden," as the cypress doth the shrubs. But thou also "shalt be brought down," with other the trees that are pleasant to the sight, as those in Eden. Thou shalt be brought to the grave, to the nether or lower parts of the earth, thou shalt "lie in the midst of the uncircumcised," that die in their uncleanness, die ingloriously, die under a curse, and at a distance from God. Then shall those whom he has trampled upon triumph over him, saying, "This is Pharaoh, and all his multitude." See how mean he looks, how low he lies; see what all his pomp and pride is come to; here is all that is left of him. Note, Great men and great multitudes, with the great figure and great noise they make in the world, when God comes to contend with them will soon become little, less than nothing, such as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Still we are upon the destruction of Pharaoh and Egypt, which is wonderfully enlarged upon, and with a great deal of emphasis. When we read so very much of Egypt's ruin, no less than six several prophecies at divers times delivered concerning it, we are ready to think, surely there is some special reason for it. And, I. Perhaps it may look as far back as the book of Genesis, where we find, *ch.* xv. 14, that God determined to judge Egypt for oppressing his people; and though that was in part fulfilled in the plagues of Egypt, and the drowning of Pharaoh, yet in this destruction here foretold these old scores were reckoned for, and that was to have its full accomplishment. II. Perhaps it may look as far forward as the book of the *Revelation*, where we find that the great enemy of the gospel church, that makes war with the Lamb, is spiritually called Egypt, *Rev.* xi. 8; and if so, the destruction of Egypt, and its Pharaoh, was a type of the destruction of that proud enemy; and betwixt this prophecy of the ruin of Egypt and the prophecy of the destruction of the antichristian generation there is some analogy. We have two distinct prophecies in this chapter relating to Egypt; both in the same month, one on the first day, the other that day fortnight, probably both on the sabbath-day. They are both lamentations, not only to signify how lamentable the fall of Egypt should be, but to intimate how much the prophet himself should lament it, from a generous principle of love to mankind. The destruction of Egypt is here represented under two similitudes. 1. The killing of a lion or a whale, or some such devouring creature, ver. 1—16; 2. The funeral of a great commander or captain-general, ver. 17—32. The two prophecies of this chapter are much of the same length.

AND it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

2 Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him,

Thou art like a young lion of the nations,
And thou *art* as a whale in the seas:
And thou camest forth with thy rivers,
And troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their

3 Thus saith the Lord GOD; [rivers.
I will therefore spread out my net over thee with a company of many people;
And they shall bring thee up in my net.

4 Then will I leave thee upon the land,
I will cast thee forth upon the open field, [thee,
And will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon
And I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee.

5 And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains,
And fill the valleys with thy height.

6 I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou
Even to the mountains; [swimmest,
And the rivers shall be full of thee.

7 And when I shall put thee out,
I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark;
I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light.

8 All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee,
And set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD.

9 I will also vex the hearts of many people,
When I shall bring thy destruction among the nations,
Into the countries which thou hast not known.

10 Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee,
And their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee,
When I shall brandish my sword before them;
And they shall tremble at *every* moment,
Every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall.

11 For thus saith the Lord GOD;
The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee

12 By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude
The terrible of the nations, all of them: [to fall,
And they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt,
And all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed.

13 I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters;
Neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more,
Nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them.

14 Then will I make their waters deep,
And cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord GOD.

15 When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate,
And the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full,
When I shall smite all them that dwell therein,
Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD.

16 This *is* the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her:
The daughters of the nations shall lament her:
They shall lament for her, *even* for Egypt,
And for all her multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

Here, First. The prophet is ordered to "take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt," ver. 2. It concerns ministers to be much of a serious spirit, and in order thereunto to be frequent in taking up lamentations for the fall and ruin of sinners, as those that have not desired, but dreaded, the woful day. Note, Ministers that would affect others with the things of God must make it appear that they are themselves affected with the miseries that sinners bring upon themselves by their sins. It becomes us to weep and tremble for those that will not weep and tremble for themselves, to try if thereby we may set them a weeping, set them a trembling.

Secondly. He is ordered to shew cause for that lamentation.

1. Pharaoh has been a troubler of the nations, even of his own nation, which he should have procured the repose of. He is "like a young lion of the nations," ver. 2, loud and noisy, hectoring and threatening as a lion when he roars. Great potentates, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, are in God's account no better than beasts of prey. He is like "a whale" or dragon, like a crocodile, so some; "in the seas," very turbulent and vexatious, as the leviathan that "makes the deep to boil like a pot," *Job* xli. 31. When Pharaoh engaged in an unnecessary war with the Cyrenians he "came forth with his rivers," with his armies, "troubled the waters," disturbed his own kingdom, and the neighbour nations, "fouled the rivers," and made them muddy. Note, A great deal of disquiet is often given to the world by the restless ambition and implacable resentments of proud princes. Ahab is he that troubles Israel, and not Elijah.

2. He that has troubled others must expect to be himself troubled; for the Lord is righteous, *Jos.* vii. 25.

1st. This is set forth here by a comparison. Is Pharaoh like a great whale, which, when it comes up the river, gives great disturbance, a leviathan which Job cannot draw out with a hook, *Job* xli. 1, yet God has a net for him which is large enough to inclose him, and strong enough to secure him; ver. 3, "I will spread my net over thee," even the army of the Chaldeans, a "company of many people." They shall force him out of his fastness, dislodge him out of his possessions, throw him like a great fish upon dry ground, upon the open field, ver. 4; where, being out of his element, he must die of course, and be a prey to the birds and beasts, as was foretold, *ch.* xxix. 5. What can the strongest fish do to help itself when it is out of the water, and lies gasping? The flesh of this great whale shall be "laid upon the mountains," ver. 5; and the valleys shall be "filled with his height." Such numbers of Pharaoh's soldiers shall be slain that the dead bodies shall be scattered upon the hills, and there shall be heaps of them piled up in the valleys. Blood shall be shed in such abundance as to swell the rivers in the valleys. Or, such shall be the bulk, such the height, of this leviathan that, when he is laid upon the ground, he shall fill a valley.

Such vast quantities of blood shall issue from this leviathan as shall "water the land of Egypt," the land wherein now he swims, now he sports himself, ver. 6. It shall reach "to the mountains," and the waters of Egypt shall again be "turned into blood;" by this means the "rivers shall be full of thee." The judgments executed upon Pharaoh of old are expressed by the "breaking of the heads of the leviathan in the waters," *Ps.* lxxiv. 13, 14. But now they go farther; this old serpent has now not only his head bruised, but is all crushed to pieces.

2nd. It is set forth by a prophecy of the deep impression which the destruction of Egypt should make upon the neighbour nations; it would put them all into a consternation, as the fall of the Assyrian monarchy did, *ch.* xxxi. 15, 16. When Pharaoh, that had been like a blazing, burning torch, is put out and extinguished, it shall make all about him look black, ver. 7; the heavens shall be hung with black, the stars darkened, the sun eclipsed, and the moon be deprived of her borrowed light. It is from the upper world that this lower receives its light; and therefore, ver. 8, when the bright lights of heaven are made dark above, darkness by consequence is set upon the land, upon the earth—so it shall be on the land of Egypt. Here the plague of darkness, which was upon Egypt of old for three days, seems to be alluded to as before, the turning of the waters into blood. For when former judgments are forgotten it is just they should be repeated. When their privy councillors and statesmen, and those that have the conduct of the public affairs, are deprived of wisdom, and made fools, and the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes, then their lights are darkened, and the land is in a mist. This is foretold, *Isa.* xix. 13, "The princes of Zoan are become fools." Now upon the spreading of the report of the fall of Egypt, and the bringing of the news to remote countries, "countries which they had not known," ver. 9, people shall be much affected, and shall feel themselves sensibly touched by it. *First.* It shall fill them with vexation to see such an ancient, wealthy, potent kingdom thus humbled and brought down, and the pride of worldly glory, which they have such a value for, stained. The hearts of many people will be vexed to see the word of the God of Israel fulfilled in the destruction of Egypt, and that all the gods of Egypt were not able to relieve it. Note, The destruction of some wicked people is a vexation to others. *Secondly.* It shall fill them with admiration, ver. 10; they shall be amazed at thee, shall wonder to see so great riches and power come to nothing, *Rev.* xviii. 17. Note, They that admire with complacency the pomp of this world will admire with consternation the ruin of that pomp, which, to those that know the vanity of all things here below, is no surprise at all. *Thirdly.* It shall fill them with fear; even their kings, that think it their prerogative to be secure, shall be horribly afraid for thee, concluding their own house to be in danger when their neighbour's is on fire. "When I shall brandish my sword before them they shall tremble every man for his own life." Note, When the sword of God's justice is drawn against some to cut them off, it is thereby brandished before others to give them warning; and those that will not be admonished by it, and made to reform, yet shall be frightened by it, and made to tremble; "They shall tremble every moment because of thy fall." When others are ruined by sin we have reason to quake for fear, as knowing ourselves guilty and obnoxious. "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?"

3rd. It is set forth by a plain and express prediction of the desolation itself that should come upon Egypt. *First,* The instruments of the desolation appear here very formidable. It is the sword of the king of Babylon, that warlike, that victorious prince, that shall come upon thee, ver. 11; "The swords of the mighty," even the "terrible of the nations, all of them," ver. 12; an army that there is no standing before. Note, Those that delight in war, and are upon all occasions entering into contention, may expect, some time or other, to be engaged with those that will prove too hard for them. Pharaoh had been forward to quarrel with his neighbour, and to come forth with his rivers, with his armies, ver. 2; but God will now give him enough of it. *Secondly.* The instances of the desolation appear here very frightful, much the same with what we had before, *ch.* xxix. 10—12; xxx. 7. 1*st.* The multitude of Egypt shall be destroyed; not decimated, some picked out to be made examples, but all cut off. Note, The numbers of sinners, though they be a multitude, will neither secure them against God's power nor entitle them to his pity. 2*nd.* The pomp of Egypt shall be spoiled; the pomp of their court, what they have been proud of. Note, In renouncing the pomps of this world we did ourselves a great kindness, for they are things that are soon spoiled, and cheat their admirers. 3*rd.* The cattle of Egypt, that used to feed by the rivers, shall be destroyed, ver. 13; neither cut off by the sword nor carried off for a prey. Egypt was famous for horses, which would be an acceptable booty to the Chaldeans. The rivers shall be no more frequented as they have been by man and beast that came hither to drink. 4*th.* The waters of Egypt that used to flow briskly shall now grow deep, and slow, and heavy, and shall run like oil, ver. 14; a figurative expression, signifying that there should be such an universal sadness and heaviness upon the whole nation, that even the rivers should go softly and silently like mourners, and quite forget their rapid motion. 5*th.* The whole country of Egypt shall be stripped of its wealth; it shall be "destitute of that whereof it was full," ver. 15; corn and cattle, and all the pleasant fruits of the earth. When those are "smitten that dwell therein," the ground is untilled, and that which is gathered becomes an easy prey to the invader. Note, God can soon empty those of this world's goods that have the greatest fulness of those things and are full of them, that enjoy most and have their hearts set upon those enjoyments. The Egyptians were full of their pleasant and plentiful country, and the rich products of it. Every one that talked with them might perceive how much it filled them; but God can soon make their "country destitute of that whereof it is full;" it is therefore our wisdom to be full of treasures in heaven. When the country is made destitute, (1.) It shall be an instruction to them; "Then shall they know that I am the Lord." A sensible conviction of the vanity of the world, and the fading, perishing nature of all things in it, will contribute much to our right knowledge of God as our portion and happiness. (2.) It shall be a lamentation to all about them. "The daughters of the nations shall lament her," ver. 16, either because, being in alliance with her, they share in her grievances, and suffer with her; or, being admirers of her, they at least share in her grief, and sympathise with her. They shall lament "for Egypt and all her multitude;" it shall grieve them to see so great a devastation made. By enlarging the matters of our joy we increase the occasions of our sorrow.

17 It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

18 Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down,
Even her, and the daughters of the famous nations,
Unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit.

19 Whom dost thou pass in beauty?
Go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised.

20 They shall fall in the midst of *them that are* slain by the sword:
She is delivered to the sword: [sword:
Draw her and all her multitudes.

21 The strong among the mighty shall speak to him
Out of the midst of hell with them that help him:
They are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. [about him:

22 Asshur *is* there and all her company: his graves *are*
All of them slain, fallen by the sword:

23 Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit,
And her company is round about her grave:
All of them slain, fallen by the sword,
Which caused terror in the land of the living. [grave,

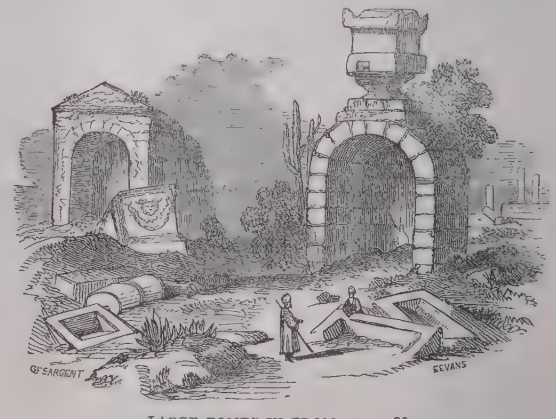
24 There *is* Elam and all her multitude round about her
All of them slain, fallen by the sword,
Which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth,
Which caused their terror in the land of the living;
Yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit.

25 They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain
With all her multitude: her graves *are* round about him:
All of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword:
Though their terror was caused in the land of the living,
Yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit:
He is put in the midst of *them that be* slain.

SCYTHIAN BARROWS.

26 There *is* Meshech, Tubal,
And all her multitude: her graves *are* round about him:
All of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword,
Though they caused their terror in the land of the living.

27 And they shall not lie with the mighty *that are* fallen of the uncircumcised,
Which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war:
And they have laid their swords under their heads,



LARGE TOMBS IN EDOM.—ver. 29.

But their iniquities shall be upon their bones,
Though *they were* the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, [cised,
28 Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircum-
And shalt lie with *them that are* slain with the sword.
29 There *is* Edom, her kings, and all her princes,
Which with their might are laid by *them that were* slain by the sword:
They shall lie with the uncircumcised,
And with them that go down to the pit.
30 There *be* the princes of the north, all of them,
And all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain;
With their terror they are ashamed of their might;
And they lie uncircumcised with *them that be* slain by the sword,
And bear their shame with them that go down to the pit.

SYRIAN TOMBS.

31 Pharaoh shall see them,
And shall be comforted over all his multitude,
Even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord GOD.
32 For I have caused my terror in the land of the living:
And he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised
With *them that are* slain with the sword,
Even Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

This prophecy concludes and completes the burthen of Egypt, and leaves it, and all its multitude, in the pit of destruction.

First. We are here invited to attend the funeral of that once flourishing kingdom, to lament its fall, and to take a view of those who attend it to the grave, and accompany it in the grave. This dead corpse of a kingdom is here,

1. Brought to the grave. The prophet is ordered to cast them down to the pit, ver. 18; to foretell it as one that had authority, as Jeremiah was set over the kingdom, *Jer.* i. 10. He must speak in God's name, and as from him who will cast them down; yet he must foretell it as one that had an affectionate concern for them; he must wail for the multitude of Egypt, even when he casts them down. When Egypt is slain, let her have an honourable funeral befitting her quality; let her be buried with the daughters of the famous nations, in their burying-places, and with the same ceremony. It is but a poor allay to the reproach and terror of death to be buried with those that were famous; yet this is all that is allowed to Egypt. Shall Egypt think to exempt herself from the common fate of proud and imperious nations? No; she must take her lot with them; ver. 19, "Whom dost thou pass in beauty?" Art thou so much fairer than any other nation that thou shouldest expect therefore to be excused? No; others, as fair as thou, are sunk into the pit. Go down, therefore, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised; thou art like them, and art likely to lie among them. The multitude of Egypt shall all "fall in the midst of them that are slain with the sword." Now there is a general slaughter made among the nations, Egypt, with the rest, must drink of the bloody cup, and therefore she is delivered to the sword, to the sword of war; but in God's hand the sword of justice is delivered to be publicly executed. Draw her and all her multitude; either draw them as the dead bodies of great men are drawn in honour to the grave in a hearse, or as malefactors are drawn in disgrace to the place of execution on a sledge; draw them to the pit, and let them be made a spectacle to the world.

2. This corpse of a kingdom is bid welcome to the grave, and Pharaoh is made free of the congregation of the dead, and admitted into their regions, not without some pomp and ceremony, as *Isa.* xiv. 9, &c. The surprising fall of the king of Babylon is thus illustrated, "Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming," and to introduce thee into those mansions of darkness; so here, ver. 20, "They shall speak to him out of the midst of hell," as it were congratulating his arrival, and calling him to join with them in acknowledging that name which neither he nor they would be brought to own, when they were in their pomp and pride,—that it is in vain to think of contesting with God, and none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. They shall say to him, and to him that pretended to help him, Where are ye now? What have you brought your attempts to at last? Divers nations are here mentioned as gone down to the grave before Egypt, that are ready to give her a scornful reception, and upbraid her with coming to them at last. These nations here spoken of were probably such as had been of late years ruined and wasted by the king of Babylon, and their princes cut off; let Egypt know that she has neighbours' fare. When she goes to the grave she doth but *migrare ad plures*,—'migrate to the majority;' there are innumerable before her. But it is observable that, though Judah and Jerusalem were just about this time, or a little before, utterly ruined and laid waste, yet they are not mentioned here among the nations that welcome Egypt to the pit; for though they suffered the same things that this nation suffered, and by the same hand, yet the kind intentions of their affliction, and its happy issue at last, and the mercy God had yet in reserve for them, altered the property of it: it was not to them a going down to the pit, as it was to the heathen; they were not smitten as others were, nor "slain according to the slaughter of other nations," *Isa.* xxvii. 7. But let us see who they are that are gone to the grave before Egypt, that "lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword," with whom she must now take up her lodging.

1st. There lies the Assyrian empire, and all the princes and mighty men of that monarchy; ver. 22, "Asshur is there and all her company;" all the countries that were tributaries to, and had dependence upon, that crown. That mighty potentate, that used to lie in state with his guards and grandees about him, now lies in obscurity, with his graves about him, and his soldiers in them, unable any longer to do him service or honour; they are "all of them slain, fallen by the sword." The number of their months was cut off in the midst, and, being bloody and deceitful men, they were not suffered to live out half their days. Their "graves were set in the sides of the pit," all in a row, like beds in a common chamber, ver. 23. All their company is such as were slain, fallen by the sword; a vast congregation there is of such, who had caused terror in the land of the living. But, as the death of those to whom they were a terror put an end to their fears, (in the grave the "prisoners rest together," and hear not the "voice of the oppressor," *Job* iii. 18,) so the death of these mighty men puts an end to their terrors. Who is afraid of a dead lion? Note, Death will be a king of terrors to those who, instead of making themselves blessings, made themselves terrors in their generation.

2nd. There lies the kingdom of Persia, which, perhaps within the memory of man at that time, had been wasted and brought down. "There is Elam and all her multitude," the king of Elam and his numerous armies, ver. 24, 25; they also had caused their terror in the land of the living, had made a fearful noise and bluster among the nations in their day. But Elam has now a grave by herself, and the graves of the common people round about her, fallen by the sword; she has her bed in the midst of the slain that went down uncircumcised, unsanctified, unholy, and not in covenant with God. They have "borne their shame with them that go down to the pit;" that is, they are fallen under the common disgrace and mortification of mankind, that they die and are buried; nay, they die under particular marks of ignominy which God and man put upon them. Note, They who cause their terror shall, sooner or later, bear their shame, and be made a terror to themselves. The king of Elam is "put in the midst of them that be slain." All the honour he can pretend to is to be buried in the chief sepulchre.

3rd. There lies the Scythian power, which about this time was busy in the world. Meshech and Tubal, those barbarous northern nations, had lately made a descent upon the Medes, and caused their terror among them, lived among them upon free quarter for some years, making every thing their own they could lay their hands on; but at length Cyaxares, king of the Medes, drew them by a wile into his power, cut off abundance of them, and obliged them to quit his country, ver. 26. There lie Meshech and Tubal, and all their multitude; there is a burying-place for them, with their chief commander in the midst of them, "all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword." These Scythians, dying ingloriously, as they lived, are not laid as the other nations spoken of before, in the bed of honour; ver. 27, "They shall not lie with the mighty," shall not be buried in state as those are, even by consent of the enemy, that are slain in the field of battle, that go down to their grave with their weapons of war carried before the hearse, or trailed after it, that have particularly "their swords laid under their heads," as if they could sleep sweeter in the grave when they laid their heads on such a pillow. These Scythians are not buried with these marks of honour, but "their iniquities shall be upon their sons;" they shall for their iniquity be left unburied, though they were the terror even of the mighty in the land of the living.

4th. There lies the kingdom of Edom, which had flourished long, but about this time, at least before the destruction of Egypt, was made quite desolate, as was foretold, *ch.* xxv. 13. Among the sepulchres of the nations there is Edom, ver. 29. There lie, not dignified with monuments or inscriptions, but mingled with common dust, "her kings and all her princes," her wise statesmen, (which Edom was famous for,) and her brave soldiers; these, "with their might, are laid by them that were slain by the sword." Their might could not prevent it, nay, their might helped to procure it, for that both encouraged them to engage in war and incensed their neighbours against them, who thought it necessary to curb their growing greatness. A deal of pains they took to ruin themselves, as many do, who with their might, with all their might, are laid by them that are slain with the sword. The Edomites retained circumcision, being of the seed of Abraham; but that shall stand them in no stead, they shall lie with the uncircumcised.

5th. There lie the "princes of the north," and all the Sidonians. These were as well acquainted with maritime affairs as the Egyptians were, who relied much upon that part of their strength; but they are gone down with the slain, ver. 30, down to the pit. Now they are ashamed of their might, ashamed to think how much they boasted of it and trusted to it; and, as the Edomites with their might, so these with their terror, are laid with them that are slain by the sword, and are forced to take their lot with them. They "bear their shame with them that go down to the pit," die in as much disgrace as those that are cut off by the hand of public justice.

6th. All this is applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who have no reason to flatter themselves with hope of tranquillity, when they see how the wisest, and wealthiest, and strongest of their neighbours have been laid waste; ver. 28, "Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised." When God is pulling down the unhumbled and unreformed nations, thou must expect to come down with them. *First.* It will be some extenuation of the miseries of Egypt to observe that it has been the case of so many great and mighty nations before; ver. 31, "Pharaoh shall see them and be comforted." It will be some ease to his mind that he is not the first king that has been slain in battle, his not the first army that has been routed, his not the first kingdom that has been made desolate. Mr. Greenhill observes here, 'that the comfort which wicked ones have after death is poor comfort, not real, but imaginary.' They will find little satisfaction in having so many fellow-sufferers; the rich man in hell dreaded it. It is only in point of honour that Pharaoh can "see and be comforted." *Secondly.* But nothing will be an exemption from these miseries; for, ver. 33, "I have caused my terror in the land of the living." Great men have caused their terror, have studied how to make every body fear them; *Oderint dum metuant*,—'Let them hate, so that they do but fear.' But now the grace of God

hath "caused his terror in the land of the living," and therefore he laughs at theirs, because he sees that his day is coming, *Ps.* xxxvii. 13. In this day of terror "Pharaoh and all his multitude" shall be "laid with them that are slain with the sword."

Secondly. The view which this prophecy gives us of ruined states may shew us something, 1. Of this present world and the empire of death in it. Come and see the calamitous state of human life, see what a dying world this is; the strong die, the mighty die, "Pharaoh and all his multitude." See what a killing world this is, they are "all slain with the sword." As if men did not die fast enough of themselves, men are ingenious at finding out ways to destroy one another. It is not only a great pit, but a great cock-pit. 2. Of the other world. Though it is the destruction of nations as such that is perhaps principally intended here, yet here is a plain allusion to the final and everlasting ruin of impenitent sinners, of those that are uncircumcised in heart: they are slain by the sword of Divine justice; their iniquity is upon them, and with it they bear their shame. Those of Christ's enemies that would not have him to reign over them shall be brought forth and slain before him, though they be as pompous, though they be as numerous, as "Pharaoh and all his multitude."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The prophet is now come off his circuit, which he went, as judge in God's name, to try and pass sentence upon the neighbour nations; and having finished with them, and read them all their doom in the eight chapters foregoing, he now returns to the children of his people, and receives farther instructions what to say to them. I. He must let them know what office he was in among them as a prophet; that he was a watchman, and had received a charge concerning them, for which he was accountable, ver. 1—9; the substance of this they had before, *ch.* iii. 17, &c. II. He must let them know upon what terms they stand with God; that they were upon their trial, upon their good behaviour, that if a wicked man repent he shall not perish, but if a righteous man apostatize he shall perish, ver. 10—20. III. Here is a particular message sent to those who yet remained in the land of Israel, and (which is very strange) grew secure there, and confident that they should take root there again, to tell them that their hopes would fail them, because they persisted in their sins, ver. 21—29. IV. Here is a rebuke to those who personally attended Ezekiel's ministry, but were not sincere in their professions of devotion, ver. 30—33.

AGAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them,

When I bring the sword upon a land,
If the people of the land take a man of their coasts,
And set him for their watchman:
3 If when he seeth the sword come upon the land,
He blow the trumpet, and warn the people;
4 Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning;
If the sword come, and take him away,
His blood shall be upon his own head.
5 He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning;
His blood shall be upon him.
But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.
6 But if the watchman see the sword come,
And blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned;
If the sword come, and take *any* person from among them,
He is taken away in his iniquity;
But his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.
7 So thou, O son of man,
I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel;
Therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. [surely die;
8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt
If thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way,
That wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity;
But his blood will I require at thine hand.
9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; [quity;
If he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his ini-
But thou hast delivered thy soul.

The prophet had been by express order from God taken off from prophesying to the Jews, just then when the news came that Jerusalem was invested, and close siege laid to it, *ch.* xxiv. 27. But now Jerusalem is taken, two years after, he is appointed again to direct his speech to them; and here his commission is renewed. If God had abandoned them quite he would not have sent prophets to them; nor, if he had not had mercy in store for them, would he have "shewed them such things as these." In these verses we have,

First. The office of a watchman laid down, the trust reposed in him, the charge given him, and the conditions adjusted between him and those that employ him, ver. 2—6.

1. It is supposed to be a public danger that gives occasion for the appointing of a watchman, when "God brings the sword upon a land," ver. 2. The sword of war, whenever it comes upon a land, is of God's bringing; it is "the sword of the Lord," of his justice, how unjustly soever men draw it. At such a time, when a country is in fear of a foreign invasion, that they may be informed of all the motions of the enemy, may not be surprised with an attack, but may have early notice of it, in order to their being at their arms, and in readiness to give the invader a warm reception, they "set a man of their coast," some likely person that lives upon the borders of their country, where the threatened danger is expected, and is therefore well acquainted with all the avenues of it, and make him their watchman. Thus wise are the "children of this world in their generation." Note, One man may be of public service to a whole country. Princes and statesmen are the watchmen of a kingdom, that are continually to employ themselves, and, if occasion be, as watchmen, to expose themselves for the public safety.

2. It is supposed to be a public trust that is lodged in the watchman, and that he is accountable to the public for the discharge of it. His business is, 1st. To discover the approaches and advances of the enemy, and therefore he must not be blind or asleep, for then he cannot see the sword coming. 2nd. To give notice of them immediately by sound of trumpet, or, as sentinels among us, by the discharge of a gun, as a signal of danger. A special trust and confidence is reposed in him by those that set him to be their watchman, that he will faithfully do these two things, and they venture their lives upon his fidelity. Now, *First.* If he do his part, if he be betimes aware of all the dangers that fall within his cognizance, and give warning of them, he has discharged his trust, and has not only delivered his soul but earned his wages. If the people do not take warning, if they either will not believe the notice he gives them, will not believe the danger to be so great or so near as really it is, or will not regard it, and so are surprised by the enemy in their security, it is their own fault; the blame is not to be laid upon the watchman, but their blood is upon their own heads. If any person goes presumptuously into the mouth of danger, though he heard the sound of the trumpet, and was told by it where the danger was, and so the sword comes and takes him away in his folly, he is *felo de se*, a foolish man, he has destroyed himself. But, *Secondly.* If the watchman do not do his duty, if he might have seen the danger and did not, but was asleep, or heedless, or looking another way, or if he did see the danger, (for so the case is put here,) and shifted only for his own safety, and "blew not the trumpet" to "warn the people," so that some are surprised and cut off "in their iniquity," ver. 6, cut off suddenly, without having time to cry, Lord, have mercy upon me, time to repent and make their peace with God, which makes the matter much the worse, that the poor creature is "taken away in his iniquity," his blood shall be required at the watchman's hands; he shall be found guilty of his death, because he did not give him warning of his danger. But if the watchman do his part, and the people do theirs, all is well; both he that gives warning and he that takes warning has delivered his soul.

Secondly. The application of this to the prophet, ver. 7—9.

1. He is "a watchman to the house of Israel." He had occasionally given warning to the nations about, but to the house of Israel he was a watchman by office, for they were the children of the prophets and the covenant. They did not set him for a watchman, as the people of the land did, ver. 2; for they were not so wise for their souls to secure the welfare of them as they would have been for the protection of their temporal interests; but God did it for them,—he appointed them a watchman.

2. His business, as a watchman, is to give warning to sinners of their misery and danger by reason of sin. This is the word he must "hear from God's mouth," and speak to them. 1st. God hath said that the wicked man shall surely die, he shall be miserable; unless he repent he shall be cut off from God, and all comfort and hope in him, shall be cut off from all good. He shall fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God, which is the death of the soul, as his favour is its life. The righteous God hath said it, and will never unsay it, nor can all the world gainsay it, that "the wages of sin is death; sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, not only against wicked nations, speaking ruin to them as nations, but against wicked persons, speaking ruin to them in their personal capacities, their personal interests, which pass into the other world and last to eternity, as national interests do not. 2nd. It is the will of God that the wicked man should be warned of this. "Warn them from me," which intimates that there is a possibility of preventing it, else it were a jest to give warning of it; nay, and that God is desirous it should be prevented. Sinners are therefore warned of the wrath to come, that they may flee from it, *Mat.* iii. 7. 3rd. It is the work of ministers to give them warning, to say to the wicked, "It shall be ill with them," *Isa.* iii. 11. God saith in general, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." The minister's business is to apply this to particular persons, and to say, "O wicked man, thou shalt surely die," whoever thou art; if thou go on still in thy trespasses they will inevitably prove thy ruin. O adulterer, O robber, O drunkard, O swearer, O sabbath-breaker, "thou shalt surely die!" And he must say this, not in passion, to provoke the sinner, but in compassion, to "warn the wicked from his way," warn him to turn from it, that he may live. This is to be done by the faithful preaching of the word in public, and by personal application to those whose sins are open.

3. If souls perish through his neglect of his duty, he brings guilt upon himself. If the prophet do not warn the wicked of the ruin that is at the end of his wicked way, that "wicked man shall die in his iniquity;" for, though the watchman did not do his part, yet the sinner might have taken warning from the written word, from his own conscience, and from God's judgments upon others, by which his mouth shall be stopped, and God will be justified in his destruction. Note, It will not serve impenitent sinners to plead in the great day that their watchman did not give them warning, that they were careless and unfaithful; for, though they were so, it will be made to appear that "God left not himself without witness." But he shall not perish alone in his iniquity, the watchman also shall be called to an account; "His blood will I require at thy hand." The blind leader shall fall with the blind follower into the ditch. See what a desire God has of the salvation of sinners, in that he resents it so ill if those concerned do not what they can to prevent their destruction. And see what a great deal those ministers have to answer for another day who palliate sin and flatter sinners in their evil way, and by their wicked lives countenance and harden them in their wickedness, and encourage them to believe they shall have peace though they go on.

4. If he do his duty he may take the comfort of it, though he do not see the success of it; ver. 9, "If thou warn the wicked of his way," if thou tell him faithfully what will be the end thereof, and call him earnestly to turn from it, and he do not turn, but persist in it, "he shall die in his iniquity," and the fair warning given him will be an aggravation of his sin and ruin; "but thou hast delivered thy soul." Note, It is a comfort to ministers that they may, through grace, save themselves, though they cannot be instrumental to save so many as they wish of those that hear them.

10 Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel;
Thus ye speak, saying,
If our transgressions and our sins *be* upon us, and we pine away in them,
How should we then live?

11 Say unto them, *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD,
I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;
But that the wicked turn from his way and live:
Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways;
For why will ye die, O house of Israel? [people,
12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy
The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him
In the day of his transgression: [thereby
As for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall
In the day that he turneth from his wickedness;
Neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *right-*
In the day that he sinneth. [*eousness*
13 When I shall say to the righteous, *that* he shall surely
live;
If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity,
All his righteousnesses shall not be remembered;
But for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die
for it.
14 Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die;
If he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and
15 If the wicked restore the pledge, [right;
Give again that he had robbed,
Walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity;
He shall surely live, he shall not die.
16 None of his sins that he hath committed shall be men-
tioned unto him: [surely live.
He hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall
17 Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord
is not equal:
But as for them, their way is not equal.
18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness,
And committeth iniquity,
He shall even die thereby.
19 But if the wicked turn from his wickedness,
And do that which is lawful and right,
He shall live thereby.
20 Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal.
O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his
ways.

These verses are the substance of what we had before, *ch.* xviii. 20, &c., and they are so full and express a declaration of the terms on which people stand with God, as the former were of the terms on which ministers stand, that it is no wonder they are here repeated, as those were, though we had the substance of them before. Observe here,

First. The cavils of the people against God's proceedings with them. God was now, in his providence, contending with them, but their uncircumcised hearts were not as yet humbled; for they were industrious to justify themselves, though thereby they reflected on God. Two things are insisted upon in their reproaches of God, and in both they added iniquity to their sin, and misery to their punishment.

1. They quarrelled with his promises and favours, as having no kindness or sincerity in them, ver. 10. God had "set life before them," but they plead that he had set it out of their reach, and therefore did but mock them with the mention of it. The prophet had said some time ago, *ch.* xxiv. 23, "Ye shall pine away for your iniquities;" with that word he concluded his threatenings against Judah and Jerusalem, and this they now upbraided him with, as if it had been spoken absolutely to drive them to despair, whereas it was spoken conditionally, to bring them to repentance. Thus are the sayings of God's ministers perverted by men of corrupt minds, who are minded to pick quarrels. He puts them in hopes of life and happiness, and herein they would make him contradict himself; for (say they) "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us," as thou hast often told us they are; and if we must, as thou sayest, pine away in them, and wear out a miserable captivity in a fruitless repentance, "how shall we then live?" If this be our doom there is no remedy; we die, we perish, we all perish. Note, It is very common for those that have been hardened with presumption, when they are warned against sin, to sink into despair when they are called to repent, and to conclude there is no hope of life for them.

2. They quarrelled with his threatenings and judgments, as having no justice or equity in them. They said, "The way of the Lord is not equal," ver. 17, and again ver. 20; suggesting that God was partial in his proceedings, and that with him there was respect of persons, and he was more severe against sin and sinners than there was cause.

Secondly. Here is a satisfactory answer given to both these cavils.

1. Those that despaired of finding mercy with God are here answered with a solemn declaration of God's readiness to shew mercy, ver. 11. When they spoke of pining away in their iniquity, God sends the prophet to them with all speed to tell them that, though their case was sad, yet it was not desperate, but there was yet hope in Israel. 1st. It is certain that God has no delight in the ruin of sinners, nor doth he desire it. If they will destroy themselves he will glorify himself in it, but he has no pleasure in it, but would rather they should turn and live; for his goodness is that attribute of his which is most his glory, which is most his delight. He would rather sinners should turn and live than go on and die. He hath said it, he hath sworn it, that by these two immutable things, in both which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. We have his word and his oath; and, since he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself, "As I live." They question whether they should live, though they did repent and reform; Yea, saith God, as sure as I live true penitents shall live also; for their life is hid with Christ in God. 2nd. It is certain that God is sincere and in earnest in the calls he gives sinners to repent; "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil way." To repent is to turn from our evil way. This God requires sinners to do, this he urgeth them to do, by repeated, pressing instances, "Turn ye, turn ye." O that they would be prevailed with to turn, to turn quickly without delay! This he will enable them to do, if they will but "frame their doings to turn to the Lord," *Hos.* v. 4: for he hath said, "I will pour out my Spirit unto you," *Pr.* i. 23. And in this he will accept of them, for it is not only what he commands, but what he courts them to. 3rd. It is certain that if sinners perish in their impenitency it is owing to themselves. They die because they will die; and herein they act most absurdly and unreasonably; "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?" God would have heard them, and they would not be heard.

2. Those that despaired of finding justice with God are here answered with a solemn declaration of the rule of judgment which God would go by in dealing with the children of men, which carries along with it the evidence of his own equity; he that runs may read the justice of it. The Jewish nation, as a nation, was now dead, it was ruined to all intents and purposes. The prophet must therefore deal with particular persons, and the rule of judging concerning them is much like that concerning a nation, *Jer.* xviii. 7—10. If God speak concerning it to build and to plant, if it do wickedly he will recall his favours, and leave it to ruin; but if he speak concerning it to pluck up and destroy, and it repent, he will revoke the sentence, and deliver it: so it is here. In short, the most plausible professors, if they apostatize, shall certainly perish for ever in their apostacy from God; and the most notorious sinners, if they repent, shall certainly be happy for ever in their return to God. This is here repeated again and again, because it ought to be again and again considered, and preached over to our own hearts. This was necessary to be inculcated upon this senseless, stupid people, that said, "The way of the Lord is not equal;" for these rules of judgment are so plainly just that they need no other confirmation of them but the repetition of them.

1st. If those that have made a great profession of religion throw off their profession, quit the good ways of God, and grow loose, and carnal, and sensual, and worldly, the profession they made, and all the religious performances with which they had for a great while kept up the credit of their profession, shall stand them in no stead, but they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, ver. 12, 13, 18. *First.* God doth say to the righteous man that he shall surely live, ver. 13. He saith it by his word, by his ministers. He that lives regularly, his own heart tells him, his neighbours tell him, he shall live. Sure such a man as this cannot but be happy. And it is certain, if he proceed and persevere in his righteousness, and if in order to that he be upright and sincere in it, if he be really as good as he seems to be, he shall live; he shall continue in the love of God, and be for ever happy in that love. *Secondly.* Righteous men that have very good hopes of themselves, and that others have a very good opinion of, yet are in danger of turning to iniquity by trusting to their righteousness. So the case is put here: "If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity," and come to make a trade of sin; if he not only take a false step, but turn aside into a false way, and persist in it. This may possibly be the case of a righteous man, and it is the effect of his trusting to his own righteousness. Note, Many eminent professors have been ruined by a proud conceitedness of themselves, and confidence in themselves. He trusts to the merit of his own righteousness, and thinks he has already made God so much his debtor that now he may venture to commit iniquity, for he has righteousness enough in stock to make amends for it; he fancies that, whatever ill deeds he may do hereafter, he can be in no danger by them, having so many good deeds beforehand to balance them. Or, he trusts to the strength of his own righteousness, thinks himself now so well established in a course of virtue, that he may thrust himself into any temptation and it cannot overcome him; and so, by presuming on his own sufficiency, he is brought to commit iniquity. By making bold on the confines of sin he is drawn at length into the depths of hell. This ruined the Pharisees; they trusted to themselves that they were righteous, and that their long prayers, and fasting twice in the week, would atone for their devouring widows' houses. *Thirdly.* If righteous men turn to iniquity, and return not to their righteousness, they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, and all the righteousness they have formerly done, all their prayers, and all their alms, shall be forgotten; no mention shall be made, no remembrance had, of their good deeds, they shall be overlooked as they had never been. The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him from the wrath of God and the curse of the law in the day of his transgression. When he becomes a traitor and a rebel, and takes up arms against his rightful sovereign, it will not serve for him to plead in his own defence that formerly he was a loyal subject, and did many good services to the government. No, "he shall not be able to live;" the remembrance of his former righteousness shall be no satisfaction either to God's justice or his own conscience, in the day that he sinneth; but rather shall both highly aggravate the sin and folly of his apostacy. And therefore "for his iniquity that he committed he shall die," ver. 13; and again, ver. 18, "He shall even die thereby," and it is owing to himself.

2nd. If those that have lived a wicked life repent and reform, forsake their wicked ways, and become religious, their sins shall be pardoned, and they shall be justified and saved, if they persevere in their reformation. *First.* God saith to the wicked, "Thou shalt surely die;" the way that thou art in leads to destruction; the wages of thy sin is death, and thine iniquity will shortly be thy ruin. It was said to the righteous man, "Thou shalt surely live," for his encouragement to proceed and persevere in the way of righteousness, but he made an ill use of it, and was emboldened by it to commit iniquity. It was said to the wicked man, "Thou shalt surely die," for warning to him not to persist in his wicked ways; and he makes a good use of it, and is quickened thereby to return to God and duty. Thus even the threatenings of the word are to some, by the grace of God, a savour of life unto life; while even the promises of the word become to others, by their own corruption, a savour of death unto death. When God said to the wicked man, "Thou shalt surely die," die eternally, it is not to frighten him out of his wits, but to frighten him out of his sins. *Secondly.* There is many a wicked man that was hastening apace to his own destruction, who yet is wrought upon by the grace of God to return and repent, and live a holy life. He turns from his sin, ver. 14, and is resolved he will have no more to do with it; and, as an evidence of his repentance for wrong done, he restores the pledge, ver. 15, which he had taken uncharitably from the poor; he gives again that which he had robbed and taken unjustly from the rich. Nor doth he only cease to do evil, but he learns to do well; he "doth that which is lawful and right," and makes conscience of his duty both to God and man. A great change, since awhile ago he neither feared God nor regarded man! But many such amazing changes, and blessed ones, have been wrought by the power of Divine grace. He that was going on in the paths of death and the destroyer now walks in the statutes of life, in the way of God's

commandments, which has both life in it, *Pr.* xii. 28, and life at the end of it, *Mat.* xix. 17. And in this good way he perseveres without committing iniquity; though not free from remaining infirmity, yet under the dominion of no iniquity. He repents not of his repentance, nor returns to the commission of those gross sins he before allowed himself in. *Thirdly.* He that doth thus repent and turn shall escape the ruin he was running into, and his former sins shall be no prejudice to his acceptance with God. Let him not pine away in his iniquity, for if he confess and forsake it he shall find mercy; "He shall surely live, he shall not die," ver. 15; again, ver. 16, "He shall surely live;" again, ver. 19, "He hath done that which is lawful and right," and "he shall live thereby." But will not his wickednesses be remembered against him? No, he shall not be punished for them; ver. 12, "As for the wickedness of the wicked," though it was very heinous, yet "he shall not fall thereby, in the day that he turneth from his wickedness." Now it is become his grief it shall not be his ruin. Now there is a settled separation between him and sin, there shall be no longer a separation between him and God. Nay, he shall not be so much as upbraided with them; ver. 16, "None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him," either as a clog to his pardon, or an allay to the comfort of it, or any blemish or diminution to the glory that is prepared for him.

Now lay all this together, and then judge whether "the way of the Lord be not equal;" whether this will not justify God in the destruction of sinners, and glorify him in the salvation of penitents. The conclusion of the whole matter is, ver. 20, O ye house of Israel, though you are all involved now in the common calamity, yet there shall be a distinction of persons made in the spiritual and eternal state, and "I will judge you every one after his ways." Though they were sent into captivity by the lump, good fish and bad inclosed in the same net, yet there he will separate between the precious and the vile, and will "render to every man according to his works." Therefore God's way is equal and unexceptionable; but as for the children of my people God turns them over to the prophet, as he did to Moses, *Ex.* xxxii. 7, They are thy people; I can scarce own them for mine; as for them, their way is unequal. This way they have got of quarrelling with God and his prophet is absurd and unreasonable. In all disputes between God and his creatures it will certainly be found that he is in the right and they in the wrong.

21 And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, *that* one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. 22 Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. 23 Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 24 Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we *are* many; the land is given us for inheritance.

25 Wherefore say unto them,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Ye eat with the blood,
And lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood:
And shall ye possess the land?
26 Ye stand upon your sword,
Ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife:
And shall ye possess the land?
27 Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD;
As I live, surely they that *are* in the wastes shall fall by the sword,
And him that *is* in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured,
And they that *be* in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.
28 For I will lay the land most desolate,
And the pomp of her strength shall cease;
And the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.
29 Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD,
When I have laid the land most desolate
Because of all their abominations which they have committed.

Here is, First. The tidings brought to Ezekiel of the burning of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The city was burned in the eleventh year of the captivity, and in the fifth month, *Jer.* lii. 12, 13. Tidings hereof were brought to the prophet, by one that was an eye-witness of the destruction, in the twelfth year and the tenth month, ver. 21, which was a year and almost five months after the thing was done. We may well suppose that, there being a constant correspondence, at this time more than ever, kept up between Jerusalem and Babylon, he had heard the news long before; but this was the first time he had an account of it from a refugee, from one that escaped, who could be particular, and would be pathetical, in the narration of it. And the sign given him was the coming of such a one to him as had himself narrowly escaped the flames; *ch.* xxiv. 26, "He that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee," to "cause thee to hear it with thine ears," to hear it more distinctly than ever from one that could say, *Quæque ipse miserrima vidi*,—'These miserable scenes I saw.'

Secondly. The Divine impressions and influences he was under, to prepare him for those heavy tidings; ver. 22, "The hand of the Lord was upon me before he came, and had opened my mouth," to speak to the house of Israel what he had in the former part of this chapter; and now he was no more dumb, he prophesied now with more freedom and boldness, being by the event proved a true prophet, to the confusion of those that contradicted him. All the prophesies from chapter twenty-four to this chapter having relation purely to the nations about, it is probable the prophet, when he received them from the Lord, did not deliver them by word of mouth, but in writing; for he could not otherwise say to the Ammonites, say unto Tyrus, say unto Pharaoh, &c., so and so, but by letters directed to the persons concerned; like Zacharias, when he could not speak he wrote, and herein he was as truly executing his prophetical office as ever. Note, Even silenced ministers may be doing a great deal of good by writing letters and making visits. But now the prophet's mouth is opened, that he may "speak to the children of his people." It is probable he had, during these three years, been continually speaking to them as a friend, putting them in mind of what he had formerly delivered to them, but never spoke to them as a prophet by inspiration, till now, when the hand of the Lord came upon him, renewed his commission, gave him fresh instructions, and "opened his mouth," furnished him with power to speak to the people "as he ought to speak."

Thirdly. The particular message he was intrusted with, relating to those Jews that yet remained in the land of Israel, and inhabited the wastes of that land, ver. 24. See what work sin had made; the cities of Israel were now become the wastes of Israel, for they lay all in ruins; some few that had escaped the sword and captivity still continued there, and began to think of re-settling. This was so long after the destruction of Jerusalem, that it was some time before this that Gedaliah (a modest humble man) and his friends were slain; but probably at this time Johanan, and the proud men that joined with him, were at the height, *Jer.* xliii. 2; and before they came to a resolution to go into Egypt, wherein Jeremiah comforted them, it is probable the project was to establish themselves in the wastes of the land of Israel, in which Ezekiel here comforted them, and probably despatched the message away by the person that brought him the news of Jerusalem's destruction. Or, perhaps those here prophesied against might be some other party of Jews that remained in the land, hoped to take root there, and to be sole masters of it after Johanan and his forces were gone into Egypt. Now here we have,

1. An account of the pride of these remaining Jews who dwell in "the wastes of the land of Israel." Though the providence of God concerning them had been very humbling, and still was very threatening, yet they were intolerably haughty and secure, and promised themselves peace. He that brought the news to the prophet that Jerusalem was smitten, could not tell (it is likely) what these people said, but God tells him, "They say the land is given us for inheritance," ver. 24. Our partners being gone, it is now all our own by survivorship; or, for want of heirs, it comes to us as occupants: we shall now be placed alone in the midst of the earth, and have it all to ourselves. This argues great stupidity under the weighty hand of God, and a reigning selfishness and a narrow-spiritedness. They pleased themselves in the ruin of their country as long as they hoped to find their own account in it; cared not though it were all waste, so that they might have the sole property,—a poor inheritance to be proud of! They have the impudence to compare their case with Abraham's, glorying in this, that we have Abraham to our father. Abraham, say they, was one, one family, and he inherited the land, and lived many years in the peaceable enjoyment of it; but we are many, many families, more numerous than he,—the land is given us for inheritance. *First.* They think they can make out as good a title from God to this land as Abraham could. If God gave this land to him that was but one worshipper of him, as a reward of his service, much more will he give it to us who are many worshippers of him, as the reward of our service. And this speaks the great conceit they had of their own merits, as if they were greater than those of Abraham their father, who yet was not justified by works. *Secondly.* They think they can make good the possession of this land against the Chaldeans, and all other invaders, as well as Abraham could against those that were competitors with him for it. If he that was but one could hold it, much more shall we, that are many, and have many more at command than his three hundred trained servants. This speaks the confidence they had in their own might; they had got possession and were resolved to keep it.

2. A check to this pride. Since God's providences did neither humble them nor terrify them, he sends them a message sufficient to do both.

1st. To humble them, he tells them of the wickedness they still persisted in, which rendered them utterly unworthy to possess this land, so that they could not expect God should give it them. They had been followed by one judgment after another, but they had not profited by those means of grace as might be expected; they were still unreformed, and how could they expect that they should possess the land? "Shall ye possess the land?" What, such wicked people as ye are! "How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land?" *Jer.* iii. 19. Surely you never reflect upon yourselves, else you would rather wonder that you are in the land of the living than expect to possess this land. For do you not know how bad you are? *First.* You make no conscience of forbidden fruit, forbidden food; you eat with the blood, directly contrary to one of the precepts given to Noah and his sons, then when God gave them possession of the earth, *Gen.* ix. 4. *Secondly.* Idolatry, that covenant-breaking sin, that sin which the jealous God has been in a particular manner provoked by to lay your country waste, is still the sin that most easily besets you, and which you have a strong inclination to. "You lift up your eyes towards your idols," which is a sign that, though perhaps you do not bow your knee to them so much as you have done, yet you set your hearts upon them, and hanker after them. *Thirdly.* You are as fierce, and cruel, and barbarous as ever; you shed blood, innocent blood. *Fourthly.* You confide in your own strength, your own arm, your own bow, and have no dependence on, or regard to, God and his providence. "Ye stand upon your sword," ver. 26; you think to carry all before you, and make all your own by force of arms. How can they expect the inheritance of Isaac, as these did, who are of Ishmael's disposition, that had "his hand against every man," *Gen.* xvi. 12; and Esau's resolution to "live by his sword?" *Gen.* xxvii. 40. We met with those, *ch.* xxxii. 27, who, when they died, thought they could not lie easy under-ground unless they had their swords under their heads. Here we meet with those who, while they live, think they cannot stand firm above-ground unless they have their swords under their feet; as if swords were both the softest pillows and the strongest pillars; though it was sin, it was sin, that first drew the sword. But, blessed be God, there are those who know better things, that stand upon the support of the Divine power and promise, and lay their heads in the bosom of Divine love, not trusting in their own sword, *Ps.* xliv. 3. *Fifthly.* You are guilty of all manner of abominations, and particularly "ye defile every one his neighbour's wife," which is an abomination of the first magnitude; "and shall ye possess the

land?" What! such vile miscreants as you? Note, They cannot expect to possess the land, nor to enjoy any true comfort or happiness, here or hereafter, that live in rebellion against the Lord.

2nd. To terrify them, he tells them of the farther judgments God had in store for them, which should make them utterly unable to possess this land, so that they could not stand it out against the enemy. Do they say they shall possess the land? No; God hath said it, he hath sworn it. As I live, saith the Lord. Though he has sworn that he delights not in the death of sinners, yet he hath sworn also, that those who persist in impenitency and unbelief "shall not enter into his rest." *First.* They that are in the cities, here called the "wastes," shall "fall by the sword;" either by the sword of the Chaldeans, who come to avenge the murder of Gedaliah, or by one another's swords in their intestine broils. *Secondly.* They that are in the open field shall be devoured by wild beasts, which swarmed of course in the country when it was dispeopled, and there were none to master them, and keep them under, *Ex.* xxiii. 29. When the army of the enemy had quitted the country yet still there was no safety in it. Noisome beasts was one of the four sore judgments, *ch.* xiv. 15. *Thirdly.* They that be in the forts, and in the caves, that think themselves safe in artificial or natural fastnesses, because men's eyes cannot discover them, nor men's darts reach them, there the arrows of the Almighty shall find them out; they "shall die of the pestilence." *Fourthly.* The whole land, even the land of Israel, that had been the glory of all lands, shall be most desolate, ver. 28. It shall be desolation, desolation, all over as desolate as desolation itself can make it. The mountains of Israel, the fruitful mountains, Zion itself, the holy mountain not excepted, "shall be desolate," the roads unfrequented, the houses uninhabited, that "none shall pass through," as it was threatened, *Deu.* xxviii. 62, "Ye shall be left few in number." *Fifthly.* The "pomp of her strength," whatever she glories in as her pomp, and trusts to as her strength, it shall be made to cease. *Sixthly.* The cause of all this was very bad; it is for "all their abominations which they have committed." It is sin that doth all this mischief, that makes nations desolate, and therefore we ought to call it an abomination. *Seventhly.* Yet the effect of all this will be very good. "Then shall they know that I am the Lord," am their Lord, and shall return to their allegiance, "when I have made the land most desolate." Those are untractable, unteachable indeed, that are not made to know their dependence upon God when all their creature comforts fail them and are made desolate.

30 Also, thou son of man,
The children of thy people still are talking against thee
By the walls and in the doors of the houses,
And speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying,
Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word
That cometh forth from the LORD.
31 And they come unto thee as the people cometh,
And they sit before thee *as* my people,
And they hear thy words, but they will not do them:
For with their mouth they shew much love,
But their heart goeth after their covetousness.
32 And, lo, thou *art* unto them as a very lovely song
Of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument:
For they hear thy words, but they do them not.
33 And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,)
Then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

The foregoing verses spoke conviction to the Jews who remained in the land of Israel, who were monuments of sparing mercy and yet returned not to the Lord. In these verses those are reproved who are now in captivity in Babylon, under Divine rebukes, and yet were not reformed by them. They are not indeed charged with the same gross enormities that the others are charged with. They made some show of religion and devotion, but their hearts were not right with God. The thing they are accused of is, mocking the messengers of the Lord, one of their measure-filling sins, which brought this ruin upon them, and yet they were not cured of it. Two ways they mocked the prophet Ezekiel.

First. By invidious, ill-natured reflections upon him, privately among themselves, endeavouring, by all means possible, to render him despicable. The prophet did not know it, but charitably thought that they who spoke so well to him to his face, with so much seeming respect and deference, surely would not speak ill of him behind his back. But God comes and tells him, "The children of thy people still are talking against thee," ver. 30, or talking no good of thee, I doubt. Note, Public persons are a common theme or subject of discourse, every one takes a liberty to censure them at pleasure; and faithful ministers know not how much ill is said of them every day. It is well they do not; for, if they did, it might prove a discouragement to them in their work not to be easily got over. But God takes notice of all that is said against his ministers,—not only what is decreed against them, or sworn against them,—not only what is written against them, or spoken with solemnity and deliberation,—but what is said against them in common talk among neighbours when they meet in an evening, "by the walls, and in the doors of their houses," where, whatever freedom of speech they use, if they reproach and slander any of God's ministers, God will reckon with them for it; his prophets shall not be made the song of the drunkards always. They had no crime to lay to the prophet's charge, but they loved to talk of him in a careless, scornful, bantering way; they said jokingly, "Come, and let us hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord." Perhaps it will be somewhat new, and will entertain us, and furnish us with matter of discourse. Note, Those have arrived to a great pitch of profaneness that can make so great a privilege, and so great a duty, as the preaching and hearing of the word of God a matter of sport and ridicule; yea, though it be not done publicly, but in private conversation among themselves. Serious things should be spoken of seriously.

Secondly. By dissembling with him in their attendance upon his ministry. Hypocrites mock God, and mock his prophets; but their hypocrisy is open before God, and the day is coming when, as here, it will be laid open. Observe here,

1. The plausible profession which these people made, and the speciousness of their pretensions. They are like those, *Mat.* xv. 8, who "draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him." 1st. They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the means of grace. "They come unto thee as the people cometh." In Babylon they had no temple or synagogue, but they went to the prophet's house, *ch.* viii. 1, and there, it is probable, they spent their new moons and their sabbaths in religious exercises, 2 *Kin.* iv. 23. When the prophet was bound, the word of the Lord was not bound; and the people, when they had not the help for their souls they wished for, were thankful for what they had,—it was a reviving in their bondage. Now these hypocrites came "according to the coming of the people," as duly and as early as any of the prophet's hearers. Their being said to come as the people came seems to intimate that the reason why they came was, because other people came. They did not come out of conscience towards God, but only for company, for fashion sake, and because it was now the custom of their countrymen. Note, Those that have no inward principle of love to God's ordinances may yet be found much in the external observation of them. Cain brought his sacrifice as well as Abel, and the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray as well as the publican. 2nd. They behaved themselves very decently and reverently in the public assembly. There were none of them whispering, or laughing, or gazing about them, or sleeping; but "They sit before thee as my people," with all the shows of gravity, and sereneness, and composure of mind; they sit out the time without weariness, or wishing the sermon done. 3rd. They were very attentive to the word preached. They are not thinking of something else, but they "hear thy words," and take notice of what thou sayest. 4th. They pretended to have a great kindness and respect for the prophet. Though behind his back they could not give him a good word, yet to his face they shewed much love to him and his doctrine; they pretended to have a great concern lest he should spend himself too much in preaching, or expose himself to the Chaldeans, for they would be thought to be some of his best friends, and well-wishers. 5th. They took a great deal of pleasure in the word. They "delighted to know God's word," *Isa.* lviii. 2. (Herod heard John Baptist gladly, *Mar.* vi. 20.) "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song." Ezekiel's matter was surprising, his language fine, his expressions elegant, his similitudes apt, his voice tuneable, and his delivery graceful; so that they could sit with as much pleasure to hear him preach, as (if I may speak in the language of our times) to see a play or an opera, or to hear a concert of music. Ezekiel was to them as one that had a pleasant voice, and could sing well, or play well on an instrument. Note, It is possible men may have their fancies pleased by the word, and yet not have their consciences touched, nor their hearts changed; the itching ear gratified, and yet not the corrupt nature sanctified.

2. The hypocrisy of these professions and pretensions. It is all a sham, it is all a jest. 1st. They have no cordial affection for the word of God. While they shew much love, it is only with the mouth, from the teeth outward, but "their heart goeth after their covetousness;" they are as much set upon the world as ever, as much in love and league with it as ever. Hearing the word is only their diversion and recreation, a pretty amusement now and then for an hour or two. But still their main business is with their farm and merchandise, the bent and bias of their souls is towards them, and their inward thoughts are employed in projects about them. Note, Covetousness is the ruining sin of multitudes that make a great profession of religion; it is the love of the world that secretly eats the love of God out of their hearts. The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, are the thorns that choke the seed, and choke the soul too. And those neither please God nor profit themselves, who, when they are hearing the word of God, are musing upon their worldly affairs. God has his eye on the hearts that do so. 2nd. They yield no subjection to it. They hear thy words, but it is only a hearing they give thee, for they will not do them, ver. 31; and again, ver. 32, they do them not. They will not be persuaded by all the prophet can say, either by authority or argument, to cross themselves in any instance, to part with any one beloved sin, or apply themselves to any one duty that is against the grain to flesh and blood. Note, There are many who take pleasure in hearing the word, but make no conscience of doing it; and so they build upon the sand, and deceive themselves.

Lastly. Let us see what will be in the end hereof. Shall their unbelief and carelessness "make the word of God of none effect?" By no means. 1st. God will confirm the prophet's word, though they contemn it, and make light of it, ver. 33. What he saith will come to pass, and not one jot or one tittle shall fall to the ground. Note, The curses of the law, though they may be bantered by profane wits, yet they cannot be baffled. 2nd. They themselves shall rue their folly when it is too late. When it comes to pass they shall know, shall know to their cost, know to their confusion, that "a prophet hath been among them," though they made no more of him than as one that had a pleasant voice. Note, Those who will not consider that a prophet is among them, and improve not the day of their visitation while it is continued, will be made to remember that a prophet has been among them, when the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes. The day is coming when vain and worldly men will have other thoughts of things than now they have, and will feel a weight in that which they made light of. They shall know "a prophet hath been among them," when they see the event exactly answer the prediction, and the prophet himself shall be a witness against them that they had fair warning given them, but would not take it. When Ezekiel is gone, whom now they speak against, and there is no more any prophet, nor any to shew them how long, then they will remember that once they had a prophet, but knew not how to use him well. Note, Those that will not know the worth of mercies by the improvement of them, will justly be made to know the worth of them by the want of them; as they who should desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, which now they slighted, and might not see it.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The iniquities and calamities of God's Israel had been largely and pathetically lamented before in this book. Now in this chapter the shepherds of Israel, their rulers both in church and state, are called to an account, as having been very much accessary to the sin and ruin of Israel, by their neglect to do the duty of their place. Here is, I. a high charge exhibited against them for their negligence, their unskilfulness, and unfaithfulness in the management of public affairs, ver. 1—6; and again, ver. 8. II. Their discharge from their trust for their insufficiency and treachery, ver. 7—10. III. A gracious promise that God would take care of his flock, though they did not, and that it should not always suffer as it had done by their maladministrations, ver. 11—16. IV. Another charge exhibited against those of the flock that were fat and strong, for the injuries they did to those that were weak and feeble, ver. 17—22. V. Another promise, that God would in the fulness of time send the Messiah to be the great and good Shepherd of the sheep, who would redress all grievances, and set every thing to rights with the flock, ver. 23—31.

AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them,

Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds;
Woe *be* to the shepherds of Israel that do feed them-
Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? [selves!
3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool,
Ye kill them that are fed: *but* ye feed not the flock.
4 The diseased have ye not strengthened,
Neither have ye healed that which was sick,
Neither have ye bound up *that which was* broken,
Neither have ye brought again that which was driven away,
Neither have ye sought that which was lost;
But with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them.
5 And they were scattered, because *there is* no shepherd:
And they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when
they were scattered.
6 My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon
every high hill:
Yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth,
And none did search or seek *after them.*

The prophecy of this chapter is not dated, nor any of those that follow it, till *ch.* xl. It is most probable it was delivered after the completing of Jerusalem's destruction, when it would be very seasonable to inquire into the cause of it.

First. The prophet is ordered to "prophesy against the shepherds of Israel." The princes and magistrates, the priests and Levites, the great Sanhedrim, or council of state, or whoever they were that had the conduct of public affairs in a higher or lower sphere; the kings especially, for there were two of them now captives in Babylon, who, as well as the people, must have their transgressions shewed them that they might repent, as Manasseh in his captivity. God has something to say to the shepherds, for they are but under-shepherds, accountable to him who is the great Shepherd of Israel, *Ps.* lxxx. 1. And that which he saith is "Woe to the shepherds of Israel!" Though they are shepherds, and shepherds of Israel, yet he must not spare them, must not flatter them. Note, If men's dignity and power doth not, as it ought, keep them from sin, it will not serve to exempt them from reproof, to excuse their repentance, or to secure them from the judgments of God, if they do not repent. We had a "Woe to the pastors," *Jer.* xxiii. 1. God will in a particular manner reckon with them if they be false to their trust.

Secondly. He is here directed what to charge the shepherds with in God's name, as the ground of God's controversy with them; for it is not a causeless quarrel. Two things they are charged with:

1. That all their care was to advance and enrich themselves, and to make themselves great. Their business was to take care of those that were committed to their charge. "Should not the shepherds feed the flock?" No doubt they should, they betray their trust if they do not. Not that they are to put the meat into their mouths, but to provide it for them, and to bring them to it; but these shepherds made this the least of their care; they fed themselves, contrived every thing to gratify and indulge their own appetite, and to make themselves rich and great, fat and easy. They made sure the profits of their places, they did eat the fat, the cream, so some; for he that feeds a flock eats of the milk of it, 1 *Cor.* ix. 7; and they made sure the best of the milk. They made sure the fleece, and clothed themselves with the wool, getting into their hands as much as they could of the estates of their subjects; yea, and killed them that were well fed, that what they had might be fed upon, as Naboth was put to death for his vineyard. Note, There is a woe to those that are in public trust but consult only their own private interest, and are more inquisitive about the benefice than about the office—what money is to be got than what good to be done. It is an old complaint; all seek their own, and too many more than their own.

2. That they took no care for the benefit and welfare of those that were committed to their charge; "Ye feed not the flock." They neither knew how to do it, so ignorant were they, nor would they take any pains to do it, so lazy and slothful were they; nay, they never desired or designed it, so treacherous and unfaithful were they. 1st. They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were distempered; did not strengthen them or heal them, or bind them up, ver. 4. When any of the flock were sick or hurt, worried or wounded, it was all one to them whether they lived or died, they never looked after them. The princes and judges took no care to right those that suffered wrong, or to shelter injured innocency. They took no care of the poor to see them provided for—they might starve for them. The priests took no care to instruct the ignorant, to rectify the mistakes of those that were in error, to warn the unruly, or to comfort the feeble-minded. The ministers of state took no care to check the growing distempers of the kingdom, which threatened the vitals of it. Things were amiss and out of course every where, and nothing was done to rectify them. 2nd. They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were dispersed, that were driven away by the enemies that invaded the country, and were forced to seek for shelter where they could find a place, or that wandered of choice upon the mountains and hills, ver. 6, where they were exposed to the beasts of prey, and became meat to them, ver. 5; every one is ready to seize a waif and stray. Some went abroad and begged, some went abroad and traded; and thus the country waxed thin of inhabitants, and was weakened and impoverished, and wanted hands both in the fields of corn and in the fields of battle, both in harvest and in war. "My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth," ver. 6. and they were never inquired after, were never encouraged to return to their own country; none did search or seek after them. Nay, with force and cruelty they ruled them, which drove more away, and discouraged those that were driven away from all thoughts of returning. Their case is bad who have reason to expect better treatment among strangers than in their own country. It may be meant of those of the flock that went astray from God and their duty; and the priests, that should have taught the good knowledge of the Lord, used no means to convince and reclaim them, so that they became an easy prey to seducers. Thus were "they scattered, because there was no shepherd," ver. 5. There were those that called themselves shepherds, but really they were not. Note, Those that do not do the work of the shepherds are unworthy of the name; and, if those that undertake to be shepherds are foolish shepherds, *Zec.* xi. 15, if they are proud and above their business, idle, and do not love their business, or faithless and unconcerned about it, the case of the flock is as bad as if it were without a shepherd. Better no shepherd than such shepherds. Christ complains that his flock were as sheep having no shepherd, when yet the scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, *Mat.* ix. 36. It is ill with the patient when his physician is his worst disease, ill with the flock when the shepherds drive them away and disperse them, by ruling them with force.

7 Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;
8 *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD,
Surely because my flock became a prey,
And my flock became meat to every beast of the field,
Because *there was* no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock,
But the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock;
9 Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD;
10 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I *am* against the shepherds;
And I will require my flock at their hand,
And cause them to cease from feeding the flock;
Neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more;
For I will deliver my flock from their mouth,
That they may not be meat for them.
11 For thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I, *even* I, will both search my sheep, and seek
them out.
12 As a shepherd seeketh out his flock
In the day that he is among his sheep *that are* scattered;
So will I seek out my sheep,
And will deliver them out of all places where they have
been scattered
In the cloudy and dark day.
13 And I will bring them out from the people,
And gather them from the countries,
And will bring them to their own land,
And feed them upon the mountains of Israel
By the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the
country.
14 I will feed them in a good pasture,
And upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be:
There shall they lie in a good fold,
And *in* a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains
of Israel.
15 I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down,
Saith the Lord GOD.
16 I will seek that which was lost,
And bring again that which was driven away,
And will bind up *that which was* broken,
And will strengthen that which was sick:
But I will destroy the fat and the strong;
I will feed them with judgment.

Upon reading the foregoing articles of impeachment drawn up in God's name, against the shepherds of Israel, we cannot but look upon the shepherds with a just indignation, and upon the flock with a tender compassion. God, by the prophet, here expresseth both in a high degree; and the shepherds are called upon, ver. 7, and again, ver. 9, to "hear the word of the Lord," to hear this word. Let them hear how little he regards them who made much of themselves, and how much he regards the flock which they made nothing of; both will be humbling to them. Those that will not hear the word of the Lord, giving them their direction, shall be made to hear the word of the Lord reading them their doom. Now see here,

First. How much displeased God is at the shepherds. Their crimes are repeated, ver. 8. God's flock became a prey to the deceivers first that drew them to idolatry, and then to the destroyers that carried them into captivity; and these shepherds took no care to prevent either the one or the other, but were as if there had been no shepherds; and therefore God saith it, ver. 10, and confirms it with an oath, ver. 8, "I am against the shepherds." They had a commission from God to feed the flock, and made use of his name in what they did, expecting he would stand by them. No, saith God, so far from that, I am against them. Note, It is not our having the name and authority of shepherds that will engage God for us, if we do not the work enjoined us, and be not faithful to the trust reposed in us. God is against them, and they shall know it; for, 1. They shall be called to an account how they have discharged their trust; "I will require my flock at their hands," and charge it upon them that so many of them are missing. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for in the judgment-day who take upon them the care of souls and yet take no care of them. Ministers must watch and work as those that must give account, *Heb.* xiii. 17. 2. They shall be deprived *officio et beneficio*,—'they shall be turned out both from the work and from the wages of their place.' "They shall cease from feeding the flock," that is, from pretending to feed it. Note, It is just with God to take out of men's hands that power which they have abused, and that trust which they have betrayed. But if this were all their punishment they could bear it well enough; therefore it is added, "Neither

shall the shepherds feed themselves any more," for "I will deliver my flock from their mouth," which, instead of protecting, they had made a prey of. Note, Those that are enriching themselves with the spoils of the public cannot expect that they shall always be suffered to do so. Nor will God always permit his people to be trampled upon by those that should support them, but will find a time to deliver them from the shepherds their false friends, as well as from the lions their open enemies.

Secondly. How much concerned God is for the flock. He speaks as if he were the more concerned for them because he saw them thus neglected, for with him the fatherless find mercy. Precious promises are made here upon the occasion, which were to have their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, and their re-establishment in their own land. Let the shepherds "hear this word of the Lord," and know that they have no part or lot in the matter; but let the poor sheep hear it, and take the comfort of it. Note, Though magistrates and ministers fail in doing their part for the good of the church, yet God will not fail in doing his; he will take the flock into his own hand, rather than the church shall come short of any kindness he has designed for it. The under-shepherds may prove careless, but the chief Shepherd neither slumbers nor sleeps. They may be false, but God abides faithful.

1. God will gather his sheep together that were scattered, and bring them back to the fold that had wandered from it. I, even I, who alone can do it, will do it, and will have all the glory of it. "I will both search my sheep and seek them out," ver. 11, as a shepherd doth, ver. 12, and bring them back, as he doth the stray sheep, upon his shoulders, "from all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day." There are cloudy and dark days, windy and stormy ones, which scatter God's sheep, which send them hither and thither, to divers and distant places, in quest of secresy and safety. But, 1st. Wherever they are the eye of God will find them out, for his eyes run to and fro through the earth in favour of them. "I will seek out my sheep," and not one that belongs to the fold, though driven ever so far off, shall be lost. The Lord knows them that are his, he knows their work, and where they dwell, *Rev.* ii. 13, and where they are hidden. 2nd. When his time is come his arms will fetch them home; ver. 13, "I will bring them out from the people." God will both incline their hearts to come by his grace, and will by his providence open a door for them, and remove every difficulty that lies in the way. They shall not return one by one, clandestinely stealing away, but they shall return in a body. I will "gather them from the countries" into which they are dispersed; not only the most considerable families of them, but every particular person; ver. 16, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away." This was done when so many thousand Jews returned triumphantly out of Babylon, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and others. When those that have gone astray from God into the paths of sin are brought back by repentance; when those that erred come to the acknowledgment of the truth; when God's outcasts are gathered and restored, and religious assemblies that were dispersed rally again upon the ceasing of persecution, and when the churches have rest and liberty, then this promise has a farther accomplishment.

2. God will feed his people as the sheep of his pasture, that had been famished. God will bring the returning captives safe to their own land; ver. 13, "will feed them upon the mountains of Israel," and that is a good pasture, and a fat pasture, ver. 14; there shall their feeding be, and there shall be their fold, and it is a good fold. There God will not only feed them, but "cause them to lie down," ver. 15, which notes a comfortable rest, after they had tired themselves with their wanderings, and a constant, continuing residence; they shall not be driven out again from these green pastures, as they have been, nor shall they be disturbed, but shall lie down in a sweet repose, and there shall be none to make them afraid; *Ps.* xxiii. 2, "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Compare this with the like promise, *Jer.* xxiii. 3, 4, when God restored them, not only to the milk and honey of their own land, to the enjoyment of the fruits of it, but to the privileges of his sanctuary on mount Zion, the chief of the mountains of Israel; when they had an altar and a temple again, and the benefit of a settled priesthood, then they were fed in a good pasture.

3. He will succour those that are hurt, will "bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick," will comfort those that mourn in Zion, and with Zion. If ministers, that should speak peace to those that are of a sorrowful spirit, neglect their duty, yet the Holy Ghost the Comforter will be faithful to his office. But, as it follows, the fat and the strong shall be destroyed. He that hath rest for disquieted saints hath terror to speak to presumptuous sinners. As "every valley shall be filled," so "every mountain and hill shall be brought low," *Lu.* iii. 5.

17 And *as for* you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he goats.
18 *Seemeth it* a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture,
But ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures?
And to have drunk of the deep waters,
But ye must foul the residue with your feet?
19 And *as for* my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet;
And they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.
20 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them;
Behold, I, *even* I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle.
21 Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder,
And pushed all the diseased with your horns,
Till ye have scattered them abroad;
22 Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey;
And I will judge between cattle and cattle.
23 And I will see up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them,
Even my servant David;
He shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.
24 And I the LORD will be their God,
And my servant David a prince among them;
I the LORD have spoken *it*.
25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace,
And will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land:
And they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.
26 And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing;
And I will cause the shower to come down in his season;
There shall be showers of blessing.
27 And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit,
And the earth shall yield her increase,
And they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I have broken the bands of their yoke,
And delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.
28 And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen,
Neither shall the beast of the land devour them;
But they shall dwell safely, and none shall make *them* afraid.
29 And I will raise up for them a plant of renown,
And they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land,
Neither bear the shame of the heathen any more.
30 Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God *am* with them,
And *that* they, *even* the house of Israel, *are* my people, Saith the Lord GOD.
31 And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, *are* men,
And I *am* your God, saith the Lord GOD.

The prophet has no more to say to the shepherds, but he has now a message to deliver to the flock; God has ordered him to speak tenderly to them, and to assure them of the mercy he had in store for them. But here he is ordered to make a difference between some and others of them, to separate between the precious and the vile, and then to give them a promise of the Messiah, by whom this distinction should be effectually made, partly at his first coming, (for for judgment he came into this world, *Jno.* ix. 39, to fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away, *Lu.* i. 53,) but completely at his second coming, when he shall, as it is here said, "judge between cattle and cattle," "as a shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats, and shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left," *Mat.* xxv. 32, 33, which seems to have reference to this here. We have here,

First. Conviction spoken to those of the flock that were fat and strong, "the rams and the he-goats," ver. 17. Those that, though they had not power as shepherds and rulers to oppress with, yet, being rich and wealthy, made use of the opportunity which this gave them to bear hard upon their poor neighbours. Those that have much would have more; and if they set to it will have more, so many ways have they of encroaching upon their poor neighbours, and forcing from them the one ewe lamb, 2 *Sam.* xii. 14. Do not the rich oppress the poor merely with the help of their riches, and draw them before the judgment seats? *Jas.* ii. 6. Poor servants and tenants are hardly used by their rich lords and masters. The rams and the he-goats not only kept all the good pasture to themselves, eat the fat and drank the sweet, but they would not let the poor of the flock have any comfortable enjoyment of the little that was left them; they trod down the residue of the pastures, and fouled the residue of the waters, so that the flock was fain to eat that which they had trodden into the dirt, and drink that which they had muddied, ver. 18, 19. This intimates that the great men not only by extortion and oppression made and kept their neighbours poor, and scarce left them enough to subsist on, but were so vexatious to them, that what little coarse fare they had was embittered to them. And this seemed a small thing to them; they thought there was no harm in it, as if it were the privilege of their quality to be injurious to all their neighbours. Note, Many that live in pomp and at ease themselves care not what straits those about them are reduced to, so they may but have every thing to their mind. Those that are at ease, and the proud, grudge that any body should live by them with any comfort.

But this was not all; they not only robbed the poor, to make them poorer, but were troublesome to the sick and weak of the flock; ver. 21, they "thrust with side and shoulder" those that were feeble, for the weakest go to the wall, and pushed the diseased with their horns, because they knew they could be too hard for them, when they durst not meddle with their match. It has been observed concerning sheep, that, if one of the flock be sick and faint, the rest will secure it as they can, and shelter it from the scorching heat of the sun, but these, on the contrary, were most injurious to the diseased. Those that they could not serve themselves of they did what they could to rid the country of them, and so scattered them abroad, as if the poor, whom Christ saith we must always have with us, were public nuisances, not to be relieved, but sent far enough. Note, It is a barbarous thing to add affliction to the afflicted. Perhaps these rams and he-goats are designed to represent the scribes and Pharisees; for they are such troublers of the church as Christ himself must come to deliver it from, ver. 23. They devoured widows' houses, took away the key of knowledge, corrupted the pure water of Divine truths, and

oppressed the consciences of men with the traditions of the elders, besides that they were continually vexatious and injurious to "the poor of the flock that waited" on the Lord, *Zec.* xi. 11. Note, It is no new thing for the flock of God to receive a great deal of damage and mischief from those that are themselves of the flock, and in eminent station in it, *Acts* xx. 30.

Secondly. Comfort spoken to those of the flock that are poor and feeble, and wait for the consolation of Israel; ver. 22, "I will save my flock," and they shall no more be spoiled as they have been by the beasts of prey, by their own shepherds, or by the rams and he-goats among themselves. Upon this occasion, as is usual in the prophets, comes in a prediction of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom, and the exceeding great and precious benefits which the church should enjoy under the protection and influence of that kingdom. Observe,

1. What is here foretold concerning the Messiah himself. 1st. He shall have his commission from God himself; I will set him up, ver. 23; I will raise him up, ver. 29. He sanctified and sealed him, appointed and anointed him. 2nd. He shall be the great Shepherd of the sheep, who shall do that for his flock which no one else could do. He is the one Shepherd under whom Jews and Gentiles should be one fold. 3rd. He is God's servant, employed by him and for him, and doing all in obedience to his will, with an eye to his glory; his servant to re-establish his kingdom among men, and advance the interests of that kingdom. 4th. He is David, one after God's own heart, set as his king upon the holy hill of Sion, made the head of the corner, with whom the covenant of royalty is made, and to whom God would give the throne of his father David. He is both the root and offspring of David. 5th. He is the "plant of renown," because a "righteous branch," *Jer.* xxiii. 5,—a branch of the Lord that is beautiful and glorious, *Isa.* iv. 2. He has a name above every name, a throne above every throne, and may therefore well be called a branch of renown. Some understand it of the church, the "planting of the Lord," *Isa.* lxi. 3. "Its name shall be remembered," *Ps.* xlv. 17, and Christ's in it.

2. Concerning the great charter, by which the Messiah should be incorporated, and upon which it should be founded; ver. 25, "I will make with them a covenant of peace." The covenant of grace is a covenant of peace; in it God is at peace with us, speaks peace to us, and assures us of peace, of all good,—all the good we need to make us happy. The tenor of this covenant is, "I the Lord will be their God," a God all-sufficient to them, ver. 24, will own them, and will be owned by them. In order to this, my servant David shall be a prince among them, to reduce them to their allegiance, to receive their homage, and to reign over them, in them, and for them. Note, Those, and those only, that have the Lord Jesus for their prince have the Lord Jehovah for their God. And then they, even the house of Israel, shall be my people. If we take God to be our God, he will take us to be his people. From this covenant between God and Israel there results communion; "I the Lord their God am with them," to converse with them; and they shall know it, and have the comfort of it.

3. Concerning the privileges of those that are the faithful subjects of this kingdom of the Messiah, and interested in the covenant of peace. These are here set forth figuratively, as the blessings of the flock; but we have a key to it, ver. 31. They that belong to this flock, though they are spoken of as sheep, are really men,—men that have the Lord for their God, and are in covenant with him. Now to them it is promised,

1st. That they shall enjoy a holy security under the Divine protection. Christ, our good Shepherd, has caused "the evil beasts to cease out of the land," ver. 25, having vanquished all our spiritual enemies, broken their power, and triumphed over them; the roaring lion is not a roaring, devouring lion to them. "They shall no more be a prey to the heathen," nor the heathen a terror to them; "neither shall the beasts of the land devour them." Sin and Satan, death and hell, are conquered. And then "they shall dwell safely," not only in the folds but in the fields, in the wilderness, in the woods, where the beasts of prey are. They shall not only dwell there, but they shall sleep there, which notes not only that, the beasts being made to cease, there shall be no danger, but, their consciences being purified and pacified, they shall be in no apprehension of danger; not only safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of evil. Note, Those may lay them down and sleep securely, sleep at ease, that have Christ for their prince; for he will be their protector, and make them to dwell in safety. None shall hurt them, nay, "none shall make them afraid." If God be for us who can be against us? "Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed." Through Christ God delivers his people, not only from the things they have reason to fear, but from their fear even of death itself, from all that fear that has torment. This safety from evil is promised, ver. 27, "They shall be safe in their land," in no danger of being invaded and enslaved, though their great plenty be a temptation to their neighbours to desire their land; and that which shall make them think themselves safe is, their confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God; "They shall know that I am the Lord." All our disquieting fears arise from our ignorance of God, and mistakes concerning him. And their experience of his particular care concerning them encourageth their confidence in him; "I have broken the bonds of their yoke," with which they have been brought and held down under oppression, and have "delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them;" from whence they shall argue, He that has delivered doth and will, therefore will we dwell safely. This is explained and applied to our gospel state; *Lu.* i. 74, "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear," as those may do that serve him in faith.

2nd. That they shall enjoy a spiritual plenty of all good things—the best things—for their comfort and happiness. "They shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land," ver. 29. Famine and scarcity, when Israel was punished with that judgment, turned as much to their reproach among the heathen as any other, because the fruitfulness of Canaan was so much talked of. But now "They shall not bear that shame of the heathen any more;" for "the showers shall come down in their season," even "showers of blessings," ver. 26. Christ is a Shepherd that will feed his people; and they shall go in and out and find pasture. *First.* They shall not be consumed with hunger; for they shall not be put off with the world for a portion, which is not bread, which satisfies not, and which those that are put off with cannot but be "consumed with hunger." The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called beggarly elements; for there was little in them compared with the Christian institutes, "wherewith the mower fills his hand and he that bindeth sheaves his bosom." They that "hunger and thirst after righteousness" shall not be consumed with that hunger, for "they shall be filled;" and he that drinks of the water that Christ gives him, the still waters by which he leads his sheep, shall never thirst. *Secondly.* "Showers of blessings" shall come upon them, ver. 26, 27. The heavens shall yield their dews, the trees of the field also shall yield her fruit. The seat of this plenty is God's hill, his holy hill of Zion; for on that mountain, in the gospel church, it is that God has "made to all nations a feast," so that those must join themselves that would partake of gospel benefits. The cause of this plenty is the showers that come down in their season, that descend upon the mountains of Zion, the graces of Christ, his doctrine that drops as the dew, the graces of Christ, and the gifts and comforts of his Spirit, by which we are made fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The instances of this plenty are the blessings of heaven poured down upon us, and the products of grace brought forth by us, our comfort in God's favour, and God's glory in our fruit-bearing. The extent of this plenty is very large, to all the "places round about my hill;" for "out of Sion shall go forth the law," shall go forth light to a dark world, and the river that shall water a dry and desert world; all that are in the neighbourhood of Sion shall fare better for it, and the nearer the church the nearer its God. And, lastly, the effect of this plenty is, "I will make them a blessing," eminently and exemplarily blessed, patterns of happiness, *Isa.* xix. 24. Or, they shall be blessings to all about them, diffusively useful. Note, Those that are the blessed of the Lord must study to make themselves blessings to the world. He that is good, let him do good; he that has received the gift, the grace, let him minister the same.

Now this promise of the Messiah and his kingdom spoke much comfort to those to whom it was then made, for they might be sure God would not utterly destroy their nation, how low soever it might be brought, as long as that blessing was in the womb of it, *Isa.* lxv. 8. But it speaks much more comfort to us to whom it is fulfilled, who are the sheep of this good Shepherd, are fed in his pastures, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by him.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was promised in the foregoing chapter, that when the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, should come, especially the time for sending the Messiah, and setting up his kingdom in the world, God would cause the enemies of the church to cease, and the blessings and comforts of the church to abound. This chapter enlargeth upon the former promise, concerning the destruction of the enemies of the church; the next chapter upon the latter promise, the replenishing of the church with blessings. Mount Seir, that is, Edom, is the enemy prophesied against in this chapter, but fitly put here, as in the prophesy of Obadiah, for all the enemies of the church; for, as they all walked in the way of Cain that hated Abel, so they all walked in the way of Esau that hated Jacob, but over whom Jacob, by virtue of a particular blessing, was to have dominion. Now here we have, I. The sin charged upon the Edomites, and that was their spite and malice to Israel, ver. 5, 10—13. II. The ruin threatened that should come upon them for this sin: God will be against them, ver. 3; and then their country shall be laid waste, ver. 4; depopulated, and made quite desolate, ver. 6—9; and left so when other nations that had been wasted should recover themselves, ver. 14, 15.

MOREOVER the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy against it, 3 And say unto it,

Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, O mount Seir, I *am* against thee,
And I will stretch out mine hand against thee,
And I will make thee most desolate.
4 I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate
And thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD.
5 Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred,
And hast shed *the blood of* the children of Israel by the force of the sword
In the time of their calamity, in the time *that their* iniquity *had* an end:
6 Therefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD, [thee:
I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue
Sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue
7 Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, [thee.
And cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth.

MOUNT SEIR.

8 And I will fill his mountains with his slain *men:*
In thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers,
Shall they fall that are slain with the sword.
9 I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return:
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Mount Seir was mentioned as partner with Moab in one of the threatenings we had before, *ch.* xxv. 8; but here it is convicted and condemned by itself, and has woes of its own. The prophet must boldly set his face against Edom, and prophesy particularly against it; for the God of Israel hath said, "O mount Seir, I am against thee!" Note, Those that have God against them have the word of God against them, and the face of his ministers; neither dare they prophesy any good of them, but evil. The prophet must tell the Edomites that God has a controversy with them, and let them know,

First. What is the cause and ground of that controversy, ver. 5. God espouseth his people's cause, and will plead it; takes what is done against them as done against himself, and will reckon for it; and it is upon their account that God now contends with the Edomites. 1. Because of the enmity they had against the people of God, that was rooted in the heart; Thou hast had a perpetual hatred to them, to the very name of an Israelite. The Edomites kept up an hereditary malice against Israel, the same that Esau bore to Jacob, because he got the birthright and the blessing. Esau had been reconciled to Jacob, had embraced and kissed him, *Gen.* xxxiii.; and we do not find that ever he quarrelled with him again; but the posterity of Esau would never be reconciled to the seed of Jacob, but hated them with a perpetual hatred. Note, Children will be more apt to imitate the vices than the virtues of their parents, and to tread in the steps of their sin than in the steps of their repentance. Parents should therefore be careful not to set their children any bad example; for, though through the grace of God they may return and prevent the mischief of what they have done amiss to themselves, they may not be able to obviate the ill influence of it upon their children. It is strange how deeply rooted national antipathies sometimes are, and how long they last, but not to be wondered at that profane Edomites hate pious Israelites, since the old enmity that was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (*Gen* iii. 15) will continue to the end. "Marvel not if the world hate you." 2. Because of the injuries they had done to the people of God. They shed their blood "by the force of the sword, in the time of their calamity." They did not attack them as fair and open enemies, but laid wait for them, to cut off those of them that had escaped, *Oba.* 14. Or, they drove them back upon the swords of the pursuers, by which they fell. It was cowardly as well as barbarous to take advantage of their distress, and for neighbours with whom they had lived peaceably to smite them secretly when strangers openly invaded them. It was in the time that their iniquity had an end, that is, when the measure of it was full, and destruction came. Note, Even those that suffer justly, and for their sins, yet are to be pitied, and not trampled upon. If the father corrects one child, he expects the rest should tremble at it, not triumph in it.

Secondly. What should be the effect and issue of that controversy. If God stretch out his hand against the country of Edom, he will make it "most desolate," ver. 3,—desolation and desolation. 1. The inhabitants shall be slain with the sword; ver. 6, "I will prepare thee unto blood." Edom shall be gradually weakened, and so be the more easily conquered, and the enemy shall gather strength the more effectually to subdue it. Thus preparation is in the making a great while before for this destruction. "Thou hast not hated blood;" it implies, thou hast delighted in it, and thirsted after it. Those that do not keep a rooted hatred of sin, when a temptation to it is very strong will be in danger of yielding to it. Some read it, 'Unless thou hatest blood,' that is, unless thou dost repent, and put off this bloody disposition, "blood shall pursue thee." And then it is an intimation that the judgment may yet be prevented by a thorough reformation. "If he turn not, he will whet his sword," *Ps.* vii. 12; but if he turn, he will lay it by. "Blood shall pursue thee," that is, the guilt of the blood which thou hast shed, or the judgment of blood; thy bloodthirsty enemies shall pursue thee, which way soever thou seekest to make thy escape. A great and general slaughter shall be made of the Idumeans, such as had been foretold, *Isa.* xxxiv. 6; the mountains and hills, the valleys and rivers, shall be filled with the slain, ver. 8. The pursuers shall overtake those that flee, and shall give no quarter, but put them all to the sword. Note, When God comes to make inquisition for blood, those that have shed the blood of his Israel shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. *Satia te sanguine quem sitisti,*—'Glut thyself with blood, after which thou hast thirsted.' 2. The country shall be laid waste. The cities shall be destroyed, ver. 4; the country made "most desolate," ver. 7; for God will cut off both him that passeth out and him that returneth; and, when the inhabitants are cut off that should keep the cities in repair, they will decay and go into ruins; and those that should till the land, that will soon be overrun with briers and thorns, and become a wilderness. Note, Those who help forward the desolations of Israel may expect to be themselves made desolate. And that which completes the judgment is, that Edom shall be made "perpetual desolations," ver. 9; and the cities shall never return to their former state, nor the inhabitants of them come back from their captivity and dispersion. Note, Those that have a perpetual enmity to God and his people, as the carnal mind has, can expect no other but to be made a perpetual desolation. Implacable malice will justly be punished with irreparable ruin.

10 Because thou hast said,
These two nations and these two countries shall be mine,
And we will possess it;
Whereas the LORD was there:
11 Therefore, *as* I live, saith the Lord GOD,
I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy
Which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them;
And I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee.
12 And thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD,
And that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken
Against the mountains of Israel, saying,
They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume.
13 Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me,
And have multiplied your words against me: I have [heard *them.*
14 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate.
15 As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of [Israel,
Because it was desolate,
So will I do unto thee:
Thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, *even* all of it:
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

Here is, First. A farther account of the Edomites, and their ill carriage towards the people of God. We find the church complaining of them for setting on the Babylonians, and irritating them against Jerusalem, saying, "Rase it, rase it," down with it, down with it, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 7, inflaming a rage that needed no spur; here it is farther charged upon them that they triumphed in Jerusalem's ruin, and in the desolations of the country. Many blasphemies they spoke against "the mountains of Israel," saying, with pride and pleasure, "They are laid desolate," ver. 12. Note, The troubles of God's church, as they give proofs of the constancy and fidelity of its friends, so they discover and draw out the corruptions of its enemies, in whom there then appears more brutish malice than one would have thought of. Now their triumphing in Jerusalem's ruin is here said to proceed,

1. From a sinful passion against the people of Israel; from anger and envy, and "hatred against them," ver. 11, and that "perpetual hatred" spoken of, ver. 5. Though they were not a match for them, and therefore could not do them a mischief themselves, yet they were glad when the Chaldeans did them a mischief.

2. From a sinful appetite to the land of Israel. They pleased themselves with hopes that when the people of Israel were destroyed they should be let into the possession of their country, which they had so often grudged and envied them. They thought they could make out something of a title to it, *ob defectum sanguinis,*—'for want of other heirs.' If Jacob's issue fail, they think they are next in the entail, and that the remainder will be to his brother's issue; "These two nations" of Judah and Israel "shall be mine;" now is the time for me to put in for them. However, they hope to come in as first occupants, being near neighbours; We will possess it, when it is deserted. *Ceditur occupanti,*—'Let us get possession, and that will be title enough.' Note, Those have the spirit of Edomites who desire the deaths of others because they hope to get by them, or are pleased with others failing because they expect to come into their business. When we see the vanity of the world in the disappointments, losses, and crosses that others meet with in it, instead of shewing ourselves upon such an occasion greedy of it we should rather be made thereby to sit more loose to it, and both take our affections off it and lower our expectations from it. But, in this case of the Edomites coveting the land of Israel, and gaping for it, there was a particular affront to God, when they said, These lands are given us to devour, and we shall have our bellies full of their riches. God saith, "You have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me;" for they expected possession upon a vacancy, because Israel was driven out, "whereas the Lord was still there," ver. 10. His temple indeed was burnt, and other the tokens of his presence gone; but his promise to give that land to the seed of Jacob for an inheritance was not made void, but remained in full force and virtue; and by that promise he did in effect still keep possession for Israel till they should in due time be restored to it. That was Immanuel's land, *Isa.* viii. 8; in that land he was to be born, and therefore that people shall continue in it of whom he is to be born till he has passed his time in it, and then let who will take it. "The Lord is there," that is, the Lord Jesus is to be there; and therefore Israel's discontinuance of possession is no defeasance of their right, but it shall be kept for them; and they shall have, hold, and enjoy it, by virtue of the Divine grant, till the promise of this Canaan shall by the Messiah be changed into the promise of a far better. Note, It is a piece of presumption highly offensive to God for Edomites to lay claim to those privileges and comforts that are peculiar to God's chosen Israel, and are reserved for them. It is blasphemy against the mountains of Israel, the holy mountains, (as they are here called, ver. 12,) to say, because they are for the present made a prey of, and "trodden under foot of the Gentiles," *Rev.* xi. 2, even the holy city itself, that therefore the Lord has forsaken them, their God has forgotten them. The apostle will by no means admit such a thought as this, that "God hath cast away his people," *Rom.* xi. 1. No; though they are cast down for a time, they are not cast off for ever. Those reproach the Lord who say they are.

Secondly. The notice God took of the barbarous insolence of the Edomites, and the doom passed upon them for it. "I have heard all thy blasphemies," ver. 12; and again, ver. 13, "You have multiplied your words against me," and I have heard them, I have observed them, I have kept an account of them. Note, In the multitude of words none escape God's cognizance; let men speak never so much, never so fast, though they multiply words which they themselves regard not, but forget immediately, yet none of them are lost in the crowd, not the most idle words; but God hears them, and will be able to charge the sinner with them. All the haughty and hard speeches particularly which are spoken against the God of Israel, the words that are magnified, as it is in the margin, ver. 13, as well as the words that are multiplied, God takes notice of. For, as the trifling words are not below his cognizance, so the daring are not above his rebuke; "I have heard all thy blasphemies." This is good reason why we should bear reproach as if we heard it not, because God will hear, *Ps.* xxxviii. 13, 15, God has heard the Edomites' blasphemy, let them therefore hear their doom, ver. 14, 15. It was a national sin; the blasphemies charged upon them were the sense and language of all the Edomites, and therefore shall be punished with a national desolation. And, 1. It shall be a distinguishing punishment. As God has peculiar favours for Israelites, so he has peculiar plagues for Edomites; so that "when the whole earth rejoiceth I will make thee desolate," when other nations have their desolations repaired to their joy, thine shall be perpetual, ver. 9. 2. The punishment shall answer the sin. As thou didst rejoice in the desolation of the house of Israel, God will give thee enough of desolation; since thou art so fond of it, thou shalt be desolate, I will make thee so. Note, Those who, instead of weeping with the mourners, make a jest of their grievances, may justly be made to weep like the mourners, and themselves to feel the weight, to feel the smart of those grievances they set so light by. Some read ver. 14 so as to complete the resemblance between the sin and the punishment, 'The whole earth shall

rejoice when I make thee desolate, as thou didst rejoice when Israel was made desolate.' Those that are glad at the death and fall of others may expect that others will be glad of their death, of their fall.

Thirdly. In the destruction of the enemies of the church God designs his own glory, and we may be sure he will not come short of his design. 1. That which he intends is to manifest himself, as a just and jealous God, firm to his covenant, and faithful to his people and their injured cause; ver. 11, "I will make myself known among them when I have judged thee." The Lord is and will be known by the judgments which he executeth. 2. His intention shall be fully answered, not only his own people shall be made to know it to their comfort, but even the Edomites themselves, and all other the enemies of his name and people, shall know that he is the Lord, ver. 4, 9, 15. As the works of creation and common providence demonstrate that there is a God, so the care taken of Israel shews that Jehovah the God of Israel is that God alone, the true and living God.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

We have done with mount Seir, and left it desolate, and likely to continue so, and must now turn ourselves with the prophet to the mountains of Israel, which we find desolate too, but hope before we have done with the chapter to leave in better plight. Here are two distinct prophecies in this chapter, I. Here is one that seems chiefly to relate to the temporal estate of the Jews, wherein their present deplorable condition is described, and the triumphs of their neighbours in it; but it is promised that their grievances shall be all redressed, and that in due time they should be settled again in their own land in the midst of peace and plenty, ver. 1—15. II. Here is another that seems chiefly to concern their spiritual estate; wherein they are minded of their former sins, and God's judgments upon them, to humble them for their sins and under God's mighty hand, ver. 16—20. But it is promised, 1. That God would glorify himself in shewing mercy to them, ver. 21—24; 2. That he would sanctify them by giving them his grace, and fitting them for his service, and this for his own name's sake, and in answer to their prayers, ver. 25—38.

ALSO, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say,

Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD:

2 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because the enemy hath said against you,
Aha, even the ancient high places are our's in possession:

3 Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Because they have made *you* desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, [heathen,
That ye might be a possession unto the residue of the
And ye are taken up in the lips of talkers,
And *are* an infamy of the people:

4 Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD;
Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills,
To the rivers, and to the valleys,

THE PLAIN AND MOUNTAINS OF THE JORDAN.

To the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken,
Which became a prey and derision
To the residue of the heathen that *are* round about;

5 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken
Against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea,
Which have appointed my land into their possession
With the joy of all *their* heart,
With despiteful minds, to cast it out for a prey.

6 Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel,
And say unto the mountains, and to the hills,
To the rivers, and to the valleys,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury,
Because ye have borne the shame of the heathen:

7 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I have lifted up mine hand,
Surely the heathen that *are* about you, they shall bear their shame.

8 But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches,
And yield your fruit to my people of Israel;
For they are at hand to come.

9 For, behold, I *am* for you, and I will turn unto you,
And ye shall be tilled and sown:

10 And I will multiply men upon you,
All the house of Israel, *even* all of it: [builded:
And the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be

11 And I will multiply upon you man and beast;
And they shall increase and bring fruit:
And I will settle you after your old estates,
And will do better *unto you* than at your beginnings:
And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. [Israel;

12 Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, *even* my people
And they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance,
And thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them *of men*.

13 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because they say unto you,
Thou *land* devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy

14 Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, [nations;
Neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord GOD.

15 Neither will I cause *men* to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, [more,
Neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the people any
Neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord GOD.

CITADEL OF EDOM.—ver. 5.

The prophet had been ordered to set his face towards the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, *ch.* vi. 2. Then God was coming forth to contend with his people; but, now God is returning in mercy to them, he must speak good words and comfortable words to these mountains, ver. 1. And again, ver. 4, "Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord;" and what he saith to them, he saith "to the hills, to the rivers, to the valleys, to the desolate wastes" in the country, "and to the cities that are forsaken," ver. 4; and again, ver. 6. The people were gone, some one way, and some another; nothing remained there to be spoken to but the places, the mountains and valleys. These the Chaldeans could not carry with them; the earth abideth for ever. Now, to shew the mercy God had in reserve for the people, he is to speak of him as having a dormant kindness for the place, which, if the Lord had been pleased for ever to abandon, he would not have called upon it to hear the word of the Lord, nor would, as at this time, have shewed it such things as these. Here is,

First. The compassionate notice God takes of the present deplorable condition of the land of Israel; it is become both a "prey and a derision to the

heathen that are round about," ver. 4. 1. It is become a prey to them; and they are all enriched with the plunder of it. When the Chaldeans had conquered them, all their neighbours flew to the spoil, as to a shipwreck, every one thinking all his own that he could lay his hands on; ver. 3, "They have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession to the heathen;" to the residue of them, even such as had themselves narrowly escaped the like desolation. No one thought it any crime to strip an Israelite; *turba Romæ sequitur fortunam ut semper*,—'the mob of Rome still praise the elevated, and despise the fallen.' It is the common cry, when a man is down, Down with him. 2. It is become a derision to them. They took all they had, and laughed at them when they had done; the enemy said, "Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession," ver. 2. Neither the antiquity, nor the dignity, nor the sanctity, nor the fortifications of the land of Israel are its security; but we are become masters of it all. The more honours that land had been adorned with, and the greater figure it had made among the nations, the more pride and pleasure did they take in making a spoil of it, which is an instance of a base and sordid spirit, for the more glorious the prosperity was the more piteous is the adversity. God takes notice of it here as an aggravation of the present calamity of Israel; "Ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people," ver. 3. All the talk of the country about was concerning the overthrow of the Jewish nation, and every one that spoke of it had some peevish, ill-natured reflection or other upon them. They were "the scorning of them that were at ease, and the contempt of the proud," *Ps.* cxxiii. 4. There are some that are noted for talkers, that have something to say of everybody, but cannot find in their hearts to speak well of anybody; God's people, among such people, were sure to be a reproach, when the crown was fallen from their head. Thus it was the lot of Christianity in its suffering days to be everywhere spoken against.

Secondly. The expressions of God's just displeasure against those who triumphed in the desolations of the land of Israel, as many of its neighbours did, even the residue of the heathen, and Idumea particularly. Let us see,

1. How they dealt with the Israel of God. They carved out larger possessions to themselves out of the land, out of God's land, for so indeed it was. "They have appointed my land into their possession," ver. 5; and so not only invaded their neighbours' property but intrenched upon God's prerogative. It was the holy land which they laid their sacrilegious hands upon. They did not own any dependence upon God, as the God of that land, nor acknowledge any remaining interest that Israel had in it, but cast it out for a prey, as if they had won it in a lawful war. And this they did without any dread of God and his judgments, and without any compassion for Israel and their calamities, but with the "joy of all their hearts;" because they got by it, and with despiteful minds to Israel that lost by it. Increasing wealth, by right or wrong, is all the joy of a worldly heart, and the calamities of God's people all the joy of a despiteful mind; and those that had not an opportunity of making a prey of God's people made a reproach of them, so that they were "the shame of the heathen," ver. 6. Everybody ridiculed them and made a jest of them; and the truth is they had, by their own sin, made themselves vile, so that God was righteous herein, but men were unrighteous and very barbarous.

2. How God would deal with them who were thus in word and deed abusive to his people. He hath spoken against the heathen, that is, he hath passed sentence upon them, he hath determined to reckon with them for it, and this in the fire of his jealousy, both for his own honour and for the honour of his people, ver. 5. Having a love for both strong as death, he hath a jealousy for both cruel as the grave. They spoke in their malice against God's people, and he will speak in his jealousy against them; and it is easy to say which will speak most powerfully. God will speak in his jealousy and in his fury, ver. 6. Fury is not in God, but he will exert his power against them, and handle them as severely as men do when they are in a fury. He will so speak to them in his wrath as to vex them in his sore displeasure. What he saith he will stand to, for it is backed with an oath; he hath lifted up his hand, and sworn by himself, hath sworn, and will not repent. And what is it that is said with so much heat, and yet with so much deliberation? It is this, ver. 7, "Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame." Note, The righteous God, to whom vengeance belongs, will render shame for shame. Those that put contempt and reproach upon God's people sooner or later will have it turned upon themselves; perhaps in this world, either their follies or their calamities, their miscarriages or their mischances, shall be their reproach—at least in that day when all the impenitent shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt.

3. The promises of God's favour to his Israel, and assurances given of great mercy God had in store for them. God takes occasion from the outrage and insolence of their enemies to shew himself so much the more concerned for them, and ready to do them good, as David hoped that God would recompense him good for Shimei's cursing him: "Let them curse, but bless thou." In this way, as well as others, the enemies of God's people do them real service, even by the injuries they do them, against their will, and beyond their intention. We shall have no reason to complain, if, the more unkind men are, the more kind God is—if the more kindly he speaks to us by his word and Spirit, and the more kindly he acts for us in his providence. The prophet must say to the mountains of Israel, which were now desolate and despised, that God is for them, and will turn to them, ver. 9. As the curse of God reacheth the ground for man's sake, so doth the blessing. Now that which is promised is,

1st. That their rightful owners should return to the possession of them. "My people Israel are at hand to come," ver. 8. Though they are at a great distance from their own country, though they are dispersed in many countries, and though they are detained by the power of their enemies, yet they "shall come again to their own border," *Jer.* xxxi. 17. The time is at hand for their return. Though there were about forty years of the seventy (perhaps fifty) yet remaining, it is spoken of as near, because it is sure, and there were some among them that should live to see it. A thousand years are with God but as one day. The mountains of Israel are now desolate; but God will cause men to walk upon them again, even his people Israel, not as travellers passing over them, but as inhabitants, not tenants, but freeholders; They shall possess thee, not for term of life, but for themselves and their heirs; thou shalt be their inheritance. It was a type of the heavenly Canaan, to which all God's children are heirs, every Israelite indeed, and into which they shall shortly be all brought together, out of the countries where they are now scattered.

2nd. That they should afford a plentiful comfortable maintenance for their owners at their return. When the land had enjoyed her sabbaths for so many years, it should be so much the more fruitful afterwards, as we should be after rest, especially a sabbath rest; "Ye shall be tilled and sown," ver. 9; and shall "yield your fruit to my people Israel," ver. 8. Note, It is a blessing to the earth to be made serviceable to men, especially to good men, that will serve God with cheerfulness in the use of those good things which the earth serves up to them.

3rd. That the people of Israel should have not only a comfortable sustenance, but a comfortable settlement in their own land. "The cities shall be inhabited, the wastes shall be builded," ver. 10; and "I will settle you after your old estates," ver. 11. Their own sin had unsettled them, but now God's favour shall resettle them. When the prodigal son is become a penitent he is settled again in his father's house according to his former estate; "Bring hither the best robe, and put it on him." Nay, "I will do better unto you" now "than at your beginnings." There is more joy for the sheep that is brought back than there would have been if it had never gone astray. And God sometimes multiplies his people's comforts in proportion to the time that he has afflicted them. Thus God blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, and doubled to him all he had.

4th. That the people after their return should be fruitful and multiply, and replenish this land, so that it should not only be inhabited again, but as thickly inhabited and as well peopled as ever. God will bring back to it all the house of Israel, even all of it, (observe what an emphasis is laid upon that, ver. 10;) all whose spirits God stirred up to return, and those only were reckoned of the house of Israel, the rest had cut themselves off from it. Or, though but few in comparison returned at first, yet afterwards, at divers times, they all returned; and then (saith God) "I will multiply these men," ver. 10; "multiply man and beast, and they shall increase," ver. 11. Note, God's kingdom in the world is a growing kingdom; and his church, though for a time it may be diminished, yet shall recover itself and be again replenished.

5th. That the reproach long since cast upon the land of Israel by the evil spies, and of late revived, that it was a land that eat up the inhabitants of it, by famine, sickness, and the sword, should be quite rolled away, and there should never be any more occasion for it. Canaan was got into an ill name; it had of old "spewed out the inhabitants," *Lev.* xviii. 28, the natives, the aborigines, which was turned to its reproach by those that should have put another construction upon it, *Num.* xiii. 32. It had of late devoured the Israelites and spewed them out too; so that it was commonly said of it, It is a land that, instead of supporting its nations or tribes that inhabited it, bereaves them, overthows them, and causes them to fall. It is a tenement that breaks all the tenants that come upon it. This character it had got among the neighbours, but God now promiseth it shall be so no more; "Thou shalt no more bereave them of men," ver. 12; shalt "devour men no more," ver. 14. But the inhabitants shall live to a good old age, and not have the number of their months cut off in the midst: compare this with that promise, *Zec.* viii. 4. Note, God will take away the reproach of his people, by taking away that which was the occasion of it; when the nation is made to flourish in peace, plenty, and power, then they hear no more the shame of the heathen, ver. 15, especially when it is reformed. When sin, which is the reproach of any people, particularly of God's professing people, is taken away, then they hear no more the reproach of the people. Note, When God returns in mercy to a people that return to him in duty, all their grievances will be soon redressed, and their honour retrieved.

16 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto
me, saying, 17 Son of man, when the house of
Israel dwelt in their own land,
They defiled it by their own way and by their doings:
Their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed [woman.
18 Wherefore I poured my fury upon them
For the blood that they had shed upon the land,
And for their idols *wherewith* they had polluted it:
19 And I scattered them among the heathen,
And they were dispersed through the countries:
According to their way and according to their doings I
judged them. [went,
20 And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they
They profaned my holy name, when they said to them,
These *are* the people of the LORD, and are gone forth
out of his land.
21 But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of
Israel had profaned
Among the heathen, whither they went.
22 Therefore say unto the house of Israel,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel,
But for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned
Among the heathen, whither ye went.
23 And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned
among the heathen,
Which ye have profaned in the midst of them;
And the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD,
Saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you
before their eyes.
24 For I will take you from among the heathen,
And gather you out of all countries,
And will bring you into your own land.

When God promised the poor captives a glorious return in due time to their own land, it was a great discouragement to their hopes that they were unworthy, utterly unworthy, of such a favour; therefore, to remove that discouragement, God here shews them that he would do it for them purely for his own name's sake, that he might be glorified in them and by them, that he might manifest and magnify his mercy and goodness, that attribute which of all others is most his glory; and, the restoration of that people being typical of our redemption by Christ, this here is intended farther to shew that the ultimate end aimed at in our salvation, to which all the steps of it were made subservient, was the glory of God. To this end Christ directed all

he did in that short prayer, "Father, glorify thy name;" and God declared it was his end in all he did in the immediate answer given to that prayer, by a voice from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again," *Jno.* xii. 28. Now observe here,

First. How God's name had suffered, both by the sins and by the miseries of Israel; and this was more to be regretted than all their sorrow, which they had brought upon themselves, for the honour of God lies nearer the hearts of good men than any interests of their own.

1. God's glory had been injured by the sin of Israel when they were in their own land, ver. 17. It was a good land, a holy land, a land that had the eye of God upon it; but "they defiled it by their own way," their wicked way; that is, our own way, the way of our own choice, and we ourselves must bear the blame and shame of it. The sin of a people defiles their land, renders it abominable to God, and uncomfortable to themselves, so that they cannot have any holy communion with him, or with one another. What was unclean might not be made use of: by the abuse of the gifts of God's bounty to us we forfeit the use of them, and, the mind and conscience being defiled with guilt, no comfort is allowed us, nothing is pure to us. Their way in the eye of God was like the pollution of a woman during the days of her separation, which shut her out from the sanctuary, and made every thing she touched ceremonially unclean, *Lev.* xv. 19. Sin is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which he cannot endure to look upon. They shed blood, and worshipped idols, ver. 18; and with those sins defiled the land. For this God poured out his fury upon them, scattered them among the heathen; their own land was sick of them, and they were sent into other lands. Herein God was righteous, and was justified in what he did; none could say that he did them any wrong; nay, he did justice to his own honour, for he judged them "according to their way, and according to their doings," ver. 19; and yet, the matter being not rightly understood, he was not glorified in it, for the enemies did say, as Moses pleaded the Egyptians would say, if he had destroyed them in the wilderness, that for mischief he brought them forth. Their neighbours considered them rather as a holy people than as a sinful people, and therefore took occasion from the calamities they were in, instead of glorifying God, as they might justly have done, to reproach him, and put contempt upon him; and God's name was "continually every day blasphemed" by their oppressors, *Isa.* lii. 5.

2. When they entered into the land of the heathen God had no glory by them there; but, on the contrary, his holy name was profaned, ver. 20. 1st. It was profaned by the sins of Israel. They were no credit to their profession, wherever they went, but, on the contrary, a reproach to it; the name of God and his holy religion was blasphemed through them, *Rom.* ii. 24. When those that pretended to be in relation to God, in covenant and communion with him, were found corrupt in their morals, slaves to their appetites and passions, dishonest in their dealings, and false to their words and the trusts reposed in them, the enemies of the Lord had thereby great occasion given them to blasphemy, especially when they quarrelled with their God for correcting them, than which nothing could be more scandalous. 2nd. It was profaned by the sufferings of Israel; for from them the enemies of God took occasion to reproach God, as unable to protect his own worshippers, and to make good his own grants. They said in scorn, "These are the people of the land," these wicked people,—you see he could not keep them in their obedience to his precepts; these miserable people,—you see he could not keep them in the enjoyment of his favours. These are the people that came out of Jehovah's land; they are the very scum of the nations. Are these they that had statutes so righteous, whose lives are so unrighteous? Is this a nation that is so much celebrated for a wise and understanding people? and that is said to have God so nigh unto them? Do these belong to that brave, that holy nation, that appear here so vile, so abject? Thus God sold his people, and did not "increase his wealth by their price," *Ps.* xliv. 12. The reproach they were under reflected upon him.

Secondly. Let us now see how God will retrieve his honour, secure it, and advance it, by working a great reformation upon them, and then working a great salvation for them. He would have scattered them among the heathen, were it not that he "feared the wrath of the enemy," *Deu.* xxxii. 26, 27; but, though they were unworthy of his compassion, yet he had pity for his own holy name, and a thousand pities it was that that should be trampled upon and abused. He looked with compassion on his own honour, which lay bleeding among the heathen, on that jewel which was trodden into the dirt, which the house of Israel, even in the land of their captivity, had profaned, ver. 21. In pity to that God brought them out from the heathen, because their sins were more scandalous there than they had been in their own land; therefore, "I will gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land," ver. 24. Not "for your sakes," because you are worthy of such a favour, for you are most unworthy, but "for my holy name's sake," ver. 22; that "I may sanctify my great name," ver. 23. Observe, by the way, God's holy name is his great name, his holiness is his greatness; so he reckons it himself. Nor doth any thing make a man truly great but being truly good, and partaking of God's holiness. God will magnify his name as a holy name, for he will sanctify it; I will sanctify my name which you have profaned. When God performs that which he hath sworn by his holiness, then he sanctifies his name. The effect of this shall be very happy. "The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes" and yours. When God proves his own holy name, and his saints praise it, then he is sanctified in them, and this contributes to the propagating of the knowledge of him. Observe, 1. God's reasons of mercy are all fetched from within himself. He will bring his people out of Babylon, not for their sakes but for his own name's sake, because he will be glorified. 2. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; therefore he will sanctify his name by the pardon of sin, because it has been profaned by the commission of sin.

25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean:
From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.
26 A new heart also will I give you,
And a new spirit will I put within you:
And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh,
And I will give you an heart of flesh.
27 And I will put my spirit within you,
And cause you to walk in my statutes,
And ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.
28 And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers;
And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.
29 I will also save you from all your uncleannesses:
And I will call for the corn, and will increase it,
And lay no famine upon you.
30 And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field,
That ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen.
31 Then shall ye remember your own evil ways,
And your doings that *were* not good,
And shall lothe yourselves in your own sight
For your iniquities and for your abominations.
32 Not for your sakes do I *this*, saith the Lord GOD,
Be it known unto you:
Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.
33 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities
I will also cause *you* to dwell in the cities,
And the wastes shall be builded.
34 And the desolate land shall be tilled,
Whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.
35 And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden;
And the waste and desolate and ruined cities *are become And* are inhabited. [fenced,
36 Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know
That I the LORD build the ruined *places, and* plant that that was desolate:
I the LORD have spoken *it*, and I will do *it*.
37 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
I will yet *for* this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do *it* for them;
I will increase them with men like a flock.
38 As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts;
So shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men:
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

The people of God might be discouraged in their hopes of a restoration, by the sense not only of their unworthiness of such a favour, (which was answered in the foregoing verses with this, that God in doing it would have an eye to his own glory, not to their worthiness,) but their unfitness for such a favour, being still corrupt and sinful; and that is answered in these verses, with a promise that God would by his grace prepare and qualify them for the mercy, and then bestow it on them; and this was in part fulfilled in that wonderful effect which the captivity in Babylon had upon the Jews there, that it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry. But it is farther intended as a draught of the covenant of grace, and a specimen of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in heavenly things by that covenant. As, *ch.* xxxiv., after a promise of their return, the prophecy insensibly slid into a promise of the coming of Christ, the great Shepherd, so here it insensibly slides into a promise of the Spirit, and his gracious influences and operations, which we have as much need of for our sanctification, as we have of Christ's merit for our justification.

First. God here promiseth that he will work a good work in them, to qualify them for the good work he intended to bring about for them, ver. 25—27. We had promises to the same purpose, *ch.* xi. 18—20.

1. That God would cleanse them from the pollutions of sin; ver. 25, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you," which signifies both the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify that and to take away the sense of guilt, as those that were sprinkled with the water of purification were thereby discharged from their ceremonial uncleanness, and the grace of the Spirit sprinkled on the whole soul to purify it from all corrupt inclinations and dispositions, as Naaman was cleansed from his leprosy by dipping in Jordan. Christ was himself clean, else his blood could not have been cleansing to us; and it is a Holy Spirit that makes us holy. "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you," and, ver. 29, "I will save you from all your uncleannesses." Sin is defiling, idolatry particularly is so; it renders sinners odious to God, and burthensome to themselves. When guilt is pardoned, and the corrupt nature sanctified, then we are cleansed from our filthiness, and there is no other way of being saved from it. This God promiseth his people here, in order to his being sanctified in them, ver. 23. We cannot sanctify God's name unless he sanctify our hearts; nor live to his glory, but by his grace.

2. That God would give them a new heart, a disposition of mind excellent in itself, and vastly different from what it was before. God will work an inward change in order to an universal change. Note, All that have an interest in the new covenant, and a title to the new Jerusalem, have a new heart and a new spirit, and that is necessary in order to their walking in newness of life. This is that Divine nature which believers are, by the promises, make partakers of.

3. That instead of a heart of stone, insensible and inflexible, unapt to receive any Divine impressions, and to return any devout affections, God would give a

heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures, and complying in every thing with the will of God. Note, Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul as the turning of a dead stone into living flesh.

4. That since, besides our inclination to sin, we complain of an inability to do our duty, God will cause them to walk in his statutes, will not only shew them the way of his statutes before them, but incline them to walk in it, and thoroughly furnish them with wisdom, and will, and active powers for every good work. In order to this he will put his Spirit within them, as a teacher, guide, and sanctifier. Note, God doth not force men to walk in his statutes by external violence, but causes them to walk in his statutes by an internal principle. And observe what use we ought to make of this gracious power and principle promised us, and put within us, "Ye shall keep my judgments." If God will do his part according to the promise, we must do ours according to the precept. Note, The promise of God's grace to enable us for our duty should engage and quicken our constant care and endeavour to do our duty. God's promises must drive us to his precepts as our rule, and then his precepts must send us back to his promises for strength, for without his grace we can do nothing.

Secondly, God here promiseth that he will take them into covenant with himself. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, ver. 28, "Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." It is not, If you will be my people I will be your God, though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God unless we be to him a people; but he hath chosen us and loved us first, not we him. Therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as the reward; not of merit, not of works; "Ye shall be my people," I will make you so; I will give you the nature and spirit of my people, and then I will be your God. And this is the foundation and topstone of a believer's happiness; it is heaven itself, *Rev.* xxi. 3, 7.

Thirdly. He promiseth that he will bring about all that good for them which the exigence of their case calls for. When they are thus prepared for mercy,

1. Then they shall return to their possessions, and be settled again in them; ver. 28, "Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers." God will, in bringing them back to it, have an eye not to any merit of theirs, but to the promise made to the fathers; for therefore he gave it them at first, *Deu.* vii. 7, 8. Therefore he is gracious, because he hath said he will be so. This shall follow upon the blessed reformation God would work among them; ver. 33, "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities," and so shall have made you meet for the inheritance, I will cause you to dwell in the cities, and so put you in possession of the inheritance. This is God's method of mercy indeed, first to part men from their sins, and then restore them to their comforts.

2. Then they shall enjoy a plenty of all good things, when they are saved from their uncleanness, from their sins which kept good things from them; then "I will call for the corn, and will increase it," ver. 29. Plenty comes at God's call, and the plenty he calls for shall be still growing; and when he speaks the word the fruit both of the tree and of the field shall multiply. As the inhabitants multiply, the products shall multiply for their maintenance, for he that sends mouths will send meat. Famine was one of the judgments which they had laboured under, and it had been as much as any other a reproach to them that they should be starved in a land so famed for fruitfulness. But now I will "lay no famine upon you." And none are under that rod but it is God that lays it on. Then they "shall receive no more reproach of famine," shall never be again upbraided with that; nor shall it ever be said that God is a Master that keeps his servants to short allowance; nay, they shall not only be cleared from the reproach of famine, but they shall have the credit of abundance. The land that had long lain desolate in the sight of all that passed by, that looked upon it, some with contempt and some with compassion, shall again be tilled, ver. 34, and, having long lain fallow, it will now be the more fruitful. Observe, God will call for the corn, and yet they must till the ground for it. Note, Even promised mercies must be laboured for, for the promise is not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, our industry and endeavours. And such a blessing will God command on the hand of the diligent that all who pass by shall take notice of it with wonder, ver. 35. They shall say, See what a blessed change here is, how "this land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden," this desert turned again into a paradise. Note, God has honours in reserve for his people to be crowned with sufficient to balance the contempt they are now loaded with, and in them he will be honoured. This wonderful increase, both of the people of the land and of its products, is compared, ver. 38, to the large flocks of cattle that are brought to Jerusalem to be sacrificed at one of the solemn feasts. Even the cities that now lie waste shall be filled with flocks of men, not like the flocks with which the pastures are covered over, *Ps.* lxv. 13, but like the holy flock which is brought to the courts of the Lord's house. Note, Then the increase of the numbers of a people is honourable and comfortable indeed when they are all dedicated to God as a holy flock, to be presented to him for living sacrifices. Crowds are a lovely sight in God's temple.

Fourthly. He shews what shall be the happy effects of this blessed change.

1. It shall have a happy effect upon the people of God themselves, for it shall bring them to an ingenuous repentance of their sins; ver. 31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves." See here what sin is; it is an abomination, a loathsome thing, that abominable thing which the Lord hates. See what is the first step towards repentance; it is remembering our own evil ways, reflecting seriously upon the sins we have committed, and being particular in recapitulating them. We must remember against ourselves not only our gross enormities, our own evil ways, but our defects and infirmities, our doings that were not good, not so good as they should have been; not only our direct violations of the law, but our coming short of it. See what is evermore a companion of true repentance, and that is self-loathing, a holy shame and confusion of face; You shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, seeing how loathsome you have made yourselves in the sight of God. Self-love is at the bottom of sin, which we cannot but blush to see the absurdity of, but our quarrelling with ourselves is in order to our being upon good grounds reconciled to ourselves. And, lastly, see what is the most powerful inducement to an evangelical repentance, and that is, a sense of the mercy of God; when God settles them in the midst of plenty then they shall loathe themselves for their iniquities. Note, The goodness of God should overcome our badness, and lead us to repentance. The more we see of God's readiness to receive into favour upon our repentance, the more reason we shall see to be ashamed of ourselves that we could ever sin against so much love. That heart is hard indeed that will not be thus melted.

2. It shall have a happy effect upon their neighbours, for it shall bring them to a more clear knowledge of God; ver. 36, "Then the heathen that are left round about you," that spoke ignorantly of God (for so all those do that speak ill of him) when they saw the land of Israel desolate, shall begin to know better things, and to speak more intelligently of God, being convinced that he is able to rebuild the most desolate cities and to replant the most desolate countries; and that, though the course of his favours to his people may be obstructed for a time, they shall not be cut off for ever. They shall be made to know the truth of Divine revelation by the exact agreement which they shall discern between God's word which he has spoken to Israel, and his works which he hath done for them; "I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it." With us saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God.

Fifthly. He proposeth these things to them, not as the recompense of their merits, but as the return of their prayers.

1. Let them not think that they have deserved it; "Not for your sakes do I this, be it known to you," ver. 32; as before, ver. 22. No; be you "ashamed and confounded for your own ways." God is doing this, all this which he hath promised; it is as sure to be done as if it were done already, and present events have a tendency towards it. But then, 1st. They must renounce the merit of their own good works, and be brought to acknowledge that it is not for their sakes that it is done. So, when God brought Israel into Canaan the first time, an express caveat was entered against this thought, *Deu.* ix. 4—6, It is "not for thy righteousness." It is not for the sake of any of their good qualities or good deeds, not because God had any need of them, or expected any benefit by them; no, in shewing mercy he acts by prerogative, not for our deserts but his own honour. See how emphatically this is expressed, "Be it known to you," it is "not for your sakes," which intimates that we are apt to entertain a good conceit of our own merits, and are hardly persuaded to disclaim a confidence in them. But one way or other God will make all his favourites to know and own that it is his grace, and not their goodness,—his mercy, and not their merit,—that made them so; and that, therefore, not unto them, not unto them, but unto him is all the glory due. 2nd. They must repent of the sin, of their own evil ways. They must own that the mercies they receive from God are not only not merited, but they are a thousand times forfeited, and therefore they must be so far from boasting of their good works, that they must be ashamed and confounded for their evil ways, and then they are best prepared for mercy.

2. Yet let them know that they must desire and expect it; ver. 37, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel." God hath spoken, and he will do it, and he will be sought unto for it, that is, he requires that his people should seek unto him, and he will incline their hearts to do it, when he is coming towards them in the ways of mercy. 1st. They must pray for it, for by prayer God is sought unto, and inquired after. What is the matter of God's promises must be the matter of our prayers. By asking for the mercy promised we must give glory to the donor, express a value for the gift, own our dependence, and put honour upon prayer, which God has put honour upon. Christ himself must ask, and then God will "give him the heathen for his inheritance;" must "pray the Father," and then he will "send the Comforter," much more must we ask that we may receive. 2nd. They must consult the oracles of God, and thus also God is sought unto and inquired after. The mercy must not be an act of providence only, but a child of promise, and therefore the promise must be looked at, and prayer made for it with an eye of faith fastened upon the promise, which must be both the guide and the ground of our expectations. Both these ways we find God inquired of by Daniel, in the name of the house of Israel, when he was about to do those great things for them; he consulted the oracles of God, for he understood by books, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, both what was to be expected and when; and then he set his face to seek God by prayer, *Dan.* ix. 2, 3. Note, Our communion with God must be kept up by the word and prayer in all the operation of his providence concerning us, and in both he must be inquired of.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The threatenings of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, which we had in the former part of this book, were not so terrible, but the promises of their restoration and deliverance for the glory of God, which we have here in the latter part of the book, are as comfortable; and, as those were illustrated with many visions and similitudes for the awakening of a holy fear, so are these for the encouraging of an humble faith. God had assured them, in the foregoing chapter, that he would gather the house of Israel, even all of it, and would bring them out of their captivity, and return them to their own land; but there were two things that rendered this very unlikely. I. That they were so dispersed among their enemies, so destitute of all helps and advantages which might favour or further their return, and so dispirited likewise in their own minds; upon all these accounts they are here in vision compared to a valley full of the dry bones of dead men, which should be brought together, and raised to life. The vision of this we have, ver. 1—10; and the explication of it, with its application to the present case, ver. 11—14. II. That they were so divided among themselves; too much of the old core between Judah and Ephraim remaining, even in their captivity. But as to this, by a sign of two sticks made one in the hand of the prophet, is foreshewed the happy coalition that should be at their return between the two nations of Israel and Judah, ver. 15—22; in which there was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, Jews and Samaritans, in Christ and his church. And so the prophet slides into a prediction of the kingdom of Christ, which should be set up in the world with God's tabernacle in it, and of the glories and graces of that kingdom, ver. 23—28.

THE hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which *was* full of bones, 2 And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, *there were* very many in the open valley; and, lo, *they were* very dry. 3 And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. 4 Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5 Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6 And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I

prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8 And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them. 9 Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. 11 Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. 12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them,

Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, O my people, I will open your graves,
And cause you to come up out of your graves,
And bring you into the land of Israel.
13 And ye shall know that I *am* the LORD,
When I have opened your graves, O my people,
And brought you up out of your graves,
14 And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live,
And I shall place you in your own land:
Then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken *it*,
and performed *it*,
Saith the LORD.

Here is, First. The vision of a resurrection from death to life, and it is a glorious resurrection. This is a thing so utterly unknown to nature, and so contrary to its principles, (*a privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*,—'from privation to possession there is no return,') that we could have no thought of it but by the word of the Lord; and that it is certain by that word that there shall be a general resurrection of the dead some have urged from this vision; for, say they, otherwise it would not probably be made a sign for the confirming of their faith in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, as the coming of the Messiah is mentioned for the confirming of their faith, touching a former deliverance, *Isa.* vii. 14. But, whether it be a confirmation or no, it is without doubt a most lively representation of a threefold resurrection, besides that which it is primarily intended to be the sign of. 1st. The resurrection of souls from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and Divine life, by the power of Divine grace going along with the word of Christ, *Jno.* v. 24, 25. 2nd. The resurrection of the gospel church, or any part of it, from an afflicted, persecuted state, especially under the yoke of the New Testament Babylon, to liberty and peace. 3rd. The resurrection of the body at the great day, especially the bodies of believers that shall rise to life eternal. Let us observe the particulars of this vision.

1. The deplorable condition of these dead bones. The prophet was made, 1st. To take an exact view of them. By a prophetical impulse and a Divine power he was in vision carried out and set "in the midst of a valley," probably that plain spoken of *ch.* iii. 22, where God then talked with him, and it was full of bones, of dead men's bones; not piled up on a heap, as in a charnel-house, but scattered upon the face of the ground, as if some bloody battle had been fought there, and the slain left unburied, till all the flesh was devoured or putrefied, and nothing left but the bones, and those disjointed from one another and dispersed. He passed "by them round about," and he observed not only that they were very many, (for there are multitudes gone to the congregation of the dead,) but that "lo, they were very dry," having been long exposed to the sun and wind. The bones that had been "moistened with marrow," *Job* xxi. 24, when they have been any while dead lose all their moisture, and are dry as dust; the body is now fenced with bones, *Job* x. 11, but then they will themselves be defenceless. The Jews in Babylon were like those dead and dry bones, unlikely ever to come together, to be so much as a skeleton, less likely to be formed into a body, and least of all to be a living body. However, they lay unburied in the open valley, which encouraged the hopes of their resurrection, as of the two witnesses, *Rev.* xi. 8, 9. The bones of Gog and Magog shall be buried, *ch.* xxxix. 12, 15, for their destruction is final, but the bones of Israel are in the open valley, under the eye of heaven, for there is hope in the end. 2nd. He was made to own their case deplorable, and not to be helped by any power less than that of God himself; ver. 3, "Son of man, can these bones live?" Is it a thing likely? Canst thou devise how it should be done? Can thy philosophy reach to put life into dry bones, or thy politics to restore a captive nation? No, saith the prophet, I know not how it should be done, but thou knowest. He doth not say they cannot live, lest he should seem to limit the Holy One of Israel; but, Lord, thou knowest whether they can and whether they shall; and if thou dost not put life into them for certain they cannot live. Note, God is perfectly acquainted with his own power and his own purposes, and will have us to refer all to them, and to see and own that his wondrous works are such as could not be effected by any counsel or power but his own.

2. The means used for the bringing of these dispersed bones together, and these dead and dry bones to life. It must be done by prophecy. Ezekiel is ordered to prophesy upon these bones, ver. 4, and again, ver. 9, "Prophesy to the wind;" so he prophesied as he was commanded, ver. 7, and again, ver. 10. 1st. He must preach, and he did so, and the dead bones lived by a power that went along with the word of God which he preached. 2nd. He must pray, and he did so, and the dead bones were made to live in answer to prayer, for a spirit of life entered into them. See the efficacy of the word and prayer, and the necessity of both for the raising of dead souls. God bids his ministers, "prophesy upon the dry bones," say unto them, Live, yea, say unto them, Live; and they do as they are commanded, calling to them again and again, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." But we call in vain, still they are dead, still they are very dry; we must therefore be earnest with God in prayer for the working of the Spirit with the word; "Come, O breath," and breathe upon them. God's grace can save souls without our preaching, but our preaching cannot save them without God's grace, and that grace must be sought by prayer. Note, Ministers must faithfully and diligently use the means of grace, even with those that there seems little probability of gaining upon. To prophesy upon dry bones seems as great a penance as to water a dry stick; and yet, whether they will hear or forbear, we must discharge our trust, must prophesy as we are commanded, in the name of him who raiseth the dead and is the fountain of life.

3. The wonderful effect of these means. Those that do as they are commanded, as they are commissioned, in the face of the greatest discouragements, need not doubt of success, for God will own and enrich his own appointments.

1st. Ezekiel looked down, and prophesied upon the bones in the valley, and they became human bodies. *First.* That which he had to say to them was, that God would infallibly raise them to life: "Thus saith the Lord God unto those bones, Ye shall live," ver. 5, and again, "Ye shall live," ver. 6; and he that speaks the word will thereby do the work; he that saith they shall live will make them alive. He will clothe them with skin and flesh, ver. 6, as he did at first, *Job* x. 11. He that made us so fearfully and wonderfully, and curiously wrought us, can in like manner new-make us, for his arm is not shortened. *Secondly.* That which was presently done for them was, that they were moulded anew into shape. We may well suppose it was with great liveliness and vigour that the prophet prophesied, especially when he found what he said begin to take effect. Note, The opening, sealing, and applying of the promises, are the ordinary means of our participation in a new and Divine nature. As Ezekiel prophesied in this vision there was a noise, a word of command from heaven, seconding what he said; or, it signified the motion of the angels that were to be employed as the ministers of the Divine providence in the deliverance of the Jews, and we read of the noise of their wings, *Eze.* i. 24, and the sound of their going, 2 *Sam.* v. 24. And behold a shaking or commotion among the bones; even dead and dry bones begin to move when they are called to hear the word of the Lord. This was fulfilled upon Cyrus's proclamation of liberty; those whose spirits God had stirred up began to think of making use of that liberty, and getting ready to be gone. When there was a noise, behold a shaking. When David heard the sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry trees, then he bestirred himself, then there was a shaking. When Paul heard the voice saying, "Why persecutest thou me?" behold a shaking of the dry bones; he trembled, and was astonished. But this was not all: "the bones came together, bone to his bone," under a Divine direction; and, though there are in man a multitude of bones, yet of all the bones of all those numerous slain not one was missing, not one missed its way, not one missed its place, but, as it were by instinct, each knew and found its fellow. The dispersed bones came together, and the displaced bones were knit together; the Divine power supplying that to these dry bones which in a living body every joint supplies. Thus shall it be in the resurrection of the dead, the scattered atoms shall be ranged and marshalled in their proper place and order, and "every bone come to his bone," by the same wisdom and power by which the bones were first formed in the womb of her that is with child. Thus it was in the return of the Jews; they that were scattered in several parts of the province of Babylon came to their respective families, and all, as it were by consent, to the general rendezvous, in order to their return. By degrees sinews and flesh came upon these bones, and the "skin covered them," ver. 8. This was fulfilled when the captives got their effects about them, and the men of their place helped them with silver and gold, and whatever they needed for their remove, *Ezr.* i. 4. But still there was no breath in them; they wanted spirit and courage for such a difficult and hazardous enterprise as this was of returning to their own land.

2nd. Ezekiel then looked up, and prophesied to the wind, or breath, or spirit, and said, "Come, O breath, and breathe upon these slain." As good have been still dry bones as dead bodies. But as for God his work is perfect; he is not the God of the dead but of the living, therefore, "breathe upon them that they may live." In answer to this request the breath presently came into them, ver. 10. Note, The spirit of life is from God: he at first in the creation breathed into man the breath of life, and so he will at last in the resurrection. The dispirited despairing captives were wonderfully animated with resolution to break through all the discouragements that lay in the way of their return, and applied themselves to it with all imaginable vigour; and then they "stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army," not only living men, but effective men, fit for service in the wars, and formidable to all that gave them any opposition. Note, With God nothing is impossible; he can out of "stones raise up children unto Abraham," and out of dead and dry bones levy an exceeding great army, to fight his battles, and plead his cause.

Secondly. The application of this vision to the present calamitous condition of the Jews in captivity. "These bones are the whole house of Israel," both the ten tribes and the two. See in this what they are and what they shall be.

1. The depth of despair to which they are now reduced, ver. 11. They all give up themselves for lost and gone; they say, Our bones are dried, our strength exhausted, our spirits gone, our hope is all lost, every thing we looked for succour and relief from fails us, and "we are cut off from our parts;" let who will cherish some hope, we see no ground for any. Note, When troubles continue long, hopes have been often frustrated, and all creature confidences fail, it is not strange if the spirits sink; and nothing but an active faith in the power, promise, and providence of God will keep them from dying away quite.

2. The height of prosperity to which, notwithstanding this, they shall be advanced. Therefore, because things are come thus to the last extremity, prophesy to them, and tell them, now is God's time to appear for them: Jehovah Jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, ver. 12—14. Tell them, 1st. That they shall be brought out of the land of their enemies, where they are, as it were, buried alive; "I will open your graves." Those shall be restored, not only whose bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, *Ps.* cxli. 7, but who are buried in the grave. Though the power of the enemy is like the bars of the pit, which one would think it impossible to break through, strong as death, and cruel as the grave, yet it shall be conquered. God can bring his people up from the depths of the earth, *Ps.* lxxi. 20. 2nd. That they shall be brought into their own land, where they shall live in prosperity. "I will bring you into the land of Israel," ver. 12, and place you there, ver. 14, and will "put my spirit in you," and then "ye shall live." Note, Then God puts spirit in us to good purpose, and so that we shall indeed live, when he puts his Spirit in us. And, 3rd. In all this God will be glorified: "Ye shall know that I am the Lord," ver. 13; that I have "spoken it, and performed it," ver. 14.

Note, God's quickening the dead redounds more than anything to his honour, and to the honour of his word, which he has magnified above all his name, and will magnify more and more by the punctual accomplishment of every tittle of it.

15 The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 16 Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick

STICK AND WOODEN BOOKS OF INDIA, CHINA, ETC.

of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel his companions: 17 And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. 18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou *meanest* by these? 19 Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, *even* with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. 20 And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. 21 And say unto them,

Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I will take the children of Israel
From among the heathen, whither they be gone,
And will gather them on every side,
And bring them into their own land:
22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel;
And one king shall be king to them all:
And they shall be no more two nations,
Neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:
23 Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols,
Nor with their detestable things,
Nor with any of their transgressions:
But I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned,
And will cleanse them:
So shall they be my people, and I will be their God.
24 And David my servant *shall be* king over them;
And they all shall have one shepherd:
They shall also walk in my judgments,
And observe my statutes, and do them.
25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant,
Wherein your fathers have dwelt;
And they shall dwell therein,
Even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever:
And my servant David *shall be* their prince for ever.
26 Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them;
It shall be an everlasting covenant with them:
And I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.
27 My tabernacle also shall be with them:
Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
28 And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel,
When my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Here are more exceeding great and precious promises made of the happy state of the Jews after their return to their own land; but they have a farther reference to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the glories of gospel times.

First. It is here promised that Ephraim and Judah shall be happily united in brotherly love and mutual serviceableness; so that, whereas ever since the desertion of the ten tribes from the house of David, under Jeroboam, there had been continual feuds and animosities between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah,—and it is to be feared there had been some clashings between them even in the land of their captivity,—Ephraim upon all occasions envying Judah, and Judah vexing Israel, that now it should be no longer, but there shall be a coalition between them, and, notwithstanding the old differences that had been between them, they should agree to love one another, and to do one another all good offices. This is here illustrated by a sign: the prophet was to take two sticks, and write upon one for Judah, including Benjamin, those of the children of Israel that were his companions; upon the other for Joseph, including the rest of the tribes, ver. 16. These two sticks must be so framed as to fall into one hand, ver. 17. The people took notice of this, and desired him to tell them the meaning of it, for they knew he did not play with sticks for his diversion, as children do. Those that would know the meaning should ask the meaning of the word of God, which they read and hear, and of the instituted signs by which spiritual and Divine things are represented to us; the ministers' lips should keep the knowledge hereof, and the people should ask it at their mouth, *Mal.* ii. 7. It is a necessary question for grown people, as well as children, to ask, "What mean ye by this service," by this sign? *Ex.* xii. 26. The meaning was, that Judah and Israel should become one in the hand of God, ver. 19.

1. They shall be one, one nation, ver. 22. They shall have no separate interests, and consequently no divided affections. There shall be no mutual jealousies and animosities, no remembrance, no remains of their former discord. But there shall be a perfect harmony between them, a good understanding one of another, a good disposition one to another, and a readiness to all good offices and services for one another's credit and comfort. They had been two sticks crossing and thwarting one another, nay, beating and bruising one another; but now they shall become one, supporting and strengthening one another; *vis unita fortior*,—'force added to force is proportionally more efficient.' "Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is" to see Judah and Israel, that had long been at variance, now "dwelling together in unity." Then they shall become acceptable to their God, amicable to their friends, and formidable to their enemies, *Isa.* xi. 13, 14.

2. They shall be one in God's hand. By his power they shall be united; and, being by his hand brought together, his hand shall keep them together, so that they shall not fly off to be separated again. They shall be one in his hand, for his glory shall be the centre of their unity, and his grace the cement of it. In him, in a regard to him, and in his service and worship, they shall unite, and so shall become one. Both sides shall agree to put themselves into his hand, and so they shall be one: *qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt*,—'those who agree with a third agree with each other.' Note, Those are best united that are one in God's hand, whose union with each other results from their union with Christ and their communion with God through him, *Eph.* i. 10; one in us, *Jno.* xvii. 21.

3. They shall be one in their return out of captivity; ver. 21, "I will take them from among the heathen, and gather them on every side," and bring them together incorporated into one body to their own land. They shall be one in their separation from the heathen, with whom they had mingled themselves. They shall both agree to part from them, and take their affections off from them, and no longer comply with their usages; and then they will soon agree to join together in walking according to the rule of God's word. Their having been joint sufferers will contribute to this blessed comprehension, when they begin to come to themselves, and to consider things. Put many pieces of metal together into the furnace, and when they are melted they will run all together. It was time for them to strengthen one another when their oppressors were so busy to weaken and ruin them all. Likewise, their being joint sharers in the favour of God, and the great and common deliverance wrought out for them all, should help to unite them. God's loving them all was a good reason why they should love one another. Times of common joy, as well as times of common suffering, should be healing, loving times.

4. They shall all be the subjects of one king, and so they shall become one. The Jews after their return were under one government, and not divided as formerly. But this certainly looks farther, to the kingdom of Christ: he is that one King, in allegiance to whom all God's spiritual Israel shall cheerfully unite, and under whose protection they shall all be gathered. All believers unite in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism; and the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, their becoming one fold under Christ, the one great Shepherd, is doubtless the union that is chiefly looked at in this prophecy. By Christ the partition-wall between them was taken down, and the enmity slain, and of them twain was made "one new man," *Eph.* ii. 14, 15.

Secondly. It is here promised that the Jews shall by their captivity be cured of their inclination to idolatry. This shall be the happy fruit of that affliction, even the taking away of their sin; ver. 23, "Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols," those detestable, defiling things; no, nor with any of their former transgressions. Note, When one sin is sincerely parted with, all sin is abandoned too, for he that hates sin as sin will hate all sin. And those that are cured of their spiritual idolatry, their inordinate affection to the world and the flesh, that no longer make a god of their money or their belly, have a happy blow given to the root of all their transgressions. Two ways God will take to cure them of their idolatry: 1. By bringing them out of the way of temptation to it; "I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces wherein they have sinned," because there they met with the occasion of sin, and allurements to it. Note, It is our wisdom to avoid the places where we have been overcome by temptations to sin, not to remain in them, or return to them, but to save ourselves out of them, as we would out of infected places: see *Zec.* ii. 7; *Rev.* xviii. 4. And it is a great mercy when God in his providence

saves us out of the dwelling-places where we have sinned, and keeps us from harm by keeping us out of harm's way—in answer to our prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." 2. By changing the disposition of their mind; "I will cleanse them," that is, (ver. 28,) I will sanctify them, will work in them an aversion to the pollutions of sin, and a complacency in the pleasures of holiness; and then you may be sure they will not defile themselves any more with their idols. Whom God hath cleansed he will keep clean.

Thirdly. It is here promised that they shall be the people of God, as their God, and the subjects and sheep of Christ their King and Shepherd. These promises we had before, and they are here repeated, ver. 23, 24, for the encouragement of the faith of Israel. "They shall be my people," to serve me, and "I will be their God," to serve them, and to make them happy. "David my servant shall be king over them," to fight their battles, to protect them from injury, and to rule them, and overrule all things that concern them for their good. He shall be their shepherd to guide them, and to provide for them. Christ is this David, Israel's king of old; and those whom he subdues to himself, and makes willing in the day of his power, he makes them to walk in his judgments and to keep his statutes.

Fourthly. It is here promised that they shall dwell comfortably, ver. 25, 26. They shall dwell in the land of Israel; for where else should Israelites dwell? And many things will concur to make their dwelling agreeable. 1. They shall have it by covenant, they shall come in again upon their old title by virtue of the grant made unto Jacob, God's servant. As Christ was David, God's servant, so the church is Jacob, his servant too; and the members of the church shall come in for a share, as born in God's house. He will make a covenant of peace with them, ver. 26; and in pursuance of that covenant he will place them, and multiply them. Note, Temporal mercies are then doubly sweet when they come from the promise of the covenant, and not merely from common providence. 2. They shall come to it by prescription. It is "the land wherein your fathers have dwelt," and for that reason you cannot but have a special kindness for it, which God will graciously gratify. It was the inheritance of their ancestors, and therefore shall be theirs; they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. 3. They shall have it entailed upon them and the heirs of their body, and shall have their families built up, so that it shall not be lost for want of heirs. They shall dwell therein all their time, and never be turned out of possession; and they shall leave it for an inheritance to "their children, and their children's children for ever," who shall enjoy it when they are gone—the prospect of which will be a satisfaction to them. 4. They shall live under a good government, which will contribute very much to the comfort of their lives; "My servant David shall be their prince for ever." This can be no other than Christ, of whom it was said, when he was brought into the world, "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever," *Lu.* i. 33. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of all Christ's faithful subjects that, as his kingdom is everlasting, so he is an everlasting king, he lives to reign for ever; and as sure, and as long, as he lives and reigns they shall live and reign also. 5. The charter by which they hold all their privileges is indefeasible. God's covenant with them shall be an everlasting covenant; so the covenant of grace is, for it secures to us an everlasting happiness.

Fifthly. It is here promised that God will dwell among them, and this will make them dwell comfortably indeed. I "will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore; my tabernacle also shall be with them," ver. 26, 27. 1. They shall have the tokens of God's special presence with them, and his gracious residence among them. God will in very deed dwell with them upon the earth, for where his sanctuary is he is. When they profaned his sanctuary he took it from them, *Isa.* lxiv. 11; but now they are purified God will dwell with them again. 2. They shall have an opportunity of conversing with God, of hearing from him, speaking to him, and so keeping up communion with him, which will be the comfort of their lives. 3. They shall have the means of grace. By the oracles of God in his tabernacle they shall be made wiser and better, and all their children shall be taught of the Lord. 4. Thus their covenant relation to God shall be improved, and the bond of it strengthened; "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," and they shall know it by having my sanctuary among them, and shall have the comfort of it.

Sixthly. Both God and Israel shall have the honour of this among the heathen, ver. 26. Now the heathen observe how Israel had profaned their own crown by their sins, and God had profaned it by his judgments; but then, when Israel is reformed, and God is returned in mercy to them, the very heathen shall be made to know that "the Lord doth sanctify Israel," has a title to them, and an interest in them, more than any other people, because his sanctuary is and shall be in the midst of them. Note, God designs the sanctification of those among whom he sets up his sanctuary; and blessed and holy are they who, enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, give such proofs and evidences of their sanctification as that the heathen may know it is no less than the almighty grace of God that sanctifies them. Such have God's sanctuary in the midst of them, the kingdom of God with them, in the principles of the spiritual life, and shall have it so for evermore in the enjoyments of an eternal life.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

This chapter and that which follows it are concerning Gog and Magog, a powerful enemy to the people of Israel, that should make a formidable descent upon them, and put them into a mighty fright, but their army should be routed, and their design defeated; and this prophecy, it is most probable, had its accomplishment some time after the return of the people of Israel out of their captivity; whether in the struggles they had with the kings of Syria, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, or perhaps in some other way not recorded, we cannot tell. If the sacred history of the Old Testament had reached as far as the prophecy, we should have been better able to understand these chapters; but for the want of that key we are locked out of the meaning of them. God had, by the prophet, assured his people of happy times after their return to their own land; but, lest they should mistake the promises which related to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the spiritual privileges of that kingdom, as if from them they might promise themselves an uninterrupted temporal prosperity, he here tells them, as Christ told his disciples, to prevent the like mistake, that in the world they shall have tribulation, but they may be of good cheer, for they shall be victorious at last. This prophecy here of Gog and Magog is without doubt alluded to in that prophecy which relates to the latter days, and which seems to be yet unfulfilled, *Rev.* xx. 8, that Gog and Magog shall be gathered to battle against the camp of the saints, as the Old Testament prophecies of the destruction of Babylon are alluded to, *Rev.* xviii. But in both the Old Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in the Jewish church, as the New Testament prophecies shall have, when the time comes, in the Christian church. In this chapter we have intermixed, I. The attempts that Gog and Magog should make upon the land of Israel, the vast army they should bring into the field, and their vast preparations, ver. 4—7; their project and design in it, ver. 8—13; God's hand in it, ver. 4. II. The great terror that this should strike upon the land of Israel, ver. 15, 16, 18—20. III. The Divine restraint that these enemies should be under, and the Divine protection that Israel should be under, ver. 2—4; and again, ver. 14. IV. The defeat that should be given to those enemies by the immediate hand of God, ver. 21—23; which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.

AND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3 And say,

Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I *am* against thee, O Gog,
The chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:
4 And I will turn thee back,
And put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth,
And all thine army, horses and horsemen,
All of them clothed with all sorts *of armour*,
Even a great company *with* bucklers and shields,
All of them handling swords:

TARTAR AND SCYTHIAN CAVALRY.

5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them;
All of them with shield and helmet:
6 Gomer, and all his bands; [bands:
The house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his
And many people with thee.
7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself,
Thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee,
And be thou a guard unto them.
8 After many days thou shalt be visited:
In the latter years thou shalt come into the land
That is brought back from the sword,
And is gathered out of many people,
Against the mountains of Israel, which have been always
But it is brought forth out of the nations, [waste:
And they shall dwell safely all of them.
9 Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm,
Thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land,
Thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.
10 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
It shall also come to pass,
That at the same time shall things come into thy mind,
And thou shalt think an evil thought: [villages;
11 And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled
I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely,
All of them dwelling without walls, and having neither
bars nor gates,
12 To take a spoil, and to take a prey;
To turn thine hand upon the desolate places *that are*
now inhabited, [nations,
And upon the people *that are* gathered out of the
Which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the
midst of the land.
13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish,
With all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee,
Art thou come to take a spoil?
Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey?

To carry away silver and gold,
To take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

The critical expositors have enough to do here to inquire out Gog and Magog; we cannot pretend either to add to their observations, or to determine their controversies. Gog seems to be the king, and Magog the kingdom; so that Gog and Magog are like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Some think they find them afar off, in Scythia, Tartary, and Russia. Others think they find them nearer the land of Israel, in Syria and Asia the Less. Ezekiel is appointed to prophesy against Gog, and to tell him that God is against him, ver. 2, 3. Note, God doth not only see those that are now the enemies of his church, and set himself against them, but he foresees those that will be so, and lets them know by his word that he is against them too, and yet is pleased to make use of them to serve his own purposes, for the glory of his own name; surely their wrath shall praise him, and the "remainder thereof he will restrain," *Ps.* lxxvi. 10. Let us observe here,

First. The confusion which God designed to put this enemy to. It is remarkable that this is put first in the prophecy; before it is foretold that God will bring him forth against Israel, it is foretold that God will put hooks into his jaws, and turn him back, ver. 4, that they might have assurance of their deliverance before they had the prospect given them of their danger. Thus tender is God of the comfort of his people, thus careful that they may not be frightened; even before the trouble begins he tells them it will end well.

Secondly. The undertaking which he designed to engage him in, in order to this defeat and disappointment.

1. The nations that shall be confederate in this enterprise against Israel are many, and great, and mighty, ver. 5, 6, Persia, Ethiopia, &c. Antiochus had an army made up of all the nations here named, and many others. These people had been at variance with one another, and yet in combination against Israel. How are they increased that trouble God's people!

2. They are well furnished with arms and ammunition, bring a good train of artillery into the field, horses and horsemen, ver. 4, bravely equipped with all sorts of armour, bucklers, and shields for defence, and all handling swords for offence. Orders are given to make all imaginable preparation for this expedition; ver. 7, "Be thou prepared," and do thou prepare. See what warlike preparations thou hast already in store, and, lest that should not suffice, make farther preparation, thou and all thy company. Let Gog himself be a guard to the rest of the confederates; as commander-in-chief let him engage to take care of them and their safety; let him pass his word for their security, and take them under his particular protection. The leaders of an army, instead of exposing their soldiers needlessly and presumptuously, and throwing away their lives upon desperate undertakings, should study to be a guard to them; and whenever they send them forth in danger, should contrive to support and cover them. This call to prepare seems to be ironical; Do thy worst, but I will turn thee back, like that, *Isa.* viii. 9, "Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces."

3. Their design is against the mountains of Israel; ver. 8, against "the land that is brought back from the sword." It is not long since it was harassed with the sword of war, and it has been always wasted, more or less, with one judgment or other; it is but newly gathered out of many people, and brought forth out of the nations; it has enjoyed, comparatively, but a short breathing time, has scarce recovered any strength since it was brought down by war and captivity, and therefore its neighbours need not fear its being too great; nay, and therefore it is very barbarous to pick a quarrel with it so soon; it is a people that "dwells safely, all of them" in "unwalled villages," very secure, and "having neither bars nor gates," ver. 11. It is a certain sign they intend no mischief to their neighbours, for they fear no mischief from them. It cannot be thought they will offend others who do not take care to defend themselves, and it aggravates the sin of these invaders. It is base and barbarous to devise "evil against thy neighbour" while he "dwells securely by thee," and has no distrust of thee, *Pr.* iii. 29. But see here how the clouds return after the rain in this world, and what little reason we have ever to be secure till we come to heaven. It is not long since Israel was brought back from the sword of one enemy, and behold the sword of another is drawn against it. Former troubles will not excuse us from farther troubles; but when we think we have put off the harness, at least for some time, by a fresh and sudden alarm we may be called to gird it on again, and therefore we must never boast, or be off our guard.

4. That which the enemy has in view in forming this project is to enrich himself, and to make himself master, not of the country, but of the wealth of it; to spoil and plunder it, and make a prey of it. At the same time that God intends to bring this matter about, things shall come into the mind of this enemy, and he shall "think an evil thought," ver. 10. Note, All the mischief men do, and particularly the mischief they do to the church of God, ariseth from evil thoughts that come into their mind—ambitious thoughts, covetous thoughts, spiteful thoughts to those that are good, for the sake of their goodness. It came into Antiochus's mind what a singular people these religious Jews were, and how their worship witnessed against, and condemned, the idolatries of their neighbours, and therefore in enmity to their religion he would plague them. It came into his mind what a wealthy people they were, that they had "gotten cattle and goods in the midst of the land," ver. 12; and withal how weak they were, and how unable to make any resistance, and how easy it would be to carry off what they had, and how much glory this rapine would add to his victorious sword. These things coming into his mind, and one evil thought drawing on another, he came at last to this resolve, ver. 11, 12, "I will go up to the land of unwalled villages," yea, that I will; it will cost me nothing to make them all my own. I will go and disturb them that are at rest, without giving them any notice; not to crush their growing greatness, or chastise their insolence, or make reprisals upon them for any wrong they have done us, (they had none of these pretences to make war upon them,) but purely "to take a spoil, and to take a prey," ver. 12, in open defiance to all the laws of justice and equity, as much as the highwayman's killing the traveller that he may take his money. These were the thoughts that came into the mind of this wicked prince, and God knew them; nay, he knew them before they came into his mind, for he "understandeth our thoughts afar off," *Ps.* cxxxix. 2.

5. According to the project thus formed he pours in all his forces upon the land of Israel, and finds those that are ready to come in to his assistance upon the same prospects; ver. 9, "Thou shalt ascend, and come like a storm," with all the force, and fury, and fierceness imaginable, and thou shalt be "like a cloud to cover the land," to darken it, and to threaten it; thou, and not only all thy bands, all the force thou canst bring into the field, but many people with thee, such as are spoken of ver. 13; Sheba and Dedan, the Arabians and Edomites, and the merchants of Tarshish, of Tyre and Sidon, and other maritime cities, they and their young lions, that are greedy of spoil, and live upon it, they shall say, "Art thou come to take the spoil" of this land? Yes, he is; and therefore they wish him success; or perhaps they envy him, or grudge it him. Art thou come for riches, who art thyself so rich already? Or, knowing that God was on Israel's side, they thus ridicule his attempts, foreseeing they would be baffled, and that he would be disappointed of the prey he promised himself. Or, if he be come to take the prey, they will come and join with him, and add to his forces. When Lysias, that was general of Antiochus's army, came against the Jews, the neighbour nations joined with him, 1 *Mac.* iii. 24, to share in the guilt, in hopes to share in the prey. "When thou sawest a thief then thou consentedst with him."

14 Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely,
Shalt thou not know *it?*
15 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts,
Thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses,
A great company, and a mighty army:
16 And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel,
As a cloud to cover the land;
It shall be in the latter days,
And I will bring thee against my land,
That the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee,
O Gog, before their eyes.
17 Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time
By my servants the prophets of Israel,
Which prophesied in those days *many* years
That I would bring thee against them?
18 And it shall come to pass at the same time
When Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD,
That my fury shall come up in my face. [spoken,
19 For in my jealousy *and* in the fire of my wrath have I
Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel;
20 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven,
And the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth,
And all the men that *are* upon the face of the earth,
Shall shake at my presence,
And the mountains shall be thrown down,
And the steep places shall fall,
And every wall shall fall to the ground.
21 And I will call for a sword against him
Throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD:
Every man's sword shall be against his brother.
22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood;
And I will rain upon him, and upon his bands,
And upon the many people that *are* with him,
An overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.
23 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself;
And I will be known in the eyes of many nations,
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.

This latter part of the chapter is a repetition of the former. The dream is doubled, for the thing is certain, and to be very carefully regarded.

First. It is here again foretold that this spiteful enemy should make a formidable descent upon the land of Israel; ver. 15, "Thou shalt come out of the north parts (Syria lay on the north of Canaan) with a mighty army," shalt come like a cloud, and "cover the land of my people Israel," ver. 16. These words, ver. 14, "When my people of Israel dwell safely, shalt thou not know it?" may be taken two ways; either,

1. As speaking his inducements to this attempt. Thou shalt have intelligence brought thee how securely, and therefore how carelessly, the people of Israel dwell, which shall give rise to thy project against them; for when thou knowest not only what a rich, but what an easy prey they are likely to be, thou wilt soon determine to fall upon them. Note, God's providence is to be acknowledged in the occasion, the small occasion perhaps that is given, and that not designedly neither, to those first thoughts from which great enterprises take their original. God, to bring about his own purposes, lets men know that which yet he knows they will make an ill use of, as here. Or,

2. As speaking his disappointment in this attempt, which here, as before, the prophecy begins with. "When my people Israel dwell safely," not in their own apprehension only, but in reality, forasmuch as they dwell safely under the Divine protection, shall not thou be made to know it by the fruitlessness of thine endeavours to destroy them; thou shalt soon find that there is no enchantment against Jacob, that no weapon formed against them shall prosper. Thou shalt know to thy cost, shalt know to thy shame, that though they have no walls, nor bars, nor gates, they have God himself, a wall of fire round about them, and he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye. Whosoever

meddles with them meddles to his own hurt; and it is for the demonstrating of this to all the world that God will bring this mighty enemy against his people. They that gathered themselves against Israel said, Let us take the spoil, and take the prey; but they "knew not the thoughts of the Lord," *Mic.* iv. 11, 12. "I will bring thee against my land." This is strange news, that God will not only permit his enemies to come against his own children, but will himself bring them. But if we understand what he aims at we shall be well reconciled even to this; it is, "That the heathen may know me" to be the only living and true God, "when I shall be sanctified in thee," O Gog; that is, in thy defeat and destruction "before their eyes," that all the nations may see and say, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens for the help of his people." Note, God therefore brings his people into danger and distress that he may have the honour of bringing about their deliverance; and therefore suffers the enemies of his church to prevail awhile, though they profane his name by their sin, that he may have the honour of prevailing at last, and sanctifying his own name in their ruin. Now it is said this shall be in the latter days, namely, in the latter days of the Old Testament church; so the mischief Antiochus did to Israel was; but in the latter days of the New Testament church another like enemy should arise, that should in like manner be defeated. Note, Effectual securities are treasured up in the word of God against the troubles and dangers the church may be brought into a great while hence, even in the latter days.

Secondly. Reference is herein had to the predictions of the former prophets; ver. 17, "Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old times," of whom Moses spoke in his prophecy of the latter days, *Deu.* xxxii. 43, "He will render vengeance to his adversaries;" and David, *Ps.* ix. 15, "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made;" and often elsewhere in the Psalms. This is the leviathan of whom Isaiah spake, *Isa.* xxvii. 1; that congress of the nations of which Joel spake, *Joel* iii. 1. Many of the prophets had perhaps spoken particularly of this event, though it be not written, as they all had spoken and written too that which is applicable to it. Note, There is an amiable, admirable harmony and agreement between the Lord's prophets, though they lived in several ages; for they were all guided by one and the same Spirit.

Thirdly. It is here foretold that this furious, formidable enemy should be utterly cut off in this attempt upon Israel, and it should issue in his own ruin. This is supposed by many to have its accomplishment in the many defeats given by the Maccabees to the forces of Antiochus, and the remarkable judgments of God executed upon his own person, for he died of sore diseases; but these things are here foretold, as usual, in figurative expressions, which we are not to look for the literal accomplishment of, and yet they might be fulfilled nearer the letter than we know of.

1. God will be highly displeased with this bold invader. When he comes up in pride and anger against the land of Israel, and thinks to carry all before him with a high hand, then God's fury shall come up in his face, which is an allusion to the manner of men whose colour riseth in their faces when some high affront is offered them, and they are resolved to shew their resentment of it, ver. 18; God will speak against them, in his jealousy for his people, and in the fire of his wrath, against his and their enemies, ver. 19. See how God's permitting sin, his laying occasions of sin before men, and his making use of it to serve his own purposes, is very well consistent with his hatred of sin, and his displeasure against it. God brings this enemy against his land, letting him know what an easy prey it might be, and determining thereby to glorify himself, and yet, when he comes against the land, God's fury comes up, and he speaks to him in the fire of his wrath. If any ask, Why doth he thus find fault, for who hath resisted his will? it is easy to answer, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"

2. His forces shall be put into the greatest confusion and consternation imaginable; ver. 19, "There shall be a great shaking" of them "in the land of Israel," an universal concussion, ver. 20, such as shall affect the fishes and fowls, the beasts and creeping things, and much more "the men that are upon the face of the earth," who sooner receive impressions of fear. There shall be such an earthquake as shall throw down the mountains, those natural heights, and the steep places, towers, and walls, those artificial heights; they shall all fall to the ground. Some understand this of the fright which the land of Israel should be put into by the fury of the enemy; but it is rather to be understood of the fright which the enemy should be put into by the wrath of God. All those things which they both raise themselves and stay themselves upon shall be shaken down, and their hearts shall fail them.

3. He shall be routed, and utterly ruined; both earth and heaven shall be armed against him. 1st. The earth shall muster up its forces to destroy him. If the people of Israel have not strength and courage to resist him, God will "call for a sword against him," ver. 21; and he hath swords always at command, that are "bathed in heaven," *Isa.* xxxv. 5. Throughout all the mountains of Israel, where he hoped to meet with spoil to enrich him, he shall meet with swords to destroy him; and, rather than fail, "every man's sword shall be against his brother," as in the day of Midian, *Ps.* lxxxiii. 9. The great men of Syria shall undermine and overthrow one another, shall accuse one another, shall fight duels with one another. Note, God can, and often doth, make the destroyers of his people to be their own destroyers, and the destroyers of one another. However, he will himself be their destroyer, will take the work into his own hand, that it may be done thoroughly; ver. 22, "I will plead against him with pestilence and blood." Note, Whom God acts against he pleads against; he shews them the ground of his controversy with them, that their mouths may be stopped, and he may be clear when he judgeth. 2nd. The artillery of heaven shall also be drawn out against them; "I will rain upon him an overflowing rain," ver. 22. He comes like a storm upon Israel, ver. 9; but God will come like a storm upon him, will rain upon him great hailstones, as upon the Canaanites, *Jos.* x. 11; fire and brimstone, as upon Sodom, and a horrible tempest, *Ps.* xi. 6. Thus the Gog and Magog in the New Testament shall be devoured with fire from heaven, and cast into the lake of brimstone, *Rev.* xx. 9, 10. That will be the everlasting portion of the impenitent, implacable enemies of God's church and people.

4. God in all this will be glorified; the end he aimed at (ver. 16) shall be accomplished; ver. 23, "Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself." Note, In the destruction of sinners God makes it to appear that he is a great and holy God, and will do so to eternity; and if men do not magnify and sanctify him as they ought, he will magnify himself, and sanctify himself. And this we should desire and pray for daily, "Father, glorify thy own name."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

This chapter continues and concludes the prophecy against Gog and Magog, in whose destruction God crowns his favour to his people Israel, which shines very bright after the scattering of that black cloud in the close of this chapter. Here is, I. An express prediction of the utter destruction of Gog and Magog, agreeing with what we had before, ver. 1—7. II. An illustration of the vastness of that destruction, in three consequences of it, the burning of their weapons, ver. 8—10; the burying of their slain, ver. 11—16; and the feasting of the fowls with the dead bodies of those that were unburied, ver. 17—22. III. A declaration of God's gracious purposes concerning his people Israel, in this and other his providences concerning them, and a promise of farther mercy he had yet in store for them, ver. 23—29.

THEREFORE, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say,
Thus saith the Lord GOD;
Behold, I *am* against thee, O Gog,
The chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:
2 And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee,
And will cause thee to come up from the north parts,
And will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel:
3 And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand,
And will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand.

TARTAR PRINCE, ARMED WITH BOW AND ARROWS.

4 Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou,
And all thy bands, and the people that *is* with thee:
I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort,
And *to* the beasts of the field to be devoured.
5 Thou shalt fall upon the open field:
For I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.
6 And I will send a fire on Magog,
And among them that dwell carelessly in the isles:
And they shall know that I *am* the LORD.
7 So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel;
And I will not *let them* pollute my holy name any more:
And the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.

This prophecy begins as that before, *ch.* xxxviii. 3, 4, "I am against thee, and I will turn thee back;" for there is need of line upon line, both for the conviction of Israel's enemies and the comfort of Israel's friends. Here, as there, it is foretold that God will bring this enemy "from the north parts," as formerly the Chaldeans were fetched from the north, *Jer.* i. 14, (*omne malum ab aquilone*, —'every evil comes from the north,') and, long after, the Roman empire was overrun by the northern nations; that he will bring him "upon the mountains of Israel," ver. 2, first, as a place of temptation, where the measure of his iniquity shall be filled up, and then as a place of execution, where his ruin shall be completed. And that is it that is here enlarged upon.

First. His soldiers shall be disarmed, and so disabled to carry on their enterprise. Though the men of might may find their hands, yet to what purpose, when they find it is put out of their power to do mischief; when God shall smite their bow out of their left hand, and their arrow out of their right? ver. 3. Note, The weapons formed against Zion shall not prosper.

Secondly. He and the greatest part of his army shall be slain in the field of battle; ver. 4, "Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel;" there they sinned, and there they shall perish, even upon the holy mountains of Israel; for "there brake he the arrows of the bow," *Ps.* lxxvi. 3. The mountains of Israel shall be moistened and fattened, and made fruitful with the blood of the enemies. "Thou shalt fall upon the open field," ver. 5, and shalt not be able even there to make thy escape; even upon the mountains he shall not find a pass that he shall be able to maintain, and upon the open field he shall not find a road that he shall be able to make his escape by. He and his bands, his regular troops, and the people that are with him, that follow the camp to share in the plunder, these shall all fall with him. Note, Those that cast in their lot among wicked people, (*Pr.* i. 14,) that they may have one purse with them, must expect to take their lot with them, and fare as they fare, taking the worse with the better. There shall be such a general slaughter made that but a sixth part shall be left, ver. 2; the other five shall all be cut off. Never was army so totally routed as this. And, for its greater infamy and reproach, their bodies shall be a feast to the birds of prey, ver. 5; compare with ver. 17, "Thou shalt fall, for I have spoken it." Note, Rather shall the most illustrious princes, (Antiochus was called Epiphanes, the illustrious) and the most numerous armies, fall to the ground, than any word of God; for he that hath spoken will make it good.

Thirdly. His country also shall be made desolate. "I will send a fire on Magog," ver. 6, and "among them that dwell carelessly," or confidently, in the isles, that is, the nations of the Gentiles. He designed to destroy the land of Israel, but shall not only be defeated in that design, but shall have his own

destroyed by some fire, some consuming judgment or other. Note, Those who invade other people's rights justly lose their own.

Fourthly. God will by all this advance the honour of his own name, 1. Among his people Israel. They shall hereby know more of God's name, of his power and goodness; his care of them, his faithfulness to them, his providence concerning them, shall lead them into a better acquaintance with him. Every providence should do so, as well as every ordinance. "I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people." In Judah is God known; but those that know much of God should know more of him; we should especially increase in the knowledge of his name, as a holy name; know him as a God of perfect rectitude and that hates all sin. And then it follows, "I will not let them pollute my holy name any more." Note, Those that rightly know God's holy name will not dare to profane it; for it is through ignorance of it that men make light of it, and make bold with it. And this is God's method of dealing with men, first to enlighten their understandings, and by that means to influence the whole man. He first makes us to know his holy name, and so keeps us from polluting it, and engageth us to honour it. And this is here the blessed effect of God's glorious appearances on the behalf of his people. Thus he completes his favours, thus he sanctifies them, thus he makes them blessings indeed; by them he instructs his people and reforms them. "When the Almighty scattered kings for her, she was white as snow in Salmon," *Ps.* lxviii. 14. 2. Among the heathen. Those that never knew it, or would not own it, shall "know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel." They shall be made to know by dear-bought experience that he is a God of power, and his people's God and Saviour; and it is in vain for the greatest potentates to contend with him; none ever hardened their heart against him and prospered.

8 Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD;
This *is* the day whereof I have spoken.
9 And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth,
And shall set on fire and burn the weapons,
Both the shields and the bucklers,
The bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears,
And they shall burn them with fire seven years:
10 So that they shall take no wood out of the field,
Neither cut down *any* out of the forests;
For they shall burn the weapons with fire:
And they shall spoil those that spoiled them,
And rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD.

11 And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the *noses* of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call *it* The valley of Hamon-gog. 12 And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. 13 Yea, all the people of the land shall bury *them;* and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD. 14 And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. 15 And the passengers *that* pass through the land, when *any* seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. 16 And also the name of the city *shall be* Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land. 17 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field,

Assemble yourselves, and come;
Gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you,
Even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel,
That ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.
18 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty,
And drink the blood of the princes of the earth,
Of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks,
All of them fatlings of Bashan.

19 And ye shall eat fat till ye be full,
And drink blood till ye be drunken,
Of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.
20 Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots,
With mighty men, and with all men of war,
Saith the Lord GOD.
21 And I will set my glory among the heathen,
And all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed,
And my hand that I have laid upon them.
22 So the house of Israel shall know that I *am* the LORD their God
From that day and forward.

Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment in the latter days, yet it is here spoken of as if it were already accomplished, because it is certain; ver. 8, "Behold, it is come, and it is done," it is as sure to be done, when the time is come, as if it were done already. "This is the day, whereof I have" long and often "spoken," and though it has been long in coming, yet at length it is come. Thus it was said unto John, *Rev.* xxi. 6, "It is done." To represent the routing of the army of Gog as very great, here are three things instanced as the consequences of it. It was God himself that gave them the defeat, we do not find that the people of Israel drew a sword, or struck a stroke. But,

First. They shall burn their weapons, their bows and arrows, which fell out of their hands, ver. 3, their shields and bucklers, their javelins, spears, their leading staves, truncheons, and half-pikes, every thing that is combustible. They shall not lay them up in their armouries, or reserve them for their own use, lest they should be tempted to put a confidence in them, but burn them. Not all at once for a bonfire—to what purpose would be that waste? but as they had occasion to use them, for fuel in their houses, instead of other firewood, so that they should have no occasion to take wood out of the field or forests for seven years together, ver. 10; such vast quantities of weapons shall there be left upon the open field, where the enemy fell, and in the roads which they passed in their flight. The weapons were dry and fitter for fuel than green wood; and by saving the wood in their coppices and forests they gave it time to grow. Though the mountains of Israel produce plenty of good things, yet it becomes the people of Israel to be good husbands of their plenty, and to save what they can for the benefit of those that come after them, as Providence shall give them opportunity to do so. We may suppose, when they that dwelt in the cities of Israel came forth to "spoil those that spoiled them," and make reprisals upon them, they found upon them silver, and gold, and ornaments; yet no mention is made of any thing particularly that they converted to their own use, but the wood of the weapons for fuel, which is one of the necessaries of human life, to teach us to think it enough if we be well supplied with those, though we have but little of the delights and gaieties of it, and of those things which we may very well live without. And every time they put fuel to the fire, and warmed themselves at it, they would be put in mind of the number and strength of their enemies, and the imminent peril they were in of falling into their hands, which would help to enlarge their hearts in thankfulness to that God who had so wonderfully, so seasonably, delivered them. As they sat by the fire with their children about them, (their fireside,) they might from it take occasion to tell them what great things God had done for them.

Secondly. They shall bury their dead. Usually, after a battle, when many are slain, the enemy desire time to bury their own dead; but here the slaughter shall be so general that there shall not be enough of the enemies left alive to bury the dead; and besides, the slain lie so dispersed on the mountains of Israel that it would be a work of time to find them out; and therefore it is left to the house of Israel to bury them, as a piece of triumph in their overthrow.

1. A place shall be appointed on purpose for the burying of them, namely, "the valley of the passengers, on the east of the sea," either the Salt sea, or the sea of Tiberias,—a valley through which there was great passing and repassing of travellers between Egypt and Chaldea. There shall be such a multitude of dead bodies putrefying above ground, with such a loathsome stench, that the travellers that go that way shall be forced to stop their noses. See what vile bodies ours are: when the soul has been a little while from them the smell of them becomes offensive, no smell more nauseous or more noxious. There, therefore, where the greatest number lay slain, shall the burying-place be appointed. In the place where the tree falls there let it lie. And it shall be called, "The valley of Hamon-gog;" that is, of the multitude, for that was the thing which was in a particular manner to be had in remembrance,—how numerous the forces of the enemies were which God defeated and destroyed for the defence of his people Israel.

2. A considerable time shall be spent in burying them—no less than seven months, ver. 22, which is a farther intimation that the slain of the Lord in this action should be many, and that great care should be taken by the house of Israel to leave none unburied, that so they may cleanse the land from the ceremonial pollution it contracted by the lying of so many dead corpses unburied in it, for the prevention of which it was appointed that those who were hanged on a tree should be speedily taken down and buried, *Deu.* xxi. 23. This is an intimation that times of eminent deliverances should be times of reformation. The more God has done for the saving of a land from ruin, the more the inhabitants should do for the cleansing of the land from sin.

3. Great numbers shall be employed in this work. All the people of the land shall be ready to lend a helping hand to it, ver. 13. Note, Every one should contribute the utmost he can in his place towards the cleansing of the land from the pollutions of it, and from every thing that is a reproach to it. Sin is a common enemy, which every man should take up arms against. *In publico discrimine unusquisque homo miles est,*—'In the season of public danger every man becomes a soldier;' and whoever shall assist in this work, "it shall be to them a renown." Though the office of grave-makers, or common scavengers of the country, seem but mean, yet, when it is for the cleansing and purifying of the land from dead works, it shall be mentioned to their honour. Note, Acts of humanity add much to the renown of God's Israel. It is a credit to religion when those that profess it are ready to every good work, and a good work it is to bury the dead, yea, though they be strangers and enemies to the commonwealth of Israel, for even they shall rise again. It shall be a renown to them in the day when God will be glorified. Note, It is for the glory of God when his Israel do that which adorns their profession; others will "see their good works, and glorify their Father," *Mat.* v. 16. And when God is honoured he will put honour upon his people. His glory is their renown.

4. Some particular persons shall make it their business to search out the dead bodies, or any part of them, that should remain unburied. The people of the land will soon grow weary of burying the pollutions of the country, and therefore they shall appoint "men of continual employment," that should apply themselves to it, and do nothing else till the land was thoroughly cleansed; for otherwise that which is every one's work would soon become nobody's work. Note, Those that are engaged in public work, especially for the cleansing and reforming a land, ought to be "men of continual employment," men that will stick to what they undertake, and go through with it, men that will apply themselves to it; and those that will do good according to their opportunities will find themselves continually employed.

5. Even the passengers shall be ready to give information to those whose business it is to cleanse the land of what public nuisances they meet with, which call for their assistance. They that pass through the land, though they will not stay to bury the dead themselves, lest they should contract a ceremonial pollution, yet they will give notice of those they find unburied. If they but discover a bone, they will set up a sign, that the buriers may come and bury it, and that till it is buried others may take heed of touching it; for which reason their sepulchres among the Jews were whited, that people might keep at a distance from them. Note, When good work is to be done, every one should lend a hand to further it, even the passengers themselves, who must not think themselves unconcerned in a common calamity, or a common iniquity, to put a stop to it. Those whose work it is to cleanse the land must not countenance any thing in it that is defiling; though it were not the body, but only the bone of a man, that was found unburied, they must encourage those who will give information of it, private information, by a sign, concealing the informer, that they may take it away, and bury it out of sight. Nay, "after the end of seven months," which was allowed them for this work, when all is taken away that appeared at first view, they shall search for more, that what is hidden may be brought to light; they shall search out iniquity till they find none. In memory of this they shall give a new name to their city; it shall be called "Hamonah, the multitude." O what a multitude of our enemies have we of this city buried! "Thus shall they cleanse the land," with all this care, with all this pains, ver. 16. Note, After conquering there must be cleansing. Moses appointed those Israelites that had been employed in the war with the Midianites to purify themselves, *Num.* xxxi. 24. Having received special favours from God, "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness."

Thirdly. The birds and beasts of prey shall rest upon the carcases of the slain, while they remain unburied, and it shall be impossible to prevent it, ver. 17, &c. We find a great slaughter represented by this figure, *Rev.* xix. 17, &c., which is borrowed from this.

1. There is a general invitation given, ver. 17. It is to the fowl of every wing, and to every beast of the field, from the greatest to the least, that preys upon carcases, from the eagle to the raven, from the lion to the dog; let them all gather themselves on every side, here is meat enough for them, and they are all welcome. Let them come to God's sacrifice, to his feast, so the margin reads it. Note, The judgments of God executed upon sin and sinners are both a sacrifice and a feast; a sacrifice to the justice of God, and a feast to the faith and hope of God's people. When God "brake the head of leviathan," he gave him to be meat to Israel, *Ps.* lxxiv. 14. "The righteous shall rejoice," as at a feast, "when he sees the vengeance," and shall "wash his foot," as at a feast, "in the blood of the wicked." This sacrifice is upon the mountains of Israel; these are the high places, the altars, where God had been dishonoured by the idolatries of the people, but where he will now glorify himself in the destruction of his enemies.

2. There is great preparation made. They shall "eat the flesh of the mighty," and "drink the blood of the princes of the earth," ver. 18, 19. 1st. It is the flesh and blood of men that they shall be treated with. This has sometimes been an instance of the rebellion of the inferior creatures against man their master, which is an effect of his rebellion against God his Maker. 2nd. It is the flesh and blood of great men, here called rams and bullocks, and great goats, "all of them "fatlings of Bashan." It is the blood of the princes of the earth that they shall regale themselves with. What a mortification is this to the princes of the blood, as they called themselves, that God can make that blood, that royal blood, which swells their veins, a feast for the birds and beasts of prey? 3rd. It is the flesh and blood of wicked men, the enemies of God's church and people, that they are invited to. They had accounted the Israel of God as "sheep for the slaughter," and now they shall themselves be so accounted; they had thus used the "dead bodies of God's servants," *Ps.* lxxix. 2, or would have done, and now it shall come upon themselves.

3. They shall all be fed, they shall all be feasted to the full; ver. 19, 20, "Ye shall eat fat, and drink blood," which are satiating, surfeiting things. The sacrifice is great, and the feast upon the sacrifice is accordingly. "You shall be filled at my table." Note, God keeps a table for the inferior creatures; he provideth food for all flesh, and the eyes of all wait upon him; and he satisfies their desires, for he keeps a plentiful table. And if the birds and beasts shall be filled at God's table, which he hath prepared for them, much more shall his children be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple. They shall be filled with horses and chariots; that is, those that ride in the chariots, mighty men, and men of war, who triumphed over nations, are now themselves triumphed over by the ravens of the valley, and the young eagles, *Pr.* xxx. 17. They thought to have made an easy prey of God's Israel, and now they are themselves an easy prey to the birds and beasts. See how evil pursues sinners, even after death. This exposing of their bodies to be a prey is but a type and sign of those terrors that after death shall prey upon their consciences, (which the poetical fiction represented by a vulture continually pecking at the heart,) and this shame but an earnest of the everlasting shame and contempt they shall rise to.

Fourthly. This shall redound very much both to the glory and to the comfort and satisfaction of his people.

1. It shall be much to the honour of God, for the heathen shall hereby be made to know that he is the Lord; ver. 21, "All the heathen shall see" and observe "my judgments, that I have executed," and thereby my glory shall be set among them. This principle shall be admitted and established among them more than ever, that the God of Israel is a great and glorious God. He is known to be so even among the heathen, that have not, or read not, his written word, by the judgments which he executed.

2. It shall be much for the satisfaction of his people, for they shall hereby be made to know that he is their God; ver. 22, "The house of Israel shall know" abundantly to their comfort that "I am the Lord their God from that day and forward." 1st. He will be so "from that day and forward." God's present mercies are pledges and assurances of farther mercies. If God evidence to us that he is our God, he assures us that he will never leave us; "This God is our God for ever and ever." 2nd. They shall know it with more satisfaction "from that day and forward." They had sometimes been ready to question whether the Lord was with them or no; but the events of this day shall silence their doubts, and the matter being thus settled, and made clear, it shall not be doubted of for the future. As boasting in themselves is hereby for ever excluded, so boasting in God is hereby for ever secured.

23 And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity:
Because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them,
And gave them into the hand of their enemies:
So fell they all by the sword.
24 According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them,
And hid my face from them.
25 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob,
And have mercy upon the whole house of Israel,
And will be jealous for my holy name;
26 After that they have borne their shame,
And all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me,
When they dwelt safely in their land, and none made *them* afraid.
27 When I have brought them again from the people,
And gathered them out of their enemies' lands,
And am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations;
28 Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD their God,
Which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen:
But I have gathered them unto their own land,
And have left none of them any more there.
29 Neither will I hide my face any more from them:
For I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel,
Saith the Lord GOD.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter going before, and hath reference not only to the predictions concerning Gog and Magog, but to all the prophecies of this book concerning the captivity of the house of Israel, and then concerning their restoration and return out of their captivity.

First. God will let the heathen know the meaning of his people's troubles, and rectify their mistake concerning them who took occasion from the troubles of Israel to reproach the God of Israel as unable to protect them, and untrue to his covenant with them. When God, upon their reformation and return to him, turned again their captivity, and brought them back to their own land, and, upon their perseverance in their reformation, wrought such great salvations for them as that from the attempts of Gog upon them, then it will be made to appear, even to the heathen, that will but consider and compare things, that there was no ground at all for their reflection; that Israel went into captivity, not because God could not protect them, but because they had by sin forfeited his favour, and thrown themselves out of his protection; ver. 23, 24, "The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity," that iniquity which they learned from the heathen their neighbours, because they trespassed against God. That was the true reason why God hid his face from them, and "gave them into the hand of their enemies." It was "according to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions." Now the evincing of this will not only silence their reflections on God, but will redound greatly to his honour. When the troubles of God's people are over, and we see the end of them, we shall better understand them than we did at first. And it will appear much for the glory of God when the world is made to know, 1. That God punisheth sin even in his own people, because he hates it most in those that are nearest and dearest to him, *Am.* iii. 2. It is the praise of justice to be impartial. 2. That when God gives up his people for a prey, it is to correct them and reform them, not to gratify their enemies, *Isa.* x. 7; xlii. 24. Let not them therefore exalt themselves. 3. That no sooner do God's people humble themselves under the rod but he returns in mercy to them.

Secondly. God will give his own people to know what great favour he has in store for them, notwithstanding the troubles he had brought them into; ver. 25, 26, "Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob."

1. Why now? Now God will "have mercy upon the whole house of Israel," 1st. Because it is time for him to stand up for his own glory, which suffers in their sufferings; Now will I "be jealous for my holy name," that that may no longer be reproached. 2nd. Because now they repent of their sins; they have borne their shame and all their trespasses. When sinners repent and take shame to themselves, God will be reconciled and put honour upon them. It is particularly pleasing to God that these penitents look a great way back in their penitential reflections, and are ashamed of all their trespasses which they were guilty of "when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid." The remembrance of the mercies they enjoyed in their own land, and the Divine protection they were under there, shall be improved as an aggravation of the sins they committed in that land. They dwelt safely, and might have continued to dwell so, and none should have given them any disquiet or disturbance if they had continued in the way of their duty; nay, therefore they trespassed because they dwelt safely. Outward safety is often a cause of inward security, and that is an inlet to all sin, *Ps.* lxxiii. Now this they are willing to bear the blame of, and acknowledge that God hath justly brought them into a land of trouble, where every one makes them afraid, because they had trespassed against him in a land of peace, where none made them afraid. And when they thus humble themselves under humbling providences God will bring again their captivity.

2. What then? When God has gathered them out of their enemies' hands, and brought them home again, 1st. Then God will have the praise of it. I will be "sanctified in them in the sight of many nations," ver. 27. As God was reproached in the reproach they were under during their captivity, so he will be sanctified in their reformation, and the making of them a holy people again; and will be glorified in their restoration, and the making of them a happy,

glorious people again. 2nd. Then they shall have the benefit of it; ver. 28, "They shall know that I am the Lord their God." Note, The providences of God concerning his people that are designed for their good have the grace of God going along with them to teach them to eye God as the Lord, and their God in all, and then they do them good. They shall eye him as the Lord, and their God, *First*. In their calamities; that it was he that "caused them to be led into captivity," and therefore they must not only submit to his will, but endeavour to answer his end in it. *Secondly*. In their comfort; that it is he that has "gathered them to their own land," and left none of them among the heathen. Note, By the variety of events that are concerning us, if we look up to God in all, we may come to acquaint ourselves better with his various attributes and designs. 3rd. Then God and they will never part, ver. 29. *First*. God will pour out his Spirit upon them, to prevent their departures from him, and returns to folly again, and to keep them close to their duty. And then, *Secondly*. He will never hide his face any more from them, will never suspend his favour as he had done. He will never turn from doing them good; and, in order to that, he will effectually provide that they shall never turn from doing him service. Note, The indwelling of the Spirit is an infallible pledge of the continuance of God's favour. He will hide his face no more from those on whom he has poured out his Spirit. When therefore we pray that God would never cast us away from his presence, we must as earnestly pray that, in order to that, he would never take his Holy Spirit away from us, *Ps.* li. 11.

CHAPTER XL.

The waters of the sanctuary which this prophet saw in vision, *ch.* xlvii. 1., are a proper representation of this prophecy. Hitherto the waters have been sometimes but to the ankles, in other places to the knees, or to the loins, but now the waters are risen, and are become a river which cannot be passed over. Here is one continual vision, beginning at this chapter to the end of the book, which is justly looked upon to be one of the most difficult portions of scripture in all the book of God. The Jews will not allow any to read it till they are thirty years old, and tell those who do read it, that, though they cannot understand every thing in it, yet when Elias comes he will explain it. Many commentators, both ancient and modern, have owned themselves at a loss what to make of it, and what use to make of it: but because it is hard to be understood we must not therefore throw it by, but humbly search concerning it, get as far as we can into it, and as much as we can out of it; and when we despair of satisfaction in every difficulty we meet with, bless God that our salvation doth not depend upon it, but things necessary are plain enough, and wait till God shall reveal even this unto us. These chapters are the more to be regarded, because the two last chapters of the *Revelation* seem to have a plain allusion to them, as *Rev.* xx. has to the foregoing prophecy of Gog and Magog. Here is the vision of a glorious temple in this chapter, and *ch.* xli. xlii.; of God's taking possession of it, *ch.* xliii.; orders concerning the priests that are to minister in this temple, *ch.* xliv.; the divisions of the land, what portion should be allotted for the sanctuary, what for the city, and what for the prince, both in his government of the people and his worship of God, *ch.* xlv.; and farther instructions for him and the people, *ch.* xlvi.; and, after the vision of the holy waters, we have the borders of the holy land, and the portions assigned to the tribes, and the dimensions and gates of the holy city, *ch.* xlvii., xlviii. Some make this to represent what had been during the flourishing state of the Jewish church; how glorious Solomon's temple was in its best days, that the captives might see what they had lost by sin, and might be the more humbled. But that seems not probable. The general scope of it I take to be, I. To assure the captives that they should not only return to their land, and be settled there, which had been often promised in the foregoing chapters, but that they should have, and therefore should be encouraged, to build another temple, which God would own, and where he would meet them, and bless them. That the ordinances of worship should be revived, and the sacred priesthood should there attend; and, though they should not have a king to live in such splendour as formerly, yet they should have a prince or ruler (who is often spoken of in this vision) that should countenance the worship of God amongst them, and should himself be an example of diligent attendance upon it; and that prince, priests, and people, should have a very comfortable settlement and subsistence in their own land. II. To direct them to look farther than all this, and to expect the coming of the Messiah, who had before been prophesied of under the name of David, because he was the man that projected the building of the temple; and who should set up a spiritual temple, even the gospel church, the glory of which should far exceed that of Solomon's temple, and which should continue to the end of time. And the dimensions of these visionary buildings being so large, the new temple bigger than all the old Jerusalem, and the new Jerusalem bigger than all the land of Canaan, plainly intimates, as Dr. Lightfoot observes, that these things cannot be literally, but must be spiritually, understood. And the gospel temple erected by Christ and his apostles was so closely connected with the second material temple, was erected so carefully just at the time when that fell into decay, that it might be ready to receive its glories when it resigned them, it was proper enough that they should both be referred to in one and the same vision. Under the type and figure of a temple and altar, priests and sacrifices, is foreshewed the spiritual worship that should be performed in gospel times more agreeably to the nature both of God and man, and that perfected at last in the kingdom of glory, in which perhaps these visions will have their full accomplishment; and, some think, in some happy and glorious state of the gospel church on this side heaven, in the latter days. In this chapter we have, I. A general account of this vision of the temple and city, ver. 1—4. II. A particular account of it entered upon, and a description given, 1. Of the out-wall, ver. 5; 2. Of the east gate, ver. 6—19; 3. Of the north gate, ver. 20—23; 4. Of the south gate, ver. 24—31; and the chambers, and other appurtenances belonging to these gates; 5. Of the inner court, both towards the east and towards the south, ver. 32—38; 6. Of the tables, ver. 39—43; 7. Of the lodgings for the singers and the priests, ver. 44—47; 8. Of the porch of the house, ver. 48, 49.

IN the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth *day* of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither. 2 In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which *was* as the frame of a city on the south. 3 And he brought me thither, and, behold, *there was* a man, whose appearance *was* like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. 4 And the man said unto me,

Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears,
And set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee;
For to the intent that I might shew *them* unto thee
Art thou brought hither:
Declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

Here is, First. The date of this vision. It was in the twenty-fifth year of Ezekiel's captivity, ver. 1, which some compute to be the thirty-third year of the first captivity, and is here said to be the "fourteenth year after the city was smitten." See how seasonably the clearest and fullest prospects of their deliverance were given them, when they were in the depths of their distress; and an assurance of the return of the morning when they were in the midnight of their captivity; then "the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither" to Jerusalem. Now it was in ruins, desolate and deserted, a piteous sight to the prophet.

Secondly. The scene where it was laid. The prophet was brought "in the visions of God to the land of Israel," ver. 2. And it was not the first time he had been brought thither in vision; we had him carried to Jerusalem to see it in its iniquity and shame, *ch.* viii. 3, here he is carried thither to have a pleasing prospect of it in its glory, though its present aspect, now it was quite depopulated, was dismal. He was set "upon a very high mountain," as Moses upon the top of Pisgah, to view the land which was now a second time a land of promise, not yet in possession. From the top of this mountain he saw "as the frame of a city," the plan and model of it; but this city was a temple as large as a city. The New Jerusalem, *Rev.* xxi. 22, had no temple therein; this here is all temple, which comes much to the same. It is a city for men to dwell in; it is a temple for God to dwell in; for in the church on earth God dwells with men, in that in heaven men dwell with God. Both these are framed in the counsel of God,—framed by Infinite Wisdom, and all very good.

Thirdly. The particular discoveries of this city, (which he had at first a general view of,) were made to him by "a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass," ver. 3; not a created angel, but Jesus Christ, who should be found in fashion as a man, that he might both discover and build the gospel temple. He brought him to this city; for it is through Christ that we have both acquaintance with, and access to, the benefits and privileges of God's house; he it is that "shall build the temple of the Lord," *Zec.* vi. 13. His appearing like brass speaks both his brightness and his strength. John in vision saw "his feet like unto fine brass," *Rev.* i. 15.

Fourthly. The dimensions of this city or temple, and the several parts of it, were taken with a line of flax and a measuring reed or rod, ver. 3, as carpenters have both their line and a wooden measure. The temple of God is built by line and rule, and those that would let others into the knowledge of it must do it by that line and rule. The church is formed according to the Scripture, the pattern in the Mount. That is the line and the measuring reed that is in the hand of Christ. With that doctrine and laws ought to be measured, and examined by that; for then peace is upon the Israel of God when they walk according to that rule.

Fifthly. Directions are here given to the prophet to receive this revelation from the Lord, and transmit it pure and entire to the church, ver. 4. 1. He must carefully observe everything that was said and done in this vision. His attention is raised and engaged; ver. 4, "Behold with thine eyes" all that is shewed thee; do not only see it, but look intently upon it; and "hear with thine ears" all that is said to thee, diligently hearken to it, and be sure to "set thine heart upon it;" attend with a fixedness of thought and a close application of mind. What we see of the works of God, and what we hear of the word of God, will do us no good unless we set our hearts upon it, as those that reckon ourselves nearly concerned in it, and expect advantage to our souls by it. 2. He must faithfully declare it to the house of Israel, that they may have the comfort of it; therefore he receives that he may give. Thus the revelation of Jesus Christ was lodged in the hands of John that he might signify it to the churches, *Rev.* i. 1. And, because he is to declare it as a message from God, he must therefore be fully apprised of it himself, and much affected with it. Note, Those who are to preach God's word to others ought to study it well themselves, and set their hearts upon it. Now the reason given why he must both observe it himself and declare it to the house of Israel is, because to this intent he is brought hither, and has it shewed him. Note, When the things of God are shewn us it concerns us to consider to what intent they are shewn us; and when we are sitting under the ministry of the word to consider to what intent we are brought thither, that we may answer the end of our coming, and may not receive the grace of God in shewing us such things in vain.

5 And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits *long* by the cubit and an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed. 6 Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, *which was* one reed broad; and the other threshold *of the gate, which was* one reed broad. 7 And *every* little chamber *was* one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers *were* five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate within *was* one reed. 8 He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed. 9 Then measured he the porch

of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate *was* inward. 10 And the little chambers of the gate eastward *were* three on this side, and three on that side; they three *were* of one measure: and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. 11 And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits; *and* the length of the gate, thirteen cubits. 12 The space also before the little chambers *was* one cubit *on this side*, and the space *was* one cubit on that side: and the little chambers *were* six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side. 13 He measured then the gate from the roof of *one* little chamber to the roof of another: the breadth *was* five and twenty cubits, door against door. 14 He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate. 15 And from the face of the gate of the entrance unto the face of the porch of the inner gate *were* fifty cubits. 16 And *there were* narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches: and windows *were*

EGYPTIAN PORTICO, WITH PILLARS OF THE FORM OF THE PALM TREE.

round about inward: and upon *each* post *were* palm trees. 17 Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, *there were* chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers *were* upon the pavement. 18 And the pavement by the side of the gates over against the length of the gates *was* the lower pavement. 19 Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits eastward and northward. 20 And the gate of the outward court that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof. 21 And the little chambers thereof *were* three on this side and three on that side; and the posts thereof and the arches thereof were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 22 And their windows, and their arches, and their palm trees, *were* after the measure of the gate that looketh toward the east; and they went up unto it by seven steps; and the arches thereof *were* before them. 23 And the gate of the inner court *was* over against the gate toward the north, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate an hundred cubits. 24 After that he brought me toward the south, and behold a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof and the arches thereof according to these measures.

OBELISKS IN FRONT OF THE GATE AT THE TEMPLE OF LUXOR.

25 And *there were* windows in it and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 26 And *there were* seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof *were* before them: and it had palm trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.

The measuring reed, which was in the hand of the surveyor-general, was mentioned before, ver. 3. Here we are told, ver. 5, what was the exact length of it, which must be observed, because the house was measured by it. It was six cubits long, reckoning, not by the common cubit, but the cubit of the sanctuary, the sacred cubit, by which it was fit this holy house should be measured, and that was a hand-breadth, that is, four inches longer than the common cubit. The common cubit was eighteen inches, this twenty-two: see *ch.* xliii. 13. Yet some of the critics contend that this measuring reed was but six common cubits in length, and one hand-breadth added to the whole. The former seems more probable. Here is an account,

First. Of the outer wall of the house, which compassed it round, which was three yards thick, and three yards high; which notes the separation between the church and the world on every side, and the Divine protection which the church is under. If a wall of this vast thickness will not secure it, God himself will be a wall of fire round about it. Whoever attacks it, it is at their peril.

Secondly. Of the several gates, with the chambers adjoining to them. Here is no mention of the outer court of all, which was called the court of the Gentiles. Some think because in gospel times there should be such a vast confluence of Gentiles to the church that their court should be left unmea-

sured, to signify that the worshippers in that court should be unnumbered, *Rev.* vii. 9, 11, 12.

1. He begins with the east gate, because that was the usual way of entering into the lower end of the temple, the holy of holies being at the west end, in opposition to the idolatrous heathen, that worshipped towards the east. Now in the account of this gate observe, 1st. That he went up to it by stairs, ver. 6; for the gospel church was exalted above that of the Old Testament, and when we go to worship God we must ascend: so is the call, *Rev.* iv. 1. Come up hither; *Sursum corda*,—'Up with your hearts.' 2nd. That the chambers adjoining to the gates were but little chambers about ten feet square, ver. 7; these were for those to lodge in who attended the service of the house. And it becomes such who are made spiritual priests to God to content themselves with little chambers, and not to seek great things to themselves. So that we may but have a place within the verge of God's court we have reason to be thankful, though it be in a little chamber, a mean apartment, though we be but doorkeepers there. 3rd. The chambers, as they were each of them four-square, noting their stability and due proportion, and their exact agreement with the rule, for they were each of them one reed long and one reed broad, so they were all of one measure, that there might be an equality among the attendants on the service of the house. 4th. The chambers were very many; for in our Father's house there are many mansions, *Jno.* xiv. 2, in his house above and in that here on earth. In the secret of his tabernacle shall those be hid, and in a safe pavilion, whose desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life, *Ps.* xxvii. 4, 5. Some make these chambers to represent the particular congregations of believers which are parts of the great temple, the universal church, which are and must be framed by the Scripture line and rule, and which Jesus Christ takes a measure of, that is, takes cognizance of, for he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. 5th. It is said, ver. 14, "He made also the posts." He that now measured them was the same that made them; for Christ is the builder of his church, and therefore is best able to give us the knowledge of it; and his reducing them to the rule and standard is called his making of them, for no account is made of them farther than they agree with that; "To the law and to the testimony." 6th. Here are posts of sixty cubits, which some think was literally fulfilled, when Cyrus, in his edict for rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, ordered that the height thereof should be sixty cubits, that is, thirty yards and more, *Ezr.* vi. 3. 7th. Here were windows to the little chambers, and windows to the posts and arches, that is, to the cloisters below, and windows round about, ver. 16, to signify the light from heaven with which the church is illuminated. Divine revelation is let into it for instruction, direction, and comfort to those that dwell in God's house; light to work by, light to walk by, light to see themselves and one another by. There were lights to the little chambers; even the least, and least considerable parts and members of the church, shall have light afforded them; "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." But they are narrow windows, as those in the temple, 1 *Kin.* vi. 4. The discoveries made to the church on earth are but narrow and scanty compared with what shall be in the future state, when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly. 8th. Divers courts are here spoken of, an outermost of all, then an outer court, then an inner, and then the innermost of all, into which the priests only entered, which some think may put us in mind 'of the diversities of gifts, and graces, and offices, in the several members of Christ's mystical body here, as also of the several degrees of glory in the courts and mansions of heaven, as there are stars in several spheres, and stars of several magnitudes in the fixed firmament,' *Engl. Annot.* Some draw nearer to God than others, and have a more intimate acquaintance with Divine things; but to a child of God a day in any of his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. These courts had porches or piazzas round them, for the shelter of those that attended in them from wind and weather; for when we are in the way of our duty to God we may believe ourselves to be under his special protection; that he will graciously provide for us, nay, that he will himself be to us a covert from the storm and tempest, *Isa.* iv. 5, 6. 9th. On the posts were palm-trees engraven, ver. 16, to signify that the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree in the courts of God's house, *Ps.* xcii. 12. The more they are depressed with the burthen of affliction the more strongly do they grow, as they say of the palm-tree. It likewise intimates the saints' victory and triumph over their spiritual enemies. They have palms in their hands, *Rev.* vii. 4; but, lest they should drop these, or have them snatched out of their hands, they are here engraven upon the posts of the temple, as perpetual monuments of their honour; "Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph." Nay, believers shall themselves be made pillars in the temple of our God, and shall go no more out, and shall have his name engraven on them, which will be their brightest ornament and honour, *Rev.* iii. 12. 10th. Notice is here taken of the pavement of the court, ver. 17, 18. The word intimates that the pavement was made of porphyry stone, which was of the colour of burning coals; for the brightest and most sparkling glories of this world should be put and kept under our feet when we draw near to God, and are attending upon him. The stars are, as it were, the burning coals, or stones of a fiery colour, with which the pavement of God's celestial temple is laid; and if the pavement of the court be so bright and glittering, how glorious must we conclude the mansions of that house to be!

2. The gates that looked towards the north, ver. 20, and towards the south, ver. 24, with their appurtenances, are much the same with that towards the east, after the measure of the first gate, ver. 21. But the description is repeated very particularly. And thus largely was the structure of the tabernacle related in *Exodus*, and of the temple, in the books of the *Kings* and *Chronicles*, to signify the special notice God doth take, and his ministers should take, of all that belong to his church. His delight is in them, his eye is upon them; he knows all that are his, all his living temples, and all that belongs to them. Observe, 1st. This temple had not only a gate toward the east, to let into it the children of the east, that were famous for their wealth and wisdom; but it had a gate to the north, and another to the south, for the admission of the poorer and less civilized nations. The New Jerusalem has twelve gates, three towards each quarter of the world, *Rev.* xxi. 13; for many shall come from all parts to sit down there, *Mat.* viii. 11. 2nd. To those gates they went up by seven steps, ver. 22—26, which, as some observe, may remind us of the necessity of advancing in grace and holiness, adding one grace to another, going from step to step, from strength to strength, still pressing forwards towards perfection—upwards, upwards towards heaven, the temple above.

27 And *there was* a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south an hundred cubits. 28 And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures; 29 And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and *there were* windows in it and

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ARCH.

in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 30 And the arches round about *were* five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad. 31 And the arches thereof *were* toward the utter court; and palm trees *were* upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it *had* eight steps. 32 And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures. 33 And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, *were* according to these measures: and *there were* windows therein and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 34 And the arches thereof *were* toward the outward court; and palm trees *were* upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps. 35 And he brought me to the north gate, and measured *it* according to these measures; 36 The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 37 And the posts thereof *were* toward the utter court; and palm trees *were* upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it *had* eight steps. 38 And the chambers and the entries thereof *were* by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt offering.

In these verses we have a delineation of the "inner court." The survey of the outer court ended with the south side of it; this of the inner court begins with the south side, ver. 27, proceeds to the east, ver. 32, and so to the north, ver. 35, for there is no gate, either of the outer or inner court, towards the west. It should seem that in Solomon's temple there were gates westward, for we find porters towards the west, 1 *Chr.* ix. 24; xxvi. 18; but Josephus saith that in the second temple there was no gate on the west side. Observe,

First. These gates into the inner court were exactly uniform with those into the outer court; the dimensions the same, the chambers adjoining the same, and the galleries or rows round the court the same, the very engraving on the posts the same. The work of grace and its workings are the same, for substance, in grown Christians that they are in young beginners, only that the former are got so much nearer their perfection. The faith of all the saints is alike precious, though it be not alike strong. There is a great resemblance between one child of God and another; for "all they are brethren," and bear the same image.

Secondly. The ascent into the outer court at each gate was by seven steps, but the ascent into the inner court at each gate was by eight steps. This is expressly taken notice of, ver. 31, 34, 37, to signify that the nearer we approach to God the more we should rise above this world and the things of it. The people that worshipped in the outer court must rise seven steps above other people, but the priests that attended in the inner court must rise eight steps above them, must exceed them at least one step more than they exceed other people.

39 And in the porch of the gate *were* two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering. 40 And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate, *were* two tables; and on the other side, which *was* at the porch of the gate, *were* two tables. 41 Four tables *were* on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they slew *their sacrifices*. 42 And the four tables *were* of hewn stone for the burnt offering, of a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and an half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice. 43 And within *were* hooks, an hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables *was* the flesh of the offering. 44 And without the inner gate *were* the chambers of the singers in the inner court, which *was* at the side of the north gate; and their prospect *was* toward the south: one at the side of the east gate *having* the prospect toward the north. 45 And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect *is* toward the south, *is* for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house. 46 And the chamber whose prospect *is* toward the north *is* for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these *are* the sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi, which come near to the LORD to minister unto him. 47 So he measured the court, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, foursquare; and the altar *that was* before the house. 48 And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured *each* post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate *was* three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. 49 The length of the porch *was* twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; and *he brought me* by the steps whereby they went up to it: and *there were* pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

In these verses we have an account,

First. Of the tables that were in the porch of the gates of the "inner court." We find no description of the altars of burnt offerings in the midst of that court till *ch.* xliii. 13. But, because the one altar under the law was to be exchanged for a multitude of tables under the Gospel, here is early notice taken of the tables at our entrance into the inner court; for till we come to partake of the table of the Lord we are but professors at large; our admission to that is our entrance into the inner court. But in this gospel temple we meet with no altar, till after the glory of the Lord has taken possession of it, for Christ is our altar, that sanctifies every gift. Here were eight tables provided, whereon to slay the sacrifices, ver. 41. We read not of any tables for this purpose, either in the tabernacle or in Solomon's temple; but here they are provided to intimate the multitude of spiritual sacrifices that should be brought to God's house in gospel times, and the multitude of hands that should be employed in offering up those sacrifices. Here were the shambles for the altar; here were the dressers on which they laid the flesh of the sacrifice, the knives with which they cut it up, and the hooks on which they hung it up, that it might be ready to be offered on the altar, ver. 43, and there also they washed the burnt offerings, ver. 38; to intimate that, before we draw near to God's altar, we must have every thing in readiness, must wash our hands, our hearts, those spiritual sacrifices, and so compass God's altar.

Secondly. The use that some of the chambers mentioned before were put to. 1. Some were for the singers, ver. 44. It should seem they were first provided for before any other that attended this temple service, to intimate not only that singing of psalms should still continue a gospel ordinance, but that the Gospel should furnish all that embrace it with abundant matter for joy and praise, and give them occasion to break forth into singing, which is often foretold concerning gospel times, *Ps.* xcvi. 1; xcviii. 1. Christians should be singers; "Blessed are they that dwell in God's house," they will be "still praising him." 2. Others of them were for the priests, both those that kept the charge of the house to cleanse it, and to see that none came into it to pollute it, and to keep it in good repair, ver. 45, and those that kept "the charge of the altar," ver. 46, that "came near to the Lord to minister unto him." God will find convenient lodging for all his servants. Those that do the work of his house shall enjoy the comforts of it.

Thirdly. Of the inner court, the court of the priests, which was fifty yards square, ver. 47. The altar that was "before the house" was placed in the midst of this court, over against the three gates, which, standing in a direct line with the three gates of the outer court, when the gates were set open all the people in the outer court might, through them, be spectators of the service done at the altar. Christ is both our altar and our sacrifice, to whom we must look with an eye of faith in all our approaches to God, and he is salvation in the midst of the earth, *Ps.* lxxiv. 12, to be looked unto from all quarters.

Fourthly. Of the porch of the house. The temple is called the house emphatically, as if no other house were worthy to be called so. Before this house there was a porch, to teach us not to rush hastily and inconsiderately into the presence of God, but gradually, that is, gravely, and with solemnity, passing first through the outer court, then the inner, then the porch, ere we enter into the house. Between this porch and the altar was a place where the priests used to pray, *Joel* ii. 17. In the porch, besides the posts on which the doors were hung, there were pillars, probably for state and ornament, like Jachin and Boaz, ("He will establish; in him is strength,") ver. 49. In the gospel church every thing is strong and firm, and every thing ought to be kept in its place, and to be done decently and in order.

CHAPTER XLI.

An account was given of the porch of the house in the close of the foregoing chapter; this brings us to the temple itself, the description of which here given creates much difficulty in the critical expositors, and occasions differences among them. Those must consult them who are nice in their inquiries into the meaning of the particulars of this delineation; it shall suffice us to observe, I. The dimensions of the house: the posts of it, ver. 1; the door, ver. 2; the wall and the side-chambers, ver. 5, 6; the foundations and wall of the chambers, and their doors, ver. 8—11; the house itself, ver. 13. II. The dimensions of the oracle, or most holy place, ver. 3, 4. III. An account of another building over against the separate place, ver. 12—15. IV. The manner of the building of the house, ver. 7, 16, 17. V. The ornaments of the house, ver. 18—20. VI. The altar of incense, and the table, ver. 22. VII. The doors between the temple and the oracle, ver. 23, 26. There is so much difference, both in the terms and in the rules of architecture, between one age and another, one place and another, that it ought not to be any stumblingblock to us that there is so much in these descriptions dark and hard to be understood, about the meaning of which the learned are not agreed. To one not skilled in mathematics the mathematical description of a modern structure would be scarce intelligible; and yet to a common carpenter or mason among the Jews at that time we may suppose all this, in the literal sense of it, was easy enough.

AFTERWARD he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, *which was* the breadth of the tabernacle. 2 And the breadth of the door *was* ten cubits; and the sides of the door *were* five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side: and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits: and the breadth, twenty cubits. 3 Then went he inward, and measured the post of the door, two cubits; and the door, six cubits; and the breadth of the door, seven cubits. 4 So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits; and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple: and he said unto me, This *is* the most holy *place*. 5 After he measured the wall of the house, six cubits; and the breadth of *every* side chamber, four cubits, round about the house on every side. 6 And the side chambers *were* three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall which *was* of the house for the side chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house. 7 And *there was* an enlarging, and a winding about still upward to the side chambers: for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house *was still* upward, and so increased *from* the lowest *chamber* to the highest by the midst. 8 I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side chambers *were* a full reed of six great cubits. 9 The thickness of the wall, which *was* for the side chamber without, *was* five cubits: and *that* which *was* left *was* the place of the side chambers that *were* within.

10 And between the chambers *was* the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side. 11 And the doors of the side chambers *were* toward *the place that was* left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south: and the breadth of the place that was left *was* five cubits round about.

We are still attending a prophet that is under the conduct of an angel, and therefore attend with reverence, though we are often at a loss to know both what this is, and what it is to us. Observe here,

First. After the prophet has observed the courts he was at length brought to the temple, ver. 1. If we diligently attend to the instructions given us in the plainer parts of religion, and profit by them, we shall be led farther into an acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They that are willing to dwell in God's courts shall at length be brought into his temple. Ezekiel was himself a priest, but by the iniquity and calamity of the times was cut short of his birthright privilege of ministering in the temple; but God makes up the loss to him by introducing him into this prophetical, evangelical, celestial temple, and employing him to transmit a description of it to the church, in which he was dignified above all the rest of his order.

Secondly. When our Lord Jesus spoke of the destroying of this temple, which his hearers understood of this second temple at Jerusalem, he spake of the temple of his body, *Jno.* ii. 19, 21; and with good reason might he speak so ambiguously, when Ezekiel's vision had a joint respect to them both together, including also his mystical body the church, which is called the house of God, 1 *Tim.* iii. 15, and all the members of that body, which are living temples, in whom the Spirit dwells.

Thirdly. The very posts of this temple, the doorposts, were as far one from the other, and consequently the door was as wide, as the whole breadth of the tabernacle of Moses, ver. 1, namely, twelve cubits, *Ex.* xxvi. 16, 22, 25. In comparison with what had been under the law we may say that wide is the gate which leads into the church, the ceremonial law, that wall of partition which had so much straitened the gate, being taken down.

Fourthly. The most holy place was an exact square, twenty cubits each way, ver. 4. For the New Jerusalem is exactly foursquare, *Rev.* xxi. 16, noting its stability; for we look for a city that cannot be moved.

Fifthly. The upper stories were larger than the lower, ver. 7. The walls of the temple were six cubits thick at the bottom, five in the middle story, and four in the highest, which gave room to enlarge the chambers the higher they went; but care was taken that the timber might have fast hold. Though God builds high, yet he builds firm, yet so as not to weaken one part for the strengthening another; they had hold, but not "in the wall of the house." By this spreading gradually, the side chambers that were on "the height of the house," that is, in the uppermost story of all, were six cubits, whereas the lowest were but four; they gained a cubit every story. The higher we build up ourselves in our most holy faith, the more should our hearts, those living temples, be enlarged.

12 Now the building that *was* before the separate place at the end toward the west *was* seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building *was* five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits. 13 So he measured the house, an hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, an hundred cubits long; 14 Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, an hundred cubits. 15 And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which *was* behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side and on the other side, an hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court; 16 The door posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, cieled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows *were* covered; 17 To that above the door, even unto the inner house, and without, and by all the wall round about within and without, by measure. 18 And *it was* made with cherubims and palm trees, so that a palm tree *was* between a cherub and a cherub; and *every* cherub had two faces; 19 So that the face of a man *was* toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side: *it was* made through all the house round about. 20 From the ground unto above the door *were* cherubims and palm trees made, and *on* the wall of the temple. 21 The posts of the temple *were* squared, *and* the face of the sanctuary; the appearance *of the one* as the appearance *of the other*. 22 The altar of wood *was* three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, *were* of wood: and he said unto me, This *is* the table that *is* before the LORD. 23 And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors. 24 And the doors had two leaves *apiece*, two turning leaves; two *leaves* for the one door, and two leaves for the other *door*. 25 And *there were* made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubims and palm trees, like as *were* made upon the walls; and *there were* thick planks upon the face of the porch without. 26 And *there were* narrow windows and palm trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and *upon* the side chambers of the house, and thick planks

Here is, First. An account of a building that was before the separate place; that is, before the temple, "at the end towards the west," ver. 12, which is here measured and compared (ver. 13) with the measure of the house, and appears to be of equal dimensions with it. This stood in a court by itself, which is measured, ver. 15, and its galleries or chambers belonging to it, its posts and windows, and the ornaments of them, ver. 15—17. But what use was to be made of this other building we are not told; perhaps in this vision it signified the setting up of a church among the Gentiles, not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of quite another nature, and which should soon supersede it.

Secondly. A description of the ornaments of the temple and the other building. The walls on the inside from top to bottom were adorned with cherubims and palm-trees, placed alternately, as in Solomon's temple, 1 *Kin.* vi. 29. Each cherub is here said to have two faces, the face of a man towards the palm-tree on one side, and the face of a young lion towards the palm-tree on the other side, ver. 16. These seem to represent the angels, that have more than the wisdom of a man and the courage of a lion; and in both they have an eye to the palms of victory and triumph which are set before them, and which they are sure of in all their conflicts with the powers of darkness. And in the assemblies of the saints angels are in a special manner present, 1 *Cor.* xi. 10.

Thirdly. A description of the posts of the doors, both of the temple and of the sanctuary. They were squared, ver. 21, not round, like pillars, and "the appearance of the one as the appearance of the other." In the tabernacle, and in Solomon's temple, the door of the sanctuary, or most holy, was narrower than that of the temple, but here it was fully as broad; for in gospel times "the way into the holiest of all is made" more "manifest" than it had been under the Old Testament, *Heb.* ix. 8, and therefore the door wider. These doors are described, ver. 23, 24. The temple and the sanctuary had each of them their door, and they were two-leaved, folding doors.

Fourthly. We have here the description of the altar of incense, here said to be an "altar of wood," ver. 22. No mention is made of its being overlaid with gold; but sure it was intended to be so, else it would not bear the fire with which the incense was to be burned, unless we will suppose that it served only to put the censers upon. Or else it intimates that the incense to be offered in the gospel temple shall be purely spiritual, and the fire spiritual, which will not consume an altar of wood. Therefore this altar is called a table; "This is the table that is before the Lord." Here, as before, we find the altar turned into a table; for the great sacrifice being now offered, that which we have to do is to feast upon the sacrifice at the Lord's table.

Fifthly. Here is the adorning of the doors and windows with palm-trees, that they might be of a piece with the walls of the house, ver. 25, 26. Thus the living temples are adorned, not with gold, or silver, or costly array, but with "the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible."

CHAPTER XLII.

This chapter continues and concludes the describing and measuring of this mystical temple, which it is very hard to understand the particular architecture of, and yet more hard to comprehend the mystical meaning of. Here is, I. A description of the chambers that were about the courts, their situation and structure, ver. 1—13; and the uses for which they were designed, ver. 13, 14. II. A survey of the whole compass of ground which was taken up with the house, and the courts belonging to it, ver. 15—20.

THEN he brought me forth into the utter court, the way toward the north: and he brought me into the chamber that *was* over against the separate place, and which *was* before the building toward the north. 2 Before the length of an hundred cubits *was* the north door, and the breadth *was* fifty cubits. 3 Over against the twenty *cubits* which *were* for the inner court, and over against the pavement which *was* for the utter court, *was* gallery against gallery

in three *stories*. 4 And before the chambers *was* a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit; and their doors toward the north. 5 Now the upper chambers *were* shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building. 6 For they *were* in three *stories*, but had not pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore *the building* was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the

GATE AT EDFOU.

ground. 7 And the wall that *was* without over against the chambers, toward the utter court on the forepart of the chambers, the length thereof *was* fifty cubits. 8 For the length of the chambers that *were* in the utter court *was* fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple *were* an hundred cubits. 9 And from under these chambers *was* the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the utter court. 10 The chambers *were* in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building. 11 And the way before them *was* like the appearance of the chambers which *were* toward the north, as long as they, *and* as broad as they: and all their goings out *were* both according to their fashions, and according to their doors. 12 And according to the doors of the chambers that *were* toward the south *was* a door in the head of the way, *even* the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them. 13 Then said he unto me, The north chambers *and* the south chambers, which *are* before the separate place, they *be* holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the LORD shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place *is* holy. 14 When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy *place* into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they *are* holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to *those things* which *are* for the people.

The prophet hath taken a very exact view of the temple and the buildings belonging to it, and is now brought again into the outer court to observe the chambers that were in that square.

First. Here is a description of these chambers, which, as that which went before, seems to us very perplexed and intricate, through our unacquaintedness with the Hebrew language, and the rules of architecture at that time. We shall only observe in general,

1. That about the temple, which was the place of public worship, there were private chambers, to teach us that our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances will not excuse us from the duties of the closet. We must not only worship in the courts of God's house, but must, both before and after our attendance there, enter into our chambers, enter into our closets, and read, and meditate, and "pray to our Father in secret;" and a great deal of comfort the people of God have found in their communion with God in solitude.

2. That these chambers were many. There were three stories of them; and though the higher stories were not so large as the lower, yet they served as well for retirement, ver. 5, 6. There were many, that there might be conveniences for all such people as Anna the prophetess, who "departed not from the temple night or day," *Lu.* ii. 37. "In my Father's house are many mansions;" in his house on earth there are so. Multitudes by faith have taken lodgings in his sanctuary, and yet there is room.

3. That these chambers, though they were private, yet were near the temple, within view of it, within reach of it, to teach us to prefer public worship before private—"The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," and so must we—and to refer our private worship to the public; our religious performances in our chambers must be to prepare us for the exercises of devotion in public, and to further us in our improvement of them, as our opportunities are.

4. That before these chambers there were walks of five yards broad, ver. 4, in which those that had lodgings in these chambers might meet for conversation, might walk and talk together for their mutual edification, might communicate their knowledge and experiences; for we are not to spend all our time between the church and the chamber, though a great deal of time may be spent to very good purpose in both; but man is made for society, and Christians for the communion of saints; and the duties of that communion we must make conscience of, and the privileges and pleasures of that communion we must take the comfort of. It is promised to Joshua, who was high priest in the second temple, that God will "give him places to walk in among them that stand by," *Zec.* iii. 7.

Secondly. Here is the use of these chambers appointed, ver. 13, 14.

1. They were for the priests that approach unto the Lord, that they may be always near their business, and may not be non-residents. Therefore they are called holy chambers, because they were for the use of them that ministered in holy things, during their ministration. Those that have public work to do for God and the souls of men have need to be much in private, to fit themselves for it. Ministers should spend much time in their chambers, in reading, meditation, and prayer, that their profiting may appear; and they ought to be provided with conveniences for this purpose.

2. There the priests were to deposit the most holy things, that is, those parts of the offerings which fell to their share, and there they were to eat them, they and their families, in a religious manner, for the place is holy; and thus they must make a difference between those feasts upon the sacrifice and other meals.

3. There (among other uses) they were to lay their vestments, which God had appointed them to wear when they ministered at the altar, their linen ephods, coats, girdles, and bonnets. We read of the providing of priest's garments after their return out of captivity, *Neh.* vii. 70, 72. When they had ended their service at the altar they must lay by those garments, to signify that the use of them should continue only during that dispensation. But they must put on other garments, such as other people wear, when they approached to those things which were for the people; that is, to do that part of their service which related to the people, to teach them the law, and to answer their inquiries. Their holy garments must be laid up, that they may be kept clean and decent for the credit of their service.

15 Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east, and measured it round about. 16 He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. 17 He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. 18 He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed. 19 He turned about to the west side, *and* measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed. 20 He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred *reeds* long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

We have attended the measuring of this mystical temple, and are now to see how far the holy ground on which we tread doth extend; and that also is here measured, and found to take in a great compass. Observe,

First. What the dimensions of it were. It extended each way five hundred reeds, ver. 16—19, each reed above three yards and a half, so that it reached every way about an English measured mile, which, the ground lying square, was above eight miles round. Thus large were the suburbs (as I may call them) of this mystical temple, signifying the great extent of the church in Gospel times, when all nations should be discipled, and the kingdoms of the world made Christ's kingdoms. Room should be made in God's courts for the numerous forces of the Gentiles that shall flow into them, as was foretold, *Isa.* xlix. 18; lx. 4. It is in part fulfilled already in the accession of the Gentiles to the church; and we trust it shall have a more full accomplishment when the "fulness of the Gentiles shall come in," and "all Israel shall be saved."

Secondly. Why the dimensions of it were made thus large. It was to make a separation, by putting a very large distance between the sanctuary and the profane place; and therefore there was a wall surrounding it, to keep off those that were unclean, and to separate between the precious and the vile. Note,

A difference is to be put between common and sacred things; between God's name and other names, between his day and other days, his book and other books, his institutions and other observances; and a distance to be put between our worldly and religious actions, so as still to go about the worship of God with a solemn pause.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The prophet having given us a view of the mystical temple, the gospel church, as he received it from the Lord, that it might appear not to be erected in vain, comes to describe in this and the next chapter the worship that should be performed in it, but under the type of the old services. In this chapter we have, I. Possession taken of this temple, by the glory of God filling it, ver. 1—6. II. A promise given of the continuance of God's presence with his people, upon condition of their return to, and continuance in, the instituted way of his worship, and their abandoning of idols and idolatry, ver. 7—12. III. A description of the altar of burnt offerings, ver. 13—17. IV. Directions given for the consecration of that altar, ver, 18—27. And Ezekiel seems here to stand between God and Israel, as Moses, the servant of the Lord, did, when the sanctuary was first set up.

AFTERWARD he brought me to the gate, *even* the gate that looketh toward the east: 2 And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice *was* like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. 3 And *it was* according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, *even* according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions *were* like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. 4 And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east. 5 So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. 6 And I heard *him* speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me.

After Ezekiel had patiently surveyed the temple of God, the greatest glory of this earth, he is admitted to a higher form, and honoured with a sight of the glories of the upper world; it is said to him, Come up hither. He hath seen the temple, and sees it to be very spacious and splendid; but till the glory of God comes into it it, is but like the dead bodies he had seen in vision, *ch.* xxxvii., that had no breath till the spirit of life entered into them. Here therefore he sees the house filled with God's glory.

First. He has a vision of the glory of God; ver. 2, "The glory of the God of Israel," that God who is in covenant with Israel, and whom they serve and worship. The idols of the heathen have no glory but what they owe to the goldsmith or the painter; but this is the glory of the God of Israel. This glory came from the way of the east, and therefore he was brought to the gate that leads towards the east, to expect the appearance and approach of it. Christ's star was seen in the east, and he is that other Angel that ascendeth out of the east, *Rev.* vii. 2; for he is the Morning Star, he is the Sun of Righteousness. Two things he observed in this appearance of the glory of God. 1. The power of his word which he heard. His voice was like a noise of many waters, which is heard very far, and makes impressions; the noise of purling streams is grateful, of a roaring sea dreadful, *Rev.* i. 15; xiv. 2. Christ's Gospel, in the glory of which he shines, was to be proclaimed aloud, the report of it to be heard far; to some it is a savour of life, to others of death, according as they are. 2. The brightness of his appearance which he saw; "The earth shined with his glory;" for God is light, and none can bear the lustre of his light, none hath seen or can see it. Note, That glory of God which shines in the church shines on the world. When God appeared for David, "the brightness that was before him" dispersed the clouds, *Ps.* xviii. 12.

This appearance of the glory of God to Ezekiel here he observed to be the same with the vision he saw when he first received his commission, *ch.* i. 4; according to that by the river Chebar, ver. 3. Because God is the same he was pleased to manifest himself in the same manner, for with him is no variableness. It was the same (saith he) with that which I saw when I came to destroy the city, that is, to foretell the city's destruction; which he did with such authority and efficacy, and the event did so certainly answer the prediction, that he might be said to destroy it. As a judge, in God's name, he passed his sentence upon it, which was soon executed. God appeared in the same manner when he sent him to speak words of terror, and when he sent him to speak words of comfort; for in both God is and will be glorified. "He kills and he makes alive," he "wounds and he heals," *Deu.* xxxii. 39. To the same hand that destroyed we must look for deliverance; "he hath smitten, and he will bind up." *Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit,*—'The same hand inflicted the wound and healed it.'

Secondly. He has a vision of the entrance of this glory into the temple. When he saw this glory he fell upon his face, ver. 3, as not able to bear the lustre of God's glory, or rather, as one willing to give him the glory of it by an humble and reverend adoration; but the Spirit took him up, ver. 5, when the glory of the Lord was come into the house, ver. 4, that he might see how the house was filled with it. He saw how the glory of the Lord, in this same appearance, departed from the temple, because it was profaned, to his great grief; now he shall see it return to the temple, to his great satisfaction: see *ch.* x. 18, 19; xi. 23. Note, Though God may forsake his people for a small moment, he will return with everlasting loving-kindness. God's glory filled the house as it had filled the tabernacle which Moses set up, and the temple of Solomon, *Ex.* xl. 34; 1 *Kin.* viii. 10. Now we do not find that ever the Shechinah did in that manner take possession of the second temple, and therefore this was to have its accomplishment in that glory of the Divine grace which shines so bright in the gospel church, and fills it. Here is no mention of a cloud filling the house as formerly, for we now "with open face behold the glory of the Lord," in the face of Christ, and not as of old through the cloud of types.

Thirdly. He receives instructions more immediately from the glory of the Lord, as Moses did when God had taken possession of the tabernacle, *Lev.* i. 1; "I heard him speaking to me out of the house," ver. 6. God's glory shining in the church, we must from thence expect to receive Divine oracles. "The man stood by me;" we could not bear to hear the voice of God, any more than to see the face of God, if Jesus Christ did not stand by us as Mediator. Or, if this was a created angel, it is observable that when God began to speak to Ezekiel, he stood by, and gave way, having no more to say. Nay, he stood by the prophet, as a learner with him; for to the principalities and powers, to the angels themselves, who desire to look into these things, "is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God," *Eph.* iii. 10. The man stood by him to conduct him thither where he might receive farther discoveries, *ch.* xliv. 1.

7 And he said unto me,
Son of man, [feet,
The place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my
Where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel
for ever, [defile,
And my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more
Neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom,
Nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places.
8 In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds,
And their post by my posts,
And the wall between me and them,
They have even defiled my holy name
By their abominations that they have committed:
Wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger.
9 Now let them put away their whoredom,
And the carcases of their kings, far from me,
And I will dwell in the midst of them for ever.
10 Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel,
That they may be ashamed of their iniquities:
And let them measure the pattern.
11 And if they be ashamed of all that they have done,
Shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof,
And the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof,
And all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof,
And all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof:
And write *it* in their sight,
That they may keep the whole form thereof,
And all the ordinances thereof, and do them.
12 This *is* the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about *shall be* most holy. Behold, this *is* the law of the house.

God doth here, in effect, renew his covenant with his people Israel, upon his retaking possession of the house; and Ezekiel negotiates the matter, as Moses formerly. This would be of great use to the captives at their return, both for direction and encouragement. But look farther, to those that are blessed with the privileges of the gospel temple, that they may understand how they are before him on their good behaviour.

First. God, by the prophet, puts them in mind of their former provocations, for which they had long lain under the tokens of his displeasure. This conviction is spoken to them to make way for the comforts designed them. Though God gives and upbraids not, it becomes us, when he forgives, to upbraid ourselves with our unworthy carriage towards him. Let them now remember, therefore, 1. That they had formerly "defiled God's holy name," had profaned and abused all those sacred things by which he had made himself known among them, ver. 7. They and their kings had brought contempt on the religion they professed, and their relation to God, by their spiritual whoredom, their idolatry, and by worshipping images, which they called their kings, for so Moloch signifies—or lords, for so Baal signifies—but were really the carcases of kings, not only lifeless and useless, but loathsome and abominable, as dead carcases, in their high places, set up in honour of them. They had defiled God's name by their abominations. And what were they? It was "in setting their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts," that is, adding their own inventions to God's institutions, and urging all to a compliance with them, as if they had been of equal authority and efficacy, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," *Isa.* xxix. 13. Or, rather, setting up altars to their idols even in the courts of the temple, than which a more impudent affront could not be put upon the Divine majesty. Thus they set up a separation wall between him and them, which stopped the current of his favours to them, and spoiled the acceptableness of their services to him. See what an indignity sinners do to God, setting up their walls in opposition to his, and thrusting him out from what is his right. And see what injury they do to themselves, for the nearer any come to God with their sins, the farther they set him at a distance from them. Some give this sense of it: Though their houses joined close to God's house, their posts and thresholds to his, so that they were in a manner his next neighbours, ("There was but a wall between me and them," so it is in the margin,) so that it might have been expected they should have acquainted themselves with him, and been in care to please him, yet they were not so much as neighbourly. Note, It often proves too true, 'The nearer the church the farther from God.' They were by profession in covenant with God, and yet they had "defiled the place of his throne," and of the soles of his feet; that is,

his temple, where he did both reside and reign. Jerusalem is called the "city of the great King," *Ps.* xlviii. 2; and his footstool, *Ps.* xcix. 5; cxxxii. 7. Note, When God's ordinances are profaned his holy name is polluted. 2. That for this God had had a controversy with them in their late troubles. They could not condemn him, for he had but brought upon them the desert of their sins; "Wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger." Note, Those that pollute God's holy name fall under his just displeasure.

Secondly. He calls upon them to repent and reform, and, in order to that, to be ashamed of their iniquities; ver. 9, "Now let them put away their whoredom." Now they have smarted so severely for it, and now God is returning in mercy to them, and setting up his sanctuary again in the midst of them, now let them cast away their idols, and have no more to do with them, that they may not again forfeit the privileges which they have been taught to know the worth of by the want of. Let them put away their idols, those lothhsome "carcases of their kings, far from me," from being a provocation to me. This was seasonable counsel now the prophet had the platform of the temple to set before them; for, 1. If they see that platform they will surely be ashamed of their sins, ver. 10; when they see what mercy God has in store for them, notwithstanding their utter unworthiness of it, they will be ashamed to think of their disingenuous carriage towards him. Note, The goodness of God to us should lead us to repentance, especially to a penitential shame. Let them measure the pattern themselves, and see how much it exceeds the former pattern, and guess by that what great things God has in store for them, and surely it will put them out of countenance to think what the desert of their sins was. And then, 2. If they be ashamed of their sins, they shall surely see more of the platform, ver. 11; if they be ashamed of all that they have done, upon a general view of the goodness of God, let them have a more distinct, particular account of it. Note, Those that improve what they see and know of the goodness of God shall see and know more of it. And then, and not till then, we are qualified for God's favours, when we are truly humbled for our own follies. "Shew them the form of the house," let them see what a stately structure it will be, and withal shew them the ordinances and laws of it. Note, With the foresights of our comforts it is fit we should get the knowledge of our duty; with the privileges of God's house we must acquaint ourselves with the rules of it. Shew them these ordinances that they may keep them and do them. Note, Therefore we are made to know our duty, that we may do it, and be blessed in our deed.

Thirdly. He promiseth that they shall be such as they should be, and then he will be to them such as they would have him to be, ver. 7. 1. The house of Israel "shall no more defile my holy name." This is pure gospel. The precept of the law saith, You must not defile my name. The grace of the Gospel saith, You shall not. Thus what is required in the covenant is promised in the covenant, *Jer.* xxxii. 40. 2. Then "I will dwell in the midst of them for ever," and the same again, ver. 9. God secures to us his good-will by confirming in us his good work. If we do not defile his name we may be sure he will not depart from us.

Fourthly. The general law of God's house is laid down, ver. 12: that, whereas formerly only the chancel or sanctuary was most holy, now the whole mountain of the house shall be so; the whole limit thereof, including all the courts, and all the chambers, shall be as the most holy place; signifying that in gospel times, 1. The whole church shall have the privilege of the holy of holies, that of a near access to God. All believers have now, under the Gospel, "boldness to enter into the holiest," *Heb.* x. 19, with this advantage, that whereas the high priest entered in the virtue of the blood of bulls and goats, we enter in the virtue of the blood of Jesus, and wherever we are we have through him access to the Father. 2. The whole church shall be under a mighty obligation to press towards the perfection of holiness, as he who hath called us is holy. All must now be "most holy." Holiness becomes God's house for ever, and in gospel times more than ever. Behold, this is the law of the house, let none expect the protection of it who will not submit to this law.

13 And these *are* the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit *is* a cubit and an hand breadth; even the bottom *shall be* a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about *shall be* a span: and this *shall be* the higher place of the altar. 14 And from the bottom *upon* the ground *even* to the lower settle *shall be* two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser settle *even* to the greater settle *shall be* four cubits, and the breadth *one* cubit. 15 So the altar *shall be* four cubits; and from the altar and upward *shall be* four horns. 16 And the altar *shall be* twelve *cubits* long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof. 17 And the settle *shall be* fourteen *cubits* long and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof; and the border about it *shall be* half a cubit; and the bottom thereof *shall be* a cubit about; and his stairs shall look toward the east. 18 And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; These *are* the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. 19 And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord GOD, a young bullock for a sin offering. 20 And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put *it* on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. 21 Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary. 22 And on the second day thou shalt offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse *it* with the bullock. 23 When thou hast made an end of cleansing *it*, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. 24 And thou shalt offer them before the LORD, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up *for* a burnt offering unto the LORD. 25 Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat *for* a sin offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. 26 Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it; and they shall consecrate themselves. 27 And when these days are expired, it shall be, *that* upon the eighth day, and *so* forward, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord GOD.

This is concerning the altar in this mystical temple; and that is mystical too, for Christ is our altar. The Jews, after their return out of captivity, had an altar long before they had a temple, *Ezr.* iii. 3; but this was an altar in the temple. Now here we have,

First. The measures of the altar, ver. 13. It was six yards square at the top, and seven yards square at the bottom; it was four yards and a half high. It had a lower bench or shelf, here called a settle, a yard from the ground, on which some of the priests stood to minister; and another two yards above that, on which others of them stood; and these were each of them half a yard broad, and had ledges on either side, that they might stand firm upon them. The sacrifices were killed at the table, spoken of before, *ch.* xl. 39. What was to be burnt on the altar was given up to those on the lower bench, and handed by them to those on the higher, and they laid it on the altar. Thus, in the service of God, we must be assistant to one another.

Secondly. The ordinances of the altar. Directions are here given,

1. Concerning the dedication of the altar at first. Seven days were to be spent in the dedication of it, and every day sacrifices were to be offered upon it, and particularly a goat for a sin offering, ver. 25; besides a young bullock for a sin offering on the first day, ver. 19; which teacheth us, in all our religious services, to have an eye to Christ, the great sin offering. Neither our persons nor our performances can be acceptable to God unless sin be taken away; and that cannot be taken away but by the blood of Christ, which both sanctifies the altar, (for Christ entered by his own blood, *Heb.* ix. 12,) and the gift upon the altar. There were also to be a bullock and a ram offered for a burnt offering, ver. 24, which was intended purely for the glory of God, to teach us to have an eye to that in all our services. We present ourselves as living sacrifices, and our devotions as spiritual sacrifices, that we and they may be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory. The dedication of the altar is here called the cleansing and purging of it, ver. 20, 26. Christ our altar, though he had no pollution to be cleansed from, yet sanctified himself, *Jno.* xvii. 19; and when we consecrate the altars of our hearts to God, to have the fire of holy love always burning upon them, we must see that they be purified and cleansed from the love of the world and the lusts of the flesh. It is observable that there are several differences between the rites of dedication here and those which were appointed, *Ex.* xxix., to intimate that the ceremonial institutions were mutable things, and the changes in them were earnests of their period in Christ. Only here, according to the general law, that all the sacrifices must be seasoned with salt, *Lev.* ii. 13, particular orders are given, ver. 24, that the priests shall cast salt upon the sacrifices. Grace is the salt with which all our religious performances must be seasoned, *Col.* iv. 6. An everlasting covenant is called a covenant of salt, because it is incorruptible. The glory reserved for us is incorruptible and undefiled; and the grace wrought in us is the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible.

2. Concerning the constant use that should be made of it when it was dedicated. From henceforward the priests shall make their burnt offerings and peace offerings upon this altar, ver. 27; for therefore it was sanctified, that it might sanctify the gift that was offered upon it.

Thirdly. Observe farther, 1. Who were to serve at the altar; the priests "of the seed of Zadok," ver. 19. That family was substituted in the room of Abiathar by Solomon, and God confirms it. His name signifies righteous, for they are the righteous seed that are priests to God through Christ, "the Lord our righteousness." 2. How they should prepare for this service; ver. 26, "They shall consecrate themselves;" shall fill their hand with the offerings, in token of the giving up of themselves with their offerings to God, and to his service. Note, Before we minister to the Lord in holy things we must consecrate ourselves by getting our hands and hearts filled with those things. 3. How they should speed in it; ver. 27, "I will accept you;" and if God now accept our works, if our services be pleasing to him, it is enough, we need no more. Those that give themselves to God shall be accepted of God, their persons first, and then their performances, through the Mediator.

CHAPTER XLIV.

In this chapter we have, I. The appropriating of the east gate of the temple to the prince, ver. 1—3. II. A reproof sent to the house of Israel for their former profanations of God's sanctuary, with a charge to them to be more strict for the future, ver. 4—9. III. The degrading of those Levites who had formerly been guilty of idolatry, and the establishing of the priesthood in the family of Zadok, which had kept their integrity, ver. 10—16. IV. Divers laws and ordinances concerning the priests, ver. 17—31.

THEN he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east; and it *was* shut. 2 Then said the LORD unto me; This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. 3 *It is* for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

The prophet is here brought to review what he had before once surveyed; for, though we have often looked into the things of God, they will yet bear to be looked over again, such a copiousness there is in them. The lessons we have learned we should still repeat to ourselves. Every time we review the sacred fabric of holy things, which we have in the Scriptures, we shall still find something new which we did not before take notice of. The prophet is brought a third time to the east gate, and finds it shut, which intimates that the rest of the gates were open at all times to the worshippers. But such an account is given of this gate being shut as puts honour,

First. Upon the God of Israel. It is for the honour of him that the gate of the inner court, at which his glory entered when he took possession of the house, was ever after kept shut, and no man was allowed to enter in by it, ver. 2. The difference ever after made between this and the other gates, that this was shut when the others were open, was intended both to perpetuate the remembrance of the solemn entrance of the glory of the Lord into the house, which it would remain a traditional evidence of the truth of, and also to possess the minds of people with a reverence for the Divine majesty, and with very awful thoughts of his transcendent glory, which was designed in God's charge to Moses at the bush, "Put off thy shoe from off thy foot." God will have a way by himself.

Secondly. Upon the prince of Israel, ver. 2. It is an honour to him that though he may not enter in by this gate, for no man may, yet, 1. He shall sit in this gate, to eat his share of the peace offerings, that sacred food, before the Lord. 2. He shall "enter by the way of the porch of that gate," by some little door or wicket, either in the gate or adjoining to it, which is called "the way of the porch." This was to signify that God put some of his glory upon magistrates, upon the princes of his people, for he hath said, Ye are gods. Some, by the prince, here understand the high priest, or the sagan, or second priest; and that he only was allowed to enter by this gate, for he was God's representative. Christ is the high priest of our profession, who entered himself into the holy place, and "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

4 Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD: and I fell upon my face. 5 And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary. 6 And thou shalt say to the rebellious, *even* to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, 7 In that ye have brought *into my sanctuary* strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, *even* my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. 8 And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves. 9 Thus saith the Lord GOD; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that *is* among the children of Israel.

This is much to the same purpose with what we had in the beginning of *ch.* xliii.; as the prophet must look again upon what he had before seen, so he must be told again what he had before heard. Here, as before, he sees the house filled with "the glory of the Lord," which strikes an awe upon him, so that he falls prostrate at the sight, the humblest posture of adoration, and the expression of a holy awe; "I fell upon my face," ver. 4. Note, The more we see of the glory of God the more low we shall lie in our own eyes. Now here,

First. God chargeth the prophet to take a very particular notice of all he saw, and all that was said to him; ver. 5, "Mark well;" set thine heart, apply thy mind to the discoveries now made to thee. 1. "Behold with thine eyes" what is shewed thee, particularly the entering in of the house, and every going forth of it, all the inlets and all the outlets of the sanctuary; those he must take special notice of. Note, In acquainting ourselves with Divine things we must not aim so much at an abstract speculation of the things themselves as at finding the plain appointed way of converse and communion with those things, that we may go in and out and find pasture. 2. "Hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee," about the laws and "ordinances of the house," which he was to instruct the people in. Note, Those who are appointed to be teachers have need to be very diligent, careful learners, that they may neither forget any of the things they are intrusted with nor mistake concerning them.

Secondly. He sends him upon an errand to the people, "to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel," ver. 6. It is sad to think that the house of Israel should deserve this character from him who perfectly knew them, that a people in covenant with God should be rebellious against him. Who are his subjects, if the house of Israel be rebels? But it is an instance of God's rich mercy, that though they had been rebellious, yet, being the house of Israel, he doth not cast them off, but sends an ambassador to them, to invite and encourage them to return to their allegiance, which he would not have done if he had been pleased to kill them. The whole race of mankind is fallen under the character here given of the house of Israel; but our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high, received gifts for men, "yea, even for the rebellious also," that, as here, "the Lord God might dwell among them," *Ps.* lxviii. 18.

1. He must tell them of their faults, must shew them their rebellions, must shew the house of Jacob their sins. Note, Those who are sent to comfort God's people must first convince them, and so prepare them for comfort; "Let it suffice you of all your abominations," ver. 6. Note, It is time for those who have continued long in sin to reckon it long enough, and too long, and to begin to think of taking up in time, and leaving off their evil courses. Let the time past of your life suffice; for by this time sure you have surfeited upon your abominations, and are become sick of them, 1 *Pet.* iv. 3. That which is here charged upon them is,

1st. That they had admitted those to the privileges of the sanctuary who were not entitled to them; whereas God had said, "The stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death." They had not only connived at the intrusion of strangers into the sanctuary, but had themselves introduced them; ver. 7, "You brought in strangers uncircumcised in flesh," and therefore under a legal incapacity to enter into the sanctuary, which was a breaking off the covenant of circumcision, throwing down the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the rest of the world. Yet if these strangers had been devout and good, though they were not circumcised, the crime had not been so great; but they were "uncircumcised in heart" too, unhumbled, unreformed, and strangers indeed to God and all goodness. When they came to offer sacrifice they brought these with them to feast with them upon the sacrifice, because they were fond of their company; and this was one of their abominations wherewith they polluted God's sanctuary; it was "giving that which was holy unto dogs," *Mat.* vii. 6. Note, The admission of those who are openly wicked and profane to special ordinances is a polluting of God's sanctuary, and a great provocation to him.

2nd. That they had employed those in the service of the sanctuary who were not fit for it. Though none but priests and Levites were to minister in the sanctuary, yet we may suppose that all that were priests and Levites did not immediately attend there, but chosen men of them who were best qualified, that were more wise and serious and conscientious, and most likely to keep the charge of the holy things carefully; but in making this choice they had not regard to merit and qualification for the work, but "Ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves," such as you had some favour or affection for, such as you either had got or hoped to get money by, or such as would comply with your humours, and would dispense with the laws of the sanctuary to please you. Thus you "have not kept the charge of my holy things." Note, Those who have the choice of the keepers of the holy things, if to serve some secular, selfish purpose they choose such as are unfit and unfaithful, will justly have it laid at their door that they have betrayed the holy things, by lodging them in ill hands.

2. He must tell them their duty; ver. 9, "No stranger shall enter into my sanctuary" till he has first submitted to the laws of it; but, lest any should think this excluded the penitent, believing Gentiles from the church, the stranger here is described to be one that is "uncircumcised in heart," not in sincerity consenting to the covenant, nor putting away the filth of the flesh; whereas the believing Gentiles were "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands," *Col.* ii. 11. This circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, was what the unbelieving Jews were strangers to, and unconcerned about, while yet they were zealous to keep out of the sanctuary uncircumcised Gentiles; witness their rage against Paul when they did but suspect him to have brought Greeks into the temple, *Acts* xxi. 28.

10 And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. 11 Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, *having* charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. 12 Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity. 13 And they shall not

come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy *place:* but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. 14 But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein. 15 But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD: 16 They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

The Master of the house, being about to set up house again, takes account of his servants the priests, and sees who are fit to be turned out of their places, and who to be kept in, and takes a course with them accordingly.

First. Those who had been treacherous are degraded and put lower. Those Levites or priests, that were carried down the stream of the apostacy of Israel formerly, that "went astray from God after their idols," ver. 10, that had complied with the idolatrous kings of Israel or Judah, that ministered to them before their idols, ver. 12, bowed with them in the house of Rimmon, or set up altars for them, as Uriah did for Ahaz, and so "caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity," led them to sin, and hardened them in sin,—for if priests go astray many will follow their pernicious ways; perhaps in Babylon some of the Jewish priests had complied with the idolaters of the place, to the great scandal of their religion,—now these priests, who had thus prevaricated, were justly put under the marks of God's displeasure; or, if they were dead, (as it is likely they were, if the crime were committed before the captivity,) the iniquity was visited upon their children; or perhaps it was the whole family of Abiathar that had been guilty of this trespass, which was now called to account for it. And,

1. They are sentenced to be deprived in part of their office, and from the dignity of priests are put down into the condition of ordinary Levites. God hath lifted up his hand against them, hath said it and sworn it, that "they shall bear their iniquity," ver. 12; assuredly they shall suffer for it—shall suffer disgrace for it. "They shall bear their shame," ver. 13; for though they have (we charitably hope) repented of it, yet they "shall not come near to do the office of a priest," that is, those parts of the office that were peculiar to them; they shall not come near to any of the holy things within the sanctuary, ver. 13. Note, Those who have robbed God of his honour will justly be deprived of their honour. And it is really a great punishment to be forbidden to come near to God; and justly might they who have once gone away from him be rejected, as unworthy ever to come near to him, and put at an everlasting distance.

2. Yet there is a mixture of mercy in this sentence. God deals not in severity, as he might have done, with those who had dealt treacherously with him, but mitigates the sentence, ver. 11, 14. They are deprived but in part *ab officio*,—'of their office,' and, it should seem, not at all *a beneficio*,—of their emoluments.' They shall help to slay the sacrifice, which the Levites were permitted to do, and which in this temple was done, not at the altar, but at the tables, *ch.* xl. 39. They shall be porters at the gates of the house, and they shall be "keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof." Note, Those who may not be fit to be employed in one kind of service may yet be fit to be employed in another; and even those that have offended may yet be made use of, and not quite thrown aside, much less thrown away.

Secondly. Those who had been faithful are honoured and established, ver. 15, 16. These are remarkably distinguished from the other; but "the sons of Zadok," that kept their integrity in a time of general apostacy, that went not astray when others did, "they shall come near to me, shall come near to my table." Note, God will put marks of honour upon those that give proofs of their fidelity and constancy to him in shaking, trying times, and will employ those in his service who have kept close to his service when others deserted it and drew back. And it ought to be reckoned a true and great reward of stability of duty to be established in it. If we keep close to God God will keep us close to him.

17 And it shall come to pass, *that* when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. 18 They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird *themselves* with any thing that causeth sweat. 19 And when they go forth into the utter court, *even* into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments. 20 Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads. 21 Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. 22 Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, nor her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before. 23 And they shall teach my people *the difference* between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. 24 And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; *and* they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. 25 And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. 26 And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days. 27 And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin offering, saith the Lord GOD. 28 And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I *am* their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I *am* their possession. 29 They shall eat the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be their's. 30 And the first of all the firstfruits of all *things*, and every oblation of all, of every *sort* of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. 31 The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

God's priests must be regulars, not seculars, and therefore here are rules laid down for them to govern themselves by, and due encouragement given them to live up to those rules. Directions are here given,

First. Concerning their clothes. They must wear linen garments when they went in to minister, or do any service in the inner court or in the sanctuary, and nothing that was woollen, because it would cause sweat, ver. 17, 18. They must dress themselves cool, that they might go the more readily about their work; and they had the more need to do so, because they were to attend the altars, which had constant fires upon them. And they must dress themselves clean and sweet, and avoid every thing that was sweaty and filthy, to signify the purity of mind with which the service of God is to be attended. Sweat came in with sin, and was a part of the curse; "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Clothes came in with sin, coats of skin did; and therefore the priests must use as little and as light clothing as possible, and not such as caused sweat. When they had finished their service they must change their clothes again, and lay up their linen garments in the chambers appointed for that purpose, ver. 19, as before, *ch.* xlii. 14. They must not go among the people with their holy garments on, lest they should imagine themselves sanctified by the touch of them; or, they shall "sanctify the people," that is, as it is explained *ch.* xlii. 14, they "shall approach to those things which are for the people" in their ordinary garments.

Secondly. Concerning their hair. In that they must avoid extremes on both hands, ver. 20. They must not shave their heads, in imitation of the Gentile priests, and as the priests of the Romish church do; nor, on the other hand, must they "suffer their locks to grow long," as the beaux; or that they might be thought Nazarites, when really they were not; but they must be grave and modest, must "poll their heads," and keep their hair short. If a man, especially a minister, wear long hair, it is not becoming, 1 *Cor.* xi. 14; it is effeminate.

Thirdly. Concerning their diet. They must be sure to drink no wine when they went in to minister, lest they should drink to excess,—should drink and forget the law, ver. 21. It is not for kings to drink wine, more than will do them good, much less for priests: see *Lev.* x. 9; *Pr.* xxxi. 4, 5.

Fourthly. Concerning their marriages, ver. 22. Here they must consult the credit of their office, and not marry one that had been divorced, that was at least under the suspicion of immodesty, nor a widow, unless she were a priest's widow, that had been accustomed to the usages of the priest's families. Others may do that which ministers may not do, but must deny themselves in, in honour of their character. Their wives, as well as themselves, must be of good report.

Fifthly. Concerning their preaching and church government.

1. It was part of their business to teach the people, and herein they must approve themselves both skilful and faithful; ver. 23, "They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane," between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, that they may neither scruple what is lawful nor venture

upon what is unlawful; that they may not pollute what is holy, nor pollute themselves with what is profane. Ministers must take pains to cause "people to discern between the unclean and the clean," that they may not confound the distinctions between right and wrong, nor mistake concerning them, so as to put darkness for light, and light for darkness, but may have a good judgment of discretion concerning their own actions.

2. It was part of their business to judge upon appeals made to them, *Deu.* xvii. 8, 9; "And in controversy they shall stand in judgment," ver. 24. They shall have the honesty to stand up for what is right, and when they have passed a right judgment shall have the courage to stand to it, and stand by it. They must judge, not according to their own fancies or inclinations, or secular interest, but "according to my judgments;" that must be their rule and standard. Note, Ministers must decide controversies according to the word of God, "to the law and to the testimony;" *sit liber judex*,—'let the judge be unbiassed.' Their business is to keep courts in God's name,—to preside in the congregations of his people. And herein they must go by the statute book; they shall "keep my statutes in all mine assemblies." God calls the assemblies of his people his assemblies, because they are held in his name, to his glory. Ministers are the masters of those assemblies, are to preside in them, and in all their acts must keep close to God's laws. Another part of their work, as church governors, is to hallow God's sabbaths, to do the public work of that day with a becoming care and reverence, as the work of a holy day should be done; and to see that God's people also sanctify that day, and do nothing to pollute it.

Sixthly. Concerning their mourning for dead relations. The rule here agrees with the law of Moses, *Lev.* xxi. 1, 11. A priest shall not come near any dead body, (for they must be purified from dead works,) except of their next relations, ver. 25. Decent expressions of a pious sorrow for dear relations, when they are removed by death, is not disagreeable to the character of a minister. Yet by this approach to the dead body of a relation they contracted a ceremonial pollution, from which they must be cleansed by a sin offering before they went in again to minister, ver. 26, 27. Note, The sorrow for the dead is very allowable and commendable, yet there is danger of sinning in it, either by excess or dissimulation, and those tears have too often need to be wept over again.

Seventhly. Concerning their maintenance. They must live upon the altar at which they served, and live comfortably; ver. 27, "Ye shall give them no possession in Israel," no lands or tenements, lest they should be entangled with the affairs of this life; for God hath said, "I am their inheritance," and they need no other in reserve; "I am their possession," and they need no other in hand. Some land was allowed them, *ch.* xlviii. 10, but their principal subsistance was by their office. What God appropriated to himself they were the receivers of, to their own proper use and behoof. They lived upon the holy things, and so God himself was the portion both of their inheritance and of their cup. Note, Those who have God for their inheritance and their possession may be content with a little, and ought not to covet a great deal of the possessions and inheritances of this earth. If we have God, we have all; and therefore may well reckon that we have enough. Observe,

1. What the priests were to have from the people, for their maintenance and encouragement. 1st. They must have the flesh of many of the offerings, the sin offering and trespass offering, which would supply them and their families with flesh meat; and the meat offerings, which would supply them with bread. What we offer to God will redound to our own advantage. 2nd. They must have "every dedicated," devoted, "thing in Israel," which was in many cases to be turned into money, and given to the priest. This is explained, ver. 30; every oblation or freewill offering, which in times of reformation and devotion would be many and considerable, "of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's." We have the law concerning them, *Lev.* xxvii. 3rd. They were to have the first of the dough when it was going to the oven, as well as the first of their fruits when they were going to the barn. God, who is the first, must have the first; and, if it belong to him, his priests must have it. We may then comfortably enjoy what we have when a share of it has been first set apart for works of piety and charity. To this the apostle's rule bears some analogy, to begin the week with laying by for pious uses, 1 *Cor.* xvi. 2. The priests being so well provided for, it would be inexcusable in them if they (contrary to the law which every Israelite is bound by) should eat that "which is torn, or dead of itself," ver. 31. Those that were in want of necessary food might perhaps expect to be dispensed with in such a case. Poverty has its temptations, but the priests were so well provided for that they could have no pretence for it.

2. What the people might expect from the priest for their recompense. Those who are kind to a prophet, to a priest, shall have a prophet's, a priest's, reward, "that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house," ver. 30; that God may cause it, by commanding it; that the priests may cause it, by praying for it. And it was part of the priest's work to "bless the people in the name of the Lord;" not only their congregation, but their families. Note, It is all in all to the comfort of any house to have the blessing of God upon it, and to have the blessing to rest in it; to dwell where we dwell, and to attend the entail of it upon those who shall come after us. And the way to have the blessing of God abide upon our estates is to honour God with them, and to give him and his ministers, him and his poor, their share out of them. God blesseth, he surely blesseth, the habitation of those who are thus just, *Pr.* iii. 33. And ministers, by instructing and praying for the families that are kind to them, should do their part towards causing the blessing to rest there. "Peace be to this house."

CHAPTER XLV.

In this chapter is farther represented to the prophet in vision, I. The division of the Holy Land: so much for the temple, and the priests that attended the service of it, ver. 1—4; so much for the Levites, ver. 5; so much for the city, ver. 6; so much for the prince, and the residue to the people, ver. 7, 8. II. The ordinances of justice that were given both to the prince and people, ver. 9—12. III. The oblations they were to offer, and the prince's part in those oblations, ver. 13—17; particularly in the beginning of the year, ver. 18—20; and in the passover and the feast of tabernacles, ver. 21—25. And all this seems to point at the new church state that should be set up under the Gospel, which, both for extent and purity, should far exceed that of the Old Testament.

MOREOVER, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the LORD, an holy portion of the land: the length *shall be* the length of five and twenty thousand *reeds*, and the breadth *shall be* ten thousand. This *shall be* holy in all the borders thereof round about. 2 Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred *in length*, with five hundred *in breadth*, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. 3 And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary *and* the most holy *place*. 4 The holy *portion* of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the LORD: and it shall be a place for their houses, and an holy place for the sanctuary. 5 And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand of breadth, shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house, have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers. 6 And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy *portion*: it shall be for the whole house of Israel. 7 And *a portion shall be* for the prince on the one side and on the other side of the oblation of the holy *portion*, and of the possession of the city, before the oblation of the holy *portion*, and before the possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the east side eastward: and the length *shall be* over against one of the portions, from the west border unto the east border. 8 In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; and *the rest of* the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

Directions are here given for the dividing of the land after their return to it, and God having warranted them to do it, it would be an act of faith, and not of folly, thus to divide it before they had it; and it would be welcome news to the captives to hear that they should not only return to their own land, but that, whereas they were now but few in number, they should increase and multiply, so as to replenish it. But this never had its accomplishment in the Jewish state after their return out of captivity, but was to be fulfilled in the model of the Christian church, which was perfectly new, (as this division of the land was quite different from that in Joshua's time,) and much enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles to it, and will be perfected in the heavenly kingdom, of which the land of Canaan had always been a type. Now,

First. Here is the portion of land assigned to the sanctuary, in the midst of which the temple was to be built, with all its courts and purlieus; the rest round about it was for the priests. This is called, ver. 1, "An oblation to the Lord;" for what is given in works of piety, for the maintenance and support of the worship of God and the advancement of religion, God accepts as given to him, if it be done with a single eye. It is a "holy portion of the land" which is to be set out first as the firstfruits that sanctify the lump. The appropriating of lands for the support of religion and the ministry is an act of piety that bids as fair for perpetuity, and the benefit of posterity, as any other. This "holy portion of the land" was to be measured, and the borders of it fixed, that the sanctuary itself might not have more than its share, and in time engross the whole land. So far the lands of the church shall extend, and no farther, as in our own kingdom donations to the church were of old limited by the statute of mortmain. The lands here allotted to the sanctuary were five and twenty thousand reeds (so our translation makes it, though some make them only cubits,) in length, and ten thousand in breadth; about eighty miles one way, and thirty miles another way, say some; five-and-twenty miles one way, and ten miles the other way, so others. The priests and Levites that were to come near to minister were to have their dwellings in this portion of land that was round about the sanctuary, that they might be near their work; whereas, by their distribution of the land in Joshua's time, the cities of the priests and Levites were dispersed all the nation over. This intimates that gospel ministers should reside upon their charge; where their service lies, there must they live.

Secondly. Next to the lands of the sanctuary the city lands are assigned, in which the holy city was to be built, and with the issues and profits of which the citizens were to be maintained; ver. 6, "It shall be for the whole house of Israel," not appropriated, as before, to one tribe or two, but some of all the tribes shall dwell in the city, as we find they did, *Neh.* xi. 1, 2. The portion for the city was full as long, but only half as broad, as that for the sanctuary, for the city was enriched by trade, and therefore had the less need of lands.

Thirdly. The next allotment, after the church lands and the city lands, is of the crown lands, ver. 7, 8. Here is no admeasurement of these, but they are said to lie on the one side and on the other side of the church lands and city lands, to intimate that the prince, with his wealth and power, was to be a protection to both. Some make the prince's share equal to the church's and city's share both together; others make it to be a thirteenth part of the rest of the

land, the other twelve being for the twelve tribes. The prince that attends continually to the administration of public affairs must have wherewithal to support his dignity and have abundance, that he may not be in temptation to oppress the people, which yet, with many, doth not prevent that. But the grace of God shall prevent it, for it is promised here, "My princes shall no more oppress my people," for God will make the officers peace, and the exactors righteousness. Notwithstanding this, we find that after the return of the Jews to their own land the princes were complained of for their exactions; but Nehemiah was one that did not do as the former governors, and yet kept a handsome court, *Neh.* v. 15, 18. But so much is said of the prince, in this mystical holy state, to intimate that in the gospel church magistrates should be as nursing fathers to it, and Christian princes its patrons and protectors; and the holy religion they profess, as far as they are subject to the power of it, will restrain them from oppressing God's people, because they are more his people than theirs.

Fourthly. The rest of the lands were to be distributed to the people according to their tribes, who had reason to think themselves well settled, when they had both the testimony of Israel and the throne of judgment so near them.

9 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord GOD. 10 Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. 11 The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. 12 And the shekel *shall be* twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels, shall be your maneh.

We have here some general rules of justice laid down both for prince and people, the rules of distributive and commutative justice; for godliness without honesty is but a form of godliness, will neither please God nor avail to the benefit of any people. Be it therefore enacted by the authority of the church's King and God,

First. That princes do not oppress their subjects, but duly and faithfully administer justice among them; ver. 9, "Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel," that you have been oppressive to the people, and have enriched yourselves by spoil and violence, that you have so long fleeced the flock instead of feeding them, and from henceforward do so no more. Note, Even princes and great men, that have long done amiss, must at length think it time, high time, to reform and amend; for no prescription will justify a wrong. Instead of saying they have been long accustomed to oppress, and therefore may persist in it, (for the custom will bear them out,) they should say they have been long accustomed to it, and therefore, as here, let the time past suffice, and let them now remove "violence and spoil;" let them drop wrongful demands, cancel wrongful usages, and turn out those from employments under them that do violence; let them "take away their exactions," ease their subjects of those taxes which they find lie heavy upon them; and let them "execute judgment and justice" according to law, as the duty of their place requires. Note, All princes, but especially the princes of Israel, are concerned to do justice; for of their people God saith, They are my people; and they in a special manner rule for God.

Secondly. That one neighbour doth not cheat another in commerce; ver. 10, "Ye shall have just balances," in which to weigh both money and goods, a just ephah, for dry measure of corn and flour, a just bath, for the measure of liquids, wine and oil; and the ephah and bath shall be of one measure, the tenth part of a chomer or cor, ver. 11. So that the ephah and bath contained (as the learned Dr. Cumberland has computed) seven wine gallons and four pints, and something more. An omer was but the tenth part of an ephah, *Ex.* xvi. 36, and the hundredth part of a chomer or homer, and contained about six pints. The shekel is here settled, ver. 13; it is twenty gerahs, just half a Roman ounce,—in our money two shillings and fourpence farthing and almost the eighth part of a farthing, as the aforesaid learned man exactly computes it. By the shekels the maneh or pound was reckoned, which, when it was set for a mere weight, (saith Bishop Cumberland,) without respect to coinage, contained just a hundred shekels, as appears by comparing 1 *Kin.* x. 17, where it is said three manehs or pounds of gold went to one shield, with the parallel place, 2 *Chr.* ix. 16, where it is said three hundred shekels of gold went to one shield. But when the maneh is set for a sum of money or coin it contains but sixty shekels, as appears here, where twenty shekels, five-and-twenty shekels, and fifteen shekels, which in all make sixty, shall be the maneh. But it is thus reckoned because they had one piece of money that weighed twenty shekels, another five and twenty, another fifteen, all which made up one pound, as a learned writer here observes. Note, It concerns God's Israel to be very honest and just in all their dealings, very punctual and exact in rendering to all their due, very cautious to do wrong to none, because otherwise they spoil the acceptableness of their profession with God and the reputation of it before men.

13 This *is* the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of barley: 14 Concerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil, *ye shall offer* the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, *which is* an homer of ten baths; for ten baths *are* an homer: 15 And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel; for a meat offering, and for a burnt offering, and for peace offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord GOD. 16 All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel. 17 And it shall be the prince's part *to give* burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and drink offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin offering, and the meat offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. 18 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the first *month*, in the first *day* of the month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary: 19 And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin offering, and put *it* upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court. 20 And so thou shalt do the seventh *day* of the month for every one that erreth, and for *him that is* simple: so shall ye reconcile the house. 21 In the first *month*, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22 And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock *for* a sin offering. 23 And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt offering to the LORD, seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily *for* a sin offering. 24 And he shall prepare a meat offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oil for an ephah. 25 In the seventh *month*, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin offering, according to the burnt offering, and according to the meat offering, and according to the oil.

Having laid down the rules of righteousness towards men, which is really a branch of true religion, he comes next to give some directions for their religion towards God, which is a branch of universal righteousness.

First. It required that they offer an oblation to the Lord out of what they have, ver. 13; "All the people of the land" must give an oblation, ver. 16. As God's tenants they must pay a quit rent to their great Landlord. They had offered an oblation out of their real estates, ver. 1, "a holy portion of their land;" now they are directed to offer an oblation out of their personal estates, their goods and chattels, as an acknowledgment of their receivings from him, their dependence on him, and their obligations to him. Note, Whatever our substance is we must honour God with it by giving him his dues out of it. Not that God has need of, or may be benefited by, any thing that we can give him, *Ps.* l. 9; no, it is but an oblation. We only offer it to him; the benefit of it returns back to ourselves, to his poor, who, as our neighbours, are ourselves, or to his ministers who serve continually for our good.

Secondly. The proportion of this oblation is here determined, which was not done by the law of Moses. No mention is made of the tithe, but only of this oblation; and the *quantum* of this is thus settled: 1. Out of their corn they were to offer a sixtieth part; out of every homer of wheat and barley, which contained ten ephahs, they were to offer the sixth part of one ephah, which was a sixtieth part of the whole, ver. 13. 2. Out of their oil (and probably their wine too) they were to offer a hundredth part for this oblation; out of every cor or homer, which contained ten baths, they were to offer the tenth part of one bath, ver. 14. This was given to the altar, for in every meat offering there was flour mingled with oil. 3. Out of their flocks they were to give one lamb out of two hundred. That was the smallest proportion of all, ver. 15; but it must be out of the fat pastures of Israel. They must not offer to God that which was taken up from the common, but the fattest and best they had, for burnt offerings and peace offerings. The former were offered for the giving of glory, to God, the latter for the fetching in of mercy, grace, and peace from God, and in our spiritual sacrifices these are our two great errands at the throne of grace; but, in order to the acceptance of both, these sacrifices were to make reconciliation for them. Christ is our sacrifice of atonement, by whom reconciliation is made, and to him we must have an eye in our sacrifices of acknowledgment.

Thirdly. This oblation must be given for "the prince in Israel," ver. 16. Some read it 'to the prince,' and understand it of Christ, who is indeed the Prince in Israel, to whom we must offer our oblations, and into whose hand we must put them to be presented to the Father. Or, they shall give it with the prince;

every private person shall bring his oblation to be offered with that of the prince. For it follows, ver. 17, "It shall be the prince's part" to provide all the offerings, "to make reconciliation for the house of Israel." The people were to bring their oblations to him, according to the foregoing rules, and he was to bring them to the sanctuary, and to make up what fell short out of his own. Note, It is the duty of rulers to take care of religion, and to see that the duties of it be regularly and carefully performed by those under their charge, and that nothing be wanting that is requisite thereto. The magistrate is the keeper of both tables; and it is a happy time when those that are above others, in power and dignity, go before them in the service of God.

Fourthly. Some particular solemnities are here appointed.

1. Here is one in the beginning of the year, which seems to be altogether new, and not instituted by the law of Moses. It is the annual solemnity of cleansing the sanctuary. 1st. On the first day of the first month, upon new-year's day, they were to offer a sacrifice for the cleansing of the sanctuary, ver. 18; that is, to make atonement for the iniquity of the holy things the year past, that they might bring none of the guilt of them into the services of the new year, and to implore grace for the preventing of that iniquity, and for the better performance of the service of the sanctuary the ensuing year; and in token of this the blood of this sin offering was to be put upon the posts of the temple, the four corners, not of the altar, but "the settle of the altar," and "the posts of the gate of the inner court," ver. 19, to signify that by it atonement was intended to be made for the sins of all the servants that attended that house, priests, Levites, and people, even the sins that were found in all their services. Note, Even sanctuaries on earth need cleansing, frequent cleansing; that above needs none. Those that worship God together should often join in renewing their repentance for their manifold defects, and applying the blood of Christ for the pardon of them, and in renewing their covenants to be more careful for the future; and it is very seasonable to begin the year with this work, as Hezekiah did when it had been long neglected, 2 *Chr.* xxix. 17. They were here appointed to cleanse the sanctuary upon the first day of the month, because on the fourteenth day of the month they were to eat the passover, an ordinance which, of all other the Old Testament institutions, had most in it of Christ and gospel grace, and therefore it was very fit they should begin to prepare for it a fortnight before, by cleansing the sanctuary. 2nd. This sacrifice was to be repeated on the seventh day of the first month, ver. 20. And then it was intended to make atonement "for every one that erreth, and for him that is simple." Note, He that sins, errs, and is simple; he mistakes, he goes out of the way, and shews himself to be foolish and unwise. But here it is spoken of those sins which are committed through ignorance, mistake, or inadvertency, whether by any of the priests, or of the Levites, or of the people. Such sins, sacrifices were appointed to atone for, which men were surprised into, did before they were aware, which they would not have done if they had known and remembered aright, which they were overtaken in, and for which afterwards they condemn themselves; but for presumptuous sins, committed with a high hand, there was no sacrifice appointed, *Num.* xv. 30. By these repeated sacrifices ye shall reconcile the house, that is, God will be reconciled to it, and continue the tokens of his presence in it, and will let it alone this year also.

2. The passover was to be religiously observed at the time appointed, ver. 21. Christ is our passover that is sacrificed for us; we celebrate the memorial of that sacrifice, and feast upon it,—triumphing in our deliverance out of the Egyptian slavery of sin, and our preservation from the sword of the destroying angel, the sword of Divine justice,—in the Lord's supper, which is our passover feast, as the whole Christian life is, and must be, the feast of unleavened bread. It is here appointed that the prince shall prepare a sin offering, to be offered "for himself and the people;" a bullock on the first day, ver. 21, and a kid of the goats every other day, ver. 23, to teach us, in all our attendance upon God for communion with him, to have an eye to the great sin offering, by which transgression was finished, and an everlasting righteousness brought in. On every day of the feast there was to be a burnt offering, purely for the honour of God, of no less than seven bullocks and seven rams, with their meat offering, which were wholly consumed upon the altar, and yet no waste, ver. 23, 24.

3. The feast of tabernacles is that spoken of next, ver. 25, and no mention of the feast of pentecost, which came between that of the passover and that of the tabernacles. Orders are here given (above what were given by the law of Moses) for the same sacrifices to be offered during the seven days of the passover. See the deficiency of the legal sacrifices for sin; they were therefore often repeated, not only every year, but every feast, every day of the feast, because "they could not make the comers thereunto perfect," *Heb.* x. 1, 3. See the necessity of our frequently repeating the same religious exercises. Though the sacrifice of atonement is offered once for all, yet the sacrifices of acknowledgment, that of a broken heart, that of a thankful heart, must be every day offered, those spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. We should, as here, fall into a method of holy duties, and stick to it.

CHAPTER XLVI.

In this chapter we have, I. Some farther rules given both to the priests and to the people relating to their worship, ver. 1—15. II. A law concerning the prince's disposal of his inheritance, ver. 16—18. III. A description of the places provided for the boiling of the sacrifices and the baking of the meat offerings, ver. 19—24.

THUS saith the Lord GOD; The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. 2 And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of *that* gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. 3 Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD in the sabbaths and in the new moons. 4 And the burnt offering that the prince shall offer unto the LORD in the sabbath day *shall be* six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. 5 And the meat offering *shall be* an ephah for a ram, and the meat offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. 6 And in the day of the new moon *it shall be* a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. 7 And he shall prepare a meat offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and an hin of oil to an ephah. 8 And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of *that* gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof. 9 But when the people of the land shall come before the LORD in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it. 10 And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth. 11 And in the feasts and in the solemnities the meat offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram, and to the lambs as he is able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. 12 Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt offering or peace offerings voluntarily unto the LORD, *one* shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings, as he did on the sabbath day: then he shall go forth; and after his going forth *one* shall shut the gate. 13 Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt offering unto the LORD *of* a lamb of the first year without blemish: thou shalt prepare it every morning. 14 And thou shalt prepare a meat offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of an hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat offering continually by a perpetual ordinance unto the LORD. 15 Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat offering, and the oil, every morning *for* a continual burnt offering.

Whether the rules for public worship here laid down were designed to be observed, even in those things wherein they differed from the law of Moses, and were so observed under the second temple, is not certain; we find not in the history of that latter part of the Jewish church that they governed themselves in their worship by these ordinances, as one would think they should have done, but only by the law of Moses, looking upon this then, in the next age after, as mystical, and not literal. We may observe, in these verses,

First. That the place of worship was fixed, and rules given concerning that, both to prince and people.

1. The east gate, which was kept shut at other times, was to be opened on the sabbath days, in the new moons, ver. 1, and whenever the prince offered a voluntary offering, ver. 12. Of the keeping of this gate ordinarily shut we read before, *ch.* xliv. 2, whereas the other gates of the court were opened every day, this only on high days, and on special occasions, when it was opened for the prince, who was to go in "by the way of the porch of that gate," ver. 2, and again, ver. 8. Some think he went in with the priests and Levites into the inner court, (for into that court this gate was the entrance,) and they observe that magistrates and ministers should join forces, and go the same way, hand in hand, in promoting the service of God. But it should rather seem that he did not go through the gate, (as the glory of the Lord had done,) though it was open, but he went "by the way of the porch of the gate," stood "at the post of

the gate," and "worshipped at the threshold of the gate," ver. 2, where he had a full view of the priests' performances at the altar, and signified his concurrence in them, for himself, and for the people of the land, that stood behind him at the door of that gate, ver. 3. Thus must every prince shew himself to be of David's mind, who would very willingly be "a doorkeeper in the house of his God," and, as the word there is, "lie at the threshold," *Ps.* lxxxiv. 10. Note, The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of God. Even princes themselves, when they draw near to God, must worship with reverence and godly fear, owning that even they are unworthy to approach him. But Christ is our prince, whom God causeth to draw near, and approach to him, *Jer.* xxx. 21.

2. As to the north gate and south gate, by which they entered into the court of the people, (not into the inner court,) there was this rule given, that whoever came in at the north gate should go out at the south gate, and whoever came in at the south gate should go out at the north gate, ver. 9. Some think this was to prevent thrusting and jostling one another; for God is the God of order, and not of confusion. We may suppose they came in at the gate that was next their own houses; but when they went away God would have them go out at that gate which would lead them the farthest way about, that they might have time for meditation. Being thereby obliged to go a great way round the sanctuary, they might have an opportunity to consider the palaces of it; and, if they improved their time well in fetching this circuit, they would call it the next way home. Some observe that this may remind us in the service of God to be still pressing forward, *Phil.* iii. 13, and not to look back; and, in our attendance upon ordinances, not to go back as we came, but more holy, and heavenly, and spiritual.

3. It is appointed that the people shall worship at the door of the east gate, where the prince doth; he at the head, and they attending him, both in the sabbaths and in the new moons, ver. 3, and that when they come in, and go out, the prince shall be "in the midst of them," ver. 10. Note, Great men should, by their constant and reverend attendance on God in public worship, give a good example to their inferiors, both engaging them and encouraging them to do likewise. It is a very graceful, becoming thing for persons of quality to go to church with their servants, and tenants, and poor neighbours about them, and to behave themselves there with an air of seriousness and devotion. And those who thus honour God with their honour he will delight to honour.

Secondly. That the ordinances of worship were fixed. Though the prince is supposed himself to be a very hearty, zealous friend to the sanctuary, yet it is not left to him, no, not in concert with the priests, to appoint what sacrifices shall be offered, but God himself appoints them; for it is his prerogative to institute the rites and ceremonies of religious worship.

1. Every morning, as duly as the morning came, they must offer a lamb for a burnt offering, ver. 13. It is strange that no mention is made of the evening sacrifice. But Christ being come, and having offered himself now in the end of the world, *Heb.* ix. 26, we are to look upon him as the evening sacrifice, about the time of the offering up of which he died.

2. On the sabbath days, whereas by the law of Moses four lambs were to be offered, *Num.* xxviii. 9, it is here appointed that (at the prince's charge) there shall be six lambs offered, and a ram beside, ver. 4; to intimate how much we should abound in sabbath work, now in gospel time, and what plenty of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise we should offer up to God on that day. And if with such sacrifices God is well pleased, sure we have a great deal of reason to be so.

3. On the new moons, in the beginning of their months, there was, over and above the usual sabbath sacrifices, the additional offering of a young bullock, ver. 6. Those who do much for God and their souls, statedly and constantly, must, upon some occasions, do yet more.

4. All the sacrifices were to be without blemish. So Christ the great sacrifice was, 1 *Pet.* i. 19; and so Christians, who are to present themselves to God as living sacrifices, should aim and endeavour to be "blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke."

5. All the sacrifices were to have their meat offerings annexed to them; for so the law of Moses had appointed, to shew what a good table God keeps in his house, and that we ought to honour him with the fruit of our ground, as well as with the fruit of our cattle, because in both he hath blessed us, *Deu.* xxviii. 4. In the beginning Cain offered the one and Abel the other. Some observe that the meat offerings here are much larger in proportion than they were by the law of Moses. Then it was three tenth-deals to a bullock, and two to a ram, (that is, so many tenth-parts of an ephah,) and half a hin of oil at the most, *Num.* xv. 6—9; but here, for every bullock and every ram, a whole ephah and a whole hin of oil, ver. 7. These unbloody sacrifices shall be more abounded in. Or, in general, it intimates that as now, under the Gospel, God abounds in the gifts of his grace to us more than under the law, so we should abound in the returns of praise and duty to him. But it is observable that, in the meat offering for the lambs, the prince is allowed to offer "as he shall be able to give," ver. 5, 7, "as his hand shall attain unto;" so likewise, ver. 11. Note, Princes themselves must spend as they can afford; and even in that which is laid out in works of piety God expects and requires but that we should do according to our ability, every man "as God hath prospered him," 1 *Cor.* xvi. 2. God hath not "made us to serve with an offering," *Isa.* xliii. 23, but considers our frame and state. Yet this will not countenance those who pretend a disability that is not real, or those who, by their extravagances in other things, disable themselves to do the good they should. And we find those praised who, in an extraordinary case of charity, went not only to their power, but beyond their power.

16 Thus saith the Lord GOD; If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons'; it *shall be* their possession by inheritance. 17 But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them. 18 Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; *but* he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

We have here a law for the limiting the power of the prince in the disposing of the crown lands,

First. If he has a son that is a favourite, or has merited well, he may, if he pleaseth, as a token of his favour, and in recompense for his services, settle some parts of his lands upon him and his heirs for ever, ver. 16, provided it do not go out of the family. There may be a cause for parents, when their children are grown up, to be more kind to one than to another, as Jacob gave to Joseph one portion above his brethren, *Gen.* xlviii. 22.

Secondly. Yet, if he have a servant that is a favourite, he may not in like manner settle lands upon him, ver. 17; but if he see cause he may give him lands to the year of jubilee, and then they must return to the family again, ver. 17. The servant might have the rents, issues, and profits, for such a term, but the inheritance, the *jus proprietarium*,—'the right of proprietorship,' shall remain in the prince and his heirs. It was fit a difference should be put between a child and a servant, like that *Jno.* viii. 35, "the servant abideth not in the house for ever," as the son doth.

Thirdly. What estates he gives his children must be of his own; ver. 18, "He shall not take of the people's inheritance," under pretence of having many children to provide for. He shall not find ways to make them forfeit their estates, or to force them to sell them, and so thrust his subjects out of their possession, but let him and his sons be content with their own. It is far from being a prince's honour to increase the wealth of his family and crown by encroaching upon the rights and properties of his subjects; nor will he himself be a gainer by it at last, for he will be but a poor prince when the people are "scattered every man from his possession," when they quit their native country, being forced out of it by oppression, choosing rather to live among strangers that are free people, and where what they have they can call their own, be it never so little. It is the interest of princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, and then all they have is in the best manner at their service. It is better for themselves to gain their affections by protecting their rights than to gain their estates by invading them.

19 After he brought me through the entry, which *was* at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and, behold, there *was* a place on the two sides westward. 20 Then said he unto me, This *is* the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, where they shall bake the meat offering; that they bear *them* not out into the utter court, to sanctify the people. 21 Then he brought me forth into the utter court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court *there was* a court. 22 In the four corners of the court *there were* courts joined of forty *cubits* long and thirty broad: these four corners *were* of one measure. 23 And *there was* a row *of building* round about in them, round about them four, and *it was* made with boiling places under the rows round about. 24 Then said he unto me, These *are* the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people.

We have here a farther discovery of buildings about the temple which we did not observe before, and those were places to boil the flesh of the offerings, ver. 20. He that kept such a plentiful table at his altar had need have large kitchens; and a wise builder will provide conveniences of that kind. Observe,

First. Where those boiling places were situated. There were some at the entry into the inner court, ver. 19; and others under the rows, in the four corners of the outer court, ver. 21—23. These were the places where it is likely there was most room to spare for this purpose; and this purpose was found for the spare room, that none might be lost. Pity holy ground should be waste ground.

Secondly. What use they were put to. In those places they were to "boil the trespass offering, and the sin offering," those parts of them which were allotted to the priests, and which were more sacred than the flesh of the peace offerings, of which the offerers also had a share. There also they were to bake the meat offering, their share of it which they had from the altar for their own tables, ver. 20. Care was taken that they "bear them not out into the outer court to sanctify the people." Let them not pretend to sanctify the people with this holy flesh, and so impose upon them. Or, let not the people imagine that by touching these sacred things they were sanctified, and made ever the better or more acceptable to God. It should seem by *Hag.* ii. 12, there were those that had such a conceit; and therefore the priests must not carry any of the holy flesh away with them lest they should encourage that conceit. Ministers must take heed of doing any thing to bolster up ignorant people in their superstitious vanities.

CHAPTER XLVII.

In this chapter we have, I. The vision of the holy waters,—their rise, extent, depth, and healing virtue, the plenty of fish in them, and an account of the trees growing on the banks of them, ver. 1—12. II. An appointment of the borders of the land of Canaan, which was to be divided by lot to the tribe of Israel, and the strangers who sojourned among them, ver. 13—23.

AFTERWARD he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward:

for the forefront of the house *stood toward* the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south *side* of the altar. 2 Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. 3 And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters *were* to the ancles. 4 Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters *were* to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters *were* to the loins. 5 Afterward he measured a thousand; *and it was* a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. 6 And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen *this?* Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. 7 Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river *were* very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8 Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: *which being* brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. 9 And it shall come to pass, *that* every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. 10 And it shall come to pass, *that* the fishers shall stand upon it from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they

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shall be a *place* to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. 11 But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. 12 And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

This part of Ezekiel's vision must so necessarily have a mystical and spiritual meaning that from thence we conclude the other parts of his vision hath so too; for it cannot be applied to the waters brought by pipes into the temple for the washing of the sacrifices, and the keeping of the temple clean, and the carrying off of those waters, for that would be to turn this pleasant river into a sink or common sewer. That prophecy, *Zec.* xiv. 8, may explain it, of "living waters that shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them towards the former sea, and half of them towards the hinder sea;" and there is plainly a reference to this in St. John's vision of "a pure river of water of life," *Rev.* xxii. 1. That seems to represent the glory and joy, which is grace perfected. This here seems to represent the grace and joy, which is glory begun. Most interpreters agree that these waters signify the Gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, and spread itself into the countries about, and the gifts and power of the Holy Ghost which accompanied it, and by virtue of which it spread itself far, and produced strange and blessed effects. Ezekiel had walked round the house again and again, and yet did not till now take notice of those waters; for God makes known his mind and will to his people, not all at once, but by degrees. Now observe,

First. The rise of these waters. He is not put to trace the streams to the fountain, but has the fountain-head first discovered to him; ver. 1, "Waters issued out from the threshold of the house eastward," and from "under the right side of the house," that is, the south side of the altar: and again, ver. 2, "There ran out waters on the right side," signifying that "from Zion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem," *Isa.* ii. 3. There it was that the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and endowed them with the gift of tongues, that they might carry these waters to all nations. In the temple first they were to stand and "preach the words of this life," *Acts* v. 20; they must preach the Gospel to all nations, but must "begin at Jerusalem," *Lu.* xxiv. 47. But that is not all: Christ is the temple; he is the door, from him those living waters flow, out of his pierced side. It is the water that he gives us that is "the well of water which springs up," *Jno.* iv. 14; and it is by believing in him that we receive from him "rivers of living water;" and "this spake he of the Spirit," *Jno.* vii. 38, 39. The original of these waters was not above ground, but they sprang up from under the threshold; for the fountain of a believer's life is a mystery; it is hid with Christ in God, *Col.* iii. 3. Some observe that they came forth "on the right side of the house," to intimate that gospel blessings are right-hand blessings. It is also an encouragement to those who attend at wisdom's gates, at the posts of her doors, who are willing to lie at the threshold of God's house, as David was, that they lie at the fountain-head of comfort and grace. The very entrance into God's word gives light and life, *Ps.* cxix. 130. David speaks it to the praise of Zion, "All my springs are in thee," *Ps.* lxxxvii. 7. They came from the side of the altar; for it is in and by Jesus Christ, the great altar, who sanctifies our gifts to God, that God hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in holy, heavenly places. From God as the fountain, in him as the channel, flows the river which "makes glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," *Ps.* xlvi. 4. But observe how much the blessedness and joy of glorified saints in heaven exceed those of the best and happiest saints on earth. Here the streams of our comfort arise from under the threshold; there they proceed "from the throne," the throne "of God and of the lamb," *Rev.* xxi. 1.

Secondly. The progress and increase of these waters. They "went forth eastward," ver. 3, towards the east country, ver. 9; for so they were directed. The prophet and his guide followed the stream as it ran down from the holy mountains; and, when they had followed it about a thousand cubits, they went over across it to try the depth of it, and it was to the ancles, ver. 3; then they walked along on the bank of the river, on the other side, a thousand cubits more, and then, to try the depth of it, they waded through it the second time, and it was up to their knees, ver. 4; they walked along by it a thousand cubits more, and then forded it the third time, and then it was up to their middle, the waters were to the loins; they then walked a thousand cubits farther, and attempted to repass it the fourth time, but found it impracticable; the waters were risen, either by the addition of brooks, that fell into it above ground, or by springs under ground, so that they were "waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over," ver. 5. Note, 1. The waters of the sanctuary are running waters, as those of a river, not standing waters, as those of a pond. The Gospel, when it was first preached, was still spreading farther. Grace in the soul is still pressing forwards; it is an active principle, *plus ultra*, —'onward still,' till it comes to perfection. 2. They are increasing waters. This river, as it runs constantly, so the farther it goes the fuller it grows. The gospel church was very small in its beginnings, like a little purling brook; but by degrees it came to be to the ankles, to the knees; many were added to it daily, and the grain of mustard seed grew up to be a great tree. The gifts of the Spirit increase by being exercised; and grace, where it is true, is growing like the light of the morning, which "shines more and more unto the perfect day." 3. It is good for us to follow these waters, and go along with them. Observe the progress of the Gospel in the world; observe the process of the work of grace in the heart; attend the motions of the blessed Spirit, and walk after them, under a Divine conduct, as Ezekiel here did. 4. It is good to be often searching into the things of God, and trying the depth of them; not only look on the surface of those waters, but go to the bottom of them, as far as we can; be often digging, often diving into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as those who covet to be intimately acquainted with those things. 5. If we search into the things of God we shall find some things very plain and easy to be understood, as the waters that were but to the ankles; others more difficult, and which require a deeper search, as the waters to the knees, or the loins; and some quite beyond our reach, which we cannot penetrate into, or account for, but despairing to find the bottom, must, as St. Paul, sit down at the brink, and adore the depth, *Rom.* xi. 33. It has been often said that in the Scripture, like these waters of the sanctuary, there are some places so shallow that a lamb may wade through them, and others so deep that an elephant may swim in them. And it is our wisdom, as the prophet here, to begin with that which is most easy, and get our hearts washed with those things, before we proceed to that which is "dark and hard to be understood;" it is good to take our work before us.

Thirdly. The extent of this river. It "issues towards the east country;" but from thence it either divides itself into several streams, or fetcheth a compass so as that it goes down into the desert, and so goes into the sea, either into the Dead Sea, which lay south-east, or the sea of Tiberias, which lay north-east; or the great sea, which lay west, ver. 8. This was accomplished when the Gospel was preached with success throughout all the regions of Judæa and Samaria, *Acts* viii. 1, and afterwards the nations about, nay, and those that lay

most remote, even in the isles of the sea, were enlightened and leavened by it. The sound of it went forth to the end of the world; and the enemies of it could no more prevail to stop the progress of it than that of a mighty river.

Fourthly. The healing virtue of this river. The waters of the sanctuary, wherever they come, and have a free course, will be found a wonderful restorative. Being brought forth into the sea, the sulphureous lake of Sodom, that standing monument of Divine vengeance, even those "waters shall be healed," ver. 8; shall become sweet, and pleasant, and healthful. This intimates the wonderful and blessed change that the Gospel would make wheresoever it came in its power, as great a change, in respect both of character and condition, as the turning of the Dead Sea into a fountain of gardens. When children of wrath became children of love, and those that were dead in trespasses and sins were made alive, then this was fulfilled. The Gospel was as that salt which Elisha cast into the spring of the waters of Jericho, with which he healed them, 2 *Kin.* ii. 20, 21. Christ, coming into the world to be its physician, sent his Gospel as the great medicine, the *pampharmacon;* there is in it a remedy for every malady. Nay, wherever these rivers come they make things to live, ver. 9, both plants and animals; they are the water of life, *Rev.* xxii. 1, 17. Christ came that we may have life, and for that end he sends his Gospel; every thing shall live whither the river comes. The grace of God makes dead sinners alive, and living saints lively; every thing is made fruitful and flourishing by it. But its effect is according as it is received, and as the mind is prepared and disposed to receive it; for, ver. 11, the marshes and miry places thereof, that are settled in the mire of their own sinfulness, and will not be healed or settled in the moisture of their own righteousness, and think they need no healing, their doom is, they "shall not be healed." The same Gospel which to others is a savour of life unto life shall to them be a savour of death unto death; "They shall be given to salt," that is, to perpetual barrenness, *Deu.* xxix. 23. They that will not be watered with the grace of God, and made fruitful, shall be abandoned to their own hearts' lusts, and left for ever unfruitful. "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." "Never fruit grow on thee more for ever." They shall be given to salt, that is, to be monuments of Divine justice, as Lot's wife that was turned into a pillar of salt, to season others.

Fifthly. The great plenty of fish that should be in this river. Every living moving thing shall be found here, shall live here, ver. 9; that is, shall come on and prosper, shall be the best of the kind, and shall increase greatly, so that there shall be "a very great multitude of fish, according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many." There shall be as great plenty of the river fish, and as vast shoals of them, as there used to be of salt water fish, ver. 10. There shall be great numbers of Christians in the church, and those multiplying like fishes, in the rising generations and the dew of their youth. In the creation the waters brought forth the fish abundantly, *Gen.* i. 20, 21; and they still live in and by the waters that produced them. So believers are begotten by the word of truth, *Jas.* i. 18, and born by it, 1 *Pet.* i. 23,—that river of God. By it they live, and from it they have their maintenance and subsistence; in the waters of the sanctuary they are as in their element, out of them they are as fish upon dry ground; so David was when he thirsted and panted for God, for the living God. Where the fish are known to be in abundance thither will the fishers flock, and there they will cast their nets; and therefore, to intimate the replenishing of these waters, and their being made every way useful, it is here foretold that the fishers shall stand upon the banks of this river, from Engedi, which lies on the border of the Dead Sea, to Eneglaim, another city, that joins to that sea, and all along shall spread their nets. The Dead Sea, which before was shunned as noisome and noxious, shall be frequented. Gospel grace makes those persons and places which were unprofitable and good for nothing to become serviceable to God and man.

Sixthly. The trees that were on the banks of this river, many trees on the one side and on the other, ver. 12, which made the prospect very pleasant and agreeable to the eye. The shelter of these trees also would be a convenience to the fishery; but that is not all, ver. 12, they are "trees for meat," and the fruit of them shall not be consumed, for it shall produce fresh fruit every month. The leaf shall be "for medicine," and it "shall not fade." This part of the vision is copied out into St. John's vision very exactly, *Rev.* xxii. 2, where, on either side of the river, is said to grow the tree of life, which yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves were for the healing of the nations. Christians are supposed to be these trees, ministers especially; "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," *Isa.* lxi. 3; set by "the rivers of water," the waters of the sanctuary, *Ps.* i. 3; grafted into Christ, the tree of life, and by virtue of their union with him made trees of life too, rooted in him, *Col.* ii. 7. There is a great variety of these trees, through the diversity of gifts with which they are endued, by that one Spirit who worketh all in all. They grow on the bank of the river, for they keep close to holy ordinances, and through them derive from Christ sap and virtue. They are fruit trees, designed, as the fig-tree and the olive with their fruits, to honour God and man, *Jud.* ix. 9; "The fruit thereof shall be for meat," for the lips of the righteous feed many. The fruits of their righteousness are one way or other beneficial. The very leaves of these trees are for medicine; for bruises and sores, (margin.) Good Christians, with their good discourses, which are as their leaves, as well as with their charitable actions, which are as their fruits, do good to those about them; they strengthen the weak, and bind up the broken-hearted. Their cheerfulness doth good like a medicine, not only to themselves but to others also. They shall be enabled, by the grace of God, to persevere in their goodness and usefulness; "their leaf shall not fade," or lose its medicinal virtue, having not only life in their root, but sap in all their branches; their profession "shall not wither," *Ps.* i. 3, "neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed;" that is, they shall not lose the principle of their fruitfulness, but "shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to shew that the Lord is upright," *Ps.* xcii. 14. Or, the reward of their fruitfulness shall abide for ever; they bring forth fruit that shall abound to their account in the great day, fruit to life eternal; that is, indeed, fruit which shall not be consumed. They bring "new fruit according to their months," some in one month, and others in another; so that still there shall be one or other found to serve the glory of God for the purpose he designs. Or, each one of them shall bring forth fruit monthly, which notes an abundant disposition to fruit-bearing—they shall never be weary of well-doing; and a very happy climate, such as that there shall be a perpetual spring and summer. And the reason of this extraordinary fruitfulness is, because their waters "issued out of the sanctuary;" it is not to be ascribed to anything in themselves, but to the continual supplies of Divine grace with which they are watered every moment, *Isa.* xxvii. 3; for, whoever planted them, it was that which gave the increase.

13 Thus saith the Lord GOD; This *shall be* the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph *shall have two* portions. 14 And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: *concerning* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. 15 And this *shall be* the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; 16 Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which *is* between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which *is* by the coast of Hauran. 17 And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And *this is* the north side. 18 And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel *by* Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And *this is* the east side. 19 And the south side southward, from Tamar *even* to the waters of strife *in* Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And *this is* the south side southward. 20 The west side also *shall be* the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This *is* the west side. 21 So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. 22 And it shall come to pass, *that* ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel: they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. 23 And it shall come to pass, *that* in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give *him* his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD.

We are now to pass from the affairs of the sanctuary to those of the state; from the city to the country.

First. The land of Canaan is here secured to them for an inheritance; ver. 14, "I have lifted up my hand to give it unto your fathers," that is, promised it upon oath to them and their posterity. Though the possession had been a great while discontinued, yet God had not forgot his oath which he sware to their fathers. Though God's providences may for a time seem to contradict his promises, yet the promise will certainly take place at last, for God will be ever mindful of his covenant. "I lifted up my hand to give it," and therefore it shall without fail "fall to you for an inheritance." Thus the heavenly Canaan is sure to all the seed, because it is what God, that cannot lie, hath promised.

Secondly. It is here circumscribed, and the bounds and limits of it fixed, which they must not pass over to encroach upon their neighbours, and which their neighbours shall not break through to encroach upon them. We had such a draught of the borders of Canaan when Joshua was to put the people in possession of it, *Num.* xxxiv. 1, &c. That begins with the salt sea in the south, goes round, and ends there. This begins with Hamath, about Damascus in the north, and so goes round, and ends there, ver. 20. Note, It is God that appointeth the bounds of our habitation; and his Israel shall always have cause to say that the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places. The lake of Sodom is here called the East sea; for, it being healed by the waters of the sanctuary, it is no more to be called a salt sea, as it was in *Numbers.*

Thirdly. It is here ordered to be divided among the tribes of Israel, reckoning Joseph for two tribes, to make up the number of twelve, when Levi was taken out to attend the sanctuary, and had his lot adjoining to that, ver. 13, 21; "Ye shall inherit it one as well as another," ver. 14. The tribes shall have an equal share, one as much as another. As the tribes returned out of Babylon this seems unequal, because some tribes were much more numerous than other; and, indeed, the most were of Judah and Benjamin, and very few of the other ten tribes. But as the twelve tribes stand in type and vision for the gospel church, the Israel of God, it was very equal, because we find in another vision an equal number of each of the twelve tribes sealed for the living God, just twelve thousand of each, *Rev.* vii. 5, &c.; and to those sealed ones these allotments did belong. It intimates, likewise, that all the subjects of Christ's kingdom have obtained like precious faith. Male and female, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are all alike welcome to Christ, and made partakers of him.

Fourthly. The strangers that sojourn among them, "which shall beget children," and be built up into families, and so help to people their country, shall have inheritance among the tribes, as if they had been native Israelites, ver. 22, 23, which was by no means allowed in Joshua's division of the land. This is an act for a general naturalization, which would teach the Jews who was their neighbour, not those only of their own nation and religion, but those, whoever they were, that they had an opportunity of shewing kindness to, because from them they would be willing to receive kindness. It would likewise invite strangers to come and settle among them, and put themselves under the wings of the Divine majesty. But it certainly looks at gospel times, when the partition wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and both put upon a level before God, both made one in Christ, in whom "there is no difference," *Rom.* x. 12.

This land was a type of the heavenly Canaan, that better country, *Heb.* xi. 16, in which believing Gentiles shall have a blessed lot, as well as believing Jews, *Isa.* lvi. 3.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

In this chapter we have particular directions given for the distribution of the land, of which we had the metes and bounds assigned in the foregoing chapter. I. The portions of the twelve tribes: seven to the north of the sanctuary, ver. 1—7; and five to the south, ver. 23—29. II. The allotment of land for the sanctuary and the priests, ver. 8—11; for the Levites, ver. 12—14; for the city, ver. 15—20; and for the prince, ver. 21, 22. Much of this we had before, *ch.* xlv. III. A plan of the city, its gates, and the new name given to it, ver. 30—35; which seals up and concludes the vision and prophecy of this book.

NOW these *are* the names of the tribes. From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath; for these are his sides east *and* west; a *portion for* Dan. 2 And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion for* Asher. 3 And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, a *portion for* Naphtali. 4 And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion for* Manasseh. 5 And by the border of Manasseh, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion for* Ephraim. 6 And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the west side, a *portion for* Reuben. 7 And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side, a *portion for* Judah. 8 And by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty thousand *reeds in* breadth, and *in* length as one of the *other* parts, from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. 9 The oblation that ye shall offer unto the LORD *shall be* of five and twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth. 10 And for them, *even* for the priests, shall be *this* holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand *in length*, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof. 11 *It shall be* for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok; which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. 12 And *this* oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a thing most holy by the border of the Levites. 13 And over against the border of the priests the Levites *shall have* five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length *shall be* five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. 14 And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the firstfruits of the land: for *it is* holy unto the LORD. 15 And the five thousand, that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane *place* for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof. 16 And these *shall be* the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and the west side four thousand and five hundred. 17 And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty. 18 And the residue in length over against the oblation of the holy *portion shall be* ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy *portion;* and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city. 19 And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel. 20 All the oblation *shall be* five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation foursquare, with the possession of the city. 21 And the residue *shall be* for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city, over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the holy oblation; and the sanctuary of the house *shall be* in the midst thereof. 22 Moreover from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, *being* in the midst *of that* which is the prince's, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince. 23 As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side, Benjamin *shall have* a *portion.* 24 And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west side, Simeon *shall have* a *portion.* 25 And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side, Issachar a *portion.* 26 And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side, Zebulun a *portion.* 27 And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west side, Gad a *portion.* 28 And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar *unto* the waters of strife *in* Kadesh, *and* to the river toward the great sea. 29 This *is* the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these *are* their portions, saith the Lord GOD.

We have here a very short and ready way taken for the dividing of the land among the twelve tribes, not so tedious and so far about as the way that was taken in Joshua's time; for in the distribution of spiritual and heavenly blessings there is not that danger of murmuring and quarrelling as in the participation of temporal blessings. When God gave to the labourers every one his penny, those that were uneasy at it were soon put to silence with, May I not do what I will with my own? And such is the equal distribution here among the tribes. In this distribution of the land we may observe,

1. That it differs very much from the division of it in Joshua's time, nor agrees with the order of their birth, or their blessing by Jacob or Moses. Simeon here is not divided in Jacob, nor is Zebulun a haven of ships, a plain intimation that it is not so much to be understood literally as spiritually, though the mystery of it is very much hidden from us. In gospel times old things are passed away; "Behold, all things are become new." The Israel of God is cast into a new method.

2. That the tribe of Dan, which was last provided for in the first division of Canaan, *Jos.* xix. 40, is first provided for here, ver. 1. Thus, in the Gospel, the last shall be first, *Mat.* xix. 20. God, in the dispensations of his grace, doth not follow the same method that he doth in the disposals of his providence. But

Dan had now his portion thereabouts where he had only one city before, northward, on the border of Damascus, and farthest of all from the sanctuary, because that tribe had revolted to idolatry.

3. That all the ten tribes that were carried away by the king of Assyria, as well as the two tribes that were long after carried to Babylon, have their allotment in this visionary land, which some think had its accomplishment in the particular persons and families of those tribes which returned with Judah and Benjamin, of which we find many instances in Ezra and Nehemiah; and it is probable there were returns of many more afterwards, at several times, which are not recorded; and the Jews having Galilee, and other parts, that had been the possessions of the ten tribes, put into their hands, in common with them, they enjoyed them. Grotius says, If the ten tribes had repented and returned to God, as the "chief fathers of Judah and Benjamin did, and the priests and Levites," *Ezr.* i. 5, they should have fared as those two tribes did; but they forfeited the benefit of this glorious prophecy by sin. However, we believe it has its designed accomplishment in the establishment and enlargement of the gospel church, and the happy settlement of all those who are Israelites indeed, in the sure and sweet enjoyment of the privileges of the new covenant, in which there is enough for all, and enough for each.

4. That every tribe, in this visionary distribution, had its particular lot assigned it by the Divine appointment; for it was never the intention of the Gospel to pluck up the hedge of property, and lay all in common; it was in a way of charity, not of legal right, that the first Christians had all things common, *Acts* ii. 44. Many precepts of the Gospel suppose that every man should know his own. And we must not only acknowledge but acquiesce in the hand of God appointing us our lot, and be well pleased with it, believing it fittest for us. "He shall chose our inheritance for us," *Ps.* xlvii. 4.

5. That the tribes lay contiguous; by the border of one tribe was the portion of another, all on a row, in exact order, so that, like stones in an arch, they fixed, and strengthened, and wedged in one another. "Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren" thus "to dwell together!" It was a figure of the communion of churches and saints under the gospel government; thus, though they are many, yet they are one, and should hold together in holy love and mutual assistance.

6. That Reuben, which before lay at a distance beyond Jordan, now lies next to Judah, and next but one to the sanctuary; for the scandal he lay under, for which he was told he should not excel, began by this time to wear off. What has turned to the reproach of any person or people ought not to be remembered for ever, but should at length be kindly forgotten.

7. That the sanctuary was in the midst of them. There were seven tribes to the north of it, and the Levites, the princes, and the city's portion, with that of five tribes more, to the south of it; so that it was, as it ought to be, in the heart of the kingdom, that it might diffuse its benign influences to the whole, and might be the centre of their unity. The tribes that lay most remote from each other would meet there in a mutual acquaintance and fellowship. Those of the same parish or congregation, though dispersed, and having no occasion otherwise to know each other, yet, by meeting statedly to worship God together, should have their hearts knit to each other in holy love.

8. That where the sanctuary was the priests were; "For them, even for the priests, shall this holy oblation be," ver. 10. As on the one hand this speaks honour and comfort to ministers, that what is given for their support and maintenance is reckoned a holy oblation to the Lord, so it speaks their duty, which is, that since they are appointed and maintained for the service of the sanctuary, they ought to attend continually to this very thing, to reside on their cures. Those that live upon the altar must serve at the altar, not take the wages to themselves, and devolve the work upon others. But how can they serve the altar, his altar they live upon, if they do not live near it?

9. Those priests had the priests' share of these lands that had approved themselves faithful to God in times of trial, ver. 11; it shall be for "the sons of Zadok," who it seems had signalised themselves in some critical juncture, and went not astray when the children of Israel, and other the Levites, went astray. God will put honour upon them, and hath special favours in reserve for them, who keep their integrity in times of general apostacy. Those are swimming upwards, and so they will find at last, that are swimming against the stream.

10. The land which was appropriated to the ministers of the sanctuary might by no means be alienated. It was in the nature of the firstfruits of the land, and was therefore holy to the Lord; and, though the priests and Levites had both the use of it and the inheritance of it, to them and their heirs, yet they might not sell it or exchange it, ver. 14. It is sacrilege to convert that to other uses which is dedicated to God.

11. The land allotted for the city and its suburbs is called "a profane place," ver. 15, or common: not but that the city was a holy city, above other cities, for the Lord was there, but, in comparison with the sanctuary, it was a profane place. Yet it is too often true in the worst sense, that great cities, even those that, like this, have the sanctuary near them, are profane places, and it ought to be sadly lamented. It was the complaint of old, "from Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land," *Jer.* xxiii. 15.

12. The city is made to be exactly foursquare, and the suburbs extending themselves equally on all sides, as the Levites' cities did in the first division of the land, ver. 16, 17, which, never being literally fulfilled in any city, intimates, that it is to be understood spiritually of the beauty and stability of the gospel church, that city of the living God, which is formed according to the wisdom and counsel of God, and is made firm and immoveable by his promise.

13. Whereas before the inhabitants of Jerusalem were principally of Judah and Benjamin, in whose tribes it lay, now the head city lies not in the particular lot of any of the tribes, but "they that serve the city," and bear office in it, "shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel," ver. 19. The most eminent men must be picked out of "all the tribes of Israel" for the service of the city, because many eyes were upon it, and there was great resort to it from all parts of the nation, and from other nations. They that live in the city are said to serve the city, for wherever we are we must study to be serviceable to the place, some way or other, according as our capacity is. They must not come out of the tribes of Israel to the city to take their ease and enjoy their pleasures, but to serve the city, to do all the good they can there, and in so doing they would have a good influence upon the country too.

14. Care was taken that those who applied themselves to public business in the city, as well as in the sanctuary, should have an honourable, comfortable maintenance: lands are appointed, the increase whereof "shall be food unto them that serve the city," ver. 18. Who goes a warfare at his own charges? Magistrates that attend the service of the state, as well as ministers that attend the service of the church, should have all due encouragement and support in so doing: and for this cause pay we tribute also.

15 The prince had a lot for himself suited to the dignity of his high station, ver. 21, (we took an account of it before, *ch.* xlv.) He was seated near the sanctuary, where the testimony of Israel was, and near the city, where the thrones of judgment were, that he might be a protection to both, and might see that the duty of both was carefully and faithfully done; and herein he was a minister of God for good to the whole community. Christ is the church's prince, that defends it on every side, and creates a defence; nay, he is himself a defence upon all its glory, and compasseth it with his favour.

16. As Judah had his lot next the sanctuary on one side, so Benjamin had, of all the tribes, his lot nearest it on the other side, which honour was reserved for them who adhered to the house of David and the temple at Jerusalem, when the other ten tribes went astray from both. It is enough if treachery and apostacy, upon repentance, be pardoned, but constancy and fidelity shall be rewarded and preferred.

30 And these *are* the goings out of the city on the north side, four thousand and five hundred measures. 31 And the gates of the city *shall be* after the names of the tribes of Israel: three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. 32 And at the east side four thousand and five hundred: and three gates; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan. 33 And at the south side four thousand and five hundred measures: and three gates; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. 34 At the west side four thousand and five hundred, *with* their three gates; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali. 35 *It was* round about eighteen thousand *measures:* and the name of the city from *that* day *shall be,* The LORD *is* there.

We have here a farther account of the city that should be built for the metropolis of this glorious land, and to be the receptacle of those who should come from all parts to worship in the sanctuary adjoining. It is nowhere called Jerusalem, nor is the land, which we have had such a particular account of the dividing of, anywhere called the land of Canaan; for the old names are forgotten, to intimate that the old things are done away, behold, all things are become new. Now, concerning this city, observe here,

First. The measures of its outlets, and the grounds belonging to it, for its several conveniences; each way its appurtenances extended four thousand and five hundred measures, eighteen thousand in all, ver. 35. But what these measures were is uncertain; it is never said in all this chapter whether so many reeds, as our translation determines, by inserting that word, ver. 8, each reed containing six cubits and a span, *ch.* xl. 5, (and why should the measurer appear with a measuring reed in his hand of that length if he did not measure with that, except where it is expressly said he measured by cubits?) or whether, as others think, it is so many cubits, because those are mentioned, *ch.* xlv. 2; xlvii. 3; yet that makes me incline rather to think that, where cubits are not mentioned, it must be intended so many lengths of the measuring reed. But those who understand it of so many cubits are not agreed whether it be meant of the common cubit, which was half a yard, or the geometrical cubit, which for better expedition is supposed to be mostly used in surveying lands, which some say contained six cubits, others about three cubits and a half, so making a thousand cubits the same with one thousand paces, that is, an English mile. But our being left at this uncertainty is an intimation that these things are to be understood spiritually, and that what is principally meant is, that there is an exact and just proportion observed by Infinite Wisdom in modelling the gospel church, which, though now we cannot discern, we shall when we come to heaven.

Secondly. The number of its gates. It had twelve gates in all, three on each side, which was very agreeable when it lay four square; and these twelve gates inscribed to the twelve tribes. Because the city was to be served "out of all the tribes of Israel," ver. 19, it was fit that each tribe should have its gate; and Levi being here taken in, to keep to the number twelve, Ephraim and Manasseh are made one in Joseph, ver. 32. On the north side were the gates of Reuben, Judah, and Levi, ver. 31; on the east, the gates of Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan, ver. 32; on the south, the gates of Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun, ver. 33; and on the west, the gates of Gad, Asher, and Naphtali, ver. 34. Conformable to this, in St. John's vision, the new Jerusalem, (for so the holy city is called there, though not here,) has twelve gates, three of a side, and on them are written "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel," *Rev.* xxi. 12, 13. Note, Into the church of Christ, both militant and triumphant, there is a free access by faith, for all that come, of every tribe, from every quarter. Christ has "opened the kingdom of heaven for all believers." Whoever will may come and take of the water of life, of the tree of life, freely.

Thirdly. The name given to this city; from that day, when it shall be new erected according to this model, the name of it shall be, not as before, Jerusalem, 'the vision of peace,' but, which is the original of that, and more than equivalent to it, Jehovah-shammah, "the Lord is there," ver. 35. This intimated,

1 That the captives, after their return, should have manifest tokens of God's presence with them, and his residence among them, both in his ordinances and in his providences. They should have no occasion to ask, as their fathers did, Is the Lord among us, or is he not? for they shall see and say that he is with them of a truth; and then, though their troubles were many, and threatening, they were like the bush which burned, but was not consumed, because the Lord was there. But when God departed from their temple, when he said, *Migremus hinc,*—'let us go hence,' their house was soon left unto them desolate. Being no longer his, it was not much longer theirs.

2. That the gospel church should likewise have the presence of God in it, though not in the Shechinah, as of old, yet in a token of it no less sure, that of his Spirit. Where the Gospel is faithfully preached, gospel ordinances duly administered, and God worshipped in the name of Jesus Christ only, it may truly be said, "The Lord is there;" for faithful is he that hath said it, and will be as good as his word, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The Lord is there in his church to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own his sincere worshippers, and to be nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for. This should engage us to keep close to the communion of saints, for the Lord is there; and then whither

else shall we go to mend ourselves? Nay, it is true of every good Christian, he dwells in God and God in him. Whatever soul has in it a living principle of grace, it may be truly said, "The Lord is there."

3. That the glory and happiness of heaven should consist chiefly in this, that "the Lord is there." St. John's representation of that blessed state doth indeed far exceed this in many respects. That is all gold, and pearls, and precious stones; it is much larger than this, and much brighter, for it needs not the light of the sun. But in making the presence of God the principal matter of its bliss they both agree. There the happiness of the glorified saints is made to be that "God himself shall be with them," *Rev.* xxi. 3, that "he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them," *Rev.* vii. 15; and here it is made to crown the bliss of this holy city, that "the Lord is there." Let us therefore give all diligence to make sure to ourselves a place in that city, that we may be for ever with the Lord.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL.

CHAP. I.—1. *Among the captives by the river Chebar.* Ezekiel was carried captive with Jehoiachim, king of Judah, in the year of the world 3406, and before Christ 598. He was placed with many of his countrymen upon the banks of the river Chebar, (still called Khabour,) which joins the Euphrates at Carchemish, between two and three hundred miles to the north-west of Babylon.

CHAP. III.—18. *Thou shalt surely die.* That is, If he turn not from his wickedness, and thou givest him not warning, as above, he shall die in his iniquity, which he should not have committed; but his blood will I require at thy hand—I will visit thy soul for the loss of his. O how awful is this! Hear it, ye priests, ye preachers, ye ministers of the Gospel; ye, especially, who have entered into the ministry for a living; ye who gather a congregation to yourselves that ye may feed upon their fat, and clothe yourselves with their wool; in whose parishes and in whose congregations souls are dying unconverted from day to day, who have never been solemnly warned by you, and to whom you have never shown the way of salvation, probably because ye know nothing of it yourselves! O, what a perdition awaits you! To have the blood of every soul that has died in your parishes or in your congregations unconverted laid at your door! To suffer a common damnation for every soul that perishes through your neglect! How many loads of endless woe must such have to bear! Ye take your tithes, your stipends, or your rents, to the last grain and the last penny; while the souls over whom you made yourselves watchmen have perished, and are perishing, through your neglect. O worthless and hapless men! better for you had ye never been born! Vain is your boast of apostolical authority, while ye do not the work of apostles! Vain your boasting of orthodoxy, while ye neither shew nor know the way of salvation! Vain your pretensions to a Divine call, when ye do not the work of evangelists! The state of the most wretched of the human race is enviable to that of such ministers, pastors, teachers, and preachers. But let not this discourage the faithful minister who teaches every man, and warns every man, in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. If after such teaching and warning they will sin on, and die in their sins, their blood will be upon themselves; but thou, O man of God, hast delivered thine own soul.—*A. Clarke.*

CHAP. IV.—15. *Cow's dung.* Here is sufficient intimation that the Hebrews sometimes employed animal dung for fuel. It is still used in some regions of Western Africa. In winter we have seen it used in the best rooms of some of the most respectable houses in towns of Northern Persia; and while travelling through the same country, and some parts of Media and Armenia, when we formed our camp near the villages, all the children who were old enough would come out with baskets to gather it. It is much used for baking, being considered preferable to any other fuel for that purpose, as it is by the villagers in Devonshire. See *Pictorial Bible.*

CHAP. VIII.—'In this remarkable chapter,' says Dr. Wilson, (*Lands of the Bible*, vol. i. 105,) 'the Israelites are represented as imitating the idolatry of the Syrians, 1—5; the Egyptians, ver. 10—12; the Phœnicians, ver. 14; and the Persians, ver. 14.' Referring to Dr. Abbot's Collection of Egyptian Antiquities at Cairo, he adds, 'The numerous images and drawings of the gods of the Egyptian pantheon, human, superhuman, and infrahuman, remind us of the time when the Egyptians worshipped "every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all idols," or (as in the original) 'nastiness.'

> 'Genii with heads of birds, hawks, ibis, drakes,
> Of lions, foxes, cats, fish, frogs, and snakes,
> Bulls, rams, and monkeys, hippopotami,
> With knife in paw, suspended from the sky;
> Gods germinating men, and men turned gods,
> Seated in honour, with gilt crooks and rods;
> Vast scarabæi, globes by hands upheld
> From chaos springing, mid an endless field
> Of forms grotesque—the sphinx, the crocodile,
> And other reptiles from the slime of Nile.'—*Hall's Life of Salt.*

10. *Pourtrayed on the wall round about.* It is very likely that these images pourtrayed on the wall were the objects of Egyptian adoration: the ox, the ape, the dog, the crocodile, the ibis, the scarabæus or beetle, and various other things. It appears that these were privately worshipped by the Sanhedrim or great Jewish council, consisting of seventy or seventy-two persons, six chosen out of every tribe, as representatives of the people. The images were pourtrayed upon the wall as we find those ancient idols are on the walls of the tombs of the kings and nobles of Egppt. See the plates to Belzoni's Travels, the Isaic tomb in the Bodleian library, and the Egyptian heiroglyphics in general. (Also the various wood engravings of Egyptian tombs in this work, especially at ver. 10.) Virgil speaks of these, *Æn.* lib. viii.:—

> *Omnigenumque Deum monstra, et latrator anubus.*
> 'All kinds of gods, monsters, and barking dogs.'

14. *Women weeping for Tammuz.* 'This was Adonis,' says Adam Clarke, and adds, 'My old MS. Bible reads, "There saten women, mornynge a mawmete of ..echerye that is cleped Adonydes." He is fabled to have been a beautiful youth beloved by Venus, and killed by a wild boar in mount Lebanon, whence springs the river Adonis, which was fabled to run blood at his festival in August. The women of Phœnicia, Assyria, and Judæa worshipped him as dead, with deep lamentation, wearing priapi and other obscene images all the while, and they prostituted themselves in honour of this idol. Having for some time mourned him as dead, they then supposed him revivified, and broke out into the most extravagant rejoicings. Of the appearance of the river at this season, Mr. Maundrell thus speaks:—"We had the good fortune to see what is the foundation of the opinion which Lucian relates, viz., that this stream at certain seasons of the year, especially about the feast of Adonis, is of a bloody colour, proceeding from a kind of sympathy, as the heathens imagined, for the death of Adonis, who was killed by a wild boar in the mountain out of which this stream issues. Something like this we saw actually come to pass, for the water was stained to a surprising redness; and, as we observed in travelling, had stained the sea a great way into a reddish hue." This was, no doubt, occasioned by a red ochre, over which the river ran with violence at this time of its increase. Milton works all this up in these fine lines:—

> "Thammuz came next behind,
> Whose annual wound in Lebanon allured
> The Syrian damsels to lament his fate,
> In amorous ditties all a summer's day;
> While smooth Adonis, from his native rock,
> Ran purple to the sea, suffused with blood
> Of Thammuz, yearly wounded. The love tale
> Infected Sion's daughters with like heat,
> Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
> Ezekiel saw, when by the vision led,
> His eye surveyed the dark idolatries
> Of alienated Judah."—*Paradise Lost*, b. i. 446.

Tammuz signifies hidden or obscure, and hence the worship of his image was in some secret place.'—*A. Clarke.*

CHAP. X.—13. *O wheel*, or rather, move round. They are put in mind of continually attending upon their duty; for the wheels and living creature were animated with the same principle of understanding and instinct, *ch.* i. 19, 21.—*Lowth.*

CHAP. XII.—7. *I digged through the wall with mine hand.* See Note on *ch.* xiii. 10. 19. *They shall eat their bread with carefulness—that her land may be desolate.* The oppressions of the government on one side, and those of the Bedouins on the other, have reduced the Fellah of the Haouran to a state little better than that of the wandering Arab. Few individuals, either among the Druses or Christians, die in the same village in which they were born. Families are continually removing from one place to another; in the first year of their new settlement the sheikh acts with moderation towards them; but, his vexations becoming in a few years insupportable, they fly to some other place where they have heard that their brethren are better treated, but they soon find that the same system prevails over the whole country. Sometimes it is not merely the pecuniary extortion, but the personal enmity of the sheikh, or of some of the head men of the village, which drives a family from their home, for they are always permitted to depart. This continued wandering is one of the principal reasons why no village in the Haouran has either orchards, or fruit trees, or gardens for the growth of vegetables.—*Burckhardt*, p. 299. 'Shall we sow for strangers?' was the answer of a Fellah, to whom I once spoke on the subject, and who, by the word strangers, meant both the succeeding inhabitants, and the Arabs who visit the Haouran in the spring and summer, *Isa.* xxxiii. 9; *Eze.* xii. 19. It is thus, according to the prophetic word, that Bashan, like Carmel, has shaken off, and still shakes off, its fruits. It is thus also, as the Lord hath said, that the inhabitants of the land of Israel, as in manifold similar illustrations besides, eat their bread with carefulness; and the land is desolate from all that was therein, because of the violence of all them that dwelt therein.—*Dr. Keith's Land of Israel.*

> 'How has kind Heav'n adorned the happy land,
> And scattered blessings with a wasteful [bounteous] hand!
> But what avail her unexhausted stores,
> Her blooming mountains and her sunny shores,
> With all the gifts that heaven and earth impart,
> The smiles of nature, and the charms of art,
> While proud oppression in her valleys reigns,
> And tyranny usurps her happy plains?'—*Addison.*

CHAP. XIII.—10. *One built up a wall, &c.* The plaster in the East is made of clay and straw, the latter being chopped and beaten small, and serving the same purpose as ox hair with our plasterers. This to be good must be well tempered, which is generally done by long continued treading or beating. Walls formed of this material, and raised upon a foundation of stone or brick, were very ancient, and are still very common in the East. They resemble the cob walls of Devonshire, forming the subject of a paper, No. 116, of the *Quarterly Review*, which, as quoted in *Pictorial Bible*, (on *ch.* xii.,) contains the following remarks. 'Ezekiel, of all the prophets best acquainted with the customs of the Phœnicians, of which the thirty-seventh chapter is a proof, when speaking of breaking through a wall invariably used the words "dig through," διορυττειν,—"I digged through the wall with mine hand" (*Eze.* xii. 7); this would be impossible in the case of a stone or brick wall, but by no means so as to one of cob. The identical expression is used twice by our Saviour himself, *Mat.* vi., "Lay up for yourselves treasures—where thieves do not break through and steal"—ὅπου κλέπται μη διορύσσουσιν, where thieves "do not dig through." In fact, the common Greek term for a housebreaker was τοιχωρυχος, a wall-breaker. Therefore the author of that most ancient book, *Job*, in the fourth chapter, adverts to the little trust to be placed in those "who dwell in houses of clay,

whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed by the moth." A very high authority has suggested that by the moth is meant the white ant. It is clear that some sort of those destructive insects are alluded to which so notoriously harbour in walls of clay, that is, of cob.' 13. *I will bring him to Babylon—yet shall not he see it, though he shall die there.* The prophet Jeremiah foretold of Zedekiah, that his eyes should behold the eyes of the king of Babylon; and here Ezekiel predicts that he should not see Babylon though he should die there. We are informed by Josephus, that the king, thinking these prophecies contradicted each other, gave no credit to either. But both proved true; for, being taken captive and carried to Riblah, he there saw Nebuchadnezzar, and then his eyes were put out, and he was sent to Babylon, where he remained for the rest of his life; so that he saw not that city though he died in it.—*Pictorial Bible.*

CHAP. XVI.—2. *Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations.* And such a revelation of impurity never was seen before or since. Surely the state of the Jews, before the Babylonish captivity, was the most profligate and corrupt of all the nations of the earth. This chapter contains God's manifesto against this most abominable people, and although there are many metaphors here yet all is not metaphorical. Where there was so much idolatry there must have been adulteries, fornications, prostitutions, and lewdness of every description. The description of the prophet is sufficiently clear, except where there is a reference to ancient and obsolete customs. What a description of crimes!—*A. Clarke,* (whose also is the first part of Note under ver. 12.) 8. *Spread my skirt over thee.* See Supplementary Note on *Ru.* iii. 9. 13. *Thou didst prosper into a kingdom.* Here the figure explains itself: by this wretched infant, the low estate of the Jewish nation in its origin is pointed out; by the growing up of this child into woman's estate, the increase and multiplication of the people; by her being decked out and ornamented, her tabernacle service, and religious ordinances; by her betrothing and consequent marriage, the covenant which God made with the Jews; by her fornication and adulteries, their apostacy from God, and the establishment of idolatrous worship, with all its abominable rites; by her fornication and whoredoms with the Egyptians and Assyrians, the sinful alliances which the Jews made with those nations, and the incorporation of their idolatrous worship with that of Jehovah; by her lovers being brought against her, and stripping her naked, the delivery of the Jews into the hands of the Egyptians, Assyrians, and Chaldeans, who stripped them of all their excellences, and at last carried them into captivity. This is the key to the whole of this long chapter of metaphors; and the reader will do well to forget the figures, and look at the facts.——The figurative mode of describing idolatry by spiritual adultery, often used by the prophets, is pursued here with great force, and at considerable length. We are not to judge of these metaphors by modern ideas, but of those of the times and places in which they were used, where many of the expressions would not sound as they do to us. It must likewise be remembered that the design was to raise the highest detestation of idolatry, and that such metaphors were well calculated for the purpose.—*Dr. John Smith.*

CHAP. XVIII.—26, 27. *When a righteous man.* It is an old opinion, that prevails among the Jews even till this day, that at the day of judgment a considerable number of good actions shall overbalance men's evil ones; so that they thought it a hard case for a man who had been righteous the far greatest part of his life, if he did at last commit iniquity, that his former righteousness should avail him nothing. In opposition to this doctrine, God here declares, that a righteous man, sinning and not repenting, should die in his sins, and that a wicked man, upon his repentance, should save his soul alive. (*Lowth.*) Notwithstanding this plain declaration, it is obvious that the notion current among the Jews is equally current among the generality of professed Christians, though directly opposite to the whole doctrine of Scripture, and even subversive of it.—*T. Scott.*

CHAP. XXI.—21. *Divination: he made his arrows bright.* Four kinds of divination are particularly mentioned in sacred history, viz. by the cup, (see Supplementary Note on *Gen.* xliv. 5,) by arrows, by inspecting the livers of slaughtered animals, and by the staff. Divination by arrows was an ancient method of presaging future events. Jerome, in his commentary on *Eze.* xxi. 21, says that 'the manner of divining by arrows was thus: they wrote on several arrows the names of the cities against which they intended to make war, and then, putting them promiscuously all together into a quiver, they caused them to be drawn out in the manner of lots, and that city whose name was on the arrow first drawn out was the first they assaulted. This method of divination was practised by the idolatrous Arabs, and prohibited by Mohammed, and was likewise used by the ancient Greeks, and other nations.—Divination by inspecting the liver of slaughtered animals was another mode of ascertaining future events, much practised by the Greeks and Romans, by the former of whom it was termed Ἡπατοσκοπια, or looking into the liver. This word subsequently became a general term for divination by inspecting the entrails of sacrifices, because the liver was the first and principal part observed for this purpose. To this method of divination there is an allusion in *Eze.* xxi. 21.—Rabdomancy, or divination by the staff, is alluded to by the prophet Hosea (iv. 12); it is supposed to have been thus performed: the person consulting measured his staff by spans, or by the length of his finger, saying, as he measured, 'I will go, or I will not go; I will do such a thing, or, I will not do it;' and as the last span fell out so he determined. Cyril and Theophylact, however, give a different account of the matter. They say that it was performed by erecting two sticks, after which they murmured forth a certain charm, and then, according as the sticks fell, backwards or forwards, towards the right or left, they gave advice in any affair.—*Horne's Introduction.*

CHAP. XXIII.—14. *Men pourtrayed.* The figure in wood-cut (ver. 9) is that of an Assyrian, as engraved, with many others, on a rock at Nahr-el-Kelb, near Beirut, and there seen by Dr. Wilson, who, referring to the inscription, says, 'Perhaps it may be found to bear the name of a Shalmanezer, Sargon, Sennacherib, or Esarhaddon, who extended the conquests of the Assyrians to the shores of the Mediterranean.' These and the other sculptures and drawings of a similar kind lately found elsewhere, the same author considers particularly worthy of notice in connexion with this passage in Ezekiel, in which, when the adulterous infidelity of Samaria and Jerusalem are strictly characterised and reprobated, allusion is made to the gorgeously clothed Assyrians, "men pourtrayed," &c., ver. 14.—*Lands of the Bible,* vol. i. p. 409. 25. *They shall take away thy nose and thine ears.* These barbarous punishments have always been most extensively in use in the East, and examples without number of their infliction might be adduced from history, ancient and modern. As the mystical adulterers of Israel and Judah are the subject of this allegory, it may be instructive to learn that in Egypt the noses of adulterous persons were cut off, and in Chaldea both their ears and noses. For some offences, in the East, the nose has been and is cut off; for others, the ears; and frequently both members at once. Indeed there seems at all times to have been a barbarous fancy for joining these two members in the same punishment. It does not appear that the Hebrews ever exercised such mutilations; but they must have known them well as inflicted by their heathen neighbours. Even in modern times this punishment has been inflicted on persons of consideration. Thus the notorious Djezzar of Acre seldom allowed those about him to remain long in possession of their ears and noses, and often deprived them of their eyes and hands. 'There were,' says Dr. Clarke, 'persons standing by the door of his apartment, some without a nose, others without an arm, with one ear only, or one eye—"marked men," as he termed them; persons bearing signs of having been instructed to serve their master with fidelity.'—*Pictorial Bible.*

CHAP. XXV.—2. *Set thy face against.* 'Look thou towards the coast of the Ammonites, and in this posture do thou prophesy against them.'—*Bp. Hall.* 5. *Rabbah, a place for camels:* see *Jer.* xlix. 2, *Rabbah shall be a desolate heap.* Rabbah, which properly denotes a great city or metropolis, is applied in Scripture to the capital of the Ammonites. 'For the space of two miles before reaching Ammon, pieces of broken pottery strewed over the ground indicate the approach to the ruins of a great city. The remains of a large isolated building of excellent masonry, with sculptured blocks scattered near it on the ground, first meet the view of the traveller, once, as is supposed, an outer gate of the city, or a triumphal entrance. The castle of Ammon, a large inclosed ruin, occupying entirely the summit of a small steep hill, has the appearance of a fortress. On the other side the wall ascends like a sloping mole, the masonry of which is excellent, the stones being squarely hewn, and nicely adjusted, &c. The steep ascent of this ruined mass is passed over large heaps of fallen stones, till the eastern gateway is reached, which leads to an open square court, with arched recesses on each side, originally open, which had arched doorways facing each other. These were all either wholly closed or partially filled up, with the single exception of a narrow passage, just sufficient for the entrance of one man, and of the goats which the Arab keepers drive in here occasionally for shelter during the night.'—*Buckingham's Travels among the Arab Tribes,* pp. 60—66. 'We passed many ruined cities, and the country has once been very populous, but during the whole day's ride, thirty-five miles at least, we did not see a single village; the whole country is one vast pasture, overspread by the flocks and herds of the Schoor and Beni Hassan Bedouins. Ammon is now quite deserted, except by the Bedouins. Re-ascending we saw sheep and goats by thousands, and camels by hundreds, coming down to drink, all in beautiful condition. How—let me cite the prophecy—how runs it, "Ammon shall be a desolation. Rabbah of the Ammonites shall be a desolate heap. I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks, and ye shall know that I am the Lord."'—*Lord Lindsay's Letters.* 8—14. *Moab—Seir—Edom.* See Supplementary Note on *Isa.* xvi. 16. *Philistines—I will destroy the remnant of the sea coasts:* see *Zeph.* ii. 6, *And the sea coasts shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.* Volney, (though, like one who in ancient times was instrumental to the fulfilment of a special prediction, 'he meant not so, neither did his heart think so,') from the manner in which he generalizes his observations, and marks the peculiar features of the different districts of Syria, with greater acuteness and perspicuity than any other traveller whatever, is the ever-ready purveyor of evidence in all the cases which came within the range of his topographical description of the wide field of prophecy; while at the same time, from his known, open, and zealous hostility to the Christian cause, his testimony is alike decisive and unquestionable; and the vindication of the truth of the following predictions may safely be committed to this redoubted champion of infidelity. 'In the plain between Ramla and Gaza,' (*Volney's Travels,* vol. ii. 335, 336,)—the very plain of the Philistines along the sea coast—'we met with a number of villages, badly built of dried mud, and which, like the inhabitants, exhibit every mark of poverty and wretchedness. The houses, on a nearer view, are only so many huts, (cottages,) sometimes detached, at others ranged in the form of cells around a court-yard, enclosed by a mud wall. In winter they and their cattle may be said to live together, the part of the dwelling allotted to themselves being only raised two feet above that in which they lodge their beasts—("dwelling and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.") Except the environs of these villages, all the rest of the country is a desert, and abandoned to the Bedouin Arabs, who feed their flocks on it.'—*Keith on Prophecy.* See Supplementary Note on *Jer.* xlvii. 5.

CHAP. XXVI.—4. *Scrape her dust from her—and make her like the top of a rock*—(the bare shining surface of a rock—Dr. Newcome's note)—*a place for the spreading of nets.* Alexander the Great seems actually to have scraped away the very rubbish as well as the stones of old Tyre to construct his causeway; (*Humus aggerebatur,* the words of Quintius Curtius, quoted by Dr. Keith, are very remarkable;) and now the bare rocks along the shore, in some part of which the ancient city must have stood, are literally a place for the spreading of nets. The first man we met in the gate of Tyre was a fisherman carrying a load of fish, and the fishing boats in the harbour we have already mentioned. If, indeed, the sea has made an advance upon the coast, then the very rocks where old Tyre stood may be now under water, and the nets of the fisherman may be literally spread over them. And this, also, would give new meaning to the expression, "Thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the water," *Eze.* xxvii. 34; although at the same time the ruin of her fleets and merchant ships will completely satisfy the terms of the prophecy. How interesting, too, is the very uncertainty that hangs over the true situation of ancient Tyre, some placing it on the shore, some at Ras-el-Ain farther inward, and some on a rocky eminence called Marshuk, to the north-east—all combining to shew how awfully the thrice-repeated curse has been fulfilled, "I will make thee a terror and thou shalt be no more;" and how true to the letter, "Though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again."—*Bonar & M'Cheyne's Narrative.* See Supplementary Note on *Isa.* xxiii.

CHAP. XXVII.—3. *The entry of the sea.* The Mediterranean. *Tyrus—a merchant of the people for many isles.* 4. *Thy borders are in the midst of the seas.* Tyre was every way conveniently placed to unite in commerce Asia, Africa, and Europe, the whole of the known world at that time; especially it was the centre for the trade of Asia, and the East Indies, with the many isles, &c., of Europe. 5. *They have made all thy ship boards*—that is, decks—*of fir trees, &c.* The Phœnicians were the teachers of the Greeks and Romans in ship-building, and had a skill therein not contemptible, even compared with the like works at the present day. 6. *Of ivory.* Ornamented with ivory. *Chittim.* Meaning the islands on the coasts of the Mediterranean, *Jer.* ii. 10. 7. *Fine linen—to be thy sail.* Most probably sails were then usually made of matting, as, according to Niebuhr, is the case at present on the Red Sea. Linen sails, therefore, indicated refinement and luxury. *Blue and purple.* These colours adorned the richest attire: see *Ex.* xxv. 4; *Jer.* x. 9. *Isles of Elishah.* Elishah was a son of Javan, *Gen.* x. 4; and the isles so called are supposed to have been Greece. 8. *Arvad.* The Arvadite is mentioned, *Gen.* x. 18. 9. *Gebal.* A Phœnician town in which were the best mechanics, *Jos.* xiii. 5; 1 *Kin.* v. 18. 10. *Lud.* Thought to have been an Egyptian colony. *Phut.* In Africa. *Were in thine army.* They were the mercenaries of Tyre. *They hanged the shield.* They had a strong force at hand, and a ready armoury, like that in the tower of David, where hung the "shields of mighty men," *Cant.* iv. 4. 11. *Arvad.* See ver. 8. *Were*

upon thy walls. The guards of the city walls. *Gammadims.* Perhaps a people of Phœnicia. These garrisoned the city. *They have made thy beauty perfect.* 'They set forth thy glory.'—*Boothroyd.* 12. *Tarshish.* The learned now generally think that Tarshish is Tartessus, a city of Spain, at the mouth of the river Bœtis, whence the Phœnicians, who first opened this trade, brought gold and silver, in which that country then abounded. 13. *Javan.* Greece, *Dan.* viii. 21; so called from Javan, the son of Japhet, *Gen.* x. 2, from whom the Greeks are called, in their own tongue, Ions. *Tubal and Meshech.* The people called Tibareni and Moschi, who dwelt near the Black Sea, and in the mountains between Iberia and Armenia. *Traded the persons of men.* That is, in slaves, *Rev.* xviii. 13. Grecian slaves were the most valuable, but Tubal and Meshech also sold slaves. This detestable traffic, which is still carried on in the world, ought to be held in universal execration, and the base souls that encourage slavery to be stigmatised as murderers, 1 *Tim.* i. 10. *Vessels of brass.* Copper mines are worked in Caucasus to this day. Here are Kubescha and Arzieni, or Erzerum, still famous for brass vessels. 14. *Togarmah.* See *Gen.* x. 3. Bochart understands Cappadocia; Michaelis prefers Armenia, which was much celebrated for its fine breed of horses. 15. *Dedan.* On the Persian Gulf, *Gen.* xxv. 3; probably imported goods from Eastern Asia. 16. *Syria was thy merchant.* Syria probably traded largely elsewhere, and sold and exchanged the merchandise of other countries with Tyre. 17. *Judah, &c.—traded in thy market wheat, &c.* In this way the Jews acquired their wealth, their land being extremely productive. The Tyrians grew nothing. *Minnith.* Was a place which belonged to the Ammonites, still a fertile spot, and then famous for its grain: see *Jud.* xi. 33. But Boothroyd's translation is, 'wheat, myrrh, and panic,' instead of 'wheat of Minnith and Pannag.' Rosenmuller thinks that Pannag means luxurious dried fruits, sweetmeats, &c. 18. *Damascus, &c.—for the multitude of all riches.* 'The abundance of all thy substance.'—*Boothroyd. In the wine of Helbon.* That is, Chalybon or Aleppo, in Syria; this wine was the only sort thought good enough for the tables of the Persian kings. *And white wool.* The wool was dyed purple at Tyre. The Damascenes still buy up and export the wool from the nomades of Arabia Deserta, whose flocks, always in the open air, produce the best. 19. *Dan—Javan.* These places were in Arabia. Javan may be pronounced Yeman in Arabia Felix. 20. *Dedan.* Different probably from that named in ver. 15; that was in the Persian Gulf, this in Edom or Arabia: see Dedan, *Gen.* xxv. 3. *In precious clothes for chariots.* 'In gorgeous apparel for horsemen.'—*Boothroyd. Parkhurst* understands it to signify horsecloths. 21. *Kedar.* In Arabia Petræa. For original possessor, see *Gen.* xxv. 13, &c. 22. *Sheba and Raamah.* Raamah near the Persian Gulf; named from Ramah, *Gen.* x. 7. Here too were the Sabeans in South Arabia. These brought, as now, caravans with Indian articles to Syria. 23. *Haran, &c.* Various tribes which inhabited Arabia Petræa, as some just before mentioned. The Sheba here is supposed to have been in Arabia Deserta, and spoken of *Job* i. 15. 24. *In chests—made of cedar.* Carefully packed in cedar for the sake of the scent, and for preservation. 25. *Tarshish.* This was the most celebrated mart in those times, and frequented by the Phœnicians. *Did sing.* Spoke strongly in praise of her. On this chapter, which contains the most ancient record in existence of the commerce of remote ages, we may observe, 1. That it is the wisdom of nations to encourage art and industry. As men must inhabit certain localities, though one country produces what another does not or cannot, so in the goodness of providence, while industry has its own reward, the whole world may reciprocally be favoured, through friendly commerce, with all the bounties providence has bestowed on the universal world. Prosperity has its snares, both for nations and individuals. Our own country has often been warned that its commerce is not on a rock. It depends much upon the friendship, the caprice, the stability, or the rivalry of other nations. 'Trade is a fluctuating thing: it passed from Tyre to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Venice, from Venice to Antwerp, from Antwerp to Amsterdam and London.' Our metropolis may not always be the mart of the world. Let us beware that pride and luxury and covetous speculation do not work our ruin. Our nation needs our prayers. The Tyrians are a beacon for us, for 'the like causes will always produce the like effects.' And Scott well remarks, 'that those who engage in commerce should remember that they are the servants of God, and learn to conduct their business according to the precepts of his word, in submission to his providence, and with an aim to his glory; and those who possess wealth should remember that they are his stewards.'—*Domestic Bible by Rev. Ingram Cobbin.*

CHAP. XXVIII.—22. *I am against thee, O Zidon.* All the magnificence of Sidon is gone, for "God has executed judgments in her," *Eze.* xxviii. 22. Again and again have its inhabitants been "judged in the midst of her by the sword on every side." There are no more any merchants worth mentioning in Sidon. In two or three shops fishing-rods were exposed for sale, but there were no signs of trade. "Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins," *Isa.* xxiii. 4. The city, and the sea that laved its walls, now lament the want of its once crowded and stirring population. It no more can boast of a king. "All the kings of Zidon" have been made to drink the wine-cup of God's fury, even as it was foretold, *Jer.* xxv. 22.

CHAP. XXIX.—10. *From the tower of Syene.* Rather, 'from Migdol to Syene,' that is, the whole of the kingdom, for its northern extremity was Migdol, and its southern Syene. 15. *It shall be the basest of the kingdoms.* In Egypt there are only two classes—the conquerors and the vanquished. The former indulge in every crime which can disgrace the character of rulers—selfishness, rapacity, injustice. The latter are sunk into the most deplorable condition. Brutalized by the wars and revolutions which have for centuries surrounded them, exasperated by the injuries to which they are daily subject, stained by every vice, and groaning under every evil, the people of Egypt have fallen to an ineffable depth of wretchedness and meanness. Every traveller who speaks of them loads them with a profusion of the vilest terms which language supplies. Thevenot terms them 'exceedingly wicked, great rogues, cowardly, lazy, hypocrites.' Of the Mamelukes, the military body whom the Turks long employed in the government of the country, Volney says, 'Educated in ignorance and superstition, they become ferocious, from habitual murder; perfidious, from cabals; seditious, from riot; base, deceitful, and corrupted by every species of debauchery.' Of the people, Volney says: 'We may easily conceive that, in such a country, every thing is correspondent with its wretched government. The peasants are hired labourers, who only get what is barely sufficient to sustain life. Their habitations are mud-walled huts, where they are suffocated with heat and smoke, and often attacked with distempers, arising from uncleanness, dampness, and unwholesome food; and to these physical evils are added continual alarms, the dread of the robberies of the Arabs and the extortions of the Mamelukes, family quarrels, and all the miseries of constant civil wars. This is a faithful picture of all the villages, and no less so of the towns. Even at Cairo, the stranger, on his arrival, is struck with the appearance of universal wretchedness and misery. The crowds thronging the streets present nothing but filthy rags. Everything he sees or hears reminds him that he is in the abode of slavery and tyranny. Nothing is spoken of but intestine broils, public misery, pecuniary extortions, bastinadoes, and murders. There is no protection for life or property. Human blood is shed like that of the vilest animals. Justice herself condemns to death without form.' "It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; for I will diminish them, and they shall no more rule over the nations." Can we not in this discern the righteous retribution of providence? Egypt was the first to impose a yoke upon the nations; not a yoke of dominion, but of a kind more degrading—a yoke of polytheism and gross idolatry. From her, as from a fountain, flowed all the superstition by which the earth was corrupted; and now, for ages, every people which have become the masters of the world have oppressed and despised her. But how amazing and inscrutable are the ways of God! As if to atone for the mischief she inflicted on the world in early time, Egypt is now conferring incalculable benefits upon it. Her monuments, inscribed with the history of the most early ages, are beginning to be deciphered; her temples and tombs to be explored; (see wood engravings in various parts of the work, especially in *Psalms, Jeremiah,* and *Ezekiel;*) and the first-fruits of a glorious harvest have been reaped, which, when the whole has been gathered in, will make one of the most magnificent offerings ever laid on the altar of revelation. It was only in the end of the last century that Voltaire affirmed that the Egypt of the Bible was a mistake; since that time, Egypt herself has been disinterred—the Egypt of four thousand years ago—and before this awful preacher from the dead the infidel stands silent and confounded.—*Wylie's Journey over the Region of Fulfilled Prophecy.*

CHAP. XXX.—3. *The day of the Lord is near.* The day when he would take vengeance on the oppressors of his people. 5. *Ethiopia, &c.* Meaning every land in league with Egypt. *Mingled people.* Arabians. *Libya.* A district of Africa. *Lydia.* This Lydia was in Upper Egypt. *Chub.* An Egyptian province in Mareotis. 7. *Her cities, &c.* Egypt was exceedingly populous, and more filled with cities than any other nation in the world at that time, which would render her desolation in this respect the more extraordinary. 8. *A fire.* So God's judgments are called. 9. *Messengers in ships.* Understood to refer to an expedition of Nebuchadnezzar, sent up the Nile, which awakened the fears of the Ethiopians. *As in the day of Egypt.* Boothroyd omits "as," which is better reading. 12. *Rivers dry.* The fertility of Egypt depended on the rise of the Nile; and this threatening implies that with the calamity of war would be that of famine. *The wicked.* The haughty and cruel Babylonians. 13. *There shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt.* This has been wonderfully fulfilled during twenty-three centuries, in which long period the land has been the prey of the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Georgians, the Tartars, known as Ottoman Turks. The Mamelukes, purchased as slaves, and introduced as soldiers, soon usurped the power, and elected a leader; slaves brought from their original country replaced them. The sceptre of Egypt has departed. 13-18. *Noph, &c.* The chief places are here enumerated, and shew that all Egypt would be desolate. *Noph.* Perhaps Memphis, now Cairo, the ancient capital. *Pathros.* Thebais, a province and city. *Zoan.* Tanis, the metropolis in Moses' time, a noted city, *Num.* xiii. 22. *No.* Or Ammon, No, *Jer.* xlvi. 25. *Sin.* Pelusium, the key of Egypt and its strength, having had a safe harbour and many merchant ships. *Aven.* On, *Gen.* xli. 45. *Pi-beseth.* Bubastes, where was a splendid temple to the goddess of that name. *Tehaphnehes.* Or, Tahpanhes; supposed the same as Daphnæ-Pelusiacæ. 18. *Yokes.* Some read 'sceptres;' others understand the yokes imposed by the Egyptians.

CHAP. XXXII.—22. *Ashur.* Assyria. 23. *Whose graves—the sides of the pit.* Such are Eastern tombs; hewn out of the rock, with niches around to receive the bodies of the departed. 24. *Elam.* That is, Persia. 26. *Meshech, Tubal,* meaning Scythia. The Scythians were conquered by Babylon. The mode of sepulture in these countries is known by the name of barrow burial, which is actually described in ancient writings as practised by the very people of whom the prophet here speaks: see woodcut. 27. *Not lie with the mighty.* Who have died a natural death, and been buried with pomp. *Have laid their swords under their heads.* Many of the warriors of ancient times slept with their swords under their heads, and had them buried with them in the same manner. These customs still prevail in Mingrelia, the inhabitants of which are believed to be descendants of Meshech and Tubal. 29. *There is Edom.* See wood engraving *in loc.* See Supplementary Notes on *Job* iii. 14; on *Isa.* xxii. and xxxiv. See also wood engravings, *Ps.* lx.; the head-piece to Isaiah, representing Petra, the capital of Edom; and in *Isa.* xxii.; *ch.* xxxii. 29. Some of the above, and of the other wood engravings in this work, have been suggested by those in the *Pictorial Bible,* and we gratefully take this opportunity of expressing our obligations. Referring to the monuments in Petra, the city of tombs, the learned editor remarks, 'However rich externally, they present nothing in the interior but coarsely chiselled walls. There is, however, one exception, noticed by Laborde, of a sepulchral chamber, with rows of sculptured pillars, which forms the finest interior to be found in the place. 'When the Bedouins descend into the valley, this tomb, which is easily closed, serves as a stable for their herds. Such are the uses to which the costly monuments of human vanity have been converted.'—*Laborde.* And such, too, we may add, are the fulfilments which the predictions of the prophets concerning the desolation of Edom have received.

CHAP. XXXIII.—30. *Still talking against (or concerning) thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses.* However severe the cold weather sometimes is in these countries, there are intervals even in the depth of winter when the sun shines and there is no wind, and when it is perfectly warm—sometimes almost hot—in the open air. At such seasons the poorer classes in the East enjoy the conversation of their friends, sauntering about in the air, and sitting under the walls of their dwellings; while the houses of the more opulent inhabitants having porches or gateways, with benches on each side, the master of the family receives visitors there, and dispatches his business—few persons (not even the nearest relations) having farther admission except on extraordinary occasions. These circumstances materially illustrate a difficult passage in the prophet Ezekiel. It appears from *ch.* xxxiii. 21, that these things were transacted in the tenth month, corresponding with the close of our December or the commencement of January. The poorer people, therefore, sat under their walls for the benefit of the sun, while those in better circumstances sat in their porchways or gateways to enjoys its genial rays.—*Horne's Introduction.*

CHAP. XXXV.—15. *Thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir.* See wood engraving, and reference made to Edom in Supplementary Note, *ch.* xxxii. 29.

CHAP. XXXVII.—11. *Our hope is lost.* 'Later in the evening a well-educated young Jew called on us. Hearing that we had been inquiring about the practicability of instituting schools among the Jews, he came to offer himself as a teacher.—He conversed with us in Latin, always addressing us by the title of "*Dominatio vestra.*" When telling us that he had given up all expectation of the restoration of his own people to their own land, and of the coming of Messiah, he used this remarkable expression, "*Despero, despero,*"

that is, "I have no hope of it." The very term used by the prophet Ezekiel, when he foretold what would be the state of Israel before the breath should enter into them, "Behold, they say, Our bones are dried and our hope is lost."'—*Bonar and M'Cheyne's Narrative.* See also account of the Jews in their own land, in Volume II., 601 and following pages, of *Dr. Wilson's Lands of the Bible*, where it is said, 'It is not the destruction of the world, so much as the non-appearance or delay of the Messiah, which the Jews so much fear, and which they employ the devotees to prevent by mourning and supplication. The most affecting scene altogether which I witnessed in the Holy Land was the praying of the Khasidim at Tiberias. Their excitement and apparent importunity were frightful; and they appeared as if determined at once to take heaven by storm, springing upon their toes, beating their breasts, and groaning and crying simultaneously at the highest pitch of their voices. Mr. Graham, who was with me on the occasion, as well as myself, was quite overcome by the scene, and by the manifest delusion under which the poor Jews evidently laboured. Dr. Wolff has given us, in his journals, the prayers which the Karaim chant at Jerusalem, at the place of mourning, in sight of the great ancient stones in the western wall of the temple. "Early will I seek my congregation, that is exceedingly afflicted; and visit mine habitation, (to view) the dreadful destruction. The fences are thrown down, and the walls are demolished; (nothing is seen but) gloomy darkness, waste, and desolation—Where is the service, the testimony, the priesthood, and the Levites? Where is the kingdom that administered justice with purity without deceit? Where are the faithful, brought up in the lap of truth, lovely as the moon, and bright as the sun? They now witness their covenant with the grave; their dwellings are in the caverns of the young harts, and in the neglected depths. Over them spring up grass and herbage, forming pastures for the wild goats and kids. Morning and evening are they exposed to the cold and drought, or swept away by the strong flood, and carried over the sea, without (seeing) an end to their captivity, by which their souls are afflicted, and their souls consumed. For the sea through which they passed, destruction is its path, death is its pilot, and the grave its ship. (There is) horror, dread, and fear; for there is no voice, nor any that answereth in all the ship. The lovely congregation was sold to be cut off; bruised and cast to the stretched-out sword. And the seed are dispersed, oppressed, and trampled (under foot): born to plagues and dreadful wounds. Their father also abhorred them and their mother; and besides them married the daughters of strangers: even the Amorites, the Hittites, the Hagarites, the Chittites, the Midianites, and Moabites. Oh, may their Father in his infinite mercy compassionate his orphans, and gather his dispersed to the pure land! For he is high and exalted; he bringeth down and raiseth up; he woundeth and healeth; killeth and restoreth to life. O Lord, return to thy city! build thine oracle, dwell in thine house, and gather thy scattered (flock). O thou who renewest the months, collect the saints, both men and women, to the erected city! O may this month be renewed for good! and may it please God, who is mighty in works, thus to command."'

CHAP. XL.—2. *Very high mountain.* Moriah, say some, but this was not very high. Others think the Christian church. It is probable that the more immediate accomplishment of this prophecy will be subsequent to the conversion of the Jews, their restoration to their own land, the destruction of Gog and Magog, and the pouring out of the Spirit, mentioned in the close of the foregoing chapter; and it will perhaps continue through the thousand years, during which Satan will be chained up in the bottomless pit.—*Scott.* 3. *He stood in the gate.* He appeared in the character of a surveyor. 5. *So he measured the breadth of the building, &c.* There has never been any temple answering the description here given. Some think that the ground plan is nearly the same as that of Solomon's temple, and might be taken as a guide for the erection of the temple after the return from the captivity. But commentators have come to no decision as to what city, temple, and land are intended, or whether the reference is to former or future times; whether this and the subsequent chapters are to be understood literally or figuratively; or whether it relates to the church on earth or in heaven. The literal interpretation receives a strong check from the river of water springing from the threshold of the temple, enlarging till it reached the Dead Sea, and sweetening its waters; with the trees growing on the banks of the river, bearing fruit every month. Some yet future and extraordinary enlargement of the church seems to be here predicted. In the mean time we should learn that the great Builder of the spiritual temple, whose power and glory are infinite and eternal, always works by rule; and, whilst he performs his secret counsels, he requires us to compare all our works with the standard of his word. Every part of Scripture is Divine, useful, and important, in different ways or to different persons; but it may not all be so immediately useful to us; others have had, and others will have, the benefit of some portions which are to us not so intelligible or full of instruction. But if we cannot understand or edify by any part of Scripture, we should humbly acknowledge our own ignorance, and adore the Divine wisdom and knowledge, and not allow ourselves to start objections on that account. Yet, as some portions are more clear, and to us, at least, more important than others, so a fondness for the study of the obscure parts in preference to the obvious, is a folly, and a temptation sometimes even of godly men.—*Scott.*

CHAP. XLI.—1. *Afterward he brought me, &c.* This chapter introduces the reader into the sacred edifice, the exterior of which was before described. 18. *Cherubims:* were intended to symbolize the presence of Jehovah. *Palm trees:* were intended to symbolize the character of the true worshippers; denoting integrity, perseverance, victory, *Ps.* xcii. 12; *Cant.* vii. 7; *Rev.* vii. 9.

CHAP. XLII.—1. *Then he brought me, &c.* This is by some commentators supposed to describe buildings not before mentioned.

CHAP. XLIII.—4. *And the glory of the Lord came into the house.* All external institutions of religion derive their excellency and efficacy from the presence and manifested glory of God in them; and as this glory is displayed in Christ our "Sun of righteousness," we sinners may behold it with comfort. His voice, indeed, is very terrible to his enemies, and at first excites great commotion and consternation in the hearts of his chosen people; but when they are taught by the Holy Spirit they experience its power accompanied with peace and comfort to their souls. 7. *Carcases of their kings.* Michaelis supposed that some of their idolatrous kings might have been buried in the precincts of Solomon's temple, and perhaps afterwards idolized: see 2 *Kin.* xxi. 18—26. 8. *In their setting of their threshold, &c.* The thresholds of the idol temples are peculiarly sacred, and there they are wont to pay their humblest adorations.

CHAP. XLIV.—2. *Gate shall be shut—because the Lord—hath entered in by it.* Among other marks of respect paid to a sovereign in the East, this is one, that the gate whereby he enters is in future closed to all other persons. 25. *And they shall come, &c.* From this verse those to the end are repetitions of the Mosaic law, as ver. 26, *Num.* xix. 11; ver. 28, *Deu.* x. 9; ver. 29, *Lev.* xxvi.; xxvii. 28, *Num.* xviii. 14; ver. 30, *Num.* xv. 20; vi. 23, *Deu.* x. 8; ver. 31, *Ex.* xxii. 31, *Lev.* xxii. 8. All, says T. Scott, in his observations on this chapter, who are employed in the ministry should be of harmless and blameless conversation; sound in the faith, full of good works; of exemplary temperance, sobriety, and gravity; walking humbly before God, and circumspectly in the sight of men; not arrogating honour to themselves, or leading the people into a superstitious veneration of them, yet acting honourably, and maintaining a sober peculiarity in their whole conduct. They should perform the most common actions of life in a pious and sanctified manner; their apparel, and the whole of their style of living, should be plain, simple, frugal, and such as manifests their indifference about worldly things; they should be careful in forming connexions, and in the choice of wives, and prudent in the management of their families; and shew that they are governed by reason, conscience, and the fear of God, not by passion and humour, in all matters. Lord, increase the number of faithful and exemplary ministers, and enlarge and prosper the spiritual priesthood all over the whole earth!

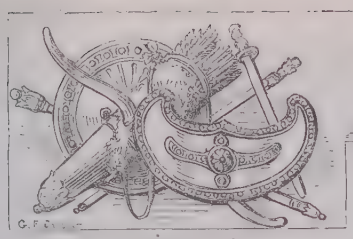
CHAP. XLV.—1. *Offer an oblation to the Lord.* 15. *Meat offering:* more properly the bread offering, for it was made of fine flour mingled with oil, *Lev.* ii. 5, 6. It is the duty of Christians, according to their ability, to provide for the decent and comfortable subsistence of ministers, that they may attend to their work without distraction. But it becomes ministers to be content even with a scanty provision, and to "suffer all things rather than hinder the Gospel of Christ." Subjects, also, should willingly contribute what is requisite to the honourable support of their governors and the charges of government; and princes, especially the princes of Israel, ought to imitate the equity and lenity of Christ our King; they should use their authority for the good of the people, and lay no needless or oppressive burthens on them; and if any have deviated from these salutary rules, (as, alas, too many have and still do,) they must be warned to proceed no farther, but to remove all violence and spoil, and to terminate all exactions. These are the duties of men in every age; and the happy time is coming when all ranks in every part of the earth will attend to them. But our very best duties are polluted with sin; errors, ignorance, and simplicity, as well as our wilful sins, need the same cleansing in the fountain of the Redeemer's blood.—*Scott.*

CHAP. XLVI.—4. *Six lambs.* The Mosaic law appointed only two lambs, without a ram: see *Num.* xxviii. 8. The other proportions of the meat and drink offerings are also different: compare ver, 4, 6, 7, and 14, with *Num.* xxviii. 9, 11, 12. 14. *Every morning.* The morning offering only is mentioned; an important difference from the Jewish ritual: see *Ex.* xxix. 38—46.

CHAP. XLVII.—1. *Waters issued, &c.* Literally, no such waters were ever in the temple; and, because there were none, Solomon had the brazen sea made for the use of the temple. 5. *Waters were risen.* A beautiful representation of the gradual progress of the Gospel. 8. *The waters shall be healed.* This finely represents the tendency of the Gospel to heal the corruptions of human nature. 11. *But the miry places, &c.* Here the waters obtained no entrance, representing the case of those who reject, neglect, or pervert the Gospel; or those countries which exclude it from them. 12. *And by the river—grow all trees, &c.* The writer of the Apocalypse has almost transcribed this part of the vision, and applied it to the salvation of Christ, as perfected in the felicity of heaven. 13. *This shall be the border.* Dr. Keith considers this as pointing out the boundaries and extent of the Holy Land, when it shall, as he conceives, be restored to the Jewish people. W. Lowth says, 'There is, without question, a mystical sense implied under this literal description.' 16. *Hamath.* A city and province of Syria, on the river Orontes, and the northern point of the land towards the west frontier.——The more carefully we examine the things of God and religion, the more interesting will be our discoveries concerning them. All our invaluable privileges and advantages are conveyed to us through the Gospel; they flow from Christ our temple, altar, and door of access to the Father; they all spring from the everlasting love and mercy of our God through his atoning sacrifice, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit; and the course of the greatest rivers might far more easily be stopped than the progress of his Gospel when God is pleased to prosper the labours of his servants. It has hitherto continued gradually to diffuse its influence; and it will still gradually run wider and deeper in its energy and effects, till it shall fill, heal, and fructify the whole earth.—*Scott.*

CHAP. XLVIII.—35. *The name of the city—the Lord is there.* The descriptive name here given to the city, Jehovah-Shammah, is sufficiently definite, as implying God's continual presence with his church under every dispensation.—*Domestic Bible.* Whether these latter chapters (says the Editor of the work last quoted) were written to aid in the erection of a new temple after the destruction of that built by Solomon, or to guide the builders of a temple yet to be erected, or to represent in mystical terms an unearthly temple, the church of God in which he is and shall be worshipped and adored—it ought to be considered as a portion of the inspired word of God, which is written for our instruction; and, in the absence of a better light than that which is at present shed upon it, we should view it as such, and endeavour to derive from it that edification which it is calculated to give; not indulging in vain fancies by spiritualizing, as it is called, every little particular in the sacred structure, and making the word of God a toy for our imaginations, but turning it to such account that we may be aided in ourselves "growing up a holy temple in the Lord—an habitation of God through the Spirit." For this purpose, the pious and judicious remarks of Scott have been used. The Lord make us meet to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," and inhabitants of "the holy Jerusalem," where "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it," and where it may emphatically be said, as in the language of the prophet, "The Lord is there."

CYCLOPEAN WALL.



ARMOUR OF THE

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE BOOK OF

WARLIKE EMPIRES.

THE PROPHET DANIEL,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE book of *Ezekiel* left the affairs of Jerusalem under a doleful aspect, all in ruins, but with a joyful prospect of all in glory again. This of Daniel fitly follows. Ezekiel told us what was seen, and what was foreseen, by him in the former years of the captivity; Daniel tells us what was seen, and foreseen, in the latter years of the captivity. When God employs different hands, yet it is about the same work. And it was a comfort to the poor captives that they had first one prophet among them and then another, to shew them how long, and a sign that God had not quite cast them off. Let us inquire,

I. Concerning this prophet. His Hebrew name was Daniel, which signifies, 'the judgment of God;' his Chaldean name was Belteshazzar. He was of the tribe of Judah, and, as it should seem, of the royal family; he was betimes eminent for wisdom and piety. Ezekiel, his contemporary, but much his senior, speaks of him as an oracle, when thus he upbraids the king of Tyre with his conceitedness of himself, "Thou art wiser than Daniel," *Eze.* xxviii. 3. He is likewise there celebrated for success in prayer, when Noah, Daniel, and Job are reckoned as three men who had the greatest interest in heaven of any other, *Eze.* xiv. 14. He began betimes to be famous, and continued long so. Some of the Jewish rabbins are loth to acknowledge him to be a prophet of the higher form, and therefore rank his book among the *Hagiographa,* not among the prophecies, and would not have their disciples pay much regard to it. One reason they pretend is, because he did not live such a mean mortified life as Jeremiah, and some other of the prophets, did, but lived like a prince, and was a prime minister of state; whereas we find him persecuted as other prophets were, *ch.* vi., and mortifying himself as other prophets did, when he ate no pleasant bread, *ch.* x. 3, and fainting and sick when he was under the power of the spirit of prophecy, *ch.* viii. 27. Another reason they pretend is, because he wrote his book in a heathen country, and there had his visions, and not in the land of Israel; but by the same reason Ezekiel also must be expunged out of the roll of prophets. But the true reason is, he speaks so plainly of the time of the Messiah's coming that the Jews cannot avoid the conviction of it, and therefore do not care to hear of it. But Josephus calls him one of the greatest of the prophets, nay, the angel Gabriel calls him "a man greatly beloved." He lived long an active life in the courts and councils of some of the greatest monarchs the world ever had,—Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius; for we mistake if we confine the privilege of an intercourse with heaven to speculative men, or those who spend their time in contemplation. No; who was more intimately acquainted with the mind of God than Daniel, a courtier, a statesman, and a man of business? The Spirit, as the wind, blows where it lists. And if those who have much to do in the world plead that as an excuse for the seldomness and slightness of their converse with God, Daniel will condemn them. Some have thought he returned to Jerusalem, and was one of the masters of the Greek synagogue, but nothing of that appears in Scripture; it is, therefore, generally concluded he died in Persia, at Susa, where he lived to be very old.

II. Concerning this book. The first six chapters of it are historical, and are plain and easy; the six last are prophetical, and in them are many things dark and hard to be understood, which yet would be more intelligible if we had a more complete history of the nations, and especially of the Jewish nation, from Daniel's time to the coming of the Messiah. Our Saviour intimates the difficulty of apprehending the sense of Daniel's prophecies, when speaking of them he saith, "Let him that readeth understand," *Mat.* xxiv. 15. The first chapter, and the three first verses of the second chapter, are in Hebrew; thence to the eighth chapter is in the Chaldee dialect; from thence to the end is in Hebrew. Mr. Broughton observes, that as the Chaldeans were kind to Daniel, and gave cups of cold water to him when he requested it, rather than the king's wine, God would not have them lose their reward, but made that language which they taught him to have honour in his writings through all the world unto this day. Daniel, according to his computation, continueth the holy story from the first surprising of Jerusalem by the Chaldean Babel, when he himself was carried away captive, until the last destruction of it by Rome, the mystical Babel, for so far forward his predictions look, *ch.* ix. 27. The fables of *Susanna,* and of *Bel and the Dragon,* in both which Daniel is made a party, are apocryphal stories, which we think we have no reason to give any credit to, they being never found in the Hebrew or Chaldee, but only in the Greek, nor ever admitted by the Jewish church. There are some, both of the histories and of the prophecies of this book, that bear date in the latter end of the Chaldean monarchy; and others, of both, that are dated in the beginning of the Persian monarchy; but both Nebuchadnezzar's dream which he interpreted and his own visions point at the Grecian and Roman monarchy, and very particularly at the Jews' troubles under Antiochus, which it would be of great use to them to prepare for, as his fixing the very time for the coming of the Messiah was to all them that waited for the consolation of Israel, and is to us for the confirming of our belief, that this is he who should come, and we are to look for no other.

A.M. 3397. B.C. 607.

CHAPTER I.

This chapter gives us a more particular account of the beginning of Daniel's life, his original and education, than we have of any other of the prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, began immediately with Divine visions; but Daniel began with the study of human learning, and was afterwards honoured with Divine visions; such variety of methods has God taken in training up men for the service of his church. We have here, I. Jehoiakim's first captivity, ver. 1, 2, in which Daniel, with others of the seed royal, were carried to Babylon. II. The choice made of Daniel, and some other young men, to be brought up in the Chaldean literature, that they might be fitted to serve the government, and the provision made for them, ver. 3—7. III. Their pious refusal to eat of the portion of the king's meat, and their determining to live upon pulse and water, which, having tried it, the master of the eunuchs allowed them to do, finding that it agreed very well with them, ver. 8—16. IV. Their wonderful improvement above all their fellows in wisdom and knowledge, ver. 17—21.

IN the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. 3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring *certain* of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4 Children in whom *was* no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as *had* ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. 5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. 6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel *the name* of Belteshazzar; and

to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

We have in these verses an account.

First. Of the first descent which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, made upon Judah and Jerusalem, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, and his success in that expedition, ver. 1, 2. He besieged Jerusalem, soon made himself master of it, seized the king, took whom he pleased and what he pleased away with him, and then left Jehoiakim to reign as tributary to him, which he did about eight years longer, but then rebelled, and it was his ruin. Now from this first captivity most interpreters think the seventy years are to be dated, though Jerusalem was not destroyed, nor the captivity completed, till about nineteen years after. In that first year Daniel was carried to Babylon, and there continued the whole seventy years, (see ver. 21,) during which time all nations shall serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his son's son, *Jer.* xxv. 11. So that this one prophet saw, within the compass of his own time, the rise, reign, and ruin of that monarchy; so that it was *res unius ætatis*,—'the affair of a single age.' Such short-lived things are the kingdoms of the earth, but the kingdom of heaven is everlasting. The righteous, that see them taking root, shall see their fall, *Job* v. 3; *Pr.* xxix. 16. Mr. Broughton observes the proportion of times in God's government since the coming out of Egypt—thence to their entering Canaan forty years—thence seven years to the dividing of the land—thence seven jubilees to the first year of Samuel, in whom prophecy begun—thence to this first year of the captivity seven seventies of years (four hundred and ninety, ten jubilees)—thence to the return one seventy—thence to the death of Christ seven seventies more—and from thence to the destruction of Jerusalem forty years.

Secondly. The improvement he made of this success. He did not destroy the city or kingdom, but did that which just accomplished the first threatening of mischief by Babylon; it was that denounced against Hezekiah, for shewing his treasure to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, *Isa.* xxxix. 6, 7, that the treasures and the children should be carried away; and if they had been humbled and reformed by this, hitherto the king of Babylon's power and success should have gone, but no farther. If lesser judgments do the work, God will not send greater; but if not, he will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Let us see what was now done.

1. The vessels of the sanctuary were carried away, part of them, ver. 2. They fondly trusted to the temple to defend them, though they went on in their iniquity; and now, to shew them the vanity of that confidence, the temple is first plundered. Many of the holy vessels which used to be employed in the service of God were taken away by the king of Babylon, those of them, it is likely, that were most valuable, and he brought them as trophies of victory to the "house of his god," to whom, with a blind devotion, he gave the praise of his success; and, having appropriated these vessels in token of gratitude to his god, he put them in the treasury of his temple. See the righteousness of God; his people had brought the images of other gods into his temple, and now he suffers the vessels of the temple to be carried into the treasuries of those other gods. Note, When men profane the vessels of the sanctuary with their sins, it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. It is likely the treasures of the king's house were rifled, as was foretold; but particular mention is made of the taking away of the vessels of the sanctuary, because we shall find afterwards that the profanation of them was that which filled up the measure of the Chaldeans' iniquity, *ch.* v. 3. But observe, it was only part of them that went now, some were left them yet upon trial, to see if they would take the right course to prevent the carrying away of the remainder: see *Jer.* xxvii. 18.

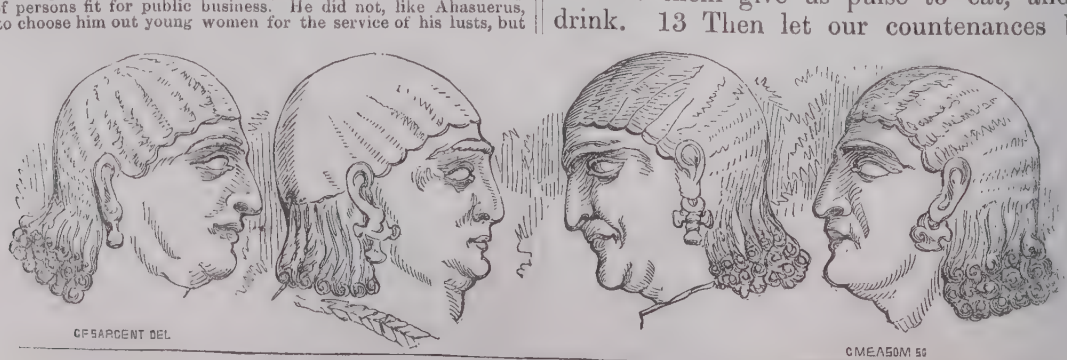
2. The children and young men, especially such as were of noble or royal extraction, that were sightly and promising, and of good natural parts, were carried away. Thus was the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children. These were taken away by Nebuchadnezzar, 1st. As trophies to be made a show of, for the evidencing and magnifying of his success. 2nd. As hostages for the fidelity of their parents in their own land, who would be concerned to carry themselves well, that their children might have the better treatment. 3rd. As a seed to serve him. He took them away to train them up for employments and preferments under him; either out of an unaccountable affectation, which great men often have, to be attended by foreigners, though they be blacks, rather than by those of their own nation, or because he knew that there were no such witty, sprightly, ingenious young men to be found among his Chaldeans as abounded among the youth of Israel; and, if that were so, it was much for the honour of the Jewish nation, as of an uncommon genius above other people, and a fruit of the blessing. But it was a shame that a people that had so much wit should have so little wisdom and grace. Now observe,

First. The directions which the king of Babylon gave for the choice of these youths, ver. 4. They must not choose such as were deformed in body, but comely and well-favoured, whose countenances were indexes of ingenuity and good humour. But that is not enough: they must be skilful in all wisdom and cunning, or well seen in knowledge, and understanding science; that were quick and sharp, and could give a ready and intelligent account of their own country, and of the learning they had hitherto been brought up in. He chose such as were young, because they would be pliable and tractable, would forget their own people and incorporate with the Chaldeans. He had an eye to what he designed them for; they must be such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, not only to attend his royal person, but to preside in his affairs. This is an instance of the policy of this rising monarch, now in the beginning of his reign, and was a good omen of his prosperity, that he was in care to raise up a succession of persons fit for public business. He did not, like Ahasuerus, appoint them to choose him out young women for the service of his lusts, but young men for the service of his government. It is the interest of princes to have wise men employed under them; it is, therefore, their wisdom to take care for the finding out and training up of such. It is the misery of this world that so many who are fit for public stations are buried in obscurity, and so many who are unfit for them are preferred to them.

Secondly. The care which he took concerning them. 1*st.* For their education. He ordered that they should be taught "the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." They are supposed to be wise and knowing young men, and yet they must be farther taught. "Give instructions to a wise man, and he will increase in learning." Note, Those who would do good in the world when they are grown up must learn when they are young—that is the learning age. If that time be lost, it will hardly be redeemed. What unlawful arts were used among the Chaldeans—magic and divination—it doth not appear that Nebuchadnezzar designed they should learn them; if he did, Daniel and his fellows would not defile themselves with them. Nay, we do not find that he ordered them to be taught the religion of the Chaldeans. By this it appears he was at this time no bigot; if men were skilful and faithful, and fit for his business, it was not material to him what religion they were of, provided they had but some religion. They must be trained up in the language and laws of the country, in history, philosophy, and mathematics; in the arts of husbandry, war, and navigation; in such learning as might qualify them to serve their generation. Note, It is real service to the public to provide for the good education of youth. 2*nd.* For their maintenance. He provided for them three years, not only necessaries, but dainties, for their encouragement in their studies. They had "daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank," ver. 5. This was an instance of his generosity and humanity. Though they were his captives, he considered their birth and quality, their spirit and genius, and treated them honourably, and studied to make their captivity easy to them. There is a respect owing to those who are well born and bred, when they are fallen into distress. With a liberal education there should be a liberal maintenance.

Thirdly. A particular account of Daniel and his fellows. They were of the children of Judah, the royal tribe, and probably of the house of David, which was grown a numerous family. And God told Hezekiah, that of the children that should issue from him some should be taken and made eunuchs or chamberlains in the palace of the king of Babylon. The prince of the eunuchs changed the names of Daniel and his fellows, partly to shew his authority over them, and their subjection to him, and partly in token of their being naturalized and made Chaldeans. Their Hebrew names, which they received at their circumcision, had something of God or Jah in them. Daniel, 'God is my Judge;' Hananiah, 'the grace of the Lord;' Mishael, 'he that is the strong God;' Azariah, 'the Lord is a help.' To make them forget the God of their fathers, the guide of their youth, they give them names that smell of the Chaldean idolatry. Belteshazzar signifies 'the keeper of the hid treasures of Bel:' Shadrach, 'the inspiration of the sun,' which the Chaldeans worshipped; Meshach, 'of the goddess Shach,' under which name Venus was worshipped; Abed-nego, 'the servant of the shining fire,' which they worshipped also. Thus, though they would not force them from the religion of their fathers to that of their conquerors, yet they did what they could by fair means insensibly to wean them from the former, and instil the latter into them. Yet see how comfortably they were provided for; though they suffered for their fathers' sins they were preferred for their own merits, and the land of their captivity was made more comfortable to them than the land of their nativity at this time would have been.

8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which *are* of your sort? then shall ye make *me* endanger my head to the king. 11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked



HEADS OF EUNUCHS.—FROM ASSYRIAN MARBLES.

upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

We observe here, very much to our satisfaction,

First. That Daniel was a favourite with "the prince of the eunuchs," ver. 9, as Joseph was with the keeper of the prison. He had a tender love for him. No doubt Daniel deserved it, and recommended himself by his ingenuity and sweetness of temper; he was greatly beloved, *ch.* ix. 23; and yet it is said here it was God that brought him into favour with the prince of the eunuchs, for every one doth not meet with acceptance according to his merits. Note, The interest which we think we make for ourselves we must acknowledge to be God's gift, and must ascribe to him the glory of it. Whoever are in favour, it is God that has brought them into favour; and it is by him that they find good understanding. Herein was again verified that word, *Ps.* cvi. 46, "He makes them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives." Let young ones know that the way to be acceptable is to be tractable and dutiful.

Secondly. That Daniel was still firm to his religion. They had changed his name, but they could not change his nature; whatever they pleased to call him, he still retained the spirit of an Israelite indeed. He would apply his mind as closely as any of them all to his book, and took pains to make himself master of the "learning and tongue of the Chaldeans;" but he was resolved "he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat," he would not meddle with it, "nor with the wine which he drank," ver. 8. And having communicated his purpose, with the reasons of it, to his fellows, they concurred in the same resolution, as appears, ver. 11. This was not out of sullenness, or peevishness, or a spirit of contradiction, but from a principle of conscience. Perhaps it was not in itself unlawful for them to "eat of the king's meat," or to "drink of his wine;" but,

1. They were scrupulous concerning the meat, lest it should be sinful. Sometimes such meat would be set before them as was expressly forbidden by their law, as swine's flesh; or, they were afraid lest it should have been offered in sacrifice to an idol, or blessed in the name of an idol. The Jews were distinguished from other nations very much by their meats, *Lev.* xi. 45, 46, and these pious young men, being in a strange country, thought themselves obliged to keep up the honour of their being a peculiar people. Though they could not keep up their dignity as princes, they would not lose it as Israelites; for by that they most valued themselves. Note, When God's people are in Babylon they have need to take special care that they partake not in her sins. Providence seemed to lay this meat before them; being captives, they must eat what they could get, and must not disoblige their masters; yet, if the command be against it, they must abide by that. Though Providence saith, "Kill and eat," conscience saith, "Not so, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has come into my mouth."

2. They were jealous over themselves, lest, though it should not be sinful in itself, it should be an occasion of sin to them; lest, by indulging their appetites with these dainties, they should grow sinful and voluptuous, and in love with the pleasures of Babylon. They had learned David's prayer, "Let me not eat of their dainties," *Ps.* cxli. 4; and Solomon's precept, "Be not desirous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat," *Pr.* xxiii. 3; and accordingly they form their resolution. Note, It is very much the praise of all, and especially of young people, to be dead to the delights of sense, not to covet them, not to relish them, but to look upon them with an indifferency. Those that would excel in wisdom and piety must learn betimes to "keep under the body, and bring it into subjection."

3. However they thought it unreasonable now, when Jerusalem was in distress, and they themselves in captivity, they had no heart "to drink wine in bowls," so much were they "grieved for the affliction of Joseph." Though they had royal blood in their veins, yet they did not think it proper to have royal dainties in their mouths, when they were thus brought low. Note, It becomes us to be humble under humbling providences. "Call me not Naomi, call me Marah." See the benefit of affliction; by the account Jeremiah gives of the princes and great men now at Jerusalem it appears they were very corrupt and wicked, and defiled themselves with things offered to idols, while these young gentlemen that were in captivity would not defile themselves, no, not with their "portion of the king's meat." How much better is it with those that retain their integrity in the depths of affliction than with those that retain their iniquity in the heights of prosperity. Observe, the great thing that Daniel avoided was, defiling himself with the pollutions of sin. That is the thing we should be more afraid of than of any outward trouble. Daniel having taken up this resolution, he "requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself;" not only that he might not be compelled to do it, but that he might not be tempted to do it; that the bait might not be laid before him; that he might not see the portion appointed him of the king's meat, nor look upon the wine when it was red. It will be easier to keep the temptation at a distance than to suffer it to come near, and then be forced to put a knife to our throat. Note, We cannot better improve our interest in any with whom we have found favour than to make use of them to keep us from sin.

Thirdly. That God wonderfully owned him herein. When Daniel requested that he might have none of the king's meat or wine set before him, the prince of the eunuchs objected that, if he and his fellows were not found in as good case as any of their companions, he should be in danger of having anger, and of losing his head, ver. 10.

Daniel, to satisfy him that there would be no danger of any ill consequences, desires the matter might be put to a trial. He applies himself farther to the under-officer, Melzar, or the steward: Prove us for ten days; during that time let us have nothing but herbs and fruits, or parched peas or lentils, and nothing but water to drink, and see how we can live upon that, and proceed accordingly, ver. 13. People will not believe the benefit of abstemiousness and a spare diet, nor how much it contributes to the health of the body, unless they try it. Trial was accordingly made. Daniel and his fellows lived for ten days upon pulse and water. Hard fare for young men of genteel extraction and education, and which one would rather expect they should have contended against than petitioned for; but "at the end of the ten days" they were compared with the other children, and were found "fairer and fatter in flesh," of a more healthful look and a better complexion, than "all those which did eat the portion of the king's meat," ver. 15. This was in part a natural effect of their temperance, but it must be ascribed to the special blessing of God, which will make a little to go a great way, a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox. By this it appears that "man lives not by bread alone." Pulse and water shall be the most nourishing food, if God speak the word. See what it is to keep ourselves pure from the pollutions of sin; it is the way to have that comfort and satisfaction which will be "health to the navel, and marrow to the bones," while the pleasures of sin are "rottenness to the bones."

Fourthly. That his master countenanced him. The steward did not force them to eat against their consciences, but, as they desired, "gave them pulse and water, ver. 16, the pleasures of which they enjoyed, and we have reason to think were not envied the enjoyment. Here is a great example of temperance, and contentment with mean things; and, as Epicurus said, 'He that lives according to nature will never be poor, but he that lives according to opinion will never be rich.' This wonderful abstemiousness of these young men in the days of their youth contributed to the fitting of them, 1. For their eminent services. Hereby they kept their minds clear and unclouded, and fit for contemplation, and saved for the best employments a great deal both of time and thought: and thus they prevented those diseases which indispose men for the business of age, that owe their rise to the intemperances of youth. 2. For their eminent sufferings. They that had thus inured themselves to hardship, and lived a life of self-denial and mortification, could the more easily venture upon the fiery furnace and the den of lions, rather than sin against God.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm. 21 And Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Concerning Daniel and his fellows, we have here,

First. Their great attainments in learning, ver. 17. They were very sober and diligent, and studied hard; and, we may suppose, their tutors, finding them of an uncommon capacity, took a deal of pains with them; but, after all, their achievements are ascribed to God only. It was he that "gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, for "every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights." It is the Lord our God that gives men power to get this wealth. The mind is furnished only by him that formed it. The great learning which God gave these four children was, 1. A balance for their losses. They had, for the iniquity of their fathers, been deprived of the honours and pleasures that would have attended their noble extraction; but, to make them amends for that, God, in giving them learning, gave them better honours and pleasures than those they had been deprived of. 2. A recompense for their integrity. They kept to their religion, even in the minutest instances of it, and would not so much as defile themselves with the king's meat or wine, but became in effect Nazarites, and now God rewarded them for it with an eminency in learning; for "God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom and knowledge, and joy" with them, *Eccl.* ii. 26. To Daniel he gave a double portion; he "had understanding in visions and dreams." He knew how to interpret dreams, as Joseph, not by rules of art, such as are pretended to be given by the Oneirocritics, but by a Divine sagacity and wisdom which God gave him. Nay, he was endued with a prophetical spirit, by which he was enabled to converse with God, and to receive the notices of Divine things in dreams and visions, *Num.* xii. 6. According to this gift given to Daniel, we find him in this book all along employed about dreams and visions, interpreting or entertaining them; for "as every one has received the gift," so shall he have an opportunity, and so should he have a heart, to "minister the same," 1 *Pet.* iv. 10.

Secondly. Their great acceptance with the king. After three years spent in their education, (they being of some maturity, it is likely, when they came, perhaps about twenty years old,) they were presented to the king, with the rest that were of their standing, ver. 18; and the king examined them, and communed with them himself, ver. 19. He could do it, being a man of parts and learning himself, else he had not come to be so great; and he would do it, for it is the wisdom of princes, in the choice of the persons they employ, to see with their own eyes, to exercise their own judgment, and not trust too much to others' representation. The king examined them, not so much in the languages, in the rules of oratory or poetry, as "in all matters of wisdom and understanding," the rules of prudence and true politics; he inquired into their judgment about the due conduct of human life, and public affairs; not, Were they wits? but, Were they wise? And he found them to excel not only the young candidates for preferment that were of their own standing, but that they had "more understanding than the ancients, than all their teachers," *Ps.* cxix. 99, 100. So far was the king from being partial to his own countrymen, to seniors, to those of his own religion, and of an established reputation, that he freely owned that, upon trial, he found these poor young captive Jews ten times wiser and "better than all the magicians that were in all his realm," ver. 20. He was soon aware of something extraordinary in these young men; and, which gave him a surprising satisfaction, was soon aware that a little of their true divinity was preferable to a great deal of the divination he had been used to. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" the magicians' rods to Aaron's? There was no comparison between them. These four young students were better, were ten times better, than all the old practitioners, put them all together, that were in all his

realm, and we may be sure they were not a few. This contempt did God pour upon the pride of the Chaldeans, and this honour did he put upon the low estate of his own people. And thus did he make not only those persons, but the rest of their nation, for their sakes, the more respected in the land of their captivity. Lastly, This judgment being given concerning them, they "stood before the king," ver. 19. They attended in the presence chamber, nay, in the council chamber; for to see the king's face is the peraphrasis of a privy councillor, *Est.* i. 14. This confirms Solomon's observation, "Seest thou a man delight in his business," sober and humble, "he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men." Industry is the way to preferment. How long the other three were about the court we are not told; but Daniel, for his part, "continued to the first year of Cyrus," ver. 21, though not always alike in favour and reputation. He lived and prophesied after the first year of Cyrus, but that is mentioned to intimate that he lived to see the deliverance of his people out of their captivity, and their return to their own land. Note, Sometimes God favours his servants that mourn with Zion in her sorrows, to let them live to see better times with the church than they saw in the beginning of their days, and to share with her in her joys.

CHAPTER II.

It was said, *ch.* i. 17, that Daniel had understanding in dreams; and here we have an early and eminent instance of it, which soon made him famous in the court of Babylon, as Joseph by the same means came to be so in the court of Egypt. This chapter is a history, but it is the history of a prophecy, by a dream, and the interpretation of it. Pharaoh's dream, and Joseph's interpretation of it, related only to the years of plenty and famine, and the interest of God's Israel in them; but Nebuchadnezzar's dream here, and Daniel's interpretation of that, looks much higher, to the four monarchies, and the concerns of Israel in them, and the kingdom of the Messiah which should be set up in the world, upon the ruins of them. In this chapter we have, I. The great perplexity that Nebuchadnezzar was put into by a dream which he had forgotten, and his command to the magicians to tell him what it was, which they could not pretend to do, ver. 1—11. II. Orders given for the destroying of all the wise men of Babylon, and of Daniel among the rest, with his fellows, ver. 12—15. III. The discovery of this secret to him, in answer to prayer, and the thanksgiving he offered up to God thereupon, ver. 16—23. IV. His admission to the king, and the discovery he made to him, both of his dream and of the interpretation of it, ver. 24—45. V. The great honour which Nebuchadnezzar put upon Daniel, in recompense for this service, and the preferment of his companions with him, ver. 46—49.

AND in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3 And the

PERSIAN COUNCILLORS BEFORE THE KING.

king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. 4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. 6 But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. 7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. 8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, *there is but* one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof. 10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore *there is* no king, lord, nor ruler, *that* asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 And *it is* a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. 12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise *men* of Babylon. 13 And the decree went forth that the wise *men* should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

We meet with a great difficulty in the date of this story. It is said to be in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 1. Now Daniel was carried to Babylon in his first year, and it should seem he was three years under tutors and governors before he was presented to the king, *ch.* i. 5. How then could this happen in the second year? Perhaps, though three years were appointed for the education of other children, yet Daniel was so pregnant that he was taken into business when he had been but one year at school, and so in the second year he became thus considerable. Some make it to be the second year after he began to reign alone, but the fifth or sixth year since he began to reign in partnership with his father. Some read it, And in the second year (namely, the second after Daniel and his fellows stood before the king) in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, or in his reign, this happened. As Joseph, in the second year after his skill in dreams, shewed and expounded Pharaoh's, so Daniel, in the second year after he commenced master in that art, did this service. I would much rather take it some of these ways than suppose, as some do, that it was in the second year after he had conquered Egypt, which was the thirty-sixth year of his reign, because it appears by what we meet with in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for wisdom and prevalency in prayer long before that; and therefore this passage or story, which shews how he came to be so eminent for both these, must be laid early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Now here we may observe,

First. The loss that Nebuchadnezzar was in by reason of a dream which he had dreamed, but had forgotten; ver. 1, "He dreamed dreams;" that is, a dream consisting of divers distinct parts, or which filled his head as much as if it had been many dreams. Solomon speaks of a "multitude of dreams," strangely incoherent, in which there are divers vanities, *Eccl.* v. 7. This dream of Nebuchadnezzar had nothing in the thing itself but what might be paralleled in many a common dream, in which are often presented to men things as foreign as this here; but there was something in the impression it made upon him which carried with it an incontestable evidence of its Divine original, and its prophetic significancy. Note, The greatest of men are not exempt from, nay, they lie most open to, those cares and troubles of mind which disturb their repose in the night, while the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, and sound, and the sleep of the sober temperate man free from confused dreams. The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep at all for care, and the excesses of gluttons and drunkards will not suffer them to sleep quietly for dreaming. But this here was not from natural causes: Nebuchadnezzar was a troubler of God's Israel, but God here troubled him; for he that made the soul can "make his sword to approach to it." He had his guards about him, but they could not keep trouble from his spirit. We know not the uneasiness of many that live in great pomp, and one would think in pleasure too. We look into their houses, and are tempted to envy them, but could we look into their hearts we should pity them rather. All the treasures, and all the delights of the children of men, which this mighty monarch had the command of, could not procure him a little repose, when by reason of the trouble of his mind his "sleep brake from him." But God giveth his beloved sleep, who return to him as their rest.

Secondly. The trial that he made of his magicians and astrologers, whether they could tell him what his dream was which he had forgotten. They were presently sent "for to shew the king his dream," ver. 2. There are many things which we retain the impressions of, and yet have lost the images of the things; though we cannot tell what the matter was, we know how we were affected with it—so it was with this king. His dream was slipped out of his mind, and he could not possibly recollect it, but was confident he should know it if he heard it again. God ordered it so, that Daniel might have the more honour, in him the God of Daniel. Note, God sometimes serves his own purposes by putting things out of men's minds, as well as by putting things into their minds. The magicians, it is likely, were proud of their being sent for into the king's bedchamber, to give him a taste of their office, not doubting but it would be for their honour. He tells them he had "dreamed a dream," ver. 3. They speak to him in the Syriac tongue, which was then the same with the Chaldee, but now they differ much. And from henceforward Daniel useth that language or dialect of the Hebrew, for the same reason that those words, *Jer.* x. 11, are in that language, because designed to convince the Chaldeans of the folly of their idolatry, and to bring them to the knowledge and worship of the true and living God, which the stories of these chapters have a direct tendency to. But *ch.* viii., and forward, being intended for the comfort of the Jews, is written in their peculiar language. They, in their answer, complimented the

king with their good wishes, desired him to tell his dream, and undertook with all possible assurance to interpret it, ver. 4. But the king insisted upon it that they must tell him the dream itself, because he had forgotten it, and could not tell it them; and if they could not do this they should all be put to death as deceivers, ver. 5; themselves cut to pieces, and their houses made a dunghill. If they could, they should be rewarded and preferred, ver. 6. And they know, as Balaam did concerning Balak, that he is able to promote them to great honour, and give them the wages of unrighteousness which, like him, they love so dearly. No question, therefore, they will do their utmost to gratify the king: if they do not, it is not for want of good-will, but for want of power. Providence so ordering it that the magicians of Babylon might now be as much confounded and put to shame as of old the magicians of Egypt had been; that, how much soever his people were both in Egypt and Babylon vilified and made contemptible, his oracles might in both be magnified and made honourable, by the silencing of those that set up in competition with them. The magicians, having reason on their side, insist upon it that the king must tell them the dream; and then, if they do not tell him the interpretation of it, it is their fault, ver. 7. But arbitrary power is deaf to reason; the king falls into a passion, gives them a parcel of hard words, and, without any colour of reason, suspects that they could tell him, but would not; and, instead of upbraiding them with impotency, and the deficiency of their art, as he might justly have done, he charges them with a combination to affront him; "Ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me." How unreasonable and absurd is this imputation! If they had undertaken to tell him what his dream was, and had imposed upon him with a sham, he might have charged them with lying and corrupt words. But to say this of them when they honestly confessed their own weakness only shews what senseless things indulged passions are, and how apt great men are to think it is their prerogative to pursue their humour in defiance of reason and equity, and all the dictates of both. When the magicians begged of him to tell them the dream, though the request was highly rational and just, he tells them they did but dally with him to "gain time," ver. 8, "till the time be changed," ver. 9; either till the king's desire to know his dream be over, and he, grown indifferent whether he be told it or no, though now he is so hot upon it, or till they may hope he has so perfectly forgot his dream (the remaining shades of which are slipping from him apace as he catcheth at them) that they may tell him what they please, and make him believe it was his dream; and when the thing which is going is quite gone from him, as it will be in a little time, he will not be able to disprove them. And therefore, without delay, they must tell him the dream. In vain do they plead,

1. That there is no man on earth that can retrieve the king's dream, ver. 10. There are settled rules by which to discover what the meaning of the dream was, (whether they will hold or no is the question,) but never were any rules offered to be given by which to discover what the dream was; they cannot work unless they have something to work upon. They acknowledge that the gods may indeed "declare unto man what is his thought," *Am.* iv. 13, for he "understandeth our thoughts afar off," *Ps.* cxxxix. 2, what they will be before we think them, what they are when we do not regard them, and what they have been when we have forgotten them. But those who can do this are gods that have not their dwelling with flesh, ver. 11; and it is they alone that can do this. As for men, their dwelling is with flesh. The wisest and greatest of men are clouded with a veil of flesh, which quite obstructs and confounds all their acquaintance with spirits, and their powers and operations; but the gods, that are themselves pure spirits, know what is in man. See here an instance of the ignorance of these magicians, that they speak of many gods, whereas there is but one, and can be but one Infinite; yet see their knowledge of that which even the light of nature teacheth, and the works of nature prove, that there is a God who is a Spirit, and perfectly knows the spirits of men, and all their thoughts, so as it is not possible any man should. This confession of the Divine omniscience is here extorted from these idolaters, to the honour of God and their own condemnation, who, though they know there is a God in heaven, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, yet offered up their prayers and praises to dumb idols, that have "eyes and see not, ears and hear not."

2. That there is no king on earth that would expect or require such a thing, ver. 10. This intimates, that they were kings, lords, or potentates, not ordinary people, that the magicians had most dealings with, and at whose devotion they were, while the oracles of God, and the Gospel of Christ, are dispensed to the poor. Kings and potentates have often required unreasonable things of their subjects, but they think never any required so unreasonable a thing as this, and therefore hope his imperial majesty will not insist upon it. But it is all in vain; when passion is in the throne reason is under foot. He was "angry and very furious," ver. 12. Note, It is very common for those that will not be convinced by reason to be provoked and exasperated by it, and to push on with fury what they cannot support with equity.

Thirdly. The doom passed upon all the magicians of Babylon. There is but one decree for them all, ver. 9; they all stand condemned, without exception or distinction. The decree has gone forth, they must every man of them be slain, ver. 13, Daniel and his fellows, though they knew nothing of the matter, not excepted. See here, 1. What are commonly the unjust proceedings of arbitrary power. Nebuchadnezzar is here a tyrant in true colours, speaking death when he cannot speak sense, and treating those as traitors whose only fault is, that they would serve him, but cannot. 2. What is commonly the just punishment of pretenders. How unrighteous soever Nebuchadnezzar was in this sentence, as to the ringleaders in the imposture, God was righteous. They that imposed upon men, in taking on them to do what they could not do, are now sentenced to death for not being able to do what they did not pretend to.

14 Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise *men* of Babylon:
15 He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why *is* the decree *so* hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. 16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation. 17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise *men* of Babylon. 19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20 Daniel answered and said,

Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever:
For wisdom and might are his:
21 And he changeth the times and the seasons:
He removeth kings, and setteth up kings:
He giveth wisdom unto the wise,
And knowledge to them that know understanding:
22 He revealeth the deep and secret things:
He knoweth what *is* in the darkness,
And the light dwelleth with him.
23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers,
Who hast given me wisdom and might, [thee:
And hast made known unto me now what we desired of
For thou hast *now* made known unto us the king's matter.

When the king sent for his wise men to tell him his dream, and the interpretation of it, ver. 2, it seems Daniel was not summoned to appear among them. The king, though he was highly pleased with him when he examined him, and thought him ten times wiser than the rest of his wise men, yet forgot him when he had most occasion for him; and no wonder, when all was done in a heat, and nothing with a cool and deliberate thought. But Providence so ordered it that the magicians, being nonplussed, might be the more taken notice of, and so the more glory might redound to the God of Daniel. But though Daniel had not the honour to be consulted with the rest of the wise men, contrary to all law and justice, by an undistinguishing sentence, he stands condemned with them, and till he has notice brought him to prepare for execution knows nothing of the matter. How miserable is the case of those who live under an arbitrary government, as this of Nebuchadnezzar's! How happy we, whose lives are under the protection of the law and methods of justice, and lie not thus at the mercy of a peevish and capricious prince!

We have found already in Ezekiel that Daniel was famous both for prudence and prayer. As a prince he had power with God and man; by prayer he had power with God, by prudence he had power with man, and in both he prevailed. Thus did he "find favour and good understanding" in the sight of both. And in these verses we have a remarkable instance of both.

First. Daniel, by prudence, knew how to deal with men, and he prevailed with them. When Arioch, the captain of the guard, that was appointed to slay all the wise men of Babylon, the whole college of them, seized Daniel,—for the sword of tyranny, like the sword of war, devours one as well as another,—he "answered with counsel and wisdom," ver. 14. He did not fall into a passion, and reproach the king as unjust and barbarous, much less did he contrive how to make resistance, but mildly asked, "Why is the decree so hasty?" ver. 15. And whereas the rest of the wise men had insisted upon it that it was utterly impossible for him ever to have his demand gratified, which did but make him more outrageous, Daniel undertakes, if he may but have a little time allowed him, to give the king all the satisfaction he desired, ver. 16. The king, being now sensible of his error, in not sending for Daniel sooner, whose character he began to recollect, was soon prevailed with to respite the judgment, and make trial of Daniel. Note, The likeliest method to turn away wrath, even the wrath of a king, which is as the messenger of death, is by a soft answer—by that yielding which pacifies great offences. Thus, though where the word of a king is there is power, yet even that word may be repelled, and that so as to be repealed; and so some read it here, ver. 14. Then Daniel returned, and stayed the counsel and edict, through Arioch, the king's provost-marshal.

Secondly. Daniel knew how by prayer to converse with God, and he found favour with him, both in petition and in thanksgiving, which are the two principal parts of prayer. Observe,

1. His humble petition for this mercy, that God would discover to him what was the king's dream, and the interpretation of it. When he had gained time, he did not go to consult with the rest of the wise men, whether there was any thing in their art, in their books, that might be of use in this matter, but went to his house, there to be alone with his God; for from him alone, who is the Father of lights, he expected this great gift. Observe,

1st. He did not only pray for this discovery himself, but he engaged his companions to pray for it too. He made the thing known to them, who had been all along his bosom friends and associates, "that they would desire mercies of God concerning this secret," ver. 17, 18. Though Daniel was probably their senior, and every way excelled them, yet he engaged them as partners with him in this matter: *vis unita fortior*,—'the union of forces produces greater force:' see *Est.* iv. 16. Note, Praying friends are valuable friends; and it is good to have an intimacy with, and an interest in, those that have fellowship with God and an interest at the throne of grace. And it well becomes the greatest and best of men to desire the assistance of the prayers of others for them. St. Paul often bespeaks his friends to pray for him. Thus we must shew that we put a value upon our friends, upon prayer, upon their prayers.

2nd. He was particular in this prayer, but had an eye to, and a dependence upon, the general mercy of God, that "they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret," ver. 18. We ought, in prayer, to look up to God as the "God of heaven," a God above us, and that has dominion over us, to whom we owe adoration and allegiance, a God of power, who can do every thing. Our Saviour has taught us to pray to God as "our Father in heaven;" and whatever good we pray for our dependence must be upon the mercies of God for it, and an interest in those mercies we must desire. We can expect nothing by way of recompense for our merits, but all as the gift of God's mercies. They desired mercy "concerning this secret." Note, Whatever is the matter of our care must be the matter of our prayer; we must desire mercy of God concerning this thing and the other thing that occasions us trouble and fear. God gives us leave to be humbly free with him, and in prayer to enter into the detail of our wants and burthens. Secret things belong to the Lord our God, and therefore, if there be any mercy we stand in need of that concerns

a secret, to him we must apply ourselves; and though we cannot in faith pray for miracles, yet we may in faith pray to him who has all hearts in his hand, and who in his providence does wonders without miracles, for the discovery of that which is out of our ken, and the obtaining of that which is out of our reach, as far as it is for his glory and our good, believing that to him nothing is hid, nothing is hard.

3rd. Their plea with God was the imminent peril they were in. They desired mercy of God in this matter, that so "Daniel and his fellows might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon," that the righteous might not be destroyed with the wicked. Note, When the lives of good and useful men are in danger, it is time to be earnest with God for mercy for them, as for Peter in prison, *Acts* xii. 5.

4th. The mercy which Daniel and his fellows prayed for was bestowed. The secret was "revealed unto Daniel in a night vision," ver. 19. Some think he dreamed the same dream when he was asleep that Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed. It should rather seem that when he was awake, and continuing "instant in prayer," and "watching in the same," the dream itself, and the interpretation of it, was communicated to him by the ministry of an angel, abundantly to his satisfaction. Note, The "effectual fervent prayer of righteous men availeth much." There are mysteries and secrets which by prayer we are let into; with that key the cabinets of heaven are unlocked, for Christ hath said, Thus "knock, and it shall be opened to you."

2. His grateful thanksgiving for this mercy, when he had received it. "Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven," ver. 19. He did not stay till he had told it to the king, and seen whether he would own it to be his dream or no, but is confident it is so, and that he has gained his point, and therefore immediately turns his prayers into praises. As he had prayed in a full assurance that God would do this for him, so he gave thanks in a full assurance that he had done it, and in both he had an eye to God as the God of heaven. His prayer was not recorded, but his thanksgiving is. Observe,

1st. The honour he gives to God in his thanksgiving, which he studies to do in a great variety and copiousness of expression, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever." There is that for ever in God which is to be blessed and praised, it is unchangeably and eternally in him, and it is to be blessed for ever and ever. As the matter of praise is God's eternal perfection, so the work of praise shall be everlastingly in the doing. *First.* He gives to God the glory of what he is in himself; "Wisdom and might are his;" wisdom and courage, so some. Whatever is fit to be done he will do; whatever he will do and can do he dares do, and he will be sure to do it in the best manner, for he has infinite wisdom to design and contrive, and infinite power to execute and accomplish; "With him is strength and wisdom," which in men are often parted. *Secondly.* He gives him the glory of what he is to the world of mankind. He has an universal influence and agency upon all the children of men and all their actions and affairs. Are the times changed? Is the posture of affairs altered? Doth every thing lie open to mutability? It is God that "changeth the times and the seasons," and the face of them; no change comes to pass by chance, but according to the will and counsel of God. Are those that were kings removed and deposed? do they abdicate? are they laid aside? It is God that removes kings. Are the poor raised out of the dust to be set among princes? It is God that setteth up kings; and the making and unmaking of kings is a flower of his crown who is the fountain of all power, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Are there men that excel others in wisdom, philosophers and statesmen, that think above the common rate, contemplative, penetrating men? It is God that gives wisdom to the wise, whether they be so wise as to acknowledge it or no; they have it not of themselves, but it is he that "gives knowledge to them that know understanding," which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our knowledge, and why we should serve and honour God with it, and make it our business to know him. *Thirdly.* He gives him the glory of this particular discovery. He praiseth him, 1*st*. For that he could make such a discovery; ver. 22, "He revealeth the deep and secret things," which are hid from the eyes of all living. It was he that revealed to man what is true wisdom, when none else could, *Job* xxviii. 27, 28. It is he that reveals things to come to his servants the prophets; he doth himself perfectly discern and distinguish that which is most close and most industriously concealed, for he will "bring into judgment every secret thing;" the truth will be evident in the great day. He "knows what is in the darkness," and what is done in the darkness, for that "hides not from him," *Ps.* cxxxix. 11, 12; "The light dwells with him," and he "dwells in the light," 1 *Tim.* vi. 16, and yet as to us he "makes darkness his pavilion." Some understand it of the light of prophecy and Divine revelation, which dwells with God and is derived from him, for he is the Father of lights, of all lights; they are all at home in him. 2*nd*. For that he had made this discovery to him. Here he has an eye to God, the God of his fathers; for, though the Jews were now captives in Babylon, yet they were "beloved for their fathers' sake." He praiseth God, who is the fountain of wisdom and might, for the wisdom and might he had given him, wisdom to know this great secret and might to bear the discovery. Note, What wisdom and might we have we must acknowledge it to be God's gift; "Thou hast made this known to me," ver. 23. What was hid from the celebrated Chaldeans that made the interpreting of dreams their profession, is revealed to Daniel, a captive Jew, a babe, much their junior. God would hereby put honour upon the spirit of prophecy just when he was putting contempt upon the spirit of divination. Was Daniel thus thankful to God for making known that to him which was the saving of the life of him and his fellows? Much more reason have we to be thankful to him for making known to us the great salvation of the soul, to us and not to the world, to us and not to the wise and prudent.

2nd. The respect he puts upon his companions in his thanksgiving. Though it was by his prayers principally that this discovery was obtained, and to him that it was made, yet he owns their partnership with him; both in praying for it, It is what "we desired of thee," and in enjoying of it, "Thou hast made known unto us the king's matter." Either they were present with Daniel, when the discovery was made to him, or as soon as he knew it he told them, Εὕρηκα, Εὕρηκα, 'I have found it, I have found it;' that they who had assisted him with their prayers might assist him in their praises. His joining them with him is an instance of his humility and modesty, which well becomes those that are taken into communion with God. Thus St. Paul sometimes joins Sylvanus, Timotheus, or some other minister, with himself in the inscriptions to many of his epistles. Note, What honour God puts upon us we should be willing that our brethren may share with us in.

24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise *men* of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise *men* of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. 25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation. 26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? 27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise *men*, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; 28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29 As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came *into thy mind* upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. 30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for *any* wisdom that I have more than any living, but for *their* sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

We have here the introduction to Daniel's declaring of the dream and the interpretation of it.

First. He immediately bespoke the reversing of the sentence against the wise men of Babylon, ver. 24. He went with all speed to Arioch, to tell him his commission was now superseded; "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon." Though there were those of them, perhaps, that deserved to die as magicians, by the law of God, yet here that which they stood condemned for was not a crime worthy of death or of bonds, and therefore let them not die and be unjustly destroyed, but let them live and be justly ashamed, as having been nonplussed and unable to do that which a prophet of the Lord could do. Note, Since God shews common kindness to the evil and good, we should do so too, and be ready to save the lives even of bad men, *Mat.* v. 45. A good man is a common good; to Paul in the ship God gave the souls of all that sailed with him; they were saved for his sake. To Daniel was owing the preservation of all the wise men, who yet rendered not according to the benefit done to them, *ch.* iii. 8.

Secondly. He offered his service with great assurance to go to the king and tell him his dream and the interpretation of it, and was admitted accordingly, ver. 24, 25. Arioch brought him in haste to the king, hoping to ingratiate himself by introducing Daniel. He pretends he had sought him to interpret the king's dream, whereas really it was to execute upon him the king's sentence that he sought him. But courtiers' business is every way to humour the prince, and make their own services acceptable.

Thirdly. He contrived as much as might be to reflect shame upon the magicians, and to give honour to God upon this occasion. The king owned it was a bold undertaking, and questioned whether he could make it good; ver. 26, "Art thou able to make known unto me a dream?" What! such a babe in this knowledge, such a stripling as thou art, wilt thou undertake that which thy seniors despair of doing? The less likely it appeared to the king that Daniel should do this, the more God was glorified in enabling him to do it. Note, In transmitting Divine revelation to the children of men it has been God's usual way to make use of the "weak and foolish things" and persons "of the world," and such as were despised and despaired of, "to confound the wise and mighty," that the excellency of the power might be of him, 1 *Cor.* i. 27, 28. Daniel from this takes occasion,

1. To put the king out of conceit with his magicians and soothsayers, whom he had such great expectations from; ver. 27, This secret they cannot shew to the king; it is out of their power, the rules of their art will not reach it; therefore, let not the king be angry with them for not doing that which they cannot do, but rather despise them and cast them off because they cannot do it. Broughton reads it generally, 'This secret no sages, astrologers, enchanters, or entrail cookers, can shew unto the king; let not the king, therefore, consult them any more.' Note, The experience we have of the inability of all creatures to give us satisfaction should lessen our esteem of them, and lower our expectations from them. They are baffled in their pretensions, we are baffled in our hopes from them; hitherto they come, and no farther. Let us therefore say to them, as Job to his friends, "Now ye are nothing," miserable comforters are ye all.

2. To bring him to the knowledge of the one only living and true God, the God whom Daniel worshipped. Though they cannot find out the secret, let not the king despair of having it found out, for "there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets," ver. 26. Note, The insufficiency of creatures should drive us to the all-sufficiency of the Creator. "There is a God in heaven," and it is well for us there is, who can do that for us, and make known that to us, which none on earth can, particularly the secret history of the work of our redemption and the secret designs of God's love to us therein, the mystery which was hid from ages and generations. Divine revelation helps us out there, where human reason leaves us quite at a loss, and makes known that not only to kings, but to the poor of this world, which none of the philosophers or politicians of the heathens, with all their oracles and arts of divination to help them, could ever pretend to give us any light into, *Rom.* xvi. 25, 26.

Fourthly. He confirmed the king in his opinion that the dream he was thus

solicitous to recover the idea of, was really well worth inquiring after, that it was of great value and of vast consequence; not a common dream, the idle disport of a ludicrous and luxuriant fancy, not worth remembering or telling again, but that it was a Divine discovery, a ray of light darted into his mind from the upper world, relating to the great affairs and revolutions of this lower world. God in it "made known to the king what shall be in the latter days," ver. 28, that is, in the times yet to come, reaching as far as the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, which was to be in the latter days, *Heb.* i. 1; and again, ver. 29, The thoughts which came into thy mind were not the repetitions of what had been before, as our dreams usually are.

Omnia quæ sensu voluntur vota diurno
Tempore sopito reddit amica quies,—

'The sentiments which we indulge throughout the day often mingle with the grateful slumbers of the night.—*Claudian.* But they were predictions of "what should come to pass hereafter," which he that "revealeth secrets makes known unto thee," and therefore thou art in the right in taking the hint and pursuing it thus. Note, Things that are to come to pass hereafter are secret things, which God only can reveal; and what he has revealed of these things, especially with reference to the last days of all, to the end of time, ought to be very seriously and diligently inquired into and considered by every one of us. Some think the thoughts which are said to have come into the king's mind upon his bed, "what should come to pass hereafter," were his own thoughts when he was awake. Just before he fell asleep, and dreamt this dream, he was musing in his own mind what would be the issue of his growing greatness, what his kingdom would hereafter come to; and so the dream was an answer to those thoughts. What discoveries God intends to make he thus prepares men for.

Fifthly. He solemnly professeth that he could not pretend to have merited from God the favour of this discovery, or to have obtained it by any sagacity of his own; ver. 30, "But as for me," this secret is not found out by me, but is "revealed to me," and that "not for any wisdom that I have more than any living," to qualify me for the receiving of such a discovery. Note, It well becomes those whom God has highly favoured and honoured to be very humble and low in their own eyes, to lay aside all opinion of their own wisdom and worthiness, that God alone may have all the praise of the good they are, and have, and do, and that all may be attributed to the freeness of his good-will towards them, and the fulness of his good work in them. The secret was made known to him not for his own sake, but, 1. For the sake of his people; "For their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king;" for the sake of his brethren and companions in tribulation, who had by their prayers helped him to obtain this discovery, and so might be said to make known the interpretation; that their lives might be spared, that they might come into favour and be preferred, and all the people of the Jews might fare the better in their captivity for their sakes. Note, Humble men will be always ready to think that what God doth for them and by them is more for others' sakes than for their own. 2. For the sake of his prince; and some read the former clause in this sense: Not for any wisdom of mine, "but that the king may know the interpretation, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thine heart;" that thou mightest have satisfaction given thee as to what thou wast before considering of, and thereby instruction given thee how to carry it towards the church of God. God revealed this thing to Daniel that he might make it known to the king. Prophets receive that they may give, that the discoveries made them may not be lodged with themselves, but communicated to the persons themselves that are concerned.

31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness *was* ex-

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cellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof *was* terrible. 32 This image's head *was* of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 36 This *is* the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37 Thou, O king, *art* a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou *art* this head of gold. 39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all *things:* and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. 41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And *as* the toes of the feet *were* part of iron, and part of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream *is* certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Daniel here gives full satisfaction to Nebuchadnezzar concerning his dream, and the interpretation of it. That great prince had been kind to this poor prophet, in his maintenance and education; he had been brought up at the king's cost, preferred at court, and the land of his captivity had hereby been made much easier to him than to others of his brethren; and now the king is abundantly repaid for all the expense he had been at upon him; and for receiving this prophet, though not in the name of a prophet, he had a prophet's reward, such a reward as a prophet only could give, and for which that wealthy, mighty prince was now glad to be beholden to him. Here is,

First. The dream itself, ver. 31, 45. Nebuchadnezzar perhaps was an admirer of statues, and had his palace and gardens adorned with them; however, he was a worshipper of images, and now, behold, "a great image" is set before him in a dream, which might intimate to him what the images were which he bestowed so much cost upon, and paid such respect to; they were mere dreams. The creatures of fancy might do as well to please the fancy; by the power of imagination he might shut his eyes and represent to himself what forms he thought fit, and beautify them at his pleasure, without the expense and trouble of sculpture. This was the image of a man erect; it stood before him as a living man; and, because those monarchies which were designed to be represented by it were admirable in the eyes of their friends, the brightness of this image was excellent; and, because they were formidable to their enemies and dreaded by all about them, the form of this image is said to be terrible; both the features of the face and the postures of the body made it so. But that which was most remarkable in this image was the different metals of which it was composed. The head of gold, the richest and most durable metal; the breast and arms of silver, the next to it in worth; the belly and sides, or thighs, of brass; the legs of iron, still baser metals; and lastly the feet, part of iron and part of clay. See what the things of this world are; the farther we go in them, the less valuable they appear. In the life of man youth is a head of gold, but it grows less and less worthy of our esteem; and old age is half clay, a man is then as good as dead. It is so with the world; latter ages degenerate. The first age of the Christian church, of the reformation, was a head of gold; but we live in an age that is iron and clay. Some allude to this in the description of a hypocrite, whose practice is not agreeable to his knowledge; he has a head of gold, but feet of iron and clay; knows his duty, but doth it not. Some observe that in Daniel's visions the monarchies were represented by four beasts, *ch.* vii.; for he looked upon that wisdom from beneath, by which they were turned to be earthly and sensual, and a tyrannical power, to have more in it of the beast than of the man, and so the vision agreed with his notions of the thing. But to Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen prince, they were represented by a gay and pompous image of a man; for he was an admirer of "the kingdoms of

this world, and the glory of them." To him the sight was so charming that he was impatient to see it again.

But what became of this image? The next part of the dream shews it us calcined and brought to nothing. He saw a stone cut out of the quarry by an unseen power, without hands, and this stone fell upon the "feet of the image," that were of "iron and clay," and "broke them to pieces;" and then the image must fall of course, and so the gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, were all broken to pieces together, and beaten so small that they became like the "chaff of the summer threshingfloors," and there was not to be found any, the least, remains of them. But the stone cut out of the mountain became itself a great mountain, and filled the earth. See how God can bring about great effects by weak and unlikely causes; when he pleaseth a little one shall become a thousand. Perhaps the destruction of this image of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, might be intended to signify the abolishing of idolatry out of the world in due time. The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, as this image was, and "they shall perish from off the earth, and from under these heavens," *Jer.* x. 11; *Isa.* ii. 18. And whatever power destroys idolatry is in the ready way to magnify and exalt itself, as this stone, when it had broken the image to pieces, "became a great mountain."

Secondly. The interpretation of this dream. Let us now see what is the meaning of this. It was from God, and therefore from him it is fit we take the explication of it. It should seem Daniel had his fellows with him, and speaks for them, as well as for himself, when he saith, "We will tell the interpretation," ver. 36. Now,

1. This image represented the kingdoms of the earth that should successively bear rule among the nations, and have influence on the affairs of the Jewish church. The four monarchies were not represented by four distinct statues, but by one image, because they were all of one and the same spirit and genius, and all more or less against the church. It was the same power, only lodged in four several nations; the two former lying eastward of Judea, the two latter westward.

1st. The "head of gold" signified the Chaldean monarchy, which is now in being; ver. 37, 38, "Thou, O king, art (or, rather, shalt be) "a king of kings," an universal monarch, to whom many kings and kingdoms shall be tributaries. Or, Thou art the highest of kings on earth at this time, (as a servant of servants is the meanest servant,) thou dost outshine all other kings. But let him not attribute his elevation to his own politics or fortitude; no, it is the God of heaven that has given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory, a kingdom that exercises great authority, stands firm, and shines bright, acts by a puissant army with an arbitrary power. Note, The greatest of princes have no power but what is given them from above. The extent of his dominion is set forth, ver. 38, that "wheresoever the children of men dwell," in all the nations of that part of the world, he was ruler over them all, over them and all that belonged to them, all their cattle, not only those which they had a property in, but those that were *feræ naturæ*,—'wild,' the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven. He was lord of all the woods, forests, and chases, and none were allowed to hunt or fowl without his leave. Thus "thou art this head of gold," thou and thy son and thy son's son, for seventy years. Compare this with *Jer.* xxv. 9, 11, especially *Jer.* xxvii. 5—7. There were other powerful kingdoms in the world at this time, as that of the Scythians, but it was the kingdom of Babylon that reigned over the Jews, and that began the government which continued in the succession here described till Christ's time. It is called a head, for its wisdom, and eminency, and absolute power, a head of gold for its wealth, *Isa.* xiv. 4; it was a golden city. Some make this monarchy to begin in Nimrod, and so bring into it all the Assyrian kings, about fifty monarchs in all, and compute that it lasted above sixteen hundred years. But it had not been so long a monarchy of such vast extent and power as is here described, nor anything like it. Therefore others make only Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, and Belshazzar, to belong to this head of gold; and a glorious high throne they had, and perhaps exercised a more despotic power than any of the kings that went before them. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-five years current, Evil-merodach twenty-three years current, and Belshazzar three. Babylon was their metropolis, and Daniel was with them upon the spot during the seventy years.

2nd. The breast and arms of silver signified the monarchy of the Medes and Persians, of which the king is told no more than this, There shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, ver. 39; not so rich, powerful, or victorious. This kingdom was founded by Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian, in alliance with each other, and therefore represented by two arms, meeting in the breast. Cyrus was himself a Persian by his father, a Mede by his mother. Some reckon that this second monarchy lasted one hundred and thirty years, others two hundred and four years. The former computation agrees best with the Scripture chronology.

3rd. The belly and thighs of brass signified the monarchy of the Grecians, founded by Alexander, who conquered Darius Cedomannus, the last of the Persian emperors. This is the "third kingdom of brass," inferior in wealth and extent of dominion to the Persian monarchy, but in Alexander himself it shall, by the power of the sword, "bear rule over all the earth;" for Alexander boasted that he had conquered the world, and then sat down and wept because he had not another world to conquer.

4th. The legs and feet of iron signified the Roman monarchy. Some make this to signify the latter part of the Grecian monarchy, the two empires of Syria and Egypt—the former governed by the family of the Seleucidæ, from Seleucus; the latter by that of the Lagidæ, from Ptolemæus Lagus; these they make the two legs and feet of this image; Grotius, and Junius, and Broughton, go this way. But it has been the more received opinion that it is the Roman monarchy that is here intended, because it was in the time of that monarchy, and when it was in its height, that the kingdom of Christ was set up in the world, by the preaching of the everlasting Gospel. The Roman kingdom was "strong as iron," ver. 40; witness the prevalency of that kingdom against all that contended with it for many ages. That kingdom broke in pieces the Grecian empire, and afterwards quite destroyed the nation of the Jews, ver. 46. Towards the latter end of the Roman monarchy it grew very weak, branched into ten kingdoms, which were as the toes of these feet, some of which were weak as clay, others strong as iron, ver. 42. Endeavours were used to unite and cement them, for the strengthening of the empire, but in vain; "They shall not cleave one to another," ver. 43. This empire divided the government for a long time between the senate and the people, the nobles and commons, but they did not entirely coalesce. There were civil wars between Marius and Sylla, Cæsar and Pompey, whose parties were as iron and clay. Some refer this to the declining times of that empire, when, for the strengthening of the empire against the irruptions of the barbarous nations, the branches of the royal family intermarried; but the politics had not the desired effect when the day of the fall of that empire came.

2. The stone "cut out without hands" represented the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which should be set up in the world in the time of the Roman empire, and upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom, in the "kingdoms of the world." This is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, for it should be neither raised or supported by human power or policy; no visible hand should act in the setting of it up, but it should be done invisibly, by the "Spirit of the Lord of hosts." This was the "stone which the builders refused," because it was not cut out by their hands, but it is now become the "head stone of the corner."

1st. The gospel church is a kingdom which Christ is the sole and sovereign monarch of, in which he rules by his word and Spirit, to which he gives protection and law, and from which he receives homage and tribute. It is a kingdom not of this world, and yet set up in it; it is the kingdom of God among men.

2nd. The God of heaven was to set up this kingdom, to give authority to Christ to execute judgment, to set him as king upon his holy hill of Zion, and to bring into obedience to him a willing people. Being set up by the God of heaven, it is often in the New Testament called the kingdom of heaven, for its original is from above, and its tendency is upwards.

3rd. It was to be set up in the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy, which there is particular notice taken of, *Lu.* ii. 1, that Christ was born when, by the decree of the emperor of Rome, all the world was taxed, which was a plain indication that that empire was become as universal as any earthly empire ever was. When these kings are contesting with each other, and in all the struggles the contending parties each hope to find their own account, God will do his own work, and fulfil his own counsels. These kings are all enemies to Christ's kingdom, and yet it shall be set up in defiance of them.

4th. It is a kingdom that knows no decay, is in no danger of destruction, and will not admit any succession or revolution. It shall "never be destroyed" by any foreign force invading it, as many other kingdoms are; fire and sword cannot waste it; the combined powers of earth and hell cannot deprive either the subjects of their prince or the prince of his subjects. Nor shall this "kingdom be left to other people," as the kingdoms of the earth are. As Christ is a monarch that has no successor, for he himself shall reign for ever, so his kingdom is a monarchy that has no revolution. The kingdom of God was indeed taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles, *Mat.* xxi. 43, but still it was Christianity that ruled the kingdom of the Messiah. The Christian church is still the same, it is fixed on a rock, much fought against, but never to be prevailed against, by the gates of hell.

5th. It is a kingdom that shall be victorious over all opposition. It shall "break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms," as the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" broke in pieces the image, ver. 44, 45. The kingdom of Christ shall wear out all other kingdoms, shall outlive them, and flourish when they are sunk with their own weight, and so wasted that their place knows them no more. All the kingdoms that appear against the kingdom of Christ shall be broken with a rod of iron, as a potter's vessel, *Ps.* ii. 9. And in the kingdoms that submit to the kingdom of Christ, tyranny and idolatry, and every thing that is their reproach, as far as the Gospel of Christ gets ground, shall be broken. The day is coming when Jesus Christ shall have put down "all rule, principality, and power," and have made "all his enemies his footstool," and then this prophecy will have its full accomplishment, and not till then, 1 *Cor.* xv. 24, 25. Our Saviour seems to refer to this, *Mat.* xxi. 44, when, speaking of himself as the stone set at nought by the Jewish builders, he saith, "On whomsoever" this stone "shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

6th. It shall be an everlasting kingdom. Those kingdoms of the earth that had broken in pieces all about them yet at length it came to their turn to be in like manner broken; but the kingdom of Christ shall break other kingdoms in pieces, and shall itself stand for ever. His throne shall be as the days of heaven, his seed, his subjects, as the stars of heaven, not only so innumerable, but so immutable. Of the increase of Christ's government and peace there shall be no end. "The Lord shall reign for ever," not only to the end of time, but when time and days shall be no more, and "God shall be all in all" to eternity.

Daniel having thus interpreted the dream to the satisfaction of Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him no interruption,—so full was the interpretation that he had no question to ask, and so plain, that he had no objection to make,—he closes all with a solemn assertion, *First.* Of the Divine original of this dream, the great God, (so he calls him to express his own high thoughts of him, and to beget the like in the mind of this great king,) he has "made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter," which the gods of the magicians could not do. And thus a full confirmation was given to that great argument which Isaiah had long before urged against idolaters, and particularly the idolaters of Babylon, when he challenged the gods they worshipped to "shew things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods," *Isa.* xli. 23, and by this proved the God of Israel to be the true God, that he "declares the end from the beginning," *Isa.* xlvi. 10. *Secondly.* Of the undoubted certainty of the things foretold by this dream. He who makes known these things is the same that has himself designed and determined them, and will by his providence effect them, and we are sure his counsel shall stand, and cannot be altered, and therefore "the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." Note, Whatever God has made known we may depend upon.

46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. 47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth *it is*, that your God *is* a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. 48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise *men* of Babylon. 49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel *sat* in the gate of the king.

PERSIAN OFFICER.

One might have expected that, when Nebuchadnezzar was contriving to make his own kingdom everlasting, he would have been enraged at Daniel, who foretold the fall of it, and that another kingdom, of another nature, should be the everlasting kingdom; but, instead of resenting it as an affront he received it as an oracle. And here we are told what the expressions were of the impressions it made upon him.

First. He was ready to look upon Daniel as a little god. Though he saw him to be a man, yet from this wonderful discovery he had made, both of his secret thoughts, in telling him the dream, and of things to come, in telling him the interpretation of it, he concluded that he had certainly a divinity lodged in him, worthy his adoration, and therefore he "fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel," ver. 46. It was the custom of the country by prostration to give honour to kings, because they have something of a Divine power in them; "I have said ye are gods." And therefore this king, who had often received such veneration from others, now paid the like to Daniel, whom he supposed to have in him a Divine knowledge, which he was so struck with an admiration of that he could not contain himself, but forgot both that Daniel was a man and that himself was a king. Thus did God magnify divine revelation, and make it honourable, extorting from a proud potentate such a veneration but for one glimpse of it. He worshipped Daniel, and "commanded that they should offer an oblation" to him, and burn incense. Herein he cannot be justified, but may very well be excused, when Cornelius was thus ready to worship Peter, and John the angel, who both knew better things. But though it is not here mentioned, yet we have reason to think that Daniel refused these honours that he paid him, and said, as St. Peter to Cornelius, "Stand up, I myself also am a man;" or, as the angel to St. John, "See thou do it not;" for it is not said that the oblation was offered unto him, though the king commanded it, or rather said it, for so the word is; he said in his haste, 'Let an oblation be offered to him.' And that Daniel did say something to him, which turned his eyes and thoughts another way, is intimated in what follows, ver. 47, "The king answered Daniel." Note, It is possible for those to express a great honour for the ministers of God's word who yet have no true love for the word. "Herod feared John," and "heard him gladly," and yet went on in his sins, *Mar.* vi. 20.

Secondly. He readily acknowledged the God of Daniel to be the great God, the true God, the only living and true God. If Daniel will not suffer himself to be worshipped, he will (as Daniel, it is likely, directed him) worship God, by confessing, ver. 47, "Of a truth your God is a God of gods," such a God as there is no other, above all gods in dignity, over all gods in dominion. He is "a Lord of kings," from whom they derive their power, and to whom they are accountable; and he is both a discoverer and revealer of secrets; what is most secret he sees and can reveal, and what he has revealed is what was secret and which none but he could reveal, 1 *Cor.* ii. 10.

Thirdly. He preferred Daniel, made him a "great man," ver. 48. God made him a great man indeed when he took him into communion with himself, a greater man than Nebuchadnezzar could make him; but because God had magnified him, therefore the king magnified him. Doth wealth make men great? The king "gave him many great gifts;" and he had no reason to refuse them, when they all put him into so much the greater capacity of doing good to his brethren in captivity. These gifts were grateful returns for the good services he had done, and not aimed at or bargained for by him, as the rewards of divination were by Balaam. Doth power make a man great? He made him "ruler over the whole province of Babylon," which no doubt had a mighty influence upon the other provinces; he made him likewise chancellor of the university, "chief of the governors, over all the wise men of Babylon," to instruct them whom he had thus outdone; and since they could not do what the king would have them do, they shall be obliged to do what Daniel would have them do. Thus it is fit "the fool should be servant to the wise in heart." Seeing Daniel could reveal this secret, ver. 47, the king thus advanced him. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to advance and employ those that receive Divine revelation, and are much conversant with it, even as Daniel here shewed himself to be well acquainted with the kingdom of heaven. Joseph, like Daniel here, was advanced in the court of the king of Egypt, for his interpreting of his dreams; and he called him Zaphnath-paaneah,—'a revealer of secrets,' as the king of Babylon here calls Daniel; so that the preambles to their patents of honour are the same,—for and in consideration of their good services done to the crown in revealing secrets.

Fourthly. He preferred his companions for his sake, and upon his special instance and request, ver. 49. Daniel himself "sat in the gate of the king," as president of the council, chief justice, or prime minister of state, or perhaps chamberlain of the household; but he used his interest for his friends as became a good man, and procured places in the government for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. They that had helped him with their prayers shall share with him in his honours, such a grateful sense had he even of that service. The preferring of them would be a great stay and help to Daniel in his place and business. And these pious Jews being thus preferred in Babylon, had great opportunity of serving their brethren in captivity, and of doing them many good offices, which, no doubt, they were ready to do. Thus, sometimes, before God brings his people into trouble, he prepares it that it may be easy to them.

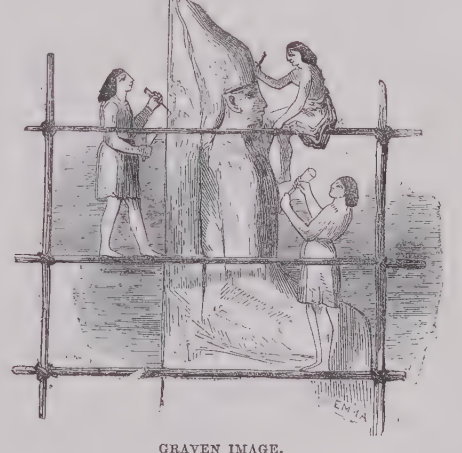
CHAPTER III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we left Daniel's companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in honour and power, princes of the provinces, and preferred for their relation to the God of Israel, and the interest they had in him; I know not whether I should say, 'It were well if this honour had all the saints; no, there are many whom it would not be good for; the saints' honour is reserved for another world. But here we have those same three men as much under the king's displeasure as then they were in his favour, and yet more truly, more highly honoured by their God, than there they were honoured by their prince, both by the grace wherewith he enabled them rather to suffer than to sin, and by the miraculous, glorious deliverance he wrought for them out of their sufferings.' It is a very memorable story, a glorious instance of the power and goodness of God, and a great encouragement to the constancy of his people in trying times. The apostle refers to it when he mentions among the believing heroes those who by faith quenched the violence of fire, *Heb.* xi. 34. We have here, I. Nebuchadnezzar's erecting and dedicating a golden image, and his requiring all his subjects, of what rank or degree soever, to fall down and worship it, and the general compliance of his people with that command, ver. 1—7. II. Information given against the Jewish princes for refusing to worship this golden image, ver. 8—12. III. Their constant persisting in that refusal, notwithstanding his rage and menaces, ver. 13—18. IV. The casting of them into the fiery furnace for their refusal, ver. 19—23. V. Their miraculous preservation in the fire by the power of God, and their invitation out of the fire by the favour of the king, who was by this miracle convinced of his error in casting them in, ver. 24—27. VI. The honour which the king gave to God hereupon, and the favour he shewed to those faithful worthies, ver. 28—30.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2

PLAINS NEAR BABYLON—DURA.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5 *That* at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar



GRAVEN IMAGE.

the king hath set up: 6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 7 Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down *and* worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

We have no certainty concerning the date of this story, only that if this image that Nebuchadnezzar dedicated had any relation to that which he dreamed of, it is probable it happened not long after that; some reckon it to be about the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, a year before Jehoiachin's captivity, in which Ezekiel was carried away. Observe,

First. A golden image set up to be worshipped. Babylon was full of idols already, yet nothing will serve this imperious prince but they must have one more; for those who have forsaken the one only living God, and begin to set up many gods, will find the gods they set up so unsatisfying, and their desire after them so insatiable, that they will multiply them without measure, wander after them endlessly, and never know when they have enough. Idolaters are fond of novelty and variety; "They choose new gods;" they that have many will wish to have more. Nebuchadnezzar the king, that he might exert the prerogative of his crown, to make what gods he thought fit, set up this image, ver. 1. Observe, 1. The valuableness of it. It was an "image of gold," not all gold, sure; as rich as he was it is likely he could not afford that, but overlaid with gold. Note, The worshippers of false gods are not wont to stick at charges in setting up images, and worshipping them; they lavish gold out of the bag for that purpose, *Isa.* xlvi. 6, which shames our niggardliness in the worship of the true God. 2. The vastness of it. It was threescore cubits high and six cubits broad. It exceeded the ordinary stature of a man fifteen times, for that is reckoned but four cubits, or six feet, as if its being monstrous would make amends for its being lifeless. But why did Nebuchadnezzar set up this image? Some suggest it was to clear himself from the imputation of being turned Jew, because he had lately spoken with great honour of the God of Israel, and had preferred some of his worshippers. Or perhaps he set it up as an image of himself, and designed to be himself worshipped in it. Proud princes affect to have Divine honours paid them. Alexander did so, pretending himself to be the son of Jupiter Olympus. He was told that in the image he had seen in his dream he was represented by the head of gold, who was to be succeeded by kingdoms of baser metal; but here he sets up to be himself the whole image, for he makes it all of gold. See here, 1st. How the good impressions that were then made upon him were quite lost, and quickly. He then acknowledged that the God of Israel is of a truth a God of gods and a Lord of kings, and yet now, in defiance of the express law of that God, he sets up an image to be worshipped; not only continues in his former idolatries, but contrives new ones. Note, Strong convictions often come short of a sound conversion. Many in a pang have owned the absurdity and dangerousness of sin, and yet have gone on in it. 2nd. How that very dream, and the interpretation of it, which then made such good impressions upon him, now had a quite contrary effect. Then it made him fall down as a humble worshipper of God; now it made him set up for a bold competitor with God. Then he thought it a great thing to be the golden head of the image, and owned himself obliged to God for it; but, his mind rising with his condition, now he thinks that too little, and, in contradiction to God himself and his oracle, he will be all in all.

Secondly. A general convention of the states summoned to attend the solemnity of the dedication of this image, ver. 2, 3. Messengers are dispatched to all parts of the kingdom to gather together the princes, dukes, and lords, all the peers of the realm, with all officers, civil and military, the captains and commanders of the forces, the judges, the treasurers or general receivers, the counsellors, and the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, they must all come to the dedicating of this image, upon pain and peril of what shall fall thereon. He summons the great men, for the greater honour of his idol; it is therefore mentioned to the glory of Christ that kings shall bring presents unto him. If he can bring them to pay homage to his golden image, he doubts not but the inferior people will follow of course. In obedience to the king's summons, all the magistrates and officers of that vast kingdom leave the services of their particular countries, and come to Babylon to the dedicating of this golden image; long journeys many of them took, and expensive ones, upon a very foolish errand; but as the idols are senseless things, such are the worshippers.

Thirdly. A proclamation made, commanding all manner of persons present before the image, upon the signal given, to fall down prostrate, and worship the image, under the style and title of, "The golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up." A herald proclaims this aloud throughout this vast assembly of grandees, with their numerous train of servants and attendants, and a great crowd of people, no doubt, that were not sent for; let them all take notice: 1. That the king doth strictly charge and command all manner of persons to fall down and worship the golden image; whatever other gods they worship at other times, now they must worship this. 2. That they must all do this just at the same time, in token of their communion with each other in this idolatrous service. And that, in order hereunto, notice shall be given by a concert of music, which would likewise serve to adorn the solemnity, and to sweeten and soften the minds of those that were loth to yield, and to bring them to comply with the king's command. This mirth and gaiety in the worship would be very agreeable to carnal, sensual minds, that are strangers to that spiritual worship which is owing to God, who is a Spirit.

Fourthly. The general compliance of the assembly with this command, ver. 7. They heard the sound of the musical instruments, both wind instruments and hand instruments, the cornet and flute, with the harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, the melody of which they thought was ravishing,—and fit enough it was to excite such a devotion as they were then to pay,—and immediately they all, as one man, as soldiers that are wont to be exercised by beat of drum, "all the people, nations, and languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image." And no marvel, when it was proclaimed that whosoever would not worship this golden image should be immediately thrown "into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace," ready prepared for that purpose, ver. 6. Here were the charms of music to allure them into a compliance, and the terrors of the fiery furnace to frighten them into a compliance. Thus beset with temptations, they all yielded. Note, That way that sense directs the most will go; there is nothing so bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a concert of music, or driven to by a fiery furnace. And by such methods as these false worship hath been set up and maintained.

8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. 9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, *that* he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in *his* rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it* true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; *well:* but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who *is* that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be *so*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

It was strange that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego should be present at this assembly, when it is likely they knew for what intent it was called together. Daniel, we may suppose, was absent, either his business calling him away or having leave from the king to withdraw, unless we suppose that he stood so high in the king's favour that none durst complain of him for his non-compliance. But why did not his companions keep out of the way? Surely because they would obey the king's orders as far as they could, and would be ready to bear a public testimony against this gross idolatry. They did not think it enough not to bow down to the image, but being in office thought themselves obliged to stand up against it, though it was the image which the king their master set up, and would be a golden image to them that worshipped it. Now,

First. Information is brought to the king, by certain Chaldeans, against these three gentlemen, that they did not obey the king's edict, ver. 8. Perhaps these Chaldeans that accused them were some of those magicians or astrologers that were particularly called Chaldeans, *ch.* ii. 2, 4, who bore a grudge to Daniel's companions for his sake, because he had eclipsed them, and so had these his companions. They, by their prayers, had obtained the mercy which saved the lives of these Chaldeans, and behold how they requite them, evil for good; for their love they are their adversaries. Thus "Jeremiah stood before God to speak good for them" who afterwards "digged a pit for his life," *Jer.* xviii. 20. We must not think it strange if we meet with such ungrateful men. Or, perhaps they were such of the Chaldeans as expected the places to which they were advanced, and envied them their preferments; "and who can stand before envy?" They appeal to the king himself concerning the edict, with all due respect to his majesty, and the usual compliment, "O king, live for ever," as if they aimed at nothing but his honour, and to serve his interest, when really they were putting upon him that which would endanger the ruin of him and his kingdom. They beg leave, 1. To put him in mind of the law he had lately made, that all manner of persons, without exception of nation or language, should "fall down and worship the golden image;" they put him in mind also of the penalty which, by the law, was to be inflicted upon recusants, that they were to be "cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace," ver. 10, 11. It cannot be denied but that this was the law; whether a righteous law or no, ought to be considered. 2. To inform him that these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, had not conformed to this edict, ver. 12. It is likely Nebuchadnezzar had no particular design to ensnare them in making the law, for then he would himself have had his eye upon them, and would not have needed this information; but their enemies, that sought an occasion against them, laid hold on this, and were forward to accuse them. To aggravate the matter, and incense the king the more against them, 1st. They put him in mind of the dignity to which the criminals had been preferred. Though they were Jews, foreigners, captives, men of a despised nation and religion, yet the king had "set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon;" it was therefore very ungrateful, and an insufferable piece of insolence, for them to disobey the king's command that had shared so much of the king's favour. And besides, the high station they were in would make their refusal the more scandalous, to be of ill example, and to have an ill influence upon others, and therefore it was necessary it should be severely animadverted upon. Thus princes that are incensed enough against innocent people commonly want not those about them who do all they can to make them worse. 2nd. They suggest that it was done maliciously, contumaciously, and in contempt of him and his authority: They have "set no regard upon thee," for they serve not the gods thou servest, and which thou requirest them to serve, nor "worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Secondly. These three pious Jews are immediately brought before the king, and arraigned and examined upon this information. Nebuchadnezzar fell into

a great passion, and "in his rage and fury commanded" them to be seized, ver. 13. How little was it the honour of this mighty prince that he had rule over so many nations, when at the same time he had no "rule over his own spirit," that there were so many who were subjects and captives to him, when he himself was a perfect slave to his own brutish passions, and led captive by them; how unfit was he to rule reasonable men who could not himself be ruled by reason! It needed not be a surprise to him to hear that these three men did not now serve his gods, for he knew very well they never had done it; and their religion, which they had always adhered to, forbade them to do it. Nor had he any reason to think they did it in contempt of his authority, who had in all instances shewed themselves respectful and dutiful to him as their prince; but it was especially unseasonable at this time, when he was in the midst of his devotions, dedicating his golden image, to be in such a rage and fury, and so much to discompose himself. The discretion of a man, one would think, should at least have deferred this anger. True devotion calms the spirit, quiets and meekens it; but superstition, and a devotion to false gods, inflames men's passions, inspires them with rage and fury, and turns them into brutes. "The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion," so was the wrath of this king; and yet, when he was in such a heat, these three men were brought before him, and appeared with an undaunted courage and unshaken constancy.

Thirdly. The case is laid before them in short, and it is put to them whether they will comply or no? 1. The king asked them whether it was true that they had not worshipped the golden image when others did, ver. 14. 'Is it of purpose?' so some read it; was it designedly and deliberately done, or was it only through inadvertency that you have not served my gods? What! you that I have nourished and brought up, that have been educated and maintained at my charge, that I have been so kind to, and done so much for, you that have been in such reputation for wisdom, and therefore should better have known your duty to your prince; what! "Do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" Note, The faithfulness of God's servants to him has often been the wonder of their enemies and persecutors, who think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot. 2. He was willing to admit them to a new trial. If they did on purpose not do it before, yet, it may be, upon second thoughts they will change their mind; it is therefore repeated to them upon what terms they now stand, ver. 15. 1st. The king is willing that music shall play again only for their sakes, to soften them into a compliance; and if they will not, like the deaf adder, stop their ears, but will hearken to the voice of the charmers, and will worship the golden image, well and good, their former omission shall be pardoned. But, 2nd. The king is resolved, if they persist in their refusal, that they shall immediately be "cast into the fiery furnace," and shall not have so much as an hour's reprieve. Thus doth the matter lie in a little compass,—turn or burn; and because he knew they buoyed themselves up in their refusal with a confidence in their God, he insolently sets him at defiance; and "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" let him, if he can. Now he forgot what he himself once owned, that their God was a "God of gods," and a "Lord of kings," *ch.* ii. 47. Proud men are still ready to say, as Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" or as Nebuchadnezzar, Who is the Lord, that I should fear his power?

Fourthly. They give in their answer, which they all agree in, that they still adhere to their resolution, not to worship the golden image, ver. 16—18. We have here such an instance of fortitude and magnanimity as is scarce to be paralleled. We call these the three children, and they were indeed young men; but we should rather call them the three champions, the first three of the worthies of God's kingdom among men. They did not break out into any intemperate heat or passion against those that did worship the golden image, did not insult or affront them; nor did they rashly thrust themselves upon the trial, or go out of their way to court martyrdom; but, when they were duly called to the fiery trial, they quitted themselves bravely, with a conduct and courage that became sufferers for so good a cause. The king was not so daringly bad in making this idol but they were as daringly good in witnessing against it. They keep their temper admirably well, do not call the king a tyrant or an idolater,—the cause of God needs not the wrath of man; but, with an exemplary calmness and sedateness of mind they deliberately give in their answer, which they resolve to abide by. Observe,

1. Their gracious and generous contempt of death, and the noble negligence with which they look upon the dilemma that they are put to: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." They do not in sullenness deny him an answer, nor stand mute, but they tell him they are in no care about it. 'There needs not an answer,' so some read it; they are resolved not to comply, and the king is resolved they shall die if they do not. The matter therefore is determined, and what needs it be disputed? But it is better read, 'We want not an answer for thee,' nor have it to seek, but come prepared. 1st. They needed no time to deliberate concerning the matter of their answer, for they did not in the least hesitate whether they should comply or no. It was a matter of life and death, and one would think they might have considered awhile before they had resolved; life is desirable, and death is dreadful. But when the sin and duty that were in the case were immediately determined by the letter of the second commandment, and no room was left to question that, the life and death that were in the case were not to be considered. Note, Those that would avoid sin must not parley with temptation; when that which we are allured or affrighted to is manifestly evil, the motion is rather to be rejected with indignation and abhorrence than reasoned with. Stand not to pause about it, but say as Christ has taught us, "Get thee behind me, Satan." 2nd. They needed no time to contrive how they should word it; while they were advocates for God, and were called out to witness in his cause, they doubted not but it should be "given them in that same hour what they should speak," *Mat.* x. 19. They were not contriving an evasive answer, when a direct answer was expected from them; no, nor would they seem to court the king not to insist upon it. Here is nothing in their answer that looks like compliment; they begin not as their accusers did, with, "O king, live for ever;" no artful insinuation, *ad captandam benevolentiam*,—'to put him into a good humour;' but every thing that is plain and downright: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee." Note, Those that make their duty their main care need not be careful concerning the event.

2. Their believing confidence in God, and their dependence upon him, ver. 18. This was it that enabled them to look with so much contempt upon death, death in pomp, death in all its terrors. They trusted in the living God, and by that faith chose rather to suffer than to sin; they therefore feared not the wrath of the king, but endured, because by faith they had an eye to him that is invisible, *Heb.* xi. 25, 27. "If it be so," if we are brought to this strait, if we must be thrown into the fiery furnace unless we serve thy gods, know then, 1st. That though we worship not thy gods, yet we are not atheists; there is a God, whom we can call ours, to whom we faithfully adhere. 2nd. That we serve this God, we have devoted ourselves to his honour, we employ ourselves in his work, and depend upon him to protect us, provide for us, and reward us. 3rd. Thus we are well assured this God is "able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace;" whether he will or no, we are sure he can either prevent our being cast into the furnace or rescue us out of it. Note, The faithful servants of God will find him a master able to bear them out in his service, and control and overrule all the powers that are armed against them; "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." 4th. That we have reason to hope he will deliver us, partly because, in such a vast appearance of idolaters, it would be very much for the honour of his great name to deliver them, and partly because Nebuchadnezzar had defied him to do it, "Who is that God that shall deliver you?" God sometimes appears wonderfully for the silencing of the blasphemies of the enemy, as well as for the answering of the prayers of his people, *Ps.* lxxv. 18—22; *Deu.* xxxii. 27. But if he do not deliver us from the fiery furnace, he will deliver us out of thy hand. He can but torment and kill the body, and after that there is no more that he can do; then they are got out of his reach, delivered out of his hand. Note, Good thoughts of God will help very much to carry us through sufferings, and a full assurance that he is with us while we are with him; and if he be for us we need not fear what man can do unto us. Let him do his worst, God will deliver us either from death or in death.

3rd. Their firm resolution however to stick to their principles; ver. 18, "But if not," though God should not think fit to deliver us from the fiery furnace, which yet we know he can do,—if he should suffer us to fall into thy hand, and fall by thy hand,—yet be it known unto thee, O king, we will not serve these gods, though they are thy gods, nor worship this golden image, though thou thyself hast set it up. They are neither ashamed nor afraid to own their religion, and tell the king to his face that they do not fear him, they will not yield to him. Would they have consulted with flesh and blood, much might have been said to bring them to a compliance, especially when there was no other way of avoiding death, so great a death. 1st. They were not required to abjure their own God, or to renounce his worship, no, nor by any verbal profession or declaration to own this golden image to be a god, but only to bow down before it, which they might do with a secret reserve of their hearts for the God of Israel, inwardly detesting this idolatry, as Naaman bowed in the house of Rimmon. 2nd. They were not to fall into a course of idolatry; it was but one single act that was required of them, which would be done in a minute, and the danger was over, and they might afterwards declare their sorrow for it. 3rd. The king that commanded it had an absolute power; they were under it, not only as subjects but as captives, and if they did it, it was purely by coercion and duress, and that would serve to excuse them. 4th. He had been their benefactor, had educated and preferred them, and in gratitude to him they ought to go as far as they could, though it were to strain a point, a point of conscience. 5th. They were now driven into a strange country, and to those that were so driven out it was in effect said, "Go and serve other gods," 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 19; it was taken for granted that in their disposition they would serve other gods, and it was made a part of the judgment, *Deu.* iv. 28. They might be excused if they go down the stream, when it is so strong. 6th. Did not their kings, and their princes, and their fathers, yea, and their priests too, set up idols even in God's temple, and worship them there, and not only bow down to them, but erect altars, burn incense, and offer sacrifices, even their own children, to them? Did not all the ten tribes for many ages worship gods of gold at Dan and Bethel? and shall they be more precise than their fathers? *Communis error facit jus*,—'What all do must be right.' 7th. If they should comply they would save their lives and keep their places, and so be in a capacity to do a great deal of service to their brethren in Babylon, and to do it long, for they were young men, and rising men. But there is enough in that one word of God wherewith to answer and silence these, and many more such like carnal reasonings, "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to any images, nor worship them." They know they must obey God rather than man. They must rather suffer than sin, and must not do evil that good may come, and therefore none of these things move them; they are resolved rather to die in their integrity than live in their iniquity. While their brethren, who yet remained in their own land, were worshipping images of theirs, these here in Babylon would not be brought to it by constraint; but as if they were good by *antiperistasis*, were most zealous against idolatry in an idolatrous country. And truly, all things considered, the saving of them from this sinful compliance was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace as the saving of them out of the fiery furnace was in the kingdom of nature. These were they who formerly resolved not to defile themselves with the king's meat, and now they as bravely resolved not to defile themselves with his gods. Note, A steadfast, self-denying adherence to God and duty in lesser instances, will qualify and prepare us for the like in greater; and in this we must be resolute, never under any pretence whatsoever to worship images, or to yield our consent with them that do so.

19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: *therefore* he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20 And he commanded the most mighty men that *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, *and* to cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonied, and rose up in haste, *and* spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast

three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, *and* spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

COAT, HOSEN, AND HATS.—FROM PERSEPOLIS.—ver. 21.

In those verses we have,

First. The casting of these three faithful servants of God into the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar had himself known and owned so much of the true God, that one would have thought, though his pride and vanity carried him to make this golden image, and set it up to be worshipped, yet that what these young men now said, (whom he had formerly found to be wiser than all his wise men,) should have revived his convictions, and at least have engaged him to dispense with them; but it proved quite otherwise.

1. Instead of being convinced by what they said, he was exasperated, and made more outrageous, ver. 19. It made him "full of fury," and the "form of his visage was changed" against these men. Note, Brutish passions, the more they are indulged, the more violent they grow, and even change the countenance, to the great reproach of the wisdom and reason of a man. Nebuchadnezzar in this heat exchanged the awful majesty of a prince upon his throne, or a judge upon the bench, for the frightful fury of a wild bull in a net. Would men in a passion but see their faces in a glass, they would blush at their own folly, and turn all their displeasure against themselves.

2. Instead of mitigating their punishment in consideration of their quality, and the posts of honour they were in, he ordered it to be heightened,—that they should "heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated" for other malefactors; that is, that they should put seven times more fuel to it, which, though it would not make their death more grievous, but rather dispatch them the sooner, yet was designed to signify that the king looked upon their crime as seven times more heinous than the crimes of others, and so made their death the more ignominious. But God brought glory to himself out of this foolish instance of the tyrant's rage; for, though it would not have made their death the more grievous, yet it did make their deliverance much the more illustrious.

3. He ordered them to be bound in their clothes, and cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, which was done accordingly, ver. 20, 21. They were bound that they might not struggle or make any resistance, were bound in their clothes, for haste, or that they might be consumed the more slowly and gradually. But God's providence ordered it for the increase of the miracle, in that their clothes were not so much as singed. They were bound in their coats or mantles, their hosen or breeches, and their hats or turbans; as if, in detestation of their crime, they would have their clothes to be burnt with them. What a terrible death was this! to be "cast bound into the midst of a burning fiery furnace," ver. 23. It makes one's flesh tremble to think of it, and horror to take hold on one. It is amazing that the tyrant was so hard-hearted as to inflict such a punishment, and the confessors so stout-hearted as to submit to it, rather than sin against God; but what is this to the second death? to that furnace into which the tares shall be cast in bundles? to that lake which burns eternally with fire and brimstone? Let Nebuchadnezzar heat his furnace as hot as he can, a few minutes will finish the torment of those who are cast into it. But hell-fire tortures, and doth not kill. The pain of damned sinners is more exquisite, and "the smoke of their torment ascends for ever and ever;" and "they have no rest," no intermission, no cessation of their pain, "who have worshipped the beast, and his image," *Rev.* xiv. 10, 11; whereas their pain would be soon over that were cast into this furnace for not worshipping this Babylonian beast and his image.

4. It was a remarkable providence that the men, the mighty men, that bound them and threw them into the furnace, were themselves consumed or suffocated by the flame, ver. 22. The king's commandment was urgent, that they should dispatch them quickly, and be sure to do it effectually, and therefore they resolved to go to the very mouth of the furnace, that they might throw them into the midst of it, but were in such haste that they would not take time to arm themselves accordingly. The apocryphal additions to Daniel say that the flame ascended forty-nine cubits above the mouth of the furnace. Probably God ordered it so that the wind blew it directly upon them with such violence that it smothered them. God did thus immediately plead the cause of his injured servants, and take vengeance for them on their persecutors, whom he punished, not only in the very act of their sin, but by it. But these men were only the instruments of cruelty, he that bade them do it had the greater sin; yet they suffered justly for executing an unjust decree, and it is very likely they did it with pleasure, and were glad to be so employed; and Nebuchadnezzar himself was reserved for a farther reckoning. There is a day coming when proud tyrants will be punished, not only for the cruelties they have been guilty of, but for employing those about them in their cruelties, and so exposing them to the judgments of God.

Secondly. The deliverance of these three faithful servants of God out of the furnace. When they were cast bound into the midst of that devouring fire we might well conclude we should hear no more of them, that their very bones would be calcined; but to our amazement we here find that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are yet alive.

1. Nebuchadnezzar finds them walking in the fire. "He was astonied, and rose up in haste," ver. 24. Perhaps the slaying of the men that executed his sentence was that which astonied him, as well it might, for he had reason to think his own turn would be next, or it was some unaccountable impression upon his own mind that astonied him, and made him rise up in haste, and go to the furnace to see what was become of those he had cast into it. Note, God can strike those with astonishment whose hearts are most hardened, both against him and against his people. He that made the soul can make his sword to approach to it, even to that of the greatest tyrant. In his astonishment he calls his counsellors about him, and appeals to them, whether we did not cast three men bound into the fire. It seems it was done by order, not only by the king, but of the council. They durst not but concur with him, which he forced them to do, that they might share with him in the guilt and odium. "True, O king," say they, we did order such an execution to be done, and it was done; but now, saith the king, I have been looking into the furnace, and "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire," ver. 25. 1st. They were loosed from their bonds. The fire, which did not so much as singe their clothes, burnt the cords wherewith they were tied, and set them at liberty. Thus God's people have their hearts enlarged, through the grace of God, by those very troubles with which their enemies designed to straiten and hamper them. 2nd. They had no hurt, made no complaint, felt no pain or uneasiness in the least. The flame did not scorch them, the smoke did not stifle them, they were alive, and as well as ever, in the midst of the flames. See how the God of nature can, when he pleaseth, control the powers of nature, to make them serve his purposes. Now was fulfilled in the letter that gracious promise, *Isa.* xliii. 2, "When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." By faith they "quench the violence of the fire, quench the fiery darts of the wicked." 3rd. They "walked in the midst of the fire." The furnace was large, so that they had room to walk; they were unhurt, so that they were able to walk; their minds were easy, so that they were disposed to walk, as in a paradise or garden of pleasure: "Can a man walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" *Pr.* vi. 28. Yes, they did it with as much pleasure as the king of Tyrus "walked up and down in the midst of his stones of fire," his precious stones, that sparkled as fire, *Eze.* xxviii. 14. They were not striving to get out, finding themselves unhurt; but, leaving it to that God who preserved them in the fire to bring them out of it, they walked up and down in the midst of it, unconcerned. One of the apocryphal writings relates at large the prayer which Azariah, one of the three, prayed in the fire, wherein he laments the calamities and iniquities of Israel, and entreats God's favour to his people; and the song of praise, which they all three sung in the midst of the flames; in both which there are remarkable strains of devotion. But we have reason to think, with Grotius, that they were composed by some Jew of a later age, not as what were used, but only as what might have been used, on this occasion, and therefore we justly reject them as no part of holy writ. 4th. There was a fourth seen with them in the fire, whose form, in Nebuchadnezzar's judgment, was "like the Son of God;" he appeared as a Divine person, a messenger from heaven, not as a servant, but as a Son. 'Like an angel,' so some; and angels are called "sons of God," *Job* xxxviii. 7. In the apocryphal narrative of this story it is said, "The angel of the Lord came down into the furnace;" and Nebuchadnezzar here saith, (ver. 28,) that God sent his angel and delivered them; and it was an angel that shut the lions' mouths when Daniel was in the den, *ch.* vi. 22. But some think it was the eternal Son of God, the angel of the covenant, and not a created angel. He appeared often in our nature before he assumed it for good and all; and never more seasonably, nor to give a more proper indication and presage of his great errand into the world, in the fulness of time, than now, when to deliver his chosen out of the fire he came and walked with them in the fire. Note, Those that suffer for Christ have his gracious presence with them in their sufferings, even in the fiery furnace, even in the valley of the shadow of death, and therefore even there they need fear no evil. Hereby Christ shewed that what is done against his people he takes as done against himself; whoever throws them into the furnace doth in effect throw him in; "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest," *Acts* ix. 5.

2. Nebuchadnezzar calls them out of the furnace, ver. 26. He "came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace; bids them "come forth, and come hither;" 'Come forth, come,' so some read it. He speaks with a great deal of tenderness and concern, and stands ready to lend them his hand, and help them out. He is convinced, by their miraculous preservation, that he did ill to cast them into the furnace, and therefore he doth not "thrust them out privily; nay, verily, but he will come himself and fetch them out," *Acts* xvi. 37. Observe the respectful title that he gives them; when he was in the heat of his fury and rage against them it is likely he called them rebels and traitors, and all the ill names he could invent, but now he owns them for "the servants of the most high God," a God who now appears "able to deliver them out of his hand." Note, Sooner or later God will convince the proudest of men that he is the most high God, and above them, and too hard for them, even in those things wherein they deal proudly and presumptuously, *Ex.* xviii. 11. He will likewise let them know who are his servants, and that he owns them, and will stand by them; Elijah prayed, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 36, "Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant." Nebuchadnezzar now embraces those whom he had

abandoned, and is very officious about them, now he perceives them to be the favourites of heaven. Note, What persecutors have done against God's servants, when God opens their eyes they must, as far as they can, undo again.

How the fourth, whose "form was like the Son of God," withdrew, and whether he vanished away or visibly ascended, we are not told; but of the other three we are informed, 1st. That they "came forth out of the midst of the fire," as Abraham their father out of Ur, that is, the fire of the Chaldees, into which, saith this tradition of the Jews, he was cast, for refusing to worship idols, and out of which he was delivered as those his three children were When they had their discharge they did not tempt God by staying in any longer, but came forth as brands out of the burning. 2nd. That it was made to appear, to the full satisfaction of all the amazed spectators, that they had not received the least damage by the fire, ver. 27. All the great men came together to view them, and found that there was not so much as "a hair of their head singed." Here that was true in the letter which our Saviour spoke figuratively, for an assurance to his suffering servants, that they should sustain no real damage; *Lu.* xxi. 18, "There shall not a hair of your head perish." Their clothes did not so much as change colour, or smell of fire, much less were their bodies in the least scorched or blistered. No, "the fire had no power on them." The Chaldeans worshipped the fire as a sort of an image of the sun; so that, in restraining the fire now, God put contempt, not only upon their king, but upon their god too, and shewed that "his voice divides the flames of fire," as well as the floods of water, *Ps.* xxix. 7, when he pleaseth to make a way for his people through the midst of it. It is our God only that is the consuming fire, *Heb.* xii. 29; other fire, if he but speak the word, shall not consume.

28 *Then* Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed *be* the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.

The strict observations that were made, *super visum corporis*,—'on inspecting their bodies,' by the princes and governors, and all the great men who were present upon this public occasion, and who could not be supposed partial in favour of the confessors, contributed much to the clearing of this miracle, and the magnifying of the power and grace of God in it. "That indeed a notable miracle has been done is manifest, and we cannot deny it," *Acts* iv. 16. Let us now see what effect it had upon Nebuchadnezzar.

First. He gives glory to the God of Israel, as a God able and ready to protect his worshippers; ver. 28, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego." Let him have the honour, both of the faithful allegiance which his subjects bear to him and the powerful protection he grants to them, neither of which can be paralleled between any other nation and their gods. The king doth himself acknowledge and adore him, and thinks it is fit he should be acknowledged and adored by all; "Blessed be the God of Shadrach." Note, God can extort confessions of his blessedness, even from those that have been ready to "curse him to his face." 1. He gives him the glory of his power, that he was able to protect his worshippers against the most mighty and malignant enemies; "There is no other god that can deliver after this sort," ver. 29; no, not this golden image which he had set up. For this reason there was no other god that obliged his worshippers to cleave to him only, and to suffer death rather than worship any other, as the God of Israel did; for they could not engage to bear them out in so doing, as he could. If God can work such deliverance as no other can, he may demand such obedience as no other may. 2. He gives him the glory of his goodness, that he was ready to do it; ver. 28, "He hath sent his angel and delivered his servants." Bel could not save his worshippers from being burnt at the mouth of the furnace, but the God of Israel saved his from being burnt when they were cast into the midst of the furnace, because they refused to worship any other god. By this Nebuchadnezzar was plainly given to understand that all the great success which he had had, and should yet have, against the people of Israel, which he gloried in, as if he had therein overpowered the God of Israel, was owing purely to their sin. If the body of that nation had faithfully adhered to their own God, and the worship of him only, as these three men did, they should all have been delivered out of his hand, as these three men were. And this was a necessary instruction for him at this time.

Secondly. He applauds the constancy of these three men in their religion, and describes it to their honour, ver. 28. Though he is not himself persuaded to own their God for his, and to worship him, because if he do so he knows he must worship him only, and renounce all others, and he calls him the God of Shadrach, not, My God, yet he commends them for sticking to him, and not serving or worshipping any other god but their own. Note, There are many who are not religious themselves, and yet will own they are clearly in the right that are religious, and are stedfast in their religion. Though they are not themselves persuaded to close with it, they will commend those who, having closed with it, cleave to it. If men have given up their names to that God who will alone be served, let them stick to their principles, and serve him only, whatever it cost them. Such a constancy in the true religion will turn to men's praise, even among them that are without, when unsteadiness, treachery, and double dealing, are what all men will cry shame on. He commends them that they did this, 1. With a generous contempt of their lives, which they valued not in comparison with the favour of God, and the testimony of a good conscience. They yielded their own bodies to be cast into the fiery furnace, rather than they would not only not forsake their God, but not affront him by once paying that homage to any other which is due to him alone. Note, Those shall have their praise, if not of men, yet of God, who prefer their souls before their bodies, and will rather lose their lives than forsake their God. Those know not the worth and value of religion that do not think it worth suffering for. 2. They did it with a glorious contradiction to their prince. They "changed the king's word," that is, they went contrary to it; and thereby put contempt upon both his precepts and threatenings, and made him repent and revoke both. Note, Even kings themselves must own that when their commands are contrary to the commands of God, he is to be obeyed, and not they. 3. They did it with a gracious confidence in their God. They trusted in him that he would stand by them in what they did, that he would either bring them out of the fiery furnace back to their place on earth or lead them through the fiery furnace forward to their place in heaven; and in this confidence they became fearless of the king's wrath, and regardless of their own lives. Note, A stedfast faith in God will produce a stedfast faithfulness to God. Now this honourable testimony, thus publicly borne by the king himself, to these servants of God, we may well think would have a good influence upon the rest of the Jews that were, or should be, captives in Babylon. Their neighbours could not with any confidence urge them to do that, nor could they for shame do it, which their brethren were so highly applauded by the king himself for not doing. Nay, and what God did for these his servants would help not only to keep the Jews close to their religion while they were in captivity, but to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, for which end they were sent into captivity; and when it had had that blessed effect upon them, they might be assured God would deliver them out of that furnace, as now he delivered their brethren out of this.

Thirdly. He issues out a royal edict, strictly forbidding any to speak evil of the God of Israel, ver. 29. We have reason to think that both the sins and the troubles of Israel had given great occasion, though no just occasion, to the Chaldeans to blaspheme the God of Israel, and it is likely Nebuchadnezzar himself had encouraged it. But now, though he is no true convert, nor is wrought upon to worship him, yet he resolves never to speak ill of him again, nor to suffer others to do so. "Whoever shall speak any thing amiss," 'any error,' so some; or, rather, any reproach or blasphemy; whoever shall speak with contempt of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, they shall be counted the worst of malefactors, and dealt with accordingly; they shall be cut in pieces,—as Agag was by the sword of Samuel,—and their houses shall be demolished and made a dunghill. The miracle now wrought by the power of this God, in defence of his worshippers, publicly in the sight of the thousands of Babylon, was a sufficient justification of this edict; and it would contribute much to the ease of the Jews in their captivity, to be by this law screened from the fiery darts of reproach and blasphemy, with which otherwise they would have been continually annoyed. Note, It is a great mercy to the church, and a good point gained, when its enemies, though they have not their hearts turned, yet have their mouths stopped, and their tongues tied. If a heathen prince laid such a restraint upon the proud lips of blasphemers, much more should Christian princes do it. Nay, in this thing, one would think men should be a law to themselves, and that those who have so little love to God that they care not to speak well of him, yet could never find in their hearts, for we are sure they could never find cause, to speak any thing amiss of him.

Fourthly. He not only reverseth the attainder of these three men, but restores them to their places in the government; 'makes them to prosper,' so the word is, and prefers them to greater and more advantageous trusts than they had been in before. He promoted them in the province of Babylon, which was so much to their honour, and the comfort of their brethren in captivity there. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to prefer and employ men of stedfastness in religion; for those are most likely to be faithful to them who are faithful to God, and it is likely to be well with them when God's favourites are made theirs.

CHAPTER IV.

The penman of this chapter is Nebuchadnezzar himself; the story concerning him here recorded is given us in his own words, as he himself drew it up, and published it; but Daniel, a prophet by inspiration, inserts it in his history, and so it has become a part of sacred writ, and a very observable part. Nebuchadnezzar was as daring a rival with God Almighty for the sovereignty as perhaps any mortal man ever was; but here he fairly owns himself conquered, and gives it under his hand that the God of Israel is above him. Here is, I. The preface to his narrative, wherein he acknowledges God's dominion over him, ver. 1—3. II. The narrative itself, wherein he relates, 1. His dream, which puzzled the magicians, ver. 1—18; 2. The interpretation of his dream by Daniel, who shewed him that it was a prognostication of his own fall, advising him therefore to repent and reform, ver. 19—27; 3. The accomplishment of it, in his running stark mad for seven years, and then recovering the use of his reason again, ver. 28—36; 4. The conclusion of the narrative, with an humble acknowledgment and adoration of God as Lord of all, ver. 37. This was extorted from him by the overruling power of that God who hath all men's hearts in his hand, and stands upon record a lasting proof of God's supremacy, a monument of his glory, a trophy of his victory, and a warning to all not to think of prospering while they lift up or harden their hearts against God.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 2 I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 3 How great *are* his signs! and how mighty *are* his wonders! his kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion *is* from generation to generation.

Here is, First. Something of form, which was usual in writs, proclamations, or circular letters, issued out by the king, ver. 1. The royal style which Nebuchadnezzar makes use of has nothing in it of pomp or fancy, but plain and short, and unaffected—Nebuchadnezzar the king. If at other times he made use of great swelling words of vanity in his title, now he laid them all aside, for he was old, he was lately recovered from a distraction which had humbled and mortified him, and was now in the actual contemplation of God's greatness and sovereignty. The declaration is directed not only to his own subjects, but to all to whom this present writing shall come, to "all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth." He is not only willing they should all hear of it, though it carry the account of his own infamy, (which perhaps none durst have published, if he had not done it himself, and therefore Daniel publisheth the original paper,) but he strictly chargeth and commandeth all manner of persons to take notice of it; for all are concerned, and it may be profitable to all. He salutes those to whom he writes in the usual form, "Peace be multiplied unto you." Note, It becomes kings, with their commands,

to disperse their good wishes, and, as fathers of their country, to bless their subjects. So the common form with us, 'We send greeting.' *Omnibus quibus hæ presentes liter, pervenerintæ salutem,*—'To all to whom these presents shall come, health;' and sometimes, *salutem sempiternam,*—'health and salvation everlasting.'

Secondly. Something of substance and matter. He writes this,

1. To acquaint others with the providences of God that had been concerning him; ver. 2, "I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God" (so he calls the true God) "hath wrought toward me." He thought it seemly, so the word is,—that it was his duty, and did well become him, that it was a debt he owed to God and the world, now he was recovered from his distraction,—to relate to distant places, and record for future ages, how justly God had humbled him, and how graciously he had at length restored him. All the nations, no doubt, had heard what befel Nebuchadnezzar, and rang of it; but he thought it fit that they should have a distinct account of it from himself, that they might know the hand of God in it, and what impressions were made upon his own spirit by it, and might speak of it not as a matter of news, but a matter of religion. The events concerning him were not only wonders to be admired, but signs to be instructed by, signifying to the world that Jehovah is greater than all gods. Note, We ought to shew to others God's dealings with us, both the rebukes we have been under, and the favours we have received; and though the account hereof may reflect disgrace upon ourselves, as this here did upon Nebuchadnezzar, yet we must not conceal it, as long as it may redound to the glory of God. Many will be forward to tell what God has done for their souls, because that turns to their own praise, who care not for telling what God has done against them, and how they deserved it; whereas we ought to give glory to God, not only by praising him for his mercies, but by confessing our sins, accepting the punishment of our iniquity, and in both taking shame to ourselves, as this mighty monarch here doth.

2. To shew how much he was himself affected with them, and convinced by them, ver. 3. We should always speak of the word and works of God with concern and seriousness, and shew ourselves affected with those great things of God which we desire others should take notice of. 1st. He admires God's doings. He speaks of them as one amazed; "How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders!" Nebuchadnezzar was now old, had reigned above forty years, and had seen as much of the world, and the revolutions of it, as most men ever did, and yet never till now, when himself was nearly touched, was he brought to admire surprising events as God's signs, and his wonders. Now, how great, how mighty, are they! Note. The more we see events to be the Lord's doing, and see in them the product of a Divine power, and the conduct of a Divine wisdom, the more marvellous they will appear in our eyes, *Ps.* cxviii. 23. 2nd. He infers from thence God's dominion. This is that he is at length brought to subscribe to, "His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom;" and not like his own kingdom, which he saw, and long since foresaw in a dream, hastening towards a period. He now owns there is a God that governs the world, and has an universal, incontestable, absolute dominion in and over all the affairs of the children of men. And it is the glory of this kingdom that it is everlasting; other reigns are confined to one generation, and other dynasties to a few generations, but "God's dominion is from generation to generation." It should seem Nebuchadnezzar here refers to what Daniel had foretold of a kingdom which the God of heaven would set up that should never be destroyed, *ch.* ii. 44, which, though meant of the kingdom of the Messiah, he understood of the providential kingdom. Thus we may make a profitable, practical use and application of those prophetical Scriptures which yet we do not fully, and perhaps not rightly, take the meaning of.

4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. 8 But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom *is* the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, *saying,* 9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods *is* in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof. 10 Thus *were* the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof *was* great. 11 The tree grew, and was strong,

BANYAN TREE.

and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: 12 The leaves thereof *were* fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it *was* meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. 13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; 14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: 15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* his portion *be* with the beasts in the grass of the earth: 16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. 17 This matter *is* by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. 18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou *art* able; for the spirit of the holy gods *is* in thee.

POSTURE OF HUMILIATION BEFORE A SUPERIOR.

Nebuchadnezzar, before he relates the judgments of God that had been brought upon him for his pride, gives an account of the fair warning he had of them before they came, which if he had duly regarded they might have been prevented. But therefore he was told of them, and of the issue of them before they came to pass, that when they did come to pass, by comparing them with the prediction of them, he might see and say that they were the Lord's doing; and might be brought to believe that there is a Divine revelation in the world, as well as a Divine providence, and that the works of God agree with his word.

Now in the account he here gives of his dream, by which he had notice of what was coming, we may observe,

First. The time when this alarm was given him, ver. 4. It was when he was "at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace." He had newly conquered Egypt, and with it completed his victories, and ended his wars, and made himself monarch of all those parts of the world,—which was about the thirty-fourth

or thirty-fifth year of his reign, *Eze.* xxix. 17,—then he had this dream, which was accomplished about a year after. Seven years his distraction continued, upon his recovery from which he penned this declaration, lived about two years after, and died in his forty-fifth year. He had undergone a long fatigue in his wars, had made many a tedious and dangerous campaign in the field; but now at length he is at rest in his house, and there is no adversary nor evil occurrent. Note, God can reach the greatest of men with his terrors then when they are most secure, and think themselves at rest and flourishing.

Secondly. The impression it made upon him; ver. 5, "I saw a dream which made me afraid." One would think no little thing would frighten him that had been a man of war from his youth, and used to look the perils of war in the face without change of countenance; yet, when God pleaseth, a dream strikes a terror upon him. His bed, no doubt, was soft and easy, and well guarded, and yet his own "thoughts upon his bed" make him uneasy, and the "visions of his head," the creatures of his own imagination, "trouble him." Note, God can make the greatest of men uneasy, even then when they say to their souls, "Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" can make those that have been the troublers of the world, and have tormented thousands, to be their own troublers, their own tormentors, and those that have been the terror of the mighty a terror to themselves. By the consternation which this dream put him into, and the impression it made upon him, he perceived it to be not an ordinary dream, but sent of God on a special errand.

Thirdly. His consulting in vain with the magicians and astrologers concerning the meaning of it. He had not now forgot the dream, as before, *ch.* 2; he had it ready enough, but he wanted to know the interpretation of it, and what was prefigured by it, ver. 6. Orders are immediately given to summon "all the wise men of Babylon," that were such fools as to pretend by magic, divination, inspecting the entrails of beasts, or observations of the stars, to predict things to come; they must all come together to see if any or all of them in consultation could interpret the king's dream. It is likely these people had sometimes, in a like case, given the king some sort of satisfaction, and, by the rules of their art, had answered the king's queries so as to please him, whether it were right or wrong, hit or missed; but now his expectation from them was disappointed. He told them the dream, ver. 7, but they could not tell him the interpretation of it, though they had boasted with great assurance, *ch.* ii. 4, 7, that if they had but the dream told them they would, without fail, interpret it. But the key of this dream was in a sacred prophecy, *Eze.* xxxi. 3, &c., where the Assyrian is compared, as Nebuchadnezzar here, to a tree cut down for his pride; and that was a book they had not studied, or acquainted themselves with, else they might have been let into the mystery of this dream. Providence ordered it so, that they should be first puzzled with it, that Daniel's interpreting it afterwards might redound to the glory of the God of Daniel. Now was fulfilled what Isaiah foretold, *ch.* xlvii. 12, 13, that when the ruin of Babylon was drawing on, her enchantments and sorceries, her astrologers and star-gazers, should not be able to do her any service.

Fourthly. The court he made to Daniel to engage him to expound his dream to him. "At the last Daniel came in," ver. 8. Either he declined associating with the rest, because of their badness; or they declined his company, because of his goodness; or the king would rather his own magicians should have the honour of doing it, if they could, than that Daniel should have it; or Daniel being governor of the wise men, *ch.* ii. 48, was, as is usual, last consulted. Many make God's word their last refuge, and never have recourse to it till they are driven off from all other succours. He compliments Daniel very highly, takes notice of the name which he had himself given him, in the choice of which he thinks he was very happy, and that it was a good omen. His name was Belteshazzar, from Bel, the name of my god. He applauds his rare endowments, he has the spirit of the holy gods, so he tells him to his face, ver. 9, with which we may suppose Daniel was so far from being puffed up, that he was rather very much grieved, to hear that which he had by gift from the God of Israel, the true and living God, ascribed to Nebuchadnezzar's god, a dunghill deity. Here is a strange medley in Nebuchadnezzar, but such as is commonly found in those that side with their corruptions against their convictions.

1. He retains the language and dialect of his idolatry, and therefore it is to be feared is no convert to the faith and worship of the living God. He is an idolater, and his speech bewrayeth him; for he speaks of many gods, and is not brought to acquiesce in one as sufficient, no, not in Him who is all-sufficient. And some think, when he speaks of the spirit of the holy gods, he supposeth that there are some evil, malignant deities, whom men are concerned to worship only to prevent their doing them a mischief, and some that are good, beneficent deities, and that by the spirit of them Daniel was animated. He also owns that Bel was his god still, though he had once and again acknowledged the God of Israel to be Lord of all, *ch.* ii. 47; iii. 29. He also applauds Daniel, not as a servant of God, but as master of the magicians, ver. 9, supposing his knowledge to differ from theirs, not in kind, but only in degree; and he consulted him not as a prophet, but as a topping magician, so endeavouring to save the credit of the art, when those blundered and were nonplussed who were masters of the art. See how close his idolatry sat to him. He has got a notion of many gods, and hath chosen Bel for his god, and he cannot persuade himself to quit either his notion or his choice, though the absurdity of both had been evidenced to him more than once, beyond contradiction. He, like other heathens, would not change his gods, though they were no gods, *Jer.* ii. 11. Many persist in a false way, only because they think they cannot in honour leave it. See how loose his convictions sat, and how easily he had dropped them. He once called the God of Israel "a God of gods," *ch.* ii. 47; now he sets him upon a level with the rest of those whom he calls the holy gods. Note, If convictions be not speedily prosecuted, it is a thousand to one but in a little time they are quite lost and forgotten. Nebuchadnezzar, not going forward with the acknowledgments he had been brought to make of the sovereignty of the true God, soon went backward, and relapsed to the same veneration he had always had for his false gods. And yet,

2. He professeth a great opinion of Daniel, whom he knows to be a servant of the true God, and of him only. He looked upon him as one that had such an insight, such a foresight, as none of his magicians had; "I know that no secret troubleth thee." Note, The spirit of prophecy quite outdoes the spirit of divination, even the enemies themselves being judges; for so it was adjudged here upon a fair trial of skill.

Fifthly. The particular account he gives him of his dream.

1. He saw a stately, flourishing tree, remarkable above all the trees of the wood. This tree was planted "in the midst of the earth," ver. 10, fitly representing him who reigned in Babylon, which was about the midst of the then known world. His dignity and eminence above all his neighbours was signified by the height of this tree, which was exceeding great, it "reached unto heaven." He overtopped those about him, and aimed to have Divine honours given him; nay, he overpowered those about him, and the potent armies he had the command of, with which he carried all before him, is signified by the strength of this tree. It grew and was strong; and so much was Nebuchadnezzar and his growing greatness the talk of the nations, so much had they their eye upon him, —some a jealous eye, all a wondering eye,—that the sight of this tree is said to be "to the end of all the earth." This tree had every thing in it that was pleasant to the eye, and good for food; ver. 12, "The leaves thereof were fair;" noting the pomp and splendour of Nebuchadnezzar's court, which was the wonder of strangers, and the glory of his own subjects. Nor was this tree for sight and state only, but for use. 1st. For protection. The boughs of it were for shelter, both to the beasts and to the fowls. Princes should be a screen to their subjects from the heat and from the storm, should expose themselves to secure them, and study how to make them safe and easy. If the bramble be promoted over the trees, he invites them to come and trust in his shadow, such as it is, *Jud.* ix. 15. It is protection that draws allegiance. The kings of the earth are to their subjects but as the shadow of a great tree; but Christ is to his subjects as the "shadow of a great rock," *Isa.* xxxii. 2. Nay, because that, though strong, yet may be cold, they are said to be hid under the "shadow of his wings," *Ps.* xvii. 8, where they are not only safe, but warm. 2nd. For provision. The Assyrian was compared to a cedar, *Eze.* xxxi. 6, which affords shadow only; but this tree here had much fruit, in it was "meat for all," and "all flesh was fed of it." This mighty monarch, it should seem by this, not only was great, but did good; he did not impoverish, but enrich his country, and by his power and interest abroad brought wealth and trade to it. They that exercise authority would be called benefactors, *Lu.* xxii. 25; and the most effectual course they can take to support their authority is to be really benefactors. And see what is the best that great men with their wealth and power can attain to, and that is, to have the honour of having many to live upon them, and to be maintained by them; for, as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them.

2. He heard the doom of this tree read, which he perfectly remembered, and relates it here, perhaps word for word as he heard it. The sentence was passed upon it by an angel, whom he saw come down from heaven, and heard him proclaim this sentence aloud. This angel is here called "a watcher," or watchman; not only because angels by their nature are spirits, and therefore neither slumber nor sleep, but because by their office they are ministering spirits, and attend continually to their ministrations, watching all opportunities of serving their great Master. They, as watchers, encamp round them that fear God, to deliver them, and bear them up in their hands. This angel was a messenger, or ambassador, so some read it, and "a holy one." Holiness becomes God's house, therefore angels that attend, and are employed by him, are holy ones; they preserve the purity and rectitude of their nature, and are in every thing conformable to the Divine will. Let us review the doom passed upon the tree.

1st. Orders are given that it be cut down, ver. 14. Now also the axe is laid to the root of this tree. Though it is never so high, never so strong, that cannot secure it when its day comes to fall; the beasts and fowls, that are sheltered in and under the boughs of it, are driven away and dispersed. The branches are cropped, the leaves shaken off, and the fruit scattered. Note, Worldly prosperity, in its highest degree, is a very uncertain thing; and it is no uncommon thing for those that have lived in the greatest pomp and power to be stripped of all that which they trusted to and gloried in. By the turns of providence those that made a figure become captives; those that lived in plenty, and above what they had, are reduced to straits, and live far below what they had; and those, perhaps, are brought to be beholden to others, who, when time was, had many depending upon them, and making suit to them. But "the trees of righteousness" that are "planted in the house of the Lord," and bring forth fruit to him, shall not be cut down, nor shall their leaf wither.

2nd. Care is taken that the root be preserved; ver. 15, "Leave the stump of it in the earth," exposed to all weathers; there let it lie neglected and buried in the grass. Let the beasts, that formerly sheltered themselves under the boughs, now repose themselves upon the stump; but that it may not be raked to pieces, or trodden to dirt, and to shew that it is yet reserved for better days, let it be hooped round with "a band of iron and brass," to keep it firm. Note, God in judgment remembers mercy, and may yet have good things in store for those whose condition seems most forlorn. There is "hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, that, through the scent of water, it will bud," *Job* xiv. 7—9.

3. The meaning of this is explained by the angel himself to Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 16. Whoever is the person signified by this tree he is sentenced to be deposed from the honour, state, and dignity of a man, to be deprived of the use of his reason, and to be and live like a brute, till "seven times pass over him." "Let a beast's heart be given unto him." This is surely the saddest and sorest of all temporal judgments, worse a thousand times than death, and though, like it, least felt by those that lie under it, yet to be dreaded and deprecated more than any others. Nay, whatever outward affliction God is pleased to lay upon us, we have reason to bear it patiently, and to be thankful that he continues to us the use of our reason, and the peace of our consciences. But those proud tyrants who "set their heart as the heart of God," *Eze.* xxviii. 2, justly may be deprived of the heart of man, and have a beast's heart given them.

4. The truth of it is confirmed; ver. 17, "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones." God has determined it; as a righteous Judge he has signed this edict; pursuant to his eternal counsel the decree is gone forth. And, 1st. The angels in heaven have subscribed to it, as attesting it, approving it, and applauding it. It is by the decree of the watchers; not that the great God needs the counsel or concurrence of the angels in any thing he determines or doth, but, as he useth their ministration in executing his counsels, so he is sometimes represented after the manner of men, as if he advised with them: "Whom shall I send?" *Isa.* vi. 8; "Who shall persuade Ahab?" 1 *Kin.* xxii. 20. So it notes the solemnity of this sentence. The king's breves, or short writs, pass, *teste me ipso*,—'in my presence;' but charters used to be signed, *his testibus*,—'in presence of us whose names are under-written;' such was Nebuchadnezzar's doom, it was by the decree of the watchers. 2nd. The saints on earth petitioned for it as well as the angels in heaven; the demand is by the word of the holy ones. God's suffering people, that had long groaned under the heavy yoke of Nebuchadnezzar's tyranny, cried to him for vengeance. They made the demand, and God gave this answer to it; for when the "oppressed cry to God he will hear," *Ex.* xxii. 27. This sentence was passed in Ahab's time, that there should be no more rain, at Elijah's word, when he "made intercession against Israel," 1 *Kin.* xvii. 1.

5. The design of it is declared. Therefore orders are given for the cutting down of this tree, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules. This judgment must be executed, to convince the unthinking, unbelieving world, that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth, a God that governs the world, that not only has a kingdom of his own in it, and administers the affairs of that kingdom, but rules also in the kingdom of men, in the dominion that one man has over another, and giveth that to whomsoever he will; from him promotion comes, *Ps.* lxxv. 6, 7. He advanceth men to power and dominion that little expected it, and crosseth the projects of the ambitious and aspiring. Sometimes he sets up the basest of men, and serves his own purposes by them; mean men, as David from the sheepfold; "raiseth the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes," *Ps.* cxiii. 7, 8. Nay, sometimes he sets up ill men, to be a scourge to a provoking people. Thus he can do, thus he may do, thus he often doth, and gives not account of any of his matters. By humbling Nebuchadnezzar it was designed that the living should be made to know this; the

dead know it, that are gone to the world of spirits, the world of retribution, they know that the Most High rules; but the living must be made to know it, and lay it to heart, that they may make their peace with God before it be too late.

Thus has Nebuchadnezzar fully and faithfully related his dream, what he saw, and what he heard, and then demands of Daniel the interpretation of it, ver. 18, for he found no one else was able to do it, but is confident he was, "for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee;" or, of the holy God, the proper title of the God of Israel. Much may be expected from those that have in them the spirit of the holy God. Whether Nebuchadnezzar had any jealousy that it was his own doom that was read by this dream, doth not appear. Perhaps he was so vain and secure as to imagine that it was some other prince that was rival with him, whose fall he had the pleasing prospect of given him in this dream; but, be it for him or against him, he is very solicitous to know the true meaning of it, and depends upon Daniel to give it him. Note, When God gives us general warnings of his judgments, we should be desirous to understand his mind in them, to hear "the Lord's voice crying in the city."

19 Then Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, was astonied for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream *be* to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. 20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 21 Whose leaves *were* fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it *was* meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: 22 It *is* thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. 23 And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* his portion *be* with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; 24 This *is* the interpretation, O king, and this *is* the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: 25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. 27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

We have here the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which, when once it is applied to himself, and it is declared that he is the tree in the dream, (*mutato nomine de te fabula narratur*,—'change but the name, the fable speaks of thee,') when once it is said, Thou art the man, there needs little more to be said for the explication of the dream; out of his own mouth he is judged; so shall his doom be, himself has decided it. The thing was so plain, that Daniel, upon hearing the dream, was "astonied for one hour," ver. 19. He was struck with amazement and terror at so great a judgment coming upon so great a prince; his flesh trembled for fear of God. He was likewise struck with confusion when he found himself under a necessity of being the man that must bring to the king these heavy tidings, which, having received so many favours from the king, he had rather he should have heard from any one else; so far is he from desiring the woful day, that he dreads it, and the thoughts of it trouble him. They that come after the ruined sinner are said to be astonished at his day, as they that went before and saw his coming, as Daniel here, were affrighted, *Job* xviii. 20.

First. The preface to the interpretation is a civil compliment, which, as a courtier, he passeth upon the king. The king observed him to stand as one astonished, and thinking he was loth to speak out for fear of offending him, he encouraged him to deal plainly and faithfully with him. "Let not the dream or the interpretation thereof trouble thee." This he speaks, either, 1. As one that sincerely desired to know the truth. Note, Those that consult the oracles of God must be ready to receive them as they are, whether they be for them or against them, and must accordingly give their ministers leave to be free with them. Or, 2. As one that despised the truth, and set it at defiance. When we see how regardless he was of this warning afterwards, we are tempted to think this was his meaning,—Let it not trouble thee, for I am resolved it shall not trouble me, nor will I lay it to heart. But whether he have any concern for himself or no, Daniel is concerned for him, and therefore wishes "the dream be to them that hate thee." Let the ill it bodes light on the head of thine enemies, not on thine head. Though Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater, a persecutor, and an oppressor of the people of God, yet he was at present Daniel's prince, and therefore, though he foresees, and is now going to foretell, ill concerning him, he dare not wish ill to him.

Secondly. The interpretation itself is only a repetition of the dream, with application to the king. As for the tree which thou sawest flourishing, ver. 20, 21, "It is thou, O king," ver. 22; and willing enough would the king be to hear this, as before to hear, "Thou art the head of gold," but for that which follows. He shews the king his present prosperous state in the glass of his own dream, "Thy greatness is grown," and reacheth as near heaven as human greatness can do, "and thy dominion is to the end of the earth," *ch.* ii. 37, 38. As for the doom passed upon the tree, ver. 23, it is "the decree of the Most High, which comes upon my lord the king," ver. 24. He must not only be deposed from his throne, but driven from men, and, being deprived of his reason, and having a beast's heart given him, his dwelling shall be "with the beasts of the field," and with them he shall be a fellow-commoner, he shall "eat grass as oxen," and like them lie out all weathers, and be "wet with the dew of heaven," and this till "seven times" pass over him, that is, seven years, and then he shall know that the "Most High ruleth;" and when he is brought to know and own that, he shall be restored to his dominion again; ver. 26, "Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee," shall remain as firm as "the stump of the tree" in the ground, and thou shalt have it, "after thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule." God is here called the heavens, because it is in heaven that he hath "prepared his throne," *Ps.* ciii. 19, from thence he "beholdeth all the sons of men," *Ps.* xxxiii. 13. "The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's;" and the influence which the visible heavens have upon this earth is intended as a faint representation of the dominion the God of heaven has over this lower world. We are said to "sin against heaven," *Lu.* xv. 19. Note, Then only we may expect comfortably to enjoy our right in, and government of, both ourselves and others, when we dutifully acknowledge God's title to and dominion over us, and all we have.

Thirdly. The close of the interpretation is the pious counsel which Daniel, as a prophet, gave the king, ver. 27. Whether he appeared concerned or not at the interpretation of the dream, a word of advice would be very seasonable; if careless, to awaken him; if troubled, to comfort him. And it is not inconsistent with the dream, and the interpretation of it, for Daniel knew not but it might be conditional, like the prediction of Nineveh's destruction. Observe, 1. How humbly he gives his advice, and with what tenderness and respect; "O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee." Take it in good part, as coming from love, and well meant, and let it not be misinterpreted. Note, Sinners need to be courted to their own good, and spoken fair to do well for themselves. The apostle beseeches men to "suffer a word of exhortation," *Heb.* xiii. 22. We think it a good point gained if people will be persuaded to take good counsel kindly, nay, if they will take it patiently. 2. What his advice is. He doth not counsel him to enter into a course of physic, for the preventing of the distemper in his head, but to break off a course of sin that he was in, to reform his life. He wronged his own subjects, and dealt unfairly with his allies, and he must break off this by righteousness, by rendering to all their due, making amends for wrong done, and not triumphing over right with might. He had been cruel to the poor, to God's poor, to the poor Jews, and he must break off this iniquity by shewing mercy to those poor, pitying those oppressed ones, setting them at liberty, or making their captivity easy to them. Note, It is necessary, in repentance, that we not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; not only do no wrong to any, but do good to all. 3. What the motive is with which he backs this advice; "If it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." Though it should not wholly prevent the judgment, yet by this means a reprieve may be obtained, as by Ahab's humbling himself, 1 *Kin.* xxi. 29; either the trouble may be the longer before it comes, or the shorter when it doth come; yet he cannot assure him of this, but it may be it may prove so. Note, The very probability of preventing a temporal judgment is inducement enough to a work so good in itself as the leaving of our sins, and reforming of our lives, much more the certainty of preventing our eternal ruin. 'That will be a healing of thine error,' so some read it. Thus the quarrel will be taken up, and all will be well again.

28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? 31 While the word *was* in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. 32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' *feathers*, and his nails like birds' *claws*.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's dream accomplished, and Daniel's application of it to him justified and confirmed. How he took it we are not told, whether he was pleased with Daniel, or displeased; but here we have,

First. God's patience with him. All this came upon him, but not till twelve months after, ver. 29. So long there was a "lengthening of his tranquillity," though it doth not appear that he broke off his sins, or shewed any mercy to the poor captives; for this was still God's quarrel with him, that he "opened not the house of his prisoners," *Isa.* xiv. 17. Daniel having counselled him to repent, God so far confirmed his word that he gave him space to repent; he let him alone this year also, this one year more, before he brought this judgment upon him. Note, God is therefore longsuffering with provoking sinners, because he is not willing that "any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 *Pet.* iii. 9.

Secondly. His pride and haughtiness, and abuse of that patience. He walked upon the "palace of the kingdom of Babylon," in pomp and pride, pleasing himself with the view of that vast city, which, with all the territories thereunto belonging, was under his command, and he said, either to himself or to those about him, perhaps some foreigners to whom he was shewing his kingdom, and the glory of it, "Is not this great Babylon?" Yes; it is great, of vast extent, no less than forty-five miles compass within the walls. It is full of inhabitants, and they full of wealth; it is a golden city, and that is enough to speak it great, *Isa.* xiv. 4. See the grandeur of the houses, walls, towers, and public edifices, (every thing in Babylon he thinks looks great,) and this great Babylon "I have built." Babylon was built many ages before he was born, but because he had fortified and beautified it,—and we may suppose much of it was rebuilt during his long and prosperous reign,—he boasts that he has built it; as Augustus Cæsar boasted concerning Rome, *Lateritiam inveni, marmoream reliqui*,—'I found it brick, but I left it marble.' He boasts that he built it "for the house of the kingdom," that is, the metropolis of his empire. This vast city, compared with the countries that belonged to his dominions, was but as one house. He built it with the assistance of his subjects, yet boasts that he did it by the might of his power; he built it for his security and convenience, yet, as if he had no occasion for it, boasts that he built it purely "for the honour of his majesty." Note, Pride and self-conceitedness is a sin that most easily besets great men, who have great things in the world. They are apt to take the glory to themselves which is due to God only,

Thirdly. His punishment for his pride. When he was thus strutting and vaunting himself, and adoring his own shadow, while the proud "word was in the king's mouth," the powerful word came from heaven, by which he was immediately deprived, 1. Of his honour as a king; "The kingdom is departed from thee." When he thought he had erected impregnable bulwarks for the preserving of his kingdom, now, in an instant, it is departed from him. When he thought it so well guarded that none could take it from him, behold, it departs of itself. As soon as he becomes utterly incapable to manage it, it is of course taken out of his hands. 2. He is deprived of his honour as a man; he loseth his reason, and, by that means, loseth his dominion; "They shall drive thee from men," ver. 32. And it was fulfilled, ver. 33, he "was driven from men the same hour;" that is, on a sudden he fell stark mad, distracted in the highest degree that ever any man was. His understanding and memory were gone, and all the faculties of a rational soul broken, so that he became a perfect brute in the shape of a man. He went naked, and on all fours, like a brute; did himself shun the society of reasonable creatures, and run wild in the fields and woods, and was driven out by his own servants, who, after some time of trial, despairing of his return to his right mind, abandoned him, and looked after him no more. He had not the spirit of a beast of prey, not that of the royal lion, but of the abject and less honourable species, for he was made to eat grass as oxen, and probably he did not speak with human voice, but lowed like an ox. Some think his body was all covered with hair; however, the hair of his head and beard, being never cut or combed, grew "like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Let us pause a little and view this miserable spectacle, and let us receive instruction from it. 1st. Let us see here what a mercy it is to have the use of our reason; how thankful we ought to be for it; and how careful we ought to be not to do any thing which may either provoke God or may have a natural tendency to put us out of the possession of our own souls. Let us learn how to value our own reason, and to pity the case of those that are under the prevailing power of melancholy, or distraction, or are delirious, and to be very tender in our censures of them, and carriage towards them; for it is a temptation common to men, and a case which some time or other may be our own. 2nd. Let us see here the vanity of human glory and greatness. Is this Nebuchadnezzar the Great? What! this despicable animal, that is meaner than the poorest beggar? Is this he that looked so glorious in the throne, so formidable in the camp, that had politics enough to subdue and govern kingdoms, and now not so much sense as to keep his own clothes on his back? "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?" *Isa.* xiv. 16. Never let the "wise man then glory in his wisdom," or "the mighty man in his strength." 3rd. Let us see here how God resists the proud, and delights to abase them, and put contempt upon them. Nebuchadnezzar would be more than a man, and therefore God justly makes him less than a man; and puts him upon a level with the beasts that sets up for a rival with his Maker: see *Job* xl. 11—13.

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation: 35 And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? 36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's recovery from his distraction, and his return to his right mind, "at the end of the days" prefixed, that is, of the seven years. So long he continued a monument of God's justice, and a trophy of his victory over the children of pride, and he was made more so by being struck mad than if he had been in an instant struck dead with a thunderbolt. Yet it was a mercy to him that he was kept alive; for while there is life there is hope, that we may yet praise God, as he did here. "At the end of the days," saith he, "I lifted up mine eyes unto heaven," ver. 34, looked no longer down towards the earth as a beast, but began to look up as a man. *Os homini sublime dedit*,—'Heaven gave to man an erect countenance.' But there was more in it than this; he looked up as a devout man, as a penitent, as an humble petitioner for mercy, being perhaps never till now made sensible of his own misery. And now,

First. He hath the use of his reason so far restored to him that with it he glorifies God, and humbles himself under his mighty hand. He was told that he should continue in that forlorn case till he should know that "the Most High rules;" and here we have him brought to the knowledge of that, "Mine understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High." Note, Those may justly be reckoned void of understanding that do not bless and praise God; nor do men ever rightly use their reason till they begin to be religious, nor live as men till they live to the glory of God. As reason is the substratum, or subject of religion, so that creatures which have no reason are not capable of religion, so religion is the crown and glory of reason; and we have our reason in vain, and shall one day wish we had never had it, if we do not glorify God with it. This was the first act of Nebuchadnezzar's returning reason; and when this became the employment of it he was then, and not till then, qualified for all the other enjoyments of it. And till he was for a great while disabled to exercise it in other things he never was brought to apply it to this, which is the great end for which our reason is given us. His folly was the means whereby he became wise; he was not recovered by his dream of this judgment,—that was soon forgotten, like a dream,—but he is made to feel it, and then his ear is opened to discipline. To bring him to himself he must first be beside himself. And by this it appears that what good thoughts there were in his mind, and what good work was wrought there, was not of himself, for he was not his own man, but it was the gift of God. Let us see what Nebuchadnezzar is now at length effectually brought to the acknowledgment of; and we may learn from it what to believe concerning God.

1. That the Most High God lives for ever, and his being knows neither changing or period, for he has it of himself. His flatterers often complimented him with, O king, live for ever; but he is now convinced there is no king lives for ever, but the God of Israel only, who is still the same.

2. That his kingdom is like himself, everlasting, and his "dominion from generation to generation." There is no succession, no revolution in his kingdom. As he lives, so he reigns, for ever, and of his government there is no end.

3. That all nations before him are as nothing; he has no need of them, he makes no account of them. The greatest of men, in comparison with him, are less than nothing. Those that think highly of God think meanly of themselves.

4. That his kingdom is universal, and both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth are his subjects, and under his check and control. Both angels and men are employed by him, and accountable to him; the highest angel is not above his command, nor the meanest of the children of men beneath his cognizance. The angels of heaven are his armies, the inhabitants of the earth his tenants.

5. That his power is irresistible, and his sovereignty uncontrollable, for "he doth according to his will," according to his design and purpose, according to his decree and counsel. Whatever he pleaseth, that he doth; whatever he appointeth, that he performeth; and none can resist his will, change his counsel, or "stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" None can arraign his proceedings, inquire into the meaning of them, or demand a reason for them. Woe to him that strives with his Maker, that saith to him, What doest thou? or, Why doest thou so?

6. That every thing that God doth is well done. His works are truth, for they all agree with his word; his ways are judgment, both wise and righteous, exactly consonant to the rules both of prudence and equity, and no fault to be found with them.

7. That he has power to humble the haughtiest of his enemies that act in contradiction to him or competition with him. Those that walk in pride, he is able to abase them, ver. 37; he is able to deal with those that are most confident of their own sufficiency to contend with him.

Secondly. He has the use of his reason so far restored to him as with it to re-enjoy himself, and the pleasures of his re-established prosperity; ver. 36, "At the same time my reason returned to me." He had said before, ver. 34, that his "understanding returned" to him, and here he mentions it again, for the use of our reason is a mercy we can never be enough thankful for. Now his lords sought to him,—he did not need to seek to them; and they soon perceived, not only that he had recovered his reason and was fit to rule, but that he had recovered it with advantage, and was more fit to rule than ever. It is likely the dream and the interpretation of it was well known, and much talked of at court; and the former part of the prediction being fulfilled, that he should go distracted, they doubted not but that, according to the prediction, he should come to himself again at seven years' end, and, in confidence of that, when the time was expired, were ready to receive him; and then his "honour and brightness returned" to him, the same he had before his madness seized him. He is now established in his kingdom as firm as if there had been no such interruption given him; he becomes a fool that he may be wise, wiser than ever; and he that but the other day was in the depth of disgrace and ignominy has now

"excellent majesty" added to him, beyond what he had when he went from kingdom to kingdom conquering and to conquer. Note, 1. When men are brought to honour God, particularly by a penitent confession of sin, and a believing acknowledgment of his sovereignty, then, and not till then, they may expect that God will put honour upon them—will not only restore them to the dignity they lost by the sin of the first Adam, but add excellent majesty to them from the righteousness and grace of the second Adam. 2. Afflictions shall last no longer than till they have done the work for which they were sent. When this prince is brought to own God's dominion over him he is then restored to a dominion over himself. 3. All the accounts we take and give of God's dealing with us ought to conclude with praises to him. When Nebuchadnezzar is restored to his kingdom, he praises, and extols, and honours the King of heaven, ver. 37, before he applies himself to his secular business. Therefore we have our reason, that we may be in a capacity of praising him; and therefore our prosperity, that we may have cause to praise him.

It was not long after this that Nebuchadnezzar ended his life and reign. Abydenus, quoted by Eusebius, (*Præp. Evang.* i. 9,) reports from the tradition of the Chaldeans, that upon his deathbed he foretold the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. Whether he continued in the same good mind that here he seems to have been in, we are not told, nor doth any thing appear to the contrary but that he did; and if so great a blasphemer and persecutor did find mercy he was not the last. And if our charity may reach so far as to hope he did, we must admire free grace, by which he lost his wits for awhile, that he might save his soul for ever.

CHAPTER V.

The destruction of the kingdom of Babylon had been long and often foretold when it was at a distance. In this chapter we have it accomplished, and a prediction of it the very same night that it was accomplished. Belshazzar now reigned in Babylon; some compute he had reigned seventeen years, others but three; we have here the story of his exit and the period of his kingdom. We must know that, about two years before this, Cyrus king of Persia, a growing monarch, came against Babylon with a great army. Belshazzar met him, fought him, and was routed by him in a pitched battle. He and his scattered forces retired into the city, where Cyrus besieged them; they were very secure, because the river Euphrates was their bulwark, and they had twenty years' provision in the city; but in the second year of the siege he took it, as is here related. We have in this chapter, I. The riotous, idolatrous, and sacrilegious feast which Belshazzar made, in which he filled up the measure of his iniquity, ver. 1—4. II. The alarm given him in the midst of his jollity, by a handwriting on the wall, which none of his wise men could read, or tell him the meaning of, ver. 5—9. III. The interpretation of the mystical characters by Daniel, who was at length brought in to him, and dealt plainly with him, and shewed him his doom written, ver. 10—28. IV. The immediate accomplishment of the interpretation in the slaying of the king and seizing of the kingdom, ver. 30, 31.

BELSHAZZAR the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which *was* in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. 3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which *was* at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. 5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6 Then the king's countenance was changed,

WINE-BEARERS.

THE KASR OR PALACE OF BABYLON.

and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. 7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. *And* the king spake, and said to the wise *men* of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and *have* a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. 8 Then came in all the king's wise *men:* but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. 9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonied.

We have here Belshazzar the king very gay, but all of a sudden very gloomy, and in straits in the fulness of his sufficiency. See how he affronts God, and God affrights him; and wait what will be the issue of this contest, and whether he that hardened his heart against God prospered.

First. See how the king affronted God, and put contempt upon him. He "made a great feast," or banquet of wine; probably it was some anniversary solemnity in honour of his birthday, or coronation day, or of some of their idols. Historians say that Cyrus, who was now with his army besieging Babylon, knew of this feast, and presuming that they then would be off their guard, *somno vinoque sepulti*,—'buried in sleep and wine,' took that opportunity to attack the city, and so with the more ease made himself master of it. Belshazzar upon this occasion invited "a thousand of his lords" to come and drink with him; perhaps they were such as had signalised themselves in defence of the city against the besiegers. Or these were his great council of war, with whom, when they had well drunk, he would advise what was farther to be done. And they were to look upon it as a great favour that he drank wine before them, for it was the pride of those eastern kings to be seldom seen. He drank wine before them, for he made this feast, as Ahasuerus did, to shew the honour of his majesty. Now, in this sumptuous feast,

1. He put an affront upon the providence of God, and bid defiance to his judgments. His city was now besieged, a powerful enemy was at his gates, his life and kingdom lay at stake; in all this the hand of the Lord was gone out against him, and by it he called him to "weeping and mourning, and girding with sackcloth." God's voice cried in the city, as Jonah to Nineveh, "Yet forty days," or fewer, and Babylon shall be destroyed. He should therefore, like the king of Nineveh, have proclaimed a fast; but, as one resolved to walk contrary to God, he proclaims a feast, and behold, "joy and gladness, slaying oxen, killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine," as if he dared the Almighty to do his worst, *Isa.* xxii. 12, 13. To shew how little fear he had of being forced to surrender for want of provisions, he spent thus extravagantly. Note, Security and sensuality are sad presages of approaching ruin. Those that will not be warned by the judgments of God may expect to be wounded by them.

2. He put an affront upon the temple of God, and bid defiance to his sanctuary; ver. 2, "While he tasted the wine he commanded to bring" the vessels of the temple, that they might drink in them. When he tasted how rich and fine the wine was, 'O,' said he, 'it is a pity but we should have holy vessels to drink such delicate wine as this in;' which was looked upon as a piece of wit, and, to carry on the humour, the vessels of the temple were presently sent for. Nay, there seems to have been something more in it than a frolic, and that it was done in a malicious despite to the God of Israel. The heart of his people was very much upon these sacred vessels, as appears by *Jer.* xxvii. 16, 18; their principal care in their return was about these, *Ezr.* i. 7. Now we may suppose they had an expectation of their deliverance approaching, reckoning the seventy years of their captivity near a period, and some of them might perhaps have given out some words to that purpose, that shortly they should have the vessels of the sanctuary restored to them; in defiance of which, Belshazzar here proclaims them to be his own, will keep them in store no longer, but make use of them among his own plate. Note, That mirth is sinful indeed, and fills the measure of men's iniquity apace, which profanes sacred things, and jests with them. This ripened Babylon for ruin, that no songs would serve them but the songs of Zion, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 3, no vessels but the vessels of the sanctuary. Let those who thus sacrilegiously alienate what is dedicated to God and his honour know that he will not be mocked.

3. He put an affront upon God himself, and bid defiance to his deity; for "they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver," ver. 4. They gave that glory to images, the work of their own hands, and creatures of their own fancy, which is due to the true and living God only. They praised them, either with sacrifices offered to them or with songs sung in honour of them. When their heads were giddy, and their hearts merry with wine, they were in the fittest frame to praise the gods of gold and silver, wood and stone; for one would think men in their senses, that had the command of a clear and sober thought, could not be guilty of so gross an absurdity; they must be intoxicated ere they could be so infatuated. Drunken worshippers, that are not men, but beasts, are the most proper for the service of dunghill deities, that are not gods, but devils. "They have erred through wine," *Isa.* xxviii. 7. They drank wine, and praised their idol gods, as if they had been the founders of their feast, and the givers of all good things to them. Or, when they were drinking wine, they praised their gods, by drinking healths to them. And the king drank wine before them, ver. 1, that is, he began the health, first to this god, and then to the other, till they went through the beadroll, or farrago, of them, those of wood and stone not excepted. Note, Immorality and impiety, vice and profaneness, strengthen the hands, and advance the interests one of another. Drunken frolics were an introduction to idolatry, and then idolatrous healths were a shoeing-horn to farther drunkenness.

Secondly. See how God affrighted the king, and struck a terror upon him. Belshazzar and his lords are in the midst of their revels, the cups going round apace, and all disposed to merriment—drinking confusion, it may be, to Cyrus and his army, and roaring out huzzas in confidence of the speedy raising of the siege. But the hour was come when that must be fulfilled which had been

long ago said of the king of Babylon, when his city should be besieged by the Persians and Medes; *Isa.* xxi. 2—4, "The night of my pleasures has he turned into fear to me." The mirth of this ball at court must be spoiled, and a damp cast upon their jollity, though the king himself be master of the revels; presently, when God speaks the word, we have him and all his guests in the utmost confusion, and the end of their mirth heaviness.

1. There appear the "fingers of a man's hand" writing "on the plaster of the wall," before the king's face, ver. 5; the angel Gabriel, say the rabbins, directing these fingers, and writing by them. 'That Divine hand (saith a rabbin of our own, Dr. Lightfoot,) that had written the two tables for a law to his people now writes the doom of Babel and Belshazzar upon the wall.' Here was nothing sent to frighten them which made a noise, or threatened their lives; no claps of thunder or flashes of lightning; no destroying angel with his sword drawn in his hand; only a pen in the hand, writing upon the wall, "over against the candlestick," where they might all see it by the light of their own candle. Note, God's written word is sufficient to put the proudest, boldest sinner into a fright, when he is pleased to give it the setting on. "The king saw the part of the hand that wrote," but saw not the person whose hand it was, which made the thing more frightful. Note, What we see of God, the part of the hand that writes in the book of the creatures and the book of the Scriptures, ("Lo, these are parts of his ways," *Job* xxvi. 14,) may serve to possess us with awful thoughts concerning that of God which we do not see. If this be the finger of God, what is his arm made bare? And what is he?

2. The king is immediately seized with a panic fear; ver. 6, "His countenance was changed." His colour went and came, "the joints of his loins were loosed," so that he had no strength in them, but was struck with a pain in his back, as is usual in a great fright; "his knees smote one against another," so violently did he tremble, like an aspen leaf. But what was the matter? Why is he in such a fright? He perceives not what is written, and how doth he know but it may be some happy presage of deliverance to him and to his kingdom. But the business was his thoughts troubled him; his own guilty conscience flew in his face, and told him he had no reason to expect any good news from heaven, and that the hand of an angel could write nothing but terror to him. He that knew himself liable to the justice of God presently concludes this is an arrest in his name, a summons to appear before him. Note, God can soon awaken the most secure, and make the heart of the stoutest sinner to tremble; and there needs no more to do it but to let loose his own thoughts upon him; they will soon play the tyrant, and give him trouble enough.

3. The wise men of Babylon are presently called in to see what they can make of this writing upon the wall, ver. 7. The king cried aloud, as one in haste, as one in earnest, to bring the whole college of magicians to try if they can read this writing, and shew the interpretation of it; for the king and all his lords cannot pretend to it, it is out of their sphere. The study of Divine revelation (such as they had, or thought they had,) and converse with the world of spirits was, by the heathen, confined to one profession, and none other meddled with it; but what is written to us by the finger of God is legible to all. Whoever will may read the mind of God in the Scriptures. To engage these wise men to exert the utmost of their skill in this matter, and provoke them to an emulation in the attempt, he promiseth that whoever would give him a satisfactory account of this writing should be dignified with the highest honours of the court. He knew what these pretenders to wisdom aimed at, and what would please them, and therefore promiseth them a scarlet robe and a gold chain—glorious things in their eyes that know no better. Nay, he should be *primus par regni*,—'chief minister of state;' the third ruler in the kingdom, next to the king and his heir apparent.

4. The king is disappointed in his expectations from them. They could none of them read the writing, much less interpret it, ver. 8; which increaseth the king's confusion, ver. 9. He likes the thing yet worse and worse, and fears that mischief is towards him. His lords also, that had been partners with him in his jollity, are now sharers with him in his terrors; they also were astonished, and at their wits' end. And neither their numbers nor their refreshment by wine would serve to keep up their spirits. The reason why the wise men could not read the writing, was not because it was written in any language or characters unknown to them, but God either cast a mist before their eyes or put such confusion upon their spirits that they could not read it, that the honour of expounding this mystical writing might be reserved for Daniel. Note, The terror of an awakened, convinced conscience may justly be increased by the utter insufficiency of all creatures to give it ease or satisfaction.

10 *Now* the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: *and* the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: 11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom *is* the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, *I say*, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, *and* soothsayers; 12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. 13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. *And* the king spake and said unto Daniel, *Art* thou that Daniel, which *art* of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? 14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods *is* in thee, and *that* light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. 15 And now the wise *men*, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing: 16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and *have* a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. 17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour: 19 And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. 22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; 23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou

DEATH JUDGMENT, FROM THE GREAT SARCOPHAGUS IN THE SLOAN MUSEUM.

hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath *is*, and whose *are* all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: 24 Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. 25 And this *is* the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This *is* the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. 27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28 PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. 29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and *put* a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Here is, First. The information given to the king by the queen-mother, concerning Daniel, how fit he was to be consulted in this difficult case. It is supposed this queen was the widow of Evil-merodach, and was the famous Nitocris, whom Herodotus mentions as a woman of extraordinary prudence. She was not present at the feast, as the king's wives and concubines were, ver. 2; it was not agreeable to her age and gravity to keep a merry night. But tidings of the fright which the king and his lords were put into being brought to her apartment, she came herself to the banqueting house, to recommend to the king a physician for his melancholy. She bespeaks him not to be discouraged by the insufficiency of his wise men to solve this riddle, for there was a man in his kingdom that had more than once helped his grandfather in such exigences, and no doubt could help him, ver. 11, 12. She could not undertake to read the writing herself, but directs him to one that could; let Daniel be called now, who should have been called first. Now observe,

1. The high character she gives of Daniel. He is a man "in whom is the spirit of the holy gods," who has something in him more than human; not only the spirit of a man, which in all is the candle of the Lord, but a Divine spirit. According to the language of her country and religion she could not give a higher encomium of any man; she speaks honourably of him, as a man that had, 1st. An admirably good head. "Light, and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him." Such an insight had he into things secret, and such a foresight of things to come, that it was evident he was Divinely inspired; he had "knowledge and understanding" beyond all the other wise men for "interpreting of dreams," explaining of enigmas or hard sentences, untying knots, and dissolving doubts. Solomon had a wonderful sagacity of this kind, but it should seem that in these things Daniel had more of an immediate Divine direction; behold, a greater than Solomon himself is here. Yet what was the wisdom of them both, compared with the treasures of wisdom hid in Christ? 2nd. He had an admirably good heart. "An excellent spirit" was found in him, which was a great ornament to his wisdom and knowledge, and qualified him to receive that gift; for "God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy." He was of an humble, holy, heavenly spirit, had a devout and gracious spirit, a spirit of zeal for the glory of God and the good of men. This was indeed an excellent spirit.

2. The account she gives of the respect that Nebuchadnezzar had for him. He was much in his esteem, and was preferred by him. "The king thy father," that is, thy grandfather; but even to many generations Nebuchadnezzar might well be called the father of that royal family, for he it was that raised it to such a pitch of grandeur. "The king, I say, thy father, made him master of the magicians." Perhaps Belshazzar had sometimes in his pride spoken slightly of Nebuchadnezzar and his politics, and the methods of his government, and the ministers he employed, and thought himself wiser than he, and therefore his mother harps upon that. "The king, I say, thy father," to whose good management all thou hast is owing, he pronounced him chief of, and gave him dominion over, all the wise men of Babylon, and named him Belteshazzar, according to the name of his god, thinking thereby to put honour upon him. But Daniel, by constantly making use of his Jewish name himself, (which he resolved to stick to, in token of his faithful adherence to his religion,) had worn out that name; only the queen dowager remembered it, otherwise he was generally called Daniel. Note, It is a very good office to revive the remembrance of the good services of worthy men, who are themselves modest, and willing they should be forgotten.

3. The motion she makes concerning him; "Let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation." By this it appears that Daniel was now forgotten at court; Belshazzar was a stranger to him, knew not that he had such a jewel in his kingdom; with the new king there came in a new ministry, and the old one was laid aside. Note, There are a great many valuable men, and such as might be made very useful, that lie long buried in obscurity, and some that have done eminent services, that lived to be overlooked, and taken no notice of; but, whatever men are, God is not unrighteous to forget the services done to his kingdom. Daniel, being turned out of his place, lived privately, and sought not any opportunity to be reinstated therein; yet he lived near the court, and within call,—though Babylon was now besieged,—that he might be ready, if there were occasion, to do any good office, by what interest he had among the great ones, for the children of his people. But providence so ordered it that now, just at the fall of that monarchy, he should by the queen's means be brought to court again, that he might lie there ready for preferment in the ensuing government. Thus do the righteous shine forth out of obscurity, and before honour is humility.

Secondly. The introducing of Daniel to the king, and his request to him to read and expound the writing. Daniel was "brought in before the king," ver. 13. He was now near ninety years of age, so that his years and honours, and former preferments, might have entitled him to a free admission into the king's presence, yet he was willing to be conducted in as a stranger by the master of the ceremonies. Now, 1. The king asks, with an air of haughtiness, "Art thou that Daniel who art of the children of the captivity?" Being a Jew, and a captive, he was loth to be beholden to him, if he could have helped it. 2. He tells him what an encomium he had heard of him, ver. 14, that "the spirit of the gods" was in him; and he had sent for him to try whether he deserved so high a character or no. 3. He acknowledgeth that all his wise men of Babylon were baffled; they could not read this writing, nor shew the interpretation, ver. 15. But, 4. He promiseth him the same rewards he had promised them, if he would do it, ver. 16. It was strange the magicians, when now, and in Nebuchadnezzar's time once and again, they were nonplussed, did not offer at something to save their credit. If they had with a good assurance said, This is the meaning of such a dream, such a writing, who could disprove them? But God so ordered it that they had nothing at all to say, as when Christ was born the heathen oracles were struck dumb.

Thirdly. The interpretation which Daniel gave of these mystic characters, which was so far from easing the king of his fears, that we may suppose it increased them rather. Daniel was now in years, and Belshazzar was young, and therefore he seems to take a greater liberty of dealing plainly and roundly with him than he had done upon the like occasions with Nebuchadnezzar. In reproving any man, especially great men, there is need of wisdom to consider all circumstances, for they are the reproofs of instruction that are the way of life. In Daniel's discourse here,

1. He undertakes to read the writing which gave them this alarm, and to shew them the interpretation of it, ver. 15. He slights the offer he made him of rewards, is not pleased that it was mentioned, for he is none of those that divine for money; what gratuities Nebuchadnezzar gave him afterwards he thankfully accepted them, but he scorned to indent for them, or to read the writing to the king for, and in consideration of, such and such honours promised him. No, "let thy gifts be to thyself," for they will not be long thine, and give thy fee to another,—to any of the wise men whom thou hadst most mind should have earned it; I value it not. Daniel sees his kingdom now at this last gasp, and therefore looks with contempt upon his gifts and rewards. And thus should we despise all the gifts and rewards this world can give, did we see, as we may by faith, its final period hastening on. Let it give its perishing gifts to another, there are better gifts which we have our eyes and hearts upon; but let us do our duty in the world, do it all the real service we can, read God's writing to it in a profession of religion, and by an agreeable conversation make known the interpretation of it, and then trust God for his gifts, his rewards, in comparison of which all the world can give is mere trash and trifles.

2. He largely recounts to the king God's dealings with his father Nebuchadnezzar, which were intended for instruction and warning to him, ver. 18—21. This is not intended for a flourish or an amusement, but is a necessary preliminary to the interpretation of the writing. Note, That we may understand aright what God is doing with us, it is of use to us to review what he has done with others.

1st. He describes the great dignity and power to which the Divine providence had advanced Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 18, 19. He had "a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour," for aught we know, above what any heathen prince ever had before him. Now he thought he got it by his own extraordinary conduct and courage, and ascribed his successes to a projecting active genius of his own; but Daniel tells him, who now enjoyed what he had laboured for, that it was the Most High God, the God of gods, and Lord of kings, as Nebuchadnezzar himself had called him, that gave him that kingdom, that vast dominion, that majesty wherewith he presided in the affairs of it, and that glory and honour which by his prosperous management he acquired. Note, Whatever degree of outward prosperity any arrive to, they must own it is of God's giving, not their own getting. Let it never be said, "My might, and the power of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth," this preferment; but let it always be remembered that it is God that gives men power to get wealth, and gives success to their endeavours. Now, the power which God gave to Nebuchadnezzar is here described to be very great, in respect both of ability and of authority. *First.* His ability was so strong that it was irresistible; such was the majesty that God gave him, so numerous the forces he had at command, and such an admirable dexterity he had at commanding them, that which way soever his sword turned it prospered; he could captivate and subdue nations by threatening them, without striking a stroke, for "all people trembled and feared before him," and would compound with him for their lives upon any terms. See what force is, and what the fear of it doth. It is that by which the brutal part of the world, even of the world of mankind, both governs and is governed. *Secondly.* His authority was so absolute that it was uncontrollable. The power which was allowed him, which descended upon him, or which at least he assumed, was without contradiction, was absolute and despotic. None shared with him either in the legislative or the executive part of it; but in dispensing punishments he condemned or acquitted at pleasure; "whom he would he slew, and whom he would he saved alive," though both were equally innocent, or equally guilty. The *jus vitæ et necis*,—'the power of life and death,' was entirely in his hand. In dispensing rewards he granted or denied preferments at pleasure; "whom he would set up, and whom he would put down," merely for a humour, and without giving a reason so much as to himself; but it is all *ex mero motu*,—'of his own good pleasure,' and *stat pro ratione voluntas*,—'his will stands for a reason.' Such was the constitution of the Eastern monarchies, such the manner of their kings.

2nd. He sets before him the sins which Nebuchadnezzar had been guilty of, whereby he had provoked God against him. *First.* He carried it insultingly towards those that were under him, and grew tyrannical and oppressive. The description given of his power intimates his abuse of his power, and that he was directed in what he did by humour and passion, not by reason and equity; so that he often condemned the innocent and acquitted the guilty, both which are an abomination to the Lord. He deposed men of merit, and preferred unworthy men, to the great detriment of the public, and for this he is accountable to the Most High God, that gave him his power. Note, It is a very hard and rare thing for men to have an absolute arbitrary power, and not to make an ill use of it. Camden has a distich of Giraldus, wherein he speaks of it as a rare instance concerning our King Henry the Second of England, that never any man had so much power and did so little hurt with it.

Glorior hoc uno, quod nunquam vidimus unum,
Nec potuisse magis, nec nocuisse minus,—

'Of him I can say, exulting, that with the same power to do harm no one was ever more inoffensive.'

But that was not all. *Secondly.* He carried it insolently towards the God above him, and grew proud and haughty, ver. 20. His heart was lifted up, and there his sin and ruin began; his mind was hardened in pride, hardened against the commands of God, and his judgments, he was wilful and obstinate, and neither God's word nor rod made any lasting impression upon him. Note, Pride is a sin that hardens the heart in all other sins, and renders the means of repentance and reformation ineffectual.

3rd. He reminds him of the judgments of God that were brought upon him for his pride and obstinacy. How he was deprived of his reason, and so "deposed from his kingly throne," ver. 20; driven from among men, to dwell with the wild asses, ver. 21. He that would not govern his subjects by rules of

reason had not reason sufficient for the government of himself. Note, Justly doth God deprive men of their reason when they become unreasonable, and will not use it, and of their power when they become oppressive, and use it ill. He continued like a brute till he knew and embraced that first principle of religion, "that the most high God rules;" and it is rather by religion than reason that man is distinguished from and dignified above the beasts; and it is more his honour to be a subject to the supreme Creator than to be lord of inferior creatures. Note, Kings must know, or shall be made to know, that the Most High God rules in their kingdoms—that is an *imperium in imperio*,—'an empire within an empire,' not to be excepted against—and that he appoints over them whomsoever he will. As he makes heirs, so he makes princes.

3. In God's name he exhibits articles of impeachment against Belshazzar. Before he reads him his doom from the handwriting on the wall, he shews him his crime, that God may be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth. Now that which he lays to his charge is,

1st. That he had not taken warning by the judgments of God upon his father; ver. 22, "Thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this." Note, It is a great offence to God if our hearts be not humbled before him to comply both with his precepts and with his providences, humbled by repentance, obedience, and patience; nay, he expects from the greatest of men that their hearts should be humbled before him by an acknowledgment that, as great as they are, to him they are accountable. And it is a great aggravation of the unhumbleness of our hearts when we know enough to humble them, but do not consider and improve it, particularly when we know how others have been broken that would not bend, how others have fallen that would not stoop, and yet we continue stiff and inflexible. It makes the sin of children the more heinous if they tread in the steps of their parents' wickedness, though they have seen how dear it has cost them, and how pernicious the consequences of it have been. Do we know this, do we know all this, and yet are we not humbled?

2nd. That he had affronted God more impudently than Nebuchadnezzar himself had done. Witness the revels of this very night in the midst of which he was seized with this horror; ver. 23, "Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven," hast swelled with rage against him, and taken up arms against his crown and dignity in this particular instance, that thou hast profaned the vessels of his house, and made the utensils of his sanctuary instruments of thine iniquity, and, in an actual designed contempt of him, hast "praised the gods of silver and gold, which see not, nor hear, nor know" any thing, as if they were to be preferred before the God that sees, and hears and knows every thing. Sinners that are resolved to go on in sin are well enough pleased with gods that neither see, nor hear, nor know, for then they may sin securely; but they will find to their confusion that, though those are the gods they choose, those are not the gods they must be judged by, but One to whom all things are naked and open.

3rd. That he had not answered the end of his creation and maintenance; "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." This is a general charge, which stands good against us all; look how we shall answer it. Observe, *First*. Our dependence upon God as our creator, preserver, benefactor, owner, and ruler. Not only from his hand our breath was at first, but in his hand our breath is still; it is he that holds our souls in life, and if he take away our breath we die. Our times being in his hand, so is our breath, by which our times are measured. "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" we live by him, live upon him, and cannot live without him. The way of man is not in himself, not at his own command, at his own disposal, but his are all our ways; for our hearts are in his hand, and so are the hearts of all men, even of kings, who seem to act most as free agents. *Secondly*. Our duty to God in consideration of this dependence. We ought to glorify him, to devote ourselves to his honour, and employ ourselves in his service, to make it our care to please him, and our business to praise him. *Thirdly*. Our default in this duty notwithstanding that dependence; we have not done it; for we "have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God." This is the indictment against Belshazzar. There needs no proof, it is made good by the notorious evidence of the fact, and his own conscience cannot but plead guilty to it; and, therefore,

4th. He now proceeds to read the sentence as he found it written upon the wall. Then, saith Daniel, when thou wast come to such a height of impiety as thus to trample upon the most sacred things, then when thou wast in the midst of thy sacrilegious idolatrous feast, then was the part of the hand, the writing fingers sent from him, from that God whom thou didst so daringly affront, and who had borne so long with thee, but would bear no longer; he sent them, and this writing thou now seest was written, ver. 24. It is he that now "writes bitter things against thee," and "makes thee to possess thine iniquities," *Job* xiii. 26. Note, As the sin of sinners is written in the book of God's omniscience, so the doom of sinners is written in the book of God's law; and the day is coming when those books shall be opened, and they shall be judged by them.

Now the writing was "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," ver. 25. It is well we have an authentic exposition of them annexed, else we could make little of them, so concise are they; the signification of them is, 'he hath numbered, he hath weighed, and they divide.' The Chaldean wise men, because they knew not that there is but one God only, could not understand who this 'He' should be, and for that reason, some think, the writing puzzled them.

First. Mene; that is repeated, for the thing is certain: *Mene, Mene*, that signifies, both in Hebrew and Chaldee, 'he hath numbered and finished;' which Daniel explains thus, ver. 26, "God hath numbered thy kingdom," that is, the years and days of the continuance of it; these were numbered in the counsel of God, and now they are finished; the term has expired for and during which thou wast to hold it, and now it must be surrendered. Here is an end of thy kingdom.

Secondly. Tekel; that signifies in Chaldee, "thou art weighed;" and in Hebrew, 'thou art too light;' so Dr. Lightfoot. For this king and his actions are weighed in the just and unerring balances of Divine equity. God doth as perfectly know his true character as the goldsmith knows the weight of that which he has weighed in the nicest scales. God doth not give judgment against him till he has first pondered his actions, and considered the merits of his case: But thou art "found wanting," unworthy to have such a trust lodged in thee, a vain, light, empty man, a man of no weight or consideration.

Thirdly. Upharsin, which should be rendered, and *Pharsin*, or *Peres*; Pharsin, in Hebrew, signifies 'the Persians;' *Paresin*, in Chaldee, signifies 'dividing.' Daniel put both together, ver. 28, "Thy kingdom is divided," is rent from thee, and "given to the Medes and Persians," as a prey to be divided among them.

Now this may, without any force, be applied to the doom of sinners; *mene, tekel, peres*, may easily be made to signify 'death, judgment, and hell.' At death the sinner's days are numbered and finished; after death the judgment, when he will be "weighed in the balance, and found wanting;" and after judgment the sinner will be cut asunder, and given as a prey to the devil and his angels. Daniel doth not here give Belshazzar such advice and encouragement to repent as he had given Nebuchadnezzar, because he saw the decree was gone forth, and he would not be allowed any space to repent.

One would have thought Belshazzar would have been exasperated against Daniel, and, seeing his own case desperate, would have been in a rage against him. But he was so far convicted by his own conscience of the reasonableness of all he said, that he objected nothing against it, but, on the contrary, gave Daniel the reward he promised him, put on him the scarlet gown and the gold chain, and proclaimed him the "third ruler in the kingdom," ver. 29, because he would be as good as his word, and because it was not Daniel's fault if the exposition of the handwriting was not such as he desired. Note, Many shew great respect to God's prophets who yet have no regard to his word. Daniel did not value these titles and ensigns of honour, yet would not refuse them, because they were tokens of his prince's goodwill. But we have reason to think he received them with a smile, foreseeing how soon they would all wither with him that bestowed them. They were like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night, and perished in a night, and therefore it was folly for him to be exceeding glad of them.

30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. 31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, *being* about threescore and two years old.

Here is, First. The death of the king. Reason enough he had to tremble, for he was just falling into the hands of the king of terrors; ver. 30, "In that night," when his heart was merry with wine, the besiegers broke into the city, aimed at the palace; there they found the king, and gave him his death wound; he could not find any place so secret as to conceal him, or so strong as to protect him. Heathen writers speak of Cyrus's taking Babylon by surprise, with the assistance of two deserters that shewed him the best way into the city. And it was foretold what a consternation it would be to the court, *Jer*. li. 11, 39. Note, Death comes as a snare upon those whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.

Secondly. The transferring of the kingdom into other hands. From the head of gold we now descend to the breast and arms of silver. "Darius the Mede took the kingdom" in partnership with, and by the consent of, Cyrus, who had conquered it, ver. 31. They were partners in war and conquest, and so they were in dominion, *ch*. vi. 28. Notice is taken of his age, that he was now sixty-two years old; for which reason Cyrus, who was his nephew, gave him the precedency. Some observe that, he being now sixty-two years old in the last year of the captivity, he was born in the eighth year of it, and that was the year when Jeconiah was carried captive, and all the nobles, &c: see 2*Kin*. xxiv. 13—15. Just at that time, when the most fatal stroke was given, was a prince born, that, in process of time, should avenge Jerusalem upon Babylon, and heal the wound that was now given. Thus deep are the counsels of God concerning his people, thus kind are his designs towards them.

CHAPTER VI.

Daniel doth not give a continued history of the reigns in which he lived, nor of the state affairs of the kingdoms of Chaldea and Persia, though he was himself a great man in those affairs; for what are those to us? But he selects such particular passages of story as serve for the confirmation of our faith in God, and the encouragement of our obedience to him; for the things written aforetime were written for our learning. It is a very observable, improvable story that we have in this chapter, how Daniel by faith "stopped the mouth of lions," and so obtained a good report, *Heb*. xi. 33. The three children were cast into the fiery furnace for not committing a known sin; Daniel was cast into the lion's den for not omitting a known duty; and God's miraculous delivering both them and him is left upon record for the encouragement of his servants in all ages to be resolute and constant, both in their abhorrence of that which is evil and in their adherence to that which is good, whatever it cost them. In this chapter we have, I. Daniel's preferment in the court of Darius, ver. 1—3. II. The envy and malice of his enemies against him, ver. 4, 5. III. The decree they obtained against prayer for thirty days, ver. 6—9. IV. Daniel's continuance and constancy in prayer, notwithstanding that decree, ver. 10. V. Information given against him for it, and the casting of him into the den of lions, ver, 11—17. VI. His miraculous preservation in the lions' den, and deliverance out of it, ver. 18—23. VII. The casting of his accusers into the den, and their destruction there, ver. 24. VIII. The decree which Darius made upon this occasion in honour of the God of Daniel, and the prosperity of Daniel afterwards, ver. 25—28. And this God is our God for ever and ever.

IT pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel *was* first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. 3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. 4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he *was* faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. 5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God.

We are here told, concerning Daniel,

First. What a great man he was. When Darius, upon his accession to the crown of Babylon by conquest, new-modelled the government, he made Daniel prime minister of state,—set him at the helm, and made him first commissioner both of the treasury and of the great seal. Darius's dominion was very large, All he got by his conquests and acquests was, that he had so many more

countries to take care of. No more can be expected from himself than what one man can do, and therefore others must be employed under him. He "set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes," ver. 1, and appointed them their districts in which they were to administer justice, preserve the public peace, and levy the king's revenue. Note, Inferior magistrates are ministers of God to us for good, as well as the sovereign, and therefore we must submit ourselves both to the king as supreme and to the governors that are constituted and commissioned by him, 1 *Pet.* ii. 13, 14. Over these princes there was a triumvirate, or three presidents, who were to take and state the public accounts, to receive appeals from the princes, or complaints against them in case of maladministration, that "the king should have no damage," ver. 2, that he should not sustain loss in his revenue, and that the power he delegated to the princes might not be abused to the oppression of the subject; for by that the king, whether he think so or no, receives real damage, both as it alienates the affections of his people from him and provokes the displeasure of his God against him. Of these three Daniel was the chief, because he was found to go beyond them all, in all manner of princely qualifications. He was "preferred above the presidents and princes," ver. 3; and so wonderfully well pleased the king with his management that he "thought to set him over the whole realm," and let him place and displace at his pleasure. Now,

1. We must take notice of it to the praise of Darius, that he would prefer a man thus, purely for his personal merit, and his fitness for business; and those sovereigns that would be well served must go by that rule. Daniel had been a great man in the kingdom that was conquered, and for that reason, one would think, would have been looked upon as an enemy, and, as such, imprisoned or banished. He was a native of a foreign kingdom, and a ruined one, and upon that account might have been despised as a stranger and captive. But Darius it seems was very quicksighted in judging of men's capacities, and was soon aware that this Daniel had something extraordinary in him, and therefore, though no doubt he had creatures of his own not a few, that expected preferment in this new conquered kingdom, and were gaping for it, and those that had been long his confidants would depend upon it that they should be now his presidents, yet so well did he consult the public welfare that, finding Daniel to excel them all in prudence and virtue, and probably having heard of his being Divinely inspired, he made him his right hand.

2. We must take notice of it, to the glory of God, that, though Daniel was now very old, (it is above seventy years since he was brought a captive to Babylon,) yet he was as able as ever for business, both in body and mind; and that he who had continued faithful to his religion, notwithstanding all the temptations of the foregoing reigns, in a new government was as much respected as ever. He kept in by being an oak, not by being a willow; by a constancy in virtue, not by a pliableness to vice. Such honesty is the best policy, for it secures a reputation; and those who thus honour God he will honour them.

Secondly. What a good man he was. "An excellent spirit was in him," ver. 3. And he was faithful to every trust, dealt fairly between the sovereign and the subject, and took care that neither should be wronged, so that there was no error or fault to be found in him, ver. 4. He was not only not chargeable with any treachery or dishonesty, but not with any mistake or indiscretion. He never made any blunder, nor had any occasion to plead inadvertency or forgetfulness for his excuse. This is recorded for an example to all that are in places of public trust, to approve themselves both careful and conscientious, that they may be free not only from fault but error; not only from crime, but from mistake.

Thirdly. What ill-will was borne him, both for his greatness and for his goodness. The presidents and princes envied him because he was advanced above them, and probably hated him because he had a watchful eye upon them, and took care they should not wrong the government to enrich themselves. See here, 1. The cause of envy, and that is every thing that is good. Solomon complains of it as a vexation, that "for every right work a man is envied of his neighbour," *Eccl.* iv. 4, that the better a man is the worse he is thought of by his rivals; Daniel is envied because he has a more excellent spirit than his neighbours. 2. The effect of envy, and that is every thing that is bad. Those that envied Daniel sought no less than his ruin; his disgrace would not serve them, it was his death they desired. "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who can stand before envy?" *Pr.* xxvii. 4. Daniel's enemies set spies upon him to observe him in the management of his place; they "sought to find occasion" against him, something on which to ground an accusation "concerning the kingdom," some instance of neglect or partiality, some hasty word spoken, some person borne hard upon, or some necessary business overlooked; and if they could but have found the mote, the mole-hill of a mistake, it would have been soon improved to the beam, to the mountain of an unpardonable misdemeanour. But they could find no occasion against him; they owned they could not. Daniel always acted honestly, and now the more warily, and stood the more upon his guard, because of his observers, *Ps.* xxvii. 11. Note, We have all need to walk circumspectly, because we have many eyes upon us, and some that watch for our halting. Those especially have need to carry their cup even that have it full. They concluded at length they should not find any occasion against him, except "concerning the law of his God," ver. 5. It seems, then, Daniel kept up the profession of his religion and held it fast, without wavering or shrinking, and yet that was no bar to his preferment; there was no law requiring him to be of the king's religion, or incapacitating him to bear office in the state unless he would. It was all one to the king what God he prayed to, so long as he did the business of his place faithfully and well; he was at the king's service *usque ad aras*,—'as far as the altars,' but there he left him. In this matter, therefore, his enemies hoped to ensnare him. *Quærendum est crimen læsæ religionis ubi majestatis deficit*,—'When treason could not be charged upon him he was charged with impiety.'—*Grot.* Note, It is an excellent thing, and much for the glory of God, when those who profess religion carry themselves so inoffensively in their whole conversation that their most watchful, spiteful enemies may find no occasion of blaming them, save only in the matters of their God, in which they walk according to their consciences. It is observable, that when Daniel's enemies could find no occasion against him concerning the kingdom, they had so much sense of justice left that they did not suborn witnesses against him to accuse him of crimes he was innocent of, and to swear treason upon him, wherein they shame many that were called Jews and are called Christians.

6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. 10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

PRINCES OF PERSIA.—FROM PERSEPOLIS.

Daniel's adversaries could have no advantage against him by any law now in being, they therefore contrive a new law, by which they hope to ensnare him, and in such a matter as they knew they should be sure of him; and such was his fidelity to his God that they gained their point. Here is,

First. Darius's impious law. I call it Darius's, because he gave the royal assent to it, and otherwise it had not been of force; but it was not properly his,—he contrived it not, and was perfectly wheedled to consent to it. The presidents and princes framed the edict, brought in the bill, and by their management it was agreed to by the convention of the states, who, perhaps, were met at this time upon some public occasion. It is pretended that this bill, which they would have to pass into a law, was the result of mature deliberation, that "all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, princes, counsellors, and captains had consulted together" about it, and that they not only agreed to it, but advised it, for divers good causes and considerations, that they had done what they could to establish it for a firm decree; nay, they intimate to the king that it was carried *nemine contradicente*,—'unanimously.' "All the presidents" are of this mind, and yet we are sure that Daniel, the chief of the three presidents, did not agree to it, and have reason to think that many more of the princes excepted against it, as absurd and unreasonable. Note, It is no new thing for that to be represented, and with great assurance too, as the sense of the nation, which is far from being so; and that which few approve of is sometimes confidently said to be that which all agree to. But, O the infelicity of kings, who, being under the necessity of seeing and hearing with other people's eyes and ears, are many times wretchedly imposed upon! These designing men, under colour of doing honour to the king, but really intending the ruin of his favourite, press him to pass this into a law, and make it a royal statute, "that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days," save of the king, should be put to death after the most barbarous manner, should "be cast into the den of lions," ver. 7. This is the bill they have been hatching, and they lay it before the king to be signed and passed into a law. Now,

1. There is nothing in it that has the least appearance of good, but that it magnifies the king, and makes him seem both very great and very kind to his subjects, which they suggest will be of good service to him now he is newly come to his throne, and will confirm his interests. All men must be made to believe that the king is so rich, and withal so ready to all petitioners, that none in any want or distress need to apply themselves either to God or man for relief, but to him only. And for thirty days together he will be ready to give audience to all that have any petition to present to him. It is indeed much for the honour of kings to be benefactors to their subjects, and to have their ears open to their complaints and requests; but if they pretend to be their sole benefactors, and undertake to be to them instead of God, and challenge that respect from them which is due to God only, it is their disgrace, and not their honour. But,

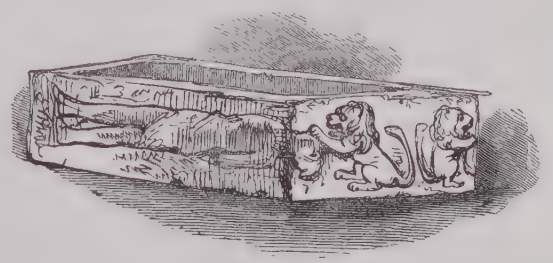
2. There is a great deal in it that is apparently evil. It is bad enough to forbid asking a petition of any man,—must not a beggar ask an alms? or one neighbour beg a kindness of another? if the child want bread, must not he ask it of his parents, or be cast into the den of lions if he do? nay, they that have business with the king, may they not petition those about him to introduce them? but it was much worse, and an impudent affront to all religion, to forbid asking a petition of any god. It is by prayer that we give glory to God, fetch in mercy from God, and so keep our communion with God; and to interdict prayer for thirty days is for so long to rob God of all the tribute he has from man, and to rob man of all the comfort he has in God. When the light of nature teacheth us that the providence of God has the ordering and disposing of all our affairs, doth not the law of nature oblige us, by prayer, to acknowledge God and seek to him? Doth not every man's heart direct him, when he is in want or distress, to call upon God? and must this be made high treason? We could not live a day without God; and can man live thirty days without prayer? Will the king himself be tied up for so long from praying to God? or, if it be allowed him, will he undertake to do it for all his subjects? Did ever any nation thus slight their gods? But see what absurdities malice will drive men to. Rather than not bring Daniel into trouble for praying to his God, they will deny themselves and all their friends the satisfaction of praying to theirs. Had they proposed only to prohibit the Jews from praying to their God, Daniel would have been as effectually ensnared; but they knew the king would not pass such a law, and therefore made it thus general. And the king, puffed up with a fancy that this would set him up as a little god, was fond of the feather in his cap, (for so it was, and not a flower in his crown,) and "signed the writing and the decree," ver. 9, which, being once done, according to the constitution of the united kingdom of the Medes and Persians, it was not upon any pretence whatsoever to be altered or dispensed with, or the breach of it pardoned.

Secondly. Daniel's pious disobedience to this law, ver. 10. He did not retire into the country, or abscond for some time, though he knew the law was levelled against him; but, because he knew it was so, therefore he stood his ground, knowing that he had now a fair opportunity of honouring God before men, and shewing that he preferred his favour, and his duty to him, before life itself. "When Daniel knew that the writing was signed," he might have gone to the king and expostulated with him about it; nay, he might have remonstrated against it, as grounded upon a misinformation that all the presidents had consented to it, whereas he that was chief of them had never been consulted about it; but he went to his house and applied himself to his duty, cheerfully trusting God with the event. Now observe,

1. Daniel's constant practice, which we had not been told but upon this occasion; but we have reason to think it was the general practice of the pious Jews. 1st. He prayed in his house sometimes himself alone, and sometimes with his family about him, and made a solemn business of it. Cornelius was a man that "prayed in his house," *Acts* x. 30. Note, Every house not only may be, but ought to be, a house of prayer; where we have a tent, God must have an altar, and on it we must offer spiritual sacrifices. 2nd. In every prayer he gave thanks. When we pray to God for the mercies we want we must praise him for those we have received. Thanksgiving must be a part of every prayer. 3rd. In his prayer and thanksgiving he had an eye to God as his God, his in covenant, and set himself as in his presence. He did this before his God, and with a regard to him. 4th. When he prayed and gave thanks he "kneeled upon his knees," which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and most expressive of humility, and reverence, and submission to God. Kneeling is a begging posture, and we come to God as beggars, beggars for our lives, whom it concerns to be imprtunate. 5th. He "opened the windows of his chamber," that the sight of the visible heavens might affect his heart with an awe of that God who dwells above the heavens. But that was not all; he opened them towards Jerusalem, the holy city, though now in ruins, to signify the affection he had for its very stones and dust, *Ps.* cii. 14, and the remembrance he had of its concerns daily in his prayers. Thus, though he himself lived great in Babylon, yet he testified his concurrence with the meanest of his brethren the captives, in remembering Jerusalem and preferring it before his chief joy, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 5, 6. Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen to put his name there; and, when the temple was dedicated, Solomon's prayer to God was, that if the people should, in the land of their enemies, pray unto him with their eye towards the land which he gave them and the city he had chosen, and the house that was built to his name, that then he would hear and maintain their cause, 1 *Kin.* viii. 48, 49, to which prayer Daniel had reference in this circumstance of his devotions. 6th. He did this three times a day, three times every day, according to the example of David; *Ps.* lv. 17, "Morning, evening, and at noon I will pray." It is good to have our hours of prayer, not to bind but to mind conscience; and if we think our bodies require refreshment by food thrice a day, can we think seldomer will serve our souls? This is, sure, as little as may be to answer the command of praying always. 7th. He did this so openly and avowedly that all that knew him knew it to be his practice; and he thus shewed it, not because he was proud of it,—in the place where he was there was no room for that temptation, for it was not reputation but reproach that attended it,—but because he was not ashamed of it. Though Daniel was a great man, he did not think it below him to be thrice a day upon his knees before his Maker, and to be his own chaplain; though he was an old man, he did not think himself past it, nor, though it had been his practice from his youth up, was he weary of this well-doing. Though he was a man of business, vast business, for the service of the public, he did not think that would excuse him from the daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable, then, are they who have but little to do in the world, and yet will not do thus much for God and their souls! Daniel was a man famous for prayer and for success in it, *Eze.* xiv. 14, and he came to be so by thus making a conscience of prayer, and making a business of it daily; and in thus doing God blessed him wonderfully.

2. Daniel's constant adherence to this practice, even when it was made by the law a capital crime. When he "knew that the writing was signed" he continued to do as he did aforetime, and altered not one circumstance of the performance. Many a man, yea, and many a good man, would have thought it prudence to omit it for these thirty days, when he could not do it without hazard of his life. He might have prayed so much the oftener when those days were expired, and the danger was over; or he might have performed the duty at another time and in another place, so secretly that it would not be possible for his enemies to discover it, and so he might both satisfy his conscience and keep up his communion with God, and yet avoid the law, and continue in his usefulness. But if he had done so it would have been thought, both by his friends and by his enemies, that he had thrown up the duty for this time through cowardice and base fear, which would have tended very much to the dishonour of God, and the discouragement of his friends. Others that moved in a lower sphere might well enough act with caution; but Daniel, that has so many eyes upon him, must act with courage, and the rather because he knows the law, when it was made, was particularly levelled against him. Note, We must not omit duty for fear of suffering, no, nor so much as seem to come short of it. In trying times great stress is laid upon our confessing Christ before men, *Mat.* x. 32; and we must take heed, lest, under pretence of discretion, we be found guilty of cowardice in the cause of God. If we do not think this example of Daniel obligeth us to do likewise, yet I am sure it forbids us to censure those that do, for God owned him in it. By his constancy to his duty now it appears he had never been used to admit any excuse for the omission of it; for if ever any excuse would have served to put it by, this would have served now. 1st. That it was forbidden by the king, his master, and in honour of the king too. But it is an undoubted maxim, in answer to that,—we are to obey God rather than men. 2nd. That it would be the loss of his life; but it is an undoubted maxim, in answer to that, that they who throw away their souls (as those certainly do that live without prayer) to save their lives, make but an ill bargain for themselves; and, though herein they make themselves, like the king of Tyre, wiser than Daniel, at their end they will be fools.

11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. 12 Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask *a petition* of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing *is* true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which *is* of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. 14 Then the king, when he heard *these* words, was sore displeased with himself, and set *his* heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. 15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians *is*, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. 16 Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast *him* into the den of lions. *Now* the king spake and said



KILLING BY LIONS.

unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Here is, First. Proof made of Daniel's praying to his God, notwithstanding the late edict to the contrary; ver. 11, "These men assembled," they came 'tumultuously together,' so the word is, the same that was used ver. 6, borrowed from *Ps.* ii. 1, "Why do the heathen rage?" They came together to visit Daniel, perhaps under pretence of business, at that time which they knew to be his usual hour of devotion; and if they had not found him so engaged they would have upbraided him with his faint-heartedness and distrust of his God; but, which they rather wished to do, they found him on his knees, "praying and making supplication before his God." "For his love they are his adversaries," but, like his father David, he "gives himself unto prayer," *Ps.* cix. 4.

Secondly. Complaint made of it to the king. When they had found occasion against Daniel concerning the law of his God, they lost no time, but applied themselves to the king, ver. 12; and having appealed to him whether there was not such a law made, and gained from him a recognition of it, and that it was so ratified as that it might not be altered, they proceeded to accuse Daniel, ver. 13. They describe him so, in the information they give, as to exasperate

the king, and incense him the more against him; He is "of the children of the captivity of Judah." He is of Judah, that despicable people, and now a captive in a despicable state, that can call nothing his own but what he has by the king's favour, and yet he "regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed." Note, It is no new thing for that which is done faithfully in conscience towards God to be misrepresented as done obstinately, and in contempt of the civil powers; that is, for the best saints to be reproached as the worst men. Daniel regarded God, and therefore prayed, and we have reason to think prayed for the king and his government, yet this is construed as not regarding the king. That excellent spirit which Daniel was endued with, and that established reputation which he had gained, could not protect him from these poisonous darts. They do not say he makes his petition to his God, lest Darius should take notice of that to his praise, but only he makes his petition, which is a thing the law forbids.

Thirdly. The great concern the king was in hereupon. He now perceived that, whatever they pretended, it was not to honour him, but in spite to Daniel, that they had proposed that law, and now is "sore displeased with himself" for gratifying them in it, ver. 14. Note, When men indulge a proud, vain-glorious humour, and please themselves with that which feeds it, they know not what vexations they are preparing for themselves. Their flatterers may prove their tormentors, and are but spreading a net for their feet. Now the king sets his heart to deliver Daniel; both by argument and by authority he labours "till the going down of the sun to deliver him;" that is, to persuade his accusers not to insist upon his prosecution. Note, We often do that through inconsideration which afterwards we see cause a thousand times to wish undone again, which is a good reason why we should ponder the path of our feet, for then all our ways will be established.

Fourthly. The violence with which the prosecutors demanded judgment, ver. 15. We are not told what Daniel said. The king himself is his advocate, he needs not plead his own cause, but silently commits himself and it to Him that judges righteously; but the prosecutors insist upon it that the law must have its course. It is a fundamental maxim in the constitution of the government of the Medes and Persians, which is now become the universal monarchy, that "no decree or statute which the king establisheth may be changed." The same we find, *Est.* i. 19; viii. 8. The Chaldeans magnified the will of their king by giving him a power to make and unmake laws at his pleasure, to slay and keep alive whom he would. The Persians magnified the wisdom of their king by supposing that, whatever law he solemnly ratified, it was so well made that there could be no occasion to alter it, or dispense with it,—as if any human foresight could, in forming a law, guard against all inconveniences. But if this maxim be duly applied to Daniel's case, (as I am apt to think it is not, but perverted,) while it honours the king's legislative power it hampers his executive power, and incapacitates him to shew that mercy which upholds the throne, and to pass acts of indemnity, which are the glories of a reign. Those who allow not the sovereign's power to dispense with a disabling statute yet never question his power to pardon an offence against a penal statute: but Darius is denied this power. See what need we have to pray for princes that God would give them wisdom, for they are often embarrassed with great difficulties, even the wisest and best are.

Fifthly. The executing of the law upon Daniel. The king himself, with the utmost reluctancy, and against his conscience, signs the warrant for his execution, and Daniel, that venerable grave man, that carried such a mixture of majesty and sweetness in his countenance, that had so often looked great upon the bench, and at the council board, and greater upon his knees, that had power with God and man, and had prevailed, purely for worshipping his God is brought, as if he had been one of the vilest of malefactors, and thrown into the den of lions, to be devoured by them, ver. 16. One cannot think of it without the utmost compasssion of the gracious sufferer, and the utmost indignation at the malicious prosecutors. To make sure work, the stone laid upon the mouth of the den is sealed, and the king (an over-easy man) is persuaded to do it with his own signet, ver. 17, that unhappy signet with which he had confirmed the law that Daniel falls by. But his lords cannot trust him, unless they add their signet too. Thus, when Christ was buried, his adversaries sealed the stone that was rolled to the door of his sepulchre.

Sixthly. The encouragement which Darius gave to Daniel to trust in God. "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee," ver. 16. 1. He justifies Daniel from guilt, owning all his crime to be serving his God continually, and continuing to do so even when it was made a crime. 2. He leaves it to God to free him from punishment, since he could not prevail to do it. He will deliver thee. He is sure his God can deliver him, for he believes him to be an Almighty God; and he has reason to think he will do it, having heard of his delivering Daniel's companions, in a like case, from the fiery furnace, and concluding him to be always faithful to those who approve themselves faithful to him. Note, Those who serve God continually he will continually preserve, and will bear them out in his service.

18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him. 19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: *and* the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. 23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. 24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Here is, First. The melancholy night which the king had upon Daniel's account, ver. 18. He had said, indeed, that God would deliver him out of the danger, but at the same time he could not forgive himself for throwing him into the danger, and justly might God deprive him of a friend whom he had himself used so barbarously. He went to his palace vexed at himself for what he had done, and calling himself unwise and unjust for not adhering to the law of God and nature, with a *non obstante*,—'a negative,' to the law of the Medes and Persians. He ate no supper, but passed the night fasting; his heart was already full of grief and fear; he forbade the music—nothing more unpleasing than songs sung to a heavy heart—he went to bed, but got no sleep; was full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day. Note, The best way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience; then we may lay us down in peace.

Secondly. The solicitous inquiry he made concerning Daniel the next morning, ver. 19, 20. He was up early, very early; for how could he lie in bed when he could not sleep for dreaming of Daniel, nor lie awake quietly for thinking of him? And he was no sooner up but he went in haste to the den of lions,—for he could not satisfy himself to send a servant, that would not sufficiently testify his affection to Daniel, nor had he patience to stay so long as till a servant would return. When he comes to the den, not without some hopes that God had graciously undone what he had wickedly done, he cries with a lamentable voice, as one full of concern and trouble, O Daniel, art thou alive? He longs to know, yet trembles to ask the question, fearing to be answered with the roaring of the lions after more prey; "O Daniel, servant of the living God," has "thy God whom thou servest" made it to appear that he is "able to deliver thee from the lions?" If he rightly understood himself when he called him the living God, he could not doubt of his ability to keep Daniel alive, for he that has life in himself quickens whom he will; but has he thought fit, in this case, to exert his power? What he doubted of, we are sure of, that the servants of the living God have a master who is well able to protect them and bear them out in his service.

Thirdly. The joyful news he meets with, that Daniel is alive, is safe and well, and unhurt in the lions' den, ver. 21, 22. Daniel knew the king's voice, though it was now a lamentable voice, and spoke to him with all the deference and respect that was due to him, "O king, live for ever." He doth not reproach him for his unkindness to him, and his easiness in yielding to the malice of his prosecutors; but, to shew that he has heartily forgiven him, he meets him with his good wishes. Note, We should not upbraid those with the unkindnesses they have done us, who we know did them with reluctancy, and are very ready to upbraid themselves with them. The account Daniel gives the king is very pleasant—it is triumphant.

1. God has preserved his life by a miracle. Darius had called him Daniel's God, thy God whom thou servest; to which Daniel doth, as it were, echo back, Yea, he is my God, whom I own, and who owns me, for he hath sent his angel. The same bright and glorious being that was seen in the form of the Son of God with the three children in the fiery furnace, had visited Daniel, and, it is likely, in a visible appearance, had enlightened the dark den, and kept Daniel company all night, and had shut the lions' mouths, that they had not in the least hurt him. The angel's presence made even the lions' den his stronghold, his palace, his paradise; he never had had a better night in his life. See the power of God over the fiercest creatures, and believe his power to restrain the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour from hurting those that are his. See the care God takes of his faithful worshippers, especially when he calls them out to suffer for him. If he keep their souls from sin, comfort their souls with peace, and receive their souls to himself, he doth in effect stop the lions' mouths, that they cannot hurt them. See how ready the angels are to minister for the good of God's people, for they own themselves their fellow-servants.

2. God has therein pleaded his cause. He was represented to the king as disaffected to him and his government. We do not find he said any thing in his own vindication, but left it to God to clear up his integrity as the light, and he did it effectually, by working a miracle for his preservation. Daniel, in what he had done, had not offended either God or the king. "Before him" whom I prayed to "innocency was found in me." He pretends not to a meritorious excellency, but the testimony of his conscience concerning his sincerity is his comfort, as also that "Before thee, O king, I have done no hurt," nor designed thee any affront.

Fourthly. The discharge of Daniel from his confinement. His prosecutors cannot but own that the law is satisfied, though they are not; or, if it be altered, it is by a power superior to that of the Medes and Persians, and therefore no cause can be shewn why Daniel should not be fetched out of the den; ver. 23, "The king was exceeding glad" to find him alive, and gave orders immediately that they should take him out of the den, as Jeremiah out of the dungeon; and when they searched "no manner of hurt was found upon him;" he was nowhere crushed or scarred, but was kept perfectly well, "because he believed in his God." Note, Those who boldly and cheerfully trust in God to protect them in the way of their duty shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, but shall always find him a present help.

Fifthly. The committing of his prosecutors to the same prison, or place of execution rather, ver. 24. Darius is animated by this miracle wrought for Daniel, and now begins to take courage and act like himself. Those that would not suffer him to shew mercy to Daniel, now God has done it for him, shall be made to feel his resentment, and he will do justice for God, who hath shewn mercy for him. Daniel's accusers, now his innocency is cleared, and Heaven itself is become his compurgator, have the same punishment inflicted upon them which they designed against him, according to the law of retaliation, made against false accusers, *Deu.* xix. 18, 19; such they were to be reckoned, now Daniel was proved innocent, for, though the fact was true, yet it was not a fault. They were cast into the den of lions, which perhaps was a punishment newly invented by themselves; however, it was what they maliciously designed for Daniel. *Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis artifices arte perire sua.*—'No law can be more just than that which adjudges the devisers of barbarity to perish by it.' *Ps.* vii. 15, 16; ix. 15, 16. And now Solomon's observation is verified, *Pr.* xi. 8, "The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in

his stead." In this execution we may observe, 1. The king's severity in ordering their wives and children to be thrown to the lions with them. How righteous are God's statutes above those of the nations, for God commanded that the children should not die for the fathers' crimes, *Deu.* xxiv. 16. Yet it was done in extraordinary cases, as that of Achan, and Saul, and Haman. 2. The lions' fierceness. They had the mastery of them immediately, and tore them to pieces before they "came to the bottom of the den." This verified and magnified the miracle of their sparing Daniel; for hereby it appeared that it was not because they had not appetite, but because they had not leave. Mastiffs that are kept muzzled are the more fierce when the muzzle is taken off; so were these lions. And the Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth.

25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he *is* the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion *shall be even* unto the end. 27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. 28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Darius here studies to make some amends for the dishonour he had done both to God and Daniel, in casting Daniel into the lions' den, by doing honour to both.

First. He gives honour to God by a decree published to all nations, by which they are required to fear before him. And this is a decree which is indeed fit to be made unalterable, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, for it is the everlasting Gospel preached to them that dwell on the earth; *Rev.* xiv. 7, "Fear God, and give glory to him." Observe,

1. To whom he sends this decree. "To all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth," ver. 25. These are big words, and it is true that all the inhabitants of the earth are obliged to that which is here decreed; but here they mean no more but "every dominion of his kingdom," which, though it contained many nations, yet not all nations. But so it is, those that have much are ready to think they have all.

2. What the matter of the decree is. That "men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel." This goes farther than Nebuchadnezzar's decree upon the like occasion, for that only restrained people from speaking amiss of this God, but this requires them to fear before him, to keep up and express awful, reverend thoughts of him. And well might this decree be prefaced as it is, with "Peace be multiplied unto you," for the only foundation of true and abundant peace is laid in the fear of God, for that is true wisdom. If we live in the fear of God, and walk according to that rule, peace shall be upon us, peace shall be multiplied to us. But though this decree goes far it doth not go far enough. Had he done right, and come up to his present convictions, he should have commanded all men not only to tremble and fear before this God, but to love him and trust in him, to forsake the service of their idols, and to worship him only, and call upon him, as Daniel did. But idolatry had been so long and so deeply rooted, that it was not to be extirpated by the edicts of princes, nor by any power less than that which went along with the glorious Gospel of Christ.

3. What are the causes and considerations moving him to make this decree. They are sufficient to have justified a decree for the total suppression of idolatry, much more will they serve to support this. There is good reason why all men should fear before this God; for, 1st. His being is transcendent. He is the "living God," lives as a God; whereas the gods we worship are dead things, have not so much as an animal life. 2nd. His government is incontestable. He has a kingdom and a dominion; he not only lives, but reigns, as an absolute sovereign. 3rd. Both his being and his government are unchangeable. He is himself "stedfast for ever," and "with him is no shadow of turning." And his kingdom, too, is "that which shall not be destroyed" by any external force, nor has his dominion any thing in itself that threatens a decay, or tends towards it, and therefore "it shall be even to the end." 4th. He has an ability sufficient to support such an authority, ver. 27. He delivereth his faithful servants from trouble, and rescueth them out of trouble; he worketh signs and wonders, quite above the utmost power of nature to effect, both in heaven and in earth, by which it appears that he is sovereign Lord of both. 5th. He has given a fresh proof of all this in delivering his servant "Daniel from the power of the lions." This miracle, and that of the delivering of the three children, were wrought in the eyes of the world, were seen, published, and attested by two of the greatest monarchs that ever were, and were illustrious confirmations of the first principles of religion, abstracted from the narrow scheme of Judaism, effectual confutations of all the errors of heathenism, and very proper preparations for pure catholic Christianity.

Secondly. He puts honour upon Daniel; ver. 28, "So this Daniel prospered." See how God brought to him good out of evil. This bold stroke which his enemies made at his life was a happy occasion of taking them off, and their children too, who otherwise would still have stood in the way of his preferment, and have been upon all occasions vexatious to him; and now he prospered more than ever, was more in favour with his prince and reputation with the people, which gave him a great opportunity of doing good to his brethren. Thus "out of the eater" (and that was a lion too) "came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness."

CHAPTER VII.

The six former chapters of this book were historical; we now enter, with fear and trembling, upon the six latter, which are prophetical, wherein are many things dark and hard to be understood, which we dare not positively determine the sense of; and yet many things plain and profitable, which I trust God will enable us to make a good use of. In this chapter we have, I. Daniel's vision of the four beasts, ver. 1—8. II. His vision of God's throne of government and judgment, ver. 9—14. III. The interpretation of these visions given him by an angel that stood by, ver. 15—28. Whether those visions look as far forward as the end of time, or whether they were to have a speedy accomplishment, is hard to say, nor are the most judicious interpreters agreed concerning it.

IN the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, *and* told the sum of the matters. 2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 4 The first *was* like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. 5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and *it had* three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. 6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it *was* diverse from all the beasts that *were* before it; and it had ten horns. 8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn *were* eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

The date of this chapter plæceth it before *ch.* v., which was in the last year of Belshazzar, and *ch.* vi., which was in the first of Darius; for Daniel had those visions in the first year of Belshazzar, when the captivity of the Jews in Babylon was drawing near a period. Belshazzar's name here is in the original spelt differently from what it used to be: before it was Bel-she-azar, 'Bel is he that treasures up riches;' but this is Bel-eshe-zar, 'Bel is on fire by the enemy.' Bel was the god of the Chaldeans; he had prospered, but is now to be consumed.

We have in these verses Daniel's vision of the four monarchies that were oppressive to the Jews. Observe,

First. The circumstances of this vision. Daniel had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and now he is himself honoured with like Divine discoveries, ver. 1. He had visions of his head upon his bed, when he was asleep; so God sometimes revealed himself and his mind to the children of men, when deep sleep fell upon them, *Job* xxxiii. 15; for when we are most retired from the world, and taken off from the things of sense, we are most fit for communion with God. But when he was awake he wrote the dream for his own use, lest he should forget it, as a dream which passeth away; and he told the sum of the matters to his brethren the Jews, for their use, and gave it them in writing, that it might be communicated to those at a distance, and preserved for their children after them, who should see these things accomplished. The Jews, misunderstanding some of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, flattered themselves with hopes that, after their return to their own land, they should enjoy a complete and uninterrupted tranquillity; but that they might not so deceive themselves, and their calamities be made doubly grievous by the disappointment, God, by this prophet, lets them know that they shall have tribulation. Those promises of their prosperity were to be accomplished in the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of grace; as Christ has told his disciples they must expect persecution, and the promises they depend upon will be accomplished in the eternal blessings of the kingdom of glory. Daniel both wrote these things and spake them, to intimate that the church should be taught both by the Scriptures and by ministers' preaching,—both by the written word and by word of mouth; and ministers in their preaching are to tell the sum of the matters that are written.

Secondly. The vision itself, which foretells the revolutions of government in those nations which the church of the Jews, for the following ages, was to be under the influence of.

1. He observed the four winds to strive upon the great sea, ver. 2. They strove which should blow strongest, and at length blow alone. This represents the contests among princes for empire, and the shakings of the nations by these contests, to which those mighty monarchies he was now to have a prospect of owed their rise. One wind from any point of the compass, if it blow hard, will cause a great commotion in the sea; but what a tumult must needs be raised when the four winds strive for mastery! That is it which the kings of the nations are contending for in their wars, which are as noisy and violent as the battle of the winds. But how is the poor sea tossed and torn, how terrible are its concussions, how violent its convulsions, while the winds are at strife which

shall have the sole power of troubling it? Note, This world is like a stormy tempestuous sea; thanks to the proud ambitious winds that vex it.

2. He saw "four great beasts come up from the sea," from the troubled waters, in which aspiring minds love to fish. The monarchs and monarchies are represented by beasts, because too often it is by brutish rage and tyranny that they are raised and supported. These beasts were diverse one from another, ver. 3, of different shape, to note the different genius and complexion of the nations in whose hands they were lodged.

1st. The first beast was "like a lion," ver. 4. This was the Chaldean monarchy, that was fierce and strong, and made the kings absolute. This lion had eagle's wings, with which to fly upon the prey. It notes the wonderful speed that Nebuchadnezzar made in his conquest of kingdoms. But he soon sees the wings plucked, a full stop put to the career of their victorious arms. Divers countries, that had been tributaries to them, revolt from them, and make head against them, so that this monstrous animal, this winged lion, is made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart is given to it. It has lost the heart of a lion, which it had been famous for, (one of our English kings was called Cœur de Lion,) hath lost his courage, and is become feeble and faint, dreading every thing, and daring nothing; they are put in fear, and made to know themselves to be but men. Sometimes the valour of a nation strangely sinks and becomes cowardly and effeminate, so that what was the head of the nations in an age or two becomes the tail.

2nd. The second beast was "like a bear," ver. 5. This was the Persian monarchy, less strong and generous than the former, but no less ravenous. This bear "raised up itself on one side" against the lion, and soon mastered it. 'It raised up one dominion,' so some read it. Persia and Media, which in Nebuchadnezzar's image were the two arms in one beast, now set up a joint government. This bear had "three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth," the remains of those nations it had devoured, which were the marks of its voraciousness, and yet an indication that, though it had devoured much, it could not devour all; there were some ribs still stuck in the teeth of it, which it could not conquer. Whereupon it was said to it, Arise, devour much flesh; let the bones, the ribs, alone that cannot be conquered, and set upon that which will be an easier prey. The princes will stir up both the kings and the people to push on their conquests, and let nothing stand before them. Note, Conquests unjustly made are but like those of the beasts of prey, and in this much worse, that the beasts prey not upon those of their own kind, as wicked and unreasonable men do.

3rd. The third beast was like a leopard, ver. 6. This was the Grecian monarchy founded by Alexander the Great; active, crafty, and cruel, "like a leopard." He had "four wings of a fowl;" the lion seems to have had but two wings, but the leopard has four; for, though Nebuchadnezzar made great dispatch in his conquests, Alexander made much greater. In six years' time he gained the whole empire of Persia, a great part beside of Asia, made himself master of Syria, Egypt, India, and other nations. This beast had four heads; upon Alexander's death his conquests were divided among his four chief captains—Seleucus Nicanor had Asia the Great; Perdiccas, and after him Antigonus, had Asia the Less; Cassander had Macedonia, and Ptolemeus had Egypt. Dominion was given to this beast; it was given of God, from whom alone promotion comes.

4th. The fourth beast was more fierce, and formidable, and mischievous than any of them, unlike any of the other, nor is there any among the beasts of prey to which it might be compared, ver. 7. The learned are not agreed concerning this anonymous beast. Some make it to be the Roman empire, which when it was in its glory comprehended ten kingdoms, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Britain, Sarmatia, Pannonia, Asia, Greece, and Egypt; and then the little horn which rose by the fall of three of the other horns, ver. 8, they make to be the Turkish empire, which rose in the room of Asia, Greece, and Egypt. Others make this fourth beast to be the kingdom of Syria, the family of the Seleucidæ, which was very cruel and oppressive to the people of the Jews, as we find in Josephus and the history of the Maccabees. And herein that empire was diverse from those that went before, that none of the preceding powers compelled the Jews to renounce their religion, but the kings of Syria did, and used them barbarously. Their armies and commanders were the great iron teeth with which they devoured and brake in pieces the people of God; and they trampled upon the residue of them. The ten horns are then supposed to be ten kings that reigned successively in Syria; and then the little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes, the last of the ten, who by one means or other undermined three of the kings, and got the government. He was a man of great ingenuity, and therefore is said to have eyes like the eyes of a man; and was very bold and daring,—had a mouth speaking great things. We shall meet with him again in these prophecies.

9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne *was like* the fiery flame, *and* his wheels *as* burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. 11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld *even* till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. 13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, *one* like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.

Whether we understand the fourth beast to signify the Syrian empire or the Roman, or the former as a figure of the latter, it is plain these verses are intended for the comfort and support of the people of God, in reference to the persecutions they were likely to sustain, both from the one and from the other, and from all their proud enemies in every age; for it is written for their learning on whom the ends of the world are come, that they also, through patience and comfort of this Scripture, might have hope. Three things are here discovered that are very encouraging:

First. That there is a judgment to come, and God is the judge. Now men have their day, and every pretender thinks he should have his day, and struggles for it. But "he that sits in heaven laughs at them," for he sees that "his day is coming," *Ps.* xxxvii. 13; ver. 9, "I beheld till the thrones were cast down," not only the thrones of these beasts, but all rule, authority, and power that is set up in opposition to the kingdom of God among men, 1 *Cor.* xv. 24. Such are the thrones of the kingdoms of the world in comparison with God's kingdom; they that see them set up need but wait awhile, and they will see them cast down. 'I beheld till thrones were set up,' so it may as well be read, Christ's throne, and the throne of his Father. One of the rabbins confesseth that these thrones are set up, one for God, another for the Son of David. It is the judgment that is here set, ver. 10. Now this is intended, 1st. To speak God's wise and righteous government of the world by his providence; and an unspeakable satisfaction it gives to all good men in the midst of the convulsions and revolutions of states and kingdoms, that the "Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all," *Ps.* ciii. 19; that, "verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth," *Ps.* lviii. 11. 2nd. Perhaps it points at the destruction brought by the providence of God upon the empire of Syria, or that of Rome, for their tyrannizing over the people of God. But, 3rd. It seems principally designed to describe the last judgment; for, though it follow not immediately upon the dominion of the fourth beast, nay, though it be yet to come, perhaps many ages to come, yet it was intended that in every age the people of God should encourage themselves under their troubles with the belief and prospect of it. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of it, *Jude* 14. Doth the mouth of the enemy speak great things? ver. 8. Here are far greater things which the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Many of the New Testament predictions of the judgment to come have a plain allusion to this vision here, especially St. John's vision of it, *Rev.* xx. 11, 12.

1. The judge is the "Ancient of days" himself, God the Father, the glory of whose presence is here described. He is called the "Ancient of days," because he is God from everlasting to everlasting. Among men we reckon that "with the ancient is wisdom," and days shall speak. Shall not all flesh then be silent before him who is the "Ancient of days?" The glory of the Judge is here set forth by his garment, which was white as snow, noting his splendour and purity in all the administrations of his justice, and the hair of his head clean and white, as the pure wool, that, as the white and hoary head, he may appear venerable.

2. The throne is very formidable. It is "like the fiery plain," dreadful to the wicked that shall be summoned before it. And the throne being moveable upon wheels, or at least the chariot in which he rode his circuit, the wheels thereof are as burning fire, to devour the adversaries; for "our God is a consuming fire," and with him are "everlasting burnings," *Isa.* xxxiii. 14. This is enlarged upon, ver. 10. As to all his faithful friends there "proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb a pure river of water of life," *Rev.* xxii. 1, so to all his implacable enemies there issues and comes forth from his throne a fiery stream of brimstone," *Isa.* xxx. 33; a fire that shall devour before him. He is a swift witness, and his word a word upon the wheels.

3. The attendants are numerous and very splendid. The Shechinah is always attended with angels; it is so here, ver. 10, a "thousand thousand minister to him," and "ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him." It is his glory that he has such attendance, but much more his glory that he neither needs them nor can be benefited by them. See how numerous the heavenly hosts are,—there are thousands of angels; and how obsequious they are,—they stand before God, ready to go on his errands, and to take the first intimation of his will and pleasure. They will particularly be employed as ministers of his justice in the last judgment, when the Son of Man shall come, and all the holy angels with him. Enoch prophesied that the Lord should come with his holy myriads.

4. The process is fair and unexceptionable; the judgment is set, publicly and openly, that all may have recourse to it, and the books are opened. As in courts of judgment, among men, the proceedings are in writing, and upon record, which is laid open when the cause comes to a hearing, the examination of witnesses is produced, and affidavits read to clear the matter of fact, the statute and common law books consulted to find out what is the law,—so in the judgment of the great day the equity of the sentence will be as incontestably evident as if there were books opened to justify it.

Secondly. That the proud and cruel enemies of the church of God will certainly be reckoned with and brought down in due time, ver. 11, 12. This is here represented to us,

1. In the destroying of the fourth beast. God's quarrel with this beast is, "because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake," bidding defiance to heaven, and triumphing over all that is sacred. This provokes God more than any thing, for the "enemy to behave himself proudly," *Deu.* xxxii. 27. Therefore Pharaoh must be humbled, because he hath said, "Who is the Lord?" and hath said, "I will pursue, I will overtake." Enoch foretold that therefore the Lord would come to judge the world, that he might "convince all that are ungodly of their hard speeches," *Jude* 15. Note, Great words are but idle words, for which men must give account in the great day. And see what comes of this beast that talks so big; he is slain, and "his body destroyed and given to the burning flame." The Syrian empire, after Antiochus, was destroyed; he himself died of a miserable disease, his family was rooted out, the kingdom wasted by the Parthians and Armenians, and at length made a province of the Roman empire by Pompey. And the Roman empire itself, (if we take that for the fourth beast,) after it began to persecute Christianity, declined and wasted away, and the body of it was destroyed. "So shall all thine enemies perish, O Lord, and be slain before thee."

2. In the diminishing and weakening of the other three beasts, ver. 12. They had their dominion taken away, and so were disabled to do the mischiefs they had done to the church and people of God; but a prolonging in life was given them, for a time and a season, a set time, the bounds of which they could not pass. The power of the foregoing kingdoms was quite broken, but the people of them still remain in a mean, and weak, and low condition. We may allude to this in describing the remainders of sin in the hearts of good people: they

have corruptions in them, the lives of which are prolonged, so that they are not perfectly free from sin, but the dominion of them is taken away, so that sin doth not reign in their mortal bodies. And thus God deals with his church's enemies; sometimes he breaks the teeth of them (*Ps.* iii. 7) when he doth not break the neck of them; crusheth the persecution, but reprieves the persecutors, that they may have space to repent. And it is fit that God, in doing his own work, should take his own time and way.

Thirdly. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up and kept up in the world, in despite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness. Let the heathen rage and fret as long as they please, God will "set his king upon his holy hill of Zion." Daniel sees this in vision, and comforts himself and his friends with the prospect of it. This is the same with Nebuchadnezzar's foresight of the "stone cut out of the mountain without hands," which broke in pieces the image; but in this vision there is much more of pure Gospel than in that.

1. The Messiah is here called, "the Son of man," "one like unto the Son of man;" for he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, was found in fashion as a man: "I saw one like unto the Son of man," one exactly agreeing with the idea formed in the Divine counsels of him who, in the fulness of time, was to be the Mediator between God and man. He is "like unto the Son of man," but is indeed the Son of God. Our Saviour seems plainly to refer to this vision when he saith, *Jno.* v. 27, that the Father has therefore "given him authority to execute judgment," because he is "the Son of man," and because he is the person whom Daniel saw in vision, to whom a kingdom and dominion were to be given.

2. He is said to come with the clouds of heaven. Some refer this to his incarnation. He descended in the clouds of heaven, came into the world unseen, as the glory of the Lord took possession of the temple in a cloud. The empires of the world were beasts that rose out of the sea; but Christ's kingdom is from above, he is the Lord from heaven. I think it is rather to be referred to his ascension; when he returned to the Father, the eye of his disciples followed him till "a cloud received him out of their sight," *Acts* i. 9. He made that cloud his chariot, wherein he rode triumphantly to the upper world. He comes swiftly, irresistibly, and comes in state, for he comes with the clouds of heaven.

3. He is here represented as having a mighty interest in heaven. When the cloud received him out of the sight of his disciples, it is worth while to inquire, (as the sons of the prophets, concerning Elijah in a like case,) whither it carried him, where it lodged him; and here we are told abundantly to our satisfaction that he came to the "Ancient of days," for he ascended to "his Father and our Father, to his God and our God," *Jno.* xx. 17; from him he came forth, and to him he returns to be glorified with him, and to sit down at his right hand. It was with a great deal of pleasure that he said, "Now I go to him that sent me." But was he welcome? Yes, no doubt he was; for they brought him near before him: he was introduced into his Father's presence with the attendance and adorations of "all the angels of God," *Heb.* i. 6. God caused him to draw near and approach to him, as an advocate and undertaker for us, *Jer.* xxx. 31, that we through him might be made nigh. By this solemn near approach he made to the "Ancient of days" it appears that the Father accepted the sacrifice he offered, and the satisfaction he made, and was entirely well pleased with all he had done. He was brought near, as our High Priest, who for us enters within the pale, and as our forerunner.

4. He is here represented as having a mighty influence upon this earth, ver. 14. When he went to be glorified with his Father he had a "power given him over all flesh," *Jno.* xvii. 2, 5. With the prospect of this Daniel and his friends are here comforted, that not only the dominion of the church's enemies shall be taken away, ver. 12, but the church's Head and best friend shall have the dominion given him; to him "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess," *Phil.* ii. 9, 10. To him is given glory and a kingdom; and it is given by him who has an unquestionable right to give it, which, some think, with an eye to these words, our Saviour teaches us to acknowledge in the close of the Lord's Prayer, "For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory." It is here foretold that the kingdom of the exalted Redeemer shall be, 1st. A universal kingdom; the only universal monarchy, whatever others have pretended to, or aimed at. All people, nations, and languages shall fear him, and be under his jurisdiction, either as his willing subjects or as his conquered captives, to be either ruled or overruled by him. One way or other the kingdoms of the world shall all become his kingdoms. 2nd. An everlasting kingdom. His dominion shall not pass away to any successor, much less to any invader, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed. Even the gates of hell, all the infernal powers and policies, shall not prevail against it. The church shall continue militant to the end of time, and triumphant to the endless ages of eternity.

15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. 17 These great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings, *which* shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. 19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth *were of* iron, and his nails *of* brass; *which* devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that *were* in his head, and *of* the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even *of* that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look *was* more stout than his fellows. 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. 23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom *are* ten kings *that* shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak *great* words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. 26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy *it* unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. 28 Hitherto *is* the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Here is, First. The deep impressions which these visions made upon the prophet. God, in them, put honour upon him, and gave him satisfaction, yet not without a great alloy of pain and perplexity; ver. 15, "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit, in the midst of my body." The word here used for the body properly signifies a sheath or scabbard, for the body is no more to the soul; that is the weapon, it is that which we are principally to take care of. "The visions of my head troubled me;" and again, ver. 28, "my cogitations much troubled me." The manner in which these things were discovered to him quite overwhelmed him, and put his thoughts so much to the stretch that his spirits failed him, and the trance he was in tired him, and made him faint. The things themselves that were discovered amazed and astonished him, and put him into a confusion till by degrees he recollected and conquered himself, and set the comforts of the vision over against the terrors of it.

Secondly. His earnest desire to understand the meaning of them; ver. 16, "I came near to one of them that stood by," to one of the angels that appeared attending the Son of man in his glory, and asked him the truth; that is, the true intent and meaning of all this. Note, It is a very desirable thing to take the right and full sense of what we see and hear from God; and those that would know must ask by faithful and fervent prayer, and by accomplishing a diligent search.

Thirdly. The key that was given him to let him into the understanding of this vision. The angel told him, and told him so plainly that he made him know the interpretation of the thing, and so made him somewhat more easy.

1. The great beasts are great kings and their kingdoms, great monarchs and their monarchies, which shall "arise out of the earth," as those beasts did out of the sea, ver. 17. They are but *terræ filii*,—'from beneath,' savour of the earth, and their foundation is in the dust; they are of the earth earthy, and they are written in the dust, and to the dust they shall return.

2. Daniel pretty well understands the first three beasts, but concerning the fourth desires to be better informed; because it differed so much from the rest, and was exceeding dreadful, and not only so, but very mischievous, for it "devoured and brake in pieces," ver. 19. Perhaps this was it that put Daniel into such a fright, and this part of the visions of his head troubled him more than any of the rest. But especially he desired to know what the little horn was that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, and whose countenance was more fearless and formidable than that of any of his fellows, ver. 20. And this he was most inquisitive about, because it was this horn that "made war with the saints, and prevailed against them," ver. 21. While no more is intimated but that the children of men make war with one another, and prevail against one another, the prophet doth not shew himself so much concerned,—"Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth," and be dashed in pieces one against another; but when they make war with the saints, when the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, are broken as earthen pitchers, it is time to ask, What is the meaning of this? Will the Lord cast off his people? Will he suffer their enemies to trample upon them, and triumph over them? What is this same horn that shall prevail so far against the saints? To this his interpreter answers, ver. 23—25, that this fourth beast is a fourth kingdom, that shall "devour the whole earth," or, as it may be read, the whole land; that the ten horns are ten kings, and the little horn is another king that shall subdue three kings, and shall be very abusive to God and his people; shall carry it, 1st. Very impiously toward God; he shall speak great words against the Most High, setting him, and his authority and justice, at defiance. 2nd. Very imperiously towards the people of God; he shall "wear out the saints of the Most High." He will not cut them off at once, but "wear them out" by long oppressions, and a constant course of hardships put upon them; ruining their estates, and weakening their families. The design of Satan has been to wear

out the saints of the Most High, that they may be no more in remembrance; but the attempt is vain, for while the world stands God will have a church in it. He shall "think to change times and laws," to abolish all the ordinances and institutions of religion, and to bring everybody to say and do just as he would have them; he shall trample upon laws and customs, human and Divine, (*Diruit, ædificat, mutat quadrata rotundis,*—'He pulls down, he builds, he changeth square into round,') as if he meant to alter even the ordinances of heaven themselves. And in these daring attempts he shall for a time prosper and have success; they shall be given into his hand until time, times, and half a time, that is, for three years and a half; that famous prophetical measure of time which we meet with in the *Revelation*, which is sometimes called forty-two months, sometimes twelve hundred and sixty days, which shall come all to one. But at the end of that time the "judgment shall sit, and take away his dominion," ver. 26; which he expounds, ver. 11, "The beast was slain and his body destroyed." And, as Mr. Mede reads ver. 12, 'As to the rest of the beast,' that is, the ten horns, especially the little ruling horn, as he calls it, they had their dominion taken away.

Now, the question is, Who is this enemy, whose rise, reign, and ruin, is here foretold? Interpreters are not agreed; some will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Seleucidæ, and the little horn to be Antiochus, and shew the accomplishment of all this in the history of the Maccabees,—so Junius Piscator, Polanus, Broughton, and many others; but others will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Romans, and the little horn to be Julius Cæsar and the succeeding emperors, saith Calvin; the antichrist, the papal kingdom, saith Mr. Joseph Mede, that wicked one which, as this little horn, is to be consumed by the brightness of Christ's second coming. And the pope assumes a power to change times and laws, that is, 'an absolute despotic power;' '*potestas, αὐτοκρατορικὴ*,' as he calls it. Others make the little horn to be the Turkish empire; so Luther, Vatablus, and others. Now I cannot prove either side to be in the wrong, and therefore, since prophecies sometimes have many fulfillings, and we ought to give Scripture its full latitude in this, as in many other controversies, I am willing to allow that they are both in the right; and that this prophecy has primary reference to the Syrian empire, and was intended for the encouragement of the Jews that suffered under Antiochus, that they might see even these melancholy times foretold, but it might foresee a glorious issue of them at last, and the final overthrow of their proud oppressors; and, which is best of all, might foresee, not long after, the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, with the hopes of which it was usual with the former prophets to comfort the people of God in their distresses: but yet it has a farther reference, and foretells the like persecuting power and rage in Rome heathen, and no less in Rome papal, against the Christian religion, that was in Antiochus against the pious Jews and their religion. And St. John, in his visions and prophecies, which point primarily at Rome, has plain reference, in many particulars, to these visions here.

3. He has a joyful prospect given him of the prevalency of God's kingdom among men, and its victory over all opposition at last. And it is very observable, that, in the midst of the predictions of the force and fury of the enemies, this is brought in abruptly, ver. 18, and again ver. 22, before it comes in the course of the vision to be interpreted, ver. 26, 27. And this also refers, 1st. To the prosperous days of the Jewish church after it had weathered the storm under Antiochus, and the power which the Maccabees obtained over their enemies. 2nd. To the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world by the preaching of the Gospel. "For judgment Christ comes into this world," to rule by his Spirit, and to make all his saints "kings and priests to their God." 3rd. To the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the saints shall judge the world, shall sit down with him on his throne, and triumph in the complete downfall of the devil's kingdom.

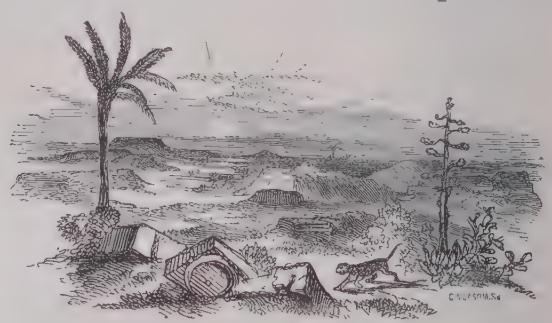
Let us see what is here foretold. *First.* The "Ancient of days shall come," ver. 22. God shall judge the world by his Son, to whom he hath committed all judgment; and, as an earnest of that, he comes for the deliverance of his oppressed people, comes for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. *Secondly.* "The judgment shall sit," ver. 26. God will make it to appear that he judgeth in the earth, and will, both in wisdom and equity, plead his people's righteous cause. At the great day he will judge the "world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained." *Thirdly.* The dominion of the enemy shall be taken away, ver. 26. All Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool, and shall be consumed and destroyed to the end. These words the apostle useth concerning the man of sin; 2 *Thes.* ii. 8, he shall be consumed with the "spirit of Christ's mouth," and "destroyed with the brightness of his coming." *Fourthly.* Judgment is "given to the saints of the Most High." The apostles are intrusted with the preaching of a Gospel by which the world shall be judged. All the saints, by their faith and obedience, condemn an unbelieving, disobedient world; in Christ their head they shall judge the world, shall "judge the twelve tribes of Israel," *Mat.* xix. 28. See what reason we have to honour them that fear the Lord; how mean and despicable soever the saints now appear in the eye of the world, and how much contempt soever is poured upon them, they are "the saints of the Most High," they are near and dear to God, and he owns them for his, and judgment is given to them. *Fifthly.* That which is most insisted upon is, that "the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever," ver. 18. And again, ver. 22, "The time came that the saints possessed the kingdom;" and again, ver. 27, "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." Far be it from us to infer from hence that dominion is founded on grace, or that this will warrant any, under pretence of saintship, to usurp kingship. No, Christ's kingdom is not of this world; but this speaks the spiritual dominion of the saints over their own lusts and corruptions, and their victories over Satan and his temptations, and the triumphs of the martyrs over death and its terrors. It likewise promiseth that the gospel kingdom shall be set up, a kingdom of light, holiness, and love; a kingdom of grace, the privileges and comforts of which now under the heavens shall be the earnest and firstfruits of the kingdom of glory in the heavens. When the empire became Christian, and princes used their power for the defence and advancement of Christianity, then the saints possessed the kingdom. The saints rule by the Spirit's ruling in them, and "this is the victory overcoming the world, even their faith," and by the making of the kingdoms of this world to become Christ's kingdom. But the full accomplishment of this will be in the everlasting happiness of the saints, the kingdom that cannot be moved, which we, according to his promise, look for, that is "the greatness of the kingdom," the crown of glory that fades not away—that is the "everlasting kingdom." See what an emphasis is laid upon this, ver. 18: "the saints shall possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever; and the reason is, because He whose saints they are is the Most High, and "his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom," ver. 27. He is so, and therefore theirs shall be so; "Because I live, you shall live also," *Jno.* xiv. 19. His kingdom is theirs; they reckon themselves exalted in his exaltation, and desire no greater honour and satisfaction to themselves than that all dominions should serve and obey him as they shall do, ver. 27. They shall either be brought into subjection to this golden sceptre or brought to destruction by this iron rod.

Daniel, in the close, when he ends that matter, tells us what impressions this vision made upon him. It overwhelmed his spirits to that degree that his countenance was changed, and it made him look pale; but he kept the matter in his heart. Note, The heart must be the treasury and storehouse of Divine things; there we must hide God's word, as the Virgin Mary kept the sayings of Christ, *Lu.* ii. 51. Daniel kept the matter in his heart, with design not to keep it from the church, but to keep it for the church, that what he had received from the Lord he might fully and faithfully deliver to the people. Note, It concerns God's prophets and ministers to treasure up the things of God in their minds, and there to digest them well. If we would have God's word ready in our mouths when we have occasion for it, we must keep it in our hearts at all times.

CHAPTER VIII.

The visions and prophecies of this chapter look only and entirely at the events that were then shortly to come to pass in the monarchies of Persia and Greece, and seem to have no farther reference at all. Nothing is here said of the Chaldean monarchy, for that was now just at its period, and therefore this chapter is not written in Chaldee, as the six foregoing chapters were, for the benefit of the Chaldeans, but in Hebrew, and so are the rest of the chapters to the end of the book, for the service of the Jews, that they might know what troubles were before them, and what the issue of them would be, and might provide accordingly. In this chapter we have, I. The vision of the ram, and the he-goat, and the little horn, that should fight and prevail against the people of God, for a certain limited time, ver. 1—14. II. The interpretation of this vision by an angel, shewing that the ram signified the Persian empire, the he-goat the Grecian, and the little horn a king of the Grecian monarchy, that should set himself against the Jews and religion, which was Antiochus Epiphanes, ver. 15—27. The Jewish church from its beginning had been all along more or less blessed with prophets, men Divinely inspired, to explain God's mind to them in his providences, and give them some prospect of what was coming upon them; but soon after Ezra's time Divine inspiration ceased, and there were no more any prophets till the gospel day dawned. And therefore the events of that time were here foretold by Daniel, and left upon record, that even then God might not leave himself without witness, or them without a guide.

IN the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, *even unto* me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. 2 And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I *was* at Shushan *in* the palace, which



SITE OF SUSA.

is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. 3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had *two* horns: and the *two* horns *were* high; but one *was* higher than the other, and the higher came up last. 4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither *was there any* that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. 5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes. 6 And he came to the ram that had *two* horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the

ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. 8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken;

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. 9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and

SELEUCUS.

toward the pleasant *land*. 10 And it waxed great, *even* to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some* of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11 Yea, he magnified *himself* even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily *sacrifice* was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12 And an host was given *him* against the daily *sacrifice* by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. 13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain *saint* which spake, How long *shall be* the vision *concerning* the daily *sacrifice*, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Here is, First. The date of this vision, ver. 1. It was "in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar," which proved to be his last year, as many reckon; so that this chapter also should be, in order of time, before the fifth. That Daniel might not be surprised at the destruction of Babylon now at hand, God gives him a foresight of the destruction of other kingdoms hereafter, that in their day had been as potent as that of Babylon. Could we foresee the changes that shall be hereafter, when we are gone, we should the less admire, and be less affected with, the changes in our own days; for "that which is done is that which shall be done," *Eccl.* i. 9. Then it was that "a vision appeared to me, even to me Daniel." Here he solemnly attests the truth of it: it was to him, even to him, that the vision was shewn; he was the eye-witness of it. And this vision puts him in mind of a former vision, which "appeared to him at the first," in the first year of this reign, which he makes mention of, because this vision was an explication and confirmation of that, and points at many of the same events. That seems to have been a dream, a vision in his sleep; this seems to have been when he was awake.

Secondly. The scene of this vision. The place where that was laid was in "Shushan the palace," one of the royal seats of the kings of Persia, situated on the banks of the river Ulai, which surrounded the city. It was in the province of Elam, that part of Persia which lay next to Babylon. Daniel was not there in person, for he was now in Babylon, a captive, in some employment under Belshazzar, and might not go to such a distant country, especially being now an enemy's country, but he was there in vision; as Ezekiel, when a captive in Babylon, was often brought in the spirit to the land of Israel. Note, The soul may be at liberty when the body is in captivity; for when we are bound the spirit of the Lord is not bound. The vision related to that country, and therefore there he was made to fancy himself to be, as strongly as if he had really been there.

Thirdly. The vision itself, and the process of it.

1. He saw a ram with two horns, ver. 3. This was the second monarchy, of which the kingdom of Media and Persia were the two horns. The horns were very high, but that which came up last was the higher, and got the start of the former; so the last shall be first, and the first last. The kingdom of Persia, which rose last, in Cyrus, became more eminent than that of the Medes.

2. He saw this ram pushing all about him with his horns, ver. 4. Westward, towards Babylon, Syria, Greece, and the lesser Asia; northward, towards the Lydians, Armenians, and Scythians; and southward, towards Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt, for all these nations did the Persian empire, one time or other, make attempts upon, for the enlarging of their dominion. And at last he became so powerful that no beasts might stand before him. This ram, that is of a species of animals that are often preyed upon, becomes formidable even to the beasts of prey themselves, so that there was no standing before him, no escaping him, none that could deliver out of his hand, but all must yield to him. The kings of Persia did according to their will, prospered in all their ways abroad, and had an uncontrollable power at home, and became great. He thought himself great, because he did what he would; but to do good is that which makes men truly great.

3. He saw this ram overcome by a he-goat. He was considering the ram, and wondering so weak an animal should come to be so prevalent, with expectation what would be the issue, and behold a "he-goat came," ver. 5. This was Alexander the Great, the son of Philip, king of Macedonia; he came from the west, from Greece, which lay west from Persia. He fetched a great compass with his army; he came upon "the face of the whole earth." He did, in effect, conquer the world, and then sat down and wept because there was not another world to be conquered. *Unus Pellæo juveni non sufficit orbis*,—'One world was too little for the youth of Pellæ.' This he-goat (a creature famed for comeliness in going, *Pr.* xxx. 31,) went on with incredible swiftness, so that he "touched not the ground," so lightly did he move; he rather seemed to fly above the ground than to go upon the ground; or, 'none touched him in the earth,' that is, he met with little or no opposition. This he-goat, or buck, had a notable horn between his eyes, like a unicorn. He had strength, and knew his own strength; he saw himself a match for all his neighbours. Alexander pushed his conquests on so fast, and with so much fury, that none of the kingdoms he attacked had courage to make a stand, or give check to the progress of his victorious arms. In six years he made himself master of the greatest part of the then known world. Well might he be called a notable horn, for his name still lives in history as one of the most celebrated commanders in war that ever the world knew. Alexander's victories and achievements are still the entertainment of the ingenious. This he-goat came to the "ram that had two horns," ver. 6. Alexander, with his victorious army, attacked the kingdom of Persia, an army consisting of no more than thirty thousand foot and five thousand horse. He ran unto him, to surprise him ere he could get intelligence of his motions. "In the fury of his power" he came "close to the ram." Alexander, with his army, came up with Darius Codomannus, then emperor of Persia, being "moved with choler against him," ver. 7. It was with the greatest violence that Alexander pushed on his war against Darius, who, though he brought vast numbers into the field, yet, for want of conduct, was an unequal match for him; so that Alexander was too hard for him whenever he engaged him, "smote him, cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him," which three expressions, some think, refer to the three famous victories that Alexander obtained over Darius, at Granicus, at Issus, and at Arbela, by which he was at length totally routed, having in the last battle had six hundred thousand men killed,—so that Alexander became absolute master of all the Persian empire—broke his two horns, the kingdoms of Media and Persia. The ram, that had destroyed all before him, ver. 4, is now himself destroyed. Darius has no power to stand before Alexander, nor has he any friends or allies to help to deliver him out of his hand. Note, Those kingdoms that, when they had power, abused it, and, because none could oppose them, withheld not themselves from the doing of any wrong, may expect to have their power at length taken from them, and to be served in their own kind, *Isa.* xxxiii. 1.

4. He saw that he-goat made hereby very considerable, but the great horn that had done all this execution was broken, ver. 8. Alexander was about twenty years old when he began his wars. When he was about twenty-six he conquered Darius, and became master of the whole Persian empire; but when he was about thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, when he was strong, in his full strength, he was broken—not killed in war, in the bed of honour, but died of a drunken surfeit, or, as some suspect, by poison, and left no child living behind him to enjoy that which he had endlessly laboured for,

but left a lasting monument of the vanity of worldly pomp and power, and their insufficiency to make a man happy.

5. He saw this kingdom divided into four parts, and that, instead of that one great horn, there came up "four notable ones,"—Alexander's four captains, to whom he bequeathed his conquests; and he had so much that, when it was divided among four, they had each of them enough for any one man. These four notable horns were towards the "four winds of heaven," the same with the four heads of the leopard, *ch.* vii. 6. The kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, Asia and Greece; Syria lying to the east, and Greece to the west, Asia Minor to the north, and Egypt to the south. Note, Those that heap up riches know not who shall gather them, nor whose all those things shall be which they have provided.

6. He saw a little horn that became a great persecutor of the church and people of God; and this was the principal thing that was intended to be shewed him in this vision, as afterwards, *ch.* xi. 30, &c. All agree that this was Antiochus Epiphanes, (so he called himself,) the illustrious; but others called him Antiochus Epimanes, Antiochus the furious. He is called here, as before, *ch.* vii. 8, a little horn, because he was in his original contemptible. There were others between him and the kingdom, and he was of a base, servile disposition, and had nothing in him of princely qualities, and had been for some time a hostage and prisoner at Rome, from whence he made his escape, and, though the youngest brother, and his elder living, got the kingdom. He waxed exceeding great "toward the south," for he seized upon Egypt; and "toward the east," for he invaded Persia and Armenia. But that which is here especially taken notice of is, the mischief that he did to the people of the Jews. They are not expressly named, for prophecies must not be too plain; but they are here described so that it would be easy for those who understood Scripture language to know who were meant; and the Jews, having notice of this before, might be awakened to prepare themselves and their children beforehand for these suffering, trying times.

1st. He set himself against "the pleasant land;" that is, the land of Israel, so called because it was the glory of all lands for fruitfulness, and all the delights of human life, but especially for the tokens of God's presence in it, and its being blessed with Divine revelations and institutions. It was mount Zion that was "beautiful for situation," and the "joy of the whole earth," *Ps.* xlviii. 2. The pleasantness of that land was, that there the Messiah was to be born, who would be both the consolation and the glory of his people Israel. Note, We have reason to reckon that a pleasant place which is a holy place, in which God dwells, and where we may have opportunity of communion with him. Surely "it is good to be here."

2nd. He fought against the host of heaven; that is, the people of God, the church, which is the kingdom of heaven, the church militant here on earth. The saints being born from above, and citizens of heaven, and doing the will of God, by his grace, in some measure, as the angels of heaven do it, may be well called a heavenly host. Or, the priests and Levites, who were employed in the service of the tabernacle, and there warred a good warfare, were this host of heaven. These Antiochus set himself against; he "waxed great to the host of heaven," in opposition to them, and in defiance of them.

3rd. He "cast down some of the host," that is, "of the stars," (for they are called the host of heaven,) "to the ground, and stamped upon them." Some of those that were most eminent both in church and state, that were burning and shining lights in their generation, he either forced to comply with his idolatries or put them to death. He got them into his hands, and then trampled upon them, and triumphed over them; as good old Eleazar and the seven brethren, whom he put to death with cruel tortures, because they would not eat swine's flesh, 2 *Mac.* vi. 7. He gloried in it, that herein he insulted Heaven itself, and "exalted his throne above the stars of God," *Isa.* xiv. 13.

4th. He "magnified himself even to the prince of the host." He set himself against the high priest Onias, whom he deprived of his dignity; or, rather, against God himself, who was Israel's king of old, who reigns for ever as Zion's king, who himself heads his own hosts that fight his battles. Against him Antiochus magnified himself; as Pharaoh, when he said, Who is the Lord? Note, Those who persecute the people of God persecute God himself.

5th. He took away "the daily sacrifice." The morning and evening lamb, which God appointed to be offered every day upon his altar to his honour, Antiochus forbade and restrained the offering of. No doubt he took away all other sacrifices; but the daily sacrifice only is mentioned, because that was the greatest loss of all other, for in that they kept up their constant communion with God, which they preferred before that which is only occasional. God's people reckon their daily sacrifice, their morning and evening exercises of devotion, to be the most needful of their daily business, and the most delightful of their daily comforts, and would not for all the world part with them.

6th. He cast down "the place of his sanctuary." He did not burn and demolish the temple, but he cast it down, when he profaned it, made it the temple of Jupiter Olympus, and set up his image in it. He also "cast down the truth to the ground," trampled upon the book of the law, that word of truth, tore it and burnt it, and did what he could to have destroyed it quite, that it might have been lost and forgotten for ever. These were the projects of that wicked prince. In these he practised; and—would you think it?—in these he prospered. He carried the matter very far, seemed to have gained his point, and went near to have extirpated that holy religion which God's right hand had planted.

But, lest he or any other should triumph, as if herein he had prevailed against God himself, and been too hard for him, the matter is here explained, and set in a true light. *First.* He could not have done this if God had not permitted him to do it; could have had no power against Israel unless it had been given him from above. God put this power into his hand, and gave him "an host against the daily sacrifice." God's providence put that sword into his hand by which he was enabled thus to bear down all before him. Note, We ought to eye and own the hand of God in all the enterprises and all the successes of the church's enemies against the church. They are but the rod in God's hand. *Secondly.* God would not have permitted it if his people had not provoked him to do so. It is by reason of transgression, the transgression of Israel, to correct them for that, that Antiochus is employed to give them all this trouble. Note, When the pleasant land, and all its pleasant things, are laid waste, it must be acknowledged that sin is the procuring cause of all the desolation. "Who gave Jacob to the spoil? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned?" *Isa.* xlii. 24. The great transgression of the Jews, after the captivity, (when they were cured of idolatry,) was a contempt and profanation of the holy things; snuffing at the service of God, "bringing the torn and the lame for sacrifice," as if the table of the Lord were a contemptible thing: so we find, *Mal.* i. 7, 8, &c., and that the priests were guilty of this, *Mal.* ii. 1, 8; and therefore God sent Antiochus to "take away the daily sacrifice, and cast down the place of his sanctuary." Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the privileges of his house that despise and profane them, and make them know the worth of ordinances by the want of them that would not know it by the enjoyment of them.

7. We heard the time of this calamity limited and determined. Not the time "when it should come," that is not here fixed, (because God would have his people always prepared for it,) but how long it should last, that, when they had no more any prophets to "tell them how long," (*Ps.* lxxiv. 9, which psalm seems to have been calculated for this dark and doleful day,) they might have this prophecy to give them a prospect of deliverance in due time. Now concerning this, we have here,

1st. The question asked concerning it, ver. 13. Observe, *First.* By whom the question was put. "I heard one saint speaking" to this purpose, and then another saint seconded him, O that we knew how long this trouble will last! The angels here are called saints, for they are holy ones, *ch.* iv. 13; the holy myriads, *Jude* 14. The angels concern themselves in the affairs of the church, and inquire concerning them; if, as here, concerning its temporal salvation, much more do they desire to look into the great salvation, 1 *Pet.* i. 12. One saint spoke of the thing, and another inquired concerning it. Thus John, that lay in Christ's bosom, was beckoned to by Peter to ask Christ a question, *Jno.* xiii. 23, 24. *Secondly.* To whom the question was put. He said, 'unto Palmoni that spake.' Some make this certain saint to be a superior angel that understood more than the rest, to whom, therefore, they came with their inquiries. Others make it to be the eternal Word, the Son of God. He is the unknown one. Palmoni seems to be compounded of Peloni Almoni, which is used, *Ru.* iv. 1, for 'Ho such a one;' and, 2 *Kin.* vi. 8, for 'such a place.' Christ was yet the nameless one; "Wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret?" *Jud.* xiii. 18. He is the 'numberer of secrets,' as some translate it, for from him there is nothing hid. 'The wonderful numberer,' so others. His name is called "Wonderful." Note, If we would know the mind of God, we must apply ourselves to Jesus Christ, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," not hid from us, but hid for us. *Thirdly.* The question itself that was asked, "How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice?" that is, how long shall the prohibition of it continue? How long shall the pleasant land be made unpleasant by that severe interdict? How long shall the "transgression of desolation," that is, the image of Jupiter, that great transgression which makes all our sacred things desolate, how long shall that stand in the temple? How long shall "the sanctuary and the host," the holy place, and the holy persons that minister in it, be trodden under foot by the oppression? Note, Angels are concerned for the prosperity of the church on earth, and desirous to see an end of its desolations. The angel asked for the satisfaction of Daniel, not doubting but he was desirous to know how long these calamities should last. The question takes it for granted that they should not last always. "The rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous," though it may come upon their lot. Christ comforted himself in his sufferings with this, "The things concerning me have an end," *Lu.* xxii. 37, and so may the church in hers. But it is desirable to know how long they shall last, that we may provide accordingly.

2nd. The answer given to this question, ver. 14. Christ gives instruction to the holy angels, for they are our fellow-servants; but here the answer was given to Daniel, because for his sake the question was asked: "He said unto me." God sometimes gives in great favours to his people, in answer to the inquiries and requests of their friends for them. Now Christ assures him, *First.* That the trouble shall end; it shall continue "two thousand and three hundred days," and no longer. So many 'evenings and mornings,' so the word is, so many νυχθήμεραι, so many natural days, reckoned, as in the beginning of *Genesis*, by the evenings and mornings; because it was the evening and the morning sacrifice that they most lamented the loss of, and thought the time passed very slowly while they wanted them. Some make the morning and the evening in this number to stand for two, and then two thousand three hundred evenings, and as many mornings, will make but one thousand one hundred and fifty days; and about so many days it was that the daily sacrifice was interrupted. And this comes nearer to the computation, *ch.* vii. 26, of a "time, times, and the dividing of a time." But it is less forced to understand them of so many natural days. Two thousand three hundred days make six years and three months, and about eighteen days; and just so long they reckon from the defection of the people, procured by Menelaus the high priest, in the one hundred and forty-second year of the kingdom of the Seleucidæ, the sixth month of that year, and the sixth day of the month, (so Josephus dates it,) to the cleansing of the sanctuary, and the re-establishment of religion among them, which was in the one hundred and forty-eighth year, the ninth month, and the twenty-fifth day of the month, 1 *Mac.* iv. 52. God reckons the time of his people's affliction by days, for in all their afflictions he is afflicted; *Rev.* ii. 10, "Thou shalt have tribulation ten days." *Secondly.* He assures him that they should see better days after; "Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Note, The cleansing of the sanctuary is a happy token for good to any people; when they begin to be reformed they will soon be relieved. Though the righteous God may, for the correction of his people, suffer his sanctuary to be profaned for awhile, yet the jealous God will for his own glory see to the cleansing of it in due time. Christ died to cleanse his church, and he will so cleanse it as at length to present it blameless to himself.

15 And it came to pass, when I, *even* I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between *the banks of* Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this *man* to understand the vision. 17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end *shall be* the vision. 18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end *shall be.* 20 The ram which thou sawest having *two* horns *are* the kings of Media and Persia.

21 And the rough goat *is* the king of Grecia: and the great horn that *is* between his eyes *is* the first king. 22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. 23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify *himself* in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. 26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told *is* true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it *shall be* for many days. 27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick *certain* days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood *it*.

Here is, First. Daniel's earnest desire to have this vision explained to him; ver. 15, "I sought the meaning." Note, Those that rightly know the things of God cannot but desire to know more and more of them, and to be led farther into the mystery of them. And those that would find the meaning of what they have seen or heard from God must seek it, and seek it diligently; "Seek and ye shall find." Daniel considered the thing, compared it with former discoveries, to try if he could understand it; but especially he sought by prayer, as he had done, *ch.* ii. 18, and he did not seek in vain.

Secondly. Orders given to the angel Gabriel to inform him concerning this vision. One in "the appearance of a man," who some think was Christ himself, for who but he could command angels? He orders Gabriel to make Daniel "understand this vision." Sometimes God is pleased to make use of the ministration of angels, not only to protect his children, but to instruct them; to serve the kind intentions not only of his providence, but of his grace.

Thirdly. The consternation that Daniel was in upon the approach of his instructor; ver. 17, "When he came near I was afraid." Though Daniel was a man of great prudence and courage, and had been conversant with the visions of the Almighty, yet the approach of an extraordinary messenger from heaven put him into this fright. He fell upon his face, not to worship the angel, but because he could no longer bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. Nay, being prostrate upon the ground, he fell into a deep sleep, ver. 18, which came not from any neglect of the vision, or indifferency towards it, but was the effect of his faintness, and the oppression of spirit he was under, through the abundance of revelations. The disciples in the garden slept for sorrow. And as there so here, the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Daniel would have kept awake, but could not.

Fourthly. The relief which the angel gave to Daniel, with great encouragement to him to expect a satisfactory discovery of the meaning of this vision. 1. He touched him, and set him upon his feet, ver. 18. Thus, when John, in a like case, was in a like consternation, Christ laid his right hand upon him, *Rev.* i. 17. It was a gentle touch that the angel here gave to Daniel, to shew that he came not to hurt him, not to "plead against him with his great power," or with a hand heavy upon him, but to help him, to "put strength into him," *Job* xxiii. 6, which God can do with a touch. When we are slumbering and grovelling on this earth we are very unfit to hear from God and to converse with him. But if God design instruction for us he will by his grace awaken us out of our slumber, raise us from things below, and set us upright. 2. He promiseth to inform him. "Understand, O son of man," ver. 17; that is, thou shalt understand if thou wilt but apply thy mind to understand. He calls him, Son of man, to intimate that he would consider his frame, and would deal tenderly with him, accommodating himself to his capacity as a man. Or, thus he preaches humility to him; though he be admitted to converse with angels he must not be puffed up with it, but must remember that he is a son of man. Or, perhaps this title puts an honour upon him; the Messiah was lately called the Son of man, *ch.* vii. 13, and Daniel is akin to him, is a figure of him as a prophet and one greatly beloved. He assures him that he shall be made to know "what shall be in the last end of the indignation," ver. 19. Let it be laid up for a comfort to those who shall live to see these calamitous times, that there shall be an end of them; "the indignation shall cease," *Isa.* x. 25; "it shall be overpast," *Isa.* xxvi. 20. It may intermit and return again, but the last end shall be glorious; good will follow it, nay, and good will be brought out of it. He tells him, ver. 17, "At the time of the end shall be the vision;" that is, when that last end of the indignation comes, when the course of this providence is completed, then the vision shall be made plain and intelligible by the event, as the event shall be made plain and intelligible by the vision. Or, "at the time of the end" of the Jewish church, in the latter days of it, shall this vision be accomplished, three or four hundred years hence; understand it therefore, that thou mayest leave it on record for the generations to come. But if he ask more particularly, When is the time of the end? and, How long to it? let this answer suffice, ver. 19, "At the time appointed the end shall be;" it is fixed in the Divine counsels, which cannot be altered, and which must not be pried into.

Fifthly. The exposition which he gave him of the vision.

1. Concerning the two monarchies of Persia and Greece, ver. 20—22. The ram signified the succession of the kings of Media and Persia. The rough goat signified the kings of Greece. The great horn was Alexander; the four horns that rose in his room were the four kingdoms into which his conquests were cantoned, of which before, ver. 8. They are said to "stand up out of the nations, but not in his power." None of them ever made the figure that Alexander did. Josephus relates, that when Alexander had taken Tyre, and subdued Palestine, and was upon his march to Jerusalem, Jaddus, who was then high priest, (who is named in *Neh.* xii. 11,) fearing his rage, had recourse to God by prayer and sacrifice for the common safety, and was by him warned in a dream that upon Alexander's approach he should throw open the gates of the city, and that he and the rest of the priests should go forth to meet him in their habits, and all the people in white. Alexander, seeing this company at a distance, went himself alone to the high priest, and having prostrated himself before that God whose name was engraven in the golden plate of his mitre, he first saluted him; and being asked by one of his own captains why he did so, he said, that while he was yet in Macedon, musing on the conquest of Asia, there appeared to him a man like unto this, and thus attired, who invited him into Asia, and assured him of success in the conquest of it. The priests led him to the temple, where he offered sacrifice to the God of Israel, as they directed him; and there they shewed him this book of the prophet Daniel, that it was there foretold that a Grecian should come and destroy the Persians, which animated him very much in the expedition he was now meditating against Darius. Hereupon he took the Jews and their religion under his protection, promised to be kind to those of their religion in Babylon and Media, whither he was now marching, and in honour of him all the priests that had sons born that year called them Alexander: *Joseph.* lib. 11.

2. Concerning Antiochus, and his oppression of the Jews. This is said to be in the latter time of the kingdom of the Greeks, "when the transgressors are come to the full," ver. 23; that is, when the degenerate Jews have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are ripe for this destruction, so that God cannot in honour bear with them any longer, then shall stand up this king, to be *flagellum Dei*,—'the rod in God's hand' for the chastising of the Jews. Now observe here,

1st. His character. He shall be a "king of fierce countenance," insolent and furious, neither fearing God nor regarding man, "understanding dark sentences," or rather, versed in dark practices, the hidden things of dishonesty. He was master of all the arts of dissimulation and deceit, and knew the depths of Satan as well as any man. He was wise to do evil.

3rd. His success. He shall make dreadful havoc of the nations about him; "His power shall be mighty," bear down all before it; but "not by his own power," ver. 24, but partly by the assistance of his allies, Eumenes and Attalus, partly by the baseness and treachery of many of the Jews, even of the priests that came into his interests, and especially by the Divine permission. It was not by his own power, but by a power given him from above, that he destroyed wonderfully, and thought he made himself a great man by being a great destroyer. He destroys wonderfully, indeed, for he destroys, *First.* The mighty people, and they cannot resist him by their power. The princes of Egypt cannot stand before him with all their forces, but he practiseth against them and prospereth. Note, The mighty ones of the earth commonly meet with those, at length, that are too hard for them, that are more mighty than they. Let not the strong man, then, glory in his strength, be it never so great, unless he could be sure there were none stronger than he. *Secondly.* He destroys the "holy people," or, the people of the holy ones, and their sacred character doth neither deter him from destroying them nor defend them from being destroyed. All things come alike to all, and there is one event to the mighty and to the holy in this world.

3rd. The methods by which he will gain this success. Not by true courage, wisdom, or justice, but by his policy and craft, ver. 25; by fraud and deceit, and serpentine subtlety; he shall "cause craft to prosper;" so cunningly shall he carry on his projects, that he shall gain his point by the art of wheedling. "By peace he shall destroy many," as others do by war; under the pretence of treaties, leagues, and alliances with them, he shall encroach on their rights, and trick them into a subjection to him. Thus, sometimes, what a nation truly brave has gained in a righteous war a nation truly base has regained in a treacherous peace, and craft has been caused to prosper.

4th. The mischief that he shall do to religion. "He shall magnify himself in his heart," and think himself fit to prescribe and give law to every body, so that he shall "stand up against the Prince of princes;" that is, against God himself. He will profane his temple and altar, prohibit his worship, and persecute his worshippers. See what a height of impudence some men's impiety brings them to; they openly bid defiance to God himself, though he is the King of kings.

5th. The ruin that he shall be brought to at last. "He shall be broken without hand;" that is, without the hand of man. He shall not be slain in war, nor shall he be assassinated, as tyrants commonly were; but he shall fall into the hands of the living God, and die by an immediate stroke of his vengeance. He, hearing that the Jews had cast the image of Jupiter Olympus out of the temple, where he had placed it, was so enraged at the Jews, that he vowed he would make Jerusalem a common burying-place, and determined to march thither immediately. But no sooner had he spoken these proud words but he was struck with an incurable plague in his bowels, worms bred so fast in his body that whole flakes of flesh sometimes dropped from him; his torments were violent, and the stench of his disease such that none could endure to come near him. He continued in this misery very long. At first he persisted in his menaces against the Jews; but at length, despairing of his recovery, he called his friends together, and acknowledged all those miseries to have fallen upon him for the injuries he had done to the Jews, and his profaning the temple at Jerusalem; then he wrote courteous letters to the Jews, and vowed that if he recovered he would let them have the free exercise of their religion. But, finding his disease grow upon him, when he could no longer endure his own smell, he said, 'It is meet to submit to God, and for man, which is mortal, not to set himself in competition with God;' and so died miserably in a strange land, on the mountains of Pacata, near Babylon, (so *Usher's Annals,*) A.M. 3840, about one hundred and sixty years before the birth of Christ.

3. As to the time fixed for the continuance of the cessation of the daily sacrifice, it is not explained here, but only confirmed, ver. 26. That "vision of the evening and morning is true," in the proper sense of the words, and needs no explication. How unlikely soever it might be that God should suffer his own sanctuary to be thus profaned, yet it is true, it is too true, so it shall be.

Sixthly. Here is the conclusion of this vision; and here,

1. The charge given to Daniel to keep it private for the present. "Shut thou up the vision;" let it not be publicly known among the Chaldeans, lest the Persians, who were now shortly to possess the kingdom, should be incensed against the Jews by it, because the downfall of their kingdom was foretold by it, which would be unseasonable now the edict for their release was expected from the king of Persia. Shut it up, for "it shall be for many days;" it was about three hundred years from the time of this vision to the time of the accomplishment of it, therefore he must shut it up for the present, even from the

people of the Jews, lest it should amaze and perplex them; but let it be kept safe for the generations to come, that should live about the time of the accomplishment of it, for to them it would be both most intelligible and most serviceable. Note, What we know of the things of God should be carefully laid up, that hereafter, when there is occasion, it may be faithfully laid out; and what we have not now any use for yet we may have another time. Divine truths should be sealed up among our treasures, that we may find them again after many days.

2. The care he took to keep it private, having received such a charge, ver. 27. He "fainted, and was sick," with the multitude of his thoughts within him, occasioned by this vision, which oppressed and overwhelmed him the more because he was forbidden to publish what he had seen, so that "his belly was as wine which has no vent;" he was "ready to burst like new bottles," *Job* xxxii. 19. However, he kept it to himself, stifled and smothered the concern he was in, so that those he conversed with could not perceive it; but he "did the king's business" according to the duty of his place, whatever it was. Note, As long as we live in this world we must have something to do in it; and those whom God has most dignified with his favours yet must not think themselves above their business; nor must the pleasure of communion with God take us off from the duties of our particular callings, but still we must in them abide with God. Those especially that are intrusted with public business must see to it that they conscientiously discharge their trust.

CHAPTER IX.

In this chapter we have, I. Daniel's prayer for the restoration of the Jews who were now in captivity, in which he confesseth sin, acknowledgeth the justice of God in their calamities, but pleads God's promises of mercy which he had yet in store for them, ver. 1—19. II. An immediate answer sent him by an angel to his prayer, in which, 1. He is assured of the discharge of the Jews out of their captivity presently, ver. 20—23; and, 2. Is informed concerning the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of which that was a type, what should be the nature of it, and when it should be accomplished, ver. 24—27; and it is the clearest, brightest prophecy of the Messiah in all the Old Testament.

IN the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

We left Daniel, in the close of the foregoing chapter, employed in the king's business, but here we have him employed in better business than any the king had for him, speaking to God and hearing from him, not for himself only, but for the church, whose mouth he was to God, and for whose use the oracles of God were committed to him, relating to the days of the Messiah. Observe,

First. When it was that Daniel had this communion with God; ver. 1, "In the first year of Darius" the Mede, who was newly made king of the Chaldeans, Babylon being conquered by him and his nephew, or grandson, Cyrus. In this year the seventy years of the Jewish captivity ended, but the decree for their release was not yet issued out, so that this address of Daniel's to God seems to have been ready in that year, and probably before he was cast into the lions' den. And one powerful inducement, perhaps, it was to him then to stick so close to the duty of prayer, though it cost him his life, that he had so lately experienced the benefit and comfort of it.

Secondly. What occasioned his address to God by prayer, ver. 2. He "understood by books" that seventy years was the time fixed for the continuance of "the desolations of Jerusalem," ver. 2. The book by which he understood this was the book of the prophecies of *Jeremiah*, in which he found it expressly foretold, *Jer.* xxix. 10, "After seventy years be accomplished in Babylon," (and therefore they must be reckoned from the first captivity, in the third year of Jehoiakim, which Daniel had reason to remember by a good token, for it was in that captivity that he was carried away himself, *ch.* i. 1,) "I will visit you, and perform my good works towards you." It was likewise said, *Jer.* xxv. 11, "This whole land shall be seventy years a desolation," *chorbath*, the same word that Daniel here useth for the desolations of Jerusalem, which shews he had that prophecy before him when he wrote this. Though Daniel was himself a great prophet, and one that was well acquainted with the visions of God, yet he was a diligent student in the Scripture, and thought it no disparagement to him to consult Jeremiah's prophecies. He was a great politician and prime minister of state to one of the greatest monarchs upon earth, and yet could find both heart and time to converse with the word of God. The greatest and best men in the world must not think themselves above their Bibles.

Thirdly. How serious and solemn his address to God was, when he understood that the seventy years were just upon expiring, (for it appears by Ezekiel's dating of his prophecies that they exactly computed the years of their captivity,) then he set his face to seek God by prayer. Note, God's promises are intended not to supersede but to excite and encourage our prayers; and when we see the day of the performance of them approaching, we should the more earnestly plead them with God and put them in suit. So Daniel did here; he prayed three times a day, and no doubt in every prayer made mention of the desolations of Jerusalem; yet he did not think that enough, but even in the midst of his business set time apart for an extraordinary application to heaven on Jerusalem's behalf. God had said to Ezekiel, that though Daniel, among others, stood before him, his intercession should not prevail to prevent the judgment, *Eze.* xiv. 14, yet he hopes, now "the warfare is accomplished," *Isa.* xl. 2, his prayer may be heard for the removing of the judgment. When the day of deliverance dawns it is time for God's praying people to bestir themselves; something extraordinary is then expected and required from them besides their daily sacrifice. Now Daniel sought, "by prayer and supplications," for fear lest the sins of the people should provoke him to defer their deliverance longer than was intended; or, rather, that the people might be prepared, by the grace of God, for the deliverance, now the providence of God was about to work it out for them. Now observe, 1. The intenseness of his mind in this prayer; "I set my face unto the Lord God to seek him," which notes the fixedness of his thoughts, the firmness of his faith, and the fervour of his devout affections in the duty. We must in prayer set God before us, and set ourselves as in his presence; to him we must direct our prayer, and must look up. Probably, in token of his setting his face towards God, he did, as usual, set his face towards Jerusalem, to affect his own heart the more with the desolations of it. 2. The mortification of his body in this prayer. In token of his deep humiliation before God, for his own sins and the sins of his people, and the sense he had of his unworthiness, when he prayed he fasted, put on sackcloth, and lay in ashes, the more to affect himself with the desolations of Jerusalem, which he was praying for the repair of, and to make himself sensible that he was now about an extraordinary work.

4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: 6 Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 O Lord, righteousness *belongeth* unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, *that are* near, and *that are* far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8 O Lord, to us *belongeth* confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. 9 To the Lord our God *belong* mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; 10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that *is* written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. 12 And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13 As *it is* written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. 14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. 15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16 O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people *are become* a reproach to all *that are* about us. 17

Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. 18 O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

We have here Daniel's prayer to God, as his God, and the confession which he joined with that prayer, "I prayed and made my confession." Note, In every prayer we must make confession not only of the sins we have been guilty of, which we commonly call confession, but of our faith in God and dependence upon him, our sorrow for sin, and our resolutions against it. It must be our confession, must be the language of our own convictions, and that which we ourselves do heartily subscribe to.

Let us go over the several parts of this prayer, which we have reason to think he offered up much larger than is here recorded, and that these are only the heads of it.

First. Here is his humble, serious, reverent address to God, in which he gives glory to God, 1. As a God to be feared, and whom it is our duty always to stand in awe of; "O Lord, the great and dreadful God," that art able to deal with the greatest and most terrible of the church's enemies! 2. As a God to be trusted, and whom it is our duty to depend upon and put a confidence in; "keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him," and, as a proof of their love to him, "keep his commandments." If we do our part of the bargain he will not fail to do his. He will be to his people as good as his word, for he keeps covenant with them, and not one iota of his promise shall fall to the ground; nay, he will be better than his word, for he keeps mercy to them something more than was in the covenant. It was proper for Daniel to have his eye upon God's mercy, now he was to lay before him the miseries of his people; and upon God's covenant, now he was to sue for the performance of a promise. Note, We should, in prayer, look both at God's greatness and his goodness, his majesty and mercy in conjunction.

Secondly. Here is a penitent confession of sin, the procuring cause of all the calamities which his people had for so many years been groaning under, ver. 5, 6. When we seek to God for national mercies we ought to humble ourselves before him for national sins. These are the sins Daniel here laments; and it is observable what variety of words he makes use of to set forth the greatness of their provocations, for it becomes penitents to lay loads upon themselves; "We have sinned" in many particular instances, nay, we "have committed iniquity," we have driven a trade of sin, we "have done wickedly" with a hard heart and a stiff neck, and herein we have rebelled, have taken up arms against the King of kings, his crown and dignity. Two things aggravated their sins:

1. That they had violated the express laws God had given them by Moses. We have "departed from thy precepts and from thy judgments," and have not conformed to them; and, ver. 10, We have not "obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." That which speaks the nature of sin, that it is the transgression of the law, doth sufficiently speak the malignity of it. If sin be made to appear sin, it cannot be made to appear worse; its sinfulness is its greatest hatefulness, *Rom.* vii. 13. God has set his laws before us plainly and fully, as the copy we should write after, yet we have not walked in them, but turned aside, or turned back.

2. That they had slighted the fair warnings God had given them by the prophets, which in every age he had sent to them, "rising up betimes and sending them," ver. 6. "We have not hearkened to thy servants the prophets," who have put us in mind of thy laws and of thy sanctions of them; though they "spake in thy name," we have not regarded them; though they delivered their message faithfully, with a universal respect to all orders and degrees of men, to our kings and princes, whom they had the courage and confidence to speak to, to our fathers, and to all the people of the land whom they had the condescension and compassion to speak to, yet we have not hearkened to them, not heard them, or not heeded them, or not complied with them. Mocking God's messengers, and despising his words, were Jerusalem's measure-filling sins, 2 *Chr.* xxxvi. 16. This confession of sin is repeated here, and much insisted on; penitents should again and again accuse and reproach themselves, till they find their hearts thoroughly broken. "All Israel have transgressed thy law," ver. 11. It is Israel, God's professing people, that have known better, and from whom better is expected—Israel, God's peculiar people, whom he has surrounded with his favours; not here and there one, but it is all Israel, the generality of them, the body of the people, that has transgressed by departing, and getting out of the way, that they might not hear, and so might not obey thy voice. This disobedience is that which all true penitents do most sensibly charge upon themselves; ver. 14, "We obeyed not his voice;" and, ver. 15, "We have sinned, we have done wickedly." Those that would find mercy must thus confess their sins.

Thirdly. Here is a self-abasing acknowledgment of the righteousness of God in all the judgments that were brought upon them. And it is evermore the way of true penitents thus to justify God, that he may be clear when he judgeth, and the sinner may bear all the blame.

1. He acknowledgeth that it was sin that plunged them in all these troubles. Israel is dispersed through all the countries about, and so weakened, impoverished, and exposed. God's hand has driven him hither and thither, some near where they are known, and therefore the more ashamed, others afar off, where they are not known, and therefore the more abandoned; and it is "because of their trespass that they have trespassed," ver. 7. They mingled themselves with the nations, that they might be debauched by them; and now God mingles them with the nations, that they may be stripped by them.

2. He owns the righteousness of God in it, that he had done them no wrong in all he had brought upon them, but had dealt with them as they deserved; ver. 7, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee." We have no fault to find with thy providence, no exceptions to make against thy judgments; for, ver. 14, "The Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doth," even in these sore calamities we are now under, for we obeyed not the words of his mouth, and therefore justly feel the weight of his hand. This seems to be borrowed from *Lam.* i. 18.

3. He takes notice of the fulfilling of the Scripture in what was brought upon them. In very faithfulness he afflicted them, for it was according to the word which he had spoken; "The curse is poured upon us, and the oath;" that is, the curse that was ratified by an oath in the law of Moses, ver. 11. This farther justifies God in his troubles, that he did but inflict the penalty of the law, and which he had given them fair notice of. It was necessary for the preserving of the honour of God's veracity, and saving his government from contempt, that the threatenings of his word should be accomplished, otherwise they look but as bugbears; nay, they seem not at all frightful. Therefore "he hath confirmed his words which he spake against us," because we broke his laws, "and against our judges that judged" us, because they did not, according to the duty of their place, punish the breach of God's laws. He told them many a time that if they did not execute justice, as terrors to evil-workers, he must and would take the work into his own hands. And now he has confirmed what he said, "by bringing upon us a great evil," in which the princes and judges themselves deeply shared. Note, It contributes very much to our profiting by the judgments of God's hand to observe how exactly they agree with the judgments of his mouth.

4. He aggravates the calamities they were in, lest they should seem, having been long used to them, to make light of them, and so to lose the benefit of the chastening of the Lord by despising it. It is not some of the common troubles of life that we are complaining of, but that which has in it some special marks of Divine displeasure; "for under the whole heaven has not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem," ver. 12. It is Jeremiah's lamentation, in the name of the church, "Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow?" which must suppose another like question, Was ever sin like unto my sin?

5. He puts shame upon the whole nation, from the highest to the lowest, and if they will say Amen to his prayer, as it was fit they should, if they would come in for a share in the benefit of it, they must all put their hand upon their mouth, and their mouth in the dust; to us belong "confusion of face, as at this day," ver. 7. We lie under the shame of the punishment at this day, and we ought to accommodate ourselves to it, and to accept of the punishment of our iniquity, for shame is our due. If Israel had retained their character, and had continued a holy people, they had been "high above all nations in praise, and name, and honour," *Deu.* xxvi. 19. But now they have "sinned and done wickedly," confusion and disgrace belong to them, to "the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem," the inhabitants both of the country and the city, for they have been all alike guilty before God; it belongs to all Israel, both to the two tribes that are near by the rivers of Babylon, and to the ten tribes that are afar off in the land of Assyria. Confusion belongs not only to the common people of our land, but to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, ver. 8, who should set a better example, and have used their authority and influence for the checking of the threatening torrent of vice and profaneness.

6. He imputes the continuance of the judgment to their incorrigibleness under it; ver. 13, 14, "All this evil is come upon us," and has lain long upon us, "yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God," not in a right manner, as we should have made it, "with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart." We have been smitten, but have not returned to him that smote us; 'we have not intreated the face of the Lord our God,' so the word is; we have taken no care to make our peace with God, and reconcile ourselves to him. Daniel set his brethren a good example of praying continually, but he was sorry to see how few there were that followed his example. In their affliction it was expected they would seek God early, but they sought him not, that they might "turn from their iniquities, and understand his truth." The errand upon which afflictions are sent is, to bring men to turn from their iniquities, and to understand God's truth; so Elihu had explained them, *Job* xxxvi. 10. God, by them, "opens men's ears to discipline, and commandeth that they turn from iniquity." And if men were brought rightly to understand God's truth, and to submit to the power and authority of it, they would turn from the error of their ways. Now the first step towards this is, to "make our prayer before the Lord our God," that the affliction may be sanctified before it is removed, and that the grace of God may go along with the providence of God, to make it answer the end. Those that in their affliction make not their prayer to God, that cry not when he bindeth them, are not likely to turn from iniquity, or to understand his truth. Therefore, because we have not improved the affliction, "the Lord hath watched upon the evil," as the judge takes care that execution be done according to the sentence; because we have not been melted, he hath kept us still in the furnace, and watched over it, to make the heat yet more intense; for when God judgeth he will overcome, and will be justified in all his proceedings.

Fourthly. Here is a believing appeal to the mercy of God, and to the ancient tokens of his favour to Israel, and the concern of his own glory in their interests.

1. It is some comfort to them, (and not a little,) that God has been always ready to pardon sin; ver. 9, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses." This refers to that proclamation of his name, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6, 7, "The Lord God, gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity." Note, It is very encouraging to poor sinners that mercies belong to God, as it is convincing and humbling to them that righteousness belongs to him; and they who give him the glory of his righteousness may take to themselves the comfort of his mercies, *Ps.* lxii. 12. There are abundant mercies in God, and not only forgiveness but forgivenesses; he is a God of pardon, *Neh.* ix. 17; he multiplies to pardon, *Isa.* lv. 7, "Though we have rebelled against him," yet with him there is mercy, pardoning mercy, even for the rebellious.

2. It is likewise a support to them to think that God had formerly glorified himself by delivering them out of Egypt; so far he looks back for the encouragement of his faith; ver. 15, "Thou hast" formerly "brought thy people out of Egypt with a mighty hand," and wilt thou not now with the same mighty hand bring them out of Babylon? Were they then formed into a people? and shall they not now be reformed, and newly formed? Are they now sinful and unworthy? and were they not so then? Are their oppressors now mighty and haughty? and were they not so then? And hath not God said, that their deliverance out of Babylon shall outshine even that out of Egypt? *Jer.* xvi. 14, 15. The force of this plea lies in that, "Thou hast gotten thee renown," hast "made thee a name," so the word is, "as at this day," that is, even to this day, by bringing us out of Egypt; and wilt thou lose the credit of that, by letting us perish in Babylon? Didst thou get a renown by that deliverance we have so often commemorated, and wilt thou not now get thee a renown by this which we have so often prayed for, and so long waited for?

Fifthly. Here is a pathetical complaint of the reproach that God's people lay under, and the ruins that God's sanctuary lay in, both which redounded very much to the dishonour of God, and the diminution of that name and renown which God had gained by bringing them out of Egypt.

1. God's holy people were despised. By their "sins and the iniquities of their fathers" they had profaned their crown, and made themselves despicable; and then, though they are in name and profession God's people, and upon that account truly great and honourable, yet they are become a "reproach to all

that are round about them." Their neighbours laugh them to scorn, and triumph in their disgrace. Note, Sin is a reproach to any people, but especially to God's people, that have more eyes upon them, and have more honour to lose, than other people.

2. God's holy place was desolate. Jerusalem the holy city was a reproach, ver. 16; when it lay in ruins it was an astonishment and a hissing to all that passed by. The sanctuary, the holy house, was desolate, ver. 17; the altars demolished, and all the buildings laid in ashes. Note, The desolations of the sanctuary are the grief of all the saints, who reckon all their comforts in this world buried in the ruins of the sanctuary.

Sixthly. Here is an importunate request to God for the restoring of the poor captive Jews to their former enjoyments again. The petition is very pressing, for God gives us leave in prayer to wrestle with him; "O Lord, I beseech thee," ver. 16. If ever thou wilt do any thing for me, do this; it is my heart's desire and prayer. "Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplication," ver. 17, and grant an answer of peace to it. Now what are his petitions? what are his requests?

1. That God would turn away his wrath from them,—that is it which all the saints dread and deprecate more than any thing; O let "thine anger be turned away from thy Jerusalem, thy holy mountain," ver. 16. He doth not pray for the turning again of their captivity,—let the Lord do with them as seemeth good in his eyes; but they pray first for the turning away of God's wrath. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

2. That he would lift up the light of his countenance upon them; ver. 17, "Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate," that is, return in mercy to us and shew that thou art reconciled to us, and then all shall be well. Note, The shining of God's face upon the desolations of the sanctuary is all in all towards the repair of it, and upon that foundation it must be rebuilt. If, therefore, its friends would begin their work at the right end, they must first be earnest with God in prayer for his favour, and recommend his desolate sanctuary to his smiles. "Cause thy face to shine, and then we shall be saved," *Ps.* lxxx. 3.

3. That he would forgive their sins, and then hasten their deliverance; ver. 19, "O Lord hear, O Lord forgive." That the mercy prayed for may be granted in mercy, let the sin that threatens to come between us and it be removed; "O Lord, hearken and do." Not hearken and speak only, but hearken and do; do that for us which none else can, and that speedily; "defer not, O my God." Now he saw the appointed day approaching he could in faith pray that God would make haste to them, and not defer. David often prays, "Make haste, O God, to help me."

Seventhly. Here are several pleas and arguments to enforce the petitions. God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him; which is not to move him,—he himself knows what he will do,—but to move ourselves, to excite our fervency and encourage our faith.

1. They disdain a dependence upon any righteousness of their own, they pretend not to merit any thing at God's hand but wrath and the curse; ver. 18, "We do not present our supplications before thee," with hope to speed for our righteousness, as if we were worthy to receive thy favour for any good in us, or done by us, or could demand any thing as a debt; we cannot insist upon our own justification, no, though we were more righteous than we are; nay, though we knew nothing amiss by ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified, nor would we answer, but we would make supplication to our Judge. Moses had told Israel long before, that, whatever God did for them, it was not for their righteousness, *Deu.* ix. 4, 5. And Ezekiel had of late told them that their return out of Babylon would be "not for their sakes," *Eze.* xxxvi. 22, 32. Note, Whenever we come to God for mercy we must lay aside all conceit of, and confidence in, our own righteousness.

2. They take their encouragement in prayer from God only, as knowing that his reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself; and, therefore, from him we must borrow all our pleas for mercy, and so give honour to him when we are suing for grace and mercy from him. 1st. Do it "for thine own sake," ver. 19; for the accomplishment of thine own counsel, the performance of thine own promise, and the manifestation of thine own glory. Note, God will do his own work, not only in his own way and time, but for his own sake; and so we must take it. 2nd. Do it "for the Lord's sake;" that is, for the Lord Christ's sake, for the sake of the Messiah promised, who is the Lord: so the most and best of our Christian interpreters understand it. For the sake of Adonai, so David called the Messiah, *Ps.* cx. 1. And mercy is prayed for, for the church, for the sake of the Son of man, *Ps.* lxxx. 17, and "for thy word's sake," 2 *Sam.* vii. 21. Note, Christ is the Lord, he is Lord of all; it is for his sake that God causeth his face to shine upon sinners, when they repent and turn to him, because of the satisfaction he has made. In all our prayers, that therefore must be our plea, we must "make mention of his righteousness, even of his only," *Ps.* lxxi. 16; "Look upon the face of thy anointed." He has himself directed us to ask in his name. 3rd. Do it "according to all thy righteousness," ver. 16; that is, plead for us against our persecutors and oppressors according to thy righteousness. Though we are ourselves unrighteous before God, yet with reference to them we have a righteous cause, which we leave it with the righteous God to appear in the defence of. Or rather, by the righteousness of God here is meant his faithfulness to his promise. God had according to his righteousness executed the threatening, ver. 11. Now, Lord, wilt thou not do according to all thy righteousness? Wilt thou not be as true to thy promises as thou hast been to thy threatenings, and accomplish them also? 4th. Do it "for thy great mercies," ver. 18; to make it to appear that thou art a merciful God. The good things we ask of God we call mercies, because we expect them purely from God's mercy. And because misery is the proper object of mercy, the prophet here spreads the deplorable condition of the church before God, as it were to move his compassion; "Open thine eyes, and behold our desolations," especially the desolations of the sanctuary. O look with pity upon a piteous case! Note, The desolations of the church must in prayer be laid before God, and then left with him. 5th. Do it for the sake of the relation we stand in to them. The sanctuary that is desolate is thy sanctuary, ver. 17; dedicated to thine honour, employed in thy service, and the place of thy residence. Jerusalem is thy city, and thy holy mountain, ver. 16; it is "the city that is called by thy name," ver. 18; it was the city which God had "chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there." The people that are become a reproach are thy people, and thy name suffers in the reproach cast upon them, ver. 16; they are "called by thy name," ver. 19. Lord, thou hast a property in them, and therefore are interested in their interests; wilt thou not provide for thine own, for those of thine own house? They are thine, save them, *Ps.* cxix. 94.

20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; 21 Yea, whiles I *was* speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22 And he informed *me*, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew *thee;* for thou *art* greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25 Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof *shall be* with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

We have here the answer that was immediately sent to Daniel's prayer; and it is a very memorable one, as it contains the most illustrious prediction of Christ and gospel grace that is extant in all the Old Testament. If John Baptist was the morning star, this was the day-break to the Sun of righteousness; "the dayspring from on high." Here is,

First. The time when this answer was given.

1. It was while Daniel was at prayer. This he observed, and laid a mighty emphasis upon: "While I was speaking," ver. 20; yea, "whiles I was speaking in prayer," ver. 21; before he rose from his knees, and while there was yet more which he intended to say. He mentions the two heads he chiefly insisted upon in prayer, and which perhaps he designed yet farther to enlarge upon. 1st. He was confessing sin, and lamenting that, both "my sin," and "the sin of my people Israel." Daniel was a very great and good man, and yet he finds sin of his own to confess before God, and is ready to confess it; for there is not a just man upon earth that doth good, and sins not, nor that sins, and repents not. St. John puts himself into the number of those who deceive themselves, if they say they have no sin, and who therefore confess their sins, 1 *Jno.* i. 8. Good men find it an ease to their consciences to pour out their complaints before the Lord against themselves, and that is confessing sin. He also confessed the sin of his people, and bewailed that. Those who are heartily concerned for the glory of God, and the welfare of the church, and the souls of men, will mourn for others' sins as well as for their own. 2nd. He was "making supplications before the Lord his God," and presenting it to him as an intercessor for Israel; and in this prayer his concern was for "the holy mountain of his God," mount Zion. The desolations of the sanctuary lay nearer his heart than those of the city and the land; and the repair of that, and the setting up the public worship of the God of Israel again, was what he had in view in the deliverance he was preparing for, more than the re-establishment of their civil interests. Now while Daniel was thus employed, *First.* He had a grant made him of the mercy he prayed for. Note, God is very ready to hear prayer, and to give an answer of peace. Now was fulfilled what God had spoken, *Isa.* lxv. 24, "While they are yet speaking, I will hear." Daniel grew very fervent in prayer, and his affections were very strong, ver. 18, 19. And "while he was speaking" with such fervour and ardency, the angel came to him with a gracious answer. God is well pleased with lively devotions. We cannot now expect that God should send us answers to our prayer by angels; but if we pray with fervency for that which God hath promised we may by faith take the promise as an immediate answer to the prayer; for "he is faithful that has promised." *Secondly.* He had a discovery made him of a far greater and more glorious redemption which God would work out for his church in the latter days. Note, Those that would be brought acquainted with Christ and his grace must be much in prayer.

2. It was "about the time of the evening oblation," ver. 21. The altar was in ruins, and there was no oblation offered upon it; but it should seem the pious Jews in their captivity were daily thoughtful of the time when it should have been offered, and at that hour were ready to weep at the remembrance of it,

and desired and hoped that their prayer should be "set forth before God as incense," and the "lifting up of their hands," and their hearts with their hands, should be acceptable in his sight as the evening sacrifice, *Ps.* cxli. 2. The evening oblation was a type of the great sacrifice which Christ was to offer in the evening of the world; and it was in the virtue of that sacrifice that Daniel's prayer was accepted, when he prayed "for the Lord's sake," and for the sake of that this glorious discovery of redeeming love was made to him; the Lamb opened the seals in the virtue of his own blood.

Secondly. The messenger by whom this answer was sent. It was not given him in a dream, or by a voice from heaven; but, for the greater certainty and solemnity of it, an angel was sent on purpose, appearing in human shape, to give this answer to Daniel. Observe,

1. Who this angel or messenger was. It was the man Gabriel: if Michael the archangel be, as many suppose, no other than Jesus Christ, this Gabriel is the only created angel that is named in Scripture; Gabriel signifies, 'the mighty one of God;' for the angels are "great in power and might," 2 *Pet.* ii. 11. It was he "whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning." Daniel heard him called by his name, and thence learned it, *ch.* viii. 18; and, though then he trembled at his approach, yet he observed him so carefully that now he knew him again, knew him to be the same that he had seen at the beginning; and, being somewhat better acquainted with him, was not now so terrified at the sight of him as he had been at first. When this angel said to Zacharias, "I am Gabriel," *Lu.* i. 19, he intended thereby to put him in mind of this notice which he had given to Daniel of the Messiah's coming, when it was at a distance, for the confirming of his faith, in the notice he was then about to give of it, as at the door.

2. The instructions which this messenger received from the Father of lights to whom David prayed; ver. 23, "At the beginning of thy supplications" the word, "the commandment, came forth" from God. Notice was given to the angels in heaven of this counsel of God, which they were desirous to look into, and orders given to Gabriel to go immediately and bring the notice of it to Daniel. By this it appears it was not any thing Daniel said that moved God, for the answer was given as he began to pray; but God was well pleased with his serious, solemn address to the duty, and in token of that sent him this gracious message. Or, perhaps it was "at the beginning of Daniel's supplications," that Cyrus's word or commandment went forth to restore and to build Jerusalem, that going forth spoken of, ver. 25. The thing is done this very day; the proclamation of liberty to the Jews is signed this morning, just then when thou wast praying for it; and now at the close of this fast day Daniel has notice of it, as at the close of the day of atonement the jubilee trumpet sounded to proclaim liberty.

3. The haste he made to deliver his message. He was "caused to fly swiftly," ver. 21. Angels are winged messengers, quick in their motions, and delay not to execute the orders they receive; they run and "return like a flash of lightning," *Eze.* i. 14. But it should seem sometimes they are more expeditious than at other times, and make a quicker dispatch, as here the angel was "caused to fly swiftly," that is, he was ordered and he was enabled to fly swiftly. Angels do their work in obedience to Divine command, and in dependence upon Divine strength. Though they excel in wisdom, they fly swifter or slower, as God directs; and though they excel in power, they fly but as God causeth them to fly. Angels themselves are to us what he makes them to be; they are his ministers, and do his pleasure, *Ps.* ciii. 21.

4. The prefaces or introductions to his message. 1st. He "touched him," ver. 22; as before, *ch.* viii. 18; not to awaken him out of sleep, as then, but to give him a hint to break off his prayer, and to attend to that which he has to say in answer to it. Note, In order to the keeping up of our communion with God, we must not only be forward to speak to God, but as forward to hear what he has to say to us; when we have prayed, we must look up, must look after our prayers, must set ourselves upon our watch tower. 2nd. He "talked with him," ver. 22; talked familiarly with him, as one friend talks with another, that his terror might not make him afraid. He informed him on what errand he came, that he was sent from heaven on purpose with a kind message to him; "I am come to shew thee," ver. 23; to tell thee that which thou didst not know before. He had shewed him the troubles of the church under Antiochus, and the period of those troubles, *ch.* viii. 19, but now he has greater things to shew him; for he that is faithful in a little shall be intrusted with more. Nay, "I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding," ver. 22; not only to shew thee these things, but to make thee understand them. 3rd. He assures him he was a favourite of heaven, else he had not had this intelligence sent him, and he must take it as a favour; "I am come to shew thee, for thou art greatly beloved;" thou art "a man of desires," acceptable to God, and whom he has a favour for. Note, Though God loves all his children, yet there are some that are more than the rest greatly beloved. Christ had one disciple that lay in his bosom, and that beloved disciple was he that was intrusted with the prophetical visions of the New Testament, as Daniel was with those of the Old. For what greater token can there be of God's favour to any man than for the secrets of the Lord to be with him? Abraham is the friend of God, and therefore "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" *Gen.* xviii. 17. Note, Those may reckon themselves greatly beloved of God to whom, and in whom, he reveals his Son. Some observe that the title which this angel Gabriel gives to the Virgin Mary was much the same with this he here gives to Daniel, as if he designed to put her in mind of it, "Thou that art highly favoured;" as Daniel, "greatly beloved." 4th. He demands his serious attention to the discovery he was now about to make to him; "Therefore understand the matter and consider the vision," ver. 23. This intimates that it was a thing well worthy of his regard, above any of the visions he had been before favoured with. Note, Those who would understand the things of God must consider them; must apply their minds to them, ponder upon them, and compare spiritual things with spiritual. The reason why we are so much in the dark concerning the revealed will of God, and mistake concerning it, is for want of consideration. This vision both requires and deserves consideration.

Thirdly. The message itself, delivered with great solemnity, received no doubt with great attention, and recorded with great exactness; but in it, as is usual in prophecies, there are things dark and hard to be understood. Daniel, that understood by the book of the prophet Jeremiah the expiration of the seventy years of the captivity, is now honourably employed to make known to the church another more glorious release, which that was but a shadow of, at the end of another seventy, not years, but weeks of years. He prayed over that prophecy, and received this in answer to that prayer. He had prayed for his people, and the holy city, that they might be released, that it might be rebuilt; but God answers him above what he was able to ask or think. God not only grants but outdoes the desires of them that fear him, *Ps.* xxi. 4.

1. The times here determined are somewhat hard to be understood. In general it is seventy weeks; that is, seventy times seven years, which makes just four hundred and ninety years; that is, the great affairs that are yet to come concerning the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem will lie within the compass of these years.

1st. These years are thus described by weeks. *First.* In conformity to the prophetical style, which is for the most part abstruse, and out of the common road of speaking, that the things foretold might not lie too obvious. *Secondly.* To put an honour upon the division of time into weeks, which was made purely by the sabbath day, and to signify that that should be perpetual. *Thirdly.* With reference to the seventy years of the captivity. As they had been so long kept out of the possession of their own land, so being now restored to it they should seven times as long be kept in the possession of it. So much more doth God delight in shewing mercy than in punishing. The land had enjoyed its sabbaths in a melancholy sense seventy years, *Lev.* xxvi. 34; but now the people of the Lord shall, in a comfortable sense, enjoy their sabbath seven times seventy years, and in them seventy sabbatical years, which makes ten jubilees. Such proportions are there in the disposals of Providence, that we might see and admire the wisdom of him who hath "determined the times before appointed."

2nd. The difficulties that arise about these seventy weeks are, *First.* Concerning the time when they commence, and whence they are to be reckoned. They are here dated "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem," ver. 25. I should most incline to understand this of the edict of Cyrus, mentioned *Ezr.* i. 1, for by it the people were restored; and though express mention be not made there of the building of Jerusalem, yet that is supposed in the building of the temple, and was foretold to be done by Cyrus, *Isa.* xliv. 28. He shall "say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built." That was, both in prophecy and history, the most famous decree for the building of Jerusalem. Nay, it should seem this going forth of the commandment (which may as well be meant of God's command concerning it as of Cyrus's) is the same with that going forth of the commandment mentioned, ver. 23, which was at the beginning of Daniel's supplications. And it looks very graceful that the seventy weeks should begin immediately upon the expiration of the seventy years. And there is nothing to be objected against this, but that by this reckoning the Persian monarchy, from the taking of Babylon by Cyrus to Alexander's conquest of Darius, lasted but one hundred and thirty years; whereas, by the particular account given of the reigns of the Persian emperors, it is computed that it continued two hundred and thirty years: so Thucydides, Xenophon, and others reckon. Those who fix it to that first edict set aside these computations of the heathen historians as uncertain and not to be relied upon. But others, willing to reconcile them, begin at the four hundred and ninety years, not at the edict of Cyrus, *Ezr.* i. 1, but at the second edict for the building of Jerusalem, issued out by Darius Nothus, above one hundred years after, mentioned, *Ezr.* vi.; others, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Mnemon, who sent Ezra with a commission, *Ezr.* vii. 8—12. The learned Mr. Pool, in his *Latin Synopsis*, has a vast and most elaborate collection of what has been said, *pro* and *con*, concerning the different beginnings of these weeks, with which the learned may entertain themselves. *Secondly.* Concerning the period of them. And here likewise interpreters are not agreed. Some make them to end at the death of Christ; and think the express words of this famous prophecy will warrant us to conclude, that from this very hour, when Gabriel spoke to Daniel, at the time of the evening oblation, to the hour when Christ died, which was towards evening too, was exactly four hundred and ninety years; and I am willing enough to be of that opinion. But others think because it is said, that "in the midst of the week," that is, the last of the seventy weeks, he "shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease," they end three years and a half after the death of Christ, when, the Jews having rejected the Gospel, the apostles turned to the Gentiles. But they who make them to end precisely at the death of Christ read it thus: He shall "make strong the testament to the many; the last seven," or the last week, yea, half that seven, or half that week, (namely, the latter half, the three years and a half which Christ spent in his public ministry,) shall bring to an end sacrifice and oblation. Others make these four hundred and ninety years to end with the destruction of Jerusalem, about thirty-seven years after the death of Christ, because these seventy weeks are said to be determined upon the people of the Jews and the holy city; and much is said here concerning the destruction of the city and the sanctuary. *Thirdly.* Concerning the division of them into seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks, and one week; and the reason of this is as hard to account for as any thing else. In the first seven weeks, or forty-nine years, the temple and city were built; and in the last single week Christ preached his Gospel, by which the Jewish economy was taken down, and the foundations laid of the gospel city and temple, which were to be built upon the ruins of the former.

3rd. But whatever uncertainty we may labour under concerning the exact fixing of these times, there is enough clear and certain to answer the two great ends of determining them. *First.* It did serve then to raise and support the expectations of believers. There were general promises of the coming of the Messiah made to the patriarchs; the preceding prophets had often spoken of him as one that should come, but never was the time fixed for his coming till now. And though there might be so much doubt concerning the date of this reckoning, that they could not ascertain the time just to a year, yet, by the light of this prophecy, they were directed about what time to expect him. And we find accordingly that when Christ came he was generally looked for, as the consolation of Israel, and redemption in Jerusalem by him, *Lu.* ii. 25, 38. There were those that for this reason thought the "kingdom of God should immediately appear," *Lu.* xix. 11; and some think this was it that brought a more than ordinary concourse of people to Jerusalem, *Acts* ii. 5. *Secondly.* It doth serve still to refute and silence the expectations of unbelievers, who will not own that Jesus is he who should come, but still look for another. This prediction silenced them, and will condemn them; for, reckon these seventy weeks from which of the commandments to build Jerusalem we please, it is certain they are expired above one thousand five hundred years ago; so that the Jews are for ever without excuse who will not own that the Messiah is come, when they are gone so far beyond their utmost reckoning for his coming. But by this we are confirmed in our belief of the Messiah's being come, and that our Jesus is he, that he came just at the time prefixed, a time worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance.

2. The events here foretold are more plain and easy to be understood, at least to us now. Observe what is here foretold,

1st. Concerning the return of the Jews now speedily to their own land, and their settlement again there, which was the thing that Daniel now principally prayed for, and yet it is but briefly touched upon here in the answer to his prayer. Let this be a comfort to the pious Jews, that a commandment shall go forth to "restore and to build Jerusalem," ver. 25. And the commandment shall not be in vain; for, though the times will be very troublous, and this good work will meet with great opposition, yet it shall be carried on and brought to perfection at last. The street shall be built again as spacious and splendid as ever it was, and the walls, even in troublous times. Note, As long as we are here in this world we must expect troublous times, upon some account or other, even then when we have joyous times. Yet we must rejoice with trembling; it is but a gleam, it is but a lucid interval of peace and prosperity; the clouds will return after the rain, when the Jews are restored in triumph to their own land; yet there they must expect troublous times, and prepare for them. But this is our comfort, that God will carry on his own work, will build up his Jerusalem, will beautify it, will fortify it, even in troublous times. Nay, the

troublousness of the times may, by the grace of God, contribute to the advancement of the church. The more it is afflicted the more it multiplies.

2nd. Concerning the Messiah and his undertaking. The carnal Jews looked for a Messiah that should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them temporal power and wealth; whereas they were here told that the Messiah should come upon another errand, purely spiritual, and upon the account of which he should be the more welcome. *First.* Christ came to take away sin, and to abolish that. Sin had made a quarrel between God and man, had alienated man from God, and provoked God against man; that was it that put dishonour upon God, and brought misery upon mankind; that was the great mischief-maker. He that would do God a real service, and man a real kindness, must be the destruction of that. Christ undertakes to be so, and for this purpose he is manifested, "to destroy the works of the devil." He doth not say, To finish your transgressions and your sins, but transgression and sin in general; for he is the propitiation not only for our sins, that are Jews, but "for the sins of the whole world." He came, 1*st.* To finish transgression; to restrain it, so some; to break the power of it, to bruise the head of that serpent that had done so much mischief; to take away the usurped dominion of that tyrant, and to set up a kingdom of holiness and love in the hearts of men upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom there, that where sin and death had reigned, righteousnes and life, through grace, might reign. When he died, he said, "It is finished;" sin has now had its death-wound given to it; like Samson's, "Let me die with the Philistines." *Animamque in vulnere ponit*,—'He inflicts the wound and dies." 2*nd.* To make an end of sin, to abolish it, that it may not rise up in judgment against us; to obtain the pardon of it, that it may not be our ruin. To 'seal up sins,' so the margin reads it, that they may not appear or break out against us, to accuse and condemn us; as, when Christ cast the devil into the bottomless pit, he set a seal upon him, *Rev.* xx. 3. When sin is pardoned it is sought for and not found, as that which is sealed up. 3*rd.* "To make reconciliation for iniquity," as by a sacrifice, to satisfy the justice of God, and so to make peace, and bring God and man together; not only as an arbitrator, or referee, who only brings the contending parties to a good understanding one of another, but as a surety or undertaker for us. He is not only the peacemaker, but the peace; he is the atonement. *Secondly.* He came to "bring in an everlasting righteousness." God might justly have made an end of the sin by making an end of the sinner; but Christ found out another way, and so made an end of sin as to save the sinner from it by providing a righteousness for him. We are all guilty before God, and shall be condemned as guilty, if we had not a righteousness wherein to appear before him. Had we stood, our innocency would have been our righteousness, but, being fallen, we must have something else to plead. And Christ has provided us a plea; the merit of his sacrifice is our righteousness, with this we answer all the demands of the law; "Christ has died, yea, rather, has risen again." Thus Christ is "the Lord our righteousness," for he is "made of God to us righteousness," that we might be "made the righteousness of God in him." By faith we apply this to ourselves, and plead it with God, and our faith is imputed to us for righteousness. *Rom.* iv. 3, 5. This is an everlasting righteousness, for Christ who is our righteousness, and the Prince of our peace, is the everlasting Father. It was from everlasting in the counsels of it, and will be to everlasting in the consequences of it. The application of it was from the beginning, for Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and will be the end, for he is "able to save to the uttermost." It is of everlasting virtue, *Heb.* x. 12; it is the rock that follows us to Canaan. *Thirdly.* He came to "seal up the vision and prophecy," that is, all the prophetical visions of the Old Testament which had reference to the Messiah. He sealed them up, that is, he accomplished them, answered them to a tittle; all things that were written in the law, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning the Messiah, were fulfilled in him; thus he confirmed the truth of them, as well as his own mission. He "sealed them up;" that is, he put an end to that method of God's discovering his mind and will, and took another course, by completing the Scripture canon in the New Testament, which is the more sure word of prophecy than that by vision, 2 *Pet.* i. 19; *Heb.* i. 1. *Fourthly.* He came to "anoint the Most Holy," that is, himself, the Holy One who was anointed, that is, appointed to his work, and qualified for it by the Holy Ghost, that oil of gladness which he received without measure above his fellows. Or, to anoint the gospel church, his spiritual temple or holy place, to sanctify and cleanse it, and appropriate it to himself, *Eph.* v. 6. Or, to consecrate for us "a new and living way into the holiest," by his own blood, *Heb.* x. 20, as the sanctuary was anointed, *Ex.* xxx. 25, &c. He is called Messiah, ver. 25, 26, which signifies Christ, Anointed, *Jno.* i. 41, because he received the unction, both for himself and for all that are his. *Fifthly.* In order to all this the Messiah must be cut off, must die a violent death, and so be cut off from the land of the living, as was foretold, *Isa.* liii. 8. Hence, when Paul preacheth the death of Christ, he saith he preached nothing but "what the prophets said should come," *Acts* xxvi. 22, 23; and thus it behoved Christ to suffer. He must be cut off, but not for himself, not for any sin of his own, but, as Caiaphas prophesied, he must "die for the people," in our stead, and for our good. Not for any advantage of his own; the glory he purchased for himself was no more but the glory he had before, *Jno.* xvii. 4, 5. No; it was to atone for our sins, and purchase life for us, that he was cut off. *Sixthly.* He must "confirm the covenant with many." He shall introduce a new covenant between God and man, a covenant of grace, since it was become impossible for us to be saved by a covenant of innocency. This covenant he shall confirm by his doctrine and miracles, by his death and resurrection, by the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, which are the seals of the New Testament, assuring us that God is willing to accept of us upon gospel terms. His death made his testament of force, and enabled us to claim what is bequeathed by it. He confirmed it to the many, that is, to the common people; the poor were evangelized when the rulers and "Pharisees believed not on him." Or, he confirmed it with many, that is, with the Gentile world; the New Testament was not (like the Old) confined to the Jewish church, but was committed to all nations; Christ gave his life a ransom for many. *Seventhly.* He must "cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease." By offering himself a sacrifice once for all he shall put an end to all the Levitical sacrifice, shall supersede them, and set them aside. When the substance is come the shadows shall be done away. He causeth all the peace offerings to cease, when he has made peace by the blood of his cross, and by it confirmed the covenant of peace and reconciliation. By the preaching of his Gospel to the world, which the apostles were intrusted to do, he took men off from expecting remission by the blood of bulls and goats, and so "caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease." The apostle, to the Hebrews, shews what a better priesthood, altar, and sacrifice we have now than they had under the law, as a reason why we should hold fast our profession.

3rd. Concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation. And this follows immediately upon the cutting off of the Messiah; not only because it was the just punishment of those that put him to death, which was the sin that filled up the measure of their iniquity, and brought ruin upon them, but because, as things were, it was necessary to the perfecting of one of the great intentions of his death. He died to take away the ceremonial law, quite to abolish "that law of commandment," and to vacate the obligation of it. But the Jews would not be persuaded to quit it, still they kept it up with more zeal than ever; they would hear no talk of parting with it; they stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr, for saying that Jesus should "change the customs which Moses delivered them," *Acts* vi. 14; so that there was no way to abolish the Mosaic economy but by destroying the temple, and the holy city, and the Levitical priesthood, and that whole nation, which so incurably doted on them. This was effectually done in less than forty years after the death of Christ, and it was a desolation that could never be repaired to this day. And this is it which is here largely foretold, that the Jews who returned out of captivity might not be overmuch lifted up with the rebuilding of their city and temple, because, in process of time, they would be finally destroyed, and not as now, for seventy years only, but might rather rejoice in hope of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world, which should never be destroyed. Now, *First.* It is here foretold that "the people of the prince" that shall come shall be the instruments of this destruction, that is, the Roman armies, belonging to the monarchy yet to come. Christ is the prince that shall come, and they are employed by him in this service; they are his armies, *Mat.* xxii. 7. Or, the Gentiles, who, though now strangers, shall become the people of the Messiah, shall destroy the Jews. *Secondly.* That the destruction should be by war, and the end of that war should be this desolation determined. The wars of the Jews with the Romans were, by their own obstinacy, made very long and very bloody, and they issued at length in the utter extirpation of that people. *Thirdly.* That the city and sanctuary should in a particular manner be destroyed and laid quite waste. Titus, the Roman general, would fain have saved the temple, but his soldiers were so enraged against the Jews that he could not restrain them from burning it to the ground, that this prophecy might be fulfilled. *Fourthly.* That all the resistance that should be made to this destruction should be in vain. The "end of it should be with a flood." It shall be a deluge of destruction, like that which swept away the old world, and which there will be no making head against. *Fifthly.* That hereby the sacrifice and oblation should be made to cease. And it must needs cease, when the family of the priests was so extirpated, and the genealogies of it so confounded, that, they say, there is no man in the world that can prove himself of the seed of Aaron. *Sixthly.* That there should be "an overspreading of abominations," a general corruption of the Jewish nation, and an abounding of iniquity among them, for which it should be made desolate, 1 *Thes.* ii. 17. Or, it is rather to be understood of the armies of the Romans, which were abominable to the Jews, they could not endure them, which overspread the nations, and by which it was made desolate. For these are the words which Christ refers to, *Mat.* xxiv. 15, "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judæa flee;" which is explained, *Lu.* xxi. 20, "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then flee." *Seventhly.* That the desolation should be total and final. "He shall make it desolate, even till the consummation;" that is, he shall make it completely desolate. It is a desolation determined, and it will be accomplished to the utmost. And when it is made desolate, it should seem there is something more determined, that is to be "poured upon the desolate," ver. 27; and what should that be but the spirit of slumber, *Rom.* xi. 8, 25, that blindness which is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in? and then all Israel shall be saved.

CHAPTER X.

This chapter, and the two next, which conclude this book, make up one entire vision and prophecy, which was communicated to Daniel for the use of the church, not by signs and figures, as before, *ch.* vii. and viii., but by express words; and this was about two years after the vision in the foregoing chapter. Daniel prayed daily, but had a vision only now and then. In this chapter we have some things introductory to the prophecy; in *ch.* xi. the particular predictions, and *ch.* xii. the conclusion of it. This chapter shews us, I. Daniel's solemn fasting and humiliation before he had this vision, ver. 1—3. II. A glorious appearance of the Son of God to him, and the deep impression it made upon him, ver. 4—9. III. The encouragement that was given him to expect such a discovery of future events as should be satisfactory and useful both to others and to himself; and that he should be enabled both to understand the meaning of this discovery, though difficult, and to bear up under the lustre of it, though dazzling and dreadful, ver. 10—21.

IN the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing *was* true, but the time appointed *was* long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. 2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. 4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the

TOMB OF CYRUS.

side of the great river, which *is* Hiddekel; 5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins *were* girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also *was* like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. 7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. 8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. 9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

This vision is dated in the third year of Cyrus, that is, of his reign, after the conquest of Babylon; his third year since Daniel became acquainted with him, and a subject to him. Here is,

First. A general idea of this prophecy; ver. 1, "The thing was true." Every word of God is so. It was true that Daniel had such a vision, and that such and such things were said; this he solemnly attests upon the word of a prophet; *et hoc paratus est verificare*,—'he was prepared to verify it;' and if it was a word spoken from heaven, no doubt it is stedfast, and may be depended on. But the time appointed was long, as long as to the end of the reign of Antiochus, which was three hundred years; a long time, indeed, when it is looked upon as to come. Nay, and because it is usual with the prophets to glance at things spiritual and eternal, there is that in this prophecy which looks in type as far forward as to the end of the world, and the resurrection of the dead; and then he might well say, "The time appointed was long:" but however it was made as plain to him as if it had been a history rather than a prophecy; he understood the thing; so distinctly was it delivered to him, and did he receive it, that he could say he had "understanding of the vision." It did not so much operate upon his fancy as open his understanding.

Secondly. An account of Daniel's mortification of himself before he had this vision. Not in expectation of it,—nor when he prayed that solemn prayer, *ch.* ix., doth it appear that he had any expectation of the vision in answer to it; but purely from a principle of devotion, and pious sympathy with the afflicted people of God. He "was mourning full three weeks," ver. 2, for his own sins, and the sins of his people, and their sorrows. Some think the particular occasion of his mourning was the slothfulness and indifferency of many of the Jews, who, though they had liberty to return to their own land, continued still in the land of their captivity, not knowing how to value the privileges offered them; and perhaps it troubled him the more, because they that did so justified themselves by the example of Daniel, though they had not that reason to stay behind which he had. Others think it was because he heard of the obstruction given to the building of the temple by the enemies of the Jews, who "hired counsellors against them" to frustrate their purpose, (*Ezr.* iv. 4, 5,) "all the days of Cyrus;" and gained their point from his son, Cambyses, or Artaxerxes, who governed while Cyrus was absent in the Scythian war. Note, Good men cannot but mourn to see how slowly the work of God goes on in the world, and what opposition it meets with; how weak its friends are, and how active its enemies. During the days of Daniel's mourning he ate no pleasant bread; he could not live without meat, but ate little, and very sparingly, and mortified himself in the quality as well as quantity of what he ate, which may truly be reckoned fasting, and a token of humiliation and sorrow. He did not eat the pleasant bread he used to eat, but that which was coarse and unpalatable, which he would not be tempted to eat any more of than was just necessary to support nature. As ornaments, so delicates, are very disagreeable to a day of humiliation. Daniel ate no flesh, drank no wine, nor anointed himself, for these three weeks' time, ver. 3. Though he was now a very old man, and might plead that the decay of his nature required what was nourishing,—though he was a very great man, and might plead that, being used to dainty meats, he could not be without them, it would prejudice his health if he were,—yet, when it was both to testify and to assist his devotion, he could thus deny himself. Be it noted to the shame of many young ordinary people, who cannot persuade themselves thus to deny themselves.

Thirdly. A description of that glorious person whom Daniel saw in vision, which it is generally agreed could be no other than Christ himself, the eternal Word. He was by the side of the river Hiddekel, ver. 4, probably walking there, not for diversion, but devotion and contemplation, as Isaac walked in the field to meditate; and, being a person of distinction, he had his servants attending him at some distance. There he looked up, and saw one man, one alone, a certain man, even the man Christ Jesus. It must be he, for he appears in the same resemblance wherein he appeared to St. John in the isle of Patmos, *Rev.* i. 13—15. His dress was priestly, for he is the high priest of our profession, clothed in linen, as the high priest himself was on the day of atonement, that great day; his loins were girded, (in St. John's vision his paps were girded,) with a golden girdle, of the finest gold, that of Uphaz, for every thing about Christ is the best in its kind. The girding of his loins notes his ready and diligent application to his work, as his Father's servant, in the business of our redemption. His shape was amiable; his body like the beryl, a precious stone of a sky-colour; his countenance was awful, and enough to strike a terror on the beholders, for his face was as the appearance of lightning, which dazzles the eyes, both frightens and threatens; his eyes were bright and sparkling, as lamps of fire; his arms and feet shone like polished brass, ver. 6; his voice was loud and strong, and very piercing, like the voice of a multitude. The *vox Dei*,—'voice of God,' can overpower the *vox populi*,—'voice of the people.' Thus glorious did Christ appear, and it should engage us, 1st. To think highly and honourably of him. Now consider how great this man is, and in all things let him have the pre-eminence. 2nd. To admire his condescension for us and our salvation. Over all this splendour he drew a veil when he took upon him the form of a servant, and emptied himself.

Fourthly. The wonderful influence that this appearance had upon Daniel and his attendants, and the terror that it struck upon him and them.

1. His attendants saw not the vision; it was not fit they should be honoured with the sight of it. There is a Divine revelation vouchsafed to all, from converse with which none are excluded that do not exclude themselves; but such a vision must be peculiar to Daniel, that was a favourite. Paul's companions were aware of the light, but saw no man, *Acts* ix. 7; xxii. 9. Note, It is the honour of those who are beloved of God that what is hid from others is known to them. Christ "manifests himself to them, but not to the world," *Jno.* xiv. 22. But, though they saw not the vision, they were seized with an unaccountable trembling, either from the voice they heard or from some strange concussion or vibration of the air they felt, so it was that "a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves," probably among the willows that grew by the river side. Note, There are many that have a "spirit of bondage to fear," that never receive "a spirit of adoption," to whom Christ has been, and will be, never otherwise but a terror. Now the fright that Daniel's attendants were in is a confirmation of the truth of the vision; it could not be Daniel's fancy, or the product of a heated imagination of his own, for it had a real, powerful, and strange effect upon those about him.

2. He himself saw it, and saw it alone, but he was not able to bear the sight of it. It not only dazzled his eyes, but overwhelmed his spirit, so that "there remained no strength in him," ver. 8. He said, as Moses himself, "I exceedingly fear and quake." His spirits were all so employed, either in an intense speculation of the glory of this vision or in the fortifying of his heart against the terror of it, that his body was left in a manner lifeless and spiritless; he had no vigour in him, and was but one remove from a dead carcase; he looked as pale as death, his colour was gone, and his comeliness in him was turned into corruption, and he retained no strength. Note, The greatest and best of men cannot bear the immediate discoveries of the Divine glory; no man can see it and live. It is next to death to see a glimpse of it, as Daniel here; but glorified saints see Christ as he is, and can bear the sight. But though Daniel was thus dispirited with the vision of Christ, yet he "heard the voice of his words," and knew what he said. Note, We must take heed, lest our reverence of God's glory by which we should be awakened to hear his voice, both in his word and in his providence, should degenerate into such a dread of him as will disable or indispose us to hear it. It should seem that, when the vision of Christ terrified Daniel, the voice of his words soon pacified and composed him, silenced his fear, and laid him to sleep in a holy security and serenity of mind; "When I heard the voice of his words I fell into a slumber," a sweet slumber, "on my face," and "my face towards the ground." When he saw the vision he threw himself prostrate into a posture of the most humble adoration, and dropped asleep, not as careless of what he heard and saw, but charmed with it. Note, How dreadful soever Christ may appear to those that are under convictions of sin, and in terror by reason of it, there is enough in his word to quiet their spirits, and to make them easy, if they will but attend to it, and apply it.

10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and *upon* the palms of my hands. 11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. 13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia. 14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision *is* for *many* days. 15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. 16 And, behold, *one* like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. 18 Then there came again and touched me *one* like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, 19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace *be* unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said,

Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me. 20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21 But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and *there is* none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

Much ado here is to bring Daniel to be able to hear what Christ has to say to him. Still we have him in a fright, hardly and very slowly recovering himself; but is still answered and supported with good words and comfortable words. Let us see how Daniel is, by degrees, brought to himself, and gather up the several passages that are to the same purpose.

First. Daniel is in a great consternation, and finds it very difficult to get clear of it. The hand that touched him set him at first "upon his knees, and the palms of his hands," ver. 10. Note, Strength and comfort commonly come by degrees to those that have been long cast down and disquieted; they are first helped up a little, and then more. "After two days he will revive us, and then the third day he will raise us up;" and we must not "despise the day of small things," but be thankful for the beginnings of mercy. Afterwards he is helped up, but he stands trembling, ver. 11, for fear lest he fall again. Note, Before God "gives strength and power unto his people" he makes them sensible of their own weakness. "I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble," *Hab.* iii. 16.

But when afterwards Daniel recovered so much strength in his limbs that he could stand steady, yet he tells us, ver. 15, that he "set his face towards the ground, and became dumb." He was as a man astonished, that knew not what to say, struck dumb with admiration and fear, and is loth to enter into discourse with one so far above him. He kept silence, yea even from good, till he had recollected himself a little. Well, at length he recovered not only the use of his feet, but the use of his tongue; and when he "opened his mouth," ver. 16, that which he had to say was to excuse his having been so long silent, for really he durst not speak, he could not speak. "O my lord," (so, in great humility, this prophet calls the angel, though the angels, in great humility, called themselves "fellow-servants to the prophets," *Rev.* xxii. 9,) "by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me," they break in upon me with violence, the sense of my sinful, sorrowful state turns upon me, when I see thy purity and brightness. Note, Man that has lost his integrity has reason to blush and be ashamed of himself, when he sees or considers the glory of the blessed angels that keep their integrity. "My sorrows turned upon me, and I have retained no strength" to resist them, or bear up ahead against them; and again, ver. 17, like one half dead with the fright, he complains, As for me "straightway there remained no strength in me" to receive these displays of the Divine glory and these discoveries of the Divine will. Nay, "There is no breath left in me;" such a deliquium did he suffer, that he could not draw one breath after another, but panted and languished, and was in a manner breathless. See how well it is for us that the treasure of Divine revelation is put into earthen vessels, that God speaks to us by men like ourselves, and not by angels. Whatever we may wish in a peevish dislike of the method God takes in dealing with us, it is certain, if we were tried, we should all be of Israel's mind at mount Sinai, when they said to Moses, "Speak thou to us, and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die," *Ex.* xx. 19. If Daniel could not bear it, how could we? Now this he insists upon as an excuse for his irreverent silence, which otherwise had been blameworthy: "How can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord?" ver. 17. Note, Whenever we enter into communion with God it becomes us to have a due sense of the vast distance and disproportion that there is between us and the holy angels, and of the infinite distance, and proportion at all, between us and the holy God; and to acknowledge that we cannot "order our speech by reason of darkness." How shall we that are dust and ashes speak to the Lord of glory!

Secondly. The blessed angel that was employed by Christ to converse with him gave him all the encouragement and comfort that could be. It should seem it was not he whose glory he saw in vision, ver. 5, 6, that here touched him, and talked with him. That was Christ, but this seems to have been the angel Gabriel, whom Christ had once before ordered to instruct Daniel, *ch.* viii. 16. The glorious appearance (as that of the God of glory to Abraham, *Acts* vii. 2,) was to give authority and to gain attention to what the angel should say. Christ himself comforted John, when he, in a like case, "fell at his feet as dead," *Rev.* i. 17; but here he did it by the angel, whom Daniel saw in a glory much inferior to that of the vision in the verses before; for he was "like the similitude of the sons of men," ver. 16; one like the appearance of a man, ver. 18. When he only appeared, as he had done before, *ch.* ix. 21, we do not find that Daniel was put into any disorder by it, as he was by this vision; and therefore he is here employed a third time with Daniel.

1. He lent him his hand to help him; touched him, and set him upon his hands and knees, ver. 10, else he had still lain grovelling; touched his lips, ver. 16, else he had been still dumb. Again, he touched him, ver. 18, and put strength into him, else he had still been staggering and trembling. Note, The hand of God's power, going along with the word of his grace, is alone effectual to redress all our grievances, and to rectify whatever is amiss in us. One touch from heaven brings us to our knees, sets us on our feet, opens our lips, and strengthens us; for it is God that works on us, and works in us, both to will and to do that which is good.

2. He assured him of the great favour that God had for him; Thou art "a man greatly beloved," ver. 11; and again, ver. 19, "O man greatly beloved!" Note, Nothing is more likely, nothing more effectual, to revive the drooping spirits of the saints than to be assured of God's love to them. Those are greatly beloved indeed whom God loves, and it is comfort enough to know it.

3. He silenced his fears, and encouraged his hopes, with good words and comfortable words. He said unto him, "Fear not, Daniel," ver. 12; and again, ver. 19, "O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong." Never did any tender mother quiet her child, when any thing had grieved or frightened it, with more compassion and affection than the angel here quieted Daniel. Those that are beloved of God have no reason to be afraid of any evil,—peace is to them: God himself speaks peace to them, and they ought, upon the warrant of that, to speak peace to themselves. And that peace, that joy of the Lord, will be their strength. Will God "plead against us with his great power," will he take the advantage against us of our being overcome by his terror? "No, but he will put strength into us," *Job* xxiii. 6. So he did into Daniel here, when, by reason of the lustre of the vision, no strength of his own remained in him. And he acknowledgeth it; ver. 19, "When he had spoken to me I was strengthened." Note, God, by his word, puts life and strength and spirit into his people; for, if he saith, Be strong, power goes along with the word. And now Daniel has experienced the efficacy of God's strengthening word and grace, he is ready for any thing; Now "let my lord speak," and I can hear it, I can bear it, and am ready to do according to it; "for thou hast strengthened me." Note, To those that, like Daniel here, have no might, God increaseth strength, *Isa.* xl. 29; and we cannot keep up our communion with God but by strength derived from him: but when he is pleased to put strength into us we must make a good use of it, and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears." Let God enable us to comply with his will, and then, whatever it is, we will stand complete in it. *Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis,*—'Give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt.'

4. He assures him that his fastings and prayers were come up for a memorial before God, as the angel told Cornelius, *Acts* x. 4; ver. 12, "Fear not, Daniel." It is natural to fallen man to be afraid of an extraordinary messenger from heaven, as dreading to hear evil tidings thence; but Daniel needs not fear, for he has by his three weeks' humiliation and supplication sent extraordinary messengers to heaven, which he may expect to return with an olive branch of peace; "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand" the word of God, that is, to be the rule of thy prayers, "and to chasten thyself before thy God," that thou mightest put an edge upon thy prayers, "thy words were heard;" as before, "at the beginning of thy supplication," *ch.* ix. 24. Note, As the entrance of God's word is enlightening to the upright, so the entrance of their prayers is pleasing to him, *Ps.* cxix. 130. From the first day that we begin to look towards God in a way of duty he is ready to meet us in a way of mercy. Thus ready is God to hear prayer; "I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest."

5. He tells him that he was sent to him on purpose to bring him a prediction of the future state of the church, as a token of God's accepting his prayers for the church; "Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee?" If thou knewest on what errand I come, thou wouldest not be put into such a consternation by it. Note, If we rightly understand the meaning of God's dealings with us, and the methods of his providence and grace concerning us, we would be better reconciled to them. "I am come for thy words," ver. 12, to bring thee a gracious answer to thy prayers. Thus, when God's praying people do call to him, he saith, "Here I am," *Isa.* lviii. 9; what would you have with me? See the power of prayer, what glorious things it has in its time fetched from heaven, what strange discoveries! On what errand did this angel come to Daniel? He tells him; ver. 14, "I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days." Daniel was a curious, inquisitive man, that had all his days been searching into secret things; and it would be a mighty gratification to him to be let into the knowledge of things to come. Daniel had always been concerned for the church; its interests lay much upon his heart, and it would be a particular satisfaction to him to know what its state should be, and he would know the better what to pray for as long as he lived. He was now lamenting the difficulties which his people met with in the present day; but, that he might not be offended in those, the angel must tell him what greater difficulties are yet before them. And, if they be wearied, now they only run with the footmen, how will they contend with horses? Note, It would abate our resentment of present troubles to consider that we know not but much greater are before us, which we are concerned to provide for. Daniel must be made to know what shall befall his people in the latter days of the church, after the cessation of prophecy, and when the time drew nigh for the Messiah to appear, "for yet the vision is made for many days." The principal things that this vision was intended to give the church the foresight of would come to pass in the days of Antiochus, near three hundred years after this. Now that which the angel is intrusted to communicate to Daniel, and which Daniel is encouraged to expect from him, is not any curious speculations, moral prognostications, or rational prospects of his own, though he is an angel, but what he has received from the Lord. It was the "revelation of Jesus Christ" that the angel gave to St. John, to be "delivered to the churches," *Rev.* i. 1; so here, ver. 21, "I will shew thee what is written in the Scriptures of truth," that is, what is fixed in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The decree of God is a thing written; it is a Scripture, which remains, and cannot be altered: "What I have written, I have written." As there are Scriptures for the revealed will of God, the letters patent, which are published to the world, so there are Scriptures for the secret will of God, the close rolls, which are sealed among his treasures, the book of his decrees. Both are Scriptures of truth; nothing shall be added to or taken from either of them. The secret things belong not to us, only now and then some few paragraphs have been copied out from the book of God's counsels, and delivered to the prophets for the use of the church, as here to Daniel; but they are the things revealed, even the words of this law, which belong to us, and to our children; and we are concerned to study what is written in these Scriptures of truth, for they are things which belong to our everlasting peace.

6. He gives him a general account of the adversaries of the church's cause, from whom it might be expected troubles would arise, and of its patrons, under whose protection it might be assured of safety and victory at last.

1st. The kings of the earth are and will be its adversaries; for they set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed, *Ps.* ii. 2. The angel tells Daniel that he was to have come to him with a gracious answer to his prayers; but "the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him one and twenty days," just the three weeks that Daniel had been fasting and praying. Cambyses, king of Persia, had been very busy to embarrass the affairs of the Jews, and to do them all the mischief he could, and the angel had been all that time employed to counterwork him, so that he had been constrained to defer his visit to Daniel till now; for angels can be but in one place at a time. Or, as Dr. Lightfoot saith, this new king of Persia by hindering the temple had hindered those good tidings which otherwise he should have brought him. The kings and kingdoms of the world were indeed sometimes helpful to the church, but more often they were injurious to it. When I am gone forth from the kings of Persia,—when their monarchy is brought down for their unkindnesses to the Jews,—then "the prince of Grecia shall come," ver. 20. The Grecian monarchy, though favourable to the Jews at first, as the Persian was, yet will come to be vexatious to them. Such is the state of the church militant,—when it has got clear of one enemy it has another to encounter; and such a hydra's head is that of the old serpent,—when one storm is blown over it is not long before another riseth.

2nd. The God of heaven is and will be its protector; and under him the angels of heaven its patrons and guardians. *First.* Here is the angel Gabriel busy in the service of the church, making his part good in defence of it twenty-one days, against the prince of Persia, and remaining there with the kings of Persia, as consul, or liege-ambassador, to take care of the affairs of the Jews in that court, and to do them service, ver. 13. And, though much was done against them by the kings of Persia, God permitting it, it is likely much more mischief would have been done them, and they would have been quite ruined, (witness Haman's plot,) if God had not prevented it by the ministration of angels. Gabriel resolves, when he has dispatched this errand to Daniel, that he will return to fight with the prince of Persia,—will continue to oppose him,

and will at length humble and bring down that proud monarchy, ver. 20, though he knows another as mischievous, even that of Grecia, will rise instead of it. *Secondly.* Here is Michael our prince, the great protector of the church, and the patron of its just, but injured cause. "The first of the chief princes," ver. 13; some understand it of a created angel, but an archangel of the highest order, 1 *Thes.* iv. 16; *Jude* 9. Others think Michael the archangel is no other than Christ himself, the angel of the covenant, and the Lord of the angels; he whom Daniel saw in vision, ver. 5. He "came to help me," ver. 13; "and there is none but he that holdeth with me in these things," ver. 21. Christ is the church's prince, angels are not, *Heb.* ii. 5. He presides in the affairs of the church, and effectually provides for its good. He is said to hold with the angels, for it is he that makes them serviceable to the heirs of salvation. And if he were not on the church's side its case were bad. But, saith David, and so said the church, "The Lord taketh my part with them that help me," *Ps.* cxviii. 7; "The Lord is with them that uphold my soul," *Ps.* liv. 4.

CHAPTER XI.

The angel Gabriel, in this chapter, performs his promise made to Daniel in the foregoing chapter, that he would shew him "what should befall his people in the latter days," according to that which was written in the Scriptures of faith. Very particularly doth he here foretell the succession of the kings of Persia and Grecia, and the affairs of their kingdoms, especially the mischief which Antiochus Epiphanes did in his time to the church, which was foretold before, *ch.* viii. 11, 12. Here is one, I. A brief prediction of the setting up of the Grecian monarchy upon the ruins of the Persian monarchy, which was now newly begun, ver. 1—4. II. A prediction of the affairs of the two kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, with reference to each other, ver. 5—20. III. Of the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, and his actions and successes, ver. 21—29. IV. Of the great mischief that he should do to the Jewish nation and religion, and his contempt of all religion, ver. 30—39. V. Of his fall and ruin at last, when he is in the heat of his pursuit, ver. 40—45.

ALSO I in the first year of Darius the Mede, *even* I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. 2 And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than *they* all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. 3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. 4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.

Here, First. The angel Gabriel lets Daniel know the good service he had done to the Jewish nation; ver. 1, "In the first year of Darius the Mede," who destroyed Babylon, and released the Jews out of the house of bondage, "I stood a strength and fortress to him;" that is, I was instrumental to protect him, and give him success in his wars, and, after he had conquered Babylon, to confirm him in his resolution to release the Jews, which it is likely met with much opposition. Thus by the angel, and at the request of the watcher, the golden head was broken, and the axe laid to the root of the tree. Note, We must acknowledge the hand of God in the strengthening of those that are friends to the church for the service they are to do it, and confirming them in their good resolutions. And herein he useth the ministry of angels more than we are aware of. And the many instances we have known of God's care of his church formerly encourageth us to depend upon him in farther straits and difficulties.

Secondly. He foretells the reign of four Persian kings; ver. 2, "Now I will shew thee the truth," that is, the true meaning of the visions of the great image, and of the four beasts, and expound in plain terms what was before represented by dark types. 1. There shall stand up three kings in Persia, besides Darius, in whose reign this prophecy is dated, *ch.* x. 1. Mr. Broughton make these three to be Cyrus, Artaxasta or Artaxerxes, called by the Greeks Cambyses, and Ahasuerus, that married Esther, called Darius son of Hystaspes. To these three the Persians gave these attributes: Cyrus was a father, Cambyses a master, and Darius a hoarder up; so Herodotus. 2. There shall be a fourth, "far richer than them all," namely, Xerxes, of whose wealth the Greek authors take notice. By his strength, that is, his vast army, consisting of eight hundred thousand men at least, and his riches, with which he maintained and paid that vast army, he stirred up all against the realm of Greece. Xerxes's expedition against Greece is famous in history, and his shameful defeat that he met with. He that, when he went out, was the terror of Greece, in his return was the scorn of Greece. Daniel needed not be told what disappointment he would meet with, for he was a hinderer of the building of the temple; but soon after, about thirty years after the first return from captivity, Darius, a young king, revived the building of the temple, owning the hand of God against his predecessors for hindering it, *Ezr.* vi. 7.

Thirdly. He foretells Alexander's conquests, and the partition of his kingdom, ver. 3. He is the mighty king that shall stand up against the kings of Persia, and he shall "rule with great dominion" over many kingdoms, and with a despotic power, for he shall "do according to his will," and undo likewise, which, by the law of the Medes and Persians, their kings could not. When Alexander, after he had conquered Asia, would be worshipped as a god, then this was fulfilled, that he "shall do according to his will." That is God's prerogative, but was his pretension. But, ver. 4, his kingdom shall soon be broken, and divided into four parts, but not to his posterity; nor shall any of his successors reign according to his dominion; none of them shall have such large territories, nor such an absolute power. His kingdom was "plucked for others besides those" of his own family. Arideus, his brother, was made king of Macedonia; Olympias, Alexander's mother, killed him, and poisoned Alexander's two sons, Hercules and Alexander. Thus was his family rooted out by its own hands. See what decaying, perishing things worldly pomp and possessions are, and the powers by which they are got. Never was the vanity of the world and its greatest things shewn more evidently than in the story of Alexander; "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

5 And the king of the south shall be strong, and *one* of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion *shall be* a great dominion. 6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in *these* times. 7 But out of a branch of her roots shall *one* stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: 8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, *and* with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue *more* years than the king of the north. 9 So the king of the south shall come into *his* kingdom, and shall return into his own land. 10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and *one* shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, *even* to his fortress. 11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, *even* with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. 12 *And* when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down *many* ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened *by it.* 13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches. 14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. 15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither *shall there be any* strength to withstand. 16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed. 17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand *on his side,* neither be for him. 18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without

his own reproach he shall cause *it* to turn upon him. 19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found. 20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes *in* the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

Here is foretold,

First. The rise and power of two great kingdoms, out of the remains of Alexander's conquests, ver. 5. 1. The kingdom of Egypt, which was made considerable by Ptolemæus Lagus, one of Alexander's captains, whose successors were from him called the Lagidæ. He is called the king of the south, that is, Egypt, named here, ver. 8, 42, 43. The countries that at first belonged to Ptolemy are reckoned to be Egypt, Phœnicia, Arabia, Libya, Ethiopia, &c. *Theocr. Idyl.* 17. 2. The kingdom of Syria, which was set up by Seleucus Nicanor, or, the Conqueror. He was one of Alexander's princes, and became stronger than the other, and had the greatest dominion of all, was the most powerful of all Alexander's successors; it was said he had no less than seventy-two kingdoms under him. Both these were strong against Judah, the affairs of which are particularly eyed in this prediction. Ptolemy, soon after he gained Egypt, invaded Judæa, and took Jerusalem, on a sabbath, pretending a friendly visit. Seleucus also gave disturbance to Judæa.

Secondly. The fruitless attempt to unite these two kingdoms, as iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image, ver. 6. At "the end of certain years," above seventy after Alexander's death, the Lagidæ and the Seleucidæ shall associate, but not in sincerity. Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, shall marry his daughter Berenice to Antiochus Theos, king of Syria, who had already a wife called Laodice. Berenice shall come to the king of the north, to make an agreement, but it shall not hold; "She shall not retain the power of the arm." Neither she nor her posterity shall establish themselves in the kingdom of the north; neither shall Ptolemy her father nor Antiochus her husband (betwixt whom there was to be a great alliance) stand, nor their arm; but "she shall be given up, and they that brought her," all that projected that unhappy marriage between her and Antiochus, which occasioned so much mischief, instead of producing a coalition between the northern and southern crowns, as was hoped. Antiochus divorced Berenice, took his former wife Laodice again, who soon after poisoned him, procured Berenice and her son to be murdered, and set up her own son by Antiochus to be king, who was called Seleucus Callinicus.

Thirdly. A war between the two kingdoms, ver. 7, 8. A branch from the same root with Berenice shall "stand up in his estate." Ptolemæus Euergetes, the son and successor of Ptolemæus Philadelphus, shall come with an army against Seleucus Callinicus, king of Syria, to avenge his sister's quarrel, and shall prevail. And he shall carry away a rich booty both of persons and goods into Egypt, and shall "continue more years than the king of the north." This Ptolemy reigned forty-six years; and Justin saith, if his own affairs had not called him home, he had in this war made himself master of the whole kingdom of Syria. But, ver. 9, he shall be forced to "come into his kingdom, and return into his own land," to keep peace there, so that he can no longer carry on the war abroad. Note, It is very common for a treacherous peace to end in a bloody war.

Fourthly. The long and busy reign of Antiochus the Great, king of Syria. Seleucus Callinicus, that king of the north who was overcome, ver. 7, and died miserably, left two sons, Seleucus and Antiochus; these are his sons, that is, the sons of the king of the north that shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces to recover what their father lost, ver. 10. But Seleucus the elder, being weak, and unable to rule his army, was poisoned by his friends, and reigned only two years; and his brother Antiochus succeeded him, who reigned thirty-seven years, and was called the Great. And therefore the angel, though he speaks of sons at first, goes on with the account of one only, who was but fifteen years old when he began to reign, and he shall "certainly come and overflow" and overrun, and shall be restored at length to what his father lost.

1. The king of the south, in this war, shall at first have great success. Ptolemæus Philopater, moved with indignation at the indignities done him by Antiochus the Great, shall (though otherwise a slothful prince) "come forth and fight with him;" and shall bring a vast army into the field of seventy thousand foot, and five thousand horse, and seventy-three elephants. And the other multitude (that is, the army of Antiochus, consisting of sixty-two thousand foot, and six thousand horse, and one hundred and two elephants,) shall be given into his hand. Polybius, who lived with Scipio, has given a particular account of this battle of Raphia. Ptolemæus Philopater, having gained this victory, grew very insolent; his heart was lifted up, then he went into the temple of God at Jerusalem, and, in defiance of the law, entered the most holy place, for which God has a controversy with him, so that, though he shall cast down many myriads, yet he shall not be strengthened by it, so as to secure his interest. For,

2. The king of the north, Antiochus the Great, shall return with a greater army than the former; and at the end of times, that is, years, he shall come often with a mighty army, and great riches, against the king of the south, namely, Ptolemæus Epiphanes, who succeeded Ptolemæus Philopater his father, when he was a child, which gave advantage to Antiochus the Great. In this expedition he had some powerful allies; ver. 14, "Many shall stand up against the king of the south." Philip of Macedon was confederate with Antiochus against the king of Egypt, and Scopas his general, whom he sent into Syria. Antiochus routed him, and destroyed a great part of his army; whereupon the Jews willingly yielded to Antiochus, joined with him, and helped him to besiege Ptolemæus's garrisons: then "the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision," to help forward the accomplishment of this prophecy, "but they shall fall," and shall come to nothing, ver. 14. Hereupon, ver. 15, the king of the north, this same Antiochus Magnus, shall carry on his designs against the king of the south another way. 1st. He shall surprise his strongholds. All that he has got in Syria and Samaria, and the arms of the south, all the power of the king of Egypt, shall not be able to withstand him. See how dubious and variable the turns of the scale of war are; like buying and selling, it is winning and losing; sometimes one side gets the better, and sometimes the other, yet neither by chance. It is not, as they call it, the fortune of war; but according to the will and counsel of God, who brings some low, and raiseth others up. 2nd. He shall make himself master of the land of Judæa, ver. 16. "He that comes against him," that is, the king of the north, shall carry all before him, and do what he pleases, and he shall stand, and get footing in the glorious land, so the land of Israel was, and by his hand it was wasted and consumed, for with the spoil of that good land he victualled his vast army. The land of Judæa lay between these two potent kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, so that in all the struggles between them that was sure to suffer, for to it they both bore ill-will. Yet some read this, 'By his hand it shall be perfected;' as if it intimated that the land of Judæa being taken under the protection of this Antiochus, shall flourish, and be in better condition than it had been. 3rd. He shall still push on his war against the king of Egypt, and "set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom," taking advantage of the infancy of Ptolemy Epiphanes, and the upright ones, that is, many of the pious Israelites, siding with him, ver. 17. And in prosecution of his design, he shall give him his daughter Cleopatra to wife, designing, as Saul, in giving his daughter to David, that she should be a snare to him, and do him a mischief; but she shall not stand on her father's side, nor be for him, but for her husband, and so that plot failed him. 4th. His war with the Romans is here foretold, ver. 18. He shall "turn his face to the isles," ver. 18; the isles of the Gentiles, *Gen.* x. 5, Greece and Italy. He took many of the isles about the Hellespont, Rhodes, Samos, Delos, &c. which, by war or treason, he made himself master of; but a prince, or state, so some, even the Roman senate, or a leader, even the Roman general, shall return his reproach, with which he abused the Romans, upon himself, or, shall make his shame rest on himself, and without his own shame, or any disgrace to himself, shall pay him again. This was fulfilled when the two Scipios were sent with an army against Antiochus. Hannibal was then with him, and advised him to invade Italy, and waste it as he had done; but he did not take his advice, and Scipio joined battle with him and gave him a total defeat, though Antiochus had seventy thousand men and the Romans but thirty thousand. Thus he caused "the reproach offered by him to cease." 5th. His fall. When he was totally routed by the Romans, and was forced to quit all he had in Europe to them, and had a very heavy tribute exacted from him, he turned to his own land, and, not knowing which way to raise money to pay his tribute, he plundered a temple of Jupiter, which so incensed his own subjects against him that they set upon him and killed him, so he was overthrown and fell, and was no more found, ver. 19. 6th. His next successor, ver. 20. There rose up one in his place, "a raiser of taxes," a sender forth of the extortioner, or extorter. This character was remarkably answered in Seleucus Philopater, the elder son of Antiochus the Great, who was a great oppressor of his own subjects, and exacted abundance of money from them; and, when he was told he would thereby lose his friends, he said he knew no better friend he had than money. He likewise attempted to rob the temple at Jerusalem, which this seems especially to refer to. "But within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle," but poisoned by Heliodorus, one of his own servants, when he had reigned but twelve years, and done nothing remarkable.

From all this let us learn, 1. That God in his providence sets up one, and pulls down another, as he pleaseth; advanceth some from low beginnings, and depresseth others that were very high. Some have called great men the football of fortune; or, rather, they are the tools of providence. 2. This world is full of wars and fightings, which come from men's lusts, and make it a theatre of sin and misery. 3. All the changes and revolutions of states and kingdoms, and every event, even the most minute and contingent, were plainly and perfectly foreseen by the God of heaven, and to him nothing is new. 4. No word of God shall fall to the ground; but what he hath designed, what he hath declared, shall infallibly come to pass, and even the sins of men shall be made to serve his purpose, and contribute to the bringing of his counsels to birth in their season; and yet God is not the author of sin. 5. That, for the right understanding of some parts of Scripture, it is necessary that heathen authors be consulted, which give light to the Scripture, and shew the accomplishment of what is there foretold. We have, therefore, reason to bless God for the human learning with which many have done great service to Divine truths.

21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. 22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23 And after the league *made* with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. 24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do *that* which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: *yea,* and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. 25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain. 27 And both these kings' hearts *shall be* to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end *shall be* at the time appointed. 28 Then shall he return into his

land with great riches; and his heart *shall be* against the holy covenant; and he shall do *exploits*, and return to his own land. 29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. 30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore

SHIPS OF CHITTIM.

he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. 31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily *sacrifice*, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. 32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do *exploits*. 33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, *many* days. 34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. 35 And *some* of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make *them* white, *even* to the time of the end: because *it is* yet for a time appointed. 36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. 37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge *and* increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain. 40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. 41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, *even* Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians *shall be* at his steps. 44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. 45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

All this is a prophecy of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn spoken of before, *ch.* viii. 9, a sworn enemy to the Jewish religion, and a bitter persecutor of those that adhered to it. What troubles the Jews met with in the reigns of the Persian kings were not so particularly foretold to Daniel as these, because then they had living prophets with them, Haggai and Zachariah, to encourage them; but these troubles in the days of Antiochus were foretold, because before that time prophecy would cease, and they would find it necessary to have recourse to the written word. Some things in this prediction concerning Antiochus are alluded to in the New Testament predictions of the antichrist, especially ver. 36, 37. And as it is usual with the prophets, when they foretell the prosperity of the Jewish church, to make use of such expressions as were applicable to the kingdom of Christ, and insensibly to slide into a prophecy of that, so, when they foretell the troubles of the church, they make use of such expressions as have a farther reference to the kingdom of the antichrist, the rise and ruin of that. Now, concerning Antiochus, the angel foretells here,

First. His character. He shall be a vile person. He called himself Epiphanes, the illustrious; but his character was the reverse of his surname. The heathen writers describe him to be an odd-humoured man, rude and boisterous, base and sordid. He would sometimes steal out of the court into the city, and herd himself with any scoundrel company, *incognito*. He made himself a companion of the common sort, and the basest strangers that came to town. He had the most unaccountable whims, so that some took him to be silly, others to be mad; hence he was called Epimanes, the madman. He is called a vile person, for he had been a long time a hostage at Rome for the fidelity of his father, when the Romans had subdued him. And it was agreed that, when the other hostages were exchanged, he should continue a prisoner at large.

Secondly. His accession to the crown. By a trick he got his elder brother's son, Demetrius, to be sent a hostage to Rome, in exchange for him, contrary to the cartel; and his elder brother being made away by Heliodorus, ver. 20, he took the kingdom. The states of Syria did not give it him, ver. 21, because they knew it belonged to his elder brother's son, nor did he get it by the sword, but came in peaceably, pretending to reign for his brother's son, Demetrius, then a hostage at Rome. But with the help of Eumenes and Attalus, neighbouring princes, he gained an interest in the people, and by flatteries obtained the kingdom, and established himself in it, and crushed Heliodorus, who made head against him "with the arms of a flood." They that opposed him were overflown and broken before him, even the prince of the covenant, his nephew, the rightful heir, whom he pretended to covenant with, that he would resign to him whenever he should return, ver. 22. But, ver. 23, "after the league made with him, he shall work deceitfully," as one whose avowed maxim it is, that princes ought not to be bound by their word any longer than it is for their interest. And with a small people, that at first cleave to him, he shall become strong, and, ver. 24, "he shall enter peaceably upon the fattest places" of the kingdom of Syria, and, very unlike his predecessors, shall scatter among the people the prey, and the spoil, and riches, to insinuate himself into their affections; but at the same time he shall "forecast his devices against the strongholds," to make himself master of them, so that his generosity shall last but for a time. When he has got the garrisons into his hands he will scatter his spoil no more, but rule by force, as those commonly do that come in by fraud. He that comes in like a fox reigns like a lion. Some understand these verses of his first expedition into Egypt, when he came not as an enemy, but as a friend and guardian to the young king Ptolemæus Philometor, and therefore brought with him but few followers, yet those stout men, and faithful to his interest, whom he placed in divers of the strongholds in Egypt, thereby making himself master of them.

Thirdly. His war with Egypt, which was his second expedition thither. This is described, ver. 25—27, Antiochus shall "stir up his power and courage" against Ptolemæus Philometor, king of Egypt. Ptolemy thereupon "shall be stirred up to battle" against him, shall come against him with "a very great and mighty army;" but Ptolemy, though he has such a vast army, shall not be able to stand before him, for Antiochus's army shall overthrow his, and overpower it, and great multitudes of the Egyptian army shall fall down slain. And no marvel, for the king of Egypt shall be betrayed by his own counsellors. "They that feed of the portion of his meat," that eat of his bread, and live upon him, being bribed by Antiochus, shall "forecast devices against him," and even they "shall destroy him." And what fence is there against such treachery? After the battle a treaty of peace shall be set on foot, and these two kings shall meet at one council board, to adjust the articles of peace

between them, but they shall neither of them be sincere in it; for they shall in their pretences and promises of amity and friendship lie to one another, for their hearts shall be at the same time to do one another all the mischief they can. And then no marvel it shall not prosper. The peace shall not last; but the end of it shall be at the time appointed in the Divine providence, and then the war shall break out again, as a sore that is only skinned over.

Fourthly. Another expedition against Egypt. From the former he returned "with great riches," ver. 28; and therefore took the first occasion to invade Egypt again at the time appointed by the Divine providence, two years after, in the eighth year of his reign, ver. 29. He shall come towards the south. But this attempt shall not succeed as the two former did, nor shall he gain his point as he had done before once and again, for, ver. 30, "The ships of Chittim shall come against him;" that is, the navy of the Romans, or only ambassadors from the Romans enate, who came in two ships. Ptolemæus Philometor, king of Egypt, being now in a strict alliance with the Romans, craved their aid against Antiochus, who had besieged him and his mother Cleopatra in the city of Alexandria. The Roman senate thereupon sent an embassy to Antiochus, to command him to raise the siege, which, when he desired some time to consider of, and consult with his friends about, Popilius, one of the ambassadors, with his staff drew a circle about him, and told him, as one having authority, he should give a positive answer before he came out of that circle; whereupon, fearing the Roman power, he was forced immediately to give orders for the raising of the siege, and the retreat of his army out of Egypt. So Livy and others relate the story which this prophecy refers to: he shall be grieved and return; for it was a great vexation to him to be forced to yield thus.

Fifthly. His rage and cruel practices against the Jews. This is that part of his government, or misgovernment rather, which is most enlarged upon in this prediction. In his return from his expedition into Egypt, which he prophesied of, ver. 28, he did exploits against the Jews, in the 6th year of his reign; then he spoiled the city and temple; but the most terrible storm was in his return from Egypt two years after, prophesied of ver. 20. Then he took Judæa in his way home, and, because he could not gain his point in Egypt, by reason of the Romans interposing, he wreaked his revenge upon the poor Jews, who gave him no provocation, but had greatly provoked God to permit him to do it, *ch.* viii. 23.

1. He had a rooted antipathy to the Jews' religion. His heart was "against the holy covenant," ver. 20; and, ver. 30, he had "indignation against the holy covenant;" that covenant of peculiarity by which the Jews were incorporated a people distinct from all other nations, and dignified above them. He hated the law of Moses, and the worship of the true God, and was vexed at the privileges of the Jewish nation, and the promises made to them. Note, That which is the hope and joy of the people of God is the envy of their neighbours, and that is the holy covenant. Esau hated Jacob because he had got the blessing. And those that are strangers to the covenant are often enemies to it.

2. He carried on his malicious designs against the Jews by the assistance of some perfidious, apostate Jews; he kept up "intelligence with them that forsook the holy covenant," ver. 30; some of the Jews that were false to their religion, and introduced the customs of the heathen, with whom they made a covenant. See the fulfilling of this, 1 *Mac.* i. 11—15, where it is expressly said concerning those renegado Jews, that they "made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant." And, 2 *Mac.* iv. 9, we read of Jason, the brother of Onias the high priest, who, by the appointment of Antiochus, set up a school at Jerusalem "for the training up of youth in the fashions of the heathen." And 2 *Mac.* iv. 23, &c., of Menelaus, who fell in with the interests of Antiochus, and was the man that helped him into Jerusalem now in his last return from Egypt. We read much in the book of the *Maccabees* of the mischief done to the Jews by these treacherous men of their own nation, Jason, and Menelaus, and their party. These upon all occasions he made use of. "Such as do wickedly against the covenant," that throw up their religion and comply with the heathen, he shall "corrupt with flatteries," to harden them in their apostasy, and to make use of them as decoys to draw in others, ver. 32. Note, It is not strange if those who do not live up to their religion, but in their conversations "do wickedly against the covenant," are easily corrupted by flatteries to quit their religion. They that make shipwreck of a good conscience will soon make shipwreck of the faith.

3. He profaned the temple. "Arms stand on his part," ver. 31; not only his own army which he now brought from Egypt, but a great party of deserters from the Jewish religion that joined with them, and they polluted the sanctuary of strength, not only the holy city, but the temple. The story of this we have, 1 *Mac.* i. 21, &c., "They entered proudly into the sanctuary, took away the golden altar, and the candlestick," &c.; and therefore, ver. 25, "There was a great mourning in Israel, the princes and elders mourned," &c. And 2 *Mac.* v. 15, &c., "Antiochus went into the most holy temple; Menelaus, that traitor to the laws, and to his own country, being his guide." Antiochus, having resolved to bring all about him to be of his religion, took away the daily sacrifice, ver. 31. Some observe that the word *tammidh*, which signifies no more than "daily," is only here and in the parallel place used for the daily sacrifice, as if there were a designed liberty left to supply it either with sacrifice, which was suppressed by Antiochus, or with gospel worship, which is suppressed by the antichrist. Then he "set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar," 1 *Mac.* i. 54, even an idol altar, ver. 59, and called the temple the temple of Jupiter Olympus, 2 *Mac.* vi. 2.

4. He persecuted those who retained their integrity. Though there are many that forsake the covenant, and do wickedly against it, yet there is a people that do know their God, and retain the knowledge of him, and "they shall be strong and do exploits," ver. 32; when others yield to the tyrant's demands, and surrender their consciences to his impositions, they bravely keep their ground, resist the temptation, and make the tyrant himself ashamed of his attempt upon them. Good old Eleazar, one of the principal scribes, when he had swine's flesh thrust into his mouth, bravely spit it out again, though he knew he must be tormented to death for so doing; and was so, 2 *Mac.* vi. 19. The mother and her seven sons were put to death for adhering to their religion, 2 *Mac.* vii. This might well be called doing exploits; for to choose suffering rather than sin is a great exploit. And it was by faith, by being strong in faith, that they did those exploits, that they "were tortured, not accepting deliverance," as the apostle speaks, probably with reference to that story, *Heb.* xi. 35. Or it may refer to the military courage and achievements of Judas Maccabæus and others in opposition to Antiochus. Note, The right knowledge of God is and will be the strength of the soul, and in the strength of that gracious souls do exploits. They that know his name will put their trust in him, and by that trust will do great things. Now, concerning this people that knew their God, we are here told,

1st. That "they shall instruct many," ver. 33. They shall make it their business to shew others what they have learned themselves of the difference between truth and falsehood, good and evil. Note, They that have the knowledge of God themselves should communicate their knowledge to those about them; and this spiritual charity must be extensive,—they must instruct many. Some understand this of a society newly erected for the propagating of Divine knowledge, called Assideans, godly men, pietists, so the name signifies, that were both knowing and zealous in the law; these instructed many. Note, In times of persecution and apostasy, which are trying times, those that have knowledge ought to make use of it for the strengthening and establishing of others. They that understand aright themselves ought to do what they can to bring others to understand; for knowledge is a talent that must be traded with. Or, they shall instruct many by their perseverance in their duty, and their patient suffering for it. Good examples instruct many, and with many are the most powerful instructions.

2nd. They that fall by the cruelty of Antiochus shall be put to the torture, and put to death by his rage. Though they are so excellent and intelligent themselves, and so useful and serviceable to others, yet Antiochus shall shew them no mercy; but 'they shall fall for some days.' So it may be read, *Rev.* ii. 10, "Thou shalt have tribulation ten days." We read much in the books of the *Maccabees* of Antiochus's barbarous usage of the pious Jews, how many he slew in wars, and how many he murdered in cold blood. Women were put to death for having their children circumcised, and their "infants hanged about their neck," 1 *Mac.* i. 60, 61. But why did God suffer this? How can this be reconciled with the justice and goodness of God? I answer, Very well, if we consider what it was that God aimed at in this, ver. 35, "Some of them of understanding shall fall;" but it shall be for the good of the church, and for their own spiritual benefit, "It shall be to try them, and to purge, and to make them white." They needed these afflictions themselves. The best have their spots, which must be washed off, their dross, which must be purged out; and their troubles, particularly their share in the public troubles, help to do this, being sanctified to them by the grace of God. They are means of mortifying their corruptions, weaning them from the world, and awakening them to greater seriousness and diligence in religion; they try them, as silver in the furnace is refined from its dross; they purge them, as wheat in the barn is winnowed from the chaff; and "make them white," as cloth by the fuller is cleared from its spots: see 1 *Pet.* i. 7. Their sufferings for righteousness' sake would try and purge the nation of the Jews, would convince them of the truth, excellency, and power of that holy religion which these understanding men died for their adherence to. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church; it is precious blood, and not a drop of it should be shed but upon such a valuable consideration.

3rd. The cause of religion, though it be thus run upon, yet it shall not be run down. "When they shall fall" they shall not be utterly cast down, but "they shall be holpen with a little help," ver. 34. Judas Maccabæus and his brethren, and a few with them, shall make head against the tyrant, and assert the injured cause of their religion; they "pulled down the idolatrous altars, circumcised the children that they found uncircumcised, recovered the law out of the hand of the Gentiles, and the work prospered in their hands," 1 *Mac.* ii. 45. Note, Those that stand by the cause of religion when it is threatened and struck at, though they may not presently be delivered and made victorious, yet they shall have present help. And a little help must not be despised, but when times are very bad we must be thankful for some reviving. It is likewise foretold that "many shall cleave to them with flatteries;" when they see the Maccabees prosper some Jews shall join with them that are no true friends to religion, but only will pretend friendship, either with design to betray them or in hope to rise with them; but the fiery trial (ver. 35) will separate between the precious and the vile, and by it they that are perfect will be made manifest, and they that are not.

4th. Though these troubles may continue long, yet they will have an end. They are for a time appointed, a limited time fixed in the Divine counsels. This warfare shall be accomplished. Hitherto the power of the enemy shall come, and no farther; here shall its "proud waves be stayed."

5. He grew very proud, insolent, and profane; and, being puffed up with his conquests, bade defiance to heaven, and trampled upon every thing that was sacred, ver. 36, &c. And here, some think, begins a prophecy of the antichrist, the papal kingdom; and it is plain, St. Paul, in his prophecy of the rise and reign of the man of sin, alludes to this here, 2 *Thes.* ii. 4, which shews that Antiochus was a type and figure of that enemy, as Babylon also was; but this, being joined in a continued discourse with the foregoing prophecies concerning Antiochus, to me it seems probable that to him it principally refers, and in him had its primary accomplishment, and has reference to the other only by way of accommodation.

1st. He shall impiously dishonour the God of Israel, the only living and true God, called here the God of gods. He shall, in defiance of him and his authority, "do according to his will," against his people and his holy religion; he shall exalt himself above him, as Sennacherib did, and shall "speak marvellous things" against him, and against his laws and institutions. This was fulfilled when Antiochus forbade sacrifice to be offered in God's temple, and ordered the sabbaths to be profaned, the sanctuary and the holy people to be polluted, &c., to "the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances," and this upon pain of death, 1 *Mac.* i. 45.

2nd. He shall proudly put contempt upon all other gods, shall "magnify himself above every God," even the gods of the nations. Antiochus wrote to his own kingdom, that every one should leave the gods he had worshipped, and worship such as he ordered, contrary to the practice of all the conquerors that went before him; 1 *Mac.* i. 41, 42, "And all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king." As fond as they were of their gods, they did not think them worth suffering for; but, their gods being idols, it was all alike to them what gods they worshipped. Antiochus did not regard any god, but "magnified himself above all," ver. 37. He was so proud that he thought himself above the condition of a mortal man, that he could "command the waves of the sea, and reach to the stars of heaven," as his insolence and haughtiness is expressed, 2 *Mac.* ix. 8, 10. Thus he carried all before him, till the indignation was accomplished, ver. 36; till he had run his length, and filled up the measure of his iniquity: for that that is determined shall be done, and nothing more, nothing short.

3rd. He shall, contrary to the way of the heathen, disregard the god of his fathers, ver. 37. Though an affection to the religion of their ancestors was among the heathen almost as natural to them as "the desire of women," for, if you search through "the isles of Chittim," you will not find an instance of a nation that has changed their gods, *Jer.* ii. 10, 11, yet Antiochus shall not regard the god of his fathers; he made laws to abolish the religion of his country, and to bring in the idols of the Greeks. And though his predecessors had honoured the God of Israel, and given great gifts to the temple of Jerusalem, 2 *Mac.* iii. 2, 3, he offered the greatest indignities to God and his temple. His not regarding the desire of women may speak either his barbarous cruelty,—he shall spare no age or sex, no, not the tender ones,—or his unnatural lusts, or, in general, his contempt of every thing which men of honour have a concern for. Or, it might be accomplished in something we meet not with in history. Its being joined to his not regarding the god of his fathers intimates that the idolatries of his country had in them more of the gratifications of the flesh than those of other countries, (Lucian has written of the Syrian goddesses,) and yet that would not prevail to keep him to them.

4th. He shall set up an unknown god, a new god; ver. 38, "In his estate," in the room of the gods of his fathers, Apollo and Diana, deities of pleasure, he shall "honour the god of forces," a supposed deity of power, "a god whom his fathers knew not," nor worshipped, because he will be thought in wisdom and strength to excel his fathers. He shall honour this god "with gold, and silver, and precious stones," thinking nothing too good for the god he had taken a fancy to. This seems to be Jupiter Olympus, known among the Phœnicians by the name of Baal-semen, the Lord of heaven, but never introduced among the Syrians till Antiochus did it. Thus shall he do "in the most strong holds," in the temple of Jerusalem, which is called "the sanctuary of strength," ver. 31, and here the 'fortresses of munitions;' there he shall set up the image of this strange god. Some read it, 'He shall commit the munitions of strength,' or of the most strong god, that is, the city Jerusalem, to 'a strange god;' he put it under the protection and government of Jupiter Olympus. This god he shall not only acknowledge, but shall "increase with glory," by setting his image even upon God's altar. And he shall cause them that minister to this idol "to rule over many;" shall put them into places of power and trust, and they shall "divide the land for gain," shall be maintained richly out of the profits of the country. Some, by the Mahuzzim, or "god of forces," that Antiochus shall worship, understand money, which is said to answer all things, and which is the great idol of worldly people.

Now here is very much that is applicable to the man of sin: he exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; magnifies himself above all; his flatterers call him 'our Lord God the pope.' By forbidding marriage, and magnifying the single life, he pretends not to regard the desire of women, and honours the god of forces, the god Mahuzzim, or strongholds, that is, saints and angels, whom his followers take for their protectors, as the heathen did of old their demons. These they make presidents of several countries, &c., these they honour with vast treasures dedicated to them; and therein the learned Mr. Mede thinks this prophecy was fulfilled, and that it is referred to 1 *Tim.* iv. 1, 2.

5th. Here seems to be another expedition into Egypt, or at least a struggle with Egypt. The Romans had tied him up from invading Ptolemy, but now that "king of the south pusheth at him," ver. 40, makes an attempt upon some of his territories; whereupon Antiochus, the "king of the north, comes against him like a whirlwind," with incredible swiftness and fury, "with chariots and horses, and many ships," a great force; he shall come through countries, "and shall overthrow and pass over." In this flying march "many countries shall be overthrown" by him; and he shall enter into the glorious land, the land of Israel; it is the same word that is translated the pleasant land, *ch.* viii. 9. He shall make dreadful work among the nations thereabout, yet some shall escape his fury, particularly Edom and Moab, and "the chief of the children of Ammon," ver. 41. He did not put these countries under contribution, because they had joined with him against the Jews; but especially the land of Egypt shall not escape, but he will quite beggar that, so bare will he strip it. This some reckon his fourth and last expedition against Egypt, in the tenth or eleventh year of his reign, under pretence of assisting the younger brother of Ptolemæus Philometor against him. We read not of any great slaughter made in this expedition, but great plunder, for it should seem that was what he came for; "He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and all the precious things of Egypt," ver. 43. Polybius, in *Athenæus*, relates that Antiochus, having got together abundance of wealth by spoiling young Philometor, and breaking league with him, and by the contributions of his friends, bestowed a vast deal upon a triumph, in imitation of Paulus Æmilius, and describes the extravagance of it. Here we are told how he got that money which he spent so profusely. Notice is here taken likewise of the use he made of the Libyans and Ethiopians, who bordered upon Egypt; they were at his steps, that is, he had them at his foot, had them at his beck, and they made inroads upon Egypt to serve him.

6. Here is a prediction of the fall and ruin of Antiochus. As before, *ch.* viii. 25, when he is in the height of his honour, flushed with victory, and laden with spoils, "tidings out of the east and out of the north," that is, out of the north-east, shall trouble him, ver. 44. Or, he shall have intelligence, both from the eastern and northern parts, that the king of Parthia is invading his kingdom. This obliged him to drop the enterprises he had in hand, and to go against the Persians and Parthians that were revolting from him. And this vexed him; for now he thought utterly to have ruined and extirpated the Jewish nation, when that expedition called him off in which he perished. This is explained by a passage in Tacitus, (though an impious one,) where he commends Antiochus for his attempt to take away the superstition of the Jews, and bring in the manners of the Greeks among them, (*ut teterrimam gentem in melius mutaret*,—'to meliorate an odious nation,') and laments that he was hindered from accomplishing it by the Parthian war. Now here is,

1st. The last effort of his rage against the Jews. When he finds himself perplexed and embarrassed in his affairs, he shall "go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many," ver. 44. The story of this we have, 1 *Mac.* iii. 27, &c.; what a rage Antiochus was in when he heard of the successes of Judas Maccabæus, and the orders he gave to Lysias to destroy Jerusalem. Then he planted "the tabernacles of his palace," or tents of his court, "between the seas," between the Great Sea and the Dead Sea. He set up his royal pavilion at Emmaus, near Jerusalem, in token that, though he could not be present himself, yet he gave full power to his captains to prosecute the war against the Jews with the utmost rigour. He placed his tent there, as if he had taken possession of "the glorious holy mountain," and called it his own. Note, When impiety grows very impudent we may see its ruin near.

2nd. His exit. "He shall come to his end, and none shall help him;" that is, God shall cut him off in the midst of his days, and none shall be able to prevent his fall. This is the same with that which was foretold, *ch.* viii. 25, "He shall be broken without hand," where we took a view of his miserable end. Note, When God's time is come to bring proud oppressors to their end, none shall be able to help them, nor, perhaps, inclined to help them; for those that covet to be feared by all, when they are in their grandeur, when they come to be in distress will find themselves loved by none; none will lend them so much as a hand or a prayer to help them; and, if the Lord do not help, who shall?

Of the kings that came after Antiochus nothing is here prophesied, for that was the most malicious, mischievous enemy to the church; that was a type of the son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming, and none shall help him.

CHAPTER XII.

After the prediction of the troubles of the Jews under Antiochus, prefiguring the troubles of the Christian church under the antichristian power, we have here, I. Comforts, and very precious ones, prescribed as cordials for the support of God's people in those times of trouble; and they are such as may indifferently serve both for those former times of trouble under Antiochus and those latter which were prefigured by them, ver. 1—4. II. A conference between Christ and an angel concerning the time of the continuance of these events, designed for Daniel's satisfaction, ver. 5—7. III. Daniel's inquiry for his own satisfaction, ver. 8; and the answer he received to that inquiry, ver. 9—13.

AND at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. 3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. 4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *even* to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

It is usual with the prophets, when they foretell the grievances of the church, to furnish it at the same time with proper antidotes, a remedy for every malady. And no relief is so sovereign, of such general application, so easily accommodated to every case, and of such powerful efficacy, as those that are fetched from Christ and the future state; thence the comforts here are fetched.

First. Jesus Christ shall appear his church's patron and protector. "At that time," when the persecution is at the hottest, "Michael shall stand up," ver. 1. The angel had told Daniel what a fast friend Michael was to the church, *ch.* x. 21. He all along shewed it in the upper world, the angels knew it; but now "Michael shall stand up" in his providence, and work deliverance for the Jews, "when he sees that their power is gone," *Deu.* xxxii. 36. Christ is that "great prince," for he is the "Prince of the kings of the earth," *Rev.* i. 5; and if he stand up for his church who can be against it? But this is not all; at that time, that is, soon after, Michael shall stand up for the working out our eternal salvation, the Son of God shall be incarnate, shall be manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Christ stood for the children of our people when he was made sin and a curse for them, stood in their stead as a sacrifice, bore the curse for them, to bear it from them. He stands for them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the veil; stands up for them, and stands their Friend. And after the destruction of antichrist, of whom Antiochus was a type, Christ shall "stand at the latter day upon the earth," shall appear for the complete redemption of all his.

Secondly. When Christ appears he will recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people. "There shall be a time of trouble;" threatening to all, but ruining to all the implacable enemies of God's kingdom among men; such trouble "as never was since there was a nation." Which is applicable, 1. To the destruction of Jerusalem, which Christ calls (perhaps with an eye to this here) such a "great tribulation as was not since the beginning of the world to this time," *Mat.* xxiv. 21. This the angel had spoken much of, *ch.* ix. 26, 27; and it happened about the same time that Christ set up the gospel kingdom in the world, that Michael our prince stands up. Or, 2. To the judgment of the great day, that day that shall burn as an oven, and consume the proud and all that do wickedly; that will be such a day of trouble as never was, to all those whom Michael our prince stands against.

Thirdly. He will work salvation for his people. "At that time thy people shall be delivered," delivered from the mischief and ruin designed them by Antiochus, even all those that were marked for preservation, that were "written among the living," *Isa.* iv. 3. When Christ comes into the world he will save his spiritual Israel from sin and hell, and will, at his second coming, complete their salvation, even the salvation of as many as were given him, as many as had "their names in the book of life," *Rev.* xx. 15. They were written there before the world, and will be found written there at the end of the world, when the books shall be opened.

Fourthly. There shall be a distinguishing resurrection of them that "sleep in the dust," ver. 2. 1. When God works deliverance for his people from persecution it is a kind of resurrection. So the Jews' release out of Babylon was represented in vision, *Eze.* xxxvii., and so the deliverance of the Jews from Antiochus, and other restorations of the church to outward prosperity; they were as life from the dead. Many of them that had long slept in the dust of obscurity and calamity shall then awake, some to that life, and honour, and comfort, that will be lasting, everlasting; but others, that when they return to their prosperity will return to their iniquity, to them it will be a resurrection to shame and contempt, for the prosperity of fools will but expose them and destroy them. 2. When, upon the appearing of Michael our prince, his Gospel is preached, many of them that "sleep in the dust," both Jews and Gentiles, shall be awakened by it, to take upon them a profession of religion, and shall rise out of their heathenism or Judaism; but, since there will be always a mixture of hypocrites with true saints, it is but some of them that are raised to life to whom the Gospel is a "savour of life unto life;" but others will be raised by it "to shame and contempt," to whom the Gospel of Christ will be a "savour of death unto death," and Christ himself set for their fall. The net of the Gospel incloseth both good and bad. But, 3. It must be meant of the general resurrection at the last day. "The multitude of them that sleep in the dust shall awake;" that is, all, which shall be a great many. Or, 'of them that sleep in the dust,' many shall arise to life, and many to shame. The Jews themselves understand this of the resurrection of the dead, at the end of time; and Christ seems to have had an eye to it when he speaks of the "resurrection of life," and the "resurrection of damnation," *Jno.* v. 29; and upon this the Jews are said by St. Paul to expect a resurrection of the dead both of "the just and of the unjust," *Acts* xxiv. 15. And nothing could come in more seasonably here; for, under Antiochus's persecution, some basely betrayed their religion, others bravely adhered to it. Now it would be a trouble to them, that when the storm was over they could neither reward the one nor punish the other; this, therefore, would be a satisfaction to them, that they would both be recom-

rensed according to their works in the resurrection. And the apostle, speaking of the pious Jews that suffered martyrdom under Antiochus, tells us that though they were tortured, yet they "accepted not deliverance," because they "hoped to obtain this better resurrection," *Heb.* xi. 35.

Fifthly. There shall be a glorious reward conferred on those that, in the day of trouble and distress, being themselves wise, did instruct many. Such were taken particular notice of in the prophecy of the persecution, *ch.* xi. 33, that they should do eminent service, and yet should "fall by the sword and by flame." Now if there were not another life after this, they would be "of all men most miserable," and therefore we are here assured that they shall be recompensed in "the resurrection of the just," ver. 3. "They that be wise," that be teachers, so some read it,—for teachers have need of wisdom, and they that have wisdom themselves should communicate it to others,—they "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament," shall shine in glory, heavenly glory, the glory of the upper world. And they that by the wisdom they have, and the instructions they give, are instrumental to turn any, especially to "turn many to righteousness," shall shine "as the stars for ever and ever." Note, 1. There is a glory reserved for all the saints in the future state, for all that are wise, wise for their souls and eternity. A man's wisdom now "makes his face to shine," *Eccl.* viii. 1; but much more in that state where its power shall be perfected and its services rewarded. 2. The more good any do in this world, especially to the souls of men, the greater will be their glory and reward in the other world. They that turn men to righteousness, that "turn sinners from the errors of their ways," and help to "save their souls from death," *Jas.* v. 6, will share in the glory of those they have helped to heaven, which will be a great addition to their own glory. 3. Ministers of Christ, that have obtained mercy of him to be faithful and successful, and so are made burning and shining lights in this world, shall shine very bright in the other world, shall shine as the stars. Christ is the sun, the Fountain of the lights, both of grace and glory. Ministers, as stars, shine in both, with a light derived from him, and a diminutive light in comparison of him; yet, to those that are earthen vessels, it will be a glory infinitely transcending their deserts. They shall shine as the stars of different magnitudes, some in lesser, others in greater lustre; but, whereas the day is coming when the stars shall fall from heaven as leaves in autumn, these stars shall shine for ever and ever, shall never set, never be eclipsed.

Sixthly. That this prophecy of those times, though sealed up now, would be of great use to them that should live then, ver. 4. Daniel must now "shut up the words, and seal the book," because the time would be long ere these things were accomplished. And that was some comfort, that the Jewish nation, though in the infancy of their return from Babylon, while they were few and weak, they met with obstructions in their work, yet they were not persecuted for their religion till a long time after, when they were grown to some strength and maturity. He must seal the book, because it would not be understood, and therefore would not be regarded, till the things contained in it were accomplished; but he must keep it safe as a treasure of great value laid up for the ages to come, to whom it would be of great service; for "many shall then run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Then this hid treasure shall be opened, and many shall search into it, and dig for the knowledge of it as for silver. They shall "run to and fro" to inquire out copies of it, shall collate them, and see that they be true and authentic; they shall read it over and over, shall meditate upon it and run it over in their minds; discurrent, they shall discourse of it, and talk it over among themselves, and compare notes about it, if by any means they may sift out the meaning of it; and thus "knowledge shall be increased." By consulting this prophecy on this occasion they shall be led to search other Scriptures, which shall contribute much to their advancement in useful knowledge; for "then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord," *Hos.* vi. 3. Those that would have their knowledge increased must take pains, must not sit still in slothfulness and bare wishes, but run to and fro,—must make use of all the means of knowledge, and improve all opportunities of getting their mistakes rectified, their doubts resolved, and their acquaintance with the things of God improved—to know more, and to know better, what they do know. And let us here see reason to hope that, 1. Those things of God which are now dark and obscure will hereafter be made clear and easy to be understood. Truth is the daughter of time; Scripture prophecies will be expounded by the accomplishment of them, and therefore they are given, and for that explication they are reserved. Therefore they are told us before, that when they do come to pass we may believe. 2. Those things of God which are despised, and neglected, and thrown by as useless, shall be brought into reputation, shall be found to be of great service, and be brought into request; for Divine revelation, however slighted for a time, shall be magnified and made honourable, and above all in the judgment of the great day, when the books shall be opened, and that book among the rest.

5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 6 And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, How long *shall it be to* the end of these wonders? 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that *it shall be* for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these *things* shall be finished. 8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things?* 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. 11 And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 Blessed *is* he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. 13 But go thou thy way till the end *be:* for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

Daniel had been made to foresee the amazing revolutions of states and kingdoms, as far as the Israel of God was concerned in them; in them he foresaw troublous times to the church, suffering, trying times, the prospect of which much affected him, and filled him with concern. Now there were two questions proper to be asked upon this head: When shall the end be? and, What shall the end be? These two questions are asked and answered here in the close of the book; and, though the comforts prescribed in the foregoing verses, one would think, were satisfactory enough, yet for more abundant satisfaction this is added.

First. The question, When the end shall be? is asked by an angel, ver. 5, 6. And, concerning this, we may observe,

1. Who it was that asked the question. Daniel had had a vision of Christ in his glory, the "man clothed in linen," *ch.* x. 5; but his discourse had been with the angel Gabriel, and now he looks and "behold other two," ver. 5, two angels that he had not seen before; one upon the bank of the river on one side, and the other on the other side, that, the river being between them, they might not whisper to one another, but what they said might be heard. Christ stood "on the waters of the river," ver. 6, "between the banks of Ulai;" it was therefore proper that the angels, his attendants, should stand on either bank, that they might be ready to go, one one way and the other the other way, as he should order them. These angels appeared, 1st. To adorn the vision, and make it the more illustrious, and to add to the glory of the Son of man, *Heb.* i. 6. Daniel had not seen them before, though it is probable they were there; but now, when they began to speak, he looked up and saw them, Note, The farther we look into the things of God, and the more we converse with them, the more we shall see of those things, and still new discoveries will be made us. They that know much, if they improve it, shall know more. 2nd. To confirm the discovery, that "out of the mouth of two or three witnesses" the word might be established; three angels appeared to Abraham. 3rd. To inform themselves, to hear and ask questions; for the mysteries of God's kingdom are things which the "angels desire to look into," 1 *Pet.* i. 12; and they are "known to the church," *Eph.* iii. 10. Now one of these two angels said, When shall the end be? Perhaps they both asked, first one and then the other, but Daniel heard only one.

2. To whom this question was put. To the man clothed in linen, of whom we read before, *ch.* x. 5. To Christ our great high priest, who "was upon the waters of the river," and whose spokesman or interpreter the angel Gabriel had all this while been. This river was Hiddekel, *ch.* x. 4, the same with Tigris, the place whereabout many of the events prophesied of would happen; there, therefore, is the scene laid. Hiddekel was mentioned as one of the rivers that watered the garden of Eden, *Gen.* ii. 14; fitly, therefore, doth Christ stand upon that river, for by him the trees in the paradise of God are watered. Waters signify people, and so his standing upon the waters notes his dominion over all; he "sits upon the flood," *Ps.* xxix. 10. He "treads upon the waters of the sea," *Job* ix. 8. And Christ, to shew that this was he in the days of the flesh, walked upon the water," *Mat.* xiv. 25. He was 'above the waters of the river,' so some read it. He appeared in the air over the river.

3. What the question was. "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" Daniel would not ask the question, because he would not pry into what was hidden, nor seem inquisitive concerning the times and the seasons, which the Father has "put in his own power," *Acts* i. 7; but, that he might have the satisfaction of the answer, the angel put the question in his hearing. Our Lord Jesus sometimes answered the questions which his disciples were afraid or ashamed to ask, *Jno.* xvi. 19. The angel asked, as one concerned, "How long shall it be?" What is the time prefixed, in the Divine counsels, for the end of these wonders? that is, these suffering, trying times, that are to pass over the people of God. Note, 1st. The troubles of the church are the wonder of angels. They admire that God will suffer his church to be thus afflicted, and yet what good he will do his church by his afflictions. 2nd. Good angels know no more of things to come than God is pleased to discover to them, much less do evil angels. 3rd. The holy angels in heaven are concerned for the church on earth, and lay to heart its afflictions; how much more, then, should we, who are more immediately related to it, and have so much of our peace in its peace! 4th. What answer was returned to it, by him who is indeed the numberer of secrets, and knows things to come.

First. Here is a more general account given of the continuance of these troubles to the angel that made the inquiry, ver. 7, that they shall continue "for a time, times and a half," that is, a year, two years, and half a year, as was before intimated, *ch.* vii. 25, but the one half of a prophetical week. Some understand it indefinitely, a certain time for an uncertain; it shall be for a time, that is, a considerable time, for times, a longer time yet, double to what it was thought at first it would be, and yet, indeed, it shall be but half a time, or a part of a time; when it is over it shall not seem half so much as was feared. But it is rather to be taken for a certain time; we meet with it in the *Revelation*, under the title, sometimes, of three days and a half, put for three years and a half; sometimes forty-two months, sometimes one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Now this determination of the time is here, 1*st.* Confirmed by an oath. The man clothed in linen lifted up both his hands to heaven, "and sware by him that lives for ever" and ever, that it shall be so. Thus the mighty angel whom St. John saw is brought in, with a plain reference to this vision here, standing with his "right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth," and with his hand lifted up to heaven, swearing "that there shall be no longer delay," *Rev.* x. 5, 6. This mighty one that Daniel saw stood with both feet on the water, and sware with both hands lifted up. Note, An oath is of use for confirmation. God only is to be sworn by, for he is the proper judge to whom we are to appeal; and lifting up the hand is a very proper and significant sign to be used in a solemn oath. 2*nd.* It is illustrated with a reason. God will suffer him to prevail, "till he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people;" God will suffer him to do his worst, and run his utmost length, and then "all these things shall be finished." Note, God's time to succour and relieve his people is when their affairs are brought to the last extremity; "in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" that Isaac is saved, just then when he lies ready to be sacrificed. Now the event answered the

prediction; Josephus saith expressly, in his book of the wars of the Jews, that Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, surprised Jerusalem by force, and held it three years and six months, and was then cast out of the country by the Asmoneans or Maccabees. Christ's public ministry continued three years and a half, during which time he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and lived in poverty and disgrace; and then, when his power seemed to be quite scattered at his death, and his enemies triumphed over him, he obtained the most glorious victory, and said, "It is finished."

Secondly. Here is something added more particularly concerning the time of the continuance of these troubles, in what is said to Daniel, ver. 11, 12; where we have, 1*st*. The event fixed from which the time of the trouble is to be dated. From the taking away of the daily sacrifice by Antiochus, and the setting up of the image of Jupiter upon the altar, which was the abomination of desolation. Then they must reckon their troubles to begin indeed, when they were deprived of the benefit of public ordinances; that was to them the beginning of sorrows, that was what they laid most to heart. 2*nd*. The continuance of their trouble. It shall last one "thousand two hundred and ninety days," three years and seven months, or, as some reckon, three years, six months, and fifteen days; and then, it is probable, the daily sacrifice was restored, and the abomination of desolation taken away, in remembrance of which the feast of dedication was observed even to our Saviour's time, *Jno*. x. 22. Though it do not appear by the history that it was exactly so long to a day, yet it appears that the beginning of the trouble was in the one hundred and forty-fifth year of the Seleucidæ, and the end of it in the one hundred and forty-eighth year; and either the restoring of the sacrifice and the taking away of the image was just so many days after, or some other previous event that was remarkable, which is not recorded. There are many particular times fixed in the Scripture prophecies, which it doth not appear by any history, sacred or profane, that the event answered, and yet no doubt it did punctually, as *Isa*. xvi. 14. 3*rd*. The completing of their deliverance, or at least a farther advance towards it, which is here set forty-five days after the former, and some think points at the death of Antiochus, one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days after his profaning the temple. "Blessed is he that waits," and comes to that time. It is said, 1 *Mac*. vi. 16, that Antiochus died in the one hundred and forty-ninth year of the kingdom of the Greeks, and, 2 *Mac*. ix. 28, x. 1, that the Maccabees, under a Divine conduct, recovered the temple and the city. Many good interpreters make these to be prophetical days, that is, so many years, and date them from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; but what events they then fall upon they are not agreed. Others date them from the corruption of the gospel worship by the antichrist, whose reign is confined in the apocalypse to one thousand two hundred and sixty days, that is, years, at the end of which he shall begin to fall; but thirty years after he shall be quite fallen, at the end of one thousand two hundred and ninety days; and whoever lives forty years longer, to one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days, will see glorious times indeed. Whether it looks so far forwards or no, I cannot tell; but this, however, we may learn, (1.) That there is a time fixed for the period of the church's troubles, and the bringing about of her deliverance, and this time will be punctually observed to a day. (2.) That this time must be waited for with faith and patience. (3.) That when it comes it will abundantly recompense us for our long expectation of it. Blessed is he that, having waited long, comes to it at last, for he will then have reason to say, "Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him."

Secondly. The question, What shall the end be? is asked by Daniel, and an answer given to it. Observe,

1. Why Daniel asked this question. It was because, though he heard what was said to the angel, yet he did not understand it, ver. 8. Daniel was a very intelligent man, and had been conversant in visions and prophecies, and yet here he was puzzled; he did not understand the meaning of the time, times and the part of a time, at least not so clearly, and with so much certainty, as he wished. Note, The best men are often much at a loss in their inquiries concerning Divine things, and meet with that which they do not understand. But the better they are the more sensible they are of their own weakness and ignorance, and the more ready to acknowledge it.

2. What the question was, "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" He directs his inquiry, not to the angel that talked with him, but immediately to Christ, for to whom else should we go with our inquiries? What shall be the final issue of these events? what do they tend to? what will they end in? Note, When we take a view of the affairs of this world, and of the church of God in it, we cannot but think what will be the end of these things. We see things move as if they would end in the utter ruin of God's kingdom among men; when we observe the prevalence of vice and impiety, the decay of religion, the sufferings of the righteous, and the triumphs of the ungodly over them, we may well ask, "O my Lord, what will be the end of these things?" But this may satisfy us in general, that all will end well at last. Great is the truth, and will prevail at long run. All opposing rule, principality, and power will be put down, and holiness and love will triumph, and be in honour to eternity. The end, this end, will come.

3. What answer is returned to this question. Besides what refers to the time, ver. 11, 12, of which before, here are some general instructions given to Daniel, with which he is dismissed from farther attendance.

1st. He must content himself with the discoveries that had been made to him, and not inquire any farther. "Go thy way, Daniel;" let it suffice thee that thou hast been admitted thus far to the foresight of things to come, but stop here. "Go thy way" about the king's business again, *ch*. viii. 27; "Go thy way" and record what thou hast seen and heard for the benefit of posterity, and covet not to see and hear more at present. Note, Communion with God is not our continual feast in this world; we sometimes are taken to be witnesses of Christ's glory, and we say, "It is good to be here;" but we must go down from the mount, and have there no continuing city. Those that know much know but in part, and still see there is a great deal that they are kept in the dark about, and are likely to be so till the veil is rent. Hitherto their knowledge shall go, but no farther; "Go thy way, Daniel," satisfied with what thou hast.

2nd. He must not expect that what had been said to him would be fully understood till it was accomplished. "The words are closed up and sealed," are involved in perplexities, and are likely to be so "till the time of the end," till the end of these things; nay, till the end of all things. Daniel was ordered to "seal the book to the time of the end," ver. 4. The Jews used to say, When Elias cometh he will tell us all things. They are "closed up and sealed," that is, the discovery designed to be made by them is now fully settled and completed. Nothing is to be added to it or taken from it, for it is "closed up and sealed;" ask not, therefore, after more. *Nescire velle quæ magister maximus docere non vult erudita inscitia est*,—'He has learned much who is willing to be ignorant of those things which the great Teacher does not choose to impart.'

3rd. He must count upon no other, but that as long as the world stands there will still be such a mixture as now we see there is of good and bad in it, ver. 10. We long to see all wheat and no tares in God's field, all corn and no chaff in God's floor; but it will not be till the time of the ingathering, till the winnowing day comes; both must grow together until the harvest. As it has been, so it is and will be; "the wicked shall do wickedly, but the wise shall understand." In this, as in other things, St. John's revelation closeth as Daniel did; *Rev*. xxii, "He which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he which is holy, let him be holy still." *First*. There is no remedy but that wicked people will do wickedly; and such people there are and will be in the world to the end of time. "So saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked," 1 *Sam*. xxiv. 13; and the observation of the moderns saith the same. Ill men will do ill things, and a corrupt tree will never bring forth good fruit; "Do men gather grapes of thorns?" or bring forth good things from an evil treasure in the heart? No, wicked practices are the natural products of wicked principles and dispositions. "Marvel not at the matter" then, *Eccl*. v. 8. We are told before that "the wicked will do wickedly," we can expect no better from them; but, which is worse, "none of the wicked shall understand." This is either, 1*st*. A part of their sin. They will not understand; they shut their eyes against light, and none so blind as they that will not see; therefore they are wicked because they will not understand. If they did but rightly know the truths of God, they would readily obey the laws of God, *Ps*. lxxxii. 5. Wilful sin is the effect of willing ignorance; therefore, they will not understand because they are wicked; therefore, they hate the light, and come not to the light, "because their deeds are evil," *Jno*. iii. 19. Or, 2*nd*. It is a part of their punishment. They will do wickedly, and therefore God hath given them up to blindness of mind, and has said concerning them, "They shall not understand," nor be converted and healed, *Mat*. xiii. 14, 15. God will not "give them eyes to see," because they will do wickedly, *Deu*. xxix. 4. *Secondly*. Yet, as bad as the world is, God will secure to himself a remnant of good people in it. Still there shall be some, there shall be many, to whom the providences and ordinances of God shall be "a savour of life unto life," while to others they are "a savour of death unto death." 1*st*. The providences of God shall do them good. "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried" by their troubles, (compare *ch*. xi. 35) by the same troubles; which will but stir up the corruptions of the wicked, and make them do more wickedly. Note, The afflictions of good people are designed for their trial; but by these trials they are "purified and made white," their corruptions are purged out, their graces are brightened and made both more vigorous and more conspicuous, and are "found to praise, and honour, and glory," 1 *Pet*. i. 7. Those that are themselves sanctified and good, to them every event is sanctified, and works for good, and helps to make them better. 2*nd*. The word of God shall do them good. When the wicked understand not, but stumble at the word, the wise shall understand. Those that are wise in practice shall understand doctrine; those that are influenced and governed by the Divine law and love, shall be illuminated with a Divine light; for if any man will do his will he shall know the truth, *Jno*. vii. 17. "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser."

4th. He must comfort himself with the pleasing prospect of his own happiness, in death, in judgment, and to eternity, ver. 13. Daniel was now very old, and had been long engaged both in an intimate acquaintance with heaven and a great deal of public business on this earth; and now he must think of bidding farewell to this present state; "Go thou thy way till the end be." *First*. It is good for us all to think much of going away from this world; we are still going, and must be gone shortly, gone the way of all the earth. That must be our way; but this is our comfort, we shall not go till God calls for us to another world, and till he has done with us in this world, till he saith, "Go thou thy way," thou hast finished thy testimony, done thy work, and accomplished as a hireling thy day. Therefore, now, "Go thou thy way," and leave it to others to take thy room. *Secondly*. When a good man goes his way from this world he enters into rest. Thou shalt rest from all thy present toils and tosses, and shalt not see the evils that are coming on the next generation. Never can a child of God say more pertinently than in his dying moments, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul." *Thirdly*. Time and days will have an end. Not only our time and days will end very shortly, but all times and days will have an end at length; yet a little while, and time shall be no more, but all its revolutions will be numbered and finished. *Fourthly*. Our rest in the grave will be but till the end of the days, and then the peaceful rest will be happily disturbed by a joyful resurrection. Job foresaw this when he said of the dead, that "till the heavens be no more" they "shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep," implying that then they shall, *Job* xiv. 12. *Fifthly*. We must every one of us "stand in our lot at the end of the days." In the judgment of the great day we must have our allotment according to what we were and what we did in the body, either, Come, ye blessed, or, Go, ye cursed; and we must stand for ever in that lot. It was a comfort to Daniel, it is a comfort to all the saints, that, whatever their lot is in the days of time, they shall have a happy lot in the end of the days, shall have their lot among the chosen. And it ought to be the great care and concern of every one of us to secure a happy lot at last in the end of the days, and then we may well be content with our present lot, welcome the will of God. *Sixthly*. A believing hope and prospect of a blessed lot in the heavenly Canaan, at the end of the days, will be an effectual support to us when we are going our way out of this world, and will furnish us with living comforts in dying moments.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

WHAT, asks Bishop Newton, is there wanting of external or internal evidence to prove the genuineness and authenticity of the book of *Daniel?* There is all the external evidence that can well be had or desired in a case of this nature; not only the testimony of the whole Jewish church and nation, who have constantly received this book as canonical, but of Josephus particularly, who recommends him as the greatest of the prophets; of the Jewish Targums and Talmuds, which frequently cite and appeal to his authority; of St. Paul and St. John, who have copied many of the prophecies; of our Saviour himself, who citeth his words, and styleth him Daniel the prophet; of ancient historians, who relate many of the same transactions; of the mother of the seven sons and of the father of the Maccabees, who both recommend the example of Daniel to their sons; of old Eleazar in Egypt, who, praying for the Jews then suffering under the persecution of Ptolemy Philopater, 3 *Mac.* vii. 6, 7, mentions the deliverance of Daniel out of the den of lions, together with the deliverance of the three men out of the fiery furnace; of the Jewish high priest, who shewed Daniel's prophecies to Alexander the Great, while he was at Jerusalem; and still higher, of Ezekiel, a contemporary writer, who greatly extols his piety and wisdom. Nor is the internal less powerful and convincing than the external evidence; for the language, the style, the manner of writing, and all other internal marks and characters, are perfectly agreeable to that age; and he appears plainly and undeniably to have been a prophet by the exact accomplishment of his prophecies. Indeed, it will entirely overthrow the notion of their being written in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, or of the Maccabees, and will establish the credit of Daniel as a prophet beyond all contradiction, if it can be proved that there are several prophecies of his which have been fulfilled since the days of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees, as well as before; nay, that there are prophecies of his which are fulfilling in the world at this very time.—And yet, says Scott, in his *Commentary*, the prophecies of Daniel have, in all succeeding generations, received as undeniable accomplishment as those did which relate to more ancient events. They all take their beginning from about the prophet's days; they all give a concise prophetical history of the church, and of the world as far as immediately connected with it, nearly to the end of time; for even the prophecy of the seventy weeks, though the first coming of the Messiah is the most prominent subject, shews the state of the Jewish nation to this day, and intimates events which have not yet taken place. They all either expressly or by consequence predict four great monarchies, the fourth of which shall last "to the time of the end," "the end of the indignation." They all foretell long continued calamities to the Jewish nation, and to the people of God, at length terminating in the restoration of Israel, and the final and universal triumph of true religion, the kingdom of Christ and of his saints, which must endure to the general resurrection They are not insulated predictions, they all exhibit the same grand outlines of the plan of Providence, to the period of the church's calamities, varied in such a manner as to reflect reciprocal light on each other; and for above two thousand years the most prominent parts of history form the best interpretation of these astonishing prophecies. For farther proofs of the authenticity and genuineness of this book, see Hengstenberg's "Treatise on the Authenticity of Daniel." There is an abridgment of his refutation of neological objections to that book in Horne's *Introduction*, and a brief account of the direct evidence, by Havernick, in the article *Daniel*, in *Kitto's Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature.*

CHAP. II.—5. *The dream, with the interpretation thereof.* The king's requisition to the wise men of Babylon, to tell him his dream, in the first instance, before they attempted to interpret it, though, as they alleged in excuse for not doing so, unusual and impossible for mere mortals, was yet founded on profound policy. He justly considered their telling the dream itself as a sure test of the truth of the interpretation afterwards, and which it was not unreasonable to require of them even upon their own principles; because the same Divine power which could communicate to them the interpretation, as they professed, could also communicate to them the dream itself. He did not forget the dream, as generally imagined, from the expression "The thing is gone from me," and which may rather be rendered, with the Septuagint and Arabic, 'The decree is gone forth from me,' and shall not be reversed; or with the Syriac version, 'The decree which I have pronounced is certain,' or unalterable, namely, for putting them all to death, if they could not tell the dream. And this surely was a more consistent reason why the wise men wished to gain time, or suspend the execution of it (ver. 8), and why Daniel, who was involved in their danger, complained, "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?"—*Hale's Analysis*, ii. 456. 34. *A stone was cut without hands.* To Henry's comment on these words we add the following:—This the fathers generally apply to Christ himself, who was miraculously born of a virgin without the concurrence of a man; but it should rather be understood of the kingdom of Christ, which was formed out of the Roman empire, not by number of hands, or strength of armies, but without human means and the virtue of second causes. This kingdom was set up by the God of heaven, and from hence the phrase of the kingdom of heaven came to signify the kingdom of the Messiah; and so it was used and understood by the Jews, and so it is applied by our Saviour in the New Testament. Other kingdoms were raised by human ambition and worldly power; but this was the work not of man, but of God; this was truly as it is called the kingdom of heaven, and (*Jno.* xviii. 36) a kingdom not of this world; its laws, its powers, were all Divine.—*Bishop Newton on the Prophecies.* "The stone" was entirely distinct from the image, nay directly opposite to it and all its interests; it must therefore mean a kingdom set up by the power of God, without the concurrence of human policy or force, and in opposition to all the authority and combined efforts of the princes of this world.—*Scott, in loc.* "Cut without hands;" particularly alluding, says A. Clarke, to the spiritual nature of our Lord's kingdom and government, in which no worldly policy, human maxims, or military force, were employed; for it was not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. 44. *It shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.* From small beginnings the kingdom of Christ has already made an immense progress; it has subverted, and will continue to subvert, pagan and antichristian kingdoms, and to entirely destroy and disperse them; and at length it will triumph over all opposition, and "become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth." This part of the prophecy yet remains to be accomplished; so that we have in this dream a most extraordinary prophetical abstract of the most signal events which would take place through all succeeding ages, nearly to the consummation of all things. As far as the accomplishment has proceeded it has been most exact and undeniable; and future ages will be filled with astonishment and awe by witnessing this "stone cut out without hands" destroying the remaining toes of this image, and becoming universally triumphant.—*Scott.* The same excellent commentator observes, 'The kings and conquerors of the earth have in every age kept the nations in a perpetual tumult by their ambitious projects and the revolutions which they have occasioned. Some have been more eminent for wealth, some for power, some for hardy courage and ruinous success; their delight has been in destroying, subduing, breaking in pieces and crushing mankind; one form of tyranny has commonly been superseded by another, still more base and barbarous; and men in general have been groaning under the effects of their contests and vices, yet willingly concurring to support and encourage them! But all human power and prowess tend to decay; many mighty empires have gradually been weakened, till they have been gradually subverted by open enemies or by intestine convulsions.' In the midst of all these events "the God of heaven is setting up his kingdom," not by human might or power, but by his word and Spirit.—In the present times, May, 1848, how remarkable and suggestive are these observations!

CHAP. IV.—30. *Is not this great Babylon.* See Supplementary Note on *Isa.* xiii. 1.

CHAP. V.—27. *Thou art weighed in the balance.* The idea involved in this is sufficiently obvious in itself. But it is by no means impossible that the allusion received more force and meaning than we give to it from a reference to some opinion or custom common among the Babylonians. What that was we cannot say precisely; but probabilities may be suggested by analogies derived from other sources. Thus the Egyptians entertained the belief that the actions of the dead were solemnly weighed in balances before Osiris, and that the condition of the departed was determined according to the preponderance of good or evil. Such judgment scenes are very frequently represented in the paintings and papyri of ancient Egypt.—*Pictorial Bible.* See wood engraving.

CHAP. VI.—16. *Cast into the den of lions.* This is a new kind of punishment, observes the editor of the last quoted valuable work, not previously mentioned in Scripture; and that it first occurs here at Babylon is a remarkable fact, shewing the accuracy of the sacred writers in their references to the manners and usages of different nations. We are not aware that any ancient writer mentions that the inhabitants of Babylon were in the habit of throwing offenders to be devoured by lions kept in dens for the purpose. But we have the still more conclusive evidence of monuments brought to light by modern travellers, on the sites not only of Babylon but of Susa also, representing lions destroying and preying upon human beings. Our wood engraving is from a block of white marble found near the tomb of Daniel at Susa, and is thus described: 'It does not exceed ten inches in width and depth, measures twenty in length, and is hollow within, as if to receive some deposit. Three of its sides are cut in bas-relief, two of them with similar representations of a man apparently naked, except a sash round his waist and a sort of cap on his head. His hands are bound behind him. The corner of the stone forms the neck of the figure, so that its head forms one of its ends. Two lions in sitting postures appear on either side at the top, each having a paw on the head of the man.' These are certainly satisfactory illustrations of the custom in question, as existing at Babylon and Susa, and others might be adduced from Babylonian coins.

CHAP. VII.—7. *A fourth beast, dreadful and terrible—and it had ten horns.* This was doubtless, says Scott, an emblem of the Roman state—the invincible fortitude, hardiness and force of which perhaps were never equalled. By wars and conquests the Romans bore down all opposition, and reduced almost every kingdom or state in the known world into some kind or degree of dependence, drew all the spoil and wealth of many conquered nations to enrich their proud capital, and tyrannized over all that did not quietly yield 'obedience to their authority.' That which the Romans could not quietly enjoy in other countries they would give to other kings and rulers, that at all times when they would they might take it again, which liberality is here called "the stamping of the rest under their feet." This fourth empire was governed in another manner, and by other measures, than any of the preceding, and in process of time it was divided into ten kingdoms. These are indeed reckoned up in several ways by different writers, according to the date assigned to the enumeration; but in general it is clear that the principal kingdoms in Europe at this day sprung from them, and comprise them, excepting some of the more northern regions, and those possessed by the Turks. Mr. Faber's remarks on this point are well worthy the accurate student's attention, and his conclusion from it seems well founded. The historian Machiavel, little thinking what he was doing, reckons up the *ten primary kingdoms* as follows (we add Bishop Lloyd's dates): 1. The Ostrogoths in Mœsia (377); 2. The Visigoths in Pannonia (378); 3. The Suevi and Alani in Gascoigne and Spain (407); 4. The Vandals in Africa (407); 5. The Franks in France (407); 6. The Burgundians in Burgundy (407); 7. The Heruli and Thuringi in Italy (476); 8. The Saxons and Angles in Britain (476); 9. The Huns in Hungary (526); and 10. The Lombards, first upon the Danube and afterwards in Italy, (483—526.) Here then, upon the testimony of an historian and chronologer, are the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was originally divided, and consequently they are the first "ten horns" of which we are in quest.—*Faber*, vol. i. pp. 170-1. Not that there were constantly ten kingdoms; they were sometimes more, and sometimes fewer; but as Sir Isaac Newton says, (*Observations on Daniel,*) 'Whatever was their number afterwards, they are still called the ten kingdoms from their first number.' 8. *Another little horn.* We have seen already that the Roman empire was divided into ten horns or kingdoms, and among them possibly we may find another little horn or kingdom answering in all respects to the character here given. Machiavel himself (a popish historian) will lead us by the hand; for having shewn how the Roman empire was broken and divided by the incursions of the northern nations, he says, 'About this time the bishops of Rome began to take upon them, and to exercise greater authority than they had formerly done. At first, the successors of St. Peter were venerable and eminent for their miracles, and the holiness of their lives; and their examples added daily such numbers to the Christian church, that, to obviate or remove the confusions which were then in the world, many princes turned Christians, and the emperor of Rome being converted among the rest, and quitting Rome, to hold his residence at Constantinople, the Roman empire, as we have said before, began to decline, but the church of Rome augmented as fast.' And so he proceeds to give an account how the Roman empire declined, and the power of the church of Rome increased, first under the Goths, then under the Lombards, and afterwards by the calling in of the Franks. Here then is a little horn springing up among the other ten horns. The bishop of Rome was respectable as a bishop long before, but he did not become a horn properly (which is an emblem of strength and power,) till he became a temporal prince. He was to rise after the others, that is behind them, as the Greek translates it, οπισω αυτων, and as Mr. Mede explains it, so that the ten kings were not aware of the growing up of the little horn till it overtopped them, the word in the original signifying as well behind in place as after in time; as also *post* in Latin is used indifferently either of place or time. Three of the first horns,

that is three of the first kings or kingdoms, were to be plucked up by the roots, and to fall before him. If ever three kingdoms were "plucked up" before a little kingdom, which arose imperceptibly above the ten primary kingdoms, they must be three the names of which occur in the preceding list of Machiavel and Bishop Lloyd; accordingly we find that the kingdom of the Heruli, the kingdom of the Ostrogoths, and the kingdom of the Lombards, were successively eradicated before the little papal horn, which at length became a temporal no less than a spiritual power, at the expense of these three depressed primary states.—*Faber.* The pope hath in a manner pointed himself out for the person by wearing the triple crown. In other respects, too, the pope fully answers the character of the little horn; so that, if exquisite fitness of application may assure us of the true sense of the prophecy, we can no longer doubt concerning the person. He is a little horn; and the power of the popes was originally very small, and their temporal dominions were little and inconsiderable in comparison with others of the ten horns; and the power of the pope differs greatly from that of all other princes, being an ecclesiastical and spiritual as well as a civil and temporal authority. "And behold in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man," ver. 8. To denote his cunning and foresight, his looking out and watching all opportunities to promote his own interest; and the policy of the Roman hierarchy hath almost passed into a proverb. The pope is properly an 'overlooker,' or 'overseer,' ἐπισκοπος, or bishop, in the literal sense of the word. (*episcopus episcoporum*,—'the overseer of overseers.') "He had a mouth speaking very great things," ver. 8, 20. And who hath been more noisy and blustering than the pope, especially in former ages, boasting of his supremacy, thundering out his bulls and anathemas, excommunicating princes, and absolving subjects from their allegiance? "His look was more stout than his fellows," ver. 20. And the pope assumes a superiority not only over his fellow bishops, but even over crowned heads. "And he shall speak great words against the Most High," ver. 25; or, as Symmachus interprets it, 'he shall speak great words as the Most High,' setting up himself above all laws, Divine and human, arrogating to himself godlike attributes and titles of holiness and infallibility, exacting obedience to his ordinances and decrees in preference to, and open violation of, reason and Scripture, insulting men, and blaspheming God. In Gratian's decretals the pope hath the title of 'God' given to him. "And he shall wear out the saints of the Most High," by wars, and massacres, and inquisitions, persecuting and destroying the faithful servants of Jesus and the true worshippers of God, who protest against his innovations, and refuse to comply with the idolatry practised in the church of Rome. "And he shall think to change times and laws;" appointing fasts and feasts, canonizing saints, granting pardons and indulgences for sins, instituting new modes of worship, imposing new articles of faith, enjoining new rules of practice, and reversing at pleasure the laws both of God and men. "And they shall be given into his hand, until a time, and times, and the dividing of time." A time, all agree, signifies a year; and a time and times and the dividing of time, or half a time, are three years and a half. So long, and no longer, as the Romanists conceive, the power of Antichrist will continue; but it is impossible for all the things which are predicted of Antichrist to be fulfilled in so short a space of time; and neither is Antichrist or the little horn a single man, but a kingdom. Single men are not the subjects of his prophecy, but kingdoms. The four kings (ver. 17) are not four single kings, but kingdoms; and so the ten horns or kings (ver. 24) are not ten single kings, but kingdoms; and so likewise the little horn is not a single king, but a kingdom; not a single man, but a succession of men, exercising such powers, and performing such actions, as are here described. We must therefore compute the time according to the nature and genius of the prophetic language. A time, then, and times, and half a time, are three years and a half; and the ancient Jewish year consisting of twelve months, and each month of thirty days, a time and times and half a time, or three years and a half, are reckoned in the *Revelation*, (xi. 2, 3; xii. 6, 14,) as equivalent to forty and two months, or a thousand two hundred and threescore days; and a day in the style of the prophets is a year; "I have appointed thee each day for a year," saith God to Ezekiel (iv. 6); and it is confessed, that the seventy weeks in the ninth chapter of *Daniel* are weeks of years, and consequently twelve hundred and sixty days are twelve hundred and sixty years: (see Supplementary Note on *ch.* viii. 14.) So long Antichrist or the little horn will continue; but from what point of time the commencement of these twelve hundred and sixty years is to be dated is not so easy to determine.—*Bishop Newton.* Now, carefully comparing what different expositors have stated concerning this little horn, and the time at which the predicted period of one thousand two hundred and sixty years began, with the prophecies themselves, I am led to conclude, says Scott, that the little horn was in existence for a considerable time before he was possessed either of ecclesiastical or temporal dominion; that he sprang up soon after the empire was divided into ten kingdoms; that though the bishop of Rome even then, nay before, made arrogant claims, yet the little horn was comparatively harmless till, by the decree of Phocas, he was constituted UNIVERSAL BISHOP AND SUPREME HEAD OF THE CHURCH; that by this decree, 'the saints, and the times, and laws, were given into his hand' (ver. 25); he had the power of persecuting and domination, whether he immediately exercised it or not; and that the one thousand two hundred and sixty years are to be dated from his being thus invested with *ecclesiastical* dominion, and not from his becoming a temporal potentate, which did not occur till a later period. This indeed is the abstract of Mr. Faber's copious argument on this subject.—In a remarkable work, (*The Rise and Fall of the Papacy*, by Robert Fleming: London, 1701.) the author argues that the periods of one thousand two hundred and sixty days, of forty-two months, and of a time, times and a half, are synchronical, that is, refer exactly to the same period of time, and describe the duration of the antichristian kingdom, and that they are to be understood prophetically, a day being put for a year. Bishop Newton, as has been seen, arrived at the same conclusion with the Presbyterian divine. Mr. Fleming, in stating his opinion respecting the commencement of the one thousand two hundred and sixty prophetical days from which the period of the fall of the papacy may be calculated, presents us with the following scheme:—

	The Prophetical Year.	The Julian Year.
One	360	365
Two	720	730
Half	180	183
Three years and a half	1260	1278

Now, if, according to this computation, we subtract 1260 apocalyptical years from 1278 Julian or Gregorian ones, (I call them so *ore rotunda*, overlooking the smaller measures of time,) there remain eighteen years to be cut off. We may justly reckon that the papal head took its first rise from that remarkable year six hundred and six, when Phocas did in a manner devolve the government of the west upon him, by giving him the title of universal bishop. Or, if a bare title of this sort be not thought sufficient to constitute the pope head of the beast, we may reckon this two years later, namely, from the year six hundred and eight, when Boniface the Fourth did first publicly authorise idolatry, by dedicating the Pantheon to the worship of the Virgin Mary and all the saints. To apply this, therefore, to our design, (continues Mr. F.,) if we may suppose that Antichrist began his reign in the year 606, the additional one thousand two hundred and sixty years of his duration, were they Julian or ordinary years, would lead us down to the year 1866, as the last period of the seven-headed monster. But, seeing they are prophetical years only, we must cast away eighteen years, in order to bring them to the exact measure of time that the Spirit of God designs in this book. And thus the final period of papal usurpations (supposing that he did indeed rise in the year 606) must conclude with the year 1848.—From the obscurity, however, of prophecy, says Mr. Scott, previous to its fulfilment, we are cautioned not confidently to assign the date of future events; but probably at the end of one thousand two hundred and sixty years from A.D. 606, the glorious events predicted will begin to receive a remarkable accomplishment. Bishop Newton, who dates the commencement of the one thousand two hundred and sixty years from the establishment of the power of the pope as a temporal prince in the eighth century, says, One thousand two hundred and sixty years from that time will lead us down to about the year of Christ 2000, or about the six thousandth year of the world; and there is an (*Barnabæ Epist.*, cap. xv., *cum notis cotelerii*; *Burnet's Theory*, b. 3. ch. v.) old tradition, both among Jews and Christians, that at the end of six thousand years the Messiah shall come, and the world shall be renewed, the reign of the wicked one shall cease, and the reign of the saints upon earth shall begin. But, as Irenæus saith in a like case, it is surer and safer to wait for the completion of the prophecy, than to conjecture and to divine (too minutely and confidently) about it. When the end shall come then we shall know better whence to date the beginning. 13, 14. *I saw—and behold one like the Son of man—and there was given him dominion.* This passage not only shews that the setting up of the everlasting kingdom was to happen in the times of the fourth or Roman monarchy, but also that it would happen when the Son of man would ascend from earth to heaven. The prophet does not represent him as coming in the clouds from heaven to earth, (as at the general judgment,) but as coming with the clouds of heaven from his former residence towards the throne of God, which, according to the Scripture style, is heaven. And this is confirmed by the words immediately following, that "they brought him near before him;" namely, before the Ancient of days.—*Maclaurin*, quoted by Scott, who adds, When Christ was about to ascend into heaven he said, All power is given to me, in heaven and earth. Then his kingdom began to be set up, and the power of the fourth kingdom to decline,; but it is plain, from the eleventh verse, that the grand event predicted in this passage is his glorious coming to destroy the kingdom of every antichristian power, and to render his own kingdom universal upon earth. "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame," ver. 11. The beast will be destroyed "because of the great words which the horn spake," and the destruction of the beast will also be the destruction of the horn; and consequently the horn is a part of the fourth beast, or of the Roman empire. "As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time," ver. 12. When the dominion was taken away from the other beasts, their bodies were not destroyed, they were suffered to continue still in being; but when the dominion shall be taken away from this beast, his body shall totally be destroyed; because other kingdoms succeeded to those, but none other earthly kingdom shall succeed to this.—*Bishop Newton.*

CHAP. VIII.—2. *Shushan in the palace.* The chief town of Susiana, and capital of Persia, in which the kings of Persia had their winter residence, *Neh.* i. 1; *Est.* i. 25. It was situated on the Eulœus, or Choaspes, probably on the spot now occupied by the village Shus, where are extensive ruins, stretching perhaps twelve miles from one extremity to the other, and consisting, like the other ruins of this region, of hillocks of earth and rubbish, covered with broken pieces of bricks and coloured tile. At the foot of these mounds is the so called tomb of Daniel, a small building erected on the spot where the remains of that prophet are locally believed to rest; but nothing but the belief that this was the site of the prophet's sepulchre could have led to its being built in the place where it stands, (*Malcolm's Hist. of Persia*, i. 255, 256;) and it may be added that such identifications are of far more value in these parts, where occasion for them is rare, than among the crowded 'holy places' of Palestine. The city of Shus is now a gloomy wilderness, is filled by lions, hyænas, and other beasts of prey. *Elam.* Probably the same land which was designated Elymus by the Greeks and Romans, and formed a part of the ancient Susiana, the modern Khuristan; but the sacred writers, under the term Elam, comprehended the country of the Persians in general. *Ulai.* A river which flowed by Susa (Shusan) into the united stream of the Tigris and Euphrates, called by Pliny, Eulœus; by Greek writers Choaspes, and now known by the name of Kerah; called by the Turks, Karasu.—*Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature.* 5. *The goat had a notable horn.* This is universally admitted to describe Alexander. It is rather a curious coincidence that, when this conqueror claimed to be the son of Jupiter Ammon, (who was worshipped under the figure of a ram, and who, when represented in the human figure, had ram's horns on his head,) he assumed, as far as he could, the symbols which denoted his assumed parentage, causing his head to be sometimes represented as horned. It is also remarkable that the oriental Mohammedans still recognise the horn of Alexander, without being aware of the origin of the symbol. In their writings he is frequently mentioned by the title of 'The horned,' without any addition.—*Pictorial Bible.* 9. *And out of one of them came forth a little horn.* M. Henry would have this, as well as the little horn introduced *ch.* vii. 8, to denote Antiochus Epiphanes. All agree, he says, in this place, that this was Antiochus Epiphanes; but Bishop Newton has shewn that many insuperable objections lie against this interpretation. He and other expositors therefore suppose this little horn to mean the empire of the Romans from the time when they had got footing in Greece and Macedonia, (which formed one horn of the goat.) They then entered on that stage on which these events were to take place throughout the successive ages of the Roman history, including therein Rome's spiritual as well as temporal empire, and the persecutions carried on against the church of Christ throughout all that period, as well as by its rulers of "fierce countenance and understanding dark sentences." With this interpretation of Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Newton, Mr. Scott the commentator had acquiesced, though not with full satisfaction, till convinced by Mr. Faber's *Dissertation on the Prophecies*, that the Mohammedan delusion, and not Roman, either pagan or popish, was here pointed out. It appears to me, he says, unaccountable, on mature reflection, that there should be in these concise, yet most comprehensive, prophecies of Daniel so many repeated and particular predictions of the papal delusion in the West, and not a hint of the Mohammedan delusion in the East, the progress and effects of which have been most extensively mischievous, and are specially and separately noted as such by St. John, (*Rev.* ix.) The Holy Spirit now purposing to describe the exploit of another great enemy to Christianity, recalls, in the vision of the ram and the he-goat, the attention of Daniel to the second and third empires, whose prophetic history had been already detailed, for the purpose of introducing another little horn, which was to come up out of one of the principal horns of the Macedonian beast, as the former little horn

sprang up among the ten horns of the Roman beast. The principal reasons for this view may be given as stated in the *Commentary* of the Religious Tract Society: As the ten-horned beast denoted the western Roman empire, and its little horn the papacy, so the he-goat symbolizes the Eastern or Grecian empire, and its little horn Mohammedanism, both of them being spiritual dominations, and co-existent. The host of heaven, or the church, is given up to its power on account of an apostacy, and we do not find this characteristic applying to any part of the Jewish history, while it is directly applicable to the apostacy which had taken place in the Christian church at the commencement of the seventh century, when the worship of saints and images had become prevalent. At this very period, about A.D. 608, Mohammed began to preach and to collect proselytes, few at first, but soon waxed great. This power corresponds with the characteristics of the little horn, as to place, personal character, and time.—Insomuch, says Faber, that Dr. Prideaux, struck with this wonderful chronological coincidence, could not refrain from exclaiming, that Antichrist seemed at that time to have set both his feet on Christendom together, the one in the East, the other in the West, (i. 256-7.) With regard to the more minute points relative to this little horn, Mohammedanism sprang up in Arabia, behind the Grecian empire; or, as Foster states, the part of Arabia in which it commenced was a province both of the empire of Alexander and of the kingdom of the Ptolemies. It came forth at the period when the apostacy was completed. Small at first, slow indeed, was the progress of Mohammed for many years; it became great towards the south, the east, and Palestine; precisely the directions in which Mohammedanism rapidly spread when it began to increase. This ecclesiastical domination may be fierce of countenance, for its avowed engine of conversion was the sword, and the ferocity of the followers of the false prophet is sufficiently known. It teaches "dark sentences," as is evident to all who look into the Koran. The casting down some of the stars of heaven may import a compulsory apostatizing of some spiritual pastors. The taking away the daily sacrifice is the interruption of the daily spiritual worship of God. Thus, the church having declined from the soundness of gospel truth to superstition and will-worship, a considerable portion should be given up to a remarkable power, rising out of the eastern empire. History shews how this part of the prediction has been fulfilled, as the punishment of a great decline in the Christian church. This false prophet magnified himself against the Prince of the host, teaching that he was himself a greater prophet than Jesus. Mohammedanism became mighty, but not by its own power, relying not on reason, argument, or internal evidence, but upon the extraneous power of the sword. It was 'to cause craft to prosper.' Fraud and perfidy are expressly stated to have been the leading means used by Mohammedanism. 'By peace,' or in a state of security, it was to destroy many. The eastern empire was thus wrapped in peaceful carelessness when invaded by the followers of the false prophet. One peculiarity alone remains to be accomplished. The spiritual domination of this eastern little horn is to be broken without hand. It denotes the destruction of this power; not by earthly force or the sword of violence, but by a Divine power, and that to take place at the great period which all these prophecies indicate—the times of the end, when all antichristian powers are to be destroyed, and the time of universal peace and happiness will commence. 14. *Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.* So many 'mornings and evenings,' so the word is, so many natural days, says M. Henry, who accordingly gives a literal interpretation of so many days, and applies the prophecy to Antiochus. Whilst this application is otherwise objectionable, we refer the reader to Supplementary Note, *ch.* viii. 8, for the reasons which justify the computation by years instead of days. We may just add that Moses spoke of the forty years of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, as answering to the forty days employed in searching out the land, (*Num.* xiv. 24); that Isaiah (xx. 3) appears to have walked three days naked, as a sign of an event to take place three years afterwards; and that in the passage from *Eze.* (iv. 6), quoted in the above Supplementary Note, the prophet was directed to lie in different postures for certain days as prophetic of events to occur in so many years; and that these, with the reasons previously given, afford sufficient authority for so understanding the terms elsewhere, especially when circumstances appear to require a greater extent of time than the terms literally taken will allow, and when the result harmonises with that of other prophecies. As to the commencement and conclusion of this lengthened period of two thousand three hundred years, we observe, in the words of Mr. Whitaker, as quoted by Mr. Faber, (i. 225), that Daniel states the rise of Mohammed as to take place when the transgressors are come to the fall. St. Paul says that the delusion of the man of sin shall be sent as a punishment, because men "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness," where surely the same period (that in which the sins of the people call for judgment) is characterised for the rise of the two powers. Now St. John assigns to each of them the same duration, and speaks of the time of their end as the same; and consequently they must begin at the same time, in exact correspondence with each of the separate declarations of the two former writers. If, says Mr. Scott, the one thousand two hundred and sixty years, so often spoken of, began A.D. 606, they must end A.D. 1966; and two thousand three hundred, reckoned backward from that period, will bring us to the year A.C. 334; between which period and the year A.C. 936, Faber considers that the date of the vision is to be fixed. And though we must not place too much confidence on the exactness of such calculations, yet the main points in this argument seem unquestionable. It may perhaps be worthy of notice, continues Scott, that it is now about two thousand three hundred and seventy-three years since Daniel had this vision; and no doubt the end of the two thousand three hundred days or years is not very distant. —After all, the best course appears to be not to rely upon any mere chronological calculation of this period; but, considering the vision to point out the Mohammedan apostacy, to leave the more clear development to events.

CHAP. IX.—24. *Anoint the most Holy.* To anoint signifies, in general, to consecrate or appoint to some special office. Here it means the consecration or appointment of our blessed Lord, the Holy One of Israel, to be Prophet, Priest, and King; his inauguration especially as King, who, having finished the transgression, sat down on his throne. 25. *Know, therefore, and understand.* It is certain that the Jews expected the Messiah about the time when Jesus Christ came upon the earth; they must, therefore, have interpreted the prophecy as if the time was then come. And if, as it is probable, the Targum or Jewish commentary on Daniel interpreted it so, this will account for the loss of that Targum, although the Targums on all the other prophets have been preserved. Their expectation is of itself a strong argument that it was founded on a careful calculation of the time, and of their persuasion that it was come.—*P. Roberts.* The Jews are so sensible of the force of the reasoning from this passage, that they denounce a most terrible curse on all who dare to compute the times.—*Religious Tract Society's Commentary.* 27. *In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.* "In the midst" means any time between the commencement and completion. It is a remarkable fact that, according to Josephus, the sacrifice and oblation, meaning every offering made by fire, did cease before the city was taken. Indeed, the temple was destroyed twenty-seven days before the latter event.——Notwithstanding some obscurity inseparable from prophecy as distinguished from history, it is undeniable that Daniel foretold that the Messiah would come in rather less than five hundred years from a decree granted for rebuilding Jerusalem. He shewed that he would be put to death by a legal sentence, (for so the word implies,) and he expressly predicted that, in consequence, Jerusalem and the temple would be desolated, and the nation of the Jews exposed to tremendous punishment, of which no termination is mentioned. Within that time Jesus of Nazareth appeared—he answered in every respect to the description given of him by all the prophets—he was put to death as a deceiver—yet vast multitudes became his disciples, and Christianity gained a permanent establishment. After a time Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, and the state of the Jews to this day is a striking comment on this prediction. How can it then be denied that Daniel spoke by Divine inspiration, or that Jesus is the promised Messiah? Both these important points might be fully demonstrated by this one single prophecy; how much more, when it is only one star, so to speak, in a resplendent constellation, or one among a great number of predictions, all of which combine with united evidence to demonstrate the same good truths.—*Scott.*

CHAP. XI.—5, 6. *Kings of the south—kings of the north.* From the recently published *Life and Correspondence of Dr. Arnold* of Rugby, (a man, on many accounts, to be envied,) it would appear that he entertained difficulties as to the authority of the latter chapters of *Daniel*, which, he says, (ii. 188,) 'if genuine, would be a clear exception to my canon of interpretation, as there can be no reasonable spiritual meaning made out of the kings of the north and south'—a very objectionable, though not unusual, mode of reasoning on such subjects. Because the Scripture cannot be made to bend to my canon of interpretation, therefore —! Respecting the events referred to in the latter part of this chapter, there has been much diversity of opinion, which, as it is properly an unfulfilled prophecy, is only what we may look for. As to those related in the commencement of the chapter, (and well expounded, on the whole, by M. Henry,) Bishop Newton says, it may be proper to stop here, and reflect a little how particular and circumstantial this prophecy is concerning the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, from the death of Alexander to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. There is not so complete and regular a series of their kings, there is not so concise and comprehensive an account of their affairs, to be found in any author of those times. The prophecy is really more perfect than any history. No one historian hath related so many circumstances, and in such exact order of time, as the prophet hath foretold them: so that it was necessary to have recourse to several authors, Greek and Roman, Jewish and Christian; and to collect here something from one, and to collect there something from another, for the better explaining and illustrating the great variety of particulars contained in this prophecy. No one could thus declare the times and the seasons but (*Acts* i. 7) he who hath them in his power. 31—40. *And arms shall stand, &c.* Thus far the prophecy is clear, and the interpretation satisfactory, but the subsequent part is very difficult, and commentators have differed exceedingly about it. Some have explained the whole of Antiochus Epiphanes, some have made him a type of antichrist, others extend a part of it to the subsequent kings of Syria, while others argue strongly that, as the commencement of the vision certainly is in the East, so the termination must be there also, and that the former, denoted as the wilful king, is Mohammedanism. But to so great a length has the exposition of Matthew Henry on this subject proceeded, that we can afford no space for entering into details, and shall only observe, that our author is not followed by recent commentators in his exposition of it, from the 31st verse onwards. Whatever may be their different views, he is considered in this, as in other parts of his interpretation of the book of *Daniel*, to have made too much of Antiochus Epiphanes. We refer the inquirer to the writers on prophecy for farther information on these subjects. 40—45. *At the time of the end.* This part of the prophecy seems to relate to the same times and events with Ezekiel's prophecy concerning Gog of the land of Magog: compare *Eze.* xxxviii. 2, 15, 4, 5, 16, 8; xxxix. 2, 4. The situation, extraction, army, time of their exploits, particular actions, and the Divine judgments, all correspond: see also *Rev.* xx. 8, 9. Among the plain characters given of antichrist in this chapter is, that instead of the true God he should worship the god the host, or the guardianship, so the word (Mahuzzim) translated forces and strongholds in ver. 38, 39, signifies; and seems to allude to the worship of the host, angels, images, &c.

CHAP. XII.—4. *And knowledge shall be increased.* The angel, by way of conclusion, intimated to Daniel that this prophecy would remain obscure, and as "a sealed book," of which little would be understood, "till the time of the end," that is, till the things predicted drew to a conclusion. The fact hath evidenced this to be the case. Immense difficulties have always been acknowledged in many of Daniel's prophecies, and they have been as words shut up even from believers in general. But "at the time of the end many should run to and fro, and knowledge would be increased." In these latter ages many have bestowed great pains in searching into history to illustrate those parts of these prophecies which are already accomplished, and, in comparing them with other Scriptures, to form some judgment of what yet remains to be fulfilled, and thus much light has been thrown on them. As they shall gradually be more and more accomplished, they will be better understood, and future generations will be more surprised and instructed by them than we are. The latter expression of "running to and fro," may refer to the future spread of the Gospel, by the active labours of faithful ministers, by the exertions of Missionary and Bible Societies, and of Christian men through the press, which will make way for the fulfilment of the remaining prophecies, by increasing in the world the knowledge of Divine truth.—*T. Scott.* The proper conclusion to the great revolutions which the prophet had been predicting is the general resurrection, which the beginning of this chapter explicitly declares. And the whole concludes with a notation of the time when these great events which he had principally in view were to have their final consummation; when the Jews were to be restored, Antichrist destroyed, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in, and the millennium or reign of saints to begin. But the precise time, till Providence opens more of the seals, cannot be fully ascertained. We see, however, that the same term (one thousand two hundred and sixty years) is fixed for the oppression of the eastern church by Mohammed, (ver. 6, 7,) and for the tyranny of the western church by the little horn, *ch.* vii. 25. And it is very remarkable that the doctrine of Mohammed was first forged at Mecca, and the supremacy of the pope established by a grant from the tyrant Phocas, in the very same year of Christ, 606; though neither arrived at their full height of power till a considerable time thereafter: see Supplementary Note on *ch.* vii. 20. But the precise time of the beginning or ending of the periods here mentioned the event only can tell with certainty. On such subjects modesty and prudence direct us to be silent. On the whole, however, we may observe what an amazing prophecy that is, comprehending such various and great events, and extending through so many ages; from the first establishment of the Persian empire, about five hundred and thirty years before Christ, to the general resurrection! What a proof of a Divine providence, and of a Divine revelation! for who could thus declare the things that shall be, with their times and seasons, but he only who hath them in his power; whose dominion is over all, and whose kingdom endureth from generation to generation.—*Dr. J. Smith.*

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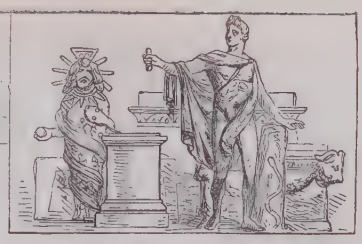


FORMS OF BAAL.

OF THE

PROPHECY OF HOSEA,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

We have now before us, I. The twelve minor prophets; which some of the ancients, in reckoning up the books of the Old Testament, put all together, and reckon but as one book. They are called the lesser prophets, not because their writings are of any less authority or usefulness than those of the greater prophets, or as if these prophets were less in God's account, or might be so in ours, than the other; but only because they are shorter, and less in bulk than the other. We have reason to think that these prophets preached as much as the other, but they did not write so much, nor is so much of their preaching kept upon record. Many excellent prophets wrote nothing, and others but little, who yet were very useful in their day. And so in the Christian church there have been many burning and shining lights, who are not known to posterity by their writings, and yet were no way inferior in gifts and graces, and serviceableness, to their own generation, than those that are; and some that have left but little behind them, and make no great figure among authors, yet were as valuable men as the more voluminous writers. These twelve small prophets, Josephus saith, were put into one volume by the men of the great synagogue in Ezra's time, of which learned and pious body of men the last three of these twelve prophets are supposed to have been themselves members; these are what remained of the scattered pieces of inspired writings. Antiquaries value the *fragmenta veterum*,—'the fragments of antiquity;' these are the fragments of prophecy, which are carefully gathered up by the Divine providence, and the care of the church, that nothing might be lost; as St. Paul's short epistles after his long ones. The son of Sirach speaks of these twelve prophets with honour, as men that strengthened Jacob, *Eccl.* xlix. 10. Nine of these prophets prophesied before the captivity, and the last three after the return of the Jews to their own land. Some difference there is in the order of these books. We place them as the ancient Hebrew did, and all agree to put Hosea first; but the ancient Septuagint place the first six in this order, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah. The thing is not material; and if we covet to place them according to their seniority, as to some of them we shall find no certainty. II. We have before us the prophecy of Hosea, who was the first of all the writing prophets, somewhat before Isaiah; the ancients say he was of Beth-shemesh, and of the tribe of Issachar. He continued very long a prophet; the Jews reckon he prophesied near fourscore and ten years; so that, as Jerome observes, he prophesied of the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes when it was at a great distance, and lived himself to see and lament it, and to improve it when it was over, for warning to its sister kingdom. The scope of his prophecy is to discover sin, and to denounce the judgments of God against a people that would not be reformed; the style is very concise and sententious, above any of the prophets; and in some places it seems to be like the book of *Proverbs*, without connexion, and rather to be called Hosea's sayings than Hosea's sermons,—and a weighty adage may sometimes do more service than a laboured discourse. Huetius observes, that many passages in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel seem to refer to, and to be borrowed from, the prophet Hosea, who wrote a good while before them; as *Jer.* vii. 34, xvi. 9, xxv. 10, and *Eze.* xxvi. 13, speak the same with *Ho.* ii. 11, so *Eze.* xvi. 16, &c., is taken from *Ho.* ii. 8; and that promise of "serving the Lord their God, and David their king," *Jer.* xxx. 8, 9, *Eze.* xxxiv. 23, Hosea had before, *ch.* iii. 5; and *Eze.* xix. 12, is taken from *Ho.* xiii. 15. Thus one prophet confirms and corroborates another; and all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit.

A.D. 3219. B.C. 785.

CHAPTER I.

The mind of God is revealed to his prophet, and by him to the people, in the first three chapters, by signs and types; but afterwards only by discourse. In this chapter we have, I. The general title of the whole book, ver. 1. II. Some particular instructions he was ordered to give to the people of God. 1. He must convince them of their sin in going a whoring from God, by marrying a wife of whoredoms, ver. 2, 3. 2. He must foretell the ruin coming upon them for their sin, in the names of his sons, which signified God's disowning and abandoning them, ver. 5—9. 3. He must speak comfortably to the kingdom of Judah, which still retained the pure worship of God, and assure them of the salvation of the Lord, ver. 7. 4. He must give an intimation of the great mercy God had in store both for Israel and Judah in the latter days, ver. 10, 11; for in this prophecy many precious promises of mercy are mixed with the threatenings of wrath.

THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Here is, First. The prophet's name and surname, which he himself, as the other prophets, prefixeth to his prophecy for the satisfaction of all, that he is ready to attest what he writes to be of God; he sets his hand to it, as that which he will stand by. His name Hosea, or Hoshea, for it is the very same with Joshua's original name, signifies a saviour; for prophets were instruments of salvation to the people of God. So are faithful ministers; they help to save many a soul from death, by saving it from sin. His surname was Ben-beeri, or the son of Beeri. As with us now, so with them then, some had their surname from their place, as Micah the Morashite, Nahum the Elkoshite; others from their parents, as Joel the son of Bethuel, and here Hosea the son of Beeri. And perhaps they made use of that distinction when the eminency of their parents was such as would bring honour upon them; but it is a groundless conceit of the Jews that where a prophet's father is named he also was a prophet. Beeri signifies a well, which may put us in mind of the fountain of life and living waters from which prophets are drawn, and must be continually drawing.

Secondly. Here is his authority and commission; "The word of the Lord came to him." It was to him, it came with power and efficacy to him; it was revealed to him as a real thing, and not a fancy or imagination of his own; in some such way as God then discovered himself to his servants the prophets. What he said and wrote was by Divine inspiration; it was "by the word of the Lord," as St. Paul speaks concerning that which he had purely by revelation, 1 *Thes.* iv. 15. Therefore this book was always received among the canonical books of the Old Testament, which is confirmed by what is quoted out of it in the New Testament, *Mat.* ii. 15; ix. 13; xii. 7; *Rom.* ix. 25, 26; 1 *Pet.* ii. 10. For the word of the Lord endures for ever.

Thirdly. Here is a particular account of the times in which he prophesied. "In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel." We have only this general date of his prophecy, and not the date of any particular part of it, as before in *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, and *Daniel*, and afterwards in *Haggai* and *Zechariah*. Here is only one king of Israel named, though there were many more within this time, because, having mentioned the kings of Judah, there was no necessity for naming the others; and they being all wicked, he took no pleasure in naming them, nor would do them the honour. Now by this account here given of the several reigns in which Hosea prophesied, (and it should seem the word of the Lord still came to him more or less at times, throughout all these reigns,) it appears,

1. That he prophesied a long time; that he began when he was very young, which gave him the advantage of strength and sprightliness; and that he continued at his work till he was very old, which gave him the advantage of experience and authority. It was a great honour to him to be thus long employed in such good work, and a great mercy to the people to have a minister so long among them that so well knew their state and naturally cared for it; one they had been long used to, and therefore was the more likely to be useful to them. And yet, for aught appears, he did little good among them; the

longer they enjoyed him the less they regarded him. They despised his youth first, and afterwards his age.

2. That he passed through a variety of conditions. Some of these kings were very good, and, it is likely, countenanced and encouraged him; others very bad, who, we may suppose, frowned upon him and discouraged him; and yet he was still the same. God's ministers must expect to pass through honour and dishonour, evil report and good report, and must resolve in both to hold fast their integrity, and keep close to their work.

3. That he began to prophesy at a time when the judgments of God were abroad, when God was himself contending in a more immediate way with that sinful people, who fell into the hands of the Lord, before they were turned over into the hands of man. For in the days of Uzziah, and of Jeroboam, his contemporary, the dreadful earthquake was, mentioned *Zec.* xiv. 5; *Am.* i. 1. And then was the plague of locusts, *Joel* i. 2—4; *Am.* vii. 1; *Hos.* iv. 3. The rod of God is sent to enforce the word, and the word of God is sent to explain the rod; yet neither prevail till God by his Spirit opens the ear to instruction and discipline.

4. That he began to prophesy in Israel at a time when their kingdom was in a flourishing, prosperous condition, for so it was in the reign of Jeroboam the Second, as we find 2 *Kin.* xiv. 25, "He restored the coast of Israel." And God saved them by his hand; yet then Hosea boldly tells them of their sins, and foretells their destruction. Men are not to be flattered in their sinful ways, because they prosper in the world, but even then must be faithfully reproved, and plainly told that their prosperity will not be their security, nor will it last long, if they go on still in their trespasses.

2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, *departing* from the LORD. 3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son. 4 And the LORD said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little *while*, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5 And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. 6 And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And *God* said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. 7 But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

These words, "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea," may refer either, 1. To that glorious set of prophets which was raised up about this time. At this time there lived and prophesied, Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah, Obadiah, and Isaiah; but Hosea was the first of them that foretold the destruction of Israel: the "beginning of this word of the Lord" was by him. We read in the history of this Jeroboam here named, (2 *Kin.* xiv. 27,) that the Lord had not yet said he would blot out the name of Israel; but soon after he said he would, and Hosea was the man that began to say it, which made it so much the harder task to him, to be the first that should carry an unpleasing message, and some time before any were raised up to second him. Or, rather, 2. To Hosea's own prophecies. This was the first message God sent him upon to this people, to tell them that they were "an evil and an adulterous generation." He might have desired to be excused from dealing so roughly with them till he had gained authority and reputation, and some interest in their affections. No, he must begin with this, that they might know what to expect from a prophet of the Lord. Nay, he must not only preach this to them, but he must write it, and publish it, and leave it upon record, as a witness against them. Now here,

First. The prophet must, as it were in a looking-glass, shew them their sin; and shew it them to be exceedingly sinful, exceedingly hateful. The prophet is ordered to take unto him "a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms," ver. 2; and he did so, ver. 3. He married a woman of ill fame, "Gomer the daughter of Diblaim;" not one that had been married and had committed adultery, for then she must have been put to death, but one that had lived scandalously in the single state. To marry such a one was not *malum in se*,—'evil in itself,' but only *malum per accidens*,—'incidentally an evil,' not prudent, decent or expedient, and therefore forbidden to the priests; and which, if it were really done, would be an affliction to the prophet, (it is threatened as a curse on Amaziah that his wife should be a harlot, *Am.* vii. 17,) but not a sin, when God commanded it for a holy end; nay, if commanded, it was his duty, and he must trust God with his reputation. But most think it was done in vision, or that it is no more than a parable, and that was a way of teaching commonly used among the ancients, particularly the prophets; what they meant of others they "transferred to themselves in a figure," as St. Paul speaks, 1 *Cor.* iv. 6. He must take a wife of whoredoms, and have such children by her as every one would suspect, though born in wedlock, to be children of whoredoms begotten in adultery; because it is too common for those that have lived lewdly in the single state to live no better in the married state. Now, (saith God,) Hosea, this people is to thee such a dishonour, and such a grief and vexation, as a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms, would be to thee; "for the land has committed great whoredom." In all instances of wickedness they had departed from the Lord, but their idolatry especially is the whoredom they are here charged with. Giving that glory to any creature which is due to God alone is such an injury and affront to God as for a wife to embrace the bosom of a stranger is to her husband. It is especially so in those that have made a profession of religion, and have been taken into covenant with God; it is breaking the marriage bond, it is a heinous, odious sin, and as much as any other besots the mind and takes away the heart. Idolatry is great whoredom, worse than any other; it is departing from the Lord, to whom we lie under greater obligations than any wife doth or can do to a husband. The land has committed whoredom; it is not here and there a particular person that is guilty of idolatry, but the whole land is polluted with it; the sin is become national, the disease epidemical. What an odious thing would it be for the prophet, a holy man, to have a whorish wife, and children whorish like her? What an exercise would it be of his patience; and, if she persisted in it, what other could be expected but that he should give her a bill of divorce? And is it not then much more offensive to the holy God, to have such a people as this to be called by his name, and have a place in his house? How great is his patience with them, and how justly may he cast them off! It was as if he should have married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, who probably was at that time a noted harlot. The land of Israel was like Gomer the daughter of Diblaim. Gomer signifies, 'corruption;' Diblaim signifies, 'two cakes or lumps of figs.' This notes that Israel was near to ruin, and that their luxury and sensuality was the cause of it; they were as "the evil figs that could not be eaten, they were so evil." It speaks sin the daughter of plenty, and destruction the daughter of the abuse of plenty. Some give this sense of the command here given to the prophet, Go, take thee a wife of whoredoms, for if thou shouldst go to seek for an honest, modest woman, thou wouldst not find any such, for the whole land and all the people of it is given to whoredom, the usual concomitant of idolatry.

Secondly. The prophet must, as it were through a perspective glass, shew them their ruin; and this he doth in the names given to the children born of this adulteress; for, as lust when it has conceived bringeth forth sin, so sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

1. He foretells the fall of the royal family, in the name he is appointed to give to his first child, which was a son; "Call his name Jezreel," ver. 4. We find that the prophet Isaiah gave prophetical names to his children, *Isa.* vii. 3, viii. 3, so this prophet here. Jezreel signifies the seed of God, so they should have been; but it signifies also the scattered of God: they shall be as sheep on the mountains, that have no shepherd. Call them not Israel, which signifies dominion, they have lost all the honour of that name; but call them Jezreel, which signifies dispersion, for they that have departed from the Lord will wander endlessly. Hitherto they have been scattered as seed; let them now be scattered as chaff. Jezreel was the name of one of the royal seats of the kings of Israel. It was a beautiful city, seated in a pleasant valley, and it is with allusion to that city that this child is called Jezreel; for "yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." Observe here,

1st. Who it is that God has a controversy with. It is the house of Jehu, from whom the present king, Jeroboam, was lineally descended. The house of Jehu smarted for the sins of Jehu; for God often lays up men's iniquity for their children, and visits it upon them. It is "the kingdom of the house of Israel," which may be meant either of the present royal family, that of Jehu, which God did presently cause to cease, (for the son of this Jeroboam, Zechariah, reigned but six months, and he was the last of Jehu's race,) or of the whole kingdom in general, which continued corrupt and wicked, and which was made to cease in the reign of Hoshea, about seventy years after, and with God that is but a little while. Note, Neither the pomp of kings nor the power of kingdoms can secure them from God's destroying judgments, if they continue to rebel against him.

2nd. What is the ground of this controversy. "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu;" that is, the blood which Jehu shed at Jezreel when, by commission from God, and in obedience to his command, he utterly destroyed the house of Ahab, and all that were in alliance with it, with all the worshippers of Baal. God approved of what he did; 2 *Kin.* x. 30, "Thou hast done well, in executing that which is right in mine eyes;" and yet here God will avenge that blood upon the house of Jehu, when the time is expired during which it was promised his family should reign, even to the fourth generation. But how comes the same action to be both rewarded and punished? Very justly. The matter of it was good; it was the execution of a righteous sentence passed upon the house of Ahab, and as such it was rewarded. But Jehu did it not in a right manner: he aimed at his own advancement, not at the glory of God, and mingled his own resentments with the execution of God's justice; he did it with a malice against the sinners, but not with any antipathy to the sin, for he kept up the worship of the golden calves, and "took no heed to walk in the law of God," 2 *Kin.* x. 31; and therefore, when the measure of the iniquity of his house was full, and God came to reckon with them, the first article in the account is (and being first it is put for all the rest) for the blood of the house of Ahab, here called the blood of Jezreel. Thus, when the house of Baasha was rooted out, it was because he did "like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him," 1 *Kin.* xvi. 7. Note, Those that are intrusted with the administration of justice are concerned to see to it that they do it from a right principle, and with a right intention, and that they do not themselves live in those sins which they punish in others, lest even their just executions should be reckoned for another day as little less than murders.

3rd. How far the controversy shall proceed. It shall be, not a correction, but a destruction. Some make those words, 'I will visit or appoint the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu,' to signify, not as we read it, the revenging of that bloodshed, but the repeating of that bloodshed; I will punish the house of Jehu as I punished the house of Ahab, because Jehu did not take warning by the punishment of his predecessors, but trod in the steps of their idolatry. And after the house of Jehu is destroyed, "I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel;" that is, I will begin to bring it down, though now it flourish. After the death of Zechariah, the last of the house of Jehu, the kingdoms of the ten tribes went to decay and dwindled insensibly. And, in order to the ruin of it, it is threatened, ver. 5, "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel;" 'the strength of the warriors of Israel,' so the Chaldee. God will disable them, either to defend themselves, or to resist their enemies. As the bow abiding in strength, and being renewed in the hand, speaks a growing power, so the breaking of the bow speaks a sinking, ruined power. The bow shall be broken in the valley of Jezreel, where probably the armoury was; or, it may be, in that valley some battle was fought, wherein the kingdom of Israel was very much weakened. Note, There is no fence against God's controversy. When he comes forth against a people, their strong bows are soon broken, and their strongholds broken down. In the valley of Jezreel they shed that blood which the righteous God would in that very place avenge upon them; as some notorious malefactors are hanged in chains where the villany they suffer for was perpetrated, that the punishment may answer the sin.

2. He foretells God's abandoning the whole nation, in the name he gives to the second child. This was a daughter, as the former was a son, to intimate that both sons and daughters had corrupted their way. Some make it to signify that Israel grew effeminate, and was thereby enfeebled and made weak. Call the name of this daughter Lo-ruhamah, that is, "not beloved," so it is

translated, *Rom.* ix. 25; or, "not having obtained mercy," so it is translated, 1 *Pet.* ii. 10; it comes all to one. This reads the doom of the house of Israel; "I will no more have mercy" upon them. This intimates that God had shewed them great mercy, but they had abused his favours, and forfeited them, and now he would shew them favour no more. Note, Those that forsake their own mercies for lying vanities have reason to expect that their own mercies should forsake them, and that they should be left to their lying vanities, *Jonah* ii. 8. Sin turns away the mercy of God, even from the house of Israel, his own professing people, whose case is sad indeed when God saith he will no more have mercy upon them. And then it follows, "I will utterly take them away;" will utterly remove them, so some; will utterly pluck them up, so others. Note, When the streams of mercy are stopped we can expect no other but that the vials of wrath should be opened. Those whom God will no more have mercy upon shall be utterly taken away, as dross and dung. The word for taking away sometimes signifies to forgive sin, and some take it in that sense here. 'I will no more have mercy upon them, though in pardoning I have pardoned them heretofore.' Though God has borne long, he will not bear always with a people that hate to be reformed. Or, 'I will no more have mercy upon them, that I should in any wise pardon them;' or, (as our margin reads it,) 'that I should altogether pardon them.' If pardoning mercy is denied, no other mercy can be expected, for that opens the door to all the rest. Some make this to speak comfort, 'I will no more have mercy upon them, till in pardoning I shall pardon them;' that is, till the Redeemer comes to Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The Chaldee reads it, 'But if they repent, in pardoning I will pardon them.' Even the greatest sinners, if in time they bethink themselves and return, will find that there is forgiveness with God.

Thirdly. He must shew them what mercy God had in store for the house of Judah, at the same time that he was thus contending with the house of Israel; ver. 7, "But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah." Note, Though some are justly cast off for their disobedience, yet God will always secure to himself a remnant that shall be the vessels and monuments of mercy. When Divine justice is glorified in some, yet there are others in whom free grace is glorified. And though some, through unbelief, are broken off, yet God will have a church in this world till the end of time. It aggravates the rejection of Israel, that God will have mercy on Judah, and not on them; and magnifies God's mercy to Judah that, though they also had done wickedly, yet God did not reject them as he rejected Israel. "I will have mercy upon them, and will save them." Note, Our salvation is owing purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Now,

1. This, without doubt, refers to the temporal salvations which God wrought for Judah in a distinguishing way, the favours shewed to them, and not to Israel. When the Assyrian armies had destroyed Samaria, and carried the ten tribes away into captivity, they proceeded to besiege Jerusalem; but God had mercy on the house of Judah, and saved them, by the vast slaughter which an angel made in one night in the camp of the Assyrians. Then they were saved by the Lord their God immediately, and not by sword or bow, when the ten tribes were continued in their captivity, and their land was possessed by others; when, being utterly taken away, God had mercy on the house of Judah, and saved them, and after seventy years brought them back, "not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts," *Zec.* iv. 6. "I will save them by the Lord their God," that is, by myself. God will be exalted in his own strength, will take the work into his hands. That salvation is sure which he undertakes to be the author of, for, if he will work, none shall hinder; and that salvation is most acceptable which he doth by himself. So the Lord alone did lead him. The less there is of man in any salvation, and the more of God, the brighter it shines, and the sweeter it tastes. 'I will save them in the word of the Lord,' so the Chaldee, for the sake of Christ, the eternal Word, and by his power. "I will save them, not by bow, nor by sword;" that is, 1st. They shall be saved, when they are reduced to so low an ebb that they have neither bow nor sword to defend themselves with, *Jud.* v. 8; 1 *Sam.* xiii. 22. 2nd. They shall be saved by the Lord, then when they are brought off from trusting to their own strength and their weapons of war, *Ps.* xliv. 6. 3rd. They shall be saved easily, without the trouble of sword and bow, *Isa.* ix. 5. I will save them by the Lord their God. In calling him their God, he upbraids the ten tribes who had cast him off from being theirs, for which reason he had cast them off, and intimates what was the true reason why he had mercy, distinguishing mercy, for the house of Judah, and saved them: it was in pursuance of his covenant with them as the Lord their God, and in recompense for their faithful adherence to him, and to his word and worship. But,

2. This may refer also to the salvation of Judah from idolatry, which qualified and prepared them for their other salvations. And this is indeed a salvation "by the Lord their God;" it is wrought only by the power of his grace, and can never be wrought by sword or bow. Just at the time that the kingdom of Israel was utterly taken away under Hosea, the kingdom of Judah was gloriously reformed under Hezekiah, and was therefore preserved. And in Babylon God saved them from their idolatry first, and then from their captivity.

3. Some make this promise to look forward to the great salvation which in the fulness of time was to be wrought out by the Lord our God, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save his people from their sins.

8 Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. 9 Then said *God*, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye *are* not my people, and I will not be your *God*. 10 Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, Ye *are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God. 11 Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great *shall be* the day of Jezreel.

We have here a prediction,

First. Of the rejection of Israel for a time, which is signified by the name of another child that Hosea had by his adulterous spouse, ver. 8, 9. And still we must observe that those children whose names carried these direful omens in them to Israel were all "children of whoredoms," ver. 2, all born of that harlot that Hosea married, to intimate that the ruin of Israel was the natural product of the sin of Israel. If they had not first revolted from God, they had never been rejected by him. God never leaves any till they first leave him. Here is,

1. The birth of this child. "When she had weaned" her daughter, "she conceived and bare a son." Notice is taken of the delay of the birth of this child, which was to carry in its name a certain presage of their utter rejection; to intimate God's patience with them, and his lothness to proceed to extremity. Some think her bearing another son signifies that, by people's persisting in their wickedness, lust still conceived and brought forth sin. They 'added to do evil,' so the Chaldee paraphrase expounds it. They were old in adulteries, and obstinate.

2. The name given him. "Call him Lo-ammi;" that is, "Not my people." When they were told that God would no more have mercy on them, they regarded it not, but buoyed up themselves with this conceit, that they were God's people, whom he could not but have mercy on; and therefore here he plucks that staff from under them, and disowns all relation to them; "Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God." 'I will not be yours,' so the word is; I will be in no relation to you, will have nothing to do with you; I will not be your king, your father, your patron, and protector. We supply it very well with that which includes all; "I will not be your God." I will not be to you what I have been, nor what you vainly expect I should be; nor what I would have been, if you had kept close to me. Observe, "You are not my people;" that is, you do not carry it as becomes my people; you are not observant of me, and obedient to me, as my people should be; you are not my people, but the people of this and the other dunghill deity, and therefore I will not own you for my people, will not protect you, will not put in any claim to you, nor demand you, nor deliver you out of the hands of those that have seized you. Let them take you, you are none of mine; you will not have me to be your God, but pay your homage to the pretenders, and therefore I will not be your God; you shall have no interest in me, shall expect no benefit by me. Note, Our being taken into covenant with God is owing purely to him and to his grace, for then it begins on his side; "I will be to them a God," and then they shall "be to me a people;" "we love him because he first loved us." But our being cast out of covenant is owing purely to ourselves, and our own folly. The breach is on man's side; "You are not my people," and therefore "I will not be your God." If God hates any, it is because they first hated him. This was fulfilled in Israel, when they were utterly taken away into the land of Assyria, and their place knew them no more. They were no longer God's people, for they lost the knowledge and worship of him; no prophets were sent them, no promises made them, as were to the two tribes in their captivity. Nay, they were no longer a people, but, for aught appears, were mingled with the nations into which they were carried, and lost among them.

Secondly. Of the reduction and restoration of Israel in the fulness of time. Here, as before, mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath; the rejection, as it shall not be total, so it shall not be final; ver. 10, 11, "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea." See how the same hand that wounded is stretched forth to heal, and how tenderly he that has torn binds up. Though God cause grief by his threatenings, yet he will have compassion, and will gather with everlasting kindness. They are very precious promises that are here made concerning the Israel of God, and which may be of use to us now.

1. Some think these promises had their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when many of the ten tribes joined themselves to Judah, and took the benefit of the liberty which Cyrus proclaimed, came up in great numbers out of the several countries into which they were dispersed, to their own land, appointed Zerubbabel their head, and coalesced into one people, whereas before they had been two distinct nations. And in their own land, where God had, by his prophets, disowned and rejected them as none of his, he would by his prophets own them and appear for them as his children; and from all parts of the country they shall come up to the temple to worship. And we have reason to think that, though this promise has a farther reference, yet it was graciously intended, and piously used, for the support and comfort of the captives in Babylon, as giving them a general assurance of mercy God had in store for them and their land. Their nation could not be destroyed so long as this blessing was in it, was in reserve for it.

2. Some think these promises will not have their accomplishment, at least not in full, till the general conversion of the Jews in the latter days, which is expected yet to come, when the vast incredible numbers of Jews, that are now dispersed as the sand of the sea, shall be brought to embrace the faith of Christ, and be incorporated in the gospel church. Then, and not till then, God will own them as his people, his children, even there where they had lain under the dismal tokens of their rejection. The Jewish doctors look upon this promise as not having had its accomplishment yet. But,

3. It is certain this promise had its accomplishment in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, and the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles to it; for to this these words are applied by St. Paul, *Rom.* ix. 25, 26; and by St. Peter, when he writes to the Jews of the dispersion, 1 *Pet.* ii. 10. Israel here is the gospel church, the spiritual Israel, *Gal.* vi. 16; all believers who follow the steps, and inherit the blessing, of faithful Abraham, who is the father of all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, *Rom.* iv. 11, 12. Now let us see what is promised concerning this Israel:

1st. That it shall greatly multiply, and the numbers of it be increased. It shall be "as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured, nor numbered." Though Israel, according to the flesh, be diminished and made few, the spiritual Israel shall be numerous, shall be innumerable. In the vast multitudes that, by the preaching of the Gospel, have been brought to Christ, both in the first ages of Christianity and ever since, this promise is fulfilled—thousands out of every tribe of Israel, and out of other nations, "a multitude which no man can number," *Rev.* vii. 4, 9; *Gal.* iv. 27. In this the promise made to Abram, when God called him Abraham, the high father of a multitude, had its full accomplishment, *Gen.* xvii. 5, and then *Gen.* xxii. 17. Some observe that they are here compared to the sand of the sea, not only for their numbers, but, as the sand of the sea serves for a boundary to the waters, that they shall not overflow the earth, so the Israelites indeed are a wall of defence to the places where they live, to keep off judgments. God can do nothing against Sodom while Lot is there.

2nd. That God will renew his covenant with the gospel Israel, and will incorporate it a church to himself, by as full and ample a charter as that whereby the Old Testament church was incorporated; nay, and its privileges shall be much greater. "In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people," there shall ye be again admitted into covenant, and owned as my people. The abandoned Gentiles, in their respective places, and the rejected Jews in theirs, shall be favoured and blessed. There, where the fathers were cast off for their unbelief, the children upon their believing shall be taken in. This is a blessed resurrection, the making of those the people of God that were not a people. Nay, but the privilege is enlarged; now it is not only, Ye are my people, as formerly, but, "Ye are the sons of the living God," whether by birth ye were Jews or Gentiles. Israel under the law was God's son, his

firstborn, but then they were as children under age; but now, under the Gospel, they are grown up both to greater understanding and greater liberty, *Gal.* iv. 1, 2. Note, *First.* It is the unspeakable privilege of all believers that they have the living God for their Father, the ever-living God, and may look upon themselves as his children by grace and adoption. *Secondly.* The sonship of believers shall be owned and acknowledged. It shall be said to them for their comfort and satisfaction, nay, and it shall be said for their honour, in the hearing of the world, "Ye are the sons of the living God." Let not the saints disquiet themselves, let not others despise them, for sooner or later there shall be a manifestation of the children of God, and all the world shall be made to know their excellency, and the value God has for them. *Thirdly.* It will add much to their comfort, very much to their honour, when they are dignified with the tokens of God's favour in that very place where they had lain long under the tokens of his displeasure. This speaks comfort to the believing Gentiles, that they need not go up to Jerusalem to be received and owned as God's children; no, they may stay where they are, and in that place, though it be in the remotest corner of the earth,—in that place where they were at a distance, where it was said to them, "You are not God's people," but are separated from them, *Isa.* lvi. 3, 6, even there, without leaving your country and kindred, you may, by faith, receive the spirit of adoption, witnessing with your spirits that you are the children of God.

3rd. That those who had been at variance should be happily brought together; ver. 11, "Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together." This uniting of Judah and Israel, those two kingdoms that were now so much at variance, biting and devouring one another, is mentioned only as a specimen, or one instance, of the happy effect of the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, the bringing of those that had been at the greatest enmity one against another to a good understanding one of another, and a good affection one to another. This was literally fulfilled when the Galileans, who inhabited the part of that country which belonged to the ten tribes, and probably, for the most part, were descended from them, so heartily joined with those that were properly called Jews, (that were of Judæa,) in following Christ, and embracing his Gospel; and his first disciples were partly Jews and partly Galileans. The first that were blessed with the light of the Gospel were of the land of Zebulun and Napthali, *Mat.* iv. 15; and, though there was no goodwill at all between the Jews and the Galileans, yet, upon their believing in Christ, they were happily consolidated, and there were no remains of the former disaffection they had to one another; nay, when the Samaritans believed, though between them and the Jews there was a much greater enmity, yet in Christ there was a perfect unanimity, *Acts* viii. 14. Thus Judah and Israel were gathered together. Yet this is but a type of the much more celebrated coalition between Jews and Gentiles, when by the death of Christ the partition wall of the ceremonial law was taken down: see *Eph.* ii. 14—16. Christ died to "gather together in one all the children of God that were scattered abroad," *Jno.* xi. 52; *Eph.* i. 10.

4th. That Jesus Christ should be the centre of unity to God and all spiritual Israel. They shall all agree to appoint to themselves one head, which can be no other but he whom God hath appointed, even Christ. Note, Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the one only head of it; not only a head of government, as of the body politic, but a head of vital influence, as of the natural body. To believe in Christ is to appoint him to ourselves for our head, that is, to consent to God's appointment, and willingly to commit ourselves to his guidance and government; and this in concurrence and communion with all good Christians that make him their head, so that, though they are many, yet in him they are one, and so become one with each other. *Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt,*—'Those who agree with a third agree with each other.'

5th. That having appointed Christ for their head, "they shall come up out of the land;" that is, they shall come, some of all sorts, from all parts, to join themselves to the church, as under the Jewish economy they came up from all corners of the land of Israel to Jerusalem, to worship; *Ps.* cxxii. 4, "Thither the tribes go up." To which there is a plain allusion in that prophecy of the accession of the Gentiles to the church, *Isa.* ii. 3, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord." It speaks not a local removal, for they are said to be in the same place, ver. 10, but a change of their minds, a spiritual ascent to Christ. They shall come up from the earth, so it may be read; for those that have given up themselves to Christ as their head take their affections off from this earth, and the things of it, to set them upon things above, *Col.* iii. 1, 2, for they are not of the world, *Jno.* xv. 19, but have their conversation in heaven. They shall come up out of the land, though it be the land of their nativity; they shall in affection come out from it, that they may follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. Thus the learned Dr. Pocock takes it.

6th. That when all this comes to pass, "Great shall be the day of Jezreel." Though great is the day of Jezreel's affliction, (so some understand it,) yet great shall be the day of Jezreel's glory. This shall be Israel's day; the day shall be their own, after their enemies have long had their day. Israel is here called Jezreel, the seed of God, the holy seed, *Isa.* vi. 13, the substance of the land. This seed is now sown in the earth, and buried under the clods; but great shall be its day when the harvest comes. Great was the church's day, when there were "added to it daily such as should be saved." Then did the Almighty do great things for it.

CHAPTER II.

The scope of this chapter seems to be much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, and to point at the same events, and the causes of them. As there, so here, I. God, by the prophets, discovers sin to them, and chargeth it home upon them, the sin of their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, their serving idols, and forgetting God and their obligations to him, ver. 1, 2, 5, 8. II. He threatens to take away from them that plenty of all good things with which they had served their idols, and to abandon them to ruin without remedy, ver. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9—13. III. Yet he promiseth at last to return in ways of mercy to them, for his own sake, ver. 14; to restore them to their former plenty, ver. 15; to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, ver. 16, 17; to renew the covenant with them, ver. 18—20; and to bless them with all good things, ver. 21—23.

SAY ye unto your brethren, Ammi;
And to your sisters, Ruhamah.
2 Plead with your mother, plead:
For she *is* not my wife,
Neither *am I* her husband:
Let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight,
And her adulteries from between her breasts;
3 Lest I strip her naked,
And set her as in the day that she was born,
And make her as a wilderness,
And set her like a dry land,
And slay her with thirst.
4 And I will not have mercy upon her children;
For they *be* the children of whoredoms.
5 For their mother hath played the harlot:
She that conceived them hath done shamefully:
For she said, I will go after my lovers,
That give *me* my bread and my water,
My wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

The first words of this chapter some make the close of the foregoing chapter, and add it to the promises which we have there of the great things God would do for them. When they shall have appointed Christ their head, and centred in him, then let them say to one another with triumph and exultation, 'let the prophets say it to them,' so the Chaldee, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," is now their commission; say to them, Ammi, and Ruhamah, call them so again, for they shall no longer lie under the reproach and doom of Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah. They shall now be my people again, and obtain mercy. God's spiritual Israel, made up of Jews and Gentiles without distinction, shall call one another brethren and sisters, shall own one another for the people of God, and beloved of him, and for that reason shall embrace one another, and stir up one another, both to give thanks for, and to walk worthy of, this common salvation which they partake of. Or, rather, because the following words seem to have coherence with these, these also are designed for conviction and humiliation. The mother (ver. 2) seems to be the same with the brethren and sisters, (ver. 1,) the church of the ten tribes, the body of the people, which were brethren, and in a special manner with the heads and leaders, which were as the mother by whom the rest were brought up and nursed. But who are the children that must plead with their mother thus? Either, 1. The godly that were among them, that witnessed against the iniquities of the times. Let them boldly go on to bear their testimony against the idolatries and gross corruptions that prevail amongst them. Let them that had not bowed the knee to Baal reason the case with those that had, and endeavour to convince them with such arguments as are here put in their mouths. Note, Private persons may and ought, in their places, to appear and plead against the public profanations of God's name and worship. Children may humbly and modestly argue with their parents, when they do amiss. "Plead with your mother," plead as Jonathan with Saul, concerning David. Or, 2. The sufferers that were among them, that shared in the calamities of the times, let them not complain of God, let them not quarrel with him, or lay the blame on him, as if he had dealt hardly with them, and not like a tender father; no, let them plead with their mother, and lay the fault on her, where it ought to be laid: compare *Isa.* l. 1, "for her transgressions is your mother put away." She may thank herself, and you may thank her, for all your miseries. Let us see now how they must plead with her.

First. They must put her in mind of the relation wherein she had stood to God, the kindness he had had for her, the many favours he had bestowed upon her, and the farther favours he had designed her. Let them tell their brethren and sisters that they had been Ammi and Ruhamah. They had been God's people, and vessels of his mercy, and might have been so still, if it had not been their own fault, ver. 1. Note, Our relation to God, and dependence on him, is a great aggravation of our revolts from him, and rebellions against him.

Secondly. They must, in God's name, charge her with the violation of the marriage covenant between her and God. Let them tell her that God doth not look upon her as his wife, nor upon himself as her husband any longer. Tell her, ver. 2, that "she is not my wife, neither am I her husband," that by her spiritual whoredom she has forfeited all the honour and comfort of her relation to God, and provoked him to give her a bill of divorce. Note, No consideration can be more powerful to awaken us to repentance than the provocation we have by sin given to God to disown and cast us off. It is time to look about us, and to think what course we must take, when God threatens to reject us; for woe unto us if he be not our husband. They must charge this home upon her; ver. 5, "Their mother has played the harlot;" 'their congregation hath run a whoring after false prophets,' so the Chaldee; or rather after idols, wherein they were encouraged by their false prophets: "she that conceived them hath done shamefully," in making and worshipping idols. An idol is called a shame, *ch.* ix. 10, and idolatry is a shameful thing. It is not only an affront to God, but a reproach to men, to "fall down to the stock of a tree," as the prophet speaks; or it notes that the sinner was shameless, impudent in sin, and could not blush, *Jer.* vi. 15, or, "she has made ashamed," has made all that see her ashamed of her; her own children are ashamed of their relation to her.

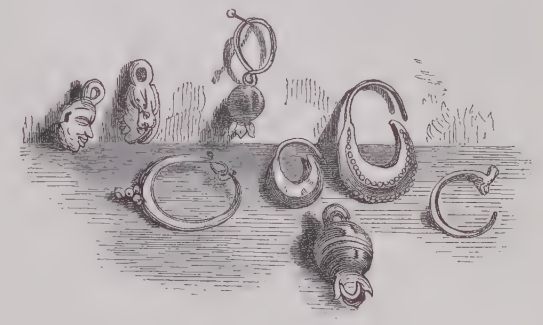
Thirdly. They must upbraid her with her horrid ingratitude to God her benefactor, in ascribing to her idols the glory of the gifts he had given her, and then giving that for a reason why she paid them the homage due to him only, ver. 5. In this she did shamefully indeed, that she said, "I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water." Observe here, 1. Her wicked resolution to persist in idolatry, notwithstanding all that God said, both by his prophets and by his providences, to draw her from it. She said, whatever is offered to the contrary, "I will go after my lovers;" or 'those that cause me to love them,' whom I cannot but be in love with. The Chaldee understands it of the nations whose alliance Israel courted and depended upon, who supplied them with what they needed. But it is rather to be understood of the idols they worshipped, to justify their love of which they call them their lovers. See who do shamefully; those that are wilful and resolute in sin, and those that openly profess and own their resolution to go on in it. See the folly of idolaters to call those their lovers that had not so much as life! Yet let us learn to call our God our lover; let us keep up good thoughts of him, and put a high value upon our interest in him, and in his love. 2. The gross mistake upon which this resolution was grounded; "I will go after my lovers," because "they give me my bread and my water," which are necessary to sustain the body; "my wool and my flax," which are necessary to clothe the body; and pleasant things, "my oil and my drink,"—my liquors, so the word is,—wine and strong drink. Note, 1st. The things of sense are the best things with carnal hearts, and the most powerful attractives; and in pursuit of which they care not what they follow after. The God of Israel set before them his statutes and judgments, *Deu.* iv. 6, "more to be desired than gold, and sweeter than honey," *Ps.* xix. 10; promised them his favour, which would put "gladness into their hearts more than corn, wine, and oil," *Ps.* iv. 7. But they had no relish at all for these things;

whence they thought their oil and their drink came, thither they would return their best affections. *O curvæ in terram animæ et cœlestium inanes!*—'O degenerate minds, bending towards the earth, and devoid of every thing heavenly!' 2nd. It is a great abuse and injury to God, in pursuance of the pleasures and delights of sense to forsake him, who not only gives us better things, but gives even those things too. The idolaters made Ceres the goddess of their corn, Bacchus the god of their wine, &c., and then foolishly fancied they had their corn and wine from these, forgetting the Lord their God, who both gave them that good land and gave them power to get wealth out of it. 3rd. Many are hardened in sin by their worldly prosperity. They had an abundance of those things when they served their idols, and then imagined them to be given them by their idols, which kept them to their service. Thus they argued, *Jer.* xliv. 17, 18, "While we burnt incense to the queen of heaven we had plenty of victuals."

Fourthly. They must persuade her to repent and reform. God will disown her if she persist in her whoredoms; let her therefore put away her whoredoms, ver. 2; let her be convinced that it is possible she may reform. The idols, as dear as they are, may yet be parted with, and it will certainly be well with her if she do reform. Note, Our pleading with sinners must be to drive them to repentance, not to drive them to despair. Let "her put away her whoredoms and her adulteries." The doubling of the words to the same purpose, and both plural, notes the abundance of idolatries that they were guilty of, all which must be abandoned ere God would be reconciled to them. Let her put them out of her sight, as detestable things which she cannot endure to look upon; let her say unto them, "Get ye hence," *Isa.* xxx. 22. Let her put them from her face and "from between her breasts," that is, let her not do as harlots use to do, that both discover their own wicked disposition and allure others to wickedness, by painting their faces, and exposing their naked breasts, and adorning them. Let her not thus, by annexing all possible gaieties and pleasures to the worship of idols, engage herself and allure others to it. Let her put away all these. Every sinful course persisted in is an adulterous departure from God; and here we may see what it is truly to repent of it, and turn from it. 1. True penitents will forsake both open sins and secret sins; will put away not only the whoredoms that lie in sight, but those that lie in secret, between their breasts, the sin that is "rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel." 2. They will both avoid the outward occasions of sin and mortify the inward disposition to it. Idolaters walked after their own eyes, which went a whoring after their idols, *Eze.* vi. 9; *Deu.* iv. 19, and therefore they must put them away out of their sight, lest they should be tempted to worship them: "Look not upon the wine when it is red." But that is not enough: the axe must be laid to the root; the corrupt bent and inclination of the heart must be changed; and it must be put away from between the breasts, that Christ alone may have the innermost and uppermost place there, *Cant.* i. 13.

Fifthly. They must shew her the utter ruin that will certainly be the fatal consequence of her sin, if she do not repent and reform; ver. 3, "Lest I strip her naked." This comes in here not by way of sentence passed upon her, but by way of warning given to her, that she may prevent it. 'Let her put away her whoredoms, that I may not strip her naked,' so it may be read; intimating that God waits to shew mercy to sinners, if they would but qualify themselves for that mercy. It is here threatened that God will deal with her as the just and jealous husband at length doth with an adulterous wife, that hath filled his house with a spurious brood, and will not be reclaimed,—he turns her and her children out of doors, and sends them a begging. "I will not have mercy upon her children," ver. 4. The particular persons that share in the calamity of the nation, and the rising generation, shall be ruined by it; for they are the "children of whoredoms," and keep up the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers. Now it is here threatened that they shall be both stripped and starved. They thought their idols gave them their bread and their water, their wool and their flax, but God, by taking them away, will let them know it was he that gave them. 1. She shall be stripped. "Lest I strip her" of all her ornaments which she is proud of, and with which she courts her lovers; strip her, and set her "as in the day that she was born," that is, send her as naked out of the world as she came into it. This death doth, *Job* i. 21. "I will strip her," and so expose her to cold, and expose her to shame; and justly is she exposed to shame that did shamefully, ver. 5. The day when God brought them out of Egypt, where they were no better than slaves and beggars, was the day in which they were born; and God threatens to bring them back to as low and miserable a condition as he then found them in. Whatever they had that either gained them respect or screened them from contempt among their neighbours should be taken from them: see *Eze.* xvi. 4, 39. 2. She shall be starved; shall be deprived not only of her honours, but of her comforts and necessary supports. She shall be famished; shall be made as a wilderness, and a dry land, and slain with thirst. She that boasted so much of her bread and water, her oil and her drinks, which her lovers had given her, shall not have so much as necessary food. The land shall not afford subsistence for the inhabitants, for want of the rain of heaven; or, if it do, it shall be taken from them by the enemy, so that the rightful owners shall perish for want of it. Some understand it thus, I will make her as she was in the wilderness, and set her as she was in the desert land, where she was sometimes ready to perish for thirst. So it explains the former part of the verse; I will set her "as in the day that she was born," for it was in that vast howling wilderness that Israel was first formed into a people. They shall be in as deplorable a condition as their fathers were in, whose carcases fell in the wilderness, and in this respect worse, that then the children were reserved to be heirs of the land of promise; but now, "I will not have mercy upon her children," for their mother hath played the harlot.

6 Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns,
And make a wall,
That she shall not find her paths.
7 And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them;
And she shall seek them, but shall not find *them:*
Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband;
For then *was it* better with me than now.
8 For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil,
And multiplied her silver and gold,
Which they prepared for Baal.
9 Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof,
And my wine in the season thereof,
And will recover my wool and my flax
Given to cover her nakedness.
10 And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers,
And none shall deliver her out of mine hand.
11 I will also cause all her mirth to cease,
Her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths,
And all her solemn feasts.
12 And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees,
Whereof she hath said, These *are* my rewards
That my lovers have given me:
And I will make them a forest,
And the beasts of the field shall eat them.
13 And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim,
Wherein she burned incense to them,
And she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels,



EGYPTIAN EARRINGS.

And she went after her lovers,
And forgat me, saith the LORD.

HEDGE OF THORNS.—THE FICUS INDICUS.

God here goes on to threaten what he would do with this treacherous, idolatrous people, and therefore he warns that he may not wound, therefore he threatens that he may not strike. "If he turn not, he will whet his sword," *Ps.* vii. 12, but if he turn, he will sheathe it. They did not turn, and therefore all this came upon them; and its being threatened before shews that it was the execution of a Divine sentence upon them for their wickedness; and it is written for admonition to us.

First. They shall be perplexed and embarrassed in all their counsels, and disappointed in all their expectations. This is threatened, ver. 6, 7. But to the threatening is annexed a promise, that this shall be a means to convince them of their folly, and bring them home to their duty; and so good shall be brought out of evil, in token of the mercy God has yet in reserve for them. And this being the happy fruit and effect of the distress, it is hard to say whether the prediction or the distress itself should be called a threatening or a promise.

1. God will raise up difficulties and troubles in their way, so that their public counsels and affairs shall have no success, nor shall they be able to get forward in them. "I will hedge up thy way with thorns," that is, with such crosses as,

like thorns and briers, are the product of sin and the curse, and are scratching, and tearing, and vexing, and, when the way we are in is hedged up with them, stop our progress, and force us to turn back. She said, "I will go after my lovers," I will pursue my leagues and alliances with foreign powers, and depend upon them; but God saith she shall be frustrated in these projects, and not be able to proceed in them; "I will hedge up thy way with thorns," and if that do not serve, "I will make a wall." If some lesser difficulties be got over, and prevail not to break thy measures, God will raise greater, for he will overcome when he judgeth. It shall be such a hedge and such a wall, as that "she shall not find her paths." The change of the person here, "I will hedge up thy way," and then she shall not find it, is usual in Scripture, especially in an earnest way of speaking. Sinner, do thou take notice, "I will hedge up thy way," and all you that are bystanders take notice what will be the effect of this, you may observe that she cannot find her paths; she shall be as a traveller that not only knows not which way to go of many that are before him, but that finds no way at all to go forward. And then "she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them;" shall endeavour to make an interest in the Assyrians and Egyptians, and to have them for her protectors, but she shall not gain her point; they shall either not come into confederacy with her or do her no service, shall help in vain, and be as the staff of a broken reed. "She shall seek them, but shall not find them," shall seek to her idols, but shall not find that satisfaction in them that she promised herself; the gods whom she trusted and courted, not only can do nothing for her, but have nothing to say to her to encourage her. Now, 1st. This is such a just judgment as the Sodomites met with, that were "struck with blindness, and wearied themselves to find the door," *Gen.* xix. 11; and the Syrians, 2 *Kin.* vi. 18. Note, Those that are most resolute in their sinful pursuits are commonly most crossed in them. "Thorns and snares in the way of the froward," *Pr.* xxii. 5; and thus with them God "shews himself froward," *Ps.* xviii. 26, and "walks contrary to those that walk contrary to him," *Lev.* xxvi. 23, 24. The lamenting prophet complains, "He hath enclosed my ways," *Lam.* iii. 7, 9. The way of God and duty is often hedged about with thorns, but we have reason to think it is a sinful way that is hedged up with thorns. 2nd. This is such a kind rebuke, and indeed such a mercy, as Baalam met with when the angel stood in his way to hinder his going forward to curse Israel, *Num.* xxii. 22. Note, Crosses and obstacles in an evil course are great blessings, and are so to be accounted; they are God's hedges, to keep us from transgressing, to restrain us from wandering out of the green pastures, to "withdraw man from his purpose," *Job* xxxiii. 17, to make the way of sin difficult, that we may not go on in it, and to keep us from it whether we will or not. We have reason to bless God for restraining grace and for restraining judgment.

2. These difficulties that God raiseth up in their way shall raise up in their minds thoughts of turning back. Then shall she say, Since I cannot overtake my lovers, I will even go "and return to my first husband," that is, will return to God, and humble myself to him, and desire him to take me in again; for when I kept close to him it was every way better with me than now. Two things are here extorted from this degenerate, apostate people. 1st. A just acknowledgment of the folly of their apostasy. They are now brought to own, that it was better with them while they kept close to their God than ever it was since they forsook him. Note, Whoever have exchanged the service of God for the service of the world and the flesh, have, sooner or later, been made to own that they changed for the worse; and that while they continued in good company, and went on in the way of good duties, and made conscience how they spent their time, and what they said or did, it was better with them, they had more true comfort and enjoyment of themselves, than ever they had since they went astray. 2nd. A good purpose to come back again to their duty. "I will go and return to my first husband," and she knows so much of his goodness and readiness to forgive that she speaks without any doubt of his receiving her again into favour, and making her condition as good as ever. Note, The disappointments we meet with in our pursuits of satisfaction in the creature, should, if nothing else will do it, drive us at length to the Creator, in whom alone it is to be had. When Moab is "weary of the high place," he shall "go to the sanctuary," *Isa.* xvi. 12. And when the prodigal son is reduced to husks, short allowance indeed, and remembers that in his father's house there is bread enough, then he saith, "I will arise and go to my father's house," *Lu.* xv. 17, 18.

Secondly. The necessary supports and comforts of life shall be taken from them, because they had dishonoured God with them, ver. 8, 9. Their land was plenteous. Now see here,

1. How graciously their plenty was given to them. God gave them not only corn for necessity, but wine for delight, and oil for ornament. Nay, he multiplied their silver and gold, wherewith to traffic with other nations, and bring home their products, and which they might hoard up for posterity. Silver and gold will keep longer than corn, and wine, and oil. He gave them wool and flax, too, to cover their nakedness, and to serve for ornament enough to them, *Eze.* xvi. 10. Note, God is a bountiful benefactor, even to those whom he foresees will be ungrateful and unthankful to him.

2. How basely their plenty was abused by them. 1st. They robbed God of the honour of his gifts. "She did not know that I gave her corn and wine," that is, she did not remember it. The law and the prophets had told them again and again, that all their comforts they received from God's bountiful providence; but they were so often told by their false prophets and idolatrous priests, that they had their corn from such an idol, and their wine from such an idol, &c., that they had quite forgot their relation to their great Benefactor, and their obligations to him. She did not consider it, she would not acknowledge it; this they were willingly ignorant of, and more brutish than the ox that knows his owner, and the ass that knows his master's crib. She did not know it, for she did not return thanks to him for his gifts, nor study what she should render; nor did she give him his dues out of them, and so carried it as if she were ignorant who was the donor. 2nd. They served and honoured his enemies with them. They prepared them for Baal. They adorned their images with gold and silver, *Jer.* x. 4, and adorned themselves for the worship of their images, ver. 13: see *Eze.* xvi. 17—19. 'Wherewith they made Baal,' so the margin reads it, that is, the image of Baal. Note, It is a very great dishonour to the God of heaven to make those gifts of his providence the food and fuel of our lusts which he gave us for our support in his service, and to be oil to the wheels of our obedience.

3. How justly their plenty should be taken from them. 'Therefore will I return,' I will alter my dealings with them, will take another course, and will "take away my corn," and other good things that I gave her. I will recover it, (a law term,) as a man by due course of law recovers what is unjustly detained from him, or, as when the tenant has committed waste, the landlord recovers *locum vastatum*,—'dilapidations.' Observe, God calls it, My corn, and my wine, my wool, and my flax; they called it theirs, My bread, and my water, ver. 5. But God lets them know they were not theirs, he only allowed them the use of them as tenants, intrusted them with the management of them as stewards, but still reserved the property in himself; It is my corn, and my wine. Note, God will have us to know, not only that we have all our creature comforts and enjoyments from him, but that he has still an incontestable right and title to them, that they are more his than ours, and therefore are to be used for him, and accounted for to him. He will therefore take it away from them, because they have forfeited it, by disowning his right; as a tenant by copy of court-roll, who holds at the will of his lord, forfeits his estate if he make a feoffment of it, as though he were a freeholder. He will recover it, will free or deliver it, that it may be no longer abused; as the creature is said to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption" under which it groans, *Rom.* viii. 21. He will take it away in the time thereof, and in the season thereof; then when they expected it, and thought they were sure of it, it shall suffer shipwreck in the harbour; and "the harvest shall be a heap." He will take it away by unseasonable weather, or by unreasonable men. Note, Those that abuse the mercies God gives them to his dishonour cannot expect to enjoy them long.

Thirdly. They shall lose all their honour, and be exposed to contempt; ver. 10, "I will discover her lewdness," that is, will bring to light all her secret wickedness, and make it public to her shame; I will shew, by the punishment of it, how heinous, how odious, how offensive it is. The fact has been denied, but now it shall appear; the fault has been diminished, but now it shall appear exceeding sinful. And this "in the sight of her lovers," that is, in the sight of the neighbour nations with whom she courted an alliance, and on whom she had a dependence; they shall despise her, and be ashamed of her, because of her weakness, and poverty, and ill-conduct; they shall not think her any longer worthy of their friendship. See this fulfilled, *Lam.* i. 8, "All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness." Or, in the sight of the sun and moon, which she worshipped as her lovers, before them shall her lewdness be discovered. Compare this with *Jer.* viii. 1, 2, "They shall bring out the bones of their kings and princes, and spread them before the sun and moon, whom they have loved and served." Note, Sin will have shame; let those expect it that have done shamefully. What other lot can this impudent adulteress expect but that of a common whore, to be carted through the town? And when God comes to deal thus with her none shall deliver her out of his hands—neither the gods nor the men they confide in. Note, Those who will not deliver themselves into the hand of God's mercy cannot be delivered out of the hand of his justice.

Fourthly. They shall lose all their pleasure, and shall be left melancholy; ver. 11, "I will cause her mirth to cease." It seems, then, though they had "gone a whoring from their God," yet they could find in their hearts to "rejoice as other people," which is forbidden, *ch.* ix. 1. Note, Many who lie under guilt and wrath are yet very jocund and merry, and live jovially; but whether in their laughter their hearts are sad or no, it is certain the end of their mirth will be heaviness; for God "will cause all their mirth to cease." It is as Mr. Burroughs observes here, sin and mirth can never hold long together; but if men will not take away sin from their mirth, God will take away mirth from their sin.

1. God will take away the occasions of their sacred mirth; "their feast days, their new moons, their sabbaths, and all their solemn feasts." These God instituted to be observed in a religious manner, and they were to be observed with rejoicing; and it seems, though they had departed from the pure worship of God, yet they kept up the observation of these, not at God's temple at Jerusalem, for they had long since forgotten that, but probably at Dan and Bethel, where the calves were, or in some other places of meeting that they had. They observed them not for the honour of God, or with any true devotion towards him, but only because they were times of mirth and feasting, music and dancing, and meeting of friends, received by tradition from their fathers. Thus, when they had lost the power of godliness, and denied that, yet for the pleasing of a vain and carnal mind they kept up the form of it; and by this means their new moons and their sabbaths became an iniquity, which God "could not away with," *Isa.* i. 13. Now observe, 1st. God calls them their new moons and their sabbaths; not his, he disowns them, but theirs. 2nd. He will cause them to cease. Note, When men by their sins have caused the life and substance of ordinances to cease, it is just with God, by his judgments, to cause the remaining show and shadow of them to cease.

2. He will take away the supports of their carnal mirth. They loved the new moons and the sabbaths only for the sake of the good cheer that was stirring then, not for the sake of any religious exercises then performed, these they had dropped long ago; and now God will take away their provisions for these solemnities; ver. 12, "I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees." Note, If men destroy God's word and ordinances, by which he should be honoured on their feast days, it is just with him to destroy their vines and fig-trees with which they use to regale themselves. While they took the pleasure of these, they gave their lovers the praise of them. "These are my rewards which my lovers have given me;" I may thank my stars for these, and my worship of them; I may thank my neighbours for these, and my alliance with them. And therefore God will destroy them, will wither them with a blast, or bring in a foreign enemy that shall lay the country waste, so that their vineyards shall become a forest, the inclosures shall be thrown down, as is usual in war, all shall be laid in common, so that the beasts of the field shall eat their grapes and their figs; or, they shall be so blasted with the east wind, that fruit trees shall be of no more use than forest trees, but, being withered and good for nothing, what fruit there is shall be left to the beasts of the field; or, it shall be devoured by their enemies, by men as barbarous as wild beasts. Now,

1st. This shall be the ruin of their mirth. God will "cause all her mirth to cease." How will he do it? Taking away the new moons and the sabbaths will not do it; they can very easily part with them, and find no loss. But I will "destroy her vines and her fig-trees," will take away her sensual pleasures, and then she will think herself undone indeed. Note, The destruction of the vines and the fig trees causeth all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease; it will say, as Micah, You have taken away my gods, and what have I more?

2nd. This shall be the punishment of her idolatry; ver. 13, "I will visit upon her the days of Baalim," that is, I will reckon with her for all the worship of all the Baals they have made gods of, from the days of their fathers unto this day. We read of their worshipping Baal as long ago as the time of the Judges, and for aught I know this may look as far back as those times, those days of Baalim; for it is in the second commandment, which forbids idolatry, that God threatens to "visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children;" and justly is that sin so visited more than any other, because it commonly supports itself by prescription and long usage. Now the measure of the iniquity of Israel was full, all their former sins came into the account, and shall be required of this generation. Or, the days of Baalim are the solemn festival days which they kept in honour of their idols. Days of sinful mirth must be visited in days of mourning. These were the days wherein she burnt incense to idols, and to grace the solemnity, "decked herself with her earrings and her jewels," that appearing honourable, the honour she did to Baal might be thought the greater; or, she was as a wife that decks herself with the earrings and jewels that her husband gave her, to make herself amiable to her lovers, whom she follows after, and is ever mindful of. But "she forgat me, saith the Lord." Note, Our treacherous departures from God are owing to our forgetfulness of him, of his nature and attributes, his relation to us, and our obligations to him. Many that plead they have weak memories, and forget the things of God, yet can remember

other things well enough; nay, it is because they are so mindful of lying vanities that they are so forgetful of their own mercies.

14 Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
And bring her into the wilderness,
And speak comfortably unto her.
15 And I will give her her vineyards from thence,
And the valley of Achor for a door of hope:

VALLEY OF ACHOR.

And she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth,
And as in the day when she came up out of the land of [Egypt.
16 And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD,
That thou shalt call me Ishi;
And shalt call me no more Baali.
17 For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth,
And they shall no more be remembered by their name.
18 And in that day will I make a covenant for them
With the beasts of the field,
And with the fowls of heaven,
And *with* the creeping things of the ground:
And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth,
And will make them to lie down safely.
19 And I will betroth thee unto me for ever;
Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment,
And in lovingkindness, and in mercies.
20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness:
And thou shalt know the LORD. [LORD,
21 And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the
I will hear the heavens,
And they shall hear the earth; [oil;
22 And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the
And they shall hear Jezreel.
23 And I will sow her unto me in the earth;
And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy;
And I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou *art* my people;
And they shall say, *Thou art* my God.

The state of Israel, ruined by their own sin, did not look so black and dismal in the former part of the chapter, but that the state of Israel, restrained by the Divine grace, looks as bright and pleasant here in the latter part of the chapter; and the more surprisingly so, as the promises follow thus close upon the threatenings; nay, which is very strange, they are, by a note of connection, joined to and inferred from that declaration of their sinfulness upon which the threatenings of their ruin are grounded. "She went after her lovers, and forgat me, saith the Lord, therefore I will allure her." Fitly, therefore, is that "therefore," which is the note of connection, immediately followed with a note of admiration, "Behold, I will allure her!" When it was said, "She forgat me," one would think it should have followed, Therefore I will abandon her, I will forget her, I will never look after her more; no, Therefore I will allure her. Note, God's thoughts and ways of mercy are infinitely above ours, his reasons are all fetched from within himself, and not from any thing in us; nay, his goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious, *Isa.* lvii. 17, 18. "Therefore," because she will not be restrained by the denunciations of wrath, God will try whether she will be wrought upon by the offers of mercy. Some think it may be translated 'Afterwards,' or, 'Nevertheless' I will allure her. It comes all to one; the design is plainly to magnify free grace to those on whom God will have mercy, purely for mercy's sake. Now that which is here promised to Israel is,

First. That, though now they were disconsolate and ready to despair, they should again be revived with comforts and hopes, ver. 14, 15. This is expressed here with an allusion to God's dealings with that people when he brought them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, to Canaan; as their forlorn and deplorable condition in their captivity was compared to their state in Egypt in the day that they were born, ver. 3. They shall be new formed by such miracles of love and mercy as they were first formed by, and such a transport of joy shall they be in as they were in then. It is hard to say when this had its accomplishment in the kingdom of the ten tribes; but it principally aims, no doubt, at the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles into the church by the Gospel of Christ; and it is applicable, nay, we have reason to think it was designed that it should be applied, to the conversion of particular souls to God. Now observe,

1. The gracious methods God will take with them. 1st. He will bring them into the wilderness, as he did at first when he brought them out of Egypt, where he instructed them, and took them into covenant with himself. The land of their captivity shall be to them now, as that wilderness was then, the furnace of affliction, in which God will choose them: see *Eze.* xx. 35, 36, "I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you." God had said he would make them as a wilderness, ver. 3, which was a threatening; now, when it is here made a part of a promise that he would bring them into the wilderness, the meaning may be, that he would, by his grace, bring their minds to their condition, they shall have humble hearts under humbling providences; being poor, shall be poor in spirit, shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity, and then they are prepared to have comfort spoken to them. When God delivered Israel out of Egypt he led them into the wilderness to "humble them, and prove them, that he might do them good," *Deu.* viii. 2, 3, 15, 16; and so he will do again. Note, Those whom God has mercy in store for he first brings into a wilderness, into solitude and retirement, that they may the more freely converse with him out of the noise of this world; into distress of mind, through sense of guilt, and dread of wrath, which brings a soul to be quite at a loss in itself, and bewildered, and by those convictions he prepares for consolations; and sometimes into outward distress and trouble, by that to open the ear to discipline. 2nd. He will then allure them, and speak comfortably to them; will persuade them, and speak to their hearts; that is, he will, by his word and Spirit, incline their hearts to return to him, and encourage them to do so. He will allure them with the promises of his favour, as before he had terrified them with the threatenings of his wrath; will speak friendly to them, both by his prophets and by his providences, as before he had spoken roughly, *Isa.* xl. 1, 2. 'By the hand of my servants the prophets I will speak comfort to her heart;' so the Chaldee. This refers to the Gospel of Christ, and the offers of Divine grace in the Gospel, by which we are allured to forsake our sins and to turn to God, and which speaks to the heart of a convinced sinner that which is every way suited to his case, speaks abundant consolation to those that sorrow for sin, and lament after the Lord. And when by the Spirit it is indeed spoken to the heart effectually, and so as to reach the conscience, —which it is God's prerogative to do,—O what a blessed change is wrought by it! Note, The best way of reducing wandering souls to God is by fair means. By the promise of rest in Christ we are invited to take his yoke upon us; and the work of conversion may be forwarded by comforts as well as by convictions. 3rd. He will "give her her vineyards from thence;" from that time and from that place where he hath afflicted her, and brought her to see her folly, and to humble herself, from thenceforward he will do her good; not only speak comfortably to her, but do well for her, and undo what he had done against her. He had "destroyed her vines," ver. 12; but now he will give her whole vineyards, as if for every vine destroyed she should have a vineyard restored, and so be repaid with interest; she shall not only have corn for necessity, but vineyards for delight. These note the privileges and comforts of the Gospel, which are prepared for those that "come up out of the wilderness" leaning upon Christ as their beloved, *Cant.* viii. 5. Note, God has vineyards of consolation ready to bestow on those who repent and return to him; and he can give vineyards out of a wilderness, which are of all other the most welcome, as rest to the weary. 4th. He will give her "the valley of Achor for a door of hope." The valley of Achor was that in which Achan was stoned; it signifies the valley of trouble, because he troubled Israel, and there God troubled him. This was in the beginning of the wars in Canaan, and their putting away the accursed thing in that place gave them ground to hope that God would continue his presence with them and complete their victories. So when God returns to his people in mercy, and they to him in duty, it will be to them as happy an omen as any other, if they put away the accursed thing from among them; if, by mortifying sin, they stone the Achan that has troubled their camp, their subduing that enemy within themselves is an earnest to them of victory over all the kings of Canaan. Or, if the allusion be to the name, it intimates that trouble for sin, if it be sincere, opens a door of hope; for that sin that truly troubles us shall not ruin us. The valley of Achor was a very fruitful, pleasant valley; some think it the same with the valley of Engedi, famous for vineyards, *Cant.* i. 14. This God gave to Israel, as a pattern and pledge of the whole land of Canaan; so, 'God will, by his Gospel, give to all believers such gifts, graces, and comforts in this life, as shall be a taste of those more perfect good things of the kingdom of heaven, and shall give them an assured hope of a full possession of them in due time.' So the learned Dr. Pocock expounds it; and to the same purpose this whole context.

2. The great rejoicing with which they shall receive God's gracious returns towards them. "She shall sing there as in the days of her youth." This plainly refers to that triumphant and prophetic song which Moses and the children of Israel sung at the Red Sea, *Ex.* xv. 1. When they are delivered out of captivity they shall repeat that song, and to them it shall be a new song, because sung upon a new occasion, not inferior to the former. God had said, ver. 11, he would "cause all her mirth to cease," but now he would cause it to revive; she shall sing as in the day that she came out of Egypt. Note, When God repeats former mercies we must repeat former praises; we find the song of Moses sung in the New Testament, *Rev.* xv. 3. This promise of Israel's singing has its accomplishment in the Gospel of Christ, which furnisheth us with abundant matter for joy and praise; and, wherever it is received in its power, enlargeth the heart in joy and praise. And this is that land flowing with milk and honey which the valley of Achor opens a door of hope to. We rejoice in tribulation.

Secondly. That though they had been much addicted to the worship of Baal, they should now be perfectly weaned from it, shall relinquish and abandon all appearances of idolatry, and approaches towards it, and cleave to God only, and worship him as he appoints, ver. 16, 17. Note, The surest pledge and token of God's favour to any people is his effectual parting between them and their beloved sins. The worship of Baal was the sin that did most easily beset the people of Israel, it was their own iniquity, the sin that had dominion over them; but now that idolatry shall be quite abolished, and there shall not be the least remains of it among them.

1. The idols of Baal shall not be mentioned, not any of the Baals that in the days of Baalim had made so great a noise with, O Baal, hear us! O Baal, hear

us! The very names of Baalim shall be taken out of their mouths. They shall be so disused that they shall be quite forgotten, as if their names had never been known in Israel. They shall be so detested that people will not bear to mention them themselves, or to hear others mention them; so that posterity shall scarce know that ever there were such things. They shall be so ashamed of their former love to Baal, that they shall do all they can to blot out the remembrance of it. They shall tie themselves up to the strictest literal meaning of that law against idolatry, *Ex.* xxiii. 13, "Make no mention of the names of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth;" as David, *Ps.* xvi. 4. Thus the apostle expresseth the abhorrence we ought to have of all fleshly lusts, "Let them not be once named among you," *Eph.* v. 3. But how can such a change of the Ethiopian's skin be wrought? It is answered, the power of God can do it, and will; "I will take away the names of Baalim;" as *Zec.* xiii. 2, "I will cut off the names of the idols." Note, God's grace in the heart will change the language by making that iniquity to be loathed which was beloved; *Zeph.* iii. 9, "I will turn to the people a pure language." One of the rabbins saith this promise relates to the Gentiles as well as Israel; and we know it had its accomplishment in the turning of the Gentiles, by the Gospel of Christ, from the idolatries which they had been wedded to, 1 *Thes.* i. 9.

2. The very word Baal shall be laid aside, even in its innocent signification. God saith, "Thou shalt call me Ishi, and call me no more Baali." Both signify my husband, and both had been made use of concerning God; *Isa.* liv. 5, "Thy Maker is thy husband," thy Baal, so the word is, thy owner, patron, and protector. It is probable many good people had accordingly made use of the word Baali in worshipping the God of Israel; when their wicked neighbours bowed the knee to Baal they gloried in this, that God was their Baal. But, saith God, you shall call me so no more, because I will have the very names of Baalim taken away. Note, That which is very innocent in itself, yet, when it has been abused to idolatry, should be abolished, and the very use of it taken away, that nothing may be done to keep idols in remembrance, much less to keep them in reputation. When calling God Ishi will do as well, and signify as much as Baali, let that word be chosen rather, lest, by calling him Baali, others should be put in mind of their quondam Baals. Some think there is another reason intimated why God would be called Ishi, and not Baali. They both signify my husband; but Ishi is a compellation of love, and sweetness, and familiarity; Baali, of reverence and subjection. Ishi is *vir meus*,—'my man;' Baali is *dominus meus*,—'my lord.' In gospel times God hath so revealed himself to us as to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of his grace, and to use a holy, humble freedom there; we ought to call God our Master, for so he is, but we are more taught to call him our Father. Ishi is a man the Lord, *Gen.* iv. 1, and intimates that in gospel times the church's husband shall be the man Christ Jesus, made like unto his brethren, and therefore they call him Ishi, not Baali.

Thirdly. That though they had been in continual troubles, as if the whole creation had been at war with them, now they shall enjoy perfect peace and tranquillity, as if they were in a league of friendship with the whole creation; ver. 18. In that day, when they have forsaken their idols, and put themselves under the Divine protection, "I will make a covenant for them."

1. They shall be protected from evil, nothing shall hurt them, or do them any mischief. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*,—'When God is at peace with us he makes every creature to be so too.' The inferior creatures shall do them no harm, as they had done, when the beasts of the field ate up their vineyards, ver. 12, and when noisome beasts were one of God's sore judgments, *Eze.* xiv. 15. The fowls and the creeping things are taken into this covenant, for they also, when God makes use of them as the instruments of his justice, may become very hurtful. But they shall be no more so; nay, by virtue of this covenant they shall be made serviceable to them, and brought into their interests. Note, God has the command of the inferior creatures, and brings them into what covenant he pleaseth; he can make the beasts of the field to honour him, so he has promised, *Isa.* xliii. 20, and to contribute to his people's comfort. And if the inferior creatures are thus laid under an engagement to serve us, it is our part of the covenant not to abuse them, but to serve God with them. Some think this had its accomplishment in the miraculous power Christ gave his disciples to take up serpents, *Mar.* xvi. 17, 18. It agrees with the promises made particularly to Israel, in their return out of captivity, *Eze.* xxxiv. 25, "I will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land;" and the more general ones to all the saints: *Job* v. 22, 23, "The beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee;" and *Ps.* xci. 13, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder." But this is not all. Men are more in danger from one another than from the brute beasts, and therefore it is farther promised that God will make wars to cease, will disarm the enemy. "I will break the bow, and sword, and battle." He can do it when he pleaseth, *Ps.* xlvi. 9, and will do it for those whose ways please him, for he "maketh even their enemies to be at peace with them," *Pr.* xvi. 7. This agrees with the promise that in gospel times "swords shall be beaten into ploughshares," *Isa.* ii. 4.

2. They shall be "quiet from the fear of evil." God will not only keep them safe, but make them to lie down safely, as those that know themselves to be under the protection of heaven, and therefore are not afraid of the powers of hell.

Fourthly. That though God had given them a bill of divorce for their whoredoms, yet upon their repentance he would again take them into covenant with himself, into a marriage covenant, ver. 19, 20. God's making a covenant for them with the inferior creatures was a great favour, but it was nothing to this, that he took them into covenant with himself, and engaged himself to do them good. Observe,

1. The nature of this covenant. It is a marriage covenant, founded in choice and love, and founding the nearest relation, "I will betroth thee unto me," and again, and a third time, "I will betroth thee." Note, All that are sincerely devoted to God are betrothed to him; that is, God gives them the most sacred and inviolable security imaginable, that he will love them, protect them, and provide for them, and that he will do the part of a husband to them, and that he will incline their hearts to join themselves to him, and will graciously accept of them in so doing. Believing souls are espoused to Christ, 2 *Cor.* xi. 2. The gospel church is "the bride, the Lamb's wife;" and they would never come into that relation to him if he did not by the power of his grace betroth them to himself. The separation begins on our side, we alienate ourselves from God; the coalition begins on his side, he betroths us to himself.

2. The duration of the covenant. "I will betroth thee for ever." The covenant itself shall be inviolable; God will not break it on his part, and you shall not on yours; and the blessings of it shall be everlasting. One of the Jewish rabbins saith, this is a promise, that she shall attain to the life of the world to come, which is absolute eternity or perpetuity.

3. The manner how this covenant shall be made. 1st. In righteousness and judgment; that is, God will deal sincerely and uprightly in covenanting with them. They have broken covenant, and God is righteous; but, saith God, I will renew the covenant in righteousness. The matter shall be so ordered as that God may receive even these backsliding children into his family again without any reflection upon his justice; nay, that being satisfied by the Mediator of this covenant, very much to the honour of it. But what reason can there be why God should take a people into covenant with him that had so often dealt treacherously? Will it not reflect upon his wisdom? No, saith God, I will do it in judgment; not rashly, but upon due consideration. Let me alone to give a reason for it, and to justify my own conduct. 2nd. In loving-kindness and in mercies. God will deal tenderly and graciously in covenanting with them; and will be not only as good as his word, but better; and, as he will be just in keeping covenant with them, so he will be merciful in keeping them in the covenant. They are subject to many infirmities, and if he be extreme to mark what they do amiss, they will soon lose the benefit of the covenant. He therefore promiseth that it shall be a covenant of grace made in a compassionate consideration of their infirmities, so as that every transgression in the covenant shall not throw them out of covenant. He will gather with everlasting loving-kindness. 3rd. In faithfulness. Every article of the covenant shall be punctually performed; faithful is he that hath called them, who also will do it,—he cannot deny himself.

4. The means by which they shall be kept right and faithful to the covenant on their part. "Thou shalt know the Lord." Which is not only a promise that God will reveal himself to them more fully and clearly than ever, but that he will give them a heart to know him; they shall know more of him, and shall know him in another manner than ever yet. The ground of their apostasy was, not knowing God to be their benefactor, ver. 8; therefore, to prevent the like, they shall all be taught of God to know him. Note, God keeps up his interest in men's souls by giving them a good understanding, and a right knowledge of things, *Heb.* viii. 11.

Fifthly. That though the heavens had been to them as brass, and the earth as iron, now the heavens shall yield their dews, and by that means the earth its fruits, ver. 21, 22. God having betrothed the gospel church, and in it all believers, to himself, how shall he not with himself, and with his Son, freely give them all things; all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things they need or can desire? All is theirs, for they are Christ's, betrothed to him; and with the righteousness of the kingdom of God which they seek first all other things shall be added unto them. And yet this promise of corn and wine is to be taken also in a spiritual sense, (so the learned Dr. Pocock thinks.) It is an effusion of those blessings and graces which relate to the soul that is here promised under the metaphor of temporal blessings; the dew of heaven as well as the fatness of the earth, and that put first, as in the blessing of Jacob, *Gen.* xxvii. 28. God had threatened, ver. 9, that he would "take away the corn and the wine;" but now he promiseth to restore them again, and that in the common course and order of nature. While they lay under the judgment of famine they called to the earth for corn and wine, for the support of themselves and their families; very gladly would the earth have supplied them, but cannot give unless she receive; cannot produce corn and wine unless it be "enriched with the river of God," *Ps.* lxv. 9, and therefore calls to the heavens for rain,—the former and latter rain in their season; gapes for it, and, by its melancholy aspect when rain is denied, pleads for it. But, say the heavens, we have no rain to give unless He who hath the keys of the clouds unlock them, and open these bottles; so that, if the Lord do not help you, we cannot. But when God takes them into covenant with himself, then the wheel of nature shall be set a-going again in favour of them, and the streams of mercy shall flow in the usual channel. "Then I will hear, saith the Lord;" I will receive your prayers, so the Chaldee interprets the first hearing. God will graciously take notice of their addresses to him. And then, "I will hear the heavens;" I will answer them, so it may be read, and then they shall "hear and answer the earth," and pour down seasonable rain upon it; and then the earth shall hear the corn and vines, and supply them with moisture, and they shall hear Jezreel, and be nourishment and refreshment for them that inherit Jezreel. See here the coherence of second causes with one another, as links in a chain, and the necessary dependence they all have upon God the First Cause. Note, We must expect all our comforts from God in the usual method, and by the appointed means; and when we are at any time disappointed in them, we must look up to God, "above the hills and mountains," *Ps.* cxxi. 1, 2. See how ready the creatures are to serve the people of God, how desirous of the honour; the corn cries to the earth, the earth to the heavens, the heavens to God, and all that they may supply them. And see how ready God is to give relief; "I will hear, saith the Lord, yea, I will hear." And if God will hear the cry of the heavens for his people, much more will he hear the intercession of his Son for them, who is made higher than the heavens. See what a peculiar delight those that are in convenant with God may take in their creature comforts, as seeing them all come to them from the hand of God; they can run up all the streams to the fountain, and taste covenant love in common mercies, which makes them doubly sweet.

Sixthly. That whereas they were now dispersed, not only, as Simeon and Levi, divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel, but divided and scattered all the world over, God will turn this curse, as he did that, into a blessing. I will not only water the earth for her, but will sow her unto me in the earth; her dispersion shall be not like that of the chaff in the floor, which the wind driveth away, but like that of the seed in the field, in order to its greater increase; wherever they are scattered they shall take root downwards, and bear fruit upwards. The "good seed are the children of the kingdom;" "I will sow her unto me." This alludes to the name Jezreel, which signifies 'sown of God,' or, 'for God.' As she was scattered of him, (which is one signification of the words,) so she shall be sown of him; and to what he sows he will give the increase. When in all parts of the world Christianity got footing, and every where there were professors of it, then this promise was fulfilled, "I will sow her unto me in the earth." Note, The greatest blessing of this earth is, that God has a church in it, and from that ariseth all the tribute of glory he hath out of it; it is what he hath sworn to himself, and what he will therefore secure to himself.

Seventhly. That whereas they had been Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah, not a people, and not finding mercy with God, now they shall be restored to his favour, and taken again into covenant with him, ver. 23. They had not obtained mercy, but seemed to be abandoned; they were not my people, not distinguished, not dealt with, as my people, but left to lie in common with the nations. This was the case of the rejected Jews; and the same, or more deporable, was that of the Gentile world, to whom the apostle applies this, *Rom.* ix. 24, 25, that had no hope, and were without God in the world; but, when great multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles were, upon their believing in Christ, incorporated into a Christian church, then, 1. God had mercy on those who had not obtained mercy. Those found favour with God, and became the children of his love, who had been long out of favour, and the children of his wrath, and if Infinite Mercy had not interposed would have been for ever so. Note, God's mercy must not be despaired of anywhere on this side hell. 2. He took those into a covenant relation to himself who had been strangers and foreigners; he saith to them, "Thou art my people," whom I will own and bless, protect and provide for; and they shall say, "Thou art my God," whom I will serve and worship, and to whose honour I will be entirely and for ever devoted. Note, 1st. The sum total of the happiness of believers is the mutual relation that is between them and God, that he is theirs, and they are his; this is the crown of all the promises. 2nd. This relation is founded in free grace; we have not chosen him, but he hath chosen

us. He first saith, They are my people, and makes them willing to be so in the day of his power, and then they avouch him to be theirs. 3rd. As we need desire no more to make us happy, but to be the people of God, so we need desire no more to make us easy and cheerful but to have him to assure us that we are so, to say unto us, by his Spirit witnessing with ours, "Thou art my people." 4th. Those that have accepted of the Lord for their God must avouch him to be so, must go to him in prayer, and tell him so, "Thou art my God," and must be ready to make profession before men. 5th. It adds to the comfort of our covenant with God, that in it there is a communion of saints, who, though they are many, yet here they are one. It is not, I will say to them, Ye are my people, but, "Thou art;" for he looks upon them as all one in Christ, and as such in him he speaks to them, and covenants with them; and they also do not say, Thou art our God, for they look upon themselves as one body, and desire with one mind and one mouth to glorify him, and therefore say, "Thou art my God;" or, it intimates that such a covenant as God made of old with his people Israel in general, now under the Gospel he makes with particular believers, and saith to each of them, even the meanest, with as much pleasure as he did of old to the thousands of Israel, "Thou art my people," and invites and encourageth each of them to say, "Thou art my God," and to triumph therein, as Moses and all Israel did; *Ex.* xv. 2, He is my God, and my fathers' God.

CHAPTER III.

God is still, by the prophet, inculcating the same thing upon this careless people, and much in the same manner as before, by a type or sign, that of the dealings of a husband with an adulterous wife. In this chapter we have, I. The bad character which the people of Israel now had; they were, as is said of the Athenians, *Acts* xvii. 16, wholly given to idolatry, ver. 1. II. The low condition which they should be reduced to by their captivity, and other the instances of God's controversy with them, ver. 2—4. III. The blessed reformation that should at length be wrought upon them in the latter days, ver. 5.

THEN said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of *her* friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. 2 So I bought her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and *for* an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: 3 And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for *another* man: so *will* I also *be* for thee. 4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without* teraphim: 5 Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

EGYPTIAN EPHOD.

Some think this chapter refers to Judah, the two tribes, as the adulteress the prophet married, *ch.* i. 3, represented the ten tribes; for this was not to be divorced, as the tribes were, but to be left desolate for a long time, and then to return, as the two tribes did. But these are called the children of Israel, which was the ten tribes; and therefore it is more probable that of them this parable, as well as that before, is to be understood. Go and repeat it, saith God to the prophet, Go yet again. Note, For the conviction and reduction of sinners it is necessary that precept be upon precept, and line upon line. If they will not believe one sign, try another, *Ex.* iv. 8, 9.

First. Now in this parable we may observe,

1. God's goodness and Israel's badness, strangely serving for a foil to each other, ver. 1. Israel is as a woman beloved of her friend, either of him that has married her, or of him that only courts her, and yet an adulteress; such is the case between God and Israel. We say of those whose affection is mutual, that there is no love lost between them; but here we find a great deal of the love, even of God himself, lost and thrown away upon an unworthy, ungrateful people. The God of Israel retains a very great love for the children of Israel, and yet they are an evil and adulterous generation. "Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth." 1st. That God's goodness has not put an end to their badness. The Lord loves them, has a kindness for them, and is continually shewing kindness to them; they know it, they cannot but own it, that he has been as a friend and father to them; and yet they look to other gods, gods that they can see, and to the love of which they are drawn by the eye; they look to them with an eye of adoration; they offer up all their services to them, and with an eye of dependence they expect all their comforts from them. If they were restrained from bowing the knee to idols, yet they gave them an amorous glance, and had eyes full of that spiritual adultery. And they love flagons of wine; they therefore joined with idolaters, because they lived merrily, and drank hard; they had a kindness for other gods for the sake of the plenty of good wine with which they had been sometimes treated in their temples. Idolatry and sensuality commonly go together; those that make a god of their belly, as drunkards do, will easily be brought to make a god of any thing else. God's priests were to drink no wine when they went in to minister, and his Nazarites none at all; but the worshippers of other gods drank wine in bowls, nay, no less than flagons of wine would content them. 2nd. That their badness had not put an end to God's goodness, and stopped the current of his favours to them. This is a wonder of mercy indeed, that she is thus "beloved of her friend, though an adulteress." Such is the "love of the Lord toward the children of Israel." Go, saith God, love such a woman: see if thou canst find in thy heart to do it; no, thou canst not; the breast of no man would admit such a love, yet such is my love to the children of Israel. It is love to the loveless, to the unlovely, to those that have a thousand times forfeited it. Note, In God's goodwill to poor sinners his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and his love is more condescending and compassionate than ours is or can be. In this, as much as any thing, he is God and not man, *Hos.* xi. 9.

2. The method found for the bringing of a God so very good and a people so very bad together again. This is the thing aimed at; and what God aims at, he will accomplish. To our great surprise we find a breach, thus wide as the sea, effectually healed; miracles cease not, so long as Divine mercy doth not cease. Observe here,

1st. The course God takes to humble them, and make them know themselves; ver. 2, "I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and an homer and an half of barley," that is, I courted her to be reconciled, to leave her ill courses, and return to her first husband, as *ch.* ii. 14. I allured her, and spake comfortably to her; as the Levite went after his concubine, that had played the harlot from him, and was run away with another man, he "spake friendly to her," *Jud.* xix. 3; but here the present which the prophet brought her for the purchasing of her favour is observed to be a very small one; but it was all that was intended for her separate maintenance, and in it she is reduced to a short allowance, and, to punish her for her pride, is made to look very mean. When Samson went to be reconciled to his wife, that had disobliged him, he visited her with a kid, *Jud.* xv. 1, which was a genteel entertainment. But the prophet here visited his wife with fifteen pieces of silver; a small sum, which yet she must be content to live upon a great while, so long as till her husband thought fit to restore her to her first estate. She shall also have a homer and a half of barley for bread-corn; and that is all she must expect till she be sufficiently humbled, and by a competent time of trial satisfactory proof given that she is indeed reformed. Let her be made sensible that it is not for her own merit that her husband makes court to her; it is but at a lame price that he values her. The price of a servant was thirty shekels, *Ex.* xxi. 32. This was but half so much; yet let her know it is more than she is worth. God had given Egypt for Israel's ransom once, so precious were they then in his sight, and so honourable, *Isa.* xliii. 3, 4; but now they have gone a whoring from him he will give but fifteen pieces of silver for them, so much have they lost in their value by their iniquity. Note, Those whom God designs honour and comfort for he first makes sensible of their own worthlessness, and brings them to acknowledge with the prodigal, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son." Time was when Israel was fed with the finest of the wheat; but they grew wanton, and loved flagons of wine; and therefore, in order to the humbling and reducing of them, they must be brought, in the land of their captivity, to eat barley bread, and be thankful they can get it, and to eat that too by weight and measure, whereas they did not use to be stinted. Note, Poverty and disgrace sometimes prove a happy means of making great sinners penitents.

2nd. The new terms upon which God is willing to come with them; ver. 3, "Thou shalt abide for me many days, and shalt not be for another, so will I be for thee." He might justly have given them a bill of divorce, and have resolved to have no more to do with them; but he is willing to shew them kindness, and that the matter should be compromised. He deals not with them in strict justice, according to the rigour of the law, but according to the multitude of his mercies; and it represents God's gracious dealings with the apostate race of mankind, that had gone a whoring from him; he bought them indeed with an inestimable price, not for their honour, but for the honour of his own justice. And now this is the proposal he makes to them, the covenant of grace he is willing to enter into with them,—they must be to him a people, and he will be to them a God, the same with the proposal here made to Israel.

First. They must take to themselves the shame of their apostasy from him; must submit to, and accept of, the punishment of their iniquity. "Thou shalt abide for many days" in solitude and silence, as a widow that is desolate and in sorrow. They must lay aside their ornaments, and wait with patience and submission to know what God will do with them, and whether he will please to admit such unworthy wretches into his favour again, as they did *Ex.* xxxiii. 4, 5. Their father, their husband, has spit in their face, (as God said concerning Miriam,) hath put them under the marks of his displeasure; and therefore, like her, they must be "ashamed seven days," and be "shut out of the camp," *Num.* xii. 14, till "their uncircumcised hearts be humbled," *Lev.* xxvi. 41. Let them sit alone and "keep silence, waiting for the salvation of the Lord," and in the meantime let them bear the yoke, *Lam.* iii. 26—28. Let them not expect that God should speedily return in mercy to them, as sometimes he has done, that comfort should come over cheap and easy to them; no, let them want it, let them wait for it many days, during all the days of their captivity, and reckon it a miracle of mercy, and worth waiting for, if it comes at last. Note, Those whom God designs mercy for he will first bring to abase themselves, and to put a high value upon his favours.

Secondly. They must never return to folly again. That is the condition upon which God will "speak peace to his people, and to his saints," *Ps.* lxxxv. 8, and no other; "Thou shalt not play the harlot," shalt not worship idols in the land of thy captivity, while thou art there set apart for thine uncleanness. Note, It is not enough to take shame to ourselves for the sins we have committed, and to justify God in correcting us for them; but we must resolve, in the strength of God's grace, that we will not offend any more; that we will not again go a whoring from God, after the world and the flesh. Blessed be God, though it is the law of the covenant, it is not the condition of it, that we shall never in any thing do amiss; but "thou shalt not play the harlot," thou shalt not serve other gods, "shalt not be for another man." In the land of their captivity they would be courted to worship the idols of the country; that would be a trial to them, a long trial, many days; but if thou keep thy ground, and hold fast thine integrity, if, when all this

is come upon thee, yet thou dost not "stretch out thy hand to a strange god," thou wilt be qualified for the returns of God's favour. Note, It is a certain sign that our afflictions are means of much good to us, and earnests of more, when we are kept by the grace of God from being overcome by the temptations of an afflicted state.

3rd. Upon these terms their Maker will again be their husband; "So will I also be for thee." This is the covenant between God and returning sinners, that if they will be for him to serve him, he will be for them to save them. Let them renounce and abjure all rivals with God for the throne in the heart, and devote themselves entirely to him, and him only, and he will be to them a God all-sufficient. If we be faithful and constant to God in a way of duty, and will never leave nor forsake him, he will be so to us in a way of mercy, and will never leave or forsake us; and a fairer proposal could not be made.

Secondly. Now in the two last verses we have the reddition of the parable, and the application of it to Israel.

1. They must long sit like a widow, stripped of all their joys and honours; *Lam.* i. 1, 2; "They shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince," &c.; and a nation in this condition may well be called a widow. They want the blessing, 1st. Of civil government. They shall abide without a king, and without a prince of their own. There were kings and princes over them to oppress them, and rule them with rigour, but they had no king or prince to protect them, to fight their battles for them, and administer justice to them, and to take care of their common safety and welfare. Note, Magistracy is a very great blessing to a people, and it is a sad and sore judgment to want it. 2nd. Of public worship. They shall abide "without a sacrifice, and without an image," (or, a statue or pillar; it is used concerning the pillars Jacob erected, *Gen.* xxviii. 18; xxxi. 45; xxxv. 20;) and "without an ephod and teraphim." The teraphim being here closely joined to the ephod, some think the Urim and Thummim were meant by it, in the breastplate of the high priest. The meaning is, that in their captivity they should not only have no face of a nation upon them, but no face of a church; they should not have (as a learned expositor speaks) liberty of any public profession or exercise of religion, either true or false, according to their choice. They shall have 'no sacrifice or altar;' so the Seventy, and therefore no sacrifice because no altar. They shall have no ephod, or teraphim, no legal priesthood, no means of knowing God's mind, no oracle to consult in doubtful cases, but shall be all in the dark. Note, The case of those is very melancholy that are deprived of all opportunities to worship God in public. This was the case of the Jews in their captivity; and is so far the case of the scattered Jews at this day, that, though they have their synagogues, they have no temple service. Desolate indeed is their condition that are shut out from communion with God, that have no opportunity of directing their addresses to God by sacrifice and altar, and of receiving instructions from him by ephod and teraphim.

2. They shall at length be received again as a wife, ver. 5; "Afterwards," in process of time, when they have gone through this discipline, "they shall return;" that is, they shall repent of their idolatries, and forsake them; they shall apply themselves to God, and adhere to him, and herein they shall be accepted of him. Two things are here promised as instances of their return, and steps towards their acceptance with God in their return.

1st. The inquiries they shall make after God. "They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king." Note, Those that would find God, and find favour with him, must seek him, must ask after him, covet acquaintance with him, desire to be reconciled to him, set their love on him, and labour in this, that they may be accepted of him. Their seeking him implies that they had lost him, that they were lamenting their loss, and that they were solicitous to retrieve what they had lost. They shall seek him as their God; for, "should not a people seek unto their God?" And they shall seek "David their king," who can be no other than the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the "root and offspring of David," whom David himself called Lord, *Ps.* cx. 1, and to whom God gave "the throne of his father David," *Lu.* i. 32. The Chaldee reads it, 'They shall seek the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey Messiah, the Son of David, their king:' compare this with *Jer.* xxx. 9; *Eze.* xxxii. 23; xxxvii. 25. Note, Those that would seek the Lord so as to find him must apply themselves to Jesus Christ, and must seek to him as their King, and become his willing people, and take an oath of fealty and allegiance to him.

2nd. The reverence they shall have of God. "They shall fear the Lord and his goodness." Some, by his goodness, here understand the temple towards which they shall look in worshipping God. The Jews say, There were three things which Israel cast off in the days of Rehoboam, the kingdom of heaven, the family of David, and the house of the sanctuary; and it will never be well with them till they return and seek them all three, which is here promised. They shall seek the kingdom of heaven in the Lord their God, the royal family in David their king, and the temple in the goodness of the Lord. Others by his goodness understand Christ, the same with David their king; but it is rather to be taken for that attribute of God which he shewed as his glory, and by which he proclaimed his name. Note, It is not only the Lord and his greatness that we are to fear, but the Lord and his goodness; not only his majesty, but his mercy. They shall flee for fear to the Lord and his goodness, (so some take it,) shall flee to it as their city of refuge. We must fear God's goodness; that is, we must admire it, and stand amazed at it; must adore it, and worship, as Moses did at the proclaiming of this name, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6. We must be afraid of offending his goodness, of making any ungrateful returns for it, and so forfeiting it. "There is forgiveness with God that he may be feared," *Ps.* cxxx. 4. We must rejoice with trembling in the goodness of God; must not be high-minded, but fear.

Now this promise had its accomplishment when, by the Gospel of Christ, great multitudes, both of Jews and Gentiles, were brought home to God, and incorporated in the New Testament church, served God in Christ with a filial fear of Divine grace, and were accepted of God as his Israel. And some think it is to be yet farther accomplished in the conversion of those Jews to the faith of Christ who shall remain in unbelief; when they shall seek their Messiah, as David their king, and by him all Israel shall be saved, when the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in. Time was when they sought him to put him to death, saying, "We have no king but Cæsar;" but the day is coming when they shall seek him to appoint him their head, and to lay their necks under his yoke. He that hath here promised they shall do it will enable them to do it, and bring about this great work in his own way and time, "in the latter days" of the last time, the times of the Messiah. But, alas, who shall live when God doth this? How far we are to expect a general conversion of that nation, I cannot say, but I am sure we ought to pray that the Jews may be converted.

CHAPTER IV.

Prophets were sent to be reprovers, to tell people of their faults, and to warn them of the judgments of God, to which by sin they exposed themselves; so the prophet is employed in this and the following chapters. He is here, as counsel for the King of kings, opening an indictment against the people of Israel, and labouring to convince them of sin, and of their misery and danger because of sin, that he might prevail with them to repent and reform. I. He shews them what were the grounds of God's controversy with them. A general prevalency of vice and profaneness, ver. 1, 2; ignorance and forgetfulness of God, ver. 6, 7; the worldly mindedness of the priests, ver. 8; drunkenness and uncleanness, ver. 11; using divination and witchcraft, ver. 12; offering sacrifice in the high places, ver. 13; whoredoms, ver. 14, 18; and bribery among magistrates, ver. 18. II. He shews them what would be the consequences of God's controversy. God would punish them for these things, ver. 9; the whole land should be laid waste, ver. 3; all sorts of people cut off, ver. 5; their honour lost, ver. 7; their creature comforts unsatisfying, ver. 10; and themselves made ashamed, ver. 19; and, which is several times mentioned here as the sorest judgment of all, they should be let alone in their sins, ver. 17; they shall not reprove one another, ver. 4; God will not punish them, ver. 14; nay, he will let them prosper, ver. 16. III. He gives warning to Judah not to tread in the steps of Israel, because they saw the steps went down to hell, ver. 15.

HEAR the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel:
For the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land,
Because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.
2 By swearing, and lying, and killing,
And stealing, and committing adultery, they break out,
And blood toucheth blood.
3 Therefore shall the land mourn,
And every one that dwelleth therein shall languish,
With the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven;
Yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.
4 Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another:
For thy people *are* as they that strive with the priest.
5 Therefore shalt thou fall in the day,
And the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night,
And I will destroy thy mother.

Here is, First. The court set, and both attendance and attention demanded. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel," for to you is the word of this conviction sent, whether you will hear or whether you will forbear. Whom may God expect to give him a fair hearing, and to take from him a fair warning, but the children of Israel, his own professing people; yea, they will be ready enough to hear when God speaks comfortably to them, but are they willing to hear when he hath a controversy with them? Yes, they must hear him when he pleads against them, when he has something to lay to their charge. "The Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land," of this land, of this holy land. Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker, it sows discord between God and Israel. God sees sin in his own people, and a good action he has against them for it. Some more particular actions lie against his own people, which do not lie against other sinners. He has a controversy with them for breaking covenant with him, for bringing a reproach upon him, and for an ungrateful return to him for his favour. God's controversy will be pleaded; pleaded by the judgments of his mouth, before they are pleaded by the judgments of his hand, that he may be justified in all he doth, and may make it appear he desires not the death of sinners. And God's pleadings ought to be attended to; for, sooner or later, they shall have a hearing.

Secondly. The indictment read, by which the whole nation stands charged with crimes of a heinous nature, by which God is highly provoked.

1. They are charged with national omissions of the most important duties. There is no truth nor mercy, neither justice nor charity; these most weighty matters of the law, as our Saviour accounts them, *Mat.* xxiii. 23, judgment, mercy, and faith. The generality of the people seemed to have no sense at all of the thing called honesty; they made no conscience of what they said and did, though never so contrary to the truth and injurious to their neighbour. Much less had they any sense of mercy, or any obligation they were under to pity and help the poor. And it is not strange there is "no truth and mercy," when there is no "knowledge of God in the land." What good can be expected where there is no knowledge of God? It was the privilege of that land, that in Israel God was made known, and his name great, which was an aggravation of their sin, that they did not know him, *Ps.* lxxvi. 1.

2. Hence follow national commissions of the most enormous sins against both the first and second table, for they had no regard at all to either. Swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, against the third, ninth, sixth, eighth, and seventh commandments, were to be found in all the corners of the land, and among all orders and degrees of men among them, ver. 2. The corruption was universal. What good people there were among them were either lost or hid, or hid themselves. By these they break out; that is, they transgress all bounds of reason, and conscience, and the Divine law. "They have exceeded," *Job* xxxvi. 9; they have been "overmuch wicked," *Eccl.* vii. 17; they suffer their corruptions to break out; they themselves break over and break through all that stand in their way, and would stop them in their sinful career, as water overflows the banks. Note, Sin is a violent thing, and its power exorbitant. When men's hearts are fully set in them to do evil, (*Eccl.* viii. 11,) what will be restrained from them? *Gen.* xi. 6. When they break out thus, "blood touches blood;" that is, abundance of murders are committed in all parts of the country, and, as it were, in a constant series and succession. *Cædes aliæ aliis sunt contiguæ*,—'Murders touch murders.' A stream of blood flows down among them, even royal blood. It was about this time that there was so much blood shed in grasping at the crown. Shallum slew Zechariah, and Menahem slew Shallum; Pekah slew Pekahiah, and Hoshea slew Pekah; and the like bloody work, it is likely, there was among other contenders; so then the land was "polluted with blood," *Ps.* cvi. 38; "it was filled with blood from one end to the other," 2 *Kin.* xxi. 16.

Thirdly. Sentence passed upon this guilty and polluted land, ver. 3. It shall be utterly destroyed and laid waste. The whole land is infected with sin, and therefore the whole land shall mourn under God's sore judgments; shall sit in mourning, being stripped of all its wealth and beauty. As the valleys are said to shout for joy, and sing when there is plenty and peace, so here they are said to mourn, when by war and famine they are made desolate. The "whole land shall be brimstone, and salt, and burning," as was threatened in the law, *Deu.* xxix. 23. They had broken all God's commandments, and now God threatens to take away all their comforts. The land mourns when there is neither grass for the cattle nor herb for the service of man; and then "every

one that dwelleth therein shall languish" for want of nice food to support a wasting life, and fret for want of the usual dainties for delight. The "beasts of the field will languish," *Jer.* xiv. 5, 6. Nay, the destruction of the fruits of the earth shall be so great that there shall not be picking for the fowls of the air to keep them alive; they shall suffer with man; and their dying, or growing lean, will be a punishment to those who used to have their tables replenished with wild fowl. Nay, "the fishes of the sea shall be taken away, or gathered together," that they may go away in shoals to some other coast, and then the fishing trade will be worth nothing. This desolation shall be in that respect more general than that by Noah's flood, for that did not affect the fishes of the sea, but this shall. It was part of one of the plagues of Egypt that he slew their fish, *Ps.* cv. 29; when the waters are dried, the fish die, *Isa.* l. 2; *Zeph.* i. 2, 3. Note, When man becomes disobedient to God, it is just that the inferior creatures should be made unserviceable to man. Oh what reason have we to admire God's patience and mercy to our land, that though there is in it so much swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and adultery, yet there is plenty of flesh, and fish, and fowl on our tables!

Fourthly. An order of court, that no pains should be taken with the condemned criminal to bring him to repentance, with the reason for that order. Observe,

1. The order itself; ver. 4, "Yet let no man strive or reprove another;" that is, let no means be used to reduce and reclaim them; let their physicians give them up as desperate, and past cure. It intimates that as long as there is any hope we ought to reprove sinners for their sins; it is a duty we owe to one another to give and take reproofs: it was one of the laws of Moses, *Lev.* xix 17, "Thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour;" it is an instance of brotherly love. Sometimes there is need to rebuke sharply; not only to reprove, but to strive, so loth are men to part with their sins. But it is a sign that persons and people are abandoned to ruin when God saith, Let them not be reproved. Yet this is to be understood as God's commands sometimes to the prophets not to pray for them, notwithstanding which they did pray for them; but the meaning is, they are so hardened in sin, and so ripened for ruin, that it will be to little purpose either to deal with them or to deal with God for them. Note, It bodes ill to a people when reprovers are silenced, and when those that should witness against the sins of the times retire into a corner, and give up the cause: see 2 *Chr.* xxv. 16.

2. The reasons of this order. Let them not reprove one another; for, 1st. They are determined to go on in sin, and no reproofs will cure them of that. "Thy people are as they that strive with the priest;" that is, they are grown so very impudent in sin, so very insolent and impatient of reproof, that they will fly in the face even of a priest himself, if he should but give them the least check, without any regard to his character and office; and how then can it be thought they should take a reproof from a private person? Note, Those sinners have their hearts wickedly hardened that quarrel with their ministers for dealing faithfully with them; and those who rebel against ministerial reproof, which is an ordinance of God for their reformation, have forfeited the benefit of brotherly reproof too. Perhaps this may refer to the late wickedness of Joash king of Judah, and his people, who stoned Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, for delivering them a message from God, 2 *Chr.* xxiv. 21; he was a priest, with him they strove when he was officiating between the temple and the altar. And Dr. Lightfoot thinks the prophet had an eye to his case when he spoke (ver. 2) of "blood touching blood," the blood of the sanctifier was mingled with the blood of the sacrifice. That, saith he, was the apex of their wickedness, from thence their ruin was to be dated, *Mat.* xxiii. 35, as this is of their incorrigibleness, that they are as those who "strive with the priest," therefore let no man reprove them; for, 2nd. God also is determined to proceed in their ruin, ver. 5. Therefore, because thou wilt take no reproof, no advice, thou shalt fall; and it is in vain for any to think of preventing it, for the decree is gone forth. Thou shalt stumble and "fall in the day," and the prophet, the false prophet, that flattered and seduced thee, "shall fall with thee in the night;" that is, both thou and thy prophet shall fall, night and day; shall be continually falling into one calamity or other; the darkness of the night shall not help to cover thee from trouble, nor the light of the day help thee to flee from it. The prophets are blind leaders, and the people blind followers; and, to the blind, day and night are alike, so that, whether it be day or night, both shall fall together into the ditch. Thou shalt fall in the day, when thy fall is least feared by thyself, and thou art very secure, and in the day, when it will be seen and be observed by others, and turn most to thy shame; and the prophet shall fall in the night, when to himself it will be most terrible. Note, The ruin of those who have helped to ruin others, will, in a special manner, be intolerable. And did the children think, when they were in danger of falling, their mother would help them? It shall be in vain to expect it, for "I will destroy thy mother," Samaria, the mother city, the whole state or kingdom, which is as a mother to every part; it shall all be made silent. Note, When all are involved in guilt, nothing less can be expected but that all should be involved in ruin.

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:
Because thou hast rejected knowledge,
I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me:
Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God,
I will also forget thy children.
7 As they were increased, so they sinned against me:
Therefore will I change their glory into shame.
8 They eat up the sin of my people,
And they set their heart on their iniquity.
9 And there shall be, like people, like priest:
And I will punish them for their ways,
And reward them their doings.
10 For they shall eat, and not have enough:
They shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase:
Because they have left off to take heed to the LORD.
11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

God is here proceeding in his controversy, both with the priests and with the people. The people were as those that strove with the priests, ver. 4, when they had priests that did their duty; but the generality of them lived in the neglect of their duty; and here is a word for those priests, and for the people that love to have it so, *Jer.* v. 31. And it is observable here how the punishment answers the sin, and how, for the justifying of his own proceedings, God sets the one over against the other.

First. The people strive with the priests that should have taught them the knowledge of God justly, therefore are they "destroyed for lack of knowledge," ver. 6. Note, Those that rebel against the light can expect no other but to perish in the dark. Or, it is a charge upon the priests, who should have been still teaching the people knowledge, (*Eccl.* xii. 9,) but they did not, or did it in such a manner that it was as if they had not done it at all, so there was no knowledge of God in the land; and because there was no vision, or none to any purpose, the people perished, *Pr.* xxix. 18. Note, Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion that it is the mother of destruction. Lack of knowledge is ruining to any person or people. They are my people that are thus destroyed. Their relation to God, as his people, aggravates both their sin in not taking pains to get the knowledge of that God whose command they were under, and with whom they were taken into covenant, and their sin likewise who should have taught them. God set his children to school to them, and they never minded them, nor took any pains with them.

Secondly. Both priests and people rejected knowledge, and justly therefore will God reject them. The reason why the people did not learn, and the priests did not teach, was not because they had not the light, but because they hated it; not because they had not ways of coming to the knowledge of God, and of communicating it, but because they had no heart to it. They rejected it; they desired not the knowledge of God's ways, but put it from them, and shut their eyes against the light, and therefore "I will also reject thee;" I will refuse to take cognizance of thee, and to own thee. You will not know me, but bid me depart; I will therefore say, "Depart from me, I know you not." Thou shalt be no priest to me. 1st. The priests shall be no longer admitted to the privileges, or employed in the services, of the priesthood, nor shall they ever be received again, as we find, *Eze.* xliv. 13. Note, Ministers that reject knowledge, that are grossly ignorant and scandalous, ought not to be owned as ministers, but that which they seemed to have should be taken away, *Lu.* viii. 18. 2nd. The people shall be no longer as they have been, a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood, *Ex.* xix. 6. God's people, by rejecting knowledge, forfeit their honour, and profane their own crown.

Thirdly. They forgot the law of God, neither desired nor endeavoured to retain it in mind, nor to transmit the remembrance of it to their posterity, and therefore justly will God forget them and their children, the people's children; they did not educate them as they ought to have done, in the knowledge of God and their duty to him, and therefore God will disown them, as not in covenant with him. Note, If parents do not teach their children when they are young to remember their Creator, they cannot expect that their Creator should remember them. Or, it may be meant of the priests' children; they shall not succeed them in the priests' office, but shall be reduced to poverty, as is threatened against Eli's house, 1 *Sam.* ii. 20.

Fourthly. They dishonoured God with that which was their honour; and justly, therefore, will God strip them of it, ver. 7. It was their honour that they were increased in number, wealth, power, and dignity. The beginning of their nation was small, but in process of time it greatly increased, and grew very considerable; the family of the priests increased wonderfully; but as they were increased, so they sinned against God; the more populous the nation grew, the more sin was committed, and the more profane they were; their wealth, honour, and power did but make them the more daring in sin. Therefore, saith God, "will I change their glory into shame." Are their numbers their glory? God will diminish them, and make them few. Is their wealth their glory? God will impoverish them, and bring them low; so that they shall themselves be ashamed of that which they gloried in. Their priests shall be made contemptible and base, *Mal.* ii. 9. Note, That which is our honour, if we dishonour God with it, will sooner or later be turned into shame to us; for "they that despise God shall be lightly esteemed," 1 *Sam.* ii. 30.

Fifthly. The priests eat up the sin of God's people, and therefore "they shall eat, and not have enough." 1. They abused the maintenance that was allowed to the priest, to the priests of the house of Aaron, by the law of God, and to the mock priests of the calves, by their constitution; ver. 8, "They eat up the sin of my people," that is, their sin offerings. If it be meant of the priests of the calves, it intimates their seizing that which they had no right to; they usurped the revenues of the priests, though they were no priests. If it be meant of those who were legal priests, it intimates their greediness of the profits and perquisites of their office, when they took no care at all to do the duty of it. They feasted upon their part of the offerings of the Lord, but forgot the work for which they were so well paid. They set their hearts upon the people's iniquities; they lifted up their soul to them; that is, they were glad when people did commit iniquity, that they might be obliged to bring an offering to make atonement for it, which they should have their share of. The more sins, the more sacrifices, and therefore they cared not how much sin people were guilty of. Instead of warning the people against sin, from the consideration of the sacrifices, which shewed them what an offence sin was to God, since it needed such an expiation, they emboldened and encouraged the people to sin, since an atonement might be made at so small an expense. Thus they glutted themselves upon the sins of the people, and helped to keep up that which they should have beaten down. Note, It is a very wicked thing to be well pleased with the sins of others because some way or other they may turn to our advantage. 2. God will therefore deny them this blessing upon their maintenance; ver. 10, "They shall eat, and not have enough." Though they have great plenty by the abundance of offerings that are brought in, yet they shall have no satisfaction in it. Either their food shall yield no good nourishment, or their greedy appetites shall not be satisfied with it. Note, What is unlawfully gained cannot be comfortably used; no, nor that which is inordinately coveted. It is just that the desires that are insatiable should always be unsatisfied, and that those should never have enough who never know when they have enough: see *Mic.* vi. 14; *Hag.* i. 6.

Sixthly. The more they increased, the more they sinned, ver. 7; and therefore, though they commit whoredom, though they take the most wicked methods to multiply their people, yet they shall not increase. Though they have many wives and concubines, as Solomon had, yet they shall not have their families built up thereby in a numerous progeny, any more than he had. Note, Those that hope any way to increase by unlawful means will be disappointed; and therefore God will thus blast their projects, "because they have left off to take heed to the Lord." Time was when they had some regard to God and to his authority over them, and interest in them, but they have left it off; they take no heed to his word or to his providences; they do not eye him in either. They forsake him, so as not to take heed to him; they have apostatised to that degree that they have no manner of regard to God, but are perfectly without God in the world. Note, Those that leave off to take heed to the Lord leave off all good, and can expect no other but that all good should leave them.

Seventhly. The people and the priests did harden one another in sin, and therefore justly shall they be sharers in the punishment; ver. 9, "There shall be like people, like priest." So they were in character; people and priest were both alike ignorant and profane, regardless of God and their duty, and addicted to idolatry. And so they shall be in condition; God will bring judgments

upon them that shall be the destruction both of priest and people. The famine that deprives a people of their meat shall deprive the priests of their meat offerings, *Joel* i. 9. It is part of the description of an universal desolation, that it shall be "as with the people, so with the priest," *Isa.* xxiv. 2. God's judgments, when they come with commission, will make no difference. Note, Sharers in sin must expect to be sharers in ruin. Thus God will "punish them" both "for their ways, and reward them their doings." God will cause their doings to return upon them, so the word is. When a sin is committed, the sinner thinks it is gone, and he shall hear no more of it; but he shall find it called over again, and made to return, either to his humiliation or condemnation.

Eighthly. They indulged themselves in the delights of sense, to hold up their hearts, but they shall find that they take away their hearts; ver. 11, "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart." Some join this with the foregoing words, They have forsaken the Lord, to take heed to whoredom and wine and new wine; or, Because these have taken away their heart. Their sensual pleasures have taken them off from their devotions, and drowned all that is good in them. Or, we may take it as a distinct sentence, containing a great truth we see confirmed by every day's experience. Theft, drunkenness, and uncleanness, are sins that besot and infatuate men, weaken and enfeeble them; they take away both the understanding and the courage.

12 My people ask counsel at their stocks,
And their staff declareth unto them:
For the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err,
And they have gone a whoring from under their God.
13 They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains,
And burn incense upon the hills,
Under oaks and poplars and elms,
Because the shadow thereof *is* good:
Therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom,
And your spouses shall commit adultery. [whoredom,
14 I will not punish your daughters when they commit
Nor your spouses when they commit adultery:
For themselves are separated with whores,
And they sacrifice with harlots:
Therefore the people *that* doth not understand shall fall.
15 Though thou, Israel, play the harlot,
Yet let not Judah offend;
And come not ye unto Gilgal,
Neither go ye up to Beth-aven,
Nor swear, The LORD liveth.
16 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer:
Now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.
17 Ephraim *is* joined to idols: let him alone.
18 Their drink is sour:
They have committed whoredom continually:
Her rulers *with* shame do love, Give ye.
19 The wind hath bound her up in her wings,
And they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

In these verses we have, as before,

First. The sins charged upon the people of Israel, for which God had a controversy with them; and they are,

1. Spiritual whoredom, that is, idolatry. They have in them a "spirit of whoredoms," that is, a strong inclination to that sin, the bent and bias of their hearts is that way; it is their own iniquity, they are carried out towards it with an unaccountable violence, and this causeth them to err. Note, The errors and mistakes of the judgment are commonly owing to the corrupt affections; men, therefore, have a good opinion of sin, because they have a disposition towards it; and, having such erroneous notions of idols, and such passionate motions towards them, no marvel that, with such a head and such a heart, they have "gone a whoring from under their God," ver. 12. They ought to have been in subjection to him as their head and husband, to have been under his conduct and command; but they revolted from their allegiance, and put themselves under the conduct and protection of false gods. So ver. 15, Israel has played the harlot; their carriage in the worship of their idols was like that of a harlot, wanton and impudent. And ver. 16, "Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer;" as an untamed heifer, so some; or, as a perverse or refractory one, so others; as a heifer that, if turned loose, runs madly about the pasture; or, if put under the yoke, (which seems rather to be alluded to here,) will draw back, instead of going forward, will struggle to get her neck out of the yoke, and her feet out of the furrow. Thus unruly, ungovernable, untractable, were the people of Israel. They had begun to draw in the yoke of God's ordinances, but they drew back, as children of Belial, that will not endure the yoke; and, when the prophets were sent with the goad of reproof, to put them forwards, they kicked against the pricks, and ran backwards. The sum of all is, ver. 17, "Ephraim is joined to idols," is perfectly wedded to them, his affections are glued to them, and his heart is upon them. There are two instances given of their spiritual whoredom, in both of which they gave that honour to their idols which is due to God only. 1st. They consulted them as oracles, and used those arts of divination which they had learned from their idolatrous priests; ver. 12, "My people ask counsel at their stocks," their wooden gods; they apply themselves to them for advice and direction in what they should do, and for information concerning the event. They say to a stock, Thou art my father, *Jer.* ii. 27; and if it were indeed a father it were worthy of this honour. But it was a great affront to God, who was indeed their Father, and whose lively oracles they had among them, with which they had liberty to consult at any time, thus to ask counsel at their stocks. And they expect that their staff should declare to them what course they should take, and what the event should be. It is probable this refers to some wicked methods of divination used among the Gentiles, and which the Jews learned from them, by a piece of wood, or by a staff, like Nebuchadnezzar's divining by his arrows, *Eze.* xxi. 21. Note, Those who forsake the oracles of God to take their measures from the world and the flesh, do, in effect, but consult with their stocks and their staves. 2nd. They offered sacrifice to them as gods, whose favour they wanted, and whose wrath they dreaded and deprecated, ver. 13. They sacrifice to them to atone and pacify them, and burn incense to them to please and gratify them, and hope, by both, to recommend themselves to them. God had pitched upon the place where he would record his name, but they, having forsaken that, chose places for their irreligious rites which pleased their own fancies. They chose, *First.* High places, "upon the tops of the mountains, and upon the hills," foolishly imagining that the height of the ground gave them some advantage in their approaches towards heaven. *Secondly.* Shady places, "under oaks, and poplars, and elms;" because the shadow thereof is pleasant to them, especially in those hot countries, and therefore they thought it was pleasing to their gods; or, they fancied that a thick shade befriends contemplation, possesses the mind with something of an awe, and therefore is proper for devotion.

2. Corporeal whoredom is another crime charged upon them; "They have committed whoredom continually," ver. 18. They drove a trade of uncleanness; it was not a single act now and then, but their constant practice, as it is of many that have "eyes full of adultery," and which cannot cease from that sin, 2 *Pet.* ii. 14. Now the abominable filthiness and lewdness that was found in Israel is here spoken of, 1st. As a concomitant of their idolatry; their false gods drew them to it; for the devil whom they worshipped, though a spirit, is an unclean spirit. They that worshipped idols were separated with whores, and they sacrificed with harlots, for because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but dishonoured him, therefore God gave them up to vile affections, by the indulging of which they dishonoured themselves, *Rom.* i. 24, 28. 2nd. As a punishment of it. The men that worshipped idols were separated with whores that attended the idolatrous rites, as in the worship of Baal-peor, *Num.* xxv. 1—3; and to punish them for that, God gave up their wives and daughters to the like vile affections; they committed whoredom and adultery, ver. 13, which could not but be a great grief and reproach to their husbands and parents; for those that are not chaste themselves desire to have their wives and daughters so. But thus they might read their sin in their punishment, as David's adultery was punished in the debauching of his concubines by his own son, 2 *Sam.* xii. 11. Note, When the same sin in others is made men's grief and affliction which they have themselves been guilty of, they must own the Lord is righteous.

3. The perverting of justice, ver. 18. Their rulers, be it spoken to their shame, do love "Give ye;" that is, they love bribes, and have it continually in their mouths, Give, give. They are given to filthy lucre; every one that has any business with them must expect to be asked, What will ye give? Though, as rulers, they are bound by office to do justice, yet none can have justice done them without a fee, and then you may be sure, for a fee, they will do injustice. Note, The love of money is the ruin of equity, and the root of all iniquity; but, of all men, it is a shame for rulers, who should be men fearing God, and hating covetousness, to love "Give ye." Perhaps this is intended in that part of the charge here, "Their drink is sour;" it is dead, it is gone. Justice, duly administered, is refreshing, like drink to the thirsty; but when it is perverted, and rulers take rewards, either to acquit the guilty or to condemn the innocent, the drink is sour, they "turn judgment into wormwood," *Am.* v. 7. Or, it may refer in general to the depraved morals of the whole nation; they had lost all their life and spirit, and were as offensive to God as dead or sour drink is to us: see *Deu.* xxxii. 32, 33.

Secondly. The tokens of God's wrath against them for their sins.

1. Their wives and daughters should not be punished for the injury and disgrace they did to their families; ver. 14, "I will not punish your daughters," and, not being punished for it, they would go on in it. Note, The impunity of one sinner is sometimes made the punishment of another. Or, I will not punish them so as I will punish you; for you must own, as Judah did concerning her daughter-in-law, that they are more righteous than you, *Gen.* xxxviii. 26.

2. They themselves should prosper for awhile, but their prosperity should help to destroy them. It comes in as a token of God's wrath; ver. 16, "The Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place;" they shall have a fat pasture and a large one, in which they shall be fed to the full, and fed with the best, but it shall be only to prepare them for the slaughter, as a lamb is that is so fed. If they wax fat and kick, they do but wax fat for the butcher. But others make them feed as a lamb on the common, a large place indeed, but where it has short grass, and lies exposed. The Shepherd of Israel will turn them both out of his pastures and out of his protection.

3. No means should be used to bring them to repentance; ver. 17, "Ephraim is joined to idols," is in love with them, and addicted to them, and therefore "let him alone," as, ver. 4, Let no man reprove him; let him be given up to his own heart's lust, and walk in his own counsels; we would have healed him, and he would not be healed, therefore forsake him. See what their end will be, *Deu.* xxxii. 20. Note, It is a sad and sore judgment for any man to be let alone in sin, for God to say concerning a sinner, He is joined to his idols, the world and the flesh—he is incurably proud, covetous, or profane, an incurable drunkard or adulterer,—let him alone; conscience, let him alone; minister, let him alone; providences, let him alone; let nothing awaken him till the flames of hell do it. The father corrects not the son any more when he determines to disinherit him. Those that are not disturbed in their sin will be destroyed for their sin.

4. They should be hurried away with a swift and shameful destruction; ver. 19, "The wind hath bound her up in her wings" to carry her away into captivity, suddenly, violently, and irresistibly. He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, *Ps.* lviii. 9; and then "they shall be ashamed because of their" sacrifices; ashamed of their sin, in offering sacrifice to idols; ashamed of their folly, in putting themselves to such an expense upon gods that have no power to help them, and thereby to make that God their enemy that has an almighty power to destroy them. Note, There are sacrifices that men will one day be ashamed of. Those that have sacrificed their time, strength, honour, and all their comforts to the world and the flesh, will shortly be ashamed of it. Yea, and those that bring to God blind, and lame, and heartless sacrifices, will be ashamed of them too.

Thirdly. The warning given to Judah, not to sin after the similitude of Israel's transgression. It is said in the close of ver. 14, They that do not understand shall fall. They must needs fall that do not understand how to avoid or get over the stumbling-blocks they meet with; and, therefore, "let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall," particularly the two tribes; ver. 15, "though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend." Though Israel be given to idolatry, yet let not Judah take the infection. Now, 1st. This was a very needful caution. The men of Israel were brethren and near neighbours to the men of Judah; Israel was more numerous, and at this time in a prosperous condition, and therefore there was danger lest the men of Judah should learn their way, and get a snare to their souls. Note, The nearer we are to the infection of sin, the more need we have to stand upon our guard. 2nd. It was a very rational caution. Let Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah do so; for Judah has greater means of knowledge than Israel, has the temple and priest-

hood, and a king of the house of David. From Judah Shiloh is to come, and for Judah God has reserved great blessings in store; therefore, let not Judah offend, for more is expected from them than from Israel, and they will have more to answer for if they do offend, and from them God will take it more unkindly. If Israel play the harlot, let not Judah do so too, for then God will have no professing people in the world. God bespeaks Judah here, as Christ doth the twelve, when many turned their backs upon them, "Will you also go away?" *Jno.* vi. 67. Note, Those that have hitherto kept their integrity should, for that reason, still hold it fast, even in times of general apostasy. Now to preserve Judah from offending as Israel had done, two rules are here given: *First.* That they might not be guilty of idolatry they must keep at a distance from the places of idolatry; "Come not ye unto Gilgal," where all their wickedness was, *ch.* ix. 15, xii. 11; there they multiplied transgression, *Am.* iv. 4; and perhaps they contracted a veneration for that place, because there it was said to Joshua, "The place where thou standest is holy ground," *Josh.* v. 15; therefore they are forbidden to enter into Gilgal, *Am.* v. 5. And for the same reason they must not go up to Bethel. here called the house of vanity, for so Beth-aven signifies; not the house of God, as Bethel signifies. Note, Those that would be kept from sin, and not fall into the devil's hands, must studiously avoid the occasions of sin, and not come upon the devil's ground. *Secondly.* That they might not be guilty of idolatry, they must take heed of profaneness, and not swear "The Lord liveth." They are commanded to swear, "The Lord liveth, in truth and righteousness," *Jer.* iv. 2; and, therefore, that which is here forbidden is swearing so in untruth and unrighteousness, swearing rashly and lightly, or falsely and with deceit; or swearing by the Lord and the idol, *Zeph.* i. 5. Note, Those that would be steady in their adherence to God must possess themselves with an awe and reverence of God, and always speak of him with solemnity and seriousness; for those that can make a jest of the true God will make a god of any thing.

CHAPTER V.

The scope of this chapter is the same with the foregoing chapter, to discover the sin both of Israel and Judah, and to denounce the judgments of God against them. I. They are called to hearken to the charge, ver. 1, 8. II. They are accused of many sins, which are here aggravated: 1. Persecution, ver. 1, 2; 2. Spiritual whoredom, ver. 3, 4; 3. Pride, ver. 5; 4. Apostacy from God, ver. 7; 5. The tyranny of the princes, and the tameness of the people in submitting to it, ver. 10, 11. III. They are threatened with God's displeasure for their sins. He knows all their wickedness, ver. 3; and makes known his wrath against them for it, ver. 9. 1. They shall fall in their iniquity, ver. 5; 2. God will forsake them, ver. 6; 3. Their portions shall be devoured, ver. 7; 4. God will rebuke them, and pour out his wrath upon them, ver. 9, 10; 5. They shall be oppressed, ver. 11; 6. God will be as a moth to them in secret judgments, ver. 12, and as a lion in public judgments, ver. 14. IV. They are blamed for the wrong course they took under their afflictions, ver. 13. V. It is intimated that they shall at length take a right course, ver. 15. The more generally these things are expressed, of so much the more general use they are for our learning, and particularly for our admonition.

HEAR ye this, O priests;
And hearken, ye house of Israel;
And give ye ear, O house of the king;
For judgment *is* toward you,
Because ye have been a snare on Mizpah,
And a net spread upon Tabor.
2 And the revolters are profound to make slaughter,
Though I *have been* a rebuker of them all.
3 I know Ephraim,
And Israel is not hid from me:
For now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom,
And Israel is defiled.
4 They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God:
For the spirit of whoredoms *is* in the midst of them,
And they have not known the LORD.
5 And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face:
Therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity;
Judah also shall fall with them.
6 They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD;
But they shall not find *him;*
He hath withdrawn himself from them.
7 They have dealt treacherously against the LORD:
For they have begotten strange children:
Now shall a month devour them with their portions.

Here, First. All orders and degrees of men are cited to appear, and answer to such things as shall be laid to their charge; ver. 1, "Hear ye this, O priests," whether in holy orders, as those in Judah, and perhaps many in Israel too,—for in the ten tribes there were divers cities of priests and Levites, who it is probable stayed in their own lot after the revolt of the ten tribes, and did so much of their office as might belong at a distance from the temple,—or pretending holy orders, as the priests of the calves, who, some think, are included here, "Hearken, ye house of Israel," the common people, and "give ear, O house of the king." Let them all take notice, for they have all contributed to the national guilt, and they shall all share in the national judgments. Note, If neither the sanctity of the priesthood, nor the dignity of the royal family, will prevail to keep out sin, it cannot be expected they should avail to keep out wrath. If the priests, and the house of the king, though they bear such noble characters, sin like others, their noble characters will not excuse them, but they must smart like others. Nor shall it be any plea for the house of Israel that they were misled by their priests and princes, but they shall receive their doom with them, and neither their meanness nor their multitude shall be their exemption.

Secondly. Witness is produced against them, one instead of a thousand; it is God's omniscience; ver. 3, "I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me." "They have not known the Lord," ver. 4, but the Lord has known them; knows their true character, however disguised; knows their secret wickedness, however concealed. Note, Men's rejecting the knowledge of God will not secure them from his knowledge of them; and when he contends with them he will prove their sins upon them by his own knowledge, so that it will be in vain to plead Not guilty.

Thirdly. Very ill things are laid to their charge.

1. They had been both very ingenious and very industrious to draw people either into sin, or into trouble; Ye have been "a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor," ver. 1, that is, such snares and nets as the huntsmen use to lay upon these mountains in pursuit of their game. When the worship of the calves was set up in Israel, the patrons of that idolatry, and sticklers for it, contrived by all possible arts and wiles to draw men into it, and reconcile those to it that at first had a dread of it. Note, Those that allure and entice men to sin, however they may pretend friendship and goodwill, are to be looked upon as snares and nets to them, and their hands as bands, *Eccl.* vii. 26; but to those whom they could not seduce into sin they were as a net and a snare, to bring them into trouble. Some think it was their practice to set spies in the road, and particularly upon the mountains of Mizpah and Tabor, at the times of the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, to watch if any of their people who were piously affected went thither, and to inform against them, that they might be prosecuted for it; thus doing the devil's work, who disquiets those whom he cannot debauch.

2. They had been both very crafty and very cruel in carrying on their designs; ver. 2, "The revolters are profound to make slaughter." Note, Those that have themselves apostatized from the truths of God are often the most subtle and barbarous persecutors of those who still adhere to them. Nothing will serve them but to make slaughter; it is the blood of the saints that they thirst after, and with the serpent's sting they have his head,—they are profound to do it. O the depth of the depths of Satan, of the wickedness of his agents, of those that have deeply revolted! *Isa.* xxxi. 6. Now that which aggravated this was the many reproofs and warnings that had been given them; "Though I have been a rebuker of them all." The prophet had been so, a reprover by office, he had many a time told them of the evil of their ways and doings, had dealt plainly with them all, and had not spared either the priests or the house of the king. God himself had been a rebuker of them all by their own consciences, and by his providences. Note, Sins against reproof are doubly sinful, *Pr.* xxix. 1.

3. They had committed whoredom, had defiled their own bodies with fleshly lusts, had defiled their own souls with the worship of idols, ver. 3. This God was a witness to, though secretly committed and artfully palliated. Nay, the piercing eye of God saw "the spirit of whoredom" that was "in the midst of them," their secret inclination and disposition to those sins, the love they had to their sins, and the dominion their sins had over them, how much they were under the power of a "spirit of whoredoms," that root of bitterness which bore all this gall and wormwood, that corrupt and poisoned fountain.

4. They have no disposition at all to come into acquaintance and communion with God. The "spirit of whoredoms" having caused them to err from him, keeps them wandering endlessly, ver. 4. 1st. "They have not known the Lord," nor desired to know him, but have rather declined, nay, dreaded the knowledge of him, for that would disturb them in their sinful ways. 2nd. Therefore "they will not frame their doings, to turn to their God;" by which it appeared they did not know him aright. It speaks their obstinate persisting in their apostasy from God. They would not turn to God, though he is their God, theirs in covenant, by whose name they have been called, and whom they were bound to serve. They would not return to their worship of him, from which they had turned aside. Nay, they would not frame their doings to turn to God. They would not consider their ways, nor dispose themselves into a serious temper, nor apply their minds to think of those things that would bring them to God. It is true we cannot, by our own power, without the special grace of God, turn to him; but we may by the due improvement of our own faculties, and the common aids of his Spirit, frame our doings to turn to him. And those that will not do that, that "prepare not their hearts to seek the Lord," 2 *Chr.* xii. 14, owe it to themselves that they are not turned, they die because they will die; and to those that will do this farther grace shall not be wanting.

5. They were guilty of notorious arrogancy and insolence in sin; ver. 5, "The pride of Israel doth testify to his face," doth witness against him, that he is a rebel to God and his government. The spirit of whoredoms which was in the midst of them shewed itself in the gaiety and gaudiness of their worship, as a harlot is known by her attire, *Pr.* vii. 10. The wantonness of her dress testifies to her face that she is not a modest woman. Or, their pride, in confronting the prophets God sent them, and the message they brought, *Jer.* xliii. 2. Or, a haughty, scornful carriage towards their brethren, and those that were under them; this witnessed against them that they were not God's people, and justified God in all the humbling judgments he brought upon them. His pride testifies in his face; so some read it, agreeing with *Isa.* iii. 9, "The show of their countenance doth witness against them." They have that proud look which the Lord hates.

6. They departed from God to idols, and bred up their children in idolatry; "They have dealt treacherously against the Lord," as a wife that, in contempt of the marriage covenant, forsakes her husband, and lives in adultery with another. Thus they who are guilty of spiritual idolatry, whose god is their money, whose god is their belly, deal treacherously against the Lord; they violate their engagements to him, and frustrate his expectations from them. Note, Wilful sinners are treacherous dealers, "they have begotten strange children," that is, their children which they have begotten are estranged from God, and trained up in a false way of worship; they are a spurious brood, as children of fornication, *Jno.* viii. 41, whom God will disown. Note, Those deal treacherously with God indeed who not only turn from following him themselves, but train up their children in wicked ways.

Fourthly. Very sad things are made to be their doom. In general, ver. 1, "Judgment is toward you," God is coming forth to contend with you, and to testify his displeasure against you for your sins. It is time to hearken when judgment is towards us. In particular,

1. They shall fall in their iniquity. This follows upon their pride testifying to their face; ver. 5, "Therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity." Note, Pride will have a fall; it is the certain presage and forerunner of it. They that exalt themselves shall be abased. The face in which pride testifies shall be filled with confusion. They shall not only fall, but fall in their iniquity, the saddest fall of all other. Their pride kept them from repenting of their iniquity, and therefore they shall fall in it. Note, Those that are not humbled for their sins are likely to perish for ever in their sins. It is added, "Judah also shall fall with them," in her iniquity. As the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria for their idolatry, so the two tribes, in process of time, were carried into Babylon for following their ill example; but the former fell and were utterly cast down, the latter fell and were raised up again. Judah had the temple and priesthood, and yet that shall not secure them; but if any sin with Israel and Ephraim, with them they shall fall.

2. They shall fall short of God's favour when they profess to seek it; ver. 6, "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord," but in vain; "they shall not find him." This seems to be spoken principally of Judah, when they fell into their iniquity, and when they fell in their iniquity. 1st. When they fell into their iniquity they sought the Lord, but they did not seek him only, and therefore he was not found of them. When they worshipped strange gods, yet they kept up the show and shadow of the worship of the true God; yet they went as usual, at the solemn feasts, "with their flocks and herds, to seek the Lord;" but their hearts were not upright with him, because they were not entire for him, and therefore he would not accept them; for then only shall we find him when we seek him with our whole heart, not divided between God and Baal, *Eze.* xiv. 3. 2nd. When they fell in their iniquity, or found themselves falling by it, they sought the Lord; but they did not seek him early, and therefore he will not be found of them. They shall see ruin coming upon them, and shall then in their distress flee to God, and think to make him their friend with burnt offerings and sacrifices; but it will be too late then to turn away his wrath when the decree is gone forth. Even Josiah's reformation did not prevail to turn away the wrath of God, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 25, 26. Those that go with their flocks and their herds only to seek the Lord, and not with their hearts and souls, cannot expect to find him, for his favour is not to be purchased with thousands of rams; nor shall those speed who do not seek the Lord while he may be found, for there is a time when he will not be found. They shall not find him, for he hath withdrawn himself, he will not be inquired of by them, but will turn a deaf ear to their prayers, and have no regard to their sacrifices. See how much it is our concern to seek God early, now while the accepted time is, and the day of salvation.

3. They and their portions shall all be swallowed up. They have "dealt treacherously against the Lord," and have thought to strengthen themselves in it by their alliances with strange children, but "now shall a month devour them with their portions," that is, their estates and inheritances, all those things which they have taken, and taken up with, as their portions; or, their portion, that is, their idols, whom they chose for their portion instead of God. Note, They that make an idol of the world, by taking it for their portion, will themselves perish with it. A month shall devour them, or eat them up, that is, a certain time prefixed, and a short time. When God's judgments begin with them they shall soon make an end, one month will do their business. How much may a body be weakened by one month's sickness, or a kingdom wasted by one month's war! "Three shepherds," saith God, "I cut off in one month," *Zec.* xi. 8. Note, The judgments of God sometimes make quick work with a sinful people. A month devours more, and more portions, than many years can repair.

8 Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah,
And the trumpet in Ramah:
Cry aloud *at* Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin.
9 Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke:
Among the tribes of Israel have I made known that
which shall surely be. [bound:
10 The princes of Judah were like them that remove the
Therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.
11 Ephraim *is* oppressed *and* broken in judgment,
Because he willingly walked after the commandment.
12 Therefore *will* I *be* unto Ephraim as a moth,
And to the house of Judah as rottenness.
13 When Ephraim saw his sickness,
And Judah *saw* his wound,
Then went Ephraim to the Assyrian,
And sent to king Jareb:
Yet could he not heal you,
Nor cure you of your wound.
14 For I *will be* unto Ephraim as a lion,
And as a young lion to the house of Judah:
I, *even* I, will tear and go away;
I will take away, and none shall rescue *him.*
15 I will go *and* return to my place,
Till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face:
In their affliction they will seek me early.

Here is, First. A loud alarm sounded, giving notice of judgments coming; ver. 8, "Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah," and in Ramah, two cities near together, in the confines of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel; Gibeah a frontier town of the kingdom of Judah, Ramah of Israel; so that the warning is hereby sent into both kingdoms. "Cry aloud at Beth-aven," or Bethel, which place seems to be already seized upon by the enemy, and therefore the trumpet is not sounded there, but you hear the outcries of them that shout for mastery mixed with theirs that are overcome. Let them cry aloud, "After thee, O Benjamin," comes the enemy. The tribe of Ephraim is already vanquished, and the enemy will be upon thy back, O Benjamin, in a little time; thy turn comes next. The cup of trembling shall go round. The prophet had described God's controversy with them as a trial at law, *ch.* iv. 1; here he describes it as a trial by battle, and here also when he judgeth he will overcome; let all therefore prepare to meet their God. He had before spoken of the judgments as certain, here he speaks of them as near; and when they are apprehended as just at the door they are very startling and awakening. The blowing of this cornet is explained, ver. 9, "Among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be;" that which is true or certain, so the word is. Note, The destruction of impenitent sinners is a thing which shall surely be; it is not mere talk, to frighten them, but it is an irrevocable sentence. And it is a mercy to us that it is made known to us, that we have timely warning given us of it, that we may flee from the wrath to come. It is the privilege of the tribes of Israel that, as they are told their duty, so they are told their danger, by the oracles of God committed to them.

Secondly. The ground of God's controversy with them.

1. He has a quarrel with the princes of Judah, because they were daring leaders in sin; ver. 10, they are "like them that remove the bound," or the ancient landmarks. God hath given them his law to be a fence about his own property; but they have sacrilegiously broken through it, and set it aside. They have encroached even upon God's rights, have trampled upon the distinctions between good and evil, and the most sacred obligations of reason and equity, thinking, because they were princes, their will was a law, and they might do any thing, *quicquid libet, licet,*—'their will was a law.' Or, it may be understood of their invading the liberty and property of the subject, for the advancing of the prerogative, which was like removing the ancient landmarks. Some have observed that the princes of Judah were more absolute, and assumed a more arbitrary power, than the princes of Israel did. Now for this God has a controversy with them: "I will pour out my wrath upon them like water," in great abundance, like the waters of the flood which were poured upon the giants of the old world, for the violence which the earth was filled with through them, *Gen.* vi. 13. Note, There are bounds which even princes themselves must not remove; bounds both of religion and justice, which they are limited by; and which, if they break through, they must know that there is a God above them who will call them to account for it.

2. He has a quarrel with the people of Ephraim, because they were sneaking followers in sin; ver. 11, "He willingly walked after the commandment," that is, the commandment of Jeroboam, and the succeeding kings of Israel, who obliged all their subjects by a law to worship the calves at Dan and Bethel, and never to go up to Jerusalem to worship. This was the commandment; it was the law of the land, and backed with reasons of state. And the people not only walked after it in a blind, implicit obedience to authority, but they willingly walked after it, from a secret antipathy they had to the worship of God, and a strong bias to the worship of idols. Note, An easy compliance with the commandments of men that thwart the commandments of God, ripens a people for ruin as much as any thing else. And the punishment of this sequacious disobedience (if I may so call it) answers the sin; for it is for this that "Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment," has all his civil rights and liberties broken in upon and trodden down. And, 1st. It is just with God it should be so, that those who betray God's property should lose their own, that those who subject their consciences to a fallible judge, and an arbitrary power, should have enough of both. 2nd. There is a natural tendency in the thing itself towards it. They that willingly walk after the commandment, even when it walks contrary to the command of God, will find the commandment an encroaching thing, and that the more power is given it the more it will claim. Note, Nothing gives greater advantage to a mastiff-like tyranny, that is fierce and furious, than a spaniel-like submission, that is fawning and flattering. Thus is Ephraim "oppressed and broken in judgment," that is, he is wronged under a face and colour of right. Note, It is a sad and sore judgment upon any people to be oppressed under pretence of having justice done them. This explains the threatening, ver. 9, "Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke." Note, Daring sinners must expect that a day of rebuke will come, and such a day of rebuke as will make them desolate, will deprive them of the comfort of all they have and all they hope for.

Thirdly. The different methods that God would take both with Judah and Ephraim; sometimes one method, and sometimes the other, and sometimes both together. Or, rather, by which, first the one and then the other, he would advance towards their complete ruin.

1. He would begin with lesser judgments, which should sometimes work silently and insensibly; ver. 12, "I will be," that is, my providences shall be "unto Ephraim as a moth," nay, (as it might better be supplied,) they are unto Ephraim as a moth; for it is such a sickness as Ephraim now sees, ver. 13. Note, The judgments of God are sometimes, to a sinful people, as a moth, and as rottenness, or as a worm. The former signifies the little animals that breed in clothes; the latter those that breed in wood. As these consume the clothes and wood, so shall the judgments of God consume them. 1st. Silently, so as not to make any noise in the world; nay, so as they themselves shall not be sensible of it. They shall think themselves safe and thriving; but when they come to look more narrowly into their state, shall find themselves wasting and decaying. 2nd. Slowly, and with long delays and intervals, that he may give them space to repent. Many a nation, as well as many a person, in the prime of its time, dies of a consumption. 3rd. Gradually God comes upon sinners with lesser judgments, so to prevent greater, if they will be wise and take warning; comes upon them step by step, to shew he is not willing they should perish. 4th. The moth breeds in the clothes, and the worm, or rottenness, in the wood. Thus sinners are consumed by a fire of their own kindling.

2. When it appeared those had not done their work, he would come upon them with greater; ver. 14, "I will be unto Ephraim as a lion," and as a young lion to the house of Judah; though Judah is himself, in Jacob's blessing, a "lion's whelp." Lest any should think his power weakened, because he was said to be as a moth to them, he saith he will now be as a lion to them, not only to frighten them with his roaring, but to pull them to pieces. Note, If lesser judgments prevail not to do their work, it may be expected that God will send greater. Christ is sometimes a lion of the tribe of Judah; here he is a lion against that tribe. See what God will do to a people that are secure in sin, "Even I will tear." He seems to glory in it as his prerogative to be able to destroy, as the alone lawgiver, *Jas.* iv. 12. I, even I, I will take the work into my own hands; I say it, that will do it. There is a more immediate work of God in some judgments than in others; "I will tear and go away." He will go away, 1st. As not fearing them. He will go away in state, and with a majestic face, as the lion from his prey. 2nd. As not helping them. If God tear by afflicting providences, and yet by his graces and comforts stays with us, it is well enough; but our condition is sad indeed if he tear and go away, if, when he deprives us of our creature-comforts, he doth himself depart from us. When he goes away he will take away all that is valuable and dear; for "when God goes, all good goes along with him." He will take away, "and none shall rescue him;" as the prey cannot be rescued from the lion, *Mic.* v. 8. Note, None can be delivered out of the hands of God's justice but those that are delivered into the hands of his grace. It is in vain for a man to strive with his Maker.

Fourthly. The different effects of those different methods.

1. When God contended with them by lesser judgments they neglected him, and sought to creatures for relief, but sought in vain, ver. 13. When God was to them as a moth, and as rottenness, they perceived their sickness and their wound; after awhile they found themselves going down the wind, and that they were behind-hand in their affairs, their state was sensibly decaying, and then they sent to the Assyrian to come in to their assistance, made their court to king Jareb, which some think was one of the names of Pul, or Tiglath-pileser, kings of Assyria, to whom both Israel and Judah applied themselves for relief in their distress, hoping by an alliance with them to repair and re-establish their declining interests. Note, Carnal hearts, in time of trouble, see their sickness, and see their wound, but do not see the sin that is the cause of it, nor will be brought to acknowledge that; no, nor to acknowledge the hand of God, his mighty hand, much less his righteous hand, in their

trouble; and therefore, instead of going the next way to the Creator that could relieve them, they take a great deal of pains to go about to creatures that can do them no service. Those who repent not that they have offended God by their sins are loth to be beholden to him in their affliction, but would rather seek relief anywhere than with him. And what comes of it? "Yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound." Note, Those who neglect God, and seek to creatures for help, will certainly be disappointed; that depend upon them for support, will find them not foundations, but broken reeds; that depend upon them for supply, will find them not fountains, but broken cisterns; that depend upon them for comfort and a cure, will find them miserable comforters, and physicians of no value. The kings of Assyria, whom Judah and Israel sought unto, "distressed them, and helped them not," 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 16, 21. Some make king Jareb to signify the great, potent, or magnificent king, for they built much upon his power; others, the king that will plead, or should plead, for they built much upon his wisdom and eloquence, and his interesting himself in their affairs. They had sent him a present, (*ch.* x. 6,) a good fee; and having so retained him of counsel for them, they doubted not of his fidelity to them; but he deceived them, as an arm of flesh doth those that trust in it, *Jer.* xvii. 5, 6.

2. When, to convince them of their folly, God brought greater judgments upon them, then they would at length be forced to apply themselves to him, ver. 15. When he has torn as a lion, 1st. He will leave them. "I will go and return to my place," that is, to heaven, or to the mercy-seat, the throne of grace, which is his glory. When God punisheth sinners he comes out of his place, *Isa.* xxvi. 21; but, when he designs them favour, he returns to his place, where he waits to be gracious upon their submission. Or, he will return to his place when he has corrected them; as not regarding them, hiding his face from them, and not taking notice of their troubles or prayers. And this for their farther humiliation, till they are qualified in some measure for the return of his favour. 2nd. He will at length work upon them, and bring them home to himself by their afflictions, which is the thing he waits for; and then he will no longer withdraw from them. Two things are here mentioned as instances of their return: *First.* Their penitent confession of sin, "till they acknowledge their offence;" margin, 'till they be guilty,' that is, till they be sensible of their guilt, and are brought to own it, and humble themselves before God for it. Note, When men begin to complain more of their sins than of their afflictions, then there begins to be some hopes of them. And this is that which God requires of us, when we are under his correcting hand, that we own ourselves in a fault and justly corrected. *Secondly.* Their humble petition for the favour of God. Till they seek my face, which it may be expected they will do, when they are brought to the last extremity, and they have tried other helpers in vain. "In their affliction they will seek me early;" that is, diligently and earnestly, and with great importunity. And if they seek him thus, and be sincere in it, though it might be called seeking him late, because it was long ere they were brought to it, yet it is not too late; nay, he is pleased to call it seeking him early, so willing is he to make the best of true penitents in their return to him. Note, When we are under the convictions of sin, and the corrections of the rod, our business is to seek God's face; that is, we must desire the knowledge of him, and an acquaintance with him, that he may manifest himself to us, and for us, in token of his being at peace with us. And it may reasonably be expected that affliction will bring those to God that had long gone astray from him, and kept at a distance. Therefore God, for a time, turns away from us, that he may turn us to himself, and then return to us. "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray."

CHAPTER VI.

The closing words of the foregoing chapter gave us some hopes that God and his Israel, notwithstanding their sins and his wrath, might yet be happily brought together again; that they would seek him, and he would be found of them. Now this chapter carries that matter farther; and some join the beginning of this chapter with the end of that, "They will seek me early," saying, "Come and let us return." But God doth again complain of the wickedness of this people; for, though some did repent and reform, the greater part continued obstinate. Observe, I. Their resolution to return to God, and the comforts wherewith they encourage themselves in their return, ver. 1—3. II. The instability of many of them in their professions and promises of repentance, and the severe course which God therefore took with them, ver. 4, 5. III. The covenant God made with them, and his expectation from them, ver. 6; and their violation of that covenant, and frustrating those expectations, ver. 7—11.

COME, and let us return unto the LORD:
For he hath torn, and he will heal us;
He hath smitten, and he will bind us up.
2 After two days will he revive us:
In the third day he will raise us up,
And we shall live in his sight.
3 Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the LORD:
His going forth is prepared as the morning;
And he shall come unto us as the rain,
As the latter *and* former rain unto the earth.

This may be taken either as the words of the prophet to the people, calling them to repentance, or as the words of the people to one another, exciting and encouraging one another to seek the Lord, and to humble themselves before him, in hopes of finding mercy with him. God had said in their affliction they would seek him; now the prophet, and the good people his friends, would strike while the iron was hot, and set in with the convictions their neighbours seemed to be under. Note, Those who are disposed to turn to God themselves should do all they can to excite, and engage, and encourage others to return to him. Observe,

First. What it is they engage to do; "Come, and let us return to the Lord," ver. 1. Let us go no more to the Assyrian, nor send to king Jareb, we have enough of that, but let us return to the Lord. Return to the worship of him from our idolatries, and to our hope in him from all our confidences in the creature. Note, It is the great concern of those who have revolted from God to return to him; and those who have gone from him by consent, and in a body, drawing one another to sin, should by consent, and in a body, return to him, which will be for his glory and their mutual edification.

Secondly. What inducements and encouragements to do this they fasten upon, to stir up one another with.

1. The experience they had had of his displeasure. Let us return to him, for "he has torn, he hath smitten;" we have been torn, and it was he that tore us; we have been smitten, and it was he that smote us. Therefore let us return to him, because it is for our revolts from him that he has torn and smitten us in anger, and we cannot expect he should be reconciled to us till we do return to him; and for this end he has afflicted us thus, that we might be wrought upon to return to him; and his hand will be stretched out still against us, if the people "turn not to him that smiteth them," *Isa.* ix. 12, 13. Note, The consideration of the judgments of God upon us and our land, especially when they are tearing judgments, should awaken us to return to God by repentance, and prayer, and reformation.

2. The expectation they had of his favour. He that has torn will heal us, that hath smitten will bind us up; as the skilful surgeon with a tender hand binds up the broken bone, or bleeding wound. Note, The same providence of God that afflicts his people relieves them, and the same Spirit of God that convinceth the saints comforts them; that which is first a spirit of bondage is afterwards a spirit of adoption. This is an acknowledgment of the power of God; he can heal, though we be never so ill torn, and of his mercy he will do it; nay, therefore, he has torn that he may heal. Some think this points particularly to the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when they sought the Lord, and joined themselves to him, in the prospect of his gracious return to them in a way of mercy. Note, It will be of great use to us, both for our support under our afflictions and for our encouragement in our repentance, to keep up good thoughts of God, and of his purposes and designs concerning us.

Now this favour of God, which they are here in expectation of, is described in several instances.

1st. They promise themselves that their deliverance out of their troubles should be to them as life from the dead; ver. 2, "After two days he will revive us," that is, in a short time, in a day or two; and the third day, when it is expected that the dead body should putrefy and corrupt, and be buried out of our sight, then will he "raise us up, and we shall live in his sight," that is, we shall see his face with comfort, and it shall be reviving to us. Though he forsake for a small moment, he will gather with everlasting kindness. Note, The people of God may not only be torn and smitten, but left for dead, and may lie so a great while; but they shall not always lie so, nor shall they long lie so. God will in a little time revive them; and the assurance given them of this should engage them to return and adhere to him. But this seems to have a further reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the time limited is expressed by the two days and the third day, that it may be a type and figure of Christ's rising the third day, which he is said to do, "according to the Scriptures," according to this Scripture; for all the prophets witnessed of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Let us see and admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in ordering the prophet's words so as that, when he foretold the deliverance of the church out of her troubles, he should at the same time point out our salvation by Christ, which other salvations were both figures of and fruits of. And though they might not be aware of this mystery in the words, yet now they are fulfilled in the letter of them in the resurrection of Christ; it is a confirmation to our faith that "this is he that should come," and we are to look for no other. And it is agreeable enough that a prophecy of Christ's rising should be thus expressed; he will raise us up, and we shall live. For Christ rose as the first-fruits, and we revived with him; we live through him, he rose for our justification, and all believers are said to be risen with Christ: see *Isa.* xxvi. 19. And it would serve for a comfort to the church then, and an assurance that God would raise them out of their low estate; for in his fulness of time he would raise his Son from the grave, who would be the life and glory of his people Israel. Note, A regard by faith to a rising Christ is a great support to a suffering Christian, and gives abundant encouragement to a repenting, returning sinner; for he hath said, "Because I live, you shall live also."

2nd. That then they shall improve in the knowledge of God; ver. 3, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." Then, when God returns in mercy to his people, and designs favour for them, he will, as a pledge and fruit of his favour, give them more of the knowledge of himself; the earth shall be full of that knowledge, *Isa.* xi. 9; "knowledge shall be increased," *Dan.* xii. 4; "all shall know God," *Jer.* xxxi. 34. We shall know, we shall follow to know the Lord, so the words are. And it may be taken as the fruit of Christ's resurrection, and the life we live in God's sight by him, that we shall have not only greater means of knowledge, but grace to improve in knowledge by those means. Note, When God designs mercy for a people he gives them a heart to know him, *Jer.* xxiv. 7. They that are risen with Christ have the spirit of wisdom and revelation given them; and, if we understand our living in his sight, as the Chaldee paraphrast doth, of the day of the resurrection of the dead, it fitly follows, we shall know, we shall follow to know, the Lord; for in that day we shall see him as he is, and our knowledge of him shall be perfected, and yet be eternally increasing. Or, taking it as we read it, "If we follow on to know," we have here, *First.* A precious blessing promised; then shall we know, shall know the Lord. Then, when we return to God, those that come to God shall be brought into an acquaintance with him. When we are designed to live in his sight, then he gives us to know him; for this is life eternal, to know God, *Jno.* xvii. 3. *Secondly.* The way and means of obtaining this blessing; we must follow on to know him. We must value and esteem the knowledge of God as the best knowledge; we must cry after it, and dig for it, *Pr.* ii. 3, 4; must "seek and intermeddle with all wisdom," *Pr.* xviii. 1; and must proceed in our inquiries after this knowledge, and our endeavours to improve in it. And if we do the prescribed duty, we have reason to expect the promised mercy, that we shall know more and more of God, and be at last perfect in this knowledge.

3rd. That then they shall abound in Divine consolations. "His going forth is prepared as the morning;" that is, the returns of his favour, which he had withdrawn from us, when he went and returned to his place. His outgoings again are prepared and secured to us as firmly as the return of the morning after a dark night; and we expect it as those do that wait for the morning after a long night, and are sure it will come at the time appointed, and will not fail. And the light of his countenance will be both welcome to us and growing upon us, unto the perfect day, as the light of the morning is. "He shall come to us," and be welcome to us "as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth," which refresheth it, and makes it fruitful. Now this looks farther than their deliverance out of captivity, and no doubt was to have its full accomplishment in Christ and the grace of the Gospel. The Old Testament saints followed on to know him, earnestly looked for redemption in Jerusalem; and at length the outgoings of Divine grace in him, in his going forth to visit this world were, *First.* As the morning to this earth, when it is dark; for he went forth as the Sun of righteousness, and in him the dayspring from on high visited us. "His going forth was prepared as the morning;" for he came in the fulness of time. John Baptist was his forerunner, nay, he was himself the bright and morning star. *Secondly.* As the rain to this earth when it is dry; "He shall come down as the rain upon the mown grass," *Ps.* lxxii. 6. And in him showers of blessings descend upon this world, which give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, *Isa.* lv. 10. And the favour of God in Christ is what is said of the king's favour, "like the cloud of the latter rain," *Pr.* xvi. 15. The grace of God in Christ is

both "the latter and the former rain;" for by it the good work of our fruit-bearing is both begun and carried on.

4 O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?
O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?
For your goodness *is* as a morning cloud,
And as the early dew it goeth away.
5 Therefore have I hewed *them* by the prophets;
I have slain them by the words of my mouth:
And thy judgments *are as* the light *that* goeth forth.
6 For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;
And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.
7 But they like men have transgressed the covenant:
There have they dealt treacherously against me.
8 Gilead *is* a city of them that work iniquity,
And is polluted with blood,
9 And as troops of robbers wait for a man,
So the company of priests murder in the way by consent:
For they commit lewdness.
10 I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel:
There *is* the whoredom of Ephraim,
Israel is defiled.
11 Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee,
When I returned the captivity of my people.

Two things, two ill things, both Judah and Ephraim are here charged with, and justly accused of.

First. That they were not firm to their own convictions, but were unsteady, unstable as water; ver. 4, 5, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?" This is a strange expression. Can infinite wisdom be at a loss what to do? Can it be nonplussed, or put upon taking new measures? By no means; but God speaks after the manner of men, to shew how absurd and unreasonable they were, and how just his proceedings against them were. Let them not complain of him as harsh and severe, in tearing them and smiting them as he has done; for what else should he do? What other course could he take with them? God had tried various methods with them; "What could have been done more to his vineyard than he had done?" *Isa.* v. 4; and very loth he was to let things go to extremity. He reasons with himself, as *ch.* xi. 8, 9, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" God would have done them good, but they were not qualified for it. "What shall I do unto thee?" What else can I do but cast thee off, when I cannot in honour save thee? Note, God never destroys sinners till he sees there is no other way with them. See here,

1. What their carriage was towards God. This goodness, or kindness, was "as a morning cloud." Some understand it of their kindness to themselves, and their own souls, in their repentance. It is indeed mercy to ourselves to repent of our sins; but they soon retracted that kindness to themselves, undid it again, and wronged their own souls as much as ever; but it is rather taken for their piety and religion; what good appeared in them sometimes soon vanished and disappeared again, as a morning cloud, and as the early dew. Such was the goodness of Israel in Jehu's time, and of Judah in Hezekiah's and Josiah's time; it was soon gone. In time of drought the morning cloud promiseth rain, and the early dew is some present refreshment to the earth; but the cloud is dispersed, and hypocrites are compared to "clouds without water," *Jude* 12. The dew doth not soak into the ground, but is drawn back again into the air, and the earth is parched still. What shall he do with them? Shall he accept their goodness? No, for it passeth away; and *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat*,—'that which does not continue can scarcely be said to be done.' Note, That goodness will never be either pleasing to God or profitable to ourselves which is as the morning cloud and the early dew. When men promise fair, and do not perform; when they begin well in religion, and do not hold on; when they leave their first love, and their first works; or, though they do not quite cast off religion, yet are unsteady, uneven, and inconstant in it, then is their goodness "as a morning cloud and the early dew."

2. What course God had taken with them; ver. 5, "Therefore," because they were so rough and ill-shapen, "I have hewed them by the prophets," as timber or stone are hewed for use, that is, 'I have slain them by the words of my mouth.' What the prophets did was done by the word of God in their mouths, which never returned void. By it they thought themselves slain, were ready to say the prophets killed them, or cut them to the heart, when they dealt faithfully with them. 1st. The prophets hewed them, by convictions of sin, endeavouring to cut off their transgressions from them. They were uneven in religion, ver. 4, therefore God hewed them. The hearts of sinners are not only as stone, but as rough stone, which require a great deal of pains to bring it into shape; or as knotty timber, that is not squared without a deal of difficulty. Ministers' work is to hew them, and God, by the minister, hews them; for with the froward he will shew himself froward. And there are those whom ministers must rebuke sharply,—every word should cut; and though the chips fly in the face of the workman, though the reproved fly in the face of the reprover, and reckon him an enemy because he tells the truth, yet he goes on with his work. 2nd. They slew them by the denunciations of wrath, foretelling that they should be slain, as Ezekiel is said to destroy the city when he prophesied of the destruction of it, *Ezc.* xliii. 3. And God accomplished that which was foretold; I have slain them by my judgments, according to the words of my mouth. Note, The word of God will be either the death of the sin or the death of the sinner; a savour either of life unto life or of death unto death. Some read it, 'I have hewed the prophets, and slain them by the words of my mouth;' that is, I have employed them in laborious service for the people's good, which has wasted their strength; they have spent themselves, and hewed away all their spirits in their work, and in hazardous service, which has cost many of them their lives. Note, Ministers are the tools which God makes use of in working upon people; and though with many they labour in vain, yet God will reckon for the wearing out of his tools. 3rd. God was hereby justified in the severest proceedings against them afterwards. His prophets had taken a deal of pains with them, had admonished them of their sin and warned them of their danger, but the means used had not the desired effect. Some good impressions, perhaps, were made for the present, but they wore off, and passed away as the morning cloud; and now they cannot charge God with severity if he bring upon them the miseries threatened. The prophet turns to him and acknowledgeth, "Thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth;" evidently just, just and righteous. Note, Though sinners be not reclaimed by the pains that ministers take with them, yet thereby God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth: see *Mat.* xi. 17—19.

Secondly. That they were not faithful to God's covenant with them, ver. 6, 7, &c. Whence observe,

1. What the covenant was that God made with them, and upon what terms they should obtain his favour, and be accepted of him; ver. 6, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice," that is, rather than sacrifice, and insisted upon the knowledge of God more than upon burnt offerings. Mercy here is the same word which is rendered "goodness," ver. 4, *chesed*,—piety, sanctity; it is put for all practical religion; it is the same with charity in the New Testament, the reigning love of God and our neighbour; and this, accompanied with, and flowing from, the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in his word, a firm belief that he is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, a good affection to Divine things, guided by a good judgment, which cannot but produce a very good conversation. This is that which God, by his covenant, requires, and not sacrifice and offering. This is fully explained, *Jer.* vii. 22, 23, "I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt offerings;" that was the smallest of the matters I spake to them of, and on which the least stress was laid; but "this I said, Obey my voice," *Mic.* vi. 6—8. To love God and our neighbour is "better than all offering and sacrifice," *Mar.* xii. 33; *Ps.* li. 16, 17. Not but that sacrifice and offering were required, and to be paid, and had their use, and when they were accompanied with mercy, and the knowledge of God, were acceptable to him; but without them God regarded them not—he despised them, *Isa.* i. 10, 11. Perhaps this is mentioned here to shew a difference between the God whom they deserted and the gods whom they went over to. The true God aimed at nothing but that they should be good men, and live good lives, for their own good, and the ceremony of honouring him with sacrifices was one of the smallest matters of his law; whereas the false gods required that only. Let their priests and altars be regaled with sacrifices and offerings, and the people might live as they list; what fools were they then that left a God who aimed at giving his worshippers a new nature, for gods who aimed at nothing but making themselves a new name? It is mentioned, likewise, to shew that God's controversy with them was not for the omission of sacrifices, "I will not reprove thee for them," *Ps.* l. 8; but because there was no justice, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God among them, *ch.* iv. 1; and to teach us all that the power of godliness is the main thing God looks at and requires, and without it the form of godliness is of no avail. Serious piety in the heart and life is the one thing needful; and, separate from that, the performances of devotion, though never so plausible, never so costly, are of no account. Our Saviour quotes this to shew that moral duties are to be preferred before rituals, whenever they come in competition, and to justify himself in eating with publicans and sinners, because it was in mercy to the souls of men; and in healing on the sabbath day, because it was in mercy to the bodies of men, to which the ceremony of singularity in eating, and the sabbath rest, must give way, *Mat.* ix. 13; xii. 7.

2. How little they had regarded this covenant. Though it was so well ordered in all things,—though they, and not God, would be the gainers by it,—yet see here what came of it.

1st. In general they broke with God, and proved unfaithful. There were good things committed to them to keep, the jewels of mercy and pity, and the knowledge of God in the cabinet of sacrifice and burnt offering; but they betrayed their trust, kept the cabinet, but pawned the jewels for the gratification of a base lust; and this is that for which God has justly a quarrel with them; ver. 7, "They like men have transgressed the covenant," that covenant which God made with them; they have broken the conditions of it, and so forfeited the benefit of it. By casting off mercy and the knowledge of God, and other instances of disobedience, *First*. They had contracted the guilt of perjury and covenant-breaking; they were like men that transgress a covenant by which they had solemnly bound themselves, which is a thing that all the world cries out shame on. Men that have done so deserve not again to be valued, or trusted, or dealt with. "There," in that thing, "they have dealt treacherously against me;" they have been perfidious, base, and false children, in whom is no faith, though I depended upon their being children that would not lie. *Secondly*. In this they had but acted like themselves, like men who are generally false and fickle, and in whose nature, that is, their corrupt nature, it is to deal treacherously; "All men are liars," and they are like the rest of that degenerate race, all gone aside, *Ps.* xiv. 2, 3. They have transgressed the covenant like men, that is, like the Gentiles that transgressed the covenant of nature, (like mean men, the word here used is sometimes put for men of low degree,) they have dealt deceitfully, like base men that have no sense of honour. *Thirdly*. Herein they trode in the steps of our first parents. They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant; so it might very well be read. As he transgressed the covenant of innocency, so they transgressed the covenant of grace, so treacherously, so foolishly. There, in paradise, he violated his engagements to God; and there, in Canaan, another paradise, they violated their engagements; and, by their treacherous dealing, they, like Adam, have ruined themselves and theirs. Note, Sin is so much the worse the more there is in it of the "similitude of Adam's transgression," *Rom.* v. 14. Low thoughts of God, and of his authority and favour, were at the bottom of all this; for so some read it, They have transgressed the covenant, as of a man, as if it had been but the covenant of a man, that stood upon even ground with them; as if the commands of the covenant were but like those of a man like themselves, and the kindness conveyed by it no more valuable than that of a man. There is something sacred and binding in a man's covenant, as the apostle shews, *Gal.* iii. 15, but much more in the covenant of God, which yet they made small account of; and there, in that covenant, they dealt treacherously; promised fair, but performed nothing. And dealing treacherously with God is here called dealing treacherously against him; for it is both an affront and an opposition. Deserters are traitors, and will so be treated; the revolting heart is a rebellious heart.

2nd. Some particular instances of their treachery are here given. There they dealt treacherously, that is, in the places hereafter named.

First. Look on the other side Jordan, to the country which lay most exposed to the insults of the neighbour nations, and where therefore the people were concerned to keep themselves under the Divine protection, yet there you will find the most daring provocations of the Divine Majesty; ver. 8, Gilead, which lay in the lot of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, was a city of the workers of iniquity. Wickedness was the trade that was driven there; the country was called Gilead, but it was called a city, because they were all, as it were, incorporated in one society of rebels against God. Or, as most think, Ramoth Gilead is the city here meant, one of the three cities of refuge on the other side Jordan, and a Levites' city. The inhabitants of it, though of the sacred tribe, were workers of iniquity, contrived it and practised it. Note, It is bad indeed when a Levites' city is "a city of those that work iniquity;" when those that

are to preach good doctrine live ill lives. Particularly it is polluted with blood, as if that were a sin which the wicked Levites were in a special manner guilty of. In popish countries the clergy are observed to be the most bloody persecutors. Or, as it was a city of refuge, by abusing the power it had to judge of murderers it became polluted with blood. They would for a bribe protect those that were guilty of wilful murder whom they ought to have put to death; and would deliver those to the avenger of blood that were guilty but of chance medley, if they were poor and had nothing to give them; and both these ways they were polluted with blood. Note, Blood defiles the land where it is shed, and no inquisition made, or no vengeance taken for it. And see how the best institutions, that are never so well designed to keep the balance even between justice and mercy, are capable of being abused and perverted to the manifest prejudice and violation of both.

Secondly. Look among those whose business it was to minister in holy things, and they were as bad as the worst, and as vile as the vilest; ver. 9, "The company of priests" are so; not here and there one that is the scandal of his order, but the whole order and body of them. The priests go all one way by consent, with one shoulder, as the word is, one and all; and they make one another worse, more daring and fierce, and impudent in sin, more crafty and more cruel. A company of priests will say and do that in conspiracy which none of them would dare to say or do singly. The companies of priests were as troops of robbers, as banditti, or gangs of highwaymen, that cut men's throats to get their money. 1*st.* They were cruel and bloodthirsty. They murder those that they have a pique against, or that stand in their way; nothing less will satisfy them. 2*nd.* They were cunning. They laid wait for men, that they might have a fair opportunity to compass their mischievous, malicious designs. Thus the company of priests laid wait for Christ to take him, saying, Not on the feast day. 3*rd.* They were concurring as one man. They murder in the way, in the highway, where travellers should be safe, there they murder by consent, aiding and abetting one another in it. See how unanimous wicked people are in doing mischief, and should not good people be so then in doing good? They murder 'in the way to Shechem,' so the margin reads it, as a proper name, such as were going to Jerusalem (for that way Shechem lay) to worship. Or, 'in the way to Shechem,' some think means in the same manner that their father, Levi, with Simeon his brother, murdered the Shechemites, *Gen.* xxxiv., by fraud and deceit; and some understand it of their destroying the souls of men by drawing them to sin. 4*th.* They did it with contrivance; they commit lewdness. The word signifies such wickedness as is committed with deliberation, and of *malice prepense*, as we say. The more there is of device and design in sin the worse it is.

Thirdly. Look into the body of the people, take a view of the whole house of Israel, and they are all alike; ver. 10, "I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel," and though it be never so artfully managed God discovers it, and will discover it to them; and who can deny that which God himself saith he hath seen? "There is the whoredom of Ephraim," both corporeal and spiritual whoredom; there it is too plain to be denied. Note, The sin of sinners, especially sinners of the house of Israel, has enough in it to make them tremble; for it is a horrible thing, it is amazing, and it is threatening. Oh, make them blush, for Israel is thereby defiled, and rendered odious in the sight of God.

Fourthly. Look into Judah, and you find them sharing with Israel; ver. 11, "Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee;" thou must be reckoned with as well as Ephraim, thou art ripe for destruction too, and the time, even the set time, of thy destruction is hastening on, when thou that hast ploughed iniquity and sown wickedness shalt reap the same. The general judgment is compared to a harvest, *Mat.* xiii. 39; so are particular judgments, *Joel* iii. 13; *Rev.* xiv. 15. I have appointed a time to call thee to account, even "when I returned the captivity of my people," that is, when those captives of Judah, which were taken by the men of Israel, were restored, in obedience to the command of God sent them by Obed the prophet, 2 *Chr.* xxviii. 8—15. When God spared them that time he set them a harvest, that is, he designed to reckon with them another time for all together. Note, Preservations from present judgments, if a good use be not made of them, are but reservations for greater judgments.

CHAPTER VII.

In this chapter we have, I. A general charge drawn up against Israel for those high crimes and misdemeanours by which they had obstructed the course of God's favours to them, ver. 1, 2. II. A particular accusation, 1. Of the court: the king, princes, and judges, ver. 3—7; 2. Of the country; Ephraim is here charged with conforming to the nations, ver. 8; senselessness and stupidity under the judgments of God, ver. 9—11; ingratitude to God for his mercies, ver. 13; incorrigibleness under his judgments, ver. 14; contempt of God, ver. 15; and hypocrisy in their pretences to return to him, ver. 16. They are also threatened with a severe chastisement, which shall humble them, ver. 12; and if that prevail not, then with an utter destruction, ver. 13, particularly their princes, ver. 16.

WHEN I would have healed Israel,
Then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered,
And the wickedness of Samaria:
For they commit falsehood;
And the thief cometh in,
And the troop of robbers spoileth without.
2 And they consider not in their hearts
That I remember all their wickedness:
Now their own doings have beset them about;
They are before my face.
3 They make the king glad with their wickedness,
And the princes with their lies.
4 They *are* all adulterers,
As an oven heated by the baker,
Who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough,
Until it be leavened.
5 In the day of our king
The princes have made *him* sick with bottles of wine;
He stretched out his hand with scorners.
6 For they have made ready their heart like an oven,
Whiles they lie in wait:
Their baker sleepeth all the night;
In the morning it burneth as a flaming fire.
7 They are all hot as an oven,
And have devoured their judges;
All their kings are fallen:
There is none among them that calleth unto me

EASTERN OVEN, WITH MAN KNEADING.

Some take away the last words of the foregoing chapter, and make them the beginning of this. "When I returned," or would have returned, "the captivity of my people, when I was about to come towards them in ways of mercy, even "when I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim," that is, the country and common people, was discovered; and the wickedness of Samaria, that is, the court and the chief city. Now in these verses we may observe,

First. A general idea given of the present state of Israel, ver. 1, 2. See how the case now stands with them.

1. God graciously designed to do well for them; "I would have healed Israel." Israel was sick and wounded; their disease was dangerous and malignant, and likely to be fatal, *Isa.* i. 6, but God offered to be their Physician, to undertake the cure, and there was balm in Gilead sufficient to recover the health of the daughter of my people. Their case was bad, but it was not desperate, nay, it was hopeful when God would have healed Israel; that is, 1st. He would have reformed them, would have parted between them and their sins, would have purged out the corruptions that were among them, by his laws and prophets. 2nd. He would have delivered them out of their troubles, and restored to them their peace and prosperity. Several healing attempts were made, and their declining state seemed sometimes to be in a hopeful way of recovery, but their own folly put them back again. Note, If sinful, miserable souls be not healed and helped, but perish in their sin and misery, they cannot lay the blame on God, for he both could and "would have healed them;" he offered to take the ruin under his hand. And there are some special seasons, when God manifests his readiness to heal a distempered church and nation; now and then a hopeful crisis, which, if carefully watched and improved, might, even when the case is very bad, turn the scale for life and health.

2. They stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door. When God would have healed them, when they bid fair for reformation and peace, then their iniquity was discovered, and their wickedness, and that stopped the current of God's favours, and undid all again. 1st. Then when their case came to be examined and inquired into, in order to their cure, that wickedness which had been concealed and palliated was found out—not that it was ever hid from God, but he speaks after the manner of men. As a surgeon, when he probes a wound in order to the cure of it, and finds it touches the vitals and is incurable, goes no farther in his endeavour to cure it, so when God came down to see the case of Israel, (as the expression is, *Gen.* xviii. 21,) with kind intentions towards them, he found their wickedness so very flagrant, and them so hardened in it, so impudent and impenitent, that he could not in honour shew them the favour he designed them. Note, Sinners are not healed, because they would not be healed. Christ would have gathered them, and they would not. 2nd. Then when some endeavours were used to reform and reclaim them, that wickedness which had been restrained and kept under broke out; and from God's steps towards the healing of them they took occasion to be so much the more provoking. When endeavours were used to reform them, vice grew more impetuous, more outrageous, and swelled so much the higher, as a stream when it is dammed up; when they began to prosper they grew more proud, wanton, and secure, and so stopped the progress of their cure. Note, It is sin that turns away good things from us, then when they are coming towards us; and it is the folly and ruin of multitudes, that when God would do well for them they do ill for themselves. And what was it that did them this mischief? In one word, they commit falsehood, they worship idols, so some; defraud one another, so others; or rather, they dissemble with God, in their profession of repentance and regard to him. They say they are desirous to be healed by him, and in order to that willing to be ruled by him; but they lie unto him with their mouth, and flatter him with their tongue.

3. A practical disbelief of God's omniscience and government was at the bottom of all their wickedness; ver. 2, "They consider not in their hearts," they never say it to their own hearts, never think of this, "that I remember all their wickedness." As if God either could not see it, though he is all eye; or did not heed it, though his name is jealous; or had forgot it, though he is an eternal Mind, that can never be unmindful; or would not reckon for it, though he is the Judge of heaven and earth. This is the sinner's atheism: as good say there is no God, as say he is either ignorant or forgetful; none that judgeth in the earth, as say he remembers not the things he is to give judgment upon. It is a high affront they put upon God, it is a damning cheat they put upon themselves; they say, "The Lord shall not see," *Ps.* xciv. 7. They cannot but know that "God remembers all their works," they have been told it many

a time; nay, if you ask them, they cannot but own it, and yet they do not consider it; they do not think of it when they should, and with application to themselves and their own works, else they would not, they durst not, do as they do. But the time will come when those who thus deceive themselves shall be undeceived; "now their own doings have beset them about," that is, they are come at length to such a pitch of wickedness that their sins appear on every side of them. All their neighbours see how bad they are; and can they think that God doth not see it? Or rather, 'the punishment of their doings besets them about, they are surrounded and embarrassed with troubles, so that they cannot get out; by which it appears that the sins they smart for are before my face; not only that I have seen them, but that I am displeased at them;' for till God, by pardoning our sins, hath cast them behind his back, they are still before his face. Note, Sooner or later God will convince those who do not now consider it, that he remembers all their works.

4. God hath begun to contend with them by his judgments, in earnest of what was farther coming. "The thief comes in, and the troop of robbers spoils without." Some take this as an instance of their wickedness, that they robbed and spoiled one another. *Nec hospes ab hospite tutus*,—'The host and the guest stand in fear of each other.' It seems rather to be a punishment of their sin; they were infested with secret thieves among themselves, that robbed their houses and shops, and picked their pockets, and troops of robbers, foreign invaders, that with open violence spoil abroad. So far was Israel from being healed, that they had fresh wounds given them daily by robbers and spoilers; and all this the effect of sin, all to punish them for robbing God, *Isa.* xlii. 24; *Mal.* iii. 8, 11.

Secondly. A particular account of the sins of the court, the kings and princes, and those about them, and the tokens of God's displeasure they were under for them.

1. Their king and princes were pleased with the wickedness and profaneness of their subjects, who were emboldened thereby to be so much the more wicked; ver. 3, "They make the king and princes glad with their wickedness." It pleased them to see the people conform to their wicked laws and examples, in the worship of their idols, and other instances of impiety and immorality, and to hear them flatter and applaud them in their wicked ways. When Herod saw that his wickedness pleased the people he proceeded farther in it; much more will the people do so when they see it pleaseth the prince, *Acts* xii. 3. Particularly they made them glad with their lies, with the lying praises with which they crowned the favourites of the prince, and the lying calumnies and censures with which they blackened those whom they knew the princes had a dislike of. Those that shew themselves pleased with slanders, and ill-natured stories, shall never want those about them that will fill their ears with such stories, *Pr.* xxix. 12. If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked, and will make him glad with their lies.

2. Drunkenness and revelling abounded much at the court, ver. 5. The day of our king was a merry day with them; either his birthday or his inauguration day, of which it is probable they had an anniversary observation. Or perhaps it was some holiday of his appointing, which was therefore called his day. On that day the princes met to drink the king's health, and got him among them, to be merry, and "made him sick with bottles of wine." It should seem that the king did not ordinarily drink to excess, but he was now, upon a high day, brought to it by the artifices of the princes, tempted by the goodness of the wine, the gaiety of the company, or the healths they urged; and so little was he used to it, that it made him sick; and it is justly charged as a crime, as *crimen læsæ majestatis*,—'treason,' upon those who thus imposed upon him, and made him sick. Nor would it serve for an excuse that it was the day of their king, but was rather an aggravation of the crime, that, when they pretended to do him honour, they dishonoured him to the highest degree. If it is a great affront and injury to a common person to make him drunk, and there is a woe to those that do it, *Hab.* ii. 15, much more to a crowned head; for the greater any man's dignity is, the greater disgrace it is to him to be drunk. "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine," *Pr.* xxxi. 4, 5. See what a prejudice the sin of drunkenness is to a man, to a king, 1st. In his health; it made him sick. It is a force upon nature; and strange it is by what charms men, otherwise rational enough, can be drawn to that which, besides the offence it gives to God, and the damage it doth to their spiritual and eternal welfare, is a present disorder and distemper to their own bodies. 2nd. In his honour; for when he was thus intoxicated "he stretched out his hand with scorners." Then he that was intrusted with the government of a kingdom lost the government of himself, and so far forgot, *First*. The dignity of a king, that he made himself familiar with players, and buffoons, and those whose company was a scandal. And, *Secondly*. The duty of a king, that he joined in confederacy with atheists, and the profane scoffers at religion, whom he ought to have silenced and put to shame. He "sat in the seat of the scornful," of those that are arrived at the highest pitch of impiety. He struck in with them, said as they said, did as they did, and exerted his power, and stretched forth the hand of his government, in concurrence with them. Goodness and good men are often made "the song of the drunkards," *Ps.* lxix. 12; xxxv. 16; but woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is such a child as to stretch forth his hand with those that make them so, *Eccl.* x. 16.

3. Adultery and uncleanness prevailed much among the courtiers. This is spoken of, ver. 4, 6, 7, and that of drunkenness comes in in the midst of this article; for wine is oil to the fire of lust, *Pr.* xxiii. 33. Those that are inflamed with fleshly lusts, that are adulterers, ver. 4, are here again and again compared to an "oven heated by the baker," ver. 4; "They have made ready their heart like an oven," ver. 6; "They are all but as an oven," ver. 7. Note, 1st. An unclean heart is like an oven heated; and the unclean lusts and affections of it are as the fuel that makes it hot. It is an inward fire, it keeps the heat within itself. So adulterers and fornicators secretly burn in lust, as the expression is, *Rom.* i. 27. The heat of the oven is an intense heat, especially as it is here described. He that heats it stirs up the fire, and ceaseth not from raising it up, till the bread is ready to be put in, being kneaded and leavened. All which only signifies that they are like an oven when it is at the hottest; nay, when it is too hot for the baker, (so the learned Dr. Pocock,) when it is hotter than he would have it, so that the raiser up of the fire ceaseth so long as while the dough that is kneaded is in the fermenting, that the heat may abate a little. Thus fiery hot are the lusts of an unclean heart. 2nd. The unclean wait for an opportunity to compass their wicked desire. Having made ready their heart, like an oven, they lie in wait to catch their prey; "The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight," *Job* xxiv. 15. "Their baker sleeps all the night, but in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire," that is, as the baker hath kindled a fire in his oven, and laid sufficient fuel to it, goes to bed and sleeps all night, and in the morning finds his oven well heated, and ready for his purpose, so these wicked people, when they have laid some wicked plot, and formed a design for the gratifying of some covetous, ambitious, revengeful, or unclean lusts, have their hearts so fully set in them to do evil, that though they may stifle them for awhile, yet the fire of corrupt affection is still glowing within; and, as soon as ever there is an opportunity for it, their purposes, which they have compassed and imagined, break out into overt acts, as a fire flames out when it hath vent given it. Thus "they are all hot as an oven." Note, Lust in the heart is like fire in an oven, puts it into a heat. But the day is coming when those who thus make themselves like a fiery oven with their own vile affections, if that fire be not extinguished by Divine grace, shall be made as a fiery oven by Divine wrath, *Ps.* xxi. 9, when the day comes that shall burn as an oven, *Mal.* iv. 1.

4. They resist the proper methods of reformation and redress. They have "devoured their judges," those few good judges that were among them, that would have put out these fires with which they were heated; they fell foul upon them, and would not suffer them to do justice, but were ready to stone them, and perhaps did so; or, as some think, they provoked God to deprive them of the blessings of magistracy, and to leave all in confusion. "All their kings are fallen" one after another, and their families with them, which could not but put the kingdom into confusion, crumble it into contending parties, and occasion a great deal of bloodshed. There are heart-burnings among them, they are hot as an oven with rage and malice at one another, and this occasions the devouring of their judges, the falling of their kings. "For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof," *Pr.* xxviii. 2. But in the midst of all this trouble and disorder, "there is none among them that calls unto God," that sees his hand stretched out against them in these judgments, and deprecates the strokes of it; none, or next to none, that stir up themselves to take hold on God, *Isa.* lxiv. 7. Note, Those are not only heated with sin, but hardened in sin, that continue to live without prayer, even when they are in trouble and distress.

8 Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people;
Ephraim is a cake not turned. [not:
9 Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth *it*
Yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not.
10 And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face:
And they do not return to the LORD their God,
Nor seek him for all this.
11 Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart:
They call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.
12 When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them,
I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven;
I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard
13 Woe unto them! for they have fled from me:
Destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me:
Though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me.
14 And they have not cried unto me with their heart,
When they howled upon their beds:
They assemble themselves for corn and wine,
And they rebel against me.
15 Though I have bound *and* strengthened their arms,
Yet do they imagine mischief against me.
16 They return, *but* not to the most High:
They are like a deceitful bow: [tongue:
Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their
This *shall be* their derision in the land of Egypt.

Having seen how vicious and corrupt the court was, we now come to inquire how it is with the country, and we find that to be no better; and no marvel if the distemper that hath so seized the head affect the whole body, so that there is no soundness in it. The iniquity of Ephraim is discovered, as well as the sin of Samaria; of the people, as well as the princes; of which here are divers instances.

First. They were not peculiar and entire for God, as they should have been, ver. 8. 1. They did not distinguish themselves from the heathen, as God had distinguished them. Ephraim, he hath mingled himself among the people; hath officiated with them, and conformed himself to them, and has, in a manner, confounded himself with them, and lost his character among them. God had said, "The people shall dwell alone;" but they "mingled themselves with the heathen, and learned their works," *Ps.* cvi. 35. They went up and down among the heathen, to beg help of one of them against another, so some; whereas, if they had kept close to God, they had not needed the help of any of them. 2. They were not entirely devoted to God. Ephraim is a cake not turned, and so is burnt on one side and dough on the other side, but good for nothing on either side. As in Ahab's time, so now, they halted between God and Baal; sometimes they seemed zealous for God, but at other times as hot for Baal. Note, It is sad to think how many, who, after a sort, profess religion, are made up of contraries and inconsistencies, as a cake not turned; a constant self-contradiction, and always in one extreme or the other.

Sixthly. They were strangely insensible of the judgments of God which they were under, and which threatened their ruin, ver. 9. Observe, 1. The condition they were in. God was now to them, in his judgments, as a moth, and as rottenness; they were silently and slowly drawing towards the ruin of their state; partly by the encroachments of foreigners upon them, "Strangers have devoured his strength," and eaten him up; they have wasted his wealth and treasure, lessened his numbers, and consumed the fruits of the earth. Some devoured them by open wars, as, 2 *Kin.* xiii. 7, when the king of Syria made them like the dust, by threshing; others, by pretending treaties of peace and amity, in which they extorted abundance of wealth from them, and made them pay dear for that which did them no good, but which afterwards they paid dearer for, as 2 *Kin.* xvi. 9. This Ephraim got by mingling himself with the heathen, and suffering them to mingle with him; they devoured that which he stayed upon, and supported himself with. Note, Those that make not God their strength, *Ps.* lii. 7, make that their strength which will soon be devoured by strangers. They were thus reduced partly by their own maladministrations among

themselves; "yea, grey hairs are here and there upon him," (are sprinkled upon him, so the word is,) that is, the sad symptoms of a decaying, declining state, that is waxing old, and ready to vanish away; the effects of trouble and vexation. *Cura facit canos*,—'Care turns grey.' The almond-tree doth not as yet flourish, but it begins to turn colour, which speaks aloud to him that the evil days are coming, and the years of which he shall say he has no pleasure in them, *Eccl.* xii. 1, 5. 2. Their regardlessness of these warnings; "He knoweth not," he is not aware of the hand of God gone out against him; it is lifted up, but he "will not see," *Isa.* xxvi. 11. He doth not know how near his ruin is, and takes no care to prevent it. Note, Stupidity under lesser judgments is a presage of greater coming.

Thirdly. They went on frowardly in their wicked ways, and were not reclaimed by the rebukes they were under; ver. 10, "The pride of Israel" still "testifieth to his face," as it had done before, *ch.* v. 5; under humbling providences their hearts were still unhumbled, their lusts unmortified; and it is "through the pride of their countenance" that they "will not seek after God," *Ps.* l. 4. They "do not return to the Lord their God" by repentance and reformation, "nor do they seek him" by faith and prayer, "for all this." Though they suffer for going astray from him,—though it can never be well with them till they come back to him, and though they have in vain sought to others for relief,—yet they think not of applying to God.

Fourthly. They were infatuated in their counsels, and took very wrong methods when they were in distress; ver. 11, 12, "Ephraim is like a silly dove without a heart." To be harmless as a dove, without gall, and not to hurt or injure others, is commendable, but to be sottish as a dove, without heart, that knows not how to defend herself, and provide for her own safety, is a shame. The silliness of this dove is, 1. That she laments not the loss of her young that are taken from her, but will make her nest again in the same place; so they have their people carried away by the enemy, and are not affected with it, but continue their dealings with those that deal barbarously with them. 2. That she is easily enticed by the bait into the net, and has no heart, no understanding, to discern her danger, as many other fowls do, *Pr.* i. 17. She "hasteth to the snare, and knows not that it is for her life," *Pr.* vii. 23; so they were drawn into leagues with neighbour nations that were their ruin. 3. That when she is frightened she has not courage to stay in the dove-house, where she is safe, and under the careful protection of her owner, but flutters and hovers, seeking shelter first in one place, then in another, and thereby exposeth herself so much the more. So this people, when they were in distress, sought not to God; did not fly "like the doves to their windows," where they might have been secured from all the birds of prey that struck at them, but threw themselves out of God's protection, and then called to Egypt to help them, and went in all haste to Assyria, to seek for that aid in vain, which they might, by repentance and prayer have found nearer home in their God. Note, It is a silly, senseless thing, for those that have a God in heaven to go to trust to creatures for that refuge and relief that is to be had in him only; and they that do so are a people of no understanding; they are without heart. Now see what comes of this silly dove; ver. 12, "When they shall go" to Egypt and Assyria "I will spread my net upon them." Note, Those that will not abide by the mercy of God must expect to be pursued by the justice of God. Here, 1st. They are ensnared; "I will spread my net upon them," bring them into straits, that they may see their folly, and think of returning. Note, It is common for those that go away from God to find snares there where they expected shelters. 2nd. They are humbled. They soar upwards, proud of their foreign alliances, and confiding in them; but "I will bring them down," let them fly never so high, "as the fowls of the heaven," that are shot flying. Note, God can and will bring those down that exalt themselves as the eagle, *Oba.* 3, 4. 3rd. They are made to smart for their folly; "I will chastise them." Note, The disappointments we meet with in the creature, when we put confidence in it, are a necessary chastisement, or discipline, that we may learn to be wiser another time. 4th. In all this the Scripture is fulfilled; it is "as the congregation has heard." They have been many a time told, by the word of God read and preached, and sung in their religious assemblies, that "vain is the help of man," that "in the son of man there is no help." They have heard, both from the law and from the prophets, what judgments God would bring upon them for their wickedness; and, as they have heard, now they shall see,—they shall feel. Note, It concerns us to take notice of the word of God, which we hear from time to time in the congregation, and to be governed by it, for we must shortly be judged by it; and it will justify God in the condemnation of sinners, and aggravate it to them, that they have had plain public warning given them of it. It is what their congregation has heard many a time, but they would not take warning. Son, remember thou wast told what would come of it, and now thou seest they were not vain words, *Zec.* i. 6.

Fifthly. They revolted from God, and rebelled against him, notwithstanding the various methods he took to retain them in their allegiance, ver. 13—15. Whence observe,

1. How kindly and tenderly God had dealt with them, as a gracious sovereign toward a people dear unto him, and whose prosperity he had much at heart. He had redeemed them, ver. 13, brought them at first out of the land of Egypt, and since delivered them out of many a distress. He had bound and strengthened their arms, ver. 15. When their power was weakened, like an arm broken, or out of joint, God set it again, and bound it, as the surgeon doth a broken bone, to make it knit. God had given Israel victories over the Syrians, 2 *Kin.* xiii. 16, 17; had "restored their coast," 2 *Kin.* xiv. 25, 26; had "girded them with strength for battle." Though 'I have chastened them,' so the margin reads it—sometimes corrected them for their faults and thereby taught them—at other times strengthened their arms, and relieved them; though I have used both fair means and foul to work upon them, it was all to no purpose; they were mercy proof and judgment proof.

2. How impudent their carriage had been towards him notwithstanding, which is described here for the conviction and humiliation of all those that have gone on in any way of wickedness, that they may see how exceeding sinful their sin is, how heinous; how the God of heaven interprets it, how he resents it. 1st. He had courted them to him, and taken them into covenant with himself; but they fled from him, as if he had been their dangerous enemy, who had always approved himself their faithful friend. They wandered from him, as the silly dove from her nest; for those who forsake God will find no rest or settlement in the creature, but wander endlessly. They fled from God when they forsook the worship of him, and ran away from his service, and withdrew themselves from their allegiance to him. 2nd. He had given them his laws, which were all holy, just, and good, by which he designed to keep them in the right way; but they transgressed against him. They sinned with a high hand and a stiff neck, wilfully and presumptuously, so the word signifies. They broke through the fence of the Divine law, and therein thwarted the design of the Divine love. 3rd. He had made known his truths to them, and given them all possible proofs of the sincerity of his goodwill to them, and yet they spoke lies against him; they set up false gods in competition with him; they denied his providence and power; thus they belied the Lord, *Jer.* v. 12. They rejected his messages sent them by his prophets, and said they should have peace, though they went on in sin, directly against what he said. In their hypocritical professions of religion, shows of devotion, and promises of amendment, they lied to the Lord, which he took as lying against him. 4th. He was their rightful Lord and King, and had always ruled in Jacob with equity, and for the public good, and yet they rebelled against him, ver. 14. They not only went off from him, but took up arms against him, would have deposed him if they could, and set up another. 5th. He designed well for them, but they imagined mischief against him, ver. 14. Sin is a mischievous thing; it is mischief against God, for it is treason against his crown and dignity. Not that the sinners can do any thing to hurt their Creator, (as one of the ancients observes on these words,) but what they can they do; and it is so much the worse when it is not done by surprise, or through inadverteney, but designedly, and with contrivance. The Jews have a saying, which Dr. Pocock quotes here, 'The thoughts of transgression are worse than the transgression.' The designing of mischief is doing it, in God's account; compassing and imagining the death of the king is treason by our law. They that imagine an ill thing, though it prove a vain thing, *Ps.* i. 2, will be reckoned with for the imagination.

3. How they shall be punished for this; ver. 13, "Woe unto them, for they have fled from me." Note, Those who fly from God have woes sent after them, and are, without doubt, in a woful case. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them. The word of God saith, Woe to them; and observe what follows immediately, "destruction unto them." Note, The woes of God's word have real effects; destruction makes them good. The judgments of his hand shall verify the judgments of his mouth. Those whom he curseth and pronounceth woful, they are cursed, they are woful indeed.

Sixthly. Their shows of devotion and reformation were but shows, and in them they did but mock God.

1. They pretended devotion, but it was not sincere, ver. 14. When the hand of God was gone forth against them they made some sort of application to him; "When he slew them, then they sought him. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee;" but it was all in hypocrisy. 1st. When they were under personal troubles, and called upon God in secret, they were not sincere in that; "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." When they were "chastened with pain upon their beds," and "the multitude of their bones with strong pains," (perhaps ill of the wounds they received in war) they cried, and groaned, and complained in the forms of devotion; and, it may be, they used many good words, proper enough for the circumstances they were in. They cried, God help us, and, Lord, look upon us; but they did not cry with their heart, and therefore God reckons it was no crying to him. Moses is said to cry unto God when he spoke not a word; only his heart prayed with faith and fervency, *Ex.* xiv. 15. These here made a great noise, and said a deal, and yet did not cry to God, because their hearts were not right with him, not subjected to his will, devoted to his honour, or employed in his service. To pray is to lift up the soul to God; this is the essence of prayer. If that be not done, words, though never so well worded, are but wind; but if there be that, it is an acceptable prayer, though the groanings cannot be uttered. Note, Those do not pray to God at all that do not pray in spirit. Nay, God is so far from approving it, and accepting it, that he calls it howling. Some think it intimates the noisiness of their prayers; they cried to God, as they used to cry to Baal, when they thought he must be awakened; or the brutish, violent passions which they vented in their prayer,—they snarled at the stone, and howled under the whip, but regarded not the hand. Or, it notes that their hypocritical prayers were so far from pleasing God that they were offensive to him. He was angry at their prayers. The "songs of the temple shall be howlings," *Am.* viii. 3. God will be so far from pitying them, that he will justly laugh at their calamity who have so often laughed at his authority. 2nd. When they were under public troubles, and met together to implore God's favour, in that also they were hypocritical; they assembled themselves for fashion's sake, because it was usual to call a solemn assembly in time of general mourning, *Zeph.* ii. 1. But it was only to pray for corn and wine that they came together, which was the thing they wanted, and feared being deprived of by the want of rain, the judgment they now laboured under. They did not pray for the favour and grace of God, that God would give them repentance, pardon their sins, and turn away his wrath, but only that he would not take away from them their corn and wine. Note, Carnal hearts in their prayers covet temporal mercies only, and dread and deprecate no other but temporal judgments, for they have no sense of any other.

2. They pretended reformation, but neither was that sincere, ver. 16. Here is, 1st. The sin of Israel. "They return," that is, they make show as if they would return. They take on them to repent, and amend their doings, but they make nothing of it. They do not come home to God, nor return to their allegiance; whereas God saith, *Jer.* iv. 1, "If thou wilt return, O Israel, return to me; do not only turn towards me, but return to me." This dissimulation of theirs makes them like a deceitful bow, which looks as if it were fit for business, and is bent and drawn accordingly; but when strength comes to be laid to it either the bow or string breaks, and the arrow, instead of flying to the mark, drops at the archer's foot. Such were their essays towards repentance and reformation. 2nd. The sin of the princes of Israel. That which is charged upon them is "the rage of their tongues," quarrelling with God and his providence, and with all about them, when they are crossed. Princes think they may say what they will, and that it is their prerogative to huff and bluster, to curse and rail, and call names at their pleasure; but let them know there is a God above them that will call them to an account for the rage of their tongues, and make their own tongues to fall upon them. 3rd. The punishment of Israel, and their princes, for their sin. As for the princes, they shall fall by the sword, either of their enemies or of their own people,—some by one, and some by the other. And "this shall be their derision;" this is that for which they shall be derided in the land of Egypt, when they flee to the Egyptians for succour, ver. 11. Their sin and punishment shall make them a laughing-stock to all about them. Note, Those that are treacherous and deceitful in their dealings with God, and passionate and outrageous in their carriage towards men, will justly be made a derision to their neighbours, for they make themselves ridiculous.

CHAPTER VIII.

This chapter, as that before, divides itself into the sins and punishments of Israel; every verse almost speaks both, and all to bring them to repentance. When they saw the malignant nature of their sin, in the description of that, they could not but be convinced how much it was their duty to repent of what was so ill in itself; and when they saw the mischievous consequences of their sin, in the predictions of them, they could not but see how much it was their interest to repent, for the preventing of them. I. The sin of Israel is here set forth, 1. In many general expressions, ver. 1, 3, 12, 14; 2. In many particular instances, setting up kings without God, ver. 4, and setting up idols against God, ver. 4—6, 11, and courting alliances with the neighbour nations, ver. 8—10; 3. In this aggravation of it, that they still kept up a profession of religion, and relation to God, ver. 2, 13, 14. II. The punishment of Israel is here set forth as answering the sin. God would bring an enemy upon them, ver. 1, 3; all their projects

should be blasted, ver. 7; their confidence, both in their idols and in their foreign alliances, should disappoint them, ver. 6, 8, 10; their strength at home should fail them, ver. 14; their secrets should have no reckoning made of them, and their sins should have a reckoning made for them, ver. 13.

SET the trumpet to thy mouth.
He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD,
Because they have transgressed my covenant,
And trespassed against my law.
2 Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee.
3 Israel hath cast off *the thing that is* good:
The enemy shall pursue him.
4 They have set up kings, but not by me:
They have made princes, and I knew *it* not:
Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols,
That they may be cut off.
5 Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast *thee* off;
Mine anger is kindled against them:
How long *will it be* ere they attain to innocency?
6 For from Israel *was* it also:
The workman made it; therefore it *is* not God:
But the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.
7 For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind:
It hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal:
If so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

The reproofs and threatenings here are introduced with an order to the prophet to "set the trumpet to his mouth," ver. 1; thus to call a solemn assembly, that all might take notice of what he had to deliver, and take warning by it. He must sound an alarm; must in God's name proclaim war with this rebellious nation. An enemy is coming with speed and fury to seize their land, and he must awaken them to expect it. Thus the prophet must do the part of a watchman, that was by sound of trumpet to call the besieged to stand to their arms, when he saw the besiegers making their attack, *Eze.* xxxiii. 3. The prophet must "lift up his voice like a trumpet," *Isa.* lviii. 1, and the people must hearken to the sound of the trumpet, *Jer.* vi. 17. Now,

First. Here is a general charge drawn up against them as sinners, as rebels and traitors, against their sovereign Lord. 1. They have "transgressed my covenant," ver. 1. They have not only transgressed the command, (every sin doth that,) but they have transgressed the covenant; they have been guilty of such sins as break the original contract; they have revolted from their allegiance, and violated the marriage covenant, by their spiritual whoredom; have, in effect, declared they will be no longer God's people, nor take him for their God; that is transgressing the covenant. They have not only done foolishly, but have dealt deceitfully. 2. "They have trespassed against my law," in many particular instances. God's law is the rule by which we are to walk; and this is the malignity of sin, that it trespasseth upon the bounds set us by that law. 3. They have "cast off the thing that is good." They have put away and rejected good, that is, God himself, so some understand it, and very fitly. He is good, and doth good, and is our goodness; "There is none good but one, that is God," the fountain of all good. They have cast him off, as not desiring to have any thing more to do with him. God was abandoning them to ruin, and here gives the reason for it. Note, God never casts off any till they first cast him off; or, as we read it, they have cast off the thing that is good; they have cast off the service and worship of God, which is, in effect, casting God off. They had cast off that which denominates men good; they have cast off the fear of God, and the regard of man, and all sense of virtue and honesty. Observe, "They have transgressed my covenant." It is come to that at last; for they trespassed against my law, breaking the command, and made way for breaking the covenant. And they did that; for they cast off that which was good; there it began first. They left off to be wise, and to do good, and then they went all to nought, *Ps.* xxxvi. 3. See the method of apostasy; men first cast off that which is good; then those omissions make way for commissions; and frequent actual transgressions of God's law bring men at length to an habitual renouncing of his covenant. When men cast off praying, and hearing, and sabbath sanctification, and other things that are good, they are in the high road to a total forsaking of God.

Secondly. Here are general threatenings of wrath and ruin for their sin. The enemy shall "come as an eagle against the house of the Lord," and, ver. 3, "shall pursue him." If by "the house of the Lord" we understand the temple at Jerusalem, by the eagle that comes against it we must suppose to be meant either Sennacherib,—who had taken all the fenced cities of Judah, laid siege to Jerusalem, and no doubt aimed at the house of the Lord, to lay that waste, as he had done the temples of the gods of other nations,—or Nebuchadnezzar, who burnt the temple, and made a prey of the vessels of the temple; but if we make it to point at the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, we must reckon it is the body of that people, which, as Israelites to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, is here called the house of the Lord. They thought their being so would be their protection; but the prophet is bid to tell them, that now they had lost the life and spirit of their religion, though they still retained the name and form of it, they were but as a carcase to which the eagles, and other birds of prey, should be gathered together. The enemy shall pursue them as an eagle, so swiftly, so strongly, so furiously. Note, Those that break their covenant of friendship with God expose themselves to the enmity of all about them, to whom they make themselves a cheap and easy prey; and their having been the house of the Lord, and his living temples, will be no excuse or refuge to them: see *Am.* iii. 2.

Thirdly. Here is the people's hypocritical claim of relation to God when they were in trouble and distress; ver. 2, "Israel shall cry unto me;" that is, when either they are threatened with these judgments, and would plead an exemption; or when the judgments are inflicted on them, and they apply themselves to God for relief, pouring out a prayer when God's chastening is upon them, they will plead that among them God is known, and his name is great, *Ps.* lxxvi. 1; and in their distress will pretend to that knowledge of God's ways which in their prosperity they desired not, but despised. They will then cry unto God, will call him their God, and, as impudent beggars, will tell him they are well acquainted with him, and have known him long. Note, There are many who in works deny God, and disown him, yet to serve a turn will profess that they know him, they know more of him than some of their neighbours do. But what stead will it stand a man in to be able to say, "My God, I know thee," when he cannot say, My God, I love thee, and, My God, I serve thee, and cleave to thee only.

Fourthly. Here is the prophet's expostulation with them in God's name; ver. 5, "How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?" It is not meant of absolute innocency, that is what the guilty can never attain to; but how long will they be ere they repent and reform, ere they become innocent in this matter, and free from the sin of idolatry? They are wedded to their idols; how long will it be ere they are weaned from them? 'ere they are able to get clear of them?' so it might be rendered. This intimates that custom in sin makes it very difficult for men to part with it. It is hard to cleanse from that filthiness either of flesh or spirit which has been long wallowed in. But God speaks as if he thought the time long till sinners cast away their iniquities and come to live a new life. He complains of their obstinacy, that is it that keeps his anger against them burning, which would soon be turned away if they did but attain to innocency from those sins that kindled it. They in trouble cry, How long will it be ere God return to us in a way of mercy? but they do not hear him ask, How long will it be ere they return to God in a way of duty?

Fifthly. Here are some particular sins which they are charged with, are convicted of the folly of, and warned of the fatal consequences of, and for which God's anger is kindled against them.

1. In their civil affairs they set up kings without God and in contempt of him, ver. 4. So they did when they rejected Samuel, in whom the Lord was their king, and chose Saul, that they might be like the nations; so they did when they revolted from their allegiance to the house of David, and set up Jeroboam, wherein, though they fulfilled God's secret counsel, yet they neither aimed at his glory nor consulted his oracle, nor applied themselves to him by prayer for direction, nor had any regard to his providence, but were led by their own humour, and hurried on by the impetus of their own passions; so they did now about the time when Hosea prophesied, when it seems to have grown fashionable to set up kings and depose them again, according as the contenders for the crown could make an interest, 2 *Kin.* xv. 8, &c. Note, We cannot expect comfort and success in our affairs when we go about them, and go in them, without consulting God, and acknowledge not him in all our ways. "They set up kings, and I knew it not," that is, I did not know it from them, they did not ask counsel at my mouth, whether they might lawfully do it, or whether it would be best for them to do it, though they had prophets and oracles with whom they might have advised; they "look not to the Holy One of Israel," *Isa.* xxxi. 1. Nor did the princes do as Jephthah, who, before he took upon him the government, "uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh," *Jud.* xi. 11. Note, Those that are intrusted with public concerns, and particularly with the election and nomination of magistrates, ought to take God along with them therein, by desiring his direction and designing his honour.

2. In their religious matters they did much worse, for they set up calves against God, in competition with him, and contradiction to him. Of their silver and their gold which God gave them and multiplied to them, that they might serve and honour him with it, they have made them idols; they called them gods, 1 *Kin.* xii. 28, "Behold thy gods, O Israel!" but God calls them idols. The word signifies griefs or troubles, because they are offensive to God, and will be ruining to those that worship them. "Their silver and their gold they have made to them idols;" so the words are, referring primarily to the images of their gods, which they made of gold and silver, especially the golden calves at Dan and Bethel—idolaters spare no cost in worshipping their idols; but they are very applicable to the spiritual idolatry of the covetous; their silver and their gold are the gods they place their happiness in, set their hearts upon, to which they pay their homage, and in which they put their confidence. Now, to shew them the folly of their idolatry, he tells them.

1st. Whence their gods came. Trace them to their original, and they will be found the creatures of their own fancies, and the work of their own hands, ver. 6. The calf they worshipped is here called the calf of Samaria, because, it is probable, when Samaria, in Ahab's time, became the metropolis of the kingdom, a calf was set up there, to be near the court, besides those at Dan and Bethel, or perhaps one of those was removed thither; for those that are for new gods will still be for newer. Now, let them consider what this god of theirs owed its rise and being to. *First.* To their own invention and institution; "from Israel was it also." Not from the God of Israel, he expressly forbade it, but from Israel. It was a device of their own, some think not borrowed from any of their neighbours, no, not from the Egyptians; for, though they worshipped Apis in a living cow, they never worshipped a golden calf; that was from Israel, it was their own iniquity. Now, could that be worthy of their worship which was a contrivance of their own? It was from Israel, that is, the gold and silver of which it was made was collected from the people of Israel by a brief. It was a poor god that was framed by contribution. *Secondly.* It was owing to the skill and labour of the craftsman, *Deu.* xxvii. 15; "The workman made it; therefore it is not God," ver. 6. This is a very cogent, conclusive argument, and the inference so very plain, that one would think their own thoughts should have suggested it to them, so as to make them ashamed of their idolatry. What can be more absurd than for men to worship that as a god, giving being and good to them, which they themselves gave being to, (both matter and form,) but could not give life to? A made god is no god. This is a self-evident truth; and yet St. Paul was accused as a criminal for preaching that "they be no gods which are made with hands," *Acts* xix. 26; and this here, which should have turned them from their idols, comes in as a reason why they were inseparably wedded to them; therefore they could not attain to innocency, that is, because it was from themselves. They were willing to have gods of their own to do what they pleased with, that they themselves might do what they pleased.

2nd. What their gods would come to. If they are not gods they will not last; nay, if they pretend to be gods they will be reckoned with. "The calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces," and those that would not yield to the force of the former argument shall be convinced by this that "it is not God," but an 'unprofitable idol,' as the Chaldee calls it. It shall be broken to shivers, like a potter's vessel, though it be a golden calf. It shall be chips or saw-dust; it shall be a spider's web: so St. Jerome. It seems to allude to Moses' grinding the golden calf to powder that was in his time. This shall be served as that was. Sennacherib boasted what he had done to Samaria and her idols, *Isa.* x. 11. Note, Deifying any creature makes way for the destruction of it. If they had made vessels and ornaments for themselves of their silver and gold, they might have remained; but if they make gods of them they shall be broken to pieces.

3rd. What their gods would bring them to. The breaking of them to pieces would be a disappointment to those who trusted in them. But that was not all; they have made themselves idols that they may be cut off, ver. 4; that their gold and silver, which they so abused, may be cut off, so some take it; nay, that they may themselves be cut off from God, from their own land, from

the land of the living. Their idolatry will as certainly end in their extirpation as if they had purposely designed it. And when this proves to be the effect of their sin, what relief will they have from the gods wherein they trusted? None at all; "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off;" that is, it cannot give thee any help in thy distress, and the pleasure thou now takest in it will vanish, and be no pleasure to thee. Those that were justly sent to the gods whom they had chosen found them miserable comforters, *Jud.* x. 14. If men will not quit the love and service of sin, yet they shall certainly lose all the delights and profits of it. If Samaria had continued firm and faithful to the God of Israel, he would have been a present, powerful help to her; but the calf she preferred before him was a broken reed. The case will be the same with those that make their silver and their gold their god; it will "cast them off," and not "profit them in the day of wrath," *Eze.* vii. 19. Note, Those that suffer themselves to be deceived into any idolatries will certainly find themselves deceived in them. Cardinal Wolsey owned that if he had served his God as faithfully as he had served his prince, he would not have cast him off, as his prince did, in his old age.

Their disappointment in their idols is illustrated, ver. 7, by a similitude which speaks both that and the destruction which God brought upon them for their idolatry. *First.* They got no good to themselves by worshipping idols; "They have sown the wind." They have put themselves to a great deal of trouble and expense to make and worship their idols, have made a business of it as much as the husbandman doth of sowing his corn, in expectation of reaping some mighty advantage by it, and that they should be as prosperous and victorious as the neighbour nations were that worshipped idols; but it is all a cheat, it is like sowing the wind, which can yield no increase; they "labour in vain, labour for the wind," *Eccl.* v. 16. They take great pains to no purpose, and weary themselves for very vanity, *Hab.* ii. 13; they that make an idol of this world do so, they set their eyes on that which is not, which, like the wind, makes a great noise, but has nothing substantial in it. *Secondly.* They brought ruin upon themselves by it. They shall "reap the whirlwind," a great whirlwind, so the word signifies, which shall hurry them away and dash them to pieces. They not only have not their false gods for them, but they set the true God against them; their favour will stand them in no more stead than the wind, but his wrath will do them more mischief than a whirlwind. As a man sows so shall he reap; 'If it may be supposed that a man should sow the wind, and cover it with earth, or keep it there for awhile penned up, what could he expect but that it should be enforced, by its being shut up, and the accession of what might increase its strength, to break forth again in greater quantities with greater violence;' so Dr. Pocock. They promise themselves plenty, peace, and victory, by worshipping idols, but their expectations come to nothing; what they sow never comes up, it has no stalk, no blade. Or, if it have, "the bud shall yield no meal," it shall be as the thin ears in Pharaoh's dream, that were blasted with the east wind, and there was nothing in them. Or, if it yield, if they do prosper for awhile in their idolatrous courses, "the stranger shall swallow it up;" it shall be so far from doing them any service, that it shall be but as a bait to invite strangers to invade them, and as a spoil to enrich those strangers, and enable them to do so much the more mischief. Note, The service of idols is an unprofitable service, and the works of darkness unfruitful; nay, in the end they will be pernicious; *Rom.* vi. 21, "the end of those things is death." They that sow iniquity reap vanity. Nay, they that sow to the flesh reap corruption. The hopes of sinners will be cheats, and their gains will be snares.

8 Israel is swallowed up:
Now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein
is no pleasure. [himself:
9 For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by
Ephraim hath hired lovers.
10 Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will
I gather them, [of princes.
And they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king
11 Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin,
Altars shall be unto him to sin.
12 I have written to him the great things of my law,
But they were counted as a strange thing.
13 They sacrifice flesh *for* the sacrifices of mine offerings,
and eat *it;*
But the LORD accepteth them not;
Now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins:
They shall return to Egypt.
14 For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples;
And Judah hath multiplied fenced cities:
But I will send a fire upon his cities,
And it shall devour the palaces thereof.

It was the honour and happiness of Israel that they had but one God to trust to, and he all-sufficient in every strait; and but one God to serve, and he well worthy of all their devotions; but it was their sin, and folly, and shame, that they knew not when they were well,—that they forsook their own mercies for lying vanities; for,

First. They multiplied their alliances; ver. 9, they have "hired lovers;" or, as the margin reads it, 'they have hired loves.' They were at great expense to purchase the friendship of the nations about them, that otherwise had no value or affection at all for them, nor cared to have any thing to do with them, but only upon the Shechemites' principle, Shall not their cattle and their substance be ours? *Gen.* xxxiv. 23. Had Israel maintained the honour of their peculiarity, the nations about would have continued to admire them as a wise, understanding people; but when they profaned their own crown their neighbours despised them, and they had no interest in them farther than they paid dear for it. But those sure have carried themselves ill among their neighbours who have no loves, no lovers but what they hire. See here,

1. The contempt that Israel lay under among the nations; ver. 8, "Israel is swallowed up," devoured by strangers, their land eaten up, ver. 7, and themselves too; and being impoverished they have quite lost their credit and reputation, like a merchant that is become a bankrupt, so that they are "among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure;" a vessel of dishonour, 2 *Tim.* ii. 20; "a despised, broken vessel," *Jer.* xxii. 28. None of their neighbours have any value for them, nor care to have any thing to do with them. Note, Those that have professed religion, if they degenerate and grow profane, are of all men the most contemptible. "If the salt have lost its savour" it is fit for nothing but to be "trodden under foot of men." Or, it notes their dispersion and captivity among the Gentiles; they shall be among the poor and prisoners, and who has pleasure in such?

2. The court that Israel made to the nations notwithstanding; ver. 9, they are gone to Assyria, to engage the king of Assyria to help them; and herein they are as "a wild ass alone by himself," foolish, and headstrong, and unruly; they will have their way, and nothing shall hold them in, no, not the bridle of God's laws; nothing shall turn them back, no, not the sword of God's wrath. They take a course by themselves, and the effect will be, that, like a wild ass by himself, they will be the easier and surer prey to the lion: see *Job* xi. 12; *Jer.* ii. 24. Note, Man is in nothing more like the wild ass's colt than in seeking for that succour and satisfaction in the creature that is to be had in God only.

3. The crosses that they were likely to meet with in their alliances with the neighbour nations; ver. 10, "Though they have hired among the nations," and hoped thereby to prevent their own ruin, yet "now will I gather them," as the sheaves in the floor, *Mic.* iv. 8; so that what they provided for their own safety shall but make them the easier prey to their enemies. Note, There is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission; nay, that which men hire for their own preservation often contributes to their own destruction: see *Isa.* vii. 20. The king of Assyria, whose friendship they courted, called himself a "king of princes;" *Isa.* x. 8, "Are not my princes altogether kings?" He laid burthens upon Israel, levied taxes upon them, 2 *Kin.* xv. 19, 20; and for these "they shall sorrow a little," that is, this shall be but a little burthen to them in comparison of what they may farther expect; or, they will be but little sensible of this grievance, will not lay it to heart, and therefore may expect heavier judgments. 'They have begun to be diminished' (so some read it) 'by the burthen of the king of princes:' but this is only the "beginning of sorrows," *Mat.* xxiv. 8; the "beginning of revenges," *Deu.* xxxii. 42. Note, God often comes gradually with his judgments upon a provoking people; that he may shew how slow he is to wrath, and may awaken them to repentance; but they that are made to sorrow a little, if they are not thereby brought to sorrow after a godly sort, will another day be made to sorrow a great deal, to sorrow everlastingly.

Secondly. They multiplied their altars and temples. Observe,

1. How they denied the power of godliness, and wholly cast that off; ver. 2, "I have written to him the great things of my law." That speaks the privilege they enjoyed, having God's statutes and judgments made known to them; and being intrusted with the living oracles. Note, 1st. The things of God's law are great things, they are *magnalia Dei*,—'the great things of God.' They are things that speak the greatness of the Law-maker, and things of great use and great importance to us; they are our life, and our eternal welfare depends upon our observance of them, and obedience to them. They will make us great if we make a right use of them; and they are things which God will magnify and make honourable. 2nd. It is a great privilege to have the things of God's law written; thus they are reduced to a greater certainty, spread the farther and last the longer, with much less danger of being embezzled and corrupted then if they were transmitted by word of mouth only. 3rd. The things of God's law are of his own writing, for Moses and the prophets were his amanuenses, and holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 4th. It is the advantage of those that are members of the visible church that these great things are written to them, are intended for their direction, and so they must receive them. What things were written in former ages were written for our learning, and are profitable for us. And if they were happy that had the great things of God's law written to them, how much happier are we that have the much greater things of his Gospel written to us! But see how this privilege was slighted, these great things of the law were "counted as a strange thing," as unintelligible and unreasonable, which might therefore be slighted because not to be fathomed, not to be accounted for; or as foreign, and things of no concernment to them; things that they had nothing to do with, nor were to be governed by. They used those things as strangers, which they were shy of, and knew not how to bid welcome. "We desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Note, *First.* God having written to us the great things of his law, we ought to make them familiar to us as our nearest relations, *Pr.* vii. 3, 4; for therefore we have them written that they may talk with us, *Pr.* vi. 22. *Secondly.* We make nothing of the things of God's law if we make strange of them, as if they did not affect us, and therefore we need not be affected with them.

2. How they kept up the form of godliness notwithstanding, and to what little purpose they did so.

1st. They multiplied their altars; ver. 11, "Ephraim made many altars to sin." God appointed that there should be but one altar for sacrifice, *Deu.* xii. 3, 5; but the ten tribes having forsaken that, yet would still be thought very devout and zealous for the honour of God, and, as if they would make amends for the affront they put on God's altar, they made many altars, dedicated to the God of Israel, whom hereby they intended, or at least pretended, to give glory to; but that would not justify their violation of God's express command, nor would the example of the patriarchs, who, before the law of Moses, had many altars. No, they "made many altars to sin;" that is, they did that which turned into sin to them, and therefore these altars shall be unto them to sin, that is, God will charge it upon them as a heinous sin, and put that upon the score of their crimes which they designed to be for the expiation of their crimes! Or, they shall be to them an occasion of farther sin. Their multiplying of altars dedicated to the God of Israel would introduce altars dedicated to other gods. Note, It is a great sin to corrupt the worship of God, and it will be charged as sin upon them that do it, how plausible soever their pretensions may be; and the way of this, as other sins, is down-hill. Those that once deviate from the fixed rule of God's commands will wander endlessly.

2nd. They multiplied their sacrifices, ver. 13. Their altars were smoking altars, and they sacrificed flesh for the sacrifices of God's offerings, and they celebrated their feasts upon their sacrifices. They were at a great expence upon their devotions, and (as those commonly are who set up their own inventions in the room of Divine institutions) were very zealous in their way, as if they hoped by their impositions on themselves to atone for the contempt of the great Atonement, and by their observing a ceremonial law of their own to excuse themselves from the obligation of all God's moral precepts. But how doth it speed? *First.* God makes no reckoning of their services. "The Lord accepteth them not;" how should he, when they did not offer their sacrifice upon that altar which alone sanctified the gift? and when they only sacrificed flesh, but not the spiritual sacrifice of a penitent, believing heart. Note, Those services only are acceptable to God which are performed according to the rule of his word, and through Jesus Christ, 1 *Pet.* ii. 5. *Secondly.* He takes that occasion to reckon with them for their sins. Now will he, instead of pardoning

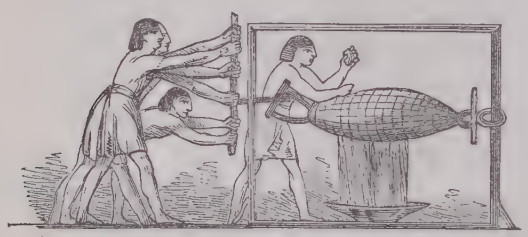
their iniquity, and blotting out their sins, as they expected, remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. Such an abomination to the Lord are the sacrifices of the wicked, that they provoke him to call them to an account for all their other abominations. When they think by their sacrifices to bribe the Judge of heaven and earth into a connivance at their wickedness, he will resent that as the highest affront they can put upon him, and it shall be the measure-filling sin. Note, A petition for leave to sin amounts to an imprecation of the curse for sin, and so it shall be answered; According to the multitude of the idols, I will punish their sins, for "they shall return to Egypt;" that is, they shall be carried captive into Assyria, which shall be to them a house of bondage, as Egypt was to their fathers, Or, it refers to *Deu.* xxviii. 68, where returning to Egypt is made to close and complete the miseries of that sinful nation.

3rd. They multiplied their temples. And these also in honour of the true God, as they pretended, but really in contempt of the choice he had made of Jerusalem to put his name there. "Israel has forgotten his Maker," ver. 14. They pretended to know him, and yet forgot him; for they "liked not to retain God in their knowledge," when the remembrance of him would give check to their lust. It was an aggravation of their sin in forgetting God that he was their Maker, *Deu.* xxxii. 15, 18; *Job* xxxv. 10, as nothing is more obligatory to us to remember him than that he is our Creator, &c., *Eccl.* xii. 1; "He has forgotten his Maker, and builds temples." He seems, by the temples he builds, to be mindful of his Maker, and to be desirous still to keep him in mind, and yet really he has forgotten him, because he has cast off the fear of him. Some by temples here understand palaces, for so the word sometimes signifies. He "has forgotten his Maker," and yet is so secure and haughty that he sets his judgments at defiance, as Nebuchadnezzar did when he said, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" Judah is likewise charged with multiplying fenced cities, and trusting in them for safety, when the judgments of God were abroad. To fortify their cities in subjection and subordination to God was well enough; but to fortify them in opposition to God, and without any regard to him or his providence, *Isa.* xxii. 11, shews their hearts to be desperately hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. But none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered, nor shall they. God will "send a fire upon his cities," upon the cities both of Judah and Israel, not only the head cities of Jerusalem and Samaria, but all the other cities of those two kingdoms, and it shall devour not only the cottages, but the palaces thereof: though never so strong, the fire shall master them; though never so stately and sumptuous, the fire shall not spare them. This was fulfilled when all the cities of Israel were laid in ashes by the king of Assyria, and all the cities of Judah. The fires they both kindled were of his sending, and when he judgeth he will overcome.

CHAPTER IX.

In this chapter, I. God threatens to deprive this degenerate seed of Israel of all their worldly enjoyments, because by sin they had forfeited their title to them, so that they should have no comfort either in receiving them themselves or offering them to God, ver. 1—5. II. He dooms them to utter ruin for their own sins and the sins of their prophets, ver. 6—8. III. He upbraids them with the wickedness of their fathers before them, which they trod in the steps of, ver. 9, 10. IV. He threatens them with the destruction of their children, and the rooting out of their posterity, ver. 11—17.

REJOICE not, O Israel, for joy, as *other* people:
For thou hast gone a whoring from thy God,
Thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor.
2 The floor and the winepress shall not feed them,
And the new wine shall fail in her.



WINEPRESS.

3 They shall not dwell in the LORD's land;
But Ephraim shall return to Egypt,
And they shall eat unclean *things* in Assyria.
4 They shall not offer wine *offerings* to the LORD,
Neither shall they be pleasing unto him:
Their sacrifices *shall be* unto them as the bread of mourners;
All that eat thereof shall be polluted:
For their bread for their soul
Shall not come into the house of the LORD.
5 What will ye do in the solemn day,
And in the day of the feast of the LORD?
6 For, lo, they are gone because of destruction:
Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them:
The pleasant *places* for their silver, nettles shall possess them:
Thorns *shall be* in their tabernacles.

Here, First. The people of Israel are charged with spiritual adultery. "O Israel, thou hast gone a whoring from thy God," ver. 1. Their covenant with God was a marriage covenant, by which they were joined to him as their God, renouncing all others. But when they set up idols, and worshipped them, when they fled to creatures for succour, and put a confidence in them, they went a whoring from God as their God, and honoured the pretenders and rivals with that affection, adoration, and confidence, which was due to God only. Other people were idolaters, but that sin was not in them, going a whoring from God, as it was in Israel, that had been married to him. Note, The sins of those who have made a profession of religion and relation to God are more provoking to him than the sins of others. As a proof of their going a whoring from God, it is charged upon them that they "loved a reward from every cornfloor." 1. They loved to give rewards to their idols in the offerings and first-fruits they presented to them out of every cornfloor. They took a strange pleasure in serving their idols with that which they would have grudged to consecrate to God, and employ in his service. Note, It is common for those that are niggardly in the expenses of their religion to be very prodigal in spending upon their lusts. Or, 2. They loved to receive rewards from their idols, and such they reckoned the fruits of the earth to be. "These are my rewards which my lovers have given me," *ch.* ii. 12. Note, Those are directly disposed to spiritual idolatry that love a reward in the cornfloor better than a reward in the favour of God and eternal life.

Secondly. They are forbidden to rejoice as other people do. Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy. Do not expect to rejoice. What peace, what joy, what hast thou to do with either, while thy whoredoms and witchcrafts are so many? 2 *Kin.* ix. 19—22. Be not disposed to rejoice, for it doth not become thee, but rather to "be afflicted, and mourn, and weep," *Jas.* iv. 9. Judah, that keeps close to the true God; nay, and other people that never knew him, nor could ever be charged with revolting from him, may be allowed to rejoice, as not having so much cause to be ashamed as Israel hath, that has gone a whoring from him. Some think they had at this time particular occasions for joy, upon the account either of some losses recovered, or some advantages gained, or some league made with a potent ally, for which they had public rejoicings, as other people used to have upon such occasions; but God sends to them not to rejoice. Note, Joy is forbidden fruit to wicked people. They must not rejoice, because they have "gone a whoring from their God." And therefore, 1st. That whatever it was which they rejoiced in, it would be no security or advantage to them, so long as they were at a distance from God, and at war with him. Note, We are likely to have small joy of any of our creature comforts if we make not God our chief joy. 2nd. The sense of sin and dread of wrath ought to be a damp upon their joy, and a strong alloy to all their comforts. Note, Those that, by departing from God, have made work for repentance, have thereby marred their own mirth, till they return and make their peace with God.

Thirdly. They are threatened with destroying judgments for their spiritual whoredoms, according to what was said long before, *Ps.* lxxiii. 27, "Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee." It is here threatened,

1. That their land shall not yield its wonted increase. Canaan, that fruitful land, shall be "turned into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." They love the reward in the cornfloor, and are so full of the joy of harvest, that they have no disposition at all to mourn for their sins, and therefore God will, for their effectual humiliation, take away from them, not only their delights and dainties, but even their necessary food; ver. 2, "The floor and the winepress shall not feed them," much less feast them; it shall either be blasted by the hand of God, or plundered by the hand of man; the new wine with which they used to make merry shall fail in her. Note, When we make the world and the things of it our idol and portion, above what they were designed for, it is just with God to deny us even support and nourishment from them, according to that which they were designed for, to shew us our folly, and correct us for it. Let them miss of their food in the cornfloor that look for their reward in the cornfloor. We forfeit the good things of this world if we love them as the best things.

2. That their land shall not only cease to feed them, but cease to lodge them, and to be a habitation for them. It shall spew them out, as it had done the Canaanites before them; ver. 3, "They shall not dwell any longer in the Lord's land." The land of Canaan was in a peculiar manner 'the Lord's land, the land of the Shechinah,' so the Chaldee; 'the land of the Lord of the worlds,' so the Arabic: he whose all the earth is, *Ps.* xxiv. 1, took that for his demesne. "The land is mine," saith God, *Lev.* xxv. 23. They had used it, or abused it rather, as if it had been their own, had not paid the rent, nor done the services due to God as their landlord, and therefore God justly enters and takes possession of it, they having forfeited their lease. It is my land, saith God, and I will make

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it appear, for they shall be turned off as bad tenants, and be made to know that, though they thought themselves freeholders, they were but tenants at will. Note, It is for the honour of God's justice and holiness that those who go a whoring from God should not be suffered to dwell upon his land; and therefore, sooner or later, the wicked shall be chased out of the world. Or, it is called the Lord's land, because it was the holy land, Immanuel's land, that had peculiar tokens of God's favour to it, and presence in it, where God was known and his name was great, where God's prophets and oracles were; it was a kind of copy of the earthly paradise, and a type of the heavenly one. It was a great privilege to have a lot in such a land as this. It was a great sin and folly to rebel against God, and go a whoring from him in such a land as this; to "deal unjustly in a land of uprightness," *Isa.* xxvi. 10. And it was a sad and sore judgment to be driven out from such a land as this; it was like driving our first parents out of the garden of Eden, and almost amounted to an exclusion out of the heavenly Canaan. Note, Those cannot expect to dwell in the Lord's land that will not be subject to the Lord's laws, nor be influenced by his love. Those have forfeited the privileges of the church that conform not to the rules of it.

3. That when they are turned out from the Lord's land they shall have no rest or satisfaction in any other land. When Cain was driven out from the presence of the Lord he was a fugitive and a vagabond ever after, and dwelt in the land of trembling. So Israel here; some shall return into Egypt, the old house of bondage. Thither they shall flee from the Assyrians, *ch.* viii. 13, and they shall lose and ruin themselves there where they thought to hide and help themselves. Others shall be carried captives to Assyria, and there shall be forced to eat unclean things; either, 1st. Such things as were not fit for men to eat, that which is rotten and putrefied; intimating that they shall be reduced to the utmost poverty, as the prodigal, that would fain have filled his belly with the husks. Or, 2nd. Such things as were not fit for Jews to eat, being prohibited by their law. It is probable that while they were in their own land, however disobedient in other things, yet they kept up the distinction of meats, and prided themselves in that; but since they would not keep the law of God in other things, they should not be suffered to keep it in that; and it was a just punishment of their sin in eating things offered to idols. Note, When at any time we suffer in our food, and either through want or for our health are forced to eat or drink that which is unpleasing, we must acknowledge that God is righteous, because we have sinned about our food, and have indulged ourselves too much in that which is pleasing.

4. That in the land of their enemies, to which they shall be driven, they shall have no opportunity either of giving honour to God or obtaining favour with God, by offering any acceptable sacrifice to him. They should not be in a capacity of keeping up any face or show of religion among them. 'And so,' as Dr. Pocock expresseth it, 'it should as it were quite cut off from any expression of relation to him, from all signs of grace and means of reconciliation with him, which would be to them a token of their being rejected of God, estranged from him, and no more owned by him as his people.' 1st. They shall have no sacrifices to offer, nor any altar to offer them on, or priests to offer them. They shall not so much as offer drink offerings to the Lord, much less any other sacrifices. 2nd. If they should offer them, neither they nor their sacrifices shall be pleasing to him, for they cannot have any legal offerings, nor are their hearts humbled. 3rd. Instead of their sacrifices of joy and praise, they shall "eat the bread of mourners;" that is, they shall live desolate and disconsolate, mourning for the death of their relations and their own miseries; so that, if they had opportunity of sacrificing, they should never be themselves in a frame fit for it, for they were forbidden to eat of the holy things in their mourning, *Deu.* xxvi. 15. All that eat of the bread of mourners are polluted, and incapacitated to partake of the altar. 4th. Their bread for their soul, the bread which they must either eat or starve, the bread that they shall have for the support of their lives, "shall not come into the house of the Lord;" that is, they shall have no house of the Lord to bring it to; or, if they had, it is such as is not fit to be brought, nor are they rightly disposed to bring it. 5th. The return of the days of their sacred and solemn feasts would therefore be very melancholy and uncomfortable to them; ver. 5, "What will ye do in the solemn day;" in the sabbath, the solemn day of every week; in the new moons, the solemn days of every month; at the return of the times for keeping the passover, pentecost and feast of tabernacles, the solemn days of every year, the days of the feast of the Lord. Note, The feasts of the Lord are solemn days, and when we are invited to those feasts we ought to consider seriously what we shall do. But the question is here put to those who were to be deprived of the benefit and comfort of those solemn feasts, What will you do then? You will then spend those days in sorrow and lamentation which, if it had not been your fault, you might have been spending in joy and praise. You will then be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them, and to prize spiritual bread by being made to feel a famine of it. Note, When we enjoy the means of grace we ought to consider what we shall do if ever we should know the want of them; if either they should be taken from us or we be disabled to attend upon them.

5. That they should perish in the land of their dispersion; ver. 6, "For, lo, they are gone out" of the Lord's land, where they might have spent both their sabbath days and other days with comfort; "gone, because of destruction;" gone to Egypt because of the destruction of their own country by the Assyrians, flattering themselves with hopes that they shall return when the storm is over. But those hopes also shall fail them, they shall find there are graves in Egypt, as their murmuring ancestors said, *Ex.* xiv. 11; graves for them, for "Egypt shall gather them up," as dead men are gathered up and carried forth to the grave; and "Memphis" (one of the chief cities of Egypt) "shall bury them." Gathering and burying are put together, *Jer.* viii. 2; *Job* xxvii. 19. Note, Those that think presumptuously to outrun the judgments of God are likely enough to meet their deaths there where they hoped to save their lives.

6. That their land which they left behind, and to which they hoped to return, should become a desolation. As for "their tabernacles," where they formerly dwelt, and where they kept their stores, "the pleasant places for their silver," they shall be demolished and laid in ruins, to that degree that they shall be overgrown with nettles; so that if they should survive the trouble, and return to their own land again, they would find it neither fruitful nor habitable; it would afford them neither food nor lodging. Note, Those that make their money their god reckon the places of their silver their pleasant places, as those that make the Lord their God reckon his tabernacles amiable, and his ordinances their pleasant things, *Isa.* lxiv. 11. But while the pleasures of communion with God are out of the reach of chance and change, the pleasant places of men's silver which were purchased with silver, or in which they deposited their silver, or which were beautified and adorned with silver, are liable to be laid in ruins, in nettles, and therewith all the pleasure men took in them.

7 The days of visitation are come,
The days of recompence are come;
Israel shall know *it:*
The prophet *is* a fool, the spiritual man *is* mad,
For the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred.
8 The watchman of Ephraim *was* with my God:
But the prophet *is* a snare of a fowler in all his ways,
And hatred in the house of his God. [Gibeah:
9 They have deeply corrupted *themselves,* as in the days of
Therefore he will remember their iniquity,
He will visit their sins.
10 I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness;
I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her
But they went to Baal-peor, [first time:
And separated themselves unto *that* shame;
And *their* abominations were according as they loved.

For their farther awakening it is here threatened,

First. That the destruction spoken of shall come speedily. They shall have no reason to hope for a long reprieve, for the judgment slumbers not, it is at the door; ver. 7, "The days of visitation are come," and there shall be no more delay; "the days of recompence are come," which they have been so often warned to expect. Their prophets have told them destruction would come, and now it is come, and the time of the Divine patience is expired. Note, 1. The day of God's judgment is both a day of visitation, in which men's sins are inquired into and brought to light, and a day of recompence, in which men's doom will be passed, and a reward given to every man according to his work. The strict visitation is in order to a just retribution. 2. This day of visitation and recompence is hasting on apace; it is sure, it is near, as if it were already come.

Secondly. That hereby they should be made ashamed of their sentiments concerning their prophets. When the day of visitation comes, Israel shall know it, shall be made to know that by sad experience which they would not by instruction. Israel shall know then what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands; "When my hand is lifted up they will not see, but they shall see." Israel shall know the difference between true prophets and false.

1. They shall know then that the pretenders to prophecy, who flattered them in their sins, and rocked them asleep in their security, and told them they should have peace though they went on, however they pretended to be spiritual men, as Ahab's prophets did, 1 *Kin.* xxii. 24, were fools and madmen, and not true prophets; they deceived themselves, and those to whom they prophesied. But why would God suffer his people Israel to be imposed upon by those false prophets? He answers, It is "for the multitude of thine iniquity," which in contempt of the Divine law thou hast persisted in, and for the great hatred of the true prophets that reproved thee in God's name for it. Note, Because men receive not the love of the truth, but conceive a hatred of it, and by the multitude of their iniquity bid defiance to it, therefore God shall "send them strong delusions to believe a lie," so strong, as that they shall not be undeceived till the day of visitation and recompence comes, which will convince them of the folly and madness of those that seduced them, and of their own folly and madness in suffering themselves to be seduced by them.

2. They shall know then, whether the true prophets, that were really spiritual men, guided by the Spirit of God, were such as they called and counted them, fools and madmen, and shall be convinced they were so far from being so, that they were the wise men of their times, and God's faithful ambassadors to them. When Israel saw that none of Samuel's words fell to the ground, they knew he was "established to be a prophet," 1 *Sam.* iii. 20; and so here, when God fulfils the word of his messengers by bringing the days of recompence they foretold, then those that despised and ridiculed them, and thought Bedlam the fittest place for them, will be ashamed of the multitude of their iniquities of that kind, and of their great hatred, for which God brings upon them this swift destruction. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was the sin they were punished for, and so made ashamed of.

Thirdly. That hereby the wickedness of the false prophets themselves should be manifested to their shame; ver. 8, "The watchman of Ephraim was with my God;" he had been formerly. They had a set of worthy good ministers that kept close to God, and maintained communion with him, but now they have a race of corrupt, malignant, persecuting prophets, that are the ringleaders of all mischief. Or, the watchman of Ephraim now pretends to have been with my God, and prefaceth his lies with "Thus saith the Lord," but he is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and is cunning to draw the simple into sin, and the upright into trouble; and he is so full of hatred and enmity to goodness and good men that he is become hatred itself "in the house of his God," or, against the house of his God. Note, Wicked prophets are of all other the worst of men; their sins against God are most heinous, and their plots against religion most dangerous. They may boast they are 'watchmen,—*speculatores,* and as far as speculation goes they may be right, and "with my God," may have their heads full of good notions; but look into their lives, and they are the "snare of a fowler in all their ways," catching for themselves, and making a prey of others; look into their hearts, and they are "hatred in the house of my God," very malicious and spiteful against good ministers and good people. Woe unto thee, O land! unto thee, O church! that hast such watchmen, such prophets; that are seers, but not doers. *Corruptio optimi est pessima,*—'the best things, when corrupted, become the worst.'

Fourthly. That God would now reckon with them for the sins of their fathers, which they had trod in the steps of, ver 9, 10.

1. They were as bad as their fathers. "They have deeply corrupted themselves;" they are rooted and riveted in sin. They are far gone in the depths of Satan, *Isa.* xxxi. 6, so that it is next to impossible they should be recovered; the stain of their corruption is deep, not to be got out, it is as scarlet and crimson, or as the spots of the leopard; and it is their own fault. They have corrupted themselves, have polluted and hardened their own hearts; as in the days of Gibeah, when the Levite's concubine was abused to death by the men of Gibeah, and the whole tribe of Benjamin patronized the villany; that was a time of deep corruption indeed, and such were the present days. Lewdness and wickedness were as impudent and daring now as in the days of Gibeah; and, therefore, what can be expected but such a vengeance as was then taken on Gibeah. Every tribe is now as bad as the tribe of Benjamin then was, and therefore may expect to be brought as low as that tribe then was.

2. They shall therefore be reckoned with for their fathers' sins; "He will remember their iniquity, and visit their sins;" the iniquity they have by kind and by entail, the sin that runs in the blood. The sin of the fathers shall now be visited upon the children. From hence God takes occasion to upbraid them

with the degeneracy and apostacy of their ancestors, their perfidiousness and base ingratitude, ver. 10. Whence observe, 1st. The great honour God put upon Israel when he first formed them into a people. "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness;" that is, he took as much delight and pleasure in them as a poor traveller would do if he found grapes in a wilderness, where he most needed them, and least expected them. Or, when they were in the wilderness he found them as grapes, not precious in themselves, but precious to him, and pleasant as the first ripe grapes to the lord of the vineyard. They were "precious in his sight and honourable," *Isa.* xliii. 4; he planted them a "choice vine, a right seed," *Jer.* ii. 21, and found them no better than he himself made them, good grapes at first. I saw them with pleasure, "as the first ripe in the fig tree at the first time." Good people are compared to the "good things that are first ripe," *Jer.* xxiv. 2; one then is worth more than many after. This speaks the delight God took in them, and in doing them good, not for their sakes, but because he loved their fathers. He preserved them carefully, as a man doth the first and choicest fruits of his vineyard. Now when he put all this honour upon them, and they stood so fair for preferment, one would think they should have maintained their excellency. But, 2nd. See the great disgrace they put upon themselves. God set them apart for himself as a peculiar people, but they went to Baal-peor, joined with the Moabites in sacrificing to that dirty dunghill deity, *Num.* xxv. 2, 3, and they "separated themselves unto that shame," that shameful idol,—so Baal-peor was in a particular manner, if, as should seem, the whoredom which the people committed with the daughters of Moab was a part of the service done to Baal-peor. Note, Whatever those separate themselves to that forsake God, it will certainly be a shame to them, first or last. Their abominations are here said to be as they loved, that is, their practices, which are an abomination to God, were as the best beloved of their souls; or, when they had once forsaken God, they multiplied their abominations, their idols, and abominable idolatries, at their pleasure. This was the way of their fathers, God had done well for them, but they had carried it ungratefully towards him; and in the same manner had the present generation deeply corrupted themselves.

11 *As for* Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird,
From the birth, and from the womb, and from the con-
12 Though they bring up their children, [ception
Yet will I bereave them, *that there shall* not *be* a man *left:*
Yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!
13 Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, *is* planted in a pleasant place:
But Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the mur-
14 Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? [derer.
Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.
15 All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal:
For there I hated them:
For the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house,
I will love them no more:
All their princes *are* revolters.
16 Ephraim is smitten,
Their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit:
Yea, though they bring forth,
Yet will I slay *even* the beloved *fruit* of their womb.
17 My God will cast them away,
Because they did not hearken unto him:
And they shall be wanderers among the nations.

In the foregoing verses we saw the sin of Israel derived from their fathers, here we see the punishment of Israel derived to their children; for, as death entered by sin at first, so it is still entailed with it. We may observe in these verses.

First. The sin of Ephraim. Some expressions are here which speak that, 1. They did not hearken to God, ver. 17; they did not give attention to the voice either of his word or of his rod; they did not believe what he said, nor would they be ruled by him. He told them their duty, their interest, their danger, but they regarded him not: all he said to them by his words, and by his prophets, was to them as a tale that is told. And then no wonder that we hear, 2. Of "the wickedness of their doings," ver. 15, the downright malice that was in their sins. They were not infirmities, but daring presumptions. How can they but do wickedly who will not hearken to the word of God that would teach and persuade them to do well? And no wonder that there were wicked doings among them, when, 3. Their worship is corrupt; ver. 15, "All their wickedness is in Gilgal," which was a place infamous for idolatry, as appears, *ch.* iv. 15; xii. 11; *Am.* iv. 4; v. 5; and it is probable the idolaters chose that place for their head-quarters because it had been famous in other ages for solemn transactions between God and Israel, as *Jos.* v. 2, 10; 1 *Sam.* x. 8; xi. 15. There where the source of idolatry was, whence it spread through the kingdom, there it might be said that "all their wickedness" was, for all other wickedness owed its original to that: corruptions in worship make way for corruptions in morals; the mother of harlots is the mother of all other abominations, *Rev.* xvii. 5. The learned Grotius conjectures that there is a mystical sense here: Golgotha in Syriac is the same with Gilgal in Hebrew, and therefore he thinks this may have reference to the putting of Christ to death at Golgotha, which was the great sin of the Jewish nation, and of which it might truly be said, all their wickedness was summed up in that. And no wonder the people did wickedly, both in worship and conversation, when, 4. "All their princes were revolters;" the whole succession of the kings of the ten tribes did evil in the sight of the Lord; or, all the set of judges and magistrates at this time were wicked,—they turned aside to sinful ways, and persisted in those ways.

Secondly. The displeasure of God against Ephraim for sin. This is variously expressed here, to shew what a provocation sin is to the pure eyes of his glory, and how odious it makes the sinner to him. 1. He departs from them, ver. 12. When they revolt from him, and withdraw from their allegiance to him, how can they expect but that he should depart from them, and withdraw both his protection and his bounty; and well may this threatening be enforced as it is, and made terrible, "Woe also unto them when I depart from them." Note, Those are in a woful condition indeed whom God hath forsaken. Our weal or woe depends upon the gracious presence of God with us, and if he goes all weal goes with him, and all woes come upon us. "God has forsaken him, persecute and take him." Saul knew this when he laid such an accent upon this part of his complaint, "The Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me." Nay, he doth not only depart from them, but, 2. He hates them; In Gilgal, where all their wickedness is, there I hated them. There where the abominations of sin are committed, there God abominates the sinners. In Gilgal he had bestowed many tokens of his favour upon their ancestors, but now that is the place where he hates them for their base ingratitude. Nay, he not only hates them, but, 3. He will love them no more, will never take them into his favour again. The breach between God and Israel is wide as the sea, which cannot be healed. This agrees with what he had said, *ch.* i. 6, 7, "I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel," the ten tribes. 4. He will discard them, and have no more to do with them; "For the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house;" that is, he will no longer own them as his, or as belonging to his family in the world; he will turn them out of doors as unfaithful tenants that pay him no rent, as unprofitable servants that do him neither credit nor work. Note, Those that profane God's house can expect no other but to be expelled his house, and no longer suffered to be either lodgers in it or retainers to it. Nay, he will not only drive them out of his house, but, 5. He will drive them far enough; ver. 17, "My God will cast them away," not only out of his house, but out of his sight; he will quite abandon and reject them, they shall be cast away. God said he would drive them out of his house, and here the prophet seconds it, as one that knew his master's mind very well, "My God will cast them away." See with what comfort and pleasure he calls God his God. Note, When others disown God, and are disowned by him, it is a very great satisfaction to good people that they can call God their God, can cheerfully own him, and see themselves owned by him. All revolters, all ruined, yet God is my God.

Thirdly. The fruit of this displeasure, in the cutting off and abandoning of their posterity, which is the judgment here threatened again and again. Observe here,

1. How numerous Ephraim was likely to be. The name Ephraim is derived from 'fruitfulness,' *Gen.* xli. 52. Joseph is a 'fruitful bough,' *Gen.* xlix. 22. And Moses' blessing foretold the "ten thousands of Ephraim," *Deut.* xxxiii. 17. This was his glory, ver. 11, for this he seemed designed by him that appointed the bounds of men's habitation; "For Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place," to encourage his increase, which one may expect, as from a tree planted by the river's side. Ephraim is as strong and rich as ever Tyre was, and as proud and secure. The Chaldee paraphrase gives this sense of it, 'The congregation of Israel, while they observed the law, was like to Tyrus in prosperity and security.'

2. How few Ephraim should be; ver. 11, "Their glory shall fly away like a bird;" that is, their children shall be taken away, and the hopes of their families cut off. All their glory shall fly "as an eagle towards heaven," swiftly and irrecoverably. Note, Worldly glory is glory that will fly away; but they that have their God their glory have in him an unfading, everlasting glory. Ephraim has been a fruitful tree, but now "Ephraim is smitten," is blasted; "their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit," ver. 16. If the root be dried, the branch must wither of course. Observe,

1st. God's threatening of this judgment of the destroying of their children. *First.* They shall perish of themselves by the immediate hand of God, ver. 11; they shall fly away, "from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception." Some of their children shall die as soon as they are born, the cradle shall be presently turned into a coffin; others of them shall be still-born, or the womb shall be their grave, and their death there their mothers' too; of others, their mothers shall miscarry almost as soon as they have conceived, and they shall be as untimely fruit. See how easily God can, and how justly we are sure he might, root out the whole race of mankind, that degenerate, guilty, obnoxious race, and blot out the name of it from under heaven; it is but doing as he doth by Ephraim here, writing them all childless, making all their glory to fly away from the birth, the womb, and the conception, drying up their root that they bear no fruit, and their business is done in a few years. *Secondly.* They shall perish by the hand of their enemies, they shall die violent deaths; ver. 12, "Though they bring up their children" to some maturity, though they escape diseases and deaths, which the infant age is liable to, and are thought to be reared past danger, yet I will bereave them, ver. 12, by one judgment or other, so that there shall not be a man left to build up their families, and bear up their name. Again, ver. 13, "Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer." The mothers shall travail with pain to bear their children, and a deal of care, and pains, and cost, be bestowed upon the nursing of them, and when a cruel enemy comes and puts all to the sword, young and old, without mercy, then they seem but as lambs that were all this while fed for the slaughter. Note, It is a great alloy to the comfort parents have in their children, that they know not what they have brought them forth and brought them up for, perhaps for the murderer, or, which is worse, to be themselves plagues of their generation. It is threatened again, ver. 16, "Though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb," those children that they are most fond of. Note, The parents' love is no security to the children's lives; nay, sometimes death is commissioned to take the darlings of the family, and leave the burthens of it. When sentence was passed upon Israel in the wilderness, that they should all perish there, this mercy was mixed with the wrath, that their children should nevertheless enter into that rest, which they, through unbelief, could not enter into. But this here is a total and final rejection, even their children shall all be cut off, and the land shall escheat to the crown, *ob defectum sanguinis*,—'shall be lost for want of heirs.' The Chaldee paraphrase, and many of the rabbins, by the murderers to which the children were brought forth, understand those that sacrificed their children to Moloch, a sin which was its own punishment, which shewed the parents void of bowels, and justly left them void of blessings. *Thirdly.* Those few that escape and remain shall be dispersed, ver. 17, they shall be wanderers among the nations. So the remains of the Jews are at this day, and there is no place in the world where they are a distinct nation.

2nd. The prophet's prayer relating to it; ver. 14, "Give them, O Lord." What shall I give? What shall I ask for a people thus doomed to destruction? It is this: since the decree is gone forth that they must either die from the womb or be brought forth for the murderer, of the two, let them rather die from the womb; rather let them have no children than have them to be made miserable. For the same reason, when a total ruin was coming on the Jewish nation, Christ said, "Blessed is the womb that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck," *Lu.* xxiii. 29. Give therefore "a miscarrying womb and dry breasts," for it is better to fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, than into the hands of men. Note, Those that are childless may with this reconcile themselves to the will of God herein, that the time may come when, if they were not so, they would wish they had been so.

CHAPTER X.

In this chapter, I. The people of Israel are charged with gross corruption in the worship of God, and are threatened with the destruction of their images and altars, ver. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8. II. They are charged with corruptions in the administration of the civil government, and are threatened with the ruin of that, ver. 3, 4, 7. III. They are charged with imitating the sins of their fathers, and with security in their own sins, and are threatened with smarting, humbling judgments, ver. 9, 11. IV. They are earnestly invited to repent and reform, and are threatened with ruin if they did not, ver. 12—15.

1 ISRAEL *is* an empty vine,
He bringeth forth fruit unto himself:
According to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars;
According to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images.
2 Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty:
He shall break down their altars,
He shall spoil their images.
3 For now they shall say,
We have no king, because we feared not the LORD;
What then should a king do to us?
4 They have spoken words,
Swearing falsely in making a covenant:
Thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

HEMLOCK.

5 The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven:
For the people thereof shall mourn over it,
And the priests thereof *that* rejoiced on it,
For the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.
6 It shall be also carried unto Assyria *for* a present to king Jareb:
Ephraim shall receive shame,
And Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel.
7 *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water.
8 The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed:
The thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars;
And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us;
And to the hills, Fall on us.

Observe, First. What the sins are which are here laid to Israel's charge, the national sins which bring down national judgments. The prophet deals plainly with them, for what good would it do them to be flattered?

1. They were not fruitful in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. Here all their other wickedness began; ver. 1, "Israel is an empty vine." The church of God is fitly compared to a vine, weak, and of an unpromising outside, yet spreading and fruitful. Believers are branches of that vine, and partake of its root and fatness. But this was the character of Israel; they were as an empty vine, a vine that had no sap nor virtue in it, and therefore none of those good fruits produced by it that were expected from it, with which God and man should be honoured. Note, There are many who, though they are not become degenerate vines, yet are empty vines, have no good in them. A vine is, of all trees, least serviceable if it do not bear fruit; it is henceforth good for nothing, *Eze.* xv. 3, 5. And they that bring forth no grapes will soon come to bring forth wild grapes; they that do no good will do hurt. He is an empty vine, for "he bringeth forth fruit to himself." What good there is in him is not directed to the glory of God, but he takes the praise of it to himself, and prides himself in it. Christians live not to themselves, *Rom.* xiv. 6, but hypocrites make self their centre; they "eat and drink to themselves," *Zec.* vii. 5, 6. Or, Israel is by the judgments of God emptied and spoiled of all his wealth, because he made use of it in the service of his lust, and not to the honour of God who gave it him. Note, What we do not rightly employ we may justly expect to be emptied of.

2. They multiplied their altars and images, and the more bountiful God's providence was to them the more prodigal they were in serving their idols; "According to the multitude of his fruit" which his land brought forth "he hath increased the altars, and according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images." Note, It is a great affront to God, and an abuse of his goodness, when the more mercies we receive from him the more sins we commit against him; and when the more wealth men have the more mischief they do. Should not we be thus abundant in the service of our God, as they were in the service of their idols? As we find our estates increasing we should proportionably abound the more in works of piety and charity.

3. Their hearts were divided, ver. 2. 1st. They were divided among themselves: they were at variance about their idols, some for one, some for another; at variance about their kings, whose separate interests made parties in the kingdom, and in them their very hearts were divided and alienated one from another; and there was no such thing as cordial friendship to be found among them. It follows, therefore, "Now shall they be found faulty." Note, The divisions and animosities of a people are the causes of much sin and the presages of ruin. 2nd. They were divided between God and their idols. They had a remaining affection in their hearts for God, but a reigning affection for their idols; they halted between God and Baal, that was the dividing of their heart. But God is the sovereign of the heart, and he will by no means endure a rival; he will either have all or none. Satan, like the pretended mother, saith, "Let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it;" but if that be yielded to, God saith, Nay, let him take all. A heart thus divided will be found faulty, and be rejected as treacherous in its covenanting with God. Note, A heart divided between God and mammon, though it may trim the matter so as to appear plausible, yet in the day of discovery it will be found faulty.

4. They made no conscience of what they said and what they did in the most solemn manner, ver. 4. 1st. Not of what they said in swearing, which is the most solemn speaking. "They have spoken words," and words only, for they meant not as they said; they did *verba dare*,—'give words;' they "swore falsely in making a covenant." They were deceitful in their covenanting with God, the covenant of circumcision, the fair promises they made of reformation, when they were in distress; and no marvel if those that were false to their God were false to all mankind. They contracted such a habit of treachery that they broke through the most sacred bonds, and made nothing of them. Subjects violated their oaths of allegiance, and their kings their coronation oaths; they broke their leagues with the nations they were in alliance with, nor was any conscience made of contracts between private persons. 2nd. Nor of what they did in judgment, which is the most solemn acting. Justice could not take place when men made nothing of forswearing themselves; for thus judgment, which should have been a healing medicinal plant, and of a sweet smell, sprung up as hemlock, which is both nauseous and noxious in the furrows of the field, in the field that was ploughed and furrowed for good corn. Note, God is greatly offended with corruptions, not only in his own worship, but in the administration of justice between man and man; and the dishonesty of a people shall be the ground of his controversy with them, as well as their idolatry and impiety; for God's laws are intended for man's benefit and the good of the community, as well as for God's honour; and the profanation of courts of justice shall be avenged as surely as the profanation of temples.

Secondly. What the judgments are with which Israel should be punished for these sins; they sinned both in civil and religious matters, and in both they shall be punished.

1. They shall have no joy of their kings and of their government. Because justice is turned into oppression, therefore those who are intrusted with the administration of it, and should be blessings to the state, shall be complained of as the burthens of it, ver. 3; and they that would not rule their people well should not be able to protect them. "Now they should say, We have no king," that is, We are as if we had none, we have none to do us any good, or stand us in any stead; none to keep us from destroying ourselves, or being destroyed by our enemies; none to preserve the public peace, or to fight our battles. And justly is this come to us; "Because we feared not the Lord" when we were safe under the protection of our kings, therefore we are rejected by him, and then "what shall a king do for us?" What good can we expect from a king, when we have forfeited the favour of our God? Note, Those that cast off the fear of God are not likely to have joy of any of their creature comforts; nor will men's loyalty to their prince befriend them without religion; for, though that may engage him to be for them, what good will that do them if God be against them? Those that keep themselves in the fear and favour of God may say with triumph, What can the greatest of men do against us? But those that throw themselves out of his protection must say with despair, What can the greatest of men do for us? He was a king that said, "If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I help thee?" Yet he is a fool that saith, If a king cannot help us we must perish, as these intimate here, for God can do that for us which kings cannot. Time was when they doted upon having a king, but now what can a king do for them, who they thought could do any thing? God can make people sick of those creature confidences which they were most fond of. This is their complaint when their king is disabled to help them; yet this is not the worst. Their civil government shall not only be weakened, but quite destroyed; ver. 7, "As for Samaria," the royal city, which is now almost all that is left, "her king is cut off as the foam from the water." The foam swims uppermost, and makes a great show upon the face of the water, yet it is but a heap of bubbles, raised by the troubling of the water. Such were the kings of Israel, after their revolt from the house of David—a mere scum; their government had no foundation. No better are the greatest of kings when they set up in opposition to God. When God comes to contend with them by his judgments, he can as easily disperse and dissolve them, and bring them to nothing, as the froth upon the water.

2. They shall have no joy of their idols, and of their worship of them. And miserable is the case of that people whose gods fail them when their kings do.

1st. The idols they had made, and the altars they had set up in honour of them, should be broken down, and spoiled, and carried away, as common plunder, by the victorious enemy. "He shall break down their altars," God shall do it by the hand of the Assyrian; the Assyrian shall do it by order from God. "He shall spoil their images," ver. 2. Note, What men make idols of it is just with God to break down and spoil. But the calf at Bethel was the sovereign idol; that was it which the inhabitants of Samaria most doted upon. Now it is here foretold that that should be destroyed; "The glory of it is departed from it," ver. 5, when it is thrown down and defaced, no more to be worshipped. But that is not all; "It shall also be carried to Assyria," as some think the calf at Dan was some time before, "for a present to king Jareb." It was carried to him as a rich booty, for it was a golden calf, and probably adorned with the gifts and offerings of its worshippers, and as a trophy of victory over their enemies. And what more glorious trophy could they bring than

this, or more incontestable proof of an absolute conquest? Thus it is said, "The sin of Israel shall be destroyed," ver. 8, that is, the idols which they made the matter of their sin; it is said of them, "They became a sin to Israel," 1 *Kin.* xii. 30. Note, If the grace of God prevail not to destroy the love of sin in us, it is just that the providence of God should destroy the food and fuel of sin about us. With the idols the high places shall be destroyed, the "high places of Aven," that is, Bethaven, ver. 5, or Bethel; it was called the house of God, so Bethel signifies, but now it is called the house of iniquity, nay, iniquity itself. The kings did not, as they ought to have done, take away the high places by the sword of justice, and therefore God will take them away by the sword of war; so that "the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars," that is, they shall lie in ruins. Their altars, while they stood, were as thorns and thistles, offensive to God and good men, and fruits of sin and the curse; justly, therefore, are they buried in thorns and thistles.

2nd. The destruction of their idols, their altars, and their high places shall be the occasion of sorrow and shame and terror to them. *First.* It shall be an occasion of sorrow to them. When the calf at Bethel is broken the people thereof shall mourn over it. They looked upon the calf to be the protector of their nation, and, when that was gone, thought they must all be undone, which made the poor ignorant people that were deluded into the love of it take on bitterly, as Micah did, *Jud.* xviii. 25, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?" The priests that had rejoiced in it shall now mourn for it with the people. Note, Whatever men make a god of, they will mourn for the loss of; and inordinate sorrow for the loss of any worldly good is a sign we made an idol of it. They used to be very merry in the worship of their idols, but now they shall mourn over them, for sinful mirth shall sooner or later be turned into mourning. *Secondly.* It shall be an occasion of shame to them; ver. 6, "Ephraim shall receive shame," when he sees the gods he trusted to carried into captivity; and "Israel shall be ashamed of his counsel," in putting such confidence in them, and paying such adoration to them. God's ark and altars were never thrown down till the people rejected them; but the idolatrous altars were thrown down when the people were doting on them, which shews that the contempt of the former, and the veneration for the latter, were the sins for which God visited. *Thirdly.* It shall be an occasion of fear to them; ver. 5, "The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear;" they shall be in pain for their gods, and afraid of losing them; or, rather, they shall be in pain for themselves, and their children, and families, when they see the judgment of God breaking in upon them, and beginning with their idols, as he "executed judgment against the gods of Egypt," *Ex.* xii. 12. Thus idolaters are brought in trembling when God ariseth to shake terribly the earth, *Isa.* ii. 21. And here, ver. 8, "They shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us;" the supporters of idolatry, *Rev.* vi. 15, 16, are brought in calling thus in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them from God's wrath.

9 O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah:
There they stood:
The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them.
10 *It is* in my desire that I should chastise them;
And the people shall be gathered against them,
When they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.
11 And Ephraim *is as* an heifer *that is* taught,
And loveth to tread out *the corn;*
But I passed over upon her fair neck:
I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow,
And Jacob shall break his clods.
12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy;
Break up your fallow ground:
For *it is* time to seek the LORD,
Till he come and rain righteousness upon you.
13 Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity;
Ye have eaten the fruit of lies:
Because thou didst trust in thy way,
In the multitude of thy mighty men.
14 Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people,
And all thy fortresses shall be spoiled,
As Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle:
The mother was dashed in pieces upon *her* children.
15 So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness:
In a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

Here, First. They are put in mind of the sins of their fathers and predecessors, for which God would now reckon with them. It was told them, *ch.* ix. 9, that they had "corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah;" and here, ver. 9, "O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah." Not only the wickedness that was committed in that age is revived in this, and reacted, a copy from that original, but the wickedness that was committed in that age hath been continued in a constant series and succession through all the intervening ages down to this; so that the measure of iniquity hath been long in filling, and still there had been made additions to it. Or, 'Thou hast sinned more than in the days of Gibeah,' so it may be read; the sins of this age exceed those of the worst of former ages. The case was bad then, for there they stood, the criminals stood in their own defence, and the tribes of Israel, who undertook to chastise them for their wickedness, were at a stand, when both in the first and in the second battle the malefactors were the victors; and "the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them" till the third engagement, and then did not overtake them all, for six hundred made their escape. But thy sin is worse than theirs, and therefore thou canst not expect but that the "battle against the children of iniquity" should overtake thee and overcome thee.

Secondly. They have warning given them, fair warning, of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, ver. 10. God had hitherto pitied and spared them; though they had been very provoking, he had a mind to try whether they would be wrought upon by patience and forbearance; but now "it is in my desire that I should chastise them," that is, It is what I have a purpose of, and will take pleasure in. He will "rejoice over them to do them hurt," *Deu.* xxviii. 63. Note, Because God doth not desire the death and ruin of sinners, therefore he doth desire their chastisement. And see what the chastisement is, "The people shall be gathered against them," as all the other tribes were against Benjamin in the battle of Gibeah. One of the rabbins thus descants upon it, 'Because they receive not chastisement from me by my prophets, who in my name rebuke them, I will chastise them by the hands of the people which shall be gathered against them,' "when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows," that is, when they shall think to fortify themselves as it were within a double intrenchment. Or, 'When I shall bind them for their two transgressions,' so the margin reads it, meaning their corporal and spiritual whoredom, which they are often charged with, or the two calves at Dan and Bethel, or those two great evils mentioned *Jer.* ii. 13. Or, 'When I shall bind them to their two furrows;" that is, bring them into servitude to the Assyrians, who shall keep them under the yoke, as oxen in the plough, who are bound to the two furrows, up the field and down it, and dare not, for fear of the goad, stir a step out of them. The Chaldee saith, 'Those that are gathered against them shall exercise dominion over them, in like manner as a pair of heifers are tied to their two furrows.' Thus, they that would not be God's freemen shall be their enemies' slaves, and shall be made to know the difference between God's service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries, 2 *Chr.* xii. 8.

Thirdly. They are made to know that their unacquaintedness with sufferings and hardships should not excuse them from a very miserable captivity, ver. 11. See how nice and tender and delicate Ephraim is; he is "as an heifer that is taught to tread out the corn," and loves that work, because, being not to be muzzled, she has liberty to eat at pleasure; and the work itself was dry and easy, and both its own diversion and its own wages. But, saith God, I have a yoke to put upon her fair neck, as fair as it is; "I will make Ephraim to ride," that is, I will tame them, or cause them to be ridden by the Assyrians and other conquerors that shall rule them with rigour, as men do the beasts they ride upon, *Ps.* lxvi. 12; and Judah too shall be made to plough, and Jacob "to break the clods," that is, they shall be used hardly, but not so hardly as Ephraim. Note, It is just with God to make those know what hardship means that indulge themselves too much in their own ease and pleasure. The learned Dr. Pocock inclines to another sense of these words, as speaking the tender gentle methods God took with this people to bring them into obedience to his law, as a reason why they should return to that obedience. He had managed them as the husbandman doth his cattle that he trains up for service. Ephraim being a docible heifer, fit to be employed, God took hold of "her fair neck," to accustom her to hand; harnessed her, or put the yoke of his commandments upon her; gave his people Israel a law, that being trained up in his institutions they might not be tempted by the usages of the heathen. He had used all fair and likely means with them to keep them in their obedience, and set Judah to plough, and Jacob to break the clods, and employed them in the observance of precepts proper for them; and yet they would not be retained in their obedience, but started aside.

Fourthly. They are invited and encouraged to return to God by prayer, repentance, and reformation, ver. 12, 13. See here,

1. The duties they are called to. They are God's husbandry, 1 *Cor.* iii. 9; and the duties are expressed in language borrowed from the husbandman's calling. If they would not be brought into bondage by their oppressors, let them return to God's service. 1st. Let them break up the fallow ground; let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, which are as weeds and thorns, and let them be humbled for their sins, and be of a broken and contrite spirit in the sense of them; let them be full of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of them, and prepare to receive the Divine precepts, as the ground that is ploughed is to receive the seed, that it may take root: see *Jer.* iv. 3. 2nd. Let them sow to themselves in righteousness, that is, let them return to the practice of good works according to the law of God, which is the rule of righteousness. Let them abound in works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards one another, and herein let them sow to the spirit, as the apostle speaks, *Gal.* vi. 7, 8. Every action is seed sown; let them sow in righteousness, that is, let them sow what they should sow, do what they should do, and they themselves shall have the benefit of it. 3rd. Let them seek the Lord, that is, let them look up to him for his grace, and beg of him to bless the seed sown. The husbandman must plough and sow with an eye to God, asking of him rain in the season thereof.

2. The argument used for the pressing of these duties. Consider, 1st. It is time to do it,—it is high time. The husbandman sows in seed time, and if that time be far spent he applies himself to it with the more diligence. Note, Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work; but there are some special occasions given by the providence and grace of God, when it is in a particular manner time to seek him. 2nd. If we do our part, God will do his. If we sow to ourselves in righteousness, that is, if we be careful and diligent to do our duty in a dependence upon his grace, he will shower down his grace upon us, will rain righteousness, the very thing that they need most who are to sow in righteousness; for by the grace of God we are what we are. Some apply it to Christ, who should come in the fulness of time, and for whose coming they must prepare themselves. He shall come as the Lord our righteousness, and shall rain righteousness upon us, that everlasting righteousness which he had brought in; he will grant us of it abundantly. It is foretold, *Ps.* lxxii. 6, that "he shall come down like rain." 3rd. If we sow in righteousness, we shall reap in mercy, which agrees with that promise, if we "sow to the Spirit," we shall "of the Spirit reap life everlasting." We shall reap according to the measure of mercy, so the word is; it shall be a great reward, according to the riches of mercy; such a reward, not as becomes such mean creatures as we are to receive, but as becomes a God of infinite mercy to give; a reward, not of debt, but of grace. We reap not in merit, but in mercy; it is what is sown. God giveth a body as it has pleased him. 4th. We have "ploughed wickedness, and reaped iniquity," and the time passed of our life may suffice that we have done so, ver. 13. You have taken a great deal of pains in the service of sin, have laboured at it in the very fire; and will you grudge to bear the burthen and heat of the day in God's service, and in doing that which will be for your own advantage? You have done much to damn your souls,—will you not undo it again, and do something to save them? 5th. We never got any thing in the service of sin. They have ploughed wickedness, that is, they have done the drudgery of sin, and they have reaped iniquity, that is, they have got all that is to be got by it; they have carried it on to the harvest; and what the better? It is all a cheat, they have "eaten the fruit of lies;" that is, fruit that is but a lie, which looks fair, but is rotten within. The works of darkness are "unfruitful works," *Eph.* v. 11; *Rom.* vi. 21. Even the gains of sin yield the sinner no satisfaction. 6th. As our comforts, so our confidences, in the service of sin will certainly fail us. "Thou didst trust in thy ways, in the multitude of thy mighty men;" that is, Thou hast stayed thyself upon creatures, thy own power and policy, and

therefore hast ventured to plough wickedness, and thy hopes have deceived thee. Come therefore and seek the Lord, and thy hope in him shall not deceive thee.

Fifthly. They are threatened with utter destruction, both for their carnal practices and for their carnal confidences; ver. 14, 15, Therefore because thou hast sown wickedness, and trusted in thy own way, "a tumult shall arise among thy people," either by insurrections at home or invasions from abroad, either of which will put a kingdom into confusion and make a noise, much more both together.

1. Their cities and strongholds shall be a prey to the enemy. The fortresses which they confided in, and in which they had laid up their effects, shall be seized and rifled, "as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle." This refers to some event that had lately happened, not elsewhere recorded. And probably Shalman is the same with Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, who had lately put some town, or castle, or house, (Beth-arbel is 'the house of Arbel,') under military execution, which perhaps he used with severity in the beginning of his conquests, to terrify other garrisons into a speedy surrender at the first summons. God tells them that thus Samaria should be spoiled.

2. The inhabitants shall be put to the sword, as it was at Beth-arbel, when it was taken; "The mother was dashed in pieces upon her children," that is, they were both dashed in pieces together by the fury of the soldiers. See what cruel work war makes; *jusque datum sceleri*,—'wickedness has free course.' It is strange that any of the human race could be so inhuman; but see what comes of sin, *homo homini lupus*,—'man is a wolf to man;" and then, *homo homini agnus*,—'man is a lamb to man.'

3. Even royal blood shall be mingled with common gore. "In a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off," ver. 15. Hoshea was the last king of Israel, in him the whole kingdom was cut off, and came to a period; it may refer either to him, or to some of his predecessors that were cut off by treachery. It shall be done "in a morning," in a very little time, as suddenly as the dawning of the morning. Or, 'at the time appointed,' for the morning comes punctually at its time. Or, 'in the morning,' when they think the night of calamity is over, and expect a returning day, then shall all their hopes be dashed by the sudden cutting off of their king, ver. 7. Kings, though gods to us, are men to God, and shall die like men. And, lastly, What doth all this desolation owe its rise to? What is the spring of this bloodshed? He tells us, ver. 15, "So shall Bethel do unto you." Bethel was the place where one of the calves was; Gilgal, where all their wickedness is said to have been, was hard by. There was their great wickedness, the evil of their evil, so the word is; the sum and quintessence of their sin, and that was it that did this to them, that made all this havoc, for that was it that provoked God to bring it upon them. He doth not say, So shall the king of Assyria do to you, but so shall Bethel do to you. Note, Whatever mischief is done to us, it is sin that doth it. Are the fortresses spoiled? are the women and children murdered? is the king cut off? it is sin that doth all this. It is sin that ruins soul, body, estate, all; "So shall Bethel do unto you." It is thy own wickedness that corrects thee, and thy backslidings that reprove thee.

CHAPTER XI.

In this chapter we have, I. The great goodness of God towards his people Israel, and the great things he had done for them, ver. 1, 3, 4. II. Their ungrateful carriage towards him, notwithstanding his favours toward them, ver. 2—4, 7, 12. III. Threatenings of wrath against them for their ingratitude and treachery, ver. 5, 6. IV. Mercy remembered in the midst of wrath, ver. 8, 9. V. Promises of what God would do for them, ver. 10 11. VI. An honourable character given of Judah, ver. 12.

WHEN Israel *was* a child, then I loved him,
And called my son out of Egypt.
2 *As* they called them, so they went from them:
They sacrificed unto Baalim,
And burned incense to graven images.
3 I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms;
But they knew not that I healed them.
4 I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love:
And I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws,
And I laid meat unto them.
5 He shall not return into the land of Egypt,
But the Assyrian shall be his king,
Because they refused to return.
6 And the sword shall abide on his cities,
And shall consume his branches, and devour *them*,
Because of their own counsels.
7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me:
Though they called them to the most High,
None at all would exalt *him*.

Here we find,

First. God very gracious to Israel. They were a people for whom he had done more than for any people under heaven, and to whom he had given more; which they are here, I will not say upbraided with, (for God gives and upbraids not,) but put in mind of as an aggravation of their sin, and an encouragement to repentance.

1. He had a kindness for them when they were young; ver. 1, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him." When they first began to multiply into a nation in Egypt, God then "set his love upon them," and "chose them, because he loved them," because he would love them, *Deu.* vii. 7, 8. When they were weak and helpless as children, foolish and froward as children, when they were outcasts, and children exposed, then God loved them, that is, he pitied them, and testified his goodwill to them. He bore them as the nurse doth the sucking child, nourished them, and suffered their manners. Note, Those that are grown up, nay, those that are grown old, ought often to reflect upon the goodness of God to them in their childhood.

2. He delivered them out of the house of bondage; "I called my son out of Egypt," because a son, because a beloved son. When God demanded Israel's discharge from Pharaoh, he called them his son, firstborn. Note, Those whom God loves he calls out of the bondage of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of his children. These words are said to have been fulfilled in Christ, when upon the death of Herod he and his parents were called out of Egypt, *Mat.* ii. 15; so that the words have a double aspect, speaking historically of the calling of Israel out of Egypt, and prophetically of the bringing of Christ thence; and the former was a type of the latter, and a pledge and earnest of the many and great favours God had in reserve for that people, especially the sending of his son into the world, and bringing him again into the land of Israel, when they had unkindly driven him out, and he might justly never have returned. The calling of Christ out of Egypt was a figure of the calling of all that are his, through him, out of spiritual slavery.

3. He gave them a good education, took care of them, took pains with them, not only as a father or tutor, but, such is the condescension of Divine grace, as a mother or nurse; ver. 3, "I taught Ephraim also to go," as a child in leading-strings is taught. When they were in the wilderness, God led them by the pillar of cloud and fire, shewed them the way in which they should go, and bore them up, "taking them by the arms;" he taught them to go in the way of his commandments, by the institutions of the ceremonial law, which were as tutors and governors to that people under age. He took them by the arms to guide them that they might not stray, and to hold them up that they might not stumble and fall. God's spiritual Israel are thus supported; "Thou hast holden me by my right hand," *Ps.* lxxiii. 23.

4. When any thing was amiss with them, or they were never so little out of order, he was their physician; "I healed them." Not only took a tender care of them,—a friend may do that; but wrought an effectual cure,—it is God only that can do that: "I am the Lord that healeth thee," *Ex.* xv. 26, that redress all thy grievances.

5. He brought them into his service by mild and gentle methods; ver. 4, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." Note, It is God's work to draw poor souls to himself; and none can come to him except he draw them, *Jno.* vi. 44. He draws, 1st. With "the cords of a man," with such cords as men draw with that have a principle of humanity; or such cords as men are drawn with. He dealt with them as men, in an equitable rational way, in an easy gentle way, with the cords of Adam. He dealt with them as with Adam in innocency, bringing them at once into paradise, and into covenant with himself. 2nd. "With bands of love," or, 'cart-ropes of love;' this word signifies stronger cords than the former. He did not drive them by force into his service, whether they would or no, nor rule them with rigour, or detain them by violence; but his attractives were all loving and endearing, all sweet and gentle, that he might overcome them with kindness. Moses, whom he made their guide, was the meekest man in the world. Kindnesses among men we commonly call obligations, or bonds, bonds of love. Thus God "draws with the savour of his good ointments," *Cant.* i. 4; draws "with lovingkindness," *Jer.* xxxi. 3. Thus God deals with us, and we must deal in like manner with those that are under our instruction and government; deal rationally, and deal mildly with them.

6. He eased them of the burthens they had been long groaning under. "I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws," alluding to the care of the good husbandman that is merciful to his beast, and will not tire him with hard and constant labour. Probably in those times the yoke on the neck of the oxen was fastened with some bridle or headstall over the jaws, which muzzled the mouth of the ox. Israel in Egypt were thus restrained from the enjoyment of their comforts, and constrained to hard labour; but God eased them, "removed their shoulder from the burthen," *Ps.* lxxxi. 6. Note, Liberty is a great mercy, especially out of bondage.

7. He supplied them with food convenient. In Egypt they fared hard; but, when God brought them out, he laid meat unto them, as the husbandman, when he has unyoked his cattle, fodders them. God rained manna about their camp, bread from heaven, angels' food. Other creatures seek their meat, but God laid meat to his own people, as we do to our children; was himself their caterer and carver, prevented them with the blessings of goodness.

Secondly. Here is Israel very ungrateful to God:

1. They were deaf and disobedient to his voice. He spake to them by his messengers, Moses and his other prophets, called them from their sins, called them to himself, to their work and duty, but, as they called them, so they went from them; they rebelled in those particular instances wherein they were admonished. The more pressing and importunate the prophets were with them, to persuade them to that which was good, the more refractory they were, and the more resolute in their evil ways, disobeying for disobedience sake. This foolishness is bound in the hearts of children, who, as soon as they are taught to go, will go from those that call them.

2. They were fond of idols, and worshipped them. They sacrificed to Baalim; first one Baal, and then another, and burnt incense to graven images, though they were called to by the prophets of the Lord again and again not to do this abominable thing which he hated. Idolatry was the sin which from the beginning, and all along, had most easily beset them.

3. They were regardless of God, and of his favour to them. "They knew not that I healed them." They looked only at Moses and Aaron, the instruments of their relief, and, when any thing was amiss, quarrelled with them; but looked not through them to God who employed them. Or, when God corrected them, and kept them under a severe discipline, they understood not that it was for their good, and that God thereby healed them, and it was necessary for the perfecting of their cure; else they would have been better reconciled to the methods God took. Note, Ignorance is at the bottom of ingratitude, *ch.* ii. 8.

4. They were strongly inclined to apostasy. This is the blackest article in the charge; ver. 7, "My people are bent to backsliding from me." Every word here is aggravating, 1st. They backslide. There is no hold of them, no stedfastness in them; they seem to come forwards towards God, but presently they slide back again, and are as a deceitful bow. 2nd. They backslide from me, from God, the chief good, the fountain of life and living waters; from their God, their owner, ruler and benefactor; from God, who never turned from them, nor was a wilderness to them. 3rd. They are "bent to backslide." They are ready to sin, there is in their natures a propensity to that which is evil. At the best they hang in suspense between God and the world, so that a little thing serves to draw them the wrong way; they are forward to close with every temptation. It also intimates that they are resolute in sin, their hearts are fully set in them to do evil. The bias is strong that way, and they persist in their backslidings, whatever is said or done to stop them. And yet, 4th. They are in profession my people; they are called by my name, and profess relation to me. They are mine whom I have done much for, and expect much from, whom I have nourished and brought up as children, and yet they backslide from me. Note, In our repentance we ought to lament not only our backslidings, but our bent to backslide; not only our actual transgressions, but our original corruption, the sin that dwells in us, the carnal mind.

5. They were strangely averse to repentance and reformation. Here are two expressions for that, 1st. "They refused to return," ver. 5. So much were they bent to backslide, that, though they could not but find upon trial the folly of their backslidings, and that when they forsook God they changed for the worse, yet they went on frowardly; "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go." They were commanded to return, were courted and entreated to return, were promised that if they would they should be kindly received, but they refused.

2nd. Though "they called them to the Most High." God's prophets and ministers called them to return to the God from whom they had revolted, to the most high God, from whom they had sunk into this wretched degeneracy. They called them from the worship of the idols that were so much below them, and the worship of whom was therefore their disparagement, to the true God, that was so much above them, and the worship of whom was therefore their preferment. They called them from this earth to high and heavenly things; but they called in vain; none at all would exalt him. Though he be the most high God, they would not acknowledge him to be so, would do nothing to honour him, nor give him the glory due to his name. Or, they would not exalt themselves, would not rise out of that state of apostasy and misery into which they had precipitated themselves; but there contentedly lay still, would not lift up their heads nor lift up their souls. Note, God's faithful ministers have taken a great deal of pains to no purpose with backsliding children, have called them to the Most High, but none would stir, none at all would exalt him.

Thirdly. Here is God very angry, and justly so, with Israel. See what are the tokens of God's displeasure with which they are here threatened.

1. God, that brought them out of Egypt to take them for a people to himself, since they would not be faithful to him, shall bring them into a worse condition than he at first found them in; ver. 5, "He shall not return unto the land of Egypt," though that was a house of bondage, grievous enough; but he shall go into a harder service, for the Assyrian shall be his king, who will use them worse than ever Pharaoh did. They shall not return into Egypt, which lies near, where they may hear often from their own country, and whence they may hope shortly to return to it again; but they shall be carried into Assyria, that lies much more remote, and where they shall be cut off from all correspondence with their own land and from all hopes of returning to it, and justly, because they refused to return. Note, Those that will not return to the duties they have left cannot expect to return to the comforts they have lost.

2. God, that gave them Canaan, that good land, and a very safe and comfortable settlement in it, shall bring his judgments upon them there, which shall make their habitation unsafe and uncomfortable, ver. 6. The sword shall come upon him, the sword of war, the sword of a foreign enemy, prevailing against them, and triumphing over them. 1st. This judgment shall spread far. The sword shall fasten upon his cities, those nests of people and storehouses of wealth. It shall likewise reach to his branches, the country villages, so some; the citizens themselves, so others; or the bars (so the word signifies) and gates of their city; or, all the branches of their revenue and wealth; or their children, the branches of their families. 2nd. It shall last long. It shall abide on their cities. David thought three months' flying before his enemies was the only judgment of the three that was to be excepted against; but this sword here shall abide much longer than that on the cities of Israel. They continued their rebellions against God, and therefore God continued his judgments on them. 3rd. It shall make a full end. It shall "consume his branches," and devour them, and lay all waste, and this "because of their own counsels," that is, because they would have their own way, both in worship and conversation; would do as they list, and pursue their own projects, which God, therefore, in a way of righteous judgment, gave them up to. Note, The confusion of sinners is owing to their contrivance. God's counsels would have saved them, but their own counsels ruin them.

8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?
How shall I deliver thee, Israel?
How shall I make thee as Admah?
How shall I set thee as Zeboim?
Mine heart is turned within me,
My repentings are kindled together.
9 I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger,
I will not return to destroy Ephraim:
For I *am* God, and not man;
The Holy One in the midst of thee:
And I will not enter into the city.
10 They shall walk after the LORD:
He shall roar like a lion:
When he shall roar, [west.
Then the children shall tremble from the
11 They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt,
And as a dove out of the land of Assyria:
And I will place them in their houses,
saith the LORD.
12 Ephraim compasseth me about with lies,
And the house of Israel with deceit:
But Judah yet ruleth with God,
And is faithful with the saints.

DOVES.

In these verses we have,

First. God's wonderful backwardness to destroy Israel; ver. 8, 9, "How shall I give thee up?" Here observe,

1. God's gracious debate within himself concerning Israel's case; a debate between justice and mercy, in which victory plainly inclines to mercy's side. Be astonished, O heavens! at this, and wonder, O earth! at the glory of God's goodness. Not that there are any such struggles in God as there are in us, or that he is ever fluctuating or unresolved; no, he is in one mind, and knows it. But they are expressions after the manner of men, designed to shew what severity the sin of Israel had deserved, and yet how Divine grace would be glorified in sparing them notwithstanding. The connexion of this with what goes before is very surprising. It was said of Israel, ver. 7, that they were bent to backslide from God; that though they were called to him yet they would not exalt him. Upon which one would think it should have followed, Now I am determined to destroy them, and never shew them mercy more. No, such is the sovereignty of mercy, such the freeness, the fulness of Divine grace, that it follows immediately, "How shall I give them up?" See here, 1st. The proposals that justice makes concerning Israel, the suggestion of which is here implied. Let Ephraim be given up, as an incorrigible son is given up to be disinherited, as an incurable patient is given over by his physician. Let him be given up to ruin, let Israel be delivered into the enemy's hand, as a lamb to the lion to be torn in pieces. Let them be made as Admah, and set as Zeboim, the two cities that with Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone, rained from heaven upon them. Let them be utterly and irreparably ruined, and be made as like these cities in desolation as they have been in sin. Let that curse which is written in the law be executed upon them, that the whole land shall be "brimstone and salt, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim," *Deu.* xxix. 23. Ephraim and Israel deserve to be thus abandoned, and God doth them no wrong if he deal thus with them. 2nd. The opposition that mercy makes to these proposals. How shall I do so? As the tender father reasons with himself, How can I cast off my untoward son? for he is my son, though he be untoward; how can I find in my heart to do it? Thus Ephraim has been a dear son, a pleasant child, how can I do it? He is ripe for ruin, judgments stand ready to seize him, there wants nothing but giving him up, but I cannot do it. They have been a people near unto me; there are yet some good among them; they are the children of the covenant: if they be ruined, the enemy will triumph. It may be they will yet repent and reform, and therefore how can I do it? Note, The God of heaven is slow to anger, and is especially loth to abandon a people to utter ruin that have been in special relation to him. See how mercy works upon the mention of those severe proceedings; "Mine heart is turned within me," as we say our heart fails us when we come to do a thing that is against the grain with us. God speaks as if he were conscious to himself of a strange striving of affections in compassion to Israel, as *Lam.* i. 20, "My bowels are troubled, my heart is turned within me." As it follows here, "My repentings are kindled together;" that is, his bowels yearned towards them, and his soul was grieved for their sin and misery, *Jud.* x. 16: compare *Jer.* xxxi. 20, "Since I spake against him my bowels are troubled for him." When God was to give up his Son to be a sacrifice for sin, and a Saviour for sinners, he did not say, How shall I give him up? No, he spared not his own Son; it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and therefore God spared not him, that he might spare us. But this is only the language of the day of his patience; but when men have sinned that away, and the great day of his wrath comes, then no difficulty is made of it; nay, "I will laugh at their calamity."

2. His gracious determination of this debate. After a long contest, mercy in the issue rejoiceth against judgment, has the last word, and carries the day, ver. 9. It is decreed the reprieve shall be lengthened out yet longer, and "I will not" now "execute the fierceness of mine anger," though I am angry. Though they shall not go altogether unpunished, yet he will mitigate the sentence, and abate the rigour of it. He will shew himself to be justly angry, but not implacably so; they shall be corrected, but not consumed. "I will not return to destroy Ephraim;" that is, the judgments that have been inflicted shall not be repeated, shall not go so deep as they have deserved. He will not return to destroy, as soldiers, when they have pillaged a town once, return a second time to take more, as when "what the palmerworm has left the locust has eaten." It is added in the close of the verse, "I will not enter into the city," into Samaria, or any other of their cities; I will not enter into them as an enemy, utterly to destroy them and lay them waste, as Admah and Zeboim were.

3. The ground and reason of this determination; "For I am God, and not man," the Holy One of Israel. To encourage them to hope that they shall find mercy, consider, 1st. What he is in himself. He is God, and not man; as in other things, so in pardoning sin, and sparing sinners. If they had offended a man like themselves, he would not, he could not, have borne it; his passion would have overpowered his compassion, and he would have executed the fierceness of his anger. But "I am God, and not man." He is Lord of his anger, whereas man's anger commonly lords it over them. If an earthly prince were in such a strait between justice and mercy, he would be at a loss how to compromise the matter between them; but he who is God, and not man, knows how to find out an expedient to secure the honour of his justice, and yet advance the honour of his mercy. Man's compassions are nothing in comparison with the tender mercies of our God, whose thoughts and ways in receiving returning sinners are as much above ours as heaven is above the earth, *Isa.* lv. 9. Note, It is a great encouragement to our hope in God's mercies to remember that he is God, and not man. He is the Holy One. One would think this were a reason why he should reject such a provoking people. No, God knows how to spare and pardon poor sinners, not only without any reproach to his holiness, but very much to the honour of it; as he is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins," and therein declares his righteousness, now Christ has purchased the pardon and he hath promised it. 2nd. What he is to them. He is the Holy One in the midst of thee; that is, his holiness is engaged for the good of his church; and even in this corrupt, degenerate land and age there were some that gave thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, and he required of them all to be "holy as he is," *Lev.* xix. 2. As long as we have the Holy One in the midst of us, we are safe and well; but woe to us when he leaves us. Note, Those who submit to the influence may take the comfort of God's holiness.

Secondly. Here is his wonderful forwardness to do good for Israel, which appears in this, that he will qualify them to receive the good he designs for them; ver. 10, 11, "They shall walk after the Lord." This respects the same favour with that, *ch.* iii. 5, "They shall return, and seek the Lord their God." It is spoken of the ten tribes, and had its accomplishment in part in the return of some of them with those of the two tribes in Ezra's time; but it had its more full accomplishment in God's spiritual Israel, the gospel church, brought together and incorporated by the Gospel of Christ. The ancient Jews referred it to the time of the Messiah. The learned Dr. Pocock looks upon it as a prophecy of Christ's coming to preach the Gospel to the dispersed remnant of Israel, the children of God that were scattered abroad. And then observe,

1. How they were to be called and brought together. The Lord "shall roar like a lion." The word of the Lord, (so saith the Chaldee,) shall be as a lion that roars. Christ is called "The word of the Lion of the tribe of Judah;" and his Gospel, in the beginning of it, was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." When Christ cried with a loud voice, it was as "when a lion roared," *Rev.* x. 3. The voice of the Gospel was heard afar, as the roaring of a lion, and it was a mighty voice: see *Joel* iii. 16.

2. What impression this call should make upon them. Such an impression as the roaring of a lion makes upon all beasts of the forest. "When he shall roar, then the children shall tremble:" see *Am.* iii. 8, "The lion has roared;" that is, the Lord hath spoken, and then "who will not fear?" When they whose hearts the Gospel reached trembled and were astonished, and cried out, What shall we do? when they were by it put upon working out their salvation, and worshipping God with fear and trembling, then this promise was fulfilled, "The children shall tremble from the west." The dispersed Jews were carried eastward to Assyria and Babylon, and those that returned came from the East; therefore this seems to have reference to the calling of the Gentiles, that lay westward from Canaan, for that way especially the Gospel spread. They shall tremble; that is, they shall move and come with trembling, with care and haste, from the west, from the nations that lay that way, to the mountain of the Lord, *Isa.* ii. 3, to the gospel Jerusalem, upon hearing the alarm of

the Gospel. The apostle speaks of "mighty signs and wonders" that were wrought by the preaching of the Gospel from "Jerusalem round about to Illyricum," *Rom.* xv. 19. Then the children trembled from the west. And whereas Israel after the flesh was dispersed in Egypt and Assyria, it is promised that they shall be effectually summoned from thence; ver. 11, "They shall tremble;" that is, they shall come trembling, and with all haste, as a bird upon the wing out of Egypt, and "as a dove out of the land of Assyria." A dove is noted for swift and constant flight, especially when she flies to her windows, which the flocking of Jews and Gentiles to the church is here compared to, as it is *Isa.* lx. 8. Wherever they are that belong to the election of grace, east, west, north, or south, they shall hear the joyful sound, and be wrought upon by it. They of Egypt and Assyria shall come together, those that lie most remote from each other shall meet in Christ, and be incorporated in the church. Of the uniting of Egypt and Assyria, it was prophesied, *Isa.* xix. 23.

3. What effect these impressions should have upon them. Being moved with fear, they shall flee to the ark; they "shall walk after the Lord," after 'the service of the Lord,' so the Chaldee. They shall take the Lord Christ for their leader and commander, they shall lift themselves under him as the Captain of their salvation, and give up themselves to the conduct of the Spirit as their guide by the word. They shall leave all to follow Christ, as becomes disciples. Note, Our holy trembling at the word of Christ will drive us to him, not drive us from him. When he roars like a lion, the slaves tremble and flee from him, the children tremble and flee to him.

4. What entertainment they shall meet with at their return; ver. 11, "I will place them in their houses;" that is, all those that come at the gospel call shall have a place and a name in the gospel church; in the particular churches, which are their houses to which they pertain. They shall dwell in God, and be at home in him; both easy and safe, as a man in his own house. They shall have mansions, for there are many in our Father's house, in his tabernacle on earth and his temple in heaven, in everlasting habitations, which may be called their houses; for they are the lot they shall stand in at the end of the days.

Thirdly. Here is a sad complaint of the treachery of Ephraim and Israel, which may be an intimation that it is not Israel after the flesh, but the spiritual Israel, to whom the foregoing promises belong; for as for this Ephraim, this Israel, they compass God about with lies and deceit; that is, all their services of him, when they pretended to compass his altar, were feigned and hypocritical. When they surrounded him with their prayers and praises, every one having a petition to present to him, they lied to him with their mouth, and flattered him with their tongue; their pretensions were so fair, and yet their intentions so foul, that they would, if possible, have imposed upon God himself. Their professions and promises were all a cheat, and yet with these they thought to compass God about, to inclose him in as it were, to keep him among them, and prevent his leaving them.

Fourthly. Here is a pleasant commendation of the integrity of the two tribes, which they yet held fast; and which comes in as an aggravation of the perfidiousness of the ten tribes, and a reason why God had that mercy in store for Judah which he had not for Israel, *ch.* i. 6, 7; for "Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints," or, with the Most Holy. 1. Judah rules with God, that is, he serves God; and the service of God is not only true liberty and freedom, but it is dignity and dominion. Judah rules, that is, the princes and governors of Judah rule with God; that is, they use their power for him, for his honour, and the support of his interest. Those rule with God that rule in the fear of God, 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 3; and it is their honour to do so, and their praise shall be of God, as Judah's here is. Judah is Israel, a prince with God. 2. He is faithful with the holy God, keeps close to his worship and to his saints, to his priests, to his people. "Faithful with the saints;" that is, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose steps they faithfully tread in. They walk in the way of good men, and those that do so rule with God; they have a mighty interest in heaven. Judah yet doth thus, which intimates that the time would come when Judah also would revolt and degenerate. Note, When we see how many there are that compass God about with lies and deceit, yet it may be a comfort to us to think that God has his remnant, that cleave to him with purpose of heart, and are faithful to his saints; and for those who are thus faithful unto death is reserved a crown of life, when hypocrites and all liars shall have their portion without.

CHAPTER XII.

In this chapter we have, I. A high charge drawn up both against Israel and Judah for their sins, which were the ground of God's controversy with them, ver. 1, 2; particularly the sin of fraud and injustice which Ephraim is charged with, ver. 7; and justifies himself in, ver. 8; and the sin of idolatry, ver. 11, by which God is provoked to contend with them, ver. 14. II. The aggravations of the sins they are charged with, taken from the honour God put upon their father Jacob, ver. 3—5; the advancement of them into a people from low and mean beginnings, ver. 12, 13; and the provision he had made them of helps for their souls by the prophets he sent them, ver. 10. III. A call to the unconverted to turn to God, ver. 6. IV. An intimation of mercy that God had in store for them, ver. 9.

EPHRAIM feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east
He daily increaseth lies and desolation; [wind:
And they do make a covenant with the Assyrians,
And oil is carried into Egypt.
2 The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah,
And will punish Jacob according to his ways;
According to his doings will he recompense him.
3 He took his brother by the heel in the womb,
And by his strength he had power with God:
4 Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed:
He wept, and made supplication unto him:
He found him *in* Beth-el, and there he spake with us;
5 Even the Lord GOD of hosts;
The LORD *is* his memorial.
6 Therefore turn thou to thy God:
Keep mercy and judgment,
And wait on thy God continually.

In these verses,

First. Ephraim is convicted of folly in staying himself upon Egypt and Assyria when he was in straits; ver. 1, "Ephraim feedeth on wind," that is, feeds himself with vain hopes of assistance from man, when he is at variance with God. And when he meets with disappointments, yet he pursues the same game, and greedily pants and "follows after the east wind," which he cannot catch hold of; nor if he could would it be nourishing, nay, it would be noxious. We say of the wind in the east, it is good neither for man nor beast; it was said, *ch.* viii. 7, "he sows the wind;" and as he sows, so he "reaps the whirlwind;" and as he reaps, so he feeds on the wind, the east wind. Note, Those that make creatures their confidence make fools of themselves; and take a great deal of pains to put a cheat upon their own souls, and to prepare vexation for themselves. He daily increaseth lies, that is, multiplies his correspondences and leagues with his neighbours, which will all prove deceitful to him; nay, they will prove desolation to him. Those very nations that he makes his refuge will prove his ruin. Those that stay themselves upon lies will be still coveting to increase them, that they may build their hopes firm upon them; as if many lies twisted together would make one truth, or many broken reeds and rotten supports one sound one, which is a great delusion, and will prove to them a great desolation. For they that observe lying vanities, the more they increase them the more disappointments they prepare for themselves, and the farther they run from their own mercies. The men of Ephraim did so, when they thought to secure the Assyrians in their interests by a solemn league, signed, sealed, and sworn to; they made a covenant with the Assyrians, but they will find there is no hold of them. That potent prince will be a slave to his word no longer than he pleaseth. They thought to secure the Egyptians for their confederates by a rich present of the commodities of their country; not only to purchase their favour, but to shew that their friendship was worth having, oil is carried into Egypt. But the Egyptians, when they had got the bribe, dropped the cause, and Ephraim was never the better for them. *Oleum perdidit et operam*,—'The oil and the labour are both lost.' This was feeding on wind; this was increasing lies and desolation.

CARRYING OIL-SKINS ON MULES.—ver. 1.

Secondly. Judah is contended with too, and Jacob, which includes both Ephraim and Judah; ver. 2, "The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah." For though he had awhile ago ruled with God, and been faithful with the saints, yet now he begins to degenerate. Or, though in keeping close to the house of David, and the house of Aaron, and in them to the covenants of royalty and priesthood, they were so far in the right, in the former they ruled with God and in the latter were faithful to the saints, yet upon other accounts God had a controversy with them, and would punish them. Note, Men's being in the right in some things, in the main things, shall not exempt them from correction, and therefore should not exempt them from reproof for those things wherein they are in the wrong. There were those of the seven churches of Asia whom Christ approved of and commended; and yet he adds, "Nevertheless, I have something against thee." So here, though Jacob is a people near to God, yet God will punish him according to the evil ways he was found in, and the evil doings he was found guilty of; for God sees sin even in his own people, and will reckon with them for it.

Thirdly. Both Ephraim and Judah are put in mind of their father Jacob, whose seed they were, and whose name they bore, and it was their honour—of the extraordinary things he did, and God did for him; that they might be the more ashamed of themselves, for degenerating from so illustrious a progenitor, and staining the lustre of so great a name; and yet that they might be engaged and encouraged to return to God, the God of their father Jacob, in hopes for his sake to find favour with him. He had called this people Jacob, ver. 2; threatening to punish them: But how shall I give them up? How shall that dear name be forgotten?

1. Three glorious things concerning Jacob the person, Jacob the people are here put in mind of; but by brief hints only, for it is presumed they knew the story.

1st. His struggling with Esau in the womb. There "he took his brother by the heel," ver. 3; we have the story, *Gen.* xxv. 26. It was an early act of bravery, and an effort for the best precedency, a pious ambition for that birthright in the covenant which Esau is justly branded as profane for despising. But his degenerate seed, by mingling themselves with the nations, and making leagues with them, profaned that crown, and laid that honour in the dust, which he so gloriously put in for. Then it was that the dominion was given him; "The elder shall serve the younger." Then he was owned of God as his beloved, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;" but they had by their sin forfeited both the love of God and dominion over their neighbours.

2. His wrestling with the angel. Remember how your father Jacob had power with God by his own strength; the strength he had by the gifts of God, who "pleaded not against him by his great power," but "put strength into him," *Job* xxiii. 6. The angel he wrestled with is called God, and therefore is supposed to be the Son of God, the angel of the covenant. 'God was both a combatant with Jacob and an assistant of him, shewing in the latter greater strength than in the former, fighting as it were against him with his left hand, and for him with his right, and to that putting greater force;' so Dr. Pocock. The providence of God fought against him, when he met with one danger after another in his return homewards, but the grace of God enabled him to go on cheerfully in his way; and, when his faith acted upon the Divine promise that was for him, prevailed above his fears that arose from the Divine providences

that were against him, then "by his strength he had power with God." But it refers especially to his prayer for deliverance from Esau, and for a blessing. "He had power over the angel, and prevailed," for he "wept and made supplication." Here was a mixture of the greatest courage and the greatest tenderness; Jacob wrestling like a champion, and yet weeping like a child. Note, Prayers and tears are the weapons with which the saints have obtained the most glorious victories. Thus Jacob commenced Israel—a prince with God. His posterity was called Israel, but they were unworthy the name; for they had forfeited and lost their communion with God, and their interest in him, by revolting from their duty to him.

3. His meeting with God at Bethel; God "found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us." God found him the first time in Bethel, as he went to Padan-aram, *Gen.* xxviii. 10; and a second time after his return, *Gen.* xxxv. 9, &c. It is likely this refers to both; for in both God spake to Jacob, and renewed the covenant with him; and the prophet might very well say, "There he spake with us," who are the seed of Jacob; for both times that God spake with Jacob at Bethel, he spake with him concerning his seed; *Gen.* xxviii. 14, "Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth," and *Gen.* xxxv. 12, "This land will I give to thy seed." Thus God then covenanted with him and his seed after him. Now justly are they upbraided with this; for in that very place which their father Jacob called Bethel, "The house of God," in remembrance of the communion he there had with God, did they set up one of the calves, and worshipped it; and so turned that Bethel into a Beth-aven, a house of iniquity. There God spake with them exceeding great and precious promises, which they had despised and lost the benefit of.

2. Two inferences are here drawn from these stories concerning Jacob, for instruction to his seed:

1st. Here is a use of information. From what passed between God and Jacob, we may learn that Jehovah, "the Lord God of hosts," is the God of Israel. He was the God of Jacob, and this is his memorial throughout all the generations of the seed of Jacob, ver. 5. The more shame for them who forgot the memorial of their church, deserted the God of their fathers, and exchanged a Lord of hosts for Baalim. Note, Those only are accounted the people of God that keep up a memorial of God, such memorials of him as he himself hath instituted, by which he makes himself known, and will have us to remember him. Here are two memorials of his, by which he is distinguished from all others, and is to be acknowledged and adored by us. *First.* The former speaks his existence of himself. He is Jehovah, much the same with "I am," the same that was and is, and is to come; infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Jehovah is his memorial, his peculiar name. *Secondly.* The latter speaks his dominion over all. He is the God of hosts, that has all the hosts of heaven and earth at his beck and command, and makes what use he pleaseth of them. Jacob saw Mahanaim, God's two hosts, about the time that he wrestled with the angel, *Gen.* xxxii. 1, 2; and so learned to call God the God of hosts, and transmitted it to us as his memorial. God's names, titles, and attributes, are the memorial of him, there is no need of images to be so; and that which was a revelation of God to one is his memorial to many, to all generations.

2nd. Here is a use of exhortation, ver. 6. Is this so, that Jacob thy father had this communion with the Lord God of hosts, and is this still his memorial? *First.* Then let those that have gone astray from God be converted to him; "Therefore turn thou to thy God." He that was the God of Jacob is the God of Israel, is thy God; from him thou hast unjustly and unkindly revolted, therefore turn thou to him by repentance and faith, turn to him as thine, to love him, obey him, and depend upon him. *Secondly.* Then let those that are converted to him walk with him in all holy conversation and godliness. "Keep mercy and judgment;" mercy in relieving and succouring the poor and distressed, judgment in rendering to all their due; be kind to all, do wrong to none. Keep piety and judgment, so it may be read; live righteously and godly in this present world; be devout and be honest. Do not only practise these occasionally, but be careful and constant, and conscientious in the practice of them. *Thirdly.* Let those that walk with God be encouraged to live a life of dependence upon him; "Wait on thy God continually," with a believing expectation receive from him all those succours and supplies thou standest in need of. Those that live a life of conformity to God may live a life of confidence and comfort in him, if it be not their own fault. Let our eyes be ever towards the Lord; and let us preserve a holy security and serenity of mind under the protection of the Divine power, and the influence of the Divine favour, looking without anxiety for a dubious event, and by faith keeping our spirits sedate and even; and that is waiting on God as our God in covenant, and this we must do continually.

7 *He is* a merchant,
The balances of deceit *are* in his hand:
He loveth to oppress.
8 And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich,
I have found me out substance:
In all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me
that *were* sin.
9 And I *that am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt
Will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles,
As in the days of the solemn feast.
10 I have also spoken by the prophets,
And I have multiplied visions,
And used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.
11 *Is there* iniquity *in* Gilead? surely they are vanity:
They sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal;
Yea, their altars *are* as heaps in the furrows of the fields.
12 And Jacob fled into the country of Syria,
And Israel served for a wife,
And for a wife he kept *sheep*.
13 And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt,
And by a prophet was he preserved.
14 Ephraim provoked *him* to anger most bitterly:
Therefore shall he leave his blood upon him,
And his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

Here are intermixed in these verses,

First. Reproofs for sin. When God is coming forth to contend with a people, that he may demonstrate his own righteousness, he will demonstrate their unrighteousness. Ephraim was called to turn to his God, and keep judgment, ver. 6; now, to shew that he had need of that call, he is charged with turning from his God by idolatry, and breaking the laws of justice and judgment.

1. He is here charged with injustice against the precepts of the second table, ver. 7, 8. Whence observe,

1st. What the sin is wherewith he is charged; "He is a merchant." The margin reads it as a proper name, He is a Canaan, or a Canaanite; unworthy to be denominated from Jacob and Israel, and worthy to be cast out with a curse from this good land, as the Canaanites were: see *Am.* ix. 7. But Canaan sometimes signifies a merchant; and therefore most likely to do so here, where Ephraim is charged with deceit in trade. Though God had given his people a land flowing with milk and honey, yet he did not forbid them to enrich themselves by merchandise, and they succeeded the Canaanites in that, as well as in their husbandry; they sucked "the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hid in the sand," *Deu.* xxxiii. 19. And if they had been fair merchants it had been no reproach at all to them, but an honour and blessing. But he is such a merchant as the Canaanites were, that were honest only with good looking to; and if they could, cheated all they dealt with. Ephraim doth so; he deceives, and thus he oppresseth. Note, There is oppression by fraud, as well as oppression by force. It is not only princes, lords, and masters that oppress their subjects, tenants and servants, but merchants and traders are often guilty of oppressing those they deal with, when they impose upon their ignorance, or take advantage of their necessity to make them hard bargains, or are rigorous and severe in expecting their debts. Ephraim cheated, *First.* With a great deal of art and cunning; "The balances of deceit are in his hand." He useth balances, and delivers his goods by weight and measure, as if he would be very exact. But they are balances of deceit, false weights and false measures; and thus, under colour of doing right, he doth the greatest wrong. Note, God has his eye upon merchants and traders, when they are weighing their goods, and paying their money, whether they do honestly or deceitfully. He observes what balances they have in their hand, and how they hold them; and though those they deal with may not be aware of that sleight of hand with which they make them balances of deceit, God sees it and knows it. Trades by the wit of man are made mysteries, but it is pity that by the sin of man they should ever be made mysteries of iniquity. *Secondly.* With a great deal of pleasure and pride; "He loveth to oppress." To oppress is bad enough, but to love it is much worse. His conscience doth not check and reprove him for it, as it ought to do; if it did, though he committed the sin, he could not delight in it. But his corruptions are so strong, and have so triumphed over his convictions, that he not only loves the gain of oppression, but he loves to oppress; sins for sinning sake, and takes a pleasure in outwitting and overreaching those that suspect him not.

2nd. How he justifies himself in this sin, ver. 8. Wicked men will have something to say for themselves now when they are told of their faults, some frivolous turn-off or other wherewith to evade the convictions of the word. Ephraim stands indicted for a common cheat. Now see what he pleads to the indictment. He doth not deny the charge, or plead not guilty, yet doth he not make a penitent confession of it, and ask pardon, but insists upon his own justification. Suppose it were so that he did use balances of deceit, yet,

First. He pleads that he had got a good estate. Let the prophet say what he pleased of his deceit, of the sin of it, and the curse of God that attended it, he could not be convinced there was any harm or danger in it; for this he was sure of, that he had thriven in it; "Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance." Whatever you make of it, I have made a good hand of it. Note, Carnal hearts are often confirmed in a good opinion of their evil ways by their worldly prosperity and success in those ways. But it is a great mistake; every word in what Ephraim saith here speaks his folly. 1*st.* It is folly to call the riches of this world substance, for they are things that are not, *Pr.* xxiii. 5. 2*nd.* It is folly to think we have them by ourselves, to say, as some read it, I have made myself rich, what substance I have is owing purely to my ingenuity and industry; I have found it, my might and power of my hand has gotten me this wealth. 3*rd.* It is folly to think that what we have is for ourselves. I have found me out substance, as if we had it for our own proper use and behoof, whereas we hold in trust only as stewards. 4*th.* It is folly to think that riches are things to be gloried in, and to say with exultation, "I am become rich." Riches are not the honours of the soul, are not peculiar to the best men, nor sure to us; and therefore "let not the rich man glory in his riches," *Jas.* i. 9, 10. 5*th.* It is folly to think that growing rich in a sinful way either doth make us innocent or will make us safe, or may make us easy in that way; for the prosperity of fools deceives and destroys them: see *Isa.* xlvii. 10; *Pr.* i. 32.

Secondly. He pleads that he had kept a good reputation. It is common for sinners when they are justly reproved by their ministers to appeal to their neighbours; and because they know no ill of them, or will say none, or think well of what the prophets charge them with as ill, fly in the face of their reprovers. "In all my labours," saith Ephraim, "they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin." Note, Carnal hearts are apt to build a good opinion of themselves upon the fair character they have among their neighbours. Ephraim was very secure, for, 1*st.* All his neighbours knew him to be diligent in his business; they had an eye upon all his labours, and commended him for them. Men will praise thee when thou dost well for thyself. 2*nd.* None of them knew him to be deceitful in his business. He played his cards so well, that nobody could say to the contrary but that he played fair. For either, (1.) He concealed the fraud, so that none discovered it. Whatever iniquity there is, they shall find none; as if no iniquity were displeasing to God, and damning to the soul, but that which is open and scandalous before men. What will it avail us that men shall find no iniquity in us, when God finds a great deal, and will bring every secret work, even secret frauds, into judgment? (2.) He excused the fraud, so that none condemned it; "They shall find no iniquity in me that were sin;" nothing very bad, nothing but what is very excusable, only some venial sins, sins not worth speaking of, which they think God will make nothing of, because they do not. It is a fashionable iniquity, it is customary, it is what everybody doth, it is pleasant, it is gainful; and this they think is no iniquity that is sin. Nobody will think the worse of them for it. But God sees not as man sees, he judgeth not as man judgeth.

2. He is here charged with idolatry, against the precepts of the first table; with that iniquity which is in a special manner vanity, the making and worshipping of images, which are vanities; ver. 11, "Surely they are vanity," they do not profit but deceive. Now the prophet mentions two places notorious for idolatry. 1st. Gilead on the other side Jordan, which had been branded for it before, *ch.* vi. 8; "Is there iniquity in Gilead?" It is a thing to be wondered at, it is a thing to be sadly lamented. What! iniquity in Gilead! idolatry there! Gilead was a fruitful, pleasant country, pleasant to a proverb, *Jer.* xxii. 6; and

doth it so ill requite the Lord? It was a frontier country, and lay much exposed to the insults of enemies, and therefore stood in special need of the Divine protection. What! and yet by iniquity throw itself out of that protection! Is there iniquity in Gilead? Yea, 2nd. And in Gilgal too. There they sacrifice bullocks, *ch.* ix. 15; and there their altars which they have set up, either to strange gods in opposition to God himself, or to the God of Israel in opposition to his own appointed altar, are as thick as heaps of muck in the furrows of the field that is to be sown, *ch.* viii. 11. Is there iniquity in Gilead only? so some. Is it only in those remote parts of the nation that people are so superstitious, where they border upon other nations? No, they are as bad at Gilgal. In Gilead God protected Jacob their father (of whom he had been speaking) from the rage of Laban, and will you there commit iniquity?

Secondly. Here are threatenings of wrath for sin. Some make that to be so, ver. 9, "I will make thee to dwell in tabernacles as in the days" of the appointed time; that is, I will bring thee into such a condition as Israel was in when they dwelt in tents, and wandered for forty years; that was the time appointed in the wilderness. Ephraim forgot that God brought him out of Egypt, and brought him up to be what he was, and was proud of his wealth, and took sinful courses to increase it, and therefore God threatens to bring him to a tabernacle state again,—to a poor, mean, desolate, unsettled condition. Note, It is just with God, when men have by their sins turned their tents into houses, by his judgments to turn their houses into tents again. However, that is certainly a threatening; ver. 14, "Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly." See how men are deceived in their opinion of themselves, and how they will one day be undeceived; Ephraim thought there was no iniquity in him that deserved to be called sin, ver. 8, but God tells him there was that in him that was sin, and would be found so, if he did not repent and reform. For,

1. It was extremely offensive to his God. "Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly," with his iniquities that are so distasteful to God, and to him too will be bitterness in the latter end. He was so wilful in sinning against his knowledge and convictions, that any one might see and say he designed no other but to provoke God in the highest degree.

2. It would certainly be destructive to himself. That cannot be otherwise which provokes God against him, and kindles the fire of his wrath. Therefore, 1st. He shall take away his forfeited life; he shall "leave his blood upon him," that is, he shall not hold him guiltless, but bring upon him that death which is the wages of sin. "His blood shall be upon his own head," 2 *Sam.* i. 16; for his own iniquity hath testified against him, and he alone shall bear it. Note, When sinners perish their blood is left upon them. 2nd. He shall take away his forfeited honour; "His reproach shall his Lord return upon him." God is his Lord; he had by idolatry and other sins reproached the Lord, and done dishonour to him, and to his name and family, and had given occasion to others to reproach him. And now God will return the reproach upon him, according to the word he has spoken, that those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed. Note, Shameful sins shall have shameful punishments. If Ephraim put contempt on his God, he shall be so reduced as that all his neighbours shall look with contempt upon him.

Thirdly. Here are memorials of former mercy, which come in to convict them of base ingratitude in revolting from God. Let them blush to remember,

1. That God had raised them from meanness. When Ephraim was become rich, and was proud of that, he forgot that which God (that they might not forget it) obliged them every year to acknowledge; *Deu.* xxvi. 5, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." But God here puts them in mind of it, ver. 12. Let them remember not only the honours of their father Jacob, what a mighty prince he was with God, ver. 3, (an honour which they had no share in, while they were in rebellion against God,) but what a poor servant he was to Laban, which was sufficient to mortify them that were puffed up with the estates they had raised. Jacob fled into Syria from a malicious brother, and there served a covetous uncle for a wife, and "for a wife he kept sheep," because he had no estate to endow a wife with. Jacob was poor and low, and a fugitive; therefore his posterity ought not to be proud. He was a plain man dwelling in tents, and keeping sheep; therefore balances of deceit ill became them. He served for a wife that was not a Canaanitess, as Esau's wives were; therefore it was a shame for them to degenerate into Canaanites, and mingle themselves with the nations. God wonderfully preserved him in his flight, and preserved him in his services, so that he multiplied exceedingly; and from that root, in a dry ground, sprang an illustrious nation that bare his name, which magnifies the goodness of God both to him and them, and leaves them under the stain of base ingratitude to that God who was their Founder and Benefactor.

2. That God had rescued them from misery; had raised them to what they were, not only out of poverty, but out of slavery, ver. 13, which laid them under much stronger obligations to serve him, and under a yet deeper guilt in serving other gods. 1st. God "brought Israel out of Egypt" on purpose that they might serve him, and by redeeming them out of bondage acquired a special title to them, and to their service. 2nd. He preserved them, as sheep are kept by the shepherd's care. He preserved them from Pharaoh's rage, at the sea, even at the Red Sea; protected them from all the perils of the wilderness, and provided for them. 3rd. He did this by a prophet, that is, Moses, who, though he is called king in Jeshurun, *Deu.* xxxiii. 5, yet what he did for Israel he did as a prophet, by direction from God, and by the power of his word. The ensign of his authority was not a royal sceptre, but the rule of God; with that he summoned both Egypt's plagues and Israel's blessings. Moses, as a prophet, was a type of Christ, *Acts* iii. 22; and it is by Christ, as a prophet, that we are brought out of the Egypt of sin and Satan, by the power of his truth. Now this shews how very unworthy and ungrateful this people were, *First.* In rejecting their God, who had brought them out of Egypt, which, in the preface to the commandments, is particularly a reason for the first, why they should have no other gods before him. *Secondly.* In despising and persecuting his prophets, whom they should have loved and valued, and have studied to answer God's end in sending them, for the sake of that prophet by whom God had brought them out of Egypt, and preserved them in the wilderness. Note, The benefit we have had by the word of God greatly aggravates our sin and folly, if we put any slight upon the word of God.

3. That God had taken care of their education as they grew up. This instance of God's goodness we have, ver. 10; as by a prophet he delivered them, so by prophets he still continued to speak to them. Man that is formed out of the earth is fed out of the earth; so that nation that was formed by prophecy, by prophecy was fed and taught. Beginning at Moses, and so going on to all the prophets through the several ages of that church, we find that Divine revelation was all along their tuition. 1st. They had prophets raised up among themselves, *Am.* ii. 11; a succession of them, scarce ever without a spirit of prophecy among them, more or less, from Moses to Malachi. 2nd. These prophets were seers; they had visions and dreams in which God discovered his mind to them immediately, with a full assurance that it was his mind, *Num.* xii. 6. 3rd. These visions were multiplied; God spake not only once, yea twice, but many a time. If one vision was not regarded, he sent another. The prophets had variety of visions, and frequent repetitions of the same. 4th. God spake to them by the prophets; what the prophets received from the Lord they plainly and faithfully delivered to them. The people at mount Sinai begged that God would speak to them by men like themselves, and he did so. 5th. In speaking to them by the prophets he used similitudes, to make the messages he sent by them both intelligible and more affecting, and more likely to be remembered. The visions they saw were often similitudes, and their discourses were embellished with very apt comparisons. And as God by his prophets, so by his Son he used similitudes, for "he opened his mouth in parables." Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, of the sermons we hear; and those that have long enjoyed the means of grace in purity, plenty, and power, that have been frequently, faithfully, and familiarly told the mind of God, will have a great deal to answer for another day, if they persist in a course of iniquity.

Fourthly. Here are intimations of farther mercy, and this remembered too in the midst of sin and wrath, as some understand; ver. 9, "I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt," that then, and there, took thee to be my people, and have approved myself thy God ever since, in a constant series of merciful providences, have yet a kindness for thee, as bad as thou art; and I will "make thee to dwell in tabernacles," not as in the wilderness, but "as in the days of the solemn feast," the feast of tabernacles, which was celebrated with great joy, *Lev.* xxiii. 40. 1. They shall be made to see by the grace of God that though they are rich, and have found out substance, yet they are but in a tabernacle state, and have in their worldly wealth no continuing city. 2. They shall yet have cause to rejoice in God, and have opportunity to do it in public ordinances. The feast of tabernacles was the first solemn feast the Jews kept after their return out of Babylon, *Ezr.* iii. 4. 3. This, as other promises, was to have its full accomplishment in the grace of the Gospel, which provides tabernacles for believers in their way to heaven, and furnisheth them with matter of joy, holy joy, joy in God, such as was in the feast of tabernacles, *Zec.* xiv. 18, 19.

CHAPTER XIII.

The same strings, though generally unpleasing ones, are harped upon in this chapter that were in those before. People care not to be told either of their sin or of their danger by sin, and yet it is necessary and for their good to be told of both, nor can they better hear of either than from the word of God, and from their faithful ministers, while the sin may be repented of, and the danger prevented. Here, I. The people of Israel are reproved and threatened for their idolatry, ver. 1—4. II. They are reproved and threatened for their wantonness, pride, and luxury, and other abuses of their wealth and prosperity, ver. 5—8. III. The ruin that is coming upon them, for these and all their other sins, is foretold as very terrible, ver. 12, 13, 15, 16. IV. Those among them that yet retain a respect for their God are here encouraged to hope that he will yet appear for their relief, though their kings and princes and all their other supports and succours fail them, ver. 9—11, 14.

WHEN Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel;
But when he offended in Baal, he died.
2 And now they sin more and more,
And have made them molten images of their silver,
And idols according to their own understanding,
All of it the work of the craftsmen:
They say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves.
3 Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud,
And as the early dew that passeth away,
As the chaff *that* is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor,
And as the smoke out of the chimney.
4 Yet I *am* the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt,
And thou shalt know no god but me:
For *there is* no saviour beside me.

Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset the Jewish nation till after the captivity; the ten tribes from the first were guilty of it, but especially after the days of Ahab. And this is the sin which in these verses they are charged with. Observe,

First. The provision that God made to prevent their falling into idolatry. This we have ver. 4. God did what was fit to be done to keep them close to himself; what could have been done more? 1. He made known himself to them as "the Lord their God," and took them to be his people in a peculiar manner. Both by his word and by his works all along, "from the land of Egypt," he declared, "I am the Lord thy God;" he told them so from heaven, at mount Sinai, that he was the Lord and their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt. This he continued both to declare and to prove to them by his prophets and by his providences. 2. He gave them a law, forbidding them to worship any other. Thou shalt know no God but me; not only shalt not own and worship any other, but shalt not acquaint thyself with any other, nor make the rites and usages of the Gentiles familiar to thee. Note, It is a happy ignorance not to know that which we ought not to meddle with. We find those praised who have not known the depths of Satan. 3. He gave them a good reason for it; "There is no Saviour besides me." Whatever we take for our God, we expect to have for our Saviour; that is, to make us happy here and hereafter. As where we have protection we owe allegiance, so where we have salvation, and hope for it, we owe adoration.

Secondly. The honour that Ephraim had while he kept himself clear from idolatry; ver. 1, "While Ephraim spake trembling," or with trembling, that is, (as Dr. Pocock understands it,) while he behaved himself towards God as his father Jacob did, with weeping and supplications, and spake not proudly and insolently against God and his prophets, while he kept up a holy fear of God, and worshipped him in that fear, so long he exalted himself in Israel; that is, he was very considerable among the tribes, and made a figure. Jeroboam, who was of that tribe, exalted himself and his family; when he spake there was trembling, that is, all about him stood in awe of him; so some understand it. Note, Those that humble themselves, especially that humble themselves before God, shall be exalted. When people speak with modesty, and jealousy of themselves, with a diffidence of their own judgment, and a deference to others, they exalt themselves, they gain a reputation. But as for Ephraim, he soon lost himself; "When he offended in Baal he died," that is, he lost his reputation,—his honour soon dwindled and sunk, and was laid in the dust. Baal is here put for idolatry; When Ephraim forsook God, and took to worship images, the state received its death wound, and was never good for any thing after. Note, Deserting God is the death of any person or persons.

Thirdly. The lamentable growth of idolatry among them; ver. 2, "Now they sin more and more." When once he began to offend in Baal the ice was broken,

and he grew worse and worse; coveted more idols, doted more upon those he had, and grew more ridiculous in the worship of them. Note, The way of idolatry, as of other sins, is down-hill; and men cannot easily stop themselves. It is the sad case of all those who have forsaken God, that they sin yet more and more. Let us trace them in their apostasy. 1. They made them molten images, proud to have gods that they could cast into what mould they pleased; probably these were the calves in little, like the silver shrines for Diana, the zealots for the calf worship carried about with them; it may be images of the gods they worshipped, made on purpose for themselves. 2. They made them of their silver, and then doubted not of their property in them, when they purchased them with their own money, or made them of their own plate melted down for that purpose. See what cost they put themselves to in the service of their idols, which they honoured with the best they had, and therefore made their molten images of silver. 3. They made them "according to their own understanding," that is, according to their own fancy. They consulted with themselves what shape they should make it in, and made it accordingly; a god according to the best of their judgment; or according to their own likeness,—in the form of a man. And when they made their idols men like themselves in shape, they made themselves stocks and stones like them in reality; for they that make them are like unto them, and so is every one that trusteth in them. 4. It was all the work of the craftsmen. Their images do not pretend, like that of Diana, to have come down from Jupiter, *Acts* xix. 35; no, perhaps the workmen stamped their names upon them,—such an idol was such a man's work: see *ch.* viii. 6; *Isa.* lxiv. 9, &c. 5. Though they were thus the work of their hands, yet they were the beloved of their souls; for they say of them, "Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves." Either the priests called upon the people thus to pay their homage, or the people who were not allowed to come so near themselves called upon the men that sacrificed, that is, the priests that attended for them, to kiss the calves in their name and stead, because they could not reach to do it, so very fond were they to pay their utmost respects to such an idol as they were taught to have a veneration for. Though they were calves, yet if they were gods, the worshippers, by themselves or their proxies, thus made their honours to them. They kissed the calves in adoration of them, affection for them, and allegiance to them as theirs. Thus we are bid to "kiss the Son," to take him for our Lord and our God.

Fourthly. Threatenings of wrath for their idolatry. The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another; and, therefore, all they "that worship images," shall be confounded, especially if Ephraim do it, *Ps.* xcvii. 7. Because they are so fond of kissing their calves, therefore, God will give them sensible convictions of their folly, ver. 3. They promise a great deal of safety and satisfaction in the worship of their idols, and that their prosperity will thereby be established; but God tells them they shall be disappointed, and driven away in their wickedness. This is illustrated by four similitudes. They shall be, 1. As the morning cloud, which promiseth showers of rain to the parched cloud. 2. As the early dew, which seems to be an earnest of such showers. But both pass away, and the day proves as dry and hot as ever; so fleeting and transitory their profession of piety was, *ch.* vi. 4, and so had they disappointed God's expectation from them; and therefore it is just that so their prosperity should be, and so their expectations from their idols should be disappointed; and so will all theirs be that make an idol of this world. 3. They are as the chaff, light and worthless; and they shall be driven "as the chaff is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor," *Ps.* i. 4; xxxv. 5; *Job* xxi. 18. Nay, 4. They are as the smoke, noisome and offensive: see *Isa.* lxv. 5; and they shall be driven away as the smoke out of the chimneys, that is soon dissipated, and disappears, *Ps.* lxviii. 2. Note, No solid, lasting comfort is to be expected anywhere but in God.

5 I did know thee in the wilderness,
In the land of great drought.
6 According to their pasture, so were they filled;
They were filled, and their heart was exalted;
Therefore have they forgotten me.
7 Therefore I will be unto them as a lion:
As a leopard by the way will I observe *them:*
8 I will meet them as a bear *that is* bereaved *of her whelps,*
And will rend the caul of their heart,
And there will I devour them like a lion:
The wild beast shall tear them.

SYRIAN LEOPARD.

We may observe here,

First. The plentiful provision God hath made for Israel, and the seasonable supplies he had blessed them with; ver. 5, "I did know thee in the wilderness," that is, took cognizance of thy case, and made provision for thee, even in a "land of great drought," when thou wast in extreme distress, and when no relief was to be had in an ordinary way: see a description of this wilderness, *Deu.* viii. 15; *Jer.* ii. 6; and say, the God that knew them, and owned them, and fed them there, was a friend indeed, for he was a friend at need, and an all-sufficient friend, that could victual so vast an army when all ordinary ways of provision were cut off, and where, if miracles had not been their daily bread, they must all have perished. Note, Help at an exigence is very obliging, and must never be forgotten.

Secondly. Their unworthy, ungrateful abuse of God's favour to them. God not only took care of them in the wilderness, but put them in possession of Canaan, a good land, a large and fat pasture; and, ver. 6, "according to their pastures so were they filled." God gave them both plenty and dainties, and they did not spare it, but, having been long confined to manna, when they came into Canaan they fed themselves to the full. And this was no hopeful presage; it would have looked better, and promised better, if they had been more modest and moderate in the use of their plenty, and had learned to deny themselves; but what was the effect of it? "They were filled, and their heart was exalted." Their luxury and sensuality made them proud, insolent, and secure. The best comment upon this is that of Moses, *Deu.* xxxii. 13—15, But "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." When the body was stuffed up with plenty the soul was puffed up with pride. Then they began to think their religion a thing below them, and they could not persuade themselves to stoop to the service of it. "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God." When they were poor and lame in the wilderness, they thought it was necessary for them to keep in with God, but when they were replenished and established in Canaan they began to think they had no farther need of him; "Their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me." Note, Worldly prosperity, when it feeds men's pride, makes them forgetful of God; for they remember him only when they want him. When Israel was filled, what more could the Almighty do for them? And therefore they said unto him, "Depart from us," *Job* xxii. 17. It is sad that those favours which ought to make us mindful of God, and studious what we shall render to him, should make us unmindful of him, and regardless what we do against him. We ought to know that we live upon God when we live upon common providence, though we do not, as Israel in the wilderness, live upon miracles.

Thirdly. God's just resentment of their base ingratitude, ver. 7, 8. The judgments threatened, ver. 3, spoke the departure of all good from them. The threatenings here go farther, and speak the breaking in of all evils upon them; for God, that had so much befriended them, now turns to be their enemy, and fights against them, which is expressed here very terribly; "I will be unto them as a lion," and "as a leopard." The lion is strong, and there is no resisting him. The leopard is here taken notice of to be crafty and vigilant; "As a leopard by the way will I observe them." As that beast of prey lies in wait by the roadside to catch travellers and devour them, so will God, by his judgments, watch over them to do them hurt, as he had watched over them to do them good, *Jer.* xliv. 27. No opportunity shall be slipped that may accelerate or aggravate their ruin; *Jer.* v. 6, "A leopard shall watch over their cities." A lynx, or spotted beast, (and such the leopard is,) is noted for quicksightedness above any creature, (*lynx visu,*—'the eyes of a lynx,) and so it intimates that not only the power but the wisdom of God is engaged against those whom he has a controversy with. Some read it, (and the original will bear it,) 'I will be as a leopard in the way of Assyria.' The judgments of God shall surprise them then when they are going to the Assyrians to seek for protection and help from them. It is added, "I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved," and thereby exasperated and made more cruel, 2 *Sam.* xvii. 8; *Pr.* xxviii. 15; which intimates how highly God was provoked, and he would make them feel it: he "will rend the caul of their heart." The lion is observed to aim at the heart of the beasts he preys upon, and thus will God "devour them like a lion." He will send such judgments upon them as shall prey upon their spirits, and consume their vitals. Their heart was exalted, ver. 6, but God will take an effectual course to bring it down. "The wild beast shall tear them;" not only God will be as a lion and leopard to them, but the metaphor shall be fulfilled to the letter, for noisome beasts are one of the four sore judgments with which God will destroy a provoking people, *Eze.* xiv. 15. Now all this teacheth us, 1. That abused goodness turns into the greater severity. Those who despise God, and affront him, when he is to them as a tender, careful shepherd, shall find he will be even to his own flock as the beasts of prey are. Those whom God has in vain endured with much longsuffering, and invited with much affection, in them he will shew his wrath, and make them vessels of it, *Rom.* ix. 22. *Patientia læsa fit furor,*—'Despised patience will turn into fury.' 2. That the judgments of God, when they come with commission against impenitent sinners, will be irresistible, and very terrible. They will rend the caul of the heart, will fill the soul with confusion, and tear that in pieces; and we are as unable to grapple with them, as a lamb is to make his part good against a roaring lion; for "who knows the power of God's anger?" "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," let us be persuaded to make peace with him, for are we stronger than he?

9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help.
10 I will be thy king:
Where *is any other* that may save thee in all thy cities?
And thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? [my wrath.
11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in
12 The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up; his sin *is* hid.
13 The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him:
He *is* an unwise son;
For he should not stay long in *the place of* the breaking forth of children.
14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave;
I will redeem them from death:
O death, I will be thy plagues;
O grave, I will be thy destruction:
Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.
15 Though he be fruitful among *his* brethren, an east wind shall come,
The wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness,
And his spring shall become dry,
And his fountain shall be dried up:
He shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels.

16 Samaria shall become desolate;
For she hath rebelled against her God:
They shall fall by the sword:
Their infants shall be dashed in pieces,
And their women with child shall be ripped up.

The first of these verses is the summary or contents of all the rest, ver. 9. Where we have, 1. All the blame of Israel's ruin laid upon themselves. O Israel! thy perdition is thence; it is of and from thyself. Or, It has destroyed thee, O Israel! that is, all that sin and folly of thine which thou art before charged with. As thy own wickedness has many a time corrected thee, so that has now at length destroyed thee. Note, Wilful sinners are self-destroyers; obstinate impenitency is the grossest self-murder. Those that are destroyed of the destroyers have their blood upon their own head, they have destroyed themselves. 2. All the glory of Israel's relief ascribed to God; "But in me is thy help." That is, 1st. It might have been. I would have helped thee, and healed thee, but thou wouldst not be healed and helped, but wast resolutely set upon thy own destruction. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, not only that they did that which tended to their own ruin, but they opposed the offers God made them, and the methods he took with them to have prevented it: I would have gathered them, and they would not. They might have been easily and effectually helped, but they put the help away from them. Nay, 2nd. It may yet be; Thy case is bad, but it is not desperate: "thou hast destroyed thyself," but come to me and I will help thee. This is a plank thrown out after shipwreck, and greatly magnifies not only the power of God, that he can help when things are at the worst, can help those that cannot help themselves, but the riches of his grace, that he will help those that have destroyed themselves, and therefore might justly be left to perish; that he will help those that had long refused his help. Dr. Pocock gives a different reading and sense of this verse: 'O Israel, this has destroyed thee, that in me is thy help.' Presuming upon God and his favour has emboldened thee in those wicked ways which have been thy ruin. Now in the rest of these verses we may see,

First. How Israel destroyed themselves. It is said, ver. 16, they rebelled against their God, revolted from their allegiance to him, entered into a confederacy with his enemies, and took up arms against him; and this was the thing that ruined them, for never any hardened themselves against God and prospered. Note, Those that rebel against their God destroy themselves, for they make him their enemy for whom they are an unequal match.

1. They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and so they destroy themselves. They are doing that every day which will be remembered against them another day; ver. 12, "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, and his sin is hid," that is, God took notice of it, kept it upon record, and will produce it against him, and reckon with him for it afterwards. Their former sins contributed to their present destruction; for they were "laid up in store with God," *Deu.* xxxii. 34, 35; *Job* xiv. 17. It is laid up in safety, and will not be forgotten, nor the evidence against him lost; but it is laid up in secret, it is hid, the sinner himself is not aware of it. It is bound up in God's omniscience, in the sinner's own conscience. Note, The sin of sinners is not forgotten till it is pardoned, but an exact account is kept of it, which will be opened in proper time.

2. They make no haste to repent and help themselves when they are under Divine rebukes; and therefore they are their own ruin, because they will not do what they should do towards their own salvation, ver. 13. 1st. They are brought into trouble and distress by sin. "The sorrow of a travailing woman shall come upon him." They shall smart for sin, and so be made sensible of it; they shall be thrown into pangs and agonies by it, very sharp and severe, and yet, like the pains of a woman in labour, hopeful and promising, and in order to deliverance; and by these, though God corrects him, yet he designs his good. He is chastened that he may not be destroyed. But, 2nd. They are not by these forwarded as they ought to be towards repentance and reformation, which would issue their sorrows in true joy: "He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long," as he doth, "in the place of the breaking forth of children," but, being brought to the birth, should struggle to get forth, lest he be stifled and still-born at last. Were the child which the mother is in travail of capable of understanding its own case, we should reckon it an unwise child that would choose to stay long in the birth; for the "captive exile hasteth to be loose, lest he die in the pit," *Isa.* li. 14. Note, Those may justly be reckoned their own destroyers who defer and put off their repentance, by which alone they might help themselves. Those are in danger of miscarrying in conversion that delay it, and will not put forth themselves to speed the work, and bring it to an issue.

3. Therefore he is destroyed because he has done that which would be his certain ruin, and neglected that which would be his only relief. Here is a sad description of the desolation they are doomed to, ver. 15, 16. It is here taken for granted that Ephraim is fruitful among his children; his name signifies 'fruitfulness.' He is fruitful in respect of the plentiful products of his country, and the great numbers of its inhabitants; it was both a rich and a populous tribe, as was foretold concerning it. But sin turns this fruitful tribe into barrenness. Joseph was a "fruitful bough," but for sin it was blasted. The instrument is an east wind, representing a foreign enemy that should invade it. It is called "the wind of the Lord," not only because it shall be a very great and strong wind, but because it shall be sent by a Divine direction; it shall come from the Lord, and do whatever he appoints; and see what effect it shall have upon that flourishing tribe, what desolations war shall make. 1st. Was it a rich tribe? the foreign enemy shall make it poor enough. This wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness a freezing, blasting wind, and shall dry up the springs and fountains with which this tree is watered, shall exhaust the sources of its wealth. The invader shall waste the country, and so impoverish the husbandman; shall intercept trade and commerce, and so impoverish the merchant. And let not the great men, whose wealth lies in their rich furniture, think that they shall be exempted from the judgment; for he shall "spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels." See the folly of those that lay up their treasure on earth, that lay it up in pleasant vessels, vessels of desire, so the word is, on which they set their affections, and in which they place their comfort and satisfaction. This is treasure that may be spoiled, and that they may be spoiled of; it is what either moth and rust may corrupt or what thieves and soldiers may steal and carry away. But wise and happy they who have laid up their treasure in heaven, and in the pleasant things of that world, which cannot be spoiled, which they cannot be stripped of; ever happy are they, and therefore truly wise. 2nd. Was it a populous tribe, and numerous? the enemy shall depopulate it, and make its men few; "Samaria shall become desolate," without inhabitants. *First.* Those shall be cut off that are the guard and joy of the present generation. The men that bear arms shall bear them to no purpose, for "they shall fall by the sword," so that there shall be none to make head against the fury of the conqueror, or to take care of the concerns, either of the public or of private families. *Secondly.* Those shall be cut off that are the seed and hope of the next generation, that should rise up in the places of those that fell by the sword. The whole nation must be rooted out, and therefore the infants shall be dashed to pieces, in the most cruel and barbarous manner; and, which, if possible, is yet more inhuman, "The women with child shall be ripped up." Thus shall the glory of Samaria flee away from the birth, and from the womb, *ch.* ix. 11; x. 14. See instances of this cruelty, 2 *Kin.* viii. 12; xv. 16; *Am.* i. 13.

Secondly. Let us now see how God was the help of this self-destroying people, how he was their only help; ver. 10, "I will be thy king," to rule and save thee. Though they had refused to be his subjects, and had rebelled against him, yet he would still be their king, and would not abandon them. The business and care of a good king is to keep his people not only from being ruined by foreign enemies, but from ruining themselves and one another. Thus will God yet be Israel's King, as he was their King of old. Note, Our case would be sad indeed if God were not better to us than we are to ourselves.

1. God will be their King when they have no other king; he will protect and save them when those are cut off and gone that should have been their protectors and saviours: I will be he, (so ver. 10 may be read,) he that shall help thee. Where is the king that may save thee in all thy cities? that may go in and out before thee, and fight thy battles, when thy cities are invaded by a foreign power, and suppress the more dangerous quarrels of thy citizens among themselves? Where are thy judges, that by administering public justice should preserve the public peace? (for they are righteousness and peace that kiss each other.) Where are thy judges that thou hadst such a desire of, and such a dependence upon, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? This refers, 1st. To the foolish, wicked desire which the whole nation had of a kingly government, being weary of the theocracy, or Divine government which they had been under during the time of the judges, because it looked too mean for them. They rejected Samuel, and in him the Lord, when they said, Give us a king like the nations, whereas the Lord was their King. 2nd. To the desire which the ten tribes had, of a kingly government different from that of the house of David, because they thought that was too absolute, and bore too hard upon them; and they hoped to mend themselves by setting up Jeroboam. Both these are instances, *First.* Of men's improvidence for themselves. When they are uneasy with their present lot they are fond of novelty, and think to mend themselves by a change; but they are commonly disappointed, and do not find that advantage by the alteration which they promised themselves. *Secondly.* Of men's impiety towards God, in thinking to refine upon his appointments, and amend them. God gave Israel judges and prophets for their conduct, but they were weary of them, and cried, "Give us a king and princes." God gave them the house of David, established it by a covenant of royalty; but they were soon weary of that too, and cried, "We have no part in David." Those destroy themselves that are not pleased with what God doth for them, but think they can do better for themselves. Well, in both these requests Providence humoured them; gave them Saul first, and afterwards Jeroboam. And what the better were they for them? Saul was given in anger, given in thunder, 1 *Sam.* xii. 18, 19; and soon after was taken away in wrath, upon mount Gilboa. The kingly government of the ten tribes was given in anger, not only against Solomon for his defection, but against the ten tribes that desired it, for their discontent, and disaffection to the house of David. And God was now about to take that away in wrath, by the power of the king of Assyria. And then, Where is thy king? He is gone, and thou shalt abide many days "without a king, and without a prince," *ch.* iii. 4; shalt have none to save thee, none to rule thee. Note, 1. God often gives in anger what we sinfully and inordinately desire; gives it with a curse, and with it gives us up to our own hearts' lusts. Thus he gave Israel quails. 2. What we inordinately desire we are commonly disappointed in, and it cannot save us, as we expected it should. 3. What God gives in anger he takes away in wrath; what he gives because we did not desire it well, he takes away because we did not use it well. It is the happiness of the saints, that, whether God gives or takes, it is all in love, and furnisheth them with matter for praise. To the pure all things are pure. It is the misery of the wicked that, whether God gives or take, it is all in wrath; to them nothing is pure, nothing is comfortable.

2. God will do that for them which no other king could do if they had one; ver. 14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave." Though Israel according to the flesh be abandoned to destruction, God has mercy in store for his spiritual Israel, in whom all the promises were to have their accomplishment, and this among the rest, for to them the apostle applies it, 1 *Cor.* xv. 55, and particularly to the blessed resurrection of believers at the great day; yet not excluding their spiritual resurrection from the death of sin to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and Divine life. It is promised, 1st. That the captives shall be delivered, shall be ransomed from the power of the grave. Their deliverance shall be by ransom, and we know who it was that paid their ransom, and what the ransom was, for it was the Son of man that "gave his life a ransom for many," *Mat.* xx. 28. It is he that thus redeemed them. Those that upon their repenting and believing are for the sake of Christ's righteousness acquitted from the guilt of sin, and saved from death and hell, which are the wages of sin, are those ransomed of the Lord that shall, in the great day, be brought out of the grave in triumph, and it shall be as impossible for the bands of death to hold them as it was to hold their Master. 2nd. That the conqueror shall be destroyed. "O death, I will be thy plague." Jesus Christ was the plague and destruction of death and the grave, when by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, and when in his own resurrection he triumphed over the grave. But the complete destruction of them will be in the resurrection of believers at the great day, when death shall for ever be swallowed up in victory; and it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed. But the word which we translate, "I will," may as well be rendered *ubi nunc*,—'where now' is thy plague? And so the apostle took it: "O death, where is thy" plague, or "sting," with which thou hast so long pestered the world? "O grave, where is thy victory," or thy destruction, wherewith thou hast destroyed mankind? Christ has abolished death, has broken the power of it, and altered the property of it, and so enabled us to triumph over it. This promise he has made, and it shall be made good to all that are his, for "repentance shall be hid from his eyes;" he will never recall this sentence passed on death and the grave, for he is not a man that he should repent. Thanks be to God, therefore, who giveth us the victory.

CHAPTER XIV.

The strain of this chapter differs from that of the foregoing chapters. Those were generally made up of reproofs for sin, and threatenings of wrath, but this is made up of exhortations to repentance and promises of mercy, and with these the prophet closeth; for all the foregoing convictions and terrors he had spoken were designed to prepare and make way for these; he wounds that he may heal; the Spirit convinceth that he may comfort. This chapter is a lesson for penitents, and some such there were in Israel, at this day, as bad as things were. We have here, I. Directions in repenting,

what to do and what to say, ver. 1—3. II. Encouragements to repent, taken from God's readiness to receive returning sinners, ver. 4, 8, and the comforts he had treasured up for them, ver. 5—7. III. A solemn recommendation of these things to our serious thoughts, ver. 9.

O ISRAEL, return unto the LORD thy God;
For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD:
Say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive *us*
So will we render the calves of our lips. [graciously:
3 Asshur shall not save us;
We will not ride upon horses:
Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands,
Ye are our gods:
For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

Here is, First. A kind invitation given to sinners to repent, ver. 1. It is directed to Israel, God's professing people; they are called to return. Note, Conversion must be preached even to those that are within the pale of the church as well as to the heathen. Thou art Israel, and therefore art bound to thy God in duty, gratitude, and interest; thy revolt from him is so much the more heinous, and thy return to him so much the more necessary. Let Israel see, 1. What work he has made for repentance. "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity;" thou hast stumbled, so some read it: their idols were their stumbling-blocks. Thou art fallen from God unto sin, fallen off from all good, fallen down under the load of guilt and the curse. Note, Sin is a fall, and it concerns those that are fallen by sin to get up again by repentance. 2. What work he has to do in his repentance. Return to the Lord thy God; return to him as the Lord whom thou hast a dependence upon, as thy God, thine in covenant, whom thou hast an interest in. Note, It is the great concern of those that have revolted from God to return to God, and so to do their first works. Return to him from whom thou hast fallen, and who alone is able to raise thee up. Return even to the Lord, or quite home to the Lord; do not only look to him, or take some steps towards him, but make a thorough work of it. The ancient Jews had a saying grounded on this: 'Repentance is a great thing, for it brings men quite up to the throne of glory.'

Secondly. Necessary instructions given how to repent. 1. They must bethink themselves what to say to God when they come to him; "Take with you words." They are not required to bring sacrifices and offerings, but penitent prayers and supplications; the fruit of thy lips, yet not of the lips only, but of the heart, else words are but wind. One of the rabbins saith, they must be such words as proceed from what is spoken first in the inner man; the heart must dictate to the tongue. We must take good words with us by taking good thoughts and good affections with us. *Verbaque prævisam rem non invita sequentur*,—'Those who master a subject are seldom at a loss for language.' Note, When we come to God we should consider what we have to say to him, for if we come without an errand we are likely to go without an answer; *Ezr.* ix. 10, "What shall we say?" We must take with us words from the Scripture, take them from the Spirit of grace and supplication, who teacheth us to cry, Abba, Father! and makes intercession in us. 2. They must bethink themselves what to do. They must not only take with them words, but must turn to the Lord, inwardly in their hearts, outwardly in their lives.

Now, for their assistance herein and encouragement, God is pleased to put words into their mouths, to teach them what they shall say. Sure we may hope to speed with God when he himself has ordered our address to be drawn up ready to our hands, and his own Spirit has indited it for us; and no doubt we shall speed if the workings of our souls agree with the words here recommended to us. They are,

1st. Petitioning words. Two things we are here directed to petition for. *First.* To be acquitted from guilt. When we return to the Lord we must say to him, Lord, "take away all iniquity." They were now smarting for sin, under the load of affliction, but are taught to pray, not as Pharaoh, Take away this death, but, Take away this sin. Note, When we are in affliction we should be more concerned for the forgiveness of our sins than for the removal of our trouble. Take away iniquity; lift it off as a burthen we are ready to sink under, or as the stumbling-block which we have often fallen over; Lord, take it away, that it may not appear against us to our confusion and condemnation. Take it all away by a free and full remission, for we cannot pretend to strike any of it off by a satisfaction of our own. When God pardons sin he pardons all that great debt; and when we pray against sin we must pray against it all, and not except any. *Secondly.* To be accepted as righteous in God's sight; "Receive us graciously." Let us have thy favour and love, and have thou respect to us and to our performances; receive our prayer graciously; be well pleased with that good which by thy grace we are enabled to do. 'Take good,' so the word is; take it to bestow upon us. So the margin reads it, 'Give good.' This follows upon the petition for the taking away of iniquity, for till iniquity is taken away we have no reason to expect any good from God; but the taking away of iniquity makes way for the conferring of good, *removendo prohibens*,—'by taking that out of the way which hindered.' Give good; they do not say what good, but refer themselves to God; it is not good of the world's shewing, *Ps.* iv. 6, but good of God's giving. Give good; that good which we have forfeited, and which thou hast promised, and which the necessity of our case calls for. Note, God's gracious acceptance, and the blessed fruits and tokens of that acceptance, are to be earnestly desired and prayed for by us in our returning to God. Give good, that is, that good which will make us good, and keep us from returning to iniquity again.

2nd. Promising words. These also are put into their mouths, not to move God or to oblige him to shew them mercy, but to move themselves, and oblige themselves to returns of duty. Note, Our prayers for pardon and acceptance with God should be always accompanied with sincere purposes and vows of new obedience. Two things they are to promise and vow:

First. Thanksgiving. Pardon our sins and accept of us, "so will we render the calves of our lips." 'The fruit of our lips,' so the Seventy, a word they used for burnt offerings, and so it agrees with the Hebrew. The apostle quotes this phrase, *Heb.* xiii. 15, and by the fruit of our lips understands the 'sacrifice of praise to God, giving thanks to his name.' Note, Praise and thanksgiving is our spiritual sacrifice, and if it come from an upright heart shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock, *Ps.* lxix. 30, 31. And the sense of our pardon and acceptance with God will enlarge our hearts in praise and thankfulness. Those that are received graciously may and must render the calves of their lips. Poor returns for rich receivings, yet if sincere more acceptable than the calves of the stall.

Secondly. Amendment of life. They are taught to promise not only verbal acknowledgments but a real reformation. And we are taught here, 1*st.* In our returns to God to covenant against sin. We cannot expect that God should take it away by forgiving it, if we do not put it away by forsaking it. 2*nd.* To be particular in our covenants and resolutions against sin, as we ought to be in our confessions, because deceit lies in generals. 3*rd.* To covenant especially and expressly against those sins which we have been most subject to, which have most easily beset us, and which we have been most frequently overcome by. We must keep ourselves from, and therefore must thus fortify ourselves against, our own iniquity, *Ps.* xviii. 23. The sin they here covenant against, owning thereby that they had been guilty of it, is giving that glory to another which is due to God only. This they promise they will never do, (1.) By putting that confidence in creatures which should be put in God only. They will not trust to their alliances abroad; Asshur, that is, Assyria, "shall not save us." We will not court the help of the Assyrians when we are in distress, as we have done, *ch.* v. 13; vii. 11; viii. 9; we will not contract for it, *ch.* ii. 1, nor will we confide in it or depend upon it. Having a God to go to, a God all-sufficient to trust to, we scorn to be beholden to the Assyrians for help. They will not trust to their warlike preparations at home, especially not those which they were forbidden to multiply; "We will not ride upon horses," that is, we will not make court to Egypt, for thence they fetched their horses, *Deu.* xvii. 6; *Isa.* xxx. 16; xxxi. 1, 3. When our enemies invade us, we will depend upon our God to succour our infantry, and will be in no care to remount our cavalry. Or, we will not post on horseback, for haste, from one creature to another to seek relief, but will take the next way, and the only sure way, by applying ourselves to God, *Isa.* xx. 5 Note, True repentance takes us off from trusting to an arm of flesh, and brings us to rely on God only for all the good we stand in need of. Nor will they do it by paying that homage to creatures which is due to God only; We will not "say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods." They must promise never to worship idols again, and for a good reason, because it is the most absurd and senseless thing in the world to pray to that as a god which is the work of our hands. We must promise that we will not set our hearts upon the gains of this world, nor pride ourselves in our external performances in religion, for that is in effect to "say to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods."

3rd. Pleading words are here put into their mouths, for "in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." We must take our encouragement in prayer, not from any merit God finds in us, but purely from the mercy we hope to find in God. This contains in itself a great truth, that God takes special care of fatherless children, *Ps.* lxviii. 4, 5; so he did in his law, *Ex.* xxii. 22; so he doth in his providence, *Ps.* xxvii. 10. It is God's prerogative to help the helpless; in him there is mercy for such, for they are proper objects of mercy; in him they find it, there it is laid up for them, and there they must seek it, "Seek, and ye shall find." It comes in here as a good plea for mercy and grace, and an encouraging one to their faith. *First.* They plead the distress of their state and condition; We are fatherless orphans, destitute of help. Those may expect to find help in God that are truly sensible of their helplessness in themselves, and are willing to acknowledge it. This is a good step towards comfort. If we have not yet boldness to call God, Father, yet we look upon ourselves as fatherless without him, and therefore lay ourselves at his feet to be looked upon by him with compassion. *Secondly.* They plead God's wonted loving-kindness to such as were in that condition. With thee the fatherless not only may find, but doth find, and shall find mercy. It is a great encouragement to our faith and hope, in returning to God, that it is his glory to father the fatherless and help the helpless.

4 I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely:
For mine anger is turned away from him.
5 I will be as the dew unto Israel:
He shall grow as the lily,
And cast forth his roots as Lebanon.
6 His branches shall spread,
And his beauty shall be as the olive tree,
And his smell as Lebanon.
7 They that dwell under his shadow shall return;
They shall revive *as* the corn, and grow as the vine:
The scent thereof *shall be* as the wine of Lebanon.

We have here an answer of peace to the prayers of returning Israel. They seek God's face, and they shall not seek in vain. God will be sure to meet them in a way of mercy who return to him in a way of duty. If we speak to God in good prayers, God will speak to us in good promises, as he "answered the angel with good words and comfortable words," *Zec.* i. 13. If we take with us the foregoing words in our coming to God, we may take home with us these following words for our faith to feast upon; and see how these answer those.

First. Do they dread and deprecate God's displeasure, and therefore return to him? He assures them that upon their submission his anger is turned away from them. This is laid as the ground of all the other favours here promised. I will do so and so, for mine "anger is turned away," and thereby a door is opened for all good to flow to them, *Isa.* xii. 1. Note, Though God is justly and greatly angry with sinners, yet he is not implacable in his anger; it may be turned away, it shall be turned away from those that turn away from their iniquity. God will be reconciled to those that are reconciled to him and to his whole will.

Secondly. Do they pray for the taking away of iniquity? He assures them that he will "heal their backslidings;" so he promised *Jer.* iii. 22. Note, Though backslidings from God are the dangerous diseases and wounds of the soul, yet they are not incurable, for God has graciously promised that, if backsliding sinners will apply themselves to him as their physician, and comply with his methods, he will heal their backslidings. He will heal the guilt of their backslidings by pardoning mercy, and their bent to backslide by renewing grace. Their iniquity shall not be their ruin.

Thirdly. Do they pray that God will receive them graciously? In answer to that, behold it is promised, "I will love them freely." God had hated them while they went on in sin, *ch.* ix. 15; but, now they return and repent, he loves them, not only ceaseth to be angry with them, but takes a complacency in them, and designs their good. He loves them freely, with an absolute, entire love, (so some,) so that there are no remains of his former displeasure; with a liberal, bountiful love, so others. He will be open-handed in his love to them, and will think nothing too much to bestow upon them, or to do for them. Or, with a cheerful, willing love; he will love them without reluctancy or retinency.

He will not say in the day of thy repentance, How shall I receive thee again? as he said in the day of thine apostacy, How shall I give thee up? Or, with an unmerited, preventing love. Whom God loves he loves freely, not because they deserve it, but of his own good pleasure; he loves because he will love, *Deu.* vii. 7, 8.

Fourthly. Do they pray that God will give good? will make them good? In answer to that, behold it is promised, "I will be as the dew unto Israel," ver. 5. Observe,

1. What shall be the favour God will bestow upon them. It is the blessing of their father Jacob, "God give thee the dew of heaven," *Gen.* xxvii. 28. Nay, what they need God will not only give them, but he will himself be that to them, all that which they need, "I will be as the dew unto Israel." This speaks spiritual blessings in heavenly things; and it follows upon the healing of their backslidings, for pardoning mercy is always accompanied with renewing grace. Note, To Israelites indeed God himself will be as the dew. He will instruct them, his doctrine shall drop upon them as the dew, *Deu.* xxxii. 2. They shall know more and more of him, for he will come to them "as the rain," *Hos.* vi. 3. He will refresh them with his comforts, so that their souls shall be as "a watered garden," *Isa.* lviii. 11. He will be to true penitents "as the dew to Israel," when they were in the wilderness, dew that had manna in it, *Ex.* xvi. 14; *Num.* xi. 9. The graces of the Spirit are the hidden manna, hidden in the dew; God will give them bread from heaven, as he did to Israel in the dew, in abundance, *Jno.* i. 16.

2. What shall be the fruit of that favour which shall be produced in them. The grace thus freely bestowed on them shall not be in vain. Those souls, those Israelites, to whom God is as the dew, on whom his grace distils,

1st. They shall be growing. The bad being by the grace of God made good, they shall by the same grace be made better; for grace, wherever it is true, is growing. *First.* They shall grow upwards, and be more flourishing; shall grow as the lily, or, as some read it, shall blossom as the rose. The growth of the lily, as that of all bulbous roots, is very quick and speedy. The root of the lily seems lost in the ground all winter, but when it is refreshed with the dews of the spring, it starts up in a little time; so the grace of God improves young converts sometimes very fast. The lily, when it is come to its height, is a lovely flower, *Mat.* vi. 29; so grace is the comeliness of the soul, *Eze.* xvi. 14. It is the beauty of holiness that is produced by the "dew of the morning," *Ps.* cx. 3. *Secondly.* They shall grow downwards, and be more firm. The lily indeed grows fast and grows fine, but it soon fades, and is easily plucked up; and therefore it is here promised to Israel that with the flower of the lily he shall have the root of the cedar. He shall cast forth his fruits as Lebanon, as the trees of Lebanon, which, having taken deep root, cannot be plucked up, *Am.* ix. 15. Note, Spiritual growth consists most in the growth of the root, which is out of sight. The more we depend upon Christ, and draw sap and virtue from him, the more we act in religion from a principle, and the more stedfast and resolved we are in it the more we cast forth our roots. *Thirdly.* They shall grow round about; ver. 6, "His branches shall spread" on all sides. And, ver. 7, He shall grow as the vine, whose branches extend farthest of any tree. Joseph was to be a fruitful bough, *Gen.* xlix. 22. When many are added to the church from without, when a hopeful generation riseth up, then Israel's branches spread. When particular believers abound in good works, and increase in the knowledge of God and in every good gift, then their branches may be said to spread; the inward man is renewed day by day.

2nd. They shall be graceful and acceptable both to God and man. Grace is an amiable thing, and makes those that have it truly amiable. They are here compared to such trees as are pleasant, *First.* To the sight. "His beauty shall be as the olive-tree," which is always green; "The Lord called thy name a green olive-tree," *Jer.* xi. 16. Ordinances are the beauty of the church, and in them it is and shall be ever green. Holiness is the beauty of a soul; when those that believe with the heart make profession with the mouth, and justify and adorn that profession with an agreeable conversation, then their beauty is as the olive-tree, *Ps.* lii. 8. It is a promise to the trees of righteousness that their leaf shall not wither. *Secondly.* To the smell. His smell shall be as Lebanon, ver. 6, and his scent as "the wine of Lebanon," ver. 7. This was the praise of their father Jacob; "The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed," *Gen.* xxvii. 27. The church is compared to a "garden of spices," *Cant.* iv. 12, 14, which "all her garments smell of." True believers are acceptable to God and approved of men; God "smells a sweet savour from their spiritual sacrifices," *Gen.* viii. 21; and they are "accepted of the multitude of their brethren." Grace is the perfume of the soul, the perfume of the name; makes it like precious ointment, *Eccl.* vii. 1. The memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon, so the margin reads it; not only their reviving comforts now, but their surviving honours when they are gone, shall be as the wine of Lebanon, that has a delicate flavour. Flourishing churches have "their faith spoken of throughout the world," *Rom.* i. 8, and "leave their name to be remembered," *Ps.* xlv. 17; and the memory of flourishing saints is blessed, and shall be so, as theirs who by faith obtained a good report.

3rd. They shall be fruitful and useful. The church is compared here to the vine and the olive, that bring forth useful fruits to the honour of God and man. Nay, the very shadow of the church shall be agreeable; ver. 7, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return." 'Under God's shadow,' so some; 'under the shadow of the Messias,' so the Chaldee. Believers "dwell under God's shadow," *Ps.* xci. 1, and there they are and may be safe and easy. But it is rather, under the shadow of Israel, under the shadow of the church. Note, God's promises pertain to those, and those only, that dwell under the church's shadow, that attend on God's ordinances, and adhere to his people; not those that flee to the shadow only for shelter in a hot gleam, but that dwell under it, *Ps.* xxvii. 4. We may apply it to particular believers. When a man is effectually brought home to God, all that dwell under his shadow fare the better for it. Children, servants, subjects, friends, this day is salvation come to this house. They that dwell under the shadow of this church shall return, their drooping spirits shall return, and they shall be refreshed and comforted. He "restoreth my soul," *Ps.* xxiii. 3. "They shall revive as the corn," which when it is sown dies first, and then revives and "brings forth much fruit," *Jno.* xii. 24. It is promised that God's people shall be blessings to the world, as corn and wine are. And a very great and valuable mercy it is to be serviceable to our generation. Comfort and honour attend it.

8 Ephraim *shall say,* What have I to do any more with idols?
I have heard *him,* and observed him:
I *am* like a green fir tree.
From me is thy fruit found.
9 Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things?*
Prudent, and he shall know them?
For the ways of the LORD *are* right, and the just shall walk in them:
But the transgressors shall fall therein.

CONE AND NUT OF THE STONE PINE.—ver. 8.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

First. Concerning Ephraim. He is spoken of, and spoken to, ver. 8.

1. Here is his repentance and reformation; "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?" As some read it, God here reasons and argues with him why he should renounce idolatry: 'O Ephraim! what to me and idols?' What concord or agreement can there be between me and idols? What "communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial?" 2 *Cor.* vi. 14, 15. Therefore thou must break off thy league with them, if thou wilt come into covenant with me. As we read it, God promiseth to bring Ephraim, and keep him to this: "Ephraim shall say," (God will put it into his heart to say it,) "What have I to do any more with idols?" He had promised, ver. 3, not to "say any more to the works of his hands, Ye are my gods." But God's promises to us are much more our security and our strength, for the mortifying of sin, than our promises to God; and therefore God himself is here surety for his servant to good, will put it into his heart, and into his mouth. And, whatever good we say or do at any time, it is he that works it in us. Ephraim had solemnly engaged not to call his idols his gods, but God here engageth farther for him, that he shall resolve to have no more to do with them. He shall abolish them, he shall abandon them, and that with the utmost detestation; for it is necessary, not only that in our lives we be turned from sin, but that in our hearts we be turned against sin. See here, 1st. The power of Divine grace. Ephraim had been "joined to idols," *ch.* iv. 17, was so fond of them, that one would have thought he could never have fallen out with them; and yet God will work such a change in him, that he shall loathe them as much as ever he loved them. 2nd. See the benefit of sanctified afflictions. Ephraim had smarted for his idolatry, it had brought one judgment after another upon him, and this at length is the fruit, even the "taking away of his sin," *Isa.* xxvii. 9. 3rd. See the nature of repentance. It is a firm and fixed resolution to have no more to do with sin. This is the language of a penitent: I am ashamed that ever I had to do with sin, but I have had enough of it, I hate it, and by the grace of God I will never have any thing to do with it again, no, not with the occasions of it. Thou shalt say to thine idol, "Get thee hence," *Isa.* xxx. 22, shalt say to the tempter, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

2. Here is the gracious notice God is pleased to take of it: "I have heard him, and observed him;" I have heard, and will look upon him; so some read it. Note, The God of heaven takes cognizance of the penitent reflections and resolutions of returning sinners. He expects and desires the repentance of sinners, because he hath no pleasure in their ruin. "He looks upon men," *Job.* xxxiii. 27; "hearkens and hears," *Jer.* viii. 6; and if there be any disposition to repent he is well pleased with it. When Ephraim bemoans himself before God, he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child, *Jer.* xxxi. 20; he meets penitents with mercy, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son. God observed Ephraim, to see whether he would bring forth fruits meet for his profession of repentance that he made, and whether he would continue in this good mind. He observed him, to do him good and comfort him, according to the exigences of his case.

3. Here is the mercy of God designed for him, in order to his comfort and perseverance in his resolutions; still God will be all in all to him. Before Israel was compared to a tree, now God compares himself to one. He will be to his people, 1st. As the branches of a tree: "I am like a green fir-tree," and will be so to thee. The fir-trees in those countries were exceeding large and thick, and a shelter against sun and rain. God will be to all true converts both a delight and a defence; under his protection and influence they shall both dwell in safety and dwell at ease. He will be either a sun and a shield or a shade and shield, according as their case requires. They shall sit down "under his shadow with delight," *Cant.* ii. 3; he will be so all weathers, *Isa.* iv. 6. 2nd. As the root of a tree; "From me is thy fruit found." Which may be understood either of the fruit brought forth to us,—to him we owe all our comforts; or, of the fruit brought forth by us,—from him we receive grace and strength to enable us to do our duty. Whatever fruits of righteousness we bring forth, all the praise of them is owing to God; for he works in us both to will and to do that which is good.

Secondly. Concerning every one that hears and reads the words of the prophecy of this book; ver. 9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?" Perhaps the prophet was wont to conclude the sermons he preached with these words, and now he closeth the whole book with them, in which he had committed to writing some fragments of the many sermons he had preached. Observe,

1. The character of those that do profit by the truths here delivered. Who is wise and prudent, he shall understand these things, he shall know them. Those that set themselves to understand and know these things thereby make it to appear that they are truly wise and prudent, and will thereby be made more so. And if any do not understand and know them, it is because they are foolish and unwise. Those that are wise in the doing of their duty, that are prudent in practical religion, they are most likely to know and understand both the truths and providences of God, which are a mystery to others, *Jno.* vii. 17. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," *Ps.* xxv. 14. "Who is wise?" This intimates a desire that those who read and hear things would understand them,—O that they were wise! and a complaint that few were so,—Who has believed our report?

2. The excellency of the things concerning which we are here instructed. "The ways of the Lord are right;" and therefore it is our wisdom and duty to know and understand them. The way of God's precepts, in which he requires us to walk, is right, agreeing with the rules of eternal reason and

equity, and having a direct tendency to our eternal felicity. The ways of God's providence, in which he walks towards us, are all right; no fault is to be found with any thing that God doth, for it is all well done. His judgments upon the impenitent, his favours to the penitent, they are all right. However they may be perverted and misinterpreted, God will at last be justified and glorified in them all. His ways are equal.

3. The different use which men make of them. 1st. The right ways of God to those that are good are, and will be, a savour of life unto life; "The just shall walk in them;" they shall conform to the will of God both in his precepts and providences, and shall have the comfort of so doing. They shall well understand the mind of God, both in his word and in his works, and shall be well reconciled to both, and shall accommodate themselves to God's intention in both. The just shall walk in those ways towards their great end, and shall not come short of it. 2nd. The right ways of God to those that are wicked will be a savour of death unto death. "The transgressors shall fall," not only in their own wrong ways, but even in the right ways of the Lord. Christ, that is a foundation stone to some, is to others a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. That which was ordained to life, through their abuse of it becomes death to them. God's providences being not duly improved by them, harden them in sin, and contribute to their ruin. God's discovery of himself, both in the judgments of his mouth and in the judgments of his hand, is to us according as we are affected under it. *Recipitur ad modum recipientis*,—'What is received influences according to the qualities of the receiver.' The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. But of all transgressors, those certainly have the most dangerous fatal falls that fall in the ways of God, that split on the Rock of ages, and suck poison out of the balm of Gilead. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid of this.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF HOSEA.

The period of time within which the twelve minor prophets flourished includes the entire prophetic cycle of more than four hundred years—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, having also lived in it. It is unquestionably the most eventful in the history of the Hebrews. It embraces the introduction of image worship, and that of Phœnician idolatry, with all its attendant evils, among the Israelites; the regicidal murders and civil wars which shook their kingdom to its centre; the corruptions of the Jewish state in consequence of its adoption of the idolatrous practices of the northern tribes; the Assyrian and Egyptian alliances; the irruption of the Syrian, Assyrian, and Chaldean armies into Palestine; the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities; the Persian conquests; the release of the Jews, and their restoration to their own land; and the state of affairs at Jerusalem during the governorship of Nehemiah. Upon all these various events and circumstances, the predictions, warnings, threatenings, promises, and moral lessons, have, in a multiplicity of aspects, a more or less pointed and important bearing. Events subsequent to this period likewise form the subjects of prophetic announcement, such as the progress of Alexander the Great; the successes of the Maccabees; the corruptions which prevailed in the last times of the Jewish state; the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; the dispersion, future conversion, and restoration of the Jews; and the universal establishment of true religion throughout the world. Intermingled with these topics, and giving to each a significance and interest which it could not otherwise have possessed, are some of the clearest and most illustrious predictions respecting the Messiah, in his Divine and human, his sacerdotal and suffering, and his regal and all-conquering character, that are to be found in the Old Testament.—It is impossible seriously to peruse this collection of prophetical writings without discovering the omniscient eye to which all future events, with the most minute of their attendant circumstances, are present; the omnipotent arm, which, in the most difficult cases, secures the accomplishment of the Divine purposes; the glorious attributes of Jehovah as the moral governor of the universe, and the special friend and protector of his people; the deep depravity of the human heart; the multiform phases of moral evil; and the just retributions which befall mankind in the present state of existence. These, and numerous subjects of a kindred nature, furnish abundance of matter "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," which, while it is able to make "men wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus," is also admirably fitted to "make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 *Tim.* iii. 15—17.—*The Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets, translated from the original Hebrew, with a Commentary, by E. Henderson, D.D.*, to which valuable work we are indebted for other notes marked *H.* The following remarks by Hengstenberg throw great light on the character and history of the Israelites at the period of Hosea's prophetical ministry. The kingdom of Israel, from its very commencement, contained within itself a twofold germ of destruction, the institution of the worship of the calves, and the apostacy from the dynasty of David. I. As to the former, the consequence of this apparently isolated violation of a Mosaic ordinance extended much farther than would appear on a superficial vew. It was shewn here also that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Still more important than the low conceptions of God which were caused by this symbolical representation of him was another aspect of the transaction. The prohibition of the worship of images in the Pentateuch was as definite and clear as possible. The kings of Israel were far from rejecting this prohibition; but as they allowed themselves to pervert and explain away this law against their better conscience, probably asserting that it was given only in reference to the rude and sensual conception of the first generations, so were they prepared to do this in other instances also, as often as they were incited by their corrupt heart. Every action of conscious unfaithfulness which is nevertheless cherished, and both internally and outwardly excused, must draw after it a total apostacy in the case of a community, no less than in that of an individual. Moreover, this first change in the nature of religion proceeded from the civil power, which secured to itself for the future also unlimited influence in the affairs of religion, by bringing into subjection the ecclesiastical power, which was independent and opposed to it. The Levites, who declared against the worship of the calves, without resorting to the miserable sophistry which the king invented to excuse it, were exiled; and, in their place, creatures of the king were made ministers of the sanctuary, and this measure would subject (compare the remarkable passage, *Am.* vii. 13) the sanctuary, and the whole substance of religion, to the caprice of the king, in direct contradiction to the Mosaic constitution; the consequence of this would necessarily be the more disastrous the more corrupt the kings were, and, from the base foundation on which the regal power rested, necessarily must be. With the worship of images idolatry was soon connected. But neither are we to regard this as an open opposition to the true God. Such opposition is found only during one reign, that of Ahab, in which the apostacy was carried to the utmost extremity. That it has been supposed to be practised at other times, is wholly owing to the circumstance that the Scripture, disregarding the multitude of wretched excuses, calls that a direct apostacy from God which was so as to its essence, though not its outward form. Men rendered outward obedience to Jehovah; they celebrated his feasts; they brought the sacrifices prescribed in the Pentateuch; they regulated, in general, the whole of religion, according to his ordinances, as may be shewn from the books of *Kings*, and still more from *Amos* and *Hosea*; but they contrived a way of identifying light with darkness, that is, of combining the worship of idols with the worship of the true God. Outwardly, the worship of Jehovah would predominate, but inwardly idolatry would be exalted to an almost sole dominion. And the danger was increased by the very circumstance, that they still continued to rely on the covenant and the promises of Jehovah, and on their outward service, and thus were strengthened in their false security. The natural consequence of this apostacy from the Lord was a frightful corruption of manners. The first result of this spiritual adultery was that which is corporeal. Licentiousness constituted a fundamental principle, as of the Asiatic religions in general, so especially of those with whom the Israelites came into contact. But the deadly influence spread still wider over the whole region of morals. Where there is no holy God, there there are no efforts of man after holiness. All Divine and human rights were trampled under foot; all the bands of love, of law, and of order, were dissolved. Thus is the condition of the land, in a moral respect, uniformly described by its two prophets: compare, for example, *ch.* iv. 1, 2, "There is no faithfulness and no love, and no knowledge of God in the land. To curse, and lie, and murder, and steal, and commit adultery; they break through, and blood touches blood." From this moral corruption, then, again followed the internal dissolution of the state, and its external weakness. The supernatural consequence of the apostacy from the Lord was a severe punishment which he inflicted upon the people. God will be sanctified upon him with whom he enters into a near and gracious relation, when, by the person's own fault, he is not sanctified in him. Because Israel was the people of the Lord, he could not always continue to appear outwardly what inwardly he no longer was. II. As the second germ of corruption, we pointed out the apostacy from the house of David. His dominion rested on a Divine right. The new Israelitish kingdom was built on the sandy foundation of human caprice. Its first king had raised himself to the throne by his own power and cunning, and the favour of the people. Every one, who had the same means in his possession, believed that they gave him a right to do the like. And thus dynasty succeeded dynasty, regicide followed regicide; in the bloody conflict thus occasioned the people became more and more lawless; sometimes interregnums occurred, times of total anarchy; by these internal struggles the power of the state to resist invaders was continually more and more weakened. No king could stop this fountain of adversity, for to do this he must have given up his existence as a king. And just as little could he apply a remedy to the other sources of evil; for, if once the religious partition-wall between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah was removed, the civil one also threatened to fall. Such, in general, were the circumstances under which Hosea, like the other prophets of the kingdom of Israel, came forward. That these circumstances were far more difficult than those in the kingdom of Judah, is obvious. There also was the corruption great, but it was not so closely interwoven with the foundation of the whole state. Thorough reforms, such as those under Hezekiah and Josiah, were possible; and in the outward preservation of the true religion the interests of a whole tribe were concerned. The reign of Jeroboam II., which was outwardly highly prosperous, and in which Hosea entered upon his prophetical office, had still more increased the apostacy from the Lord, and the corruption of manners, and therefore laid the foundation of the series of misfortunes, which, beginning soon after his death, conducted the people with rapid steps to their total ruin. They were still more confirmed in their security by prosperity; for, instead of being led by the unmerited mercy of God to repentance, (compare 2 *Kin.* xiv. 26, 27,) they regarded this prosperity as a reward of their apostacy, as a seal whereby Jehovah-Baal confirmed the correctness of their course. The false prophets did their utmost to strengthen them in their delusion; the true preached to deaf ears. Immediately after the death of Jeroboam it began to appear which of the two had the truth on their side. A ten years' interregnum followed. After its termination, Jeroboam's son Zachariah began to reign; but in the short space of six months he was murdered by Shallum, 2 *Kin.* xv. 10. This king was slain by Menahem after he had reigned only a month, 2 *Kin.* xv. 14. Menahem reigned ten years in Samaria. Even in his reign the catastrophe was preparing which brought the kingdom to total ruin. He became tributary to the Assyrian king Phul, 2 *Kin.* xv. 19—21. He was followed by his son Pekahiah, in the fiftieth year of Uzziah. After a two years' reign, this prince was slain by Pekah the son of Remaliah, who held the throne twenty years, 2 *Kin.* xv. 27, and by his alliance with the king of Assyria against Judah (compare *Isa.* vii.) hastened the ruin of Israel. The Assyrians, under Tiglath-pileser, who had been summoned by Ahaz, carried away into exile, even at that time, a portion of the citizens, the tribes beyond the Jordan. Pekah was slain by Hoshea, in the fourth year of Ahaz, who began to reign in the twelfth year of Ahaz, 2 *Kin.* xvii. 1, after an interregnum of eight years. He became tributary to Shalmanassar, and at the end of his nine years' reign was also the end of the kingdom of the ten tribes. By an attempted alliance with Egypt, he brought the vengeance of the king of Assyria upon himself and his people.

Chap. I.—5. *Valley of Jezreel.* Since called Esdraelon, consisting of the broad elevated plain which stretches from the Jordan to the Mediterranean, near mount Carmel.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO HOSEA.

CHAP. II.—8. *Baal.* Baal was perhaps the most ancient of all the gods worshipped in the East. He was, according to Dr. Munter, the representative of the sun, the generative power in the eastern mythology, and had associated with him Astarte, the female power, which was viewed as representing the moon. Gesenius, however, is of opinion that, under these names, the planets Jupiter and Venus were worshipped. From the frequency with which his name occurs in compound Phœnician names, as Hannibal, Hasdrubal, &c., the worship of Baal appears to have been common among that people, and from them, especially the Tyrians, it was borrowed by the Israelites. Mention is made of this idolatry in the time of the Judges; (see *Jud.* ii. 11, 13; iii. 7; vi. 25;) it became prevalent even in Judah in the days of Ahaz; and, though abolished by the pious king Josiah, was revived by Manasseh. In Israel it rapidly gained ground after the introduction of the worship of the golden calves by Jeroboam, and reached its height in the reigns of Ahab and Hoshea.—*H.* 23. *Thou art my people.* The sentences in the latter part of this verse are very abrupt, but exceedingly expressive. Leaving out those supplied by the translators, and which unnerve the passage, it stands thus: I will say to NOT MY PEOPLE, THOU MY PEOPLE; and they shall say, MY GOD.—*A. Clarke.*

CHAP. III.—4. *Without teraphim.* This was true during the captivity, and is true at this day. The mournful comment on this of Rabbi Kimchi, as quoted in *Pictorial Bible*, deserves attention. 'These are the days of the captivity, in which we are at this day.' (Kimchi wrote in the twelfth century.) 'We have no king nor prince out of Israel, for we are in the power of the Gentiles, and of their kings and princes. We have no sacrifices for God, nor images for idols; no ephod, for God, that declares future things; nor any teraphim, for idolatry, which shews things to come, according to the mind of those that believe in them.'—They have had neither priests nor sacrifice, their temple being destroyed, where only they were to offer sacrifice. And yet the want of a place where to perform the most solemn part of their public worship does not tempt them to idolatry, or make them fond of image worship, or any such idolatrous practice, which was the epidemical sin of their forefathers.—*Lowth.* This is surely a most astonishing prophecy of events directly contrary to all human probability, yet undeniably taking place, not on a particular occasion, or for a short time, but through very many revolving centuries, and in the most distant regions. How could Hosea have foreseen this had not God inspired him? And does not this demonstrate (in the only way by which such things can be demonstrated) the Divine inspiration of this prophecy?—*Scott.* 5. *Afterward shall the children of Israel return.* No reflection, says Fuller, need here be made, save this, that the superabundant grace of God towards them in their outcast and perishing condition shall not only fill their hearts with gratitude, but inspire them with a holy fear of offending him any more.

CHAP. IV.—9. *Like people, like priest.* They live upon the sin offerings of the people, and are so far from restraining them that they take delight in seeing them commit iniquity; because, the more they sin, the greater is the number of sin offerings, which are the priests' portion.—*Lowth.* Thus absolutions, indulgences and dispensations have long enriched the Romish clergy, and *spiritual* courts have prosecuted such offenders as could afford to pay fines and fees apparently for no other reason; and many such things have been and are done by the professed ministers of religion.—*Scott.* 12. *Their staff declareth unto them.* See Supplementary Note on *Eze.* xxi. 21.

CHAP. V.—15. *Till they acknowledge their offence.* As God's coming to a people and being with them implies their experiencing efficient protection and aid, so his withdrawment of his presence implies the deprivation of their blessings. The original, like many other Hebrew verbs, conveys not only the idea of contracting guilt, but of suffering its consequences. The latter idea seems to Dr. Henderson to be clearly conveyed in this passage, who accordingly translates the verse as follows:—

> 'I will depart, I will return to my place,
> Till they suffer punishment.
> Then will they seek my face;
> When they are in trouble they will seek me early.'

CHAP. VII.—8. *A cake not turned.* In the East, having heated the hearth, they sweep one corner, put the cake upon it, and cover it with embers; and in a short time they turn it, cover it again, and continue this several times, till they find it sufficiently baked. 9. *Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not.* The kingdom is grown old in iniquity, the time of their captivity is at hand, and they are apprehensive of no danger. They are in the state of a silly old man who, through age and infirmities, is become nearly bald, and the few remaining hairs on his head are quite gray; but he does not consider his latter end, is making no provision for that eternity on the brink of which he is constantly standing; does not apply to the Sovereign Physician to heal his spiritual diseases, but calls in the doctors to cure him of old age and death! This miserable state and preposterous conduct we witness every day. O how fast does the human being cling to his native earth! Reader, hear the voice of an old man:—

> 'O my coevals! remnants of yourselves,
> Shall our pale withered hands be still stretched out,
> Trembling at once with eagerness and age,
> With avarice and ambition grasping,—fast
> Grasping at air! For what hath earth beside?
> We want but little, nor that little long.'—*A. Clarke.*

CHAP. VIII.—5. *Thy calf, O Samaria.* The calf, or ox, was a supreme deity in Egypt. A white ox was worshipped under the name of Apis at Memphis, and another ox, called Mneris, was worshipped at On, or Heliopolis. See wood engraving, *Ps.* cxx. The introduction of the worship of the golden calves by Jeroboam, which he must have seen during his residence in Egypt, prepared the way for the adoption by the Israelites of the gross idolatries of the Phœnicians, Syrians, and Chaldeans. 12. *But they were counted as a strange thing.* Alas! exclaims Scott, in how many places, even among Protestants, is a minister who inculcates the great doctrines of Christianity, as stated at the reformation, accused of preaching *a new religion*, and bringing strange things to the ears of the people!

CHAP. IX.—6. *Memphis.* See Supplementary Note on *Jer.* xlvi. 13. *Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus.* Tyrus was situated in a beautiful and strongly fortified place by the sea. Samaria was on a mountain, and the territory occupied by the tribe of Ephraim and several of the other nine was distinguished for its fertility. Notwithstanding this, the purposes of God would take effect against it. Perhaps Tyrus is introduced in the comparison, because extensive commerce was carried on by the Israelites with the Phœnician ports. "Judah and the land of Israel were thy merchants," says the prophet, in denouncing Tyre, *Eze.* xxvii. 17; both have now fallen. See Supplementary Notes on *Eze.* xxvii., and *Mic.* i. 6. 17. *They shall be wanderers among the nations.* Referring to Ephraim, ver. 16, which, distinguished from Israel, means the tribe of Ephraim, whence most of the apostate kings sprang, and where idolatry most abounded. By Israel the other nine tribes are meant, the ten together forming the principal subject of Hosea's prophecies. This distinction is not sufficiently marked in Henry's commentary. As to these ten tribes, no one can tell where they have wandered to, nor in what nations they are to be found. Some have thought they were to be discovered in one country, some in another,—among the American Indians—among the Affghans in the East Indies—among the Nestorians. Wanderers they certainly are, hitherto undiscovered by others, perhaps now even unknown to themselves, says Dr. Adam Clarke. Dr. Henderson is of opinion that they returned with the Jews after the Babylonish captivity, and that there is no ground for expecting them yet to be restored in their tribal capacity. However this may be, even such of them as were incorporated with the Jews have with them been wanderers among the nations for many hundred years, and so continue.

> 'Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,
> When shall we flee away and be at rest?'

It is wonderful that these prophecies, so often repeated, and so exactly descriptive of the present state of that favoured nation, after many revolving ages, do not more impress the minds of those who read them with admiration of the foreknowledge of God, and full conviction of the Divine inspiration of the holy Scriptures!

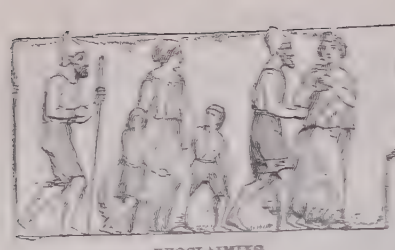
CHAP. X.—11. The general meaning of this verse seems to be that the Ephraimites had been accustomed, in the plenitude of their power, to crush and oppress others, apparently their brethren of the two tribes; but they were now themselves to be brought into subjection to the king of Assyria, by whom they would be placed in circumstances of great hardship in foreign countries.—*H.* The meaning here given to "tread out," namely, threatening other nations, is very doubtful. M. Henry's is to be preferred, who says, the heifer loved the work, 'because, not being muzzled, she has liberty to eat at pleasure; and the work itself was both dry and easy, and both its own diversion and its own wages.' Scott makes "passing over her fair neck" to denote mild discipline, formerly but ineffectually tried. Henry again is to be preferred. But, saith God, I have a yoke to put upon her fair neck, as fair as it is. "I will make Ephraim to ride;" that is, I will tame them, or cause them to be ridden by the Assyrians.'

CHAP. XI.—4. *That take off the yoke on their jaws.* There appears to be here an allusion to the moving and pulling forward the collar or yoke of beasts which have been hard at work, to let in the cool air between it and their neck. 'I have often,' says Adam Clarke, 'done this at the land ends in ploughing, when at the *turnings* the cattle were permitted a few moments to draw their breath.' *And I laid meat unto them.* Giving them at the same time a bite of grass or hay, to encourage them to go on afresh. Thus God acted with his people, on whose necks was the yoke of his law. How many privileges, advantages, and comforts did he mingle with his precepts to make them at once a righteous and a happy people. 8. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* The mercy of God is here pathetically represented as contending with his justice, to shew that he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.—*Lowth.* It is indeed, in the words of Dr. Henderson, one of the most affecting instances of the infinite tenderness of the Divine compassion to be found in Scripture, the point of which is enhanced by its being introduced immediately after a description of the odious conduct of the Israelites. For suddenly and unexpectedly, says Dr. Smith, the prophet changes. Beams of mercy break from the clouds just now fraught with vengeance. God, to speak in the language of love, feels the relentings of a tender parent; his bowels yearn, his mercy triumphs, his rebellious child shall be pardoned. As the Lion of the tribe of Judah he will exert his power to save his people; he will call his children from the land of their captivity and dispersion, and, with the swiftness of doves, they will fly to him a faithful and a holy people.

CHAP. XII.—5. *Even the Lord God of hosts.* This, says Bishop Horsley, is no other than he whom the patriarch found at Bethel, who there spake with the Israelites in the loins of their progenitor; he whom the patriarch found at Bethel, by the tenor of the context, was the antagonist with whom he was matched at Peniel, and who wrestled with the patriarch in human form. The conflict was no sooner ended than the patriarch acknowledged his antagonist as God. And, to make the assertion of this precious godhead if possible more unequivocal, he adds, that to him belonged, as his appropriate memorial, that name which is declarative of the very essence of the godhead,—Jehovah is his memorial. See valuable note in this place on the import of the name Jehovah, in Dr. Henderson's work on the Minor Prophets.—'He contended nobly with God, he contended nobly with the angel; he wept and supplicated to him; at Bethel he found him, and there he spake with him; even Jehovah the God of hosts, Jehovah is his memorial.' The Being eminently called the angel of God is one who is, in certain respects and properties, distinct from God, and yet is, at the same time, truly and essentially *the same* with God.—*J. P. Smith.*

CHAP. XIII.—2. *Kiss the calves.* Kissing the idol was and still is a rite of idolatrous worship.

CHAP. XIV.—5-7. *I will be as the dew unto Israel, &c.* These verses contain gracious promises of God's favour and blessing upon Israel's conversion. In the fifth verse it is described by that refreshment which copious dews give to the grass in summer. If we consider the nature of the climate, and the necessity of dews in so hot a country, not only to refresh but likewise to preserve life,—if we consider also the beauty of the oriental lilies, the fragrance of the cedars which grow upon Lebanon, the beauteous appearance which the spreading olive-trees afford, the exhilarating coolness caused by the shade of such trees, and the aromatic smell exhaled by the cedars,—we shall then partly understand the force of the metaphors here employed by the prophet; but their full energy no one can conceive till he feels alike the want and enjoys the advantage of the particulars referred to in that climate where the prophet wrote.—*Lowth.* This last remark admits of a farther application. None but he who has experienced spiritual thirst, who has drank of the living water which Christ gives, and dwelt under his shadow, none but he, in short, who has 'felt the want and enjoyed the advantage' of the free, rich grace of God, 'can conceive the full energy' of these expressions. What a glorious prophecy! What a wonderful prophet! How sublime, how energetic, how just! And these promises are not for Israel merely after the flesh; they are for all the people of God. 7. *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* The Targum is curious: 'They shall be gathered together from the midst of their captivity; they shall dwell under the shadow of his Christ, and the dead shall revive.' —*A. Clarke.* 9. *The just.* The Just One; he who stands justified by the perfectness of his own obedience. The only one of the human race who ever was just, or justified, by his own justice. The plural, except where the matter of the discourse is relative to mere secular transactions, signifies 'the justified,' those that are justified by faith in the Redeemer coming, or to come, and clothed with his righteousness. *Transgressors.* Or, 'revolters shall stumble therein.' To the incorrigible enemies of God the very scheme of mercy itself will be a cause of error, confusion, and ruin.—*Bp. Horsley.*



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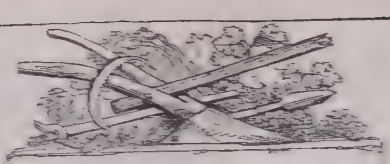


AN

EXPOSITION

A FAST.

OF THE

PROPHECY OF JOEL,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

We are altogether uncertain concerning the time when this prophet prophesied. It is probable it was about the same time that Amos prophesied—not for the reason that the rabbins give,—because Amos learns his prophecy with that wherewith Joel concludes his, "The Lord shall roar out of Zion;" but for the reason Dr. Lightfoot gives, because he speaks of the same judgments of locusts, and invasion and fire, that Amos foresees; which is an intimation that they appeared about the same time,—Amos in Israel, and Joel in Judah. Hosea and Obadiah prophesied about the same time. And it appears that Amos prophesied in the days of Jeroboam II., king of Israel, *Am.* vii. 10. God sent a variety of prophets, that they might strengthen one another's hands and hearts, and that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established. In this prophecy, I. The desolations made by hosts of noxious insects is described, ch. i., and part of *ch.* ii. II. The people are hereupon called to repentance, *ch.* ii. III. Promises are made of the return of mercy upon their repentance, ch. ii., and promises of the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter days. IV. The cause of God's people is pleaded against their enemies, whom God would in due time reckon with, *ch.* iii., and glorious things are spoken of the gospel Jerusalem, and of the prosperity and perpetuity of it.

A.M. 3204. B.C. 800.

CHAPTER I.

This chapter is the description of a lamentable devastation made of the country of Judah by locusts and caterpillars. Some think the prophet speaks of it as a thing to come, and gives warning of it beforehand, as usually the prophets did of judgments coming. Others think it was now present, and his business is to affect the people with it, and awaken them by it to repentance. I. It is spoken of as a judgment which there was no precedent of in former ages, ver. 1—7. II. All sorts of people sharing in the calamity are called upon to lament it, ver. 8—13. III. They are directed to look up to God in their lamentations, and to humble themselves before him, ver. 14—20.

THE word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

2 Hear this, ye old men,
And give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land.
Hath this been in your days,
Or even in the days of your fathers?
3 Tell ye your children of it,
And *let* your children *tell* their children,
And their children another generation.

4 That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten;
And that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten;
And that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpiller eaten.

5 Awake, ye drunkards, and weep;
And howl, all ye drinkers of wine,
Because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.

6 For a nation is come up upon my land,
Strong, and without number,
Whose teeth *are* the teeth of a lion,
And he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion.

7 He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree:
He hath made it clean bare, and cast *it* away;
The branches thereof are made white.

It is a foolish fancy which some of the Jews have, that this Joel the prophet was the same with that Joel that was the son of Samuel, 1 *Sam.* viii. 2, yet one of their rabbins very gravely undertakes to shew why Samuel is here called Pethuel; this Joel was long after that. He here speaks of a sad and sore judgment which was now brought, or to be brought, upon Judah for their sins.

Observe,

First. The greatness of the judgment, expressed here in two things: 1. It was such as could not be paralleled in the ages that were past, in history, or in the memory of any living, ver. 2. The old men are appealed to, who could remember what had happened long ago; nay, and "all the inhabitants of the land" are called on to search if they could any of them remember the like. Let them go farther back than their memory, and "prepare themselves for the search of their fathers," if this be a case that would not find an account of the like any record. Note, Times that outdo their predecessors in sin may justly expect to fall under greater and sorer judgments than any their predecessors have felt. It was such as would not be forgotten in the ages to come, ver. 3. "Tell ye your children of it; let them know what dismal tokens of the wrath of God are in store under, that they may take warning, and may learn submission to the things which you have suffered: for it is designed for warning to many also. Yea, "let your children tell their children, and these children another generation." Let them tell it not only as a strange thing, which may surprise posterity, but as a solemn instruction, accidents are reported in our days in the manner of them as such phenomena, as if any thing like the great drought aforetime—as it is said there was a plague and fire, as there was under the great drought, and one great wind—that let them tell it to their children, as those in Israel did of the judgments and to teach the future. Note, We ought to transmit to posterity the memorial of God's judgments as well as of his mercies.

Secondly. The judgment itself. It is an invasion of the country of Judæa by a great army. Many interpreters, both ancient and modern, understand it of armies of men; the troops of the Assyrians, that under Sennacherib took all the defenced cities of Judah, and then, as usual, made sport of the country, and consumed the products of it. Nay, some make the four sorts of animals here named, ver. 4, to signify the four monarchies, which in their turns were oppressive to the people of the Jews, one destroying what another left. Some of the Chaldee paraphrasers understand it of the Babylonish captivity, which happened in the days of the young men, and their multitude, to lay all waste. So the Chaldee paraphrase of verse 6, "Nations, peoples, tongues, languages, possessed the land instead of them." Nations, peoples, tongues, languages, possessed ch. ii. 25, "I restored to them." Nations, peoples, tongues, languages, possessed and ravaging a captive. But it seems plain rather to be understood literally of armies of insects coming upon the land, and eating up the fruits of it. Locusts were one of the plagues of Egypt, of them it is said there never were any like them, nor shall be, *Ex.* x. 14. Some such as those in Egypt, some such as these in Judæa; some that come into a country for subsistence, and others for multitude, and the mischief they do. That locusts but for a few days, this here seems to have continued for four years successively, as some think, because here are four sorts of insects mentioned, ver. 4, one destroying what the other left; but others think they came all in one year. We are not told in the history of the Old Testament when this happened, but we are sure no word of God fell to the ground. And though a devastation by these insects is primarily intended here, yet it is expressed in such language as is very applicable to the destruction of the country by a foreign enemy invading it; because, if the people were not humbled and reformed by that lesser judgment which devoured the fruits, God would send this greater upon them, which should devour the inhabitants, and by the description of that they are bid to take it for a warning. If the nation of worms do not reduce them, another nation shall come to ruin them. Observe,

1. What these armies are that are sent against them. Locusts and caterpillars, palmer-worms and canker-worms, ver. 4. We cannot now determine precisely the difference between them, any one of them they differed one from another. They were all noisome insects, any one of them destructive and worse a man might easily think with his own strength to encounter; but when they came in vast numbers or attacks of them they were very mighty; not when they came in vast numbers or attacks of them they were very formidable, and set up all before them. Note, God is the Lord of hosts, has all

creatures at his command, and when he pleaseth can humble and mortify a proud and rebellious people by the weakest and most contemptible creatures. Man is said to be a worm, and by this it appears he is less than a worm; for when God pleaseth worms are too hard for him, plunder his country, eat up that for which he laboured, destroy the forage, and cut off the subsistence of a potent nation. The weaker the instrument is that God employs, the more is his power magnified.

2. What force and fury they came with. They are here called a nation, ver. 6, because they are embodied, and act by consent, and as it were with a common design; for though "the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands," *Pr.* xxx. 27, and it is there mentioned as an instance of their wisdom. It is prudence for those that are weak severally to unite and act jointly. They are strong, for they are without number. The "small dust of the balance" is light and easily blown away, but a heap of dust is weighty; so a worm can do little, (yet one worm served to wither Jonah's gourd,) but numbers of them can do wonders. They are said to have "the teeth of a lion," of "a great lion," because of the great and terrible execution they do. Note, Locusts become as lions when they come armed with a Divine commission. We read of the locusts out of the bottomless pit, that "their teeth were as the teeth of lions," *Rev.* ix. 8.

3. What mischief they do. They eat up all before them, ver. 4; what one leaves the other devours. They destroy not only the grass and corn, but the trees; ver. 7, The vine is laid waste. These vermin eat the leaves which should be a shelter to the fruit while it ripens, and so that also perisheth and cometh to nothing. They eat the very bark of the fig-tree, and so kill it. Thus the fig-tree doth not blossom, nor is there fruit in the vine.

Thirdly. A call to the drunkards to lament this judgment; ver. 5, "Awake and weep, all ye drinkers of wine." This intimates,

1. That they should suffer very sensibly by this calamity. It should touch them in a tender part; the new wine, which they loved so well, should be cut off from their mouth. Note, It is just with God to take away those comforts which are abused to luxury and excess; to recover the corn and wine which is prepared for Baal, which is made the food and fuel of a base lust. And to them judgments of that kind are most grievous. The more men place their happiness in the gratifications of sense the more pressing temporal afflictions are upon them. The drinkers of water needed not to care when the vine was laid waste, they could live as well without it as they had done, it was no trouble to the Nazarites; but the drinkers of wine will weep and howl. The more delights we make necessary to our satisfaction, the more we expose ourselves to trouble and disappointment.

2. It intimates that they had been very senseless and stupid under the former tokens of God's displeasure; and therefore they are here called to awake and weep. They that will not be roused out of their security by the word of God shall be roused by his rod; those that will not be startled by judgments at a distance shall be themselves arrested by them; and when they are going to take of the forbidden fruit, a prohibition of another nature shall come between the cup and the lip, and cut off the wine from their mouth.

8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth
For the husband of her youth.
9 The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off
From the house of the LORD;
The priests, the LORD's ministers, mourn.
10 The field is wasted, the land mourneth;
For the corn is wasted:
The new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.
11 Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vine-
For the wheat and for the barley; [dressers,
Because the harvest of the field is perished.
12 The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth;
The pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple
Even all the trees of the field, are withered: [tree,
Because joy is withered away from the sons of men.
13 Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests:
Howl, ye ministers of the altar:
Come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God:
For the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden
From the house of your God.

The judgment is here described as very lamentable, and such as all sorts of people should share in. It shall not only rob the drunkards of their pleasure, (if that were the worst of it, it might be the better borne,) but it shall deprive others of their necessary subsistence, who are therefore called to lament, ver. 8, as a virgin laments the death of her lover, to whom she was espoused, but not completely married, yet so as that he was in effect her husband; or, as a young woman lately married, from whom "the husband of her youth," her young husband, or the husband to whom she was married when she was young, is suddenly taken away by death. Betwixt a new married couple that are young, that married for love, and that are every way amiable and agreeable to each other, there is great fondness, and consequently great grief if either be taken away. Such lamentation shall there be for the loss of their corn and wine. Note, The more we are wedded to our creature comforts the harder it is to part with them. See that parallel place, *Isa.* xxxii. 10—12. Two sorts of people are here brought in, as concerned to lament this devastation, countrymen and clergymen.

First. Let the husbandmen and vinedressers lament, ver. 11. Let them be ashamed of the care and pains they have taken about their vineyards, for it will be all labour lost, and they shall gain no advantage by it; they shall see the fruit of their labour eaten up before their eyes, and shall not be able to save any of it. Note, Those who labour only for "the meat that perisheth," will, sooner or later, be ashamed of their labour. The vinedressers will then express their extreme grief by howling, when they see their vineyards stripped of leaves and fruit, and the vine withered, so that nothing is to be had or hoped for from them, wherewith they might pay their rent and maintain their families. The destruction is particularly described here. "The field is wasted," ver. 10; all is consumed that it produced; "the land mourns," the ground has a melancholy aspect, and looks ruefully; all the inhabitants of the land are in tears for what they have lost, are in fears of perishing for want, *Isa.* xxiv. 4; *Jer.* iv. 28. The corn, the bread-corn, which is the staff of life, is wasted; the new wine which should be brought into the cellars for a supply, when the old is drunk, is dried up, is ashamed of having promised so fair what it is not now able to perform. The oil languisheth or is diminished, because (as the Chaldee renders it) the olives are fallen off. The people were not thankful to God as they should have been, for the "bread that strengthens man's heart," the "wine that makes glad the heart," and the "oil that makes the face to shine," *Ps.* civ. 14, 15; and therefore they are justly brought to lament the loss and want of them, of all the products of the earth which God had given them, either for necessity or for delight. This is repeated, ver. 11, 12: the wheat and barley, the two principal grains. Bread was then made of wheat for the rich and of barley for the poor, so that rich and poor meet together in the calamity. The trees are destroyed, not only the vine and the fig-tree, as before, ver. 7, which were more useful and necessary, but other trees also that were for delight—the pomegranate, palm-tree, and apple-tree, yea all the trees of the field, as well as those of the orchard,—timber-trees as well as fruit-trees. In short, all "the harvest of the field is perished," ver. 11; and by this means "joy is withered away from the sons of men," ver. 12; the joy of harvest, which is used to express great and general joy, is come to nothing, is turned into shame, is turned into lamentation. Note, The perishing of the harvest is the withering of the joy of the children of men. Those that place their happiness in the delights of sense, when they are deprived of them, or any way disturbed in the enjoyment of them, lose all their joy; whereas the children of God, that look upon the pleasures of sense with a holy indifferency and contempt, and know what it is to make God their heart's delight, can rejoice in him as the God of their salvation, even when the fig-tree doth not blossom; spiritual joy is so far from withering then, that it flourisheth more than ever, *Hab.* iii. 17, 18. Let us see here,

1. What perishing, uncertain things all our creature comforts are. We can never be sure of the continuance of them. Here the heavens had given their rains in due season, the earth had yielded her strength, and when the appointed weeks of harvest were at hand they saw no reason to doubt but that they should have a very plentiful crop; yet then they are invaded by those unthought-of enemies, that lay all waste, and not by fire and sword. It is our wisdom not to lay up our treasure in those things which are liable to so many ill accidents.

2. See what need we have to live in a continual dependence upon God and his providence, for our own hands are not sufficient for us. When we see the full corn in the ear, and think we are sure of it,—nay, when we have brought it home,—if he blow upon it, nay, if he do not bless it, we are not likely to have any good of it.

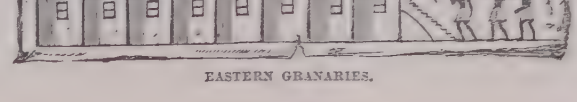
3. See what ruinous work sin makes. A paradise is turned into a wilderness, a fruitful land, the most fruitful land upon earth, into barrenness, for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein.

Secondly. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, lament, for they share deeply in the calamity. "Gird yourselves" with sackcloth, ver. 13; nay, they do mourn, ver. 9. Observe, The priests are called the "ministers of the altar," for on that they attended, and the ministers of the Lord, of my God, saith the prophet; for in attending on the altar they served him, did his work, and did him honour. Note, They that are employed in holy things are therein God's ministers, and on him they attend. The ministers of the altar used to rejoice before the Lord, and spend their time very much in singing; but now they must lament and howl, for the meat offering and drink offering was "cut off from the house of the Lord," ver. 9; and the same again, ver. 13, "from the house of your God." He is your God in a particular manner; you are in a nearer relation to him than other Israelites are, and therefore it is expected you should be more concerned than others for that which is a hindrance to the service of his sanctuary. It is intimated,

1. That the people, as long as they had the fruits of the earth brought in their season, presented to the Lord his dues out of them, and brought the offerings to the altar, and tithes to them that served at the altar. Note, A people may be filling up the measure of their iniquity apace, and yet may keep a course of external performances in religion.

2. That when the meat and drink failed, the meat offering and drink offering failed of course; and this was the sorest instance of the calamity. Note, As far as any public trouble is an obstruction to the course of religion, it is to be upon that account, more than any other, sadly lamented, especially by the priests, the Lord's ministers. As far as poverty occasions the decay of piety, and the neglect of Divine offices, and starves the cause of religion among a people, it is indeed a sore judgment. When the famine prevailed God could not have his sacrifices, nor could the priests have their maintenance; and therefore let the Lord's ministers mourn.

14 Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly,
Gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land
Into the house of the LORD your God,
And cry unto the LORD,
15 Alas for the day!
For the day of the LORD *is* at hand,
And as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.
16 Is not the meat cut off before our eyes,
Yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God?
17 The seed is rotten under their clods,
The garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down;
For the corn is withered.
18 How do the beasts groan! [pasture;
The herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no



EASTERN GRANARIES.

Yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate.
19 O LORD, to thee will I cry:
For the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness,
And the flame hath burned all the trees of the field.
20 The beasts of the field cry also unto thee:
For the rivers of waters are dried up,
And the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

We have observed abundance of tears shed for the destruction of the fruits of the earth by the locusts, now here we have those tears turned into the right channel, that of repentance and humiliation before God. The judgment was very heavy, and here they are directed to own the hand of God in it, his mighty hand, and to humble themselves under it. Here is,

First. A proclamation issued out for a general fast. The priests are ordered to appoint one. They must not only mourn themselves, but they must call upon others to mourn too. "Sanctify ye a fast;" that is, let some time be set apart from all worldly business, to be spent in the exercises of religion, in the expressions of repentance, and other extraordinary instances of devotion. Note, Under public judgments there ought to be public humiliations; for by them the Lord God calls to weeping and mourning. With all the marks of sorrow and shame sin must be confessed and bewailed, the righteousness of God must be acknowledged, and his favour implored. Observe what is to be done by a nation at such a time. 1st. A day is to be appointed for this purpose, a day of restraint, so the margin reads it. A day in which people must be restrained from their other ordinary occasions, (that they may the more closely attend God's service,) and from all bodily refreshments. For, 2nd. It must be a fast, a religious abstaining from meat and drink, farther than is of absolute necessity. The king of Nineveh appointed a fast, in which they were to taste nothing, *Jonah* iii. 7. Hereby we own ourselves unworthy of our necessary food, and that we have forfeited it, and deserve to be wholly deprived of it. We punish ourselves, and mortify the body, which has been the occasion of sin; we keep it in a frame fit to serve the soul in serving God; and by the appetite's craving food, the desires of the soul towards that which is better than life, and all the supports of it, are excited. This was in a special manner seasonable, now God was depriving them of their meat and drink; for hereby they accommodate themselves to the affliction they were under. When God saith, You shall fast, it is time to say, We will fast. 3rd. There must be a solemn assembly. The elders and the people, magistrates and subjects, must be gathered together, even "all the inhabitants of the land," that God might be honoured by their public humiliations, that they might thereby take the more shame to themselves, and that they might excite and stir up one another to the religious duties of the day. All had contributed to the national guilt, all shared in the national calamity, and therefore they must all join in the professions of repentance. 4th. They must come together in the temple, "the house of the Lord your God," because that was the house of prayer, and there they might hope to meet with God, because it was the place which he had chosen to put his name there; there they might hope to speed, because it was a type of Christ and his mediation. Thus they interested themselves in Solomon's prayer for the acceptance of all the requests that should be put up in or towards this house, in which their present case was particularly mentioned; 1 *Kin.* viii. 37, "If there be locust, if there be caterpillar." 5th. They must sanctify this fast, must observe it in a religious manner, with sincere devotion. What is a fast worth if it be not sanctified? 6th. They must "cry unto the Lord." To him they must make their complaint, and offer up their supplication to him. When we cry in our affliction, we must cry to the Lord; this is fasting to him, *Zec.* vii. 5.

Secondly. Divers considerations suggested to induce them to proclaim this fast, and to observe it strictly.

1. God was beginning a controversy with them. It was time to "cry unto the Lord, for the day of the Lord is at hand," ver. 15. Either they mean the continuance and consequences of this present judgment, which they now saw but breaking in upon them, or some greater judgment, which this was but a preface to. However it be, this they are taught to make the matter of their lamentation; "Alas, for the day, the day of the Lord is at hand." Therefore cry to God. For, 1st. The day of his judgment is very near, it is at hand; it will not slumber, and therefore you should not. It is time to fast and pray, for you have but a little time to turn you in. 2nd. It will be very terrible; there is no escaping it, no resisting it; "as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come:" see *Isa.* xiii. 6. It is not a correction but a destruction; and it comes from the hand, not of a weak creature, but of the Almighty, and who knows (nay, who doth not know,) the power of his anger? Whither should we go with our cries, but to him from whom the judgment we dread comes? There is no fleeing from him but by fleeing to him; no escaping destruction from the Almighty but by making our submission and supplication to the Almighty. This is "taking hold on his strength, that we may make peace," *Isa.* xxvii. 5.

2. They saw themselves already under the tokens of his displeasure. It was time to fast and pray, for their distress was very great, ver. 16. 1st. Let them look into their own houses, and there was no plenty there, as used to be. Those who kept a good table were now obliged to retrench; "Is not the meat cut off before our eyes?" We see it wherever we go. Note, Though it is common for the heart not to rue what the eye sees not, yet that heart is hard indeed which trembles not, and humbles not itself, when God's judgments are before the eyes. If, when God's hand is lifted up, men will not see, when his hand is laid on they shall see. Is not the meat many a time cut off before our eyes? Let us then labour for that spiritual meat which is not before our eyes, and which cannot be cut off. 2nd. Let them look into God's house, and see the effects of the judgment there. Joy and gladness were cut off from the house of God. Note, The house of our God is the proper place of joy and gladness. When David goes to the altar of God, it is to God my exceeding joy. But when joy and gladness are cut off from God's house, either by the corruption of holy things, or the persecution of holy persons, when serious godliness decays and love waxes cold, then it is time to cry to the Lord, time to cry, Alas!

The prophet returns to describe the grievousness of the calamity in several particulars of it. Corn and cattle are husbandmen's staple commodities; now here they are deprived of both these. *First.* The caterpillars have devoured the corn; ver. 17, the garners, which they used to fill with corn, "are laid desolate, and the barns broken down," because the corn is withered, and the owners think it not worth while to be at the charge of repairing them when they have nothing to put in them, nor likely to have any; for "the seed is rotten under the clods," either through too much rain, or (which was the more common case in Canaan) for want of rain, or perhaps some insects under ground eat it up. When one crop fails the husbandman hopes the next will make it up; but here they despair of that, the seedtime being as bad as the harvest. *Secondly.* The cattle perish too for want of grass; ver. 18, "How do the beasts groan!" This the prophet takes notice of, that the people might be affected with it, and lay to heart the judgment. The groans of the cattle should soften their hard and impenitent hearts. "The herds of cattle," the larger cattle, (black cattle we call them,) they are perplexed, nay, even "the flocks of sheep," who will live upon a common, and take up with very short grass, yet even they are made desolate. See here the inferior creatures suffer for our transgression, and groan under the double burthen of being serviceable to the sin of man and subject to the curse of God for it. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake."

Thirdly. The prophet stirs them up to cry to God, with the consideration of the examples given them for it.

1. His own example; ver. 19, "O Lord, to thee will I cry." He would not put them upon doing that which he would not resolve to do himself; nay, whether they would do it or no, he would. Note, If God's ministers cannot prevail to affect others with the discoveries of Divine wrath, yet they ought to be themselves affected with them; if they cannot bring others to cry to God, yet they must themselves be much in prayer. In time of trouble we must not only pray but cry, must be fervent and importunate in prayer; and to God, from whom both the destruction is and the salvation must be, ought our cry to be always directed. That which engaged him to cry to God was not so much any personal affliction as the national calamity. "The fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness;" which seems to be meant of some parching, scorching heat of the sun, which was as fire to the fruits of the earth; it consumed them all. Note, When God "calls to contend by fire," it concerns those that have any interest in heaven to cry mightily to him for relief: see *Num.* xi. 2; *Am.* vii. 4, 5.

2. The example of the inferior creatures. The beasts of the field do not only groan, but they cry unto thee, ver. 20. They appeal to thy pity, according to their capacity, and as if, though they are not capable of a rational and revealed religion, yet they had something of dependence upon God by natural instinct. At least, when they groan by reason of their calamity, he is pleased to interpret it as if they cried to him; much more will he put such a favourable construction upon the groanings of his own children, though sometimes so feeble that they cannot be uttered, *Rom.* viii. 26. The beasts are here said to cry unto God, as from him the lions seek their meat, *Ps.* civ. 21, and the young ravens, *Job* xxxviii. 41. The complaints of the brute creatures here are for want of water. The rivers are dried up, through the excessive heat, and for want of grass, for "the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness." And what better are they than beasts that never cry to God but for corn and wine, and complain of nothing but the want of the delights of sense; yet their crying to God in those cases shames the stupidity of those that cry not to God in any case.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter, we have, I. A farther description of that terrible desolation which should be made in the land of Judah by the locusts and caterpillars, ver. 1—11. II. A serious call to the people, when they are under this sore judgment, to return and repent, and to fast and pray, and seek unto God for mercy, with directions how to do this aright, ver. 12—17. III. A promise that upon their repentance God would remove the judgment, would repair the breaches made upon them by it, and restore unto them plenty of all good things, ver. 18—27. IV. A prediction of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, by the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter days, ver. 28—32. Thus the beginning of this chapter is made terrible with the tokens of God's wrath, but the latter end of it made comfortable with the assurances of his favour, and it is in the way of repentance that this blessed change is made. So that though it is only the last paragraph of the chapter that points directly at gospel times, yet the whole may be improved as a type and figure, representing the curses of the law invading men for their sins, and the comforts of the Gospel flowing into them upon their repentance.

BLOW ye the trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm in my holy mountain:
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble:
For the day of the LORD cometh, for *it is* nigh at hand;
2 A day of darkness and of gloominess,
A day of clouds and of thick darkness,
As the morning spread upon the mountains:
A great people and a strong;
There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it.
Even to the years of many generations.
3 A fire devoureth before them;
And behind them a flame burneth:
The land *is* as the garden of Eden before them,
And behind them a desolate wilderness;
Yea, and nothing shall escape them.
4 The appearance of them *is* as the appearance of horses;
And as horsemen, so shall they run.
5 Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap,
Like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble,
As a strong people set in battle array.
6 Before their face the people shall be much pained:
All faces shall gather blackness.
7 They shall run like mighty men;
They shall climb the wall like men of war;
And they shall march every one on his ways,
And they shall not break their ranks:
8 Neither shall one thrust another;
They shall walk every one in his path:
And *when* they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.

9 They shall run to and fro in the city;
They shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses;
They shall enter in at the windows like a thief.
10 The earth shall quake before them;
The heavens shall tremble:
The sun and the moon shall be dark,
And the stars shall withdraw their shining:
11 And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army:
For his camp *is* very great:
For *he is* strong that executeth his word:
For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible;
And who can abide it?

Here we have God contending with his own professing people for their sins, and executing upon them the judgment written in the law; *Deu.* xxviii. 42, "The fruit of thy land shall the locust consume," which was one of those diseases of Egypt that God would bring upon them, ver. 60.

First. Here is the war proclaimed; ver. 1, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion;" either to call the invading army together, and then the trumpet sounds a charge, or rather to give notice to Judah and Jerusalem of the approach of the judgment, that they might prepare to meet their God in the way of his judgments, and might endeavour by prayers and tears—the church's best artillery—to put by the stroke. It was the priests' business to sound the trumpet, *Num.* x. 8, both as an appeal to God in the day of their distress and a summons to the people to come together to seek his face. Note, It is the work of ministers to give warning from the word of God of the fatal consequences of sin, and to reveal his wrath from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And though it is not the privilege of Zion and Jerusalem to be exempted from the judgments of God, if they provoke him, yet it is their privilege to be warned of them, that they may make their peace with him. Even in the holy mountain the alarm must be sounded, and then it sounds most dreadful, *Am.* ii. 2. Now, "shall a trumpet be blown in the city," in the holy city, "and the people not be afraid?" Sure they will; *Am.* iii. 6, "Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble." They shall be made to tremble by the judgment itself. Let them therefore tremble at the alarm of it.

Secondly. Here is a general idea given of the day of battle, which cometh, which is nigh at hand, and there is no avoiding it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, in which he will both manifest and magnify himself. It is "a day of darkness and gloominess," ver. 2; literally so, the swarms of locusts and caterpillars being so large and so thick as to darken the sky, *Ex.* x. 15, or rather figuratively; it will be a melancholy time, a time of grievous affliction. And it will come "as the morning spread upon the mountains;" the darkness of this day will come as suddenly as the morning light, as irresistibly, will spread as far, and grow upon them as the morning light.

Thirdly. Here is the army drawn up in array; ver. 2, They are "a great people and strong." Any one that sees the vast numbers that there shall be of locusts and caterpillars, destroying the land, will say, (as we are all apt to be most affected with what is present,) Surely, never was the like before, nor ever will be the like again. Note, Extraordinary judgments are rare things, and seldom happen, which is an instance of God's patience. When God had drowned the world once he promised never to do it again. The army is here described to be, 1. Very bold and daring. They are as horses, as war horses that rush into the battle, and are not affrighted, *Job* xxxix. 22; and as horsemen carried on with martial fire and fury, "so shall they run," ver. 4. Some of the ancients have observed that the head of a locust is very like in shape to the head of a horse. 2. Very loud and noisy. "Like the noise of chariots," of many chariots, when driven furiously over rough ground, "on the tops of the mountains," ver. 5. Hence is borrowed part of the description of the locusts which St. John saw rise out of the bottomless pit, *Rev.* ix. 7, 9, "The shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto the battle; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses running to the battle." Historians tell us, that the noise made by swarms of locusts in those countries that use to be infested with them hath sometimes been heard six miles off. The noise is likewise compared to that of a roaring fire. It is like the "noise of a flame" that "devours the stubble," which noise is the more terrible because that which it is the indication of is devouring. Note, When God's judgments are abroad they make a great noise, and it is necessary for the awakening of a secure and stupid world. 3. They are very regular, and keep rank in their march. Though numerous and greedy of spoil, yet they are "as a strong people set in battle array," ver. 5. "They shall march every one on his way," straight forward, as if they had been trained up by the discipline of war to keep their post, and observe their right-hand man. "They shall not break their ranks, nor one thrust another," ver. 7, 8. Their number and swiftness shall breed no confusion. See how God can make creatures to act by rule that have no reason to act by, when he designs to serve his own purposes by them. And see how necessary it is that those who are employed in any service for God should observe order and keep ranks, should diligently go on in their own work, and not stand in one another's way. 4. They are very swift. They "run like horsemen," ver. 4; run "like mighty men," ver. 7; they "run to and fro in the city," and "run upon the wall," ver. 9; when God "sends forth his command on earth," his word "runs very swiftly," *Ps.* cxlvii. 15. Angels have wings, and so have locusts, when God makes use of them.

Fourthly. Here is the terrible execution done by this formidable army. 1. In the country, ver. 3. View the army in the front, and you will see a fire devouring before them; they consume all as if they breathed fire. View it in the rear, and you will see those that come behind as furious as the foremost; "Behind them a flame burns." When they are gone, then it will appear what destruction they have made. Look upon the fields that they have not yet invaded, and they are as the garden of Eden, pleasant to the eye, and full of good fruits; they are the pride and glory of the country. But look upon the fields that they have eaten up, and they are "as a desolate wilderness," One would not think that these had ever been like the former, and yet so they were perhaps but the day before; or that those should ever be made like these, and yet so they shall be perhaps by to-morrow night; yea, and nothing shall escape them that can possibly be made food for them. Let none be proud of the beauty of their grounds any more than of their bodies, for God can soon change the face of both. 2. In the city they shall "climb the wall," ver. 7; they shall "run upon the houses, and enter in at the window like a thief," ver. 9. When Egypt was plagued with locusts, they filled Pharaoh's houses and the houses of his servants, *Ex.* x. 5, 6. The locusts out of the bottomless pit—Satan's emissaries, and missionaries of the man of sin—do as these locusts. God's judgments, too, when they come with commission, cannot be kept out with bars and bolts; they will find or force their way.

Fifthly. The impressions that should hereby be made upon the people. They shall find it to no purpose to make opposition; these enemies are invulnerable, and therefore irresistible; "When they fall upon the sword they shall not be wounded," ver. 8. And those that cannot be hurt cannot be stopped, and therefore "before their faces the people shall be much pained," ver. 6; as the merchants are in pain for their trading ships when they hear they are just in the mouth of a squadron of the enemies. One was in pain for his field, another for his vineyard, and "all faces gather blackness," which notes the utmost consternation imaginable. Men in fear look pale; but men in despair look black. The whiteness of a sudden fright, when it is settled, turns unto blackness. What is the matter of our pride and pleasure God can soon make the matter of our pain. The terror that the country should be in is described, ver. 10, by figurative expressions. "The earth shall quake," and "the heavens tremble." Even the hearts that seemed undaunted, so firm that nothing would frighten them, as immovable as heaven or earth, yet shall be seized with astonishment. Or, when the inhabitants of the land are made to quake, it seems to them as if all about them trembled too. Through the prevalency of their fear, or for want of the supports of life they used to have, their eye shall wax dim, and their sight fail them, so that to them "the sun and moon shall" seem to "be dark," and the stars to "withdraw their shining." Note, When God frowns upon men the lights of heaven will be small joy to them. For man, by rebelling against his Creator, has forfeited the benefit of all the creatures. But though this here is to be understood figuratively, there is a day coming when it will be accomplished in the letter, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Particular judgments should awaken us to think of the general judgment.

Sixthly. We are directed to look up to him who is the Commander-in-chief of this formidable army, and that is God himself, ver. 11. It is "his army," it is "his camp;" he raised it, he gives it commission; he "utters his voice before it," as the general useth to give orders to his army what to do, and make a speech to animate the soldiers. It is the Lord that gives the word of command to all these animals, which they exactly observe. Some think with this cloud of locusts God sent terrible thunder, for that is called, "the voice of the Lord," and was another of the plagues of Egypt, and this made the heavens and earth tremble. It is "the day of the Lord," as it was called, ver. 1, for in this war we are sure he carries the day; it must need be his, for his camp is great and numerous; those whom he makes war upon he can, as here, overpower with numbers. And whoever he employs to execute his word, as the minister of his justice, is sure to be made strong, and *par negotio*,—'equal to what he undertakes.' Whom God gives commission to he girds with strength for the executing of that commission. And this makes the great day of the Lord very terrible to all those who in that day are to be made the monuments of his justice, for who can abide it? None can escape the arrests of God's wrath, can make head against the force of it, or bear up under the weight of it, 1 *Sam.* vi. 20; *Ps.* lxxvi. 7.

12 Therefore also now, saith the LORD,
Turn ye *even* to me with all your heart,
And with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:
13 And rend your heart, and not your garments,
And turn unto the LORD your God:
For he *is* gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger, and of great kindness,
And repenteth him of the evil.
14 Who knoweth *if* he will return and repent,
And leave a blessing behind him;
Even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD [your God?
15 Blow the trumpet in Zion,
Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:
16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation,
Assemble the elders,
Gather the children, and those that suck the breasts:
Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber,
And the bride out of her closet.
17 Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD,
Weep between the porch and the altar,
And let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD,
And give not thine heritage to reproach,
That the heathen should rule over them:
Wherefore should they say among the people, Where *is* their God?

We have here an earnest exhortation to repentance, inferred from that desolating judgment described and threatened in the foregoing verses: Therefore now turn ye to the Lord. 1. Thus you must answer the end and intention of the judgment; for it was sent for this end, to convince you of your sins, to humble you for them, to reduce you to your right minds and to your allegiance. God brings us into straits that he may bring us to repentance, and so bring us to himself. 2. Thus you may stay the progress of the judgment. Things are bad with you, but thus you may prevent their growing worse; nay, if you take this course, they will soon grow better. Here is a gracious invitation,

First. To a personal repentance, exercised in the soul; "every family apart, and their wives apart," *Zec.* xii. 12. When the judgments of God are abroad each person is concerned to contribute his quota to common supplications, having contributed to the common guilt. Every one must mend one, and mourn for one, and then we should all be mended, and all found among God's mourners. Observe,

1. What we are here called to, which will teach us what it is to repent; for

it is the same that the Lord our God still requires of us, we having all made work for repentance.

1st. We must be truly humbled for our sins, must be sorry we have by sin offended God, and ashamed we have by sin wronged ourselves, both wronged our judgments and wronged our interests. There must be outward expressions of sorrow and shame, fasting and weeping and mourning? Tears for the trouble must be turned into tears for the sin that procured it. But what will the outward expressions of sorrow avail, if the inward impressions be not agreeable, and not only accompany them, but be the root and spring of them, and give rise to them? And, therefore, it follows, "Rend your heart, and not your garments;" not but that, according to the custom of that age, it was proper for them to rend their garments, in token of great grief for their sins, and a holy indignation against themselves for their folly. But rest not in the doing of that, as if that were sufficient, but be more in care to accommodate your spirits than to accommodate your dress to a day of fasting and humiliation. Nay, rend not your garments at all, unless withal you rend your hearts; for the sign without the thing signified is but a jest and a mockery, and an affront to God. Rending the heart is that which God looks for, and requires; that is, the "broken and contrite heart," which he "will not despise," *Ps.* li. 17. When we are greatly grieved in soul for sin, so that it even cuts us to the heart to think how we have dishonoured God, and disparaged ourselves by it,—when we conceive an aversion to sin, and earnestly desire and endeavour to get clear of the principles of it, and never to return to the practice of it,—then we rend our hearts for it, and then will God rend the heavens, and come down to us with mercy.

2nd. We must be thoroughly converted to our God, and come home to him when we fall out with sin. "Turn ye even to me," saith the Lord, ver. 12, and again, ver. 13, "Turn unto the Lord your God." Our fasting and weeping is worth nothing if we do not with it turn to God as our God. When we are fully convinced that it is our duty and interest to keep in with him, and are heartily sorry we have ever turned the back upon him, and thereupon by a firm and fixed resolution make his glory our end, his will our rule, and his favour our felicity, then we return to the Lord our God; and this we are all commanded and invited to do, and to do it quickly.

2. What arguments are here used to persuade this people thus to turn to the Lord, and to turn to him with all their hearts. When the heart is rent for sin, and rent from it, then it is prepared to turn entirely to God, and to be devoted entirely to him, and he will have it all or none. Now, to bring ourselves to this, let us consider,

1st. We are sure he is, in the general, a good God. Therefore we must turn to the Lord our God, not only because he has been just and righteous in punishing us for our sins, the fear of which should draw us to him, but because "he is gracious and merciful," in receiving us upon our repentance, the hope of which should drive us to him. He is gracious and merciful, delights not in the death of sinners, but desires they may turn and live. He is slow to anger against those that offend him, but of great kindness towards those that desire to please him. These very expressions are used in God's proclamation of his name, when he caused his goodness, and with it all his glory, to pass before Moses, *Ex.* xxxiv. 6, 7. He "repenteth him of the evil;" not that he changeth his mind, but when the sinner's mind is changed God's way towards him is changed, the sentence is reversed, and the curse of the law is taken off. Note, That is genuine, ingenuous, and evangelical repentance which ariseth from a firm belief of the mercy of God, which we have sinned against, and yet are not in despair. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The goodness of God, if it be rightly understood, instead of emboldening us to go on in sin, will be the most powerful inducement to repentance, *Ps.* cxxx. 4. The act of indemnity brings those to God whom the act of attainder frightened from him.

2nd. We have reason to hope he will, upon our repentance, give us that good which by sin we have forfeited and deprived ourselves of, ver. 14; that he will return and repent, that he will not proceed against us as he has done, but will act in favour of us. Therefore let us repent of our sins against him, and return to him in a way of duty, because then we may hope he will repent of his judgments against us, and return to us in a way of mercy. Now observe, *First.* The manner of the expectation is very humble and modest; "Who knows if he will?" Some think it is expressed thus doubtfully, to check the presumption and security of the people, and to quicken them to a holy carefulness and liveliness in their repentance, as *Jos.* xxiv. 19. Or, rather, it is expressed doubtfully, because it is the removal of a temporal judgment that they here promise themselves, which we cannot be so confident of as we may that in the general God is gracious and merciful. There is no question at all to be made but that if we repent of our sins God will forgive them, and be reconciled to us; but whether he will remove this or the other affliction we are under may well be questioned, and yet the probability of it should encourage us to repent. Promises of temporal good things are often made with a peradventure: "It may be you shall be hid," *Zeph.* ii. 3. David's sin is pardoned, and yet the child shall die; and when David prayed for its life he said as here, "Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me" in this matter likewise? 2 *Sam.* xii. 22. The Ninevites repented and reformed upon such a consideration as this, *Jon.* iii. 9. *Secondly.* The matter of the expectation is very pious. They hope God will return and repent, and "leave a blessing behind him;" not as if he were about to go from them, and they could be content with any blessing in lieu of his presence, but behind him, that is, after he hath ceased his controversy with us, he will bestow a blessing upon us. And what is it? It is a "meat offering and a drink offering to the Lord our God." The fruits of the earth are called a blessing, *Isa.* lxv. 8, because they depend upon God's blessing, and are necessary blessings to us. They had been deprived of these, and that which grieved them most while they were so was, that God's altar wanted its offerings, and God's priests their maintenance. That, therefore, which they comfort themselves with the prospect of in their return of plenty is, that then there should be meat offerings and drink offerings in abundance brought to God's altar, which they more desired than to see the wonted abundance of meat and drink brought to their own tables. Thus, when Hezekiah was in hopes he should recover of his sickness, he asked, "What is the sign that I shall go up," not to the throne of judgment, or to the council-board, but "to the house of the Lord?" *Isa.* xxxviii. 22. Note, The plentiful enjoyment of God's ordinances in their power and purity is the most valuable instance of a nation's prosperity, and the greatest blessing that can be desired. If God give the blessing of the meat offering and the drink offering, that will bring along with it other blessings,—will sanctify them, sweeten them, and secure them.

Secondly. They are here called to a public national repentance, to be exercised in the solemn assembly, as a national act, for the glory of God and the excitement of one another, and that the neighbour nations might know and observe what it was that qualified them for God's gracious returns in mercy to them, which they would be the admiring witnesses of. Let us see here,

1. How the congregation must be called together, ver. 15, 16. The trumpet was blown, ver. 1, to sound an alarm of war; but now it must be blown in order to a treaty of peace. God is willing to shew mercy to his people, if he do but find them in a frame fit for it, and therefore, Call them together; "sanctify a fast." By the law many annual feasts were appointed, but only one day in the year was to be observed as a fast,—the day of atonement, a day to afflict the soul; and if they had kept close to God and their duty, there would have been no occasion to observe any more. But now they had by sin brought the judgments of God upon them they are often called to fasting. What was said, *ch.* i. 14, is here repeated, "Call a solemn assembly," "gather the people," press them to come together upon this errand; "sanctify the congregation," appoint a time for solemn preparation beforehand, and put them in mind to prepare themselves. Let not the greatest be excused, but assemble the elders, the judges, and magistrates; let not the meanest be passed by, but "gather the children, and those that suck the breasts." It is good to bring little children, as soon as they are capable of understanding any thing, to religious assemblies, that they may be trained up betimes in the way wherein they should go. But these were brought even when they were at the breast; and were kept fasting, that by their cries for the breast the hearts of the parents might be moved to repent of sin, which God might justly visit upon their children, so as that the tongue of the sucking child might "cleave to the roof of his mouth," *Lam.* iv. 4; and that on them God might have compassion, as he had on the infants of Nineveh, *Jon.* iv. 11. New married people must not be exempted; "Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet." Let them not take state upon them as usual, nor put on their ornaments, nor indulge themselves in mirth, but apply themselves to the duties of the public fast with as much gravity and sadness as any of their neighbours. Note, Private joys must always give way to public sorrows, both those for affliction and those for sin.

2. How the work of the day must be carried on, ver. 17. 1st. The priests, the Lord's ministers, must preside in the congregation, and be God's mouth to the people, and theirs to God. Who but they should stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God, whose business it was to make intercession upon ordinary occasions? 2nd. They must officiate "between the porch and the altar." There they used to attend about the sacrifices, and therefore, now they have no sacrifices to offer, or next to none, there they must offer up their spiritual sacrifices. There the people must see them weeping and wrestling, like their father Jacob, and be helped into the same devout frame. Ministers must themselves be affected with those things wherewith they desire to affect others. It was "between the porch and the altar" that Zechariah the son of Jehoiada was put to death for his faithfulness; that precious blood God would require at their hands, and therefore, to turn away the judgment threatened for it, there they must weep. 3rd. They must pray. Words are here put into their mouths which they might in their prayers enlarge upon. Their petition must be, "Spare thy people, O Lord." God's people, when they are in distress, can expect no relief against God's justice but what comes from his mercy. They cannot say, Lord, right us, but, Lord, spare us; we deserve the correction; we need it; but, Lord, mitigate it. The sinner's supplication is, Spare us, good Lord: their plea must be taken from the relation wherein they stand to God. They are thy people, and thine heritage, therefore have compassion on them, but especially from the concern of God's glory in their trouble. Lord, "give not thine heritage to reproach," to the reproach of famine. Let not the land of Canaan, that hath so long been celebrated for the glory of all lands, now be made the scorn of all lands; let not the heathen rule over them, as they easily will do, when thine heritage is impoverished, and disabled to subsist. Let not the heathen make them a proverb or a byword, so some read it; let it never be said, As poor and beggarly as an Israelite. Note, The maintaining of the credit of the nation among its neighbours is a blessing to be desired and prayed for by all that wish well to it. But that reproach of the church is especially to be dreaded and deprecated which reflects upon God; let them not "say among the people, Where is their God?" that God who has promised to help them, whom they have boasted so much of, and put such a confidence in. If God's heritage be destroyed, the neighbours will say, that God was either weak, and could not relieve them, or unkind, and would not. God thus triumphs over the pretended deities; *Deu.* xxxii. 37, "Where are now their gods in whom they trusted?" And Sennacherib thus triumphs over them; "Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?" But it must by no means be suffered that any should say of Israel, "Where is their God?" for we are sure our God is in the heavens, *Ps.* cxv. 2, 3; is in his temple, *Ps.* xi. 4.

18 Then will the LORD be jealous for his land,
And pity his people.
19 Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people,
Behold, I will send you corn,
And wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith:
And I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:
20 But I will remove far off from you the northern *army*,
And will drive him into a land barren and desolate,
With his face toward the east sea,
And his hinder part toward the utmost sea, [up,
And his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come
Because he hath done great things.
21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice:
For the LORD will do great things.
22 Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field:
For the pastures of the wilderness do spring,
For the tree beareth her fruit,
The fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.
23 Be glad then, ye children of Zion,
And rejoice in the LORD your God:
For he hath given you the former rain moderately,
And he will cause to come down for you the rain,
The former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*
24 And the floors shall be full of wheat,
And the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

25 And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten,
The cankerworm, and the caterpiller, and the palmerworm,
My great army which I sent among you.
26 And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied,
And praise the name of the LORD your God,
That hath dealt wondrously with you:
And my people shall never be ashamed.
27 And ye shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel,
And *that* I *am* the LORD your God, and none else:
And my people shall never be ashamed.

See how ready God is to succour and relieve his people, how he waits to be gracious. As soon as ever they humble themselves under his hand, and pray, and seek his face, he presently meets them with his favours. They prayed that God would spare them; and see here with what good words, and comfortable words, he answered them. But God's promises are real answers to the prayers of faith, because with him saying and doing are not two things. Now observe,

First. Whence this mercy promised shall take rise, ver. 18. God will be "jealous for his land, and pity his people." He will have an eye, 1. To his own honour, and the reputation of his covenant with Israel, by which he had conveyed to them that good land, and had given in the value of it very high. Now he will not suffer it to be despised or disparaged, but will be jealous for the credit of his land, and the inhabitants of it, who had been praised as a happy people, and therefore must not lie open to reproach as a miserable people. 2. To their distress. He will "pity his people," and in pity to them he will restore them their forfeited comforts. God's compassion is a great encouragement to those that come humbly to him as penitents and as petitioners.

Secondly. What his mercy shall be, in several instances:

1. The destroying army shall be dispersed and defeated; ver. 20, "I will remove far off from you the northern army," that army of locusts and caterpillars that invaded you from the north, brought in upon the wings of a north wind—an army which you could put no stop to the progress of. But when you have made your peace with God he will ease you of these soldiers that are quartered upon you, and will "drive them into a land barren and desolate," into that vast howling wilderness that Israel wandered in, where, after having surfeited upon the plenty of Canaan, they shall perish for want of sustenance. Those that have their face to the east sea, the Dead Sea, which lay east of Judæa, shall perish in that, and the rear of the army shall be lost in the Great Sea, called here "the utmost sea." They had made the land barren and desolate, and God will cast them into a land barren and desolate. Thus those whom God employs for the correction of his people come afterwards to be themselves reckoned with, and the rod thrown into the fire. Nothing shall remain of these swarms of insects but the ill savour of them. When Egypt was eased of the plague of locusts they were carried away to the Red Sea, *Ex.* x. 19. Note, When an affliction has done its work it shall be removed in mercy, as the locusts of Canaan were from a penitent people; not as the locusts of Egypt were removed in wrath from an impenitent prince, only to make room for another plague. Many interpreters, by this northern army, understand that of Sennacherib, which was dispersed, when God by it had "accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, and upon Jerusalem," *Isa.* x. 12. This enemy shall be driven away, "because he has done great things," has done a great deal of mischief, and has magnified to do it, has done it in the pride of his heart. Therefore it follows, ver. 21, "The Lord will do great things" for his people, as the enemy has done great things against them, to convince them that wherein they deal proudly he is and will be above them; that, what great things soever they did, they did no more than God commissioned them to do; and as, when he said to them, Go, they went, so when he said to them, Come, they came, to shew that they were soldiers under him.

2. The destroyed land shall be watered and made fruitful. When the army is scattered, yet what shall we do if the desolation they have made continue? It is therefore promised, ver. 22, that "the pastures of the wilderness," the pastures which the locusts had left as bare as the wilderness, shall again spring, and the trees shall again bear their fruit, particularly the fig-tree and the vine. But when we see how the country is wasted we are tempted to say, "Can these dry bones live?" "If the Lord should make windows in heaven," it cannot be. But it shall be; for, ver. 23, "The Lord has given," and will give you, "the former rain and the latter rain;" and if he give them in mercy he will give them moderately, so that the rain shall not turn into a judgment; and he will give them in due season, "The latter rain in the first month," when it was wanted and expected. It would make it comfortable to them to see it coming from the hand of God, and ordered by his wisdom, for then we are sure it is well ordered. 'He hath given you a teacher of righteousness,' so the margin reads it, for the same word that signifies 'the rain' signifies 'a teacher;' and that which we translate 'moderately' is, 'according to righteousness.' And this teacher of righteousness, saith one of the rabbins, is the King Messias, and of him many others understand this; for he is a teacher come from God, and he shews us the way of righteousness. But others understand it of any prophet that instructs unto righteousness, and some of Hezekiah particularly; others of Isaiah. Note, It is a good sign God has mercy in store for a people when he sends them teachers of righteousness, pastors after his own heart.

3. All their losses shall be repaired; ver. 25, "I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten." You shall be comforted according to the time that you have been afflicted, and shall have years of plenty to balance the years of famine. Thus doth it "repent the Lord concerning his servants," when they repent; and, to shew how perfectly he is reconciled to them, he makes good the damage they have sustained by his judgments, and, like the gaoler, "washeth their stripes." Though in justice he distrained upon them, and did them no wrong, yet in compassion he makes restitution; as the father of the prodigal, upon his return, made up all he had lost by his sin and folly, and took him into his family, as in his former estate. The locusts and caterpillars are here called God's "great army," which he sent among them, and he will therefore repair what they had devoured, because they were his army.

4. They shall have great abundance of all good things. The earth shall yield her increase, and they shall enjoy it. Look into the store where they lay up, and you shall find "the floors full of wheat, and the fats overflowing with wine and oil," ver. 24; whereas, in the day of their distress, the "wine and oil languished," and "the barns were broken down," *ch.* i. 10, 17. Look upon their tables, where they lay out what they have laid up, and you shall find that they "eat in plenty and are satisfied," ver. 26; they do not eat to excess, nor are surfeited. We hope the drunkards are cured by the late affliction of their inordinate love of wine and strong drink; for, though they were brought in howling for their scarcity, *ch.* i. 5, they are not brought in again here singing for the plenty of it. But now all shall have enough, and shall know when they have enough, for God will make their food nourishing, and give them to be content with it.

These are the mercies promised, and in these God doth great things, ver. 21; "He deals wondrously with his people," ver. 26. Herein he glorifies his power, and shews that he can relieve his people, though their distress be never so great; and glorifies his goodness that he will do it upon their repentance, though their provocations were never so great. Note, When God deals graciously with poor sinners that return to him, it must be acknowledged that he deals wondrously and doth great things. Some expositors understand these promises figuratively, as pointing at the gospel grace, and having their accomplishment in the abundant comforts that are treasured up for believers in the covenant of grace, and the satisfaction of soul they have therein. When God sends us his promises to be the matter of our comfort, his graces to be the grounds of it, and his Spirit to be the author of it, we may well own that he hath sent us, according to his promise here, ver. 19, "corn, and wine, and oil," or that which is unspeakably better, and we have reason to be satisfied therewith.

Thirdly. What use shall be made of these returns of God's mercy to them, and the good account they shall turn to.

1. God shall have the glory of it; for they shall "rejoice in the Lord their God," ver. 23; and what is the matter of their rejoicing shall be the matter of their thanksgiving. They shall "praise the name of the Lord their God," ver. 26, and not praise their idols, nor call their corn and wine the rewards that their lovers had given them. Note, Then the plenty of our creature comforts is a mercy indeed to us, when by them our hearts are enlarged in love and thankfulness to God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, though we serve him but poorly. When God restores to us plenty, after we have known scarcity, as it is doubly pleasant to us, so it should make us the more thankful to God. When Israel comes out of a wilderness into a Canaan, and there eats and is full, surely he will then bless the Lord with a very sensible pleasure, for that good land which he has given him, *Deu.* viii. 10.

2. They shall have the credit and comfort and spiritual benefit of it. When God gives them plenty again, and gives them to be satisfied with it, 1st. Their reputation shall be retrieved. They and their God shall be no more reflected upon as unfaithful to one another, when they are returned to him in a way of duty, and he to them in a way of mercy; ver. 19, "I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen," that triumphed in your calamities, and insulted over you. And, ver. 26, and again, ver. 27, "My people shall never be ashamed," as they have been of their good land which they used to boast of, but shall again and ever have the same occasion to boast of it. Note, It redounds much to the honour of God when he doth that which saves the honour of his people; and those that are his people indeed, though they may be for a time, they shall not be always a reproach among the heathen. If we be rightly ashamed of our sins against God we shall never be ashamed of our glorying in God. 2nd. Their joys shall be revived; ver. 23, "Be glad, and rejoice, O land," and all the inhabitants of it. Times of plenty use to be times of joy; yet the favour of God puts gladness into the heart, more than they have whose corn, and wine, and oil increaseth. But especially "be glad, then, ye children of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God," ver. 23. They mourned in Zion, ver. 15, and therefore there in a particular manner they shall rejoice; for those that sow in penitential tears shall certainly reap in thankful joys. The children of Zion, who led the rest in fasting, must lead the rest in rejoicing. But observe, they shall rejoice in the Lord their God; not so much in the good things themselves that are given them, as in the good hand that gives them, and in the return of his favours to them, as theirs in covenant, which these good things are the tokens and pledges of. The joy of harvest and the joy of a feast must both terminate in God, whose love we should taste in all the gifts of his bounty, that we may make him our chief joy, as he is our chief good, and the fountain of all good to us. 3rd. Their faith in God shall be confirmed and increased. When temporal mercies are made by the grace of God to be of spiritual advantage to us, and plenty for the body is so far from being an enemy, as with many it proves, that it becomes a friend to the prosperity of the soul, then they are mercies indeed to us. This is promised here, ver. 27, "Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, the Holy One in the midst of thee," *Hos.* xi. 9, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else. As it proves that the Lord is God, and there is none other, because he wounds and he heals, he forms light and darkness, he doth good and evil, *Isa.* xlv. 7; *Deu.* xxxii. 39; so it proves him to be the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, and a Father to them; that as a Father he both corrects them when they offend and comforts them when they repent. It was the burthen of the threatenings in Ezekiel's prophecy, Such and such evils I will bring upon you, and "ye shall know that I am the Lord." And the same is here made the crown of the promises, You shall eat and be satisfied, and rejoice, and thus "ye shall know that I am the Lord." Note, We should labour to grow in our acquaintance with God by all providences, both merciful and afflictive. When God gives to his people plenty, and peace, and joy, upon their return to him, he thereby gives them to understand that he is pleased with their repentance, that he has pardoned their sins, and that he is theirs as much as ever; that they are taken into the same covenant with him, for he is the Lord their God, and into the same communion, for he is in the midst of them, nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for; and, as the sun in the centre of the worlds, so in the midst of them as to diffuse his benign influences to all the parts of his land.

3. Even the inferior creatures shall share in it, and be made easy by it; "Fear not, O land," ver. 21; "Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field," ver. 22. They had suffered for the sin of man and for God's quarrel with him, and now they shall fare the better for man's repentance, and God's reconciliation to him. Nay, the beasts were said to cry unto God, *ch.* i. 20, and now that cry is answered, and they are bid not to be afraid, for they shall have plenty of all that which their nature craves. God, in sparing Nineveh, had an eye to the cattle, *Jon.* iv. 11; for the cattle had fasted, *ch.* iii. 8. This may lead us to think of the restitution of all things, when the creature that is now made subject to vanity, and groans under it, shall be brought, though not into the glorious joy, yet "into the glorious liberty of the children of God," *Rom.* viii. 21.

28 And it shall come to pass afterward,
That I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh;
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions:
29 And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids
In those days will I pour out my spirit.
30 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth,
Blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.
32 And it shall come to pass,
That whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered:
For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance,
As the LORD hath said,
And in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

The promises of corn, and wine, and oil, in the foregoing verses, would be very acceptable to a wasted country, but here we are taught that we must not rest in those things. God has reserved some better things for us; and these verses have reference to those better things, both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory, and the happiness of true believers in both. We are here told,

First. How the kingdom of grace shall be introduced by a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, ver. 28, 29. We are not at a loss for the meaning of this promise, nor in doubt what it refers to, and wherein it had its accomplishment, for the apostle Peter has given us an infallible explication and application of it, assuring us that when the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles at the day of Pentecost, *Acts* ii. 1, &c., that was the very thing "which was spoken of here by the prophet Joel." *Acts* ii. 16, 17. That was the gift of the Spirit, which, according to the prediction, was to come; and we are not to look for any other, no more than for another accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. Now,

1. The blessing itself here promised is the pouring out of the Spirit of God, his gifts, graces, and comforts, which the blessed Spirit is the Author of. We often read in the Old Testament of the Spirit of the Lord coming by drops, as it were, upon the judges and the prophets whom God had raised up for extraordinary services; but now the Spirit shall be poured out plentifully in a full stream, as was promised with an eye to gospel times, *Isa.* xliv. 3, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed."

2. The time fixed for this is afterwards; after the fulfilling of the foregoing promises this shall be fulfilled. St. Peter expounds this of the last days, the days of the Messiah, by whom the world was to have its last revelation of the Divine will and grace, in the last days of the Jewish church, a little before its dissolution.

3. The extent of this blessing in respect of the person on whom it shall be bestowed. The Spirit shall be "poured upon all flesh," that is, not as hitherto, upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles also, for in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, *Rom.* x. 11, 12. Hitherto Divine revelation was confined to the seed of Abraham, none but those of the land of Israel had the spirit of prophecy, but in the last days "all flesh shall see the glory of God," *Isa.* xl. 5, and shall come to "worship before him," *Isa.* lxvi. 23. The Jews understand it of all flesh in the land of Israel; and Peter himself did not fully understand it as speaking of the Gentiles, till he saw it accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his friends, who were Gentiles, *Acts* x. 44, 45, which was but a continuation of that same gift which was bestowed on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit shall be poured out "upon all flesh," that is, upon all those whose hearts are made hearts of flesh, soft and tender, and so prepared to receive the impressions and influences of the Holy Ghost. "Upon all flesh," that is, upon some of all sorts of men; the gifts of the Spirit shall not be so sparing, or so much confined, as they have been, but shall be more general and diffusive of themselves. 1st. The Spirit shall be poured out upon some of each sex; Not "your sons" only, but "your daughters" shall prophesy. We read of four sisters in one family that were prophetesses, *Acts* xxi. 9. Not the parents only, but the children, shall be filled with the Spirit, which intimates the continuance of this gift for some ages successively in the church. 2nd. Upon some of each age; "Your old men" that are past their vigour, and whose spirits begin to decay; "your young men," that have yet but little acquaintance with, and experience of, Divine things, yet they shall "dream dreams," and "see visions," that is, God will reveal himself by dreams and visions both to young and old. 3rd. Upon those of the meanest rank and conditions, even "upon the servants and the handmaids." The Jewish doctors say, 'that prophecy doth not reside in any but such as are wise, valiant, and rich, not upon the soul of a poor man or a man in sorrow;' but in Christ Jesus there is "neither bond nor free," *Gal.* iii. 28. There were many that were called being servants, 1 *Cor.* vii. 21, but that was no obstruction to their receiving the Holy Ghost. 4th. The effect of this blessing. "They shall prophesy;" they shall receive new discoveries of Divine things, and that not for their own use only, but for the benefit of the church. They shall interpret Scripture, and speak of things secret, distant, and future, which, by the utmost sagacities of reason and their natural powers, they could not have an insight into or foresight of. By these extraordinary gifts the Christian church was first founded and set up, and the Scriptures written, and ministry settled, by which, with the ordinary operations and influences of the Spirit, it was to be afterwards maintained and kept up.

Secondly. How the kingdom of glory shall be introduced by the universal change of nature, ver. 30, 31. The pouring out of the Spirit will be very comfortable to the righteous; but let the unrighteous hear this and tremble. There is "a great and terrible day of the Lord" coming, which shall be ushered in with wonders in heaven and earth, "blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke," the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood. This is to have its full accomplishment, as the learned Dr. Pocock thinks, in the day of judgment, at the end of time, before which these signs will be performed in the letter of them; yet so as that it was accomplished in part in the death of Christ, which is called the judgment of this world, when the earth quaked and the sun was darkened, and a great and terrible day" it was; and more fully in the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a type and figure of the general judgment, and before which there were many amazing prodigies, besides the convulsions of states and kingdoms prophesied of under the figurative expressions of turning the sun "into darkness, and the moon into blood," and the "wars and rumours of wars," and "distress of nations," which our Saviour spoke of as the beginning of these sorrows, *Mat.* xxiv. 6, 7. But before the last judgment there will be wonders indeed in heaven and earth,—the dissolution of both, without a metaphor. The judgments of God upon a sinful world, and the frequent destruction of wicked kingdoms by fire and sword, are prefaces to, and presages of, the judgment of the world at the last day. Those on whom the Spirit is poured out shall foresee and foretell that "great and terrible day of the Lord," and expound the "wonders in heaven and earth," that go before it; for as to his first coming, so to his second, did and do all the prophets bear witness, *Rev.* x. 7.

Thirdly. The safety and happiness of all true believers, both in the first and second coming of Jesus Christ, ver. 32. This speaks of particular persons; for to them the New Testament has more respect, and less to kingdoms and nations, than the Old. Now observe here,

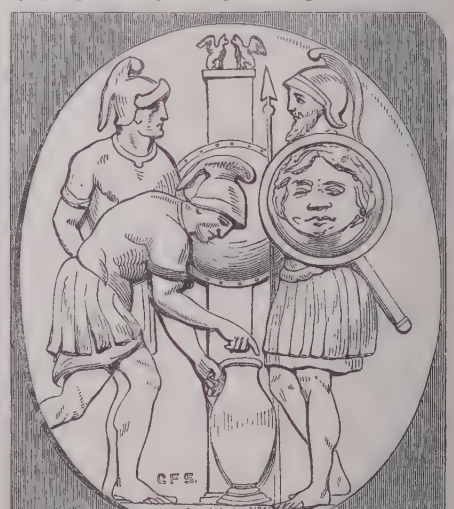
1. That there is a salvation wrought out. Though the day of the Lord will be great and terrible, yet "in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance" from the terror of it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, who knows how to separate between the precious and the vile. In the everlasting Gospel, which went from Zion, in the church of the firstborn, typified by mount Zion, and which is the Jerusalem that is from above, there is deliverance; a way of escaping the wrath to come is found out and laid open. Christ is himself not only the Saviour, but the salvation; he is so to the ends of the earth. This deliverance, laid up for us in the covenant of grace, is the performance of the promises made to the fathers; "There shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said:" see *Lu.* i. 72. Note, This is ground of comfort and hope to sinners, that, whatever danger there is in their case, there is also deliverance, deliverance for them if it be not their own fault. And if we would share in this deliverance we must apply ourselves to the gospel Zion, to God's Jerusalem.

2. That there is a remnant that are interested in this salvation, and for whom the deliverance is wrought. It is "in this remnant," that is, among them, that the deliverance is; or in them, that is, in their souls and spirits, they are the earnests and evidences of it; "Christ in you the hope of glory." They are called a remnant, because they are but a few in comparison with the multitudes that are left to perish; a little remnant, but a chosen one, a "remnant according to the election of grace." And here we are told who they are that should be delivered in the great day. 1st. Those that sincerely call upon God. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord," whether Jew or Gentile, (for the apostle expounds it so, *Rom.* x. 13, where he lays this down as the great rule of the Gospel, by which we must all be judged,) "shall be delivered." This calling on God supposeth knowledge of him, faith in him, desire towards him, dependence on him, and, as an evidence of all this, a conscientious obedience to him; for without that, crying, "Lord, Lord," will not stand us in any stead. Note, It is the praying remnant that shall be the saved remnant; and it will aggravate the ruin of those who perish that they might have been saved on such easy terms. 2nd. Those that are effectually called to God. The deliverance is sure to the remnant whom the Lord shall call; not only with the common call of the Gospel, with which many are called that are not chosen, but with a special call into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, 'whom the Lord predestinates or prepares,' so the Chaldee. St. Peter borrows this phrase, *Acts* ii. 39. Note, Those only shall be delivered in the great day that are now effectually called from sin to God, from self to Christ, from things below to things above.

CHAPTER III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had a gracious promise of deliverance in mount Zion and Jerusalem; now this whole chapter is a comment upon that promise, shewing what that deliverance shall be, how it shall be wrought by the destruction of the church's enemies, and how it shall be perfected in the everlasting rest and joy of the church. This was in part accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from the attempt that Sennacherib made upon it, in Hezekiah's time, and afterwards in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, and other deliverances wrought for the Jewish church betwixt that and Christ's coming. But it has a farther reference to the great redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, and the destruction of our spiritual enemies and all their agents, and will have its full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day. Here is a prediction. I. Of God's reckoning with the enemies of his people for all the injuries and indignities that they had done them, and returning them upon their own head, ver. 1—8. II. Of God's judging all nations when the measure of their iniquity is full, and appearing publicly, to the everlasting confusion of all impenitent sinners, and the everlasting comfort of all his faithful servants, ver. 9—17. III. Of the provision God has made for the refreshment of his people, for their safety and purity, when their enemies shall be made desolate, ver. 18—21. These promises were not of private interpretation only, but were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of this Scripture might have hope.

FOR, behold, in those days, and in that time,
When I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and [Jerusalem,
2 I will also gather all nations,
And will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat
And will plead with them there
For my people and *for* my heritage Israel,



CASTING LOTS.—ver 3.

Whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted
3 And they have cast lots for my people; [my land.
And have given a boy for an harlot,
And sold a girl for wine,
That they might drink
4 Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon,
And all the coasts of Palestine?
Will ye render me a recompence?
And if ye recompense me,
Swiftly *and* speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head;
5 Because ye have taken my silver and my gold,
And have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things:
6 The children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem
Have ye sold unto the Grecians,
That ye might remove them far from their border

SLAVE MARKET.

7 Behold, I will raise them out of the place
Whither ye have sold them,
And will return your recompence upon your own head:
8 And I will sell your sons and your daughters
Into the hand of the children of Judah, [off:
And they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far
For the LORD hath spoken *it*.

We have often heard of the "year of the Redeemer," and the "year of recompences for the controversy of Zion;" now here we have a description of the transactions of that year, and a prophecy of what shall be done when it comes, whenever it comes, for it comes often, and at the end of time it will come once for all.

First. It shall be the year of the redeemed, for God will "bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem," ver. 2. Though the bondage of God's people may be grievous and very long, yet it shall not be everlasting. That in Egypt ended at length in their deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God; "Let my son go that he may serve me." That in Babylon shall likewise end well. And the Lord Jesus will provide for the effectual redemption of poor captived souls from under the dominion of sin and Satan, and will proclaim that acceptable year, the year of jubilee, the release of debts and servants, and the "opening of the prison to them that were bound." There is a day, there is a time fixed, for the bringing again of the captivity of God's children, for the redeeming of them from the power of the grave; and it shall be the last day, and the period of all time.

Secondly. It shall be the "year of recompences for the controversy of Zion." Though God may suffer the enemies of his people to prevail against them very far, and for a long time, yet he will call them to an account for it, and lead captivity captive, *Ps.* lxviii. 18; will lead those captive that led his people captive, *Rev.* xiii. 10. Observe,

1. Who they are that shall be reckoned with; "All nations," ver. 2. This intimates, 1st. That all the nations had made themselves liable to the judgment of God, for wrong done to his people. Persecution is the reigning crying sin of the world; that lying in wickedness itself is set against godliness. The enmity that is in the old serpent, the god of this world, against the seed of the woman, appears more or less in the children of this world; "Marvel not if the world hate you." 2nd. That whatever nation injured God's nation, they should not go unpunished; for he that toucheth the Israel of God shall be made to know that he toucheth the apple of his eye. Jerusalem will be a "burthensome stone to all people," *Zec.* xii. 3; but the neighbour nations shall be particularly reckoned with, "Tyre and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine," or the Philistines, who had been troublesome neighbours to the Israel of God, ver. 4. When the more remote and potent nations that laid Israel waste are reckoned with, the impotent malice of these that lay near them, and "helped forward the affliction," *Zec.* i. 15, and made a hand of it, *Eze.* xxvi. 2, shall not be passed by. Note, Little persecutors shall be called to an account as well as great ones; and, though they could not do much mischief, shall be reckoned with according to the wickedness of their endeavours, and the mischief they would have done.

2. The sitting of this court for judgment. They shall all be gathered, ver. 2; that they who have combined together against God's people, "with one consent," *Ps.* lxxxiii. 5, may together receive their doom. They shall be "brought down into the valley of Jehoshaphat," which lay near Jerusalem, and there God "will plead with them." 1st. Because it is fit that criminals should be tried in the same country where they did the fact. 2nd. For their greater confusion, when they shall see that Jerusalem, which they have so long endeavoured and hoped for the ruin of, in spite of all their rage made a praise in the earth. 3rd. For the great comfort and honour of God's Jerusalem, which shall see God pleading their cause. 4th. Then shall be reacted what God did for Jehoshaphat, when he gave him victory over those that invaded him, and furnished him and his people with matter of joy and praise, in the valley of Berachah: see 2 *Chr.* xx. 26. 5th. It was in this valley of Jehoshaphat, as Dr. Lightfoot suggests, that Sennacherib's army, or part of it, lay, when it was destroyed by an angel. They came together to ruin Jerusalem, but God brought them together for their own ruin, "as sheaves into the floor," *Mic.* iv. 12.

3. The plaintiff called, on whose behalf this prosecution is set on foot. It is "for my people, and for my heritage Israel." It is their cause that God will now plead with jealousy. Note, God's people are his heritage, his peculiar, his portion, his treasure above all people, *Ex.* xix. 5; *Deu.* xxxii. 9. They are his demesne, and therefore he has a good action against those that trespass upon them.

4. The charge exhibited against them, which is very particular. Many affronts they had put upon God by their idolatries; but that for which God has a quarrel with them is the affront they have put upon his people, and upon the vessels of his sanctuary.

1st. They had been very abusive to the people of Israel; had "scattered them among the nations," and forced them to seek for shelter where they could find a place. Or, carried them captives into their respective countries, and there industriously dispersed them for fear of their incorporating for their common safety. They parted their land, and took every one his share of it as their own; nay, "They have cast lots for my people," and sold them. When they had taken them prisoners, *First.* They made a jest of them, made a scorn of them, as of no value,—whom they would not release, and yet thought them not worth the keeping. They made nothing of playing them away at dice, or they made a dividend of the prisoners by lot, as the soldiers did of Christ's garments. *Secondly.* They made a gain of them. When they had them they sold them, yet with so much contempt, that they did not increase their wealth by their price, but sold them for their pleasure rather than their profit; they gave a boy taken in war for the hire of a harlot, and a girl for so many bottles of wine as would serve them for one sitting—a goodly price at which they valued them, and goodly preferment for a son and daughter of Israel, to be a slave and a drudge in a tavern or a brothel. Observe here how that which is got by one sin is commonly spent upon another. The spoil which the enemies of the Jews gathered by injustice and violence they scattered and threw away in drinking and whoring; such is the character many times, and such the conversation, of the enemies and persecutors of the people of God. The Tyrians and Philistines, when they seized any of the children of Judah and Jerusalem, either took them prisoners in war or kidnapped them; they sold them to the Grecians, (with whom the men of Tyre traded in the persons of men, *Eze.* xxvii. 13,) that they "might remove them far from their own border," ver. 6. It was a great reproach to Israel, God's firstborn, his freeborn, to be thus bought and sold among the heathen.

2nd. They had unjustly seized God's silver and gold, ver. 5, by which some understand the wealth of Israel. The silver and gold which God's people had he calls his, because they had received it from him, and devoted it to him; and whosoever robbed them God took it as if they had robbed him, and would make reprisals accordingly. Those that take away the estates of good men for well-doing will be found guilty of sacrilege—they take God's silver and gold. But it seems rather to be meant of the vessels and treasures of the temple, which God here calls his goodly, pleasant things, precious and desirable to him, and all that are his. These they carried into their temples, as trophies of their victory over God's Israel, thinking therein they triumphed over Israel's God; nay, and that their idols triumphed over him. Thus the ark was put in Dagon's temple. Thus they did unjustly: "What have you to do with me?" ver. 4; that is, with my people. What wrong have they done you? what provocation have they given you? You had nothing to do with them, and yet you do all this against them. Devices are devised against the quiet in the land, and those offended and harmed that are harmless and inoffensive. "Will you render me a recompence?" Can they pretend that either God or his people have done them any injury, for which they may justify themselves by the law of retaliation in doing them these mischiefs? No, they have no colour for it. Note, It is no new thing for those that have been very civil and obliging to their neighbours yet to find them very unkind and unneighbourly, and for those who do no injuries yet to suffer many.

5. The sentence passed upon them. In general, ver. 4, "If ye recompense me," if you pretend a quarrel with me, if you provoke me thus to jealousy, if you touch the apple of mine eye, "I will swiftly and speedily return your recompence upon your own head." Those that contend with God will find themselves unable to make their part good with him. He will recompense them suddenly when they little think of it, and have not time to prevent it; if he take them to task, he will soon effect their ruin. Particularly it is threatened, 1st. That they shall not gain their end in the mischief they designed against God's people. They thought to have removed them so far from their border that they should never return to it again, ver. 6; but, saith God, "I will raise them out of the place whither you have sold them," and they shall not, as you intended, be buried alive there. Men's selling the people of God will not deprive him of his property in them. 2nd. That they shall be paid in their own coin, as Adonibezek was; ver. 8, "I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah;" you shall lie as much at their mercy as they have been at yours, *Isa.* lx. 14. Thus the Jews had "rule over them that hated them," *Est.* ix. 1; and then they shall justly be sold to "the Sabeans, to a people far off." This, some think, had its accomplishment in the victories obtained by the Maccabees over the enemies of the Jews. Others think it looks as far forward as the last day, when "the upright shall have dominion," *Ps.* xlix. 14; and "the saints shall judge the world." It is certain none ever hardened his heart against God, or his church, and prospered long. No; not

Pharaoh himself, for "the Lord hath spoken it," for the comfort of all his suffering servants, that "Vengeance is his, and he will repay."

9 Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles;
Prepare war, wake up the mighty men,
Let all the men of war draw near; let them come up:
10 Beat your plowshares into swords,
And your pruninghooks into spears:
Let the weak say, I *am* strong.
11 Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen,
And gather yourselves together round about:
Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD.
12 Let the heathen be wakened,
And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat:
For there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

VALLEY OF JEHOSHAPHAT.

13 Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe:
Come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow;
For their wickedness *is* great.
14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision:
For the day of the LORD *is* near in the valley of decision.
15 The sun and the moon shall be darkened,
And the stars shall withdraw their shining.
16 The LORD also shall roar out of Zion,
And utter his voice from Jerusalem;
And the heavens and the earth shall shake:
But the LORD *will be* the hope of his people,
And the strength of the children of Israel
17 So shall ye know that I *am* the LORD your God
Dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain:
Then shall Jerusalem be holy,
And there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

What the psalmist had long before ordered to be "said among the heathen," *Ps.* xcvi. 10, the prophet here will have in like manner to be published to all the nations, that "the Lord reigns," and that "he comes, he comes to judge the earth," as he had long been judging in the earth. The notice here given of God's judging the nations may have reference to the destruction of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and to the antichrist especially, and all the proud enemies of the Christian church. But some of the best interpreters, ancient and modern, particularly the learned Dr. Pocock, think the scope of these verses is to set forth the day of the last judgment, under the similitude of God's making war upon the enemies of his kingdom, and his gathering in the harvest of the earth, both which similitudes we find used in the *Revelation, ch.* xiv. 18; xix. 11. Here we have,

First. A challenge given to all the enemies of God's kingdom to do their worst. To signify to them that God is preparing war against them, they are called upon to prepare war against him, ver. 9—11. When the hour of God's judgment is come, effectual methods shall be taken to gather all nations "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty," *Rev.* xvi. 14; xx. 8. It seems to be here spoken ironically, "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles;" let all the forces of the nations be summoned to join in confederacy against God and his people. It is like that, *Isa.* viii. 9, "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and gird yourselves," but ye shall be "broken to pieces." "Prepare war," muster up all your strength, "wake up the mighty men;" call them into your service, excite them to vigilance and resolution. "Let all the men of war draw near, let them come" and enter the lists with Omnipotence if they dare. Let them not complain for want of weapons, but let them "beat their ploughshares into swords," and their "pruning-hooks into spears." Let them resolve, if they will, never to return to their husbandry again, but either to conquer or die. Let none plead unfitness to bear arms, but "let the weak say, I am strong," and will venture into the field of battle. Thus doth a God of almighty power bid defiance to all the opposition of the powers of darkness. Let "the heathen rage," and "the kings of the earth take counsel together" against the Lord and his Christ. Let them assemble and come, and gather themselves together; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them, and while he thus calls them has them in derision, *Ps.* ii. 1, 4. The heathen must be wakened, must be raised from the dead, that they may "come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat," to receive their doom, ver. 12; may come up out of their graves, come up into the air, to meet the Lord there. Jehoshaphat signifies, 'The judgment of the Lord.' Let them come to the place of God's judgment, which perhaps is the chief reason for the using of this name here; but it is put together as a proper name, for the sake of allusions to the place so called, which we observed before. Let them come thither where God will "sit to judge the heathen," to that throne of glory before which shall be "gathered all nations," *Mat.* xxv. 32; for before the judgment-seat of Christ we must all appear. The challenge, ver. 9, is turned into a summons, ver. 12. It is not only, Come if you dare, but, You shall come whether you will or no, for there is no escaping the judgments of God.

Secondly. A charge given to the ministers of God's justice to appear and act against these daring enemies of his kingdom among men. And, therefore, "Cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord," ver. 11; when they bring their forces into the field, let God bring his. Let the archangel's trumpet sound a charge, to call together his mighty ones, that is, his angels. Perhaps it is with reference to this that Christ's coming from heaven at the last day is said to be "with his mighty angels," 2 *Thes.* i. 7. These are the hosts of the Lord, that shall fight his battles then, when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality and power, when he shall "judge among the heathen," *Ps.* cx. 6. Some think these words, ver. 9, 10, "Prepare war, wake up the mighty men," are not a challenge to the enemy's hosts, but a charge to God's hosts—let them draw near and come up. When God's cause is to be pleaded, either by the law or by the sword, he hath those ready that shall plead it effectually; witnesses ready to appear for him in the court of judgment; soldiers ready to appear for him in the field of battle. They shall "beat ploughshares into swords," if need be; however, it is plain to them the charge is given; ver. 13, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe;" that is, their wickedness is great, the measure of it is full, and they are ripe for ruin. Our Saviour has expounded this, *Mat.* xiii. 39, "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels;" and they are commanded to thrust in their sickle, their sharp sickle, and gather in both the harvest and the vintage, *Rev.* xiv. 15, 18. Note, The greatness of men's wickedness makes them ripe for God's judgment.

Thirdly. The vast appearance that shall be in that great and solemn day; ver. 14, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision," the same which before was called the valley of Jehoshaphat, or, of the judgment of the Lord, for "the day of the Lord is near" in that valley. Note, 1st. The judgment day, that day of the Lord, has all along been looked upon and spoken of as nigh at hand. Enoch said, Behold, the Lord comes, as if the judge were then standing before the door; because it is certain that day will come, and will come according to the appointment, and "a thousand years with God are but as one day." Things are ripening apace for it; we ought always to be ready for it, because our judgment is at hand. 2nd. The day of judgment will be the day of decision, when every man's eternal state will be determined; and the controversy that has been long depending between the kingdom of Christ and that of Satan shall be finally decided, and an end put to the struggle; 'The valley of the distribution of judgment,' so the Chaldee; when "every man shall receive according to the things done in the body." 'The valley of threshing,' so the margin, carrying on the metaphor of the harvest, ver. 13. The proud enemies of God's people will then be crushed and broken to pieces, and made as the "dust of the summer threshing-floors." 3rd. Innumerable multitudes will be gathered together to receive their final doom in that day; as in the destruction of Gog we read of the valley of Hamongog, and the city of Hamonah, *Eze.* xxxix. 15, 16, both signifying the multitude of the vanquished enemies; it is the word here used, Hamonim, Hamonim, expressed by way of admiration—O what vast multitudes of sinners will Divine justice be glorified in the ruin of at that day! 'A multitude of living,' saith one of the rabbins, 'and a multitude of dead;' for Christ shall come to judge "both the quick and the dead."

Fourthly. The amazing change that shall then be made in the kingdom of nature; ver. 15, "The sun and moon shall be darkened;" as before, *ch.* ii. 31. Their glory and lustre shall be eclipsed by the far greater brightness of that glory in which the Judge shall then appear. Nay, they shall themselves be set aside in the dissolution of all things; for damned sinners in hell shall not be allowed their light, being cast into utter darkness; and glorified saints in heaven shall not need their light, for God himself will be their everlasting light, *Isa.* lx. 19. Those that fall under the wrath of God in that day of wrath shall be cut off from all comfort and joy, signified by the darkening not only of the sun and moon, but of the stars also.

Fifthly. The different impressions which that day will make upon the children of this world and the children of God, according as it will be to them.

1. To the wicked it will be "a terrible day." The Lord shall then speak from Zion and Jerusalem; that is, from the throne of his glory, from heaven, where he manifests himself in a peculiar manner, as sometimes he had done in the "glorious high throne of his sanctuary," which yet was but a faint resemblance of the glory of that day. He shall speak from heaven, from the midst of his saints and angels, (so some understand it,) the holy society of which may be called Zion and Jerusalem; for when we come to the heavenly Jerusalem, we come to the "innumerable company of angels:" see *Heb.* xii. 22, 25. Now his speaking in that day will be to the wicked as roaring, terrible as the roaring of a lion, for so the word signifies. He long kept silence, but now "our God shall come and shall not keep silence," *Ps.* l. 3, 21. Note, The judgment of the great day will make the ears of those to tingle that continue the implacable enemies of God's kingdom. God's voice will then "shake terribly both heaven and earth," *Isa.* ii. 21; yet once more, *Hag.* ii. 6; *Heb.* xii. 26. This notes, that the voice of God will in the great day speak such terror to the wicked as were enough to put even heaven and earth into a consternation. When God comes to pull down and destroy his enemies, and make them all his footstool, though heaven and earth should stand up in defence of them, and undertake their protection, it shall be all in vain; even they shall shake before him, and be an insufficient shelter to those whom he comes forth to contend with. Note, As blessings out of Zion are the sweetest blessings, and enough to make heaven and earth sing, so terrors out of Zion are the surest terrors, and enough to make heaven and earth shake.

2. To the righteous it will be a joyful day. When heaven and earth shall tremble, and be dissolved, and burnt up, then will the Lord be "the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel," ver. 16; and "then shall Jerusalem be holy," ver. 17. The saints are the Israel of God; they are his people, the church is his Jerusalem; they are in covenant and communion with him. Now in the great day, 1st. Their longings shall be satisfied. "The Lord

will be the hope of his people;" that is, as he always was the founder and foundation of their hopes, so he then will be the crown of their hopes. He will be the 'harbour' of his people, so the word is, their receptacle, refuge, and home. The saints in the great day shall arrive at the desired haven,—shall put to shore after a stormy voyage. They shall go to be for ever at home with God; to their Father's house, the house not made with hands. 2nd. Their happiness shall be confirmed. God will be in that day "the strength of the children of Israel," enabling them to bid that day welcome, and to bear up under the weight of its glories and joys to them. In this world, when the judgments of God are abroad, and sinners are falling under them, God is, and will be, the hope and strength of his people; the strength of their heart, and their portion, when other men's hearts fail them for fear. 3rd. Their holiness shall be completed; ver. 17, "Then shall Jerusalem be holy," the holy city, indeed. Such shall the heavenly Jerusalem be, such the glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Jerusalem shall be holiness, so the word is; it shall be perfectly holy, there shall be no remainder of sin in it. The gospel church is a holy society, even in its militant state, but will never be holiness itself till it comes to be triumphant. Then "no stranger shall pass through her any more;" that is, there shall not enter into the new Jerusalem any thing that defiles or works iniquity. None shall be there but who have a right to be there,—none but its own citizens; for it shall be an unmixed society. 4th. God shall in all this be manifested and magnified. "So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God." By the sanctifying and glorifying of the church God will be known in his holiness and glory, as the God that dwells in his holy mountain, and makes it holy by dwelling in it; and they that are sanctified and glorified are so through the knowledge of him that called them. The knowledge which true believers have of God is, *First*. An appropriating knowledge. They know that he is "the Lord their God;" yet not theirs only, but theirs in common with the whole church; that he is their God, but "dwelling in Zion, his holy mountain;" for, though faith appropriates, it doth not engross or monopolize, the privileges of the covenant. *Secondly*. It is an experimental knowledge. They shall find him their hope and strength in the worst of times; and so they shall "know that he is the Lord their God." Those know best the goodness of God who have tasted and seen it, and have found him good to them.

18 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the mountains shall drop down new wine,
And the hills shall flow with milk,
And all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters,
And a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD,
And shall water the valley of Shittim.
19 Egypt shall be a desolation,
And Edom shall be a desolate wilderness,
For the violence *against* the children of Judah,
Because they have shed innocent blood in their land.
20 But Judah shall dwell for ever,
And Jerusalem from generation to generation.
21 For I will cleanse their blood *that* I have not cleansed:
For the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

These promises with which this prophecy concludes have their accomplishment in part in the kingdom of grace, and the comforts and graces of all the faithful subjects of that kingdom, but will have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of glory; for, as to the Jewish church, we know not of any event concerning that which answers to the extent of these promises. And what instances of peace and prosperity they were blessed with, which these may be supposed to be an hyperbolical description of, they were but figures of better things reserved for us, that they in their best estate without us might not be made perfect.

First. It is promised that the enemies of the church shall be vanquished and brought down; ver. 19, Egypt, that old enemy of Israel, and Edom, that had an inveterate enmity to Israel, derived from Esau, these "shall be a desolation," a "desolate wilderness," no more to be inhabited; they are become the people of God's curse: so the Idumeans were, *Isa.* xxxiv. 5. No strength or wealth of a nation is a fence against the judgments of God. But what is the quarrel God has with these potent kingdoms? It is for their "violence against the children of Judah," and the injuries they have done them: see *Eze.* xxv. 3, 8, 12, 15; xxvi. 2. They had shed the innocent blood of the Jews that fled to them for shelter, or were making their escape through their country. Note, The innocent blood of God's people is precious to him, and not a drop of it shall be shed but it shall be reckoned for. In the last day this earth, which has been filled with violence against the people of God, shall be made a desolation, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. And sooner or later the oppressors and persecutors of God's Israel will be brought down and laid in the dust; nay, they will at length be brought down and laid in the flames.

Secondly. It is promised that the church shall be very happy; and truly happy it is in spiritual privileges, even during its militant state, but much more when it comes to be triumphant. Three things are here promised it:

1. Purity. That is put last here, as a reason for the rest, ver. 21; but we may consider it first, as the ground and foundation of the rest. "I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed;" that is, their bloody, heinous sins, especially shedding innocent blood. That filth and guilt they had contracted by sin, which rendered them unfit for communion with God, and made them odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice; this they shall be washed from in the fountain opened, *Zec.* xiii. 1. That shall be cleansed by the blood of Christ which could not be cleansed by the sacrifices and purification of the ceremonial law. Or, if we apply it to the happiness of the future state, it speaks the cleansing of the saints from all these corruptions from which they were not cleansed, either by ordinances or providences, in this world; there shall not be the least remains of sin in them there. Here, though they are washing daily, yet still there is something that is not cleansed; but in heaven, even that also shall be done away. And the reason is, because "the Lord dwells in Zion," dwells with his church, and much more gloriously with that in heaven, and "holiness becomes his house for ever;" for which reason, where he dwells there must be, there shall be, a perfection of holiness. Note, Though the refining and reforming of the church is work that goes on slowly, and still there is something we complain of that is not cleansed, yet there is a day coming when every thing that is amiss shall be amended, and the church shall be all fair, and no spot, no stain in her; and we must wait for that day.

2. Plenty, ver. 18. This is put first, because it speaks the reverse of the judgment threatened in the foregoing chapters. 1st. The streams of this plenty overflow the land, and enrich it. "The mountains shall drop new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk," such great abundance shall they have of suitable provision, both for babes and strong men. It speaks the abundance of vineyards, and all fruitful trees; and the abundance of cattle in the pastures that fill them with milk. And, to make the corn-land fruitful, "the rivers of Judah shall flow with water," so that the country shall be like the garden of Eden,—well watered every where and greatly enriched, *Ps.* lxv. 9. But this seems to be meant spiritually; the graces and comforts of the new covenant are compared to wine and milk, *Isa.* lv. 1; and the Spirit to "rivers of living water," *Jno.* vii. 38. And these gifts abound much more under the New Testament than they did under the Old. When believers receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, when they are enriched with everlasting consolations, and "filled with joy and peace in believing," then the mountains drop new wine, and the hills flow with milk. "Drink ye," drink abundantly, O beloved. When there is a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace, then the "rivers of Judah flow with water," and make glad, not only "the city of our God," *Ps.* xlvi. 4, but the whole land. 2nd. The fountain of this plenty is in the house of God; thence the streams take their rise, as those "waters of the sanctuary," *Eze.* xlvii. 1, from "under the threshold of the house," and the river of life "out of the throne of God and the Lamb," *Rev* xxii. 1. The apostle, speaking of Zion, saith, "All my springs are in thee," *Ps.* lxxxvii. 7. Those that take temporal blessings to be meant in the former part of the verse, yet, by this fountain out of "the house of the Lord," understand the grace of God, which, if we abound in temporal blessings, we have so much the more need of, that we may not abuse them. Christ himself is this fountain, his merit and grace cleanse us, refresh us, and make us fruitful. This here is said to water the valley of Shittim, which lay a great way off from the temple at Jerusalem, on the other side of Jordan, and was a dry and barren valley, which intimates that gospel grace, flowing from Christ, shall reach far, even to the Gentile world, to the most remote regions of it, and shall make them to abound in the fruits of righteousness which had long laid as the barren wilderness. This grace is a fountain overflowing, ever-flowing, from which we may be continually drawing, and yet need not fear its being drawn dry. This fountain comes "out of the house of the Lord;" for those that would partake of the promised graces and comforts must diligently and constantly attend upon instituted ordinances. And from the house of the Lord above, from his temple in heaven, flows all that good which here we are daily tasting the streams of, but hope to be shortly, hope to be eternally, drinking at the fountain-head of.

3. Perpetuity. This crowns all the rest; ver. 20, "Judah shall dwell for ever," (when Egypt and Edom are made a desolation,) and Jerusalem shall continue "from generation to generation." This is a promise, and a precious promise it is; 1st. That the church of Christ shall continue in the world to the end of time. As one generation of professing Christians passeth away another shall come, in whom the throne of Christ shall endure for ever, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 2nd. That all the living members of that church (Judah and Jerusalem are put for the inhabitants of that city and country, *Mat.* iii. 5,) shall be established in their happiness to the utmost ages of eternity. This new Jerusalem shall be from generation to generation, for it is a city that has foundations not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

TO THE BOOK OF JOEL.

CHAP. I.—4. *That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten.* Bochart and others consider the four insects here enumerated, the gazam, the arbeh, the jakeh, and the chasil, denote four sorts of locusts. Some commentators think they are emblematical of the four monarchies, but the literal application, combining also a reference to the Chaldeans, seems most correct. The description of the ravages of locusts, in this and the following chapter, is exceedingly accurate as well as striking. Wherever they feed, the land, after their ravages, seems as if parched with fire. The head of the locust has some resemblance in shape to that of a horse, but its properties, its strength, swiftness, and fierceness may rather be alluded to here. The noise made by the approach of flights of locusts is heard afar off. Jackson describes the fear caused by their approach among the inhabitants of cultivated districts, and the joy of the wild Arabs at seeing them pass towards a fertile land, knowing that the desolation they cause will render the people and their goods an easy prey to their predatory inroads. Nothing can withstand or divert their progress, so vast are the swarms, extending miles in length, obscuring the light of the sun, and passing over or through every obstacle, devouring every sort of verdure, and reducing the trees to naked stems and boughs. Volney concludes his description by saying, 'Happily this calamity is not frequently repeated, for it is the inevitable forerunner of famine, and of the maladies it occasions.' Harmer states that the depredations of locusts injure the vines for many years, ver. 5. The locust is about three inches long, and in its general form resembles the grasshopper, and is eaten for food in times of scarcity. The vast swarms usually are carried forward by the wind till they fall into some sea, where they perish, and their myriads putrefying on the shore emit a most offensive smell, causing pestilential diseases in the neighbouring country.—*Religious Tract Society's Commentary.* Are the statements of Joel, in the first and second chapters, to be understood literally of these insects, or figuratively of enemies, that were to invade and lay waste the Holy Land? The latter is the more ancient opinion. It is that of the Targum, the Jews whom Jerome consulted, and Machiavel; it is, with various modifications, adopted by numerous Christian interpreters. On the other hand, not a few maintain that the language is to be understood literally of locusts. This interpretation has certainly much in its favour; and if it could without violence be applied throughout, might fairly be adopted. But the announcement of a second and more awful judgment, (*ch.* i. 15; ii. 1, 2,) the distinct recognition of a foreign rule, (*ch.* ii. 17,) and the assignment of the north as the native country of the enemy, (*ch.* ii. 20,) present insuperable obstacles to its adoption.—*Dr. Henderson,* who enumerates the authors referred to above. See Note on *ch.* ii. 9.

CHAP. II.—Joel now proceeds to introduce and describe the hostile army of the Assyrians in the same terms in which he had metaphorically described the locusts. In this description, he not only transfers the metaphor back to the proper subject from which it was taken, but converts it into an allegory, and at considerable length, and in the most minute manner, exhibits the invasion, the formidable character, and ravages of the barbarian foe. So perfectly is the allegorical veil woven throughout, that most commentators have been able to discover nothing more than natural locusts in the passage.—*H.* 8. *Neither shall one thrust another.* The locusts are remarkable for keeping their ranks and places with as much order and exactness as the best disciplined army. 9. *They shall run to and fro.* The fine conversion of the subjects is remarkable. The prophecy is delivered in the first chapter, "Awake, ye drunkards;" and repeated in the second, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion." In the first chapter, the locusts are described as a people, "For a nation is come up upon my land." But, that we may not be mistaken in the primary sense, namely, the plague of locusts, the ravages described are the ravages of insects. "They lay waste the vine, they bark the fig-tree." In this chapter the hostile people are described as locusts, "As the morning spread upon the mountains." "The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses, and as horsemen." But that we may not mistake the secondary sense, namely, the invasion of a foreign enemy, they are compared, we see, to a mighty army. In some places of this prophet dearth by insects must needs be understood; in others, desolation by war, so that both senses are of necessity to be admitted—a circumstance so far from inaccurate, that it gives the highest elegance to the discourse, and evinces an art in the contexture of the prophecy truly Divine.—*Warburton's Div. Leg.,* iv., 467. 11. *His army.* We have here a key to the grand and beautiful description which runs through these two chapters. Every reader of taste must be struck with the poetical and sublime manner in which the allegory is conducted. There is not a more splendid piece of poetry extant.—*Bishop Newcome.* 20. *The northern army.* So called, says Lowth, because they entered the land at Hamath, one of the northern boundaries of it. M. Henry also says, 'that army of locusts and caterpillars that invaded you from the north.' Scott also hath the same comment. But to this view there is the objection not merely that locusts do not ordinarily come from the north, but that the original language denotes that the north was the *native country* of the subject of discourse. Now it is agreed on all hands, say Dr. Henderson, that the native country of the locusts is the region of Arabia, the Libyan deserts, and the Sahara of Egypt, so that they cannot be meant by the term here employed. On the supposition that by 'the northern' the Assyrians are meant, every difficulty vanishes. And that they may with the strictest propriety be so termed is proved by *Zeph.* ii. 13, "And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria." The Jews were accustomed to call Assyria and Babylonia the north, and the north country, because they lay in that direction from Palestine. We have adverted at much length to this subject, because there is so little of it in the commentary which refers to a literal invasion of locusts, to the almost total exclusion of the northern enemy which they symbolized. All, however, that is necessary in order to the profitable perusal, under God's blessing, of the Word and commentary thereon, is to keep the secondary sense referring to the Assyrians in view, as well as the primary allusion to the locusts; for so perfect is the allegory, that the description of the character, progress, and ravages of the one will, by this method, correctly guide us to all that it was intended to denote respecting the other. 28. *And it shall come to pass, &c.* These words are expounded by the apostle Peter in *Acts* ii. We subjoin A. Barnes' comment. "In the last days." Heb. Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic, 'after these things,' or 'afterwards.' The expression "the last days," however, occurs frequently in the Old Testament: *Gen.* xlix. 1, Jacob called his sons, that he might tell them what should happen to them "in the last days," that is, in future times, (Heb. 'in after times;') *Mic.* iv. 1, "In the last days (Heb. 'in after times') the mountain of the Lord's house," &c.; *Isa.* ii. 2, "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the tops of the mountains," &c. The expression, then, properly denoted the future times in general. But, as the coming of the Messiah was to the eye of a Jew the most important event in the coming ages,—the great, glorious, and crowning scene in all that vast futurity,—the phrase came to be regarded as properly expressive of that. And they spoke of future times, and of the last times, as the glad period which should be crowned and honoured with the presence and triumphs of the Messiah. It stood in opposition to the usual denomination of earlier times. It was a phrase in contrast with the days of the patriarchs, the kings, the prophets, &c. "The last days," or the closing period of the world, were the days of the Messiah. It does not appear from this, and it certainly is not implied in the expression, that they supposed the world would then come to an end. Their views were just the contrary. They anticipated a long and glorious time under the dominion of the Messiah, and to this expectation they were led by the promise that his kingdom should be for ever, that of the increase of his government there should be no end, &c. This expression was understood by the writers of the New Testament as referring undoubtedly to the times of the Gospel. And hence they often used it as denoting that the time of the expected Messiah had come, but not to imply that the world was drawing near to an end. *Heb.* i. 2, "God hath spoken in these last days by his Son." 1 *Pet.* i. 20, "Was manifest in these last times for you." 2 *Pet.* iii. 3; 1 *Pet.* i. 5; 1 *Jno.* ii. 18, "Little children, it is the last time, &c.; *Jude* 18. The expression "the last day," is applied by our Saviour to the resurrection and the day of judgment, *Jno.* vi. 39, 40, 44, 45; xi. 24; xii. 48. Here the expression means simply, in those future times, when the Messiah shall have come. *I will pour out my Spirit.* The expression in Hebrew is, 'I will pour out my Spirit.' The word pour is commonly applied to water, or to blood, to pour it out, or to shed it, *Isa.* lvii. 6; to tears, to pour them out, that is, to weep, &c., *Ps.* xlii. 4; 1 *Sam.* i. 15. It is applied to water, to wine, or to blood, in the New Testament. *Mat.* ix. 17; *Rev.* xvi. 1; *Acts* xxii. 20, "The blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed." It conveys also the idea of communicating largely, or freely, as water is poured freely from a fountain. *Tit.* iii. 5, 6, "The renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly." Thus *Job,* xxxvi. 27, "They (the clouds) pour down rain according to the vapour thereof." *Isa.* xliv. 3, "I will pour out water on him that is thirsty." *Isa.* xlv. 8, "Let the skies pour down righteousness." *Mal.* iii. 10, "I will pour you out a blessing." It is also applied to fury and anger, when God intends to say that he will not spare, but will signally punish, *Ps.* lxix. 24; *Jer.* x. 25. It is not unfrequently applied to the Spirit, *Pr.* i. 23; *Isa.* xliv. 3; *Zec.* xii. 10; and then it means that he will bestow large measures of spiritual influences. As the Spirit renews and sanctifies men, so to pour out the Spirit is to grant freely his influences to renew and sanctify the soul. *My Spirit.* The Spirit here denotes the third person of the Trinity, promised by the Saviour, and sent to finish his work, and apply it to men. The Holy Spirit is regarded as the source, or conveyer of all the blessings which Christians experience. Hence he renews the heart, *Jno.* iii. 5, 6. He is the source of all proper feelings and principles in Christians, or he produces the Christian graces, *Gal.* v. 22—25; *Tit.* iii. 5, 7. The spread and success of the Gospel is attributed to him, *Isa.* xxxii. 15, 16. Miraculous gifts are traced to him, especially the various gifts with which the early Christians were endowed, 1 *Cor.* xii. 4—10. The promise that he would pour out his Spirit means that he would, in the time of the Messiah, impart a large measure of those influences which it was his peculiar province to communicate to men. A part of them were communicated on the day of Pentecost, in the miraculous endowment of the power of speaking foreign languages, in the wisdom of the apostles, and in the conversion of the three thousand. And from Peter's vindication, in the book of *Acts,* of the scene on the day of Pentecost, we may learn also, 1. That revivals of religion are to be expected as a part of the history of the Christian church. He speaks of God's pouring out his Spirit, &c., as what was to take place in the last days, that is, in the indefinite and large tract of time which was to come under the administration of the Messiah. His remarks are by no means limited to the day of Pentecost. They are as applicable to future periods as to that time; and we are to expect it as a part of Christian history that the Holy Spirit will be sent down to awaken and convert men. 2. This will also vindicate revivals from most of the charges which have ever been brought against them. And if that excited deep interest in the apostles, if they felt deep concern to vindicate it from the charge brought against it, then Christians and Christian ministers now should feel similar solicitude to defend revivals, and not be found among their revilers, their calumniators, or their foes. There will be enemies enough of the work of the Holy Spirit without the aid of professed Christians; and that man possesses no enviable feelings or character who is found with the enemies of God and his Christ, in opposing the mighty work of the Holy Spirit on the human heart.——J. P. Smith says, 'that the prophet presents two facts. 1. The commencement of the Gospel dispensation, its spiritual nature, the Divine influence which would sustain it, and its extension to all ages, classes, and nations of men. This general fact is depicted, according to the established manner of the prophets, by grouping a number of particular images, derived from the modes in which the inspiration of God was communicated under the Jewish theocracy. He considers that the most certain principles of biblical interpretation compel us to understand the application of the prediction to the church under the New Testament, as consisting in the general fact of the operations of the Holy Spirit, and by no means in the identical modes specified, namely, prophesying, dreams, and visions. That influence was given by the glorified Redeemer in a new and more copious manner, but in modes suitable to the new state of things. These modes would, of course, include the temporary and miraculous operations of the kinds which Divine wisdom judged best, and would be conferred with a marked disregard to those distinctions and exclusions which the corrupt traditions and proud prejudices of the Jews had set up. Also, in the permanent operations of the Holy Spirit, in giving success to the ministry of the Gospel, and other means of instruction. 2. The Jewish war, and the miseries which came upon the nation, are described by these images and symbols, generally employed by the prophets to convey the most awful ideas of revolutionary calamities. He quotes many passages to shew that this imagery is applied by the prophets to denote events brought about, not miraculously, but by the constant providence and power of God in the changes of human society.

FAMINE, PESTILENCE, AND DESOLATION.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF AMOS,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THOUGH this prophet appeared a little before Isaiah, yet he was not, as some have mistaken, that Amos who was the father of Isaiah, (*Isa.* i. 1,) for in the Hebrew their names are very different; and their families too were of a different character, for Isaiah was a courtier, Amos a country farmer. Amos signifies a 'burthen,' whence the Jews have a tradition that he was of a slow tongue, and spoke with stammering lips; we may rather, in allusion to his name, say that his speech was weighty, and his word the burthen of the Lord. He was, as most think, of Judah, yet prophesied chiefly against Israel, and at Bethel, *ch.* vii. 18. Some think his style savours of his extraction, and is more plain and rustic than that of some other of the prophets; I do not see it so: but it is plain his matter agreed with that of his contemporary, Hosea, that "out of the mouth of these two witnesses the word might be established." It appears by his contest with Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, that he met with opposition in his work; but was a man of undaunted resolution in it, faithful and bold in reproving sin, and denouncing the judgments of God for it, and pressing in his exhortations to repentance and reformation: he begins with threatenings against the neighbour nations that were enemies to Israel, *ch.* i. and ii.; then calls Israel to account, and judgeth them for their idolatry, their unworthy walking under the favours God bestowed upon them, and their incorrigibleness under his judgments, *ch.* iii. and iv. He calls them to repentance, *ch.* v., rejecting their hypocritical sacrifices, unless they did repent. He foretells the desolations that were coming upon them notwithstanding their security, *ch.* vi., some particular judgments, *ch.* vii., particularly on Amaziah; and after other reproofs and threatenings, *ch.* viii. and ix., concludes with a promise of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom, and the happiness of God's spiritual Israel therein; just as the prophecy of Joel concluded. These prophets having opened the wound in their reproofs and threatenings, which shew all wrong, in the promises of gospel grace open the remedy, which alone will set all to rights.

A.M. 3217. B.C. 787.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have, I. The general title of this prophecy, ver. 1, with the general scope of it, ver. 2. II. God's particular controversy with Syria, ver. 3—5; with Palestine, ver. 6—8; with Tyre, ver. 9, 10; with Edom, ver. 11, 12; and with Ammon, ver. 13—15; for their cruelty to his people, and the many injuries they had done them. This explains God's pleading with the nations, *Joel* iii. 2.

THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. 2 And he said,

The LORD will roar from Zion,
And utter his voice from Jerusalem;
And the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn,
And the top of Carmel shall wither.

Here is, First. The general character of this prophecy. It is the words which the prophet saw. Are words to be seen? Yes, God's words are; the apostles speak of the word of life, which they had not only heard, but which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and which their hands had handled, 1 *Jno.* i. 1, such a real substantial thing is the word of God. The prophet saw these words, that is, 1. They were revealed to him in a vision, as John is said to see the voice that spake to him, *Rev.* i. 12. 2. That which was foretold by them was to him as certain as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. It intimates how strong he was in that faith which is the "evidence of things not seen."

Secondly. The person by whom this prophecy was sent: "Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa," and was one of them. Some think he was a rich dealer in cattle; the word is used concerning the king of Moab, 2 *Kin.* iii. 4, he was "a sheepmaster." It is likely he got money by that business, and yet he must quit it to follow God as a prophet. Others think he was a poor keeper of cattle, for we find *ch.* vii. 14, 15, that he was withal a gatherer of wild figs, a poor employment, by which we may suppose he could but just get his bread, and that God took him, as he did David from following the flock, and Elisha from following the plough. Many were trained up for great employments in the quiet, innocent, contemplative business of shepherds. When God would send a prophet to reprove and warn his people, he employed a shepherd, a herdsman, to do it, for they had made themselves as the horse and mule that have no understanding; nay, worse than the ox that knows his owner. God sometimes "chooseth the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," 1 *Cor.* i. 27. Note, Those whom God has endued with abilities for his service ought not to be despised or laid aside for the meanness either of their original or of their beginnings. Though Amos himself is not ashamed to own that he was a herdsman, yet others ought not to upbraid him with it, or think the worse of him for it.

Thirdly. The persons concerned in the prophecy of this book. It is concerning Israel, the ten tribes, who were now ripened in sin, and ripening apace for ruin. God had raised them up prophets among themselves, *ch.* ii. 11, but they regarded them not, therefore God sends them one from Tekoa, in the land of Judah, that coming from another country he might be the more valued; and, perhaps, he was the rather sent out of his own country, because there he was despised for his having been a herdsman: see *Mat.* xiii. 55—57.

Fourthly. The time when these prophecies were delivered. 1. The book is dated, as laws used to be, by the reigns of the kings under whom the prophet prophesied. It was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, when the affairs of that kingdom went very well, and of Jeroboam the second king of Israel, when the affairs of that kingdom went pretty well; yet then they must both be told both of the sins they were guilty of and the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins, that they might not with the present gleam of prosperity flatter themselves either into an opinion of their innocency or a confidence of their perpetual security. 2. It is dated by a particular event, to which his prophecy had a reference. It was "two years before the earthquake," that earthquake which is mentioned to have been in the days of Uzziah, *Zec.* xiv. 5, which put the nation into a dreadful fright, for it is there said they fled before it. But how could they flee from it? Some conjecture that this earthquake was at the time of Isaiah's vision, when "the posts of the door were moved," *Isa.* vi. 4. The tradition of the Jews is, that it happened just at the time when Uzziah presumptuously invaded the priest's office, and went in to burn incense, 2 *Chr.* xxvi. 16. Josephus mentions this earthquake, *Antiq.* ix. 11, and saith, 'that by it half of a mountain was removed and carried to a plain four furlongs off, and that it spoiled the king's gardens.' God by this prophet gave warning of it two years before, that God by it would shake down their houses, *ch.* iii. 15.

Fifthly. The introduction to these prophecies, containing the general scope of them; ver. 2, "The Lord will roar from Zion." His threatenings by his prophets, and the executions of those threatenings in his providence, will be as terrible as the roaring of a lion is to the shepherds and their flocks. Amos here speaks the same language with his contemporaries, Hosea, *Hos.* xi. 10, and Joel, *Joel* iii. 16. The lion roars before he tears, God gives warning before he strikes. Observe, 1. Whence the warning comes. From Zion and Jerusalem, from the oracles of God there delivered, for "by them is thy servant warned," *Ps.* xix. 11; or God, whose special residence is there, will issue out warrants, given at that court, as it were, for the executing of judgments on the land: see *Jer.* xxv. 30. In Zion was the mercy-seat; thence the Lord roars, intimating that God's acts of justice are consistent with mercy, allayed and mitigated by mercy, nay, as they are warnings, they are really acts of mercy. We are chastened that we may not be condemned. 2. What effect the warning hath. "The habitations of the shepherds mourn," either because they fear the roaring lion or because they feel

what is signified by that comparison, the consequences of a great drought, *ch.* iv. 7, which made the top of Carmel, of the most fruitful fields, to wither, and become as a desert, *Joel* i. 12, 17.

3 Thus saith the LORD;
For three transgressions of Damascus,
And for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof;
Because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron:
4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael,
Which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.
5 I will break also the bar of Damascus,
And cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven,
And him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden:
And the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir,
saith the LORD.
6 Thus saith the LORD;
For three transgressions of Gaza,
And for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof;
Because they carried away captive the whole captivity,
To deliver *them* up to Edom:
7 But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza,
Which shall devour the palaces thereof:
8 And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod,
And him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon,
And I will turn mine hand against Ekron:
And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD.
9 Thus saith the LORD;
For three transgressions of Tyrus,
And for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof;
Because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom,
And remembered not the brotherly covenant:
10 But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus,
Which shall devour the palaces thereof.
11 Thus saith the LORD;
For three transgressions of Edom,
And for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof;
Because he did pursue his brother with the sword,
And did cast off all pity,
And his anger did tear perpetually,
And he kept his wrath for ever:
12 But I will send a fire upon Teman,
Which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.
13 Thus saith the LORD;
For three transgressions of the children of Ammon,
And for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof;
Because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead,
That they might enlarge their border:
14 But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah,
And it shall devour the palaces thereof,
With shouting in the day of battle,
With a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:
15 And their king shall go into captivity,
He and his princes together, saith the LORD.

AMMON.—ver. 13.

What the Lord saith here may be explained by what he saith *Jer.* xii. 14, "Thus saith the Lord, against all my evil neighbours that touch the inheritance of my people Israel, Behold I will pluck them out." Damascus was a near neighbour to Israel on the north, Tyre and Gaza on the west, Edom on the south, Ammon and (in the next chapter) Moab on the east, and all of them had been one time, one way or other, pricking briars and grieving thorns to Israel, ill neighbours to them; and, because God espouseth his people's cause, he there calls them his evil neighbours, and here comes forth to reckon with them. The method taken in dealing with each of them is in part the same, and therefore we put them together, and yet in each there is something peculiar.

First. Let us see what is repeated, both by way of charge and by way of sentence, concerning them all. The controversy God hath with each of them is prefaced with, "Thus saith the Lord," Jehovah the God of Israel. Though those nations will not worship him as their God, yet they shall be made to know that they are accountable to him as their judge. The God of Israel is the God of the whole earth, and hath something to say to them that shall make them tremble. Against them the Lord roars out of Zion. And before God, by the prophet, threatens Israel and Judah, he denounceth judgments against these nations whom he made use of as scourges to them for their being so, which might serve for a check for their pride and insolence, and a relief to his people under their dejections, for hereby they might see that God had not quitted his interest in them, and therefore might hope they had not lost their interest in him. Now as to all these nations here arraigned,

1. The indictment drawn up against them all is thus far the same: 1st. That they are charged in general with "three transgressions," and with "four," that is, with many transgressions; as by one or two we mean a few, so by three or four we mean many; as in Latin, a man that is very happy is said to be *terque quaterque beatus*,—'three and four times happy;' or, with three and four, that is, with seven transgressions, a number of perfection, intimating that they have "filled up the measure of their iniquities," and are ripe for ruin; or, with three, that is, a variety of sins, and with a fourth especially, which is specified concerning each of them, though the other three are not, as *Pr.* xxx. 15, 18, 21, 29, where we read of "three things, yea, four," generally one seems to be more especially intended. 2nd. That the particular sin which is fastened upon as the fourth, and which alone is instanced, is the sin of persecution. It is some mischief or other done to the people of God that is particularly charged upon every one of them, for persecution is the measure-filling sin of any people; and it is this sin that will be particularly reckoned for, "I was hungry and you gave me no meat," much more if it may be said, I was hungry and you took my meat from me.

2. The judgment given against them all is thus far the same: 1st. That their sin being come to such a height, "God will not turn away the punishment thereof;" that is, though he has granted them a long reprieve, and has often turned away their punishment, yet now he will turn it away no longer, but justice shall take its course. 'I will not revoke it,' so some read it, that is, not recall the voice which is gone forth from Zion and Jerusalem, ver. 2, speaking death and terror to the sinful nations. It is an irrevocable sentence; God hath spoken it, and he will not call it back. Note, Though God bear long, he will not bear always, with those that provoke him, and when the decree brings forth it will bring up. 2nd. That God will kindle a fire among them. This is said concerning all these ill neighbours, ver. 4, 7, 10, 12, 14; God will send a fire into their cities. When fires are kindled that lay cities, towns, and houses in ashes, whether designedly or casually, God must be acknowledged in it; they are of his sending. Sin stirs up the fire of his jealousy, and that kindles other fires.

Secondly. Let us see what is mentioned, both by way of charge and by way of sentence, that is peculiar to each of them, that every one may take his portion.

1. Concerning Damascus, the head city of Syria, a kingdom that was often vexatious to Israel. 1st. The peculiar sin of Damascus was using the Gileadites barbarously. They "threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron," ver. 3, which may be understood either literally, of their putting the inhabitants of Gilead to the torture, or to cruel deaths, whom they got into their hands, as David put the Ammonites under saws and harrows, 2 *Sam.* xii. 31. We read with what inhumanity Hazael, king of Syria, prosecuted his wars with Israel, 2 *Kin.* viii. 12, he "dashed their children," and "ripped up their women with child;" and see what desolations he made in their land, 2 *Kin.* x. 32, 33. Or it may be taken figuratively, for his laying the country waste, and this very similitude is used in the history of it, 2 *Kin.* xiii. 7, he destroyed them, and made them like the dust by threshing. Note, Men often do that unjustly and wickedly, and shall be severely reckoned with for it, which yet God justly permits them to do. The church is called "God's threshing, and the corn of his floor," *Isa.* xxi. 10; but if men make it their threshing, and the chaff of their floor, they shall be sure to hear of it. 2nd. The peculiar punishment of Damascus is, *First.* That the fire which shall be sent shall fasten upon the court in the first place, not on the chief city, or the country towns, but on the house of Hazael which he built; and it "shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad," that is, the royal palaces inhabited by the kings of Syria, many of whom were of that name. Note, Even royal palaces are no fence against the judgments of God, though never so richly furnished, though never so strongly fortified. *Secondly.* That the enemy shall force his way into the city; ver. 5, "I will break the bar of Damascus," and then the gate flies open. Or it may be understood figuratively,—all that which is depended upon as the strength and safety of that great city shall fail, and prove insufficient. When God's judgments come with commission, it is in vain to think of turning them out. *Thirdly.* That the people shall be destroyed with the sword; "I will cut off the inhabitants from the plain of Aven, the valley of idolatry," for the gods of

the Syrians were gods of the valleys, 1 *Kin.* xx. 23, were worshipped in valleys, as the idols of Israel were worshipped on the hills; "Him also that holdeth the sceptre" of power, some petty king or other that used to boast of the sceptre he held from Beth-eden, 'the house of pleasure.' Both those that were given to idolatry and those that were given to sensuality shall be cut off together. *Fourthly.* That the body of the nation shall be carried off; "The people shall go into captivity unto Kir," which was in the country of the Medes. We find this fulfilled, 2 *Kin.* xvi. 9, about fifty years after this, when "the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin," at the instigation of Ahaz, king of Judah.

2. Concerning Gaza, a city of the Philistines, and now the metropolis of that country. 1st. The peculiar sin of the Philistines was "carrying away captive the whole captivity," either of Israel or Judah, which some think refers to that inroad made upon Jehoram, when they took away all the king's sons, and all his substance, 2 *Chr.* xxi. 17. Or, perhaps, to their seizing those that fled to them for shelter, when Sennacherib invaded Judah, and selling them to the Grecians, *Joel* iii. 4, 6; or, as here, to the Edomites, who were always sworn enemies to the people of God. They spared none, but carried off all they could lay their hands on, designing, if possible, to "cut off the name of Israel," *Ps.* lxxxiii. 4, 7. 2nd. "The peculiar punishment of the Philistines is, that the fire which God will send shall devour the palaces of Gaza; and that the inhabitants of other cities of the Philistines, Ashdod (or Azotus), Ashkelon, and Ekron, should all be cut off, and God would make as thorough work with them in their ruin as they would have made with God's people when they carried away the whole captivity, for even the remnant of them shall perish, ver. 8. Note, God will make a full end of those that think to make a full end of his church and people.

3. Concerning Tyre, that famous city of wealth and strength, that was itself a kingdom, ver. 9. 1st. The peculiar sin of Tyre, is "delivering up the whole captivity to Edom;" that is, selling to the Edomites those of Israel that fled to them for shelter, or any way fell into their hands, nor caring what hardships they put upon them, so they could but make gain of them to themselves. Herein they forgot the "brotherly covenant," the league that was between Solomon and Hiram king of Tyre, 1 *Kin.* v. 13, which was so intimate, that Hiram calls Solomon his brother, 1 *Kin.* ix. 13. Note, It is a great aggravation of enmity and malice when it is the violation of friendship, and of a "brotherly covenant." 2nd. Here is nothing peculiar in the punishment of Tyrus, but that the palaces thereof shall be devoured, which was done when Nebuchadnezzar took it after thirteen years' siege. Their merchants were all princes, and their private houses were as palaces; but the fire shall make no more of them than cottages.

4. Concerning Edom, the posterity of Esau. 1st. Their peculiar sin was an unmerciful, unwearied pursuit of the people of God, and their taking all advantages against them to do them a mischief, ver. 11. He did pursue his brother with the sword, not only of old, when the king of Edom took up arms to oppose the children of Israel's passage through his border, *Num.* xx. 18, but ever since upon all occasions. They had not strength and courage enough to face them in the field of battle; but whenever any other enemy had put Judah or Israel to flight, then the Edomites set in with the pursuers, fell upon the rear, slew those that were half dead already, and (as is usual with cowards when they have an enemy at an advantage) they did "cast off all pity." Those that are least courageous are commonly most cruel. Edom was so; his malice 'destroyed his compassion,' so the word is. He stripped himself of the tenderness of a man, and put on the fierceness of a beast of prey, and as such a one he did tear; "his anger did tear perpetually." His cruelty was insatiable, and he never knew when he sucked enough of the blood of Israel, but like the horse-leech still cried, Give, give. Nay, he "kept his wrath for ever;" when he wanted objects of his wrath, and opportunity to shew it, yet he kept it in reserve, it rested in his bosom, he rolled it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, and had it ready to spit in the face of Israel upon the next occasion. Cursed be such cruel wrath and anger so fierce, so outrageous, which makes men like the devil, who continually seeks to devour, and unlike to God, who keepeth not his anger for ever. Edom's malice was unnatural, for thus he pursued his brother, whom he ought to have protected. It was hereditary, as if it had been entailed upon the family ever since Esau hated Jacob, and time itself could not wear it out; no, nor the brotherly carriage of Israel towards them, *Deu.* ii. 4, and the express law given to Israel, *Deu.* xxiii. 7, "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother." 2nd. Here is nothing peculiar in the punishment; but, ver. 11, a fire shall be sent to devour their palaces. Note, The fire of our anger against our brethren kindles the fire of God's anger against us.

5. Concerning the Ammonites, ver. 13—15. 1st. See how violently the fire of their anger turned against the people of God. They not only triumphed in their calamities, as we find, *Eze.* xxv. 2, 6, but they did themselves use them barbarously; they "ripped up the women with child of Gilead," a piece of cruelty the very mention whereof strikes a horror upon one's mind. One would think it impossible that any of the human race should be so inhuman. Hazael was guilty of it, 2 *Kin.* viii. 12. It was done not only in a brutish rage, which falls without consideration upon all that comes before it, but with a devilish design to extirpate the race of Israel,—by killing not only all that were born, but all that were to be born, worse than Egyptian cruelty. It was "that they might enlarge their border," that they might make the land of Gilead their own, and there might be none to lay claim to it, or give them any disturbance in the possession of it. We find, *Jer.* xlix. 1, that the Ammonites "inherited Gad," that is, Gilead, under the pretence that Israel had no sons, no heirs. We know how heavy their doom was, and how heinous their crime, who said, "This is the heir, come let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours," by occupancy. See what cruelty covetousness is the cause of, and what horrid practices those are often put upon that are greedy to enlarge their own border. 2nd. See how violently the fire of God's anger burned against them. Shall not God visit for these things done to any of mankind, especially when they are done to his own people? Shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this? No doubt it shall. The fire shall be kindled with shouting in the day of battle, that is, war shall kindle the fire. It shall be a fire accompanied with the sword, or a roaring fire, which shall make a noise like that of soldiers ready to engage; and it shall be as a tempest in the day of the whirlwind, which comes swiftly, furiously, and bears down all before it. Or, this tempest and whirlwind shall be as bellows to the fire, to make it burn the stronger, and spread the farther. It is particularly threatened that their king and his princes shall go together into captivity, carried away by the king of Babylon, not long after Judah was. See what changes God's providence often makes with men, or rather their own sin; kings become captives, and princes prisoners. Milchom shall go into captivity; some understand it of the God of the Ammonites, whom they called Moloch—a king; "He and his princes," and his priests that attend him, shall "go into captivity." Their idol shall be so far from protecting them that it shall itself go into captivity with them. Note, Those who by violence and fraud seek to enlarge their own border will justly be expelled and excluded their own border; nor is it strange if those who make no conscience of invading others' rights be able to make no resistance against those that invade theirs.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter, I. God by the prophet proceeds in a like controversy with Moab, as before with other nations, ver. 1—3. II. He shews what quarrel he had with Judah, ver. 4, 5. III. He at length begins his charge against Israel, to which all that goes before is but an introduction. Observe, 1. The sins they are charged with: injustice, oppression, whoredom, ver. 6—8; 2. The aggravations of those sins; the temporal and spiritual mercies God had bestowed upon them, for which they had made him such ungrateful returns, ver. 9—12; 3. God's complaint of them for their sins, ver. 13; and his threatenings of their ruin, and their utter inability to prevent it, ver. 14—16.

THUS saith the LORD;
For three transgressions of Moab,
And for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof;
Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime:
2 But I will send a fire upon Moab,
And it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth:
And Moab shall die with tumult,
With shouting, *and* with the sound of the trumpet:

RUINS IN MOAB.

3 And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof,
And will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD.
4 Thus saith the LORD:
For three transgressions of Judah,
And for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof;
Because they have despised the law of the LORD,
And have not kept his commandments,
And their lies caused them to err,
After the which their fathers have walked:
5 But I will send a fire upon Judah,
And it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.
6 Thus saith the LORD;
For three transgressions of Israel,
And for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof;
Because they sold the righteous for silver,
And the poor for a pair of shoes;
7 That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor,
And turn aside the way of the meek:
And a man and his father will go in unto the *same* maid,
To profane my holy name:
8 And they lay *themselves* down upon clothes laid to pledge
By every altar,
And they drink the wine of the condemned
In the house of their god.

Here is, First. The judgment of Moab, another of the nations that bordered upon Israel. They are reckoned with, and shall be punished "for three transgressions and for four," as those before. Now,

1. Moab's fourth transgression, as theirs who were before set to the bar, was cruelty. The instance given refers not to the people of God, but to a heathen like themselves. The king of Moab "burnt the bones of the king of Edom into lime." We find there was war between the Edomites and the Moabites, in which the king of Moab in distress and rage offered his own son for a burnt offering to appease the deity, 2 *Kin.* iii. 26, 27; and it should seem that afterwards he or some of his successors, in revenge upon the Edomites, for bringing him to that extremity, having an advantage against the king of Edom, either seized him alive and burnt him to ashes, or slew him and burnt his body, or digged up the bones of their dead king, of that particularly who had so straitened him, and in token of his rage and fury burnt them to lime, and perhaps made use of the powder of his bones for the whitewashing of the walls and ceiling of his palace, that he might please himself with the sight of that monument of his revenge; *est vindicta bonum vita jucundius ipsa*,—'revenge is sweeter than life itself.' It is barbarous to abuse human bodies, for we ourselves also are in

the body; it is senseless to abuse dead bodies, nay, it is impious, for we believe and look for the resurrection; and to abuse the dead bodies of the kings (whose persons and names ought to be in a particular manner respected and had in veneration) is an affront to majesty. It is an argument of a base spirit for those to trample upon a lion, who, were he alive, would tremble before him. 2. Moab's doom for this transgression is, 1st. A judgment of death. Those that deal cruelly shall be cruelly dealt with; ver. 2, "Moab shall die." The Moabites shall be cut off with the sword of war, which kills "with tumult, with shouting, and with sound of trumpet," circumstances that make it so much the more terrible, as the lion's roaring aggravates his tearing; "every battle of the warrior is with confused noise," *Isa.* ix. 5. 2nd. It is a judgment upon their judges, who had passed the sentence upon the bones of the king of Edom, that they should be burnt to lime; "I will cut him off," saith God, ver. 3; he shall know there is a judge that is higher than he. The king, the chief judge, and all the inferior judges and princes, shall be cut off together. If the people sometimes suffer for the sins of their princes, yet the princes themselves shall not escape; *Jer.* xlviii. 47, "Thus far is the judgment of Moab."

Secondly. Judah also is a near neighbour to Israel; and therefore, now justice is riding the circuit, that shall not be passed by. That nation had made itself like the heathen, and mingled itself with them, and therefore the indictment here runs against them in the same form in which it had run against all the rest; "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." Their sins are as many as the sins of other nations, and we find them huddled up with them in the same character; *Jer.* ix. 26, "Egypt and Judah and Edom,"—jumble them together, they are all alike. The sentence here also is the same; ver. 5, "I will send a fire upon Judah," though it is the land where God is known, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, though it is the holy city, and God has been "known in its palaces for a refuge," when time was, *Ps.* xlviii. 3. But the sin here charged upon Judah is different from all the rest. The other nations were reckoned with for injuries done to men, but Judah is reckoned with for indignities done to God, ver. 4. 1. They put contempt upon his statutes, and persisted in disobedience to them; "They have despised the law of the Lord," as if it were not worth taking notice of, nor had any thing in it valuable; and herein they despised the wisdom, justice, and goodness, as well as the authority and sovereignty of the Lawmaker. This they did in effect when they kept not his commandments, made no conscience of them, took no care about them. 2. They put honour upon his rivals, their idols, here called "their lies," which "caused them to err;" for "an image is a teacher of lies," *Hab.* ii. 18, and they that are led away into the error of idolatry are by that led into a multitude of other errors; *uno dato absurdo mille sequuntur*,—'one absurdity draws after it a thousand.' God is an infinite eternal Spirit; but when that truth of God is by idolatry changed into a lie all his other truths are in danger of being so changed likewise. Thus their idols caused them to err, and God justly gave them up to strong delusions. Nor was it any excuse for their sin, that they were the lies after which their fathers walked; for they should rather have taken warning than taken pattern by those that perished with these lies in their right hand.

Thirdly. We now at length come to the words which Amos saw concerning Israel. The reproofs and threatenings having walked the round, here they centre, here they settle. He begins with them as with the rest, "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof;" if all these nations must be punished for their iniquities, shall Israel go unpunished? Observe here what their sins were for which God would reckon with them.

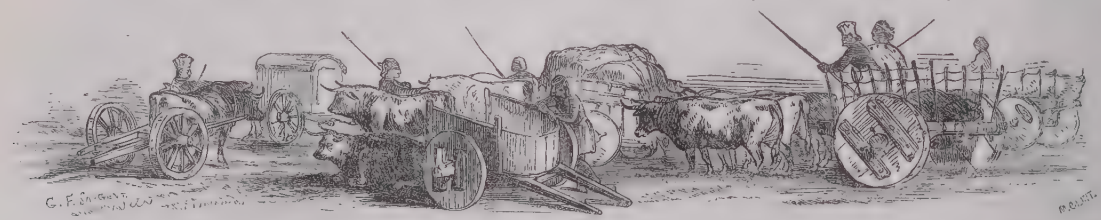
1. Perverting justice. This was the sin of those who were intrusted with the administration of justice, the judges and magistrates, and all parties concerned. They made nothing of a righteous man, and his righteous cause, when it came to be tried before them: for a piece of silver, sentence was passed, not according to the merits of the cause, but the bribe always turned the scale, and judgment was set to sale by auction to the highest bidder. They would sell the life and livelihood of a poor man "for a pair of shoes," for the least advantage to themselves that could be proposed to them. Give them but a pair of shoes, and the cause of a poor man, who could not give them so much as that, should be betrayed, and left at the mercy of those that will have no mercy. They will rather play at small game than sit out; "for a piece of bread such a man will transgress." Note, Those that will wrong their consciences for any thing will come at length to do it for next to nothing; those that begin to sell justice for silver will in time be so sordid as to sell it for a pair of shoes, for a pair of old shoes.

2. Oppressing the poor, and seeking to benefit themselves by doing them a mischief; they "pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor." They swallow up the poor with the utmost greediness, and make a prey of them that are in sorrow, with dust on their heads,—poor orphans that are in mourning for their parents; they catch at them to get their estates into their hands. They never rest till they have got the heads of the poor in the dust, to be trodden on. Or, "they pant after the dust of the earth," that is, silver and gold, white and yellow dust; they covet it earnestly, and levy it upon the head of the poor by their unjust exactions. Note, Men's seeking to enrich themselves by the impoverishing of others is a transgression which God will not long turn away the punishment of. This is "turning aside the way of the meek," contriving to do injury to those that they know are mild and patient, and will bear injury. They invade their rights, break their measures, and obstruct the course of justice in favour of them, not suffering them to go on with their righteous cause; this is turning aside their way. Note, The more patiently men bear the injuries that are done them, the greater is the sin of those that injure them, and the more occasion they have to expect that God will right them, and take vengeance for them. "I, as a deaf man, heard not," and then "thou wilt hear."

3. Abominable uncleanness; even incest itself, such as is not named among the Gentiles, that "a man should have his father's wife," 2 *Cor.* v. 1, his father's concubine; "A man and his father will go in unto the same young woman," as black an instance as any other of an unbounded promiscuous lust; and yet where the former iniquities of oppression and extortion are this also is found; for laws of modesty seldom hold those that have broken the bands of justice, and cast away its cords from them. This wickedness is such a scandal to religion, and the professors of it, that they who are guilty of it are looked as designing thereby to profane God's holy name, and to render it odious among the heathen, as if he countenanced the villanies which those who pretend relation to him allow themselves in, and were altogether such a one as they.

4. Regaling themselves, and yet pretending to honour their God with that which they had got by oppression and extortion, ver. 8. They add idolatry to their injustice, and then think to atone for their injustice with their idolatry. 1st. They make merry with that which they have unjustly squeezed from the poor. They "lay themselves down" at ease and in state, and stretch themselves upon clothes laid to pledge, which they ought to have restored the same night, according to the law, *Deu.* xxiv. 12, 13. And they "drink the wine of the condemned," of such as they have fined and laid heavy mulcts upon, spending that in sensuality which they had got by injustice. 2nd. They think to make atonement for this by feasting on the gains of oppression before their altars, and drinking this wine in the house of their god, in the temples where they worshipped their calves, as if they would make God a partner in their crimes, by making him a partner of the profits of them—service good enough for false gods, but the true God will not be thus mocked. He has declared he "hates robbery for burnt offerings," and cannot be served acceptably but with that which is got honestly.

9 Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them,
Whose height *was* like the height of the cedars,
And he *was* strong as the oaks; [beneath.
Yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from
10 Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
And led you forty years through the wilderness,
To possess the land of the Amorite.
11 And I raised up of your sons for prophets,
And of your young men for Nazarites. [LORD.
Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the
12 But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink;
And commanded the prophets,
Saying, Prophesy not.
13 Behold, I am pressed under you,
As a cart is pressed *that is* full of sheaves.
14 Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift,
And the strong shall not strengthen his force,
Neither shall the mighty deliver himself:
15 Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow;
And *he that is* swift of foot shall not deliver *himself:*
Neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself,
16 And *he that is* courageous among the mighty
Shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.



ANCIENT CARTS.—ver. 13.

Here, First. God puts his people Israel in mind of the great things he had done for them in putting them into possession of the land of Canaan, the greatest part of which these ten tribes now enjoyed, ver. 9, 10. Note, We need often to be minded of the mercies we have received, which are the heaviest aggravations of the sins we have committed. God gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our meanness and unworthiness, and the disproportion between his gifts and our merits; but he justly upbraids us with our ingratitude and ill requital of his favours, and tells us what he had done for us, to shame us for not rendering again according to the benefit done to us: "Son, remember," Israel, remember, 1. That God brought thee out of a house of bondage, rescued thee out of the land of Egypt, where else thou hadst perished in slavery. 2. That he led thee forty years through a desert land, and fed thee in a wilderness, where else thou hadst perished with hunger. Mercies to our ancestors were mercies to us, for if they had been cut off we had not been. 3. That he made room for them in Canaan, by extirpating the natives by a series of wonders little inferior to those by which they were redeemed out of Egypt; I "destroyed the Amorite before them," here put for all the devoted nations. Observe the magnificence of the enemies that stood in their way, which is taken notice of that God might be the more magnified in the subduing of them. They were of great stature, "whose height was like the height of the cedars," and the people of Israel were as shrubs to them; and of great strength, not only tall, but well set, "he was strong as the oaks." Their kingdom was eminent among the nations, and overtopped all its neighbours; the supports and defences of it seemed impregnable; it was as fine as the stately cedar, it was as firm as the sturdy oak, yet when God had a vine to plant there, *Ps.* lxxx. 8, 9, this Amorite is not only cut down but plucked up. "I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath," so that the Amorites were no more a nation, nor ever read of any more. Thus highly did God value Israel; he gave men for them, and people for their life, *Isa.* xliii. 4. How ungrateful then were they who put such contempt upon him! 4. That he

made them "possess the land of the Amorite;" not only put it into their hands, so that they became masters of it, *jure belli*, but gave them a better title to it, so that it became theirs by promise.

Secondly. He likewise upbraids them with the spiritual privileges and advantages they enjoyed as a holy nation, ver. 11. They had helps for their souls, which taught them how to make a good use of their temporal enjoyments, and were therefore more valuable. It is true the ten tribes had not God's temple, altar, and priesthood, and it was their own fault that they deserted them, and for that they might justly have been left in utter darkness; but God left not himself without witness, or them without guides, to shew them the way.

1. They had prophets that were powerful instructors in piety, Divinely inspired, and commissioned to make known the mind of God to them, to shew them what is pleasing to God, and what displeasing; to reprove them for their faults, and warn them of their danger; to direct them in their difficulties, and comfort them in their troubles. God raised them up prophets, spirited them for that work, and employed them in it. He raised them up of their sons, from among themselves, as Moses and Christ were raised up "from among their brethren," *Deu.* xviii. 15. It was an honour put upon their nation and upon their families that they had children of their own to be God's messengers to them, of their own language, not strangers sent from another country, whom they might suspect to be prejudiced against them and their land, but those whom they knew wished well to them. Note, Faithful ministers are great blessings to any people, and it is God that raiseth them up to be so, and they may justly be reckoned an honour to the families they are of.

2. They had Nazarites that were bright examples of piety; "I raised up of your young men for Nazarites," men that bound themselves by a vow to God and his service, and in pursuance of that denied themselves many of the lawful delights of sense, as drinking wine and eating grapes. There were some of their young men that were in their prime for the enjoyment of the pleasures of this life, and yet voluntarily abridged themselves of them; these God raised up by the power of his grace, to be monuments of his grace, to his glory, and to be his witnesses against the impieties of that degenerate age. Note, It is a great blessing to any place to have eminent good Christians in it, as to have eminent good ministers in it, for so they have examples to their rules. We must acknowledge that it bodes well to any people when God raiseth up numbers of hopeful young people among them; when he makes their young men Nazarites, devout and conscientious, and mortified to the pleasures of sense; and those that are such Nazarites, are "purer than snow, whiter than milk," they are indeed the polite young men, for their "polishing is of sapphire," *Lam.* iv. 7. They that have such men, such young men, among them have therein such an advantage both for direction and encouragement to be religious as they will be called to an account for another day if they do not improve. Israel is here reckoned with, not only for the prophets, but for the Nazarites raised up among them. Concerning the truth of this he appeals to themselves; "Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel?" Can you deny it? Have not yourselves been sensible of the advantage you have had by the prophets and Nazarites raised up among you? Note, Sinners' own consciences will be witnesses for God that he has not been wanting to them in the means of grace; so that if they perish it is because they have been wanting to themselves in not improving those means. The men of Judah shall themselves "judge between God and his vineyard," whether he could have done more for it, *Isa.* v. 3, 4.

Thirdly. He chargeth them with the abuse of the means of grace they enjoyed, and the opposition they gave to God's designs in affording them those means, ver. 12. They were so far from walking in the light, that they rebelled against it and did what they could to extinguish it, that it might not shine in their faces to their conviction.

1. They did what they could to debauch good people, to draw them off from their seriousness in devotion and their strictness in conversation. "Ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink," contrary to their vow, that, having broken it in that instance, they might not pretend to keep it in any other. Some they surprised or allured into it, and "with their much fair speech caused them to yield;" others they forced and frightened into it, reproached and threatened them if they were more precise than their neighbours; and, by drawing them in to drink wine, they spoiled them for Nazarites. Note, Satan and his agents are very busy to corrupt the minds of young people that look heavenward, and many that we thought would have been Nazarites they have overcome by giving them wine to drink, by drawing them into the love of mirth and pleasure and drinking company. Multitudes of young men that bade fair for eminent professors of religion have "erred through wine," and been undone for ever. And how do the factors for hell triumph in the debauching of a Nazarite!

2. They did what they could to silence God's ministers, and to stop their mouths. Ye "commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not," and threatened them if they did prophesy, *ch.* vii. 12, as if God's messengers were bound to observe your orders, and might not deliver their errand unless you gave them leave; and so you not only received the grace of God, in raising up those prophets, in vain, but put the highest affront imaginable upon that God in whose name the prophets spoke. Note, Those have a great deal to answer for that cannot bear fruitful preaching, and those much more that suppress it.

Fourthly. He complains of the wrong they did him by their sins; ver. 13, "I am pressed under you," I am straitened by you, and know not what to do, *Hos.* xi. 8, 9. I am loaded and burthened by you, and can no longer bear it, and therefore I will ease me of my adversaries, *Isa.* i. 24. "I am pressed under you," and the load of your sins, "as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves," is loaded with corn, in the midst of the joy of harvest, as long as any will lie on. Note, The great God complains of sin, especially the sins of his professing people, as a burthen to him; he is "grieved with this generation," *Ps.* xcv. 10, "is broken with their whorish heart," *Eze.* vi. 9; a consideration which, if it make not the sinner's repentance very deep, it will make his ruin very great. The great God that upholds the world, and never complains that he is pressed under the weight of it, he fainteth not, neither is weary, yet complains of the sins of Israel, yea, and of their hypocritical services too, that he is "weary of bearing them," *Isa.* i. 14. No wonder the "creature groans, being burdened," *Rom.* viii. 22, when the Creator saith, "I am pressed under them."

Fifthly. He threatens them with unavoidable ruin. And so some read ver. 13, 'Behold, I will press,' or straiten, 'your place, as a cart full of sheaves presseth.' They shall be loaded with judgments till they shall sink under them, and shall make a noise as a cart overloaded doth. They that will not submit to the convictions of the word, that will neither be won by that nor by the conversation of those about them, shall be made to sink under the weight of God's judgments. If God load us daily with his benefits, and we, notwithstanding that, load him with our sins, how can we expect any other but that he should load us with his judgments? And it is here threatened in the last three verses, that when God comes forth to contend with this provoking people they shall not be able to stand before him, to flee from him, or to make their part good with him; for when God judgeth he will overcome. Though his patience be tired out, his power is not, and so the sinner shall find to his cost. When the Assyrian army comes to lay the country waste by sword or captivity, none shall escape, but every one shall have his share in the common desolation.

1. It will be in vain to think of fleeing from the enemy that comes armed with a commission to make all desolate. "The flight shall perish from the swift;" those that have been famed for happy escapes and happy retreats, their arts shall now fail them. They shall have no time to flee, or shall find no way to take; or they shall have no strength or spirit to attempt it. They shall be at their wits' end, and then they are soon at their flight's end. Are they as Asahel, as "swift of foot as a wild roe?" 2 *Sam.* ii. 18; yet like him they shall run the faster upon their own destruction; "He that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself," ver. 15. Or do they say as those, *Isa.* xxx. 16, "We will flee upon horses," and "we will ride upon the swift," yet they shall be overtaken; "neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself" from the pursuers; "a horse is a vain thing for safety."

2. It will be in vain to think of fighting it out. God is at war with them, and are they stronger than he? Is there any military force that can pretend to be a match for Omnipotence? No; "the strong shall not strengthen his force." He that has a habit of strength shall not be able to exert it when he has occasion for it. And the mighty, who should protect and deliver others, shall not be able to "deliver himself," to 'deliver his soul,' so the word is, shall not save his life. Let not the strong man, then, "glory in his strength," nor trust in it, but "strengthen himself in the Lord his God," for in him is everlasting strength. And as the bodily strength shall fail, so shall the weapons of war, the armour as well as the arm shall become insufficient; neither shall he stand that handles the bow, though he stand at a distance, but shall betake himself to flight, and not trust to his own bow to save him. Though the arm were never so strong, and the armour never so well fixed, neither will avail when the spirit fails; ver. 6, "He that is courageous among the mighty," that used to look danger in the face, and not be dismayed at it, he shall flee away naked in that day, not only disarmed, having thrown away his weapons, both offensive and defensive, but plundered of his treasure, which he thought to have carried away with him, and he shall think it as much a bargain that he has "his life for a prey." Thus when God pleaseth, "he taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth," and causeth them who used to boast of their courage and their daring enterprises in the field to wander and sneak "in a wilderness where there is no way," *Job* xii. 4.

CHAPTER III.

A stupid, senseless, heedless people are in this chapter called upon to take notice, I. Of the judgments of God denounced against them, and the warnings he gave them of those judgments; and to be hereby awakened out of their security, ver. 1—8. II. Of the sins that were found among them, by which God was provoked thus to threaten, thus to punish, that they might justify God in his controversy with them; and unless they repented and reformed, might expect no other but that God should proceed in his controversy, ver, 9—15.

HEAR this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

2 You only have I known
Of all the families of the earth:
Therefore I will punish you
For all your iniquities.
3 Can two walk together,
Except they be agreed?
4 Will a lion roar in the forest,
When he hath no prey?
Will a young lion cry out of his den,
If he have taken nothing?
5 Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth,
Where no gin *is* for him?
Shall *one* take up a snare from the earth,
And have taken nothing at all?
6 Shall a trumpet be blown in the city,
And the people not be afraid?
Shall there be evil in a city,
And the LORD hath not done *it?*
7 Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing,
But he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.
8 The lion hath roared, who will not fear?
The Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

The scope of these verses is to convince the people of Israel that God had a controversy with them; that which the prophet has to say to them is to let them know that the Lord has something to say against them, ver. 1. They were his peculiar people above others, knew his name, and were called by it; nevertheless he hath something against them, and they are called to hear what it is, that they may consider what answer they shall make, as the prisoner at the bar is bid to hearken to his indictment. The children of Israel would not regard the words of counsel and comfort that God had many a time spoken to them, and now they shall be made to hear the word of reproof and threatening that the Lord hath spoken against them; for he will act as he hath spoken.

First. Let them know that the gracious cognizance God had taken of them, and the favour he had bestowed upon them, should not exempt them from the punishment due to them for their sins. It is a family that God "brought up from the land of Egypt," ver. 1, and it was no more than a family when it went down thither; thence God delivered it, thence he fetched it to be a family to himself. It is not only the ten tribes, the kingdom of Israel, that must take

notice of this, but that of Judah also, for it is spoken against the whole family that God brought up out of Egypt. It is a family that God has bestowed distinguished favours upon, has owned in a peculiar manner; "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Note, God's church in the world is a family dignified above all the families of the earth. Those that know God are known of him; in Judah is God known, and therefore Judah is more than any people known to God. God has known them, that is, he has chosen them, covenanted with them, and conversed with them as his acquaintance. Now one would think it should follow, Therefore, I will spare you, will connive at your faults, and excuse you; no, "Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Note, The distinguished favours of God to us, if they do not serve to restrain us from sin, shall not serve to exempt us from punishment. Nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, and the kinder notice he has taken of them, the more surely, the more quickly, and the more severely will he reckon with them, if they, by a course of wilful sin, profane their character, disgrace their relation to him, violate their engagements, and put a slight upon the favours and honours with which they have been distinguished. Therefore they shall be punished because their sins dishonour him, affront him, and grieve him, more than the sins of others; and because it is necessary that God should vindicate his own honour, by making it appear that he hates sin, and hates it most in those that are nearest to him. If they be but as bad as others, they shall be punished as worse than others, because it is justly expected they should be so much better than others. Judgment begins at the house of God, begins at the sanctuary, for God will be sanctified either by or upon those that come nigh unto him, *Lev.* x. 3.

Secondly. Let them know that they could not expect any comfortable communion with God unless they first made their peace with him; ver. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" No, how should they? Where there is no friendship there can be no fellowship; if two persons be at variance, they must first accommodate the matters in difference between them before there can be any interchanging of good offices. Israel had affronted God, had broken their covenant with him, and ill requited his favours to them; and yet they expected he should continue to walk with them,—should take their part, act for them, and give them assurances of his presence with them, though they took no care by repentance and reformation to agree with their adversary, and to turn away his wrath. But how can that be? saith God; while you continue to walk contrary to God, you can look for no other but that he should walk contrary to you, *Lev.* xxvi. 13. Note, We cannot expect that God should be present with us, or act for us, unless we be reconciled to him. God and man cannot "walk together except they be agreed;" unless we agree with God in our end, which is his glory, we cannot walk with him by the way.

Thirdly. Let them know that the warnings God gave them of judgments approaching were not causeless and groundless, merely to amuse them, but certain declarations of the wrath of God against them, which, if they did not speedily repent, they would infallibly feel the effects of; ver. 4, "Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey" in view? No, he roars upon his prey; nor will a "young lion cry out of his den," if the old lion has taken nothing to bring home to him. Nor would God thus give you warning, both by the threatenings of his word and by lesser judgments, if you had not by your sins made yourselves a prey to his wrath, nor if he were not really about to fall upon you with desolating, destroying judgments. Note, The threatenings of the word and providence of God are not bugbears to frighten children and fools, but are certain inferences from the sin of man, and certain presages of the judgments of God.

Fourthly. Let them know that, as their own wickedness was the procuring cause of these judgments, so they shall not be removed till they have done their work, ver. 5. When God is come forth to contend with a sinful people, it is necessary they should understand, 1. That it is their own sin that has entangled them; for, "can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him?" No, nature doth not lay snares for the creatures, but the art of men. A bird is not taken in a snare by chance, but with the fowler's design: so the providence of God prepares trouble for sinners, and it is in the work of their own hands that they are snared. Affliction doth not spring out of the dust, but it is God's justice, and our own wickedness, that correct us. 2. It is nothing but their own repentance that can disentangle them; for shall one take up the snare from the earth which he laid with design, except he have taken something as he designed? So neither will God remove the affliction he hath sent till it have done its work, and accomplished that for which he sent it. If our hearts be duly humbled, and we are brought by our afflictions to confess and forsake our sins, then the snare has taken something, then the point is gained, the end is answered; and then, and not till then, the snare is broken,—is taken up from the earth, and we are delivered in love and mercy.

Fifthly. Let them know that all their troubles came from the hand of God's providence, and from the counsel of his will; ver. 6, "Shall there be evil in the city," in a family, in a nation, "and the Lord hath not done it," appointed it, and performed what he appointed? The evil of sin is from ourselves, it is our own doing; but the evil of troubles, personal or public, is from God, and is his doing; whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent. "Out of his mouth both evil and good proceed." This consideration, that whatever evil is in the city the Lord hath done it, should engage us patiently to bear our share in public calamities, and to study to answer God's intention in them.

Sixthly. Let them know that their prophets, who give them warning of judgments approaching, deliver nothing to them but what they have received from the Lord, to be delivered to his people. 1. God makes it known beforehand to the prophets; ver. 7, "Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing," none of that evil in the city spoken of, ver. 6, "but he reveals it to his servants the prophets," though to others it is a secret. Therefore they know not what they do who make light of the warnings which the prophets give them in God's name. Observe, God's prophets are his servants, whom he employs to go on his errands to the children of men. The secret of God is with them; it is in some sense with all the righteous, *Pr.* iii. 32, with "all that fear God," *Ps.* xxv. 14, but in a peculiar manner with the prophets, to whom the spirit of prophecy is a spirit of revelation. It had put honour enough upon the prophets if it had been only said that sometimes God is pleased to reveal to his prophets what he designs to do; but it speaks something very great to say, He doth nothing but he reveals it to them, as if they were the men of his counsel. "Shall I hide from Abraham," who is a prophet, "the thing which I do," *Gen.* xviii. 17. God will therefore be sure to reckon with those who put contempt on the prophets whom he puts this honour upon. 2. The prophets cannot but make that known to the people which God has made known to them; ver. 8, "The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy." His prophets, to whom he hath spoken in secret by dreams and visions, cannot but speak in public to the people what they have heard from God. They are so full of those things themselves, so well assured concerning them, and so much affected with them, that they cannot but speak of them, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak; "I believed, therefore have I spoken," *Acts* iv. 26. Nay, and besides the prophetic impulse which went along with the inspiration, and made the word like a fire in their bones, *Jer.* xx. 9, they received a command from God to deliver what they had been charged with, and they had been false to their trust if they had not done it. Necessity was laid upon them, as upon the preachers of the Gospel, 1 *Cor.* ix. 16.

Seventhly. Let them know that they ought to tremble before God, upon the fair warning he had given them, as they would, 1. Upon the sounding of a trumpet, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, that all may stand upon their guard, and stand to their arms; "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city and the people not be afraid," or run together? as some read it, ver. 6. Will they not presently come together in a fright to consider what is best to be done for the common safety? Yet when God by his prophets gives them notice of their danger, and summons them to come and enlist themselves under his banner, it makes no impression; they will sooner give credit to a watchman on their walls than to a prophet sent of God; will sooner obey the summons of the governor of their city than the orders given them by the governor of the world. God saith, Hearken to the voice of the trumpet, but they will not hearken; nay, and they tell him plainly that they will not, *Jer.* vi. 17. 2. Upon the roaring of a lion. God is sometimes "as a lion, and a young lion to the house of Judah," *Hos.* v. 14. The lion roars before he tears, thus God warns before he wounds. If, therefore, the lion roars upon a poor traveller, as he did against Samson, *Jud.* xiv. 5, he cannot but be put into a mighty consternation; yet "the Lord roars out of Zion," *ch.* i. 2, and none are afraid; but they go on securely, as if they were in no danger. Note, The fair warning given to a careless world, if it be not taken, will aggravate its condemnation another day. The lion roared, and they were not moved with fear to prepare an ark. O the amazing stupidity of an unbelieving world, that will not be wrought upon, no, not by the terrors of the Lord!

9 Publish in the palaces at Ashdod,
And in the palaces in the land of Egypt,
And say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria,
And behold the great tumults in the midst thereof,
And the oppressed in the midst thereof.
10 For they know not to do right, saith the LORD,
Who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.
11 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD;
An adversary *there shall be* even round about the land;
And he shall bring down thy strength from thee,
And thy palaces shall be spoiled.
12 Thus saith the LORD;
As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion
Two legs, or a piece of an ear;
So shall the children of Israel be taken out
That dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed,
And in Damascus *in* a couch.
13 Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob,
Saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts,
14 That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him
I will also visit the altars of Beth-el:
And the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground.
15 And I will smite the winter house with the summer house;
And the houses of ivory shall perish,
And the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

Israel is here again convicted and condemned, and particular notice given of the crimes they are convicted of, and the punishments they are condemned to.

First. Notice is given of it to their neighbours. The prophet is ordered to publish it in the palace of Ashdod, one of the chief cities of the Philistines; nay, the summons must go farther, even to "the palaces in the land of Egypt." The great men of both those nations that dwell in the palaces, that are inquisitive concerning the affairs of the neighbour nations, and are conversant with the public intelligence, let them assemble themselves "upon the mountains of Samaria," ver. 9. There, upon a throne, high and lifted up, the judgment is set; Samaria is the criminal that is to be tried. Let them be present at the trial; for it shall be (as trials used to be) public, in the face of the country; let them make an appointment to meet there from all parts, to judge between God and his vineyard. God appeals to all impartial righteous men, *Eze.* xxiii. 45. They will all subscribe to the equity of his proceedings, when they see how the case stands. Note, God's controversies with sinners do not fear a scrutiny. Even Philistines and Egyptians will be made to see and say that the ways of the Lord are equal, but our ways are unequal. They are likewise summoned to attend, not only that they may justify God, and be witnesses for him that he deals fairly, but that they may themselves take warning; for if judgment begin at the house of God, as they see it doth, what shall be the end of those that are strangers to him? 1 *Pet.* iv. 17; "If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?" Or, this intimates that the sin of Israel had been so notorious that the neighbour nations could come in witnesses against them, and therefore it was fit their punishment should be so. If it could have been concealed we would have said, "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;" but why should their friends consult their reputation, when they themselves do not consult it? If they are grown impudent in sin let them bear the shame; publish it in Ashdod, in Egypt.

1. Let them see how black the charge is, and how well proved. Let them observe the behaviour of the inhabitants of Samaria; let them look off from the adjacent hills, and they may see how rude and boisterous they are, and hear how loud the cry of their sin is, as was that of Sodom. 1st. Look into their streets, and you will see nothing but riot and disorder, "great tumults in the midst thereof." Reason and justice are upon all occasions run down by the noise and fury of an outrageous mob, the dominion of which is the sin and

shame of any people, and is likely to be their ruin. 2nd. Look into their prisons, and you see them filled with injured innocents; the oppressed are in the midst thereof, thrown down and crushed by their oppressors, overpowered and overwhelmed, and "they had no comforter, *Eccl.* iv. 1. 3rd. Look into their courts of justice, and they who preside in those courts "know not to do right," because they have been always accustomed to do wrong. They act as if they had no notion at all of the thing called justice, are in no care to do justice themselves or to see that others do justice. 4th. Look into their treasures and stores, and you see them replenished with violence and robbery, with that which was unjustly got, and is still unjustly kept; thus they have heaped treasure together for the last days, but it will prove a "treasure of wrath against the day of wrath." It may be well said, those know not to do right who think to enrich themselves by doing wrong.

2. Let them see how heavy the doom is, and how well executed, ver. 11, 12. 1st. Their country shall be invaded and ruined; and observe how the punishment answers the sin, *First.* Great tumults are in the midst of the land, and therefore "an adversary shall be even round about the land;" the Assyrian forces shall surround it, and break in upon it on every side. Note, When sin is harboured and indulged in the midst of a people, they can expect no other but that adversaries should be round about them, so that go which way they will they go into the mouth of danger, *Lu.* xix. 43. *Secondly.* They strengthened themselves in their wickedness, but the enemy shall bring down their strength from them,—that strength which they abused in oppressing the poor, and doing violence to all about them. Note, That power which is made an instrument of unrighteousness will justly be brought down and broken. *Thirdly.* They stored up "robbery in their palaces," and therefore their palaces shall be spoiled; for what is got and kept wrongfully will not be kept long. Even palaces will be no protection to fraud and oppression; but the greatest of men, if they have spoiled others, shall themselves be spoiled; for the Lord is the avenger of all such. 2nd. Their countrymen shall not escape, ver. 12. They shall be in the hands of the enemy, as a lamb in the mouth of a lion, all devoured and eaten up; and they shall be utterly unable to make any resistance. And if any do make their escape, so as neither to fall by the sword nor to go into captivity, yet they shall be very few, and those of the meanest and least considerable, like two legs or shanks of a lamb, or, it may be, a piece of an ear, which the lion drops, or the shepherd takes from him when he has eaten the whole body; so perhaps here and there one may escape from Samaria and from Damascus, when the king of Assyria shall fall upon them both, but none to make any account of. And those that do escape, it shall be with the utmost difficulty and hazard, by hiding themselves in "the corner of a bed," or under the bed's feet, which intimates that their spirits shall be quite cowed and broken, and they shall sneak shamefully in the time of danger. They shall not hide themselves in dens and caves, but in the corner of a bed, or the piece of a bed, such as poor people must be content with. They shall very narrowly escape, as it is foretold concerning the last destruction of Jerusalem, that there shall be "two in a bed together, one taken and the other left." Note, When God's judgments come forth against a people with commission, it will be in vain to think of outrunning them. Some make their dwelling in the corner of a bed, and in a couch, to speak their present security and sensuality. They are at ease, as in a bed or on a couch, but when God comes to contend with them, he shall make them uneasy, shall take them away out of the bed of their sloth and slumber. Those that stretch themselves lazily upon their couches when God's judgments are abroad, shall go captive with the first that go captive.

Secondly. Notice is given of it to themselves, ver. 12. Let this be testified, and heard in the house of Jacob, among all the seed of Israel, for it is spoken by the Lord God, the God of hosts, who hath authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it. Let them know from him that the day is at hand when God will "visit the transgression of Israel upon him," that is, when he will inquire into them and reckon for them. There will come a day of visitation, a day of punishment; and in that day all those things they are proud of, and put confidence in, shall fail them, and so they shall smart for the sins they have been guilty of about them.

1. Woe to their altars, for God will visit them. He will inquire into the sins they have been guilty of at their altars, and bring into the account all their superstition and idolatry,—all their expenses on their false gods, and all their expectations from them; and he will lay the altars themselves under the marks of his displeasure, for the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground, and with them the altar itself demolished and broken to pieces. We find the altar at Bethel prophesied against, 1 *Kin.* xiii. 2, and immediately rent, ver. 3; and that prophecy fulfilled when Josiah "burnt men's bones upon it," 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 15, 16. This here seconds that prophecy, and seems to point at the same event. Note, If men will not destroy idolatrous altars God will, and those with them that held them in veneration. Some make "the horns of the altar" to signify all those things which they flee to for refuge, and trust in, and which they make their sanctuary. They shall all be cut off, so that they shall have nothing to take hold of.

2. Woe to their houses, for God will visit them too. He will inquire into the sins they have been guilty of in their houses, the robbery they have stored up in their houses, and the luxury in which they lived. And, ver. 15, "I will smite the winter house with the summer house." Their nobility and gentry, and rich merchants, had their winter houses in the city and their summer houses in the country; so nice were they in guarding against the inconveniences of the winter when the country was thought too cold, and of the summer when the city was thought too hot, though the climate of that good land was so temperate, like that of ours, that neither the cold nor heat were ever in extremity. They indulged a foolish affectation of change and variety, but God will either by war or by the earthquake smite both the winter house and the summer house; neither shall serve to shelter them from his judgments. The houses of ivory, (so called because either the ceiling, or wainscot, or some of the ornaments of them, were edged or inlaid with ivory,) those shall perish,—shall be burnt, or pulled down, and "the great houses shall have an end;" the most splendid and spacious houses, the houses of their great men, they shall no longer be, or at least be no longer theirs. Note, The pomp and pleasantness of men's houses will be so far from fortifying them against God's judgments, that it will make them the more grievous and vexatious, as their extravagance about them will be put upon the score of their sins and follies.

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter, I. The oppressors in Israel are threatened for their oppression of the poor, ver. 1—3. II. The idolaters in Israel being joined to idols, are given up to their own hearts' lusts, ver. 4, 5. III. All the sins of Israel are aggravated from their incorrigibleness in them, and their refusal to return and reform, notwithstanding the various rebukes of providence they had been under, ver. 6—11. IV. They are invited yet at length to humble themselves before God, since it is impossible for them to make their part good against him, ver. 12, 13.

HEAR this word, ye kine of Bashan,
That *are* in the mountain of Samaria,

Which oppress the poor, which crush the needy,
Which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink.
2 The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness,
That, lo, the days shall come upon you,
That he will take you away with hooks,
And your posterity with fishhooks.
3 And ye shall go out at the breaches,
Every *cow at that which is* before her;
And ye shall cast *them* into the palace, saith the LORD.
4 Come to Beth-el, and transgress;
At Gilgal multiply transgression;
And bring your sacrifices every morning,
And your tithes after three years:
5 And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven,
And proclaim *and* publish the free offerings:
For this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

It is here foretold, in the name of God, that oppressors shall be humbled, and idolaters shall be hardened.

First. That proud oppressors shall be humbled for their oppressions; for he that doth wrong shall receive according to the wrong that he has done. Now observe,

1. How their sin is described, ver. 12. They are compared to the kine of Bashan, which were a breed of cattle very large and strong, especially if, though bred there, they were fed upon the mountains of Samaria, where the pastures were extraordinarily fat. Amos had been a herdsman, and he speaks in the dialect of his calling, comparing the rich and great men, that lived in luxury and wantonness, to the kine of Bashan, that were wanton and unruly, would not be kept within the bounds of their own pasture, but broke through the hedges, broke down all the fences, and trespassed upon the neighbouring grounds; and not only so, but pushed and gored the lesser cattle that were not a match for them. They that had their summer houses upon the mountains of Samaria, when they went thither for fresh air, were as mischievous as the kine upon the mountains of Bashan, and as injurious to those about them.

1st. They oppress the poor and needy themselves; they crush them to squeeze something to themselves out of them. They take advantage of their poverty and necessity, and inability to help themselves, to make them poorer and more necessitous than they are. They made use of their power, as judges and magistrates, for the invading of men's rights and properties, the poor not excepted; for they made no conscience of robbing even the hospital.

2nd. They are in confederacy with them that do so. They "say to their masters," that is, to the masters of the poor, that abuse them, and violently take from them what they have, when they ought to have relieved them—they say to them, Bring, and let us drink, let us feast with you upon the gains of your oppression, and then we will protect you, and stand by you in it, and reject the appeals of the poor against you. Note, What is got by extortion is commonly made use of as "provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," and therefore men are tyrants to the poor, because they are slaves to their appetites. "Bring, and let us drink," is the language of those that crush the needy; as if the tears of the oppressed mingled with their wine made it drink the better. And by their associations for drinking and revelling, and an excess of riot, they strengthen their combinations for persecution and oppression, and harden the hearts of one another in it.

2. How their punishment is described, ver. 2, 3. God will "take them away with hooks, and their posterity with fish-hooks;" that is, he will send the Assyrian army upon them, that shall make a prey of them; shall not only inclose the body of the nation in their net, but shall angle for particular persons, and take them prisoners and captives as with hooks and fish-hooks, shall draw them out of their own land, as fish are drawn out of the water, which is their element, they and their children with them. Or, they in their day shall be drawn out by one victorious enemy, and their posterity in their day by another; so that, by a succession of destroying judgments, they shall at length be wholly extirpated. These kine of Bashan thought they could no more be drawn out with a hook and a cord than the leviathan can, *Job* li. 1, 2. But God will make them know he has a hook for their nose, and a bridle for their jaws, *Isa.* xxxvii. 29. The enemy shall take them away as easily as the fisherman takes away the little fish, and shall make it their sport and recreation. When the enemy has made himself master of Samaria, then, 1st. Some shall attempt to escape by flight. Ye "shall go out at the breaches" made in the

wall of the city, "every cow at that which is before her," to shift for their own safety, and make the best of their way. And now the unruly kine of Bashan are tamed, and are themselves crushed, as they crushed the poor and needy. Note, Those to whom God has given a good pasture, if they are wanton in it, will justly be turned out of it. And those who will not be kept within the hedge of God's precepts forfeit the benefit of the hedge of God's protection, and will be forced in vain to flee through the breaches they have themselves fearfully made in that hedge. 2nd. Others shall think to shelter themselves, or at least their best effects, in the place, because it is a castle well fortified, and a garrison well manned. 'Ye shall throw yourselves,' so some read it, or throw them, that is, your posterity, your children, or whatever is dear to you, into the palace, where the enemy will find it ready to be seized. Note, What is got by oppression cannot long be enjoyed with satisfaction.

3. How their sentence to this punishment is ratified. "The Lord God has sworn it by his holiness." He had often said it, and they regarded it not, they thought God and his prophets did but jest with them; therefore he swears it in his wrath, and what he hath sworn he will not revoke. He swears by his holiness, that attribute of his which is so much his glory, and which is so much glorified in the punishment of wicked people. For, as sure as God is a holy God, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, shall reap the same.

Secondly. That obstinate idolaters shall be hardened in their idolatries; ver. 4, 5, "Come to Bethel, and transgress." It is spoken ironically; Do so, take your course; multiply your transgressions by multiplying your sacrifices, "for this liketh you." But what will ye do in the end hereof? Here we see, 1. How intent they were upon the service of their idols, and how willing they were to be at cost upon them. They brought their sacrifices, and their tithes, and their free offerings, hoping that therein they should be accepted of God, but it was all an abomination to him. The profuseness of idolaters in the service of their false gods may shame our straithandedness in the service of the true and living God. 2. How they mimicked God's institutions. They had their daily sacrifice at the altar of Bethel, as God had at his altar. They had their thank offerings, as God had, only they allowed leaven in them, which God had forbidden, because the priests did not like to have the bread so heavy and tasteless as it would be if it had not leaven in it, or something to ferment it. Holy bread would not serve them, unless it were pleasant bread. 3. How well pleased they were with these services themselves. "This liketh you, O ye children of Israel:" so ye love. What was their own invention they were fond of, and wedded to, and thought it must therefore be pleasing to God, because it was agreeable to their own fancy. 4. How they are upbraided with it. "Come to Bethel," to Gilgal, bring the sacrifices and tithes yourselves, proclaim and publish to the nation the free offerings, pressing them to bring in abundance of such. Go on in this way; that is, 1st. It is plain you are resolved to do it, whatever God and conscience say to the contrary. 2nd. Your prophets shall let you alone in it, and not admonish you as they have done, for it is to no purpose; "Let no man strive to rebuke his neighbour." 3rd. Your foolish hearts shall be more and more darkened and besotted, and you shall be quite given up to these strong delusions, to believe a lie. 4th. What will you get by it? Come to Bethel, and multiply your sacrifices, and see what the better you will be, what returns you will have to your sacrifices, what stead they will stand you in, in the day of distress; "You shall be ashamed at Bethel your confidence," *Jer.* xlviii. 13. 5th. Come and transgress, come and multiply your transgression, that you may fill up the measure of your iniquity, and be ripened for ruin. Thus Christ said to Judas, "What thou doest, do quickly;" and to the Jews, "Fill ye up the measure of your fathers," *Mat.* xxiii. 32.

6 And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
And want of bread in all your places:
Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.
7 And also I have withholden the rain from you,
When *there were* yet three months to the harvest:
And I caused it to rain upon one city,
And caused it not to rain upon another city:
One piece was rained upon,
And the piece whereupon it rained not withered.
8 So two *or* three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water;
But they were not satisfied:
Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.
9 I have smitten you with blasting and mildew:
When your gardens and your vineyards
And your fig trees and your olive trees increased,
The palmerworm devoured *them:*
Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.
10 I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt:
Your young men have I slain with the sword,
And have taken away your horses;
And I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils:
Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.
11 I have overthrown *some* of you,
As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
And ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning:
Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD.
12 Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel:
And because I will do this unto thee,
Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.
13 For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind,
And declareth unto man what *is* his thought,
That maketh the morning darkness,
And treadeth upon the high places of the earth,
The LORD, The God of hosts, *is* his name.

Here, First. God complains of his people's incorrigibleness under the judgments which he had brought upon them, in order to their humiliation and reformation. He had by several tokens intimated to them his displeasure, with this design, that they might by repentance make their peace with him, but it had not the effect. It is five times repeated in these verses, as the burthen of the charge, "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord;" you have been several times corrected, but in vain. You are not reclaimed, there is no sign of amendment. You have been sent for by one messenger after another, but you have not come back, you have not come home. 1. This intimates that that which God designed in all his providential rebukes was to reduce them to their allegiance, to influence them to return to him. 2. That, if they had returned to their God, they would have been accepted, he would have bid them welcome, and the troubles they were in should have been removed. 3. That the reason why God sent farther troubles was, because former troubles had not done the work, otherwise it is no pleasure to the Almighty that he should afflict. 4. That God was grieved at their obstinacy, and took it unkindly that they should force him to do that which he did so unwillingly: "You have not returned to me," from whom you have revolted; to me, with whom ye are in covenant; to me, that stand ready to receive you; to me, who have so often called you. Now, to aggravate their incorrigibleness, and to justify himself in inflicting greater judgments, he recounts the lesser judgments with which he had tried to bring them to repentance.

1st. There had sometimes been a scarcity of provisions, though there was no visible cause of it; ver. 6, "I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities," for you had no meat to chew whereby your teeth might be fouled, especially no flesh, which dirties the teeth; or 'emptiness of teeth,' nothing to fill your mouth with. Bread, the staff of life, has been wanting, for you have sown much and brought in little, as *Hag.* i. 9. Some think this refers to that seven years' famine that was in Elisha's time, which we read of, 2 *Kin.* viii. 1. Now when God thus "took away their corn in the season thereof," because they had prepared it for Baal, they should have said, "We will go and return to our first husband," having paid dear for leaving him; but it had not that effect; "They have not returned to me, saith the Lord."

2nd. Sometimes they had wanted rain, and then of course they wanted the fruits of the earth. This evil was of the Lord; "I have withholden the rain from you." God has the key of the clouds, and if he shut, who can open? ver. 7. The rain was withheld "when there were yet three months to the harvest," at the time when they used to have it, and therefore the withholding of it was an extraordinary thing; and if the course of nature was altered, they must therein own the hand of the God of nature; and it was at a time when they most needed it, and therefore the want of it was a very sore judgment, and blasted their expectations of a crop at harvest. And one circumstance which made this very remarkable was, that when there were some places that wanted rain, and withered for want of it, there were other places near adjoining that had it in abundance. God "caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another," in the same country; nay, he caused it to rain upon one field, one piece of a field, and it was thereby made fruitful and flourishing; but on the next field, on the other side the hedge, nay, on another part of the same field, it rained not at all, and it was so long without rain that all the products of it withered. No doubt this was literally true, and there were many instances of it which were generally taken notice of. Now, *First.* By this it appeared that the withholding of the rain was not casual, but by a Divine direction and disposal; that the cloud which watereth the earth is "turned round about by the counsels of God, to do whatsoever he commandeth it, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy," *Job* xxxvii. 12, 13. Rain doth not go by planets, (as common people speak,) but as God sends it by his winds. *Secondly.* We have reason to think that those cities on which it rained not were the most famous for wickedness, such as Bethel and Gilgal, ver. 4; and that those on which it rained were such as retained something of religion and virtue among them. And so in the town-fields it rained or rained not upon the piece, according as the owner was; for we are sure the curse of the Lord is in the house and upon the ground of the wicked, but he blesseth the habitation of the just, and his field is a field that the Lord has blessed. *Thirdly.* It would be the greater grief and vexation to those whose fields withered for want of rain, to see their neighbours' fields well watered and flourishing. "My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry," *Isa.* lxv. 13; the "wicked shall see it and be grieved." Probably those that were oppressed were rained upon, and so they recovered their losses, while the oppressors withered, and so lost their gains. *Fourthly.* Yet, as to the nation in general, it was a mixture of mercy with the judgment, and consequently strengthened the call to repentance and reformation, and encouraged them to hope for all mercy in their returns to God, since there was so much mercy in God's rebukes of them. But, because they did not make a good use of this gracious allay to the extremity of the judgment, they had not the benefit of it which otherwise they might have had; for, ver. 8, "Two or three cities wandered" at uncertainty, as beggars, "unto one city to drink water," and, if possible, to have some to carry home with them, but "they were not satisfied." It was but here and there one city that had water, while many wanted, and then it was not as usual, *usus communis aquarum,*—'Water is free to all.' They that had it had occasion for it, or knew not how soon they might, and therefore could afford but little to them that wanted, saying, "Lest there be not enough for us and you." They that came drank water, but they were not satisfied, because they drank it by measure, and with astonishment; and they that "drink of this water shall thirst again," *Jno.* iv. 13. They were not satisfied, because their desires were greedy, and what they had God did not bless to them, *Hag.* i. 6. And now one would think, when they met with all this disappointment, they should have considered their ways, and repented; but it had not that effect; "Yet have ye not returned to me," no, not so much as to pray in a right manner for the former and latter rain, *Zec.* x. 1. See the folly of carnal hearts; they will wander from city to city, from one creature to another, in pursuit of satisfaction, and still they miss of it; they labour for that which satisfieth not, *Isa.* lv. 2; and yet, after all, they will not return to God, will not incline their ear to him in whom they might have satisfaction. The preaching of the Gospel is as rain, God sometimes blesseth one place with it more than another; some countries, some cities, are like Gideon's fleece, wet with this dew, while the ground about is dry. All withers where this rain is wanting. But it were well if people were but as wise for their souls as they are for their bodies, and, when they have not this rain for them, would go and seek it where it is to be had; and if they seek aright, they shall not seek in vain.

3rd. Sometimes the fruits of their ground were eaten up by caterpillars, or blasted with mildew, ver. 9. Heaven and earth are armed against those who have made God their enemy. When God pleased, that is, when he was displeased, *First*. They suffered by a malignant air, the influences of which, either too hot or too cold, blasted their fruits, with a force that could be neither discerned nor resisted, and against which there was no defence. *Secondly*. They suffered by malignant animals. Their vineyards and gardens yielded their increase in great abundance, so did their fig-trees and olive-trees, but the palmer-worms devoured them before the fruit was ripe and fit to be gathered in. This was either the same judgment with that which we read of, *Joel* i. 4, 6, or a lesser judgment of the same nature sent before, to give warning of that. But they did not take warning; "Yet have ye not returned to me."

4th. Sometimes the plague had raged among them, and the sword of war had cut off multitudes, ver. 10. The pestilence is God's messenger, this he sent among them, with directions whom to strike dead, and it was done. It was a "pestilence after the manner of Egypt;" deaths were scattered among them by the hand of a destroying angel, at midnight. And perhaps this pestilence, as that of Egypt, fastened upon the firstborn. 'In the way of Egypt,' so the margin; when they were making their escape to Egypt, or going thither to seek for aid, the pestilence seized them by the way, and stopped their journey. The sword of war is likewise "the sword of the Lord;" this was drawn among them with commission; and then it slew their young men, the strength of the present generation and the seed of the next. God saith, I have slain them; he avows the execution; "The slain of the Lord are many." The enemy took away their horses, and converted them to their own use. And the dead carcases of those that were slain, either by the sword or pestilence, were so many, and, for want of surviving friends, were left so long unburied, that the stench of their camps came up into their nostrils, and was both noisome and dangerous, and might put them in mind of the offensiveness of their sin to God. And yet this did not prevail to humble and reclaim them; "You have not returned to him that smiteth you." Such a rueful, woful sight as this prevailed not to make them religious.

5th. In these and other judgments some were remarkably cut off, and made monuments of justice; others were remarkably spared, and made monuments of mercy; the setting of which the one over against the other one would have thought likely to work upon them; but it had not its effect, ver. 11. *First*. Some were quite ruined, their families destroyed, and themselves in them. "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah;" perhaps consumed them with lightning, as Sodom was, or the houses some other way burnt to the ground, and the inhabitants in them. Sodom and Gomorrah are said to be condemned with an overthrow, and so made an example, 2 *Pet*. ii. 6. God had threatened to destroy the whole land with such an overthrow as that of Sodom, *Deu*. xxix. 23. But he began with some particular places first, to give them warning, or perhaps with some particular persons, whose sins went before-hand to judgment. *Secondly*. Others very narrowly escaped. Ye were, many of you, "as a firebrand plucked out of the burning," like Lot out of Sodom, when the fire had already kindled upon you; and yet you hate sin never the more for the danger it has brought you to, nor love God ever the more for the deliverance he wrought for you. You that have been so signally delivered, and in such a distinguishing way, yet "have not returned unto me."

Secondly. God in the close calls upon his people, yet at length, in this their day, to understand the things that belong to their peace before they were hid from their eyes, ver. 12, 13. Observe here,

1. How God threatens them with sorer judgments than any they had yet been under. Therefore, seeing you have not been wrought upon by correction hitherto, "Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel." He doth not say how he will do, but it shall be something worse than had come yet, *Jno*. v. 14. Or, thus I will go on to do unto thee, following one judgment with another, like the plagues of Egypt, till I have made a full end. Nothing else but reformation will prevent the ruin of a sinful people. If they turn not to him, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. "I will punish you yet seven times more, if you will not be reformed;" so it was written in the law, *Lev*. xxvi. 23, 24.

2. How he awakens them therefore to think of making their peace with God. Seeing "I will do this unto thee," and there is no remedy, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel;" that is, 1st. Consider how unable thou art to meet him as a combatant. Some make it to be spoken by way of irony or challenge: Prepare to meet God that is coming forth to contend with thee. What armour of proof canst thou put on? What courage canst thou steel thyself with? Alas, it is but putting briars and thorns before a consuming fire, *Isa*. xxvii. 4, 5. Art thou able with less than ten thousand to meet Him that comes out against thee with more than twenty thousand? *Lu*. xiv. 31. 2nd. Resolve, therefore, to meet him as a penitent, as a humble supplicant; to meet him as thy God, in covenant with thee, to submit, and stand it out no longer. We must prepare to "meet God in the way of his judgments," *Isa*. xxvi. 8, to "take hold on his strength that we may make peace." Note, Since we cannot flee from God, we are concerned to prepare to meet him, and therefore he gives us warning, that we may prepare. When we are to meet him in his ordinances, we must prepare to meet him, prepare to seek him.

3. How he sets forth the greatness and power of God, as a reason why we should prepare to meet him, ver. 13. If he be such a God as he is here described to be, it is folly to contend with him, and our duty and interest to make our peace with him; it is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy. 1st. He "formeth the mountains;" made the earth, the strongest, stateliest parts of it, and by the word of his power still upholdeth it and them. Whatever are the products of the everlasting mountains, he formed them; whatever salvation is hoped for from hills and mountains, he is the founder of it, *Ps*. lxxxix. 11, 12. He that formed the great mountains can make them plain when they stand in the way of his people's salvation. 2nd. He createth the wind; the power of the air is derived from him, and directed by him; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures, and orders from what point of the compass it shall blow, and he that made it rules it: even the winds and the seas obey him. 3rd. He declares unto man what are his thoughts; he makes known his counsel by his servants the prophets to the children of men—the thought of his justice against impenitent sinners, and the thought of good he thinks toward those that repent. He can also make known, for he perfectly knows, the thought that is in man's heart, he understands it afar off, and in the day of conviction will set the evil thoughts, among other the sins of sinners, in order before them. 4th. He often "makes the morning darkness," by thick clouds overspreading the sky presently after the sun rose bright and glorious; so, when we look for prosperity and joy, he can dash our expectations with some unlooked-for calamity. 5th. He "treads upon the high places of the earth," is not only higher than the highest, but has dominion over all; tramples upon proud men, and upon the idols that they worshipped in the highest places. 6th. Jehovah, "the God of hosts is his name," for he has his being of himself, and is the fountain of all being, and all the hosts of heaven and earth are at his command. Let us humble ourselves before this God, prepare to meet him, and give all diligence to make him our God; for happy the people whose God he is, that have all this power engaged for them.

CHAPTER V.

The scope of this chapter is to prosecute the exhortation given to Israel, in the close of the foregoing chapter, to prepare to meet his God: he here tells them, I. What preparation they must make, they must seek the Lord, and not seek any more to idols, ver. 4—8; they must seek good and love it, ver. 14, 15. II. Why they must make this preparation to meet their God, 1. Because of the present deplorable condition they were in, ver. 1—3. 2. Because it was by sin that they were brought into such a condition, ver. 7, 10—12. 3. Because it would be their happiness to seek God, and he was ready to be found of them, ver. 8, 9, 14. 4. Because he would proceed in his wrath to their utter ruin if they did not seek him, ver. 5, 6, 13, 16, 17. 5. Because all their confidence would fail them, if they did not seek unto God, and make him their friend. 1st. Their profane contempt of God's judgments, and setting them at defiance, would not secure them, ver. 18—20. 2nd. Their external services in religion, and their shows of devotion, would not avail to turn away the wrath of God, ver. 21—24. 3rd. Their having been long in possession of church privileges, and in a course of holy duties, would not be their protection, while all along they had kept up their idolatrous customs, ver. 25—27. They have therefore no way left them to save themselves, but by repentance and reformation.

HEAR ye this word which I take up against you,
Even a lamentation, O house of Israel.
2 The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise:
She is forsaken upon her land; *there is* none to raise her
3 For thus saith the Lord GOD; [up.
The city that went out *by* a thousand shall leave an hundred,
And that which went forth *by* an hundred shall leave ten,
To the house of Israel.

This chapter begins as those two next foregoing began, with "Hear this word." Where God has a mouth to speak we must have an ear to hear; it is our duty, it is our interest; yet so stupid are the most of men, that they need to be again and again called upon to hear the word of the Lord, to give audience, to give attention: "Hear this word." This convincing, awakening word must be heard and heeded, as well as words of comfort and peace; the word that is taken up against us, as well as that which makes for us; for, whether we hear or forbear, the word of God shall take effect, and not a tittle of it shall fall to the ground. It is the word which I take up, not the prophet only, but the God that sent him. It is "the word that the Lord hath spoken," *ch*. iii. 1. The word to be heard is a lamentation, a lamentable account of the present calamitous state of the kingdom of Israel, and a lamentable prediction of its utter destruction. Their condition is sad; "The virgin of Israel is fallen," ver. 2, is come down from what she was. That state, though not pure and chaste as a virgin, yet was beautiful and gay, and had her charms, looked high herself, and was courted by many as a virgin; but she is fallen into contempt and poverty, and is universally slighted. Nay, and their condition is helpless; she shall no more rise, shall never recover her former dignity again. God had lately begun to cut Israel short, 2 *Kin*. x. 32; and, because they repented not, it was not long before he cut Israel down.

First. Their princes that should have helped them up were disabled; she is "forsaken upon her land." Not only those she was in alliance with abroad failed her, but her friends at home deserted her. She had not been carried captive into a strange land if she had not first been forsaken upon her own land, and thrown to the ground there, and all her true interests abandoned by those that should have had them at heart. There is none to raise her up, none that can do it, none that care to lend her a hand.

Secondly. Their people that should have helped them up were diminished, ver. 3. The city that had a militia a thousand strong, and in the beginning of the war had furnished out a thousand effective men, able-bodied and well armed, when they come to review their troops after the battle, shall find but a hundred left; and in proportion, the city that sent out a hundred shall have but ten come back; so great a slaughter shall be made, and so few left to the house of Israel for the public service and safety, scarce one in ten shall escape of the hands that should relieve this abject, this dejected nation. Note, The lessening of the numbers of God's spiritual Israel, by death or desertion, is just matter for lamentation; for, by whom shall Jacob arise? by whom shall the decays of piety be repaired when he is thus made small?

4 For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel,
Seek ye me, and ye shall live:
5 But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal,
And pass not to Beer-sheba:
For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity,
And Beth-el shall come to nought.
6 Seek the LORD, and ye shall live;
Lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph,
And devour *it*, and *there be* none to quench *it* in Beth-el
7 Ye who turn judgment to wormwood,
And leave off righteousness in the earth,
8 *Seek him* that maketh the seven stars and Orion,
And turneth the shadow of death into the morning,
And maketh the day dark with night:
That calleth for the waters of the sea,
And poureth them out upon the face of the earth:
The LORD *is* his name:
9 That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong,
So that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.
10 They hate him that rebuketh in the gate,
And they abhor him that speaketh uprightly

11 Forasmuch therefore as your treading *is* upon the poor,
And ye take from him burdens of wheat:
Ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them;
Ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.
12 For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins:
They afflict the just, they take a bribe,
And they turn aside the poor in the gate *from their right.*
13 Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time;
For it *is* an evil time.
14 Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live:
And so the LORD, the God of hosts, shall be with you,
As ye have spoken.
15 Hate the evil, and love the good,
And establish judgment in the gate:
It may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious
Unto the remnant of Joseph.

This is a message from God to the house of Israel, in which,

First. They are told of their faults, that they might see what occasion there was for them to repent and reform, and that when they were called to return, they might not need to ask, Wherein shall we return? God tells them in general; ver. 12, "I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins," and you shall be made to know them too. In our penitent reflections upon our sins we must consider, as God doth in his judicial remarks upon them, and will do in the great day,

1. That they are very numerous; they are our manifold transgressions, sins of various kinds, and often repeated. O what a multitude of vain and vile thoughts lodge within us! What a multitude of idle, foolish, wicked words have been spoken by us! In what a multitude of instances have we gratified and indulged our corrupt appetites and passions! And how many are our omissions of duty, and in duty! Who can understand his errors? Who can tell how oft he offends? God knows how many, just how many, our transgressions are; none of them pass him unobserved: we know they are to us innumerable, more than the hairs of our head, and we have reason to see what danger we have brought ourselves into, and what abundance of work we have made for repentance by our manifold transgressions, by the numberless numbers of our sins of daily incursion.

2. That some of them are very heinous; they are our mighty sins; sins that are more exceeding sinful in their own nature, and by being committed presumptuously, and with a high hand. Sins against the light of nature, flagrant crimes, that are mighty to overpower your convictions, and to pull down judgments upon you. He instances some of these mighty sins:

1st. They corrupted the worship of God, and turned to idols; that is implied, ver. 5: that they had sought to Bethel, where one of the golden calves was; they had frequented Gilgal, a place which they chose to set up idols in, because it had been made famous in the days of Joshua by God's wonderful appearances to and for his people. Beersheba likewise, a place that had been famous in the days of the patriarchs, was now another rendezvous of idols; as we find also, *ch.* viii. 14; and thither they passed, though it lay at a distance in the land of Judah. Now, having thus shamefully gone a whoring from God, no doubt they were concerned to return to him.

2nd. They perverted justice among themselves; ver. 7, ye "turn judgment to wormwood;" that is, you make your administration of justice bitter and nauseous, and highly displeasing both to God and man: that fruit is become a weed, a weed in the garden. As nothing more venerable, nothing more valuable, than justice duly administered, so nothing is more hurtful, nothing more abominable, than designedly doing wrong, under colour and pretence of doing right. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*,—'The best, when corrupted, become the worst.' Ye "leave off righteousness in the earth;" as if those that do wrong were accountable to the God of heaven only, and not to the princes and judges of the earth. Thus it was as before the flood, when the earth was filled with violence.

3rd. They were very oppressive to the poor, and made them poorer; they trod upon the poor, ver. 11, trampled upon them, hectored over them, made them their footstool, and were most imperious and barbarous to those that were most obsequious and submissive. They cared not what shame and slavery they put them to who were poor, and such as they could get nothing by. That was it that the judges aimed at,—nothing but to enrich themselves, and therefore they took from the poor burthens of wheat, took it by extortion, either by way of bribe or usury. The poor had no other way to save themselves from being trodden upon, and trodden to dirt by them, but by presenting to them horse-loads of that corn which they and their families should have had to subsist upon, and they forced them to do it. They took from the poor 'debts of wheat,' so some read it; it was legally due, either for rent, or for corn lent; but they exacted it with rigour from those who were disabled by the providence of God to pay it, as *Neh.* v. 2, 5. In demanding and recovering even a just debt, we must take heed lest we act either unjustly or uncharitably. This sin of oppression they are again charged with; ver. 22, "They afflict the just," by turning the edge of the law and of the sword of justice against those that are the innocent and quiet in the land; they therefore hated men because they were more righteous than themselves, and he that departed from evil thereby made himself a prey to them. They take a bribe from the rich to patronize and protect them in oppressing the poor; so that he who has money in his hand is sure to have the judge and judgment on his side, be his cause never so bad. Thus they turn aside the poor in the gate, in the courts of justice, from their right. If the poor sue for their right, who cannot bribe them, or are so honest that they will not, though they have it never so clear in view, and never so near, yet they are turned away from it by their unrighteous sentence, and cannot come at it; and "therefore the prudent will keep silence," ver. 13. Men will reckon it their prudence, when they are wronged and injured, to be silent, and make no complaints to the magistrates, for it will be to no purpose, they shall not have justice done them.

4th. They were malicious persecutors of God's faithful ministers and people, ver. 10. Their hearts were so fully set in them to do evil, that they could not bear to be reproved, *First.* By the ministry of the word; by the reading and expounding of the law, and the messages which the prophets delivered to them in the name of the Lord. They "hate him that rebuketh in the gate," in the gate of the Lord's house, or in the courts of justice, or in the places of concourse, where wisdom is lifting her voice, *Pr.* i. 21. Reprovers in the gate are reprovers by office; these they hated, counting them their enemies, "because they told them the truth," as Ahab hated Micaiah. They not only despised them, but had an enmity to them, and sought to do them mischief. Those that hate reproof love ruin. *Secondly.* By the conversation of their honest neighbours. Though things were generally very bad, yet there were some among them that spoke uprightly, that made conscience of what they said; and as it was their praise, so it was the shame of those that spoke deceitfully, and condemned them, as Noah's faith condemned the unbelief of the old world, and for that reason they abhorred him. They were such inveterate enemies to the thing called honesty, that they could not endure the sight of an honest man. All that have any sense of the common interest of mankind will love and value such as speak uprightly, for veracity is the bond of human society. To what a pitch of folly and madness then were they arrived, who, having banished all notions of justice out of their own hearts, would have them banished out of the world too, and so put mankind into a state of war, for they "abhor him that speaketh uprightly?" and for this reason, "the prudent shall keep silence in that time," ver. 13. Prophets cannot, dare not, keep silence; the impulse they are under will not allow them to act by prudential considerations; they must cry aloud and not spare; but as for other wise and good men, they shall keep silence, and shall reckon it is their prudence to do so, because it is an evil time. 1*st.* They shall think it dangerous to complain, and therefore shall keep silence. This was one way in which they afflicted the just, that by false suggestions, and strained inuendoes, they made men offenders for a word, *Isa.* xxix. 21; and therefore the prudent, who were wise as serpents, because they knew not how what they said might be misinterpreted and misrepresented, were so cautious as to say nothing, lest they should run themselves into a premunire, because it was an evil time. Note, Through the iniquity of the times, as good men are hid, so good men are silent, and it is their wisdom to be so. Little said soon amended. But it is their comfort that they may speak freely to God when they know not who else they can speak freely to. 2*nd.* They shall think it fruitless to reprove. They see what wickedness is committed, and their spirits are stirred up as Paul's at Athens; but they shall think it prudent not to bear an open testimony against it, because it is to no purpose. They are "joined to their idols, let them alone." "Let no man strive or rebuke another," for it is but casting pearls before swine. The cautious men will say to a bold reprover, as Erasmus to Luther, *Abi in cellam, et dic, miserere mei, Domine*,—'Away to thy cell, and cry, Have mercy on me, O Lord!' Let grave lessons and counsels be kept for better men and better times. And there is a time to keep silence, as well as a time to speak, *Eccl.* iii. 7. Evil times will not bear plain dealing; that is, evil men will not. And the men the prophet here speaks of had reason to think themselves evil men indeed, when wise and good men thought it in vain to speak to them, and were afraid of having any thing to do with them.

Secondly. They are told of their danger, and what judgments they lay exposed to for their sins. 1. The places of their idolatry are in danger of being ruined, in the first place; ver. 5, Gilgal, the head-quarters of idolatry, shall "go into captivity," not only its inhabitants but its images, and Bethel with its golden calf "shall come to nought." The victorious enemy shall make nothing of it, so easily shall it be spoiled, and shall bring it to nothing, so effectually shall it be spoiled. Idols were always vanity and things of nought, and so they shall prove when God appears to abolish them. 2. The body of the kingdom is in danger of being ruined by them, ver. 6. There is danger lest, if you seek him not in time, he "break out like a fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it;" for our God is a righteous judge, is a consuming fire, and the men of Israel, as criminals, are stubble before him. Woe to those that make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath. It follows, and "there shall be none to quench it in Bethel." There their idols were, and their idolatrous priests; thither they brought their sacrifices, and there they offered up their prayers; but God tells them, that when the fire of his judgments kindled upon them, all the gods they served at Bethel should not be able to quench it, should not turn away the judgment, or be any relief to them under it. Thus they that make an idol of the world will find it insufficient to protect them when God comes to reckon with them for their spiritual idolatry. 3. What they have got by oppression and extortion shall be taken from them; ver. 11, "Ye have built houses of hewn stone," which you thought would be lasting, "but ye shall not dwell in them," for your enemies shall burn them down, or possess them for themselves, or take you into captivity. "Ye have planted pleasant vineyards," have contrived how to make them every way agreeable, and have promised yourselves many a pleasant walk in them, but ye shall be forced to walk off, and shall never "drink wine of them." The law had tenderly provided, that if a man had built a house, or planted a vineyard, he should be at liberty to return from the wars, *Deu.* xx. 5, 6; but now the necessity would be so urgent, that it would not be allowed, all must go to the battle, and many of those who had lately been building and planting should fall in battle, and never enjoy what they had been labouring for. What is not honestly got is not likely to be long enjoyed.

Thirdly. They are told their duty, and have great encouragement to set about it in good earnest, and good reason. The duties here prescribed to them are, godliness and honesty,—seriousness in their applications to God, and justice in their dealings with men; and each of these is here pressed upon them, with proper arguments to enforce the exhortation.

1. They are here exhorted to be sincere and devout in their addresses to God; ver. 4, God saith to the house of Israel, "Seek ye me," and good reason, for "should not a people seek unto their God?" *Isa.* viii. 19; Whither else should they go but to their protector? Israel was a prince with God, let his descendants seek the Lord as he did, and they shall be so too. Now, in order to their doing this, they must abandon their idolatries. God is not sought truly if he be not sought only, for he will endure no rivals. "Seek ye the Lord, and seek not Bethel," ver. 5; consult not your idol oracles, nor ask at the mouth of the priest of Bethel: seek not to the golden calf there for protection, nor bring your prayers and sacrifices any longer thither, or to Gilgal, for you forsake your own mercies if you observe those lying vanities; but seek the Lord, ver. 6, 8, inquire after him, inquire of him, seek to know his mind as your rule, to secure his favour as your felicity. To press this exhortation we are bid to consider,

1st. What we shall get by seeking God; it will be our life, we shall find him, and shall be happy in him. So he tells them himself; ver. 4, "Seek ye me, and ye shall live." So the prophets tell them; ver. 6, "Seek the Lord, and ye shall live." They that seek perishing gods shall perish with them, ver. 5, but they that seek the living God shall live with him. Ye shall be delivered from the killing judgments which you are threatened with; your nation shall live, shall recover from its present languishings; your souls shall live, you shall be sanctified and comforted, and made for ever blessed; "Ye shall live."

2nd. What a God he is whom we are to seek, ver. 8, 9. *First.* He is a God of almighty power himself. The idols were impotent things, could do neither good nor evil, and therefore it was folly either to fear or trust them. But the

God of Israel doth every thing, and can do any thing, and therefore we ought to seek to him; he challengeth our homage who has all power in his hand, and it is our interest to have him on our side. Divers proofs and instances are here given of God's power, as Creator in the kingdom of nature, both the founding and governing of that kingdom: compare *ch.* iv. 13. *1st.* The stars are the work of his hands; those stars which the heathens worshipped; ver. 26, "the stars of your God," those stars are God's creatures and servants. "He maketh the seven stars and Orion," two very remarkable constellations, which Amos, a herdsman, while he kept his cattle by night, had particularly observed the motions of. He made them at the first, he still maketh them to be what they are to this earth, and either binds or looses the sweet influences of Pleiades and Orion, the two constellations mentioned, *Job* ix. 9; xxxviii. 31, to which passages Amos here seems to refer, putting them in mind of those ancient discoveries of the glory of God, before he was called the God of Israel. *2nd.* The constant succession of day and night is under his direction, and is kept up by his power and providence. It is he that turns the night, which is dark as "the shadow of death, into the morning," by the rising of the sun, and by the setting of the sun "makes the day dark with night." And the same power can, for humble penitents, easily turn affliction and sorrow into prosperity and joy; but can as easily turn the prosperity of presumptuous sinners into darkness, into utter darkness. *3rd.* The rain riseth and falls as he appoints. He "calls for the waters of the sea," out of them vapours are drawn up by the heat of the sun, which gather into clouds, and are poured out "upon the face of the earth," to water it, and make it fruitful. This was the mercy that had been withholden from them of late, *ch.* iv. 7, and therefore to whom should they apply themselves but to him who had power to give it? For all the vanities of the heathen could not give rain, nor could the heavens of themselves give showers, *Jer.* xiv. 22; it is God that has made these things, Jehovah is his name, the name by which the God of nature, the God of the whole earth, has made himself known to his people Israel, and covenanted with them. *Secondly.* As he is a God of almighty power himself, so he giveth strength and power unto his people that seek him, and renews strength to those that had lost it, if they wait upon him for it; for, ver. 9, he "strengthens the spoiled against the strong," to such a degree, that the spoiled came against the fortress, and made bold and brave attacks upon those that had spoiled them. This is an encouragement to the people to seek the Lord, that if they do so they shall find him able to retrieve their affairs when they are brought to the lowest ebb. Though they are the spoiled, and their enemies are the strong, if they can but engage God for them, they shall soon recruit, so as the next time to be not only the aggressors, but the conquerors; they "come against the fortress," to make reprisals and become masters of it.

2. They are here exhorted to be honest and just in their dealings with men, ver. 14, 15, where observe,

1st. The duty required. Seek good and not evil. Hate the evil and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate, re-establish it there whence it has been banished, ver. 7. Note, Things are not so bad but that they may be amended if the right course be taken; we must not despair but that grievances may be redressed, and abuses rectified; justice may yet triumph there where injustice tyrannizeth. In order to this, good must be loved and sought, evil must be hated and no longer sought; we must love good principles, and adhere to them; love to do good, and abound in it; love good people, and good converse, and good duties; and whatever good we do, we must do it from a principle of love, do it of choice and with delight. And they who thus love good will seek it, will contrive to do all the good they can, and inquire for opportunities to do it, and endeavour it to the utmost of their power. They will also hate evil, will abhor the thoughts of doing an unjust thing, and abstain from all appearance of it. In vain do we pretend to seek God in our devotions, if we do not seek God in our whole conversation.

2nd. The reasons annexed. *First.* This is the sure way to be happy ourselves, and to have the continual presence of God with us. "Seek good and not evil, that ye may live," may escape the punishment of the evil you have sought and loved. Righteousness delivereth from death, that ye may have the favour of God, which is your life, which is better than life itself, that ye may have comfort in yourselves, and may live to some good purpose. You shall live, for "so the Lord God of hosts shall be with you," and be your life. Note, Those that keep in the way of duty have the presence of God with them, as the God of hosts, a God of almighty power. He will be with you "as ye have spoken," that is, as ye have gloried; you shall have that really, which, while ye went on in unrighteous ways, you only seemed to have, and boasted of as if you had. They that truly repent and reform enter into the enjoyment of that comfort which before they had only flattered themselves with the imagination of. Or, as ye have prayed when you sought the Lord; live up to your prayers, and you shall have what you pray for. *Secondly.* This is the likeliest way to make the nation happy. If you seek and love that which is good, you may contribute to the saving of the land from ruin. "It may be the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph:" though there is but a remnant left, if God be gracious to that remnant, it will rise to a great nation again; and if some among them turn from sin, especially if judgment be established in the gate, though we cannot be certain, yet there is great probability that public affairs will take a new and happy turn, and every thing will mend, if men mend their lives. Temporal promises are made with an 'It may be,' and our prayers must be accordingly.

16 Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith
Wailing *shall be* in all streets; [thus;
And they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas!
And they shall call the husbandman to mourning,
And such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.
17 And in all vineyards *shall be* wailing:
For I will pass through thee, saith the LORD.
18 Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD!
To what end *is* it for you?
The day of the LORD *is* darkness, and not light.
19 As if a man did flee from a lion,
And a bear met him;
Or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall,
And a serpent bit him. [light?
20 *Shall* not the day of the LORD *be* darkness, and not
Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

Here is, First. A very terrible threatening of destruction approaching, ver. 16, 17. Because they would not take the right course to obtain the favour of God, God would take an effectual course to make them feel the weight of his displeasure. The threatening is introduced with more than ordinary solemnity, to strike an awe upon them. It is not the word of the prophet only, if so it might be made light of, but it is the Lord Jehovah, that has an infinite, eternal being, it is the God of hosts, that has a boundless, irresistible power, and it is Adonai, the Lord, that has an absolute, incontestable sovereignty, and an universal dominion; it is he that saith it, who can and will make his words good. And he hath said, 1. That the land of Israel shall be put into mourning, true mourning; that all places shall be filled with lamentation for the calamities coming upon them. Look into the cities, and "wailing shall be in all streets," in the great streets, in the bye-streets. Look into the country, and "they shall say in all the highways, Alas! Alas!" we are all undone. The lamentation shall be so great as not to be confined within doors, nor kept within the bounds of decency, but it shall be proclaimed in the streets and highways, and run wild. The husbandman shall be called from the plough by the calamities of his country to the natural expressions of mourning. And because those will come short of the merits of the cause, such as are skilful of lamentation shall be called to artificial mourning, to put accents upon the lamentations of the real mourners with their Ahone, Ahone. Even in all vineyards, where there used to be nothing but mirth and pleasure, there shall be general wailing, when a foreign force invades the country, lays all waste, and there is no making any head against it, no weapons left but prayers and tears. 2. That the land of Israel shall be brought to ruin, and the advances of that ruin are the occasions of all this wailing. "I will pass through thee," as the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt to destroy the firstborn, but then passed over the houses of the Israelites. God's judgments had often passed by them, but now they shall pass through them, shall run them through.

Secondly. A just and severe reproof to those who made light of these threatenings, and impudently bid defiance to the justice of God and his judgments, ver. 18. Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord, that really wish for times of war and confusion, as some do who have restless spirits and long for changes, or who choose to fish in troubled waters, hoping to raise their families, as some had done, upon the ruins of their country. But the prophet tells them this should be so great a desolation that nobody could get by it. Or, it is spoken to those who, in their wailings and lamentations for the calamities they were in, wished they might die and be rid out of their misery, as Job did, with passion. The prophet shews them the folly of this: Do they know what death is to those that are unprepared for it, and how much more terrible it will be than any thing that can befall them in this life? Or, rather, it is spoken to those who speak jestingly of that day of the Lord which the prophets spoke so seriously of; they desired, that is, they challenged it; they said, Let him do his worst, "let him make speed," and "hasten his work," *Isa.* v. 19. "Where is the promise of his coming," 2 *Pet.* iii. 4. It intimates, 1. That they do not believe it. They say they wish it would come, because they do not believe it will ever come, nor will they believe it unless they see it. 2. That they do not fear it. Though they may have some belief of it, yet they have so little consideration of it, and their mind is so intent upon other things, that they are under no apprehension at all of peril from it; instead of having the conscience to dread it, they have the curiosity to desire it. In answer to this,

1. He shews the folly of those that impudently wished for any of God's judgments, and made a jest of any of the terrors of the Lord. To what end is it for you that the day of the Lord should come? You will find it both certain and sad; not a thing to be bantered, for it is neither a thing to be questioned whether it will come or no, nor a thing to be turned off with a slight when it doth come. "The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light," ver. 18. "Shall it not be so?" ver. 20. Do not your own consciences tell you it will be so, that it will be very dark, and no brightness in it? Note, The day of the Lord will be a dark, dismal, gloomy day to all impenitent sinners; the day of judgment will be so, and sometimes the day of their present trouble. And when God makes a day dark, all the world cannot make it light.

2. He shews the folly of those that impatiently wished for a change of God's judgments, in hopes the next would be better and more tolerable. They desire the day of the Lord in hopes to mend themselves, though their hearts and lives be not amended, or, however, to know the worst. But the prophet tells them they know not what they ask; ver. 19, it is "as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him," a beast of prey more cruel and ravenous than a lion; or, as if a man, to escape all dangers abroad, "went into the house" for security, and "leaned his hand on the wall" to rest himself, and there "a serpent bit him." Note, Those that are not reformed by the judgments of God will be pursued by them, and if they escape one, another stands ready to seize them; "Fear, and the pit, and the snare" surround them, *Isa.* xxiv. 17, 18. It is madness therefore to defy the day of the Lord.

21 I hate, I despise your feast days,
And I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.
22 Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offer-
I will not accept *them:* [ings,
Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.
23 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs;
For I will not hear the melody of thy viols.
24 But let judgment run down as waters,
And righteousness as a mighty stream.

IDOL CARS.—FROM SIDONIAN COINS.—ver. 26.

25 Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings
In the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
26 But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch
And Chiun your images,
The star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.
27 Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus,
Saith the LORD, whose name *is* The God of hosts.

The scope of these verses is to shew how little God valued their shows of devotion, nay, how much he detested them, while they went on in their sins. Observe,

First. How unpleasing, nay, how displeasing, their hypocritical services were to God. They had their feast days at Bethel, in imitation of those at Jerusalem, in which they pretended to rejoice before God; they had their solemn assemblies for religious worship, in which they put on the gravity of those who come before God as his people come, and sit before him as his people sit; they offered to God burnt offerings, to the honour of God, together with the meat offerings that by the law were to be offered with them; they offered the peace offerings, to implore the favour of God, and they offered them of fat beasts they had, ver. 22. In imitation likewise of the temple music, they had "the noise of their songs," and "the melody of their viols," ver. 23, vocal and instrumental music with which they praised God: with these services they hoped to make God amends for the sins they had committed, and to obtain leave to go on in sin; and therefore they were so far from being acceptable to God that they were abominable. He hated, he despised their feast days, not only despised them as no valuable services done to him, but hated them as an affront and provocation to him, as we hate to see men dissemble with us, pretend a respect for us when really they have none. Nothing more hateful, more despicable than hypocrisy; "He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice it shall be counted a curse," when it appears his heart is not with him. God will not smell in their solemn assemblies, for there is nothing in them that is grateful to him, but a great deal that is offensive. Their sacrifices are not to him "of a sweet smelling savour," as Noah's was, *Gen.* viii. 21. He will not accept them, he will not regard them, will not take any notice of them; he will not "hear the melody of their viols," for when sin is a jar in the harmony it grates in his ears; "Take it away," saith God, I cannot bear it. Now this speaks, 1. That sacrifice itself is of small account with God, in comparison with moral duties; to love God and our neighbour is better than all burnt offerings and sacrifice. 2. That the sacrifice of the wicked is really an abomination to him, *Pr.* xv. 8. Dissembled piety is double iniquity, and so it will be found when, if any place in hell be hotter than another, that will be the hypocrite's portion.

Secondly. What it was that he required in order to the acceptableness of their sacrifices, and without which no sacrifice would be acceptable; ver. 24, "Let judgment run down as waters" among you, and "righteousness as a mighty stream," that is, 1. Let there be a general reformation of manners among you. Let religion, God's judgment and righteousness, have its due influence upon you; let your land be watered with it, and let it bear down all the opposition of vice and profaneness; let it run wide as overflowing waters, and return strong as a mighty stream. 2. In particular, let justice be duly administered by magistrates and rulers; let not the current of it be stopped by partiality and bribery, but let it come freely, as waters do, in the natural course; let it be pure as running waters, not muddled with corruption, or whatever may pervert justice. Let it run like a mighty stream, and not suffer itself to be obstructed, or its course retarded, by the fear of man; let all have free access to it, as a common stream, and have benefit by it, as "trees planted by the rivers of waters." The great thing laid to Israel's charge was turning "judgment into wormwood," ver. 7; in that matter therefore they must reform, *Zec.* vii. 9. This was it that God desired more than sacrifices, *Hos.* vi. 6; 1 *Sam.* xv. 22.

Thirdly. What little stress God had laid upon the law of sacrifices, though it was his own law, in comparison with the moral precepts; ver. 25, "Did ye offer to me sacrifices in the wilderness forty years?" No, you did not; for the greatest part of that time sacrifice was very much neglected, because of the unsettledness of their state. After the second year the passover was not kept till they were come into Canaan, and other institutions were in like manner intermitted; and yet, because God will have mercy and not sacrifice, he never imputed the omission to them as their fault, but continued his care of them, and kindness to them; that was not it, but their murmuring and unbelief, for which God was displeased with them. He that so owned his people, though they did not sacrifice, when in other things they kept close to him, will certainly disown them, though they do sacrifice, if in other things they depart from him. But though ritual sacrifices may thus be dispensed with, spiritual sacrifices will not; even justice and honesty will not excuse for the want of prayer and praise, a broken heart, and the love of God. Stephen quotes this passage, *Acts* vii. 42, to shew the Jews that they ought not to think it strange, the repeal of the ceremonial law, when from the beginning it was comparatively made light of: compare *Jer.* vii. 22, 23.

Fourthly. What little reason they had to expect that their sacrifices should be acceptable to God, when they and their fathers had been all along addicted to the worship of other gods. So some take ver. 25, 'Did you offer to me sacrifices?' that is, To me only? No, and therefore not at all to me acceptably; for the law of worshipping the Lord our God is, that him only we must serve. "But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch," ver. 26, little shrines that you made to carry about with you; pocket idols, for your private superstition, when you durst not be seen to do it publicly. You have had the images of your Moloch, your king, probably representing the sun, that sits king among the heavenly bodies, and Chiun, or Remphan, as Stephen calls it, *Acts* vii. 43, after the Septuagint, which it is supposed represented Saturn, the highest of the seven planets. The worship of the sun, moon, and stars, was the most ancient, most general, and most plausible idolatry; they made to themselves the star of their God, some particular star which they took to be their god, or the name of which they gave to their god. This idolatry Israel was from the beginning prone to, *Deu.* iv. 19; and those that retain an affection for false gods cannot expect the favour of the true God.

Fifthly. What punishment God would inflict upon them for their persisting in idolatry; ver. 27, "I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus." They were led captive by Satan into idolatry, and therefore God caused them to go into captivity among idolaters, and hurried them into a strange land, who were so fond of strange gods. They were carried beyond Damascus; their captivity by the Assyrians was far beyond that by the Syrians; for, if lesser judgments do not the work for which they were sent, God will send greater. Or, the captivity of Israel under Shalmaneser was far beyond that of Damascus under Tiglath-pileser, and much more grievous and destructive, which was foretold, *ch.* i. 5; for as the sins of God's professing people are greater than the sins of others, so it may be expected their punishment will be proportionable. We find the spoil of Damascus and that of Samaria carried off together by the king of Samaria, *Isa.* viii. 4; Stephen reads it, "I will carry you away beyond Babylon," *Acts* vii. 43; farther than Judah shall be carried, so far farther as not to return. And to make this sentence appear both the more certain and the more dreadful, he that passeth it calls himself "the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts," and who is therefore able to execute the sentence, having hosts at command.

CHAPTER VI.

In this chapter we have, I. A sinful people studying to put a slight upon God's threatenings, and to make them appear trivial; confiding in their privileges and pre-eminences above other nations, ver. 2, 3; and their power, ver. 13; and wholly addicted to their pleasures, ver. 4—6. II. A serious prophet studying to put a weight upon God's threatenings, and to make them appear terrible, by setting forth the severity of those judgments that were coming upon these sensualists, ver. 7; God's abhorring them, and abandoning them and theirs to death, ver. 8—11; and bringing utter desolation upon them, since they would not be wrought upon by the methods he had taken for their conviction, ver. 11—14.

WOE to them *that are* at ease in Zion,
And trust in the mountain of Samaria,
Which are named chief of the nations,
To whom the house of Israel came!
2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see;
And from thence go ye to Hamath the great:
Then go down to Gath of the Philistines:
Be they better than these kingdoms?
Or their border greater than your border?
3 Ye that put far away the evil day,
And cause the seat of violence to come near;
4 That lie upon beds of ivory,
And stretch themselves upon their couches,
And eat the lambs out of the flock,
And the calves out of the midst of the stall;
5 That chant to the sound of the viol,
And invent to themselves instruments of musick, like [David;
6 That drink wine in bowls,
And anoint themselves with the chief ointments:
But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.
7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive,
And the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

The first words of the chapter are the contents of these verses; but they sound very strange, and contrary to the sentiments of a vain world, "Woe to them that are at ease!" We are ready to say, Happy they that are at ease, that neither feel any trouble nor fear any, that lie soft and warm, and lay nothing to heart; and wise, we think, are they that do so, that bathe themselves in the delights of sense, and care not how the world goes. These are looked upon as doing well for themselves that do well for their bodies, and make much of them; but against them this woe is denounced, and we are here told what their ease is, and what the woe is.

First. Here is a description of their pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon with them.

1. They were vainly conceited of their own dignities, and thought those would secure them from the judgments threatened, and be their defence against the wrath both of God and man. 1st. Those that dwell in Zion thought that was honour and protection enough for them, and they might there be quiet from all fear of evil—because it was a strong city, well fortified both by nature and art, (we read of Zion's strongholds, and her bulwarks;) and because it was a royal city, where was set the thrones of the house of David, (it was the head city of Judah, and therefore truly great;) and especially because it was the holy city, where the temple was, and the testimony of Israel. They that dwelt there doubted not but that God's sanctuary would be a sanctuary to them, and would shelter them from his judgments. The "temple of the Lord are these," *Jer.* vii. 4. They are haughty because of the holy mountain, *Zeph.* iii. 11. Note, Many are puffed up with pride, and rocked asleep in carnal security, by their church privileges, and the place they have in Zion. 2nd. Those that dwelt in the mountain of Samaria, though it was not a holy hill, like that of Zion, yet they trusted in it, because it was the metropolis of a potent kingdom, and perhaps, in imitation of Jerusalem, was the head-quarters of its religion; and by lapse of time the hill of Shemer became with them in as good repute as the hill of Zion ever was. They hoped for salvation from those hills and mountains. 3rd. Both these two kingdoms valued themselves upon their relation to Israel, that prince with God, which they looked upon as making them the "chief of the nations," more ancient and honourable than any of them; the 'firstfruits of the nation,' so the word is, dedicated to God, and sanctifying the whole harvest. The house of Israel came to them, that is, was divided into those kingdoms Zion and Samaria were the mother cities of. Those that were at ease were the princes and rulers, the great men, that were chief of the nations, chief of those two kingdoms, and to whom, having their residence in Zion and Samaria, the whole house of Israel applied themselves for judgment. Note, It is hard to be great and not to be proud. Great nations and great men are apt to overvalue themselves and to overlook their neighbours, because they think they a little overtop them. But, for a check to their pride and security, the prophet bids them take notice of these cities that were within the compass of their knowledge, that had been as illustrious in their time as ever Zion and Samaria were, and yet were destroyed, ver. 2. Go to Calneh, which was an ancient city, built by Nimrod, *Gen.* x. 10, and see what is come of that,—it is now in ruins; so is Hamath the great, one of the chief cities

of Syria. Sennacherib boasts of "destroying the gods of Hamath." Gath was likewise made desolate by Hazael not long ago, 2 *Kin.* xii. 17. Now, were "they better than those kingdoms of Judah and Israel?" Yes, they were, and "their border greater than your border," so that they had more reason than you to be confident of their own safety. Yet you see what has become of them, and dare you be secure? "Art thou better than populous No?" *Nah.* iii. 8. Note, The examples of others' ruin forbid us to be secure.

2. They persisted in their wicked courses upon a presumption that they should never be called to an account for them; ver. 3, "Ye put far away the evil day," the day of reckoning, as a thing that shall never come; or ye look upon it as at such a distance that it makes no impression at all upon you; ye put it far away, and think ye can still put it yet farther, and adjourn it *de die in diem*,—'from day to day;' and therefore ye "cause the seat of violence to come near," that is, ye venture upon all acts of injustice and oppression, and have "fellowship with the throne of iniquity, which frameth mischief by a law," *Ps.* xciv. 20: ye cause that to come near, as if that would be your protection from these judgments which really ripens you for them. Note, Therefore men take sin to be near them, because they take judgments to be far off from them; but they deceive themselves who thus mock God.

3. They indulged themselves in all manner of sensual pleasures and delights, ver. 4—6. These Israelites were perfect epicures and slaves to their appetites. Their dignities (in consideration of which they ought to have been examples of self-denial and mortification) they thought would justify them in their sensuality. The gains of their oppression and violence they thought would bear the charge of it; and they put the evil day at a distance, that that might give them no disturbance in it. That which they are here charged with is not in itself sinful, these things might be soberly and moderately used, but they placed their happiness in the gratification of their carnal appetites; and though they were men in office, that had business to mind, they gave themselves up to their pleasures, spent their time in them, and threw away their thoughts, and cares, and estates upon them; they were in these enjoyments as in their element. Their hearts were upon them, they exceeded all bounds in them, and this at a time when God in his providence was calling them to "weeping and mourning," *Isa.* xxii. 12, 13. When they were under guilt and wrath, and the judgments of God were ready to break in upon them, they called for wine and strong drink, presuming that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant," *Isa.* lvi. 12, thus walking contrary to God, and setting his justice at defiance. 1st. They were extravagant in their furniture. Nothing would serve them but beds of ivory to sleep upon, or to sit on to their meat, when sackcloth and ashes had better become them. 2nd. They were lazy, and humoured themselves in the love of ease. They did not only lie down, but stretched themselves upon their couches, when they should have stirred up themselves to their business. They were willingly slothful, and took a pride in doing nothing. They abounded in superfluities, so the margin reads it, when many of their poor brethren wanted necessaries. 3rd. They were nice and curious in their diet, must have every thing of the best, and abundance of it. They "eat the lambs out of the flock," (lambs by wholesale,) and "the calves out of the midst of the stall," the fattest they could lay their hands on; and these perhaps not out of their own flock, and their own stall, but taken by oppression from the poor. 4th. They were merry and jovial, and diverted themselves at their feasts with music and singing. They "chant to the sound of the viol," sing and play in concert, and they invent new-fashioned instruments of music, striving herein, more than in any thing else, to excel their ancestors; they set their wits to work to contrive how to please their fancy. Some men never shew their ingenuity but in their luxury; on that they bestow all their faculty of invention and contrivance. They invent "instruments of music, like David," entertain themselves with that which formerly used to be the entertainment of kings only. Or, it intimates their profaneness in their mirth: they mimicked the temple music, and made a jest of that, because, it may be, it was old-fashioned, and they took a pride in bantering it, as the Babylonians did when they urged the captives to sing them the songs of Zion. Such was Belshazzar's profaneness when he drank wine in temple bowls, and such theirs that sing vain and loose songs in psalm tunes, on purpose to ridicule a Divine institution. 5th. They drink to excess, and never think they can pour down enough. They "drink wine in bowls," not in glasses or cups, (as *Jer.* xxxv. 5;) they hate to be stinted, and must have large draughts, and therefore make use of vessels that they can steal a draught out of. 6th. They affect the strongest perfumes, they "anoint themselves with the chief ointments," to please the smell, and to make them more in love with their own bodies, and to guard against those presages of putrefaction which they carry about with them while they live. No ordinary ointments would serve their turn—they must have the chief, such as were far-fetched and dear bought, when cheaper would have served as well.

4. They had no concern at all for the interests of the church of God, and of the nation, that were sinking and going to decay, "They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." The church of God, including both the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, (which are called Joseph, *Ps.* lxxx. 1,) was in distress,—invaded, insulted, and broken in upon; their own kingdom, which they were intrusted with the government of the affairs of, which they were the directors of, the peace of which they were the conservators of, great breaches were made upon it, upon its peace and welfare; and they were so besotted, that they were not aware of them, so indulgent of their pleasures, that they never laid them to heart, and had such an aversion to the thing called business, that they were in no care and concern to get them repaired. It is all one to them whether the nation sink or swim, so that they can but lie at ease and live in pleasure. Particular persons that belonged to Joseph were in affliction, and they took no cognizance of their case, of the wrongs and hardships they sustained, and the troubles they were in; nor took any care to relieve them, or right them: contrary to the temper of holy Job, who, when he was in prosperity, wept with him that was in misery, and his soul was grieved for the poor, *Job* xxx. 25. Some think that, in calling the afflicted church Joseph here, there is an allusion to the story of Pharaoh's butler, who, when he was preferred to give the cup again into his master's hand, "remembered not Joseph, but forgat him," *Gen.* xl. 21, 23. Thus they "drank wine in bowls," but "were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." Note, Those are commonly careless of others' troubles that are set upon their own pleasures; and it is a great offence to God when his church is in affliction and we are not grieved for it, nor lay it to heart.

Secondly. Here is the doom passed upon them; ver. 7, "Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive," and shall fall into all the miseries that attend captives; and the banquet of them that stretched themselves upon their couches shall be removed. Their plenty shall be taken from them, and they from it, because they made it the food and fuel of their lusts. 1. They that lived in luxury shall lose even their liberty, and, by being brought into servitude, shall be justly punished for the abuse of their dignity and dominion. 2. They that trusted in the delights and pleasures of their own land shall be carried away into a strange land, and so made ashamed of their pride and confidence: they shall go captive. 3. They that placed their happiness in the pleasures of sense, and set their hearts upon them, shall be deprived of those pleasures; their banquet shall be removed, and they shall know what it is to fare hard. 4. Those that stretched themselves shall be made to contract themselves, and to come in a less compass. 5. Those that put the evil day far from them shall find it nearer to them than it is to others; "they shall go captive with the first," who flattered themselves with hopes, that, if trouble did come, they should be the last that should be seized by it. Those are ripening apace for trouble themselves, that lay not to heart the troubles of others and of the church of God. Those that give themselves to mirth when God calls them to mourning, will find it is a sin that shall not go unpunished, *Isa.* xxii. 14.

8 The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself,
Saith the LORD the God of hosts,
I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces:
Therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.
9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. 10 And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth

BURNING THE DEAD.

him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that *is* by the sides of the house, *Is there* yet *any* with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD.
11 For, behold, the LORD commandeth,
And he will smite the great house with breaches,
And the little house with clefts.
12 Shall horses run upon the rock?
Will *one* plow *there* with oxen?
For ye have turned judgment into gall,
And the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:
13 Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought,
Which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?
14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel,
Saith the LORD the God of hosts;
And they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath
Unto the river of the wilderness.

In the former part of the chapter we had these secure Israelites loading themselves with pleasures, as if they could never be made merry enough; here we have God loading them with punishments, as if they could never be made miserable enough. And observe,

First. How strongly this burthen is bound on, not to be shaken off by their presumption and security; for it is bound by "the Lord, the God of hosts," by his mighty, his almighty hand, which none can resist. It is bound with an oath, which puts the sentence past revocation: "The Lord God hath sworn," and he will not repent; and, since he could swear by no greater, he hath sworn by himself. How dreadful, how miserable is the case of those whose ruin, whose eternal ruin, God himself hath sworn, who can execute his purpose, and cannot alter it?

Secondly. How heavy this burthen lies. Let us see the particulars.

1. God will abhor and abandon them; and that speaks misery enough, all misery. "I abhor the excellency of Jacob," all that which they are proud of, and value themselves upon, and for which they call and count themselves the chief of the nations. Their visible church-membership, and the privileges of that, their temple, altar, and priesthood, these were more than any thing the excellencies of Jacob; but, when these were profaned and polluted by sin, God abhorred them; he hated and despised them, *ch.* v. 21. Note, God abhors that form of godliness which hypocrites keep up, while they abhor the power of it; and if he abhors their temple for the iniquity of that, no marvel that he hates their palaces for the injustice and oppression he finds there. Note, That creature which we take such a complacency and put such a confidence in, as to make it a rival with God, is thereby made abominable to him. He hates the palaces of sinners, for the sake of the wickedness of them which dwell therein; *Pr.* iii. 33, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked." And if God abhor them, presently it follows, he will "deliver up the city, with all that is therein," deliver it up into the hands of the enemy, that will lay it waste, and make a prey of all its wealth. Note, Those that are abhorred and abandoned of God are undone to all intents and purposes.

2. There shall be a great and general mortality among them, that, ver. 9, "If there remain ten men in one house" that have escaped the sword of the enemy, yet they shall be met with another way; they shall all die by famine or pestilence. In the most sickly times, if there be ten in a house, one may hope at least the one half of them will escape, according to the proportion of two in a bed, one taken, and the other left; but here not one of ten shall live to bury the rest. Another instance of the greatness of the mortality is, ver. 10, that the nearest relations of the dead shall be forced with their own hands to wind up their bodies and bury them, for want of other hands to be employed in it; that is all that the next of kin, to whom the right of redemption belongs, can do for them, and with great reluctancy will they do that. It intimates that the young people shall be cut off soonest; for the uncle that survives is ordinarily the senior relation. When the uncle comes with the sexton, or "him that burneth," to "bring out the bones out of the house," he shall say to him that he sees next about the house, "Is there yet any with thee?" Are there any left alive? and he shall say, No, this is the last; now the whole family is cut off by death, and neither root nor branch remains. But that which makes this judgment the more grievous is, that their hearts seem to be hardened under it. When he that was found by the sides of the house began to enter into discourse with those that were carrying off the dead, they shall say, "Hold thy tongue;" do not stand preaching to us about the hand of providence in this calamity, for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord. God is so angry with us that there is no speaking to him; he is so extreme to mark what we do amiss that we dare not so much as make mention of his name. Thus the foolishness of men perverteth their way, and brings them into distress, and then their heart fretteth against the Lord. Even then they will not take notice of his hand, nor suffer those about them to do it. Perhaps it was forbidden by some of the idolatrous kings to make mention of the name of Jehovah, as by the law of Moses it was forbidden to make mention of the names of the heathen gods. We may not do it without incurring the penalty. Note, Those hearts are wretchedly hardened indeed that will not be brought to make mention of God's name, and to worship him, when the hand of God is gone out against them; and when, as here, sickness and death are in their families. Thus those heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them.

3. Their houses shall be destroyed; ver. 11, God will "smite the great houses with breaches, and the little house with clefts;" they shall both be cracked, so as to lose their beauty and strength, and to be hastening towards a fall. The princes' palaces are not above the rebukes of Divine justice, nor the poor men's cottages beneath it; neither shall escape. When sin has marked them for ruin, God will find ways to bring it about. It is by order from him that breaches are made.

Thirdly. How justly they are thus burthened. If we understand the matter aright, we shall say, The Lord is righteous.

1. The methods used for their reformation have been all fruitless and ineffectual; ver. 12, "Shall horses run upon the rock?" to hurl and harrow the ground there; or, "Will one plough there with oxen?" No, for there will be no profit to countervail the pains. God had sent them his prophets to break up their fallow ground, but they found them as hard and inflexible as the rock, rough and rugged, and they could do no good with them, nor work upon them; and therefore they shall not attempt it any more. They will not be reclaimed, and therefore shall not be reproved, but quite abandoned. Note, Those who will not be husbanded as fields and vineyards shall be rejected as barren rocks and deserts, *Heb.* vi. 7, 8.

2. They had abused their power to the wrong and oppression of many, whose injured cause the sovereign Judge would not only right, but revenge. "Ye have turned judgment into gall," which is nauseous, "and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock," which is noxious. It would make one sick to see how those that were intrusted with the administration of public justice bear down equity with that power with which they ought to have defended and supported it, and so turned its own artillery against itself. Note, When our services of God are soured with sin his providences will justly be embittered to us.

3. They had set the judgments of God at defiance, and, confiding in their own strength, thought themselves a match for Omnipotence; ver. 13, they "rejoiced in a thing of nought," pleased themselves with a fancy that no evil should befall them, though they had no ground at all for that confidence, nothing to trust to that would bear any weight. They said, "Have we not taken to us horns?" are we not arrived to great dignity and dominion? have we not pushed down our enemies, and pushed on our victories? and this "by our own strength," our own conduct and courage, our own wealth and military force? Who then need we be afraid of? Who then need we make court to? Not God himself. Note, Prosperity and success commonly make men secure and haughty; and those that have done much think they can do any thing, any thing without God, nay, any thing against him. But those who trust in their own strength rejoice in a thing of nought, and so they will find. Probably they did not say this with their lips, *totidem verbis*,—'in so many words;' but it was the language of their hearts and of their actions, both which God understands.

Fourthly. How easily and effectually this burthen shall be brought upon them, ver. 14. He that brings it upon them is "the Lord the God of hosts," who both may do and can do what he pleaseth; who has all creatures at his command, and who, when he has work to do, will not want instruments to do it with. Though they are the house of Israel, yet he will raise up against them a nation which they feared not, but had many a time hoped in, even the Assyrians; and this nation shall afflict them, bring them into straits, and put them to pain, from "the entering in of Hamath," in the north, to "the river of the wilderness," the river of Egypt, Sihor or Nile, in the south. The whole nation hath shared in the iniquity, and therefore must expect to share in the calamity. Note, When men are any way instruments of affliction to us, we must see God raising them up against us, for they are his hand, the rod, the sword in his hand. The Lord hath bidden Shimei curse David.

CHAPTER VII.

In this chapter we have, I. God contending with Israel, by the judgments brought on their land. 1. They are threatened with lesser judgments, but are reprieved, and the judgments turned away at the prayer of Amos, ver. 1—6. 2. God's patience is at length worn out by their obstinacy, and they are rejected, and sentenced to utter ruin, ver. 7—9. II. Israel contending with God, by the opposition given to his prophet. 1. Amaziah informs against Amos, ver 10, 11, and doth what he can to rid the country of him, as a public nuisance, ver. 12, 13. 2. Amos justifies himself in what he did as a prophet, ver. 14, 15; and denounceth the judgments of God against Amaziah his persecutor, ver. 16, 17; for when the contest is between God and man, it is easy to foresee, it is very easy to foretell, who will come off with the worst of it.

THUS hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, *it was* the latter growth after the king's mowings.
2 And it came to pass, *that* when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said,

O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee:
By whom shall Jacob arise? for he *is* small.
3 The LORD repented for this:
It shall not be, saith the LORD.

4 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.
5 Then said I,

O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee:
By whom shall Jacob arise? for he *is* small.
6 The LORD repented for this:
This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD.

7 Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall *made* by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. 8 And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord,

Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel:
I will not again pass by them any more:
9 And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate,
And the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste;
And I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

We here see that God bears long, but he will not bear always, with a provoking people; both these God here shewed the prophet; "Thus hath the Lord God shewed me," ver. 1; and again, ver. 4, and "thus he shewed me," ver. 7. He shewed him what was present, foreshewed him what was to come, gave him the knowledge both of what he did and of what he designed; for the Lord God "revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets," *ch.* iii. 7.

First. We have here two instances of God's sparing mercy, remembered in the midst of judgment, the narratives of which are so like one another, that they will be best considered together, and very considerable they are.

1. God is here coming forth against this sinful nation, first by one judgment and then by another.

1st. He begins with the judgment of famine. The prophet saw this in vision; he saw God forming grasshoppers or locusts, and bringing them up upon the land to eat up the fruits of it, and so to strip it of its beauty, and starve its inhabitants, ver. 1. God formed these grasshoppers, not only as they were his creatures, and much of the wisdom and power of God appears in the formation of minute animals—as much in the structure of an ant as of an elephant—but as they were instruments of his wrath: God is said to frame evil against a sinful people, *Jer.* xviii. 11. These grasshoppers were framed on purpose to eat up the grass of the land, and vast numbers of them were prepared accordingly. They were sent "in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth, after the king's mowings." See here how the judgment was mitigated by the mercy that went before it. God could have sent these insects to eat up the grass at the beginning of the first growth in the spring, when the grass was most needed, was most plentiful, and was the best in its kind; but God suffered that to grow, and suffered them to gather it in. The king's mowings were safely housed, for "the king himself is served from the field," *Eccl.* v. 9, and could as ill be without his mowings as without any other branch of his revenues. Uzziah was now king of Judah, who loved husbandry, 2 *Chr.* xxvi. 10. But the grasshoppers were commissioned to eat up only the latter growth, (the edgrew we call it in the country,) the after-grass, which is of little value in comparison with the former. The mercies which God gives us, and continues to us, are more numerous and more valuable than those he removes from us, which is a good reason why we should be thankful, and not complain. The remembrance of the mercies of the former growth should make us submissive to the will of God, when we meet with disappointments in the latter growth. The prophet in vision saw this judgment prevailing far. These grasshoppers eat up the grass of the land, which should have been for the cattle, which the owners must of course suffer by. Some understand this figuratively, of a wasting, destroying army brought upon them. In the days of Jeroboam the kingdom of Israel began to recover itself from the desolations it had been under in the former reigns, 2 *Kin.* xiv. 25; the latter growth shot up, after the mowings of the kings of

Syria, which we read of 2 *Kin.* xiii. 3. And then God commissioned the king of Assyria with an army of caterpillars to come upon them, and lay them waste; that nation spoken of *ch.* vi. 14, which afflicted them "from the entering of Hamath to the river of the wilderness," which seems to refer to 2 *Kin.* xiv. 25; where Jeroboam is said to have restored their coast "from the entering of Hamath to the sea of the plain." God can then bring all to ruin when we think all is in some good measure repaired.

2nd. He proceeds to the judgment of fire, to shew that he has many arrows in his quiver, many ways of humbling a sinful nation; ver. 4, "The Lord God called to contend by fire." He contended; for God's judgments upon a people are his controversies with them, in them he prosecutes his action against them; and his controversies are neither causeless nor groundless. He "called to contend;" he did by his prophets give them notice of his controversy, and drew up a declaration setting forth the meaning of it. Or, he called for his angels, or other ministers of his justice that were to be employed in it. A fire was kindled among them; by which is meant, either a great drought,—the heat of the sun, which should have warmed the earth, scorched it, and burnt up the roots of the grass, which the locusts had eaten the spires of; or a raging fever, which was a fire in their bones, which devoured and eat up multitudes; or lightning, fire from heaven, which consumed their houses, as Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed, *ch.* iv. 11; or it was the burning of their cities, either by accident or by the hand of the enemy, for fire and sword used to go together,—thus were the towns wasted, as the country was by the grasshoppers. This fire which God called for did terrible execution; it "devoured the great deep," as the fire that fell from heaven on Elijah's altar licked up the water that was in the trench. Though the water designed for the stopping and quenching of this fire were as the water of the great deep, yet it devoured it; for who or what can stand before a fire kindled by the wrath of God? It did "eat up a part," a great part, of the cities where it was sent. Or it was as the fire at Taberah, which consumed the outermost parts of the camp, *Num.* xi. 1; when some were overthrown others were "as brands plucked out of the fire." All deserved to be devoured, but it ate up only a part, for God doth not stir up all his wrath.

2. The prophet goes forth to meet him in the way of his judgments, and by prayer seeks to turn away his wrath, ver. 2. When he saw in vision what dreadful work these caterpillars made, that they had eaten up in a manner all the grass of the land—he foresaw they would do so, if suffered to go on—then he said, "O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee," ver. 2; "cease, I beseech thee," ver. 5. He that foretold the judgment in his preaching to the people, yet deprecated it in his intercessions for them. "He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee;" it was the business of prophets to pray for those whom they prophesied to, and so to make it appear that, though they denounced, they did not desire, the woful day. Therefore God shewed his prophets the evils coming, that they might befriend the people, not only by warning them, but by praying for them, and standing in the gap to turn away God's wrath, as Moses that great prophet often did. Now observe here,

1st. The prophet's prayer, "O Lord God." *First.* "Forgive, I beseech thee," and take away the sin, ver. 2. He sees sin at the bottom of the trouble, and therefore concludes that the pardon of sin must be at the bottom of the deliverance, and prays for that in the first place. Note, Whatever calamity we are under, personal or public, the forgiveness of sin is that which we should be most earnest with God for. *Secondly.* "Cease, I beseech thee," and take away the judgment; cease the fire, cease the controversy; "cause thine anger towards us to cease." This follows from the forgiveness of sin; take away the cause, and the effect will cease. Note, Those whom God contends with will soon find what need they have to cry for a cessation of arms; and there is hope that, though God had begun and proceeded far in his controversy, yet it may be obtained.

2nd. The prophet's plea to enforce this prayer; "By whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?" ver. 2, and it is repeated ver. 6, and yet no vain repetition. Christ in his agony prayed earnestly, saying the same words again and again. *First.* It is Jacob that he is interceding for; the professing people of God, called by his name, calling on his name, the seed of Jacob, his chosen, and in covenant with him. It is Jacob's case that is in this prayer spread before the God of Jacob. *Secondly.* Jacob is small, very small, already, weakened and brought low by former judgments; and therefore if these come he will be quite ruined and brought to nothing. The people are few, the dust of Jacob is now soon counted, which, when time was, was innumerable. Those few are feeble; it is "the worm Jacob," *Isa.* xli. 14; they are unable to help themselves or one another. Sin will soon make a great people small, will diminish the numerous, impoverish the plenteous, and weaken the courageous. *Thirdly.* By whom shall he arise? He is fallen, and cannot help himself up, and he has no friend to help him, none to raise him, unless the hand of God do it. What will become of him, then, if the hand that should raise him be stretched out against him? Note, When the state of God's church is very low and very helpless, it is proper to be recommended by our prayers to God's pity.

3. God graciously lets fall his controversy in answer to the prophet's prayer, once again; ver. 3, "The Lord repented for this." He did not change his mind, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? But he changed his way, took another course, and determined to deal in mercy, and not in wrath. He said, "It shall not be;" and again, ver. 5, "This also shall not be." The caterpillars were countermanded, were remanded, a stop put to the progress of the fire, and thus a reprieve was granted. See the power of prayer, of effectual fervent prayer, how much it avails, what great things it prevails for. A stop has many a time been put to a judgment by making supplication to the Judge. This was not the first time that Israel's life was begged, and so saved. See what a blessing praying people, praying prophets, are to a land, and therefore how highly they ought to be valued. Ruin had many a time broken in, if they had not stood in the breach, and made good the pass. See how ready, how swift God is to shew mercy, how he waits to be gracious. Amos moves for a reprieve, and obtains it, because God inclines to grant it, and looks about to see if there be any that will intercede for it, *Isa.* lix. 16. Nor are former reprieves objected against farther instances of mercy, but are rather encouragements to pray and hope for them. This also shall not be, any more than that. It is the glory of God that he multiplies to pardon, that he spares and forgives to more than seventy times seven times.

Secondly. We have here the rejection of those at last who had been often reprieved, and yet never reclaimed; reduced to straits, and yet never reduced to their God and their duty. This is represented to the prophet by a vision, ver. 7, 8, and an express prediction of utter ruin, ver. 9.

1. The vision is of a plumb-line, a line with a plummet at the end of it, such as masons and bricklayers use to run up a wall by, that they may work it straight and true, and by rule. 1st. Israel was a wall, a strong wall, which God himself had reared as a bulwark, or wall of defence to his sanctuary, which he set up among them. The Jewish church saith of herself, *Cant.* viii. 10, "I am a wall, and my breasts like towers." This wall was made by a plumb-line, very exact and firm. So happy was its constitution, so well compacted, and every thing so well ordered according to the model, it had long stood fast as a wall of brass. But, 2nd. God now stands upon this wall, not to hold it up, but to tread it down, or rather to consider what he shall do with it. He stands upon it "with a plumb-line in his hand," to take measure of it, that it may appear to be a bowing, bulging wall. *Recti est index sui et obliqui*,—'This plumb-line would discover where it was crooked.' Thus God would bring the people of Israel to the trial, would discover their wickedness, and shew wherein they erred; and he would likewise bring his judgments upon them according to equity, would set a "plumb-line in the midst of them," to mark how far their wall must be pulled down, as David measured the Moabites with a line, 2 *Sam.* viii. 2, to put them to death. And when God is coming to the ruin of a people, he is said to "lay judgments to the line, and righteousness to the plummet," for when he punisheth it is with exactness. It is now determined, I will not again pass by them any more; they shall not be spared and reprieved as they have been, their punishment shall not be turned away, *ch.* i. 3. Note, God's patience, that has long been sinned against, will at length be sinned away; and the time will come when those that have been spared often shall be no longer spared; "My Spirit shall not always strive." After frequent reprieves, yet a day of execution will come.

2. The prediction is of utter ruin, ver. 9. 1st. The body of the people shall be destroyed, with all those things that were their ornament and defence. They are here called Isaac as well as Israel, the house of Isaac, ver. 16, some think in allusion to the signification of Isaac's name; it is, 'laughter;' they shall become a jest among all their neighbours, they shall laugh at them. The desolation shall fasten upon their high places and their sanctuaries, either their castles or their temples, both built on high places. Their castles they thought safe, and their temples sacred as sanctuaries; these shall be laid waste, to punish them for their idolatry, and to make them ashamed of their carnal confidences, which were the two things for which God had a controversy with them. When these were made desolate, they might read their sin and folly in their punishment. 2nd. The royal family shall sink first, as an earnest of the ruin of the whole kingdom. "I will rise against the house of Jeroboam," Jeroboam the Second, who was now king of the ten tribes; his family was extirpated in his son Zacharias, that was "slain with the sword before the people" by Shallum, who conspired against him, 2 *Kin.* xv. 10. How unrighteous soever the instruments were, God was righteous, and in them God rose up against that idolatrous family. Even kings' houses will be no shelter against the sword of God's wrath.

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. 11 For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. 12 Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: 13 But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it *is* the king's chapel, and it *is* the king's court. 14 Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I *was* no prophet, neither *was* I a prophet's son; but I *was* an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:

SYCAMORE FIGS.

15 And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. 16 Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not *thy word* against the house of Isaac. 17 Therefore thus saith the LORD;

Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city,
And thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword,
And thy land shall be divided by line;
And thou shalt die in a polluted land:
And Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

One would have expected that what we met with in the former part of the chapter should, 1st. Have awakened the people to repentance, when they saw that therefore they were reprieved that they might have space to repent, and that they could not obtain a pardon unless they did repent. 2nd. That it should have endeared the prophet Amos to them, who had not only shewed his goodwill to them, in praying against the judgments that invaded them, but had prevailed to turn away those judgments, which, if they had had any sense of

gratitude, would have gained him an interest in their affections. But it fell out quite contrary; they continue impenitent, and the next news we hear of Amos is that he is persecuted. Note, As it is the praise of great saints that they pray for those who are enemies to them, so it is the shame of many great sinners that they are enemies to those who pray for them, *Ps.* xxxv. 13, 15; cix. 4. We have here,

First. The malicious information brought to the king against the prophet Amos, ver. 10, 11. The informer was Amaziah, "the priest of Bethel," the chief of the priests that ministered to the golden calf there; the president of Bethel, so some read it, that had the principal hand in civil affairs there. He complained against Amos, not only because he prophesied without license from him, but because he prophesied against his altars, which would soon have been deserted and demolished if Amos's preaching could but have gained credit. Thus the shrine-makers at Ephesus hated Paul, because his preaching tended to spoil their trade. Note, Great pretenders to sanctity are commonly the worst enemies to those who are really sanctified. Priests have been the most bitter persecutors. Amaziah brings an information to Jeroboam against Amos. Observe,

1. The crime he is charged with is no less than treason. "Amos hath conspired against thee," to depose and murder thee; he aims at succeeding thee, and therefore is taking the most effectual way to weaken thee; he sows the seeds of sedition in the hearts of the good subjects of the king, and makes them disaffected to him and his government, that he may draw them by degrees from their allegiance. Upon this account "the land is not able to bear his words." It is slily insinuated to the king that the country was exasperated against him, and it is given in as their sense that his preaching was intolerable, and such as nobody could be reconciled to, such as the times would by no means bear, that is, the men of the times would not. Both the impudence of his supposed treason and the ill influence it would have upon the country are intimated in that part of the charge, that he conspired against the king in the midst of the house of Israel. Note, It is no new thing for the accusers of the brethren to misrepresent them as enemies to the king and kingdom, as traitors to their prince, and troublers of the land, when really they are the best friends to both; and it is common for designing men to assert that as the sense of the country which is far from being so. And yet here I doubt it was too true that the people could not bear plain dealing any more than the priests.

2. The words laid in the indictment for the support of this charge, ver. 11. "Amos saith," and they have witnesses ready to prove it, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be led away captive;" and from hence they infer that he is an enemy to his king and country, and not to be tolerated. See the malice of Amaziah; he doth not tell the king how Amos had interceded for Israel, and by his intercession had turned away first one judgment and then another, and did not let fall his intercession till he saw the decree was gone forth. He doth not tell him that these threatenings were conditional; and he had often assured them that if they would repent and reform the ruin should be prevented. Nay, it was not true that he said, "Jeroboam shall die by the sword," nor did he so die, 2 *Kin.* xiv. 28, but that God would "rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword," ver. 9. God's prophets and ministers have often had occasion to make David's complaint, *Ps.* lvi. 5, "Every day they wrest my words." But shall it be made the watchman's crime, when he sees the sword coming, to give warning to the people that they may get themselves secured? or the physician's crime to tell his patient of the danger of his disease, that he may use means for the cure of it? What enemies are foolish men to themselves, to their own peace, to their best friends! It doth not appear that Jeroboam took any notice of this information; perhaps he reverenced a prophet, and stood more in awe of the Divine authority than Amaziah his priest did.

Secondly. The method he used to persuade Amos to withdraw and quit the country, ver. 12, 13. When he could not gain his point with the king to have Amos imprisoned, banished, or put to death, or at least to have him frightened into silence or flight, he tried what he could do by fair means to get rid of him; insinuated himself into his acquaintance, and, with all the arts of wheedling, endeavoured to persuade him to go prophesy in the land of Judah, and not at Bethel. He owns him to be a seer, and doth not pretend to enjoin him silence, but suggests to him, 1st. That Bethel was not a proper place for him to exercise his ministry in, for it was the king's chapel, or sanctuary, where he had his idols, and their altars and priests; and it was the king's court, or the house of the kingdom, where the royal family resided, and where were set the thrones of judgment; and therefore prophesy not any more here. And why not? *First.* Because Amos is too plain and blunt a preacher for the court and the king's chapel. They that wear silk and fine clothing, and speak silken, soft words, are fit for king's palaces. *Secondly.* Because the worship that is in the king's chapel will be a continual vexation and trouble to Amos; let him, therefore, get far enough from it, and what the eye sees not the heart grieves not for. *Thirdly.* Because it was not fit that the king and his house should be affronted in their own court and chapel by the reproofs and threatenings which Amos was continually teasing them with in the name of the Lord, as if it were the prerogative of the prince and the privilege of the peers, when they are running headlong upon a precipice, not to be told of their danger. *Fourthly.* Because he could not expect any countenance or encouragement there, but on the contrary to be bantered and ridiculed by some, and to be threatened and browbeaten by others. However, he could not think to make any converts there, or to persuade any from that idolatry which was supported by the authority and example of the king. To preach his doctrine there was but, as we say, to run his head against a post, and therefore prophesy no more there. But, 2nd. He persuades him that the land of Judah was the fittest place for him to set up in; "Flee thee away" thither with all speed, "and there eat bread, and prophesy there." There thou wilt be safe, there thou wilt be welcome; the king's court and chapel there are on thy side; the prophets there will second thee, the priests and princes there will take notice of thee, and allow thee an honourable maintenance. See here, *First.* How willing wicked men are to get clear of their faithful reprovers, and how ready to say to the seers, See not, or see not for us; the two witnesses were a torment to them that dwelt on the earth, *Rev.* xi. 10; and it were indeed pity that men should be tormented before the time, but that it is in order to the preventing of eternal torment. *Secondly.* How apt worldly men are to measure others by themselves. Amaziah, as a priest, aimed at nothing but the profits of his place, and he thought Amos, as a prophet, had the same views, and therefore adviseth him to prophesy there, where he might eat bread, where he might be sure to have his belly full; whereas Amos was to prophesy where God appointed him, and where there was most need of him, not where he would get most money. Note, Those that make gain their godliness, and are governed by the hopes of wealth and preferment themselves, are ready to think these the most powerful inducements with others also.

Thirdly. The reply which Amos made to these suggestions of Amaziah's. He did not consult with flesh and blood, nor was it his care to enrich himself, but to make full proof of his ministry, and to be found faithful in the discharge of it; not to sleep in a whole skin, but to keep a good conscience; and therefore he resolves to abide by his post, and in answer to Amaziah,

1. He justifies himself in his constant adherence to his work and to his place, ver. 15. And that which he is sure will not only bear him out, but bind him to it, is, that he had a Divine warrant and commission for it. "I was no prophet, or prophet's son," neither born nor bred to the office; not originally designed for a prophet, as Samuel and Jeremiah; not educated in the schools of the prophets, as many others were; but "I was a herdman," a keeper of cattle, and "a gatherer of sycamore fruit." Our sycamores bear no fruit, but it seems theirs did, which Amos gathered, either for his cattle, or for himself and family, or to sell. He was a plain countryman, bred up and employed in country work, and used to country fare. He followed the flocks as well as the herds, and thence God took him and bid him, "Go, prophesy to his people Israel," deliver to them such messages as he should from time to time receive from the Lord. God made him a prophet, and a prophet to them, appointed him his work, and appointed him his post. Therefore he ought not to be silenced, for, 1st. He could produce a Divine commission for what he did. He did not run before he was sent, but pleads, as Paul, that he was "called to be an apostle," and men will find it is at their peril if they contradict and oppose any that come in God's name; if they say to his seers, See not, or silence those whom he has bid to speak; such fight against God. An affront done to an ambassador is an affront to the prince that sends him. Those that have a warrant from God ought not to fear the face of man. 2nd. The mean character he wore before he received that commission strengthened his warrant, so far was it from weakening it. *First.* He had no thoughts at all of ever being a prophet, and therefore his prophesying could not be imputed to a raised expectation, or a heated imagination, but purely to a Divine impulse. *Secondly.* He was not educated or instructed in the art or mystery of prophesying, and therefore he must have his abilities for it immediately from God, which is an undeniable proof that he had his mission from him. The apostles, being originally unlearned and ignorant men, evidenced that they owed their knowledge to their having been with Jesus, *Acts* iv. 13. When the treasure is put into such earthen vessels, it is thereby made to appear that the "excellency of the power is of God, and not of man," 2 *Cor.* iv. 7. *Thirdly.* He had an honest calling, by which he could comfortably maintain himself and his family, and therefore did not need to prophesy for bread, as Amaziah suggested, ver. 12; did not take it up as a trade to live by, but as a trust to honour God and do good with. *Fourthly.* He had all his days been accustomed to a plain, homely way of living, among poor husbandmen, and never affected either gaieties or dainties, and therefore would not have thrust himself so near the king's court and chapel if the business God had called him to had not called him thither. *Fifthly.* Having been so meanly bred, he could not have had courage to speak to kings and great men, especially to speak such bold and provoking things to them, if he had not been animated by a greater spirit than his own. If God that sent him had not strengthened him, he could not thus have set his face as a flint, *Isa.* l. 7. Note, God often chooseth the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty; and a herdman of Tekoa puts to shame a priest of Bethel, when he receives from God authority and ability to act for him.

2. He condemns Amaziah for the opposition he gave him, and denounceth the judgments of God against him, not from any private resentment or revenge, but in the name of the Lord, and by authority from him, ver. 16, 17. Amaziah would not suffer Amos to preach at all, and therefore he is particularly ordered to preach against him: "Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord," hear it and tremble. Those that cannot bear general woes may expect woes of their own. The sin he is charged with is forbidding Amos to prophesy; we do not find that he beat him, or put him in the stocks, only enjoined him silence: "Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against Isaac." He must not only not thunder against them, but he must not so much as drop a word against them; he cannot bear, no not the most gentle distilling of that rain, that small rain. Let him therefore hear his doom.

1st. For the opposition which he gave to Amos God will bring ruin upon himself and his family. This was the sin that filled the measure of his iniquity. *First.* He shall have no comfort in any of his relations, but be afflicted in those that were nearest to him. His "wife shall be a harlot;" either she shall be forcibly abused by the soldiers, as the Levite's concubine by the men of Gibeah, they "ravished the women in Zion," *Lam.* v. 11; or she shall herself wickedly play the harlot, which, though her sin, her great sin, would be his affliction, his great affliction and reproach, and a just punishment upon him for promoting spiritual whoredom. Sometimes the sins of our relations are to be looked upon as the judgments of God upon us. His children, though they keep honest, yet shall not keep alive. His "sons and his daughters shall fall by the sword" of war, and he himself shall live to see it. He had trained them up in iniquity, and therefore God will cut them off in it. *Secondly.* He shall be stripped of all his estate; it shall fall into the hand of the enemy, and be divided by line, by lot, among the soldiers. What is ill got will not be long kept. *Thirdly.* He shall himself perish in a strange country; not in the land of Israel, which had been holiness to the Lord, but in a polluted land, in a heathen country, the fittest place for such a heathen to end his days in, that hated and silenced God's prophets, and contributed so much to the polluting of his own land with idolatry.

2nd. Notwithstanding the opposition he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon the land and nation. He was accused for saying, Israel shall be led away captive, ver. 11, but he stands to it, and repeats it, for the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of none effect. The "burthen of the word of the Lord" may be striven with, but it cannot be shaken off. Let Amaziah rage and fret, and say what he will to the contrary, "Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his own land." Note, It is to no purpose to contend with the judgments of God, for when God judgeth he will overcome. Stopping the mouths of God's ministers will not stop the progress of God's word, for it shall not return void.

CHAPTER VIII.

Sinful times are here attended with sorrowful times, so necessary is the connexion between them; it is threatened here, again and again, that the laughter shall be turned into mourning. I. By the vision of a basket of summer fruit is signified the hastening on of the ruin threatened, ver. 1—3; and that shall change their note. II. Oppressors are here called to an account for their abusing of the poor; and their destruction is foretold, which will set them on mourning, ver. 4—10. III. A famine of the word of God is here made the punishment of a people that go a whoring after other gods, ver. 11—14; yet for this, which is the most mournful judgment of all, they are not here brought in mourning.

THUS hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. 2 And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me,

The end is come upon my people of Israel;
I will not again pass by them any more.
3 And the songs of the temple shall be howlings
In that day, saith the Lord GOD:
There shall be many dead bodies in every place;
They shall cast *them* forth with silence.

The great reason why sinners defer their repentance *de die in diem*,—'from day to day,' is because they think God thus defers his judgments; and there is no song wherewith they so effectually sing themselves asleep as that, "My Lord delays his coming;" and therefore God by his prophets frequently represents to Israel the day of his wrath, not only as just and certain, but as very near, and hastening on apace. So he doth in these verses:

First. The approach of the threatened ruin is represented by "a basket of summer fruit" which Amos saw in vision, for the Lord shewed it him, ver. 1, and obliged him to take notice of it; ver. 2, "Amos, what seest thou?" Note, It concerns us to inquire whether we do indeed see that which God has been pleased to shew us, and hear what he has been pleased to say to us; for many a thing God speaks, God shews, once, yea twice, and men perceive it not. Are we in the midst of the visions of the Almighty? let us consider what we see. He saw "a basket of summer fruit" gathered, and ready to be eaten, which signified, 1. That they were ripe for destruction, rotten ripe, and it was time for God to put in the sickle of his judgments, and to cut them off; nay, the thing was in effect done already, and they lay ready to be eaten up. 2. That the year of God's patience was drawing towards a conclusion; it was autumn with them, and their year would quickly have its period in a dismal winter. 3. Those we call summer fruits that will not keep till winter, but must be used presently, an emblem of this people, that had nothing solid or consistent in them.

Secondly. The intent and meaning of this vision is no more than this, it signifies that "the end is come upon my people Israel." The word that signifies "the end" is *ketz*, which is of near affinity with *kitz*, the word used for "summer fruit." God had long spared them and bore with them, but now his patience is tired out. They are indeed his people Israel, but their end, that latter end they had been so often minded of, but had so long forgotten, is now come. Note, If sinners do not make an end of sin, God will make an end of them, yea, though they be his people Israel. What was said, *ch.* vii. 8, is here repeated as God's determinate resolution, "I will not again pass by them any more," they shall not be connived at as they have been, nor the judgment coming turned away.

Thirdly. The consequent of this shall be a universal desolation, ver. 3. When the end is come, sorrow and death shall ride in triumph; they use to go together, and shall at length go away together, when in heaven "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow," *Rev.* xxi. 4. But here in a sinful world, in a sinful nation, 1. Sorrow reigns, reigns to that degree that "the songs of the temple shall be howlings." The songs of God's temple at Jerusalem, or rather of their idol temples, where they used, when in honour of the golden calves they had eaten and drunk, to rise up to play. They were, perhaps, wanton and profane songs, and it is certain, sooner or later, those will be turned into howlings; or if they had a sound and show of piety and religion, yet not coming from the heart, nor being sung to the glory of God, he valued them not, but would justly turn them into howlings. Note, Mourning will follow sinful mirth, yea, and sacred mirth too, if it be not sincere. And when God's judgments are abroad, they will soon turn the greatest joy into the greatest heaviness—the temple songs, that used to sound so pleasant, not only into sighs and groans, but into loud howlings that seem so dismal. They shall come to the temple, and finding that in ruins, there they shall howl most bitterly. 2. Death reigns, reigns to that degree that there shall be dead bodies, "many dead bodies in every place," (*Ps.* cx. 6,) slain by the sword or pestilence; so many, that the survivors shall not bury them with the usual pomp and solemnity of funerals; they shall not so much as have the bell tolled, but they shall "cast them forth with silence," shall bury them in the dead of the night, and charge all about them to be silent, and take no notice of it; either because they have not wherewithal to bear the charges of a funeral, or because the killing disease being infectious, none would come near them, or for fear the enemy should be provoked if they should be known to lament their slain. Or, they shall charge themselves and one another silently to submit to the hand of God in these desolating judgments, and not to repine and quarrel with him. Or it may be taken, not for a patient, but a sullen silence; their hearts shall be hardened, and all these judgments shall not extort from them one word of acknowledgment, either of God's righteousness or their own unrighteousness.

4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy,
5 Even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying,
When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn?
And the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat,
Making the ephah small, and the shekel great,
And falsifying the balances by deceit?
6 That we may buy the poor for silver,
And the needy for a pair of shoes;
Yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?
7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob,
Surely I will never forget any of their works.
8 Shall not the land tremble for this,
And every one mourn that dwelleth therein?
And it shall rise up wholly as a flood; [Egypt.
And it shall be cast out and drowned, as *by* the flood of
9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord
That I will cause the sun to go down at noon, [GOD,
And I will darken the earth in the clear day:
10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning,
And all your songs into lamentation;
And I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins,
And baldness upon every head;
And I will make it as the mourning of an only *son*,
And the end thereof as a bitter day.

God is here contending with proud oppressors, and shewing them,

First. The heinousness of the sin they were guilty of. In short, they had the character of the unjust judge, *Lu.* xviii. 2, that neither feared God nor regarded man.

1. Observe them in their devotions, and you will say they have no reverence for God. As bad as they are, they do indeed keep up a show and form of godliness, they observe the sabbath and the new moon, they put some difference between those days and other days; but they were soon weary of them, and had no affection at all to them, but their hearts were wholly set upon the world and the things of it. It is a sad character which this gives of them, that they said, "When will the sabbath be gone that we may sell corn?" Yet it is still the character of many that are called Christians. 1st. They were sick of sabbath days. When will they be gone? They were weary of the restraints of the sabbaths and the new moons, and therefore wished them over, because they might do no servile work therein. They were weary of the work and business of the sabbaths and new moons, snuffed at it, *Mal.* i. 13, and were as Doeg, "detained before the Lord," 1 *Sam.* xxi. 7; they would rather have been any where else than about God's altars. Note, Sabbath days and sabbath work are a burthen to carnal hearts, that are always afraid of doing too much for God and eternity. Can we spend our time better than in communion with God? And how much time do we spend pleasantly with the world? Will not the sabbath be gone before we have done the work of it, and reaped the gains of it? Why then should we be in such haste to part with it? 2nd. They were fond of market days. They longed to be selling corn, and setting forth wheat. When they were employed in religious services they were thinking of their marketings, their hearts "went after their covetousness," *Eze.* xxxiii. 31, and thus made my Father's house a house of merchandize, nay, a den of thieves. Therefore they were weary of holy duties, because their worldly business stood still the while; in which they were as in their element, but in God's sanctuary as a fish upon dry ground. Note, Those are strangers to God, and enemies to themselves, that love market days better than sabbaths, that would rather be selling corn than worshipping God.

2. Observe them in their conversations, and you will see they have no regard to man; and this commonly follows upon the former. Those that have lost the savour of piety will not long retain the sense of common honesty. These here neither do justly nor love mercy.

1st. They cheat those they deal with. When they sell their corn they impose upon the buyer, both in giving out the goods, and in receiving the money for them. They measure him the corn by their own measure, and pretend to give him what he agreed for, but they make the ephah small. The measure is scanty, and not statute measure, and so they wrong him that way. When they receive his money they must weigh it in their own scales, by their own weights, and the shekel they weigh by is above standard; they make "the shekel great," so that the money, being found too light, must have more added to it, and so they cheat that way too, and this under colour and pretence of exactness in doing justice. By such wicked practices as these men shew such a greediness of the world, such a love of themselves, such a contempt of mankind in general, and of the particular persons they deal with, and of the sacred laws of justice, as speaks them to have in their hearts neither the fear nor love of that God who hath so plainly said that false weights and balances are an abomination to him. Another instance of their fraudulent dealing is, that they "sell the refuse of the wheat," and, taking advantage of their neighbours' ignorance or necessity, make them take it at the same price at which they sell the finest of the wheat.

2nd. They are barbarous and unmerciful to the poor. They "swallow up the needy," and "make the poor of the land to fail." *First.* They valued themselves so much by their wealth, that they looked upon all that were poor with

RISING OF THE NILE.—ver. 8.

the highest contempt imaginable. They hated them, could not endure them, but abandoned them, and therefore did what they could to make them cease; not by relieving them, to make them cease to be poor, but by banishing and destroying them, to make them cease to be, or at least to be in their land. But he who thus reproacheth the poor despiseth his Maker, in whose hands rich and poor meet together. *Secondly.* They were so eager to increase their wealth, and make it more, that they robbed the poor to enrich themselves; and therefore they fastened upon the poor to make a prey of them, because they were not able to right themselves, nor to resist or revenge the violence of their oppressors. Those riches that are got by the ruin of the poor will bring ruin on those that get them. They swallowed up the poor by making them hard bargains, and cheating them in those bargains; for therefore they "falsify the balances by deceit," not only that they may enrich themselves, may have money at command, and so may have every thing else, as they think, at command too, but that they may impoverish those about them, and bring them so low, that they may force them to become slaves to them; and so, having drained them of every thing else, they may have their labour for nothing, or next to nothing. Thus they "buy the poor for silver;" they bring them and their children into bondage, because they have not wherewithal to pay for the corn they have bought: see *Neh.* v. 2—5. And there were so many that were reduced to this extremity that the price was very low; and the oppressors had beat it down so, that you might buy a poor man to be your slave "for a pair of shoes." Property was first invaded, and then liberty. It is the method of oppressors first to make men beggars, and then make them their vassals. Thus is the dignity of the human nature lost in the misery of those that are trampled on, and the tenderness of it in the sin of those that trample on them.

Secondly. Observe the grievousness of the punishment that shall be inflicted on them for this sin. When the poor are injured they will cry unto God, and he will hear their cry, and reckon with those that are injurious to them; for, they being his receivers, he takes the wrongs done to them as done to himself, *Ex.* xxii. 23, 24.

1. God will remember their sin against them. He hath "sworn by the excellency of Jacob," ver. 7, by himself, for he can swear by no greater; and who but he is the glory and magnificence of Jacob? He hath sworn by those tokens of his presence with them, and his favour to them, which they had profaned and abused, and had done what they could to make them detestable to him; for he is said, *ch.* vi. 8, to "abhor the excellency of Jacob." He swears in his wrath, swears by his own name, that name which was so well known, and was so great in Israel. He swears, "Surely I will never forget any of their works;" but upon all occasions they shall be remembered against them; for more is implied than is expressed. I will never forget them, is as much as to say, I will never forgive them; and then it speaks the case of these unjust, unmerciful men to be miserable indeed, eternally miserable. Woe, and a thousand woes, to that man that is cut off by an oath of God from all benefit by pardoning mercy; and those have reason to fear judgment without mercy that have shewed no mercy.

2. He will bring utter ruin and confusion upon them. It is here described largely, and in a great variety of emphatical expressions, that, if possible, they might be frightened into a sincere repentance and reformation. 1st. There shall be a universal terror and consternation. "Shall not the land tremble for this?" ver. 8; this land out of which you thought to have driven the poor. "Shall not every one mourn that dwelleth therein?" Certainly they shall. Note, Those that will not tremble and mourn as they ought for national sins shall be made to tremble and mourn for national judgments. Those that look unconcerned upon the sins of the oppressors, which should make them tremble, and upon the miseries of the oppressed, which should make them mourn, God will find out a way to make them tremble at the fury of those that oppress them, and mourn for their own losses and sufferings by it. 2nd. There shall be a universal deluge and desolation. When God comes forth against them, the waters of trouble and calamity shall "rise up wholly as a flood," that swells when it is dammed up, and soon overflows its banks. Every thing shall make against them. That with which they thought to check the progress of God's judgments shall but make them rise the higher. Judgments shall force their way, as the breaking forth of waters. The whole land "shall be cast out and drowned," and laid under water, as the land of Egypt is every year by the overflowing of its river Nile. Or, the expressions may allude to some former judgments of God. Their ruin "shall rise up wholly as a flood," as Noah's flood, which overwhelmed the whole world, so shall this the whole land; and the land shall be "cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt;" that is, as Pharaoh and his Egyptians were buried in the Red Sea, which was to them the flood of Egypt; both which judgments, as this here threatened, were the punishment of violence and oppression, which the Lord is the avenger of.

3. It shall surprise them, and come upon them when they little think of it; ver. 9, "I will cause the sun to go down at noon," when it is in its full strength and lustre; at their noon, when they promise themselves a long afternoon, and think they have at least half a day good before them. The earth shall be darkened "in the clear day," when every thing looks pleasant and hopeful. Thus uncertain are all our creature comforts and enjoyments, even life itself. The highest degree of health and prosperity often proves the next degree to sickness and adversity; Job's sun went down at noon. Many are taken away in the midst of their days, and their sun goes down at noon; in the midst of life we are in death. Thus terrible are the judgments of God to those that sleep in security, they are to them as the sun's going down at noon; the less they are expected the more confounding they are. When they cry peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes, comes as a snare, *Lu.* xxi. 35.

4. It shall change their note, and mar all their mirth; ver. 10, "I will turn your feasts into mourning;" as, ver. 3, "the songs of the temple into howlings." Note, The end of the sinner's mirth and jollity is heaviness. As to the upright there "ariseth light in the darkness," which gives them the "oil of joy for mourning," so on the wicked there falls darkness in the midst of light, which turns their laughter into mourning, their joy into heaviness. So great, so general shall the desolation be, that "sackcloth shall be brought upon all loins, and baldness upon every head," instead of the well-set hair, and the rich garments they used to wear. The mourning at that day shall be as "mourning for an only son," which speaks the most bitter and lasting lamentation; but is there no hope that when things are at the worst they will mend, that at evening time it will yet be light? No, even "the end thereof shall be as a bitter day," a day of bitter mourning. The state of impenitent sinners grows worse and worse, and the last of all will be the worst of all. "This shall ye have at my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD,
That I will send a famine in the land,
Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the LORD:
12 And they shall wander from sea to sea, [and fro
And from the north even to the east, they shall run to
To seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find *it*.
13 In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint
for thirst.
14 They that swear by the sin of Samaria,
And say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth;
And, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth;
Even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

In these verses is threatened,

First. A general judgment of spiritual famine coming upon the whole land; a famine of the word of God, the failing of oracles, and the scarcity of good preaching. This is spoken of as a thing at some distance; the days come, they will come hereafter, when another kind of darkness shall come upon the land of light. When Amos prophesied, and for a considerable time after, there was great plenty of prophets, abundant opportunities of hearing the word of God, in season and out of season; they had precept upon precept, and line upon line. Prophecy was their daily bread, and it is likely they surfeited upon it, as Israel on the manna, and therefore God threatens that hereafter he will deprive them of this privilege. Probably in the land of Israel there were not so many prophets, about the time that the destruction came upon them, as there were in the land of Judah; and when the ten tribes went into captivity they "saw not their signs," there were no more any prophets, none to "shew them how long," *Ps.* lxxiv. 9. The Jewish church, after Malachi, had no prophets for many ages; and some think this threatening looks farther yet, to the blindness which has in part happened to Israel in the days of the Messiah, and the veil that is on the heart of the unbelieving Jews. They reject the Gospel, and the ministers of it, that God doth send to them, and covet to have prophets of their own, as their fathers had; but they shall have none, the kingdom of God being taken from them and given to another people. Observe here,

1. What the judgment itself is that is threatened. It is a famine, a scarcity, not of bread and water, which are the necessary supports of the body, and the want of which is very grievous, but much sorer judgment than that, even "a famine of hearing the words of the Lord." There shall be no congregations for ministers to preach to, nor any ministers to preach; nor any instructions and abilities given to those that do set up for preachers, to enable them for their work. The word of the Lord shall be precious and scarce; there shall be no vision, 1 *Sam.* iii. 1; they shall have the written word, Bibles to read, but no ministers to explain and apply it to them; the water in the well, but nothing to draw. It is a gracious promise, *Isa.* xxx. 20, that though they have a scarcity of bread, they shall have plenty of the means of grace; God will "give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction," but their eyes shall see their teachers; and it was a common saying among the puritans, that brown bread and the Gospel are good fare; but it is here a threatening, that on the contrary they should have plenty enough of bread and water, and yet their teachers should be removed. Now, 1st. This was the departure of a great part of their glory from their land. This made their nation great and high, that to them were committed the oracles of God; but, when those were taken from them, their beauty was stained, and their honour laid in the dust. 2nd. This was a token of God's highest displeasure against them. Surely he was angry indeed with them, when he would no more speak to them as he had done, and had abandoned them to ruin, when he would no more afford them the means of bringing them to repentance. 3rd. This made all the other calamities that were upon them truly melancholy, that they had no prophets to instruct and comfort them from the word of God, nor to give them any hopeful prospect. We should say at any time, and will say in a time of trouble, that a famine of the word of God is of all others the sorest famine, the heaviest judgment.

2. What will be the effect of this; ver. 12, "They shall wander from sea to sea," from the sea of Tiberias to the Great Sea, from one border of the country to another, to see if God will send them prophets either by sea or land from other countries, since they have none among themselves. They shall go from the north to the east; when they are disappointed in one place they shall try another, and shall "run to and fro" as men at a loss, and in a hot pursuit, "to seek the word of the Lord," to inquire if there be any prophets, any prophecy, any message from God; but they "shall not find it." 1st. Though to many this is no affliction at all, yet some will be very sensible of it as a great grievance, and will gladly travel far to hear a good sermon; but they shall sensibly feel the loss of those mercies which others have foolishly sinned away. 2nd. Even those that slighted prophets when they had them shall wish for them, as Saul did for Samuel, when they are deprived of them: many never know the worth of mercies till they feel the want of them. Or it may be meant thus, though they should thus wander from sea to sea in quest of the word of God, yet they shall not find it. Note, The means of grace are moveable things, and the candlestick, when we think it stands most firm, yet may be removed out of its place, *Rev.* ii. 5, and those that now slight "the days of the Son of man" may wish in vain to see them. And in the day of this famine "the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst," ver. 13. Those who one would think could well enough have borne the toil yet shall sink under it. The Jewish churches, and the masters of their synagogues, some take to be meant by the virgins and the young men; these shall lose the word of the Lord and the benefit of Divine revelation, and shall faint for want of it, shall lose all their strength and beauty. Those that trust to their own merit and righteousness, and think they have no need of Christ, others take to be meant by the fair virgins and the choice young men; those shall faint for thirst, when those that hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ shall be abundantly satisfied and filled.

Secondly. The particular destruction of those that were ringleaders in idolatry, ver. 14. Observe, 1. The sin they are charged with. They "swear by the sin of Samaria," that is, by the god of Samaria, the idol that was worshipped at Bethel, not far off from Samaria. Thus did they glory in their shame, and swear by that as their god, which was their iniquity, thinking that could help them which would certainly ruin them, and giving the highest honour to that which they should have looked upon with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. They say, "Thy god, O Dan, liveth;" that was the other golden calf, a dumb dead idol, and yet is caressed and complimented as if it had been the living and true God. They say, "the manner," or way, "of Beer-sheba liveth." They swear by the religion of Beer-sheba, the way and manner of worship used there, which they looked upon as sacred, and therefore swear by it, and appealed to it as a judge of controversy. Thus the papists swear by the mass, as "the manner of Beer-sheba." 2. The destruction they are threatened with. Those who thus give that honour to idols which is due to God alone will find the God they affront is thereby made their enemy, so that "they shall fall," and the gods they serve cannot stand their friends, so that they shall "never rise again." They will find that God is jealous, and will resent the indignity done him; and that he will be victorious, and it is to no purpose to contend with him.

CHAPTER IX.

In this chapter we have, I. Judgments threatened which the sinner shall not escape, ver. 1—4; which an almighty power shall inflict, ver. 5, 6; which the people of Israel have deserved, as a sinful people, ver. 7, 8; and yet it shall not be the utter ruin of their nation, ver. 8; for a remnant of good people shall escape, ver. 9; but the wicked ones shall perish, ver. 10. II. Mercy promised which was to be bestowed in the latter days, ver. 11—15; as appears by the application of it to the days of the Messiah, *Acts* xv. 16. And with those comfortable promises, after all the foregoing rebukes and threatenings, the book concludes.

I SAW the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said,
Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake:
And cut them in the head, all of them;
And I will slay the last of them with the sword:
He that fleeth of them shall not flee away,
And he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.
2 Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; [them down:
Though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring
3 And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel,
I will search and take them out thence;
And though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, [them:
Thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite
4 And though they go into captivity before their enemies,
Thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: [good.
And I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for
5 And the Lord GOD of hosts *is* he
That toucheth the land, and it shall melt,
And all that dwell therein shall mourn:
And it shall rise up wholly like a flood;
And shall be drowned, as *by* the flood of Egypt.
6 *It is* he that buildeth his stories in the heaven,
And hath founded his troop in the earth;
He that calleth for the waters of the sea,
And poureth them out upon the face of the earth:
The LORD *is* his name.
7 *Are* ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me,
O children of Israel? saith the LORD.
Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?
And the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? [kingdom,
8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD *are* upon the sinful
And I will destroy it from off the face of the earth;
Saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD.
9 For, lo, I will command,
And I will sift the house of Israel among all nations,
Like as *corn* is sifted in a sieve,
Yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.
10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword,
Which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

We have here the justice of God passing sentence upon a provoking people; and observe,

First. With what solemnity the sentence is passed. The prophet saw in vision "the Lord standing upon the altar," ver. 1, the altar of burnt offerings, for "the Lord hath a sacrifice," and multitudes must fall as victims to his justice. He is removed from the mercy-seat between the cherubims, and stands upon the altar, the judgment-seat, on which the fire of God used to fall to devour the sacrifices. He stands upon the altar to shew that the ground of his controversy with this people was their profanation of his holy things. Here he stands to avenge the quarrel of his altar; as also to signify that the sin of the house of Israel, like that of the house of Eli, shall "not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever," 1 *Sam.* iii. 14. He stands on the altar to prohibit sacrifice. Now the order given is, "Smite the lintel of the door" of the temple, the chapiter, smite it with such a blow "that the posts may shake," and "cut them," wound them "in the head, all of them;" break down the door of God's house, or of the courts of his house, in token of this, that he is going out from it, and forsaking it, and then all judgments are breaking in upon it. Or it signifies the destruction of those in the first place that should be as door-posts to the nation, for its defence; so as that, they being broken down, it becomes as "a city without gates and bars." Smite the king, who is as the lintel of the door, that the princes, who are as the posts, may shake; "cut them in the head," cleave them down, "all of them," as wood for the fire; and "I will slay the last of them," the posterity of them, them and their families, or the least of them, them and all that are employed under them. Or, I will slay them all, them and all that remain of them till it comes to the last man; the slaughter shall be general. There is no living for those of whom God hath said, "I will slay them," no standing before his sword.

Secondly. What effectual care is taken that none shall escape the execution of this sentence. This is enlarged upon here, and is intended for warning to all that provoke the Lord's jealousy; let sinners read it and tremble. As there is no fighting it out with God, so there is no fleeing from him; his judgments, when they come with commission, as they will overpower the strongest that think to outface them, so they will overtake the swiftest that think to outrun them, ver. 1. Those of them that flee, and take to their heels, they shall soon be out of breath, and shall not flee away out of the reach of danger; for as sometimes "the wicked flee when none pursues," so he cannot flee away when God pursues, though he would fain flee out of his hand. Nay, he that escapeth of them, that thinks he has gained his point, yet he shall not be delivered; evil pursues sinners, and will arrest them. This is here enlarged upon by shewing, that, wherever sinners flee for shelter from God's justice, it will overtake them, and the shelter will prove but a refuge of lies. What David saith of the ubiquity of God's presence, *Ps.* cxxxix. 7—10, is here said of the extent of God's power and justice.

1. Hell itself, though it has its name in English from its being hilled, or covered over, or hidden, cannot hide them; ver. 2, "though they dig into hell," into the centre of the earth, or the darkest recesses of it, yet "thence shall my hand take them," and bring them forth to be made public monuments of Divine justice. The grave is a hiding-place to the righteous from the malice of the world, *Job.* iii. 17, but it shall be no hiding-place to the wicked from the justice of God; from thence God's hand shall take them, when they shall rise in the great day to everlasting shame and contempt.

2. Heaven, though it has its name from being heaved or lifted up, shall not put them out of the reach of God's judgments; as hell cannot hide them, so heaven will not; "Though they climb up to heaven," in their own conceit, yet "thence will I bring them down." Those whom God brings to heaven by his grace shall never be brought down; but those who climb thither themselves, by their own presumption and confidence in themselves, will be brought down and filled with shame.

3. The top of Carmel, one of the highest parts of the dust of the world in that country, shall not protect them; "Though they hide themselves" there, where they imagine nobody will look for them, "I will search and take them out thence:" neither the thickest bushes nor the darkest caves in the top of Carmel will serve to hide them.

4. The bottom of the sea shall not serve to conceal them; though they think to hide themselves there, even there the judgments of God shall find them out, and lay hold on them. "Thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them," the "crooked serpent," even "the dragon that is in the sea," *Isa.* xxvii. 1. They shall find their plague and death there where they hope to find shelter and protection; diving will stand them in no more stead than climbing.

5. Remote countries will not befriend them, nor shall lesser judgments excuse them from greater; ver. 4, "Though they go into captivity before their enemies," who carry them to places at a great distance, and mingle them with their own people, among whom they seem to be lost, yet that shall not serve their turn; "Thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them;" the sword of the enemy, or one another's sword; when God judgeth he will overcome. And that which binds on all this, and makes their escape impossible, and their ruin inevitable, is that God will "set his eyes upon them for evil and not for good." His eyes are in every place, are upon all men, and upon all the ways of men; upon some for good, to shew himself strong on their behalf, but upon others for evil, to take notice of their sins, *Job* xiii. 27, and take all opportunities of punishing them for their sins. Their case is truly miserable that have the providence of God and all the dispensations of it against them, working for their hurt.

Thirdly. What a great and mighty God he is that passeth this sentence upon them, and will take the executing of it into his own hands. Threatenings are more or less formidable according to the power of him that threatens. We laugh at impotent wrath, but the wrath of God is not so; it is omnipotent wrath—who knows the power of it? What he had before said he would do, *ch.* viii. 8, is here repeated, that he would make the land melt and tremble, and "all that dwell therein mourn," that the judgment should "rise up wholly like a flood," and the country shall be drowned, and laid under water, "as by the flood of Egypt," ver. 5. But is he able to make his words good? Yes, certainly he is; he doth but touch the land and it melteth, touch the mountains and they smoke. He can do it with the greatest ease; for,

1. He is "the Lord of hosts" that undertakes to do it, the God that has all power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck, that having made them all, and given them their several capacities, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and all their powers. Very miserable is the case of those that have the Lord God of hosts against them, for they have hosts against them—the whole creation at war with them.

2. He is the Creator and governor of the upper world; "It is he that buildeth his stories in the heavens," the celestial orbs, or spheres, one over another, as so many stories in a high and stately palace, are his, for he built them at first, when he said, "Let there be a firmament," and he made the firmament, and he buildeth them still, is continually building them, not as they need repair, but by his providence he still upholdeth them. His power is the pillars of heaven, by which it is borne up. Now he that hath the command of those stories is certainly to be feared, for from thence, as from a castle, he can fire upon his enemies, or cast upon them great hailstones, as on the Canaanites; or make the stars in their courses, the furniture of those stories, to fight against them, as against Sisera.

3. He has the conduct and command of this lower world too, in which we dwell,—the terraqueous globe, both earth and sea, so that, which way soever his enemies think to make their escape, he will meet them, or to make opposition, he will match them. Do they think to make a land-fight of it? "He hath founded his troop in the earth," his troop of guards which he has at command, and makes use of for the protection of his subjects, and the punishment of his enemies. All the creatures on earth make one bundle, as the margin reads it, one bundle of arrows, out of which he takes what he pleaseth to discharge against the persecutors, *Ps.* vii. 13. They are all one army, one body, so closely are they connected, and so harmoniously and so much in concert do they act for the accomplishing of their Creator's purposes. Do they think to make a sea-fight of it? He will be too hard for them there; for he has the waters of the sea at command, even its waves; the most tumultuous rebellious waters do obey him. He "calls for the waters of the sea," in the course of his common providence, causeth vapours to ascend out of it, and poureth them out in showers, the small rain and the great rain of his strength, upon the face of the earth. This was mentioned before as a reason why we should seek the Lord, *ch.* v. 8, and make him our friend, as it is here made a reason why we should fear him, and dread having him our enemy.

Fourthly. How justly God passeth this sentence upon the people of Israel. He doth not destroy them by an act of sovereignty, but by an act of righteousness; for, ver. 8, it is a sinful kingdom, and the eyes of the Lord are upon it,

discovering it to be so. He sees the great sinfulness of it, and therefore he will "destroy it from off the face of the earth." Note, When those kingdoms that in name and profession were holy kingdoms, and kingdoms of priests, as Israel was, become sinful kingdoms, no other can be expected but that they should be cut off and abandoned. Let sinful kingdoms, and sinful families, and sinful persons too, see the eyes of the Lord upon them observing all their wickedness, and reserving the notice of it for the day of reckoning and recompense. This being a sinful kingdom, see how light God makes of it, ver. 7.

1. Of the relation wherein he stood to it; "Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?" A sad change! children of Israel become as children of the Ethiopians! 1st. They were so in themselves, that was their sin. It is a thing to be greatly lamented that the children of Israel often become as children of the Ethiopians; the children of godly parents degenerate, and become the reverse of those that went before them. Those that were well educated and trained up in the knowledge and fear of God, and set out well, and promised fair, throw off their profession, and become as bad as the worst. How is the gold become dim! 2nd. They were so in God's account, and that was their punishment. He valued them no more, though they were children of Israel, than if they had been children of the Ethiopians. We read of one in the title of *Ps.* vii., that was Cush, (an Ethiopian, so some understand it,) and yet a Benjamite. Those that by birth and profession are children of Israel, if they degenerate and become wicked and vile, are to God no more than children of the Ethiopians. This is an intimation of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews in the days of the Messiah: because they embraced not the doctrine of Christ, the kingdom of God was taken from them, they were unchurched, and cast out of covenant, became as children of the Ethiopians, and are so to this day. And it is true of those that are called Christians, but do not live up to their name and profession, that rest in the form of piety, but live under the power of reigning iniquity, that they are to God as children of the Ethiopians; he rejects them and their services.

2. See how light he makes of the favours he had conferred upon them. They thought he would not, he could not, cast them off, and put them upon a level with other nations, because he had done that for them which he had not done for other nations, whereby they thought he was bound to them, so as never to leave them. No, saith he, the favours shewed you are not so distinguishing as you think they are; "Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?" It is true, I have; but I have also brought the Philistines from Caphtor, or Cappadocia, where they were either natives or captives, or both. They are called the remnant of the country of Caphtor, *Jer.* xlvii. 4, and the Philistim are joined with the Caphtorim, *Gen.* x. 14. In like manner the Syrians were brought up from Kir, when they had been carried away thither, 2 *Kin.* xvi. 9. Note, If God's Israel lose the peculiarity of their holiness, they lose the peculiarity of their privileges; and what was designed as a favour of special grace shall be set in another light, shall have its property altered, and shall become but an act of common providence. If professors liken themselves to the world God will level them with the world. And if we live not up to the obligation of God's mercies we forfeit the honour and comfort of them.

Fifthly. How graciously God will separate between the precious and the vile in the day of retribution. Though the wicked Israelites shall be as the wicked Ethiopians; and their being called Israelites shall stand them in no stead, yet the pious Israelites shall not be as the wicked ones. No, "the Judge of all the earth will do right," more right than to "slay the righteous with the wicked," *Gen.* xviii. 25. His eyes "are upon the sinful kingdom," to spy out those in it that preserve their integrity, and swim against the stream, who sigh and cry for the abominations of their land, and they shall be marked for preservation, so that the destruction shall not be total; "I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob," not ruin them by wholesale, and in the gross, good and bad together, but I will distinguish, as becomes a righteous judge. The house of Israel shall be sifted, as corn is sifted; they shall be greatly hurried, and shaken, and tossed, but still in the hands of God, in both his hands, as the sieve in the hands of him that sifteth; ver. 9, "I will sift the house of Israel among all nations." Wherever they are shaken and scattered, God will have his eye upon them, and will take care to separate between the corn and chaff, which was the thing he designed in sifting them.

1. The righteous ones among them, that are as the solid wheat, shall none of them perish; they shall be delivered either from or through the common calamities of the kingdom; "Not the least grain shall fall on the earth," so as to be lost and forgotten; not the least stone, so the word is, for the good corn is weighty as a stone, in comparison with that which we call light corn. Note, Whatever shakings there may be in the world, God doth and will effectually provide that none that are truly his shall be truly miserable.

2. The wicked ones among them, that are hardened in their sins, shall all of them perish, ver. 10. See what a height of impiety they are come to; "They say, The evil shall not overtake and prevent us." They think they are innocent, and do not deserve punishment; or that the profession they make of relation to God will be their exemption and security from punishment; or that they shall be able to make their part good against the judgments of God, that they shall flee so swiftly from them that they shall not overtake them, or guard so carefully against them that they shall not prevent or surprise them. Note, Hope of impunity is the deceitful refuge of the impenitent. But see what it will come to at last; all the sinners that thus flatter themselves, and affront God, shall die by the sword, the sword of war, which to them shall be the sword of Divine vengeance, yea, though they be the sinners of my people, for their profession shall not be their protection. Note, Evil is often nearest those that put it at the greatest distance from them.

11 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that
And close up the breaches thereof; [is fallen,
And I will raise up his ruins,
And I will build it as in the days of old:
12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom,
And of all the heathen, which are called by my name,
Saith the LORD that doeth this.
13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD,
That the plowman shall overtake the reaper,
And the treader of grapes him that soweth seed;
And the mountains shall drop sweet wine,
And all the hills shall melt. [Israel,
14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of
And they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit *them*;
And they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof;
They shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.
15 And I will plant them upon their land,
And they shall no more be pulled up
Out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

To him, to whom all the prophets bare witness, this prophet here in the close bears his testimony, and speaks of that day, those days that shall come, in which God will do great things for his church, by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, for the rejecting of which the rejection of the Jews was foretold in the foregoing verses. The promise here is said to agree to the planting of the Christian church, and in that to be fulfilled, *Acts* xv. 15—17.

First. It is promised that in the Messiah the kingdom of David shall be restored; ver. 11, "the tabernacle of David" it is called, that is, his house and family, which, though great and fixed, yet in comparison with the kingdom of heaven was mean and moveable as a tabernacle. The church militant, in its present state, dwelling as in shepherds' tents to feed, as in soldiers' tents to fight, is the tabernacle of David. God's tabernacle is called the tabernacle of David, because David desired and chose to "dwell in God's tabernacle for ever," *Ps.* lxi. 4. Now, 1. These tabernacles were fallen, and gone to decay. The royal family was so impoverished, its power abridged, its honour stained and laid in the dust; for many of that race degenerated, and in the captivity it lost the imperial dignity. Sore breaches were made upon it, and at length it was laid in ruins. So it was with the church of the Jews; in the latter days of it its glory was departed. It was like a tabernacle broken down, and brought to ruin, in respect both of purity and prosperity. 2. By Jesus Christ these tabernacles were raised and rebuilt. In him God's covenant with David had its accomplishment, and the glory of that house, which was not only sullied, but quite sunk, revived again; the breaches of it were closed, and its ruins raised up, "as in the days of old." Nay, the spiritual glory of the family of Christ far exceeded the temporal glory of the family of David, when it was at its height. In him also God's covenant with Israel had its accomplishment; and in the gospel church the tabernacle of God was set up among men again, and raised up out of the ruins of the Jewish state. This is quoted in the first council at Jerusalem, as referring to the calling in of the Gentiles, and God's taking out of them a people for his name. Note, While the world stands God will have a church in it; and if it be fallen in one place, and among one people, it shall be raised up elsewhere.

Secondly. It is promised that that kingdom shall be enlarged, and the territories of it shall extend far, by the accession of many countries to it; ver. 12, that the house of David "may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen," that is, that Christ may have them given him for his inheritance, even "the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," *Ps.* ii. 8. Those that had been strangers and enemies shall become willing, faithful subjects to the Son of David, shall be added to the church, or those of them that are called by my name, saith the Lord; that is, that belong to the election of grace, and are ordained to eternal life, *Acts* xiii. 48; for it is true of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, that "the election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded," *Rom.* xi. 7. Christ died to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad," here said to be those that were called by his name. The promise is to all that were afar off, even "as many of them as the Lord our God shall call," *Acts* ii. 39. St. James expounds this as a promise "that the residue of men should seek after the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called." But may the promise be depended upon? Yes, the Lord saith this, who doth this, who can do it, who hath determined to do it, the power of whose grace is engaged for the doing of it, and with whom saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us.

Thirdly. That in the kingdom of the Messiah there shall be great plenty, and an abundance of all good things that the country doth produce; ver. 13, "The ploughman shall overtake the reaper," that is, there shall be such a plentiful harvest every year, and so much corn to be gathered in, that it shall last all summer, even till autumn, when it is time to begin to plough again. And in like manner the vintage shall continue till seedtime; and there shall be such abundance of grapes that even "the mountains shall drop new wine" into the vessels of the grape-gatherers, and the hills that were dry and barren shall be moistened, and shall melt with the fatness, or the mellowness as we call it, of the soil. Compare this with *Joel* ii. 24; iii. 18. This must certainly be understood of the abundance of spiritual blessings in heavenly things which all those are and shall be blessed with that are in sincerity added to Christ and his church. They shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of God's house, with the graces and comforts of his Spirit. They shall have bread, the bread of life, to strengthen their hearts, and the wine of Divine consolation to make them glad; meat indeed, and drink indeed, all the benefit that comes to the souls of men from the word and Spirit of God. These had been long confined to the vineyard of the Jewish church; Divine revelation, and the power that attended it, were to be found only within that inclosure. But in gospel times the mountains and hills of the Gentile world shall be enriched with these privileges, by the Gospel of Christ preached and professed, and received in the power of it. When great multitudes were converted to the faith of Christ, and nations were born at once,—when the preachers of the Gospel were always caused to triumph in the success of their preaching,—then the ploughman overtook the reaper. And when the Gentile churches were "enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge," and all manner of spiritual gifts, 1 *Cor.* i. 5, then "the mountains dropped sweet wine."

Fourthly. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be well peopled. As the country shall be replenished so shall the cities be; there shall be mouths for this meat, ver. 14. Those that were carried captives shall be brought back out of their captivity; their enemies shall not be able to detain them in the land of their captivity, nor shall they themselves incline to settle in it, but the remnant shall return, and shall "build the waste cities, and inhabit them;" shall form themselves into Christian churches, and set up pure doctrine, worship, and discipline among them, according to the gospel charter by which Christ's cities are incorporated, and shall enjoy the benefit and comfort thereof. They shall plant vineyards, and make gardens: though the mountains and hills drop wine, and the privileges of the gospel church are laid in common, yet they shall inclose for themselves, not to monopolise these privileges to the exclusion of others, but to appropriate and improve these privileges in communion with others. And they shall drink the wine and eat the fruit of their own vineyards and gardens; for they that take pains in religion, as men must do about their vineyards and gardens, shall have both the pleasure and the profit of it. The bringing again of the captivity of God's Israel, which is here promised, may

refer to the cancelling of the ceremonial law, which had been long to God's Israel as a yoke of bondage, and the investing of them in the liberty wherewith Christ came to make his church free, *Gal.* v. 1.

Fifthly. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall take such deep rooting in the world as never to be rooted out of it; ver. 15, "I will plant them upon their land." God's spiritual Israel shall be planted by the right hand of God himself, upon the land assigned them; and "they shall no more be pulled up out of it," as the old Jewish church was. God will preserve them from throwing themselves out of it by a total apostasy, and will preserve them from being thrown out of it by the malice of their enemies. The church may be corrupted, but shall not quite forsake God; may be persecuted, but shall not quite be forsaken of God, so that the gates of hell, neither with their temptations nor with their terrors, shall prevail against it. Two things secure the perpetuity of the church. 1. God's grants to it. It is "the land which I have given them," and God will confirm and maintain his own grants. The part he has given to his people is that good part which shall never be taken from them; he will not revoke his grant, and all the powers of earth and hell shall not invalidate it. 2. Its interest in him. He is "the Lord thy God," who has said it, and will make it good; "Thine, O Israel," who shall "reign for ever," as thine "unto all generations." And because he lives the church shall live also.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF AMOS.

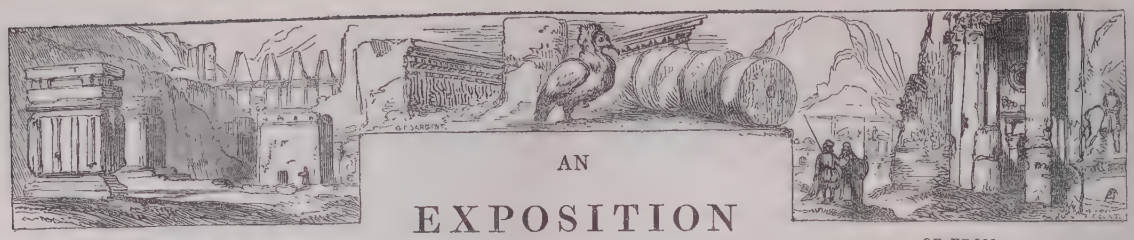
CHAP. I.—2. *The top of Carmel.* The range of hills runs nearly eight miles into the country, and was in former days fruitful to a proverb. Indeed the name Carmel, signifying 'a fruitful field,' was plainly given to it for this reason. In the days of its primitive luxuriance how easy it would have been to hide in the top of Carmel, for embowering vines and deep shady fig-trees would afford a covert for many a mile along the summit; but the extensive summit, which was once like a garden, is (now) covered as far as our eye reached with wild mountain shrubs and briary plants, all of stinted growth, except where the rock lay bare and without verdure under the scorching sun. The same God who said, "Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and I will pour the stones of Samaria down the valley" said also, "The top of Carmel shall wither," and that word we saw before our eyes fulfilled to the letter.—*Bonar and M'Cheyne's Narrative*, p. 316. 5. *Plain of Aven.* Supposed to be the same as the plain of Baalbec, or valley of Baal, where was a magnificent temple dedicated to the sun. See wood engraving at end of 2 *Chr.* 7. *I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza.* Supplementary Note, *Jer.* xlvii. 5, where is allusion to fire as having literally fused the masses of stone. The expression, however, so frequently employed in this chapter, denotes generally the instrument of executing the Divine judgments, especially war, in carrying on which fire is so often employed. Compare *Num.* xxi. 28; *Isa.* xxvi. 11. 8. *The remnant of the Philistines shall perish.* Supplementary Note, *Jer.* xxv. 16. 9. *I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus.* Supplementary Notes on *Isa.* xxiii. and *Eze.* xxvi. 4. 11. *Edom—I will not turn away the punishment thereof.* Supplementary Notes on *Isa.* xvi. and xxxiv. 12. *Teman—Bozrah*—were principal cities of Edom, or Idumea. 14. *I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah.* Supplementary Note, *Eze.* xxv. All these countries were subdued by Nebuchadnezzar.

CHAP. II.—2. *Moab—I will not turn away the punishment thereof.* Supplementary Notes on *Isa.* xvi. 14, and *Jer.* xlvii. 28. The judgments here pronounced against these countries should teach us that while God on his throne of grace delights to exercise mercy to the humble believer, he will thence also denounce and execute the severest vengeance on his enemies; that though he bears long with transgressors, yet he will no longer turn away the punishment of those who have filled up the measure of their guilt; that his wrath will consume flourishing families and magnificent palaces like a tremendous fire, break down the gates of fortified cities, depopulate fertile regions, dethrone princes, and reduce powerful nations to captivity and ruin. 4, 6. *Judah—Israel—I will not turn away the punishment thereof.* After the prophet had given a general warning to the surrounding nations and to Judah, he more particularly, in the name of God, addressed the Israelites, to whom he was charged with a special message. He recapitulates their atrocious and aggravated sins, and predicts the awful judgment that would come upon them. From this we should learn that it is a small thing for those "to whom are committed the oracles of God" (merely) to avoid the gross enormities of benighted heathens; that, even without crimes so atrocious in the sight of men, they may fill up a large measure of guilt and ripen speedily for vengeance, by "despising the law of the Lord and not keeping his commandments;" that false doctrines, delusive superstitions, idolatries, and direct and aggravated violations of the word of God, have often been perpetuated by tradition in the visible church, and one generation after another "have erred through the lies after which their fathers have walked," till the wrath of God has burned like fire to consume even the palaces of Jerusalem; that as it has been in times past, so when at any period this becomes the general character of churches and nations, it cannot be expected that the Lord will endure them, but that they also will be given up to complicated misery, notwithstanding all their idolized power, courage, and resources.—*Scott.* 6, 7. *Sold—the poor for a pair of shoes—that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor.* Dr. Henderson gives nearly the same meaning as M. Henry to this latter clause. He says, 'the meaning of the prophet is, that the persons whom he describes were so avaricious, that after having robbed others of their property and reduced them to a state of poverty, they even begrudged them the small quantity of dust which they had cast on their heads in token of mourning.' Compare 2 *Sam.* i. 2; *Job* ii. 12. Some render it, 'They tread down the heads of the poor into the dust of the earth.' 'Such nominal Christians,' says Scott, 'will grudge the poor servant, labourer, and mechanic, the smallest advantage or indulgence, and eagerly pursue every iniquitous method of extorting their little from them to increase their own abundance.'—If you read *Isa.* v. 3—32; *Jer.* v. 22, 30; *Am.* iv. (rather ii.); *Hab.* ii.; and the *Epistle of St. James*, written to the same people a little before the second destruction of Jerusalem, you will be struck, I think, with the close resemblance of our own state to that of the Jews; while the state of the Greek churches, to whom St. Paul wrote, is wholly different, because, from their thin population and better political circumstances, poverty among them is hardly noticed, and our duties to the poor are consequently much less prominently brought forward.'—*Life and Correspondence of Rev. Thos. Arnold, D.D., late Head Master of Rugby School, and Regius Professor of Modern History in the Unversity of Oxford. By A. P. Stanley, M.A., Oxford*, vol. i. 262. In the same letter Dr. Arnold says, 'Unquestionably our aristocratical manners and habits have made us and the poor two distinct and unsympathizing bodies, and from want of sympathy I fear the transition to enmity is but too easy when distress embitters the feelings, and the sight of others in luxury makes that distress still more intolerable. This is the plague spot, to my mind, in our whole state of society, which must be removed, or the whole must perish. And under God it is for the clergy to come forward boldly and begin to combat it. The prophets, in a similar state of society in Judæa, did not preach subordination only or chiefly, but they denounced oppression and unnecessary overgrown properties, and grinding the labourers to the smallest possible pittance.' For remarks on that part of the above extract which speaks of our duties to the poor as much less prominently brought forward in the epistles of Paul than in these prophecies, see Comment on *Jas.* i. 27. At present we would only observe, that the civic and burghal, as well as the other aristocracy, (to which Dr. Arnold appears specially to allude,) have been to blame in this matter, and that it becomes all classes among the laity, higher and middle together, to be deeply humbled because of their past neglect of the interests of their poorer brethren, both in the manufacturing and rural districts of the land. The ministers of the Gospel, too, have much to answer for on this account. And whilst it is an occasion of thankfulness that within these few years increased efforts have been made for the temporal and spiritual amelioration of the humbler classes, it cannot be concealed that the evil has been allowed to get too far ahead, and that God by his providence, as by his word, is now loudly calling upon all men, clergy and laity, to apply themselves more strenuously than ever to the great duty, a duty so peculiarly obligatory on Christians, and for which they are furnished with such peculiar and powerful motives; "For ye know," says the apostle, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his povery might be made rich."

CHAP. V.—3. *The city—which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten to the house of Israel.* 'Of the hundreds of cities or towns that anciently flourished in Palestine, whether under the Israelites or the Romans, not one has been left to give now an example or illustration of what they were. Time after time they have been laid waste, and many of them are desolate without an inhabitant. Where miserable villages take the place and the name of large towns, and where towns still exist where cities stood, nothing more can be said than the prophet foretold in declaring the work of the Lord concerning them.'—*Dr. Keith's Land of Israel.* 5. *Seek not Beth-el.* Lord Lindsay's interpretation of this passage cannot stand. It is not a direction to a traveller not to search out its ruins, but a command to the idolatrous Israelites to give over their idolatry, that is to say, 'Seek not Bethel, but return to me.' *Beth-el shall come to nought.* This word has been fulfilled to the very letter. The shapeless ruins scattered over the brow of the hill are themselves silent witnesses of God's truth and faithfulness.—*Narrative*, p. 275. 15. *Establish judgment in the gate.* Supplementary Note, *Matt.* xvi. 18. 26. *The star of your god.* Supplementary Note, *Num.* xxiv. 17.

CHAP. VI.—1. *Woe to them—that trust in the mountain of Samaria.* Supplementary Note, 2 *Kin.* vi.; *Obad.* 19. 5. *And invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David.* On this passage we give the following extract from Dr. Adam Clarke's *Commentary*, with no other view (though the true meaning is much controverted) than that our Wesleyan readers may know the opinion of an eminent minister of their body. After referring to his note on 1 *Chr.* xxiii. 5, and especially to his note on 2 *Chr.* xxix. 25, he adds, 'I believe that David was not authorized by the Lord to introduce that multitude of musical instruments into the Divine worship of which we read, and I am satisfied that his conduct in this respect is most solemnly reprehended by this prophet.' 'The late venerable and most eminent divine, the Rev. John Wesley,' he continues, 'who was a lover of music and an elegant poet, when asked his opinion of instruments of music being introduced into the chapels of the Methodists, said, "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen." I say the same, though I think the expense of purchase had better be spared.'

CHAP. IX.—3. *Hide—the top of Carmel.* Supplementary Note, *ch.* i. 2. 8. *I will destroy it from off the face of the earth—saving that I will not utterly destroy, &c.* He intended to scatter the remnant of them through all nations and to harass them with manifold calamities, as the corn is shaken in the sieve, yet he would preserve all that were valuable of them with the most exact care, and not suffer one of them, however mean and inconsiderable, to perish. The astonishing preservation of the Jews as a distinct people through all their dispersions to the present day is here evidently predicted—the whole house of Jacob, the families brought out of Egypt being certainly intended, and not the ten tribes only.—*Scott.* 13—15. *Behold the days come, &c.* Not a few recent commentators consider these verses as referring to the restoration of the Jews to their own land, its increased fertility, and their perpetual occupation of it. See Supplementary Notes on *Jer.* xxiii., containing a collection of the passages from Scripture adduced by them in favour of this opinion. Dr. Henderson, in particular, gives a strong expression of his views to this effect: 'It is impossible, he says, 'to conceive of prophecy more distinctly or positively asserting the future and general restoration of the Jews to Canaan than that contained in these verses.' Hengstenberg, in his *Christology*, gives quite a different interpretation, coinciding in the main with that of M. Henry. Scott's views on this subject do not appear well defined; though every reader, whatever his opinion on these minor matters, will unite with him in prayer for 'the complete performance of these predictions in the more perfect peace, purity, and beauty of the church; in the increase of diligent, able, faithful, and successful ministers; in the ruin of all obstinate enemies, and in the conversion of Jews, Gentiles, and Mohammedans, to the faith of Christ. But only in heaven shall we be so planted and established as to experience no more changes, fears, temptations, sins or sorrows, for there alone is fulness of joy for evermore.'



DESOLATION OF EDOM.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF OBADIAH,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THIS is the shortest of all the books of the Old Testament—the least of those tribes—and yet is not to be passed by, or thought meanly of; for this penny hath Cæsar's image and superscription upon it: it is stamped with a Divine authority. There may appear much of God in a short sermon, in a little book, and much good may be done by it; *multum in parvo*,—'much in a little.' Mr. Norris saith, 'If angels were to write books, we should have few folios.' That may be very precious which is not voluminous. This book is entitled "The vision of Obadiah." Who this Obadiah was doth not appear from any other Scripture. Some of the ancients imagined him to be the same with that Obadiah that was steward of Ahab's household, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 3; and if so, he that hid and fed the prophets had indeed a prophet's reward, when he was himself made a prophet. But that is a conjecture which has no ground. This Obadiah, it is probable, was of later date; some think contemporary with Hosea, Joel, and Amos; others think he lived about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the children of Edom so barbarously triumphed in that destruction. However, what he wrote was what he saw—it is his vision. Probably there was much more which he was Divinely inspired to speak, but this is all he was inspired to write; and all he writes is concerning Edom. It is a foolish fancy of some of the Jews that, because he prophesies only concerning Edom, he was himself an Edomite by birth, but a proselyte to the Jewish religion. Other prophets prophesied against Edom, and some of them seem to have borrowed from him, in their predictions against Edom, as *Jer.* xlix. 7, &c., *Eze.* xxv. 12, &c. Out of the mouth of these two or three witnesses every word will be established.

A.D. 3417. B.C. 587.

This book is wholly concerning Edom, a nation near allied and near adjoining to Israel, and yet an enemy to the seed of Jacob, inheriting the enmity of their father Esau to Jacob. Now here we have, after the preface, ver. 1. I. Threatenings against Edom. 1. That their pride should be humbled, ver. 2—4; 2. That their wealth should be plundered, ver. 5—7; 3. That their wisdom should be infatuated, ver. 8, 9; 4. That their spiteful carriage towards God's Israel should be avenged, ver. 10—16. II. Gracious promises to Israel, that they shall be restored and reformed, and shall be victorious over the Edomites, and become masters of their land and the lands of other their neighbours, ver. 18—20; and that the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, by the bringing in of the great salvation, ver. 21.

THE vision of Obadiah.
Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning Edom;
We have heard a rumour from the LORD,
And an ambassador is sent among the heathen,
Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle.
2 Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen:
Thou art greatly despised.
3 The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee,
Thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation *is* high;
That saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?
4 Though thou exalt *thyself* as the eagle,
And though thou set thy nest among the stars,
Thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD.
5 If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night,
(How art thou cut off!)
Would they not have stolen till they had enough?
If the grapegatherers came to thee,
Would they not leave *some* grapes?
6 How are *the things* of Esau searched out!
How are his hidden things sought up!
7 All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee *even* to the border:
The men that were at peace with thee have deceived [thee,
And prevailed against thee;
They that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee:
There is none understanding in him.
8 Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD,
Even destroy the wise *men* out of Edom,
And understanding out of the mount of Esau?
9 And thy mighty *men*, O Teman, shall be dismayed,
To the end that every one of the mount of Esau
May be cut off by slaughter.

Edom is the nation against which this prophecy is levelled, and some think is put for all the enemies of Israel, that shall be brought down, first or last. The rabbins, by Edom, understand Rome,—Rome Christian they understand it of, and have an implacable enmity to it as such; but if we understand it of Rome antichristian, we shall find the passages of it applicable enough. And, though Edom was mortified in the times of the Maccabees, as it had been before by Jehoshaphat, yet its destruction seems to have been typical, as their father Esau's rejection, and to have farther reference to the destruction of the enemies of the gospel church; for so shall all God's enemies perish. And we find, *Isa.* xxxiv. 5, the sword of the Lord coming down upon Idumea, to signify the general day of God's recompences for the controversy of Zion, ver. 8. Some have well observed that it could not but be a great temptation to the people of Israel, when they saw themselves, who were the children of the beloved Jacob, in trouble, and the Edomites, the seed of hated Esau, not only prospering, but triumphing over them in their troubles; and therefore God gives them a prospect of the destruction of Edom, which should be total and final, and of a happy issue of their own correction. Now we may observe here,

First. A declaration of war against Edom; ver. 1, "We have heard a rumour," or rather an order from the Lord, the God of hosts. He hath given the word of command; it is his counsel and decree, which can neither be reversed nor resisted, that all that do mischief to his people shall certainly bring mischief upon themselves. We have heard a report that God is raised up out of his holy habitation, and is preparing his throne for judgment; and "an ambassador is sent among the heathen," a herald rather, some minister or messenger of providence to alarm the nations; or, the Lord's prophets, who gave each nation its burthen. Those whom God employs cry to each other, "Arise ye, stir up yourselves and one another," "and let us rise up against Edom in battle." The confederate forces under Nebuchadnezzar thus animate themselves and one another to make a descent upon that country; "Gather ye together and come against her," so it is in the parallel place, *Jer.* xlix. 14. Note, When God hath bloody work to do among the enemies of his church, he will find out and fit up both hands and hearts to do it.

Secondly. A prediction of the success of that war. Edom shall certainly be subdued, and spoiled, and brought down, for all her confidence shall fail her, and stand her in no stead; and in like manner shall all the enemies of God's church be disappointed in those things which they stayed themselves upon.

1. Do they depend upon their grandeur, the figure they make among the nations, their influence upon them, and interest in them? that shall dwindle; ver. 2, "Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen," so that none of thy neighbours will court thy friendship, or court an alliance with thee; thou art greatly despised among them, and looked upon with contempt as an infatuated and unfaithful nation. And thus, ver. 3, "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee. Note, 1st. Those that think well of themselves are apt to fancy that others think well of them too; but when they come to make trial of them they will find themselves mistaken, and thus their pride deceives them, and by it slays them. 2nd. God can easily lay those low that have magnified and exalted themselves, and will find out a way to do it, for he resisteth the proud. And we often see those small and greatly despised, who, when time was, looked very big, and were greatly caressed and admired.

2. Do they depend upon the fortifications of their country, both by nature and art, and glory in the advantages they have thereby? Those also shall deceive them. They "dwelt in the clefts of the rock," as an eagle in her nest, and their habitation was high; not only exalted above their neighbours, which was the matter of their pride, but fortified against their enemies, which was the matter of their security; so high as to be out of the reach of danger. Now observe, 1st. What Edom saith in the pride of his heart; "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" He speaks with a confidence of his own strength, and a contempt of God's judgments, as if almighty power itself could not overpower him. As for "all his enemies," even God himself, "he puffeth at them," *Ps.* x. 5, sets them all at defiance. Their father Esau had sold his birthright, and yet they lift up themselves, as if to them had still pertained the "excellency of dignity and power." Many forfeit their privileges, and yet boast of them. Because Edom is high and lifted up he imagines none can bring him down. Note, Carnal security is a sin that most easily besets men in the day of their pomp, power, and prosperity, and doth as much as any thing both ripen men for ruin, and aggravate it when it comes. 2nd. What God saith to this, ver. 4. If men will dare to challenge omnipotence, their challenge shall be taken up. "Who shall bring me down?" saith Edom. "I will," saith God. "Though thou exalt thyself as an eagle," that soars high, and builds high; nay, "though thou set thy nest among the stars," higher than ever any eagle flew, it is but in thine own imagination, and "thence will I bring thee down." This we had *Jer.* xlix. 15, 16. Note, Sinners will certainly be made ashamed of their pride and security; of their pride when it has a fall, and of their security when their confidences fail their expectation.

3. Do they depend upon their wealth and treasure, the abundance of which is looked upon as the sinews of war? Is their money their defence? Is that their strong city? It is so but in their own conceit, for it shall rather expose them than protect them; it shall be made a prey to the enemy, and they for the sake of it, ver. 5, 6; much to this purpose we had, *Jer.* xlix. 9, 10; only here comes in, in a parenthesis, "How art thou cut off!" thou and all thy stores. The prophet foretells it, but laments it, that the thread of their prosperity was cut off. How art thou fallen, and how great is thy fall? How art thou stupified? so the Chaldee words it. How senseless art thou under these desolating judgments, as if they were but common strokes! But he shews that it should be an utter ruin, not a usual calamity; for, 1st. It is indeed a usual calamity for those that have wealth to have it stolen, and to lose a little out of their great deal. Thieves come to them,—for where the carcase is, there will the birds of prey be gathered together,—robbers come by night, and they steal till they have enough, what they have occasion for, what they have a mind of; they steal no more than they think they can carry away, and out of a great stock it is scarce missed. Those that rob orchards, or vineyards, carry off what they think fit, but they "leave some grapes," some fruits for the owner, who easily bears his loss, perhaps, and soon recruits it. But, 2nd. It shall not be so with Edom. His wealth shall be taken away, and nothing shall escape the hands of the destroying army, not that which is most precious and valuable; ver. 6, "How are the things of Esau," the things he sets his heart upon, and placeth his happiness in,—his good things, his best things,—how are these things, which were so carefully treasured up and concealed, now "searched out" by the enemy and seized! "How are his hidden things," his hid treasures, plundered, rifled, and "sought up!" his hoards, that had not seen the light of many years, are now a spoil to the enemy. Note, Treasures on earth, though never so fast locked up, and never so artfully hidden, yet cannot be so safely laid up but that thieves may break through and steal. It is therefore our wisdom to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

4. Do they depend upon their alliances with neighbouring states and potentates? those also shall fail them; ver. 7, "The men of thy confederacy," all of them, the Ammonites and Moabites, and other thy high allies, that "were at peace with thee," that entered into a league offensive and defensive with thee, that solemnly engaged not only to do thee no hurt, but to do thee all the service they could. They did eat thy bread, were magnificently treated and entertained by thee, lived upon thee; their soldiers had free quarter in thy country, and took pay as thine auxiliaries. They have "brought thee even to the border" of thy land; were very respectful to thine ambassadors, and brought them on their way home, even to the utmost limits of their country. They seemed forward to serve thee with their forces when thou hadst occasion for them, and came along with thee to the border, till thou wast just ready to engage the invading enemy. But then, 1st. They have deceived thee. They flew back and retreated when thou wast in extremity, and proved as a broken reed to the traveller that is weary, and as the brooks in summer to the traveller that is thirsty; they bear no weight, yield no relief. Nay, 2nd. They have "prevailed against thee;" that is, they were too hard for thee in the treaty imposed upon thee, and by cheating thee ruined thee; brought thee into danger, and there left thee an easy prey to thine enemy. Note, Those that make flesh their arm arm it against them. Yet this was not the worst. 3rd. They have "laid a wound under thee;" that is, they have laid that under thee for a stay and support, for a foundation to rely on, for a pillow to repose on, which will prove a wound to thee, not as thorns only, but as swords. If God lay under us the arms of his power and love, these will be firm and easy under us,—the God of our covenant will never deceive us; but if we trust to the men of our confederacy, and what they will lay under us, it may prove to us a wound and dishonour. And observe the just censure here passed upon Edom for trusting to those who thus played tricks with him, "There is no understanding in him," or else he would never have put it into their power to betray him, by putting such a confidence in them. Note, Those shew they have no understanding in them who, when they are encouraged to trust in the Creator, put a cheat upon themselves by reposing a confidence in the creature.

5. Do they depend upon the politics of their counsellors? these shall fail them, ver. 8. Edom had been famous for great statesmen, men of learning and experience, that sat at the helm of government, and were masters of all the arts of management, that in all treaties used to outwit their neighbours; but now the counsellors are become fools, and the wise God makes them so. "Shall I not in that day destroy the wise men out of Edom?" as men they shall fall by the sword in common with others, *Ps.* xlix. 10, and their wisdom shall not secure them. As wise men, they shall be infatuated in all their counsels; their best laid designs shall be baffled, their measures broken, and those very projects by which they thought to establish themselves and the public interests shall be the ruin of both. Thus "wisdom perished from Teman," as it is in the parallel place, *Jer.* xlix. 7. This was, 1st. The just punishment of their folly in trusting to an arm of flesh. "There is no understanding in them," ver. 7. They have no sense to trust in a living God, and a God of truth, but put confidence in men that are frail, fickle, and false, and therefore God will destroy their understanding. Note, God will justly deny those understanding to keep out of the way of danger that will not use their understanding to keep out of the way of sin. He that will be foolish, let him be foolish still. 2nd. It was the forerunner of their destruction. A nation is then marked for ruin when God hides the things that belong to its peace from the eyes of those that are intrusted with its counsels. *Quos Deus vult perdere eos dementat*,—'God infatuates those whom he designs to destroy.' *Job* xii. 17.

6. Do they depend upon the strength and courage of their soldiers? They are not only able-bodied, but men of spirit and courage, that can face an enemy and stand their ground; but now, ver. 9, "Thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed," their courage shall fail them, "to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter," and none escape. The weak, and feeble, and unarmed, must fall of course into the hand of the destroyer, when the mighty men are dismayed, and not only lose the day, but lose their lives, because they have lost their spirits. "Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken." Note, The death or disuniting of the mighty oft proves the death and destruction of the many; and it is in vain to depend upon mighty men for our protection, if we have not an almighty God for us, much less if we have an almighty God against us.

10 For *thy* violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall
And thou shalt be cut off for ever. [cover thee,
11 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side,
In the day that the strangers carried away captive his
And foreigners entered into his gates, [forces,
And cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou *wast* as one of
them. [brother
12 But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy
In the day that he became a stranger;
Neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of
In the day of their destruction; [Judah
Neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day
of distress. [people
13 Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my
In the day of their calamity;
Yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction
In the day of their calamity,
Nor have laid *hands* on their substance in the day of
their calamity;
14 Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway,
To cut off those of his that did escape;
Neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his
That did remain in the day of distress.
15 For the day of the LORD *is* near upon all the heathen:
As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee:
Thy reward shall return upon thine own head.
16 For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain,
So shall all the heathen drink continually,
Yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down,
And they shall be as though they had not been.

When we have read Edom's doom, no less than utter ruin, it is natural to ask, Why, what evil hath he done? What is the ground of God's controversy with him? Many things, no doubt, were amiss in Edom; they were a sinful people, and a people laden with iniquity. But that one single crime which is laid to their charge, as filling their measure, and bringing this ruin upon them,—that for which they here stand indicted, of which they are convicted, and for which they are condemned,—is the injuries and wrongs they had done to the people of God; ver. 10, it is for "thy violence against thy brother Jacob," that ancient and hereditary grudge which thou hast borne to the people of Israel, that is it for which all this "shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." Note, Injuries to men are affronts to God, the righteous God that loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness; and, as the Judge of all the earth, will give right to those that suffer wrong, and take vengeance on those that do wrong. All violence, all unrighteousness, is sin; but it is a great aggravation of the violence if it be done either, 1st. Against any of our own people. It is violence against thy brother, thy near relation, to whom thou shouldest be a *goel*, a redeemer; whom it is thy duty to right if others wronged him. How wicked is it then for thee thyself to wrong him! Thou slanderest and abusest thine own mother's son; this makes the sin exceeding sinful, *Ps.* l. 20. Or, 2nd. Much more if it be done against any of God's people. It is thy brother Jacob that is in covenant with God, and dear to him. Thou hatest him whom God has loved, and because God hath loved him; him whose cause God espouseth, and will plead with jealousy; and in whose interests God is pleased so far to interest himself, as that he takes the violence done to him as done to himself: "Whoso toucheth Jacob, toucheth the apple of the eye of Jacob's God." So that it is *crimen læsæ majestatis*,—'high treason,' for which let Edom expect an ignominious punishment; "Shame shall cover thee," and a ruining one; "Thou shalt be cut off for ever." In the following verses we are told more particularly,

First. What the violence was which Edom did against his brother Jacob, and what are the proofs of this charge. It doth not appear that the Edomites did themselves invade Israel, but that was more for want of power than will; they had malice enough to do it, but were not a match for them. But that which is laid to their charge is, their barbarous carriage towards Judah and Jerusalem

when they were in distress and ready to be destroyed, probably by the Chaldeans, or upon occasion of other calamities of the Jews; for this seems to have been always their temper towards them. See this charged upon the Edomites, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 7, that "in the day of Jerusalem they said, Rase it, rase it," and *Eze.* xxv. 21. They are here told particularly what they did, by being told what they should not have done; ver. 12—14, "Thou shouldest not have looked," thou "shouldest not have entered;" but thou didst so. Note, In reflecting upon ourselves, it is good to compare what we have done with what we should have done, our practice with the rule, that we may discover wherein we have done amiss, have "done those things which we ought not to have done;" we should not have been where we were at such a time, should not have been in such and such company, should not have said what we said, nor have taken the liberty that we took. Sin thus looked upon in the glass of the commandment will appear exceeding sinful. Let us see,

1. What was the case of Judah and Jerusalem when the Edomites behaved themselves thus basely, and insulted over them. 1st. It was a day of distress with them, ver. 12; it was "the day of their calamity," so it is called three times, ver. 13. With the Edomites it was a day of prosperity and peace, when with the Israelites it was a day of distress and calamity, for judgment commonly begins at the house of God. Children are corrected when strangers are let alone. 2nd. It was "the day of their destruction," ver. 12, when both city and country were laid waste, were laid in ruins. 3rd. It was a day when foreigners entered into the gates of Jerusalem, when the city, after a long siege, was broken up, and the great officers of the king of Babylon's army came and sat in the gates, as judges of the land; when they cast lots upon the spoils of Jerusalem, as the soldiers on Christ's garments, what share each of the conquerors should have, what share of the lands, what share of the goods; or cast lots to determine themselves when and where they should attack it. 4th. It was a day when the "strangers carried away captive his forces," ver. 11, took the men of war prisoners of war, and carried them off in poverty and shame to their own country. Or, such a multitude of captives that they were as an army. 5th. It was a day when thy brother himself, that had been long at home, at rest in his own land, became a stranger, an exile in a strange land. Now when this was the woful case of the Jews, the Edomites, their neighbours and brethren, should have pitied them and helped them, condoled them and comforted them, and should have trembled to think that their own turn would come next; for "if this were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" But,

2. See what was the carriage of the Edomites towards them when they were in this distress, for which they are here condemned. 1st. They looked with pleasure upon the affliction of God's people. They "stood on the other side," ver. 11, afar off, when they should have come in to the relief of their distressed neighbours; and looked upon them, and their day, "looked on their affliction," ver. 12, 13, with a careless, unconcerned eye, as the priest and Levite looked upon the wounded man, and passed by on the other side. Those have a great deal to answer for that are idle spectators of the troubles and afflictions of their neighbours, when they are capable of being their active helpers. But this was not all; they looked upon it with a scornful eye, with an eye of complacency and satisfaction; they looked and laughed to see Israel in distress, saying, "Aha! so would we have it." They fed their eyes with the rueful spectacle of Jerusalem's ruins, and looked at it as those that had long looked for it, and often wished to see it. Note, We must take heed with what eye we look upon the afflictions of our brethren, and if we cannot look upon them with a gracious eye of sympathy and tenderness, it is better not to look upon them at all. "Thou shouldest not have looked" as thou didst "upon the day of thy brother." 2nd. They triumphed and insulted over them, upbraided their brethren with their sorrows, and made themselves and their companions merry with them. They "rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction." They had not the good manners to conceal the pleasure they took in Judah's destruction, and to dissemble it, but openly declared it, and rudely and insolently declared it to them; they rejoiced over them, crowed and hectored, and trampled upon them. Those have the spirit of Edomites that can rejoice over any, especially of Israelites, in the day of their calamity. 3rd. They spoke proudly, 'magnified the mouth,' so the word is, against Israel; talked with a great disdain of the suffering Israelites, and with an air of haughtiness of the present safety and prosperity of Edom; as if it might be inferred from their present different state that the tables were turned, and now Esau were beloved, and the favourite of heaven, and Jacob hated and rejected. Note, Those must expect to be some way or other effectually humbled and mortified themselves that are puffed up and made proud by the humiliations and mortifications of others. 4th. They went farther yet, for they entered into the gate of God's people, in the day of their calamity, and laid hands on their substance. Though they did not help to conquer them they helped to plunder them, and put in for a share in the prey, ver. 13. Jerusalem was thrown open, and then they entered it; its wealth was thrown about, and they seized it for themselves, excusing it with this, that they had as good take it as let it be lost; whereas it was taking what was not their own. Babylon lays Jerusalem waste, but Edom, by meddling with the spoil, becomes *particeps criminis*,—'partaker of the crime,' and shall be reckoned with as an accessary *ex post facto*,—'after the fact.' Note, These do but impoverish themselves that think to enrich themselves by the ruins of the people of God; and those deceive themselves who think they may call all that substance their own which they can lay their hands on in a day of calamity. 5th. They did yet worse things; they not only robbed their brethren, but murdered them, in the day of their calamity; laid hands not only on their substance, but on their persons, ver. 14. When the victorious sword of the Chaldeans was making bloody work among the Jews, many made their escape, and were in a fair way to save themselves by flight, but the Edomites basely interrupted them, stood in the cross-way where several roads met, by each of which the trembling Israelites were making the best of their way from the fury of the pursuers, and there they stopped them. Some they barbarously and coward-like cut off themselves; others they took prisoners, and delivered up to the pursuers, only to ingratiate themselves with them because they were now the conquerors. They should not have been thus cruel to those that lay at their mercy, and never had done, nor were ever likely to do, them any hurt,—should not have betrayed those whom they had such a fair opportunity to protect; but such are the tender mercies of the wicked. One cannot read this without a high degree of compassion towards those that were thus basely abused, that when they fled from the sword of an open enemy, and thought they were got out of the reach of it, fell upon and fell by the sword of a treacherous neighbour, that they were not apprehensive of any danger from; nor without a high degree of indignation towards those that were so perfectly lost to all humanity as to exercise such cruelty upon such proper objects of compassion. 6th. In all this they joined with the open enemies and persecutors of Israel. Even thou wast as one of them, an accessary equally guilty with the principals. He that joins in with evil-doers, and is aiding and abetting in their evil deeds, shall be reckoned, and shall be reckoned with, as one of them.

Secondly, What the shame is that shall cover them for this violence of theirs.

1. They shall soon find that the cup is going round, even the cup of trembling; and when they come to be in the same calamitous condition that the Israel of God is now in, they will be ashamed to remember how they triumphed over them; ver. 15, "The day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen," when God will recompense tribulation to the troublers of his church. Though judgment begin at the house of God, it shall not end there. This should effectually restrain us from triumphing over others in their misery, that we know not how soon it may be our own case.

2. Their enmity to the people of God, and the injuries they have done them, shall be recompensed into their own bosoms; "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee." The righteous God will render both to nations and to particular persons according to their works; and the punishment is often made exactly to answer the sin, and those that have abused others come to be themselves abused in like manner. The just and jealous God will find out a time and way to avenge the wrong done to his people on those that have been injurious to them. And, ver. 16, "As ye have drunk upon my holy mountain;" that is, as God's professing people, who inhabit his holy mountain, have drunk deep of the cup of affliction, and their being of the holy mountain will not excuse them, so shall all the heathen drink in their turn of the same bitter cup; for if God bring evil on the city that is called by his name, shall they be unpunished that never knew his name? see *Jer.* xxv. 29; and it is part of the burthen of Edom, *Jer.* xlix. 12, "They whose judgment was not to drink of the cup;" that is, who had reason to promise themselves an exemption from it, have assuredly drunken, and shall Edom go unpunished that is the generation of God's wrath? No, "Thou shalt surely drink of it;" the "cup of trembling shall be taken out of the hand" of God's people, and put "into the hand of them that afflict them," *Isa.* li. 22, 23. Nay, they may expect their case to be worse in the day of their distress than that of Israel was in their day. For, 1st. The afflictions of God's people were but for a moment, and soon had an end; but their enemies shall "drink continually the wine of God's wrath," *Rev.* xiv. 10. 2nd. The dregs of the cup are reserved for "the wicked of the earth," *Ps.* lxxv. 8; they shall "drink and swallow down," or sup up, as the margin reads it, shall drink it to the bottom. 3rd. The people of God, though they may be made to drink of the "wine of astonishment" for awhile, *Ps.* lx. 3, yet they shall recover it, and come to themselves again; but the heathen shall drink and be "as though they had not been;" that is, there shall be neither any remains nor any remembrance of them, but they shall be wholly extirpated and rooted out. "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord;" so they shall perish if they turn not.

17 But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance,
And there shall be holiness;
And the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.
18 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire;
And the house of Joseph a flame,
And the house of Esau for stubble,
And they shall kindle in them, and devour them;
And there shall not be *any* remaining of the house of
For the LORD hath spoken *it*. [Esau;
19 And *they of* the south shall possess the mount of Esau;
And *they of* the plain the Philistines:
And they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria:
And Benjamin *shall possess* Gilead.
20 And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel
Shall possess that of the Canaanites, *even* unto Zarephath;

ZAREPHATH.

And the captivity of Jerusalem, which *is* in Sepharad,
Shall possess the cities of the south.
21 And saviours shall come up on mount Zion
To judge the mount of Esau;
And the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

After the destruction of the church's enemies is threatened, which will be completely accomplished in the great day of recompence, and that judgment for which Christ came once, and will come again, into this world, here follow precious promises of the salvation of the church, with which this prophecy concludes, as those of Joel and Amos did; which, however they might be in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of Babylon, notwithstanding the triumphs

of Edom in their captivity, as if it were perpetual, yet, doubtless, they are to have their accomplishment in that great salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ, to which all the prophets bare witness. It is promised here,

First. That there shall be salvation upon mount Zion, that holy hill where God sets his anointed king, *Ps.* ii. 6; "Upon mount Zion shall be deliverance," ver. 17. There shall be those that escape; so the margin. A remnant of Israel, upon the holy mountain, shall be saved, ver. 16. Christ said, "Salvation is of the Jews," *Jno.* iv. 22. God wrought deliverances for the Jews, typical of our redemption by Christ. But mount Zion is the gospel church, from thence the New Testament law went forth, *Isa.* ii. 3; there salvation shall be preached and prayed for. To the gospel church those are added that shall be saved; and those who come in faith and hope to this mount Zion, for them deliverance shall be wrought from wrath and the curse, from sin, and death, and hell, while those that continue afar off shall be left to perish.

Secondly. That where is salvation there shall be sanctification in order to it. And "there shall be holiness," to prepare and qualify the children of Zion for this deliverance; for, wherever God designs glory he gives grace. Temporal deliverances are then wrought for us in mercy when with them there is holiness; when there is wrought in us a disposition to receive them with love and gratitude to God; when we are sanctified, they are sanctified to us. Holiness is itself a great deliverance, and an earnest of that eternal salvation which we look for. There, upon mount Zion, in the gospel church, shall be holiness, for that is it which becomes God's house for ever; and the great design of the Gospel and its grace is to plant and promote holiness. There shall be the Holy Spirit, the holy ordinances, the holy Jesus, and a select remnant of holy souls, in whom and among whom the holy God will delight to dwell. Note, Where there is holiness there shall be deliverance.

Thirdly. That this salvation and sanctification shall spread and prevail, and get ground in the world. The house of Jacob, even this mount Zion, with the deliverance and the holiness there wrought, shall possess their possessions; that is, the gospel church shall be set up among the heathen, and shall replenish the earth. The apostles of Christ by their preaching shall gain possession of the hearts of men for him whose messengers and ministers they are; and when they possess their hearts they shall possess their possessions, for those who have given up themselves to the Lord give up all they have to him. When Lydia's heart was opened to Christ her house was opened to his ministers. When the Gentile nations became "nations of them that were saved," were discipled, walked in the light of the Lord, and "brought their glory and honour into the New Jerusalem," *Rev.* xxi. 24, then the house of Jacob possessed their possessions. This is in part fulfilled by the planting of the Christian religion in the world; and shall be fulfilled yet more and more by the setting up of Christ's throne there where Satan's seat is, and the erecting of the trophies of his victory upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom. Now here is foretold,

1. How this possession shall be gained, and the opposition given to it got over; ver. 18, "The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame," for their God is and will be a consuming fire; and the house of Esau shall be for stubble, easily devoured and consumed by this fire. This is fulfilled, 1st. In the conversion of multitudes by the grace of Christ. The Gospel preached in the house of Jacob and Joseph, and there owned and professed, shall be as a fire and a flame to melt and soften hard hearts, to burn up the dross of sin and corruption, that they may be purified and refined with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning. Christ, when he comes, shall be "as a refiner's fire," *Mal.* iii. 1, 2. 2nd. In the confusion of all the impenitent, implacable enemies of the Gospel of Christ, that oppose it and do all they can to hinder the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah by it. The gospel day is a day that "burns like an oven," in which "all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble," *Mal.* iv. 1. Jacob and Joseph shall be as a fire and a flame; for those that meddle with them to do them hurt will find it at their peril; they shall be to them as a torch of fire in a sheaf, *Zec.* xii. 6. The word of God in the mouth of his ministers is said to be like fire, and the people "as wood to be devoured" by it, *Jer.* v. 14; and the man of sin is to be consumed by the "breath of Christ's mouth," 2 *Thes.* ii. 8. Those that are not refined as gold by the fire of the Gospel shall be consumed as dross by it, for it will be a savour either of life or death. When idols and idolatry were abolished, and the wealth and power of the nations were brought into the service of Christ and his Gospel, and the spoils of the strong man armed were divided by him that was stronger than he, then the house of Jacob and Joseph devoured the house of Esau, so that there was none of them left remaining. This the Lord spoke by his prophets, and this he did by his apostles.

2. How far this possession shall extend, ver. 19, 20. This is described in Jewish language, which speaks the accessions made to the land of Israel, after the return out of captivity in Babylon. "The captivity of this host of Israel," that is, this host of Israel that has been so long in captivity, and now they are come back are still called the children of the captivity, these shall not only recover their own land, but shall gain ground upon their neighbours adjoining to them, some of whom shall become proselytes, and shall incorporate with the Jews, who, by possessing them in a holy communion, possess their land. We must reckon ourselves truly enriched by the conversion of our neighbours to the fear of God and the faith of Christ, and their coming to join with us in the worship of God. Such an accession to our Christian communion we must reckon to be more our wealth and strength than an accession to our estates. Or, the ancient inhabitants of those lands that were carried away into captivity being lost, and never returning to their estates, the children of Israel shall take possession of that which lies next them; for their numbers shall so increase that their own land shall be too strait for them, and their neighbours' estates shall escheat to them, *ob defectum sanguinis*,—'through default of heirs;' they shall enter upon that which is adjoining to them. The country of Esau shall be possessed by them of the south parts of Canaan, for to them it lies contiguous. "They of the plain," on the west of Canaan, which was a champaign country, shall enter upon the land of the Philistines, their neighbours. They of Judah, which was the chief of the two returning tribes, shall possess the field of Ephraim and Samaria, which before belonged to the ten tribes; and Benjamin, the other tribe, shall possess Gilead on the other side Jordan, which had belonged to the two tribes and a half. The kingdom of Israel shall join with that of Judah, both in civil and sacred interests, and as friends and brethren shall mutually possess and enjoy one another; and both together shall possess the Canaanites, even to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon; and Jerusalem shall possess the cities of the south, even to Sepharad. Thus did the Jews enlarge their borders on all sides. The modern rabbins teach their scholars, by Zarephath and Sepharad, to understand France and Spain, grounding upon this a foolish, groundless expectation, that some time or other the Jews shall be masters of those countries; and they call and count the Christians Edomites, over whom they are to have dominion. But the promise here, no doubt, has a spiritual signification, and had its accomplishment in the setting up of the Christian church, the gospel Israel, in the world, and shall have its accomplishment more and more in the enlargement of it, and the additions made to it, till the mystical body is completed. When ministers and Christians prevail with their neighbours to come to Christ, to yield themselves to the Lord, they possess them. The converts that Abraham made are said to be the "souls that he had gotten," *Gen.* xii. 5. The possession is gained, not *vi et armis*,—'by force of arms,' for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," but spiritual. It is by the preaching of the Gospel, and the power of Divine grace given along with it, that this possession is got and kept.

Fourthly. That the kingdom of the Redeemer should be erected and maintained, to the comfort of his loyal subjects, and the terror and shame of all his enemies; ver. 21, "The kingdom shall be the Lord's," the Lord Christ's; God shall give it him, by putting all things into his hand, all power both in heaven and in earth. Men shall give it him, by resigning themselves to him as his willing people, and appointing him their head. Now the work of kings is to protect their subjects and suppress their enemies; and this Christ will do, he will both reward and punish.

1. The mountain of Zion shall be saved. On it saviours shall come, the preachers of the Gospel, who are called saviours, because their business is to save themselves and those that hear them; and in this they are workers together with Christ, but to little purpose, if he by his grace did not work together with them.

2. The mountain of Esau shall be judged, and the same that come as saviours on mount Zion shall judge the mountain of Esau, for the word of the Gospel in their mouth that saves believers judgeth unbelievers, convinceth and condemns them. Christ's ministers are "saviours on mount Zion," when they preach that "he that believes shall be saved;" but they judge the mount of Esau, when they preach that "he that believeth not shall be damned," which they are not only commissioned, but commanded to do, *Mar.* xvi. 16. And in the course of God's providence his Scripture is fulfilled; when God raiseth up friends to the church in her distress, as he raised up judges to deliver Israel of old, *Jud.* ii. 16, then "saviours come on mount Zion," to save it from being sunk and ruined. And when the enemies of the church are brought down, and their power broken, then is the mount of Esau judged; and this shall be done in every age, in such a way as God thinks best. We may depend upon it that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, but the church shall prevail against them; for the "kingdom shall be the Lord's," the kingdoms of the world shall become his, and he has taken and will take to himself his great power and reign.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF OBADIAH.

VER. 17, 18.—*Of the house of Esau.*—Supplementary Note on *Isa.* xxxiv. 19. *The plain.* An immense undulating plain was stretched before us, lying north and south, and of vast breadth east and west. There were few trees, but it was covered with fields of yellow grain, and studded with a goodly number of little towns, the remains of other days. In the background, the beautiful hill country of Judah rose tier above tier, and the sun, which was just rising above them, poured a flood of golden rays into the plain. This is the great plain of Cephela, called "the plain."—*Narrative*, 153. Referring to Zarephath, in ver. 20, (alluded to also in 1 *Kin.* xvii. 9, and under the name of Sarepta, in *Lu.* iv. 26,) now called Sarpend, it is described in the same work as formerly spread towards the shore, but now upon the heights, about a mile from the shore, and as a village pleasantly situated upon the steep brow, overhanging a ravine filled with fine olive trees, and commanding a wide view. In the rocks along the foot of the hills Dr. Robinson found many excavated tombs, which he considers to have once belonged to this ancient city.—*Palestine*, iii. 414. *They shall possess the fields of Samaria.* Dr. Keith, in his interesting work, *The Land of Israel*, adopting the opinion referred to in Supplementary Note on *Jer.* xxiii., and *Amos* ix. 13, &c., respecting the restoration of the Jews to that land, gives many striking illustrations of its capability to sustain them, (especially with the limits which he assigns to it,) describing its former fertility and cultivation, and stating that, though now so greatly desolate, it will hereafter be made eminently fruitful. He quotes Dr. Robinson, who says, 'Even in these parts, where all is now desolate, as in the rugged sloping mountains between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, which present nothing but an aspect of dreary desolation, there are everywhere traces of the hands of the men of other days—terraces, walls, stones gathered along the paths, frequent cisterns, and the like. Most of the hills exhibit the remains of terraces built up around them, the undoubted sites of former cultivation.'—*Robinson and Smith*, ii. 187. The city of Samaria, situated on an oblong isolated hill, at the head of the great valley, trusted in its strength, and gloried in its riches. Purchased, as was the hill on which it stood, by Omri of Shemer, it is reserved, like all the mountains of Samaria, and the land over which they look, as the free gift of the Lord to his people Israel. The beasts of the field, according to the word of the Lord, now feed on the grassy terraces which encircle the hill, like beds of down all ready for cultivation, but like those around it, whose terraced sides formed hanging gardens beautifully closing in the rich valley, they are yet reserved for their primitive use, and for their ancient occupants; for in the same chapter in which the prophet announces the new covenant which the Lord will make with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, it is written, "Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things," *Jer.* xxxi. 5.—*The Land of Israel*, 436. Whatever may be our opinion of it, we think it right to give the interpretation put on this and other passages of Scripture by esteemed authors entertaining the views to which allusion has been made.

ANCIENT

SHIPS.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF JONAH,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THIS book of *Jonah*, though it be placed here in the midst of the prophetical books of Scripture, yet it is rather a history than a prophecy. One line of prediction there is in it, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown;" the rest of the book is a narrative of the preface to, and the consequences of, that prediction. In the midst of the obscure prophecies before and after this book, wherein are many things dark and hard to be understood, which are puzzling to the learned, and are strong meat for strong men, comes in this plain and pleasant story, which is entertaining to the weakest, and milk for babes. Probably Jonah was himself the penman of this book, and he, as Moses, and other inspired penmen, records his own faults, which is an evidence that in these writings they designed God's glory, and not their own. We read of this same Jonah, 2 *Kin.* xiv. 25, where we find that he was of Gath-hepher in Galilee, a city that belongs to the tribe of Zebulun, in a remote corner of the land of Israel; for the Spirit, which, like the wind, "blows where it listeth," will as easily find out Jonah in Galilee as Isaiah at Jerusalem. We find also that he was a messenger of mercy to Israel, in the reign of Jeroboam the Second; for the success of his arms in the restoring of the coast of Israel is said to be "according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hands of his servant Jonah the prophet." Those prophecies were not committed to writing, but this against Nineveh was, chiefly for the sake of the story that depends upon it, and that is recorded chiefly for the sake of Christ, of whom Jonah was a type. It contains also very remarkable instances of human infirmity in Jonah, and of God's mercy, both in pardoning repenting sinners, witness Nineveh, and in bearing with repining saints, witness Jonah.

A.M. 3142. B.C. 862.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have, I. A command given to Jonah to go preach at Nineveh, ver. 1, 2. II. Jonah's disobedience to that command, ver. 3. III. The pursuit and arrest of him for that disobedience by a storm, in which he was asleep, ver. 4—6. IV. The discovery of him, and his disobedience, to be the cause of the storm, ver. 7—10. V. The casting of him into the sea for the stilling of the storm, ver. 11—16. VI. The miraculous preservation of his life there in the belly of a fish, ver. 17, which was his reservation for farther services.

NOW the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3 But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

First. The honour God put upon Jonah in giving him a commission to go and prophesy against Nineveh. Jonah signifies a dove, a proper name for all God's prophets, all his people, who ought to be harmless as doves, and to mourn as doves for the sins and calamities of the land. His father's name was Amittai, 'my truth,' for God's prophets should be the sons of truth. To him "the word of the Lord came," 'to him it was,' so the word signifies; for God's word is a real thing; men's words are but wind, God's words are substance. He had been before acquainted with the word of the Lord, and knew his voice from that of a stranger. The orders now given him were, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city," ver. 2. Nineveh was at this time the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy, an eminent city, *Gen.* x. 11; a great city, that great city, forty-eight miles in compass, some make it much more; great in the number of the inhabitants, as appears by the multitudes of infants in it, *ch.* iv. 11; great in wealth, there was no end of its store, *Nah.* ii. 9; great in power and dominion, it was the city that for some time ruled over the kings of the earth. But great cities, as well as great men, are under God's government and judgment. It was a great city, and yet a heathen city, without the knowledge and worship of the true God. How many great cities and great nations are there that "sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death!" This great city was a wicked city; "Their wickedness is come up before me," their malice, so some read it; their wickedness was presumptuous, and they sinned with a high hand. It is sad to think what a great deal of sin is committed in great cities, where there are many sinners, who are not only all sinners, but making one another sin. Their wickedness is come up, that is, it is come to a high degree, to the highest pitch; the measure of it is full to the brim; their wickedness is come up, and then it is time for vengeance to come down. Or, "the cry of their wickedness is come up," as that of Sodom, *Gen.* xviii. 20, 21; it is come up before me, to my face, so the word is; it is a bold and open affront to God. It is sinning against him, in his sight, therefore Jonah must cry against it; he must witness against their great wickedness, and must warn them of the destruction that was coming upon them for it. God is coming forth against it, and he sends Jonah before to proclaim war and to sound an alarm, Cry aloud, spare not; he must not whisper his message in a corner, but publish it in the streets of Nineveh. He that has ears to hear let him hear what God has to say by his prophet against that wicked city; when the cry of sin comes up to God, the cry of vengeance comes out against the sinner. He must go to Nineveh, and cry there upon the spot, against the wickedness of it. Other prophets were ordered to send messages to the neighbour nations, and the prophecy of Nahum is particularly the burthen of Nineveh; but Jonah must go and carry the message himself. Arise quickly, apply thyself to the business with speed and courage, and the resolution that becomes a prophet, "Arise, and go to Nineveh." Those that go on God's errands must rise and go, must stir up themselves to the work cut out for them. The prophets were sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet not to them only; they had the children's bread, but Nineveh eats of the crumbs.

Secondly. The dishonour Jonah did to God, in refusing to obey his orders, and to go on the errand on which he was sent; ver. 3, "But Jonah," instead of rising to go to Nineveh, "rose up to flee to Tarshish," to the sea, not bound for any port, but desirous to get away "from the presence of the Lord;" and, if he might but do that, he cared not whither he went, not as if he thought he could go any where from under the eye of God's inspection, but from his special presence, from the spirit of prophecy, which, when it put him upon this work, he thought himself haunted with, and coveted to get out of the hearing of. Some think Jonah went upon the opinion of some of the Jews, that the spirit of prophecy was confined to the land of Israel, (which in Ezekiel and Daniel was effectually proved to be a mistake,) and therefore he hoped he should get clear of it if he could but get out of the borders of that land. 1. Jonah would not go to Nineveh to cry against it, either because it was a long and dangerous journey thither, and in a road he knew not; or, because he was afraid it would be as much as his life was worth to deliver such an ungrateful message to that great and potent city. He consulted with flesh and blood, and declined the embassy, because he could not go with safety; or, because he was jealous for the prerogative of his country, and not willing that any other nation should share in the honour of Divine revelation. He feared it would be the beginning of the removal of the kingdom of God from the Jews to another nation, that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. He owns himself, *ch.* iv. 2, that the reason of his aversion to this journey was because he foresaw that the Ninevites would repent, and God would forgive them, and take them into favour, which would be a slur upon the people of Israel, who had been so long a peculiar people to God. 2. He therefore went to Tarshish, to Tarsus in Cilicia, so some, probably because he had friends and relations there, with whom he hoped for some time to sojourn. He went to Joppa, a famous seaport in the land of Israel, in quest of a ship bound for Tarshish, and there he found one. Providence seemed to favour his design, and give him an opportunity to escape. We may be out of the way of duty, and yet may meet with a favourable gale. The ready way is not always the right way. He found the ship just ready to weigh anchor perhaps, and to hoist sail for Tarshish, and so he lost no time;

but perhaps therefore he went to Tarshish because he found the ship going thither; otherwise all places were alike to him. He did not think himself out of his way, the way he would go, provided he was not in his way, the way he should go. "So he paid the fare thereof," for he would not stick at the charge, so he could but gain his point, and get at a distance "from the presence of the Lord;" he went with them, with the mariners, with the passengers, with the merchants, whoever they were, that were going to Tarshish. Jonah, forgetting his dignity, as well as duty, herded himself with them, and went down into the ship to go with them to Tarshish. See what the best of men are when God leaves them to themselves; and what need we have, when the word of the Lord comes to us, to have the Spirit of the Lord come along with the word, to bring every thought within us into obedience to it. The prophet Isaiah owns that therefore he "was not rebellious, neither turned away back," because God not only spake to him, but "opened his ear," *Isa.* l. 5. Let us learn hence to cease from man, and not to be too confident either of ourselves or others in a time of trial, but "let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

4 But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that *were* in the ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. 6 So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. 7 And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil *is* upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. 8 Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil *is* upon us; What *is* thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what *is* thy country? and of what people *art* thou? 9 And he said unto them, I *am* an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry *land*. 10 Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.

When Jonah was set on shipboard, and under sail for Tarshish, he thought himself safe enough; but here we find him pursued and overtaken, discovered and convicted as a deserter from God, as one that had run from his colours.

First. God sends a pursuivant after him, "a mighty tempest in the sea," ver. 4. God has the "winds in his treasuries," *Ps.* cxxxv. 7; and out of these treasuries God sent forth, he cast forth, so the word is, with force and violence, "a great wind into the sea;" even "stormy winds fulfil his word," and are often the messengers of his wrath. He "gathers the winds in his fist," *Pr.* xxx. 4, where he holds them, and whence he squeezeth them when he pleaseth; for though as to us the wind blows where it listeth, yet not as to God, but where he directs. The effect of this wind was a mighty tempest; for when the winds rise the waves rise. Note, Sin bring storms and tempests in the soul, in the family, in churches, and nations; it is a disquieting, disturbing thing. The tempest prevailed to that degree that "the ship was like to be broken," the mariners expected no other; that ship, so some read it, that and no other. Other ships were upon the same sea at the same time, yet it should seem that ship in which Jonah was was tossed more than any other, and was more in danger. This wind was sent after Jonah to fetch him back again to God and to his duty, and it is a great mercy to be reclaimed and called home when we go astray, though it be by a tempest.

Secondly. The ship's crew were alarmed by this mighty tempest, but Jonah only, the person concerned, was unconcerned, ver. 5. The mariners were affected with their danger, though it was not with them that God had this controversy.

1. They were afraid. Though, their business leading them to be very much conversant with dangers of this kind, they used to make light of them, yet now the oldest and stoutest of them began to tremble, being apprehensive that there was something more than ordinary in the tempest, so suddenly did it rise, so strongly did it rage. Note, God can strike a terror upon the most daring, and make even great men and chief captains call for shelter from rocks and mountains.

2. They "cried every man unto his god." This was the effect of their fear; many will not be brought to prayer till they are frightened to it; he that would learn to pray, let him go to sea, "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee." Every man of them prayed; they were not some praying, and others reviling, but every man engaged. As the danger was general, so was the address to heaven; there was not one praying for them all, but every one for himself. They cried every man to his god, the god of his country or city, or his own tutelar deity. It is a testimony against atheism that every man had a god, and had the belief of a god; but it is an instance of the folly of paganism that they had gods many, every man the god he had a fancy for, whereas there can be but one God; there needs be no more. But though they had lost that dictate of the light of nature, that there is but one God, they still were governed by that direction of the law of nature, that God is to be prayed to; "Should not a people seek unto their God," *Isa.* viii. 19; and that he is especially to be prayed to when we are in distress and danger; "Call upon me in the time of trouble." Is any afflicted? is any frightened? let him pray.

3. Their prayers for deliverance were seconded with endeavours, and having called upon their gods to help them, they did what they could to help themselves; for that is the rule, Help thyself, and God will help thee; "They cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them;" as Paul's mariners, in a like case, cast forth even the tackling of the ship, and the wheat, *Acts* xxvii. 18, 19, 38. These here were making a trading voyage, as it should seem, and were laden with many goods and merchandises, by which they hoped to get gain; but now they are content to suffer loss, by throwing them all overboard, to save their lives. See how powerful the natural love of life is; "Skin for skin, and all that a man has" will he give for it; and shall we not put a like value upon the spiritual life, the life of the soul, reckoning that the gain of all the world cannot countervail the loss of the soul. See the vanity of worldly wealth, and the uncertainty of its continuance with us. Riches make themselves wings and flee away; nay, and the case may be such that we may be under a necessity of making them wings, and driving them away, as here, when they could not be kept for the owners thereof but to their hurt, so that they themselves are glad to be rid of them, and sink that which otherwise would sink them, though they had no prospect of ever recovering it. Oh that men would be thus wise for their own souls, and would be willing to part with that wealth, pleasure, and honour, which they cannot keep without making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and ruining their souls for ever! And they that thus quit their temporal interests for the securing of their spiritual welfare will be unspeakably gainers at last; for what they lose upon those terms they shall find again to life eternal.

But where is Jonah all this while? One would have expected him busier than any there; but we find him gone down into his cabin, nay, into the hold, between the sides of the ship, and there he lies, and is fast asleep; neither the noise without nor the sense of guilt within waked him. Perhaps for some time before he had avoided sleeping, for fear of God's speaking to him again in a dream; and now he imagined himself out of the reach of that danger he slept so much the faster. Note, Sin is of a stupifying nature, and we are concerned to take heed lest at any time our hearts be hardened by the deceitfulness of it. It is the policy of Satan, when by his temptations he has drawn men from God and their duty, to rock them asleep in carnal security, that they may not be sensible of their misery and danger. It concerns us all to watch therefore.

Thirdly. The master of the ship called Jonah up to his prayers; ver. 6, the shipmaster came to him, and bid him for shame get up both to pray for life and prepare for death. He gave him,

1. A just and necessary chiding; "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" Here we commend the shipmaster, who gave him this reproof, for though he was a stranger to him he was for the present as one of his family; and whoever has a precious soul we must help as we can to save it from death. We pity Jonah, who needed this reproof; as a prophet of the Lord, if he had been in his place, he might have been reproving the king of Nineveh, but being out of the way of his duty, he doth himself lie open to the reproofs of a sorry shipmaster. See how men by their sin and folly diminish themselves, and make themselves mean. Yet we must admire God's goodness in sending him this seasonable reproof, for it was the first step towards his recovery, as the crowing of the cock was to Peter. Note, Those that sleep in a storm may well be asked what they mean?

2. A pertinent word of advice; "Arise, call upon thy God." We are here crying every man to his god, why dost not thou get up and cry to thine? Art not thou equally concerned with the rest, both in the danger dreaded and in the deliverance desired? Note, The devotions of others should quicken ours; and those who hope to share in a common mercy ought in all reason to contribute their quota towards the prayers and supplications that are made for it. In time of public distress, if we have any interest at the throne of grace, we ought to improve it for the public good. And the servants of God themselves have sometimes need to be called and stirred up to this part of their duty.

3. A good reason for this advice; "If so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." It should seem the many gods they called upon were considered by them but as mediators between them and the supreme God, and intercessors for them with him; for the shipmaster speaks of one God still, from whom he expected relief. To engage prayer, he suggests that the danger was very great and imminent: We are all likely to perish; there is but a step between us and death, and that just ready to be stepped. That yet there was some hope remaining that their destruction might be prevented: And we may not perish. While there is life there is hope, and while there is hope there is room for prayer. That it was God only that could effect their deliverance, and it must come from his power and his pity. If he think upon us, and act for us, we may yet be saved; and therefore to him we must look, and in him we must put our trust, when the danger is ever so imminent.

Fourthly. Jonah is found out to be the cause of the storm.

1. The mariners observed so much peculiar and uncommon, either in the storm itself or in their own distress by it, that they concluded it was a messenger of Divine justice sent to arrest some one of them that were in that ship, as having been guilty of some enormous crime; judging as the barbarous people, *Acts* xxviii. 4, "No doubt one of us is a murderer," or guilty of sacrilege, or perjury, or the like, who is thus pursued by the vengeance of the sea, and it is for his sake that we all suffer. Even the light of nature teaches that in extraordinary judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against some extraordinary sins and sinners. Whatever evil is upon us at any time, we must conclude there is a cause for it; there is evil done by us, or else this evil would not be upon us; there is a ground for God's controversy.

2. They determined to refer it to the lot, which of them was the criminal that had occasioned this storm. "Let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us." None of them suspected himself, or said, "Is it I? Lord, is it I?" but they suspected one another, and would find out the man. Note, It is a desirable thing, when any evil is upon us, to know for what cause it is upon us, that what is amiss may be amended, and, the grievance being redressed, the grief may be removed; and in order to this we must look up to heaven, and pray, Lord, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. That which I see not, teach thou me. These mariners desired to know the person that was the dead weight in their ship, the accursed thing, that that one man might die for the people, and that the whole ship might not be lost, and that was not only expedient, but highly just. In order to this they cast lots, by which they appealed to the judgment of God, "to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secret is hid;" agreeing to acquiesce in his discovery and determination, and to take that for true which the lot spoke; for they knew by the light of nature what the Scripture tells us, that "the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord." Even the heathen looked upon the casting of lots to be a sacred thing, and to be done with seriousness and solemnity, and not to be made a sport of. It is a shame for Christians if they have not a like reverence for an appeal to providence.

3. The lot fell upon Jonah, who could have saved them this trouble if he

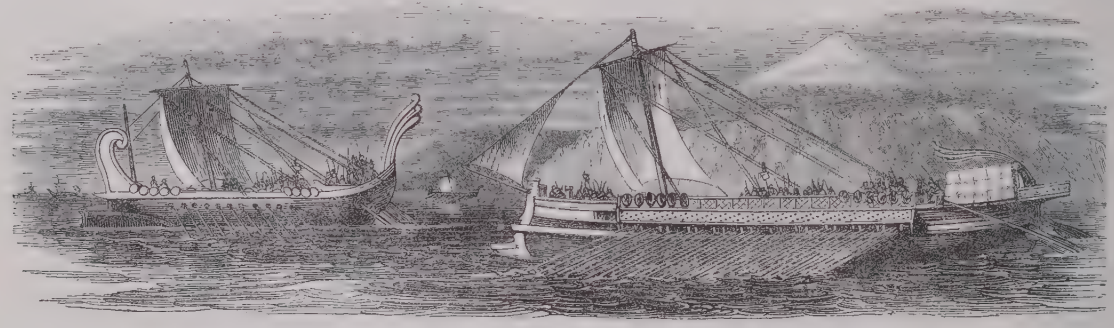
would but have told them, what his own conscience told him, "Thou art the man." But, as it is usual with criminals, he never confesseth till he finds he cannot help it, till "the lot falls upon him." We may suppose there were those in the ship who, upon other accounts, were greater sinners than Jonah, and he is the man that the tempest pursues, and that the lot pitcheth upon; for it is his own child, his own servant, that the parent, that the master, corrects if they do amiss; others that offend he leaves to the law. The storm is sent after Jonah, because God has work for him to do, and it is sent to fetch him back to it. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light concealed sins and sinners, and making manifest that folly which was thought to be hid from the eyes of all living. God's right hand will find out all his servants that desert him, as well as all his enemies that have designs against him; yea, though they flee to the uttermost parts of the sea, or go down to the sides of the ship.

4. Jonah is hereupon brought under examination before the master and mariners. He was a stranger,—none of them could say they knew the prisoner, or had anything to lay to his charge, and therefore must extort a confession from him, and judge him out of his own mouth; and for this they needed no rack, the shipwreck they were in danger of was sufficient to frighten him, so as to make him tell the truth. Though it was discovered by the lot that he was the person for whose sake they were thus damaged and exposed, yet they did not fly outrageously upon him, as one would fear they might have done, but calmly and mildly inquired into his case. There is a compassion owing to offenders when they are discovered and convicted. They give him no hard words, but, "Tell us, we pray thee," what is the mischief? Two things they inquire of, 1st. Whether he would himself own that he was the person for whose sake the storm was sent, as the lot had intimated, "Tell us, for whose cause this evil is upon us?" Is it indeed for thy cause; and if so, for what cause? What is the offence for which thou art thus prosecuted? Perhaps the gravity and decency of Jonah's aspect and carriage made them suspect that the lot had missed its man, had missed its mark, and therefore they would not trust it, unless he would himself own his guilt; they therefore beg of him he would satisfy them in this matter. Note, Those that would find out the cause of their troubles must not only begin, but pursue, the inquiry, must descend to particulars, and accomplish a diligent search. 2nd. What his character was, both as to his calling and to his country. *First.* They inquire concerning his calling, "What is thine occupation?" This was a proper question to be put to a vagrant. Perhaps they suspected his calling to be such as might bring this trouble upon him. Art thou a diviner, a sorcerer, a student in the black art? hast thou been conjuring for this wind? Or, what business art thou now going on? is it like Balaam's, to curse any of God's people, and is this wind sent to stop thee? *Secondly.* They inquire concerning his country. One asked, "Whence camest thou?" Another, not having patience to stay for an answer to that, asked, "What is thy country?" and a third, to the same purpose, "Of what people art thou?" Art thou of the Chaldeans, that were noted for divination? or of the Arabians, that were noted for stealing? They wish to know of what country he was, that, knowing who was the god of his country, they might guess whether he was one that could do them any kindness in this storm.

5. In answer to these interrogatories Jonah makes a full discovery. 1st. Did they inquire concerning his country? he tells them he is a Hebrew, ver. 9, not only of the nation of Israel, but of their religion, which they received from their fathers. He is an Hebrew, and therefore is the more ashamed to own that he is a criminal; for the sins of Hebrews, that make such a profession of religion, and enjoy such privileges, are greater than the sins of others, and more exceeding sinful. 2nd. Did they inquire concerning his calling, "What is his occupation?" In answer to that he gives an account of his religion, for that was his calling, that was his occupation, that was it he made a business of; "I fear the Lord Jehovah," that is the God I worship, the God I pray to, even "the God of heaven," the sovereign Lord of all, that has "made the sea, and the dry land," and has the command of both. Not the god of one particular country, which they inquired after, and such as the gods were that they had been every man calling upon, but "the God of the whole earth," who, having made both the sea and the dry land, makes what work he pleaseth in both, and makes what use he pleaseth of both. This he mentions not only as condemning himself for his folly, in fleeing from the presence of this God, but as designing to bring these mariners from the worship and service of their many gods to the knowledge and obedience of the one only living and true God. When we are among those that are strangers to us we should do what we can to bring them acquainted with God, by being ready upon all occasions to own our relation to him, and our reverence for him. 3rd. Did they inquire concerning his crime, for which he is now prosecuted? he owns that he "fled from the presence of the Lord," that he was here outrunning his duty, and the storm was sent to fetch him back. We have reason to think he told them this with sorrow and shame, justifying God, and condemning himself, and intimating to the mariners what a great God Jehovah is, who could send such a messenger as this tempest was after a runagate servant.

6. We are told what impression this made upon the mariners; "The men were exceedingly afraid," and justly; for they perceive, 1st. That God is angry, even that God that made the sea and the dry land. This tempest comes from the hand of an offended justice, and therefore they have reason to fear it will go hard with them. Judgments inflicted for some particular sin have a peculiar weight and terror in them. 2nd. That God is angry with one that fears and worships him, only for once outrunning his work in a particular instance. This made them afraid for themselves: If a prophet of the Lord be thus severely punished for one offence, what will become of us that have been guilty of so many, and great, and heinous offences? If the righteous be thus scarcely saved, and for a single act of disobedience thus closely pursued, "Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" 1 *Pet.* iv. 17, 18. They said to him, "Why hast thou done this?" If thou fearest the God that made the sea and the dry land, why wast thou such a fool as to think thou couldest flee from his presence? what an absurd, unaccountable thing is it! Thus he was reproved, as Abraham by Abimelech, *Gen.* xx. 16; for if the professors of religion do an ill thing, they must expect to hear of it from those that make no such profession. Why hast thou done this to us? so it may be taken; why hast thou involved us in the prosecution? Note, Those that commit a wilful sin know not how far the mischievous consequences of it may reach, nor what mischief may be done by it.

11 Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. 12 And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest *is* upon you. 13 Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. 14 Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. 15 So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. 17 Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.



ANCIENT SHIPS.

It is plain that Jonah is the man for whose sake this evil is upon them; but the discovery of him to be so was not sufficient to answer the demands of this tempest. They had found him out, but something more was to be done; for still "The sea wrought, and was tempestuous," ver. 11; and again, ver. 13, it 'grew more and more tempestuous,' so the margin reads it; for if we discover sin to be the cause of our troubles, and do not forsake it, we do but make ill worse. Therefore they go on with the prosecution.

First. They inquire of Jonah himself what he thought they must do with him; ver. 11, "What shall we do unto thee that the sea may be calm to us?" They perceive that Jonah is a prophet of the Lord, and therefore will not do any thing, no, not in his own case, without consulting him. He appears to be a delinquent, but he appears also to be a penitent, and therefore they would not insult over him, or offer him any rudeness. Note. We ought to carry it with great tenderness towards those that are overtaken in a fault, and are brought into distress by it. They would not cast him into the sea, if he could think of any other expedient by which to save the ship. Or, perhaps, thus they would shew how plain the case was, that there was no remedy but he must be thrown overboard; let him be his own judge, as he had been his own accuser, and he himself will say so. Note, When sin has raised a storm, and laid us under the tokens of God's displeasure, we are concerned to inquire what we shall do that the sea may be calm; and what shall we do? We must pray and believe when we are in a storm, and study to answer the end for which it was sent, and then the storm shall become a calm. But especially we must consider what is to be done to the sin that raised the storm; that must be discovered and penitently confessed, that must be detested, disclaimed, and utterly forsaken. What have I to do any more with it? crucify it, crucify it, for this evil it has done.

Secondly. Jonah reads his own doom; ver. 12, "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea." He would not himself leap into the sea, but he puts himself into their hands to cast him into the sea, and assures them that then the sea would be calm, and not otherwise. He proposed this in tenderness to the mariners, that they might not suffer for his sake. "Let thy hand be upon me," saith David, 1 *Chr.* xxi. 17, who am guilty, let me die for my own sin, but let not the innocent suffer for it. This is the language of true penitents, who earnestly desire that none but themselves may ever smart or fare the worse for their sins

and follies. He proposed it likewise in submission to the will of God, who sent this tempest in pursuit of him; and therefore judgeth himself to be cast into the sea, because to that he plainly saw God judging him, that he might not be judged of the Lord to eternal misery. Note, Those who are truly humble for sin will cheerfully submit to the will of God, even in a sentence of death itself. If Jonah sees this to be the punishment of his iniquity, he accepts it, he subjects himself to it, and justifies God in it. No matter though the flesh be destroyed, no matter how it is destroyed, so that the spirit may but be "saved in the day of the Lord Jesus," 1 *Cor.* v. 5. The reason he gives is, "For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." See how ready Jonah is to take all the guilt upon himself, and to look upon all the trouble as theirs: It is purely for my sake, who have sinned, that this tempest is upon you; therefore "cast me forth into the sea;" for,

1. I deserve it. I have wickedly departed from my God, and it is upon my account that he is angry with you; surely I am unworthy to breathe in that air which for my sake has been hurried with winds, to live in that ship which for my sake has been thus tossed; cast me into the sea after the wares which for my sake you have thrown into it. Drowning is too good for me, a single death is punishment too little for such a complicated offence.

2. Therefore there is no other way of having the sea calm. If it is I that have raised the storm, it is not casting the wares into the sea that will lay it again; no, you must cast me thither. When conscience is awakened, and a storm raised there, nothing will turn it into a calm but parting with the sin that occasioned the disturbance, and abandoning that. It is not parting with our money that will pacify conscience. No, it is the Jonah that must be thrown overboard. Jonah is herein a type of Christ, that he "gives his life a ransom for many;" but with this material difference, that the storm Jonah gave himself up to still was of his own raising, that which Christ gave himself up to still was of our raising. Yet as Jonah delivered himself up to be cast into a raging sea, that it might be calm, so did our Lord Jesus, when he died that we might live.

Thirdly. The poor mariners did what they could to save themselves from the necessity of throwing Jonah into the sea, but all in vain; ver. 10, "They rowed hard to bring the ship to the land," that if they must part with Jonah they might set him safe on shore; but they could not, all their pains were to no purpose, for the sea worked harder than they could, and tempestuous against them, so that they could by no means make the land. If they thought sometimes they had gained their point, they were presently thrown off to sea again; still their ship was overladen, their lightening it of the wares made it never the lighter as long as Jonah was in it. And besides they rowed against wind and tide, the wind of God's vengeance, the tide of his counsels; and it is in vain to contend with God, in vain to think of saving ourselves any other way but by destroying our sins. By this it appears the mariners were very loath to execute Jonah's sentence upon himself, though they knew it was for his sake that this tempest was upon them. They were thus very backward to it, partly from a dread of bringing upon themselves the guilt of blood, and partly from a compassion they could not but have for poor Jonah, as a good man, as a man in distress, as a man of sincerity. Note, The more sinners humble and abase themselves, judge and condemn themselves, the more likely they are to find pity both with God and man. The more forward Jonah was to say, Cast me into the sea, the more backward they are to do it.

Fourthly. When they found it necessary to cast Jonah into the sea, they first prayed to God that the guilt of his blood might not lie upon them, or be laid to their charge, ver. 14. When they found it in vain to row hard, they quitted their oars and went to their prayers; "Wherefore they cried unto the Lord," unto Jehovah, the true and living God, and no more to the gods many and lords many that they cried to, ver. 5. They prayed to the God of Israel, being now convinced by the providences of God concerning Jonah, and the information he had given them, that he is God alone. Having determined to cast Jonah into the sea, they first enter a protestation in the court of heaven that they do not do it willingly, much less maliciously, or with any design to be revenged upon him because it was for his sake that this tempest was upon them. No, his God forgive him as they do! But they are forced to do it *se defendendo*,—'in self-defence,' having no other way to save their own lives; and they do it as ministers of justice, both God and himself having sentenced him to so great a death. They therefore present a humble petition to the God whom Jonah feared, that they might not perish for his life. See,

1. What a fear they had of contracting the guilt of blood, especially the blood of one that feared God, and worshipped him, and had fellowship with him, as they perceived Jonah had, though in a single instance he had been faulty. Natural conscience cannot but have a dread of blood-guiltiness, and make men very earnest in prayer, as David was, to be delivered from it, *Ps.* li. 14. So they were here; "We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, lay not upon us innocent blood." They are now as earnest in praying to be saved from the peril of the sin as they were before in praying to be saved from the peril of the sea, especially because Jonah appeared to them to be no ordinary person, but a very good man, a man of God, a worshipper of the great Creator of heaven and earth, upon which account even these rude mariners conceived a veneration for him, and trembled at the thought of taking away his life. Innocent blood is precious, but saints' blood, prophets' blood, is much more precious, and so they will find to their cost that any way bring themselves under the guilt of it. The mariners saw Jonah pursued by Divine vengeance, and yet could not without horror think of being his executioners. Though his God has a controversy with him, yet, think they, "Let not our hands be upon him." The Israelites were at this time killing the prophets for doing their duty, (witness Jezebel's late persecution,) and were prodigal of their lives, which is aggravated by the tenderness these heathens had for one whom they perceived to be a prophet, though he was now out of the way of his duty.

2. What a fear they had of incurring the wrath of God. They were jealous lest he should be angry if they should be the death of Jonah; for he had said, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm;" it is at your peril if you do. Lord, say they, "Let us not perish for this man's life;" let it not be such a fatal dilemma to us; we see we must perish if we spare his life, O let us not perish for taking away his life. And their plea is good: "For thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee," thou hast laid us under a necessity of doing it; the wind that pursued him, the lot that discovered him, were both under thy direction, which we are herein governed by; we are but the instruments of providence, and it is sorely against our will that we do it; but we must say, "The will of the Lord be done." Note, When we are manifestly led by providence to do things contrary to our own inclinations, and quite beyond our own intentions, it will be some satisfaction to us to be able to say, "Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee;" and if God please himself we ought to be satisfied, though he do not please us.

Fifthly. Having deprecated the guilt they dreaded, they proceeded to execution; ver. 15, "They took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea." They cast him out of their ship, out of their company, and cast him into the sea, a raging stormy sea, that cried, Give, give; surrender the traitor, or expect no peace. We may well think what confusion and amazement poor Jonah was in when he saw himself ready to be hurried into the presence of that God as a judge, whose presence as a master he was now fleeing from. Note, Those know not what ruin they run upon that run away from God. "Woe unto them, for they have fled from me." When sin is the Jonah that raises the storm, that must thus be cast forth into the sea, we must abandon it, and be the death of it, must drown that which otherwise will drown us in destruction and perdition. And if we thus, by a thorough repentance and reformation, cast our sins forth into the sea, never to recall them or return to them again, God will by pardoning mercy subdue our iniquities, and cast them into the depths of the sea too, *Mic.* vii. 19.

Sixthly, The throwing of Jonah into the sea immediately put an end to the storm; the sea has what she came for, and therefore rests contented, she ceaseth from her raging. It is an instance of the sovereign power of God that he can soon turn the storm into a calm, and of the equity of his government, that when the end of an affliction is answered and attained, the affliction shall presently be removed. He will not contend for ever, will not contend any longer than till we submit ourselves and give up the cause. If we turn from our sins he will soon turn from his anger.

Seventhly. The mariners were hereby more confirmed in their belief that Jonah's God was the only true God; ver. 16, "Then the men feared the Lord with a great fear," were possessed with a mighty veneration for the God of Israel, and came to a resolution that they would worship him only for the future, for there is no other God that can destroy, that can deliver after this sort. When they saw the power of God in raising and laying the tempest, when they saw his justice upon Jonah his own servant, and when they saw his goodness to them in saving them from the brink of ruin, "then they feared the Lord," *Jer.* v. 22. As an evidence of their fear of him they offered sacrifice to him when they came ashore again in the land of Israel; and for the present made vows that they would do so, in thankfulness for their deliverance, and to make atonement for their souls. Or, perhaps they had something yet on board which might be for a sacrifice to God immediately; or it may be meant of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, with which God is better pleased than with that of an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs: see *Ps.* cvii. 22, &c. We must take vows not only when we are in the pursuit of mercy, but, which is much more generous, when we have received mercy, as those that are still studying what we shall render.

Eighthly. Jonah's life after all is saved by a miracle, and we shall hear of him again for all this. In the midst of judgment God remembers mercy. Jonah shall be worse frightened than hurt, not so much punished for his sin as reduced to his duty. Though he flees from the presence of the Lord, and seems to fall into his avenging hands, yet God has more work for him to do, and therefore hath "prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah," ver. 17. A

SHARK AND WHALE.

whale, our Saviour calls it, *Mat.* xii. 40; one of the largest sorts of whales, that have wider throats than others, in the belly of which has sometimes been found the dead body of a man in armour. Particular notice is taken in the history of the creation of God's creating great whales, *Gen.* i. 21; and the leviathan in the waters made to play therein, *Ps.* civ. 26. But God finds work for this leviathan, has prepared him, has numbered him, so the word is, has appointed him to be Jonah's receiver and deliverer. Note, God has command of all the creatures, and can make any of them serve his designs of mercy to his people; even the fishes of the sea, that are most from under man's cognizance, even the great whales, that are altogether from under man's government. This fish was prepared, lay ready under water close by the ship, that he might keep Jonah from sinking to the bottom, and save him alive, though he deserves to die. Let us stand still and see this salvation of the Lord, and admire his power that he could thus save a drowning man, and his pity that he would thus save one that was running from him, and had offended him. It was of the Lord's mercies that Jonah was not now consumed. The fish swallowed up Jonah, not to devour him, but to protect him; "Out of the eater comes forth meat," for Jonah was alive and well "in the belly of the fish, three days and three nights," not consumed by the heat of the animal, or suffocated for want of air. It is granted that to nature this was impossible, but not to the God of nature, with whom all things are possible. Jonah, by this miraculous preservation, was designed to be made, 1. A monument of Divine mercy, for the encouragement of those that have sinned, and gone away from God, to return and repent. 2. A successful preacher to Nineveh; and this miracle wrought for his deliverance, if the tidings of it reached Nineveh, would contribute to his success. 3. An illustrious type of Christ, who was buried and rose again according to the Scriptures, 1 *Cor.* xv. 4; according to this Scripture, for, "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so was the Son of man three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," *Mat.* xii. 40. Jonah's burial was a figure of Christ's. God prepared Jonah's grave, so he did Christ's, when it was long before ordained that he should "make his grave with the rich," *Isa.* liii. 9. Was Jonah's grave a strange one, a new one? so was Christ's, one in whom never man before was laid. Was Jonah there the best part of three days and three nights? so was Christ; but both in order to their rising again for the bringing of the doctrine of repentance to the Gentile world. "Come, see the place where Lord lay."

CHAPTER II.

We left Jonah in the belly of the fish, and had reason to think we should hear no more of him; that if he were not destroyed by the waters of the sea, he would be consumed in the bowels of that leviathan, "out of whose mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire," and whose "breath kindles coals," *Job* xli. 19, 21. But God brings his people through fire and through water, *Ps.* lxvi. 12; and by his power behold Jonah the

prophet is yet alive, and is heard of again. In this chapter God hears from him, for we find him praying; in the next Nineveh hears from him, for we find him preaching. In his prayer we have, I. The great distress and danger he was in, ver. 2, 3, 5, 6. II. The despair he was thereby almost reduced to, ver. 4. III. The encouragement he took to himself in this deplorable condition, ver. 4—7. IV. The assurance he had of God's favour to him, ver. 6, 7. V. The warning and instruction he gives to others, ver. 8. VI. The praise and glory of all given to God, ver. 9. And in the last verse we have Jonah's deliverance out of the belly of the fish, and his coming safe and sound upon dry land again.

THEN Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly, 2 And said,

I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; [voice.
Out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* thou heardest my
3 For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of
And the floods compassed me about: [the seas;
All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.
4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight;
Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.
5 The waters compassed me about, *even* to the soul:
The depth closed me round about,
The weeds were wrapped about my head.
6 I went down to the bottoms of the mountains;
The earth with her bars *was* about me for ever:
Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O
LORD my God. [LORD:
7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the
And my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.
8 They that observe lying vanities
Forsake their own mercy.
9 But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanks-
I will pay *that* that I have vowed. [giving;
Salvation *is* of the LORD.

God and his servant Jonah had parted in anger, and the quarrel began on Jonah's side; he fled his country that he might outrun his work, but we hope to see them brought together again; and the reconciliation begins on God's side. In the close of the foregoing chapter we found God returning to Jonah in a way of mercy, delivering him from going down to the pit, having found a ransom; in this chapter we find Jonah returning to God in a way of duty. He was called up in the former chapter to pray to his God, but we are not told that he did so; however, now at length he is brought to it. Now observe here,

First. When he prayed; ver. 1, "Then Jonah prayed." Then, when he was in trouble, under the sense of sin, and the tokens of God's displeasure against him for sin, then he prayed. Note, When we are in affliction we must pray; then we have occasion to pray, then we have errands at the throne of grace, and business there. Then, if ever, we have a disposition to pray, when the heart is humbled and softened, and made serious; then God expects it; "In their affliction they will seek me early," seek me earnestly. And though we bring our afflictions upon ourselves by our sins, yet, if we pray in humility and godly sincerity, we shall be welcome to the throne of grace, as Jonah was. Then, when he was in a hopeful way of deliverance, being preserved alive by miracle, a plain indication that he was reserved for farther mercy, then he prayed. An apprehension of God's goodwill to us, notwithstanding our offences, gives us boldness of access to him, and opens the lips in prayer which were closed with the sense of guilt and dread of wrath.

Secondly. Where he prayed. In the fish's belly. No place amiss for prayer; "I will that men pray everywhere." Wherever God casts us we may find a way open heavenwards, if it be not our own fault. *Undique ad cœlos tantundem est viæ*,—'The heavens are equally accessible from every part of the earth.' He that hath Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, wherever he goes carries his altar along with him that sanctifies the gift, and is himself a living temple. Jonah was here in confinement, the belly of the fish was his prison, was a close and dark dungeon to him, yet there he had freedom of access to God, and walked at liberty in communion with him. Men may shut us out from communion with one another, but not from communion with God. Jonah was now in the bottom of the sea, yet "out of the depths he cries to God," as Paul and Silas prayed in the prison, in the stocks.

Thirdly. To whom he prayed. "To the Lord his God." He had been fleeing from God, but now he sees the folly of it, and returns to him. By prayer he draws near to that God whom he had gone aside from, and engageth his heart to approach to him. In prayer he has an eye to him, not only as the Lord, but as his God, a God in covenant with him; for, thanks be to God, every transgression in covenant doth not throw us out of covenant. This encourageth even backsliding children to return; *Jer.* iii. 22, "Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God."

Fourthly. What his prayer was. He afterwards recollected the substance of it, and left it upon record. He reflects upon the workings of his heart towards God, when he was in distress and danger, and the conflict that was then in his breast between faith and sense, between hope and fear.

1. He reflects upon the earnestness of his prayer, and God's readiness to hear and answer, ver. 2. He said, "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord." Note, Many that prayed not at all, or did but whisper prayer, when they were in prosperity, are brought to pray, nay, they are brought to cry by reason of their affliction; and it is for this end that afflictions are sent, and they are in vain if this end be not answered. Those "heap up wrath who cry not when God binds them," *Job* xxxvi. 13. "Out of the belly of hell," and the grave, "cried I." The fish might well be called a grave; and as it was a prison to which Jonah was condemned for his disobedience, and in which he lay under the wrath of God, it might well be called the belly of hell. Thither this good man was cast, and yet thence he cried to God, and it was not in vain: God heard him, heard the voice of his affliction, the voice of his supplication. There is a hell in the other world, out of which there is no crying to God, with any hope of being heard; but, whatever hell we may be in the belly of in this world, we may from thence cry to God. When Christ lay as Jonah three days and three nights in the grave, though he prayed not, as Jonah did, yet his very lying there cried to God for poor sinners, and the cry was heard.

2. He reflects upon the very deplorable condition that he was in, when he was in the belly of hell, which when he lay there he was very sensible of, and made particular remarks upon. Note, If we would get good by our troubles, we must take notice of our troubles, and of the hand of God in them. Jonah observes here,

1st. How low he was thrown; ver. 3, "Thou hadst cast me into the deep." The mariners cast him there; but he looked above them, and saw the hand of God casting him there. Whatever deeps we are cast into, it is God that casts us into them, and he it is that after he hath killed has power to cast into hell. He was cast into the midst of the seas, 'the heart of the seas,' so the word is; and from hence Christ borrows that Hebrew phrase, when he applies it to his own lying so long in the heart of the earth. For he that is laid dead in the grave, though never so shallow, is cut off as effectually from the land of the living as if he were laid in the heart of the earth.

2nd. How terribly he was beset. "The floods compassed me about;" the channels and springs of the waters of the sea, these surrounded him on every side; it was always high water with him. God's dear saints and servants are sometimes compassed with the floods of affliction, with troubles that are very forcible and violent, that bear down all before them, and that run constantly upon them, as the waters of a river, in a continual succession, one trouble upon the neck of another, as Job's messengers of evil tidings; and inclosed with them on all sides, as the church complains, *Lam.* iii. 7, "He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out," nor see which way I may flee for safety. "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me." Observe, he calls them God's billows and his waves, not only because he made them, "The sea is his, and he made it," and because he rules them, for "even the wind and the seas obey him," but because he had now commissioned them against Jonah, and limited them; had ordered them to afflict and terrify him, but not to destroy him. These words are plainly quoted by Jonah from *Ps.* xlii. 7, where, though the translations differ a little, in the original David's complaint is the same verbatim with this of Jonah's, "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me." What David spoke figuratively and metaphorically Jonah applies to himself as literally fulfilled. For the reconciling of ourselves to our afflictions, it is good to search precedents, that we may find there has no temptation taken us but such as is common to men. If ever any man's case was singular, and not to be paralleled, sure Jonah's was; and yet, to his great satisfaction, he finds even the man after God's own heart making the same complaint of God's waves and billows going over him that he has now occasion to make. When God performeth the thing that is appointed for us we shall find that many such things are with him, that even our path of trouble is no untrodden path, and God deals with us no otherwise than as he useth to deal with those that love his name. And therefore, for our assistance in our addresses to God when we are in trouble, it is good to make use of the complaints and prayers which the saints that have been before us made use of in the like case. See how good it is to be ready in the Scriptures. Jonah, when he could make no use of his Bible, by the help of his memory furnished himself from the Scripture with a very proper representation of his case; "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me." To the same purpose, ver. 5, "The waters compassed me even to the soul;" that is, they threatened his life, which was hereby brought into imminent danger; or, they made an impression upon his spirit. He saw them to be the tokens of God's displeasure, and in them the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against him; this reached to his soul, and put that in confusion. And this also is borrowed from David's complaint; *Ps.* lxix. 1, "The waters are come in unto my soul." When without are fightings, it is no marvel that within are fears. Jonah in the fish's belly finds the depths closing him round about, so that, if he would get out of his prison, yet he must unavoidably perish in the waters. He feels the seaweed (which the fish sucked in with the water) wrapped about his head, so that he had no way left him to help himself, nor hope that any one else could help him. Thus are the people of God sometimes perplexed and entangled, that they may learn not to trust in themselves, but in God that raiseth the dead, 2 *Cor.* i. 8, 9.

3rd. How fast he was held, ver. 6. He "went down to the bottom of the mountains," to the rocks in the sea, upon which the hills and promontories by the sea-side seem to be bottomed. He lay among them; nay, he lay under them. "The earth with her bars was about him," so close about him that it was likely to be about him for ever. The earth was so shut and locked, so barred and bolted against him, that he was quite cut off from any hope of ever returning to it. Thus helpless, thus hopeless, did Jonah's case seem to be. Those whom God contends with the whole creation is at war with.

3. He reflects upon the very black and melancholy conclusion he was then ready to make concerning himself, and the relief he obtained against it, ver. 4, 7.

1st. He began to sink into despair, and to give up himself for gone, and undone to all intents and purposes. When the waters compassed him about even to the soul, no marvel that his soul fainted within him, fainted away, so that he had not any comfortable enjoyments or expectations; his spirits quite failed, and he looked upon himself as a dead man. "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight," and the apprehension of that was the thing that made his spirit faint within him. He thought God had quite forsaken him, would never return in mercy to him, nor shew him any token for good again. He had no example before him of any that were brought alive out of a fish's belly; if he thought of Job upon the dunghill, Joseph in the pit, David in the cave, yet these did not come up to his case. Nor was there any visible way of escape open for him, but by a miracle; and what reason had he to expect that a miracle of mercy should be wrought for him who was now made a monument of justice? His own conscience told him that he had wickedly "fled from the presence of the Lord," and therefore he might justly cast him away from his presence; and, in token of that, take away his Holy Spirit from him, never to visit him more. What hopes could he have of deliverance out of a trouble which his own ways and doings had procured to himself? Observe, when Jonah would say the worst he could of his case, he saith this, "I am cast out of thy sight." Those, and those only, are miserable whom God has cast out of his sight, whom he will no longer own and favour. What is the misery of the damned in hell but this, that they are cast out of God's sight? For what is the happiness of heaven but the vision and fruition of God? Sometimes the condition of God's people may be such in this world as that they may think themselves quite excluded from God's presence, so as no more to see him, or to be regarded by him. Jacob and Israel said, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God," *Isa.* xl. 27. Zion said, The Lord has forsaken me, my God has forgotten me, *Isa.* xlix. 14. But it is only the surmise of unbelief, for God hath not cast away his people whom he hath chosen.

2nd. Yet he recovered himself from sinking into despair, with some comfortable prospects of deliverance. Faith corrected and controlled the surmises of fear and distrust. Here was a mighty struggle between sense and faith, but faith had the last word, and came off a conqueror. In trying times the issue

will be good at last, provided our faith do not fail; it was therefore the continuance of that in its vigour that Christ secured to Peter, "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not," *Lu.* xxii. 32. David had fainted if he had not believed, *Ps.* xxvii. 13. Jonah's faith said, "Yet I will look again towards thy holy temple." Thus, though he was perplexed, yet not in despair; in the depth of the sea he had this hope in him, as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast. That which he supports himself with the hope of is, that he shall yet "look again towards God's holy temple." *First.* That he shall live. He shall look again heavenwards, shall again see the light of the sun, though now he seems to be cast into utter darkness; thus "against hope he believed in hope." *Secondly.* That he shall live and praise God; and a good man doth not desire to live for any other purpose, *Ps.* cxix. 175. That he shall enjoy communion with God again in holy ordinances, shall look towards, and go up to, the holy temple, there to inquire, there to behold the beauty of the Lord. When Hezekiah desired that he might be assured of his recovery, he asked, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?" *Isa.* xxxviii. 22, as if that were the only thing for the sake of which he wished for health. So Jonah here hopes he shall look again towards the temple; that way he had looked many a time with pleasure, rejoicing when he was called to go up to the house of the Lord; and the remembrance of it was his comfort, that when he had an opportunity he was no stranger to the holy temple. But now he could not so much as look towards it; in the fish's belly he could not tell which way it lay, but he hopes he shall again be able to look towards it, to look on it, to look into it. Observe how modestly Jonah expresseth himself, as one conscious to himself of guilt and unworthiness. He dares not speak of dwelling in God's house, as David, knowing that he is no more worthy to be called a son, but he hopes he may be admitted to look towards it. He calls it the holy temple, for the holiness of it was in his eye the beauty of it, and that for the sake of which he loved and looked towards it. The temple was a type of heaven, and he promiseth himself that, though being now a captive exile, he should never be loosed, but die in the pit, yet he should look towards the heavenly temple, and be brought safe thither. Though he die in the fish's belly, in the bottom of the sea, yet from thence he hopes his soul shall be carried into Abraham's bosom. Or these words may be taken as Jonah's vow when he was in distress; and he speaks, ver. 9, of paying what he vowed. His vow is, that, if God deliver him, he will praise him in the gate of the daughter of Zion, *Ps.* ix. 13, 14. His sin for which God pursued him was, fleeing from the presence of the Lord, the folly of which he is now convinced of, and promiseth not only that he will never again look towards Tarshish, but that he will again look towards the temple, and will go from strength to strength, till he appear before God there. And thus we see how faith and hope were his relief in his desponding condition. To this he added prayer to God; ver. 7, "When my soul fainted within me, then I remembered the Lord," I betook myself to that cordial. He remembered what he is, how nigh to those that seem to be thrown at the greatest distance by trouble, how merciful to those that seem to have thrown themselves at a distance from him by sin. He remembered what he had done for him, what he had done for others, what he could do, what he had promised to do, and this kept him from fainting. And remembering God, he made his addresses to him, "My prayer came in unto thee;" that is, I sent it in, and expected to receive an answer to it. Note, Our afflictions should put us in mind of God, and thereby put us upon prayer to him. When our souls faint we must remember God, and when we remember God we must send up a prayer to him, a pious ejaculation at least; when we think on his name we should call on his name.

4. He reflects upon the favour of God to him, when thus in his distress he sought to God, and trusted in him.

1st. He graciously accepted his prayer, and gave admission and audience to it, ver. 7. My prayer being sent to him, came in unto him, even into his holy temple; it was heard in the highest heavens, though it was prayed in the lowest deeps.

2nd. He wonderfully wrought deliverance for him, and, when he was in the depth of his misery, gave him the earnest and assurance of it; ver. 6, "Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." Some think he said this when he was vomited up on dry ground, and then it is the language of his thankfulness; and he sets it over against the great difficulty of his case, that the power of God might be the more magnified in his deliverance. "The earth with her bars was about me for ever," and yet "thou hast brought up my life from the pit," from the bars of the pit. Or, rather, we may suppose it spoken while he was yet in the fish's belly, and then it is the language of his faith; Thou hast kept me alive here, in the pit, and therefore thou canst, thou wilt, bring up my life from the pit. And he speaks of it with as much assurance as if it were done already; "Thou hast brought up my life." Though he has not an express promise of deliverance, he has an earnest of it, and on that he depends. He has life, and therefore believes his life shall be "brought up from corruption," and this assurance he addresseth to God, "Thou hast done it, O Lord my God." Thou art the Lord, and therefore canst do it; my God, and therefore wilt do it for me. Note, If the Lord be our God, he will be to us the resurrection and the life, will redeem our lives from destruction, from the power of the grave.

5. He gives warning to others, and instructs them to keep close to God only; ver. 8, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy." That is,

1st. They that worship other gods, as the heathen mariners did, and call upon them, and expect relief and comfort from them, they forsake their own mercy, they stand in their own light, they turn their back upon their own happiness, and go quite out of the way of all good. Note, Idols are lying vanities, and those that pay that homage to them which is due to God only act as contrary to their interest as to their duty. Or,

2nd. They that follow their own inventions, as Jonah himself had done when he "fled from the presence of the Lord" to go to Tarshish, they forsake their own mercy, that mercy which they might find in God, and might have such a covenant right and title to it as to be able to call it their own, if they would but keep close to God and their duty. They that think to go any where to be from under the eye of God, as Jonah did—that think to mend themselves by outrunning his service, as Jonah did—and that grudge his mercy to any poor sinners, and pretend to be wiser than he in judging who are fit to have prophets sent them, and who not, as Jonah did—they observe lying vanities, are led away by foolish, groundless fancies, and, like him, they forsake their own mercy, and no good can come of it. Note, They that forsake their own duty forsake their own mercy, they that run away from the work of their place and day run away from the comfort of it.

6. He solemnly binds his soul with a bond, that if God work deliverance for him, the God of his mercies shall be the God of his praises, ver. 9. He covenants with God,

1st. That he will honour him in his devotions with the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and God hath said, for the encouragement of those that do so, that they that offer praise glorify him. He will, according to the law of Moses, bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will offer that according to the law of nature, with "the voice of thanksgiving." The love and thankfulness of the heart to God are the life and soul of this duty; without it neither the sacrifice of thanksgiving nor the voice of thanksgiving will avail any thing. But it was then by a Divine appointment to be expressed by a sacrifice, in which the offerer presented the beast slain to God, not in lieu of himself, but in token of himself; and it is now to be expressed by "the voice of thanksgiving," the "calves of our lips," *Hos.* xiv. 2; the fruit of our lips, *Heb.* xiii. 15; speaking forth, singing forth, the high praises of our God. This Jonah here promiseth, that with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, to his glory, and the encouragement of others.

2nd. That he will honour him in his conversation by a punctual performance of his vows which he made in the fish's belly. Some think it was some work of charity that he vowed, or such a vow as Jacob's was, "Of all that thou hast given me, I will give the tenth unto thee." More probably his vow was, that if God would deliver him, he would readily go wherever he should please to send him, though it were to Nineveh. When we smart for deserting our duty, it is time to promise that we will adhere to it, and abound in it. Or, perhaps the sacrifice of thanksgiving is the thing he vowed, and that is it which he will pay, as David, *Ps.* cxvi. 17—19.

7. He concludes with an acknowledgment of God as the saviour of his people. "Salvation is of the Lord, it belongs to the Lord," *Ps.* iii. 8; he is the God of salvation, *Ps.* lxviii. 19, 20; he only can work salvation, and he can do it, be the danger and distress never so great; he has promised salvation to his people that trust in him. All the salvations of his church in general, and of particular saints, were wrought by him. He is the Saviour of them that believe, 1 *Tim.* iv. 10. Salvation is still of him, as it has always been; from him alone it is to be expected, and on him we are to depend for it. Jonah's experience shall encourage others in all ages to trust in God as the God of their salvation. All that read this story shall say it with assurance, say it with admiration, that salvation is of the Lord, and is sure to all that belongs to him.

10 And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry *land.*

CARAVANSARY ON THE SPOT WHERE JONAH IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN CAST ASHORE.

We have here Jonah's discharge from his imprisonment, and his deliverance from that death which there he was threatened with. His return, though not to life, for he lived in the fish's belly, yet to the land of the living, for from that he seemed to be quite cut off; his resurrection, though not from death, yet from the grave, for surely never man was so buried alive as Jonah in the fish's belly. His enlargement may be considered,

First. As an instance of God's power over all the creatures. God spake to the fish, gave him orders to return him, as before he had given him orders to receive him. God speaks to other creatures, and it is done; they are all his ready, obedient servants; but to man he speaketh once, yea, twice, and he perceiveth it not, regards it not, but turns a deaf ear to what he saith. Note, God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and serves his own purposes by them.

Secondly. As an instance of God's mercy to a poor penitent, that in his distress prays to him. Jonah had sinned, had done foolishly, very foolishly, his own backsliding did now correct him, and it appears by his after carriage that his foolishness was not quite driven from him, no, not by the rod of his correction; and yet, upon his praying and humbling himself before God, here is a miracle in nature wrought for his deliverance, to intimate what a miracle of grace, free grace, God's reception and entertainment of returning sinners is. When God had him at his mercy, he shewed him mercy, and did not contend for ever.

Thirdly. As a type and figure of Christ's resurrection. He died and was buried to lay the storm which our sin had raised, and lay in the grave, as Jonah did, three days and three nights a prisoner for our debt; but the third day he came forth, as Jonah did, by his messengers, to preach repentance and remission of sins, even to the Gentiles. And thus was another Scripture fulfilled, "After two days he will receive us, and the third day he will raise us up," *Hos.* vi. 2. The earth trembled as if full of her burthen, as the fish was of Jonah.

CHAPTER III.

In this chapter we have, I. Jonah's mission renewed, and the command a second time given him to go to Nineveh, ver. 1, 2. II. Jonah's message to Nineveh faithfully delivered, by which its speedy overthrow was threatened, ver. 3, 4. III. The repentance, humiliation, and reformation of the Ninevites hereupon, ver. 5—9. IV. God's gracious revocation of the sentence passed upon them, and the preventing of the ruin threatened, ver. 10.

AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, 2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. 3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the

LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. 4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

We have here a farther evidence of the reconciliation between God and Jonah, and that it was a thorough reconciliation, though the controversy between them had run high.

First. By this it appears that God was perfectly reconciled to Jonah, that he employed him again in his service; and the commission anew given him was an evidence of the remission of his former disobedience. Among men it has been justly pleaded that the giving of a commission to a criminal convicted is equivalent to a pardon; so it was to Jonah, ver. 1, "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time;" for,

1. Jonah must be tried whether he do indeed repent of his former disobedience or no, and whether he have gotten the good designed him, both by his strange punishment and by his strange deliverance. He had deserted his work and duty, and had been under an arrest for it, had received a sentence of death within himself, but upon his submission God had released him, had given him his life, had given him his liberty; but it is upon his good behaviour that he is released, and he must again be put upon the trial, whether he will follow the will of God, or his own will. After he has been thrown into the sea, and thrown out again, God comes and asks him, Jonah, wilt thou go to Nineveh now? For when God judgeth he will overcome, he will gain his point, he will bring the disobedient stubborn child to his foot at last. Note, When God has afflicted us, and delivered us out of affliction, we must hear his voice saying to us, Now return to the duties which before you neglected, and which by these providences you are called to. God now said in effect to Jonah, as Christ said to the impotent man, when he had healed him, Now go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee, *Jno.* v. 14, a worse thing than lying three days and three nights in the whale's belly. God looks upon men when he has afflicted them, and has delivered them out of their affliction, to see whether they will mend of that fault particularly for which they were corrected; and therefore in that thing we are concerned to see to it that we receive not the grace of God in vain, neither in the correction nor in the deliverance, for both are designed to be means of grace.

2. Jonah shall be trusted, in token of God's favour to him. God might justly have said concerning Jonah, as we would concerning one that had cheated us, and dealt treacherously with us, that though we would not proceed to the rigour of the law against him, nor ruin him, yet we would never again repose a confidence in him. Justly might the spirit of prophecy, which Jonah had resisted and rebelled against, depart from him, with a resolution never to return to him any more. One would have expected that, though his life was spared, yet he should be laid under a disability and incapacity ever to serve the government again in the character of a prophet. But, behold, the word of the Lord comes to him again, to shew that when God forgives he forgets, and whom he forgives he gives a new heart and a new spirit to; he receives those into his family again, and restores them to their former estate, that had been prodigal children and disobedient servants. Note, God's making use of us is the best evidence of his being at peace with us. Hereby it will appear that our sins are pardoned, and we have the goodwill of God towards us. Doth his good word come unto us, and do we experience his good work in us? If so, we have reason to admire the riches of free grace, and to own our obligations to the Lord Jesus, who received gifts for men, "Yea, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell" even among them, and employ them in his work, *Ps.* lxviii. 18.

Secondly. By this it appears that Jonah was well reconciled to God; that he was not now, as he had been before, disobedient to the heavenly vision, did not flee from the presence of the Lord as he had done. He neither endeavoured to avoid hearing the command, nor did he decline obeying it; made no objections, as he had done, that the journey was long, the errand invidious, the delivery of it perilous, and if the threatened judgment did not come he should be reproached as a false prophet, and the impenitency of his own nation would be upbraided, (which he had objected, *ch.* iv. 2.) But now, without murmuring and disputing, "Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord," ver. 3. See here, 1. The nature of repentance. It is the change of our mind and way, and a return to our work and duty, from which we had turned aside; it is doing that good which we had left undone. 2. The benefit of affliction. It reduceth those to their place that had deserted it. Jonah might truly say with David, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word;" and therefore, though it was dreadful, though it was painful to me, and for the present not joyous but grievous, yet "it was good," very good, "for me that I was afflicted." 3. See the power of Divine grace working with affliction, for otherwise affliction of itself would rather drive men from God than bring them to him; but God, by his grace, can turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and make those willing in the day of his power, freely willing to come under his yoke, whose neck had been as an iron sinew. 4. See the duty of all those to whom the word of the Lord comes. They must in all points conform themselves to it, and yield a cheerful, faithful obedience to the orders God gives them. Jonah arose, and did not sit in sloth or sullenness; he went directly to Nineveh, though it was a great way off, and a place where it is likely he never was before; yet thither he took his journey, "according to the word of the Lord." God's servants must go where he sends them, come when he calls them, and do what he bids them. Whatever appears to be the word of the Lord, we must conscientiously do according to it. Let us now see what was the command and commission given him, and what he did in prosecution of it.

Thirdly. He was sent as a herald-at-arms, in the name of the God of heaven, to proclaim war with Nineveh; ver. 2, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city," that metropolis, and "preach unto it," preach against it, so the Chaldee. What is against us is preached to us that we may hear it and take warning; and what is preached to us, if we do not give ear to it, and mix faith with it, will prove to be against us. Jonah is sent to Nineveh, which was at this time the chief city of the Gentile world, as an indication of God's gracious intentions, in process of time, to make the light of Divine revelation to shine in those dark regions. God knew that if Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, had had the means of grace, they would have repented, and yet he denied them those means, *Mat.* xi. 21, 23. He knew that if Nineveh had now the means of grace they would repent, and he gave them those means; sent Jonah, though not to preach repentance to them expressly, (for we find not that he had that in his commission,) yet to "preach them to repentance," for that was the happy effect of what he had in commission. If God thus, in dispensing his favours, in giving the means of grace to some places and not to others, and the spirit of grace to some persons and not to others, acts by prerogative and in a way of sovereignty, who may say unto him, What doest thou? "May he not do what he will with his own?" He is debtor to no man. Go and preach, saith God, "the preaching that I bid thee." That is,

1. The preaching that I did bid thee, when I first ordered thee to go thither, *ch.* i. 2. Go and cry against it, denounce Divine judgments against it, tell the men of Nineveh that their wickedness is come up to God, and God's vengeance is coming down upon them. This was the message Jonah was then very loath to deliver, and therefore flew off and went to Tarshish; but when he is brought to it the second time, God doth not at all alter the message to gratify him, or make it the more passable with him. No, he must now preach the very same that he was then ordered to preach, and would not. Note, The word of God is an unalterable thing, and will not be made to bend to the humours either of its preachers or of its hearers; it shall never comply with their humours and fancies, but they must comply with its truths and laws: see *Jer.* xv. 19, "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." Or,

2. The preaching that I shall bid thee when thou comest thither. This was an encouragement to him in his undertaking, that God would go along with him, that the spirit of prophecy should abide upon him and be ready to him when he was at Nineveh, to give him all the farther instructions that were needful for him. This intimated that he should hear from him again, which would be his great support in this hazardous expedition; as, when God sent Abraham to offer up Isaac, he gave him a like intimation, by telling him he must do it upon one of the mountains which he would afterwards direct him to. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. He leads his people step by step, and so he expects they should follow him. Jonah must go with an implicit faith; though he knows whither he goes, he shall not know till he comes thither what message he must deliver, but whatever it is he must deliver it, be it pleasing or displeasing. Thus God will keep us in a continual dependence upon himself, and the directions of his word and providence. What he doth, and what he will have us to do, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. Admirals sometimes, when they are sent abroad, are not to open their commission till they are got so many leagues off at sea; so Jonah must go to Nineveh, and when he comes there shall be told what to say.

Fourthly. He faithfully and boldly delivered his errand. When he came to Nineveh he found his diocese large; it was an "exceeding great city of three days' journey," ver. 2; a city great to God, so the Hebrew phrase is, meaning no more than, as we render it, exceeding great. This honour that language doth to the great God, that great things derive their denomination from him. The greatness of Nineveh consisted chiefly in the extent of it; it was much larger than Babylon; such a city, saith Diodorus Siculus, as no man ever after built. It was one hundred and fifty furlongs long, and ninety broad, and four hundred and eighty in compass. The walls one hundred feet high, and so thick that three chariots might go abreast upon them. On them were one thousand five hundred towers, each of them two hundred feet high. It is here said to be of three days' journey; for the compass of the walls, as some relate, was four hundred and eighty furlongs, which, allowing eight furlongs to a mile, makes sixty miles, which may well be reckoned three days' journey for a footman, twenty miles a day. Or, walking slowly and gravely, as Jonah must, when he went about preaching, it would take him up at least three days to go through all the principal streets and lanes of the city to proclaim his message, that all might have notice of it. And when he came hither he lost no time, he did not come to look about him, but applied himself closely to his work; and when he began to enter into the city he did not retire into an inn to refresh himself after his journey, but opened his commission immediately, according to his instructions, "and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." This, no doubt, he had particular warrant and direction to say; whether he enlarged upon this text, as is most probable, shewing them the controversy God had with them, and how provoking their wickedness was, and what reason they had to expect destruction, and to give credit to this warning; or whether he only repeated these words again and again, is not certain, but this was the purport of his message.

1. He must tell them that this great city shall be overthrown. He meant, and they understood him, that it should be overthrown, not by war, but by some immediate stroke from heaven; either by an earthquake, or by fire and brimstone, as Sodom was. The wickedness of cities ripens them for destruction, and their wealth and greatness cannot protect them from destruction when the measure of their iniquity is full, and the day of vengeance is come. Great cities are easily overthrown when the great God comes to reckon with them.

2. He must tell them that it shall shortly be overthrown, at the end of forty days. It has a reprieve granted; so long God will wait to see if, upon this alarm given, they will humble themselves, and amend their doings, and so prevent the ruin threatened. See how slow God is to wrath. Though Nineveh's wickedness cried for vengeance, yet it shall be spared for forty days, that it may have space to repent, and meet God in the way of his judgments. But he will wait no longer. If in that time they turn not, they shall know that he hath whet his sword and made it ready. Forty days is a long time for a righteous God to defer his judgments, yet it is but a little time for an unrighteous people to repent and reform in, and so turn away the judgments coming. The fixing of the day thus with all possible assurance would help to convince them that it was a message from God, for no man durst be so positive in prefixing a time, however he might prognosticate the thing itself; it would also startle them into a preparation for it. It may justly awaken secure sinners by a sincere conversion to prevent their own ruin, when they see they have but a little time to turn them in. And should it not awaken us to get ready for death, to consider that the thing itself is certain, and the time fixed in the counsel of God, but we are therefore kept in the dark and at uncertainty about it that we may be always ready. We cannot be so sure that we shall live forty days as Nineveh now was that it should stand forty days; nay, I think it is more probable we should die within thirty or forty days than that we should live thirty or forty years; and so many years in the day of our security we are apt to promise ourselves.

Fleres, si scires unum tua tempora mensem;
Rides, cum non sit forsitan una dies.

'We should be alarmed if we were sure not to live a month, and yet we are careless, though we are not sure to live a day.'

5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands. 9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.

Here is, First. A wonder of Divine grace in the repentance and reformation of Nineveh, upon the warning given them of their destruction approaching; "Verily, I say unto you," we have not found so great an instance of it, no, not in Israel; and it will "rise up in judgment against the men of" the gospel "generation," and condemn them; for the "Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas, but behold, a greater than Jonas is here," *Mat.* xii. 41. Nay, it did condemn the impenitency and obstinacy of Israel at that time. God sent many prophets to Israel, and those well known among them to be mighty in word and deed; but to Nineveh he sent only one, and he a stranger, whose aspect was mean, we may suppose, and his bodily presence weak, especially after the fatigue of so long a journey; and yet they repented, but Israel not. Jonah preached but one sermon, and we do not find that he gave them any sign or wonder, by the accomplishment of which his word might be confirmed, and yet they were wrought upon; while Israel continued obstinate, whose prophets chose out words wherewith to reason with them, and confirmed them by signs following. Jonah only threatened wrath and ruin; we do not find that he gave them any calls to repentance or directions how to repent, much less any encouragements to hope that they should find mercy if they did repent, and yet they repented; but Israel persisted in impenitency, though the prophets sent to them drew them with cords of a man and with bands of love, and assured them of great things which God would do for them if they did repent and reform. Now let us see what was the method of Nineveh's repentance, what the steps and particular instances of it.

1. They believed God; that is, they gave credit to the word which Jonah spake to them in the name of God. They believed that though they had many that they called gods, yet there is but one living and true God, the sovereign Lord of all; that to him they were accountable, that they had sinned against him, and were become obnoxious to his justice; that this notice sent them of ruin approaching came from him, and consequently that the ruin itself would come from him at the time prefixed, if it were not prevented by a timely repentance; that he is a merciful God, and there might be some hopes of the turning away of the wrath threatened, if they did turn away from the sins for which it was threatened. Note, They that come to God, that come back to him after they have revolted from him, must believe, must believe that he is, that he is reconcilable, that he will be theirs if they take the right course. And observe what great faith God can work by very small, weak, and unlikely means; he can bring even Ninevites, by a few threatening words, to be obedient to the faith. Some think the Ninevites heard from the mariners, or others, or from Jonah himself, of his being cast into the sea, and delivered thence by miracle, and that served for a confirmation of his mission, and brought them the more readily to believe God speaking by him; but of this we have no certainty. However, Christ's resurrection typified by that of Jonah's served for the confirmation of his Gospel, and contributed abundantly to their great success who in his name "preached repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

2. They brought word to the king of Nineveh, who some think was at this time Sardanapalus, others Phul, king of Assyria. Jonah was not directed to go to him first, in respect to his royal dignity. Crowned heads, when guilty heads, are before God upon a level with common heads; and therefore Jonah is not sent to the court but to the streets of Nineveh, to make his proclamation. However, an account is brought of his errand to the king of Nineveh, not by way of information against Jonah as a disturber of the public peace, that he might be silenced and punished, which perhaps would have been done if he had cried thus in the streets of Jerusalem, who "killed God's prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her." No, the account was brought him of it, not as of a crime, but as of a message from heaven, by some that were concerned for the public welfare, and whose hearts trembled for it. Note, Those kings are happy who have such about them as will give them notice of the things that belong to the kingdom's peace, of the warnings both of the word and providence of God, and the tokens of God's displeasure they are under; and those people are happy who have such kings over them as will take notice of those things.

3. The king set them a good example of humiliation; ver. 6, when he heard of the word of God sent to him, he "rose from his throne," as Eglon, king of Moab, who, when Ehud told him he had a message to him from God, rose up out of his seat. The king of Nineveh rose from his throne, not only in reverence to a word from God in general, but in fear of a word of wrath in particular, and in sorrow and shame for sin, by which he and his people were become obnoxious to his wrath. He rose from his royal throne, and laid aside his royal robe, the badge of his imperial dignity, as an acknowledgment that, not having used his power as he ought to have done, for the restraining of violence and wrong and the maintaining of right, he had forfeited his throne and robe to the justice of God, had rendered himself unworthy of the honour put upon him and the trust reposed in him as a king, and it was just with God to take it from him. Even the king himself disdained not to put on the garb of a penitent, for he "covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes," in token of his humiliation for sin, and his dread of Divine vengeance. It well becomes the greatest of men to abase themselves before the great God.

4. The people conformed to the example of the king; nay, it should seem they led the way, for they first began to "put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them," ver. 5. The least of them, that had least to lose in the overthrow of the city, yet did not think themselves unconcerned in the alarm; and the greatest of them, that had used to lie at ease and live in state, did not think it below them to put on the marks of humiliation. The wearing of sackcloth, especially to those who were used to fine linen, was a very uneasy thing, and they would not have done it if they had not had a deep sense of their sin, and their danger by reason of sin, which hereby they designed to express. Note, Those that would not be ruined must be humbled; those that would not destroy their souls must afflict their souls. When God's judgments threaten us, we are concerned to humble ourselves under his mighty hand; and though bodily exercise alone profits nothing, and a man's spreading sackcloth and ashes under him, if that be all, is but a jest, it is the heart that God looks at, *Isa.* lviii. 5; yet on solemn days of humiliation, when God in his providences calls to mourning and girding with sackcloth, we must, by the outward expressions of inward sorrow, glorify God with our bodies, at least by laying aside the ornaments.

5. A general fast was proclaimed and observed throughout that great city, ver. 7–9. It was ordered "by the decree of the king and his nobles;" the whole legislative power concurred in appointing it, and the whole body of the people concurred in observing it; and both these ways it became a national act, and it was necessary it should be so when it was to prevent a national ruin. We have here the contents of this proclamation, and it is very observable. See here,

1st. What it is that is required by it. *First.* That the fast, properly so called, be very strictly observed. On the day appointed for this solemnity, "let neither man nor beast taste anything;" let them not take the least refreshment, no, not so much as drink water. Let them not plead they cannot fast so long without prejudice to their health, or that they cannot bear it; let them try for once. What if they do feel it an uneasiness, and feel from it for some time after? it is better to submit to that than be wanting in any act or instance of that repentance which is necessary to save a sinking city. Let them make themselves uneasy in body by putting on sackcloth, as well as by fasting, to shew how uneasy they are in mind through sorrow for sin, and the fear of Divine wrath. Even the beasts must do penance as well as man, because they had been made subject to vanity, as instruments of man's sin, and that either by their complaints, or their silent pining for want of meat, they might stir up their owners, and those that attended them, to the expressions of sorrow and humiliation. Those cattle that were kept within doors must not be fed and watered as usual, because no meat must be stirring on that day; things of that kind must be forgotten, and not minded. As when the psalmist was intent upon the praises of God, he called upon the inferior creatures to join with him therein, so, when the Ninevites were full of sorrow for sin, and dread of God's judgments, they would have the inferior creatures concur with them in the expressions of it. The beasts that used to be covered with rich and fine trappings, which were the pride of their masters, and theirs too, must now be covered with sackcloth; for the great men will, as becomes them, lay aside their equipage. *Secondly.* With their fasting and mourning they must join prayer and supplication to God; for the fasting is designed to fit the body for the service of the soul in the duty of prayer, which is the main matter, and to which the other is but preparatory or subservient. Let them "cry mightily to God;" let even the brute creatures do it according to their capacity; let their cries and moans for want of food be graciously construed as cries to God, as the cries of the young ravens are, *Job* xxxviii. 41, and of the young lions, *Ps.* civ. 21. But especially let the men, women, and children cry to God; let them cry mightily for the pardon of the sins that cry against them, and the preventing of the judgments which were by Jonah cried against them. It was time to cry to God when there was but a step between them and ruin—high time to seek the Lord. And in prayer we must cry mightily with a fixedness of thought, firmness of faith, and fervour of pious and devout affections. By crying mightily we wrestle with God, we take hold of him, and we are concerned to do so when he is not only departing from us as a friend, but coming against us an enemy. It therefore concerns us in prayer to stir up all that is within us. Yet this is not all: *Thirdly.* They must to their fasting and prayer add reformation and amendment of life. "Let them turn every one from his evil way," the evil way he hath chosen, the evil way he is addicted to and walks in, the evil way of his heart, and the evil way of his conversation, and particularly from the violence that is in their hands; let them restore what they have unjustly taken, and make reparation for what wrong they have done; and let them not any more oppress those they have power over, or defraud those they have dealings with. Let the men in authority, at the court end of the town, turn "from the violence that is in their hand," and not decree unrighteous decrees, or give wrong judgment upon appeals made to them; let the men of business, at the trading end of the town, turn from the violence in their hands, and use no unjust weights or measures, nor impose upon the ignorance or necessity of those they trade with. Note, It is not enough to fast for sin, but we must fast from sin, and in order to the success of our prayers must no more "regard iniquity in our hearts," *Ps.* lxvi. 18. This is "the only fast that God hath chosen," and will accept, *Isa.* lviii. 6; *Zec.* vii. 5, 9. The work of a fast-day is not done with the day; no, then the hardest and most needful part of the work begins, which is to turn from sin, and to live a new life, and not return with the dog to his vomit.

2nd. Upon what inducement this fast is proclaimed and religiously observed; ver. 9, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent?" Observe, *First.* What is it that they hope for? That God will, upon their repenting and turning, change his way towards them, and revoke his sentence against them; that he will turn from his fierce anger, which they own they deserve, and yet humbly and earnestly deprecate; and that thus their ruin will be prevented, and they perish not. They cannot object against the equity of the judgment, they pretend not to set it aside by appealing to a higher court, but hope in God himself that he will repent, and that his own mercy, to which they fly, shall rejoice against judgment. They believe that God is justly angry with them, and that, their sin being very heinous, his anger is very fierce, and that if he proceed against them there is no remedy, but they die, they perish, they all perish, and are undone; for who knows the power of his anger? It is not therefore the threatened overthrow that they pray for the prevention of, but the anger of God that they pray for the turning of. As when we pray for the favour of God we pray for all good, so when we pray against the wrath of God we pray against all evil. *Secondly.* What degree of hope they had of it. "Who can tell if God will turn to us?" Jonah had not told them; they had not among them any other prophets to tell them, so that they could not be so confident of finding mercy upon their repentance as we may be that have the promise and oath of God to depend upon, and especially the merit and mediation of Christ to trust to for pardon upon repentance. Yet they had a general notion of the goodness of God's nature, his mercy to man, and his being pleased with the repentance and conversion of sinners; and from this they raised some hopes that he would spare them: they dare not presume, but they will not despair. Note, Hope of mercy is the great encouragement to repentance and reformation; and though there be but some glimmerings of hope, mixed with great fears, arising from a sense of our own sinfulness and unworthiness, and long abuse of Divine patience, yet they may serve to quicken and engage our serious repentance and reformation. Let us boldly cast ourselves at the footstool of

free grace, resolving that, if we perish, we will perish there; yet who knows but God will look upon us with compassion?

Secondly. Here is a wonder of Divine mercy in the sparing of these Ninevites upon their repentance; ver. 10, "God saw their works." He not only heard their good words, by which they professed repentance, but saw their good works, by which they "brought forth fruits meet for repentance." He saw that they turned from their evil way, and that was the thing he looked for and required; if he had not seen that, their fasting and sackcloth would have been as nothing in his account. He saw there was among them a general conviction of their sins, and a general resolution not to return to them, and that for some days they lived better, and there was a new face of things upon the city; and this he was greatly well pleased with. Note, God takes notice of every instance of the reformation of sinners, even those instances that fall not under the cognizance and observation of the world. He sees who turn from their evil way and who do not, and meets those with favour that meet him in a sincere conversion; when they repent of the evil of sin committed by them, he repents of the evil of judgment pronounced against them. Thus he spared Nineveh, and did not the evil which he said he would do against it. Here were no sacrifices offered to God that we read of to make atonement for sin, but the "sacrifice of God is a broken spirit." "A broken and a contrite heart," such as the Ninevites now had, is what he will not despise; it is what he will give countenance to and put honour upon.

CHAPTER IV.

We read with a great deal of pleasure, in the close of the foregoing chapter, concerning the repentance of Nineveh, but in this chapter we read with a great deal of uneasiness concerning the sin of Jonah; and as there is joy in heaven and earth for the conversion of sinners, so there is grief for the follies and infirmities of saints. In all the book of God we scarce find a servant of the Lord, (and such a one we are sure Jonah was, for the Scripture calls him so,) so very much out of temper as he is here, so very peevish and provoking to God himself. In the first chapter we had him fleeing from the face of God, but here we have him, in effect, flying in the face of God, and which is more grievous to us, there we had an account of his repentance and return to God; but here, though no doubt he did repent, yet, as in Solomon's case, no account is left us of his recovering himself; but while we read with wonder of his perverseness, we read with no less wonder of God's tenderness towards him, by which it appeared he had not cast him off. Here is, I. Jonah's repining at God's mercy to Nineveh, and the fret he was in about it, ver. 1—3. II. The gentle reproof God gave him for it, ver. 4. III. Jonah's discontent at the withering of the gourd, and his justifying of himself in that discontent, ver. 5—9. IV. God's improving of it for his conviction, that he ought not to be angry at the sparing of Nineveh, ver. 10, 11. Man's badness and God's goodness serve here for a foil to each other, that the former may appear the more exceeding sinful and the latter the more exceeding gracious.

BUT it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. 2 And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. 3 Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for *it is* better for me to die than to live. 4 Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

See here, First. How unjustly Jonah quarrelled with God for his mercy to Nineveh upon their repentance. This gives us occasion to suspect that Jonah had only delivered the message of wrath against the Ninevites, and had not at all assisted or encouraged them in their repentance, as one would have thought he should have done; for when they did repent, and found mercy,

1. Jonah grudged them the mercy they found; ver. 1, "It displeased Jonah exceedingly;" and, would you think it? "He was very angry," was in a great heat about it. It was very ill, 1st. That he had so little government of himself as to be displeased and very angry. He had no rule over his own spirit, and therefore, as a city broken down, lay exposed to temptations and snares. 2nd. That he had so little reverence of God as to be displeased and angry at what he did, as David was when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza. Whatever pleaseth God should please us; and though we cannot account for it, yet we must acquiesce in it. 3rd. That he had so little affection to men as to be displeased and very angry at the conversion of the Ninevites, and their reception into the Divine favour. This was the sin of the scribes and Pharisees, who murmured at our Saviour because he entertained publicans and sinners. But "is our eye evil, because his is good?" But why was Jonah so uneasy at it, that the Ninevites repented and were spared? It cannot be expected we should give any good reason for a thing so very absurd and unreasonable; no, nor any thing that has the face or colour of reason. But we may conjecture what the provocation was. Hot spirits are usually high spirits; only by pride comes contention, both with God and man. It was a point of honour that Jonah stood upon, and that made him angry. *First.* He was jealous for the honour of his country. The repentance and reformation of Nineveh shamed the obstinacy of Israel, that repented not, but hated to be reformed. And the favour of God shewed to these Gentiles upon their repentance was an ill omen to the Jewish nation, as if they should be, as at length they were, rejected and cast out of the church, and the Gentiles substituted in their room. When it was intimated to St. Peter himself that he should make no difference between Jews and Gentiles, he startled at the thing, and said, "Not so, Lord;" no marvel then that Jonah looked upon it with regret that Nineveh should become a favourite. Jonah herein had a zeal for God, as the God of Israel in a particular manner, but not according to knowledge. Note, Many are displeased with God under pretence of concern for his glory. *Secondly.* He was jealous for his own honour, fearing lest, if Nineveh was not destroyed within forty days, he should be accounted a false prophet, and stigmatized accordingly; whereas he needed not be under any discontent about that, for in the threatening of ruin it was implied that for the preventing of it they should repent, and if they did it should be prevented. And no one will complain of being deceived by him that is better than his word; and he would rather gain honour among them, by being instrumental to save them, than fall under any disgrace. But melancholy men (and such an one Jonah seems to have been) are apt to make themselves uneasy by fancying evils to themselves that are not, nor are ever likely to be. Most of our frets, as well as our frights, are owing to the power of imagination, and those are to be pitied as perfect bondslaves that are under the power of such a tyrant.

2. He quarrelled with God about it. When his heart was hot within him, he "spake unadvisedly with his lips;" and here he tells us what he said; ver. 2, 3, "He prayed unto the Lord," but it is a very awkward prayer, not like that which he prayed in the fish's belly; for affliction teacheth us to pray submissively, which Jonah now forgot to do. Being in discontent, he applied himself to the duty of prayer, as he used to do in his troubles, but his corruptions got head of his graces, and when he should have been praying for benefit by the mercy of God himself, he was complaining of the benefit others had by that mercy. Nothing could be spoken more unbecomingly.

1st. He now begins to justify himself in fleeing from the presence of the Lord when he was first ordered to go to Nineveh, for which he had before, with good reason, condemned himself. "Lord," saith he, "was not this my saying when I was in my own country?" Did I not foresee, that if I went to preach to Nineveh, they would repent, and thou wouldst forgive them, and then thy word would be reflected upon and reproached, as Yea and Nay? What a strange sort of man was Jonah to dread the success of his ministry! Many have been tempted to withdraw from their work because they have despaired of doing good by it, but Jonah declined preaching because he was afraid of doing good by it; and still he persists in the same corrupt notion, for it seems the whale's belly itself could not cure him of it. It was his saying when he was in his own country, but it was an ill saying; yet here he stands to it, and, very unlike the other prophets, desires the woful day which he had foretold, and grieves because it doth not come. Even Christ's disciples "know not what manner of spirit they are of;" they did not who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did not receive them, much less did Jonah, who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did receive him, *Lu.* ix. 55. Jonah thinks he has reason to complain of that, when it is done, which he was before afraid of; so hard is it to get a root of bitterness plucked out of the mind when once it is fastened there. And why did Jonah expect that God would spare Nineveh? Because I knew that thou wast a gracious God, indulgent, and easily pleased,—that thou wast "slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." All this is very true, and Jonah could not but know it by God's proclamation of his name, and the experience of all ages, but it is strange and very unaccountable, that that which all the saints had made the matter of their joy and praise Jonah should make the matter of reflection upon God, as if that were an imperfection of the Divine nature which is indeed the greatest glory of it, that God is gracious and merciful. The servant that said, "I know thee to be a hard man," said that which was false, and yet, had it been true, it was the proper matter of a complaint; but Jonah, though he saith what is true, yet, speaking it by way of reproach, speaks very absurdly. Those have a spirit of contention and contradiction indeed that can find in their hearts to quarrel with the goodness of God, and his sparing, pardoning mercy, to which we all owe it that we are out of hell. This is making that to be to us a "savour of death unto death" which ought to be a "savour of life unto life."

2nd. In a passion he wishes for death, ver. 3, a strange expression of his causeless passion; "Now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me." If Nineveh must live, let me die, rather than see thy word and mine disproved, rather than see the glory of Israel transferred to the Gentiles, as if there were not grace enough in God both for Jews and Gentiles, or as if his countrymen were the farther off from mercy for the Ninevites being taken into favour. When the prophet Elijah had laboured in vain, he wished he might die, and it was his infirmity, 1 *Kin.* xix. 4. But Jonah labours to good purpose, saves a great city from ruin, and yet wisheth he might die, as if, having done much good, he were afraid of living to do more; he sees of the travail of his soul, and is dissatisfied. What a perverse spirit is mingled with every word he saith! When Jonah was brought alive out of the whale's belly, he thought life a very valuable mercy, and was thankful to that God who brought up "his life from corruption," *ch.* ii. 6, and a great blessing his life had been to Nineveh; yet now for that very reason it is become a burthen to himself, and he begs to be eased of it, pleading, "It is better for me to die than live." Such a word as this may be the language of grace, as it was in Paul, who desired to depart and be with Christ, which is far better; but here it was the language of folly, and passion, and strong corruption, and so much the worse. *First.* That Jonah was now in the midst of his usefulness, and therefore fit to live. He was one whose ministry God wonderfully owned and prospered. The conversion of Nineveh might give him hopes of being instrumental to convert the whole kingdom of Assyria. It was therefore very absurd for him to wish he might die, when he had a prospect of living to so good purpose, and could be so ill spared. *Secondly.* That he was now so much out of temper, and therefore unfit to die. How durst he think of dying, and going to appear before God's judgment-seat, when he was actually quarrelling with him? Was this a frame of spirit proper for a man to go out of the world in? But those who passionately desire death commonly have least reason to do it, as being very much unprepared for it. Our business is to get ready to die by doing the work of life, and then refer ourselves to God to take away our life when and how he pleases.

Secondly. See how justly God reproved Jonah for this heat that he was in; ver. 4, the Lord said, "Doest thou well to be angry?" Is doing well a displeasure to thee? so some read it. What! Dost thou repent of thy good deeds? God might justly have rejected him for this impious heat he was in, might justly have taken him at his word, and have struck him dead when he wished to die; but he vouchsafes to reason with him for his conviction, and to reduce him to a better temper; as the father of the prodigal reasoned with his elder son, when, as Jonah here, he murmured at the remission and reception of his brother. "Doest thou well to be angry?" See how mildly the great God speaks to this foolish man, to teach us to restore those that are fallen with a spirit of meekness, and with soft answers to turn away wrath. God appeals to himself, and to his own conscience, "Doest thou well?" Thou knowest thou dost not. We should often put this question to ourselves, Is it well to say thus, to do thus? Can I justify it? Must I not unsay it, and undo it again by repentance, or be undone for ever? Ask, 1. Do I well to be angry? When passion is up let it meet with this check, Do I well to be so soon angry, so oft angry, so long angry, to put myself into such a heat, and to give others such ill language in my anger? Is this well, that I suffer these headstrong passions to get dominion over me? 2. Do I well to be angry at the mercy of God to repenting sinners? That was Jonah's crime. Do we well to be angry at that which is so much for the glory of God and the advancement of his kingdom among men? to be angry at that which angels rejoice in, and for which abundant thanksgivings will be rendered to God? We do ill to be angry at that grace which we ourselves need, and are undone without. If room were not left for repentance, and hope given of pardon upon repentance, what would become of us? Let the conversion of sinners, which is the joy of heaven, be our joy, and never our grief.

5 So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth,

EASTERN FIELD BOOTHS.

and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. 6 And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made *it* to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. 7 But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. 8 And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, *It is* better for me to die than to live. 9 And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, *even* unto death. 10 Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast

RICINUS COMMUNIS.

not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: 11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?

Jonah persists here in his discontent; for the beginning of strife, both with God and man, is as the letting forth of waters, the breach grows wider and wider, and when passion gets head ill is made worse; it should therefore be silenced and suppressed at first. We have here,

First. Jonah's sullen expectation of the fate of Nineveh. We may suppose the Ninevites, giving credit to the message he brought, were ready to give entertainment to the messenger that brought it, and to shew him respect, that they would have bid him welcome to the best of their houses and tables; but Jonah was out of humour, would not accept their kindness, not carry it towards them with common civility, which one might have feared would have prejudiced them against him and his word. But when there is not only the treasure put into earthen vessels, but the trust lodged with men subject to like passions as we are, and yet the point gained, it must be owned that the excellency of the power appears so much the more to be of God and not of man. Jonah retires, goes out of the city, sits alone, and keeps silence, because he sees the Ninevites repent and reform, ver. 5. Perhaps he told those about him that he went out of the city for fear of perishing in the ruins of it; but he went to "see what would become of the city," as Abraham went up to see what would become of Sodom, *Gen.* xix. 27. The forty days were now expiring or expired, and Jonah hopes that, if Nineveh be not overthrown, yet that some judgment or other shall come upon it sufficient to save his credit; however, it is with great uneasiness that he waits the issue. He will not sojourn in a house, expecting it would fall upon his head, but he makes him a booth of the boughs of trees, and sits in that, though there he would lie exposed to wind and weather. Note, It is common for those that have fretful, uneasy spirits, industriously to create inconveniences to themselves, that, resolving to complain, they may still have something to complain of.

Secondly. God's gracious provision for his shelter and refreshment, when he thus foolishly afflicted himself, and was still adding yet more and more to his own affliction, ver. 6. Jonah was sitting in his booth, fretting at the cold of the night and the heat of the day, which were both grievous to him; and God might have said, It is his own choice, his own doing, a house of his own building, let him make the best of it; but he looked on him with compassion, as the tender mother doth on the froward child, and relieved him against the grievances which he by his own wilfulness created to himself. He "prepared a gourd," a plant with broad leaves, and full of them, that suddenly grew up and covered his hut and booth, so as to keep off much of the injury of the cold and heat. It was a "shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief," that, being refreshed in body, he might the better guard against the uneasiness of his mind, which outward crosses and troubles are often the occasion and increase of. See how tender God is of his people in their affliction, yea, though they are foolish and froward; nor is he extreme to mark what they do amiss. God had before "prepared a great fish" to secure Jonah from the injuries of the water, and here a great gourd to secure him from the injuries of the air; for he is the protector of his people against evils of every kind, has the command of plants as well as animals, and can soon prepare them to make them serve his purposes, can make their growth sudden which in a course of nature is slow and gradual. A gourd, one would think, was but a slender fortification at the best, yet "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd;" for,

1. It was really at that time a great comfort to him. A thing in itself small and inconsiderable, yet, coming seasonably, may be to us a very valuable blessing. A gourd in the right place may do us more service than a cedar. The least creatures may be great plagues, as flies and lice were to Pharaoh, or great comforts, as the gourd to Jonah, according as God is pleased to make them.

2. He, being now much under the power of imagination, took a greater complacency in it than there was cause for. He was exceeding glad of it, was proud of it, and triumphed in it. Note, Persons of strong passions, as they are apt to be cast down with a trifle that crosseth them, so they are apt to be lifted up with a trifle that pleaseth them. A small toy will serve sometimes to pacify a cross child, as the gourd did Jonah. But wisdom and grace would teach us both to weep for our troubles as though we wept not, and to rejoice in our troubles as though we rejoiced not. Creature comforts we ought to enjoy, and be thankful for, but we need not be exceeding glad of them; it is God only that must be our exceeding joy, *Ps.* xliii. 4.

Thirdly. The sudden loss of this provision God had made for his refreshment, and the return of his troubles, ver. 7, 8. God, that had provided comfort for him, provided also an affliction for him in that very thing which was his comfort; the affliction did not come by chance, but by Divine direction and appointment.

1. God "prepared a worm" to wither the gourd. He that gave took away, and Jonah ought to have blessed his name in both; but because, when he took the comfort of the gourd, he did not give God the praise of it, he deprived him of the benefit of it, and justly. See what all our creature comforts are, and what we may expect them to be; they are gourds, have their root in the earth, are but a thin and slender defence compared with the Rock of ages; they are withering things, they perish in the using, and we are soon deprived of the comfort of them. The gourd withered the next day after it sprang up. Our comforts come forth like flowers, and are soon cut down; when we please ourselves most with them, and promise ourselves most from them, we are disappointed; a little thing withers them; a small worm at the root destroys a large gourd; something unseen and undiscerned doth it; our gourds wither, and we know not what to attribute it to. And perhaps those wither first that we have been more exceeding glad of—that proves least safe that is most dear. God did not send an angel to pluck up Jonah's gourd, but sent a worm to wither it; there it grew still, but it stood him in no stead. Perhaps our creature comforts are continued to us, but they are embittered; the creature continued, but the comfort gone, and the remains, or ruins of it rather, do but upbraid us with our folly in being exceeding glad of it.

2. He "prepared a wind" to make Jonah feel the want of the gourd, ver. 8. It was "a vehement east wind," which drove the heat of the rising sun violently upon the head of Jonah. This wind was not as a fan to abate the heat, but as bellows to make it more intense. Thus poor Jonah lay open to sun and wind.

Fourthly. The farther fret that this put Jonah into; ver. 8, "He fainted, and wished in himself that he might die." If the gourd be killed, if the gourd be dead, kill me too; let me die with the gourd. Foolish man, that thinks his life bound up in the life of a weed! Note, It is just that those who love to complain should never be left without something to complain of, that their folly may be manifested and corrected, and, if possible, cured. And see here how the passions that run into an extreme one way commonly run into an extreme

the other way; Jonah, that was in transports of joy when the gourd flourished, is in pangs of grief when the gourd is withered. Inordinate affection lays a foundation for inordinate affliction; and what we are over-fond of when we have it, we are apt to over-grieve for when we lose it, and we may see our folly in both.

Fifthly. The rebuke God gave him for this. He again reasoned with him; "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" ver. 9. Note, The withering of a gourd is a thing which it doth not become us to be angry at. When afflicting providences deprive us of our relations, possessions, enjoyments, we must bear it patiently, must not be angry at God, must not be angry for the gourd. It is comparatively but a small loss, the loss of a shadow, that is the most we can make of it. It was a gourd, a withering thing; we could expect no other but that it should wither. Our being angry for the withering of it will not recover it; we ourselves shall shortly wither like it. If one gourd be withered another gourd may spring up in the room of it; but that which should especially silence our discontent is, that, though our gourd be gone, our God is not gone, and there is enough in him to make up all our losses. Let us therefore own that we do ill, that we do very ill, to be angry for the gourd; and let us under such events quiet ourselves as a child that is weaned from his mother.

Sixthly. His justification of his passion and discontent, and it is very strange; ver. 9, he said, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." It is bad to speak amiss, yet if it be in haste, if what is said amiss be presently recalled and unsaid again, it is the more excusable; but to speak amiss, and stand to it, is bad indeed. So Jonah did here, though God himself rebuked him, and by appealing to his conscience expected he should have rebuked himself. See what brutish things ungoverned passions are, and how much it is our interest, and ought to be our endeavour, to chain up these roaring lions and raging bears. Sin and death are two very dreadful things, yet Jonah in his heat makes light of them both. 1. He has so little regard for God as to fly in the face of his authority, and to say he did well in that which God said was ill done. Passion often overrules conscience, and forces it, when it is appealed to, to give a false judgment, as Jonah here did. 2. He has so little regard to himself as to abandon his own life, and to think it no harm to indulge his passion, even to death, to kill himself with fretting. We read of wrath that "kills the foolish man," and envy that "slays the silly one," *Job* v. 2; and foolish silly ones indeed they are that cut their own throats with their own passions, that fret themselves into consumptions and other weaknesses, and put themselves into fevers with their own intemperate heats.

Seventhly. The improvement of it against him for his conviction that he did ill to murmur at the sparing of Nineveh. Out of his own mouth God will judge him; and we have reason to think it overcame him, for he made no reply, but we hope returned to his right mind, and recovered his temper, though he could not keep it, and all was well. Now let us see how God argued with him; ver. 10, 11, "Thou hast had pity on the gourd," hast spared it, (so the word is,) didst what thou couldest, and wouldest have done more, to keep it alive, and saidst, What a pity it is that this gourd should ever wither! and "Should not I then spare Nineveh?" should not I have as much compassion upon that as thou hadst upon the gourd, and forbid the earthquake which would ruin that, as thou wouldest have forbidden the worm that withered the gourd? Consider,

1. The gourd thou hadst pity on was but one, but the inhabitants of Nineveh I have pity on are numerous. It is a great city, and very populous, as appears by the number of the infants, suppose from two years old and under; there are a hundred and twenty thousand such in Nineveh, that are not come to so much use of understanding as to know their right hand from their left, for they are yet but babes. These are taken notice of because the age of infants is commonly looked upon as the age of innocency. So many there were in Nineveh that had not been guilty of any actual transgression, and consequently had not themselves contributed to the common guilt, and yet, if Nineveh be overthrown, all will be involved in the common calamity, and shall not I spare Nineveh then with an eye to them? God has a tender regard to little children, and is ready to pity and succour them. Nay, here a whole city is spared for their sakes, which may encourage parents to present their children to God by faith and prayer, that, though they are not capable of doing him any service, for they cannot discern between their right hand and their left, between good and evil, sin and duty, yet they are capable of participating in his favours, and of obtaining salvation. The great Saviour discovered a particular kindness for the children that were brought to him, when he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Nay, God took notice of the abundance of cattle too that were in Nineveh, which he had more reason to pity and spare than Jonah had to pity and spare the gourd, in as much as the animal life is more excellent than the vegetable.

2. The gourd, which Jonah was concerned for, was none of his own,—it was that for which he did not labour, nor made it to grow; but the persons in Nineveh, whom God had compassion on, were all the work of his own hands, whose beings he was the author of, whose lives he was the preserver of, whom he planted, and made to grow. He made them, and his they were, and therefore he had much more reason to have compassion on them, for he cannot "despise the work of his own hands," *Job* x. 3; and thus Job there argues with him, ver. 8, 9, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me," have "made me as the clay," and "wilt thou destroy me, wilt thou bring me into dust again?" And thus he here argues with himself.

3. The gourd which Jonah had pity on was of a sudden growth, and therefore of less value. It "came up in a night;" it was the son of a night, so the word is, but Nineveh is an ancient city, of many ages standing, and therefore cannot be so easily given up. The persons I spare have been many years in growing up, not so soon reared as the gourd; and shall not I then have pity on them, that have been so many years the care of my providence, so many years my tenants?

4. The gourd which Jonah had pity on "perished in a night," it withered and there was an end of it; but the precious souls in Nineveh that God had pity on are not so short-lived; they are immortal, and therefore to be carefully and tenderly considered. One soul is of more value than the whole world, and the gain of the world will not countervail the loss of it; surely then one soul is of more value than many gourds,—of more value than many sparrows. So God accounts, and so should we, and therefore have a greater concern for the children of men than for any of the inferior creatures, and for our own and others' precious souls than for any of the riches and enjoyments of this world.

From all this we may learn, 1st. That, though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it, but will take a course effectually to shew them their error, and to bring them to themselves, and to their right mind again. We have reason to hope that Jonah after this was well reconciled to the sparing of Nineveh, and was as well pleased with it as ever he had been displeased. 2nd. That God will justify himself in the methods of his grace towards repenting, returning sinners, as well as in the course his justice takes with them that persist in their rebellion. Though there be those that murmur at the mercy of God because they do not understand it, for his thoughts and ways therein are as far above ours as heaven above the earth, yet he will make it evident that therein he acts like himself, and will be justified when he speaks. See what pains he takes with Jonah to convince him that it was very fit Nineveh should be spared. Jonah had said, "I do well to be angry," but he could not prove it. God saith it, and proves it, "I do well to be merciful." And it is a great encouragement to poor sinners to hope that they shall find mercy with him, that he is so ready to justify himself in shewing mercy, and to triumph in those whom he makes the monuments of it, against those whose eye is evil because his is good. Such murmurers shall be made to understand this doctrine, that, how narrow soever their souls, their principles are, and how willing soever they are to engross Divine grace to themselves, and those of their own way, there is one "Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him;" and in every nation, in Nineveh as well as in Israel, "he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him;" he that repents and turns from his evil way shall find mercy with him.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF JONAH.

The opinion which has been most generally entertained is that which accords to the book a strictly historical character; in other words, which affirms that it is a relation of facts which actually took place in the life and experience of the prophet. Nor can I view it in any other light, while I hold fast an enlightened belief in the Divine authority of the books composing the canon of the Old Testament, and place implicit reliance on the authority of the Son of God. But assuming that all the books contained in it possess the Divine sanction, the test to which I would bring the question, and by which, in my opinion, our decision must mainly be formed, is the unqualified manner in which the personal existence, miraculous fate, and public ministry of Jonah, are spoken of by our Lord. He not only explicitly recognises the prophetical office of the son of Amittai, (Ἰωνᾶ τοῦ προφήτου,) just as he does that of Elisha, Isaiah, and Daniel, but represents his being in the belly of the fish as a real miracle (τὸ σημεῖον); grounds upon it, as a fact, the certainty of the future analogous fact in his own history; assumes the actual execution of the commission of the prophet at Nineveh; positively asserts that the inhabitants of that city repented at his preaching; and concludes by declaring respecting himself, "Behold! a greater than Jonah is here," *Mat.* xii. 39—41; xvi. 4. Now, is it conceivable that all these historical circumstances would have been placed in this prominent light, if the person of the prophet, and the brief details of his narrative, had been purely fictitious? On the same principle that the historical bearing of the reference in this case is rejected, may not that to the queen of Sheba, which follows in the connection, be set aside, and the portion of the first book of *Kings*, in which the circumstances of her visit to Solomon are recorded, be converted into an allegory, a moral fiction, or a popular tradition? The two cases, as adduced by our Lord, are altogether parallel; and the same may be affirmed of the allusion to Tyre and Sidon, and that to Sodom in the preceding chapter. It may be said, indeed, that a fictitious narrative of the moral kind would answer the purpose of our Saviour equally well with one which contained a statement of real transactions, just as it has been maintained that the reference made by the apostle James to the patience of Job suited his purpose, irrespective of the actual existence of that patriarch; but as, in the one case, a fictitious example of patience would prove only a tame and frigid motive to induce to the endurance of actual suffering, so, in the other, a merely imaginary repentance must be regarded as little calculated to enforce the duties of genuine contrition and amendment of life. Certainly in no other instance in which our Saviour adduces passages out of the Old Testament, for the purpose of illustrating or confirming his doctrines can it be shewn that any point or circumstance is thus employed which is not historically true. He uniformly quotes and reasons upon them as containing accounts of universally admitted facts, stamps them as such with the high sanction of his Divine authority, and transmits them for the confident belief of mankind in all future ages.—*H.* Jerome informs us that the prophet's sepulchre was shewn at Gath-hepher in his time. The orientals now shew his tomb at Mosul, where the Turks have built a mosque, in which they pretend to possess his relics; while others who reside at Gath-hepher, now a little bourgade, shew a mausoleum of Jonah in a subterranean chapel, inclosed in a mosque, and compel travellers to enter it barefoot. Such are the contests of superstitious reverence on the claims of mercenary rivalship. The fame of Jonah's deliverance appears to have spread among the heathen nations; and the Greeks, who were accustomed to adorn the memory of their heroes by every remarkable event and embellishment which they could appropriate, added to the fictitious adventures of Hercules that of having continued three days, without injury, in the belly of a dog, (καρχαρος κυων,—'dog fish,') sent against him by Neptune. The fable of Arion and the dolphin, of which the date is fixed at a time coeval with the period of Jonah, is possibly a representation of particulars recorded in the sacred book.—*Bp. Gray's Key.* See Supplementary Notes on *Nahum.*

Chap. I.—2. *Nineveh, that great city.* Supplementary Note on *ch.* iii. 2, 3. 3. *To flee to Tarshish—and went down to Joppa.* Joppa, (Yafa,) stands on a rocky

hill of an oblong shape, on the east coast of the Mediterranean, at the distance of ten (or about thirty-two or thirty-three miles) hours from Jerusalem, of which it may be said to be the sea-port. The houses and streets rise regularly according to the elevation of the different strata forming the site of the buildings. In the Armenian convent of this place Buonaparte poisoned his sick soldiers. The harbour, which is close to the town, is surrounded by rocks, and is quite inadequate to afford shelter to vessels of any considerable size. The Jews at Joppa consist of twenty-six families, with one hundred and twenty souls,—an insignificant portion of the population of Joppa, which, exclusive of the military, may be reckoned at five thousand souls. We found two Jews from Egypt, and one from Bagdad. We put the question to them, 'To what Tarshish do you think the prophet Jonah attempted to go when he set sail from Joppa?' Their reply was satisfactory enough, 'To Tarsus of Cilicia.'—*Lands of the Bible.* Dr. Kitto prefers Tartessus in Spain, stating, among other reasons for his opinion, that Tartessus belonged to the Phœnicians, between whom and the inhabitants of Joppa there was constant intercourse. 14. *Let us not perish for this man's life.* There is a parallel passage in the Argonautics of Orpheus, which has been quoted by Bishop Newcome in illustration of this:

'And much they doubted in their prudent minds,
Whether to kill, and cast a prey to fishes,
Wretched Medea, and avert their fate.'

Attributing to the presence of Medea the storm that assailed the Argo. 17. *Now the Lord had prepared a great fish.* It has been supposed by some that the fish here spoken of was created at the moment, for the purpose of swallowing the prophet, though, according to Rabbi Tarphon, it was prepared for the purpose at the creation of the world; but there is nothing in the original word which at all suggests the idea of creation or production. It properly signifies, to appoint, order, arrange, and the like, so that all that can be legitimately inferred from its use in this place is, that, in the providence of God, the animal was brought to the spot at the precise time when Jonah was thrown into the sea, and its instrumentality was wanted for his deliverance. In other words, it was the result of a special pre-arrangement in the Divine plan, according to which the movements of all creatures are regulated, and rendered subservient to the purposes of God's universal government. On the subject of the fish itself various opinions have been broached; but the Scriptures leave it entirely undecided to what species of marine animals the fish belonged, merely stating that it was 'a great fish,' one sufficiently large for the occasion.—*H.* They who undertake to explain every thing in a transaction of this nature perform a work of very great supererogation. As a whole, the narrative presents fewer difficulties than many of the other miracles recorded in Scripture. The greatest difficulty may be to find by what provision Jonah was preserved from suffocation. And for this it is not necessary to account. "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" And to the Lord it was not harder to preserve Jonah in the belly of the fish than the three youths at Babylon in the midst of the "burning fiery furnace." They who believe that the Almighty has, at sundry times and in divers manners, exercised powers beyond the ordinary course of the laws which he has appointed to govern nature, will find no difficulties; and those who do not believe this have read the Bible, if they do read it, to little purpose. Our limits do not allow us to investigate the subject more fully; but we may refer the reader to Calmet's *Dissertation sur Jonas,* the *Dissertations* in Gleig's edition of Stackhouse, and Bishop Jebb's *Sacred Literature. Three days and three nights.* This by no means necessarily implies three entire days and nights, but would be true if understood of one complete day, and any part, however small, of two others. Thus our Saviour, who lay in the tomb from Friday evening to Sunday morning, is said to have lain three days and nights in the grave. And that the present text should be similarly understood is the more probable, from the remarkable text in which the Son of man makes this situation of Jonah a type of his own sojourn for "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," *Mat.* xii. 40.—*Pictorial Bible.* The following remarks are from *M'Ewen.* A greater than Jonah is here pointed forth, in his death, burial, resurrection, and preaching to the Gentiles. The casting forth of Jonah into the sea much resembles the death of Christ, though in some circumstances there is a considerable difference; for the prophet Jonah was, for his own offences, delivered into the hands of mariners, who, without being guilty of a murder, reluctantly, and for their own preservation, threw him overboard, beseeching that his blood might not be laid to their charge. But Christ being delivered, not for his own but our offences, unto the Jews and Gentiles, was crucified, while his murderers imprecated the vengeance of his innocent blood to fall on themselves and their children. In other respects the circumstances respecting Christ and Jonah are more alike. With his own consent the prophet is cast forth into the sea, acknowledging he was the man for whom the storm was sent; so Christ voluntarily laid down his life, saying to those who were sent to apprehend him, "I am the man whom ye seek." The sufferings of the prophet, when thrown into the sea, were attended with happy consequences to the seamen,—the stilling of the tempest, preserving their lives, and, as it is to be hoped, the salvation of their souls; so, when Christ expired on the cross, this apparently tragical event produced the most blessed results, saving from destruction those for whom he gave his life, some of whom were the instruments of his death. Jonah's being in the belly of the fish three days and nights corresponds to the burial of our Redeemer. Never did that monster of the deep swallow such a morsel before; nor ever did the grave inclose such a prisoner as Jesus was. Jonah, indeed, was not really dead, as Christ was, when in the heart of the earth; but as that dismal place much resembled the horrors of the grave, and is styled the belly of hell by the prophet, perhaps the circumstance of Jonah's being alive in that sepulchre may remind us that Jesus was the living God, even when he was a dead man; for, though death was able to rend his soul and body from one another, neither were dissevered from his Divine person. And as Jonah received no harm, which was miraculous if we consider the powers of the stomach of so large a creature, so Christ, when lying in the grave, saw no corruption. His casting forth on the third day at the command of the Lord answers to the resurrection of the Son of God at the command of his Father. When Jonah was saved from the fish he was saved from the sea; when Christ was rescued from the grave he emerged from those billows of his Father's wrath which had passed over his head. It was not possible that Jonah should be detained in his dungeon when the Lord spake to the fish; it was not possible that Christ should be held by the cords of death longer than the appointed time. Nevertheless, in all things Jesus must have the pre-eminence, and we must acknowledge that "a greater than Jonas is here," *Mat.* xii. 41; for, whereas Jonah did not contribute in the least to his own restoration, our Redeemer, on the other hand, as he had power to lay down his life, had power to take it again. The fish that swallowed Jonah might receive as little harm by the prophet as the prophet by the fish; but, O grave, he was thy destruction! Never any descended into the grave but it was able to digest them, till Christ died and was buried. This grand devourer, snatching the bait of his human body, was not aware of the hook of his Divine nature, and was first to surrender his prey, having received such a deadly wound as shall never be healed. Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites, and saving them from destruction, corresponds to Christ's preaching to the Gentiles by his apostles, after his resurrection from the dead. For the gracious design of preserving a guilty city by turning them from their evil ways was the prophet preserved in the monster's belly, and revisited the light on the third day; for the same merciful purpose was Jesus raised from the dead, to save a guilty world from death, and to bless them in turning away every one of them from their iniquities. Was not the belief those poor Gentiles gave to the preaching of the prophet, and their speedy repentance, a prelude to the quick reception the doctrine of Jesus Christ should meet with among those who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel? On this occasion the prophet acted a most unworthy part, and shewed greater regard to his own reputation than to the salvation of his hearers. In this Jonah is not a type of Christ, who wept over Jerusalem, not because they repented, but because they repented not. On this account, as well as those formerly mentioned, we may well say, "a greater than Jonas is here." Thus, as Mather observes, Jonah is a partial, not a complete type of Christ.—*Religious Tract Society's Bible.*

CHAP. II.—3. *All thy billows and waves passed over me.* The hymn which commences here is partly descriptive, partly precatory, and partly eucharistical. That the language, not only of the prayer, but also of the introduction, is in part borrowed from the *Psalms,* appears from the following comparison: *Ps.* cxx. 1, with ver. 3; *Ps.* xlii. 8, ver. 4; *Ps.* xxxi. 23, ver. 5; *Ps.* lxix. 2, ver. 6; *Ps.* cxii. 4, ver. 8; *Ps.* xxxi. 7, ver. 9; *Ps.* iii. 9, ver. 10. On the supposition that Jonah was familiar with the *Psalms,* it was very natural for him to incorporate sentences taken from them with his own language, just as we frequently do in extempore prayer, without thinking of the portion of Scripture from which they are derived. On reviewing this prayer, and weighing the import of its several terms, it is obvious that, though Jonah was in a state of consciousness while in the belly of the fish, he had no idea that such was his situation. On the contrary, he appears to have been under the impression that he was ingulfed in the sea, now forcibly carried along by its current, now entangled among its weeds, and now sinking into the profound ravines of its rocks.—*H.*

CHAP. III.—2, 3. *Nineveh that great city—an exceeding great city of three days journey.* Supposing a journey on foot to be intended, or a caravan march, the distance will range from forty-five to sixty miles. It is not stated whether we are to apply this distance to a direct passage through the city from one extremity to the other, or to the compass of its walls; but as the former supposition gives incredible dimensions, and the latter only an extent equal to that assigned by profane authorities, its circuit is no doubt meant. The walls of Nineveh circumscribed an area equal to that of Babylon. Diodorus Siculus states its dimensions at one hundred and fifty stadia long, ninety broad, and four hundred and eighty in circumference. Herodotus, in measuring the royal road from Sardis to Susa, allows one hundred and fifty stadia for a day's journey. This is the length ascribed to Nineveh, the distance compassed, according to the view given, in the days' journey of Jonah; and the representation of it, as a city of three days' journey in circuit, and its assigned circumference of four hundred and eighty stadia, are closely coincident, especially when we remember that the Greeks, in estimating distances, allowed a certain number of stadia to every day, independent of the casual hindrances or facilities that might arise to progress. In the regions of civilization no parallel case exists, or what may be deemed an approximation to it, of a city occupying such an extent of ground. But we are not to frame our ideas of the eastern and ancient from the western and modern, and look to our closely packed towns and condensed population as samples of the arrangement of things three thousand years ago in Central Asia. Not London or Paris, but Ispahan and Pekin, will shape our imaginations rightly. Babylon, we know, was very loosely built. The dwellings were usually detached, as a security in case of fire. There were large open spaces for pleasure and cultivation, and a sufficient quantity of ground for tillage to sustain the inhabitants a considerable time if shut up within their walls. We may read then without surprise concerning the extent of Nineveh, inclosing parks, plantations, gardens, lands for pasturage and tillage, as many of the oriental towns now do upon a smaller scale. In the Divine rebuke administered to the prophet, dissatisfied at the city being spared, the reference to "much cattle" within its bounds corroborates the view taken of its structure. Fifteen hundred towers, each two hundred feet in height, crowned the walls of the city, rendering its defences so strong as to be deemed impregnable. The walls themselves were a hundred feet high, and so broad that three chariots might be driven upon them abreast. This is the testimony of profane antiquity; and the references of the Jewish prophets to the "rejoicing city that sat in security," the "fenced place," the "stronghold," the "valiant men and chariots," the "silver and gold," the "pleasant furniture," "carved lintels," and "cedar work," convey the idea of great material strength and grandeur. The population bore no proportion to the area occupied, like that which belongs to our modern cities. Of this we have indisputable evidence, (*ch.* iv. 11,) "Sixscore thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand," are mentioned among its inhabitants—a proverbial expression for young children. Following the usual rate of calculation, this will give only six hundred thousand souls for the entire population, which we may increase to seven hundred thousand, as the number of children is said to have exceeded the number specified. This amount of human occupation of such a space would leave ample room for every dwelling to be apart, and corresponds Nineveh to the suburban aspect of one of our towns, rather than to the closely piled and densely peopled interior.—*Lowe's Edin. Mag.* for Feb. and April, 1847, edited by an eminent clergyman. To this work we are also partly indebted for the Note on *Zep.* ii. 13—15. 5. *So the men of Nineveh believed God.* There were no outward indications of the overthrow of Nineveh, and Jonah wrought no miracle in confirmation of his prediction, yet the Ninevites believed it to be the word of God, and that it would be verified, probably through a conviction excited in their minds of the greatness of their guilt, and from a recollection of the many wonderful judgments that Israel's God had inflicted on his enemies. Perhaps they had also heard of the wonderful things which God had wrought in respect of Jonah.—*Scott.* The fame of the wonderful works God had wrought for the Jews was spread over the eastern parts of the world. This might make the Ninevites hearken to a man of that nation, that came to them as sent by God; and it is likely that he gave them an account of the miraculous circumstances which attended his own mission. But, without question, a sense of their own guilt, and their deserving whatever punishment heaven could inflict, was a principal reason that moved them to have regard to his message. And by the men of Nineveh's repenting at the preaching of Jonah, God designed to upbraid the stubbornness of his people, and shame them, as it were, into repentance, for fear the men of Nineveh should rise up in judgment against them, *Mat.* xii. 41.—*Lowth.*

SITTING UNDER VINE

AND FIG TREE.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF MICAH,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

We shall have some account of this prophet in the first verse of the book of his prophecy, and therefore shall here only observe that, being contemporary with the prophet Isaiah, (only that he began to prophecy a little after him,) there is a near resemblance between that prophet's prophecy and this; and there is a prediction of the advancement and establishment of the gospel church, which both of them have, almost in the same words, that out of the mouth of two such witnesses so great a word might be established: compare *Isa.* ii. 2, 3, with *ch.* iv. 1, 2. Isaiah's prophecy is said to be concerning Judah and Jerusalem, but Micah's concerning Samaria and Jerusalem; for, though this prophecy be dated only by the reigns of the kings of Judah, yet it refers to the kingdom of Israel, the approaching ruin of which, in the captivity of the ten tribes, he plainly foretells, and sadly laments. What we find here in writing was but an abstract of the sermons he preached during the reign of the three kings. The scope of the whole is, I. To convince sinners of their sins, by setting them in order before them, charging both Israel and Judah with idolatry, covetousness, oppression, contempt of the word of God; and their rulers especially, both in church and state, with the abuse of their power; and also by shewing them the judgments of God ready to break in upon them for their sins. II. To comfort God's people with promises of mercy and deliverance, especially with an assurance of the coming of the Messiah, and of the grace of the Gospel through him. It is remarkable concerning this prophecy, and confirms its authority, that we find two quotations out of it made publicly upon very solemn occasions, both referring to very great events. 1. One is a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, *ch.* iii. 12, which we find quoted in the Old Testament, by the elders of the land, *Jer.* xxvi. 17, 18, in justification of Jeremiah, when he foretold the judgments of God coming upon Jerusalem, and to stay the proceedings of the court against him. Micah, say they, foretold that Zion should be ploughed as a field, and Hezekiah did not put him to death, why then should we punish Jeremiah for saying the same? 2. Another is a prediction of the birth of Christ, *ch.* v. 2, which we find quoted in the New Testament, by the chief priests and scribes of the people, in answer to Herod's inquiry, where Christ should be born? *Mat.* ii. 5, 6; for still we find that to him bare all the prophets witness.

A.M. 3254. B.C. 750.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have, I. The title of the book, ver. 1, and a preface demanding attention, ver. 2. II. Warning given of desolating judgments, hastening upon the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, ver. 3, 4; and all for sin, ver. 5. III. The particulars of the destruction instanced, ver. 6, 7. IV. The greatness of the destruction illustrated, 1. By the prophet's sorrow for it, ver. 8, 9; 2. By the general sorrow that should be for it, in the several places that must expect to share in it, ver. 10—16. These prophecies of Micah might well be called his lamentations.

THE word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, *and* Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

2 Hear, all ye people;
Hearken, O earth, and all that therein is:
And let the Lord GOD be The Lord from his holy temple. [witness against you,

3 For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place,
And will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

4 And the mountains shall be molten under him,
And the valleys shall be cleft,
As wax before the fire,
And as the waters *that are* poured down a steep place.

5 For the transgression of Jacob *is* all this,
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What *is* the transgression of Jacob? *is it* not Samaria?
And what *are* the high places of Judah? *are they* not Jerusalem?

6 Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field,
And as plantings of a vineyard:
And I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley,
And I will discover the foundations thereof. [pieces,

7 And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to
And all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire,
And all the idols thereof will I lay desolate:
For she gathered *it* of the hire of an harlot,
And they shall return to the hire of an harlot.

Here is, First. A general account of this prophet and his prophecy, ver. 1. This is prefixed for the satisfaction of all that read and hear the prophecy of this book, who will give the more credit to it when they know the author and his authority.

1. The prophecy is "the word of the Lord;" it is a Divine revelation. Note, What is written in the Bible, and what is preached by the ministers of Christ, according to what was written there, must be heard and received, not as the word of dying men, which we may be judges of, but as the word of the living God, which we must be judged by, for so it is. This word of the Lord came to the prophet, came plainly, came powerfully, came in a preventing way, and he saw it, saw the vision in which it was conveyed to him, saw the things themselves which he foretold with as much clearness and certainty as if they had been already accomplished.

2. The prophet is Micah the Morasthite; his name Micah, a contraction of Micaiah, the name of a prophet some ages before, in Ahab's time, 1 *Kin.* xxii. 8. His surname was, the Morasthite, born or lived at Moresheth, which is mentioned here, ver. 13; or Mareshah, which is mentioned, ver. 15, and *Jos.* xv. 44. The place of his abode is mentioned, that any one might inquire in that place at that time, and might find there was, or had been, such a one there, who was generally reputed to be a prophet.

3. The date of his prophecy is in the reigns of three kings of Judah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Ahaz was one of the worst of Judah's kings, and Hezekiah one of the best; such variety of times pass over God's ministers, times that frown and times that smile, to each of which they must study to accommodate themselves, and to arm themselves against the temptations of both. The promises and threatenings of this book are interwoven, by which it appears that even in the wicked reign he preached comfort, and said to the righteous then, it shall be well with them; and in the pious reign he preached conviction, and said to the wicked then, it shall be ill with them; for, however the times change, the word of the Lord is still the same.

4. The parties concerned in this prophecy. It is concerning Samaria and Jerusalem, the head cities of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, under the influence of which the kingdoms themselves were. Though the ten tribes have deserted the houses both of David and Aaron, yet God is pleased to send prophets to them.

Secondly. A very solemn introduction to the following prophecy, ver. 2. In which,

1. The people are summoned to draw near and give their attendance, as upon a court of judicature; "Hear all ye people." Note, Where God has a mouth to speak we must have an ear to hear; we all must, for we are all concerned in what is delivered. 'Hear, ye people, all of them,' so the margin reads it; all ye that are now within hearing, and all others that hear it at second hand. It is an unusual construction; but those words with which Micah begins his prophecy are the very same in the original with those wherewith Micaiah ended his, 1 *Kin.* xxii. 28.

2. The earth is called upon, with all that therein is, to hear what the prophet has to say. "Hearken, O earth." The earth shall be made to shake under the stroke and weight of the judgments coming. Sooner will the earth hear than this stupid senseless people; but God will be heard when he pleads. If the church and those in it will not hear, the earth and those in it shall, and shame them.

3. God himself is appealed to, and his omniscience, power and justice, are vouched in testimony against this people. "Let the Lord God be witness against you," a witness that you had fair warning given you, that your prophets did their duty faithfully as watchmen, but you would not take the warning; let the accomplishment of the prophecy be a witness against your contempt and disbelief of it, and prove to your conviction and confusion that it was the word of God, and no word of his shall fall to the ground. Note, God himself will be a witness by the judgments of his hand against those that would not receive his testimony in the judgments of his mouth; he will be a witness "from his holy temple" in heaven, when he comes down to execute judgment, ver. 3, against those that turned a deaf ear to his oracles, wherein he witnessed to them out of his holy temple at Jerusalem.

Thirdly. A terrible prediction of destroying judgments, which should come upon Judah and Israel, which had its accomplishment soon after in Israel, and at length in Judah. For it is foretold,

1. That God himself will appear against them, ver. 3. They boast of themselves and their relation to God, as if that would secure them; but, though God never deceives the faith of the upright, he will disappoint the presumption of the hypocrites, for "behold the Lord cometh forth out of his place," quits his mercy-seat, where they thought they had him fast, and prepares his throne for judgment. His glory departs, for they drive it from them. God's way towards this people had long been a way of mercy; but now he changeth his way, he comes out of his place, and will come down. He had seemed to retire, as one regardless of what was done, but now he will shew himself, he will rend the heavens, and will come down; not as sometimes in surprising mercies, but in surprising judgments, to do things, not for them, but against them, which they looked not for, *Isa.* xxvi. 21; lxiv. 1.

2. That when the Creator appears against them, it shall be in vain for any creature to appear for them. He will tread with contempt and disdain upon the high places of the earth, upon all the powers that are advanced in competition with him, or in opposition to him; and he will so tread upon them as to tread them down, and level them. High places set up for the worship of idols, or for military fortifications, shall all be trodden down and trampled into the dust. Do men trust to the height and strength of the mountains and rocks, as if they were sufficient to bear up their hopes, and bear off their fears? They shall be "molten under him," melted down "as wax before the fire," *Ps.* lxviii. 2. Do they trust to the fruitfulness of the valleys and their products? They shall be cleft or rent, with those fiery streams that shall come pouring down from the mountains when they are melted. They shall be ploughed and wasted away, as the ground is by the waters that are "poured down a steep place." God is said to "cleave the earth with rivers," *Hab.* iii. 9. Neither men of high degree, as the mountains, nor men of low degree, as the valleys, shall be able to secure either themselves or the land from the judgments of God, when they are sent with commission to lay all waste, and, like a sweeping rain, to leave no food, *Pr.* xxviii. 3. This is applied particularly to the head city of Israel, which they hoped would be a protection to the kingdom; ver. 6, "I will make Samaria," that is now a rich and populous city, as "a heap of the field," as a heap of dung laid there to be spread, or as a heap of stones gathered together to be carried away, and "as plantings of a vineyard," as hillocks of earth raised to plant vines in. God will make of that city a heap, of that "defenced city a ruin," *Isa.* xxv. 2. Their altars had been as "heaps in the furrows of the fields," *Hos.* xii. 11, and now their houses shall be so, as ruinous heaps. The stones of the city are poured down into the valley by the fury of the conqueror, who will thus be revenged on those walls that so long held out against him. They shall be quite pulled down, so that the very foundations shall be discovered that had been covered by the superstructure; and not one stone shall be left upon another.

Fourthly. A charge of sin upon them, as the procuring cause of these desolating judgments; ver. 5, "For the transgression of Jacob is all this." If it be asked why God is so angry, and why Jacob and Israel are thus brought to ruin by his anger, the answer is ready, Sin has done all the mischief. Sin hath laid all waste; all the calamities of Jacob and Israel are owing to their transgressions; if they had not gone away from God, he had never appeared thus against them. Note, External privileges and professions will not secure a sinful people from the judgments of God. If sin be found in the house of Israel, if Jacob be guilty of transgression and rebellion, God will not spare them; no, he will punish them first, for their sins are of all other most provoking to him, for they are most reproaching; but it is asked, "What is the transgression of Jacob?" Note, When we feel the smart of sin, it concerns us to inquire what the sin is we smart for, that we may particularly war against that which wars against us. And what is that?

1. It is idolatry; it is the high places. That is the transgression, the great transgression which reigns in Israel, that spiritual whoredom, the violation of the marriage covenant, which merits a divorce. Even the high places of Judah, though not so bad as the transgression of Jacob, were yet offensive enough to God, and a remaining blemish upon some of the good reigns. "Howbeit the high places were not taken away."

2. It is the idolatry of Samaria and Jerusalem, the royal cities of these two kingdoms. Those were the most populous places, and where there were most people there was most wickedness, and they made one another worse; these were the most pompous places, there men lived most in wealth and pleasure, and they forgat God. These were the places that had the greatest influence upon the country by authority and example, so that from them idolatry and "profaneness went forth throughout all the land," *Jer.* xxiii. 15. Note, Spiritual distempers are most contagious in persons and places that are most conspicuous. If the head city of a kingdom, or the chief family in a parish, be vicious and profane, many will follow their pernicious ways, and write after an ill copy, when great ones set it them. The vices of leaders and rulers are leading ruling vices, and therefore shall be surely and sorely punished. Those have a great deal to answer for indeed, that not only sin, but make Israel to sin. Those must expect to be made examples that have been examples of wickedness. If the transgression of Jacob is Samaria, therefore shall Samaria become a heap. Let ringleaders in sin hear this and fear.

Fifthly. The punishment made to answer the sin is, the particular destruction of the idols, ver. 7.

1. The gods they worshipped shall be destroyed; the "graven images shall be beaten to pieces" by the army of the Assyrians, and all the idols shall be laid desolate. Samaria and her idols were ruined together by Sennacherib, *Isa.* x. 11, and "their gods cast into the fire," for "they were no gods," *Isa.* xxxvii. 19; and this was the Lord's doing: "I will lay the idols desolate." Note, If the law of God prevail not to make men in authority destroy idols, God will take the work into his own hands, and will do it himself.

2. The gifts that passed between them and their gods shall be destroyed; for "all the hires thereof shall be burnt with fire." Which may be meant either of the presents they made to their idols, for the replenishing of their altars, and the adorning of their statues and temples,—these shall become a prey to the victorious army, that shall rifle not only private houses, but the houses of their gods; or of the corn, and wine, and oil, which they called the rewards or hires which their idols, their lovers, gave them, *Hos.* ii. 12,—these shall be taken from them, by him whom (by ascribing them to their dear idols) they have defrauded of the honour due to him. Note, That cannot prosper by which men are either hired to sin or hire others to sin; for the wages of sin will be death. "She gathered it of the hire of the harlot, and it shall return to the hire of the harlot." They enriched themselves by their leagues with the idolatrous nations, who gave them advantages to court them into the service of their idols; and their idols' temples were enriched with gifts, by those that went a whoring after them; and all this wealth shall become a prey to the idolatrous nations, and so be the hire of a harlot again, wages to an army of idolaters, who shall take it as a reward given them by their gods; "It shall be a present to king Jareb," *Hos.* x. 6. What they gave to their idols, and what they thought they got by them, shall be as the hire of a harlot; that is, the curse of God shall be upon it, and it shall never prosper, or do them any good. It is common that what is squeezed out by one lust is squandered away upon another.

8 Therefore I will wail and howl,
I will go stripped and naked:
I will make a wailing like the dragons,
And mourning as the owls.
9 For her wound *is* incurable;
For it is come unto Judah; [lem.
He is come unto the gate of my people, *even* to Jerusa-
10 Declare ye *it* not at Gath, weep ye not at all:
In the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust.
11 Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked:
The inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth
In the mourning of Beth-ezel; he shall receive of you his standing.
12 For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good:
But evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem. [swift beast:
13 O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the
She *is* the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion:
For the transgressions of Israel were found in thee.
14 Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-gath:
The houses of Achzib *shall be* a lie to the kings of Israel.
15 Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah:
He shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel.
16 Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children;
Enlarge thy baldness as the eagle;
For they are gone into captivity from thee.

We have here a long train of mourners attending the funeral of a ruined kingdom.

First. The prophet is himself chief mourner; ver. 8, 9, "I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked," as a man distracted with grief. The prophets usually expressed their own grief for the public grievances, partly to mollify the predictions of them, and to make it appear it was not out of ill-will they denounced the judgments of God,—so far were they from desiring the woful day that they dreaded it more than any thing; partly to show how dreadful and mournful the calamities would be, and to stir up in the people a holy fear of them, that by repentance they might turn away the wrath of God. Note, We ought to lament the punishments of sinners as well as the sufferings of saints in this world; the weeping prophet did so, *Jer.* ix. 1. So did this prophet: he "makes a wailing like the dragons," or rather, jackalls, ravenous beasts, that in those countries used to meet in the night, and howl, and make hideous noises; he mourns as the owls, the screech owls, or ostriches, as some read it. Two things the prophet here thus dolefully laments.

1. That Israel's case is desperate. "Her wound is incurable," it is ruin without remedy. Man cannot help her, God will not, because she will not by repentance and reformation help herself. There is indeed balm in Gilead, and a physician there; but they will not apply themselves to the physician, nor apply the balm to themselves, and therefore the wound is incurable.

2. That Judah likewise is in danger. The cup is going round, and is now put into Judah's hand; the enemy is come to the gate of Jerusalem. Soon after the destruction of Samaria, and the ten tribes, the Assyrian army under Sennacherib laid siege to Jerusalem, came to the gate, but could not force their way any farther. However, it was with great concern and trouble that the prophet foresaw the fright, so dearly did he love the peace of Jerusalem.

Secondly. Other places are here brought in mourning, and are called upon to mourn, but with this proviso, that they should not let the Philistines hear them; ver. 10, "Declare it not in Gath." This is borrowed from David's lamentation

for Saul and Jonathan, 2 *Sam.* i. 20, "Tell it not in Gath," for the uncircumcised will triumph in Israel's tears. Note, One would not, if it could be helped, gratify those that make themselves and their companions merry with the sins or with the sorrows of God's Israel. David was silent, and stifled his griefs, when the wicked were before him, *Ps.* xxxix. 1. But, though it may be prudent not to give way to a noisy sorrow, yet it is a duty to admit a silent one when the church of God is in distress. "Roll thyself in the dust," as great mourners used to do, and so let the house of Judah, and every house in Jerusalem, become a house of Aphrah, a house of dust, covered with dust, crumbled into dust. When God makes the house dust, it becomes us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and to put our mouths in the dust, thus accommodating ourselves to the providences that are concerning us. Dust we are; God brings us to the dust that we may know it, and own it. Divers other places are here named that should be sharers in this universal mourning, the names of some of which we do not find elsewhere; whence it is conjectured that they are names put upon them by the prophet, the signification of which might either indicate or aggravate the miseries coming upon them; thereby to awaken this secure and stupid people to a holy fear of Divine wrath. We find Sennacherib's invasion thus described in the prediction of it, by the impressions of terror it should make upon the several cities that fell in his way, *Isa.* x. 28, 29, &c. Let us observe the particulars here:

1. The inhabitants of Saphir, which signifies, 'neat and beautiful,' ('Thou that dwellest fairly,' so the margin reads it,) shall pass away into captivity, or be forced to flee, stripped of their ornaments, and "having their shame naked." Note, Those who appear never so fine and delicate know not what contempt they may be exposed to; and the more grievous will the shame be to those that have been the inhabitants of Saphir.

2. The inhabitants of Zaanan, which signifies 'the country of flocks,' a populous country, where the people are as numerous and thick as flocks of sheep, shall yet be so taken up with their own calamities, felt or feared, that they shall not "come forth in the mourning of Bethezel," which signifies 'a place near,' shall not condole with, or bring any succour to, their next neighbours in distress; for "he shall receive of you his standing," the enemy shall encamp among you, O inhabitants of Zaanan, shall take up a station there, shall find footing among you. They may well think themselves excused from helping their neighbours that find they have enough to do to help themselves, and to hold their own.

3. As for the inhabitants of Maroth, which some think is Ramoth, others that it signifies the rough places, they "waited carefully for good," and were grieved for the want of it, but were disappointed; for "evil came from the Lord, unto the gate of Jerusalem," when the Assyrian army besieged it, ver. 12. The inhabitants of Maroth might well overlook their own particular grievances, when they saw the holy city itself in danger; and might well overlook the Assyrian, that was the instrument, when they saw the evil coming from the Lord.

4. Lachish was a city of Judah, which Sennacherib laid siege to, *Isa.* xxxvi. 1, 2. The inhabitants of that city are called to "bind the chariot to the swift beast;" to prepare for a speedy flight, as having no other way left to secure themselves and their families. Or, it is spoken ironically: You have had your chariots and swift beasts, but where are they now? God's quarrel with Lachish is, that "she is the beginning of the sin," probably the sin of idolatry, to the daughter of Zion, ver. 13. They had learned it from the ten tribes, their near neighbours, and so infected the two tribes with it. Note, Those that help to bring sin into a country do but thereby prepare for the throwing of themselves out of it. They must expect to be first in the punishment that have been ringleaders in sin. "The transgressions of Israel were found in thee;" that is, when they came to be traced up to their original, they were found to take rise very much from that city. God knows at whose door to lay the blame of the transgressions of Israel, and whom to find guilty. Lachish having been so much accessary to the sin of Israel shall certainly be reckoned with; "Thou shalt give presents to Moresheth-gath," a city of the Philistines, which perhaps had a dependence upon Gath, that famous Philistine city. Thou shalt send to court those of that city to assist thee, but it shall be in vain; for, ver. 14, "The houses of Achzib," (a city which joined to Mareshah, or Moresheth, and is mentioned with it, *Jos.* xv. 44,) "shall be a lie to the kings of Israel;" though they depend upon their strength, yet they shall fail them. Here there is an allusion to the name; Achzib signifies 'a lie,' and so it shall prove to those that trust in it.

5. Mareshah, that could not or would not help Israel, shall herself be made a prey; ver. 15, "I will bring an heir," that is, an enemy, that shall take possession of thy lands, with as much assurance as if he were heir-at-law to them; and he "shall come to Adullam," and "to the glory of Israel," that is, to Jerusalem, the head city. Or, the glory of Israel shall come to be as Adullam, a poor, despicable place. Or, the king of Assyria, whom Israel had gloried in, shall come to Adullam in laying the country waste.

6. The whole land of Judah seems to be spoken to, ver. 16, and called to weeping and mourning, "Make thee bald," by tearing thy hair, and shaving thy head; "poll thee for thy delicate children," that had been tenderly and nicely brought up. "Enlarge thy baldness as the eagle," when she casts her feathers, and is all over bald, "for they are gone into captivity" from thee, and are not like to return. And their captivity will be the more grievous to them, because they have been brought up delicately, and have not been inured to hardship. Or this is directed particularly to the inhabitants of Mareshah, as ver. 15. That was the prophet's own city, and yet he denounceth the judgments of God against it; for it shall be an aggravation of its sin, that it had such a prophet, and knew not the day of its visitation. Its being thus privileged, since it improved not the privilege, shall not procure favour for it, either with God or his prophet.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter we have, I. The sins with which the people of Israel are charged, covetousness and oppression, fraudulent and violent practices, ver. 1—2; dealing barbarously, even with women and children, and other harmless people, ver. 8, 9; opposition of God's prophets, and silencing them, ver. 6, 7; and delighting in false prophets, ver. 11. II. The judgments with which they are threatened for these sins, that they should be humbled and impoverished, ver. 3—5; and banished, ver. 10. III. Gracious promises of comfort reserved for the good people among them, in the Messiah, ver. 12, 13. And this is the sum and scope of most of the chapters of this and other prophecies.

WOE to them that devise iniquity,
And work evil upon their beds!
When the morning is light, they practise it,
Because it is in the power of their hand.
2 And they covet fields, and take *them* by violence;
And houses, and take *them* away:
So they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.
3 Therefore thus saith the LORD;
Behold, against this family do I devise an evil,
From which ye shall not remove your necks;
Neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time *is* evil.
4 In that day shall *one* take up a parable against you,
And lament with a doleful lamentation,
And say, We be utterly spoiled:
He hath changed the portion of my people:
How hath he removed *it* from me!
Turning away he hath divided our fields.
5 Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot
In the congregation of the LORD.

Here is, First. The injustice of man contriving the evil of sin, ver. 1, 2. God was coming forth against this people to destroy them; and here he shews what was the ground of his controversy with them: it is that which is often mentioned as a sin, that hastens the ruin of nations and families as much as any other, the sin of oppression. Let us see the steps of it.

1. They eagerly desire that which is not their own,—that is the root of bitterness, the root of all evil; ver. 2, "They covet fields and houses," as Ahab did Naboth's vineyard. O that such a one's field and house were mine! It lies convenient for me, and I would manage it better than he doth; it is fitter for me than for him.

2. They set their wits to work to invent ways of accomplishing their desires, ver. 1. They devise iniquity with a great deal of cursed art and policy; they plot how to do it effectually, and yet so as not to expose themselves, or bring themselves into danger, or under reproach by it. This is called working evil; they are working it in their heads, in their families, and are as intent upon it, and with as much pleasure, as if they were doing it; and are as confident of their success (so wisely do they think they have laid the scheme) as if it were then assuredly done. Note, It is bad to do mischief upon a sudden thought, but much worse to devise it, to do it with design and deliberation; when the craft and subtlety of the old serpent appears with his poison and venom it is wickedness in perfection. They devised it "upon their beds," when they should have been asleep; care to compass a mischievous design held their eyes waking: upon their beds, where they should have been remembering God, and meditating upon him, where they should have been communing with their own hearts, and examining them, they were devising iniquity. It is of great consequence to us how we improve and employ the hours of our retirement and solitude.

3. They employ their power in executing what they have designed and contrived. They practise the iniquity they have devised, "because it is in the power of their hand." They find they can compass it by the help of their wealth, and the authority and interest they have, and that none dare control them, or call them to an account for it; and this they think will justify them, and bear them out in it. Note, It is the mistake of many to think, as they can do they may do; whereas no power is given for destruction, but all for edification.

4. They are industrious and very expeditious in accomplishing the iniquity they have devised. When they have settled the matter in their thoughts in their beds they lose no time, but as soon as the morning is light they practise it; are up early in the prosecution of their designs, and what ill their hands find to do they do it with all their might, which shames our slothfulness and dilatoriness in doing good, and should shame us out of it. In the service of God and our generation let it never be said we left that to be done to-morrow which we could do to-day.

5. They stick at nothing to compass their designs; what they covet they take away if they can. And, 1st. They care not what wrong they do, though it be never so gross and open; they take away men's fields by violence, not only by fraud and underhand practices, and colour of law, but by force and with a high hand. 2nd. They care not whom they do wrong to, nor how far the iniquity extends which they devise; they "oppress a man and his house," they rob and ruin those that have numerous families to maintain, and are not concerned though they send them and their wives and children a begging. They "oppress a man and his heritage;" they take away from men that which they have an unquestionable title to, having received it from their ancestors, and which they have but in trust to transmit it to their posterity; but those oppressors care not how many they impoverish, so they may but enrich themselves. Note, If covetousness reigns in the heart, commonly all compassion is banished from it; and if any man love this world, as the love of the Father, so the love of his neighbour is not in him.

Secondly. The justice of God contriving the evil of punishment for this sin; ver. 3, "Therefore thus saith the Lord," the righteous God that judgeth between man and man, and is an avenger on them that do wrong, "Behold against this family do I devise an evil;" that is, against the whole kingdom, the house of Israel, and particularly those families in it that were cruel and oppressive. They unjustly devise evil against their brethren, and God will justly devise evil against them. Infinite Wisdom will so contrive the punishment of their sin as that it shall be very sure, and such as cannot be avoided; very severe, and such as they cannot bear; and very signal and remarkable, and such as shall be universally observed to answer the sin. The more there appears of a wicked wit in the sin, the more there shall appear of a holy wisdom and conduct in the punishment; for the Lord will be known by the judgments he executeth, he will be owned by them.

1. He finds them very secure and confident that they shall some way or other escape the judgment; or, though they fall under it, shall soon throw it off and get clear of it, and therefore he tells them, it is "an evil from which they shall not remove their neck." They were children of Belial, that would not endure the easy yoke of God's righteous commands, but broke those bonds asunder, and cast away those cords from them; and, therefore, God will lay upon them the heavy yoke of his righteous judgments, and they shall not be able to withdraw their necks from that. Those that will not be overruled shall be overcome.

2. He finds them very proud and stately; and therefore he tells them, they shall not go haughtily, with "stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go," *Isa.* iii. 16; for this time is evil, and the events of it were very humbling and mortifying, and such as will bring down the stoutest spirit.

3. He found them very merry and jovial; and therefore tells them their note shall be changed, their laughter shall be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness; ver. 4, "In that day," when God comes to punish you for your

oppression, "shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation," with 'a lamentation of lamentations,' so the word is, a most lamentable lamentation, as a song of songs is a most pleasant song. Their enemies shall insult over them, and make a jest of their griefs, for they shall "take up a parable" against them. Their friends shall mourn over them, and lay to heart their calamities, and this shall be the general cry, "We be utterly spoiled," we are all undone. Note, They that were most haughty and secure in their prosperity are commonly most dejected and most ready to despair in their adversity.

4. He found them very rich in houses and lands, which they had gained by oppression, and therefore tells them they shall be stripped of all. 1st. They should in their despair give it all up; they shall say, "We be utterly spoiled, he hath changed the portion of my people," so that it is now no longer theirs, but it is in the possession and occupation of their enemies; "How hath he removed it from me!" how suddenly, how powerfully. What is unjustly got by us will not long continue with us; the righteous God will remove it. "Turning away" from us in wrath, he "hath divided our fields," and given them into the hands of strangers. Woe to those from whom God turns away. The margin reads it, 'Instead of restoring, he hath divided our fields;' instead of putting us again in possession of our estates, he hath confirmed those in the possession of them that have taken them from us. Note, It is just with God that those who have dealt fraudulently and violently with others should themselves be dealt fraudulently and violently with. 2nd. God shall ratify what they say in their despair, ver. 5; so it shall be, "Thou shalt have none to cast a cord by lot, in the congregation of the Lord;" none to divide inheritances, because there shall be no inheritances to divide, no courts to try titles to lands, or determine controversies about them, or cast lots upon them, as in Joshua's time, for all shall be in the enemies' hand. This land which should be taken from them they had not only an unquestionable title to, but a very comfortable enjoyment of; for it was "in the congregation of the Lord," or rather, the congregation of the Lord was in it. It was God's land, it was a holy land, and therefore it was the more grievous to them to be turned out of it. Note, Those are to be held the sorest calamities which cut us off from the congregation of the Lord, or cut us short in the enjoyment of the privileges of it.

6 Prophesy ye not, *say they to them that* prophesy:
They shall not prophesy to them,
That they shall not take shame.
7 O *thou that art* named the house of Jacob, [doings?
Is the spirit of the LORD straitened? *are* these his
Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?
8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy:
Ye pull off the robe with the garment
From them that pass by securely as men averse from war.
9 The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses;
From their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.
10 Arise ye, and depart; for this *is* not *your* rest:
Because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you*,
Even with a sore destruction.
11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie,
Saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong
He shall even be the prophet of this people. [drink;

Here are two sins charged upon the people of Israel, and judgments denounced against them for each, such judgments as exactly answer the sin—persecuting God's prophets, and oppressing God's poor.

First. Persecuting God's prophets, suppressing and silencing them, is a sin that provokes God as much as any other, for it not only spits in the face of his authority over us, but spurns at the bowels of his mercy to us; for his sending prophets to us is a sure and valuable token of his goodwill. Now observe here,

1. What the obstruction and oppression was which this people gave to God's prophets. They said to them that prophesy, Prophesy ye not, as *Isa.* xxx. 10. They "said to the seers, See not;" do not trouble us with accounts of what you have seen, nor bring us any such frightful messages; either they must not prophesy at all or only what they please. The word for prophesying here signifies 'dropping,' for the words of the prophets dropped from heaven as the dew. Note, Those that hate to be reformed hate to be reproved, and do all they can to silence faithful ministers. Amos was forbidden to prophesy, *Am.* vii. 10, &c. And therefore persecutors stop their breath, because they have no other way to stop their mouths; for if they live they will preach, and torment them that dwell on the earth, as the two witnesses did, *Rev.* xi. 10. Some read it, 'Prophesy not, let these prophesy:' let not those prophesy that tell us of our faults, and threaten us, but let these prophesy that will flatter us in our sins, and cry peace to us. They will not say they will have no ministers at all, but they will have such as would say just what they would have them, and go their way. This they are charged with, ver. 11, that when they silenced and frowned upon the true prophets they countenanced and encouraged pretenders, and set them up, and made an interest for them to confront God's faithful prophets. "If a man walk in the spirit of falsehood," pretend to have the Spirit of God, but really it is a spirit of error, a spirit of delusion, and he himself knows it, that he has no commission, no instruction from God, yet if he saith, "I will prophesy unto thee of wine and strong drink," if he will but assure them that they shall have wine and strong drink enough, that they need not fear the judgments of war and famine, which the other prophets threatened them with, that they should always have plenty of the delights of sense, and never know the want of them, and if he will but tell them that it is lawful for them to drink as much as they please of their wine and strong drink, and they need not scruple being drunk, that they shall have peace, though they go on and add drunkenness to thirst—such a prophet as this is a man after their own heart, that will tell them there is neither sin nor danger in that wicked course of life they lead; "He shall even be the prophet of this people," that is, such a man they would have to be their prophet, that will not only associate himself with them in their rioting and revellings, but will pretend to consecrate it by his prophecies, and so harden them in their security and sensuality. Note, It is not strange if people that are vicious and debauched covet to have ministers that are altogether such as themselves, for they are willing to believe God is so too, *Ps.* l. 21. But how are sacred things profaned, when they are prostituted to such base purposes, when prophecy itself shall be pressed into the services of a lewd and profane crew! But thus that servant who said, "My lord delays his coming," by the spirit of falsehood, "smote his fellow servants, and ate and drank with the drunken."

2. How they are here expostulated with upon this matter; ver. 7, "O thou that art named the house of Jacob," doth it become thee to say and do thus? Wilt thou silence them that prophesy, and forbid them to speak in God's name? Note, It is an honour and privilege to be named of the house of Jacob; "Thou art called a Jew," *Rom.* ii. 17. But when those who are called by that worthy name degenerate, they commonly prove the worst of men themselves, and the worst enemies to God's prophets. The Jews, that were named of the house of Jacob, were the most violent persecutors of the first preachers of the Gospel. Upon this the prophet here argues with these opposers of the word of God, and shews them, 1st. What an affront they hereby put upon God, the God of the holy prophets; "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" In silencing the Lord's prophets, you do what you can to silence his Spirit too; but do you think you can do it? Can you make the Spirit of God your prisoner and your servant? Will you prescribe to him what he shall say, and forbid him to say what is displeasing to you? If you silence the prophets, yet cannot the Spirit of the Lord find out other ways to reach your consciences? Can your unbelief frustrate the Divine counsels? 2nd. What a scandal it was to their profession as Jews; You are "named the house of Jacob," and it is your honour, but "are these his doings?" Are these the doings of your father Jacob? Do you herein tread in his steps? No, if you were indeed his children, you would do his works; but now ye seek to kill and silence a man that tells you the truth in God's name. "This did not Abraham," *Jno.* viii. 39, 40; this did not Jacob. Or, 'are these God's doings?' are these doings that will please him? are these the doings of his people? No, you know they are not; however some may be so strangely blinded and bigoted as to kill God's ministers, and think that therein they do him service, *Jno.* xvi. 2. 3rd. Let them consider how unreasonable and absurd the thing was in itself; "Do not my words do good to them that walk uprightly?" Yes, certainly they do. It is an appeal to the experiences of the generation of the upright: Call now if there be any of them that will answer you, and to which of the saints will you turn? Turn to which you will and you will find they all agree in this, that the word of God "doth good to them that walk uprightly;" and will you then oppose that which doth good, so much good as good preaching doth? Herein you wrong God, who owns the words of the prophets to be his words, They are my words, and who by them aims and designs to do good to mankind, *Ps.* cxix. 68. And will you hinder the great Benefactor from doing good? will you put the Light of the World under a bushel? You had as good say to the sun, Shine not, as "say to the seers, See not." Herein you wrong the souls of men, and deprive them of the benefit designed them by the word of God. Note, Those are enemies not only to God, but to the world, they are enemies to their country, that silence good ministers, and obstruct the means of knowledge and grace; for it is certainly for the public common good of states and kingdoms that religion should be encouraged. God's words do good to them that walk uprightly: it is the character of good people that they walk uprightly, *Ps.* xv. 2, and it is their comfort that the words of God are good, and do good to them; they find comfort in them. God's words are good words to good people, and speak comfortably to them. But they that opposed the words of God, and prohibited the prophets, pleaded in justification of themselves, that God's words were unprofitable and unpleasant to them, and did them no good, nor prophesied any good concerning them, but evil, as Ahab complained of Micaiah. In answer to which the prophet here tells them, that it was their own fault; they might thank themselves. They might find it of good use to them, if they were but disposed to make a good use of it; if they would but walk uprightly as they should, and so qualify themselves for comfort, the word of God would speak comfortably to them. "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same."

3. What they are threatened with for this sin. God also will choose their delusions; and, 1st. They shall be deprived of the benefit of a faithful ministry. Since they say, Prophesy not, God will take them at their word, and "they shall not prophesy to them;" their sin shall be their punishment. If men will silence God's ministers, it is just with God to silence them, as he did Ezekiel, and to say, They shall no more be reprovers and moniters to them. Let the physician no longer attend the patient that will not be healed, for he will not be ruled. They shall not prophesy to them, and then they will not take shame. As it is the work of magistrates, so also of ministers, to put men to shame when they do amiss, *Jud.* xviii. 7, that, being made ashamed of their folly, they may not return again to it; but when God gives men up to be impudent and shameless in sin, he saith to his prophets, They are "joined to idols, let them alone." 2nd. They shall be given up to the blind conduct of an unfaithful ministry. We may understand ver. 11 as a threatening: if a man be found walking in the spirit of falsehood, having such a lying spirit as was in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, that will strengthen their hands in their wicked ways, "he shall be the prophet of this people;" that is, God will leave them to themselves to hearken to such. Since they will deceive, let them be deceived; since they will not admit the truth in the love of it, God will send them "strong delusions to believe a lie," 2 *Thes.* ii. 10, 11. They shall have prophets that will prophesy to them for wine and strong drink, so some read it; that will give you a cast of their office to your mind, for a bottle of wine, or a flagon of ale; will soothe sinners up in their sins, if they will but feed them with the gratifications of their lusts. To have such prophets, and to be ridden by them, is as sad a judgment as any people can be under, and as ill a presage of ruin approaching as it is to a particular person to be under the influence of a debauched conscience.

Secondly. Oppressing God's poor is another sin they are charged with, as before, ver. 1, 2, for it is a sin doubly hateful and provoking to God. Observe,

1. How the sin is described, ver. 8, 9; when they contemned God's prophets and opposed them, they broke out into all other wickedness. What bonds will hold those that have no reverence to God's word? They who formerly rose up against the enemies of the nation, in defence of their country, and therein behaved themselves bravely, now of late rose up as enemies of the nation, and instead of defending it destroyed it, and did it more mischief, as usually such vipers in the bowels of a state do, than a foreign enemy could do. They made a prey of men, women, and children. 1st. Of men that were travelling on the way, that "pass by securely, as men averse from war," that were far from any ill designs, but went peaceably about their lawful occasions. Those they set upon, as if they had been dangerous, obnoxious people, and "pulled off the robe with the garment from them;" that is, they stripped them both of the upper and inner garment, took away their cloak, and would have their coat also; thus barbarously did they use those that were quiet in the land: being harmless, they were fearless, and so the more easily made a prey of. 2nd. Of women, whose sex should have been their protection; ver. 9, "The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses." "They devour widows' houses," *Mat.* xxiii. 14, and so turn them out of the possession of them, because they were pleasant houses, and such as they had a mind of. It was inhuman to deal thus barbarously with women, but that which especially aggravated it was, that they were the women of God's people, whom they knew to be under his

protection. 3rd. Of children, whose age entitles them to a tender usage; "From their children have ye taken away my glory for ever." It was the glory of the Israelites' children that they were free, but they enslaved them; that they were born in God's house, and had a right to the privileges of it, but they sold them to strangers, sent them unto idolatrous countries, where they were deprived for ever of that glory,—at least the oppressors designed their captivity should be perpetual. Note, The righteous God will certainly reckon for injuries done to the widows and fatherless, who, being helpless and friendless, cannot otherwise expect to be righted.

2. What the sentence is that is passed upon them for it; ver. 11, "Arise ye and depart," prepare to quit this land, for you shall be forced out of it, as you have forced the women and children of my people out of their possessions; it is not, it shall not be, your rest, as it was intended Canaan should be, *Ps.* xcv. 11. You shall neither have contentment nor continuance in it, because it is polluted by your wickedness. Sin is defiling to a land, and sinners cannot expect to rest in a land which they have polluted, but it will spew them out, as this land spewed out the Canaanites of old, when they had polluted it with their abominations, *Lev.* xviii. 27, 28. Nay, you shall not only be obliged to depart out of this land, but "it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction;" you shall either be turned out of it, or, which is all one, you shall be ruined in it. We may apply this to our state in this present world; it is polluted, there is a great deal of corruption in the world through lust, and therefore we should arise and depart out of it, keep at a distance from the corruption that is in it, and keep ourselves unspotted from it; it is not our rest, it was never intended to be so, it was designed for our passage, but not for our portion, our inn, but not our home. Here we have no continuing city, let us therefore arise and depart, let us sit loose to it, and live above it, and think of leaving it, and seek a continual city above.

12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee;
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel;
I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah,
As the flock in the midst of their fold:
They shall make great noise by reason of *the multitude*
13 The breaker is come up before them: [*of* men.
They have broken up, and have passed through the gate,
And are gone out by it:
And their king shall pass before them,
And the LORD on the head of them.

After threatenings of wrath, the chapter here concludes, as is usual in the prophets, with promises of mercy, which were in part fulfilled when the Jews returned out of Babylon, and had their full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah. Their grievances shall be all redressed.

First. Whereas they were dispersed, they shall be brought together again, and shall jointly receive the tokens of God's favour to them, and shall have communion with each other, and comfort in each other; ver. 12, "I will assuredly assemble, O Jacob, all of thee," all that belong to thee, all that are "named of the house of Jacob," ver. 7, that are now expelled your country, ver. 10. I will bring you together again, and not one of you shall be lost, not one of you shall be missing. "I will surely gather the remnant of Israel," that remnant that is designed and reserved for salvation; they shall be brought to incorporate in one body, "I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah." Sheep are inoffensive and sociable creatures; they shall be "as the flock in the midst of their fold," their own fold, where they are safe under the shepherd's eye and care; and "they shall make great noise," as numerous flocks and herds do, with their bleating and lowing, "by reason of the multitude of men," (for the sheep are men, as the prophet explains this comparison, *Eze.* xxxiv. 31;) not by reason of their strifes and contentions, but by reason of their great numbers. This was accomplished when Christ by his Gospel gathered together in one "all the children of God that were scattered abroad," and united both Jews and Gentiles in one fold, and under one Shepherd; when all the complaint was that the "place was too strait" for them, that was "the noise, by reason of the multitude," *Isa.* xlix. 19, 20; when there were some added to the church from all parts of the world, and all men were drawn to Christ by the attractive power of his cross, which shall be done yet more and more, and perfectly done, when he shall send forth his angels to "gather in his elect from the four winds."

Secondly. Whereas God had seemed to desert them, and cast them off, now he will own them, and head them, and help them through all the difficulties that are in the way of their return and deliverance; ver. 13, "The breaker is come up before them," to break down all opposition, and clear the road for them; and under his conduct "they have broken up, and have passed through the gate," the door of escape out of their captivity, and are gone out by it with courage and resolution, having Omnipotence for their vanguard. Their King shall pass before them, to lead them in the way, even Jehovah, (he is their King,) on the head of them, as he was on the head of the armies of Israel, when they followed the pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness, and when he appeared to Joshua, as captain of the Lord's host. Christ is the church's king; he is Jehovah, he heads them, passeth before them, brings them out of the land of their captivity, brings them into the land of their rest. He is the breaker that broke in upon the powers of darkness, and broke through them; that rent the veil, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The learned Bishop Pearson applies it to the resurrection of Christ, by which he obtained the power, and became the pattern, of our resurrection. The breaker is gone before us out of the grave, and has carried away its gates, as Samson did Gaza's, bar and all, and by that breach we go out. The learned Dr. Pocock mentions it, as the sense which some of the ancient Jews gave of it, that the breaker is Elias, and their king the Messiah, the Son of David; and he thinks we may justly apply it to Christ and his forerunner John the Baptist. John was the breaker, he broke the ice, prepared the way of the Lord by the baptism of repentance; in him the Gospel began, from his time the kingdom of heaven suffered violence; and so the Christian church is introduced, with Messiah the Prince before it, on the head of it, going forth conquering and to conquer.

CHAPTER III.

What the apostle saith of another of the prophets is true of this, who was also his cotemporary—"Esaias is very bold," *Rom.* x. 20; so in this chapter Micah is very bold, in reproving and threatening the great men that were the ringleaders in sin; and he gives the reason, ver. 8, why he was so bold, because he had commission and instruction from God to say what he said, and was carried out in it by a higher spirit and power than his own. Magistracy and ministry are two great ordinances of God, for good to his church; but these were both corrupted, and the intentions of them perverted; and upon those that abused them, and so abused the church with them, the prophet is very severe, and justly so. I. He gives them their lesson severally, reproving and threatening oppressing princes, ver. 1—4; and false and flattering prophets, ver. 5—7. II. He gives them their lesson jointly, putting them together, as acting in conjunction for the ruin of the kingdom, which they should see the ruin of, ver. 9—12.

AND I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob,
And ye princes of the house of Israel;
Is it not for you to know judgment?
2 Who hate the good, and love the evil;
Who pluck off their skin from off them,
And their flesh from off their bones;
3 Who also eat the flesh of my people,
And flay their skin from off them;
And they break their bones,
And chop them in pieces, as for the pot,
And as flesh within the caldron. [them:
4 Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear
He will even hide his face from them at that time,
As they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.
5 Thus saith the LORD
Concerning the prophets that make my people err,
That bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace;
And he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.
6 Therefore night *shall be* unto you, that ye shall not have a vision;
And it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine;
And the sun shall go down over the prophets,
And the day shall be dark over them. [founded:
7 Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners con-
Yea, they shall all cover their lips; for *there is* no answer of God.

Princes and prophets, when they faithfully discharge the duty of their office, are to be highly honoured above other men; but when they betray their trust, and act contrary to it, they should hear of their faults as well as others, and shall be made to know there is a God above them, to whom they are accountable; at this bar the prophet here in his name arraigns them,

First. Let the princes hear their charge, and their doom. The "heads of Jacob," and the "princes of the house of Israel," are called upon to hear what the prophet has to say to them, ver. 1. The word of God has reproofs for the greatest of men, which the ministers of that word ought to apply as there is occasion. The prophet here has comfort in the reflection upon it, that, whatever the success was, he had faithfully discharged his trust, "And I said, Hear, O princes." He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had not baulked his duty for fear of the face of men. He tells them,

1. What was expected from them. "Is it not for you to know judgment?" that is, to do judgment, for otherwise the knowledge of it is of no avail. Is it not your business to administer justice impartially, and not to know faces, (as the Hebrew phrase is for partiality, and respect of persons,) but to "know judgment," and the merits of every cause? Or, it may be taken for granted that the heads and rulers are well acquainted with the rules of justice, whatever others are; for they have these means of knowledge, and have not those excuses for ignorance which some others have that are poor and foolish, *Jer.* v. 4; and if so, their transgression of the laws of justice is the more provoking to God, for they sin against knowledge. Is it not for you to know judgment? Yes, it is; therefore stand still, and hear your own judgment, and judge if it be not right, whether any thing can be objected against it.

2. How wretchedly they had transgressed the rules of judgment, though they knew what they were. Their principle and disposition are bad, they hate the good and love the evil; they hate good in others, and hate it should have any influence on themselves; they hate to do good, hate to have any good done, and hate those that are good and do good; and they love the evil, delight in mischief, and in those that do mischief. This being their principle, their practice was accordingly; they are very cruel and severe towards those that are under their power, and whoever lies at their mercy will find that they have none. They barbarously devour those whom they should protect, and, as unfaithful shepherds, fleece the flock they should feed; nay, instead of feeding it, they feed upon it, *Eze.* xxxiv. 2. It is fit indeed that he who feedeth a flock should "eat of the milk of the flock," 1 *Cor.* ix. 7; but that will not content them, they "eat the flesh of my people;" it is fit they should be clothed with the wool, but that will not serve, they "flay the skin from off them," ver. 3, by imposing heavier taxes upon them than they could bear, and exacting them with rigour, by mulcts and fines, and corporal punishments for pretended crimes. They ruined the estates and families of their subjects; took away from some their lives, from others their livelihoods, and were to their subjects as beasts of prey rather than shepherds; they break their bones to come at the marrow, and chop the flesh in pieces as for the pot. This speaks them, 1st. Very ravenous and greedy for themselves, indulging themselves in luxury and sensuality. 2nd. Very barbarous and cruel to those that were under them, not caring whom they beggared, so they could but enrich themselves: such evil is the love of money the root of. 3rd. How they might expect that God should deal with them, who had been thus cruel to his subjects. The rule is fixed, they shall have judgment without mercy that have shewed no mercy; ver. 4, "They shall cry to the Lord, but he will not hear them" in the day of their distress, as the poor cried to them in the day of their prosperity and they would not hear them. There will come a time when the most proud and scornful sinners will "cry to the Lord," and sue for that mercy which, when time was, they neither valued nor copied out; but it will then be in vain. God will even hide his face from them at that time, that time when they need his

favour, and see themselves undone without it. At another time they would have turned their back upon him; but at that time he will turn his back upon them, as they have "behaved themselves ill in their doings." Note, Men cannot expect to do ill and fare well, but may expect to find, as Adonibezek did, that done to them which they did to others; for "he is righteous who taketh vengeance. With the froward God will shew himself froward;" and he often gives up cruel and unmerciful men into the hands of those who are cruel and unmerciful to them, as themselves have formerly been to others. This agrees with *Pr.* xxi. 13, "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself, and shall not be heard;" but the merciful have reason to hope that they shall obtain mercy.

Secondly. Let the prophets hear their charge too, and their doom; they were such as prophesied falsely, and the princes bare rule by their means. Observe,

1. What was their sin. 1st. They made it all their business to flatter and deceive the people; They make my people err, lead them into mistakes, both concerning what they should do and concerning what God would do with them. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and those draw them out of the way that should guide them, and go before them in it. They make them to err by crying peace, by telling them that they do well, and that all shall be well with them, whereas they are in the paths of sin, and within a step of ruin. They cry "peace," but they "bite with their teeth," which perhaps is meant of their biting their own lips, as we use to do when we would suppress something which we are ready to speak; when they cried peace their own hearts gave them the lie, and they were just ready to eat their own words, and to contradict themselves; but they bit with their teeth, and kept it in. They were not blind leaders of the blind, for they saw the ditch before them, and yet led their followers into it. 2nd. They made it all their aim to glut themselves, and serve their own belly, as the seducers in St. Paul's time, *Rom.* xvi. 18; for their god is their belly, *Phil.* iii. 19. They "bite with their teeth and cry peace," that is, they will flatter and compliment those that will feed them with good bits, will give them something to eat; but as for those that "put not into their mouths," that are not continually cramming them, they look upon them as their enemies; to them they do not cry peace, as they do to those whom they look upon as their benefactors, but they "even prepare war against them;" against them they denounce the judgments of God. They preach either comfort or terror to men, not according as they are to God but as they are to them; as the crafty priests of the church of Rome, in some places, make their image either to smile or frown upon the offerer, according as his offering is. Justly is it insisted on as a necessary qualification of a minister, 1 *Tim.* iii. 3, and again *Tit.* i. 7, that he be not greedy of filthy lucre.

2. What is the sentence passed upon them for this sin, ver. 6, 7. It is threatened, 1st. That they shall be involved in troubles and miseries with those to whom they had cried peace. "Night shall be upon them," a dark, cold night of calamity, such as they flattered people with hope should never come. "It shall be dark unto you," darker to you than others; "The sun shall go down over the prophets," shall go down at noon, all comfort shall depart from them, and they shall be deprived of all hope of it; the "day shall be dark over them" in which they promised themselves light. Nor shall they only be surrounded with outward troubles, but their minds shall be full of confusion, and they shall be brought to their wits' end; their heads shall be muddied and clouded, and their own thoughts shall trouble them, and that is trouble enough. They kept others in the dark, and now God will bring them into the dark. 2nd. That thereby they shall be silenced, and all their pretensions to prophesy for ever shamed. They never had any true vision, and now, the event disproving their predictions of peace, it shall be made to appear that they never had any; that there never was an answer of God to them, but it was all a sham, and they were cheats and impostors. Their reputation being thus quite sunk, their confidence would of course fail them. And their spirits being ruffled and confused their invention would fail them too; and by reason of this darkness, both without and within too, they shall not divine, they shall not have so much as a counterfeit vision to produce, they shall be ashamed and confounded, and "cover their lips," as men that are quite baffled, and have nothing to say for themselves. Note, Those who deceive others are but preparing confusion for their own faces.

8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD,
And of judgment, and of might,
To declare unto Jacob his transgression,
And to Israel his sin.
9 Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob,
And princes of the house of Israel,
That abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.

ROMAN SOLDIERS PASSING THE PLOUGH OVER A RUINED CITY.—ver. 1.
1087

10 They build up Zion with blood,
And Jerusalem with iniquity.
11 The heads thereof judge for reward,
And the priests thereof teach for hire,
And the prophets thereof divine for money:
Yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say,
Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.
12 Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed *as* a field,
And Jerusalem shall become heaps,
And the mountain of the house as the high places of the [forest.

Here, First. The prophet experienceth a Divine power going along with him in his work, and he makes a solemn profession and protestation of it, as that which would justify him and bear him out, in his plain dealing with the princes and rulers. He would not, he durst not, make thus bold with the great men, but that he was carried out to do it by a prophetical impulse and impression. It was not he that said it, but God by him, and he could not but speak the word that God put into his mouth. It comes in likewise by way of opposition to the false prophets, who were full of shame when they lived to see themselves proved liars, and who never had courage to deal faithfully with the people, but flattered them in their sins. They were sensual, not having the Spirit; but truly, saith Micah, "I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord," ver. 8. Having in himself an assurance of the truth of what he said, he said it with assurance. Compare him with those false prophets, and you will say there is no comparison between them. "What is the chaff to the wheat?" *Jer.* xxiii. 28. What is painted fire to real fire? Observe here,

1. What the qualifications were with which this prophet was endued. He was "full of power, and of judgment, and of might." He had an ardent love to God, and to the souls of men, a deep concern for his glory and their salvation, and a flaming zeal against sin. He had likewise courage to reprove it, and witness against it, not fearing the wrath either of great men or of great multitudes; whatever difficulties or discouragements he met with they did not deter him, or drive him from his work, none of these things moved him; and all this was guided by judgment and discretion. He was a man of conduct as well as courage; in all his preaching there was light as well as heat, and a spirit of wisdom as well as zeal. Thus was this man of God thoroughly furnished for every good word he had to say, and every good work he had to do. And those he preached to could not but perceive him full both of power and judgment, for they found both their understandings opened and their hearts made to burn within them; with such evidence and demonstration, and such power, did the word come from him.

2. Whence he had these qualifications. Not from and of himself, but he was "full of power by the Spirit of the Lord." Knowing that it was indeed the Spirit of the Lord that was in him, and spoke by him, that it was a Divine revelation that he delivered, he spoke it boldly, and as one having authority; "set his face as a flint," knowing he should be justified and borne out in what he said, *Isa.* l. 7, 8. Note, Those that act honestly may act boldly; and those that are sure they have a commission from God need not be afraid of opposition from men. Nay, he had not only a Spirit of prophecy, which was the ground of his boldness, but the Spirit of sanctification endued him with that boldness and wisdom which was requisite for him. It was not in any strength of his own that he was strong, for "who is sufficient for these things?" but in the Lord, and in the power of his might, for from him all our sufficiency is. Are we full of power at any time for that which is good, it is purely by the Spirit of the Lord, for of ourselves we are weak as water; it is the God of Israel that gives strength and power both to his people and to his ministers.

3. What use he made of these qualifications, this judgment, and this power. He "declared unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin." If transgression be found in Jacob and Israel they must be told of it, and it is the business of God's prophets to tell them of it; to cry aloud and not to spare, *Isa.* lviii. 1. Those that come to hear the word of God must be willing to be told of their faults, and must not only give their ministers leave to deal plainly and faithfully with them, but take it kindly and be thankful; but because few have meekness enough to receive reproof, those have need of a great deal of boldness that are to give reproofs, and must pray for a spirit both of wisdom and might.

Secondly. The prophet exerts this power in dealing with the "heads of the house of Jacob," both the princes and the prophets, whom he had drawn up a high charge against in the former part of the chapter. He repeats the summons of their attendance and attention, ver. 9, the same that we had ver. 1, directing himself to "the princes of the house of Israel," yet he means those of Judah; for it appears, *Jer.* xxvi. 18, 19, (where ver. 12 is quoted,) that this was spoken in Hezekiah's kingdom; but, the ten tribes being gone into captivity, Judah is all that is now left of Jacob and Israel. The prophet speaks respectfully to them, "Hear, I pray you," and gives them their titles of heads and princes. Ministers must be faithful to great men, in reproving them for their sins, but they must not be rude and uncivil to them. Now observe here,

1. The great wickedness that these heads of the house of Jacob were guilty of, princes, priests, and prophets; in short, they were covetous, and prostituted their offices to their love of money. 1st. The princes abhorred all judgment. They would not be governed by any of its laws, either in their own practice or in passing sentence upon appeals made to them; "They perverted all equity," and scorned to be under the direction or correction of justice, when it could not be made pliable to their secular interests. When, under pretence of doing right, they did the most palpable wrong, then they perverted equity, and made it serve a purpose contrary to the intention of the founder of magistracy and fountain of power. It is laid to their charge, ver. 10, that "they build up Zion with blood." They pretend, in justification of their extortion and oppressions, that they build up Zion and Jerusalem, they add new streets and squares to the holy cities, and adorn them; they establish and advance the public interests both in church and state, and think therein they do God and Israel good service. But it is with blood and with iniquity, and therefore it cannot prosper; nor will their intentions of good to the city of God justify their contradictions to the law of God. They mistake that think a burning flaming zeal for holy church, and the propagating of the faith, will serve to consecrate robberies and murders, massacres and depredations. No; Zion's walls owe those no thanks that build them up with blood and iniquity. The sin of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The office of the princes is to judge upon appeals made to them, but they judge for reward, ver. 11. They give judgment on their side that give the bribe. The most righteous cause shall not be carried without a fee, and for a fee the most unrighteous cause shall be carried. Miserable is the people's case when the judge's inquiry upon a cause is, not What is to be done in it? but What is to be got by it? 2nd. The

priests' work was to teach the people, and for that the law had provided them a very honourable, comfortable maintenance, but that will not content them; they teach for hire over and above, and will be hired to teach any thing as an oracle of God which they know will please and gain them an interest. 3rd. The prophets, it should seem, had honorary fees given them, by way of gratuity, 1 *Sam.* ix. 7, 8. But these prophets govern themselves in their prophesying by the prospect of temporal advantage, and that was the main thing they had in their eye. They divine for money, their tongues were mercenary, they would either prophesy or let it alone, according as they found was most for their advantage; and a man might have what oracle he would from them, if he would but pay them for it: the fit successors of Balaam, who "loved the wages of unrighteousness." Note, Though that which is wicked can never be consecrated by a zeal for the church, yet that which is sacred may be, and often is, desecrated by the love of the world. When men do that which in itself is good, but do it not but for filthy lucre, it loses its excellency, and becomes an abomination to God and man.

2. Their vain presumption and carnal confidence, notwithstanding; "They lean upon the Lord," and because they are in profession his people, they think there is neither harm nor danger in these wicked practices of theirs. Faith builds upon the Lord, rests in him, and relies upon him as the soul's foundation. Presumption only leans upon the Lord as a prop, makes use of him to serve a turn, while still the world is the foundation that is built upon. They speak with a great deal of confidence, 1st. Of their honour. "Is not the Lord among us?" have we not the tokens of his presence with us, his temple, his ark, his lively oracles? They are "haughty because of the holy mountain," and the dignities of that, *Zeph.* iii. 11, as if their church privileges would palliate the worst of practices; or as if God's presence with them were intended to make the priests and people rich with the sale of their performances. It was true that the Lord was among them by his ordinances, and this puffed them up with pride; but if they imagined that he was among them by his favour and love, they were mistaken. But it is a cheat the children of men often put upon themselves, to think they have God with them, when they have by their sin provoked him to depart from them. 2nd. They are confident of their own safety; No evil can come upon us. Many are rocked asleep in a fatal security by their church privileges, as if those would protect them in sin and shelter them from punishment, which are really, and will be, the greatest aggravations both of their sin and of their punishment. If men's having the Lord among them will not restrain them from doing evil, it can never secure them from suffering evil for so doing; and it is very absurd for sinners to think that their impudence will be their impunity.

3. The doom passed upon them for their real wickedness, notwithstanding their imaginary protection; ver. 12, "Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field." This is that passage which is quoted as a bold word spoken by Micah, *Jer.* xxvi. 18, which yet Hezekiah and his princes took well, though in another reign it might have gone near to cost him his head; nay, they repented and reformed, and so the execution of this threatening was prevented and did not come in those days. 1st. It is the ruin of holy places that is here foretold, places that had been highly honoured with the tokens of God's presence and the performances of his worship. It is Zion that shall be ploughed as a field, the building burnt to the ground and levelled with it. Some observe that this was literally fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, when the ground was ploughed upon which the city stood, in token of its utter dissolution, and that no city should be built upon that ground without the emperor's leave. Even Jerusalem, the holy city, shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house, on which the temple is built, shall be overgrown with briars and thorns, as the high places of the forest. If sacred places be polluted by sin they must expect to be wasted and ruined by the judgments of God. 2nd. It is the wickedness of those who preside in them that brings the ruin. It is for your sake that "Zion shall be ploughed as a field;" you pretend to build up Zion, but doing it by blood and iniquity, you pull it down. Note, The sin of priests and princes is often the ruin of states and churches. *Delirant reges, plectuntur achivi,*—'The kings act foolishly, and the people suffer for it.'

CHAPTER IV.

Comparing this chapter with the close of the foregoing chapter, the comfortable promises here with the terrible threatenings there, we may with the apostle "behold the goodness and severity of God," *Rom.* xi. 22; towards the Jewish church, which fell, severity, when Zion was ploughed as a field; but towards the Christian church, which was built upon the ruins of it, goodness, great goodness; for it is here promised, I. That it shall be advanced and enlarged by the accession of the nations to it, ver. 1, 2. II. That it shall be protected in tranquillity and peace, ver. 3, 4. III. That it shall be kept close, and constant and faithful to God, ver. 5. IV. That under Christ's government all its grievances should be redressed, ver. 6, 7. V. That it shall have an ample and flourishing dominion, ver. 8. VI. That its troubles shall be brought to a happy issue at length, ver. 9, 10. VII. That its enemies should be disquieted, nay, that they should be destroyed in and by their attempts against it, ver. 11—13.

BUT in the last days it shall come to pass,
That the mountain of the house of the LORD
Shall be established in the top of the mountains,
And it shall be exalted above the hills;
And people shall flow unto it.

2 And many nations shall come, and say,
Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
And to the house of the God of Jacob;
And he will teach us of his ways,
And we will walk in his paths:
For the law shall go forth of Zion,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

3 And he shall judge among many people,
And rebuke strong nations afar off;
And they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruninghooks:
Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more.

4 But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree;
And none shall make *them* afraid:
For the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken *it*.

ORIENTAL VERANDAH.

5 For all people will walk every one in the name of his god,
And we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

6 In that day, saith the LORD,
Will I assemble her that halteth,
And I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted;

7 And I will make her that halted a remnant,
And her that was cast far off a strong nation:
And the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion
From henceforth, even for ever.

It is a very comfortable "but" with which this chapter begins, and very reviving to those who lay the interests of God's church near their hearts, and are concerned for the welfare of it. When we sometimes see the corruptions of the church, especially of church rulers, princes, priests, and prophets, seeking their own things, and not the things of God,—and when we soon after see the desolations of the church, Zion for their sakes ploughed as a field,—we are ready to fear it will one day perish between both, that the name of Israel shall be no more in remembrance; are ready to give up all for gone, and to conclude the church will have neither root nor branch upon earth. But let not our faith fail in this matter; out of the ashes of the church another phœnix shall arise. In the last words of the foregoing chapter we left "the mountain of the house" as desolate and waste as the "high places of the forest;" and is it possible that such a wilderness should ever become a fruitful field again? Yes; the first words of this chapter bring in the mountain of the Lord's house as much dignified by being frequented as ever it had been disgraced by being deserted. Though Zion be ploughed as a field, yet God has not cast off his people, but by the fall of the Jews salvation is come to the Gentiles, so that it proves to be the riches of the world, *Rom.* xi. 11, 12. This is the mystery which God by the prophet here shews us, and he saith the very same in the first three verses of this chapter which another prophet said by the word of the Lord at the same time, *Isa.* ii. 2—4, that "out of the mouth of those two witnesses" these promises might be established; and very precious promises they are, relating to the gospel church, which have been in part accomplished, and will be yet more and more, for he is faithful that has promised.

First. That there shall be a church for God set up in the world, after the defection and destruction of the Jewish church, and this in the last days, that is, as some of the rabbins themselves acknowledge, in the days of the Messiah. The people of God shall be incorporated by a new charter, a new spiritual way of worship shall be enacted, and a new institution of offices to attend it; better privileges shall be granted by this new charter, and better provision made for the enlarging and establishing the kingdom of God among men than had been made by the Old Testament constitution. The mountain of the house of the Lord shall again appear firm ground for God's faithful worshippers to stand, and go, and build upon, in their attendance on him, ver. 1. And it shall be a centre of unity to them; a church shall be set up in the world, to which the Lord will be daily adding such as shall be saved.

Secondly. That this church shall be firmly founded and well built. It shall be "established in the top of the mountains;" Christ himself will build it upon a rock; it shall be an impregnable fort, upon an immovable foundation, so that the gates of hell shall neither overthrow the one nor undermine the other, *Mat.* xvi. 18; its foundations are still in the holy mountains, *Ps.* lxxxvii. 1, the everlasting mountains, which cannot, which shall not, be removed. It shall be established, not as the temple, upon one mountain, but upon many; for the foundations of the church, as they are sure, so they are large.

Thirdly. That it shall be highly advanced, and become eminent and con-

spicuous. It shall be "exalted above the hills," observed with wonder for its growing greatness from small beginnings; the kingdom of Christ shall shine with greater lustre than ever any of the kingdoms of the earth did. It shall be as a city on a hill, which cannot be hid. *Mat.* v. 14. The glory of this latter house is greater than that of the former, *Hag.* ii. 9: see 2 *Cor.* iii. 7, 8, &c.

Fourthly. That there shall be a great accession of converts to it, and succession of converts in it. People shall flow unto it as the waters of a river are continually flowing; there shall be a constant stream of believers flowing in from all parts into the church, as the people of the Jews flowed into the temple, while it was standing, to worship there. Then many tribes came to the mountain of the house, to inquire of God's temple. But in gospel times many nations shall flow into the church, shall fly like a cloud, and as the doves to their windows; for ministers shall be sent forth to disciple all nations, and they shall not labour in vain, for, multitudes being wrought upon to believe the Gospel and embrace the Christian religion, they shall excite and encourage one another, and shall say, "Come, and let us go up unto the mountain of the Lord," now raised among us, even to "the house of the God of Jacob," the spiritual temple which we need not travel far to, for it is brought to our doors, and set up in the midst of us. Thus shall people be made "willing in the day of his power," *Ps.* cx. 3, and shall do what they can to make others willing, as Andrew invited Peter, and Philip Nathaniel, to be acquainted with Christ. They shall "call the people to the mountain," *Deu.* xxxiii. 19, for there is in Christ enough for all, enough for each. Now observe what it is, 1. Which those converts expect to find in "the house of the God of Jacob." They come thither for instruction; "He will teach us of his ways," what is the way in which he would have us to walk with him, and in which we may depend upon him to meet us graciously. Note, Where we come to worship God we come to be taught of him. 2. Which they engage to do when they are thus taught of God; "We will walk in his paths." Note, Those may comfortably expect that God will teach them who are firmly resolved by his grace to do as they are taught.

Fifthly. That in order to this a new revelation shall be published to the world, on which the church should be founded, and by which multitudes should be brought into it; "for the Lord shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The Gospel is here called "the word of the Lord," for "the Lord gave the word, and great was the company of them that published it." *Ps.* lxviii. 11. It was of a Divine original, a Divine authority; it began to be spoken by the Lord Christ himself, *Heb.* ii. 3; and it is a law, a law of faith; we are under the law of Christ. This was to go forth from Jerusalem, from Zion, the metropolis of the Old Testament dispensation, where the temple, and altars, and oracles were, and whither the Jews went to worship from all parts. There the Gospel must take its rise, to shew the connexion between the Old Testament and the New; that the Gospel is not set up in opposition to the law, but is an explication and illustration of it, and a "branch growing out of its roots." It was in Jerusalem that Christ preached and wrought miracles; there he died, rose again, and ascended; there the Spirit was poured out, and those that were to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations were ordered to begin at Jerusalem, so that thence flowed the streams that were to water the desert world.

Sixthly. That a convincing power should go along with the gospel of Christ in all places where it should be preached; ver. 3, "He shall judge among many people." Messiah the lawgiver, ver. 2, is here the judge, for to him the Father committed all judgment, and "for judgment he came into this world;" his word, the word of his Gospel, that was to go forth from Jerusalem, was the golden sceptre by which he shall rule and judge, when he sits as king on the holy hill of Zion, *Ps.* ii. 6. By it he shall "rebuke strong nations afar off;" for the Spirit, working with the word, shall reprove the world, *Jno.* xvi. 8. It is promised to the Son of David that he shall judge among the heathen, *Ps.* cx. 6, which he doth, when, in the chariot of his everlasting Gospel, he goes forth and goes on, conquering and to conquer.

Seventhly. That a disposition to mutual peace and love should be the happy effect of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah. "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares;" that is, angry, passionate men, that have been fierce and furious, shall be wonderfully sweetened, and made mild and meek, *Tit.* iii. 2, 3. They that before their conversion did injuries, and would bear none, after their conversion can bear injuries, but will do none. As far as the Gospel prevails it makes men peaceable, for such is the wisdom from above; it is gentle, and easy to be entreated; and if nations were but leavened by it there would be an universal peace. When Christ was born there was an universal peace in the Roman empire. Those that were first brought into the gospel church were all of one heart and of one soul, *Acts* iv. 32; and it was observed of the primitive Christians how well they loved one another: in heaven this will have its full accomplishment. It is promised, 1. That none shall be quarrelsome. The art of war, instead of being improved, which some reckon the glory of a kingdom, shall be forgotten, and laid aside as useless; they "shall not learn war any more," as they have done, for they shall have no need to defend themselves, nor any inclination to offend their neighbours. "Nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation;" not that the Gospel will make men cowards, but it will make men peaceable. 2. That all shall be quiet, both from evil and from the fear of evil, ver. 4. They shall sit safely, and none shall disturb them; they shall sit securely, and shall not disturb themselves, every man "under his vine and under his fig-tree," enjoying the fruit of them, and needing no other shelter but the leaves of them. "None shall make them afraid;" not only there shall be nothing that is likely to frighten them, but they shall not be disposed to fear; under the dominion of Christ, as that of Solomon, there shall be abundance of peace. Though his followers have trouble in the world, in him they enjoy great tranquillity. If this seems unlikely, yet we may depend upon it, for "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," and no word of his shall fall to the ground; what he hath spoken by his word he will do by his providence and grace. He that is the Lord of hosts will be the God of peace; and those may well be easy whom the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, undertakes the protection of.

Eighthly. That the church shall be constant in their duty, and so shall make a good use of their tranquillity, and shall not provoke the Lord to deprive them of it, ver. 5. When the churches have rest they shall be edified, and confirmed, and comforted, and shall resolve to be as firm to their God as other nations are to theirs, though they be no gods. Where we find the foregoing promises, (*Isa.* ii. 2, &c.,) it follows, ver. 5, "O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord;" and here, "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God." Note, Then peace is a blessing indeed when it strengthens our resolutions to cleave to the Lord. Observe, 1. How constant other nations were to their gods. "All people will walk every one in the name of his God," will own their God and cleave to him, will worship their God and serve him, will depend upon him and put a confidence in him. Whatever men make a god of they will make use of, and take his name along with them in all their actions and affairs. The mariners in a storm cried every man to his god, *Jon.* i. 5; and no instance could be found of a nation's changing their gods, *Jer.* ii. 11. If the hosts of heaven were their gods, they loved them, and served them, and walked after them, *Jer.* viii. 2. 2. How constant God's people now resolve to be to him. "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God," will acknowledge him in all our ways, and govern ourselves by a continual regard to him, doing nothing but what we have warrant from him for, and openly professing our relation to him. Observe, Their resolution is peremptory: it is not a thing that needs be disputed: "We will walk in the name of the Lord our God;" it is just and reasonable, he is our God. And it is a resolution for a perpetuity; we will do it for ever and ever, and will never leave him. He will be ours for ever, and therefore so we will be his, and never repent our choice.

Ninthly. That, notwithstanding the dispersions, distress, and infirmities of the church, it shall be formed and established, and made very considerable, ver. 6, 7. 1. The state of the church had been low, and weak, and very helpless, in the latter times of the Old Testament, partly through the corruptions of the Jewish nation, and partly through the oppressions under which they groaned. They were like a flock of sheep, that were maimed, worried, and scattered, *Eze.* xxxiv. 16; *Jer.* l. 6, 17. The good people among them, and in other places, that were well inclined, were dispersed, were very infirm, and in a manner lost, and cast far off. 2. It is promised that all these grievances shall be redressed, and the distemper healed. Christ will come himself, *Mat.* xv. 24, and send his apostles to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," *Mat.* x. 6. From among the Jews that halted, or that for want of strength could not go upright, God gathered a remnant, (ver. 7,) that "remnant according to the election of grace," which is spoken of in *Rom.* xi. 7, which embraced the Gospel of Christ. And from among the Gentiles that were cast far off, (so the Gentiles are described to be, *Eph.* ii. 13; *Acts* ii. 39,) he raised a strong nation, greater numbers of them were brought into the church than of the Jews, *Gal.* iv. 27. And such a strong nation the gospel church is, that the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against it. The church of Christ is more numerous than any other nation, and "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

Tenthly. That the Messiah shall be the king of this kingdom, shall protect and govern it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, and this to the end of time. The Lord Jesus "shall reign over them in mount Zion," by his word and Spirit in his ordinances, and this "from henceforth and for ever," for "of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end."

8 And thou, O tower of the flock,
The strong hold of the daughter of Zion,
Unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion;
The kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.
9 Now why dost thou cry out aloud?
Is there no king in thee?
Is thy counsellor perished?
For pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.
10 Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion,
Like a woman in travail:
For now shalt thou go forth out of the city,
And thou shalt dwell in the field,
And thou shalt go *even* to Babylon;
There shalt thou be delivered;
There the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.
11 Now also many nations are gathered against thee,
That say, Let her be defiled,
And let our eye look upon Zion.
12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD,
Neither understand they his counsel:
For he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.
13 Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion:
For I will make thine horn iron,
And I will make thy hoofs brass:
And thou shalt beat in pieces many people:
And I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD,
And their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

These verses concern Zion and Jerusalem, here called the tower of the flock, or the tower of Edar. We read of such a place *Gen.* xxxv. 21, near Bethlehem; and some conjecture it is the same place where the shepherds were keeping their flocks when the angels brought them tidings of the birth of Christ; and some think Bethlehem itself is here spoken of, as *ch.* v. 2. Some think it is a tower at that gate of Jerusalem which is called the sheep gate, *Neh.* iii. 32, and conjecture that through that gate Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem. However, it seems to be put for Jerusalem itself, or for Zion the tower of David; all the sheep of Israel flocked thither three times a year. It was the "stronghold," (Ophel, which is also a name of a place in Jerusalem, *Neh.* iii. 27,) or castle, "of the daughter of Zion." Now here,

First. We have a promise of the glories of the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel church, which is "the tower of the flock," that one fold in which all the sheep of Christ are protected under one Shepherd; "Unto thee shall it come," that which thou hast long waited and wished for, "even the first dominion," a dignity and power equal to that of David and Solomon, by whom Jerusalem was first raised. That kingdom shall again "come to the daughter of Jerusalem," which it was deprived of at the captivity. It shall make as great a figure, and shine with as much lustre among the nations, and have as much influence upon them, as ever it had. This is the first or chief dominion. Now this had by no means its accomplishment in Zerubbabel; his was nothing like the first dominion, either in respect of splendour and sovereignty at home or the extent of power abroad, and therefore it must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah, (and to that the Chaldee paraphrase refers it,) and had its accomplishment when God gave to our Lord Jesus "the throne of his father David," *Lu.* i. 32, set him king "upon the holy hill of Zion," and "gave him the heathen for his inheritance," *Ps.* ii. 6; made him his firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth, *Ps.* lxxxix. 27; *Dan.* vii. 14. David in spirit "called him, Lord,"

and, as Dr. Pocock observes, he witnessed of himself, and his witness was true, that he was greater than Solomon, none of their dominions being like his for extent and duration. The common people welcomed Christ into Jerusalem with "Hosannas to the Son of David," to shew that it was the first dominion that came to the daughter of Zion; and the evangelist applies it to the promise of Zion's King coming to her, *Mat.* xxi. 5; *Zec.* ix. 9. Some give this sense to the words, To Zion and Jerusalem, that tower of the flock, to the nation of the Jews, came the first dominion, that is, there the kingdom of Christ was first set up, the Gospel of the kingdom was first preached, *Lu.* xxiv. 47; there Christ was first called King of the Jews.

Secondly. This is illustrated by a prediction of the calamities of the literal Jerusalem, to which some favour and relief should be granted, as a type and figure of what God would do for the gospel Jerusalem in the last days, notwithstanding its distresses. We have here,

1. Jerusalem put in pain by the providences of God. She cries out aloud, that all her neighbours may take notice of her griefs, because there is no king in her, none of that honour and power she used to have. Instead of ruling the nations, as she did when she sat a queen, she is ruled by them, and become a captive. Her counsellors are perished; she is no longer at her own disposal, but is given up to the will of her enemies, and is governed by their counsellors. Pangs have taken her. 1st. She is carried captive to Babylon, and there is in pangs of grief. She goes forth out of the city, and is constrained to dwell in the field, exposed to all manner of inconveniences; she goes even to Babylon, and there wears out seventy tedious years in a miserable captivity, all that while in pain, "as a woman in travail," waiting to be delivered, and thinking the time very long. 2nd. When she is delivered out of Babylon, and redeemed from the hand of her enemies there, yet still she is in pangs of fear. The end of one trouble is but the beginning of another; for now also, when Jerusalem is in the rebuilding, many "nations are gathered against her," ver. 11. They were so in Ezra's and Nehemiah's time, and did all they could to obstruct the building of the temple and the wall. They were so in the time of the Maccabees; they said, Let her be defiled, let her be looked upon as a place polluted with sin, and be forsaken and abandoned both of God and man; let her holy places be profaned, and all her honours laid in the dust; let our eye look upon Zion, and please itself with the sight of its ruins, as it is said of Edom, *Oba.* 12, "Thou shouldest not have looked upon the day of thy brother." Let our eyes see our desire upon Zion, the day we have long wished for. When they hear the enemies thus combine against them, and insult over them, no wonder that they are in pain, and cry aloud; "Without are fightings, within are fears."

2. Jerusalem made easy by the promises of God; "Why dost thou cry aloud?" Let thy griefs and fears be silenced, indulge not thyself in them, for, though things are bad with thee, they shall end well. Thy pangs are great, but they are like those of a woman in travail, ver. 9, that labours to bring forth, ver. 10, the issue of which will be good at last. Jerusalem's pangs are not as dying agonies, but as travailing throes, which after a while will be forgotten, for joy that a child is born into the world. Let the literal Jerusalem comfort herself with this, that whatever straits she may be reduced to, she shall continue till the coming of the Messiah, for there his kingdom must be first set up; and she shall not be destroyed while that blessing is in her. And when at length she is ploughed as a field, and become heaps, as is threatened, *ch.* iii. 12, yet her privileges shall be resigned to the spiritual Jerusalem, and in that the promises made to her shall be fulfilled. Let Jerusalem be easy then; for, 1st. Her captivity in Babylon shall have an end, a happy end; ver. 10, "There shalt thou be delivered," and "the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies" there. This was done by Cyrus, who acted therein as God's servant; and that deliverance was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, and the release from our spiritual bondage which is proclaimed in the everlasting Gospel, that acceptable year of the Lord, in which Christ himself preached liberty to the captives, and the "opening of the prison to them that were bound." 2nd. The designs of her enemies against her afterwards shall be baffled, nay, they shall turn upon themselves, ver. 12, 13. They promise themselves a day of it, but it shall prove God's day; they are gathered against Zion to destroy it, but it shall prove to their own destruction, which Israel and his God shall have the glory of. *First.* Their coming together against Zion shall be the occasion of their ruin. They associate themselves, and gird themselves, that they may break Jerusalem in pieces, but it will prove that they shall be broken in pieces; *Isa.* viii. 9, "They know not the thoughts of the Lord." When they are gathering together, and providence favours them in it, they little think what God is designing by it, nor do they understand his counsel. They know what they aim at in coming together, but they know not what God aims at in bringing them together; they aim at Zion's ruin, but God aims at theirs. Note, When men are made use of as instruments of Providence, in accomplishing its purposes, it is very common for them to intend one thing and God intend quite the contrary. The king of Assyria is to be a rod in God's hand, for the correction of his people, in order to their reformation; "Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so," *Isa.* x. 7. And thus it is here; the nations are gathered against Zion, as soldiers into the field, but God gathers them as sheaves into the floor, to be beaten to pieces; and they could not have been so easily, so effectually destroyed, if they had not gathered together against Zion. Note, The designs of enemies for the ruin of the church often prove ruining to themselves, and thereby they prepare themselves for destruction, and put themselves in the way of it. They are "snared in the work of their own hands." *Secondly.* Zion shall have the honour of being victorious over them, ver. 13, when they are "gathered as sheaves into the floor," to be trodden down, as the corn then was by the oxen; then "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion." Instead of fearing them, and fleeing from them, boldly set upon them, and take the opportunity Providence favours thee with of trampling upon them. Plead not thine own weakness, and that thou art not a match for so many confederated enemies; God will make thy horn iron to push them down, and thy hoofs brass to tread upon them when they are down; and thus thou shalt beat in pieces many people that have long been beating thee in pieces. Thus, when God pleaseth, "The daughter of Babylon is made a threshing-floor, it is time to thresh her," *Jer.* li. 33. And the worm Jacob is made a threshing instrument, with which God will "thresh the mountains, and make them as chaff," *Isa.* xli. 14, 15. How strangely, how happily, are the tables turned since Jacob was the threshing-floor, and Babylon the threshing instrument, *Isa.* xxi. 10. Note, When God has conquering work for his people to do he will furnish them with strength and ability for it,—will make the horn iron, and the hoofs brass; and when he doth so, they must exert the power he gives them, and execute the commission; even the daughter of Zion must arise and thresh. *Thirdly.* The glory of the victory shall redound to God. Zion shall thresh these sheaves in the floor, but the corn threshed out shall be a meat offering at God's altar; "I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord," (that is, I will have it consecrated,) and "their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." The spoils gained by Zion's victory shall be brought into the sanctuary, and devoted to God, either in part, as those of Midian, *Num.* xxxi. 28, or in whole, as those of Jericho, *Jos.* vi. 17. God is Jehovah, the fountain of being; he is the "Lord of the whole earth," the fountain of power, and therefore needs not any of our gain or substance, but may challenge and demand it all if he pleaseth; and with ourselves we must devote all we have to his honour, to be employed as he directs. Thus far all we have must have holiness to the Lord written upon it; all our gain and substance must be "consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth," *Isa.* xxiii. 18. And extraordinary successes call for extraordinary acknowledgments, whether they be of spoils in war or gains in trade. It is God that gives us power to get wealth, which way soever it is honestly got, and therefore he must be honoured with what we get. Some make all this to point at the defeat of Sennacherib, when he besieged Jerusalem, others to the destruction of Babylon, others to the successes of the Maccabees; but the learned Dr. Pocock, and others, think it had its full accomplishment in the spiritual victories obtained by the Gospel of Christ over the powers of darkness that fought against it. The nations thought to have ruined Christianity in its infancy, but it was victorious over them. Those that persisted in their enmity were broken to pieces, *Mat.* xxi. 44, particularly the Jewish nation. But multitudes by Divine grace were gained to the church; and they and their substance were consecrated to the Lord Jesus, the Lord of the whole earth.

CHAPTER V.

In this chapter we have, I. A prediction of the troubles and distresses of the Jewish nation, ver. 1. II. A promise of the Messiah, and of his kingdom, to support the people of God in the day of these troubles. 1. Of the birth of the Messiah, ver. 2, 3; 2. Of his advancement, ver. 4; 3. Of his protection of his people, and his victory over his and their enemies, ver. 5, 6; 4. Of the great increase of the church, and the blessings that shall come to the world by it, ver. 7; 5. Of the destruction of the enemies of the church, both those without, that attack it, and those within, that expose it, ver. 8—15.

NOW gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops:
He hath laid siege against us:
They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the
2 But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, [cheek.
Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to
be ruler in Israel; [lasting.
Whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from ever-

RUINS (ANCIENT) AT BETHLEHEM.

3 Therefore will he give them up, [forth:
Until the time *that* she which travaileth hath brought
Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the
children of Israel.
4 And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD,
In the majesty of the name of the LORD his God;
And they shall abide:
For now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.
5 And this *man* shall be the peace,
When the Assyrian shall come into our land:
And when he shall tread in our palaces,
Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds,
And eight principal men.
6 And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword,
And the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof:
Thus shall he deliver *us* from the Assyrian,
When he cometh into our land,
And when he treadeth within our borders.

Here, as before, we have,

First. The abasement and distress of Zion, ver. 1. The Jewish nation for many years before the captivity dwindled and fell into disgrace; "Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops!" It is either a summons to Zion's enemies, that had troops at their service, to come and do their worst against her,

(God will suffer them to do it,) or a challenge to Zion's friends, that had troops too at command, to come and do their best for her. Let them gather in troops, yet it should be to no purpose; for, saith the prophet, in the name of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "He hath laid siege against us." The king of Assyria has, the king of Babylon has, and we know not which way to defend ourselves, so that the enemies shall gain their point, and prevail so far as "to smite the judge of Israel," the king, the chief justice, and the other inferior judges, "with a rod upon the cheek," in contempt of them and their dignity. Having made them prisoners, they shall use them as shamefully as any one of the common captives. Complaint had been made of the judges of Israel, *ch.* iii. 11, that they were corrupt and took bribes, and this disgrace came justly upon them for abusing their power; yet it was a great calamity to Israel to have their judges treated thus ignominiously. Some make this the reason why the troops shall lay siege to Jerusalem, that is, the Roman army, because the Jews "shall smite the judge of Israel upon the cheek," because of the indignities they shall do to the Messiah, the Judge of Israel, whom they smote on the cheek, saying, "Prophesy who smote thee!" But the former sense seems more probable, and that it is meant of the besieging of Jerusalem, not by the Romans, but by the Chaldeans; and was fulfilled in the indignities done to king Zedekiah and the princes of the house of David.

Secondly. The advancement of Zion's king. Having shewed how low the house of David should be brought, and how vilely the shield of that mighty family should be cast away, as though it had not been anointed with oil,—to encourage the faith of God's people, who might be tempted now to think that his covenant with David and his house was abrogated, according to the psalmist's complaint, *Ps.* lxxxix. 38, 39, he adds an illustrious prediction of the Messiah and his kingdom, in whom that covenant should be established, and the honours of that house should be revived, advanced, and perpetuated. Now let us see,

1. How the Messiah is here described. It is he that is to be "ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," from the 'days of eternity, as the word is. Where we have,

1st. His existence from eternity as God. His goings forth or emanations, as the goings forth of the beams from the sun, were, or have been, of old, from everlasting; which, saith Dr. Pocock, is so signal a description of Christ's eternal generation, or his going forth as the Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, that this prophecy must belong only to him, and could never be verified of any other. It certainly speaks of a going forth that was now past, when the prophet spoke, and cannot but be read as we read it, his outgoings have been; and the putting of both these words together, which severally are used to denote eternity, plainly shew that they must be taken in the strictest sense, the same with *Ps.* xc. 2, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God," and can be applied to no other but to him who was able to say, "Before Abraham was, I am," *Jno.* viii. 58. Dr. Pocock observes that the 'going forth' is used, *Deu.* viii. 3, for a word which 'proceedeth out of the mouth,' and is therefore very fitly used to signify the eternal generation of him who is called the Word of God, that was "in the beginning with God," *Jno.* i. 1, 2.

2nd. His office as Mediator. He was to be ruler in Israel, king of his church; he was to "reign over the house of Jacob for ever," *Lu.* i. 32, 33. The Jews object that our Lord Jesus could not be the Messiah, for he was so far from being ruler in Israel, that Israel ruled over him, and put him to death, and would not have him to reign over them; but he answered that himself, when he said his "kingdom was not of this world," *Jno.* xviii. 36. And it is a spiritual Israel he reigns over, the children of promise, all the followers of believing Abraham and praying Jacob; in the hearts of these he reigns by his Spirit and grace, and in the society of these by his words and ordinances. And was not he ruler in Israel whom winds and seas obeyed, and legions of devils were forced to truckle to, and who commanded away diseases from the sick, and called the dead out of their graves? None but he "whose goings forth were from of old, from everlasting," was fit to be "ruler in Israel," to be a head of the church, and head over all things to the church.

2. What is here foretold concerning him.

1st. That Bethlehem should be the place of his nativity, ver. 2. This was the Scripture which the scribes went upon, when, with the greatest assurance, they told Herod "where Christ should be born," *Mat.* ii. 6; and from hence it was universally known among the Jews that "Christ cometh out of the town of Bethlehem where David was," *Jno.* vii. 42. Bethlehem signifies the house of bread, the fittest place for him to be born in who is the bread of life. And because it was the city of David, by a special providence it was ordered that he should be born there who was to be the Son of David, and his heir and successor for ever. It is called Bethlehem-Ephratah, both names of the same city, as appears, *Gen.* xxxv. 19. It was "little among the thousands of Judah," not considerable either for the number of the inhabitants or the figure they made; it had nothing in it worthy to have this honour put upon it. But God in that, as in other instances, chose to exalt them of low degree, *Lu.* i. 52. Christ would give honour to the place of his birth, and not derive honour from it. Though thou be little, yet this shall make thee great; and, as St. Matthew reads it, thou "art not the least among the princes of Judah," but upon this account art really honourable above any of them. A relation to Christ will magnify those that are little in the world.

2nd. That in the fulness of time he should be born of a woman; ver. 3, "Therefore will he give them up. He will give up his people Israel to distress and trouble, and will defer their salvation, which has been so long promised and expected, until the time, the set time, "that she which travaileth hath brought forth;" or, as it should be read, 'that she who shall bring forth shall have brought forth;' that the blessed virgin, who was to be the mother of the Messiah, shall have brought him forth at Bethlehem, the place appointed. This Dr. Pocock thinks to be the most proper, genuine sense of the words. Though the outgoings of the Messiah were from everlasting, yet the redemption in Jerusalem, the consolation of Israel, must be waited for, *Lu.* ii. 25—38, till the time that "she who should bring forth" (so the virgin Mary is called, as Christ is himself called, "he that should come") shall bring forth; and in the meantime he will give them up. Divine salvations must be waited for until the time fixed for the bringing of them forth.

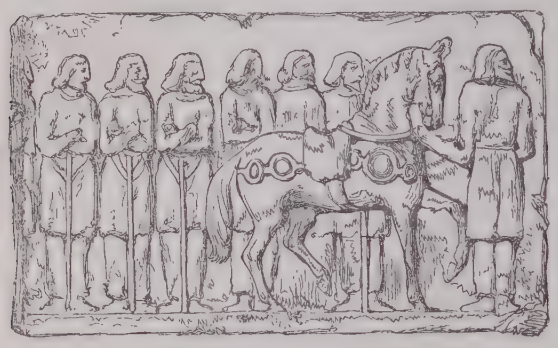
3rd. That "the remnant of his brethren shall then return unto the children of Israel." The remnant of the Jewish nation shall return to the spirit of the true genuine children of Israel, a people in covenant with God; the hearts of the children shall be turned to the fathers, *Mal.* iv. 6. Some understand it of all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews; they shall all be incorporated into the commonwealth of Israel; and, as they are all brethren to one another, so "he is not ashamed to call them brethren," *Heb.* ii. 11.

4th. That he shall be a glorious Prince, and his subjects shall be happy under his government; ver. 4, "He shall stand and feed;" that is, he shall both teach and rule, and shall continue to do so, as a good Shepherd, with wisdom, and care, and love. So it was foretold, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd," shall provide green pastures for them, and under-shepherds to lead them into these pastures. He is the good Shepherd that goes before the sheep, and presides among them. He shall do this, not as an ordinary man, but in the strength of the Lord, as one clothed with a Divine power to go through his work, and break through the difficulties in his way, so as not to fail or be discouraged. He shall do it "in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God;" that is, so as plainly to evidence that God's name was in him, *Ex.* xxiii. 21, the majesty of his name; for "he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." The prophets prefaced their messages with, "Thus saith the Lord;" but Christ spoke not as a servant, but as a son. "Verily, verily, I say unto you:" this was feeding "in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. All power was given him in heaven and in earth," a "power over all flesh," by virtue of which he still rules "in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God," a name above every name. Christ's government shall be, *First.* Very happy for his subjects, for they shall abide. They shall be safe and easy, and continue so for ever; "because he lives, they shall live also." They shall lie down in the green pastures to which he shall lead them, "shall abide in God's tabernacle for ever," *Ps.* lxi. 4; his church shall abide, and he in it and with it always even to the end of the world. *Secondly.* It shall be very glorious to himself; "Now shall he be great to the ends of the earth." Now he stands and feeds his flock, "now shall he be great;" for Christ reckons it his greatness to do good. Now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, for the uttermost parts of the earth shall be given him for his possession, and the ends of the world shall see his salvation.

5th. That he shall secure the peace and welfare of his church and people against all the attempts of his and their enemies; ver. 5, 6, "This man," as king and ruler, "shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into this land." This refers to the deliverance of Hezekiah and his kingdom from the power of Sennacherib, who invaded them, in the type; but under the shadow of that is a promise of the safety of the gospel church, and of all believers, from the designs and attempts of the powers of darkness, Satan and all his instruments, the dragon and his angels, that seek to devour the church of the firstborn, and all that belong to it. Observe, *First.* The peril and danger which Christ's subjects are supposed to be in. The Assyrian, a potent enemy, comes into their land, ver. 5, 6, treads within their borders, nay, prevails so far as to tread in their palaces; it was a time of treading down and of perplexity when Sennacherib made a descent upon Judah, took all the defenced cities, and laid siege to Jerusalem, *Isa.* xxxvi. 1, xxxvii. 3: this represented the gates of hell fighting against the kingdom of Christ, compassing the camp of the saints and the holy city, and threatening to bear down all before them. When the terrors of the law set themselves in array against a convinced soul, when the temptations of Satan assault the people of God, and the troubles of the world threaten to rob them of all their comforts, then the Assyrian comes into their land, and treads in their palaces; "Without are fightings, within are fears." *Secondly.* The protection and defence which his subjects are then sure to be under. 1*st.* Christ will himself be their peace. When the Assyrian comes with such a force into a land, can there be any other peace than a tame submission and an unresisted desolation? Yes, even then the church's King will be the conservator of the church's peace, will be for a hiding-place, *Isa.* xxxii. 1, 2. Christ is our peace as a Priest, making atonement for sin and reconciling us to God; and he is our peace as a King, conquering our enemies, and commanding down disquieting fears and passions; "He creates the fruit of the lips, peace." Even when the Assyrian comes into the land, when we are in the greatest distress and danger, and have received a sentence of death within ourselves, yet "this man may be the peace." "In me," saith Christ, "you shall have peace," when "in the world you have tribulation;" at such a time our souls may dwell at ease in him. 2*nd.* He will find out proper instruments to be employed for their protection and deliverance, and the defeat of their enemies. "Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men;" that is, a competent number of persons proper to oppose the enemy, and make head against him, and protect the church of God in peace, men that shall have the care and tenderness of shepherds, and the courage and authority of principal men, or princes of men. Seven and eight are a certain number for an uncertain. Note, When God has work to do he will not want fitting instruments to do it with; and when he pleaseth he can do it by a few. He needs not raise thousands, but seven or eight principal men may serve the turn, if God be with them. Magistrates and ministers are shepherds and principal men raised in defence of religion's righteous cause against the powers of sin and Satan in the world. 3*rd.* The opposition given to the church shall be got over, and the opposers brought down. This is represented by the laying of Assyria and Chaldea waste, which two nations were the most formidable enemies to the Israel of God of any, and the destruction of them signified the making of Christ's enemies his footstool. "They shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword," and "the land of Nimrod in the entrance thereof;" they shall make inroads upon the land, and put all to the sword that they find in arms. Note, Those that threatened ruin to the church of God hasten ruin to themselves, and their destruction is the church's salvation: thus shall he "deliver us from the Assyrian." When "Satan fell as lightning from heaven," before the preaching of the Gospel, and Christ's enemies, that would not have him to reign over them, were slain before him, then this was fulfilled.

7 And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many
As a dew from the LORD, [people
As the showers upon the grass,
That tarrieth not for man,
Nor waiteth for the sons of men.
8 And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles
In the midst of many people
As a lion among the beasts of the forest,
As a young lion among the flocks of sheep:
Who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth
And none can deliver. [in pieces,
9 Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries,
And all thine enemies shall be cut off.
10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD,
That I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee,
And I will destroy thy chariots:
11 And I will cut off the cities of thy land,
And throw down all thy strong holds:
12 And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand;

And thou shalt have no *more* soothsayers:
13 Thy graven images also will I cut off,
And thy standing images out of the midst of thee;
And thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands.
14 And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee:
So will I destroy thy cities.
15 And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen,
Such as they have not heard.



HORSE OF STATE.—FROM A SCULPTURE NEAR SHAPOR.

Glorious things are here spoken of the remnant of Jacob, that remnant which was raised of her that halted, *ch.* iv. 7; and it seems to be that "remnant which the Lord our God shall call," *Joel* ii. 32, on whom the Spirit shall be poured out; the remnant that shall be saved, *Rom.* ix. 27. Note, God's people are but a remnant, a small number, in comparison with the many that are left to perish. A little flock, but they are the remnant of Jacob, a people in covenant with God, and in his favour. Now, concerning this remnant, it is here promised,

First. That they shall be as a dew in the midst of the nations, ver. 7. God's church is dispersed all the world over; it is "in the midst of many people," as gold in the ore, wheat in the heap. Israel according to the flesh dwelt alone, and was not numbered among the nations; but the spiritual Israel lies scattered "in the midst of many people," as the "salt of the earth," or as seed sown in the ground, here a grain and there a grain, *Hos.* ii. 23. Now this remnant shall be "as dew from the Lord." 1. They shall be of heavenly extraction, as dew from the Lord, who is the father of the rain, and hath "begotten the drops of the dew," *Job* xxxviii. 28. They are born from above, and are not of the earth, savouring the things of the earth. 2. They shall be numerous as the drops of dew in a summer's morning; *Ps.* cx. 3, "Thou hast the dew of thy youth." 3. They shall be pure and clear, not muddy and corrupt, but crystal drops, as the water of life. 4. They shall be produced silently and without noise, as the dew that distils insensibly, we know not how; such is the way of the Spirit. 5. They shall live in a continual dependence upon God, and be still deriving from him, as the dew, which "tarrieth not for man," nor "waiteth for the sons of men." They should not rely upon human aids and powers, but on Divine grace, for they are, and own that they are, no more than what the free grace of God makes them every day. 6. They shall be great blessings to those among whom they live, as the dew and the showers are to the grass, to make it grow without the help of man, or the sons of men. Their doctrine, example, and prayers shall make them as dew to soften and moisten others, and make them fruitful. Their speech shall distil as the dew, *Deu.* xxxii. 2; and all about them shall "wait for them as for the rain," *Job* xxix. 23. The people among whom they live shall be as the grass, which flourisheth only by the blessing of God, and not by the art or care of man. They shall be beneficial to those about them by drawing down God's blessings on them, as Jacob on Laban's house, and by cooling and mitigating God's wrath, which otherwise would burn them up, as the dew preserves the grass from being scorched by the sun; so Dr. Pocock. They shall be mild and gentle in their behaviour, like their Master, who comes down "like rain upon the new-mown grass," *Ps.* lxxii. 6.

Secondly. That they shall be "as a lion among the beasts of the forest," that treads down and tears in pieces, ver. 8. As they shall be silent, and gentle, and communicative of all good to those that receive the truth in the love of it, so they shall be bold as a lion in witnessing against the corruptions of the times and places they live in, and strong as a lion in the strength of God to resist and overcome their spiritual enemies. The "weapons of their warfare are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds," 2 *Cor.* x. 4, 5. They shall have "courage, which all their adversaries should not be able to resist," *Lu.* xxi. 15; as when the lion tears, none can deliver. When infidelity is silenced, and all iniquity made to stop her mouth, when sinners are convinced and converted by the power of the Gospel in the doctrine of its ministers and the conversation of its professors, then the remnant of Jacob is like a lion. This is explained, ver. 9, "Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries;" the church shall have the upper hand at last of all that oppose her. Her "enemies shall be cut off;" that is, they shall cease to be enemies, their enmity shall be cut off. Christ's arrows of conviction shall be sharp in their hearts, so that they shall "fall under him;" that is, they shall yield themselves subjects to him, *Ps.* xlv. 5, and be happily conquered and subdued, *Ps.* cx. 2.

Thirdly. That they shall be brought off from all carnal confidences which they had relied on; that by the providence of God they should enjoy such a security as that they should not need them; and by the grace of God they should be brought to see the folly of them, and come off from them. It was the sin of Israel that they furnished themselves extravagantly with horses and chariots, and were soothsayers and idolaters; (see *Isa.* ii. 6—8;) but here it is promised that they should not regard them any more. The tranquillity of the kingdom of Christ is intended in that promise, which explains this, *Zech.* ix. 10, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem." Note, It is a great mercy to be deprived of those things which we have reposed a confidence in, in competition with God, which we have made our arm, and after which we have gone a whoring from God. Let us observe the particulars: 1. They had trusted in chariots and horses, and multiplied them, *Ps.* xx. 7; but now God will cut off their horses, and destroy their chariots, ver. 10, as "David houghed the chariot-horses," 2 *Sam.* viii. 4. They shall not have them, lest they should be tempted to trust in them. 2. They depended upon their strongholds and fortified cities for their security, but God will take care that they be demolished; ver. 11, "I will cut off the cities of thy land;" that is, "I will throw down thy strongholds." They shall have them for habitations, but not for garrisons, for God will be their only place of defence, their high tower and their deliverer. 3. Many of them depended much upon the conduct and advice of their conjurers, diviners, and fortune-tellers, and those God will cut off, not only as weak things, and insufficient to relieve them, but as wicked things, and sufficient to ruin them; ver. 12, "I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand," that thou shalt no more take hold of them, and stay thyself upon them; and "thou shalt have no more soothsayers," for thou shalt be convinced that all their pretensions are a cheat. The justice of the nation shall cut them off according to the law, *Lev.* xx. 27; the preaching of the Gospel brought men off from using curious arts, *Acts* xix. 19. 4. Many of them had said to the work of their hands, Ye are our gods; but now idolatry shall be abolished and abandoned; ver. 13, "Thy graven images will I cut off, and thy standing images," both those that were moveable and those that were fixed. They shall be destroyed by the power of the law of Moses, and deserted by the power of the Gospel of Christ, so that "thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands," but be ashamed that ever thou hast been so deluded. Among other monuments of idolatry, "I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee," ver. 14, which were planted and preserved in honour of their idols, and used in the worship of them. These they were ordered to burn, *Deu.* xii. 2, 3; and if they do not, God will, so as that they shall not have them to trust to. And so "will I destroy thy cities," meaning the cities that were dedicated to the idols, to some or other dunghill deity, which they confided in for their protection.

Fourthly. That those who stand it out against the Gospel of Christ, and continue in league with their idolatries and witchcrafts, shall fall under the wrath of God, and be consumed by it; ver. 15, "I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen," that is, upon the heathenism, "such as they have not heard." Idolatries shall be done away, and idolaters put to shame. I will execute vengeance upon the heathen which have not heard, (so some read it,) or which would not hear and receive the doctrine of Christ. God will give his Son either the hearts or the necks of his enemies, and make them either his friends or his footstool.

CHAPTER VI.

After the precious promises in the two foregoing chapters, relating to the Messiah's kingdom, the prophet is here directed to set the sins of Israel in order before them, for their conviction and humiliation, as necessary to make way for the comfort of gospel grace. Christ's forerunner was a reprover, and preached repentance, and so prepared his way. Here, I. God enters an action against his people for their base ingratitude, and the ill returns they had made him for his favours, ver. 1—5. II. He shews the wrong course they took, when they were under convictions, and the frivolous proposals they made, in answer to his charge, and what course they should have taken, ver. 6—8. III. He calls upon them to hear the voice of his judgments, and set the sins in order before them, for which he still proceeded in his controversy with them, ver. 9; their injustice, ver. 10—15; and their idolatry, ver. 16; for both which ruin was coming upon them.

HEAR ye now what the LORD saith;
Arise, contend thou before the mountains,
And let the hills hear thy voice.
2 Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy,
And ye strong foundations of the earth:
For the LORD hath a controversy with his people,
And he will plead with Israel.
3 O my people, what have I done unto thee?
And wherein have I wearied thee?
Testify against me.
4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,
And redeemed thee out of the house of servants;
And I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted,
And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him
From Shittim unto Gilgal;
That ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

Here, First. The prefaces to the message are very solemn, and such as may engage our most serious attention. 1. The people are commanded to give audience, "Hear ye now what the Lord saith." What the prophet speaks, he speaks from God, and in his name, they are therefore bound to hear it, not as the word of a sinful, dying man, but of the holy, living God. Hear now what he saith, for, first or last, he will be heard. 2. The prophet is commanded to speak in earnest, and to put an emphasis upon what he said, "Arise, contend thou before the mountains," or with the mountains, "and let the hills hear thy voice," if it were possible. Contend with the mountains and hills of Judæa, that is, with the inhabitants of those mountains and hills; and some think reference is had to those mountains and hills on which they worshipped idols, and which by that means were polluted. But it is rather to be taken more generally, as appears by his call, not only to the mountains, but to the "strong foundations of the earth," pursuant to the instructions given him. This is designed, 1st. To excite the earnestness of the prophet. He must speak as vehemently as if he designed to make even the hills and mountains hear him, must cry aloud and not spare; what he has to say in God's name he must proclaim publicly before the mountains, as one that was neither ashamed nor afraid to own his message; he must speak as one concerned, and one that desired to speak to the heart, and therefore appeared to speak from the heart. 2nd. To expose the stupidity of the people; "Let the hills hear thy voice," for this senseless, careless people will not hear it, will not heed it. Let the rocks, the foundation of the earth, that have no ears, hear, since Israel, that has ears,

will not hear. It is an appeal to the mountains and hills; let them bear witness that Israel has fair warning given them, and good counsel, if they would but take it. Thus Isaiah begins with, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth." Let them judge between God and his vineyard.

Secondly. The message itself is very affecting. He is to let all the world know that God has a quarrel with his people, good ground for an action against them. Their offences are public, and therefore so are the articles of impeachment exhibited against them. Take notice, "the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel," will plead by his prophets, plead by his providences, to make good his charge. Note, 1. Sin begets a controversy between God and man. The righteous God has an action against every sinner, an action of debt, an action of trespass, an action of slander. 2. If Israel, God's own professing people, provoke him by sin, he will let them know that he has a controversy with them. He sees sin in them, and is displeased with it; nay, their sins are more displeasing to him than the sins of others, as they are a greater grief to his spirit and dishonour to his name. 3. God will plead with those whom he has a controversy with, will plead with his people Israel, that they may be convinced, and that he may be justified. In the close of the foregoing chapter he pleaded with the heathen in anger and fury, to bring them to ruin, but here he pleads with Israel in compassion and tenderness, to bring them to repentance: "Come now and let us reason together;" God reasons with us, to teach us to reason with ourselves. See the equity of God's cause, it will bear to be pleaded, and sinners themselves will be forced to confess judgment, and to own that God's ways are equal, but their ways are unequal, *Eze.* xviii. 25. Now,

1. God here challengeth them to shew what he had done against them which might give them occasion to desert him. They had revolted from God, and rebelled against him; but had they any cause to do so? ver. 3. "O my people, what have I done unto thee? Wherein have I wearied thee?" If subjects quit their allegiance to their prince, they will pretend, as the ten tribes did, when they revolted from Rehoboam, that his yoke is too heavy for them; but can you pretend any such thing? What have I done to you that is unjust or unkind? Wherein have I wearied you with the impositions of service, or the exactions of tribute? "Have I made you to serve with an offering?" *Isa.* xliii. 23. "What iniquity have your fathers found in me?" *Jer.* ii. 5. He never deceived us, or disappointed our expectations from him, never did us wrong, or put disgrace upon us; why, then, do we wrong and dishonour him, and frustrate his expectations from us? Here is a challenge to all that ever were in God's service, to testify against him, if they have found him in any thing a hard master, and his demands unreasonable.

2. Since they could not shew any thing he had done against them, he will show them a great deal he has done for them, which should have engaged them for ever to his service, ver. 4, 5. They are here directed, and we in them, to look a great way back in their reviews of the Divine favour; let them remember their former days, their first days, when they were formed into a people, and the great things God did for them:

1st. When he brought them out of Egypt, the land of their bondage, ver. 4. They were content with their slavery, and almost in love with their chains, for the sake of the garlic and onions they had plenty of; but God brought them up, inspired them with an ambition of liberty, and animated them with a resolution, by a bold effort, to shake off their fetters. The Egyptians held them fast, and would not let the people go, but God redeemed them, not by price, but by force, "out of the house of servants," or rather, "the house of bondage," for it is the same word that is used in the preface to the ten commandments; which insinuates that the same considerations which are arguments for duty, if they be not improved by us, will be improved against us as aggravations of sin. When he brought them out of Egypt into a vast howling wilderness, as he left not himself without witness, so he left not them without guides, for he sent before them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam,—three prophets, saith the Chaldee paraphrase: Moses, the great prophet of the Old Testament; Aaron, his prophet, *Ex.* vii. 1; and Miriam, a prophetess, *Ex.* xv. 20. Note, When we are calling to mind God's former mercies to us, we must not forget the mercy of good teachers and governors when we were young; let those be made mention of to the glory of God, who went before us, saying, This is the way, walk in it. It was God that sent them before us, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to prepare a people for him.

2nd. When he brought them into Canaan. God no less glorified himself, and honoured them, in what he did for them when he brought them into the land of their rest, than in what he did for them when he brought them out of the land of their servitude. When Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, were dead, yet they found God the same. Let them remember now what God did for them, *First.* In baffling and defeating the designs of Balak and Balaam against them, which he did by the power he has over the hearts and tongues of men, ver. 5. Let them remember "what Balak the king of Moab consulted," what mischief he devised and designed to do to Israel, when they encamped in the plains of Moab; that which he consulted was to curse Israel, to divide between them and their God, and to disengage him from the protection of them. Among the heathen, when they made war upon any people, they endeavoured by magic, charms, or otherwise, to get from them their tutelar gods, as to rob Troy of its palladium. Macrobius has a chapter *De ritu evocandi deos,*—'concerning the solemnity of calling out the gods.' This Balak would try against Israel; but remember "what Balaam the son of Beor answered him," how, contrary to his own intention and inclination, instead of cursing Israel he blessed them, to the extreme confusion and vexation of Balak. Let them remember the malice of the heathen against them, and for that reason never "learn the way of the heathen," or associate with them; let them remember the kindness of their God to them, how he "turned the curse into a blessing, because the Lord thy God loved thee," as it is *Deu.* xxiii. 5, and for that reason never forsake him. Note, The disappointing of the devices of the church's enemies ought always to be remembered to the glory of the church's Protector, who can make the answer of the tongue directly to contradict the preparation and consultation of the heart, *Pr.* xvi. 1. *Secondly.* In bringing them from Shittim, their last lodgment out of Canaan, unto Gilgal, their first lodgment in Canaan. There it was, between Shittim and Gilgal, that, upon the death of Moses, Joshua, a type of Christ, was raised up to put Israel in possession of the land of promise, and to fight their battles. There it was that they passed over Jordan, through the divided waters, and renewed the covenant of circumcision; these mercies of God to their fathers they must now remember, that they may know the righteousness of the Lord,—his righteousness, so the word is; his justice in destroying the Canaanites, his goodness in giving rest to his people Israel, and his faithfulness to his promise made unto the fathers. The remembrance of what God had done for them might convince them of all this, and engage them for ever to his service. Or, they may refer to the controversy now pleaded between God and Israel; let them remember God's many favours to them and their fathers, and compare with them their unworthy, ungrateful carriage towards him, that they may know the righteousness of the Lord in contending with them; and it may appear that in this controversy he has right on his side. His ways are equal, for he will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth.

6 Wherewith shall I come before the LORD,
And bow myself before the high God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
With calves of a year old?
7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression,
The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul?
8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good;
And what doth the LORD require of thee,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God?

Here is the proposal for accommodation between God and Israel, the parties that were at variance in the beginning of the chapter. Upon the trial, judgment is given against Israel, they are convicted of injustice and ingratitude towards God, the crimes with which they stood charged; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused. And therefore,

First. They express their desires to be at peace with God upon any terms; ver. 6, 7, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" Being made sensible of the justice of God's controversy with them, and dreading the consequences of it, they were inquisitive what they might do to be reconciled to God, and to make him their friend. They apply themselves to a proper person with this inquiry,—to the prophet, the Lord's messenger, by whose ministry they had been convinced. Who so fit to shew them their way as he that had made them sensible of their having missed it? And it is observable that each one speaks for himself. "Wherewith shall I come?" Knowing every one the plague of his own heart, they ask not, What shall this man do? but, What shall I do? Note, Deep convictions of guilt and wrath will put men upon careful inquiries after peace and pardon, and then, and not till then, there begins to be some hopes of them. They inquire wherewith they may come before the Lord, and bow themselves before the high God. They believe there is a God, that he is Jehovah, and that he is the high God, the Most High. They whose consciences are convinced have learned to speak very honourably of God, whom before they spake slightly of. Now, 1. We know we must come before God. He is the God with whom we have to do; we must come as subjects to pay our homage to him, as beggars to ask alms from him; nay, we must come before him as criminals, to receive our doom from him, must come before him as our Judge. 2. When we come before him we must bow before him; it is our duty to be very humble and reverent in our approaches to him, and when we come before him there is no remedy but we must submit; it is to no purpose to contend with him. 3. When we come and bow before him, it is our great concern to find favour with him, and to be accepted of him; their inquiry is, What will the Lord be pleased with? Note, All that rightly understand themselves and their own interest cannot but be solicitous what they must do to please God, to avoid his displeasure, and to obtain his goodwill. 4. In order to God's being pleased with us, our care must be that the sin by which we have displeased him may be taken away, and an atonement made for it. The inquiry here is, "What shall I give for my transgression," for "the sin of my soul?" Note, The transgression we are guilty of is the sin of our soul; for the soul acts it,—without the soul's act it is not sin; and the soul suffers by it,—it is the disorder, disease, and defilement of the soul, and threatens to be the death of it; "What shall I give for my transgression?" What will be accepted as a satisfaction of his justice, a reparation of his honour? and what will avail to shelter me from his wrath? 5. We must therefore ask, Wherewith may we come before him? We must not appear before the Lord empty. What shall we bring with us? In what manner must we come? In whose name must we come? We have not that in ourselves which will recommend us to him, but must have it from another; what righteousness then shall we appear before him in?

Secondly. They make proposals, such as they are, in order to it. Their inquiry was very good and right, and what we are all concerned to make; but their proposals betray their ignorance, though they shew their zeal; let us examine them,

1. They bid high. They offer, 1st. That which is very rich and costly—thousands of rams. God required one ram for a sin offering; they proffer flocks of them, their whole stock, will be content to make themselves beggars, so that they may but be at peace with God. They will bring the best they have, the rams, and the most of them, till it comes to thousands. 2nd. That which is very dear to them, and which they would be most loath to part with. They could be content to part with their firstborn for their transgressions, if that would be accepted as an atonement, and the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul. To them that were become vain in their imaginations, this seemed a probable expedient of making satisfaction for sin, because our children are pieces of ourselves, and therefore the heathen sacrificed their children to appease their offended deities. Note, Those that are thoroughly convinced of sin, of the malignity of it, and of their misery and danger by reason of it, would give all the world, if they had it, for peace and pardon.

2. Yet they do not bid right. It is true some of these things were instituted by the ceremonial law, as the bringing of burnt offerings to God's altar, and calves of a year old,—rams for sin offerings, and oil for the meat offerings; but these alone would not recommend them to God. God had often declared that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; that sacrifice and offering he would not. The legal sacrifices had their virtue and value from the institution and reference they had to Christ the great propitiation; but otherwise, of themselves, it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. And as to the other things here mentioned, 1st. Some of them are impracticable things, as rivers of oil, which nature has not provided to feed men's luxury, but rivers of water, to supply men's necessity. All the proposals of peace, but those that are according to the Gospel, are absurd. One stream of the blood of Christ is worth ten thousand rivers of oil. 2nd. Some of them are wicked things, as to give our firstborn and the fruit of our body to death, which would but add to the transgression and the sin of the soul. He that hates robbery for burnt offerings much more hateth murder, such murder. What right have we to our firstborn, and the fruit of our body? Do they not belong to God? Are they not his already, and born to him? Are they not sinners by nature, and their lives forfeited upon their own account? How then can they be a ransom for ours? 3rd. They are all external things, parts of that bodily exercise which profiteth little, and which could not make the comers thereunto perfect. 4th. They are all insignificant, and insufficient to attain the end proposed. They could not answer the demands of Divine justice, nor satisfy the wrong done to God in his honour by sin; nor would

they serve in lieu of the sanctification of the heart and the reformation of the life. Men will part with any thing rather than their sins, but they part with nothing to God's acceptance unless they part with them.

Thirdly. God tells them plainly what he demands and insists upon from those that would be accepted of him, ver. 8. Let their money perish with them that think the pardon of sin, and the favour of God, may be so purchased. No; God "hath shewed thee, O man, what is good." Here we are told,

1. That God hath made a discovery of his mind and will to us, for the rectifying of our mistakes, and the directing of our practice. 1st. It is God himself that hath shewed us what we must do. We need not trouble ourselves to make proposals, the terms are already settled and laid down. He whom we have offended, and to whom we are accountable, hath told us upon what conditions he will be reconciled to us. 2nd. It is to man that he hath shewed it; not only to thee, O Israel, but to thee, O man, Gentiles as well as Jews. To men that are rational creatures, and capable of receiving the discovery, and not to brutes; to men for whom a remedy is provided, not to devils, whose case is desperate. What is spoken to all men, every where in general, must by faith be applied to ourselves in particular, as if it were spoken to thee, O man, by name, and to no other. 3rd. It is a discovery of that which is good, and which the Lord requires of us. He hath shewed us our end which we should aim at, in shewing us what is good, wherein our true happiness doth consist. He hath shewed us our way in which we must walk towards that end, in shewing us what he requires of us. There is something which God requires we should do for him, and devote to him; and it is good, it is good in itself. There is an innate goodness in moral duties, antecedent to the command; they are not as ceremonial observances, therefore good because they are commanded, but therefore commanded because they are good; consonant to the eternal rule and reason of good and evil, which is unalterable. It has likewise a direct tendency to our good; our conformity to it is not only the condition of our future happiness, but it is a great expedient of our present happiness. In keeping God's commandments there is a great reward, as well as after keeping them. 4th. It is shewed us. God has not only made it known, but made it plain; he hath discovered it to us with such convincing evidence as amounts to a demonstration; "Lo this, we have searched it, so it is."

2. What that discovery is. The good which God requires of us is not the paying of a price for the pardon of sin, and acceptance with God, but doing the duty, which is the condition of our interest in the pardon purchased. 1st. We must do justly, must render to all their due, according as our relation and obligation to them is; must do wrong to none, but do right to all, in their bodies, goods, and good name. 2nd. We must love mercy, not only be just to all we deal with, but kind to all that need us, and that we are in a capacity of doing good to. Nor must we only shew mercy, but we must love mercy, we must delight in it, as our God doth, must be glad of an opportunity to do good, and do it cheerfully. Justice is put before mercy, for we must not give that in alms which is wrongfully got, or with which our debts should be paid; God hates robbery for a burnt offering. 3rd. We must walk humbly with our God. This includes all the duties of the first table, as the two former do all the duties of the second table. We must take the Lord for our God in covenant, must attend on him, and adhere to him as ours, and must make it our constant care and business to please him. Enoch's walking with God is interpreted, *Heb.* xi. 5, his pleasing God. We must in the whole course of our conversation conform ourselves to the will of God, keep up our communion with God, and study to approve ourselves to him in our integrity. And this we must do humbly, (submitting our understandings to the truths of God, and our wills to his precepts and providences,) we must humble ourselves to walk with God, so the margin reads it; every thought within us must be brought down, to be brought into obedience to God, if we would walk comfortably with him. This is that which God requires, and without which the most costly services are vain oblations; this is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

9 The LORD's voice crieth unto the city,
And *the man of* wisdom shall see thy name:
Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.
10 Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked,
And the scant measure *that is* abominable?
11 Shall I count *them* pure with the wicked balances,
And with the bag of deceitful weights?
12 For the rich men thereof are full of violence,
And the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies,
And their tongue *is* deceitful in their mouth.
13 Therefore also will I make *thee* sick in smiting thee,
In making *thee* desolate because of thy sins.
14 Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied;
And thy casting down *shall be* in the midst of thee;
And thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver;
And *that* which thou deliverest will I give up to the [sword.
15 Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap;
Thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil;
And sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.
16 For the statutes of Omri are kept,
And all the works of the house of Ahab,
And ye walk in their counsels;
That I should make thee a desolation,
And the inhabitants thereof an hissing:
Therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

God having shewed them how necessary it was that they should do justly, here shews them how plain it was that they had done unjustly; and since they submitted not to his controversy, nor went the right way to have it taken up, here he proceeds in it. Observe,

First. How the action is entered against them, ver. 9. God speaks to the city, to Jerusalem, to Samaria; his voice cries to it, by his servants the prophets, who were to cry aloud and spare not. Note, The voice of the prophets is the Lord's voice, and that cries to the city, cries to the country. Doth not wisdom cry? *Pr.* viii. 1. When the sin of a city cries to God, his voice cries against the city, and when the judgments of God are coming upon a city, his voice first cries unto it; he warns before he wounds, because he is not willing that any should perish. Now observe,

1. How the voice of God is discerned by some. "The man of wisdom will see thy name." When the voice of God cries to us we may by it see his name, may discern and perceive that by which he makes himself known. Yet many see it not, are not aware of it, because they do not regard it; God "speaketh once, yea twice, and they perceive it not," *Job* xxxiii. 14; but they that are men of wisdom will see it, and perceive it, and make a good use of it. Note, It is a point of true wisdom to discover the name of God in the voice of God, and to learn what he is from what he saith. "Wisdom shall see thy name;" for "the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

2. What this voice of God saith to all; "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." Hear the rod when it is coming, hear it at a distance, before you see it and feel it; and be awakened to go forth to meet the Lord in the way of his judgments. Hear the rod when it is come, and is actually upon you, and you are sensible of the smart of it; hear what it saith to you, what convictions, what counsels, what cautions it speaks to you. Note, Every rod has a voice, and it is the voice of God that is to be heard in the rod of God, and it is well for them that understand the language of it; which if we would do, we must have an eye to him that appointed it. Note, Every rod is appointed, of what kind it shall be, where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. God in every affliction "performeth the thing that is appointed for us," *Job* xxiii. 14; and to him therefore we must have an eye, to him we must have an ear; hear what he saith to us by the affliction, "hear it, and know it for thy good," *Job* v. 6. The work of ministers is to explain the providences of God, and to quicken and direct men to learn the lessons that are taught by them.

Secondly. What is the ground of the action, and what are the things that are laid to their charge.

1. They are charged with injustice, a sin against the second table. Are there yet to be found among them the marks and means of fraudulent dealing? What, after all the methods that God has taken to teach them to do justly, will they yet deal unjustly? It seems they will, ver. 10; and "Shall I count them pure?" ver. 11. No, this is a sin which will by no means consist with a profession of purity. Those that are dishonest in their dealings have not the spots of God's children, and shall never be reckoned pure, whatever shows of devotion they may make. Be not deceived, God is not mocked. When a man is suspected of theft or fraud the justice of peace will send a warrant to search his house. God here doth as it were search the houses of these citizens, and there he finds, 1st. Treasures of wickedness. Abundance of wealth, but it is ill got, and not like to prosper; for treasures of wickedness profit nothing. 2nd. A scant measure by which they sold to the poor, and so exacted from them and cheated them. 3rd. They had wicked balances and a bag of false weights, by which, under a pretence of weighing what they sold, and giving the buyer what was right, they did him the greatest wrong, ver. 11. 4th. Those that had wealth and power in their hands abused it to oppression and extortion. "The rich men thereof are full of violence;" for they that have much would have more, and are in a capacity of making it more by the power which their abundance of wealth gives them. They are full of violence; that is, they have their houses full of that which is got by violence. 5th. Those that had not advantage of doing wrong by their wealth yet found means of defrauding those they dealt with. "The inhabitants thereof have spoken lies;" if they are not able to use force and violence, they use fraud and deceit. "The inhabitants" have "spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth;" they do not stick at a deliberate lie to make a good bargain. Some understand it of their speaking falsely concerning God, saying, "The Lord seeth not. He hath forsaken the earth," *Eze.* viii. 12.

2. They are charged with idolatry; ver. 16, "The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the work of the house of Ahab." Both these kings were wicked, and "did evil in the sight of the Lord;" but the wickedness which they established by a law, concerning which they made statutes, and which was the peculiar work of that house, was idolatry. Omri walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin of provoking God to anger with their vanities, 1 *Kin.* xvi. 26; Ahab introduced the worship of Baal, 1 *Kin.* xvi. 31. These reigns were some ages before the time when this prophet lived, and yet the wickedness which they established by their laws and examples remained to this day; those statutes were still kept, and that work was still done; and the princes and people still walked in their counsels, took the same measures, and governed themselves and the people by the same politics. Observe, 1st. The same wickedness continued from one generation to another. Sin is a root of bitterness soon planted; but not so soon plucked up again. The iniquity of former ages is often transmitted to, and entailed upon, the succeeding ones. Those that make corrupt laws, and bring in corrupt usages, are doing that which perhaps may prove the ruin of the child unborn. 2nd. It was never the less evil in itself, provoking to God, and dangerous to the sinners, for its having been established and confirmed by the laws of princes, the examples of great men, and a long prescription. Though the worship of idols is enacted by the statutes of Omri, recommended by the practice of the house of Ahab, and pleads that usage of many generations, yet it is still displeasing to God and destructive to Israel; for no laws or customs are of force against the Divine command.

Thirdly. What is the judgment given upon this. Being found guilty of these crimes, the sentence is, that which God had given them warning of, ver. 9, shall he brought upon them; ver. 13, "Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee." As they had smitten the poor with the rod of their oppressions, so would God in like manner smite them so as to make them sick, sick of the gains they had unjustly gotten; so that, though they had swallowed down riches, they should vomit them up again, *Job* xx. 15. Their doom is,

1. That what they have they shall not have any comfortable enjoyment of. It shall do them no good; they grasped at more than enough, but when they have it, it shall not be enough to make them easy and happy. What is got by fraud and oppression cannot be kept or enjoyed with any satisfaction. 1st. Their food shall not nourish them; "Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied;" either because the food shall not digest, for want of God's blessing going along with it, or because the appetite shall by disease be made insatiable, and still craving,—the just punishment of those that were greedy of gain, and enlarged their desire as hell. Men may be surfeited with the good things of this world, and yet not satisfied, *Eccl.* v. 10; *Isa.* lv. 2. 2nd. Their country shall not harbour and protect them; "Thy casting down shall be in the midst of them;" that is, thou shalt be broken and ruined by intestine troubles, mischiefs at home enough to cast thee down, though thou shouldst not be invaded by a foreign force. God can cast a nation down by that which is in the midst of them, can consume them by a fire in their own bowels. 3rd. They shall not be able to preserve what they have from a foreign force, nor to recover what they have lost; "Thou shalt take hold" of what is about to be taken from thee, but thou shalt not hold

it fast; shalt catch at it, but thou shalt not deliver it, shalt not retrieve it. It is meant of their wives and children, that were dear to them, which they took hold of, as resolved not to part with them; but there is no remedy, they must go into captivity. Note, What we hold closest we commonly lose soonest, and that proves least safe which is most dear. 4th. What they save for a time shall be reserved for a future and sorer stroke; That which thou deliverest out of the hand of one enemy will I give up to the sword of another enemy; for God has many arrows in his quiver,—if one miss the sinner, the next shall not. 5th. What they have laboured for they shall not enjoy; ver. 15, "Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap;" either it shall be blasted and withered, and there shall be nothing to reap, or an enemy shall come and reap it for himself, or thou shalt be carried into captivity, and leave it to be reaped by thou knowest not whom. Thou shalt "tread the olives," but "thou shalt not anoint thee with oil;" having no heart to make use of ornaments and refreshments, when all is going to ruin. Thou shalt tread out the sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine, for many things may fall between the cup and the lip. Note, It is very grievous to be disappointed of our expectations, and not to have the pleasure of that which we have taken pains for; and this will be the just punishment of those that frustrate God's expectations from them, and answer not the cost he has been at upon them. See this threatened in the law, *Lev.* xxvi. 16; *Deu.* xxviii. 30, 38, &c., and compare *Isa.* lxii. 8, 9.

2. That all they have shall at length be taken from them; ver. 13, "Thou shalt be made desolate, because of thy sins;" and, ver. 16, "a desolation and a hissing." Sin makes a nation desolate; and when a people that have been famous and flourishing are made desolate, it is the astonishment of some, and the triumph of others; some lament it, and others hiss at it. Thus "ye shall hear the reproach of my people." Their being the people of God in name and profession, while they kept close to their duty, and kept themselves in his love, was an honour to them, and all their neighbours thought it so. But now they have corrupted and ruined themselves, now their sins and God's judgments have made their land desolate, their having been once the people of God doth but turn so much the more to their reproach; their enemies will say, "These are the people of the Lord," *Eze.* xxxvi. 20. Note, If professors of religion ruin themselves, their ruin will be the most reproachful of any other; and they in a special manner will rise at the last day to everlasting shame and contempt.

CHAPTER VII.

In this chapter, I. The prophet in the name of the church sadly laments the woful decay of religion in the age wherein he lived, and the deluge of impiety and immorality which overwhelmed the nation, which levelled the differences, and bore down the fences of all that is just and sacred, ver. 1—6. II. The prophet, for the sake of the church, prescribes comforts which may be of use at such a time, and gives counsel what to do: 1. They must have an eye to God, ver. 7; 2. They must courageously bear up against the insolences of the enemy, ver. 8—10; 3. They must patiently lie down under the rebukes of their God, ver. 9; 4. They must expect no other but that the trouble would continue long, and must endeavour to make the best of it, ver. 11—13; 5. They must encourage themselves with God's promises, in answer to the prophet's prayers, ver. 14, 15; 6. They must foresee the fall of their enemies, that now triumph over them, ver. 16, 17; 7. They must themselves triumph in the mercy and grace of God, and his faithfulness to his covenant, ver. 18—20; and with that comfortable word the prophecy concludes.

WOE is me! [fruits,
For I am as when they have gathered the summer
As the grapegleanings of the vintage: [fruit.
There is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe
2 The good *man* is perished out of the earth:
And *there is* none upright among men:
They all lie in wait for blood;
They hunt every man his brother with a net.
3 That they may do evil with both hands earnestly,
The prince asketh, and the judge *asketh* for a reward;
And the great *man*, he uttereth his mischievous desire:
So they wrap it up.
4 The best of them *is* as a brier:
The most upright *is sharper* than a thorn hedge:
The day of thy watchmen *and* thy visitation cometh;
Now shall be their perplexity.
5 Trust ye not in a friend,
Put ye not confidence in a guide:
Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy
6 For the son dishonoureth the father, [bosom.
The daughter riseth up against her mother,
The daughter in law against her mother in law;
A man's enemies *are* the men of his own house.

This is such a description of bad times as some think could scarce agree with the times of Hezekiah, when this prophet prophesied; and therefore they rather take it as a prediction of what should be in the reign of Manasseh. But we may rather suppose it to be in the reign of Ahaz, (and in that reign he prophesied, *ch.* i. 1,) or in the beginning of Hezekiah's time, before the reformation he was instrumental in; nay, in the best of his days, and when he had done his best to purge out corruptions, still there was much amiss. The prophet cries out, Woe is me! he bemoans himself that his lot was cast in such a degenerate age, and thinks it his great unhappiness that he lived among a people that were ripening apace for a ruin which many a good man would unavoidably be involved in. Thus David cries out, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech." He laments it,

First. That there were so few good people to be found, even among those that were called God's people; and this was their reproach, spoken of *ch.* v. 6, "The good man is perished out of the earth," or out of the land, the land of Canaan. It was a good land, and a land of uprightness, *Isa.* xxvi. 10; but there were few good men in it, none upright among them, ver. 2. The good man is a godly man and a merciful man, the word signifies both. Those are completely good men that are devout towards God, and compassionate and beneficent towards men, that love mercy and walk with God. These are perished; those few honest men that some time ago enriched and adorned our country are now dead and gone, and there are none risen up in their stead, that tread in their steps. Honesty is banished, and there is no such thing as a good man to be met with. Those that were of religious education are degenerated, and become as bad as the worst; "The godly man ceaseth," *Ps.* xii. 1. This is illustrated by a comparison, ver. 1. They were "as when they have gathered the summer-fruits;" it was as hard a thing to find a good man as to find any of the summer-fruits, (which were the choicest and best, and therefore must carefully be gathered in,) when the harvest is over. The prophet is ready to say, as Elijah in his time, 1 *Kin.* xix. 10, "I, even I only am left." Good men, that used to hang in clusters, are now as the "grape-gleanings of the vintage," here and there a berry, *Isa.* xvii. 6. You can find no societies of them, as bunches of grapes, but those that are are single persons; "There is no cluster to eat," and the best and fullest grapes are those that grow in large clusters. Some think this speaks not only the fewness of good people, but that those which remained, that went for good people, were good for little; like the small withered grapes, the refuse that were left behind, not only by the gatherer, but by the gleaner. When the prophet observed this universal degeneracy, it made him "desire the first-ripe fruit;" that is, he wished to see such worthy good men as were in the former ages, were the ornaments of the primitive times, and as far excelled the best of all the present age as the first and full-ripe fruits do those of the latter growth, that never come to maturity. When we read and hear of the wisdom and zeal, the strictness and conscientiousness, the devotion and charity, of the professors of religion in former ages, and see the reverse of this in those of the present age, we cannot but sit down and wish, with a sigh, 'O, for primitive Christianity again!' Where is the plainness and integrity of those that went before us? Where are the Israelites indeed without guile? Our souls desire them, but in vain. The golden age is gone, and past recall; we must make the best of what is, for we are not likely to see such times as have been.

Secondly. That there were so many wicked, mischievous people among them; not only none that did any good, but multitudes that did all the hurt they could. "They all lie in wait for blood," and "hunt every man his brother." To get wealth to themselves they care not what wrong, what hurt, they do their neighbours and nearest relations. They act as if mankind were in a state of war, and force were the only right. They are as beasts of prey to their neighbours; for "they all lie in wait for blood," as lions for their prey; they thirst after it, make nothing of taking away any man's life or livelihood to serve a turn for themselves, and lie in wait for an opportunity to do it. Their neighbours are as beasts of prey to them, for "they hunt every man his brother with a net;" they persecute them as noxious creatures, fit to be taken and destroyed, though they are innocent, excellent ones. We say of him that is outlawed, *Caput gerit lupinum*,—'He is to be hunted as a wolf.' Or, they hunt them as men do the game, to feast upon it; they have a thousand cursed arts of ensnaring men to their ruin, so that they may but get by it. Thus they do mischief with both hands earnestly, their hearts desire it, their heads contrive it, and then both hands are ready to put it in execution. Note, The more eager and intent men are upon any sinful pursuit, and the more pains they take in it, the more provoking it is.

Thirdly. That the magistrates, who by their office ought to have been the patrons and protectors of right, were the practisers and promoters of wrong. "That they may do evil with both hands earnestly," to excite and animate themselves in it, "the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward," for a bribe, with which they will be hired to exert all their power, for the supporting and carrying on of any wicked design, with both hands. 'They do evil with both hands well,' so some read it. They do ill with a great deal of art and dexterity, they praise themselves for doing it so well. Others thus, 'to do evil they have both hands,' (they catch at an opportunity of doing mischief,) 'but to do good the prince and the judge ask for a reward.' If they do any good offices, they are mercenary in them, and must be paid for them. The great man, that has wealth and power to do good, he is not ashamed to utter his mischievous desire, in conjunction with the prince and the judge, who are ready to support him, and stand by him in it; so they wrap it up, they perplex the matter, involve it, and make it intricate, (so some understand it,) that they may lose equity in a mist, and so make the cause turn which way they please. It is ill with a people when their princes, and judges, and great men, are in a confederacy to pervert justice. And it is a sad character that is given of them, ver. 4, that "the best of them is as a briar, and the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge;" that is, it is a dangerous thing to have any thing to do with them: "He that toucheth them must be fenced with iron," 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 6, 7, he shall be sure to be scratched, to have his clothes torn, and his eyes almost pulled out. And if this be the character of the best and most upright, what are the worst? And when things are come to this pass, "the day of the watchman comes," that is, as it follows, the day of thy visitation, when God will reckon with thee for all this wickedness; which is called the day of the watchmen, because their prophets, whom God set as watchmen over them, had often warned them of that day. When all flesh have corrupted their way, even the best and the most upright, what can be expected but a day of visitation, a deluge of judgments, as that which drowned the old world, when the earth was filled with violence.

Fourthly. That there was no faith in man; people were grown so universally treacherous that one knew not who to repose any confidence in, ver. 5. Those that have any sense of honour or sparks of virtue remaining in them have a mighty regard to the laws of friendship; they would not discover what passed in private conversation, nor divulge secrets to the prejudice of a friend; but those things are now made a jest of: you will not meet with a friend that you dare trust, whose word you dare take, or who will have any tenderness or concern for you; so that wise men shall give it and take it for a rule, "Trust ye not in a friend," for you will find him false, you can trust him no farther than you can see him; and even he that passeth for an honest man you will find to be so only with good looking to. Nay, he that undertakes to be your guide, to lead you into any business which he professeth to understand better than you, yet you cannot put a confidence in him, for he will be sure to mislead you, if he can get any thing by it. Some by a guide understand a husband, who is called the guide of thy youth; and that agrees well enough with what follows, "Keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom," from thy own wife; take heed what thou sayest before her, lest she betray thee as Dalilah did Samson; lest she be the bird of the air that carries the voice of that which thou sayest in thy bedchamber, *Eccl.* x. 6. It is an evil time indeed when the prudent are obliged even thus far to keep silence.

Fifthly. That children were abusive to their parents, and men had no comfort, no satisfaction, in their own families and their nearest relations, ver. 6. The times are bad indeed when "the son dishonoureth his father," gives him ill language, exposeth him, threatens him, and studies to do him a mischief, "when the daughter riseth up" in rebellion against her own mother, having no sense of duty nor natural affection; and no marvel that then the daughter-in-law quarrels with her mother-in-law, and is vexatious to her. Either they cannot agree about their property or interest, or their humours and passions clash, or, from a spirit of bigotry and persecution, "The brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child," *Mat.* x. 4; *Lu.* xxi. 16. It is sad

when a man's betrayers and worst enemies are the "men of his own house," his own children and servants, that should be his guard, and his best friends. Note. The contempt and violation of the laws of domestic duties are a sad symptom of a universal corruption of manners. Those are never likely to come to good that are undutiful to their parents, and study to be provoking to them, and cross them.

7 Therefore I will look unto the LORD; [hear me.
I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will
8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy:
When I fall, I shall arise; [me.
When I sit in darkness, the LORD *shall be* a light unto
9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD,
Because I have sinned against him,
Until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me:
He will bring me forth to the light,
And I shall behold his righteousness.
10 Then *she that is* mine enemy shall see *it*,
And shame shall cover her which said unto me,
Where is the LORD thy God?
Mine eyes shall behold her:
Now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.
11 *In* the day that thy walls are to be built,
In that day shall the decree be far removed.
12 *In* that day *also* he shall come even to thee from Assyria,
And *from* the fortified cities,
And from the fortress even to the river,
And from sea to sea, and *from* mountain to mountain.
13 Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate
Because of them that dwell therein,
For the fruit of their doings.

The prophet, having sadly complained of the wickedness of the times he lived in, here fastens upon some considerations for the comfort of himself and his friends in reference thereunto. The case is bad, but it is not desperate: "Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing."

First. Though God be now displeased, he shall be reconciled to us, and then all will be well, ver. 7, 9. We are now under "the indignation of the Lord;" God is angry with us, and justly, because we have sinned against him. Note, It is our sin against God that provokes his indignation against us; and we must see it, and own it, whenever we are under Divine rebukes, that we may justify God, and may study to answer his end in afflicting us, by repenting of sin, and breaking off from it. Now, at such a time,

1. We must have recourse to God under our troubles; ver. 7, "Therefore I will look unto the Lord." When a child of God has ever so much occasion to cry, "Woe is me!" as the prophet here, ver. 1, yet it may be a comfort to him that he has a God to look to, a God to come to, to fly to, in whom he may rejoice and have satisfaction. All may look bright above him, when all looks black and dark about him. The prophet had been complaining that there was no comfort to be had, no confidence to be put in friends and relations on earth, and this drives him to his God: "Therefore I will look unto the Lord." The less reason we have to delight in any creature, the more reason we have to delight in God. If princes are not to be trusted, we may say, Happy is the man that has the God of Jacob for his help, and happy am I, even in the midst of my present woes, if he be my help. If men be false, this is our comfort, that God is faithful. If relations be unkind, he is and will be gracious. Let us therefore look above and beyond them, and overlook our disappointment in them, and look unto the Lord.

2. We must submit to the will of God in our troubles; "I will bear the indignation of the Lord," will bear it patiently, without murmuring and repining, "because I have sinned against him." Note, Those that are truly penitent for sin will see a great deal of reason to be patient under affliction. Wherefore should a man complain for the punishment of his sin? When we complain to God of the badness of the times we ought to complain against ourselves for the badness of our own hearts.

3. We must depend upon God to work deliverance for us, and put a good issue to our troubles in due time. We must not only look to him, but look for him: "I will wait for the God of my salvation," and for his gracious returns to me. In our greatest distresses we shall see no reason to despair of salvation, if by faith we eye God as the God of our salvation, who is able to save the weakest, upon their humble petition, and willing to save the worst, upon their true repentance. And if we depend on God as the God of our salvation, we must wait upon him, and for his salvation, in his own way and his own time. Let us now see what the church is here taught to expect and promise herself from God, even then when things are brought to the last extremity. 1st. "My God will hear me." If the Lord be our God, he will hear our prayers, and grant an answer of peace to them. 2nd. "When I fall," and am in danger of being dashed in pieces by the fall, yet "I shall arise" and recover myself again. I fall, but am not utterly cast down, *Ps.* xxxvii. 24. 3rd. "When I sit in darkness," desolate and disconsolate, melancholy and perplexed, and not knowing what to do, or which way to look for relief, yet then "the Lord shall be a light unto me," to comfort and revive me, to instruct and teach me, to direct and guide me, as a light to mine eyes, a light to my feet, a light in a dark place. 4th. He "will plead my cause, and execute judgment for me," ver. 9. If we heartily espouse the cause of God, the just but injured cause of religion and virtue, and make it our cause, we may hope he will own our cause, and plead it. The church's cause, though it seem for a time to go against her, yet will at length be pleaded with jealousy, and judgment not only given against, but executed upon, the enemies of it. 5th. "He will bring me forth to the light." Shall make me shine eminently out of obscurity, and become conspicuous; shall make my righteousness shine evidently from under the dark cloud of calumny, *Ps.* xxxvii. 6; *Isa.* lviii. 10; the morning of comfort shine forth out of the long and dark night of trouble. 6th. "I shall behold his righteousness;" that is, I shall see the equity of his proceedings concerning me, and the performance of his promises to me.

Secondly. Though enemies triumph and insult, they shall be silenced, and put to shame, ver. 8, 10. Observe here,

1. How proudly the enemies of God's people trample upon them in their distress. They said, "Where is the Lord their God?" As if, because they were afflicted, God had forsaken them, and they knew not where to find him with their prayers, and he knew not how to help them with his favours. This David's enemies said to him, and it was a sword in his bones, *Ps.* xlii. 10, and see *Ps.* cxv. 2. Thus, in reproaching Israel as an abandoned people, they reflected on the God of Israel as an unkind, unfaithful God.

2. How comfortably the people of God by faith bear up themselves under these insults; ver. 8, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy;" I am now down, but shall not be always so; and when my God appears for me, then "she that is mine enemy shall see it and be ashamed," not only being disappointed in her expectations of the church's utter ruin, but having the same cup of trembling put into her hand. Then "mine eyes shall behold her" in the same deplorable condition that I now am in. "Now shall she be trodden down." Note, The deliverance of the church will be the confusion of her enemies; and their shame shall be double when, as they have trampled upon God's people, so they shall themselves be trampled upon.

Thirdly. Though the land continue a great while desolate, yet it shall at length be replenished again, when the time, even the set time of its deliverance, comes.

1. Its salvation shall not come 'till after it has been desolate,' so the margin reads it, ver. 13. God has a controversy with the land, and it must lie long under his rebukes, "because of them that dwell therein." It is their iniquity that makes their land desolate, *Ps.* cvii. 34; it is "for the fruit of their doings," their evil doings, which they have been themselves guilty of, and the evil fruit of them, the sins of others which they have been accessary to, by their ill influence and example. For this they must expect to smart a great while, for the world shall know that God hates sin even in his own people.

2. When it doth come it shall be a complete salvation; and it seems to refer to their deliverance out of Babylon by Cyrus, which Isaiah about this time prophesied of, as a type of our redemption by Christ. 1st. The "decree shall be far removed." God's decree concerning their captivity, and Nebuchadnezzar's decree concerning the perpetuity of it, his resolution never to release them, these shall be set aside and revoked, and you shall hear no more of them; they shall no more lie as a yoke upon thy neck. 2nd. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah shall be again reared; then "Thy walls shall be built," walls for habitation, walls for defence, house walls, town walls, temple walls. It is in order to these that the decree is repealed, *Isa.* xliv. 28. Though Zion's walls may lie long in ruins, there will come a day when they shall be repaired. 3rd. All that belong to the land of Israel, whithersoever dispersed, and howsoever distressed, far and wide over the face of the whole earth, shall come flocking to it again, ver. 12. He shall come even to thee, having liberty to return, and a heart to return, from Assyria, whither the ten tribes were carried away, though it lay remote; and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress, those strongholds in which they thought they had them fast; for when God's time is come, though Pharaoh will not let the people go, God will fetch them out with a high hand. They shall come from all the remote parts, from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain, not turning back for fear of their discouragements, but they shall go from strength to strength till they come to Zion. Thus, in the great day of redemption, "God will gather his elect from the four winds."

14 Feed thy people with thy rod,
The flock of thine heritage,
Which dwell solitarily *in* the wood, in the midst of Carmel:
Let them feed *in* Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of
old. [Egypt
15 According to the days of thy coming out of the land of
Will I shew unto him marvellous *things*. [might:
16 The nations shall see and be confounded at all their
They shall lay *their* hand upon *their* mouth, their ears
shall be deaf.
17 They shall lick the dust like a serpent, [earth:
They shall move out of their holes like worms of the
They shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear
because of thee.
18 Who *is* a God like unto thee,
That pardoneth iniquity, [heritage?
And passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his
He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delight-
eth *in* mercy.
19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us;
He will subdue our iniquities; [sea.
And thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the
20 Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob,
And the mercy to Abraham, [old.
Which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of

Here is, First. The prophet's prayer to God to take care of his own people, and of their cause and interest, ver. 14. When God is about to deliver his people, he stirs up their friends to pray for them, and pours out a spirit of grace and supplication, *Zec.* xii. 10; and when we see God coming towards us in ways of mercy, we must go forth to meet him by prayer. It is a prophetical prayer, which amounts to a promise of the good prayed for. What God directed his prophet to ask, no doubt he designed to give. Now, 1. The people of Israel are here called the flock of God's heritage, for they are the sheep of his hand, the sheep of his pasture, his little flock in the world; and they are his heritage, his portion in the world; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. 2. This flock "dwells solitarily in the wood," or forest, "in the midst of Carmel," a high mountain. Israel was a peculiar people, that dwelt alone, and was not

reckoned among the nations, like a flock of sheep in a wood. They were now a desolate people, ver. 13, were in the land of their captivity as sheep in a forest, in danger of being lost, and made a prey of to the beasts of the forest. They are scattered upon the mountains as sheep having no shepherd. 3. He prays that God would "feed them there with his rod;" that is, that he would take care of them in their captivity, would protect them, and provide for them, and do the part of a good shepherd to them. Let thy rod and staff comfort them, even in that darksome valley; and even there let them want nothing that is good for them. Let them be governed by thy rod, not the rod of their enemies, for they are thy people. 4. He prays that God would in due time bring them back to feed in the plains of Bashan and Gilead, and no longer to be fed in the woods and mountains. Let them feed in their own country again, as in the days of old. Some apply this spiritually, and make it either the prophet's prayer to Christ or his Father's charge to him to take care of his church, as the great Shepherd of the sheep; and to go in and out before them while they are here in this world, as in a wood, that they may find pasture, as in Carmel, as in Bashan and Gilead.

Secondly. God's promise in answer to this prayer. And we may well take God's promises as real answers to the prayers of faith, and embrace them accordingly, for with him saying and doing are not two things. The prophet prayed that God would feed them, and do kind things for them; but God answers that he will shew them marvellous things, ver. 15, will do for them more than they are able to ask or think, will outdo their hopes and expectations; he will shew them his marvellous loving-kindness, *Ps.* xvii. 2. 1. He will do that for them which shall be the repetition of the wonders and miracles of former ages; "according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt." Their deliverance out of Babylon shall be a work of wonder and grace, not inferior to their deliverance out of Egypt, nay, it should eclipse the lustre of that, *Jer.* xvi. 14, 15, much more should the work of redemption by Christ be so. Note, God's former favours to his church are patterns of future favours, and shall again be copied out as there is occasion. 2. He will do that for them which shall be matter of wonder and amazement to the present age, ver. 16, 17. The nations about shall take notice of it, and it shall be said among the heathen, "The Lord has done great things for them," *Ps.* cxxvi. 2. The impression which the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon shall make upon the neighbour nations shall be very much for the honour both of God and his church. 1st. Those that had insulted over the people of God in their distress, and gloried that when they had them down they would keep them down, shall be confounded when they see them surprisingly rising up; they shall be confounded at all the might with which the captives shall now exert themselves, whom they thought for ever disabled. They shall now "lay their hands upon their mouth," as being ashamed of what they have said, and not able to say any more, by way of triumph over Israel. Nay, "their ears shall be deaf" too, so much shall they be ashamed at the wonderful deliverance; they shall stop their ears, as being not willing to hear any more of God's wonders wrought for that people which they had so despised and insulted over. 2nd. Those that had impudently confronted God himself shall now be struck with a fear of him, and thereby brought, in profession at least, to submit to him; ver. 17, "They shall lick the dust like a serpent," they shall be so mortified, as if they were sentenced to the same curse the serpent was laid under; *Gen.* iii. 14, "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat." They shall be brought to the lowest abasement imaginable, and shall be so dispirited that they shall tamely submit to them. "His enemies shall lick the dust," *Ps.* xii. 9. Nay, they shall lick the dust of the church's feet, *Isa.* xlix. 23. Proud oppressors shall now be made sensible how mean, how little, they are before the great God, and they shall, with trembling, and the lowest submission, "move out of the holes," into which they are crept, *Isa.* ii. 21, "like worms of the earth" as they are, being ashamed and afraid to shew their heads; so low shall they be brought, and such abjects shall they be when they are abased. When God did wonders for his church, many of the people of the land became Jews, because the fear of the Jews and of their God fell upon them, *Est.* viii. 17. So it is promised here, "They shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee," O Israel. Forced submissions are often but feigned submissions, yet they redound to the glory of God and the church, though not to the benefit of the dissemblers themselves.

Thirdly. The prophet's thankful acknowledgment of God's mercy, in the name of the church, with a believing dependence upon his promise, ver. 11, 19, 20. We are here taught,

1. To give to God the glory of his pardoning mercy, ver. 18. God having promised to bring back the captivity of his people, the prophet on that occasion admires pardoning mercy, as that which was the bottom of it. As it was their sin that brought them into bondage, so it was God's pardoning their sin that brought them out of it: see *Ps.* lxxxv. 1, 2; *Isa.* xxxiii. 24; xxxviii. 17; xl. 1, 2. The pardon of sin is the foundation of all other covenant mercies, *Heb.* viii. 12. This the prophet stands amazed at, while the nations about only stood amazed at those deliverances which were but the fruits of this. Note, 1st. God's people, that are the remnant of his heritage, stand charged with many transgressions. Being but a remnant, a very few, one would hope they should all be very good, but they are not so, God's children have their spots, and oft offend their Father. 2nd. The gracious God is ready to pass by and pardon the iniquity and transgression of his people upon their repentance and return to him. God's people are pardoned people, and to this they owe their all. When God pardons sin he passeth it by, doth not punish it as justly he might, nor deal with the sinner according to the desert of it. 3rd. Though God may for a time lay his own people under the tokens of his displeasure, yet he will not retain his anger for ever; but though he cause grief he will have compassion. He is not implacable, yet against those that are not of the remnant of his heritage, that are unpardoned, he will keep his anger for ever. 4th. The reasons why God pardons sin and keeps not his anger for ever are all taken from within himself; it is "because he delights in mercy," and the salvation of sinners is what he has pleasure in, not their death and damnation. 5th. The glory of God in forgiving sin is, as in other things, matchless, and without compare. There is no God like unto him for this; no magistrate, no common person, forgives as God doth. In this his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours; in this he is God, and not man. 6th. All those that have experienced pardoning mercy cannot but admire that mercy; it is what we have reason to stand amazed at, if we know what it is. Has God forgiven us our transgressions? We may well say, "Who is a God like unto thee?" Our holy wonder of pardoning mercy will be a good evidence of our interest in it.

2. To take to ourselves the comfort of that mercy, and all that grace and truth that goes along with it. God's people here, as they look back with thankfulness upon God's pardoning their sins, so they look forward with assurance upon what he would yet farther do for them. His mercy endures for ever; and therefore, as he has shewed mercy, so he will, ver. 19, 20. 1st. He will renew his favours to us. "He will turn again," he will "have compassion;" he will again have compassion upon us, as formerly he had. His compassions shall be new every morning; he seemed to be departing from us in anger, but he will turn again and pity us. He will turn us to himself, and then will turn to us and have mercy upon us. 2nd. He will renew us, to prepare and qualify us for his favour. "He will subdue our iniquities;" when he takes away the guilt of sin, that it may not damn us, he will break the power of sin, that it may not have dominion over us; that we may not fear sin, or be led captive by it. Sin is an enemy that fights against us, a tyrant that oppresseth us; nothing less than almighty grace can subdue it, so great is its power in fallen man, and so long has it kept possession. But if God forgive the sin that has been committed by us, he will subdue the sin that dwelleth in us, and in that there is none like him in forgiving. And all those whose sins are pardoned earnestly desire and hope to have their corruptions mortified, and their iniquities subdued, and please themselves with the hopes of it. If we be left to ourselves our iniquities will be too hard for us, but God's grace we trust shall be sufficient for us to subdue them, so that they shall not rule us, and then they shall not ruin us. 3rd. He will confirm this good work, and effectually provide that his act of grace shall never be repealed. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea," as when he brought them out of Egypt (to which he has an eye in the promises here, ver. 15,) he subdued Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and cast them "into the depth of the sea." It intimates that when God forgives sin he remembers it no more, and takes care that it shall never be remembered more against the sinner; *Eze.* xviii. 22, "His transgressions shall not be mentioned unto him;" they are blotted out as a cloud which never appears more. He casts them into the sea, not near the shore side, where they may appear again next low water, but into the depth of the sea, never to rise again. All their sins shall he cast there without exception, for when God forgives sin he forgives all. 4th. He will perfect that which concerns us, and with this good work will do all that for us which our case requires, and which he has promised; ver. 20, Then "thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham." It is in pursuance of the covenant that our sins are pardoned and our lusts mortified; from that spring all these streams flow, and with these he shall freely give us all things. The promise is said to be mercy to Abraham, because, as made to him first, it was mere mercy, preventing mercy, considering what state it found in him. But it was truth to Jacob, because the faithfulness of God was engaged to make good to him and his seed, as heirs to Abraham, all that was graciously promised to Abraham. See here, *First.* With what solemnity the covenant of grace is ratified to us. It was not only spoken, written, and sealed, but, which is the highest confirmation, it was sworn to our fathers. Nor is it a modern project, but is confirmed by antiquity too: it was sworn from the days of old; it is an ancient charter. *Secondly.* With what satisfaction it may be applied and relied upon by us. We may say with the highest assurance, Thou wilt perform the truth and mercy; not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground; faithful is he that has promised, who also will do it.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF MICAH.

CHAP. I.—6. *I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.* 'We read over the prophecy of Micah regarding Samaria as we drew near to it, and conversed together as to its full meaning. We asked Dr. Keith what he understood by the expression, "I will make Samaria as a heap of the field?" He replied that he supposed that the ancient stones of Samaria would be found, not in the form of a ruin, but gathered into heaps in the same manner as they do in clearing a vineyard, or as our farmers at home clear their fields by gathering the stones together. In a little after we found the conjecture to be completely verified.' Having described their investigation of the ruined city, the writers (M'Cheyne and Bonar) continue: 'It was most affecting to look round this scene of desolation, and to remember that this was the place where wicked Ahab built his house of Baal, where cruel Jezebel ruled, and where Elijah and Elisha did their wonders. But, above all, it filled the mind with solemn awe to read over on the spot the words of God's prophet uttered 2500 years before—"I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof." Every clause reveals a new feature in the desolation of Samaria, differing in all its details from the desolation of Jerusalem, and every word has literally come to pass. We had found, both on the summit and on the southern valley, at every little interval, heaps of ancient stones piled up which had been gathered off the surface to clear it for cultivation. There can be no doubt that these stones once formed part of the temples, and palaces, and dwellings of Samaria, so that the word is fulfilled, "I will make Samaria as a heap of the field." We had also seen how completely the hill had been cleared of all its edifices, the stones gathered off it as in the clearing of a vineyard, the only columns that remain standing bare, without their capitals; so that, in all respects, the hill is left like "the plantings of a vineyard;" either like the bare vine-shoots of a newly-planted vineyard, or like the well-cleared terraces where vines might be advantageously planted. Still farther we had seen that the ruins of the ancient city had not been left to moulder away on the hill where they were built, as is the case with other ruined cities, but had been cleared away to make room for the labours of the husbandman. The place where the buildings of the city

stood had been tilled, sown, and reaped, and the buildings themselves rolled down over the brow of the hill. Of this, the heaps in the valley, the loose fragments in the rude dykes that run up the sides, and the broken columns on their way down into the valley, are witnesses; so that the destroyers of Samaria (whose very name is unknown,) and the simple husbandman have both unwittingly been fulfilling God's word, "I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley." And, last of all, we had noticed that many of the stones in the valley were large and massy, as if they had been foundation stones of a building, and that in many parts of the vast colonnade nothing more than the bases of the pillars remain. But especially, we observed that the ruined church had been built upon foundations of a far older date than the church itself, the stones being of great size, and bevelled in a manner similar to the stones of the temple wall at Jerusalem, and those of the mosque at Hebron; and these foundations were now quite exposed. So that the last clause of the prophecy is fulfilled with the same awful minuteness, "I will discover the foundations thereof." Surely there is more than enough in the fulfilment of this fourfold prediction to condemn, if it does not convince, the infidel.'—*Narrative.* 16. *Make thee bald.* The prophet concludes this geographical part of his denunciations by addressing himself to the land of Judah, and calling upon her to put on signs of deep-felt grief on account of the removal of her inhabitants. Baldness, and cutting off the beard, are tokens of mourning in the East, as they were among the nations of antiquity, *Ezr.* ix. 3; *Job.* i. 20; *Jer.* vii. 21; xvi. 6; xlviii. 37. 'When Khaled ben Walid ben Mogairah died, there was not a female of the house of Mogairah, either matron or maiden, who caused not her hair to be cut off at his funeral.'—*Harmer's Observ.* iii. p. 5. One species of eagle is called the bald eagle, from the circumstance of its having its head almost entirely bald; but they all, more or less, exhibit baldness during the moulting season.—*H.*

CHAP. II.—12, 13. These verses are translated as follows by Hengstenberg, whose comment we subjoin: 'I will collect, yea, O Jacob, I will collect thee wholly, I will collect the remnant of Israel. Together will I bring them as the sheep of Bozrah, as a flock upon their pasture, they shall make a tumult before men. The breaker goes forth before them, they break through, pass through the gate, and go forth, and their king marches before them, and the Lord in their front.' The whole description receives much light from the remark that its lines are nearly all borrowed from the deliverance out of Egypt. Israel there, under oppression and affliction, constantly increased in numbers by the Lord's blessing concealed under the cross; compare *Ex.* i. 12. When the time of redemption came, the Lord, who had long remained concealed, again made himself known as their God; in the first place, the people were collected,—then the Lord marched before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night He led them out of Egypt, the house of bondmen. Just so here also. The increase and assembling are described in the twelfth verse, the deliverance in the thirteenth; here, as there, Israel's affliction is exhibited under the image of a residence in the house of bondage, a prison whose gates the Lord opens, whose walls he breaks through. In this leaning to the former deliverance, which has its deeper ground in the typical import of the latter, an aeted prediction of all later deliverances, and which fully contains in itself their germ and their pledge, Micah harmonizes with his contemporaries, Hosea and Isaiah; compare *Hos.* ii. 1, 2; *Isa.* xi. 11—16.—The words, 'together will I bring,' &c., shew, at the same time, the faithfulness of the great Shepherd, who collects his scattered flock out of all regions, and the unexpected and wonderful increase of this flock? Compare *Jer.* xxiii. 3; xxxi. 10. We take Bozrah as the name of the capital of the Idumeans in Auranitis, four days' journey from Damascus.—Supplementary Note to *Isa.* xxxiv. The great wealth of this city in herds appears from *Isa.* xxxiv. 6, and may be easily explained by its position. In its neighbourhood, particularly, begins the immeasurable Arabian plain, which extends on the one side without interruption to Dschof in the heart of Arabia, and reaches northwards, under the name of El Hamad, to Bagdad. Its length and breadth are reckoned at eight days' journey. It contains an abundance of flowering plants.—The *tertium comparationis* is to be sought in the assembling, in antithesis with the dispersion. The multitude comes under consideration here only as a necessary consequence of the collection. We must think of the flocks of Bozrah as being not merely numerous, but at the same time as crowded together.—The last words graphically describe the tumult which a numerous and crowded flock occasions. The whole verse (13) is to be explained by the figure, lying at the foundation of a prison, in which the people of God are shut up, but are now to be delivered by the powerful hand of God. By the breaker through we understand the *dux et antesignanus* raised up by God. Every Divine deliverance begins with the raising up and preparing of such a leader; and what the typical leader, a Moses, a Zerubbabel, was in the inferior deliverances, that was Christ in the highest and last. The three verbs, they 'break through,' they 'pass through,' they 'go forth,' vividly describe the progress which can be hindered by no human power.—The last words give a view of the highest leader of the expedition: compare besides *Ex.* xiii. 21; *Isa.* lii. 12; xl. 11; *Ps.* lxxx. 3. In the exodus from Egypt, besides Moses, (the breaker through,) there went before the host a visible symbol of God's presence. On the return from Babylon the angel of the Lord was visible only to the eye of faith, as formerly, when Abraham's servant journeyed to Mesopotamia, *Gen.* xxiv. 7. In the last and highest deliverance the breaker through was at the same time the King and God of the people.—*The Christology of the Old Testament, by E. W. Hengstenberg, translated by Dr. Reuel Keith, Rev. T. K. Arnold's edition.*

CHAP. III.—3. *Flay their skin from off them.* The metaphor of a flock is still carried on. The chiefs of Jacob and the princes of Israel, instead of taking care of the flocks, defending them, and finding them pasture, oppressed them in various ways. Suetonius tells us, in his life of Tiberius, that when the governors of the provinces wrote to the emperor, entreating him to increase the tributes, he wrote back, 'It is the property of a good shepherd to shear his sheep, not to skin them,'—a maxim which many rulers of the earth do not seem to understand.—*A. Clarke.* 12. *Therefore shall Zion—be ploughed as a field.* It shall undergo, says the same commentator, a variety of reverses and sackages, till at last there shall not be one stone left on the top of another that shall not be pulled down, and then a plough shall be drawn along the site of the valley. Of this ancient custom Horace speaks,

> From hence proud cities date their utter falls,
> When, insolent in ruin, o'er their walls
> The wrathful soldier drags the hostile plough,
> That haughty mark of total overthrow.

The destruction of the city and temple by the Romans, as well as that by the Chaldeans, seems to have been predicted, in which the ground where the temple stood is said to have been broken up with a plough by the conqueror. Supplementary Note to *Luke* xix. 41—44.

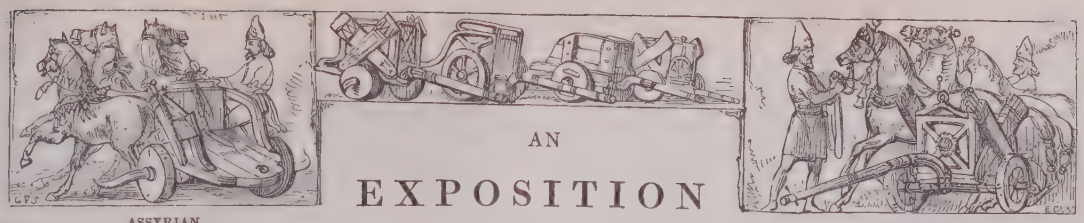
CHAP. IV.—1. *But in the last days it shall come to pass.* Supplementary Note, *Isa.* ii. 4. *They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree.* This beautiful addition, which is not in *Isaiah*, appears to have been a common adage among the Hebrews, to express a state of complete outward security, 1 *Kin.* iv. 25; *Zec.* iii. 10. 'In the court and the house in which we were lodged, (at Hasbeuja, near the source of the Jordan,) and in many similar places of the town, we noticed vines and fig-trees spreading their tendrils and umbrageous branches. The rearing of these plants in this manner is now commencing in Lebanon and Damascus, and doubtless is of great antiquity in the country.'—*Lands of the Bible. And none shall make them afraid.* Regarding this passage as prophesying the conversion not only of the Gentiles, but also of the Jews, and the state of peace to which they would in the latter times be brought, no images could be employed more strikingly descriptive than those employed in this verse, of the greatness and blessedness of the change, especially when contrasted with the present condition of the Israelites in many parts of the world, where they live in such insecurity and fear. See Supplementary Note, *Deu.* xxviii. 24, for proofs of this as to their past state; and in evidence of their present condition, especially in different parts of the Continent, we add the words of a converted Jew, now an esteemed minister of the Gospel: 'They are,' says Mr. Herschell, 'driven from place to place, and not permitted to live in the same street where the (so-called) Christians reside! It not unfrequently happens that when one or more wealthy Jews have built commodious houses in any part of a town not hitherto prohibited, this affords a reason for proscribing them; it is immediately enacted that no Jew must live in that part of the city, and they are forthwith driven from their houses, without any compensation for their loss being given them. They are oppressed on every side, yet dare not complain; robbed and defrauded, yet obtain no redress; in the walks of social life insult and contempt meet them at every turning.' Nowhere are they more illiberally and cruelly treated than in the free towns of Germany. 'At this moment the Jews in Hamburgh are subject to their former degrading thraldom; they are still in the land of Egyptian bondage; still made to endure the feelings of an outcast race.' 5. *For all people will walk every one in the name of his God.* Many interpreters have been puzzled how to reconcile the statement made in the beginning of this verse with the prediction contained in verse 2. The difficulty will be removed if we consider the words to be those of the Jews during their dispersion. '*Hic spectanda est diversitas temporis,*'—*Calvin, in loc.* They witnessed the eagerness with which the idolaters around them devoted themselves to the service of their gods—an eagerness which led them to despair of their ever being reclaimed; and they nobly resolved that nothing should ever again move them to abandon the service of Jehovah; but that, with equal earnestness, they would addict themselves to his worship, and the observance of his laws.—*H.*

CHAP. V.—2. *Beth-lehem Ephratah.* Supplementary Note to *Mat.* ii. 6. Michaelis remarks, 'If not even a word were found in *Mat.* ii. 5, 6, explanatory of our text, I should believe the subject to be Christ, who was born in the reign of Herod. The whole thread of the prophecy in the preceding chapter leads me to him, and the time of his birth.' The Messianic application of the prophecy was formally made by the Jewish Sanhedrim, in their official reply to Herod, *Mat.* ii. 5, 6; and is admitted both by the rabbinical and the rationalistic interpreters, though, as might be expected, they differ as to the person of the Messiah. The Targum has, 'From thee the Messiah shall come forth before me, to exercise dominion over Israel, whose name was announced long ago, from the days of old.' 5. *And this man shall be the peace.* 'And This Same shall be the peace,' are intimately connected with the preceding words, but have no relation to those which follow, except in so far as the victories there assumed were to pave the way for that state of the Jewish affairs during which the Messiah was to appear in the world. 'This, This Same,' is used emphatically, with reference to the Messiah, who had just been spoken of. Compare, for a similar use of the pronoun, *Gen.* v. 29; *Ex.* xv. 2; "peace" is put, by metonymy, for the author and introducer of reconciliation; compare *Gen.* xlix. 10; *Isa.* ix. 5; *Zec.* ix. 10; *Eph.* ii. 14, 17; *Col.* i. 20.—*H.* The following is Dr. Hale's translation of verses 3, 4, and part of 5:

> 'Therefore he will give them up (for a season)
> Until the time that she which shall bear
> Have borne: then shall return
> The residue of thy brethren (the Jews),
> Along with the outcasts of Israel.
> And he shall stand and guide them
> In the strength of THE LORD,
> In the majesty of THE NAME OF THE LORD HIS GOD.
> And when they return, He shall be magnified
> Unto the ends of the earth,
> And He shall be their PEACE.—*Analysis*, ii. 462.

6. *Thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian.* This promised Saviour, and salvation, would ensure to Judah peace, or deliverance, during the ravages of the Assyrians and other enemies. But, as Sennacherib's invasion was not repelled by the ruler or chieftains of Israel,—nor did the Jews ever invade or waste the Assyrian dominions, or those of the Chaldeans, who afterwards occupied the same regions,—it seems evident that these expressions must be understood as mystically intending other enemies and persecutors of the church, who should be of the same spirit with Sennacherib and the Assyrians. Whatever heathen, infidel, or antichristian opposers should at any time harass, or attempt to desolate, the church, as Sennacherib did Judah and Jerusalem, the great Shepherd of the flock would furnish a competent number of able teachers and rulers, to defeat their designs, and at length to retaliate upon them, and to destroy those who had attempted to destroy them. This may refer to the powerful effects of the preached Gospel in the primitive times, in subverting paganism; to the termination of pagan persecution, by the conversion of the Roman emperors; and to the future promulgation of the Gospel, and the ruin of all antichristian, pagan, and Mohammedan powers, by the numerous and able instruments whom the Lord will raise up for these purposes.

CHAP. VII.—18. *Who is a God like unto thee?* Impelled by strong feelings of gratitude at the anticipated deliverance of his people, the prophet breaks out into a strain of the sublimest praise and admiration, and gives a description of the gracious character of God, unrivalled by any contained in the Scriptures.—*H.* 20. *Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob.* This promise, and this oath, says Dr. Clarke, God has most signally fulfilled by the incarnation of Christ, who was sent to bless us by turning away every one of us from his iniquities; and for this purpose he was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification; and repentance and remission of sins are preached in his name to all nations. The proclamation was first made at Jerusalem; and that the prophet refers to this is evident from the use made of these words by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, when, under the full afflatus of the Spirit of God, he quoted this prophecy of Micah, as fulfilled in the incarnation of Christ, *Lu.* i. 72, 73. Well might the prophet exult in his challenge to earth and hell. "Who is a God like unto thee!" Hell is speechless, earth is dumb. Infidels dare not open their mouths!!! Hallelujah! Jesus is the mighty God and Saviour, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin, and saving to the uttermost all that come unto God through him. Blessed be God! Reader, lay this to heart.



ASSYRIAN CHARIOTS.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF NAHUM,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE name of this prophet signifies 'a comforter;' for it was a charge given to all the prophets, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people;" and even this prophet, though wholly taken up in foretelling the destruction of Nineveh, which speaks terror to the Assyrians, yet even in that is comforter to the ten tribes of Israel, who it is probable were now lately carried captives into Assyria. It is very uncertain at what time he lived and prophesied, but most probable that he lived in the time of Hezekiah, and prophesied against Nineveh after the captivity of Israel by the king of Assyria, which was in the ninth year of Hezekiah, and before Sennacherib's invading Judah, which was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah; for to that attempt, and the defeat of it, it is supposed the first chapter has reference, and it is probable was delivered a little before it, for the encouragement of God's people, in that day of treading down and perplexity. And it is the conjecture of the learned Huetius that the two other chapters of this book were delivered by Nahum some years after, perhaps in the reign of Manasseh, and in that reign the Jewish chronologies generally place him, somewhat nearer to the time when Nineveh was conquered, and the Assyrian monarchy reduced by Cyaxares and Nebuchadnezzar, some time before the first captivity of Judah. It is probable Nahum did by word of mouth prophesy many things concerning Israel and Judah, as it is certain Jonah did, 2 *Kin.* xiv. 25, though we have nothing of either of them in writing but what related to Nineveh; which, though a great and ancient city, yet probably we should never have heard of in sacred writ, if the Israel of God had not had some concern in it.

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CHAPTER I.

In this chapter we have, I. The inscription of the book, ver. 1. II. A magnificent display of the glory of God, in a mixture of wrath and justice against the wicked, and mercy and grace towards his people, and the discovery of his majesty and power in both, ver. 2—8. III. A particular application of this (as most interpreters think) to the destruction of Sennacherib and the Assyrian army when they besieged Jerusalem, which was a very memorable and illustrious instance of the power both of God's justice and of his mercy, and spoke abundance of terror to his enemies and encouragement to his faithful servants, ver. 9—16.

THE burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

This title directs us to consider,

First. The great city against which the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is "the burden of Nineveh." Not only a prophecy and a weighty one, but a burdensome prophecy, a dead weight to Nineveh, a millstone hanged about its neck. Nineveh was the place concerned, and the Assyrian monarchy, which that was the royal seat of. About a hundred years before this Jonah had, in God's name, foretold the speedy overthrow of this great city; but then the Ninevites repented and were spared, and that decree did not bring forth. The Ninevites then saw clearly how much it was to their advantage to turn from their evil way; it was the saving of their city; and yet soon after they returned to it again. It became worse than ever, a bloody city, and full of lies and robbery; they repented of their repentance, returned with the dog to his vomit, and at length grew worse than ever they had been. Then God sent not this prophet, as Jonah, but this prophecy, to read them their doom, which was now irreversible. Note, The reprieve will not be continued if the repentance be not continued in. If men turn from the good they began to do, they can expect no other but that God should turn from the favour he began to shew, *Jer.* xviii. 10.

Secondly. The poor prophet, by whom the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is "the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite." The burthen of Nineveh was what the prophet plainly foresaw, for it was his vision, and what he left upon record; it is the "book of the vision," that when he was gone the event might be compared with the prediction, and confirm it. All the account we have of the prophet himself is, that he was an Elkoshite, of the town called Elkes, or Elcos, which St. Jerome saith was in Galilee. Some observe that the Scripture ordinarily saith little of the prophets themselves, that our faith might not stand upon their authority, but upon that of the blessed Spirit by whom their prophecies were indited.

2 God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth;
The LORD revengeth, and *is* furious;
The LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries,
And he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies.
3 The LORD *is* slow to anger, and great in power,
And will not at all acquit *the wicked:*
The LORD *hath* his way in the whirlwind and in the storm,
And the clouds *are* the dust of his feet.
4 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry,
And drieth up all the rivers:
Bashan languisheth, and Carmel,
And the flower of Lebanon languisheth.
5 The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt,
And the earth is burned at his presence,
Yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.
6 Who can stand before his indignation?
And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?
His fury is poured out like fire,
And the rocks are thrown down by him.
7 The LORD *is* good, a strong hold in the day of trouble;
And he knoweth them that trust in him.
8 But with an overrunning flood
He will make an utter end of the place thereof,
And darkness shall pursue his enemies.

Nineveh knows not God, that God that contends with her, and therefore is here told what a God he is; and it is good for us all to mix faith with that which is here said concerning him, which speaks a great deal of terror to the wicked and comfort to good people; for this glorious description of the Sovereign of the world, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a bright side towards Israel and a dark side towards the Egyptians. Let each take their portion from it; let sinners read it and tremble; let saints read it and triumph. The wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against his enemies; his favour and mercy is here assured to his faithful loyal subjects, and his almighty power in both, making his wrath very terrible and his favour very desirable.

First. He is a God of inflexible justice, a jealous God, and will take vengeance on his enemies; let Nineveh know this, and tremble before him. Their idols are insignificant things, there is nothing formidable in them, but the God of Israel is greatly to be feared. For,

1. He resents the affronts and indignities done him by those that deny his being, or any of his perfections, that set up other gods in competition with him, that destroy his laws, arraign his proceedings, ridicule his word, or are abusive to his people. Let such know that Jehovah, the one only living and true God, is a jealous God, and a revenger. He is jealous for his own honour in the matters of his worship, and will not endure a rival. He is jealous for the comfort of his worshippers, jealous for his land, *Joel* ii. 18, and will not have that injured. He is a revenger, and he is furious; he hath fury, so the word is; not as man hath it, in whom it is an ungoverned passion, so he hath said, "Fury is not in me," *Isa.* xxvii. 4; but he has it in such a way as becomes the righteous God, to put an edge upon his justice, and to make it appear more terrible to those who otherwise would stand in no awe of it. He is 'Lord of anger,' so the Hebrew

phrase is for that which we read, he is furious; he hath anger, but he hath it at command, and under government. Our anger is often lord over us, as theirs that have no rule over their own spirits, but God is always Lord of his anger, and weigheth a path to it, *Ps.* lxxviii. 50.

2. He resolved to reckon with those that put those affronts upon him. We are told here, not only that he is a revenger, but that he will take vengeance; he hath said he will, he hath sworn it, *Deu.* xxxii. 40, 41. Whoever are his adversaries and enemies among men, he will make them feel his resentments; and though the sentence against his enemies is not executed speedily, yet he reserveth wrath for them, and reserveth them for it, in the day of wrath. Against his own people, that repent and humble themselves before him, he keepeth not his anger for ever, but against his enemies he will for ever let out his anger. And, ver. 3, he "will not at all acquit the wicked," that sin and stand to it, and do not repent. Those wickedly depart from their God that depart and never return, *Ps.* xviii. 21, and these he will not acquit. Humble supplicants will find him gracious, but scornful beggars will not find him easy, or that the door of mercy will be opened to a loud but late "Lord, Lord." This revelation of the wrath of God against his enemies is applied to Nineveh, ver. 8, and should be applied by all those to themselves who go on still in their trespasses: "With an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the places thereof;" the army of the Chaldeans shall overrun the country of the Assyrians, and lay it all waste. God's judgments, when they come with commission, are like a deluge to any people, which they cannot keep off or make head against. Darkness shall pursue his enemies, terror and trouble shall follow them whithersoever they go, shall pursue them to utter darkness. If they think to flee from the darkness that pursues them, they will but fall into that which is before them.

Secondly. He is a God of irresistible power, and is able to deal with his enemies, be they never so many, never so mighty, never so hardy. He is "great in power," ver. 3, and therefore it is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy. Now here,

1. The power of God is asserted and proved by divers instances of it in the kingdom of nature, where we always find its visible effects in the ordinary course of nature, and sometimes in the surprising alterations of that course. 1st. If we look up into the regions of the air, there we shall find proofs of his power, for "he hath his ways in the whirlwind and the storm;" which way soever God goes he carries a whirlwind and storm along with him for the terror of his enemies, *Ps.* xviii. 9, &c.; and wherever there is a whirlwind and a storm, God has the command of it, the control of it, makes his way through it, goes on his way in it, and serves his own purposes by it. He spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, and even stormy winds fulfil his word. He has "his way in the whirlwind," that is, he goes on undiscerned, and the methods of his providence are to us unaccountable, as it is said, "His way is in the sea." "The clouds are the dust of his feet," that is, he treads on them, walks on them, raiseth them when he pleaseth, as a man with his feet raiseth a cloud of dust. It is but by permission, or usurpation rather, that the devil is the prince of the power of the air, for that power is in God's hand. 2nd. If we cast our eye upon the great deeps, there we find that the sea is his, for he made it; for when he pleaseth "he rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry," by drying up all the rivers with which it is continually supplied. He gave those proofs of his power when he divided the Red Sea and Jordan, and can do the same again whenever he pleaseth. 3rd. If we look around us on this earth, we find proofs of his power, when, either by the extreme heat and drought of summer or the cold and frost of winter, "Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth," the choicest and strongest flower languisheth. His power is often seen in earthquakes which shake the mountains, ver. 5, melt the hills, and melt them down, and level them with the plains. When he pleaseth, the earth is burnt at his presence, by the scorching heat of the sun, and he could burn it with fire from heaven, as he did Sodom; and at the end of time he will burn the world, "and all that dwell therein," the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up. Thus great is our Lord, and of great power.

2. This is particularly applied to his anger. If God be an almighty God, we may from thence infer, ver. 6, "Who can stand before his indignation?" The Ninevites had once found God "slow to anger," as he saith, ver. 3, and perhaps presumed upon the mercy they then had experience of, and thought they might make bold with him; but they will find he is just and jealous, as well as merciful and gracious; and having shewed the justice of his wrath, in the next he shews the power of it, and the utter insufficiency of his enemies to contend with him. It is in vain for the stoutest and strongest of sinners to think to make their part good against the power of God's anger. 1st. See God here as a consuming fire, terrible and mighty. Here is his indignation against sin, and the fierceness of his anger, his fury poured out, not like water, but like fire, like the fire and brimstone rained on Sodom, *Ps.* xi. 6. Hell is the fierceness of God's anger, *Rev.* xvi. 19. God's anger is so fierce that it beats down all before it, "the rocks are thrown down by him," that seemed immoveable. Rocks have sometimes been rent by the eruption of subterraneous fires, which is a faint resemblance of the fierceness of God's anger against sinners whose hearts are rocky, for none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. 2nd. See sinners here as stubble before the fire, weak and impotent, and a very unequal match for the wrath of God. *First.* They are utterly unable to bear up against it, so as to resist it, and put by the strokes of it. "Who can stand before his indignation?" Not the proudest and most daring sinner, not the world of the ungodly, no, not the angels that sinned. *Secondly.* They are utterly unable to bear up under it, so as to keep up their spirits, and preserve any enjoyment of themselves. "Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?" As it is irresistible, so it is intolerable. Some of the effects of God's displeasure in this world a man may bear up under, but the fierceness of his anger, when it fastens immediately upon the soul, who can bear it? Let us therefore fear before him, let us stand in awe, and not sin.

Thirdly. He is a God of infinite mercy; and in the midst of all this wrath mercy is remembered. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid that go on still in their transgressions, but let not those that trust in God tremble before him. For, 1. He is slow to anger, ver. 3; not easily provoked, but ready to shew mercy to those who have offended him, and to receive them into favour upon their repentance. 2. When the tokens of his rage against the wicked are abroad, he takes care for the safety and comfort of his own people; ver. 7, "The Lord is good" to those that are good, and to them he will be "a stronghold in the day of trouble." Note. The same almighty power that is exerted for the terror and destruction of the wicked is engaged, and shall be employed, for the protection and satisfaction of his own people; he is able both to save and to destroy. In the day of public trouble, when God's judgments are in the earth laying all waste, he will be a place of defence to those who by faith put themselves under his protection, those that trust in him in the way of their duty, that live a life of dependence upon him and devotedness to him; he knows them, he owns them for his, he takes cognizance of their case, knows what is best for them, and what course to take most effectually for their relief. They are perhaps obscure and little regarded in the world, but the Lord knows them, *Ps.* i. 6.

9 What do ye imagine against the LORD?
He will make an utter end:
Affliction shall not rise up the second time.
10 For while *they be* folden together *as* thorns,
And while they are drunken *as* drunkards,
They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.
11 There is *one* come out of thee,
That imagineth evil against the LORD,
A wicked counsellor.
12 Thus saith the LORD;
Though *they be* quiet, and likewise many,
Yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through.
Though I have afflicted thee,
I will afflict thee no more.
13 For now will I break his yoke from off thee,
And will burst thy bonds in sunder.
14 And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee,
That no more of thy name be sown:
Out of the house of thy gods will I cut off
The graven image and the molten image:
I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.
15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!
O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows:
For the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

These verses seem to point at the destruction of the army of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, which may well be reckoned a part of the burden of Nineveh, the head city of the Assyrian empire, and a pledge of the destruction of Nineveh itself about a hundred years after; and this was an event which Isaiah, with whom probably this prophet was contemporary, spoke much of. Now observe here,

First. The great provocation which the Assyrians gave to God, the just and jealous God, for which, though slow to anger, he would take vengeance; ver. 11, "There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord;" Sennacherib, and his spokesman Rabshakeh. They framed an evil letter and an evil speech, not only against Hezekiah and his people, but against God himself, reflecting upon him as level with the gods of the heathen, and unable to protect his worshippers, dissuading his people from putting a confidence in him, and urging them rather to put themselves under the protection of the great king, the king of Assyria; they contrived to alter the property of Jerusalem, that it should be no longer the city of the Lord, the holy city. This one, this mighty one, so he thinks himself, that comes out of Nineveh, imagining evil against the Lord, brings upon Nineveh this burden. Never was the glorious majesty of heaven and earth more daringly, more blasphemously affronted, than by Sennacherib at that time. He was "a wicked counsellor" who counselled them to despair of God's protection, and surrender themselves to the king of Assyria, and endeavoured to put them out of conceit with Hezekiah's reformation, *Isa.* xxxvi. 7. With this wicked counsellor he here expostulates; ver. 9, "What do ye imagine against the Lord?" What a foolish, wicked thing is it for you to plot against God, as if you could outwit Divine wisdom, and overpower Omnipotence itself. Note, There is a great deal imagined against the Lord by the gates of hell, and against the interests of his kingdom in the world, but it will prove a vain thing, *Ps.* ii. 1, 2. He that sits in heaven laughs at the imaginations of the pretenders to politics against him, and will turn their counsels headlong.

Secondly. The great destruction which God would bring upon them for it; not presently, upon the whole monarchy, the ruin of that was deferred till the measure of their iniquity was full, but,

1. Upon the army. God will make an utter end of that, it shall be totally cut off and ruined at one blow, one fatal stroke of the destroying angel shall lay them dead upon the spot; "Affliction shall not rise up the second time," for it shall not need. With some sinners God makes a quick despatch, doth their business at once. Divine vengeance goes not by one certain rule, not in one constant track, but one way or other, by acute diseases or chronical ones, by speedy deaths or lingering ones, he will make an utter end of all his enemies who persist in their imaginations against him. We have reason to think that the Assyrian army were mostly of the same spirit, and spoke the same language, with their general; and now God will take them to task, though they did but say as they were taught; and it shall appear that they have laid themselves open to Divine wrath by their own act and deed, ver. 10. 1st. They are as thorns that entangle one another, and are folded together. They make one another worse, and more inveterate against God and his Israel, harden one another's hearts, and strengthen one another's hands in their impiety; and therefore God will do with them as the husbandman doth with a bush of thorns when he cannot part them; he puts them all into the fire together. 2nd. They are as drunken men, intoxicated with pride and rage, and such as they shall be irrecoverably overthrown and destroyed. They shall be as drunkards, besotted to their own ruin, and shall stumble and fall, and make themselves a reproach, and be justly laughed at. 3rd. They shall be "devoured as stubble fully dry," which is irresistibly and irrecoverably consumed by the flame. The judgments of God are as devouring fire to those that make themselves as stubble to them. It is again threatened against this great army, ver. 12, that "though they be quiet and likewise many," very secure, not fearing the sallies out of the besieged upon them because they are numerous, yet "thus shall they be cut down," or certainly shall they be cut down, as grass and corn are cut down, with as little ado, when he shall pass through, even the destroying angel that is commissioned to cut them down. Note, The security of sinners, and their confidence in their own strength, is often a presage of ruin approaching.

2. The destruction comes upon the king. He imagined evil against the Lord, and shall he escape? No; ver. 14, "The Lord hath given a commandment

concerning thee;" the decree has gone forth, "that thy name be no more sown," that thy memory perish, and that thou be no more talked of as thou hast been, and the report of thy mighty actions dispersed upon the wings of fame, and celebrated with her trumpet. Because Sennacherib's son reigned in his stead, some make this to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian empire not long after. Note, Those that "imagine evil against the Lord" hasten evil upon themselves, and their own families and interests, and ruin their own names by dishonouring his name. It is farther threatened, 1st. That the images he worshipped should be cut off from their temple, the graven image and the "molten image out of the house of his gods," which some think was fulfilled when Sennacherib was slain by his two sons, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, by which barbarous parricide, we may suppose, the temple was looked upon as defiled, and was therefore disused, and the images cut off from it, the worshippers of those images no longer attending there. Or, it may be taken more generally to speak the utter ruin of Assyria; the army of the enemy shall lay all waste, and not spare even the images of their gods, by which God would intimate to them that one of the grounds of his controversy with them is their idolatry. 2nd. That Sennacherib's grave shall be made there. Some think, in the house of his god; there he is slain, and there he shall be buried, for he is vile. He lies under this perpetual mark of disgrace, that he had so far lost his interest in the natural affection of his own children, that two of them murdered him. Or, it may be meant of the ignominious fall of the Assyrian monarchy itself, upon the ruins of which that of Babylon was raised. What a noise was made about the grave of that once formidable state, but now despicable, is largely described, *Eze.* xxxi. 3, 11, 15, 16. Note, Those that make themselves vile by scandalous sins, God will make them vile by shameful punishments.

Thirdly. The great deliverance which God would hereby work for his own people, and the city that was called by his name. The ruin of the church's enemies is the salvation of the church; and a very great salvation it was that was wrought for Jerusalem by the overthrow of Sennacherib's army.

1. The siege shall hereby be raised; "Now will I break his yoke from off thee," by which thou art kept in servitude, and "will burst thy bonds in sunder," by which thou seemest bound over to the Assyrian's wrath. That vast victorious army, when it forced free quarters for itself throughout all the land of Judah, and lived at discretion there, was as yokes and bonds upon them. Jerusalem, when it was besieged, was, as it were, bound and fettered by it; but when the destroying angel had done his work Jerusalem's bonds were burst asunder, and it was set at liberty again. This was a figure of the great salvation by which the Jerusalem that is above is made free, is made free indeed.

2. The enemy shall be so weakened and dispirited that they shall never make any such attempt again, and the end of this trouble shall be so well gained by the grace of God, that there shall be no more occasion for such a severe correction. 1st. God will not again afflict Jerusalem. His anger is turned away, and he saith, It is enough; for he has by this fright accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, *Isa.* x. 12, and therefore, "though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more;" the bitter potion shall not be repeated, unless there be need, and the patient's case calls for it, for God doth not afflict willingly. 2nd. The enemy shall not dare again to attack Jerusalem; ver. 15, "The wicked shall no more pass through thee" as they have done, to lay all waste, "for he is utterly cut off," and disabled to do it. His army is cut off, his spirit cut off, and at length he himself cut off.

3. The tidings of this great deliverance shall be published, and welcomed with abundance of joy throughout the kingdom, ver. 15. While Sennacherib prevailed and carried all before him, every day brought ill news, but now, "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings," the feet of the evangelist, he is seen coming at a distance, upon the mountains, as fast as his feet will carry him; and how pleasant a sight is it once more to see a messenger of peace, after we have received so many of Job's messengers? We find these words made use of by another prophet, to illustrate the mercy of the deliverance of the people of God out of Babylon, *Isa.* lii. 7; not that the prophets stole the words one from another, (as those did, *Jer.* xxiii. 30,) but, speaking by the same Spirit, they often used the same expressions. And it may be of good use for ministers to testify their consent to wholesome truths, (1 *Tim.* vi. 3,) by concurring in the same forms of sound words, 2 *Tim.* i. 13. These words are also quoted by the apostle, both from Isaiah and Nahum, and applied to the great redemption wrought out for us by our Lord Jesus, and the publishing of it to the world by the everlasting Gospel, *Rom.* x. 15. Christ's messengers are those messengers of good tidings that preach peace by Jesus Christ; how beautiful are the feet of those messengers, how welcome their message, to those that see their misery and danger by reason of sin! And observe, he that brings these good tidings brings them with a call to Judah to keep her solemn feasts, and perform her vows. During the trouble, 1st. The ordinary feasts had been intermitted; *inter arma silent leges,*—'the voice of law cannot be heard amidst the shouts of battle.' While Jerusalem was compassed with armies they could not go thither to worship, but now the embargo is taken off they must return to the observation of their feasts; and the feasts of the Lord will then be doubly sweet to the people of God when they have been for some time deprived of the benefit of them, and God graciously restores them their opportunities again, for we are taught the worth of such mercies by the want of them. 2nd. They had made vows to God, that if he would deliver them out of this distress they would do something extraordinary in his service to his honour; and now the deliverance is wrought they are called upon to perform their vows; the promise they had then made must now be made good, for better it is not to vow than to vow and not to pay. And those words, "The wicked shall no more pass through thee," may be taken as a promise of the perfecting the good work of reformation which Hezekiah had begun; the wicked shall not, as they have done, walk on every side, but they shall be cut off. And then the baffling of the attempts from the wicked enemies abroad is a mercy indeed to a nation, when it is accompanied with the restraint and reformation of the wicked at home, who are its more dangerous enemies.

CHAPTER II.

We now come closer to Nineveh, that great city; she took not warning by the destruction of her armies, and the fall of her king, and therefore may expect, since she persists in her enmity to God, that he will proceed in his controversy with her. Here is foretold, I. The approach of the enemy that should destroy Nineveh, and the terror of his military preparations, ver. 1—5. II. The taking the city, ver. 6. III. The captivity of the queen, the flight of the inhabitants, the seizing of all the wealth of it, and the mighty consternation it should be in, ver. 7—10. IV. All this is run up to its true causes, their sinning against God, and God's appearing against them, ver. 11—13. All this was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar, in the first year of his reign, in conjunction with Cyaxares, or Ahasuerus, king of the Medes, conquered Nineveh, and made himself master of the Assyrian monarchy.

HE that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face:
Keep the munition, watch the way,
Make *thy* loins strong, fortify *thy* power mightily.
2 For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob,
As the excellency of Israel:
For the emptiers have emptied them out,
And marred their vine branches.
3 The shield of his mighty men is made red,
The valiant men *are* in scarlet:
The chariots *shall be* with flaming torches in the day of his preparation,
And the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.
4 The chariots shall rage in the streets,
They shall justle one against another in the broad ways:
They shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. [walk;
5 He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their
They shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared.
6 The gates of the rivers shall be opened,
And the palace shall be dissolved.
7 And Huzzab shall be led away captive,
She shall be brought up,
And her maids shall lead *her* as with the voice of doves,
Tabering upon their breasts.
8 But Nineveh *is* of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away.
Stand, stand, *shall they cry;* but none shall look back.
9 Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold:
For *there is* none end of the store *and* glory
Out of all the pleasant furniture.
10 She is empty, and void, and waste:
And the heart melteth, and the knees smite together,
And much pain *is* in all loins,
And the faces of them all gather blackness.

Here is, First. An alarm of war sent to Nineveh, ver. 1. The prophet speaks of it as just at hand, for it is neither doubtful nor far distant; Look about thee and see, "He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face." Nebuchadnezzar, that is noted, and will be yet more so, for dashing nations in pieces, begins with thee, and will dissipate and disperse thee, so some render the word. Babylon is called the hammer of the whole earth, *Jer.* l. 23. The attempt of Nebuchadnezzar upon Nineveh is public, bold, and daring; he is come up before thy face, avowing his design to ruin thee. And, therefore, stand to thine arms, O Nineveh! "Keep the munition." Secure thy towers and magazines, "watch the way," set guards upon all the avenues to the city; "make thy loins strong," encourage thy soldiers; animate thyself and them; "fortify thy power mightily," as cities use to do when an enemy is advancing against them. This is spoken ironically: Do the utmost thou canst, yet thou shalt not be able to put by the stroke of this judgment, for there is no counsel or strength against the Lord.

Secondly. A manifesto published shewing the causes of the war; ver. 2, "The Lord has turned away the excellency of Jacob as the excellency of Israel." That is,

1. The Assyrians have been abusive to Jacob, the two tribes, have humbled and mortified them, as well as to Israel, the ten tribes; have emptied them, and "marred their vine branches;" and for this God will reckon with them. Though done long since, it shall come into the account now against that kingdom, and Nineveh the head city of it. God's quarrel with them is for the violence done to Jacob. Or,

2. God is now, by Nebuchadnezzar, about to turn away the pride of Jacob, by the captivity of the two tribes, as he did the pride of Israel, by their captivity. He has done it, he has determined to do it, to bring emptiers upon them; and the enemy that is to do it must begin with Nineveh, and reduce that first, and humble the pride of that. God is looking upon proud cities and abasing them, even those that were nearest to him; Samaria is humbled, and Jerusalem is to be humbled, and their pride brought low, and shall not Nineveh, that proud city, be brought down too? "Emptiers have emptied" the cities, and "marred the vine branches" in the country of Jacob and Israel; and must not the excellency of Nineveh, that is so much her pride, be turned away too?

Thirdly. A particular account given in of the terrors wherein the invading enemy shall appear against Nineveh; every thing shall contribute to make him formidable.

1. The "shields of his mighty men are made red," and probably their other arms and array; as if they were already tinctured with the blood they had shed, or intended hereby to signify they would put all to the sword: they hung out a red flag in token that they would give no quarter.

2. "The valiant men are in scarlet;" not only red clothes, to intimate what bloody work they designed to make, but rich clothes, to intimate the wealth of the army, and that is the sinews of war.

3. "The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation." When they are making their approaches, they shall fly as swift as lightning, the wheels shall strike fire upon the stones, and those that drive them shall drive furiously, with a flaming indignation, as Jehu drove. Or, they carried flaming torches with them in the open chariots, when they made their approach in the night, as Gideon's soldiers carried lamps in their pitchers, both to be a guide to

themselves and a terror to their enemies, and with them to set all on fire wherever they went.

4 "The fir-trees shall be terribly shaken;" the great men of Nineveh, that overtop their neighbours, as the stately firs do the shrubs; or the very standing trees shall be made to shake by the violent concussions of the earth which that great army shall cause.

5. The chariots of war shall be very terrible; ver. 4, "They shall rage in the streets," that is, those that drive them shall rage, you would think the chariots themselves raged. They shall be so numerous, and drive with so much fury, that even in the broad ways, where one would think there should be room enough, they shall jostle one another; and these iron chariots shall be made so bright, that in the beams of the sun "they shall seem like torches" in the night, "they shall run like the lightnings," so swiftly, so furiously. Nebuchadnezzar's commanders are here called his worthies, his 'gallants,' so the margin reads it, his heroes; those he shall recount, and order them immediately and without fail to render themselves at their respective posts; for he is entering upon action, is resolved to take the field presently, and to open the campaign with the siege of Nineveh. His worthies shall remember, so some read it; they shall be mindful of the duty of their place, and the charge they have received, and shall thereby be made so intent upon their business that "they shall stumble in their walk," shall make more haste than good speed. They stumble, but shall not fall; for "they shall make haste to the wall thereof," shall open the trenches, and the defence of the covered way shall be prepared, something to shelter them from the darts of the besieged; and they shall so closely carry on the siege, and with so much vigour, that at length the "gates of the rivers shall be opened," ver. 6; that is, those gates of Nineveh which open upon the river Tigris, (on which Nineveh was built,) shall be first forced by, or betrayed to, the enemy, and by those gates they shall enter. And then "the palace shall be dissolved," either the king's house, or the house of Nisroch his god; the same word signifies both a palace and temple. When the God of heaven goes forth to contend with a people, neither the palaces nor their kings, neither the temples nor their gods, can protect and shelter them, but must all inevitably fall with them.

Fourthly. A prediction of the consequences of this; and it is easy to guess how dismal those will be.

1. The queen shall fall into the hands of the enemy; ver. 7, "Huzzab shall be led away captive." She that was 'established,' so some read it, thought herself safe, because she was concealed and shut up in secret, shall be 'discovered,' so the margin reads it, and shall be led away captive in greater disgrace than that of common prisoners. She shall be brought up in a mock state, and her maids of honour shall lead her, because she is weak and faint, not able to bear such frights and hardships, which are doubly hard and frightful to those that have not been used to them. They shall attend her, not to speak cheerfully to her, and to encourage her, but murmuring and moaning themselves, as with the voice of doves, the doves of the valleys, *Eze.* vii. 16, noted for their mourning, *Isa.* xxxviii. 14; lix. 11. They shall be tabering upon their breasts, beating their own breasts in grief and vexation, as if they were drumming upon them, for so the word signifies.

2. The inhabitants, though numerous, shall none of them be able to make head against the invaders, or stand their ground; ver. 8, "Nineveh is of old like a pool of water," replenished with people as a pool with water, (and waters signify multitudes, *Rev.* xvii. 15,) or as those waters with fish. It was long ago a populous city; in Jonah's time there were an hundred and twenty thousand little children in it, *Jon.* iv. 11, and, ordinarily, cities and countries are increasing in their numbers every year; but though they have so many hands to be employed in the public service, yet they shall not be able to inspire one another with courage, but "they shall flee away" like cowards. Their commanders shall do what they can to animate them; they shall cry "Stand, stand," have a good heart on it, and we shall do well enough; "but none shall" so much as look back." They shall have not the least spark of courage remaining, but every one shall think it his wisest course to make the best of the opportunity to escape; they shall not so much as look back to see who calls for them. Note, God can dispirit the strongest and boldest in the day of distress, so that they shall not be what one would expect from them, but "like a pool of water," the water whereof is dried up and gone.

3. The wealth of the city shall become a prey, and all its rich furniture shall fall into the hands of the victorious enemy, ver. 9; they shall thus animate and excite one another to plunder, "Take the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold." Thus the officers shall stir up the soldiers to improve their opportunity; here is silver and gold enough for them, for "there is no end of the store" of money and plate. Nineveh, having been "of old like a pool of water," has gathered a vast deal of mud; and abundance of glory it has "out of all the pleasant furniture," all the vessels of desire which they have gloried in, and which shall now be a prey and a pride to the conquerors. Note, Those who prepare raiment as the clay, and heap up silver as the dust, know not who may put on the raiment, and divide the silver, *Job* xxvii. 16, 17. Thus this rich city is empty, and void, and waste, ver. 10. See the vanity of worldly wealth; instead of defending its owners it does but expose them, and enable their enemies to do them so much the more mischief.

4. The soldiers and people shall have no heart to appear for the defence of the city. Their spirits shall melt away like wax before the fire; their "knees shall smite together," as Belshazzar's did in his agony, *Dan.* v. 6, so that they shall not be able to stand their ground, no, nor to make their escape; much pain shall be in all loins, as useth to be in extreme frights, so that they shall not be able to hold up their backs. And the "faces of them all shall gather blackness," like that of a pot that is every day over the fire, so the word signifies. Note, Guilt in the conscience will fill men with terror in an evil day, and those who place their happiness in the wealth of this world, and set their hearts upon it, think themselves undone when their silver and their gold, and their pleasant furniture, is taken from them.

11 Where *is* the dwelling of the lions,
And the feedingplace of the young lions,
Where the lion, *even* the old lion, walked,
And the lion's whelp, and none made *them* afraid?
12 The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps,
And strangled for his lionesses,
And filled his holes with prey,
And his dens with ravin.
13 Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the LORD of hosts,
And I will burn her chariots in the smoke,
And the sword shall devour thy young lions:
And I will cut off thy prey from the earth,
And the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

Here we have Nineveh's ruin,

First. Triumphed in by its neighbours, who now remember against it all the oppressions and abuse of power it had been guilty of in its pomp and prosperity; ver. 11, 12, "Where is the dwelling of the lions?" It is gone, there appear no remnants, no footsteps of it; "Where is the feeding-place of the young lions," where they glutted themselves with prey? The princes of Nineveh had been as lions, as beasts of prey. Cruel tyrants are no better, nay, in this respect much worse, that being men, humanity is expected from them; nay, if they were indeed lions, they would not prey upon those of their own kind. *Sævis inter se convenit ursæ,*—'fierce bears agree together;' but in the shape of men they have the cruelty of lions. They walked in Nineveh as a lion in the woods, and none made them afraid; every one stood in awe of them, and they were under no apprehensions of danger from any; though nobody loved them everybody feared them, and that was all they desired. *Oderint dum metuant,*—'Let them hate, so that they do but fear.' The king himself and every prince made it his business, by all the arts of violence and extortion, to enrich himself and raise his family; he did "tear in pieces enough for his whelps," (and no little would be enough for them,) and he "strangled for his lionesses;" killed all that came near him, and seized what they had for his children, for his wives, and concubines, and "filled his holes with prey," and his dens with rapine, as lions use to do. Note, Many make it an excuse for their rapine and injustice that they have wives and children to provide for, whereas what is so got will never do them any good. They that fear the Lord, and get what they have honestly, shall not want a competency for themselves and theirs; verily they shall be fed, when the young lions, though dens and holes were filled with prey and rapine for them, shall lack and suffer hunger, *Ps.* xxxiv. 10.

Secondly. It is avowed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth; it is his doing, and let all the world take notice that it is so; ver. 13, "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts." And what good can hosts do for her in her defence, when the Lord of hosts is against her for her destruction? The oppressors in Nineveh thought they only set their neighbours against them, who were not a match for them, and whom they could easily overpower; but it proved they set God against them, who is, who will be, the asserter of right and the avenger of wrong. God is against the princes of Nineveh, and then, 1. These military preparations will stand them in no stead. "I will burn her chariots in the smoke;" he doth not say in the fire, but, in contempt to them, the very smoke of God's indignation shall serve to burn their chariots. They shall be consumed as soon as the fire of his indignation is kindled, while as yet it doth but smoke, and not flame out. Or, the drivers of the chariots shall be smothered and stifled with the smoke; then the chariots of their glory shall be the shame of their families, *Isa.* xxii. 18. 2. Their children, the hopes of their families, shall be cut off; "the sword shall devour the young lions," whom they were so solicitous to provide for by oppression and extortion. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of their children, or (which is all one) of comfort in them, that take sinful courses to enrich them, and, as has been said of some, damn their souls to make their sons gentlemen. 3. The wealth they have heaped up by fraud and violence shall neither be enjoyed by them nor employed for them. "I will cut off thy prey from the earth," not only thou shalt not be the better for it, but no one else shall. Some understand it of the disabling of them for the future to prey upon their neighbours. 4. Their agents abroad shall not have that respect from their neighbours, and that influence upon them, which sometimes they had had. "The voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard," no more be heeded; which some think refers to Rabshakeh, one of Nineveh's messengers, that had blasphemed the living God; an iniquity which was remembered against Nineveh long after. Those are not worthy to be heard again that have once spoken reproachfully of God.

CHAPTER III.

This chapter goes on with the burden of Nineveh, and concludes it. I. The sins of that great city are charged upon it: murder, ver. 1; whoredom and witchcraft, ver. 4; and a general extent of wickedness, ver. 19. II. Judgments are here threatened against it: blood for blood, ver. 2, 3; and shame for shameful sins, ver. 5, 6, 7. III. Instances are given of the like desolations brought upon other places for the like sins, ver. 8—11. IV. The overthrow of all those things which they depended upon, and put confidence in, is foretold, ver. 12—19.

WOE to the bloody city! [not;
It *is* all full of lies *and* robbery; the prey departeth
The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels,
And of the pransing horses, and of the jumping chariots.
3 The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: [carcases;
And *there is* a multitude of slain, and a great number of
And *there is* none end of *their* corpses;
They stumble upon their corpses:
4 Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot,
The mistress of witchcrafts,
That selleth nations through her whoredoms,
And families through her witchcrafts.
5 Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the LORD of hosts;
And I will discover thy skirts upon thy face,
And I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. [thee vile,
6 And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make
And will set thee as a gazingstock.
7 And it shall come to pass,

That all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee,
And say, Nineveh is laid waste:
Who will bemoan her?
Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

Here is, First. Nineveh arraigned and indicted. It is a high charge that is here drawn up against that great city, and neither her numbers nor her grandeur shall secure her from persecution. 1. It is a city of blood, that is, in which a great deal of innocent blood is shed, (which the righteous God will make inquisition for,) either by unrighteous war or under colour and pretence of public justice, or by suffering barbarous murders to go unpunished. 2. "It is all full of lies." Truth is banished from among them; there is no such thing as honesty, one knows not whom to believe and whom to trust. 3. It is all full of robbery and rapine; no man cares what mischief he doth, nor to whom he doth it; "the prey departeth not," that is, they never knew when they had got enough by spoil and oppression. They shed blood and told lies in pursuit of the prey, that they might enrich themselves. 4. There is a "multitude of whoredoms" in it, that is, idolatries, spiritual whoredoms, by which she defiled herself, and to which she seduced the neighbour nations, as a "well-favoured harlot," and sold and ruined "nations through her whoredoms." 5. She is a "mistress of witchcrafts," and by them she sells families, ver. 4. That which Nineveh aimed at was a universal monarchy, to be the metropolis of the world, and to have all her neighbours under her feet; to compass this she used not only arms but arts; compelling some, but deluding others, into subjection to her, and wheedling them, as a harlot by her charms, to lay their necks under her yoke, suggesting to them that it would be for their advantage. She courted them to join with her in her idolatrous rites, to tie them the faster to her interests; and made use of her wealth, power, and greatness to draw people into alliances with her, by which she gained advantages over them, and made a hand of them. These were her whoredoms, like those of Tyre, *Isa.* xxiii. 15, 17; these were her witchcrafts, with which she unaccountably gained dominion. And for this, that God has a quarrel with her who, having made of one blood all nations of men, never designed one to be a nation of tyrants and another of slaves, and who claims it as his own prerogative to be universal monarch.

Secondly. Nineveh condemned to ruin upon this indictment. Woe to this bloody city! ver. 1. See what this woe is.

1. Nineveh had with her cruelties been a terror and destruction to others, and therefore destruction and terror shall be brought upon her. Those that are for overthrowing all that come in their way will, sooner or later, meet with their match. 1st. Hear the alarm with which Nineveh shall be terrified, ver. 2. It is a formidable army that advanceth against it; you may hear them at a distance,—the noise of the whip, driving the chariot horses with fury; hear the noise of the "rattling of the wheels, the prancing horses, and the jumping chariots;" the very noise is frightful, but much more so when they know that all this force is coming with all this speed against them, and they are not able to make head against it. 2nd. See the slaughter with which Nineveh shall be laid waste, ver. 3; the sword drawn, with which execution shall be done, "the bright sword lifted up," and the glittering spear, the dazzling brightness of which is very terrible to those whom they are lifted up against. See what havoc these make when they are commissioned to slay; "There is a great number of carcases," for the slain of the land shall be many, "there is no end of their corpses;" there is such a "multitude of slain" that it is in vain to go about to take the number of them, they lie so thick that passengers are ready to stumble upon their corpses at every step. The destruction of Sennacherib's army, which in the morning were all dead corpses, is perhaps looked upon here as a figure of the like destruction that should afterwards be in Nineveh; for they that will not take warning by judgments at a distance shall have them come nearer.

2. Nineveh had with her whoredoms and witchcrafts drawn others to shameful wickedness, and therefore God will load her with shame and contempt, ver. 5—7. The Lord of hosts is against her, and then she shall be exposed to the highest degree of disgrace and ignominy,—shall not only lose all her charms, but shall be made to appear very odious. When it shall be seen that while she courted her neighbours it was with design to ruin their liberty and property,—when all her wicked artifices shall be brought to light,—then her shame is discovered to the nations. When her proud pretensions are baffled, and her vain towering hopes of an absolute and universal dominion brought to nought, and she appears not to have been so strong and considerable as she would have been thought to be, then to see the nakedness of the land do they come, and it appears ridiculous. Then do they cast abominable filth upon her, as upon a carted whore, and make her vile, as the offscouring of all things; that great city which all the nations had made court to, and coveted an alliance with, is become a gazingstock, a laughingstock. They that, when time was, looked upon her, and fled to her in hopes of protection from her, now look upon her and flee from her, for fear of being ruined with her. Note, Those that abuse their honour and interest will justly be disgraced and abandoned, and because miserable will be made contemptible, and thereby be made more miserable. When Nineveh is laid waste, who will bemoan her? Her trouble will be so great, and her sense of it so deep, as not to admit relief from sympathy, or any comforting considerations; or, if it would, none shall do any such good office; "Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?" Note, Those that shewed no pity in their day of power can expect to find no pity in the day of their fall. When those about Nineveh, that had been deceived by her wiles, come to be undeceived in her ruin, every one shall insult over her, and none bemoan her. This was Nineveh's fate, when she was made a spectacle or gazing-stock. Note, The greater men's show was in the day of their abused prosperity, the greater will their shame be in the day of their deserved destruction. 'I will make thee an example,' so Drusius reads it. Note, When proud sinners are humbled and brought down, it is designed that others should take example by them, not to lift up themselves in security and insolence when they prosper in the world.

8 Art thou better than populous No,
That was situate among the rivers, *that had* the waters round about it, [sea?
Whose rampart *was* the sea, *and* her wall *was* from the
9 Ethiopia and Egypt *were* her strength, and *it was* infi-
Put and Lubim were thy helpers. [nite;
10 Yet *was* she carried away, she went into captivity:
Her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets:
And they cast lots for her honourable men,
And all her great men were bound in chains.
11 Thou also shalt be drunken:
Thou shalt be hid,
Thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.
12 All thy strong holds *shall be like* fig trees with the first-
ripe figs: [the eater.
If they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of
13 Behold, thy people in the midst of thee *are* women:
The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine
The fire shall devour thy bars. [enemies:
14 Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds:
Go into clay, and tread the morter,
Make strong the brickkiln.

TREADING MORTAR.

15 There shall the fire devour thee;
The sword shall cut thee off,
It shall eat thee up like the cankerworm:
Make thyself many as the cankerworm,
Make thyself many as the locusts. [heaven:
16 Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of
The cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away.
17 Thy crowned *are* as the locusts,
And thy captains as the great grasshoppers,
Which camp in the hedges in the cold day,
But when the sun ariseth they flee away,
And their place is not known where they *are*.
18 Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria:
Thy nobles shall dwell *in the dust:*
Thy people is scattered upon the mountains,
And no man gathereth *them*.
19 *There is* no healing of thy bruise;
Thy wound is grievous: [thee:
All that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over
For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

Nineveh has been told that God is against her, and then none can be for her to stand her in any stead; yet she sets God himself at defiance, and his power and justice, and saith she shall have peace. Threatened folks live long, therefore here the prophet largely shews how vain her confidence would prove, and insufficient to ward off the judgment of God. To convince them of this,

First. He shews them that other places, which had been as strong and as secure as they, yet could not keep their ground against the judgments of God. Nineveh shall fall unpitied and uncomforted, (for miserable comforters will they prove that speak peace to those on whom God will fasten trouble,) and she shall not be able to help herself; for, "Art thou better than populous No?" ver. 8. He takes them off from their vain confidences, by quoting precedents; the city instanced is No, a great city in the land of Egypt, *Jer.* xlvi. 25; 'No-Ammon,' so some read it, both there and here. We read of it, *Eze.* xxx. 14—16. Some think it was Diospolis, others Alexandria. As God said to Jerusalem, Go see what I did to Shiloh, *Jer.* vii. 12, so to Nineveh, that great city, Go see what I did to populous No. Note, It will help to keep up in us a holy fear of the judgments of God, to consider that we are not better than those that have fallen under those judgments before us. We deserve them as much, and are as little able to grapple with them. This also should help to reconcile us to afflictions, Are we better than such and such that were in like manner exercised? nay, were not they better than us, and less likely to be so afflicted? Now concerning No, observe,

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO NAHUM.

1. How firm her standing seemed to be, ver. 8. She was fortified both by nature and art, was situate among the rivers. Nile in several branches not only watered her fields, but guarded her wall,—her rampart was the sea, the lake of Mareotis, an Egyptian sea, like the sea of Tiberias; her "wall was from the sea;" it was fenced with a wall which was thought to make the place impregnable. It was also supported by its interests and alliances abroad, ver. 9; Ethiopia or Arabia were her strength, either by the wealth they brought to her in a way of trade or by the auxiliary forces they furnished her with for military services; the whole country of Egypt also contributed to the strength of this populous city, so that it was infinite, and there was no end of it—so it might be rendered; she set no bounds to her ambition, and knew no end of her wealth and strength. People flocked to her endlessly, and she thought there never would be any end of it; but it is God's prerogative to be infinite. "Put and Lubim were thy helpers," two neighbouring countries of Africa, Mauritania and Libya, namely, Libya Cyrenæa, a country that Egypt had much dependence upon. No thus helped seemed to sit as a queen, and was not likely to see any sorrow. But,

2. See how fatal her fall proved to be; ver. 10, "Yet was she carried away," and her strength failed her, even she that was so strong, so secure, yet went into captivity. This refers to some destruction of that city which was then well known, and probably fresh in memory, though not recorded in history; for the destruction of it by Nebuchadnezzar (if we should understand this prophetically) could not be made an example to Nineveh; for the reducing of Nineveh was one of the first of his victories, and that of Egypt one of the last. The strength and grandeur of that great city could not be its protection from military execution. 1st. Not from that which was most barbarous; for her young children had no compassion shewed them, but were "dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets," by the merciless conquerors. 2nd. Not from that which was most inglorious and disgraceful. "They cast lots for their honourable men," that were made prisoners of war, who should have them for their slaves; so many had they of them that they knew not what to do with them; but they made sport with throwing dice for them. "All her great men," that used to be adorned on state days with chains of gold, were now bound in chains of iron; they were pinioned or handcuffed, so the word properly signifies, not only as slaves, but as condemned malefactors. What a mortification was this to populous No, to have her honourable men and great men, that were her pride and confidence, thus abused! Now, from hence he infers against Nineveh, ver. 11, thou also shalt be intoxicated, infatuated; thou also shalt reel and stagger, as drunk with the cup of the Lord's fury, that shall be put into thy hands: see *Jer.* xxv. 17, 27, "Thou shalt fall and rise no more." The cup shall go round, and come to thy turn, O Nineveh! to drink off at last, and shall be to thee as the waters of jealousy.

Secondly. He shews them that all those things which they reposed a confidence in should fail.

1. Did the men of Nineveh trust to their own magnanimity and bravery? Their hearts should sink and fail them; "They shall be hid," shall abscond for shame, being in disgrace, abscond for fear, being in distress and danger; and not able to face the enemies, because of whose strength and terror, having no strength of their own, they shall seek strength, shall come sneaking to their neighbours to beg their assistance in a time of need. Thus God can cut off the spirit of princes, and take away their heart.

2. Did they depend upon their barrier, the garrisons and strongholds they had, which were regularly fortified, and bravely manned? Those shall prove but paper walls, and "like the first-ripe figs," which, if you give the tree but a little shake, "will fall into the mouth of the eater" that gapes for them; so easily will all thy strongholds be made to surrender to the advancing enemy, upon the first summons, ver. 12. Note, Strongholds, even the strongest, are no fence against the judgments of God, when they come with commission. The rich man's wealth is his strong city and a high wall, but only in his own conceit, *Pr.* xviii. 10. They are supposed to make their strongholds as strong as possible, and are challenged to do their utmost to make them tenable and serviceable to them against the invader; ver. 14, "Draw thee water for the siege," lay in great quantities of water, that that which is so necessary to the support of human life may not be wanting. It is put here for all manner of provision, with which Nineveh is ironically bid to furnish herself in expectation of a siege. Take never so much care that thou mayest not be starved out, and forced by famine to surrender, yet that shall not avail; "Fortify the strongholds" by adding outworks to them, or putting men or arms into them, as with us by planting cannon upon them. "Go into clay, and tread the mortar," and "make strong the brick-kiln," take all the pains thou canst in erecting new fortifications; but it shall be all in vain, for, ver. 15, there shall even "the fire devour thee," if the stronghold be burnt; or, "the sword cut thee off," if it be taken by storm. It is by fire and sword that, in time of war, the great devastations are made.

3. Did they put a confidence in the multitude of their inhabitants? were they reckoned their strongest walls and fortifications? in their number, their valour? Alas! these shall stand them in no stead, they shall but sink the sooner under the weight of their own numbers; ver. 13, "Thy people in the midst of thee are women," they have no conduct, no courage; they shall be fickle, feeble, and faint-hearted, as women commonly are in such times of danger and distress; they shall be at their wits' end, adding to their griefs and fears by the power of their own indignation, and utterly unable to do any thing for themselves; the valiant men shall become cowards, *O vere Phrygiæ, neque enim Phryges,*—'Phrygian dames, not Phrygian men.' Though they make themselves many (ver. 15) as the canker-worm and as the locust, that come in vast swarms, "though thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven," though thy exchange be thronged with wealthy traders that, having so much money to stand up in defence of, and so much to lay out in the means of their defence, one would think they should give the enemy a warm reception, yet their hearts shall fail them too; though they be numerous as caterpillars, yet the fire and sword shall eat them up, easily and irresistibly as the canker-worm, ver. 15; they are as numerous as those wasting insects, but their enemies shall be mischievous like them. He adds, ver. 16, "The canker-worm spoileth," or spreadeth herself, "and flieth away." Both the merchants and the enemies were compared to canker-worms. The enemies shall spoil Nineveh, and carry away the spoil without opposition, or any hope of recovering it. Or, the rich merchants, that have come from abroad to settle in Nineveh, and have raised vast estates there, out of which it was hoped they would contribute largely for the defence of the city, when they see the country invaded, and the city likely to be besieged, will send away their effects, and remove themselves to some other place; will spread their wings and fly away where they may be safe, and Nineveh shall be never the better for them. Note, It is rare to find even those that have shared with us in our joys willing to share with us in our griefs too. The canker-worms will continue upon the field while there is any thing to be had, but they are gone when all is gone. Those that men have got by yet they do not care to lose by. Nineveh's merchants bade her farewell in her distress. Riches themselves are as the canker-worms that on a sudden "fly away as the eagle towards heaven," *Pr.* xxiii. 5.

4. Did they put a confidence in the strength of their gates and bars? What fence will those be against the force of the judgments of God? ver. 13, "The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies," the gates of thy rivers, *ch.* ii. 5, the flood-gates, or the passes and avenues, by which the enemy would make his entrance into the country; or the gates of the cities, these, though never so strong and well-guarded, shall not answer their end; "The fire shall devour thy bars," the bars of thy gates, and then they shall fly open.

5. Did they put a confidence in their kings and princes? They should do them no service; ver. 17, "Thy crowned are as the locusts;" those that had pomp and power, as crowned heads, were enfeebled, and had no power to make resistance when the enemy came in like a flood. Thy captains, that should lead thy forces into the field, are great indeed, and look great; but they are as the great grasshoppers, *maximum quod sic*,—'the largest specimens' of that species; still they are but grasshoppers, worthless, that can do no service. "They camp in the hedges in the cold day," the cold weather, but "when the sun ariseth, they flee away," and are gone, nobody knows whither. So these mercenary soldiers, that lay slumbering about Nineveh, when any trouble ariseth, flee away, and shift for their own safety. The hireling flees because he is a hireling. The king of Assyria is told, and it is a shame he needs to be told it who might observe it himself, that "his shepherds slumber;" they have no life or spirit to appear for the flock, and are very remiss in the discharge of the duty of their place, and the trust reposed in them. "Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust," and be buried in silence.

6. Did they hope that they should yet recover themselves, and rally again? In this also they shall be disappointed; for, when the shepherds are smitten, the "sheep are scattered;" the people are dispersed "upon the mountains," and "no man gathereth them," nor will they ever come together of themselves, but will wander endlessly, as scattered sheep do. The judgment they are under is as a wound, and it is incurable; there is no relief for it, "no healing of thy bruise," no possibility that the wound which is so grievous and painful to thee should be so much as skinned over; thy case is desperate, ver. 19, and thy neighbours, instead of lending a hand to help thee, "shall clap their hands over thee," and triumph in thy fall; and the reason is, because thou hast been one way or other injurious to them all; "Upon whom has not thy wickedness passed continually?" Thou hast been always doing mischief to those about thee; there is none of them but what thou hast abused and insulted; and therefore they shall be so far from pitying thee, that they shall be glad to see thee reckoned with. Note, Those that have been abusive to their neighbours, it will one time or other come against them; they are but preparing enemies to themselves against their day comes to fall; and those that dare not lay hands on them themselves will clap their hands over them, and upbraid them with their former wickedness, for which they are now well enough served, and paid in their own coin. The troublers shall be troubled will be the burden of many, as it is here the burden of Nineveh.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF NAHUM.

CHAP. I.—1. *The burden of Nineveh.* Supplementary Note on *Jon.* iii. 2, 3. When they, the Assyrians, had served the purposes of Divine providence, they were to be severely punished for their pride and ambition, their tyranny and cruelty to their neighbours; "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." There was no prospect of such an event while the Assyrians were in the midst of their successes and triumphs, but still the word of the prophet prevailed; and it was not long after these calamities brought upon the Jews, by their instrumentality, that the Assyrian empire, properly so called, was overthrown, and Nineveh destroyed. Nineveh, or Ninus, as it was most usually called by the Greeks and Romans, was the capital city of the Assyrian empire; and the capital is frequently put for the whole empire, the prosperity or ruin of the one being involved in that of the other.——Nahum plainly and largely foretold the destruction of Nineveh; his whole prophecy relates to this single event; and the city was accordingly destroyed by the Medes and Babylonians. These two rebelling and uniting together subverted the Assyrian empire. There is some difficulty in discovering the persons by whom Nineveh was taken, there is more in ascertaining the king of Assyria in whose reign it was taken, and more still in fixing the time when it was taken, scarce any two chronologers agreeing in the same date: but as these things are hardly possible to be known, so neither are they necessary to be known, with precision and exactness, and we may safely leave them among the uncertainties of ancient history and chronology. It is sufficient for our purpose that Nineveh was taken and destroyed according to the predictions; and Nahum foretold not only the thing, but also the manner of it. Herodotus promised to relate in his Assyrian history how Nineveh was taken: the Medes took Nineveh, saith he, but how they took it I will shew in another work. Again afterwards he mentions his design of writing the Assyrian history. Speaking of the kings of Babylon, he saith, Of these I shall make mention in the Assyrian history. But, to our regret, this

history was never finished, or is lost. More probably it was never finished, for otherwise some or other of the ancients would have mentioned it. If it had been extant with his other works, it would in all probability have been of great service in illustrating several passages in Nahum's prophecies. It is, however, something fortunate that we can in some measure supply this loss out of Diodorus Siculus.—*Bishop Newton on the Prophecies.* 9. *What do ye imagine against the Lord.* By a sudden apostrophe Nahum here turns to the invaders, and boldly challenges them to account for their temerity in daring to oppose themselves to Jehovah. On which he repeats what he had declared in the preceding verse respecting the total destruction of the Assyrian power, and adds, for the special encouragement of the Jews, that it should never annoy them again. 12. *Thus saith the Lord.* A description of the formidable appearance of the hostile army, accompanied with a prediction of its sudden and complete annihilation, the flight of Sennacherib, and the future immunity of the Jews from an invasion on the part of the Assyrians. *Though they be quiet.* Or, 'complete,' as translated by Dr. Henderson, conveying the idea either of martial completeness, as being fully provided with every thing requisite for the successful siege of Jerusalem, or mental completeness, that is, in this connexion, security, martial courage. *And likewise many.* Sennacherib invaded Judæa with an army of nearly two hundred thousand men. *Yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through.*

Thus saith Jehovah:
Though they are complete and so very numerous,
Yet in this state they shall be cut down,
And he shall pass away.

The change of number from the plural, 'they are, or shall be cut down,' to 'he passeth away,' is obviously intended to distinguish between the overthrow of the Assyrian army and the immediate departure of Sennacherib to his own land. To cut, or mow down, is a metaphor derived from the hay harvest, and forcibly sets forth the sudden and entire destruction of an army. See for the historical facts, 2 *Kin.* xix. 35; *Isa.* xxxvii. 36, 37; and Supplementary Note on this last text.—*H.* We are not prevented by the inconsistencies of the man from giving insertion to the beautiful lines of the poet.

'The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd;
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!'

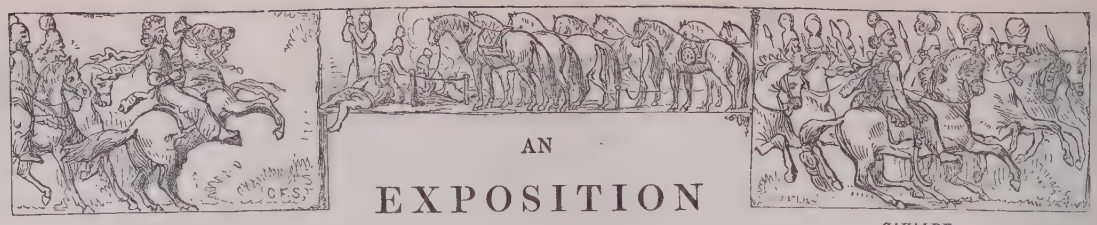
CHAP. II.—3. *The valiant men are in scarlet. Eze.* xxiii. 14, 15, and Supplementary Note, *in loc.* 6. *The gates of the rivers shall be opened.* Diodorus informs us that there was an old prophecy that Nineveh should not be taken till the river became an enemy to the city; and in the third year of the siege the river being swollen with continual rains, overflowed part of the city, and broke down the wall for twenty furlongs; then the king, thinking that the oracle was fulfilled, and the river become an enemy to the city, built a large funeral pile in the palace, and, collecting together all his wealth and his concubines and eunuchs, burnt himself and the palace with them all; and the enemy entered the breach that the waters had made, and took the city. 9. *Take ye the spoil of silver.* We read, in Diodorus, that Arbaces carried many talents of gold and silver to Ecbatana, the royal city of the Medes. 10. *She is empty, and void, and waste.* The original is strongly emphatic: the words are of the same sound; and increase in their length as they point out great, greater, and greatest desolation.

Bukah, umebukah, umebullakah.
She is void, empty, and desolate.—*A. Clarke.*

CHAP. III.—1. *Woe to the bloody city.* Nineveh; the threatenings against which are continued in a strain of invective, astonishing for its richness, variety, and energy. One may hear and see the whip crack, the horses prancing, the wheels rumbling, the chariots bounding after the galloping steeds, the reflection from the drawn and highly polished swords, and the hurled spears, like flashes of lightning, dazzling the eyes; the slain lying in heaps, and horses and chariots stumbling over them! O what a picture, and a true representation of a battle, when one side is broken, and all the cavalry of the conqueror fall in upon them, hewing them down with their swords, and trampling them to pieces under the hoofs of their horses! Oh, infernal war! Yet sometimes thou art the scourge of the Lord.—*A. Clarke.* See wood engravings from Assyrian marbles in *Isa.* vii., viii.; *Jer.* xxii., xxix. 7. *Nineveh is laid waste.* Supplementary Note to *Zephaniah.* See wood engravings, and *Isa.* vii., viii.; *Jer.* xxii., xxix. 8. *Art thou better than populous No?* Margin, *Amon*, (*Jer.* xlvi. 25.) The residence or possession of the Egyptian deity known by the name of Jupiter Ammon. The statement of Macrobius, that he was the representative of the sun, is confirmed by the name of *Amon-Re*, that is, 'Amon, the sun,' being given to him in Egyptian inscriptions. On Egyptian monuments this god is represented by the figure of a man sitting upon a chair, with a ram's head, or by that of an entire ram. The city, which, from its being the principal seat of his worship, was called by the Greeks Diospolis, is the celebrated Thebes, the ancient capital of Upper Egypt, situated on both sides of the Nile, about two hundred and sixty miles south of Cairo. It was renowned for its hundred gates, and was of such extent that its remaining ruins still describe a circuit of twenty-seven miles.

Not all proud Thebes' unrivall'd walk contains
The world's great empress on th' Egyptian plains,
That spreads her conquests o'er a thousand states,
And pours her heroes through a hundred gates;
Two hundred horsemen and two hundred cars
From each wide portal issuing to the wars.—*Pope's Homer.*

Of the magnificent ruins, the most remarkable are the temples of Luxor and Karnac, on the eastern side of the river. The architecture is of the most gigantic and superior description. Fragments of colossal obelisks and statues are found in every direction. The stupendous colonnade at Luxor is in the highest degree imposing; but the grand hall of the temple at Karnac is of surpassing interest. (See wood engravings, *Jer.* xlvi., and *Eze.* xxx., xl., xlii.) Wilkinson, in his *Thebes*, p. 174, describes it as 'one hundred and seventy feet by three hundred and twenty-nine, supported by a central avenue of twelve massive columns, sixty-six feet high, (without the pedestal and abacus,) and twelve in diameter, besides one hundred and twenty-two of smaller, or rather less gigantic, dimensions, forty-one feet nine inches in height, and twenty-seven feet six inches in circumference, distributed in seven lines on either side of the former.' The walls of the temples are covered with hieroglyphics, chiefly representing the victories gained by the Egyptian kings over their enemies. One of the walls exhibits the result of the expedition of Shishak against Jerusalem, 1 *Kin.* xiv. 25, &c., 2 *Chr.* xii. 2—9, in the leading away of the Jewish captives. Of the conquest of this famous city, here referred to by Nahum, no mention is made in profane history, but it not improbably took place on the advance of the Assyrian army under Sargon, in the year B. C. 714. It was aftewards taken by Cambyses, B. C. 525, and its ruin completed by Ptolemy Lathyrus, B. C. 81. *No, that was situate among the waters.* Thebes—populous No—was watered by the Nile, somewhat in the manner that Babylon was by the Euphrates, and Nineveh by the Tigris; accordingly, the ruins of the city are seen on the west of the river as well as on the east. Here, too, are the remains of temples. Here are colossal statues and sphinxes innumerable, half buried in the soil, which ages have accumulated around them. These have beheld generations rise and fade on the plains of Egypt; they have seen dynasties sink at their feet; on them the day of glory has shone, and now the night of ruin darkens around them; still they wait here, to welcome, with the same look of austere majesty, the stranger who comes from a far land to gaze on them; and here they will remain, no doubt, till the end of time, shedding a dim glory on these plains—the twilight of a day of splendour which has passed away, never more to return. Here, too, separated from the ruins of the city by a range of naked hills, in a low, winding, gloomy valley, shut in by iron rocks, are the 'Tombs of the Kings.' They are gorgeous halls, hewn in the heart of the mountain, richly adorned with painting and sculpture, and, in point of size and brilliancy, rivalling the halls of living monarchs. In this, the "house of his glory," lie Pharaoh and his princes. Not only have the Egyptians, by the durable materials which they used in building, and the scale on which their public edifices were constructed, transmitted their temples to us—their very bodies themselves have come down to our day. The art of embalming, as is well known, was universally practised amongst them; and the consequence is, that we may see, at this day, the forms and features of the very men by whom these mighty fabrics were erected—men who lived four thousand years ago—the kings, the warriors, the sages, and the citizens of Egypt. After a slumber of many ages, their remains are as perfect as when they were newly laid in what were designed to be their last resting-places. But, alas! their bodies have been preserved only to be desecrated. Their tombs have been violated, and now their bones literally 'lie scattered about the grave's mouth;' while by some the mummies have been carried into lands far distant, and which, when these men lived, and for ages after, were altogether unknown. The common dwellings of Thebes, formed probably of brick, have utterly perished ages ago. They have left not a vestige, unless the mounds of earth around us can be regarded as such—a distinction to which we think they may lay claim. On these mounds, and especially adjoining the walls of the temples—looking all the meaner from their close proximity to the memorials of such unrivalled magnificence—are the mud huts of the few poor and miserable Arabs who inhabit the site, and who live mainly by digging into mummy pits, and selling the antiquities they discover to strangers. To such a base end has the mighty Thebes—"populous No"—come. "I will execute judgments in No"—"I will cut off the multitude of No"—"No shall be rent asunder," *Eze.* xxx. 14, 15, 16.—*Wylie's Journey.* 9. *Ethiopia.* The land of Cush, not far from No, or Thebes. See below. *Egypt.* Here taken for Lower Egypt, as distinguished from Upper, of which Thebes was itself the capital. *Put.* Part of Africa. *Lubim.* Libya. Or Ethiopia. See Supplementary Note on *Isa.* xviii., where the conversion of the Ethiopians is predicted. The same event is predicted in *Ps.* lxviii. 32; lxxxvii. 4; *Isa.* xlv. 14; *Zep.* iii. 10. 'Those,' says Gesenius, in his commentary on *Ps.* xviii., 'who take pleasure in tracing the fulfilment of such predictions in subsequent history, may find it in *Acts* viii. 27, (the conversion, both to Judaism and Christianity, of the women of queen Candace,) and still more in the circumstance that Abyssinia is to this day the only great Christian state in the eastern world.' Interesting details respecting the Abyssinian or Ethiopian church are given in recent works, especially Gobat's *Abyssinia*, and Harris's *Highlands of Ethiopia*, and in the Appendix to Dr. Wilson's *Lands of the Bible.* 'The adherents of the Abyssinian church,' says Dr. W., 'occupy the whole of the country marked in our maps as Abyssinia, with the exception of its outer parts on all sides, which are now occupied by heathen and Muhammadan tribes, which, till lately, were fast contracting its limits. Beyond the bounds of Habesh, on both sides of the river Gochob, too, it appears, from credible reports communicated to Sir William Harris during his late embassy to the country, there exist, in various quarters, isolated communities professing the Christianity of Ethiopia, who for a long period of years have successfully held their position among the mountain fastnesses in the very heart of the now pagan and Muhammadan country.'——'Making due allowance for the superstition and geographical ignorance of the various natives from whom the foregoing particulars have been collected, the fullest credit may be accorded,—minute cross-examinations of individuals, who could have held no previous communication with each other, having corroborated every point. It is important,' he adds, 'to know that the Gochob, in its upper course, is occupied by so powerful a Christian people, whose sovereign exercises over the destinies of the surrounding Gentiles an influence which, if properly directed, could be made to check the rapid spread of Islamism, instead of fostering the traffic in human beings.'—*Harris's Highlands of Ethiopia.* Dr. Wilson, referring to the earliest authentic notices of the conversion of Ethiopia to Christianity, mentions two Christian youths of Tyre who, whilst in captivity in Ethiopia, were made greatly instrumental, about the year 327 of our era, in accomplishing the change. At present Christianity exists in a most corrupted form in that country; and Dr. Wilson gives a most interesting narrative of two young men, natives of it, who have twice traversed the immense distance from Abyssinia to Bombay, in order to attend a Missionary institution there, and be more fitted to declare to their fellow-countrymen the gospel tidings. With this view, after a residence of several years at Bombay, they are about to return to their native land. 'Many, I trust,' adds their instructor, 'will lift their hearts unto God in fervent prayer in behalf of these youthful and beloved Ethiopian disciples, who have travelled so far, and suffered so much, that the work of their preparation for preaching the Gospel to their benighted countrymen may be completed; and that some herald of the cross may, in due time, be sent from the highly favoured lands of the west to "bear this heavy burden with them," and to strive with them mightily for the revival of the faith of the Gospel among the mountains of Africa, in which nominal Christianity has found for ages a refuge from the hate and persecution of the heathen and the followers of the false prophet.' Supplementary Note on *Zep.* iii. 10.



ASSYRIAN CAVALRY.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

It was a very foolish fancy of the Jewish rabbins that this prophet was the son of the Shunamite woman that was at first miraculously given and afterwards raised to life by Elisha, 2 *Kin.* iv., as they say also the prophet Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath, whom Elijah raised to life. It is a more probable conjecture of their modern chronologers that he lived and prophesied in the reign of king Manasseh, when wickedness abounded, and destruction was hastening on: destruction by the Chaldeans, whom this prophet mentions as the instruments of God's judgments; and Manasseh was himself carried to Babylon as an earnest of what should come afterwards. In the apocryphal story of *Bel and the Dragon* mention is made of Habakkuk the prophet in the land of Judah, that was carried thence by an angel into Babylon to feed Daniel in the den. Those who give credit to that story take pains to reconcile our prophet's living before the captivity, and foretelling it, with that. Huetius thinks that was another of the same name, a prophet—this of the tribe of Simeon, that of Levi; others, that he lived so long as to the end of the captivity, though he prophesied of it before it came; and some have imagined that Habakkuk's feeding Daniel in the den is to be understood mystically, that Daniel then lived by faith, as Habakkuk had said the just should do: he was fed by that word, *ch.* ii. 4. The prophecy of this book is a mixture of the prophet's addresses to God in the people's name, and to the people in God's name; for it is the office of the prophets to carry messages both ways; and we have in it a lively representation of the intercourse and communion that is between a gracious God and a gracious soul. The whole particularly refers to the invasion of the land of Judah by the Chaldeans, which brought spoil upon the people of God—a just puishment of the spoil they had been guilty of among themselves; but it is of general use, especially to help us through that great temptation with which good men have in all ages been exercised, arising from the power and prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the righteous by it.

A.M. 3378. B.C. 626.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter, I. The prophet complains to God of the violence done by the abuse of the sword of justice among his own people, and the hardships thereby put upon many good people, ver. 1—4. II. God by him foretells the punishment of that abuse of power by the sword of war, and the desolations which the army of the Chaldeans should make upon them. ver. 5—11. III. Then the prophet complains of that too, and is grieved that the Chaldeans prevailed so far, ver. 12—17; so that he scarce knows which is more to be lamented, the sin or the punishment of it; for in both many harmless good people are very great sufferers. It is well there is a day of judgment and a future state before us, in which it shall be eternally well with all the righteous, and with them only, and ill with all the wicked, and them only; so the present seeming disorders of providence shall be set to rights, and there will remain no matter of complaint whatsoever.

THE burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

2 O LORD, how long shall I cry,
And thou wilt not hear!
Even cry out unto thee *of* violence,
And thou wilt not save!
3 Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance?
For spoiling and violence *are* before me:
And there are *that* raise up strife and contention.
4 Therefore the law is slacked,
And judgment doth never go forth:
For the wicked doth compass about the righteous;
Therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

No more is told us in the title of this book, which we have, ver. 1, but that the penman was a prophet, a man Divinely inspired and commissioned, which is enough; if that be so, we need not ask concerning his tribe or family, or place of his birth; and that the book itself is "the burden" which he saw,—he was as sure of the truth of it as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes already accomplished. Here, in these verses, the prophet sadly laments the iniquity of the times, as one sensibly touched with grief for the lamentable decay of religion and righteousness. It is a very melancholy complaint which he here makes to God.

First. That no man could call what he had his own; but, in defiance of the most sacred laws of property and equity, he that had power on his side had what he had a mind to, though he had no right on his side. The land was full of violence, as the old world was, *Gen.* vi. 11; the prophet cries out of violence, ver. 2, iniquity and grievance, spoil and violence. In families and among relations, in neighbourhoods and among friends, in commerce and in courts of law, every thing was carried with a high hand, and no man made any scruple of doing wrong to his neighbour, so that he could but make a good hand of it for himself. It does not appear that the prophet himself had any great wrong done him,—in losing times it fared best with those that had nothing to lose; but it grieved him to see other people wronged, and he could not but mingle his tears with those of the oppressed. Note, Doing wrong to harmless people, as it is an iniquity in itself, so it is a great grievance to all that are concerned for God's Jerusalem, who sigh and cry for abominations of this kind. He complains, ver. 4, that "the wicked doth compass about the righteous." One honest man, one honest cause, shall have enemies besetting it on every side, many wicked men in confederacy against it to run it down; nay, one wicked man (for it is singular) with so many various arts of mischief sets upon a righteous man, that he perfectly besets him.

Secondly. That the kingdom was broken into parties and factions, that were continually biting and devouring one another. This is a lamentation to all the sons of peace, "There are that raise up strife and contention," ver. 3; that foment divisions, widen breaches, incense men against one another, and sow discord among brethren by doing the work of him that is the accuser of the brethren. Strifes and contentions that have been laid asleep, and begun to be forgotten, they awake, and industriously raise up again, and blow up the sparks that were hid under the embers; and if blessed be the peace makers, cursed are such peace breakers that make parties, and so make mischief that spreads farther and lasts longer than they can imagine. It is sad to see ill men warming their hands at those flames which are devouring all that is good in a nation, and stirring up the fire too.

Thirdly. That the torrent of violence and strife ran so strong as to bid defiance to the restraints and regulations of laws, and the administration of justice, ver. 4; because God did not appear against them nobody else would, therefore the law is slacked, is silent, it breathes not, its pulse beats not, (so it is said the word signifies,) it intermits, and judgment doth not go forth as it should; no cognizance is taken of those crimes, no justice done upon the criminals; nay, "wrong judgment proceedeth;" if appeals be made to the courts of equity, the righteous shall be condemned, and the wicked justified, so that the remedy proves the worst disease. The legislative power takes no care to supply the deficiencies of the law, for the obviating of those growing threatening mischiefs; the executive power takes no care to answer the good intentions of the laws that are made; the stream of justice is dried up by violence, and has not its free course.

Fourthly. That all this was open and public, and impudently avowed; it was barefaced. The prophet complains that this iniquity was shewed him; he beheld it which way soever he turned his eyes, nor could he look off it; "Spoiling and violence are before me." Note, The abounding of wickedness in a nation is a very great eyesore to good people, and if they did not see it they could not believe it to be so bad as it is. Solomon often complains of the vexation of this kind which he saw under the sun; and the prophet would therefore gladly turn hermit, that he might not see it, *Jer.* ix. 2. But "then we must needs go out of the world," which therefore we should long to do, that we may remove to that world where holiness and love reign eternally, and no spoiling and violence shall be before us.

Fifthly. That he complained of this to God, but could not obtain a redress

of those grievances; Lord, saith he, "why dost thou shew me iniquity?" Why hast thou cast my lot in a time and place when and where it is to be seen, and why do I continue to sojourn in Mesech and Kedar? I cry to thee of this violence, I cry aloud, I have cried long, but "thou wilt not hear," "thou wilt not save," thou dost not take vengeance on the oppressors, nor do justice to the oppressed, as if thine arm were shortened, or thine ear heavy. When God seems to connive at the wickedness of the wicked, nay, and to countenance it, by suffering them to prosper in their wickedness, it shocks the faith of good men, and proves a sore temptation to them to say they have cleansed their hearts in vain, *Ps.* lxxiii. 13; and hardens those in their impiety who say, "God hath forsaken the earth." We must not think it strange if wickedness be suffered to prevail far, and prosper long; God has reasons, and we are sure they are good reasons, both for the reprieves of bad men and the rebukes of good men; and therefore, though we plead with him, and humbly expostulate concerning his judgments, yet we must say he is wise, and righteous, and good in all; and must believe the day will come, though it may be long deferred, when the cry of sin will be heard against those that do wrong, and the cry of prayer for those that suffer it.

5 Behold ye among the heathen, and regard,
And wonder marvellously:
For *I* will work a work in your days,
Which ye will not believe, though it be told *you*.
6 For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation,
Which shall march through the breadth of the land,
To possess the dwellingplaces *that are* not their's.
7 They *are* terrible and dreadful: [selves.
Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of them-
8 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards,
And are more fierce than the evening wolves:
And their horsemen shall spread themselves,
And their horsemen shall come from far;
They shall fly as the eagle *that* hasteth to eat.
9 They shall come all for violence:
Their faces shall sup up *as* the east wind,
And they shall gather the captivity as the sand.
10 And they shall scoff at the kings,
And the princes shall be a scorn unto them:
They shall deride every strong hold;
For they shall heap dust, and take it.
11 Then shall *his* mind change,
And he shall pass over, and offend,
Imputing this his power unto his god.

We have here an answer to the prophet's complaint, giving him assurance that though God bore long, he would not bear always, with this provoking people; for the day of vengeance was in his heart, and he must tell them so, that they might by repentance and reformation turn away the judgment they were threatened with.

First. The preamble to the sentence is very awful; ver. 5, "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard." Since they will not be brought to repentance by the long-suffering of God, he will take another course with them. No resentments are so keen, so deep, as those of abused patience. The Lord will inflict upon them, 1. A public punishment; which shall be beheld and regarded among the heathen, which the neighbour nations shall take notice of, and stand amazed at: see *Deu.* xxix. 24, 25. This will aggravate the desolations of Israel, that they will thereby be made a spectacle to the world. 2. An amazing punishment; so strange and surprising, and so much out of the common road of providence, that it shall not be paralleled among the heathen, shall be sorer and heavier than what God has usually inflicted upon the nations that know him not; nay, it shall not be credited, even by those that had the prediction of it from God before it comes, or the report of it from those that were eyewitnesses of it; when it is come, you will not believe it, though it be told you. It will be thought incredible that so many judgments should combine in one, and every circumstance so strangely concur to enforce and aggravate it; that so great and potent a nation should be so reduced and broken, and that God should deal so severely with a people that had been taken into the bond of the covenant, and that he had done so much for. The punishment of God's professing people cannot but be the astonishment of all about them. 3. A speedy punishment; "I will work a work in your days;" now quickly. This generation shall not pass till the judgment threatened be accomplished. The sins of former days shall be reckoned for in your days, for now the measure of the iniquity is full, *Mat.* xxiii. 36. 4. It shall be a punishment in which much of the hand of God shall appear; it shall be a work of his own working, so that all who see it shall say, This is the Lord's doing; and it will be found a fearful thing to fall into his hands; woe to those whom he takes to task! 5. It shall be such a punishment as will typify the destruction to be brought upon the despisers of Christ and his Gospel; for to that these words are applied, *Acts* xiii. 41, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish." The ruin of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for their idolatry, was a figure of their ruin by the Romans, for rejecting Christ and his Gospel, and it is a very marvellous thing, and almost incredible. Is there not a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?

Secondly. The sentence itself is very dreadful and particular; ver. 6, "Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans." There were those that raised up a great deal of strife and contention among them, which was their sin; and now God will "raise up the Chaldeans" against them, who shall strive and contend with them, which shall be their punishment. Note, When God's professed people quarrel among themselves, snarl at, and devour one another, it is just with God to bring the common enemy upon them that shall make peace by making an universal devastation. The contending parties in Jerusalem were inveterate one against another, when the Romans came and took away their place and nation. The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of the destruction threatened, who though themselves acting unrighteously, yet shall "execute the righteousness of the Lord," and punish the unrighteousness of Israel. Now here we have,

1. A description of the people that shall be raised up against Israel, to be a scourge to them. 1st. They are a bitter and hasty nation, cruel and fierce, and what they do is done with violence and fury. They are precipitate in their counsels, vehement in their passions, and push on with resolution in their enterprises; they shew no mercy, and they spare no pains. Miserable is the case of those that are given up into the hand of those cruel ones. 2nd. They are strong, and therefore formidable, and such as there is no standing before, and yet no fleeing from; ver. 7, "They are terrible and dreadful," famed for the gallant troops they bring into the field; ver. 8, "Their horses are swifter than leopards," to charge and pursue, and "more fierce than the evening wolves;" and wolves are observed to be most ravenous towards the evening, after they have been kept hungry all day, waiting for that darkness under the protection of which "all the beasts of the forest creep forth," *Ps.* civ. 10. Their squadrons of horse shall be very numerous, "their horsemen shall spread themselves" a great way, for they shall "come from far," from all parts of their own country, and shall be dispersed into all parts of the country they invade, to plunder it, and enrich themselves with the spoil of it. And "in making speed to spoil, they shall hasten to the prey," as those, *Isa.* viii. 1, margin, for they shall "fly as the eagle" towards the earth, when she "hasteth to eat," and strikes at the prey she has an eye upon. 3rd. Their own will is a law to them, and in the fierceness of their pursuits they will not be governed by any laws of humanity, equity, or honour. "Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves," ver. 7. Appetite and passion rule them, and not reason or conscience; their principle is *Quicquid libet, licet*,—'My will is my law;' and *Sic volo, sic jubeo; stat pro ratione voluntas*,—'This is my wish, this is my command; it shall be done because I choose it.' What favour can be hoped for from such an enemy? Note, Those that have been unjust and unmerciful, among whom "the law is slacked, and judgment doth not go forth," will justly be paid in their own coin, and fall into the hands of those that will deal unjustly and unmercifully with them.

2. A prophecy of the terrible execution that should be made by this terrible nation. 'They shall march through the breadth of the earth,' so it may be read; for in a little time the Chaldean forces subdued all the nations in those parts, so that they seemed to have conquered the world; they overran Asia and part of Africa. Or, through the breadth of the land of Israel, which was wholly laid waste by them. It is here foretold, 1st. That they shall seize all as their own that they can lay their hands on. They shall come to "possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs," which they have no right to but that which their sword gives them. 2nd. That they shall push on the war with all possible vigour; "They shall all come for violence," ver. 9, not to determine any disputed right by the sword, but right or wrong, to enrich themselves with the spoil. "Their faces shall sup up as the east wind;" their very countenances shall be so fierce and frightful, that a look will serve to make them masters of all they have a mind to; so that they shall swallow up all, as the east wind nips and blasts the buds and flowers. 'Their faces looked towards the east,' so some read it; they shall still have an eye to their own country, which lay eastward from Judæa, and all the spoil they seize they shall remit thither. 3rd. That they shall take a vast number of prisoners, and send them into Babylon; "They shall gather the captivity as the sand" for multitude, and shall never know when they have enough, as long as there are any more to be had. 4th. They shall make nothing of the opposition that is given to them, ver. 10. Do the distressed Jews depend upon their great men to make a stand, and with their conduct and courage to give check to the victorious arms of the Chaldeans? Alas, they will make nothing of them. "They shall scoff," ('he' shall, so it is in the original, meaning Nebuchadnezzar, who, being puffed up with his successes, shall scoff,) "at the kings" and commanders of the forces that think to make head against him, and "the princes shall be a scorn to them," so unequal a match shall they appear to be. Do they depend upon their garrisons and fortified towns? "He shall deride every stronghold," for to him it shall be weak, and "he shall heap up dust and take it." A little soil thrown up for ramparts shall serve to give him all the advantage against them that he can desire; he shall make but a jest of them, and a sport of taking them. 5th. By all this he shall be puffed up with an intolerable pride, which shall be his destruction; ver. 11, "Then shall his mind change" for the worse. The spirit both of the people and of the king shall grow more haughty and insolent. Those that will not be content with their own rights, neither will they be content when they have made themselves masters of other people's rights too; but as the condition riseth, the mind riseth too. This victorious king shall pass over all the bounds of reason, and equity, and modesty, and break through all their bond, and thereby he shall offend, shall make God his enemy, and so prepare ruin for himself, by "imputing this his power unto his god," whereas he had it from the God of Israel. Bel and Necho were the gods of the Chaldeans, and to them they gave the glory of their successes, were hardened in their idolatry, and blasphemously argued that because they had conquered Israel their gods were too strong for the God of Israel. Note. It is a great offence (and the common offence of proud people) to take that glory to ourselves, or give it to gods of our own making, which is due to the living and true God only. These closing words of the sentence give a glimpse of comfort to the afflicted people of God; it is to be hoped they will change their minds and grow better, and ripen for deliverance, and they did so. However, their enemies will change their minds and grow worse, and ripen for destruction, which will inevitably come in God's due time, for a haughty spirit, lifted up against God, goes before a fall.

12 *Art* thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine
We shall not die. [Holy One?
O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment;
And, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.
13 *Thou art* of purer eyes than to behold evil,
And canst not look on iniquity: [ously,
Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacher-
And holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth *the man that is* more righteous than he?
14 And makest men as the fishes of the sea,
As the creeping things, *that have* no ruler over them?
15 They take up all of them with the angle,
They catch them in their net,

And gather them in their drag:
Therefore they rejoice and are glad.
16 Therefore they sacrifice unto their net,
And burn incense unto their drag;
Because by them their portion *is* fat,
And their meat plenteous.
17 Shall they therefore empty their net,
And not spare continually to slay the nations?

The prophet having received of the Lord that which he was to deliver to the people, now turns to God, and again addresseth himself to him, for the ease of his own mind under the burden which he saw. And still he is full of complaints; if he look about him, he sees nothing but violence done by Israel; if he look before him, he sees nothing but violence done against Israel; and it is hard to say which is the more melancholy sight. His thoughts of both he pours out before the Lord. It is our duty to be affected both with the iniquities and with the calamities of the church of God, and of the times and places wherein we live; but we must take heed lest we grow peevish in our resentments, and carry them too far, so as to entertain any hard thoughts of God, or lose the comfort of our communion with him. The world is bad, and always was so, and will be so; it is out of our power to mend it; but we are sure that God governs the world, and will bring glory to himself out of all, and therefore we must resolve to make the best of it, must be ourselves better, and long for the better world. The prospect of the prevalency of the Chaldeans drives the prophet to his knees, and he takes the liberty to plead with God concerning it. And in his plea we may observe,

First. The truths he lays down, which he resolves to abide by, and with which he endeavours to comfort himself and his friends under the growing, threatening power of the Chaldeans; and they will furnish us with pleasing considerations for our support in the like case.

1. However it be, yet God is the Lord our God, and our Holy One. The victorious Chaldeans impute their power to their idols, but we are taught to tell them that the "God of Israel is the true God, the living God," *Jer.* x. 10, 11. 1st. He is Jehovah, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection. Our Rock is not as theirs. 2nd. He is my God. He speaks in the people's name; every Israelite may say, He is mine; though we are thus sore broken, and all this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten the name of our God, nor quitted our relation to him; yet have we not disowned him, nor hath he disowned us, *Ps.* xliv. 17. We are an offending people, he an offended God, yet he is ours, and we will not entertain any hard thoughts of him or of his service, for all this. 3rd. He is my Holy One, which intimates that the prophet loved God, as a holy God, loved him for the sake of his holiness; he is mine, because he is a Holy One, and therefore he will be my Sanctifier and my Saviour, because he is my Holy One. Men are unholy, but my God is holy.

2. Our God is from everlasting. This he pleads with him, "Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord my God?" It is a matter of great and continual comfort to God's people, under the troubles of this present life, that their God is from everlasting, which speaks, 1st. The eternity of his nature. If he is from everlasting, he will be to everlasting; and we must have recourse to this first principle, when things seen that are temporal are discouraging, that we have hope and help sufficient in a God that is not seen, that is eternal. Art thou not from everlasting, and then wilt thou not make bare thine everlasting arm, in pursuance of thine everlasting counsels, to make unto thyself an everlasting name? 2nd. The antiquity of his covenant. Art thou not from of old, a God in covenant with thy people, so some understand it; and hast thou not done great things for them in the days of old, which we have heard with our ears, and which our fathers have told us of; and art thou not the same God still that ever thou wast? Thou art God, and changest not.

3. While the world stands God will have a church in it. Thou art from everlasting, and then "we shall not die." The Israel of God shall not be extirpated, nor the name of Israel blotted out, though it may sometimes seem to be very near it; like the apostles, "chastened and not killed," 2 *Cor.* vi. 9; "chastened sore, but not delivered over to death," *Ps.* cxviii. 18. See how the prophet infers the perpetuity of the church from the eternity of God; for Christ hath said, "Because I live," and therefore as long as I live, "ye shall live also," *Jno.* xiv. 19. He is the Rock on which the church is so firmly built that the gates of hell shall not, cannot, prevail against it. "We shall not die."

4. Whatever the enemies of the church may do against her, it is according to the counsel of God, and is designed and directed for wise and holy ends. "Thou hast ordained them, thou hast established them." It was God that gave the Chaldeans their power, made them a formidable people, and in his counsel determined what they should do; nor had they any power against his Israel but what was given them from above. He gave them their commission "to take spoil and to take the prey," *Isa.* x. 6. Herein God appears a mighty God, that the power of mighty men is derived from him, and depends upon him, and is under his check; he saith concerning it, "Hitherto shall it come and no farther." They whom God ordains shall do no more than what God has ordained, which is a great comfort to God's suffering people. Men are in God's hand, the rod in his hand, *Ps.* xvii. 14; and he hath "ordained them for judgment," and for correction. God's people need correction, and deserve it; they must expect it, they shall have it; when wicked men are let loose against them, it is not for their destruction, that they may be ruined, but for their correction, that they may be reformed; they are not intended for a sword to cut them off, but a rod to drive out the foolishness that is found in their hearts; though they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so. It is matter of great comfort to us, in reference to the troubles and afflictions of the church, that, whatever mischief men design to them, God designs to bring good out of them, and we are sure his counsel shall stand.

5. Though the wickedness of the wicked may prosper for a while, yet God is a holy God, and doth not approve of that wickedness; ver. 13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil." The prophet observing how very vicious and impious the Chaldeans were, and yet what great success they had against God's Israel, found a temptation arising from it to say, that it was vain to serve God, and indifferent to him what men were; but he soon suppresses the thought, by having recourse to his first principle, that God is not, that he cannot be, the author or patron of sin; as he cannot do iniquity himself, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it, with any allowance or approbation. No, it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates; he sees all the sin that is committed in the world, and it is an offence to him, it is odious in his eyes, and those that commit it are thereby made obnoxious to his justice. There is in the nature of God an antipathy to those dispositions and practices that are contrary to his holy law; and though an expedient is happily found out for his being reconciled to sinners, yet he never will, or can be, reconciled to sin. And this principle we must resolve to abide by, though the dispensations of his providence may for a time, and in some instances, seem to be inconsistent with it. Note, God's connivance at sin must never be interpreted his giving countenance to it; for "he is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness," *Ps.* v. 4, 5. The iniquity which it is here said God doth not look upon, may be meant especially of the mischief done to God's people by their persecutors; though God sees cause to permit it, yet he doth not approve of it. So it agrees with that of Balaam, *Num.* xxiii. 21, "He hath not beheld iniquity against Jacob," nor seen, with allowance, "perverseness against Israel," which is very comfortable to the people of God in their afflictions by the rage of men, that they cannot infer God's anger from it. Though the instruments of their trouble hate them, it doth not therefore follow that God doth; nay, he loves them, and it is in love that he doth correct them.

Secondly. The grievances he complained of, and finds hard to reconcile with these truths. Since we are sure thou art a holy God, why have atheists temptation given them to question whether thou art so or no? "Wherefore lookest thou upon the Chaldeans, that deal treacherously" with thy people, and givest them success in their attempts upon us? Why dost thou suffer thy sworn enemies, that blaspheme thy name, to deal thus cruelly, thus perfidiously, with thy sworn subjects, that desire to fear thy name? What shall we say to this? This was a temptation to Job, *Job* xxi. 7; xxiv. 1; to David, *Ps.* lxxiii. 2, 3; to Jeremiah, *Jer.* xii. 1, 2.

1. That God permitted sin, and was patient with the sinners. He looked upon them, he saw all their wicked doings and designs, and did not restrain or punish them, but suffered them to speed in their purposes, to go on and prosper, and to carry all before them. Nay, his looking upon them intimates that he not only gave them no check or rebuke, but gave them encouragement and assistance, as if he smiled upon them, and favoured them. He held his tongue when they went on in their wicked courses, said nothing against them, gave no orders to stop them. "These things thou hast done, and I kept silence."

2. That his patience was abused, and because sentence against these evil works and workers was not executed speedily, therefore their hearts were the more "fully set in them to do evil."

1st. They were false and deceitful, and there was no credit to be given them, nor any confidence to be put in them. They deal treacherously: under colour of peace and friendship they prosecute and execute the most mischievous designs, and make no conscience of their word in any thing.

2nd. They hated and persecuted men because they were better than themselves, as Cain hated Abel because "his own works were evil and his brother's righteous." "The wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he," for that very reason, because he shames him; they have an ill-will to the image of God, and therefore devour good men, because they bear that image. Though many of the Jews were as bad as the Chaldeans themselves, and worse, yet there were those among them that were much more righteous, and yet were devoured by them.

3rd. They make no more of killing men than of catching fish. The prophet complains that, Providence having delivered up the weaker to be a prey to the stronger, they were in effect made "as the fishes of the sea," ver. 14. So they had been among themselves, preying upon one another, as the greater fishes do upon the lesser, ver. 3; and they were made so to the common enemy. They were as "creeping things," or swimming things, for the word is used for fish, *Gen.* i. 20, that have no ruler over them, either to restrain them from devouring one another or to protect them from being devoured by their enemies. They are given up to the Chaldeans as fish to the fishermen. Those proud oppressors make no conscience of killing them, any more than men do of pulling fish out of the water, so small account do they make of human lives. They make no difficulty of killing them, but do it with as much ease as men catch fish, that make no resistance, but are unguarded and unarmed, and it is rather a pastime than any pains to take them. They make no distinction among them, but all is fish that comes to their net; and they reckon every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. They have various ways of spoiling and destroying, as men have of taking fish. Some they "take up with the angle," ver. 15, one by one; others they catch in shoals and by wholesale in their net, and "gather them in their drag," their inclosing net. Such variety of methods have they to destroy those by whom they hope to enrich themselves.

4th. They gloried in what they got, and pleased themselves with it, though it was got dishonestly. "Their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous," they prosper in their oppression and fraud; they have a great deal and it is of the best; their land is good, and they have abundance of it. And therefore, *First.* They have a great complacency in themselves, and are very pleasant, they live merrily; ver. 15, "Therefore they rejoice and are glad," because their wealth is great, and their projects succeed for the increase of it, *Job* xxxi. 25. "Soul, take thine ease," *Lu.* xii. 19. *Secondly.* They have a great conceit of themselves, and are very much in love with themselves, and mighty admirers of their own ingenuity and conduct; they sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag; they applaud themselves for having got so much money, though never so dishonestly. Note. There is a proneness in us to take the glory of our outward prosperity to ourselves, and to say, "My might and the power of my hands has gotten me this wealth," *Deu.* viii. 17. And this is idolizing ourselves, sacrificing to the drag-net because it is our own, which is as absurd a piece of idolatry as sacrificing to Neptune or Dagon. That which makes them adore their net thus is because by it their portion is fat. They that make a god of their money will make a god of their drag-net, if they can but get money by it.

Thirdly. The prophet in the close humbly expresseth his hope that God will not suffer these destroyers of mankind always to go on and prosper thus, and expostulates with God concerning it; ver. 17, "Shall they therefore empty their net?" Shall they enrich themselves, and fill their own vessels, with that which they have by violence and oppression taken away from their neighbour? Shall they empty their net of what they have caught, that they may cast it into the sea again to catch more? And wilt thou suffer them to proceed in this wicked course? Shall they not "spare continually to slay the nations?" Must the numbers and wealth of nations be sacrificed to their net? As if it were a small thing to rob men of their estates, shall they rob God of his glory? Is not God the king of nations? And will he not assert their injured rights? Is he not jealous for his own honour, and will he not maintain that? The prophet lodgeth the matter in God's hand, and leaves it with him, as the Psalmist doth, *Ps.* lxxiv. 22, "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause."

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter we have an answer expected by the prophet, ver. 1, and returned by the Spirit of God, to the complaints which the prophet made of the violences and victories of the Chaldeans in the close of the foregoing chapter. The answer is, I. That after God hath served his own purposes by the prevailing power of the Chaldeans, has tried the faith and patience of his people, and distinguished between the hypocrites and the sincere among them, he will reckon with the Chaldeans, will humble and bring down, not only that proud monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, but that proud monarchy, for their boundless and insatiable thirst after dominion and wealth, for which they themselves should at length be made a prey, ver. 2—8. II. That not they only, but all other

sinners like them, should perish under a Divine woe: 1. Those that are covetous, are greedy of wealth and honours, ver. 9—11; 2. Those that are injurious and oppressive, and raise estates by wrong and rapine, ver. 12—14; 3. Those that promote drunkenness, that they may expose their neighbours to shame, ver. 15—17; 4. Those that worship idols, ver. 18—20.

I WILL stand upon my watch,
And set me upon the tower,
And will watch to see what he will say unto me,
And what I shall answer when I am reproved.
2 And the LORD answered me, and said,
Write the vision, and make *it* plain upon tables,
That he may run that readeth it.
3 For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time,
But at the end it shall speak, and not lie:
Though it tarry, wait for it;
Because it will surely come, it will not tarry.
4 Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him:
But the just shall live by his faith.

Here, First. The prophet humbly gives his attendance upon God; ver. 1, "I will stand upon my watch," as a sentinel on the walls of a besieged city, or in the borders of an invaded country, that is very solicitous to gain intelligence. I will look up, will look round, will look within, and "watch to see what he will say unto me," will listen attentively to the words of his mouth, and carefully observe the steps of his providence, that I may not lose the least hint of instruction or direction. "I will watch to see what he will say in me,' so it may be read, what the spirit of prophecy in me will dictate to me by way of answer to my complaints. And even in an ordinary way God not only speaks to us by his word, but speaks in us by our own consciences whispering to us, This is the way, walk in it; and we must attend to the voice of God in both. The prophet's standing upon his tower or high place speaks his prudence, in making use of the helps and means he had within his reach to know the mind of God, and to be instructed concerning it. Those that expect to hear from God must withdraw from the world, and get above it, must raise their attention, fix their thought, study the Scriptures, consult experiences and the experienced, and continue instant in prayer, and thus set themselves upon the tower. His standing upon his watch speaks his patience, his constancy and resolution; he will wait the time, and weather the point, as a watchman doth, but he will have an answer; he will know what God will say to him, not only for his own satisfaction, but to enable him, as a prophet, to give satisfaction to others, and answer their exceptions when he is reproved or argued with. Herein the prophet is an example to us,

1. When we are tossed and perplexed with doubts concerning the methods of providence, are tempted to think it is fate or fortune, and not a wise God, that governs the world, or that the church is abandoned, and God's covenant with his people cancelled and laid aside, then we must take pains to furnish ourselves with considerations proper to clear this matter; we must stand upon our watch against the temptation, that it may not get ground upon us; must set ourselves upon the tower, to see if we can discover that which will silence the temptation, and solve the objected difficulties; must do as the psalmist, "consider the days of old," and make a "diligent search," *Ps.* lxxvii. 6; must "go into the sanctuary of God," and there labour to understand the end of these things, *Ps.* lxxiii. 17. We must not give way to our doubts, but struggle to make the best of our way out of them.

2. When we have been at prayer, pouring out our complaints and requests before God, we must carefully observe what answers God gives by his word, his Spirit, and his providences, to our humble representations. When David saith, "I will direct my prayer unto thee," as an arrow to the mark, he adds, "I will look up," will look after my prayer, as a man doth after the arrow he hath shot, *Ps.* v. 3. We must "hear what God the Lord will speak," *Ps.* lxxxv. 8.

3. When we go to read and hear the word of God, and so to consult the lively oracles, we must set ourselves to observe what God will thereby say unto us to suit our case, what word of conviction, caution, counsel, and comfort he will bring to our souls, that we may receive it, and submit to the power of it, and may consider what we shall answer, what returns we shall make to the word of God, when we are reproved by it.

4. When we are attacked by such as quarrel with God and his providence, as the prophet here seems to have been, beset, besieged as in a tower, by hosts of objectors, we should consider how to answer them, fetch our instructions from God, hear what he saith to us for our satisfaction, and have that ready to say to others, when we are reproved, to satisfy them, as a "reason of the hope that is in us," 1 *Pet.* iii. 15, and beg of God a mouth and wisdom, and that it may be "given us in that same hour what we shall speak."

Secondly. God graciously gives him the meeting, for he will not disappoint the believing expectations of his people, that wait to hear what he will say unto them, but will speak peace, will "answer them with good words and comfortable words," *Zec.* i. 13. The prophet had complained of the prevalency of the Chaldeans which God had given him a prospect of; now, to pacify him concerning it, he here gives him a farther prospect of their fall and ruin, as Isaiah before this, when he had foretold the captivity in Babylon, foretold also the destruction of Babylon. Now, this great and important event being made known to him by a vision, care is taken to publish the vision, and transmit it to the generations to come, who should see the accomplishment of it.

1. The prophet must "write the vision," ver. 2. Thus, when St. John had a vision of the New Jerusalem, he was ordered to write, *Rev.* xxi. 5. He must write it, that he might imprint it on his own mind, and make it more clear to himself, but especially that it might be notified to those in distant places, and transmitted to those in future ages. What is handed by tradition is easily mistaken, and liable to corruption; but what is written is reduced to a certainty, and preserved safe and pure. We have just reason to bless God for written visions, that God has written to us the great things of his prophets, as well as of his law. He must "write the vision, and make it plain upon tables," must write it legibly, in large characters, so that he that runs may read it; that those who will not allow themselves leisure to read it deliberately may not avoid a cursory view of it. Probably the prophets were wont to write some of the most remarkable of their predictions in tables, and to hang them up in the temple, *Isa.* viii. 1. Now the prophet is bid to write this very plain. Note, Those that are employed in preaching the word of God should study plainness as much as may be, so as to make them intelligible to the meanest capacities. The things of our everlasting peace, which God has written to us, are "made plain, they are all plain to him that understandeth," *Pr.* viii. 9, and they are published with authority; God himself has prefixed his imprimatur to them; he hath said, Make them plain.

2. The people must wait for the accomplishment of the vision; ver. 3, "The vision is yet for an appointed time" to come. You shall now be told of your deliverance by the breaking of the Chaldeans' power, and that the time of it is fixed in the council and decree of God; "There is an appointed time," but it is not near, it is yet to be deferred a great while; and that comes in here as a reason why it must be written, that it may be reviewed afterwards, and the event compared with it. Note, God has an appointed time for his appointed work, and will be sure to do the work when the time comes; and it is not for us to anticipate his appointments, but to wait his time. And it is a great encouragement to wait with patience, that, though the promised favour be deferred long, it will come at last, and be an abundant recompence to us for our waiting. "At the end it shall speak, and not lie;" we shall not be disappointed of it, for it will come at the time appointed, nor shall we be disappointed in it, for it will fully answer our believing expectations. The promise may seem silent a great while, but at the end it shall speak; and therefore, though it tarry longer than we expected, yet we must continue waiting for it, being assured it will come, and willing to tarry till it doth come. The day that God hath set for the deliverance of his people, and the destruction of his and their enemies, is a day, 1st. That will surely come at last; it is never adjourned *sine die*,—'without fixing another day,' but it will without fail come at the fixed time and the fittest time. 2nd. It will not tarry; for God "is not slack, as some count slackness," 2 *Pet.* iii. 9. Though it tarry past our time, yet it doth not tarry past God's time, which is always the best time.

3. This vision, the accomplishment of which is so long waited for, will be such an exercise of faith and patience as will try and discover men what they are, ver. 4. 1st. There are some who will proudly disdain this vision, whose hearts are so lifted up that they scorn to take notice of it. If God will work for them presently they will thank him, but they will not give him credit; their hearts are lifted up towards vanity, and since God puts them off they will shift for themselves, and not be beholden to him. They think their own hands sufficient for them, and God's promise is to them an insignificant thing. That man's soul that is thus lifted up is not upright in him; he is not right with God, is not as he should be. Those that either distrust or despise God's all-sufficiency will not walk uprightly with him, *Gen.* xvii. 1. But, 2nd. Those that are truly good, and whose hearts are upright with God, will value the promise, and venture their all upon it; and in confidence of the truth of it will keep close to God and duty in the most difficult, trying times, and will then live comfortably in communion with God, dependence on him, and expectation of him. "The just shall live by faith," that is, during the captivity. Good people shall support themselves, and live comfortably by faith in these precious promises, while the performance of them is deferred. "The just shall live by his faith," by that faith which he acts upon the word of God. This is quoted in the New Testament, *Rom.* i. 17; *Gal.* iii. 11; *Heb.* x. 38, for the proof of the great doctrine of justification by faith only, and of the influence which the grace of faith has upon the Christian life. Those that are made just by faith shall live, shall be happy here and for ever; and while they are here they live by it: when they come to heaven faith shall be swallowed up in vision.

5 Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine,
He is a proud man, neither keepeth at home,
Who enlargeth his desire as hell,
And *is* as death, and cannot be satisfied,
But gathereth unto him all nations,
And heapeth unto him all people:
6 Shall not all these take up a parable against him,
And a taunting proverb against him and say,
Woe to him that increaseth *that which is* not his!
How long?
And to him that ladeth himself with thick clay!
7 Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee,
And awake that shall vex thee,
And thou shalt be for booties unto them?
8 Because thou hast spoiled many nations,
All the remnant of the people shall spoil thee;
Because of men's blood, and *for* the violence
Of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.
9 Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house,
That he may set his nest on high,
That he may be delivered from the power of evil!
10 Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people,
And hast sinned *against* thy soul.
11 For the stone shall cry out of the wall,
And the beam out of the timber shall answer it.
12 Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood,
And stablisheth a city by iniquity!
13 Behold, *is it* not of the LORD of hosts
That the people shall labour in the very fire,
And the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?
14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,
As the waters cover the sea.

The prophet, having had orders to write the vision, and the people to wait for the accomplishment of it, the vision itself follows; and it is, as divers other prophecies we have met with, the burden of Babylon and Babylon's king, the

same that was said to "pass over, and offend," *ch.* i. 11. It reads the doom, some think, of Nebuchadnezzar, who was principally active in the destruction of Jerusalem, or of that monarchy, or of the whole kingdom of the Chaldeans, or of all such proud and oppressive powers that bear hard upon any people, especially upon God's people. Observe,

First. The charge laid down against this enemy, upon which the sentence is grounded, ver. 5. The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are the entangling snares of men, and great men especially; and we find him that led Israel captive himself led captive by each of these. For, 1. He is sensual and voluptuous, and given to his pleasures. He transgresseth by wine; drunkenness is itself a transgression, and is the cause of abundance of transgression. We read of those that err through wine, *Isa.* xxviii. 7. Belshazzar, in whom particularly this prophecy had its accomplishment, was in the height of his transgression by wine when the handwriting upon the wall signed the warrant for his immediate execution, pursuant to this sentence, *Dan.* v. 1. 2. He is haughty and imperious. He is a proud man, and his pride is a certain presage of his fall coming on. If great men be proud men the great God will make them know he is above them. His transgression by wine is made a cause of his arrogance and insolence; therefore he is a proud man. When a man is drunk, though he makes himself as mean as a beast, yet he thinks himself as great as a king, and prides himself in that by which he shames himself. We find the crown of pride upon the head of the drunkards of Ephraim, and a woe to both, *Isa.* xxviii. 1. 3. He is covetous and greedy of wealth, and this is the effect of his pride. He thinks himself worthy to enjoy all, and therefore makes it his business to engross all. The Chaldean monarchy aimed to be an universal one. He keepeth not at home; is not content with his own, which he has an incontestable title to, but thinks it too little, and so enjoys it not, nor takes the comfort he might in his own palace, in his own dominion; his sin is his punishment, and his ambition his perpetual uneasiness. Though the home be a palace, yet to a discontented mind it is a prison. He enlargeth his desires as hell, or the grave, that daily receives the bodies of the dead, and yet still cries, Give, give. He is as death, which continues to devour, and cannot be satisfied. Note, It is the sin and folly of many that have a great deal of the wealth of this world that they do not know when they have enough, but the more they have the more they would have, and the more eager they are for it. And it is just with God that the desires that are insatiable should still be unsatisfied; it is the doom passed on those that love silver that they shall never be satisfied with it, *Eccl.* v. 10. They that will not be content with their allotments shall not have the comfort of their achievements. This proud prince is still gathering to him all nations, and heaping to him all people, invading their rights, seizing their properties, and they must not be unless they will be his, and under his command. One nation will not satisfy him unless he has another, and then another, and all at last; as those in a lower sphere, to gratify the same inordinate desire, lay house to house, and field to field, that they may be placed alone in the earth, *Isa.* v. 8. And it is hard to say which is more to be pitied, the folly of such ambitious princes, that place their honour in enlarging their dominions, and not in ruling them well, or the misery of those nations that are harassed and pulled to pieces by them.

Secondly. The sentence passed upon him; ver. 6, "Shall not all these take up a parable against him?" His doom is, 1. That since pride has been his sin, disgrace and dishonour shall be his punishment, and he shall be loaded with contempt, shall be laughed at and despised by all about him, as those that look big and aim high deserve to be, and commonly are, when they are brought down and baffled. 2. That since he has been abusive to his neighbours, those very persons whom he has abused shall be the instruments of his disgrace; "All those shall take up a taunting proverb against him." They shall have the pleasure of insulting over him, and he the shame of being trampled upon by them. Those that shall triumph in the fall of this great tyrant are here furnished with a parable and a taunting proverb, to take up against him. He shall say, he that draws up the insulting ditty shall say thus: Ho, he "that increaseth that which is not his!" Aha! what has gone with him now? So it may be read in a taunting way. Or, He shall say, that is, the just that lives by his faith, he to whom the vision is written and made plain, with the help of that, he shall say this; shall foretell the enemy's fall, even when he sees him flourishing, and suddenly curse his habitation, even when he is taking root, *Job* v. 3. He shall indeed denounce woes against him.

1st. Here is a woe against him for increasing his own possessions by invading his neighbours' rights, ver. 6—8. He "increaseth that which is not his," but other people's. Note, No more of what we have is to be reckoned ours but what we came honestly by; nor will it long be ours, for wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished. Let not those that thrive in the world be too forward to bless themselves in it, for if they do not thrive lawfully they are under a woe. See here, *First.* What this prosperous prince is doing. He is "lading himself with thick clay." Riches are but clay, thick clay; what is gold and silver but white and yellow earth? They that travel through thick clay are both retarded and dirtied in their journey; so are they that go through the world in the midst of an abundance of the wealth of it. But, as if that were not enough, what fools are they that load themselves with it, as if the trash would be their treasure. They burden themselves with continual care about it, with a great deal of guilt in getting, saving, and spending it, and with a heavy account which they must give of it another day. They overload their ship with this thick clay, and so sink it and themselves into destruction and perdition. *Secondly.* See what people say of him, while he is thus increasing his wealth. They cry, How long? how long will it be ere he has enough? They cry to God, How long wilt thou suffer this proud oppressor to trouble the nations? Or they say to one another, See how long it will last, how long he will be able to keep what he gets thus dishonestly. They dare not speak out, but we know what they mean when they say, How long? *Thirdly.* See what it will be in the end hereof. What he has got by violence from others, others shall take by violence from him. The Medes and Persians shall make a prey of the Chaldeans, as they had done of other nations, ver. 7, 8. There shall be those that will bite thee and vex thee; they, from whom thou didst not fear any danger, that seemed asleep, shall rise up and awake to be a plague to thee. They shall rise up suddenly, when thou art most secure, and least prepared to receive the shock and ward off the blow; "Shall they not rise up suddenly?" No doubt they shall, and thou thyself hast reason to expect it, to be dealt with as thou hast dealt with others; that "thou shalt be for booties unto them," as others have been unto thee; that according to the law of retaliation, as "thou hast spoiled many nations," so thou shouldest thyself be spoiled; ver. 8, "All the remnant of the people shall spoil thee." The king of Babylon thought he had brought all the nations round about him so low that none of them should have been able to make reprisals upon him: but though they were but a remnant of people, a very few left, yet these shall be sufficient to spoil him, when God hath such a controversy with him, 1*st.* For men's blood, and the thousands of lives that have been sacrificed to his ambition and revenge, especially for the blood of Israelites, which is in a special manner precious to God. 2*nd.* For the violence of the land. His laying waste so many countries, and destroying the fruits of the earth, especially in the land of Israel. 3*rd.* For the "violence of the city," the many cities that he had turned into ruinous heaps, especially Jerusalem, the holy city, and of all that dwelt therein, who were ruined by him. Note, The violence done by proud men to greaten and enrich themselves will be called over again, and must be accounted for, another day, by him to whom vengeance belongs.

2nd. Here is a woe against him for coveting still more, and aiming to be still higher, ver. 9—11. The crime for which this woe is denounced is much the same with that in the foregoing article, an insatiable desire of wealth and honour; it is "coveting an evil covetousness to his house," that is, grasping at an abundance for his family. Note, Covetousness is a very evil thing in a family; it brings disquiet and uneasiness into it; "He that is greedy of gain troubles his own house," and, which is worse, it brings the curse of God upon it, and upon all the affairs of it. 'Woe to him that gaineth an evil gain,' so the margin reads it. There is a lawful gain which, by the blessing of God, may be a comfort to a house, a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children; but what is got by fraud and injustice is ill got, and will be ill gain, will not only do no good to a family, but will bring poverty and ruin upon it. Now observe, *First.* What this covetous wretch aims at. It is "to set his nest on high," to raise his family to some greater dignity than it had before arrived at; or to set it, as he apprehends, out of the reach of danger, that he may be "delivered from the power of evil;" that it may not be in the power of the worst of his enemies to do him a mischief, or so much as to disturb his repose. Note, It is common for men to pretend it as an excuse for their covetousness and ambition, that they only consult their own safety, and aim to secure themselves. And yet they do but deceive themselves, when they think their wealth will be a strong city to them, and a high wall, for it is so only in their own conceit, *Pr.* xviii. 10. *Secondly.* What he will get by it. "Thou hast consulted," not safety, but "shame to thy house, by cutting off many people," ver. 10. Note, An estate raised by iniquity is a scandal to a family. Those that cut off or undermine others to make room for themselves, that impoverish others to enrich themselves, do but consult shame to their houses, and fasten upon them a mark of infamy. Yet that is not the worst of it; "Thou hast sinned against thy own soul," hast brought that under guilt and wrath, and endangered that. Note, Those that do wrong to their neighbour do a much greater wrong to their own souls. But if the sinner pleads not guilty, and thinks he has managed his frauds and violence with so much art and contrivance that they cannot be proved upon him, let him know that, if there be no other witnesses against him, "the stone shall cry out of the wall" against him, and the "beam out of the timber" in the roof "shall answer it," shall second it, shall witness it, that the money and materials wherewith he built the house were unjustly gotten, ver. 10. The stones and timber cry to heaven for vengeance, as the whole creation groans under the sin of man, and waits to be delivered from that bondage of corruption.

3rd. Here is a woe against him for building a town and a city by blood and extortion, ver. 12. He builds a town, and is himself lord of it; he stablisheth a city and makes it his royal seat: so Nebuchadnezzar did, *Dan.* iv. 30, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom?" But it is built with the blood of his own subjects, whom he has oppressed, and the blood of his neighbours, whom he hath unjustly invaded; it is "established by iniquity," by the unrighteous laws that are made for the security of it. Woe to him that doth so; for the towns and cities thus built can never be established, they will fall, and their founders be buried in the ruins of them. Babylon, that was built by blood and iniquity, did not continue long, its day soon came to fall; and then this woe took effect when that prophecy, which is expressed as a history, (*Isa.* xxi. 9,) proved a history indeed, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen." And the destruction of that city was, *First.* The shame of the Chaldeans, who had taken so much pains, and were at such a vast expense, to fortify it; ver. 13, "Is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people," who have laboured so hard to defend that city, shall "labour in the very fire," shall see the outworks, which they confided in the strength of, set on fire, and shall labour in vain to save them? Or they, in their pursuit of worldly wealth and honour, put themselves to a great fatigue, and ran a mighty hazard, as they that labour in the fire do. The worst that can be said of the labourers in God's vineyard is, that "they have borne the burden and heat of the day," *Mat.* xx. 12; but those that are eager in their worldly pursuits labour in the very fire, make themselves perfect slaves to their lusts. There is not a greater drudge in the world than he that is under the power of reigning covetousness. And what comes of it? Though they take a world of pains they are but poorly paid for it, for after all "they weary themselves for very vanity;" they were told it was vanity, and when they find themselves disappointed of it, and disappointed in it, they will own it is worse than vanity, it is vexation of spirit. *Secondly.* It was the honour of God, as a God of impartial justice and irresistible power; for by the ruin of the Chaldean monarchy, (which all the world could not but take notice of,) "the earth was filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord," ver. 14; "The Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth, especially when he is pleased to look upon proud men and abase them;" for he thereby proves himself to be God alone, *Job* xl. 11, 12. See what good God brings out of the staining and sinking of earthly glory; he thereby manifests and magnifies his own glory, and fills the earth with the knowledge of it, as plentifully as the waters cover the sea, which lie deep, spread far, and shall not be dried up till time shall be no more. Such is the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, given by the Gospel, 2 *Cor.* iv. 6, and such was the knowledge of his glory by the miraculous ruin of Babylon. Note, Such as will not be taught the knowledge of God's glory by the judgments of his mouth shall be made to know and acknowledge it by the judgments of his hand.

15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink,
That puttest thy bottle to *him*, and makest *him* drunken
That thou mayest look on their nakedness! [also,
16 Thou art filled with shame for glory:
Drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered:
The cup of the LORD's right hand shall be turned unto
And shameful spewing *shall be* on thy glory. [thee,
17 For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee,
And the spoil of beasts, *which* made them afraid,
Because of men's blood, and for the violence
Of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.
18 What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof
hath graven it;
The molten image, and a teacher of lies,

That the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols?

19 Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake;
To the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach!
Behold, it *is* laid over with gold and silver,
And *there is* no breath at all in the midst of it.

20 But the LORD *is* in his holy temple:
Let all the earth keep silence before him.

The three foregoing articles, upon which the woes here are grounded, are very near akin to each other. The criminals charged by them are oppressors and extortioners, that raise estates by rapine and injustice; and it is mentioned here again, ver. 17, the very same that was said ver. 8, for that is the crime upon which the greatest stress is laid. It is because of men's blood, innocent blood, barbarously and unjustly shed, which is a provoking, crying thing; it is "for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein," which God will certainly reckon for, sooner or later, as the asserter of right and the avenger of wrong. But here are two articles more of a different nature, which carry a "woe" to all those in general to whom they belong, and particularly to the Babylonian monarchs by whom the people of God were taken and held captives.

First. The promoters of drunkenness stand here impeached and condemned. Belshazzar was one of those; he was so remarkably that very night that the prophecy of this chapter was fulfilled in the period of his life and kingdom, when he drank wine before a thousand of his lords, *Dan.* v. 1, began the healths, and forced them to pledge him. And perhaps it was one reason why the succeeding monarchs of Persia made it a law of their kingdom that "in drinking none should compel," but "they should do according to every man's pleasure," as we find, *Est.* i. 8; because they had seen in the kings of Babylon the mischievous consequences of forcing healths, and making people drunk. But the woe here stands firm and very fearful against all those, whoever they be, that at any time are guilty of this sin, and in any place, from the stately palace (where that was) to the paltry alehouse. Observe,

1. Who the sinner is that is here articled against. It is he "that maketh his neighbour drunk," ver. 15. To give a neighbour drink that is in want, that is thirsty and poor, though it be but a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple,—to give drink to a weary traveller,—nay, and to give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to them that are heavy of heart,—is a piece of charity which is required of us, and shall be recompensed to us. "I was thirsty, and you gave me drink." But to give a neighbour drink that has enough already, and more than enough, with design to intoxicate him, that he may expose himself, may talk foolishly, and make himself ridiculous, may disclose his own privacies, or be drawn in to agree to an ill bargain for himself,—this is abominable wickedness, and those that are guilty of it, that make a practice of it, and take a pride and pleasure in it, are rebels against God in heaven, and his sacred laws, factors for the devil in hell, and his cursed interests, and enemies to men on earth, and their honour and welfare; they are like the son of Nebat, that "sinned and made Israel to sin." To entice others to drunkenness, to put the bottle to them, that they may be allured to it by its charms, by "looking on the wine when it is red and gives its colour in the cup," or to force them to it, obliging them by the rules of the club (and club laws indeed they are) to drink so many glasses, and so filled, is to do what we can, and perhaps more than we know of, towards the murder both of soul and body; and those that do so have a great deal to answer for.

2. What the sentence is that is here passed upon him. There is a "woe" to him, ver. 15, and a punishment, ver. 16, that shall answer the sin. 1st. Doth he put the cup of drunkenness into the hand of his neighbour? The cup of fury, the cup of trembling, the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto him; the power of God shall be armed against him; that cup which had gone round among the nations, to make them "a desolation, an astonishment and a hissing," which had made them stumble and fall, so that they could rise no more, shall at length be put into the hand of the king of Babylon, as was foretold, *Jer.* xxv. 15, 16, 18, 26, 27. Thus the New Testament Babylon, which had made the nations drunk with the cup of her fornications, shall have blood given her "to drink, for she is worthy," *Rev.* xviii. 3, 6. 2nd. Doth he take a pleasure in putting his neighbour to shame? He shall himself be loaded with contempt; "Thou art filled with shame for glory," with shame instead of glory, or art filled now with shame more than ever thou wast with glory, and the glory thou hast been filled with shall but serve to make thy shame the more grievous to thyself, and the more ignominious in the eyes of others. "Thou also shalt drink" of the cup of trembling, and shalt expose thyself by thy fear and cowardice, which shall be as the "uncovering of thy nakedness," to thy shame; and all about thee shall load thee with disgrace, for "shameful spewing shall be on thy glory," on that which thou hast most prided thyself in, thy dignity, wealth, and dominion; those whom thou hast made drunk shall themselves spew upon it. For, ver. 17, "The violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts;" that is, thou shalt be hunted and run down with as much violence as ever any wild beasts in Lebanon were, shall be spoiled as they are, and thy fall made a sport of; for thou art as one of the beasts that made them afraid, and therefore they triumph when they have got the mastery of thee. Or, it is because of the violence thou hast done to Lebanon, that is, the land of Israel, *Deu.* iii. 25, and the temple, *Zec.* xi. 1, that God now reckons with thee; that is the sin that now covers thee.

Secondly. The promoters of idolatry stand here impeached and condemned; and this also was a sin that Babylon was notoriously guilty of,—it was the mother of harlots. Belshazzar in his revels praised his idols. And for this here is a woe against them, and in them against all others that do likewise, particularly the New Testament Babylon. Now see here,

1. What they do to promote idolatry. They are mad upon their idols; so the Chaldeans are said to be, *Jer.* l. 38. For, 1st. They have a great variety of idols, their graven images and molten images, that people may take their choice which they like best. 2nd. They are very nice and curious in the framing of them. The maker of the work has played his part admirably well, the fashioner of his fashion, so it is in the margin, that contrived the model in the most significant manner. 3rd. They are at great expense in beautifying and adorning them; "They lay them over with gold and silver." Because they are things people love and doat upon wherever they meet with them, they dress up their idols in them, the more effectually to court the adoration of the children of this world. 4th. They have great expectations from them; "The maker of the work trusteth therein" as his god, puts a confidence in it, and gives honour to it as his god. The worshippers of God give honour to him by offering up their prayers to him, and waiting to receive instructions and directions from him; and these honours they give to their idols. *First.* They pray to them; "They say unto the wood, Awake" for our relief, awake to hear our prayers; and "to the dumb stone, Arise," and save us, as the church prays to her God, Awake, O Lord, arise, *Ps.* xliv. 23. They own their image to be a god by praying to it; "Deliver me, for thou art my god," *Isa.* xliv. 17. *Deos qui rogat ille facit*,—'that to which a man addresses petitions is to him a god.' *Secondly.* They consult them as oracles, and expect to be directed and dictated to by them; "They say to the dumb stone," though it cannot speak, yet "it shall teach." What the wicked demon, or no less wicked priest, speaks to them from the image they receive with the utmost veneration, as of Divine authority, and are ready to be governed by it. Thus is idolatry planted and propagated under the specious show of religion and devotion.

2. How the extreme folly of this is exposed. God, by Isaiah, when he foretold the deliverance of his people out of Babylon, largely shewed the shameful stupidity and sottishness of idolaters, and so he doth here by the prophet on the like occasion. 1st. Their images, when they have made them, are but mere matter, which is the meanest, lowest rank of being; and all the expense they are at upon them cannot advance them one step above that. They are wholly void both of sense and reason, lifeless and speechless; it is a dumb idol, a dumb stone, and there is "no breath at all in the midst of it," so that the most minute animal that has but breath and motion is more excellent than they. They have not so much as the spirit of a beast. 2nd. It is not in their power to do their worshippers any good; ver. 8, "What profiteth the graven image?" Though it be mere matter, if it were cast into some other form it might be serviceable to some purpose or other of human life; but, as it is made a god of, it is of no profit at all, nor can do their worshippers the least kindness; nay, 3rd. It is so far from profiting them that it puts a cheat upon them, and keeps them under the power of a strong delusion. They say it shall teach; but it is a teacher of lies, for it represents God as having a body, as being finite, visible, and dependent, whereas he is a Spirit, infinite, invisible, and independent; and confirms those that become vain in their imaginations in the false notions they have of God, and make the idea of God to be a precarious thing, and what every man pleaseth. If we may say to the "works of our hands, Ye are our gods," we may say so to any of the creatures of our own fancy, though the chimera be never so extravagant. An image is a doctrine of vanities, it is falsehood, and a work of errors, *Jer.* x. 8, 14, 15. It is therefore easy to see what their religion is, and what they aim at, who recommend those teachers of lies as laymen's books, which they are to study and govern themselves by, when they have locked up from them the book of the Scriptures in an unknown tongue.

3. How the people of God triumph in him, and therewith support themselves, when the idolaters thus shame themselves; ver. 20, "But the Lord is in his holy temple." 1st. Our rock is not as their rock, *Deu.* xxxii. 31. Theirs are dumb idols; ours is Jehovah, a living God, that is what he is, and not as theirs, what men please to make him. He is in his holy temple in heaven, the residence of his glory, where we have access to him in the way, not which we have invented, but which he himself hath instituted: compare *Ps.* cxv. 3, "But our God is in the heavens," and *Ps.* xi. 4. 2nd. The multitude of their gods which they set up, and take so much pains to support, cannot thrust out our God; he is and will be in his holy temple still, and glorious in holiness. They have laid waste his temple at Jerusalem, but he has a temple above, that is out of the reach of their rage and malice, but within the reach of his people's faith and prayers. 3rd. Our God will "make all the world silent before him," will strike the idolaters as dumb as their idols, convicting them of their folly, and covering them with shame. He will silence the fury of the oppressors, and check their rage against his people. 4th. It is the duty of his people to attend him with silent adorings, *Ps.* lxv. 1, and patiently wait for his appearing to save them in his own way and time. Be still, and know that he is God, *Zec.* ii. 13.

CHAPTER III.

Still the correspondence is kept up between God and his prophet. In the first chapter he spoke to God, then God to him, and then he to God again; in the second chapter God spoke wholly to him by the spirit of prophecy; now, in this chapter, he speaks wholly to God by the spirit of prayer, for he would not let the intercourse drop on his side, like a genuine son of Abraham, who returned not to his place until God had left communing with him, *Gen.* xviii. 33. The prophet's prayer in this chapter is in imitation of David's *Psalms*, for it is directed to the chief musician, and is set to musical instruments. The prayer is left upon record for the use of the church, and particularly of the Jews in their captivity, while they were waiting for their deliverance, promised by the vision in the foregoing chapter. I. He earnestly begs God to relieve and succour his people in affliction, to hasten their deliverance, and to succour them in the meantime, ver. 2. II. He calls to mind the experiences which the church formerly had of God's glorious and gracious appearances on her behalf, when he brought Israel out of Egypt, through the wilderness, to Canaan, and there many a time wrought wonderful salvations for them, ver. 3—15. III. He affects himself with a holy concern for the present troubles of the church, but encourageth himself and others to hope that the issue will be comfortable and glorious at last, though all visible means fail, ver. 16—19.

A PRAYER of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, *and* was afraid:
O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years,
In the midst of the years make known;
In wrath remember mercy.

This chapter is entitled "A prayer of Habakkuk." It is a meditation with himself, an intercession for the church. Prophets were praying men, this prophet was so; "He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee," *Gen.* xx. 7; and sometimes they prayed for those even whom they prophesied against. They that were intimately acquainted with the mind of God concerning future events knew better than others how to order their prayers, and what to pray for, and in the foresight of troublous times could lay up a stock of prayers that might then receive a gracious answer, and so be serving the church by their prayers when their prophesying was over. This prophet had found God ready to answer his requests and complaints before, and therefore now repeats his applications to him. Because "God hath inclined his ear to us," we must resolve that therefore we will call upon him as long as we live.

First. The prophet owns the receipt of God's answer to his former representation, and the impression it made upon him; ver. 2, "O Lord, I have heard thy speech." 'Thy hearing,' so some read it, that which thou wouldst have us hear, the decree that is gone forth for the afflicting thy people. I received thine, and it is before me. Note, Those that would rightly order their speech to God must carefully observe, and lay before them, his speech to them. He had said, *ch.* ii. 1, "I will watch to see what he will say;" and now he owns, "Lord, I have heard thy speech;" for if we turn a deaf ear to God's word we can expect no other but that he should turn a deaf ear to our prayers, *Pr.* xxviii. 9. I heard it, and was afraid. Messages immediately from heaven commonly struck even the best and boldest men into a consternation: Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel did exceedingly fear and quake. But, besides that, the

matter of this message made the prophet afraid; when he heard how low the people of God should be brought under the oppressing power of the Chaldeans, and how long they should continue under it, he was afraid lest their spirits should quite fail, and lest the church should be utterly rooted out and run down, and, being kept low so long, should be lost at length.

Secondly. He earnestly prays that, for the elect's sake, these days of trouble might be shortened, or the trouble of these days mitigated and moderated, or the people of God supported and comforted under it. He thinks it very long to wait till the end of the years; perhaps he refers to the seventy years fixed for the continuance of the captivity, and therefore, Lord, (saith he,) do something on our behalf "in the midst of the years," those years of distress; though we be not delivered, and our oppressors destroyed, yet let us not be abandoned and cast off.

1. Do something for thine own cause. "Revive thy work," that is, thy church; that is the work of God's own hand, formed by him, formed for him, revive that, even when it "walks in the midst of trouble," *Ps.* cxxxviii. 7, 8. Grant thy people "a little reviving in their bondage," *Ezr.* ix. 8; *Ps.* lxxxv. 6. 'Preserve alive thy work,' so some read it; though thy church be chastened, let it not be killed; though it have not its liberty, yet continue its life; save a remnant alive to be a seed of another generation. Revive the work of thy grace in us, by sanctifying the trouble to us, and supporting us under it, though the time be not yet come, even the set time for our deliverance out of it. Whatever becomes of us, though we be as dead and dry bones, Lord, "let thy work be revived;" let not that sink and go back, and come to nothing.

2. Do something for thine own honour. "In the midst of the years make known," make thyself known, for now "verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," *Isa.* xlv. 15. Make known thy power, thy pity, thy promise, thy providence, in the government of the world, for the safety and welfare of thy church. Though we be buried in obscurity, yet, Lord, make thyself known; whatever becomes of Israel, yet let not the God of Israel be forgotten in the world, but discover himself even in the midst of the dark years, before thou art expected to appear. When in the midst of the years of the captivity God miraculously owned the three children in the fiery furnace, and humbled Nebuchadnezzar, this prayer was answered, "In the midst of the years make known."

3. Do something for thy people's comfort. "In wrath remember mercy," and make that known. "Shew us thy mercy, O Lord," *Ps.* lxxxv. 7. They see God's displeasure against them in their troubles, and that makes them grievous indeed; there is wrath in the bitter cup,—that therefore they deprecate, and are earnest in begging that in the midst of wrath God would remember mercy to them, would make it appear that he is a merciful God, and they are vessels of his mercy. Note, Even those that are under the tokens of God's wrath yet must not despair of his mercy; and mercy, mere mercy, is that which we must flee to for refuge, and rely upon as our only plea. He doth not say, Remember our merit, but, Lord, remember thine own mercy.

3 God came from Teman,
And the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah.

MOUNT HOREB.

His glory covered the heavens,
And the earth was full of his praise.
4 And *his* brightness was as the light;
He had horns *coming* out of his hand:
And there *was* the hiding of his power.
5 Before him went the pestilence,
And burning coals went forth at his feet.
6 He stood, and measured the earth:
He beheld, and drove asunder the nations;
And the everlasting mountains were scattered,
The perpetual hills did bow:
His ways *are* everlasting.
7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction:
And the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.
8 Was the LORD displeased against the rivers?
Was thine anger against the rivers?
Was thy wrath against the sea,
That thou didst ride upon thine horses
And thy chariots of salvation?
9 Thy bow was made quite naked,
According to the oaths of the tribes, *even thy* word. Selah.
Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.
10 The mountains saw thee, *and* they trembled:
The overflowing of the water passed by:
The deep uttered his voice,
And lifted up his hands on high.
11 The sun *and* moon stood still in their habitation:
At the light of thine arrows they went,
And at the shining of thy glittering spear.
12 Thou didst march through the land in indignation,
Thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.
13 Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people,
Even for salvation with thine anointed;
Thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked,
By discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.
14 Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages:
They came out as a whirlwind to scatter me:
Their rejoicing *was* as to devour the poor secretly.
15 Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses,
Through the heap of great waters.

It has been the usual practice of God's people, when they have been in distress, and ready to fall into despair, to help themselves by recollecting their experiences, and reviving them; "Considering the days of old, and the years of ancient times," *Ps.* lxxvii. 5, and pleading them with God in prayer, as he is pleased sometimes to plead them with himself; *Isa.* lxiii. 11, "Then he remembered the days of old." This is that which the prophet doth here, and he looks as far back as the first forming them into a people, when they were brought by miracles out of Egypt, a house of bondage, through the wilderness, a land of drought, into Canaan, then possessed by mighty nations. He that thus brought them at first into Canaan, through so much difficulty, can now bring them thither again out of Babylon, how great soever the difficulties are that lie in the way. Those great works of wonder wrought of old are here most magnificently described, for the greater encouragement to the faith of God's people in their present straits.

First. God appeared in his glory, so as he never did before or since; ver. 3, 4, "He came from Teman, even the Holy One from mount Paran." This refers to the visible display of the glory of God, when he gave the law upon mount Sinai, as appears by *Deu.* xxxiii. 2, whence these expressions are borrowed. Then "the Lord came down upon mount Sinai" in a cloud, *Ex.* xix. 20, and his glory was "as the devouring fire;" not only to enforce the law he then gave them, but to avow the deliverance he had wrought for them, and to magnify it; for the first word he said there was, "I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt;" I that appear in this glory am the author of that work. Then "his glory covered the heavens," which shone with the reflection of that glorious appearance of his; the earth also was full of his praise, or, of his splendour, as some read it. People at a distance saw the cloud and fire on the top of mount Sinai, and praised the God of Israel; for the earth was full of those works of God which were to be praised. His "brightness was as the light," as the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength. "He had horns," or bright beams, (so it should be rendered,) "coming out of his" side or "hand." Rays of glory were darted forth around him; and with some rays borrowed thence it was that Moses' face shone when he came down from that mount of glory. Some, by the horns, the 'two horns,' (for the word is dual,) "coming out of his hand," understand the two tables of the law, which perhaps, when God delivered them to Moses, though they were tables of stone, had a glory round them. These books were gilt with beams; and so it agrees with *Deu.* xxxiii. 2, "From his right hand went a fiery law for them." It is added, "And there was the hiding of his power;" that is, there was his hidden power, in the rays that came out of his hand. The operations of his power, compared with what he could have done, were rather the hiding of it than the discovery of it; the secrets of his power, as well as of his wisdom, are double to that which is seen, *Job* xi. 6.

Secondly. God sent plagues on Egypt, for the humbling of proud Pharaoh, and the obliging of him to let the people go; ver. 5, "Before him went the pestilence," which slew all the firstborn of Egypt in one night, and "burning coals went forth at his feet," when in the plague of hail there was "fire mingled with hail"—'burning diseases,' so the margin reads it; some think those that wasted Egypt, others, those with which the number of the Canaanites was diminished before Israel was brought in upon them. These were "at his feet," that is, at his coming, for they are at his command; he saith to them, Go, and they go; Come, and they come; Do this, and they do it.

Thirdly. He divided the land of Canaan to his people Israel, and expelled the heathen from before them; ver. 6, "He stood and measured the earth," measured that land, to assign it for an inheritance to Israel his people; *Deu.* xxxii. 8, 9, "He beheld, and drove asunder the nations" that were in possession of it. Though they combined together against Israel, God dispersed and discomfited them before Israel. Or, he exerted such a mighty power as was enough to shake in pieces all the nations of the earth. Then "the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow;" the mighty princes and potentates of Canaan, that seemed as high, as strong, and as firmly fixed, as the mountains and hills, were broken to pieces, they and their kingdoms were totally subdued. Or, the power of God was so exerted as to have shaken the mountains and hills, nay, and Sinai did tremble, and the adjacent hills: see *Ps.* lxviii. 7, 8. To this he adds, "His ways are everlasting;" that is, all the motions of his providence are according to his eternal counsels; and he is the same for ever, that which he was yesterday and to-day. His covenant is unchangeable, and "his mercy endureth for ever." When he "drove asunder the nations of Canaan," one might have seen the "tents of Cushan in affliction,

and the curtains of the land of Midian tremble," all the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries taking the alarm; and though they were not in the commission given to Israel to destroy, nor their land within the warrant given to Israel to possess, yet they thought their own house in danger when their neighbour's house was on fire, and therefore they were in a great fright, ver. 7. Balak the king of Moab was so, *Num.* xxii. 3, 4. Some make the tents of Cushan to be in affliction when, in the days of judge Othniel, God delivered Cushan-rishathaim into his hand, *Jud.* iii. 8; "and the curtains of the land of Midian to tremble," when in the days of judge Gideon a barley cake in a dream overthrew the tent of Midian. *Jud.* vii. 13.

Fourthly. He divided the Red Sea and Jordan, when they stood in the way of Israel's progress, and yet fetched a river out of a rock when Israel wanted it, ver. 8. One would have thought God was displeased with the rivers, and that his wrath was against the sea, for he made them give way and flee before him, when he "rode upon his horses and chariots of salvation," as a general at the head of his forces, mighty to save. Note, God's chariots are not so much chariots of state to himself as chariots of salvation to his people; it is his glory to be Israel's Saviour. This seems to be referred to again, ver. 15, "Thou didst walk through the sea," through the Red Sea, "with thine horses," in the pillar of cloud and fire, that was his chariot, borne by angels; thus thou didst walk secure, and so as to accommodate thyself to the slow pace that Israel could go, as Jacob tenderly drove, in consideration of his children and cattle. "Thou didst walk through the heap" or mud "of great waters;" and Israel likewise was led "through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness," *Isa.* lxiii. 13, 14. When they came to enter Canaan, the "overflowing of the water passed by;" that is, Jordan, which at that time overflowed all its banks, was divided, *Jos.* iii. 15. Note, When the difficulties in the way of perfecting the salvation of Israel seem most insuperable, when they rise to the height, and overflow, yet then God can put them by, break through them, and get over them. Then "the deep uttered his voice," when, the Red Sea and Jordan being divided, the waters roared and made a noise, as if they were sensible of the restraint they were under from proceeding in their natural course, and complained of it. They "lift up their hands" or sides "on high;" for the waters "stood up on a heap," *Jos.* iii. 16, as if they would have made opposition to the orders given them; "they lifted up their voices, lifted up their waves," but in vain, "the Lord on high was mightier than they," *Ps.* xciii. 3, 4. With the dividing the sea and Jordan, notice is again taken of the trembling of the mountains, as if the stop given to the waters gave a shock to the adjacent hills; they are put together, *Ps.* cxiv. 3, 4, when "the sea saw it and fled," and "Jordan was driven back," "the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs." The whole creation yielded, earth and waters trembled and truckled "at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the mighty God of Jacob." But, (as Mr. Cowley paraphraseth it,)

'Fly where thou wilt, thou sea, and Jordan's current cease;
Jordan, there is no need of thee,
For at God's word, whene'er he please,
The rocks shall weep new waters forth instead of these.'

So here, "Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers;" that is, channels were made in the wilderness, such as seemed to cleave the earth, for the waters to run in that issued out of the rock, to supply the camp of Israel, and which followed them in all their removes. Note, The God of nature can alter and control the powers of nature which way he pleaseth, can turn waters into crystal rocks, and rocks into crystal streams.

Fifthly. He arrested the motion of the sun and moon to befriend and complete Israel's victories; ver. 11, "The sun and moon stood still" at the prayer of Joshua, that the Canaanites might not have the benefit of the night to favour their escape; they "stood still in their habitation" in the heavens, *Ps.* xix. 4; but with an eye to Gibeon, and the valley of Ajalon, where God's work was in the doing, and which they, though at so vast a distance, attended the motions of, "At the light," that is, at the direction, of "thine arrows they went," and at the "shining of thy glittering spear" they followed Israel's arms to favour them, according to the intimation of the arrows God shot, (as Jonathan's arrows, 1 *Sam.* xx. 20,) and which way soever his spear pointed (the glittering light of which they acknowledged to outshine theirs) that way they directed their influences, benign to Israel and malignant against their enemies, as when "the stars in their course fought against Sisera." Note, The heavenly bodies, as well as earth and seas, are at God's command, and, when he pleaseth, at Israel's service too.

Sixthly. He carried on and completed Israel's victories over the nations of Canaan and their kings, slew great kings and famous, *Ps.* cxxxvi. 17, 18. This is largely insisted upon here, as a proper plea with God to enforce the present petition, that he would restore them again to that land which they were, at the expense of so many lives, so many miracles, first put in possession of. Many expressions are here used to set forth the conquest of Canaan. 1. God's "bow was made quite naked," taken out of the case, to be employed for Israel. We would say, his sword was quite unsheathed, not drawn out a little way to frighten the enemy, and then put up again, but quite drawn out, not to be returned till they are all cut off. 2. He "marched through the land," from end to end, "in indignation," as scorning to let that wicked generation of Canaanites any longer possess so good a land. He marched *cum fastidio*,—'with disdain,' (so some,) despising their confederacies. 3. He "threshed the heathen in anger," trod them down, nay, he trod them out, as corn in the floor, to give them, and what they had, to be meat to his people Israel, *Mic.* iv. 13. 4. He "wounded the heads of the house of the wicked;" that is, he destroyed the families of the Canaanites, and wounded their princes, the heads of their families; nay, he cut off the heads, and so "discovered the foundations of them," even to the neck. Are they a building? They are rased "even to the foundation." Are they a body? They are plunged in deep mire, "even to the neck," so that they cannot get out or help themselves. He "brake the heads of leviathan in pieces," *Ps.* lxxiv. 14. Some apply this to Christ's victories over Satan and the powers of darkness, in which he "wounded the heads over many countries," *Ps.* cx. 6. 5. He "struck through with his staves the head of the villages," ver. 14. With Israel's staves God struck through the head of the villages of the enemies, whether Egypt or Canaan. Staves shall do the same execution as swords, when God pleaseth to make use of them. The enemy came out with the utmost force and fury, as a whirlwind to scatter me, (saith Israel;) for many a time have they thus afflicted me, thus attacked me, from my youth, *Ps.* cxxix. 1. Pharaoh, when he pursued Israel to the Red Sea, "came out as a whirlwind;" so did the kings of Canaan in their confederacies against Israel. "Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly;" that is, they were as confident of success in their enterprise as ever any great man was of devouring a poor man that was no way a match for him, and his design against him was carried on with secresy; but God disappointed them, and their pride did but make their fall the more shameful, and God's care of his poor the more illustrious. 6. He walked to the sea with his horses, so some read ver. 15; that is, he carried Israel's victories to the Great Sea, which was opposite to that side of Canaan at which they entered; so that they went quite through it, and made themselves masters of it all; or, rather, God made them so, for they got it not by their own sword, *Ps.* xliv. 3.

Now there were three things that God had an eye to, in giving Israel so many bloody victories over the Canaanites: 1st. He would hereby make good his promise to the fathers; it was according to the oaths of the tribes, even his word, ver. 9. He had sworn to give this land to the tribes of Israel; it was his oath to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob, and repeated many a time to the tribes of Israel; "Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan." This word God will accomplish, though Israel be never so unworthy, *Deu.* ix. 5; and their enemies never so many and mighty. Note, What God doth for his tribes is according to the oaths of the tribes, according to what he hath said and sworn to them; for he is faithful that promised. 2nd. He would hereby shew his kindness to his people, because of their relation to him, and his interest in them; "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people," ver. 13. All the powers of nature are shaken, and the course of nature changed, and every thing seems to be thrown into disorder, and all is for the salvation of God's people. There is a people in the world that are God's people, and their salvation is that which he has in his eye in all the operations of his providence. Heaven and earth shall sooner come together than any of the links in the golden chain of their salvation shall be broken; and even that which seems most unlikely shall by an overruling hand be made to work for their salvation, *Phil.* i. 19. 3rd. He would hereby give a type and figure of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. It is "for salvation with thine anointed," with Joshua, who led the armies of Israel; and was a figure of him whose name he bare, even Jesus, our Joshua. What God did for his Israel of old was done with an eye to his Anointed; for the sake of the Mediator, who was both the founder and foundation of the covenant made with them. It was salvation with him; for in all the salvations wrought for them, God "looked upon the face of the Anointed," and did them by him.

16 When I heard, my belly trembled;
My lips quivered at the voice: [myself,
Rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in
That I might rest in the day of trouble:
When he cometh up unto the people, he will invade
them with his troops.
17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom,
Neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines;
The labour of the olive shall fail,
And the fields shall yield no meat;
The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
And *there shall be* no herd in the stalls:
18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
19 The LORD God *is* my strength,
And he will make my feet like hinds' *feet*,
And he will make me to walk upon mine high places.
To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

Within the compass of these few lines we have the prophet in the highest degree both of trembling and triumphing; such are the varieties both of the state and of the spirit of God's people in this world. In heaven there shall be no more trembling, but everlasting triumphs.

First. The prophet had foreseen the prevalency of the church's enemies, and the long continuance of the church's troubles, and the sight made him tremble, ver. 16. This goes on with what he had said, ver. 2, "I have heard thy speech, and was afraid." "When I heard" what sad times were coming upon the church "my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice;" the news made such an impression that it put me into a perfect ague fit. The blood retiring to the heart, to succour that when it was ready to faint, the extreme parts were left destitute of spirits, so that his lips quivered. Nay, he was so weak, and unable to help himself, that he was as if rottenness had entered into his bones; he had no strength left in him, could neither stand nor go; he trembled in himself, trembled all over him, trembled within him. He yielded to this trembling, and troubled himself, as our Saviour did; his flesh trembled for fear of God, and he was afraid of his judgments, *Ps.* cxix. 120. He was touched with a tender concern for the calamities of the church, and trembled for fear lest they should end at length in its ruin, and that the name of Israel would be blotted out. Nor did he think it any disparagement to him, or a reproach to his courage, but freely owned he was one of those that trembled at God's word; for to them he will look with favour. "I tremble in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble." Note, When we see a day of trouble approaching, it concerns us to provide accordingly; and to lay up something in store, by the help of which we may rest in that day. And the best way to make sure of rest for ourselves in the day of trouble is, to tremble within ourselves at the word of God, and the threatenings of that word. He that has joy in store for them that sow in tears, has rest in store for them that tremble before him. Good hope through grace is founded in a holy fear. Noah, that was moved with fear, and trembled within himself at the warning given him of the deluge coming, had the ark for his resting-place in the day of that trouble. The prophet tells us what he said in his trembling; his fear was, "when he cometh up to the people," when the Chaldean comes up to the people of Israel, "he will invade them," will surround them, will break in upon them, nay, as it is in the margin, he will 'cut them in pieces,' "with his troops." He cried out, We are all undone, the whole nation of the Jews is lost and gone. Note, When things look bad, we are too apt to aggravate them, and make the worst of them.

Secondly. He had looked back upon the experiences of the church in former ages, and had observed what great things God had done for them, and so he recovered himself out of his fright; and not only retrieved his temper, but fell into a transport of holy joy, with an express *non obstante*,—'notwithstanding,' to the calamities he foresaw coming; and this not for himself only, but in the name of every faithful Israelite.

1. He supposeth the ruin of all his creature comforts and enjoyments, not only of the delights of this life, but even of the necessary supports of it, ver. 17. Famine is one of the ordinary effects of war, and those commonly feel it first and most that sit still and are quiet; the prophet and his pious friends (when the Chaldean army comes) will be plundered and stripped of all they have. Or he supposeth himself deprived of all, by blasting and unseasonable weather, or some other immediate hand of God; or the captives in Babylon have not the plenty of all good things they had in their own land. 1st. He supposeth the fruit trees to be withered, and become barren; the fig-tree, (which used to furnish them with much of their food, hence we often read of cakes of figs,)

shall not so much as blossom, "neither shall fruit be in the vine," from which they had their drink that made glad the heart. He supposeth "the labour of the olive should fail," their oil, which was to them as butter is to us; the labour of the olive shall lie, so it is in the margin, their expectations from it shall be disappointed. 2nd. He supposeth the bread-corn to fail; "The fields shall yield no meat;" and, since the king himself is served of the field, if the product of that be withdrawn, every one will feel the want of them. 3rd. He supposeth the cattle to perish, either for want of the food which the field should yield, and doth not, or by disease, or being destroyed and carried away by the enemy. The flock is cut off from his fold, and there is no herd in the stall. Note, When we are in the full enjoyment of our creature comforts, we should consider that there may come a time when we shall be stripped of them all, and use them accordingly, as not abusing them, 1 *Cor.* vii. 29, 30.

2. He resolves to delight and triumph in God notwithstanding. When all is gone, his God is not gone; ver. 18, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord." I shall have him to rejoice in, and will rejoice in him. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, *Hos.* ii. 11, 12. But those who, when they were full, enjoyed God in all, when they are emptied and impoverished can enjoy all in God, and can sit down upon a melancholy heap of the ruins of all their creature comforts, and even then can sing to the praise and glory of God, as the God of their salvation. This is the principal ground of our joy in God, that he is the God of our salvation, our eternal salvation, the salvation of the soul; and if he be so we may rejoice in him as such, in our greatest distresses, since by them our salvation cannot be hindered, but may be furthered. Note, Joy in God is never out of season; nay, it is in a special manner seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world, that it may then appear our hearts are not set upon these things, nor our happiness bound up in them. See how the prophet triumphs in God, "The Lord is my strength," ver. 19. He that is the God of our salvation in another world will be our strength in this world to carry us on in our journey thither, and help us over the difficulties and oppositions we meet with in our way. Even then, when provisions are cut off, to make it appear that man lives not by bread alone, we may have the want of bread supplied by the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, and with the supplies of them. 1st. We shall be strong for our spiritual warfare and work; "The Lord is my strength," the strength of my heart. 2nd. We shall be swift for our spiritual race; "He will make my feet like hinds' feet," that with enlargements of heart I may run the way of his commands, and outrun my troubles. 3rd. We shall be successful in our spiritual enterprises; "He will make me to walk upon my high places," that is, I shall gain my point, shall be restored unto my own land, and tread upon the high places of the enemy, *Deu.* xxxii. 13; xxxiii. 29. Thus the prophet, that began his prayer with fear and trembling, concludes it with joy and triumph, for prayer is heart's ease to a gracious soul. When Hannah had prayed she "went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad." This prophet, finding it so, publishes his experience of it, and puts it into the hand of the chief singer for the use of the church, especially in the day of her captivity. And though then the harps were hung upon the willow-trees, yet, in hopes they would be resumed, and their right hand retrieve its cunning, which it had forgotten, he set his song upon Shigionoth, ver. 1, wandering tunes, according to the variable songs; and upon Neginoth, ver. 19, the stringed instruments. He that is afflicted, and has prayed aright, may then be so easy, may then be so merry, as to sing psalms.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK.

CHAP. II.—2. *That he may run that readeth it.* That he who attentively peruses it may speed to save his life from the irruption of the Chaldeans, by which so many shall be cut off. The prophet does not mean that the words are to be made so plain that a man running by may easily read them, and catch their meaning. This interpretation has been frequently given; and it has been incautiously applied to the whole of the Bible: 'God's book is so plain, that he that runs may read;' but it is very foolish. God never intends that his words shall be understood by the careless. He that reads, studies, meditates, and prays, shall understand every portion of this sacred book that relates immediately to his own salvation. But no trifler can understand it. If the contents of a play bill were to be read as many read the Bible, they would know just as much of the one as they do of the other. 5. *And cannot be satisfied.* When he has obtained all that is within his reach he wishes for more, and becomes miserable because any limits are opposed to his insatiable ambition. It is said by Juvenal,

> 'One world sufficed not Alexander's mind;
> Cooped up, he seemed on earth and seas confined.'

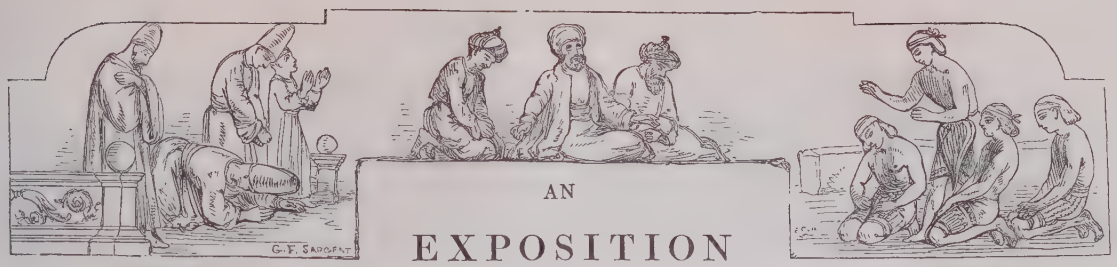
And the poet justly ridicules him, because at last the sarcophagus was found too large for his body.—*A. Clarke.* 11. *The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam—shall answer it.* M. Henry says, 'The beam out of the timber in the roof;' but does not "the beam out of the timber," answering to "the stone out of the wall," imply that beams of timber were used by the Hebrews to unite and strengthen the mass of masonry? Walpole, in his *Memoirs of Turkey*, is of this opinion, and his statement renders it probable: 'The ancient architects of Egypt, Syria, and Italy used wood to unite and bind the stones together. The French, during their expedition to Egypt, observed, at Ombos and Philæ, that pieces of the sycamore had been formed for that purpose into a dove-tail shape; at Ombos they appear to have been covered with bitumen. Fastenings made of wood, of similar forms, were used in the ancient buildings of Italy, and were seen and described by F. Vacca. The Greeks, as we learn from Jerome, expressed this mode of binding stones together by the word ἰμαντωσις. In the prophet *Habbakuk*, ii. 11, the Hebrew term bearing a similar meaning is *caphis*. In the first Bible printed in English, by Coverdale, the passage is rendered, "like as the bond of wood bound together in the foundation of the house."'—*Pictorial Bible.* 19. *Arise, it shall teach.*

> 'Woe to him that saith to the wood, Awake!
> Wake up! to the dumb stone.
> It teach! There it is,
> Overlaid with gold and silver,
> But there is no breath at all within it.
> But Jehovah is in his holy temple;
> Keep silence before him all the earth.'
>
> *Dr. Henderson's Translation.*

CHAP. III.—3. *God came from Teman—from mount Paran.* 'Is there any connexion between Feiran and the wilderness and mountain of Paran of the sacred Scripture? This is a question which we anxiously put to one another when in this valley. Travellers have not been agreed about the answer to be given. Niebuhr is disposed to reply to it in the affirmative, and Burckhardt in the negative. As far as the Hebrew and Arabic denominations of Feiran and Paran go, they may be identical. Paran is mentioned in Scripture in several historical and poetical passages, (*Gen.* xxi. 21; *Num.* x. 12; xii. 16; xiii. 3, 26; *Deu.* i. 1; xxxiii. 2; 1 *Sam.* xxv. 1, 2; 1 *Kin.* xi. 18; *Hab.* iii. 3; with these passages take, perhaps, *Gen.* xiv. 6, "And the Horites in their mount Seir, unto El-Paran, which is by the wilderness," in which it seems to be used in a comprehensive sense, as applicable, not merely to some particular part or parts of the desert, contiguous to mount Sinai and south of Judah, but to a large portion, if not the whole, of Arabia Petræa; and it may include this district, from which it may probably have derived its name. If this conclusion be correct, and I see no objection to it, it suggests a very sublime interpretation of the most sublime poetry of *Habakkuk*:

> "God came from Teman,
> And the Holy One from mount Paran,
> His glory covered the heavens,
> And the earth was full of his praise,
> And his brightness was as the light:
> He had horns (rays) coming out of his hand:
> And there was the hiding of his power."

When God descended to give the law to his people, the Divine glory was revealed from Teman, or Maan, in the east of Edom, to Paran, at Serbal, in the west. It literally covered the heavens over this extent. His majestic presence shook a large portion of the globe.'—*Dr. Wilson's Lands of the Bible.* *Selah.* See Supplementary Note on *Ps.* iii. 6. *He stood and measured the earth.* He stood and made the earth to tremble, exhibiting 'one of the boldest, most abrupt, and sublime turns to be found in sacred poetry. While Jehovah is marching forth for the deliverance of his people, he stops all of a sudden in his progress, the immediate effects of which are universal consternation and terror. Nature, in her strongest and most ancient formations, is broken in pieces before him. The inhabitants of the earth tremble at his look.'—*H.* *The everlasting mountains were scattered.* Or, broken asunder. This may refer to the convulsions on mount Sinai, and to the earthquake which announced the descent of the Most High: see *Ex.* xix. 18.—God occupied the summit of the eternal mount Sinai, and led his people over the eternal mountains of Arabia Petræa; and this sense is preferable to the figurative one, that his ways or doings are predetermined from everlasting.—*Newcome.* The epithets 'eternal' and 'everlasting' are applied to mountains and immense rocks, because no other parts of nature are less subject to decay or change than these immense masses of earth and stone, and that almost indestructible stone, granite, out of which Sinai appears to be formed.—*A. Clarke.* 16. *When I heard.* Having finished the poetic rehearsal of the mighty acts of Jehovah on behalf of his people in ancient times, which he had composed in order to inspire the pious with unshaken confidence in him as their covenant God, Habakkuk reverts to the fear which had seized him on hearing of the judgments that were to be inflicted upon his country by the Chaldeans, ver. 2. Instead of there entering into a description of his feelings, he broke out in an earnest prayer that God would exercise pity towards Israel, from which there was an easy transition to the ancient Divine interpositions. He now describes those feelings in very forcible and affecting language. The voice is to be referred to the Divine threatening recorded *ch.* i. 6. The quivering of the prophet's lips is merely expressive of the effect of the fear with which he was seized, and has no reference to his delivery of the threatening.—*H.* 17, 18. *Although the fig-tree.* From a statement of the assurance which he possessed of the mental tranquillity which he should enjoy during the anticipated calamity, Habakkuk rises to a triumphant assertion of the holy joy and exultation which would be vouchsafed to him amidst all the desolation to which his country might be subjected. The desolation here so graphically and forcibly described is that which was to be effected by the Chaldeans, whose army would consume or destroy the best and most necessary productions of the land; not only seizing upon the cattle and devouring the fruits of the earth, but so injuring the trees as to render them incapable of yielding any produce. The passage contains the most beautiful exhibition of the power of true religion to be found in the Bible.—*H.* Faith in Christ prepares for every event. Though God seems to threaten our dearest comforts, yet when we remember it is his hand, when we consider it is his design, his love, his wisdom, and his power, we cannot refuse to trust him. Then to think how much less our sufferings are than our sins deserve, how many mercies we still enjoy; to compare the present momentary affliction with the exceeding weight of glory which shall be revealed; to recollect that the time is short, the hour swiftly approaching, when the Lord shall wipe away all tears, and constrain us with wonder and joy to sing, He hath done all things well. Such considerations, with the remembrance of what Christ has suffered for us, are always at hand to compose the believer's soul under troubles, and will be effectual according to the degree of faith. Our faith, also, is strengthened by affliction; we learn more of our own insufficiency, and the vanity of things about us, and discover more of the power, faithfulness, and nearness of a prayer-hearing God. Upon this ground Habakkuk could rejoice under the loss of all earthly comforts, and say, I will rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation. The name of Jesus, when we can speak of him as ours, is balm for every wound, a cordial for every care. It is as ointment poured forth, diffusing fragrance through the whole soul.—*John Newton.*



WORSHIPPING ON THE HOUSETOPS.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF ZEPHANIAH,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THIS prophet is placed last, as he was last in time of all the minor prophets before the captivity, and not long before Jeremiah, who lived at the time of the captivity. He foretells the general destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and sets their sins in order before them, which had provoked God to bring their ruin upon them; calls them to repentance, threatens the neighbouring nations with the like destructions, and gives encouraging promises of their joyful return out of captivity in due time, which have a reference to the grace of the Gospel. We have in the first verse an account of the prophet, and the date of his prophecy, which supersedes our inquiry concerning them here.

A.D. 3374. B.C. 630.

CHAPTER I.

After the title of the book, ver. 1, here is, I. A threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, an utter destruction by the Chaldeans, ver. 2—4. II. A charge against them for their gross sin, which provoked God to bring that destruction upon them, ver. 5, 6; and so he goes on in the rest of the chapter, setting both the judgments before them, that they might prevent them or prepare for them, and the sins that destroy them, that they might judge themselves, and justify God in what was brought upon them. 1. They must hold their peace, because they had greatly sinned, ver. 7—9; but, 2. They shall howl, because the trouble will be great. The day of the Lord is near, and it will be a terrible day, ver. 10—18. Such fair and timely warning as this did God give to the Jews of the approaching captivity, but they hardened their neck, which made their destruction remediless.

THE word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

2 I will utterly consume all *things* from off the land, saith the LORD.

3 I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, And the stumblingblocks with the wicked; And I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD.

4 I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, And upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, *And* the name of the Chemarims with the priests;

5 And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; And them that worship *and* that swear by the LORD, And that swear by Malcham;

6 And them that are turned back from the LORD; And *those* that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him.

Here is, First. The title-page of this book, ver. 1; in which we may observe, 1. What authority it has, and who gave it that authority. It is from heaven, and not of men. It is "the word of the Lord." 2. Who was the instrument of conveying it to the church. His name was Zephaniah, which signifies 'the servant of the Lord;' for God revealed his secrets to his servants the prophets. The pedigrees of other prophets, whose extraction we have an account of, goes no farther back than their father, except Zecharias, whose grandfather is also named. But this of Zephaniah goes back four generations, and the highest mentioned is Hizkiah. It is the very same name in the original with that of Hezekiah, king of Judah, (2 *Kin.* xviii. 1,) and it is very probable is the same person; and if so, our prophet was lineally descended from that pious prince, and being of the royal family he could with the better grace reprove the folly of the king's children, as he doth, ver. 8. 3. When this prophet prophesied. "In the days of Josiah king of Judah," who reigned well; and in the twelfth year of his reign began vigorously and carried on a work of reformation, in which he destroyed idols and idolatry. Now it doth not appear whether Zephaniah prophesied in the beginning of his reign; if so, we may suppose his prophesying had a great and good influence on that reformation. When he as God's messenger reproved the idolatries of Jerusalem, Josiah as God's vicegerent removed them; and reformation is likely then to go on and prosper when both magistrates and ministers do their part towards it. If it were towards the latter end of his reign that he prophesied, we sadly see how a corrupt people relapse into their former distempers. The idolatries Josiah had abolished it should seem returned in his own time, when the heat of the reformation began a little to abate and wear off. What good can the best reformers do with a people that hate to be reformed, as if they longed to be ruined?

Secondly. The summary or contents of this book. The general proposition contained in it is, that utter destruction is coming apace upon Judah and Jerusalem for sin. Without preamble or apology he begins abruptly; ver. 2, "By taking away I will make an end of all things from off the face of the land, saith the Lord." Ruin is coming, utter ruin, destruction from the Almighty; he hath said it, who can and will make good what he hath said, "I will utterly consume all things." I will gather all things, (so some,) I will recall all the blessings I have bestowed, because they have abused them, and so forfeited them. The consumption determined shall take away,

1. The inferior creatures; "I will consume the beasts, the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea," ver. 3; as in the deluge, "every living substance was destroyed that was upon the face of the ground," *Gen.* vii. 23. The creatures were made for man's use, and therefore, when he has perverted the use of them, and made them subject to vanity, God, to shew the greatness of his displeasure against the sin of man, involves them in his punishment. The expressions are figurative, speaking a universal desolation. Those that fly never so high, as the fowls of heaven, and think themselves out of the reach of the enemy's hand,—those that hide never so close, as the fishes of the sea, and think themselves out of the reach of the enemy's eye,—yet shall become a prey to them, and be utterly consumed.

2. The children of men; "I will consume man, I will cut off man from the land." The land shall be dispeopled and left uninhabited; not only, I will destroy Israel, but destroy man. The land shall enjoy her sabbaths. I will cut off not only the wicked men, but all men; even the few among them that are good shall be involved in this common calamity. Though they shall not be cut off from the Lord, yet they shall be "cut off from the land." It is with Judah and Jerusalem that God has his quarrel, both city and country, and upon them he will stretch out his hand—the hand of his power, the hand of his wrath; and who knows the power of his anger? ver. 4. They that will not humble themselves under God's mighty hand shall be humbled and brought down by it. Note, Even Judah, where God is known, and Jerusalem, where his dwelling-place is, if they revolt from him, and rebel against him, shall have his hand stretched out against them.

3. All wicked people, and all those things that are the matter of their wickedness; ver. 3, "I will consume the stumblingblocks with the wicked," the idols with the idolaters, the offences with the offenders. Josiah had taken away the stumblingblocks, and as far as he could had purged the land of the monuments of idolatry, hoping that there would be no more idolatry; but "the wicked will do wickedly," the dog will return to his vomit; and therefore, since the sin will not otherwise be cured, the sinners must themselves be consumed, even the wicked with the stumblingblocks of their iniquity, *Eze.* xiv. 3. Since it was not done by the sword of justice, it shall be done by the sword of war. See who the sinners are that shall be consumed.

1st. The professed idolaters, that avowed idolatry, and were wedded to it. The remnant of Baal shall be cut off, the images of Baal, and the worshippers of those images. Josiah cut off a great deal of Baal, but that which was so close as to escape the eye, or so bold as to escape the hand of his justice, God will cut off, even all the remains of it. The Chaldeans would spare none of the images of Baal, or the worshippers of those images. The Chemarims shall be cut off. We read of them in the history of Josiah's reformation; 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 5, "He put down the idolatrous priests;" the word is, the 'Chemarim.' The word signifies black men. Some think, because they wore black cloth, affecting to appear grave; others, because their faces were black with attending the altars, or the fires in which they burnt their children to Moloch. They seem to have been immediate attendants upon the service of Baal. They shall be cut off with the priests, the regulars with the seculars; the very name of them shall be cut off; the order shall be quite abolished, so as to be forgotten, or remembered with detestation. And, among other idolaters, the "worshippers of the host of heaven upon the housetops" shall be cut off, ver. 5, who justified themselves in their idolatry with those that did not worship images, the work of their own hands, but offered their sacrifices, and burnt their incense, to the sun, moon, and stars, immediately upon the tops of their houses. But God will let them know that he is a jealous God, and will not endure any rival; and though some have thought that the most specious and plausible idolatry, yet it will appear as great an offence to God to give Divine honour to a star, as to give them to a stone or stock. Even "the worshippers of the host of heaven shall be consumed," as well as the worshippers of the beasts of the earth, or the fiends of hell. The sin of the adulteress is not the less sinful for the gaiety of the adulterer.

2nd. Those also shall be consumed that think to compound the matter between God and idols, and keep an even hand between them, that halt between God and Baal, and worship between Jehovah and Moloch, and swear by both; or, as it might better be read, swear to the Lord and to Malcham. They bind themselves by oath and covenant to the service both of God and idols. They have a good opinion of the worship of the God of Israel,—it is the religion of their country, and has been long so, and therefore they will by no means quit it; but they think it will be very much improved and beautified if they join with it the worship of Moloch, for that also is much used in other countries, and travellers admire it; there is a great deal of good fancy and strong flame in it. They cannot keep always to the worship of a God whom they have no visible representation of, and therefore they must have an image; and what better than the image of Moloch, a king? They think they shall effectually atone for their sin if they swear to Moloch, and, pursuant to that oath, burn their children in sacrifice to that idol; and yet, if they do amiss in that, they hope to atone for it in worshipping the God of Israel too. Note, Those that think to divide their affections and adorations between God and idols will not only come short of acceptance with God, but will have their doom with the worst of idolaters; for what communion can there be between light and darkness,—Christ and Belial, God and Mammon? She whose own the child is not pleads for the dividing of it, for if Satan have half, he will have all; but the true mother saith, Divide it not, for if God have but half, he will have none. Such waters will not be long sweet if they come from a fountain that sends forth bitter water too. What have they to do to swear by the Lord that swear by Malcham?

3rd. Those also shall be consumed that have apostatized from God, together with those that never gave up their names to him; ver. 6, I will cut off, *First*. "Them that are turned back from the Lord;" that were well taught, and begun well, that had given up their names to him, and set out at first in the worship of him, but have flown off, and turned aside, and fallen in with idolaters, and deserted those good ways of God which they were brought up in, and despised them; those God will be sure to reckon with who are renegadoes from his service, that began in the Spirit and ended in the flesh; they shall be treated as deserters, to whom no mercy is shewed. *Secondly*. "Those that have not sought the Lord," nor ever inquired for him, never made any profession of religion, and think to excuse themselves with that, yet that shall not excuse them; nay, that is the thing laid to their charge: they are atheistical, careless people, that live without God in the world; and those that do so, are certainly unworthy to live upon God in the world.

7 Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD:
For the day of the LORD *is* at hand:
For the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his [guests.
8 And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD's sacrifice,
That I will punish the princes, and the king's children,
And all such as are clothed with strange apparel.
9 In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold,
Which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.
10 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD,
That there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate,
And an howling from the second,
And a great crashing from the hills.
11 Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh,
For all the merchant people are cut down;
All they that bear silver are cut off.
12 And it shall come to pass at that time,
That I will search Jerusalem with candles,
And punish the men that are settled on their lees:
That say in their heart,
The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.
13 Therefore their goods shall become a booty,
And their houses a desolation:
They shall also build houses,
But not inhabit *them;*
And they shall plant vineyards,
But not drink the wine thereof.

Notice is here given to Judah and Jerusalem that God is coming forth against them, and will be with them shortly: his presence as a just avenger, his day, the day of his judgment and his wrath, are not far off, ver. 7. Those that improve not the presence of God with them as a Father, but sin away that presence, may expect his presence with them as a Judge, to call them to an account for the contempt put upon his grace. The day of the Lord will come. Men have their day now, when they take a liberty to do what they please, but God's day is at hand. It is here called a sacrifice, a sacrifice of his preparing; for the punishing presumptuous sinners is a sacrifice to the justice of God, some reparation to his injured honour. They that brought their offerings to other gods were themselves justly made victims to the true God. On a day of sacrifice great slaughter was made; so shall there be in Jerusalem; men shall be killed up as fast as lambs for the altar, with as little regret, with as much pleasure; "The slain of the Lord shall be many." On a day of sacrifice great feasts were made upon the sacrifices; so the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem shall be feasted upon by their enemies, the Chaldeans. These are the guests God has prepared and invited to come and glut themselves,—their revenge with slaughter, and their covetousness with plunder. Now observe,

First. Who they are that are marked to be sacrificed, that shall be visited and punished in this day of reckoning, and what it is they shall be called to an account for.

1. The royal family, because of the dignity of their place, shall be first reckoned with, for their pride and vanity and affectation; ver. 8, "I will punish the princes, and the king's children," who think themselves exempt from punishment; they shall find themselves accountable to God, and that, as high as they are, he is above them. They shall be punished, and all such as like them are clothed with strange apparel, that in contempt of their own country (where probably it was the custom to go in a very plain dress, as became the seed of Jacob, that plain man,) affected to appear in the fashion of other nations, and introduced their modes in apparel, studying to resemble those from whom God had appointed them, even in their clothes, industriously to distinguish themselves. The princes and king's children thought scorn to wear any home-made stuffs, though God had provided them fine linen and silks, *Eze.* xvi. 10; but they must send abroad to strange countries for their clothes, which would not please unless they were far-fetched, and dear-bought; and even those of inferior rank affected to imitate the princes and the king's children. Pride in apparel is displeasing to God, and a symptom of the degeneracy of a people.

2. The noblemen and their stewards and servants come next to be reckoned with; ver. 9, "In the same day will I punish those that leap on the threshold," a phrase, no doubt, well understood then, and probably signified the invading their neighbours' rights, entering their houses by force and violence, and seizing their possessions. They leap on the threshold, as much as to say, the house is their own, and they will keep their hold of it; and accordingly make all in it their own that they can lay their hands on, and so fill their masters' houses with goods gotten by violence and deceit, and with all the guilt thereby contracted. Nor shall it suffice them to say that the ill-got gains were not for themselves, but for their masters, and what they did was by their order; for the obligations we lie under to keep God's commandments are prior and superior to the obligations we lie under to serve the interests of any master on earth.

3. The trading people and the rich merchants are the next called to account. Iniquity is found in their end of the town among the inhabitants of Maktesh, a low part of Jerusalem, deep like a mortar, (for so the word signifies). The goldsmiths lived there, *Neh.* iii. 32, and the merchants; and they are now cut down, they are broken, and have shut up their shops, and become bankrupts; nay, all they that bear silver are cut off in the first place by the invaders, for the sake of the silver they carry, which is so far from being a protection to them that it will expose and betray them. The conquerors aimed at the wealthy men, and carried them off first, while the poor of the land escaped. Or, it may be meant of a general decay of trade, which was a preface and introduction to the general destruction of the land. It is the token of a declining state when great dealers are cut down, and great bankers are cut off and become bankrupts, who cannot fall alone, but with themselves ruin many.

4. All the secure and careless people, the sons of pleasure, that live a loose, idle life, are next reckoned with, ver. 12. They come from all parts of the country, to take up their quarters in the head-quarters of the kingdom, where they take private lodgings, and indulge themselves in ease and luxury; but God will find them out and punish them; "At that time I will search" Jerusalem "with candles," to discover them, that they may be brought out to condign punishment. This intimates that they conceal themselves, as being either ashamed of the sin or afraid of the punishment of it. When the judgments of God are abroad they hope to escape by absconding and getting out of the way; but God will search Jerusalem, as search is made for a malefactor in disguise, that is harboured by his accomplices. God's hand will find out all his enemies, wherever they lie hid, and will punish not only the secret idolaters, but the secret epicures and profane; and those are they that are described, and marks are given by which they will be discovered, when strict search is made for them. 1st. Their dispositions are sensual. They are settled on their lees, intoxicated with their pleasures, strengthening themselves in their wealth and wickedness; they are secure and easy, and because they have had no changes they fear none; as Moab, *Jer.* xlviii. 11, "They had not been emptied from vessel to vessel;" they "fill themselves with wine and strong drink," and banish all thought, saying, "To-morrow shall be as this day," *Isa.* lvi. 12. Their being "settled on their lees," signifies the same with being "inclosed in their own fat," *Ps.* xvii. 10. 2nd. Their notions are atheistical. They could not live such loose lives but that they say "in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil;" that is, he will do nothing. They deny his providential government of the world; what good and evil there is in the world comes by the wheel of fortune, and not by the disposal of a wise and supreme Director. They deny his moral government, and his dispensing of rewards and punishments. "The Lord will not do good" to those that serve him, nor do evil to those that rebel against him; and therefore there is nothing got by religion, nor lost by sin. This is the effect of their sensuality; if they were not drowned in sense, they could not be thus senseless; nor be so stupid, if they had not stupified themselves with the love of pleasure. It was also the cause of their sensuality. Men would not make a god of their belly if they did not at first become so vain, so vile in their imaginations, as to think the God that made them altogether such an one as themselves. But God will punish them; "their end is destruction," *Phil.* iii. 19.

Secondly. What the destruction will be with which God will punish these sinners, and what course he will take with them. 1. He will silence them; ver. 7, "Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord;" that is, he will force them to hold their peace, will strike them dumb with horror and amazement. They shall be speechless, all the excuses of their sin and exceptions against the sentence will be overruled, and they shall not have a word to say for themselves. 2. He will sacrifice them, for it is "the day of the Lord's sacrifice,"

ver. 8. He will give them into the hands of their enemies, and glorify himself thereby. 3. He will fill both city and country with lamentation; ver. 10, "In that day there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate," so called because near either to the fish-ponds or fish-market. It belonged to the city of David, 2 *Chr.* xxxiii. 14; *Neh.* iii. 3; perhaps the same with that which is called the first gate, *Zec.* xiv. 10, and if so it will explain what follows here, "And a howling from the second," namely, the second gate, which was next to that fish-gate. The alarm shall go round the walls of Jerusalem, from gate to gate; and there shall be "a great crushing from the hills," a mighty noise from the mountains round about Jerusalem, either from the acclamations of the victorious invaders or the lamentations of the timorous invaded, or both. The inhabitants of the city, even of the closest safest part of the city, shall howl, ver. 11, so clamorous shall the grief be. 4. They shall be stripped of all they have, it shall be a prey to the enemy; ver. 13, Their household goods and shop goods shall become a booty, and a rich booty they shall be; their houses shall be levelled with the ground, and be a desolation. Those of them that have built new houses shall not inherit them, but the invaders shall get and keep possession of them; and the vineyards they have planted they shall not drink the wine of, but, instead of having it for the relief of their friends that faint among them, they shall part with it for the animating of their foes, that fight against them, *Deu.* xxviii. 30.

14 The great day of the LORD *is* near,
It is near, and hasteth greatly,
Even the voice of the day of the LORD:
The mighty man shall cry there bitterly.
15 That day *is* a day of wrath,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of wasteness and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloominess,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
16 A day of the trumpet and alarm
Against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.
17 And I will bring distress upon men,
That they shall walk like blind men,
Because they have sinned against the LORD:
And their blood shall be poured out as dust,
And their flesh as the dung. [them
18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver
In the day of the LORD's wrath; [jealousy:
But the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his
For he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them
that dwell in the land.

Nothing could be expressed with more spirit and life, nor in words more proper to startle and awaken a secure and careless people, than the warning here given to Judah and Jerusalem of the approaching destruction by the Chaldeans. That is enough to make the sinners in Zion tremble, that it is the day of the Lord, the day in which he will manifest himself by taking vengeance on them. It is "the great day of the Lord," a specimen of the day of judgment, a kind of doomsday, as the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is represented to be in our Saviour's prediction concerning it, *Mat.* xxiv. 27.

First. This day of the Lord is here spoken of as very near. The vision is not for a great while to come, as those imagine that put the evil day far from them; they deceive themselves that look upon it as a thing at a distance, for it is near, it is near, it hasteth greatly. The prophet gives the alarm like one that is in earnest, like one that awakens a family with the cry of Fire! fire! when it is at the next door that the danger is. It is near, it is near, and therefore it is high time to bestir yourselves, and do what you can for your own safety before it be too late. It is madness for those to slumber whose damnation slumbereth not, and to linger when it hastens.

Secondly. It is spoken of as a very dreadful day. The very voice of this day of the Lord, the noise of it when it is coming, shall be so terrible as to make "the mighty men cry there bitterly," cry for fear, as children do. "It shall be a vexation to hear the report" of it. In the last great day of the Lord the mighty men shall cry bitterly to rocks and mountains to shelter them, but in vain. Observe how emphatically the prophet speaks of this day approaching, ver. 15. It is a day of wrath, God's wrath, wrath in perfection, wrath to the utmost; it will be a day of trouble and distress to the sinners, they shall be in pain, and shall see no way of easing or helping themselves. The miseries of the damned are summed up (perhaps with reference to this here) in the indignation and wrath of God, which are the cause, and the tribulation and anguish of the sinner's soul, which are the effect, *Rom.* ii. 8, 9. It will be a day of trouble and distress to the inhabitants, and a day of wasteness and desolation to the whole land; that fruitful land shall be turned into a wilderness. It shall be a day of darkness and gloominess, every thing shall look dismal, and there shall not be the least gleam of comfort or glimpse of hope; look round, and it is all black. It is "a day of clouds and thick darkness;" there is not only nothing encouraging, but every thing threatening; the thick clouds are big with storms and tempests.

Thirdly. It is spoken of as a destroying day, ver. 16, 17. It shall be destroying, 1. To places, even the strongest and best fortified. "A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities," to break into them, and against the high towers, to bring them down. For what forts, what fences, can hold out against the wrath of God? 2. To persons; ver. 17, "I will bring distress upon men," the strongest and stoutest of men, their hearts and hands shall fail them; they shall "walk like blind men," wandering endlessly, "because they have sinned against the Lord." Note, Those that walk as ill men will justly be left to walk as blind men, always in the dark, in doubt and danger, without any guide or comfort, and falling at length into the ditch. Because they have sinned against the Lord he will deliver them into the hands of cruel enemies, that shall pour out their blood as dust, so profusely and with as little regret, and their flesh shall be thrown as dung upon the dunghill.

Fourthly. The destruction of that day will be unavoidable and universal, ver. 18. 1. There shall be no escaping it by ransom. Neither their silver nor their gold, which they have hoarded up so covetously against the evil day, or which they have spent so prodigally to make friends for such a time, "shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath." Another prophet borrowed these words from this, with reference to the same event, *Eze.* vii. 19. Note, Riches profit not in the day of wrath, *Pr.* xi. 4. Nay, riches expose to the wrath of men, *Eccl.* v. 13, and riches abused to the wrath of God. 2. There shall be no escaping it by flight or concealment; for the "whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy," and where then can a hiding-place be found? See what the fire of God's jealousy is, and what the force of it; it will devour whole lands: how then can particular persons stand before it? He shall make riddance, "a speedy riddance, of all them that dwell in the land;" as the husbandman, when he rids his ground, cuts up all the briars and thorns for the fire. Note, Sometimes the judgments of God make riddance, even utter riddance, with sinful nations, a speedy riddance; their destruction is effected, is completed, in a little time. Let not sinners be laid asleep by the patience of God; for, when the measure of their iniquity is full, his justice will both overtake and overcome—will make quick work and thorough work.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter we have, I. An earnest exhortation to the nation of the Jews to repent, and make their peace with God, and so to prevent the judgments threatened before it was too late, ver. 1—3; and this inferred from the revelation of God's wrath against them in the foregoing chapter. II. A denunciation of the judgments of God against divers of the neighbour nations that had assisted or rejoiced in the calamity of Israel. 1. The Philistines, ver. 4—7; 2. The Moabites and Ammonites, ver. 8—11; 3. The Ethiopians and Assyrians, ver. 12—15. All these shall drink of the same cup of trembling that is put into the hands of God's people, as was foretold by other prophets before and after.

GATHER yourselves together,
Yea, gather together, O nation not desired;
2 Before the decree bring forth,
Before the day pass as the chaff,
Before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you,
Before the day of the LORD's anger come upon you.
3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth,
Which have wrought his judgment;
Seek righteousness, seek meekness:
It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger.

Here we see what the prophet meant in that terrible description of the approaching judgments we had in the foregoing chapter. From first to last his design was, not to drive the people to despair, but to drive them to God, and to their duty; not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins. And in pursuance of that he here calls them to repentance, national repentance, as the only way to prevent a national ruin. Observe,

First. The summons given them to a national assembly; ver. 1, "Gather yourselves together." He had told them, in the last words of the foregoing chapter, that God would make a "speedy riddance of all that dwell in the land," upon which, one would think, it should follow, Disperse yourselves, and flee for shelter where you can find a place. When the decree was absolutely gone forth for the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, that was the advice given, *Mat.* xxiv. 16, "Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains;" but here it is otherwise: God warns that he may not wound, threatens that he may not strike, and therefore calls to the people to use means for the turning away of his wrath. The summons is given to a nation not desired. The word signifies either, 1. Not desiring; that has not any desires towards God or the remembrance of his name, is not desirous of his favour and grace, but very indifferent to it, has no mind to repent and reform; yet come together, and see if you can stir up desires in one another. Thus God is often found of them that sought him not, nor asked for him, *Isa.* lxv. 1. Or, 2. Not desirable; no ways lovely, nor having any thing in them amiable, or which might recommend them to God. The land of Israel had been "a pleasant land, a land of delight," *Dan.* xi. 41; but now it is unlovely, it is a nation not desired, to which God might justly say, "Depart from me;" but he saith, Gather together to me, and let us see if any expedient can be found out for the preventing thy ruin. Gather together, that you may in a body humble yourselves before God, may fast, and pray, and seek his face. Gather together to consult among yourselves what is to be done in this critical juncture, that every one may consider of it, may give and take advice, and speak his mind, and that what is done may be done by consent, and so may be a national act. Some read it, 'Inquire into yourselves, yea, inquire into yourselves;' examine your consciences, look into your hearts, search and try your ways; inquire into yourselves, that you may find out the sin by which God has been provoked to this displeasure against you, and may find out the way of returning to him. Note, When God is contending with us, it concerns us to inquire into ourselves.

Secondly. Arguments urged to press them to the utmost seriousness and expedition herein, ver. 2. Do it in earnest, do it with all speed, before it be too late, "before the decree bring forth, before the day pass." The manner of speaking here is very lively and awakening, designed to make them apprehensive, as all sinners are concerned to be, 1. That their danger is very great. Their all lies at stake; it is a matter of life and death, which therefore well requires and deserves the closest application of mind that can be. It is not a trifle, and therefore is not a thing to be trifled about. It is the "fierce anger of the Lord" that is kindled against them, and is just ready to kindle upon them; that devouring fire which none can dwell with, which none can make head against, or hold up their head under. It is the day of the Lord's anger, the day set for the pouring out of the full vials of it, that you are threatened with, that great day of the Lord spoken of, *ch.* i. 14. Are you not concerned to prepare for that day? 2. That it is very imminent. Bestir yourselves now quickly, "before the decree bring forth," and then it will be too late, the opportunity will be lost, and never retrieved. The decree is as it were big with child, and will bring forth the day, the terrible day, which shall pass as chaff; that is, which shall hurry you away into captivity as chaff before the wind. "We know not what a day may bring forth," *Pr.* xxvii. 1; but we do know what the decree will bring forth against impenitent sinners, whom therefore it highly concerns to repent in time, in the accepted time. Note, It is the wisdom of those whom God has a controversy with to agree with him quickly, while they are in the way, before his fierce anger comes upon them, not to be turned away. In a case of this nature delays are highly dangerous, and may be fatal; they will be so, if by them the heart is hardened. How solicitous should we all be to make our

peace with God before the Spirit withdraws from us, or ceaseth to strive with us; before the day of grace be over, or the day of life; before our everlasting state shall be determined on the other side the great gulf fixed!

Thirdly. Directions prescribed for the doing of this effectually. It is not enough to gather together in a consternation, but they must seriously and calmly apply themselves to the duty of the day; ver. 3, "Seek ye the Lord." That they might find mercy with God they are here put upon seeking; for so is the rule, "Seek, and ye shall find." A general call was given to the whole nation to gather together, but little good is to be expected from the far greater part of them; if the land be saved, it must be by the interest and intercession of the pious few, and therefore to them the exhortation here is particularly directed. And observe, 1. How they are described. They are "the meek of the earth," or of the land. It is the distinguishing character of the people of God that they are the meek ones of the earth; this is their badge, it is their livery. They are modest, and humble, and low in their own eyes; they are mild, and gentle, and yielding to others, not soon angry, not very angry, not long angry; they are the quiet in the land, *Ps.* xxxv. 20. And they are subject and submissive to their God, to all his precepts and all his providences; actuated by this principle and disposition, they have wrought his judgments, that is, have obeyed his laws, observed his institutions, have made conscience of their duty to him, and have laid out themselves for the advancement of his honour and interest in the world. 2. What they are required to do. They must seek; which notes both a careful inquiry and a constant endeavour, that they may know and do their duty. 1st. They must seek the Lord, seek his favour and grace, address to him upon all occasions, ask of him what they need, seek him early, seek him diligently, and continue seeking him. 2nd. They must seek righteousness; seek to God for the performance of his promises to you, and see to it that you abound yet more in duty to him, seek for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to you, for the graces of God's Spirit to be implanted in you; hunger and thirst after it. 3rd. They must seek meekness. This is a grace they were so eminent for that they were denominated the meek of the land, and yet this they must seek. Note, Those that are never so good must still strive to be better, that have never so much grace must be still praying and labouring for more. Nay, they that excel in any particular grace must still seek to excel yet more in that, because in that most assaults will be made upon them by their enemies, and in that most is expected from them by their friends, and in that they are most apt to be themselves secure. *Si dixisti sufficit, periisti,*—'Say but, I am all that I ought to be, and you are undone.' In the difficult, trying times approaching, the meek will find exercise for all the meekness they have, and all little enough, and therefore should seek it earnestly, and pray that when God in his providence gives them occasion for it, he would by his grace enable them to exercise it, "to shew all meekness to all men," in all instances; that "as the day is, so may the strength be."

Fourthly. Encouragements given to take these directions; "It may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." 1. You particularly that are the meek of the earth; though the day of the Lord's anger do come upon the land, yet you shall be safe, you shall be taken under special protection, verily "it shall be well with thy remnant," *Jer.* xv. 11; "Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey," *Jer.* xlv. 5; "I will deliver thee in that day," *Jer.* xxxix. 17. "It may be you shall be hid;" if any be hid, you shall. Good men cannot be sure of temporal preservation, for all things come alike to all; but they are most likely to be hid, and stand fairest for a distinguishing care of providence. It is expressed thus doubtfully, to try if they will trust the goodness of God's nature, though they have but the "it may be" of a promise; and to keep up in them a holy fear and watchfulness, lest they should seem to come short, and should do any thing to throw themselves out of the Divine protection. Note, Those that hold fast their integrity in times of common iniquity have reason to hope that God will find out a hiding-place for them, where they shall be safe and easy in times of common calamity. They shall be hid, as Luther said, *aut in cœlo, aut sub cœlo,*—'either in heaven or under heaven;' either in the possession of heaven or under the protection of heaven. Or, 2. You of this nation, though it be a nation not desired, yet in the day of the Lord's anger with the neighbour nations, when his judgments are abroad, you shall be hid, your land shall be preserved for the sake of those few meek ones that stand in the gap, to turn away the wrath of God. It concerns us all to make it sure to ourselves that we shall be hid in the great day of God's wrath; and if we hide ourselves in chambers of duty, God will hide us in chambers of safety, *Isa.* xxvi. 20. If we prepare an ark, that shall be our hiding-place, *Gen.* vii. 1.

4 For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation:
They shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day,
And Ekron shall be rooted up.
5 Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites!
The word of the LORD *is* against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines,
I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.
6 And the sea coast shall be dwellings *and* cottages for shepherds,
And folds for flocks.
7 And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah;
They shall feed thereupon:
In the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening:
For the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

The prophet here comes to foretell what share the neighbour nations should have in the destruction made upon those parts of the world by Nebuchadnezzar and his victorious Chaldees, as other of the prophets did at that time; which is designed, 1. To awaken the people of the Jews, by making them sensible how strong, how deep, how large, the inundation of calamities should be, that the day of the Lord that was near might appear the more dreadful, and they might thereby be quickened to prepare for it as for a general deluge. 2. To comfort them with this thought, that their case, though sad, should not be singular, (*solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris,*—'the wretched find it consolatory to have companions of their woe,') and much more with this, that though God had seemed to be their enemy, and to fight against them, yet he was still so far their friend, and an enemy to their enemies, that he resented and would revenge the indignities done them.

In these verses we have the doom of the Philistines, that were near neighbours and old enemies to the people of Israel. Five lordships there were in that country; only four are here named, Gaza and Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron. Gath, the fifth, is not named; some think because it was now subject to Judah. They were the inhabitants of the sea-coasts, ver. 5, for their country lay upon the Great Sea. The nation of the Cherethites is here joined with them, which bordered upon them, 1 *Sam.* xxx. 14, and fell with them, as is foretold also, *Eze.* xxv. 16. The Philistines' land is here called Canaan, for it belonged to that country which God gave to his people Israel, and was inserted in the grant made to them, *Jos.* xiii. 3. This land is yet possessed by five lords of the Philistines; so that they wrongfully kept Israel out of the possession of it, *Jud.* iii. 3, which is now remembered against them; for, though others' rights may be long detained unjustly, the righteous God will at length avenge the wrong.

First. It is here foretold, that the Philistines, the usurpers, shall be dispossessed and quite extirpated. In general, here is a "Woe to them," ver. 5, which, coming from God, speaks all misery; "The word of the Lord is against them;" the word of the former prophets, which, though not yet accomplished, will be in its season, *Isa.* xiv. 31. This word now, by this prophet, is against them. Note, Those are really in a woful condition that have the word of the Lord against them; for no word of his shall fall to the ground. They that rebel against the precepts of God's word shall have the threatenings of the word against them. The effect will be no less than their destruction. 1. God himself will be the author of it; "I will even destroy thee," who can make good what he saith, and will. 2. It shall be a universal destruction, it shall extend itself to all parts of the land, both city and country. "Gaza shall be forsaken," though now a populous city. It was foretold, *Jer.* xlvii. 5, that baldness should come upon Gaza: Alexander the Great razed that city, and we find, *Acts* viii. 26, that Gaza was a desert. Ashkelon shall be a desolation, a pattern of desolation. "Ashdod shall be driven out at noon-day;" in the extremity of the scorching heat they shall have no shade, no shelter to protect them; but then, when most incommoded by the weather, they shall be forced away into captivity, which will be an aggravating circumstance of it. Ekron likewise shall be rooted up, that had been long taking root. The land of the Philistines shall be dispeopled; "there shall be no inhabitant," ver. 5. God made the earth to be inhabited, *Isa.* xlv. 18, otherwise he had made it in vain; but if men do not answer the end of their creation in serving God, it is just with God that the earth should not answer the end of its creation in serving them for an habitation. Man's sin hath sometimes subjected it to this vanity. 3. It shall be an utter destruction. The sea-coast that used to be a harbour for ships, and a habitation for merchants, shall now be deserted, and be only cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks, ver. 6; and then, perhaps, put to better use than when it was possessed by the Philistines.

Secondly. It is here foretold that the house of Judah, the rightful owners, shall recover the possession of it, ver. 7. The remnant of them that shall return out of captivity, when God visits them, shall be made to lie down in safety in the houses of Ashkelon, to lie down in the evening when they are weary and sleepy. There they shall feed themselves and their flocks. Note, God will at length restore his people to their rights, though they may be long kept out from them.

8 I have heard the reproach of Moab,
And the revilings of the children of Ammon,
Whereby they have reproached my people,
And magnified *themselves* against their border.
9 Therefore *as* I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,
Surely Moab shall be as Sodom,
And the children of Ammon as Gomorrah,
Even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation:

SALT-PITS.

The residue of my people shall spoil them,
And the remnant of my people shall possess them.
10 This shall they have for their pride,
Because they have reproached and magnified *themselves*
Against the people of the LORD of hosts.
11 The LORD *will be* terrible unto them:
For he will famish all the gods of the earth;
And *men* shall worship him, every one from his place,
Even all the isles of the heathen.

The Moabites and Ammonites were both of the posterity of Lot; their countries joined, and both adjoining to Israel, they are here put together in the prophecy against them.

First. They are both charged with the same crime, and that was reproaching and reviling the people of God, and triumphing in their calamities; ver. 8, "They have reproached my people." While God's people kept close to their duty, it is probable they reproached them for the singularities of their religion; and now they had revolted from God, and were fallen under his displeasure, they reproached them for that too. It has been the common lot of God's people in all ages to be reproached and reviled upon one account or other; thus the old serpent spits his venom; and pride is at the bottom of it. It is in their pride that they have "magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts," thinking themselves as good as they, as great, and every way as happy. It is the contempt of the proud that God's people are filled with, *Ps.* cxxiii. 4. They have 'spoken big' (so some read it, *magni locuti sunt*,—'they have spoken great things,') "against their border," ver. 8, against those of them that bordered upon their country, whom upon all occasions they insulted; or, against the property they claimed, which they disputed, or the protection they boasted of, which they ridiculed. They spoke big against the people of the Lord of hosts, as a deserted, abandoned people; great swelling words of vanity are the genuine language of the church's enemies. But I have heard them, saith God, and will let you know that I have heard them. I have heard, and I will reckon for them, *Jude* 15. And if God hears the reproaches and revilings we are under, it is a good reason why we should be as a deaf man that hears not, *Ps.* xxxviii. 14, 15. Nay, God not only takes notice of, but interests himself in, the reproaches cast on his people, because they are his; and it is certain they who look with disdain upon the people of the Lord of hosts thereby dishonour the Lord of hosts himself. See this very thing charged on Moab and Ammon, *Eze.* xxv. 3, 8.

Secondly. They are both laid under the same doom. Associates in iniquity may expect to be so in desolation. See with what solemnity sentence is pronounced upon them, ver. 9. It is the Lord of hosts, the sovereign Lord of all, who has authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it; it is the God of Israel, who is jealous for their honour; it is he that has said it, nay, he hath sworn it, "As I live, saith the Lord." The sentence is, 1. That the Moabites and Ammonites shall be quite destroyed. They shall be as Sodom and as Gomorrah, the marks of whose ruins in the Dead Sea lay near adjoining to the countries of Moab and Ammon; they shall, though not by the same means, even fire from heaven, yet almost in the same manner, be laid waste, not again to be inhabited, or not for a long time. The country shall produce nothing but nettles instead of corn, and there shall be brine pits instead of the pleasant fountains of water with which the country had abounded. 2. That Israel shall be too hard for them, shall spoil them of their goods, and possess their country by lawful war. Note, Proud men sometimes, by the just judgment of God, fall under the mortification of being trampled upon themselves by those whom, when time was, they haughtily trampled upon. And this they shall have for their pride.

Thirdly. Other nations shall in like manner be humbled, that the Lord alone may be exalted; ver. 11, The Lord will be terrible unto the Moabites and Ammonites in particular, who have made themselves a terror to his Israel. For, 1. Heathen gods must be abolished. They have long had possession, and their worshippers have both glorified them and gloried in them; but the Lord will famish all the gods of the earth, will starve them out of their strongholds. The pagans had a fond conceit that their idols were regaled by their offerings, and did eat the fat of their sacrifices, *Deu.* xxxii. 38; *omnia comesta a Belo*,—'Bel has eaten all.' But it is here promised that when the Christian religion is set up in the world, men shall be turned from the service of these dumb idols, shall forsake their altars, and bring no more sacrifices to them, and thus they shall be famished, or made lean, as the word is; their priests shall. This speaks the vanity of these idols; it lies in the power of their worshippers to famish them; whereas the true God saith, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee." It speaks also the victory of the God of Israel over them, "Now know we that he is greater than all gods." 2. Heathen nations must be converted; when the Gospel gets ground, by it men shall be brought to worship him who lives for ever, for that is the command of the everlasting Gospel, *Rev.* xiv. 7; "Every one from his place;" they shall not need to go up to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel, but wherever they are they may have access to him; "I will that men pray everywhere." God shall be worshipped, not only by all the tribes of Israel, and the strangers who join themselves to them, but by "all the isles of the heathen." This is a promise which looks favourably upon our native country, for it is one of the most considerable of the isles of the Gentiles, by which God will be glorified.

12 Ye Ethiopians also,
Ye *shall be* slain by my sword.
13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north,
And destroy Assyria;
And will make Nineveh a desolation,
And dry like a wilderness.
14 And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her,
All the beasts of the nations:

PELICANS, OR CORMORANTS.
1119

Both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it;
Their voice shall sing in the windows;
Desolation *shall be* in the thresholds:
For he shall uncover the cedar work.
15 This *is* the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, [me:
That said in her heart, I *am*, and *there is* none beside
How is she become a desolation,
A place for beasts to lie down in! [hand.
Every one that passeth by her shall hiss, *and* wag his

The cup is going round, when Nebuchadnezzar is going on conquering and to conquer, and not only Israel's near neighbours, but those that lay more remote, must be reckoned with for the wrongs they had done to God's people. The Ethiopians and the Assyrians are here taken to task.

First. The Ethiopians, or Arabians, that had sometimes been a terror to Israel, as in Asa's time, 2 *Chr.* xiv. 9, must now be reckoned with. They "shall be slain by my sword," ver. 12. Nebuchadnezzar was God's sword, the instrument in his hand, with which these and other enemies were subdued and punished, *Ps.* xvii. 14.

Secondly. The Assyrians, and Nineveh, the head city of their monarchy, are next set to the bar to receive their doom. He that is God's sword will "stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria," and make himself master of it. Assyria had been the rod of God's anger against Israel, and now Babylon is the rod of God's anger against Assyria, *Isa.* x. 5. He will "make Nineveh a desolation," as had been lately and largely foretold by the prophet Nahum. Observe,

1. How flourishing Nineveh's state had formerly been; ver. 15, "This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly." Nineveh was so strong that she feared no evil, and therefore dwelt carelessly, and set danger at defiance; was so rich, that she thought herself sure of all good, and therefore was a rejoicing city, full of mirth and gaiety; and had such a dominion, that she admitted no rival, but said in her heart, "I am, and there is none besides me," that can compare with me, no city in the world that can pretend to be equal with me. God can with his judgments frighten the most secure, humble the most haughty, and mar the mirth of those that laugh most now.

2. How complete Nineveh's ruin shall now be. It shall be made a desolation, ver. 13. Such a heap of ruins shall this once pompous city be, that it shall be, 1st. A receptacle for beasts, such a wilderness that flocks shall lie down in it; nay, such a waste, desolate, frightful place, that wild beasts, the beasts of the nations, all kinds of beasts, shall take up their abode there; the melancholy birds, as the cormorant and bittern, shall make their nests in what remains of the houses, as they sometimes do in old ruinous buildings that are uninhabited and unfrequented. The lintels, or chapiters of the pillars, the windows and thresholds, and all the fine cedar work curiously engraven, shall lie exposed; and on them these rueful, ominous birds shall perch, and their voice shall sing. How are the songs of mirth turned into hideous, horrid noises! What little reason have men to be proud of stately buildings, and rich furniture, when they know not what all the pomp of them may come to at last. 2nd. A derision to travellers. They that had come from far to gratify their curiosity with the sight of Nineveh's splendour shall now look on her with as much contempt as ever they looked upon her with admiration; ver. 15, "Every one that passeth by shall hiss" at her, "and wag his hand," making light of her desolations, nay, and making sport with them; there is an end of proud Nineveh. They shall not weep and wring their hands, their adversities are unpitied and unlamented that were insolent and haughty in their prosperity; but they shall hiss and wag their hands, forgetting that perhaps their own ruin is not far off.

CHAPTER III.

We now return to Jerusalem, and must again hear what God has to say to her, I. By way of reproof and threatening, for the abundance of wickedness that was found in her, of which divers instances are given, with the aggravations of them, ver. 1—7. II. By way of promise of mercy and grace, which God had yet in reserve for them. Two general heads of promises here are: 1. That God would bring in a glorious work of reformation among them, cleanse them from their sins, and bring them home to himself: many promises of this kind here are, ver. 8—13; 2. That he would bring about a glorious work of salvation for them, when he had thus prepared them for it, ver. 14—20. Thus the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and, to clear his own way, shall turn away ungodliness fron Jacob. These promises were to have their full accomplishment in gospel times and gospel graces.

WOE to her that is filthy and polluted,
To the oppressing city!
2 She obeyed not the voice;
She received not correction;
She trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.
3 Her princes within her *are* roaring lions;
Her judges *are* evening wolves;
They gnaw not the bones till the morrow.
4 Her prophets *are* light *and* treacherous persons:
Her priests have polluted the sanctuary,
They have done violence to the law.
5 The just LORD *is* in the midst thereof;
He will not do iniquity:
Every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not;
But the unjust knoweth no shame.
6 I have cut off the nations; their towers are desolate;

I made their streets waste, that none passeth by:
Their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man,
That there is none inhabitant.
7 I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction;
So their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them:
But they rose early, *and* corrupted all their doings.

STREET OF AN ANCIENT CITY, POMPEII.—FROM MODEL AT SIR. J. SOANE'S MUSEUM.

One would wonder that Jerusalem, the holy city, where God was known, and his name was great, should be the city of which this black character is here given; that a place that enjoyed such plenty of the means of grace should become so very corrupt and vicious, and that God should permit it to be so; yet so it is, to shew that the law made nothing perfect. But, if this be the true character of Jerusalem, as no doubt it is, for God's justice will make none worse than they are, it is no wonder that the prophet begins with "Woe to her," for the holy God hates sin in those that are nearest to him, nay, in them he hates it most. A sinful state is, and will be, a woful state.

First. Here is a very ill character given of the city in general. How is the faithful city become a harlot! 1. She shames herself. She is filthy and polluted, has made herself infamous, (so some read it,) ver. 1; the gluttonous city, (so the margin,) always cramming, and making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts of it. Sin is the filthiness and pollution of persons and places, and makes them odious in the sight of the holy God. 2. She wrongs her neighbours and inhabitants; she is the oppressing city. Never any place had statutes and judgments so righteous as this city had, and yet in the administration of the government never was more unrighteousness. 3. She is very provoking to her God, and in every respect walks contrary to him, ver. 2. He has given his law, and spoken to her by his servants the prophets, telling her what is the good she should do, and what the evil she should avoid; but she obeyed not his voice, nor made conscience of doing as he commanded her, in any thing. He has taken her under an excellent discipline, both of the word and of the rod, but she did not receive the instruction of the one or the correction of the other; did not submit to God's will, nor answer his end in either. He encouraged her to depend upon him, and his power and promise, for deliverance from evil, and supply with good, but "she trusted not in the Lord;" her confidence was placed in her alliances with great nations more than in her covenant with God. He gave her tokens of his presence, and instituted ordinances of communion for her with himself, but "she drew not near to her God," did not meet him where he appointed, and where he promised to meet her. She stood at a distance, and said to the Almighty, "Depart."

Secondly. Here is a very ill character of the leading men in it. Those that should, by their influence, suppress vice and profaneness there, are the wicked patterns and patrons of it; and those that should be her physicians are really her worst disease. 1. Her princes are ravenous and barbarous as roaring lions, that make a prey of all about them, and are universally feared and hated; they use their power for destruction, and not for edification. 2. Her judges, that should be the protectors of injured innocence, are evening wolves, rapacious and greedy, and their cruelty and covetousness both insatiable. They gnaw not the bones till the morrow; they take so much delight and pleasure in cruelty and oppression that, when they have devoured a good man, they reserve the bones, as it were, for a sweet morsel, to be gnawed the next morning, *Job* xxxi. 31. 3. Her prophets, that pretended to be special messengers from heaven to them, were light and treacherous persons, fanciful and of a vain imagination, frothy and airy, and of a loose conversation; men of no consistency with themselves, nor that one could put any confidence in. They were so given to bantering that it was hard to say when they were serious. Their pretended prophecies were all a sham, and they secretly laughed at those that were deluded by them. 4. Her priests, that were teachers by office, and had the charge of the holy things, were false to their trust, and betrayed it. They were to preserve the purity of the sanctuary, but they did themselves pollute it, and the sacred offices of it which they were to attend upon; such priests as Hophni and Phineas, that by their wicked lives made the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred. They were to expound and apply the law, and to judge according to it, but in their explications and applications of it they did violence to the law; they corrupted the sense of it, and perverted it to the patronizing of that which was directly contrary to it. By forced constructions they made the law speak what they pleased, to serve a turn, and so in effect made void the law.

Thirdly. We have here the aggravations of this general corruption of all orders and degrees of men in Jerusalem.

1. They had the tokens of God's presence among them, and all the advantages that could be of knowing his will, with the strongest inducements possible to do it, and yet they persisted in their disobedience, ver. 5. 1. They had the honour and privilege of the Shechinah, God's dwelling in their land, so as he dwelt not with any other people. "The just Lord is in the midst" of thee, to take cognizance of all thou dost amiss, and give countenance to all thou dost well. He is in the midst of thee as a holy God, and therefore thy pollutions are the more offensive, *Deu.* xxiii. 14. He is in the midst of thee as a just God, and therefore will punish the affronts you put upon him, and the wrongs and injuries you do to one another. 2. They had God's own example set before them, in the discovery he made of himself to them, that they might conform to it. "He will not do iniquity," and therefore you shall not; for this was the great rule of their institution, Be ye holy, for I am holy. God will be true to you, be not you then false to him. 3. He sent to them his prophets, rising up early and sending them. "Every morning doth he bring his judgment to light," as duly as the morning comes, he faileth not; he shews them plainly what the good is he requires of them, and puts them in mind of it. He wakeneth morning by morning, *Isa.* l. 4; wakens his prophets with the rising sun, to bring to light the things which belonged to their peace. So that, upon the whole matter, what more could have been done to his vineyard to make it fruitful? *Isa.* v. 4; and yet, after all, the unjust know no shame; they that have been unjust are unjust still, and are not ashamed of their unrighteousness, neither can they blush. If they had any sense of honour, any shame left in them, they would not go so directly contrary to their profession, and to the instructions given them. But they that are past shame are past cure.

2. God has set before their eyes some remarkable monuments of his justice, which were designed for warnings to them; ver. 6, "I have cut off the nations," the seven nations of Canaan, which the land spewed out for their wickedness; upon which they had this caution given to them, to "take heed lest it spew out them also," *Lev.* xviii. 28. Or it may refer to some of the neighbour nations, that were made desolate for their wickedness, especially to the nation of Israel, the ten tribes; their towers were desolate, their high towers, their strong towers, their pride and power broken, their streets wasted, so that none passed along through them; their cities were destroyed and laid in ruins, no man was to be found in them, no inhabitant, all were slain or carried into captivity. The enemies did it, but God avows it: I cut them off, saith he. And God designed this for an admonition to Jerusalem; *Eze.* xxiii. 9, 11, "I said, Surely thou wilt fear me;" surely these judgments upon others will deter thee from the like wicked practices; "surely thou wilt receive instruction" by these providences; it ought reasonably to be expected that thou wouldst not continue to sin like the nations when thou seest the ruin which their sin has brought upon them. They could not but see their own house in danger when their neighbour's was on fire; and when we are frightened, God should be feared.

3. He had set before them life and death, good and evil, both in his word and in his providence. 1. He had assured them of the continuance of their prosperity, if they would fear him, and receive instruction; for "so their dwelling would not be cut off," as their neighbour's was,—if they took the warning given them, and reformed, what was past should be pardoned, and their tranquillity lengthened out. 2. He had made them feel the smart of the rod, though he reprieved them from the sword; "Howsoever I punished them," that being chastened they might not be condemned. Such various methods did God take with them to reclaim them, but all in vain,—they were not to be won upon by gentle methods, nor had severe ones any effect, for "they rose early, and corrupted all their doings." They were more resolute and eager in their wicked courses than ever, more studious and solicitous in making provision for their lusts, and let slip no opportunity for the gratification of them. God rose up early to send them his prophets, to reduce and reclaim them; but they were up before him, to shut and bolt the door against them. Their wickedness was universal,—all their doings were corrupted, and it was all along of themselves; they could not lay the blame upon the tempter, but they alone must bear it. They themselves wilfully and designedly "corrupted all their doings," for "every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed."

8 Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD,
Until the day that I rise up to the prey:
For my determination *is* to gather the nations,
That I may assemble the kingdoms,
To pour upon them mine indignation, *even* all my fierce anger:
For all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.
9 For then will I turn to the people a pure language,
That they may all call upon the name of the LORD,
To serve him with one consent.
10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants,
Even the daughter of my dispersed,
Shall bring mine offering.
11 In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings,
Wherein thou hast transgressed against me;
For then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride,
And thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.
12 I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people,
And they shall trust in the name of the LORD.
13 The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak [lies;

Neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: For they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make *them* afraid.

Things looked very bad with Jerusalem in the foregoing verses; she has got into a very ill name, and seems to be incorrigible, incurable, mercy proof and judgment proof. Now one would think it should follow,—therefore expect no other but that she should be utterly abandoned and rejected, as reprobate silver. Since they will not be wrought upon by prophets or providences, let them be made a desolation, as their neighbours have been. But behold and wonder at the riches of Divine grace, which takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious. They still grew worse and worse; "Therefore, wait ye upon me, saith the Lord," ver. 8; since the law it seems will make nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope shall. Let those that lament the corruptions of the church wait upon God, till he send his Son into the world to save his people from their sins,—till he send his Gospel to reform and refine his church, and to purify to himself a peculiar people, both of Jews and Gentiles. And there were those who, according to this direction and encouragement, waited for redemption, for this redemption, in Jerusalem, and long looked for it came at last, *Lu.* ii. 38. For judgment Christ will come into this world, *Jno.* ix. 39.

First. To avenge what has been done amiss against his church, to bring down and destroy the enemies of it,—its spiritual enemies, of which the destruction of Babylon, and other the oppressors of God's people, in the Old Testament times, was a type, and would be a happy presage. He will rise up to the prey, to lead captivity captive, *Ps.* lxviii. 18, to conquer and spoil the powers of darkness, and the powers on earth, that set themselves "against the Lord and his Anointed." He will "break them with a rod of iron," *Ps.* ii. 5, 9; xi. 5, 6. His determination is to gather the nations, and to assemble the kingdoms. By the Gospel of Christ preached to every creature all nations are summoned, as it were, to appear in a body before the Lord Jesus, who is about to set up his kingdom in the world. But, since the greatest part of mankind will not obey the summons, he will pour upon them his indignation; for he that "believes not is condemned already." At the time of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah there shall be on earth "distress of nations with perplexity," *Lu.* xxi. 25; great tribulation, such as never was or ever shall be, *Mat.* xxiv. 21. Then God pours upon the nations his indignation, even all his fierce anger, for their indignation and fierce anger against the Messiah and his kingdom, *Ps.* ii. 1, 2. Then "all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of his jealousy," both Jews and Gentiles shall be reckoned with for their enmity to the Gospel. Principalities and powers shall be spoiled and made a shew of openly, and the victorious Redeemer shall triumph over them. Those that continue to be of the earth, and to mind earthly things, after God has set up the kingdom of heaven among men, "their end shall be destruction," *Phil.* iii. 19; they shall be "devoured with the fire of God's jealousy."

Secondly. To amend what he finds amiss in his church. When God intends the restoration of Israel, and the revival of their peace and prosperity, he makes way for it by their reformation, and the revival of their virtue and piety; for this is God's method, both with particular persons and with communities, first to make them holy, and then to make them happy. These promises were in part accomplished, after the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when by their captivity they were thoroughly cured of their idolatry; and this was all the fruit, even the taking away of sin. But it looks farther, to the blessed effects of the Gospel, and the grace of it, to those times of reformation we live in, *Heb.* ix. 10.

1. It is promised that there shall be a reformation in men's discourse, which had been generally corrupt, but should now be with grace seasoned with salt; ver. 9, "Then will I turn to the people a pure language;" that is, I will turn the people to such a language, from that evil communication which had almost ruined all good manners among them. Note, Converting grace refines the language, not by making the phrases witty, but the substance wise. Among the Jews, after the captivity, there needed a reformation of the dialect; for they had mingled the language of Canaan with that of Ashdod, *Neh.* xiii. 24, and that grievance shall be redressed. But that is not all; their language shall be purified from all profaneness, filthiness, and falsehood. I will turn to them a choice language, so some read it; they shall not speak rashly, but with caution and deliberation; they shall choose out their words. Note, An air of purity and piety in common conversation is a very happy omen to any people. Other graces, other blessings, shall be given where God gives a pure language to those that have been a people of unclean lips.

2. That the worship of God, according to his will, shall be more closely applied to, and more unanimously concurred in. Instead of sacrifice and incense, they shall call upon the name of the Lord. Prayer is the spiritual offering with which God must be honoured; and to prepare and fit us for that duty it is necessary that we have a pure language. We are utterly unfit to take God's name into our lips, unless they be pure lips. The purifying of the language in common conversation is necessary to the acceptableness of the words of our mouth, and the meditation of our heart in our devotion; for how can sweet waters and bitter come out of the same fountain? *Jas.* iii. 9—12. It is likewise promised, that, their language being thus purified, they shall serve God with one consent, with one shoulder, so the word is, alluding to oxen in the yoke, that draw even. When Christians are unanimous in the service of God the work goes on cheerfully. This is the effect of the pure language, purified from passion, envy, and censoriousness. Note, Purity is the way to unity, the reformation of manners the way to a comprehension. The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.

3. That those that were driven from God should return to him, and be accepted of him; ver. 10, "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia," that is, from Egypt, so described, *Isa.* xviii. 1, or from some other very remote country, "my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering." Those that by reason of their distance had almost forgotten God, and their obligations to him, shall be put in mind of him, as the prodigal son was of his father's house, in the far country. Those that, by reason of their dispersion under the tokens of his displeasure, might be afraid of coming to him, yet even they shall be gathered under his wings. The daughter of his dispersed that is afar off will be found among those whom the Lord our God shall call; and though they are dispersed he will own them for his. His calling them "My dispersed" puts honour upon them, sufficient to balance all the disgrace of their dispersion. These shall come, 1. With their humble petitions; "They are my suppliants." Note, True converts are supplicants to God; they do not plead, but "make supplication to their Judge," *Job* ix. 15; and wherever they are, though beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, a great way off from the house of prayer, he has his eye upon them, and his ear open to them; they are his suppliants. 2. With their spiritual sacrifices. They shall bring mine offering,—shall bring themselves as spiritual sacrifices to God, *Rom.* xii. 1. The conversion of the Gentiles is called "the offering up of the Gentiles," *Rom.* xv. 16; and with themselves they shall bring the gospel sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and alms, with which God is well pleased.

4. That sin and sinners shall be purged out from among them, ver. 11. God will take away, 1. Their just reproach; "In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings." They shall be ashamed as penitents, and shall continue to be so, (see *Eze.* xvi. 63,) but they shall not be ashamed as sinners that return to folly again. "Thou shalt not be ashamed," that is, thou shalt no more do a shameful thing, as thou hast done. The guilt of sin being taken away by pardoning mercy, the reproach of it shall be rolled away from the sinner's own conscience, that being purified, and pacified, and cleansed from dead works. When wickedness and wicked people abound in a nation, those few in it that are good are ashamed of them and of their land; but when sinners are converted, and the land reformed, that shame, and the cause of it, are removed. 2. Their unjust glorying; "I will take away out of the midst of thee," not only the profane that are a shame to thy land, but the hypocrites that appear beautiful outwardly, and rejoice in thy pride, in the holy city, the holy house. These were indeed Israel's glory, but they made them their pride, and rejoiced in them, as if they were an invincible bulwark to secure them in their sinful ways; they relied on them as their righteousness and strength, boasting of "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord," *Jer.* vii. 4; they were "haughty because of the holy mountain;" were conceited of themselves, scornful of others, and set even the judgments of God at defiance. Note, Church privileges, when they are not duly improved as they ought to be, are often made the matter of man's pride, and the ground of their security. But that haughtiness is of all other the most offensive to God which is supported and fed by the pretensions of holiness. This God will silence and take away.

5. That God will have a remnant of holy, humble, serious people among them, that shall have the comfort of their relation to him, and interest in him; ver. 12, "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people." When the Chaldeans carried away the Jews into captivity, they left of the poor of the land for vine-dressers and husbandmen, a type and figure of God's distinguished remnant, whom he sets apart for himself,—they are afflicted, and poor, and low in the world; such God hath chosen, *Jas.* ii. 5. The poor are evangelized, low in their own eyes, afflicted for sin, poor in spirit. They are God's leaving; for it is a "remnant according to the election of grace; I have reserved them to myself," saith God, *Rom.* xi. 4, 5, and "they shall trust in the name of the Lord." Note, Those whom God designs for the glory of his name he enables to trust in his name; and the greater their affliction and poverty in the world is, the more reason they see to trust in God, having nothing else to trust to, 1 *Tim.* v. 5.

6. That this select remnant shall be blessed with purity and peace, ver. 13. 1st. They shall be blessed with purity, both in words and actions. They shall neither do iniquity nor speak lies; justice and veracity shall command them, and govern them, though it be never so much against their secular interest. They shall not only not speak a direct deliberate lie, but "there shall not be a deceitful tongue found in their mouth," not in the mouth of any of them; not the least equivocation shall come from them. 2nd. They shall be blessed with peace. They shall, as the sheep of God's pasture, feed and lie down, and "none shall make them afraid." They shall not be fearful themselves, nor shall any about them be frightful to them. Note, Those that are careful not to do iniquity need not be afraid of any calamity, for it cannot hurt them, and therefore should not terrify them.

14 Sing, O daughter of Zion;
Shout, O Israel;
Be glad and rejoice with all the heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem.
15 The LORD hath taken away thy judgments,
He hath cast out thine enemy:
The king of Israel, *even* the LORD, *is* in the midst of thee:
Thou shalt not see evil any more.
16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not:
And to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.
17 The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty;
He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy;
He will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.
18 I will gather *them that are* sorrowful for the solemn assembly,
Who are of thee,
To whom the reproach of it *was* a burden.
19 Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee:
And I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out;
And I will get them praise and fame
In every land where they have been put to shame.
20 At that time will I bring you *again*,
Even in the time that I gather you:
For I will make you a name and a praise
Among all people of the earth,
When I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

After the promises of taking away of sin here follow promises of the taking away of trouble; for when the cause is removed the effect will cease: what makes a people holy will make them happy of course. The precious promises here made to the purified people were to have their full accomplishment in the comforts of the Gospel; in the hope, and much more in the enjoyment, of which they are here called upon, 1. To rejoice and sing; ver. 14, "Sing, O daughter of Zion," sing for joy, "shout, O Israel," in a holy transport and exultation. "Be glad and rejoice with all the heart;" let the joy be inward, let it be great. Those that love God with all their heart have occasion with all their heart to rejoice in him. It was promised, ver. 13, that their sins should be mortified, and these fears silenced, and then follows, Sing and rejoice. Note, Those that reform have cause to rejoice, whereas Israel cannot rejoice for joy, as other people, while she goes a whoring from her God. God's promises applied by faith furnish the saints with constant and abundant matter for joy; they are filled with joy and peace in believing them. 2. To throw off all

their discouragements; ver. 16, "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem,"—God will say it by his prophets, by his providences, their neighbours shall say it, they shall it to one another,—"Fear thou not," be not disposed to fear, do not easily admit the impressions of it; when things are bad fear not their being worse, but hope they will mend; frighten not thyself upon every occasion. "Let not thy hands be slack," or faint; wring not thy hands in despair, drop not thy hands in despondency, disfit not thyself for thy work and warfare by giving way to doubts and fears. Pluck up thy spirits; and in token of that lift up thy hands, "the hands that hung down," *Heb.* xii. 12; *Isa.* xxxv. 3. Lift up thy hands in prayer to God; lift up thy hands to help thyself. Fear makes the hands slack, but faith and hope make them vigorous; and the joy of the land will be our strength, both for doing and suffering.

Let us now see what these precious promises are, which are here made to the people of God, for the banishing of their griefs and fears, and the encouraging of their hopes and joys; and to us are these promises made as well as to them.

First. An end shall be put to all their troubles and distresses; ver. 15, "The Lord hath taken away thy judgments," hath removed all the calamities thou hast been groaning under, which were the punishments of thy sin. The noise of war shall be silenced, the reproach of famine done away, and the captivity brought back. Though some grievances remain, they shall be only afflictions, and not judgments, for sin shall be pardoned. "He hath cast out thine enemy," that has thrust himself into thy land, and triumphed over thee. He hath swept out thine enemy, so some read it, as dirt is swept out of the house to the dunghill. When they sweep out their sins with the besom of reformation God will sweep out their enemies with the besom of destruction. If they should need correction, they shall fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, and shall not again fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel. "Thou shalt not see evil any more," not such evil days as thou hast seen. Note, The way to get clear of the evil of trouble is to keep clear from the evil of sin; and to them that do so trouble has no real evil in it.

Secondly. God will give them the tokens of his presence with them. Though he has long seemed to stand at a distance, they having provoked him to withdraw, he will make it to appear that he is with them of a truth; "The Lord is in the midst of thee, O Zion," of thee, O Jerusalem, as the sun in the centre of the universe, to diffuse his light and influence upon every part. He is in the midst of thee, to preside in all thine affairs, and to take care of all thine interests. And, 1. He is the King of Israel, ver. 15; and is in the midst of thee, as a king in the midst of his people. With an eye to this, our Lord Jesus is called the King of Israel, *Jno.* i. 49; and he is, and will be, in the midst of his church always, even to the end of the world, to receive the homage of his subjects, and to give out his favours to them, even where but "two or three are gathered together in his name." 2. He is the Lord thy God, thine in covenant; and he is in the midst of thee as thy God, whom thou hast an interest in, and whose own thou art. He has put himself into dear relation to thee, laid himself by promise under obligations to thee; and, that thou mayst have abundant comfort in both, he is in the midst of thee, nigh at hand to answer both. 3. He that "is in the midst of thee," as thy God and King, is mighty, is almighty, is able to do all for thee that thou needest and canst desire. 4. He has engaged his power for thy succour; "He will save." He will be Jesus; he will answer the name, for he will save his people from their sins.

Thirdly. God will take delight in them, and in doing them good. The expressions of this are very lively and affecting; ver. 17, "He will rejoice over thee with joy;" will not only be well pleased with thee upon thy repentance and reformation, and take thee into favour, but will take a complacency in thee, as the bridegroom doth in his bride, or the bride in her ornaments, *Isa.* lxii. 3—5. The conversion of sinners, and the consolation of saints, is the joy of angels; for it is the joy of God himself. The church should be the joy of the whole earth, *Ps.* xlviii. 2, for it is the "joy of the whole heaven." He will rest in his love, will be silent in his love, so the word is; will not rebuke thee as I have done, for thy sins; will acquiesce in thee, and in my relation to thee. I know not where there is the like expression of Christ's love to his church, unless in that song of songs, *Cant.* iv. 5, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse, with one of thine eyes." O the condescensions of Divine grace! The great God not only loves his saints, but he loves to love them, is pleased that he has pitched upon these objects of his love. He "will joy over them with singing." He that is grieved for the sin of sinners, rejoiceth in the graces and services of the saints, and is ready to express that joy, by singing over them. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him;" and in them Jesus Christ will shortly be glorified and admired.

Fourthly. God will comfort Zion's mourners, that sympathize with her in her griefs, and will wipe away their tears; ver. 18, "I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assemblies, to whom the reproach of it was a burthen." See, 1. Who they are whom God will rejoice in, and make to rejoice. They are such as are sorrowful; they only must expect to reap in joy that sow in tears. The sorrowful now shall be for ever joyful. 2. What is the great matter of sorrow to Zion's mourners, when Zion is in mourning. Many are her calamities, the city is ruined, the palaces demolished, trade is at an end, and the administration of public justice; but all these are nothing to them in comparison with the desolations of the sanctuary, the destruction of the temple and the altar, to attend on which, in solemn feasts, all Israel used to come together three times a year: it is for those sacred solemn assemblies that they are sorrowful. 1st. Because they are dispersed. There is no temple to come up to, or, if there were, no people to come up to it, so that the "solemn feasts and sabbaths are forgotten in Zion," *Lam.* ii. 6. Note, The restraining of public assemblies for religious worship, the scattering of them by their enemies, or the forsaking of them by their friends, so that either there are no assemblies, or not solemn ones, is a very sorrowful thing to all good people. If the ways of Zion mourn, the sons of Zion mourn too. And hereby they make it to appear that they are indeed of Zion, living members of that body with the grievances of which they are so sensibly affected. 2nd. Because they are despised. The reproach of the solemn assemblies is a burthen to them. It had been the lot of the solemn assemblies to lie under a great deal of reproach, Satan and his instruments having a particular spite at them, as the great support of the interests of God's kingdom among men. Black and odious characters have been put upon those assemblies; and this is a burthen to all those who have a cordial concern for the glory of God and the welfare of the souls of men. They reckon that the reproaches of those who reproach the solemn assemblies fall upon them, fall foul upon them.

Fifthly. God will recover the captives out of the hands of their oppressors, and bring home the banished that seemed to be expelled, ver. 19, 20. 1. Their enemies shall be disabled to detain them in bondage: "At that time I will undo all that afflict thee," will break their power, and blast their counsels, so that they shall be forced to surrender the prey they have taken. *Conficiam*,—'I will take them to task;' I will be doing with them shortly, and so as to make an end of them. Note, Those that abuse and oppress God's people take the ready way to undo themselves. 2. They shall be enabled to assert and recover their liberty, and all the difficulties in the way of it shall be surmounted. Is the church weak and wounded? "I will save her that halteth," as was promised, *Mic.* iv. 7. He will help her when she cannot help herself, even "the lame shall take the prey," *Isa.* xxxiii. 23. Is she dispersed, and not likely to incorporate for her common benefit? I will "gather her that was driven out, and bring her again at the time that I gather her;" one act of mercy and grace shall serve both to collect them out of their dispersions and conduct them to their own land. When the people's hearts are prepared, the work will be done suddenly; and who can hinder it, if God undertake to effect it? "I will turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord;" you shall plainly discern the hand of God in it, and say, "This is the Lord's doing."

Sixthly. God will by all this put honour upon them, and gain them respect from all about them. Israel was at first "made high above all nations in praise and fame," *Deu.* xxvi. 19. The reproach brought upon them was therefore one of the sorest of their grievances,—nothing cuts deeper to those that are in honour than disgrace doth,—and therefore, when God returns in mercy to his church, it is here promised that she shall regain her credit; all the reproach shall be for ever rolled away, as Israel's at Gilgal, *Jos.* v. 9. The church shall be as honourable as ever she has been despicable. 1. Even those that have reproached her shall be made to respect her. "I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame," that the same who were the witnesses of their disgrace may see cause to change their mind concerning them. They that said, This is Zion, whom no man looketh after, shall say, This is Zion, whom the great God looks after: and she that was looked upon to be the offscouring of the earth now appears to be the darling of heaven. 2. Even those that never knew her shall be brought to honour her; ver. 20, "I will make you a name and a praise among all the people of the earth;" so the Jewish church was, when the fear of the Jews fell upon their neighbours, *Esth.* viii. 17; and some of all nations said, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you," *Zec.* viii. 23. So the Christian church was, when it was made to flourish in the world, for there is that in it which may justly recommend it to the value and esteem of all the people of the earth: and so the universal church of the firstborn will be in the great day, when the saints shall be brought together to Christ, that he may be admired and glorified in them, and they admired and glorified in him, before angels and men. Then will God's Israel be "made a name and a praise" to eternity.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
TO THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH.

CHAP. II.—4. *Gaza shall be forsaken.* Supplementary Note, *Jer.* xlv. 5. *Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod; Ekron shall be rooted up.* 6. *And the sea-coasts shall be cottages for shepherds.* Supplementary Note, *Eze.* xxv. 16. The ruins of white marble sometimes found at Gaza prove that it was formerly the abode of luxury and opulence. It has shared in the general destruction; and, notwithstanding its proud title of the capital of Palestine, it is now no more than a defenceless village, peopled by, at most, only two thousand inhabitants.—The sea-coast, by which it was formerly washed, is every day removing farther from the deserted ruins of Ashkelon.—Amidst the various successive ruins, those of Edzoud, (Ashdod,) so powerful under the Philistines, are now remarkable for their scorpions.—*Volney's Travels.*——In short, cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks, partially scattered along the sea-coasts, are now truly the best substitutes for populous cities that the once powerful realm of Philistia can produce; and the remnant of that land which gave titles and grandeur to the lords of the Philistines is destroyed. Gaza, the chief of its satrapies, 'the abode of luxury and opulence,' now bereaved of its king, and bald of all its fortifications, is the defenceless residence of a subsidiary ruler of a devastated province; and, in kindred degradation, ornaments of its once splendid edifices are now bedded in a wall that forms an inclosure for beasts. A handful of men could now take unobstructed possession of that place where a strong city opposed the entrance, and defied, for a time, the power, of the conqueror of the world. The walls, the dwellings, and the people of Ashkelon have all perished; and though its name was, in the time of the crusades, shouted in triumph throughout every land in Europe, it is now literally without an inhabitant. And Ashdod, which withstood a siege treble the duration of that of Troy, and thus outrivalled far the boast of Alexander at Gaza, has, in verification of "the word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword," been cut off, and has fallen before it to nothing. There is yet another city which was noted by the prophets, the very want of any information respecting which, and the absence of its name from several modern maps of Palestine, while the sites of other ruined cities are marked, are really the best confirmation of the truth of the prophecy that could possibly be given: Ekron shall be rooted up. It is rooted up. It was one of the chief cities of the Philistines; but though Gaza still subsists, and while Ashkelon and Ashdod retain their names in their ruins, the very name of Ekron is missing.—*Keith on Prophecy.* Since the above observations of Dr. Keith were written, Ekron has been inserted on one of the maps in Dr. Wilson's Lands of the Bible, most probably on the authority of Dr. Robinson, who describes the small Moslem

village of Akri, five miles south of Ramleh, as occupying the situation of Ekron. This situation corresponds to all that is known of the ancient city; the radical letters of the Arabic name are the same as those of the Hebrew, and both the Christians and Moslems of the neighbourhood regard the site as the same. The village is built of unburnt bricks, and, as there are no apparent ruins, Ekron was probably of the same materials. It is alleged, however, that cisterns and the stones of handmills are often found at Akri, and the adjacent fields.—*Cyclo. of Bib. Liter.*, art. Ekron. Nothwithstanding this, it is not the less certain that Ekron is *rooted out*. The very description of Akri, as occupying its site, and of the cisterns and stones of handmills being found there, and in the adjacent fields, are all the more striking proofs of this fact, and give but additional force to Dr. Keith's concluding words:—'The wonderful contrast in each particular, whether in respect to the land or to the cities of the Philistines, is the exact counterpart of the literal prediction; and, having the testimony of Volney to all the facts, and also indisputable evidence of the great priority of the predictions to the events, what more complete or clearer proof could there be, that each and all of them emanated from the prescience of Heaven?' 13—15. *He will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.* Nineveh ceased to exist before what is usually considered the commencing date of authentic history. No mention of the place occurs in the narratives of the life and wars of Alexander, though the decisive action which destroyed the first Persian monarchy, and transferred the sceptre of the east into his hands, was fought in its locality. In the second century of the Christian era, Lucian expressly states, that so utterly had Nineveh been destroyed, that no vestige of it remained, nor could it be readily ascertained where it had once stood. In Gibbon's relation of the triumph of the emperor Heraclius over the troops of Chosroes, A.D. 627, he styles it the 'battle of Nineveh,' because fought on the vacant site of the city, which afforded a spacious field for the operations of the two armies. In a note he adds, that Niebuhr passed over Nineveh without perceiving it, mistaking for a natural ridge its grass-covered rampart of brick or earth. An old English traveller in the district quaintly remarks,—'Now it is destroyed, as God foretold it should be, by the Chaldeans, being nothing else than a sepulchre of her selfe.' Subsequently the presumed site of the city has been described by Kinneir, Buckingham, and Rich. Following the best authorities, ancient Nineveh may be generally described as differing from Babylon, which was built as a square, by being in the form of an immense parallelogram. It stood upon the Tigris, extending in length along its eastern bank, and in breadth from thence towards the Lycus, a tributary stream, the present Zab. Accordingly, guided by coincidence of position, the traditions of the country, and indications of a departed city, the site of Nineveh has been fixed on the side of the Tigris opposite Mosul, the head-quarters of a small Turkish pashalic, on the west bank of the Tigris. We cross to the eastern side by a bridge of boats, leading to the remnant of one of stone, at present extending over the space occupied by the river when in a flood. There are then before us two principal mounds, nearly due north and south of each other, called Tel Koyunjuk and Nebbi Yunus, distinctly visible from the opposite bank of the stream. Both are artificial elevations, clothed with grass, or otherwise cultivated, except where occupied by the dwellings of some villagers, and might be mistaken on a hasty glance for natural ground. The northern mound, Tel Koyunjuk, according to the measurement of Mr. Rich, is forty-three feet in perpendicular height, and seven thousand six hundred and ninety-one feet in circumference, of an irregular form, with steep sides and a level summit. Some years ago, upon excavating at this spot for stone to repair the bridge over the flood ground of the Tigris, the workmen opened a sepulchral chamber, in which was an inscription, and among bones and rubbish a woman's *khalkhal* or bracelet for the ancle, of silver, covered with torquoise-coloured rust; another differently formed of gold, called a *hejil*, being without bells; and a perfect bracelet of gold beads with pieces of engraved agate. The articles were disposed of, and the chamber obliterated in the work of farther excavation. Koyunjuk is called by the natives the Kalaa, or castle of Ninewe. The southern mound, Nebbi Yunus, or the prophet Jonah, was once the site of a monastery, named after the Divine messenger, from a tradition that Jonah preached on the spot. The hill itself is about fifty feet in perpendicular height above the level of the plain, and exceeds four hundred and thirty-one feet in length from east to west, and three hundred and fifty-five in breadth from north to south. Its antiquity and artificial character are attested by the remains found on digging into it, consisting of bricks and pottery with cuneiform inscriptions, one of which, more than a foot thick, and covered with writing, is now in the British museum. This is a summary of the knowledge obtained respecting the remains of Nineveh, down to the period of Mr. Rich's lamented death, who four times visited the spot during his stay at Bagdad as the English resident. In the year 1833, the French journals announced the success with which some excavations had been crowned, commenced by their consul, M. Botta, at the village of Khorsobad, about five hours of caravan journey eastward from Mosul. The village occupies a mound into which his workmen penetrated, and aided by fresh hands, supplied by the funds contributed by the French government, finally fifteen chambers were opened, some a hundred feet in length, evidently forming part of a stately palace. The walls of these chambers were sculptured with representations of historical events, and with writing in the cuneiform character, so placed as to leave no doubt that it contains explanations of the events described, and the names of the actors in them. Upon the discovery of these antiquities being reported to the French government, the sum of fifty thousand francs was granted to M. Botta for his private expenses, and a hundred thousand francs for that of excavating, while two artists, M. M. Costa and Flandin, were sent out to make drawings of unremovable sculptures, and a ship was despatched to Bussora for the purpose of transporting to Paris those that could be taken away. The return of this vessel to Havre, laden with the spoils of ancient architecture and art, has recently been announced; and a room on the ground-floor of the Louvre has been prepared for their reception, which is to bear the name of the *salle de Nineveh*. From Mosul, the river is descended in light craft or keleks, (see Supplementary Notes to *Isa.* xviii. 2,) of identical construction with the rafts described by Herodotus as common in this region in his day, more than two thousand years ago; and communicating westward with the Euphrates by numerous canals which are still traceable, and southward through the Persian Gulf with the Indian Ocean, Nineveh, by means of the Tigris, had ample facilities for the prosecution of commerce. The defiance of the prophet, "Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven," *Nah.* iii. 16, indicates the commercial habits of the people. We then arrive at the village of Nimroud, about six hours' journey from Mosul. The Turks generally believe this to have been Nimrod's own city, and one or two of the better informed, (says Mr. Rich, *Koordistan*, ii. 231,) with whom I conversed at Mosul, said it was Al Athur, or Ashur, from which the whole country was denominated. It is curious that the villagers still consider Nimrod as their founder. The village story-tellers have a book they call the Kisseh Nimrod, or Tales of Nimrod, with which they entertain the peasants on a winter night. This statement is remarkable, viewed in connection with the fact, that it still remains a vexed question with biblical philologists, whether the passage in *Genesis*, "Out of that land (Shinar) went forth Ashur, and builded Nineveh," ought not rather to be rendered, as it is in the margin, 'Out of that land he (Nimrod) went forth into Ashur, (Assyria,) and builded Nineveh.' Regarded either way, it is singular to find an obscure place on the site of Nineveh, connected by name and local tradition with the first settler in the country. Upon opening a mound at this village, Mr. Layard found an entrance evidently into a building. The entrance was formed by two magnificent lions, winged and human-handed. Upon farther excavation, it led into a hall, a hundred and fifty feet long by thirty broad, from which several entrances, each formed by winged lions or bulls, led to other chambers, and successively fourteen were opened without the whole having been explored. He proceeded laboriously in his work maugre all impediments, and the British Museum now contains some of the results of his indefatigable researches. From these our artist has made several sketches. The whole of the marbles found are in perfect preservation, and the sculptures in relievo shew a degree of art far beyond that which the Egyptians had attained. We are reminded in these sculptures of the spirited descriptions of the chariots and horses, and warriors and drivers of Assyria, as given by Nahum. Three palaces have been discovered, one at Khorsabad by M. Botta, and two by Mr. Layard. The walls of the palace at Nimroud, whence the sculptures have been taken, are of unburnt brick or clay, incrusted with slabs of marble, eight inches thick and seven feet wide; the height is not at present ascertained, as the inscriptions were cut off to make the marbles more portable. These slabs were firmly united together by plugs of brass or wood, as well as wedge-shaped cramps, and each wall presented a record of the valour of the king, both in the war and the chase. There are nine of these in the Museum, the subjects of which are,—the attack of a fortified city,—the king drinking,—the king's chariot drawn by three horses,—the standard-bearer and charioteers of the great king,—the king in the van of a battle, riding in his chariot with his charioteer and shield-bearer,—a hawk-headed deity, seven feet high,—a bull hunt, the king in his chariot, with his huntsmen riding sideways on one horse, and leading another richly caparisoned,—a lion hunt, the king being in his chariot drawn by three horses, which the charioteer urges forward to escape a lion which has already placed his claw on the back of the chariot infuriated with the wounds of four arrows sticking in his body,—a league or treaty of peace, exhibiting two kings, both on foot,—and a colossal human-headed divinity. The historical part of these tablets is evidently designed to exhibit the exploits of one king, whose likeness is preserved throughout, and is doubtless a genuine portrait. The name may ultimately be discovered by deciphering the forthcoming inscriptions. Besides these, vases, drinking cups, chairs, tables, and other articles of domestic use, bracelets, earrings, and other personal ornaments, occur in the sculptures, and all designed in so bold a style, and beautifully finished. 'There are not a few points in the Scriptural account of Babylon and Nineveh which the sculptures of this subterranean edifice authenticate and verify. Babylon is described in the Bible as a land of graven images—a statement which would lead us to infer that in the country of Babylonia the arts were universally diffused, and had attained some degree of perfection. There is the most perfect accordance on this point between the pages of the Bible and the walls of this palace. We find mention made, too, of the "pleasant furniture" of Nineveh; and we find articles of this description frequently introduced in the bas-reliefs we have described. Moreover, the absence of every thing of value, and the marks of fire still visible on the edifice, make it apparent that it was first plundered and then burnt, as the prophet foretold. Little did the builders of this edifice imagine the singular fortune that awaited it,—that it should long outlast the Assyrian monarchy itself; and, after being buried for ages in darkness, should be brought forth to the light, to be the marvel of the last ages of the world, and to bear its testimony to matters of infinitely higher moment to man than the magnificence of the art with which it was so profusely decorated—even the supremacy and truth of that God who foretold by his prophets its destruction, and that of the power that flourished in it, ere yet a stone of it had been overthrown. Such (continues Wylie, in his work on *Fulfilled Prophecy*,) is the latter end of that city which repented in sackcloth and ashes at the preaching of Jonah—which Jehovah at that time spared—but which, returning to her former wickedness, was at last fearfully overthrown. Yet, as if the Divine indignation against Nineveh had begun of late to be mitigated, the aspect of her ruins is now of a less gloomy character than that which belongs to the remains of some other large cities. The scene is almost a pleasant and pastoral one. The dust of Nineveh sleeps beneath a fresh and beautiful turf. On some portions of the plain the plough has been busy for ages; and the ground is covered with crops of grain and cotton, which the niggard soil produces only on the alternate years. The rest of the plain is covered with green sward, dotted here and there with patches of tamarisk bushes. Here there is nothing of the scathed and blasted look which the plain of Chaldea presents, nor are there here those gigantic and hoary mounds which give such unspeakable sublimity to the site of Babylon. One has to reflect on the long line of monarchs and princes who flourished here—the stately palaces—the delicious gardens—the multitude of men—the wealth, the luxury, the wickedness of which this plain was once the abode, and to contrast it with its utter desertion now, and the deep and perpetual silence that reigns over it, before he can feel the truly sublime character of the scene on which he is gazing. Still, as we have said, there is, to this hour, some doubt regarding the site of Nineveh, which, however, it is probable will be speedily dispelled by the investigations going on there. If the remains we have described are the ruins of Nineveh, "how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in!" If these are not the ruins of Nineveh, no man knows where it stood. In either case, how exact has been the fulfilment of the prophecy: "He will make an utter end of the place thereof!"'

CHAP. III.—10. *From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants.* See Supplementary Note on *Nah.* iii. 9. It is a well ascertained fact, though all the historical circumstances with which it is connected have not yet been brought to light, that there have long existed in the west of Abyssinia a people called *Falashas*, or emigrants, who maintain that they derived their origin from Palestine, and all of whom profess the Jewish religion. They are identified, as to physical traits, not with the African races living in Ethiopia, but with the tribes of Arabia. They have their own government conceded to them by the Negus, or king of Ethiopia. When Bruce was there they had a Jewish king named Gideon, and his queen, Judith. Considering how greatly the Christianity of Abyssinia has been mixed up with Judaism, there is every reason to believe that most of the early converts in that country belonged to this very people. That the Falashas are part of the dispersed people whose conversion is here predicted, I can have no doubt. They are singled out as a separate portion of the scattered seed of Abraham, most probably on account of the peculiar circumstances in which they have lived during the dispersion. Their bringing of Jehovah's offering does not necessarily imply that they are, on their conversion, to come with gifts to Jerusalem; all that is intended may only be the pure offering, which, under the new dispensation, was to be presented in every place: see *Mal.* i. 11; and compare ver. 9.—*H.*

REBUILDING THE TEMPLE.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF HAGGAI,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THE captivity in Babylon gave a very remarkable turn to the affairs of the Jewish church, both in history and prophecy. It is made a signal epocha in our Saviour's genealogy, *Mat.* i. 17. Nine of the twelve minor prophets, whose oracles we have been hitherto consulting, lived and preached before that captivity; and most of them had an eye to it in their prophecies, foretelling it as the just punishment of Jerusalem's wickedness. But the last three (in whom the spirit of prophecy took its period, until it revived in Christ's forerunner,) lived and preached after the return out of captivity,—not immediately upon it, but some time after. Haggai and Zechariah appeared much about the same time—eighteen years after the return—when the building of the temple was both retarded by its enemies and neglected by its friends. "Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them," so we read, *Ezr.* v. 1, to reprove them for their remissness, and to encourage them to revive that good work when it had stood still for some time, and to go on with it vigorously, notwithstanding the opposition they met with in it. Haggai began two months before Zechariah, who was raised up to second him, that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established: but Zechariah continued longer at the work; for all Haggai's prophecies that are recorded were delivered within four months, in the second year of Darius, between the beginning of the sixth month and the end of the ninth; but we have Zechariah's prophecies dated above two years after, *Zec.* vii. 1. Some have the honour to lead, others to come last, in the work of God. The Jews ascribe to these two prophets the honour of being members of the great synagogue, as they call it, which was formed after the return out of captivity; we think it more certain, and it was their honour, and a much greater honour, that they prophesied of Christ. Haggai spoke of him as the glory of the latter house, and Zechariah as the Man, the Branch. In them the light of that morning star shone more bright than in the foregoing prophecies, as they lived nearer the time of the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and now began to see his day approaching. The Septuagint makes Haggai and Zechariah to be the penmen of *Ps.* cxxxviii., cxlvi., cxlvii., and cxlviii.

A.M. 3484. B.C. 520.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter, after the preamble of the prophecy, we have, I. A reproof of the people of the Jews for their dilatoriness and slothfulness in building the temple, which had provoked God to contend with them by the judgment of famine and scarcity; with an exhortation to them to resume that good work, and to prosecute it in good earnest, ver. 1—11. II. The good success of this sermon, appearing in the people's return and close application to that work, wherein the prophet, in God's name, animated and encouraged them, assuring them that God was with them, ver. 12—15.

IN the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, 2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built. 3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4 *Is it* time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses,
And this house *lie* waste?
5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Consider your ways.
6 Ye have sown much,
And bring in little;
Ye eat,
But ye have not enough;
Ye drink,
But ye are not filled with drink;
Ye clothe you,
But there is none warm;
And he that earneth wages
Earneth wages *to put it* into a bag with holes.
7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Consider your ways.
8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood,
And build the house;
And I will take pleasure in it,
And I will be glorified, saith the LORD.
9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, *it came* to little;
And when ye brought *it* home, I did blow upon it.
Why? saith the LORD of hosts.
Because of mine house that *is* waste,
And ye run every man unto his own house.
10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew,
And the earth is stayed *from* her fruit.
11 And I called for a drought
Upon the land, and upon the mountains, [the oil,
And upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon
And upon *that* which the ground bringeth forth,
And upon men, and upon cattle,
And upon all the labour of the hands.

It was the complaint of the Jews in Babylon that they "saw not their signs," and there was "no more any prophet," *Ps.* lxxiv. 9, which was a just judgment upon them for mocking and misusing the prophets. We read of no prophets they had in their return, as there were in their coming out of Egypt, *Hos.* xii. 13. God stirred them up immediately by his Spirit, to exert themselves in that escape, *Ezr.* i. 5, for though God makes use of prophets he needs them not, he can do his work without them. But the lamp of Old Testament prophecy shall yet make some bright and glorious efforts before it expire; and Haggai is the first that appears under the character of a spiritual messenger from heaven, when the word of the Lord had been long precious, as when prophecy began, 1 *Sam.* iii. 2, and there had been no open vision. In the reign of Darius Hystaspes,

the third of the Persian kings, in the second year of his reign, this prophet was sent; and the word of the Lord came to him, and came by him, to the leading men among the Jews, who are here named, ver. 1. The chief governor, 1. Of the state; that was Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, of the house of David, who was commander-in-chief of the Jews, in their return out of captivity. 2. In the church; and that was Joshua the son of Josedech, who was now high priest. They were great men, and good men, and yet were to be stirred up to their duty when they grew amiss. What the people also were faulty in they must be told of, that they might use their power and interest for the mending of it. The prophets, who were extraordinary messengers, did not go about to set aside the ordinary institutions of magistracy and ministry, but endeavoured to render both more effectual for the ends to which they were appointed, for both ought to be supported. Now observe,

First. What the sin of the Jews was at this time, ver. 2. As soon as they came up out of captivity they set up an altar for sacrifice, and within a year after laid the foundations of a temple, *Ezr.* iii. 10. They then seemed very forward in it, and it was likely enough that the work would be done suddenly; but being served with a prohibition some time after from the Persian court, and charged not to go on with it, they not only yielded to the force when they were actually under it, which might be excused, but afterwards, when the violence of the opposition was abated, they continued very indifferent to it; had no spirit or courage to set about it again, but seemed glad they had a pretence to let it stand still. Though they who are employed for God may be driven off from their work by a storm, yet they must return to it as soon as the storm is over: these here did not do so, but continued loitering, until they were afresh minded of their duty. And that which they suggested one to another was, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built;" that is,

1. Our time has not come for the doing of it, because we have not yet got up our backs after our captivity, our losses are not repaired, nor have we yet got beforehand in the world. It is too great an undertaking for new beginners in the world, as we are; let us first get our own houses up, before we talk of building churches; and in the mean time let a bare altar serve us, as it did our father Abraham. They did not say, they would not build a temple at all, but not yet; it is all in good time. Note, Many a good work is put by, by being put off; as Felix put off the prosecution of his convictions to a more convenient season. They do not say, they will never repent, and reform, and be religious, but not yet; and so the great business we were sent into the world to do is not done, under pretence it is all in good time to go about it.

2. God's time has not come for the doing of it; for, say they, the restraint laid upon us by authority in a legal way is not broken off, and therefore we ought not to proceed, though there be a present connivance of authority. Note, There is an aptness in us to misinterpret providential discouragements in our duty, as if they amounted to a discharge from our duty, when they are only intended for the trial and exercise of our courage and faith. It is bad to neglect our duty, but it is worse to vouch providence for the patronising of our neglects.

Secondly. What the judgments of God were by which they were punished for this neglect, ver. 6, 9—11. They neglected the building of God's house, and put that off, that they might have time and money for their secular affairs. They desired to be excused from such an expensive piece of work, under this pretence, that they must provide for their families; their children must have meat and portions too, and till they have got beforehand in the world they cannot think of rebuilding the temple. Now, that the punishment might answer the sin, God by his providence kept them still behindhand. And that poverty which they thought to prevent by not building the temple God brought upon them for not building it. They were sensible of the smart of the judgment, and every one complained of the unseasonable weather, and the great losses they sustained in their corn and cattle, and the decay of trade, but they were not sensible of the cause of the judgment, and the ground of God's controversy with them; they did not, or would not, see and own that it was for their putting off the building of the temple that they lay under these manifest tokens of God's displeasure; and therefore God here gives them notice that this was it for which he contended with them. Note, We need the help of God's prophets and ministers to expound to us not only the judgments of God's mouth, but the judgments of his hands, that we may understand his mind and meaning, in his rod as well as in his word, to discover to us not only wherein we have offended God, but wherein God shews himself offended at us. Let us observe,

1. How God contended with them. He did not send them into captivity again, nor bring a foreign enemy upon them, as they deserved, but took the correcting of them into his own hands, for his mercies are great.

1st. He that giveth seed to the sower denied his blessing upon the seed sown, and then it never prospered; they had nothing, or next to nothing, from it. "They sowed much," ver. 6, kept a deal of ground in tillage, which they might expect would turn to a better advantage than usual, because their land had long lain fallow, and had enjoyed its sabbath. Having sowed much, they looked for much from it, enough to spend, and enough to spare too, but were disappointed; they bring in little, very little, ver. 6. However, when they have made the utmost of it, it comes to little, ver. 9, it did not yield as they expected; *Isa.* v. 10, "The seed of an homer shall yield an ephah," a bushel's sowing shall yield a peck. Note, Our expectations from the creature are oftentimes most frustrated when they are most raised; and then, when we look for much, it comes to little, that our expectation may be from God only, in whom it will be outdone. We are here told how they came to be disappointed; ver. 10, "The heaven over you is stayed from dew." He that has the key of the clouds in his hands shut them up, and withheld the rain when the ground called for it, the former or the latter rain, and then of course "the earth is stayed from her fruit;" for if the heaven be as brass the land is as iron. The corn perhaps came up very well, and promised a very plentiful crop, but for want of the dews at bearing time it never filled, but was parched with the heat of the sun, and so withered away. The restored captives, that had long been kept bare in Babylon, thought they should never want when they had got their own land in possession again, and had that at command; but what the better are they for it, unless they had the clouds at command too? God will make us sensible of our necessary and constant dependence upon him, throughout all the links in the chain of second causes, from first to last; so that we can at no time say, Now we have no farther occasion for God and his providence: see *Hos.* ii. 21. But God not only withheld the cooling rains, but he appointed the scorching heats; ver. 11, "I called for a drought upon the land," ordered the weather to be extremely hot, and then the fruits of the earth were burnt up. See how every creature is that to us that God makes it to be, either comfortable or afflictive, serving us or incommoding us. Nothing among the inferior creatures is so necessary and beneficial to the world as the heat of the sun,—that is it that puts life into the plants, and renews the face of the earth at spring; and yet, if that goes into an extreme, it undoes all again. Our Creator is our best friend, but, if we make him our enemy, we make the best friends we have among the creatures our enemies too. This drought God calls for, and it came at the call; as the winds and the waves, so the rays of the sun obey him. It was universal, and the ill effects of it general; it was a drought upon the mountains, which, lying high, were first affected with it. The mountains were their pasture grounds, and used to be covered over with flocks, but now there is no grass for them. It was upon the corn, the new wine, and the oil; all failed through the extremity of the hot weather, even all that the ground brought forth; it was all withered. Nay, it had an ill influence upon men; the hot weather enfeebled some, and made them weary and faint, and spent their spirits; it inflamed others, and put them into fevers. It should seem it brought diseases upon cattle too. In short, it spoiled all the labour of their hands, which they hoped to eat of, and maintain their families by. Note, Meat for the belly is meat that perisheth, and, if we labour for that only, we are in danger of losing our labour; but are sure our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord, if we labour for meat that endures to eternal life; for the hand of the diligent, in the business of religion, will infallibly make rich; whereas, in the business of this life, the most solicitous, and the most industrious, often lose the labour of their hands. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

2nd. He that giveth bread to the eater denied his blessing upon the bread they eat, and then that did not nourish them. The cause of the withering and failing of the corn in the field was visible; it was for want of rain. But, besides that, there was a secret blast and curse attending that which they brought home. *First.* When they had it in the barn they were not sure of it. "I did blow upon it, saith the Lord of hosts," ver. 9, and that withered it; as buds are sometimes blasted in the spring by a nipping frost, which we see the effects of, but know not the way of. 'I did blow it away,' so the margin reads it. When men have heaped wealth together God can scatter it with the breath of his mouth as easily as we can blow away a feather. Note, We can never be sure of any thing in this world; it is exposed not only when it is in the field, but when it is housed, for there moth and rust corrupt, *Mat.* vi. 19. And if we would have the comfort and continuance of our temporal enjoyments, we must make God our friend; for if he bless them to us they are blessings indeed, but if he blow upon them we can expect no good from them,—they "make themselves wings and fly away." *Secondly.* When they had it upon the board, it was not that to them that they expected; "Ye eat, but ye have not enough;" either because the meat is washy and not satisfying, or because the stomach is greedy and not satisfied. You eat, but you have no good digestion, and so are not nourished by it, nor doth it answer the end; or, you have not enough, because you are not content, nor think it enough. "Ye drink," but are not cooled and refreshed by it, "you are not filled with drink;" you are stinted, and have not enough to quench your thirst, the "new wine is cut off from your mouths," *Joel* i. 5. Nay, and you drink your water too by measure, and with astonishment; you have no comfort of it, because you have no plenty of it, but are still in fear of falling short. *Thirdly.* That which they had upon their backs did them no good there; "Ye clothe you, but there is none warm;" your clothes soon wear out, and wax old, and grow thin, because God blows upon them, contrary to what Israel's did in the wilderness, when God blessed them. It is God that makes our garments warm upon us, when he quieteth the earth, *Job* xxxvii. 17. *Fourthly.* That which they had in their bags, which was not laid out, but laid up, yet they were not sure of it. He that earns wages by hard labour, and has it paid him in ready current money, yet "puts it into a bag with holes," it drops through and wastes away insensibly. Every thing is so scarce and dear that they spend their money as fast as they get it. Those that lay up their treasure on earth put it into a bag with holes, they lose it as they go along, and they that come after them pick it up. But if we lay up our treasure in heaven, we provide for ourselves "bags that wax not old," *Lu.* xii. 33.

2. Observe wherefore God thus contended with them, and stopped the current of those favours promised them at their return, *Joel* ii. 24. They provoked him to do it; "It is because of my house that is waste." That is the quarrel God has with them. The foundation of the temple is laid, but the building doth not go on; every man runs to his own house, to finish that, and to make that convenient and fine, and no care is taken about the Lord's house; and therefore it is that God crosseth you thus in all your affairs, to testify his displeasure against you for that neglect, and to bring you to a sense of your sin and folly. Note, As those that "seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness" thereof, shall not only find them, but are most likely to have other things added to them, so they who neglect and postpone those things, will not only lose them, but will justly have other things taken away from them. And if God cross us in our temporal affairs, and we meet trouble and disappointment, we shall find this is the cause of it; the work we have to do for God and our own souls is left undone, and we "seek our own things more than the things of Jesus Christ," *Phil.* ii. 21.

Thirdly. The reproof which the prophet gives them for their neglect of the temple work. "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses," to have them beautified and adorned, and your families settled in them? They were not content with walls and roofs for necessity, but they must have for gaiety and fancy. It is high time, saith one, that my house were wainscotted; and high time, saith another, that mine were painted; and God's house all this while lies waste, and nothing is done at it. What! saith the prophet, Is it time you should have your humour pleased, and not time you should have your God pleased? How was their disposition the reverse of David's, who could not be easy in his house of cedar while the ark of God was in curtains, 2 *Sam.* vii. 2; and of Solomon, who built the temple of God before he built a palace for himself. Note, Those are very much strangers to their own interest that prefer the conveniences and ornaments of the temporal life before the absolute necessities of the spiritual life; that are full of care to enrich their own houses, while God's temple in their hearts lies waste, and nothing is done for it, or in it.

Fourthly. The good counsel which the prophet gives to them who thus despised God, and whom God was therefore justly displeased with.

1. He would have them reflect. "Now therefore consider your ways," ver. 5, and again, ver. 7. Be sensible of the hand of God gone out against you, and inquire into the reason. Think what you have done that has provoked God thus to break in upon your comforts; and think what you will do to testify your repentance, that God may return in mercy to you. Note, It is the great concern of every one of us to consider our ways; 'to set our hearts to our ways,' so the word is; to "think on our ways," *Ps.* cxix. 59, to search and try them, *Lam.* iii. 40, to "ponder the path of our feet," *Pr.* iv. 26, to apply our minds with all seriousness to the great and necessary duty of self-examination, and communing with our own hearts concerning our spiritual state, our sins that are past, and our duty for the future; for sin is what we must answer for, duty is what we must do; about these, therefore, we must be inquisitive, rather than about events, which we must leave to God. Many are quicksighted to pry into other people's ways that are very careless of their own; whereas our concern is to "prove every one his own work," *Gal.* vi. 4.

2. He would have them reform; ver. 8, "Go up to the mountain," to Lebanon, "and bring wood," and other materials, that are wanting, "and build the house" with all speed,—put it off no longer, but set to it in good earnest. Note, Our considering of our ways must issue in the amending of whatever we find amiss in them. If any duty has been long neglected, that is not a reason why it should still be so, but why now at length it should be revived; better late than never. And for their encouragement to apply themselves in good

earnest to this work, he assures them, 1st. That they should be accepted of him in it. "Build the house, and I will take pleasure in it;" and that was encouragement enough to apply themselves to it with alacrity and resolution, and to go through with it, whatever it cost them. Note, Whatever God will take pleasure in when it is done, we ought to take pleasure in the doing of, and to reckon that inducement enough to set about it, and go on with it, in good earnest; for what greater satisfaction can we have in our own bosoms than in contributing any thing towards that which God will take pleasure in? It ought to have been the top of their ambition to be accepted of the Lord, 2 *Cor.* v. 9. Though they had foolishly neglected the house of God, yet if at length they will resume the care of it, God will not remember against them their former neglects, but will take pleasure in the work of their hands. Those that have long deferred their return to God, if at length they return with all their heart, must not despair of his favour. 2nd. That he would be honoured by them in it; "I will be glorified, saith the Lord." He will be served and worshipped in the temple, when it is built, and sanctified in them that come nigh to him. It is worth while to bestow all possible care, and pains, and cost upon that by which God may be glorified.

12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD. 13 Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I *am* with you, saith the LORD. 14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, 15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

"As an earring of gold," (saith Solomon,) and "an ornament of fine gold," so amiable, so acceptable, in the sight of God and man, "is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear," *Pr.* xxv. 12. The prophet here was a wise, but faithful, reprover in God's name, and he met with an obedient ear. The foregoing sermon met with the desired success among the people, and that met with due encouragement from God. Observe,

First. How the people returned to God in the way of duty. All those to whom that sermon was preached received the word in the love of it, and were wrought upon by it. Zerubbabel, the chief governor, did not think himself above the check and command of God's word. He was a man that had been eminently useful in his day, and serviceable to the interest of the church, yet did not plead his former merits in answer to this reproof for his present remissness, but submitted to it. Joshua's business, as high priest, was to teach, and yet he was willing himself to be taught, and willingly received admonition and instruction. The "remnant of the people,"—and the whole body of them was but a remnant, a very few of the many thousands of Israel,—also were very pliable; they all "obeyed the voice of the Lord their God," and bowed their neck to the yoke of his commands; and it is here recorded to their honour, ver. 12. Their Father said, "Sons, go work to-day in my vineyard," in my temple; and they not only say, We go, sir, but they went immediately.

1. They looked upon the prophet to be "the Lord's messenger," and the word he delivered to be the Lord's message to them; and therefore received it, not as the word of man, but as the word of Almighty God. They obeyed his words, "as the Lord their God had sent him," ver. 12. Note, In attending to God's ministers we must have an eye to him that sent them, and receive them for his sake, while they act according to their commission.

2. They did "fear before the Lord." Prophecy was a new thing with them; they had had no special messenger from heaven for a great while, and therefore now they had one, and but one, they paid an extraordinary regard to him; whereas their fathers, that had many prophets, mocked and misused them. It is sometimes so, when good preaching is most scarce it does most good; whereas the manna that is rained in plenty is loathed as light bread. And, because they so readily received this prophet, within a month or two God raised them up another, *Zec.* i. 1. They "feared before the Lord," that is, they had a great regard to the Divine authority, and a great dread of the Divine wrath, and were of those that "trembled at God's word." The judgments of God they had been under, though severe, had not prevailed to make them fear before the Lord, till the word of God was sent to expound his providences, and then they feared,—then, when they saw their own sin the cause of those judgments, then they feared. Note, A holy fear of God will have a great influence upon our obedience to him. "Serve the Lord with fear;" if we fear him not, we shall not serve him.

3. "The Lord stirred up their spirits," ver. 14. 1st. He excited them to their duty, and put it into their hearts to go about it. Note, Then the word of God has its success when God by his grace stirs up our spirits to comply with it; and without that grace we should remain stupid, and utterly averse to every thing that is good. It is in the day of a Divine power that we are made willing. 2nd. He encouraged them in their duty, and with those encouragements enlarged their hearts, *Ps.* cxix. 32. When they heard the word they feared; but, lest they should sink under the weight of that fear, God stirred them up, and made them cheerful and bold, to encounter the difficulties they might meet with. Note, When God has work to do he will either find or make men fit to do it, and stir them up to it.

4. They applied themselves to their work with all possible vigour; "They came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God." Every one, according as his capacity or ability was, lent a hand, some way or other, to further that good work; and this they did with an eye to God, as the Lord of hosts, and as their God, the God of Israel. The consideration of God's sovereign dominion in the world by his providence, and his covenant relation to his people by his grace, should stir up our spirits to act for him, and for the advancement of the interest of his kingdom among men to the utmost of our power.

5. They did this speedily. It was but on the first day of the sixth month that Haggai preached them this sermon, and by the twenty-fourth of the same month, little more than three weeks after, they were all busy, working in the "house of the Lord their God," ver. 15. To shew that they were ashamed of their delays hitherto, now they were convinced and called, they were resolved to delay no longer, but strike while the iron was hot, and set about the work while they were under convictions. Note, Those that have lost time have need to redeem time, and the longer we have loitered in that which is good, when we are convinced of our folly the more haste we should make.

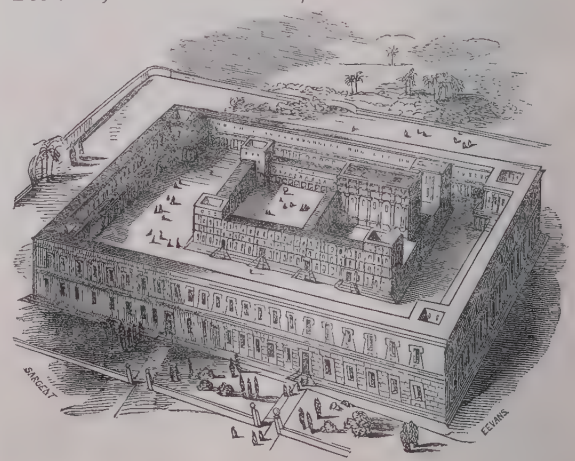
Secondly. How God met them in a way of mercy. The same prophet that brought them the reproof brought them a very comforting, encouraging word; "Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message," (in his name, and as from him,) "saying, I am with you, saith the Lord." That is all he has to say, and that is enough; as that word of Christ to his disciples is, *Mat.* xxviii. 20, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." "I am with you," that is, I will forgive your neglects hitherto, and they shall not be remembered against you; I will remove the judgments you have been under for those neglects, and will appear for you, as I have in them appeared against you. "I am with you," to protect you against your enemies, that bear ill-will to your work, and to prosper you, and to give you success in it; with you, to strengthen your hands, and bless the work of them, without which blessing they labour in vain that build. Note, Those that work for God have God with them; and if he be for us who can be against us? If he be with us what difficulty can stand before us?

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter we have three sermons preached by the prophet Haggai, for the encouragement of those that are forward to build the temple. In the first he assures the builders that the glory of this house they were now building should in spiritual respects, though not in outward, exceed that of Solomon's temple, in which he has an eye to the coming of Christ, ver. 1—9. In the second he assures them, that though their sin in delaying to build the temple had retarded the prosperous progress of all their other affairs, yet, now they had set about it in good earnest, he would bless them, and give them success, ver. 10—19. In the third he assures Zerubbabel that, as a reward of his pious zeal and activity herein, he should be a favourite of heaven, and one of the ancestors of Messiah the Prince, whose kingdom should be set up on the ruins of all opposing powers, ver. 20—23.

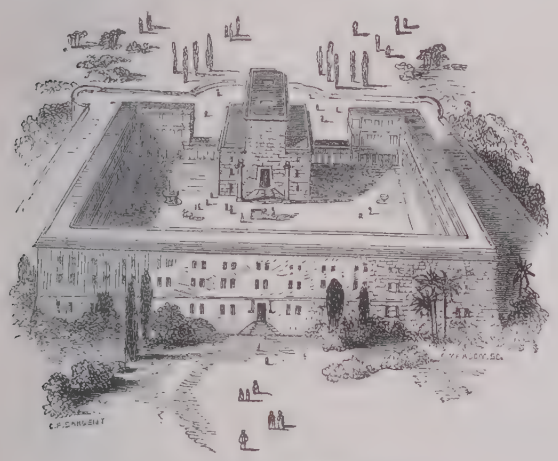
IN the seventh *month*, in the one and twentieth *day* of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, 2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

3 Who *is* left among you
That saw this house in her first glory?
And how do ye see it now?
Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?
4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD;
And be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; [and work:
And be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD,
For I *am* with you, saith the LORD of hosts:
5 *According to* the word that I covenanted with you
When ye came out of Egypt,
So my spirit remaineth among you:
Fear ye not.
6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Yet once, it *is* a little while,



SUPPOSED FORM OF FIRST TEMPLE.—ver. 9.

And I will shake the heavens, and the earth,
And the sea, and the dry *land;*
7 And I will shake all nations,
And the desire of all nations shall come:
And I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of
8 The silver *is* mine, and the gold *is* mine, [hosts.
Saith the LORD of hosts.
9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of
Saith the LORD of hosts: [the former,
And in this place will I give peace,
Saith the LORD of hosts.



SUPPOSED FORM OF SECOND TEMPLE.

Here is, First. The date of this message, ver. 1. It was sent on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, when the builders had been about a month at work, (since the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month,) and had got it in some forwardness. Note, Those that are hearty in the service of God shall receive fresh encouragements from him to proceed in it, as their case calls for them. Set the wheels a going, and God will oil them.

Secondly. The direction of this message, ver. 9. The encouragements here are sent to the same persons to whom the reproofs in the foregoing chapter are directed; for they that are wounded by the convictions of the word shall be healed and bound up by its consolations. Speak to Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the "residue of the people," the very same that "obeyed the voice of the Lord," *ch.* i. 12, and whose spirits God stirred up to do so, *ch.* i. 14; to them are sent these words of comfort.

Thirdly. The message itself. In which observe,

1. The discouragements which they laboured under that were employed in this work. That which was such a damp upon them, and an alloy to their joy, when the foundation of the temple was laid, was still a clog upon them, that they could not build such a temple now as Solomon built; not so large, so stately, so sumptuous a one as that was. This fetched tears from the eyes of many, when the dimensions of it were first laid, *Ezr.* iii. 12, and still it made the work go on heavily, that the glory of this house, in comparison with that of the former, was as nothing, ver. 3. It was now about seventy years since Solomon's temple was destroyed, (for that was in the nineteenth year of the captivity, and this about the nineteenth after the captivity,) so that there might be some yet alive that could remember to have seen it, and still they would be upbraiding themselves and their brethren with the great disparity between this house and that. One could remember the gold with which it was overlaid; another, the precious stones with which it was garnished. One could describe the magnificence of the porch, another of the pillars; and where are these now? This weakened the hands of the builders; for though our gracious God is pleased with us, if we do in sincerity as well as we can in his service, yet our proud heart will scarce let us be pleased with ourselves, unless we do as well as others whose abilities far exceed ours. And it is sometimes the fault of old people to discourage the services of the present age, by crying up too much the performances and attainments of the former age, with which others should be provoked to emulation, but not exposed to contempt; "Say not thou that the former days were better than these," *Eccl.* vii. 10, but thank God that there is any good in these, as bad as they are.

2. The encouragement that is given them to go on in the work notwithstanding; ver. 4, Yet now, though this house is likely to be much inferior to the former, yet "be strong, O Zerubbabel, and be strong, O Joshua;" let not these leading men give way to this suggestion, or be disheartened by it, but do as well as they can, when they cannot do so well as they would; and let all the people of the land be strong too, and work; and if the leaders have but a good heart on it, it is hoped the followers will have the better heart. Note, Those that work for God ought to exert themselves with vigour, and then to encourage themselves with hope that it will end well.

3. The grounds of these encouragements. God himself saith to them, "Fear ye not," ver. 5; and gives good reasons for it.

1st. They have God with them, his Spirit and his special presence, "Be strong, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts," ver. 4. This he had said before, *ch.* i. 13, "I am with you." But we need to have those assurances repeated, that we may have strong consolation. The presence of God with us, as the Lord of hosts, is enough to silence all our fears, and to help us over all the discouragement we may meet with in the way of our duty. The Jews had hosts against them, but they had the Lord of hosts with them to take their part, and plead their cause. He is with them; for, *First.* He adheres to his promise; his covenant is inviolable; and he will be always theirs, and will appear and act for them, "according to the word that he covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt." Though he "chasteneth their transgressions with the rod," yet he will not make his faithfulness to fail. *Secondly.* He dwells among them by his Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy. When he first formed them into a people "he gave his good Spirit to instruct them," *Neh.* ix. 20; and still the Spirit, though often grieved and provoked to withdraw, remained among them. It was the Spirit of God that stirred up their spirits to come out of Babylon, *Ezr.* i. 5, and now to build the temple, *Hag.* i. 14. Note, We have reason to be encouraged as long as we have the Spirit of God remaining among us to work upon us, for so long we have God with us to work for us.

2nd. They shall have the Messiah among them shortly; he that should come. To him bear all the prophets witness, and this prophet particularly here, ver. 6, 7. Here is an intimation of the time of his coming, that it would not be long ere he came: "Yet once, it is a little while," and he shall come. The Old Testament church has but one stage more (if we may so say) to travel; five stages were now past, from Adam to Noah, thence to Abraham, thence to Moses, thence to Solomon's temple, thence to the captivity, and now yet one stage more; it is six days' journey, and then comes the sabbatism of the Messiah's kingdom. Let the Son of man when he comes find faith on the earth, and let the children of promise continue still looking for him, for now it is but a little while and he will come. Hold out, faith and patience, yet a while, for "he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." And, as he then said of his first appearance, so now of his second, "Surely, I come quickly." Now concerning his coming it is here foretold, *First.* That it shall be introduced by a general shaking; ver. 6, "I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." This is applied to the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, to make way for which he will judge among the heathen, *Ps.* cx. 6. God will once again do for his church as he did when he brought them out of Egypt; then he shook the heavens and earth at mount Sinai, with the thunder, and lightnings, and earthquakes; shook the sea and the dry land, when lanes were made through the sea, and streams fetched out of the rock. This shall be done again, when at the sufferings of Christ the sun shall be darkened, the earth shake, and the rocks rent; when, at the birth of Christ, Herod and all Jerusalem are troubled, *Mat.* ii. 3, and he is set for the fall and rising again of many. When his kingdom was set up it was with a shock to the nations; the oracles were silenced, idols were destroyed, and the powers of the kingdoms were moved and removed, *Heb.* xii. 27. It speaks the removing of the things that are shaken. Note, The shaking of the nations is often in order to the settling of the church, and the establishing of the things that cannot be shaken. *Secondly.* That it shall issue in a general satisfaction. He shall come as "the desire of all nations," desirable to all nations, for in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed, with the best of blessings, that had been long expected and desired by the good people in all nations, that had any intelligence from the Old Testament predictions concerning him. Balaam, in the land of Moab, had spoken of a star that should arise out of Jacob; and Job, in the land of Uz, of his living Redeemer; the concourse of devout men from all parts at Jerusalem, *Acts* ii. 5, was in expectation of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom about that time. All the nations that are brought in to Christ, and discipled in his name, have called him, and will call him, all their salvation and all their desire. This glorious title of Christ seems to refer to Jacob's prophecy, *Gen.* xlix. 10, that to him shall the gathering of the people be. *Thirdly.* The house they were now building shall be filled with glory to such a degree that its glory shall exceed that of Solomon's temple. The enemies of the Jews followed them with reproach, and cast contempt upon the house they were building; but they might very well endure that, when God undertook to fill it with glory. It is God's prerogative to fill with glory; the glory that comes from him is satisfying, and not vain glory. Moses' tabernacle and Solomon's temple were filled with glory, when God in a cloud took possession of them; but this house shall be filled with glory of another nature.

1*st.* Let them not be concerned that this house had not so much silver and gold about it as Solomon's temple had, ver. 8. God needs not the silver and gold to adorn his temple; for (saith he) "The silver is mine and the gold mine;" all the silver and gold in the world is his, all that is hid in the bowels of the earth, "for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof." All that is laid up in the exchequers, banks, and treasures of the children of men, and all that circulates for the maintaining of trade and commerce, it is all the Lord's. Every penny bears his image as well as Cæsar's. And, therefore, when gold and silver are dedicated to his honour, and employed in his service, no addition is made to him, for it was his before. When David and his princes offered vast sums for the service of the house of God, they acknowledge, "It is all thine own, and of thine own, Lord, have we given thee," 1 *Chr.* xxix. 14, 16. Therefore God needs not sacrifice, for every beast of the forest is his, *Ps.* l. 10. Note, If we have silver and gold, we must serve and honour God with it, for it is all his own, we have but the use of it, the property remains in him; but if we have not silver and gold to honour God with we must honour him with such as we have, and he will accept us, for he needs it not; all the silver and gold in the world is his already. "The earth is full of his riches," so is the great and wide sea also.

2*nd.* Let them be comforted with this, that, though this temple had less gold in it, it should have more glory than Solomon's; ver. 9, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former." This was never true in respect of outward glory; this latter house was indeed in its latter times very much beautified and enriched by Herod, and we find the disciples admiring the stones and buildings of the temple, how fine they were, *Mar.* xiii. 1; but it was nothing in comparison with Solomon's temple; and besides, the Jews own that there were several of the Divine glories of the first temple that were wanting in this,—the ark, the Urim and Thummim, the fire from heaven, and the Shechinah, so that we cannot conceive how the glory of this latter house should in any thing exceed that of the former, but in that which would indeed excel all the glories of the first house, the presence of the Messiah in it, the Son of God, his being presented there, "the glory of his people Israel," his attending there at twelve years old, and afterwards his preaching and working miracles there, and his driving the buyers and sellers out of it. It was necessary then that the Messiah should come while that second temple stood, but that being long since destroyed, we must conclude that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, is he that should come, and we are to look for no other. It was also the "glory of this latter house," (1.) That before the coming of Christ it was always kept free from idols and idolatries, and was never polluted with those abominable things, as the first temple often was, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 11, 12; and in this its glory excelled all the glory of that. Note, The purity of the church, and the strict adherence to Divine institutions, is much more its glory than external pomp and splendour. (2.) That after Christ the Gospel was preached in it by the apostles, even all the words of this life, *Acts* v. 20. In the temple Jesus Christ was daily preached, *Acts* v. 42. Now the ministration of righteousness and life by the Gospel was unspeakably more glorious than the law, which was a ministration of death and condemnation, 2 *Cor.* iii. 9, 10. Note, That is the most valuable glory which ariseth from our relation to Christ, and our interest in him. As, where Christ is, "behold, a greater than Solomon is

there," so the heart in which he dwells, and makes a living temple, behold, it is more glorious than Solomon's temple, and will be so to eternity.

3rd. They should see a comfortable end of their present troubles, and enjoy the pleasure of a happy settlement. "In this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." Note, God's presence with his people in his ordinances secures to them all good. If God be with us, peace is with us. But the Jews under the latter temple had so much trouble, that we must conclude this promise to have its accomplishment in that spiritual peace which Jesus Christ has by his blood purchased for, and by his last will and testament bequeathed to, all believers, *Jno.* xiv. 27; that peace which Christ himself preached as the Prophet of peace, and gives as the Prince of peace. God will give peace in this place, that is, he will give his Son to be the peace, *Eph.* ii. 14.

10 In the four and twentieth *day* of the ninth *month,* in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 11 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests *concerning* the law, saying, 12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. 13 Then said Haggai, If *one that is* unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. 14 Then answered Haggai, and said,

So *is* this people, and so *is* this nation before me, saith [the LORD;
And so *is* every work of their hands;
And that which they offer there *is* unclean.

15 And now, I pray you, consider
From this day and upward,
From before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:

16 Since those *days* were,
When *one* came to an heap of twenty *measures,*
There were *but* ten:
When *one* came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty *vessels* out of the press,
There were *but* twenty.

17 I smote you with blasting and with mildew
And with hail in all the labours of your hands;
Yet ye *turned* not to me, saith the LORD.

18 Consider now from this day and upward,
From the four and twentieth day of the ninth *month,*
Even from the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid,
Consider *it.*

19 Is the seed yet in the barn?
Yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree,
And the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not [brought forth:
From this day will I bless *you.*

This sermon was preached two months after that in the former part of the chapter. The priests and Levites preached constantly, but the prophets preached occasionally; both were good and needful: we have need to be taught our duty in season and out of season. The people were now going on vigorously with the building of the temple, and in hopes shortly to have it ready for their use, and to be employed in the services of it; and now God sends them a message by his prophet which would be of use to them,

First. By way of conviction and caution. They were now engaged in a very good work, but they are concerned to see to it, not only that it be good for the matter of it, but that it be done in a right manner, for otherwise it would not be accepted of God. God sees there are many among them that spoil this good work, by going about it with unsanctified hearts and hands, and are likely to gain no advantage to themselves by it; these are here convicted, and all are warned thereby to purify the hands they employ in this work, for "to the pure only all things are pure," and from the pure only that comes which is pure. This matter is here illustrated by the established rules of the ceremonial law, in putting a difference between the clean and unclean, about which many of the appointments of the law were conversant. Hereby it appears that a spiritual use is to be made of the ceremonial law, and that it was intended not only as a Divine ritual to the Jews, but for instruction in righteousness to all, even to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come, to discover to us both sin and Christ, both our disease and our remedy. Now observe here,

1. What the rule of the law was. The prophet is ordered to inquire of the priests concerning it, ver. 11; for their lips should keep this knowledge, and the people should "inquire the law at their mouth," *Mal.* ii. 7. Haggai himself, though a prophet, must ask the priest concerning the law. His business, as an extraordinary messenger, was to expound the providences of God, and to give directions concerning particular duties, as he had done, *ch.* i. 8, 9. But he would not take the priests' work out of their hands who were the ordinary ministers, and whose business it was to expound the ordinances of God, and to teach the people the meaning of them, and to give the general rules for the observance of them. In a case of that nature, Haggai himself must consult them. Note, God has given to his ministers diversities of gifts, and calls them out to do diversities of services, so that they have need one of another, should make use one of another, and be helpful to one another. The prophet, though Divinely inspired, cannot say to the priest, I have no need of thee, nor can the priest say so to the prophet. Perhaps Haggai was therefore ordered to consult the priests, that out of their own mouths he might judge both them and the people committed to their charge, and convict them of worse than a ceremonial pollution: see *Lev.* x. 10, 11. Now the rules of the law, in the cases propounded, are,

1st. That he that has holy flesh in his clothes cannot, by the touch of his clothes, communicate holiness; ver. 12, "If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment," though the garment is thereby so far made a devoted thing as that it is not to be put to common use till it has first been washed in the holy place, *Lev.* vi. 27, yet it shall by no means transmit a holiness to either meat or drink, so as to make them ever the better to those that use them.

2nd. That he that is ceremonially unclean by the touch of a dead body doth by his touch communicate that uncleanness. The law is express, *Num.* xix. 22, "Whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean," yet this Haggai will have from the priests' own mouth; for concerning those things that we find very plain in our Bibles yet it is good to have the advice of our ministers. The sum of these two rules is, that pollution is easier communicated than sanctification; that is, saith Grotius, there are many ways of vice, but only one of virtue, and that a difficult one. *Bonum oritur ex integris, malum ex quolibet defectu,*—'Good implies perfection, evil commences with the slightest defect.' Let not men think that living among good people will recommend them to God if they be not good themselves, but let them fear that touching the unclean thing will defile them, and therefore let them keep at a distance from it.

2. How it is here applied; ver. 14, "So is this people, and so is this nation before me." He doth not call them his people and his nation, they are unworthy to be owned by him, but this people, and this nation; they have been thus before God. They thought their offering sacrifices on the altar would sanctify them, and excuse their neglect to build the temple, and remove the curse which by that neglect they had brought upon their common enjoyments. No, saith God, your holy flesh and your altar will be so far from sanctifying your meat and drink, your wine and oil, to you, that your contempt of God's temple will bring a pollution, not only on your common enjoyments, but even on your sacrifices too; so that, while you continued in that neglect, all was unclean to you; nay, and so is this people still, and so they will be. On these terms they will stand with me, and on no other,—that if they be profane, and sensual, and morally impure, if they have wicked hearts, and live wicked lives, though they work never so hard at the temple while it is building, and though they offer never so many and costly sacrifices there when it is built, yet that shall not serve to sanctify their meat and drink to them, and to give them a comfortable use of it; nay, the impurity of their hearts and lives shall make even that work of their hands and all their offerings unclean, and an abomination to God. And the case is the same with us. Those whose devotions are plausible, but their conversations wicked, will find their devotions unable to sanctify their enjoyments, but their wickedness prevailing to pollute them. Note, When we are employed in any good work we should be jealous over ourselves, lest we render it unclean by our corruptions and mismanagements.

Secondly. By way of comfort and encouragement. If their hearts be right with God, and their eye single in his service, they shall have the benefit of it. God will take away the judgment of famine wherewith they have been corrected for their remissness, and will restore them great plenty. This they are called to consider and observe, whether God would not be to the utmost as good as his word, and by his providence remarkably countenance and recompense their reformation in this matter. To make this the more signal, let them set down the day when they began to work at the building of the temple, to raise the structure upon the foundations that had been laid some time before. On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month they began to prepare materials, *ch.* i. 5; and now on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month they began to "lay a stone upon a stone in the temple of the Lord." Let them take notice of this day, and observe,

1. How they were gone behindhand in their estates before this day. Let them remember the time when there was a sensible waste and decay in all they had, ver. 16. A man came to his garner, expecting to find a heap of twenty measures of corn, so much he used to have from such a piece of ground, or so much used to be left at that time of the year, or so much he took it for granted there was when he fetched the last from it, but he found it unaccountably diminished, and when he came to measure it there were but ten measures; it was run in, and dried away in the keeping; or vermin had eaten it, or it was stolen. In like manner he went to the winepress, expecting to draw fifty vessels of wine, for so much he used to have from such a quantity of grapes, but they did not yield as usual, for he could get but twenty. This agrees with what we had *ch.* i. 1, "Ye looked for much, and it came to little." Note, It is our folly that we are apt to raise our expectations from the creature, and to think to-morrow must needs be as this day, and much more abundant, but we are commonly disappointed; and the more we expect the more grievous the disappointment is. In the stores and treasures of the new covenant we need not fear being disappointed, when we come by faith to draw from them. But this was not all; God did visibly contend with them in the weather; ver. 17, "I smote you with blasting," winds and frosts, which made every green thing to wither; "and with mildew," which choked the corn when it was knitting; "and with hail," which battered it down and broke it when it was grown to some maturity. Thus they were baulked in all the labour of their hands, while they neglected to lay their hand to the work of God, and to labour in that. Note, While we take no care of God's interest we cannot expect he should take care of ours; and when he thus walks contrary to us, he expects that we should return to him, and to our duty. But this people either saw not the hand of God in it, imputing it to chance, or saw not their own sin, the provoking cause of it, and therefore turned not to him. They were a long time incorrigible and unhumbled under these rebukes, so that God's hand was "stretched out still, for the people turned not to him that smote them," *Isa.* ix. 12, 13. They might easily observe that as long as they continued in the neglect of the temple work all their affairs went backward. But,

2. Let them now observe, and they should find that from this day forward God would bless them, ver. 18, 19. Consider now whether, when you begin to change your way towards God, you do not find God changing his way towards you. From this day, when you fall to work about the temple, consider it, I say, and you shall find a remarkable turn given for the better to all your affairs. "Is the seed yet in the barn?" Yes, it is, and not yet thrown into the ground. The fruit trees do not as yet bud, the vine, and the fig-tree, and the olive-tree have not as yet brought forth, so that nothing appears to promise a good harvest and vintage next year. Nature doth not promise it; but now you begin to apply yourselves in good earnest to your duty, the God of nature promiseth it; he has said, "From this day I will bless you." It is the best day's work you ever did in your lives, for from hence you may date the return of your prosperity. He doth not say what they shall be, but in general, "I will bless you;"

and those that know what are the fruits flowing from God's blessing know they can desire no more to make them happy. "I will bless you," and then you shall soon recover all your losses, shall thrive as fast as before you went backward, for "the blessing of the Lord, that maketh rich," and those whom he blesseth are blessed indeed. Note, When we begin to make conscience of our duty to God we may expect his blessing. And this tree of life is so known by its fruits, that one may discern, almost to a day, a remarkable turn of providence in favour of those that return in a way of duty, so that they and others may say, from this day they are blessed: see *Mal.* iii. 10. And "whoso is wise will observe these things, and understand" by them "the lovingkindness of the Lord."

20 And again the word of the LORD came unto
Haggai in the four and twentieth *day* of the month,
saying, 21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah,
saying,
I will shake the heavens and the earth;
22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms,
And I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the
heathen;
And I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in [them;
And the horses and their riders shall come down,
Every one by the sword of his brother.
23 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts,
Will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant,
The son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD,
And will make thee as a signet:
For I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

After Haggai's sermon *ad populum*,—'to the people,' here follows one the same day, *ad magistratum*,—'to the magistrates,' a word directed particularly to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, who was a leading active man in this good work the people now set about, and therefore he shall have some particular marks put upon him; ver. 21, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah," speak to him by himself; he hath thoughts in his head far above those of the common people, as wise princes use to have, that move in a higher and larger sphere than others. The people of the land are in care about their corn-fields and vineyards, God has assured them that they shall prosper, and we hope that will make them easy; but Zerubbabel is concerned about the community and the interests of that, about the neighbour nations and the revolutions of their governments, and what will become of the few and feeble Jews in those changes and convulsions, and how such a poor prince as he is should be able to keep his ground and serve his country. Go to him, saith God, and tell him it shall be well with him and his remnant, and let that make him easy.

First. Let him expect to hear of great commotions in the nations of the earth, and let them not be a surprise to him. Behold, he is told of them before; ver. 21, 22, "I will shake the heavens and the earth." This he had said before, ver. 6, 7, and now saith it again to Zerubbabel. Let him expect shaking times, universal concussions. The world is like the sea, like the wheel, always in motion, but sometimes in a special manner turbulent. But, blessed be God, if the earth be shaken, it is to "shake the wicked out of it," *Job* xxxviii. 13. In the apocalyptic visions earthquakes bode no ill to the church. Here the heavens and the earth are shaken, that proud oppressors may be broken and brought down: "I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms." The Chaldean monarchy, that had been the throne of kingdoms a great while, was already overthrown, and the powers that are, and are yet to come, shall in like manner be overthrown; their day will come to fall. 1. Though they be never so powerful, the very strength of their kingdoms shall be destroyed. They "trust in chariots and horses," *Ps.* xx. 7; but their chariots shall be overthrown, and those that ride in them, so that they shall not be able to attack the people of God, whom they persecute, nor to escape the judgments of God, which persecute them. 2. Though there appear none likely to be the instruments of their destruction, yet God will bring it about, or they shall be brought down, "every one by the sword of his brother." This reads the doom of all the enemies of God's church, that will not repent to give him glory. It seems likewise designed as a promise of Christ's victory over the power of darknesss, his overthrow of Satan's throne, that throne of kingdoms, the throne of the god of this world, the taking from him all the armour wherein he trusted, and dividing the spoil. And all opposing "rule, principality, and power" shall be put down, that the kingdom may be "delivered up to God, even the Father."

Secondly. Let him depend upon it that he shall be safe under the Divine protection in the midst of all these commotions, ver. 23. Zerubbabel was active to build God a house, and therefore God makes the same promise to him as he did to David on the like occasion, that he would build him a house, and establish it, even in that day when heaven and earth are shaken. This promise refers to this good man himself, and to his family; he honoured God, and God would honour him. His successors likewise in the government of Judah might take encouragement from it; though their authority was very precarious as to men, yet God would confirm it, and this would contribute to the stability of the people over whom God had set them. But this promise hath special reference to Christ, who lineally descended from Zerubbabel, and is the sole builder of the Gospel temple. 1. Zerubbabel is here owned as God's servant, and it is an honourable mention that is hereby made of him, as Moses and David, "My servant." When God destroys his enemies, he will prefer his servants. Our Lord Jesus is his Father's servant in the work of redemption, but faithful as a Son, *Isa.* xlii. 1. 2. He is owned as God's elect. I have chosen thee into this office; and whom God makes choice of he will make use of. Our Lord Jesus is chosen of God, 1 *Pet.* ii. 4; and he is the head of the chosen remnant,—in him they are chosen. 3. It is promised that, being chosen, God will make him as a signet. Jeconiah had been as the "signet on God's right hand," but was plucked thence, *Jer.* xxii. 24; and now Zerubbabel is substituted in the room of him. He shall be near and dear to God, precious in his sight and honourable, and his family shall continue till the Messiah spring out of it, who is "the signet on God's right hand." This speaks, 1st. The delight the Father has in him; in him he once and again declared himself to be well pleased. He is set as a "seal upon his heart, a seal upon his arm," is brought near unto him, *Dan.* vii. 13; is "hid in the shadow of his hand," *Isa.* xlix. 2. 2nd. The dominion the Father has intrusted him with. Princes sign their edicts, grants, and commissions with their signet rings, *Est.* iii. 10. Our Lord Jesus is the signet on God's right hand, for all power is given to him, and derived from him. By him the great charter of the Gospel is signed and ratified, and it is in him that all the promises of God are Yea and Amen.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF HAGGAI.

CHAP. II.—7. *The desire of all nations.* Who this person should be, may easily be known by the application of the same, or synonymous epithets, in the other prophets. From Abraham's days a seed was promised, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, *Gen.* xxii. 18; xxvi. 4; xxviii. 14. The promise was renewed to Isaac, afterwards to Jacob, who restrained it to one of Judah's posterity, to Shiloh, who was foretold to be the gathering of the people; or, as the Hebrew is rendered by the Septuagint, Vulgate, Syriac, and Jarchi, the expectation or desire of the people. It appears from hence, from *Isa.* x., xii. 4, and other passages, that the expectation, the hope, the desire of all nations, and of Israel in particular, was a known description of some person, delivered from one prophet to another, and which after the captivity was applied and confined to the Messias: compare this passage with *Mal.* iii. 1. The quality of the person and the place do agree so exactly, that one must think the same person is meant by both prophets, who is no other than the Lord Messias, termed "The hope, the blessed hope of Israel, the hope of the promise to the twelve tribes, the blessing of Abraham to the Gentiles," 1 *Tim.* i. 1; *Tit.* ii. 13, &c. Accordingly, the Jews, about our Saviour's time, interpret this passage of the Messias. Akiba, who might be born under the second temple, and was chief rabbi and counsellor to Barchochba in Trajan's reign, understands it so, as likewise does the Targum on *Isa.* iv. 2. Not to search after more authorities, we may acquiesce in the confession of Jarchi, who asserts 'That the ancients expounded this place of the Messias.' The word peace (ver. 9) is likewise a name of the Messias; and, as it includes all kinds of happiness, seems to be the reason why he is the desire of all nations, even because he shall be the blessing of all nations. However, this is one among the other lofty titles of the Messiah in *Isa.* ix. 6, "Prince, peace;" as the words may be rendered in apposition. The Jews paraphrase "He shall be our peace," *Mic.* v. 2, 5, by "the Messias shall be our peace." And they likewise pray for him under that title in their liturgy, 'Cause to come to us blessing and peace quickly. Give peace, good, blessing to us and thy people Israel, &c.' Add to this, that the Messiah is spoken of in other places of Scripture by the name of glory of the Lord, and then nothing is wanting to prove that the person, whose coming shall make the latter house glorious, must be the Messiah. The texts hinted at are *Isa.* xl. 5, lx. 1, 2, according to the paraphrase of the Targum; the rabbinical book entitled *Sanhedrim*, xi. 36; and Kimchi. This interpretation is farther established and confirmed from the expectation that the Jews generally had of the Messiah's coming before the end of the second temple, into which the person prophesied of by Haggai was to come. To this purpose are several of their traditions: as in Midrasch on *Deu.* xxxiii. 12; Ber. Ketan. on *Gen.* i., pas. 2; Breschith Rabba on *Gen.* xxvii. 47, 'The second temple shall continue to the age to come, and the days of the Messias.' Talmud. Hieros. R. Berachoth, Jarchi, 'The day when the temple was destroyed the Messias was born.' And very remarkable is the exclamation of R. Jose, who lived at the destruction by Titus, and affected with the sight, cried, 'Alas! the time of the Messiah is passed.' They then never dreamed of a third temple, so strongly insisted upon by Abarbanel, much less did they infer it, as he has done from this very passage, whereas the prophet expressly asserts the direct contrary. Haggai's temple is plainly the same as they then saw, and which was in their eyes as nothing; for he adds for their comfort, "I will fill this house with glory, and the glory of this latter shall be greater than the former; I will fill this place with peace." There had been at that time but two houses; Solomon's, which was the former, was not; Zerubbabel's, which is the latter, was now building—unlike to the former in magnificence, and yet promised to exceed it in glory. Nothing can be plainer than that into this house the desire of all nations was to come, that, while this temple was standing, he was to appear in this place, and manifest forth his glory. Within this compass of time no one else came, whom these titles fitted, besides Jesus Christ, in whom the *Logos*, or Word, tabernacled, or placed his Shechinah, and whose glory they beheld as the only begotten of the Father, *Jno.* i. 14.—*Chandler's Defence of Christianity*, pp. 71—84.

SYMBOLS OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF ZECHARIAH,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

THIS prophet was colleague with the prophet Haggai, and a worker together with him in forwarding the building of the second temple, *Ezr.* v. 1.; for two are better than one: Christ sent forth his disciples two and two. Zechariah began to prophesy some time after Haggai; but he continued longer, soared higher in visions and revelations; wrote more, and prophesied more, particularly concerning Christ, than Haggai had done: so "the last shall be first"—the last in time sometimes proves the first in dignity. He begins with a plain practical sermon, expressive of that which was the scope of his prophesying, in the first five verses; but afterwards, to the end of *ch.* vi., he relates the vision he saw, and the instructions he received immediately from heaven by them. At *ch.* vii., from an inquiry made by the Jews concerning fasting, he takes occasion to shew them the duty of their present day, and to encourage them to hope for God's favour, to the end of *ch.* viii. After which there are two sermons, which are both called "burdens of the word of the Lord;" one begins with *ch.* ix., the other with *ch.* xii., which probably were preached some time after; the scope of which is, to reprove for sin, and threatens God's judgments against the impenitent, and to encourage those that feared God with assurances of mercy God had in store for his church, and especially of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

A.M. 3484. B.C. 520.

CHAPTER I.

In this chapter, after the introduction, ver. 1, we have, I. An awakening call to a sinful people to repent of their sins and return to God, ver. 2—6. II. Great encouragement given to hope for mercy: 1. By the vision of the horses, ver. 7—11; 2. By the prayer of the angel for Jerusalem, and the answer to that prayer, ver. 12—17; 3. By the vision of the four carpenters, that were employed to cut off the four horns with which Judah and Jerusalem were scattered, ver. 18—21.

IN the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

2 The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts,
And I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.

4 Be ye not as your fathers,
Unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying,
Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Turn ye now from your evil ways, and *from* your evil [doings:
But they did not hear,
Nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.

5 Your fathers, where *are* they?
And the prophets, do they live for ever?

6 But my words and my statutes,
Which I commanded my servants the prophets,
Did they not take hold of your fathers?
And they returned and said,
Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us,
According to our ways, and according to our doings,
So hath he dealt with us.

Here is, First. The foundation of Zechariah's ministry. It is laid in a Divine authority: "The word of the Lord came to him." He received a Divine commission to be God's mouth to the people, and with it instructions what to say. He received of the Lord that which also he delivered unto them. The word of the Lord was to him; it came in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, as a real thing, and not a fancy. For the ascertaining of this we have here,

1. The time when the word of the Lord came first to him; or, when the word that next follows came to him. It was "in the second year of Darius." Before the captivity the prophets dated their writings by the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, but now by the reigns of the kings of Persia, to whom they were subjects; such a melancholy change had sin made in their circumstances. Zerubbabel took not so much state upon him as to have public acts dated by the years of his government; and in things of this nature the prophets, as is fit, complied with the usage of the time, and scrupled not to reckon by the years of the heathen kings, as *Dan.* vii. 1; viii. 1. Zechariah preached his first sermon in the eighth month of this second year of Darius; Haggai preached his in the sixth month of the same year, *Hag.* i. 1. The people being readily obedient to the will of the Lord in the mouth of Haggai, God blessed them with another prophet; for "to him that hath," and useth well what he has, "more shall be given."

2. The name and family of the prophet to whom the word of the Lord came. He was "Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo;" and he was the prophet, as Haggai is called the prophet, *Hag.* i. 1. For though in former ages there was one Iddo, a prophet, 2 *Chr.* xii. 15, yet we have no reason to think that Zechariah was of his progeny, or should be denominated from him. The learned Mr. Pemble is clear of opinion that this Zechariah the son of Berechiah is the same that our Saviour saith was "slain between the temple and the altar," perhaps many years after the rebuilding of the temple, *Mat.* xxiii. 35; and that our Saviour doth not mean, as is commonly thought, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada; for why should Jehoiada be called Berechiah? And he thinks the manner of Christ's account persuades us to think so; for, reckoning up the innocent blood shed by the Jews, he begins at Abel, and ends even in the last of the holy prophets; whereas, after Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, many prophets and righteous men were put to death by them. It is true there is no mention made in any history of their slaying this Zechariah, but Josephus might industriously conceal that shame of his nation. Perhaps what Zechariah spoke in his prophesying concerning Christ, of his being sold, his being wounded in the house of his friends, and the shepherd being smitten, was verified in the prophet himself, and so he became a type of Christ. Probably being assaulted by his persecutors, he took sanctuary in the court of the priests, and some think he was himself a priest, and so was slain between the porch and the altar.

Secondly. The firstfruits of Zechariah's ministry. Before he came to visions and revelations, and delivered his prophetical discourses, he preached that which was plain and practical; for it is best to begin with that. Before he published the promises of mercy, he published calls to repentance; for thus the way of the Lord must be prepared. Law must be first preached and then gospel. Now,

1. The prophet here puts them in mind of the controversy God had with their fathers; ver. 2, "The Lord has been sore displeased with your fathers," and has laid them under the tokens of his displeasure. You have heard with your ears, and your fathers have told you of it; you have seen with your eyes the woful remains of it. God's quarrel with you has been of long standing, and therefore it is time for you to think of taking it up. Note, The judgments of God which those that went before us were under should be taken as warnings to us not to tread in their steps, and calls to repentance, that we may cut off the entail of the curse, and get it turned into a blessing.

2. He calls them in God's name to return to him, and make their peace with him, ver. 3. God, by him, saith that to this backsliding people which he had often said by his servants the prophets, "Turn ye to me" in a way of faith and repentance, duty and obedience, and "I will turn to you" in a way of favour and mercy, peace and reconciliation. Let the rebels return to their allegiance, and they shall be taken under the protection of the government, and enjoy all the privileges of good subjects; let them change their way, and God will change

his: see *Mal.* iii. 7. But that which is most observable here is, that God is called here the Lord of hosts three times: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts;" it is he that speaks, and therefore you are bound to regard what he saith. "Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of hosts," this speaks the authority and obligation of the command, "and I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts," this speaks the validity and value of the promise, so that it is no vain repetition. Note, The consideration of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion should both engage and encourage sinners to repent and turn to him. It is very desirable having the Lord of hosts our friend, and very dreadful having him our enemy.

3. He warns them not to persist in their impenitence, as their fathers had done; ver. 4, "Be ye not as your fathers." Instead of being hardened in their evil courses by the example of their fathers' sin, let them rather be deterred from it by the example of their fathers' punishment. We are apt to be governed very much by precedent, and we are well or ill governed according to the use we make of the precedents before us. The same examples to some are a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death. Some argued thus: Shall we be wiser than our fathers? they never minded the prophets, and why, then, should we mind them? They made laws against them, and why should we tolerate them? But they are here taught how they should argue: Our fathers slighted the prophets, and God was sore displeased with them for it; therefore let us the more carefully regard what God saith to us by his prophets. Review what is past, and observe,

1st. What was the message that God sent by his servants the prophets to your fathers. "The former prophets cried to your fathers;" they cried aloud, and did not spare, not spare themselves, not spare your fathers; they cried as men in earnest, as men that would be heard; they spoke not as from themselves, but in the name of the Lord of hosts. And this was the substance of what they said, the burthen of every song, the application of every sermon, "Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings;" the very same that we now preach to you. Be persuaded to leave your sins; resolve to have no more to do with them; a speedy reformation is the only way to prevent an approaching ruin. Turn ye now from sin to God without delay.

2nd. How little this matter was regarded by your fathers; "But they did not hear," they did not heed. They turned a deaf ear to these calls; "They would not hearken unto me, saith the Lord;" they would not be reclaimed, would not be ruled by the word I sent them: say not then, You will do as your fathers did, for they did amiss: see *Jer.* xliv. 17. Note, We must not follow the examples of our dear fathers, unless they were God's dear children, nor any farther than they were dutiful and obedient to him.

3rd. What is become of your fathers and of the prophets that preached to them. They are all dead and gone, ver. 5. 1. "Your fathers, where are they?" The whole generation of them is swept away, and their place knows them no more. Note, When we think of our ancestors that are gone through the world, and gone out of it before us, we should think where they are. Here they were in the towns and countries where we live, passing and repassing in the same streets, dwelling in the same houses, trading in the same shops and exchanges, worshipping God in the same churches. But, "Where are they?" They are somewhere still, when they died there was not an end of them; they are in eternity, in the world of spirits, the unchangeable world, to which we are hastening apace. "Where are they?" Those of them that lived and died in sin are in torment; and we are warned by Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to look to it that we "come not to that place of torment," *Lu.* xvi. 28, 29. Those of them that lived and died in Christ are in paradise; and if we live and die as they did we shall be with them shortly, with them eternally. 2. The prophets also, "Did they live for ever?" No, they are gone too. The treasure is put into earthen vessels, the water of life into earthen pitchers, often cracked, and brought home broken at last. Christ is a prophet that lives for ever, but all other prophets have a period put to their office. Note, Ministers are dying men, and live not for ever in this world. They are to look upon themselves as such, and to preach accordingly, as those that must be silenced shortly, and know not which sermon may be the last. People are to look upon them as such, and to hear them accordingly, as those that yet a little while have the light with them, that they may walk and work while they have the light. Oh that this weighty consideration had its due weight given it; that we are dying ministers, dealing with dying people, about the concerns of immortal souls and an awful eternity, which both they and we are standing upon the brink of! It concerns us to think of the prophets that are gone, that were before us of old, *Jer.* xxviii. 8; they that were the glory of men withered and fell, but "the word of the Lord endureth for ever," 1 *Pet.* i. 24, 25. The prophets that are now, Do we live for ever? so some read it. No, Haggai and Zechariah will not be long with you, and prophecy itself shall shortly cease. In another world both we and our prophets shall live for ever, and to prepare for that world ought to be our great care and business in this.

4th. What the effects of the word were which God spoke to them by his prophets, ver. 6. The preachers died, and the hearers died, but the word of God died not; that took effect, and not one iota or tittle of it fell to the ground. As the rain and snow from heaven, it shall not return void, *Isa.* lv. 11. He appeals to themselves; they knew very well, *First.* That the judgments God had threatened were executed upon their fathers, and they were made to feel what they would not believe and fear. "My statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets," the precepts, with the penalties annexed, which I charged them with the delivery of, "did they not take hold of your fathers?" Though God's prophets could not fasten convictions upon them, the calamities threatened overtook them, and they could not escape them or get out of the reach of them. God's words took hold of them, as the bailiff arrests the debtor, and takes him in execution for contempt. Note, The unbelief of man cannot make the threatenings of God's word of none effect, but sooner or later they will take place, if the prescribed course be not taken to prevent the execution of them. God's anger will certainly take hold of those that will not be taken hold of by his authority; for when he judgeth he will overcome. *Secondly.* That they themselves could not but own the accomplishment of the word of God in the judgments of God that were upon them, and that therein he was righteous, and had done them no wrong. "They returned and said," (they changed their mind, and when it was too late to prevent the ruin of their nation they acknowledged,) "Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and doings," to reckon with us for them, "so hath he dealt with us," and we must acknowledge both his truth and his justice; must blame ourselves only, and have no blame to lay to him. *Sero sapiunt Phryges,*—'It is late before the Phrygians become wise.' This after-wit, as it is a proof of the truth of God, so it is a proof of the folly of men, that they will look no farther than they can see. They would never be persuaded to say in time, God will be as good as his word, for he is faithful; he will deal with us according to our deserts, for he is righteous. But now they see both plain enough, when the sentence is executed; now "he that runs may read," and publish the exact agreement that appears between the present providences and the former predictions, which then were slighted; between the present punishments and the former sins, which then were persisted in; now they cannot but say, "The Lord is righteous," *Dan.* ix. 11—13.

7 Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which *is* the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 8 I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that *were* in the bottom; and behind him *were there* red horses, speckled, and white. 9 Then said I, O my lord, what *are* these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these *be*. 10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These *are they* whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. 11 And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. 12 Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? 13 And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me *with* good words *and* comfortable words. 14 So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying,

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; [jealousy.
I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great
15 And I am very sore displeased with the heathen *that are* at ease:
For I was but a little displeased,
And they helped forward the affliction.
16 Therefore thus saith the LORD;
I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies:
My house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts,
And a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.
17 Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad;
And the LORD shall yet comfort Zion,
And shall yet choose Jerusalem.

We now come to visions and revelations of the Lord; for in that way God chose to speak by Zechariah, to awaken the people's attention, and to engage their humble reverence of the word, and their humble inquiries into it, and to fix it the more in their minds and memories. Most of the following visions seem designed for the comfort of the Jews, now newly returned out of captivity, and their encouragement to go on with the building of the temple. The scope of this vision (which is an introduction to the rest) is to assure the Jews of the care God took of them, and the eye of his providence that was upon them for good, now in their present state, when they seemed to be deserted, and their case deplorable. The vision is dated (ver. 7) the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, three months after he preached that sermon (ver. 1) in which he called them to repentance from the consideration of God's judgments. Finding that that sermon had a good effect, and that they returned to God in a way of duty, the assurances he had given them are confirmed that God would return to them in a way of mercy. Now observe here,

First. What the prophet saw, and the explication of that.

1. He saw a grove of myrtle-trees; a dark, shady grove, down in a bottom, hid by the adjacent hills, so that you were not aware of it till you were just upon it. This represented the low, dark, solitary, melancholy condition of the Jewish church at this time. They were overtopped by all their neighbours, buried in obscurity; what friends they had were hidden, and there appeared no way of relief and succour for them. Note, The church has not been always visible, but sometimes hid, as the "woman in the wilderness," *Rev.* xii. 6.

2. He saw a man mounted upon a red horse, standing in the midst of this shady myrtle grove. This man is no other than the man Christ Jesus, the same that appeared to Joshua with "his sword drawn in his hand," as "captain of the host of the Lord," *Jos.* v. 13, 14, and to St. John with his bow and his crown, *Rev.* vi. 2. Though the church was in a low condition, yet Christ was present in the midst of it. Was it hid by the hills? He was much more hid in the myrtle grove, yet hid as in an ambush, ready to appear for the seasonable relief of his people, to their happy surprise. Compare *Isa.* xlv. 15, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself," and yet Israel's God and Saviour at the same time, their "Holy One in the midst of them." He was riding, as a man of war, as a man in haste, riding on the heavens for the help of his people, *Deu.* xxxiii. 26. He rode on a red horse, either naturally so or dyed red with the blood of war, as this same victorious prince appeared red in his apparel, *Isa.* lxiii. 1, 2. Red

is a fiery colour, noting that he is jealous for Jerusalem, ver. 14, and very angry at her enemies. Christ under the law appeared on a red horse, noting the terror of that dispensation, and that he had yet his conflict before him, when he was to resist unto blood. But under the Gospel he appears on a white horse, *Rev.* vi. 2, and again, *ch.* xix. 11, noting that he has now gained the victory, and rides in triumph, and hangs out the white, not the bloody flag.

3. He saw a troop of horse attending him, ready to receive and obey his orders. Behind him there were some red horses, and some speckled, and some white, angels attending the Lord Jesus, ready to be employed by him for the service of his church, some in acts of judgment, others of mercy, others in mixed events. Note, The king of the church has angels at command, not only to do him honour, but to minister for the good of those that are his.

4. He inquired into the signification of this vision. He had an angel talking with him as his instructor, besides those he saw in the vision. So had Ezekiel, *ch.* xl. 3, and Daniel, *ch.* viii. 16. Zechariah asked him, ver. 9, "O, my Lord, what are these?" And it should seem this angel that talked with him was Christ himself, the "man on the red horse," whom the rest were attendants on; to him immediately Zechariah addresseth himself. Would we be acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, we must make our application not to angels, they are themselves learners, but to Christ himself, who is alone "able to take the book and open the seals," *Rev.* v. 7. The prophet's question implies a humble acknowledgment of his own ignorance, and an earnest desire to be informed. O let me know what these are! This he desired, not for the satisfying of his curiosity, but that he might be furnished with something proper for the comfort and encouragement of the people of God, in their present distress.

5. He received from the angel that talked with him, ver. 9, and from the man that stood among the myrtle-trees, ver. 10, the interpretation of this vision. Note, Jesus Christ is ready to instruct those that are humbly desirous to be taught the things of God. He presently said, "I will shew thee what these be." What knowledge we have, or may have, concerning the world of spirits, we are indebted to Christ for. The account given him was, "These are they whom the Lord hath sent," they are his messengers, his envoys, appointed (as his eyes are said to do, 2 *Chr.* xvi. 9,) to walk, to run, to fly swiftly through the earth, to observe what is done in it, and to execute the Divine commands. God needs them not, but he is pleased to employ them, and we need the comfort arising from the doctrine of their administration.

Secondly. What the prophet heard, and what instructions were thereby given him. Faith comes by hearing, and generally in visions there was something said.

1. He heard the report or representation which the angels made to Christ of the present state of the world, ver. 11. They had been out abroad as flying posts, ("being hastened by the King of kings' commandment," *Est.* iii. 15,) and being returned, they give this account to the "angel that stood among the myrtle-trees," (for to the Lord Jesus angels themselves are accountable,) "We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." We are taught to pray that the will of God may be done by men on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven; and here we see what need we have to pray so, for it is far from being so. For, 1st. We find the world of angels here very busy. Those that are employed in the court above rest not day nor night from praising God, which is their business there; and those that are employed in the camp below are never idle nor lose time, they are still ascending and descending upon the Son of man, *Jno.* i. 51, as on Jacob's ladder, *Gen.* xxviii. 12; they are still "walking to and fro through the earth." Thus active, thus industrious, Satan owns himself to be to do mischief, *Job* i. 7. It is well for us that good angels bestir themselves as much to do good, and that here in this earth we have guardians going about continually seeking to do us a kindness, as we have adversaries that as roaring lions go about continually seeking to devour us. Though holy angels in this earth meet with a great deal that is disagreeable, yet, while they are going on God's errands, they stick not to walk to and fro through it. Their own habitation, which those that fell liked not, they will like the better when they return. 2nd. We find the world of mankind here very careless: "All the earth sitteth still, and is at rest," while all the church is made uneasy, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. Those that are strangers to the church are secure, those that are enemies to it are successful. The Chaldeans and Persians dwell at ease, while the poor Jews are continually alarmed; as when "the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed." The children of men are merry and jovial, but none grieved for the affliction of God's children. Note, It is sad to think what a deep sleep the world is cast into, what a spirit of slumber hath seized the generality of mankind, that are under God's wrath and Satan's power, and yet secure and unconcerned! they sit still, and are at rest, *Lu.* xvii. 26, &c.

2. He heard Christ's intercession with the Father for his afflicted church, ver. 12. The angels related the posture of affairs in this lower world, but we read not of any prayers they made for the redress of the grievances they had made a remonstrance of; no, it is the angel among the myrtle-trees that is the great intercessor. Upon the report of the angels, he immediately turned heavenward, and said, Lord, wilt thou not have mercy on thy church? 1st. The thing he intercedes for is mercy, as *Ps.* lxxxv. 7, "Shew us thy mercy, O Lord." Note, God's mercy is all in all to the church's comfort; and all his mercy must be hoped for through Christ's mediation. 2nd. The thing he complains of is, the delay of this mercy; "How long wilt thou not have mercy!" He knows that mercies through him "shall be built up for ever," *Ps.* lxxxix. 2, but thinks it long that the building is deferred. 3rd. The objects of compassion recommended to the Divine mercies are, Jerusalem, the holy city, and other the cities of Judah, that were now in ruins, for God had had indignation against them now threescore and ten years. He mentioned seventy years, because that was the time fixed in the Divine counsels for the continuance of the captivity. So long the indignation lasted; and though now for a little space grace had been shewed them from the Lord their God, to give them some reviving, *Ezr.* ix. 8, yet the scars of those seventy years' captivity still remained so deep, so painful, that that is the melancholy string they still harp upon, the Divine indignation during those seventy years. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that, whereas the seventy years of captivity were reckoned from Jehoiakim's fourth year, and ended in the first of Cyrus, these seventy years are to be computed from the eleventh of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem and the temple were burnt, about nineteen years after the first captivity, and which ended in this second year of Darius Hystaspes, about seventeen years after Cyrus's proclamation; as that seventy years mentioned *ch.* vii. 5 was about nineteen years after. The captivity went off as it came on, gradually. Lord, we are still under the burden of the seventy years' wrath, and "Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?"

3. He heard a gracious reply given to this intercession of Christ's for his church; for it is a prevailing intercession, always acceptable, and "him the Father heareth always," ver. 13. "The Lord answered the angel," this angel of the covenant, "with good words, comfortable words," with promises of mercy and deliverance, and the perfecting of what he had begun in favour to them. These were comfortable words to Christ, who is grieved in the grievances of his church, and comfortable to all that mourn with Zion. God often answers prayer with good words, when he doth not presently appear in great works; and those good words are real answers to prayer. Men's good words will not feed the body, *Jas.* ii. 16, but God's good words will feed the faith; for saying and doing with him are not two things, though they are with us.

4. He heard that reply which was given to the angel repeated to himself, with a commission to publish it to the children of his people, for their comfort. "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him" he "signified to his servant John," and by him to the churches, *Rev.* i. 1, 4. Thus all the good words and comfortable words of the Gospel we receive from Jesus Christ, as he received them from the Father, in answer to the prayer of his blood, and his ministers are appointed to preach them to all the world. Now God would "speak comfortably to Jerusalem." Zechariah is "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." The voice said, Cry, cry then. The prophets must now cry as loud to shew God's people their comforts as ever they did formerly to shew them their transgressions, *Isa.* xl. 2, 3, 6. And if he ask what he shall cry, he is here instructed.

1st. He must proclaim the wrath God has in store for the enemies of Jerusalem. He is "jealous for Zion with great jealousy," ver. 14; that is, he takes himself to be highly affronted by the injuries and indignities that are done to his church, as he had been formerly by the iniquities found in his church. The earth "sat still and was at rest," ver. 21, not relenting at all, or shewing the least remorse for all the mischief they had done to Jerusalem, as Joseph's brethren, who, when they had sold him, sat down to eat bread; and this God took very ill; ver. 15, "I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease," and have no concern for the afflicted church. Much more will he be displeased with those that are at ease in Zion, *Am.* vi. 1, with Zion's own sons, that sympathise not with her in her sorrows. But this was not all; they were not only not concerned for her, but they were concerned against her. "I was but a little displeased" with my people, and designed to correct them moderately; but those that were employed as instruments of the correction cast off all pity, and with the greatest rage and malice helped forward the affliction, and added to it, persecuting those whom God had smitten, *Ps.* lxix. 26, and insulting over those whom he had troubled: see *Isa.* x. 5; xlvii. 6; *Eze.* xxv. 12. 15. Note, God is displeased with those that help forward the affliction even of such as suffer justly; for true humanity in such a case is good divinity.

2nd. He must proclaim the mercy God has in store for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, ver. 16. He must cry, "Thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies." I was going away in wrath, but I am now returning in love. Cry yet to the same purpose, ver. 17. There must now be line upon line for consolation, as formerly there had been for conviction. The Lord, even the Lord of hosts, assures them, *First.* That the temple shall be built that is now but in the building. This good work they are now about, though it meet with much discouragement, shall be perfected, and they shall have the tokens of God's presence, and opportunities of conversing with him, and worshipping him as formerly. Note, It is good news indeed to any place to hear that God will build his house in it. *Secondly.* That Jerusalem shall again be builded as a city compact together, which had formerly been its glory; *Ps.* cxxii. 3, "A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem," in order to the rebuilding of it with great exactness and uniformity. *Thirdly.* That the nation shall again become populous and rich, though now diminished and impoverished; not only Jerusalem, but other cities that are reduced and lie in a little compass, shall yet spread abroad, or be diffused. Their suburbs shall extend far, and colonies shall be transplanted from them, and this through prosperity. They shall be so numerous, and so wealthy, that there shall not be room for them; they shall complain the place is too strait, *Isa.* xlix. 20. As they had been scattered and spread abroad through their calamities, so they should now be through their prosperity. "Let thy fountains be dispersed," *Pr.* v. 16. The cities that should thus increase God calls his cities; they are blessed by him, and they are fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land. *Fourthly.* That all their present sorrows should not only be balanced, but for ever silenced, by Divine consolations; "The Lord shall yet comfort Zion." Yet at length, though her griefs and grievances may continue long, God has comforts in reserve for Zion and all her mourners. *Fifthly.* That all this will be the fruit of God's preventing, distinguishing favour. He shall yet choose Jerusalem, shall renew his choice, renew his covenant, shall make it appear he has chosen Jerusalem. As he first built them up into a people, when he brought them out of Egypt, so he will now rebuild them when he brings them out of Babylon; not for any worthiness of theirs, but in pursuance of his own choice, *Deu.* vii. 7, 8. Jerusalem is the city he has chosen, and he will not cast it off.

18 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. 19 And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What *be* these? And he answered me, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. 20 And the LORD shewed me four carpenters. 21 Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up *their* horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

It is the comfort and triumph of the church, *Isa.* lix. 19, that "when the enemy shall come in like a flood," with mighty force and fury, then "the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Now in this vision (the second that this prophet had) we have an illustration of that, God's Spirit making a stand, and making head against the formidable power of the church's adversaries.

First. We have here the enemies of the church bold and daring, and threatening to be its death, to cut off the name of Israel; such the people of God had lately been insulted by. I looked, and behold, four horns, ver. 18, which are explained, ver. 19, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem;" that is, the Jews, both in the country and in the city, because they were the Israel of God. They have 'tossed them,' (so some read it,) as furious bulls with their horns toss that which they are enraged at. They have scattered them, "so that no man did lift up his head," ver. 21. No man durst shew his face for fear of them, much less give them any opposition, or make head against them. They are horns, noting their dignity and dominion, horns exalted, and their strength and power and violence. They are four horns, for

the Jews are surrounded with them on every side; when they avoid one horn that pusheth at them, they run upon another. The men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many of Israel, that joined themselves to them, set about the building of the temple, but the enemies of that work from all sides pushed at them, and drove them from it. Rehum and Shimshai, and other the Samaritans, that opposed the building of the temple, were these horns, *Ezr.* iv. 8, so were Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Ammonites and Arabians, that opposed the building of the wall, *Neh.* iv. 7. Note, The church's enemies have horns, and use them to the hindrance of every good work. The great enemy of the New Testament church hath seven heads and ten horns, *Rev.* xvii. 3, so that they who endeavour to do the church any service must expect to be pushed at.

Secondly. We have here the friends of the church active and prevailing. The prophet did himself lift up his eyes, and see the four horns, and saw them so formidable that he began to despair of the safety of every good man, and the success of every good work; but the Lord then shewed him four carpenters, or smiths, that were empowered to cut off these horns, ver. 20, 21. With an eye of sense we see the power of the enemies of the church,—look which way we will, the world shews us that; but it is with an eye of faith that we see it safe notwithstanding,—it is the Lord that shews us that, as he opened the eyes of the prophet's servant to see the angelic guards round about his master, 2 *Kin.* vi. 17. Observe, Those that were to fray or break the horns of the Gentiles, and to cast them out, were,

1. Carpenters, or smiths, (for they are supposed by some to have been horns of iron,) men that had skill and ability to do it, whose proper business it was, and who understood their business, and had tools at hand to do it with. Note, God calls those to serve the interests of his church whom he either finds or makes fit for it. If there be horns against the church, which speak the force and fury of beasts, there are carpenters for the church, which speak the wisdom and forecast of men, by which they find ways to master the strongest beasts; for "every kind of beast is tamed and has been tamed of mankind," *Jas.* iii. 7.

2. They were four carpenters; as many horns, so many hands to saw them off. Note, Which way soever the church is threatened with mischief, and opposition given to its interests, God can find out ways and means to check the force, to restrain the wrath, and make it turn to his praise. Some by these four carpenters understand Zerubbabel and Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, that carried on the work of God in despite of the opposition given to it. Those horned beasts broke into God's vineyard, to tread it down, but the good magistrates, and the good ministers, whom God raised up, though they had not power to "cut off the horns of the wicked," as David did, *Ps.* lxxv. 5, 10, yet they frightened them, and cast them out. Note, When God has work to do he will raise up some to do it, and others to defend it, and protect those that are employed in the doing of it.

CHAPTER II.

In this chapter we have, I. Another vision which the prophet saw, not for his own entertainment, but for his satisfaction, and the edification of those to whom he was sent, ver. 1, 2. II. A sermon upon it in the rest of the chapter, 1. By way of explication of the vision, shewing it to be a prediction of the replenishing of Jerusalem, and of its safety and honour, ver. 3—5; 2. By way of application; here is, 1st. A use of exhortation to the Jews that were yet in Babylon, pressing them to hasten their return to their own land, ver. 6—9; 2nd. A use of consolation to those that were returned, in reference to the many difficulties they had to struggle with, ver. 10—12; 3rd. A use of caution to all, not to prescribe to God, or limit him, but patiently to wait for him, ver. 13.

I LIFTED up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. 2 Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what *is* the breadth thereof, and what *is* the length thereof. 3 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, 4 And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying,

Jerusalem shall be inhabited *as* towns without walls
For the multitude of men and cattle therein:
5 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about,
And will be the glory in the midst of her.

This prophet was ordered in God's name to assure the people, *ch.* i. 16, that "a line should be stretched forth upon Jerusalem." Now here we have that promise illustrated and confirmed, that the prophet might deliver that part of his message to the people with the more clearness and assurance.

First, He sees in a vision a man going to measure Jerusalem; ver. 1, 2, "He lift up his eyes again, and looked." God had shewed him that which was very encouraging to him, *ch.* i. 20, and therefore now he "lift up his eyes again and looked." Note, The comfortable sight which by faith we have had of God's goodness made to pass before us, should engage us to lift up our eyes again, and to search farther into the discoveries made us of the Divine grace; for there is still more to be seen. In the close of the foregoing chapter he had seen Jerusalem's enemies baffled and broken, so that now he begins to hope she shall not be ruined. But that is not enough to make her happy, and therefore that is not all that is promised; here is more carpenter's work to be done. When David had resolved to "cut off the horns of the wicked," he engaged likewise that the horns of the righteous should be exalted, *Ps.* lxxv. 10. And so doth the Son of David here; for he is the man, even "the man Christ Jesus," whom the prophet sees "with a measuring line in his hand;" for he is the master builder of his church, *Heb.* iii. 3, and he builds exactly by line and level. Zechariah took the boldness to ask him whither he was going, and what he designed to do with that measuring line; and he readily told him he was going to measure Jerusalem, to take a particular account of the dimensions of it each way, that it might be computed what was necessary for the making a wall about it, and that it might appear, by comparing the dimensions with the vast numbers that should inhabit it, what additions were necessary to be made for the receiving and containing of them. When multitudes flock to Jerusalem, *Isa.* lx. 4, it is time for her to "enlarge the place of her tent," *Isa.* liv. 2. Note, God takes notice of the extent of his church, and will take care that when never so many guests are brought into the wedding supper, yet still there shall be room, *Lu.* xiv. 22; in the "New Jerusalem, my Father's house" above, "there are many mansions."

Secondly. He is informed that this vision means well to Jerusalem; that the measuring line he saw was not a line of confusion, as that *Isa.* xxxiv. 11; not a line to mete out for destruction, as when God "purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion, he stretched out a line," *Lam.* ii. 8; but it is as when he "divided the inheritance by line," *Ps.* lxxviii. 55. The angel that talked with the prophet went forth as he designed to measure Jerusalem, but "another angel went out to meet him," to desire that he would first explain this vision to the prophet, that it might not occasion him any uneasy speculations. "Run and speak to this young man," for it seems the prophet entered upon his prophecy when he was young, yet no man ought to despise his youth when God thus highly honoured it. He is a young man, not experienced, and may be ready to fear the worst, therefore bid him hope the best; tell him that Jerusalem shall be both safe and great.

1. As safe and great as numbers of men can make it; ver. 4, Jerusalem "shall be inhabited as towns without walls;" that is, the inhabitants of it shall increase, and multiply, and replenish it to admiration, so as to extend itself far beyond the present dimensions, which now there is an account taken of. The walls of a city, as they defend it, so they straiten and confine it, and keep its inhabitants from multiplying beyond such a pitch; but Jerusalem, even when it is walled to keep off the enemy, yet shall be inhabited "as towns without walls;" the city shall be in a manner lost in the suburbs, as London is, where the out parishes are more populous than those within the walls. So shall it be with Jerusalem; it shall be extended as freely as if it had no walls at all, and yet shall be as safe as if it had the strongest walls, such a multitude of men (which are the best walls of a city) shall there be therein, and of cattle too, to be not only food, but wealth too, for those men. Note, The increase of the numbers of a people is a great blessing, is a fruit of God's blessing on them, and an earnest of farther blessings; *Ps.* cvii. 38, "They are multiplied, for he blesseth them."

2. As safe and great as the presence of God can make it, ver. 5. 1st. It shall be safe, for God himself will be a "wall of fire round about it." Jerusalem had no walls about it at this time, but lay naked and exposed. Formerly, when it had walls, the enemy not only broke through them, but broke them down; but now "God will be unto her a wall of fire." Some think it alludes to shepherds that made fires about their flocks, or travellers that made fires about their tents in desert places, to frighten wild beasts from them. God will not only make a hedge about them, as he did about Job, *ch.* i. 10, not only make walls and bulwarks about them, *Isa.* xxvi. 1, those may be battered down; not only be as the mountains round about them, *Ps.* cxxv. 2, mountains may be got over; but he will be a wall of fire round them, which can neither be broke through nor scaled, nor undermined, nor the foundations of it sapped, nor can it be attempted or approached without danger to the assailants. God will not only make a wall of fire about her, but he will himself be such a wall; for "our God is a consuming fire" to his and his church's enemies; he is a wall of fire, not on one side only, but round about on every side. 2nd. It shall be great, for God himself "will be the glory in the midst of it." His temple, his altar, shall be set up and attended there, and his institutions observed; and there then shall the tokens of his special presence and favour be, which will be the glory in the midst of them, will make them truly admirable in the eyes of all about them. God will have honour from them, and put honour upon them. Note, Those that have God for their God have him for their glory; those that have him in the midst of them have glory in the midst of them; and thence the church is said to be "all glorious within." And those persons and places that have God to be "the glory in the midst of them" have him for "a wall of fire round about them;" for "upon all that glory there is" and shall be "a defence," *Isa.* iv. 5. Now this was fulfilled in part in Jerusalem, which in process of time became a very flourishing city, and made a very great figure in those parts of the world, much beyond what could have been expected, considering how low it was brought, and how long it was ere it recovered itself. But it was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, which is extended far, as towns without walls, by the admission of the Gentiles into it; and which hath God, the Son of God, for its prince and protector.

6 Ho, ho, *come forth*,
And flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD:
For I have spread you abroad
As the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD.
7 Deliver thyself, O Zion,
That dwellest *with* the daughter of Babylon.
8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts;
After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you:
For he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.
9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them,
And they shall be a spoil to their servants:
And ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.

One would have thought Cyrus's proclamation, which gave liberty to the captive Jews to return to their own land, would have sufficed to bring them all back; and that, as when Pharaoh gave them leave to quit Egypt and their house of bondage there, they should not have left a hoof behind; but it seems it had not that effect. There were about forty thousand whose spirits God stirred up to go, and they went; but many, perhaps the greater part, stayed behind. The land of their captivity was to most of them the land of their nativity; they had taken root there, had gained a settlement, and many of them a very comfortable one. Some perhaps had got estates and preferments there, and they did not think they could mend themselves by returning to their own land; *Patria est ubicunque bene est*,—'My country is every spot where I feel myself happy.' They had no great affection for their own land, and apprehended the difficulties in their way to it insuperable. This proceeded from an ill cause, a distrust of the power and promise of God, a love of ease and worldly wealth, and an indifferency to the religion of their country, and to the God of Israel himself; and it had an ill effect, for it was an implicit censure of those, as foolish, and rash, and given to change, that did return, and a weakening of their hands in the work of God. Such as these could not sing *Ps.* cxxxvii. in their captivity, for they had forgot thee, O Jerusalem, and were so far from preferring thee before their chief joy that they preferred any joy before thee. Here is therefore another proclamation issued out by the God

of Israel, strictly charging and commanding all his freeborn subjects, wherever they were dispersed, speedily to return to their own land, and render themselves at their respective posts there. They are loudly summoned, ver. 6, "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord." This fitly follows upon the promise of the rebuilding and enlarging of Jerusalem. If God will build it for them and their comfort, they must come and inhabit it for him and his glory, and not continue sneaking in Babylon. Note, The promises and privileges with which God's people are blessed should engage us, whatever it cost us, to join ourselves to them, and cast in our lot among them. When Zion is enlarged to make more room for all God's Israel, it is the greatest madness imaginable for any of them to stay in Babylon. The captivity of a sinful state is by no means to be continued in, though a man be never so easy upon temporal accounts; no, "Come forth and flee," with all speed, and lose no time. Escape for thy life, look not behind thee. To induce them to hasten their return, let them consider,

First. They are now dispersed, and were concerned to incorporate themselves for their mutual, common defence; ver. 6, "I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven," some sent into one corner of the world, and some into another, and this has been your condition a long time; wherefore you should now think of coming together again, to help one another. God owns that his scattering them was in wrath, and therefore they must take this invitation as a token of God's being willing to be reconciled to them again; so that they kicked at his kindness in refusing to accept the call.

Secondly. They are now in bondage, and were concerned to assert their own liberty, and therefore "Deliver thyself, O Zion," flee from the oppressor, and make the best of thy way; let us see some such bold efforts and struggles to help thyself as become the generous, gracious seed of Abraham, ver. 7. Note, When Christ has proclaimed that deliverance to the captives which he has himself wrought out, it then concerns each of us to "deliver ourselves, to loose ourselves from the bands of our necks," *Isa.* lii. 2; and, since we are under grace, to resolve that "sin shall not have dominion over us." Zion herself is here said to dwell with the daughter of Babylon, because many of the precious sons of Zion dwelt there; and where the people of God are there the church of God is, for it is not tied to places. Now it is not fit that Zion should "dwell with the daughter of Babylon." What communion can light have with darkness? Zion will be in danger of partaking with the daughter of Babylon, both in her sins and in her plagues; and therefore, "Come out of her, my people," *Rev.* xviii. 4; "Deliver thyself, O Zion," by a speedy return to thine own land, and do not destroy thyself by continuing in that polluted, devoted land. Those that would be found among the generation of God's children must save themselves from the untoward generation of this world; it was St. Peter's charge to his new converts, *Acts* ii. 40.

Thirdly. They have seemed to be forsaken and forgotten of God, but God will now make it to appear that he espouseth their cause, and will plead it with jealousy, ver. 8, 9. It was a discouragement to those who remained in Babylon to hear of the difficulties and opposition which their brethren met with that were returned, by which they were still in danger of being crushed and overpowered; and we had as good sit still (think they) as rise up and fall. In answer to this objection, the angel that talked with the prophet, that is, Jesus Christ, tells him what he had commission to do for their protection, and the perfecting of their salvation, and therein has an eye to the great redemption which in the fulness of time he was the author of. Christ, who is Jehovah, and the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, in both which he has a sovereign power, saith, "He," that is, the Father, "hath sent me." Note, What Jesus Christ hath done and doth for his church against his enemies he was sent and commissioned by the Father to do. With great satisfaction he often speaks of the Father that sent him.

1. He is sent after the glory. After the glorious beginning of their deliverance he is sent to perfect it, for he is the finisher of that work which he is the author of. Christ is sent in the first place to the nation and people of the Jews, to whom pertained the glory, *Rom.* ix. 4, and he was himself the glory of his people Israel. But after the glory, after his care of them, he is sent to the nations, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, by the power of his Gospel to captivate them, and bring them, and every high thought among them, into obedience to himself.

2. He is sent to the nations that spoiled them, to take vengeance on them for the wrongs done to Zion, when the year of his redeemed comes, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, *Isa.* xxxiv. 8. He is sent to shake his hand upon them, to lift up his mighty hand against them, and to lay upon them his heavy hand, to "bruise them with a rod of iron," and "dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," *Ps.* ii. 9. Some think it intimates how easily God can subdue and humble them with the turn of his hand; it is but shaking his hand over them and the work is done. "They shall be a spoil to their servants," shall be enslaved to those whom they had enslaved, and be plundered by those whom they had plundered. In Esther's time this was fulfilled, when the Jews had rule over them that hated them, *Est.* ix. 1, and often in the time of the Maccabees. And the promise is farther fulfilled in Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies, his spoiling principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, *Col.* ii. 15. And it is still in force to the gospel church; Christ will reckon with all that are enemies to it, and sooner or later will make them his footstool, *Ps.* cx. 1; *Rev.* iii. 9.

3. What he will do for his church shall be an evident proof of God's tender care of it, and affection to it; "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye." This is a high expression of God's love to his church. By his resentment of the injuries done to her it appears how dear she is to him, how he interests himself in all her interests, and takes what is done against her not only as done against himself, but as done against the very apple of his eye, the tenderest part, which nature has made very fine, has put a double guard upon, and taught us to be in a special manner careful of, and which the least touch is a great offence to. This encourageth the people of God to pray with David, *Ps.* xvii. 8, "Keep me as the apple of thine eye;" and engageth them to do as Solomon directs, *Pr.* vii. 2, to keep his law as the apple of their eye. Some understand it thus, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his own eye;' whoever do you any injury will prove in the issue to have done the greatest injury to themselves.

4. It shall be an evident proof of Christ's mission; "Ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me" to be the protector of his church, that the promises made to the church are Yea and Amen in him. Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies proves that the Father sent him, and was with him.

10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion:
For, lo, I come,
And I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.
11 And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that [day,
And shall be my people:
And I will dwell in the midst of thee,
And thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.
12 And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion
In the holy land,
And shall choose Jerusalem again.
13 Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD:
For he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

Here is, First. Joy proclaimed to the church of God, to the daughter of Zion, that had separated herself from the daughter of Babylon. The Jews that were returned were in distress and danger, their enemies in the neighbourhood were spiteful against them, their friends that remained in Babylon were cool towards them, shy of them, and declined coming to their assistance, and yet they are bid to sing, and to rejoice, even in tribulation. Note, Those that have recovered their purity, and integrity, and spiritual liberty, though they have not yet recovered their outward prosperity, have reason to sing and rejoice, to give glory to God, and take comfort to themselves.

1. God will have a people among them. If their brethren in Babylon will not come to them, those of other nations shall, and shall replenish Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah; "Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day," that are now at a distance from him, and strangers to him. The Jewish nation, after the captivity, multiplied very much by the accession of proselytes to it, that were naturalised, and were entitled to all the privileges of native Israelites, and perhaps they were equal in number; and therefore Paul mentions it as an honour to him which many Jews had not, that he was "of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews," *Phil.* iii. 5. And this was an earnest of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the Christian church; and in that, this and other like promises were to have their full accomplishment. It was therefore strange that that should be so great an offence to the Jews as we find it was in the apostles' times, which was promised them as a blessing in the prophets' times, that many nations should be joined to the Lord. And as there had been one law so should there be one Gospel for the stranger and for those born in the land; whatever nation they come from, when they "join themselves to the Lord they shall be my people," as dear to God as ever Israel had been. Note, God will own those for his people that with purpose of heart join themselves to him; and when many do so, we ought to look upon them, not with a jealous eye, but with a joyful one. Angels rejoice, and therefore so should the daughter of Zion, when many nations are joined to the Lord.

2. They shall have his presence among them; "Sing and rejoice," for "I come." Those to whom God comes have reason to rejoice, for he will be to them their chief joy. God will come, not to make them a visit only, but to reside with them, and preside over them; "I will dwell in the midst of thee," ver. 10; and it is repeated, ver. 11, because it was to have a double accomplishment: 1st. In the dedication of the temple, in their regularly observing all God's institutions there, and God's owning them therein. Those have God dwelling in the midst of them that have his ordinances administered in their purity, and a Divine power going along with them; with these tokens of God's presence the Jewish church was blessed after this as much as ever. 2nd. In the incarnation of Christ. He that here promiseth to dwell among them is that "Lord, whom the Lord of hosts hath sent," ver. 11; and, therefore, must be the Lord Jesus, who came and dwelt in the midst of the Jewish nation, the eternal Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us. This was the great honour reserved for that nation in its last days; the promise of it effectually secured their continuance till it was accomplished. They could not be destroyed while that blessing was in them. And the prospect of it according to the promise was the great support and comfort to them who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. It is promised that when Christ comes and dwells among them they shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent him; all that were Israelites indeed were made to know it; sufficient proofs were given of it by the miracles Christ wrought, so that they might have known it, and yet there were those that perished in ignorance and unbelief, that would not know it; for, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

3. They shall have all their ancient dignities and privileges restored to them again, ver. 12. 1st. Canaan shall be a holy land again; not polluted by sin as it had been formerly, nor profaned by the enemies as it had been of late; it shall be an inclosure again and not laid in common. 2nd. Judah shall be in this holy land, shall inhabit it, and enjoy the comfort of it, and no longer be lost and scattered in Babylon. 3rd. Judah shall be God's portion, which he will delight in, which shall be dear to him, by which he will be served, and in which he will be glorified; the Lord's portion is his people. 4th. God will inherit Judah again as his portion, will claim his interest, and recover the possession out of the hands of those that had invaded his right. He will protect his people, and govern them as a man doth his inheritance, and will be at home among them. He will choose Jerusalem again, as he had chosen it formerly, to put his name there; will renew and confirm the choice, and continue it a chosen place till it must resign its honours to the Jerusalem that is from above. Though the election seemed to be set aside for awhile, yet it shall obtain.

Secondly. Here is silence proclaimed to all the world beside, ver. 13. The daughter of Zion must sing, but all flesh must be silent. Observe here,

1. A very awful description of God's appearances for the relief of his people. "He is raised up out of his holy habitation," as a man out of sleep, *Ps.* xliv. 23; lxxviii. 65; or as a man entering with resolution upon a business that he will go through with. Heaven is his holy habitation above, thence we must expect him to appear, *Isa.* lxiv. 1. His temple is so in this lower world, thence from between the cherubims he will shine forth, *Ps.* lxxx. 1. He is about to do something unusual, unexpected, and very surprising, and to plead his people's cause, which had long seemed neglected.

2. A seasonable caution and direction at such a time. "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord," before Christ and his grace,—let not flesh object against the methods he takes. Before God and his providence the enemies of the church shall be silenced, all iniquity shall stop her mouth; the friends of the church must be silent. Leave it to God to take his own way, and neither prescribe to him what he should do nor quarrel with him whatever he doth. Be still, and know that he is God; Stand still, and see his salvation: see *Hab.* ii. 20; *Zep.* i. 7. Silently acquiesce in his holy will, and patiently wait the issue, as those that are assured, when God is raised up out of his holy habitation, he will not retreat or sit down again till he has accomplished his whole work.

CHAPTER III.

The vision in the foregoing chapter gave assurances of the re-establishing of the civil interests of the Jewish nation, the promises of which terminated in Christ. Now the vision in this chapter concerns their church state, and their ecclesiastical interests, and

assures them that they shall be put into a good posture again; and the promises of this also have an eye to Christ, who is not only our Prince, but the High Priest of our profession, of whom Joshua was a type. Here is, I. A vision relating to Joshua, as the representative of the church in his time, representing the disadvantages he laboured under, and the people in him, with the redress of the grievances of both. 1. He is accused by Satan, but is brought off by Christ, ver. 1, 2; 2. He appears in filthy garments, but had them changed, ver. 3—5; 3. He is assured of being established in his office if he carry himself well, ver. 6, 7. II. A sermon relating to Christ, who is here called the Branch, who should be endued with all perfections for his undertaking, should be carried triumphantly through it, and by whom we should have pardon and peace, ver. 8—10.

AND he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2 And the LORD said unto Satan,

The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan;
Even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee:
Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. 4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. 5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his

MITRES.

head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by. 6 And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, 7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;

If thou wilt walk in my ways,
And if thou wilt keep my charge,
Then thou shalt also judge my house,
And shalt also keep my courts, [stand by.
And I will give thee places to walk among these that

There was a Joshua that was a principal agent in the first settling of Israel in Canaan. Here is another of the same name very active in their second settlement there after the captivity. Jesus is the same name, and it signifies a saviour; and they were both figures of him that was to come, our Chief Captain and our Chief Priest. The angel that talked with Zechariah shewed him Joshua the high priest; it is likely the prophet saw him frequently, and spoke to him, and there was a great intimacy between them. But in his common views he only saw how he appeared before men; if he must know how he stands before the Lord, it must be shewed him in vision; and so it is shewed him. And so men are really as they are with God, not as they appear in the eye of the world. He stood before the angel of the Lord; that is, before Christ, the Lord of the angels, to whom even the high priests themselves of Aaron's order were accountable. He stood before the angel of the Lord to execute his office, to minister to God under the inspection of the angels. He stood to consult the oracle on the behalf of Israel, whom as high priest he was agent for. Guilt and corruption are our two great discouragements when we stand before God. By the guilt of the sins committed by us we are become obnoxious to the justice of God, by the power of the sin that dwelleth in us we are become odious to the holiness of God. All God's Israel are in danger upon these two accounts. Joshua was so here, for "the law made men priests that had infirmity," *Heb.* vii. 28; and as to both we have relief from Jesus Christ, who is made of God to us both righteousness and sanctification.

First. Joshua is accused as a criminal, but is justified.

1. A violent opposition is made to him. Satan stands "at his right hand to resist him," to be a Satan to him, a law adversary. He stands at his right hand, as the prosecutor or witness at the right hand of the prisoner. Note, The devil is the accuser of the brethren, that "accuseth them before God day and night," *Rev.* xii. 10. Some think the chief priest was accused for the sin of many of the inferior priests, in marrying strange wives, which they were much guilty of after their return out of captivity, *Ezr.* ix. 1, 2; *Neh.* xiii. 28. When God is about to re-establish the priesthood, Satan objects the sins that were found among the priests, as rendering them unworthy the honour designed them. It is by our own folly that we give Satan advantage against us, and furnish him with matter for reproach and accusation; and if any thing be amiss, especially with the priests, Satan will be sure to aggravate it, and make the worst of it. He stood to resist him; that is, to oppose the service he was doing for the public good. He stood at his right hand, the hand for action, to discourage him, and to raise difficulties in his way. Note, When we stand before God to minister to him, or stand up for God to serve his interests, we must expect to meet with all the resistance that Satan's subtlety and malice can give us. Let us then resist him that resists us, and he shall flee from us.

2. A victorious defence is made for him; ver. 2, "The Lord," that is, the Lord Christ, "said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee." Note, It is the happiness of the saints that the Judge is their friend; the same that they are accused to is their patron and their protector, and an advocate for them, and he will be sure to bring them off. 1st. Satan is here checked by one that has authority, that has conquered him, and many a time silenced him. "The accuser of the brethren," of the ministers and the ministry, is cast out; his indictments quashed, and his suggestions against them, as well as his suggestions to them, shewed to be malicious, frivolous, and vexatious; "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan." "The Lord said," that is, the Lord our Redeemer, "The Lord rebuke thee," that is, the Lord our Creator. The power of God is engaged for the making of the grace of Christ effectual. The Lord restrain thy malicious rage, reject thy malicious charge, and revenge upon thee thine enmity to a servant of his. Note, Those that belong to Christ have him ready to appear vigorously for them, then when Satan appears most vehement against them. He doth not parley with him, but stops his mouth immediately with this sharp reprimand, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan." This is the best way of dealing with that furious enemy; "Get thee behind me, Satan." 2nd. Satan is here argued with. He resists the priest, but let him know that his resistance, *First*. Will be fruitless; it will be to no purpose to attempt any thing against Jerusalem, for the Lord hath chosen it, and he will abide by his choice. Whatever is objected against God's people, God saw it; he foresaw it when he chose them, and yet he chose them; and, therefore, that can be no inducement to him now to reject them. He knew the worst of them when he chose them, and his election shall obtain. *Secondly*. It is unreasonable; for, "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Joshua is so, and the priesthood, and the people whose representative he is. Christ has not that to say for them for which they are to be praised, but that for which they are to be pitied. Note, Christ is ready to make the best of his people, and takes notice of every thing that is pleadable in excuse of their infirmities, so far is he from being extreme to mark what they do amiss. They have been lately in the fire, no wonder they are black and smoked, and have the smell of the fire upon them, but they are therefore to be excused, not to be accused. One can expect no other but that those who but the other day were captives in Babylon should appear very mean and despicable. They have been lately brought out of great affliction, and is Satan so barbarous as to desire to have them thrown into affliction again? They have been wonderfully delivered out of the fire, that God might be glorified in them; and will he then cast them off, and abandon them? No; he will not quench the smoking flax, because he intended to make use of it. Note, Narrow escapes from imminent danger are happy presages and powerful pleas for more eminent favours. A converted soul is a brand plucked out of the fire by a miracle of free grace, and therefore shall not be left to be a prey to Satan.

Secondly. Joshua appears as one polluted, but is purified; for he represents the Israel of God, who are all as an unclean thing, until they are washed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Now observe here,

1. The impurity wherein Joshua appeared, ver. 3. He was clothed not only in coarse but in filthy garments, such as did very ill become the dignity of his office and the sanctity of his work. By the law of Moses the garments of the high priest were to be for glory, and for beauty, *Ex.* xxviii. 2; but Joshua's garments were a shame and reproach to him. Yet in them "he stood before the angel of the Lord;" he had no clean linen wherein to minister, and do the duty of his place. Now this intimates not only that the priesthood was poor and despised, and loaded with contempt, but that there was a great deal of iniquity cleaving to the holy things. The returned Jews were so taken up with their troubles, that they thought they needed not to complain of their sins, and were not aware those were the great hindrances of the progress of God's work among them; because they were free from idolatry, they thought themselves chargeable with no iniquity. But God shews them there were many things amiss in them, which retarded the advances of God's favours towards them. There were spiritual enemies warring against them, more dangerous than any of the neighbour nations. The Chaldee paraphrase saith, Joshua had sons, who took unto them wives which were not lawful for the priests to take; and we find it was so, *Ezr.* x. 18. And, no doubt, there were other things amiss in the priesthood, *Mal.* ii. 1; yet Joshua was permitted to stand before the angel of the Lord: though his children did not as they should, yet the covenant of priesthood was not broken. Note, Christ bears with his people, whose hearts are upright with him, and admits them into communion with himself, notwithstanding their manifold infirmities.

2. The provision that was made for his cleansing. Christ gave orders to the angels that attended him, and were ready to do his pleasure, to put Joshua into a better state. Joshua presented himself before the Lord in his filthy garments, as an object of his pity; and Christ graciously looked upon him with compassion, and not, as justly he might have done, with indignation. Christ loathed the filthiness of Joshua's garments, yet did not put him away, but put them away. Thus God by his grace doth with those whom he chooses to be priests to himself, he parts between them and their sins, and so prevents their sins parting between them and their God; reconciles himself to the sinner, but not to the sin. Two things are here done for Joshua, representing a double work of Divine grace wrought in and for believers.

1st. His filthy garments are taken from him, ver. 4; the meaning of which is given us in what Christ said, and he said it as one having authority, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee." The guilt of it is taken away by pardoning mercy, the stink and stain of it is by peace spoken to the conscience, and the power of it broken by renewing grace. When God forgives our sins he "causeth our iniquity to pass from us," that it may not appear against us to condemn us; it passeth from us as far as the east is from the west. When he sanctifies the nature, he enables us to put off the old man, to cast away from us the filthy rags of our corrupt affections and lusts, as things we will never have any thing more to do with, will never gird to us, or appear in. Thus Christ washeth those from their sins in his own blood whom he makes to our God kings and priests, *Rev.* i. 5, 6. Either we must be cleansed from the pollutions of sin, or we shall, as polluted, be put from that priesthood, *Ezr.* ii. 62.

2nd. He is clothed anew, has not only the shame of his filthiness removed, but the shame of his nakedness covered; "I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Joshua had no clean linen of his own, but Christ will provide for him; for he will not let a priesthood of his own instituting be lost, be either contemptible before men or unacceptable before God. The change of raiment

here is rich, costly raiment, such as is worn on high days; Joshua shall appear as lovely as ever he appeared loathsome. They that minister in holy things shall not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well. God will make them wise, and humble, and diligent, and faithful, and examples of every thing that is good; and then Joshua is clothed with change of raiment. Thus those whom Christ makes spiritual priests are clothed with the spotless robe of his righteousness, and appear before God in that, and with the graces of his Spirit, which are ornaments to them. The righteousness of saints, both imputed and implanted, is the fine linen, clean and white, with which the bride the Lamb's wife is arrayed, *Rev.* xix. 8.

Thirdly. Joshua is in danger of being turned out of office, but instead of that he is reinstalled, and established in his office. He not only hath his sins pardoned, and is furnished with grace sufficient for himself, but, as *rectus in curia*, —'acquitted in court,' he is restored to his former honours and trusts.

1. The crown of the priesthood is put upon him, ver. 5. This was done at the special instance and request of the prophet: "I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head," as a badge of his office. Now he looks clean, let him also look great; let him be dressed up in all the garments of the high priest. Note, When God designs the restoring and reviving of religion, he stirs up his prophets and people to pray for it, and doth it in answer to their prayers. Zechariah prayed that the angels might be ordered to set the mitre on Joshua's head, and they did it immediately, and clothed him with the priestly garments; for no man took this honour to himself but he that was called of God to it. "The angel of the Lord stood by," as having the oversight of the work, which the created angels were employed in. He stood by as one well pleased with it, and resolved to stand by the orders he had given for the doing of it, and to continue his presence with that priesthood.

2. The covenant of the priesthood is renewed with him, which is called God's covenant of peace, *Num.* xxv. 12. Mr. Pemble calls it the patent of his office, which is here declared and delivered to him before witnesses, ver. 6, 7. The angel of the Lord having taken care to make him fit for his office, (and all that God calls to any office he either finds them fit or makes them so,) invests him in it. And though he is not made a priest with an oath, that honour is reserved for him who is a priest after the order of Melchisedek, *Heb.* vii. 21, yet, being a type of him, he is inaugurated with a solemn declaration of the terms upon which he held his office. The angel of the Lord protested to Joshua that, if he would be sure to do the duty of his place, he should enjoy the dignity and reward of it. Now see,

1st. What the conditions are upon which he enters into his office. Let him know that he is upon his good behaviour; he must walk in God's ways, that is, he must live a good life, and be holy in all manner of conversation; must go before the people in the paths of God's commandments, and walk circumspectly. He must also keep God's charge, must carefully do all the services of the priesthood, and must see to it that the inferior priests perform the duties of their place decently and in order. He must take heed to himself and to all the flock, *Acts* xx. 28. Note, Good ministers must be good Christians; yet that is not enough: they have a trust committed to them, they are charged with it, and they must keep it with all possible care, that they may give up their account of it with joy, 1 *Tim.* vi. 14.

2nd. What the privileges are which he may expect and be assured of in the due discharge of his office. His patent runs, *quamdiu se bene gesserit*,—'during good behaviour;' let him be sure to do his part, and God will own him. *First.* "Thou shalt judge mine house;" that is, thou shalt preside in the affairs of the temple, and the inferior priests shall be under thy direction. Note, The power of the church and of church rulers is not a legislative, but only a judicial power. The high priest might not make any new laws for God's house, nor ordain any other rights of worship than what God had ordained, but he must judge God's house, that is, he must see to it that God's laws and ordinances were punctually observed; must protect and encourage those that did observe them, and inquire into and punish the violation of them. *Secondly.* "Thou shalt also keep my courts;" that is, thou shalt have the oversight of what is done in all the courts of the temple, and shalt keep them pure and in good order for the worship to be performed in them. Note, Ministers are God's stewards, and they are to keep his courts in honour of him, who is the chief Lord, and for the preserving of equity and good order among his tenants. *Thirdly.* "I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by;" that is, among these angels that are inspectors and assistants in this instalment. They shall stand by while Joshua is at work for God, and shall be as a guard to him; or he shall be highly honoured and respected as an angel of God, *Gal.* iv. 14. Ministers are called angels, *Rev.* i. 20. They that walk in God's ways may be said to walk among the angels themselves, for they do the will of God, as the angels do it that are in heaven, and are their fellow-servants, *Rev.* xix. 10. Some make it a promise of eternal life, and of a reward of his fidelity in the future state. Heaven is not only a palace, a place to repose in, but a paradise, a garden, a place to walk in; and there are walks among the angels, in society with that holy and glorious company: *Eze.* xxviii. 14.

8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest,
Thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee:
For they *are* men wondered at:
For, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.
9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua;
Upon one stone *shall be* seven eyes:
Behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts,
And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.
10 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts,
Shall ye call every man his neighbour
Under the vine and under the fig tree.

As the promises made to David oft slide insensibly into promises of the Messiah, whose kingdom David's was a type of, so the promises here made to Joshua presently rise as far upward, and look as far forward, as to Christ, whose priesthood Joshua's was now a shadow of, not only in general, as it kept up the line of Aaron's priesthood, but especially as it was the reviving of that happy method of correspondence between heaven and earth, to which a great interruption had been given by the iniquity and captivity of Israel. Christ is a high priest as Joshua was, for sinners and sufferers, to mediate for those that have been under guilt and wrath; and it was fit Joshua should understand the priesthood of Christ, because all the virtue of his priesthood, its value and usefulness to the church, depended upon, and was derived from, the priesthood of Christ. See,

First. To whom this promise of Christ is directed; ver. 8, "Hear now, O Joshua." Thou hast heard with pleasure what belongs to thyself, but behold a greater than Joshua is at hand; hear now concerning him, thou and the rest of the priests, "thy fellows that sit before thee," at thy feet, as learners, but whom thou art to look upon as thy fellows, for all ye are brethren. Let the high priest and all the inferior priests take notice of this, for they are men wondered at. They are set for signs, that is, for types and figures of Christ's priesthood. What God now did for Joshua and his fellows was a happy omen of the coming of the Messiah promised, and would be so interpreted with a pleasing wonder by all that had understanding of the times. Or, they are men wondered at for their singularity, hooted at as strange sort of people, because they run not with others to the same excess of riot, 1 *Pet.* iv. 4. Or, for their strange afflictions and surprising deliverance out of them, as *Ps.* lxxi. 7, "I am as a wonder unto many." They are men of wonder; they are a wonder to themselves, are amazed to think how happily their condition is altered. God's people and ministers are, upon many accounts, men wondered at. The high priest and his fellows here, as the prophet and his children, *Isa.* viii. 18, are for signs and for wonders. But men's wonders at them will cease when the Messiah comes, as the stars are eclipsed by the light of the sun, for his name shall be called Wonderful.

Secondly. The promise itself, which consists of several parts, all designed for the comfort and encouragement of Joshua and his friends in that great good work of building the temple which they were now engaged in. An eye to Christ, and a believing dependence on the promises relating to him and his kingdom, would carry him through the difficulties they met with in that and other their services.

1. The Messiah shall come; "Behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch." He has been long hid, but the fulness of time is now at hand, when he shall be brought forth into the world, brought forth among his people Israel. God himself undertakes to bring him forth, and therefore no doubt he will own him, and stand by him. He is God's servant, employed in his work, obedient to his will, and entirely devoted to his honour and glory. He is the branch; so he was called *Isa.* iv. 2, "The branch of the Lord;" *Isa.* xi. 1, "A branch out of the root of Jesse;" *Jer.* xxiii. 5, "A righteous branch;" and *Jer.* xxxiii. 15, "The branch of righteousness," whose beginning was small, as a tender branch, but in time should become a great tree, and fill the earth, *Isa.* liii. 2. He is the branch from which all our fruit must be gathered.

2. Many eyes shall be upon him. He is the stone laid before Joshua, alluding to the foundation or chief corner-stone of the temple, which probably was laid with great solemnity in the presence of Joshua. Christ is not only the branch, which is the beginning of a tree, but the foundation, which is the beginning of a building, and when he shall be "brought forth seven eyes shall be upon him." The eye of his Father was upon him, to take care of him and protect him, especially in his sufferings; when he was buried in the grave, as the foundation stones are under ground, yet the eyes of heaven were upon him; buried out of men's sight, but not out of God's. The eyes of all the prophets and Old Testament saints were upon this one stone. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he "saw it, and was glad." The eyes of all believers are upon him; they look unto him and are saved, as the eyes of the stung Israelites were upon the brazen serpent. Some understand this one stone to have the seven eyes in it, as the wheels had in Ezekiel's vision, and think it denotes that perfection of wisdom and knowledge which Jesus Christ was endued with for the good of his church; "His eyes run to and fro through the earth."

3. God himself will beautify him, and put honour upon him. "I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts." This stone the builders refused, as rough and unsightly, but God undertakes to smooth and polish it; nay, and to carve it, so as that it shall be "the head stone of the corner," the most beautiful in all the building. Christ was God's workmanship, and abundance of his wisdom appears in the contrivance of our redemption, which will appear when the engraving is perfected. This stone is a precious stone, though laid for the foundation, and the graving of it seems to allude to the precious stones in the breastplate of the high priest, which had the names of the tribes graven upon them, as the engraving of a signet, *Ex.* xxviii. 21, 22. In that breastplate there were twelve stones laid before Aaron; for aught appears those were lost. But there shall be one worth them all laid before Joshua, and that is Christ himself. This precious stone shall sparkle as if it had seven eyes; there shall appear a perfection of wisdom and prudence in the oracles that proceed from this breastplate of judgment. And God will "engrave the graving thereof;" he will intrust Christ with all his elect, and he shall appear as their representative and agent for them, as the high priest did when he went in before the Lord, with the names of all Israel engraven in the precious stones of his breastplate. When God gave a remnant to Christ, to be brought through grace to glory, then he engraved the graving of this precious stone.

4. By him sin shall be taken away, both the guilt and the dominion of it. "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." When the high priest had the names of Israel engraven on the precious stones he was adorned with, he is said to "bear the iniquity of the holy things," *Ex.* xxviii. 38; but "the law made nothing perfect," *Heb.* x. 1. He bore the iniquity of the land as a type of Christ, but he could not remove it; the doing of that was reserved for Christ, that blessed "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world;" and he did it in one day, that day in which he suffered and died. That was done by the sacrifice offered that day, which could not be done by the sacrifices of ages before; no, not by all the days of atonement which from Moses to Christ returned every year. This agrees with the angel's prediction, *Dan.* ix. 24: he shall finish transgression, and make an end of sin. And some make the engravings wherewith God engraved him to signify the wounds and stripes which were given to his blessed body, which he underwent for our transgression, for our iniquity, and by which we are healed.

5. The effect of all this shall be the sweet enjoyment which all believers shall have of themselves, and the sweet communion they shall have with one another; ver. 10, "In that day ye shall call every man his neighbour under the vine and the fig-tree," which yield most pleasant fruit, and whose leaves also afford a refreshing shade for arbours. When iniquity is taken away, 1st. We reap precious benefits and privileges from our justification, more precious than the products of the vine or the fig-tree, *Rom.* v. 1. 2nd. We repose ourselves in a sweet tranquillity, and are quiet from the fear of evil. What should terrify us when iniquity is taken away, when nothing can hurt us? We sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and by it are sheltered from the scorching heat of the curse of the law. We live as Israel in the peaceable reign of Solomon, 1 *Kin.* iv. 24, 25, for he is the Prince of peace. 3rd. We ought to invite others to come and partake with us in the enjoyment of these privileges, to "call every man his neighbour" to come and sit with him for mutual converse under the vine and fig-tree, and to share with him in the fruits he is surrounded with. Gospel grace, as far as it comes with power, makes men neighbourly; and those that have the comfort of acquaintance with Christ themselves, and communion with God through him, will be forward to court others to it; "Let us go unto the house of the Lord."

CHAPTER IV.

In this chapter we have another comfortable vision, which, as it was explained to the prophet, had much in it for the encouragement of the people of God in their present straits, which were so great that they thought their case helpless, that their temple could never be rebuilt, nor their city replenished; and therefore the scope of the vision is to shew that God would by his own power perfect the work, though the assistance given to it by his own friends were never so weak, and the resistance given to it by its enemies were never so strong. Here is, I. The awakening of the prophet to observe the vision, ver. 1. II. The vision itself, of a candlestick with seven lamps, which were supplied with oil, and kept burning, immediately from two olive trees that grew by it, one on either side, ver. 2, 3. III. The general encouragement hereby intended to be given to the builders of the temple to go on in that good work, assuring them that it should be brought to perfection at last, ver. 4—10. IV. The particular explication of the vision, for the illustration of these assurances, ver. 11—14.

AND the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, 2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all *of* gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which *are* upon the top thereof: 3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right *side* of the bowl, and the other upon the left *side* thereof. 4 So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What *are* these, my lord? 5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. 6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying,

Not by might, nor by power,
But by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

7 Who *art* thou, O great mountain?
Before Zerubbabel *thou shalt become* a plain:
And he shall bring forth the headstone *thereof*
With shoutings, *crying,* Grace, grace unto it!

8 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9 The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. 10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel *with* those seven; they *are* the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Here is, First. The prophet prepared to receive the discovery that was to be made him; "The angel that talked with me came and waked me," ver. 1. It seems, though he was in conference with an angel, and about matters of great and public concern, yet he grew dull, and was dropped asleep, as it should seem, while the angel was yet talking with him. Thus the disciples, when they saw Christ transfigured, were heavy with sleep, *Lu.* ix. 32. The prophet's spirit, no doubt, was willing to have attended to that which was to be seen and heard, but the flesh was weak; his body could not keep pace with his soul in Divine contemplations; the strangeness of the vision perhaps stupified him, and so he was overcome with sleep; or perhaps the sweetness of the vision composed him, and even sung him asleep. Daniel was in a deep "sleep when he heard the voice of the angel's words," *Dan.* x. 9. We shall never be fit for converse with spirits till we are got clear of these bodies of flesh." It should seem the angel let him lose himself a little, that he might be fresh to receive new discoveries, but then waked him, to his surprise, "as a man that is wakened out of his sleep." Note, We need the Spirit of God not only to make known to us Divine things, but to make us take notice of them; "He wakens morning by morning, he wakens mine ear," *Isa.* l. 4. We should beg of God that whenever he speaks to us he would waken us, and we should then stir up ourselves.

Secondly. The discovery that was made to him when he was thus prepared. The angel asked him, "What seest thou?" ver. 2. When he was awake, perhaps, he had not taken notice of what was presented to his view, if he had not thus been excited to look about him. When he observed, he saw a golden candlestick, such an one as was in the temple formerly, and with the like this temple should in due time be furnished. The church is a candlestick, set up for the enlightening this dark world, and the holding forth of the light of Divine revelation to it. The candle is God's, the church is but the candlestick, but all of gold, noting the great worth and excellency of the church of God. This golden candlestick had seven lamps branching out from it, so many sockets, in each of which was a burning and shining light. The Jewish church was but one; and the Jews that were dispersed, it is probable, had synagogues in other countries, yet they were but as so many lamps, belonging to one candlestick. But now, under the Gospel, Christ is the centre of unity, and not Jerusalem, or any one place; and therefore seven particular churches are represented, not as seven lamps, but as seven several golden candlesticks, *Rev.* i. 20. This candlestick had one bowl, or common receiver, on the top, into which oil was continually dropping, and from it, by seven secret pipes or passages, it was diffused to the seven lamps, so that without any farther care they received oil as fast as they wasted it, (as in those which we call fountain inkhorns or fountain pens,) never wanted, nor were ever glutted, and so kept always burning clear. And the bowl, too, was continually supplied, without any care or attendance of man; for, ver. 3, he saw two olive trees, one on each side the candlestick, that were so fat and fruitful that of their own accord they poured plenty of oil continually into the bowl, which by two large pipes, ver. 12, dispersed the oil to lesser ones, and so to the lamps; so that nobody needed to attend this candlestick, to furnish it with oil,—it "tarried not for man, nor waited for the sons of men;" the scope of which is to shew that God easily can, and often doth, accomplish his gracious purposes concerning his church by his own wisdom and power, without any art or labour of man. And though sometimes he makes use of instruments, yet he neither needs them nor is tied to them, but can do his work without them, and will rather than it shall be undone.

Thirdly. The inquiry which the prophet made concerning the meaning of this, and the gentle reproof given him for his dulness; ver. 4, "I answered and spake to the angel, saying, What are these, my lord?" Observe how respectfully he speaks to the angel; he called him, "my lord." Those that would be taught must give honour to their teachers; he saw what these were, but asked what these signified. Note, It is very desirable to know the meaning of God's manifestations of himself and his mind, both in his word and by his ordinances and providences. What mean ye by these services, by these signs? And those that would understand the mind of God must be inquisitive; then shall we know, if we follow on to know, if we not only hear, but, as Christ, ask questions upon what we hear, *Lu.* ii. 46. The angel answered him with a question, "Knowest thou not what these be?" intimating that, if he had considered and compared spiritual things with spiritual, he might have guessed at the meaning of these things; for he knew that there was a golden candlestick in the tabernacle, which it was the priests' constant business to supply with oil, and to keep it burning for the use of the tabernacle. When, therefore, he saw in vision such a candlestick, with lamps always kept burning, and yet no priests to attend it, nor any occasion for them, he might discern the meaning of this to be that, though God had set up the priesthood again, yet he could carry on his own work for and in his people without them. Note, We have reason to be ashamed of ourselves that we do not more readily apprehend the meaning of Divine discoveries. The angel asked the prophet this question, to draw from him an acknowledgment of his own dulness, and darkness, and slowness to understand, and he had it presently; "I said, No, my lord," I know not what these be. Visions had their significancy, but often dark and hard to be understood, and the prophets themselves were not always aware of it at first. But those that would be taught of God must see and acknowledge their own ignorance and their need to be taught, and must apply themselves to God for instruction. To him that gave us the cabinet we must apply ourselves for the key wherewith to unlock it. God will teach the meek and humble, not those who are conceited of themselves, and lean on the broken reed of their own understanding.

Fourthly. The general intendment of this vision. Without a critical descant upon every circumstance of the vision, the design of it is to assure the prophet, and by him the people, that this good work of building the temple should by the special care of the Divine providence, and the immediate influence of the Divine grace, be brought to a happy issue, though the enemies of it were many and mighty, and the friends and furtherers of it few and feeble. Note, In the explication of visions and parables we must look at the principal scope of them, and be satisfied with that, if that be clear, though we may not be able to account for every circumstance, or accommodate it to our purpose. The angel lets the prophet know, in general, that this vision was designed to illustrate a word which the Lord had to say to Zerubbabel, to encourage him to go on with the building of the temple. Let him know that he is a worker together with God in it, and it is a work which God will own and crown.

1. God will carry on and complete this work, as he had begun their deliverance from Babylon, not by external force, but by secret operations and internal influences upon the minds of men. He saith this who is the Lord of hosts, and could do it *vi et armis*,—'by force,' has legions at command; but he will do it, not by human might or power, but by his own Spirit. What is done by his Spirit is done by might and power, but it stands in opposition to visible force. Israel was brought out of Egypt, and into Canaan, by might and power, in both these works of wonder great slaughter was made; but they were brought out of Babylon, and into Canaan the second time, "by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts," working upon the spirit of Cyrus, and inclining him to proclaim liberty to them, and working upon the spirits of the captives, and inclining them to accept the liberty offered them. It was "by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts" that the people were excited and animated to build the temple, and therefore they are said to be helped by the prophets of God, because they, as the Spirit's mouth, spoke to their hearts, *Ezr.* v. 2. It was by the same spirit that the heart of Darius was inclined to favour and further that good work, and that the sworn enemies of it were infatuated in their councils, so that they could not hinder it as they designed. Note, The work of God is often carried on very successfully when yet it is carried on very silently, and without the assistance of human force. The gospel temple is built, not by might or power, for "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal," but by "the Spirit of the Lord of hosts," whose work on men's consciences is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds; thus the excellency of the power is of God, and not of man. When instruments fail, let us therefore leave it to God to do his work himself by his own Spirit.

2. All the difficulties and oppositions that lie in the way shall be got over and removed, even those that seem insuperable; ver. 7, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." See here, 1. How the difficulty is represented. It is a great mountain, impassable and immoveable; a heap of rubbish, like a great mountain, which must be got away or the work cannot go on. The enemies of the Jews are proud and hard as great mountains; but when God has work to do, the mountains that stand in the way of it shall dwindle into mole hills; for see here, 2. How these difficulties are despised, "Who art thou, O great mountain," that thou shouldest stand in God's way, and think to stop the progress of his work? who art thou that lookest so big, that thus threatens, and art thus feared? "Before Zerubbabel," when he is God's agent, "thou shalt become a plain." All the difficulties shall vanish, and all the objections be got over; "every mountain and hill" shall be "brought low," when the way of the Lord is to be prepared, *Isa.* xl. 4. Faith will remove mountains, and make them plains. Christ is our Zerubbabel; mountains of difficulty were in the way of his undertaking, but before him they were all levelled; nothing is too hard for his grace to do.

3. The same hand that has begun this good work will perform it. "He shall bring forth the headstone," ver. 7; and again, ver. 9, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundations of this house." Be it spoken to his honour; perhaps with his own hands he laid the first stone; and though it has been long retarded, and is still much opposed, yet it shall be finished at last. He shall live to see it finished, nay, and "his hands shall finish it,"—herein a type of Christ,

who is both the author and the finisher of our faith; and his being the author of it is an assurance to us that he will be the finisher; for as for God his work is perfect,—has he begun, and shall he not make an end? Zerubbabel shall himself bring forth the headstone with shoutings and loud acclamations of joy among the spectators. The acclamations are not huzzas, but "Grace, grace;" that is the burden of the triumphant song the church sings. It may be taken, 1. As magnifying free grace, and giving to that all the glory of what is done. When the work is finished, it must be thankfully acknowledged it was not by any policy or power of our own that it was brought to perfection, but it was grace that did it—God's goodwill towards us, and his good work in us and for us. "Grace, grace," must be cried not only to the headstone, but to the foundation-stone, the corner-stone, and indeed to every stone in God's building; from first to last it is nothing of works, but all of grace, and all our crowns must be cast at the feet of free grace. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us." 2. As depending upon free grace, and desiring the continuance of it for what is yet to be done. Grace, grace, is the language of prayer as well as of praise. Now this building is finished, all happiness attend it! Peace be within its walls, and, in order to that, grace. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon it! Note, What comes from the grace of God may in faith and upon good grounds be committed to the grace of God, for God will not forsake the work of his own hands.

4. This shall be a full ratification of the prophecies which went before concerning the Jews' return, and their settlement again. When the temple is finished, then "thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you." Note, The exact accomplishment of Scripture prophecies is a convincing proof of their Divine original. Thus God "confirmeth the word of his servants by saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built," *Isa.* xliv. 26. No word of God shall fall to the ground, nor shall there fail one iota or tittle of it; Zechariah's prophecies of the approaching day of deliverance to the church would soon appear by the accomplishment of them to be of God.

5. This shall effectually silence those that looked with contempt upon the beginnings of this work, ver. 10. Who, where, is he now that despised the day of small things, and thought this work would never come to any thing? The Jews themselves despised the foundations of the second temple, because it was likely to be so far inferior to the first, *Ezr.* iii. 12. Their enemies despised the wall when it was in the building, *Neh.* ii. 19; iv. 2, 3; but let them not do it. Note, In God's work the day of small things is not to be despised. Though the instruments be weak and unlikely, God often chooseth such by them to bring about great things. As a great mountain becomes a plain before him when he pleaseth, so a little stone cut out of a mountain without hands comes to fill the earth, *Dan.* ii. 35. Though the beginnings be small, God can make the latter end greatly to increase; a grain of mustard seed may become a great tree. Let not the dawning light be despised, for it will shine more and more to the perfect day. The day of small things is the day of precious things, and will be the day of great things.

6. This shall abundantly satisfy all the hearty well-wishers to God's interest, who will be glad to see themselves mistaken in "despising the day of small things." They that despaired of the finishing of the work shall rejoice when they "see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel;" when they see him busy among the builders, giving orders and directions what to do, and taking care that the work be done with great exactness, that it may be both fine and firm. Note, It is matter of great rejoicing to all good people to see magistrates careful and active for the edifying of the house of God, to see the plummet in the hand of those who have power to do much, if they have but a heart according to it. We see not Zerubbabel with the trowel in his hand,—that is left to the workmen, the ministers; but we see him with the plummet in his hand, and it is no disparagement, but an honour to him. Magistrates are to inspect ministers' work, and to speak comfortably to the Levites that do their duty.

7. This shall highly magnify the wisdom and care of God's providence, which is always employed for the good of his church. Zerubbabel doth his part, doth as much as man can do to forward the work, but it is "with those seven, those seven eyes of the Lord," which we read of, *ch.* iii. 9. He could do nothing if the watchful, powerful, gracious providence of God did not go before him, and go along with him in it. Except the Lord had built this house, Zerubbabel and the rest had laboured in vain, *Ps.* cxxvii. 1. These "eyes of the Lord" are they that "run to and fro through the whole earth," that take cognizance of all the creatures and all their actions, 2 *Chr.* xvi. 9; and inspire and direct all according to the Divine counsels. Note, We must not think that God is so taken up with the affairs of his church as to neglect the world; but it is a comfort to us that the same all-wise almighty Providence that governs the nations of the earth is in a particular manner conversant about the church. Those seven eyes that run through the earth are all upon the stone that Zerubbabel is laying straight with his plummet, to see that it be well laid; and those that have the plummet in their hand must look up to those eyes of the Lord, must have a constant regard to the Divine providence, and act in dependence upon its conduct and submission to its disposals.

11 Then answered I, and said unto him, What *are* these two olive trees upon the right *side* of the candlestick and upon the left *side* thereof? 12 And I answered again, and said unto him, What *be these* two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden *oil* out of themselves? 13 And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these *be?* And I said, No, my lord. 14 Then said he, These *are* the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

Enough is said to Zechariah to encourage him, and to enable him to encourage others, with reference to the good work of building the temple which they were now about, and that was the principal intention of the vision he saw; but still he is inquisitive about the particulars, which we will ascribe, not to any vain curiosity, but to the value he had for Divine discoveries, and the pleasure he took in acquainting himself with them. Those that know much of the things of God cannot but have an humble desire to know more. Now observe,

First. What his inquiry was. He understood the meaning of the candlestick and its lamps,—it is Jerusalem, it is the temple, and their salvation that is to go forth as a lamp that burneth; but he wants to know what are these two olive trees, ver. 11; these two olive branches, ver. 12. Observe here, 1. He asked. Note, Those that would be acquainted with the things of God must be inquisitive concerning those things. Ask and you shall be told. 2. He asked twice, his first question having no reply given to it. Note, If satisfactory answers be not given to our inquiries and requests quickly, we must renew them, and repeat them, and continue instant and importunate in them, and the vision shall at length speak, and not lie. 3. His second query varied somewhat from the former. He first asked, "What are these two olive trees?" but afterwards, "What be these two olive branches?" those boughs of the tree that hung over the bowl, and distilled oil into it. When we inquire concerning the grace of God, it must be rather as it is communicated to us by the fruitful boughs of the word and ordinances, for that is one of the things revealed which belong to us and to our children, than as it is resident in the good olive, where all our springs are, for that is one of the secret things which belong not to us. 4. In his inquiry he mentions the observations he had made upon the vision. He took notice not only of what was obvious at first sight, that the two olive trees grew one on the right side and the other on the left side of the candlestick—so nigh, so ready, is the Divine grace to the church—but he observed farther, upon a more narrow inspection, that the two olive branches from which in particular the candlestick did receive of the root and fatness of the olive, (as the apostle saith of the church, *Rom.* xi. 17,) did empty the golden oil, that is, the clear bright oil, the best of its kind, and of great value, as if it were *aurum potabile*,—'liquid gold,' out of themselves through the two golden pipes. Or, as the margin reads it, which, 'by the hand of the two golden pipes empty out of themselves oil into the gold,' that is, into the golden bowl on the head of the candlestick. Our Lord Jesus emptied himself to fill us; his precious blood is the golden oil in which we are supplied with all we need.

Secondly. What answer was given to his inquiry. Now again the angel obliged him expressly to own his ignorance, before he informed him; ver. 13, "Knowest thou not what these be?" If thou knowest the church to be the candlestick, canst thou think the olive trees that supply it with oil to be any other than the grace of God? But he owned he either did not fully understand it or was afraid he did not rightly understand it, "I said, No, my Lord, how should I except some one guide me?" and then he told him, ver. 14, "These are the two sons of oil," so it is in the original, 'the two anointed ones,' so we read it; rather, 'the two oily ones.' That which we read, *Isa.* v. 1, a very fruitful hill is in the original the horn of the son of oil, a fat and fattening soil. 1. If by the candlestick we understand the visible church, particularly that of the Jews at that time, for whose comfort it was primarily intended, these sons of oil, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth, are the two great ordinances and offices of the magistracy and ministry, at that time lodged in the hands of those two great and good men, Zerubbabel and Joshua. Kings and princes were anointed; this prince, this priest, were oily ones, endued with the gifts and graces of God's Spirit, to qualify them for the work to which they were called. They stood before the Lord of the whole earth, to minister to him, and to receive direction from him; and a great influence they had upon the affairs of the church at that time. Their wisdom, courage, and zeal, were continually emptying themselves into the golden bowl, to keep the lamps burning; and when they are gone others shall be raised up to carry on the same work. Israel shall no longer be without prince and priest. Good magistrates and good ministers, that are themselves anointed with the grace of God, and "stand by the Lord of the whole earth," as faithful adherents to his cause, contribute very much to the maintaining and advancing of religion, and the shining forth of the word of life. 2. If by the candlestick we understand the church of the firstborn of true believers, these sons of oil may be meant of Christ and the Spirit, the Redeemer and the Comforter. Christ is not only the Messiah, the Anointed One himself, but he is the good olive to his church, and "from his fulness we receive," *Jno.* i. 16; and the Holy Spirit is the unction or anointing which we have received, 1 *Jno.* ii. 20, 27. From Christ the olive tree, by the Spirit the olive branch, all the golden oil of grace is communicated to believers, which keeps their lamps burning, and without a constant supply of which they would soon go out. They "stand by the Lord of the whole earth," who is in a special manner the church's Lord; for the Son was to be sent by the Father, and so was the Holy Ghost, in the time appointed, and they stand by him ready to go.

CHAPTER V.

Hitherto we have seen visions of peace only, and all the words we have heard have been good words and comfortable words. But the pillar of cloud and fire hath a black and dark side towards the Egyptians, as well as a bright and pleasant side towards Israel. So have Zechariah's visions; for God's prophets are not only his ambassadors to treat of peace with the sons of peace, but heralds to proclaim war against those that delight in war, and persist in their rebellion. Two visions here are in this chapter, by which the "wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." God will do great things for his people, and very kind ones which the faithful sons of Zion shall rejoice in, but let the sinners in Zion be afraid; for, I. God will reckon severely with those particular persons among them that were wicked and profane, and hated to be reformed in these times of reformation; while God is shewing kindness to the body of the nation, and loading that with his blessings, they and their families shall, notwithstanding that, lie under the curse, which the prophet sees in a flying roll, ver. 1—4. II. If the body of the nation hereafter degenerate, and wickedness prevails among them, it shall be carried off and hurried away with a swift destruction, under the pressing weight of Divine wrath, represented by a talent of lead upon the mouth of an ephah, carried upon the wing I know not where, ver. 5—11.

THEN I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. 2 And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof *is* twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. 3 Then said he unto me,

This *is* the curse that goeth forth
Over the face of the whole earth:
For every one that stealeth shall be cut off
As on this side according to it;
And every one that sweareth shall be cut off
As on that side according to it.

4 I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts,
And it shall enter into the house of the thief,

And into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name:
And it shall remain in the midst of his house,
And shall consume it
With the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

We do not find that the prophet now needed to be wakened, as he did, *ch.* iv. 1; being wakened then, he kept wakeful after; nay, now he needs not be so much as called to look about him, for of his own accord he turns and lifts up his eyes. This good men sometimes get by their infirmities, they make them the more careful and circumspect afterwards. Now observe,

First. What it was that the prophet saw. He looked up into the air, and, "behold, a flying roll," a vast large scroll of parchment, which had been rolled up, and is therefore called a roll, but was now unrolled and expanded. This roll was flying upon the wings of the wind, carried swiftly through the air in open view, as an eagle shoots down upon her prey. It is a roll like Ezekiel's, that was "written within and without with lamentations, and mourning, and woe," *Eze.* ii. 9, 10. As the command of the law is in writing, for certainty and perpetuity, so is the curse of the law,—it writes bitter things against the sinner: "What I have written I have written," and what is written remains. The angel, to engage the prophet's attention, and to raise in him a desire to have it explained, asks him what he sees; and he gives him this account of it, "I see a flying roll, and" (as near as he can guess by his eye,) it is twenty cubits long," (that is, ten yards,) "and ten cubits broad," (that is, five yards). The Scriptures of the Old Testament and the New are rolls in which God hath written to us the great things of his law and Gospel. Christ is the Master of these rolls; they are large rolls, have much in them; they are flying rolls,—the angel that had "the everlasting Gospel to preach flew in the midst of heaven," *Rev.* xiv. 6. God's word "runneth very swiftly," *Ps.* cxlvii. 15. Those that would be let into the meaning of these rolls must first tell what they see, must go as far as they can themselves; "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" Tell me that, and then thou shalt be made to understand what thou readest.

Secondly. How it was expounded to him, ver. 3, 4. This flying roll is a curse; it contains a declaration of the righteous wrath of God against those sinners especially who by swearing affront God's majesty, or by stealing invade their neighbour's property. Let every Israelite rejoice in the blessings of his country with trembling; for if he swear, if he steal, if he live in any course of sin, he shall see them with his eyes, but shall not have the comfort of them, for against him the curse is gone forth; "If I be wicked, woe to me" for all this. Now observe here,

1. The extent of this curse. The prophet sees it flying, but which way doth it steer its course? It "goes forth over the face of the whole earth," not only of the land of Israel, but the whole world; for those that have sinned against the law written in their hearts only shall by that law be judged, though they have not the book of the law. Note, All mankind are liable to the judgment of God; and wherever sinners are, any where upon the face of the whole earth, the curse of God can and will find them out, and seize them. Oh that we could with an eye of faith see the flying roll of God's curse hanging over the guilty world as a thick cloud, not only keeping off the sunbeams of God's favour from them, but big with thunders, lightnings, and storms, ready to destroy them! How welcome then would the tidings of a Saviour be, who came to redeem us from the curse of the law, by being himself made a curse for us, and like the prophet eating this roll! The vast length and breadth of this roll intimates what a multitude of curses sinners lie exposed to. God will make their plagues wonderful, if they turn not.

2. The criminals against whom particularly this curse is levelled. The world is full of sin, in great variety, so was the Jewish church at this time; but two sorts of sinners are here specified as the objects of this curse. 1st. Thieves. It is "for every one that stealeth," that by fraud or force takes that which is not his own, especially that robs God, and converts to his own use what was devoted to God and his honour, which was a sin much complained of among the Jews at this time, *Mal.* iii. 8; *Neh.* xiii. 10. Sacrilege is, without doubt, the worst kind of thievery. He also that "robs his father or mother, and saith it is no transgression," *Pr.* xxviii. 24, let him know that against him this curse is directed, for it is against every one that stealeth. The letter of the eighth commandment hath no penalty annexed to it, but the curse here is a sanction to that command. 2nd. Swearers. The former sin against the second table, these against the first; for the curse meets those that break either table. He that swears rashly and profanely shall not be held guiltless, much less he that swears falsely, ver. 4; he imprecates the curse upon himself by his perjury—so shall his doom be. God will say, Amen to his imprecation, and turn it upon his own head. He has appealed to God's judgment, which is always according to truth, for the confirming of a lie, and to that judgment he shall go which he hath so impiously affronted.

3. The enforcing of this curse, and the equity of it; "I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts," ver. 4. He that pronounces the sentence will take care to see it executed. His bringing it forth notes, 1st. His giving it commission. It is a righteous curse, for he is a righteous God that warrants it. 2nd. His giving it the setting on. He brings it forth with power, and orders what execution it shall do; and who can put by or resist the curse which a God of almighty power brings forth?

4. The effect of this curse. It is very dreadful, 1st. Upon the sinner himself; "Every one that steals shall be cut off;" not corrected, but destroyed,—cut off from the land of the living. The curse of God is a cutting thing, a killing thing. He shall be cut off as on this side, cut off from this place, that is, from Jerusalem; and so he that swears from this side, (it is the same word,) from this place. God will not spare the sinners he finds among his own people, nor shall the holy city be a protection to the unholy. Or, they shall be cut off from hence, that is, from the face of the whole earth, over which the curse flies. Or, he that steals shall be cut off on this side, and he that swears "on that side," that is, they shall be cut off, one as well as another, and both according to the curse; for the judgments of God's hand are exactly agreeable with the judgments of his mouth. 2nd. Upon his family. It shall enter into the house of the thief, and him that swears. God's curse comes with a warrant to break open doors, and cannot be kept out by bars or locks. There, where the sinner is most secure, and thinks himself out of danger,—there, where he promiseth himself refreshment by food and sleep,—there, in his own house, shall the curse of God seize him; nay, it shall fall, not upon him only, but upon all about him, for his sake: "Cursed shall be his basket and his store, and cursed the fruit of his body," *Deu.* xxviii. 17, 18. "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked," *Pr.* iii. 33. It shall not only beset his house, or lie at the door, but "it shall remain in the midst of his house," and diffuse its malignant influences to all the parts of it; "it shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his," *Job* xviii. 15. It shall dwell where he dwells, and be his constant companion at bed and board, to make both miserable to him. Having got possession it shall keep it; and unless he repent and reform there is no way to throw it out, or cut off the entail of it. Nay, it shall so remain in it as to "consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof," which, though never so strong, though the timber be heart of oak, and the stones hewn out of the rocks of adamant, yet they shall not be able to stand before the curse of God. We heard the stone and timber complaining of the owner's extortion and oppression, and groaning under the burden of it, *Hab.* ii. 11; now here we have them delivered from that bondage of corruption. While they were in their strength and beauty they supported (sore against their will) the sinner's pride and security, but when they are consumed their ruins will (to their satisfaction) be standing monuments of God's justice, and lasting witnesses of the sinner's injustice. Note, Sin is the ruin of houses and families, especially the sins of injury and perjury. "Who knows the power of God's anger," and the operations of his curse? Even timber and stones have been consumed by them; let us therefore stand in awe, and not sin.

5 Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what *is* this that goeth forth. 6 And I said, What *is* it? And he said, This *is* an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This *is* their resemblance through all the earth. 7 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this *is* a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. 8 And he said, This *is* wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. 9 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind *was* in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. 10 Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? 11 And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

The foregoing vision was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark and hard to be understood, and some think that the scope of it is to foretell the final destruction of the Jewish church and nation, and the dispersion of the Jews, when, by crucifying Christ and persecuting his Gospel, they should have filled up the measure of their iniquities; therefore it is industriously set out in obscure figures and expressions, 'lest the plain denunciation of the second overthrow of temple and state might discourage them too much from going forward in the restoration of both.' See Mr. Pemble.

The prophet was contemplating the power and terror of the curse, which consumes the houses of thieves and swearers, when he is bid to turn, and he shall see greater desolations than these made by the curse of God, for the sin of man. "Lift up thine eyes now," and see what is here, ver. 5, "what is this that goeth forth." Whether over the face of the whole earth, as the flying roll, ver. 3, or only over Jerusalem, is not certain; but it seems the prophet now, either through the distance or the dimness of his sight, could not well tell what it was, but asked, "What is it?" ver. 6, and the angel tells him both what it is and what it means.

First. He sees an ephah, a measure wherewith they measured corn; it contained ten omers, *Ex.* xvi. 36, and was the tenth part of an homer, *Eze.* xlv. 11; it is put for any measure used in commerce, *Deu.* xxv. 14. And "this is their resemblance," that is, the resemblance of the Jewish nation over all the earth, wherever they are dispersed; or at least it will be so when their ruin draws near. They are filling up the measure of their iniquity, which God hath set them; and when it is full, as the ephah of corn, they shall be delivered into the hands of those to whom God has sold them for their sins. They are meted to destruction, as an ephah of corn measured to the market, or to the mill. Some think the mentioning of an ephah, which is used in buying and selling, intimates that fraud, and deceit, and extortion in commerce, were sins abounding much among them, as that people are known to be notoriously guilty of them at this day. This is a proper representation of them through all the earth. There is a measure set them, and they are filling it up apace: see *Mat.* xxiii. 32; 1 *Thes.* ii. 16.

Secondly. He sees "a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah," representing the sinful church and nation of the Jews, in their later and degenerate age, when the faithful city became a harlot. He that weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, measures nations and churches as in an ephah, so exact is he in his judicial dealings with them. God's people are called the corn of his floor, *Isa.* xxi. 10; and here he puts this corn into the bushel, in order to his parting with it. The angel saith of the woman in the ephah, "This is wickedness;" it is a wicked nation, else God would not have rejected it thus; it is as wicked as wickedness itself; it is abominably wicked. "How is the gold become dim!" Israel "was holiness to the Lord," *Jer.* ii. 3; but now, "This is wickedness;" and wickedness is nowhere so scandalous, so odious, and many times so outrageous, as when it is found among professors of religion.

3. He sees the woman thrust down into the ephah, and a talent, or large weight, of lead, cast upon the mouth of it, by which she is secured, and made a close prisoner in the ephah, and utterly disabled to get out of it. This is designed to shew that the wrath of God against impenitent sinners is, 1. Unavoidable, and what they cannot escape. They are bound over to it, concluded under sin, and shut up under the curse, as this woman in the ephah; "He would fain flee out of his hand," *Job* xxvii. 22, but he cannot. 2. It is insupportable, and what they cannot bear up under. Guilt is upon the sinner as a talent of lead, to sink him to the lowest hell. When Christ said of the things of Jerusalem's peace, "Now they are hid from thine eyes," that threw a talent of lead upon them.

Fourthly. He sees the ephah, with the woman thus pressed to death in it, carried away into some far country. 1. The instruments employed to do it were two women, that had wings like those of a stork, large and strong; and,

to make them fly the more swiftly, they had the "wind in their wings," noting the great violence and expedition with which the Romans destroyed the Jewish nation. God has not only winged messengers in heaven, but he can when he pleases give wings to those also whom he employs in this lower world; and when he doth so he forwards them with the wind in their wings—his providence carries them on with a favourable gale. 2. They bore it up in the air, noting the terrors which pursued the wicked Jews, and their being a public example of God's vengeance to the world. They lift it up between the earth and the heaven, as unworthy of either, and abandoned by both; for the Jews, when this was fulfilled, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men, 1 *Thes.* ii. 15. This is wickedness, and this comes of it: heaven thrust out wicked angels, and earth spewed out wicked Canaanites. 3. When the prophet inquired whither they carried their prisoner, whom they had now in execution, (ver. 10,) he was told they designed to "build it a house in the land of Shinar," which intimates that the punishment of the Jews should be a final dispersion; they should be hurried out of their own country, as the chaff which the wind driveth away, and should be forced to dwell in far countries, particularly in the country of Babylon, whither many of the scattered Jews went after the destruction of their country by the Romans, as they did also to other countries, especially in the Levant parts; not to sojourn, as in their former captivity, for seventy years, but to be nailed down for perpetuity. There the ephah shall "be established, and set upon her own base," which intimates, 1st. That their calamity shall continue from generation to generation, and they shall be so dispersed that they shall never unite or incorporate again; they shall settle in a perpetual unsettlement, and Cain's doom shall be theirs, to dwell in the land of shaking. 2nd. That their iniquity shall continue too, and their hearts shall be hardened in it. Blindness is happened unto Israel, and they are settled upon the lees of their own unbelief; their wickedness is established on its own basis. God has given them a spirit of slumber, *Rom.* xi. 8, lest at any time they should convert and be healed.

CHAPTER VI.

The two kingdoms of providence and grace are what we are all very nearly interested in, and therefore are concerned to acquaint ourselves with; all our temporal affairs being in a necessary subjection to the Divine providence, and all our spiritual and eternal concerns in a necessary dependence upon the Divine grace; and these two are represented to us in this chapter, the former by a vision, the latter by a type. Here is, I. God as king of nations, ruling the world by the ministry of angels, in the vision of the four chariots, ver. 1—8. II. God as king of saints, ruling the church by the mediation of Christ, in the figure of Joshua the high priest crowned, the ceremony performed, and then explained concerning Christ, ver. 9—15.

AND I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains *were* mountains of brass. 2 In the first chariot *were* red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; 3 And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. 4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What *are* these, my lord? 5 And the angel answered and said unto me, These *are* the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. 6 The black horses which *are* therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. 7 And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. 8 Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.

The prophet is forward to receive this vision, and, as if he expected it, he turned and lifted up his eyes, and looked. Though this was the seventh vision he had had, yet he doth not think he has had enough; for the more we know of God and his will, if we know it aright, the more desirous we shall be to get a farther acquaintance with God. Now observe here the sight that the prophet had of four chariots drawn by horses of divers colours, together with the explication of the sight, ver. 1—5. He did not look long, but he discovered that which was worth seeing, and which would serve very much for the encouraging of himself and his friends in this dark day. We are very much in the dark concerning the meaning of this vision; some by the four chariots understand the four monarchies; and then they read ver. 5, "These are the four winds of the heavens," and suppose that therein reference is had to *Dan.* vii. 2, where Daniel saw in a vision the "four winds of the heavens striving upon the great sea," representing the four monarchies. The Babylonian monarchy, they think, is here represented by the red horses, which are not afterwards mentioned, because that monarchy was now extinct. The second chariot, with the black horses, is the Persian monarchy, which went forth northward against the Babylonians, and quieted God's Spirit in the north country, by executing his judgments on Babylon and freeing the Jews from their captivity. The white, the Grecians, go forth after them into the north, for they overthrow the Persians. The grisled, the Romans, who conquered the Grecian empire, are said to go forth toward the south country, because Egypt, which lay southward, was the last branch of the Grecian empire that was subdued by the Roman. The bay horses had been with the grisled, but afterwards went forth by themselves; and by these they understand the Goths and Vandals, who, with their victorious arms, walked to and fro through the earth; or the Seleucidæ or Lagidæ, the two branches of the Grecian empire. Thus Grotius and others.

But I incline rather to understand this vision more generally, as designing to represent the administration of the kingdom of providence in the government of this lower world. The angels are often called the chariots of God, *Ps.* xviii. 10; lxviii. 17. The various providences of God concerning nations and churches are represented by the different colours of horses, *Rev.* vi. 2, 4, 5, 8. And so we may observe here,

First. That the counsels and decrees of God are the spring and original of all events, and they are immovable as mountains of brass. The chariots came from between the two mountains; for God performeth the thing that is appointed for us. His appointments are the great originals, and his performances are but copies from them; he doth all according to the counsel of his will. We could as soon grasp the mountains in our arms as comprehend the Divine counsels in our finite understandings, and as soon remove mountains of brass as alter any of God's purposes; for "he is in one mind, and who can turn him?" Whatever the providences of God are concerning us, as to public or private affairs, we should see them all coming from between the mountains of brass, and therefore see it as much our folly to quarrel with them as it is our duty to acquiesce in them. Who may say to God, "What doest thou, or why doest thou so?" *Acts* ii. 23; iv. 28.

Secondly. That God executes his decrees in the works of providence, which are as chariots, in which he rides as a prince in an open chariot, to shew his glory to the world, in which, as in chariots of war, he rides forth "conquering and to conquer," and triumphing over all the enemies of his glory and government. God is great and terrible in his doings, *Ps.* lxvi. 3, and in them we "see the goings of our God, our King," *Ps.* lxviii. 24. His providences move swiftly and strongly as chariots, but all directed and governed by his infinite wisdom and sovereign will, as chariots by their drivers.

Thirdly. That the holy angels are the ministers of God's providence, and are employed by him as the armies of heaven for the executing of his counsels among the inhabitants of the earth. They are the chariots, or, which comes all to one, they are the horses that draw the chariots, great in power and might, and who, like the horse that God himself describeth, *Job* xxxix. 19, &c., are clothed with thunder, are terrible, but cannot be terrified or made afraid. They are "chariots of fire, and horses of fire," to carry one prophet to heaven and guard another on earth. They are as observant of, and obsequious to, the will of God as well-managed horses are to their rider or driver. Not that God needs them or their services, but he is pleased to make use of them that he may put honour upon them, and encourage our trust in his providence.

Fourthly. That the events of providence have different aspects, and the face of the times often changeth. The horses in the first chariot were red, signifying war and bloodshed, "blood to the horse bridles," *Rev.* xiv. 20. Those in the second chariot were black, signifying the dismal, melancholy consequences of war; it puts all into mourning, lays all waste, introduceth famines, and pestilences, and desolations, and makes whole lands to languish. Those in the third chariot were white, signifying the return of comfort, and peace, and prosperity after these dark and dismal times. Though God cause grief to the children of men yet will he have compassion. Those in the fourth chariot were of a mixed colour, grisled and bay; some speckled, and spotted, and ash-coloured, signifying events of different complexions, interwoven and counterchanged, a day of prosperity and a day of adversity, set the one over against the other. The cup of providence in the hand of the Lord is full of mixture, *Ps.* lxxv. 8.

Fifthly. That all the instruments of providence, and all the events of it, come from God, and from him they receive their commissions and instructions; ver. 5, "These are the four spirits of heaven," the four winds, so some, which seem to blow as they list from the various points of the compass; but God has them in his fists, and brings them out of his treasuries. Or, rather, these are the angels that "go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth," to attend upon him, and minister to him; to behold his glory in the upper world, which is their blessedness, and to serve his glory in this lower world, which is their business. They stand before him as the Lord of the whole earth, to receive orders from him, and give up their accounts to him concerning their services on this earth, for it is all within his jurisdiction. But when he appoints, they go forth as messengers of his counsels, and ministers of his justice and mercy. Those secret motions and impulses upon the spirits of men by which the designs of providence are carried on, some think, are these four spirits of the heavens which go forth from God, and fulfil what he appoints, who is "the God of the spirits of all flesh."

Sixthly. That there is an admirable beauty in providence, and one event serves for a balance to another; ver. 6, "The black horses went forth," carrying with them very dark and melancholy events, such as made every person and every thing look black; but presently "the white went forth after them," carrying joy to them that mourned, and, by a new turn given to affairs, making them to look pleasant again. Such are God's dealings with his church and people. If the black horses go forth, the white ones presently go after them; for, as affliction abounds, consolation much more abounds.

Seventhly. That the common general aspect of providence is mixed and compounded. The grisled and bay horses were both in the fourth chariot, ver. 3; and though they went forth at first towards the south country, yet afterwards they sought to "walk to and fro through the earth," and were directed to do so, ver. 7. If we go to and fro through the earth, we shall find the events of providence neither all black nor all white, but ash-coloured or grey, mixed of black and white, for such is the world we live in; that before us is unmixed. Here we are singing at the same time of mercy and judgment, and we must sing unto God of both, *Ps.* ci. 1, and labour to accommodate ourselves to God's will and design in the mixtures of providence, rejoicing in our comforts as though we rejoiced not, because they have their alloys; and weeping for our afflictions as though we wept not, because there is so much mercy mixed with them.

Eighthly. That God is well pleased with all the operations of his own providence; ver. 8, "These have quieted my spirit." These black horses which speak extraordinary judgments, and the white ones which speak extraordinary deliverances, both which went toward the north country, while the common mixed providences went all the world over, these have quieted my spirit in the north country, which had of late been the most remarkable scene of action with reference to the church; that is, by these uncommon appearances and actings of providence, God's wrath is executed upon the enemies of the church, and his favours conferred upon the church, both which had long been deferred, and in both God had fulfilled his will, accomplished his word, and so quieted his spirit. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake;" and as he speaks, *Isa.* i. 24, made himself easy.

9 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 10 Take of *them of* the captivity, *even* of Heldai, of

Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; 11 Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set *them* upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest; 12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying,

Behold the man whose name *is* The BRANCH;
And he shall grow up out of his place,
And he shall build the temple of the LORD:
13 Even he shall build the temple of the LORD;
And he shall bear the glory,
And shall sit and rule upon his throne;
And he shall be a priest upon his throne:
And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

14 And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD. 15 And they *that are* far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And *this* shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.

God did not only at sundry times, but in divers manners, speak in time past by the prophets to his church. In the former part of this chapter he spoke by a vision, which the prophet only saw himself; here, in this latter part, he speaks by a sign, or type, which many saw, and which, as it was explained, was an illustrious prediction of the Messiah, as the priest and king of his church. Here is,

First. The significant ceremony which God appointed, and that was the coronation of Joshua the high priest, ver. 10, 11. It is observable that there should be two eminent types of Christ in the Old Testament that were both named Joshua, the same name with Jesus, and by the Septuagint and in the New Testament rendered Jesus, *Acts* vii. 45: Joshua, the chief captain, a type of Christ the captain of our salvation, and Joshua the chief priest, a type of Christ the high priest of our profession; and both, in their day, saviours and leaders into Canaan. And this is peculiar to Joshua the high priest, that here was something done to him by the Divine appointment on purpose that he might be a type of Christ, a priest after the order of Melchisedek, who was both a king and a priest. Joshua was far from being ambitious of a crown, and the people of having a crowned head over them; but the prophet, to the great surprise of both, is ordered to crown Joshua, as if he had been a king. And as Zerubbabel's prudence and piety kept this from being any affront to him, as the setting up of a rival with him, so God's providences kept the kings of Persia from taking umbrage at it, as raising a rebellion against them. In doing what we are sure is God's pleasure, as this was, we may well venture men's displeasure.

1. Here were some Jews come from Babylon that brought an offering to the house of God. Some of the captivity, here named to their honour, that came from Babylon on a visit to Jerusalem. They ought to have bid a final farewell to Babylon, and to have come and settled with their brethren in their own land; and for their remissness and indifferency in not doing so they thought to atone by this visit. Perhaps they came as ambassadors from the body of the Jews that were in Babylon, who lived there in ease and fulness; and, hearing that the building of the temple went on slowly for want of money, they sent them with an offering of gold and silver for the service of the house of God. Note, Those that by reason of distance, or otherwise, cannot forward a good work by their persons, must, as they are able, forward it by their purses. If some find hands, let others fill them.

2. Time and place are appointed for the prophet to meet them. They thought to bring their present to the priest, God's ordinary minister; but God has a prophet, an extraordinary one, ready to receive them and it, which would be an encouragement to them who in their captivity had so often complained, "We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet;" and would invite them and others to resettle in their own land, which then began to look like itself, like a holy land, when the spirit of prophecy was revived in it. Zechariah was ordered to give them the meeting the same day they came, (for when they were arrived, they would lose no time, but present their offering presently,) and to bid them welcome, assuring them that God accepteth their gifts. He was to meet them in the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, who probably was receiver-general for the temple, and kept the treasures of it. They brought their gold and silver to be employed about the temple; but God ordered it to be used in honour of One greater than the temple, *Mat.* xii. 6.

3. Crowns are to be made, and put upon the head of Joshua, ver. 11. It is supposed that there were two crowns provided, one of silver, and the other of gold; the former (as some think) noting his priestly dignity, the latter his kingly dignity. Or, rather, he being a priest already, and having a crown of gold of pure gold already, to signify his honour and power as a priest, these crowns of silver and gold both signify the royal dignity; the crown of silver being, perhaps, designed to typify the kingdom of the Messiah, when he was here on earth, for then he was the King of Israel, *Jno.* i. 49, but the crown of gold his kingdom in his exalted state, the glory of which as far exceeded that of the former as gold doth silver. The sun shines as gold when he goes forth in his strength; and the beams of the moon, when she walketh in brightness, we call silver beams. Those that had worshipped the sun and moon shall now fall down before the golden and silver crowns of the exalted Redeemer, before whom the sun shall be ashamed and the moon confounded, being both outshone.

Secondly. The signification which God gave of this ceremony. Every one would be ready to ask what is the meaning of Joshua's being crowned thus, and the prophet is as ready to tell them the meaning of it. Upon this speaking sign is grafted a prediction, and the sign was used to make it the more taken notice of and the better remembered. Now the promise is,

1. That God will, in the fulness of time, raise up a great high priest like Joshua. Tell Joshua that he is but the figure of one that is to come, a faint shadow of him; ver. 12, Speak unto him in the name of the Lord of hosts, that "the man whose name is the Branch" shall "grow up out of his place," out of Bethlehem the city of David, the place appointed for his birth. Though the family be a root in a dry ground, yet this Branch shall spring out of it, as in spring, when the sun returns, the flowers spring out of their roots that lay buried out of sight and out of mind. He shall grow up for himself, so some read it, *propria virtute*,—'by his own vital energy,' shall be exalted in his own strength.

2. That as Joshua was an active useful instrument in building the temple, so the man the Branch shall be the master builder, the sole builder, of the spiritual temple, the gospel church. He "shall build the temple of the Lord;" and it is repeated again, ver. 13, "Even he shall build the temple of the Lord." He shall grow up to do good, to be an instrument of God's glory, and a great blessing to mankind. Note, The gospel church is "the temple of the Lord, a spiritual house," 1 *Pet.* ii. 5; a holy temple, *Eph.* ii. 21. In the temple God made discoveries of himself to his people, and there he received the service and homage of his people; so in the gospel church, the light of Divine revelation shines by the word, and the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered. Now Christ is not only the foundation, but the founder, of this temple, by his Spirit and grace.

3. That Christ shall bear the glory. Glory is a burden, but not too heavy for him to bear who upholdeth all things. The cross was his glory, and he bore that; so was the crown an exceeding weight of glory, and he bears that. The government is upon his shoulders, and in it he bears the glory, *Isa.* ix. 6. "They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house," *Isa.* xxii. 24; it becomes him, and he is *par negotio*,—'well able to bear it.' The glory of the priesthood and royalty had been divided between the house of Aaron and that of David; but now he alone shall bear all the glory of both. That which he shall bear, which he shall undertake, shall be indeed the glory of Israel, and they must wait for that; and, in prospect of that, must be content in the want of that external glory which they formerly had. He shall bear such a glory as shall make the glory of this latter house greater than that of the former. He shall lift up the glory, so it may be read. The glory of Israel had been thrown down and depressed, but he shall raise it out of the dust.

4. That he should have a throne, and be both priest and king upon his throne. A throne notes both dignity and dominion, an exalted honour, with an extensive power. 1st. This priest shall be a king, and his office as a priest shall be no diminution to his dignity as a king: he shall sit and rule upon his throne. Christ, as a priest, ever lives to make intercession for us, but he doth it sitting at his Father's right hand, as one having authority, *Heb.* viii. 1. We have such a high priest as Israel never had, for "he is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens," which puts a prevailing virtue into his mediation. He that appears for us within the veil is one that sits and rules there. Christ, that is ordained to offer sacrifices for us, is authorised to give law to us. He will not save us unless we be willing he should govern us. God has prepared him a throne in the heavens, and if we would have any benefit by that we must prepare him a throne in our hearts, and be willing and glad he should sit and rule upon that throne, and to him every thought within us must be brought into obedience. 2nd. This king shall be a priest, a priest upon his throne. With the majesty and power of a king he shall have the tenderness and simplicity of a priest, who, being taken from among men, is ordained for men, and "can have compassion on the ignorant," *Heb.* v. 1, 2. In all the acts of his government as a king he prosecutes the intentions of his grace as a priest. Let not those that are his then look upon his throne, though a throne of glory, and a throne of judgment, with terror and amazement; for, as there is a rainbow about the throne, so he is a priest upon the throne.

5. That the "counsel of peace should be between them both." That is, 1st. Between Jehovah and the man the Branch, between the Father and the Son. The counsels concerning the peace to be made between God and man, by the mediation of Christ, shall be concerted, that is, shall appear to have been concerted, by Infinite Wisdom in the covenant of redemption, and that the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter. Or, rather, 2nd. Between the priest and the throne, between the priestly and kingly office of Jesus Christ. The man the Branch must grow up to carry on a counsel of peace; peace on earth, and, in order to that, peace with heaven. God's thoughts towards us were thoughts of peace, and in prosecution of them he exalted his Son Jesus Christ to be both a Prince and a Saviour; gave him a throne, but with this proviso, that he should be a priest upon his throne, and by executing the two offices of a priest and king should bring about that great undertaking of man's reconciliation to God, and happiness in God. Some think it alludes to the former government of the Jews' state, wherein the king and priest, separate officers, did take counsel one with and of another, for the maintenance of peace and prosperity in church and state, as did Zerubbabel and Joshua now, I may add, and the prophets of God helping them; so shall the peace and welfare of the gospel church and of all believers be wrought, though not by two several persons, yet by virtue of two several offices meeting in one—Christ purchasing all peace by his priesthood, and maintaining and defending it by his kingdom: so Mr. Pemble. And the prophetical office is serviceable to both in this great design.

6. That there should be a happy coalition between Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, and they should both meet in Christ, the priest upon his throne, as the centre of their unity. "They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord," ver. 15. Some understand it of the Jews that were now afar off in Babylon, that stayed behind in captivity, to the great discouragement of their brethren that were returned, who wanted their help in building the temple. Now God promiseth that many of them, and some of other nations too, proselyted to the Jewish religion, should come in and lend a helping hand to the building of the temple, and "many hands would make light work." The kings of Persia contributed to the building of the temple, *Ezr.* vi. 8, and to the furnishing of it, *Ezr.* vii. 19, 20. And in after times Herod the Great, and others that were strangers, helped to beautify and enrich the temple. But it has a farther reference to the temple of the Lord which the man the Branch was to build. The Gentiles, "strangers afar off," shall help to build it; for from among them God will raise up ministers that shall be workers together with Christ about that building; and all the Gentile converts shall be stones added to this building, so that it shall "grow up to a holy temple," *Eph.* ii. 20—22. When God's temple is to be built he can fetch in those that are afar off, and employ them in the building of it.

7. That the accomplishment of this would be a mighty confirmation of the truth of God's word; "Ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you." That promise that those that were afar off should come and assist them in "building the temple of the Lord," was as it were the giving of them a sign. By this they might be assured that the other promises should be fulfilled in due

time; this should be fulfilled now, very speedily. It was so; for those that had been their enemies and accusers, in obedience to the king's edict, became their helpers, and did speedily what they were ordered to do for the furtherance of the work, and by that means the work went on and was finished: see *Ezr.* vi. 13, 14. Now by this surprising assistance which they had from afar off in building the temple, they might know that Zechariah, who told them of it before, was sent of God, and therefore his word concerning the man the Branch should be fulfilled.

8. That these promises were strong obligations to obedience; for "this shall come to pass," you shall have help in building the temple, "if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God." You shall have the help of foreigners in building the temple, if you will but set about it in good earnest yourselves. The assistance of others, instead of being an excuse for our slothfulness, should be a spur to our industry. You shall have the benefit and comfort of all those promises if you make conscience of your duty. They must know that they are upon their good behaviour; and though their God is coming towards them in a way of mercy, they cannot expect him to proceed in it unless they conform to his laws. Note, That which God requires of us to qualify us for his favour is obedience to his revealed will, and it must be a diligent obedience. We cannot obey the voice of God without a great deal of care and pains; nor will our obedience be accepted of God unless it be laboured by us.

Thirdly. The provision that was made to preserve the remembrance of this. The crowns that were used in the solemnity were not given to Joshua, but must be "kept for a memorial in the temple of the Lord," ver. 14. Either they were laid up in the temple treasury, or (as the Jews' tradition is) they were hung up in the windows of the temple, in the view of all, *in perpetuam rei memoriam*,—'for a perpetual memorial;' for a traditional evidence of the promise of the Messiah, and this typical transaction used for the confirmation of that promise. The crowns were delivered to them who found the materials, (and some think their names were engraven on the crowns,) to be preserved as a public testimony of their pious liberality, and an encouragement to others in like manner to bring presents to the house of God. Note, Various means were used for the support of the faith of the Old Testament saints, who waited for the consolation of Israel till the time, the set time, for it came.

CHAPTER VII.

We have done with the visions, but not with the revelations, of this book; the prophet sees no more such signs as he had seen, but still the word of the Lord came to him. In this chapter we have, I. A case of conscience proposed to the prophet by the children of the captivity concerning fasting, whether they should continue their solemn fasts which they had religiously observed during the seventy years of their captivity, ver. 1—3. II. The answer to this question, which is given in this and the next chapter; and this answer was not given all at once, but by piecemeal, at several times, for here are four distinct discourses that have all of them reference to this case, each prefaced with "The word of the Lord came:" in this chapter, ver. 4—8, and *ch.* viii. 1, 18; and the method of them is very observable. In this chapter, 1. The prophet sharply reproves them for the mismanagement of their fasts, ver. 4—7; 2. He exhorts them to reform their lives, which would be the best way of fasting, and to take heed of those sins which brought those judgments upon them which they kept these fasts in memory of, ver. 8—14. And then in the next chapter, having searched the wound, he binds it up, and heals it, with gracious assurances of great mercy God had yet in store for them, by which he would turn their fasts into feasts.

AND it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, *that* the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth *day* of the ninth month, *even* in Chisleu; 2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, 3 *And* to speak unto the priests which *were* in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? 4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *month*, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even* to me? 6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat *for yourselves*, and drink *for yourselves*? 7 *Should ye* not *hear* the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when *men* inhabited the south and the plain?

This occasional sermon which the prophet preached, and which is recorded in this and the next chapter, was above two years after the former, in which he gave them an account of his visions, as appears by comparing the date of this, ver. 1, in the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius, with the date of that, *ch.* i. 1, in the eighth month of the second year of Darius. Not that Zechariah was idle all the while, (it is expressly said that he and Haggai continued prophesying till the temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius, *Ezr.* vi. 14, 15;) but during that time he did not preach any sermon that was afterwards published, and left upon record, as this here. God may be honoured, his work done, and his interests served, by word of mouth as well as by writing; and by inculcating and pressing what has been taught, as well as by advancing something new. Now here we have,

First. A case proposed concerning fasting. Some persons were sent to inquire of the priests and prophets whether they should continue to observe their yearly fasts, particularly that in the fifth month, as they had done. It is uncertain whether the case was put by those that yet remained in Babylon, who, being deprived of the benefit of the solemn feasts which God's ordinance appointed them, made up the want by the solemn fasts which God's providences called them to; or by those that were returned, but lived in the country, as some rather incline to think, because they are called "the people of the land," ver. 5. But as to that, the answer given to the messengers of the captive Jews might be directed not to them only, but to all the people. Observe,

1. Who they were that came with this inquiry. Sherezer and Regem-melech, persons of some rank and figure; for they came with their men, and did not think it below them, or any disparagement to them, to be sent on this errand, but rather an addition to their honour, to be, 1st. Attendants in God's house; there to do duty, and receive orders. The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ. 2nd. Agents for God's people to negotiate their affairs. Men of estates, having more leisure than men of business, ought to employ their time in the service of the public, and by doing good they make themselves truly great. The messengers of the churches were the glory of Christ, 2 *Cor.* viii. 23.

2. What the errand was upon which they came. They were sent, perhaps, not with gold and silver, as those, *ch.* vi. 10, 11, or, if they were, that is not mentioned, but upon the two great errands which should bring us all to the house of God: 1st. To intercede with God for his mercy. They were sent to pray before the Lord, and some think (according to the usage then) to offer sacrifice, with which they offered up their prayers. The Jews in captivity prayed towards the temple, as appears, *Dan.* vi. 10; but, now it was in a fair way to be rebuilt, they send their representatives to pray in it, remembering what God had said, that his house should be called a "house of prayer for all people," *Isa.* lvi. 7. In prayer we must set ourselves as before the Lord, must see his eye upon us, and have our eye up to him. 2nd. To inquire of God concerning his mind. Note, When we offer up our requests to God, it must be with a readiness to receive instructions from him; for if we turn away our ear from hearing his law we cannot expect that our prayers should be acceptable to him. We must therefore desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, that we may inquire there, *Ps.* xxvii. 4; to ask, not only, Lord, what wilt thou do for me? but, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

3. Whom they consulted. They spoke "to the priests that were in the house of the Lord, and to the prophets." The former were an oracle for ordinary cases, the later for extraordinary; they were blessed with both, and would try if either could acquaint them with the mind of God in this case. Note, God having given diversities of gifts to men, and all to profit with, we should make use of all as there is occasion. They were not so wedded to the priests, their stated ministers, as to distrust the prophets, who appeared by the gifts given them well qualified to serve the church; nor yet were they so much enamoured with the prophets as to despise the priests, but they spoke both to the priests and to the prophets; and in consulting both gave glory to the God of Israel, and that one Spirit who worketh all in all. God might speak to them either by Urim, or by prophets, 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 6, and therefore they would not neglect either. The priests and the prophets were not jealous one of another, nor had any difference among themselves; let not the people then make differences between them, but thank God they had both. The prophets did indeed reprove what was amiss in the priests, but at the same time told the people that the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they must "inquire the law at his mouth;" for "he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts," *Mal.* ii. 7. Note, Those that would know God's mind should consult God's ministers, and, in doubtful cases, ask advice of those whose special business it is to search the Scriptures.

4. What the case was which they desired satisfaction in; ver. 3, "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself as I have done these so many years?" Observe,

1st. What had been their past practice. Not only during the seventy years of the captivity, but to this time, which was twenty years after the liberty proclaimed them, they kept up solemn stated fasts for humiliation and prayer, which they religiously observed according as their opportunities were, in their closets, families, or such assemblies for worship as they had. In the case here they mention only one, that of the fifth month; but it appears by *ch.* viii. 19, that they observed four anniversary fasts: one in the fourth month, (June 17,) in remembrance of the breaking up of the wall of Jerusalem, *Jer.* lii. 6; another in the fifth month, (July 4,) in remembrance of the burning of the temple, *Jer.* lii. 12, 13; another in the seventh month, (September 3,) in remembrance of the killing of Gedaliah, which completed their dispersion; and another in the tenth month, (December 10,) in remembrance of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, 2 *Kin.* xxv. 1. Now it was very commendable in them to keep those fasts, thus to humble themselves under those humbling providences by which God called them to weeping and mourning, thus to accommodate themselves to their troubles, and to prepare themselves for deliverance. It would likewise be a means of possessing their children betimes with a due sense of the hand of the Lord gone out against them.

2nd. What was their present doubt—whether they should continue their fasts or no. The case is put by a single person, "Should I weep?" But it was the case of many, and the satisfaction of one would be a satisfaction to the rest; or perhaps many had left it off. But the querist will not be determined by the practice of others; if God will have him continue it, he will, whatever others do. His fasting is described by his weeping,—separating himself. A religious fast must be solemnized not only by abstinence, here called a separating ourselves from the ordinary lawful comforts of life, but by a godly sorrow for sin, here expressed by weeping. Should I still keep such "days to afflict the soul as I have done these so many years?" It is said, ver. 5, to be seventy years computed from the last captivity, as before, *ch.* i. 12. The inquiry intimates a readiness to continue it, if God so appoint, though it be a mortification to the flesh. *First.* Something is to be said for the continuance of these fasts. Fasting and prayer is good work at any time, and doth good; we have always both cause enough and need enough to humble ourselves before God. To throw off these fasts would be an evidence of their being too secure, and a cause of their being more so. They were still in distress, and under the tokens of God's displeasure; and it is unwise for the patient to break off his course of physic while he is sensible of such remains of his distemper. But, *Secondly.* There is something to be said for the letting fall of these fasts. God had changed the method of his providence concerning them, and was returned in ways of mercy to them; and ought not they then to change the method of their duties? Now the bridegroom is returned, why should "the children of the bridechamber fast?" Every thing is beautiful in its season; and as to the fast of the fifth month, which is that they particularly inquire of, that being kept in remembrance of the burning of the temple, might seem to be superseded, rather than any of the other, because the temple was now in a fair way to be rebuilt. But, having long kept up this fast, they would not leave it off without advice, and without asking and knowing God's mind in the case. Note, A good method of religious services, which we have found beneficial to ourselves and others,

ought not to be altered without good reason, and therefore not without mature deliberation.

Secondly. An answer given to this case. And it should seem, though the question looked plausible enough, they that proposed it were not conscientious in it, for they were more concerned about the ceremony than about the substance; they seemed to boast of their fasting, and to upbraid God Almighty with it, that he had not sooner returned in mercy to them: For we have done it these so many years. As those, *Isa.* lviii. 3, "Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?" And some think that an unbelief and distrust of the promises of God was at the bottom of their inquiry; for, if they had given them the credit that was due to them, they needed not to doubt but that their fasts ought to be laid aside now the occasion of them was laid aside. And therefore the first answer to their inquiry is a very sharp reproof of their hypocrisy, directed not only to the people of the land, but to the priests, who had set up these fasts, and perhaps some of them were for keeping them up to serve some purpose of their own. Let them all take notice, that whereas they thought they had made God very much their debtor by these fasts, they were much mistaken; for they were not acceptable to him unless they had been observed in a better manner, and to better purpose.

1. What they did that was good was not done aright; ver. 5, "You fasted and mourned." They were not chargeable with the omission or neglect of the duty, though it was displeasing to the body, (Thy fasts were continually before me, *Ps.* l. 8;) but they had not managed them aright. Note, Those that come to inquire of their duty must be willing to be told of their faults. And those that seem zealous for the outside of a duty ought to examine themselves faithfully whether they have the regard they ought to have to the inside of it.

1st. They had not an eye to God in their fasting: "Did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" He appeals to their own consciences; they will witness against them, that they had not been sincere in it; much more will God, who is greater than the heart, and knows all things. You know very well you did not at all fast to me: in fasting did you fast to me? There was the carcase and form of the duty, but none of the life, and soul, and power of it. Was it to me, even to me? The repetition intimates what a great deal of stress is laid upon this, as the main matter in that and other holy exercises, that they be done to God, even to him, with an eye to his word as our rule, and his glory as our end in them: seeking to please him, and to obtain his favour, and studious by the sincerity of our intentions to approve ourselves to him. When this was wanting every fast was but a jest. To fast, and not fast to God, was to mock him, and provoke him, and could not be pleasing to him. Those that make fasting a cloak for sin, as Jezebel's fast, or by it make their court to men for their applause, as the Pharisees, or that rest in outward expressions of humiliation while their hearts are unhumbled, as Ahab, do they fast to God, even to him? "Is this the fast that God hath chosen?" *Isa.* lviii. 5. If the solemnities of our fasting, though frequent, long, and severe, do not serve to put an edge upon devout affections, to quicken prayer, to increase godly sorrow, and to alter the temper of our minds and the course of our lives for the better, they do not at all answer the intention, and God will not accept them as performed to him, even to him.

2nd. They had the same eye to themselves in their fasting that they had in their eating and drinking; ver. 6, "When ye did eat, and when ye did drink" on other days, nay, perhaps on your fast-days, in the observation of which you could, when you saw cause, dispense with yourselves, and take a liberty to eat and drink, did ye not "eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?" Have you not always done as you had a mind yourselves? Why then do you now pretend a desire to know the mind of God? In your religious feasts and thanksgivings you have had no more an eye to God than in your fasts. Or rather it refers to their common meals: they did no more design the honour of God in their fasting and praying than they did in their eating and drinking; but self was still the centre in which the lines of all their actions, natural, civil, and religious, met. They needed not be in such care about the continuance of their fasts, unless they had kept them better. Note, We miss our end in eating and drinking when we eat to ourselves and drink to ourselves, whereas we should eat and drink to the glory of God, 1 *Cor.* x. 31, that our bodies may be fit to serve our souls in his service.

2. The principal good thing they should have done was left undone; ver. 7, "Should ye not hear the words which the Lord has cried by the former prophets?" Yes, that you should have done on your fast-days; it was not enough to weep and separate yourselves on your fast-days, in token of your sorrow for the judgments you were under, but you should have searched the Scriptures of the prophets, that you might have seen what was the ground of God's controversy with your fathers, and might have taken warning by their miseries not to tread in the steps of their iniquities. You ask, Shall you do as you have done in fasting? No, you must do that which you have not yet done, you must repent of your sins, and reform your lives; that is it that we now call you to, and it is the same that the former prophets called your fathers to. To affect them the more with the mischiefs that sin had done them, that they might be brought to repent of it, he puts them in mind of the former flourishing state of their country. Jerusalem was then inhabited, and in prosperity, that is now desolate and in distress; the cities round about, that are now in ruins, were then inhabited too and in peace; the country, likewise, was very populous. "Men inhabited the south of the plain," which was not at all fortified, and yet they lived safely, and which was fruitful, and so they lived plentifully; but then God by the prophets cried to them, as one in earnest, and importunate with them to amend their ways and doings, or else their prosperity would soon be at an end. Now, saith the prophet, you should have taken notice of that, and have inferred that what was required of them for the preventing of the judgments, and which they did not, is required of you for the removal of the judgments, and, if you do it not, all your fasting and weeping signify nothing. Note, The words of the late prophets agree with those of the former; and whether people are in prosperity or adversity, they must be called upon to leave their sins, and do their duty; this must be the burthen of every song.

8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying, 9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying,

Execute true judgment,
And shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:
10 And oppress not the widow,
Nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor;
And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.
11 But they refused to hearken,
And pulled away the shoulder,
And stopped their ears, that they should not hear.
12 Yea, they made their hearts *as* an adamant stone,
Lest they should hear the law,
And the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent
In his spirit by the former prophets:
Therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.
13 Therefore it is come to pass, *that* as he cried,
And they would not hear;
So they cried,
And I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:
14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind
Among all the nations whom they knew not.
Thus the land was desolate after them,
That no man passed through nor returned:
For they laid the pleasant land desolate.

What was said, ver. 7, that they should have heard the words of the former prophets, is here enlarged upon for warning to these hypocritical inquirers, who continued their sins when they very precisely asked whether they should continue their fasts. This prophet had before put them in mind of their fathers' disobedience to the calls of the prophets, and what came of it, *ch.* i. 4—6, and here again,—for others' harms should be our warnings. God's judgments upon Israel of old for their sins were written for admonition to us Christians, 1 *Cor.* x. 11; and the same use we should make of the like providences in our own day.

First. This prophet here repeats the heads of the sermons which the former prophets preached to their fathers, ver. 9, 10, because the very same things were required of them now. Thus doth the Lord of hosts speak to you now, and thus he did speak to your fathers, saying, "Execute true judgment." The duties here required of them, which would have been the lengthening of the tranquillity of their fathers, and must be the restoring of their tranquillity, are not keeping fasts, and offering sacrifices, but doing justly and loving mercy; duties which they were bound to by the light and law of nature, though there had been no prophets sent to insist upon them; duties which had a direct tendency to the public welfare and peace, and which they themselves would be the gainers by, and not God. 1. Magistrates must administer justice impartially, according to the maxims of the law, and the merits of the cause, without respect of persons. "Judge judgment of truth," and execute it when ye have judged it. 2. Neighbours must have a tender concern for one another, and must not only do one another no wrong, but must be ready to do all the good offices that lay in their power one to another. They must "shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother," as the case called for it. The infirmities of others, as well as their calamities, are to be looked upon with compassion. *Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim*,—'This kindness we ask and exercise.' 3. They must not bear hard upon those that they have advantage against, and that they know are not able to help themselves. They must not, either in commerce or in course of law, oppress "the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor," ver. 10. The weakest must not therefore be thrust to the wall because they are weakest. No thanks to men not to deny right to those that are in a capacity to demand it, and recover it; but we must, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake, give those their own who have not power to force it from us. Or, it intimates that that which is but exactness with others is exaction upon the widows and the fatherless; nay, that not relieving and helping them as we ought is, in effect, oppressing them. 4. They must not only not do wrong to any, but they must not so much as desire it, or think of it; "Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart." Do not project it, do not wish it, nay, do not so much as please yourself with the fancy of it. The law of God lays a restraint upon the heart, and forbids the entertaining, forbids the admitting, of a malicious, spiteful, ill-natured thought; *Deu.* xv. 9, "Beware that there be not a thought in thy Belial heart against thy brother."

Secondly. He describes the wilfulness and disobedience of their fathers, who persisted in all manner of wickedness and injustice, notwithstanding these exhortations and admonitions frequently given them in God's name. Various expressions to this purpose are here heaped up, ver. 11, 12; setting forth the stubbornness of that carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not in subjection to the law of God, neither indeed can be. They were obstinate and refractory, and persisted in their transgressions of the law, purely from a spirit of contradiction to the law. 1. They would not, if they could help it, come within hearing of the prophets, but kept at a distance. Or, if they could not avoid hearing what they said, yet they resolved they would not heed it; they refused to hearken, and looked another way, as if they had not been spoken to. 2. If they did hear what was said to them, and as it seemed inclined at first to comply with it, yet they flew off when it came to the setting to, and like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, "they pulled away the shoulder," and would not submit to the easy yoke and light burthen of God's commandments. 'They gave a withdrawing shoulder,' so the word is; they seemed to lay their shoulder to the work, but they presently withdrew it again, as those *Jer.* xxxiv. 10, 11. They were like a deceitful bow, as that son that said, "I go, sir, but went not." 3. They filled their own minds with prejudices against the word of God; and had some objection or other ready wherewith to fortify themselves against every sermon they heard. "They stopped their ears that they should not hear," as the deaf adder, *Ps.* lviii. 4; and none so deaf as those that will not hear; those that make their own ear heavy, as the word is. 4. They resolved that nothing that was said to them for the enforcing of these injunctions should make any impression upon them; "They made their hearts as an adamant stone," as a diamond, the hardest of stones to be wrought upon; or as flint, which the mason cannot hew into shape, as he can other stones out of the quarry. Nothing so hard, so unmalleable, so inflexible, as the heart of a presumptuous sinner; and they whose hearts are hard may thank themselves: they are of their own hardening; and it is just with God to give them over to a reprobate sense, to the hardness and impenitence of their own hearts. These stubborn sinners hardened their hearts on purpose, lest they should hear what God said to them by the written word, by the law of Moses, and by the words of the prophets that preached to them; they had had Moses and the prophets, but resolved they would hear neither, nor would they have been persuaded though one had been sent to them from the dead. The words of the prophets were not regarded by them, though they were words which the Lord of hosts sent and directed to them, though he sent them immediately by his Spirit in

the prophets; so that in despising them they affronted God himself and resisted the Holy Ghost. Note, The reason why men are not good is, because they will not be so; they will not consider, they will not comply, and therefore, "If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it."

Thirdly. He shews the fatal consequences of it to their fathers; "Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of hosts." God was highly displeased with them, and justly; he required nothing of them but what was reasonable in itself, and beneficial to them, and yet they refused, and in a most insolent manner too; what master could bear to be so abused by his own servant? Such an implacable enmity to the Gospel as this here to the law and the prophets was that which brought wrath to the uttermost upon the last generation of the Jewish church, 1 *Thes.* ii. 16. Great sins against the Lord of hosts, whose authority is incontestable, bring "great wrath from the Lord of hosts," whose power is irresistible. And the effect was, 1. As they had turned a deaf ear to God's word, so God turned a deaf ear to their prayers; ver. 13, "As he cried" to them in their prosperity to leave their sins, "and they would not hear," but persisted in their iniquities, so "they cried to him" in the day of their trouble, to remove his judgments, and he would not hear, but lengthened out their calamities. They that set God at defiance in the height of their pride, yet when pangs came upon them cried unto him: "Lord, in trouble have they visited thee." But God hath said it, and will abide by it, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination," *Pr.* i. 24; xxviii. 9. Iniquity regarded in the heart will certainly spoil the success of prayer, *Ps.* lxvi. 18. 2. As they flew off from their duty and allegiance to God, and were of desultory and unsettled spirits, so God dissipated them, and threw them about as chaff before a whirlwind; he "scattered them among all the nations whom they knew not," and whom therefore they could not expect to receive any kindness from, ver. 14. 3. As they violated all the laws of their land, so God took away all the glories of it; "their land was desolate after them, and no man passed through, or returned." All that country that was the kingdom of the two tribes, after the dispersion of the remaining Jews, upon the slaughter of Gedaliah, was left utterly uninhabited. There was not man, woman, or child, in it till the Jews returned at the end of the seventy years' captivity; nay, it should seem the very roads that lay through the country were deserted,—none passed or repassed; which, as it had an intimation of mercy in it, though they were cast out of it, yet it was kept empty for their return, so for the present it made the judgment appear much the more dismal; for what a horrid wilderness must a land be that had been so many years uninhabited? And they might thank themselves; it was they that by their own wickedness laid the pleasant land desolate. It was not so much the Chaldeans that did it, no, they did it themselves; the desolations of a land are owing to the wickedness of its inhabitants, *Ps.* cvii. 34. This came of their wilful disobedience to the law of God. And the present generation saw how desolate sin had made that pleasant land, and yet would not take warning.

CHAPTER VIII.

The work of ministers is rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give every one their portion. So the prophet is here instructed to do, in the farther answer he gives to the case of conscience proposed about continuing the public fasts. His answer in the foregoing chapter is by way of reproof to those that were disobedient, and would not obey the truth: but here he is ordered to change his voice, and to speak by way of encouragement to the willing and obedient. Two words here are from the Lord of hosts, and they are both good words and comfortable words. In the first of these messages, ver. 1, God promiseth that Jerusalem shall be restored, reformed, ver. 2—8; that the country shall be rich, and the affairs of the nation shall be successful, their reputation retrieved, and their state, in all respects, the reverse of what it had been for many years past, ver. 9—15; and then exhorts them to reform what was amiss among them, that they might be ready for these favours designed them, ver. 16, 17. In the latter of these messages, ver. 18, he promiseth that their fasts should be superseded by the return of mercy, ver. 19; and that thereupon they should be replenished, enriched, and strengthened by the accession of foreigners to them, ver. 20—23.

AGAIN the word of the LORD of hosts came *to me,* saying,
2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy,
And I was jealous for her with great fury.
3 Thus saith the LORD; [Jerusalem:
I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of
And Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth;
And the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy moun-
4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; [tain.
There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem,
And every man with his staff in his hand for very age.
5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.
6 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, [of hosts.
Should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD
7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Behold, I will save my people from the east country,
And from the west country; [of Jerusalem:
8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst
And they shall be my people, and I will be their God,
In truth and in righteousness.

The prophet in his foregoing discourses had left his hearers under a high charge of guilt, and a deep sense of wrath, had left them in a melancholy view of the desolations of their pleasant land, which was the effect of their fathers' disobedience; but, because he designed to bring them to repentance, not to drive them to despair, he here sets before them the great things God had in store for them, encouraging them hereby to hope that their case of conscience should shortly determine itself, and God's providence should as loudly call them to joy and gladness as ever it called them to fasting and mourning.

First. It is here promised that God will appear for Jerusalem, and will espouse and plead her cause. 1. He will be revenged on Zion's enemies; ver. 2, "I was jealous for Zion," or of Zion, that is, I have of late been so heartily concerned for her honour and interests, "with great jealousy." The great wrath that was against her, *ch.* vii. 12, now turned against her adversaries. I am now "jealous for her with great fury," and can no more bear to have her abused in her afflictions than I could bear to be abused by her provocations. This he had said before, *ch.* i. 14, 15, that they might promise themselves as much from the power of his anger, when it was turned for them, as they had felt from it, when it was against them. The sins of Zion were her worst enemies, and had done her the most mischief, and therefore God, in his jealousy for her honour and comfort, will take away her sins, and then, whatever other enemies injured her, it was at their peril. 2. He will be resident in Zion's palaces; ver. 3, "I am returned to Zion," after I had seemed so long to stand at a distance, and I will again "dwell in the midst of Jerusalem," as formerly. This secures to them the tokens of his presence in his ordinances, and the instances of his favour in his providences.

Secondly. That there shall be a wonderful reformation in Jerusalem, and religion, in the power of it, shall prevail and flourish there. Jerusalem, that had dealt treacherously both with God and man, shall become so famous for fidelity and honesty, that it shall be called and known by the name of a city of truth, and the inhabitants of it children that will not lie. The faithful city had become a harlot, *Isa.* i. 21, but shall now become a faithful city again; faithful to the God of Israel, and to the worship of him only. This was fulfilled; for the Jews after the captivity, though there was much amiss among them, yet were never guilty of idolatry. Jerusalem shall be called "the mountain of the Lord of hosts," owning him and owned by him, and therefore "the holy mountain," cleared from idols, and consecrated to God, and not, as it had been, the mount of corruption, 2 *Kin.* xxiii. 13. Note, The city of God ought to be a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts a holy mountain. Those that profess religion and relation to God must study to adorn their profession by all instances of godliness and honesty.

Thirdly. That there shall be in Jerusalem a great increase of people, and all the marks and tokens of a profound tranquillity. When it has become a city of truth, and a mountain of holiness, it is then peaceable and prosperous, and every thing in it looks bright and pleasant.

1. You may look with pleasure upon the generation that is going off the stage, and see them fairly quitting it in the ordinary course of nature, and not driven off it by war, famine, or pestilence; ver. 4, "In the streets of Jerusalem," that had been filled with the bodies of the slain, or deserted, and left desolate, shall now dwell old men, and old women, that have not been cut off by untimely deaths, either through their own intemperance or God's vengeance, but have the even thread of their days spun out to a full length; they shall feel no distemper but the decay of nature, and go to their grave in a full age, as a "shock of corn in his season." They shall have every one his staff in his hand for very age, to support him, as Jacob, that "worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff," *Heb.* xi. 21. Old age needs a support, should not be ashamed to use it, but should furnish itself with Divine graces, which will be the strength of the heart, and a better support than a staff in the hand. Note, The hoary head, as it is a crown of glory to those that wear it, so it is to the places where they live. It is a graceful thing to a city to see abundance of old people in it; it is a sign not only of the healthfulness of the air, but of the prevalency of virtue, and the suppression and banishment of those many vices which cut off the number of men's months in the midst; a sign not only that the climate is temperate, but that the people are so.

2. You may look with as much pleasure upon the generation that is rising up in their room; ver. 5, "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets." This intimates, 1st. That they shall be blessed with a multitude of children, their families shall increase and multiply, and replenish the city, which was an early product of the Divine blessing, *Gen.* i. 28. Happy the man, happy the nation, whose quiver is full of these arrows. They shall have of both sexes, boys and girls, in whom their families shall afterwards be joined, and another generation raised up. 2nd. That their children shall be healthful, and strong, and active; their boys and girls shall not lie sick in bed, or sit pining in the corner, but (which is a pleasant sight to parents) shall be hearty and cheerful, and play in the streets. It is their pleasant, playing age; let us not grudge it them, much good may it do them, and no harm. Evil days will come time enough, and years of which they will say they have no pleasure in them; in consideration of which they are concerned not to spend all their time in play, but to remember their Creator. 3rd. That they shall have great plenty, and meat enough for all their mouths. In time of famine we find the children swooning as the wounded, in the streets of the city, *Lam.* ii. 11, 12. If they are playing in the streets, it is a good sign that they want for nothing. 4th. That they shall not be terrified with the alarms of war, but enjoy a perfect security. There shall be no breaking in of invaders, no going out of deserters, no complaining in the streets, *Ps.* cxliv. 14; for when there is playing in the streets it is a sign there is little care or fear there. Time was when the enemy hunted their steps so close that they could not go in their streets, *Lam.* iv. 18; but now they shall play in the streets, and fear no evil. 5th. That they shall have love and peace among themselves; the boys and girls shall not be fighting in the streets, as sometimes, in cities that are divided into factions and parties, the children soon imbibe and express the mutual resentments of the parents; but they shall be innocently and lovingly playing in the streets, not devouring, but diverting one another. 6th. That the sports and diversions used shall be all harmless and inoffensive. The boys and girls shall have no other play but what they are willing shall be seen in the streets, no play that seeks corners, no playing the fool, or playing the wanton,—for it is the mountain of the Lord, the holy mountain,—but honest and modest recreations, which they have no reason to be ashamed of. 7th. That childish, youthful sports shall be confined to the age of childhood and youth. It is pleasant to see the boys and girls playing in the streets, but it is ill-favoured to see men and women playing there, that should fill up their time with work and business. It is well enough for children to be sitting in the market place, crossing questions, *Mat.* xi. 16, 17; but it is no way fit that men who are able to work in the vineyard should stand all the day idle there, *Mat.* xx. 3.

Fourthly. That the scattered Israelites shall be brought together again from all parts whither they were dispersed; ver. 7, "I will save my people from the east country, and from the west;" will save them from being lost, or losing themselves, in Babylon, or in Egypt, or in any other country whither they were driven. They shall neither be detained by the nations among whom they sojourn nor incorporate with them; but I will save them, will separate them, and will bring them to their own land again; will by the prosperity of that invite them back, and at the same time incline them to return; and "they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem," shall choose to dwell there, because it is the holy city, though upon many other accounts it was more eligible to dwell in

the country; and therefore we find, *Neh.* xi. 2, that "the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem."

Fifthly. That God would renew his covenant with them, would be faithful to them, and make them so to him; "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." That is the foundation and crown of all these promises, and is inclusive of all happiness. They shall obey God's laws, and God will secure and advance all their interests. This contract shall be made, shall be new made, "in truth and righteousness." Some think the former speaks God's part of the covenant,—he will be their God in truth, he will make good all his promises of favour to them; and the latter speaks man's part of the covenant,—they shall be his people in righteousness, they shall be a righteous people, and shall abound in the fruit of righteousness, and shall not, as they have done, deal treacherously and unjustly with their God: see *Hos.* ii. 19, 20. God will never leave nor forsake them in a way of mercy, as he has promised them; and they shall never leave nor forsake him in a way of duty, as they have promised him. These promises were fulfilled in the flourishing state of the Jewish church for some ages, betwixt the captivity and Christ's time, but were to have a farther and fuller accomplishment in the gospel church, that heavenly Jerusalem, which is from above, is free, and is the mother of us all, and fullest of all in the future state.

All these precious promises are hereby ratified, and the doubts of God's people silenced with that question; ver. 6, "If it be marvellous in the eyes of this people, should it be marvellous in mine eyes?" If it seem unlikely to you that ever Jerusalem should be thus repaired, should be thus replenished, is it therefore impossible with God? The "remnant of this people," (and God's people in this world are but a remnant,) being few and feeble, thought all this was too good news to be true, especially in these days, these difficult days, these cloudy and dark days: considering how bad the times are, it is highly improbable, it is morally impossible, they should ever come to be so good as the prophet speaks: how can these things be? how can dry bones live? But should it therefore appear so in the eyes of God? We do both God and ourselves a deal of wrong if we think that, when we are nonplussed, he is so, and that he cannot get over the difficulties which to us seem insuperable. With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible; so far are God's thoughts and ways above ours.

9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Let your hands be strong,
Ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets,
Which *were* in the day *that* the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid,
That the temple might be built.
10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast;
Neither *was there any* peace to him that went out or came in
Because of the affliction:
For I set all men every one against his neighbour.
11 But now I *will* not *be* unto the residue of this people
As in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.
12 For the seed *shall be* prosperous;
The vine shall give her fruit,
And the ground shall give her increase,
And the heavens shall give their dew;
And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these *things*.
13 And it shall come to pass,
That as ye were a curse among the heathen,
O house of Judah, and house of Israel;
So will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing:
Fear not, *but* let your hands be strong.
14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts;
As I thought to punish you,
When your fathers provoked me to wrath,
Saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:
15 So again have I thought in these days
To do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah:
Fear ye not.
16 These *are* the things that ye shall do;
Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour;
Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:
17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour;
And love no false oath:
For all these *are things* that I hate, saith the LORD.

God, by the prophet, here gives farther assurances of the mercy he had in store for Judah and Jerusalem. Here is line upon line for their comfort, as before there was for their conviction. Mighty encouragements these verses contain, with reference to the difficulties they now laboured under. And we may observe,

First. Who they were to whom these encouragements did belong. To those who, in obedience to the call of God by his prophets, applied themselves in good earnest to the building of the temple; ver. 9, "Let your hands be strong," that are busy at work for God, "you that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets," and are not disobedient to them, as your fathers were in the former days to the words of those prophets that were sent to them; you may take the comfort of the promises, and shall have the benefit of them who have obeyed the precept given you "in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid," when you were told that, having begun with it, you must go on, "that the temple might be built." God told you you must go on with it, and you have laboured hard at it for some time, in obedience to the heavenly vision: now you are they whose hands must be strengthened, and whose hearts must be comforted, with these precious promises; to you is the word of this consolation sent. Note, Those, and those only, that are employed for God, may expect to be encouraged by him,—those who lay their hands to the plough of duty shall have them strengthened with the promises of mercy; and those who mend of their fathers' faults not only cut off the entail of the curse, but have it turned into a blessing.

Secondly. What the discouragements were which they had hitherto laboured under, ver. 10. These are mentioned as a foil to the blessings God was now about to bestow upon them, to make them appear the more strange, to the glory of God, and the more sweet, to their comfort. The truth was, the times had long been very bad, and the calamities and difficulties of them were many and great.

1. Trade was dead; there was nothing to be done, and therefore nothing to be got. "Before these days" of reformation began, "there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beasts;" the fruits of the earth (though it had long lain fallow, and therefore one would think should have been the more fertile,) were thin and poor; so that the husbandman had no occasion to hire harvest people to reap his corn, or teams to carry it home, for it came to next to nothing. Merchants had no goods to import or export, so that they needed not to hire either man or beast; by which means the poor people, that lived by their labour, had no way of getting bread for themselves and their families.

2. Travelling was dangerous; so that all commerce, both by sea and land, was cut off. Nay, none durst stir abroad so much as to visit their friends, for "there was no peace to him that went out or came in, because of the affliction;" the Samaritans and Ammonites, and other their evil neighbours, made inroads upon them in small parties, and seized all they could lay their hands on. The roads were infested with highwaymen, and both city and country with housebreakers; so that neither men's persons nor their goods were safe at home or abroad.

3. There was no such thing as friendship or good neighbourhood among them; "I set all men every one against his neighbour." In this there was a great deal of sin, for these wars and fightings came from men's lusts, and this God was not the author of; but there was in it a great deal of misery also, and so God was in it a just avenger of their disobedience to him. Because they were of an evil spirit towards him, a spirit of contradiction to his laws, God sent among them an evil spirit, to make them vexatious one to another. Those that throw off the love of God forfeit the comfort of brotherly love.

Thirdly. What encouragement they shall now have to proceed in the good work they are about, and to hope that it shall yet be well with them. Thus and thus you have been harassed and afflicted, but now God will change his way towards you, ver. 11. Now you return to your duty God will comfort you according to the time that he has afflicted you; the ebbing tide shall flow again.

1. God will not proceed in his controversy with them; "I will not be to them as in the former days." Note, It is with us well or ill according as God is to us, for every creature is that to us which he makes it to be; and if we walk not contrary to God, "as in the former days," he will not walk contrary to us, as in the former days; for it is only "with the froward that he will wrestle."

2. They shall have great plenty and abundance of all good things, ver. 12. The seed sown shall be prosperous, and yield a great increase; "The vine shall give her fruit," which makes glad the heart, and the ground its products, which strengthen the heart. They shall have all they can desire, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight. The "heavens shall give their dew," without which the earth would not yield her increase, which is a constant intimation to us of the beneficence of the God of heaven to men on earth, and their dependence upon him. It is said of a sweeping rain that it leaves no food, *Pr.* xxviii. 3; but here the gentle dew waters the earth, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. And thus God will "cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things." They are but a remnant, a residue, very few,—one would think scarce worth looking after; but, now they are at work for God, he will take care they shall want nothing that is fit for them. This confirms what the prophet's colleague had said a little before, *Hag.* ii. 16, 19, "From this day will I bless you." Note, God's people, that serve him faithfully, have great possessions: All is yours, for you are Christ's.

3. They shall recover their credit among their neighbours; ver. 13, "Ye were a curse among the heathen." Every one censured and condemned them, spake ill of them, and wished ill to them, upon the account of the great disgrace that they were under. Some think they were made a form of execration, so that if a man would load his enemy with the heaviest curse, he would say, God make thee like a Jew! but now, "I will save you, and you shall be a blessing." Your restoration shall be as much taken notice of to your honour as ever your desolation and dispersion were to your reproach; you shall be applauded and admired as much as ever you were vilified and run down, shall be courted and caressed as much as ever you were slighted and abandoned. Most men smile or frown upon their neighbours according as Providence smiles or frowns on them; but those whom God plainly blesseth, as his own, shews favour to, and puts honour upon, we ought also to respect and be kind to. The blessed of the Lord are the blessing of the land, and should be so accounted by us. This is here promised to the house both of Israel and Judah; for many of the ten tribes returned out of captivity with the two tribes, and shared with them in those blessings; and it is probable, besides what came at first, many, very many, flocked to them afterwards, when they saw their affairs take this turn.

4. God himself will determine to do them good, ver. 14, 15. All their comforts take rise from the thoughts of love God had towards them, *Jer.* xxix. 11. Compare these promises with the former threatenings. 1st. When they provoked him to anger with their sins he said he would punish them, and so he did. It was his declared purpose to bring destroying judgments upon them; and because they repented not of their rebellions against him, he repented not of his threatenings against them, but let the sentence of the law take its course. Note, God's punishing of sinners is never a sudden and hasty resolve, but is always the product of thought, and there is a counsel in that part of the will of God. And if the sinner turn not, God will not turn. 2nd. Now they pleased him with their services, he said he would do them good; and will he not be as true to his promises as he was to his threatenings? No doubt he will. "So again have I thought to do well to Jerusalem in those days," when you begin to hearken to the voice of God speaking to you by his prophets; and these thoughts also shall be performed.

Fourthly. The use they are to make of these encouragements.

1. Let them take the comfort which these promises give to them. "Fear not," ver. 15; "Let your hands be strong," ver. 9; and both together, ver. 13, "Fear not, but let your hands be strong." 1st. The difficulties they met with in their work must not drive them from it, or make them go on heavily in it, for the issue would be good, and the reward great. Let this therefore animate them to proceed with vigour and cheerfulness. 2nd. The dangers they were exposed to from their enemies must not terrify them. Those that have God for them, engaged to do them good, need not fear what man can do against them.

2. Let them do the duty which these promises call for from them, ver. 16, 17. The very same duties which the former prophets pressed upon their fathers, from the consideration of the wrath threatened, *ch.* vii. 9, 10, this prophet presseth upon them from the consideration of the mercy promised. Leave it to God to perform for you what he has promised in his own way and time, but upon condition that you make conscience of your duty. "These are the things then that ye shall do;" this is your part of the covenant, the articles which you are to perform, fulfil, and keep, that you may not put a bar in your own door, and stop the current of God's favours. 1st. You must never tell a lie, but always speak as you think, and as the matter is, to the best of your knowledge; "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour," both in bargains and common converse; dread every word that looks like a lie. This precept the apostle quotes, *Eph.* iv. 25, and backs it with this reason, "We are members one of another." 2nd. Those that are intrusted with the administration of public justice must see to it, not only that none be wronged by it, but that those who are wronged be righted by it; "Execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates." Let the judges that sit in the gates in all their judicial proceedings have regard both to truth and to peace; let them take care both to do justice and to accommodate differences, and prevent vexatious suits. It must be a judgment of truth, in order to peace, and making those friends that were at variance; and a judgment of peace, so far as is consistent with truth, and no farther. 3rd. No man must bear malice against his neighbour upon any account. This is the same with what we had *ch.* vii. 10. We must not only keep our hands from doing evil, but we must watch over our hearts, that "they imagine not any evil" against our neighbour, *Pr.* iii. 29. Injury and mischief must be crushed in the thought, in the embryo. 4th. Great reverence must be had for an oath, and conscience made of it: Never take a false oath; nay, "love no false oath;" that is, hate it, dread it, keep at a distance from it. Love not to impose oaths upon others, lest they swear falsely; love not that any should take a false oath for your benefit, and forswear themselves to do you a kindness. Here is a very good reason against all these corrupt practices annexed: For "all these things I hate," and therefore you must hate them if you expect to have God your friend. These things here forbidden are all of them found among the "seven things which the Lord hates," *Pr.* vi. 16—19. Note, We must forbear sin, not only because God is angry at it, and therefore it is dangerous to us, but because he hates it, and therefore it ill becomes us, and is a very ungrateful thing.

18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, 19 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth *month*, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and chearful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. 20 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; *It shall* yet *come to pass*, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: 21 And the inhabitants of one *city* shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. 22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. 23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that* God *is* with you.

Here are two precious promises in these verses, for the farther encouragement of those pious Jews that were hearty in building the temple.

First. That a happy period shall be put to their fasts, and there shall be no more occasion for them, but they shall be converted into thanksgiving days, ver. 19; this is a direct answer to the inquiry concerning their fasts, *ch.* vii. 3. Those of them that fasted in hypocrisy had their doom in the foregoing chapter; but those that in sincerity humbled themselves before God, and sought his face, have here a comfortable assurance given them of a large share in the happy times approaching. The four yearly feasts they had religiously observed should be to "the house of Judah joy and gladness, and solemn feasts," and those cheerful ones. Note, Joyous times will come to the church after troublous times; if weeping endure for more than a night, and joy come not the next morning, yet the morning will come that will introduce it at length. And when God comes towards us in ways of mercy, we must meet him with joy and thankfulness; when God turns judgments into mercies, we must turn fasts into festivals, and thus "walk after the Lord." And those who sow in tears with Zion shall reap in joy with her; those that submit to the restraints of her solemn fasts while they continue, shall share in the triumphs of her cheerful feasts when they come, *Isa.* lxvi. 10. The inference from this promise is, "Therefore love the truth and peace;" that is, be faithful and honest in all your dealings, and let it be a pleasure to you to be so, though thereby you cut yourselves short of those gains which you see others get dishonestly; and as much as in you lies live peaceably with all men, and be in your element when you are in charity. Let the truths of God rule in our heads, and let the peace of God rule in our hearts.

Secondly. That a great accession shall be made to the church by the conversion of many foreigners, ver. 20—23. This was fulfilled but in part when, in the latter times of the Jewish church, there were abundance of proselytes from all the countries about, and some that lay very remote, who came yearly to worship at Jerusalem; which added very much both to the grandeur and wealth of that city, and contributed greatly to the making of it so considerable as it came to be before our Saviour's time, though now it was but just peeping out of its ruins. But it would be accomplished much more fully in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, and the incorporating of them with the believing Jews in one great body, under Christ the head, a mystery which is made manifest by the Scriptures of the prophets, *Rom.* xvi. 26, and by this among the rest, which makes it strange that when it was accomplished it was so great a surprise and stumbling-block to the Jews. Observe,

1. Who they are that shall be added to the church. "People, and the inhabitants of many cities," ver. 20; not only a few ignorant country people that may be easily imposed upon, or some idle people that have nothing else to do, but intelligent, inquisitive citizens, men of business and acquaintance with the world, shall embrace the Gospel of Christ. "Yea, many people and strong nations," ver. 22; some of "all languages," ver. 23. By this it appears that they are brought into the church, not by human persuasion, for they are of different languages; not by external force, for they are strong nations, able to have kept their ground if they had been so attacked, but purely by the effectual working of Divine truth and grace. Note, God has his remnant in all parts; and at the general assembly of the church of the first-born some will be found "out of all nations and kindreds," *Rev.* vii. 9.

2. How their accession to the church is described. They shall come to "pray before the Lord," and to "seek the Lord of hosts," ver. 21; and, to shew that this is the main matter in which their conversion consists, it is repeated, ver. 22, they shall "come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem," and to "pray before the Lord." No mention is made of their offering sacrifices, not only because those were not expected from the "proselytes of the gate," but because, when the Gentiles should be brought in, sacrifice and offering should be quite abolished. See who are to be accounted converts to God, and members of the church; and all that are converts to God are members of the church. 1st. They are such as seek the Lord of hosts, that inquire for God their Maker, covet and court his favour, and are truly desirous to know his mind and will, and sincerely devoted to his honour and glory; "This is the generation of them that seek him." 2nd. They are such as pray before the Lord; that make a conscience and make a business of the duty of prayer; that dare not, that would not, for all the world, live without it; that by prayer pay their homage to God, own their dependence upon him, maintain their communion with him, and fetch in mercy and grace from him. 3rd. They are such as herein have an eye to the Divine revelation and institution, which is signified by their doing this in Jerusalem, the place which God had chosen, where his word was, where his temple was, that was a type of Christ and his mediation, which all faithful worshippers will have a faithful regard to.

Thirdly. How unanimous they shall be in their accession to the church, and how zealous in exciting one another to it; ver. 21, "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another," as formerly, when they went up from all parts of the country to worship at the yearly feasts, and they shall say, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord; I will go also." This intimates, 1. That those who are brought into an acquaintance with Christ themselves should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him. Thus Andrew invited Peter to Christ, and Philip invited Nathanael; true grace hates monopolies. 2. That those who are rightly sensible of their need of Christ, and of the favour of God through him, will stir up themselves and others without delay to hasten to him; "Let us go speedily to pray;" it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we are to petition, and therefore it concerns us to lose no time; in a matter of such moment delays are dangerous. 3. That our communion with God is very much assisted and furthered by the communion of saints. It is pleasant going "to the house of God in company," *Ps.* lv. 14; "with the multitude," *Ps.* xlii. 4; and of good use to those that do so, to excite one another to go speedily, and lose no time. We should be glad when it is said to us, "Let us go," *Ps.* cxxii. 1. As iron sharpens iron, so may good men sharpen the countenances and spirits one of another in that which is good. 4. That those who stir up others to that which is good must take heed that they do not turn off, or tire, or draw back themselves; he that saith, "Let us go," saith, "I will go also." What good we put others upon doing we must see to it that we do ourselves, else we shall be judged out of our own mouths. Not, Do you go, and I will stay at home; but, Do you go, and I will go with you. 'A singular pattern,' saith Pemble, 'of zealous charity, that neither leaves others behind nor turns others before it.'

Fourthly. Upon what inducement they shall join themselves to the church. Not for the church's sake, but for his sake who dwells in it; ver. 23, "Ten men," of different nations and languages, shall "take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew," begging of him not to outgo them, but to take them along with him. This speaks the great honour they have for a Jew, as one of the chosen people of God, and therefore well worthy their acquaintance. They cannot all come to take him by the hand, or embrace him in their arms, but are ambitious to take hold of the skirt of his robe, to touch the hem of his garment, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." The Gospel was preached to the Jews first, (for of that nation the apostles were,) and by them it was carried to the Gentiles. St. Paul was a Jew, whose skirt many took hold of, when they welcomed him as an angel of God, and begged of him to take them along with him to Christ. Thus the Greeks took hold of Philip's skirt, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus," *Jno.* xii. 21. Note, It is the privilege of the saints that they have God with them, have him among them—the knowledge, and fear, and worship of him. They have his favour and gracious presence, and this should invite us into communion with them. It is good being with those that have God with them, and those who join themselves to the Lord must join themselves to his disciples. If we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people; cast in our lot among them, and be willing to take our lot with them.

CHAPTER IX.

At this chapter begins another sermon, which is continued to the end of *ch.* xi., and it is called, "The burden of the word of the Lord," for every word of God has weight in it to those that regard it, and will be a heavy weight upon those that do not—a dead weight. Here is, I. A prophecy against the Jews' unrighteous neighbours, the Syrians, Tyrians, Philistines, and others, ver. 1—6; with an intimation of mercy to some of them in their conversion, ver. 7; and a promise of mercy to God's people in their protection, ver. 8. II. A prophecy of their righteous king, the Messiah, and his coming, with a description of him, ver. 9, and of his kingdom, the nature and extent of it, ver. 10. III. An account of the obligation the Jews lay under to Christ, for their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, ver. 11, 12. IV. A prophecy of the victories and successes God would grant the Jews over their enemies, as typical of our great deliverance by Christ, ver. 13—15. V. A promise of great plenty, and joy, and honour, which God had in reserve for his people, ver. 16, 17, which was written for their encouragement.

THE burden of the word of the LORD in the land of
And Damascus *shall be* the rest thereof: [Hadrach,
When the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel,
Shall be toward the LORD.
2 And Hamath also shall border thereby;
Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.
3 And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold,
And heaped up silver as the dust,
And fine gold as the mire of the streets.
4 Behold, the Lord will cast her out,
And he will smite her power in the sea;
And she shall be devoured with fire.
5 Ashkelon shall see *it*, and fear;
Gaza also *shall see it*, and be very sorrowful,
And Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed;
And the king shall perish from Gaza,
And Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.
6 And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod,
And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.
7 And I will take away his blood out of his mouth,
And his abominations from between his teeth:
But he that remaineth, even he, *shall be* for our God,
And he shall be as a governor in Judah,
And Ekron as a Jebusite. [army,
8 And I will encamp about mine house because of the
Because of him that passeth by,
And because of him that returneth:
And no oppressor shall pass through them any more:
For now have I seen with mine eyes.

After the precious promises we had in the foregoing chapter of favour to God's people, their persecutors that hated them come to be reckoned with, those particularly that bordered close upon them.

First. The Syrians had been ill neighbours to Israel, and God has a controversy with them. The word of the Lord shall be a burthen in the land of Hadrach, that is, of Syria; but it doth not appear why it was so called. That that kingdom is meant is plain, because Damascus, the metropolis of that kingdom, is said to be the rest of this burthen; that is, the judgments here threatened shall light and lie upon that city. Those are miserable upon whom the burthen of the word of the Lord rests, upon whom the wrath of God abides, *Jno.* iii. 36; for it is a weight that they can neither shake off nor bear up under. There are those whom God causeth his fury to rest upon; whom the wrath of God makes its mark it will be sure to hit, whom it makes its rest it will be sure to sink. And the reason of this burthen resting on Damascus is, because "the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel," (or rather, 'even of all the tribes of Israel,') are "towards the Lord;" that is, because the people of God by faith and prayer look up to him for succour and relief, and depend upon him to take their part against their enemies. Note, It is a sign God is about to appear remarkably for his people when he raiseth their believing expectations from him, and dependence upon him, and when by his grace he turns them from idols to himself; *Isa.* xvii. 7, 8. "At that day shall a man look to his Maker." It may be read thus, 'For the Lord has an eye upon man, and upon all the tribes of Israel,' that is, he is King of nations, as well as King of saints, governs the world as well as the church; and, therefore, will punish the sins of other people as well as those of his own people. God is Judge of all, and therefore all must give account of themselves to him. When St. Paul was converted at Damascus, and preached there, and disputed with the Jews, then the word of the Lord might be said to rest there; and then the eyes of men, of other men besides the tribes of Israel, began to be towards the Lord: see *Acts* ix. 22. Hamath, a country which lay north of Damascus, and which we often read of, "shall border thereby," ver. 2; it joins to Syria, and shall share in the "burden of the word of the Lord" that rests upon Damascus. The Jews have a proverb, 'Woe to the wicked man, and woe to his neighbour,' who is partaking in his sins and in his plagues. Woe to the land of Hadrach, and woe to Hamath that borders thereby.

Secondly. Tyre and Zidon come next to be called to an account here, as in other prophecies, ver. 2—4. Observe here,

1. Tyre flourishing, thinking herself very safe, and ready to set God's judgments not only at a distance, but at defiance; for, 1st. She is very wise. It is spoken ironically; she thinks herself very wise, and able to outwit even the wisdom of God. It is granted her king is a great politician, her statesmen are so, *Eze.* xxviii. 3; but with all their wit and policy they shall not be able to evade the judgments of God when they come with commission,—there is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord. Nay, it is his honour to take the wise in their own craftiness. 2nd. She is very strong, and well fortified, both by nature and art. "Tyrus did build herself a stronghold," which she thought could never be brought down, or got over. 3rd. She is very rich, and money is a defence; it is the sinews of war, *Eccl.* vii. 12. By her vast trade she hath "heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets;" that is, she has an abundance of them, heaps of silver as common as heaps of sand, *Job* xxvii. 16. Solomon made silver to be in Jerusalem as the "stones of the streets;" but Tyre went farther, and made fine gold to be as "the mire of the streets." It were well if we could all learn so to look upon it, in comparison with the merchandise of wisdom and grace, and the gains thereof.

2. Tyrus falling, after all; her wisdom, and wealth, and strength shall not be able to secure her; ver. 4, "The Lord will cast her out" of that stronghold wherein she has fortified herself; will make her poor, so some read it. There have been instances of those that have fallen from the height of plenty to the depth of poverty, and great riches have come to nothing. God will smite her power in the sea; her being surrounded by the water shall not secure her, but "she shall be devoured with fire," and burnt down to the ground. Tyrus, being seated in the midst of the water, one would have thought was in danger to be some time or other overflowed or washed away by that, yet God chooseth to destroy it by the contrary element; sometimes he brings ruin upon his enemies by those means which they least suspect. Water enough was nigh at hand to have quenched the flames of Tyre, and yet by them she shall be devoured; for who can put out the fire which the breath of the Almighty blows up?

Thirdly. God next contends with the Philistines, with their great cities and great lords, that bordered southward upon Israel.

1. They shall be alarmed and affrighted by the word of the Lord lighting and resting upon Damascus, ver. 5; the disgraces of Israel had many a time been published in the streets of Ashkelon, and they had triumphed in them; but now Ashkelon shall see the ruin of her friends and allies, and shall fear. "Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron," concluding that their own turn comes next, now the cup of trembling goes round. What will become of their house when their neighbour's is on fire? They had looked upon Tyre and Zidon as a barrier to their country, but when those strong cities were ruined their expectations from them were ashamed, as our expectation from all creatures will be in the issue.

2. They shall themselves be ruined and wasted. 1st. The government shall be dissolved; "The king shall perish from Gaza," not only the present king shall be cut off, but there shall be no succession, no successor. 2nd. The cities shall be dispeopled; "Ashkelon shall not be inhabited," the rightful owners shall be expelled, either slain or carried into captivity. 3rd. Foreigners shall take possession of their land, and become masters of all its wealth; ver. 6, "A bastard shall dwell in Ashdod," a spurious brood of strangers shall enter upon the inheritances of the natives, which they have no more right to than a bastard has to the estates of the legitimate children. And thus God will "cut off the pride of the Philistines," all that strength and wealth which they prided themselves in, and which was the ground of their confidence in themselves, and their contempt of the Israel of God. This prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines, and of Damascus and Tyre, was accomplished not long after this by Alexander the Great, who ravaged all these countries with his victorious army, took the cities, and planted colonies in them, which Quintus Curtius gives a particular account of in the history of his conquests. And some think he is meant by the bastard that shall dwell in Ashdod; for his mother, Olympia, owned him begotten in adultery, but pretended it was by Jupiter. The Jews afterwards got ground of the Philistines, Syrians, and others their neighbours, took some of their cities from them, and possessed their countries; as appears by the histories of Josephus and the Maccabees. And this was predicted before, *Zep.* ii. 4, &c.; *Oba.* 20.

3. Some among them shall be converted and brought home to God by his Gospel and grace; so some understand ver. 7, as a promise, 1st. That God would take away the sins of these nations, their blood and their abominations, their cruelties and their idolatries. God will part between them and these sins, which they have rolled under their tongue as a sweet morsel, and are as loath to part with as men are to part with the meat out of their mouths, and which they hold fast between their teeth. Nothing is too hard for the grace of God to do. 2nd. That he would accept of a remnant of them for his own; "He that remaineth shall be for our God." God would preserve a remnant even of these nations, that should be the monuments of his mercy and grace, and be set apart for him; and the disadvantages of their birth shall be no bar to their acceptance with God, but a Philistine shall be as acceptable to God upon gospel terms as one of Judah, nay, as a governor or chief one in Judah; and a man of Ekron shall be as a Jebusite or man of Jerusalem, as a proselyted Jebusite, as Araunah the Jebusite, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 8. In Christ Jesus there is no distinction of nations, but all are one in him, all alike welcome to him.

Fourthly. In all this God intends mercy for Israel; and it is in kindness to them that God will deal thus with the neighbouring nations, to avenge their quarrel for what is past, and to secure them for the future. Thus some understand the seventh verse, as intimating,

1. That thus God would deliver his people from their bloody adversaries that hated them, and to whom they were an abomination, then when they were just ready to devour them, and make a prey of them; "I will take away his blood," that is, the blood of Israel, out of the mouth of the Philistines, and from between their teeth, *Am.* iii. 12, when in their hatred of them, and enmity to them, they were greedily devouring them.

2. That he would thus give them victory and dominion over them; And "he that remaineth," that is, the remnant of Israel, "shall be for our God;" shall be taken into his favour, shall own him, and be owned by him, and "he shall be as a governor in Judah." Though the Jews have long been in servitude, they shall recover their ancient dignity, and be victorious, as David and other governors in Judah formerly were; and Ekron, that is, the Philistines, shall be as the Jebusites, and the rest of the devoted nations were brought into subjection under them. However, this is plainly the sense of ver. 8, that God will take his people under his special protection, and therefore will weaken their neighbours, that it may not be in their power to do them a mischief; "I will encamp about my house because of the army." Note, God's house lies in the midst of an enemy's country, and his church is as a lily among thorns; and, therefore, God's power and goodness are to be observed in the special preservation of it. The camp of the saints, being a little flock in comparison with the numerous armies of the powers of darkness that are set against it round about, would certainly be swallowed up, if the angels of God did not encamp about it, as they did about Elisha, to deliver it, *Rev.* xx. 9; *Ps.* xxxiv. 7. When the times are more than ordinarily perilous, when armies are marching and counter-marching, and all bearing ill-will to Zion, then providence will as it were double its guards upon the church of God; "because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth," that, whether he return a conqueror or conquered, he may do it no harm. And as none that pass by shall hurt them, so "no oppressor shall pass through them any more;" they shall have no enemy within themselves to rule them with rigour, and to make their lives bitter to them with sore bondage, as of old in Egypt. This was fulfilled when, for some time after the struggles of the Maccabees, Judæa was a free and flourishing state; or perhaps when Alexander the Great, struck with an awe of Jaddus the high priest, favoured the Jews, and took them under his protection, at the same time when he wasted the neighbouring countries. And the reason given for all this is, "For now have I seen with mine eyes;" now have I carefully distinguished between my people and other people, with whom before they seemed to have had their lot in common, and have made it to appear that I know them that are mine. This agrees with *Ps.* xxxiv. 15, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous;" now his eyes, which "run to and fro through the earth," shall fix upon them, that he may shew himself tender of them, and "strong on their behalf," 2 *Chr.* xvi. 9.

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee;

He *is* just, and having salvation;
Lowly, and riding upon an ass,
And upon a colt the foal of an ass.
10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,
And the horse from Jerusalem,
And the battle bow shall be cut off:
And he shall speak peace unto the heathen:
And his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea,
And from the river *even* to the ends of the earth.
11 As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant
I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein
is no water.

That here begins a prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom is plain from the literal accomplishment of the ninth verse, and its express application to Christ's riding in triumph into Jerusalem, *Mat.* xxi. 5; *Jno.* xii. 15.

First. Here is notice given of the approach of the Messiah, promised as matter of great joy to the Old Testament church; "Behold, thy king cometh unto thee." Christ is a king, invested with regal powers and prerogatives, a sovereign prince, an absolute monarch, having all power both in heaven and on earth. He is Zion's king; God hath "set him upon his holy hill of Zion," *Ps.* ii. 6. In Zion his glory as of a king shines; thence his law went forth, even the word of the Lord. In the gospel church his spiritual kingdom is administered; it is by him that the ordinances of the church are instituted, and its offices commissioned; and it is taken under his protection; he fights the church's battles, and secures its interest as its king. This king has been long in coming, but now, Behold, he cometh, he is at the door; there are but few ages more to run out, and he that shall come will come; he cometh unto thee. The Word will shortly be made flesh, and dwell within thy borders; he will come to his own. And therefore rejoice, rejoice greatly and shout for joy! Look upon it as good news, and be assured it is true. Please thyself to think that he is coming, that he is on his way towards thee, and be ready to go forth to meet him with acclamations of joy, as one not able to conceal it, it is so great, nor ashamed to own it, it is so just; cry, Hosanna to him. Christ's approaches ought to be the church's applauses.

Secondly. Here is such a description of him as renders him very amiable in the eyes of all his loving subjects, and his coming to them very acceptable. 1. He is a righteous ruler; all his acts of government will be exactly according to the rules of equity, for he is just. 2. He is a powerful protector to all those that bear faith and true allegiance to him; for he hath salvation, he hath it in his power, he hath it to bestow upon all his subjects. He is the God of salvation; treasures of salvation are in him. He is *servatus*,—'saving himself,' so some read it; rising out of the grave by his own power, and so qualifying himself to be our Saviour. 3. He is a meek, humble, tender Father to all his subjects as his children. He is lowly, he is poor and afflicted, (so the word signifies, so it notes the meanness of his condition,) having emptied himself; he was despised and rejected of men. But the evangelist translates it so as to speak the temper of his spirit; he is meek, not taking state upon him, or resenting injuries, but humbling himself from first to last, condescending to the mean, compassionate to the miserable. This was a bright and excellent character of him as a prophet, *Mat.* xi. 29, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," and no less so as a king. It was a proof of this that when he made his public entry into his own city, and it was the only passage of his life that had any thing in it magnificent in the eye of the world, he chose to ride, not upon a stately horse, or in a chariot, as great men used to ride, but upon an ass, a beast of service indeed, but a poor silly and contemptible one, low and slow, and in those days only ridden by the meaner sort of people. Nor was it an ass fitted for use, but an ass's colt, a little foolish, unmanageable thing, that would be more likely to disgrace his rider than be any credit to him, and that not his own neither, nor helped off, as sometimes a sorry horse is, by good furniture, for he had no saddle, no housings, no trappings, no equipage, but his disciples' clothes thrown upon the colt; for he made himself of no reputation when he visited us in great humility.

Thirdly. His kingdom is here set forth in the glory of it. This king has and will have a kingdom, not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of heaven. 1. It shall not be set up and advanced by external force, by an arm of flesh, or weapons of warfare that are carnal; no, he "will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem," ver. 10, for he shall have no occasion for them while he himself rides upon an ass. He will in kindness to his people cut off their horses and chariots, that they may not cut themselves off from God, by putting that confidence in them which they should put in the power of God only. He will himself undertake their protection, will himself be a wall of fire about Jerusalem, and give his angels charge concerning it, those "chariots of fire and horses of fire;" and then the chariots and horses they had had in their service shall be discarded and cut off as altogether needless. 2. It shall be propagated and established by the preaching of the Gospel, the speaking of peace to the heathen; for Christ came and preached peace to them that were afar off, and to them that were nigh, and so established his kingdom by proclaiming on earth peace and goodwill towards men. 3. His kingdom, as far as it prevails in the minds of men, and has the ascendant over them, will make them peaceable, and slay all enmities; it will cut off the battle-bow and beat swords into ploughshares; it will not only command the peace, but will create the fruit of the lips, peace. 4. It shall extend itself to all parts of the world, in defiance of the opposition given to it. The chariot and horse, that came against Ephraim and Jerusalem to oppose the progress of Zion's king, shall be cut off; his Gospel shall be preached to the world, and be received among the heathen, so that "his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth," as was foretold by David, *Ps.* lxxii. 8. The preachers of the Gospel shall carry it from one country, one island, to another, till some of the remotest corners of the world are enlightened and reduced by it.

Fourthly. Here is an account of the great benefit procured for mankind by the Messiah, which is redemption from extreme misery, typified by the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity; ver. 11, "As for thee also," thee, O daughter of Jerusalem, or thee, O Messiah the prince, "by the blood of thy covenant," that is, by force and virtue of the covenant made with Abraham, sealed with the blood of circumcision, and the covenant made with Israel at mount Sinai, sealed with the blood of sacrifices, in pursuance and performance of that covenant, I have now of late sent for thy prisoners, thy captives, out of Babylon, which was to them a most uncomfortable place, as a pit in which was no water. It was part of the covenant, that if in the land of their captivity they sought the Lord, he would be found of them, *Lev.* xxvi. 42, 44, 45; *Deu.* xxx. 4. It was by the blood of that covenant typifying the blood of Christ, in whom all God's covenants with man are Yea and Amen, that they were released out of captivity; and this was but a shadow of the great salvation wrought out by thy king, O daughter of Zion. Note, A sinful state is a state of bondage: it is a spiritual prison; it is a pit or a dungeon in which there is no water, no comfort at all to be had. We are all by nature prisoners in this pit; the Scripture has concluded us all under sin, and bound us over to the justice of God. God is pleased to deal upon new terms with these prisoners, to enter into another covenant with them. The blood of Christ is the blood of that covenant, purchased it for us, and all the benefits of it; by that blood of the covenant effectual provision is made for the sending forth of these prisoners upon easy and honourable terms, and proclamation made of liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, like Cyrus's proclamation to the Jews in Babylon, which all those whose spirits God stirreth up will come and take the benefit of.

12 Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope:
Even to day do I declare *that* I will render double unto [thee;
13 When I have bent Judah for me,
Filled the bow with Ephraim,
And raised up thy sons, O Zion,
Against thy sons, O Greece,
And made thee as the sword of a mighty man.

ANCIENT GREEKS.

14 And the LORD shall be seen over them,
And his arrow shall go forth as the lightning:
And the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet,
And shall go with whirlwinds of the south.
15 The LORD of hosts shall defend them;
And they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones;
And they shall drink, *and* make a noise as through wine;
And they shall be filled like bowls,
And as the corners of the altar.
16 And the LORD their God shall save them in that day
As the flock of his people:
For *they shall be as* the stones of a crown,
Lifted up as an ensign upon his land.
17 For how great *is* his goodness, and how great *is* his
Corn shall make the young men chearful, [beauty!
And new wine the maids.

The prophet, having taught those that were returned out of captivity to attribute their deliverance to the blood of the covenant and to the promise of the Messiah, for therefore they were so wonderfully helped, because that blessing was in them, was yet in the womb of their nation, now comes to encourage them with the prospect of a joyful and happy settlement, and of glorious times before them; and such a happiness they did enjoy in a great measure for some time; but these promises have their full accomplishment in the spiritual blessings of the Gospel which we enjoy by Jesus Christ.

First. They are invited to look unto Christ, and fly unto him as their city of refuge; ver. 12, "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." The Jews that were returned out of captivity into their own land were yet in effect but prisoners, (We are servants this day, *Neh.* ix. 36;) yet prisoners of hope, or expectation, for God had given them a little reviving in their bondage, *Ezr.* ix. 8, 9. Those that yet continued in Babylon, detained by their affairs there, yet lived in hope some time or other to see their own land again. Now both these are

directed to turn their eyes upon the Messiah set before them in the promise as their stronghold, to shelter themselves in him, and stay themselves upon him, for the perfecting of the mercy which by his grace, and for his sake, was so gloriously begun: "Look unto him, and be ye saved," *Isa.* xlv. 22. The promise of the Messiah was the stronghold of the faithful long before his coming; they saw his day at a distance, and were glad; and the believing expectation of this redemption in Jerusalem was long the support and consolation of Israel, *Lu.* ii. 25, 38. They in their dangers and distresses were ready to turn towards this and the other creature for relief, but the prophets directed them still to turn to Christ, and to comfort themselves with the joy of their king coming to them with salvation. But, as their deliverance was typical of our redemption by Christ, ver. 11, so this invitation to the stronghold speaks the language of the gospel call. Sinners are prisoners, but they are prisoners of hope; their case is sad, but it is not desperate. Yet now there is hope in Israel concerning them; Christ is a stronghold for them, a strong tower, in whom they may be safe and quiet from the fear of the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the assaults of spiritual enemies; to him they must turn by a lively faith, to him they must fly, and trust in his name.

Secondly. They are assured of God's favour to them. "Even to-day do I declare,"—when things are at the worst, and you think your case deplorable to the last degree, yet I solemnly promise,—that "I will render double unto thee," to thee, O Jerusalem, to every one of you prisoners of hope; I will give you comforts double to the sorrows you have experienced, or blessings double to what I ever bestowed upon your fathers, when their condition was at the best; the glory of your latter state, as well as of your latter house, shall be greater, shall be twice as great, as that of your former. And so it was no otherwise but by the coming of the Messiah, the preaching of his Gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom. These spiritual blessings in heavenly things were double to what they had ever enjoyed in their most prosperous state. As a pledge of this, in the fulness of time God here promiseth to the Jews victory, plenty, and joy in their own land, which yet should be but a type and shadow of more glorious victories, riches, and joys in the kingdom of Christ.

1. They shall triumph over their enemies. The Jews, after their return, were surrounded with enemies on all sides; they were as a speckled bird, all the birds of the field were against them. Their land lay between the two potent kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, branches of the Grecian monarchy, and what frequent dangers they should be in between them was foretold, *Dan.* xi. But it is here promised that out of them all the Lord would deliver them; and this promise had its primary accomplishment in the times of the Maccabees, when the Jews made head against their enemies, kept their head above water, and after many struggles and difficulties came to be head over them. It is promised,

1st. That they shall be instruments in God's hand, for the defeating and baffling of their persecutors. "I have bent Judah for me," as my bow of steel; that bow I have filled with Ephraim as my arrows, have drawn it up to its full bent, till the arrow be at the head; for some think that is signified by the phrase of filling the bow. The expressions here are very fine, and the figures lively. Judah had been taught the use of the bow, 2 *Sam.* i. 18; and Ephraim had been famous for it, *Ps.* lxxviii. 9. But let them not think that they gain their successes by their own bow; for they themselves are no more than God's bow and his arrows—tools in his hand, which he makes use of and manageth as he pleaseth, which he holds as his bow, and directs to the mark as his arrows. The best and bravest of men are but what God makes them, and do no more service than he enables them to do. The preachers of the Gospel were the bow in Christ's hand, with which he went forth; he went on "conquering and to conquer," *Rev.* vi. 2. The following words explain this: "I have raised up" and spirited "thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece." This was fulfilled when against Antiochus, one of the kings of the Grecian monarchy, the people that knew their God were strong, and did exploits, *Dan.* xi. 32. And they in the hand of an almighty God were made "as the sword of a mighty man," which none can stand before. Wicked men are said to be God's sword, *Ps.* xvii. 13, and sometimes good men are made so, for he employs both as he pleaseth.

2nd. That God will be Captain and Commander-in-chief over them in every expedition and engagement; ver. 14, "The Lord shall be seen over them;" he shall make it appear that he presides in their affairs, and that in all their motions they are under his conduct, as apparently, though not so sensibly, as he was seen in Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire, when he led them through the wilderness. *First.* Is their army to be raised or mustered, and brought into the field? "The Lord shall blow the trumpet," to gather the forces together, to proclaim the war, to sound the alarm, and to give directions which way to march, which way to move; for if God blow the trumpet it shall not give an uncertain sound, or a feeble, ineffectual one. *Secondly.* Is the army taking the field and entering upon action? Whatever enterprise the campaign is opened with, God shall go forth at the head of their forces "with whirlwinds of the south," which were of incredible swiftness and fierceness; and before these whirlwinds thy sons, O Greece, shall be as chaff. *Thirdly.* Is the army actually engaged? God's "arrows shall go forth as lightning," so strongly, so suddenly, so irresistibly; his lightnings shall go forth as arrows: see *Ps.* xviii. 14. He sent out his arrows, and scattered them; that is, he shot out his lightnings and discomfited them. This alludes to that which God had done for Israel of old, when he brought them out of Egypt and into Canaan, and had its accomplishment partly in the wonderful successes which the Jews had against their neighbours that attacked them in the time of the Maccabees, by the special appearances of the Divine providence for them, and perfectly in the glorious victories gained by the cross of Christ, and the preaching of the cross, over Satan and all the powers of darkness, whereby we are made more than conquerors. *Fourthly.* Are they in danger of being overpowered by the enemy? "The Lord of hosts shall defend them," ver. 15; "The Lord their God shall save them," ver. 16; so that their enemies shall not prevail over them or prey upon them. God shall be unto them for defence as well as offence, the shield of their help as well as the sword of their excellency, and this as the Lord of hosts, who has power to defend them, and as their God, who is engaged by promise to defend them, and by the property he has in them. He shall save them in that day, that critical, dangerous day, as the flock of his people, with the same care and tenderness that the shepherd protects his sheep with. Those are safe whom God saves. *Fifthly.* Did their enemies hope to swallow them up? It shall be turned upon them, and they shall devour their enemies, and shall "subdue with sling-stones," for want of better weapons, those that come forth against them. The stones of the brook, when God pleaseth, shall do as great execution as the best train of artillery; for the stars in their courses shall fight on the same side. Goliath was subdued with a sling-stone. Having subdued they shall devour, shall drink the blood of their enemies, as it were, and, as conquerors use to do, they shall "make a noise, as through wine." It is usual for conquerors with loud huzzas and acclamations to glory in their victories, and proclaim them. We read of those that shout for mastery, and of the shout of a king among God's people. They shall be filled with blood and spoil, as the bowls and basins of the temple, or the corners of the altar, were used to be filled with the blood of the sacrifices; for their enemies shall fall as victims to Divine justice.

2. They shall triumph in their God. They shall take the comfort, and give God the glory, of their successes; so some read ver. 15. They shall eat, that is, they shall quietly enjoy what they have got; God will give them power to eat of it, after they have subdued the sling-stones, that is, their enemies that slung stones at them; and "they shall drink and make a noise," a joyful noise before the Lord, their Maker and Protector, "as through wine," as men use to be merry at a banquet of wine. "Being not drunk with wine, wherein is excess," but "filled with the Spirit," they shall speak to themselves and one another in "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," as those that are drunk do with vain and foolish songs, *Eph.* v. 18, 19. And in the fulness of their joy they shall offer abundance of sacrifices to the honour of God, so that they shall both fill the bowls and the corners of the altar with the fat and blood of their sacrifices. And when they thus triumph in their successes their joy shall terminate in God as their God, the God of their salvation. They shall triumph,

1st. In the love he has for them, and the relation wherein they stand to him; that they are "the flock of his people," and he is their Shepherd; and that they are to him "as the stones of a crown," which are very precious, and of great value, and which are kept under a strong guard. Never was any king so pleased with the jewels of his crown as God is and will be with his people that are near and dear unto him, and in whom he glories. They are a crown of glory, and a royal diadem in his hand, *Isa.* lxii. 2, 3; and "they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels," *Mal.* iii. 17; and "they shall be lifted up as an ensign upon his land," as the royal standard is displayed in token of triumph and joy. God's people are his glory, so he is pleased to make them, so he is pleased to reckon them. He sets them as a banner upon his own land, waging war against those that hate him, to whom it is a flag of defiance, and a centre of unity to all that love him, to all the children of God that are scattered abroad, who are invited to come and enlist themselves under this banner, *Isa.* xi. 10, 11.

2nd. In the provision he makes for them, ver. 15. This is the matter of their triumph; ver. 17, "For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!" This is the substance, this the burthen, of the songs wherewith they shall make a noise before the Lord. We are here taught, *First.* To admire and praise the amiableness of God's being. How great is his beauty! All the perfections of God's nature conspire to make him infinitely lovely in the eyes of all that know him. They are to him as the stones of a crown, but what is he to them? Our business in the temple is to "behold the beauty of the Lord," *Ps.* xxvii. 4; and how great is that beauty! How far doth it transcend all other beauties, particularly the beauty of his holiness. This may refer to the Messiah, to "Zion's King that cometh," (see "that King in his beauty," *Isa.* xxxiii. 17,) who is "fairer than the children of men," the "fairest of ten thousand," and "altogether lovely." Though in the eye of the world he had no form or comeliness, in the eye of faith how great is his beauty! *Secondly.* To admire and give thanks for the gifts of God's favour and grace, his bounty as well as his beauty; for "how great is his goodness!" How rich in mercy is he! How deep, how full are its springs! How various, how plenteous, how precious are its streams! What a great deal of good doth God do! How rich in mercy is he! Here is an instance of his goodness to his people: "Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids;" that is, God will bless his people with an abundance of the fruits of the earth. Whereas they had been afflicted with scarcity to that degree that the young men and the maidens were ready to swoon and faint away for hunger and thirst, *Lam.* ii. 12, 21; iv. 7, 8; v. 10; now they shall have bread enough and to spare; not water only, but wine, new wine, which shall make the young people grow and be cheerful; and (which some have observed to be the effect of plenty and the cheapness of corn) the poor will be encouraged to marry and repeople the land, when they shall have wherewithal to maintain their families. Note, What good gifts God bestows upon us we must serve him cheerfully with them, and must trace the streams up to the fountain, and when we are refreshed with corn and wine must say, "How great is his goodness!"

CHAPTER X.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the chapter before, to encourage the Jews that were returned with hope that though they had been under Divine rebukes, for their negligence in rebuilding the temple, and were now surrounded with enemies and dangers, yet that God would do them good, and make them prosperous at home and victorious abroad. Now, I. They are here directed to eye the great God in all events that were concerning them, and, both in the evils they suffered and the comforts they desired, to acknowledge his hand, ver. 1—4. II. They are encouraged to expect strength and success from him in all their struggles with the enemies of their church and state, and to hope that the issue would be glorious at last, ver. 5—12.

ASK ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain;
So the LORD shall make bright clouds,
And give them showers of rain,
To every one grass in the field.
2 For the idols have spoken vanity,
And the diviners have seen a lie,
And have told false dreams; they comfort in vain:
Therefore they went their way as a flock,
They were troubled, because *there was* no shepherd.
3 Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds,
And I punished the goats: [Judah,
For the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of
And hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.
4 Out of him came forth the corner,
Out of him the nail,
Out of him the battle bow,
Out of him every oppressor together.

Gracious things and glorious ones, very glorious and very gracious, were promised to this poor afflicted people in the foregoing chapter; now here he intimates to them that he will, for these things, be inquired of by them, and that he expects they should acknowledge him in all their ways, and in all his ways towards them,—him, and not idols that were rivals with him for their respects.

First. He directs them to apply themselves to God by prayer for rain in the

season thereof. He had promised in the close of the foregoing chapter that there should be great plenty of corn and wine, whereas for several years, by reason of unseasonable weather, there had been great scarcity of both; but the earth will not yield its fruits unless the heavens water it, and therefore they must look up to God for the dew of heaven, in order to the fatness and fruitfulness of the earth; ver. 1, "Ask ye of the Lord rain." Do not pray to the clouds or to the stars for rain, but to the Lord, for he it is that hears the heavens when they hear the earth, *Hos.* ii. 21. Seasonable rain is a great mercy, which we must ask of God; "rain in the time of the latter rain," when there is most need of it. The former rain fell at the seed time, in autumn; the latter fell in the spring, between March and May, which brought the corn to an ear and filled it. If either of these rains failed it was very bad with that land, for from the end of May to September they never had any rain at all. Jerome, who lived in Judæa, saith he never saw any rain there in June or July. They are directed to ask for it in the time when it used to come. Note, We must in our prayers dutifully attend the course of providence, ask for mercies in their proper time, and not expect that God should go out of his usual way and method for us. But since sometimes God denied rain in the usual time, as a token of his displeasure, they must pray for it then as a token of his favour, and they shall not pray in vain. Ask, and it shall be given you; "So the Lord shall make bright clouds," which, though they are without rain themselves, yet are presages of rain; 'lightnings,' so the margin reads it, for he maketh lightnings for the rain. He will "give them showers of rain" in great abundance, and so give "to every one grass in the field;" for God is universally good, "and makes his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust."

Secondly. He shews them the folly of making their addresses to idols as their fathers had done; ver. 2, "The idols have spoken vanity;" the teraphim, which they courted and consulted in their distress, were so far from being able to command rain for them, that they could not so much as tell them when they should have rain. They pretended to promise them rain at such a time, but it did not come. The diviners, that were the prophets of those idols, have seen a lie; their visions were all a cheat and a sham, and "they have told false dreams," such as the event did not answer, which proved that they were not from God. Thus they comforted in vain those that consulted the lying oracles; all the vanities of the heathen put together could not give rain, *Jer.* xiv. 22. Yet this was not the worst of it: they not only got nothing by the false gods, but they lost the favour of the true God; for "therefore they went their way" into captivity, "as a flock" driven into the fold, and "they were troubled" with one vexation after another, as scattered sheep use to be, "because there was no shepherd," no prince to rule them, no priest to intercede for them, none to take care of them, and keep them together. They that wandered after strange gods were made to wander into strange nations.

Thirdly. He shews them the hand of God in all the events that were concerning them, both those that made against them and those that made for them, ver. 3. Let them consider, 1. When everything went cross it was God that walked contrary to them; ver. 3, "Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds" that should have fed the flock, but neglected it, and starved it. I was displeased at the wicked magistrates and ministers, the idol shepherds. The captivity in Babylon was a token of God's anger against them; in it likewise he punished the goats, those of the flock that were filthy and mischievous; they were set on the left hand to go away into punishment. Though the body of the nation suffered in the captivity, yet it was only the goats and the shepherds that God was angry with, and that he punished; the same affliction to others came from the love of God, and was but a fatherly chastisement, which to them came from his wrath, and was a judicial punishment. 2. When things began to change for the better it was God that gave them the happy turn. He has now visited his flock with favour, to inquire after them, and provide what he finds proper for them, and he has made them "as his goodly horse in the battle," has beautified them, taken care of them, managed and made use of them, as a man doth the horse he rides on; has made them valuable in themselves, and formidable to those about them, as his goodly horse. It is God that makes us what we are, and it is with us as he appoints.

Fourthly. He shews them that every creature is to them what God makes it to be; ver. 4, "Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail." 1. All the power that was engaged against them was from God. Out of him came all the combined force of their enemies, every oppressor together (and the oppressors of Israel were not a few) did but what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done; nor could they have had such power against them unless it had been given them from above. 2. All the power likewise that was engaged for them was derived from him, and depended on him. Out of him came forth the corner stone of the building, the power of magistrates, which keeps the several parts of the state together; princes are often called the corners of the people, as 1 *Sam.* xiv. 38. Out of him came forth the nail that fixeth the state, the "nail in the sure place," *Isa.* xxii. 23; the "nail in his holy place," *Ezr.* ix. 8. Out of him came forth the battle bow, the military power, and out of him every oppressor, or exactor, that has the civil power in his hand; and therefore to God, the fountain of power, we must always have an eye, and see every man's judgment proceeding from him.

5 And they shall be as mighty *men*,
Which tread down *their enemies* in the mire of the streets in the battle:
And they shall fight, because the LORD *is* with them,
And the riders on horses shall be confounded.
6 And I will strengthen the house of Judah,
And I will save the house of Joseph,
And I will bring them again to place them;
For I have mercy upon them:
And they shall be as though I had not cast them off:
For I *am* the LORD their God, and will hear them.
7 And *they of* Ephraim shall be like a mighty *man*,
And their heart shall rejoice as through wine:
Yea, their children shall see *it*, and be glad;
Their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.
8 I will hiss for them, and gather them;
For I have redeemed them:
And they shall increase as they have increased.
9 And I will sow them among the people:
And they shall remember me in far countries;
And they shall live with their children, and turn again.
10 I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt,
And gather them out of Assyria;
And I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon;
And *place* shall not be found for them.
11 And he shall pass through the sea with affliction,
And shall smite the waves in the sea,
And all the deeps of the river shall dry up:
And the pride of Assyria shall be brought down,
And the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.
12 And I will strengthen them in the LORD;
And they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.

Here are divers precious promises made to the people of God, which look farther than to the state of the Jews in the latter days of their church, and have certain reference to the spiritual Israel of God, the gospel church, and all true believers.

First. They shall have God's favour and presence, and shall be owned and accepted of him. This is the foundation of all the rest, "The Lord is with them," ver. 5. He espouses their cause, takes their part, is on their side, and if he be for them who can be against them? Again, ver. 6, "I have mercy upon them." All their dignity and joy is owing purely to God's mercy; and mercy, as it supposeth misery, so it excludes merit. They had been cast off, the effect of which could not but be misery; they had been justly cast off, and therefore could pretend to merit nothing at God's hand but wrath and the curse, yet it is promised, "They shall be as though I had not cast them off." The transgressions of their fathers, for which they had been rejected, shall not only not be visited upon them, but they shall not be so much as remembered against them. God will be as perfectly reconciled to them as if he had never contended with them, and the falling out of these lovers shall rather be the renewing than the weakening of love. They shall have such a full assurance of God's being reconciled to them, and upon that shall be so well reconciled to themselves, that they shall be as easy as if they had never been cast off; and their condition after their restoration to the Divine favour shall be so very happy that there shall not remain the least scar from the wounds which were given them by their being cast off. Such favour doth God shew to returning repenting sinners, that were by nature at a distance, and children of wrath; such fellowship are they admitted into, and such freedom doth he use with them, that they are as though they had never been cast off. 1. The covenant they are admitted into is the same that ever it was; "I am the Lord their God," according to the original contract, the covenant made with their fathers. 2. The communion they are admitted into is the same that ever it was; "I will hear them." They shall be as welcome as ever to speak to him, and as sure as ever to receive from him an answer of peace, for, as he never did, so he never will, say to Jacob's seed, "Seek ye me in vain."

Secondly. They shall be victorious over their enemies, that would draw them from either their duties to God or their comfort in God; ver. 5, "They shall be as mighty men," that are strong in body and bold in spirit, men of vigour, men of valour, effective men; they of Ephraim, as well as they of Judah, shall be "like a mighty man," ver. 7, that dares go about a difficult enterprise, and is able to go through with it. They shall, as mighty men, "tread down their enemies in the battle," as the dirt that is thrown out of the houses is trodden with other dirt "in the mire of the streets." And they shall therefore "fight because the Lord is with them." Some would argue, they shall therefore sit still and do nothing, because the Lord is with them that can and will do all. No, God's gracious presence with us to help us must not supersede, but quicken and animate, our endeavours to help ourselves; and we must therefore "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," because it is God that works in us both to will and to do. They fight with readiness and resolution, because, if God be with them, they are sure to be conquerors, more than conquerors; for then "the riders on horses shall be confounded." The cavalry of the enemies shall be routed and put into disorder by the infantry of the Jews. The preachers of the Gospel of Christ went forth to war a good warfare: they charged bravely because God was with them; and the riders on horses that opposed them were confounded, for God chose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty. But whence have they all this might? How come they to be so able, so active? It is in the Lord, and in the power of his might, that they are so; ver. 6, "I will strengthen the house of Judah," and so "I will save the house of Joseph." Note, God saves us by strengthening us, and works out our happiness by working in us to do our duty. And thus we are engaged to the utmost diligence in using the strength God gives us, and yet when all is done God must have the glory of all. God is our strength, and so becomes both our song and our salvation.

Thirdly. Those of them that are dispersed shall be gathered together into one body; ver. 6, "I will bring them again to place them," bring them from other lands to place them in their own land. This was a token of their being perfectly restored to all their other ancient privileges—they shall be restored to the possession of their own land. This was fulfilled when "the children of God that were scattered abroad" were by faith in Christ incorporated in the gospel church, and Jews and Gentiles became one fold, *Jno.* x. 16. In order to this, ver. 8, I will hiss for them, or, rather, whistle for them, as the shepherd with his pipe calls his sheep together that know his voice, and so "I will gather them." The preaching of the Gospel was, as it were, God's hissing for souls to come to Jesus Christ, his calling in his scattered sheep to the green pastures. "I will gather them, for I have redeemed them." Note, Whom Christ has redeemed by his blood God will gather by his grace, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. This promise is enlarged upon, ver. 10, "I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt." Some think this was literally fulfilled when Ptolemeus Philadelphus, king of Egypt, sent a hundred and twenty thousand Jews out of his country into their own land, as was the promise of gathering them out of Assyria by Alexander the son of Antiochus Epiphanes. But it has its spiritual accomplishment in the gathering in of precious souls out of a bondage worse than that in Egypt or Assyria, and bringing of them into the glorious liberties of the children of God, and their enjoyments, which are as the beautiful fruitful pastures in "the land of Gilead

and Lebanon." All the land of promise is theirs, even Gilead, the utmost border of it eastward, and Lebanon, the utmost border northward. But how shall this be? How shall a people so dispersed be got together? How shall they that are set at such a distance from their own country be brought to it again? It is true the difficulties seem insuperable, but they shall be got over as easily, as effectually, as those that lay in the way of their deliverance out of Egypt, and their entrance into Canaan. "He shall pass through the sea with affliction," as of old through the Red Sea, to the sore affliction of Pharaoh and his hosts, or to the sore affliction of the sea, the waves whereof he shall smite, so that it shall be driven back, as then "the sea saw and fled," *Ps.* cxiv. 3. And all the deeps of the river, all the rivers, though never so deep, shall dry up, as Jordan did to make way for Israel's passage into that good land which God had given them. Doth the pride of Assyria stand in the way of their deliverance? He shall give check to it that sets bounds to "the proud waves of the sea," and it "shall be brought down." Doth the sceptre of Egypt oppose it? That shall depart away, so that it shall not be able to obstruct the gathering in of God's Israel, when his time is come for the doing of it. When the gospel church was to be gathered out of all nations by the preaching of the Gospel, great opposition was given to it by the enraged combined powers of earth and hell; insuperable difficulties seemed to be in the way of it; but, by a Divine power going along with the doctrine of Christ, it became mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, and the conversion and salvation of thousands. Then the sea fled, and Jordan was "driven back at the presence of the Lord."

Fourthly. They shall greatly multiply, and the church, that new world, shall be replenished; ver. 8, "They shall increase as they have increased" formerly in Egypt, and great additions shall be made to their numbers, as in the days of David and Solomon. When God gathers his redeemed ones to himself they shall help to gather in others with them, and their motion homewards shall be like that of a snowball; *crescit eundo*,—'the farther it goes the larger it grows by accretion.' "I will gather them, and they shall increase." Note, The church of Christ is a growing body, as long as it is in the present state of minority, till it comes "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." There are "added to it daily such as shall be saved." 1. It shall spread to distant places. It shall fill Canaan, even to the lands of Gilead and Lebanon, so that no more place, no more room, shall be found for it there, ver. 10. In Judah only God had been known, and his name great in Israel only. Here only he revealed his statutes and judgments, but in gospel times that place shall be quite too strait; the church's tent must be enlarged, and its cords lengthened; then "I will sow them among the people," ver. 9. Their scattering shall be like the scattering of seed in the ground, not to bury it, but to increase it, that it may bring forth much fruit. The Jews are said to be dispersed "into every nation under heaven," *Acts* ii. 5; and as it was their troubles that dispersed some of them, so perhaps others transplanted themselves into colonies, because the land of Israel was too strait for them; and many were natives of other nations, but proselyted to the Jewish religion. Now these were "sown among the people," *Hos.* ii. 23; and this contributed very much to the spreading of the Gospel. The Jews that came from all parts to worship at Jerusalem fetched thence the gospel light and fire to their own countries, as those, *Acts* ii., and the eunuch, *Acts* viii. And their synagogues in the several cities of the Gentiles were the first receptacles of the apostles, and their preaching, wherever they came. Thus, when God sowed them among the people, that they might not get hurt by the Gentiles, but do good to them, he took care that they should remember him, and make mention of his name in far countries; and by keeping up the knowledge of God among them as he had revealed himself in the Old Testament, they would be the more ready to admit the knowledge of Christ as he has revealed himself in the New Testament. 2. It shall last to future ages. The church shall not be *res unius ætatis*,—'a temporary thing,' but a seed in it shall serve the Lord; ver. 7, "Yea, their children shall see it and be glad;" and ver. 9, "They shall live with their children, and turn again." Converts to Christ shall have their children about them, whom they shall teach the knowledge of the Lord, and bring with them when they turn again to the holy land and the way of holiness. It was said to those to whom the Gospel was first preached, "The promise is to you and to your children," *Acts* ii. 39. They shall be so sown among the people as never to be extirpated. Christ's family upon earth shall never be extinct, nor his purchased possession lost for want of heirs.

Fifthly. God himself will be both their strength and their song. 1. In him they shall be comforted, and shall have abundant satisfaction; ver. 7, "Their heart shall rejoice as through wine;" for Christ's love, which is their joy, is better than wine. They shall be "like a mighty man," and "their heart shall rejoice." When we resolutely resist, and so overcome, our spiritual enemies, then our hearts shall rejoice. But we ruin our own joy if our resistance be feeble, and we yield to the temptations of Satan. Their heart shall rejoice, and then they shall be as a mighty man, for the joy of the Lord will be our strength. And with their graces their joys shall be propagated. "Their children shall see it and be glad, and their hearts" also "shall rejoice in the Lord." It is good to acquaint children betimes with the delights of religion, and to make the services of it as pleasant as may be to them, that, learning betimes to rejoice in the Lord, they may with purpose of heart cleave to him. 2. By him they shall be carried on with vigour and enlargement of heart in his service; ver. 12, "I will strengthen them in the Lord," strengthen them for their walk and work, as well as for their warfare. It is the God of Israel that "gives strength and power unto his people," that strengthens all their powers and faculties for spiritual performances, above what they are by nature, and against what they are by the corruption of nature. Now observe, 1st. How they are thus enabled and invigorated for their duty. "I" the Lord "will strengthen them in the Lord," in the Messiah, who is Jehovah our strength, as well as Jehovah our righteousness. Strength is treasured up for us in Christ, and from him it is derived to us. It is through Christ strengthening us that we can do all things, and without him we can do nothing. His strength is commanded him for this purpose, *Ps.* lxviii. 28. 2nd. What good use they shall make of this strength given unto them. "They shall walk up and down in his name." If God strengthen us, we must bestir ourselves; must walk up and down in all the duties of the Christian life; must be active and busy in the work of God; must walk up and down as industrious men do, losing no time, and letting slip no opportunity. But still we must walk up and down in the name of Christ, must do all by warrant from him, and in dependence on him, with an eye to his word as our rule and his glory as our end. To us to live must be Christ; and, whatever we do in word or deed, we must "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," that we receive not the strengthening grace of God in vain: see *Ps.* lxxx. 17, 18.

CHAPTER XI.

God's prophet, that in the chapters before was an ambassador sent to promise peace, is here a herald sent to proclaim war. The Jewish nation shall recover its prosperity, and shall flourish for some time, and become considerable; it shall be very happy at length in the coming of the long-expected Messiah, in the preaching of his Gospel, and the setting up of the standard there. But when thereby the chosen remnant among them are effectually called in, and united to Christ, the body of the nation, persisting in unbelief, shall be utterly abandoned, and given up to ruin for rejecting Christ, and that is it that is foretold here in this chapter—the Jews rejecting Christ, which was the measure-filling sin, and the wrath which for that sin came upon them to the uttermost. Here is, I. A prediction of the destruction itself that should come upon the Jewish nation, ver. 1—3. II. The putting of it into the hands of the Messiah: 1. He is charged with the custody of that flock, ver. 4—6; 2. He undertakes it, and bears rule in it, ver. 7, 8; 3. Finding it perverse, he gives it up, ver. 9; breaks his shepherd's staff, ver. 10, 11; resents the indignities done him, and the contempt put upon him, ver. 12, 13, and then breaks his other staff, ver. 14; 4. He turns them over into the hands of foolish shepherds, who, instead of preventing, shall complete their ruin, and both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch, ver. 15—17. This is foretold to the poor of the flock before it comes to pass, that when it doth come to pass they may not be offended.

OPEN thy doors, O Lebanon,
That the fire may devour thy cedars.
2 Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen;
Because the mighty are spoiled:
Howl, O ye oaks of Bashan;
For the forest of the vintage is come down.
3 *There is* a voice of the howling of the shepherds;
For their glory is spoiled:
A voice of the roaring of young lions;
For the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

In dark and figurative expressions, as is usual in the Scripture predictions of things at a great distance, that destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation, is here foretold, which our Lord Jesus, when the time was at hand, prophesied of very plainly and expressly. We have here,

First. Preparation made for that destruction; ver. 1, "Open thy doors, O Lebanon." Thou wouldst not open them to let thy king in; he "came to his own, and his own received him not;" now thou must open them to let thy ruin in. Let the gates of the forest and all the avenues of it be thrown open, and let the fire come in and devour its glory. Some by Lebanon here understand the temple, which was built of cedars from Lebanon, and the stones of it white as the snow of Lebanon. It was burnt with fire by the Romans, and its gates were forced open by the fury of the soldiers. To confirm this, they tell a story, that forty years before the destruction of the second temple the gates of it opened of their own accord; upon which prodigy, Rabbi Johanan made this remark, (as it is found in one of the Jewish authors,) Now I know, said he, that the destruction of the temple is at hand, according to the prophecy of Zechariah, "Open thy gates, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars." Others understand it of Jerusalem, or rather of the whole land of Canaan, to which Lebanon was an inlet on the north. All shall lie open to the invader, and the cedars, the mighty and eminent men, shall be devoured, which cannot but alarm those of an inferior rank, ver. 2. If the cedars are fallen, that is, if all the mighty are spoiled and brought to ruin, let the fir-tree howl. How can the slender fir-trees stand, if stately cedars fall? If cedars are devoured by fire, it is time for the fir-trees to howl; for no wood is so combustible as that of the fir. And let the oaks of Bashan, that lie exposed to every injury, howl, for the forest of the vintage, or the flourishing vineyard, that used to be guarded with a particular care, is come down. Or, as some read it, when the defenced forests, such as Lebanon was, are come down. Note, The falls of the wise and good into sin, and the falls of the rich and great into trouble, are loud alarms to those that are every way their inferiors, not to be secure.

Secondly. Lamentation made for the destruction; ver. 3, "There is a voice of howling." Those that are fallen howl for grief and shame, and those who see their own turn coming howl for fear. But the great men especially receive the alarm with the utmost confusion. Those that were roaring in the day of their revels and triumphs are howling in the day of their terrors; for now they are tormented more than others. Those great men were by office shepherds, and such should have protected God's flock committed to their charge, (it is the duty both of princes and priests;) but they were as young lions, that made themselves a terror to the flock with their roarings, and the flock a prey to themselves with their tearing. Note, It is sad with a people when those that should be as shepherds to them are as young lions to them. But what is the issue? The shepherds howl, for their glory is spoiled. Their pastures, and the flocks that covered them, which were the glory of the swains, are laid waste. The young lions howl, for "the pride of Jordan is spoiled." The pride of Jordan was the thickets on the banks, in which the lions reposed themselves; and therefore, when the river overflowed and spoiled them, the lions came up from them, as we read, *Jer.* xlix. 19, and they came up roaring. Note, When those that have power proudly abuse their power, and, instead of being shepherds, are as young lions, they may expect that the righteous God will humble their pride and break their power.

4 Thus saith the LORD my God;
Feed the flock of the slaughter;
5 Whose possessors slay them,
And hold themselves not guilty:
And they that sell them say,
Blessed *be* the LORD; for I am rich:
And their own shepherds pity them not.
6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land,
saith the LORD:
But, lo, I will deliver the men every one
Into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king:
And they shall smite the land,
And out of their hand I will not deliver *them*.
7 And I will feed the flock of slaughter, *even* you,
O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two
staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I

called Bands; and I fed the flock. 8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me. Then said I,

I will not feed you:
That that dieth,
Let it die;
And that that is to be cut off,
Let it be cut off;
And let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.

10 And I took my staff, *even* Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I

BREAKING STAFF OF OFFICE.

had made with all the people. 11 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it *was* the word of the LORD. 12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give *me* my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver. 13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty *pieces* of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD. 14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, *even* Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

The prophet here is made a type of Christ, as the prophet Isaiah sometimes was; and the scope of these verses is to shew that "for judgment Christ came into the world," *Jno.* ix. 39; for judgment to the Jewish church and nation, which were, about the time of his coming, wretchedly corrupted and degenerated, by the worldliness and hypocrisy of their rulers. Christ would have healed them, but they would not be healed; they are therefore left desolate, and abandoned to ruin. Observe here,

First. The desperate case of the Jewish church under the tyranny of their own governors. Their slavery in their own country made them as miserable as their captivity in strange countries had done. "Their possessors slay them and sell them," ver. 5. In Zechariah's time we find the rulers and the nobles justly rebuked for exacting usury of their brethren; and the governors, even by their servants, oppressive to the people, *Neh.* v. 7, 15. In Christ's time the chief priests and the elders, that were the possessors of the flock, by their traditions, the commandments of men, and their impositions on the consciences of the people, became perfect tyrants, devoured their houses, engrossed their wealth, and fleeced the flock instead of feeding it. The Sadducees, that were deists, corrupted their judgments; the Pharisees, that were bigots for superstition, corrupted their morals, by making void the commandments of God, *Mat.* xv. 6. Thus they slew the sheep of the flock, thus they sold them. They cared not what became of them, so they could but gain their own ends, and serve their own interests. And,

1. In this they justified themselves. They slay them, and hold themselves not guilty. They think there is no harm in it, and that they shall never be called to an account for it by the chief Shepherd: as if their power were given them for destruction, which was designed only for edification; and as if, because they sat in Moses' seat, they were not under the obligation of Moses' law, but might dispense with it, and with themselves in the breach of it, at their pleasure. Note, Those have their minds wofully blinded indeed that do ill, and justify themselves in it. But God will not hold them guiltless who hold themselves so.

2. In this they affronted God, by giving him thanks for the gain of their oppression. They said, "Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich;" as if because they prospered in their wickedness, got money by it, and raised estates, God had made himself patron of their unjust practices, and Providence was become *particeps criminis*,—'the associate of their guilt.' What is got honestly we ought to give God thanks for, and to bless him whose blessing makes rich, and adds no sorrow with it. But with what face can we go to God, either to beg a blessing upon the unlawful methods of getting wealth, or to return him thanks for success in them? They should rather have gone to God to confess the sin, to take shame to themselves for it, and to vow restitution, than thus to mock him by making the gains of sin the gift of God, who hates robbery for burnt offerings, and reckons not himself praised by the thanksgiving, if he be dishonoured either in the getting or in the using of that which we give him thanks for.

3. In this they put contempt upon the people of God, as unworthy their regard or compassionate consideration. "Their own shepherds pity them not," they make them miserable, and then do not commiserate them. Christ had "compassion on the multitude, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as if they had no shepherd," as really they had worse than none; but "their own shepherds pitied them not," nor shewed any concern for them. Note, It is ill for a church when its pastors have no tenderness, no compassion for precious souls; when they can look upon the ignorant, the foolish, the wicked, the weak, without pity.

Secondly. The sentence of God's wrath passed upon them for their senselessness and stupidity in this condition. There was a general decay, nay, a destruction of religion among them; and it was all one to them, they regarded it not: "My people love to have it so," *Jer.* v. 31. Though they were "oppressed and broken in judgment," yet they "willingly walked after the commandment," *Hos.* v. 11. And their shepherds pitied them not, so they did not bemoan themselves; therefore God saith, ver. 7, "I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land." They have courted their own destruction, and so let their doom be. But those are truly miserable whom the God of mercy himself will no more have compassion upon. They that are willing to have their consciences oppressed by those that teach for doctrines the commandments of men, as the Jews were, who called them Rabbi, Rabbi, that did so, *Mat.* xv. 9, xxiii. 7, are often punished by oppression in their civil interests, and justly, for they forfeit their own rights who tamely give up God's rights. The Jews did so, the papists do so; and who can pity them if they be ruled with rigour? God here threatens them,

1. That he will deliver them into the hand of oppressors, "every one into his neighbour's hand," so that they shall use one another barbarously. The several parties in Jerusalem did so. The zealots, the seditious, as they were called, committed greater outrages than the common enemy did, as Josephus relates in his history of the wars of the Jews. They shall be delivered every one "into the hands of his king," that is, the Roman emperor, whom they chose to submit to rather than to Christ, saying, "We have no king but Cæsar." Thus they thought to ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters. But for this God brought the Romans upon them, who "took away their place and nation."

2. That he will not deliver them out of their hands. "They shall smite their land," the whole land, and "out of their hand I will not deliver them." And if the Lord do not help them, none else can, nor can they help themselves.

Thirdly. Trial yet made whether their ruin might be prevented by sending Christ among them as a shepherd. God hath sent his servants to them in vain, "but last of all he sent unto them his Son, saying, They will reverence my Son," *Mat.* xxi. 37. Divers of the prophets had spoken of him as the Shepherd of Israel, *Isa.* xl. 11; *Eze.* xxxiv. 23. He himself told the Pharisees that he was the Shepherd of the sheep, and that they who pretended to be shepherds were thieves and robbers, *Jno.* x. 1, 2, 11, where he seems to refer to this here, where we have,

1. The charge he received from his Father to try what might be done with this flock; ver. 4, "Thus saith the Lord my God," (Christ called his Father his God, because he acted in compliance with his will, and with an eye to his glory in his whole undertaking,) "Feed the flock of the slaughter." The Jews were God's flock, but they were the flock of slaughter, for their enemies had killed them all the day long, and "accounted them as sheep for the slaughter." Their own possessors slew them, and God himself had doomed them to the slaughter; yet, Feed them by reproof, instruction, and comfort, provide wholesome food for them who have so long been soured with the leaven of the scribes and Pharisees. "Other sheep he had, which were not of his fold," and which afterwards must be brought, but he is first "sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," *Mat.* xv. 24.

2. His acceptance of this charge, and his undertaking pursuant to it, ver. 7. He doth, as it were, say, Lo, "I come to do thy will, O my God!" and since this is thy will it is mine, "I will feed the flock of slaughter." Christ will have a care for these lost sheep; he will go about among them, teaching and "healing even you, O poor of the flock." Christ did not neglect the meanest, or overlook them for their meanness. The shepherds that made a prey of them regarded not the poor, they were conversant with those only that they could get by, but Christ preached his Gospel to the poor, *Mat.* xi. 5. It was an instance of his humiliation that his converse was mostly with the inferior sort of people; his disciples, that were his constant attendants, were of the poor of the flock.

3. His furnishing himself with tools proper for the charge he had undertaken; "I took unto me two staves," pastoral staves. Other shepherds have but one crook, but Christ had two, noting the double care he had of his flock, and what he did both for the souls and for the bodies of men. David speaks of God's rod and his staff, *Ps.* xxiii. 4, a correcting rod and a supporting staff. One of these staves was called Beauty, noting the temple which is called the beauty of holiness, and one of its gates, Beautiful, which Christ called his Father's house, and for which he shewed a great zeal when he cleared it of the buyers and sellers; the other he called Bands, noting their civil state, and the incorporate society of that nation, which Christ also took care of by preaching love and peace among them. Christ in his Gospel, and in all he did among them, consulted the advancement both of their civil and of their sacred interests.

4. His execution of his office as the chief Shepherd; "He fed the flock," ver. 7, and he displaced those under-shepherds that were false to their trusts; ver. 8, "Three shepherds I cut off in one month." Through the deficiency and uncertainty of the history of the Jewish church in its latter ages, we know not what particular event this had its accomplishment in; in general, it seems to be an act of power and justice for the punishment of the sensual shepherds, and the redress of the grievances of the abused flock. Some understand it of the three orders of princes, priests, and scribes or prophets, who, when Christ had finished his work, were laid aside for their unfaithfulness; others, of the three sects among the Jews, of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, all whom Christ silenced in dispute, *Mat.* xxii., and soon after cut them off, all in a little time.

Fourthly. Their enmity to Christ, and making themselves odious to him. He came to his own, the sheep of his own pasture; it might have been expected that between them and him there would have been an entire affection, as between the shepherd and his sheep, but they carried themselves so ill that his soul loathed them,—was straitened towards them, so it may be read; he intended them kindness, but could not do them the kindness he intended them, because of their unbelief, *Mat.* xiii. 58. He was disappointed in them, discouraged concerning them, grieved for them; not only for the shepherds he cut off, but for the people, whom Christ often looked upon with grief in his heart and tears in his eyes. Their provocations even wore out his patience, and he was weary of that "faithless and perverse generation." "Their soul also it abhorred me," and therefore it was that his soul loathed them; for, whatever estrangement there is between God and man, it begins on man's side. The Jewish shepherds rejected this chief Shepherd, as the Jewish builders rejected this chief corner stone. They had indignation at Christ's doctrine and miracles, and his interest in the people, to whom they did all they could to make him odious, as they had made themselves odious to him. Note, There is a mutual enmity between God and wicked people; they are hateful to God and haters of God. Nothing speaks more the sinfulness and misery of an unregenerate state than this doth; the carnal mind, the friendship of the world, are enmity to God, and God hateth all the workers of iniquity; and it is easy to foresee what this will end in, if the quarrel be not taken up in time, *Isa.* xxvii. 4, 5.

Fifthly. Christ's rejecting them as incurable, and leaving them their house desolate, *Mat.* xxiii. 38. The things of their peace are now hid from their eyes, because they knew not the day of their visitation. Here we have,

1. The sentence of their rejection passed; ver. 8, "Then said I, I will not feed you." I will take no farther care of you, "you shall not see me again," take your own course. As I will not feed you, so I will not cure you; "that that dieth, let it die," the Shepherd will do nothing to save its forfeited life; that "that is to be cut off, let it be cut off;" that that will make itself a prey to the wolf, let it be a prey; and let the rest so far forget their own mild and gentle nature as to "eat the flesh one of another;" let these sheep fight like dogs. Those that reject Christ will be certainly and justly rejected by him, and then are miserable of course.

2. A sign of it given; ver. 10, "I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it in sunder," in token of this, that he would be no longer a shepherd to them. As the lord high steward determines his commission by breaking his white staff, and as Moses' breaking the tables of the law put a stop for the present to the treaty between God and Israel, the breaking of this staff signified the breaking of God's covenant which he had "made with all the people," the covenant of peculiarity made with all the tribes of Israel, and all other people that, by being proselyted to their religion, were incorporated into their nation. The Jewish church was now stripped of all its glory,—its crown was profaned and cast to the ground, and all its honour laid in the dust, for God is departed from it, and will no more own it for his. When Christ told them plainly that the kingdom of God should be taken from them and given to another people, then he broke the staff of beauty, *Mat.* xxi. 43. And it was broken in that day; though Jerusalem and the Jewish nation held up forty years longer, yet from that day we may reckon the staff of beauty broken, ver. 11. And though the great men did not, or would not, understand it as a Divine sentence, but thought to put it by with a cold "God forbid," *Lu.* xx. 16, yet the poor of the flock, the disciples of Christ that waited on him, and understood with what authority he spake, and could distinguish the voice of their Shepherd from that of a stranger, they "knew that it was the word of the Lord," and trembled at it, and were confident that it should not fall to the ground. Note, Christ is waited upon by the poor of the flock; he chose them to be with him, to be his pupils, to be his witnesses. The poor received him and his Gospel when those that had great possessions turned their backs upon him. And those that wait upon Christ, that sit at his feet to hear and receive his words, they shall "know of the doctrine whether it be of God," *Jno.* vii. 17.

3. A farther reason given for their rejection. It was said before, their souls abhorred him; and here we have an instance of it, their buying and selling him for thirty pieces of silver, either thirty Roman pence or rather thirty Jewish shekels. This is here foretold in somewhat obscure expressions, as it is fit such particular prophecies should be delivered, lest otherwise the plainness of the prophecy might prevent the accomplishment of it. Here, 1st. The Shepherd comes to them for his wages; ver. 12, "If ye think good, give me my price," you are weary of me, pay me off, and discharge me; "and if not, forbear:" if you be willing to continue me longer in your service, I will continue; or if to turn me off without wages, I am content. Christ was no hireling, and yet the labourer is worthy of his hire. Compare with this what Christ said to Judas, when he was going to sell him, "What thou doest do quickly;" be at a word with the chief priests, let them either take the bargain or leave it, *Jno.* xiii. 27. Those that betray Christ are not forced to it; they might have chosen. 2nd. They value him at thirty pieces of silver. Many years' service he had done them as a Shepherd, yet this is all they will now turn him off with; A goodly price that I with all my care and pains was valued at by them. If Judas fixed this sum in his demand, it is observable that his name was Judah, the same name with that of the body of the people, for it was a national act; or if (as rather it seems) the chief priests patched up this sum in their proffers, they were the representatives of the people; it was part of the priest's office to put a value upon the devoted things, *Lev.* xxvii. 8, and thus they valued the Lord Jesus. It was the ordinary price of a slave, *Ex.* xxi. 32. Making light of Christ, and undervaluing the love of that great and good Shepherd, is the ruin of multitudes, and justly so. 3rd. The silver being no way proportionable to his worth, it is thrown to the potter with disdain; let him take it to buy clay with, or for any use that a little money will serve to, for it is not worth hoarding; it may be enough for a potter's stock, but not for the pay of such a Shepherd, much less for his purpose. So the prophet "cast the thirty pieces of silver to the potter in the house of the Lord." Let him take them, and do what he will with them. Now we find a particular accomplishment of this in the history of Christ's sufferings, and reference is had to this prophecy, *Mat.* xxvii. 9, 10. Thirty pieces of silver was the very sum for which Christ was sold to the chief priests; the money, when Judas would not keep it, and the chief priests would not take it back, was laid out in the purchase of the "potter's field." Even that sudden resolve of the chief priests was according to an ancient prophecy, and the more ancient counsel and foreknowledge of God.

4. The completing of their rejection in the cutting asunder of the other staff, ver. 14. The former spoke the ruin of their church, by breaking the covenant between God and them, that defaced their beauty; this speaks the ruin of their state, by breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel, that is, by reviving animosities and contention among them, such as were of old between Judah and Israel, the righting of whom, as one stick in the hand of the Lord, was one of the blessings promised after their return out of captivity, *Eze.* xxxvii. 19. But that union shall now be dissolved; they shall be crumbled into parties and factions, exasperated one against another, and their kingdom, being thus divided, shall be brought to desolation. 1st. Nothing ruins a people so certainly, so inevitably, as the breaking of the staff of bands, and the weakening of the brotherhood among them; for hereby they become an easy prey to the common enemy. 2nd. This follows upon the dissolving of the covenant between God and them, and the decay of religion among them. When iniquity abounds love waxeth cold. No wonder if those fall out among themselves that have provoked God to fall out with them. When the staff of beauty is broken, the staff of bands will not hold long. An unchurched people will soon be an undone people.

15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee
yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.
16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land,
Which shall not visit those that be cut off,
Neither shall seek the young one,
Nor heal that that is broken,
Nor feed that that standeth still:
But he shall eat the flesh of the fat,
And tear their claws in pieces.
17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock!
The sword *shall be* upon his arm, and upon his right eye:
His arm shall be clean dried up,
And his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

God having shewed the misery of his people in their being justly abandoned by the good Shepherd, here shews their farther misery in being shamefully abused by foolish shepherds. The prophet is himself to personate and represent this pretended shepherd; ver. 15, "Take unto thee instruments," or accoutrements, "of a foolish shepherd," that are no way fit for the business, such a shepherd's coat, and bag, and staff, as a foolish shepherd would appear in; for such a shepherd shall be set over them, ver. 16, that instead of protecting them shall oppress them, and do them mischief. 1. They shall be under the inspection of unfaithful ministers. Their scribes, and priests, and doctors of their law, shall bind heavy burthens upon them, and grievous to be borne; and with their traditions imposed shall make the ceremonial law much more a yoke than God had made it. The description here given of the foolish shepherd suits very well with the character Christ gives of the scribes and Pharisees, *Mat.* xxiii. 2. They shall be under the tyranny of unmerciful princes that shall rule them with rigour, and make their own land as much a house of bondage to them as ever Egypt or Babylon were. When they had rejected him by whom princes decree justice, it was just they should be turned over to them who decree unrighteous decrees. 3. They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false Christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, *Mat.* xxiv. 5. Many such there were, who by their seditious practices provoked the Romans, and hastened the ruin of the Jewish nation; but it is observable they were never cheated by a counterfeit Messiah, till they had refused and rejected the true Messiah. Now observe,

First. What a curse this foolish shepherd should be to the people, ver. 16. God will for their punishment raise up a foolish shepherd, who will not do the duty of a shepherd; he will not "visit those that be cut off," nor go after those that go astray, or seek those that are missing, to find them out, and bring them home, as the good Shepherd doth, *Mat.* xviii. 12, 13. They take no care of the young ones, that need their care, and are well worthy of it, as Christ doth, *Isa.* xl. 11. They do not heal that which was broken, which was worried and torn, but let it die of its bruises, when a little thing in time would have saved it. They do not feed those that through weakness stand still, and are ready to faint and cannot get forward, but leave them behind, let who will take them up. They do not carry that which stands still, so some read it, never do any thing to support the weak, and comfort the feeble-minded; but on the contrary, 1st. They are luxurious themselves. They eat of the flesh of the fat, they will have of the best for themselves; and, like that wicked servant that said, "My lord delays his coming," they "eat and drink with the drunken," and "serve their own bellies." 2. They are barbarous to the flock. Their passions are as ill governed as their appetites; for when they are in a rage against any of the flock they "tear their" very "claws in pieces," by overdriving them; they beat their hoofs; they "smite their fellow-servants." Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is such a child!

Secondly. What a curse this foolish shepherd should bring upon himself; ver. 17, "Woe to the idol shepherd," that, like an idol, has eyes and sees not,—that, like an idol, receives abundance of respect and homage from the people, and the chiefest of their offerings, but neither can nor will do them any kindness. He leaves the flock when they most need his care,—leaves them destitute, and flees because he is a hireling; his doom is, that the sword of God's justice shall be upon his arm and his right eye, so that he shall quite lose the use of both. His arm shall wither and be dried up, so that he who would not help his friends when it was required, shall not know how to help himself; "his right eye shall be utterly darkened," that he shall not discern the danger that his flock is in, nor know which way to look for relief. This was fulfilled when Christ said to the Pharisees, "I am come, that they which see may be made blind," *Jno.* ix. 39. Those that have gifts which qualify them to do good, if they do not do good with them they shall be taken away from them. Those that should have been workmen, but were slothful and would do nothing, will justly have their arm dried up; and those that should have been watchmen, but were sleepy, and would never look about them, will justly have their eye blinded.

CHAPTER XII.

The apostle, *Gal.* iv. 25, 26, distinguished between Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children, the remaining carcass of the Jewish church that rejected Christ, and Jerusalem that is from above, that is free, and is the mother of us all,—the Christian church, the spiritual Jerusalem, which God has chosen to put his name there. In the chapter before we read the doom of the former, and left that carcass to be a prey to the eagles that should be gathered to it. Now in this chapter we have the blessings of the latter, many precious promises made to the gospel Jerusalem by him who, ver. 1, declares his power to make them good. It is promised, I. That the attempts of the church's enemies against her shall be to their own ruin, and they shall find it is at their peril if they do her any hurt, ver. 2—4, 6. II. That the endeavours of the church's friends and patrons for her good shall be pious, regular, and successful, ver. 5. III. That God will protect and strengthen the meanest and weakest that belong to his church, and work salvation for them, ver. 7, 8. IV. That as a preparative for all his mercy, and a pledge of it, he will pour upon them a spirit of prayer and repentance, the products of

which shall be universal and very particular, ver. 9—14. These promises were of use then to the pious Jews that lived in the troublous times under Antiochus, and other persecutors and oppressors, and they are still to be improved in every age for the directing of our prayers, and the encouraging of our hopes, with reference to the gospel church.

THE burden of the word of the LORD for Israel,
Saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens,
And layeth the foundation of the earth,
And formeth the spirit of man within him.
2 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto
all the people round about,
When they shall be in the siege
Both against Judah *and* against Jerusalem.
3 And in that day will I make Jerusalem
A burdensome stone for all people:
All that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces,
Though all the people of the earth be gathered together
4 In that day, saith the LORD, [against it.
I will smite every horse with astonishment,
And his rider with madness:
And I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah,
And will smite every horse of the people with blindness.
5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart,
The inhabitants of Jerusalem *shall be* my strength
In the LORD of hosts their God.
6 In that day will I make the governors of Judah
Like an hearth of fire among the wood,
And like a torch of fire in a sheaf;
And they shall devour all the people round about,
On the right hand and on the left:
And Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place,
Even in Jerusalem.
7 The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first,
That the glory of the house of David
And the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem
Do not magnify *themselves* against Judah. [Jerusalem;
8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of
And he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as
And the house of David *shall be* as God, [David;
As the angel of the LORD before them.

Here is, First. The title of this charter of promises made to God's Israel. It is "the burden of the word of the Lord," a Divine prediction; it is of weight in the delivery of it; it is to be pressed upon the people, and will be very pressing in the accomplishment of it. It is a burthen, a heavy burthen to all the church's enemies, like that talent of lead, *ch.* v. 7, 8; but it is for Israel,—it is for their comfort and benefit. As even the fiery law, *Deu.* xxxiii. 2, so the fiery prophecies and fiery providences that come from God's right hand, come for them. The word that speaks terror to their enemies speaks peace to them; as the pillar of cloud and fire which turned a bright side towards the Israelites to direct and encourage them, but a black side towards the Egyptians to terrify and dispirit them. Happy they that have even the burthens of God's word for them, as well as the blessings of it.

Secondly. The title of him that grants this charter, which is prefixed to it, to shew that he hath both authority to make these promises and ability to make them good; for he is the Creator of the world, and our Creator, and therefore has an incontestable, irresistible dominion. 1. He stretcheth out the heavens. Not only he did so at the first, when he said, "Let there be a firmament," and he made the firmament, but he doth so still; he keeps them stretched out like a curtain; keeps them from running in, and will do so till the end comes, when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. No bounds can be set to his power that stretcheth out the heavens, nor can any thing be too hard for him. 2. He "layeth the foundation of the earth," and keeps it firm and fixed on its own basis, or rather on its own axis, though it is founded on the seas, *Ps.* xxiv. 1, 2; nay, though it is hung upon nothing, *Job* xxvi. 7. The founder of this earth is no doubt the ruler of it, and judgeth in it; and they deceive themselves who say, The Lord has forsaken the earth; for if he had it would have sunk, since it is he that not only did lay its foundations at first, but doth still lay them, still uphold them. 3. He "formeth the spirit of man within him," that is, "he made us these souls," *Jer.* xxxviii. 16. He not only breathed into the first man, but still breathes into every man the breath of life. The body is derived from the fathers of our flesh, but the soul is infused by the Father of spirits, *Heb.* xii. 9. He fashioneth men's hearts; they are in his hand, and he turns them as the rivers of water, and casts them into what mould he pleaseth, so as to serve his own purposes with them; and can therefore save his church by inspiriting his friends, and dispiriting his enemies, and will eternally save all his chosen by forming their spirits anew.

Thirdly. The promises themselves that are here made them, by which the church shall be secured, and in which all its friends may enjoy a holy security.

1. It is promised that, whatever attacks the enemies of the church may make upon her purity or peace, they will certainly issue in their own confusion. The enemies of God and of its kingdom bear a great deal of malice and ill-will to Jerusalem, and form designs for its destruction; but it will prove at last that they are but preparing ruin for themselves. Jerusalem is in safety, and they are in all the danger that fight against it. This is here illustrated by three comparisons:

1st. Jerusalem shall be a cup of trembling to all that lay siege to it, ver. 2. They promise themselves that it shall be to them a cup of wine, which they shall easily and with pleasure drink off; and they thirst for its spoils, nay, they thirst for its blood, as for such a cup; but it shall prove a cup of slumber, nay, a cup of poison to them, which when they take into their hands, and think it is all their own, they shall not be able to drink off, the fumes of it shall give them enough. When the kings were assembled against her, and saw how God was known in her palaces for a refuge, they trembled and hasted away; fear took hold upon them, as we find, *Ps.* xlviii. 3—6. Thus Alexander the Great was struck with amazement when he met Jaddus the high priest, and was deterred thereby from offering any violence to Jerusalem. When Sennacherib laid siege against Judah and Jerusalem he found them such a cup of stupifying wine as laid all his mighty men asleep, *Ps.* lxxv. 5, 6. Some read it, I will make Jerusalem a post of contrition, or breaking. They that make any attempts upon Jerusalem do but run their heads against a post, which they cannot move, but are sure to hurt themselves. The blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall, *Isa.* xxv. 4, broken by it, but not shaking it. God's church is a cup of consolation to all her friends, *Isa.* lxv. 1; but a cup of trembling to all that would either debauch her by errors and corruptions or destroy her by wars and persecutions: *Isa.* li. 22, 23.

2nd. Jerusalem shall be a burthensome stone to all that attempt to remove it, or carry it away, ver. 3. All the people of the earth are here supposed to be gathered together against it, some one time and some another. There has been a succession of enemies from age to age making war upon the church; nay, though they were all at once in a confederacy against it, and had formed a resolution to "cut off the name of Israel, that it should be no more in remembrance," *Ps.* lxxxiii. 4, they will find it a task too hard for them; they are for keeping up and advancing the kingdom of sin in the world, look upon Jerusalem, even the church of God, as the great obstacle to their designs, and they must have it out of the way; but they will find it heavier than they think it is; so that, *First.* They cannot remove it. God will have a church in the world in spite of them; it is built upon a rock, and is as "mount Zion that abideth for ever," *Ps.* cxxv. 1. This "stone cut out of the mountain without hands" will not only keep its ground, but fill the earth, *Dan.* ii. 35. Nay, *Secondly.* It will break in pieces all that burthen themselves with it, as that stone smote the image, *Dan.* ii. 45; all that think themselves a match for it shall be cut in pieces by it. Some think it is an allusion to a sport which Jerome, upon this place, saith was in use among the Jews, as among us. Young men tried their strength, and strove for mastery, by heaving up great stones, which, if they proved too heavy for them, fell upon them and bruised them. Those that make a jest of religion, and banter sacred things, will find them a burthensome stone,—that it is ill jesting with edge-tools; and though they make light of it, saying, "Am not I in sport?" they bring upon themselves an insupportable sinking load of guilt. Our Saviour seems to allude to these words when he speaks of himself as a burthensome stone to those that would not have him as their foundation stone, which shall "fall upon them, and grind them to powder," *Mat.* xxi. 44.

3rd. The governors of Judah shall be among their enemies "like a hearth of fire among the wood," and "a torch of fire in a sheaf," ver. 6. Not that their own passions shall make them incendiaries and firebrands to all about them; no, Zion's King is meek and lowly, and all subordinate governors must be like him; but God's justice will make them avengers of his cause and theirs upon their enemies. They that contend with them will find it is like an opposition given by briers and thorns to a consuming fire, *Isa.* xxvii. 4; it will go through them, and burn them together. It is God's wrath, and not theirs, that is the fire which devour the adversaries; God's fire is said to be in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem, *Isa.* xxxi. 9. The enemies thought to be as water to this fire to extinguish it, and put it quite out; but God will make them as wood, nay, as a sheaf of corn, which is more combustible to this fire, not only to be consumed by it, but to be made thereby to burn the more strongly. When God would make Abimelech and the men of Shechem one another's destroyers, fire is said to "come out from the one to devour the other," *Jud.* ix. 20. So here, fire shall come out from the governors of Judah to devour all the people round about, as from the mouth of God's witnesses to consume those who offer to hurt them, *Rev.* xi. 5. The persecutors of the primitive church found this fulfilled in it, witness Lactantius' history of God's judgments upon the primitive persecutors, and the confession of Julian the apostate at last: 'Thou hast overcome me, O thou Galilean.' The church's motto may be, *Nemo me impune lacessit*,—'He that assails me does it at his peril.' If you are weary of your life, persecute the Christians,' was once a proverb.

2. It is promised that God will infatuate the counsels, and enfeeble the courage, of the church's enemies; ver. 4, "In that day," when the people of the earth are gathered together against Jerusalem, "I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness;" and again, "I will smite every horse of the people with blindness," so that they shall be no way serviceable to them; blinding the horses will be as bad as houghing them. The horses and their horsemen shall both forget the military exercise to which they were trained; and instead of keeping ranks, and observing the rules of their discipline, they shall both go mad and ruin themselves. The church's infantry shall be quite too hard for the enemy's cavalry; and those that are upbraided with trusting in horses shall be baffled by those who were forbidden to multiply horses.

3. It is promised that Jerusalem shall be repeopled and replenished; ver. 6, "Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem." The natives of Jerusalem shall not incorporate in a colony in some other country, and build a city there, and call that Jerusalem, and see the promises fulfilled in that, as those in New England called their towns by the names of towns in Old England; no, they shall have a New Jerusalem upon the same foundation, the same spot of ground, with the old one. They had so after their return out of captivity; but this was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, which is a Jerusalem inhabited in its own place; for, the Gospel being to be preached to all the world, it may call every place its own.

4. It is promised that the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be enabled to defend themselves, and yet shall be taken under the Divine protection, ver. 8. See here in what method God preserves his church, and those that are his, from the gates of hell to and through the gates of heaven. 1st. He doth himself secure them; "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem;" not only Jerusalem itself from being taken and destroyed, but every inhabitant of it from being any way damaged. God will not only be a wall of fire about the city to fortify that, but he will compass particular persons with his favour as with a shield, so that no dart of the besiegers shall touch them. 2nd. He doth it by giving them strength and courage to help themselves. What God works in his people by his grace contributes more to their preservation and defence than what he works for them by his providence. "The God of Israel gives strength and power to his people," that they may do their part, and then he will not be wanting to do his. It is the glory of God to strengthen the weak that most need his help, that see and own their need of it, and will be the most thankful for it. *First.* In that day the feeblest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as David, shall be men of war, as bold and brave, as skilful and strong, as David himself; shall undertake and accomplish great things, as David did, and become as serviceable to Jerusalem in guarding it as David himself was in

founding it, and as formidable as he was to the enemies of it. See what Divine grace doth. It makes children not only men, but champions; makes weak saints to be not only good soldiers, but great soldiers, like David; and see how God often doth his own work as easily and effectually, and more to his own glory, by weak and obscure instruments, than by the most illustrious. *Secondly.* "The house of David shall be as God," that is, "as the angel of the Lord," before him. Zerubbabel was now the top branch of the house of David; he shall be endued with wisdom and grace for the service to which he is called, and shall go before the people as an angel; as that angel (so some think,) which went before the people of Israel through the wilderness, who was God himself, *Ex.* xxiii. 20. God will increase the gifts and abilities both of the people and princes, in proportion to the respective services for which they are designed. It was said of David that he was "as an angel of God to discern good and bad," 2 *Sam.* xiv. 17. Such shall now the house of David be. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as strong and as fit for action as nature made David, and their magistrates as wise and fit for counsel as grace made him; but this was to have its full accomplishment in Christ. Now, the house of David looked little and mean, and its glory was eclipsed; but in Christ the house of David shone more bright than ever, and its countenance was as that of an angel. In him it became more blessed, and more a blessing, than ever it had been.

5. It is promised that there shall be a very good understanding between the city and the country, and the balance shall be kept even between them. There shall be no mutual envies or jealousies between them; they shall not keep up any separate interests, but shall heartily unite in their counsels, and act in concert for the common good; and this happy agreement between the city and the country, the head and the body, is very necessary to the health, welfare, and safety of any nation.

1st. The governors of Judah, the magistrates and gentry of the country, shall think honourably of the citizens, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the merchants and tradesmen. They shall not run them down, and contrive how to keep them under; but they shall say in their hearts, not in compliment, but in sincerity, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength," the strength of my country, of my family, "in the Lord of hosts their God," ver. 5. They will therefore upon all occasions pay respect and deference to Jerusalem as the mother city, the ruling city, and the city that is to be first served, because they look upon it to be the bulwark of the nation, and its strongest fortification in times of public danger and distress, which therefore they would all come in to the asisistance of, and come under the protection of; and this not so much because it was a rich city, and money is the sinews of war, or because it was a populous city, and could bring the greatest numbers into the field, or because its inhabitants were generally the most ingenious active men, the best soldiers, and the best commanders—"Of Zion it shall be said, that this and that" brave "man was born there"—but because it was a holy city, where God's house and household, the temple and the priests were, where his worship was kept up, and his feasts observed; and because it should now be more than ever a praying city, for "upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem" God will "pour a spirit of supplication," ver. 10. Therefore the governors of Judah shall say, "These are my strength;" they are so upon the account of their relation to, their interest in, and their communion with, "the Lord of hosts their God;" because the Lord of hosts is in a particular manner their God, for "in Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion," therefore "they shall be my strength." Note, It is well with a kingdom when its great men know how to value its good men, when its governors look upon religion and religious people to be their strength, and that it is their interest to support them, and learn to call godly praying people, and skilful faithful ministers, the chariots and horsemen of Israel, as Joash called Elisha, and not the troublers of the land, as Ahab called Elijah.

2nd. The court and the city shall not despise or look with contempt upon the inhabitants of the country, no, not the meanest of them, much less upon the governors of Judah, for God will put signal honour upon Judah, and so save them from the contempt of their brethren. As Jerusalem was dignified by special ordinances, so Judah shall be dignified with special providences. God saith, ver. 3, "I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah," upon the poor country people. Proud men scornfully overlook them, but the great God will graciously look upon them, and look after them. Nay, ver. 7, "The Lord shall save the tents of Judah first." They that dwell in tents lie most exposed; but God will remarkably protect and deliver those that dwell in Jerusalem. He will appear glorious in what he doth for the "inhabitants of his villages in Israel," *Jud.* v. 11. Thus, in the mystical body, God "gives more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there may be no schism in the body: see 1 *Cor.* xii. 22—25; which is the reason here given why the glory of the house of David, that has great power, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that have great wealth, and both which live in great pomp and pleasure, "may not magnify themselves against Judah," and the tents of Judah, the dwellers in which work hard and fare hard, and perhaps are not so well-bred. Note, Courtiers and citizens ought not to despise country people, or look with disdain upon those whom God opens his eyes upon, and who are first saved, while it is so hard for the rich and great to enter the kingdom of God. If God by his grace has magnified the dwellers in the tents of Judah, having chosen the weak and foolish things of the world, and chosen to employ them, we affront him if we vilify them, or magnify ourselves against them, *Jas.* ii. 5, 6. This promise has a farther reference to the gospel church, in which no difference shall be made between high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, circumcision and uncircumcision; but all shall be alike welcome to Christ, and partake of his benefits, *Col.* iii. 11. Jerusalem shall not then be thought, as it had been, more holy than other parts of the land of Israel.

9 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.
10 And I will pour upon the house of David,
And upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
The spirit of grace and of supplications:
And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced,
And they shall mourn for him,
As one mourneth for *his* only *son*,
And shall be in bitterness for him,
As one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.
11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem,
As the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.
12 And the land shall mourn, every family apart;
The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart;
The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;
13 The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart;
The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;
14 All the families that remain,
Every family apart, and their wives apart.

VALLEY OF MEGIDDO.—ver. 11.

The day here spoken of is the day of Jerusalem's defence and deliverance, that glorious day when God will appear for the salvation of his people, which if it do refer to the successes which the Jews had against their enemies in the time of the Maccabees, yet certainly it looks far to the gospel day,—to Christ's victories over the powers of darkness, and the great salvation he has wrought for his chosen. Now we have here an account of two remarkable works designed in that day.

First. A glorious work of God to be wrought for his people; "I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem," ver. 9. Nations came against Jerusalem, many and mighty nations; but they shall all be destroyed, their power shall be broken and their attempts baffled; the mischief they intend shall return upon their own head. God will seek to destroy them, not as if he were at a loss for ways and means to bring it about,—infinite wisdom was never nonplussed; but his seeking to do it intimates that he is very earnest and intent upon it,—he is jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and has the day of vengeance in his heart—and that he overrules means and instruments, and all the motions and operations of second causes, in order to it. He is framing evil against them; when he seems to be setting them up he is seeking to destroy them. In Christ's first coming, he sought to destroy him that had the power of death, and did destroy him; bruised the serpent's head, and broke all the powers of darkness that fought against God's kingdom among men, and the faithful friends and subjects of that kingdom,—spoiled them, and made a show of them openly. In his second coming he will complete their destruction, when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, and death itself shall be swallowed up in that victory,—the last enemy that shall be destroyed of all that fought against Jerusalem.

Secondly. A gracious work of God to be wrought in his people, in order to the work that is to be wrought for them. When he seeks to destroy their enemies he will "pour upon them the spirit of grace and supplication." Note, When God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he doth is to set them a praying. Thus he seeks to destroy their enemies by stirring them up to seek to him that he would do it for them; because, though he has purposed it and promised it, and it is for his own glory to do it, yet he will "for this be inquired of by the house of Israel," *Eze.* xxxvi. 37. Ask, and it shall be given; this honour will he have to himself, and this honour will he put upon prayer and upon praying people. And it is a happy presage to the distressed church of deliverance approaching, and is, as it were, the dawning of its day when his people are stirred up to cry mightily to him for it. But this promise has reference to, and is performed in, the graces of the Spirit given to all believers, as that *Isa.* xliv. 3, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed," which was fulfilled when Jesus was glorified, *Jno.* vii. 39. It is a promise of the Spirit, and with him of all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ. Now observe here,

1. On whom these blessings are poured out. 1st. On the house of David, on the great men, for they are no more and no better than the grace of God makes them. It was promised, ver. 8, that "the house of David" shall be "as the angel of the Lord." Now in order to that the Spirit of grace is poured upon them; for the more the saints have of the Spirit of grace, the more like they are to the holy angels. When God was about to appear for the land, he poured his Spirit of grace upon the house of David, the leading men of the land. It bodes well to a people when they go before the rest in that which is good, as 2 *Chr.* xx. 5. The house of David is all summed up in Jesus Christ, the son of David, and upon him, as the head, the Spirit of grace is poured out, from him to be diffused to all his members; "from his fulness we receive, and grace for grace." 2nd. On the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the common people; for the operations of the Spirit are the same upon the mean and weak Christians that they are upon the strong and more grown. The inhabitants of Jerusalem cannot influence public affairs by their powers and policies so as the great men of the house of David may, yet they may do good service by their prayers, and therefore upon them the Spirit shall be poured out. The church is Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem; all true believers that have their conversation in

heaven are inhabitants of this Jerusalem, and to them this promise belongs,—God will pour out his Spirit upon them. This is that earnest which all that believe in Christ shall receive; thus are they sanctified, thus are they sealed.

2. What these blessings are. "I will pour upon them the Spirit." That includes all good things, as it qualifies us for the favour of God and all his other gifts. He will pour out the Spirit, 1st. As a Spirit of grace, to sanctify us, and to make us gracious. 2nd. As a Spirit of supplication, inclining us to, instructing and assisting us in, the duty of prayer. Note, Wherever the Spirit is given as a Spirit of grace, he is given as a Spirit of sanctification. Wherever he is a Spirit of adoption, he "teacheth to cry, Abba, Father." As soon as ever Paul was converted, "Behold, he prays," *Acts* ix. 11. You may as soon find a living man without breath as a living saint without prayer. There is a more plentiful effusion of the spirit of prayer now under the Gospel than was under the law; and the farther the work of sanctification is carried in us, the better is the work of supplication carried on by us.

3. What the effect of them will be. "I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace." One would think it should follow, And they shall look on him whom they believed and shall rejoice; and it is true that that is one of the fruits of the pouring out of the Spirit, whence we read of the joy of the Holy Ghost. But it follows, They shall mourn, for there is a holy mourning that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, a mourning for sin, which is of use to quicken faith in Christ, and qualify for joy in God. It is here made the matter of a promise that they shall mourn, for there is a mourning that will end in rejoicing, and hath a blessing entailed upon it. This mourning is a fruit of the Spirit of grace, an evidence of a work of grace in the soul, and a companion of the Spirit of supplication, as it expresseth lively affections working in prayer; hence prayers and tears are often put together, 2 *Kin.* xx. 5. Jacob, that wrestler with God, wept and made supplication. But here it is a mourning for sin that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit.

1st. It is a mourning grounded upon a sight of Christ; "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him." Here, *First.* It is foretold that Christ should be pierced, and this Scripture is quoted as that which was fulfilled when Christ's side was pierced upon the cross: see *Jno.* xix. 37. *Secondly.* He is spoken of as one whom we have pierced. It is spoken primarily of the Jews, who persecuted him to the death, (and we find that they who pierced him are distinguished from the other kindreds of the earth that shall wail because of him, *Rev.* i. 7,) yet it is true of us all as sinners; we have pierced Christ, inasmuch as our sins were the cause of his death, for he was wounded for our transgressions, and they are the grief of his soul. He is broken with the whorish heart of sinners, who therefore are said to crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame. *Thirdly.* Those that truly repent of sin look upon Christ as one whom they have pierced, who was pierced for their sins, and is pierced by them; and this engageth them to look unto him as those that are deeply concerned for him. *Fourthly.* This is the effect of their looking to Christ, it makes them mourn. This was particularly fulfilled in those to whom Peter preached Christ crucified; when they heard it they who had had a hand in piercing him were pricked to the heart, and cried out, "What shall we do?" It is fulfilled in all those who sorrow for sin after a godly sort; they look to Christ and mourn for him, not so much for his sufferings as for their own sins that procured them. Note, The genuine sorrows of a penitent soul flow from the believing sight of a pierced Saviour. Looking by faith upon the cross of Christ will set us a mourning for sin after a godly sort.

2nd. It is a great mourning. *First.* It is like the mourning of a parent for the death of a beloved child. They shall mourn for sin as one mourneth for an only son, in whose grave the hopes of his family are buried, and shall be inwardly "in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn;" as the Egyptians were when there was a cry throughout the land for the death of their firstborn. The sorrow of children for the death of their parents is sometimes counterfeited, is often small, and soon wears off and is forgotten; but the sorrow of parents for a child, for a son, for an only son, for a firstborn, is natural, sincere, unforced, and unaffected; it is secret and lasting. Such are the sorrows of a true penitent, flowing purely from love to Christ above any other. *Secondly.* It is like the mourning of the people for the death of a wise and good prince. It shall be like "the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon," where good king Josiah was slain, for whom there was a general lamentation, ver. 11; and perhaps the greater because they were told it was their sin that provoked God to deprive them of so great a blessing; therefore they cried out, "The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us, for we have sinned," *Lam.* v. 16. Christ is our king; our sins were his death, and for that reason ought to be our grief.

3rd. It is a general, universal mourning; ver. 12, "The land shall mourn." The land itself put on mourning at the death of Christ, for there was then "darkness over all the land," and the earth trembled. But this is a promise that, in consideration of the death of Christ, multitudes shall be effectually brought to sorrow for sin, and turn to God; it shall be such a universal, gracious mourning as was when "all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord," 1 *Sam.* vii. 2. Some think this is yet to have its complete accomplishment in the general conversion of the Jewish nation.

4th. It is also a private, particular mourning. There shall be not only a mourning of the land by its representatives in a general assembly, as *Jud.* ii. 5, when the place was called Bochim, 'a place of weepers,' but it shall spread itself into all corners of the land. "Every family apart" shall mourn," ver. 12; "all the families that remain," ver. 14. All have contributed to the guilt, and therefore all shall share in the grief. Note, The exercises of devotion should be performed by private families among themselves, besides their joining in public assemblies for religious worship. National fasts must be observed not only in our synagogues but in our houses. In the mourning here foretold the wives mourn apart by themselves, in their own apartment, as "Esther and her maids." And some think it intimates their denying themselves the use even of lawful delights in a time of general humiliation, 1 *Cor.* vii. 5.

Four several families are here instanced as examples to others in this mourning. *First.* Two of them are royal families; the house of David, in Solomon, and the house of Nathan, another son of David, brother to Solomon, from whom Zerubbabel descended, as appears by Christ's genealogy, *Lu.* iii. 27—31. The house of David, particularly that of Nathan, which is now the chief branch of that house, shall go before in this good work; the greatest princes must not think themselves exempted from the law of repentance, but rather obliged most solemnly to express it, for the exciting of others, as Hezekiah humbled himself, 2 *Chr.* xxxii. 26; the princes and the king, 2 *Chr.* xii. 6; and the king of Nineveh, *Jon.* iii. 6. *Secondly.* Two of them are sacred families; ver. 13, "The family of the house of Levi," which was God's tribe, and in it particularly the family of Shimei, which was a branch of the tribe of Levi, 1 *Chr.* vi. 17; and probably some of the descendants of that family were now of note for preachers to the people, or ministers to the altar. As the princes must mourn for the sins of the magistracy, so must the priests for the iniquity of the holy things. In times of general tribulation and humiliation the Lord's ministers are concerned to "weep between the porch and the altar," *Joel* ii. 17, and not only there, but in their houses apart; for in what families should godliness, both in the form and in the power of it, be found, if not in ministers' families?

CHAPTER XIII.

In this chapter we have, I. Some farther promises relating to gospel times; here is a promise of the remission of sins, ver. 1; and of the reformation of manners, ver. 2; and particularly of the convicting and silencing of false prophets, ver. 2—6. II. A clear prediction of the sufferings of Christ, and the dispersion of his disciples thereupon, ver. 7; and of the destruction of the greater part of the Jewish nation not long after, ver. 8; and of the purifying of a remnant of them, a peculiar people to God, ver. 9.

IN that day there shall be a fountain opened
To the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusa-
For sin and for uncleanness. [lem
2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts,
That I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land,
And they shall no more be remembered:
And also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit
to pass out of the land. [phesy,
3 And it shall come to pass, *that* when any shall yet pro-
Then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him,
Thou shalt not live;
For thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD:
And his father and his mother that begat him
Shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.
4 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the prophets shall be ashamed
Every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied;
Neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive.
5 But he shall say, I *am* no prophet, I *am* an husbandman;
For man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.
6 And *one* shall say unto him,
What *are* these wounds in thine hands?
Then he shall answer, [friends.
Those with which I was wounded *in* the house of my

Behold here the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, the sin of the church; for therefore was the Son of God manifested, to take away our sin, 1 *Jno.* iii. 5.

First. He takes away the guilt of sin by the blood of his cross; ver. 1, "In that day," in the gospel day, "there shall be a fountain opened," that is, provision made, for the cleansing of all those from the pollutions of sin that truly repent and are sorry for them. In that day, when the Spirit of grace is poured out to set them a mourning for their sins, they shall not mourn as those that have no hope, but they shall have their sins pardoned, and the comfort of it in their bosoms. Their consciences shall be purified and pacified by the "blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin," 1 *Jno.* i. 7; for Christ is exalted to give both repentance and remission of sins, and where he gives the one no doubt he gives the other. This fountain opened is the pierced side of Jesus Christ, spoken of just before, *ch.* xii. 10, for thence came thereout blood and water, and both for cleansing. And those who look upon Christ pierced, and mourn for their sins that pierced him, and are therefore in bitterness for him, may look again upon Christ pierced, and rejoice in him, because it pleased the Lord thus to smite this rock that it might be to us "a fountain of living waters." See here,

1. How we are polluted. We are all so; we have sinned, and sin is uncleanness; it defiles the mind and conscience, renders us odious to God, and uneasy in ourselves; unfit to be employed in the service of God and admitted into communion with him, as those that were ceremonially unclean were shut out of the sanctuary. The house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are under sin, which is uncleanness. The truth is, we are all as an unclean thing, and deserve to have our portion with the unclean.

2. How we may be purged. Behold there is a fountain opened for us to wash in, and streams flowing to us from that fountain, so that if we be not made clean it is our own fault. The blood of Christ, and God's pardoning mercy in that blood, revealed in the new covenant, is, 1st. A fountain; for there is in them an inexhaustible fulness. There is mercy enough in God, and merit enough in Christ, for the forgiving of the greatest sins and sinners, upon gospel terms. "Such were some of you, but you are washed," 1 *Cor.* vi. 11. Under the law there was a brazen laver and a brazen sea to wash in; those were but vessels, but we have a fountain to apply ourselves to, overflowing, ever-flowing. 2nd. It is a fountain opened; for whoever will may come and take the benefit of it. It is opened not only to the house of David, but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; to the poor and mean as well as to the rich and great; or it is opened to all believers, who, as the spiritual seed of Christ, are of the house of David, and, as living members of the church, are inhabitants of Jerusalem. Through Christ all that believe are justified; are "washed from their sins in his blood," that they may be "made to our God kings and priests," *Rev.* i. 5, 6.

Secondly. He takes away the dominion of sin by the power of his grace, even of beloved sins. This evermore accompanies the former; those that are washed in the fountain opened, as they are justified, so they are sanctified; the water came with the blood out of the pierced side of Christ. It is here promised that in that day,

1. Idolatry shall be quite abolished, and the people of the Jews shall be effectually cured of their inclination to it; ver. 2, "I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land." The worship of the idols of their fathers shall be so perfectly rooted out, that in one generation or two it shall be forgotten that ever there were such idols among them; they shall either not be named at all or not with any respect; "they shall be no more remembered," as was promised,

Hos. ii. 17. This was fulfilled in the rooted aversion which the Jews had after the captivity to idols and idolatry, and still retain to this day, and in the ready conversion of many to the faith of Christ, by which they were taken off from making an idol of the ceremonial law, as the unbelieving Jews did; and is still in the fulfilling when souls are brought off from the world and the flesh, those two great idols, that they may cleave to God only.

2. False prophecy shall also be brought to an end. "I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit," that is, the prophets that are under the influence of the unclean spirit, to "pass out of the land." The devil is an unclean spirit; sin and uncleanness are from him; he hath his prophets, that serve his interests and receive their instructions from him. Take away the unclean spirit, and the prophets would not deceive as they do; take away the false prophets, that produce sham commissions, and the unclean spirit could not do the mischief he doth. When God designs the silencing of the false prophets he banisheth the unclean spirit out of the land, that wrought in them, and was a rival with him for the throne in the heart. The church of the Jews, when they were addicted to idols, did also doat much upon false prophets that flattered them in their sins with promises of impunity and peace; but here it is promised, as a blessed effect of the promised reformation, that they should be very much set against false prophets, and zealous to clear the land of them. They were so after the captivity, till, through the blindness of their zeal against false prophets, they had put Christ to death under that character, and after that there arose many false Christs and false prophets, and deceived many, *Mat.* xxiv. 11. It is here foretold,

1st. That false prophets, instead of being indulged and favoured, should be brought to condign punishment even by their nearest relations, which would be as great an instance as any other of flagrant zeal against those deceivers, ver. 3. When any shall set up for a prophet, and shall speak lies in the name of the Lord, shall preach that which tends to draw people from God, and to confirm them in sin, his own parents shall be the first and most forward to prosecute him for it, according to the law, *Deu.* xiii. 6—11, "If thy son entice thee secretly" from God, "thou shalt surely kill him." Shew thy indignation against him, and prevent any farther temptation from him. His "father and mother shall thrust him through when he prophesieth." Note, We ought to conceive, and always to retain, a very great detestation and dread of every thing that would draw us out of the way of our duty into by paths, as those who cannot bear that which is evil, *Rev.* ii. 2. A holy zeal for God and godliness will make us hate sin and dread temptation most in those whom naturally we love best, and who are nearest to us; there our danger is greatest, as Adam's from Eve, Job's from his wife; and there it will be most praiseworthy to shew our zeal, as Levi, who in the cause of God did not acknowledge his brethren, or know his own children, *Deu.* xxxiii. 9. Thus we must hate and forsake our nearest relations, when they come in competition with our duty to God, *Lu.* xiv. 26. Natural affections, even the strongest, must be overruled by gracious affections.

2nd. That false prophets should be themselves convinced of their sin and folly, and let fall their pretensions; ver. 4. "The prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision." They shall not repeat it or insist upon it, but desire that it may be forgotten, and no more said of it, being ready themselves to own it was a sham; either because God has, by his grace, awakened their consciences and shewed them their error, or because the event disproves their predictions and gives them the lie, or because their prophecies do not meet with such a favourable reception as they used to meet with, but are generally despised and distasted. They perceive the people ashamed of them, which makes them begin to be ashamed of themselves; and therefore they shall no longer wear a rough garment, or garment of hair, as the true prophets used to do, in imitation of Elijah, and in token of their being mortified to the pleasures and delights of sense. The pretenders had appeared in the habit of true prophets; but, their folly being now made manifest, they shall lay it aside, no more to deceive and impose upon unthinking, unwary people by it. A modest dress is a very good thing, if it be the genuine indication of a humble heart, and is to instruct; but an ill thing if it be the hypocritical disguise of a proud, ambitious heart, and is to deceive. Let men be really as good as they seem to be, but not seem to be better than really they are. This pretender, as a true penitent, *First.* Shall undeceive those whom he had imposed upon. "He shall say, I am no prophet," as I have pretended to be, was never designed or set apart to the office, never educated or brought up for it, never conversant among the sons of the prophets; "I am an husbandman," and was bred to that business; I was never taught of God to prophesy, but taught of man to keep cattle. Amos was originally such a one too, and yet was afterwards called to be a prophet, *Am.* vii. 14, 15; but this deceiver never had any such call. Note, Those who sorrow after a godly sort for their having deceived others will be forward to confess their sin, and will be so just as to rectify the mistakes which they have been the cause of. Thus they who had used curious arts, when they were converted shewed their deeds, and by what fallacies they had cheated the people, *Acts* xix. 18. *Secondly.* He shall return to his own proper employment, which is the fittest for him. I will be a husbandman, so it may be read; I will apply myself to my calling again, and meddle no more with things that belong not to me; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth, and cattle I will go keep, and never set up for a preacher any more. Note, When we are convinced that we are gone out of the way of our duty, we must evidence the truth of our repentance by returning to it again, though it be never so much a mortification to us. *Thirdly.* He shall acknowledge those to be his friends that by a severe discipline were instrumental to bring him to a sight of his error, ver. 6. When he who, with the greatest assurance, had asserted himself so lately to be a prophet suddenly drops his claim, and saith, I am no prophet, every body will be surprised at it, and some will ask, "What are these wounds" or marks of stripes "in thine hands?" How camest thou by them? Hast thou not been examined by scourging? and is not that it that has brought thee to thyself? (*Vexatio dat intellectum,*—'Vexation sharpens the intellect.) Hast thou not been beaten into this acknowledgment? Was it not the rod and reproof that gave thee this wisdom? And he shall own, Yes, it was; these are the wounds "with which I was wounded in the house of my friends," that bound me and used me hardly and severely as a distracted man, and so brought me to my senses. By this it appears that those parents of the false prophet that "thrust him through," ver. 3, did not do it till they had first tried to reclaim him by correction, and he would not be reclaimed; for so was the law concerning a disobedient son,—his parents must first have chastened him in vain, before they bring him forth to be stoned, *Deu.* xxi. 18, 19. But here is another that was reduced by stripes, and so prevented the capital punishment; and he had that sense and honesty to own that they were his friends, his real friends, who thus wounded him that they might reclaim him; for "faithful are the wounds of a friend," *Pr.* xxvii. 6. Some good interpreters, observing how soon this comes after the mention of Christ being pierced, think that these are the words of that great Prophet, not of the false prophet spoken of before. Christ was wounded in his hands when they were nailed to the cross, and after his resurrection he had the marks of these wounds; and here he tells how he came by them; he received them as a false prophet, for the chief priests called him a deceiver, and upon that account would have him crucified. But he received them "in the house of his friends," the Jews, that should have been his friends, for he came to his own; and though they were his bitter enemies, yet he was pleased to call them his friends, as he did Judas, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" because they forwarded his sufferings for him, as he called Peter, Satan,—'an adversary,' because he dissuaded him from them.

7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, [of hosts:
And against the man *that is* my fellow, saith the LORD
Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered:
And I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.
8 And it shall come to pass,
That in all the land, saith the LORD,
Two parts therein shall be cut off *and* die;
But the third shall be left therein.
9 And I will bring the third part through the fire,
And will refine them as silver is refined,
And will try them as gold is tried:
They shall call on my name, and I will hear them:
I will say, It *is* my people:
And they shall say, The LORD *is* my God.

Here is a prophecy,

First. Of the sufferings of Christ, of him who was to be pierced, and was to be the fountain opened. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd," ver. 7. These are the words of God the Father, giving order and commission to the sword of his justice to awake against the Son, when he had voluntarily made his soul an offering for sin; for it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief; and he was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted, *Isa.* liii. 4, 10. Observe, 1. How he calls him. As God he is my fellow, for he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; he and the Father are one. He was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, and in the work of man's redemption he was his elect, in whom his soul delighted; and the counsel of peace was between them both. As Mediator he is my Shepherd, that great and good Shepherd that undertook to feed the flock, *ch.* xi. 7. He is the Shepherd that was to lay down his life for the sheep. 2. How he useth him. "Awake, O sword, against him." If he will be a sacrifice, he must be slain, for without the shedding of blood, the life blood, there was no remission. Men thrust him through as a foolish shepherd; God thrust him through as the good Shepherd, (compare ver. 3,) that he might purchase the flock of God with his own blood, *Acts* xx. 28. It is not a charge given to a rod to correct him, but to a sword to slay him; for Messiah the Prince must be cut off, but not for himself, *Dan.* ix. 26. It is not the sword of war to whom he has given this charge, that he may die in the bed of honour, but the sword of justice, that he may die as a criminal, upon an ignominious tree. This sword must awake against him; he having no sin of his own to answer for, the sword of justice had nothing to say to him of itself, till, by particular order from the Judge of all, it was warranted to brandish itself against him. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, in the decree and counsel of God; but the sword designed against him had long slumbered, till now at length it is called upon to awake, not awake and frighten him, but awake and smite him; strike home, not with a drowsy blow, but an awakened one. God spared not his own Son.

Secondly. Of the dispersion of the disciples thereupon. "Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." This our Lord Jesus himself saith was fulfilled, when "all his disciples were offended because of him," in the night wherein he was betrayed, *Mat.* xxvi. 31; *Mar.* xiv. 27. They all forsook him and fled. The smiting of the Shepherd is the scattering of the sheep. They were "scattered every one to his own, and left him alone," *Jno.* xvi. 32. Herein they were like timorous sheep, yet the Shepherd thus provided for their safety, for he said, "If ye seek me, let these go their way." Some make another application of this: Christ was the shepherd of the Jewish nation; he was smitten, they themselves smote him, and therefore they were justly scattered abroad, and dispersed among the nations, and remain so at this day. These words, "I will turn my hand upon the little ones," may be understood either as a threatening,—as Christ suffered, so shall his disciples, they shall drink of the cup that he drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that he is baptized with,—or as a promise that God will gather Christ's scattered disciples together again, and he should give them the meeting in Galilee. Though the little ones among Christ's soldiers may be dispersed, they shall rally again; the lambs of his flock, though frightened by the beasts of prey, shall recover themselves, shall be gathered in his arms, and laid in his bosom. Sometimes when the sheep are scattered and lost in the wilderness, yet the little ones, which it was feared would be a prey, *Num.* xiv. 31, are brought in, are brought home, and God turns his hand upon them.

Thirdly. Of the rejection and ruin of the unbelieving Jews, ver. 8; and this word has, and shall have, its accomplishment in the destruction of the corrupt and hypocritical part of the church. It shall come to pass that in all the land of Israel two parts shall be cut off and die; the Roman army laid the country waste, and slew at least two-thirds of the Jews. Some understand by the cutting off and dying of two parts in all the earth, the abolishing of heathenism and Judaism, that Christianity, the third part, might be left to reign alone. The Jewish worship was quite taken away by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. And some time after pagan idolatry was in a manner extirpated when the empire became Christian.

Fourthly. Of the reformation and the preservation of the chosen remnant, those of them that believed, and the Christian church in general, ver. 9; the third part shall be left. When Jerusalem and Judæa were destroyed, all the Christians in that country, having among them the warning Christ gave them to flee to the mountains, shifted for their own safety, and were sheltered in a city called Pella, on the other side Jordan. We have here, first the trials, and then the triumphs, of the Christian church, and of all the faithful members of it. 1. Their trials. I will bring that third part through the fire of affliction, and will refine and try them as silver and gold are refined and tried. This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the primitive church, the fiery trial which tried the people of God then, 1 *Pet.* iv. 12. Those that God sets apart for himself must pass through a probation and purification in this world; they must be tried that their faith may be found to praise and honour, 1 *Pet.* i. 6, 7, as Abraham's faith was when it was tried by the command given him to offer up Isaac; "Now know I that thou fearest me." They must be tried, that both they that are perfect and they that are not may be made manifest. They must be refined from their dross, their corruption must be purged out, they must be brightened and bettered. 2. Their triumphs. 1st. Their communion with

God is their triumph. "They shall call on my name and I will hear them." They write to God by prayer, and receive from him answers of peace, and thus keep up a comfortable communion with him; this honour have all his saints. 2nd. Their covenant with God is their triumph. I will say, It is my people, whom I have chosen and loved, and will own; and they shall say, The Lord is my God, and a God all-sufficient to me; and in him they shall boast every day, and all the day long. "This God is our God for ever and ever."

CHAPTER XIV.

Divers things were foretold in the two foregoing chapters which should come to pass in that day, and this chapter speaks of a day of the Lord that cometh, a day of his judgment; and ten times in the foregoing chapters, and seven times in this, it is repeated, in that day; but what that day is that is here meant is uncertain, and perhaps will be so (as the Jews speak) till Elias comes. Whether it refer to the whole period of time, from the prophet's days to the days of the Messiah, or to some particular events in that time, or to Christ's coming, and the setting up of his kingdom upon the ruins of the Jewish polity, we cannot determine; but divers passages here seem to look as far as gospel times. Now the day of the Lord brings with it both judgment and mercy; mercy to his church, judgment to her enemies and persecutors. I. The gates of hell are here threatening the church, ver. 1, 2, and yet not prevailing. II. The power of heaven appears here for the church, and against the enemies of it, ver. 3—5. III. The events concerning the church are here represented as mixed, ver. 6, 7, but issuing well at last. IV. The spreading of the means of knowledge is here foretold, and the setting up of the gospel kingdom in the world, ver. 8, 9; which shall be the enlargement and establishment of another Jerusalem, ver. 10, 11. V. Those shall be reckoned with that fought against Jerusalem, ver. 12—15; and those that neglect his worship there, ver. 17—19. VI. It is promised that there shall be great resort to the church, and great purity and piety in it, ver. 16, 20, 21.

BEHOLD, the day of the LORD cometh,
And thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.
2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle;
And the city shall be taken,
And the houses rifled, and the women ravished;
And half of the city shall go forth into captivity,
And the residue of the people shall not be cut off from [the city.
3 Then shall the LORD go forth,
And fight against those nations,
As when he fought in the day of battle.
4 And his feet shall stand in that day
Upon the mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east,
And the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof
Toward the east and toward the west,
And there shall be a very great valley;
And half of the mountain shall remove toward the north,
And half of it toward the south.
5 And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains;
For the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal:
Yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earth-[quake
In the days of Uzziah king of Judah:
And the LORD my God shall come,
And all the saints with thee.
6 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That the light shall not be clear, *nor* dark:
7 But it shall be one day
Which shall be known to the LORD,
Not day, nor night: [light.
But it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be

God's providences concerning his church are here represented as strangely changing, and strangely mixed.

First. As strangely changing. Sometimes the tide runs high and strong against them, but presently turns and comes to be in favour of them; and God has for wise and holy ends set the one over against the other.

1. God here appears against Jerusalem. Judgment begins at the house of God; when "the day of the Lord cometh," ver. 1, Jerusalem must pass through the fire to be refined. God himself "gathers all nations against Jerusalem to battle," ver. 2; he gives them a charge as he did Sennacherib to take the spoil, and to take the prey, *Isa.* x. 6. For the people of Jerusalem are now become the people of his wrath; and who can stand before him, or before nations gathered by him? Where he gives commission he will give success; the city shall be taken by the Romans, that have nations at command; the houses shall be rifled, and all the riches of them taken away by the enemy; and to gratify an insatiable lust of uncleanness, as well as avarice, the women shall be ravished, as if victory were a licence to the worst of villanies, *jusque datum scelerі*,—'and crimes were sanctioned by law.' One half of the city shall then be carried into captivity to be sold or enslaved, and shall not be able to help themselves, such is the destruction that shall be made in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

2. He presently changeth his way, and appears for Jerusalem; for though judgment begin at the house of God, yet as it shall not end there, so it shall not make a full end there, *Jer.* iv. 27; xxx. 11.

1st. A remnant shall be spared, the same with that third part spoken of *ch.* xiii. 8. One half "shall go into captivity," whence they may hereafter be fetched back, "and the residue of the people shall not be cut off," as one would have feared, from the city. Many of the Jews shall receive the Gospel, and so shall prevent their being cut off from the city of God, his church upon earth. "In it shall be a tenth," *Isa.* vi. 13: see *Eze.* vi. 3.

2nd. Their cause shall be pleaded against their enemies, ver. 3. Then when God has made use of these nations as a scourge to his people, he shall go forth and fight against them by his judgments, as when he fought against the enemies of his church formerly, in the day of battle, with the Egyptians, Canaanites, and others. Note, The instruments of God's wrath will themselves be made the objects of it, for it will come to their turn to drink of the cup of trembling; and whom God fights against he will be sure to overcome, and be too hard for. And every former day of battle which God has made to his people a day of triumph, as it is an engagement to God to appear for his people, because he is the same, so it is an encouragement to them to trust in him. It is observable that the Roman empire never flourished after the destruction of Jerusalem as it had done before, but in many instances God fought against it.

3rd. Though Jerusalem and the temple be destroyed, yet God will have a church in the world, into which Gentiles shall be admitted, and with whom the believing Jews shall be incorporated, ver. 4, 5. These verses are dark and hard to be understood, but divers good expositors take this to be the meaning of them: *First.* God will carefully inspect Jerusalem, even then when the enemies of it are laying it waste; "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives," whence he may take a full view of the city and temple, *Mar.* xiii. 3. When the refiner puts his gold into the furnace, he stands by it, and has his eye upon it, to see that it receive no damage; so when Jerusalem, God's gold, is to be refined, he will have the oversight of it; he will stand by upon the mount of Olives. This was literally fulfilled when our Lord Jesus was often upon this mountain, especially when from thence "he ascended up into heaven," *Acts* i. 12. It was the last place on which his feet stood on this earth, the place from which he took rise. *Secondly.* The partition wall between Jews and Gentiles shall be taken away. The mountains about Jerusalem, and particularly this, signified it to be an inclosure, and stood in the way of those that would approach to it. Between the Gentiles and Jerusalem this mountain of Bether, of division, stood, *Cant.* ii. 17. But by the destruction of Jerusalem this mountain shall be made to cleave in the midst, and so the Jewish pale shall be taken down, and the church laid in common with the Gentiles, who were made one with the Jews, by the "breaking down of this middle wall of partition," *Eph.* ii. 14. "Who art thou, O great mountain?" And a great mountain the ceremonial law was in the way of the Jews' conversion, which one would think could never have been got over, yet before Christ and his Gospel it was made plain. This mountain departs, this hill removes, but the covenant of peace cannot be broken; for peace is still preached to him that is afar off and to them that are nigh. *Thirdly.* A new and living way shall be opened to the new Jerusalem, both to see it and to come into it. The mountain being divided, one half towards the north, and the other half towards the south, "there shall be a very great valley;" that is, a broad way of communication opened between Jerusalem and the Gentile world, by which the Gentiles shall have free admission into the gospel Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord that goes forth from Jerusalem shall have a free course into the Gentile world. Thus the way of the Lord is prepared, for "every mountain and hill shall be brought low," and plain and pleasant valleys shall come in the room of them, *Isa.* xl. 4. *Fourthly.* Those of the Jews that believe shall come in and join themselves to the Gentiles, and incorporate with them in the gospel church; "Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains," that valley that is opened between the divided halves of the mount of Olives; they shall hasten into the church with the Gentiles, as formerly the Gentiles with them, *ch.* viii. 23. The "valley of the mountains" is the gospel church, to which there were added of the Jews daily such as should be saved, who fled to that valley as to their refuge. This valley of the mountains is said to reach unto Azal, or to the separate place; that is, to all those whom God hath set apart for himself. When God "makes his mountains a way," *Isa.* xlix. 11, by making them a valley, the way shall be opened to all the wayfaring men, *Isa.* xxxv. 8, and though fools they shall not err therein. Or, to those that are now separated from God this valley shall reach; for the Gentiles that are afar off shall be nigh with the Jews, that are a people near unto him, and both have an access, a mutual access, to each other, and a joint access to God as a Father by one Spirit, *Eph.* ii. 18. *Fifthly.* They shall flee to the valley of the mountains, to the gospel church, under dreadful apprehensions of their danger from the curse of the law. They shall "flee from the wrath to come," from the avenger of blood that is in pursuit of them, to the church as to a city of refuge, or as doves to their windows, as they "fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah," *Am.* i. 1. Therefore the Gospel reveals the wrath of God from heaven, *Rom.* i. 18, that we might be awakened to escape for our lives. Flee as from an earthquake; for we feel the earth ready to sink under us, and we can find no firm footing in it, and therefore must flee to Christ, in whom alone we can stand fast and be easy.

4th. God shall appear in his glory for the accomplishing of all this. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee," which may refer to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, or to destroy the enemies of Jerusalem, or his coming to set up his kingdom in the world, which is called "the coming of the Son of man," *Mat.* xxiv. 37; or to his last coming at the end of time. However, it teaches us, *First.* That the Lord will come. It has been the faith of all the saints. "Behold, the Lord comes" to fulfil every word that he hath spoken in its season. *Secondly.* When he comes all his saints come with him; they attend his motions, and are ready to serve his interests. Christ will come at the end of time with ten thousand of his saints, as when he came to give the law upon mount Sinai. *Thirdly.* Every particular believer being related to God, as his God, may triumph in the expectation of his coming, and speak of it with pleasure: "The Lord my God shall come," shall come to the comfort of all that are his; for, blessed Lord, "all the saints shall be with thee," and it shall be their everlasting happiness to dwell in thy presence; and therefore come, Lord Jesus. And some think this may be read as a prayer, 'Yet, O Lord my God, come, and bring all the saints with thee.'

Secondly. God's providences appear here strangely mixed; ver. 6, 7, In that day of the Lord, "the light shall not be clear, nor dark, not day nor night;" but "at evening time it shall be light." Some refer this to all the time from hence to the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish church had neither perfect peace nor constant trouble, but a cloudy day, neither rain nor sunshine. But it may be taken more generally as designed to represent the method God usually takes in the administration of the kingdom, both of providence and grace. Here is,

1. An idea of the usual course and tenor of God's dispensations. The day of his grace and the day of his providence are neither clear, nor dark, not day nor night. It is so with the church of God in this world; where the Sun of righteousness is risen it cannot be dark night, and yet, short of heaven, it will not be clear day. It is so with particular saints; they are not darkness, but light in the Lord; and yet while there is so much error and corruption remaining in them, it is not perfect day. So it is as to the providences of God that are concerning his church; in general the affairs of the church are neither good nor bad in any extremity, but there is a mixture of both; we are singing both of

mercy and judgment, and are uncertain which will prevail, whether it be an evening or a morning twilight. We are between hope and fear, not knowing what to make of things.

2. An intimation of comfort, with reference hereunto. "It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord." This intimates, 1st. The beauty and harmony of such mixed events. There is one and the same tendency in all; all the wheels make but one wheel, all the revolutions but one day. 2nd. The brevity of them. It is as it were but for one day, for a little moment; the cloud that darkens the light will soon blow over. 3rd. The eye God has upon all these events, and the hand he has in them all; they are known to the Lord. He takes notice of them, and orders and disposeth of all for the best, according to the council of his will.

3. An issue very joyful secured at last. "At evening time it shall be light;" it shall be clear light, and no longer dark. We are sure of it in the other world, and we hope for it in this world. At evening time, when our hopes are quite spent with waiting all day to no purpose, nay, when we fear it will go to be quite dark, when things are at the worst, and the case of the church is most deplorable. As to the church's enemies the sun goes down at noon, so to the church it rises at night; unto the upright springs light out of darkness, *Ps.* cxii. 4. Deliverance comes when the tale of bricks is doubled, and when God's people had done looking for it, and so it comes with a pleasing surprise.

8 And it shall be in that day,
That living waters shall go out from Jerusalem;
Half of them toward the former sea,
And half of them toward the hinder sea:
In summer and in winter shall it be.
9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth:
In that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.
10 All the land shall be turned as a plain
From Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem:
And it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place,
From Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate,
unto the corner gate, [presses.
And *from* the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-
11 And *men* shall dwell in it,
And there shall be no more utter destruction;
But Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.
12 And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people
That have fought against Jerusalem; [their feet,
Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon
And their eyes shall consume away in their holes,
And their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.
13 And it shall come to pass in that day,
That a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them;
And they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, [bour.
And his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neigh-
14 And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem;
And the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together,
Gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.
15 And so shall be the plague of the horse,
Of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass,
And of all the beasts that shall be in these tents,
As this plague.

Here is, First. Blessings promised to Jerusalem, the gospel Jerusalem, in the day of the Messiah, and to all the earth, by virtue of the blessings poured out on Jerusalem, especially to the land of Israel.

1. Jerusalem shall be a spring of living waters to the world. It was made so when there the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and thence the word of the Lord diffused itself to the nations about; ver. 8, "Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem," for there they began, and thence they set out that were to preach repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, *Lu.* xxiv. 47. Note, Where the Gospel goes, and the graces of God's Spirit go along with it, there living waters go. Those streams that "make glad the city of our God" make glad the country also, and make it like paradise, like the garden of the Lord, which was well watered. It was the honour of Jerusalem that "from thence the word of the Lord went forth," *Isa.* ii. 3. And thus far, even in its worst and most degenerate age, for old acquaintance sake, it was made a blessing, and to be so is to be blessed. Half of these waters shall go towards the former sea, and half towards the hinder sea, as all rivers bend their course towards some sea or other, some eastward, others westward. The Gospel shall spread into all parts of the world, some that lie remote from Jerusalem one way, and others that lie as far off another way; for the dominion of the Redeemer which was thereby to be set up must be from sea to sea, *Ps.* lxxii. 8, and the earth must be full of the knowledge of the Lord "as the waters cover the sea," and as the waters that in various channels run to the sea. The knowledge of God shall diffuse itself, 1st. Every way. These living waters shall produce both eastern churches and western churches, that shall each of them in their turn be illustrious. 2nd. Every day. In summer and in winter it shall be. Note, Those that are employed in spreading the Gospel may find themselves work both winter and summer, and are to serve the Lord therein at all seasons, *Acts.* xx. 18. And such a Divine power goes along with these living waters that they shall not be dried up, or the course of them be obstructed, either by the droughts in summer or the frosts in winter.

2. The kingdom of God among men shall be a universal and a united kingdom, ver. 9. 1st. It shall be a universal kingdom; "The Lord shall be king over all the earth." He is and ever was so of right; and in the sovereign disposals of his providence his kingdom doth rule over all, and none are exempt from his jurisdiction. But it is here promised that he shall be so by actual possession of the hearts of his subjects; he shall be acknowledged king by all, in all places; his authority shall be owned and submitted to, and allegiance sworn to him. This will have its accomplishment with that word, *Rev.* xi. 15, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ." 2nd. It shall be a united kingdom. "There shall be one Lord, and his name one." All shall worship one God only, and not idols, and shall be unanimous in the worship of him. All false gods shall be abandoned, and all false ways of worship abolished; and as God shall be the centre of their unity, in whom they shall all meet, so the Scripture shall be the rule of their unity, by which they shall all walk.

3. The land of Judæa and Jerusalem, its mother city, shall be repaired and replenished, and taken under the special protection of Heaven, ver. 10, 11. Some think this speaks particular favour to the people of the Jews, and points at their conversion and restoration in the latter days; but it is rather to be understood figuratively of the gospel church, typified by Judah and Jerusalem, and it signifies the abundant graces with which the church shall be crowned, and the fruitfulness of its members, and the vast numbers of them. 1st. The church shall be like a fruitful country, abounding in all the rich products of the soil. The whole land of Judæa, which is naturally uneven and hilly, shall be turned as a plain; it shall become a smooth level valley from Geba, or Gibeah, its utmost border north, to Rimmon, which lay south of Jerusalem, and was the utmost southern limit of Judæa. The Gospel of Christ, where it comes in its power, levels the ground. Mountains and hills are brought low by it, that the Lord alone may be exalted. 2nd. It shall be like a populous city. As the holy land shall be levelled, so the holy city shall be peopled, shall be rebuilt and replenished. Jerusalem shall be lifted up out of its low estate, shall be raised out of its ruins; when the land is turned as a plain, and not only the mount of Olives removed, ver. 4, but other mountains too, then Jerusalem shall be lifted up, that is, shall appear the more conspicuous. She shall be inhabited in her place, even in Jerusalem, *ch.* xii. 6. The whole city shall be inhabited in the utmost extent of it, and no part of it left to lie waste. The utmost limits of it are here mentioned, betwixt which there shall be no ground lost, but all built upon, from Benjamin's gate north-east to the corner gate north-west, and from the tower of Hananeel in the south to the king's winepresses in the north. When the churches of Christ in all places are replenished with great numbers of holy, humble, serious Christians, and many such are daily added to it, then this promise is fulfilled. 3rd. This country and this city shall both be safe, both the meat in the country and the mouths in the city. They that dwell in it shall dwell securely, and there shall be none to make them afraid; there shall be no more of that utter destruction that has laid both town and country waste; no more anathema, as some read it, no more cutting off, no more curse or separation from God to evil, no more such desolating judgments as you have been groaning under, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. There shall be no danger, nor any apprehension of it; neither shall its friends be fearful to disquiet themselves, nor its enemies formidable to disquiet them. That promise of Christ explains this, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church; and so doth that holy security and serenity of mind which believers enjoy in relying on the Divine protection.

Secondly. Here are judgments threatened against the enemies of the church, that have fought, or do fight against Jerusalem; and the threatening of these judgments is in order to the preservation of the church in safety. Men that read and hear of these plagues will be afraid of fighting against Jerusalem; much more, when these threatenings are fulfilled in some, will others hear and fear. Those that fight against the city of God and his people will be found fighting against God, against whom none ever hardened his heart and prospered; ver. 12, "This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem;" whoever they are, God will punish them for the affront done, and avenge Jerusalem upon them.

1. They shall waste away under grievous and languishing diseases. "Their flesh shall consume away," and they shall be miserably emaciated even "while they stand on their feet," so that they shall be walking skeletons, nothing shall remain but skin and bone. The flesh which they pampered, and indulged, and made provision for, when they were fed to the full with the spoils of God's people, shall now "consume away that it cannot be seen, and the bones that were not seen shall stick out," *Job* xxxiii. 21. They keep their feet, and hope to keep their ground, crawling about as long as they can, but must yield at last. The organs of sight, the outlets of sin, their eyes, "shall consume away in their holes," shall sink into their heads, or perhaps start out of them; their envious, malicious, adulterous eyes, the eyes they had so often fed with spectacles of misery, these shall consume, which shall make not only their countenances ghastly but their lives wretched. The organs of speech, the outlets of sin, their tongue, "shall consume away in their mouth," whereby God will reckon with them for all their blasphemies against himself, and invectives against his people. Thus "their own tongue shall fall upon them," and their punishment shall be legible in their sin, as his was whose tongue was tormented in hell flames. Thus Antiochus and Herod consumed away.

2. They shall be dashed in pieces one against another; ver. 13, "A great tumult from the Lord shall be among them." But are tumults from the Lord, who is the God of order, and not of confusion? As they are the sin of those that raise them they are not from the Lord, but from the wicked one, and from men's own lusts; but as they are the punishment of those that suffer by them they are from the Lord, who serves his own purposes, and carries on his intentions, by the sins, and follies, and restless spirits of men. It is of themselves that they bite and devour one another; but it is of the Lord, the righteous judge, that thus they are "consumed one of another," *Gal.* v. 15. As Ahab was deceived by a lying spirit from the Lord, so Abimelech and the men of Shechem were divided, and so destroyed, by an evil spirit from the Lord, *Jud.* ix. 23. Note, Those that are confederate and combined against the church will justly be separated and set against one another; and their tumults raised against God will be avenged in tumults among themselves. And they shall "lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour," to hold him from striking, or to bind him as his prisoner; nay, "his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour," to strike and wound him. Note, Those that aim to destroy the church are often made to destroy one another; and every man's sword is sometimes set against his fellow by him whose sword they all are. Some think this was fulfilled in the factions and dissensions that were among the Jews when the Romans were destroying them all; for they had fought against the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel church; and to that well enough agrees ver. 19, "Thou also, O Judah, shalt fight against Jerusalem;" that is, the Jewish nation shall be ruined by itself, shall die by its own hand; the city and country shall be at war with each other, and so both shall be destroyed. *Suis et ipsa Roma viribus ruit,*—'Rome was urged into ruin by its very strength.'

3. The plunder of their camp shall greatly enrich the people of God, or the spoils of their country; ver. 14, "Judah also shall eat at Jerusalem," so one learned interpreter reads it; people shall come from all parts to share in the prey. As when Sennacherib's army was routed before Jerusalem there was "the prey of a great spoil divided," *Isa.* xxxiii. 23, so it shall be now; the "wealth of all the heathen round about" that had spoiled "Jerusalem shall be gathered together, gold and silver, and apparel in great abundance," that an equal dividend may be made among all the parties entitled to a share of the prize. Note, The wealth of the sinner is often laid up for the just, and the Israel of God enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians.

4. The very cattle shall share in the plague with which the enemies of God's church shall be cut off, as they did in divers of the plagues of Egypt, ver. 15. All the beasts that shall be in the tents of these wicked men, when God comes to contend with them, shall perish with them. Not only beasts used in war, as the horse, but those used for travel or in the plough, as the mule, the camel, and the ass. Note, The inferior creatures often suffer for the sin of man, and in his plagues. Thus God will shew his indignation against sin, and will make the creature that is thus subject to vanity groan to be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, *Rom.* viii. 21, 22.

16 And it shall come to pass,
That every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem
Shall even go up from year to year
To worship the King, the LORD of hosts,
And to keep the feast of tabernacles.
17 And it shall be, *that* whoso will not come up of *all* the families of the earth
Unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts,
Even upon them shall be no rain.
18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not,
That *have* no *rain;* there shall be the plague,
Wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen
That come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.
19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt,
And the punishment of all nations
That come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.
20 In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses,
HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD;
And the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

BELLS ON MULES AND CAMELS.

21 Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah
Shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts:
And all they that sacrifice
Shall come and take of them, and seethe therein.
And in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite
In the house of the LORD of hosts.

Three things are here foretold:—

First. That a gospel way of worship being set up in the church, there shall be a great resort to it, and a general attendance upon it. Those that were left of the enemies of religion shall be so sensible of the mercy of God to them in their narrow escape, that they shall apply themselves to the worship of the God of Israel, and pay their homage to him, ver. 16. Those that were not consumed shall be converted, and this makes their deliverance a mercy indeed, a double mercy. It is a great change that the grace of God makes upon them; they that had come against Jerusalem, finding their attempts vain and fruitless, shall become as much her admirers as ever they had been her adversaries, and shall come to Jerusalem to worship there, and go in concurrence with those whom they had gone contrary to. Note, Christ's foes, as some of them shall be made his footstool, so others of them shall be made his friends; and when the principle of enmity is slain in them, their former acts of hostility are pardoned to them, and their services are admitted and accepted, as though they had never fought against Jerusalem. They shall "go up to worship at Jerusalem," because that was the place that God had chosen, and there the temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation. Converting grace sets us right, 1. In the object of our worship. They shall no longer worship the Molochs and Baals, the kings and lords that the Gentiles worship, the creatures of their own imagination, but the King, the Lord of hosts, the everlasting King, the King of kings, the Sovereign Lord of all. 2. In the ordinances of worship, those which God himself hath appointed. Gospel worship is here represented by the "keeping of the feast of tabernacles," for the sake of those two great graces which were in a special manner acted and signified in that feast,—contempt of the world, and joy in God, *Neh.* viii. 17. The life of a good Christian is a constant feast of tabernacles; and in all acts of devotion we must retire from the world, and rejoice in the Lord, must worship as in that feast. 3. In the Mediator of our worship. We must go to Christ, our temple, with all our offerings, for in him only our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God, 1 *Pet.* ii. 5. If we rest in ourselves, we come short of pleasing God; we must go up to him, and mention his righteousness only. 4. In the time of it. We must be constant. They shall go up from year to year, at the times appointed for this solemn feast. Every day of a Christian's life is a day of the feast of tabernacles, and every Lord's day especially, that is the great day of the feast; and therefore every day we must worship the Lord of hosts, and every Lord's day with a peculiar solemnity.

Secondly. That those who neglect the duties of gospel worship shall be reckoned with for their neglect. God will compel them to come and worship before him, by suspending his favours from those that keep not his ordinances; upon them there shall be no rain, ver. 17. Some understand it figuratively: the rain of heavenly doctrine shall be withheld, and of the heavenly grace that should accompany that doctrine. God will "command the clouds that they rain no rain upon them." Note, It is a righteous thing with God to withhold the blessings of grace from those that do not attend the means of grace, to deny the green pastures to those that attend not the shepherds' tents. Or, we may take it literally: "On them there shall be no rain" to make their ground fruitful. Note, The gifts of common providence are justly denied to those that neglect and despise instituted ordinances. Those that neglected to build the temple were punished by want of rain, *Hag.* ii. 17; and so were they that neglected to attend there when it was built. If we be barren and unfruitful towards God, justly is the earth made so to us. Many are crossed and go backward in their affairs, and this is at the bottom of it—they do not keep close to the worship of God as they should; they go off from God, and then he walks contrary to them. If we omit or postpone the duties he expects from us, it is just with him to deny the favours we expect from him.

But what shall be done with the defaulters of the land of Egypt, to whom the threatening of the want of rain is no threatening, for they have no rain at any time? They need none, they desire none; the river Nilus is to them instead of the clouds of heaven, waters their land, and makes it fruitful, so that what is a punishment to others is none to them: ver. 18, 19, it is threatened that "if the family of Egypt go not up that have no rain," yet God will find out a way to meet with them, for there shall be in effect the same plague wherewith other nations are smitten for their neglect. God can, and often did, restrain the overflowing of the river, which was equivalent to the shutting up of the clouds; or if the river did its part, and rose as high as it used to do, God had other ways of bringing famine upon them, and destroying the fruits of their ground, as he did by divers of the ten plagues of Egypt; so that this (that is, the same) shall be the punishment of Egypt that is the punishment of other nations who come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. Note, Those who think themselves least indebted to and depending on the mercy of heaven, yet cannot therefore think themselves guarded against the justice of heaven. Those that can live without rain, it doth not therefore follow they can live without God; for not the heavens only, but all other creatures, are that to us and no more that God makes them to be; nor can any man's way of living enable him to set light by the judgments of God. "This shall be the punishment;" margin, 'This shall be the sin of Egypt, and the sin of all nations, that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.' The same word signifies both sin and the punishment of sin, so close and inseparable is the connexion between them, as *Gen.* iv. 7; and sin is often its own punishment. Note, Omissions are sins, and we must come into judgment for them; those contract guilt that go not up to worship at the times appointed, as they have opportunity, and it is a sin that is its own punishment; for those who forsake the duty forfeit the privilege of communion with God.

Thirdly. That those who perform the duties of gospel worship shall have grace to adorn their profession by the duties of a gospel conversation too. This is promised, ver. 20, 21, and it is necessary to the completing of the beauty and happiness of the church. In general, all shall be holiness to the Lord. 1. The name and character of holiness shall not be so confined as it had been. "Holiness to the Lord" had been written only upon the high priest's forehead; but now it shall not be so appropriated. All Christians shall be living temples, and spiritual priests, dedicated to the honour of God, and employed in his service. 2. Real holiness shall be more diffused than it had been; because there shall be more powerful means of sanctification, more excellent rules, more cogent arguments, and brighter patterns of holiness; and because there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the spirit of holiness and sanctification after Christ's ascension than ever before.

1st. There shall be holiness introduced into common things; and those things shall be devoted to God that seemed very foreign.

First. The furniture of their horses shall be consecrated to God. Upon the bells of the horses shall be engraven "Holiness to the Lord," or upon the bridles of the horses, so the margin, or the trappings. The horses used in war shall no longer be used against God and his people, as they have been, but for him and them. Even their wars shall be holy wars, their troopers serving under God's banners. Their great men, that ride in state with a pompous retinue, shall reckon it their greatest ornament to honour God with their honours; "Holiness to the Lord" shall be written on the harness of their chariot horses, as great men have sometimes their coat of arms with their motto painted on their coaches. Every gentleman shall take the high priest's motto for his, and glory in it, and make it a memento to himself, not to do any thing unworthy of it. Travellers shall have it upon their bridles with which they guide their horses, as those that desire always to be put in mind of it by having it continually before them, and to guide themselves in all their motions by this rule. The bells of the horses which are designed to quicken them in their journey, and to give notice of their approach, shall have "Holiness to the Lord" upon them,

to signify that this is what we ought to be influenced by ourselves, and make profession of to others, wherever we go.

Secondly. The furniture of their houses too shall be consecrated to God, to be employed in his service. *1st.* The furniture of the priests' houses, or apartments adjoining to the house of the Lord. The common drinking cups they used shall be "like the bowls before the altar," that were used either to receive the blood of the sacrifices or to present the wine and oil in, which were for the drink offerings. The vessels which they used at their own tables shall be used in such a religious manner, with such sobriety and temperance, such devotedness to the glory of God, and such a mixture of pious thoughts and expressions, that their meals shall look like sacrifices; they shall not eat and drink to themselves, but to Him that spreads their tables and fills their cups. And thus, in ministers' families especially, should common actions be done after a godly sort, however they are done in other families. *2nd.* The furniture of other houses, those of the common people. "Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord;" the pots in which they boiled their meat, the cups out of which they drank their wine, *Jer.* xxxv. 5. In these God's good creatures shall never be abused to excess, nor that made the food and fuel of lust which should have been oil to the wheels of obedience, as had formerly been, when "all tables were full of vomit and filthiness," *Isa.* xxviii. 8. What they eat and drink out of these shall nourish their bodies for the service of God; and out of these they shall give liberally for the relief of the poor; then are they holiness to the Lord, as the merchandize and the hire of the converted Tyrians is said to be, *Isa.* xxiii. 11; for both in our gettings and in our spendings we must have an eye to the will of God as our rule, and the glory of God as our end. *3rd.* Where there shall be such an abundance of real holiness people shall not be nice and curious about ceremonial holiness. "They that sacrifice shall come and take" of these common vessels, and seethe their sacrifices therein, making no distinction between them and the bowls before the altar. In gospel times the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth, and "neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem," *Jno.* iv. 21. One place shall be as acceptable to God as another, "I will that men pray every where," and one vessel as acceptable as another. Little regard shall be had to the circumstance, provided there be nothing indecent or disorderly, while the substance is religiously preserved and adhered to. Some think it intimates that there should be greater numbers of sacrifices offered than the vessels to the sanctuary would serve for; but, rather than any should be turned back or deferred, they shall make no difficulty at all of using common vessels, as the Levites, in a case of necessity, helped the priests to kill the sacrifices, 2 *Chr.* xxix. 34.

2nd. There shall be no unholiness introduced into their sacred things to corrupt them. "In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts." Some read it, There shall be no more 'the merchant;' for so a Canaanite sometimes signifies; and they think it was fulfilled when Christ once and again drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Or, though those that were Canaanites, strangers, and foreigners, shall be brought into the house of the Lord, yet they shall cease to be Canaanites; they shall have nothing of the spirit or disposition of Canaanites in them. Or, it intimates that though in gospel times people should grow indifferent as to holy vessels, yet they should be very strict in church discipline, and careful not to admit the profane to special ordinances, but to separate between the precious and the vile, between Israelites and Canaanites. Yet this will not have its full accomplishment short of the heavenly Jerusalem,—that house of the Lord of hosts into which no unclean thing shall enter; for, at the end of time, and not before, Christ shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends, and the tares and wheat shall be perfectly and eternally separated.

ASKELON.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

CHAP. IV.—10. *With those seven—they are the eyes of the Lord.*

> For who hath despised the day of small things?
> For those seven eyes of Jehovah
> Which run to and fro through the whole earth rejoiced,
> When they saw the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.

With the human estimate of the enterprise, forcibly expressed in the interrogative form, that of Jehovah is strikingly contrasted. His eyes rejoiced when they saw the work marked out by Zerubbabel with the plummet. This, which appears to me to be the only tenable construction, is that given in the margin by our translators. It relieves the passage from the burthen of fanciful conjectures which have been advanced in regard to the meaning, and brings out the simple but encouraging truth, that, how much soever men might despise the commencement of the work in which Zerubbabel and his compatriots were engaged, it was the object of peculiar regard and delight to Divine providence, which was acquainted with all human designs, and from its universal activity could not only defeat the machinations of enemies, but command the agency of those who should help forward the cause of truth and righteousness. Compare *ch.* iii. 9; 2 *Chr.* xvi. 9; *Pr.* xv. 3.—*H.*

CHAP. V.—8. *And he said, This is wickedness.* By the Hebrew word in this place is meant, idolatry, which was the most flagrant kind of *wickedness* with respect to God, and the fruitful parent of every other species of iniquity. 9. *There came out two women.* The two females here mentioned are regarded by Maurer and Hengstenberg as merely belonging, by way of colouring, to the symbol as such, two persons being required to carry so large a measure as the ephah. I should rather, however, infer that the Assyrian and Babylonian powers are intended, by which, as instruments, God removed idolatry in the persons of the apostate Hebrews out of the holy land. In this striking hieroglyphic we are taught how idolatry, with all its accompanying atrocities, was removed from the land of the Hebrews, which it had desecrated, to a country devoted to it, and where it was to commingle with its native elements, never to be re-imported into Canaan. How exactly has the prediction been fulfilled! From the time of the captivity to the present, a period of more than two thousand years, the Hebrew people have never once lapsed into idolatry! The whole vision was intended to convince them of the greatness of the evil.—*H.* See Supplementary Note on *Hos.* iii. 4.

CHAP. VI.—1. *Four chariots.* The import of this vision stands in close connexion with the foregoing. After (such is its simple meaning) Israel shall have been visited by severe Divine judgments, equally fearful chastisements shall be inflicted upon the instruments, which God had in part employed in the punishment of his people; upon all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. He sees four chariots. With respect to their import, he is taught by the declaration of the *interpreting angel*, ver. 5, '*These are the four winds of heaven, which go forth after they have appeared as ministers before the Lord of the whole earth.*' The four winds of heaven serve as a symbol of the Divine judgments. From their personification is explained the circumstance that chariots are attributed to them, and that these are afterwards *identified* with the winds, of which they are to be considered as the *vehicles*. The figurative representation receives light from some passages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, whom the prophet seems here, as commonly, without prejudice to his independence, to have imitated. The Divine judgments breaking in from all sides appear also, *Jer.* xlix. 36, under the image of the four winds: '*And I bring against Elam the four winds from the four ends of heaven, and I scatter them according to all these winds.*' See also *Eze.* i. 12; *Dan.* vii. 2. *From between two mountains—of brass.* The chariots go forth from the two mountains, and these mountains are of brass. That the prophet had in view particularly the *valley of Jehoshaphat* appears from the parallel passage, *ch.* xiv. 4, where an extension of this valley, by the cleaving asunder of the mount of Olives, is promised. But why does the prophet, in order to designate the judgment as a consequence of the theocracy, make the four chariots go forth particularly from this valley of the mountains? Because it lay under the *mountain* of the

temple, which was the dwelling-place of the Lord under the old covenant, and was the nearest place to it that was accessible to carriages. Here, therefore, (compare ver. 5,) the four winds of heaven stationed themselves, expecting the commands of the Lord. Wherefore were the two mountains called *brazen?* To indicate that the Lord surrounds his kingdom with a wall of protection, which can neither be scaled nor broken through. This truth was symbolized by the position of Jerusalem, as the Psalmist had already expressed it in the words, '*The mountains are round about Jerusalem, and the Lord surrounds his people.*' In order to make the type more conformable to the reality, the prophet converts the mountains, which cover Jerusalem on the eastern side, into brass. 2. *Red horses.* The colour of the horses (as in the first chapter) indicates the destination of the chariots to execute judgment upon the enemies of God, red being the colour of blood, black that of mourning, white that of victory. Since no *significant* colour remained for the horses of the fourth chariot, the prophet was compelled to give them an unmeaning colour, '*speckled,*' ['grisled,' E. T.,] and by a special epithet, 'strong,' to signify the attribute, which, in the case of the others, was already implied in the colour. The difficulty here, which has given occasion to the interpreters for the most forced explanations, is, that the black horses of the second chariot are mentioned first, and that the red of the first appear to be entirely passed over. On a nearer inspection, however, this difficulty entirely disappears; the red horses of the first chariot are here *the* strong, (disregard of the article is the chief cause of the errors of interpreters,) those *in comparison with which* the rest were to be regarded as weak, although in themselves considered they were strong, and had before in part been designated by the same epithet. These are mentioned last, because, feeling their power, and not satisfied like the rest with any particular portion of the earth, they desire permission of the Lord to go over the whole, whereby it is intended to express the thought that the judgment shall be strictly universal, no portion of the earth shall be exempted from it. 6. *The north country.* The chariot with the black, and that with the white horses, both go towards the north country. There must be a reason why this country is expressly mentioned, and two chariots depart for it. The inhabitants of the north country—according to constant usage the Babylonians and Assyrians—had been in times past the most dangerous enemies of the covenant people. They, therefore, served the prophet, in *ch.* v, as a type of their future enemies. In order now to express the thought, that, after the latter shall have returned again to the Lord, the former shall eminently experience the Divine chastisement, he makes the executioners of God's justice go forth in a peculiar manner towards the north country. That the north country is here to be understood, not properly, but typically, appears even from the foregoing chapter, where the prophet calls the country of those whose punishment is here announced the land of Shinar, not in a literal but in a figurative sense. *The south country.* On the south of Palestine dwelt the Egyptians, the first oppressors of Israel, who were elsewhere also combined by Zechariah with the enemies from the north, as a type of the future enemies of the covenant people. That only one chariot departs for them, represents them as comparatively less guilty, since their misconduct from length of time now appeared in a less striking light. The vision closes with an explanation of the Lord to the prophet, concerning the design of the departure of the chariots. '*Behold those which depart for the north country make mine anger to rest on the north country;*' compare *Eze.* v. 13, '*I make mine anger rest,*' and *Zec.* ix. 1, where the land of Hadrach and Damascus is represented as the *resting-place* of the Divine sentence of punishment, which included in itself the fulfilment. The explanation refers indeed, in the first instance, only to one part, (which, however, according to the above remarks, was the chief object of the Divine judgment,) but the prophet could easily deduce from this the destination of the rest sent forth under similar circumstances. 9. *And the word of the Lord came unto me.* The future developments of the kingdom of God, which the prophet had described in the preceding context, the judgment upon the former covenant people, as well as also, after their restoration, upon the remaining people of the earth, had their cause and source in the promised Anointed of the Lord, and presupposed his appearing. To fix the attention of the prophet, and through him that of the people, upon this point, it is once more presented to his inward contemplation towards the close of his ecstasy, and with this, as the last words indicate, at once lovely and terrific image the whole series of visions, whose collective contents in some way refer to it, is closed.

Chap. VII.—2, 3. *When they had sent, &c.* The congregation caused inquiry to be made by certain deputies, sent to the temple, whether they should continue to observe the fasts hitherto kept on the day of the destruction of the temple by the Chaldeans, and which contained a penitential confession of guilt, and a prayer for forgiveness and restoration of the former prosperity. In this *question* there is at the same time included a *supplication* that God would very soon change the days of mourning into days of rejoicing. Therefore, it is said, the deputies have come to supplicate the Lord. Both inquiry and supplication presuppose that in the relations of the present there was ground to hope for a favourable future. But this can be shown to be the case in precisely the fourth year of Darius. The building of the temple had hitherto been unremittingly and successfully prosecuted. The new machinations of the Samaritans in the Persian court, with a design to arrest its progress, had been already completely defeated, (compare Prideaux.) The pusillanimity of the returned exiles was thus put to shame, and they gave themselves up henceforth to the most joyful hopes in reference to the future. The question was directed to the priests and prophets collected in the temple, in the hope that God would reveal his will by one of them. This was done through Zechariah. His answer consists of two parts. In the first, (ver. 5—14,) he employs himself in rebuking the base motive from which the question, at least with a part of the inquirers, originated. That dead, hypocritical self-righteousness already existed in the germ, which, continually gaining ground, became at a later period as destructive to the new colony as outward idolatry, resting on the same principle, had been in former times. This self-righteous spirit exerted the most prejudicial influence on the view entertained of fasts. They attributed an intrinsic value, as a mere *opus operatum,* to that which had no meaning, except as an outward manifestation of a penitent heart. They believed merit to be thereby attained, and wondered and murmured that God so long delayed to acknowledge and reward it. The prophet shews how absurd was this notion, and that the Lord required some thing entirely different, the fulfilment of the moral precepts of his law, without which all outward worship was only hypocrisy; he reminds them that the disregard of this requisition, loudly and repeatedly expressed by the former prophets, brought upon the people the previous inexpressible calamity, from which they had not yet recovered, and that a like cause would be attended with the like effect in future.

Chap. VIII.—1. *Again the word of the Lord.* This chapter contains the second part of the discourse, wherein the prophet proceeds to give a direct answer to the question, which could not now serve to confirm the hypocrites in their carnal security, but might well console and strengthen the weak in faith in his own and subsequent times, until the appearing of Christ. For the covenant people—this is the sum—so great prosperity is destined, that the day of the destruction of the temple, as well as the remaining fast days, at that time observed in remembrance of particular melancholy events of the past, the day of the capture of Jerusalem in the fourth, the day of the murder of Gedaliah in the seventh, and the day of the beginning of the siege in the tenth month, should be changed into days of rejoicing, because the future blessings would be far greater than those which had been lost. The prophet here also embraces the whole of the prosperity destined for the covenant people, and his prediction was first completely fulfilled in Christ. We must refer exclusively to the glorification, conferred through him upon the kingdom of God, the conclusion, ver. 20—23; where, as an enlargement upon *Mic.* iv. 2; *Isa.* iv. 3; *Jer.* xxxi. 6, the zeal of the heathen nations for admittance into the theocracy is described. (This and preceding Notes (on *ch.* vi. and vii.) from *Hengstenberg's Christology.*) 19—23. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, &c.* At the time when Zechariah prophesied it was most unlikely that powerful nations, renowned for arts and arms, for civilization and for philosophy, which had conquered and oppressed Israel, and ridiculed the worship of Jehovah, should learn religion from that very people! Hitherto the Jews had been prone to learn the idolatries of other nations: what more improbable than that after they had been enslaved they should teach religion to their conquerors and all the principal nations of the earth? Yet this is expressly foretold, and it came to pass; for all the knowledge of the true God, and all the true religion in the world, may be traced back to the Jewish nation. But all the effects which have yet been seen are far beneath the language here used. Hitherto, however, the prophecy has been wonderfully accomplished, and no doubt future events will explain it further. The last verse is considered by many to indicate that numbers of converted Jews will be employed and prospered in the future conversion of the Gentiles.

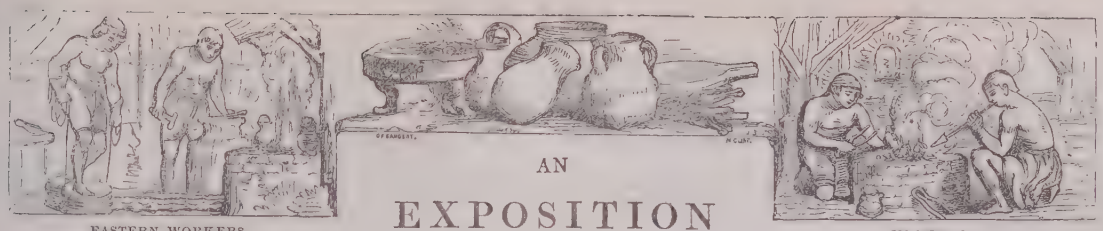
Chap. IX.—3—6. See Supplementary Notes on *Isa.* xxiii., and *Zep.* ii. 10. *I will cut off.* The prophet proceeds to give the characteristic difference of the Messianic kingdom from all worldly kingdoms, and especially from the former theocracy, whether with special reference to the carnal conceptions of his contemporaries is uncertain. While earthly kingdoms are upheld and extended only by the power of arms, while even the theocracy formerly employed them, it shall in the time of the Messiah be deprived of every external weapon, since it will need them no more, because its head, the Prince of peace, by his bare word extends peace over the whole earth, which willingly and joyfully submits to him.

Chap. XII.—12. *So they weighed for my price.* This doubtless is the passage quoted by Matthew, *ch.* xxvii. 5, but there ascribed to Jeremiah. See M. Henry's remarks on Matthew. To what is there stated we may add, that some have thought there was a mistake made by ancient transcribers writing the name Jeremiah instead of Zechariah, and it is observed that this might be done by only the change of a single letter. It was often the custom to abridge words in writing them. Thus, instead of writing the name of Jeremiah in full, it would be written in Greek Ιριου; so Zechariah would be written Ζριου. By the mere change of Z into I, therefore, the mistake might easily have been made.—*Barnes.*

Chap. XII.—10. *Upon me.* Dr. J. P. Smith and Dr. Henderson successfully oppose those who translate this 'unto him;' and, as Jehovah declares himself to be the person thus pierced, it follows that there is such unity between the suffering man and the eternal God as, without confounding the properties of each nature, renders it proper for the Divine Being to use this personal style. 11. *Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddon,* is considered to denote the plain of Esdraelon. The mourning referred to here is the lamentation for the death of Josiah, who was slain there. This remarkable district is computed to be about fifteen miles square, and abounds with hills, though small in comparison with the neighbouring mountains. It has been the scene of innumerable contests, from the days of Barak, *Jud.* iv., to the present time. (See Wood Engraving.)

Chap. XIII.—7. *My shepherd—the man that is my fellow.* The Messiah is often described as the Shepherd of his people—their Saviour. Against him the sword, described as an instrument of certain death, is commanded to awake. The word translated "my fellow" denotes the most close and near resemblance. It is derived from a term denoting a sameness of internal construction. It is not found in any writings of the Old Testament between those of Moses and Zechariah. We may therefore conclude it was revived from apparent obsoleteness by him who inspired the prophet, from a very special motive, and to make a singular and strong expression. Not only here is attributed to the Messiah a high official station in the kingdom of grace, and a capacity, by possessing the human nature, to suffer and to die, but an actual equality of rank and identity of nature.—*J. P. Smith,* as quoted (with the two previous Notes,) in *Religious Tract Society's Bible.*

CHEERFUL FEASTS.—*ch.* viii. 19.



EASTERN WORKERS IN METAL.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROPHECY OF MALACHI,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

God's prophets were his witnesses to his church, each in their day, for several ages; witnesses for him and his authority, witnesses against sin and sinners, attesting the true intents of God's providences in his dealings with his people then, and the kind intentions of his grace concerning his church in the days of the Messiah, to whom all the prophets bore witness, for they all agreed in their testimony; and now we have only one witness more to call, and we have done with our evidence; and though he be the last, and in him the prophecy ceased, yet the spirit of prophecy shines as clear, as strong, as bright in him, as in any that went before, and his testimony challengeth an equal regard. The Jews say prophecy continued forty years under the second temple, and this prophet they call the seal of prophecy, because in him the series or succession of prophets broke off and came to a period: God wisely ordered it so that Divine inspiration should cease for some ages before the coming of the Messiah, that that great Prophet might appear the more conspicuous and distinguishable, and be the more welcome. Let us consider, I. The person of the prophet. We have only his name, Malachi, and no account of his country or parentage. Malachi signifies 'my angel;' which has given occasion for a conjecture that this prophet was indeed an angel from heaven, and not a man; as that *Jud.* ii. 1. But there is no just ground for the conjecture: prophets were messengers, God's messengers; this prophet was so. His name is the very same with that we find in the original, *ch.* iii. 1, for my messenger; and perhaps from that word he might (though probably he had another name) be called Malachi. The Chaldee paraphrase, and some of the Jews, suggest that Malachi was the same with Ezra, but that also is groundless; Ezra was a scribe, but we never read that he was a prophet. Others, yet farther from probability, make him to be Mordecai. But we have reason to conclude he was a person whose proper name was that by which he is here called; the tradition of some of the ancients is that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, and that he died young. II. The scope of the prophecy. Haggai and Zechariah were sent to reprove the people for delaying to build the temple, Malachi was sent to reprove them for the neglect of it when it was built, and for their profanation of the temple service; for from idolatry and superstition they ran into the other extreme of impiety and irreligion; and the sins he witnesseth against are the same that we find complained of in Nehemiah's time, with whom it is probable he was cotemporary. And now prophecy was to cease he speaks more clearly of the Messiah as nigh at hand than any of the prophets had done, and concludes with a direction to the people of God to keep in remembrance the law of Moses, while they were in expectation of the Gospel of Christ.

A.M. 3607. B.C. 397.

CHAPTER I.

This prophet is sent to convince, and then to comfort; first to discover sin, and reprove for that, and then to promise the coming of him who shall take away sin; and this method the blessed Spirit takes in dealing with souls, *Jno.* xvi. 8. He first opens the wound and then applies the healing balm. God had provided (and one would think effectually) for the engaging of Israel to himself, by providences and ordinances; but it seems, by the complaints here made of them, they received the grace of God in both these in vain. I. They were very ungrateful to God for his favours to them, and rendered not again according to the benefits they received, ver. 1—5. II. They were very careless and remiss in the observance of his institutions; the priests especially were so, that were in a particular manner charged with them, ver. 6—14. And what shall we say of those whom neither providences nor ordinances work upon, and who affront God in those very things wherein they should honour him?

THE burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

2 I have loved you, saith the LORD.
Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?
Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD:
Yet I loved Jacob,
3 And I hated Esau,
And laid his mountains and his heritage waste
For the dragons of the wilderness.
4 Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished,
But we will return and build the desolate places;
Thus saith the LORD of hosts,
They shall build, but I will throw down;
And they shall call them, The border of wickedness,
And, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.
5 And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say,
The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.

The prophecy of this book is intituled, "The burden of the word of the Lord," (ver 1,) which intimates, 1. That it was of great weight and importance: what the false prophets said was light as the chaff, what the true prophets said was ponderous as the wheat, *Jer.* xxiii. 28. 2. That it ought to be often repeated to them and by them, as the burthen of a song. 3. That there were those to whom it was a burthen and a reproach; they were weary of it, and found themselves so aggrieved by it that they were not able to bear it. 4. That to them it would prove a burthen indeed, to sink them to the lowest hell, unless they repented. 5. That to those who loved and embraced, and bade it welcome, though it was a light burden, as our Saviour calls it, *Mat.* xi. 30, yet it was a burthen. This "burden of the word of the Lord" was sent, 1st. To Israel; for to them pertained the lively oracles of prophecy, as well as those of the written word. Many prophets God had sent to Israel, and now he will try them with one more. 2nd. By Malachi; by the hand of Malachi,—as if it were not a message by word of mouth, but a letter put into his hand, for the greater certainty.

In these verses they are charged with ingratitude in that they were not duly sensible of God's distinguishing goodness to them; and such a charge as this may well be called a burthen, for it is a heavy one.

First. God asserts the great kindness he had, and had often expressed, for them; ver. 2, "I have loved you, saith the Lord." Thus abruptly doth the sermon begin, as if God intended whatever reproofs should be given them to reconcile them to his love, and to take care that they should still have good thoughts of him; "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Thus kindly doth the sermon begin; God will have his people satisfied that he loves them, and ever mindful of his love. This is the same with that he said of old to the virgin of Israel, that he might engage her affections to himself, *Jer.* xxxi. 3, 4, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." In this one word God sums up all his gracious dealings with them; love was the spring of all. He loved them because he would love them, *Deu.* vii. 7, 8; loved them in their childhood, *Hos.* xi. 1; his delight was in them, *Isa.* lxii. 4. "I have loved you," but you have not loved me, nor made any suitable returns for my love. Note, God's people need to be often minded of his love to them.

Secondly. They question his love, and diminish the instances of it, and seem to quarrel with him for telling them of it. "Yet they say, Wherein hast thou loved us?" As God runs up all his favours to them to the fountain, which was his love, so he runs up all their sins against him to the fountain, which was their contempt of his love. Instead of acknowledging his kindness, and studying what they shall render, they scorn to own that they had been beholden to him; challenge him to produce proofs of his love that were material, and think and speak very slightly of the instances they had had of his kindness, as if they were so few, so small, as not to be worth taking notice of, and no more than what they had sufficiently balanced with instances of his wrath: Have we not been wasted, impoverished, and carried captive, and wherein then hast thou loved us? Note, God justly takes it very ill to have his favours

slighted, as not worth speaking of; and it is very absurd for us to ask wherein he has loved us, when which way soever we look we meet with the proofs and instances of his love to us.

Thirdly. He makes it out beyond contradiction that he had loved them, loved them in a distinguishing way, which was in a special manner obliging. For proof of this he shews the difference he had made, and would still make, between Jacob and Esau, between Israelites and Edomites. Some read their question, Wherefore hast thou loved us? As if they did indeed own that he had loved them, but withal insinuate that there was a reason for it, that he loved them because their father Abraham had loved him, so that it was not a free love, but a love of debt; to which he replies, Was not Esau as near akin to Abraham as you are, was he not Jacob's own brother, his elder brother? and, therefore, if there were any right to a recompence for Abraham's love, he had it. And yet I hated Esau and loved Jacob.

1. Let them see what a difference God had made between Jacob and Esau. Esau was Jacob's brother, his twin brother; "Yet I loved Jacob," and "I hated Esau," that is, took Jacob into covenant, and entailed the blessings on him and his, but I refused and rejected Esau. Note, Those that are taken into covenant with God, that have the lively oracles and the means of grace committed to them, have reason to look upon these as tokens of his love. Jacob is loved, for he hath these; Esau hated, for he has not. The apostle quotes this, *Rom.* ix. 13, and compares it with what the oracle said to Rebecca concerning her twins, *Gen.* xxv. 23, "The elder shall serve the younger," to illustrate the doctrine of God's sovereignty in dispensing his favours, for "man he not do what he will with his own?" Esau was justly hated, but Jacob freely loved; even so, Father, "because it seems good in thine eyes;" and it is not for us to ask why or wherefore.

2. Let them see what he was now doing, and would do with them, pursuant to this original difference.

1st. The Edomites shall be made the monuments of God's justice, and he will be glorified in their utter destruction; For Esau have I hated; "I laid his mountains waste," the mountains of Seir, which were his heritage. When all that part of the world was ravaged by the Chaldean army, the country of Edom was among the rest laid in ruins, and became a habitation "for the dragons of the wilderness," so perfectly desolate was it, as was foretold, *Isa.* xxxiv. 6, 11. The Edomites had triumphed in Jerusalem's overthrow, *Ps.* cxxxvii. 7, and, therefore, it was just with God to put the same cup of trembling into their hands. And though Edom's ruins were last, yet they were lasting, and the desolations perpetual; and in this the difference was made between Jacob and Esau, and is made between the righteous and the wicked, to whom otherwise all things come alike, and there seems to be one event. Jacob's cities are laid waste, but they are rebuilt; Edom's are laid waste, and never rebuilt. The sufferings of the righteous will have an end, and will end well, all their grievances will be redressed, and their sorrow turned into joy; but the sufferings of the wicked will be endless and remediless, as Edom's desolations, ver. 4. Observe here, *First.* The vain hopes of the Edomites that they shall have their ruins repaired as well as Israel, though they had no promise to build their hope upon. They say, It is true we are impoverished; it is the common chance, and there is no remedy, but "we will return and build the desolate places." We are resolved we will, not so much as asking God leave; we will, whether he will or no; nay, we will do it in defiance of God's curse, and that sentence pronounced upon Edom, *Isa.* xxxiv. 10, "From generation to generation it shall lie waste." They build presumptuously, as Hiel built Jericho in direct contradiction to the word of God, 1 *Kin.* xvi. 34, and it will speed accordingly. Note, It is common for those whose hearts are unhumbled under humbling providences to think to make their part good against God himself, and to build and plant, and flourish again as much as ever, though God hath said they shall be impoverished. But see, *Secondly.* The dashing of these hopes, and the disappointment of them. They say, We will build; but what saith the Lord of hosts? for we are sure his word shall stand, and not theirs. And he saith, 1*st.* Their attempts shall be baffled; "They shall build, but I will throw down." Note, Those that walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to them; for who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered? When the Jews had rejected Christ and his Gospel they became Edomites, and this word was fulfilled in them; for when, in the time of the emperor Adrian, they attempted to rebuild Jerusalem, God by earthquakes and eruptions of fire threw down what they built, so that they were forced to quit the enterprise. 2*nd.* They shall be looked upon by all as abandoned to utter ruin. All that see them shall call them the border of wickedness, a sinful nation, incurably so; and, therefore, "the people against whom the Lord has indignation for ever." Since their wickedness is such as will never be reformed, their desolations shall be such as are never to be repaired. Against Israel God was a little displeased, *Zec.* i. 15; but against Edom he has indignation, and will have for ever, for they are the people of his curse, *Isa.* xxxiv. 5.

2nd. The Israelites shall be made the monuments of his mercy, and he will be glorified in their salvation, ver. 5. Edomites shall be stigmatised as a people hated of God, but your eyes shall see your doubts concerning his love to you for ever silenced; for you shall say, and have cause to say, "The Lord" is and "will be magnified from the border of Israel," that is, from every part and border of the land of Israel. The border of Edom is a border of wickedness, and, therefore, the Lord will have "indignation against it for ever;" but the border of Israel is a border of holiness, the border of the sanctuary, *Ps.* lxxviii. 54, and therefore God will make it to appear, though it may for a time lie desolate, that he hath mercy in store for it, and from thence he will be magnified; he will give his people Israel both cause and hearts to praise him. When the border of Edom still remains desolate, and the border of Israel is repaired and replenished, then it will appear that God hath loved Jacob. Note, *First.* Those that doubt of God's love to his people shall sooner or later have convincing and undeniable proofs given them of it; your own eyes shall see what you will not believe. *Secondly.* Deliverances out of trouble are to be reckoned proofs of God's goodwill to his people, though they may be suffered to fall into trouble, *Ps.* xxxiv. 19. *Thirdly.* Distinguishing favours are very obliging. If God rear up again the border of Israel, but leave the border of Edom in ruins, let no Israelite ask, for shame, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Fourthly.* The dignifying of Israel is the magnifying of the God of Israel, and one way or other God will have honour from his professing people. *Fifthly.* God's goodness being his glory, when he doth us good we must speak him great, for that is magnifying him. It is an instance of his goodness that he hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, and for this they that love his salvation say, "The Lord be magnified," *Ps.* xxxv. 27.

6 A son honoureth *his* father,
And a servant his master:
If then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour?
And if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear?
Saith the LORD of hosts unto you,
O priests, that despise my name.
And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?
7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar;
And ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee?
In that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible
8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil?
And if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil?
Offer it now unto thy governor;
Will he be pleased with thee,
Or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.
9 And now, I pray you,
Beseech God that he will be gracious unto us:
This hath been by your means:
Will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts.
10 Who *is there* even among you that would shut the doors *for nought?*
Neither do ye kindle *fire* on mine altar for nought.
I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts,
Neither will I accept an offering at your hand.
11 For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same
My name *shall be* great among the Gentiles;
And in every place incense *shall be* offered unto my name,
And a pure offering:
For my name *shall be* great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.
12 But ye have profaned it, in that ye say,
The table of the LORD *is* polluted;
And the fruit thereof, *even* his meat, *is* contemptible.
13 Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness *is it!*
And ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts;
And ye brought *that which was* torn, and the lame, and the sick;
Thus ye brought an offering:
Should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.
14 But cursed *be* the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male,
And voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing:
For I *am* a great King, saith the LORD of hosts,
And my name *is* dreadful among the heathen.

The prophet is here by a special commission calling the priests to account, though they were themselves appointed judges to call the people to an account. Let the rulers in the house of God know that there is one above them, who will reckon with them for their maladministrations. Thus "saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests," ver. 6. God will have a saying to unfaithful ministers; and it concerns them who speak from God to his people to hear and heed what he saith to them, that they may save themselves in the first place, otherwise how should they help to save them that hear them. It is a severe, and no doubt a just reproof, that is here given to the priests for the profanation of the holy things of God with which they were intrusted; and if this was the crime of the priests, we have reason to fear the people also were guilty of it, so that what is said to the priests is said to all. Nay, it is said to us, who, as Christians, profess ourselves not only the people of God, but priests to him. Observe here,

First. What it was that God expected from them, and with what good reason he expected it; ver. 6, "A son honoureth his father" because he is his father. Nature has written this law in the hearts of children, before God wrote it at mount Sinai; nay, a servant, though his obligation to his master be not natural, but by voluntary compact, yet thinks it is his duty to honour him, to be observant to his orders, and true to his interests. Children and servants pay respect to their parents and masters; every one cries out Shame on them, if they do not, and their own hearts cannot but reproach them too. The order of families is thus kept up, and it is their beauty and advantage. But the priests, that are God's children and his servants, do not fear and honour him. They were fathers and masters to the people, and expected to be called so, (*Jud.* xviii. 19; *Mat.* xxiii. 7, 10,) and to be reverenced and obeyed as such; but they forgot their Father and Master in heaven, and the duty they owe to him. We may each of us charge it upon ourselves what is here charged upon the priests. Note, 1. We are every one of us to look upon God as our Father and Master, and upon ourselves as his children and servants. 2. Our relation to God as our Father and Master strongly obligeth us to fear and honour him. If we honour and fear the fathers of our flesh, much more the Father and Master of our spirits, *Heb.* xvii. 9. 3. It is a thing to be justly complained of and lamented, that God is so little feared and owned, even by those that own him for their Father and Master. Where is his honour? Where is his fear?

Secondly. What the contempt was which these priests put upon God. This is that in general which is charged upon them. 1. They despised God's name. Their familiarity with it, as priests, bred contempt of it, and served them only to gain a veneration by for themselves, and their own name, while God's name was of small account with them. God's name is all that whereby he has made himself known, his word and ordinances; these they had low thoughts of, and vilified that which it was their business to magnify; and no wonder that when they despised it themselves they did that which made it despicable to others, even the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred, as Eli's sons did. 2. They profaned God's name, ver. 12; they polluted it, ver. 7. They not only made no account of sacred things, but they made an ill use of them, and perverted them

to the service of the worst and vilest purposes, their own pride, covetousness and luxury. There cannot be a greater provocation to God than the profanation of his name; for it is holy and reverend. His purity cannot be polluted by us, for he is unspotted, but his name may be profaned, and nothing profanes it more than the misconduct of priests, whose business it is to do honour to it.

This is the general charge exhibited against them; to this they plead, Not guilty, and challenge God to prove it upon them, and to make good the charge; which added daring impudence to their daring impiety: "Ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?" ver. 6; and "Wherein have we polluted thee?" ver. 7. It is common with proud sinners, when they are reproved, to stand thus upon their own justification. These priests had most horribly profaned sacred things, and yet, like the adulterous woman, say they have done no wickedness; either they were so unobservant of themselves that they remembered not, or reflected not upon their own acts, or so ignorant of the Divine law that they thought there was no harm in them, and that what they did could not be construed as despising God's name, or so atheistical as to imagine that though they knew their own guilt yet God did not, or so scornful in their carriage towards God and his prophets, that they took a pride in bantering a serious and just reproof, and turning it off with a jest. They either laugh at the reproof, as those that despise and harden their hearts against it, or laugh it off, as those that resolve they will not be touched by it, or not seem to be so. Which way soever we take it, their defence was their offence, and in justifying themselves, their own tongues condemned them; and their saying, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" proved them proud and perverse. Had they asked this question with a humble desire to be told more particularly wherein they had offended, it had been an evidence of their repentance, and had given hopes of their reformation; but to ask it thus, in disdain and defiance of the word of God, argues their hearts "fully set in them to do evil." Note, Sinners ruin themselves by studying to baffle their own convictions; but they will find it hard to kick against the pricks. Justly might they have been convicted and condemned upon the general charge, and their plea thrown out as frivolous; but God will not only overcome, but will be clear, will be justified when he judgeth, and therefore he shews them very particularly wherein they had despised his name, and what the contempt was they cast upon him. As formerly when he charged them with idolatry, so now, when he chargeth with profaneness, he bids them "see their way in the valley," and know what they have done, *Jer.* ii. 23.

1st. They despised God's name in what they said, in the low opinion they had of his institutions. Ye say in your hearts, and perhaps speak it out when you priests get together, over your cups, out of the hearing of the people, "The table of the Lord is contemptible," ver. 7; and again, ver. 12, "Ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted;" it is to be no more regarded than any other table. Either the table in the temple on which the shewbread was placed is that which they reflect upon,—not understanding the mystery of it they despised it as an insignificant thing,—or, rather, the altar of burnt offerings is here called the table; for there God and his priests, and his people, did, as it were, feast together upon the sacrifices, in token of friendship: this they thought was contemptible. Formerly, in the days of superstition, it was thought contemptible in comparison with the idolatrous altars that the heathen had, and was set aside to make room for a new fashioned one, 2 *Kin.* xvi. 14, 15. Now it is thought contemptible in comparison with their own tables, and those of their great men; "The fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible." They who served at the altar were to live upon the altar, but they complained that they lived poorly and meanly, and it was not worth while to attend the service of the altar for the fruit and meat of it, for it was very ordinary, and always the same again; they had no dainties, no varieties, no nice dishes. Nay, that part of the sacrifices which was given to God, the blood and the fat, they looked upon with contempt, as not worthy so many laws God had made about them; they asked what needs so much ado about burning the fat, and pouring out the blood! Note, Those greatly profane and pollute God's name that despise the business of religion, though it be very honourable, as not worth taking pains in; and the advantages of religion, though highly valuable, as not worth taking pains for. Those that live in a careless neglect of holy ordinances, that come to them and attend on them irreverently, and go away from them never the better, and under no concern, they do in effect say, "The table of the Lord is contemptible," there is neither virtue nor value in it, neither credit nor comfort from it.

2nd. They despised God's name in what they did, which was of a piece with what they said, and flowed from it; corrupt principles and notions are roots of bitterness which bear the gall and wormwood of corrupt practices. They looked upon the table and altar of the Lord as contemptible, and then,

First. They thought any thing would serve for a sacrifice, though never so coarse and mean; and were so far from bringing the best, as they ought to have done, that they picked out the worst they had, which was fit neither for the market nor for their own tables, and offered that at God's altar. With every sacrifice they were to bring a meat offering of fine flour mingled with oil; but they brought polluted bread, ver. 7, coarse bread, servants' bread. Perhaps it was dry and mouldy, or made of the refuse of the wheat, which they thought good enough to be burned upon the altar; for had it been better they would have said, To what purpose is this waste? And as to the beasts they offered, though the law was express that what was offered in sacrifice should not have blemish, yet they brought "the blind, and the lame, and the sick," ver. 5; and again, ver. 13, the torn, and the lame, and the sick, that was ready to die of itself. They looked no farther than the burning of the sacrifice, and they pleaded it was pity to burn it if it was good for any thing else. The people were so far convinced of their duty that they would bring sacrifices; they durst not wholly omit the duty, but they brought vain oblations, mocked God, and deceived themselves, by bringing the worst they had; and the priests, who should have taught them better, accepted the gifts brought to the altar, and offered them up there, because if they should refuse them the people would bring none at all, and then they would lose their perquisites; and therefore, having more regard to their own profit than to God's honour, they accepted that which they knew he would not accept of. Some make ver. 8 to be a continuation of what the priests profanely said, ver. 7, "Ye say" to the people, "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, it is not evil; or the lame and the sick, it is not evil." Note, It is a very evil thing, whether men think so or no, to offer the blind and the lame, the torn and the sick, in sacrifice to God. If we worship God ignorantly, and without understanding, we bring the blind for sacrifice; if we do it carelessly, and without consideration, if we are cold and dull, and dead in it, we bring the sick; if we rest in bodily exercises, and do not make heart work of it, we bring the lame; and if we suffer vain thoughts and distractions to lodge within us, we bring the torn. And is not this evil? Is it not a great affront to God, and a great wrong and injury to our own souls? Do not our books tell us, nay, do not our own hearts tell us, that this is evil? For God, who is the best, ought to be served with the best we have.

Secondly. They would do no more of their work but what they were paid for. The priests would offer the sacrifices that were brought to the altar, because they had their share of them; but as for any other service of the temple, that had not a particular fee belonging to it, they would not stir a step, or lend a hand to it; and this was the general temper of them, ver. 10. There is not a man among the priests that would shut the doors or kindle a fire for nought. If he were bid to do the smallest piece of service, he would ask, How shall I be paid for it? They would do nothing gratis, but were all for what they could get; "every one for his gain, from his quarter," *Isa.* lvi. 11. Note, Though God has given order that his servants be well paid in this world, yet those are no acceptable servants to him that are mercenary, and would never do the work but for the wages.

Thirdly. Their work was a perfect drudgery to them; ver. 13, "Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it!" Both priests and people were of this mind, that they thought God imposed too hard a task upon them; the people grudged the charge of providing the sacrifice, and the priests grudged the pains of offering it; they thought the feasts of the Lord came too thick, and they were forced to attend too often, and too long, in the courts of the Lord. The priests thought it a severe penance imposed upon them to purify themselves as was required, when they attended the altar, and ate of the holy things; they thought the duty of their office toilsome and troublesome, and snuffed at it as unreasonable, and bearing hard upon them; they did it, but it was grudgingly, and with reluctancy. God speaks of it in justification of his law, that he had not "made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense," *Isa.* xliii. 23; "Wherein have I wearied thee?" *Mic.* vi. 3. But their own wicked hearts made it a weariness; and they were as Doeg, detained before the Lord, they would rather have been anywhere else. Note, Those are highly injurious both to God and themselves that are weary of his service and worship, and snuff at it.

Thirdly. Observe how God expostulates and reasons the case with them, for their conviction and humiliation.

1. Would they, durst they, affront an earthly prince thus? You offer to God "the lame and the sick, offer it now unto thy governor," ver. 8; either as tribute or as a present, when thou art entreating his favour, or in gratitude for some favour received; "will he be pleased with thee?" or rather will he not take himself to be affronted by it? Note, Those that are careless and irreverent in the duties of religious worship should consider what a shame it is to offer that to their God which they would scorn to offer to their governor, and to be more observant of the laws of breeding and good manners than of the laws of religion, and more afraid of being rude than of being profane.

2. Could they imagine that such sacrifices as these would be pleasing to God, or answer the end of sacrifices? "Should I accept this of your hand, saith the Lord?" ver. 13. Have you any reason to think I should either not discern or not resent the affront? that I should connive at the violation of my own laws? No; ver. 10, "I have no pleasure in you," and therefore I will not accept an offering, such an offering, at your hand. If God has no pleasure in the person, if he be not in a justified state, if he be not sanctified, he will not accept the offering; God had respect to Abel first, and then to his sacrifice. Note, In order to our acceptance with God, it is not enough to do that which, for the matter of it, is good, but we must do it from a right principle, in a right manner, and for a right end. It was the ancient rule laid down, *Gen.* iv. 7, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" Now if we be not accepted of God, in vain do we worship him,—it is all lost labour; nay, we are all undone, for ever undone, if we come short of God's acceptance; those therefore make an ill bargain for themselves, that, to save charges in their religion, miss all the ends of it, and, by thinking to go the next way to work, bring nothing to pass. Those who make it the top of their ambition, as we all ought to do, whether present or absent, to be accepted of the Lord, will not dare to bring the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice.

3. How could they expect to prevail with God in their intercessions for the people, when they thus affronted God in their sacrifices? So some understand ver. 9, as spoken ironically: And now, if you will do the duty of priests, and stand in the gap to turn away the judgments of God that you see ready to pour in upon us, "I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us," and to our land, which is almost eaten up with locusts and caterpillars, as appears *ch.* iii. 11. Try now what interest you have at the throne of grace, improve it for the removing of this plague, for it has been by your means, you have provoked God to send it; but, as you go on thus to profane his sacred things, will he regard your persons or your prayers? No, you cannot prevail with him to command it away. For "if we regard iniquity in our hearts God will not hear us," either for ourselves or others.

4. Had God deserved this at their hands? No, he had provided comfortably for them, and had given them such encouragement in their work as might have engaged them to do it cheerfully and well; so some understand ver. 10, "Who is there among you that shall shut a door or kindle a fire for nought?" No, God doth not expect you should serve him for nothing; you are well paid for it, and shall be so,—not a cup of cold water given for the honour of God shall lose its reward. Note, The consideration of our constant receivings from God, and the present rewards of obedience in obedience, very much aggravates our slothfulness and niggardliness in our returns of duty to God.

Fourthly. He calls them to repentance for their profanations of his holy name. So we may understand ver. 9, "Now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us." Humble yourselves for your sin, cry mightily to God for pardon, and make up in the faith and fervency of your prayers what has been wanting in the worth and value of your sacrifices; for all the rebukes of Providence we are under are by your means. Note, Those that have by their sins helped to kindle a fire are highly concerned by their repentance, prayers, and personal reformation, to help to quench it. We must see how much God's judgments are by our means, and be awakened thereby to be earnest with him to return in mercy; and if we take not this course how can we think he should regard our persons!

Fifthly. He declares his resolution both to secure the glory of his own name and to reckon with those that do profane it. Those that put contempt upon God and religion, and think to run down sacred things, let them know,

1. That they shall not gain their point. God will magnify his law, and make it honourable, though they vilify it and make it contemptible; for, ver. 11, "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles." It might be said, If these be not the worshippers whom God will accept, then he has no worshippers; as if he must make the best of their service, or else he would have no service done him; and then what will he do for his great name? But let him alone for that: though Israel be not faithful, be not gathered, yet God will be glorious; though these priests provoke him to take down the ceremonial economy, and to abolish that law of commandments which "could not make the comers thereunto perfect," yet he will be no loser by that at the long run; for, 1st. Instead of those carnal ordinances which they profaned, a spiritual way of worship shall be introduced and established. "Incense shall be offered to God's name," which signifies prayer and praise, (*Ps.* cxli. 2; *Rev.* viii. 3,) instead of the blood and fat of bulls and goats. And it shall be a pure offering, refined, not only from the corruptions that were in the priests' practice, but from the mere bodily exercise that was in the institutions themselves, which are called "carnal ordinances, imposed till the time of reformation," *Heb.* ix. 10. When the hour came in which "the true worshippers worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth," then this

incense was offered, even this pure offering. 2nd. Instead of his being worshipped and served among the Jews only, a small people in a corner of the world, he will be served and worshipped in all places. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, in every place," in every part of the world, "incense shall be offered to his name," nations shall be discipled, and shall speak of the wonderful works of God, and have them spoken to them in their own language. This is a plain prediction of that great revolution in the kingdom of grace by which the Gentiles that had been strangers and foreigners came to be fellow-citizens with the saints of the household of God, and as welcome to the throne of grace as ever the Jews had been. It is twice said, for the thing was certain, "My name shall be great among the Gentiles," whereas hitherto in Judah only he was known, and his name great, *Ps.* lxxvi. 1. God's name shall be declared to them, the declaration of it shall be received and believed, and there shall be those among the Gentiles that shall magnify and glorify the name of God better than ever the Jews had done, even the priests themselves.

2. That they shall "not go unpunished," ver. 4. Here is the doom of those that do like these priests here, for the sentence on them is a sentence on all such. Observe, 1st. The description of profane and careless worshippers. They are such as "vow and sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt thing," when they have in their flock a male. They have of the best wherewith to serve and honour him, so bountiful has he been in his gifts to them; but they put him off with the worst, and think that good enough for him, so ungrateful are they in their returns to him. This was the fault of the people; but the priests connived at it, and indulged them in it. We find a distinction in the law, which allowed that to be offered for a freewill offering which should not be accepted for a vow, *Lev.* xxii. 23. But the priests would accept it though God would not, pretending to be more indulgent than he was, for which he will give them no thanks another day. 2nd. The character given of such worshippers. They are deceivers; they deal falsely and fraudulently with God; they play the hypocrite with him; they pretend to honour him in making the vow, but when it comes to be performed they put an affront upon him to that degree that it had been better not to have vowed than to vow and thus to pay. But let not such be themselves deceived, for God is not mocked; those that think to put a cheat upon God will prove in the end to have put a damning cheat upon their own souls. Hypocrites are deceivers, and they will prove self-deceivers, and so self-destroyers. 3rd. The doom passed upon them. They are cursed; they expect a blessing, but will meet with a curse, the tokens of God's wrath, according to the judgment written. 4th. The reason of this doom. "For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts," and therefore will reckon with those that deal with me but as a man like themselves; "my name is dreadful among the heathen," and therefore I will not bear that it should be contemptible among mine own people. The heathen paid more respect to their gods, though idols, than the Jews did to theirs, though the only true and living God. Note, The consideration of God's universal dominion, and the universal acknowledgment of it, should restrain us from all irreverence in his service.

CHAPTER II.

There are two great ordinances which Divine wisdom hath instituted, the wretched profanation of both which is complained of and sharply reproved in this chapter: I. The ordinance of the ministry, which is peculiar to the church, and is designed for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned by those that were themselves dignified with the honour of it, and intrusted with the business of it. The priests profaned the holy things of God; this they are here charged with, their sin is aggravated, and they are severely threatened for it, ver. 1—9. II. The ordinance of marriage, which is common to the world of mankind, and was instituted for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned both by the priests and by the people, in marrying strangers, ver. 10—12; treating their wives unkindly, ver. 13; putting them away, ver. 16; and herein dealing treacherously, ver. 10, 14, 15; and that which was at the bottom of this, and other instances of profaneness, was downright atheism, thinking God altogether such a one as themselves, which was in effect to say, There is no God, ver. 17. And these reproofs to them are warnings to us.

AND now, O ye priests, this commandment *is* for you.
2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay *it* to heart,
To give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts,
I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings:
Yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay *it* to heart.
3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed,
And spread dung upon your faces,
Even the dung of your solemn feasts;
And *one* shall take you away with it.
4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you,
That my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.
5 My covenant was with him of life and peace;
And I gave them to him
For the fear wherewith he feared me,
And was afraid before my name.
6 The law of truth was in his mouth,
And iniquity was not found in his lips:
He walked with me in peace and equity,
And did turn many away from iniquity.
7 For the priest's lips should keep knowledge,
And they should seek the law at his mouth:
For he *is* the messenger of the LORD of hosts.
8 But ye are departed out of the way;
Ye have caused many to stumble at the law;
Ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.
9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people,
According as ye have not kept my ways,
But have been partial in the law.

What was said in the foregoing chapter was directed to the priests; *ch.* i. 6, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, that despise my name;" but the crimes here charged upon them they were guilty of as sacrificers, and for those they might think it some excuse that they offered what the people brought, and if they were not so good as they should be it was not their fault, but the people's; and therefore here the corruptions there complained of are traced to the source and spring of them, the faults the priests were guilty of as teachers of the people, as expositors of the law and the lively oracles. And this is a part of their office which still remains in the hands of gospel ministers, who are appointed to be pastors and teachers like the priests under the law, though not sacrificers like them; and therefore by them the admonition here is to be particularly regarded. If the priests had given the people better instructions, the people would have brought better offerings, and therefore the blame returns upon the priests; "And now, O ye priests, this commandment is" purely "for you," ver. 1, who should have taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord, and how to worship him aright. Note, The governors of the churches are under God's government, and to him they are accountable. Even for them that command God hath commandments. Nay, ver. 4, "Ye shall know that I have sent these commandments for you;" shall know it either, 1. By the power of the Spirit working with the word for their conviction and reformation; you shall know its original by its efficacy, whence it comes by what it doth. When the word of God to us brings about, and carries on, the work of God in us, then we cannot but know that he sent it to us, that it is not the word of Malachi, God's messenger, but it is indeed the word of God, and is sent not only in general to all, but in particular to us. Or, 2. By the accomplishment of the threatenings denounced against them; "Ye shall know" to your cost "that I have sent this commandment to you," for it shall not return void. Let us now see what this commandment is that is for the priests, which they must know was sent to them, and put into method the particulars of the charge.

First. Here is a recital of the covenant God made with that sacred tribe, which was their commission for their work and the patent of their honour. The Lord of hosts sent a commandment to them, for the establishing of this covenant, ver. 4, for his covenant is said to be the word which he commanded, *Ps.* cv. 8. And he sent this commandment by the prophet at this time for the re-establishing of it, that it might not be cut off for their persisting in the violation of it. Let the sons of Levi know then (and particularly the sons of Aaron) what honour God put upon their family, and what a trust he reposed in them; ver. 5, "My covenant was with him of life and peace." Besides the covenant of peculiarity made with all the house of Israel, there was a covenant of priesthood made with one family that they should do the services, and upon condition of that, should enjoy all the privileges, of the priest's office; that as Israel was a peculiar nation, a kingdom of priests, so the house of Aaron should be a family of priests set apart for the service and honour of God, to bear up his name in that nation as they were to bear up his name among the nations; both the one and the other in different degrees were to give glory unto God's name, ver. 2. God covenanted with them as his menial servants, obliged them to do his work, and promised to own and accept them in it. This is called his covenant of life and peace, because it was intended for the support of religion, which brings life and peace to the souls of men,—life to the dead, peace to the distressed; or because life and peace were by this covenant promised to those priests that faithfully and conscientiously discharged their duty; they shall have peace, which speaks security from all evil, and life, which speaks the summary of all good. What is here said of the covenant of priesthood is true of the covenant of grace made with all believers as spiritual priests; it is a covenant of life and peace; it assures all believers of life and peace, everlasting peace, everlasting life, of all happiness, both in this world and in that to come. This covenant was made with the whole tribe of Levi when they were distinguished from the rest of the tribes,—were not numbered with them, but were taken from among them, and "appointed over the tabernacle of testimony," *Num.* i. 49, 50; by virtue of which appointment God saith, *Num.* iii. 12, "The Levites shall be mine." It was made with Aaron when he and his sons were taken to "minister unto the Lord in the priest's office," *Ex.* xxviii. 1. Aaron is therefore called the saint of the Lord, *Ps.* cvi. 16. It was made with Phinehas and his family, a branch of Aaron's, upon a particular occasion, *Num.* xxv. 12, 13. And there the covenant of priesthood is called as here the covenant of peace, because by it peace was made and kept between God and Israel. These great blessings of life and peace contained in that covenant, God gave to him, to Levi, to Aaron, and to Phinehas; promised life and peace to them and their posterity, intrusted them with these benefits for the use and behoof of God's Israel; they received that they might give, as Christ himself did, *Ps.* lxviii. 18. Now, for the farther opening of this covenant, observe,

1. The considerations upon which it was grounded. It was "for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name." The tribe of Levi gave a signal proof of their holy fear of God, and their reverence for his name, when they appeared so bravely against the worshippers of the golden calf, *Ex.* xxxii. 26; and for their zeal in that matter God bestowed this blessing upon them, and invited them to consecrate themselves unto him. Phinehas also shewed himself zealous in the fear of God and his judgments, when, to stay the plague, he stabbed Zimri and Cozbi, *Ps.* cvi. 30, 31. Note, Those, and those only, that fear God's name can expect the benefit of the covenant of life and peace; and those who give proofs of their zeal for God it shall without fail be recompensed to them, in the glorious privileges of the Christian priesthood. Some read this, not as the consideration of the grant, but as the condition of it, "I gave them to him," provided that he should fear before me. If God grants us life and peace he expects we should fear before him.

2. The trust that was lodged in the priests by this covenant, ver. 7. They were hereby made the messengers of the Lord of hosts, messengers of that covenant of life and peace; not mediators of it, but only messengers, or ambassadors, employed to treat of the terms of peace between God and Israel. They were God's mouth to his people, from whom they must receive instructions according to the lively oracles. This was the office to which Levi was advanced; because, in his zeal for God, he did not acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children, therefore "they shall teach Jacob God's judgments." *Deu.* xxxiii. 9, 10. Note, It is an honour to God's servants to be employed as his messengers, and to be sent on his errands. Angels have their name from thence; Haggai was called the Lord's messenger. This being their office, observe,

1st. What is the duty of ministers. "The priests' lips should keep knowledge,"

not keep it from his people, but keep it for them. Ministers must be men of knowledge; for how are they able to teach others the things of God who are themselves unacquainted with those things or unready in them? They must keep knowledge, must furnish themselves with it, and retain what they have got, that they may be like the good householder, that "brings out of his treasury things new and old." Not only their heads, but their lips, must keep knowledge; they must not only have it, but they must have it ready, must have it at hand,—must have it, as we say, at their tongues' end,—to be communicated to others as there is occasion. Thus we read of wisdom in "the lips of him that hath understanding," with which they feed many, *Pr.* x. 13, 21.

2nd. What is the duty of the people. They should seek the law at his mouth; should consult the priest as God's messenger, and not only hear the message, but ask questions upon it, that they may the better understand it, and mistakes concerning it may be prevented and rectified. We are all concerned fully to know what the will of the Lord is, to know it distinctly and certainly, should be desirous to know it, and therefore inquisitive concerning it; "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" must not only consult the written word, "to the law and to the testimony," but must have recourse to God's messengers, and desire instruction and advice from them in the affairs of our souls, as we do from physicians and lawyers concerning our bodies and estates. Not but that ministers ought to lay down the law of God to those who do not inquire concerning it, or desire the knowledge of it,—they must "instruct them that oppose themselves," 2 *Tim.* ii. 25, as well as those that offer themselves; but it is people's duty to apply themselves to them for instruction, not only to hear, but to ask questions. Watchman, what of the night? thus, "if ye will inquire, inquire ye:" see *Isa.* xxi. 8, 11, 12. People should not only seek comfort at the mouth of their ministers, but seek the law there; for if we be found in the way of duty we shall find it the way of comfort.

Secondly. Here is a memorial of the fidelity and zeal of many of their predecessors in the priest's office, which is mentioned as an aggravation of their sin in degenerating from such honourable ancestors, and deserting such illustrious examples; and as a justification of God in withdrawing from them those tokens of his presence which he had granted to them that kept close to him. See here, ver. 6, how good the godly priest was whose steps they should have trod in, and what good he did, God's grace working with him.

1. See how good he was. He was ready and mighty in the Scriptures; "The law of truth was in his mouth" for the use of those that asked the law at his mouth; and in all his discourses there appeared more or less of the law of truth. Every thing he said was under the government of that law, and with it he governed others. He spake as one having authority, every word was a law, and as one that had both wisdom and integrity; it was a law of truth, and truth is a law, it has a commanding power,—it is by truth that Christ rules. "The law of truth was in his mouth," for his resolutions of cases of conscience proposed to him were such as might be depended upon; his opinion was good law. "Iniquity was not found in his lips;" he did not "handle the word of God deceitfully" to please men, to serve a turn, or make an interest for himself, but told all that consulted him what the law was, whether it were pleasing or displeasing. He did not pronounce that unclean which was clean, nor that clean which was unclean, as one of the rabbins expounds it; and his conversation was of a piece with this doctrine. God himself gives him this honourable testimony, "He walked with me in peace and equity;" he did not think it enough to talk of God, but he walked with him. The temper of his mind and the tenor of his life were of a piece with his doctrine and profession; he lived a life of communion with God, and made it his constant care and business to please him; he lived like a priest that was chosen to walk before God, 1 *Sam.* ii. 30. His conversation was quiet, he was meek and gentle towards all men, was a pattern and promoter of love; he walked with God in peace, was himself peaceable, and a great peacemaker; and it was honest, he did no wrong to any, but made conscience of rendering to all their due; He walked with me in equity, or rectitude. We must not for peace sake transgress the rules of equity, but must keep the peace as far as is consistent with justice; the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable. Ministers, of all men, are concerned to walk with God in peace and equity, that they may be examples to the flock.

2. See what good he did. He answered the ends of his advancement to that office; "He did turn many away from iniquity." He made it his business to do good, and God crowned his endeavours with wonderful success; he helped to save many a soul from death, and there are multitudes now in heaven blessing God that ever they knew him. Ministers must lay out themselves to the utmost for the conversion of sinners, and even among those that have the name of Israelites there is need of conversion work; there are many to be turned from iniquity; and they must reckon it an honour, and a rich reward of their labour, if they may but be instrumental herein. It is God only that by his grace can turn men from iniquity, and yet it is here said of a pious, laborious minister, that he turned men from iniquity, as a worker together with God, and an instrument in his hand; and they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars, *Dan.* xii. 3. Note, Those ministers, and those only, are likely to turn men from iniquity that preach sound doctrine and live good lives, and both according to the Scripture; for, as one of the rabbins observes here, when the priest is upright many will be upright.

Thirdly. Here is a high charge drawn up against the priests of the present age, who violated the covenant of the priesthood, and went directly contrary both to the rules and to the examples that were set before them. Many particulars of their sins we had in the chapters before, and we find, *Neh.* xiii., that there were many corruptions crept into the church of the Jews at this time,—mixed marriages, admitting strangers into the house of God, profanation of the sabbath-day, which were all owing to the carelessness and unfaithfulness of the priests; here it is charged upon them in general,

1. That they transgressed the rule. "Ye are departed out of the way," ver. 8; out of the good way which God hath prescribed to you, and which your godly ancestors walked before you in. It is ill with a people when those whose office it is to guide them in the way do themselves depart out of it. "Ye have not kept my ways," not kept in them yourselves, nor done your part to keep others in them, ver. 9.

2. That they betrayed their trust. "Ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi," have violated it, have contradicted the great intentions of it, and have done what in you lay to frustrate and defeat them; you have managed your office as if it were designed only to feed you fat, and make you great, and not for the glory of God and the good of the souls of men. This was a corrupting of the covenant of Levi; it was perverting the ends of the office, and making it truckle to those sensual, secular things, over which it ought always to have dominion. And thus they forfeited the benefit of that covenant, and corrupted it to themselves; they made it void, and lost that life and peace which was by it settled upon them. We have no reason to expect God should perform his part of the covenant if we do not make conscience of performing ours. Another instance of their betraying their trust was, that they were "partial in the law," ver. 9. In the law given to them they would pick and choose their duty,—this they would do, and that they would not do, just as they pleased, which is the fashion of hypocrites; while those whose hearts are upright with God have a respect to all his commandments. Or, rather, in the law they were to lay down to the people. In this they knew faces, so the word is; they accepted persons; they wilfully misinterpreted and misapplied the law, either to cross those they had a spleen to or countenance those they had a kindness for; would wink at those sins in some which in others they would be sharp upon, according as their interest or inclination led them. God is no respecter of persons in making his law, nor will he in reckoning for the breach of it; he regardeth not the rich more than the poor, and therefore his priests, his ministers, misrepresent him, and do him a great deal of dishonour, if in doctrine or discipline they be respecters of persons: see 1 *Tim.* v. 21.

3. That they did a great deal of mischief to the souls of men, which they should have helped to save. "Ye have caused many to stumble at the law;" not only to fall in the law, as the margin reads it, by transgressing it, taught and encouraged to do so by the examples of the priests, but to stumble at the law by contracting prejudices against it, as if the law were the minister of sin, and gave countenance to it. Thus Hophni and Phinehas by their wickedness "made the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred," 1 *Sam.* ii. 17. There are many to whom the law of God is a stumblingblock, the Gospel of Christ a "savour of death unto death," and Christ himself a rock of offence; and nothing contributes more to this than the vicious lives of those that make a profession of religion, by which men are tempted to say it is all a jest. This is properly a scandal, a stone of stumbling; there is no good reason it should be so to any, but "Woe to those to whom this offence comes."

4. That when they were under the rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God for it, they would not hear, that is, they would not heed, they "would not lay it to heart;" they were not at all grieved or shamed for their sin, nor affected with the tokens of God's displeasure they were under. What we hear doth us no good unless we lay it to heart, and admit the impressions of it. "Ye will not lay it to heart" to "give glory unto my name," by repentance and reformation. Therefore we should lay to heart the things of God, that we may give glory to the name of God, may praise him in and for all that whereby he hath made himself known. It is bad in any to rob God of his honour, but worst in ministers, whose office and business it is to bear up his name, and to give him the glory due to it.

Fourthly. Here is a record of the judgments God had brought upon these priests for their profaneness, and their profanation of holy things.

1. They had lost their comfort; ver. 2, "I have already cursed your blessings." They had not the comfort of their work, which is the satisfaction of doing good; for the blessings with which they, as priests, blessed the people, God was so far from saying Amen to, that he turned them into curses, as he did Balaam's curses into blessings, that profane people should not have the favour of receiving God's blessings, nor those profane priests the honour of conferring and conveying them, but both should lie under the tokens of his wrath. Nor had they the comfort of their wages; for the blessings with which God blessed them were turned into a curse to them, by their abuse of them; they could not receive them as the gifts of his favour, when they had made themselves so obnoxious to his displeasure by not laying to heart the reproofs given them.

2. They had lost their credit; ver. 9, "Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people." While they glorified God he dignified them, and supported their reputation. And a great interest they had in the love and esteem of the people. While they did their duty, and walked with God in peace and equity, every one had a value and veneration for them, they were truly styled the reverend the priests: but when they forsook the ways of God, and corrupted the covenant of Levi, they thereby made themselves not only mean, but vile, in the eyes even of the common people, who, the more they honoured the order, the more they hated the men that were a dishonour to it. Their carriage, their misconduct, had a direct tendency to this, and God owns his hand in it, and will have it looked upon as a just judgment of his upon them, and not only produced by their sin, but answering to it; they put dishonour upon God, and made "his table and the fruit thereof contemptible," *ch.* i. 12, and therefore God justly put dishonour upon them, and made them contemptible; they exposed themselves, and therefore God exposed them. Note, Sin, as it is a reproach to any people, so especially to priests. There is not a more despicable animal upon the face of the earth than a profane, wicked, scandalous minister.

Fifthly. Here is a sentence of wrath passed upon them, and this the prophet begins with, ver. 2, 3. But it is conditional: "If ye will not lay it to heart;" implying, if you will, God's anger shall be turned away, and all shall be well; but, if you persist in these wicked courses, hear your doom,—your sin will be your ruin.

1. They shall fall and lie under the curse of God; "I will send a curse upon you." The wrath of God shall be revealed against them, according to the threatenings of the written word. Note, They who violate the commands of the law lay themselves under the curses of the law.

2. Neither their employments nor their enjoyments as priests shall be clean to them; "I will curse your blessings," so that you shall neither be blessed yourselves, nor blessings to the people, but even your plenty shall be plagues to you, and ye shall be plagues to your generation.

3. The fruits of the earth, which they had the tithe of, should be no comfort to them. "Behold I will corrupt your seed." The corn you sow shall rot under ground, and never come up again; the consequence of which must needs be famine and scarcity of provisions, so that no meat offerings shall be brought to the altar, which the priests will soon have a loss of. Or it may be understood of the seed of the word which they preached. God threatens to deny his blessing with the instructions they gave the people, so that their labour shall be lost, as that of the husbandman is when the seed is corrupt; and so it agrees with that threatening, *Jer.* xxiii. 32, "They shall not profit this people at all."

4. They and their services shall be rejected of God. He will be so far from taking any pleasure in them that he will loathe and detest them; "I will spread dung in your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts," that is, of the sacrifices that were offered at those feasts. Instead of being himself pleased with the fat of their sacrifices, he will shew himself displeased, by throwing the dung of them in their faces, which he doth, in effect, when he saith, Bring no more vain oblations, your incense is an abomination to me. Note, Those that rest in their external performances of religion, which they should count but dung that they may win Christ, shall not only come short of acceptance with God in them, but shall be filled with shame and confusion for their folly.

5. All will end at last in their utter ruin; "One shall take you away with it." They shall be so overspread with the dung of their sacrifices that they shall be carried away with it to the dunghill, as a part of it. Any one shall serve to take you away, the common scavenger. Reprobate silver shall men call them, and treat them accordingly, because the Lord has rejected them.

10 Have we not all one father?
Hath not one God created us?
Why do we deal treacherously every man against his bro-
By profaning the covenant of our fathers? [ther,

11 Judah hath dealt treacherously, [salem;
And an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jeru-
For Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved,
And hath married the daughter of a strange god.
12 The LORD will cut off the man that doeth this,
The master and the scholar,
Out of the tabernacles of Jacob,
And him that offereth an offering unto the LORD of hosts.
13 And this have ye done again,
Covering the altar of the LORD with tears,
With weeping, and with crying out,
Insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more,
Or receiveth *it* with good will at your hand.
14 Yet ye say, Wherefore?
Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth,
Against whom thou hast dealt treacherously:
Yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.
15 And did not he make one?
Yet had he the residue of the spirit.
And wherefore one?
That he might seek a godly seed.
Therefore take heed to your spirit, [youth.
And let none deal treacherously against the wife of his
16 For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away:
For *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts:
Therefore take heed to your spirit,
That ye deal not treacherously.
17 Ye have wearied the LORD with your words.
Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied *him?* When ye say,
Every one that doeth evil *is* good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them;
Or, Where *is* the God of judgment?

Corrupt practices are the genuine fruit and product of corrupt principles; and the badness of men's hearts and lives is owing to some loose, atheistical notions which they have got, and govern themselves by. Now in these verses we have an instance of this; we here find men dealing falsely with one another, and it is because they think falsely of their God. Observe,

First. How corrupt their practices were. In general they dealt treacherously "every man against his brother," ver. 10. It cannot be expected that he who is false to his God should be true to his friend. They had dealt treacherously with God in his tithes and offerings, and had defrauded him, and thus conscience was debauched, its bonds and cords broken, and a door opened to all manner of injustice and dishonesty, and the bonds of relation and natural affection are broken through likewise, and no difficulty made of it. Some think the treacherous dealings here reproved are the same with those instances of oppression and extortion which we find complained of to Nehemiah about this time, *Neh.* v. 3—7. Therein they forgot the God of their fathers, and the covenant of their fathers, and rendered their offerings unacceptable, *Isa.* i. 11. But it seems rather to refer to what was amiss in their marriages, which was likewise complained of, *Neh.* xiii. 23.

Two things they are charged with as very provoking to God in this matter, —taking strange wives of heathen nations, and abusing and putting away the wives they had of their own nation; and in both these they dealt treacherously, and violated a sacred covenant: the former was in contempt of the covenant of peculiarity, the latter of the marriage covenant.

1. In contempt of the covenant of God made with Israel as a peculiar people to himself, they married strange wives, which was expressly prohibited, and provided against, in that covenant, *Deu.* vii. 3. Observe here,

1st. What good reason they had to deal faithfully with God and one another in this covenant, and not to make marriages with the heathen. *First.* They were expressly bound up from such marriages by covenant. God engaged to do them good upon this condition, that they should not mingle themselves with the heathen. This was the covenant of their fathers, the covenant made with their fathers, noting the antiquity and authority of it; and its being the great charter by which that nation was incorporated, they lay under all possible obligations to observe it strictly, and yet they profaned it, as if they were not bound by it. They profane the covenant of their fathers who live in disobedience to the command of the God of their fathers. *Secondly.* They were a peculiar people, united in one body, and therefore ought to have united for the preserving of the honour of their peculiarity. "Have we not all one Father?" Yes, we have; for "has not one God created us?" Are we not all his offspring? Are we not made of one blood? Yes, certainly we are. God is a common Father to all mankind, and, upon that account, all we are brethren, members one of another, and therefore ought to put away lying, *Eph.* iv. 25, and not to deal treacherously, no, not any man against his brother. But here it seems to refer to the Jewish nation; "Have we not all one Father," Abraham, or Jacob? This they prided themselves in, "We have Abraham to our father." But here it is turned upon them as an aggravation of their sin, in betraying the honour of their nation by marrying with heathens; "Hath not one God created us?" that is, formed us into a people, made us a nation by ourselves, and put a life into us distinct from that of other nations. And should not this oblige us to maintain the dignity of our character? Note, The consideration of the unity of the church in Christ, its Founder and Father, should engage us carefully to preserve the purity of the church, and to guard against all corruptions. *Thirdly.* They were dedicated to God, as well as distinguished from the neighbour nations. "Israel was holiness to the Lord," *Jer.* ii. 3, taken into covenant with him, set apart by him for himself, to be to him for a name and a praise, and upon this account he loved them, and delighted in them. The sanctuary set up among them was the "holiness of the Lord, which he loved," of which he said, It is "my rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it;" but by their marrying strange wives they profaned this holiness, and laid the honour of it in the dust. Note, Those that are devoted to God, and beloved of him, are concerned to preserve their integrity, that they may not throw themselves out of his love, nor lose the honour, or defeat the end, of their dedication to him.

2nd. How treacherously they dealt notwithstanding. They profaned themselves in that very thing which was prescribed to them for the preserving of the honour of their singularity. Judah has "married the daughter of a strange god." The harm was not so much that she was the daughter of a strange nation, (God has made all nations of men, and is himself king of nations,) but that she is the daughter of a strange god, trained up in the service and worship of false gods, and at their disposal, as a daughter at her father's disposal, and having a dependence upon them; hence some of the rabbins (quoted by Dr. Pocock) say, 'He that marries a heathen woman is as if he made himself son-in-law to an idol.' It began the corruption of the old world, that the sons of God married the daughters of men, *Gen.* vi. 2. It is the same thing that is here complained of, but, as it is expressed, it sounds worse,—the sons of God married the daughters of a strange god. Herein Judah is said to have dealt treacherously, for they basely betrayed their own honour, and profaned that holiness of the Lord which they should have loved, so some read it; and it is said to be "an abomination committed in Israel and in Jerusalem;" it was hateful to God, and very unbecoming those that were called by his name. Note, It is an abominable thing for those that profess the holiness of the Lord to profane it, particularly by yoking themselves unequally with unbelievers.

3rd. How severely God would reckon with them for it; ver. 12, "The Lord will cut off the man that doth this," that marries the daughter of a strange god. He has in effect cut himself off from the holy nation, and joined in with foreigners and aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and so shall his doom be; "God will cut him off, him and all that belong to him," so the original intimates. He shall be cut off from Israel and from Jerusalem, and not be written among the living there. The Lord will cut off both "the master and the scholar" that are guilty of this sin; both the teachers and the taught, the blind leaders and the blind followers, shall fall together into the ditch; both him that wakeneth and him that answereth, (so it is in the margin,) for the master calls up his scholar to his business, and stirs him up in it. They shall be cut off together "out of the tabernacles of Jacob," God will no more own them as belonging to his nation. Nay, and the priest that "offereth an offering to the Lord," if he marry a strange wife (as we find many of the priests did, *Ezr.* x. 18,) he shall not escape; the offering he offers shall not atone for him, but he shall be cut off from the temple of the Lord, as others from the tabernacles of Jacob. Nehemiah chased away from him and from the priesthood one of the sons of the high priest whom he found guilty of this sin, *Neh.* xiii. 28.

2. In contempt of the marriage covenant, which God instituted for the common benefit of mankind, they abused and put away the wives they had of their own nation, probably to make room for those strange wives, when it was all the fashion to marry such; ver. 13, "This also have ye done." This is the second article of the charge, for the way of sin is down-hill, and one violation of the covenant is an inlet to another.

1st. Let us see what it is that is here complained of. They did not carry it as they ought to do towards their wives. *First.* They were cross with them, froward and peevish, and made their lives bitter to them; so that when they came with their wives and families to worship God at the solemn feasts, which they should have done with rejoicing, they were all out of humour; the poor wives were ready to break their hearts, and, not daring to make their case known to any other, they complained to God, and "covered the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with crying." This is illustrated by the instance of Hannah, who, upon account of her husband having another wife, (though otherwise a kind husband,) and the discontent thence arising, whenever they went up to the house of the Lord to worship fretted and wept, and was in bitterness of soul, and would not eat, 1 *Sam.* i. 6, 7, 10; so it was with these wives here. This was so contrary to that cheerfulness which God requires in his worshippers, that it spoiled the acceptableness of their devotions; God "regardeth not their offering any more." See what a good Master they serve, who will not have his altar covered with tears, but compassed with songs; which condemns those that left his worship for that of idols, among the rites of which we find "women weeping for Tammuz," *Eze.* viii. 14, and the blood of the worshippers gushing out upon the altar, 1 *Kin.* xviii. 28. See also what an ill thing it is to put others out of frame for the cheerful worship of God. Though it is their fault by their fretfulness to indispose themselves for their duty, yet it is much more their fault that "provoked them to make them to fret." It is a reason given why yoke-fellows should live in holy love and joy, "that their prayers may not be hindered," 1 *Pet.* iii. 7. *Secondly.* They dealt treacherously with them, ver. 14—16. They did not perform their promises to them, but defrauded them of their maintenance or dower, or took in concubines to share in the affection that was due to their wives only. *Thirdly.* They put them away, gave them a bill of divorce, and turned them off. Nay, perhaps they did it without the ceremony that the law of Moses prescribed, ver. 16. *Fourthly.* In all this they covered violence with their garment. They abused their wives, and were vexatious to them; and yet, in the sight of others, they pretended to be very loving to them, and tender of them, and to cast a skirt over them. It is common for those that do violence to advance some specious pretence or other wherewith to cover it as with a garment.

2nd. Let us see the proof and aggravations of the charge. *First.* It is sufficiently proved by the testimony of God himself; "The Lord has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth," ver. 14; has been witness to the marriage covenant between thee and her, for to him you appealed concerning your sincerity in it, and fidelity to it; he has been a witness to all the violations of it, and all thy treacherous dealings in contempt of it, and is ready to judge between thee and her. Note, This should engage us to be faithful both to God and to all with whom we have to do, that God himself is a witness both to all our covenants and to all our covenant breaches; and he is a witness against whom there lies no exception. *Secondly.* It is highly aggravated by the consideration of the person wronged and abused. 1*st.* She is thy wife, thy own, bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh; the nearest to thee of all the relations thou hast in the world, and to cleave to whom thou must quit the rest. 2*nd.* She is "the wife of thy youth;" that is, who had thy affections when they were at the strongest, was thy first choice, and with whom thou hast lived long. Let not the darling of thy youth be the scorn and loathing of thine age. 3*rd.* She is thy companion; she has long been an equal sharer with thee in thy cares, and griefs, and joys. The wife is to be looked upon not as a servant, but as a companion

to the husband, with whom he should freely converse and take sweet counsel as with a friend, and in whose company he should take delight more than in any other's, for is she not appointed to be thy companion? *4th.* She is "the wife of thy covenant," to whom thou art so firmly bound that while she continues faithful thou canst not be loosed from her, for it was a covenant for life. It is the wife with whom thou hast covenanted, and who has covenanted with thee; there is an oath of God between you, which is not to be trifled with, is not to be played fast and loose with. Married people should often call to mind their marriage vows, and review them with all seriousness, as those that make conscience of performing what they promised.

3rd. Let us see the reasons given why man and wife should continue together to their lives' end in holy love and peace, and neither quarrel with each other nor part from each other. *First.* Because God has joined them together; ver. 15, "Did not he make one?" One Eve for one Adam, that Adam might never "take another to vex her," *Lev.* xviii. 18, nor put her away to make room for another. It is great wickedness to complain of the law of marriage as a confinement, when Adam, in innocency, in honour, in Eden, in the garden of pleasure, was confined to one. Yet God had "the residue of the Spirit," he could have made another Eve as amiable as that he did make, but designing "Adam a help meet for him," he made him one wife; had he made him more he had not had a meet help. And wherefore did he make but one woman for one man? It was that he might seek a godly seed, a seed of God, so the word is, a seed that should bear the image of God, be employed in the service of God, and be devoted to his glory and honour; that every man having his own wife, and but one, according to the law, 1 *Cor.* vii. 2, they might live in chaste and holy love, under the directions and restraints of the Divine law, and not as brute beasts, under the dominion of lust, and thus might propagate the nature of man in such a way as might make it most likely to participate in a Divine nature; that the children being born in holy matrimony, which is an ordinance of God, and by which the inclinations of nature are kept under the regulations of God's command, might thus be made a seed to serve him, and be bred as they are born under his direction and dominion. Note, The raising up of a godly seed, which shall be "accounted to the Lord for a generation," is one great end of the institution of marriage, but that is a good reason why the marriage bed should be kept undefiled, and the marriage bond inviolable. Husbands and wives must therefore live in the fear of God, that their seed may be a godly seed, else were they unclean, but now are they holy, as children of the covenant, the marriage covenant, which was a type of the covenant of grace, and the conjugal union, when thus preserved entire, of the mystical union between Christ and his church, in which he seeks and secures to himself a godly seed: see *Eph.* v. 25, 32. *Secondly.* Because he is much displeased with those who go about to put asunder what he has joined together; ver. 16, "The God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away." He had indeed permitted it to the Jews for the hardness of their hearts, or, rather, limited and clogged it, *Mat.* xix. 8; but he hated it, especially as they practised it who "put away their wives for every cause," *Mat.* xix. 3. Let those wives that elope from their husbands, and put themselves away, those husbands that are cruel to their wives and turn them away, or take their affections off their wives and place them upon others, yea, and those husbands and wives that live asunder by consent for want of love to each other, let such as these know that the God of Israel hates such practices, however vain men may make a jest of them.

4th. Let us see the caution inferred from all this. We have it twice; ver. 15, "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth;" and again, ver. 16. Note, They that would be kept from sin must take heed to their spirits, for there all sin begins; they must keep their hearts with all diligence, must keep a jealous eye upon them, and a strict hand, and must watch against the first risings of sin there. We shall act as we are spirited, and therefore, that we may regulate our actions, we must consider what manner of spirit we are of; we must take heed to our spirits with reference to our particular relations, and see that we stand rightly affected to them, and be of good temper, for otherwise we shall be in danger of dealing treacherously. If our own hearts deal treacherously with us, whom will they not deal treacherously with?

Secondly. Observe how corrupt their principles were, to which was owing all these corrupt practices. Let us run up the streams to the fountain; ver. 17, "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words." They thought to evade the convictions of the word, and to justify themselves by cavilling with God's proceedings, but their defence was their offence, and their vindication of themselves was the aggravation of their crime; they affronted the Lord with their words, and repeated them so often, and persisted so long in their contradictions, that they even wearied him, see *Isa.* vii. 13; they made him weary of doing them good as he had done, and stopped the current of his favours; or, they represented him as weary of governing the world, and willing to quit it, and lay aside the care of it. Note, It is a wearisome thing, even to God himself, to hear people insist upon their own justification in their corrupt and wicked practices, and to plead their atheistical principles in vindication of them. But, as if God by his prophet had done them wrong, see how impudently they ask, "Wherein have we wearied him?" What are those vexatious words whereby we have wearied him? Note, Sinful words are more offensive to the God of heaven than they are commonly thought to be. But God has his proofs ready; two things they had said, at least in their hearts, and thoughts are words to God, with which they had wearied him:

1. They had denied him to be a holy God, and had asserted that concerning him which is directly contrary to the doctrine of his holiness. As he is a holy God he hates sin, is of purer eyes than to behold it, and "cannot endure to look upon it," *Hab.* i. 13; he "is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness," *Ps.* v. 4; and yet they had the impudence to say, in direct contradiction to this, "every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them." This wicked inference they drew without any reason from the prosperity of sinners in their sinful courses, (see *ch.* iii. 15,) as if God's love or hatred were to be known by that which is before us, and those must be concluded "good in the sight of the Lord" that are rich in the world. Or, this they said because they wished it might be so; they were resolved to do evil, and yet to think themselves "good in the sight of the Lord," and to believe that he delighted in them notwithstanding; and therefore, under pretence of making God not so severe as he was commonly represented, they said as they would have it, and thought he was altogether such an one as themselves. Note, Those who think God a friend to sin affront him and deceive themselves.

2. They had denied him to be the righteous governor of the world. If he did not delight in sin and sinners, yet it would serve their turn to believe that he would never punish it or them. They said, "Where is the God of judgment?" that God that we have been so often told would call us to an account, and reckon with us for what we have said or done; where is he? He hath forsaken the earth, and takes no notice of what is said and done there; he hath said he will come to judgment, but where is the promise of his coming? We may do what we please, he sees us not, nor will regard us. It is such a challenge to the Judge of the whole earth as bids defiance to his justice, and in effect dares him to do his worst. Such scoffers as these there were in the latter days of the Jewish church, and such there shall be in the latter days of the Christian church; but their unbelief shall not make the promise of God of none effect, for the day of the Lord will come; behold the Judge standeth before the door, the God of judgment is at hand.

CHAPTER III.

In this chapter we have, I. A promise of the coming of the Messiah and of his forerunner, and the errand he comes upon is here particularly described, both the comfort which his coming brings to his church and people and the terror it will bring to the wicked, ver. 1—6. II. A reproof of the Jews for their corrupting of God's ordinances, and sacrilegious robbing him of his dues; with a charge to them to amend this matter, and a promise that if they did God would return in mercy to them, ver. 7—12. III. A description of the wickedness of the wicked that speak against God, ver. 13—15; and of the righteousness of the righteous that speak for him, with the precious promises made to them, ver. 16—18.

BEHOLD, I will send my messenger,
And he shall prepare the way before me:
And the Lord, whom ye seek,
Shall suddenly come to his temple,
Even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in:
Behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.
2 But who may abide the day of his coming?
And who shall stand when he appeareth?
For he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope:
3 And he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver:
And he shall purify the sons of Levi,
And purge them as gold and silver, [eousness.
That they may offer unto the LORD an offering in right-

EGYPTIAN CRUCIBLES.

4 Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the LORD,
As in the days of old,
And as in former years.
5 And I will come near to you to judgment;
And I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers,
And against the adulterers, and against false swearers,
And against those that oppress the hireling in *his* wages,
The widow, and the fatherless.
And that turn aside the stranger *from his right*,
And fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.
6 For I *am* the LORD, I change not:
Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

The first words of this chapter seem a direct answer to the profane atheistical demand of the scoffers of those days, which closed the foregoing chapter: "Where is the God of judgment?" To which it is readily answered, Here he is, he is just at the door, the long-expected Messiah is ready to appear; and he saith, "For judgment am I come into the world," for that judgment which you so impudently bid defiance to. One of the rabbins saith the meaning of this is, that God will raise up a righteous King to set things in order, even the king Messiah. And the beginning of the Gospel of Christ is expressly said to be the accomplishment of this promise with which the Old Testament concludes, *Mar.* i. 1, 2; so that by this the two Testaments are, as it were, tacked together, and made to answer one another. Now here we have,

First. A prophecy of the appearing of his forerunner, John the Baptist, which the prophet Isaiah had foretold, *Isa.* xl. 3, as the preparing of the way of the Lord, to which this here seems to have a reference, for the words of the latter prophets confirmed those of the former. Behold, "I will send my messenger," or, I do send him, or, I am sending him, I am determined to send him; he will now shortly come, and will not come unsent, though to a careless generation he comes unsent for. Observe,

1. He is God's messenger; that is his office. He is Malachi, so the word is, the same with the name of this prophet; he is my angel, my ambassador. John Baptist had his commission from heaven, and not of men. All held John Baptist for a prophet, for he was God's messenger, as the prophets were, and came on the same errand to the world that they were sent upon, to call men to repentance and reformation.

2. He is Christ's harbinger. He shall "prepare the way before me," by

calling men to those duties which qualify them to receive the comforts of the Messiah and his coming; and by taking them off from a confidence in their relation to Abraham as their father, which they thought would serve their turn without a Saviour; and by giving notice that the Messiah was now at hand, and so raising men's expectations of him, and making them readily to go into the measures he would take for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. Note, God observes a method in his work, and before he comes takes care to have his way prepared. This is like the giving of a sign; the church was told long before that the Messiah would come, and here it is added that, by the same token, a little before he appears, there shall be a signal given; a great Prophet shall arise that shall give notice of his approach, and call to the everlasting gates and doors to lift up their heads, and give him admission. The accomplishment of this is a proof that Jesus is the Christ, is he that should come, and we are to look for no other; for there was such a messenger sent before him, who "made ready a people prepared for the Lord," *Lu.* i. 17. The Jewish writers run themselves into great absurdities to evade the conviction of this evidence; some of them say this messenger is the angel of death, who shall take the wicked out of this life to be sent into hell torments; others of them say it is Messiah the son of Joseph, who shall appear before Messiah the son of David; others, this prophet himself; others, an angel from heaven. Such mistakes do they run into that will not receive the truth.

Secondly. A prophecy of the appearing of the Messiah himself. "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple," even the God of judgment, who ye think has forsaken the earth, and you wot not what is become of him. The Messiah has been long called he that should come, and you may assure yourselves that now shortly he will come.

1. He is the Lord—*Adonai*, the basis and foundation on which the world is founded and fastened, the ruler and governor of all; that one Lord over all, *Acts* x. 36, that hath all power committed to him, *Mat.* xxviii. 18, and is to reign over the house of Jacob for ever, *Lu.* i. 33.

2. He is the messenger of the covenant, or the angel of the covenant, that blessed one that was sent from heaven to negotiate a peace, and settle a correspondence between God and man. He is the angel, the archangel, the Lord of the angels, who received commission from the Father to bring man home to God by a covenant of grace, who had revolted from him by the violation of the covenant of innocency. Christ is the angel of this covenant, by whose mediation it is brought about and established, as God's covenant with Israel was made by the disposition of angels, *Acts* vii. 53; *Gal.* iii. 19. Christ as a prophet is the messenger and mediator of the covenant, nay, he is given for a covenant, *Isa.* xlix. 8; that covenant which is all our salvation, "began to be spoken by the Lord," *Heb.* ii. 3. Though he is the prince of the covenant, as some read this here, yet he condescended to be the messenger of it, that we might have full assurance of God's goodwill towards man, upon his word.

3. He it is "whom ye seek, whom ye delight in;" whom the pious Jews expect and desire, and whose coming they think of with a great deal of pleasure. In looking and waiting for him, they looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and "waited for the consolation of Israel," *Lu.* ii. 25, 38. Christ was to be the desire of all nations, desirable to all, *Hag.* ii. 7; but he was the desire of the Jewish nation actually, because they had the promise of his coming made to them. Note, Those that seek Jesus shall find pleasure in him. If he be our heart's desire he will be our heart's delight; and we have reason to delight in him who is the messenger of the covenant, and to bid him welcome who came to us on so kind an errand.

4. He shall suddenly come; his coming draws nigh, and we see it not at so great a distance as the patriarchs saw it at. Or, he shall come immediately after the appearing of John Baptist, shall even tread on the heels of his forerunner; when that morning star appears, believe that the Sun of righteousness is not far off. Or, he shall come suddenly, that is, he shall come when by many he is not looked for; as his second coming will be, so his first coming was, at midnight, when some had done looking for him, for "shall he find faith on the earth?" *Lu.* xviii. 8. The Jews reckon the Messiah among the things that come unawares, so Dr. Pocock. And the coming of the Son of man in his day is said to be as the lightning, which is very surprising, *Lu.* xvii. 24.

5. He shall come to his temple; this temple at Jerusalem which was lately built, that latter house which he was to be the glory of. It is his temple, for it is his Father's house, *Jno.* ii. 16. Christ at forty days old was presented in the temple, and thither Simeon went by the Spirit, according to the direction of this prophecy, to see him, *Lu.* ii. 27. At twelve years old he was in the temple about his Father's business, *Lu.* ii. 49. When he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, it should seem he went directly to the temple, *Mat.* xxi. 12; and, ver. 14, thither the blind and the lame came to him to be healed; there he often preached, and often disputed, and often wrought miracles. By this it appears that the Messiah was to come while that temple was standing; that, therefore, being long since destroyed, we must conclude that he is come, and we are to look for no other. Note, Those that would be acquainted with Christ, and obtain his favour, must meet him in his temple, for there he records his name, and there he will bless his people. There we must receive his oracles, and there we must pay our homage.

6. The promise of his coming is repeated and ratified. "Behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts;" you may depend upon his word who cannot lie, he shall come, he will come, he will not tarry.

Thirdly. An account given of the great ends and intentions of his coming, ver. 2. He is one whom they seek, and one whom they delight in, and yet "who may abide in the day of his coming?" It is a thing to be thought of with great seriousness, and with a holy awe and reverence, for "who shall stand when he appeareth?" though he comes not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might have life. This may refer,

1. To the terrors of his appearance. Even in the days of his flesh there were some emanations of his glory and power, such as none could stand before, witness his transfiguration, and the prodigies that attended his death; and we read of divers that trembled before him, as *Mar.* v. 33.

2. To the troublous times that should follow soon after. The Jewish doctors speak of the pangs or griefs of the Messiah, meaning, they say, the great afflictions that should be to Israel at the time of his coming; he himself speaks of great tribulation then approaching, "such as was not since the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be," *Mat.* xxiv. 21.

3. To the trial which his coming would make of the children of men. He shall be "like a refiner's fire," which separates between the gold and the dross by melting the ore; or "like fullers' soap," which with much rubbing fetcheth the spots out of the cloth. Christ came to discover men, "that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed," *Lu.* ii. 35; to distinguish men, to separate between the precious and the vile, for "his fan is in his hand," *Mat.* iii. 12; to "send fire on the earth, not peace, but rather division," *Lu.* xii. 49, 51; to "shake heaven and earth," that the wicked might be shaken out, *Job* xxxviii. 13, and that the things which "cannot be shaken might remain," *Heb.* xii. 27. See what the effect of the trial will be that shall be made by the Gospel:

1st. The Gospel shall work good upon those that are disposed to be good. To them it shall be a savour of life unto life; ver. 3, "He shall sit as a refiner." Christ by his Gospel shall purify and reform his church, and by his Spirit working with it shall regenerate and cleanse particular souls; for to this end he gave himself for the church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word," *Eph.* v. 26, and "purify to himself a particular people," *Tit.* ii. 14. Christ is the great refiner. Observe, *First.* Who they are that he will purify. The sons of Levi; that is, all those that are devoted to his praise, and employed in his service, as the tribe of Levi was, and whom he designs to make unto our God spiritual priests, *Rev.* i. 6; a holy priesthood, 1 *Pet.* ii. 5. Note, All true Christians are sons of Levi, set apart for God to do the service of his sanctuary, and to war the good warfare. *Secondly.* How he will purify them. He will purge them as gold and silver; that is, he will sanctify them inwardly, will not only wash away the spots they have contracted from without, but will take away the dross that is found in them; will separate from them their indwelling corruptions which rendered their faculties worthless and useless, and so make them like gold refined, both valuable and serviceable. "He will purge them" with fire "as gold and silver are purged," for "he baptizeth with the Holy Ghost and with fire," *Mat.* iii. 11; with the Holy Ghost working like fire. He will purge them by afflictions and manifold temptations, that the trial of their faith might be found to praise and honour, 1 *Pet.* i. 6, 7. He will purge them so as to make them a precious people to himself. *Thirdly.* What will be the effect of it. "That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness;" that is, that they may be in sincerity converted to God, and consecrated to his praise, (hence we read of the offering up or sacrificing of the Gentiles to God, when they were sanctified by the Holy Ghost, *Rom.* xv. 16,) and that they may in a spiritual manner worship God according to his will, may offer the sacrifices of righteousness, *Ps.* iv. 5, the offering of prayer, and praise, and holy love, that they may be the true worshippers who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, *Jno.* iv. 23, 24. Note, We cannot offer unto the Lord any right performances in religion unless our persons be justified and sanctified. Till we ourselves be refined and purified by the grace of God we cannot do any thing that will redound to the glory of God; God had respect to Abel first, and then to his offering; and therefore God purgeth his people that they may offer their offerings to him in righteousness, *Zep.* iii. 9. He therefore makes the tree good, that the fruit may be good. And then it follows, ver. 4, "The offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasant unto the Lord." It shall no longer be offensive, as it has been, when in the former days they worshipped other gods with the God of Israel, or when in the present days they brought the torn, and the lame, and the sick for sacrifice; but it shall be acceptable, he will be pleased with the offerers and their offerings, as in the days of old, and as in former years, as in the primitive times of the church, as when God had respect to Abel's sacrifice, and smelled a savour of rest from Noah's, and when he kindled Aaron's sacrifice with fire from heaven. When the Messiah comes, 1st. He will by his graces in them make them acceptable. When he has purified and refined them, then they shall offer such sacrifices as God requires and will accept. 2nd. He will by his intercession for them make them accepted. He will recommend them and their performances to God, so that, their prayers being perfumed with the incense of his intercession, shall be pleasant unto the Lord, for he hath made us acceptable in the Beloved, and in him is well pleased with those that are in him, *Mat.* iii. 17, and bring forth fruit in him.

2nd. It shall turn for a testimony against those that are resolved to go on in their wickedness, ver. 5. This is the direct answer to their challenge, "Where is the God of judgment?" You shall know where he is, and shall know it to your terror and confusion, for "I will come near to you to judgment;" to you that set Divine justice at defiance. To them the Gospel of Christ will be a "savour of death unto death;" it will bind them over to condemnation, and will "judge them in the great day," *Jno.* xii. 48. Let us see here. *First.* Who the sinners are that must appear to be judged by the Gospel of Christ. They are the sorcerers that deal in spiritual wickedness, that forsake the oracles of the God of truth to consult the father of lies; and the adulterers that wallow in the lusts of the flesh, those adulterers that were charged with dealing treacherously, *Mal.* ii. 15; and the false swearers who profane God's name, and affront his justice by calling him to witness to a lie; and the oppressors that barbarously injure those that lie at their mercy, and are not able to help them; they defraud the hireling in his wages, and will not give him what he agreed for; they crush the widow and fatherless, and will not pay them their just debts because they cannot prove them, or have not wherewithal to sue for them; the poor stranger too, that has no friend to stand by him, and is ignorant of the laws of the country, they turn aside from his right, so that he cannot keep, or cannot recover, his own. And that which is at the bottom of all this is, "They fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts." The transgression of the wicked plainly declares that there is no fear of God before his eyes: where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. *Secondly.* Who will appear against them. "I will come near," saith God, and will be a swift witness against them. They justify themselves, and, their sins having been artfully concealed, hope to escape punishment for want of proof; but God, who sees and knows all things, will himself be witness against them, and his omniscience is instead of a thousand witnesses, for to it the sinner's own conscience shall be made to subscribe, and so every mouth shall be stopped; he will be a swift witness, though they reflect upon him as slow and dilatory, and ask, "Where is the God of judgment," and where the promise of his coming? They will find that he is not slack concerning his threatenings, any more than he is concerning his promises. Judgment against those sinners shall not be put off for want of evidence, for he will be a swift witness. His judgment shall overtake them, and it shall be impossible for them to outrun it. Evil pursues sinners.

Fourthly. The ratification of all this; ver. 6, "For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Here we have,

1. God's immutability asserted by himself, and gloried in. "I am the Lord, I change not," and therefore no word that I have spoken shall fall to the ground. Is God a just revenger of those that rebel against him? Is he the bountiful rewarder of those that diligently seek him? In both these he is unchangeable. Though the sentence passed against evil works, ver. 5, be not executed speedily, yet it will be executed, for he is the Lord, he changeth not; he is as much an enemy to sin as ever he was, and impenitent sinners will find him so. There needs no *scire facias*,—'a writ calling one to shew cause,' to revive God's judgments, for it is never antiquated or out of date, but against those that go on still in their trespasses the curse of his law still remains in full force, power, and virtue.

2. A particular proof of it from the comfortable experience which the people of Israel had had of it. They had reason to say he was an unchangeable God, for he had been faithful to his covenant with them and their fathers. If he had not stuck to that they had been consumed long ago, and cut off from being a people. They had been false and fickle in their carriage to him, and he might justly have abandoned them, and then they had soon been consumed and ruined; but because he remembered his covenant, and would not violate that, nor alter the thing that was gone forth out of his lips, they were preserved from ruin, and recovered from the brink of it. It was purely because he would be as good as his word, *Deu.* vii. 8; *Lev.* xxvi. 42. Now, as God had kept them from ruin while the covenant of peculiarity remained in force, purely because he would be faithful to that covenant, and would shew that "he is not a man

that he should lie," *Num.* xxiii. 19, so, when that covenant shall be superseded and set aside by the New Testament, and they by rejecting the blessings of it lay themselves open to the curses, he will shew that, in the determinations of his wrath, as well as in those of his mercy, "he is not a man that he should repent;" but will then be as true to his threatenings as hitherto he has been to his promises: see 1 *Sam.* xv. 29. We may all apply this very sensibly to ourselves, because we have to do with a God that changeth not, therefore it is that we are not consumed, even "because his compassions fail not, they are new every morning, great is his faithfulness," *Lam.* iii. 22, 23.

7 Even from the days of your fathers [kept *them*.
Ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not
Return unto me, and I will return unto you,
Saith the LORD of hosts.
But ye said, Wherein shall we return?
8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me.
But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee?
In tithes and offerings.
9 Ye *are* cursed with a curse:
For ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation.
10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be meat in mine house,
And prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts,
If I will not open you the windows of heaven,
And pour you out a blessing,
That *there shall* not *be room* enough *to receive it*.
11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes,
And he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground;
Neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in [the field,
Saith the LORD of hosts.
12 And all nations shall call you blessed: [hosts.
For ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of

We have here God's controversy with the men of that generation for deserting his service, and robbing him; wicked servants indeed, that not only run away from their Master, but run away with their Master's goods.

First. They had run away from their Master, and quitted the work he gave them to do; ver. 7, "Ye are gone away from my ordinances, and have not kept them." The ordinances of God's worship were the business which as servants they must mind, the talents they must trade with, and the trust which was committed to them to keep; but they went away from them, grew weary of them, and withdrew their neck from that yoke; they deviated from the rule that God had prescribed to them, and betrayed the trust lodged with them; they had revolted from God, not only in worship but in conversation; they had not kept his ordinances. This disobedience they were chargeable with, and had been guilty of, even from the days of their fathers; either as in the days of their fathers of old, who were sent into captivity for their disobedience, or now for some generations past, you are fallen off from what you were when first you came back out of captivity. Ezra owns it in one particular instance: "Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day," *Ezr.* ix. 7. Now observe,

1. What a gracious invitation God gives them to return and repent; "Return unto me," and to your duty, return to your service, return to your allegiance, return as a traveller that has missed his way, as a soldier that has run from his colours, as a treacherous wife that has gone away from her husband. Return, thou backsliding Israel, return to me, and then "I will return unto you," and be reconciled, will remove the judgments you are under, and prevent those you fear. This had been of old the burthen of the song, *Zec.* i. 3, and is still.

2. What a peevish answer they return to this gracious invitation; "But ye said," with disdain, said it to the prophets that called you, said it to one another, said it to your own hearts, to stifle the convictions you are under, you said, "Wherein shall we return?" Note, God takes notice what returns our hearts make to the calls of his word, what we say and what we think when we have heard a sermon, what answer we give to the message sent us. When God calls us to return, we should answer as they did, *Jer.* iii. 22, "Behold, we come;" but not as these here, "Wherein shall we return?" 1st. They take it as an affront to be told of their faults, and called upon to amend them; are ready to say, What ado do these prophets make about returning and repenting? Why are we disgraced and disturbed thus, our own consciences and our neighbours' stirred up against us? It is ill with those who thus count reproofs reproaches, and "kick against the pricks." 2nd. They are so ignorant of themselves, and of the strictness, extent, and spiritual nature of the Divine law, that they see nothing in themselves to be repented of or reformed; they are pure in their own eyes, and think they need no repentance. 3rd. They are so firmly resolved to go on in sin that they will find a thousand frivolous excuses to shift off their repentance, and turn away the calls that are given them to repent. They seem to speak only as those that wanted something to say; it is a mere evasion, a banter upon the prophet, and a challenge to him to descend to particulars. Note, Many ruin their own souls by baffling the calls that are given them to repent of their sins.

Secondly. They had robbed their Master, and embezzled his goods. They had asked, "Wherein shall we return?" What have we done amiss? And he soon tells them. Observe,

1. The prophet's high charge exhibited in God's name against the people. They stand indicted for robbery, for sacrilege, the worst of robberies; "Ye have robbed me." And he expostulates with them upon it: will a man be so daringly impudent as to rob God; man that is a weak creature, and cannot contend with God's power, will he think to rob him *vi et armis?*—'forcibly;' man that lies open to God's knowledge, and cannot conceal himself from that, will he think to rob him *clam et secreto?*—'privily;' man that depends upon God, and derives his all from him, will he rob him that is his benefactor? This is ungrateful, unjust, and unkind indeed, and very unwise, thus to provoke him from whom our judgment proceeds. 'Will a man do violence to God?' so some read it; 'Will a man stint or straiten him?' so others read it. Robbing God is a heinous crime,

2. The people's high challenge in answer to that charge. "But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee?" They plead, Not guilty, and put God upon the proof of it. Note, Robbing God is such a heinous crime that they who are guilty of it are not willing to own themselves guilty. They rob God, and know not what they do. They rob him of his honour, rob him of that which is devoted to him, to be employed in his service; rob him of themselves; rob him of sabbath time; rob him of that which is given for the support of religion, and give him not his dues out of their estates; and yet they ask, Wherein have we robbed him?

3. The plain proof of the charge in answer to this challenge. It is in tithes and offerings. Out of these the priests and Levites had maintenance for themselves and their families; but they detained them, defrauded the priests of them, would not pay their tithes, or not in full, or not of the best; they brought not the offerings which God required, or brought the torn, and lame, and sick, which were not fit for use. They were all guilty of this sin, even the whole nation, as if they were in confederacy against God, and all combined to rob him of his dues, and to stand by one another in it when they had done. For this they were "cursed with a curse," ver. 9. God punished them with famine and scarcity, through unseasonable weather, or insects that eat up the fruits of the earth. God had thus punished them for neglecting to build the temple, *Hag.* i. 10, 11, and now for not maintaining the temple service. Note, Those that deny God his part of their estates may justly expect a curse upon their own part of them. "Ye are cursed with a curse" for robbing me, and yet ye go on to do it. Note, It is a great aggravation of sin when men persist in it, notwithstanding the rebukes of Providence they are under for it. Nay, it should seem, because God had punished them with scarcity of bread, they made that a pretence for robbing him; that now they were impoverished they could not afford to bring their tithes and offerings, but must save them that they might have bread for their families. Note, It argues great perverseness in sin when men make those afflictions excuses for sin which are sent to part between them and their sins. When they had but little they should have done the more good with that little, and that would have been the way to make it more; but it is ill with the patient when that which should cure the disease serves only to palliate it, and prevent its being searched into.

4. An earnest exhortation to reform in this matter, with a promise that if they did the judgments they were under should be presently removed.

1st. Let them take care to do their duty; ver. 10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." They had brought some, but, like Ananias and Sapphira, had kept back part of the price, pretending they could not spare so much as was required, and necessity has no law; but even necessity must have this law, and it would redress the grievance of their necessity: Bring in the full tithes, to the utmost that the law requires, "that there may be meat in God's house" for them that serve at the altar, whether there be meat in your houses or no. Note, God must be served in the first place, and our quota must be contributed for the support of religion in the place where we live, that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom may come, and his will be done, even before we provide our daily bread; for the interests of our souls ought to be preferred before those of our bodies.

2nd. Let them then trust God to provide for them and their comfort. Let God be first served, and then "Prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts," whether I will not "open the windows of heaven." They said, Let God give us our plenty again as formerly, and try us whether we will not then bring him his tithes and offerings, as we did formerly. No, saith God, do you first bring in all your tithes as they become due, and all the arrears of what is past, and try me whether I will not then restore you your plenty. Note, Those that will deal with God must deal upon trust, and we may all venture to do so; for, though many have been losers for him, never any were losers by him in the end. It is fit we should venture first, for his reward is with him, but his work is before him; we must first do the work which is our part, and then try him, and trust him for the reward. Elijah put the widow of Zarephath into this method when he said, 1 *Kin.* xvii. 13, "Make me a little cake first," and then prove me whether there shall not be enough afterwards, "for thee and thy son." That which discourages people from the expenses of charity is the weakness of their faith concerning the gains and advantages of charity,—they cannot think that they shall get by it; but it is a reasonable demand that God here makes, Prove me now. Is any thing to be got by charity? Come and see; nothing venture nothing win. Trust upon honour, and you shall find, *First.* That whereas the heavens have been shut up, and there has been no rain, now God will open to you the windows of heaven, for in his hand the key of the clouds is, and you shall have seasonable rain. Or, the expression is figurative: every good gift coming from above, thence God will plentifully pour out upon them the bounties of his providence; very sudden plenty is expressed by opening the windows of heaven, 2 *Kin.* vii. 2. We find the windows of heaven opened to pour down a deluge of wrath in Noah's flood, *Gen.* vii. 11; but here they are opened to pour down blessings to that degree that there should not be room enough to receive them. So plentifully shall their ground bring forth that they shall be tempted to pull down their barns and build greater for want of room, *Lu.* xii. 18. Or, as Dr. Pocock explains it, 'I will pour out on you such a blessing as shall be not enough only, and such as shall be sufficient, but more, and more than enough,' that is, a great addition; the oil that is multiplied shall not stay as long as there are vessels to receive it, 2 *Kin.* iv. 6. Note, God will not only be reconciled to sinners that repent and reform, but he will be a benefactor, a bountiful benefactor, to them. We are never straitened in him, but often straitened in our own bosoms; God has blessings ready to bestow upon us, but, through the weakness of our faith, and the narrowness of our desires, we have not room to receive them. *Secondly.* That whereas the fruits of their ground had been eaten up by locusts and caterpillars, God would now remove that judgment; ver. 12, "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes," and will check the progress of those destroying animals, that they shall no more destroy the products of the earth and the fruits of the trees. God has all creatures at his beck, can command them and remand them at his pleasure. "Neither shall the vine cast her fruit before the time;" it shall not be blasted or blown off. Or, as some read it, 'Neither shall the devourer make your vine barren, as the locusts did,' *Joel* i. 7. *Thirdly.* That whereas their neighbours had upbraided them with their scarcity, and they had lain under the reproach of famine, which was the more grievous because their country used to be boasted of for its plenty, now "all nations shall call them blessed," shall speak honourably of them, and own them to be a happy people. *Fourthly.* That whereas their sin had made their land unpleasing to God, even their temple, and altars, and offerings were so, *ch.* ii. 13, and whereas his judgments had made their land unpleasant to them, and very melancholy, now "ye shall be a delightsome land," your country shall be acceptable to God, and comfortable to yourselves. Note, The reviving of religion in a land will make it indeed a delightsome land, both to God and to all good people; he will say, It is "my rest for ever, here will I dwell," and they will say the same, *Isa.* lxii. 4; *Deu.* xi. 12. It should seem this charge to bring in the tithes had its good effect; for we find, *Neh.* xiii. 12, that "all Judah did bring their tithe into the treasuries," and no doubt they had the benefit of these promises in the return of their plenty, immediately upon their return to their duty, that they might plainly

discern for what cause the evil had been upon them,—for when the cause was removed the evil was removed; and that they might see how perfectly reconciled God was to them upon their repentance, and how their transgression was remembered no more,—for the curse was not only taken away, but turned into an abundant blessing.

13 Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD.
Yet ye say, What have we spoken *so much* against thee?
14 Ye have said,
It *is* vain to serve God:
And what profit *is it* that we have kept his ordinance,
And that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of [hosts?
15 And now we call the proud happy;
Yea, they that work wickedness are set up;
Yea, *they that* tempt God are even delivered.
16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to ano- [ther:
And the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*,
And a book of remembrance was written before him
For them that feared the LORD,
And that thought upon his name.
17 And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts,
In that day when I make up my jewels;
And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son
that serveth him.
18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous
and the wicked, [not.
Between him that serveth God and him that serveth him

Among the people of the Jews at this time, though they all enjoyed the same privileges and advantages, yet there were men of very different characters, as ever were, and ever will be, in the world and in the church, like Jeremiah's figs, some very good and others very bad,—some that plainly appeared to be the children of God, and others that as plainly discovered themselves to be the children of the wicked one. There are tares and wheat in the same field, chaff and corn in the same floor; and here we have an account of both.

First. Here is the angry notice God takes of the impudent blasphemous talk of the sinners in Zion, and his just resentments of it. Probably there was a club of them that were in league against religion, that set up for wits, and set their wits to work to run it down, and ridicule it, and herein strengthened one another's hands. Here is,

1. An indictment found against them for treasonable words spoken against the King of kings; "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord." They spoke against God, in reflection upon him, in contradiction to him, as their fathers in the wilderness; *Ps.* lxxviii. 19, "Yea, they spake against God." What he said, and what he designed, they opposed, as if they had been retained of counsel against him and his cause. Their words against God were stout; they came from their pride and haughtiness, and contempt of God. What they said against God, they spoke it loudly, as if they cared not who heard them; they were not themselves ashamed to say it, and they desired to propagate their atheistical notions, and to infect the minds of others with them. They spoke it boldly, as those that were resolved to stand to it, and were in no fear of being called to an account. They spoke it proudly, and with insolence and disdain, scorning to be under the Divine check and government. They strengthened themselves; they would be valiant against the Almighty, *Job* xv. 25.

2. Their plea to this indictment. They said, "What have we spoken so much against thee?" They deny the words, and put the prophet to prove them; or, if they spoke the words, they did not design them against God, and therefore will not own there was any harm in them; at least they extenuate the matter; "What have we spoken so much against thee?" so much, that there needs all this ado about it. They cannot deny but that they have spoken against God, but they make a light matter of it, and wonder it should be taken notice of. Words, say they, are but wind; others have said more, and done worse; if they be not so good as they should be, yet they hope they are not so bad as they are represented to be. Note, It is common for sinners that are unconvinced and unhumbled to deny or extenuate the faults they are justly charged with, and to insist upon their own justification against the reproofs of the word and of their own consciences. But it will be to no purpose.

3. The words themselves they are charged with. God keeps an account of what men say, as well as of what they do, and will let them know that he doth so. We presently forget what we have said, and are ready to deny what we have said amiss; but God can say, Ye have said so and so. They had said it as their deliberate judgment,

1st. That there is nothing to be got in the service of God, though it is a service that subjects men to labour and sorrow. They said, "It is vain to serve God," or, he is vain that serveth God, that is, he labours in vain and to no purpose; he has his labour for his pains, and therefore is a fool for his labour; "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance," or his observation? that we have observed what he has appointed us to observe. What mammon or wealth have we gained? saith the Chaldee; intimating, saith Dr. Pocock, that it was for mammon's sake only that they served God, and so indeed not God at all, but mammon. We have walked mournfully, or in black, with great gravity and great grief, before the Lord of hosts, have afflicted our souls at the times appointed for that purpose, and yet we are never the better. Perhaps this comes in as a reason why they would not trust God to prosper them upon their bringing in the tithes, ver. 10; for, say they, we have tried him in other things, and have lost by him. This is a very unjust and unreasonable reflection upon the service of God, and we can call witnesses enough to confront the slander. *First.* They would have it thought that they had served God, and had kept his ordinances, whereas it was only the external observance of them that they had kept up, while they were perfect strangers to the inward part of the duty, and therefore might say, It is in vain, for God saith so, *Mat.* xv. 9, "In vain do they worship me," whose "hearts are far from me" while they "draw near with their mouth." But whose fault is that? Not God's, who is the rewarder of them that seek him diligently, but theirs who seek him carelessly. *Secondly.* They insisted much upon it that they had walked mournfully before God, whereas God had required them to serve him with gladness, and to walk cheerfully before him. They by their own superstitions made the service of God a task and drudgery to themselves, and then complained of it as a hard service. The yoke of Christ is easy; it is the yoke of Antichrist that is heavy. *Thirdly.* They complained that they had got nothing by their religion; they were still in poverty and affliction, and behindhand in the world. This is an old piece of impiety; *Job* xxi. 14, 15, "What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" Elihu chargeth Job with something like this; *Job* xxxiv. 9, "It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God." The enemies of religion do but set up against it the old cavils that have been long since answered and exploded. Perhaps this here refers to the errors of the sect of the Sadducees, which was the scandal of the Jewish church in its latter days; they denied a future state, and then said it was vain to serve God, which had indeed some colour in it; for "if in this life only we had hope in Christ, we were of all men most miserable," 1 *Cor.* xv. 19. Note, Those do a great deal of wrong to God's honour who say that religion is either an unprofitable or an unpleasant thing, for the matter is not so; wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and wisdom's gains better than that of fine gold.

2nd. They maintained that wickedness was the way to prosperity; for they had observed that the workers of wickedness were set up in the world, and they that tempted God were delivered, ver. 15. The outward prosperity of sinners in their sins, as it has weakened the hands of the godly in their godliness, *Ps.* lxxiii. 13, so it has strengthened the hands of the wicked in their wickedness. Note, *First.* They that work wickedness tempt God by presumptuous sins; they do as it were try God, whether he can and will punish them as he hath said in his word, and in effect challenge him to do his worst, by provoking him in the highest degree. *Secondly.* Those that tempt God by their wicked works are many times both delivered out of the adversity into which they were justly brought and advanced to the prosperity which they were utterly unworthy of. They are not only set up once, but when we thought their day was come to fall, and they were in trouble, yet they were delivered and set up again, so strangely did Providence seem to smile upon them. *Thirdly.* Though it be thus, yet it will not warrant us to call the proud happy; for they may be delivered and set up for a while, but it will appear that God resists them, and that their pride is a preface to their fall. And if so, they are truly miserable, and it is folly to call them happy, and to bless them whom the Lord abhors. Wait a while, and you will see them that work wickedness set up as a mark to the arrows of God's vengeance, and them that tempt God delivered to the tormentors. Judge of things as they will appear shortly, when the doom of these proud sinners, which follows here, *ch.* iv. 1, comes to be executed to the utmost.

Secondly. Here is the gracious notice God takes of the pious talk of the saints in Zion, and the gracious recompence of that. Even in this corrupt and degenerate age, when there was so great a decay, nay, so great a contempt, of serious godliness, yet there were some that retained their integrity and zeal for God. And let us see,

1. How they distinguished themselves, and what their character was. It was the reverse of theirs that spoke so much against God; for,

1st. They feared the Lord. That is the beginning of wisdom, and the root of all religion; they reverenced the majesty of God, submitted to his authority, and had a dread of his wrath, in all they thought and said; they humbly complied with God, and never spoke any stout words against him. In every age there has been a remnant that feared the Lord, though sometimes but a little remnant.

2nd. They "thought upon his name;" that is, they seriously considered and frequently meditated upon the discoveries God has made of himself in his word and by his providences; and their meditation of him is sweet to them, and influenceth them. They "thought upon his name," that is, they consulted the honour of God, and aimed at that as their ultimate end in all they did. Note, Those that know the name of God should often think of and dwell upon it in their thoughts. It is a copious, curious subject, and frequent thoughts of it will contribute very much to our communion with God, and the stirring up of our devout affections to him.

3rd. They "spake often one to another" concerning the God they feared, and that name of his which they thought so much of; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, and a good man out of a good treasure there will bring forth good things. They that feared the Lord kept together as those that were company for each other; they spoke kindly and endearingly one to another, for the preserving and promoting of mutual love, that that might not wax cold when iniquity did thus abound. They spoke knowingly and edifyingly to one another, for the increasing and improving of faith and holiness; they spoke one to another in the language of them that fear the Lord and think on his name,—the language of Canaan. When profaneness was come to so great a height as to trample upon all that is sacred, then they that feared the Lord "spake often one to another." *First.* Then when iniquity was bold and barefaced the people of God took courage and stirred up themselves, "the innocent against the hypocrite," *Job* xvii. 8. The worse others are the better we should be; when vice is daring let not virtue be sneaking. *Secondly.* Then when religion was reproached and misrepresented, its friends did all they could to support the credit of it, and to keep it in countenance. It had been suggested that the ways of God are melancholy unpleasant ways, solitary and sorrowful; and therefore then they that feared God studied to evidence the contrary, by their cheerfulness in mutual love and converse, that they might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. *Thirdly.* That when seducers were busy to deceive, and to possess unwary souls with prejudices against religion, they that feared God were industrious to arm themselves and one another against the contagion, by mutual instructions, excitements and encouragements, and to strengthen one another's hands. As evil communication corrupts good minds and manners, so good communication confirms them.

2. How God dignified them, and what farther honour and favour he intended for them. They who spoke stoutly against God no doubt looked with disdain and displeasure upon those that feared him,—hectored and bantered them; but they had little reason to regard that, or to be disturbed at it, when God countenanced them.

1st. He took notice of their pious discourses, and was graciously present at their conferences; "The Lord hearkened and heard it," and was well pleased with it. God saith, *Jer.* viii. 6, that he hearkened and heard what bad men would say, and they spake not aright; here he hearkened and heard what good men did say, for they spake aright. Note, The gracious God observes all the gracious words that proceed out of the mouth of his people. They need not desire that men may hear them and commend them; let them not seek praise from men by them, nor affect to be taken notice of by them, but let it content them that, be the conference never so private, God sees and hears in secret, and will reward openly. When the two disciples going to Emmaus were discoursing concerning Christ, he hearkened and heard, and joined himself to them, and made a third, *Lu.* xxiv. 15.

2nd. He kept an account of them. "A book of remembrance was written before him;" not that the Eternal Mind needs to be minded of things by books and writings, but it is an expression after the manner of men, intimating that

their pious affections and performances are kept in remembrance as punctually and particularly as if they were written in a book, as if journals were kept of all their conferences. Great kings had books of remembrance written and read before them, in which were entered all the services done them, when, and by whom, as *Est.* ii. 23. God in like manner remembers the services of his people, that in the review of them he may say, "Well done," and "enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." God has a book for the sighs and tears of his mourners, *Ps.* lvi. 8, much more for the pleadings of his advocates. Never was any good word spoken of God, or for God, from an honest heart, but it was registered, that it might be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, and in no wise lose its reward.

3rd. He promiseth them a share in his glory hereafter; ver. 17, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." When God utterly cuts off the Jewish church and nation for their infidelity, the remnant among them that believe his word, and having waited for the consolation of Israel welcome him when he comes, shall be admitted into the Christian church, and shall become a peculiar people to God. God will take care of them that they perish not with them that believe not, but that they be hid in the day of the Lord's anger against that nation. "They shall be my segullah, my peculiar treasure" (it is the word used *Ex.* xix. 5,) "in the day when I make or do" what I have said and designed to do, so some read it. These pious ones shall have all the glorious privileges of God's Israel appropriated to them, and centering in them. They shall now be the peculiar treasure, when the rest are rejected; they shall now be the vessels of mercy and honour, when the rest are made vessels of wrath and dishonour, vessels in which is no pleasure. This may be applied to all the faithful people of God, and the distinction he will put between them and others in the great day. Note, *First.* The saints are God's jewels. They are highly esteemed by him, and are dear to him; they are comely with the comeliness that he puts upon them, and he is pleased to glory in them; they are a royal diadem in his hand, *Isa.* lxii. 3. He looks upon them as his own proper goods, his choice goods, his treasure, laid up in his cabinet, and the furniture of his closet, *Ps.* cxxxv. 4; the rest of the world is but lumber in comparison with them. *Secondly.* There is a day coming when God will make up his jewels. They shall be gathered up out of the dirt into which they are now thrown, and gathered together from all the places to which they are now scattered. He shall send forth his angels to gather his elect, that are "his jewels, from the four winds of heaven," *Mat.* xxiv. 31; to gather his jewels into his jewel house, as the wheat from several fields into the barn. All the saints will then be gathered to Christ, and none but saints, and saints made perfect; then God's jewels will be made up, as stones into a crown, as stars into a constellation. *Thirdly.* Those who now own God for theirs, he will then own them for his,—will publicly confess them before angels and men; "They shall be mine," their sanctification shall be completed, and so they shall be perfectly and entirely mine, without any remaining interests of the world and the flesh. Their relation to God shall be acknowledged, and his property in them; he will separate them from those that are not his, and give them their portion with those that are his; for to them it shall be said, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." They were in doubt sometimes whether they were belonging to God or no, but the matter shall then be put out of doubt, God himself will say unto them, You are mine. Now their relation to God is what they are reproached with, but it will then be gloried in; God himself will glory in it.

4th. He promiseth them a share in his grace now; "I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serves him." God had promised to own them as his, and take them to be with him, but it might be a discouragement to them to think that they had offended God, and he might justly disown them and cast them off. But as to that, he saith, "I will spare them," I will not deal with them as they deserve; "I will rejoice over them," so some expound it, as the bridegroom over his bride, *Isa.* lxii. 5; *Zeph.* iii. 17. But the word usually signifies to spare with commiseration and compassion, "as a father pities his children," *Ps.* ciii. 13. Note, *First.* It is our duty to serve God with the disposition of children; we must be his sons, must by a new birth partake of a Divine nature, must consent to the covenant of adoption, and partake of the Spirit of adoption; and we must be his servants. God will not have his children trained up in idleness; they must do him service, and they must do it from a principle of love, with cheerfulness and delight, and as those that are therein serving their own true interest; and this is serving as a son with the father, *Phil.* ii. 22. *Secondly.* If we serve God with the disposition of children, he will spare us with the tenderness and compassion of a Father. Even God's children that serve him stand in need of sparing mercy, that mercy to which we owe it that we are not consumed, that mercy which keeps us out of hell. Nehemiah, when he had done much good, yet, knowing there is not a just man on earth that doth good and sins not, and that every sin deserves God's wrath, prays, "Lord, spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy:" see *Neh.* xiii. 22; and God, as a Father, will shew them his mercy. He will not be extreme to mark what we do amiss, but will make the best of us, and our poor performances, will mitigate the afflictions his children are exercised with, and save them from the ruin they deserve. The father continues to spare the son, and does it with complacency, because he is his own. Thus God will spare humble penitents and petitioners, "as a man spares his son that serves him," though we do him so little service, nay, though we do him so much disservice.

Thirdly. How they will thus be distinguished from the children of this world; ver. 18, "Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked," between sinners and saints; between those that serve God and make conscience of their duty to him, and those that serve him not, but put contempt upon his service. You that now speak against God, as making no difference between good and bad, and therefore say, "It is vain to serve him," ver. 14, you shall be made to see your error; you that would speak for God, but know not what to say as to this, that there seems to be one event to the righteous and the wicked, and all things come alike to all, will then have the matter set in a true light, and will see to your everlasting satisfaction the difference between the righteous and the wicked. Then ye shall return; that is, you shall change your mind, and come to a right understanding of the thing. This primarily respects the manifest difference that was made by the Divine providence between the believing Jews and those that persisted in their infidelity at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish church and nation by the Romans; but it is to have its full accomplishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ, and that great discriminating day when it shall be easy enough to discern between the righteous and the wicked. Note,

1. All the children of men are either righteous or wicked, either such as serve God or such as serve him not. This is that division of the children of men which will last for ever, and by which their eternal state will be determined; all are going either to heaven or hell.

2. In this world it is many times hard to "discern between the righteous and the wicked;" they are mingled together, good fish and bad in the same net. The righteous are so distempered, and the wicked so disguised, that we are often deceived in our opinions concerning both the one and the other. There are many that we think serve God who, having not their hearts right with him, will be found none of his servants; and, on the other hand, many will be found his faithful servants who, because they followed not with us, we thought did not serve him. But that which especially raised the difficulty here was, that the Divine providence seemed to make no difference between the righteous and the wicked: you could not know wicked men by God's frowning upon them, for they commonly prospered in the world; nor righteous men by his smiling upon them, for they were involved with others in the same common calamity. None now know God's love or hatred by all that is before them, *Eccl.* ix. 1.

3. At the bar of Christ, in the last judgment, it will be easy to "discern between the righteous and the wicked," for then every man's character will be both perfected and perfectly discovered; every man will then appear in his true colours, and his disguise will be taken off. Some men's sins, indeed, go beforehand, and you may now tell who is wicked, but others follow after; however, in the great day we shall see who was righteous and who wicked. Every man's condition, likewise, will be both perfected and everlastingly determined; the righteous will then be perfectly happy, and the wicked perfectly miserable, without mixture or allay. When the righteous are all set on the right hand of Christ, and invited to come for a blessing, and all the wicked on his left hand are bid to depart with a curse, then it will be easy to discern between them. As to ourselves, therefore, we are concerned to think among which we shall have our lot, and as to others must judge nothing before the time.

CHAPTER IV.

We have here proper instructions given us, (very proper to close the canon of the Old Testament with,) I. Concerning the state of recompence and retribution that is before us; the misery of the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous, in that state, ver. 1—3. And this is represented to us under a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the unbelieving Jews with it, and of the comforts and triumphs of those among them that received the Gospel. II. Concerning the state of trial and preparation we are now in, in which we are directed to have an eye to Divine revelation, and to follow that; they then must stick to the law of Moses, ver. 4, and expect a farther discovery of God's will by Elijah the prophet, that is, by John Baptist, the harbinger of the Messiah, ver. 5, 6. The last chapter of the New Testament is much to the same purpose, setting before us heaven and hell in the other world, and obliging us to adhere to the word of God in this world.

FOR, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven;
And all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble:
And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts,
That it shall leave them neither root nor branch.
2 But unto you that fear my name
Shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings;
And ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.
3 And ye shall tread down the wicked;
For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet
In the day that I shall do *this*, saith the LORD of hosts.

The great and terrible day of the Lord is here prophesied of, which, like the pillar of cloud and fire, shall have a dark side turned towards the Egyptians that fight against God, and a bright side towards the faithful Israelites that follow him. "The day cometh," that is, the Lord cometh, the day of the Lord; and it hath reference both to the first and to the second coming of Jesus Christ—the day of both was fixed, and should answer the character here given of it.

First. In both Christ is a consuming fire to those that rebel against him. The day of his coming shall burn as an oven; it shall be a day of wrath, of fiery indignation. This was foretold concerning the Messiah, *Ps.* xxi. 9, "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies," and "shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger" It will be a day of terror and destruction, like the burning of a city, or rather of a wood, the trees whereof are withered and dried, for to that the allusion seems to be, as *Isa.* x. 17, 18, "The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame, and it shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field." Now observe here,

1. Who shall be fuel to this fire. All the proud in heart, whose words have been stout against God, and their necks stiff, and unapt to yield to the yoke of his commandments. All those that in the pride of their countenances will not seek after God, nor submit to the grace and government of Jesus Christ, all that proudly say they will not have Christ to reign over them; and all those that do wickedly in their affections and conversations, that wilfully persist in sin, in contempt of, and contradiction to, the law of God; they are such as do wickedly against the covenant, as another prophet had lately expressed it, *Dan.* xi. 32. God, that has a perfect knowledge of every one's character, knows who are the proud, and of every one's actions, knows who they are that do wickedly; and they shall be as stubble to this fire,—they shall be consumed by it, easily consumed, utterly consumed, and it is wholly owing to themselves that they shall be so, for they make themselves stubble, that is, combustible matter to this fire. If they were not stubble it would not burn them; for the fire will be to every man according as he and his works are found. If they be wood, hay, and stubble, they will be consumed; but if they be gold, silver, and precious stones, they will abide the fire, and be purified by it, 1 *Cor.* iii. 13—15. They that by their unbelief oppose Christ thereby set themselves as briers and thorns before a devouring fire, *Isa.* xxvii. 4, 5.

2. What shall be the force, and what the fruit, of this fire. "The day that cometh shall burn them up," shall both terrify and ruin them, and shall "leave them neither root nor branch," neither son nor nephew, so the Chaldee paraphrase; neither they nor their posterity shall be spared; they shall be wholly extirpated and cut of. "Who knows the power of God's anger?" The proud, and those that do wickedly, will not fear it, but they shall be made to feel it. Where are they now that called the proud happy, when thus they are made completely miserable; when there remains no branch of their happiness to be enjoyed for the present, nor any root of it out of which it might again spring up?

Now this was fulfilled, 1st. When Christ in his doctrine spoke terror and condemnation to the proud Pharisees and other the Jews that did wickedly; when he sent that fire on the earth which burnt up the chaff of the traditions of the elders, and the corrupt glosses they had put upon the law of God. 2nd. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and the nation of the Jews, as a nation, quite blotted out from under heaven, and neither root nor branch left them. This seems to be principally intended here. Our Saviour saith that

those should be the days of vengeance, when all the things that were written to that purpose should be fulfilled, *Lu.* xxi. 22. Then the unbelieving Jews were as stubble to the devouring fire of God's judgments, which gathered together to them as the eagles to the carcass. 3rd. It is certainly applicable, and is to be applied, to the day of judgment, both to the particular judgment at death, (some of the Jewish doctors refer it to the punishment that seizeth on the souls of the wicked immediately after they go out of the body;) but especially it will have its accomplishment in the general judgment, at the end of time, when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire, to execute judgment on the proud and all hat do wickedly. The whole world shall then burn as an oven, and all the children of this world, that set their hearts upon it, and choose their portion in it, shall take their ruin with it, and the fire then kindled shall never be quenched.

Secondly. In both Christ is a rejoicing light to those that serve him faithfully, to those that fear his name, and give him the glory due to it, ver. 2; who stand in awe of that name of his which the wicked and profane trample upon. Here is mercy and comfort kept in store for all those that fear the Lord and think on his name. Observe,

1. Whence this mercy and comfort shall flow to them. To you that fear my name "shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." The day that comes, as it will be a stormy day to the wicked, a day in which God will rain upon them fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, as he did on Sodom, *Ps.* xi. 6, a "day of clouds and thick darkness," *Am.* v. 18, 20, so it will be a fair and bright day to those that fear God, and reviving as the rising sun is to the earth; and particular notice is taken of the rising of the sun upon Zoar, when that was mercifully distinguished from the cities of the plain whom the fires consumed: see *Gen.* xix. 23. So to you that fear God is comfort spoken; when the hearts of others fail for fear, let them lift up their heads for joy, for their redemption draws nigh, *Lu.* xxi. 28. But by the Sun of righteousness here we are certainly to understand Jesus Christ, who would undertake to secure the believing remnant, in the day of the general destruction of the Jews, from falling with the rest, and to comfort them in that day of distress and perplexity with his consolations. He directed them that were in Judæa to flee to the mountains, *Mat* xxiv. 16, and they did so, and were all safe and easy in Pella. But it is to be applied more generally,

1st. To the coming of Christ in the flesh, to seek and save them that were lost; then the Sun of righteousness arose upon this dark world. Christ is the light of the world, the true light, the great light that makes day and rules the day, *Jno.* viii. 12, as the sun; he is the light of men, *Jno.* i. 4, is to men's souls as the sun is to the visible world, which without the sun would be a dungeon; so would mankind be darkness itself without the light of the glory of God, shining in the face of Christ. Christ is the Sun that has light in himself, and is the fountain of light, *Ps.* xix. 4—6. He is the Sun of righteousness, for he is himself a righteous Saviour; righteousness is both the light and the heat of this Sun; the word of his righteousness is so, it guides, instructs, and quickens. So is the everlasting righteousness he has brought in; he is made of God to us righteousness, he is the Lord our righteousness, and therefore is fitly called the Sun of righteousness. Through him we are justified and sanctified, and so are brought to see light. This Sun of righteousness, in the fulness of time, arose upon the world, and with him light came into the world, *Jno.* iii. 19; a great light, *Mat.* iv. 16. In him the dayspring from on high visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, *Lu.* i. 78, 79. Righteousness sometimes signifies mercy or benignity, and it was in Christ that the tender mercy of our God visited us.

2nd. It is applicable to the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit brought into the souls of men. Grotius understands it of Christ's giving the Spirit to those that are his, to shine in their hearts, and to be a comforter to them, a sun and a shield. Those that are possessed and governed by a holy fear of God, and a dread of his majesty, shall have his love also shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and then the sun may be said to arise there, and to bring both a delightful day and a fruitful spring along with it.

3rd. Christ's second coming will be a glorious and welcome sunrising to all that fear his name. It will be that morning of the resurrection in which the upright shall have dominion, *Ps.* xlix. 14; that day which to the wicked will burn as an oven, will to the righteous be bright as the morning; and it is what they wait for "more than they that wait for the morning."

2. What this mercy and comfort shall bring with it to them. He shall arise with "healing in his wings," or in his rays or beams, which are as the wings of the sun. Christ came as the sun, to bring not only light to a dark world, but health to a diseased, distempered world. The Jews, saith Dr. Pocock, have a proverbial saying, 'As the sun riseth infirmities decrease;' the flowers which drooped and languished all night revive in the morning. Christ came into the world to be the great physician, yea, and the great medicine too, both the balm in Gilead and the physician there. When he was upon earth he went about as the sun in his circuit, doing this good; he "healed all manner of sickness and diseases among the people;" he healed by wholesale, as the sun doth. He shall arise with healing in his skirts, (so some read it,) and then apply to it the story of the woman's touching the hem of his garment, and being thereby made whole, and his finding that "virtue went out of him," *Mar.* v. 28—30. But his healing bodily diseases was a specimen of his great design in coming into the world to heal the diseases of men's souls, and to put them into a good state of health, that they may serve and enjoy both God and themselves.

3. What good effect it should have upon them.

1st. It should make them vigorous in themselves. "Ye shall go forth," as those that are healed go abroad, and return to their business. The souls shall go forth out of their bodies at death, and the bodies out of their graves at the resurrection, as prisoners out of their dungeons, and both to "see the light" and be "set at liberty." Ye shall go forth as plants out of the earth, when in the spring the sun returns. Some make it to mean the going forth of the Christians from Jerusalem, and the escape they thereby made from its destruction. And thus the souls on whom the Sun of righteousness ariseth go forth out of this world, go forth out of Babylon, as those that are made free indeed. Ye shall likewise grow up, being restored to health and liberty; ye shall increase in knowledge, and grace, and spiritual strength. The souls on which the Sun of righteousness riseth are growing up towards the perfect man. Those that by the grace of God are made wise and good by the same grace are made wiser and better; and their path, like that of the rising sun, "shines more and more to the perfect day," *Pr.* iv. 18. Their growth is compared to that of the calves of the stall, which is a quick, strong, and useful growth. Ye shall grow up, not as the flower of the field, which is slender and weak, and of little use, and withereth soon after it is grown up, but as the "calves of the stall," that, as one of the rabbins expounds it, 'grow great in flesh and fatness,' with which both God's altars and men's tables are replenished. So the growth of the saints, on whom the Sun of righteousness ariseth, honour both God and man. Some read it, instead of "ye shall grow up," ye shall 'move yourselves,' or 'leap for joy,' shall be as frolicsome as calves of the stall, when they are let loose in the open field: and it notes the joy of the saints that rejoice in Christ Jesus: they shall even leap for joy; are always caused to triumph.

2nd. It shall make them victorious over their enemies; ver. 3, "Ye shall tread down the wicked." Time was when the wicked trod them down, said to their souls, "Bow down, that we may go over;" but the day will come when they shall tread down the wicked,—being made Christ's footstool they are made theirs also, *Ps.* cx. 1, and come and worship before the feet of the church, *Rev.* iii. 9. "The elder shall serve the younger;" when believers by faith overcome the world, when they suppress their own corrupt appetites and passions, when the God of peace bruiseth Satan under their feet, then they tread down the wicked. When it came to the turn of the Christians to triumph over the Jews that had insulted over them, then this promise was fulfilled, "They shall be ashes under the soles of your feet;" they shall not only be trodden down, but trodden to dirt. When the day that comes shall have burnt them up, they shall trample upon them as ashes; when the righteous shall rise to everlasting life, the wicked shall rise to everlasting contempt; and though they shall not triumph over them they shall triumph in that God whose justice is glorified in their destruction. The saints in glory are said to have power given them over the nations, to "rule them with a rod of iron," *Rev.* ii. 26, 27. This "ye shall do, in the day that I shall do this." Note, The saints' triumphs are all owing to God's victories; it is not they that do this, but God that doth it for them, that saith, Come, set your feet on the necks of those kings. Some read it, 'In the day that I make,' or shall make, the great day that I shall make remarkable, of which you will say with joy, This is the day that the Lord has made. The day of the destruction of Jerusalem is called the "great and terrible day of the Lord," *Acts* ii. 20; and our Saviour, in foretelling that destruction, made use of such expressions as, like these here, might be applied likewise to the end of the world and the last judgment; for it was such a terrible revelation of the wrath of God from heaven, and caused such a scene of horror upon this earth, as that it might fitly serve for a type of that glorious transaction which will be an outlet to the days of time and an inlet to the days of eternity; and by the accomplishment of these prophecies in the ruin of the Jewish nation we should have our faith confirmed in the assurances Christ has given us concerning the dissolution of all things. "Surely I come quickly;" so saith Christ, the Lord of hosts, to whom all power in heaven and earth is committed.

4 Remember ye the law of Moses my servant,
Which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel,
With the statutes and judgments.
5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet [LORD:
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the
6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children,
And the heart of the children to their fathers,
Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

This is doubtless intended for a solemn conclusion, not only of this prophecy, but of the canon of the Old Testament, and is a plain information they were not to expect any more sayings or writings by Divine inspiration, no more of the dictates of the spirit of prophecy, till the beginning of the Gospel of the Messiah, which sets aside the Apocrypha as no part of the Holy Writ, and which, therefore, the Jews never received. Now prophecy ceaseth and is about to be sealed up, there are two things required of the people of God that lived then:—

First. They must keep up an obedient veneration for the law of Moses; ver. 4, "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant," and observe to do according to it; even that law which "I commanded unto him in Horeb," that fiery law which was intended "for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments;" not only the law of the ten commandments, but all the other appointments, ceremonial and judicial, then and there given. Observe here, 1. The honourable mention that is made of Moses, the first writer of the Old Testament, in Malachi, the last writer. God by him calls him Moses my servant; for the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance. See how the penmen of Scripture, though they lived in several ages at a great distance from each other, (it was above one thousand two hundred years from Moses to Malachi,) all concurred in the same thing, and supported one another, being all actuated and guided by one and the same Spirit. 2. The honourable mention that is made of the law of Moses. It was what God himself commanded, he owns it for his law, and he commanded it for all Israel, as the municipal law of their kingdom. Thus will God magnify his law and make it honourable. Note, We are therefore concerned to keep the law, because God has commanded it, and commanded it for us, for we are the spiritual Israel; and if we expect the benefit of the covenant with Israel, *Heb.* viii. 10, we must observe the commands given to Israel, those of them that were intended to be of perpetual obligation. 3. The summary of our duty with reference to the law. We must remember it. Forgetfulness of the law is at the bottom of all our transgressions of it. If we would rightly remember it, we could not but conform to it; remember it when we have occasion to use it; remember both the commands themselves and the sanctions wherewith they are enforced. The office of conscience is to bid us remember the law.

But how doth this charge to remember the law of Moses come in here? 1st. This prophet had reproved them for many gross corruptions and irregularities, both in worship and conversation, and now, for the reforming and amending of what was amiss, he only chargeth them to remember the law of Moses. Keep to that rule, and you will do all you should do. He will lay upon them no other burthen but what they have received, hold that fast, *Rev.* ii. 24, 25. Note, Corrupt churches are to be reformed by the written word, and reduced into order by being reduced to the standard of the law and the testimony: see 1 *Cor.* xi. 23. 2nd. The church had long enjoyed the benefit of prophets, extraordinary messengers from God, and now they had a whole book of their prophecies put together, and it was a finished piece, but they must not think that hereby the law of Moses was superseded, and was become as an almanac out of date, as if now they were advanced to a higher form, and might forget that; no, the prophets do but confirm and apply the law, and press the observance of that, and therefore still remember the law. Note, Even when we have made considerable advances in knowledge, yet still we must retain the first principles of practical religion, and resolve to abide by them. Those that study the writings of the prophets and apocalypse must still remember the law of Moses and the four gospels. 3rd. Prophecy was now to cease in the church for some ages, and the spirit of prophecy not to return till the beginning of the Gospel; and now they are bid to remember the law of Moses,—let them live by the rules of that, and live upon the promises of that. Note, We need not complain for want of visions and revelations as long as we have the written word and the canon of Scripture complete to be our guide; for that is the most sure word of prophecy, and the touchstone by which we are to try the spirits. Though we have not prophets, yet as long as we have Bibles we may keep up our communion with God, and keep ourselves in his way. 4th. They

were to expect the coming of the Messiah, and the preaching of his Gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom; and in that expectation they must remember the law of Moses, and live in obedience to that, and then they might expect the comforts that the Messiah would bring to the willing and obedient. Let them observe the law of Moses, and live upon the light which that gave them, and then they might expect the benefit of the Gospel of Christ; for to him that has, and useth what he has well, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance.

Secondly. They must keep up a believing expectation of the Gospel of Christ, and must look for the beginning of it in the appearing of Elijah the prophet; ver. 5, 6, "Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet." Though the spirit of prophecy cease for a time, and you will have only the law to consult, yet it shall revive again in one that shall be sent in the spirit and power of Elias, *Lu.* i. 17. The "law and the prophets were until John," *Lu.* xvi. 16; they continued to be the only lights of the church till that Morning Star appeared. Note, As God never left himself without witness in the world, so neither in the church, but, as there was occasion, carried the light of Divine revelation farther and farther to the perfect day. They had now Moses and the prophets, and might hear them; but God will go farther, he will send them Elijah. Observe,

1. Who this prophet is that shall be sent. It is Elijah. The Jewish doctors will have it to be the same Elijah that prophesied in Israel in the days of Ahab, that he shall come again to be the forerunner of the Messiah; yet others of them say, not the same person, but another of the same spirit. It should seem those different sentiments they had when they asked John, "Art thou Elias?" or that prophet that should bear his name? *Jno.* i. 19—21. But we Christians know very well that John Baptist was the Elias that was to come, *Mat.* xvii. 10—13; and very expressly, *Mat.* xi. 14, "This is Elias which was for to come;" and ver. 10, "the same of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger," *ch.* iii. 1. Elijah was a man of great austerity and mortification, zealous for God, bold in reproving sin, and active to reduce an apostate people to God and their duty, and John Baptist was animated by the same spirit and power, and preached repentance and reformation as Elias had done; and all held him for a prophet as they did Elijah in his day, and that his baptism was from heaven, and not of men. Note, When God hath such work to do as was formerly to be done, he can raise up such men to do it as he formerly raised up, and can put into a John Baptist the spirit of an Elias.

2. When he shall be sent. Before the appearing of the Messiah, which, because it was the judgment of this world, and introduced the ruin of the Jewish church and nation, is here called the "coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," and this John Baptist gave them fair warning of when he told them of the wrath to come, that wrath to the uttermost which was hastening upon them, and put them into a way of escape from it, and of the fan in Christ's hand with which Christ would thoroughly purge his floor; see *Mat.* iii. 7, 10, 12. That day of Christ when he came first was as that day will be when he comes again; though a great and joyful day to those that embrace him, yet a great and dreadful day to those that oppose him. John Baptist was sent before the coming of this day to give people notice of it, that they might get ready for it, and go forth to meet it.

3. On what errand he shall be sent. "He shall turn the heart of the fathers to their children, and the heart of the children to their fathers;" that is, he shall be employed in this work, he shall endeavour it; his doctrine and baptism shall have a direct tendency to it, and with many shall be successful. He shall be an instrument in God's hand of turning many to righteousness, to the Lord their God, and so "making ready a people prepared for him," *Lu.* i. 16, 17. Note, The turning of souls to God and their duty is the best preparation of them for the "great and dreadful day of the Lord." It is promised concerning John, 1st. That he shall give a turn to things, shall make a bold stand against the strong torrent and long current of sin and impiety which he found in full force among the children of his people, and bearing down all before it. This is called his "coming to restore all things," *Mat.* xvii. 11, to set them to rights, that they may again go in the right channel. 2nd. That he shall preach a doctrine that shall reach men's hearts, and have an influence upon them, and work a change in them. God's word in his mouth shall be quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Many had their consciences awakened by his ministry that yet were not thoroughly wrought upon, such a spirit and power was there in it. 3rd. That he shall turn the hearts of the fathers with the children, and of the children with the fathers, (for so some read it,) to God and to their duty. He shall call upon young and old to repent, and shall not labour in vain; for many of the fathers that are going off, and many of the children that are growing up, shall be wrought on by his ministry. 4th. That thus he shall be an instrument to revive and confirm love and unity among relations, and shall bring them closer and bind them faster to each other, by bringing and binding them all to their God. He shall prepare the way for that kingdom of heaven which will make all its faithful subjects of one heart and one soul, *Acts* iv. 32, which will be a kingdom of love, and will slay all enmities.

4. With what view he shall be sent on this errand. "Lest I come and smite the earth;" that is, the land of Israel, the body of the Jewish nation, that were of the earth earthy, "with a curse." They, by their impiety and impenitence in it, had laid themselves open to the curse of God, which is a separation to all evil. God was ready to smite them with that curse, to bring utter ruin upon them, to strike home, to strike dead with the curse; but he will yet once more try them whether they will repent and return and so prevent it, and therefore sends John Baptist to preach repentance to them, that their conversion might prevent their confusion; so unwilling is God that any should perish, so willing to have his anger turned away. Had they universally repented and reformed, it had had this desired effect; but, they generally rejecting the counsel of God in John's baptism, it proved against themselves, *Lu.* vii. 30, and their land was smitten with the curse, which both it and they lie under to this day. Note, Those must expect to be smitten with a sword, with a curse, who turn not to him that smiteth them with a rod, with a cross, *Isa.* ix. 13. Now the "axe is laid to the root of the tree," saith John Baptist, and it is ready to be smitten, to be cut down "with a curse," therefore "bring forth fruit meet for repentance." Some observe that the last word of the Old Testament is a curse, which threatens the earth, *Zec.* v. 3, which we must be made sensible of our danger of, that we may bid Christ welcome who comes with a blessing; and it is with a blessing, with the choicest of blessings, that the New Testament ends, and with it let us arm ourselves, or rather, let God arm us against this curse. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen."

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES TO THE BOOK OF MALACHI.

CHAP. III.—1. *The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.* He is the Lord of the temple at Jerusalem; he is, besides, the messenger of that everlasting covenant of which the establishment is so explicitly foretold by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel; he is also the Lord whom the profane seek not; the Messenger in whom they delight not; that is, he is the appointed judge of man, who will execute God's final vengeance on the wicked.——It may seem (continues Bishop Horsley, *Sermons*, 401—410,) that the text leaves it pretty much undetermined what the particular business is to be, intimating only in general terms that something very terrible will be the consequence of the Messiah's arrival. "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" You will not wonder that the appearance of that "Sun of righteousness who hath arisen with healing on his wings" should here be spoken of in terms of dread and apprehension, if you bear in remembrance that the prophet is speaking to the profane and atheistical—to those who had nothing to hope from the mercy of God, and every thing to fear from his justice. To these persons the year of the redemption of Israel is to be the year of the vengeance of our God. The punishment of these is not less a branch of the Messiah's office than the deliverance of the penitent and contrite sinner; they make a part of that power of the serpent which the seed of the woman is to extinguish. But the prophet opens the meaning of this threatening question in the words that immediately follow it, (ver. 2—5.) Here you see the Messiah's business described in various branches, which are reducible, however, to these: the final judgment, when the wicked shall be destroyed; a previous trial or experiment of the different tempers and dispositions of men, in order to that judgment; and something to be done for their amendment and improvement. The trial is signified under the image of an assayist's separation of the nobler metals from the dross with which they are blended in the ore; the means used for the amendment and improvement of mankind by the Messiah's atonement for our sins, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the eternal influences of the Holy Spirit,—all these means, employed under the Messiah's covenant for the reformation of men, are expressed under the image of a fuller's soap, which restores a soiled garment to its original purity. One particular effect of this purification is to be, that the sons of Levi will be purified. The worship of God shall be purged of all hypocrisy and superstition, and reduced to a few simple rites, the natural expressions of true devotion. "And then shall this offering of Judah and Jerusalem," that is, of the true members of God's true church, "be pleasant unto the Lord." These, then, are the particulars of the business on which the Messiah, according to this prophecy, was to come. It yet remains to recollect the particulars in which this prophecy, as it respects both the person of the Messiah and his business, hath been accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth. And, first, the prophet tells us that the Messiah is the Lord, and should come to his temple. Agreeably to this, the temple was the theatre of our Lord's public ministry at Jerusalem; there he daily taught the people; there he held frequent disputations with the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees; so that, to us who acknowledge Jesus for the Lord, the prophetical character of coming to his temple must seem to be in some measure answered in the general habits of his holy life. It is remarkable that the temple was the place of his very first public appearance, and in his coming upon that occasion there was an extraordinary suddenness. It was indeed before the commencement of his triennial ministry; he was but a child of twelve years of age, entirely unknown when he entered into disputation in the temple with the priests and doctors of the law, and astonished them with his accurate knowledge of the Scriptures. And in this very year the sceptre of royal power departed from Judah; for it was in the year that Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great, was deposed by the Roman emperor, and banished to Lyons, and the Jews became wholly subject to the dominion of the Romans. Thus the prophecy of Jacob was fulfilled by the coincidence of the subversion of the independent government of the Jews with the first advent or appearance of Shiloh in the temple. But there are three particular passages of his life in which this prophecy appears to have been more remarkably fulfilled, and the character of the Lord coming to his temple more evidently displayed in him. The first was in an early period of his ministry, when, going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, he found in the temple a market of live cattle, and bankers' shops, where strangers who came at this season from distant countries to Jerusalem were accommodated with cash for their bills of credit. Fired with indignation at this daring profanation of his Father's house, he oversets the accounting tables of the bankers, and with a light whip made of rushes he drives these irreligious traders from the sacred precincts. Here was a considerable exertion of authority. However, on this occasion, he claimed not the temple expressly for his own; he called it his Father's house, and appeared to act only as a son. He came a second time as Lord to his temple, much more remarkably, at the feast of tabernacles; when, "in the last day, that great day of the feast, he stood in the temple and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink: he that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."—Consider these words as they lie in the context of the prophet, (*Isa.* xii.;) consider the occasion upon which Jesus, standing in the temple, applies them to himself; consider the sense in which he applies them; and judge whether this application was less than an open claim to be the Lord Jehovah come unto his temple. It is remarkable that it had at the time an immediate and wonderful effect. "Many of the people, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the prophet." The light of truth burst at once upon their minds. Jesus no sooner made the application of this abused prophecy to himself, than they perceived the justness of it, and acknowledged in him the fountain of salvation. What would these people have said had they had our light, had the whole volume of

prophecy been laid before them, with the history of Jesus to compare with it? Would they not have proceeded in the prophet's triumphant song, "Cry out and shout, O daughter of Zion! Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee!" This then I take to be the second particular occasion in the life of Jesus in which Malachi's prediction "that the Lord should come to his temple" was fulfilled in him, when Jesus, in the last day of the feast of tabernacles, stood in the temple, and declared himself the person intended by Isaiah under the image of the "fountain of salvation;" for, by appropriating the character to himself, he must be understood in effect to claim all those other characters which Isaiah in the same prophecy ascribes to the same person; which are these,—"God, the salvation of Israel; the Lord Jehovah, his strength and his song; the Lord that hath done excellent things; the Holy One of Israel." A third time Jesus came still more remarkably as the Lord to his temple, when he came up from Galilee to celebrate the last passover, and made that public entry at Jerusalem which is described by all the evangelists. Strange as it may seem, the coming to Jerusalem upon an ass's colt was one of the prophetical characters of the Messiah; and the great singularity of it had perhaps been the reason that this character had been more generally attended to than any other; so that there was no Jew who was not apprised that the Messiah was to come to the holy city in that manner. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!" saith Zechariah. "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee! He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even a colt the foal of an ass!" And this prophecy the Jews never understood of any other person than the Messiah. Jesus, therefore, by seating himself upon the ass's colt in order to go to Jerusalem, without any possible inducement either of grandeur or convenience, openly declared himself to be that King who was to come, and at whose coming in that manner Zion was to rejoice. And so the disciples, if we may judge from what immediately followed, understood this proceeding; for no sooner did they see their Master seated on the colt than they broke out into transports of the highest joy, as if in this great sight they had the full contentment of their utmost wishes; conceiving, as it should seem, the sanguine hope that the kingdom was this instant to be restored to Israel. They strewed the way which Jesus was to pass with the green branches of the trees which grew beside it,—a mark of honour in the east, never paid but to the greatest emperors on occasions of the highest pomp,—they proclaimed him the long expected heir of David's throne, the Blessed One coming in the name of the Lord; that is, in the language of Malachi, the Messenger of the covenant; and they rent the skies with the exulting acclamation of "Hosanna in the highest!" On their way to Jerusalem they are met by a great multitude from the city, whom the tidings had no sooner reached than they ran out in eager joy to join his triumph. When they had reached Jerusalem, the whole city, says the blessed evangelist, was moved. Here recollect that it was now the season of the passover. The passover was the highest festival of the Jewish nation, the anniversary of that memorable night when Jehovah led his armies out of Egypt with a high hand and an extended arm, "a night much to be remembered to the Lord of the children of Israel in their generations;" and much indeed it was remembered. The devout Jews flocked at this season to Jerusalem, not only from every corner of Judæa, but from the remotest countries whither God had scattered them; and the numbers of the strangers that were annually collected in Jerusalem during this festival are beyond imagination. These strangers, who, living at a distance, knew little of what had been passing in Judæa since their last visit, were they who were moved (as well they might be) with wonder and astonishment, when Jesus, so humble in his equipage, so honoured in his numerous attendants, appeared within the city gates; and every one asks his neighbour, "Who is this?" It was replied by some of the natives of Judæa,—but, as I conceive, by none of the disciples; for any of them at this time would have given another answer,—it was replied, "This is the Nazarene, the great prophet from Galilee." Through the throng of these astonished spectators the procession passed by the public streets of Jerusalem to the temple, where immediately the sacred porticoes resound with the continued hosannas of the multitudes. The chief priests and scribes are astonished and alarmed: they request Jesus himself to silence his followers. Jesus, in the early part of his ministry, had always been cautious of any public display of personal consequence, lest the malice of his enemies should be too soon provoked, or the unadvised zeal of his friends should raise civil commotions: but now that his work on earth was finished in all but the last painful part of it,—now that he had firmly laid the foundations of God's kingdom in the hearts of his disciples,—now that the apostles were prepared and instructed for their office,—now that the days of vengeance on the Jewish nation were at hand, and it mattered not how soon they should incur the displeasure of the Romans their masters,—Jesus lays aside a reserve which could be no longer useful; and, instead of checking the zeal of his followers, he gives a new alarm to the chief priests and scribes, by a direct and firm assertion of his right to the honours that were so largely shewn to him. "If these," says he, "were silent, the stones of this building would be endued with a voice to proclaim my titles." And then, as on a former occasion, he drove out the traders; but with a higher tone of authority, calling it his own house, and saying, "My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." You have now the story in all its circumstances, faithfully collected from the four evangelists; nothing exaggerated, but set in order, and somewhat perhaps illustrated by an application of old prophecies and a recollection of Jewish customs. Judge for yourselves whether this was not an advent of the Lord Jehovah taking personal possession of his temple.

CHAP. IV.—6. *And he shall turn the hearts.* The design of the ministry of John is described as consisting in the production of universal peace and concord. Family feuds had increased to an enormous extent by the time of John the Baptist, the removal of which by genuine repentance and reformation of conduct might be taken as a specimen of the ἀποκατάστασις, or restoration of things to a better state throughout Judæa. With respect to the extent of the effects produced by John's ministry, there can be no doubt it was very great. Not only did immense multitudes come to his baptism, confessing their sins, but the great body of the common people appear to have been prepared by him for the labours of our blessed Lord himself, and thus the foundation was laid for the recovery of tens of thousands from Judaism to the faith of the Gospel, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem: see *Acts* xxi. 20. The prophecy, and with it the entire Old Testament, closes with the awful alternative,—the denunciation of the Divine curse, to be realised in the extermination of the impenitent Jews from their own land. The word translated *curse* signifies 'utter destruction,' from the Hebrew word 'to shut' or 'stop up,' exclude from common use, place under a ban, devote to destruction. It is one of the most fearful words in use among the Jews, and was specially applied to the extermination of the Canaanites, whose cities were razed to the foundations, and their inhabitants utterly destroyed. Under this ban the land of Palestine has lain ever since the capture of Jerusalem; and the sufferings to which, in consequence, the Jews have been subjected are truly appalling: but incomparably more dreadful is the New Testament ΑΝΑΘΕΜΑ, ΜΑΡΑΝ ΑΘΑ (1 *Cor.* xvi. 22.—*H.*

HISTORICAL CONNEXION

OF THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS.

THE Old Testament canon ends with Nehemiah's reform among the Jews. Nehemiah and Malachi were contemporaries; and the latter is the last of the ancient prophets. The Jews who returned from the Babylonish captivity were, after Nehemiah's decease, under a Persian governor of all Syria. The high priest himself was under political control, and was sometimes appointed by the governor.

The Persians and Greeks had been generally in a state of war 160 years, when Alexander the Great marched 35,000 Greeks into Asia, and in six years conquered the whole Persian empire.

While Alexander was engaged in effecting his conquests in the Persian dominions, he was exceedingly enraged against the Jews, for their inflexible adherence to the Persians, to whom they were under great obligations. When he laid siege to Tyre, the Samaritans sent him a considerable body of troops; but the Jews were not disposed to submit to him, so long as Darius, to whom they had taken the oath of allegiance, should be alive.

Rollin relates the particulars of an interesting event, which saved the Jews, and changed their haughty foe into a cordial friend:—'Jaddas [or Jaddua] the high priest, who governed under the Persians, seeing himself exposed, with all the inhabitants, to the wrath of the conqueror, had recourse to the protection of the Almighty, and gave orders for the offering up public prayers to implore his assistance, and made sacrifices. The night after God appeared to him in a dream, and bid him "cause flowers to be scattered up and down the city; to set open all the gates, and go, clothed in his pontifical robes, with all the priests dressed also in their vestments, and all the rest clothed in white, to meet Alexander, and not to fear any evil from that king, inasmuch as he would protect them." This command was punctually obeyed; and accordingly this august procession, the very day after, marched out of the city to an eminence called Sapha, whence there was a view of all the plain, as well as of the temple and city of Jerusalem; here the whole procession waited the arrival of Alexander. As soon as the Jews heard of his approach they set out to meet him, with all the pomp before described. Alexander was struck at the sight of the high priest, in whose mitre and forehead a golden plate was fixed, on which the name of God was written. The moment the king perceived the high priest, he advanced towards him with an air of the most profound respect, bowed his body, adored the august name upon his front, and saluted him who wore it with a religious veneration. Then the Jews, surrounding Alexander, raised their voices to wish him every kind of prosperity. All the spectators were seized with inexpressible surprise; they could scarce believe their eyes. Parmenio, one of Alexander's generals, who could not yet recover from his astonishment, asked the king how it came to pass that he, who was adored by every one, adored the high priest of the Jews. 'I do not,' replied Alexander, adore the high priest, but the God whose minister he is; for whilst I was at Dia, in Macedonia, (my mind wholly fixed on the great design of the Persian war,) as I was revolving the methods how to conquer Asia, this very man, dressed in the same robes, appeared to me in a dream, exhorted me to banish every fear, bid me cross the Hellespont boldly, and assured me that God would march at the head of my army, and give me the victory over that of the Persians.' Alexander added, that the instant he saw this priest he knew him by his habit, his stature, his air, and his face, to be the same person that he had seen at Dia; that he was firmly persuaded it was by the command, and under the immediate conduct of heaven, that he had undertaken this war; that he was sure he should overcome Darius hereafter, and destroy the empire of the Persians; and that this was the reason why he adored this God in the person of his priest. Alexander, after having thus answered Parmenio, embraced the high priest and all his brethren; then walking in the midst of them, he arrived at Jerusalem, where he offered sacrifices to God in the temple, after the manner prescribed to him by the high priest. The high priest afterwards shewed him those passages in the prophecy of *Daniel* which are spoken of that monarch, (*Dan.* ii. 20, 21, 35, 37; iv. 14, 32, 34—36; vii. 2—6; viii.; xi. 2—4.)' Rollin adds, 'We may easily figure to ourselves the great joy and admiration with which Alexander was filled upon hearing such clear, such circumstantial, and advantageous promises. Before he left Jerusalem he assembled the Jews, and bid them ask any favour whatsoever. They answered, that their request was to be allowed to live according to the laws which their ancestors had left them, and to be exempted the seventh year from their usual tribute; and for this reason, because they were forbid by their laws to sow their fields, and consequently could have no harvest. Alexander granted their request; and upon the high priest's beseeching him to suffer the Jews who lived in Babylon and Media to live likewise agreeably to their own laws, he also indulged them in this particular with the utmost humanity.' Having conquered Egypt, he built Alexandria, and induced many of the Jews to become its inhabitants, granting them equal privileges with the Macedonians. Alexander died at Babylon, in the thirty-second year of his age, and the twelfth of his reign, B. C. 323.

Within fifteen years after the death of Alexander his whole family was murdered, and his empire divided among four of his principal generals. For more than 150 years these were generally in a state of war, one with another; nevertheless the Jews, whose country was betwixt them, were marvellously protected by Providence. Ptolemy Lagus, to whose lot Egypt fell, did indeed invade Judæa; for Palestine, having been given to Laomedon of Mitylene, one of Alexander's generals, and confirmed to him, the Jews, mindful of their oath of obedience, refused to submit to Ptolemy, who had deprived Laomedon of his dominions. Enraged at their fidelity to the sovereign to whom they had sworn allegiance, Ptolemy took Jerusalem, and carried one hundred thousand of the people captives into Egypt. Their loyalty and fidelity, however, moved his compassion, and so raised their characters in his estimation, that he appointed them to places of trust and power. In the year B.C. 292 died Simon the Just, who was high priest of the Jews, and son of Onias. This high priest was the last of the men of the great synagogue, consisting of one hundred and twenty persons, appointed by Ezra for perfecting the restoration of the Jewish church; and it is believed that he made the last revision of the books of the Old Testament, and completed the sacred canon by adding the books of *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Esther*, and *Malachi*.

After the death of Ptolemy Soter, B. C. 284, the Jews were favoured with another protector in his son, Ptolemy Philadelphus. This king was engaged in a long war with Antiochus Theos, king of Syria, which they terminated by a treaty of marriage. Antiochus divorced his wife Laodice, and married Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy, B. C. 249. Ptolemy Philadelphus dying two years afterwards, he (Antiochus) took back his first queen, and separated from Berenice, who, fearing another divorce, speedily poisoned him, cut off Berenice and her son, and placed her son Callinicus on the throne. Ptolemy Euergetes, now king of Egypt, in revenge for the death of his sister Berenice, hastened with a considerable army against Syria, slew Laodice, and having subdued the kingdom, returned laden with spoils; and on his way offered many sacrifices in the temple of Jerusalem, as a grateful acknowledgment to God for his triumphs. Ptolemy Philopater, son of Ptolemy Euergetes, succeeded his father on the throne, B. C. 221. This was a very profligate prince. Antiochus, brother of Callinicus, engaged in war with him, and at first was successful; but Ptolemy ultimately conquered, and made a progress through his provinces. On visiting Jerusalem he offered numerous victims, and gave valuable presents to the temple; but Simon II., then high priest, seriously offended him by not permitting him to enter the holy of holies; and he avenged himself in a most barbarous manner; for, on his return to Egypt, he deprived the Jews of their privileges, and assembled multitudes of them at Alexandria, to be destroyed by wild beasts, which, however, it is said, instead of slaying them, destroyed their enemies. The dissipated Philopater died B. C. 204, and was succeeded by his infant son, Ptolemy Epiphanes. Antiochus now availed himself of favourable circumstances, and marched a large army into Cœlo-Syria and Palestine, and speedily subdued them. Antiochus, being soon after engaged in war with Attalus, king of Pergamus, the Egyptians recovered the lost territories, and put a garrison in Jerusalem, B. C. 199. In the year following they were again recovered by Antiochus, and the Egyptians were captured. The Jews cordially espoused the cause of Antiochus, with which he was so pleased that he ordered their city to be repaired, their dispersed to be recalled, and their lost privileges, granted by Alexander, to be restored. Antiochus was succeeded on the Syrian throne by his son, Seleucus Philopater; he finished an inglorious reign B. C. 176. Antiochus Epiphanes, or the Illustrious, next ascended the throne. Being pressed by the Romans for tribute, he deposed Onias, the Jewish high priest, and sold his sacred office to his brother Jason; and afterwards he deposed Jason, and sold it to his brother Menelaus: this was B. C. 172.

Antiochus, having marched into Egypt, and a report being spread of his death, Jason collected together a thousand men, to recover by force the priesthood of which he was the first purchaser. He succeeded in surprising the city of Jerusalem, drove Menelaus into the castle, and cruelly put to death all whom he considered as his adversaries. Antiochus, being informed of these transactions, hastened out of Egypt to quell the rebellion; and being told that the inhabitants of Jerusalem had made great rejoicings at the news of his death, he was so provoked, that having stormed the city, he slew forty thousand persons, sold as many as slaves, plundered the temple of gold and furniture, entered the holy of holies, and sacrificed a sow on the altar of burnt-offering, and caused the broth of the unclean animal to be sprinkled all over the temple. As a farther punishment of the Jews, he appointed one Philip, a Phrygian,

HISTORICAL CONNEXION.

a most cruel man, to be governor of Judæa, and continued the wicked Menelaus in the high priesthood. Not long after, the Romans having peremptorily ordered him to withdraw his forces from Egypt, he vented his rage at his disappointment by inflicting farther punishment on the unfortunate Jews; and despatching Apollonius with twenty thousand men, gave him orders to destroy Jerusalem, to put the men to the sword, and to make slaves of the women and children. These commands were executed with savage fierceness on the sabbath day, and none escaped but those who were able to find refuge in the neighbouring caves and mountains. On his arrival at Antioch he published a decree requiring all people in his dominions to conform to the religion of the Greeks; and Atheneus was commissioned to instruct the Jews in the Grecian idolatrous ceremonies, and to put to death all who disobeyed his authority. When the idolater arrived at Jerusalem, he obtained aid from some apostate Jews, caused the sacrifices to cease, suppressed the observances of the Jewish religion, polluted the temple, profaned the sabbaths and festivals, forbade the circumcision of the children, burned such copies of the law as could be discovered, dedicated the temple to Jupiter Olympius, raised a statue of the idol on the altar of burnt offering, and put to death all who would not conform to heathenism. Mattathias, great grandson of Asmonæus, after whom the family were called Asmonæans, retired with his five sons from the persecution at Jerusalem to his native town, Modin. Here he made a determined stand against idolatry. Apelles, an officer in command, could neither influence him by compulsion nor bribes. The venerable priest slew the first apostate Jew; and, aided by his sons, put the king's agent to death, with all his attendants, demolished the idols, and withdrew to the mountains; and, after forming a valiant army, he marched through Judæa, broke down the heathen altars, restored circumcision, cut off the heathen priests, and restored the worship of God, B. C. 167. Mattathias died the next year; but his third son Judas, called Maccabæus, succeeded him in command. This valiant man defeated army after army sent after him by Antiochus, recovered the temple, repaired and beautified it, restored the worship of God, and repaired Jerusalem, which was nearly in ruins, B. C. 165. The enraged Antiochus resolved to take signal revenge, but was suddenly seized with an incurable disease, of which he died, B. C. 164. His successor, Antiochus Eupator, was a minor, but combined with other enemies to extirpate all the race of Israel. Judas, therefore, carried on the war prosperously for some years, making the enemy's own territories the scene of action, till he was slain; and he was succeeded by his brother Jonathan. Onias, the high priest, being settled in Egypt, where he built a temple like that of Jerusalem, Jonathan and his brother Simon officiated at Jerusalem, both as high priests and civil governors. Jonathan was treacherously slain by Tryphon, who had usurped the throne of Syria, B. C. 144. Simon succeeded him, reformed Jerusalem, and rendered the Jews independent of all the neighbouring nations. He, too, was treacherously murdered, together with two of his sons, by his son-in-law Ptolemy, B. C. 135. His son John Hyrcanus next succeeded to the government and priesthood; he destroyed the Samaritan temple on mount Gerizim, B. C. 130, after it had stood two hundred years. His son Aristobulus became his successor, B. C. 107; he raised Judæa again into a monarchy, and assumed the title of king. His successor was his son Alexander Janneus, who died B. C. 79; his reign was prosperous. His widow Alexandra assumed the government with much prudence during nine years. When she died, her indolent son Hyrcanus reigned during three months only, being dethroned by his younger brother Aristobulus. Through the aid of the Romans Hyrcanus was soon restored; but was obliged to lay aside the crown, and Judæa became tributary to the Romans, B. C. 63. Pompey, the Roman general, with some of his officers, entered the holy of holies; and Crassus, governor of Syria, pillaged the temple of ten thousand talents of silver, B.C. 54. Antipater, a noble and crafty Idumean, now obtained the rank of procurator of Judæa, and Hyrcanus was obliged to be contented with the office of high priest, B. C. 47. Antipater was succeeded by his son Herod the Great, who, after much bloodshed, obtained the royal dignity, B. C. 40, in which he was confirmed by Augustus Cæsar, B. C. 30. He built many cities, rebuilt the temple, ingratiated himself with the Jews, and discovered great talent; but he was a monster in cruelty. He it was who attempted to murder the infant Redeemer. His sons ascended the throne in succession after him. A.D. 6, Archelaus was deposed by the Romans for mal-administration. Judæa was formed into a province; the sceptre thus passed away from Judah. Roman procurators were placed on the seat of authority, till those awful wars commenced which ended in the subversion of the Jewish state, when Titus Vespasian commanded the Roman armies, A. D. 79. The Jews have ever since been scattered abroad, the objects of God's displeasure, but neither beyond our pity nor our prayers.

APOCRYPHAL BOOKS.

THESE are *Esdras I.* and *II.*, *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Chronicles of Esther*, *Wisdom of Solomon*, *Ecclesiasticus*, *Baruch*, *Song of the Three Children*, *History of Susanna*, *Bel and the Dragon*, *Prayer of Manasses*, *Maccabees I.* and *II.* These books are rejected by Protestants, because they have no authority for admission into the canon; none are extant in Hebrew; they were written after the cessation of prophecy, and before the Gospel; not one of the writers directly claims to have been inspired; they were never received into the canon by the Jewish church; and were rejected by Christ. The Christian church rejected them during the first four centuries. They contain fabulous matter, *Esth.* x. 6; 2 *Mac.* i. 19—22; ii. 4, &c.: contradictory statements, *Tobit* i. 12 contradicts xii. 15, &c.: contradictory doctrines to Scripture, 2 *Mac.* xii. 43, 44; *Wisd.* viii. 19, 20; 1 *Esd.* viii. 33; *Tobit* xii. 8, 9; *Ecclus.* iii. 3, 30; vii. 20; xiii. 24; xxxv. 3: commend immoral practices, 2 *Mac.* xiv. 41—46; *Judith* ix. 2—9; *Tobit* vi. 16, 17: and contradict profane historians without good evidence, see 1 *Mac.* i. 6, 7; viii. 16.

THE SEPTUAGINT.

THIS Greek translation of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament is here noticed, because it was from this volume that Christ and his apostles made their quotations,—a circumstance which will account for certain phrases there found being different from the Old Testament translation, which is made at once from the Hebrew. Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, caused this translation to be made 284 years B.C., the Jews in Egypt having forgotten the Hebrew language. About seventy learned men were employed for the purpose; hence the name Septuagint, or seventy. The Greek language was then extensively spoken; and when the apostles began to preach, they, in appealing to the Septuagint, appealed to a book read by both Jews and heathens.

END OF VOL. II.

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